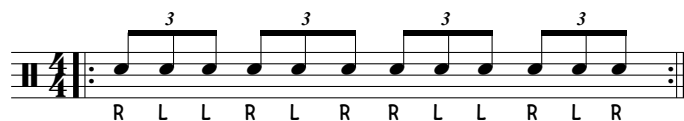


Making the *Swingadiddle* Part of Your Drum Set Vocabulary

By Sean J. Kennedy

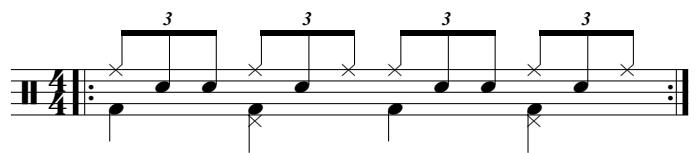
Oftentimes while chatting we use vocabulary words that we are familiar with and have used instinctively over and over again in conversation. Having a readily available repository of useful phrases, musical or otherwise, allows us to communicate much more quickly, and effectively with other people.

Similar to building a solid and instinctive verbal and written vocabulary, the same is true for our drum set vocabulary; it takes lots of focused individual practice and practical application in live playing situations to make it part of our personal vernacular. Back in the 1980s, my high school drum set teacher, Ray Deeley, taught me one of the most useful patterns that I've ever learned, which has become part of my personal drumming language:



Learning and practicing this pattern solved a problem for me. I was in my school jazz band and needed to play an extended solo in a swing tune. Having only played and listened to jazz for a very short time, I had a very limited jazz drumming musical vocabulary. Mr. Deeley showed me the basics of building a solo based off this motif. After I could play it correctly on a pad and then the snare drum, we added a simple hi-hat and bass drum part and started moving the right-hand part to different drums and cymbals — all while repeating the pattern — and, just like that, I could easily play a four-, eight-, or sixteen-measure solo that swung and kept the pulse for the band.

Here is the pattern expanded to the full drum set. Notice how the right-hand part is a standard swing ride pattern:



This is a very practical pattern with many useful, real-life applications. The drummer and the band can constantly hear and feel the swing pattern, no matter which drum or cymbal is being played, because the playing is motivic in nature due to the swing pattern being used throughout.

While preparing this article, I figured that I should let someone else look at it to make sure that I was on the right track, so, I sent it to PAS Hall of Famer, and friend, Mr. Harold Jones. The day after I emailed him my draft of this article, he emailed me back and said, "Call me, ASAP!" When we were able to chat live on the phone, he erupted with laughter and said, laughing, "Sean, I've been playing this pattern for the past year on my pad to keep my hands in shape! I thought that I had invented it!"

He went on to say, "For swing drummers, I consider it very important for them to learn and practice all of their rudiments on the snare drum and then orchestrate them around the entire drum kit, but *especially* the pattern here in this article. In fact, I think that this is so important that it should actually be a standard *swing drum set rudiment*, if there were such things. Sean, let's name it!"

From that point we went back and forth with a few options, and finally settled on calling it a *Swingadiddle*. Harold concluded, "I'm going to call it the 'Swingadiddle' from now on and tell every drummer that I know to learn it and practice it. It keeps the drummer swinging during comping and solos and really gives both hands a full workout!"

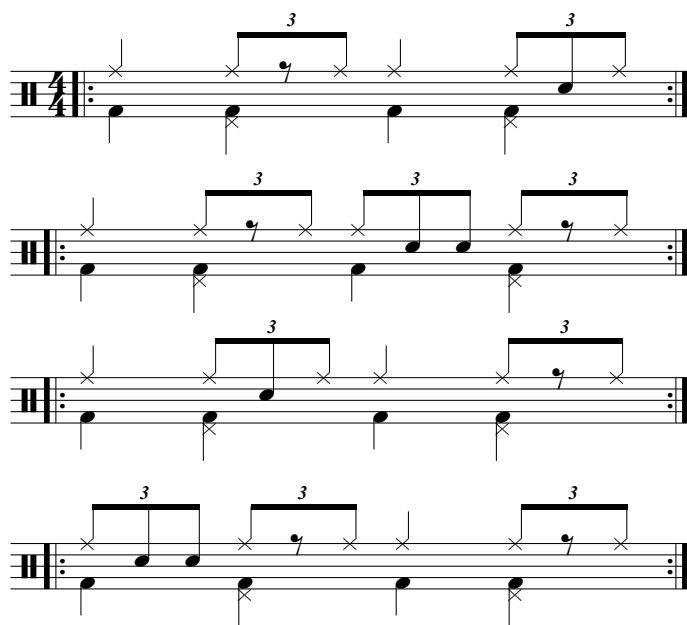
So there you have it; a pattern that I was taught by my first drumming hero, Ray Deeley, and have loved and used, making it part of my personal drumming vocabulary since high school, and then I find out that it is also loved by big band drumming royalty, Harold Jones. Well, that's good enough for me; it proved to me that this is a very valuable part of my drum set vocabulary, and well worth sharing here with all of you!

Here are some practice techniques that will help you to get the Swingadiddle in your hands.

ISOLATION

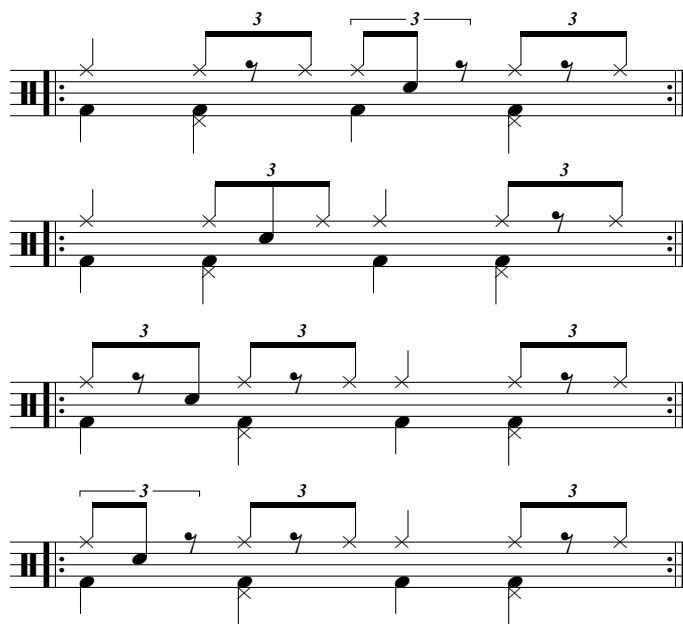
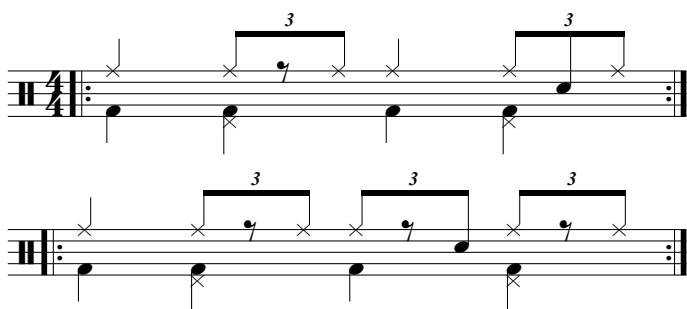
In this set of variations, swing on the cymbal with your right hand, and then play the snare, as you'll see below, on beats 4, 3, 2, and 1. Using this "reverse order" just swings better in my opinion. I play each of these four times in the video demonstration, but you can and should repeat them more than four times until they all become comfortable.

Isolation Variation 1



Isolation Variation 2

In this variation we break up the snare drum rhythms to add some more nuance and flexibility to our left hand.



ADDITION

This is the same sequence as Isolation Variation I, but this time, when you add a snare, keep it in the pattern. By the end of this sequence, you'll be playing a full Swingadiddle.

Addition Variation 1

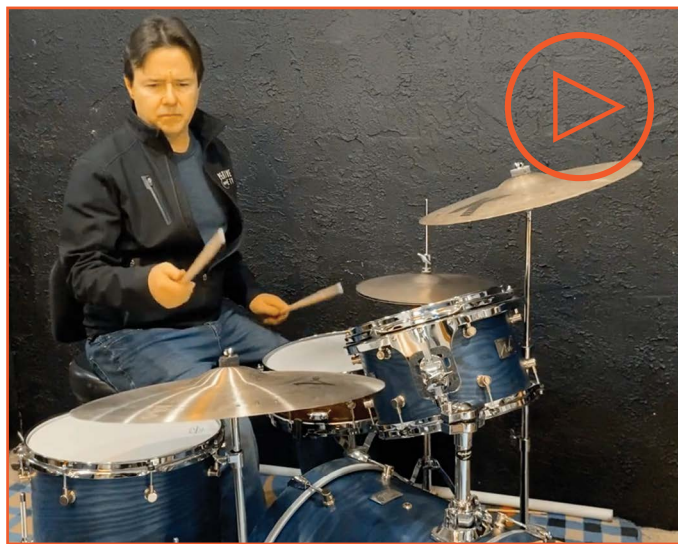


Addition Variation 2

SUBTRACTION

In these examples contrary to the above variations, we'll start with the full Swingadiddle pattern, and then systematically eliminate snare drum notes in similar fashion to the previous

Video: Vocabulary Lesson: Making a 'Swingadiddle' Part of Your Vernacular on Drum Set



variations, first on beat 4, then 3, and 2, finally leaving only the pattern on beat 1.

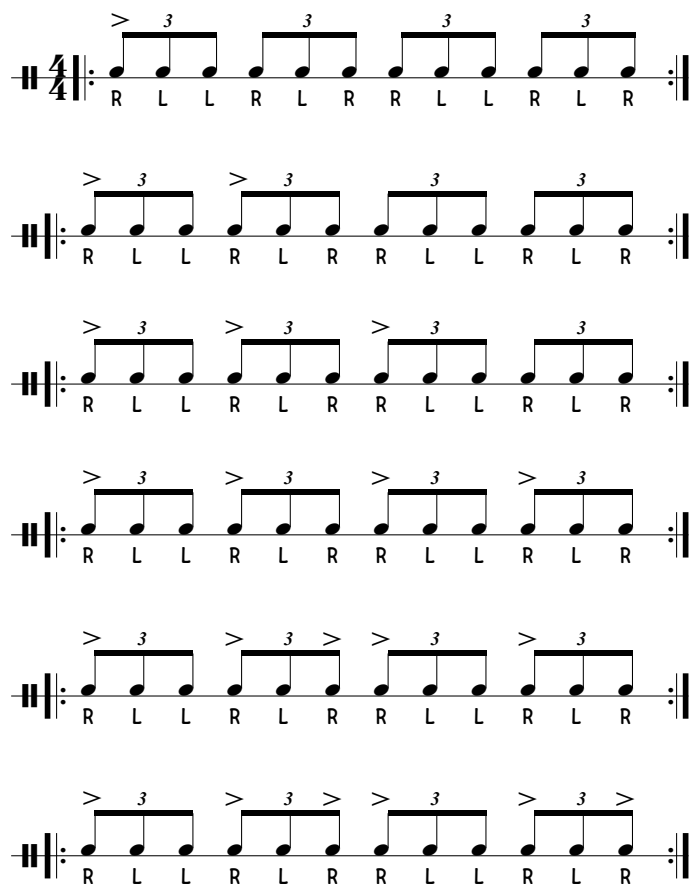
Subtraction Variation 1

Subtraction Variation 2

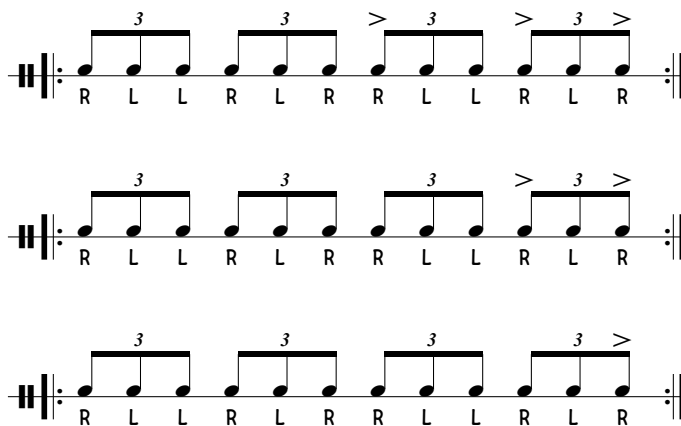
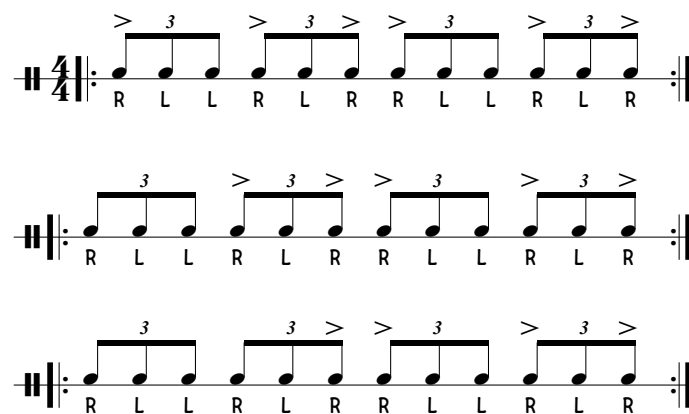
PAD/SNARE EXERCISES

Finally, here are short sequences that you can perform on your pad/snare to gain more control of this pattern.

Pad/Snare Variation 1 (Addition)



Pad/Snare Variation 2 (Subtraction)



And there we have a relatively simple pattern expanded and explored more completely, as an example of making the most of a single idea. And yet, these examples are just the tip of the iceberg. Experiment with your own variations of this pattern!

Going through this process of development with the Swingadiddle reinforced to me the notion that it is not the *quantity* of our notes and patterns in practice and performance; what really matters the *quality* with which we execute them. It reminds me of the great quote by Bruce Lee: "I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times." Focused practice on just one practical pattern like this can really pay off and solidify your drumming vocabulary. As an example, check out the short, improvised solo, based solely on the Swingadiddle, that I play at the end of the demonstration video, and like Harold Jones says, "Keep swinging!"

Sean J. Kennedy performs with The Gardyn Jazz Orchestra, The Doc Severinsen Tribute Band featuring Jay Webb, and is principal percussionist with the Philadelphia Boys Choir and Chorale. An active freelancer on stage and in the studio, Sean is producer and host of a music-industry podcast, *Backstage at The Enharmonic*, a member of PAS Drum Set Committee, author of numerous drum set, percussion, and improvisation books, and in 2018 presented a TEDx Talk about the history of the drum set. An adjunct drum set and percussion professor at Arcadia University, Sean is also on the instrumental music staff at the Upper Dublin and Wissahickon School Districts in suburban Philadelphia. For more info, visit: www.seanjkenedy.com.