


# A Study of the Rudiments Used in Foreign Military Drumming Styles

by  
John K. Galm

During the reign of Charles II a decree was issued ordering all drummers under the royal command to adopt a common method of beating.<sup>1</sup> From this attempt to have improved communications in the field of battle developed a system of drumming known today as "The 26 Rudiments." These rudiments are rhythmic cells based on different combinations of single and double strokes. When the rudiments are joined in sequence, they grow into phrases that make up the various military signals and "rudimental solos." Since the orchestral snare drummer is often called upon to interpret a part in a military style, this basis of the rudiments is a necessary element of his performance technique. The National Association of Rudimental Drummers selected the 26 Rudiments from what they considered the basic technique to perform the military style of drumming, based on the Charles Ashworth system of drumming printed in 1812 and the *Drummer's Guide* by Bruce and Emmett written in 1862. They also endorsed a system of notation which is in general use in the United States today.<sup>2</sup>

While this system has accomplished its purpose in establishing a standard, it has imposed a conformity of style. Drummers who have learned this military system tend to play percussion parts in orchestras and bands in this style without considering alternate artistic possibilities. Also when playing compositions of foreign countries, the American drummer usually is not cognizant of the fact that another notational system is being used. In other words, drummers show a tendency to be domestically limited in their thinking rather than internationally enlightened.


One method of broadening the artistic range of the drummer in this country is a study of military systems used in other countries. This study will show the various methods of notation and how to correctly interpret


them. For example, when this symbol  <sup>3</sup> is written in an American

<sup>1</sup> Bradley Spinney, *Encyclopedia of Percussion Instruments* (Hollywood: Hollywood Percussion Club, 1955), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *The 26 Rudiments* (Chicago: National Association of Rudimental Drummers, 1935).

<sup>3</sup> In the examples "L" is the left hand and "R" is the right hand. All examples are 120 beats per minute unless otherwise indicated.

composition, it is called a flam and executed by two strokes playing almost simultaneously. This symbol  in a French composition is called a *fla* and is played the same way but if a subtle notational change were made,

 it would be a *coup anglais*, or a *Batard* in which case there would

be a stroke before the flam, producing an entirely different sound. This relatively small point of interpretation becomes important when the snare drum part to "Iberia" by Debussy is examined. There, what looks like a flam is possibly a *coup anglais*. This passage alone seems to justify an inquiry by the serious student of percussion instruments.

For the basis of the comparative study, the rudiments will be divided into groups—according to similar types rather than numerical order. The first group is the "roll" type comprising nine rudiments of the "26." Group II consists basically of those rudiments using single strokes such as the four stroke ruff and the paradiddles. Group III includes all the flam types, and Group IV classifies all the rudiments embellished by ruffs or drags.

Since most systems of drumming are based on a verbal tradition, it is only in this century that many of them have been notated and have been taught through instruction books. It is from such books that this study is based to determine how these various systems are used today.

### *The German System*

The study of the German system is based on a tutor by Franz Krüger written in 1951.<sup>4</sup> In the roll group is found the *Doppelwirbel* or long roll. For the stroked rolls there is only mention of *Der Deutsche Ruf* written



and played as our five stroke roll. The only differ-

ence is that it is started and ended with only the right hand, never the left. The *Französischer Ruf* appears in two forms; the short "French ruff"

which is the same as the American Ruff , and the longer 

"French ruff" which is like our four stroke ruff only the appoggiatura group is with the same hand. The latter ruff has the effect of making the principal note more important with less emphasis on the initial three strokes. Here is the first difference in interpretation. The American style employs the single stroke sticking which gives more clarity to each note


<sup>4</sup> Franz Krüger, *Pauken und Kleine Trommel Schule* (Berlin: Hinrichsen, [1951]).





Obviously the American style will produce a different sound than the German style ruff and would be incongruous if it were played in a German composition.

Group II, the single stroke group, mentions only the single stroke roll omitting the paradiddles.

Group III, the flam group, includes the *Schleifschlag* (sliding stroke) which is the same as our flam. The difference again being that it is to be

played only with the right stroke as a principal stroke . The flam

taps are played either  or  just so that the

right hand flam is always played. The same for the flam accents played

either  or . The last member of

the flam group is the *Druckruf* or pressed ruff, notated



It is to be executed by playing a right hand flam only pressing with the right stroke, followed by a left hand press and ended by a final right hand stroke. It is used in very fast tempi.

No members of Group IV, the ruff embellished group, are mentioned; however, they appear in various combinations in the exercises as a result of composition.

In summary, the German system does not have as many particular rudiments as the American system but it uses one which we don't, the *Druckruf* or flammed pressed roll. Also there is not as much hand-to-hand alternation of flams, ruffs, and rolls as we use; thus, there is an entirely different character to the music. The right hand is used on all strong beats and the principal stroke of ruffs, flams, and rolls, never allowing a contrasting left stroke to interrupt the steady driving cadence of the German Style.


### *The Dutch School*

The study of the Dutch system of military drumming is based on two books written slightly conflicting in notation. The *Eenvoudige Leergang*<sup>5</sup> is written by M. Schneifer who is the instructor of the Neatherlands Military Drum Corps. This book contains mostly small marches using the tenor drum, bass drum, and cymbals along with the snare drum. The *Tamboer-*

<sup>5</sup> M. Schneider and W. F. Sprink, *Eenvoudige Leergang* (Rotterdam: N. V. Konefa Muziekuitgaven, n.d.).

*school voor Marsch- en Concerttamboers*<sup>6</sup> by A. van Veluwen, instructor of the Amsterdam Police Orchestra is more comprehensive in its scope including *Jazz-muziek*. Since the van Veluwen book is of a more advanced nature and the Schneider book borrows marches by van Veluwen, this section is based on the van Veluwen book except where there is conflicting notation.

The Dutch system admits the long roll, five stroke, seven stroke, and nine stroke rolls. The ruff is used and like the German system, a four stroke

ruff is played by using the same stick for the appoggiatura group: 


Group II, the single stroke family, includes the single stroke roll and a different method of playing triplets. The normal practice in this country is to play triplets hand-to-hand, but the Dutch play the first two strokes with the same hand. This gives the same quality to each triplet rather than a contrasting flavor produced by alternation.

The Flam Group is the richest in variety of types of any of the systems studied. The flam is known as the *Vlamslag* and is played by both hands.

Van Veluwen notates it  $\frac{2}{4}$   , while Schneider calls it *de*

*korte voorslag* and notates it  . *De dubbele slagen* is

played by both sticks hitting the drum at the same time producing the first

overtone:  . This sound is considered objectionable in rudimental

drumming because it indicates that a flam has been misplayed. But the Dutch use this in a very effective contrasting manner, usually the first note of a march:

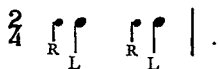


<sup>6</sup> A. van Veluwen, *Tamboerschool* (Wormerveer, Holland: Molenaar's Muziek-centrale, n.d.).

The rudiment which sounds like a flam played very open (fa—lam) is called *de lange voorslag* by Schneider and notated

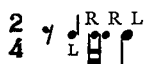


Van Veluwen calls this a *dubbelslag* and notates it  $\frac{2}{4}$  .



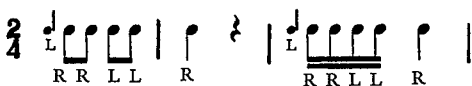
This rudiment will show a close resemblance to the French “charge stroke” mentioned later.

Two open style rudiments are the *Verwisselagen* which is a flammed ruff

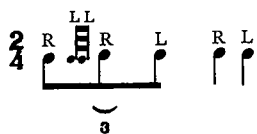


and the *Vijfslag* which is a flammed five stroke roll played

in eighth or sixteen notes:  $\frac{2}{4}$  | |



In Group IV, there is only one beat embellished by the ruff. The *Appelslag* or Dawn stroke is notated with a *dubbelslag* according to van Veluwen,



, and a *korte voorslag* according to Schneider:



The Dutch system is distinguished by its large vocabulary of Group III flam-type rudiments. With its use of flammed open rudiments and “right-handed” triplets, it has a unique flavor among military drum systems.

#### *The Swiss or Basle System*

Probably the oldest system of military drumming can be traced to the Swiss. Ironically it wasn't until this century that this system was notated by the late Dr. Franz Robert Berger of Basle.<sup>7</sup> The notational system used was developed by Dr. Berger and is probably the most exact notation used. All notes above the line are right hand and those below the line are for

<sup>7</sup> Franz Rober Berger, *Instructor for Basle-Drumming* (Basle: Trommelveilag Basle, 1937).

the left hand. All the rolls in the American system are included in the Swiss system with the addition of the seventeen stroke roll.

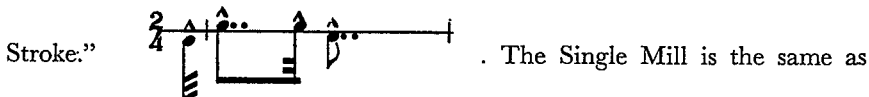
An unusual method of alternating the rolls is written:



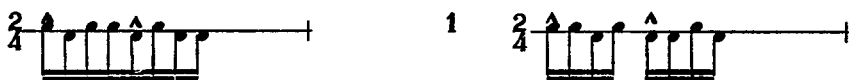
In order to interpret the notation one must think a background beat of 32nd notes and begin the second roll on the 64th note following the last



Group II has the single stroke roll plus a variant called "The Charge-



our paradiddle except that it can appear inverted with the double stroke first.



While no other name is found than sextolet for this rudiment, it is clearly



The last member of Group II is the "Half Ruff" which is the same figure as our four stroke ruff with an important change of sticking:



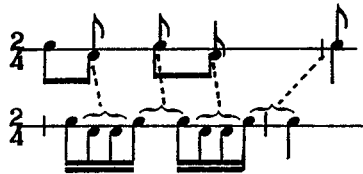
This along with the German sticking of the four stroke ruff gives a possibility of three methods of interpreting the figure.

The flam family makes use of all the rudiments found in the American

system with the exception of the flamacue. The flam is notated



and the flam tap is notated



with the sixteenth tap coming before the note. Also all rolls can begin with a flam.



When the method of playing triplets in the Dutch system is recalled, the Swiss style uses the same method merely adding a flam.



This is known as the Swiss army triplets. The paradiddle is flammed but

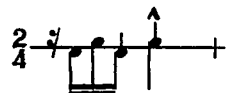
only in its inverted position



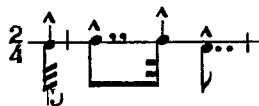
called a "flammed mill."

Of the rudiments not found in the "26", the following are members of the flam group. The "Patafla-fla" is a direct import into the Swiss style

from the French military style. It is notated:

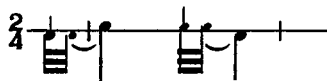


The charge stroke is flammed in this fashion:



and an open ruff such as seen in the Dutch style is flammed and called

a stroke of three:



Group IV doesn't appear with specific names for each ruff embellishment. All the members of the American Group IV are found in variations of the "Reveille Strokes."

The Swiss drum is a long metal-shelled drum with four snares. It is played very tightly with large light-weighted sticks producing a very clear sound in which every stroke of the faster beats are distinctly articulated. As there is little playing while marching, the tempi are much slower

$$\left( \text{♩} = 80 - 100 \text{ m m} \right)$$

and greater attention is paid to musical factors such as dynamics and phrasing. It is probably this musical aspect that led Rolf Liebermann to write a concerto for Basle Drum and orchestra. Need it be necessary to point out that here is a large area of percussion literature often neglected by the American drummer, and unjustly so. Here is a short example transcribed into standard notation:

### The Scotch System

The study of Scotch drumming is based on *Mozart Allan's Pipe Band Drum Tutor*<sup>8</sup> by John Seton and the various collections mentioned in the bibliography. One fundamental observation should be made before con-

<sup>8</sup> John Seton, *Mozart Allan's Pipe Band Drum Tutor* (Glasgow: Mozart Allan, 1950).



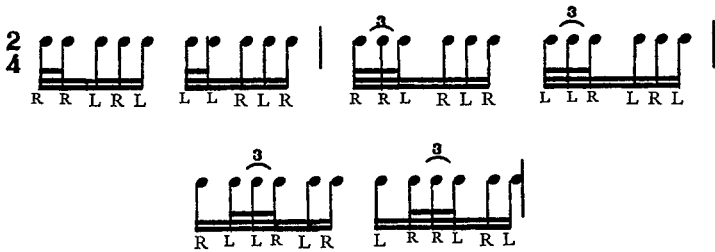
sidering the details of the Scotch system: the drum is the natural partner to the bagpipe in Scotland and, therefore, does not exist in an independent state as in other systems. The bagpipe with its drone needs the peppery style of the Scotch drumming to produce the lively spirit which distinguishes this music.

The greatest concentration of rudiments lies in Group I. The long roll, five stroke roll, and a ruff called a "drag" is included in this group with a six stroke roll based on our ten stroke roll. This similarity occurs in the sticking of the final two notes, both with single strokes. In addition to this conventional roll, the Scotch contrast a "Buzz Roll" which is notated



and is executed by playing a right stroke immediately following with a left pressed multiple bounce stroke and a final right stroke. This more than any other rudiment gives the flavor of Scotch drumming.

Another member of Group I is the "Birle." The "Birle" is merely a double or triple stroke inserted in a group of single strokes.



The mark of an accomplished Scotch drummer is measured by how many "Birles" he can skillfully use in a composition.


The only other rudiments mentioned in Seton's tutor are the flam and the paradiddle. One small aspect of notation peculiar to Scotch drumming is the accent. The **V** accent when used in conjunction with the **>** accent is heavier and usually occurs on the strong beats.

The sound of the Scotch drum is that of tight clarity. The drum has usually two sets of snares; a set of gut snares on the snare or resonating head and a set of wire snares on the batter head. With very small, light-weighted sticks the various speeds of the roll, open, closed, buzzed etc., can be well distinguished. One other feature of this style is the alternation between the lead drum which is usually improvisatory and the rest of the drums resulting in a theme and variations form.

*The French System*




Robert Tourte of the National Opera in Paris and formerly of the Paris Conservatory has written *Methode de Tambour*<sup>9</sup> on which this study is based. This book is not only a fine tutor, but includes many historical marches from the time of Napoleon.

Group I includes all the rolls of the "26." A six and eight stroke roll is produced by adding a flam to the five and seven stroke rolls respectively. The *ra de quatre* which is notated as our four stroke ruff is played with a

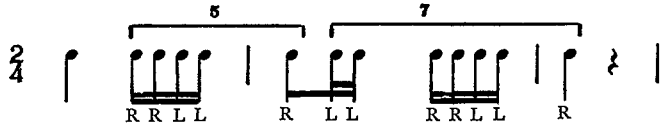
double stroke between the first and last single stroke. 

Remembering the German ruff played with a triple stroke and a single stroke and the American four stroke ruff which is alternately stroked, the French *ra de quatre* is a compromise containing the bounce feature of the German style and the articulation of the American style.

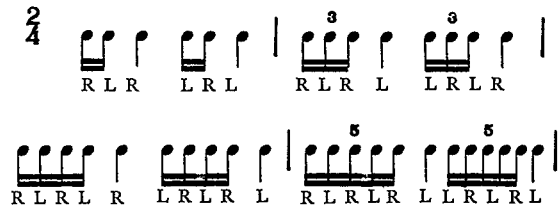
One notational difference sometimes occurs in the ruff. Instead of the

customary  , it is often written  , it is often written 

Also the five and seven stroke rolls are written in a lower measure to be played open in slower marches:



The single stroke roll of Group II is divided into units of three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine single strokes called *Coup Frisés*:



<sup>9</sup> Robert Tourte, *Methode de Tambour* (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1956).

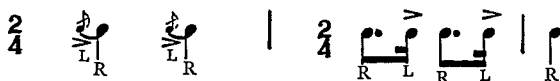
*Le Moulin*, the mill, is like the paradiddle differing in the fact that the figure begins on the second sixteenth note and ends on the beat:



This conception prevails among most all French rudiments indicating that they think of their rudiments as beat embellishments. The *Volant* is a double paradiddle again ending on the strong beat:





The last member of Group II is *Le coup de charge*:




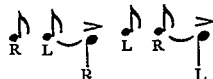
The accent on the sixteenth before the eighth note gives a curious syncopation to French military music.

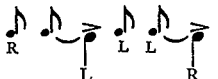
The flam group in the French style is a collection of onomatopoeic

terms. While this notation designates the *Fla* or flam  

when a line is drawn through the appoggiatura note this rudiment then

becomes *le coup Anglais*,<sup>10</sup>  which is played with a single stroke

before the flam in the manner of a rapid flamtap: . If

this sticking is used, the name is altered to be a *Batard*: .

<sup>10</sup> Berger, 22. "...it may be possible that this "English stroke" is an adaptation of the English "Flam and Stroke" used in Potter's Manual of 1786. However this was used in a cadence of 60."

As mentioned in the introduction, this rudiment is very easy to misinterpret as a flam; therefore, care should be taken to avoid this mistake while playing French compositions. Observe the following example.

fla ga da le coup anglaise  
Pa-ta-fla-fla

le coup de charge

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is in bass clef, 2/4 time, and contains the melody for 'le coup anglaise' with lyrics 'fla ga da le coup anglaise' and 'Pa-ta-fla-fla'. The bottom staff is in treble clef, 2/4 time, and contains the melody for 'le coup de charge'.

The *Fa-ta-fla* is played as its name sounds which is the same as our flam accent if it were started on the second note of the triplet:

The image shows a musical notation for 'Fa-ta-fla' in 2/4 time. It consists of a triplet of eighth notes (F, A, F) followed by a quarter note (A). The sticking is indicated as R L R L R.

The *Pa-ta-fla-fla* is of the same type with an extra flam added to conform

to the four sixteenth notes: . The last member of this

The image shows a musical notation for 'Pa-ta-fla-fla' in 2/4 time. It consists of a group of four sixteenth notes (F, A, F, A) followed by a quarter note (F). The sticking is indicated as R L R L R L.

flam group is the Fla-ga-da: . It is

The image shows a musical notation for 'Fla-ga-da' in 2/4 time. It consists of a quarter note (F), a quarter note (A), and a group of four sixteenth notes (F, A, F, A). The sticking is indicated as R R L R L L R.

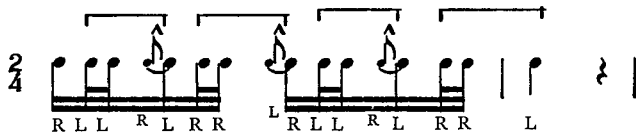
played alternately and it will be noticed that it has the identical sticking of the *ra de quatre*.

Group IV contains *le coup du Rigodon* which is the same as the single drag. *Le coup de la Diane* or beat of reveille is like the double drag:

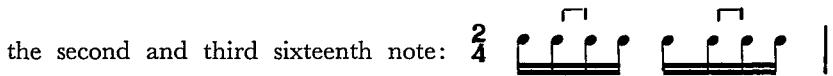
The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and contains the melody for 'le coup du Rigodon' with sticking R LLR L. The bottom staff is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and contains the melody for 'le coup de la Diane' with sticking RR L RRL R.

The only member of Group IV which is unlike a member of the "26" is *le coup coulés* or *le coup Roulés* translated as a "flowing beat." This rudi-

ment is a combination of the ruff and the *coup de charge* so that the last note of the ruff is the first note of the charge stroke:



To challenge the virtuosic drummers, the French have derived a series of rudiments known as "Sautés." The basis for this rudiment is the group of four sixteenth notes with a place for optional embellishment left between



If the drummer chooses to put a ruff in this space, it is called a *Raté-Sauté*



is placed here, the rudiment becomes a *Raté-Sauté de cinq*:



The *Frises-sautés* refers to the use of single stroke in this space:



and the *coulés-sautés* refers to the use of the *Coup de coulés* or *Roulés*:



As can be seen from this short study, the French system offers the most contrasting style to the American style. Here is a very old system which contains twelve additional rudiments to the "26." Also the concept of leading to a beat is a new method of thinking about the position of the rudi-

ments in the musical phrase. More than an academic study, the French system becomes important when one considers the various compositions written for band and orchestra which incorporate this military style. Therefore, a correct interpretation is important to faithfully reproduce the ideas of the composer. And a correct interpretation must be based on a knowledge of the system in which it is written.

### Summary

From the following charts it can be observed that the twenty-six rudiments have been expanded into an international list of fifty-seven. Of course many of the rudiments show only a subtle change but it must be remembered that they have been abstracted from their particular system.

In Group I not only has the speed of the roll been varied but also different types of rolling have been introduced such as the German Pressed roll and the Scotch "Buzz" roll. Of particular interest is the four stroke ruff which is given a three-fold variety in the sticking.

Group II has added the charge stroke and a new variety of triplet sticking.

The flam Group III has the largest number of additions including three different ways of playing the flam itself.

Group IV adds an unusual rudiment in the *Appelslag* of the Dutch. Also the French system of *Sautés* is very challenging.

Here, clearly, is an enriched vocabulary for the American drummer. He should no longer be in doubt as to notation and with practice should be able to interpret a composition of most any style.

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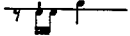
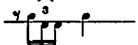
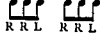
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## DRUM RUDIMENTS

### GROUP I

Symbol	Name	System Where Found
	Long Roll	American
	Ruff	American
	Five Stroke	American
	Seven Stroke	American
	Nine Stroke	American
	Ten Stroke	American
	Eleven Stroke	American
	Thirteen Stroke	American
	Fifteen Stroke	American
	Voorslag Van Drie	Dutch
	Ras De Trois	French
	Ra De Quatre	French
	Franzosischer Ruf	German
	Druckruf	German
	Buzz Roll	Scotch
	Birles	Scotch
	Six Stroke Roll	Scotch



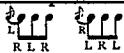












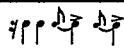

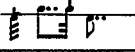
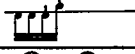



DRUM RUDIMENTS  
GROUP II

Symbol	Name	System Where Found
	Single Stroke	American
	Paradiddle	American
	Double Paradiddle	American
	Le Coup De Charge	French
	Charge Stroke	Swiss
	Stroke of Three	Swiss
	Half Ruff	Swiss
	Triplets, Triolen	Dutch






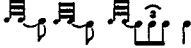

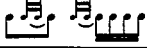


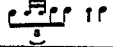


DRUM RUDIMENTS

GROUP III

Symbol	Name	System Where Found
	Flam	American
	Flam Tap	American
	Flam Accent	American
	Flamacue	American
	Flam Paradiddle	American
	Flam Paradiddle-diddle	American
	De Dubbele Slagen	Dutch
	De Lange Voorslag	Dutch
	Verwisselagen	Dutch
	Vijfslag	Dutch
	Ra De Six	French
	Ra De Huit	French
	Le Coup Anglais	French
	Batard	French
	Pa Ta Fla	French
	Pa Ta Fla Fla	French
	Fla Ga Da	French
	Flammed Charge Stroke	Swiss
	Patafla-Fla	Swiss
	Swiss Army Triplets	Swiss
	Flammed Rolls	Swiss
	Flammed Mill	Swiss

DRUM RUDIMENTS  
GROUP IV

Symbol	Name	System Where Found
	Single Drag	American
	Double Drag	American
	Lesson 25 Ratatap	American
	Single Ratamacue	American
	Double Ratamacue	American
	Triple Ratamacue	American
	Drag Paradiddle No. 1	American
	Drag Paradiddle No. 2	American
	Le Coup Coules	French
	Les Sautes	French
	Appelslag	Dutch