



REPEAT YOUR SUCCESSES

BY JOSH GOTTRY

How often have you found yourself repeating a passage several times, making the same mistake over and over again? Finally, when you play it perfectly for the first time, you let out a sigh of relief and go on to the next section. What's wrong with that process? What's wrong is that you've played the section several times the wrong way and played it correctly only once. The next time you try to play that passage, your odds of playing it incorrectly far outweigh the odds that you'll play it perfectly. Why? Because you've practiced it more times wrong than right! So how can that problem be avoided?

SLOWLY, BUT SURELY

The first step in playing your music right more often than wrong is playing your music right the first time. When you begin a new piece of music, play it slow enough the first time that you are perfectly capable of playing it without mistakes. By playing it right the first time, the first habit you create is a good one. Don't worry that the tempo is slower than you would perform the piece. The more accurately you learn the music and the more times you repeat a section only one way - the right way - the easier it will be to increase the tempo. Remember, only increase the tempo after playing it several times at the original tempo without making mistakes.

ONE STEP AT A TIME

When planning your practice, keep in mind that you shouldn't necessarily play every part of every piece every day. Working on a small section of music and making sure to play it correctly is far more effective than struggling through the entire piece or a larger section. Instead of playing eight

lines of music two times a day, consider how accurate you might be if over the course of four days, you practice two lines eight times per day.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Another important key in playing music without mistakes is how we handle the occasional mistake. Too often when we make a mistake we jump right back into the music, sometimes at a faster tempo because of our frustration, and make the same mistake again. Anytime you do make a mistake, take a brief pause - a deep breath - before repeating the passage. Then play the passage, or even just a portion of it, at a slower tempo focusing on playing those few notes correctly this time around. This way you won't allow yourself to make mistakes out of frustration, since the last thing we need is another cause for mistakes!

MAKE A COMMITMENT

Although it takes a little extra self-control, committing yourself to playing every piece of music more times right than wrong is definitely worth the effort. Imagine being able to approach a performance knowing that most of the time you've played this music, you've played it perfectly. Trust me, it's nice to have the odds in your favor!



Josh Gottry is an active percussion instructor, performer, and composer in Gilbert, Arizona. He serves as an instructor for several local percussion ensembles and private percussion students, and performs regularly as both a soloist and ensemble member. As a composer, Mr. Gottry is a three-time ASCAP grant recipient with seventeen works published for percussion. Josh Gottry is a clinician for Mike Balter Mallets, Pro-Mark Sticks, and Yamaha Percussion.