

## Improving Your Sense of Rhythm

### I. Internal Sources

- A. Inner Pulse - create a pulse physically then imagine it
- B. Breath - feel as a steady pulse, subdivide it in various ways
- C. Heartbeat - feel your pulse, subdivide it
- D. Chest Pulse - hand on solar plexus and push out with diaphragm, saying "taah" and "unhh" multiple times on each breath
- E. Imagination - imagine yourself playing with perfect time

### II. External Sources

#### A. Metronome without Instrument

1. Imagine beat - turn metronome on at 80 bpm, then turn off and imagine it, then turn on to check yourself
2. Clap or play claves (wooden blocks), then imagine it
3. Alternate playing with metronome and imagining (40 to 160 bpm); avoid flams as much as possible
4. Groups of 4 on and off with metronome
5. Groups of 3
6. Groups of 2
7. Alternate every other beat
8. Longer phrases with varied groupings, as in 1 on, 1 off, 2 on, 1 off, 3 on, 1 off etc.
9. Pulse unison - see how long you can go without a flam
10. Displaced pulse - feel combined rhythm of attack plus click; sink into these; try slower and faster tempos; stay relaxed
  - a. 8<sup>th</sup> note: -&
  - b. 16<sup>th</sup> notes: -e&a
  - c. 16<sup>th</sup> notes: -e--
  - d. 16<sup>th</sup> notes: ---a
  - e. 8<sup>th</sup> note triplets: 1&a
  - f. 8<sup>th</sup> note triplets: -&-
  - g. 8<sup>th</sup> note triplets: --a
  - h. practice hearing all of the above in groups of 4
  - i. practice hearing all of the above in groups of 3

11. 8<sup>th</sup> and quarter note combinations
  - a. 1 & (2)
  - b. (1) & 2
  - c. 1 & (2) &
  - d. 1 & 2 &
  - e. Improvise 8ths and quarters, as in | (1) & (2) & 3 (&) 4 & |
  
12. Combinations of 8<sup>th</sup> note triplets
  - a. 1 & (a)
  - b. 1 (&) a
  - c. | 1 (& a) (2) & (a) (3 &) a (4 & a) |
  - d. | 1 (& a) (2 &) a (3) & (a) (4 & a) |
  - e. Improvise triplets, as in | (1 & a) 2 & a (3) & a (4 &) a |
  
13. Combinations of 16<sup>th</sup> notes
  - a. 1e&a
  - b. -e&a
  - c. -e&-
  - d. --&a
  - e. -e-a
  - f. Improvise 16<sup>th</sup> notes, as in | (1)e&a (2)e-a (3)e-- 4-&- |
  
14. 8th and 16th note combinations
  - a. |-e&a|--&-|3--a|-e--|
  - b. |-e-a|--&-|---a|-e--|
  - c. |--&-|-e&a|3---|4e&-|
  - d. |1e--|---a|-e--|4---|
  - e. Other combinations of 8ths and 16ths
  
15. 8<sup>th</sup> and triplet combinations
  - a. |1 & |2 & a |3 & |4 & a |
  - b. |1 & |2 & |3 & a |4 & a |
  - c. |- & |- & - |- & |- & - |
  - d. |- & |2 - |- & a |4 & |
  - e. |1 - a |- & |3 & |4 & a |
  - f. Other 8th and triplet combinations
  - g. Improvise 8th and triplets
  
16. triplet & 16th combinations
  - a. |1 e & a |2 & a |3 e & a |4 & a |
  - b. |- e & a |- & a |- e & a |- & a |
  - c. |- e & a |2 - - |3 & a |4 - - |
  - d. |- e & - |- & a |- - & a |- & a |
  - e. |- - a |2 - - |3 & - |4 e & a |
  - f. Other triplet & 16th combinations
  - g. Improvise triplets & 16ths
  
17. 8ths, triplets & 16th combinations
  - a. |1 - & - |2 & a |3 e & a |4 & a |
  - b. |- - & - |- & a |- e & a |- & a |
  - c. Other 8th, triplet & 16th combinations
  - d. Improvise 8ths, triplets & 16ths

18. 5s

1 2 3 4 5

- a. Tadigenaka
- b. --digenaka
- c. ----genaka
- d. -----naka
- e. -----ka
- f. Ta--ge--ka
- g. Tadi--na--
- h. Ta--gena--
- i. Ta-----ka
- j. Ta----na--
- k. Ta--ge----
- l. Tadi-----
- m. Other combinations of 5
- n. Improvise in 5s

19. 7s

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- a. TakidaTakadimi (3+4)
- b. Ta--kaTa--ka-- (3+4)
- c. TakidaTa----- (3+4)
- d. Ta----Ta--ka-- (3+4)
- e. Ta----Ta----- (3+4)
- f. Other combinations of 7 (ex: invert a-e as 4+3)
- g. Improvise in 7s

20. 9s - use slow tempo as in 30 bpm

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

- a. TakidaTakidaTakida (3+3+3)
- b. Ta----Ta----Ta--ka (3+3+3)
- c. Ta----TakidaTa---- (3+3+3)
- d. Taka--di--mi--taka (3+3+3)
- e. Takida--taka----ka (3+3+3)
- f. kaTa--ka--di--mi-- (3+2+2+2)
- g. Ta--ka--dm--Ta---- (2+2+2+3)
- h. Ta--Ta----Ta--dimi (2+3+2+2)
- i. ----Ta--TakidaTa-- (2+2+3+2)
- j. Takadm--Tadige--ka (4+5)
- k. Ta--ka--Tadige--ka (4+5)
- l. Ta--ge----Ta--ka-- (5+4)
- m. --di-----Ta--dimi (5+4)
- n. Tadigena--Takadimi (5+4)
- o. Ta-----Ta---- (3+3+3)
- p. --di-----Ta----- (5+4)
- q. ----Ta-----Taki-- (2+2+2+3)
- r. Other combinations of 9
- s. Improvise in 9s

21. 8ths, triplets, 16<sup>th</sup>, 5s & 6s  
(bar lines are uneven but represent 1 click)
  - a. |TakidaTakida|Takadimi|Tadigenaka|Takida|Taka|
  - b. |Taka|--kidaTakida|Ta|Tadigenaka|Ta|Takida|Ta|
  - c. |Takida|TakidaTakida|Takadimi|--ka|--digenaka|Taka|Ta|
  - d. Other combinations of 8ths, triplets, 16<sup>th</sup>, 5s & 6s
  - e. Improvise using 8ths, triplets, 16<sup>th</sup>, 5s & 6s
  
22. 8ths, triplets, 16<sup>th</sup>, 5s, 6s, 7s, 32<sup>nd</sup>, 9s  
(bar lines are uneven but represent 1 click)
  - a. |Taka|TakidaTakadimi|Taka|Tadigenaka|Taka|--digenaka|Ta|
  - b. |TakadimiTakajuno|Ta--da|TakidaTakadimi|Takida|--digenaka|
  - c. |--kida|Ta|TakidaTakidaTakida|Takadimi|--Ta--ki--da--|
  - d. |Ta----naka|Taka|Ta----Ta----Takida|Ta|
  - e. Other combinations
  - f. Improvise using all subdivisions
  
23. Set metronome on "&" (clap on 1)
  
24. Set metronome on "e" (clap on 1)
  
25. Set metronome on "a" (clap on 1)
  
26. Set metronome on 2<sup>nd</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> note triplet "-&-" (clap on 1)
  
27. Set metronome on 3<sup>rd</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> note triplet "--a" (clap on 1)
  
28. Play #23 to 27, each in turn with continuous click
  
29. Group beats in various combinations at 240 bpm or faster
  - a. 2s
  - b. 3s
  - c. 4s
  - d. 5s
  - e. 6s
  - f. 7s
  - g. 8s
  - h. 9s
  - i. displaced (i.e. "and" only) 2s
  - j. displaced 3s
  - k. displaced 4s
  - l. displaced 5s
  - m. displaced 6s
  - n. displaced 7s
  - o. displaced 8s
  - p. displaced 9s
  
30. extract 'real' rhythms from your repertoire
  - a. clap them with click on 1
  - b. clap them with click on other parts of beat

## B. Metronome with Instrument

1. Select a short passage you are working on at a metronome setting you can easily divide by 4 (example is theme from 2<sup>nd</sup> movement of Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony, in 3/8 at 90 bpm). Play with click on every beat.
2. Adjust speed & play it with click only on 1<sup>st</sup> beat (ex: 30 bpm)
3. Play it with click only on 2<sup>nd</sup> beat
4. Shift the whole passage as if it started a beat earlier
5. Play it the original way with click only on 3<sup>rd</sup> beat
6. Shift the whole passage as if it started two beats earlier
7. Adjust speed to set metronome to 8<sup>th</sup> notes (ex: 180 bpm) and play it the original way
8. Half the speed of the previous step and set it to the "and" of each beat (ex: 90 bpm)
9. Adjust speed to set metronome at 16<sup>th</sup> notes (ex: 360); line everything up; slow it down if necessary
10. Half the speed of previous step and set to the "e" of each beat (ex: 180)
11. Set click to the "a" of each beat
12. Adjust speed to that of step 9 and set click to offset 16ths, i.e. "-e-a" of each beat (ex: 360)
13. Half the speed of step 2 so that click is on "1" of every other bar (ex: 15)

## C. Recording Yourself

1. Set metronome to 80 bpm and listen; then turn it off and record yourself playing that pulse. How smooth, solid, "fat" (i.e. not pushing or pulling to get to next click in time) is it?
2. Accent the first pulse in groups of 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.
3. Set metronome to disappear for progressively longer periods of time. Gradually set it to slower tempos as well, as in 100, 80, 60, 40. ["If you can play 8 on 8 off at 40 you're doing very well."]

4. Create a 'phrased pulse track' where you record the click and the scat of the count of the rhythm of your complex passage and play along with it
5. Play to click, then turn it off but keep playing and record. Then listen back to it with the click turned on.
6. Listen to yourself playing without a metronome and analyze your habits and tendencies with respect to rhythm and feel.
7. Record yourself playing with click, then listen back at half speed to reveal the 'flams'
8. Play duets with yourself. Record different but complementary rhythms on each track.

#### D. Play along with recorded music

1. Randomly turn volume off and see if you can stay in time with it before you turn it back on
2. Listen to music from all over the world to be exposed to lots of rhythms
3. Listen to different recordings of same piece.

E. Memorize tempos of songs at different tempos & use them to 'call up' different tempos (ex: Come As You Are, Free Fallin', Time After Time, Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, Dreams are all at 120 bpm; use any of them to estimate 120, 60, 240 etc.)

#### F. Interact with Others

1. Take turns leading playing at different tempos, meters, grooves, and with different accents
2. Play a displaced pulse unison at a given tempo and grouping. Then choose a different combination.
3. Listen to recordings with each other and critique them
4. Play drums together

G. Observe Rhythms in Daily Life like birdcalls, dogs panting, flags blowing, wipers on windshield, photocopiers, busy signal, etc.

### III. Motion and Action

- A. Walking - pay attention to rhythm of your steps
- B. Jogging and Running - create polyrhythms with breath or in your mind
- C. Sports - coordination in sports can help coordination in music. Some sports have relatively obvious rhythms (ex: tennis)
- D. Other motion - brushing your teeth, typing, gardening have irregular, non-periodic rhythms. When on-stage, don't overdo bodily motions, especially tapping foot.
- E. Body music ("playing on your body") and dancing
- F. Hand drumming
  - 1. Position drum so head is at navel
  - 2. Fingers rest on head, thumb is at edge
  - 3. Stretch fingers off head, then back on with small, relaxed motion
  - 4. Drop hand like a dead fish; stretch fingers so they come up a little right at point of contact (open tone)
  - 5. Alternate hands in time
  - 6. Muffle pulse where hand & fingers flop on and stay on head
  - 7. Mix muffled and open tones in specific rhythms
    - a. 1---2---3---4---
    - b. Bo Diddly beat |x--x--x-|--x-x---|
    - c. 3/4 time as in 1 2(3)&
    - d. 12/8 combinations (all at same time with different drummers)
      - 1. 1--2--3--4--
      - 2. 1-2-3-4-5-6-
      - 3. 1---2---3---
      - 4. x-x-xx-x-x-x (Afro Cuban 6/8 bell pattern)
      - 5. 1&--&a--a4--
      - 6. -&--&--&--&-
  - 8. Add accents with slap tones (squeeze into head)
  - 9. Play often