

BOOK ONE

INTRODUCTION TO CONGA DRUMMING

I STROKES AND FUNDAMENTALS

II PLAYING IN THE FOLKLORIC STYLE

APPENDIX A - MODERN METRIC NOTATION

APPENDIX B - ESSAY ON COMMUNITY

By DAVE LYONS

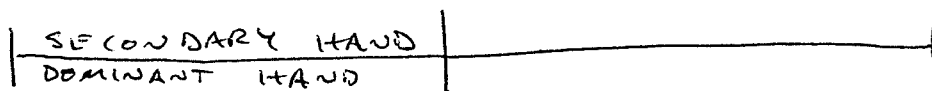
A WORK IN

PROGRESS!

## 1.2 Notation

Rythmic placement of strokes is indicated by Modern Metric Notation (see Appendix A), generally in  $\frac{6}{8}$  or  $\frac{4}{4}$ . The duration and pitch of the sound is indicated by the notehead, which will be one of the 8 basic strokes. Nuance markings and notation conventions for instruments other than conga drums will be introduced as needed.

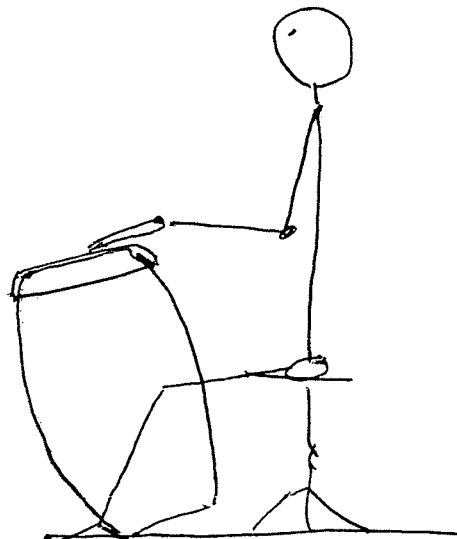
Each instrument in the percussion ensemble recieves a single line divided into measures.





Strokes written below the line are performed by the dominant hand, strokes written above the line are performed by the secondary hand. Since all patterns should be learned on both sides and in such a way as to switch sides these are merely conventions to aid communication. Keep in mind that notation is only a tool for communication and analysis. Notes written on a page are not music. They only become music when performed by a musician, with passion and sensitivity. No amount of notational skill can replace a musicians "feel" for the music. There are subtleties in all music which notation will be unable to capture. This is why we will always need live people to teach and perform real music, many thanks to all Spirits!

## 1.3 Posture

Proper and relaxed posture is important for good drumming. The drum is held lightly between the legs, tilted slightly forward. It is important to lean the drum forward to get the proper wrist action. Feet should be flat on the ground, back straight, shoulders and elbows loose and relaxed. The correct stool hieght will leave the forearms parallel to the ground when the hands are flat on the drum. If you sit too low your shoulders will tire, too high and you will hunch over causing back problems.



## 1.4 Whole Hand Strokes

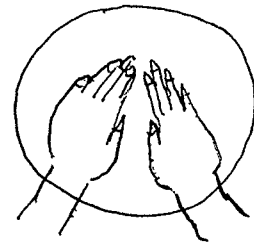
The whole hand strokes are the bass (  ) and palm (  ). As the name indicates these strokes are performed with the entire hand out on the drum head. Allow the hands to rest flat on the head. Relax your shoulders and elbows. Feel the skin of the drum with your entire hand, making the hands as flat as possible. There should be a straight line from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, except for a very slight downward bend at the wrist due to the forward tilt of the drum. R e l a x. This is called the rest position.

To perform a bass stroke lift the entire hand off the drum without moving the wrist and drop it down flat again. Stick to the head and feel the skin, do not bounce. The bass is the only stroke that does not come from the wrist! The sound should be a deep boom. By leaning the drum over different amounts and by picking the drum up with your legs you can achieve wide pitch and volume variations. Remember, do not hit the drum hard! Simply allowing gravity to pull the hand down from a height of an inch or two should be enough to get the full sound. The most important factor is the flatness of the hand.

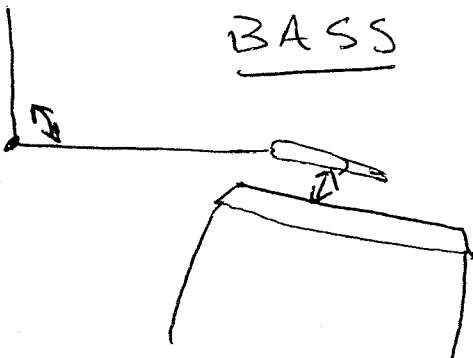
To perform a palm stroke tilt the hand upward from the wrist, while staying in contact with the drum then let it flop back down flat. Stay in contact with the drum the entire time. The heel stroke comes entirely from the wrist, with the hand held perfectly flat. Good tone depends on the flatness of the hand and requires very little force.

The bass and palm are often performed in conjunction with one another to create the pitter-patter sounds common in Cuban drumming. When practicing the bass-palm exercises concentrate on playing steadily, keeping the hands flat, relaxing the shoulders, holding good posture, and isolating the motions of the wrist (palm stroke) and elbow (bass stroke). Leave the hands in contact with the drum as much as possible, allowing the shoulders to relax. The importance of the bass-palm cannot be overstressed, as it develops the proper hand position and wrist motion critical to the rest of the basic strokes.

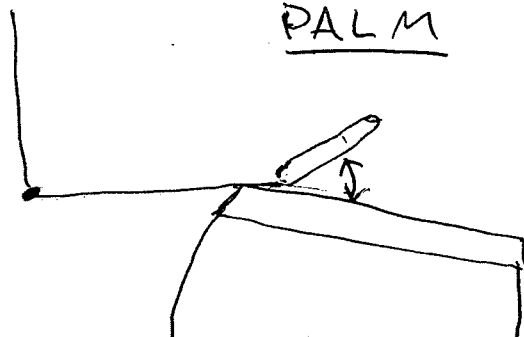
REST POSITION  
(HANDS FLAT ON DRUM)



BASS



PALM





# EX 1.4 BASS/PALM PATTERNS

4/4

6/8

The image displays two systems of handwritten musical notation. The first system is for 4/4 time and consists of five staves. The second system is for 6/8 time and consists of seven staves. Each staff contains rhythmic patterns for bass and palm, represented by notes and stems with flags. The notation is organized into two columns, with a double bar line separating them. The patterns are consistent across both columns in each system.

### 1.5 Half Hand Strokes

The half hand strokes are the tone (  ) and muff (  ). The rest position for these is the same as for whole hand strokes; hands flat, wrists bent slightly downward, relaxed posture; except now only the fingers rest on the drum. The rim should be under the first knuckle so that the palm is held flat off the drum and the fingers form a flat paddle resting flat on the drum head. The middle finger should point straight toward the center of the drum.

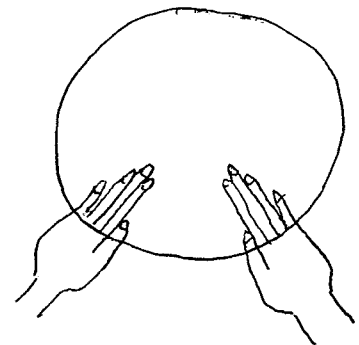
To perform a tone rotate the hand upward from the wrist then drop it back flatly, allowing the fingertips to bounce while maintaining contact with the base of the fingers. A round ringing tone should result. Return to the rest position by allowing the fingertips to fall back onto the head.

To perform a muff rotate the hand upward from the wrist then drop it back flatly, sticking all of the fingers to the head in rest position. The sound should be a dry thump of slightly higher pitch than the tone.

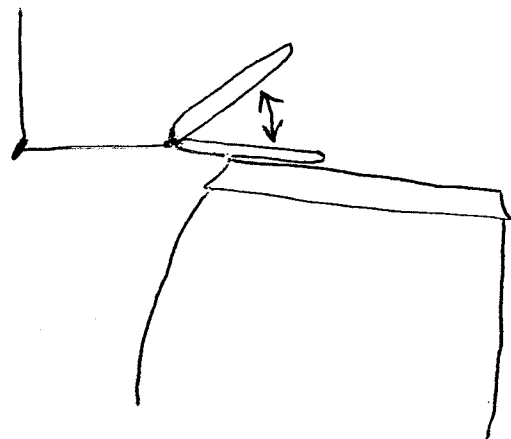
The tone and muff should be virtually identical motions, save only the tips of the fingers. The strokes should come almost entirely from the wrist with the hand held flat throughout, as with the heel stroke. The half hand strokes should never be hit hard as a very light stroke, properly done, will bring out the full resonance of the drum.

When practicing the tone-muff exercises that follow continue to concentrate on good relaxed posture, steadiness, and good hand position and wrist motion while listening for the proper "resonant" sounds. Beautiful tones and muffs are the cornerstone of excellent drumming.

REST POSITION  
(FINGERS FLAT ON DRUM)



TONE AND MUFF



# TONE - MUFF EXERCISES

ALTERNATE HANDS STRICTLY FOR ALL EXERCISES  
d = TONE    x = MUFF  
(UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE)

## 1) TAKE TENAGENA TENAGENA

- a) 8 | : d x x x x x x x |
- b) 7 | : d x x x x x x |
- c) 6 | : d x x x x |
- d) 5 | : d x x x |
- e) 4 | : d x x |
- f) 3 | : d x |
- g) 2 | : d |
- h) 1 | : d |

PLAY AS STEADILY AS POSSIBLE

PLAY WITH EITHER HAND LEADING.

PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO TONE QUALITY!

## 2) STANDARD BELL & CLAVE PATTERNS

### a) TRESILLO (3 + 3 + 2)

4/4 | : d x x d x d d x |

### b) CINQUILLO

4/4 | : d x d d x d d x |

### HAITIAN 4/4 BELL

4/4 | : d x d d x d d x |

### INVERSE CINQUILLOS

4/4 | : d d x d x d d x |

4/4 | : d d x d d d d x |

c) SON CLAVE

4/4 | : d x d d d x d x d d d d x x d : |

d) RUMBA CLAVE

4/4 | : d x d d x x d x d | d d d d x d x d : |

e) BOSSA CLAVE

4/4 | : d x d d x d x d | d x d x d x d d : |

f) GAHU BELL

4/4 | : d x d d x d x d | d x d x d x d d : |

g) 6/8 CLAVE

6/8 | : d x d d x d | d d x d x d : |

h) SHORT BELL

6/8 | : d x d d x d d | d d x d x d : |

i) LONG BELL

6/8 | : d x d d x d x d | d d x d x d : |

j) MAMBO BELL (CASCARA)

4/4 | : d x d d x d x d | d x d x d d x d : |

PRACTICE ALL LEADING WITH EITHER HAND

### 3) ODD BELL PATTERNS

a) 5/4 CLAVE (2+3)

5/4 | : d d d d d : |

b) 7/4 CLAVE (2+2+3)

7/4 | : d d d d d d d : |

c) 3/4 CLAVE (3+3+4+2)

3/4 | : d d d d d d | d d d d d d : |

d) STANDARD HEMIOLA

6/8 | : d d d d d d | d d d d d d : |

e) 7/8 HEMIOLA

7/8 | : d d d d d d d | d d d d d d d : |

f) 7/4 RUMBA CLAVE

7/4 | : d d d d d d d | d d d d d d d : |

g) 13/8 CLAVE

13/8 | : d d d d d d d d d d d d d : |

h) ANY AND ALL INDIAN TALA PATTERNS

i) MAKE UP YOUR OWN, THE POSSIBILITIES ARE INFINITE



# 4) SNARE DRUM RUDIMENTS

## a) SINGLE STROKE ROLL

ALL TONES | : d d : | OR | : d d : |  
R L L R

ALL MUFFS | : x x : | OR | : x x : |  
R L L R

(SEE EX 1. "TAKE TENA GENA TENA")

## b) DOUBLE STROKE ROLL (HANDS NO LONGER ALTERNATE STRICTLY)

| : d d d d : |  
R R L L

ACCENT VARIATIONS ON DOUBLE STROKE ROLL

i) | : d x x x : |  
R R L L

ii) | : d x x x : |  
R L L R

iii) | : d x x x : |  
L L R R

iv) | : d x x x : |  
L R R L

## c) RUDIMENTS ON THE DOUBLE STROKE ROLL

### i) 5-STROKE ROLL

$\frac{6}{8}$  | : o x x x d | | o x x x d : |  
R R L L R L L R R L

### ii) 7-STROKE ROLL

$\frac{4}{4}$  | : o x x x x d : | OR  $\frac{4}{4}$  | : o x x x x d : |  
R R L L R R L L L R R L L R

THERE ARE MANY OTHERS, SEE ANY GOOD SNARE DRUMMING TEXT. ACCENTED STROKES ARE TONES, UNACCENTED STROKES ARE MUFFS.

# d) PARADIDDLES

## i) SINGLE PARADIDDLE

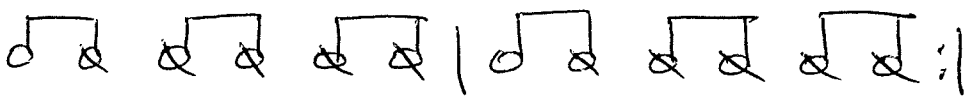
4/4 | :  :

PRACTICE  
ALL 8  
POSSIBLE  
HANDING  
PATTERNS

}	R L R R L R L L
	L R R L R L L R
	R R L R L L R R
	R L R L L R L R
	L R L L R L R R
	R L L R L R R L
	L L R L R R L R
	L R L R R L R L

THESE 4  
ARE THE  
REVERSE  
OF THE  
TOP 4

## ii) DOUBLE PARADIDDLE

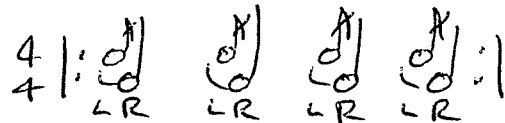
$\frac{B}{4}$  | :  : |

R L R L R R L R L R L L

THERE ARE 12 POSSIBLE HANDINGS FOR THE DOUBLE PARADIDDLE AND A LARGE NUMBER OF OTHER PARADIDDLES TO PRACTICE. AGAIN, CONSULT ANY GOOD SNARE DRUMMING TEXT.

## e) FLAMS

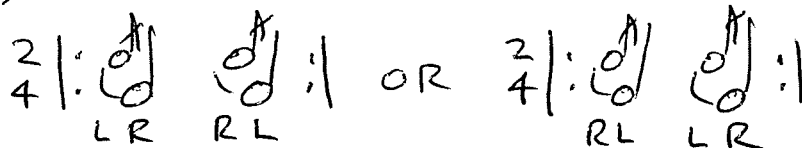
### i) RIGHT HAND FLAM



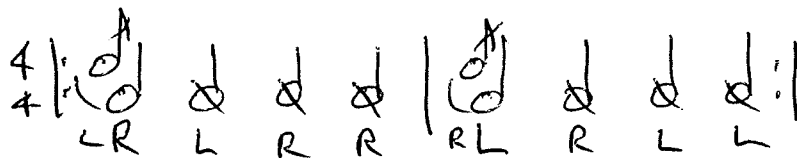
### ii) LEFT HAND FLAM



### iii) ALTERNATING FLAMS



LARGE NUMBERS OF RUDIMENTS CAN BE GENERATED BY INSERTING FLAM ACCENTS INTO SINGLE ROLLS, DOUBLE ROLLS AND PARADIDDLES, FOR EXAMPLE THE "FLAMA DIDDLE"



I LEAVE THESE AND THE OTHER SNARE RUDIMENTS (RUFF, RADAMALUE ETC.) AS EXERCISES FOR THE TRULY DEDICATED CONGUERO.

5, COMBINE BASS - PALM AND TONE-MUFF EXERCISES BY SUBSTITUTING TONES OR MOFFS FOR PALM STROKES IN THE BASS - PALM EXERCISES

## Repertoire 1.5 Shiko support parts

Shiko is a Nigerian style which is melodic, driving and not too difficult to play. Both of these parts can stand alone but they really come alive when you play them with a friend. The Tumba is the lowest pitched drum in a group of Conga drums. Conga refers to a medium pitch drum.


Handwritten musical notation for Shiko Tumba. It consists of a single staff with a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. The notes are placed on the first and second lines of the staff. To the right of the staff, the words "SHIKO" and "TUMBA" are written in capital letters.

Handwritten musical notation for Shiko Conga. It consists of a single staff with a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter. The notes are placed on the first and second lines of the staff. To the right of the staff, the words "SHIKO" and "CONGA" are written in capital letters.

Practice these leading with either hand and work them up to a good fast tempo smoothly and with good tone. Listen for the melody made by the different pitched tones when playing in ensemble.

Handwritten musical notation for Shiko Melody. It consists of a single staff with a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. The notes are placed on the first and second lines of the staff. To the right of the staff, the words "CONGA" and "TUMBA" are written in capital letters, with "SHIKO" and "MELODY" written in capital letters above them.

## 1.6 Touches

Touches (  ) are used for timing and are not meant to be audible. Starting from the half hand rest position a touch is performed by lifting one or more fingers then setting them back down lightly. Immediately following a tone a touch is performed by allowing the fingertips to drop into the rest position. Half hand position touches are performed by the fingers only, the wrist should not move and the first knuckle remains in contact with the edge of the head. In the whole hand position touches are sometimes performed by holding the hand slightly above the drum and touching the head lightly with the fingertips. This is less common than half hand touches.

The purpose of touching is to lend rhythms a certain swing or feel by making contact with rhythmic points other than those being stressed. Touches can also solve certain handing difficulties and allow for playing in unusual and syncopated rhythmic spots.

In addition to working with the touch exercises that follow, practice touches by substituting them for muffs in the tone-muff exercises.

# TONE - TOUCH RUDIMENTS

4  
4

6  
6

PRACTICE TONE-MUFF AS TONE-TOUCH

Ex 1.6 The Gallop

The gallop is a fundamental rhythmic pattern in virtually all forms of music. In snare drumming it is known as a 3 stroke ruff.

GALLOP  
(MODE 1)

The gallop can be varied by starting the pattern in a different place in the measure. I refer to these as the modes of the gallop.

GALLOP  
(MODE 2)

GALLOP  
(MODE 3)

GALLOP  
(MODE 4)

Practice all of these leading with either hand and accenting the first beat of the measure with a muff. We will return to the gallop often as it is very fundamental.

Rep 1.6 Samba Atabaque

This form of Samba is a fundamental conga drum pattern. It can be played with almost any form of Samba or in any situation. It is also an excellent exercise and should be practiced until you can play it smoothly with good tone at any speed.

SAMBA

Concentrate on getting sweet tones, rich basses and quiet, relaxed touches and palms, while staying very loose. Samba is sometimes played very fast so practice this pattern a lot. Relax. Play some more.

## 1.7 Side Stroke, Clave and Bell Patterns

The side stroke ( / ) is the simplest of conga strokes. Hit the side of your drum with a stick, or your fingertips if a stick is not handy. Though this is relatively simple you must still pay attention to technique and tone. Good sound will be achieved by hitting the wood of the drumshell lightly with the side of the stick an inch or two down from the tip, while holding the stick in a relaxed manner. Proper stick control is a study unto itself and is beyond the scope of this book. Suffice to say that the thumb and first finger form a pivot for the stick and the stroke is achieved by flicking the wrist and tightening the back fingers. A lesson or two from a snare drum teacher and some work on a practice pad works wonders.

The reasons a conguero would want to develop stick technique are multifold. The agility developed will help conga strokes, many of the supporting parts of traditional rythms are played with sticks, and there is an entire repertoire of playing conga drums with sticks (particularly adaptations of the Rada rythms from Haiti which employ a wooden hammer called a baguette to sound tones and side strokes). The most critical reason for a conga player to learn stick control is the concept of clave.

By clave here I do not refer to a musical instrument nor to a specific rythmic pattern but rather to a function within the music. In most Afro-Atlantic music styles there is an instrument (usually a bell or wood block) which provides a time line for the other instruments by playing a specific rythmic pattern without variation. This instrument is performing the clave function. Clave is the key to the rythm. If all performers relate thier part to clave improvisation and conversation can occur naturally without the music becoming confused. Different rythms and songs can have different clave or bell patterns which fulfill the clave function. Clearly the feel of a rythm is strongly affected by the pattern used, however the presence of a clave of some type is universal. I would venture to say that the use of clave function as a means of ordering time is the central principle of the music that I will be discussing in this book.

Clave is so central to all the drumming patterns I am presenting that henceforth all repertoire will be presented with reference to a specific clave or bell pattern and should be learned in reference to that pattern. Learning to play the most common clave and bell patterns is the first step in this process and is the goal of the excercises in this section. Do not be fooled into thinking that this introductory work can give you a complete understanding of clave. Mastery of clave comes from large and varied experience both playing clave and playing with clave in ensemble. Learning to feel clave is a life-long process that only begins with learning to play the patterns.

CLAVE EXERCISES WITH A STICK ON THE SIDE OF YOUR DRUM LEARN TO TAP OUT ALL THE ACCENT (TONE) PATTERNS OF EX 2. a - 2. j THESE ARE

a) TRESILLO

HAITIAN 4 BELL

b) CINQUILLO

1st INV. CINQUILLO

2nd INV. CINQUILLO

c) SON CLAVE

d) RUMBA CLAVE

e) BOSSA CLAVE

f) GAHU BELL

g) 3/8 CLAVE

h) SHORT BELL

i) LONG BELL

j) MAMBO BELL

TRESILLO VARIATIONS

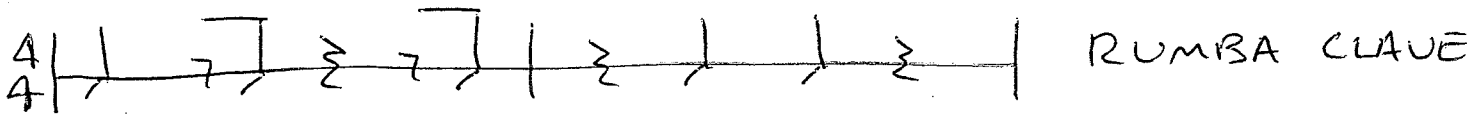
LEARN TO PLAY ALL OF THESE WITH EITHER HAND

~~AND WHILE~~ TAPPING A STRAIGHT BEAT WITH YOUR OFF HAND. (1/4 NOTES + 1/2 NOTES)  
WITH + WITHOUT

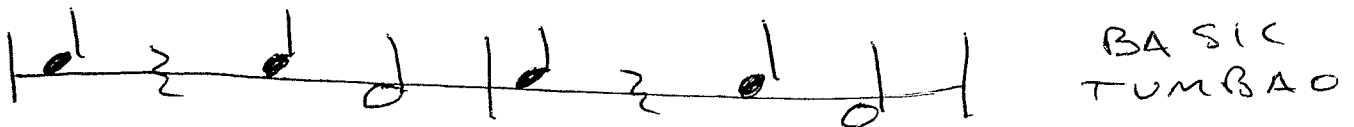


Rep 1.7 Rumba clave and tumbao

Ex 1.7.d is called Rumba Clave. It is the key to cuban rumba music and toques de santos in  $\frac{4}{4}$ .



The accompanying steady beat, played on the tumba, is called Rumba Tumbao. It is the foundation of  $\frac{4}{4}$  rumba. The simplest form of the tumbao is

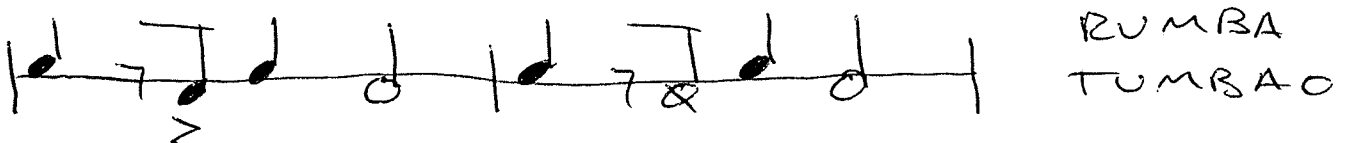


which fulfills the basic functions of a tumbao;

1. Drive the dance pulse with bass strokes.
2. Play a tone on the upbeat of every weak dance pulse.

Take a look at the tumba for Shiko and verify that it is a tumbao. Appendix A, Modern Metric Notation, discusses this nomenclature in detail and might be worth a look now also.

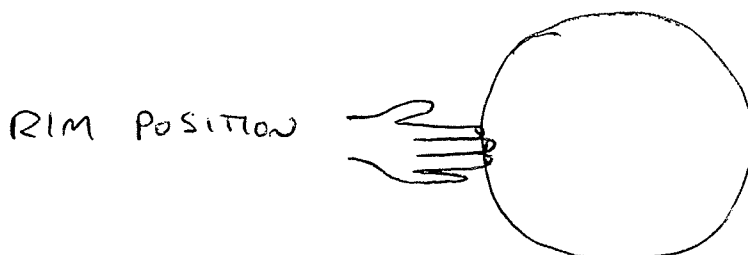
This basic tumbao tends to have a blocky feel and does not respond to clave. The part I will call the root of Rumba Tumbao is



The accent ( > ) on the bass stroke indicates that the drum should be lifted of the ground for a loud, resonant bass sound. This accent corresponds to the second stroke of clave which is called bombo or bomba (pump). Tumbao is played in all tempii. We will be encountering many forms of the tumbao as it is found in many rythms.

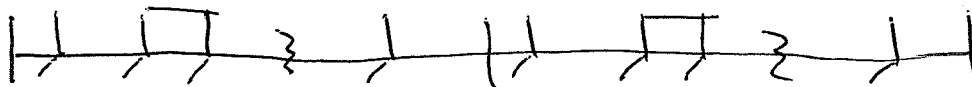
## 1.8 Rim Strokes ( )

The rim stroke is made by striking the rim of the drum with the tips of the fingers. The motion comes from the wrist and the sound is a thin, high pitched ringing tone, very distinct from the open tone. To get the right sound and avoid banging up your knuckles you must strike only the rim with only the tips of the fingers and the hand should stay flat. The rim is a simple stroke but in practice a difficult one to play quickly and accurately. Practice the tone-muff exercises as rim-muff, tone-rim and rim-bass. Concentrate on keeping the rim distinct in pitch, not just volume, from the open tone.



### Rep 1.8 Macandal segon

Macandal is a rhythm in the petwo style from Haiti. The middle pitched drum in the ensemble is called segon. Its part can be performed on a conga drum using rim strokes to create a rich melody. The bell pattern is played on an iron bell.



MACANDAL  
BELL



MACANDAL  
SEGON

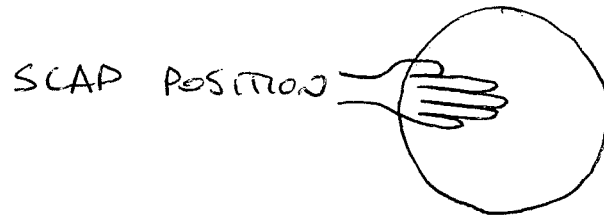
### Playing Ambidextrously

It is very important to develop the hands equally in conga drumming. All exercises and repertoire should be practiced with both possible handings. This may seem like twice as much work, and it is, but it is impossible to achieve the highest levels of playing with a strong hand to hand bias. Go back now and be sure you can play all exercises and repertoire with either hand leading.

## 1.9 The Slap ( )

The slap is the most difficult of all the conga strokes to master. Before you begin this section review all the previous sections, master the exercises and repertoire, and perfect your bass, palm, tone, muff, touch, side and rim strokes.

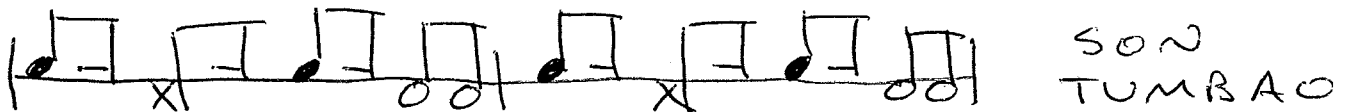
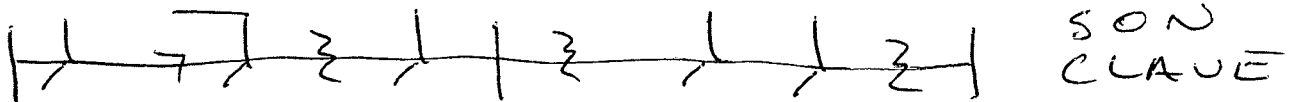
To perform a slap (X) the hand is held slightly cupped. The meat of the heel and side of the hand contact the rim lightly as the fingertips strike the drum well out on the head.



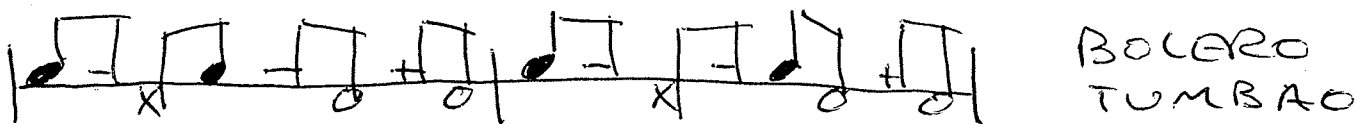
The slap comes from the wrist and is not hit hard, however the fingertips must have good velocity to produce the high pitched pop or crack of a good slap. Study the slaps of good players and try to imitate the sound. Be careful not to hurt yourself. Work up to the slap with a lot of careful practice, a little at a time. Use the slap in place of tones in the tone-muff exercises, then use it in place of muffs instead. Do not get discouraged with the slap. Continue to practice it slowly and carefully until the correct sounds start to pop out. The joy of being able to play a good slap is well worth the pain, frustration and effort it takes to learn it.

Rep 1.9 Son clave and tumbao

Son Tumbao is the driving pulse of Son and Salsa music and is probably the most commonly used pattern in conga drumming. The Son Clave pattern is very common in west African music and in American pop music it is called the Bo Diddley or Zydeco beat. It is very important to master these patterns.



Practice the tumbao leading with either hand and in such a way as to switch sides. For variation one of the tones can be played as a muff. Practice at all tempos. Played very fast this is called Mambo. Medium speed is Son Montuno. Slower and more relaxed is Cha Cha Cha. At very slow tempo a variation is sometimes played called Bolero.



## 1.10 Stroke Nuances, Rules, No No's, and Continued Study

All of the strokes have a variety of nuances, the most obvious being dynamics. You should develop control over the volume of all your strokes and use this control artistically. In addition the following techniques are important.

### 1. Lifting the bass stroke ( )

By lifting or tilting the drum while playing bass strokes it is possible to achieve wide variation in pitch, volume and tone quality. Muff strokes can also be accented by lifting, the effect is somewhat different.

### 2. Elbow tones ( ) and Ciye or Glide tones ( )

The pitch and quality can be modified by placing the off elbow lightly on the drumhead while performing open tones. different positions produce different pitches, center is highest pitched, rim lowest. This technique also works with muff and rim strokes.

The fingertip glide produces a sustained moaning tone.

### 3. Muted slaps ( ) and open slaps ( )

By muting the head with the off hand a variety of pitches can be created for the slap, similar to the elbow tone technique.

When soloing or playing loudly an open slap is sometimes used. This is similar to a Djembe slap. The hand is cupped slightly and the fingertips are launched at the drumhead and allowed to rebound immediately. This should produce a ringing crack of a slap with very little open tone quality.

## 3 Rules of conga strokes, with 1 exception each

1. All conga strokes come from the wrist. The exception is the bass, which comes from the elbow.

2. All conga strokes finish with the hand muting the head. The exception is the open tone where the fingertips are allowed to rise, letting the head ring.

3. In all conga strokes the hand is held flat. The exception is the slap, where the hand is cupped slightly.

## Some things not to do

There are some common mistakes made in conga drumming that the serious student should be on the lookout for.

### 1. Tone pollution of basses and slaps

Tone pollution is allowing a ringing open tone sound to

come out of your bass and slap strokes. This happens when you fail to stick to the head to mute this tone out. Remember to always mute unless you are specifically performing an open tone. Not muting is the equivalent of mumbling while someone else is talking. It muddies and confuses the conversation.

Good ensemble conga drumming should be crystal clear. You should be able to hear a pin drop behind your drumming. Any muddiness is probably the result of innappropriate stroking. All drummers should listen closely for insidious tone-pollution and eliminate it by sticking to the drumhead and feeling the skin.

## 2. Tone-rim and muff-slap distinction

It is fairly common to hear beginners lose the distinction between tones and rims and between muffs and slaps. Specific practice and careful listening will get you over this hump, and is very important, for without the right sounds the patterns will not work in the ensemble correctly.

## 3. Sore Hands

This results from playing too hard. When practicing always remember to play lightly so that in the heat of ensemble playing you will play more lightly. The sounds cannot be forced out of the drum, they must be brought out with finesse. A slight stiffness is normal after playing for hours on end. Any real pain is a sign of improper technique.

## Continued Strike and Rudiment Practice

As you study the repertoire in the following sections and throughout your study of the conga drums you must never lose sight of the importance of proper strokes, rudiments, and ambidextrous playing. You should continue to play stroke exercises daily, concentrate on tone quality when practicing and performing, and work toward balance between your hands throughout your life and at all levels of experience and expertise. No one is so good that thier slap couldn't occaissionally sound better, that thier strokes couldn't be performed with less wasted motion and energy, or that thier weak hand is equal to thier strong hand in every way. Truly fine sounding strokes and relaxed, fluid, even-handed playing are the marks of excellent drumming and can only be achieved through diligent practice over a long period of time.

## Chapter 2. Playing in the Folkloric Style

- 2.1 Instrument Type and Function
- 2.2 Bells and Wood Blocks, Clave and Bell Function
- 2.3 Shakers and Scrapers, Shaker Function
- 2.4 Drums, Melody and Bass Function
- 2.5 Style and Improvisation I
- 2.6 Shiko Basic Chart
- 2.7 Shiko tumbao, ~~beat~~ SUPPORT PART 5
- ~~2.8 Shiko conga, melody~~
- ~~2.9 Shiko hi conga, upbeat~~
- 2. ~~10~~ Shiko quinto, conversation and call
- 2. ~~11~~ Style and Improvisation II
- 2. ~~12~~ Practicing a Rythm Ensemble
- 2. ~~13~~ Bembe and short bell
- 2. ~~14~~ Bembe basic styles
- 2. ~~15~~ Bembe support parts
- 2. ~~16~~ Bembe lead drum
- 2. ~~17~~ <sup>15 AND DANCE</sup> Song in the Folkloric style
- ~~2. <sup>16</sup> Rumba clave, palitos, shakers~~
- ~~2. <sup>17</sup> Guaguaneo Matanzas style~~
- ~~2. <sup>18</sup> Guaguaneo support drums~~
- ~~2. <sup>19</sup> Guaguaneo quinto~~
- ~~2. <sup>20</sup> Dance in the Folkloric style~~
- ~~2. <sup>21</sup> Rumba as an Event~~

## 2.1 Instrument type and function in the Folkloric style

Folkloric style refers to music performed in an ensemble of the same type as would be used in the authentic folk traditions. This does not mean that you must use the exact same instruments as the tradition dictates (although it would be nice) but rather that the instruments used must fulfill the same musical functions. Since the traditions of the music I am cataloging use a great many different instruments it would be difficult to collect every instrument needed much less learn to play them all. On the other hand most of the traditional instruments can be classified into basic types with similar functions. Instrumentation often varies from time to time and place to place within a tradition. This is primarily a book about conga drums, therefore I feel justified in transcribing the rhythms to a simplified battery centered around the conga drum.

### Bells (Metallophones) and Wood Blocks (Idiophones)

There are a large variety of bells and blocks;

<u>Bells</u>	<u>Blocks</u>	<u>Function</u>
cowbell	claves	Basic Timekeeper
hoe blade	side of drum	
gankogui		
hi hat		
ago-go	guagua	Secondary Timekeeper
cymbals	temple blocks	
vibes	marimba	Melodic
etc.		

Clearly some crossing over of function is possible and would depend on the musical arrangement. The most important functions for these instruments for my purposes are the basic timekeeper or clave function and the secondary timekeeper or bell function. One of the most general rules of folkloric style playing is that each player usually only plays 1 instrument. This allows for a large number of people to participate. Melody is then generated by the interaction of these different instruments played by different people, rather by being laid out by an individual.

Clave is the key to the music. It is a strictly non-varying pattern played on a cutting, stoccatto instrument. All other instruments in the ensemble base their timing and placement on the clave pattern. The names may be a bit confusing since the clave pattern may be played by a bell. It is the primacy of the clave function that sets it apart from the more decorative bell. Bell function serves both to keep time and to fill out or add color and melody to a basic clave underpinning. Though many songs can have the same clave one can customize unique bell patterns to accompany specific songs. Bell can sometimes vary and even improvise. Clave must not vary.

Sometimes clave is not apparent in the music because no instrument is playing it explicitly. In these cases it should be

possible to identify an implicit clave which is keying the music. The implicit clave is just as important and inviolable as the clave and you must keep the feeling of clave in mind at all times when playing whether or not it is being stated explicitly.

The instruments I will use for clave are claves, cowbell and gankogui (double iron bell). For bell function I will use cowbell, gankogui and wood block. The side of the drum will often be used to tap out both clave and bell patterns.

#### Shakers and Scrapers, shaker function

Shakers and scrapers serve a similar function to bell in that they keep time as well as adding color and texture to the music. Shakers tend to be more freely played than bells and fill in the highest pitch register of the music. The instruments I will use for shaker function are maracas (double shaker with beads inside), axatse (netted gourd rattle), shekere (larger gourd, tossed from hand to hand), ganza (cylindrical metal shaker) and guiro (scraper).

#### Drums (Membranophones)

This is the most diverse group I will be discussing and serves a wide variety of functions. The drums I am most concerned with are congas or tumbadores, which are used in the Rumba style of Cuba. These are sophisticated, versatile and readily available. There are usually 3 but sometimes 4 (rarely even more) conga drums in the ensemble. By tuning the congas to different pitches and having them play tones at different times a melody is generated, hence these drums serve the primary melody function in the rhythm.

Tumba is the lowest pitched drum of the group, usually between 12" and 14" in diameter. It is commonly the most basic support drum but can also be the lead drum in the ensemble.

Conga is the generic name for the drum type and in our ensemble refers to a medium pitched drum which provides a melodic function. Sometimes there will be 2 middle pitched drums in the ensemble. These will be referred to as lo conga and hi conga and are usually between 11" and 12" in diameter. Conga almost always serves a support function.

Quinto refers to the highest pitched drum in the ensemble, 10" to 11" in diameter. It is commonly the lead drum, but becomes a support drum when tumba leads.

The last function I would like to discuss is bass. Bass is the bottom of the music, the very lowest pitches the ear can appreciate and is essential in getting people to move to the music. Sometimes the conga drum arrangement or a specific conga drum part (eg. tumbao) will fill the bass function but sometimes a specialized bass drum is used to enhance bass. The main instrument I will use for bass function is the floor tom familiar from the drumset. Cajon or box will be discussed in association with Rumba in Chapter 3.

#### Instruments in the Simplified Ensemble



claves  
 cowbell  
 gankogui                   clave and bell function  
 wood block  
 side of drum

maracas  
 axatse  
 shekere                   shaker function  
 ganza  
 guiro

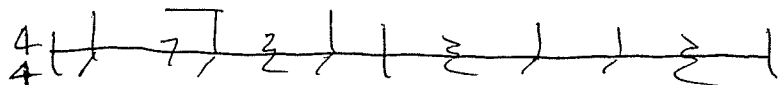
tumba  
 lo conga                   melody and bass function  
 hi conga  
 quinto

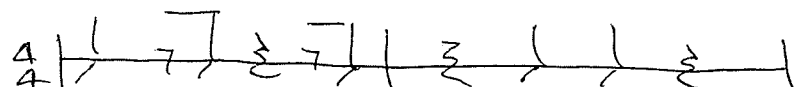
floor tom                   bass function

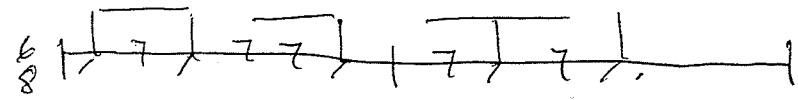
## 2.2 clave and bell instrument techniques

1. Claves. When claves are played they will always serve clave function. Thier extremely high pitched and cutting tone can always be heard even when many other instruments are playing. I prefer solid, cylindrical wooden claves of the cuban design over shaped "African" claves or those made of other materials. One clave is held lightly on the heel and fingertips of the weak hand. The other clave is held like a stick in the strong hand. Strike the weak hand clave with the strong hand clave lightly at right angles and allow them to bounce apart. They should resonate freely. The weak hand clave should be struck in the middle by a point about one quarter of the way down from the tip of the strong hand clave. allowing the weak hand clave to resonate by holding it very lightly, actually balancing on your fingertips is important. Never hit the claves hard. Done properly a very light stroke can hurt your ears. Hold them away from your ears and from other people. At a distance of 4 feet the claves will be less offensive, but easily heard by other players.

The most important clave patterns are;

                   son clave

                   rumba clave

                   6/8 clave

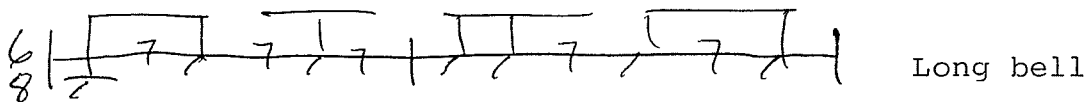
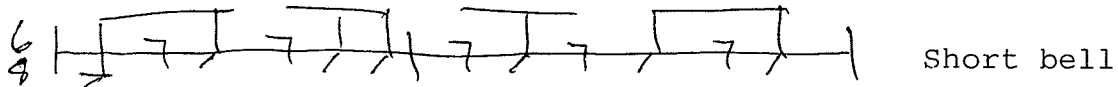
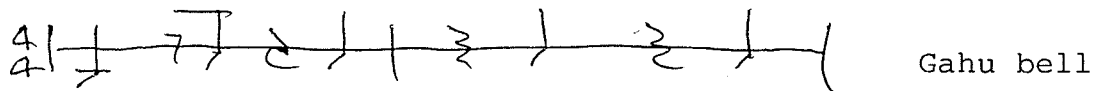
You should already know these from the side stroke exercises in Chapter 1. Work them some more and try to really groove on the patterns while learning to get a good sound out of your claves. You should be able to play clave for a long time without variations or mistakes at any tempo.

2. Gankogui or iron double bell can serve clave or bell function. Proper gankogui technique can be quite challenging and has 3 distinct elements; holding, striking, and muting.

Holding. The gankogui should be held vertically in a noose made by the middle finger and thumb.

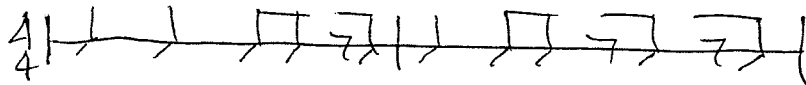
Striking. The gankogui should be struck like a side stroke, squarely across the body of the bell with a point an inch or two below the tip of the stick. Stick technique is not the subject of this book but is very important in bell playing so should be studied on it's own.

Muting. Muting is very important when playing gankogui. The high bell is muted by the index finger and the low bell is muted by setting it on your leg, which also gives some interesting pitch modifications. Some common parts to practice on gankogui are;

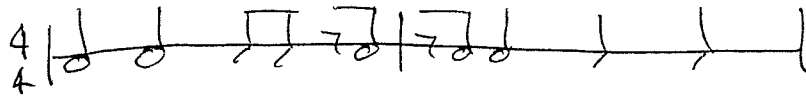


These should also be familiar from Chapter 1. Practice correct gankogui technique and muting in the hoquet while reviewing these patterns. More patterns and technique for gankogui will be introduced with the repertoire.

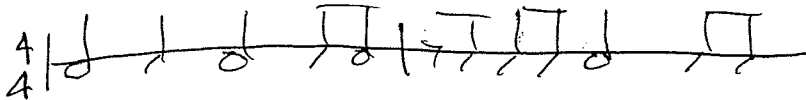
3. Cowbell. Cowbells can be used for both clave and bell function. The cowbell is held flat in the palm of your hand with the mouth pointed away from you. There are 2 basic ways of striking a cowbell. The tone ( ) is struck across the mouth of the cowbell with the edge of the stick, producing a deep, resonant tone of distinct pitch. The side ( ) is struck near the base of the bell with the tip of the stick and produces a sharp high pitched sound. Experiment with different of muting by lifting the bell off the palm with your fingers and with different sticks, etc. to bring a full, sweet sound out of the cowbell. Good tone is difficult to achieve on a cowbell. The sound should be loud and full but not obnoxious. Many cowbell patterns will be introduced with the repertoire but here are a few to practice now.



Cascara

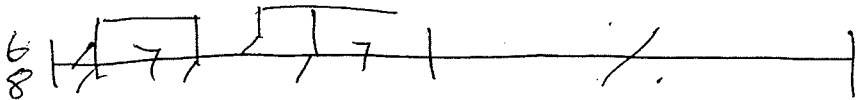


Comparsa

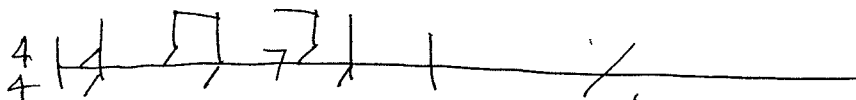


Mozambique

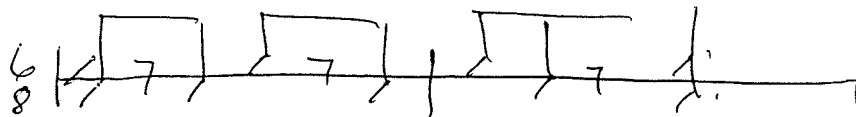
4. Wood block. The wood block can also be used for both clave and bell functions. The wood block is played with 2 sticks so more complex patterns can be performed. The wood block is held between the knees or is placed on a stand. The sticks are held in the standard fashion, all strokes are side strokes ( ) played across the mouth of the block with the edge of the stick. A sweet, round tone is the desired sound and is difficult to get consistently. The sides of a drum can be used in place of a wood block. Practice the following patterns.



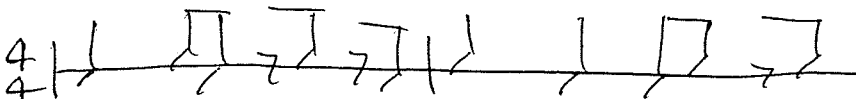
2 across 3



Cinquillo



6/8 palitos



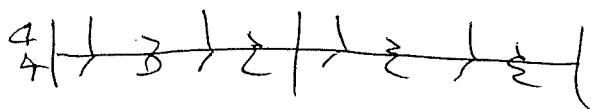
4/4 rumba palitos

### 2.3 Shaker function instruments.

Shakers and scrapers are used to fill in the time and add color, especially in the highest pitch register of the music. Shakers tend to play simple, very repetitive, groove oriented parts. They are sometimes thought of as unimportant but this is wrong. The shaker function is of great importance to the music, filling the high register and developing momentum through repetition. Good shaker playing raises incredible amounts of energy and shaker parts, by virtue of their simplicity, are subject to a wider range of variation and embellishment than clave and bell parts. A good shaker player can do much, but the technique of shakers is as advanced as any instrument, and of all the instruments discussed in this book I consider the shakers to be the most physically demanding.

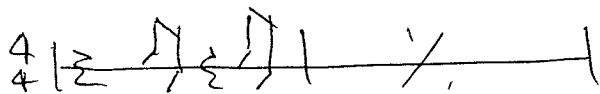
1. Axatse (gourd rattle with handle) is the simplest of the shakers but still has a good deal of technique. The axatse is generally held in the strong hand as if it were a fat stick. The first technique is simply to strike your weak hand, leg or other body part to produce a crisp "chit" sound. For a quieter, cleaner sound the net can be held in the weak hand or tightened by the fingers of the strong hand. The axatse can be held in the weak and and the net thrown by the strong hand for some patterns. The net can also be spun or tossed using wrist action similar to maraca technique while in either hand. The most unique technique of the axatse is to sit down, hold the axatse in the strong hand and perform downstrokes on the thigh and upstrokes on the palm of the weak hand. This requires a bit of endurance, as do most shaker styles, so needs lots of practice.

Here are some common axatse parts



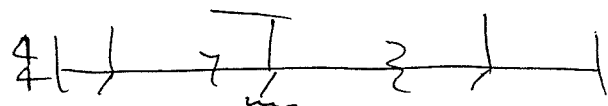
downbeats

(strike in palm of weak or on leg)



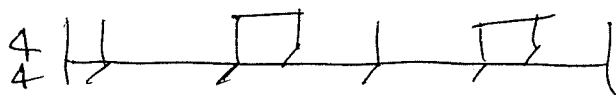
upbeats

(hold net in weak hand, or hold axatse in weak hand and shake net with strong hand)



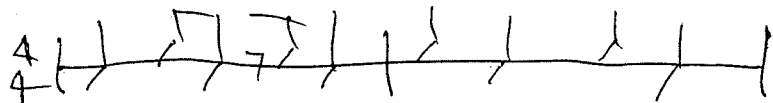
tresillo

(strike in palm, spin net around gourd)

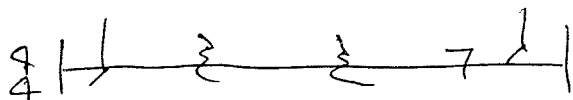


one sided gallop

(upstrokes in palm of weak hand, downstrokes on thigh)



Gahu



rumba

(maraca style technique)

practice all of these techniques.

2. Shekere is a larger version of the axatse designed to be tossed from hand to hand. Shekere can be used like axatse to mark downbeats, it can play tonal patterns and it can be played

faster, marking the basic pulses and sounding an amazing array of nuance and accents. Shekere technique is very deep and should be approached with seriousness.

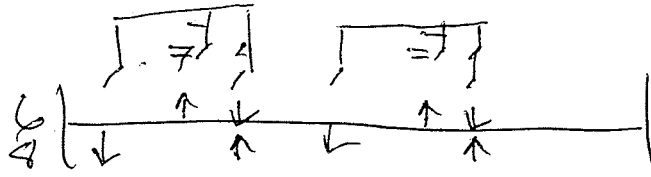
The shekere is held between the hands approximately level with the base of the gourd in the strong hand and the neck of the gourd in the weak hand. The basic technique involves using the wrists to toss the gourd back and forth. Try for a smooth, even progression of crisp "chit" sounds. Once this is happening accents can be inserted on either side with a more exaggerated wrist snap. More nuance can be sounded by tilting the gourd and spinning or manipulating the net. In addition the strong hand can perform tones (♩) with the palm and slaps (X) with the fingertips on the base of the gourd. Practice accents using the tone-muff exercises in Chapter 1. Here are some tonal patterns to practice.

	short bell
	ganza accents
	Yesa style

More patterns will be introduced with the repertoire. Shekere can also be played ganza style, maraca style, axatse style or held hanging in one hand to produce downbeats by throwing and catching the net. The whole shekere can be tossed into the air and then caught in both hands to produce downbeats with a bit of visual allure. This makes the shekere the most versatile of the shaker class instruments. A master of shekere is a formidable musician.

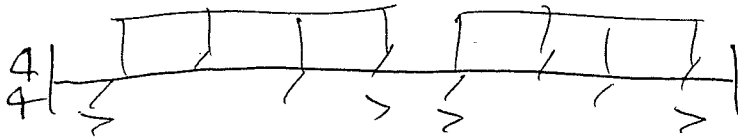
3. Maracas is a pair of hollow shakers with handles and grit of some sort inside. They are played by holding one in each hand and tossing the grit back and forth using wrist action. There are 2 strokes an up (or back) and down (or forward) available to each hand. These are interlocked to create patterns that can be played at incredible speeds and are less energetically taxing than most shakers. Practice these basic patterns until each stroke is distinct and you can play the patterns smoothly at medium or fast speeds.

	gallop
	triplets



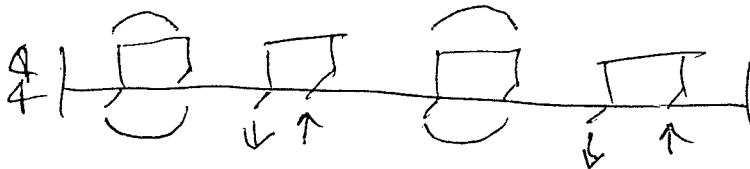
mbira hosho

4. Ganza is a cylindrical metal shaker with grit inside. It is held in either hand or both hands parallel to the body and shaken back and forth using wrist technique similar to maracas. The characteristic ganza sound from the samba rhythm is brought out by combining an up and down motion with the back and forth motion. Other patterns are possible for ganza but this is by far the most important.



ganza

5. Guiro is a gourd scraper though the metal version will do just fine for my purposes. Guiro is especially useful at slower tempos where most shakers are hard to play correctly and the more sustained tone of the guiro can be used to good effect. Like the ganza many patterns are possible for guiro but one pattern predominated. This is a gallop with a long sustained note on the downbeat and 2 quick notes on the upbeat leading to the next downbeat.



guiro

#### 2.4 Drums, melody and bass functions

Basic technique of the conga drum was the subject of Chapter 1 and will not be repeated here. Congas are the primary melodic element in most of these rhythms but any instrument can add melody by using several of them, of different pitch and playing offset parts. Groups of bells and shekeres for example can be arranged to add melody to the ensemble. Congas are the only instrument discussed so far capable of producing significant bass register sound. They are sometimes joined by one or more drums which sound primarily in the bass register to fill out the bass function.

Floor tom is the most common drum used for this purpose. It is common and capable of imitating a variety of traditional bass drums like surdo, bomba, gome, bas and junjun acceptably when played properly. When played in this style the tom is usually played with a soft mallet in the strong hand, keeping the weak hand free for muting and timing strokes. The strong hand performs tones (♩), muffs (♩) muted by the weak hand and side strokes (♩) on the metal rim of the tom. The weak hand can perform basses (♩) to mute a ringing head, palms (♩) tones, muffs and touches (♩) using technique similar to the

conga drum. Here are a few floor tom patterns to practice.

A handwritten musical staff in 4/4 time. The notes and rests are: quarter note, quarter rest, quarter note, quarter rest, quarter note, quarter rest, quarter note, quarter rest.

Samba surdo

A handwritten musical staff in 4/4 time. The notes and rests are: quarter note, eighth note, eighth note, quarter note, eighth note, eighth note, quarter note, eighth note, eighth note, quarter note.

Comparsa bomba

~~Comparsa bomba~~

A handwritten musical staff in 6/8 time. The notes and rests are: quarter note, eighth note, eighth note, quarter note, eighth note, eighth note, quarter note, eighth note, eighth note, quarter note, eighth note, eighth note, quarter note.

Mahi bas

A handwritten musical staff in 4/4 time. The notes and rests are: quarter note, quarter rest, quarter note, quarter rest, quarter note, quarter rest, quarter note, quarter rest.

Samba alt. surdo

## 2.5 Style and Improvisation

The most important thing about Folkloric style music is that it happens within a community. No one can play this music alone. By its very nature this music promotes, requires, interdependency and communication amongst a good sized group of people. Nor is Folkloric style music suited to the professional situation. One of the key concerns of professional music is money and how that money is split up. Hence professional bands try to get away with the least number of members necessary by having each member do as much as possible. Drumming in this style is the subject of Part II-Band Style. This is contrary to the Folkloric process wherein as many people as possible are invited to participate and each person does one job only. Money is not an issue in Folkloric style music. The issues are communication and cooperation. The music is a microcosm of life and can be very healing both socially and personally if approached in the right manner. As in any group dynamic the key to success is mutual respect and a willingness on the part of each person to fulfill their role for the greater good of the group. There are no heroes, only good team players.

### Repetition vs. Improvisation

Achieving a pleasing balance and flow between repetition and improvisation is one of the basic issues of style. Rote repetition, especially of support parts, is central to the success of the music and should predominate at most times. This must be relaxed however in order to keep the music from becoming static, to capture the loose feeling. For purposes of improvisational style and approach I find the following classifications useful.

1. Timekeepers would include clave, bell, shaker and sometimes bass function. With clave no variation is allowed. The whole point and challenge of clave is not to vary. The clave pattern only achieves its true stature after about 1000 flawless repetitions, where it truly begins to order time. One mistake breaks the momentum and you must start over. Bell function is almost as strict but sometimes specific variations or sectional changes are performed. If improvisation is allowed on a bell it will be in the context of melody function. Shaker function is a bit looser but the shaker must always be driving the groove with whatever they choose to play. Shaker is not a lead instrument, but it can add looseness to the strictly structured time section. Bass function instruments have a wide range of playing styles. Sometimes bass functions as part of the time by playing a part repetitively with little or no variation. In samba the bass instrument (surdo) is the primary timekeeper. Bass can also be melodic, as in the case of multiple surdos in large samba bands, which implies a wider improvisational range. Bass could also function as a lead instrument with unlimited improvisational scope. Hence players of bass function instruments must pay very close attention to their role in the



music to achieve appropriate performance style. The best players will find ways of keeping the music interesting without changing it. This involves the use of nuance and subtle perceptual shifts. More about this later.

2. Response instruments are usually from melody functions though any instrument can play a response role in some cases. Response are required to answer a call from the lead instrument with a specific response. Response instruments usually have a variety of variations which they can employ to hieghten the music or intensify conversation and they can sometimes even take over as lead. Good response playing involves study and careful listening.

3. Call or lead instruments are the freest in the ensemble. They are responsible for improvising tastefully, making calls to guide the music, and making sure the entire event is enjoyable for all. This requires quite a bit of musical sensitivity and is not the place to start. The best lead players know how thier support lines up intimately and engage the support parts in conversation, bringing attention to various beauties inherent in the rythm rather than playing over the top of the rythm in order to draw attention to themselves.

Within each of these classifications there is still a wide range of possibilities. Each rythm and each song is different. Only great sensitivity to the music as a whole will lead to proper balance. When getting started on any new rythm I advise playing it perfectly straight for a long time (hours of playing time) before experimenting with improvisation. Each set of basic parts represents a "key" to a certain "groove". You must first find that groove and get to know it. Then you can play freely.

A detailed analysis of Shiko is very instructive.

## 2.6 Shiko basic chart

The following page is what I will refer to as a basic chart for Shiko. It contains all the information you need to play Shiko. By playing these basic parts for a long time you will learn to feel the groove of Shiko, and embellishments will begin to flow without destroying the feel of the music. This is the process the entire group must go through before you can really play Shiko. Now part of the genius of Folkloric style becomes apparent. The best way to learn the groove is to listen to experienced players play while playing a simple support part. Hence places for both students and teachers are provided in the basic chart. For those without such help the following guidelines should be kept in mind.

1. The bell and axatse parts are very basic and should not be varied. The exception is that a bell may use a single insted of a double stroke sometimes to rest and provide variation. This should not be overdone as the train-like feel established by the timekeepers is essential.

# SHIKO FOLKLORIC STYLE

LO BELL 4/4  
 HI BELL 4/4

AXATSE 4/4

TUMBA 4/4

CONGA 4/4

HI CONGA 4/4

QUINTO LEAD 4/4

TRIPLET CLAVE

## COMPLETE SHIKO MELODY

QUINTO  
 CONGA  
 CONGA  
 TUMBA

2. Implicit clave has been scored in to emphasize that even though no instrument is playing the clave pattern the clave feel still underlies the music and must not be violated (eg. by reversing one of the drum parts). It is critical to keep the polarity established by the implicit clave intact at all times so that musical phrases can flow smoothly. It might be helpful to have someone play clave at least until the feel has been ingrained.

3. Melody is established by the tuning of the drums and the rhythmic placement of open tones. This melody is important in the music and must be kept in mind when improvising. These parts set up a double conversation. Tumba and lo conga converse every measure. Quinto and high conga converse once per clave cycle (2 measures). The drum parts deserve individual attention.

## 2.7 Shiko support parts

The tumba in Shiko plays a classic tumbao, driving the dance pulse with bass strokes, with an open tone on the upbeat of the weak dance pulse. Placing a muff squarely on the upbeat of the strong dance pulse makes this tumbao very blocky and hard-driving. This is part of the feel of Shiko. The bass strokes on the beat should be relentless and steady, like a disco bass drum. Because of its great responsibility to the rhythm and because 3 other drums are speaking somewhat more freely improvisation on the tumba should be restricted to small embellishments and used sparsely, simply to keep the part from becoming "locked up". The most common variation is to double the final tone. Too much variation on the tumba will destroy the groove so beware of mutiny on the tumba.

The lo conga part is somewhat freer

# SHIKO, TUMBA VARIATIONS

IMPLICIT CLAVE

4  
4

TUMBA  
(BASIC PART)

VAR 1  
(DOUBLE TONE)

VAR 2  
(DOUBLE TONE  
SWITCH SIDES)

VAR 3 (SWITCH  
BACK)

VAR 4, 5  
(ALTERING POSITION  
OF MUFF)

VAR 6, 7  
(REPLACE MUFF  
WITH TONE, DOUBLE)

VAR 8 (CINQUILLO)  
(FOR TURNAROUNDS)

VAR 9 (MUFF ROLL)

CONGA THE CONGA DRUM PART IS SOMEWHAT FREER THAN THE TUMBA BECAUSE THE CONGA DOES NOT BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DRIVING THE DANCE PULSE. THE CONGA IS PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH CREATING MELODY BY PLAYING TONES ON THE FIRST HALF OF EACH MEASURE. THE CONGA PLAYER MUST ALSO KEEP TRACK OF THE IMPLICIT CLAVE AND KEEP THEIR PART LINED UP CORRECTLY, THOUGH THE POSSIBILITIES FOR EMBELLISHMENT ARE GREATER THAN WITH TUMBA THE CONGA PLAYER SHOULD STILL REMAIN VERY CLOSE TO THE ROOT PART TO ALLOW THE HIGHER DRUMS EVEN GREATER IMPROVISATIONAL RANGE. PLAYING THIS DRUM IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF PLAYING IN A SPOT. SO LONG AS THE TONES FALL ON THE FIRST HALF OF EACH MEASURE (IN ANSWER TO THE TUMBA) ANY PATTERN WILL DO. ~~IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT YOU SAY IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN WHEN YOU SAY IT.~~ AS LONG AS YOU SPEAK IN THE RIGHT SPOT WHAT YOU SAY IS YOUR OWN CHOICE.

# SHIKO - CONGA VARIATIONS

## CONGA

The image shows a series of musical staves for conga variations. The first section is in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of seven staves of music. The first staff has a 4/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp. The notes are quarter notes and eighth notes, with some slurs and accents. The second staff has 'x' marks under some notes, indicating slaps. The third staff has 'x' marks under some notes, indicating slaps. The fourth staff has 'x' marks under some notes, indicating slaps. The fifth staff has 'x' marks under some notes, indicating slaps. The sixth staff has 'x' marks under some notes, indicating slaps. The seventh staff has 'x' marks under some notes, indicating slaps. The second section is in 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff has a 2/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp. The notes are quarter notes and eighth notes, with some slurs and accents. The second staff has 'x' marks under some notes, indicating slaps. The third staff has 'x' marks under some notes, indicating slaps. The fourth staff has 'x' marks under some notes, indicating slaps. There is a triplet of eighth notes in the third staff of the second section.

ROOT PART.  
(x COULD BE x OR d)

ADD SLAPS ON LAST BEAT

FILL IN WITH  
GALLOP STROKES  
(MANY STROKE  
VARIATIONS ARE POSSIBLE)

MIX & MATCH

ISOLATE & REPEAT

SHORT TENSION  
PHRASES

MUFF FIRST TONE

SPEAK ON DOWNBEAT

ETC.

## HI CONGA

THE HI CONGA BEARS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FILLING IN THE UPBEATS AND THIS MUST BE RESPECTED. THE BASS STROKES ON THE BEAT ARE NOT ESSENTIAL, SINCE THE TUMBA IS ALSO PLAYING THESE, BUT THEY ARE IMPORTANT IN GETTING THE CORRECT DRIVING FEEL. ONCE YOU'VE PLAYED THIS PART LONG ENOUGH TO FEEL IT STRONGLY, EXPERIMENT WITH LEAVING THE BASS STROKES OUT, ESPECIALLY AT FAST TEMPOS. THE UPBEAT SLAPS ON THE FRONT HALF OF CLAVE SHOULD STAY IN PLACE BUT THERE ARE GREAT POSSIBILITIES FOR CONVERSATION WITH QUINTO BY EMBELLISHING THE TONES ON THE BACK HALF OF CLAVE. THIS SHOULD BE TASTEFULLY DONE AND ALWAYS IN RESPONSE TO THE QUINTO, RETURNING IMMEDIATELY TO THE ROOT PATTERN ON THE FRONT HALF OF THE CLAVE. THIS WILL SET UP A MORE OPEN CONVERSATION BETWEEN QUINTO AND HIGH CONGA AT HALF THE SPEED ~~OF~~ THE TUMBA/LO CONGA CONVERSATION.

# SHIKO - HI CONGA VARIATIONS

4  
4

The musical notation consists of 13 staves. The first two staves show rhythmic patterns with vertical strokes and accents. The next three staves show patterns with 'x' marks and slurs. The remaining staves show various melodic and rhythmic variations, including triplets and slurs.

IMPLICIT  
CLAVE

ROOT PART

LEAVE OUT BASSES

ADD SLAPS AT  
END

BACK-HALF  
MELODIC VARIATIONS

DON'T VARY  
FRONT HALF  
EXCEPT TO LEAVE  
OUT BASSES



## QUINTO - LEAD DRUM

THE QUINTO IS THE LEAD DRUM AND CARRIES LESS RESPONSIBILITY TO THE BASIC RYTHM. QUINTO CAN AND SHOULD PLAY MORE FREELY THAN THE OTHER DRUMS, PROVIDING DECORATION AND CONSTANT CHANGE, INTERACTING WITH DANCERS OR OTHER DRUMMERS, AND CALLING CHANGES IN THE MUSIC OR DANCE, THOUGH THE LIMITS OF VARIATION ARE VAGUE AND DEPEND MOSTLY ON THE MUSICAL ABILITIES OF THE PLAYER, AN IMPORTANT POINT TO KEEP IN MIND IS THAT THE MELODIC SWING AND CONVERSATIONAL POSSIBILITIES ARE SET UP BY THE ROOT PATTERN. IN GENERAL THE QUINTO SHOULD PLAY TONES ON THE FRONT HALF OF CLAVE AND SLAPS ON THE BACK HALF, STICKING PRIMARILY TO THIS <sup>TONAL</sup> FORMAT WHILE ALLOWING RYTHMIC VARIATIONS TO FLOW FREELY WILL ENGAGE THE OTHER DRUMS IN THE VARIATION/CONVERSATION WHILE KEEPING THE MELODY INTACT, THIS BALANCE OF KEEPING THE RYTHM IN PLACE BUT NOT STATIC, WHILE INSPIRING INTERACTION AMONG THE ENSEMBLE AND WITH THE SINGERS & DANCERS IS THE GOAL OF GOOD LEAD DRUMMING. PLAYING THE GOV CALL IN SUCH A WAY THAT EVERYONE WOULD HEAR AND STOP IS GOOD FINAL

# SHIKO - QUINTO RIFFS

(PRACTICE WITH HAJAJIG REVERSAL)

4/4

Two columns of musical notation, each containing 12 rows of rhythmic patterns and notes.

IMPLICIT  
CLAVE

ROOT PART

MIX + MATCH  
CINQUILLO  
INVERSIONS

UPBEATS WITH  
RESOLUTION

FLAM S

CHOPS

TRIPLETS

OFF THE BEAT

ON THE BEAT

TONAL ALTERNATION

STEP CALL

5ive

## SUMMARY.

OBVIOUSLY THE FINITE NUMBER OF VARIATIONS I HAVE PROVIDED IS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG. AN INFINITE NUMBER OF THINGS ARE POSSIBLE, OF COURSE, BUT PLAYERS MUST ALWAYS BE CONSIDERATE OF THE MUSIC AS A WHOLE, LESS IS MORE IN MOST CASES AND A VARIATION ONLY MAKES SENSE WHEN THE ROOT PATTERN HAS BEEN WELL-ESTABLISHED. FOR EVERY VARIATION THAT PICKS THE MUSIC UP THERE ARE A MILLION VARIATIONS THAT ARE MORE LIKELY TO DESTROY. 2 DRUMS VARYING SIMULTANEOUSLY CAN KILL THE GROOVE ALSO. IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO LISTEN CLOSELY AS YOU PLAY AND TO EXERCISE CAUTION AND DISCIPLINE WHEN MAKING CHANGES. OFTEN NO CHANGE OR THE SMALLEST POSSIBLE CHANGE IS THE BEST CHOICE. THE QUANTITY AND STYLE OF IMPROVISATION IS VERY DEPENDENT ON SITUATION. A GROUP OF DRUMMERS SITTING AROUND HAVING A JAM SESSION CAN AFFORD TO BE

WILDER AND MORE FLAGRANT IN THEIR  
IMPROVISATION. IF YOU CRASH THE  
BEAT IT'S NO BIG DEAL, YOU SIMPLY  
START IT BACK UP AND REMEMBER NOT  
TO DO THAT AGAIN! (AT LEAST NOT  
WITHOUT PRACTICING IT). WHEN PLAYING  
WITH SINGERS AND/OR DANCERS A  
DRUMMER MUST BE MORE SENSITIVE  
TO THE NEEDS OF THE ENTIRE  
GROUP, WHICH USUALLY MEANS PLAYING  
IN A MUCH MORE RESERVED STYLE.  
BUILDING ENERGY THROUGH REPETITION  
AND INTERACTION SHOULD BE THE GOAL,  
NOT SHOWING OFF YOUR CHOPS. CHOPS  
ARE WORSE THAN IRRELEVANT IF A  
DANCER FINDS THEM CONFUSING. FAR  
BETTER TO REPEAT THE ROOT PART  
ENDLESSLY SO THE DANCERS CAN GROOVE.  
YOUR DUTY AS A PERCUSSIONIST IS TO  
BE A SOLDIER FOR THE RHYTHM, CARRYING  
YOUR PART AS BEST YOU CAN AND  
REVELING IN THE SUCCESS OF THE GROUP  
RATHER THAN IN YOUR OWN PERSONAL  
RECOGNITION. ONE EGO-TRIPPER CAN  
RUIN THE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE  
ELSE. DON'T LET THAT PERSON BE  
YOU!

FURTHER DISCUSSION OF

IMPROVISATORY TECHNIQUES

PRACTICING A RHYTHM SECTION

2.13

## EXAMPLE 2 BEMBE

BEMBE IS A SACRED RHYTHM FROM CUBA USED FOR SINGING AND DANCING FOR THE ORISA (SPIRITS) OF THE LUCUMI (YORUBA) PEOPLE.

THE DEGREE OF SANCTITY OF THE RHYTHM ~~DE~~PENDS ON THE USE TO WHICH IT IS PUT, THE MOST SACRED DRUMS OF THE LUCUMI ARE THE BATA. BEMBE CAN BE THOUGHT OF AS A STYLE OF PLAYING BATA ON CONGA DRUMS, INDEED BEMBE BEARS A CLOSE RESEMBLANCE TO THE BATA TOQUE (RHYTHM) LHA LHA LOKEFUN.

BEMBE IS TYPICALLY PLAYED IN CEREMONIES THAT BEAR THE SAME NAME BUT THAT ARE SOMEWHAT MORE INFORMAL THAN THE RITUALS INVOLVING THE BATA DRUMS. IT REPRESENTS A SECULARIZATION OF

THE BATA TOQUES IN THAT BEMBE CAN BE USED TO SUMMON THE ORISA, OR MERELY TO HAVE A PARTY IN THEIR HONOR.

BEMBE CAN ALSO BE THOUGHT OF AS THE MOTHER OF AFRO-CUBAN  $\frac{6}{8}$  RHYTHMS. THE FURTHER SECULARIZATION OF THE BEMBE STYLE RESULTS IN SUCH RHYTHMS AS CAMBIERTO, BACOSA RUMBA COLUMBIA AND MANY OTHERS.

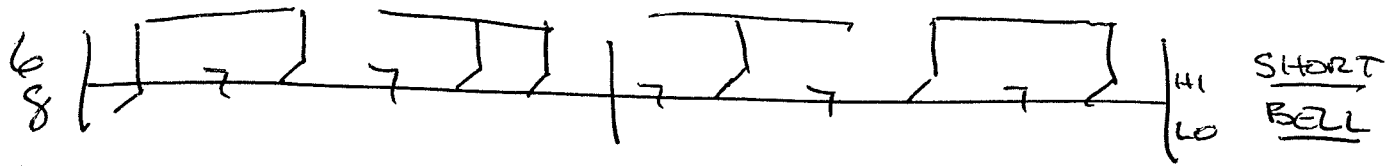
ALL THE PARTS OF BEMBE ARE VERY FUNDAMENTAL. THE LEAD IS IN THE TUMBA (OFTEN CALLED CAJA) AS IS TRUE WITH MOST AFRO-ATLANTIC SPIRITUAL MUSIC. THIS IS SIGNIFICANT, AS THE LOWEST VOICE IN THE ENSEMBLE THE TUMBA HAS GREAT POWER. THIS POWER CARRIES THE RESPONSIBILITY OF USING IT WISELY. MOST PARTICULARLY IN A SPIRITUAL SETTING, WHERE THE LEAD DRUMMER IS EXPECTED TO USE EVERY AVAILABLE RESOURCE TO COMMUNICATE WITH SPIRIT. THE TUMBA LEAD MUST



BE PLAYED WITH GREAT AUTHORITY AND INTENTION, EVEN IN A STRICTLY SECULAR SETTING THE TUMBA CANNOT FLIT AND FLUTTER ABOUT LIKE A QUINTO LEAD. THIS WILL DESTROY THE DRIVE OF THE RHYTHM. THE TUMBA LEAD MUST FLOW SMOOTHLY FROM TENSION TO RESOLUTION AND MUST GUIDE THE REST OF THE ENSEMBLE THROUGH MOOD AND ENERGY VARIATIONS WITH GREAT COMMAND OF SUBLETY AND NUANCE, AND GREAT FEELING FOR THE OVERALL EVENT. THIS REQUIRES ENORMOUS SENSITIVITY AND MUSICAL STYLE AND SHOULD NOT BE APPROACHED LIGHTLY. AS WITH ALL MUSIC OF A SPIRITUAL NATURE BEMBE MUST BE LEARNED AND PLAYED WITH RESPECT AND DEVOTION. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT BEMBE IS SOLEMN. INDEED, FAR FROM IT, BEMBE IS A PARTY, AND SHOULD CAPTURE THE JOYOUS EXPRESSION OF THE AFRICAN SPIRIT!

# 6/8 BELL PATTERN

THE BELL PATTERN USED IN BEMBE:



IS ONE OF THE OLDEST AND MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPTS IN ALL MUSIC. IT'S BEAUTIES ARE MANY, AND MANY VOLUMES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO DISCOURSE UPON THEM FULLY. AT THIS POINT I WILL MERELY SAY THAT THIS PATTERN MUST BE COMPLETELY INTERNALIZED BY ANY SERIOUS STUDENT OF AFRO-ATLANTIC MUSIC. THE PATTERN MUST BE REPEATED AND MEDITATED UPON MANY HOURS EVERY WEEK FOR MANY YEARS, AND REVELATIONS UPON THE BELL PATTERN WILL OCCUR CONTINUOUSLY THROUGHOUT THE STUDENT'S LIFE. IT IS THE WAY OF THIS MUSIC. ENJOY!

MEDITATION ON THE BELL PATTERN

# SHORT BELL EXERCISES

## I, STEADY BEAT POLYRHYTHMS

6/8

The exercises are arranged in a grid of 12 rows and 2 columns of staves. Each row represents an exercise. The notation uses stems with flags to represent pulses. Exercises 1-9 show 4, 6, and 3 pulses on different beats. Exercises 10-12 show 8 pulses on different triplets.

- 1 (4 PULSE  
1ST TRIPLET)
- 2 (4 PULSE  
2ND TRIPLET)
- 3 (4 PULSE  
3RD TRIPLET)
- 4 (6 PULSE ON  
DOWN BEAT)
- 5 (6 PULSE ON)  
BACK BEAT,
- 6 (3 PULSE)  
ON 1)
- 7 (3 PULSE)  
ON 2)
- 8 (3 PULSE)  
ON 3)
- 9 (3 PULSE)  
ON 4)
- 10 (8 PULSE)  
1ST TRIPLET)
- 11 (8 PULSE)  
2ND TRIPLET,
- 12 (8 PULSE)  
3RD TRIPLET,

# SHORT BELL EXERCISES

## II. HOCKETING, MODALITIES

6/8

- 1) SHORT BELL WITH HOCKET
  - 2)  $\frac{6}{8}$  CLAVE WITH HOCKET
  - 3) SHORT BELL WITH  $\frac{6}{8}$  CLAVE
  - 4)  $\frac{6}{8}$  CLAVE WITH 4 PULSE
  - 5) LONG BELL WITH 4 PULSE
  - 6) LONG BELL AS A MODE OF SHORT BELL
  - 7) SYMMETRIC BELL
- III. BASIC  $\frac{6}{8}$  POLYRHYTHMS
- 1) 2 ACROSS 3
  - 2) EMBELLISHMENTS
  - 3) 4 ACROSS 3
  - 4) 2 ACROSS 3 MODALITIES

## BEMBE VERSIONS, STYLES, ETC.

BEMBE WAS TAUGHT TO ME SEVERAL DIFFERENT WAYS BY SEVERAL DIFFERENT PEOPLE, AND I HAVE HEARD IT SOUND VARIOUS WAYS ON DIFFERENT RECORDS. THIS IS NOT SURPRISING AS BEMBE IS FOLK MUSIC AND SUBJECT TO REGIONAL, TEMPORAL AND PERSONAL VARIATION.

WITH THIS IN MIND I HAVE PRESENTED 3 POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENTS FOR DRUM BEMBE AS WELL AS A BEMBE FOR SHEKERS ONLY. <sup>(WIRE)</sup> PLAY THEM ALL, LEARN HOW THEY SOUND, AND MAKE YOUR OWN DECISION AS TO WHICH ONES TO USE, THAT WAY YOU CAN DEVELOP YOUR OWN STYLE.

# BEMBE VERSION 1

MEDIUM

The musical score is written on a system of six staves. The first five staves are labeled on the right as GANKOGU I, AXATSE, QUINTO, CONGA, and TUMBA ROOT (LOAD). The sixth staff is labeled BASIC TUMBA VARIATIONS and contains six numbered variations. The notation includes various rhythmic symbols such as beams, stems, and notes, along with specific markings like 'x' and '7'. A wavy line is drawn across the top of the sixth staff.

GANKOGU I

AXATSE

QUINTO

CONGA

TUMBA ROOT  
(LOAD)

BASIC TUMBA  
VARIATIONS

- 1) ISOLATE + REPEAT
- 2) SHORT TENSION
- 3) TURNAROUND
- 4) TURNAROUND
- 5) BELLY PATTERN
- 6) SPIRIT POSSESSION  
BREAK

## PLAYING BEMBE

FOR NOW I RECOMMEND PLAYING AT MEDIUM TEMPO AND KEEPING ALL THE SUPPORT PARTS PERFECTLY STRAIGHT WHILE EXPERIMENTING WITH TUMBA VARIATIONS. IN A SPIRITUAL SETTING THE SUPPORT PARTS WOULD GENERALLY BE KEPT PERFECTLY STRAIGHT FOR A LONG TIME, TO ESTABLISH THE GROOVE, ~~AND~~ INDUCE TRANCE AND TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THE SINGERS AND LEAD DRUMMER.

STRIVE FOR A SMOOTH, RELAXED, ROLLING FEEL, ~~AND~~ BEMBE IS NOT A WAR RHYTHM. THE IDEA IS TO BRING IN THE SPIRITS IN A CALM AND FESTIVE MOOD, NOT ANGRY AND AGITATED. THERE ARE OTHER RHYTHMS FOR THAT. BEMBE SHOULD FEEL SMOOTH AND EFFORTLESS, AND YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO PLAY IT FOR A LONG TIME.

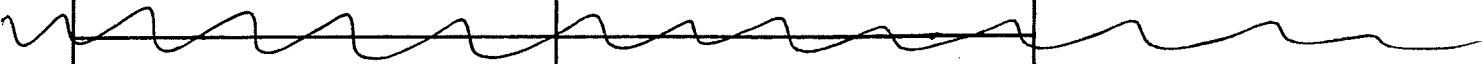
SHEKERE S ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF LUCUMI MUSIC. SHEKERE S CAN ACCOMPANY THE DRUMS OR AN ENTIRE BEMBE CAN BE PLAYED ON SHEKERE S ALONE, SINGING WITH THE SHEKERE S IS PARTICULARLY POWERFUL.



# BEMBE FOR SHEKERE'S

6/8

		LO SHEKERE
		MID SHEKERE
		HI SHEKERE



## BEMBE VERSION 2

		GANKOWI
		AYATSE
		QUINTO
		CONGA
		TUMBA
<u>VARIATIONS</u>		
		7) ORNAMENTS FIRST TONE
		8)

## DISCUSSION OF BEMBE VERSION 2

THIS VERSION HAS A VERY SIMILAR FEEL TO VERSION 1 EVEN THOUGH THE SUPPORT DRUMS ARE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT. VERSION 2 DEVELOPS LESS MOMENTUM THAN VERSION 1, HAS A TENDENCY TO BECOME FUNKY, RATHER THAN SMOOTH AND LOPING, BUT IT IS BEMBE NONETHELESS. A CLOSER INSPECTION SHOWS THAT THE DIFFERENCES ARE LARGELY SUPERFICIAL. NOTE PARTICULARLY HOW THE SLAPS ON THE 2ND OF EACH TRIPLET, ALL PLAYED BY THE QUINTO IN VERSION 1 ARE NOW SHARED BETWEEN THE TWO SUPPORT DRUMS, AND HOW THE MELODY HAS THE SAME 'DOWN AND UP AND' FEEL, THOUGH IT IS ACCOMPLISHED BY A DIFFERENT DEVICE.

## FULL ENSEMBLE BEMBE

BY COMBINING ALL THE IDEAS FROM THE PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF BEMBE IT IS POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE A LARGE ENSEMBLE BEMBE. THE ENERGY CREATED BY 8 PEOPLE PLAYING INTERLOCKING RHYTHMIC PARTS IS ASTOUNDING, WHEN COMBINED WITH SINGING AND DANCING THIS BEMBE TAKES ON IT'S FULL STATURE AS A COMMUNALLY BONDING CEREMONY, WHERE ALL PARTICIPATE IN A MUTUALLY INTERDEPENDENT FASHION TO CREATE AN EVENT OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR ALL. I SINCERELY HOPE YOU GET A CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE THIS.

# BEMBE FOR LARGER ENSEMBLE

6/8

GAJKOGUI

AXATSÉ

HI SHEKERE

LO SHEKERE

QUINTO

HI CONGA

LO CONGA

TUMBA ROOT

MORE TUMBA VARIATIONS

a) 6 PULSE FLAMS

(10) 6 PULSE 4 GROUPS

# DISCUSSION OF BEMBE SUPPORT DRUMS

UP UNTIL NOW WE HAVE BEEN KEEPING THE SUPPORT PARTS OF BEMBE ABSOLUTELY STRAIGHT IN ORDER TO LEARN THE SOUND CLEARLY. TRADITION, ANALYSIS AND EXPERIMENTATION WILL REVEAL WAYS OF VARYING THESE DRUMS WHILE MAINTAINING THE BEMBE FEEL. THERE ARE 3 TYPES OF BEMBE SUPPORT PARTS AS SHOWN IN THE FULL ENSEMBLE SCORE.

## 1) QUINTO, OKONKOLO, KI-PA

THE QUINTO PART IS A COMMON PART ON OKONKOLO (THE HIGHEST PITCHED BATA DRUM) AND IS CALLED BY THE VOCALIZATION KI-PA. STUDY OF THE BATA REPERTOIRE REVEALS 2 TYPES OF VARIATIONS.

1) BENDING INTO  $\frac{4}{4}$

2) MOVING TO UPBEATS

ANALYSIS AND EXPERIMENTATION YIELDS A NUMBER OF WAYS OF DOING THIS,

# KI-PA VARIATIONS

6  
8

BELL

KI-PA

BENDING INTO  
4 VARIATIONS

1)

2)

3) MOVING TO  
UPBEAT VARIATIONS

4) MOVING BACK  
TO KI-PA

5) MAKING IT  
SPARSER

6) COMBINING  
BOTH TYPES

7) FULL BELL  
CYCLE EXAMPLE

8) MULTIPLE  
BELL CYCLE  
EXAMPLE

NEEDLESS TO SAY ANY VARIATION OF KI-PA NEEDS TO BE BLENDED WITH A GOOD DEAL OF STRAIGHT AHEAD PLAYING. VARIATION IS SPICE AND SHOULD NOT BE OVERDONE. TRY TO ORCHESTRATE VARIATIONS TO GO WITH SONGS, STATE PHRASES AND RESPOND TO OTHER DRUMS RATHER THAN PLAYING PURELY SPONTANEOUSLY. OF COURSE I HAVE HEARD SPONTANEOUS OUT BURSTS FROM BEMBE QUINTO PLAYERS THAT SOUNDED WONDERFUL SO BE OPEN TO THE SPIRIT OF THE MUSE. A SECTION WHERE QUINTO TAKES OVER AS SOLOIST CAN ~~ALSO~~ BE ARRANGED INTO THE RHYTHM OR CALLED BY THE TUMBA. USE YOUR IMAGINATION BUT REMEMBER WHAT BEMBE SOUNDS LIKE. IF YOU CHANGE IT TOO MUCH YOU'LL BE PLAYING A DIFFERENT RHYTHM, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO THINK OF A NEW NAME.

## 2) BEMBE HI CONGA - $\frac{6}{8}$ TUMBAO

THE BEMBE HI CONGA PART IS A VERY COMMON TUMBAO IN  $\frac{6}{8}$ . THE DANCE PULSE IS MARKED BY BASS STROKES, THE UPBEATS OF THE WEAK DANCE PULSE ARE MARKED WITH TONES. THIS PART IS CRITICAL TO BEMBE AND SHOULD BE MAINTAINED WITH VERY LITTLE VARIATION. ~~THE~~ THE VARIATIONS THAT ARE ACCEPTABLE IN THE BEMBE STYLE TAKE THE FORM OF SUBTLE ORNAMENTATIONS. ALTERNATE HANDING PATTERNS AND MORE RADICAL VARIATIONS WILL BE DISCUSSED IN REFERENCE TO RUMBA COLUMBIA AND HAITIAN ZEPOL AND NAGO WHICH ARE ALSO FOUNDED ON  $\frac{6}{8}$  TUMBAO



# 6/8 TUMBAO VARIATIONS FOR BEMBE

Return

6/8

BELL

6/8 TUMBAO

## VARIATIONS

- 1) VERSION 2 (MAX SLAP)
- 2) DROP A TONE
- 3) TONE TRILL, MUFF TRILL
- 4) BASSES ON 8 POISE, TONE TRILL
- 5) SWITCHING SIDES
- 6) MUFF A TONE
- 7) RIM ON LAST STROKE
- 8) TONE IN PLACE OF SLAP
- 9) BELL PATTERN
- 10) SHORT STRESS VARIATIONS

### 3) BEMBE LO LOUGA - BOMBA PART

THIS PART IS ALSO FUNDAMENTAL TO MUCH AFRO-CUBAN  $\frac{6}{8}$ . IT IS BASED ON THE 2 ACROSS 3 POLYRHYTHM, IT DRIVES THE DANLE PULSE WITH BASS STROKES, AND A TONE EMPHASISES THE SECOND STROKE OF THE BELL PATTERN (BOMBA OR BOMBO). THIS RHYTHMIC POINT, THE PULSE IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE WEAK DANLE PULSE, IS ALSO STRESSED WITH A SLAP IN THE  $\frac{6}{8}$  TUMBAO, STRESSING THIS PULSE PROVIDES A FORWARD-DRIVING FEEL WHICH IS RESOLVED ON THE NEXT STRONG DANLE PULSE. THIS FORWARD-DRIVING OR HIP-SWINGING FEEL IS IMPORTANT IN A GREAT DEAL OF AFRO-CUBAN MUSIC, AS WITH THE  $\frac{6}{8}$  TUMBAO THE VARIATION IS STRICTLY ORNAMENTAL IN THE BEMBE STYLE, BUT GETS A BIT LOOSER IN THE COLUMBIA AND COMPARSA STYLES.

BEMBE LO CONGA VARIATIONS

DRUM

BELL

LO CONGA  
(BOMBA PART)

VARIATIONS

- 1) LEAVE MUFF OFF
- 2) MUFF TO SLAP
- 3) MOVE MUFF
- 4) MOVE 2nd BASS
- 5) LEAVE 2nd BASS
- 6) MOVE TONE
- 7) DOUBLE TONE
- 8) ALLEJED BASS ON BOMBA

## ADVANCED PLAYING OF THE BEMBE LEAD PART

SO FAR WE HAVE FOCUSED ON SPECIFIC VARIATIONS OF THE BEMBE TUMBA IN ORDER TO LEARN THE BASIC FEEL, ONCE MASTERED HOWEVER THE VARIATION ON THIS PART IS THEORETICALLY INFINITE, LIMITED ONLY BY THE TECHNIQUE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE DRUMMER, THE MOST IMPORTANT PART IS CLEARLY THE TONE ON 1, HOWEVER EVEN THIS CAN BE ALTERED. ALL THE TECHNIQUES FOR GENERATING VARIATIONS DISCUSSED IN THE CONTEXT OF SHIKO QUINTO CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON BEMBE TUMBA, SO LONG AS THE BASIC FEEL IS KEPT CLEARLY IN MIND, ONE THING TO FOCUS ON PARTICULARLY IS ROLLING FIGURES USING MUFFS. GOOD MUFFS ON A TUMBA ARE VERY POWERFUL AND ARE EASY TO PLAY FAST AND DISTINCTLY, THEY PROVIDE EXCITEMENT WITHOUT CLUTTERING TO MELODY UNDULY.

WHEN PLAYING BEMBE TUMBA TRY TO PLAY DELIBERATELY AND THINK IN LONG (MULTIPLE BEAT PATTERNS) MUSICAL PHRASES, BUT REMAIN OPEN TO INSTANT INSPIRATION, AND RESPONSIVE CONVERSATION WITH DANCERS, SINGERS & OTHER DRUMS.

# MORE BEMBE TUMBA VARIATIONS

886

BELL

BEMBE TUMBA ROOT  
VARIATIONS

- 11) ACCENTED BASS VARIATIONS
- 12)
- 13) DIMINUTION
- 14)
- 15) MUFF ROLL VARIATIONS
- 16)
- 17)
- 18) TONES PAST 1 VARIATIONS
- 19)
- 20)

MIX + MATCH FRONT + BACK HALVES.

SONGS FOR BEMBE (SHORT BELL)

ELEGUA - OGUN - OCHOSI (THE WARRIORS)

(VAD)  
I. ELEGUA

1) CALL: I BARAGO MOJUBA  
I BARAGO AGO MOJUBA  
OMODE KONI KOSI BARAGO  
AGO MOJUBA  
ELEGUA ESHU LONA

RESPONSE: (SAME)

2) C: AGO ELEGUA ABU KENKE  
AGO ELEGUA ABU KENKE

R: (SAME)

3) FIRST CALL: ABUKENKE ABUKENKE  
ELEGUA DE MASANTIO

R: ABUKENKE ABUKENKE

C2: OGUN LATOP YAWO

C1: ELEGUA DE MASANTIO

(FASTOR)

## II. OGUN

1) C: OGUN DE ARERE

IYE GBO GBO LO KUA  
OGUN GUANILE (O KEGUALOWA)  
ARERE

IYE GBO GBO ~~LO~~ KUA E

R: (SAME)

2) C: AGUANILE ONILE

R: AGUANILE MARI MARI

3) C: EH AFEDID

R: (SAME)

(FASTOR)

## III. OCHOSI

1) ~~OGUN~~ C: OCHOSI AYILODA  
MALA MALA DE

R: (SAME)

2) C: SIRE SIRE



R: ODE MATA ODE ODE




3) C: ODE MATA

R: IGUARA O MATA

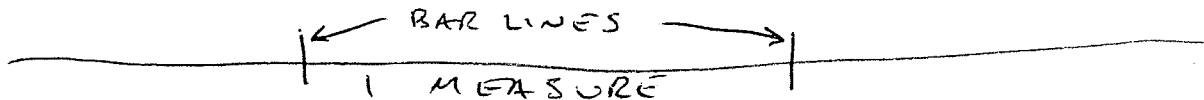
## Apendix A.-Modern Metric Notation

Modern Metric Notation is of european origin and in spite of the relative simplicity of European rythms as compared to the rich Indian and African traditions, it suffices to notate these musics as it is based on principles which underly all rythm. These principles are time span and pulsation.

Pulsation is the phenomenon of time ordering itself into regular bits. Perhaps it is a feature of time itself, perhaps it is a figment of human perception, but it is real. This "silent pulsation" is the thing that makes rythm possible. One can find a silent pulsation in all rythm, whether an instrument is actually playing it or not. There may be many possibilities, nonetheless in any music played in time it will be possible to find a steady pulsation which the music is based upon. This pulsation I will call the Basic Pulse. It may be quite fast. I will represent a basic pulse by an eighth note (  ). Finer divisions of time can occur in the music, but they are not generally percieved as a steady flow. These are the sixteenth (  ) and higher order notes.

The Dance Pulse is the pulsation in the music to which the body tends to move. It is usually slower than the basic pulse, each dance pulse being composed of 2 or more basic pulses. The dance pulse is sometimes called the "beat". Use The ears to find the basic pulse, use the body to find the dance pulse. If a dance pulse is composed of 2 basic pulses the dance pulse is said to be binarily divided. If a dance pulse is composed of 3 basic pulses it is ternary. If 4, quarternary. Etc. and so on. A binary dance pulse is represented by a quarter note (  ), A ternary dance pulse is a dotted quarter note (  ), a qaurternary dance pulse is a half-note (  ).

The Time Span is a length of time, measured in basic pulses, over which the underlying rythmic template of the music repeats itself. In most music this time is 2 dance pulses. In this notation the time span is represented by the measure. The measure is the space between 2 bar lines.



The way pulsations are organised within the time span determines the time signature. There are many possible time signatures, but the 3 simplest possibilities suffice to describe the vast majority of the world's music. A measure composed of 2 binary dance pulses is said to be in (  $\frac{2}{4}$  ) time. 2 ternary dance pulses make a measure of (  $\frac{6}{4}$  ) and 2 quarternary pulses make a measure of (  $\frac{4}{4}$  ). The 2 dance pulses that make up a measure of music are referred to as the strong (first) and weak (second) downbeats. Strong and weak do not refer to volume, as often the weak down beat recieves greater stress than the strong, (as in rock music where the weak downbeat is called the "backbeat" and is always stressed) but rather to a sense of closure or resolution. The strong down beat will feel more stable and resolved.



I claim that these 3 metric conventions suffice to notate the bulk of the world's music. Each has its own personality and peculiarities, however before we proceed further let us examine a few of the ambiguities and exceptions.

1. Hemiola refers to an apparent switching back and forth from one subdivision scheme to another, usually binary to ternary. This is quite common in west african music.

HEMIOLA

In this case the notation is somewhat arbitrary. The first (or strong) measure could be written in "waltz time" ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) which indicates a measure composed of 3 binary dance pulses, 1 strong and 2 weak, the second (or weak) measure remaining in ( $\frac{6}{8}$ ),

or it could be notated in ( $\frac{2}{4}$ ) using the triplet marking.

Both alternate notations are cumbersome at best, and misleading at worst. The waltz time notation gives the false impression that there are 3 dance pulses in the first measure and only 2 in the second. In my experience this is not generally true, the hemiola usually lasts for 4 dance pulses. The ( $\frac{2}{4}$ ) notation gives the false impression that the pulses in the weak measure are divided in a binary fashion. In my experience most hemiola will be best notated in ( $\frac{6}{8}$ ).

2. Polymeter refers to a continuous crossing of different subdivision schemes. Depending on the level of subdivision of the dance pulse these can be simple or complex.

2 ACROSS 3  
(SIMPLE POLY METER)

This is the most common case and as with hemiola the ( $\frac{6}{8}$ ) notation is less cumbersome and more true to the actual feel of the music than other possibilities.

3 ACROSS 4  
(COMPLEX POLY METER)

In this case the finer level subdivision of the dance pulse makes both notations cumbersome, hence choice of notation is arbitrary and should be based on context. This and even more complex polymeters are actually quite rare and can be dealt with individually.

3. Uneven division of the time span is represented by odd time signatures, for example jazz ( $\frac{5}{4}$ ).

"TAKE 5"

These cases are also rare in most music (although common in hindustani tala) and can be dealt with individually

4. Unequal time spans. The above example could also be notated,

"TAKE 3+2"

Now the division of each time span is even but the time spans are of different lengths. Choice of notation is again arbitrary and should be based context. Much more complex combinations of all these examples can be found in the hindustani tala repertoire however it is interesting to note that the most common hindustani tala "Tintal" is a simple ( $\frac{4}{4}$ ) rhythm.

"TINTAL"

Of course there are many other exceptions, complications and shortcomings of this notational system. The thing to keep in mind is that notation is only a tool for communication and analysis. Notes written on a page are not music. They only become music when played by a musician with passion and sensitivity. No amount of notational skill can replace a musician's "feel" for the music. There are subtleties in all music which notation will be unable to capture. This is why we will always need live people to perform real music, many thanks to all spirits!

A graphic description of the 3 subdivision schemes

- 1)  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$  → STRAIGHT UP AND DOWN
- 2)  $\frac{6}{8}$   $\frac{6}{8}$  → ROUNDED, ROLLING
- 3)  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$  → ANGULAR, SQUARE

## Essay on Community, by Dave Lyons

Community is a subject of great concern to many in our modern society, and for good reason. With massive urbanization, rapid transportation, and extensive media disinformation the ties that bind people together have been frayed to the point where most people feel completely isolated and alone among our teeming millions. This sense of isolation leads to an attitude of selfishness which propagates, eventually leading to crime which in turn justifies governmental control and a complete loss of individual freedom and choice. Sound familiar?

Many thinking people have witnessed this trend and sought to escape it via the "counter culture" which places the freedom of the individual above all other considerations. I applaud this, however the selfishness intrinsic to such a position is bound to degenerate into anarchy and a need for control if individuals are not willing to temper their freedom to the needs of others. These counter culture groups have done much to revive interest in alternative lifestyles and folk arts, but their preoccupation with the individual has alienated many so called "responsible" people from their cause. This has prevented the assimilation of their values into the "mainstream". They create folk art but it often lacks the spirit of cooperation which would bring it to the highest levels of creativity, at which point the public at large could not fail to notice, and desire to join in. It is this issue I would like to address.

### Self Expression versus Cooperation

I hear many people who profess to "play the drum" say that they "just want to do their own thing" or that "having to play a structured part destroys my self expression". In my opinion this kind of thinking is both a symptom and a cause of our communities not functioning properly. Many "dancers" say the same thing, that having an organized dance interferes with self expression. In my experience nothing could be further from the truth. I believe that freedom and self expression are the most important things that a person or community can have. Therefore I also take issue with "music and dance nazis" who insist that a particular piece of music or dance must always be performed in the same way. I say:

Self expression and cooperation are not mutually exclusive. They reach their highest pinnacle when combined, completely integrated.

Witness the music of an african drumming ensemble. Each person plays a completely different part yet these parts must be related to each other in specific ways for the whole music to work. Each musician must be more concerned with the success of the whole than with their own individual recognition, but the music works best if each individual plays with heartfelt conviction born of true self expression and tempered with respect for the whole. In this way the ability for us all to be

free individuals is taken to new heights by our ability to work together.

Art imitates life, and vice versa,

therefore however it is in your music and dance so it is in your neighborhood. If people become more concerned with their own needs and recognition than with the success of their community as a whole their greed will interfere with their neighbors ability to live freely. The resulting antagonism will ultimately end in chaos. On the other hand if a single person or group attempts to control this chaos by forcing others to do as they say even greater restriction of freedom occurs, with even greater resentment.

The greatest amount of individual freedom is thus afforded by the middle way. In this community people would realise that their personal greatest good comes from the success and freedom of everyone and everything. People would willingly cooperate without needing to surrender individuality. Obviously in a system like this great havoc could be caused a greedy or power hungry individual. The benefits of such a society would have to be so great that no one would even think of behaving in such a manner.

The question of course remains, how do we establish such a cooperative attitude within the reality of our greed driven, power hungry, selfish and short sighted society? How can people come not only to believe but to know viscerally that their best interests are served by serving the best interests of the society and the environment as a whole?

I contend that these lessons can be learned through cooperative folk art, namely music and dance.

"I wouldn't want to belong to any club that would have me as a member." -Groucho Marx

It's fine and dandy to tell a person something but they rarely believe or understand until they experience it for themselves. The arena of a cooperative folk art event allows people to experience the reality of cooperation and freedom taking each other to giddy heights with relatively little risk. This knowledge can then be applied to daily life at greater and greater apparent risk until "virtuous selfishness" and "free cooperation" replace "short term selfishness" and "forced cooperation" in our society as a whole. This would be heaven on earth, and in order to achieve this lofty goal all we as individuals need do is come together and risk a little of our precious time learning to participate in an "organised" folk art event.

Many people will be skeptical of this statement, and rightly so. Until one has experienced the power of cooperative freedom it seems greatly exaggerated by it's proponents. A true skeptic, however, is always willing to learn, so what have you got to lose. Drop your reservations for a moment and get involved in doing something "organised" with others.

You may find that it is more difficult than you imagined. This is as it should be. Nothing (or everything) worth having comes for free. When one enters community one must accept responsibility for providing that community with something of value. In return the community must make use of each individuals' talents and skills in a way that allows them free expression and validates their sense of individual worth. None of this will happen without effort and thoughtfulness from all involved, however once you experience the joy of coming together to create something that no individual could have conceived you will want that feeling as a permanent part of your life. I know this firsthand and I have heard it from many with whom I have shared such experiences. This heartfelt understanding has filtered down into many aspects of my daily life and will continue to do so as I continue to learn and grow. I only wish I could have had this understanding much earlier, and that all people, especially children, could learn the benefits of free cooperation through folk art, so that the healing of the world could begin.

Towards this end I suggest the grass roots establishment of cooperative folk art traditions in all communities throughout the world. Many communities have never lost their folk art traditions. Those of us seeking to reestablish community amidst the heartless and spiritless urban societies created by our "civilization" have much to learn from them. Yet we must remember that folk art is about expressing ourselves as much as it is about working together. We must seek to allow all our voices to be heard harmoniously, to create something uniquely our own. To this goal I dedicate myself freely.

"Do what thy Will shall be the whole of the law."

-Aliester Crowley