

Maracatu Meets Technique

Part 1

By Stephane Chamberland; inspired by Eduardo Guedes

Sometimes we meet people who change our lives. I am fortunate enough to have met Eduardo Guedes while I was studying with Dom Famularo and Jim Chapin in Long Island, NY. Eduardo became a friend and teacher. Of all the Brazilian styles he had been teaching me, the Maracatu is my favourite. This can be a complex style to play, but a strong command of technique can save you time and effort.

The Maracatu originates from the Coronation of the Black King ceremony that used to take place in the cities of Recife and Olinda in the state of Pernambuco in Northeastern Brazil. In the early 1700s, when Brazil was still a Portuguese colony, the enslaved Africans would consecrate a leader, The King of Congo, who would speak for the slaves in the presence of their masters. This ceremony was done with a procession that involved music, dance, and theatre. From that procession evolved what is known today as Maracatu.

Before we go on to the examples, let's review what pullouts and control strokes are. Those techniques concern the execution of sequential strokes played with different dynamics – from soft to loud or from loud to soft. We can play them with a formal technique (free strokes) where the wrist goes up to play the accents or informally (Moeller strokes) where the forearm is used in a whip-like motion to play the accents. We think “down-stroke” for an accent, “up-stroke” for the note just before the accent, and “tap” for a soft note without accent.

Pullouts or upstrokes: Two notes played with the same hand – an unaccented note (tap) followed by an accented note (loud).

Control strokes or downstrokes: Two notes played with the same hand – an accented note (loud) followed by an unaccented note (tap).

The following examples were taken from the Maracatu section of *Brazil for Drum Set, Vol.1* (page 40). We will analyze the snare drum variations (ex. 34 and 35).

1. Start slow and gradually speed up the tempo, from approximately 40 to 80 BPM.



2. Now let's find the control strokes played on 1 and 3.



3. Finally, let's add press rolls on 1 and 3 to emphasize the accents.



4. You can also place accents anywhere you like in this rhythm to practice this concept and become comfortable improvising dynamics. Something like this:



Stay tuned for part two of this article in the next issue, where we'll show you a second snare drum variation and a real drumset groove in the Brazilian Maracatu style.



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