

The Hellcats

United States Military Academy
West Point, New York



Percussive Arts Society International Convention
Saturday, November 8, 2008
2:00 p.m.



Hellcat Heritage

The Hellcats, an ensemble comprised of buglers and rudimental drummers from the West Point Band, has played an influential role in over 220 years of musical tradition at West Point. Their legend began early in the American Revolution, when units of George Washington's Continental Army, including fifers and drummers, established the garrison of West Point in January of 1778. Following the Revolution, West Point remained an active federal garrison upon the formal establishment of the United States Military Academy in 1802. During this period, fifers and drummers assigned to artillery and engineer units at West Point perpetuated the pragmatic nature of field music.



During the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the War Between the States, the drum was the primary source of battlefield communication. Throughout the day it signaled various orders, and its steady beat established the cadence for road marches and troop movements. The bugle served an increasingly important role starting in the 1800's. Army commanders grew more dependent upon the bugle's bold, brilliant sound to present commands both in camp and over the din of battle.



The Hellcats' mission today is to provide musical support to the U.S. Corps of Cadets. In addition to sounding Reveille and Retreat at the garrison flagpole, the Hellcats perform a myriad of ceremonial functions, including military reviews and parades. Each weekday they provide music as the cadets march into the mess hall. As the football season nears the annual Army vs. Navy game, special Hellcat arrangements of traditional West Point gridiron songs fan the Army fighting spirit. Hellcat buglers and drummers also have the honorable task of performing muffled drums and Taps for West Point funerals. Annually, a bugler plays Taps at the tombs of presidents Ulysses S. Grant and Franklin D. Roosevelt on the anniversaries of their births.

Pride, intense esprit de corps, and a sense of historical continuity inspire the distinguished service of today's Hellcats. With their precise marching, embellished by the twirls of silver bugles and intricate rudimental drumming, the group delights thousands of spectators each year. In 1994, the Hellcats participated in the deactivation parade of the Allied Strike Force as it made its final departure from the city of Berlin. The Hellcats have also been featured at various military tattoos throughout the United States and Canada.

In 2002, the group performed in Carnegie Hall with the New York Pops Orchestra and for the Fourth of July with the Boston Pops Orchestra. In 2004, the ensemble traveled to Orlando, Florida to participate in festivities honoring Flag Day at Walt Disney World. Recently, the ensemble performed with the Virginia Grand Military Band and was showcased at the Blossom Festival, the summer home of the Cleveland Orchestra, as a part of its Fourth of July festivities. Members of the Hellcats have also been showcased on The Today Show, Fox and Friends, 60 Minutes, Dateline NBC as well as on documentaries occurring on The History and Discovery Channels.



Equipped with instruments designed and hand-made specifically for them, the Hellcats enable the West Point Band to maintain faithful renditions of traditional American military music while providing the Corps of Cadets with a piece of living history.

Bridging the Gap

The most recent addition to the rudimental drum feature repertoire of The Hellcats is *Bridging the Gap*, composed by Staff Sgt. Jeff Prosperie. This feature is inspired by an exploration of rudimental drumming through time, genre, and style.

The first excerpt from this drum solo explores the contrast of the “old school” versus the “new school,” or traditional versus contemporary styles of rudimental composition. This section explores the contrasting aspects of technique, use of muscle groupings, heights, vocabulary, and orchestration. **(See Excerpt #1)**

It is important to understand the compositional choices and tools available to the composer when creating a work. These devices hold true whether the vehicle is a snare solo, an ensemble selection, or a marching band or drum corps show. Understanding these devices as a performer, arranger, teacher, or judge aids greatly in clarity of intent. Many compositional devices were employed in this second excerpt to end one section, transition to the next, and create an interesting effect. This example contains the following: visual transition (visual thread from Pratt to Moeller), asymmetrical phrasing (3/4, 4/4), rhythmic and visual tension/release, subito tempo change, repetition (“heavy left foot” quote), accelerando, risk/reward (stick flip), crescendo, metric modulation, thematic thread (*Three Camps*/musical arrival), visual arrival of a well set up effect (“2 punch/knock out” rule), and silence. **(See Excerpt #2)**

The third excerpt demonstrates the influence of a more contemporary rudimental vocabulary on a traditional classic. What would *Crazy Army* look like if, in 1934, composer Ed Lemley had the same rudimental palette of modern hybrid rudiments at his disposal? In *Bridging the Gap*, Staff Sgt. Prosperie drew from this thought and created what he envisioned Lemley might have been able to compose using today’s selection of hybrid rudiments and combinations. **(See Excerpt #3)**

The fourth excerpt pays tribute to rudimental icon Marty Hurley and explores some of the unique idiosyncrasies of ancient style rudimental drumming. Lift/delayed 7-stroke rolls, yips, “filling up” rolls (quintuplet base), and different ruff interpretations are all utilized. **(See Excerpt #4)**

A thematic thread is a compositional device used to sew a musical selection together. It provides continuity to the structure and a sense of connection and familiarity for the listener. In *Bridging the Gap*, the famous drummer’s call *Three Camps* is used as a thematic thread, and is quoted in three separate compositional settings. The first presentation is in the second excerpt, as previously stated. The second setting inspires the back sticking in the fifth excerpt, and the third setting is realized in the final excerpt. Also note the “2 punch/knock out” rule of effect previously stated (back stick, fake, and sequential visual effects). **(See Excerpt #5)**

The final excerpt concludes the drum solo, employing such compositional transition devices as metric modulation, accelerando, and stability of repetition to release the tension previously created. This final section also pays homage to the American art form of Jazz and its African influences. In the finale of this rudimental tour de force, there are quotes from two classic tunes (*Downfall of Paris* and *Three Camps*), forward motion through another metric modulation and accelerando, a thunderous crescendo roll, a visual flurry, and the visual resolution of a military salute. **(See Excerpt #6)**

Bridging the Gap

Jeff Prosperie

Ancient Style $\text{♩} = 120$

Excerpt #1

Snare Drum

Crazy Army "B"

Pratt vis.
up down *ff*

Bass Drum

ff

S.Dr.

B. Dr.

A Modern Style

S.Dr.

B. Dr.

mf

mf

S.Dr.

B. Dr.

fp *f* *sfz*

p *ff*

S.Dr.

B. Dr.

--> edge

ff

S.Dr.

B. Dr.

f

f

Excerpt #6

J stagger entrances by an 8th note *LH butt up* *slight accel.*

mf *LH twirl* *RH twist/flip* *ff* *down* *p* *f*

K Jazz Style

ff *p* *mf* *f*

1. 2.

ff *p* *mf* *f*

L Downfall/Three Camps accel.

ff *accel.*

M Naningo

ff

6- 6- 6-

mp *mf*

double twirl *in spin* *both sticks RH* *set salute* *behind back sw. hands*

ff

Burns Moore

Musical notation for Burns Moore, featuring four staves with rhythmic patterns and fingerings. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first staff is labeled 'A' and the second 'B'. The third and fourth staves are labeled 'A2' and 'B2' respectively. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first staff is labeled 'A' and the second 'B'. The third and fourth staves are labeled 'A2' and 'B2' respectively. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Crazy Army

Ed Lemley

Musical notation for Crazy Army, featuring six staves with rhythmic patterns and fingerings. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first staff is labeled 'Fill' and the second 'Fill'. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Three Camps

Musical score for 'Three Camps' in 12/8 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music features a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents. The first two staves are marked with repeat signs. The third staff has a first ending bracket over the final two measures, and the fourth staff has a second ending bracket over the final two measures. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Three Camps Variation

Arr. Jeff Prosperie

Musical score for 'Three Camps Variation' in 2/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music features a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents and sixteenth-note runs. The first two staves are marked with repeat signs. The third staff has a first ending bracket over the final two measures, and the fourth staff has a second ending bracket over the final two measures. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

R r r L l l R l r l | R r r L l l R l r l | R r r L l l R l l R r r | R r r L l l R r r L | R r r L l l R l r L

R r r L l l R l r L | R r r L l l R l r L | R r r L l l R l l R r r | L r r L l l R l r L

R l r L R l r L | R r r L l l R l r L | R l r L R l r L | R r r L l l R l r L

R r r L l l R l r L | R r r L l l R l r L | R r r L l l R l l R r r | L r r L l l R l r L | L R L R L R L

Grids

William Calohan

Seven staves of musical notation for a drum set exercise in 4/4 time. Each staff begins with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature. The notation consists of eighth notes grouped in threes, with an accent (>) above each group. The first four staves end with a double bar line. The fifth and sixth staves end with a fermata over the final note. The seventh staff ends with a fermata over the final note and a double bar line.

Ideas

- Play beginning on either hand.
- Put an ornament (flam, grace note, diddle, buzz, etc.) on or in place of the accent.
- Place an ornament on one part of the beat while still moving the accent.
- Keep the accent on one part of the beat while moving the ornament.
- Try to incorporate rudiments like the flam drag and paradiddle.

excerpt from "in Keeping with Tradition"

William Calohan

The musical score is written for a drum set in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 116 beats per minute. It consists of eight staves of music, each with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature of 4/4. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamics are indicated by *ff*, *mf*, *f*, *fp*, and *ff*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 3, 5, and 6. The score begins with a double bar line and a tempo marking of 116. The first staff starts with a *ff* dynamic and features a pattern of eighth notes with accents. The second staff continues with a *mf* dynamic and includes a five-fingered pattern. The third staff has a *mf* dynamic and features a pattern of eighth notes with accents. The fourth staff has a *f* dynamic and includes a six-fingered pattern. The fifth staff has a *f* dynamic and features a pattern of eighth notes with accents. The sixth staff has a *ff* dynamic and includes a three-fingered pattern. The seventh staff has a *fp* dynamic and features a pattern of eighth notes with accents. The eighth staff has a *ff* dynamic and includes a six-fingered pattern. The score ends with a double bar line.

Bass Drum Techniques of The Hellcats

The Hellcats are fortunate to host guest clinicians from time to time. In the past three years, we've benefited from presentations by guests such as Marty Hurley, Lee Caron, Albert Bachman, and Nick Attanasio. We spent an afternoon with Nick learning from his masterful bass drum technique and enjoying his vast knowledge and great stories. Nick is a true innovator in rudimental bass drumming. He took an instrument that was primarily used for simple beat support and used it as an independent voice in fife and drum corps writing. Nick also added various visual elements to his bass drum performance bag of tricks, effectively taking the bass drummer out of the shadows behind the snare line and into the limelight.

In each of the features we perform in our clinic, the bass drum serves double duty. For our daily duties at West Point, the bass drum is normally limited to what we affectionately call "heavy left." This means the bass drummer simply plays quarter notes, accenting each left foot step (beats 1 and 3 of a 4/4 bar). We play "heavy left" to keep the more than 4,000 strong US Corps of Cadets in step while marching on the parade field. Within our drum features, the bass drum becomes an extra voice, playing parts that require much more technical expertise. In this more intricate compositional style, the bass drummer is called upon to support the rhythms and accents of the snare drum voice and play as a soloist, as well as create a bass line for the bugles and drums of The Hellcats. Additionally, the bass drummer often adds swings and other stick motions, creating more visual interest. These visual elements are completely derived from the work of Nick Attanasio.

One of the three drum features performed by The Hellcats is entitled *Shades of Grey*. This feature was composed by Hellcat alumnus Gus Cuccia, Jr. The Cuccia family has been very involved in the fife and drum corps activity for many years. In this feature, Gus utilized roll and drag figures that are very common in fife and drum writing, but not as common in today's DCI and WGI compositional styles. Conversely, some of the included hybrid rudiments and combinations that feature accents before and after a flam (like what you might find in a grid exercise) were familiar to the newer Hellcats with DCI and WGI experience. By combining these elements, Gus created a very unique and demanding rudimental drum feature.

Since *Shades of Grey* was written with an additional transitional purpose for The Hellcats feature show, Gus used a metric modulation to move from an up-tempo 6/8 to a more deliberate 2/4. He achieved this by taking the absolute tempo of the 6/8 8th notes, and making it the absolute tempo of the sixteenth notes in the 2/4. This happens between bars 37 and 45 of the provided excerpt.

The compositional style used to create double-duty in the bass drum voice is illustrated in this example as well. In measures 41-44, the bass drum supports the snare drum by playing many of the same accents and rhythms. In measures 45-48, however, the bass drum plays off of the snare drum accents, creating a syncopated conversation between the two voices. The bass drum is also used as a contrasting solo voice, as seen in measures 57 and 58, and again in measures 61 and 62.

Gus Cuccia, Jr. started drumming with the Young Colonials Fife and Drum Corps in 1978. In 1996, Gus joined The Hellcats and performed with them as a rudimental drummer for 11 years. Some of the numerous memorable performances with The Hellcats include international tattoos, Disney World, and Fourth of July with the Boston Pops Orchestra. Gus has performed with and taught many fife and drum corps, including the Young Colonials, the Regulators, the Civil War Troopers and the Mount Kisco Fife and Drum Corps. Gus has appeared on recordings with The Hellcats and The U.S. Military Academy Band, numerous fife and drum corps, the Planxty Pauline Album, and historical recordings for The Company of Fifers and Drummers. Gus currently resides in Beacon, NY, with his wife Traci and their two daughters, Maria and Elizabeth. He is a band director with the Paul Effman Music Service, and maintains an active schedule in the fife and drum community as a performer, instructor, and arranger.

excerpt from "Shades of Grey"

Gus Cuccia

♩. = 148

Snare Drum

Bass Drum

f

33 *f* 37

S.Dr.

B.Dr.

mf

39 41 *mf*

R stick on L stick

S.Dr.

B.Dr.

44 48

pls. 1 & 2 (L^A) (R^A)

S.Dr.

B.Dr.

50 53

all players

pls. 3 & 4

S.Dr.

B.Dr.

55 58 *f* *mf*

all players

p

S.Dr.

B.Dr.

60 62 *f* *ff* *ff*

Sergeant Major Eric Sheffler

Sergeant Major Eric Sheffler is a native of Kansas. He returned to The Hellcats in January of 2002. Beginning the summer of 2004, Sgt. Maj. Sheffler assumed the duties of Drum Major for The US Military Academy Band. He previously served in The Hellcats from 1983-1994, and was the Assistant Drum Major of the U.S. Military Academy Band. While away from West Point, Sgt. Maj. Sheffler completed a Masters Degree in Percussion Performance at Pittsburg State University. He also taught classes in percussion techniques, applied percussion, music fundamentals, basic conducting, wind ensemble, and marching band. In addition to his duties with The U.S. Military Academy Band, Sgt. Maj. Sheffler serves as an adjunct faculty member at Marist College.

Staff Sergeant William Calohan

Staff Sergeant William Calohan joined The Hellcats in August of 2005. In 2002, he received a Bachelor of Music Education from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, where he studied with C. William Rice, Dr. Todd Johnson, and Dr. Michael Overman. Staff Sgt. Calohan completed a Master of Music in Percussion Performance at the University of Minnesota in May of 2005, where he studied with Fernando Meza and Earl Yowell. As a graduate student, Staff Sgt. Calohan taught percussion lessons and the percussion techniques course for undergraduate music education majors. Staff Sgt. Calohan has attended the Leigh Howard Stevens Summer Marimba Seminar, Bob Becker Ragtime Institute, and performed at PASIC 2004 with Rolando Morales-Matos. He was the winner of the 2001 Virginia Music Teachers Association concerto competition. Staff Sgt. Calohan has instructed and arranged music for high school marching bands, worked as a freelance percussionist in Virginia, Minnesota and New York, and enjoys arranging and composing original music.

Staff Sergeant Bill Cuthbert

Staff Sergeant Bill Cuthbert joined The Hellcats in November of 2007. He earned a Bachelor of Music Performance from Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois, where he studied with David Collier. Prior to his assignment with The Hellcats, Staff Sgt. Cuthbert held a position with the Navy Band Southeast in Jacksonville, Florida. While in the Navy, he performed as a member of the concert band, ceremonial band, jazz big band and the rock band "Liberty". Staff Sgt. Cuthbert has performed with the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, Peoria Symphony Orchestra, St. John's River City Brass Band, and the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra. In addition, Staff Sgt. Cuthbert has instructed and arranged music for numerous high school and college drum lines, including Illinois State University and the University of Illinois.

Staff Sergeant J. Andrew Porter

Staff Sergeant J. Andrew Porter joined The Hellcats in May of 2005. Prior to his appointment, Staff Sgt. Porter taught percussion for J.J. Pearce High School in Richardson, Texas, and general music and band in the Barren County School District in his home state of Kentucky. He holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Western Kentucky University and a Master of Music in Percussion Performance from Louisiana State University. He has studied with Dr. Christopher S. Norton, Dr. Michael G. Kingan, Timothy K. Adams, Jr. and Conrad Alexander. Staff Sgt. Porter was a member of the snare line for the Bluecoats Drum and Bugle Corps of North Canton, Ohio from 1993 to 1995, and the snare section leader for the WGI Independent World Champion Music City Mystique of Nashville, Tennessee in 1996. Staff Sgt. Porter has performed with the Baton Rouge Symphony, the Natchez Opera Festival Orchestra, the Brevard Music Center Orchestra, and the Dallas Wind Symphony. Staff Sgt. Porter is an active freelance performer and clinician, and is endorsed by Innovative Percussion.

Staff Sergeant Jeff Prosperie

Staff Sergeant Jeff Prosperie joined The Hellcats in December of 2006. Staff Sgt. Prosperie previously served as Director of Percussion Studies at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette, Principal Percussion with the Baton Rouge Symphony, and as percussion designer/caption head for the World Champion Phantom Regiment Drum and Bugle Corps of Rockford, Illinois. Having won numerous snare drum titles, Staff Sgt. Prosperie is a world snare drum champion, and is the first and only individual to ever capture the “triple crown” of solo snare drum competition (DCI, PAS, and DCA). Staff Sgt. Prosperie actively serves as a championship level adjudicator for DCI, and as a marching percussion committee member for PAS. Staff Sgt. Prosperie received his Bachelor of Music Education from Louisiana State University, his Master of Music from University of North Texas, and has completed all course work for Doctor of Musical Arts from University of North Texas. Staff Sgt. Prosperie has performed clinics, concerts, and adjudicated throughout the United States, Europe, Canada, and Japan, for organizations and events such as PASIC, TBA, TMEA, and the Mid-West Band and Orchestra Clinic. He is a performing artist endorsed by Pearl/Adams, Sabian, Innovative Percussion, and Evans.

NOTES



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