

REDEFINING THE GROOVE: NEW APPROACHES TO RHYTHM PEDAGOGY IN JAZZ AND POPULAR MUSIC EDUCATION

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What do we teach when we seek to educate students on “rhythm”? This is an extremely important question that cuts to the heart of any music education philosophy.

In the same way musicians are expected to know their scales and chords, unique musicians need to be well-versed in this set of universal rhythms and cycles as well as having the ability to practice them in a variety of ways as repertoire demands. I’ll preface this by saying that this is not a scientific study and all of my conclusions should be evaluated based upon your own experience of the music and your physical intuition as to what may or may not be occurring across various rhythms. There is no wrong way to experience a rhythm – only ones that can be expanded.

Some may think that the rhythms discussed here today are primarily Afro Latin rhythms, and only tangentially related to other forms of popular music. This could not be further from the truth. The nexus of African rhythms that evolved in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and in the south eastern United States are part of a continuum rooted in the west African slave trade and the porous cross-pollination of Afro-Latin-American cultures across these regions. While these traditions represent some of the richest in the western hemisphere, for too long various concepts of music and rhythm have been segregated to the periphery of the American musical academy and are only recently becoming acknowledged as the fundamental bedrock of contemporary rhythm. In short, this is not a presentation on African or Afro Latin rhythm. It is an overview of the DNA - seminal African building blocks of all popular rhythms.

CHALLENGES IN RHYTHM PEDAGOGY

- Rhythm is about *participating* – music is created engage a participatory reaction from listeners and other musicians. It is impossible to teach or learn anything about rhythm sitting motionless and silent at a desk.
- Rhythm is based in *physical movement* – embodied, perceived, recalled or imagined. It may involve speaking, singing, beating (drums), dancing, or other whole-body movement. Rhythm pedagogy demands a *performative* stance, unlike harmony. Because of this the gap between theoretical and embodied knowledge can be significant. Pedagogy needs to embrace these modalities so as to mirror the meanings and values evidenced in actual music making (especially African American and Afro-Latin American music), listening, and outcomes in specific cultural contexts.
- Rhythm, more often than not, is most effectively developed *away from a primary instrument* that requires its own technical and physical demands.
- *Contemporary rhythm is at its core African rhythm* – adapted and evolved through local and global communities, especially in the Americas where vast numbers of enslaved West African peoples were transported. American music combines this rhythmic ancestry, having evolved in Cuba, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Mexico not to mention regional styles in the South Eastern United States that formed the locus of popular American music in the 20th century. *This is a vast and challenging subject!* Cultural practices, terminology, organizational factors, conceptual frames, and pedagogical methods (not to mention history and sociological issues) have yet to find wide understanding, acceptance or agreement in mainstream American society or educational institutions.

Unlike the almost universal ubiquity of the piano in Western music curriculums, integration of drums (especially hand drums) presents logistical issues for educators, and has yet to overcome the centuries old bias against percussion and historical European and American attitudes that

have canonized and prioritized harmonic and compositional study. Pedagogical Aestheticism is phenomenologically at odds with the embodied music making at the heart of African rhythmic cultures and percussion-based music making. “The site of the most intense rhythmic behavior is not at the same time the site of critical discourse about rhythm” (Agawu).

SUGGESTED READING LIST

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Kubik, Gerhard. *Jazz Transatlantic: The African Undercurrent in Twentieth-Century Jazz Culture*. University Press of Mississippi, 2017.

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<https://go.platformpurple.com/?e=jazzbeat>. Accessed 25 May 2022.

Peñalosa, David. *The Clave Matrix: Afro-Cuban Rhythm : Its Principles and African Origins*. Bembe Books, 2009.

Prieto, Dafnis. *A World of Rhythmic Possibilities: Drumming Lessons and Reflections on Rhythms*. Dafnison Music, 2016.

Sublette, Ned. *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*. Chicago Review Press, 2007.

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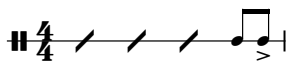
Uribe, Ed. *The Essence of Afro-Cuban Percussion and Drum Set: Rhythms, Songstyles, Techniques, Applications*. Warner Bros. Publications, 1996.

---. *The Essence of Brazilian Percussion and Drum Set: With Rhythm Section Parts : Rhythms, Songstyles, Techniques, Applications*. Alfred Music Publishing, 1994.

Washburne, Christopher. *Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Rhythms are usually phrased *into* beat one, rather than *from* it.

Afro-Latin/New Orleans

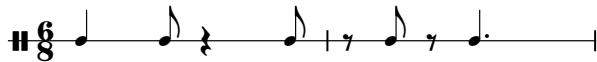


Backbeat

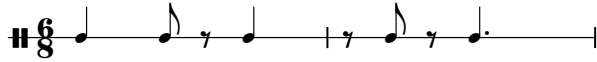


To develop rhythm you must sing (use your voice), drum (use both hands), and dance (move your feet) at the same time.

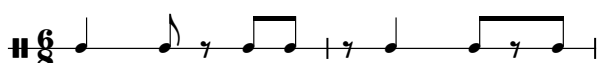
6/8 Rumba Clave 3-2



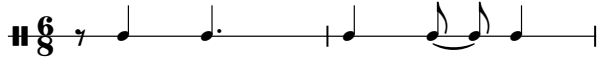
6/8 Clave 3-2



Standard Pattern



Clave 2-3



Patterns can bear a striking family resemblance.

One of the most pervasive Afro-Latin-American bell patterns.

Every rhythm has a complement - the cycle that falls in between.

Tresillo



Habanera/Tango



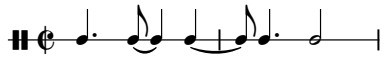
Cinquillo



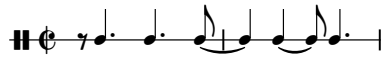
Many rhythmic cycles fall across four beats across two measures.

Any rhythm can be rotated to start on another beat in the bar.

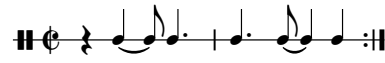
Double Tresillo 1



Double Tresillo 2



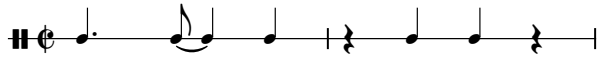
Double Tresillo 3



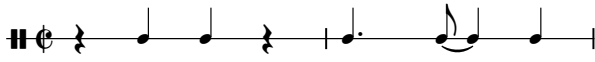
Rhythms can be split into their reciprocal sides (3-2 vs. 2-3).

Clave rhythms are played with specific bell patterns - listen for beat 2!

Son Clave 3-2



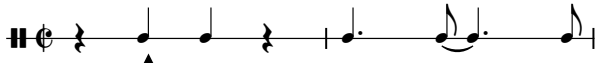
Son Clave 2-3



Rumba Clave 3-2



Rumba Clave 2-3



Cascara 3-2

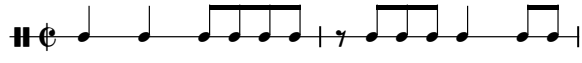


Cascara 2-3



Afro-Latin Patterns like these are part of the DNA of groove music.

Mambo Bell

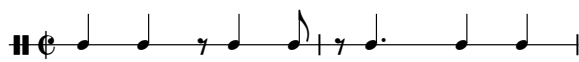


Mozambique (New York)


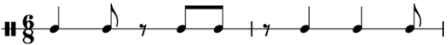





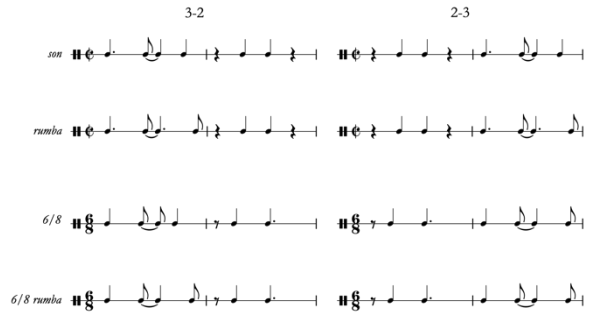
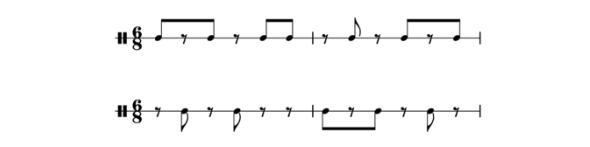

Rhythms are not always explicit: Several instruments can contribute to the perception of a composite rhythm that can be felt but difficult to pinpoint.

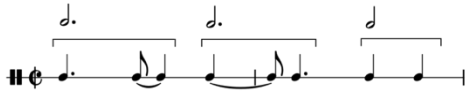

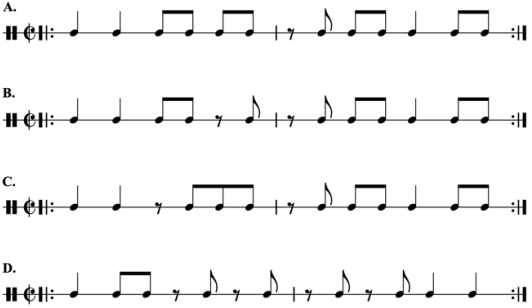
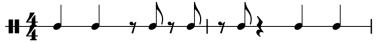
Cha Cha (vox)/Mambo/Motown

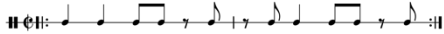


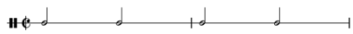


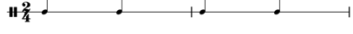



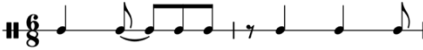
GLOSSARY


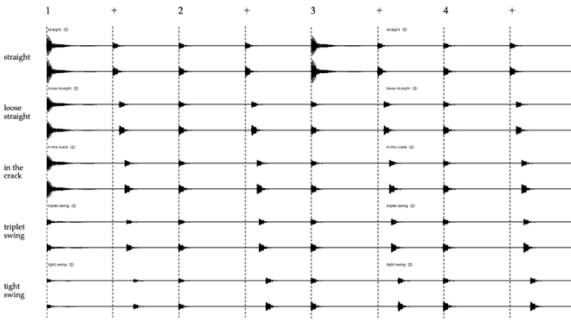


Accent Shift	Almost any rhythmic cycle can be displaced, shifting the pattern onset to a different beat. This phenomenon (whether intended or not) can help describe numerous idiomatic rhythms that can be analyzed as displacements of recognizable patterns.	
Backbeat	American off-beat accent cycle (secondary cycle) appearing in popular music commonly on beats 2 & 4 in a measure of 4/4 but can also be heard as an accent on beat 3 in 2/2 or beat 4 in 6/8.	 <p>The image shows three musical staves illustrating backbeats. The first staff is in 4/4 time, showing a dotted quarter note on beat 2 and a dotted quarter note on beat 4. The second staff is in 2/2 time, showing a dotted half note on beat 3. The third staff is in 6/8 time, showing a dotted quarter note on beat 4.</p>
Bell Patterns	A closely related rhythm to a key pattern, often played by a bell (or cymbal) but not exclusively so. Bell patterns are interrelated with key patterns in that they articulate the former but add additional strokes so as to create a seven-ten stroke rhythm.	 <p>The image shows a musical staff in 6/8 time with a bell pattern consisting of seven strokes: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, an eighth note, and a quarter note.</p>
Bilateral Tapping	A method of simplified body percussion involving hands, feet, and voice to connect the player to an embodied relationship to rhythm.	
Bombo and Ponche	In Cuban music the second stroke of the tresillo is called the <i>bombo</i> , while the third is referred to as the <i>ponche</i> . These strokes can be described colloquially as the “lift” and the “landing” ¹ , an “up” and “down”, or other similar terms to describe the physical sensations involved in the playing. These and similar asymmetric accent alteration, from up to downbeats, is at the core of beat-oriented music across cultures.	 <p>The image shows a musical staff in 6/8 time with three notes. The first note is a quarter note, the second is a quarter note with an accent above it labeled 'bombo', and the third is a quarter note with an accent above it labeled 'ponche'.</p>
Cascara	Cascara (or cata) translates as “shell” in Spanish, referring to various patterns played on a bell, ride cymbal, hi hat, or the literal side (or shell) of a drum, such as a tom-tom or timbale. It is a pattern similar to the standard pattern in that it contains a clave rhythm. It is one of the clearest examples of how a cymbal pattern can express an embellished version of a fundamental key pattern. The cascara in reciprocal form creates either a 3-2 or 2-3 versions.	 <p>The image shows two musical staves in 6/8 time. The first staff is labeled '2-3' and shows a pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes. The second staff is labeled '3-2' and shows a similar pattern.</p>
Cinquillo	The <i>cinquillo</i> (little five) is a symmetrical rhythm comprised of a [21212] onset pattern.	 <p>The image shows a musical staff in 6/8 time with a cinquillo pattern consisting of five notes: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, an eighth note, and a quarter note.</p>

<p>Clave Rhythms</p>	<p>The most well-known key patterns in Western music are the clave rhythms from Afro-Latin traditions. These patterns Exhibit 2 separate sides, each containing either two or three strokes. They are heard in son, rumba, and 6/8 varieties.</p>	
<p>Comparsa</p>	<p>Street music Cuba contains two important traditions, that of <i>comparsa</i> and <i>conga</i>, (not to be confused with the common percussion instrument of the same name). According to Sublette, “the former word implies an organized neighborhood-based group with uniform costume and choreography, while the latter suggests a percussion-driven dancing parade that anyone might join in... in practice, comparsas could lead congas down the street, and the two words are often used interchangeably.”</p>	
<p>Complementary Cycles</p>	<p>The pattern of beats that are <i>not</i> played comprise a <i>complementary cycle</i> - the elementary pulses not included in the standard pattern, but fall in-between.</p>	
<p>Composite Rhythm</p>	<p>Two or more independent rhythms that combine to form a single melo-rhythmic entity. Often several instruments can combine across an ensemble to create the perception of a cycle that no one person is playing explicitly.</p>	
<p>Cross Rhythm</p>	<p>Secondary cycles are symmetrical patterns also referred to as <i>cross-rhythms</i>. These consist of groups of two, three, four, five, six etc., across primary cycles comprised of a different number of beats. Common patterns involving 3:2, 4:3, and 3:4 etc., exemplify these relationships.</p>	
<p>Displacement /Accent Shift</p>	<p>Shifting the onset of a rhythm forward or backward by any number of subdivisions.</p>	

Double Tresillo	<p>A six-stroke pattern that augments the rhythmic values found in the tresillo. This rhythm contains a characteristic series of four dotted values and could be considered a “large six” spanning four (or eight) reference beats. The [3+3] + [3+3] + [2+2] cycle doubles each value of the tresillo and can also be expressed as a series of accented subdivisions.</p>	
Habanera	<p>The <i>habanera</i> rhythm adds a stroke to the tresillo pattern, creating accents on beat 2+ as well as 3 and 4. Also known as a <i>Tango</i> rhythm.</p>	
Key Patterns (Time Lines)	<p>A recurring rhythm that influences the orientation of the patterns and phrasing used across a performance. It is a short, clap-able, metrically asymmetrical pattern that combines on and off-beat accents to create points of rhythmic consonance and dissonance. “Put simply, key patterns epitomize the complete rhythmic matrix. For the student, key patterns are the most important tool and unlocking the rhythmic code of the music they are the “compass” by which you sent your proper bearings within the rhythmic matrix. (Penalosa 2012)</p>	
Mambo Bell	<p>One of the most influential forms of music in the 20th century was Mambo - an instrumental dance-music genre popular in the 1940’s, distinctive for its call & response arrangements, contrasting horn sections and modern jazz harmonies. Originally a Cuban style, the music evolved with performers and arrangers such as Mario Bauzá, Machito, Chico O’Farrill, Tito Puente and Tito Rodriguez in New York City. The rhythms used by these performers became an integral part of popular Music from the onward, and can be heard in much of contemporary dance music. The style includes a distinctive bell pattern (A) and closely related variations (B-D).</p>	
Mambo/Cha Cha Melody	<p>A seven stroke rhythmic pattern that can be heard in countless cha cha cha and danzon-mambo vocal melodies, including the first cha cha cha “LaEngañadora” (Enrique Jorin), “Gozar mi Mambo (Orquesta Arcano y sus Maravillas), “Cuban Mambo” (Pérez Prado Orchestra), Mama Guela Mambo (Tito Rodriguez), and “Oye Como Va” (Tito Puente). The rhythm becomes pervasive in later Motown, rock, and dance styles.</p>	
Meter	<p>A notational practice designed to communicate and describe various pulse and grouping relationships. Standard meters in Western music can be classified into <i>simple meters</i> and <i>compound meters</i>, as well as <i>duple</i>, <i>triple</i>, and <i>quadruple</i> meters – commonly 6/8, 12/8, 2/4, 4/4, 2/2 etc.,</p>	

<p>Mozambique Bell (New York)</p>	<p>The New York style Mozambique contains a distinctive bell pattern played in 2-3 rumba clave that, unlike the cascara, avoids the downbeat of the second bar. The rhythmic pattern is almost identical to several others, including bell patterns used in conga de comparsa as well as a basic sticking pattern used in <i>songo</i>.</p>	<p>Mozambique bell </p> <p>Havana-style conga de comparsa </p> <p>songo stick pattern </p>
<p>Reference Beats</p>	<p>Colloquially called “the beat”, this pulse has most commonly been associated with the feet and dancing, with some African languages even referring to them as (translated) <i>the steps</i>. This might be where you pat a foot or nod your head.</p>	
<p>Regulative Beats</p>	<p>Reference Beats are often grouped (musically and perceptually) into cycles of four. This group of four is referred to as a regulative beat cycle, and appears in various notations beyond the common 4/4, including 6/8, 2/4, and 2/2.</p>	<p>$\text{♩} = 100$ </p> <p>$\text{♩} = 100$ </p> <p>$\text{♩} = 100$ </p> <p>$\text{♩} = 100$ </p>

<p>Rhythmic Counterpoint</p>	<p>The combination and interactions of cycles that create the fundamental characteristics of polyrhythm. The relationship of these cycles is non-hierarchical - one pattern is oriented with another but does not “come from” or “belong” to it. These combinations are culturally specific but African in origin.</p>	 <p>reference beat</p> <p>backbeat</p> <p>subdivision</p> <p>3:2</p> <p>displaced 3:2</p> <p>conga accents</p> <p>key pattern (3-2 rumba clave)</p> <p>bell pattern</p> <p>3:4</p> <p>4:3</p>
<p>Rhythmic cycles</p>	<p>Repeating patterns found in all forms of beat-oriented music. To practice rhythm is to practice these cycles – the ones we play, the ones we don’t play, and the ones we contribute to. Some of these cycles are explicit, occurring as ostinatos (i.e. a clave or bell pattern) while others are experienced through the use of accents within a melody (accent patterns). Cycles may also be felt intuitively through a combination of separate instruments contributing to a composite rhythmic melody, such as the bass and snare drum on a drum set. Cycles combine and interact to form different networks of rhythmic counterpoint - the of polyrhythmic cycles that influence how the totality of rhythm is experienced.</p>	
<p>Rotation</p>	<p>Shifting the onset of a rhythmic pattern to any pulse within the two-measure cycle.</p>	
<p>Secondary Beat Cycles</p>	<p>Symmetrical patterns that form cross rhythms against the reference beat and/or the meter. They may also include displacements of that primary cycle.</p>	
<p>Standard Pattern</p>	<p>A 6/8 seven-stroke cycle considered to be a “mother” rhythm because of its prevalence in many types of African music, including regions in Nigeria, Benin, and Ghana as well as Afro-Cuban styles such as the palo, triallo, Lucumi, Abakua, rumba Columbia, and dozens of others.</p>	

<p>Subdivisions (Elementary Pulses)</p>	<p>Not just a particular division of a larger pulse, but colloquially refer to smaller beats that form the “grid” of our rhythmic experiences, the common denominator for the majority of rhythms and cycles found in a performance. The smallest practical subdivisions are referred to as <i>elementary pulses</i>, usually describing 8th notes, 8th note triplets, or 16th notes depending on the music in question. Elementary pulses are usually at least two divisions of the primary beats, i.e. 16th notes in 4/4 or 8th notes in 6/8.</p>	
<p>Swing</p>	<p>Unless played straight (mathematically equal in duration) the first eighth note of is longer than the second. How much longer is a question of style and the player, and not always mathematically deductible. Some of the options could be labeled <i>straight 8th</i> (equal), <i>loose straight</i>, <i>in the crack</i>, <i>triplet swing</i>, and <i>tight swing</i>.</p>	
<p>Tresillo</p>	<p>A three-stroke, duple-pulse correlative of the 3:2 secondary beat cycle, identifiable by the internal grouping of three, three, and two [332] elemental pulses (long-long-short).</p>	
<p>3:2</p>	<p>Secondary beat cycle 3:2 forming relationships, as with a measure in 6/8 divided into three quarter notes. This rhythm is adapted into duple meters as the ubiquitous tresillo (triplet) rhythm found in blues, jazz, rock, pop, Latin, hip hop and funk. While the tresillo does not divide the bar equally into three segments it maintains the connection to its 6/8 relative.</p>	
<p>4:3</p>	<p>A fundamental ratio that underlies various polyrhythms including hemiolas and coexistent 2/2 and 6/8 meters.</p>	