

# the fabric of time

## INDIAN RHYTHMIC

## CONCEPTS FOR DRUM SET PART 24



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This month I'll begin by mixing up styles from two very different musical cultures, Cuba and India. To do this I'm going to employ a concept I explored in my first *Fabric of Time* column. This time however it will be used for congas. We'll begin with the five basic units from South Indian rhythm and assign each of them a conga pattern based on the Cuban 'Heel-Tip' technique.

Key for Examples 1,2,3,4,5

H = Heel T = Fingertips S = Slap Stroke O = Open Stroke

### Ex 1 (KANDAM; 5 Bts TA KA TA KI TA)

H T S T O

### Ex 2 (MISRAM; 7 Bts TA KA DI ME TA KI TA)

H T S T H T O

### Ex 3 (SHANKEERNAM; 9 Bts TA KA DI ME TA KA TA KI TA)

H T S T H T S T O

Example 4 is the common pattern most conga players are familiar with.

### Ex 4 (CHATURUSRAM; 4 Bts TA KA DI ME)

H T S T

### Ex 5 (TISRAM; 3 Bts TA KI TA)

H T O

OR

H T S

Using these units, go through the following juxtapositions and see how they feel.

- A)  $5 + 7 + 3 + 5 + 9 + 3 (= 32)$
- B)  $7 + 5 + 3 + 9 + 3 + 5 (= 32)$
- C)  $5 + 4 + 9 + 3 + 3 + 5 + 3 (= 32)$
- D)  $9 + 5 + 7 + 3 + 3 + 5 (= 32)$
- E)  $5 + 7 + 4 + 4 + 7 + 5 (= 32)$
- F)  $7 + 7 + 5 + 5 + 4 + 4 (= 32)$
- G)  $7 + 5 + 4 + 4 + 5 + 7 (= 32)$
- H)  $4 + 3 + 3 + 5 + 7 + 5 + 5 (= 32)$
- I)  $9 + 5 + 5 + 7 + 3 + 3 (= 32)$

The next step is to set up a clave pattern, either on a drum machine or get a friend to help you out. Then play the juxtaposed rhythms against the clave. (Play these rhythms as semi-quavers). Following this we need the involvement of a third person to play cowbell. For the cowbell we will have a different pattern for each of our five units. Here they are. When you are comfortable with each of them separately, juxtapose them in the same manner as the congas were.

**Ex 6**

Now, back to the juxtapositions and try the following as a group.

- Person 1: Clave
- Person 2: Any juxtaposition from A-I on congas
- Person 3: The same juxtaposition on cowbell

- Person 1: Clave
- Person 2: Any juxtaposition from A-I on congas
- Person 3: A different juxtaposition on cowbell

Anyway, Cuba and India might be continents apart but there are some striking similarities between the South Indian Mridangam and Bata drums from Santeria. Besides both being double ended drums with bass on one end and treble on the other, the large Bata drum, (IYA) has a very similar resonating patch on its bass head, (ENU) to the semolina patch applied to the bass head of the Mridangam, although the patch on the Bata drum is made from clay, rosin and oil. Also, the slap stroke on Bata is very similar to the 'Ara Jhapu' stroke on the Mridangam.

Let's go on to the groove I heard played by the old Mridangam master, Palghat Mani Iyer. He might have been some years into his pension when he recorded this but it didn't stop him sounding like Keith Moon. Will you still be playing it when you're a pensioner?

**Ex 7**

► Take the first six beats, give it the Indian triplet treatment, (see September's *Rhythm*) and you end up with this (I've added an accent).

**Ex 8**

Ex 8 shows a musical staff in 4/4 time. The top staff contains four groups of triplets, each starting with an accented eighth note followed by two eighth notes. The bottom staff contains four groups of triplets, each starting with a quarter note followed by two eighth notes. Brackets above and below the groups indicate the triplet grouping.

Another similar groove to Example 7 is a groove played on one of the Shakti albums. It is in 11/8 but is divided 4, 3, 4. The last bar begins on a snare beat and produces an unusually phrased rhythm which on first hearing is difficult to identify. This is made more difficult on the recording because they often leave beat one silent.

**Ex 9 BASIS OF RHYTHM**

Ex 9 shows a musical staff in 4/4 time divided into three measures. The first measure is 4/4, the second is 3/4, and the third is 4/4. Below the staff are vocalizations: TUM TA TUM TUM TA, TUM TA TUM TUM, TA TA TUM.

And now the kit.

**Ex 10**

Ex 10 shows a musical staff in 4/4 time divided into three measures. The first measure is 4/4, the second is 3/4, and the third is 4/4. Above the staff are drum notations: 'x' for snare and 'o' for bass. Below the staff are vocalizations: TUM TA TUM TUM TA, TUM TA TUM TUM, TA TA TUM.

Beat 1 (brackets) is sometimes left silent

This in turn leads me to a rhythm from Bulgaria which is also divided 4, 3, 4. It's called 'Copanitser' and it looks like this.

**Ex 11 COPANITSER**

Ex 11 shows a musical staff in 11/8 time divided into three measures. The first measure is 4/8, the second is 3/8, and the third is 4/8. Below the staff are vocalizations: TUM TA TUM TUM TA, TUM TA TUM TUM, TA TA TUM.

I learnt to play this on a drum called the 'Davul' which is like a bass drum held around the neck on a strap. Like the Bata and Mridangam it has bass on one side and treble on the other. The low pitched head is played with a thick stick and the high pitched head is played with a thin stick. One of the basic strikings for copanitser is this.

**Ex 12**

Ex 12 shows a musical staff in 11/8 time divided into three measures. The first measure is 4/8, the second is 3/8, and the third is 4/8. Above the staff are drum notations: 'R' for bass and 'L' for snare. Below the staff are vocalizations: TUM TA TUM TUM TA, TUM TA TUM TUM, TA TA TUM.

Key for Ex 12

Key for Ex 12 shows a musical staff with three notes: a quarter note labeled 'Bass', a quarter note labeled 'Wooden Rim of Bass Head', and an eighth note labeled 'Hi Pitched Skin'.

Enough is enough, I'm going to mosey off and have a butchers hook for beat one. Happy Christmas and don't get stuck upside down in a huge bowl of Christmas pudding.