



Pata-Fla-Fla Madness

by Chet Doboie

Before the “bla bla bla” about how cool the pata-fla-fla is and how it can be used to excite your drumming, I’d like to explain exactly what this oddly named rudiment is. The pata-fla-fla is a Swiss drum rudiment that, like many rudiments, sounds like its name. Specifically, the pata-fla-fla consists of a 16th-note rest, two 16th-note taps, and then two alternating flams.

The creative power of the pata-fla-fla lies in linking more than one together and by inverting the rudiment (which simply means changing the order of the pairs of taps and flams). That said, in today’s drum world it’s quite common for drummers to think of the pata-fla-fla as a flam, two taps, and another flam, all performed with alternate sticking.

Built on the foundation of 16th notes, the flams in pata-fla-flas function as accents and as the “storytellers” of the performance. It’s important to perform all the taps at a low (1” to 2”) stick height, which will be key in contrasting the dynamics of the flams and the taps. I find it helpful to “fire” the flams in pata-fla-flas

with a snapping motion.

Try to play as effortlessly as possible. Don’t overplay. It may sound silly, but imagine yourself performing with the musical footprint of a cheetah rather than with that of an elephant.

Traditional Pata-Fla-Fla

Musical notation for Traditional Pata-Fla-Fla in 2/4 time. The notation shows a 16th-note rest, followed by two 16th-note taps, and then two alternating flams. The sticking pattern is L R L R.

“Modern” Pata-Fla-Fla

Musical notation for “Modern” Pata-Fla-Fla in 2/4 time. The notation shows a 16th-note rest, followed by two 16th-note taps, and then two alternating flams. The sticking pattern is R L R L R L R L.

The following exercise lays out the pata-fla-fla and its three permutations. It may be helpful to omit the flams at first and replace them with accents. This should prove helpful in appreciating how the flams add texture to excite the exercise. It should also create a strong mental template for us to follow as we strive to master this exercise.

Drum exercise notation consisting of four staves. Each staff begins with a '1' and a common time signature. The notation shows the pata-fla-fla and its three permutations. The sticking patterns are: R L R L R L R L R L R L R R, L R L R L R L R L R L R L L, R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R, and L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L.

