

Drumset Duets

By Stephane Chamberland

The concept of using two drummers on stage has a long and celebrated history. Artists like the Joshua Redman Double Trio in jazz and John Mayer in his live performance in Los Angeles (“Where the Light Is”) have utilized this approach to add fun and variety. Bands such as Genesis, The Allman Brothers, King Crimson, The Doobie Brothers, The Grateful Dead, and Stuff have also enjoyed the unique possibilities two drummers can create. Much like two guitars, where one can play background chords while the other comps, two drummers can explore a similar dynamic. One drummer can maintain a steady groove while the other solos, or they can use a variety of sound sources and textures to enhance the music.

Educational Benefits

Playing with other musicians is the ultimate goal of studying drumming. A few years ago, I was searching for a method to help my students improve their listening skills while learning new drum beats. With two drum sets in my studio, I felt it was essential to use this setup as much as possible for the students’ benefit. This arrangement allows me to play alongside the student not only for demonstrations but also to help them develop their listening skills. In a band setting, drummers must listen to themselves and the other musicians to fully serve the music. This is a crucial skill for all musicians. Drummers, in particular, must focus on many different sounds simultaneously, even when performing the simplest beats.

During my studies with my mentor, Dom Famularo, in New York, he introduced me to an incredible book, *Drumset Duets*. Although it was an old version no longer distributed, Dom continued using it with his students because of its effectiveness. I am honored to have collaborated with him on various educational projects and books over the years and writing the new edition of *Drumset Duets* was a thrill. Whenever we create a new book, we ensure it fits into a special curriculum we use with our students and then promote it to drummers worldwide. The impact of this concept has been profound.

The digital version is now available on the updated Hudson Music App.

Practical Application

Imagine two drummers each playing a groove that, together, creates a more complex sound. We explored different styles, such as rock and funk grooves, and added more ghost notes as we progressed through the book. Dom also suggested using different hi-hat patterns to challenge advanced students’ independence. I now use this book as soon as my students learn their first drum groove and begin playing with them. I always emphasize listening to their part, then my part, and finally the combined groove. This approach turns exercises into music, similar to playing in a band with other instruments.

Let’s Try It

Let’s start with a warm-up exercise. We’ll designate the first drummer as Drummer A and the second as Drummer B. Before playing the snare and bass drum notes, practice syncing your hi-hats. If you don’t have a student or a friend with another drum set, click on each groove and you’ll hear it, and play the other part like if you were two drummers. You can play as Drummer A or B, depending on your mood. Ensure all notes align evenly with your partner, whether they’re on the audio tracks or in person. Remember to listen to your part, then the other part, and most importantly, the final groove.

Groove:

The image displays four staves of musical notation for a drum groove exercise in 4/4 time. Each staff begins with a 4/4 time signature and a key signature of one flat. The notation uses a standard drum set shorthand: a vertical line for the snare drum, a vertical line with a diagonal slash for the bass drum, and an 'x' for the hi-hat. The first staff shows a consistent snare and bass drum pattern with a steady hi-hat. The second staff introduces a more complex hi-hat pattern with occasional snare and bass drum notes. The third staff features a different hi-hat pattern with snare and bass drum notes. The fourth staff shows a final variation of the groove with a different hi-hat pattern and snare/bass drum placement. Each staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

In the next example, we'll include some ghost notes.
Ghost notes are played softly near the drumhead, creating
a groovy feel and adding lightness to your playing,
making it more engaging for other musicians.

Ghost Note Grooves

Groove A:

Musical notation for Groove A, consisting of four staves in 4/4 time. Each staff has a drumstick icon and a 4/4 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns with ghost notes indicated by 'x' marks above the notes.

Groove B:

Musical notation for Groove B, consisting of four staves in 4/4 time. Each staff has a drumstick icon and a 4/4 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns with ghost notes indicated by 'x' marks above the notes.

