

from hand to drum
HAND DRUM TECHNIQUES
FROM AROUND THE WORLD



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The Mridangam

And so, we reach month three of my most challenging set of articles so far. There's really no substitute for tuition from a qualified and competent teacher, but if you are thinking of taking this instrument on board, I hope these articles have been a useful start.

In this instalment I'm going to introduce a new stroke and integrate it into some patterns. I'll also give a brief introduction to some strokes which will be of more use to those of you wishing to take the instrument further with a teacher. These strokes won't be introduced into any patterns at this juncture but a synopsis of them will do no harm.



Fig. 1 The 'Nam' stroke, as covered in the previous two articles

Fig. 2 The 'Tim' stroke (rim open tone on inner ring - treble end)

Right then, on to our first new stroke, 'Tim'.

This stroke is articulated in the same way as 'Nam', in that the third and fourth fingers rest on the edge of the black spot, and the second finger is held in the air whilst the first finger strikes. The only difference is that the finger strikes the inner ring, between the black spot and the thick outer skin. This gives the sound more bass overtones than the similar 'Nam' stroke. Compare Figs. 1 and 2 for the slight difference in striking position.

Next is the Half Jhapu stroke...



Fig. 3 Half Jhapu (resonant overtone stroke on treble end)

Fig. 4 The Gumki Stroke (bass end - glissando version of 'Tum')

This is the first of the three strokes aimed at those of you intending to carry on with a teacher. It's articulated with the third and fourth fingers. The hand is moved away from the drum and the fingers strike in the same place that they rest for 'Nam' and 'Tim'. They remain in contact

with the head after impact, creating an unusual buzzing/overtone sound.

The Gumki stroke is played by cupping the hand as in Fig. 4, and striking with the second finger whilst simultaneously digging into the drum head with the wrist at the base of the thumb. This causes a glissando on the 'Tum' stroke. The sound is actually much quieter than 'Tum', but is effective all the same.

The Full Jhapu is without doubt the stroke I found most difficult. It's similar to the Half Jhapu but warmer and more resonant. It is articulated by striking the side of the hand, from the base of the little finger to the wrist, onto the middle of the drum, leaving only half an inch at the wrist end in contact with the head after impact. The sound should be resonant with overtones. Believe me, it takes months and months to even make this sound for the first time. Ask your teacher...

Anyway, let's get onto some music covering our intended strokes. Good luck, and I'll see you next month for some frame drumming, mounted John Bergama style.

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Ex 1

R.H. NAM TIM NAM NAM TIM TIM NAM

L.H. TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM

Ex 2

R.H. THA NAM TIM THA NAM THUM

L.H. TUM TUM TUM KA

Ex 3

R.H. TIM THA TIM THA THA THA

L.H. TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM

Ex 4

R.H. THA NAM NAM THA NAM NAM

L.H. TUM KA TUM TUM

Ex 5

R.H. NAM THA NAM TIM THA NAM TIM THA NAM TIM NAM TA RI DA

L.H. TUM TUM TUM KA KA TUM KI

Ex 6

R.H. NAM THA NAM THA NAM NAM TIM NAM THA NAM NAM TIM

L.H. TUM TUM TUM TUM KA KA TUM TUM TUM

Ex 7

R.H. NAM TIM NAM TIM NAM TIM THA THA

L.H. TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM

Ex 8 BASIC ADI THALA (8 BEAT TIME CYCLE)

R.H. THA TIM NAM THA THA TIM NAM

L.H. TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM

R.H. THA RI THA TIM NAM TIM TIM NAM

L.H. TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM