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Rudimental Classics

'The Three Camps'

By Robert J. Damm

Many beginning snare drummers learn traditional rudimental "solos" that have been passed down from one drummer to another for generations. These pieces are contained in the *Collection of Drum Solos* by William F. Ludwig. Students are taught the rudiments and how to apply them in order to learn, memorize, and play "The Three Camps," "Hell on the Wabash," and "The Downfall of Paris." These pieces are actually fife and drum duets, which were included with other "classics" such as "Yankee Doodle" in *The Drummer's Heritage* by Frederick Fennell.

Fennell wrote in the foreword that many drummers have never heard the tunes with which the rudimental drum music was intended to be performed (p. 9). These classic pieces, removed from their authentic historical context, remain pedagogically valuable for teaching the application of rudimental technique. However, beyond striving for technical perfection, snare drummers will gain a deeper appreciation for these classics and their place in history if they are played in ensemble with a fife (flute). Such appreciation requires an understanding of each piece's historical, cultural, and musical contexts, and engages students by answering questions such as: Who wrote this? When was this written? Where was this written? Why was this written? What function did this serve?

The snare drum is, historically, a military instrument. Rudimental drumming originated and functioned in a military culture; to understand the musical and historical significance of rudimental drumming, one must learn military history. Unfortunately, very little historical information was included with the published pieces, and much information previously disseminated through oral tradition seems to have been lost. An extensive Internet search will not readily generate a coherent explanation of the histories of these classic pieces. Some information has been preserved in ceremonial, military fife-and-drum units as well as Colonial fife-and-drum reenactment groups, but the drumming community at large is unaware of the specific historical contexts of these important pieces.

Beginning snare drummers should appreciate that they have been entrusted

with acquiring and honoring a centuries-old tradition. Today's rudimental style has origins in the military drumming of the American Revolutionary War; it evolved from an even earlier heritage in the military drumming of the British armies. Fifers and drummers in the Continental Army were usually trained by rote in the British military traditions (Camus, p. 82). In those times, drums were used primarily for communicating military signals rather than as musical instruments. This concept should be readily understandable by today's students, whose ears are attuned to the musical signals of cell phones, which notify an individual of either a text message or phone call. Ring tones can be programmed to indicate a call from friends or family, and alarms set to alert an individual of work or other commitments. In a similar way, the soldier's day was regulated by the various drum beats referred to as the camp duties (Camus, p. 83). The drummer was responsible for playing the calls and for providing the cadence for the marching. One drummer would beat the "Drummer's Call" to assemble the company of fifers and drummers for each of the day's routines, such as reveille. The drum beats alone were sufficient to give signals and commands. The fife melodies, which were added for interest, became standard by the last third of the 18th century. The fife and drum, therefore, were essential to military camp life, marking the divisions and duties of the day from morning until night (Camus in Groves, p. 229–230).

The camp duty of the United States Army was included in *The Moeller Book* (1950), where it was characterized as important repertoire every drummer should master. Sanford A. Moeller's one-page essay included the following:

The CAMP DUTY is given here as an exercise in the highest execution on the drum and is recommended for serious study to every student. No one should disregard it because he is not of a military disposition. The rudiments are the scales and chords of the drum. By combining them we get music for drum and the Camp Duty is the concertos. A proficient rudimental drummer can play rhythms that you can march to or dance to without the aid of any other instrument. He

can render beats and calls that are as readily understood as the code from the telegraph instrument. The scholarly drummer is a student of eurythmics and the CAMP DUTY is his last lesson (p. 69).

Instructors still value the rudiments as essential elements for learning drum technique; their application to drum repertoire is invaluable. Mastering rudiments such as the roll, for example, is essential to performing "The Three Camps."

This is the first in a series of articles that will look at the history of some of the best-known rudimental solos.

THE THREE CAMPS

"The Three Camps," inherited from the British Army by the Continental Army, was a staple of the drumming repertoire during the time of the American Revolution and served as the reveille call. One of the earliest drum instruction books printed in America, *A New, Useful and Complete System of Drum Beating*, was written by Charles Stewart Ashworth, conductor of the United States Marine Band from 1804 until 1816. Ashworth's book included "The Three Camps," which he explained was used to begin and end the reveille ceremony.

"Reveille was played at day-break as the signal for soldiers to rise and be ready for the duties of the day and for the sentries to leave off challenging" (Camus, 90). "At a certain signal, all the field musicians (drummers and fifers) assemble at 6 o'clock a.m. (or earlier in some seasons) and play the...reveille. The leading drummer gives the stick tap signal for all to commence 'The Three Camps'" (Bruce & Emmett, p. 28).

Reveille began with "The Three Camps" and consisted of a series of compositions that were strung together by the long roll commencing at the end of one call and lasting until the drum major signaled the beginning of the next (Olson, p. 88). Drummers remained with their companies in battle, giving drum signals as required and usually marched immediately after the advancing line (Camus in Groves, 229).

Duty ended with tattoo at nine o'clock in the evening (Nathan, 107–108). The origin of the word "tattoo" in this context refers to

the order for all beer taps to be turned off, “taps put to,” when the drummers played the warning “tap-to” signal (Murray, 13). Tattoo is the signal for soldiers to be in their quarters. Ashworth wrote that the first 16 measures

of “The Three Camps” was called “The Point of War” (p. 20). “The Point of War” was used to indicate the signaled commands given by drummers to direct the soldiers in battle. It was also played when the regimental colors

were returned and as a compliment [salute] for a Governor or for the President (Asworth, p. 20). There is also a literal meaning to “Point of War” since it was played for the order to “Charge Bayonets” (Ambrus in Turnbull-

The Three Camps

1st CAMP
Allegro

Piccolo/Fife

Field Drum

f

5 simile

2nd CAMP

9

13

3rd CAMP

17

21

25

THE REVEILLE.

The Reveille begins with the three Camps, omitting the three Rolls, between the first, second, third, and fourth, parts, one Roll. — between the fourth and fifth parts, eight Rolls — that is two long ones like those between the first parts, and six short Rolls; — let the last stroke of the Scotch repeat be the first of the three Camps. — The three parts of the three Camps is considered but one part of the Reveille, therefore the first Roll is not till the three Camps are beat through.

THE FIRST PART of the THREE CAMPS.



THE SECOND PART of the THREE CAMPS.



THIRD PART of the THREE CAMPS.



"The Reveille" from Charles Ashworth's 1812 *A New, Useful and Complete System of Drum Beating*

CAMP DUTY.

The pupil must now proceed to learn the several 'calls,' and also their uses, and the proper time and places at which they are to be played. They are called, when combined, "Camp Duty." At a certain signal, all the Field Music (Drummers and Fifers), assemble at 6 o'clock, A. M., (or earlier in some seasons), and play the following pieces, which are connected by rolls of the Drum, and are called

REVEILLE.

The leading Drummer gives the 'stick tap' signal, when all commence the

THREE CAMPS, OR POINTS OF WAR.

"Camp Duty: Reveille" from Bruce and Emmett's 1865 *The Drummer's and Fifer's Guide*

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Burchmore, p. 30). "The Points of War" had been standardized by Charles I, in 1632, to include these six drum beats (Nordin and Knutson, p. 3):

1. Call: *prepare to hear proclamation or order*
2. Troop: *shoulder weapons, close ranks and files, and follow your officers to the place of rendezvous*
3. March: *shoulder all weapons, march to the beat of the drum where the Captain directs*
4. Preparative: *close to your proper distance for battle and make ready to execute the first command*
5. Battell (charge): *press forward in order of battle with the highest pitch of courage, stepping forward in the place of him that falls dead, or wounded before thee*
6. Retreat: *orderly retiring for relief, advantage of ground, or to draw the enemy into ambush*

The curious student will question the significance of the number three in the title and the three corresponding sections of the piece's formal structure. There is some speculation on this topic. The only explanation (for the number three) with a basis in actual military practice is provided by Camus in his description of the reveille performance:

When the eighteenth-century army encamped, it did so in battle formation. This configuration included the "color line," a grand street or parade ground, where the colors were planted and the drums were piled. The drummers would pick up their drums from in front of the adjutant's tent, which was in the center at the head of the "grand" street, and perform the beats in unison. Starting in front of the adjutant's tent, they paraded along the front of the battalion to the right [one], then to the left [two], and then back to the center [three] (p. 91).

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