Pearl Educational Resource Library

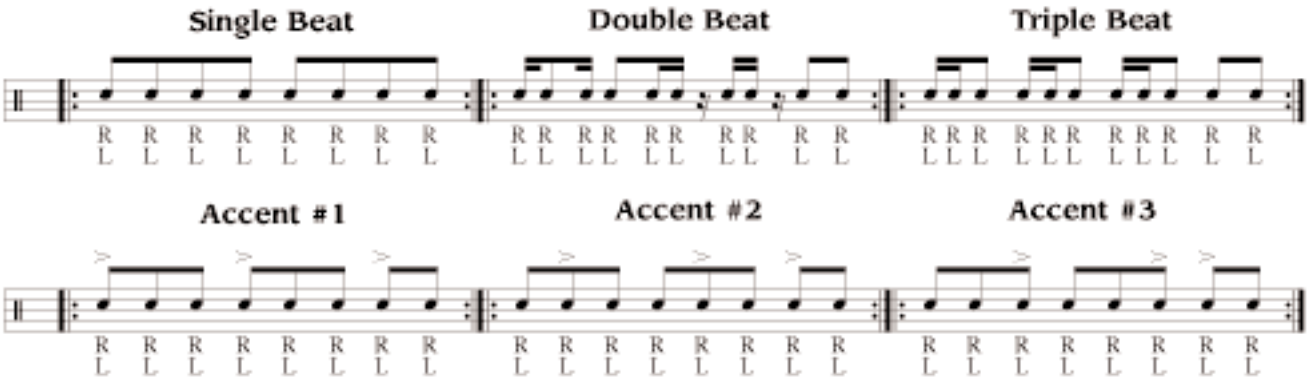
Building Your Vocabulary
by Thom Hannum

Visit Thom's Mobile Percussion Seminar Website
www.percussion.org

Music is our universal language, and building a vocabulary to communicate our ideas is an essential step for all musicians. Included in this article are some fundamental elements of percussion we all use as players and writers. Mastering these basics will help you organize your approach to practice, soloing, and writing music. Be patient! Go slow and gradually speed up when you feel comfortable. Use a metronome and keep track of your tempo during all practice sessions.

I. Basic Beat Patterns and Accents

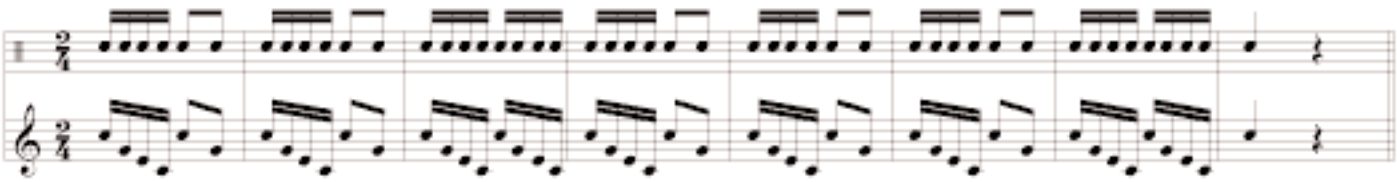
Develop a consistent motion in your strokes. Establish a comfortable grip and relax your fingers and hands. The natural reaction is for the stick to rebound. Let it happen! Play these at all dynamic levels.



II. Rhythmic Building Blocks For Reading

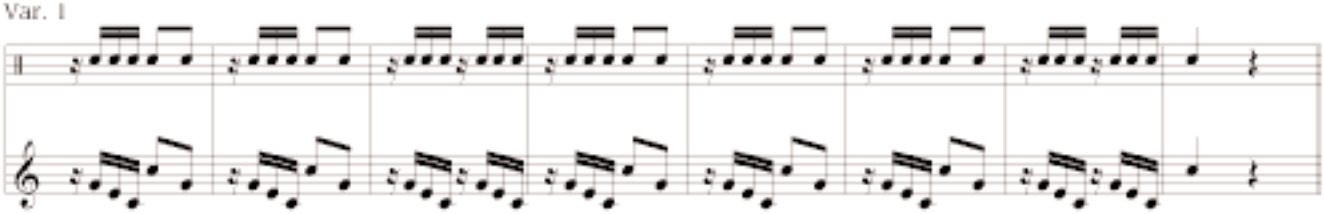
Use the "natural sticking" method (RLRL) to learn the Check Pattern and 14 Duple Variations. Go slow at first! Tap your foot, and feel solid downbeats. With consistent practice all syncopation should feel natural.

The Check Pattern

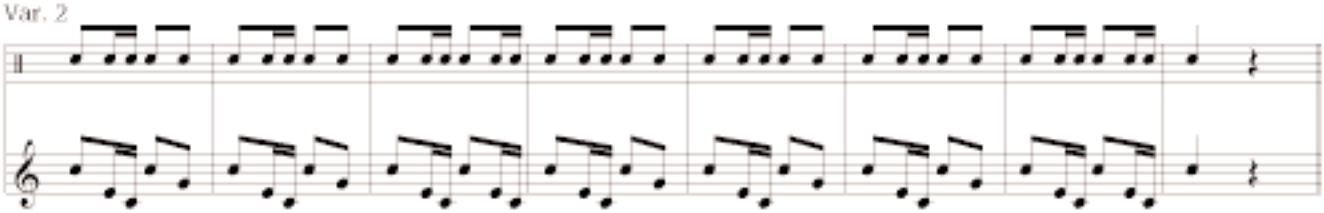


14 Duple Variations

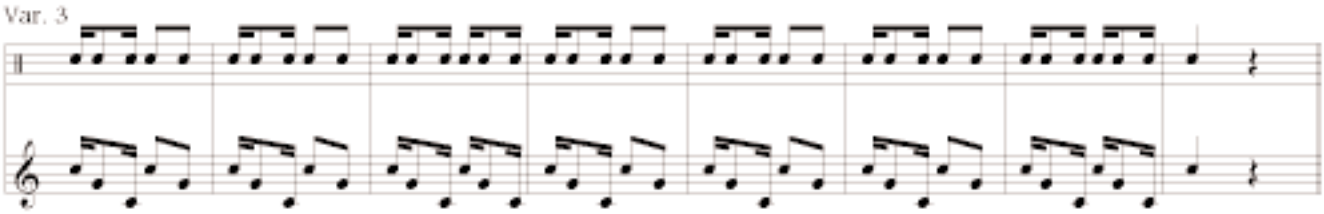
Var. 1



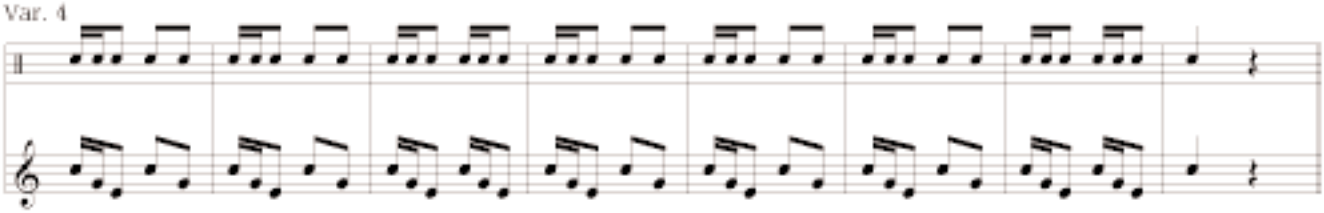
Var. 2



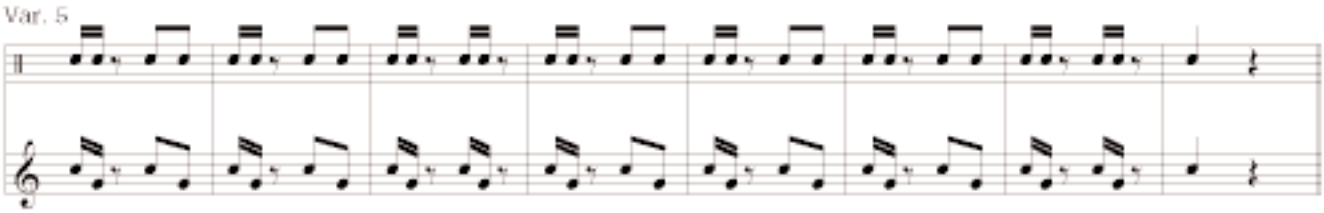
Var. 3



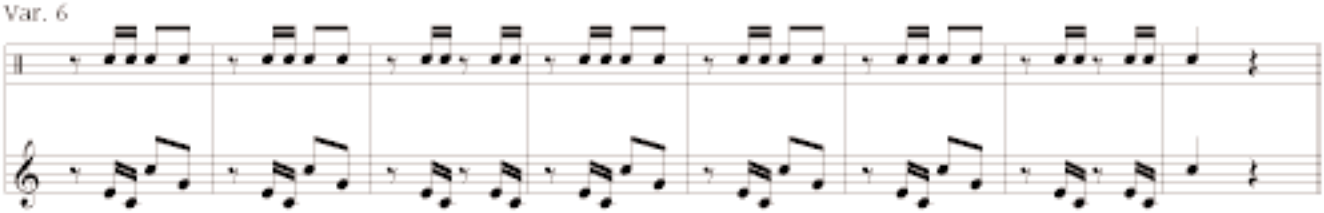
Var. 4



Var. 5

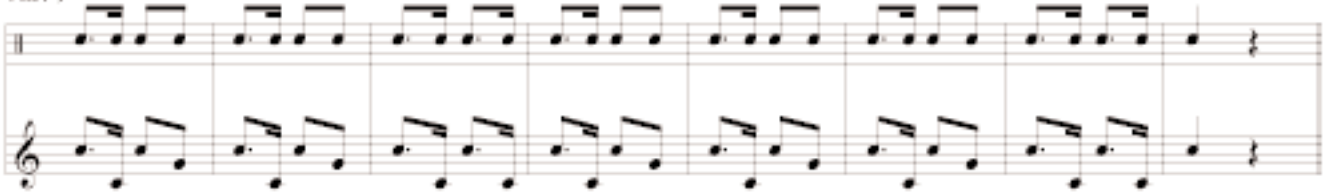


Var. 6

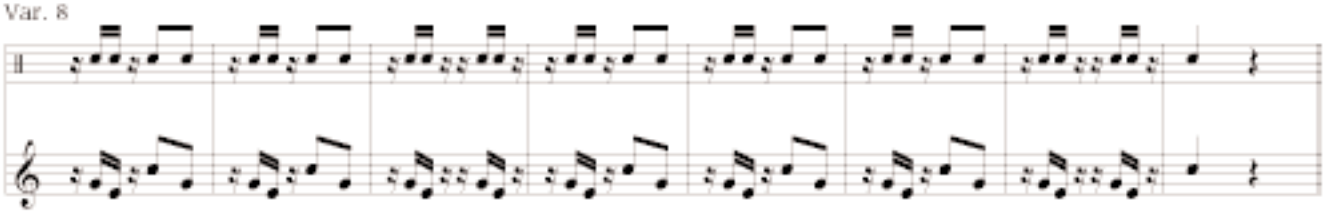


14 Duple Variations Cont.

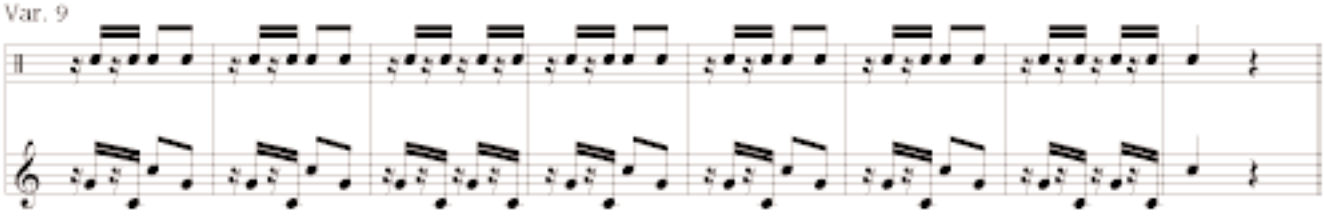
Var. 7



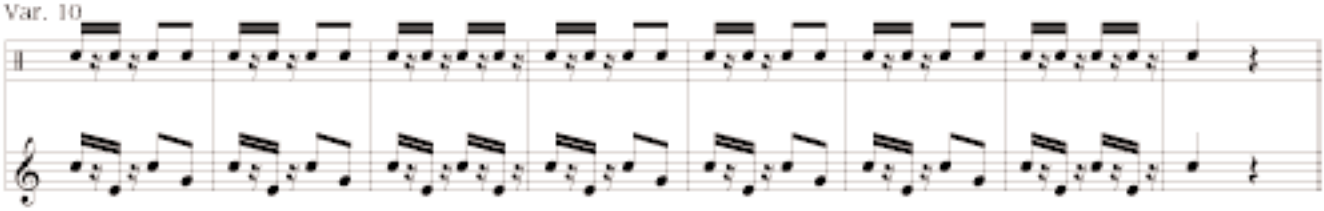
Var. 8



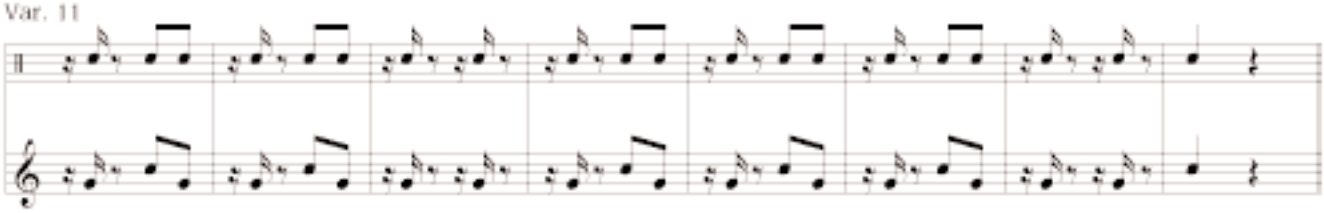
Var. 9



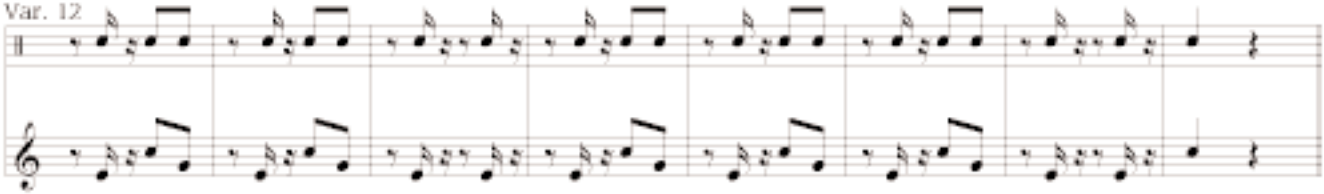
Var. 10



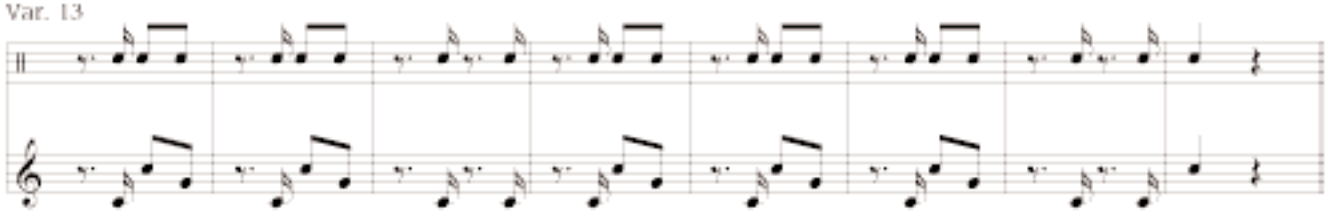
Var. 11



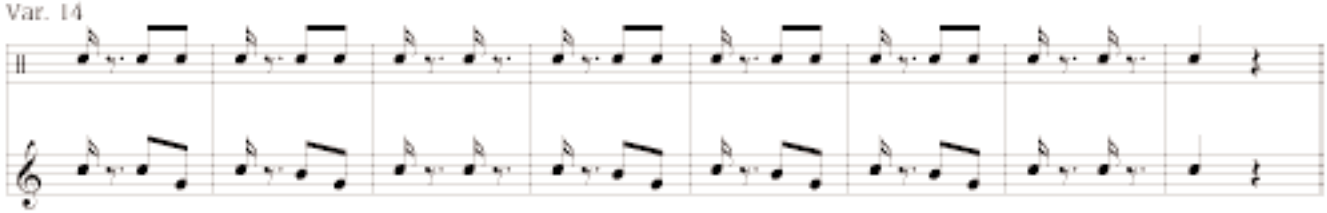
Var. 12



Var. 13

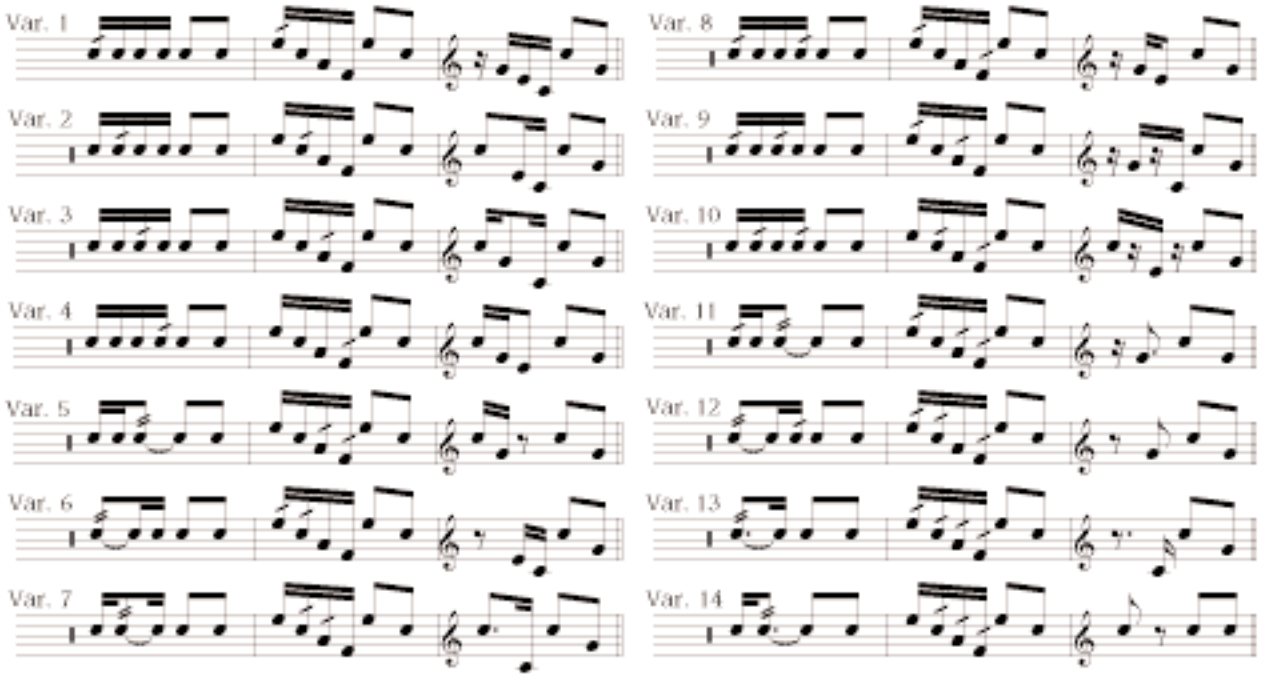


Var. 14



III. Expanding the Building Blocks

Let's use the 14 Duple Variations to learn the basics of 32nd note roll sequencing. Just add a double beat in the space of each rested 16th note. Maintain the basic 16th note motion of the sticks at all times.

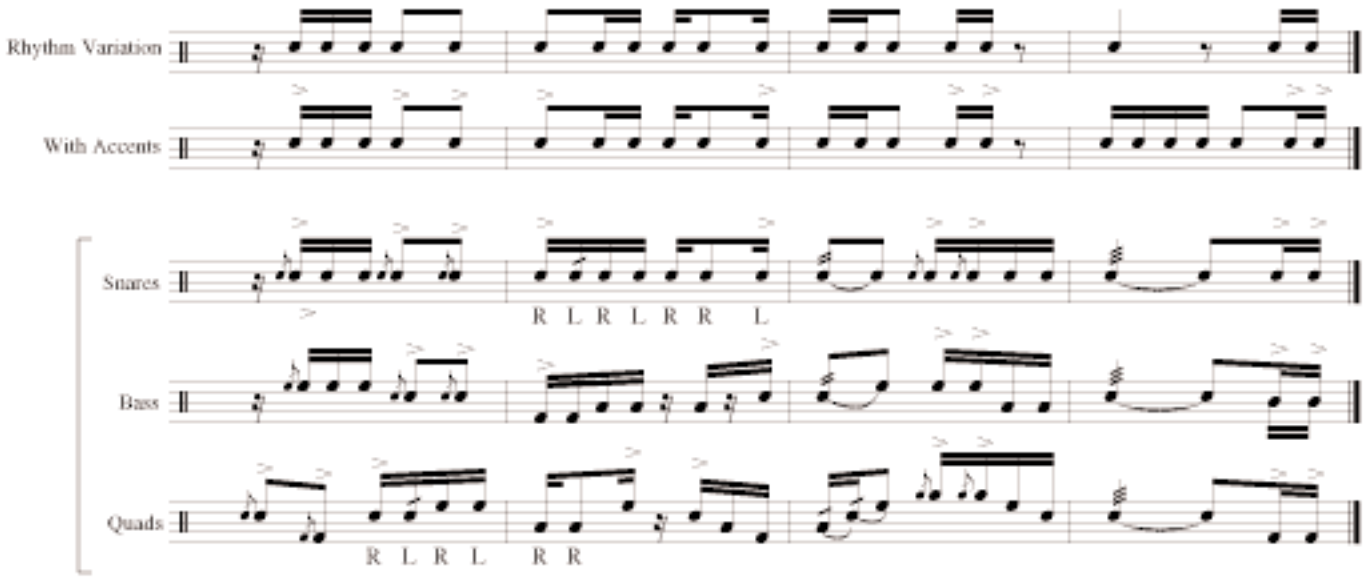


IV. Rudiments

Every percussionist should learn the 40 International Drum Rudiments. For your convenience the Percussive Arts Society has compled a simple 2 page handout with all 40 rudiments. Approach the sticking patterns of each rudiment as a single, double, or triple beat. This method is a great tool for teaching and helps to reinforce the use of the Basic Beat Patterns presented at the beginning of this article. Good luck!

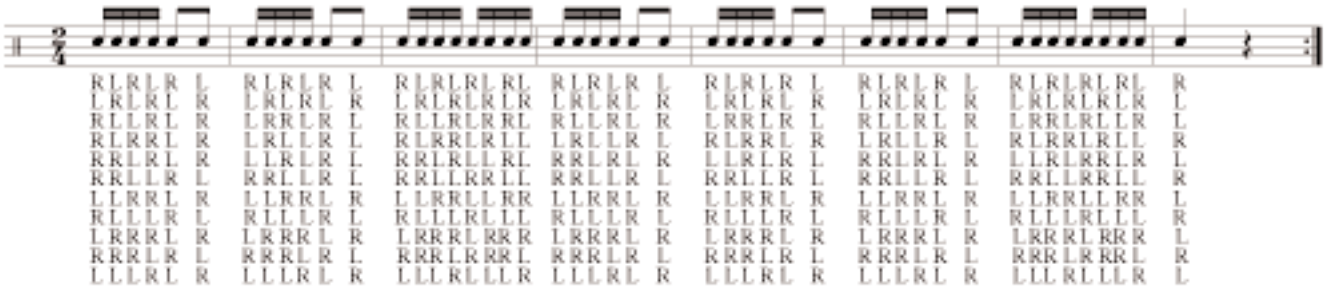
V. Musical Development

Now let's show you how to develop some parts using the fundamentals presented so far. We'll make use of the 14 Duple Variations, accents, unaccented notes, rolls, and flams.



VI. Stone Control Patterns

George Lawrence Stone was one of the great percussion educators of our time. Let's borrow some ideas from his method and use them with the Check Pattern. Just like rudiments, these sticking patterns are combinations of single, double, and triple beats. Concentrate on maintaining a natural flow of the sticks by using the rebound. Play these at all dynamic levels.



Mr. Hannum has long been regarded as one of the nation's foremost percussion arrangers, instructors, and clinicians having presented numerous seminars and workshops throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Southeast Asia. He is best known for his work with the DCI World Champion Cadets of Bergen County and Star of Indiana. Thom is a member of the design team for the Tony Award Winning show Blast! as well as CyberJam. In the summer of 2001, Mr. Hannum was selected for induction into the DCI Hall of Fame.

Thom has developed an outstanding percussion program at the University of Massachusetts where he serves as the Associate Director of the Minuteman Marching Band. He is a product consultant and clinician for the Avedis Zildjian Cymbal Company, Evans Drum Heads, the Pearl Corporation, and Vic Firth Sticks & Mallets where he has developed several Signature Series drumsticks for marching percussion. Thom is an active member of the Percussive Arts Society and the current President of the Massachusetts PAS Chapter.

Through the Hal Leonard Corporation, Mr. Hannum has published a Textbook and corresponding Student Workbook, Championship Concepts For Marching Percussion, which provide many band programs with a comprehensive foundation for percussion education. His instructional video produced by Warner Brothers/Chappell, Fundamental Techniques For Marching Percussion, demonstrates many of the concepts outlined in the books. Thom has published percussion arrangements and solos with Warner Brothers, Rowloff Productions, and Drop6 Media, Inc.