

George Carroll: Marching and Field Percussion Historian

Interviewed by Jeff Hartsough and Derrick Logozzo

GEOERGE CARROLL IS A respected drum maker, historian, author and researcher in the marching and field percussion idiom. In the recent movie *Gettysburg*, Carroll's fife and drum corps, the CSA Field Music, was featured along with others playing classic Civil War period music and calls using drums made by George's colonial drum company, Cousin Sally Ann. His numerous credits include membership in the Black Watch Band of Canada and the U.S. Army Band, through which he established an association with the famous drum teacher and maker Sanford Moeller. Carroll is also known for founding the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, the Colonial Williamsburg Fife and Drum Corps, the International Association of Field Musicians, and the Yorktown Fife and Drum Museum.

When did you start playing and on what instruments?

I was born in Pictou, Nova Scotia, Canada on December 27, 1932, and started when I was about ten or eleven years old on trumpet and cornet. Like most kids in Canada, I grew up on ice skates playing hockey. I had a hockey accident and ruined my embouchure. I couldn't play brass anymore, but I really wanted to play drums anyway. I was too short for the drum line, in what were called drum and bugle bands in Canada at that time, so they stuck a bugle in my hand. I had to play that for about a year while I was practicing on the drums. I continued to practice on a coffee can with a pair of chair rungs, and I eventually got Gene Krupa's book, *Science of Drumming*, and V.F. Safranec's *Manual for Field Trumpet and Drum* and practiced the rudiments. I never had a teacher as such, because there were no teachers in my hometown, so I took the method books of Safranec and Gene Krupa and worked on them as though they were holy writ, and was able to accomplish most of what I needed to do. So I am pretty much self-taught.

How did Cousin Sally Ann get started?

What does the business do and what is your role?

Cousin Sally Ann is the name we picked for our drum-building business. We make rope-tensioned snare and bass drums that are replicas of museum models. And

we have quite a big collection of old drums going back two hundred years that we use as models. We sell these to reenactors, and people who want to play historically accurate drums. I am the co-founder. My business partner is Pat Smith. Mainly, I manufacture the drums myself and Pat does most of the finishing on them as well as some clerical work.

What types of teaching have you done related to your research?

After I finished my enlistment in the United States Army, I spent about ten years in Colonial Williamsburg, where I inaugurated their fife and drum program. I was the first drum major music master that Colonial Williamsburg had. I also did a lot of research in early drumming and implemented that with the corps. We got to play for some interesting people. President Nixon went down there and we were photographed in newspapers and magazines playing for him. Also, Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia visited Williamsburg when we were there. So we played for him with the fife and drum corps as well. I also started an 18th century band there.

After I finished at Colonial Williamsburg, I went to Walt Disney World for about seven or eight years and taught the fife and drum corps. I also taught at Jacksonville University and played with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, eventually becoming the principal percussionist. I inaugurated four or five other corps around the state of Florida, as well. And all this time I was doing research on old drumming. Then I came back to Virginia after the Disney job and got a job at the Pentagon working for the National Guard Bureau in the capacity of museum heraldry and history work. I was the editor and founder of a newsletter of history, heraldry and museums. I acted as sort of a staff curator for the Army and Air National Guard.

What philosophies that mark your styles of playing have you taken from your teachers and applied to your own teaching?

I've studied the old style of playing from the early records, the Bruce and Emmett book and the Hart book, both of 1862, the Howe book of 1861, the Robinson



books of the early 1800s. I teach the use of the "tap," mostly utilizing your wrist, and the "blow," as Colonel Hart's book called it in 1862, which was an accented stroke where you use more of your arm. My teaching is mostly based on these historical works because they seem to do the job on rope-tensioned drums very well, and they are good basic training for playing modern percussion, as you know.

How and when did you meet Sanford Moeller? How would you describe him?

I wrote to [Sanford] Gus Moeller in the 1950s when I was teaching a fife and drum corps in Alexandria. I was a member of the Army Band at that time, and this little corps was trying to get going with fake rope drums. The corps had rod drums with little ropes on them. Also, they were playing their fifes in the lower register. Since they were struggling along, I tried to give them a hand, so I sent a picture of this corps up to Gus and he didn't take it too well. The fact that they were using glockenspiels, mouthpiece fifes and fake rope drums didn't go over with him very well at all. He came back with kind of a blistering letter saying that the corps was not in the spirit of the age and style. He was very adamant about how they should change. I showed this letter to the corps directors and tried to make some influence on the corps. In that particular case, it didn't work.

Eventually, Mr. Moeller came down to see the Army Band and we were using a couple of his snare drums that we had gotten earlier. They were his Grand

Republic model, which was 17 inches by 21- or 22-inches deep. We also had a couple of rope-tensioned bass drums. He eventually made a whole new set of drums for the band. Unfortunately, they were made right at the end of his construction career, after he'd had a stroke or two, so he was never able to finish them. Consequently, he had to turn them over to Buck Soistman, who finished making them.

On a winter day, I drove to Baltimore and picked these drums up for the Army Band, and photographed them before the band started to use them. Mr. Moeller talked to us and gave kind of a lecture, or masterclass, on the care and feeding of rope drums as well as how to play the double-stick bass drum. He was a very dedicated teacher with high standards. Of course, he was completely in love with the idea of the old drumming.

He was a very respectable person. He never drank or smoked and was a member of the Polar Bear Club; he used to go swimming in the wintertime,

breaking the ice up there in New York. He also marched from New York to Boston playing a rope-tensioned drum to draw attention to that kind of playing. As you well know, he was the teacher of a lot of good percussionists like Gene Krupa and Jim Chapin.

How did Moeller teach drum strokes and related motions?

Moeller's grip was a bit unique. It was drawn from the old drum methods and styles. Ed Olson, a good fifer and one of the founders of the Company of Fifers and Drummers in Connecticut, told me that Gus used to go around to the old Civil War drummers' homes with bags of tobacco and pick their brains as to how they played back in the old days. This is reflected in what he taught about how to hold the sticks. He used a very relaxed grip and he figured that you could not play a drum with any muscular stiffness. You had to relax. His grip for the left hand was more or less conventional, but his right was straight out

of the Civil War methodology, where you hold the stick with your little finger and let it play through the hand. He could draw a tone from the drum by this method of stick-holding that other people couldn't get. Instead of contacting the head and pushing down on the head, he played in constance with the vibration of the instrument, and his pupils played the same way.

We had John Cain and Vince Batista in the Army Band who were both Moeller pupils. They could draw a beautiful tone from a snare drum using the Moeller method. He also advocated the upstroke and the downstroke, where, as your hand started to rise in the air, you utilized a tap with a swing of the stick. He taught the use of the accent on learning the roll. Moeller was not against the idea of utilizing the arms, although he didn't use the so-called "waterfall system" that a lot of drummers used up in the Northeast. That was a high rise of the stick. Instead, Moeller's was mostly a wrist and forearm technique, rather than a full-arm tech-

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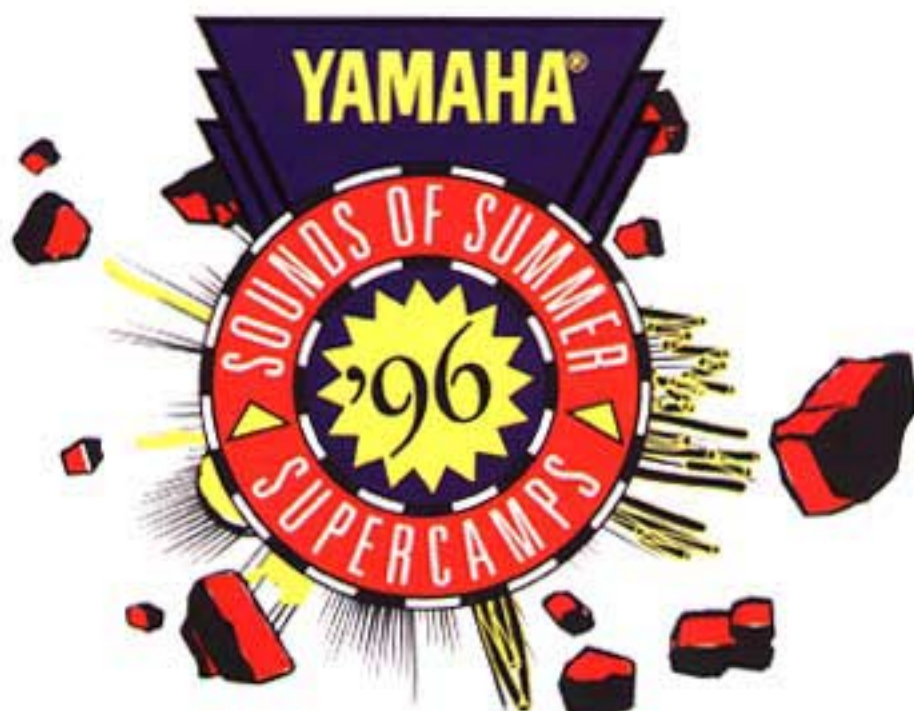
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nique as was advocated by drummers of the 18th and early 19th century.

When Moeller came down to the Army Band, he was very kind to us and very respectful of what we were doing. I think he really liked the Army Band and the idea of making drums for the United States armed forces. The body position that he taught was erect with the left heel at the right instep, as the old drum instruction books taught. Also, he always advocated playing standing up because he figured that it was the proper way to address a field drum. Furthermore, Moeller taught one to move the sticks in a uniform fashion with fan-like motions. He allowed no jerkiness or mechanical movement.

Although Mr. Moeller was kind enough to say that he wished I lived close to New York so we could work together, I didn't get a chance to do a whole lot with him, because I was in the Army Band at Washington D.C. His stay with the band was brief. It was just long enough to visit, put on a little demonstration of how he played, and discuss the new drums that the band was ordering.

I did, however, work for quite some time with his successor, Charles Buck Soistman of Baltimore. Soistman's family had a long tradition of making drums. His great-uncle made drums in Philadelphia for the Union Army during the Civil War. He had quite a big drum company there. Soistman started making drums for the Army Band when Moeller started to fail, and I went over to see him. So we broke him in on making drums for the Army Band, and then for the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps.

What did you teach players about stick positions and fulcrums?

Most of my influence came from pre-Moeller. The system looked very similar to Moeller's, but it wasn't identical. It was a loose grip, as Jim Chapin calls it, a flesh grip, so that the stick has lots of opportunity to vibrate. Also, a bigger stick was used so that its mass and weight were utilized more than the muscles in playing on the instrument. The height of the stick was utilized as well for accents and regular strokes. The height above the drum was increased so that the weight of the drumstick and the arm were applied rather than muscle to play the heavier dynamics on the drum. The idea was for the stick to have freedom to

vibrate—do its job. A big enough stick held far enough away from the drum in the initial strokes would bounce so that you didn't have to force it into the head. Then, you allow the stick to bounce and do its full job. You dampen the stick with a little pressure to make sure that the accents come in on the double strokes of the roll. Then, you dampen out the accents to get a smooth, even roll.

The fulcrum on the stick was the wrist, of course, and a rolling forearm with a little up-and-down motion when it was needed. For large accents, you applied a little more up-and-down motion along with the entire limb, from the shoulder all the way down to the wrist at one time or another. But mostly, it was a wrist motion.

Do you think that rebound is used in modern drum corps drumming as much as it was thirty years ago?

Back in the days of the skin heads there was a limit as to how much rebound you could utilize on the heads because they were a lot slacker than the modern heads. The modern drums have been tightened down so much that if you had that same tension on a skin head, it would break. So the tone of the drum has gone past what a real drum would sound like with a skin head on it. Modern drums have gotten into the realm where they do not really have a drum sound anymore. In many cases they are more like a machine sound. And of course, there is so much tension that there is a lot of rebound available from the stick against that tight surface. It makes it very easy to do things that you have to work a lot harder to get on a slacker head.

Various people have said that older styles of rudimental drumming are not very precise. How would you respond to this?

I don't think that a lack of precision is a component of any particular style. It is just sloppiness of execution that one may be hearing. Although a rope-tensioned drum with a lower tension can sound resonant, and the resonance can cover up a lot of sloppiness in playing, it shouldn't be relied upon to do that. Unfortunately, a lot of drummers utilize that resonance to cover up the fact that their execution is not very good.

On the other hand, many modern drummers use a lot of tension frequently

with a lot of mechanical motion to play on a drum, and they don't draw a very good tone out of the instrument or play with a large variety of dynamics. All the rudiments were taught in the 19th century to be played with at least one accent, but always with just one accent as the NARD codified in the 1930s. Frequently, a drag paradiddle would have one, two or three accents, and some were of varying textures. So the drumming had more variety as far as hills and dales of dynamicism and intensity. It was a lot more interesting to listen to in my estimation.

There have been many good drummers who have played extremely clean on rope-tensioned drums with old styles, and I have been fortunate enough to play with some of those at past Yorktown Musters. We had a drum section that was as clean as a whistle. The rudimental content was highly evolved. It wasn't simple drumming. It was played very well, and it sounded good. The old drummers used to say that in the Lancraft Fife and Drum Corps of New Haven, Connecticut, you could take a gun and shoot off the tip of one drumstick and catch them all [in the line]. They took great pride in that corps in playing very precisely and very cleanly. But there were still no mechanical or stiff motions that, today, are attributed to the military, although they really did not emanate in the military. They emanated in an overzealous attempt to try and get a militant style in the playing.

You have done extensive research about rudimental drumming. Describe how and when you started doing research, and how much information you have acquired.

Well, I have a whole walk-in library—a room of file cabinets full of information on so-called ancient rudimental drumming. I started when I was in the Royal Canadian Navy back in the fifties, researching to try to find out where the rudiments came from and what significance they had from a musical and military point of view. I think I have been able to answer quite a few questions in that regard.

We were using a flam-tap to double time the sailors of the Royal Canadian Navy. So the flam-tap was one of the first rudiments that I was interested in tracking back. That subject, the history



George Carroll and CSA Field Music

of the rudiments, is a long and heavy one. I am working on getting out a glossary of the rudiments now. The amount of information is quite large, and I probably have more information than most anybody else on American rudimental drumming and all its antecedents, including French and Swiss.

What is the time frame of your research?

It is from the time of Charles II, which is roughly the 1630s, to about the 1890s.

What topics in the history of rudimental drumming have you researched?

Style, content, the instruments themselves, particularly the kinds of drums on which they are playing, the sizes, their construction, and also medieval notation. I'm heavily involved with translating the old notation from the early book. Lastly, I've researched the uses with the military.

How many international rudiments have you found in your research, and from which countries have you found them?

Over two hundred rudiments from Switzerland, France, England, Holland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Spain and, of course, the United States.

What are the different styles or methods of drumming that you have found that can be labeled by time period, country, region and group?

That's quite a long study, but to make it as short as possible, the different styles could be consolidated by nationality: American, British, Swiss, French, German and Dutch. Each has its own body of rudiments and history, and that is a long, hard study to put it all down in one survey like this. In other words, it

is a stand-alone article and I intend to do more on that for the Percussive Arts Society.

Basically, the American style was derived from the British style back in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as far as we can tell. The research is pretty solid in that direction. There is no doubt that our American drumming started in England. Early on, the two styles started to go in different, divergent directions. For instance, Charles Stuart Ashworth, who was an Englishman, came to America and was the second leader of the United States Marines School of Music and band in Washington, D.C. He had a big fife and drum school with about thirty-six individuals involved. His style of drumming was, of course, English, but he started also playing some of the American rudiments, which became the foundation of the Bruce and Emmitt book that came out in the 1860s. So he was kind of a crossover type. He came from Britain, then he ended up in America.

The flam accent was coming in during the War of 1812 in America. There is no evidence of that ever being used in Great Britain. George Barret-Bruce apparently was influenced by the black drummer Juba Clark, from the Western School for Practice, which was out in Jefferson Barracks, Kentucky. He obviously taught the syncopated rhythms that were so prevalent during the 1860s in all kinds of music, and started some of the rhythmical figures [in that medium] that we know of as ragtime and jazz today. This was as early as the 1860s and probably a little earlier.

That kind of drumming did not evidence itself in any other country. It put an indelible stamp on American drumming

ever since. It sounds very strongly syncopated. Whereas the other countries didn't do that, particularly Great Britain.

In Switzerland, the Basel style of drumming is very possibly a derivative of the French style. There was a Papa Beuller, in the French Guard during the War of 1812, who came back to Basel after that and taught a lot of drummers in the city. It's a strong possibility that he brought back a lot of the French rudiments, and they were the basis of the Basel Swiss drumming.

The army drumming that they did in the hill areas outside of Basel was a rather simple style that did not really exemplify the complexities of the Basel drumming. French drumming has a lot more double strokes than either American, British or Swiss drumming. But it has a lot of the figures such as the pataflafla stroke, sautes, couais and many of the figures that we have yet to reckon with here in the United States. So it is one of the world's most complex styles of drumming.

I understand from recent readings that it was revived almost from the point of extinction by Robert Goute, who used to be the French Air Force drum major. They had a Napoleonic drum corps in the French Air Force Band. He has started a whole wave of interest in playing the old French Napoleonic styles that are so beautiful and so exhaustive. This has caught on in France and has become quite the tradition. There are corps there of up to a hundred members, and they play this great style.

The American system, or systems, are all similar. For instance, the Connecticut River Valley style is played in a very slow, open method, with big snare drums that are deep and wide and with big barrel bass drums. The rudiments are played slow and extremely open on rather slack drums. The heads are just a couple of notches above being flabby. However, the sound is huge. Although it might be lacking in finesse, it has a thunderous quality. It's very moving to hear a whole drum corps driving down the street with the fifes cutting through all that drum sound. It is typical of some of the older New England fife and drum corps.

The majority play a much more modern style now, and in some cases they have taken the entire repertoire of the drum and bugle corps and just

translated it straight into the fife and drum idiom. There are also all kinds of way-station stops between those two extremes. Then there are, of course, those who try to restore old fife tunes and write drum beats that go with them, or resuscitate the drum beats from the old books.

How do the modern drum and bugle corps of today compare to the groups in which you have played and/or taught in terms of technique, musicality and style?

Well, I think that the "Timeline" that you did with a little help from myself and a lot other people brought out that there have been some great changes through the history of the drum and bugle corps movement. It would be remarkable if it hadn't changed—if it stayed the way fife and drum corps have stayed. It is a different kind of an animal and change is frequently very good, but sometimes, a regression. My heartburn from the point of view of purely a military musician all my life is that I think the drums are overused [in today's drum and bugle corps]. Every square millimeter of a measure is filled with some kind of figure.

The original idea behind that, of course, was to balance off the lack of harmony instruments in a band situation where you didn't have bass, baritone, tenor and alto voices very frequently. So, for the lack of the harmonic progressions that band instruments bring to their art, the drum and bugle corps and the fife and drum corps use rhythmic devices to fill in some of the gaps that would otherwise be done by other types of instruments.

This has gone about as far as it can go as far as complexity is concerned. I think there is a great imbalance sometimes between the drums and the bugles. The drums have gotten so busy and there are so many of them playing all the time that there is no release in the art. The way it was described to me, all kinds of art has to have tension and release. A personification of this is in the French and Swiss drumming. No drum style in the world is more complex than their style. Yet, they will slow down the amount of figures that they put into a piece or a composition. They will play simple figures to complement the music.

It doesn't all have to be technique. It doesn't all have to be speed and razzle-dazzle. It can be balanced. If some of the drum and bugle corps composers would look at and listen to their composition from the point of view of balance, they could learn something from the Swiss and the French.

Again I harken back to my background, which is military music. I like marching music to sound like marching music. I don't have any heartburn with playing marches and music that was composed for the field, for the camp and for marching itself. The marches of Sousa and Kenneth J. Alford are still the best I have ever heard. When you take a pop tune, Broadway show tune, or a jazz or rock tune and try to shoe-horn it into some of these marching scenarios, some of it works, but a lot of it doesn't. A lot of it sounds like trying to make the particular sound of a swing or rock band, but with inadequate instrumentation. That is just my particular view. Everyone, of course, has the right to their own taste, and they should. I am not trying to change that aspect of things.

Why do you think that various traditional aspects of military drumming have left the modern drum and bugle corps?

I don't think they were absorbed by modern drum and bugle corps because the military drumming, as such, really went with the fifes. When the bugles came in, the drumming was an accompaniment. If you look at your history of the fifes and drums, the drum beats themselves could be used as calls in the camps 150 to 300 years ago, and they frequently were. The fife added melodic interest, but it wasn't the real melody of the call.

With the aspect of the bugle, the drum went out the door as a field-music instrument. When it was brought back in with the bugle, it was an accompaniment instrument that no longer played the actual calls. So that aspect of it was turned completely around. The drumming that went with the fifes, the single drag and double drag played straight up and all the variations thereof, and the seven-stroke roll were left behind, because the tempo had increased with the bugle, and the bugle could not play quick 16th-note figures of complexity as the fife is capable of doing. Therefore,

the tempo picked up with the long linear sounds of the bugle, and the drummers couldn't execute some of the rudiments used for things such as the breakfast call or the dinner call. The double drag and the single drag had the tempos required with the bugles, so they weren't played anymore. About half of our rudimental repertoire has gone by the wayside because of the pickup of tempo, and because of the different applications of drums with bugles.

I don't want anyone to think that I look down my nose or cast any aspersions on my colleagues in the drum and bugle field. My tastes happen to go in another direction, but it is not to disparage the other activities. I will say this in respect to the drum and bugle corps: they bring a lot of discipline and application of hard practice into their art. I have yet to see any other folks in any kind of activity put so much effort into what they are doing. And it is usually not as a profession, it is usually done because they love to play. That shows in the accuracy with which they play and the precision with which a lot of the groups perform. The fife and drum corps would do well to emulate the drum and bugle corps in that respect.

What would you like to see happen with PAS and research efforts like yours?

I would like to see maybe a sub-committee or a parallel organization set up in the Percussive Arts Society that would address the history of all drumming, all percussion, not as a side issue, but as a main thrust. There is a lot of material from the past, and if it isn't gleaned, it is going to go into the ground with the people who have it in their heads. So there is a great need to set something up so that what we know so far is retained, and further research can be done and published.

The style of fifing and drumming in America has lasted for well over two hundred years, and much of that is intact. But there is a slow erosion that is bound to go on in the move to make things more modern. Folks that are eroding it don't even realize what they are doing because it is on such a long basis, such a slow motion. The Company of Fifers and Drummers has a museum up in Ivoryton, Connecticut, and they are doing great work, holding on to the more recent past. More

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research has to be done, I think, and implemented as to what was done in the early days. We need to find out who the heroes were back then, as well as today. PN



Jeff Hartsough is the Director of Percussion for the Spirit of Atlanta Drum and Bugle Corps and Escape indoor marching percussion ensemble. He was percussion caption head

for Magic of Orlando Drum and Bugle Corps 1990-92 and was a percussionist with the 27th Lancers and Suncoast Sound Drum and Bugle Corps. Hartsough is president of Perfection in Performance, a percussion consulting, arranging, and instructing business, and is an accomplished performer, clinician, and private instructor, as well as an adjudicator for the Ohio Music Educators Association. He is General Manager and Percussion Educational Specialist for Columbus Pro Percussion, Inc. in Columbus, Ohio. Hartsough has studied with Robert Breithaupt at Capital University's Conservatory of Music. He received the NAMM Scholarship and holds two Bachelor of Science degrees from Franklin University. He is also a member of the PAS Marching Percussion Committee.



Derrick Logozzo studies and teaches at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas, where he is completing a master's degree in performance. He received his Bachelor of

Music Education degree at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. His teachers include: Robert Schietroma, Robert Breithaupt, Ed Soph, Brad Wagner, Ed Smith and Chris Allen. Currently, Logozzo is an active performer and teacher in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, playing in various jazz, orchestral and chamber groups. As leader and founder of Kalimbe, the Caribbean Ensemble, Derrick performs regularly on tenor steel drum. He also instructs the jazz band and teaches music theory at Krum High School in Krum, Texas. Logozzo also serves on the PAS Marching Percussion Committee.



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