Polyrhythmic Studies for Snare Drum

by Fred Albright

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Albright was a professional musician and percussion teacher for many years in New York City where he also served on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music and as an associate member of the New York Philharmonic and NBC Symphony Orchestra. During his tenure in New York, Mr. Albright also performed with the famous "Lucky Strike Orchestra" under the direction of B.A. Rolfe and with the Voice of Firestone Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Howard Barlow.

Mr. Albright subsequently retired and now resides in California.

FOREWORD

This book contains studies and solos of intermediate and advanced levels for it was written to encompass several phases of music for the snare drum, as well as to develop the mind and hands to perform both common and uncommon meters. To acquaint the student with varied techniques of writing for percussion, the author has chosen to write alternately on five-line and single-line staves.

These studies should be first played at a tempo slower than marked in an effort to strive for complete accuracy. With each successive reading, the tempo should be increased until the indicated tempo is achieved. Special attention should be given to all rhythmic phrasing, accented notes and meter changes.

I wish to dedicate this book to all serious minded students who would like to improve their reading abilities and general musicianship.

The Author

# ANALYSIS OF POLYRHYTHMS AND ABNORMAL GROUPS

It is obviously of great importance to know exactly where each note of a complex rhythm falls in each measure. However, polyrhythms, abnormal groupings and rhythmic per-mutations in contemporary music often present some of the most formidable problems encountered by the student percussionist. The first section of this book methodically ana-lyzes twenty-two such variants in detail which, if studied carefully, will build a solid founda-tion of understanding so that future encounters may be thoroughly analyzed and executed with little difficulty.

When dealing with rhythmic ratios as shown in the following twenty-one examples, one must first find the common denominator; much the same as in dealing with mathematical fractions. This is done by locating the smallest note value into which both numbers of the ratio may be divided. In example #2 for instance, the lowest common denominator into which both 2 and 3 may be divided is 6. Therefore, six notes of equal value must be men-tally superimposed over this bar of 3/4 time. This can be done only by making each an 8th note as indicated in the example. It is then quite easy to play the rhythm accurately while mentally "ticking off" the smaller units.

In example #5, a ratio of 5:4 requires a common denominator of 20 (both 5 and 4 can be divided into 20). Twenty notes can be placed in a bar of 4/4 time only if each beat is assigned a quintuplet. It is then the student's task to properly execute the written rhythm while mentally "ticking off" the smaller units.

Example #18 presents a unique problem since the note grouping begins on an upbeat rather than right on the beat as have the others. Whereas technically the ratio is 3:4 (the

4 is implied) and the common denominator would therefore be 12, the displacement of the triplet rhythm (beginning on an upbeat) makes it difficult to execute:
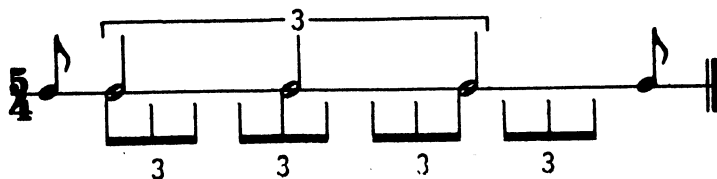

Therefore, it is necessary to break these triplets down even further to 16th notes in order to be able to visually discern exactly where the beat lies. This is much more playable:
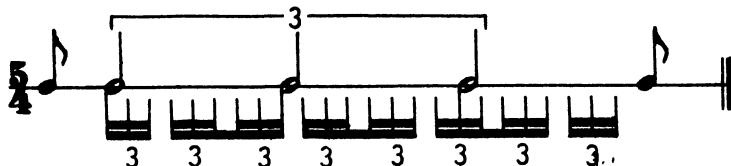
A similar problem is seen in example #21. Although mathematically the common denominator is 12 and these 12 notes divided evenly over 3 beats would have to be 16th notes, the complexity of the written rhythm nearly prohibits accurate execution:
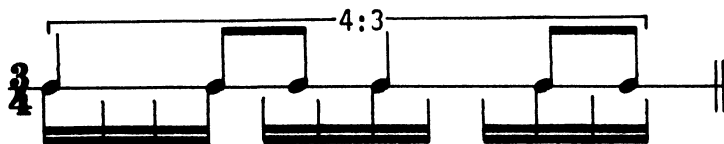
Therefore, it must be reduced one step further, to twenty-four 32nd notes at which time the rhythm becomes easily playable:
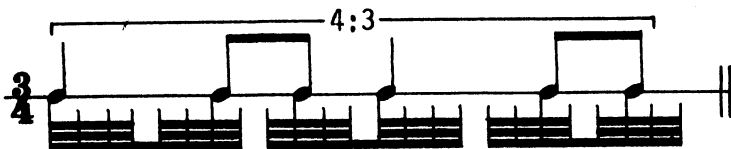
By using this method, I am certain you will soon be able to analyze and accurately execute all rhythms you shall encounter.

The Author

ANALYSIS OF ABNORMAL RHYTHMS

NOTE: The following rhythms appear in the solo and exercise material which follows.

Example #1

Example #2

Example #3

Example #4

Example #5

Example #6

Example #7

6

Example #8

Example #9

Example #10

Example #11

Example #12

Example #13

Example #14

Example #15

Example #16

Example #17

or

Example #18

or

Example #19

Example #20

or

(same feel as 8th-note triplets)

Example #21

can be reduced to:

which can be reduced to:

which, in turn, can be reduced to:

which is the rhythmic basis of:

Example #22

1

Andante mm ♩=76-108

The Thinker