

the fabric of time



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INDIAN RHYTHMIC CONCEPTS FOR DRUM SET PART 19

It is quite easy to lose track of where the beat lies in some Indian rhythmic structures. One device for fooling the listener in this way is to take a straightforward phrase, for example:

Example 1



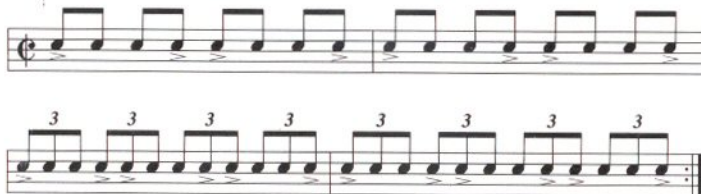
And transpose it into triplets (some readers may recall I briefly covered this in April last year).

Example 2

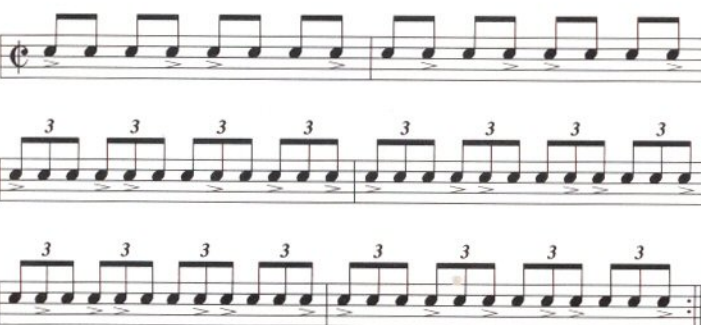


Notice how the phrase repeats three times for the triplet level. Here is the same device used on two common Samba feels.

Example 3



Example 4

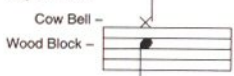


Now try repeating these with this steady foot pattern to get a feel of the pulse. Play each level for the duration of 16 bars.

Example 5

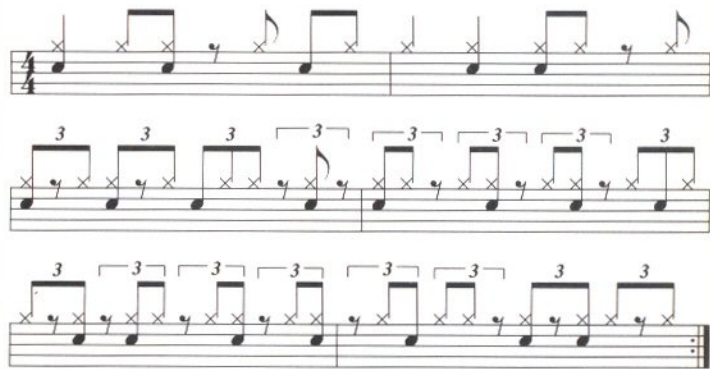


Key for Ex 6



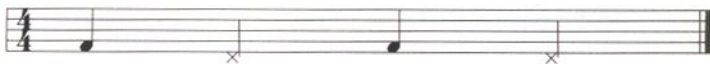
Now we'll do the same with a 3/2 clave and cowbell pattern. You can play the clave on a wood block or on the rim of the snare.

Example 6



Now with a steady foot pattern to make sure the time shift is fully understood.

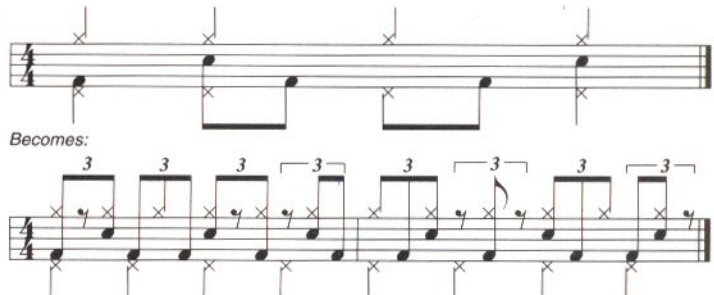
Example 7



Indian percussionists will often play on these ambiguities for long periods of time, adding further syncopations and fooling the listener even more. Part of the skill is to not get dragged into hearing the four beat patterns instead of the triplets. This is particularly important for the person who has to clap the 'Thalum' in South Indian concerts. A bad thalum clapper can ruin a concert and annoy the soloists beyond the pale.

Now let's use the same system on a few basic kit rhythms. The right hand plays the ride or the secondary hi hats, leaving the other hi-hats free to be played on each beat with the left foot.

Example 8



Notice how the ride pattern goes to steady quarter note triplets. Also, if you accent beat three in each bar on the snare it becomes a much more interesting transformation. Try playing 16 measures of each level.

▶ Example 9

Musical notation for Example 9, showing a 4/4 time signature with a sequence of notes and rests.

Becomes:

Musical notation for Example 9, showing the same sequence of notes and rests converted into triplets.

Of course, it works both ways. Let's take the Bembe cowbell pattern and convert it into semi quavers (for convenience the Bembe pattern is written in triplets, not 6/8).

Example 10

Bembe cowbell in triplets, not 6/8

Musical notation for Example 10, showing the Bembe cowbell pattern in triplets.

Example 11

Bembe pattern converted into semi quavers

Musical notation for Example 11, showing the Bembe pattern converted into semi quavers across three staves.

Example 12

I've deliberately taken very common rhythms to explain this method. It is possible to do it with any rhythm you choose. Concentrate on an even transition between the time levels, keeping the crotchet pulse steady. A metronome will help.

It doesn't end with triplets. Here is a very simple phrase, one crotchet in length but, converted into quintuplets, otherwise well known all over the world as 'Khanda Gati'. Good luck.

Musical notation for Example 12, showing a phrase of notes in 4/4 time.

NAM TA DIM NAM TA DIM NAM TA NIM NAM TA DIM

Becomes:

Musical notation for Example 12, showing the phrase converted into quintuplets.

NAM TA DIM NAM TA DIM NAM TA DIM NAM TA DIM NAM TA DIM