

the fabric of time

INDIAN RHYTHMIC

CONCEPTS FOR DRUM SET PART 15



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Solkattu, or vocal percussion is common not only in Indian drumming, but also in Indian dance. In North India there is a dance form called Khatak in which there is often a number of complex rhythmic compositions recited by the dancer and answered by the tabla or phakawaj player. There is also a section in most performances dedicated to 'virtuosic' footwork. The dancer stands centre stage and does the equivalent of a Buddy Rich snare drum solo with his feet. The patterns are made up of lots of linear phrases, accents and paradiddle-like patterns.

► In South India, however, the vocal percussion is not the responsibility of the dancer, it is done by the 'Natuvanger'. Being mildly obsessed by vocal percussion, I studied Natuvangam for Bharata Natayam dance and even ended up doing quite a few gigs as Natuvanger, once for a very famous dancer on tour from Kalekshetra in Madras. Basically, you have to keep time with two small hand-bells, recite a number of long rhythmic compositions and follow all the other rhythmic compositions with the bells. This is fine, up until you have to recite a complex composition while playing something entirely different with the bells. (The reason for this is that the bells are following the foot patterns of the dancer.)

What we will do in this article is take some sections from one Natuvangum composition and apply it to the kit. We'll play the

The attack of the footwork is made crisper by the use of hundreds of bells fixed to the ankles. The first basic pattern for a Khatak dancer is this:

Example 1

R L R L L R L R ►

composition on the snare and the bell pattern with the feet. The first section is spread over four bars of 4/4. The feet, however, are playing $4 \times 7/8 + 1 \times 2/4$. The 7/8 looks like this:

Example 2

The 2/4 looks like this:

Example 3

Written in 4/4, the whole foot pattern looks like this:

Example 4

The whole exercise looks like this. choose a sticking which suits you best.

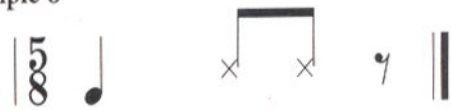
Example 5

Ta Ka Ta Ri Ta Ka Ta Ki Da Ki Da Ta Ka Tha Tha Ki Da Ta Ka
Thi Ta Ki Da Ta Ka Tum Ta Ki Da Ta Ka Nam Ta Ki Da Ta Ka

The next section spans four bars of 3/4.

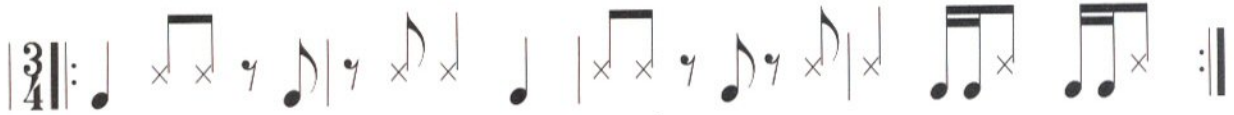
The feet play $4 \times 5/8 + 1 \times 2/4$. The 5/8 looks like this:

Example 6



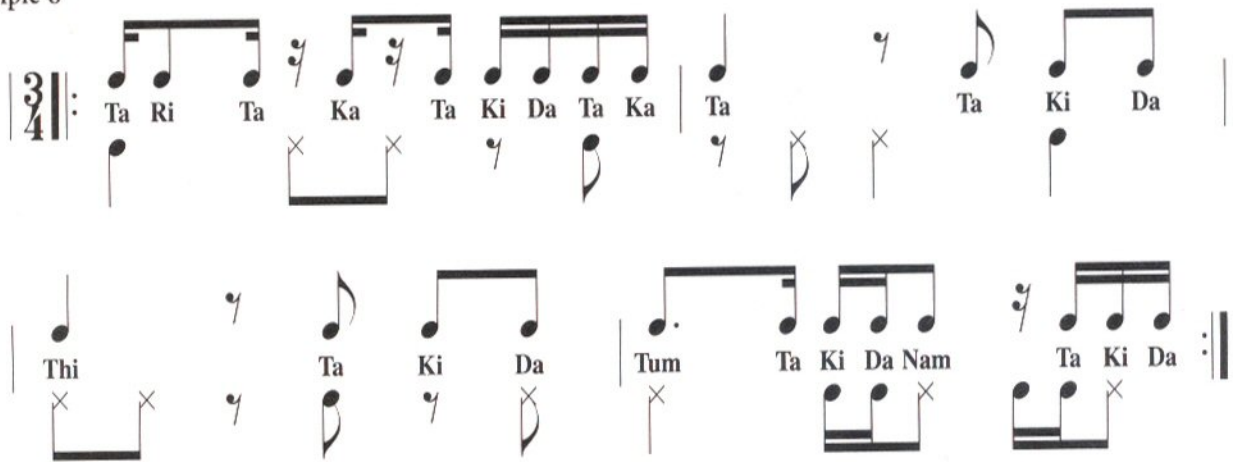
The whole foot pattern written in 3/4 looks like this:

Example 7



The whole exercise looks like this. Again, choose a sticking which suits you.

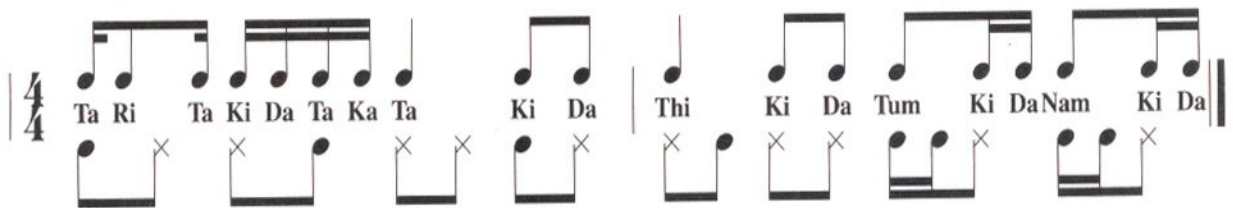
Example 8



The next section spans two bars of 4/4.

The feet play $4 \times 3/8 + 1 \times 2/4$... Here it is. Choose a sticking which doesn't suit you at all, it will be harder to practice.

Example 9



This works great as an independence exercise. The astute readers out there will notice how phrases are getting shorter each time.

However, at the end of the day, I personally approach the kit in a more linear fashion, but it doesn't take away the satisfaction of mastering these things. As far as a practice philosophy goes, I think it's healthy to do things like this up to a certain point,

then throw them away and wait for them to come out unconsciously in your playing. I see little point in a gamut of set pieces.