

a-rhythm-etic

rhythm mathematics and pattern formation using short, medium, and long *tabla* syllable cells

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INTRODUCTION

This study offers a glimpse into the power of the North Indian *tabla* drum language and the fundamental mathematics the language comprises, presented here as a unique yet universal method called ***a-rhythm-etic***. The concept is simple but with great possibilities. Rhythm cells in this method are rendered with spoken syllables that are strung together to form potent musical shapes and metric structures that are applicable to any instrument and in any style of music. Using basic *tabla* syllables (called *bols*) you will discover new and essential entry points into rhythm invention, while speaking syllables clearly and with inflection will enhance the musicality of your practice.

Above all, the goal of playing music is to always remain relaxed—to achieve “effortless mastery” for “getting around” on your instrument, as you weave musical sound inside of time. The *a-rhythm-etic* method is designed to help you make better rhythm choices and to gain confidence with spontaneity while remaining relaxed and in control. Even when phrases are rendered incorrectly during your practice, the act of “fixing” the pattern as you repeat it requires living in the moment and being spontaneous.

Nothing worthwhile can be achieved without “doing the work” to get to the heart of the approach. As you follow this discussion you enter into a commitment, a promise to be patient in trying something new, to gain fresh perspectives and results. Initially, we will explore rhythm cells using only the voice and a steady beat. Deeper levels of integration and action will be introduced as we progress. But moving on to the next and more challenging stage requires you

to “graduate” from your successive levels. Do not be fooled by the desire to get to the end as quickly as possible.

As you progress there will be discussions that slow things down so you can digest material, and the “nutrients” of the concept can flow through your veins, not just in your head. If you follow the carefully planned sequences of the *a-rhythm-etic process*, your mind, body, and spirit can work complementarily. There is nothing worse than “brain sweat” when learning and playing music—the mind, body, and spirit should ideally work in an integrative fashion, so one should trust the non-thinking parts of the process.

RHYTHM CELLS

Shown in figure 1 below are three categories of rhythm cells: A (short), B (medium), and C (long). Study these cells for a while before moving to their analysis. Familiarize yourself with the concept of syllables comprising rhythm. The number following each letter (A1, C3) describes how many “dha” strokes are to be played in each cell.

Figure 1. Three Categories of Rhythm Cells

A series: (short cells: “tira kita”)

A1

dha - tira kita

A2

dha - dha - tira kita

A3

dha - dha - dha - tira kita

B series: (medium cells: “tira kita taka”)

B1

dha - tira kita taka

B2

dha - dha - tira kita taka

B3

dha - dha - dha - tira kita taka

C series: (long cells: “tira kita taka tira kita”)

C1

dha - tira kita taka tira kita

C2

dha - dha - tira kita taka tira kita

C3

dha - dha - dha - tira kita taka tira kita

Speaking the *Bols* Clearly

When played on the *tabla* drums, *dha* is an accented open (sustaining) tone rendered simultaneously on both high and low drums, whereas *tira kita* are non-sustaining strokes that function as a softer rolling-like figure between accented *dha* strokes. *Dha* contains the letter “h” which encourages one to speak the deep voice/tongue of the low bass drum called “bayan.” In the beginning it may be difficult to find the “proper” tone for *dha* syllables. But patience (and practice) will out.

Tabla bols (syllables) were inspired by the sounds of nature, created to mimic the sound of the drums. *Bols* are an onomatopoetic representation of drum sound; they do not have any cultural linguistic meaning. They are letters of a rhythm alphabet that form sentences of organized sound placed in a time matrix. The *tabla* language is vast, however our focus will be on the simple combinations discussed in this guide.

The softer rolling pattern “*tira kita*” moves rapidly in 16th note formations. To facilitate rapid recitation place the tip of your tongue at the top of the mouth and move only the tongue without moving the lips. If you speak the phrase phonetically you would most likely say: TI RAH KI TAH. However, there is no strong “R” sound in the phrase. You would need to say the “R” in a rolling fashion, as if the letter “D” replaced the “R”. By not moving the lips as you recite you may find the doorway into proper pronunciation.

Shorthand Notation

Shown in figure 2 below, the entire A, B, C series now appears in a “short-hand” form to simplify notation and facilitate quicker player response.

Figure 2. Shorthand Notation

dha = D (capital D represents the “accent” of the stroke and the duration of two 8th notes)

tira kita = trkt • tira kita taka = trkttk • tira kita taka tira kita = trkttktrkt (16ths)

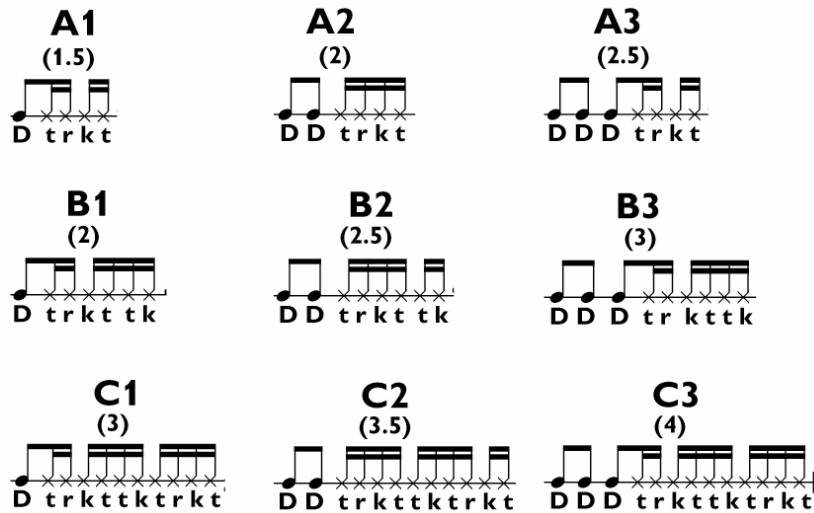
A1 D trkt	A2 D D trkt	A3 D D D trkt
B1 D trkttk	B2 D D trkttk	B3 D D D trkttk
C1 D trkttktrkt	C2 D D trkttktrkt	C3 D D D trkttktrkt

Of course, cells can be grown into much larger shapes using 4, 5, 6 or more *dha* strokes, or by lengthening *tira kita* rolls even further. These three A, B C categories represent a “good beginning” while providing a multitude of pattern possibilities.

Duration of Each Cell

Now it is time to examine the duration of each cell when set to a steady beat. Western notation (figure 3, below) provides a familiar link between *tabla* syllables and 8th and 16th notes. The number in parenthesis refers to the number of beats of a given cell (i.e., A1 is 1.5 beats in length, A2 is 2 beats, A3 is 2.5 beats). Repeat each cell while clapping or tapping a steady beat.

Figure 3. Rhythmic Cells in Western Notation



A “Non-Metric” Perspective

In the above, there is no association of “meter” with each cell, nor are there any rests included with any of the “fractional cells” (2.5, 3.5) to complete an unfinished beat. Our initial purpose is to string spoken cells together without pause, to understand each shape vocally for (eventually) playing phrases in a “metered” musical context. Proficiency with these nine cells would result in the freedom to play any combination in a purely improvisational setting, or for composing. Consider this “non-metric” approach to rhythm as “Flow without Measure.”

“Flow without Measure:” Cell Exercises to the “Beat”

Following are exercises that drill recited cells in a “flow without measure” context. Notice the musicality of each shape as you repeat a series. A steady “beat” is essential to feel and hear how fractional cells “flip” to the off-beat. For example, A1 recited four times would

result in an “on-beat/off-beat” combination: on, off, on, off. In fact, “beat flipping” occurs with all fractional cells: A1, A3, B2, C2.

In the cell formatting of figure 4 below, “A1” identifies the cell, while the “/4” indicates the number of times a cell is to be played before moving on. The small number in parenthesis (1.5) indicates the length of each single cell (previously discussed). Again, beat awareness is essential; metric awareness does not (yet) apply. When beginning these lessons, a metronome without accents is needed for checking your skill with cells that flip to the off-beat.

Figure 4. Cell Exercises to the “Beat”

A1/4 (1.5) A2/4 (2) A3/4 (2.5)

B1/4 (2) B2/4 (2.5) B3/4 (3)

C1/4 (3) C2/4 (3.5) C3/4 (4)

Series Succession

Variations can be derived by playing each cell in a series once then moving on to the next cell of the same series. In the format shown in figure 5 below you will see A (1-3)/4 (6). As before, the “A” identifies the “tira kita” series, (1-3) means “play each cell once.” The “/4” means “play the entire series four times,” and the number in parenthesis (6) indicates the length of each strung-together series: A (1-3) = 6 beats. Notice that B (1-3) and C (1-3) add up to odd numbers, resulting in a fractional phrase that will flip from on- to off-beat and back again. The B and C series will challenge your beat awareness, especially when playing to a metronome. Included below is the shorthand notation of each phrase you repeat.

Figure 5. Series Succession

A (1-3)/4 (6) D trkt D D trkt D D D trkt (6 beats)

B (1-3)/4 (7.5) D trkttk D D trkttk D D D trkttk (7.5 beats)

C (1-3)/4 (10.5) D trkttktrkt D D trkttktrkt D D D trkttktrkt (10.5 beats)

Series Combinations

A dramatic and challenging series results by combining A, B, and C using one *dha* (1), two *dha* (2), and three *dha* (3) strokes, as seen in figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Series Combinations

A1, B1, C1/4 (6.5) D trkt D trkttk D trkttktrkt (6.5 beats)

A2, B2, C2/4 (8) D D trkt D D trkttk D D trkttktrkt (8 beats)

A3, B3, C3/4 (9.5) D D D trkt D D D trkttk D D D trkttktrkt (9.5)

A Bridge to Carnatic Rhythm

The amazing rhythm system of South Indian (Carnatic) music is based, in large part, on stringing together drum (*mridangam*) patterns of varying lengths to complete a musical phrase in any speed and in any rhythm cycle. These powerful skills were part of the inspiration for the *a-rhythm-etic* concept. *A-rhythm-etic* functions as a bridge to the Carnatic system; it is a means for translating and transferring syllables to sounds on any instrument (discussed later). The next step is to surrender the intellect and the “knowing” of a cell’s duration to allow for unencumbered “flow without measure;” that is to say, establishing an assembly line of rhythm in the spontaneity and need of the moment.

At this point recite your own combination of A, B, C cells with randomness, spontaneity, and spark. Take chances to make your attempts sparkle. Be confident even with what you might call “mistakes.” Let your practice be your meditation—the relaxed central core of the physical

and mental; and let your meditation be your practice—always hearing music and rhythm throughout your day.

GRID OF TIME

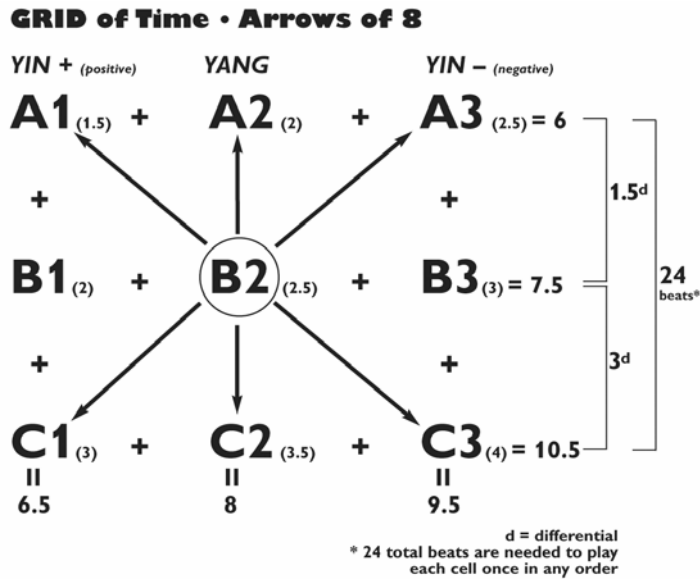
As we work beyond the “exercise” and “discovery” stage of *a-rhythm-etic* cells we must organize patterns in useful ways to support the music. Compound meters are built using smaller groupings (subunits) that combine to form the whole of a given meter. For example, the 10-beat tabla cycle “Jhaptal” is divided 2+3+2+3. All *tabla* cycles are built using smaller subunits.

In the “Grid of Time” that follows (figure 7, below) we will construct phrases (and eventually meters) using 3 unique letter cells. Working across the page in rows we see that A (1-3) = 6 beats, B (1-3) = 7.5 beats, C (1-3) = 10.5 beats. Working down the grid in columns we see that $A_1+B_1+C_1 = 6.5$ beats, $A_2+B_2+C_2 = 8$ beats, $A_3+B_3+C_3 = 9.5$ beats. These patterns are also shown with the *Series Succession* and *Series Combination* examples previously examined. Unlimited phrases can be built by repeating letter combinations in any fashion, for example: $A_1+A_1+A_2 = 5$ beats. If you have to construct an 11.5 beat phrase (or metric structure) the grid would be a useful place to begin.

Arrows of 8

The most prevalent meter is 4/4 (also known as “common time”). There are many potent 3-cell combinations that total 8-beats, as we will discover in the “Arrows of 8” (figure 8, below). Study the grid before continuing on to the analysis. (Note: yin & yang headings will be discussed later, when 2-letter combinations are explored.)

Figure 7. Grid of Time



The arrows in the above grid define combinations of A, B, C cells that total 8 beats.

Within any rotation of “arrow” cells the number of beats (8) remains the same, however *dha* accents shift locations, creating a “theme & variation” quality that is found in many *tabla* solo forms: *kaida*, *rela*, *peshkar*. In the examples below you can visually “see” where *dha* accents appear in a given phrase, especially when compared to other rotations of the same series. Recite each example at least four times (with a metronome or beat tapping) before moving on.

Figure 8. Grid of Time Exercise Examples

First series of 8

A1, B2, C3 D trkt D D trkttk D D D trkttktrkt (1.5 + 2.5 + 4)

A1, C3, B2 D trkt D D D trkttktrkt D D trkttk (1.5 + 4 + 2.5)

B2, A1, C3 D D trkttk D trkt D D D trkttktrkt (2.5 + 1.5 + 4)

B2, C3, A1 D D trkttk D D D trkttktrkt D trkt (2.5 + 4 + 1.5)

C3, A1, B2 D D D trkttktrkt D trkt D D trkttk (4 + 1.5 + 2.5)

C3, B2, A1 D D D trkttktrkt D D trkttk D trkt (4 + 2.5 + 1.5)

Second series of 8

C1, B2, A3 D trkttktrkt D D trkttk D D D trkt (3 + 2.5 + 2.5)

C1, A3, B2 D trkttktrkt D D D trkt D D trkttk (3 + 2.5 + 2.5)

B2, C1, A3 D D trkttk D trkttktrkt D D D trkt (2.5 + 3 + 2.5)

B2, A3, C1 D D trkttk D D D trkt D trkttktrkt (2.5 + 2.5 + 3)

C1, A3, B2 D trkttktrkt D D D trkt D D trkttk (3 + 2.5 + 2.5)

C1, B2, A3 D trkttktrkt D D trkttk D D D trkt (3 + 2.5 + 1.5)

Third series of 8

A2, B2, C2 D D trkt D D trkttk D D trkttktrkt (2 + 2.5 + 3.5)

A2, C2, B2 D D trkt D D trkttktrkt D D trkttk (2 + 3.5 + 2.5)

B2, A2, C2 D D trkttk D D trkt D D trkttktrkt (2.5 + 2 + 3.5)

B2, C2, A2 D D trkt D D trkttktrkt D D trkttk (2.5 + 3.5 + 2)

C2, A2, B2 D D trkttktrkt D D trkt D D trkttk (3.5 + 2 + 2.5)

C2, B2, A2 D D trkttktrkt D D trkttk D D trkt (3.5 + 2.5 + 2)

Numerous other 8-beat combinations are possible using three letters that are not represented in the arrows. Contact Jerry Leake at Rhombus@comcast.net for the entire 50-page *a-rhythm-etic* document.

MATH AND COUNTING THEORY

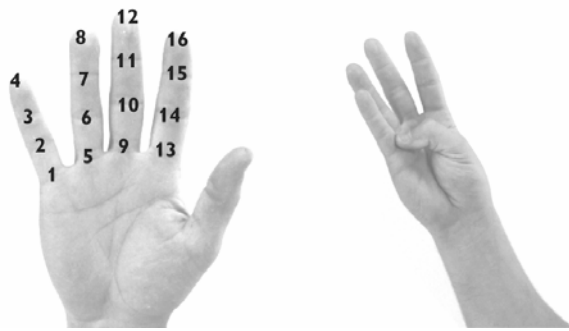
The Abacus of Time in Indian Music

In both North (*Hindustani*) and South (*Carnatic*) Indian music, time can be measured using several useful methods: clap and wave gestures (called *kriya*) that delineate groupings (bars) of beats, or individual beats that are called “matras.” The *matra* method of counting in the north (known as *keeping tal*) is an essential tool for calculating the length phrases, and for determining where and how fractional phrases flip off and back on to the beat.

Calculations are accomplished by using just the right hand with the thumb serving as the counting device (figure 9, right photo), and the notches in the finger joints serving as beat locations (figure 9, left photo). In this manner, the hand functions as a “time abacus” that allows one to calculate any composition's length from a few beats to 100 or more. It also functions as a “time compass” that allows musicians to navigate through any length of rhythm cycle and at any speed. For now we are concerned with 1) keeping the beat of a given phrase, 2) calculating the length of the phrase and, 3) determining if and where a phrase flips to the off beat.

Shown below is a scan of my right hand indicating the placement of each *matra* (beat). Notice how 16 beats fit comfortably onto the hand, as if it were designed all along to comprise the classic four bar phrase in 4/4, each finger serving as one bar of four beats. Once you reach beat 16, start again at “one” and continue counting 17, 18, 19, all the way to beat 32 to finish a second pass of the hand. A whole number phrase of “15-beats” requires you to land on beat 15 then return to beat “one” to begin again. A fractional number such as 2.5 (D D trkttk) requires you to begin on beat “one” and recite the phrase twice (on- then off-beat), eventually reaching beat “5.” After beat 5, return to beat “one.” In other words, let the phrase determine where and when you return back to the “one” on the hand.

Figure 9. *The Abacus of Time (Kriya Method)*



Number Locations

A question that often arises is “why is beat one located at the base of the pinkie and not at the tip of the index finger?” Unfortunately there is a limited amount of documented history regarding the evolution of Indian music to answer this question. However I do have some theories that may raise further debate by others, for the good of the cause. If number “1” were located at the tip of the index finger, where beat “16” is located, and beat “2” where beat “15” is, the remaining beats would be counted in a downward fashion moving from index finger to 2nd finger, 3rd finger, then pinkie. The sheer act of counting “down the ladder of time” is contrary to the idea of a “building up of time” that heightens musical climax and excitement. “Ascending the time ladder” deepens the musical plot, raises anticipation, and propels the engine of time forward, not backward.

Also, by starting at the pinkie and working inward toward the index finger one gets a feeling of time and music “coming toward the player” and not away. With the right hand positioned upright, the palm facing to the left and back of the hand on the right, time is coming closer to the heart of both the musician (literally) and to the heart of the music (figuratively). Music builds in anticipation as time approaches the player, and relaxes again when it returns to the base of the pinkie for beat one. *Keeping tal* is one of the most useful tools the player has for

determining how phrases fit into a given time matrix and, most importantly, what can be done with these phrases in a musical context.

YIN & YANG LETTER PAIRS

In the Grid of Time each column contains a heading of “Yin+, Yang, Yin-.” This classification refers to the order of letter pairs that are whole or fractional numbers. Yin+ (positive) contains one *dha* stroke for each A, B, and C series. Yin- (negative) contains three *dha* strokes per series. If you add A1 (1.5 beats) + A3 (2.5 beats) you get a whole number of 4. Similarly, B1+B3 = 5 and C1+C3 = 7. However, if you add a Yang cell (middle column) in a given series to either Yin+ or Yin- of the same series you get a fractional number. Shown in figure 10 below is a summary of these points.

Figure 10. Yin and Yang Rhythmic Cells

whole numbers: yin(+) + yin(-)

$$A1+A3 = 4$$

$$B1+B3 = 5$$

$$C1+C3 = 7$$

fractional numbers: yin + yang

$$A1+A2 = 3.5 \quad A3+A2 = 4.5$$

$$B1+B2 = 4.5 \quad B3+B2 = 5.5$$

$$C1+C2 = 6.5 \quad C3+C2 = 7.5$$

In the fractional numbers above notice that the total for each series grows by a single digit (3.5-7.5), with 4.5 appearing in both the A and B series. The musicality of whole and fractional letter pairs can be enhanced by creating strands of a given series, repeating each letter cell, and inverting cell order in the second half (below). When repeating each pair of letters in an

inverted order (1, 2 becoming 2, 1), what results is a whole number. Refer to the cell summary in figure 11 below for calculation and reference.

Figure 11. Cell Summary

$$\mathbf{A1 = 1.5} \quad \mathbf{A2 = 2} \quad \mathbf{A3 = 3.5}$$

$$\mathbf{B1 = 2} \quad \mathbf{B2 = 2.5} \quad \mathbf{B3 = 3}$$

$$\mathbf{C1 = 3} \quad \mathbf{C2 = 3.5} \quad \mathbf{C3 = 4}$$

A series: $A1+A2+A2+A1 = 7$

$$A1+A3+A3+A1 = 8$$

$$A2+A3+A3+A2 = 9$$

B series: $B1+B2+B2+B1 = 9$

$$B1+B3+B3+B1 = 10$$

$$B2+B3+B3+B2 = 11$$

C series: $C1+C2+C2+C1 = 13$

$$C1+C3+C3+C1 = 14$$

$$C2+C3+C3+C2 = 15$$

In the above A, B, C combinations “whole-numbers” also increase by a factor of “1” digit, with a 9-beat phrase appearing at the end of the A series and at the beginning of the B series. Interestingly, there is no 12-beat series in this specific model. However, as footnoted in the Grid of Time, when you add each individual A, B, C cell together you get 24 total beats. Therefore, if you start from A1 and play each cell once, you will reach 24 beats of music: $A1+2+3 + B1+2+3 + C1+2+3 = 24$. You can play each cell in any order you choose, perhaps in a sort of “flash-card” manner darting from one letter to the other without repeating any of them. This exercise will challenge your proficiency, control, and spontaneity.

Shown below is a summary of the Stages of Development that have been taking place as you explore this method.

Stages of Development

1. **Grasping** the “syllables for rhythm” concept of *tabla* drumming that began this study
2. **Reciting** syllables clearly to hear the shape of “dha” accents and softer “tira kita” rolls
3. **Translating** long syllable cells to “shorthand” cells to facilitate rapid response
(dha - tira kita = D trkt)
4. **Understanding** the entire cell construct: A1/4 (1.5), and other compound cell sets such as A1, B2, C3/4 (8)
5. **Practicing** repeatedly to complete the connection between doing rhythm exercises and creating useful musical patterns
6. **Counting** beats with the Abacus of Time while reciting cells and returning to beat “one” as needed
7. **Visualizing** in your mind’s eye (seeing time) whole and fractional cells (with Western notation serving as a *temporary* linking guide to syllables)
8. **Rendering** phrases by seeing only letter and number cells: A1, B2, B3/4 (7)

BUILDING METRIC STRUCTURES

Now it is time to build specific meters for placing rhythm cells into musical contexts. Any of the cell combinations we have previously examined (6.5, 9, etc.) could form the basis of a metric structure upon which to build a composition. Beginning with a summary of rhythm cells we can see that beat totals of 2, 2.5, and 3 appear in two letter cells, but that no number comprises all three A, B, C cells. You can also visualize the stair-stepping of beats as they increase. Refer to the table in figure 12 as we explore metric shapes.

Figure 12. Metric Shapes

beats:	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4
cells:	A1	A2	A3	-	-	-
	-	B1	B2	B3	-	-
	-	-	-	C1	C2	C3

A1 (1.5)	A2 (2)	A3 (2.5)
D trkt	D D trkt	D D D trkt
B1 (2)	B2 (2.5)	B3 (3)
D trkttk	D D trkttk	D D D trkttk
C1 (3)	C2 (3.5)	C3 (4)
D trkttktrkt	D D trkttktrkt	D D D trkttktrkt

Meters in 5

Shown in figures 13 and 14 below are exercises for building 5-beat and 7-beat metric structures. As we progress into other meters, not all rotations will be provided; there are simply too many to list. Contact Leake at Rombus@comcast.net for cells in 6, 9, 11, 13, etc.

Figure 13. Meters in 5

Meters in 5

A1, C2	D trkt D D trkttktrkt	(1.5+3.5)	C2, A1	D D trkttktrkt D trkt	(3.5+1.5)
A2, B3	D D trkt D D D trkttk	(2+3)	B3, A2	D D D trkttk D D trkt	(3+2)
A2, C1	D D trkt D trkttktrkt	(2+3)	C1, A2	D trkttktrkt D D trkt	(3+2)
A3, B2	D D D trkt D D trkttk	(2.5+2.5)	B2, A3	D D trkttk D D D trkt	(2.5+2.5)
B1, B3	D trkttk D D D trkttk	(2+3)	B3, B1	D D D trkttk D trkttk	(3+2)
B1, C1	D trkttk D trkttktrkt	(2+3)	C1, B1	D trkttktrkt D trkttk	(3+2)
B3, A2	D D D trkttk D D trkt	(3+2)	A2, B3	D D trkt D D D trkttk	(2+3)
B3, B1	D D D trkttk D trkttk	(3+2)	B1, B3	D trkttk D D D trkttk	(2+3)

Repeating Cells

A1, A1, A2 D trkt D trkt D D trkt (1.5+1.5+2)

A1, A2, A1 D trkt D D trkt D trkt (1.5+2+1.5)

A2, A1, A1 D trkt D trkt D D trkt (2+1.5+1.5)

A1, A1, B1 D trkt D trkt D trkttk (1.5+1.5+2)

A1, B1, A1 D trkt D trkttk D trkt (1.5+2+1.5)

B1, A1, A1 D trkttk D trkt D trkt (2+1.5+1.5)

Figure 14. Meters in 7

Meters in 7 (4 of 11 sets shown, contact Leake for more)

set 1

A1, A2, C2 D trkt D D trkt D D trkttktrkt (1.5+2+3.5)

A1, C2, A2 D trkt D D trkttktrkt D D trkt (1.5+2+3.5)

A2, C2, A1 D D trkt D D trkttktrkt D trkt (2+3.5+1.5)

A2, A1, C2 D D trkt D trkt D D trkttktrkt (2+1.5+3.5)

C2, A1, A2 D D trkttktrkt D trkt D D trkt (3.5+1.5+2)

C2, A2, A1 D D trkttktrkt D D trkt D trkt (3.5+2+1.5)

set 2

A1, A3, B3 D trkt D D D trkt D D D trkttk (1.5+2.5+3)

A1, B3, A3 D trkt D D D trkttk D D D trkt (1.5+3+2.5)

A3, B3, A1 D trkt D D D trkttk D D D trkt (1.5+3+2.5)

A3, A1, B3 D D D trkt D trkt D D D trkttk (2.5+1.5+3)

B3, A1, A3 D D D trkttk D trkt D D D trkt (3+1.5+2.5)

B3, A3, A1 D D D trkttk D D D trkt D trkt (3+2.5+1.5)

set 3

A1, A3, C1 D trkt D D D trkt D trkttktrkt (1.5+2.5+3)

A1, C1, A1 D trkt D trkttktrkt D D D trkt (1.5+3+2.5)

A3, C1, A1 D D D trkt D trkttktrkt D trkt (2.5+3+1.5)

A3, A1, C1 D D D trkt D trkt D trkttktrkt (2.5+1.5+3)

C1, A1, A3 D trkttktrkt D trkt D D D trkt (3+1.5+2.5)

C1, A3, A1 D trkttktrkt D D D trkt D trkt (3+2.5+1.5)

set 4

A1, B1, C2 D trkt D trkttk D D trkttktrkt (1.5+2+3.5)

A1, C2, B1 D trkt D D trkttktrkt D trkttk (1.5+3.5+2)

B1, C2, A1 D trkttk D D trkttktrkt D trkt (2+3.5+1.5)

B1, A1, C2 D trkttk D trkt D D trkttktrkt (2+1.5+3.5)

C2, A1, B1 D D trkttktrkt D trkt D trkttk (3.5+1.5+2)

C2, B1, A1 D D trkttktrkt D trkttk D trkt (3.5+2+1.5)

CONCLUSION

Music is difficult to play at the highest level—we are glad that it is difficult, otherwise no one would be gifted. But playing (and learning) music should also be fun and engaging. It is the aspect of “fun” that is rapidly dwindling from the learning process. Many students are stressed out by their schedules, challenged on academic and performing stages, and unable to remember the “fun” that they first felt upon hearing their instrument played by the great artists before them. Rather than force “determination” on the practice process, feel the “devotion” that initially motivated you to play music.

“Devotion” removes the “ego-driven” aspect of determination and opens the heart to a more spiritual relationship with one’s self, others, and God. Music is like religion: it brings us one step closer to the all mighty creator. Devotion does not mean “religion.” It means “love.” When you devote yourself to someone, you love that person. You devote yourself to hours of practice because you love the many sounds of your instrument and the feeling you get while playing, you love the self-discovery that comes with each new revelation that surfaces as you break new ground in your studies. Devotion is dedication, loyalty, worship and reverence, all to the sincere service of you craft. Such a commitment to your art will help you to always remember the love and the fun you derive as a participant.

Hopefully, the *a-rhythm-etic* method has been challenging and insightful, while also offering a “fun” way to discover new rhythm possibilities. All musicians need to engage in disciplined and “devoted” practice, but this does not mean that we should not enjoy the process along the way.

Any useful learning method provides the musician with new “tools” for creating more interesting improvisations and compositions. Consider *a-rhythm-etic* the latest addition to your toolbox of concepts and methods. And by keeping all of your tools polished and organized you will discover the spontaneous possibilities. Musicians can never have too many tools *on-hand* to achieve new levels of creativity.

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