



SOLO CONSTRUCTION

In this segment, I will talk in depth about how I came up with my championship solo, Tribute – and give you some of my recommendations to help you successfully plan and perform what will hopefully be your own championship solo one day. Follow these steps to create your own solo and have fun!

The main steps to solo construction are:

- I. **COMPILE YOUR IDEAS AND SKILLS**
- II. **IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS**
- III. **FIND A THEME**
- IV. **WRITING THE SOLO**
- V. **PACING AND TRANSITIONS**
- VI. **PREPARATION AND PERFORMANCE**

I. COMPILE YOUR IDEAS AND SKILLS

Constructing your solo should begin with a brainstorming process, involving nothing more than notebook paper and a pencil. Write down everything you can do, whether it's a trick, visual, musical idea, rudiment, melody, ANYTHING! Nothing should be left out in this process. Can you play four mallets but use sticks instead? Can you juggle? Can you stand on your head and play? Anything goes, so keep your mind open to any idea that comes to you! Work to make the list as long as possible so you have plenty to choose from later.

EXAMPLE LIST:

I can play: paradiddles, fast rolls, flam accents, old school backsticking, 3 way backsticking, walk the dog, juggle, sing, fubars, inverts, swiss, flam taps, inverts to sextuplet morph, stick toss "a" and stick toss "b", The Three Camps, back-sticked hertas, snare break from last years show, "my favorite lick" etc.

The only thing that matters in this stage is that you get **everything you know how to do** down on paper.

Once you have your list done, organize your ideas into categories. List all your "rudimental" ideas under one heading, all your tricks under another, all your backsticking ideas, all your rhythmic or melodic ideas together, etc. This way you will have a "menu" to choose from when you start to write the actual solo.

II. IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS

Now that you have all your ideas organized find two or three "main" strengths (what you do the best out of your list), and three to five "sub-strengths" (something you do well but may not be the most difficult of flashy thing). My main strengths are my fast rolls, paradiddles and backsticking. My "sub-strengths" include playing slow with great heights, my singles, and a few stick tosses. I chose to showcase each of these "main" and "sub" strengths throughout my solo, with ideas that supported them. I will cover how and where to place your ideas later in the chapter.

III. FIND A THEME

Now it's time to find a way to link all your ideas and strengths together. The best way to do this is find a theme or motif you can fit your strengths and rhythmic ideas in to. If you have a strength (main or sub) that fits into some pattern or rhythm already, that could be your theme.

My solo is based on the main theme from Etude #3 from Tony Cirone's **Portraits in Rhythm**:



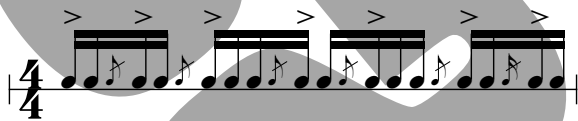
I modified Cirone's theme to fit some ideas I had and made it:



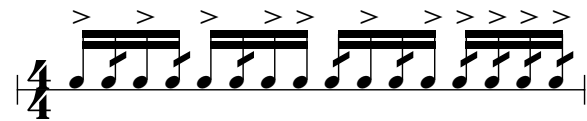
Your theme can be a simple one measure "lick", a four measure phrase, a one count rhythm, an ostinato, or anything you want it to be. I have seen solos based off a Flam Drag, a 2:3 polyrhythm, a visual, and much more. There is no right or wrong when it comes to *your* theme for *your* solo.

Below I have listed many of the variations to the main theme of Tribute:

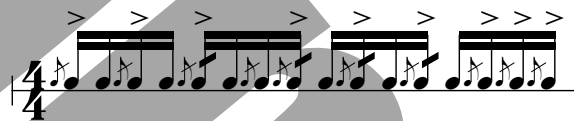
This motif is presented with inverts, straight sticking, on both drums and with backsticking:



This motif is stated on both the Mylar and Kevlar heads and split between the two:



This motif is present during Part 3:

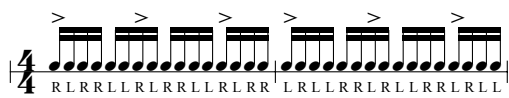


You can see that each of the motif's are similar to the main theme but with a twist. This is a great way to keep your solo on track and making musical sense.

I also have "sub-themes" or motifs which are present throughout the piece as well (the measure to the right is the first motif I present).



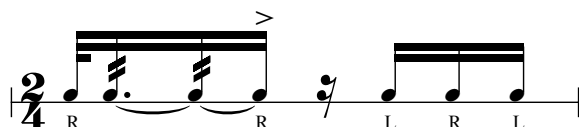
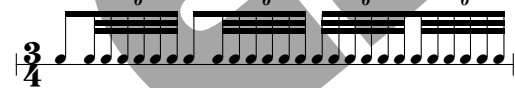
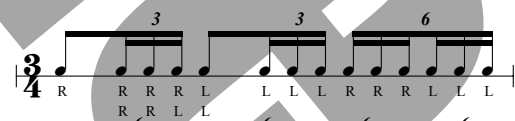
I then use the accent pattern with the paradiddle theme below, then add buzzes, flams, or triplets. The theme is present but altered just enough to keep the ideas fresh. Again, you can see how all of the motifs above relate to each other through note groupings, accent placement or slight embellishments.



One of the last motif's I used is the Bolero ostinato of:



Here are the related motifs to the Bolero theme. Some of the motifs are played with a stick toss; others simply altered the sticking slightly.



This final motif is what I used as a "linking phrase". This phrase is used a few times to tie sections together.

