

**ZEN IN THE ART OF DRUMMING: JIM BLACKLEY AND HIS INFLUENCE
ON THE JAZZ DRUMMERS OF CANADA**

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to examine how the pedagogy of Jim Blackley (1927-2017)— the late Scottish-Canadian jazz drummer and educator— influenced several generations of Canadian jazz drummers. Blackley’s seminal publications such as *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer Vol. I* (1961) and *The Essence of Jazz Drumming* (2001) disavow the traditional instruction of the snare drum rudiments in favour of playing and interpreting musical lines. Consequently, Blackley inculcated in his students the importance of the drummer’s ride cymbal acting as the primary means of stating time and providing the accents, punctuations, and phrases so vital to jazz rhythmic accompaniment. Through emphasizing the development of strong time keeping skills, an awareness of song form, the memorization and vocalization of rhythmic figures and phrases, and the significance of listening carefully to the bass line, chord changes and melody when improvising, Blackley instilled in his students the inviolable tenet of playing the drums musically. Using an ethnographic approach culling data from interviews with Blackley’s former students such as Terry Clarke, Barry Elmes, Duris Maxwell, and others, this thesis will also explore issues of identity construction and construal examining how Blackley’s pedagogy had led his students on an important journey of identity realization.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated in memory of Keith Blackley (1950-2008). I first heard Keith's highly musical drumming on a recording called *Determination* by the Michael Stuart/ Keith Blackley Quartet. At the start of one of my early lessons with Jim Blackley in 1996, Blackley enlightened me by playing the album's opening track, "Compassion." As I listened to the track, I was awe-inspired by Keith's fluid, organic, musically sensitive and dynamic drumming. I remember thinking to myself, "I would love to be able to play like that."

This thesis is also dedicated in memory of Agnes (née Dodds Wilson) Blackley (1926-2010), better known as Nan by Jim's West Coast students and known as Aishah by many of Jim's students in Toronto. Aishah was a kind, gentle, generous and compassionate soul who greeted many of Jim's students with a warm smile and a cup of tea.

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I first learned about Jim Blackley in 1990 through visiting fellow drummer Steve Mancuso at his neighbouring rehearsal studio. Mancuso was practicing material from Blackley's *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer* and as he demonstrated and described to me Blackley's approach of taking syncopated figures and interpreting them in a variety of creative ways, I responded, "That's a pretty musical way of thinking about phrasing on the drum set." Three years later I attended Humber College in Toronto as a music student specializing in percussion performance. It was at Humber College that I embarked on a serious course of musical study involving jazz theory, ear training and jazz performance. While at Humber, Jim Blackley's name resurfaced through fellow student Scott Grant who specifically came to Toronto from British Columbia to study at Humber, alongside taking monthly private lessons at Blackley's home. In 1996, after my third year at Humber, I was feeling somewhat overwhelmed with Humber's then emphasis on classical percussion. Consequently, I felt as though my kit playing was being severely neglected and I was seriously thinking about abandoning my pursuits of becoming a professional musician.

During this period, while spending time with my good friend and Humber peer André Banini (a fantastic drummer from Norway), he suggested that I study with Jim Blackley. Although André wasn't studying with Blackley, only taking one lesson with the master pedagogue in the year 2000, my friend was aware of Blackley's legacy as a highly reputable and effective drum teacher, exclaiming, "Jim's a guru! You should take

advantage of the fact that such a great drum teacher lives here in Toronto.” In response to my friend’s suggestion, a few weeks later I called Blackley’s number provided to me by Scott Grant through a Jim Blackley promotional flyer.

Upon calling Blackley’s number, I spoke to his son Kaja who added my name to Blackley’s already lengthy waiting list. Kaja said, “I’ll make sure my dad calls you.” Within a half hour of that phone call, Blackley returned my call and on Saturday morning of that week, bright and early at 8:45am on June 15, 1996, I made my way up Blackley’s driveway only to see the man himself standing in his front room window with his arms folded and later motioning me to go to the side door entrance. As I was greeted by Blackley, he escorted me into his basement teaching studio and asked me in his inimitable brogue, “Would you like a cup of tea, son: milk and sugar?” “Yes please,” I responded. As the kettle was brewing, Blackley made his way downstairs and was scrutinizing me with an intense countenance, he inferred, “Yup, you’re a worrier, I can see it written all over your face.” Within mere minutes of meeting me, Blackley was already telling me things about myself. I knew then that I was in the presence of an extraordinarily perceptive, intuitive and sagacious individual.

That first lesson was eye-opening as Blackley talked about the importance of internalizing the blues and rhythm changes song forms and introduced me to the basic time studies: a series of time development exercises which form the underpinning of Blackley’s methodical course of study. Consequently, my initial lesson with Blackley was revelatory and awe-inspiring. I had never experienced that type of well-guided instruction from any other teacher that I studied with up until that point. Blackley made

the objectives of the lesson material very clear having me write down the practice instructions as he recited them, “Play each exercise at quarter note equals 40, count eighth-note triplets throughout and play each exercise for five minutes non-stop daily.” That initial lesson was the start of a seven and half year apprenticeship and an incredible learning journey which still goes on till this day.

In 2009, I transferred credits from my Humber College music diploma and embarked on undergraduate and later graduate studies in musicology at York University in Toronto. I would like to thank Al Henderson for encouraging me to write about Blackley’s pedagogy and its influence on the jazz drummers of Canada. This idea was initially born out of a final paper I wrote for 6220 (Canadian Music: Repertoires, Practices and Interpretation). I would also like to show gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Barry Elmes, whose suggestions assisted me in the structural organization of this thesis, and as a former Blackley student, his sentiments, experiences and anecdotes are also featured in this thesis. I would like to also extend gratitude to my secondary supervisor Rob van der Blik, who was available on numerous occasions to discuss issues and matters regarding musicology and particularly, this thesis.

A special thank you is extended to colleague and jazz bassist Joe Dimech, whose technical expertise in notation software greatly assisted me in the creation of all illustrations found in this thesis. Joe was the first student I met at York University back in 2009 as we awaited our first counterpoint class with the inimitable and masterful theory professor Art Levine. Joe and I have played numerous gigs together working with York University’s Oscar Peterson Jazz Mobile led by trombonist Ron Westray.

A special thank you also goes out to the many Blackley students who have graciously granted their time for interviews and expressed an overwhelming excitement for this project: Terry Clarke, Julia Cleveland, Aubrey Dayle, Bryan Humphreys, Sly Juhas, Chris Lesso, Mackenzie Longpre, Steve Mancuso, Duris Maxwell, Bob McLaren, Anthony Michelli, Lorne Nehring, Howie Silverman, Gregg Simpson, Eric West and pianist Frank Falco. Also, a specific debt is owed to my parents, whose constant support and prodding enabled me to pursue my academic goals and see the completion of this thesis.

Finally, I acknowledge a profound debt to Kaja and Christina Blackley whose friendship, hospitality and assistance during my time studying with Jim Blackley will always be appreciated and recognized. In many ways, this thesis can be viewed as a tribute to Jim Blackley's legacy as a musician and educator; a testimonial to his great contributions to the percussive arts and jazz drumming, and his undeniable and profound influence on the musical development of drummers the world over. Jim came into my life at a time when I most needed a guiding light, and at a time when I was ready to embark on a serious course of study with a master teacher. As the adage goes, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear." The patience, humility and diligence that I acquired from studying with Jim have helped me to become a better musician. But more importantly, these qualities have helped me to become an even better human being. Thank you, Jim. I will forever be indebted for all the wonderful things that you have done for me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The late Scottish-Canadian drum pedagogue and jazz drummer Jim Blackley (1927-2017) is recognized internationally as one of the greatest drum teachers of all time. Although his roots lie in the generational observance of Scottish pipe band music, Blackley made a significant mark as a progressive teacher of jazz drums instructing many of Canada's finest drummers. Consequently, Blackley's innovative methodology contributed significantly to the advancement of modern drum set pedagogy in the latter part of the 20th century and beyond. In 1968, the publication *Jazz & Pop* extolled Blackley's noteworthy contributions by stating: "Jim Blackley, a Scot whose system of teaching percussion has won him the plaudits of such drummers as Joe Morello, Louis Bellson, and Jake Hanna, probably has done as much to influence the course of jazz drumming as any native [sic] American" (*Jazz & Pop* 1968, 10). Blackley's significant publications such as *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer* (1961) and *The Essence of Jazz Drumming* (2001) disavow the traditional instruction of the snare drum rudiments in favour of playing and interpreting musical lines. This concept was gleaned from his Scottish pipe band education and shared by contemporaneous and controversial educators such as Stanley Spector (1925-1987) and Sam Ulano (1920-2014).

Like that of Spector, Blackley instilled in his students the importance of the drummer's ride cymbal acting as the main means of generating time and from this

conception emanates the construction of musical phrases which are shaped by articulation and interpretation. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Blackley saw the need to develop methodologies which addressed the musical issues and developmental needs of the jazz drummer's role within small group improvisation. These characteristic elements were instilled in his students through the development of the ear as a main line of communication within a musical performance.

Canadian jazz drummers such as Jerry Fuller (1939-2002), Terry Clarke (1944-), Barry Elmes (1952-) and others are noteworthy exponents of Blackley's highly musical and efficacious teaching method. Through the subjecting of this methodology, Blackley had forged a distinct jazz identity amongst these drummers who have made significant contributions to the development of Canadian jazz history. The objective of this thesis is to underscore the key constituents of Blackley's pedagogy and examine how these elements have impacted several generations of Canadian jazz drummers. Other than providing his students with the requisite tools for musical expression and performance, Blackley had also inspired and influenced the pedagogical endeavours of his students who continue to preserve and acknowledge this legacy.

Through examining existing articles, scholarly work, method books, interviews and recordings, I intend to provide a greater insight into one of the finest teachers of modern drum set pedagogy.

The Limitations of Existing Research

Although Blackley's publications proffer an insight into the musical content of his pedagogy, very little has been documented on how this pedagogical methodology has

impacted the musical development of his students. However, through my research efforts, I did unearth a selection of interview-based articles which provide a glimpse into Blackley's pedagogical and musical philosophies. These include Ira Gitler's 1968 *Down Beat* article entitled, "Jim Blackley: Swinging Scot"¹ and T. Bruce Wittet's interview which appeared in a 1984 *Modern Drummer* feature entitled "Focus on Teachers: Jim Blackley."² The latter article also included separate interviews with other noteworthy drum teachers such as Murray Spivack (1903-1994), Freddie Gruber (1927-2011), Peter Magadini (1942-) and Keith Killgo (1954-).

Aside from these scant interviews, I gleaned some further insight into the impact of Blackley's teaching method by discovering a few articles penned by two of Blackley's former students. One of these articles, written by Jamaican-born, Toronto-based drummer Aubrey Dayle (1964-), reflected on the consequential benefits of practicing musical exercises at slow tempos. In the article entitled, "Try it slowly: A Great Way to Achieve Articulate Playing," Dayle describes his initial disheartening experience working with this key element of Blackley's pedagogy:

I understood this tendency in myself for the first time when I studied with the great Canadian drum instructor Jim Blackley. During my first lesson he asked me to play basic swing time on the ride cymbal, with the hi-hat on beats two and four, and the bass drum feathering every quarter note. I launched into a groove at about 140 beats to the quarter note. He said fine, and then turned the metronome on and asked me to play the same thing at 40 beats to the quarter note. I simply could not play anything consistently at that tempo. It was as if I didn't know how to play the drums at all! I realized that I would not be able to perform well at a moderate or fast tempo until I could comfortably play at a very slow tempo. I spent two

¹ Gittler, I. 1968. "Jim Blackley: Swinging Scot." *Down Beat*, March 21, 15-16.

² Wittet, T. Bruce. 1984. "Focus on Teachers: Jim Blackley." *Modern Drummer*, March, 28 contd. 96-98.

years with Jim and we didn't do very many exercises quicker than 40 beats to the quarter note. That period changed my musical life! (Dayle 2010, 28)

Contrastingly, in an article entitled "Jim Blackley," which appeared in the publication *Broken Pencil*, Toronto-based drummer and bandleader Dave Clark expressed feelings of being irrevocably adrift in 1994 after his departure from the popular indie rock band the Rheostatics. In the ensuing passage, Clark states how studying with Blackley inspired a life of new musical directions and personal growth:

He [Blackley] took the piss out of the silly music box that I had put myself into. Jim got me laughing at life. I was laughing at myself, how ridiculously small my life had become and how self-important I'd duped myself into being. It was such a relief to start letting go of the old me. I needed to laugh, to lighten up... when it came to, playing or even thinking about music. He instinctively knew all this. My drum lessons with Jim were life lessons. The drumming instruction and progression on the drum kit were only a part of these lessons.... He tailored my studies to suit what I needed. Lessons involved discovering the joy and freedom which humility offers. Jim began my studies from the ground up. He saw that I needed to get grounded as a person; that I needed to build a strong foundation not only as a drummer but as an individual. Jim helped me to capitalize on my strengths and to improve upon my weaknesses as a drummer. He worked to instill confidence in my ability to trust my instincts. Soon thereafter I could feel the peaceful meditation brought on by practicing my lessons. Jim created excitement for me around the idea of becoming my own person. He encouraged me to let go of my old life and to embrace the new life awaiting me. His caring guidance allowed me not only to discover the subtle beauty in the art of drumming but also to discover treasures that abound when one participates joyfully in life. (Clark 2002, 18)

Incidentally, the sentiments expressed by Dayle and Clark were amply reverberated in many of the interviews I conducted with Blackley's former students. Many of the interviewees unanimously described Blackley's pedagogy as possessing multiple layers of depth which dealt with musical issues as well as matters sparking introspective self-analysis.

Method of Investigation

Aside from the articles discussed above, I garnered additional information by conducting interviews with several of Blackley's former students. The interviews span at least five generations of former students who have made a significant mark as performers, or, in some cases, as performer/educators in the Canadian jazz scene. The following chart presents a list of the various drummers I interviewed including year of birth, the Canadian or North American city or cities in which the artist is (or was) affiliated, and their duration of study with Blackley.

Fig. 1.1 Drummers Interviewed Listed in Alphabetical Order

Artist	Year of Birth	N. American City	Duration of Study
Terry Clarke	1944	Vancouver, San Francisco, Toronto, New York	5 years
Julia Cleveland	1978	Toronto	5 years
Aubrey Dayle	1964	Montreal, New York, Toronto	2 years
Barry Elmes	1952	Toronto	2 years
Bryan Humphreys	1967	Toronto	2 years and 3 months
Sly Juhas	1978	Toronto	8 years from 1997-2005. Resumed 2010-2016.
Chris Lesso	1977	Toronto	2 years
Mackenzie Longpre	1988	Toronto	5 years
Steve Mancuso	1966	Toronto	Aug. 1988-June 1989. Resumed 2014-2017.

Duris Maxwell	1946	Vancouver	2 years
Bob McLaren	1944	Toronto	1 year
Anthony Michelli	1968	Toronto	2 years
Lorne Nehring	1951	Montreal, Toronto, Halifax, New York	2 years
Howie Silverman	1953	Toronto	2 years and a half
Gregg Simpson ³	1947	Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal	3 years
Eric West	1988	Toronto	4 years

Each interview was recorded using a ZOOM H2 Handy Recorder and later transcribed providing a great deal of insight into Blackley's teaching methods and its pervasive influence on those interviewed. To cull this empirical data, I asked each interviewee a similar set of questions:

- 1) How did you discover Jim Blackley?
- 2) How long did you study with Jim Blackley?
- 3) Do you recall your first lesson with Blackley, and how did this first lesson impact you and inspire you to continue studying with him?
- 4) How did Blackley's methodology affect your musical and artistic development?

³ During his time studying at Jim Blackley's Drum Village in Vancouver (1962-65), Gregg Simpson had primarily studied with Gary Taylor (1941-). "At the age of 15, Taylor began learning how to play the drums with the legendary and much sought drum teacher, Jim Blackley... Gary was a dedicated student and he rose in the professional ranks. At the age of 17, Taylor was playing with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra... The young Taylor continued to study with Blackley, becoming the man's protégé and at the age of 18, became an associate teacher and Blackley's right hand man" (<http://karen-magill.blogspot.ca/2014/09/gary-taylor-revamped.html>). Although Simpson learned Blackley's method through the tutelage of Taylor, Simpson was occasionally taught by Blackley.

- 5) Did Blackley's teachings influence your own pedagogical endeavours? If so, how so?
- 6) Through practicing Blackley's lesson material did you experience any self-discoveries or revelations?

Furthermore, additional inquiry focussed attention on the specific constituents of Blackley's teaching method and how these elements affected the artistic and musical developments of each interviewee. Pertinent subject matter such as slow tempo practice involving the ride cymbal ("The Basic Time Studies"), the interpretation of syncopated figures, the concept of shaping musical lines through the use of strong and weak pulses (articulation), the superimposition of meters (i.e. three-beat figures played over several bars of 4/4 time), the vocalizing of two-bar ride cymbal phrases and the significant development of memorization, recall and aural skills—all of which are applied to musical song structures such as the twelve-bar blues and rhythm changes—were discussed eliciting thought-provoking responses from the interviewees.

Aside from discussing the musical impact of Blackley's pedagogy with each participant, I also broached discussions which explored how Blackley's pedagogy influenced the construction of identity amongst his community of students. In the book, *I Drum, Therefore I Am*, author Gareth Dylan Smith referencing Wenger and Green states:

Wenger (1998, p.3)⁴ helpfully explains that identities are obtained in part through 'learning in the context of our lived experience in the world.' Learning is part of what drummers do, and can be viewed as part of identity construction and construal (Green 2011).⁵ Drummers learn much of this from other drummers, and

⁴ Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger (1998, p.7) goes on to observe how ‘for *individuals*, it means that learning is an issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities. For *communities*, it means that learning is an issue of refining their practice and ensuring new generations of members.’ (Smith 2013, 15)

Blackley’s multigenerational community of drum students are unified by the foundational tenet of the drummer’s ride cymbal acting as the primary means of stating time and providing the accents, punctuations and phrases so vital to jazz rhythmic accompaniment. Blackley states: “... [the] common bond with all the students is the right hand on the cymbal. That’s the foundation to their playing... All I’m doing is giving everybody a foundation.... In other words, what I do is build a platform to stand on and what they do after that is up to them” (Jim Blackley, in conversation with the author, July 4, 2014).

Through the examination of recordings and live performances, Blackley’s students evidence a characteristic sound and musical conception. This was also apparent with the pedagogical work of other teachers such as the late Stanley Spector:

That he has a method that gets results is illustrated in part by an incident involving one of his well-known students, Joe Cocuzzo.⁶ The drummer was playing in a trio with pianist Ross Tompkins, who told him, “I’ve only heard a particular sound quality coming out of a cymbal from one other drummer, and while you don’t play like Jake Hanna in other respects, the cymbal sound is strikingly similar.” “We studied with the same teacher,” said Cocuzzo. (Gitler 1969, 22)

The same can be expressed and interchangeably applied to Blackley’s students regarding the similarity of their cymbal sound and musical approach. Although Blackley’s students

⁵ Green, L. 2011. ‘Keynote speech: What do we mean by “the sociology of music education”?’ *6th International Symposium on the Sociology of Music Education*. Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, 9-12 July 2009, St Patrick’s College, Dublin.

⁶ Boston-born drummer Joe Cocuzzo (1937-2008) studied with Stanley Spector and performed with Don Ellis, Tony Bennett, Harry James, Rosemary Clooney and others.

possess a likeness in their musical approach to playing the ride cymbal, many differences can be detected as well attributed to the individuality of each student. Blackley encouraged his students to find their own voice with the lesson material. For this reason, Blackley's instruction inspired individualism amongst his community of students provoking issues pertaining to identity construction and construal. Much of this subject matter will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Other than interviewing a diverse cross section of Blackley's drum students, I also interviewed the Toronto-based jazz pianist and educator Frank Falco. While in his twenties, Falco spent a considerable amount of time playing with Blackley in both jam session and live performance settings. Toronto jazz bassist Steve Wallace attended many of these sessions which included Falco on piano. The following words from Wallace comment on the invaluable experience he gained from these sessions:

Though I never played in public with him or was formally a student of his, Jim Blackley taught me a whole lot. In the late 1970s I was part of a group of musicians who played with Jim twice a week at his house—saxophonists Michael Stuart and Jane Fair, pianist Frank Falco and guitarist Tony Palladino. On one of the days we would work on specific things—he would make us do some really difficult, exhausting stuff like play tunes in all twelve keys, sometimes at extremely slow or fast tempos—he and I would play straight swing through this. On the second day, we would just play flat-out, and he brought a lot of intensity right at you, [he] would play all sorts of outside stuff all over the place and beat, while never losing his place in the tune. It was hard going, but this all really strengthened me physically and mentally... I developed a lot more endurance, conviction and concentration from all of this.... A lot of learning to play jazz well has to do with overcoming your many fears, and Jim really helped me do this by giving me this sort of friendly trial by fire over a couple of years.
(trapdted.blogspot.ca/2012/04/inside-drummers-studio-installment-8.html)

Consequently, Wallace's comments illuminate the far-reaching extent of Blackley's pedagogical influence. Blackley's insights into the art of jazz performance impacted not

only his private drum students, but also many musicians who performed with Blackley in jam session and live performance capacities.

As essential to students as technical information and counsel is the understanding of jazz acquired directly through performance. In part, they gain experience by participating in one of the most venerable of the community's institutions, the jam session. At these informal musical get-togethers, improvisers are free of the constraints that commercial engagements place upon repertory, length of performance, and the freedom to take artistic risks. (Berliner 1994, 41-2)

Besides interviewing Falco, I intended to interview other musicians who performed with Blackley in these informal learning settings. However, due to the delimitations of this thesis, I chose to limit my investigation to Blackley's drum students only. Perhaps a future study can include additional insights and sentiments from those individuals who performed with Blackley or attended his home studio jam sessions.⁷

Moreover, I interviewed Blackley as well probing into his early musical upbringing as a vocalist in a children's choir and his training as a pipe band drummer while in his teens. I also asked questions pertaining to the education he received from the noteworthy New York-based drum teachers: Sam Ulano, Stanley Spector, Charlie Perry (1924-1998) and Jim Chapin (1919-2009). Additionally, further catechizations focussed attention on the many principles of Blackley's methodical pedagogy found in seminal publications such as *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer* and *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*.

⁷ See Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (1994. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press). In the chapter entitled, "Hangin' Out and Jammin': The Jazz Community as an Educational System," Berliner discusses the significant and venerable practice of the informal jam session as a means for younger players to connect with and learn from older, experienced musicians.

Length of Investigation

Although I conducted interviews for this thesis between the months of March and November in 2014, my interest in Blackley's pedagogy and its profound impact on his students initiated when I first began studying with him in June of 1996. Upon my initial lesson with Blackley, I was already cognizant of his legacy as a master drum teacher clearly evidenced by the performances of his former pupils: Terry Clarke, the late Jerry Fuller, Barry Elmes, et al. From the onset, I detected that Blackley's course of study was shaped by a thoughtful methodology.

Whenever I encountered a former or contemporaneous Blackley student in a jazz club or educational institution, I was invariably overwhelmed with inquisitiveness and proceeded to ask these individuals about their experiences studying with Blackley. Often, I would ask former students about their duration of study with Blackley and the nature and content of their lessons. Through these conversations, I would share my own experiences and thoughts with other students who were similarly impacted by Blackley's sapience, organized instruction and musical knowledge. Due to my seven-and a half-year apprenticeship with Blackley, I not only learned how to play the drums, I also gleaned vast insight into the art of effective teaching. For the past twenty years, Blackley's methodology greatly influenced my own efforts as a drum set instructor. Through careful observation of Blackley's teaching methods, I developed a deep-seated interest in the evolution of drum set pedagogy which led me to research the teaching methods of other notable drum teachers such as Freddie Gruber, Sam Ulano, Stanley Spector, Charlie Perry, Murray Spivack and Henry Adler (1915-2008).

Research Models

In many ways, this study is tapping into uncharted academic territory. When investigating research models and source material, I had some difficulty finding theses or dissertations which dealt with the subject of master and student and the consequential ramifications of such a relationship, i.e. the learning process, the impact of socio-cultural influences, the construction of identity through learning. Consequently, I had to look towards non-academic sources for examples pertaining to this subject matter. Eugen Herrigel's classic philosophical text, *Zen in the Art of Archery* (1953) immediately came to mind.⁸

Zen in the Art of Archery recounts Herrigel's experiences studying archery in Japan with kyūdō master Awa Kenzō (1880-1939).⁹ "At the time Herrigel began learning the skill, Awa was just beginning to formulate his own unique ideas based on personal spiritual experiences... Herrigel came to Japan in search of Zen and chose Japanese archery as a method through which to approach it" (Yamada 2001, 1). I was first introduced to Herrigel's book through studying with Blackley. While laboriously practicing, over several months, a long series of phrasing exercises based on the rudimentary stroke known as the flam, Blackley suggested that I read Herrigel's book to gain a deeper insight into the objectives of the lesson material. Herrigel's book became recommended reading for many of Blackley's students.

⁸ Eugen Herrigel (1884-1955) was a German philosopher who taught philosophy at Tohoku Imperial University in Sendai, Japan from 1924 to 1929 and through his essays and publications, he introduced Zen to large portions of Europe.

⁹ Kyūdō is a form of Japanese archery which derived influence from kyūjutsu: an early form of Japanese archery which originated with the samurai class of feudal Japan.

When interviewing Toronto-based drummer Bryan Humphreys, Herrigel's book was alluded to in our conversation. In the following passage, Humphreys describes how at the age of seventeen, he was reluctant to purchase a copy of Herrigel's book due to its profound philosophical nature:

I think, among the first things he asked me would've been, "Did you go and pick up the book by Eugen Herrigel: *Zen in the Art of Archery*," and I hadn't picked it up yet. You know, like every teenager, they figure they got stuff figured out and what not and I certainly didn't. I wasn't picking up on the method to his madness, not at that point in time and so, I suspect—I don't know whether he was disappointed, or he was like, in his mind, he was going, "This young fellow is in this category now...because he can't follow instruction, not completely." ... but I chose not to get the Eugen Herrigel book. Had I gotten it though and I did eventually—the level of the writing is such that a seventeen-year-old—I was having a hard time getting my head wrapped around English Lit. [sic]. (Bryan Humphreys, in conversation with the author, August 1, 2014)

Aside from Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*, Gareth Dylan Smith's musicological text, *I Drum, Therefore I Am: Being and Becoming a Drummer* (2013) provided invaluable scholarly insight into how and why individuals become drummers. Through conducting interviews with professional and amateur drummers of various ages, Smith elucidates how drummers learn and how they come to be identified as drummers through issues of identity construction and construal. Smith's work also embraces many facets of modern musicological study such as gender issues, ethnicity and contentions dealing with the conceptualization of identity and learning realization through the Snowball Self: a psychological paradigm which deals with the socio-cultural complexities and symbiosis of learning and identity.¹⁰

¹⁰ For a thorough analysis of the Snowball Self paradigm, see Chapter 2 of Smith's *I Drum, Therefore I Am: Being and Becoming a Drummer* (2013. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited).

Contrastingly, Ryan McBride's thesis *A Model Mentor: The Relationship between the Pedagogy and Performance Style of Alan Dawson* (2014) was the first musicological study I discovered which dealt specifically with the pedagogical approach and influence of a master drum set educator. McBride's thesis deals with the pedagogy of the late drum teacher/jazz drummer Alan Dawson (1929-1996) and how the musical elements of this pedagogy influenced Dawson's live and recorded performances.¹¹ McBride supports his contention through an analysis of Dawson's musically creative interpretations of classic drum texts such as George Lawrence Stone's *Stick Control for the Snare Drummer* (1935) and Ted Reed's *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer* (1958) and how these interpretations informed Dawson's recorded performances.¹² Other than examining a selection of transcribed performances, McBride also bolsters his argument through data culled from interviews conducted with Dawson's former students.

In contrast to McBride's thesis, through sharing Smith's ethnographic lens, my work will explore how Blackley's pedagogy influenced the musical development and identity construction of several generations of Canadian jazz drummers. Interestingly, when I first began brainstorming this topic, I had to consider the pervasiveness of Blackley's influence and its undeniable impact on drummers from various parts of the globe. While performing and teaching in New York City from 1967-1973, Blackley instructed the likes

¹¹ The Boston-based Alan Dawson (1929-1996) performed with the likes of Dave Brubeck, Jaki Byard, Sonny Rollins, Bill Evans and many others. Dawson also taught at the Berklee College of Music from 1957-1975 and some of his noteworthy students include: Clifford Jarvis, Tony Williams, Joe LaBarbera, Vinnie Colaiuta and many others.

¹² Reed, Ted. 1958. *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*. Clearwater: Ted Reed. Stone, George L. 1935. *Stick Control for the Snare Drummer*. Boston: George B. Stone & Son, Inc.

of Clyde Lucas (1943-2010) and John “Willie” Wilcox.¹³ In a 1984 *Modern Drummer* interview, Wilcox describes the difficulties of establishing a solid groove in a big band setting and how Blackley’s instruction assisted in developing a greater cognizance of temporal discrepancies:¹⁴

I was always very conscious of time. I had been studying with a teacher by the name of Jim Blackley for the last couple of years, and we had been working with a metronome in all different times [sic] from the slowest to the fastest. Obviously, for a drummer, time is the big trip, right? So I was very aware of that. I thought I had it fairly under control in all the other situations I had encountered. But all of a sudden I had this big band, and here were these saxophone players who were laying back way behind the beat, which they’re famous for doing. This isn’t a dig against saxophone players, but it’s fairly true. Also, I found out that the saxophone players were playing off the drummer, and it was the first time people were using me to groove. (Flans 1984, 58)

Other than instructing New York-based drummers such as Lucas and Wilcox, Blackley also taught several U.K.-based drummer/percussionists such as David Hassell (1947-) and Paul Clarvis (1963-).¹⁵ In a 2001 *Modern Drummer* interview, Clarvis describes yet

¹³ The late Clyde Lucas (1943-2010) was a well-known New York-based drummer who performed with the Count Basie Orchestra, The Illinois Jacquet Orchestra, Ray Charles, Frank Foster, Monty Alexander and many others. Lucas studied with Blackley in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Also, Lucas taught drummer Omar Hakim (1959-) of Weather Report and Sting fame. Similarly, John “Willie” Wilcox is a New York-based drummer who studied with Blackley in the early 1970s. Wilcox has performed and recorded with Hall & Oates, Bette Midler, Todd Rundgren’s Utopia and many others.

¹⁴ See Keil. 1966. “Motion and Feeling through Music.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24 (3): 337-349. Also see Butterfield. 2010. “Participatory Discrepancies and the Perception of Beats in Jazz.” *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 27 (3): 157-176.

¹⁵ English drummer/percussionist David Hassell (1947-) studied with Blackley in the late 1960s while simultaneously performing on cruise ships which would port in New York Harbour. Hassell has performed with Charles McPherson, Barney Kessel, Tal Farlow, Clarke Terry, Art Farmer and numerous others. Hassell is also widely regarded as an authority on Latin percussion and has authored the book, *Latin Grooves* (1994). Through his instruction, Hassell has introduced Blackley’s method to many U.K.-based percussionists who have repeatedly flown to Toronto to study directly from the source. One such student, Paul Clarvis (1963-) has made periodic trips to Toronto and has studied with Blackley for several years. Clarvis is equally adept at playing drum set, tabla and an assortment of percussion instruments

another fundamental principle of Blackley’s musical approach to playing the drums, “‘I’m just playing the shape of a musical line.’ This is a passion he shares with his mentor, Scottish/Canadian teacher Jim Blackley” (Wittet 2001, 25).

In view of the widespread influence of Blackley’s pedagogy, I also had to consider the diverse stylistic scope of Blackley’s instruction. Although the core of Blackley’s instruction is jazz-oriented, his pedagogy also addresses the stylistic and temporal elements of rock, funk, Latin (Afro-Cuban and Brazilian) and odd time signature-based drumming. In my early instruction with Blackley, I became aware of the master pedagogue’s lack of fondness for musical categorization. I recount him saying to me, “There’s only one box and it’s a musical box.” Many of Blackley’s students, and particularly the participants I interviewed for this thesis, possess musical versatility and have performed and recorded in a multitude of stylistic settings. In the following passage, drummer Terry Clarke shares the above sentiments:

At the time, no one could figure out where I was coming from. Because [when] I came into town [Toronto], I just came off the road with the Fifth [Dimension] and they didn’t know if I was a rock studio player or jazz player, a big band—I did everything. There was an impact with what I was doing because that wasn’t happening in this town. Jerry Fuller was really the only one who could cover all those bases and naturally Jim Blackley’s name would’ve come up when Jerry was here three years before I got here: ’67 or ’68 and Don [Thompson] thought I was going to move to—when we left John Handy, we had to leave the country [U.S.A.] actually in 1967—that’s a whole other story, oh, God! Anyway, when he heard I was going out with the Fifth Dimension, he said, “I thought we were going to move to Montreal and play with Sonny Greenwich and form a band.” He was very pissed off at me. So, that was three years out of my life that I wasn’t involved in jazz because I wanted to learn this other music. It was a whole other direction for me and which Jim was kind of interested in. He saw my reason for it. (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014)

spanning a multitude of styles. Clarvis has recorded or performed with the likes of Sting, Paul McCartney, John Williams, Kenny Wheeler, Henry Lowther’s “Still Waters” and many others.

Other than Terry Clarke's well-known versatility, Blackley also taught many other multifaceted drummers who made their mark primarily in the realm of rock and commercial music. Some of these individuals include, amongst many others: Al Cross (Big Sugar, Jane Siberry), Bob DiSalle (Bruce Cockburn, Roger Whittaker) and Dave Clark (The Rheostatics). When considering studying with Blackley, an apprehensive Dave Clark was conscious of the master teacher's who's who litany of successful drummers. Clark states:

I was elated and nervous about being a drum student again. My ego had been massaged enough to cause such irrationality. I knew that extremely gifted musicians from around the globe would fly in to study with Jim. Just his list of local students was daunting. Folks like Mike Slosky (Mary Margaret O'Hara), Terry Clarke (Jim Hall, Oscar Peterson) and Johnny Faye (Tragically Hip) were a few of the drummers connected to Jim. (Clark 2002, 18)

Although Blackley taught many accomplished rock drummers and his pedagogy had addressed the diverse needs of contemporary popular music, this thesis will focus specifically on the jazz-related components of Blackley's pedagogy and the inner-workings of the master/student relationship.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY AND MUSICAL INFLUENCES

Early Musical Upbringing in Scotland

James David (Jim) Blackley was born in Edinburgh, Scotland on March 4, 1927. “It was obvious from an early age that he possessed an excellent ear and singing voice and became a featured soloist with a famous children’s choir singing in such major concert halls as the Usher Hall in Edinburgh and the McEwan Hall in Glasgow” (http://www.jimblackley.com/jbbio_body.html). Blackley states, “... I really had a good singing voice... and... I had an exceptional ear. That was the thing; I could hear anything and sing it back. Yes, that was a real strength of mine: singing” (Jim Blackley, in conversation with the author, July 4, 2014). Blackley’s affinity for singing would later play a pivotal role in the development of his pedagogy. Blackley states:

No matter what type of band you play in, you should learn to sing each song that your group plays. If there are lyrics, then learn them, for they will assist you in developing a sensitivity and feeling for the piece. The young jazz player should learn as many bebop heads as possible, and would gain from listening to the recordings of Frank Sinatra, as a means of developing a strong foundation for the song form. (Blackley 1961, 9)

Other than singing, Blackley also played and studied violin from the age of 9 to 13.

Blackley’s “... early career reveals he was one of Europe’s most celebrated child prodigies on violin...” (*Jazz & Pop* 1968, 10). However, at the age of 12, Blackley’s interest in the violin subsided, eventually to be supplanted by an intense passion for pipe band drumming.

While in his teens, as part of the Boys Brigade, Blackley studied with champion pipe band drummers: James Catherwood¹⁶ (1907-1983) and George Pryde. In the following passage, Blackley and I discuss his early pipe band training:

Joe: So, James Catherwood and George Pryde, they'd be working with a whole group of drummers in that sense...

Jim: Usually about four to six drummers in drum corp.

Joe: And then you guys were learning the snare drum rudiments, but then you would be learning these pieces.

Jim: That's correct.

Joe: And that was all done by ear, right?

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: Were James and George strong players technically?

Jim: Very strong players; very prominent players.

Joe: So, I guess as far as your hand development in those days, those guys were the individuals who were teaching you technique and things of that nature as far as playing the strokes and ...

Jim: Yeah, but they didn't have the understanding of technique like... Chapin and Henry Adler had. These men [Catherwood and Pryde] weren't into it in a very deep way. We just put a pair of sticks in your hands and you just played.

Although Blackley received a reasonably thorough training in pipe band drumming from Catherwood and Pryde, it would be several years later, while studying in New York, that Blackley would refine his hand technique through the tutelage of Jim Chapin and yet another prominent teacher and performer Sonny Igoe (1923- 2012).

¹⁶ Additional biographical information on James Catherwood can be found at *The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association* website: (<http://www.rspba.org/html/assochistory.php>).

In 1947, the diligent drum student graduated from the S.P.B.A.¹⁷ College of Drumming and began participating in the World Solo Drumming Championships. Blackley placed fourth in 1949, third in 1950 and took second place in 1951.

Coaching Pipe Bands in Montreal and Ottawa

In 1952, the twenty-five-year-old drummer and his family moved to Montreal, Canada. It was in Montreal that Blackley fortuitously secured employment coaching a newly formed pipe band. Blackley's departure from Scotland was recounted in Francis Gay's weekly column for *The Sunday Post* dated July 6, 1952:

Last September he was at the Gathering of the Clans at Murrayfield. As he stood with his drumsticks in his hands, two strangers approached him. They explained they were Canadian business men on the look-out for a Scots drummer to take charge of the drum section of a new pipe band in Montreal. ... And so, last week Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Blackley and their wee boy left Sunnybank Place and flew to Canada and a new home and a new life....
(Gay 1952, 7)

In 1953, Blackley relocated to Ottawa, Ontario and tenured as a drum instructor for the R.C.A.F. Pipe Band in Rockcliffe.¹⁸ "During his stay with the R.C.A.F. (1953-56), he won practically every Solo Drum and Drum Corps Championship in North America" (http://www.jimblackley.com/jbbio_body_pg2.html). In John T. MacKenzie's memoir: *There Was A Piper, A Scottish Piper* (2001), the R.C.A.F. piper recounts how Blackley's

¹⁷ S.P.B.A. is an acronym for the Scottish Pipe Band Association.

¹⁸ R.C.A.F. is an acronym for Royal Canadian Air Force.

dextrous execution and knowledge of rudimental snare drum strokes astounded jazz drumming legend Gene Krupa (1909-1973):¹⁹

Another time we visited the City of Toronto Pipe Band for the annual trade test of piping and drumming. When it finished we were passing the Empire Club, where the bill featured Gene Krupa, the world-renowned jazz drummer. We went in and introduced ourselves. Krupa asked, “You play the drums?” To his surprise, “Yes,” we replied, “pipe band drums.” He handed his sticks to Jim Blackley. “Give us a few beats.” Blackley could use his right hand and left hand better than most drummers. “My God!” Krupa commented. “By the way, what are you in the air force?” Blackley answered, “Just a sergeant, and this is Pipe Major John MacKenzie.” Krupa went on, “... I could give you a job in the States anywhere—even starting up with your own drummer school. How many rudiments do you play?” When Blackley replied, “Oh, I don’t know—maybe forty or fifty,” Krupa was astounded. “God almighty! I only play about eighteen!” Krupa recommended that Blackley take up the xylophone, and my friend received permission at Rockcliffe to travel to New York to take a course. In no time at all he became proficient and, having a bit of money in hand, he decided to buy a brand-new xylophone and asked for permission to bring it back to Rockcliffe. (MacKenzie 2001, 123)

The Impact of the Clifford Brown and Max Roach Quintet

Other than Blackley’s encouraging meeting with Krupa, there was yet another important visit to Toronto that proved to be quite monumental in shaping Blackley’s decision to pursue the art of jazz drum set. “Although Jim had heard many fine dance band drummers during his dancing years and knew hundreds of standard tunes and their lyrics, he had never been inspired to pursue drum set performance...” (http://www.jimblackley.com/jbbio_body_pg2.html). However, in 1955, Blackley made his way to the Colonial Tavern in Toronto to attend a performance by the Clifford Brown and Max Roach Quintet. The quintet was recognized as one of the definitive bop groups

¹⁹ John T. MacKenzie (1920-) was born in Edinburgh, Scotland and is highly regarded as an authority on highland piping. In 1956, he worked closely with Blackley in Rockcliffe, Ottawa performing with and coaching the R.C.A.F pipe band.

of the mid 1950s and greatly impacted and inspired the young pipe band drummer to take up the study and performance of jazz drums. Blackley recollects, "... to hear Max Roach play with that band, I never had seen anybody play like that on a drum set; it was phenomenal... the musicality and the dynamics and everything else: the technical facility that was needed to play like that... the whole band was like that; everybody came up to play, there were no passengers" (Jim Blackley, in conversation with the author, July 4, 2014). Blackley further states, "It was the most moving experience; I knew no other path but to become a jazz musician" (Freedman 1977, 1).

The Move to Vancouver: The Birth of Jim Blackley's Drum Village and Performing in Vancouver's Jazz Clubs

In 1957, Blackley migrated to Vancouver, British Columbia where he initially worked as a millwright/draftsman and taught drum lessons at his home studio. It was at his home studio that Blackley first instructed future Canadian jazz drummers: Jerry Fuller, Terry Clarke and others. In 1961, Blackley started a thriving drum retail store and progressive school of modern drumming known as Jim Blackley's Drum Village. It was here, in the early to mid-1960s, that he continued to instruct Clarke and taught other eager students such as Gary Taylor, Blaine Wikjord, the late Al Wiertz, Jim Chivers, Stan Perry, Don Fraser Jr., Duris Maxwell (a.k.a. Ted Lewis), Gregg Simpson, Michael Clapham, Ray Ayotte and others.²⁰ In a 1968 *Down Beat* article, jazz writer Ira Gitler stated:

²⁰ Roy Ayotte is most notable for introducing Ayotte Drums to the drum market in the early 1980s. He was also responsible for producing Tave Drums in the early 2000s. However, before embarking on a career in drum manufacturing, Ayotte taught lessons at Jim Blackley's Drum Village from 1966-69. "Ray graduated from high school in 1965. At that time, he was taking drum lessons from noted Canadian teacher Jim Blackley, who owned Jim Blackley's Drum Village in Vancouver. In 1966, Jim hired Ray to

Jim Blackley's Drum Village in Vancouver became a haven for students, and for the established name drummers who passed through the area. Among his pupils were Terry Clarke, formerly with John Handy and now with the Fifth Dimension; Jerry Fuller, now working in Toronto; Stan Perry and Blaine Wikjord in Montreal; and Ted Lewis, "a kid playing with the Vancouvers—signed to Motown—one of the best r&b drummers ever." (Gitler 1968, 15)

Other than teaching lessons and selling drums and cymbals, Blackley also worked busily as a jazz drummer and band leader in Vancouver's night club circuit. Blackley performed in a trio with bassist/pianist Don Thompson (1940-) and performed extensively with pianist Wilf Wylie (1913-1985). "... Wylie was Vancouver's premier jazz pianist during the 1940s, known especially for his proficiency in the then-current style of Teddy Wilson... he continued for many years to take ... trios into local night spots, including the Quadra Club at the turn of the 1960s, by which time his playing is remembered to have reflected the contemporary influence of Bill Evans" (Miller 2001, 216). Besides working with Wylie, Blackley also performed with trombonist Dave Robbins' big band on a weekly radio program known as the C.B.C. Jazz Workshop and led his own group at venues such as the Java Jive and a residency at the Marco Polo.²¹

teach beginners on Saturdays which led eventually to Ray's going to work for Drum Village full time" (Van Horn 1990, 32). Ayotte states: "I got my first taste of the manufacturing side of the business when Michael Clapham, who had bought Drum Village from Jim Blackley in 1967, developed the Milestone line of fibreglass drums" (ibid).

²¹ Former Blackley student Gregg Simpson recounts seeing Blackley perform at the Java Jive, "... So everybody knew Jim... Jim was the center of the scene in a lot of ways and I heard him play one night at the Java Jive... on Locarno Beach. Maybe, it was even a big band or something. It was great. His favourite drummer was Jake Hanna" (Gregg Simpson, telephone conversation with the author, May 7, 2014). Incidentally, Terry Clarke recalls how Blackley was the bandleader at the Marco Polo and how through Blackley's recommendation, Clarke secured employment with the popular, R&B vocal group, the Fifth Dimension: "Jim Blackley was the band leader at a club in Vancouver called the Marco Polo. The Fifth Dimension had been signed to play there, and they had just recorded "Up, Up and Away," which was their big hit... So they came to Vancouver and Jim was playing in the house band but they brought their own

Educational Sojourns to New York City and Boston

While living in Vancouver, aside from performing and teaching, Blackley would also take periodic trips to New York City and in one instance Boston, where he discovered the controversial drum teacher Stanley Spector. During these visits, Blackley was specifically seeking out drum set instruction and studied with other noteworthy and progressive drum teachers such as Sam Ulano, Charlie Perry, Jim Chapin and Sonny Igoe. Terry Clarke states:

.... he [Blackley] decided to move to Vancouver and he was trained as a draftsman... and so he got the job in Vancouver. So, that's what he was doing, and he was working with a good firm whose boss allowed him to take off two weeks a year and go to New York. That's how he would make the trek. It was an annual trek for four or five, maybe ten years. That's when he hooked up with Jim Chapin, Sam Ulano, Stanley Spector and ... that whole era. Then he would go and bring it all back.... (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014)

Lessons with Sonny Igoe and meeting Jake Hanna

In 1957, during Blackley's initial trip to New York City, he studied with Sonny Igoe who revealed the inner-workings of Henry Adler's hand technique method. Igoe was a former Adler student and adopted Adler's pedagogical methods. Adler is well known for the drum instruction method book he co-wrote with Buddy Rich entitled *Buddy Rich's Modern Interpretation of Snare Drum Rudiments* (1942). Former Adler student Jack Sperling states: "Henry was an excellent all-around drummer... he knew how to turn his hands. He'd studied with violin teachers about how the hands moved—the easiest way—and he'd worked with doctors on which way the hands turn with the least amount of

bass player and drummer... They were looking for a new drummer and they wanted Jim to go [out on the road]. Jim said, 'No, I don't want to go out, but Terry Clarke might want to.' (Wittet 1983, 90).

effort, and he came up with the Adler system” (Borst 1983, 69).²² Adler’s method, as instructed by Igoe, had a significant impact on increasing Blackley’s awareness of how to develop hand technique from a physiological stand point. The Adler system’s cognizance of fulcrum development and the correct way of pronating the hands through exercises known as “Pick Ups” and “Point Downs” had a significant effect on the development of Blackley’s students. Steve Mancuso states:

... I was playing matched grip and I remember that first lesson and he had said to me—because I was playing matched grip and I was playing some things and I was using the Roger Flock/ Henry Adler technique, I guess with the grip and working on that.²³ And then he [Jim] had said, “Let’s see you hold the stick with the traditional grip.” And I did, and the first thing he said to me, “You know what. That looks good on you. That’s going to be good for you.” I remember him saying that, “That grip is going to be good for you Steve.” He saw something I never saw. That first lesson was like “Point Downs” ... and then we worked on ... *Stick Control* pages 5-7. I think it was “Point Downs” and then the “Pick Ups” and he had me go through those at 60 beats per minute. (Steve Mancuso, in conversation with the author, September 26, 2014)

Other than providing Blackley with a deeper insight into the mechanics of hand technique, it was Igoe who made Blackley aware of the swinging prowess of the late Jake Hanna (1931-2010). Based on Igoe’s suggestion, Blackley attended one of Hanna’s performances at New York’s Hickory House. Blackley states:

²² For a greater insight into the Adler system of hand development, see *Buddy Rich’s Modern Interpretation of Snare Drum Rudiments* (2006. New York: Amsco Publications). In 2006, an updated edition of the book was published with revisions from former Adler student, Ted MacKenzie. The revised version also contains two DVDs with MacKenzie demonstrating the wrist turns which are essential to the development of well executed rudimental strokes. Also see the home video, *Henry Adler: Hand Development Technique* (1992. Miami: CPP Media).

²³ Classical percussionist Roger Flock was the department head of percussion studies at Humber College in Toronto from 1972-2005. Flock taught elements of the Adler method to his students including Steve Mancuso. Flock was particularly influenced by the Roy Burns and Lewis Malin book, *Practical Method of Developing Finger Control* (1966. New York: Belwin Mills). Both Burns and Malin were students of Adler and documented elements of Adler’s method in their publication, *Finger Control*.

He [Igoe] told me to go up to the Hickory House and listen to this guy Jake Hanna. So, I went up to the Hickory House and the Hickory House is a big, swank steak house... a big horse shoe bar. So, I was sitting at the bar this night and Jake Hanna walked by and I touched his arm and I said, "Excuse me Mr. Hanna, do you have a moment?" He said, "Nope! I don't have a moment. I'm going across the street to Charlie's to have a drink." So, I said, "Mr. Hanna, excuse me for intruding, I just wanted you to know, I think you got the greatest right hand on the cymbal I've ever heard." And he stopped, and he looked at his watch and he said, "Come to think of it, I've got all night." (Jim Blackley, in conversation with the author, July 4, 2014)

Blackley's meeting with Hanna initiated a lifelong friendship where the two drummers shared a deep-seated interest in the temporal function of the ride cymbal and its role in generating and establishing a swinging momentum within a jazz ensemble.²⁴ This interest was consolidated by the fact that both men spent time studying with the Boston and New York-based drum pedagogue Stanley Spector.

The Influence of Stanley Spector and Charlie Perry

Aside from studying with Igoe and befriending Hanna, Blackley also sought out the progressive instruction of Spector and Perry. Both these men recognized the musical sea change instigated by the advent of bebop in the early to mid-1940s and responded with new developments in drum set literature which renounced the hegemony of traditional rudimental instruction. In a 1980 *Modern Drummer* article entitled, "Stanley Spector: Challenging the Rudimental System," Spector explains that many drum instruction books

²⁴ In 1985, while being interviewed by jazz writer and historian Chip Deffaa (1951-), Jake Hanna was asked if he had any advice to offer aspiring drummers. Hanna responded, "Get your ass up to Toronto and study with Jim Blackley! That's Terry Clarke's teacher. And he's the absolute best teacher I ever bumped into in my whole life" (Deffaa 1992, 356).

from the late 1930s and early 1940s derived influence from Gardiner A. Strube's snare drum manual: *The Strube Drum and Fife Instructor* (1869). Spector states:

I guess that if Gene Krupa had a book on the market then his contemporary and "competitor" Buddy Rich also had to have a book on the market. But after reading the publisher's foreword and the introduction written by Tommy Dorsey found in *Buddy Rich's Modern Interpretation of Snare Drum Rudiments* published in 1942, it is difficult indeed to tell exactly who is putting us on. Again, we have another presentation of the Strube Rudiments,²⁵ their application to reading exercises, the initial portions of three pieces from the Civil War Camp Duty that are also found in the Krupa book, but again there is no indication as to how all of this relates to the jazz performances of Buddy Rich's predecessors, his contemporaries, or his own improvised recorded performances.²⁶ (Spector 1980, 47)

The classically trained Spector, who as a teenager played concert snare drum for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, embodied the above sentiments as far back as 1958. In his instruction manual entitled *Stanley Spector's Lessons in Improvisation for the Jazz Drummer, Volume 1: Time and the Eight Bar Phrase*, Spector stated:

However, we must point out that rudimental technique as such is an end in itself. In its pure form the rudimental attitude is rigid and traditional, leaving no room for personal interpretation. On the other hand, a jazz technique is for the purpose of communicating a personal style and feeling through the drum set. Since jazz allows for individual differences of temperament and interpretation, the jazz technique must slowly develop from within rather than from predetermined rules, established at a rudimental drum competition. If the student is willing to accept

²⁵ Spector states:

Apparently, Gardiner A. Strube, Drum Major for the 12th Infantry, innovated a system of "preliminary instruction" by demonstrating that all the Calls, and Marching Cadences were exactly reducible to 26 bits and parts, the 26 rudiments of drumming. The *Strube Drum and Fife Instructor* began with a way of notation by which the 26 rudiments of drumming were presented as a "new and entirely original system of expressing hand to hand drumbeating," according to the title page they are the 5,7,9, 10, 11, 13, and 15 stroke rolls, the flam, ruff, single and double drag, single, double, and triple ratamacues, the flam paradiddle, the flam paradiddle-diddle, the drag paradiddles number one and two, Lesson 25, and finally the long roll. Terms such as the flam, ruff, ratamacue were not so much esoteric, rather they were arrived at by onomatopoeia (formation of words in imitation of natural sound: buzz, hiss). (Spector 1980, 46-7)

²⁶ Spector is referring to Krupa's drum method entitled *Gene Krupa Drum Method* (1994. Miami: Warner Bros. Publications Inc.). Krupa's book was originally published in 1938 and is still in print.

the rudimental thinking as a preliminary discipline that will be eventually modified to meet his own personal needs in jazz performance all is well. But when a student drummer is indoctrinated into rudimental patterns not understanding the flexible technique required in jazz and begins to feel awkward in trying to adapt to jazz, then we must point out in sympathy the limitations of any absolute method of execution established by the traditionalists. (Spector, 1958, 2)

Consequently, Spector's sentiments were corroboratively reverberated in the preface of Blackley's seminal drum book, *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer, Volume 1*.

Blackley states:

While we do agree that a study of rudimental patterns can be advantageous to the Jazz Drummer, we will not accept the theory held by many that the first basic studies all drummers should indulge in be the rudiments, for we are most emphatic in our belief, that the development of good listening habits, time, jazz rhythm and phrasing, drum set control etc., are all essential musical requirements that must precede rudimental study. (Blackley 1961, 1)

Spector's method was quite revolutionary upon its initial publication in 1958. The method focussed primarily on the musical constituents of improvised jazz performance through exploring the jazz ride beat and its variations formulated by the punctuation of three-beat figures. Spector's method was also unique in that the subject matter could be studied by a qualified student anywhere in the world through tape-recorded correspondence. Spector states:

... a teaching record with written instructions... "made it possible for me to establish a vehicle for direct two-way communication between individual drummers and myself. It occurred to me that I could get feedback on this material by having students tape-record their examinations. It is interesting to note that the instructional recording paralleled the free style of cymbal playing characteristic of Elvin Jones and Tony Williams, if not anticipating it." ²⁷ (Gitler 1969, 35)

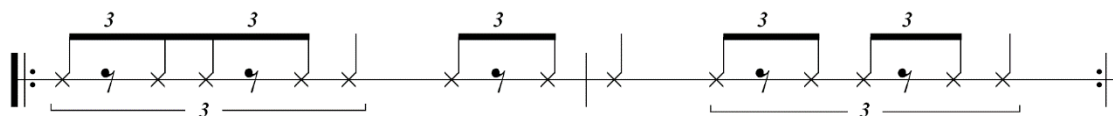
²⁷ Spector's instructional record accompanied the book *Stanley Spector's Lessons in Improvisation for the Jazz Drummer, Vol. One: Time and the Eight-Bar Phrase*. The record was self-produced and featured Jaki Byard on piano and Gene Cherico on bass.

In one of Spector's advertisements appearing in *Down Beat* (1962), Blackley's words can be found extolling the influential and innovatory nature of Spector's method:

“... I feel that my main influence has stemmed from my association with... Stanley Spector... for the development of time and jazz figures developed from the time... I personally feel that the next few years will see Stanley Spector emerge as one of the most outstanding and original teachers and authors to enter the field of Modern Jazz Drumming Instruction.” (Spector 1962, 55)

Spector's method contained various two-bar exercises consisting of three-beat figures punctuating the phrase in different positions. The following example, found on page 24 of Spector's method, clearly exhibits a two-bar phrase comprising a three-beat figure in first position (bar 1) and second position (bar 2).

Fig. 2.1 Two-bar cymbal phrase punctuated with three-beat figures



The above illustration exemplifies the type of two-bar cymbal phrases elaborated upon in “Section G” of Blackley's jazz drumming tome, *The Essence of Jazz Drumming* (2001). *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*, in many ways, derived influence from and expanded upon the contents of Spector's method.

Similarly, the contemporaneous drummer/educator Charlie Perry also shared Spector's ideology regarding the primacy of the ride cymbal's role in improvised jazz

performance.²⁸ Perry states, “The ride rhythm, ride variations and other cymbal rhythms that are used to generate time and establish time are a cornerstone of jazz drumming. They will remain so long as cymbal rhythms are used for this purpose” (DeJohnette and Perry 1989, 12). Spector’s method alongside DeJohnette and Perry’s *The Art of Modern Jazz Drumming*, and Blackley’s *The Essence of Jazz Drumming* marked a significant advancement in the development of modern drum set pedagogy. In an unprecedented manner, these methods catered to the musical needs of the improvising, small group jazz drummer.

Sam Ulano: Sight-Reading and the Exposure to Drum Literature

Spector and Perry’s contemporary Sam Ulano, was yet another significant drum teacher that Blackley discovered and sought out in his educational sojourns to New York City. Like that of Spector and Perry, Ulano also shared a similar apprehension towards the snare drum rudiments and their applicability to musical performance. Ulano states:

Lots of drum instructors instill that students memorize rudiments. I don’t think memorizing drum rudiments is the way to teach modern drummers to drum. I learned rudiments when I studied drums 75 years ago—they didn’t work then for the music I wanted to play and they don’t work now for modern drummers. Rudimental drum strokes were created hundreds of years ago as signals and patterns for large military marching drum corps where each musician played one drum with his pair of sticks. As far back as 1911, Edward B. Straight and Harry A. Bower wrote books suggesting that educators move away from the rudimental

²⁸ Charlie Perry (1924-1998) was a New York-based jazz drummer and educator. He played with Kai Winding, Oliver Nelson, Stan Kenton, Stan Getz, Charlie Parker and others. He also co-wrote with Jack DeJohnette, the drum instruction book, *The Art of Modern Jazz Drumming* (1979. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Publishing). Like that of Spector’s work, Perry promoted a similar idea of counting and later applying vocalized phonetics to ride cymbal phrases in his promotional pamphlet for Zildjian Cymbals entitled, *Avedis Zildjian Presents Cymbal Ride Rhythm: Analysis and Method of Counting* (circa 1963, The Avedis Zildjian Company).

strokes because there was another way to play the drums.²⁹ They wrote about the need for educational material to help drummers learn to play the music of that time—jazz, rags and ballroom dance tunes... I can't stress enough the importance of updating, and making sure what you're learning today is the most current material. We must get rid of the idea of rudimental strokes. We need to replace the traditional with new rudiments for current forms of music—like the ride cymbal beat, the shuffle, the two-and four, etc.—the foundational elements for real world drumming.³⁰ (http://www.samulano.com/sams_system.html)

Ulano's early publications such as *Bass Bops* and *Rudi-Bops* reflected the above sentiments as far back as 1948. The book *Bass Bops* repudiated the inclusion of rudimental strokes by presenting a series of studies which demonstrated different note values and rhythmic subdivisions played by hands and feet in a linear fashion. *Bass Bops* was Ulano's initial contribution to a vast catalogue of publications which addressed changing trends in popular music and emphasized the importance of developing strong sight-reading skills. Ulano states:

... I've done away with the 26 rudiments in my teaching method. I want my students to learn to play musically—not mechanically. Rudiments are not the answer to becoming a professional drummer. After all, outside of marching bands, drum corps, and so on, how often do you find the 26 rudiments on a chart?

²⁹ In the preface of *Straight's Modern Syncopated Rhythms for Drums*, originally published in 1922, ragtime jazz drummer and educator Edward B. Straight expressed, "We must get away from the old military method of drumming and play the drum part the same lead as the violin, saxophone or xylophone parts. We must fill up what others leave out.... But that time is passing the same as the old noisy jazz. The real way to play drums and to get the very best results is to work soft and easy and just permit the accent on the different notes to stick out a little, to put color in your work" (Straight 1922, 3). Similarly, the Boston-based symphonic and vaudevillian percussionist, Harry A. Bower shared a like-minded approach in eschewing the military tradition of rudimental drumming. Bower was an active performer at the turn of the 20th Century authoring the book, *The Harry A. Bower System for Drums, Bells, Xylophone, Timpani* (1911, Carl Fischer). "Bower's methods were revolutionary at the time in that they treated the bells, xylophone, and timpani as equals alongside the snare drum. Previous drum methods focused almost exclusively on the military tradition of rudimental drumming with no attention paid to timpani or mallet percussion." (<http://www.bostondrumbuilders.com/bower.html>)

³⁰ Ulano refers to the jazz ride beat or jazz cymbal rhythm as the twenty-seventh rudiment in his book, *Rudi-Bops* (1949). Ulano states, "True, there are twenty-six standard rudiments, but by today's modern standard of playing, this beat can be called the twenty-seventh rudiment. Another name for it is the 'Sock Beat'" (Ulano 1949, 28).

So, I teach all my students to be drum readers first, last, and always. (Ulano 1991, 68)

Through a vast exposure of diverse drum literature, Ulano's instruction assisted Blackley in the development of strong sight-reading skills. Blackley states: "I studied with him [Ulano] and I got to say it was very helpful... there was great value in it too, definitely. He exposed you to all the drum literature that had been presented. And there definitely was a lot of good in that and he in his own way—he had a good thing going..." (Jim Blackley, in conversation with the author, July 4, 2014).³¹ In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Blackley's course of study involved the use of Ulano's publications such as *Bass Bops* and other drum literature which Ulano had introduced to Blackley such as Ralph C. Pace's *Variations of Drumming* (1949) and the Carl E. Gardner series: *Progressive Studies for the Snare Drum* (1925). Terry Clarke recalls using an extensive array of drum publications in his early instruction with Blackley: "... I was being taught out of ... Sam's books, Jim Chapin's books, *Stanley Spector Method* and Ted Reed [*Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*], just for syncopation and reading" (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014).

Jim Chapin: Coordinated Independence and the Moeller Technique

Ulano's compeer Jim Chapin was yet another prominent and influential teacher that Blackley studied with in New York. In 1948, Chapin's revolutionary book, *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer, Volume 1: Coordinated Independence as applied to Jazz and Bebop* reflected the rhythmic developments of bop drumming and, in many

³¹ For a greater insight into the pedagogical philosophy and methodologies of the late Sam Ulano, see Ulano's website: www.samulano.com. Also see the chapter entitled, "How to Teach Drums" from Ulano's educational tome, *The Professional Drummer's System, Volume One* (1972. New York: DSR Publishing Co.).

ways, assisted bop drummers in resolving the technical and mechanical problems of coordinated independence.³² Chapin states:

In those early be-bop days, there was no independence. Max Roach, Art Blakey, and Kenny Clarke always played figures, but they couldn't do them independently at that time. In fact, Max told me recently, "You know, you kind of intimated in that book that we played this way. We didn't do any independence. All of us had to study that book and learn it." So the only thing I invented were [sic] the mechanics. The guys from the be-bop era invented the artistic part. They were playing the actual lines, but they weren't playing them independently. The only thing I did was to show them the mechanics of maintaining the right hand. I played that way, so they could hear it. Kenny Clarke used to come into the Hickory House when he was working across the street. The book was a mechanical study I did during the war. I was drafted at the end of '43, and got out at the end of '45. I practiced all those things and wrote them out. I didn't do anything with it until '48... (Mattingly 1981, 25)

In a feature *Modern Drummer* article commemorating Chapin's 75th birthday, drummer Max Roach (1924-2007) expressed the following concerning Chapin's contribution to the development of drum set pedagogy:

Jim is a very dear, long-time friend. He's the one who wrote the great treatise on independence, and he made a significant contribution to conceptualizing what the drum set is all about, explaining it so clearly in his book, which has become a landmark in the history of the instrument. He beat a lot of drummers up with that book; we were all stumbling on it. (Mattingly 1994, 29)

In the same article, author Rick Mattingly described the radical nature of Chapin's book upon its initial publication in 1948, "Today it is considered the fundamental study for

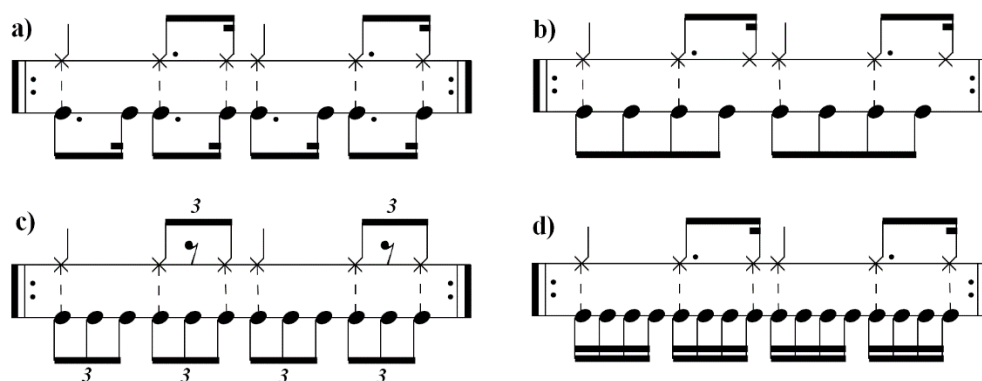
³² In Anthony Brown's scholarly article: "Modern Jazz Drumset Artistry" (*The Black Perspective in Music*, Vol. 18, No. 1/2), the musicologist describes coordinated independence in the following manner:

This oxymoron is a term that describes the drummer's unique ability to play several different rhythms simultaneously, that is, to use his four limbs to maintain a continuous, four-voice, polyrhythmical structure. This technically challenging feat is further compounded by the orientation of the various component instruments of the drumset, requiring counter-rhythmic execution between both hands and feet as well as between the two hemispheres of the body. Essentially, the fixed rhythmic component is maintained on the cymbals: the traditional jazz rhythm pattern is played by the right hand on the ride (top) cymbal, and the left foot marks beats 2 and 4 with the hi-hat cymbals.... The snare drum (left hand) and bass drum (right foot) provide polyrhythmic accents and punctuation figures.... (Brown 1990, 43-4)

learning jazz independence; when it was first published in 1948, it was considered unplayable. Chapin's habit of always carrying sticks and a practice pad is, in part, a carry-over from the days when unbelievers frequently challenged him to demonstrate the exercises from his own book" (ibid, 27).

The following set of illustrations exhibits a sampling of the types of exercises found in Chapin's treatise on coordinated independence:

Fig. 2.2 A selection of exercises found in Chapin's *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer*.³³



The above illustrations display a series of notational variations depicting the jazz ride beat superposed over counter-rhythmic activity in the left hand. However, example (c) should acquire the greatest level of primacy when attempting to generate and facilitate a swinging momentum within a jazz setting. Musicologist J.A. Prögler states:

The issue of effectively notating swing for prescriptive purposes has been addressed by some drum teachers. In his classic drum instruction manual, *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer*, Jim Chapin reminds his students

³³ Chapin's ground-breaking treatise on coordinated independence was first published in November of 1948. As of this writing, the book is now in its 62nd printing and is being published by Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.

that swing can be notated in straight eight[h]s, dotted figures, triplets, or in 12/8... Chapin recommends that drummers be aware that playing the dotted rhythms exactly as written in his manual would result in a “ticky” sound, and that the drummer can interpret them as “shuffle” rhythms with a triplet feel. (Prögler 1995, 26)

The eighth note triplet-based exercises found in Section 1, Part C. of Chapin’s book became a focal point in my early studies with Blackley. Similarly, former Blackley student Terry Clarke also expressed that he used Chapin’s book as a study manual in his early instruction. Clarke states, “... I was being taught out of, which I still use here... Jim Chapin... the independence book and I had all the records: *Music Minus One Drummer: For Drummers Only*—which I use” (Terry Clarke, in discussion with the author, May 6, 2014).

Aside from the influence of Chapin’s book and its use in Blackley’s instruction, Chapin also taught Blackley the mechanics of the Moeller technique. The Moeller technique is a sound physical approach to playing parade snare drum that was researched and codified by the New York drummer/educator Sanford A. Moeller (1879-1961). “It’s said that Moeller was so curious about the old ways of drumming, that as a young man, he sought out the surviving Civil War drummers and picked their brains about how, why, and what they played. In fact, a publisher’s note on page 1 of the *Moeller Book* states that Sanford’s teaching style and concepts were based on George B. Bruce’s 1862 US Army prescribed drum methods” (Riley 2004, 56). “The basic foundation of the Moeller system is to play with natural relaxed strokes in wave-like motions... Moeller’s basic full stroke, the premise of his system, can be likened to cracking a whip or throwing a baseball. This, in concise form, is what Moeller observed in the best players of the day”

(Logozzo 88, 1993). The Moeller system is “a way of breaking down the mechanics of playing accented and unaccented notes into individual strokes. By doing this, it’s possible always to have the sticks in the right place for the next stroke. And by harnessing the rebound of the stick for accented strokes and also playing quieter ‘tap’ strokes, as the sticks move upwards to prepare for the next accent, a ‘graceful economy of movement’ is created” (Riley 2003, 23).³⁴

Through the instruction of the Moeller technique, Blackley aided his students in facilitating the execution of exercises found in *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer* and the three volumes of *Rhythmical Explorations*. Terry Clarke states, “He started me doing the Moeller thing, but he never really referred to it as the Moeller. You know like, ‘down,’ ‘up’ ‘tap,’ ‘tap’... I just watched that movement and it’s only like in the last few years I realized, ‘Oh, that’s the Moeller Method,’ which he learned from Jim Chapin” (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014).

The Move to New York City

In 1967, Blackley left Vancouver and relocated to New York City, where from 1967 to 1973, he operated a teaching studio. Blackley’s arrival in New York was mentioned in the pages of *Down Beat*:

Drum teacher Jim Blackleigh [sic], a scot who once won a world-wide solo drumming contest for pipe bands, and has been conducting his School of Modern Drumming in Vancouver, Canada, for several years (Terry Clarke was one of his students), recently moved to New York City and has opened a drum school there. (*Down Beat* 1968, 13)

³⁴ For a greater insight into the Moeller system, see Sanford A. Moeller’s *The Moeller Book* (1925. Cleveland: Ludwig Music Publishing) and Jim Chapin’s DVD, *Speed, Power, Control, Endurance* (2009. Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.).

Besides teaching, Blackley would occasionally substitute for Jake Hanna on the *Merv Griffin Show* playing in the house band alongside Richie Kamuca, Kai Winding, Bob Brookmeyer, Ray Brown, Jack Sheldon, Jim Hall and others. Blackley states: “I played the *Merv Griffin Show* a number of times” (Jim Blackley, in conversation with the author, July 2014). Also, Blackley replaced an ailing George Wettling in a trio which featured Clarence Hutchenrider (1908- 1991) and Charlie Queener (1921- 1997).³⁵ In October of 1968, *Down Beat* reported, “... Drummer Jim Blackley, who filled in for the late George Wettling during the latter’s final illness, has become a permanent member of the trio at Bill’s Gay Nineties joining clarinetist Clarence Hutchenrider and pianist Charlie Queener” (*Down Beat* 1968, 15).

It was also during this time beginning in 1971, that Blackley would make bi-weekly commutes to Toronto to teach students who were desirous of his wisdom and progressive instruction. Terry Clarke states:

When he [Blackley] decided to come up and start teaching, he asked me if I would get as many drummers together as possible for a meeting. So, I did just that and I got everybody interested because... my playing was beginning to be known in Toronto. I just established myself here and so, naturally they would’ve heard about Jim and want to know what I know.... Anyway, I got them together in one place and he came and just did a little talk about things and everybody asked him stuff and that was just the reconnaissance mission to come up and check everything out. And then he said, “I’ll be back in two weeks” and then I set up a schedule which started at my house.... So that’s how it started. I got as many people as I could, and word of mouth then got around and then it became a phenomenon because he had done the same thing in Vancouver. You know, we had this huge group of players and so we had a new group of up-and-coming players who all became richer. (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014)

³⁵ George Wettling (1907-1968) was an American jazz drummer who played in the big bands of Artie Shaw, Bunny Berigan, Red Norvo and performed in small ‘hot’ groups led by Eddie Condon.

Settling in Toronto and the Influence of the Sufi Mystic: M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen

In the summer of 1973, Blackley moved to Toronto permanently and became the most sought-after drum teacher in the city. Through the recommendations of Terry Clarke and York University's pioneering jazz theory professor John Gittins, Blackley developed a thriving teaching practice where he taught monthly two-hour lessons to a different student each day. Former Blackley student Barry Elmes states:

Essentially, when I got here [York University] I didn't have a place to live and I was living in John Gittins' basement and John was ... telling me, "You need a good teacher, and this is the guy that you need to be with." I was really frustrated at the time because I just didn't know what I should be practicing. I was particularly frustrated when I came here, because it was the first time in my life that I heard other young people playing jazz and some of them were light years ahead of me. (Barry Elmes, in conversation with the author, March 18, 2014)

It was also during this period that Blackley made fewer public appearances. However, in early April of 1976, the Jim Blackley Quintet played a successful three-night stand at Toronto's now defunct Mother Necessity Jazz Workshop. In May of 1976, the jazz publication *Coda* reported, "... Mother Necessity... is instituting "after-hours" jams and hosting many musicians in aggregations that rarely appear elsewhere, such as... the Jim Blackley Quintet featuring Mike Stewart [sic] ..." (Lee 1976, 26).³⁶

Incidentally, during this time, Blackley and his family experienced a pivotal, life-changing spiritual transformation through encountering the impactful teachings of the Sri Lankan Sufi mystic: Muhammad Raheem Bawa Muhaiyaddeen (1889-1986):

³⁶ The Jamaican-born, Toronto-based jazz musician Michael Stuart (1948-) is highly regarded for his prowess and musicality on the tenor and soprano saxophones. Stuart has played or recorded with Jimmy McGriff, Jay McShann, Sonny Greenwich, the Duke Ellington Orchestra, the Elvin Jones Jazz Machine and others. Stuart also formed a notable partnership with Jim Blackley's son: the late drummer, Keith Blackley (1950-2008). Stuart and Blackley's extraordinary musical interplay can be heard on the Michael Stuart/Keith Blackley Quartet recording, *Determination* (1979: WRC1-640).

M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen is a revered sage and holy man who emerged from the jungles of Sri Lanka in 1914. Little is known of his history prior to this time, except that he traveled extensively throughout the Middle East and India. He has spent his entire life as a student of the world's religions and an observer of the subtle secrets of God's creation.... Though he teaches within the framework of Islamic Sufism, people from the Christian, Judaic, and Hindu faiths also come to him in their search for wisdom.³⁷ (Muhaiyaddeen 1983, i)

In 1971, Muhaiyaddeen “arrived in the United States... upon the invitation of a young woman ‘seeker’ from Philadelphia, and established the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship of North America in Philadelphia” (Küçük 2008, 309).³⁸ It was this fellowship in Philadelphia that Blackley and his family would visit as a means of seeking out spiritual knowledge and guidance.

Consequently, the inculcation of Muhaiyaddeen's spiritual philosophies significantly impacted Blackley's approach to teaching. Blackley states:

Being a top musician is no big deal; being a true human being is a very, very big deal. That's what it's all about. The more true human beings we become, the more that quality will emanate from our music. There's no such thing as gaining spirituality from the music. The spirituality comes from within as we develop the qualities of God and surrender to that power. The thing is, I'm not someone who just sits here teaching. I only teach one student a day, and I only take each student one day each month. I could have hundreds of students if I wanted, but I'm not interested in making money. I'm interested in helping to contribute, through God's grace, something to another human being's life. If I do my duty to God properly, then I'll do my duty to every human being I encounter. (Wittet 1984, 97)

American jazz flautist Paul Horn (1930- 2014) was privy to the spiritual profundities of Blackley's instruction when Horn accompanied his son Robin to a lesson. Horn states:

³⁷ For more biographical content on Muhaiyaddeen, see *The Tree That Fell to the West: Autobiography of a Sufi* (2003. Philadelphia: Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship).

³⁸ “The development of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship is a distinct and important part of the history of Sufism in America, representing a community that has been able to unite a variety of interpretations of Sufism's relationship to Islam, that is, ‘Sufi-Muslim,’ ‘Sufi-non Muslim’ and ‘Muslim-Non Sufi,’ under the umbrella of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship and Mosque...” (ibid).

I took my son Robin to a drum teacher in Toronto, a man named Jim Blackley. He asked Robin what his ambitions were. Robin said he wanted to be a great drummer. Blackley said being a great drummer was not the highest goal. First and foremost, you should want to become a great human being. He wanted Robin to integrate music into the larger scheme of life. I said to myself, "This is a good teacher." (Horn 1990, 112)

Due to the delimitations of this thesis, it would seem infeasible to further tease out the implications of Blackley's association with the spiritual teachings of Muhaiyaddeen. Perhaps a future study can delve profoundly into this area of musicological inquiry dealing with musicians and their nexus with spiritual concerns. Blackley continued to follow the teachings of Muhaiyaddeen and had been living in Barrie, Ontario since 1999. Although highly in demand as a drum teacher, in April of 2017, Blackley retired from teaching. He taught his last lesson to drummer/percussionist Steve Mancuso on April 6, 2017. Following a year-long struggle with dementia, Blackley passed away peacefully on July 16, 2017, at the age of 90.

CHAPTER III

DELINEATING BLACKLEY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO DRUM SET LITERATURE

Like that of the significant contributions of his peers (Ulano, Spector, Perry and Chapin), Blackley also recognized the changing musical terrain brought on by bebop and post-bop jazz and responded with the creation of innovative publications such as *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer*; *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*; and *Rhythmical Explorations, Volumes 1-3*. This chapter will explore how Blackley's important publications contributed to the advancement of modern drum set pedagogy by addressing the musical needs of the extemporizing, small-group jazz drummer.

Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer

In 1961, Blackley wrote and published the pioneering drum set method book, *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer, Volume 1*. Blackley's book involves taking accentuated rhythmic figures and interpreting them in a multitude of ways through various subdivisions and roll applications.³⁹ The concept of deriving rhythmic content from a musical line or melodic theme forms the basis of Blackley's various publications. Blackley relates this conception to his formative pipe band upbringing:

There are two kinds of pipe band drumming. One is for marching. The other, explains Blackley, "is not military. It is used to accompany a solo piper and the

³⁹ In 1962, Blackley followed *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer, Vol.1* with a second volume which dealt with broken eighth-note triplet figures interpreted in a variety of ways. In 1982, Blackley combined the two volumes in a revised printing of the book.

rhythms are derived from the rhythmic-melodic line of the bagpipes.” He feels that this aspect of the music is extremely close to jazz. (Gitler 1968, 15-16)

The premise of *Syncopated Rolls*, in many ways, echoes and creatively elaborates upon the controversial and radical sentiments of Spector and Ulano. Blackley states:

The author has viewed with much interest the growth of various drummers each subjected to the aforementioned environments, and the most obvious difference that emerges during their development, lies in their conception and execution of the time, and in their choice of accents which give impetus to the musical line, and while the Jazz Drummer develops his solos from the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic contents of the composition being performed, the rudimentalist’s solos are derived from the combining of rudimental patterns. (Blackley 1961, 1)

The following illustration exemplifies one of the fundamental principles of Blackley’s methodology. Here we see Blackley’s creative interpretation of a syncopated rhythmic figure contrasted against traditional rudimental thinking. The example below can be found on page 19 of the original *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer, Volume 1*:

Fig. 3.1 Basic figure interpreted with a triplet roll application

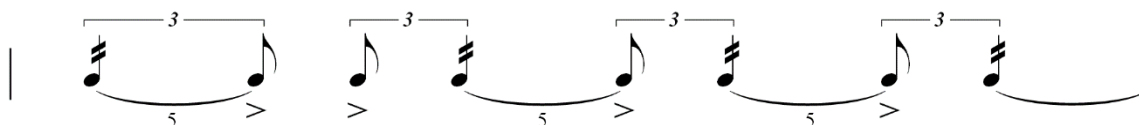
Basic Figure

The illustration shows a musical figure consisting of a quarter note followed by three eighth notes. Below this, four variations of the figure are shown, each with an accent (>) over the first note and a '3' over the triplet. The drum patterns for these variations are: R R L L R, L R R L L, R L L R R, and L R R L L.

The preceding example displays a rhythmic figure consisting of one upbeat followed by three downbeats. Consequently, the figure is marked by jazz interpretation and is

filled in with a ternary subdivision.⁴⁰ Additionally, each of the unaccented triplet pulses are further fragmented into two sixteenth-notes and are executed through using a low volume double stroke (two right hand strokes or two left hand strokes). Blackley encourages the student to think of “saving the accents and throwing the unaccented beats away” (ibid). Antithetically, the rudimentally trained drummer would view the above example as a series of 5-stroke rolls strung together. The example below illustrates this conception:

Fig. 3.2 Rudimental interpretation of 5-stroke rolls



Through his methodology, Blackley reveals the musical shortcomings and limitations of the rudimental school of thought: a numerical approach which negates an effective means of musical phrasing. For a drummer to play musically, the drummer needs to think of, interpret, and improvise with, musical lines.

The Essence of Jazz Drumming

The notion of interpreting and improvising with musical lines, found in *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer*, also informed the premise of Blackley’s pedagogical tome: *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*. Originally published in 2001, Blackley’s

⁴⁰ Jazz interpretation involves the conversion of straight eighth note rhythms into swung eighth notes. “Simply stated, the only notes affected are those falling on the upbeat. Downbeats will always fall on the downbeat, but the upbeat written to fall on the ‘an’ count would actually be played on the ‘let’ of the triplet” (Blackley 2001, 13).

educational opus took nearly forty years to write and represents the apotheosis of his work concerning the art of jazz drumming and its temporal and musical methodologies.

“As Blackley states in the introduction, the book is a culmination of ‘performing, teaching, and observing its contents in action for close to 40 years’ ” (Brush 2001, 75).

The Essence of Jazz Drumming explores the development of the ride cymbal as the main means of generating time through providing complementary musical phrases, punctuations and accents within a collective jazz performance. Blackley states, “Everything that a jazz drummer plays is in my opinion an extension of the time, generated through the right hand on the cymbal. It is from the time that the figures and musical lines so essential to jazz performance are developed. They are not developed from breaking rudiments around the drum set” (Blackley 2001, 12).

Blackley further augments this concept by filling in the cymbal phrases with “shuffle” and “triplet” extensions and through introducing advanced rhythmic devices such as the superimposition of three-beat and five-beat figures over 4/4 time. *Down Beat* reviewer, Doug Brush elaborates upon the Zen-like nature of Blackley’s method and its multifarious practice applications:

What makes the book challenging is the Zen-like approach of practicing the exercises. Blackley instructs students to play many of the exercises for five minutes with a tempo of a quarter note equals 40 beats per minute. In addition, the exercise is then played many different ways using the same method. When one takes a basic one-measure rhythm and, using this method, practices just the right hand, then adds a “shuffle extension” in the left hand, then a “triplet extension” in the left hand, then adds at least three bass drum/hi-hat combinations with each of the first three ways of playing the basic rhythm, then suddenly you have been playing the same one measure rhythm at 40 beats per minute for 60 minutes. The overall result can be hypnotic and, if one stays focussed, very much like meditation. (Brush 2001, 75)

Incidentally, with *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*, Blackley also introduces the idea of shaping musical phrases through the employment of articulation (strong and weak pulses) and the process of taking musical phrases in common notation and converting them to augmented notation for up-tempo playing and diminished notation for ballads.

Consequently, the various applications are then applied to musical song structures such as the twelve-bar blues and the thirty-two-bar rhythm changes chorus. The various methodologies discussed above constitute the core of Blackley's pedagogy and will be greatly elaborated upon in the subsequent chapter.

Rhythmical Explorations


Aside from *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer* and *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*, Blackley's three-volume anthology known as *Rhythmical Explorations: Volume One* (2002); *Volume Two* (2003) and *Volume Three* (2007) continues to elongate the parameters of musical phrasing as applied to jazz drumming and its allied forms. In the respective volumes, Blackley constructs musical phrases through exploiting rudimental strokes such as the flam accent; the Swiss triplet and lastly, the single Swiss windmill and its various permutations. However, Blackley uses the rudimental strokes only as a preliminary building block and later transcends the mere rudimental execution of these exercises by exploring, in an unprecedented manner, the polyrhythmic execution of each exercise. Through the polyrhythmic treatment of each exercise, Blackley extrapolates upon the emergence of dual rhythmical lines each shaped by its own articulation. Blackley explains:

There is... thinking amongst many drummers that if they place their right hand on the cymbal and their left hand on the snare drum, and execute the flam accent in the same manner, that they are playing polyrhythms. This is erroneous thinking. It is nothing more than rudimental execution, with the rhythmical line being created from the flam accents. We do recognize that a separate sound and rhythm will emerge from each hand, but in true polyrhythmic execution, each line will have its own physicality and articulation, and each will have the rhythmic strength to stand alone. Although both the rudimental and polyrhythmic exercises have the same sticking, the physical execution and articulation of each have no connection whatsoever. In my publication, *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*, I introduced (for the first time to my knowledge), the question of rhythmic articulation as it relates to drum set performance. It is the ability to articulate the rhythmic line of each hand which leads to successful polyrhythmic execution. This is not a simple undertaking. It will require patience and dedicated practice to bring both hands together in a successful musical application. (Blackley 2002, 6)

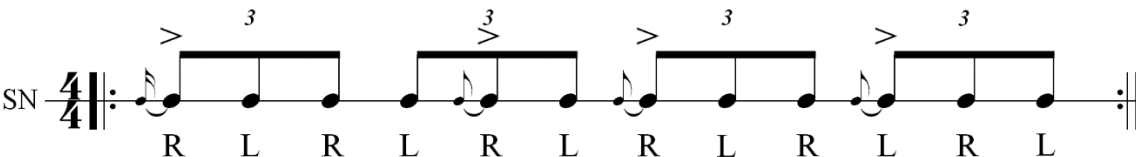
The following illustration derived from page 17 of *Rhythmical Explorations: Volume One* (Basic Rhythm # 4, Exercises 1, 2, and 3) depicts a basic rhythmic figure in Exercise 1 interpreted as a flam accent rudimental variation in exercise 2 and lastly, Exercise 3 presents "... the polyrhythmic development of Exercise 2. Each hand has its own rhythmic line and articulation. The flam accents of Exercise 2 become compound strokes" (ibid).

Fig. 3.3 Basic rhythmic figure interpreted through rudimental and polyrhythmic applications

1) **Basic Rhythm**



2) **Rudimental Execution**



3) **Polyrhythmic Execution**

The influence of Blackley's seminal publications can be seen in the pedagogical literature of the late, New York-based drummer/educator Al Miller (1927-2000). Miller's six volume series: *Al Miller's 1,000 Solos for the Drum Set* presents a similar concept of interpreting rhythmic figures through various subdivisions and roll applications.⁴¹ Also, the pedagogical approach of the late Alan Dawson involved taking figures from Ted Reed's *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer* and interpreting them in a variety of ways addressing the development of sight reading and four-way limb coordination. Many of Dawson's different interpretations of the *Syncopation* book can be found in John Ramsay's book, *The Drummer's Complete Vocabulary as Taught by Alan Dawson* (1997: Manhattan Music Publications). Of note, the triplet roll applications found in Dawson's method and Miller's *1000 Triplet Roll Solos for the Drum Set: Vol.3* (1968) are reminiscent of those found in Blackley's book *Syncopated Rolls*. In a 1983 *Modern Drummer* interview, Terry Clarke states, "The Scottish were into more buzz rolls than paradiddles and all that stuff. Anyway, Jim eventually put that into a book, which I think got to Alan Dawson and I think Tony Williams because Tony plays an awful lot of those types of things" (Wittet 1983, 18).

⁴¹ Al Miller's six volumes were published respectively in 1961, 1966, 1968 (Volumes 3 and 4) and 1980 (Volumes 5 and 6). The books are widely available and are distributed by Hal Leonard.

The idea of interpreting written figures similarly informed the premise of Gary Chester's method book *The New Breed* (1989: Modern Drummer Publications). It appears that several, musically-minded drum set educators introduced pedagogical methods which explored the interpretation of rhythmic figures. Irrespective of who originated this concept, Blackley's *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer* was the first drum publication to present and explore this idea. In a *Modern Drummer* interview from 1984, Blackley recounts how *Syncopated Rolls* came to be:

Back about 1959, Charles Mingus came to Vancouver. From the first moment, I was fully aware of what was going on in that band, and what Dannie Richmond was doing. Dannie and I struck up a beautiful friendship, and I invited him to my home. When he came over, I played him some solo pipe band drumming records that were made in the '40s, and after Dannie heard them he said, "I don't care what you call that, man. That's jazz." I then proceeded to show him some of the ideas and concepts I had developed for drum set. When I finished playing, he threw his arms around me and said, "You're the first white drummer I've met in my life who plays *black*." His enthusiasm for my concepts resulted in my writing *Syncopated Rolls*. You know, it's interesting to see the way things go, for it seems that many players are just beginning to realize the depth of musical material in these books. It goes way beyond what the title suggests. (Wittet 1984, 97)

CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF JIM BLACKLEY'S PEDAGOGY

The previous chapter delineated Blackley's important contributions to the advancement of drum set literature. The objective of this chapter is to explore the key constituents of Blackley's pedagogy in greater detail. Blackley's methodical course of study accentuates the significant development of strong timekeeping skills, the cognizance of song form, the shaping and interpretation of musical lines through articulation and various applications, the memorization and vocalizing of all figures and phrases emanating from the time on the ride cymbal, and the superimposition of various meters. Incidentally, once the exercises are mastered at a slow tempo of 40bpm, they are readily applied to song structures such as the twelve-bar blues and thirty-two-bar rhythm changes emphasizing a heuristic and highly musical approach to drum set instruction. T. Bruce Wittet states:

While Jim's system arises from the best of Scottish and American drumming traditions, it is a true method for any instrument. Never before, perhaps, has music been stressed so much at the expense of technique. Jim believes that if you know music—really know music—and can hear it at any tempo and grasp its inner logic, you will discover surprising technique. And nobody leaves Blackley's once-a-month sessions with any doubt about what it takes to make music. (Wittet 1984, 28)

The Awareness of Song Form

When studying with Blackley, the initial step in his course of study involves developing an awareness of important song forms such as the twelve-bar blues and the thirty-two-bar rhythm changes chorus. Blackley states:

The first two things students of jazz have to learn are the 12-bar blues and the 32-bar chorus. Those two things cover a large portion of jazz composition.... When students come to study with me, I'll sit them behind the drums, play a very basic 12-bar blues record, and ask them to play some time. Next, I'll play something with a 32-bar form and ask them to play that. Then I will ask if they know where they are in the music. All of them will say, "Oh yeah, I hear it," and I'll say, "Fine." Then I'll drop the needle at random on the record and ask them to tell me which bar of the tune they're on. Eight out of ten cannot tell whether they're on the fifth, ninth, or eleventh bar. The Jamey Aebersold instruction records have been an invaluable aid for the students because they were designed for professional development.⁴² The student gets an opportunity to clearly hear the bass and the chord changes. (ibid)

"The Basic Time Studies"

Aside from introducing the twelve-bar blues and rhythm changes chorus in the initial lesson, Blackley also presents to the student a series of foundational exercises known as "The Basic Time Studies." These consequential exercises form the keystone of Blackley's method addressing the issue of temporal development using the ride cymbal. Blackley states:

My whole concept is based on approaching everything from the time. All rhythms and figures are first developed as cymbal patterns. Students learn to hear the musical line, played over the chord changes, the bass, and the melody line. And then, they learn how to take that single musical line and explore the total drum set. They are playing musical lines—not rudiments. (ibid)

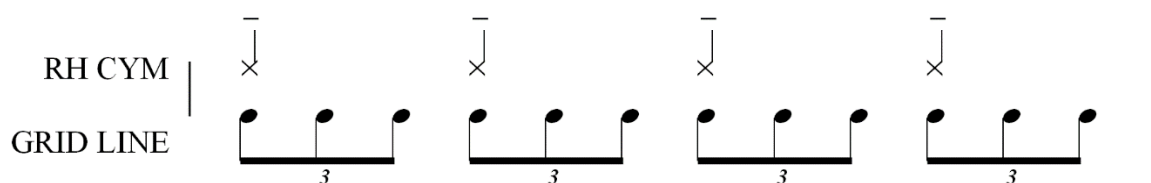
"The Basic Time Studies," as found in *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*, consist of fourteen preliminary exercises which explore the physical mechanics of timekeeping as applied to the eighth-note triplet grid. Important exercises such as downbeats, the shuffle rhythm, the jazz ride beat, upbeats and several syncopated, tied-note figures comprise this crucial element of Blackley's pedagogy. Blackley states, "The foundation for all

⁴² American-born Jamey Aebersold (1939-) is a noteworthy jazz saxophonist and educator who developed an extensive, multi-volume resource of "Play-A-Long" instruction books/CDs for the aspiring jazz student. See, www.jazzbooks.com.

performance material throughout this presentation is contained within the 14 basic time studies... be sure to make them a part of your being” (Blackley 2001, 24).

Although the initial stages of Blackley’s method consist of fourteen preparative exercises, I will proceed to elaborate upon the inner-workings and musical significance of four key exercises.

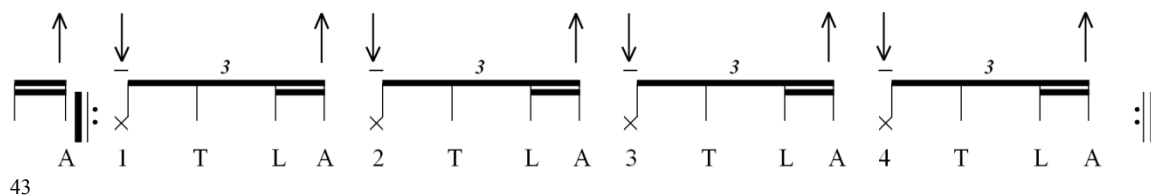
Fig. 4.1 “Basic Time 1” (The Quarter Note Pulse: Downbeats)



The preceding exercise forms the cornerstone of Blackley’s method and displays four isochronous quarter notes played with equal emphasis over an underlying eighth note-triplet grid. Blackley states, “Each quarter note must be played with equal intensity. Strive to hear and feel an extension of musical sound from one quarter note to the next. This will assist in achieving the forward motion so necessary for a musical time flow” (Blackley 2001, 24).

To mentally apprehend and embody the corporeal mechanics of playing four isochronous quarter notes to the bar, Blackley has his students play the exercise at a slow tempo of 40 bpm. The following illustration visually explicates the mechanics of playing four evenly spaced quarter notes based on an eighth-note triplet grid:

Fig. 4.2 Downbeats (quarter notes) played with equal emphasis and displaying the preparation and downswing of each stroke.



43

The preceding diagram intelligibly demonstrates how the wind-up of the stroke occurs precisely on the sixteenth-note following the ‘let’ count of each triplet grouping.

Blackley states, “Any young player interested in playing jazz should investigate the triplet very, very thoroughly, because therein lies the essence of jazz time” (Wittet 1984, 96).

Like the pedagogy of the Boston-based drummer/educator Robert Kaufman (1946-), the preparatory stroke or wind-up represents another important facet of Blackley’s methodology. “The anticipatory stroke can be thought of as a backswing or wind-up in preparation for the downbeat.... The anticipatory stroke begins about one inch from the drum or cymbal. The stroke continues without stopping through to the downbeat.... The study of the anticipatory stroke is also the study of your inner timing and how you move through space” (Kaufman 1993, 18).

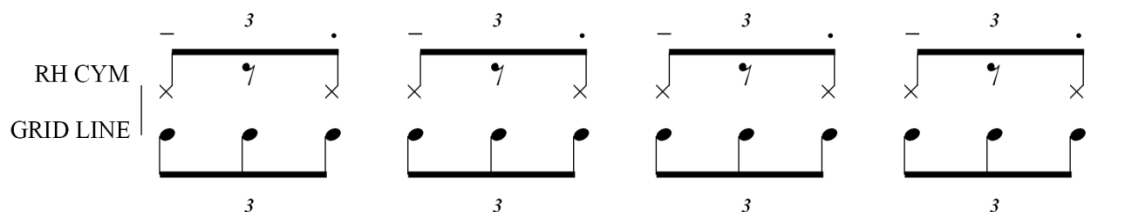
Following the downbeats, Blackley introduces yet another imperative exercise known as “Shuffle Rhythm.” The ensuing illustration demonstrates the shuffle rhythm shaped

⁴³ When playing eighth-note triplets, they are counted: 1 trip-let, 2 trip-let, 3 trip-let, 4 trip-let. In the above illustration and all subsequent figures involving the “Basic Time Studies,” the eighth-note triplet count is displayed in abbreviated form: 1 T L, 2 T L etc. T = trip, and L = let. Incidentally, when subdividing the eighth-note triplet into sixteenth notes, the sixteenth notes are counted: 1-a trip-a let-a, 2-a trip-a let-a, etc. or in abbreviated form as demonstrated in the above illustration: 1-A T-A L-A etc.

by articulation. The downbeats of the shuffle rhythm are clearly marked with a tenuto symbol indicating that each note is to be played with equal stress as a strong pulse.

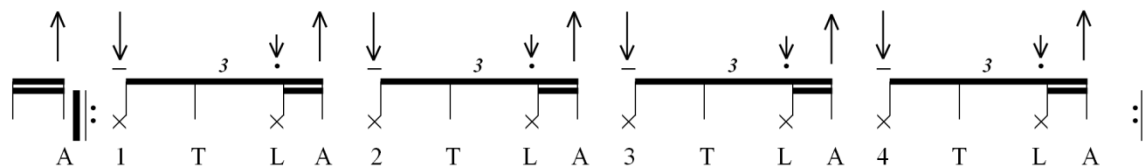
Conversely, the ‘let’ counts or the third pulse of each triplet grouping is typified with a dot indicating that the “skip beats” are to be played as weak pulses.

Fig. 4.3 “Basic Time 2” (Shuffle Rhythm)



This subsequent illustration elaborates upon the physical mechanics required to play the shuffle rhythm evenly in time with articulation.

Fig. 4.4 The Shuffle Rhythm displaying the wind-up, downswing and drop stroke

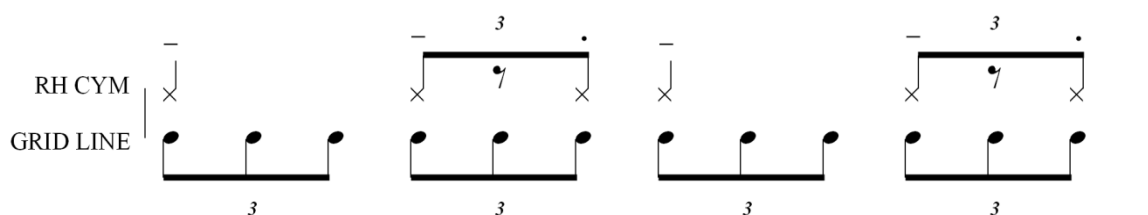


The preceding illustration clearly exhibits how each downbeat is played evenly in time through a wind-up occurring precisely on the sixteenth-note following the ‘let’ count. Consequently, the anticipatory stroke is followed by a down swing of the stick, where upon completion of the stroke, the tip rests one inch above the cymbal preceded by an eighth-note triplet rest and then on the ‘let’ count: a drop stroke (thumb release) is executed one inch above the cymbal facilitating the skip beat. Incidentally, Blackley advises: “Pay close attention to the strong and weak pulses. All strong pulses must have

a full, relaxed and even sound. The weak pulses (skip beats) should be dropped from a low level and must be free of any tension” (Blackley 2001, 26).

As a result, the principles and physical motions used to perform the downbeats and shuffle rhythm coalesce to form the standard jazz ride beat. The following illustration exemplifies Blackley’s approach to playing and articulating the conventional jazz cymbal pattern.

Fig. 4.5 “Basic Time 3” (Ride Rhythm)



The above illustration lucidly depicts Blackley’s approach to playing the jazz ride beat with strong, even quarter notes and a light skip beat. Blackley states: “...it’s the quarter note that drives the time and the ‘skip beat’ is just a colouring. You don’t want the ‘skip beat’ getting in the way” (Jim Blackley, in conversation with the author, July 4, 2014).

Additionally, Blackley states: “One of the biggest faults I hear with many jazz drummers in their playing of the ride cymbal rhythm is the accenting of the cymbal on 2 and 4. The feeling should be one of 4/4, because the main duty in playing the cymbal in this manner is to complement the walking bass line. The 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the bar should have equal stress” (Wittet 1984, 96).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ In the article, “Jazz Drumming, from a Bass Player/Composer’s Point of View,” bassist Chuck Israels (1936-) shares Blackley’s sentiments. Israels states: “It has been recommended in jazz education articles

Blackley's approach to playing the jazz ride beat was reflected in the influential and pioneering drum style of bebop progenitor, Kenny Clarke (1914-1985). Musicologist Theodore Dennis Brown states:

...bop drummers not only emphasized each beat but did so in a variety of ways, one of which was known as "tipping" This term is most frequently applied to the cymbal style of pioneer bop drummer, Kenny Clarke. Dick Katz, a pianist who worked with Clarke, describes Clarke's tipping as "that sound, on the beat, articulating all four beats." Bop drummer Roy Haynes comments that "Klook [Clarke] would be playing single beats, but you'd get a continuity. You still got the feeling of ding-ding-da-ding [the ride cymbal pattern]." (Brown 1976, 470)⁴⁵

Although Blackley's method eventually expands upon and explores ride rhythm variations, Blackley ardently feels that the student drummer should initially aspire to master an undeviating approach to playing the jazz ride beat. Blackley states:

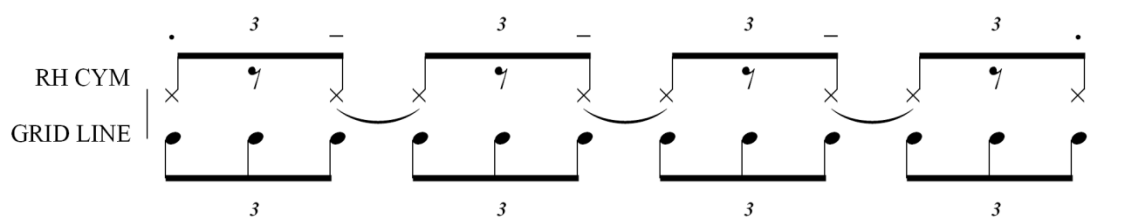
A most difficult aspect of playing is to play a straight ride beat devoid of any accents or variations. Some horn players like the time behind them to be very straight and simple. If you have not developed the control to handle this type of playing, it can be very embarrassing. Mastery of this concept will give your playing a solid foundation from which to grow, although this is certainly only one approach to playing time. Jake Hanna is an excellent example to listen to. (Wittet 1984, 96)

that student drummers ought to play strong accents on both the high hat and... the ride cymbal on the 2nd and 4th beats of every measure.... In fact, this way of playing could not possibly 'swing' in 4/4 time as it would effectively create a discontinuity in the rhythmic line, cutting each measure into two disparate parts. This would only be useful and appropriate in creating a strong '2' feel such as might be needed in the last chorus of an Ellington composition of the 1930's" (www.chuckisraeljazz.com/index.php/blog/item/68-jazz-drumming-from-a-bass-player-composer-s-point-of-view). Israel's further states: "The ride cymbal beat expresses a rhythmic 'line' rather than a 'one note at a time' pattern. That line is built on a base (not bass) line of evenly accented quarter notes into which are added subtly accented nuances.... Into this quarter note line, shorter note values are interjected at a reduced volume before the 3rd and 1st beats.... They are better understood as embellishments of the essential quarter notes which follow them.... They act in fact as 'grace' notes and are usefully understood in that way" (ibid).

⁴⁵ Tracks found on the CD compilation: *Complete Jackie McLean & Miles Davis Studio Sessions* (JC 1006: 2007) reveal, in a well-recorded manner, Clarke's "tipping" technique stressing four strong quarter notes to the bar.

Apart from developing a command of the basic jazz ride rhythm, Blackley's instruction also explores at length, the various syncopated accents which can be used to colour, punctuate and propel the time. The following example depicts how syncopation can be used to establish rhythmical variations within ride cymbal phrasing.

Fig. 4.6 “Basic Time 11” (Upbeat of 1, 2 and 3)



The preceding illustration provides a clear-cut example of how syncopated accents can be used to create a rhythmical line. Blackley states: “The word syncopation means ‘disturbed accent,’ or taking the accent or strong pulse from its regular position and placing it in an irregular position. Two of the most common ways of creating syncopation is by the use of ties or rests.... By tying the upbeat of 1 to the downbeat of 2 ... we have created a reversal of sound or stress on the first two notes of the bar” (Blackley 2001, 13-14).

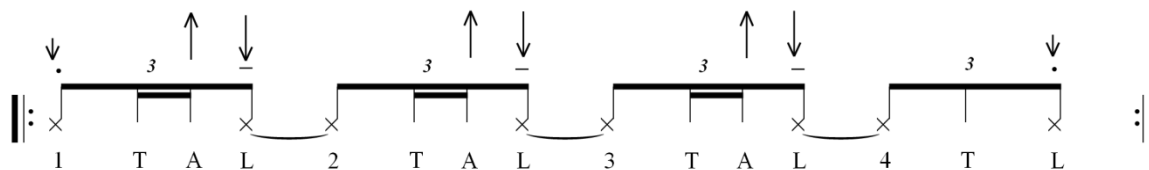
The above example also introduces an additional stroke known as a tap stroke. When a weak pulse falls on a downbeat, because of a displaced accent, it is played as a light tap one inch above the cymbal. When studying with Blackley, through using boxing parlance, he likened this stroke to a jab followed by a punch.⁴⁶ Blackley states: “The weak pulse on the downbeat of 1 is a light tap followed by three strong upbeat pulses.

⁴⁶ The boxing analogy stems from the fact that Blackley was an amateur boxer as a young man.

The weak pulse on the upbeat of 4 is a skip beat dropped from a low level followed by a light tap on the downbeat of 1. Hear and feel an extension of musical sound from one upbeat to the next, and feel the resolution from the skip beat to the downbeat of 1” (ibid, 44).

The following illustration demonstrates the physical motions involved in playing an upbeat accent on the ‘let’ count. To facilitate an even execution of upbeats, observe how the wind-up or anticipatory stroke occurs precisely on the sixteenth-note following the middle triplet pulse.

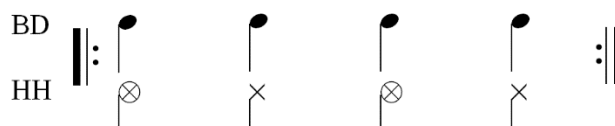
Fig. 4.7 “Basic Time 11” including the anticipatory stroke and downswing



Once the student has attained a sufficient mental and physical grounding of each basic time study and its right hand (or left hand) procedure, Blackley has the student apply feet “basic time” to the respective exercises. “Basic time” played with the feet requires feathering the bass drum in four using the “heel down” technique and allowing the beater ball of the bass drum pedal to rebound two inches off the batter head with each stroke. Conversely, the hi-hat is played with a well-defined snap on beats 2 and 4 using the “heel up” hi-hat technique. Blackley encourages the student to drop the left foot heel on beats 1 and 3 and use a jump motion for beats 2 and 4. This method allows the student to achieve a consistent pulsation of quarter notes on the hi-hat while only sounding beats 2

and 4. The following illustration depicts feet “basic time.” The encircled hi-hat note heads found on beats 1 and 3 indicate a silent stroke executed by dropping the left foot heel onto the hi-hat heel plate.⁴⁷

Fig. 4.8 “Feet Basic Time”



Blackley further states:

Irrespective of the method used in playing the bass drum and hi-hats, it is imperative that you think of a shuffle feel being applied to the foot movement. The feet must strike together on the downbeats, and release together [on] the upbeats. (Let counts). The inner rhythm of the feet must match the skip beat of the shuffle and ride rhythm. You should feel as though you are shuffling with your entire being.... You must swing from the four limbs. (ibid, 14)

Incidentally, once the above procedure has been mastered, Blackley encourages the student to apply bass drum strokes to all the strong pulses or tied notes contained within the various basic time studies.

The Shuffle and Triplet Extensions

Once the student has procured a sufficient familiarity with the basic time studies, Blackley recommends that the student complement the cymbal phrases with rhythmical elaborations known as the shuffle and triplet extensions. The following illustration

⁴⁷ For visual documentation of the above bass drum and hi-hat techniques, see Jojo Mayer’s instructional DVD entitled *Secret Weapons for the Modern Drummer-Part II: A Guide to Foot Technique* (2014. Milwaukee: Hudson Limited).

displays how a skeletal rhythmic figure can be fleshed out by the shuffle and triplet extensions.

Fig. 4.9 “Basic Time 6” filled out with the Shuffle and Triplet Extensions

The figure shows three musical staves illustrating rhythmic variations for 'Basic Time 6'. Each staff begins with a skeletal rhythmic figure consisting of a quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note, with a '3' above the dotted quarter indicating a triplet extension.

- Basic Rhythm:** The first staff shows the skeletal figure on a single staff labeled 'RH CYM'. The triplet extension is indicated by a bracket over the dotted quarter note.
- Shuffle Extension:** The second staff shows the skeletal figure on two staves: 'RH CYM' and 'LH SN'. The triplet extension is played on the snare drum. The notation includes eighth notes and a dotted quarter note, with a '3' above the dotted quarter.
- Triplet Extension:** The third staff shows the skeletal figure on two staves: 'RH CYM' and 'LH SN'. The triplet extension is played on the snare drum. The notation includes eighth notes and a dotted quarter note, with a '3' above the dotted quarter.

Below the staves, the letters 'L' and 'R' indicate the hand used for the snare drum strokes in the Shuffle and Triplet Extension variations.

The use of the shuffle and triplet extensions pervades Blackley’s method and is also applied to the three and five-beat figures and the two-bar melodic motifs (jazz lines).

Initially, the extensions are to be played on the snare drum. However, Blackley suggests that the student experiment with moving and orchestrating the extensions around the snare drum and toms while the right hand plays the basic rhythm on the ride cymbal.

Blackley advises:

When control and understanding is attained, search for sounds and textures, by allowing the extension to move clockwise, then counter-clockwise, then random, around the drum set. The main focus however, must always be on the RH basic rhythm. (ibid 24)

The concept of interpreting rhythmic figures with the shuffle and triplet extensions can be heard in the drumming of Alan Dawson, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones and several others.

Barry Elmes states, “Jim Blackley’s method book *The Essence of Jazz Drumming* (2001)

makes use of cymbal phrasing exercises and to some extent Jones's concept of filling and supporting phrases using the eighth-note triplet grid" (Elmes 2005, 59).

Slow Tempo Practice

To develop and gain proficiency with Blackley's lesson material, all exercises are to be initially practiced at a slow metronome marking of a quarter note equals 40 beats per minute. The idea of slow tempo practice highlights another important constituent of Blackley's thoughtful methodology. In the ensuing passage, Blackley elaborates on this practice:

The hardest thing is playing slow. The essence of my teaching is built from this premise. I never talk to a student about playing fast. The slower you can learn to play, the happier you will make me.... The essence is in the space. Once you can hear the space with confidence, you can start to do unbelievable things from within that space, and the up tempos become very easy to play. Naturally, you have to practice playing fast as well. But the stress is on playing as slow as we possibly can. Usually, quarter note equals 40 is where I have my students practice their material. We build it up from there. To me, the whole conception and feeling for space comes from the art of playing slow. (Wittet 1984, 97)

Aside from developing an awareness of space, the act of slow practice enables the student to think conscientiously about the physical execution of each stroke in relation to a prescribed notational grid. Musician and academic Malcolm Santiago states:

People basically execute movement in two different ways (or a combination of both). These are *cognitive responses* and *reactive responses*. The *cognitive response* is movement that you consciously set in motion by telling yourself to perform an act. Most of the time, this happens when executing an action for the first time. With cognitive response, the actual signal from brain to muscle moves at about three meters per second or from head to hand in about a third of a second (10-11 km/hour). This is why practicing slowly at first helps you to learn any movement or music correctly, and eliminates poor or inaccurate motor responses. (Santiago 2010, 27)

Also, the slow tempo enables the student to gain an experiential sense of their nervous system and the coordination of their movements. This practice technique is common amongst serious athletes and musicians providing them with an efficacious means of Body Mapping.⁴⁸ Musician and Alexander Technique proponent David Nesmith states: “Body Mapping is the conscious correcting of one’s body map to produce efficient, graceful, and coordinated movement” (<http://poisedforlife.com/Body%20Mapping.html>).⁴⁹

Furthermore, the act of slow tempo practice also broaches the idea of practice as an incontrovertible form of meditation which refines our powers of concentration bringing about a deeper awareness of mind and body. In the article, “Musical Rhythm: Considering the Mind in Time,” musicologists Alex W. Rodriguez and Joe Sorbara reflect on the concept of slow practice and its connection with the Shambhala tradition of Buddhist meditation. Rodriguez and Sorbara state:

The idea that what musicians call “woodshedding” is a kind of meditation opens up, we think, an interesting area of inquiry. We decided to experiment with this idea... as a part of the Time Forms conference at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec [September 2013] where we presented a simple musical technique—the articulation of a slow, steady pulse—as an object of meditation and then asked the participants to use that technique in the performance of a structured improvisation. In addition to our initial questions about the idea of “practice,” we were also attempting to speak to the conference’s main theme by asking if, by bringing awareness to our bodies and minds through the practice of meditating on the articulation of a simple pulse, we might learn something about how we experience time... we’d like to mention that these ideas are rooted firmly in the

⁴⁸ John Jerome’s book *The Sweet Spot in Time* (1982. New York: Avon) provides an insightful study of biomechanics and the synchronous refinement of mind and body through athletic endeavors. The book’s content can be interchangeably applied to musical practice.

⁴⁹ The practice of Body Mapping is a cornerstone of the Alexander Technique. For additional information, see ([www.http://poisedforlife.com/Body%20Mapping.html](http://poisedforlife.com/Body%20Mapping.html)).

teachings of the master drummer, Jim Blackley, with whom Joe studied for many years in Toronto and Barrie, Ontario, and Alex's experience with Shamatha meditation in the Shambhala tradition.... (Rodriguez and Sorbara, 2013)

Other than the meditative attributes described by Rodriguez and Sorbara, the act of slow tempo practice is also a boon to the development of temporal sensitivity enabling one the ability to detect temporal discrepancies within a collective group performance.⁵⁰ Through studying Blackley's material at slow tempos, my cognizance of temporal asynchronies heightened and I was able to better discern expressive variations of the time more commonly known in musician's argot as a "pushing or pulling" of the metrical pulse. The process of learning how to maintain a consistent metrical pulse involves the development of metrical entrainment or rhythmic attending. Metrical entrainment can be regarded as a perceptual capacity to coordinate our attentional powers or motor behaviour with isochronous events in a musical or non-musical environment.⁵¹

In musical or non-musical contexts there have been many studies of rhythmic synchronization, anticipation, and attention. The simplest studies of entrainment involve having subjects tap along with a metronome at varying tempos (i.e., tapping in 1:1 coordination with metronome clicks). Tapping studies involve not only attention but also action, a behaviour (tapping in synchrony) that depends on rhythmic attending. (London 2004, 12)

Due to the delimitative extent of this work, perhaps a future study can delve further into the impact of slow tempo practice and its psychological and perceptual ramifications.

⁵⁰ See, Prögler, J.A. 1995. "Searching for Swing: Participatory Discrepancies in the Jazz Rhythm Section." *Ethnomusicology*, 39 (1): 21-54. Also see, Butterfield, Matthew. 2010. "Participatory Discrepancies and the Perception of Beats in Jazz." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 27 (3): 157-176.

⁵¹ For more on metric entrainment see pages 12-14 of Justin London's book, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter* (2004: Oxford University Press).

Articulation and Phonetics as Applied to a Musical Line

Other than accentuating the beneficial importance of slow practice, Blackley's method also addresses the concept of shaping musical lines using articulation and the practice of vocalizing musical phrases with phonetics. As was evinced previously with the exploration of the basic time studies, Blackley's method presents the idea of moulding rhythmic figures and phrases through the variegated use of strong and weak pulses.

Blackley states:

No other part of the jazz drummer's technique is more misunderstood or neglected than that of articulation. Irrespective of the metronomic perfection of the time and rhythm, it is the subtlety of articulation which brings forth its proper motion and poetic quality. To repeat, music is a language which involves conversation, and it must contain the correct punctuations and nuances, in order to capture the ear of the listener and deliver its intended message.... Developing a feeling for the phrase is a most important quality which must be attained, but if each note within that phrase is not nourished with its special degree of light and shade, then the phrase will not dance its special dance. (Blackley 2001, 13-14)

Working in tandem with the development of articulation, Blackley has the student vocalize the various musical lines by means of phonetics. Once the student has adequately internalized the eighth-note triplet grid through counting: 1-trip-let, 2-trip-let, 3-trip-let, 4-trip-let; Blackley has the student verbalize only the downbeats of the triplet subdivision. At this juncture in the student's temporal development, the eighth-note triplet subdivision should now be an inner feeling enabling the student to sing the rhythms phonetically and hear them as pure and musical sounds. By attributing a phonetic sound to the rhythm being played, the student's ear is invariably linked to the sound emanating from the cymbal. A similar and much more sophisticated phonetic

approach can be found in the art and practice of North Indian tabla.⁵² Former Blackley student Chris Lesso states:

If you were going to sing and go through his [Blackley's] method, he demanded a commitment from you. It's also the tabla thing. That's where I saw that too; you start by singing (sings: Dah, Te Re Ki Te, Dah). You have to sing it and play it and you're committing to it and it's a musical line. I'm just singing a North Indian kaida and then obviously those all have strokes with them. But, it's a musical line, I'm not thinking of it as (sings: one/ one, two, three, four, five, six/ one, two/ one, two, three, four) blocks and five-stroke rolls. It's all about the musical line. (Chris Lesso, in conversation with the author, May 29, 2014)

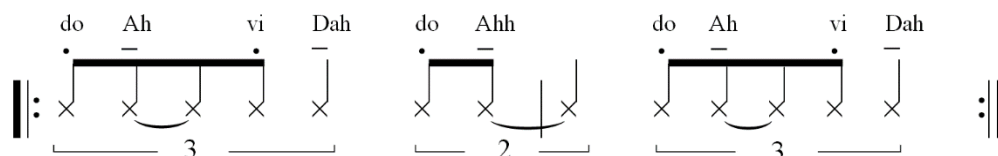
The following illustration exhibits the key rhythmic figures of Blackley's method including the corresponding phonetic syllables:

Fig. 4.10 Basic Rhythmic Figures including Phonetic Syllables

⁵² For more information pertaining to North Indian tabla and its phonetics, see David Courtney's article, "The Cyclic Form in North Indian Tabla." 1995. *Percussive Notes*, Vol.33, No.6: 32-45.

This next illustration exhibits a two-bar ride cymbal phrase taken from “Section G” of *The Essence of Jazz Drumming* (Page 128, Ex. 6). The example conflates a few of the basic phonetic syllables presented above:

Fig. 4.11 Two-Bar Melodic Motif (Jazz Line) with Phonetics

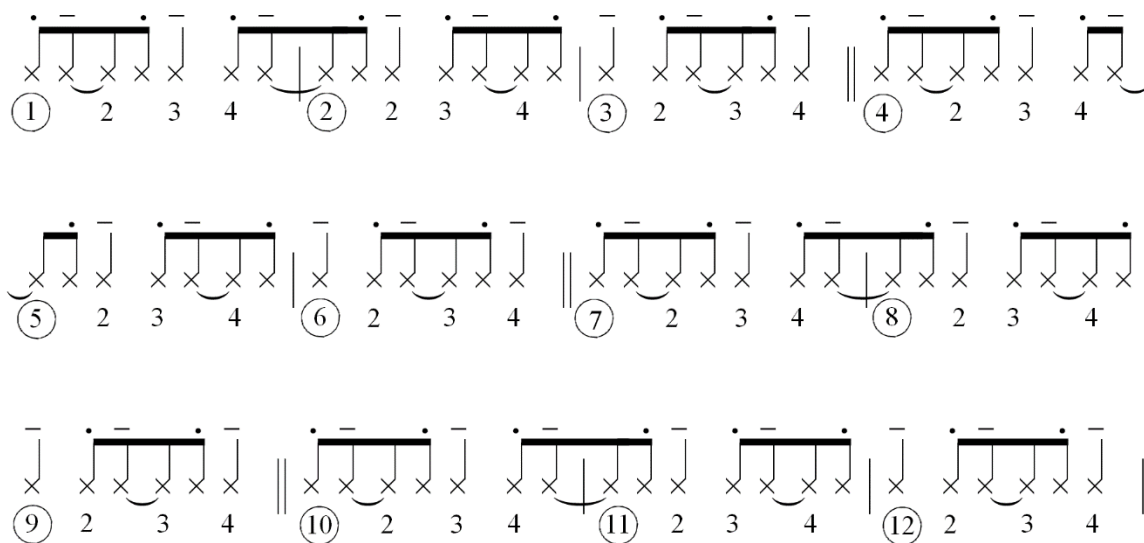


The Superimposition of Three-Beat and Five-Beat Figures over 4/4 Time

Other than articulating and singing musical lines, Blackley’s method also deals with the superimposition of three-beat and five-beat figures over 4/4 time. Blackley states: “The musical importance of the 3-beat figure cannot be overstated. A few listen[s] to the brilliant composite solos of Max Roach and the creative time playing of Elvin Jones should clarify what we mean” (Blackley 2001, 77). Blackley further states: “Superimposing three over four is one of the most important tools of the improviser” (ibid 1961, 51).

Blackley’s approach to superimposing three and five-beat figures over 4/4 time involves having the student count, feel, hear and think of the three or five-beat figure in the context of 4/4 time. The following illustration demonstrates this approach:

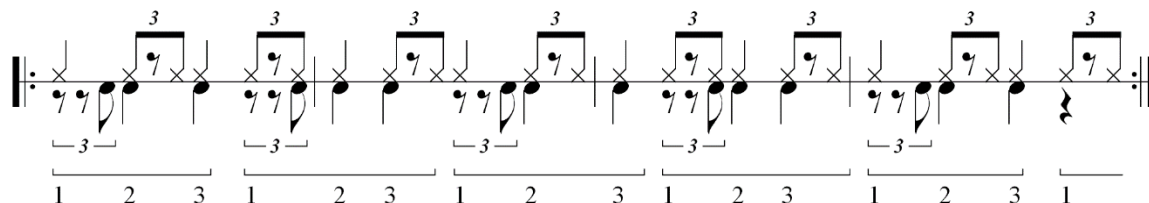
Fig. 4.12 Three-beat figure superimposed over twelve bars of 4/4 time



Blackley's pedagogical conception of superimposing three-beat figures over 4/4 time differs significantly from earlier treatments of this topic found most notably in Section I, Part III and Section II, Part III of Joel Rothman's jazz drumming anthology, *The Compleat Jazz Drummer* (1974).⁵³ In the segment entitled, "Coordinated Rhythmic Patterns Phrased in Three," Rothman states, "I might also add that I strongly advise counting the written notation in three, even though the time signature is in 4/4 time. In other words, count according to the phrasing. This will not only make the reading easier, but it will also help to develop a more relaxed feel for playing the superimposed phrases of three against a 4/4 ride rhythm" (Rothman 1974, 185). The following illustration depicts Rothman's approach:

⁵³ Joel Rothman (1938-) was born in Brooklyn, New York and is widely known as an innovative author of hundreds of drum books dealing with a broad range of jazz, rock, Latin, rudimental and orchestral-related musical topics. Rothman studied with notable teachers such as Sam Ulano, Ed Shaughnessey, Jim Chapin, Saul Goodman and others. Rothman continues to write and publish drum books and has been teaching and living in London, England since the late 1970s.

Fig. 4.13 Three-beat figure played on snare drum while ride cymbal plays jazz ride beat in 4/4 time



The preceding illustration demonstrates erroneous thinking in Rothman's pedagogical approach to the superimposition of three-beat figures over 4/4 time. If the student was to count and add the number of three-beat figures played in the four-bar phrase, they would no longer be thinking of the exercise in the context of 4/4 time. The student's attention would invariably shift to 3/4 time and they could possibly lose track of where they are in a 4/4 song form. Blackley states:

When I teach this concept to my students, I do not write out the 3-bar resolutions as they would be expected by this time in their studies to have memorized all 16 figures and be able to superimpose them over a phrase of any length from memory.... These studies are not reading exercises. They are tools to develop your... improvising skills.... Play over blues and rhythm changes. Be sure you know where you are in the music at all times. (Blackley 2001, 99)

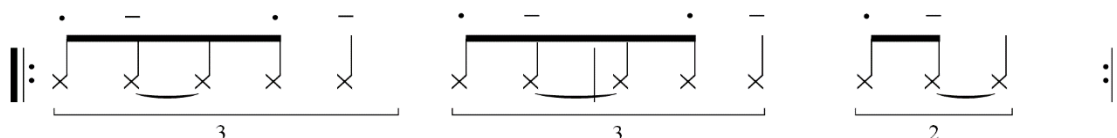
Other than the cross-rhythmic superposing of three-beat and five-beat figures over 4/4, Blackley also instructs his students to superimpose five-beat figures over 3/4 time; two-bar phrases in 4/4 time over 3/4 time; three-beat figures over 5/4 time, and two-bar phrases in 4/4 over 5/4 (See "Section V" of *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*).

Two-Bar Melodic Motifs (Jazz Lines)

Besides the superimposition of three and five-beat figures over 4/4 time and other meters, Blackley also explores the conflation and development of various three-beat and two-beat figures which are used to punctuate turnarounds on the last two bars of an eight-

bar phrase or a twelve-bar phrase. The ensuing illustration exhibits the type of two-bar motifs found in “Section G” of *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*:

Fig. 4.14 Two-Bar Melodic Motif



The numerous two-bar phrases found in Blackley’s method can also be used as ride rhythm variations for comping purposes and can be further developed into thematic ideas for the intent of soloing. Although the phrases are composed of various three-beat figure possibilities and are configured using a 3 + 3 + 2 rhythmic scheme which is permuted through eight positions, Blackley advises the student to hear “... each motif as a musical phrase, not as a mathematical equation” (ibid, 107).

Three Basic Forms of Musical Notation

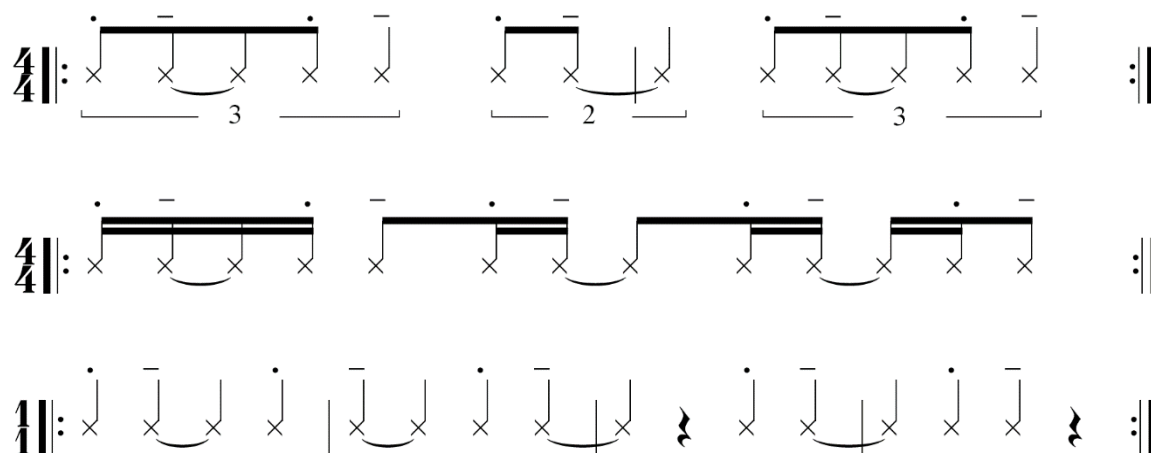
Another unique hallmark of Blackley’s method is the interpretation of figures and phrases using three basic forms of notation known as common, diminished and augmented. Blackley states: “If you hope to attain complete freedom as a time player, improviser and interpreter of the written part, then you must develop a clear understanding of the three forms of musical notation and how they are applied to cover all tempos from slow to fast” (ibid, 155).

In the succeeding illustration, a two-bar motif written in common notation (eighth-note syncopation) is then converted, through diminution, to a one-bar exercise using sixteenth-note syncopation and lastly, the two-bar motif is lengthened into a four-bar

phrase through augmentation (quarter note syncopation). Exercises converted into diminished notation can be used for rock and funk-related time playing and phrasing. Additionally, exercises transposed to diminished notation can also be used for slower jazz ballads. Conversely, when a two-bar phrase written in common notation is transposed to augmented notation, the motif can now be effectively used in up-tempo playing through hearing and thinking of the four-bar phrase in 1/1 time. Blackley states:

When playing the jazz ride beat or any figures in augmented notation at fast to very fast tempos it is best to eliminate thinking, feeling and hearing in 4/4 and think of the time signature as 1/1. This means that the quarter notes and each measure would be counted 1-e+-ah, etc. By thinking, feeling and hearing in 1/1, you free the music to breathe and move in a more fluent and relaxed manner. (ibid)

Fig. 4.15 Two-bar motif in common notation converted to diminished notation and augmented notation



Applying the Exercises to Music and Hearing the Bass Line, Chord Changes and Melody

Once the student has developed a clear mental and physical grasp of each exercise through working with a metronome, Blackley encourages the student to apply the various exercises to music. Through applying the exercises to music, the student begins to cultivate practical musical skills derived from hearing and developing an understanding of the bass line, chord changes and melody. Blackley states:

I think that environment is one of the most important things in development. Music is a language and has to be learned.... If you want to be a jazz drummer and have never heard jazz being played, then you're not going to learn to play jazz. You have to expose yourself to the jazz language. The first thing that every musician should be taught is the art of listening... the important thing you must give the young student is direction about understanding structure, listening to chord changes, listening to the bass line, how to play the time and punctuate the phrases—these are the things that a musical player must learn. (Wittet 1984, 28)

Blackley achieves this practical development through having his students apply exercises to John Coltrane's 1960 recording: *Coltrane Plays the Blues* (Atlantic CD 1382), and various play-along CDs such as Allan Cox's "*Meet the Bass Player...*" (FCM001), Jamey Aebersold's *Vol. 42: Blues in All Keys* (1988. Jamey Aebersold Jazz, Inc. New Albany) and for up-tempo playing: Jamey Aebersold's *Vol. 61: Burnin' Up-Tempo Jazz Only for the Brave* (1994. Jamey Aebersold Jazz, Inc. New Albany). Additionally, as a means of facilitating the performance of odd time signatures, Blackley has his students combine and apply various three-beat figures to Miles Davis' "All Blues"⁵⁴ and for the development of playing in 5/4, Blackley has his students apply the

⁵⁴ The composition "All Blues" appears on Miles Davis' monumental recording: *Kind of Blue* (1959. Columbia/Legacy: CK 64935).

various five- beat figures to Brad Mehldau’s 1997 recording of the Rogers and Hart composition, “I Didn’t Know What Time It Was.”⁵⁵

The Memorization and Recall of Musical Phrases

In conjunction with the development of listening skills, and as a means of assisting students in the act of extemporization, Blackley’s pedagogy also stresses the importance of memorizing all figures and musical phrases. Through this process, a student will harness the ability to mentally visualize, hear and recall musical lines for the intent of developing a dialogic interplay with other musicians. In a 1968 *Down Beat* interview conducted by jazz writer Ira Gitler, Blackley espoused the following view point, “ ‘I prepare the students mentally as well as physically,’ ... ‘I teach them how to listen—to hear chord changes and a good bass line: The ability to hear these things develops a good drummer’ ” (Gitler 1968, 16). Earlier in the interview, Blackley made the following controversial remark, “ ‘Reading is important,’ ... ‘but I stress that music can be made totally by ear. Too many drummers get tied up in a chart and no music comes out’ ” (ibid, 15).

Consequently, Blackley’s statement elicited a contentious reaction from his former teacher Sam Ulano, whose response to Blackley appeared in Gitler’s *Down Beat* article, “Drum Debate” (*Down Beat*, May 16, 1968). Ulano retorted, “ ‘You can’t do anything totally by ear until you have learned your instrument and how to read. You can’t write a story unless you know the English language. The reason, I take offense is that, I feel it

⁵⁵ The track “I Didn’t Know What Time It Was” appears on Brad Mehldau’s 1997 recording, *The Art of the Trio: Volume One* (Warner Bros. 9 46260 -2).

gives the young student a distorted picture' ” (Gitler, May 1968, 10). Blackley’s riposte to Ulano which appeared in the column, “Chords & Discords: A Forum for Readers” (*Down Beat*, June 27, 1968) illuminated many of the musical shortcomings found in drum set pedagogy. In his rebuttal to Ulano, Blackley stated the following:

... I am involved in the teaching of music to students who wish to use the drum set as a medium for musical expression, and it is this involvement with music that makes the ear a prime requisite.... With the lessons of nature so obviously surrounding our daily lives, it would appear to be a simple task to apply these principles to any mode of learning, but so far apart have the teaching of drums and the making of music become in many areas, that the ear, our main line of communication, is too seldom called upon to perform. To be sure, there are dozens of outstanding drum teachers throughout the country, but the number of teachers involving their students in conditions and attitudes comparable to on-stage performance is very indeed low. How many drum students during their studies have been involved in the following: 1) The study of form and structure as applied to modern music. 2) Direction in listening to the chord progressions and comping patterns of the piano player, and how to rhythmically compliment same. 3) Direction in listening to bass lines, and how to rhythmically compliment same. 4) The meaning of consonance and dissonance, and how this affects the drummer. ... Max (Roach) employed these principles magnificently in his solo work, so much so that one could walk in on a performance at any given time and tell which part of the chorus form he was in. 5) The difference between an arrangement written with a vertical line, and one written with a horizontal line, and how this affects the drummer, re conception, fills, set ups, etc. ... 6) The importance of space in music, and how great tensions, color and intensity can be created by its use. (Listen to Duke, Monk and Miles) It has been my observation that the number of drummers involved in studies of this nature is very indeed low.... It is for this reason that many fine musicians involved in regular studio work thirst for jazz activity, for they are fully aware of the importance of keeping the ear at a high level of participation. (Blackley 1968, 10)

Although Blackley recognized the importance of developing sight-reading skills, he felt that many music students were too reliant on the visual learning of jazz standards. The following words from Frank Falco, a Toronto-based pianist and educator, recall Blackley’s sentiments on this issue expressed at a mid-1970s master class conducted at York University. Falco states:

So, he came up to do a clinic and it was an old time, inspirational kind of clinic where it was more about the attitudinal approach to playing rather than the substantive, like, he didn't go up there and say, "Now, do this figure and do that figure." He, sort of inspired everybody by saying these iconic phrases like, "Burn your books" [mimicking brogue]. He didn't want anybody to be reading music. He noticed that was a distraction to the sort of inspirational well because if you are staring like this [with your nose in the chart], you don't listen as much. Many people thought that; well, he insisted on it. His idea was, it's better to play the same three tunes and get deeper and deeper and deeper into the tunes so you can really explore all the elements of what you're supposed to do, as well as what the collective is supposed to do rather than play a thousand tunes reading them. (Frank Falco, in conversation with the author, November 18, 2014)

The Importance of Studying the Piano and Jazz Harmony

As a means of nurturing aural skills and developing a deeper comprehension of the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic components of jazz composition and performance, Blackley encourages his neophyte drum students to commence the study of piano and jazz harmony from the onset. Blackley states:

I encourage my students who are planning a career in music to study piano, with a special emphasis on jazz harmony. In fact, I tell them to make the piano their main musical instrument for I know that the musical rewards will be far reaching. To every young drummer who wishes musical success don't delay. Start the study of piano and jazz harmony now! You have plenty of time to become accomplished in both areas. If you combine the study of piano and jazz harmony, with my book, *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*, you will be building a solid foundation for musical jazz performance. (Blackley 2002, 67)

CHAPTER V

BLACKLEY'S PEDAGOGY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON HIS STUDENTS

Paying significant attention to the socio-cultural influences of identity construction and construal, this chapter will explore how Blackley's pedagogy impacted the musical and artistic development of his students. When examining the impact of Blackley's pedagogy, an ethnographic approach is taken through interviewing a sizable number of his students and culling data from their sentiments, experiences and memories. This ethnographic modus operandi is also apparent in the scholarly work of Ingrid Monson (1955-), whose book, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (1996) deals with socio-cultural factors and how they shape and inspire collective improvisations and interplay within a jazz group.⁵⁶ Similarly, Gareth Dylan Smith's important study, *I Drum, Therefore I Am: Being and Becoming a Drummer* also embraces an ethnographic approach. Smith states:

I wanted to collect rich data for this book, containing lots of words describing human experiences; what I absolutely did not wish to end up with was a pile of numbers somehow purporting to quantify, yet ultimately (indeed, inevitably) serving to obfuscate what I hoped would be a hugely colourful series of snapshots of experiences of being a drummer. As a drummer and as a writer I have often found mathematics, certainly in the arithmetical sense, to fall far short of addressing my needs. While it may be, on one level, the role of a drummer to keep time in a band, it is that which a living, breathing, emoting musician adds to the mere functionality of a pulse that gives me the joy I feel when I engage with

⁵⁶ Monson, Ingrid T. 1996. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

the instrument. It is possible for a musical artist to conjure with drums more shades, pigments and emotions than any sequencer or metronome will permit. So it is with words as well. I have occasionally wrestled with self-levelled accusations of laziness on account for my dislike adhering to the strict confines of graphs, pie charts and statistics. However, it became obvious throughout my research that I created a far heftier and fascinating workload by largely avoiding the more cut-and-dried solutions offered by certain quantitative methodologies. (Smith 2013, 7-8)

Perhaps a future and extended study on Blackley's pedagogy can provide, through transcriptions of recorded performances, a quantitative analysis of Blackley's pedagogy and its influence on his students.

Choosing the Right Teacher: Seeking out the Master

In the process of commencing this ethnographic study, I asked each participant, "How did you discover Jim Blackley?" Many of the interviewees expressed that they were apprised of Blackley through musical colleagues who studied or were studying with the pedagogue. Terry Clarke states:

I was trying to flip a coin between hearing about Jim Blackley and... another teacher in Vancouver. So, I was ready to make a move. I was probably fourteen or fifteen by then and I ran into Al [Wiertz] because we had been playing at a club called the Black Spot in Vancouver....⁵⁷ It was like a neighbourhood jazz club; imagine something three blocks from where I lived, and we could go any time of the day or night and go in there and play. And so, I meet Al Wiertz there. You know everybody would converge there and I think I asked Al, "What do you think about this guy and this guy Jim Blackley?" And he said, "I just started studying with Jim, so check him out, I think he's the guy." (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014)

⁵⁷ Al Wiertz (1941-1997) was a Vancouver-based jazz drummer who studied with Jim Blackley in the early to mid-1960s. Wiertz was a contemporary of Terry Clarke, Blaine Wikjord and others who converged at Jim Blackley's Drum Village for instruction. Wiertz had performed with the legendary jazz guitarist Lenny Breau (1941-1984) and shared the stage with other Vancouver jazz luminaries such as Bob Murphy, Dale Jacobs, Pat Coleman, Lincoln Goines, Neil Swainson and others. Wiertz possessed a playing style strongly influenced by the post-bop drumming of Elvin Jones (1927-2004) and Tony Williams (1945-1997). For a sampling of Wiertz's drumming see the link: soundlink.com/bands/default.cfm?bandID=1118983.

Similarly, the Montreal-born drummer Lorne Nehring learned about Blackley through developing an acquaintance with Terry Clarke. Nehring states:

Before I was living here [Toronto], I was touring here a lot out of Montreal. I was living in Montreal at the time and from going to gigs I just got talking to Terry [Clarke] looking for a teacher. Because there was nothing in Montreal at the time; Claude [Ranger] was here... most of the guys from Montreal were here at that time.⁵⁸ So anyway, through conversations with Terry he turned me onto Jim and so I did a little research and figured out what was going on and kind of decided, or once I knew there was a teacher here ... that was it, it's time to make the move. I planned to move, but I didn't have all the pieces in place. (Lorne Nehring, in conversation with the author, March 25, 2014)

In an age preceding websites and online resources, many of the interviewees learned about Blackley through viva voce recommendations. Bob McLaren states:

...Terry Clarke had moved to town and Jerry Fuller was already playing with jazz guys at night, but he wasn't doing much studio work. But Terry Clarke was working in the day time and playing jazz at night and I thought, "That's a good thing. I wouldn't mind doing that." So, then I found out who he studied with and Jim Blackley had recently moved to town. So that's how that worked. (Bob McLaren, in conversation with the author, March 30, 2014)

Aside from learning about Blackley through word of mouth recommendations, many of the participants sought out Blackley at a time when they were prepared to embark on a serious course of study with a master teacher. Montreal-born drummer Ken Rabow states:

I went through many teachers and several instruments in my teens before I finally found a true master drum teacher, Jim Blackley in Toronto. Jim profoundly changed my understanding of music, drums, practicing and life. When I would

⁵⁸ Montreal-born drummer/composer/bandleader Claude Ranger (1941- ?) was an iconic and hugely influential Canadian jazz musician who performed in the jazz scenes of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Ranger has performed and recorded with Brian Barley, Don Thompson, Kenny Wheeler, Doug Riley, Moe Koffman, Dewey Redman, Sonny Greenwich and several others. In 1987, Ranger moved to Vancouver and in April of 2002, Ranger was listed as a missing person by the RCMP. Ranger's musical and infinitely creative drumming was reminiscent of the polyrhythmic stylings of post-bop innovators such as Elvin Jones and Tony Williams. See, www.clauderanger.com. Also, see Mark Miller's biography, *Claude Ranger: Canadian Jazz Legend* (2017. Self-published).

rave about him to my friends they would ask if I regretted going to all my previous teachers. I replied that if I had not tried other things, I would not have appreciated Jim as much. (ourkids.net/blog/finding-the-perfect-music-teacher-1362)

In response to the above sentiments, the following statement from Blackley emphasizes the importance of studying with an appropriate teacher. Blackley states: “The key to sound musical performance rests with your ability to listen, and having access to the proper performance material, so be absolutely sure when selecting a teacher, that your teacher is capable of preparing you for the field of music you wish to enter” (Blackley 2001, 11).

Ascribing Pedagogic Authority

Other than finding a suitable teacher, many of the interviewees, in describing their first lesson with Blackley, articulated revelatory events which led them to trust and ascribe Blackley with pedagogic authority. Referencing cultural sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, musicologist Smith states:

An important consideration in learning or enculturation is the question of whence learners choose to seek or accept instruction, information and understanding—to whom does one ascribe the wisdom and right to impart that which one is willing to consider valuable and desirable knowledge? Bourdieu and Passeron refer to this issue in terms of ‘Pedagogic Authority (PAu).’ They observe that the effectiveness of teaching in a given situation relies on the acceptance by the taught person of the PAu of the teacher: ‘In real learning situations... recognition of the legitimacy of the act of transmission, that is, of the PAu of the transmitter, conditions the reception of the information and, even more, the accomplishment of the transformative action capable of transforming that information into a mental formation (training)’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p.19).⁵⁹ For drummers one might add a physical dimension to that training. Bourdieu and Passeron’s basic point is that ‘authority plays a part in all pedagogy’ (1977, p.10),

⁵⁹ Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C. 1977. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage Publications.

and that, in order for learning to derive from a teaching situation, that authority must in turn be recognized. (Smith 2013, 35)

In the ensuing passage, Toronto-based drummer Aubrey Dayle reflects on how he submitted to Blackley's pedagogic authority after feebly attempting to play evenly spaced quarter notes at 40 beats per minute. Dayle states:

So, lesson number one, he took out a metronome... he set it at 40 [bpm]... I didn't know anyone practiced anything at 40... "What does he want me to do?" "Maybe, he's just testing how well I play double time," I thought to myself. I was ... just speculating in my head and he said, "Alright, what I want you to do on the ride cymbal is just play along with the metronome—quarter notes." But, he hadn't said how to do it, "Alright, whatever. I can play at any other tempo. I know I can play at this tempo." He kicks it off [laughs], and I go to play—I listen to a bar and I go to play, and I miss the first note. Straight up, like way off. Now, I'm getting nervous, right off the bat. So, I'm going for the second note—unbelievably off and I said, "Oh, my God, I can't do this" [laughs]. Like I just spent three years of some of the most intense musical study: classical theory, history, classical percussion, technique up the yin-yang, playing the most difficult pieces of music and I couldn't play two quarter notes accurately in time [laughs].... It was like I was falling off a cliff. Devastating—he [Jim] was just sitting there smiling and ... that was the thing though, seeing me fall apart, I looked over at him—I must have looked horrified, "Oh my God, I'm screwing this up." He was just really serene about it and it was all good. (Aubrey Dayle, in conversation with the author, April 27, 2014)

Blackley's approach to garnering pedagogic authority was not dissimilar to the methods used by Zen master, Awa Kenzo. In *Zen in the Art of Archery*, author Herrigel questions the master's pedagogical approach:

In talking it over with Mr. Komachiya, I once asked him why the Master had looked on so long at my futile efforts to draw the bow "spiritually," why he had not insisted on the correct breathing right from the start. "A great Master," he replied, "must also be a great teacher. With us the two things go hand in hand. Had he begun the lessons with breathing exercises, he would never have been able to convince you that you owe them anything decisive. You had to suffer shipwreck through your own efforts before you were ready to seize the lifebelt he threw you. Believe me; I know from my own experience that the Master knows you and each of his pupils much better than we know ourselves. He reads in the souls of his pupils more than they care to admit." (Herrigel 1953, 23)

Similarly, Toronto-based drummer Howie Silverman unknowingly contested Blackley's pedagogic authority through suggesting to the pedagogue a self-prescribed course of study.⁶⁰ Silverman states:

So, I came into to see Jim and I took all these books out and I said I want to do this and do that. And I spent about fifteen minutes, really intensely, telling him everything I wanted to do, and he took all the books very nicely and put them back in my brief case and took me to the door and said, "Okay, I'll be in touch." He let me out and I was gone. As I stood in the hallway, I thought, "What the hell just happened." And I didn't know what happened and then I called him, and he wouldn't return my calls... by the time I went to see Jim I was a cocky kid with all kinds of attitude and you know the way you are at that age. So, I returned this time: no books. Anyway, he did say something to me about, "You didn't bring all your books this time, did you?" "I'm really sorry about that." When I went to see him, I just kept apologizing... "I beg you for forgiveness, oh wise one." So, he said, "Either you're going to listen to what I have to say musically and end up working with everybody or listen to your dad." [My dad] who was always influencing me, "Study Buddy Rich, that's the way to go." And I said to Jim, "I want to listen to you." (Howie Silverman, in conversation with the author, October 1, 2014)

Through his primary lesson with Blackley, much to Silverman's chagrin, the drummer became aware of the humility that is essential to studying with any teacher. Blackley states: "The ego is always waiting to be discovered, but hoping not to be found out. To be found out early in life is a true gift. Then the real learning can begin. Do not hide from your weaknesses. Recognize them and take action to eradicate, but do not advertise them to the world in hope of gaining sympathy. Great dangers exist in adverts of this nature" (Blackley 2001, 15).

⁶⁰ Following his studies with Jim Blackley in the early 1970s, Howie Silverman (1953-) toured with Dizzy Gillespie, Peter Appleyard, Moe Koffman, Hagood Hardy, Joe Williams and backed up visiting artists such as Zoot Sims in Toronto's jazz clubs.

The Internalization of Song Form

Other than exploring the sociological implications of recognizing and ascribing pedagogic authority, Blackley's methodology also impacted the musical development of his students through underlining the significant internalization of song structures such as the twelve-bar blues and rhythm changes chorus. Bryan Humphreys states:

I believe he asked me the twelve-bar blues and the rhythm changes and he'd get out, which at that time, was the turntable and he'd have the Jamey Aebersold LPs on and he'd just drop the needle and say, "Okay son, what bar are we in?"... I go, "Well, it kind of feels like" and I'd tell him, "Maybe, it was bar nine, maybe it was bar four or five" depending on whether we were on the one, the four or the five or if we were playing some alternative changes. So, he said the blues form was very important, "Learn to sing the melody." (Bryan Humphreys, in conversation with the author, August 1, 2014)

Like-wise, the following words from Barry Elmes recount a light-hearted incident involving Blackley's unique means of emphasizing the interiorizing of important song forms:

The one thing he did to me at the first lesson, he said, "It is very important to hear the music in your head, it's not out here, it's up here in your head. Alright, I want you to play a blues and I want you to sit at the drums and I want you to play two choruses of it, then I want you to stop playing and I don't want you to stop hearing the music though, I just want you to lay out, then I want you to get up, go outside, and I want you to head over—go for a walk. When you have played fifty choruses make sure you are back here and come back in on beat one." I go outside, and I walked all the way over to Yonge Street. And I got to Yonge Street and there are all these distractions and everything and I'm going, "Oh man, twenty-seven, two, three, four." You know like the twenty-seventh chorus. Then I was worried that I wouldn't get back in time by the fiftieth chorus, not realizing, he's not keeping track! ... but up here I'm freaked because this is my big, first lesson and so I come in and I'm banging on the door and he's not answering the door right away and I'm getting pretty close to the top of the fiftieth chorus [laughs]. He finally opens the door; he must've thought this was hilarious. I ran down the stairs and get to the drums, *bop!* And I started playing again and he kept a straight face. I don't know how he did it. He didn't crack up or anything. It was a great lesson. He was right. Those were the kinds of things that I really needed help with at the time: internalizing music and hearing form, and... not

being a follower on the drums but being the one that is in control of the music that is going on. (Barry Elmes, in conversation with the author, March 18, 2014)

The Benefits of Slow Tempo Practice: Spatial Awareness and Learning How to Move in Time

Other than the internalization of song form, Blackley's pedagogy has also profoundly impacted the temporal development of his students. Through the promulgation of slow tempo practice, Blackley has instilled an acute spatial cognizance in his pupils who have developed the physical motions of timekeeping in relation to specific notational subdivisions. Chris Lesso states:

Within seconds of me playing for my esteemed teacher Jim Blackley at our first lesson, he could already see that he needed to take away instead of adding more. This is his genius as a teacher. He challenged me to play all his exercises at 40bpm.... The impatient part of me that Buddhists call the 'Monkey Mind' was not happy about this at all. Most drummers are very energized and passionate people... and they don't spend much time grooving slowly at 40bpm. I resisted this at first, but after I stuck with it I started to see things I hadn't noticed before, like the deep tone of the ride cymbal, or the warm resonance of the drums. The space between the notes now carried more weight and had more meaning. Jim meticulously does this to all his students, which is akin to tearing you down and building you up again. Eventually I found I was playing less, but was more fully committed to what I was playing. (Lesso 2015, 18)

Similarly, in her initial lessons with Blackley, Julia Cleveland also resisted Blackley's insistence on slow tempo practice. Cleveland states:

At the beginning, I had some resistance to it, I wanted to play faster. But, a lot of his lessons were about that kind of mental aspect of it: resisting the ego to play faster. There were a lot of lessons that were about the mental approach to music and practicing music and playing music... some of the most important things that I learned in my lessons were those jewels of knowledge. So, I remember, I did struggle against the 40 [bpm] a little bit. Not like I didn't do it, but I found it tedious at the beginning. But, then as we worked I got more and more into it and more and more comfortable with [it] and then I think that really started to develop some confidence for me. Playing at 40 [bpm] is harder than playing at 160 [bpm] [laughs]. There's so much space. So, you must be confident with where

everything is going. There's no fudging. (Julia Cleveland, in conversation with the author, November 27, 2014)

Cleveland's contemporary Sly Juhas communicates similar sentiments however, Juhas also elaborates upon the corporeal awareness that one gains from executing physical motions at slow tempos. Juhas states:

It was the first time anyone made me play at those slow, demanding tempos and it was the first time that I sat down and actually thought about physically what I was doing. I never really sat down and... thought about the motion of hitting a cymbal or anything like that. So immediately I became aware of my body and how it was functioning on the drum set and the movements I was making. And then also, just the fact that playing at slow tempos... how much space and how much time is between each note. And you quickly realize how important it is to subdivide and learn all the spaces in between each note. Up until that point, that concept, I always heard about it, but to actually have it in a concrete lesson plan... "This is what you need to work on for this month and this is how you do it and this is for how long you do it for." Immediately, this is it. This is what I have been looking for. It takes the guess work out of it in some way. (Sly Juhas, in conversation with the author, May 22, 2014)

Further teasing out the ideas expressed by Juhas, drummer/educator Steve Mancuso likens the physical motions of Blackley's technique to a dance in mid-air. Mancuso states:

What Jim taught me was time... and space, that's what I learned from Jim. Initially, the opening of my eyes with Jim in that first phase—when I studied with him and started practicing his stuff—dealt with really understanding the space between notes and understanding the subdivisions—just basically... how to really feel time and feel space. In other words, what you don't play is just as important as what you play. And I think the whole idea of the motion of the stick, what also has been coined: stick choreography—how the sticks are supposed to move. So, he taught me: it's not just hitting the instrument, there's a dance that's happening with the sticks before even hitting the instrument. There's an art to motion. And I think with Jim—because this kind of brought me to a whole other thing in my journey as a drummer—is that because Jim was a dancer... I think he understood how the body should move. Like Freddie Gruber talks about, "It's what's

happening in the air before you even touch the ground.”⁶¹ (Steve Mancuso, in conversation with the author, September 26, 2014)

Elaborating on Mancuso’s thoughts, the following words from Anthony Michelli illuminate the benefits of slow practice and its influence on the refinement of time, touch and tone production. Michelli states:

I was beginning to understand how motion equals sound and how control equals sound and expression. So, if you didn’t have control of your stick and where you were hitting the cymbal and intent of the downbeat and then the backstroke and how deeply you are playing into the drum, or whether it’s a “drop stroke.” If you don’t have control of those things, then your tone is all over the map. And that’s when I started realizing these four exercises [“Basic Time Studies” 1-4] that he gave me at the beginning of my first lesson are for me to realize that I’m all over the map with my tone; my sound and even—time, because those elements are not working together. They are fighting each other. I slowly started to realize what was going on. (Anthony Michelli, in conversation with the author, March 20, 2014)

The Influence of Articulating and Singing Musical Lines

Operating part and parcel with the physical mechanics of time keeping is the development of articulation which enables the drummer to shape musical phrases on the ride cymbal through strong and weak pulses. Through the development of this invaluable and highly musical technique, many of Blackley’s students have acquired the ability to create and generate a poetic and dance-like quality in their playing. Sly Juhas states:

I never really thought of it that way up until that point and... everyone I guess understands about phrasing, and naturally shaping a song or a phrase. But to get into the guts of it... the way he does is a whole new thing; a whole new process for me. I think you become more aware of shape and just the effect of what the drums can actually do to something. You can play a rock groove and accent the upbeats instead of the downbeats and ... suddenly the drum set can really change

⁶¹ For more insight into Freddie Gruber’s pedagogical approach, see the video tape, *Freddie Gruber: Drum Set Masterclass* (1995. Miami: Warner Bros. Publications). Also see, Bruce Becker’s DVD, *Drumming Concepts with Bruce Becker, Concepts and Philosophies: A Comprehensive Approach for the Development of Drum Technique* (2013. Los Angeles: Bruce Becker).

the tune sounding one way or the other and that all comes from the way we decide to phrase it, and to shape it, and shade it and that all comes from knowing the articulation and being aware of it. You can play all those figures even just in your bass drum foot and articulate it and all of a sudden— a weaker hit and stronger hit and suddenly there is all this bubbly motion going on. (Sly Juhas, in conversation with the author, May 22, 2014)

In a like-minded way, Toronto-based drummer Mackenzie Longpre also shares Juhas' sentiments regarding articulation and its adaptability to rock and funk drumming styles.

Longpre states:

I think, like most young drummers, there's no subtlety in the playing. Particularly in the jazz ride pattern it is easy to see that there's no dynamic flow in there at all, and so, I think I became intensely aware of—any time you are playing consecutive notes, trying to shape them a little bit. So, even if you are playing a rock back-beat with eighth notes... I was really into... accenting the downbeats and letting the eighth notes in between go. So, giving the accent to the downbeats or giving the accent to the upbeats, you know, switching it around. So, when you are in high school, you inevitably end up playing more rock music with your pals or whatever and you're searching for places to play jazz. But, I found ways to apply Jim's stuff to the rock and funk thing. (Mackenzie Longpre, in conversation with the author, August 5, 2014)

Apart from the significant impact of shaping musical phrases with articulation,

Blackley's approach to vocalizing musical lines has also saliently influenced the musical development of his students. Chris Lesso states

... That was also a game changer. This is the fifth limb ... your voice is the fifth limb and if you can't say it, you can't play it. And how you sing it is going to determine how it comes out of your instrument. And so, all the singing was like: ding, ding, ding, ding [sings downbeats on ride cymbal]; so, you can hear how I'm singing that. I'm committed but I'm not yelling it, I'm not rushed. So, I was making that attachment from the voice to the hand to the instrument and to the sound; that was huge. I had never really done that before. (Chris Lesso, in conversation with the author, May 29, 2014)

Incidentally, Blackley's use of phonetics also greatly impacted Duris Maxwell's musical growth and rhythmic internalization. Maxwell states: "Jim was very much into 'singing'

the phrasing. It made me feel [sic] inside the music and groove rather than standing outside looking in” (Duris Maxwell, Facebook message to author, September 23, 2014). Similarly, Eric West shares Maxwell’s sentiments. However, the following words from West elaborate on the merits of singing rhythmic phrases as a means of hearing the musical line outside the confines of mechanical counting. West states:

I would say that’s getting away from the counting and making it more of a musical phrase. I would say it’s huge. It’s the same way that if you lift a trumpet solo and you sing the line and it is musical.... So, I would say it had the same affect. You’re shifting from this regimented practice of counting to all of a sudden it being just like music and creativity. Really understanding... the strong and weak pulses and phrasing... I would say for me it mostly was clarity on something that was vague. So, that concept of strong and weak pulses, again it wasn’t new to me, but it wasn’t as clearly put as when Jim taught it to me. The second he explained it to me, “Oh, that’s how I do it.” From step one, it was like this full proof method to make it swing, and sound good and shape a phrase and your time feel. (Eric West, in conversation with the author, August 10, 2014)

The Superimposition of Meters and the Influence of Two-Bar Phrases (Jazz Lines)

As was described earlier, it is the articulation and phonetics which sculpt and vitalize the various musical phrases found in Blackley’s methodology. In speaking of musical phrases, the use of three-beat figures and two-bar melodic motifs, as extensions of the time generated by the ride cymbal, have become a focal point of study and a fountainhead of improvisatory vocabulary for many of Blackley’s students. Barry Elmes states:

This is one of the other basic things that I thought was hugely important because this is what opening up phrasing over the bar line is, thinking of time as phrases. That was huge, and I spent a lot of time using that kind of stuff with my students—a long time with them to the exclusion of other sorts of things. What I like about that approach is it does two things: first of all, it just reinforces the idea that pretty much everything you play, as Elvin [Jones] used to talk about, comes off the cymbal. It’s coming from the cymbal, so you’re dealing with phrases in the cymbal line, but this allows you, if you want to [include] the ties, to open it up

for ... bringing in accents...⁶² (Barry Elmes, in conversation with the author, March 18, 2014)

The ensuing words from Mackenzie Longpre corroborate Elmes' sentiments on Elvin Jones' musical contributions and its influence on Blackley's pedagogy. Longpre states:

I think that really came from listening to slow Elvin, you know listening to *Coltrane Plays the Blues* and... you could really hear stuff like the polyrhythmic resolutions and things like that. They started to really take shape in my head a little bit. But, conceptually on a grand scale it doesn't take a jazz scientist to listen to say, some early Philly Joe and then put Elvin on and you don't have to be well-studied to hear the differences and certainly Jim's method gets you towards that—where Elvin was coming from. (Mackenzie Longpre, in conversation with the author, August 5, 2014)

Like that of Longpre, Blackley's instruction of three-beat figures also assisted Sly Juhas in demystifying Jones' approach to superimposing meters and phrasing over the bar line. Juhas states:

I remember listening to *Crescent*... it was an album that I kind of gave up on and I listened to the album probably for the first time in a year and ... [suddenly] I was able to hear all this stuff and I was just blown away.⁶³ From that moment, there is something to this. In my head, I thought Jim parted the seas for me or something and I thought, "I can hear this now" and from there on I just started understanding it more and more and till this day.... It's funny to listen to it now and hear it differently.... It completely blew my mind. I focussed on this stuff so much and at the time I was very much into Bill Stewart and he just released a trio record with Pat Metheny and that record had this stuff all over it and ... hearing him take this actual language and hearing [it] at that high level and sitting down and counting out loud and counting it through an eight-bar form or twelve-bar form... every moment I had to practice, I was thinking about it and working on this stuff.⁶⁴ (Sly Juhas, in conversation with the author, May 22, 2014)

⁶² See, Elmes, Barry W. 2005. "Elvin Jones: Defining his Essential Contributions to Jazz." Master's thesis. York University, Toronto.

⁶³ Juhas is alluding to John Coltrane Quartet's 1964 recording, *Crescent* (Impulse – AS-66).

⁶⁴ Juhas is referring to the Pat Metheny recording: *Pat Metheny - Trio99→00* (Warner Bros. Records – 936247632-2). The recording, which was released in 2000, also features Bill Stewart on drums and Larry Grenadier on bass.

The Interpretation of Musical Phrases and Learning to Stay with the Obvious

Elaborating upon the superimposition of meters and the use of two-bar melodic motifs, Blackley's methodology also encourages the exploration of musical phrases through various interpretations and applications. Aubrey Dayle states:

... I could now hum a melody and be able to embellish it without worrying about what's happening in between that melodic fragment—and play it articulately: whether I play it open like in this line [points to exercise in *Syncopated Rolls*] or whether I play it as multi-stroke rolls in the “tizz” fashion. It didn't matter how I played it, I could think more about the melody than all the activity in between and the more I practiced these methods the stronger the elements in between the melodies would be. So, my practice was to get... the sticking and all that comfortable so that when I'm actually playing, I'm not thinking a whole lot about that. I'm thinking about what I'm trying to melodically get across. (Aubrey Dayle, in conversation with the author, April 27, 2014)

Similarly, the concept of interpreting musical lines also enabled Bryan Humphreys to think melodically when improvising in a jazz setting. Humphreys states:

And I think this principle here is great for soloing; it's great for putting together fills and of course it's great for—if you're in a real traditional or even non-traditional jazz context where you can play these melodies or rhythms in your right hand and you fill with your left. Mark Eisenman used to always say, “It's like you're a piano player.”⁶⁵ I stopped studying drums with Jim, so I could start studying piano with Mark and [he] would say, “Think of it this way. Your right hand is playing the ride cymbal; it's playing the melody and your left hand is comping. So, get some of those lines from your Blackley book and put them into your improvisations.” (Bryan Humphreys, in conversation with the author, August 1, 2014)

Incidentally, Anthony Michelli was also motivated by Blackley to explore the varied possibilities of two-bar phrases in improvised soloing. Michelli states:

He talked about soloing and using those as shapes [two-bar jazz lines] as well. Not just on the ride cymbal, now let's talk about ideas for soloing and strong pulses, weak pulses. You know when you add the ties and all that stuff there are

⁶⁵ Mark Eisenman (b. New York, 1955) is a Toronto-based jazz pianist and educator.

these big pushes. He wanted me to see it beyond a ride cymbal thing. (Anthony Michelli, in conversation with the author, March 20, 2014)

When applying the various two-bar motifs to musical settings, Blackley encourages the student to take a single two-bar phrase and play it through an entire solo chorus or, in some cases, throughout an entire composition exploring a multitudinous array of interpretations. Blackley states:

Improvisation is the ability to take a two-bar motif and play it throughout a composition and have no one [knowing]. Or being able to take simple ideas and turn them inside out, upside down, move them around, and make a total composition from a simple two-bar phrase. That's what Max Roach was [the] master of; he could develop a whole composition from a two-bar phrase. (Wittet 1984, 98)

Through the approach of extemporizing with a single idea, Blackley instructs the student on how to stay with the obvious. Terry Clarke states:

The clearer you become, the more clarity will start to happen in your life in all respects. When you get rid of all the excess shit, it's all about—from probably 1965 'til now, it's now about editing. This is a one-handed job. It will end up being a one-handed job, I'm sure of it. Because it's all about, "Now take what you know and forget everything and just go up there and play the music." And if the music tells you what to do, then I bring in this phrase, which people have written down and absorbed, which is, "Developing the ability to stay with the obvious." That's what I tell all my students. (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014)

The following words from Mackenzie Longpre mirror Clarke's sentiments on the discipline of learning how to stay with the obvious. Longpre states:

Perhaps, his pedagogy instilled in me the stripping away of a lot of the B.S. that we traditionally play and it's always going to be there: we're never going to get rid of all the B.S. I'm always going to play a bunch of stupid nonsense, but hopefully it will always just be peeling away layers and peeling away more layers and trying to always get at the core. And maybe every time you play a tune, you've got a fresh onion [laughs] and every time you play that tune you got to work through the onion and get to the very middle of it and get to the essence of the song. And that's probably the fun of the whole thing. That's the reason we

do it. We just love searching for the core of something. (Mackenzie Longpre, in conversation with the author, August 5, 2014)

The Importance of Studying the Piano and Composing Music

As was stated in the previous chapter, Blackley's pedagogy emphasizes the importance of studying piano and jazz harmony as a means of gaining a profound aural and theoretical understanding of composition. Mackenzie Longpre states:

I studied some piano with Frank [Falco], who Jim set me up with, but more importantly to me or at the time, I learned a lot of theory from Frank. So, by the time I got into second and third year theory courses and arranging courses, [studying at the University of Toronto] I was totally fine because I had learned it all from Frank which was... great and the ear training I had to work really hard at and certainly you hear the voice of Jim telling you not to just be a dumb drummer all the time [laughs]. (Mackenzie Longpre, in conversation with the author, August 5, 2014)

In the case of Barry Elmes, Blackley stressed to Elmes the importance of composing original music. Elmes states:

...right out of the blue Jim said I should be composing music and that was pretty much, during the first lesson or the second lesson. He asked if I had written music and I said, "Well, I have to, at York I'm trying to write some stuff, but it's not really decent" and he said, "No, no that's really important" and just the fact that... he as a drum teacher was pushing me to do that. That was a huge thing because it has a reciprocal effect.⁶⁶ Once you understand melody better and you get a better grasp of what's going on in the music harmonically and structurally, that impacts your drumming. So those kinds of things really helped. There was a point where I started to think that my drumming was getting better but, what was really getting better was musicianship which included drumming. (Barry Elmes, in conversation with the author, March 18, 2014)

Like that of Elmes, Howie Silverman was also encouraged by Blackley to study piano and arranging alongside composing original music. Silverman states:

⁶⁶ A selection of Elmes' compositions can be heard on a number of recordings by the Barry Elmes Quintet and the quartet Time Warp, co-led by bassist Al Henderson (1951-). See, *The Time Warp Collection* (1995. Cornerstone Records: CRST CD105-2), and *Redshift* (2011. Cornerstone Records: CRST CD-137).

And then I formed an eighteen-piece big band that I wrote and arranged for because I was studying Gordon Delamont's stuff.⁶⁷ All on Jim's suggestions, "Study with Ted [Moses]; study with Gordon Delamont, go to Darwyn Aitken." ... Darwyn Aitken... was a classical piano teacher that everyone used to study with back then: he was the Jim Blackley of the classical piano. Anyway, he had a great studio, second floor on Markham Street across from Honest Ed's. So, again, I was this young kid and I was just mesmerized. It was like going to Jim Blackley, only with piano. And Jim was friends with Darwyn and I studied with Darwyn for four and a half years. (Howie Silverman, in conversation with the author, October 1, 2014)

Like many of Blackley's educands, Julia Cleveland was also motivated to write original compositions. Cleveland states: "Yes, my first album was all originals.... He [Blackley] encouraged me to learn the piano; to learn the harmony; to compose music—all that stuff to be a part of it" (Julia Cleveland, in conversation with the author, November 27, 2014).

Blackley's Influence on the Pedagogical Endeavours of his Students

Aside from inculcating the importance of studying piano and composing music, Blackley's pedagogy also had a tremendous influence on the pedagogical aspirations of his students. Lorne Nehring states:

His... philosophy is the core of how I teach... I have modified aspects of it that I use with my students. This idea of the musical line; this idea of playing music right from the get go. Learning to play the drums through learning to play the music has been my... philosophy.... If you haven't cultivated the musicality associated with employing all those skills, you got nothing. I always felt that it was Jim who set me on the right course. If I'm at all a good teacher, it was due to him being the first serious teacher I studied with and just kind of setting a standard that I always tried to meet... always trying to encourage the student to work hard on skill acquisition through the music, rather than just the exercises. (Lorne Nehring, in conversation with the author, March 25, 2014)

⁶⁷ Gordon Arthur Delamont (1918- 1981) was a notable Canadian music educator, author, composer and trumpeter. As an educator of theory, composition and arranging, Delamont was highly sought after and authored noteworthy texts such as *Modern Arranging Techniques* (1965. New York: Delavan), *Modern Contrapuntal Techniques* (1969. New York: Delavan) and various other publications.

Similarly, when working with students, drummer/percussionist Steve Mancuso also emphasizes the importance of conceptualizing and interpreting musical lines. Through his pedagogy, Mancuso has broadened this notion adapting it to the performance of other percussion instruments such as congas and the Brazilian pandeiro. Mancuso states:

I would do a lot of Jim's stuff on the congas. So, taking his lines, I would go [plays syncopated figure moving the accents around the congas and filling in the basic rhythm with a triplet roll application]. I'm using the heel/toe method for conga playing and later, I saw Giovanni Hidalgo came out with a video on that and I thought, "Jim's doing that already."⁶⁸ Because Hidalgo was taking rudiments, he was taking 5-stroke rolls, 7-stroke rolls and 9-stroke rolls. But, Jim, as you know would talk about rudiments. It's good to learn rudiments, you can get some benefit from rudiments, but, it's not teaching you how to play musically.... But, when I saw Hidalgo do that, I just went straight to Jim's stuff because you can take that stuff further than Hidalgo because you can play melodically. And I would take these phrases... and my conga technique went through the roof because I wasn't just focussing on a pattern. I was focussing on a melodic approach. So, I could basically apply that concept to everything. Even the pandeiro— just taking a line [plays pandeiro applying a syncopated figure]. But, it's the musical line. It's like going back to what Jim did. How can I fill that in with different ways and with different subdivisions? So, it's a musical approach. It's not just a drum set approach. (Steve Mancuso, in conversation with the author, September 26, 2014)

Like that of Mancuso, the foundational elements of Blackley's methodology also had a profound impact on the pedagogical efforts of Barry Elmes. However, the following words from Elmes expatiate on the broader quintessence of Blackley's pedagogy:

The... first few lessons were sort of iconic. Those things, the most basic principles of trying to strip away all the crap in my playing that I learned myself: it wasn't an approach, it was just stuff. Getting rid of all that and then getting down to really basic things; that really affected how I teach people.... Long after I left Jim, I still felt that what happened in the first couple of lessons was huge and that was the most important thing I got from Jim. Learning how to play different Latin rhythms, that was all very important but that wasn't life changing; the concepts about hearing time; the importance of playing slowly; the mechanics of

⁶⁸ Mancuso is referring to Giovanni Hidalgo's instructional VHS tape entitled *One on One: A Private Lesson with Giovanni Hidalgo* (1996. Miami: Warner Bros.).

the drum set, and life lessons were. Trying to get it into your head that it is not just about the drums, it's about who you are, how you live, what you eat. He probably says this to every student. But I remember at the very first lesson, one of the very first things he said to me, "We are going to work very hard and my main goal is to get you to a place where you don't need me for anything." He said, "I'm going to be in your face for a while but what I'm trying to do is get you to a point where you don't need Jim Blackley in your life for anything." This is kind of heavy when it's your very first lesson and you are not used to having teachers like this. (Barry Elmes, in conversation with the author, March 18, 2014)

The following words from Terry Clarke accord with Elmes' sentiments on the multilayered depth of Blackley's pedagogical influence. However, Clarke's thoughts extend beyond the paternalistic qualities of Blackley's pedagogy delving into issues pertaining to identity construction and construal. Clarke states:

For... years, I never ever thought I would ever teach because I don't think I could ever come up to the level of a Jim Blackley. Again, I... find myself repeating to my students what Jim told me. But, I'm finding out, I've got my own way of doing it and at its essence, the heart of it is that I'm literally teaching them what I know—what I have experienced. And I can say, "This works, this doesn't" and stop trying to be Jim Blackley, stop trying to be Elvin Jones. Stop it, be yourself. So, I've got my own funny little method which I vary from student to student, the way that Jim did, because everybody is different. (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014)

Blackley's Pedagogy and its Influence on the Construction of Identity

As Elmes and Clarke have stated above, Blackley's pedagogy possesses many layers which deal with drum set instruction prompting student self-analysis. Through his pedagogical efforts, Blackley not only provides his students with a firm and sound musical approach to playing the drums, he also leads his students on an important journey of identity formation. Howie Silverman states: "He [Blackley] sort of acted as a surrogate father and he is very perceptive and his whole thing is to get inside you [sic] and help you and guide you and make you a stronger person. That's why so many people

go to see him, not so much about the music as it is about pulling you together—utilizing the music and going out there and being a humble human being” (Howie Silverman, in conversation with the author, October 1, 2014).

Apart from Blackley’s objective of helping students become better human beings, through the subjection of Blackley’s methodology, the pedagogue has forged a collective identity amongst his discipleship which is characterized by a specific musical approach to playing the drums. This notion of collective identity is very much founded on classic sociological constructs such as Durkheim’s “collective consciousness.”⁶⁹ “So rooted, the notion addresses the ‘we-ness’ of a group, stressing the similarities or shared attributes around which group members coalesce” (Cerulo 1997, 386). The nature of this collective identity, as represented by Blackley’s students, is characterized by the ride cymbal serving as the main means of stating time and providing the necessary punctuations, phrases and accents for dialogical musical interplay. Bryan Humphreys states: “I could almost tell you if I went to somebody’s gig blindfolded whether or not that they studied with Jim... because they would be applying those two-bar jazz lines [sings: doo vi do ah, doo vi do ah, doo ah]” (Bryan Humphreys, in conversation with the author, August 1, 2014).

Other than the characteristic rhythmic content expressed by a Blackley student, many of Blackley’s students can also be identified by the physical motions that they use to facilitate these musical statements. Chris Lesso states:

⁶⁹ See, Émile Durkheim’s classic sociological text, *The Division of Labour in Society*. (1984. London: Macmillan).

I did this gig at the Mississauga Arts Center and it was an awards show and there was one act where the drummer wanted to sit at my set and ... use... the bass drum and hi-hat, but she was going to play djembe... and so I go to the side stage and I'm watching her and I can see her feet and her left foot was pumping [drops left-foot heel on beats 1 and 3 and jumps for beats 2 and 4]. And I was watching her and looking at her left foot and I thought, "I bet she's a Jim Blackley student." And he [Jim] said, "Commit to your left foot and you have to drive the band with that snap of the hi-hat." And he said, "Don't be like a wet fish. Have a strong handshake and you should exude that in your drumming." Her name escapes me right now and then I asked her later, "Do you study with Jim Blackley?" and she said, "Yes I did for five years." So, imagine looking at someone's foot [technique]—she only played for five minutes— and I know that she studied with Jim. That's heavy. (Chris Lesso, in conversation with the author, May 29, 2014)

Although a commonality exists among Blackley's community of students regarding their musical approach to playing the ride cymbal and the physicality of their technique, many of Blackley's students also exhibit unique, idiosyncratic attributes which typify the individuality of each student. The individuality of Blackley's students was aptly recognized in 1962 when the Canadian jazz publication *Coda* reviewed a student showcase presented by Blackley's retail store. The publication stated:

If you want to hear great young drummers, Vancouver is the place, thanks to local talent being developed by Jim Blackley, a Scot of small size and great impact. These men are unique—the stress is on individualism—there is no way of knowing that these drummers all have the same teacher except they have the one hallmark of clean technique and they swing. (Clayton 1962, 10)

The following words from Terry Clarke express similar sentiments. Clarke states:

You could never tell that it was a Jim Blackley student... he didn't grind us all out in the same mould. He allowed all of us freedom of expression and individuality and personality to come through—strangely enough— but still all swing. The only thing you knew is that this guy really swings hard, he's got a great cymbal ride: maybe he studied with Jim Blackley.... You can recognize it, you watch me play— you know what the hallmarks of that method are. (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014)

Aside from providing his students with an unwavering musical foundation, Blackley also sought to assist his students in the development of a unique artistic voice. Howie Silverman states:

Everybody that Terry [Clarke] worked for I was Terry's first call. Terry would call me first, because of all the guys playing in town I had Terry's sound. I could play like Terry because of the ride.... Very early into my lessons I discovered something about my own playing: space and how to create the space.... [If] you take one of those two-bar figures and you imply it and you divide it between the hands; so, you play alternate sticking [sings: two-bar phrase]. And what happens is you're creating space. Your hand is not going [sings: Ding Ding-a Ding Ding]. But, with alternate sticking and your limbs and putting the note in the right place you're creating the pulse without being busy and you're creating space, but the time is there. As a listener, you could feel the time and there's lots of breathing space because you're not playing every single note. So, let's say you imply some of this, you don't play every single note, but you play the essential notes. So, you discover which ones are the essential notes which keep the time moving forward and you can feel the pulse and then you create your space. I developed this really early and I use it in my solos and Jim said to me, "You are starting to discover something about yourself and your own voice. That is your natural way and sensitivity about how you want to play the time." And he encouraged me to keep developing it and through my writing I kept developing that and as a result, I developed my own unique sound. (Howie Silverman, in conversation with the author, October 1, 2014)

Through Blackley's instruction of a musical ride cymbal technique, Silverman's drumming possesses an ostensible affinity to his forerunner Clarke. However, Blackley's thoughtful and individualized tutelage enabled Silverman to discover his own voice as a drummer and composer.

Comparable to how Silverman was inspired by and emulated his precursor Clarke, not unlike many budding, young jazz drummers from the early-to-mid 1960s, Clarke was in turn greatly influenced by the innovative post-bop drumming of Elvin Jones. The ensuing words from Clarke articulate the preponderance of Jones' impact and considering

his deep-seated interest in Jones' drumming, Clarke was admonished by Blackley to seek out his own identity and voice as a drummer. Clarke states:

I was consumed with that quartet [John Coltrane Quartet]. I was absolutely consumed with listening to everything they did. I transcribed things that Elvin did; Jim warned me, he said, "You shouldn't be doing this." I said, "I can't help it." I was slowing down my turntable and listening to what Elvin was doing and trying to figure it out. I was just consumed with it.... You know the players—that you hear somebody and say, "Oh, he sounds just like ..." It's a human foible.... It was related; it all made perfect sense. But, to try not to sound like him because people could hear it in my playing, "Who's this guy?" like the Monterey thing, it was all just straight out of Elvin.⁷⁰ Some people thought I was black. Well, that's what Jim said. Students that came to him in New York assumed I was a black guy [chuckles]. (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014)

Although Blackley's pedagogy imparts a demystification of Jones' modus operandi, more significantly, Blackley aims to provide his students with the rhythmic vocabulary of jazz enabling them to transgress the limitations of an imitative method of expression. Through implementing a methodical teaching method and a careful and perceptive observation of each student's individual needs, Blackley encourages his students to work out of their own imaginations and lived experiences. In considering the singularities of Blackley's students and their diversity of thoughts, personalities, physical attributes and life experiences, it would seem an infeasible task to imitate Elvin Jones or any drummer for that matter. The following words from Barry Elmes corroborate and augment the notions stated above:

A student of jazz drumming can never sound exactly like Elvin Jones simply because the student is *not* Elvin Jones. Issues of personality, life experience, physique, concept of self and personal goals are all factors contributing to style.

⁷⁰ Clarke is referring to John Handy's critically acclaimed live recording, *John Handy Recorded Live at the Monterey Jazz Festival* (1996: KOC 3-7820-2). Originally recorded in 1965, the live recording also features fellow Vancouver jazz luminary, bassist Don Thompson.

However, regardless of how difficult it may be for the performance student and/or researcher to gain insight into these factors, in my opinion it is important to acknowledge their impact in order to gain a better understanding of an artist's style.... Although almost every jazz percussionist today employs stylistic things originally provided by Jones, nobody sounds remotely like him. After all the changes he brought to jazz drumming, and after most of these changes have become part of every drum student's homework, thus far Elvin Jones remains the sole player in jazz history who could play like Elvin Jones. (Elmes 2005, 120)

Incidentally, in September of 1965, while living in San Francisco and working with John Handy's group, Clarke performed with the John Coltrane group sitting in for Elvin Jones during a Sunday matinee performance at the Jazz Workshop.⁷¹ Clarke states:

He [Coltrane] wanted me to join the group after Elvin left. A year later, after I played; a year later I went back, and I was there when Elvin quit the band ... half way through the night he packed up his drums and left. So, I asked Rashied [Ali], "What happened?" But, anyway, after Elvin left, 'Trane wanted me to consider being the other drummer. Which would have been quite a milestone, but I ... legally couldn't leave John Handy because I was on an H1 work permit. I would have been the only white drummer to ever play that gig. Because we connected—and he thanked me after the gig, he comes over, "Thank you very much for playing with us." (Terry Clarke, in conversation with the author, May 6, 2014)

Although Clarke's primary motivation for playing with Coltrane's group was musically driven, Clarke did transgress racial barriers in the mid-1960s through his involvement with artists such as John Handy, the Fifth Dimension and his sole outing with John Coltrane.

Contrastingly, Clarke's contemporary Duris Maxwell felt marginalized by his musical peers because of his interest in rhythm and blues music. Maxwell states:

I hated sight-reading because I thought it would head me into playing music I hated... that disgustingly corny "businessman's bounce" ... that was so prevalent at the time. Stone cold R&B was where I was going. Absolutely everything I accomplished as a player grew out of my time with Jim Blackley. I think it's tragic that hardly anybody understood how deep I actually was into jazz. My

⁷¹ See pages 329-30 of *The John Coltrane Reference* (ed. by Lewis Porter. 2008. New York: Routledge).

famous shuffle groove is rooted in a jazz feel... it's just a few more eighth notes, right. Once I was seen as an R&B guy, I was a musical n-word to the jazzers. Funny... Coltrane played in an R&B band once. (Duris Maxwell, Facebook message to author, September 23, 2014)

Through Blackley's inculcation of the eighth-note triplet subdivision, Maxwell harnessed and developed a swinging blues shuffle feel.⁷² From a sociological perspective, Maxwell's drumming demonstrated a capacity to extend beyond his central meta-identity as 'drummer' to include and realize contextual identities such as 'jazz drummer' and 'rhythm and blues drummer.' When examining the inner-workings of meta-identities and their inherent contextual identities, Smith states:

A Meta-identity is a larger, overarching identity that one might experience in a range of situations: such a meta-identity could be 'drummer.' Meta-identities contain and embrace contextual identities, which are the smaller, context-specific identities that people realize. For me, 'drummer' is a meta-identity; within this I realize contextual identities such as 'equal collaborator,' 'compliant subordinate,' 'sweaty rocker' and 'flamboyant soloist.' (Smith 2013, 22)

Although the focus of Maxwell's course of study with Blackley was jazz-oriented, through transferring this knowledge to other forms of drumming, Maxwell enriched and developed his interest in rhythm and blues music performing and recording with artists such as Bobby Taylor and the Vancouvers (1968), and the Powder Blues Band (1979-1985).

As was stated above, Maxwell felt marginalized by his jazz peers not unlike the marginalization many rock drummers face when attempting to crossover into the realm of jazz performance. In speaking of progressive rock drummer Bill Bruford's explorations of jazz composition and performance, Smith states:

⁷² Examples of Maxwell's swinging prowess as a blues drummer can be found on the Powder Blues Band's 1980 debut album, *Uncut* (RCA Victor- KKL1-0365).

By releasing jazz CDs, Bruford allied himself with the social group comprising jazz musicians, but with his history as a famous rock drummer he sensed that he stood apart from many of his jazz peers.⁷³ A comment from one of Bruford's former band-mates in Yes implies that Bruford was seen as a misfit even in his early days as a rock drummer: 'having a drummer like Bill Bruford ... we could have had a more ordinary drummer, but it wouldn't have worked as well' (Howe quoted in Budofsky 2006, p. 6) ... drummers feel at once part of some groups, and at the same time distinct from and much less a part of others. A drummer's actions and self-awareness in different groups are the realization of contextual identities within his or her meta-identity as 'drummer.' (ibid, 77)

Like that of Maxwell, Julia Cleveland also felt marginalized in the patriarchal world of jazz. Through Blackley's encouragement, Cleveland blurred gender barriers in the Toronto jazz scene and led groups which were identified by competent musicianship irrespective of sex. Cleveland states:

He [Blackley] cautioned me about... people having attitudes and preconceptions of me.... Well, when I started at U of T in percussion, I was the only female student. So, I'm kind of used to being, the only woman all the time—but, not all the time. But, it wasn't a huge change for me to be that only woman again and to be doing what I want to do. That's not to say it didn't have its challenges and it's hard to find your place and figure out where you fit in the community. But, I think that's true for men and women, I'm sure, to find their place in the community. I struggle against people saying, "You know, you should start an all-girl band." And I really resist that. I played in one all-girl band which was great because it was comprised of [sic] all fantastic musicians. I want to play with great musicians; I don't care what gender they are. If an all-girl band has great musicians, I will happily play in it. But, if it is just for gender only at a show, I'm not really interested in being a part of that. And I guess I get a thrill out of trying to push myself in that way and not feel hampered by gender norms and stuff like that. (Julia Cleveland, in conversation with the author, November 27, 2014)

⁷³ William Scott "Bill" Bruford (1949-) is a retired English drummer, percussionist, composer, bandleader and record label owner who has performed and recorded with pioneering progressive rock acts such as Yes, King Crimson, Genesis, U.K. and his own group Bruford. In 1986, Bruford formed and led the jazz-fusion group Earthworks which featured Danjo Bates on keyboards and tenor horn, Iain Ballamy on saxophones, Mick Hutton on bass, and Dave Stewart on samples. See, *Earthworks* (1987: EG Records 7871252).

In dealing with her liminality in the Toronto jazz scene, Cleveland formed a distinct identity as a drummer, composer and bandleader transcending the hegemonic influence of gender norms. In his book, *I Drum, Therefore I Am*, Smith states:

... female drummers are aware of themselves as members of three distinct social groups: (1) drummers, (2) females and (3) female drummers. The intersection of the meta-identities of ‘drummer’ and ‘female/feminine’ (‘gendered female’) brings about the realization of ‘female drummer’ as an identity. Conversely, while meta-identities as ‘male’ and as ‘drummer’ exist for male drummers, the confluence of these two identities rarely gives rise to the realization of an identity as ‘male drummer’ because ‘male drummer’ is, statistically and culturally, synonymous with ‘drummer.’⁷⁴ (Smith 2013, 141)

In speaking of meta-identities, irrespective of gender, many of Blackley’s students embody multiple meta-identities as drummers, composers, bandleaders and educators. Through emphasizing and recognizing the primacy of identity construction, Blackley’s pedagogy realizes the transformative power of learning. Smith referencing Wenger states: “‘*learning transforms our identities*’ [italics in original].⁷⁵ Moreover, enculturation transforms our identities, just as realization of drummer identities [and its various meta-identities and contextual identities] transforms, renews and perpetuates our drumming [and musical] culture” (ibid, 52).

⁷⁴ In examining historical references as applied to gender and drumming, Smith states:

Drummers’ identities are realized in a male-dominated and very masculine culture. Seventeen authors contributed to the recent *Modern Drummer* publication *The Drummer: 100 Years of Rhythmic Power and Invention* [2006. Cedar Grove: Modern Drummer Publications], and of those only one was female; she, Meredith Ochs, also wrote one of the shortest articles in the book. The book’s layout, at least, was designed by another woman, Michele Heusel. The book contains 176 pages extolling the art and craft of drummers from the past century—people whom the (male) editor, Adam Budofsky, deems to be and to have been exemplars of their trade. Of the 529 drummers featured in those pages, only seven are female. (Smith 2013, 139)

⁷⁵ See, Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

In sum, Blackley's pedagogy contains many layers of profundity dealing with issues pertaining to musical growth and the crucial development of identity. The following sentiments from Barry Elmes encapsulate the notions stated above:

He [Blackley] makes it possible for all of us to learn how to play the drums to some level, but allows *us* to do it, to play *ourselves*, to bring *our* personalities to it. That's some pretty heavy teaching because you know that can get buried sometimes with all the technical requirements and the rest of it. But I know that's a goal of Jim's the minute he meets someone. He wants you to play the drums really well, but he wants you to be *you* and hear what you are going to do. It gave me this reassurance that your uniqueness as a human being plays an important role in your sound and what you want to express on the instrument. (Barry Elmes, in conversation with the author, March 18, 2014)

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

As was evidenced in the preceding discussion, Blackley's pedagogy not only impacted the musical and artistic development of his students, it also inspired and led his students on an important journey of identity realization and formation. Although Blackley's students are united by the primacy of the ride cymbal and its vital role of stating time and providing dialogical interplay within the improvisatory settings of jazz, many disparities can be recognized as well ascribed to the individualism and unique lived experiences of his students. Because of this recognition, when teaching students, Blackley would often state, "One man's medicine, is another man's poison." The following words from Barry Elmes corroborate the above notion:

I often thought ... Jim obviously has a method, as you know it is very personal, it is very one to one and I always assumed that even though there is this huge body of material that Jim has in his teaching, that emphasis would be put on different things with different people. He used to tell me at lessons... not to talk to his other students and I understood that, and he'd say, "Because you're not them and what we talk about here is for you, not for them." There were other students that were starting with him around the time I did and some of them were up here at York [University]. And some of them would ask, "Okay what did you do at your lesson?" "I'm not going to tell you."— The cone of silence. (Barry Elmes, in conversation with the author, March 18, 2014)

In concert with Elmes' thoughts, Dave Clark states, "He [Blackley] creates the kind of student-teacher understanding that transcends studying a specific discipline. Jim aims to illuminate a way for each individual student to find his or her path through life. He dispenses wisdom with humble yet confident self-knowledge" (Clark 2002, 18).

In his quest of sagaciously guiding students through a process of self-discovery and identity formation, Blackley illumined and nurtured the latent talents of his students by encouraging them to study the drums, as well as, piano, theory and harmony, and composition. Through these various learning endeavours, Blackley's students have acquired and fostered multiple meta-identities as drummers, bandleaders, composers and educators. Also, within these meta-identities, Blackley's students have realized and embraced various contextual identities. Drummers such as Terry Clarke, Duris Maxwell and others have realized and embodied contextual identities such as 'jazz drummer,' 'rhythm and blues drummer,' and 'rock drummer.'

Recognizing Blackley's Pedagogical Contributions

In December of 2008, Duris Maxwell and Kaja Blackley (1964-)⁷⁶ inaugurated the Official Jim Blackley Appreciation Page on the social media/networking website Facebook. The webpage contains many testimonials, anecdotes, and words of gratitude from Blackley's former students and other musicians who have been impacted by the pedagogue's life-altering wisdom and musical knowledge. Moreover, the page honours Blackley's hugely significant contributions to the development of modern drum-set pedagogy and his profound impact on drummers throughout the world. Maxwell states, "I started the page and brought Kaja in. It just seemed like a good idea [...] I wrote the 'object' of the page. It's still there and still true—to celebrate Jim's influence and legacy.

⁷⁶ Kaja Blackley (1964-) is Jim Blackley's youngest progeny and the publisher of Blackley's instruction books (Blackley Books). Kaja is also a graphic novelist and the chief creative director of Art House 7. His 1995 graphic novel, *Dark Town* (Mad Monkey Press) was the basis for the film *Monkey Bone* (2001: 20th Century Fox) which starred Brendan Fraser and Whoopi Goldberg.

What I owe Jim is beyond measure. I love and respect him above all things in this world.” (Duris Maxwell, Facebook message to author, September 23, 2014).

Aside from the obeisance bestowed by the members of the Jim Blackley Appreciation Page, on August 7, 2010; Barrie, Ontario’s Rhythmfest presented a tribute to Blackley’s musical, cultural and educational contributions.⁷⁷ Alongside performances from Canadian jazz luminaries such as Terry Clarke, Robi Botos, Michael Stuart, Bob Brough, Kelly Jefferson, Brian Rudolph and others, Blackley was conferred a lifetime achievement award by mayor Dave Aspden and Barrie’s Director of Culture, Rudi Quammie Williams. (<https://barrie.snapd.com/events/view/191881>)

Consequently, on September 22, 2012, the Metalworks Institute in Mississauga, Ontario presented Blackley with yet another lifetime achievement award. The award was granted by Blackley’s former student and Metalworks faculty member, Dave Patel. (<http://jimblackley.com/jim-receives-a-lifetime-achievement-award/>). Upon accepting the award, Blackley’s acceptance speech reflected his core musical and educational philosophies stressing the importance of studying piano as a crucial means of developing a strong musical foundation. Blackley stated:

A special thanks to everyone here connected with Metalworks Institute. I feel very privileged indeed to be here and receive this award. The award should really go to all my students, because they are the people who made it possible for me to be here. If the student doesn’t do as the teacher says, nothing can really happen. So, it’s all about following the direction of the teacher. But, it is very important indeed, as I say this to all you parents, that if you’re sending your children to

⁷⁷ Incidentally, Blackley was accorded a further accolade at the Barrie Arts Awards gala on November 16, 2016. Susan Doolan states, “The Excellence in the Arts Award went to Jim Blackley, who’s 89 years old, for teaching drumming to students who have gone on to play with the who’s who of the music industry, both in Canada and the US... genres from rock to jazz. He is also the author of several books related to drumming” (<http://www.innisfilexaminer.ca/2016/11/17/awards-handed-out-in-five-categories-wednesday-night>).

music lessons—that you find the right teacher. [The teacher] must be someone with good human qualities, number one; number two, has great musical experience and has an ability to impart it. Playing the drums is actually—very easy indeed. It's not about playing the drums, it's about knowing the music. That's what we heard today with the gentlemen that have been playing here. You must know the music... that's really what it's all about. Playing the drums is very easy indeed but knowing the music and being able to play to the music—that's what being a musician is all about. My advice to every musician, irrespective of the instrument that you're going to play, is to study the piano first. Everything comes from the piano and if more people would understand about the importance of learning the piano first, the path we wish to follow in music will be much simpler. So, try and find a good piano teacher, as well as a good drum teacher. (Jim Blackley, Metalworks acceptance speech, September 22, 2012)

Sustaining Blackley's Legacy through the Pedagogical Endeavours of his Students

Aside from the approbation bestowed by the Metalworks Institute and Barrie's Rhythmfest, Blackley's legacy is being honoured and sustained by the pedagogical endeavours of his students. Drummer/educators such as Steve Mancuso and Lorne Nehring are preserving Blackley's educational contributions through their pedagogical efforts at Humber College in Toronto. Similarly, the Blackley-inspired instruction of Barry Elmes and Anthony Michelli has imbued the drum-set curriculum at York University in Toronto. Other preceptors such as Terry Clarke, Chris Lesso and myself have also been instrumental in the perpetuity of Blackley's highly musical and efficacious teaching method. Terry Clarke states, "I guess I would say I'm trying to continue the work of Jim Blackley, the master, but I don't take to it as easily. The older I get the more baffled I get, and the more mystified about what I do, whereas when I was growing up, I would analyze everything. There is a spiritual quality, and a psychic/intuitive quality, that is impossible to teach" (Wittet 2003, 46).

Implications for Further Research

Clarke's words above bring to light the important numinous qualities of Blackley's teachings leaving room for many unanswered questions and the potentiality of extended research. Perhaps, a future qualitative study can probe further into Blackley's connection with spiritual concerns and its impact on the musical development and identity realization of his students. In speaking of qualitative analysis and considering the widespread influence of Blackley's pedagogy, a prospective study can potentially glean insights, anecdotes and perspectives from the students that Blackley taught in New York City in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Incidentally, the perspectives of numerous U.K.-based students such as David Hassel, Paul Clarvis and Allan Cox can also form the basis of an additional study. Moreover, Blackley's insights into the art of jazz performance impacted not only his private drum students, but also many musicians who performed with Blackley in jam session and live performance capacities. It could be thoroughly productive and worthwhile to include the sentiments, viewpoints and insights of these other instrumentalists.

In considering the qualitative nature of this study, perhaps, extended research can yield, through transcriptions of recorded performances, a quantitative analysis of Blackley's pedagogy and its influence on his students. Additionally, a potentially foreseeable study can delve further into specific aspects of Blackley's pedagogy such as the impact of slow tempo practice and its psychological and perceptual ramifications. Influenced by the oeuvre of Charles Keil and J.A. Prögler, perhaps, a future study can quantitatively examine the participatory discrepancies found in the drummer's ride

cymbal and its close-knit temporal relationship with the acoustic bass. Both instrumentalists provide a strong temporal foundation for the extemporizations and interplay which comprise a musical performance. However, within the alliance of bass and drums exists expressive variations of the time which can be viewed as temporal compressions and extensions or a “pushing or pulling of the time.” A study of this nature, could possibly explore how Blackley’s insistence on slow tempo practice has enabled his students to effectively navigate through the temporal maintenance of bass and drums.

Other than exploring the temporal constituents of Blackley’s method, conceivably, another potential study can examine how the elements of Blackley’s pedagogy have been applied to other drum set method books. Besides using his own publications, Blackley also used various forms of drum set literature in his course of study. Blackley’s approach to shaping written figures through varying degrees of articulation and inflection have imbued the Mambo bell patterns found in Ted Reed’s *Latin Rhythms for Drums and Timbales*,⁷⁸ and the syncopated sixteenth note-based rhythms found in Chet Doboë’s *Funk Sambas*.⁷⁹ Incidentally, Blackley had his students work through select pages of Doboë’s *Funk Sambas* applying a variety of different interpretations and applications conducive to the development of Brazilian, rock, and funk drumming styles. Also, for the development of odd time signatures, Blackley had his students study the pages of

⁷⁸ Reed, Ted. 1988. *Latin Rhythms for Drums and Timbales*. Clearwater: Ted Reed.

⁷⁹ Doboë, Chet. 1982. *Funk Sambas*. Uniondale: C. Doboë.

Ralph Humphrey's *Even in the Odds*,⁸⁰ and as an addendum to the *Essence of Jazz Drumming*, Blackley had his students drill the comping exercises found in John Riley's *The Art of Bop Drumming*.⁸¹

Aside from potentially exploring how the constituents of Blackley's pedagogy can be applied to various forms of drum set literature, and considering that a portion of this thesis has been devoted to the constructs of identity realization; perhaps, an additional study can further deconstruct the inner workings of Smith's paradigm of the 'Snowball Self.'⁸² This thesis merely perforated the possibilities which exist when exploring the conceptual elements of identity realization, learning realization, meta-identities and contextual identities and how they can provide further insights into the identity construction of Blackley's students. Potentially, an appended study can further tease out the work I initiated here.

Final Thoughts

This thesis provides indisputable evidence regarding the corollary of Blackley's teachings: a set of pedagogic principles which have abnegated the hegemony of traditional rudimental study in favour of playing and interpreting syncopated musical lines. Consequently, Blackley inculcated in his students the importance of the drummer's ride cymbal acting as the primary means of stating time and providing the accents, punctuations and phrases so vital to jazz rhythmic accompaniment. Through

⁸⁰ Humphrey, Ralph. 1980. *Even in the Odds*. Oskaloosa: C.L. Barnhouse Company.

⁸¹ Riley, John. 1994. *The Art of Bop Drumming*. Miami: Manhattan Music.

⁸² See Chapter 2 of Smith's *I Drum, Therefore I Am: Being and Becoming a Drummer* (2013. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited).

emphasizing the development of strong timekeeping skills, an awareness of song form, the memorization and vocalization of rhythmic figures and phrases, and the significance of listening carefully to the bass line, chord changes and melody when improvising, Blackley imbued in his students a heuristic and highly musical approach to playing the drums. This musical philosophy permeated seminal publications such as *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer*; *The Essence of Jazz Drumming*, and three volumes of *Rhythmical Explorations*. Through using these publications, Blackley had instilled in his students the inviolable tenet of playing the drums musically.

Aside from providing his students with a resolute and musically sound approach to rhythmic accompaniment, Blackley spent his lifetime devoted to helping his students discover their own unique talents, as well as, helping them to discover their own individual paths in life. The following felicitous anecdote encapsulates the true quiddity of Blackley's teachings. Back in September of 2002 as I attended my monthly lesson with Blackley, the moment I walked through the door he could immediately detect that I was grappling with issues of personal distress. As I posited myself behind the student drumkit, one of Blackley's framed, eminent and wise aphorisms was filling my line of sight. It read: "Being a musician, means being a part of a total experience; no winning, no losing." Veering my head, I looked over at Jim and suggested ruminatively, "You can alternately say, 'Living life, means being part of a total experience; no winning, no losing.'" "That's right!" Blackley emphatically responded. "It's not about winning or losing; it's about discovering who you are."

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Appendix

Jim Blackley Interview: Friday, July 4, 2014 (Barrie, Ontario)

Joe: Jim, going back to your youth; your bio mentioned that you were a featured soloist in a children's choir.

Jim: Singing, yeah.

Joe: Was that religious hymns that you were singing?

Jim: Oh no, it was—they sang a big variety of material.

Joe: How old were you at that time: seven or eight years old?

Jim: No, probably about ten years old.

Joe: I was reading you played at the Usher Hall in Edinburgh and the McEwan Hall in Glasgow.

Jim: Pardon me.

Joe: The McEwan Hall.

Jim: Sang there.

Joe: So, this was a big choir of about twenty kids?

Jim: Oh yeah.

Joe: So, I guess that was your introduction to performance and music, at that time?

Jim: Well no, I studied the violin first.

Joe: From the ages of nine to thirteen.

Jim: That's correct.

Joe: How did you get into playing the violin?

Jim: My father always wanted me to study the violin. So, he got me a violin and he arranged for lessons.

Joe: With a local teacher?

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: And you were working on classical repertoire? Is that what you were studying?

Jim: Yeah, just—various materials.

Joe: So, how did that impact your musical development at that time? I guess that was introducing you to some different components [of music] like melody.

Jim: Well, I really had a good singing voice, you know and...

Joe: You must've had a good ear?

Jim: Yeah, I had an exceptional ear. That was the thing; I could hear anything and sing it back. Yes, that was a real strength of mine—was singing.

Joe: Yeah, we'll get back to that as well because that plays a big influence in your method. So, I guess after that—when did you get into the pipe band drumming?

Jim: When I was twelve years old in the Boys Brigade in Scotland.

Joe: And then I discovered you had studied under these two teachers: James Catherwood and George Pryde.

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: So, they were the coaches for the pipe band?

Jim: They were prominent pipe band drummers at that time and much older than I was.

Joe: Because James Catherwood was born in 1907 and he died in 1983.

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: And I didn't find much about George Pryde as far as when he was born.

Jim: He's up in Powell River. He went from Scotland to the Powell River pipe band.

Joe: Is George Pryde still alive?

Jim: I don't know. He may be. It's where Don Thompson is from: Powell River.

Joe: In B.C.?

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: So, James Catherwood and George Pryde, they'd be working with a whole group of drummers in that sense...

Jim: Usually about four to six drummers in drum corp.

Joe: And then you guys were learning the snare drum rudiments, but then you would be learning these pieces.

Jim: That's correct.

Joe: And that was all done by ear, right?

Jim: Yeah, yeah.

Joe: Were James and George strong players technically?

Jim: Very strong players, yeah—very prominent players.

Joe: So, I guess as far as your hand development in those days, those guys were the individuals who were teaching you technique and things of that nature as far as playing the strokes and ...

Jim: Yeah, but they didn't have the understanding of technique like Chapin and Henry Adler had. These men [Catherwood and Pryde] weren't into it in a very deep way. We just put a pair of sticks in your hands and you just played.

Joe: That's right [chuckles] and it said in your bio, in 1947 you graduated from the Scottish Pipe Band Association and I guess that was some sort of certification that you received.

Jim: They had a series of exams like elementary, advanced. You know, so I had covered all these aspects of it.

Joe: So, from there, you got into the competitive pipe band drumming then. Other than playing in the pipe bands, you were doing a lot of solo competitions, right?

Jim: Well, there wasn't a lot. There was only one contest a year: solo drumming. It was called the World Solo Drum Championship.

Joe: I can't remember, but you were highly ranked in those.

Jim: I was runner-up.

Joe: I guess in those days other than playing the violin from nine to thirteen and then the pipe band drumming—that was very much the extent of your musical development and involvement at that time. Because you had mentioned to me that you were also a woodworker.

Jim: Oh Yeah, a cabinet maker.

Joe: You were a cabinet maker by trade and I remember reading that in 1952 you were approached by some Canadian business men and they had asked you if you wanted to go to Montreal and coach a pipe band.

Jim: Well, you know, they wanted me to move to Montreal and, you know, help them develop [a pipe band]. So, 1952, I moved from Scotland to Montreal and taught the pipe band there and I worked in cabinet making and so forth.

Joe: So, you carried that trade over to Montreal.

Jim: Well, I worked in Ogilvy's department store and they had a little carpentry shop there too and they'd do all the work around the store, you know.

Joe: What was that department store called?

Jim: Ogilvy's—it's a big department store...

Joe: In Montreal, and you were doing that as well. That's interesting.

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: So, after that you had moved to Ottawa in 1953 and you were...

Jim: I was in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Joe: So, I guess you went through military training then as well?

Jim: There was no military training. I just went straight in as a bandsman.

Joe: Oh, I see you were coaching the pipe band as well. So that's essentially what you did in Ottawa in those days from '53 to '56; you were just coaching the pipe band. And it was during that time that you made your way to the Colonial Tavern in Toronto to see Max Roach play with Clifford Brown—that group and you were just so blown away by that experience that that inspired you to take up jazz drumming.

Jim: That's correct.

Joe: Can you talk a little about that experience Jim? Seeing Max...

Jim: Well, I mean, to hear Max Roach play with that band, I never had seen anybody play like that on a drum set; it was phenomenal.

Joe: I guess the musicality and the soloing.

Jim: Oh, the musicality and the dynamics and everything else: the technical facility that was needed to play like that.

Joe: Did you talk to Max that night? Did you go up to him and talk to him?

Jim: Yeah, I went and hung out with him all night. There was a fellow called Clem Hambourg and he had a place—it was a big building he had and in the basement of the building he had a little kitchen there and all the musicians would go after work and he would cook and serve them meals.

Joe: Wow. That's amazing, Clem Hambourg. So, Max and Clifford, they were all hanging out there with you and you guys were eating and discussing things. I remember when I was talking to Chris Lesso, he had told me that the thing that really impressed you about Max was "his commitment to the music and he played as though it was his last day on earth."

Jim: Oh yeah, the commitment was just— but the whole band was like that: everybody came up to play, there were no passengers.

Joe: So, then we are looking at those years: 1953, 1954, 1955, so it was after that that you decided to learn how to play the drums.

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: So, I'm assuming in Ottawa you must have bought a drum kit for yourself?

Jim: They had a drum kit on the air force base. So, I got the kit and took it back home and I was working out on that. My wife was doubling up laughing, she said, "Forget it."

Joe: How old were you at that time when you took up the drum kit?

Jim: Mid-twenties.

Joe: You would have been pushing thirty years of age when you took up playing the drum set. Wow.

Jim: I was getting up there.

Joe: Yeah, I mean some people would consider that to be late in the game. So, Jim, how did you discover—how did you learn about Sam Ulano in those days? How did you discover Sam?

Jim: Just by accident. Someone just suggested, "Go up, there's a guy that teaches up there, go up and see him."

Joe: Go see Sam in New York— was it someone in Ottawa that suggested him?

Jim: No, no, in New York.

Joe: So, someone in New York recommended him. So, when was the first time you went to New York?

Jim: 1957, I think.

Joe: So, you went to New York. Did you have specific teachers in mind that you wanted to study with or you were just searching, you were trying to find...

Jim: I was just searching. But, I took a few lessons from Sonny Igoe.

Joe: First, okay.

Jim: He was a very good player. Very, very good indeed and he told me to go up to the Hickory House and listen to this guy Jake Hanna. So, I went up to the Hickory House and the Hickory House is a big, swank steak house, you know: a big horse shoe bar. So, I was sitting at the bar this night and Jake Hanna walked by and I touched his arm and I said, “Excuse me Mr. Hanna, do you have a moment?” He said, “Nope! I don’t have a moment. I’m going across the street to Charlie’s to have a drink.” So, I said, “Mr. Hanna, excuse me for intruding, I just wanted you to know, I think you got the greatest right hand on the cymbal I’ve ever heard.” And he stopped, and he looked at his watch and he said, “Come to think of it, I’ve got all night.”

Joe: And that’s how you met Jake and you’ve been friends all those years. That’s amazing [laughs].

Jim: We were buddies you know.

Joe: We’ll get back to Jake in just a moment. So, then you learned about Ulano and I guess you called up Sam and you went to go see him.

Jim: I studied with him and I got to say it was very helpful. I mean, he had his own approach, but there was great value in it too—definitely.

Joe: Just being exposed to all that literature...

Jim: Yeah, I mean, he exposed you to all the drum literature that had been presented. And there definitely was a lot of good in that and he in his own way—he had a good thing going: if he had just done his own thing and minded his own business.

Joe: [Laughs]. That brings me to this Jim [produces a copy of Sam Ulano’s *Bass Bops*]. It’s interesting at this time— this book was first published in the late ‘40s—it’s interesting how Sam at the time and Jim Chapin of course, they were recognizing this sea change that was taking place in modern music with the advent of bop and stuff like that. It’s amazing how Chapin documented those developments in his book, *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer* and Sam was sort of on a similar wave length and he wrote *Bass Bops*. This must have been interesting back in the day.

Jim: It was. These were actually very advanced books at the time.

Joe: Yeah, [shows Jim a copy of *Bass Bops*] this is actually Sam’s hand [writing]. I bought this from one of Sam’s former students. I found this on eBay from some dentist in New York. He had a bunch of Sam’s books [points to lesson date on page]—January 16, 1976. So, you were saying this was quite advanced in its time: this type of hand and foot thing.

Jim: Oh, that thing and he had *Rudi-Bops*.

Joe: Yeah, I've got that. So, this was pretty ground breaking for its time. So, when you were studying with Sam, just for that brief period, he had you work out of that? You were working out of *Bass Bops*?

Jim: Yeah, you just went through them, you know. You didn't sit at the drum set though, you just stood...

Joe: Oh, on the pad. This is interesting: *Rudi-Bops*. This was pretty radical for its time. Just the way that he took snare drum rudiments—I guess he was trying to find a way of making the rudiments musical.

Jim: That's right.

Joe: And he was playing them between the hands and feet and stuff like that. I found this from a used book dealer in the U.K. It's interesting how he was thinking in those terms of breaking up the rudiments between the bass drum and the snare drum.

Jim: Oh no, he was a progressive thinker, you know.

Joe: And then in the second half of the book he was applying the rudiments to actual dance band rhythms. I mean, he was taking these "rudi-bops" and applying them to these dance band rhythms like the Viennese waltz and different things of that nature. So, I guess that was his attempt at trying to make this material musical and practical.

Jim: That's right. Oh no, he was no dummy.

Joe: That brings me to this other thing, because Sam and Stanley [Spector] and yourself and Charlie [Perry] as well—you guys realized the limitations of traditional drum set study which involved studying the rudiments and developing hand technique and of course there was reading. But, in terms of playing small group jazz and things of that sort, the snare drum rudiments didn't really come into play in those settings. It was more about playing off the musical line and that sort of thing.

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: I guess Sam's whole argument was that you didn't see the rudiments in any charts or things of that nature. He related it all to sight-reading whereas Stanley and yourself—you guys were relating it to small group playing and improvisation because Stanley—those old ads that he would publish in *Down Beat*: those really controversial ads—those things are amazing and he just talked about—even I found an old *Down Beat* interview from '69 where they were interviewing Stanley Spector... and he said some controversial things about sight-reading and rudiments. He just felt that sort of thing just fragmented the brain and sight-reading amputated the ear and that sort of thing. It didn't really lend itself to learning how to improvise which involves memorization of phrases and figures and learning how to take those musical lines and apply them to music and improvise with them and stuff like that.

Jim: Well, Stanley Spector was a very smart person, you know. But just, you know, whenever you think you're the know-all of everything then you're in trouble, you know. None of us know it all; none of us.

Joe: But it was an interesting start at something new and progressive.

Jim: Yeah, I agree.

Joe: And you guys were definitely a part of that. You guys were the main exponents of a new movement of drum set instruction. How did you meet Stanley Spector, was that through Jake [Hanna]?

Jim: No, I met him down in Boston. I went down there one time and I went into the drum store there: Jack's Drum Store and he suggested, "You should check this guy Stanley Spector out." So, I went and seen him.

Joe: What year was that?

Jim: Oh God.

Joe: Was it the late Fifties as well.

Jim: Yeah, late Fifties. But, the thing with Stanley was that he had an approach that he was taking. It didn't matter how intelligent you are, he would only give you so much in each lesson, you know.

Joe: [Produces copy of Stanley Spector's *Lessons in Improvisation for the Jazz Drummer Vol. 1: Time and the Eight Bar Phrase*] Yeah, this is a photocopy of Stanley Spector's *Lessons in Improvisation for the Jazz Drummer*. Neil LaFortune found that on eBay and I photocopied it. It's really interesting to see how he [Spector] recognized the ride cymbal as the focal point of the drum set and the main means of generating the time. Jim, how did Stanley impact you? He obviously had a big influence on you.

Jim: Oh, Stanley Spector was a very smart guy and he was one of the few teachers that were on the right path musically. I had a lot of respect for him, you know. But, it's just when you think you're God: then you're in trouble.

Joe: This is the second volume [produces copy of Stanley Spector's *Lessons in Improvisation Vol. 2*]

Jim: That's right.

Joe: That's a letter from Stanley to the subscriber. You had to subscribe to study the course: it was a home study course and once you finished the book you'd have to tape record your performance of the lesson material and send in the tape and he would evaluate it. And you'd send the first volume back and then he'd send you the second volume. It's interesting.

Jim: Yeah. He wanted to control everything. He was very paranoid about people...

Joe: Yeah, you were telling me that in past conversations.

Jim: The thing is that he [Stanley Spector] learned a lot from Charlie Perry.

Joe: Because Sam had told me that Stanley had studied with him as well. Stanley had studied with Sam and then I guess he realized that working through all these books and learning how to sight-read is fine; but, to play jazz drums, we need a new type of course of study to cater to the needs of the progressive jazz drummer—the improvising jazz drummer. So, that’s when, I guess, he developed his method with getting into the two-bar phrases and developing the time.

Jim: Exactly. As I say, Stanley was a very smart guy. But, he thought he was God.

Joe: So, you’re saying, Stanley also studied with Charlie Perry?

Jim: Yeah, I think he did. They had a kind of a little war going.

Joe: Yeah, you were telling me that. But, as far as *Syncopated Rolls* and its publication back in 1961, that was your first contribution to what seems to be at the time an ever-expanding library of drum books. *Syncopated Rolls* was seminal and unique.

Jim: It was very unique.

Joe: In the way that you took a written figure, you took a musical line and you interpreted it in different ways and although there was some rudimental connection with some of the exercises—it wasn’t to be thought of in that way.

Jim: No, it really was greatly influenced by my experience in the pipe bands because that’s the way we did it.

Joe: Can you elaborate on that a little bit.

Jim: Yeah, pipe band drumming was all built around the melodic line, you know. And that’s basically what I did with *Syncopated Rolls*. I just took melodic phrases...

Joe: For instance, someone might view that as 5-stroke rolls [points to ex. 1 a) on page 15 of the original *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer*]. But, we’re just thinking of the downbeats which creates the musical line and as you say, “Think of saving the accents and throwing the unaccented beats away.”

Jim: You don’t think of every note you’re playing; you just think of the musical phrase.

Joe: And then that lends itself to musical playing.

Jim: Exactly.

Joe: That numerical approach can fragment the thinking of a lot of drummers and that's when they start to get into trouble.

Jim: Well, you can't think that way when you play music.

Joe: Exactly. This is amazing because Terry [Clarke] had mentioned to me that when you were living in Vancouver, you were working as a draftsman and just the way that this is laid out, you can clearly see that.

Jim: It was all done by [hand]. I just did it in the back of my store on a drawing board.

Joe: And you were mentioning to me that Aishah had typed up all the text for you.

Jim: Yeah, she did all this stuff.

Joe: So, this in itself was—this book was ground breaking and revolutionary.

Jim: Oh yeah. Well, Chapin loved it.

Joe: This was ground breaking and I think it solved a lot of the musical problems that drummers were faced with at that time. In some ways, it was ahead of its time and I can see how this influenced—there were several books afterwards like Al Miller's books. He had a similar idea of taking a musical line and interpreting it in different ways and there was that Andy White book, *Roll Control*. That book was very much just a copy of *Syncopated Rolls*.

Jim: Yeah, it was.

Joe: Was Andy a Scottish pipe band drummer as well?

Jim: He wasn't prominent or anything.

Joe: And then there was the second volume of *Syncopated Rolls for the Modern Drummer* released in 1962.

Jim: I was trying to make everything as musical as possible.

Joe: And then there was that whole Dannie Richmond connection. In the old *Modern Drummer* article, you talked about hanging out with Dannie when Mingus was in town in Vancouver in 1959 or '60 and then...

Jim: Yeah, Dannie and I became good friends.

Joe: And you guys were hanging out listening to the pipe band records and he was blown away and he said, "I don't care what you call that. That swings." And then you sat down and played some of your ideas on the drum set and he had said, "Wow, you're the first white drummer that I ever heard that sounds black" [laughs]. That's amazing. Through your instruction—Terry [Clarke] mentioned this, when he would go out and see... say,

Mingus play for instance or he would listen to Elvin on record, because you had said to Terry, “Listen to Elvin Jones, he’s the next guy. He’s doing something really important here.” Many of your students understood where these guys were coming from, because Terry talked about seeing Dannie playing with Charles Mingus and he’d be sitting there, and he was getting it and I think it was because of your instruction. So, you were really opening up the ears of your students and getting them to listen to the music.

Jim: Yeah— and getting them to understand what was going on too: being able to hear it, you know. But, Terry had a very sharp ear. There are not too many players around that had as good an ear as he had. He had an exceptional—he was a very quick student. There was another lad I had too: Blaine Wikjord. He was a very good player. He’s still in Vancouver and then Duris Maxwell.

Joe: How about—you taught Al Weirtz in those days and then Don Fraser. Do you remember that name?

Jim: Yeah sure.

Joe: Because Terry mentioned to me he was searching for a good teacher and I think he ran into Al Weirtz and Al had just started studying with you and he recommended you. And Terry said that you were teaching out of your home to begin with—this is before the Drum Village started. When did you start the Drum Village?

Jim: Oh, good God, I can’t remember.

Joe: Because Terry said when he started taking lessons with you in 1960, you were at your home. So, I guess shortly after that you started up your business.

Jim: ’61, I think, I opened the store.

Joe: You started the Drum Village then, amazing. I guess your intent was to not only provide a retail service of selling Gretsch drum kits and K. Zildjian cymbals, I guess you had this whole plan involving education.

Jim: I was very serious about education because from the time I’d spent in New York, I really felt that there were a lot of fakers going around teaching. They weren’t really interested in teaching.

Joe: Can you elaborate on some of your aims at that time?

Jim: Yeah, well, the thing is to— you must understand, when someone comes to study drums: are they going to be a pipe band drummer? Are they going to be an American rudimentalist? Are they going to be a symphonic player or jazz player? So, you must prepare them for the field of music they wish to enter. There’s no sense in teaching someone American rudimental drums if they want to play in a symphony.

Joe: Right, that makes sense. So, these young guys like Terry and Blaine and Al and these guys who were seeking you out at the time, they wanted to learn how to play jazz drums and play the drums musically and you were providing that service at the time.

Jim: I was trying to accommodate, yeah. Everybody should start on the piano.

Joe: Just speaking of developing time and developing the inner clock which seems to be such an important thing as a musician regardless of what instrument you play. How did you get into the whole concept of playing at forty [bpm] and slowing it way down and getting into the inner-workings of swinging?

Jim: So many people were just trying to teach drummers to play as fast as they could. The hardest thing is playing slowly, not playing fast, but playing slowly. Space is frightening, you know, and a lot of—the very fact that my wife and I were ballroom dancing champions: I learned a lot from dancing too, you know, because learning to take up the space...

Joe: Through movement.

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: But, then just getting into the whole physical approach of playing the ride cymbal with the way you developed the time studies and that sort of thing and getting into the point down of the stick and the wind up of the stroke. I guess a lot of that came about through experimentation and taking a metronome...

Jim: Exactly, trial and error.

Joe: Taking a metronome and slowing it way down. Because as I was researching things, I kind of saw some of the connections with your thing—some of the connections: little things like... [Produces a copy of Sam Ulano's *Photo Hand Study Guide*] Because Sam wrote a book called the *Photo Hand Study Guide* back in the day. Originally, it was presented as photographs but then some student of his took the original photos and created hand drawn images based on the photos. Have you seen this Jim?

Jim: No, I don't think so.

Joe: Just the whole idea of—even that kind of thing just kind of reminds me of winding up after the 'let' count and pointing the stick down resting the tip an inch above the cymbal—that kind of thing.

Jim: Yeah, exactly.

Joe: So, I guess you took that kind of thing and sat with the metronome at forty [bpm] and you were just playing downbeats and you started to get the whole thing to lock in.

Jim: That's what it is.

Joe: That whole synchronization of the eighth-note triplet grid and your movements in time. But, then how did you develop this whole thing for the “skip beat”? [Picks up stick and plays a slow shuffle rhythm emphasizing the downbeats as strong pulses and playing the “let” counts as a weak pulse “drop stroke” with slight release from the thumb].

Jim: Well, the thing is, it’s the quarter note that drives the time and the “skip beat” is just a colouring [Plays slow shuffle rhythm on practice pad emphasizing the downbeats and playing the “skip beat” light and weak]. You don’t want the “skip beat” getting in the way. That’s it. That’s good, yeah [commenting on my execution of the shuffle rhythm]—it’s, squeeze and release.

Joe: Yeah, that’s right. That’s a wonderful thing just that—lifting the thumb slightly for the “skip beat.” And another interesting element of your pedagogy is the whole idea of taking a musical line and shaping it through strong and weak pulses. So, you’re bringing out the proper accents in the line and that’s when you get into the rules of syncopation.

Jim: Yeah, a light and shade.

Joe: That stuff is so important. That had a profound effect on my playing and I see that with all the other students as well. That was a radical thing; that was a game-changer and it transformed the feel of my drumming.

Jim: Definitely.

Joe: Can you elaborate on some of that Jim: the articulation.

Jim: Well, it’s like speech. If someone says every word with the same emphasis, there’s no character in it.

Joe: It’s devoid of that—because you talked about how that gives one’s drumming and ride cymbal playing a poetic quality.

Jim: Exactly.

Joe: I guess a lot of those mechanics stemmed from Spector’s method?

Jim: No, I wouldn’t say that that came—just a lot of these things just developed from playing and teaching, you know.

Joe: What I mean to say is these other teachers planted the seed of some of these ideas and then obviously there’s some kinship with *The Essence of Jazz Drumming* and Spector’s method. You had said this to me years ago that you took Spector’s thing and you organized it better and fleshed it out even more. You expanded upon it further and I mean there’s a starting point to everything.

Jim: You know that’s the whole secret to evolution. You know, same thing with a guy like Jim Chapin. Chapin was a brilliant mind. His whole family consisted of brilliant

people. His father was a world-renown artist and then his son of course, Harry Chapin that was killed. Chapin was a very open guy. The thing about Chapin, he had no secrets, he wanted to give you everything he knew.

Joe: He was very generous that way.

Jim: Whereas, Spector, man, was like a secret service agent. Join the F.B.I., you know.

Joe: [Laughs]. You were telling me that. You had to really pry to—because you said Spector was so mysterious about everything.

Jim: Oh yeah, everything. You know Spector was onto something—give him credit. He put a lot of thought [into his teaching method]. But he was petrified of someone being able to copy it. Him [Spector] and Charlie Perry—man, they fought like mad.

Joe: But, isn't that the whole essence of knowledge that we are able to pass it on to people and I think that's just the whole objective of creativity. To take perhaps something that came before and then...

Jim: Expand it.

Joe: And you're expanding upon it and putting a twist on it.

Jim: Well, that's what happened with all the harmonic stuff on the piano.

Joe: And I think a lot of things were developing rhythmically on the drum set at that time and you guys were definitely a part of it.

Joe: I guess your teaching evolved over the years moving from using some of the books and literature that Sam Ulano had exposed to you to—that sort of thing evolved over the years because I know when I was studying with you, we were working on “The Basic Time Studies” and the “Jazz Lines.” This was before the *Essence* came out and then John Riley's book, *The Art of Bop Drumming*.

Jim: Yeah, that's a good book.

Joe: Chapin's book, the Ted Reed *Latin Rhythms*: I remember, that was very helpful and *Funk Sambas* later on and ...

Jim: Ted Reed was a very smart guy too, you know. His books were all very good—very, very good books.

Joe: Yeah, that brings me to the next thing Jim. You permanently moved to New York in 1967. What inspired that move to New York?

Jim: I just wanted to get deeper involved in everything.

Joe: Oh, I see: just a greater involvement in playing music...

Jim: Yeah, I mean, New York City was the mecca of jazz, let's face it. It wasn't Vancouver or Toronto or Ottawa.

Joe: Right. Did you work a lot in New York? Were you playing a lot of gigs?

Jim: Oh, yeah.

Joe: Didn't Jake [Hanna] get you to sub in for him on the *Merv Griffin Show* once?

Jim: Yeah, I played the *Merv Griffin Show* a number of times.

Joe: That's awesome. So, I guess you were playing jazz gigs and you were doing dance band gigs as well and playing weddings. So where was your teaching studio in New York? Was it in Times Square?

Jim: Yeah, pretty close: 7th and Broadway.

Joe: Because you told me once, every day you would walk from uptown Manhattan to downtown Manhattan to your studio.

Jim: I walked across. I lived on 52nd and 1st. I walked right across 52nd ...

Joe: And then you would teach your students and just walk back home. I remember you mentioning that me. You said that that was the only exercise you were getting in those days— [it] kind of attributes to the fact that you are still alive today.

Jim: [Laughs].

Joe: That's interesting. Well, during that time, I guess in '71, you would commute to Toronto every other week to teach students here.

Jim: Yeah, that's right.

Joe: How did you set that up?

Jim: Terry [Clarke] set that up.

Joe: That's right. Terry told me he set that up and he had gathered a group of guys who were interested in studying with you. And you called a meeting—you guys had a meeting where you introduced yourself and you were talking about your whole thing and "This is what we are going to do." That's interesting. Because Terry even said that he set you up with a house that you were teaching out of. But, then you were teaching upstairs at Drummer's Paradise on Church Street.

Jim: Yeah, I used to stay at Terry's apartment on Yonge Street and then Terry bought that house on Hillside and he rented it to me.

Joe: And that must've been interesting. I guess you liked Toronto a great deal and you thought, "I would like to settle here" [proceeds to present Jim with three *Down Beat* articles pertaining to Jim and his schism with Sam Ulano].

Jim: Oh, it's a good city. [What] articles [are these] [chuckles].

Joe: These are for you Jim. This is from *Down Beat*, March 21st, 1968: "Jim Blackley: Swinging Scot."

Jim: Oh, yeah [chuckles].

Joe: This is great.

Jim: Is the other one with Sam Ulano?

Joe: Yeah, I've got them all here. This is where you mention [reads from *Down Beat* interview: "Jim Blackley Swinging Scot"}: " 'My development came from listening,' he explains. While he has the greatest respect for the rudimental drummer, he 'will not concede for one minute that the requirements of the rudimentalist have any true connection with that of the jazz performer.' " And then you went on to say: " 'Reading is important,' says Blackley, 'but I stress that music can be made totally by ear. Too many drummers get tied up in the chart and no music comes out.' "

Jim: That's when Sam got disgruntled.

Joe: And so, Sam responded in "Drum Debate." So, this is *Down Beat*, May 16, 1968 and it was unbelievable that he wanted to call a meeting. I'll read this to you Jim, it's hilarious: "From 1 to 5 in the afternoon of May 5 at the Hotel Diplomat in New York City, the Drum Teachers Organization, a non-profit organization dedicated to the exchange of ideas between drum teachers, professional players and students, will hold its second meeting. Many points about drumming will be discussed and divergent viewpoints presented, but as far as veteran teacher Sam Ulano, founder of DTO, is concerned, a dialogue is in order right now. When he read about drum teacher Jim Blackley (*DB*, March 21), the rivets on Ulano's Chinese cymbal began to quiver. The first thing that irritated him was Blackley's statement that 'reading is important, but... music can be made entirely by ear. Too many drummers get tied up in the chart and no music comes out.' Ulano reasons: 'You can't do anything totally by ear until you have learned your instrument and how to read. You can't write a story unless you know the English language. The reason I take offense is that I feel it gives the young student a distorted picture. I don't think Jim Blackley could have written his books if he hadn't been a reader. 'As for drummers getting tied up in a chart,' he continues, 'He should be more specific. Of course, the beginner will get tied up in a chart. Or a guy who doesn't have the playing experience.' " It's interesting that he took offense to that.

Jim: Oh, yeah.

Joe: And then your rebuttal! This is one of the most eloquent things I've ever read in my life.

Jim: [laughs].

Joe: I mean you really...

Jim: Read it [laughs].

Joe: I'm going to read this Jim. You really brought the issue home and the concerns; and the problems of the jazz drummer and I think you hammered in the final nail to the coffin because I don't think Sam Ulano responded to this. I'm going to read this. This is wonderful. So, this is *Down Beat*, June 27, 1968: "Chords and Discords: A Forum for Readers: Drum Debate: Blackley Answers:" "In view of the long association that I have had with Sam Ulano, it comes as no surprise when I read his reaction (*DB*, May 16) to the *DB* article (March 21), which appeared on my behalf. To differ naturally means a personal vendetta on his part, but his attempt to involve two other knowledgeable and respected gentlemen was the height of bad taste." That's when he mentioned...

Jim: Charlie Perry

Joe: And Stanley Spector [continues reading article]. "That he became irritated, that his Chinese cymbal began to quiver, and that he cannot comprehend my statement, 'Reading is important, but I stress to my students that music can be made totally by ear' is fully understandable, for while the man is involved in the teaching of drummers to play drums, I am involved in the teaching of music to students who wish to use the drum set as a medium for musical expression, and it is this involvement with music that makes the ear a prime requisite. He attempts to reason, 'You can't do anything totally by ear, until you have learned your instrument and how to read. You can't write a story unless you know the English language,' but these, to me, are statements in reverse, for I have heard choirs throughout the country whose members are totally unfamiliar with the written note come forth with music in abundance. I have been told the most imaginative stories by children who know nothing of the written word, and I have observed with wonder the verbal and intellectual development of the newborn child that stems from its communication via the ear. With the lessons of nature so obviously surrounding our daily lives, it would appear to be a simple task to apply these principles to any mode of learning, but so far apart have the teaching of drums and the making of music become in many areas, that the ear, our main line of communication, is too seldom called upon to perform. To be sure, there are dozens of outstanding drum teachers throughout the country, but the numbers of teachers involving their students in conditions and attitudes comparable to on-stage performance is very low indeed. How many drum students during their studies have been involved in the following: 1: The study of form and structure as applied to modern music. 2: Direction in listening to the chord progressions and comping patterns of the piano player, and how to rhythmically compliment same. 3: Direction in listening to bass lines and how to rhythmically compliment same. 4: The meaning of consonance and dissonance, and how this affects the drummer. (Listen to the work of Max Roach, Shelly Manne, Elvin

Jones, Roy Haynes, Jake Hanna and Mel Lewis.) Max employed these principles magnificently in his solo work, so much so that one could walk in on a performance at any given time and tell which part of the chorus form he was in. 5: The difference between an arrangement written with a vertical line, and one written with a horizontal line, and how this affects the drummer, re conception, fills, set ups, etc. (Listen to the work of Mel Lewis with Thad Jones, Jake Hanna with Woody Herman, and Sam Woodyard with Duke Ellington.) 6: The importance of space in music, and how great tensions, colour and intensity can be created by its use. (Listen to Duke, Monk and Miles.) It has been my observation that the number of drummers involved in studies of this nature is very low indeed, and it is the absence of this type of musical involvement, that prompts me to the usage of the word ‘clinical.’ With his Chinese cymbal still sizzling in the background, Ulano now takes issue with my comment ‘Too many drummers get all tied up in the chart and no music comes out,’ and again he attempts to reason: ‘Of course the beginner will get tied up in a chart, or a guy who does not have the playing experience.’ But strange as it may seem, it is often the highly seasoned pros, regularly involved in reading during performance, who unconsciously turn the ear off and allow their reading ability to dominate their performance. I have heard various drummers who play the chart superbly first time through, but with each successive playing they see (and I stress *see*) more and more to add, so that the finished product sounds like an extended drum solo.” That’s interesting. Yeah, there are a couple of more paragraphs here. Do you want me to read the rest of it, Jim?

Jim: Yeah.

Joe: Yeah, I might as well: “It is for this reason that many fine musicians involved in regular studio work”— this is a good point—“thirst for jazz activity, for they are fully aware of the importance of keeping the ear at a high level of participation. Contrary to what has been suggested, I do not consider myself so much of an authority, but the conviction with which I speak stems not only from 20 years of teaching experience, but from the thousand times that I have lived and died and lived again, through good dues paid as a contributing musician in many quarters of the globe. It would be wise for the young drummer to realize that unless his musical understanding and listening habits are nourished and developed to the fullest, great chops and the ability to read a drum chart at sight develop nothing more than a mechanical, unmusical performer. Irrespective of the profound facility of Buddy Rich, his phenomenal ear still remains his greatest weapon of defense. I sincerely hope that these comments will give the young drummer a musical course to steer upon.” Wow, amazing. That was kind of the—you put the final nail in the coffin and laid that to rest [laughs]. Yeah, I mean, that in itself just seems to be— it encapsulates a lot of what your teaching method is all about.

Jim: Exactly, it’s all about the music.

Joe: And you were filling an important void at that time.

Jim: It's all about the music. *That's why everybody should learn the piano first of all.* But, my advice to you is to really work on the piano. Go and study with Brian Rudolph. You've got his number, right? Give him a call.

Joe: Jim, I wanted to ask you just a few more things. One of the wonderful things about your teaching method is— although you use a lot of the same core materials with your students: *The Essence of Jazz Drumming* and some of the other literature, you recognize the unique characteristics of each student. You always had this wonderful gift of working with a student and bringing out the best qualities in the student and helping the student to discover who they are. Because I remember you said to me years ago in one of my moments of distress, you just said to me, “It's not about winning or losing, it's about discovering who you are.” And it connects with your famous quote there [points to framed quote on the wall], “Being a musician, means being part of a total experience, no winning, no losing.” But, that was always one of the wonderful things about your method is that you knew exactly where to take the student next; you knew exactly what they needed in order to get a certain thing together if they were having problems and you had said to me once, “One man's medicine, is another man's poison” [laughs]. Which is true, you know, one little prescription that you would give to me that would work really well with me could possibly mess up another student.

Jim: That's right, exactly.

Joe: Could you elaborate on some of that; just the way that you work with students in that respect?

Jim: Well, the thing is that when I'm teaching you, I'm not just teaching you about drums, I'm teaching from my life time experiences. You know, I had many experiences playing the violin, dancing, boxing, pipe band thing, you know— everything. So, it's an accumulation of all these things.

Joe: It's all about eternal learning and growth.

Jim: And you got to have a thirst for knowledge.

Joe: That's right, that constant betterment and continually improving and bettering oneself.

Jim: It's never-ending.

Joe: That's right. It's eternal. Now, that brings me to the next thing. Another special thing about your teaching whether the student knows of him—your whole involvement with Bawa Muhaiyaddeen and the impact he had on you and the general elements of Sufism and matters of the heart. I always found that you would— you know, just through getting inside the students' heads and seeing what makes them tick and what not and gaining an understanding of them that way, you would then get to their hearts and bring

out the best in each student. And I believe a lot of that stems from the Sufi teachings and things of that nature. It plays a big role in how you deal with students.

Jim: It's very important to try and bring out the best in every student, you know. But, I never believed in being a dictatorial [teacher], you know. I think you got to work with compassion—very, very important. People respond to compassion.

Joe: That's right.

Jim: If you're screaming and shouting at a student.

Joe: That's right. I always felt tranquility and calm when I would go to the lesson. And I always felt at ease in your presence. Obviously, we were working hard reviewing the lesson material and we would drink tea and you would kick me in the butt from time to time [laughs]; which is what we all need. But, yet there was always this feeling of tranquility and ease. You described it as tough love, I remember. It was very paternalistic, but you described it as showing students tough love; which is what we need.

Jim: Well, when you get out into the real world everybody isn't putting their arms around you [laughs].

Joe: It's true. You're right about that and it's about destroying the ego and realizing that we are eternal students.

Jim: We are all eternal students. That's the thing.

Joe: So, Jim how did you discover Bawa Muhaiyaddeen? I think you told me Don Thompson had learned about Bawa.

Jim: It wasn't Don Thompson. He [Bawa] came to Toronto once to lecture and a friend of mine just saw the ad in the paper and called me up and said, "You'd probably be interested."

Joe: Did you speak to Bawa when he put on that lecture?

Jim: Oh, yes. He kicked my ass.

Joe: So, you spoke to him that day.

Jim: So did Aishah.

Joe: He must've had a profound impact on the two of you which inspired Aishah and yourself to continue studying with him.

Jim: Well, Aishah would go every weekend from here to Philadelphia.

Joe: She would commute to Philadelphia [and go to] the Fellowship. That's amazing. That in itself is life-changing. After that you became a vegetarian and adopted a healthier lifestyle and things like that.

Jim: Now, there's just so much to learn. But, the most important thing is being a good human being. That's the key, you know. Just be kind with everybody. It doesn't matter if they're Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, you know: black, white, yellow, green, you know.

Joe: We're all human beings. We're all part of the human race. I remember you telling me years ago, "Just strive to be the best that you can be and serve humanity." And those were perhaps some of the greatest words I've ever heard. That's it!

Jim: Well, that's what it is all about. Just be yourself and you've got a lot of talent and see where your strengths are and work [with them]. You know, don't try and accept your weaknesses, you know.

Joe: I remember you telling me years ago, "Don't talk about your weaknesses too much. When you're on a gig don't talk about the music, just play." It's a good frame of mind to adopt.

Jim: You don't want to be talking about, "Oh, I feel very insecure here." People will pass that around and then—you know.

Joe: So, Jim, do you still meditate every day?

Jim: Well, just in my own particular way.

Joe: With prayer and all that. That's good. Any other drum books on the horizon Jim: *Rhythmical Explorations Vol. 4*?

Jim: Yeah, I've got other ones that I'm thinking about. Well, you've seen...

Joe: I have three [volumes]. I have volumes one, two and three [*Rhythmical Explorations*]. [Volume] three is amazing. I worked out of that a little bit.

Jim: What one was that?

Joe: The one where you are dealing with the fliddles [plays exercise on lap with hands].

Jim: Oh yeah, being able to articulate, that's the thing.

Joe: That's what I wanted to ask you Jim. Because in one of your old tutorials, I think in 2007, you spoke about the misuse of the word interdependence and you spoke about coordinated independence and you talked about how interdependence deals with the limbs and their relationship to a specific grid: being an eighth-note triplet grid or a sixteenth-note grid. And then you looked at coordinated independence as the physical approach to playing the strokes. But, it also involved the execution and the articulation;

and you felt that what you were presenting in *Rhythmical Explorations* was a true form of pure independence in that you are articulating the two lines. It's amazing how—that's what sets those books apart from say something like Nick Ceroli's book from back in the day [produces a copy of Nick Ceroli's *A Modern Approach to Independence for the Advanced Drummer: Vol. 1*]. Do you remember this Jim?

Jim: Let me see this. Oh yeah.

Joe: He's got the two lines happening and I know Ulano wrote a book back in the day called *Duet Yourself*.

Jim: Nick Ceroli, he was a very good player Nick Ceroli.

Joe: Did you know him?

Jim: Oh yeah.

Joe: Was he a New Yorker?

Jim: No, L.A.

Joe: Oh, he was an L.A. guy. Well, you know he had the two lines happening but there is no articulation. You took it to the next level by articulating the two lines.

Jim: But, once again they're exercises.

Joe: That's right. It's a matter of taking things and applying them to music and making them work musically. I think a lot of what you presented in your books is very musical and very practical.

Jim: Well, that's the idea. But, you should definitely get into the piano as quick as possible. You got Brian Rudolph's number?

Joe: Yeah, I do.

Jim: Good.

Joe: I wanted to ask you one more thing. Just the whole teaching method—I have been discussing this with various students, I just wanted your opinion on this. I have been discussing this with the various former students and what not: the whole idea of the ride cymbal being the main means of generating the time...

Jim: From a jazz stand point.

Joe: But, it also seems to be the thing that draws a lot of drummers into the music. The actual playing of the ride cymbal and the ride beat, it calls the student and it's through that that the student develops their identity as a jazz musician and their voice and I find that—because you can hear that in many of your students. There is something very

recognizable about the way that they are playing the time and the sound that is coming out of the cymbal. I was reading something about one of Spector's students Joe Cocuzzo...

Jim: Oh Yeah.

Joe: [He] was playing with a piano player named Ross Tompkins and he [Cocuzzo] was on the gig with Ross and Ross had said to him, "Although, you don't play like Jake Hanna, the only other drummer that I heard who sounds that way is Jake Hanna and you guys sound very similar with the ride cymbal." And Joe had said to Ross, "Well, we studied with the same teacher: Stanley Spector." And I think the same can be said for your students in that there are similarities in the approach. I've had people approach me and say—you know, they just watched me play and they ask, "Did you study with Jim Blackley?" Just based on the sound and the way I'm playing the ride cymbal and everything. And I think a lot of that has to do with the way you taught the students and dealt with them. As much as there are similarities, there are differences as well. I think that largely has to do with the fact that we are all unique individuals. Do you have anything to say regarding that, just as a final thing?

Jim: Yeah, it's very true. I mean, there's a common bond with all the students and it is the right hand on the cymbal. That's the foundation to their playing. All the other stuff with the left hand, bass drum, hi-hat is just colouring, you know.

Joe: Because I remember you would say to me in the past, "Take the material and personalize it. Find your own way of working through the material." And I think through that you can develop a unique identity on the drums through extending the ideas found in your books.

Jim: All I'm doing is giving everybody a foundation, you know. In other words, what I do is build a platform to stand on and what they do after that is up to them.

Joe: That's right.

Jim: I mean, Barry Elmes doesn't sound like Terry Clarke and vice versa.

Joe: Although they both studied with you at different times. They were exposed to some similar material.

Jim: Oh yes, exposed to all of it.

