

# the fabric of time

## INDIAN RHYTHMIC

## CONCEPTS FOR DRUM SET PART 12.5



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All together there are four main drums used in South Indian classical music. Along with the Mridangum (twin-headed barrel drum) there is the kanjira (tambourine with one jingle) the Ghatam (clay pot) and the Thavil.

The Thavil is a double-sided drum: bass on one side, treble on the other. Its shell is carved from one piece of wood, but is much stubbier than the Mridangum. It is played with a stick on the bass end, while the treble is played with the fingers, on which there are hard thimble-like beaters. This produces a very high-pitched, cutting, even offensive sound. This suits the usual musical environment of the drum, accompanying a loud reed instrument called the Nadaswaram.

An interesting aspect of Thavil playing is the linear phrases that are played between the two heads. The first Thavil phrase we'll look at is this:

### Example 1



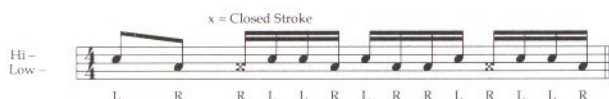
Split between two hands it will look like this:

### Example 2



This phrase is made more subtle by the use of closed strokes on the bass end. The player does this by using the fist of his hand that is holding the stick. The stick is held in the same fist-like manner of Japanese drummers – Jim Chapin would have a fit. With the closed stroke it looks like this:

### Example 3



To begin putting it on the kit, we'll interpret the closed note as a snare drum note. We'll lay it on the snare and floor tom:

### Example 4



The accents and ghosted notes are very important to make this sound correct. Also important is the feel of the bracketed floor tom notes. These should not be accented as such, but should sing out above the ghosts on the snare. This is achieved by playing the snare more quietly – not vice-versa.

For the next example we'll bring in the bass drum to replace these bracketed notes.

### Example 5



Next we'll put the left hand on the hi-hat. The result is not too dissimilar to a backwards version of the Brazilian Baion.

### Example 6



### Example 7

(Basic Baion.)



### Example 8

(Baion, backwards version)



The bracketed notes in these two examples are optional.

To emphasise the feel, we'll introduce the right hand on the ride cymbal and an open hi-hat on beat one. The ride pattern on its own will look like this:

### Example 9



Alternatively, it could be played on a cowbell. Here is the complete rhythm:

### Example 10



These linear patterns are very common in South Indian drumming, much more so than in the north. As you can see from this article, it's easy to extrapolate idioms from the ancient tradition and place them in a modern context. This is a strong argument for an eclectic approach and an open mind. ♦