Independence for Snare Drum
How to Foster Your Facility
By Dr. Christopher Whyte

Facility
“the quality of being easily or conveniently done or performed.”

I would add – “the quality of [something difficult] being easily or conveniently done or performed.”

We can all do the easy things easily. It is the difficult material and repertoire that is difficult to perform easily.

Elements of Facility

1. Muscle Groups
   a. Arm
   b. Wrist
   c. Fingers
   d. Fulcrum?

2. Rebound
   a. We can’t escape it – every stroke bounces to some degree.
   b. We are trying to figure out how much to restrict, or not restrict, the natural rebound of the stick to varying degrees at any given moment.
   c. Various levels of restricting the rebound
      i. Least control [natural stroke]
      ii. Some control [many variations]
      iii. Complete control [down stroke/control stroke]
   d. Every stroke played on the snare drum bounces to some degree. Developing varying levels of control and being able to call on them when needed is what helps us establish facility.

3. Independence between Right and Left hands
   a. Not rhythmic independence, but *kinesthetic* independence

Levels of Control

1. Natural Stroke [legato]
2. Down Stroke [lots of versions]
3. Tap Stroke [small natural stroke]
4. Up Stroke [opposite of the down stroke]

Dynamic Extremes

1. Practice “within” soft dynamics
   a. Reduce all dynamics to their softest parallels.
   b. Forte = piano, piano = pianissimo, pianissimo = pianississimo, etc.
2. Practice at *physical* extremes. This is especially important for rolls, but is helpful for all technique exercises.
Double Stroke Roll

In the first measure of each line, establish the correct level of control over the rebound. As you proceed past the first measure, maintain the same feel as you add the opposing hand.
Flam Accent

Take a look at the pattern in each hand underlying the Flam Accent:

Be sure to maintain the same level of control in your Downstroke in the stems-up notes throughout each exercise.
Paradiddle

Take a look at the way the paradiddle breaks down the Right and Left hand parts:

Be sure to maintain the Up Stroke in the stems-up part throughout each exercise.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.