

Chapter 13: Polyrhythmic Limbs

Polyrhythmic limbs is a concept having to do with the numerous ways you can apply polyrhythms to the drumset. It ties together the previous chapters of linear phrasing and polyrhythmic ratios and applies those concepts to

the drumset. Some of the masters who use this concept to great extent are Tony Williams, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Bill Stewart, Dan Weiss, Ari Hoening and a host of other up-and-coming jazz drummers.

There are a couple of ways to approach this:

1. **Note groupings**—Refer to the linear phrasing section (page 84). For example, you can play a grouping of four quarter notes in the feet against a grouping of three eighth notes in the hands.

♩ = 144

3 3 3 3 etc.

4 etc.

444

Detailed description: This exercise is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 144. The top staff shows a continuous eighth-note pattern in the hands, grouped into sets of three. The bottom staff shows a continuous quarter-note pattern in the feet, grouped into sets of four. The pattern repeats every 12 eighth notes (3 groups of 3 in hands, 3 groups of 4 in feet).

Now employ the swing pattern.

♩ = 144

3 3 3 3 etc.

4 etc.

445

Detailed description: This exercise is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 144. The notation is identical to exercise 444, but it is intended to be played with a swing feel.

Here's another example where you can play a grouping of four quarter notes on the ride cymbal, three eighth

notes on the bass drum and five eighth notes on the snare (playing only beats 1 and 3 of the five grouping).

♩ = 176

446

Detailed description: This exercise is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 176. The top staff shows a continuous eighth-note pattern in the hands, grouped into sets of five. The bottom staff shows a continuous quarter-note pattern in the feet, grouped into sets of four. The pattern repeats every 20 eighth notes (4 groups of 5 in hands, 5 groups of 4 in feet).

Now, employ the swing pattern.

♩ = 176

447

Detailed description: This exercise is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 176. The notation is identical to exercise 446, but it is intended to be played with a swing feel.

2. **Superimposing**—*Superimposing* is playing two or more meters simultaneously and having them both start together on beat one every measure, similar to the chapter on polyrhythmic ratios. For example, a basic superimposition we've practiced throughout the book is playing $\frac{4}{4}$ in your hands and $\frac{3}{4}$ in your feet.

448a

♩ = 120

or:

448b

Now employ the swing pattern.

448c

Here's another example where you can play a measure of $\frac{5}{4}$ in your hands, while playing a measure of $\frac{4}{4}$ in your feet.

449a

♩ = 120

or:

449b

Now employ the swing pattern.

449c

There are endless possibilities to this concept, and I hope that these chapters on polyrhythms will inspire you to create your own ideas and applications of this approach

to jazz drumming. After all, when all is said and done, jazz is about the creative spirit within.