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A MODEL MENTOR: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PEDAGOGY AND PERFORMANCE STYLE OF ALAN DAWSON

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A MODEL MENTOR: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PEDAGOGY AND PERFORMANCE STYLE OF ALAN DAWSON

by

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ABSTRACT

Drummer Alan Dawson embodied the performer-pedagogue model often found in modern collegiate jazz programs, yet his innovations as a performer are often overshadowed in relation to his teaching career. The purpose of this study is to examine how Dawson demonstrated the concepts he developed as a teacher in his overall drumming style as a performer. Through musical analysis of selected transcriptions taken from Dawson’s recorded output, as well as interviews with his former students and colleagues, the study provides further insight into Dawson’s contributions as a player and educator, and into the relationship between his pedagogy and performing. Findings include direct correlations between the two, involving direct applications of his pedagogical concepts for four-way coordination, rudimental technique, and melodic implications within an improvised performance context.
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CHAPTER 1
THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Introduction and Background

Alan Dawson (1929-1996) possessed many enviable qualities as both a gifted jazz drummer and educator. In addition to mentoring numerous drummers through his association with Berklee College of Music and beyond, Dawson had the distinction of being called upon to perform with numerous renowned jazz musicians who travelled through his hometown of Boston. Through his work at venues such as Wally’s Paradise and Lennie’s On The Turnpike, Dawson had the privilege to perform with such artists as Coleman Hawkins, Sonny Stitt, Phil Woods, and numerous others.

By his own admission, Dawson never set out to become a teacher (Potter, 1985, p. 10). However, as a result of his work around Boston as a performer, Dawson was invited by Lawrence Berk to join the faculty at Berklee College of Music in 1957 (Gardner, 1971, p. 4). During his 18-year tenure, Dawson’s students included Tony Williams, Harvey Mason, Steve Smith, and Vinnie Colaiuta (Spagnardi, 1992, p. 71). It was also during this time that Dawson began to refine and develop numerous applications for such snare drum books as Ted Reed’s *Progressive Steps To Syncopation for the Modern Drummer* and George Lawrence Stone’s *Stick Control* (Scott, 1989, p. 35). By taking these texts and applying them around the drum set, Dawson further elevated the field of...
both jazz education and modern drum set performance by developing a formalized, unique, and creative approach to teaching jazz drum set technique.

Dawson’s legacy as both a performer and teacher are well established by many in both the percussion and jazz education community. Former Berklee College of Music Percussion Department Chairman Gary Chaffee noted,

Alan Dawson was one of those unique individuals whose talents covered not only performance, but also education…. He was an outstanding teacher and one of the most dedicated ones that I have ever met. Additionally, Alan’s expertise as a performer is well documented through his many recordings (Ramsay, 1996, p. x). Through his work as both a drummer and an educator, Dawson truly embodied the model for the modern jazz performer-pedagogue model that is often replicated in numerous modern-day collegiate jazz programs.

Main Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer questions such as: How strongly were the drumming techniques of Alan Dawson related to his teaching pedagogy? Was Dawson’s pedagogy an extension of his performing style before his tenure at Berklee? How consistently did Alan’s playing evolve with his teaching career? How did Dawson’s career influence the field of jazz education? What impact did Dawson’s drumming style have on modern jazz drumming?
Statement of the Problem

Alan Dawson’s drum teaching methods used snare drum texts such as George L. Stone’s *Stick Control for the Snare Drummer* (1935) and Ted Reed’s *Progressive Steps To Syncopation for the Modern Drummer* (1958), and have been utilized by drummers worldwide to improve their technique in areas such as solo development, knowledge of jazz repertoire, rudimental vocabulary, and four-way coordination. While much has been written about Dawson’s teaching methods and their influence on jazz education, very little has been examined about how these methods were related to Dawson’s own drumming style. Despite Dawson’s associations with such artists as Dave Brubeck, Dexter Gordon, and Booker Ervin, very little has been published about Dawson the drummer versus Dawson the educator.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how Alan Dawson demonstrated his own concepts he developed as a teacher in his overall drumming style as a performer. This study will serve as a means from which drummers and percussionists can gain further musical and historical insight into the drumming style of Dawson than is currently available. Hopefully, it will also enable drummers to further expand Dawson’s existing exercises to serve their own stylistic needs. Furthermore, it will serve as a treatise for all teachers and jazz pedagogues seeking to gain insight into how Dawson influenced the jazz education community thanks in large part to his affiliation with Berklee College of Music.
Methodology

The research was conducted using a qualitative mode of inquiry along with musical analysis. One-on-one interviews with former students revealed the intrinsic qualities of Dawson’s drumming style, which were then shown and analyzed more in depth via musical transcriptions. Research participants were former students Ron Savage, Kenwood Dennard, Jon Hazilla, Casey Scheuerell, John Ramsay and Robert Tamagni, all of who were affiliated at the time of writing with Berklee College of Music. Since many of Dawson’s former students worked one-on-one with Dawson at Berklee in a private applied lesson setting, they had much insight about his specific methods and techniques employed during lessons. These same research participants also acknowledged hearing Dawson perform both live and on record on numerous occasions, and were able to dovetail Dawson’s teaching techniques and methods directly into his drumming style as a performer.

Musical transcriptions of Dawson’s performances further illustrate how his teaching methods both matched and differed from what he played, as well as provide the reader with appropriate context for analysis of his drumming style. The recordings examined include mostly works performed from the mid-1960s until the early 1970s, arguably the most prolific and visible period of Dawson’s career. The final transcriptions were examined in light of Dawson’s teaching methodology as outlined in John Ramsay’s drum method book *The Drummer’s Complete Vocabulary as taught by Alan Dawson* (1997). Additional archival research was also conducted at Berklee College of Music, the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers-Newark, and Harvard University.
Research Models

Ron Wilson’s 2003 Master’s Thesis *Melodic Drum Set Compositions: A Study of Max Roach and Terry Bozzio* is a strong example of a thesis that achieved an equal balance of interviews and musical transcriptions. For his study, Wilson split his thesis in half, with the first half dedicated to Roach, the second half dedicated to Bozzio. Each section began with historical background information about each drummer’s life and career before analyzing a solo drum composition that each was known for: in this case, “The Drum Also Waltzes” and “Tango,” respectively. Wilson then dedicated a section to analyzing the similarities and differences between the two drummers’ soloing techniques before concluding with his overall findings and suggestions for further investigations. This format gave the reader a very clear template to follow the study from start to finish, and made the thesis interesting to read.

Dave Goodman’s doctoral dissertation *Tony Williams’ Drum set Ideology to 1969* is also a strong model for scholarly drum set research. It gives Williams’ personal and historical background, as well as a chapter summarizing and defining concepts that appear throughout the work, such as entrainment. He then provided an overview of Williams’ personal drumming style, followed by musical analyses of four of Williams’ drumming influences: Art Blakey, Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, and Roy Haynes. He followed this analytical chapter with one about Williams’ “adaptive modeling” (the central focus of his work) via analysis of Williams’ performance on the tunes *Vertigo* and *Walkin’* before summarizing his conclusions.
Both the Wilson thesis and Goodman dissertation have a similar format, one which seeks to engage the reader with an intriguing and interesting problem statement before further elaborating with historical background, leading to transcription and musical analysis before summarizing the findings. The current study strove to incorporate all these elements, with the important addition of supporting interview research from Dawson’s former colleagues and students.
CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND AND DRUMMING INFLUENCES

Beginnings in Boston

George Alan Dawson was born on July 14, 1929 in Marietta, PA, but grew up in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. Music was always present in the Dawson household, as Dawson’s mother and father were amateur musicians, “My father [played] guitar and a little bit of piano…. My mother also, as an amateur, played the piano, sang in the church choir, and that type of thing. My sister took piano lessons and played the piano a bit.” Some of the first music Dawson recalled hearing and seeing as a youngster were neighborhood drum corps, “I remember particularly St. Cyprian’s Drum Corps…. Incidentally, I was never a member of that organization, but one person who was a member was Roy Haynes.” By the time he was 14, Dawson was already performing around Boston with such local musicians as Tasker Crosson and Hopeton Johnson (Vandermark, 1983, pp. 5-6).

In his late teens, Dawson began formally studying drums with local Boston show drummer Charles Alden. In addition to teaching Dawson how to read music, Alden later expanded the lessons to include studies on marimba and vibraphone, skills that would later prove to be an integral part of Dawson’s teaching curriculum. During the Korean

Dawson’s performing career began in earnest upon his discharge, when he was called to join vibraphonist Lionel Hampton on a tour of Europe in the mid-1950s (Morgenstern, 1966, p. 29). Upon his return to Boston, Dawson continued to perform with local musicians such as Sabby Lewis, yet found the irregularity of work a constant challenge, and attended drafting school for a brief period in the mid-1950s. In 1957, however, his luck began to change, thanks to his regular gigs at Wally’s Paradise, a jazz club in Boston’s South End, “It was during this period of time when I was working there [Wally’s] with my own group that several students from Berklee started coming in on a regular basis and they kept asking me various things and asking if I gave lessons.” Even though Dawson was teaching both Clifford Jarvis and Tony Williams at the time, he had never seriously considered a foray into education full-time. Nonetheless, Berklee president and founder Lawrence Berk called upon Dawson to join the faculty at his newly emerging school, to which the drummer accepted (Gardner, 1971, p. 4).

In addition to becoming in demand as a teacher, Dawson’s star as a performer also began to rise during this time. In 1963, Dawson began working as the house drummer at Lennie’s On The Turnpike, a nightclub located in Peabody, Massachusetts, “Lennie’s-on-the-Turnpike was actually the first job that I had where we operated as a house band or a house rhythm section playing behind different well-known individual stars such as Sonny Stitt, Phil Woods…and others such as Roy Eldridge and Coleman Hawkins. So in that respect that’s the best kind of exposure I’ve ever received really” (Gardner, 1971, p. 22).
One of Dawson’s most fruitful associations that came as a result of his work at Lennie’s was that with tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin, who asked Dawson to appear on his album *The Freedom Book* for Prestige Records alongside pianist Jaki Byard and bassist Richard Davis, “…after a week at [Lennie’s-on-the-Turnpike] with him…he mentioned to me, ‘You know I’m supposed to be doing a record date pretty soon. I’d sure like you to make it.’…This kind of commitment involves a person really putting himself out because he could have gotten just about any drummer in New York for scale and yet he actually thought that much of me to have me come down from Boston…” (Dawson, 1970, p. 25). As a result of this date, Dawson was awarded the “Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition” award from Down Beat Magazine in 1965, and Dawson went on to record further with Ervin through the mid-1960s (Morgenstern, 1966, p. 27).

Dawson’s career gained even more momentum when in 1968, he replaced Joe Morello in the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Dawson especially appreciated the fact that Brubeck’s touring schedule allowed him to continue his teaching work at Berklee, “Working with the Dave Brubeck Quartet is really an enjoyable experience….Dave doesn’t do anywhere near as many dates as he did years back. And that’s tailor-made for me: with the situation at the school and other activities, I really wouldn’t want to be out anymore than we are at present” (Gardner, 1971, p. 18). In addition to recording and touring with Brubeck’s quartet, Dawson also appeared with Brubeck’s family band, Two Generations of Brubeck (Anderson, p. 13).

In 1975, Dawson suffered a slipped disc injury that prompted him to leave both Brubeck and Berklee. He limited his private teaching hours to 30 hours per week from his home in Lexington, MA and kept his performance career centered within the Boston area.
with a group that included tenor saxophonist Billy Pierce, pianist James Williams, and bassist Richard Reid. He continued to teach and perform until his death in 1996 from leukemia (Anderson, p. 13).

**Drumming Influences**

**Jo Jones.** Dawson often cited “Papa” Jo Jones as one of his top drumming influences, “Right from the beginning and up through the teens I was very much impressed with Jo Jones, the drummer with the original Count Basie Band” (Gardner, 1971, p. 2). In numerous interviews, Dawson frequently cited Jones’ use of the hi-hat as a timekeeping device, as well as Jones’ overall playing style and sound, as the two characteristics that influenced him the most. In Bouchard’s 1980 interview, Dawson elaborated further on Jones’ use of the hi-hat:

> Jo’s use of hi-hat was probably his most innovative contribution, but that carried over to the ride cymbal. Way back as long as I can remember, he was playing time across the bar lines…. When people were playing hi-hat staccato and jumpy, Jo was playing it legato and flowing. (p. 64)

When Vandermark (1983) asked if Dawson had ever seen Jones perform in person, Dawson replied, “No, he turned me on on [sic] the records at about 1941. His sound. You know, the high hat thing. That really did it for me…. I didn’t see him in person until about 1944…. Jo was my number one influence” (p. 6).

Dawson also admired Jones for his overall sound and individual style on the drums. He told Gardner (1971) about the intrinsic qualities he heard in Jones’ drumming:
His way of playing cymbals and getting that real smooth, legato kind of sound; the kind of taste that he displayed; the way that he could just play the drums so that they were not just drums. With him they were not a crude banging type of instrument. He really played the drums and to this day I still feel the same way about him. (p. 2)

Dawson spoke further about Jones’ relaxed and legato drumming style, even going so far as to suggest Jones’ very posture at the drums was a factor in his sound. In a *Modern Drummer* interview with Potter (1985), Dawson said, “I listened to him for years, and the way he sounded to me is how I pictured he would look playing. As last, I got to watch him and he certainly did look like that. The posture at the drum set…are things I saw and started doing...” (p. 13).

Dawson summarized his respect for Jones’ sound in an interview with Fish (1986): “I heard Jo Jones before I saw him. I certainly was impressed with his sound…. He had his own sound – an individual sound. These drummers sounded like they sounded no matter what drums they played on...” (p. 105).

**Max Roach.** Dawson also frequently cited Max Roach as a strong influence in conjunction with Jones, “As far as main influences from big-time drummers is concerned, the big ones were Jo Jones and Max Roach” (Vandermark, p. 6). Dawson specifically cited Roach’s solo on the bebop recording “Ko-Ko,” considered by many jazz historians and scholars to be the first true recording of the bebop period. In the same interview where he first spoke of Jo Jones, Dawson told Gardner (1971),
Later…. I heard the record *Ko-Ko*. This was about 1945 or ’46 and I heard this drummer on there and I had never heard anybody play like this; I had never heard such cymbal sounds, such conception, and it turned out to be Max Roach. (p. 2)

Dawson was also greatly influenced by Roach’s ability to extend the role of the bass drum beyond acting as a timekeeping device relegated to keeping four beats to the bar, as had been the case during much of the Swing Era. Riley (1994) referred to this concept, popularized during the Bebop Era, in his book *The Art of Bop Drumming* as a “third hand” (p. 24). Dawson further explained his appreciation for Roach’s use of the bass drum to Vandermark (1983):

> The idea that a drummer could play the types of things he [Roach] did…. You know, where the bass drum wasn’t played steady. Where the bass drum was used as another voice. He could do that and still play a certain number of measures and come out exactly right. That just floored me…. I became a Max Roach fan. (p. 7)

Thanks to Roach’s influence, Dawson would go on to expand the roles of both feet in conjunction with the hands, further advancing the art of drumming.

Roach’s highly developed sense of melodic soloing around the drums was another attribute that Dawson admired. This melodic sense was a trademark of Roach’s style, and revolutionized the art of jazz drum soloing for all who followed. In an interview with Potter (1985), Dawson remarked,

> When we speak of melodic drumming, we aren’t actually playing melody per se. What we’re doing is a sleight of hand. We’re making people “hear” melodies by dealing with approximations of pitch – basically going up or down – and by the combination of the rhythms that go with certain melodies. It can actually make
you think you’re hearing it, but you’re really not…. For instance, if a tune is very rhythmic, you can use a lot of the rhythm of the melody and people would certainly hear the melody. (p. 36)

Roach’s contributions to drum soloing would clearly shape Dawson’s own approach to creating highly melodic drum solos with an enhanced vocabulary that integrated the bass drum and hi-hat as equal voices in conjunction with the hands.

The Role of Berklee College of Music in Jazz Education

Originally founded by Lawrence Berk in 1945 as Schillinger House, Berklee College of Music soon became one of the leading schools dedicated to the study of contemporary music. Though its initial mission was to train students in the compositional system of music theorist Joseph Schillinger, it eventually expanded and broadened its curriculum to include courses in jazz and popular music (Vacca, 2012, pp. 118-120).

Berk’s first teachers were not only accomplished musicians with relevant experience behind them, but passionate educators as well. In addition to hiring Dawson in 1957, he recruited such renowned Boston musicians as saxophonist Joe Viola in 1946, trumpeter Herb Pomeroy in 1955, and trombonist Phil Wilson in 1965 (Vacca, pp. 121-122). In 1971, Berk hired vibraphonist and Berklee alumnus Gary Burton to join the percussion faculty, who, by that time, was a rising star in the early days of the jazz-fusion movement. Similar to Dawson, Burton maintained an active performing career while serving on the faculty full-time, and his albums Alone At Last (1971) and Duet (1979) both won Grammy Awards during his tenure as a teacher (Hazell, 1995, p. 119). In a 2005 interview with Berklee Today, Burton told Small,
I moved to Boston and started teaching in the fall of 1971. My fear was that I would lose my credibility as a player if people thought I was teaching and not playing anymore. I killed myself for the first few years taking every gig I could squeeze into the schedule to keep my visibility. It seemed to work…. My career was going great and I found teaching inspiring. Since then, it has become fairly common for active jazz players to have jobs teaching at colleges. It's good for the colleges, the students, and the players; everybody wins. (p. 13)

Teaching Career and Pedagogy

Dawson was called by Lawrence Berk to join the faculty largely due to his presence around the Boston jazz scene, “While I was playing at Wally’s Paradise in the late 1950’s, a lot of students from Berklee would come catch my group and sit in…. Quite a few of them would say to me, ‘Gee, I wish you were teaching at Berklee.’ Months later, I got a call from Larry Berk and I started teaching at Berklee in 1957” (Scott, 1989, p. 35).

Dawson’s teaching career began primarily with an informal passing of knowledge to Clifford Jarvis and Tony Williams, his first two students who would both go on to become established jazz drummers in their own right. By his admission, however, Alan never planned on a path in education, “…I never set out to be a teacher. I definitely set out to be a player…. I became a teacher only because various people that I’d run into along the way expressed an interest in what I was doing” (Potter, 1985, p. 10)

After Dawson began teaching, however, his pedagogy became more sophisticated. In a 1989 interview with Arvin Scott, Dawson said, “I began teaching students the way I
was taught – basically reading through a series of books that went from elementary to advanced. Then as students became more advanced, I started working with drum-set things…. I also used the Stick Control book basically the way it was set up to be used – for chops and hand development.” Inevitably, Dawson would have to address the various problems his students had in their development:

…I developed an approach for substituting the “L” (i.e. notes written for the left hand) with the bass drum in the Stick Control book…. I developed various approaches to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer which helped students interpret syncopated figures on the drum-set. So a kind of evolution in my teaching took place due to necessity. Chances are that I would not have wound up teaching the way I do if I had not been affiliated with a jazz school (Scott, p. 35).

When asked about the specifics of his private lesson approach, Dawson said, “…my lessons are structured in four parts basically: (1) rudiments; (2) hand development; (3) time-playing and soloing with tunes; and (4) syncopation techniques. Ideally each part should be covered in every practice routine” (Scott, p. 48).

**The Rudimental Ritual.** One of Alan’s greatest strengths as an improviser was using the snare drum rudiments in a creative fashion. According to Ramsay (1997), Alan knew more than 80 rudiments (American, Swiss, New Innovations, and Chopsbuilders), and he gave you three a week to work on. If you couldn’t play those satisfactorily, you didn’t get the next three – and you wanted those next three because after you learned them all, you got to learn the Rudimental Ritual. This was of all the rudiments played in 4- and 8-bar phrases over a Bossa Nova foot pattern. (p. vii)
Dawson said of the “Ritual” to Vandermark (1983) that, “That’s something I try to get in at least once a day during the week. Actually, once any of my students have learned this ritual, we always start the lesson with that” (p. 11).

**Timekeeping and Soloing.** One of Dawson’s greatest strengths as a teacher was taking existing drum and percussion books and developing new ways to interpret the notation around the drum set. One such example was with the book *Stick Control*, by George L. Stone, which Dawson used for the development of the bass drum foot. In a 1989 interview, Dawson explained the approach: “As time passed, students would say ‘What can I do for developing my bass drum foot?’ So I developed an approach for substituting the ‘L’ [notes written for the left hand] with the bass drum...” (Scott, p. 35).

Dawson utilized this approach throughout the exercises found in *Stick Control*, and heavily used the “Single Beat Combinations” of eighth notes found on pages five through seven.

Ramsay (1997) further praised Dawson’s ingenuity as a teacher, as well as described the benefits of this particular exercise:

Alan was always mindful of trying to balance his lessons and studies equally between technique and musical ideas. One of the ways in which he did that was by teaching you to solo over various standard song forms while you sang the melody to those songs aloud…. This exercise will accomplish several things: you will develop hand and foot coordination, increase your ability to feel four- and eight-bar musical phrases, teach you about song form, and, most important, it will give you the ability to solo over the form of a tune without having to count. This in itself will make your solos more musical and melodic. (p. 48)
**Syncopation Techniques.** Dawson also believed in the development of four-way coordination around the drums, a skill utilized when both soloing and playing time around the drums that enables a player to divide rhythms between all four limbs. To assist with this development, Dawson utilized pages 38 through 45 of the classic text *Progressive Steps to Syncopation For The Modern Drummer* by Ted Reed over forty different ways. These pages consist of syncopated “short note” (eighth note) and “long note” (quarter notes, dotted quarter notes, and all tied notes) musical phrases. According to Ramsay (1997), “…you will not only be practicing coordination, but also reading. Alan would stress the importance of practicing all of the eight pages particularly…. You never knew which page he was going to ask you to play…” (p. 25). One such application was playing the jazz ride cymbal pattern in the right hand, the syncopated figures on the snare drum in the left hand, the right foot “feathering” the bass drum on all four beats, and the left foot playing the hi-hat on beats 2 & 4 (p. 25).

Similar to the other areas of his pedagogy, Dawson’s fluidity with coordination was readily apparent in his drumming, and his various approaches to using *Syncopation* also influenced such other drum publications as Gary Chester’s 1985 work *The New Breed*. Drummer John “JR” Robinson, one of Dawson’s most prolific former students, summed up Alan’s pedagogy perfectly: “Alan’s teaching technique showed me chart reading, confidence, song sense, and most of all, groove” (Anderson, 1996, p. 14).
CHAPTER 3

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED DAWSON PERFORMANCES

Methodology

Dawson’s own lesson criteria guided the analysis of his recorded performances. When asked about the specifics of his private lesson approach, Dawson told Scott (1989), “…my lessons are structured in four parts basically: (1) rudiments; (2) hand development; (3) time-playing and soloing with tunes; and (4) syncopation techniques. Ideally each part should be covered in every practice routine” (p. 48). Examples of each of these four areas will be examined in Dawson’s performance style. Works examined include Dawson’s full-chorus solo on the tune “Chasin’ The Bird,” two choruses of trading between Dawson and pianist Bill Evans over the jazz standard “Beautiful Love,” Dawson’s outro on the tune “Oleo” from a performance with Sonny Rollins, and numerous choruses over the Duke Ellington tune “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be.” Comments from former students further reinforce the key areas that Dawson emphasized in the aforementioned pedagogical areas. Each part of Dawson’s pedagogy will be examined in conjunction with the information presented from John Ramsay’s book The Drummer’s Complete Vocabulary as taught by Alan Dawson, and have been classified into two main sections, “Rudiments/Hand Technique” and “Syncopation Techniques.”
Since the snare drum rudiments often run synonymous with the development of hand technique, these two areas have been combined into one section. Similarly, since timekeeping techniques were often addressed in conjunction with the four-way coordination methods used with the *Syncopation* book, timekeeping will be examined as part of the section titled “*Syncopation* Techniques,” along with some of the more soloistic applications utilizing four-way coordination. Examples of Dawson soloing over various song forms have been included throughout both sections as examples from which to illustrate Dawson’s concepts applied in practice.

**Nomenclature.** All notation presented in this section will utilize the following key. Since the modern jazz drum set consists mostly of cymbals and drums of indeterminate pitch, the percussion clef has been used with the following staff assignments for all instruments.

![Drum notational key](image1)

*Figure 1. Drum notational key*

The jazz ride cymbal pattern referred to in this section is a common timekeeping ostinato in the jazz idiom often written as this:

![Jazz ride cymbal pattern](image2)

*Figure 2. Jazz ride cymbal pattern, version 1*
However, it is interpreted more like this:

![Image of jazz ride cymbal pattern, version 2]

*Figure 3. Jazz ride cymbal pattern, version 2*

Both methods of notation will be employed throughout. When applicable, all right hand strokes have been labeled with the letter “R,” all left hand strokes with the letter “L,” and all foot strokes, bass drum or hi-hat, with the letter “F.” All examples are in 4/4 time.

**Repertoire Examined.** The repertoire examined in this section covers much of Dawson’s most prolific period as a drummer. “Chasin’ The Bird” and “Oleo” are both examples of tunes written over the chord changes to the tune “I Got Rhythm” by George Gershwin. These two “Rhythm changes” tunes are 32-bar AABA forms, however the “B” section to “Oleo” is improvised by the performer. Only the “A” sections of this tune contain composed material. “Oleo” was written by tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins and “Chasin’ The Bird” was written by alto saxophonist Charlie Parker.

“A Lunar Tune” is a 16-bar original modal composition by tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin. “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be” is a 12-bar blues composed by Mercer Ellington with lyrics by Ted Persons. “Beautiful Love” is a 32-bar tune composed by Wayne King, Victor Young, and Egbert Van Alstyne with lyrics by Haven Gillespie.
Rudiments/Hand Development

Dawson frequently utilized numerous snare drum rudiments in his playing style. For many drum students, the snare drum rudiments are some of the first sticking patterns drummers learn when beginning to study the instrument, and are considered synonymous with scales and arpeggios for instruments of definite pitch.

When asked about the importance of the snare drum rudiments, former Dawson student and Berklee Ensemble Department Chair Ron Savage noted, “The rudiments are the beginning and ending of controlling the drum set. Most of what we do, we play with our hands. However you’d like to describe it, it’s very important…. It was then, and to this day, it’s still the most underestimated element of becoming a good drummer” (R. Savage, personal communication, August 5, 2013). Drummer Kenwood Dennard elaborated,

   Mostly they’re not important for my playing style. They’re important, of course, for my playing technique. And ultimately, if you have no technique, you have no style. I try not to regurgitate anything when I play, especially rudiments. It doesn’t really work…. I think it’s important not to regurgitate the actual musical material of the rudiments, and yet utilize the important artistry that the rudiments have to offer. And Alan certainly helped me to understand that (K. Dennard, personal communication, August 8th, 2013).

When asked about how the rudiments added to Dawson’s overall melodic sense around the drums, Berklee professor Casey Scheuerell commented,

   You can’t get around the drums if you don’t have a whole variety of stickings. Stickings get you from one point to another…. There are also phrases that are
rudimental in nature that can only really get you that sound if you play that rudiment. So that’s a part of jazz vocabulary. It’s a part of our basic and fundamental vocabulary. So you need to know a lot of those. That’s part of Alan’s playing, too (C. Scheuerell, personal communication, August 14, 2013).

Dawson often incorporated both the hands and feet when executing rudimental phrases. In Dawson’s first section of eights on the tune “Beautiful Love,” he orchestrates six-stroke rolls between the hands and feet in measures 7-8:

![Six-Stroke Roll orchestrations between the hands and feet](image)

Figure 4. Six-Stroke Roll orchestrations between the hands and feet

In “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be,” Dawson incorporates the Four-Stroke Ruff in a very musical and effective way:

![Four-Stroke Ruff snare drum rudiment](image)

Figure 5. Four-Stroke Ruff snare drum rudiment

![Four-Stroke Ruff application, measures 5-6 of “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be”](image)

Figure 6. Four-Stroke Ruff application, measures 5-6 of “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be”
This three-beat triplet idea is an alternate way of dividing up the Four-Stroke Ruff between the hands and the bass drum, similar to Max Roach’s motif from the solo drum composition *For Big Sid*.

![Figure 7](image)

*Figure 7. Alan Dawson 2nd solo chorus bars 9-12, “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be”*

Another one of Dawson’s favorite stickings was a Paradiddle-Diddle between the hands and feet, substituting “stick shots” for the two rights and the bass drum for the two lefts:

![Figure 9](image)

*Figure 9. Paradiddle-Diddle snare drum rudiment*
Figure 10. Paradiddle-Diddle figure between hands and feet using stick shots, subdivided in triplets (from “Beautiful Love”)

Figure 11. Paradiddle-Diddle figure between hands and feet using stick shots, subdivided in sextuplets (from “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be”)

**Over-the-bar line phrasing.** Another of Dawson’s most creative applications of the rudiments was within the context of an over-the-bar-line hemiola figure. In Dawson’s solo on the Charlie Parker composition “Chasin’ The Bird,” a 32-bar AABA tune based on the chord changes to the George Gershwin composition “I Got Rhythm,” Dawson begins his chorus with a single stroke roll (alternating left and right hands) on the snare drum featuring an accented hemiola figure that implies 3/8 time.

Figure 12. 3/8 hemiola figure
Dawson accentuates the first half of the figure using the ride cymbal:

![Hemiola figure (accented)](image)

*Figure 13. Measures 1-3 of Alan Dawson solo on “Chasin’ The Bird” (all single strokes alternating R and L)*

Dawson also used this same hemiola figure for rudiments based in triple meter, such as the Flam Accent, within the context of his Rudimental Ritual that he assigned to his private students.

![Flam Accent rudiment](image)

*Figure 14. Flam Accent rudiment*

To create a four-bar phrase, Dawson converted the rudiment’s subdivision from triplets to 8th notes, then back to triplets for the final measure upon the cycle’s conclusion:

![Flam Accent section of Rudimental Ritual](image)

*Figure 15. Flam Accent section of Rudimental Ritual*

This hemiola pattern also appears during a series of traded eights and fours that Dawson exchanged with pianist Bill Evans over the tune “Beautiful Love,” from their appearance
at the Berlin Jazz Piano Workshop in 1965. Dawson outlines the hemiola in bars 5-6 of his first chorus of eights with the hi-hat:

![Figure 16](image)

*Figure 16. Hemiola pattern outlined with open/closed hi-hat*

Here, Dawson outlines the full hemiola pattern in a timekeeping context, and starts the pattern on beat three:

![Figure 17](image)

*Figure 17. Hemiola pattern outlined between snare drum, bass drum, and ride cymbal, outlined with accents*

Dawson outlines the pattern again in his final four-bar trade with Evans. Here, the pattern is accented using the ride cymbal with interpolated double stroke rolls.

![Figure 18](image)

*Figure 18. Hemiola pattern from the last four bars of Dawson’s trading on “Beautiful Love,” outlined with accents*
Dawson also outlines it in the first two bars of his first chorus on the Duke Ellington tune “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be,” from the 1971 Newport Jazz Festival with Dave Brubeck.

![Figure 19. First four bars of Dawson’s solo, “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be”](image)

**Syncopation Techniques**

In addition to developing his students’ hand technique through the study of the snare drum rudiments, Dawson also believed in the development of four-way coordination around the drums, a skill utilized when both soloing and playing time around the drums that enables a player to divide rhythms between all four limbs. One of Alan’s greatest teaching tools for four-way coordination was the Ted Reed book *Syncopation*, especially Reading Exercises 1-8 found on pages 38-45. Except for Exercise One, all of the material contained on these pages utilizes a mix of eighth, quarter, dotted quarter, and tied-note rhythms. With this book, Alan developed over 40 different approaches to reading and interpreting “short notes” (eighth notes) and “long notes” (quarter, dotted quarter, and tied notes). As Berklee professor Bob Tamagni said, Alan didn’t teach you to quote drummers. He would teach you about other drummers’ stylistic techniques, which is what he used *Syncopation* for. So rather than showing you a “Philly” Joe lick, he might show you some things that could sound like what “Philly” Joe or Max or other jazz drummers played using the
rhythms in *Syncopation* to make those sorts of stylistic sounds (B. Tamagni, personal communication, August 6, 2013).

John Ramsay noted the following:

Alan would also say, “When you practice *Syncopation*, you’re practicing two things: reading and four-way coordination.” And he was a stickler about the reading because if you ever stopped while playing through one of the pages he assigned you or went backwards, he would say, “Don’t stop. Don’t go backwards.” …. And his point being was that good readers make mistakes, but they don’t stop…. So for me, the book was significant for teaching me to read syncopated eighth and quarter note rhythms (J. Ramsay, personal communication, August 10, 2013).

**The First Three Ways.** Typically, Dawson started all of his students on the *Syncopation* book with three applications, each with the right hand playing the jazz ride pattern and the left foot playing the hi-hat on beats “2” and “4” of every measure. In the first application, the left hand plays the line from *Syncopation* on the snare drum while the right foot “feathers” all four quarter notes softly on the bass drum. In the second application, the right foot plays the line from *Syncopation* while the left hand plays beats “2” and “4” of every bar with a rim click, where the stick rests across the batter head of the snare while striking the metal drum rim to create a “click” sound.

The third application combines the snare and bass drum together to divide phrases. In this application, the snare drum plays the “short” notes and the bass drum plays the “long” notes. Thus, a phrase such as this:
becomes this. The core rhythm is specified above the accented notes:

Such phrases divided between the bass drum and snare drum are common accompanying, or “comping” patterns, amongst jazz drummers, and Dawson regularly employed such phrasing when accompanying soloists. This example of comping comes from McPherson’s first solo chorus of “Chasin’ The Bird.”
Note Dawson’s usage of the hi-hat and additional triplet figures in the snare drum, as well as his ability to vary the ride cymbal pattern. Even though Dawson does not maintain a literal observance of the jazz ride cymbal pattern, he still manages to imply the pattern while creating a sense of forward motion for McPherson.

**The Roy Haynes Special.** Fellow Boston native Roy Haynes was a major proponent of the “stick shot” in his soloing, a technique which involves resting the left stick on the drum’s surface while striking it with the right stick. One of Dawson’s numerous applications of the *Syncopation* book was an exercise known as the “Roy Haynes Special,” which used stick shots. In this application, the short notes are played as stick shots, the long notes are played as press rolls with unison hands, the bass drum is
played very lightly, or “feathered,” on all four beats, and the hi-hat is played on beats 2 and 4. A phrase such as this:

![Figure 23](image)

*Figure 23. First two measures of Exercise One, pg. 38 (from Syncopation by Ted Reed)*

becomes this:

![Figure 24](image)

*Figure 24. First two measures of Exercise One using the Roy Haynes Special application*

Dawson employs this concept to great effect in the last four bars of the bridge section of “Chasin’ The Bird.”

![Figure 25](image)

*Figure 25. Measures 21-24 of Dawson’s solo from “Chasin’ The Bird”*

Dawson also utilized this concept in the first four bars of his trading in “Beautiful Love.”

![Figure 26](image)

*Figure 26. First four bars of Dawson’s fours from “Beautiful Love”*
Even though Dawson did not strictly adhere to the bass drum and hi-hat part, he still created an application that was not only highly creative and ingenious, but also paid homage to those drummers who influenced him.

**Triplet Roll.** The Triplet Roll was another one of Dawson’s most well-known applications using the *Syncopation* book. In this application, the short notes are accented on the snare drum and the long notes are played with the bass drum and cymbal (crash or ride) with 16\(^{th}\) note double strokes interpolated between the accented hits. For example, a phrase such as this:

![Figure 27](image)

*Figure 27. First two measures of Exercise One, pg. 38 (from *Syncopation* by Ted Reed)*

becomes this. The core rhythm is specified above the accented notes:

![Figure 28](image)

*Figure 28. First two measures of Exercise One, pg. 38 with Triplet Roll application*
Dawson utilized the Triplet Roll concept most effectively in his solo from “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be.” Although not a strict application of the Triplet Roll within the context of Syncopation, Dawson introduces the idea of playing triplets with double strokes early in his first chorus:

![Figure 29](image1.png)

*Figure 29. Measures 5-12 of Dawson’s first solo chorus on “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be” using doubled stroked triplets*

Later, Dawson incorporates the ride and hi-hat cymbals as “long note” sounds:

![Figure 30](image2.png)

*Figure 30. Measures 5-8 of Dawson’s 4th solo chorus on “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be” using Triplet Roll application*

In his teaching, Dawson instructed his students to play the hi-hat on “2” and “4” of every bar for this application. Even though Dawson does not demonstrate that in this context, one can still clearly gather a strong understanding of the overall concept.
**Bass Drum Triplet Fill-Ins.** This application involves extensive use of the bass drum. The left hand plays the line from *Syncopation* on the snare drum, the hi-hat plays “2” and “4,” the right hand plays the jazz ride cymbal pattern, and the bass drum interpolates, or “fills in,” triplets. For example, a phrase such as this:

![Bass Drum Triplet Fill-Ins Diagram](image)

*Figure 31. First two measures of Exercise One, pg. 38 (from *Syncopation* by Ted Reed)*

becomes this. Again, the core rhythm is specified above the accented notes:

![Bass Drum Triplet Fill-Ins Diagram](image)

*Figure 32. First two measures of Exercise One, pg. 38 applying Bass Drum Fill-Ins*

In “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be,” Dawson uses this timekeeping application in a more soloistic manner, and outlines clear syncopated lines between the hands and feet, accenting with the crash cymbal, ride cymbal, and tom toms.
Figure 33. Measures 1-12 of Dawson’s 6th solo chorus on “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be” using bass drum fill-in concept

**Hi-Hat Left Foot and Left Hand.** Another of Dawson’s *Syncopation* applications involved playing syncopated figures with the hi-hat. In this application, Dawson would have his students play all short notes using the hi-hat foot pedal and all long notes with a stick on a half-open hi-hat. Thus, the following figure:

![Figure 34. First two measures of Exercise One, pg. 38 (from Syncopation by Ted Reed)](image-url)
Figure 35. First two measures of Exercise One using the hi-hat left foot/left hand application

Dawson demonstrated this concept in a 1965 performance in Copenhagen with Sonny Rollins and bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen over Rollins’ classic tune “Oleo.” Like “Chasin’ The Bird,” “Oleo” is a 32-bar AABA tune based on “I Got Rhythm” by George Gershwin. The “A” sections are written out, and the “B” section is improvised.
After taking multiple solo choruses over the tune’s form, Dawson utilizes the hi-hat to clearly outline, or “quote,” the melody to bring the band back in.

*Figure 36. “Oleo” by Sonny Rollins*
Again, even though Dawson doesn’t necessarily adhere to the concept as explicitly in a performance context, he utilizes the overall concept of short and long notes to clearly outline the rhythmic contour of the melody to “Oleo” with the hi-hat.

**Melodic Implications**

Another strong aspect of Dawson’s performing that cross-fed into his pedagogy was his awareness and understanding of outlining melodies around the drum set. Drums are not, by nature, instruments with defined pitches. Throughout his career, Dawson used his technique and four-way coordination to outline rhythms from a given tune’s melody around the drum set. According to Ron Savage, it was most likely Max Roach who inspired Dawson in this fashion:
From Max Roach, his innovation in terms of the melodic approach to drum soloing and detailing the song forms...that was Alan. You had to sing the melody [of tunes] throughout your lesson when you were doing the different [Stick Control] exercises. So that really engrained in you the importance of knowing the melody, being very comfortable and competent of interpreting the form of the song... those things were very evident (R. Savage, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

Casey Scheuerell echoed the impact of Roach on Dawson’s drumming style, “From Max, definitely the melodic aspect of his drumming. I think Max was the first guy who really brought that to a really high level that we know of. When Max played the form, he used the melody to get his ideas from. And that was Alan’s thing” (C. Scheuerell, personal communication, August 14, 2013). Dawson’s intrinsic ability to outline rhythmic contours of melodies around the drums is evidence on the intro to “A Lunar Tune” by Booker Ervin, where he outlines the accents of Jaki Byard’s chords using the hi-hat, snare drum, and bass drum.

![Figure 38. “A Lunar Tune” intro](image-url)
Another example of Dawson outlining the melody around the drums comes from his solo on “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be.” Just like “Oleo,” Dawson outlines the melodic contour around the drums in order to effectively bring the band back in.

Figure 39. Dawson drum intro on “A Lunar Tune”

Figure 40. “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be” by Mercer Ellington
At the core of Dawson’s *Syncopation* pedagogy was undoubtedly the drummer’s pursuit of a means of further expression around the drum set, the likes of which hadn’t been explored prior to the bebop era. Even though Dawson employed *Syncopation* extensively in his teaching, he also employed another book, Marvin Dahlgren and Elliot Fine’s 1963 work *Four Way Coordination*, which greatly assisted a number of Dawson’s students. As Bob Tamagni related:

…it [*Four Way Coordination*] was completely about controlling all four limbs. I worked on that book diligently with Alan, and he had me [play] through them at a pretty up tempo [snaps off tempo and sings eighth note lines]. It was linear 8\(^{th}\) notes in all four voices, which was a real challenge to do, but I still, to this day, can feel what it did to open up my linear/melodic sense of playing. It’s incredible; I almost always play that way, even when I’m trying not to. Sometimes it just comes out because my lower limbs want to fill in spaces between my hands, and
that’s what that book seemed to want you to do. It’s a constant flow of subdivision while you move it around your limbs; it creates a certain style of playing... (B. Tamagni, personal communication, August 6, 2013).

Casey Scheuerell further confirmed the influence of *Four Way Coordination* during his studies with Dawson:

That [book] was hard stuff, because it doesn’t make so much musical sense to you, or it didn’t to me, at the time. It was a very difficult book to work through. And then he had some things in there that he worked out of, that he would show you, some polyrhythmic things. And you could see how it had influenced his playing (C. Scheuerell, personal communication, August 14, 2013).

Even though Dawson may not have always applied his concepts he developed as a teacher as explicitly as he taught them, he utilized the core principles behind the concepts to create unique and well-developed ideas around the drums.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

Upon review of Dawson’s own performances in conjunction with his pedagogy, it is readily apparent that the two were closely related. Though Dawson never set out to be a teacher initially, it is undeniable after examining his drumming style over time that the two were inextricably linked. Over time, Dawson grew from his already sophisticated drumming style on his first record dates with Booker Ervin in the early 1960s.

Performance Analysis

Upon examining Dawson’s soloing in the ‘60s, one can easily conclude that Dawson’s hand technique was firmly developed by that time. Such is the case on his solo from “Chasin’ The Bird” with Charles McPherson. Similar to the style of his childhood friend, Roy Haynes, Dawson employed numerous buzz roll and “stick-on-stick” phrasings in a style strikingly similar to Haynes. John Ramsay noted, “I think Roy had been a direct influence because they were around each other. Alan named one of his Syncopation applications, the Roy Haynes Special, after him. That’s an influence, for sure” (J. Ramsay, personal communication, August 10, 2013). The beginning of the solo also highlights Dawson’s clean single stroke roll technique.
On “Beautiful Love,” Dawson’s hand technique is once again on display, as similar vocabulary, such as five stroke rolls and “stick-on-stick” phrasings, reappear throughout. In this solo, however, Dawson’s sense of four-way coordination sounds more matured and developed. One gets the sense that he is starting to further explore possibilities for *Syncopation* applications, as the phrases he divides between his hands and feet show a deeper complexity than those from only a few years prior with McPherson.

When asked what changed in the years between his first record dates with Booker Ervin versus his later work with Dave Brubeck, Ron Savage offered,

It [Dawson’s style] became deeper. There was a layer of complexity in terms of the musical interpretation…. It’s not as if the drums not only had a nice *sound* to them, but you had a sense that he was in control of the sound that he wanted you to hear coming from the drum. There was a level of emotion like it was embedded in his ideas. It was like this conveyance of emotion that got deeper as he got older…. The combination of sophistication and refinement from all those years of playing in such high-profile and highly-creative settings, I felt that you could see it in his playing (R. Savage, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

One could easily argue that Dawson’s voice as a drummer became the most pronounced during his time with the Dave Brubeck Quartet, as it was this group that saw Alan’s notoriety as a drummer rise to a level far beyond any success he had by simply staying in Boston and teaching at Berklee full-time. Even though Dawson recorded extensively with Booker Ervin during the early-mid 1960s, Brubeck was, by the late
1960s into the early 1970s, firmly established as a mainstream jazz artist most likely due
to the success of his classic tune “Take Five.” As Casey Scheuerell noted,

…there’s nothing like road chops, and I think that with [Brubeck’s] *Last Set At
Newport* album or the Booker Ervin stuff, to me that sounds like he had road
chops. They must have been playing together a lot, all of them together, during
that period, because there’s definitely some continuity there with what’s going on
and they just sound like they’re really on their game (C. Scheuerell, personal
communication, August 14, 2013).

By this point, Dawson’s overall sense of four-way coordination, combined with
his rudimental technique, was clearly heightened compared to his work in the ‘60s. The
triplet phrases between the toms, bass drum, and cymbals in Dawson’s 5th chorus on
“Things Ain’t What They Used To Be” show a strong sense of developed coordination
unlike anything Dawson had played before. According to Bob Tamagni,

The applications came early in his development of ideas for use of the
*Syncopation* book, which became the Bible for him…. I would guess he had a list
of roughly 20-25 ways to use the book, and the word was getting around about it.
So, people then came up with their own ways to use it. They were layering on top
of his, and before you know it, there were probably hundreds and thousands of
ways to use the *Syncopation* book for jazz exercises (B. Tamagni, personal
communication, August 6, 2013).

It is interesting to note that, of all the interview participants, Tamagni was the
only one who began studying with Dawson during the 1960s, a time when Dawson was
most likely still formulating and refining his pedagogy. Though inconclusive, the concept
of “filling in” notes with the bass drum very well might have come as a result of Dawson’s further explorations with developing ideas for the *Syncopation* book past his original list of 20-25 applications.

Tamagni offered this opinion about Dawson’s pedagogical development around this time, in regards to one of the drummer’s most reputed students,

…I think Alan would say that in teaching Tony [Williams] he probably didn’t have his teaching as together as he might have later in his career. I’m sure he had things to teach Tony and got him on the right track, but I think his teaching developed maybe after Tony as well (B. Tamagni, personal communication, August 6, 2013).

Upon comparing Dawson’s soloistic vocabulary from the 1970s against his vocabulary from the 1960s, one can easily conclude that Dawson definitely expanded and refined his concept of four-way coordination, quite possibly as a result of playing numerous consecutive shows with a high-profile artist such as Brubeck. The ideas Dawson conveys between both the hands and feet during this time period are far more sophisticated than what he recorded during the 1960s, and, to this day, reflect the technical sensibility of a true drumming master.

**Dawson’s Legacy**

Former Dawson pupil Kenwood Dennard commented on Dawson’s most lasting legacy:

I mentioned the importance of that artistic paradigm: the paradigm that says, ‘I can take these tools, discipline myself to use them, practice hard and come away
elevated as a drummer.’…. So his real legacy is that paradigm that other
drummers didn’t have: the Max Roaches of the day, Buddy Riches of the day,
other teachers….You know, there were other teachers that were popular, but he
was the consummate drum teacher. At that time, there was nobody with a bigger
reputation as a teacher and I can see why. It certainly persists to this day (K.
Dennard, personal communication, August 8, 2013).

Drummer Ron Savage argued that it was Dawson who created the first true curriculum
for teaching jazz drumming:

…he developed the first sophisticated curriculum for teaching the drum set…. I
know there were a few books written where they had dance rhythms and some
coordination exercises and stuff like that, but nothing in terms of a curriculum to
help you address music in the same way that you would study etudes for trumpet
or piano and stuff like that. So that was the first thing: he set the bar for that, and
he will always be the originator of that” (R. Savage, personal communication,
August 5, 2013).

Even though Dawson himself may not be as well-known as such drumming
figures as “Philly” Joe Jones or Art Blakey, one of Dawson’s earliest students clearly
stands out amongst the rest. When former Dawson student Jon Hazilla thinks about
Dawson’s legacy:

I think of one name, Tony Williams. He only needed one student, and it happened
to be Tony Williams…. Some of his advanced ideas are directly attributable to
Dawson…. a lot of his independence ideas, like the hi-hat stuff, came from Alan.
Alan was exploring and investigating those things himself. So I think that’s how it
got funneled, and people know less about Alan Dawson, but they certainly know
about Tony Williams” (J. Hazilla, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

Casey Scheuerell concurred the power of Tony’s influence:

You have Tony Williams first, and the influence of that particular drummer is
beyond description. There’s the link between jazz and what became known as
fusion music. He put that together, probably on a high level before anyone else
did. He led the way. Even if you disallow all the fusion aspects of Tony’s career
and just talk about the jazz playing that Tony did, he’s so influential. I don’t think
you would have the same Tony Williams without the Alan Dawson influence (C.
Scheuerell, personal communication, August 14, 2013).

For Bob Tamagni, Dawson’s legacy was:

… all the things that I admire him for that I mentioned: his musicality, his
melodic approach, his listening, his chops, his elegance and stage presence, and
his presence in a recording. That’s his performing half. The other half is his
teaching half, which has arguably an even bigger contribution to the drumming
community because he’s taught us things that are still, to this day, used and built
upon, added to, embellished, and varied, all starting with his ideas (B. Tamagni,
personal communication, August 6, 2013).

**Influence on Drum Set Education**

Dawson’s influence on drum set education is readily apparent due to the
fact that so many of his students not only became great players, but were also
inspired to teach. Jon Hazilla noted,
…he influenced all of us [Berklee faculty] to want to be great teachers like him. For the most part, all humility aside, I think we’re all really good, competent teachers. We’ve developed that; you don’t become a good teacher your first week or your first year. I know that from experience, and you do need the experience. But I think Alan fostered that desire and dedication for us to be teachers, whether we knew it at the time or not. I did, because I remember writing in my journal, “Someday, I want to be like just like Alan Dawson as a teacher” not as a player. I wanted to hopefully develop my own voice. I knew I wanted to teach, and I wanted to be just like Alan. I’m grateful I’ve been able to have fulfilled that (J. Hazilla, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

Ron Savage concurred about Dawson’s inspiring so many others to become teachers as well:

If you look at Berklee, there are maybe 50 percussion teachers here at the school. My guess is maybe 35 of them studied with Alan…. I’m not even in the Percussion Department any longer and his influence still affects how I do things. I run a non-profit music school outside of Berklee where we help young drummers and musicians. I’ve taught scores of drummers in that program including some of the elements of what Alan taught me and now two of those students that I taught at age six are teachers themselves. That’s part of that legacy. (R. Savage, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

Dawson’s legacy is also alive and well in the output of many of his former students.

Drummer John Ramsay published the bulk of Dawson’s methods in his 1997 work The
In the introduction to his 2007 book *Stickings And Orchestrations*, Casey Scheuerell wrote, “The methodology presented in this book has been inspired by the teaching I received from Alan Dawson and Gary Chaffee. Two of the topics, ‘Paradiddle Fills’ and ‘Hand-To-Hand Triplets,’ are presented pretty much the way Alan taught them to me.” (p. xi) When asked about this, Scheuerell elaborated, “You had a key, and he would write that an 8\textsuperscript{th} note was two singles, a quarter note was a Paradiddle, a dotted quarter note was a Paradiddle-Diddle, and rests were doubles. I learned that exercise, and then orchestrated it cymbal to cymbal with bass drum” (C. Scheuerell, personal communication, August 14, 2013).

Dawson’s impact on the world of drumming also extended far beyond the realm of his own teaching studio. Though he may not have been the first person to think of it, his concept of applying numerous methods of interpreting a single snare drum line went on to influence other drum set methods by other noted drum teachers, one of whom was legendary New York studio drummer Gary Chester.

Chester’s 1985 work *The New Breed* revolves around 39 different rock/funk-based ostinatos, or “systems,” designed to be played over five different levels of reading text, starting with basic quarter and eighth note phrases and ending with syncopated 16\textsuperscript{th} note lines. The concept is essentially the same with *Syncopation*: the student performs an ostinato with one set of limbs while reading the written line with another. Chester, however, took the concept one step further by requiring his students to use their voice to sing the quarter note pulse while playing the exercises, thus strengthening their inner
sense of time. Chester even suggested in his “Advanced Systems” chapter to, “Take other reading books such as Ralph Pace’s *Variations Of Drumming*, Ted Reed’s *Syncopation*…and practice reading the rhythms in those books while playing the systems in this book” (Chester, 1985, p. 24). Thus, Dawson’s role in raising awareness about four-way coordination in a variety of contexts cannot be understated.

**Implications for Further Study**

Given the sheer number of students who passed through Dawson’s studio during his time at Berklee and beyond, a collection of interviews from his former students could certainly yield enriching material for an oral history project. Due to the fact that Dawson’s commercial recording career started six years after he began teaching at Berklee, the question “Was Dawson’s pedagogy an extension of his performing style before his tenure at Berklee?” remains inconclusive, given the lack of evidence that exists prior to the beginning of his teaching career. During Kenwood Dennard’s interview, Mr. Dennard did suggest the possibility of a mainstream book as a possible extension of the research already conducted, perhaps as a biography. Given the preponderance of information for this thesis, such a book could most likely be a valuable resource for any researcher desiring to uncover further information about Dawson’s teaching and performing career.

Since Dawson was fortunate to have such an immense recorded output, a transcription volume from selected recordings could also yield valuable information for drummers and researchers alike, as similar volumes exist for other jazz drummers such as “Philly” Joe Jones, Art Blakey, and Tony Williams.
**Final Conclusions**

Based on Dawson’s thorough pedagogy alone, it is obvious as to why he is reputed in the field of jazz education. However, as seen from the analysis of selections from his recorded output, the time has clearly come for Dawson’s reputation as a performer to be more widely recognized. Additional study of Dawson’s career will certainly bring forth new information previously unrepresented in other literature sources. Through additional research, more information may be uncovered about the evolution of jazz drumming from the 1950s onward. An abundance of Dawson’s former students exists not only within the United States, but around the world as well, and their individual accounts of lessons could very well raise the overall level of awareness about Dawson’s contributions to the art of drumming. Dawson’s concepts and ideas are clearly timeless, and have had an immense influence on the art of both jazz drumming and jazz education.
REFERENCES


TRANSCRIBED DISCOGRAPHY


TRANSCRIBED VIDEOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A

Active Informed Consent for Interviews and Other Minimal Risk Studies

William Paterson University
Project Title: The Influence of Alan Dawson on the Development of Modern Jazz Drumming
Principal Investigator: Ryan McBride (mcbrider1@student.wpunj.edu) Phone: (917) 275-5570
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Timothy Newman (newmant@wpunj.edu) Phone: (973) 720-2373
Contact Phone Number: 917-275-5570
Department: Music-Jazz Studies
Course Name and Number: MUSI 6910
Date: July 1, 2013

I have been asked to participate in a research study on the life and music of jazz drummer Alan Dawson. The purpose of this study will be to survey Alan’s musical career and examine his overall contributions to the art of modern jazz drumming. I understand that I will be asked to voluntarily answer questions presented to me by the Principal Investigator in a one-on-one personal interview.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and I may end my participation in this research at any time without penalty. I understand that my identity will be protected at all times and that my name will not be used without my separate written permission. I understand that permitting my name and likeness in the final Master’s Thesis published by the Principal Investigator is completely voluntary and non-obligatory. I understand that no risks to my physical or emotional health are known to exist as a result of this kind of study.

I may call the investigator, Ryan McBride, or the other individuals listed in the heading of this document if I have any questions or concerns about this research and my participation. I may call the Associate Vice President and Dean for Graduate Studies and Research from William Paterson at (973) 720-3093 or Dr. Michael Mason, Co-Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), from Berklee College of Music at (617) 747-2991 for information regarding my rights as a research subject.

By signing this consent form, I am agreeing to participate in this research study.

Name of Subject __________________________ Signature of Subject __________________________ Date: __________________________

Name of Investigator ______________________ Signature of Investigator ______________________ Date: __________________________

By signing below, I am permitting my name and likeness to be cited for possible inclusion in the final Master’s Thesis.

Name of Subject __________________________ Signature of Subject __________________________ Date: __________________________

Name of Investigator ______________________ Signature of Investigator ______________________ Date: __________________________

By signing below, I am permitting my likeness to be audio and/or video-recorded as part of this research project.

Name of Subject __________________________ Signature of Subject __________________________ Date: __________________________

Name of Investigator ______________________ Signature of Investigator ______________________ Date: __________________________
APPENDIX B

MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTIONS

Chasin' The Bird

Medium-Up Swing

From the Charles McPherson LP *Con Alma!* (PR 7427)  Alan Dawson-Drums

© 1965
Beautiful Love

Transcribed from the Impro-Jazz DVD Berlin Jazz Piano Workshop 1965 (IJ 522)

Medium-Up Swing

8 Bars Piano Solo

All Press Rolls

8 Bars Piano Solo

© 1965
4 Bars Piano Solo

4 Bars Piano Solo

4 Bars Piano Solo

4 Bars Piano Solo

Beautiful Love
Oleo
Transcribed from the Jazz Icons DVD Sonny Rollins Live in '65 and '68 (NAXOS 2.119011)

Up Swing

Alan Dawson-Drums

©1965
Things Ain't What They Used To Be
Performed live at the Newport Jazz Festival, July 3, 1971

Medium Swing

Alan Dawson-Drums

©1971
Things Ain't What They Used To Be
Terri Lynne Carrington (1965-) Jazz drummer regarded by many as a child prodigy. Credits include Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Diane Reeves. Berklee faculty member since 2007.

Vinnie Colaiuta (1956-) In-demand session/studio drummer based in Los Angeles since the 1970s. Credits include Frank Zappa, Sting, and Jeff Beck.

Keith Copeland (1946-) Jazz drummer and teacher. Berklee faculty member from 1975-1978, former teacher at numerous other institutions including Rutgers University and The New School. Credits include Billy Taylor, Johnny Griffin, and Hank Jones. Author of the book *Creative Coordination for the Performing Drummer*.

Joe Farnsworth (1968-) Jazz drummer based in the New York City area. Credits include Eric Alexander, Diana Krall, and George Coleman.

Billy Kilson (1962-) Jazz and fusion drummer. Credits include Dave Holland, Chris Botti, and George Duke.

Joe LaBarbera (1948-) Jazz drummer. Credits include Bill Evans, Tony Bennett, and Bill Cunliffe. California Institute of the Arts faculty since 1993.

Harvey Mason (1947-) Jazz-fusion drummer. Credits include Herbie Hancock’s Headhunters, The Brecker Brothers, and Lee Ritenour. Current member of fusion group Fourplay.

John “JR” Robinson (1954-) Session/studio drummer based in Los Angeles. Credits include Michael Jackson, Chaka Khan, Eric Clapton, and numerous movie and television soundtracks.

Shawn Pelton (1963-) Rock and session/studio drummer based in New York City. Drummer for the Saturday Night Live Band since 1992, has also performed and/or recorded with artists such as Sheryl Crow, Natalie Merchant, and Rod Stewart.

Steve Smith (1954-) Jazz-fusion and rock drummer. Most commonly associated with the rock band Journey, has also performed with artists such as Jean-Luc Ponty, Steps Ahead, and his own group, Vital Information.
APPENDIX D

SELECTED ALAN DAWSON DISCOGRAPHY


Great Jazz Quartet. (1985). *Live In Japan* [CD]. Tokyo, Japan: TDK.

