

the fabric of time



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INDIAN RHYTHMIC

CONCEPTS FOR DRUM SET PART 14

Some years ago I had the great but unusual honour of taking one of India's great ghatam players shopping in London. I met him at his hotel and we set off to the tube station and into the rush hour. It turned out that he had left his shoes in Madras and so sported a pair of clogs at least three sizes too large.

The whole event was made all the more interesting by the fact that he spoke almost no English and I spoke absolutely no Tamil. This led to the inevitable 'DIGUTANGU KIDATAKA' conversations. However, he wasn't shy as far as vocal percussion was concerned. Excitedly he clapped the thalum and fired syllables at me, regardless of the disgruntled business travellers sitting and standing all around us. Happily I snapped away with my recording machine, eager to miss nothing. This carried on all day until finally we ended up back at the hotel to rendezvous with his embassy car to the airport. I was dozens of compositions better off, whilst he seemed very chuffed with his electric iron. This was one of the compositions he showed me that day.

Ex.1

TA KI TA TA KI DA TUM TA KA
TA KI DA TUM DI TA KI DA TUM TA
KI DA TUM KI DA TUM TA KI DA TUM DI
TA KI DA TUM TA DI TA KI DA TUM

Time Resumes




Like this it looks like four bars of music for the snare drum, apparently without logic. Lets add some accents and see if it supplies any order.

Ex.2

Afraid not, it still appears to be random. Let's break it down in its components and look at it the Indian way... The unusual layout will make it easier to understand. Also note it's written in common time so it should be twice the speed.

Ex.3

TA KI TA TA KI DA TUM TA KA
TA KA TA KI DA TUM
DI TA KI DA TUM
TA KI DA TUM
KI DA TUM
TA KI DA TUM
DI TA KI DA TUM
TA DI TA KI DA TUM

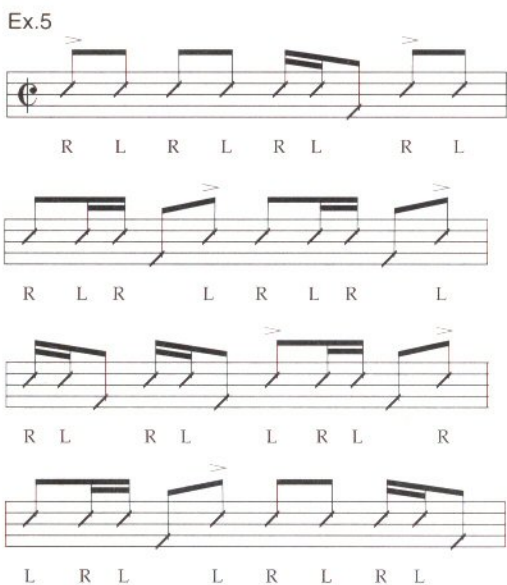
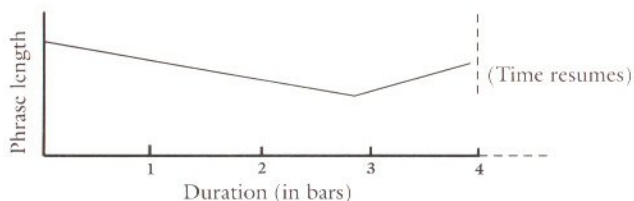
(Fills up time space of 32 x )

As you can see, it all derives from this basic phrase...



It is then manipulated by reducing the phrase in length, then by enlarging the phrase. This is a very common procedure in South Indian drumming and can lead to some very interesting constructions. If we looked at it as if it were a graph then it would look like this...

Let's start playing it on the kit by putting our 'Tums' on the bass drum.

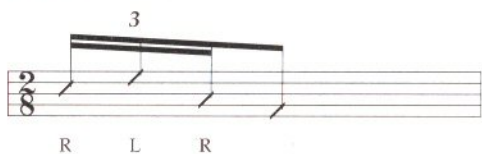


When you've mastered this, add a cymbal crash to each bass drum note. Don't always hit the same cymbal, it will look and sound a lot better if you alternate from side to side.

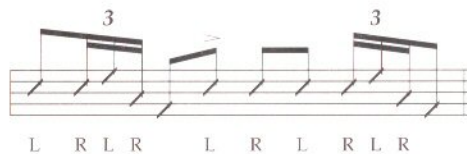
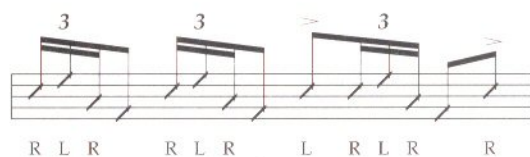
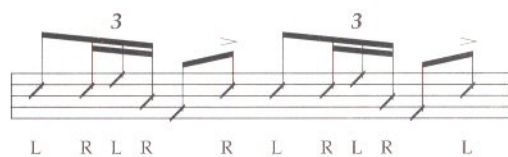
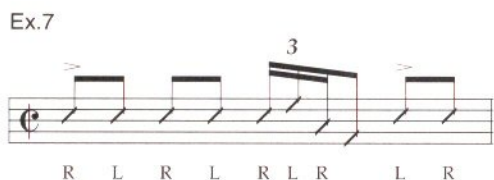
Next we'll make each 'Kidatum' into semi quaver triplets around the kit. Don't forget we're in cut common, so these will be demi-semi quaver triplets..



Becomes...

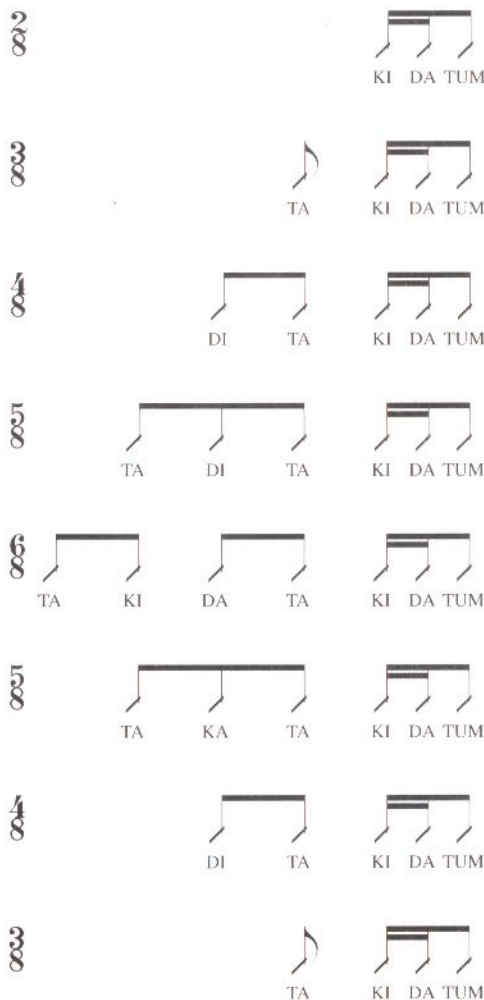


It will look like this...



Now we'll rearrange it. Starting from the shortest phrase we'll make it longer and then reduce it.

Ex.8



(Fills up space time of 32 x ♩)

With this as your new framework go back to the beginning and go through all the various stages. When you're comfortable with it you can begin dissecting all your favourite phrases out of it and begin thinking about how you would apply it to the sort of music you play. It's yours now, stamp a bit of personality onto it. ♦