Australian New Zealand Cultural Arts

Drumkit

Performance Diploma



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Gary in the pit for Spamalot (2020)



Gary in the p for Wicked (2017)



Gary in the pit for Strictly Ballroom (2024)



Gary set up for High School Musical (2024)

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Welcome

Thank you for joining me for my ANZCA Drum set diploma recital.
This performance represents more to me than a music examination; it is the sum of decades of study, practice, performing and teaching, as well as creative artistic decisions.

This performance will be delivered in an educational / clinic format to demonstrate my understanding of the concepts underpinning the music, as well as my ability to perform the pieces.
I also hope this presentation might also allow for others to learn from my experience should they wish to undertake the ANZCA drum kit diploma studies for themselves.

Due of the educational nature of this recital, this program booklet also doubles as an educational handout, containing information about the pieces, the technical material covered and the relevance of these techniques to drumkit music more broadly.

Regarding the pieces I will be performing, I have chosen to frame these solos through the lens of commonly used rhythmic vocabulary as it appears in modern drum kit performance, particularly within advanced rock, progressive, and fusion styles. At the same time, these works can also be understood as stand-alone contemporary percussion pieces within the art music tradition, drawing on the lineage of percussionists such as Terry Bozzio, David Jones, and theatrical percussion ensembles like Stomp and Blue Man Group.

I hope this performance is both enjoyable and educational.

Gary McDonald



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Gary in 1996 with his first drum set



Gary on the set of the musical Chicago in 2023

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BACKGROUND AND BIOGRAPHY

Gary began playing drumkit in 199 augmenting imited private lesso s with s own research and practice. In those early years, Gary developed his skills y playing along with recordings, play ng rhythms out of various textbooks, notating songs he liked, jammi g with f ends, and performing in ocal over bands.

After relocating to the A bu y-Wodonga region in 2001, Ga y undertook Certificate IV in Contemporary Music Performance at the Riverin Institute of TAFE (2002) and q ckly arned a reputation in the local area as a drummer who could (and w s willing to) both read music and p y in different genres.

In 2003, Gary accept d two part-time drumkit teaching positions – one at the Murray Conservatorium of Music and another at A b ry Music School – marking the beginning of his long-standing commitment to music education.

Gar we t on to complete all four grades of the Australian Music Examination Boards (AMEB) Contemporary Drum Set Syl abus (translating roughly to g ade 7 8 of the ANZCA syllabus) while also taking lessons and participating in clinics an masterclasses with some of the world's most respected drum set practitioners. Around 2005 Gary began teaching in a variety of primary scho s, high schools and private music programs, while also performing in a variety of settings such as cover band , o igin l projects, community concert bands and regional theatre productions.

Over the year Gary ha taught in more than 15 schools and music education institutions. He has completed Certificate IV in Trainin and Assessing, and currently works in several high schools across Albury-Wodonga and the wider north-east Victoria region as part of the Victorian Department of Education's instrumental music program.

Gary has self-published three drumming textbooks – The Drummers Vade Mecum (2007), The Drummers Enchiridion (2021), and The Drummers Overture (2022). All three books have been well received within the music education community.

Gary currently represents Bosphorus Cymbals (Turkey) and Vic Firth drumsticks (USA) as an endorsee thanks to instrument distributors Pro Music Australia and Dynamic Music, and is a member of the regional ensemble Sweet Buzz.

For more information please visit: www.thedrummers.com.au

PERFORMANCE NOTES

All of the pieces for this performance are taken from

DRUM KIT Performance Volume 9
by Mark Murphy (ADipA)
for ANZCA Music



This 47-page book is designed for ANZCA's diploma level drum set exams and contains eight original solo pieces that cover a variety of advanced musical styles and drum set techniques. Each solo is fully notated in western music notation for drum set with optional backing tracks availab from the ANZCA website: **www.anzca.com.au**

About the Author
Mark Murphy is a respected Australian musician, autho and senior ANZCA drum set examiner with extensive performance and exam nation experience across Australia and the South East A ia region.

Mark has a long history in music performance an formal study having achieved an Associate Diploma in drumk grade 7 n iano as well as grad 5 in music theory. This extensive exp rienc has given him valuable insigh into the expectations and require ents f musi exams and the mat ri l associated with them.

Mark created many of the ANZ A d um set syllabus materials directly for ANZCA and conducts work hops both domestically and in ernationally on them and their associated exams. Mark also teaches um set, p ano and music theory on op f being a professional perform g and recording artist

For more inf rmation on mark please visit:
www.mark urphymusic.com.au



Author / Examiner: Mark Murphy *(AdipA)*

Solos played in this performance

I chose these pieces to reflect my personal taste in music, which is often quite different to the music I'm asked to play in a professional setting.

Over the months f pre aration for this exam, I have affectionately named these solos, as noted below.

Solo 4	Solo 7	Solo 2	Solo 5
Pages 22 o 26	Pages 38 to 42	Pages 12 to 16	Pages 27 to 31
The compound time one	**Linear 7s: Scenes from a paradiddle**	**Purple Rainbow**	**The "More Cowbell" Suite**

QR CODE DELETED

For more information regarding this performance such as technical details and behind the scenes footage, scan the QR code. **www.thedrummers.com.au**

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INTERPRETING THE SCORES: BEYOND THE PRINTED PAGE

While the solos in this book are very detailed, as expected for diploma level performance pieces, this doesn't mean that every note must be played exactly as written. Drum notation can function as a musical guide or a strict direction, depending on the context. A drummer may adapt charts to stabilise a performance. The same drummer may also need to ensure consistency between performances such as in a musical theatre setting, where choreography and cues demand.

With such considerations in mind, I have chosen to make some minor modifications to the original scores for the sake of this performance. Examples of these changes are discussed here.

There is a fine line to walk between demonstrating proficiency by playing a musical part exactly as written and ensuring a music performance can flow effectively.

This applies not only in exam situations but to music performance in general, and every listener can be a critic regardless of whether they understand the decisions behind such choic

My approach is to remain as faithful as possible to the original charts. However if I feel a component is upsetting to the flow or execution of the piece, I will experiment with ideas and adjustments that might help bring better clarity and stability to the piece.

Typically, this involves either keeping the note values the same as written and changing the orchestration slightly or removing a few individual notes to make space.

Some of the modifications I made aim to optimise sticking patterns, clarify rhythmic transitions, enhance overall stability of the part and, where appropriate, reflect my individual performance skills.

Right are some examples taken from Solo 4 that illustrate these ideas.

Solo 4, bar 52
Original Score

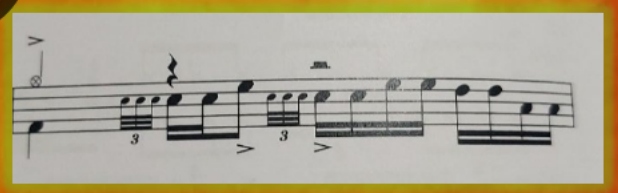


Performance Version

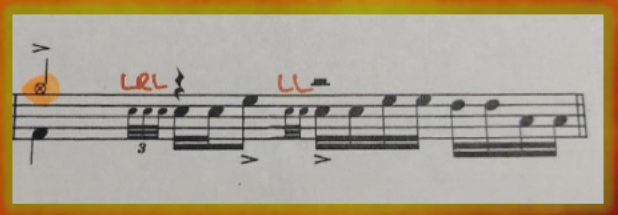


The new rhythm is inverted. The triplets are played as a double bass drum pattern, with a drumstick trick added over the top for visual effect and entertainment value.

Solo 4, Bar 36
Original Score



Performance Version



One grace note / ghost note has been removed from a 4 stroke ruff, converting it to a drag. This allows for cleaner entry to beat three.

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PERFORMANCE PIECE: Solo 4: The compound time one

Composer: Mark Murphy

When notating music with a triplet-based feel composers generally choose one of two methods:

1. Using a simple time signature (like 4/4) and using triplets, or
2. Using a compound time signature such as 6/8 or 12/8.

The choice often comes down to the transcriber's personal preference, what they believe is most easily understood or what they consider captures the feel of the music better.

Solo 4 explores two advanced rhythmic concepts: The use of 15/8 time and a specific rhythmic transition from 12/8 to 8/8.

The 15/8 section at the start of the piece is an extension of the commonly used 12/8 time.

However, the core of the piece lies in the understanding of how to transition from 12/8 to 8/8

In some music, this change can maintain a steady beat and the subdivisions change.
This can be heard in the song *Carry on Wayward Son* by Kansas. Some may refer to this as a crotchet = dotted crotchet approach.



In contrast, this solo demands a "Quaver = Quaver" approach.

This requires a shift from a triplet-based feel to a "straight eight" rock feel without altering the speed of the quaver. This specific transition can be heard in songs such as Tim Minchin's *You grew on me* or in the song *Loud* from Matilda the Musical, with more advanced examples in Dream Theater's *Hell's Kitchen*.



Solo 4 also features several 2:3 and 4:3 polyrhythmic phrases. Beyond the technical coordination, mastering these types of polyrhythms allows a drummer to better identify and support polyrhythmic counterpoint within melodic lines.

The soundtrack to *Groundhog Day: The Musical* provides an excellent case study for this. with tracks like "Hope" and "There Will Be Sun" having vocal lines that are phrased in long stretches of 3 and 6 against a primary 4/4 groove. Understanding how these melodic lines pull against the pulse is a powerful asset to any drummer.

Although this solo contains some advanced components the skills are directly transferable to more standard triplet-based songs such as *Nothing Else Matters* (Metallica) and *I'm with you* (Avril Lavinge)

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PERFORMANCE PIECE: Solo 7: Linear 7s: Scenes from a paradiddle

Composer: Mark Murphy

This solo is heavily inspired by progressive rock and progressive metal. The album *Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes from a Memory by Dream Theater* comes to mind when I hear the backing track to this solo.

The styles of progressive rock and progressive metal often depart significantly from the composition and song writing ideas of commercial rock and heavy metal.

Progressive rock and heavy metal music typically combines commercial and alternative rock styles with art music elements and classical composition structures such as “theme and variation” or “through composition.”

Examples of this compositional approach can be heard in the songs *YYZ* by Rush or *Yours is no disgrace* by YES, and even earlier on the "proto prog experimentations by The Beatles on *Sgt. Peppers lonely hearts club band.* More virtuosic works in this style, like Dream Theater’s *Dance of eternity* and Virgil Donati’s *Castle Bastards*, push the boundaries of musical complexity and human performance.

Solo 7 opens with a rhythmic development, a single paradiddle (R LRR LRLL) executed in a similar manner to the *Paradiddle Pyramid* exercise, before transitioning into more modern linear rhythmic groupings.

The primary theme of Solo 7 is the use of odd length linear note groupings – groups of 7 and 5 notes – that force the drumkit phrases to cross bar lines to create an illusion of rhythmic chaos or a sense of rhythmic independence. And while these groupings feel irregular, they are based in mathematical logic.

The phrases in bars 24-25, 32-33, 44-45, 48-49, and 52-53 are odd combinations, but they are designed to resolve within 4/4 time signature. For example:

- 7 + 5 + 4 = 16 (one bar of semiquavers)
- 7 + 7 + 5 + 5 + 4 + 4 = 32 (two bars of semiquavers)

Orchestrating these odd-numbered phrases in different ways around the drumkit creates a feeling of rhythmic displacement which can be surprising or even off-putting to a listener. The drummer, though, maintains an underlying sixteenth note grid and knows exactly where they are in the piece.

Later at bar 58, there is a significant tempo reduction (from 100 BPM to 80 BPM), where the music shifts feel and the performer must execute descending rhythmic subdivisions. This requires smooth transitions from sextuplets (6) through quintuplets (5), semiquavers (4), and quaver triplets (3), down to standard quavers.

The challenge of this solo is in understanding and executing the more technical rhythmic elements found in progressive music. Elements such as tempo shifts, unexpected and odd rhythmic phrases as well as rhythmic and timing independence. At times the backing track for Solo 7 intentionally pulls against the drummer’s pulse. To perform this successfully, the drummer must be able to maintain a solid internal tempo while the surrounding rhythmic environment remains intentionally unstable and disorienting.

Progressive music isn’t for everyone. Many people prefer predictability and groove to their music and the feeling of odd phrasings and rhythmic independence such as those used in Solo 7 can feel jarring to some listeners. However, as a drummer, studying these techniques is incredibly useful for live performance, especially for error correction.

Genre-defining progressive bands like YES and Genesis were releasing music during the proto-metal era (1960s and 1970s), which was covered in Solo 2. Solo7 and Solo 2 complement each other somewhat with each covering elements of rock drumming of that era.

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PERFORMANCE PIECE: Solo 2 Purple Rainbow

Composer: Mark Murphy

Solo 2 is based in a genre of rock music that can be described as "proto-metal".

Proto-metal (as the name suggests) was the precursor to what became known generally as heavy metal. Proto-metal developed out of the late 1960s and peaked around the mid- to late-1970s. The style was characterised by guitar riff-driven songs that often contained Hammond organ. With Deep Purple and Rainbow being two of the most notable bands using this style, alongside other well-known names such as Black Sabbath, Judas Priest, Alice Cooper (the band) The Scorpions, Iron Butterfly, The Who and Led Zeppelin.

The proto-metal style regularly features use of fantasy or science fiction style themes and artwork with the era's artists paving the way for future acts such as Iron Maiden, Saxon, Diamond Head, Stratovarius and Yngwie Malmsteen.

The drumming of this era was pioneered by icons such as Ian Paice, Cozy Powell, Bill Ward, Keith Moon and John Bonham. These drummers moved away from a strict timekeeping style toward a more complex and somewhat improvised and embellished style. Improvised rhythmic variations created more musical movement and complex drum fills created technical interest, but it was all done in a way that helped reinforce the guitar work and melodic lines.

Solo 2 requires the player to embrace this more complex style of playing. The drums add emphasis and support to the guitar and organ throughout the piece with accents throughout. There are also several advanced technical and rhythmic challenges:

- **Double bass drumming endurance and independence**: Solo 2 features extended sixteenth note double bass passages. The player must maintain a consistent bass drum *ostinato* while playing hand patterns that are syncopated or polyrhythmic against the primary pulse. This requires stability in both physical balance and rhythmic timing, as the rapid thirty-second note bursts and "call and response" figures between the hands and feet can challenge stability of timing.
- **Linear fills and advanced note groupings:** Another feature of this piece is the repeated use of linear drum fills. The player must transition seamlessly between sixteenth notes, sixteenth note triplets, sextuplets, and quintuplets. Executing these groupings cleanly requires a robust understanding of rhythmic subdivision as well as the coordination and technique to control them.
- **Cymbal Usage:** Due to the number of crash cymbal accents, this piece requires use of two crash cymbals and comfort playing them with either hand to maintain flow.
- **Tom Fills:** The use of rapid thirty-second note (demisemiquaver) single-stroke rolls across the rack toms demand a level of comfort and precision with accessing and manoeuvring around the toms.

These aspects combine to form a feel that is reminiscent of the drumming styles found in songs like Deep Purple's *Fireball* or the iconic opening to Rainbow's *Stargazer*.

Solo 2 is essentially a technical study of the various techniques found in 1970s proto-metal and later, 1980s hard rock and heavy metal drumming. The skills highlighted in this solo developed from their 1970s roots, becoming more intricate and demanding, and can be seen in the albums *Fright Night* by Stratovarius (1989) and W.A.S.P's *The Headless Children* (1989).

The techniques used in Solo 2 also complement those used in Solo 7, a study in progressive rock and metal drumming techniques.

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PERFORMANCE PIECE: Solo 5: The "More Cowbell" Suite

Composer: Mark Murphy

My personal title for this solo is a nod to the iconic *Saturday Night Live* sketch. Sadly, unlike Gene Frenkle, I will be stuck behind the drum set and will not be able to “explore the space.”

Solo 5 serves as an introduction to "Latin Rock."

The term “Latin Rock” refers to the fusion of rock instrumentation with the rhythmic vocabulary of Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Specifically, this solo draws from the Afro-Cuban and Brazilian style rhythms that have become common and expected knowledge for the modern drum set player.

Rhythms such as cáscara, tresillo, clave, samba, bossa nova, mambo, cha cha cha were historically rhythms that were performed by percussion sections comprising a multitude of percussion instruments such as congas, bongos, timbales, and various bells to name just a few.

As drumkit players we are tasked with imitating an entire percussion section. To achieve this successfully, the drummer must focus on "tonal orchestration"—using accents, rim clicks, and varying toms to imply the different voices of a traditional ensemble.

Studying these different rhythmic styles is important because their essence is embedded in almost every genre of modern music in some way or another. Rhythmic foundations such as the Son Clave, Rumba Clave, and Tresillo are the "hidden" architecture for many well-known hit songs. For example:

- The "Bo Diddley Beat" is essentially a Clave pattern adapted to the guitar.
- Coldplay’s *Clocks* and Metallica’s *Fuel* both rely on the tresillo pattern for their primary driving force.
- Musical Theatre: Productions such as *In the Heights*, *West Side Story*, and *Evita* require a deep mastery of these rhythms because the entire show’s musical premise is based in Latin culture and its music.

The primary challenge of this solo is maintaining the cascara-derived cowbell pattern while maintaining a regular back beat rock feel on the bass drum and snare. This requires high-level four-way coordination and a clear understanding of the sixteenth note rhythmic grid.

The more complex sixteenth note fills (notably bars 25 to 28 and 68 to 72) can be intimidating at first glance, however the secret to playing them easily isn’t to just practice them, it’s to fully understand their structure.

Each of these fills is essentially a continuous single-stroke roll played with one hand on the high tom and one hand on the floor tom. With the accents played on the snare.

Learning rhythmic phrases like those used in solo 5 means the phrases take up less “mental bandwidth” and become much more physically manageable. This allows the player to maintain the flow of a complex "Latin" groove without getting bogged down in trying to read every individual note in the phrase.

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