

Polyrhythmic Studies for Snare Drum

by Fred Albright

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Foreword.....	2
Analysis of Polyrhythms and Abnormal Groups	3
Etudes #1-#35.....	5-43
Solos for the Snare Drum	
The Rhyth'mist.....	44
Emulation	45
Contestation.....	46
Differentiation	47
Rudiment Etude.....	48
Drumology	49
Drum Torture.....	50
Triplexity	51
Confusion	52
Excitation.....	53
The Annoyer	54
Percussion Performance.....	55
Fantasia.....	56
The Beat.....	57
Three for Two	58
Trickishness.....	59
Five for One	60
Flam Tap It.....	61
Rhythm-Rhythm-Rhythm	62
Go Right, Go Left.....	64
Alternation	65
All Mixed Up	66
Concentration	67
Recital Time.....	68
Time Piece.....	69
The Thinker.....	70

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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

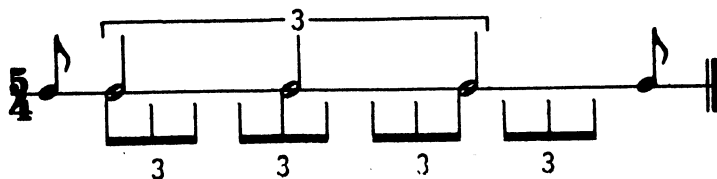
It is obviously of great importance to know exactly where each note of a complex rhythm falls in each measure. However, polyrhythms, abnormal groupings and rhythmic permutations in contemporary music often present some of the most formidable problems encountered by the student percussionist. The first section of this book methodically analyzes twenty-two such variants in detail which, if studied carefully, will build a solid foundation 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 mentally 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.

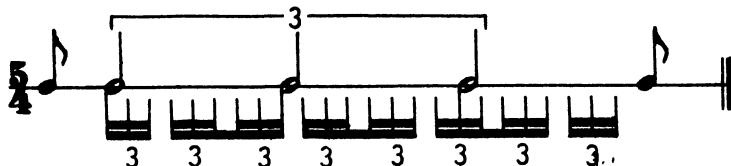
In example #5, a ratio of 5:4 requires a common denominator of 20 (both 5 and 4 can be divided into 20). Twenty notes can be placed in a bar of $4/4$ time only if each beat is assigned a quintuplet. It is then the student's task to properly execute the written rhythm while mentally "ticking off" the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

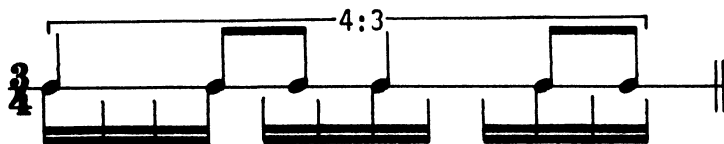
4 is implied) and the common denominator would therefore be 12, the displacement of the triplet rhythm (beginning on an upbeat) makes it difficult to execute:



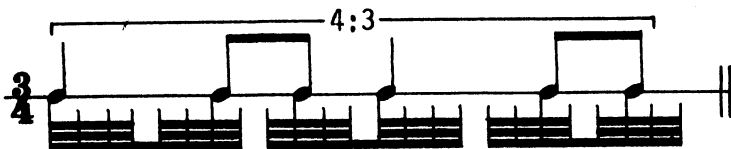
Therefore, it is necessary to break these triplets down even further to 16th notes in order to be able to visually discern exactly where the beat lies. This is much more playable:



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

Example #8

Example #9

Example #10

Example #11

Example #12

Example #13

Example #14

Example #15

Example #15 in 3/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with an 8:3 ratio bracketed over the first four notes. The second staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with an 8:3 ratio bracketed over the first four notes. Below the second staff is an 'or' alternative with a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes.

Example #16

Example #16 in 6/8 time. The first staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with 4:3 ratio brackets over the first two and last two notes. The second staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with 4:3 ratio brackets over the first two and last two notes. Below the second staff is an 'or' alternative with a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes.

Example #17

Example #17 in 5/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with a 6:5 ratio bracketed over the first five notes. The second staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with a 6:5 ratio bracketed over the first five notes. Below the second staff is an 'or' alternative with a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes, including triplet markings.

Example #18

Example #18 in 5/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with a triplet bracket over the first three notes. The second staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with a triplet bracket over the first three notes. Below the second staff is an 'or' alternative with a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes, including triplet markings.

Example #19

Example #19 in 4/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with triplet brackets over the first two and last two notes. The second staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with triplet brackets over the first two and last two notes.

Example #20

Example #20 in 3/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with 4:3 ratio brackets over the first two and last two notes, and triplet markings. The second staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with 4:3 ratio brackets over the first two and last two notes, and triplet markings. Below the second staff is an 'or' alternative with a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes, including triplet markings.

(same feel as 8th-note triplets)

Example #21

Example #21 shows a musical staff in 3/4 time. A bracket above the first two measures is labeled '4:3', indicating a 4:3 ratio. The notation includes eighth notes and sixteenth notes. Below the main staff, there are two additional staves: the first shows a single eighth note followed by a sixteenth note, and the second shows a similar pattern with a different rhythmic grouping.

Example #22

Example #22 illustrates a series of reductions in 2/4 time. The first staff shows a complex pattern of triplets (groups of three eighth notes) with a '3' above each group. The second staff shows a simplified version with a single triplet. The third staff shows another reduction with two triplet groups. The fourth staff shows a further reduction with six individual eighth notes, each with a '3' above it, indicating the original triplet structure. The fifth staff shows a final reduction with three triplet groups. Vertical dashed lines connect the notes across the staves to show their alignment.

can be reduced to:

which can be reduced to:

which, in turn, can be reduced to:

which is the rhythmic basis of:

Andante mm $\text{♩} = 76$ -I08

1

This musical score is for a piece in 4/4 time, marked 'Andante' with a tempo of approximately 76-108 beats per minute. The score is written for piano and consists of ten staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The piece begins with a dynamic marking of *p-mf*. The music is characterized by intricate rhythmic patterns, including frequent triplets and sixteenth-note runs. The notation includes various articulations such as accents (>) and slurs. The score concludes with a double bar line and the letters 'L R' at the end of the final staff.

The Thinker

Andante
mm ♩ = 76-108

Musical score for the Andante section of 'The Thinker'. The piece is in 5/8 time and features a melodic line with frequent triplets and accents. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as *f* and *mf*. The section concludes with a repeat sign and a 5/4 time signature.

Adagio mm ♩ = 66-76

Musical score for the Adagio section of 'The Thinker'. The piece is in 5/4 time and features a more complex melodic line with frequent quintuplets and triplets. Fingerings and hand positions are indicated by letters R (Right) and L (Left) below the notes. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*. The section concludes with a repeat sign.