Straight Through Odd Times

A practical approach to playing in odd meters for pitched instruments

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a big thanks to Lars Møller. A lot of the concepts come from talking to Lars and playing his music. I also want to thank my friends and fellow musicians and educators Thommy Andersson and Jonas Johansen for playing so beautifully on the tunes. Thanks to drummer Jochen Rueckert, a master of odd meters, who has helped me look everything over. A special thanks to all my students - their feedback has greatly helped me.

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INTRODUCTION

This material is about playing in odd meters and feeling at home doing it. The method described here is for all pitched instruments including the voice and can also be used by percussionists and drummers to some extent.

We approach all meters, odd or even, as a combination of groups of two or three beats. The premise is that we think rhythm before pitch.

The aim is to give you the tools to understand and play in any meter, odd or even. Even if all you ever want to do after reading this material is to play in 4/4 for the rest of your life, this can help you get more out of it. All the principles laid out here can also be used as compositional tools.

The first two chapters lay out basic concepts: how notes values fit into bars of two and three beats and how we can combine two and three beat bars to form odd meters.

In chapters 3, 4 and 5 I use three of my original compositions as case studies for playing in three, five and seven beat measures.

There are plenty of exercises throughout this paper. Exercises are described in bulleted lists. The accompanying videos expand on how to practice and include trio performances of the three tunes with Jonas Johansen on drums, Thommy Andersson on bass and myself on guitar. See Appendix A for a list of videos.

The material at hand is based on years of experience playing in odd meters. This approach has worked for me even though I still feel there is a lot to learn.

AUDIO/VIDEO

AUDIO AND VIDEO IS AVAILABLE ON
https://www.sdmk.dk/straight-through-odd-times-audiovideo

THE SITE CONTAINS AUDIO RECORDINGS OF ALL EXERCISES
AS WELL AS VIDEO PLAYTHOUGHS AND PRESENTATIONS.

A SOUND SYMBOL IN THE BOOK INDICATES THAT AN AUDIO EXAMPLE IS AVAILABLE ON THE SITE.

THE VIDEO ON THE SITE CAN ALSO BE ACCESSED VIA THE
PLAY-BUTTONS AND/OR QR-CODES AT THE END OF EACH CHAPTER.

CREDITS

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BASS: Thommy Andersson
DRUMS: Jonas Johansen

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LAYOUT: Jesper Dyhre Nielsen / SDMK

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1. THE BASICS

NOTE VALUES

Before we start talking about bars, let's first take a look at note values, our basic building blocks. In Figure 1 you will see the note values used in this material. They are the same values the vast majority of all music in the world can be described with.

In the middle of the figure we have 'the even layer' - blue squares.
The top row shows 'the dotted layer' - purple hexagons.
The bottom row shows 'the triplet layer' - red circles.

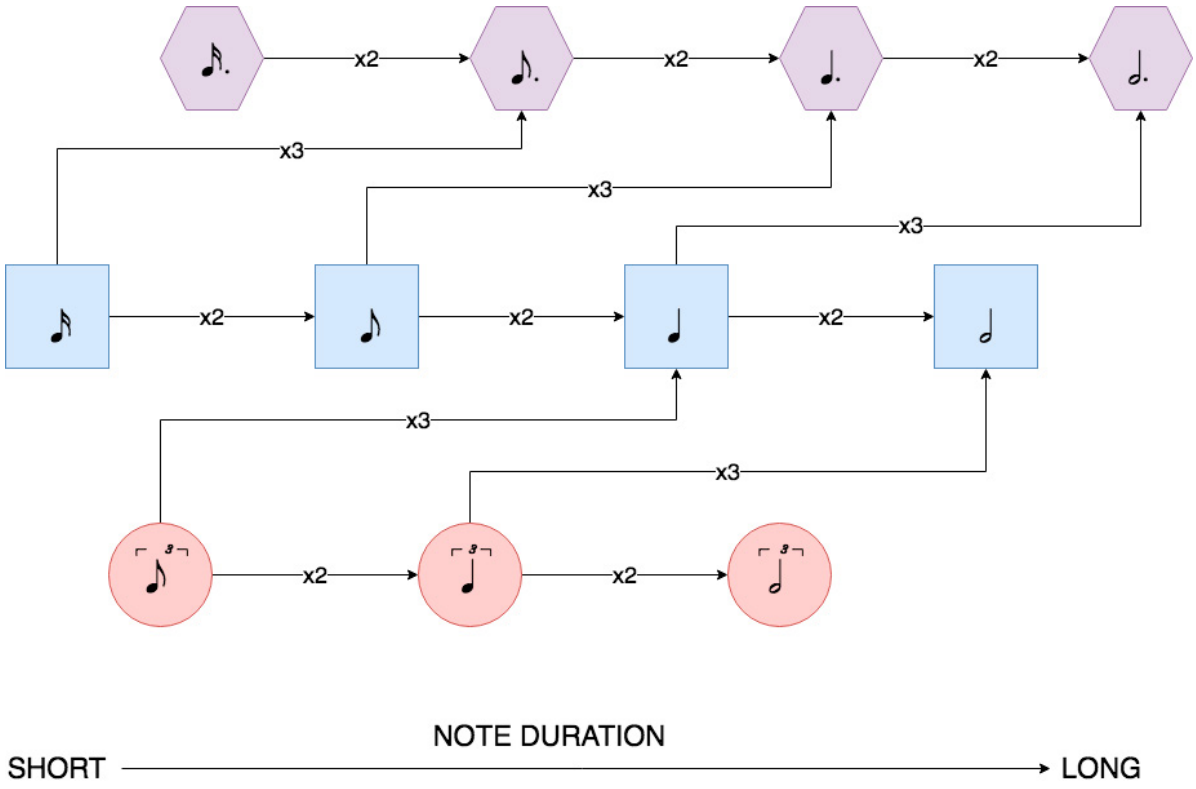


Figure 1: Note lengths short to long

When we move right to the next box of the same color we double the length of the note (x2). We can also move to a box of a different color by tripling the length of the note (x3). We can move in the opposite direction (right to left) by dividing the note length by two (stay in the same color) or by dividing the note length by three (move to a different color).

There is a confusing aspect of how we commonly notate rhythm: A quarter note triplet is shorter than a dotted eighth note. So even though they are very close in duration, it appears they are far apart. This is because a note inside a tuplet (triplet, quadruplet etc.) is *shorter* than the even note, whereas a dotted note is *longer* than the even note. A more logical, but less common way, is to notate dotted notes as quadruplets as seen in Figure 2.

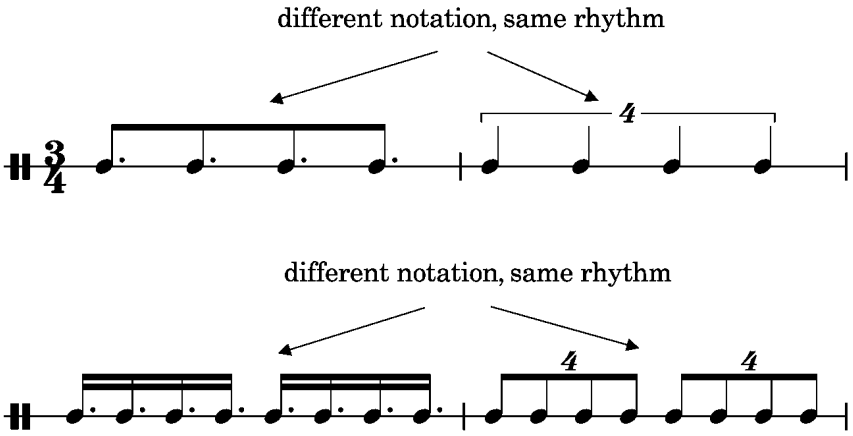


Figure 2: Different notation, same rhythm

Even though this gives a better visual representation of neighboring layers it is rare to encounter single quadruplets, i.e. one note with the number 4 above it, in written music. In the following I will mostly be using quadruplets when they come in groups of four and otherwise dotted notes.

LAYERS

The colors in Figure 1 represent what we can call rhythmic layers. We can talk about playing in 'the triplet layer' meaning using all the three different red circles. Same for 'the even layer' (all the blue squares) and 'the dotted layer' (all the purple hexagons). We can also specifically play in one particular layer: the even 8th note layer, the triplet quarter note layer, the dotted quarter note layer etc.

Notice in Figure 1 that if we double a note value, we stay in the same layer, if we triple, we move to a different layer. Same in the other direction, if we half a note value, we stay in the same layer, if we divide by three, we move to a different layer.

BARS

Figure 3 shows how many notes of the same value will fill a bar of 2/4 and a bar of 3/4.

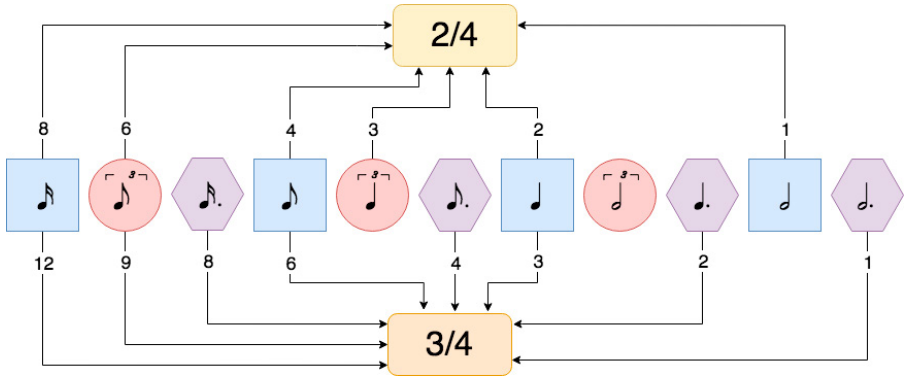


Figure 3: Filling bars of 2/4 and 3/4 with notes of one value.

As you can see from Figure 3 we can associate 2/4 with even- and triplet notes and we can associate 3/4 with even and dotted notes. Notice how 3/4 also has a link to the triplets: we can fill a bar with nine (9) 8th note triplets.

HALF-TIME AND DOUBLE-TIME

Halving and doubling the meter is a very powerful tool. When we play in an even meter like 2/4 or 4/4, it is pretty straight forward and we usually don't have to think about it. When we play in 3/4, it is a little different.

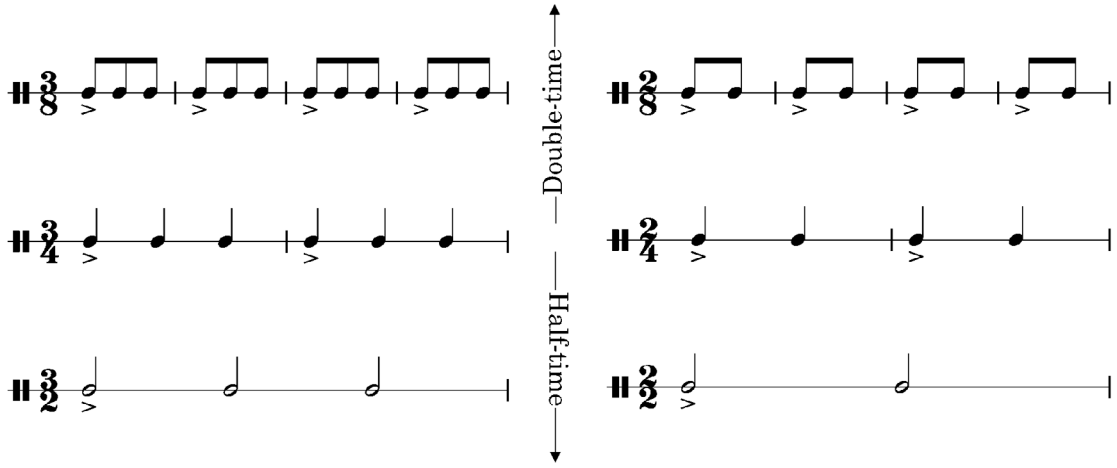


Figure 4: Half-time and double-time of 3/4 and 2/4

Look at the left side first. The second bar of 3/8 starts in between beats in 3/4, the second bar of 3/4 starts in between beats in 3/2. Then check out the right side: everything aligns.

Playing in half-time over a 3/4 beat feels strange at first but the beauty of it is that your phrasing changes in a funky way .

2. ODD METERS

Playing in odd meters is fun. It is also challenging - especially for someone like me who didn't grow up surrounded by odd meters. In certain parts of the world, like the Balkans, odd meters are a part of folklore and musicians and non-musicians alike have fully internalized a range of odd meters.

TWO AND THREE BEATS

In the following we will combine two and three beat measures to form odd meters. Any meter, odd or even, can be broken down into a combination of two and three beats.

2 = 2
3 = 3
4 = 2 + 2
5 = 2 + 3 or 3 + 2
6 = 2 + 2 + 2 or 3 + 3
7 = 2 + 2 + 3 or 3 + 2 + 2
9 = 2 + 2 + 2 + 3 or 3 + 3 + 3 or 3 + 2 + 2 + 2

I have left out the ones where the three beats are in the middle, like seven divided 2 + 3 + 2; those are not as common. I also left out the number 8 above - it is rare to see a meter written in eight beats, although we very often phrase in eight beats, like two bars of 4/4. Figure 5 shows three different odd meters and how they can be seen as a combination of two and three beat measures.

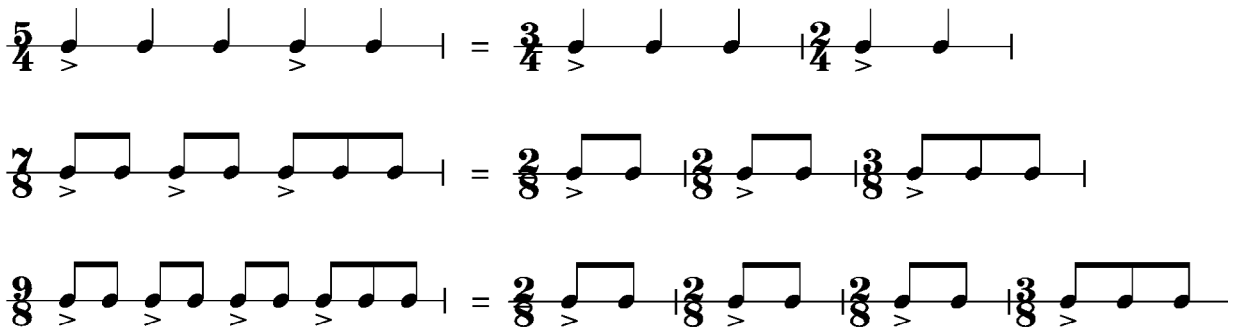


Figure 5: Odd meters as combinations of two and three beat measures

We can also talk about 'short' and 'long' beats. The 7/8 bar in Figure 5 is perceived as a three beat measure: short, short, long. 'Short' corresponds to two beats, and 'long' to three beats. Similarly the 9/8 measure can be thought of as a four beat measure: short, short, short, long. Short and long beats are often tied to dancing where it corresponds to the length of the steps.

KEEPING THE BEAT

Most musicians can easily count to two or to four while playing without thinking about it - they 'feel' it rather than count it. The count has been fully internalized and playing in 2/4 and 4/4 seems natural - finding the downbeat is not a problem (unless the drummer goes nuts!).

For most people, playing in odd meters is a different matter altogether. Playing in five, seven or eleven doesn't feel nearly as natural. The count has not been internalized and the downbeat gets lost on a regular basis. Great beauty can come from being lost and playing on instinct but as a general approach it has its limits.

When we play in meters with more than four beats we can arrange them in groups of two and three beats as earlier. We use the first beat of each group as accents to anchor our phrases - like a very simple clave.

The easiest way to feel this is by tapping your foot on the accents. You can also tap your foot on the accents and lightly tap your foot in between on the unaccented beats.

What works best is very dependent on the tempo - the faster the tempo, the more it can make sense to tap your foot only on the accents, the slower the tempo, the more you will need to tap on all beats and create accents with your foot.

It is important to understand that the goal is to eventually internalize the count so you don't have to tap your foot to know where you are.

In many of the richest musical cultures in terms of rhythm, none of the musicians show you the pulse, musicians are not tapping a foot or moving much at all, except the movement on the instruments.

HOW TO PRACTICE

Now that we have covered the basics it is time to put it all to work. In the remainder of this paper we will use three of my original tunes to practice. All tunes can be found in Appendix B, C and D. Printing out the tunes or using a separate screen will make things easier. I would also suggest watching the accompanying videos, see Appendix A.

For each tune there is a trio performance, trio demonstrations of different concepts and a how to practice video where I show how to practice in odd meters with a metronome.

References to the A, B or C section refer to rehearsal marks in the lead sheets in the appendix. Bulleted lists under the examples are suggested exercises. For each meter you will find different metronome patterns you can use. The screen shots of the metronome are from Pro Metronome (I am not affiliated with the makers of Pro Metronome). Using an advanced metronome app or a Digital Audio Workstation will allow you to program patterns to fit the shifting accents of the tunes.

Remember that a lot of work can be done without your instrument. Drumming your fingers on a table, singing rhythms to yourself while walking (your steps are the beats) and listening to music while figuring out the rhythms used, are all good examples of practicing without an instrument.

As mentioned before, the basic concept of this material is to think rhythm before pitch. Any phrase you will find in the examples is just a manifestation of a rhythmic idea. Extract the rhythm from the phrase and play around with notes of your choice; that is the basic idea.

For each chapter the examples get progressively more intricate and harder to play. Don't feel you have to play all the examples; the most important thing is get your foot going on the accents to start internalizing the count and to get an understanding of the different rhythmic layers used. Slow the tempos down as much as you need when practicing.

AUDIO AND VIDEO

Audio and video is available on:
https://www.sdmk.dk/straight-through-odd-times-audiovideo

Throughout the text the  -icon indicates when an audio example is available on the site.

After each chapter you will find three corresponding videos. Click the  -icon to watch a video or play it on the webpage.

3. TUNE IN THREE

Three is both an odd meter in itself and a component in other odd meters as we shall see later.

Tune in Three utilizes all the layers of 3/4 side (see Chapter 1, Figure 3). The C section is heavily inspired by Wayne Shorter's Footprints and will be used for metric modulation to 2/4 later in this chapter. All the concepts used here can be applied to other tunes in three.

PLAYING THE TUNE

You can use the metronome patterns from Figure 6.

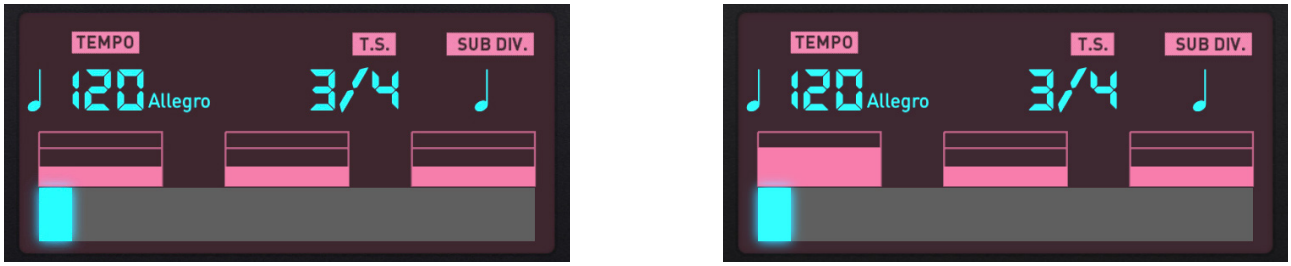
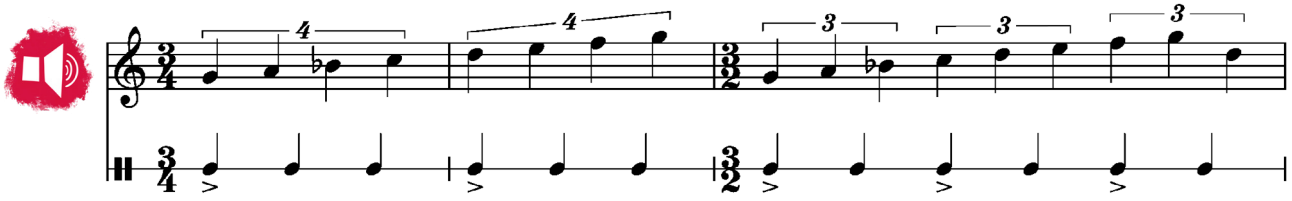


Figure 6: Metronome patterns in 3/4. Left: no accents. Right: accent on beat one

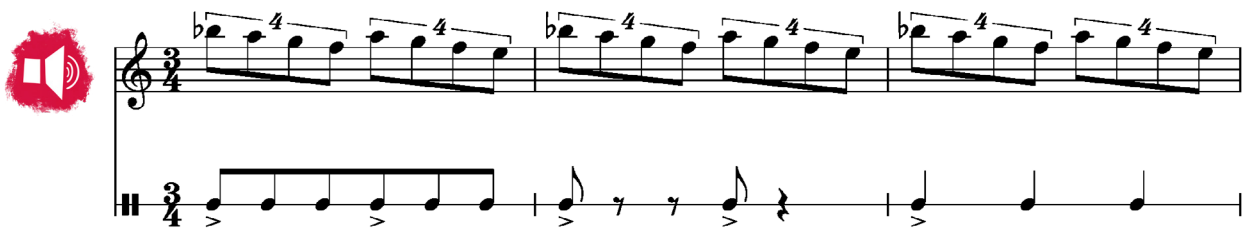
The most challenging part of playing the tune is switching between the dotted notes and the triplets. Remember again that quarter note quadruplets are the same as dotted 8th notes. In Example 1 the first two bars are bar 7 and 8 of the tune, the last bar is bar 15.



Example 1: Eight and nine notes over six beats

- Play the first two bars in a loop. Tap your foot as in the bottom staff.
- Play the last bar while tapping your foot on every other beat as indicated.
- Play all three bars in a loop.
- Play the whole A section.

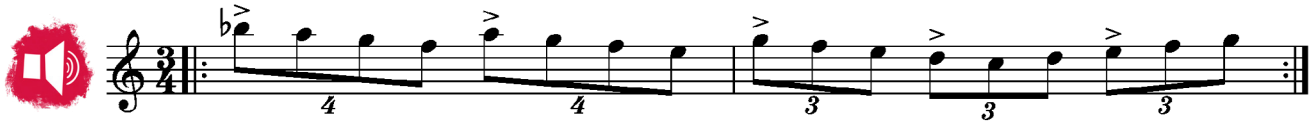
Playing 8th note quadruplets or 'eight over three' is the most difficult layer of the ones used in this material, but a lot of fun once you get the hang of it. 8th note quadruplets are the same as dotted 16th notes.



Example 2: Three different ways of accenting the beat playing 8th note quadruplets

- Practice the pattern tapping your foot as notated in the bottom staff. For the first bar you might have to lower the tempo to be able to tap your foot on the 8th notes. Shoot for the middle of the bar so that the fifth quadruplet aligns with the accent in the middle of bar one and two.

Now we will switch between 8th note quadruplets and 8th note triplets as in bar 21 and 22 of the tune. This is pretty challenging! In Example 3 I changed the phrase of the tune a bit to make a better loop.



Example 3: 8th note quadruplets and 8th note triplets in 3/4. Play

- Practice each bar on its own and tap your foot on all three beats.
- Practice both bars in a loop.
- Practice the whole B section.

Notice the push and pull feeling - changing from quadruplets to triplets gives the impression of accelerating and going the other way from triplets to quadruplets gives the impression of decelerating.

Now you should be ready to put everything together and play the whole song. The C section is fairly easy.

METRIC MODULATION

Now let's try metric modulation between 3/4 and 2/4 in the C section of the tune. This means that the length of the bar measured in time (seconds, milliseconds) remains the same. This is done by altering the speed of the quarter notes as seen in Figure 7.

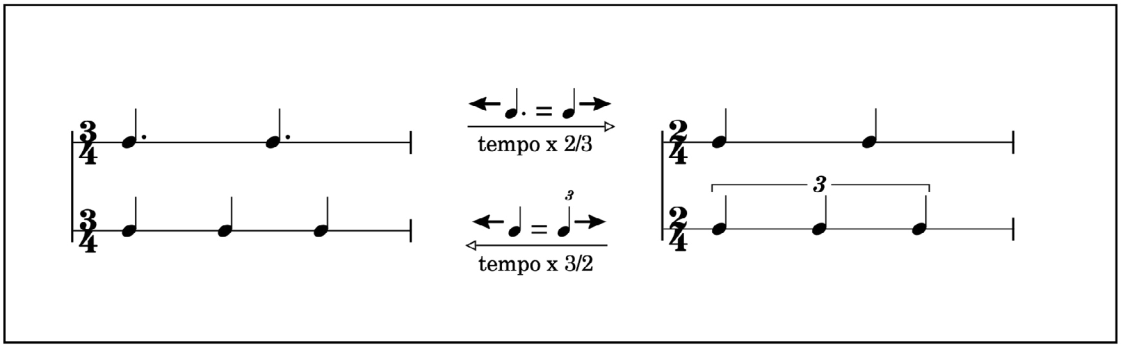


Figure 7: Metric modulation between 2/4 & 3/4

We modulate from 3/4 to 2/4 by making the old dotted quarter note the new quarter note. We modulate from 2/4 to 3/4 by making the old quarter note triplet the new quarter note. A tempo of 120 bpm in 3/4 corresponds to a tempo of 80 bpm in 2/4.

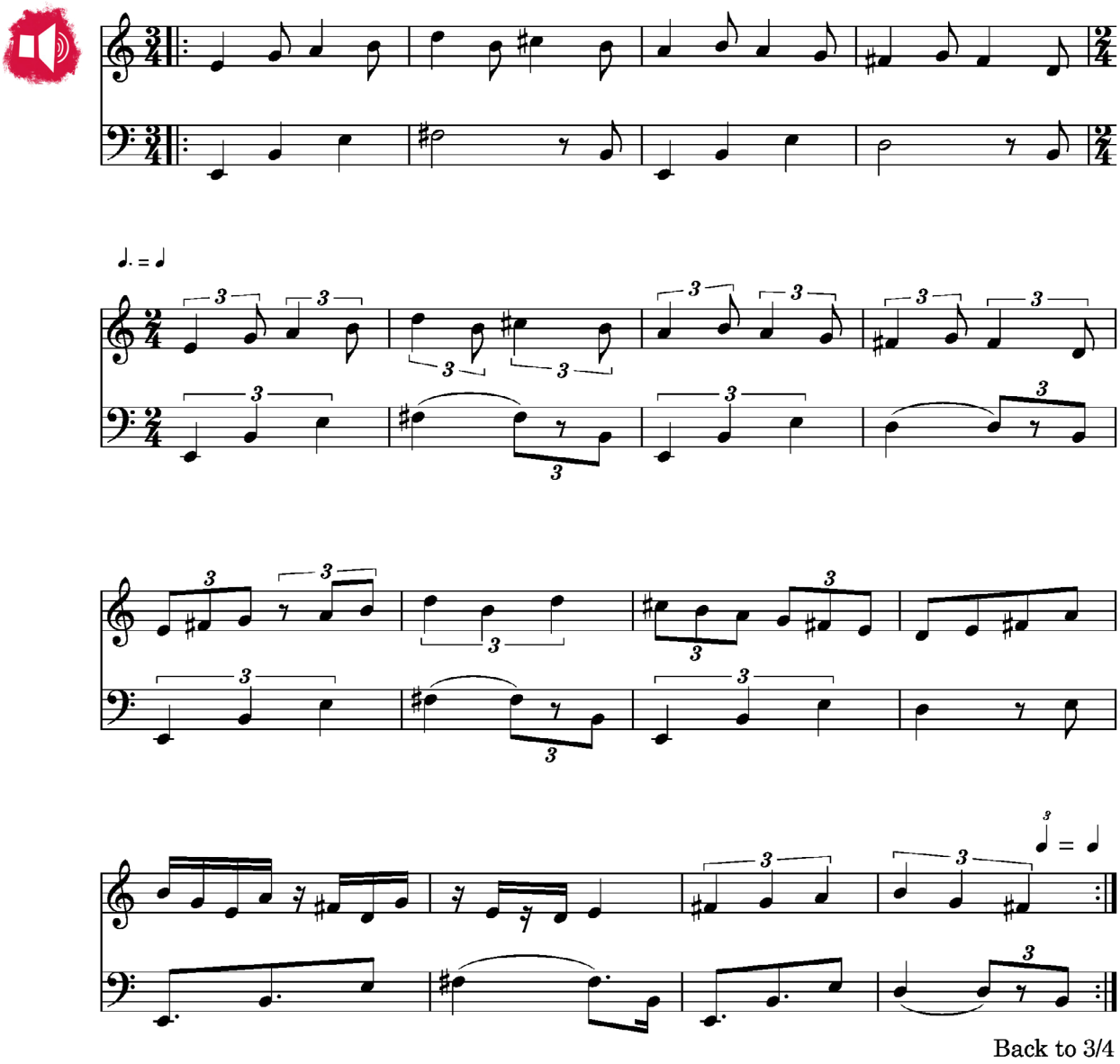
We can see that the following applies when modulating between 3/4 and 2/4:

3/4		**2/4**
Even	⟷	Triplet
Dotted	⟷	Even

Let's try a metric modulation on the C section like in video 1.B. In Example 4 you will see a condensed version of how we do it in the video. The melody lines are examples of what could be played, not the exact phrases I use in the video, but the idea is the same.

The first two systems sound the same but the second system is written in 2/4, i.e. the tempo of the quarter note has changed. Notice the little metric modulation sign. What were even notes in the first line have now become triplet notes in the second line.

Then the melody line expands to a more mixed triplet layer in the third system and in the fourth system it switches to the even layer. The bass line in system 4 is an approximation of the bass line in system 2 and 3 - the triplets have been changed to the nearest even value to fit the melody line. In the last two bars the quarter note triplets of the melody points back to the top of the form, they become quarter notes when back in 3/4.



Example 4: Metric modulation between 3/4 and 2/4

- Play the melody line with one of the metronome patterns in Figure 8 below.
- Play the bass line.
- Play the example with a band. This is the most fun.
- Use the same ideas with pitches of your choice.

You can use the suggested metronome patterns in Figure 8.

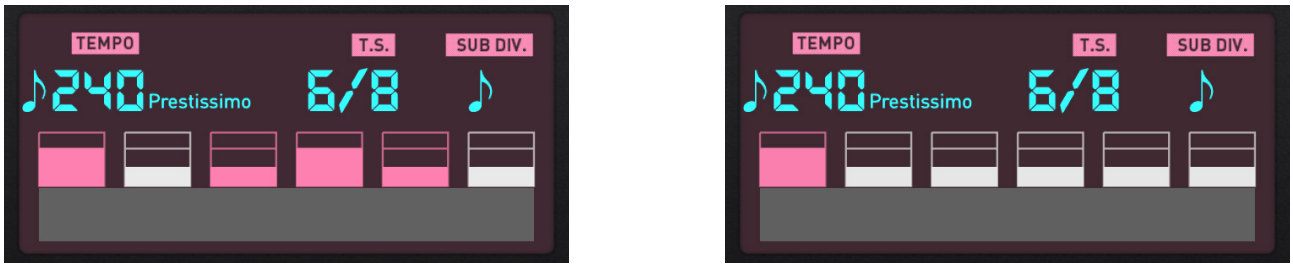


Figure 8: Metronome patterns suited for metric modulation between 2/4 and 3/4. Grey notes are muted

The left metronome pattern of Figure 8 corresponds to Figure 7 and can be understood both in 3/4 and 2/4. In 3/4 the quarter notes are on beat one, three and five and the dotted quarter notes on beat one and four. In 2/4 the quarter notes are on beat one and four and the quarter note triplets are on beat one, three and five.

When we play the first two bars of system 4, the quarter note triplet of the metronome pattern on the left goes a little against the 16th notes of the melody and bass line. This is not the case for the pattern on the right as it just gives you the downbeat of either 2/4 or 3/4. Just having the downbeat is a little more challenging but gives you more freedom to switch between layers.

Metric modulation is like changing your point of view. The same phrase feels totally different when you change perspective, i.e. change the speed of the quarter note. Metric modulation is an extremely important musical component in many cultures, primarily in Africa and places with extensive African influences like Cuba and Brazil.

IMPROVISING OVER TUNE IN THREE

The solo form is an open repeat on the C section. The E dorian scale will fit all the chords. You can get ideas for rhythms in the Rhythmic Permutation Sheet (see Appendix E). Move around the scale or use any notes of your choice. Think rhythm before pitch.

- Practice playing in the even and dotted layers in 3/4.
- Practice playing in the 8th note triplet layer in 3/4.
- Practice playing in the even and triplet layers when modulated to 2/4.

I suggest using tempos that fit the metric modulation. If the tempo is 120 bpm in 3/4 it will be 80 bpm in 2/4. If we are at 105 bpm in 3/4 we will be at 70 bpm in 2/4. As we saw in Figure 7 we modulate from 3/4 by multiplying the tempo with 2/3 so start with a tempo in 3/4 that divides nicely by three.

TUNE IN THREE VIDEOS

TRIO PERFORMANCE

TRIO DEMO

Metric modulation

HOW TO PRACTICE

4. TUNE IN FIVE

Now it is time to put a two and three beat measure together to form a five beat measure. My composition Tune in Five (see Appendix C) does that in three different ways as shown in Figure 9. All the concepts laid out here can be applied to other tunes in five.

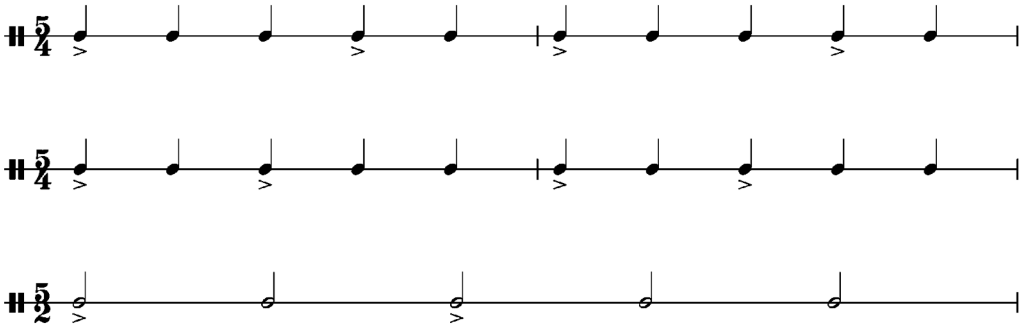


Figure 9: The three different groupings used in Tune in Five

In the A section the 5/4 is divided into 3 + 2 beats. The accents or anchors (see Chapter 2) fall on the first and fourth beat of the measure (top line).

In the first ending the groove switches to 5/4 with accents on one and three (middle line).

In the B section the groove switches to half-time 2 + 3 (bottom line). The drums play an adapted afro clave over beat three, four and five (see Appendix C).

You can use the metronome patterns in Figure 10. The left pattern can go with any section of the tune. The right pattern fits the A minor part of the A section. You can change the second accent from beat four to beat three to fit other sections of the tune.

Figure 10:
Metronome patterns in 5/4.
Left: unaccented. Middle: accents on beat one and four. Right: only accents.

PLAYING THE TUNE

Set a metronome to unaccented beats in 5/4 (Figure 10, left), then:

- Practice the first six bars of the bass line on the A section while tapping your foot on beat one and four. When you get to the first ending, switch your foot to beat one and three, then switch back when repeating. In the second ending and the B section, tap your foot on every other beat of 5/4, which will give you a bar of 5/2 over two bars of 5/4.

- Practice the melody the same way.

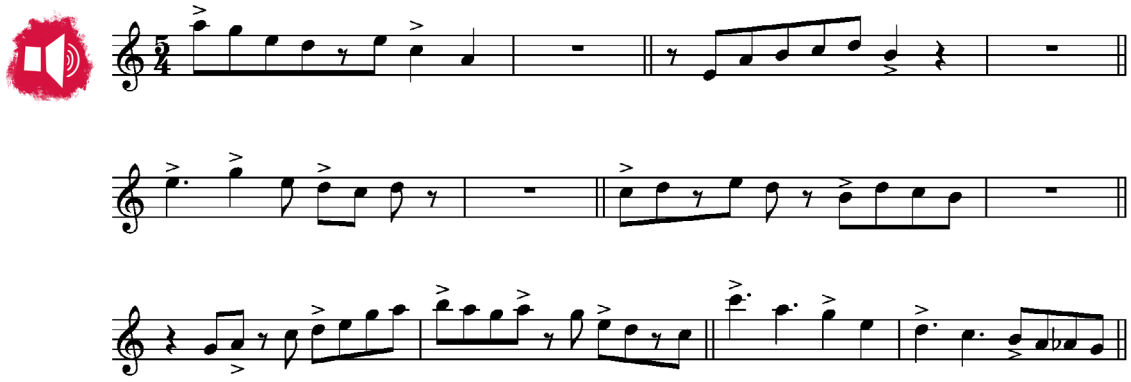
- Practice melody and bass line without a metronome, with the foot on all five beats, creating the accents with your foot (see Chapter 2: Keeping the Beat).

- Practice melody and bass line of the A section while only tapping your foot on the accents and imagining the other unaccented beats. Use the right side pattern of Figure 10 or practice without the metronome.

IMPROVISING INSIDE THE GROOVE

The solo form is eight bars. The first six bars are the basic A minor 3 + 2 groove. Bar seven and eight goes to F minor and switches to a 2 + 3 groove. Just like when we play the melody.

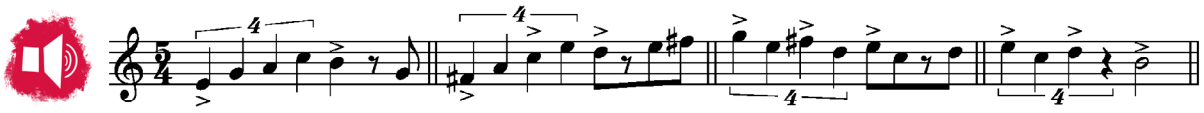
Let's start by looking at the basic A minor groove. Your bread and butter here is to play phrases that utilize and enhance the rhythmic structure of the groove. If you look at the bass line you will see that all note values can be found in the 8th note layer. Notice how the accents line up with the bass notes of the groove.



Example 5: Playing inside the A minor groove of Tune in Five

- Play Example 5 with the foot on one and four.
- Change some of the accents from Example 5 so they fall in between bass notes.
- Play the rhythms with pitches of your own choice. Move around the A minor pentatonic scale, the A dorian scale or any other pitches you like.

Now let's incorporate the quarter note quadruplets from the first bar of the melody on the A section. Remember that quarter note quadruplets are the same as dotted 8th notes. This adds a little more rhythmic tension to the phrases but still aligns beautifully with the bass line.

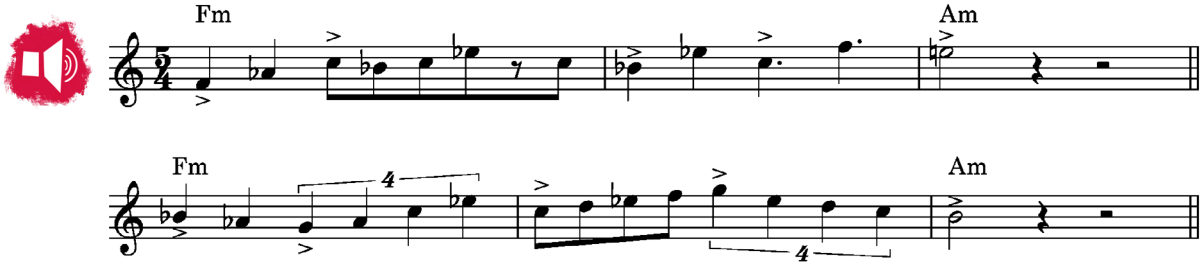


Example 6: Adding quarter note quadruplets

Notice how the third note of the quadruplet aligns with the second note of the bass line. You can try adding an accent with your foot on this beat to help you feel the connection between the bass line and the phrases. This would give you accents on one, and-of-two and four.

At first you will probably find that keeping the foot on one and four demands a lot of attention and that it takes away some freedom in your playing. That's ok. It will benefit you later once you get the hang of it, I promise!

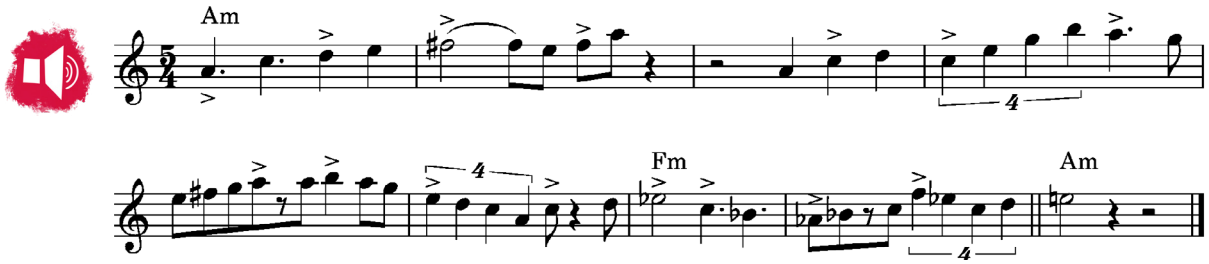
Now let's zoom in on the last two bars of the solo form when it goes to F minor and the groove changes to 2 + 3. Notice how the accents in Example 7 align with the bass notes.



Example 7: Playing inside the F minor groove

- Play the Example with the metronome on unaccented beats and foot on one and three.
- Adapt some of the earlier examples over A minor to fit F minor. This means swapping the two sides of the bar: any rhythm on beat one, two and three in A minor moves to beat three, four and five in F minor. Beat four and five in A minor moves to beat one and two in F minor.

It is time to put everything together and improvise over the whole form.



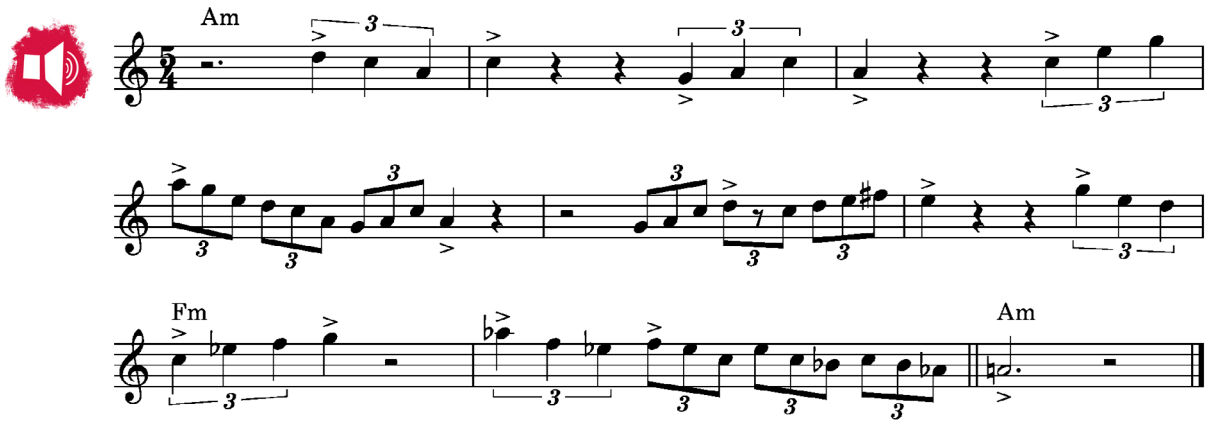
Example 8: Playing over the whole solo form

- Play the example. In the first six bars tap your foot on one and four. In the last two bars tap your foot on one and three.
- Improvise freely over the whole form while keeping the foot on the accents.

Again, you will probably find that keeping track of the accents with the foot is hard at first, especially since we now have to change the accents from one and four to one and three in the last two bars. Keep working on these accents with the foot for quite some time as it will give you a great tool for navigating in any meter of five beats and prepare you for improvising in other odd meters as we shall see later on.

TRIPLETS AND QUADRUPLETS

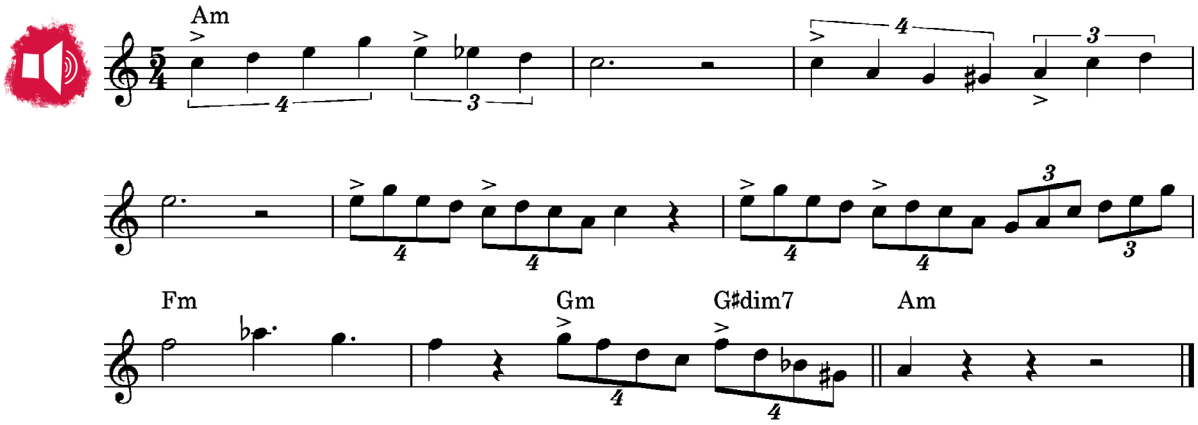
The triplets are really fun to use over a groove like Tune in Five. The melody and bass groove only use even and dotted notes so the triplets create some rhythmic excitement.



Example 9: Using triplets over the whole form.

- Play the example and try other pitches with the same rhythms. Keep the foot on the accents like before.

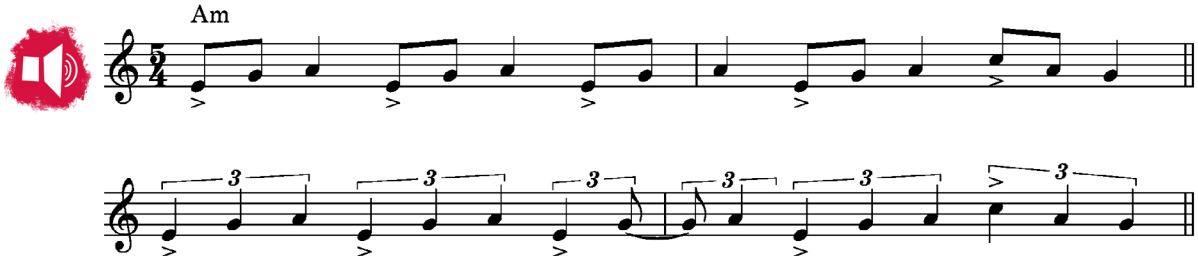
Now, when we mix in the quadruplets we get a really interesting combined quadruplet-triplet layer. The quadruplets are just a little bit slower than the triplets as eight (8) quadruplets occupy the same space as nine (9) triplets. I use these combined layers a lot in video 2.A. See Chapter 3 for how to practice the 8th note quadruplets.



Example 10: Using a mix of quadruplets and triplets over the form

HALF-TIME FEEL

The patterns in Example 11 suggests a half-time feel.



Example 11: Patterns suggesting a half-time feel (The example is recorded two times - first time with normal 5/4 feel, second time with half-time feel)

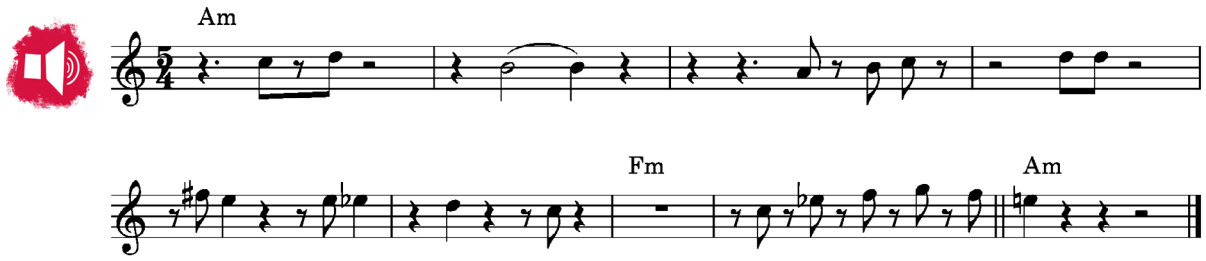
- Practice the example with the foot on one and four.
- Then practice in a half-time feel. Foot on one, three and five of the first bar and two and four of the second bar of 5/4. Now you are superimposing a half-time feel over 5/4.

In general you can practice any of the previous rhythms with a half-time feel. This gives a nice grounded feeling plus it prepares you for when the drummer switches to half-time feel, like they tend to do! Playing with a half-time feel is usually one of the first things I try when learning a new tune in an odd meter, unless the tune is very slow to begin with.

Watch video 2.B for examples of how to superimpose a half-time feel over 5/4.

USING SPACE

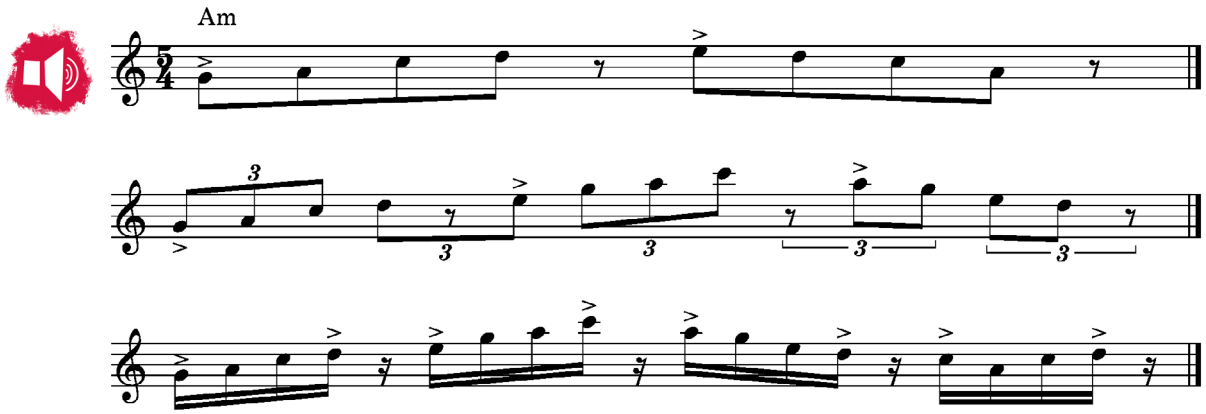
In general, and especially in a meter new to us, we use what we play to keep track of where we are. We tend to play on the accented beats of the groove and be less funky than when playing in 4/4. Practicing playing sparsely and in between accented beats is more challenging but has two benefits: not having to play to keep track of where we are and also giving us the tools to play counter rhythms to the bass line.



Example 12: Sparse, playing in between notes of bass line

DIVIDING THE BAR IN TWO, THREE AND FOUR

Now we will look at some other ways of dividing a 5/4 bar. In Example 13, the accents of the top line divide the bar into two equal parts, the accents in the middle line divide the bar in three equal parts and the accents in the bottom line divide the bar into four equal parts.

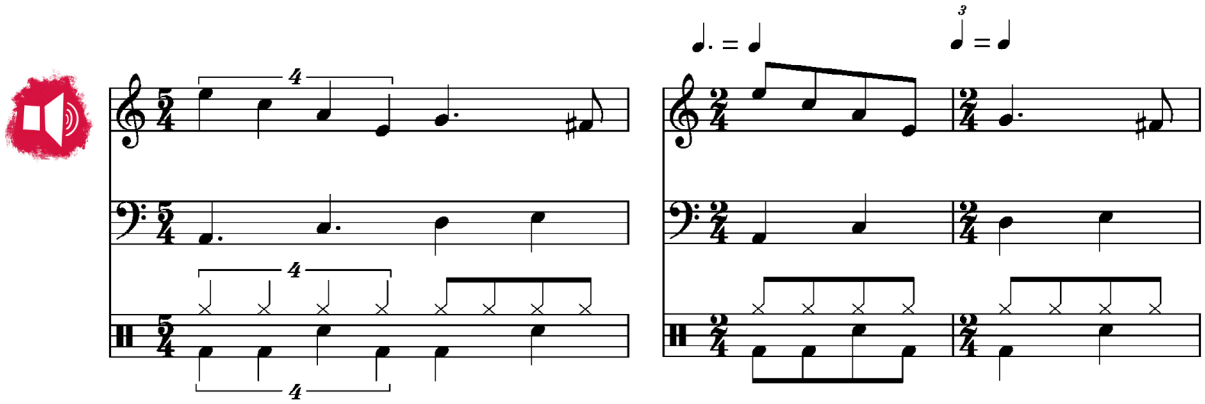


Example 13: Patterns using groups of five notes in 5/4

- Play all patterns with the accents as written.
- Shift all the patterns one value to the right, i.e. start on the second 8th note (top line), second 8th note triplet (middle line) and second 16th note (bottom line).
- Shift all the patterns two values to the right. Now all the patterns will end on the downbeat.
- Play all patterns with the foot on one and four. You can also try with the foot on one and three.

MINI METRIC MODULATION

In the first bar of the A section we see that both the melody and the bass use quadruplets/dotted notes. The melody is in the dotted layer twice as fast as the bass (see Chapter 1). This could open up for a mini metric modulation of the first three beats of the 5/4 measure. The left side of Example 14 is notated in 5/4. The drum part makes it feel like a mini metric modulation as shown on the right side. The two sides are identical, just different notations.



Example 14: Mini metric modulation in Tune in Five
Recorded example: 3rd bar modulated as above

- Try this with a band.

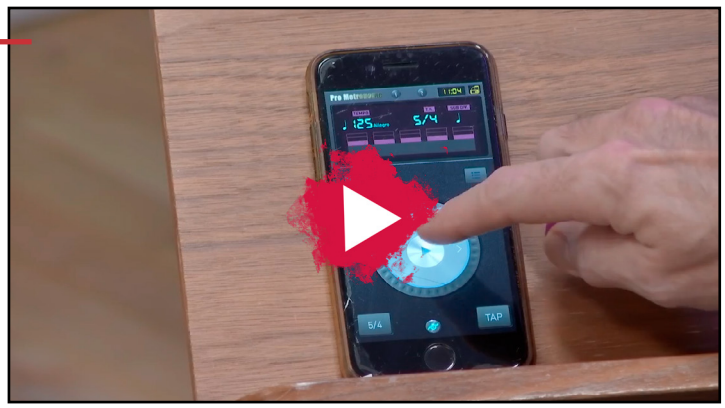
TUNE IN FIVE VIDEOS

TRIO PERFORMANCE

TRIO DEMO

Using different groupings of five beats

HOW TO PRACTICE



5. TUNE IN SEVEN

Lastly we will use my composition Tune in Seven (see Appendix D) as an example of what you can do in a meter based on seven. All these concepts can be applied to pretty much any tune in seven beats. There are three different ways the seven beats are broken up in the tune.

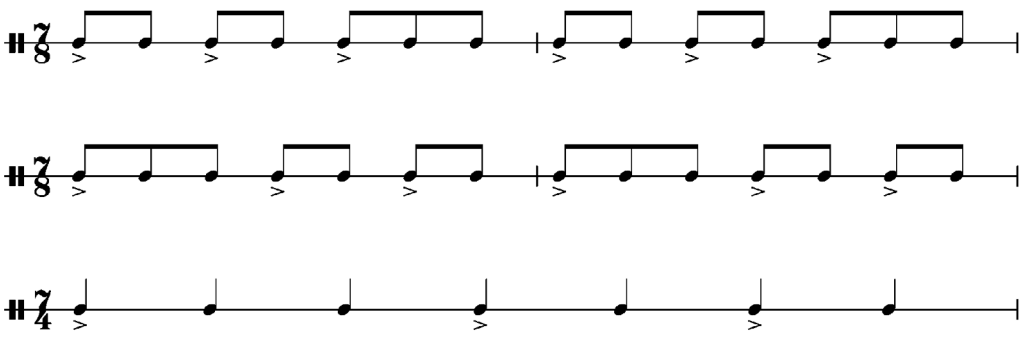


Figure 11: The three different groupings used in Tune in Seven

The A section is in 7/8 divided 2 + 2 + 3 (top line).

The B section is in 7/4 divided 3 + 2 + 2 (bottom line).

The fourth and fifth bar of the B section switch back to 7/8 divided 3 + 2 + 2 (middle line).

The last bar of the B section is back to 7/4 but without accents and is meant to be a little drum break with a fill leading back to 7/8 at the top of the form.

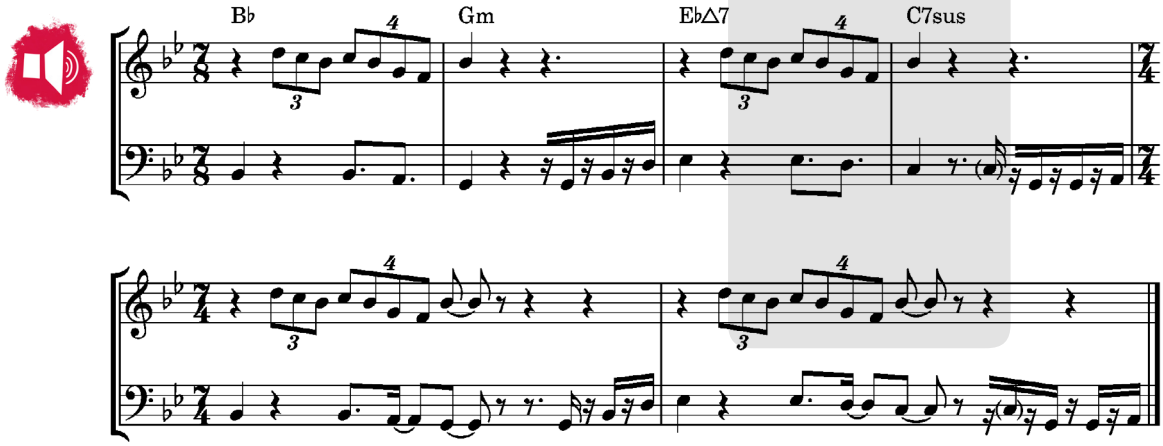
You can use the metronome patterns in Figure 12. The left pattern can be used for any section of the tune. The middle and right patterns fit the A section. You can change the accents to the middle line of Figure 11 to fit the B section.

Figure 12: Metronome patterns in 7/8.
Left: unaccented beats. Middle: with accents on beat one, three and five.
Right: only accents - grey notes are muted

PLAYING THE TUNE

Set a metronome to unaccented beats in 7/8 (Figure 12, left).

- Practice the A section with the foot on beat one, three and five. A beat is now one 8th note.
- In the B section, switch to 7/4. The foot should now be on every other beat of 7/8 creating a bar of 7/4 over two bars of 7/8 (see Figure 11). Accents in 7/4 should be on one, four and six as the melody indicates. When we are in 7/4, a beat is a quarter note.
- In bar four and five of the B section, switch back to 7/8 but this time with the foot on beat one, four and six. Now a beat is back to being an 8th note.
- Now practice the A section with a half-time feel, i.e. tapping your foot on every other beat over two bars of 7/8. It is pretty common for the drummer to go to a half-time feel in a groove like this which changes the feel, especially of the second and fourth bar. Example 15 shows the notation in both 7/8 and 7/4.



Example 15: Showing the first four bars of the A section in Tune in Seven written in both 7/8 and 7/4

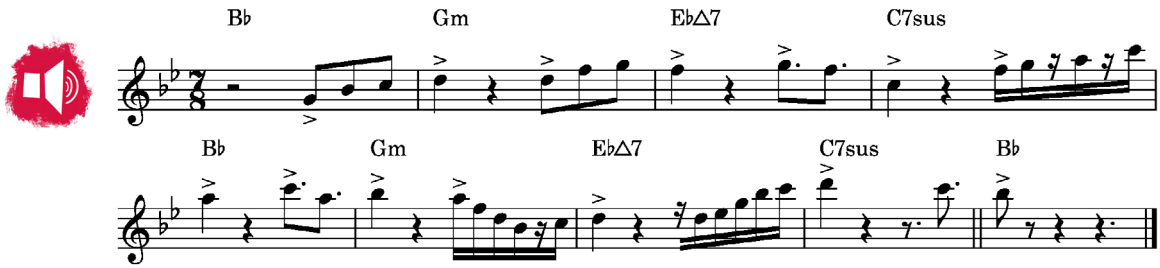
- Practice the example with both a 7/8 feel (top line) and a 7/4 feel (bottom line).

IMPROVISING INSIDE THE GROOVE

For the following you can use any of the three metronome patterns from Figure 12.

The solo form is the first four bars of the A section. Even though there are four different chords, you can stay in the same Bb major tonality the whole time. In Tune in Five, the basic layer was the 8th note, in Tune in Seven the basic layer is the 16th note. Solos go to section B on cue. You either simply play the melody again or mix improvising and quoting the melody like I do in the video. Let's look at

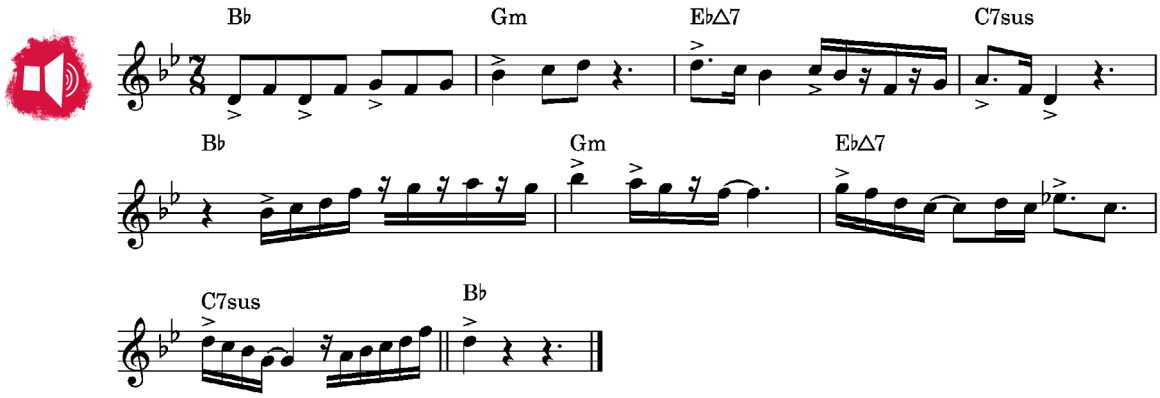
the A section. To begin with, focus on playing over the last three beats of the bar, ie. the 'long beat' (see Chapter 2).



Example 16: Playing over the last three beats of the bar

- Practice Example 16 with the foot on beat one, three and five.
- Come up with similar phrases which start on or around beat five, i.e. the third accent (see top line of Figure 11).

Now let's create a little more action in the beginning of the bar.

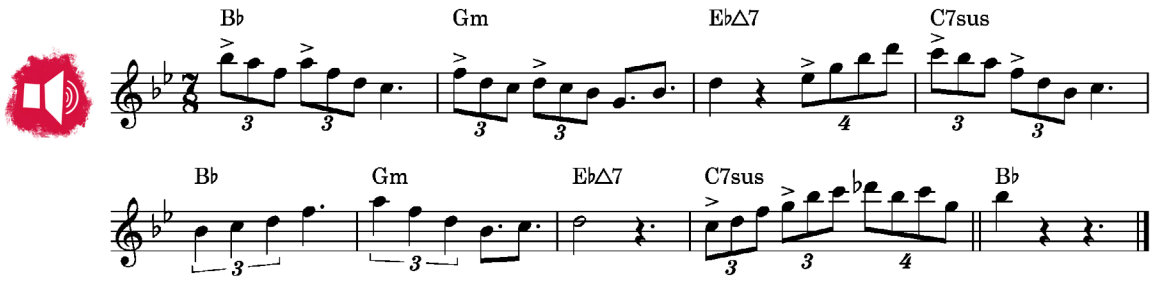


Example 17: Improvising inside the groove

- Practice Example 17 and come up with other lines supporting the groove and the accents. You can use the Rhythmic Permutation Sheet (Appendix E) to get ideas.
- Practice phrasing in the 7/8 groove like above but with a half-time feel, i.e. foot on every other beat over two bars of 7/8.

TRIPLETS AND QUADRUPLETS MIXED

The melody in the A section is using a mix of triplets and quadruplets. We can use the general idea of triplets over the first part of the bar and dotted notes or quadruplets over the last part of the bar. As we saw earlier, the triplets are a little bit faster than the quadruplets. I use these combined layers a lot in video 3.A. 7/8 can be a pretty 'edgy' or 'sharp' meter - this combined layer has a 'softening' effect.

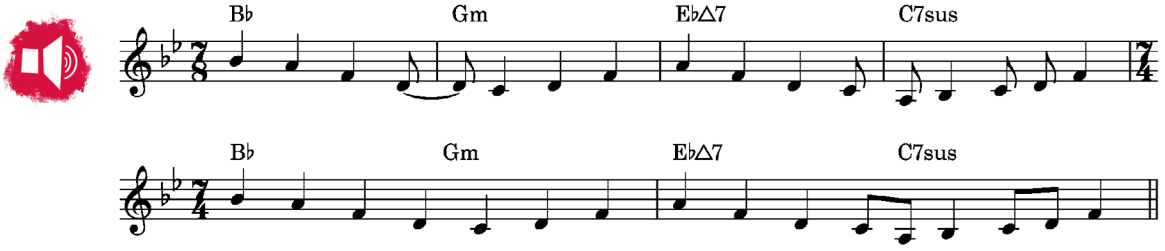


Example 18: 8th note triplets and dotted notes/quadruplets

- Practice the example and create your own lines using a mix of triplets and quadruplets.

HALF-TIME FEEL

As mentioned earlier, going to a half-time feel in a groove like this is pretty common. You can also superimpose a half-time feel over 7/8 without the drummer changing. I use this trick three times in video 3.A. Below you will see the same line written in 7/8 and 7/4.



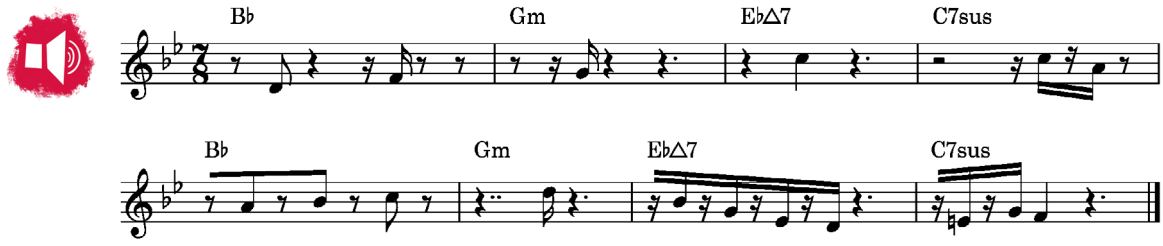
Example 19: Phrases suggesting a half-time feel. Same phrase, two different notations

- Play the phrase in 7/8 with the foot on beat one, three and five like before.
- Play the phrase in 7/4 with the foot on all seven quarter notes. Think of the 7/4 bar as 4/4 + 3/4.

Watch video 3.B for examples of how to superimpose a half-time feel over 7/8.

USING SPACE

We can play sparse and in between the accented beats as we did in Tune in Five for all the same reasons. Again this will strengthen your understanding of the meter and allow you to play syncopated rhythms without crowding the groove.



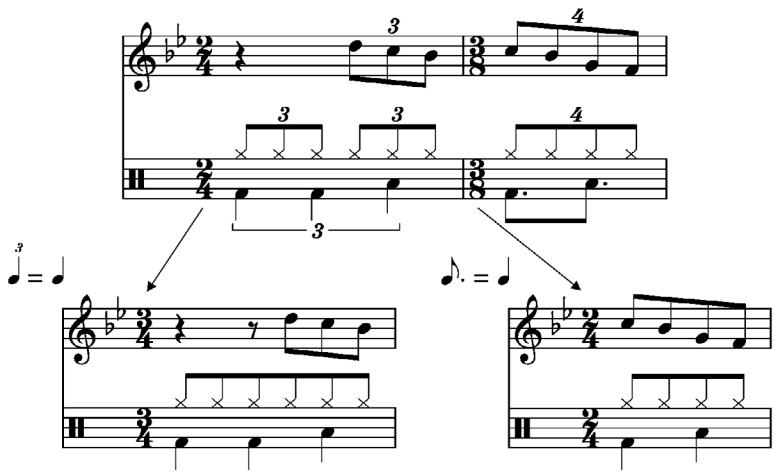
Example 20: Sparse playing around unaccented beats

- Play the example with the foot on beat one, three and five of 7/8 like before.
- Practice playing in between accents with rhythms of your choice.

MINI METRIC MODULATIONS

Like we did in Tune in Five, we can create mini metric modulations inside the bar. In the top system of Example 21 the first bar of the A section in Tune in Seven is re-written as 2/4 + 3/8. Each part is modulated in the bottom system.

Notice that the quarter note of the bottom system left is a little bit faster than the quarter note of the bottom system right. They are both derived from the original tempo. The left side is based on the quarter note triplet and the right side is based on the dotted 8th note. Both bottom bars relate to the original tempo but there is no meaningful way to express the relationship of the tempos directly between them. This is a very challenging metric modulation because we have two tempos that don't directly relate, nevertheless it has become a favored metric modulation by many advanced drummers.



Example 21: 7/8 written as 2/4 + 3/8 (top). Each bar with metric modulation (bottom).
Recorded example: Drums play as above in bar three and seven

TUNE IN SEVEN VIDEOS

TRIO PERFORMANCE

TRIO DEMO

Using different groupings of seven beats

HOW TO PRACTICE

APPENDIX

A. LIST OF VIDEOS
B. LEAD SHEET: TUNE IN THREE
C. LEAD SHEET: TUNE IN FIVE
D. LEAD SHEET: TUNE IN SEVEN
E. RHYTHMIC PERMUTATIONS SHEET

LIST OF VIDEOS

TUNE IN THREE
VIDEO 1.A: TRIO PERFORMANCE
VIDEO 1.B: TRIO DEMO: METRIC MODULATION
VIDEO 1.C: HOW TO PRACTICE

TUNE IN FIVE
VIDEO 2.A: TRIO PERFORMANCE
VIDEO 2.B: TRIO DEMO: USING DIFFERENT GROUPINGS OF FIVE BEATS
VIDEO 2.C: HOW TO PRACTICE

TUNE IN SEVEN
VIDEO 3.A: TRIO PERFORMANCE
VIDEO 3.B: TRIO DEMO: USING DIFFERENT GROUPINGS OF SEVEN BEATS
VIDEO 3.C: HOW TO PRACTICE

LEAD SHEETS

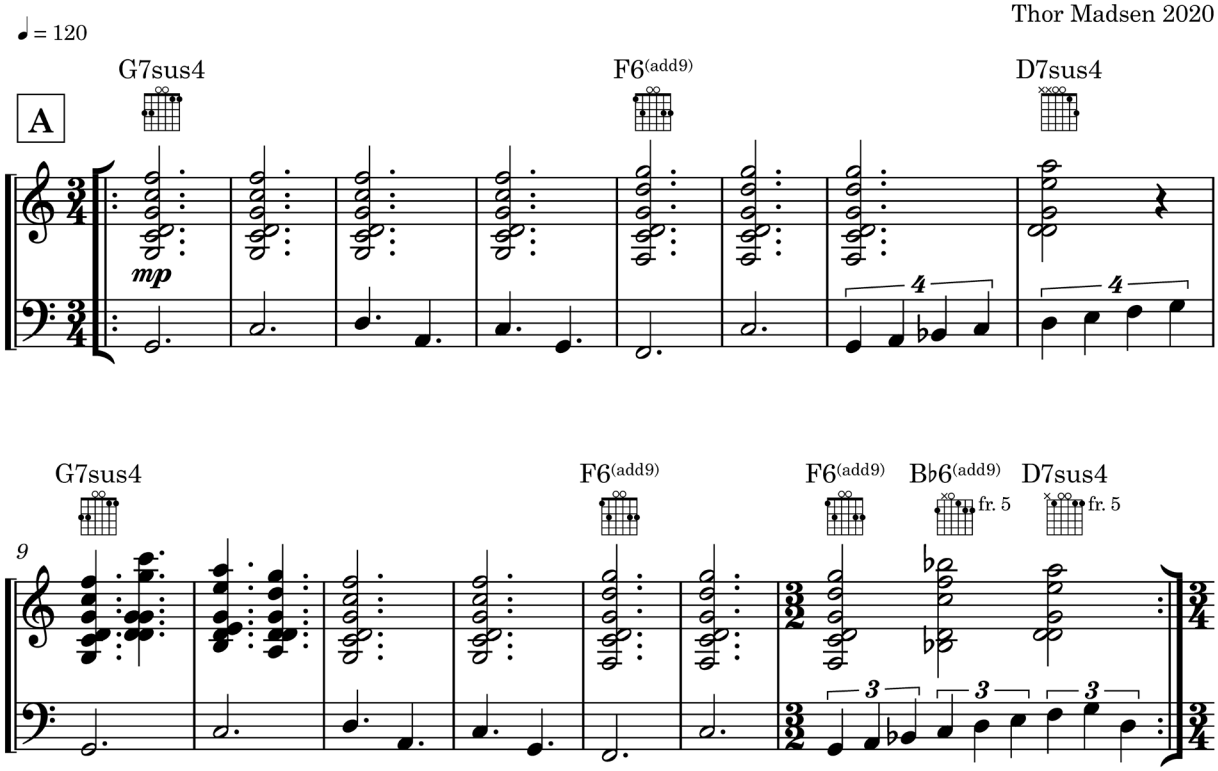
C-PARTS FOR THE THREE TUNES CAN BE FOUND PAGES 33-35.

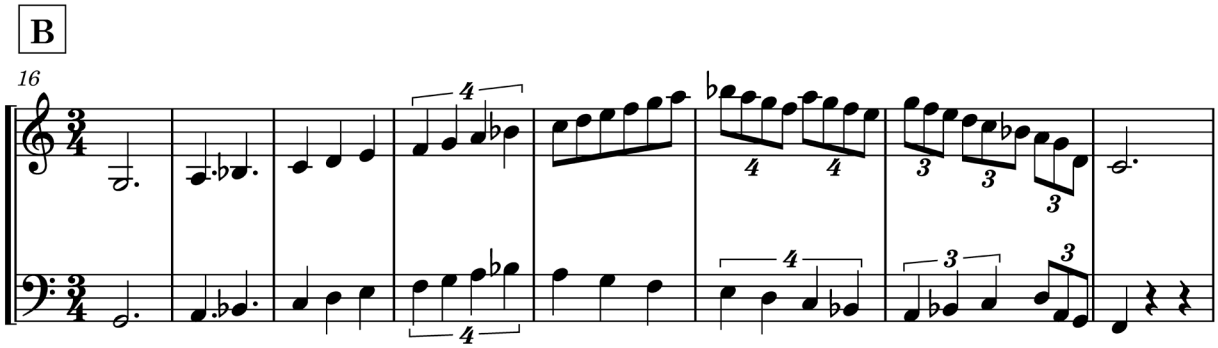
FOR LYRICS AND Bb/Eb-PARTS, VISIT:
HTTPS://WWW.SDMK.DK/STRAIGHT-THROUGH-ODD-TIMES-AUDIOVIDEO

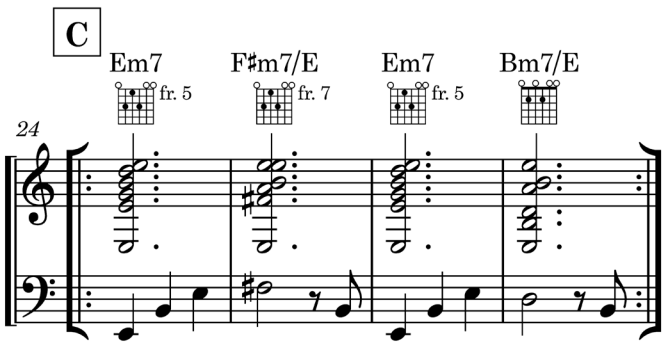
TUNE IN THREE

C-PART

Thor Madsen 2020

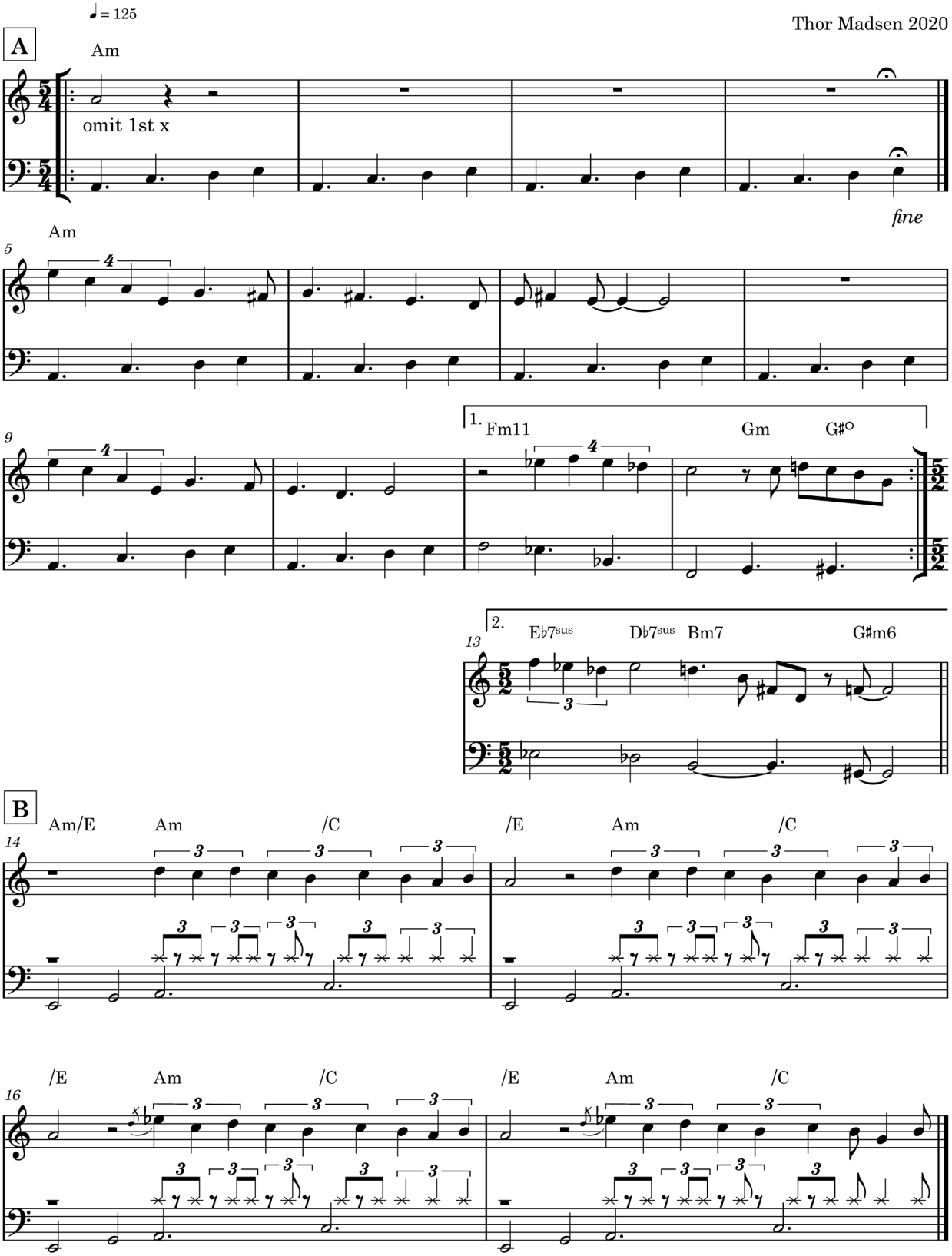






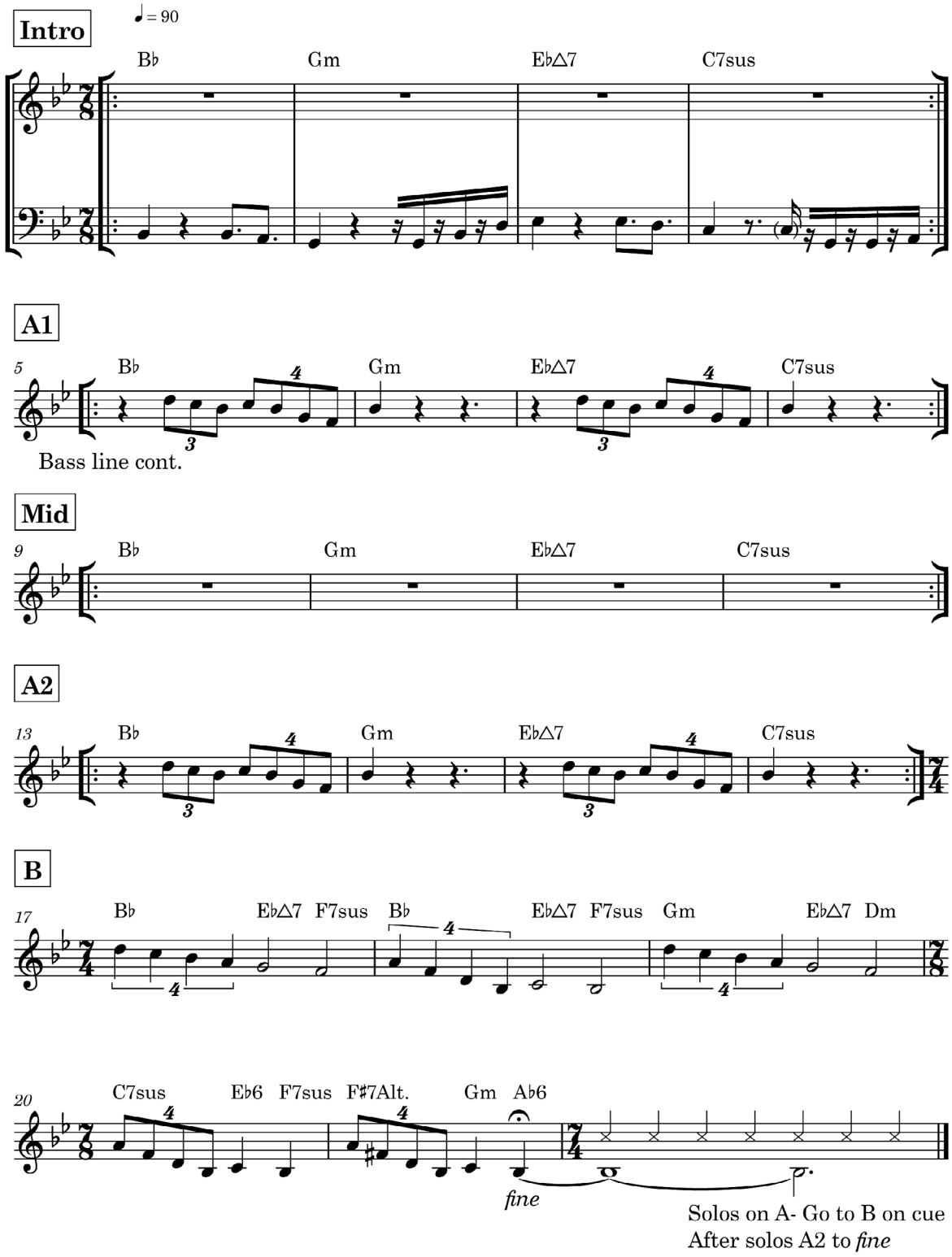
Play form twice
Solos on C

TUNE IN FIVE C-PART



TUNE IN SEVEN C-PART

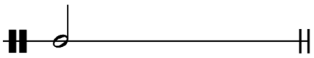
Thor Madsen 2020



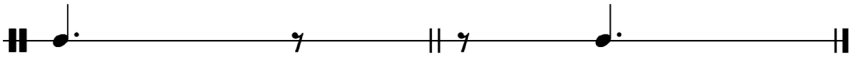
RHYTHMIC PERMUTATIONS SHEET

2/4

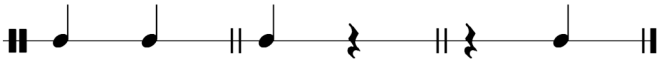
Half note



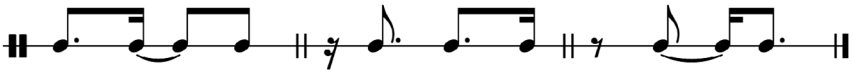
Dotted quarter notes



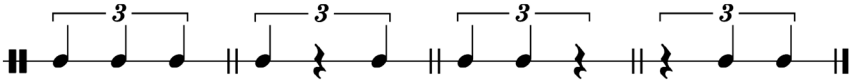
Quarter notes



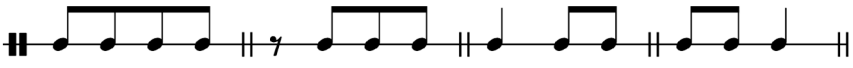
Dotted 8th notes

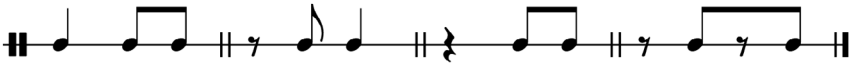


Quarter note triplets

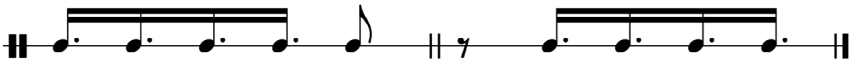


8th notes

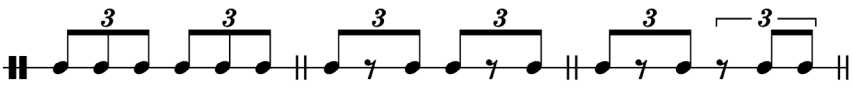


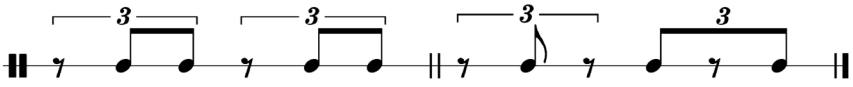


Dotted 16th notes



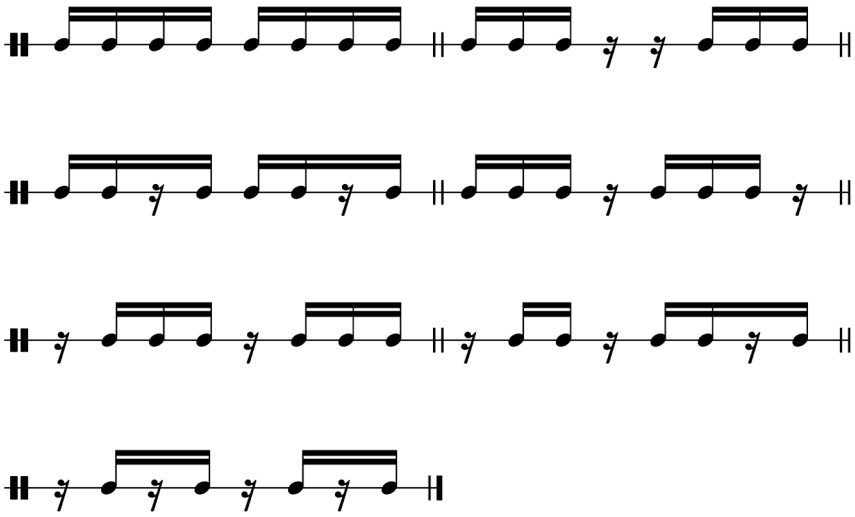
8th note triplets





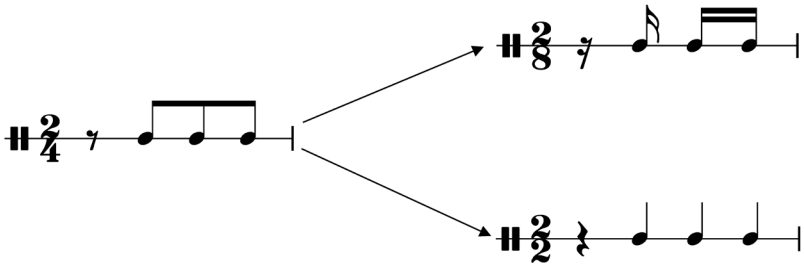
2/4

16th notes



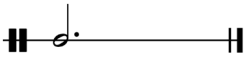
You can transform a 2/4 bar to a 2/8 bar by halving all note lenghts.

You can transform a 2/4 bar to a 2/2 bar by doubling all note lenghts.

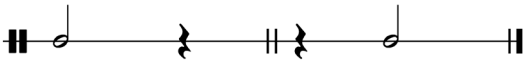


3/4

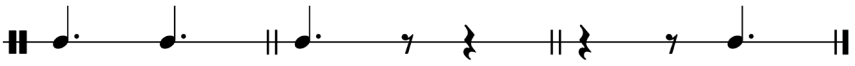
Dotted half note



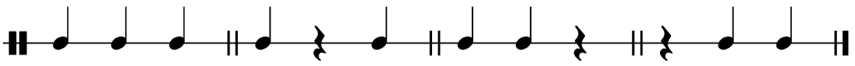
Half notes



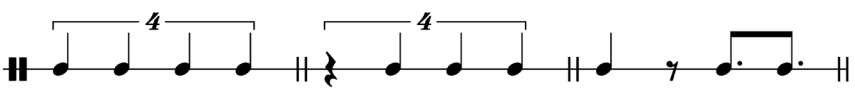
Dotted quarter notes



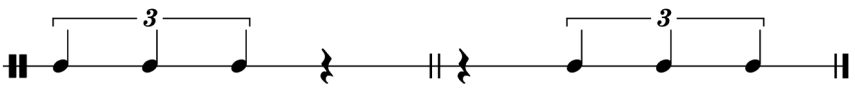
Quarter notes



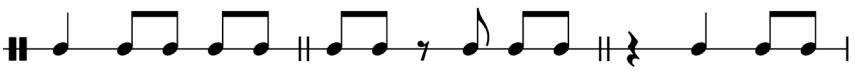
Dotted 8th notes/
Quarter note quadruplets

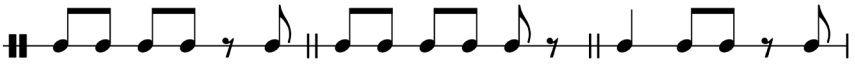


Quarter note triplets

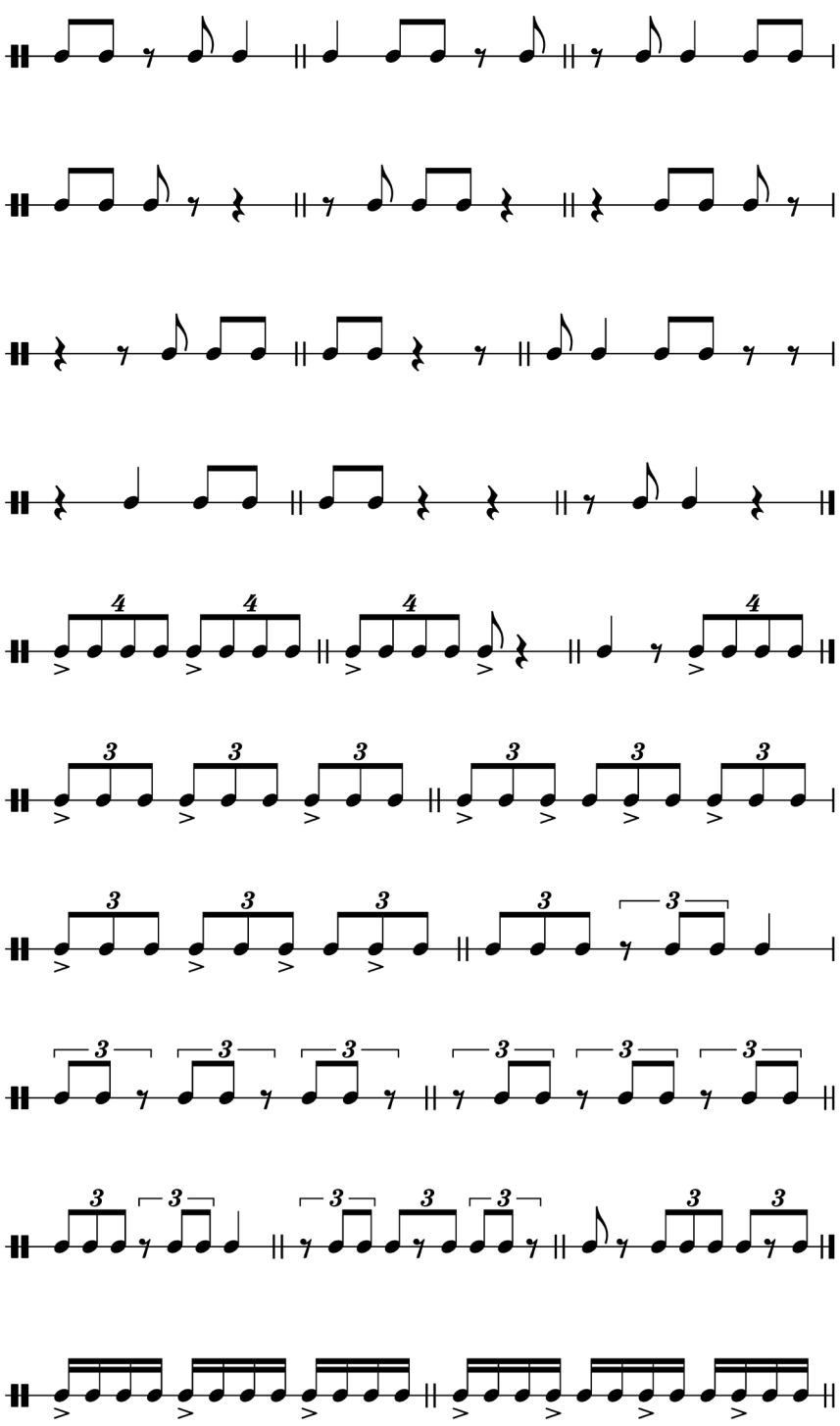


8th notes

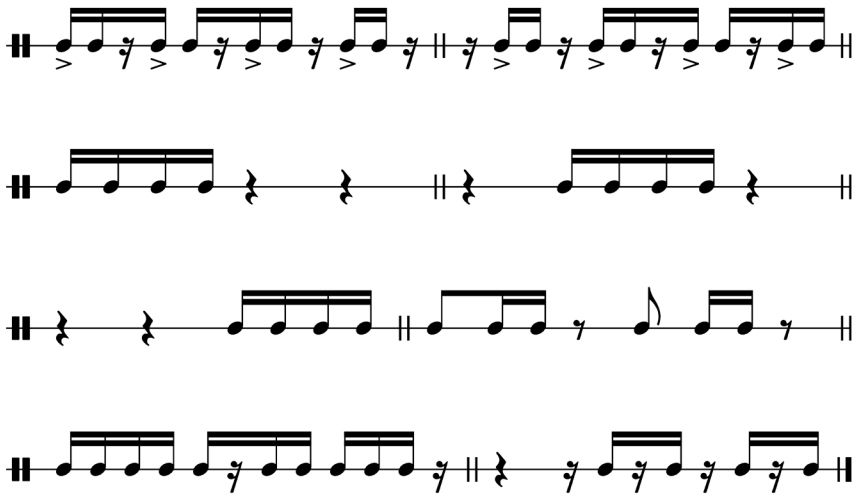




3/4

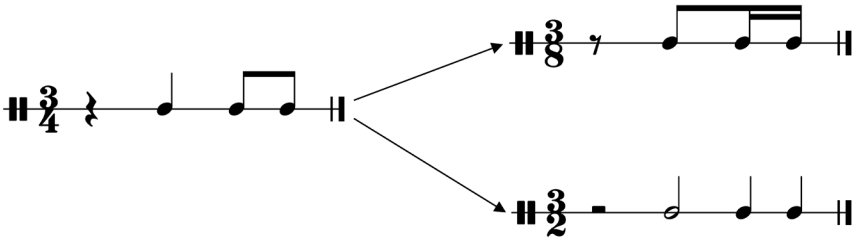


3/4



You can transform a 3/4 bar to a 3/8 bar by halving all note lenghts.

You can transform a 3/4 bar to a 3/2 bar by doubling all note lenghts.



HOW TO PLAY IN ODD METERS AND FEEL AT HOME DOING IT!

This method is for all pitched instruments including the voice and can also be used by percussionists and drummers to some extent.

The approach is applicable to all meters, odd or even, as a combination of groups of two or three beats. The premise is that we think rhythm before pitch.