

## **Writing Drum Parts for Steel Band**

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each drummer. They learn best by listening to the original band/steel band playing the songs and become familiar with the tempos, styles, fills, and the way that the drummers support the song without getting in the way of the melody.

### **Some Essential "Beats" or "Grooves"**

Remember that the drummer's main role in the steel band is to keep everyone in time, lay down a steady beat, and add colour to the piece through musical use of fills and accents. **Steady time is the number one priority.**

**The Simple Calypso** (Fig. 1). Bass drum and hi-hat on beats one, two, three, and four. Snare with left hand on the "ah" of 1 and 3, and the "and" of 2 and 4. A great calypso for beginning drummers.

**The Authentic Calypso** (Fig. 2). The same as the simple calypso except that the hi-hat is playing eighth notes and opening every second one. A much fuller sound and very popular. Add a slight accent to the snare on the "and" of 2 and 4 to give it a little more drive.

**The Soca Beat** (Fig.3). The Soca (pronounced "soe-ka") is often called "the soul of calypso." This beat is very popular with West Indian music and is characterized by the bassists (and bass drum parts) playing "2-and" and "4-and." The snare part may be a variety of rhythms, but this example is popular.

**The Basic Rock Beat** (Fig. 4). This beat is by far the most commonly used beat in the history of popular music. Slow it down for pop/rock ballads, play at medium tempo for pop, and speed it up for heavy rock. For variety, try the hi-hat eighth notes on the ride cymbal. For soft rock ballads, use a "cross-stick rim shot" with the left hand on beats 2 & 4. (Lay the stick across the snare, lift the end, and tap it on the rim of the drum.)

Remember that your drummers can make or break the entire groove of the steel band. Keep them occupied and challenged, insist on musicality and dynamics, and ensure they have good quality drums and cymbals to work with. Good luck!

I welcome your comments, and suggestions for future articles. You can reach me at [prestomusic@sympatico.ca](mailto:prestomusic@sympatico.ca)

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