



LEARN FROM THE BEST™

**NEWSLETTER**

OCTOBER 2024

# GIOVANNI HIDALGO

MASTERING PERCUSSION  
CONGAS, BATÁS, AND BEYOND

## WALFREDO REYES JR.

ONE PLAYER, TWO ROLES  
WHAT TO PLAY AND WHAT NOT TO PLAY

## ON THE AIR

JAMS, PERFORMANCES,  
INTERVIEWS



[SUPPORT@DRUMCHANNEL.COM](mailto:SUPPORT@DRUMCHANNEL.COM)





## FOUNDER'S DOWNBEAT



Writing the Founder's Downbeat this month is very exciting for me as the featured artist is Giovanni Hidalgo. His life's journey and career are truly unique. As a child prodigy, his music and inspiration have spanned decades. When you say, "Gio," everyone knows who you're speaking of. His bio below notes some of his credits, but there is much more than that to Gio, the man. He's a loving, kind soul who embodies rhythm in every aspect of his being. Whether playing, walking, talking, or teaching, you know, within seconds, he is the master of technique and rhythm. Having spent many hours, days, and weeks with Gio, I can tell you he is a very simple yet complex person everyone can learn from. If I had to describe Gio in a few words, I would say he is the "Pinnacle of Percussion."

Today, we are announcing Gio's Course on [DrumChannel.com](https://DrumChannel.com), *Mastering Percussion with Giovanni Hidalgo. A journey through Congas, Batás, and Beyond*. These five courses will give you beginning to advanced materials that will take your percussion playing to the next level and give you great insights into applying these rhythms to the drum set.

Have fun getting into Gio's world!

*Don Lombardi*



Giovanni Hidalgo is recognized as one of the greatest percussionists of all time. At age five, Giovanni started playing congas handcrafted by his father, José "Mañengue" Hidalgo. In the early '80s, he gained international fame with Batacumbé in Cuba, where his incredible hand-drumming helped shape the Songo style. Giovanni has performed with legends like Eddie Palmieri, Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Mickey Hart, Paul Simon, and Carlos Santana. His Grammy-nominated album *Hands of Rhythm* with Michel Camilo and his innovative percussion products, like LP Galaxy Congas and Timbales, have cemented his influence in music and percussion. Learn from the master today on [DrumChannel.com](https://DrumChannel.com)!

OCTOBER 2024

## NEW WEEKLY PLAYALONGS

Fri, October 4  
**Slow Disco**

• Gregg Bissonette

Fri, October 11  
**Hot for Teacher**

• Van Halen

Fri, October 18  
**3/4 Waltz**

• Gregg Bissonette

Fri, October 25  
**25 or 6 to 4**

• Chicago

# MASTERING PERCUSSION

## WITH GIOVANNI HIDALGO

### A JOURNEY THROUGH CONGAS, BATÁS, AND BEYOND

#### Course One: Exercise for Congas - Introduction to Giovanni's Imperial World

This foundational introductory course focuses on essential conga exercises and provides a gateway into Giovanni's unique techniques and artistic vision.

#### Course Two: Mastering The Congas - Submersion into Puerto Rico and World Rhythms

This course explores Puerto Rican rhythms and other global influences, offering an immersive experience of mastering the congas.

#### Course Three: Batás / Ancestral Sounds - The Art of Batá and the Yoruba Lucumí Legacy

A focus on the spiritual and cultural heritage of Batá drumming, highlighting the Yoruba Lucumí traditions and their impact on contemporary music.

#### Course Four: Batás with Sticks - Transformation and Innovation in Itótele and Okónkolo

Giovanni presents innovative techniques for playing Batá drums with sticks, transforming traditional rhythms and expanding the sonic possibilities of Itótele and Okónkolo.

**Course Five: Timbales and Bongos – Inner Dialogue / Improvisation on Timbales, Bongos, and Congas** This course emphasizes improvisation and rhythmic exploration, blending styles like Plena and Danzón with bongos, congas, and timbales.

A photograph of Giovanni Hidalgo, a man with a beard and a blue cap, smiling and surrounded by several conga drums. He is wearing a dark jacket over a blue shirt. The background is dark and textured.

**MASTERING PERCUSSION**

**BUY NOW**

with

**GIOVANNI HIDALGO**

**\$99.99**





## GIOVANNI HIDALGO

*"Through music and rhythm, we bring healing, harmony, and happiness."*

Join Don Lombardi for a sit-down interview with Giovanni to learn lessons about life and music from the percussion master himself. Highlights from the interview are on the pages that follow. You can also catch the full interview [here!](#)



### HOW DID MUSIC SHAPE YOUR LIFE?

Music is part of my life, and my life is music. God is rhythm. That's how I have seen it all my life. It is a great gift to play for the masses. Through music and rhythm, we bring healing, harmony, and happiness.

I started reading music at eight years old. I was ready to play with the orchestra and big bands by nine years old. When I say ready, I mean I thought, "Wow, someday the great ones are going to call us, and we need to be ready for them." And that's what happened.

My uncle, Tito Garcia, brought me to California in 1974 to play with the orchestra. At nine years old, I was playing with Pete Escovedo (Sheila's father), Benny Velarde, Francisco Aguabella, and Armando Peraza. My uncle said, "My nephew's going to play the congas," they asked, "Where is he?" My uncle pointed to me and said, "This is my nephew, the little kid!"



# GIOVANNI HIDALGO

## CONTINUED...

I grew up listening to every conguero, drummer, and style on television and radio in Puerto Rico. I listened to everything, an amalgam of different styles: Chinese, Japanese, European, South American, Central American, Mexican, Cuban, you name it, rock and roll, England, the United States, the whole nation—everything.

## WHAT HAS YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY BEEN LIKE?

I practiced 325 - 330 days out of the year, from 8 a.m. until 5 or 6 p.m. I would start by playing along with vinyl records at 33 RPM for three, four, or five hours. Then I'd take a break, maybe have a little sandwich, and jump back in to play with vinyls at 45 RPM, really fast. Playing like that was completely healing for me.

At ten years old, I was watching cartoons, practicing, and reading my books. Some of my favorite books are *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer* by Ted Reed, *Elementary Training for Musicians* by Paul Hindemith, *Modern Reading Text in 4/4* by Louis Bellson, *Stick Control for the Snare Drummer* by George Lawrence Stone, and *Podemski's Standard Snare Drum Method* by Benjamin Podemski. And even though I love these books, the real university is the street. But please learn how to read music because the academic part is so important. When you learn to read music, you can also learn how to transcribe what you played. It's a language. Reading music will save your life.

And, of course, I'm still learning like a child because on the congas, bongos, timbales, or batá, I still feel like I don't know anything. Learning is never-ending. Sometimes, when I sleep, I sleep with my conga in my bed. I've done that since I was a little kid, and I do it now when I can. That's the instrument that gives me happiness, health, knowledge, and the visualization of my life. I also always have a little piano and music paper to write down rudiments, tunes, or songs. How you learn the approach that gives you the pattern and structure on the instrument is endless.

We are not only musicians or percussionists. We are architects. We belong to the architectural level. We are scientists. I've been a drummer all my life. The way that I play congas is the same way I play the drums. I've played my whole life out of love for the instrument, including when I put the rudiments to the congas. When I play with others, I say, "You guys play," and I let them play and record. Then, I go in between and fill in the colors. We are painters.

Click [here](#) to watch the full interview, which includes how Gio tunes his congas and much more.



## GIOVANNI HIDALGO Q & A

Where were you born?

**San Juan, Puerto Rico**

Favorite vacation destination?

**Puerto Rico and Japan**

When are you the most creative (morning or night)?

**Both, the whole day!**

Dream collaboration?

**Alive: Steve Winwood / Deceased: George Harrison**

If you weren't a drummer, which instrument would you focus on?

**Piano**

Book recommendation?

**"Genesis Miracles and Predictions According to Spiritism" and "The Mediums" by Allan Kardec**

TV Show Recommendations?

**Wild Kingdom and The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau**

Hidden talent?

**Drawing and Painting**

Favorite Drink?

**Coconut Water**

Favorite food?

**Seafood, Japanese cuisine, Puerto Rican food**

Favorite treat?

**Seaweed snacks or a spoonful of extra virgin olive oil.**

What time do you go to bed?

**Sometimes as early as 7:00 PM. I like to wake up at 4:00 AM.**

Do you have any words of wisdom to share with up-and-coming drummers?

**Love your instruments. Have faith in what you do. Always practice mentally, spiritually, and physically, and do it with a lot of loyalty and happiness.**

## LOMBARDI LIVE FT. GIOVANNI HIDALGO AND HIS STUDENT, FAUSTO CUEVAS





# MASTERING PERCUSSION WITH GIOVANNI HIDALGO

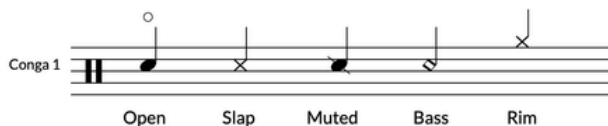
A JOURNEY THROUGH CONGAS, BATÁS, AND BEYOND



## Giovanni Hidalgo Session A: Part 1 (1 to 4)

Lesson 1

### Drum Key



### 1 Pattern 1



### Played On Rim Of Conga With Stick



### 2a Pattern 2



### 2b Played On Congas



### 3 Combining Patterns 1 & 2 On Congas



### 4a Pattern 3



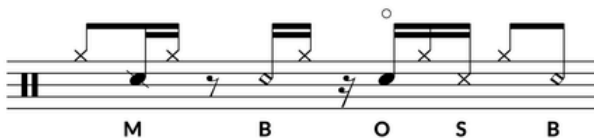
### 4b Pattern 1 & 3 On Congas



### 5a Pattern 4



### 5b Pattern 1 & 4 On Congas



A photograph of Walfredo Reyes Jr. playing a drum set. He is wearing a black t-shirt with white stripes on the sleeves. The background is dark with some text visible, including "DRUM CHANNEL".

**WALFREDO REYES JR.**

# WHAT TO PLAY & WHAT NOT TO PLAY

**Walfredo Reyes Jr.**, born in Cuba and raised in Puerto Rico, has crafted a unique global rhythmic style by blending his passion for both the drum set and percussion. Known for his ability to sound like a drummer and percussionist at once, Walfredo's impressive career includes touring and recording with legendary artists like Carlos Santana, Steve Winwood, Jackson Browne, Gloria Estefan, Richard Marx, and Chicago, among many others. His versatility has made him one of the most in-demand musicians worldwide, and he continues to expand his work in recording, producing, composing, and education. Walfredo is currently touring with the iconic rock band Chicago.

## COURSE

### WHAT TO PLAY...AND WHAT NOT TO PLAY

Walfredo shares his experience and expertise in playing authentic salsa music on the drum set with and without one or more percussionists. Showing how one player can fill the role of a drummer as well as a percussionist (when needed), Walfredo skillfully explains what to play and, equally important, what not to play when performing music from this popular genre.

#### WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

- **CHA CHA CHA ON THE SET**
  - **WITH/WITHOUT PERCUSSION**
- **HYBRID DRUMS AND TIMBALES**
- **PLAYING PERCUSSION PARTS ON A DRUM SET**

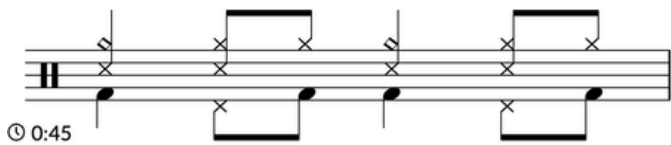




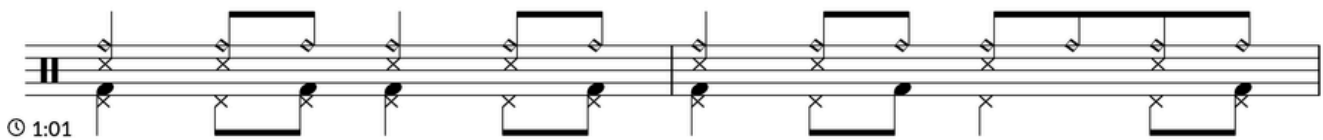
Walfredo Reyes Jr.

# Playing Percussion Parts On A Drum Set

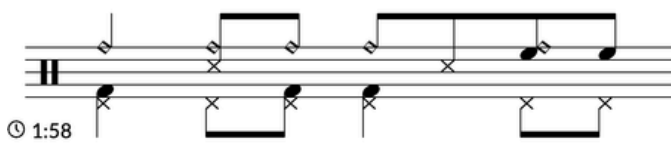
## 1 Cha Cha Hi-Hat Pattern



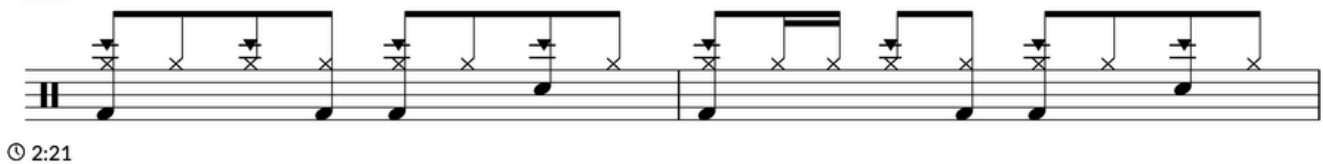
## 2 Cha Cha Ride Pattern



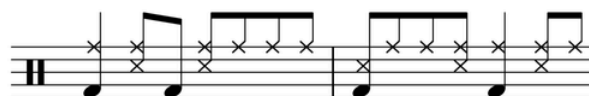
## 3 Adding Conga Rhythm



## 4 Adding Percussion (Cha Cha Bell)



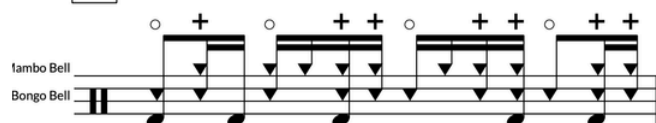
## 5 Son Montuno Variations



⌚ 2:47

Note: Move your left hand around. You can play the cross-stick or clave block.

## 6 Adding Bongo Bell & Mambo Bell To The Drums (Son Montuno)



⌚ 3:08

R B B L B B R L B B R B B



R L B L L L R L L L R L L

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## INCORPORATING PERCUSSION INTO YOUR DRUM SET



MORE  
WALFREDO  
on *DrumChannel.com*  
REYES JR.

## UNDERSTANDING CLAVE VARIATIONS

*Blistering chops and playing unusual, intricate patterns is only a glimpse of what this man can do.*





EDUCATION

# DC MUST-SEE

ENTERTAINMENT

**TERRY BOZZIO, WALTER RODRIGUEZ & LUIS CONTE** DRUM JAM: "HIGH ON DRUMS"



AUTHENTIC LATIN RHYTHMS ON THE DRUM SET FT. **ALEX ACUÑA**



**RICHIE GAJATE-GARCIA** - USING LATIN RHYTHMS IN A POP ENVIRONMENT



LEARN.

WHEN NOT TO PLAY DRUM FILLS!  
THE ART OF SUBTLETY IN DRUMMING



"THE DON" BY  
**THOMAS PRIDGEN** AND **BIG TRIPPIN'**



POST MALONE'S DRUMMER,  
**JACOPO VOLPE**, PLAYS "GOODBYES"



HAVE FUN.