

Preface

As November approaches and you start to listen to the music in the rehearsal rooms and studios of your local music school, you will soon realize: “Oh yes, it’s once again time for the season! It’s Christmas time again!”

In the piano room you can hear a 7-year-old boy playing his first version of “Jingle Bells”, the school choir is having its first rehearsal for the annual Christmas concert and the saxophone class is working on an arrangement of “Sleigh Ride”. Christmas seems to be all around us! With one exception: the drum studio, very often located deep down in the basement of the school. What you hear down there is the sound of silence as far as Christmas music goes. For a long time it seemed to be written in stone that Christmas time and all its wonderful music never had a ticket into the drum studios!

“But this has to be changed”, I thought a few years ago and so I started working on this book and the playalongs. You will find here many international Christmas classics, arranged especially for the needs and skills of beginners and intermediate drum students.

A few notes about this book for all the teachers:

1. All tunes were arranged to provide useful material for you to work with your students on important skills like timing, feel, reading, form, soloing, technique (rudiments) and special feels like Afro-Cuban/Brazilian grooves and odd meters.
2. Three classic Christmas anthems (Deck The Halls, We Wish You A Merry Christmas and Jingle Bells) were especially arranged for the snare drum to give the student some material to work on rudiments, technique and reading. Each of these three tunes comes in 2 tempos (slow and fast) and I wrote 3 different drum parts for each song (easy, intermediate and difficult). It’s up to you to choose the best for the playing level of your student. By the way, I thought it would be a nice idea if the student could perform some tunes just on a snare drum for his family instead of setting up his whole drum kit in front of the tree on Christmas Eve!
3. All the “drum-set” tunes have so-called “open charts”, which means I’ve just written out the form of the tune with all stops and rhythmic figures. On the right side of each double page you’ll find several groove ideas (from easy to more advanced) which will work with the feel of the tune. That makes it possible to work with different-level students on the same pieces. Of course it’s great if you encourage your student to come up with his or her own ideas and grooves!
4. I also thought it could be a great experience for you and your students to organize a special “Christmas recital” with your drum class. I am sure you’ll find enough material here for students of all levels.
5. At the end of the book you will find some (hopefully) interesting background stories about the songs. I have always found it inspiring to know a little bit about the music I play, plus I thought the stories about the tunes could also be helpful for you in presenting the music in a recital.

I hope, at least, that I will be able to bring a little bit of “Christmas spirit” into your drum studio and I would be happy if you have at least as much fun playing the tunes as I had recording and arranging them.
Have yourself a merry, groovy Christmas!



Special Thanks

First of all I want to thank my dear friends and buddies who helped me record these arrangements. Thank you so much for your creativity and your beautiful playing and singing.

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This book is dedicated to Bob Ruckerl.