Jazz and West African Aesthetics:
Traditional Ghanaian Drum Ensemble Concepts Applied to Jazz Drumset

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Foreword

The contents of this document include a brief description on the history of jazz, traditional Ghanaian drum ensembles, the influence of African music in jazz, and the application of Ghanaian drum ensemble ideas to drumset. The analyzed drummers and their concepts include Art Blakey and his comping, Max Roach and his construction of a drum solo, as well as Ed Blackwell and his approach to drumset. All three drummers included in this document present a strong emphasis on the application of traditional Ghanaian ensemble ideas to drumset. Following each analysis there will be exercises highlighting the concepts outlined by each of the aforementioned drummers. Additional resources involving listening examples and literature are included in the conclusion to continue further studies on this topic. Through the process of creating this workbook I have gained a stronger sense of creativity within my own adaptations of the concepts mentioned, revised my approach to jazz, and further understood the ways in which the ideas of indigenous cultural music can be more effectively applied.

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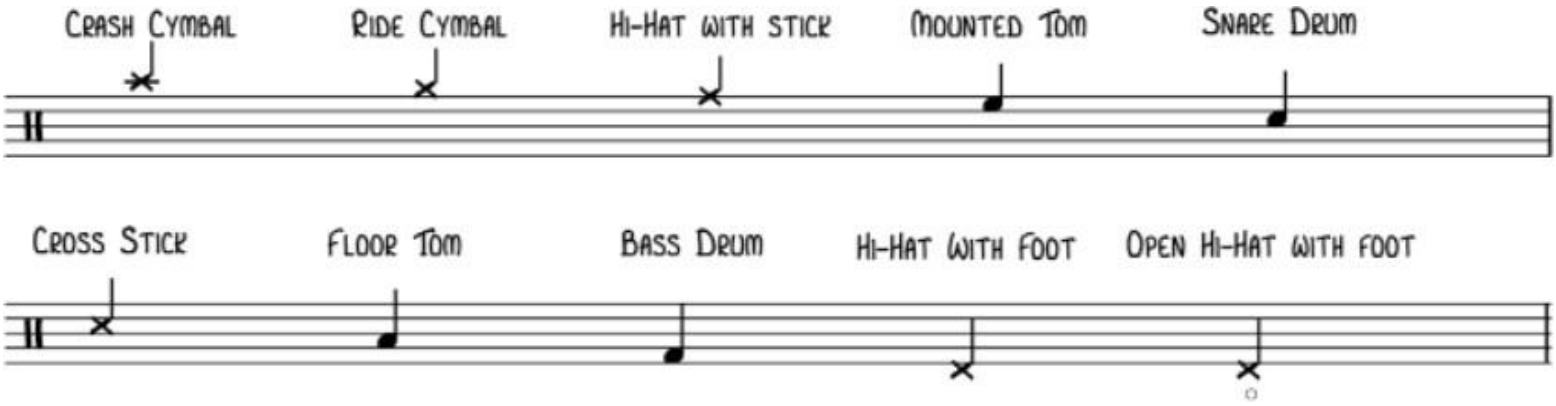


Introduction

Roots of Jazz

Jazz, a musical genre as well as a musical approach, is an art form created by African Americans in the United States of America during the early 20th century. Similar to other music from the African Diaspora, jazz is a combination of traditional African rhythms combined with Western harmony, developed from blues, ragtime, church music, and southern vocal and instrumental traditions.

While its origins trace to West Africa, the new world expression of jazz began in New Orleans, Louisiana, a major port of entry for slaves in The United States to be sold during the 19th century. Starting in 1817, slaves were permitted by their masters to gather in the historical Congo Square on Sundays to socialize and perform music. The music that they played was mainly percussion-based, with traditional song and dance.

With the slave trade existing for almost three centuries, by this time, slaves were from many parts of the world and brought with them diverse musical backgrounds. The main connection among these diverse musical backgrounds was their roots in West Africa. Slaves were taken away from their families and homes with nothing in hand. They did not have time to pack any luggage or say goodbye to their families. All they could carry with them was the music of their homeland, a key component of many West African cultures.

Through the slave gatherings in Congo Square, many new styles came about, and these were related to blues, ragtime, and second line brass bands. The styles created in this period laid the foundation for jazz, leading to its creation in the first two decades of the 20th century. Jazz wasthe music of freedom and expression for African Americans. It was fighting against euro-centric ideas of music, and allowed all to be free. It was music being made beyond the page, for players to express themselves and rebel against colonial restrictions and influence in music and life.

The traditional music of America known as jazz has evolved over the years from its in the early 1900s. It has developed into many different forms of the contemporary musical genres we hear today. We will be looking at jazz and its evolution into more African based ideas, starting in the 1950s.

Beginning of African Rhythms in Jazz

Nigerian-born Michael Babatunde Olantunji, also known as Baba, is considered the cultural ambassador of African music in the United States. Many believe he is the most influential African Drummer in the United States. After arriving in the United States in 1950 to attend university, Olatunji's renown came after releasing his 1960 debut album *Drums of Passion* with Columbia Records. This album exposed thousands of Americans to African Culture. Olatunji had, "crafted a recording that could speak to the growing American thirst for Africa" (Eric Charry) around the time of the Civil

Rights Movement. Although many professional African dance troupes began forming in the 1930s, Drums of Passion is considered a major influence for African American Music and Facilitated the connection of jazz and Africa.

The work of Olatunji as a cultural ambassador of African music inspired many jazz musicians, especially drummers, to incorporate African drumming into their music. Notably, drummer Max Roach, saxophonist John Coltrane, and drummer Art Blakey. Max Roach featured Olatunji on two tracks of his 1960 album, *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite,* which was made in response to anti-segregation, and numerous African countries gaining their independence, around that time. John Coltrane was a big fan of Olatunji and supported the Olatunji Center for African Culture in Harlem, New York, which opened shortly before Coltrane's death in 1967. Jamaican percussionist, Roger "Montego Joe" Sanders, a percussionist on Drums of Passion, performed with Art Blakey and the Afro-Drum ensemble. Sanders is one of many to have worked with Olatunji and integrated world rhythms and jazz.

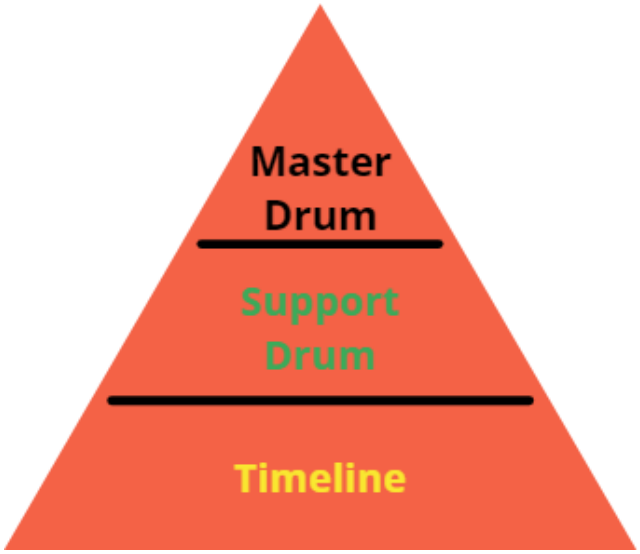
Olatunji's mission was to spread the message of African Music. He accomplished that through many recordings, collaborations, and teachings. His impact on jazz alone speaks for itself in that his message was received and still influences new artists: Michael Babatunde Olantunji, a pioneer in bridging authentic African rhythms to jazz.

Structure of a West African Drum Ensemble

Each African Country has a unique culture expressed in music. Unfortunately, many people choose to generalize the individual countries and ethnic groups within Africa. Some music cultures have similarities, but with a little effort you will realize they are not all the same. The music of Africa is rich, beautiful, and diverse across the continent. Some countries have more melodic based traditions, using mbiras, baliphones/gyils, atenteben flutes, and koras, while others are more rhythmically based, using djembes, ngoma drums, and ashikos, among a myriad of African instruments. Despite general parallels among a number of music cultures, each has specific and different qualities.

When looking at the music of West Africa, you will realize that the basic musical structure of many traditional drum and dance ensembles are similar. This is true among the various ethnic groups within Ghana. Ghana comprises over 90 different ethnic groups. Just like every other formerly colonized country in Africa, Ghana's borders were created by the British Empire. If the indigenous people of what we call Ghana and other countries were to draw their borders, the continent would look radically different than what we see today. The three main ethnic groups we will be looking at within Ghana are the Asante of central Ghana, the Ewe of southeastern coastal and inland Ghana, and the Ga of southern coastal Ghana.

Looking at the culture of Asante, Ewe, and Ga ethnic groups, you would say that they are not at all related, with religious, environmental, and cultural differences. The one marked similarity of these groups is the basic musical structure of their traditional music. When looking at the music as an overview, it can be structured as a pyramid, with three different tiers. These different tiers include a timeline, support drums, and a master drum. Throughout these three tiers, from bottom to top, you are able to identify the hierarchy. While the master drum directs the ensemble, all parts are still important and necessary to maintain the aesthetic of traditional West African Drum and Dance.



Musical Pyramid

You will notice when breaking down the instruments of the ethnic groups, they are not the same but still serve the same function.

The timeline is the base tier of the pyramid. It consists of some sort of metal bell, a shaker/rattle, and usually a small drum. These instruments will play a relatively static part throughout the entirety of the piece. In terms of improvisation, and variation, the bell timeline stays nearly the same throughout any given piece. Seldom does the bell add any sort of nuance to its given part, due to the bell pattern acting as a placeholder for all members of the ensemble. While the shakers/rattles, usually made of hollow gourds, have strong basic rhythms in support of the bell heartbeat, in some pieces the rattle can state many virtuosic variations without disrupting its basic voice. Depending on the piece that is being played, the small drum might vary in certain sections and is also able to improvise, as long as the given rhythm has been stated. The more flexible rhythms come from the second and third tier instruments in the ensemble.

<u>Some Timeline instruments by Ethnic group</u>

Asante

- Dawuro - Single metal bell
- Torowa - Gourd shaker
- Frikiywa - Metal castanets
- Agyegyewa - Small carved drum, played with sticks

Ewe

- Gankogui - Double-flanged metal bell
- Axaste - Gourd shaker
- Kagan - Small barrel or carved drum, played with sticks

Ga

- Gankogui (Also known as Ngongo) - Double-flanged metal bell
- Axaste - Shaker/Rattle
- Tamalin - Rectangular frame drum, played with hands

As we move up the tiers of the pyramid, the instruments become more active. The second tier encompasses support drums. There are a couple of drums varying in size, played with either hands or sticks. Depending on the piece, support drums will either play the same exact rhythm in unison or each drum will play different interweaving parts. If we think of the idea of question and answer in jazz, a soloist playing a phrase answered by a response from the accompanying instruments. Support drums are expressing that same idea throughout the piece; answering the call presented to them by the master drum. In this case, the master drum has specific rhythms that are played for support drums response. It is up to the support drummer to listen carefully to what the master drum plays due to the music not being written out with a certain amount of repeats, or order of variations in the piece. They have to change as soon as possible when they hear a transition into another variation's call.

<u>Support Drums by Ethnic group</u>

Asante

- Petia - Large or medium sized support drum, played with sticks
- Aburukuwa - Medium or small support drum, played with sticks.

- Apentemma - Medium sized hand drum

Ewe

- Sogo - Large barrel or carved drum, played with sticks
- Kidi - Medium sized barrel or carved drum, played with sticks
- Kroboto and Totodzi - Short and wide barrel drums, played with sticks and vary in tuning

Ga

- Apentemma - Hand drums of different sizes and shapes

The third and final tier of the pyramid is the master drum. The master drum, as it is named, leads the ensemble from the beginning of the piece, through variations and all the way to the end. Although improvisation within traditional structures and vocabularies is a main feature of the master drum, it is important for the master drum to state the rhythms appropriate to the piece before improvising. The lead player can select when and where to place the improvisation within the variation, only after presenting the primary rhythm of the variation.

<u>One Example of Lead Drum by Ethnic group</u>

Asante

- Kwadum - Short and wide drum played with sticks, in Kete music

Ewe

- Atsimevu - Long barrel or carved drum, angled on a stand played with sticks

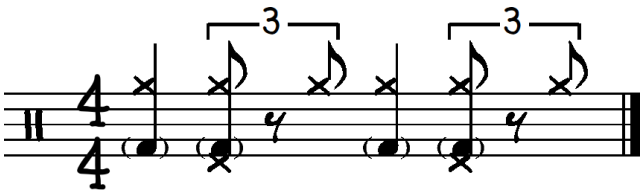
Ga

- Balogo (Also known as Kpanlogo) - Low tuned hand drum

The Concept of a West African Drum Ensemble for Drumset

With a basic understanding of a West African drum ensemble, we will be able to take those ideas and apply them to the drumset. If we were to break down the pyramid of the West African ensemble we would relate these ideas to one, two, or more of our four limbs used for the drumset, to create the feeling of multiple players in coordination. We will break down this pyramid in a jazz approach, focusing on the ideas of constructing accompaniment, constructing a solo, and literal adaptations of the ensemble rhythms to drumset.

The drumset in jazz resembles the musical structure of a West African ensemble, transferred into a Western setting. The ride cymbal, hi-hat, and sometimes bass drum function like the timeline tier. A basic jazz ride cymbal pattern is a great example of this, since it plays the identifying part of the groove, with hi-hat sounding on beats two and four, in 4/4 time, and the bass drum, depending on style, optionally playing all or some of the downbeats throughout a whole piece with slight variation. A comping pattern played by one, two, or three other limbs under the swing pattern on cymbal creates a dialogue among the other parts of the drumset, with the ride being the place holder.



Basic Jazz Ride Pattern

The snare drum, tom drums, and bass drum can still be considered a part of both the master drum tier and the support tier. The bass drum is not always a part of these leading tiers, due to it also being a part of the timeline. We are able to designate the bass drum to a tier based on what its role is in a specific piece or style. In freer styles the hi-hat and all parts of the drumset can assume this lead function with a time sense internalized and not expressed literally. The master drum tier and the support tier meld together to make up an approach to comping on drumset. While the timeline is playing, the snare, toms, and bass are able to play anywhere around the pattern. There can be a full measure of snare drum, with the next being a measure of toms, or a combination of bass drum and tom drums in a single measure. The whole point of comping is to enhance the written melody of a jazz tune, and to support a soloist. The issue with applying the drums to specific tiers in the comping approach is that we do not know what to consider the lead or support. The drums are still creating a dialogue among each part, but you are not able to distinguish which drum is leading. Another way to conceive this relationship is to see the drumset as the

timeline and support tier with the other members of the jazz ensemble acting as the lead or lead and support in conjunction with the drumset.

With a drumset lacking the full melodic range of horns and other instruments in an ensemble, they are able to express multiple tones and timbres by creating dialogues among each part. To construct a drum solo with African ideas in mind, we will apply all tiers of the pyramid. The feet will take the role of the timeline, meaning, our hi-hat and bass drum will play an ostinato, in its simplest form with both parts playing in unison. Once the timeline is established we will apply the role of the lead and support drum. Just like any other drum solo, we are thinking of motivic development. To emulate the feeling of a full drum ensemble, we start with a basic rhythm on any surface, followed by a response with a contrasting rhythm or the exact rhythm on different parts of the drumset; creating a call and response. The master drum voice would correspond to the initial motif that was presented, while the support drums voices correspond to the drumset parts responding to the motif. Throughout the solo, the motif can be altered, further developing the solo. This is very similar to the master drum's role of signaling new variations and support drums changing their responses. The bass drum can drop out of the timeline and be added to the other tiers as the solo develops. To fully understand the application of West African ideas to construct a solo, it is important to actually listen to a full drum ensemble and realize how the dialogue is created.

Making the drumset sound like an ensemble. Is it possible or desirable? To an extent, yes. While parallels can be creative without replication, with this approach we are trying to adapt a West African ensemble to drumset as accurately as possible. This requires a deep listening and understanding of whatever traditional piece you are looking to apply to the drumset. You will have to understand all three tiers of the pyramid working within the ensemble before applying them to the drumset. With all the musicians in an ensemble, and the average human only having four limbs to play a drumset, it is difficult to play all parts at once. The basic approach to fulfilling the idea of the ensemble is to assign each limb a specific instrument and role from the ensemble. The most important identifying part of any traditional West African piece is the bell pattern. This part can typically be played on the ride cymbal, hi-hat, played with a stick, or the shell/rim of the floor tom. Once the bell placement has been decided, we are able to choose the next instrument. The hi-hat, played by foot, can be assigned as the shaker part, thus helping us complete the timeline portion. The remaining drums have the option to split the support drum and master drum part or just play one. If we are looking to fulfill a constant groove throughout a piece, one would determine the essential support voices as the main dialogue of the piece and divide it among the drums.

All of the concepts mentioned above are attainable by any player. There are many famous jazz musicians who have taken on this approach to

drumming throughout their career. To understand these ideas beyond words on a page, it is important to listen to the great drummers that have exemplified these concepts in their playing. To enrich the experience of your studies beyond the jazz setting, you should seek recordings of African master artists and ensembles playing traditional pieces. In the following sections we will be analyzing drummers who have applied these African concepts to their playing; Art Blakey's comping, Max Roach's soloing, and Ed Blackwell’s literal adaptations.

Art Blakey

Background

Best known as a founding member of The Jazz Messengers in the late 1950s, Art Blakey was one of the most influential jazz musicians and bandleaders of his time. He was originally a pianist in the early 1940s, and later switched to drumset. Blakey, just like the master drummer in traditional Ghanaian music, was considered a custodian of the ensemble throughout his entire career ensuring that the tradition and authenticity of the music was kept. He was a big supporter of giving young musicians a chance. Another name for The Jazz Messengers was the University of Blakey, due to Blakey constantly accepting young musicians, who would later go on to have successful careers. Some notable members of The Jazz Messengers are Wayne Shorter and Horace Silver.

Around 1947 Art Blakey traveled to West Africa to study the traditional drumming and to find religion. His study of the music is very perceptible in his playing, the ideas of structure and applying traditional West African ideas to drumset. Max Roach once noted that "Art was perhaps the best at maintaining independence with all four limbs. He was doing it before anybody was." Art Blakey in terms of four-way independence was in fact ahead of his time, being able to keep ostinatos with whichever limb he wanted and improvising/comping over it.

Throughout his career, up through the 1980s, Blakey remained devoted to his passion for both performing and mentoring other jazz artists, up until his death in 1990.

Transcriptions

For this portion of the project we will be focusing on Art Blakey's timekeeping and comping, and its relationship to the musical pyramid. When listening to Art Blakey play in an Afro-esque style you will hear a very distinct pattern being played on his ride cymbal. You can hear the pattern being played in the time signature of 12/8 using eighth notes, or 4/4 with triplets. The 4/4 time signature would be the closest to relate in a more basic jazz setting. When applying the music structure of a traditional Ghanaian drum ensemble, the ride pattern would be considered the timeline. When the pattern is introduced in any tune, Blakey keeps it consistent throughout the whole section, making it the static part for other parts of the drums to add to it. Here is one example of his timeline playing.

Art Blakey's Ride Pattern

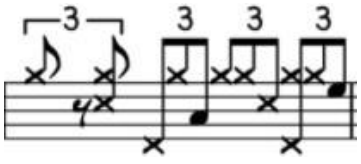
Along with this ride pattern Blakey usually creates a dialogue between the rest of the kit, adding in cross sticks, mounted tom, or floor tom, giving us the idea of the dialogue that we would hear between a lead drum and the support drums.

Sortie

Let us take a look at a full chorus of Blakey playing under the tenor saxophone solo on the piece *Sortie* by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers off of the 1966 album Indestructible.

This piece is an ABBC form and we will be analyzing it in 4/4 time signature. Although we are looking at a portion of the piece, if you were to listen to the whole thing you would notice that Blakey is keeping a steady pattern throughout the whole solo section. The A and C section are a Jazz shuffle rhythm, while the B section has an African-based pattern. The hi-hat is always on beats two and four during the whole piece adding an extra layer of the timeline to the comping/groove. Blakey's discipline and consistency in playing these rhythms are similar to the musicians playing the timeline in a Ghanaian drum ensemble.

The main groove within the B section can be considered a one bar pattern. The basic dialogue is happening between the snare drum, mounted tom and floor tom. Below is an excerpt from the B section.



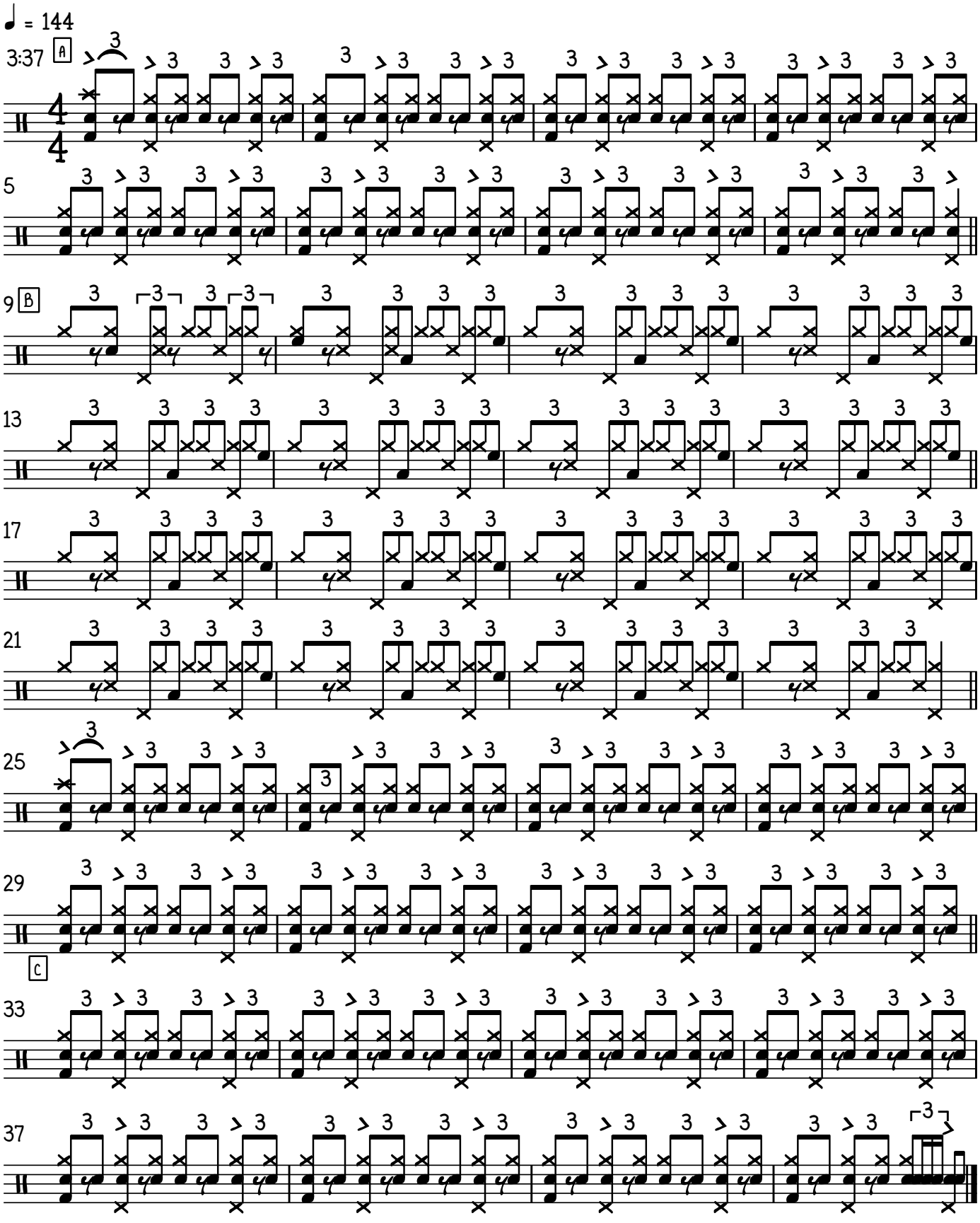
Main groove of the B section

All the notes are on the third partial of every triplet, the lead and support/call and answer effect is happening with every partial being played on a different surface. The snare drum cross stick can be considered the call, while the mounted and floor tom sounds are heard as the response.

SORTIE

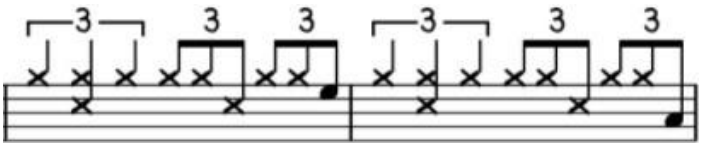
Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers
Indestructabke 1966

Art Blakey
Tran. Joe Boulos



Oh, By The Way

Another transcription of comping we can look at is *Oh, By The Way* by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers from the 1982 album Oh, By The Way. This piece is an AABA form and we are focusing on the ride cymbal pattern in the 4/4 time signature for the A sections. The main pattern in this groove consists of the Afro ride pattern. Art Blakey is creating a two-bar phrase with this rhythm.



Main groove of the A section

From this extraction of the two-bar phrase, the timeline is the ride cymbal, and the snare cross sticks are consistently on the same partial of the beat. The dialogue here is happening between the mounted and floor toms.

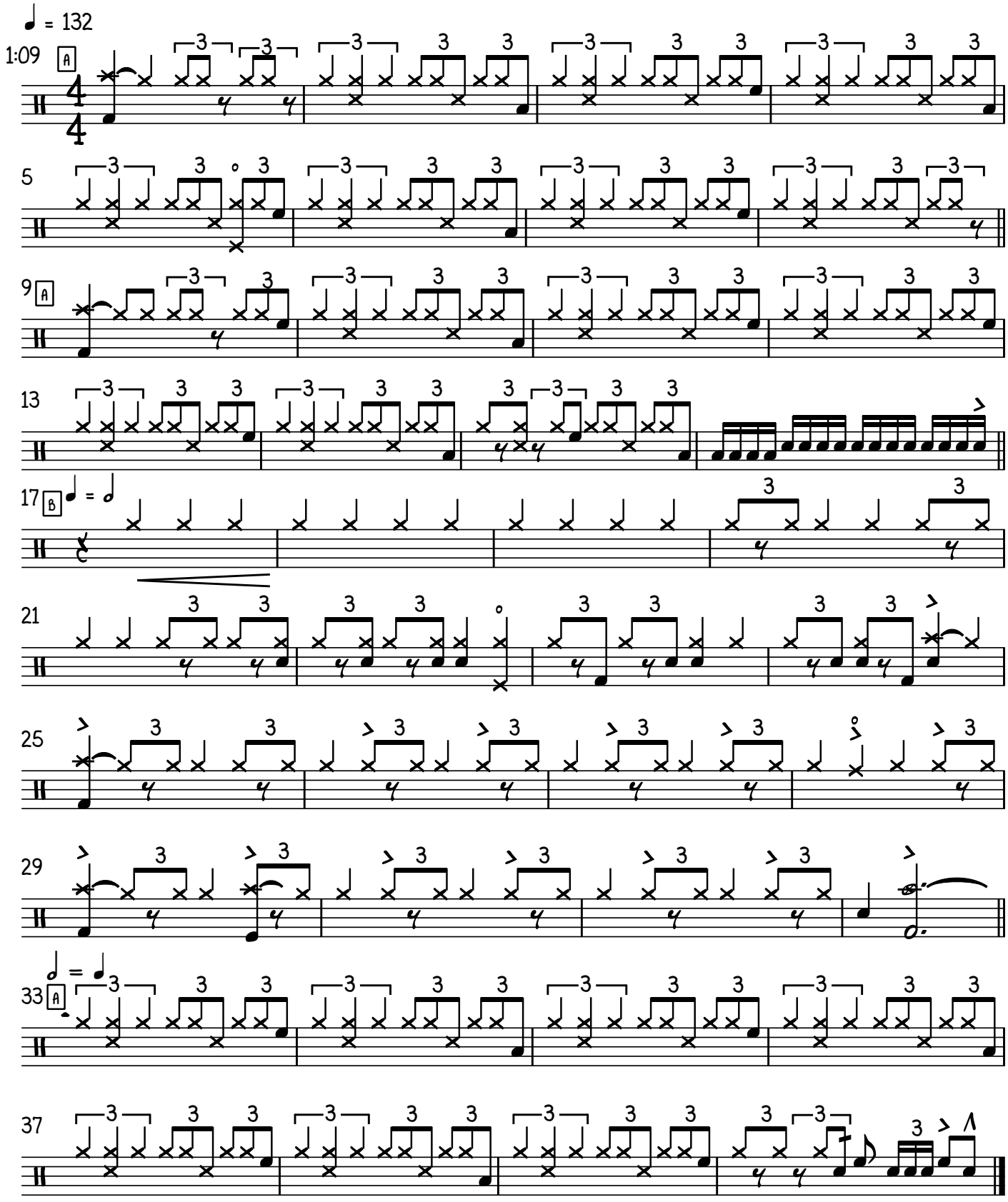
OH, BY THE WAY

ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS

OH, BY THE WAY 1982

ART BLAKEY

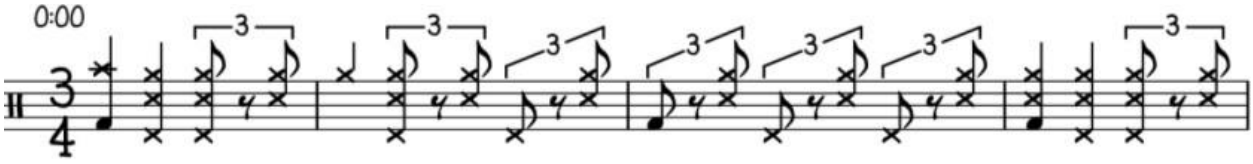
TRAN. JOE BOULOS



United

From what we have seen so far we can confirm that Art Blakey has a distinct identity. Although, you will not hear this same exact pattern in every piece of this style, the basic idea is still there. A great example of this is the opening theme of the piece *United* by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers from the 1961 album Roots & Herbs.

The form of this piece is 16 bars, and the opening theme is played four times before the solo section. Based on the movement of the hi-hat we will interpret this piece in the 3/4 time signature. The ride cymbal pattern in this piece is not consistent as the other two pieces we have looked at, but we are able to point out a motivic pattern that happens often.



Four measures of the first chorus

In this case the hi-hat is considered the timeline element, due to it being the only consistent part throughout. The ride cymbal and snare cross sticks are playing unison rhythms, with a few additional ride cymbal sounds in between. You will also notice that the bass drum is very sparse, usually only accompanying cymbal crashes and to intensify the in-head as it develops.

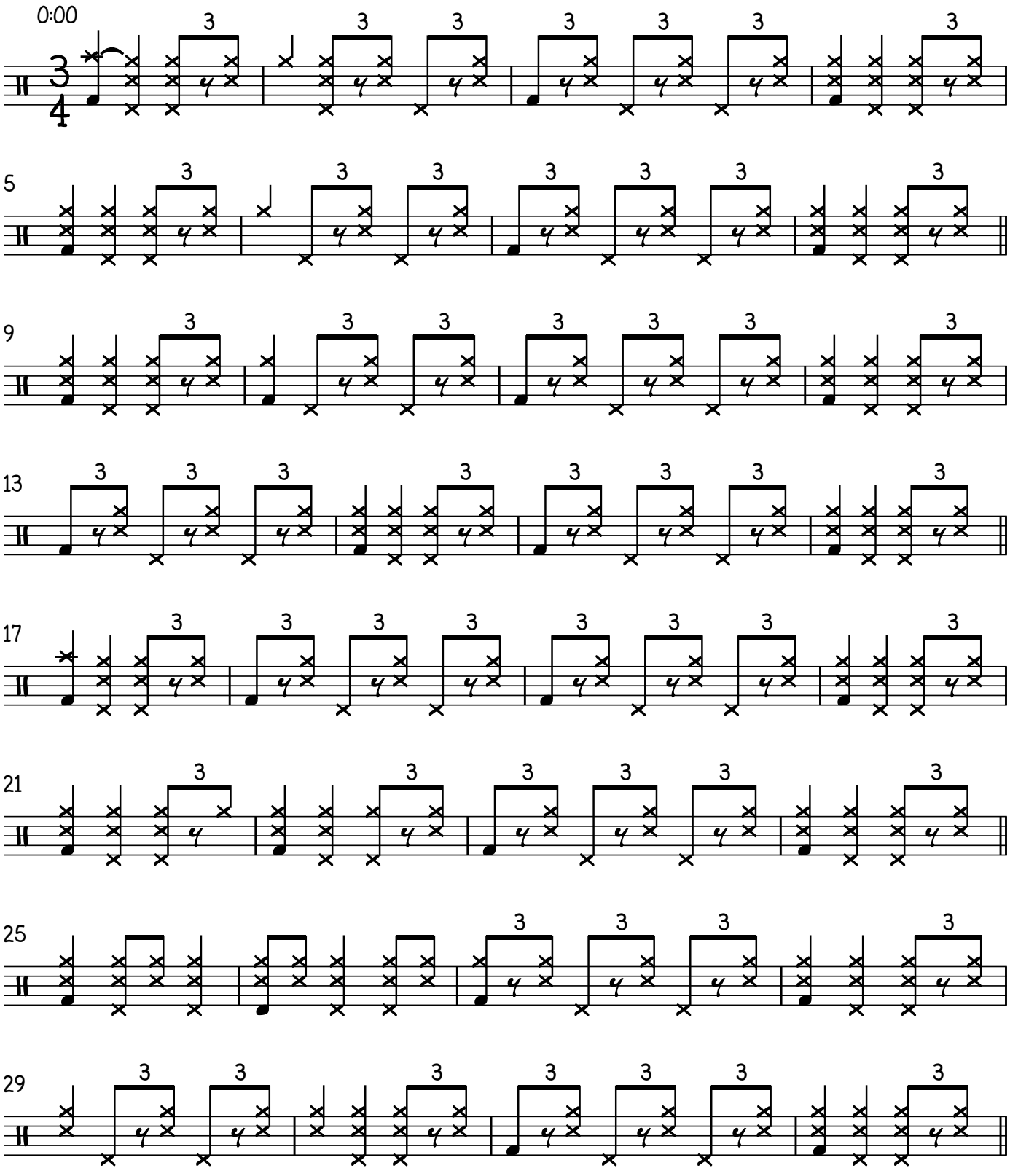
UNITED

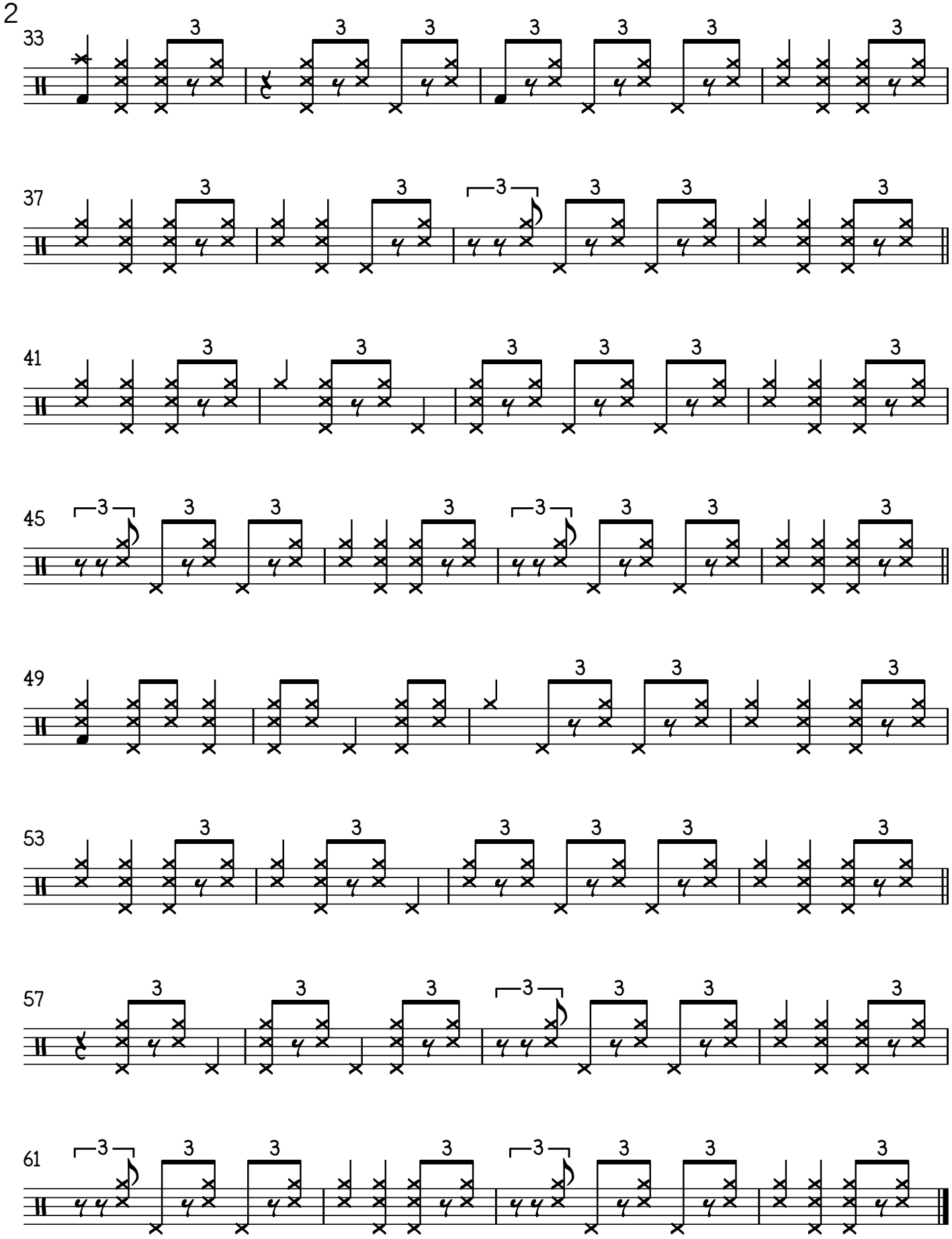
Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers

Roots and Herbs

Art Blakey
Trans. Joe Boulos

♩ = 225

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61

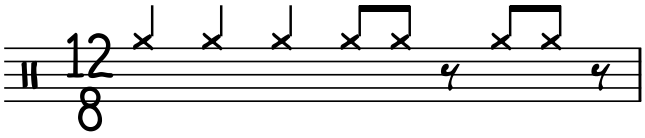
Additional Ideas

Focusing on the first two transcriptions, let us take a deeper look at the ride pattern. With the exercise below, you will develop fluency with Art Blakey's ride pattern, along with additional African-based patterns to further your studies.

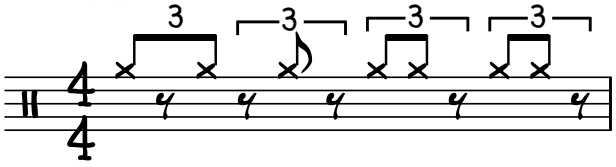
EXPANDING ON ART BLAKEY'S AFRICAN-BASED RIDE PATTERN

Joe Boulos

12/8 interpretation

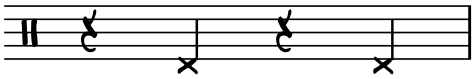


4/4 interpretation

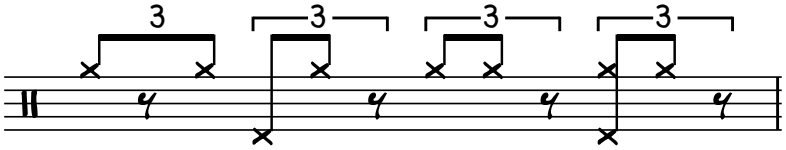


We will focus on variations of the bell in 4/4 time

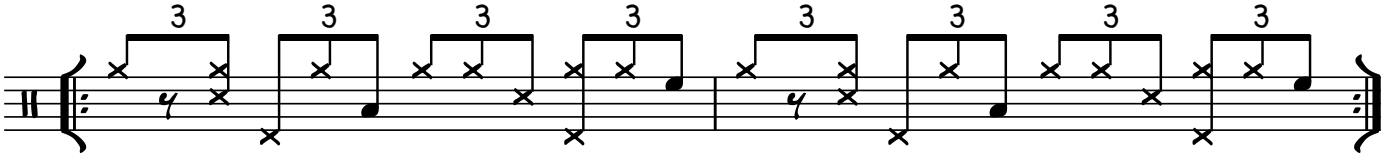
(A) foot Pattern

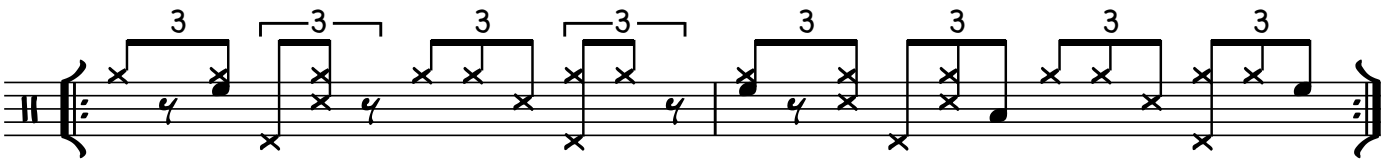


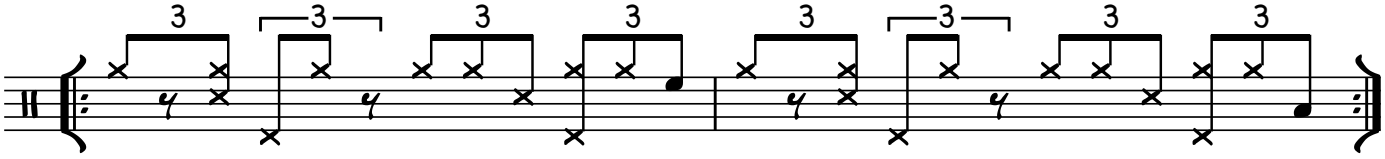
Basic groove



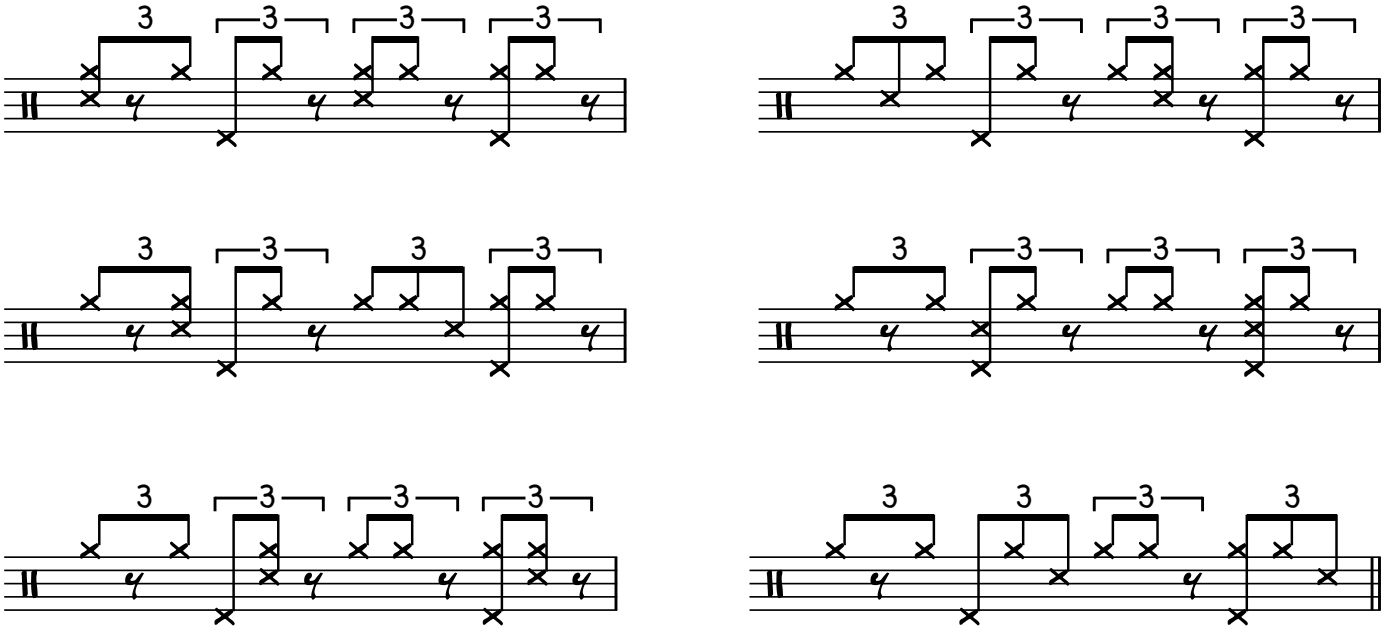
(B) Art Blakey Variations



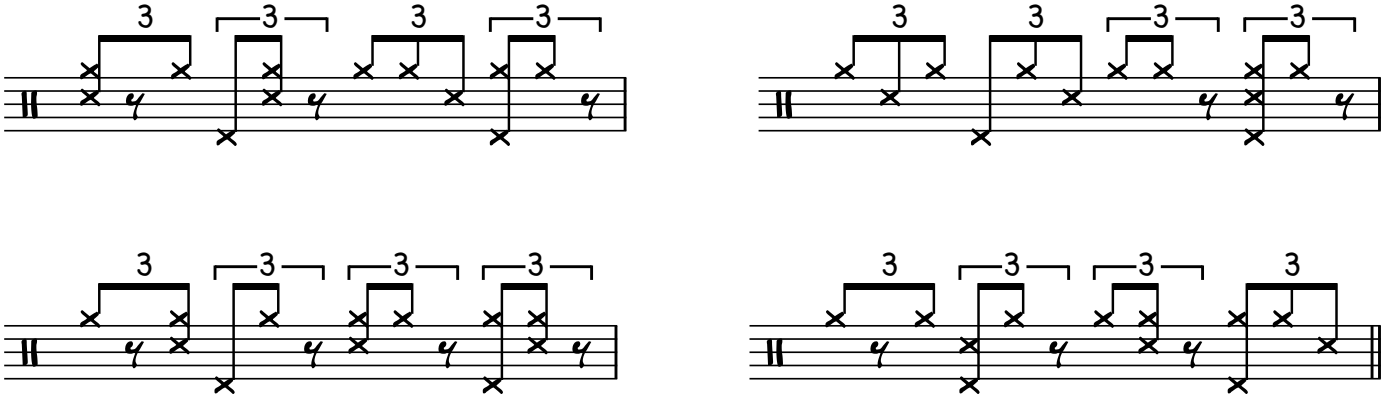




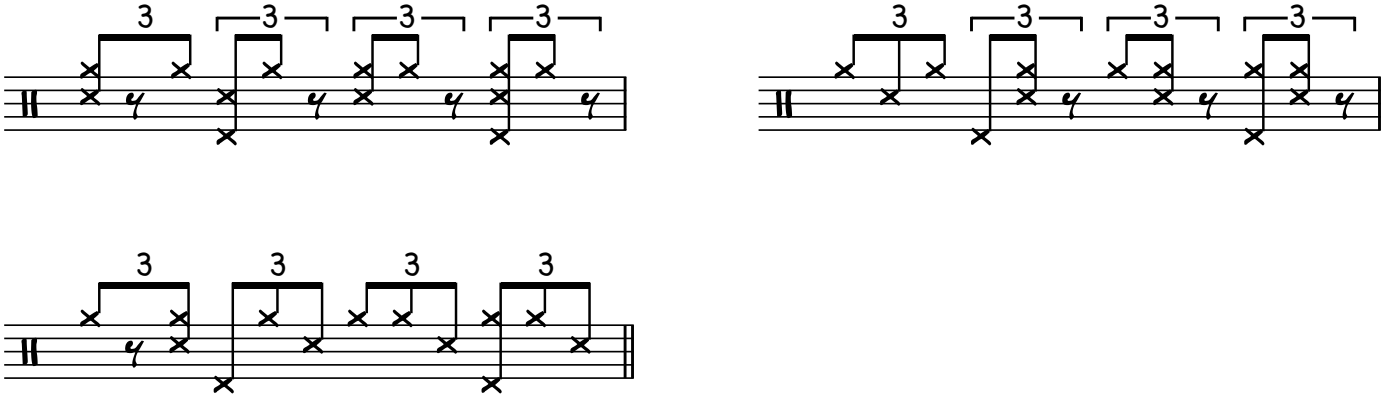
2 (C) 2 Pulse



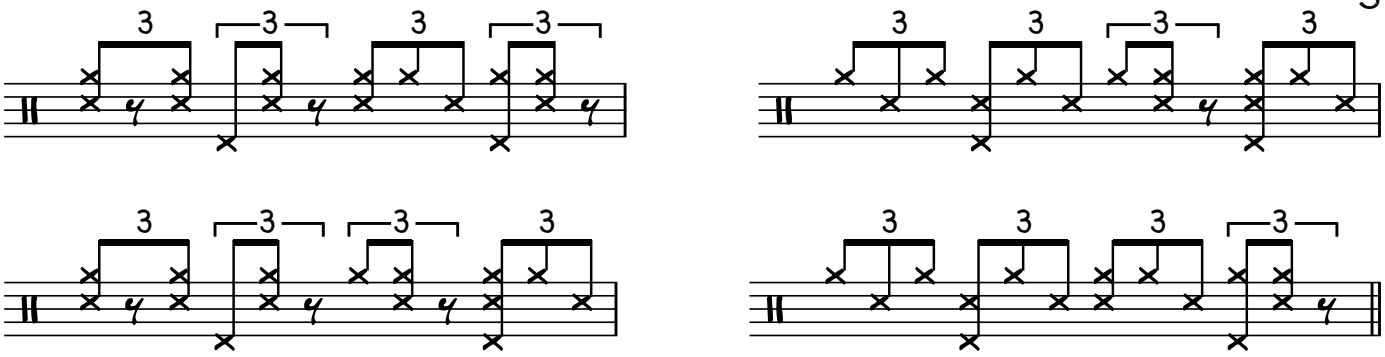
(D) 3 Pulse



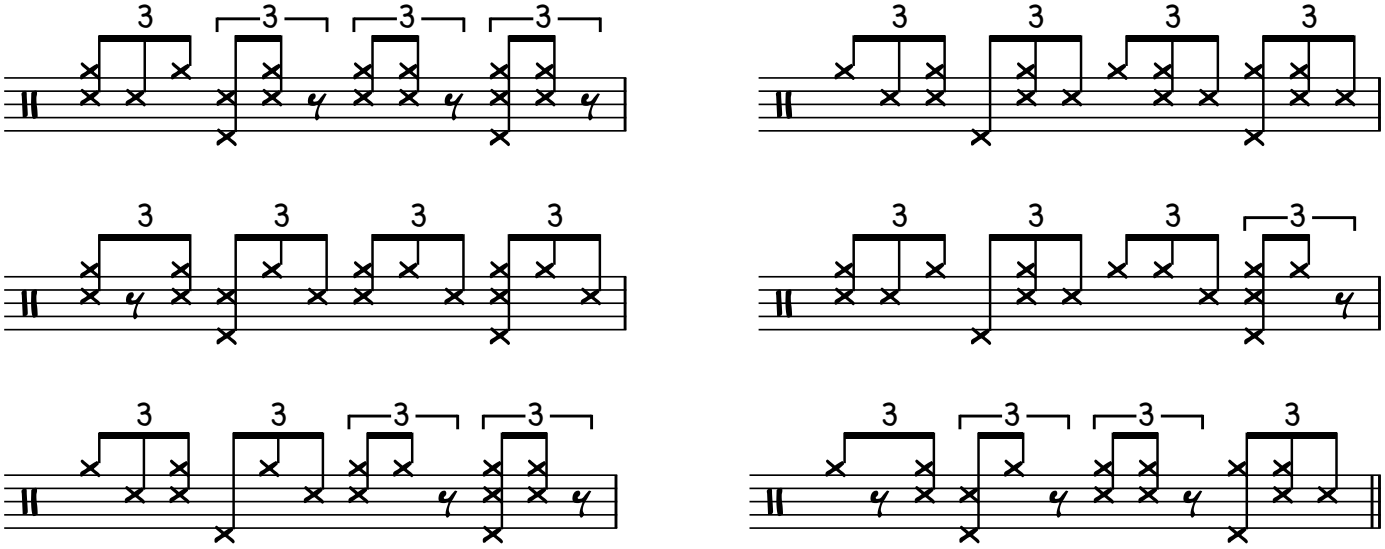
(E) 4 Pulse



(F) 6 pulse

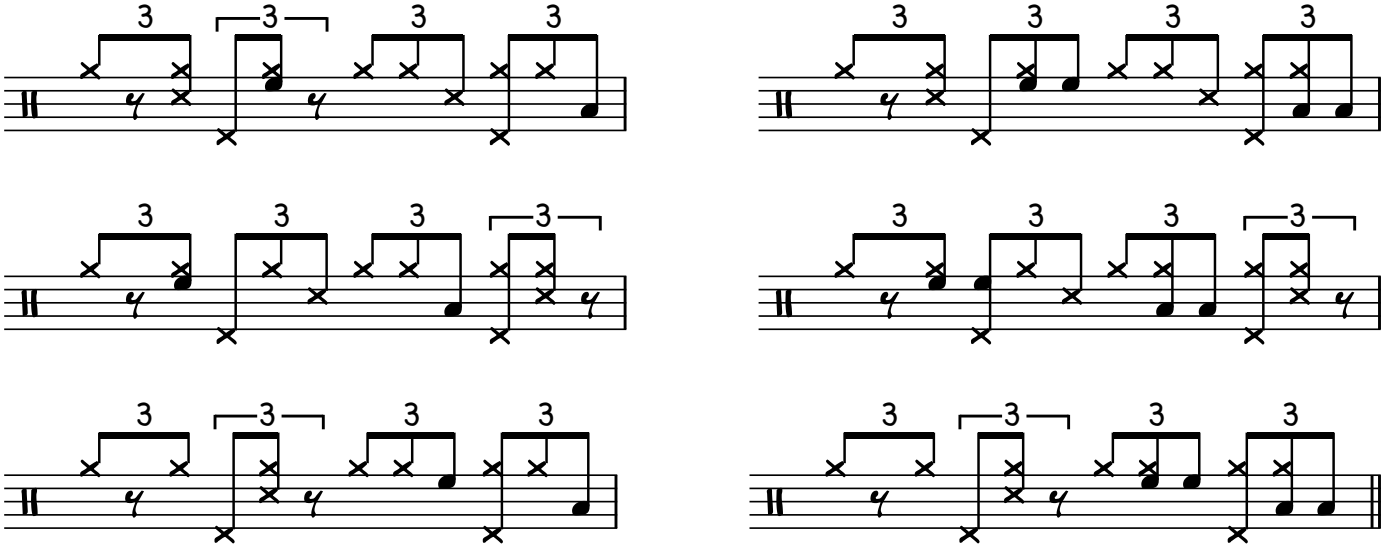


(G) Combining Pulses



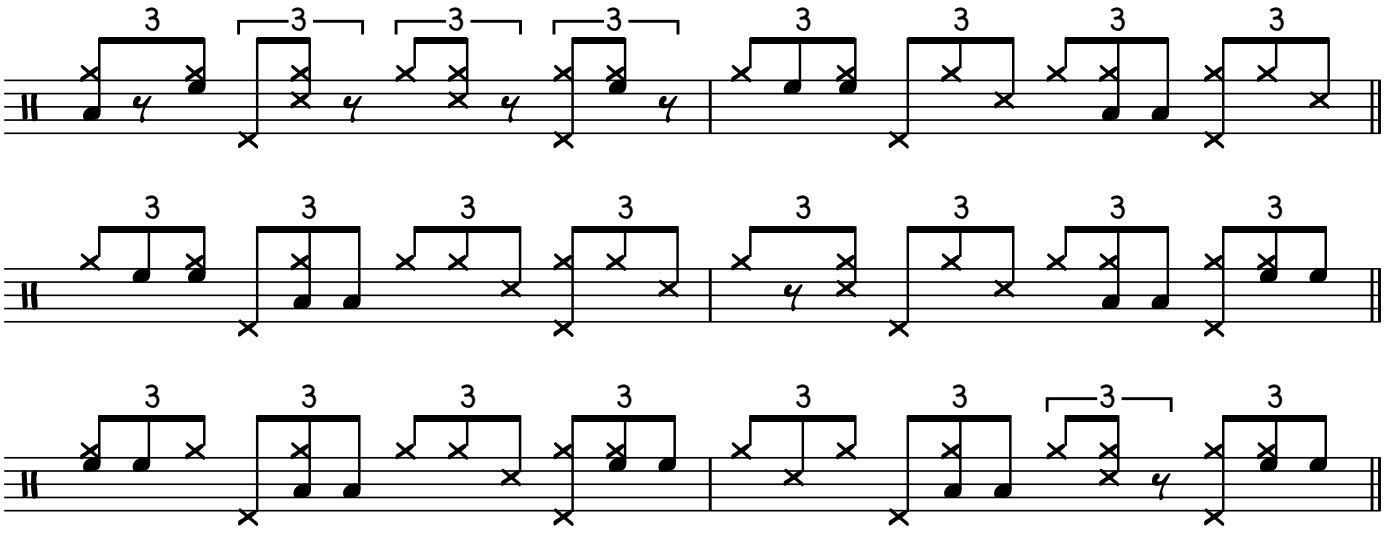
Once you have worked through letters C - G Create your own one, two, or miltuple bar orchestrations around the drumset

(H) One Bar Orchestration Examples



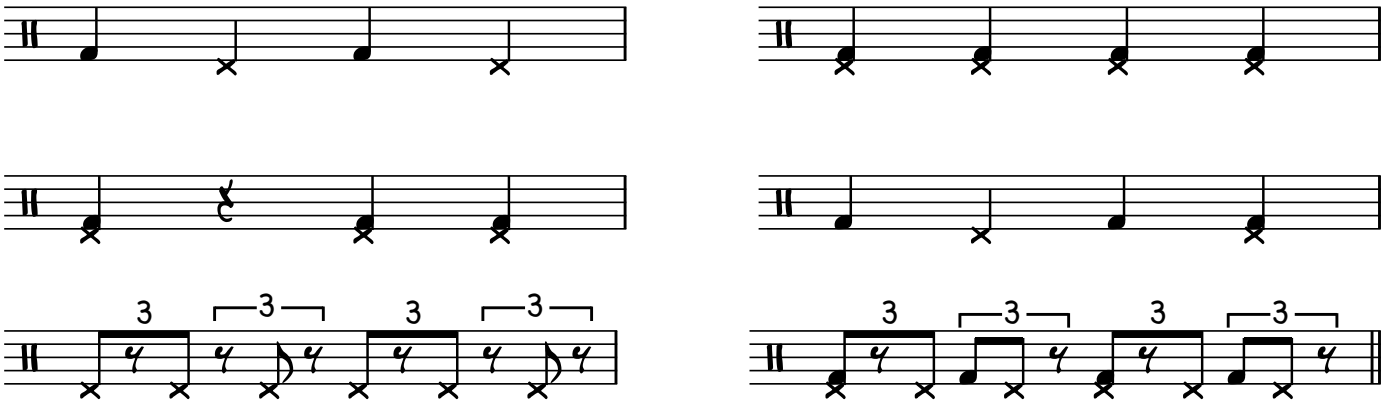
(D) Two Bar Orchestration Examples

4

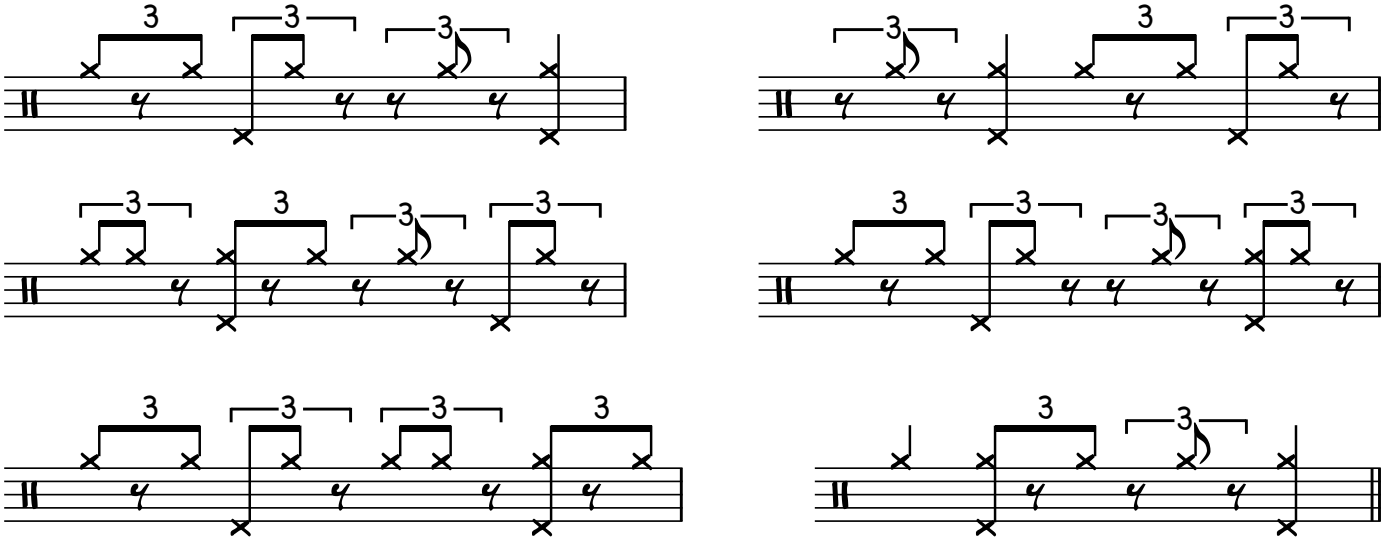


ADDITIONAL IDEAS

(J) Additional foot patterns



(R) Additional Ride Patterns



Max Roach

Background

Seen as one of the most important drummers in history, Max Roach was first exposed to music as a child, attending church with his family, and singing with the church choir. He would then go on to join the church marching band, where he first started to learn drums. Roach would later go on to be one of the most important drummers in history.

Throughout his impressive career, Max Roach worked with many great musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie, Charles Mingus, Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington, and many more. In 1960, Roach released the album "We Insist! Freedom Now Suite" which was about the Emancipation Proclamation and growing African independence movements. Michael Babatunde Olantunji was featured on some of the tracks in the album.

M'Boom was a percussion ensemble created by Max Roach in 1970, and lasted for 25 years. It consisted of drumset players, hand drummers, and percussionists. The group focused on primarily African rhythms and incorporated other indigenous music elements. Roach moved with the development of music over the years, and created opportunities for himself, like M'Boom, and many jazz albums as a bandleader.

Along with Max Roach's extensive performing career, he was also an educator. He was one of the first to become full time jazz faculty at the time.

He was affiliated with the University of Massachusetts Amherst starting in 1972 until his retirement in 1994.

Transcriptions

We will focus on Max Roach's solo construction, and its relationship to the musical pyramid. In most of his works, Max Roach utilizes motifs and rhythmic development when constructing a drum solo. The idea of "question and answer" is very prominent in Roach's drum solos. He plays a certain rhythm on a single/multiple drum(s) and responds in the same way with a different rhythm. Some solos can have an ostinato or consistent pattern played by the feet while the solo is happening. In relation to a traditional Ghanaian drum ensemble, this could be seen as the dialogue happening between the support and master drum tiers, and the timeline tier with a consistent pattern happening throughout.

Blues Waltz

Let us take a look at the complete drum solo on the piece *Blues Waltz* by Max Roach from the 1957 album Jazz In 3/4 Time.

BLUES WALTZ

Max Roach

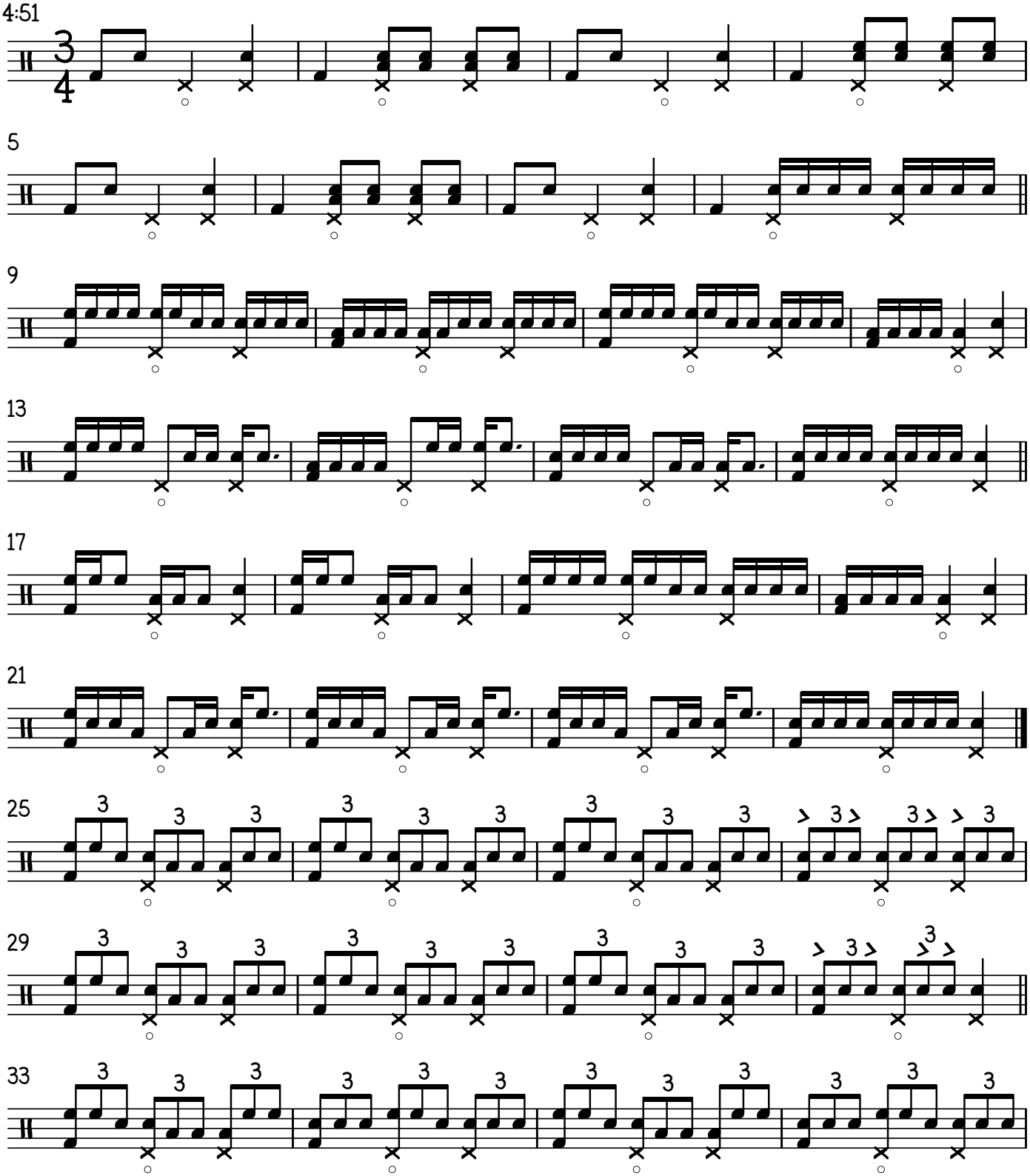
Jazz In 3/4 Time 1957

Max Roach

Tran. Joe Boulos

♩ = 178

4:51



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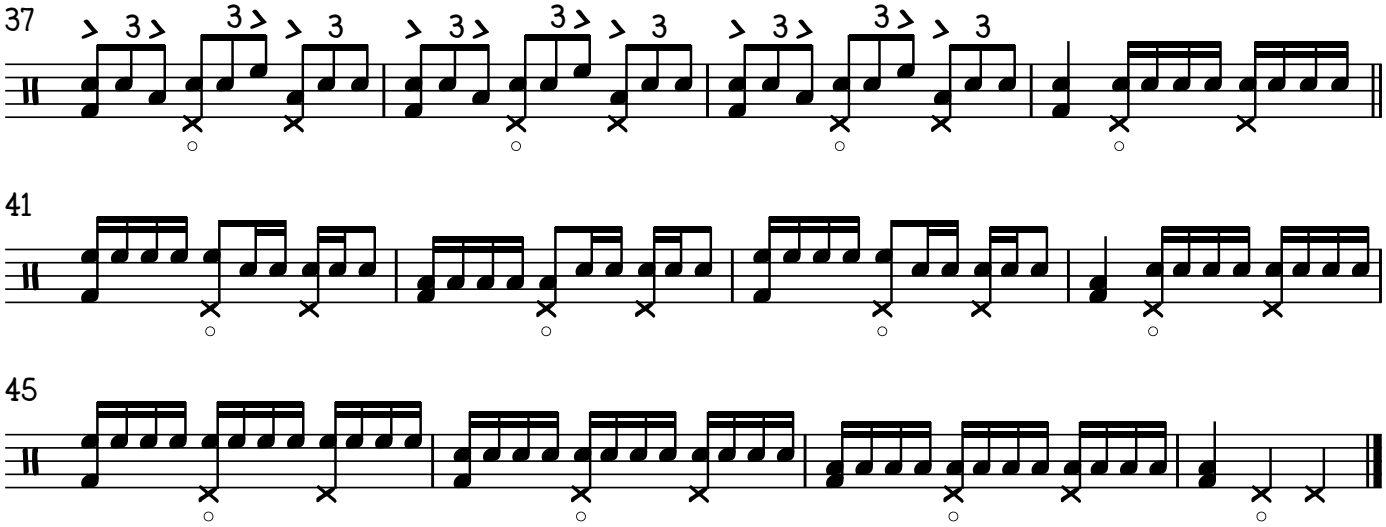
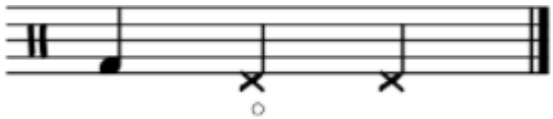


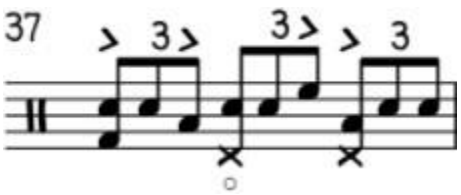
This piece is a Blues in 3/4 time, and its form spans 24 measures, twice through the form for a total length of 48 bars. Throughout this entire solo you can hear a consistent bass drum and hi-hat pattern, the bass drum is on beat one, with a hi-hat splash on beat two and a closed hi-hat on beat three. This would be considered the timeline.



Timeline Feet Pattern

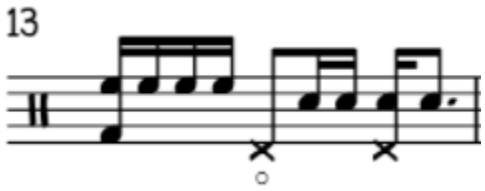
Over the timeline there are instances of repetition and development of the same rhythm, as well as a conversation happening between the drums. This repetition and development can be seen as the lead and support drum tiers. We can analyze the conversation between the drums at a micro level and a macro level.

At a micro level we would take one measure and realize what conversation is happening there, through rhythm, accents or both.



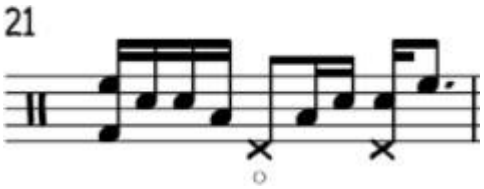
M. 37 Accent Example

In measures 37 through 39, we see this repetitive accent pattern happening between the snare drum and floor tom, as well as the mounted tom and floor tom. The first half of the measure can be seen as a question, with the second half being the answer; creating a short conversation based on accents.



M. 13 Rhythm example

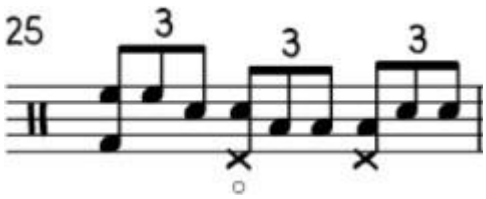
Here we have a micro level conversation based on rhythm. In measure 13 the mounted tom is on beat one during the first half of the measure while the snare drum responds in the second half, starting on the 'and' of two.



M. 21 Rhythm and accent example

This example is similar to what we have in measure 13, with the same rhythm but different orchestration. This causes a change in the sound and

tonality of the conversation. The conversation in measure 13 has the call and response, each on single drums and tones, while the measure 21 motives are spread across the varying tonalities of the snare, mounted, and floor tom; first descending, followed by mirroring ascending movement. Being broken up by bigger beats, we now see a condensed conversation. The change in the instrumental surfaces of what Max Roach strikes stands out more, with the mounted and floor toms framing the snare drum couplets. This high-low statement with a low-high response can be heard as a microcosm of longer compositional melodies in jazz or even extended to symphonic music, where melodic movement can signal changes in form.

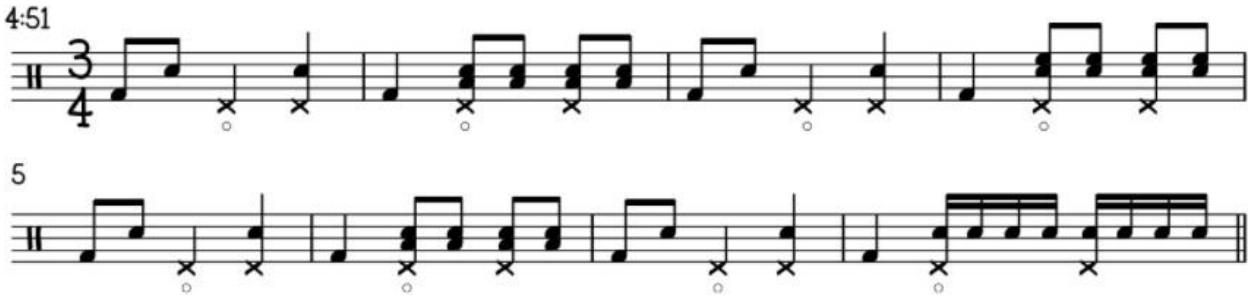


M. 25 Rhythm example

Measure 25 is another example of the mounted tom and floor tom having a conversation. This is a “high-low” conversion with the snare drum filling in the space.

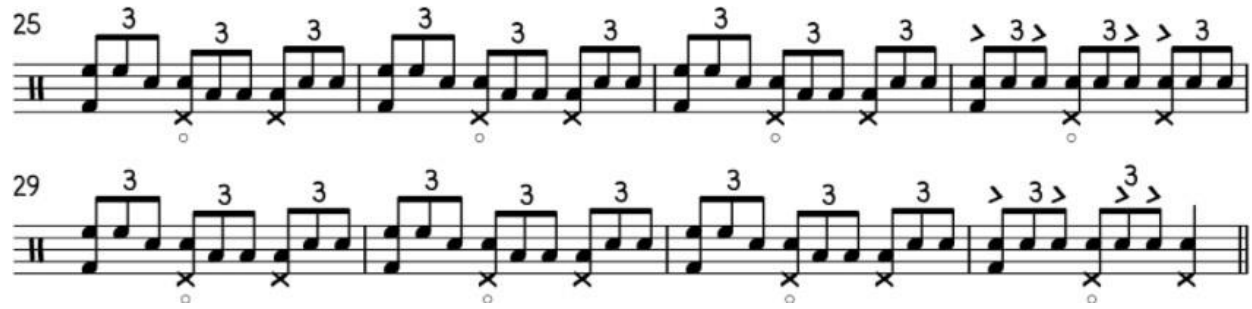
At a macro level we would take multiple measures or phrases and realize what conversation is happening from that broader perspective. With

most of these phrases, you will notice that Max Roach inserts an ending to show that he is going into a new idea.



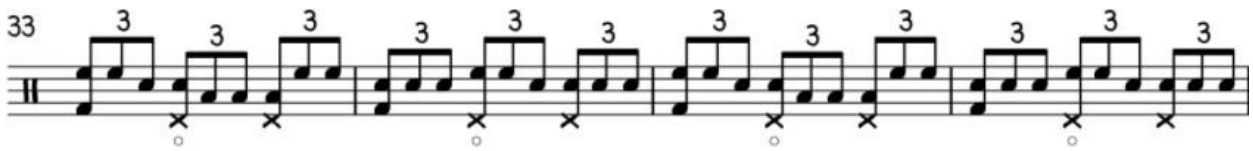
M. 1-8

In the first couple measures of the solo there is already a conversation happening. The snare drum asks the question in the first measure and then gets a response from the tom drums, and this conversation is repeated twice in measures 3-6. If we remember the specific role of the master drum tier in a traditional Ghanaian ensemble, we can say that measure 8 is the signal to let us know we are transitioning into a new section.



M. 25-32

After previously looking at measure 25 at a micro level, we put it back into context with measures 25-32. The same repetitive rhythm happens in four bar phrases, with the last measure of each phrase consisting of a varied rhythm. We can hear measures 25-27, and 29-31 as the master drum, and then measures 28 and 32 as the support drums' response.



M. 33-36

Measures 33-36 are a repeated two bar phrase. The mounted and floor tom have a micro conversation in measures 33 and 35, and get a response from just the mounted tom in measures 34 and 36

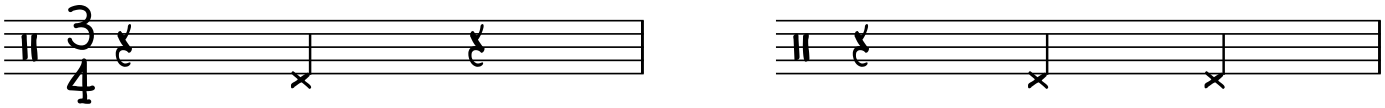
Additional Ideas

As you can see Max Roach's development of a rhythm or motif is very prominent in his soloing. Whether at a micro or macro level, we can use many of his ideas to apply in our own playing. Let us take a deeper look at how we can adapt these "question and answer" ideas in our own playing. With the exercises below, we should be able to develop a stronger sense of Roach's playing and develop our own ideas influenced by these concepts.

CONVERSATIONAL DRUMS
MAX ROACH SOLO DEVELOPMENT

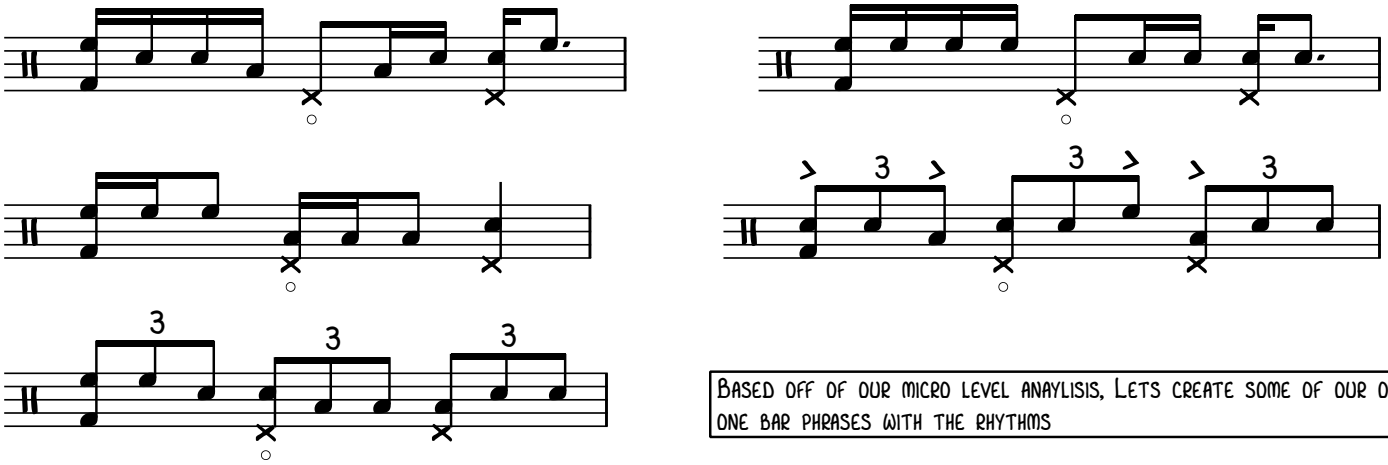
Joe Boulos

(A) Basic Foot Patterns



Lets focus on this one

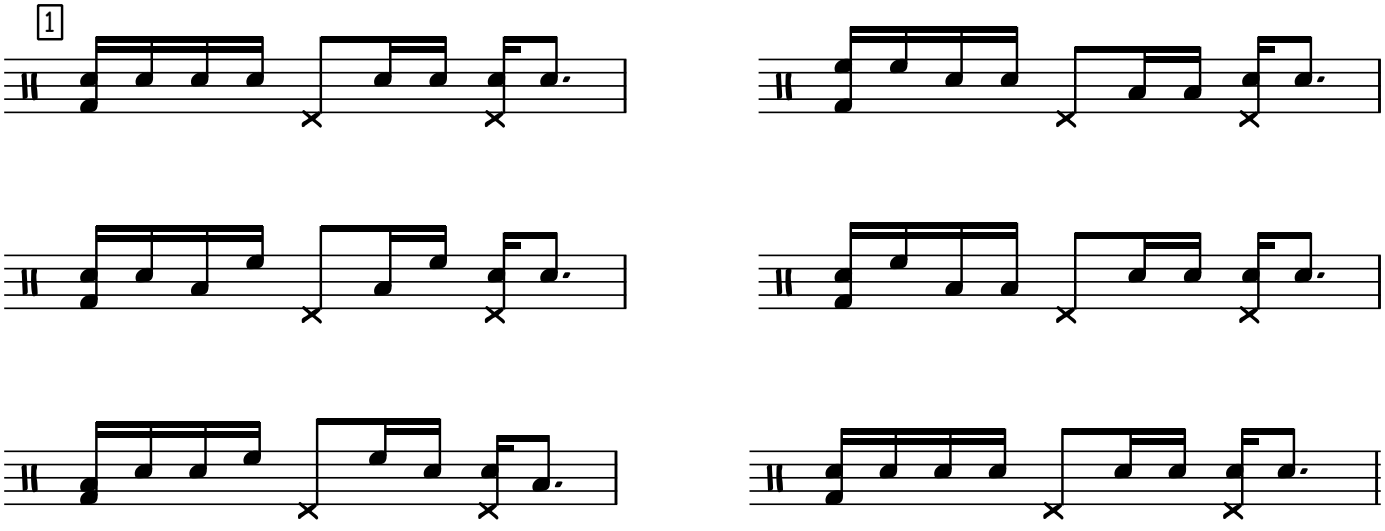
(B) Max Roach One bar phrases - Micro Level



Based off of our micro level anaylisis, Lets create some of our own one bar phrases with the rhythms

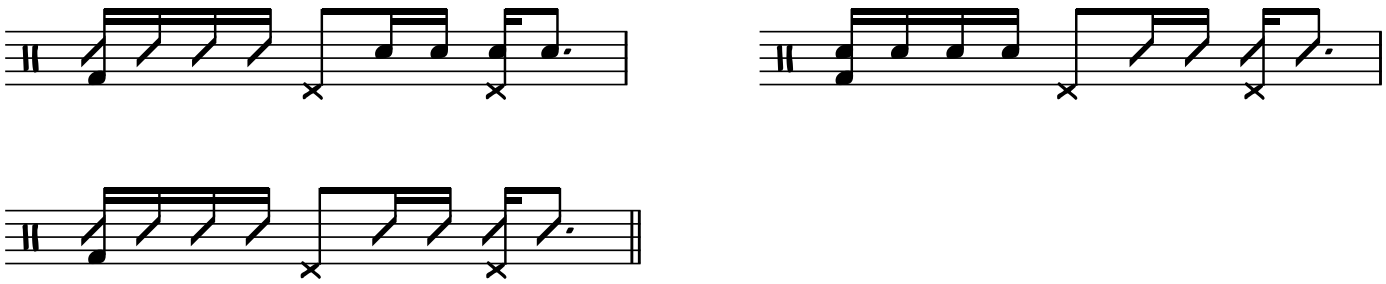
(C) Orchestrating the rhythms

1



2

SLASHES ARE FOR YOU TO CREATE YOUR OWN
ORCHESTRATION WITH THE GIVEN RHYTHM



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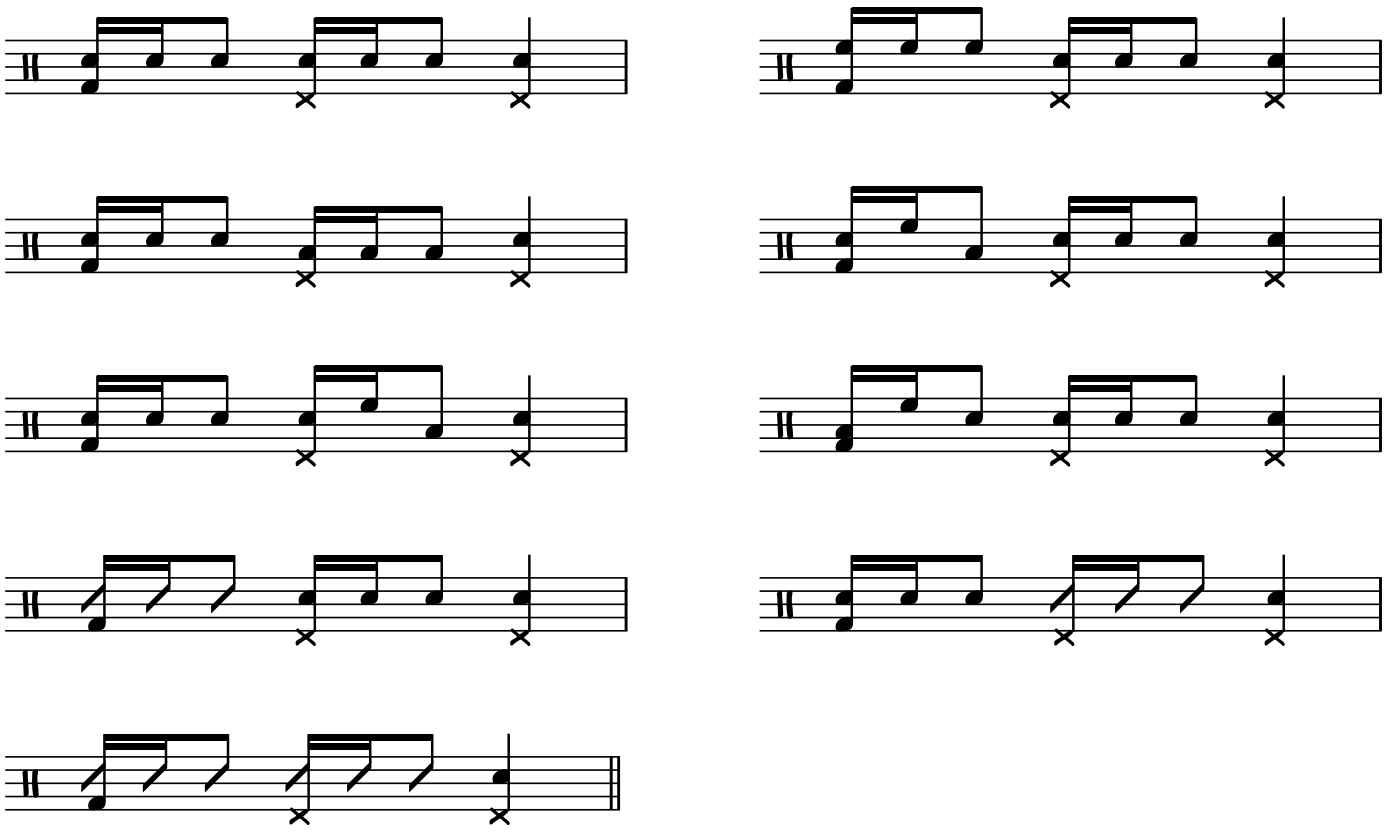

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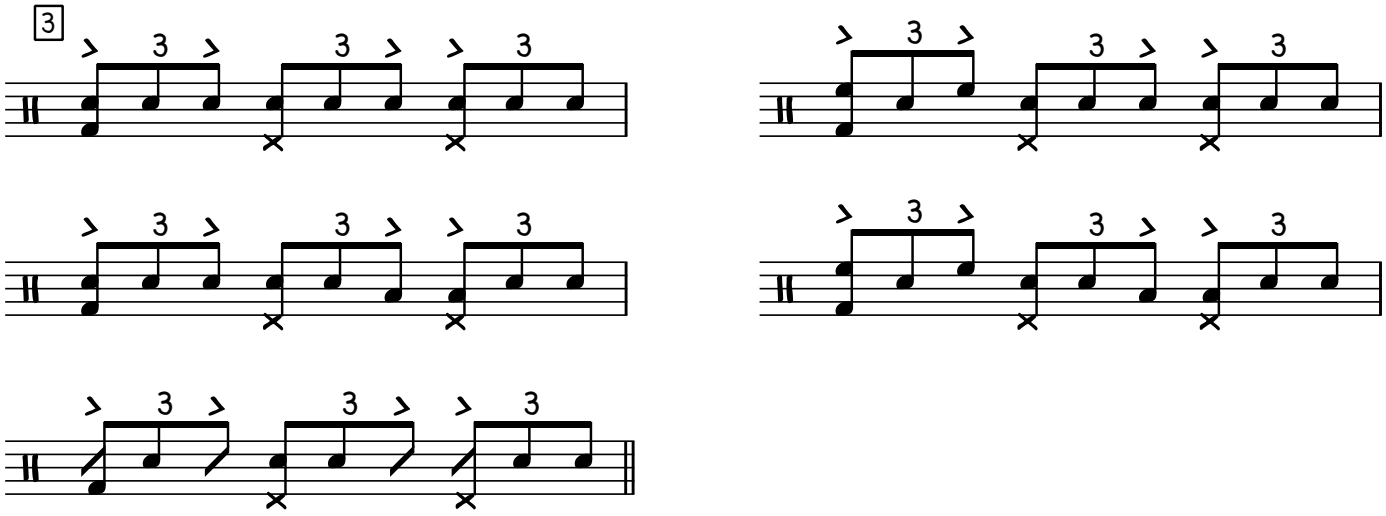
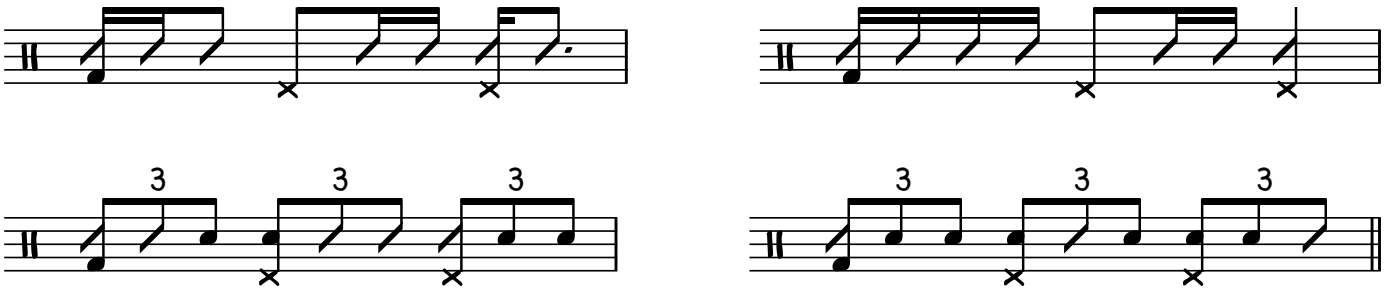
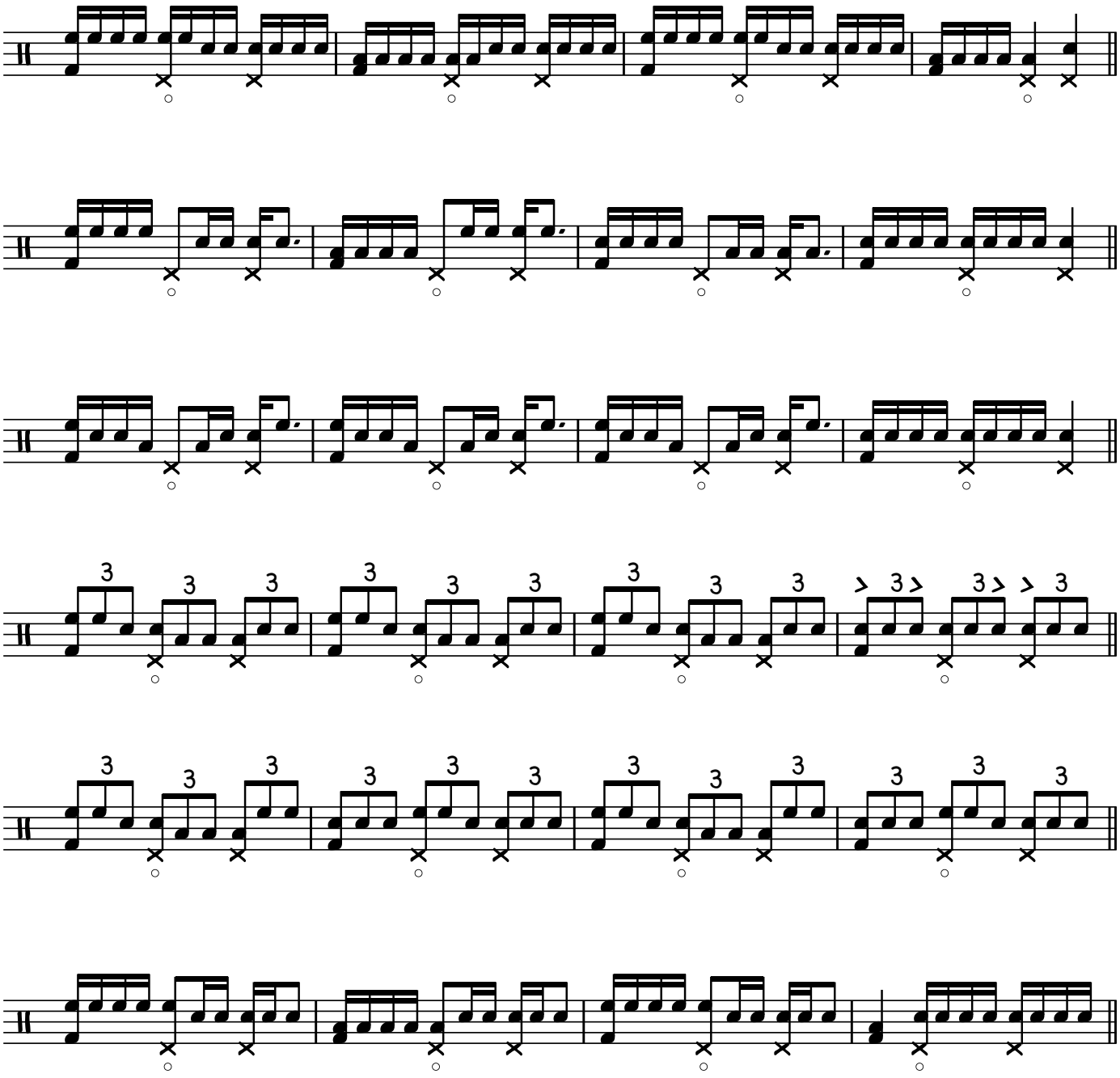


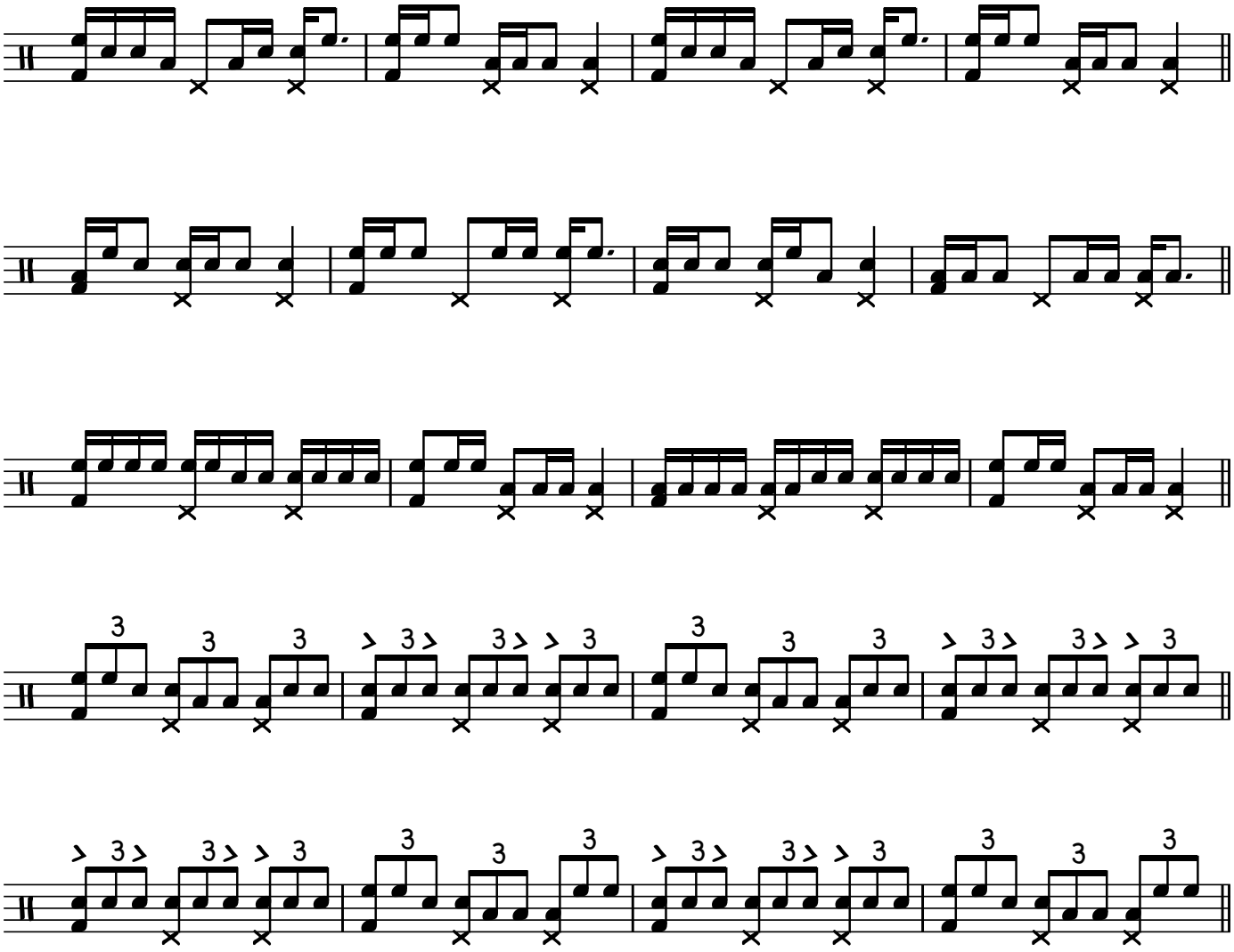
(D) Additional one bar phrases



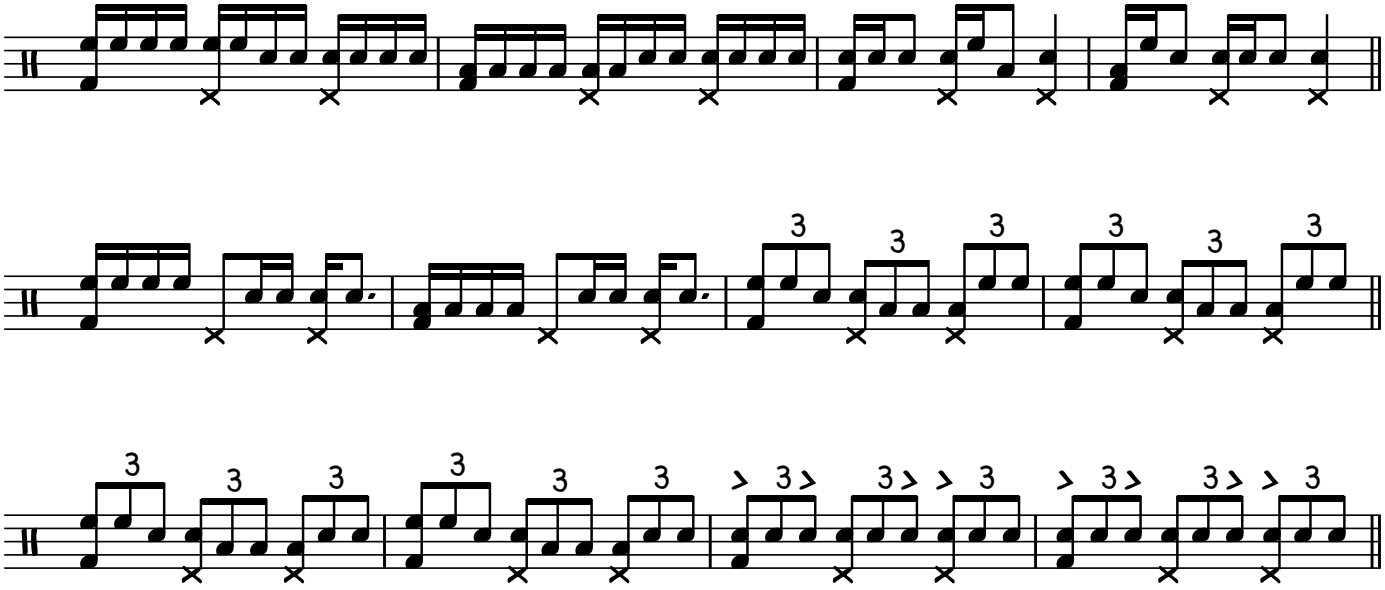
(E) Max Roach four bar phrases - Macro level

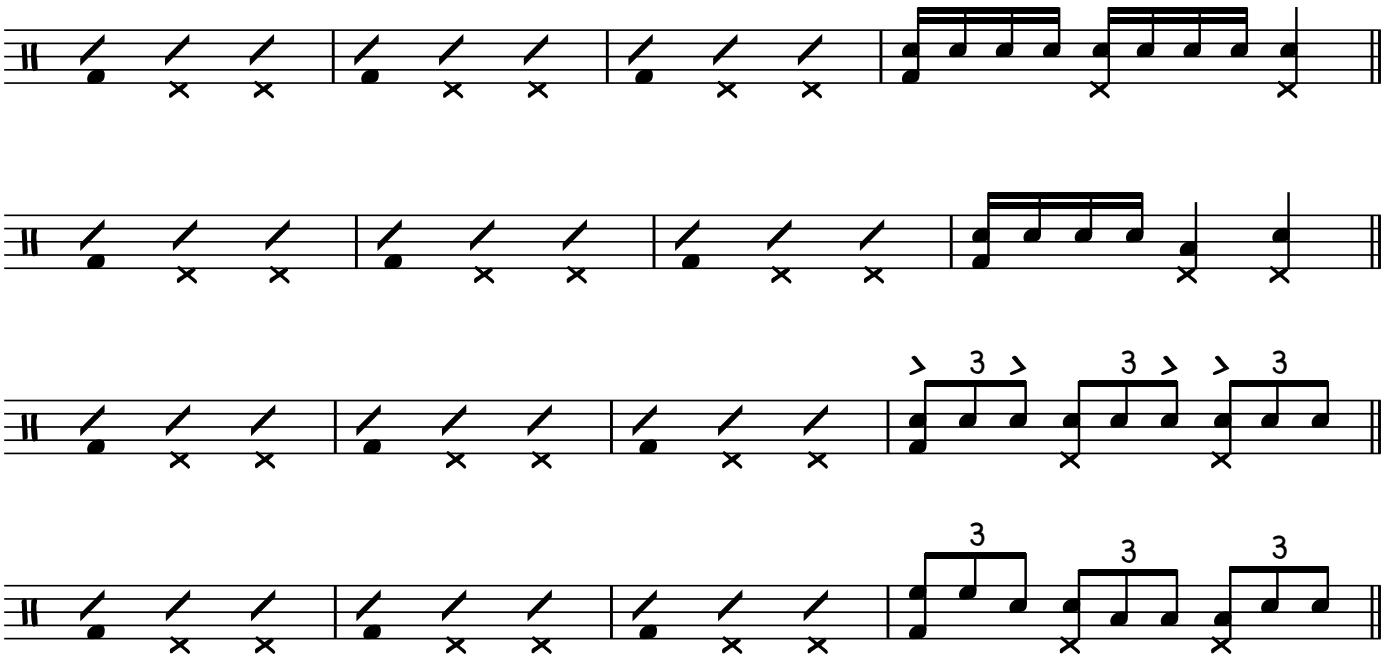


4 (F) Additional Four Bar Phrases: 1 & 1



(G) 2 & 2

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3

Ed Blackwell

Background

Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, the birthplace of jazz, Ed Blackwell is considered to be an innovator of avant-garde jazz. As a child, Blackwell would attend vaudeville shows to watch his brother and sister perform. He would sit behind drummers and watch how they interacted with the tap dancers, which influenced his approach to music; This is an important component of a Ghanaian drum and dance ensemble, where the lead drummer interacts with dancers and plays according to their movements.

Ed Blackwell's career gained momentum in the early 1960s, when he started performing and recording with jazz saxophonist Ornette Coleman, another major innovator in avant-garde jazz. Blackwell continued his work with Coleman up until the early 1970s, when they parted ways. In 1965, Ed Blackwell started working with pianist Randy Weston, and went on a tour of North and West Africa, which reinforced Blackwell's already strong sense of jazz and African connections.

After his work with Ornette Coleman, Blackwell joined the group Old and New Dreams in 1976, consisting of the original members from Coleman's group, with Dewey Redman on saxophone.

Ed Blackwell's career also consisted of teaching, where he became an artist in residence at Wesleyan University in 1975. At Wesleyan University Blackwell worked with master artists Abraham Adzenyah and Freeman

Donkor from Ghana, West Africa. Ed Blackwell kept affiliations with the university until his death in 1992.

Transcriptions

For this portion of the project we will be focusing on Ed Blackwell's development of a groove in relationship to the musical pyramid. From swing to avant garde, Ed Blackwell is one of the most unique sounding drummers of his time. With his childhood being surrounded by the second line music of New Orleans, to the end of his career working with master artists from Ghana, these influences played a big role in his overall approach to music. When listening to Blackwell play you hear grooves primarily utilizing the actual drums instead of the cymbals. In relation to the traditional Ghanaian drum ensemble, Ed Blackwell conveys all the functions, keeping a consistent timeline and creating a dialogue between the support and the lead drum tiers.

T. & T.

Let us take a look at the beginning portion of Ed Blackwell's drumming on the piece *T. & T.* by Ornette Coleman off of the 1962 album Ornette!.

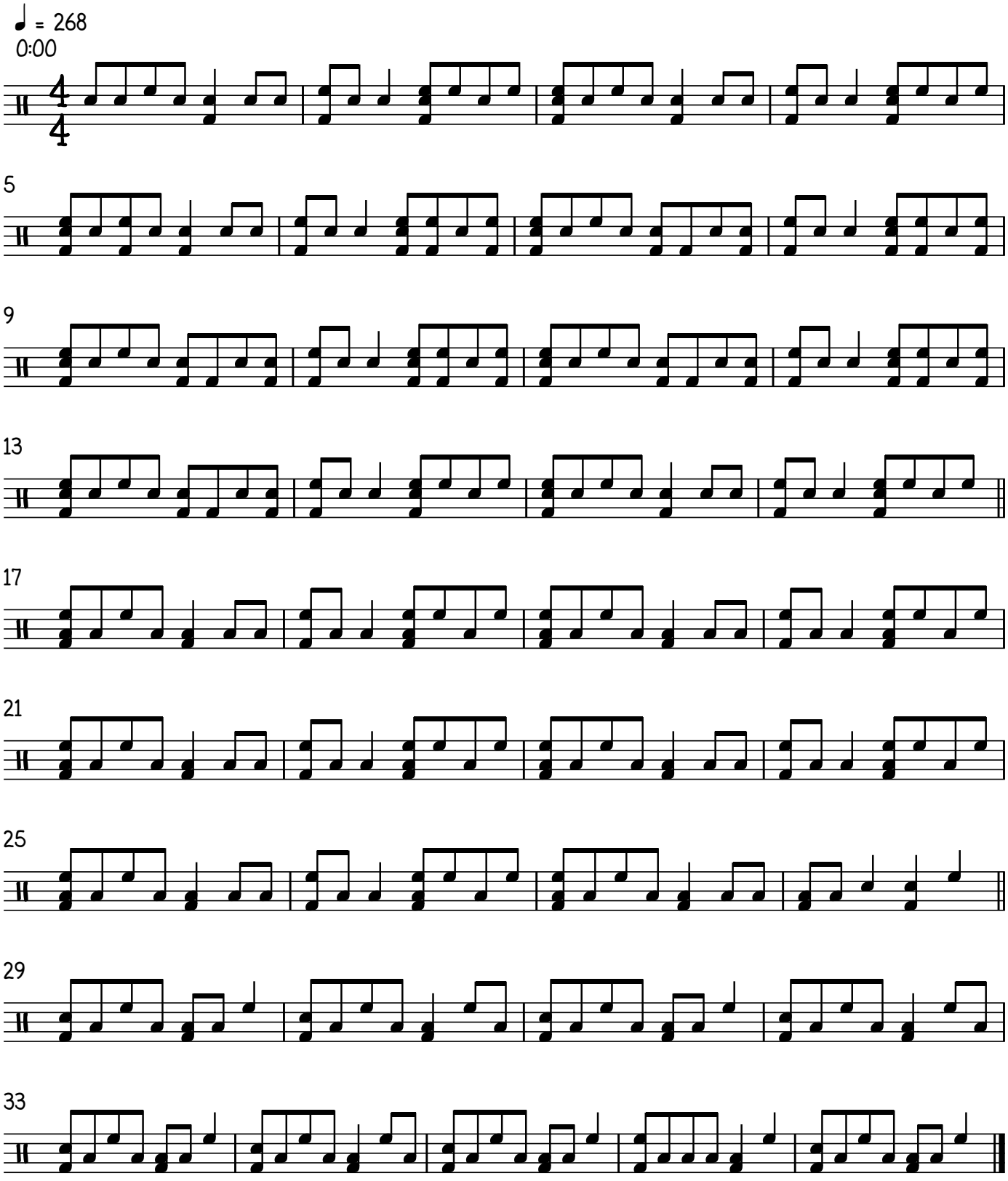
T. & T.

Ornette Coleman

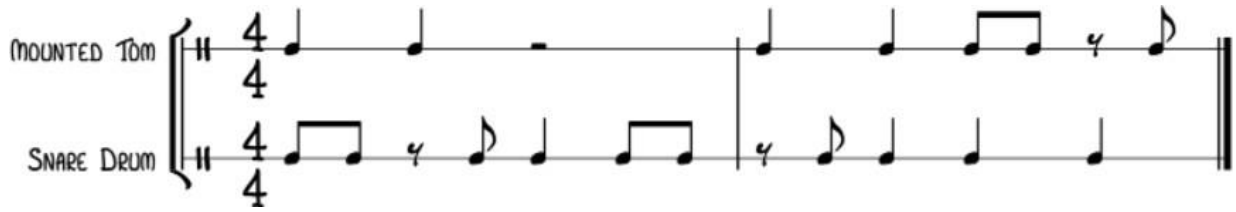
Ornette! 1962

Ed Blackwell

Trans. Joe Boulos



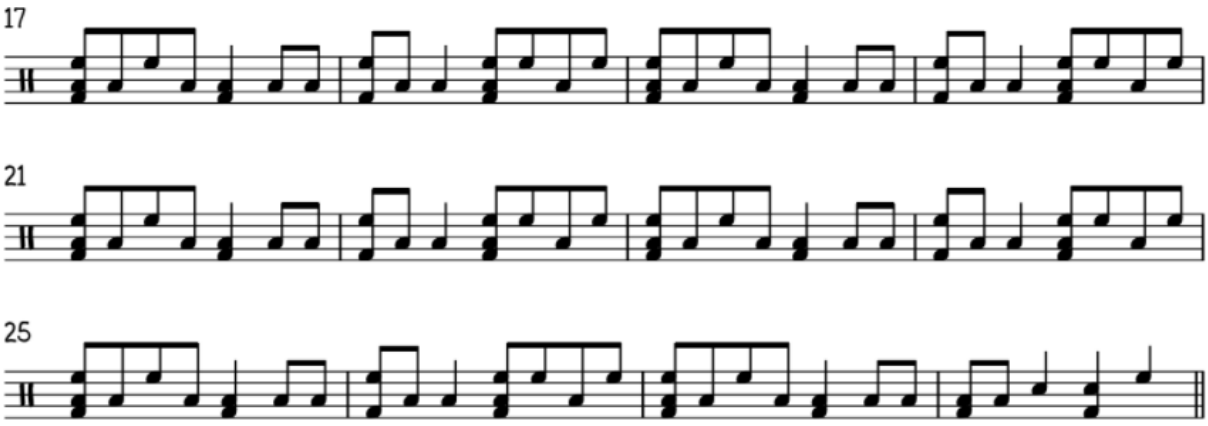
A lot of what we see from this transcription is repetition, with very minimal variation to lead the listener into a new section. Ed Blackwell begins this piece with a 16 bar drum introduction. The first thing to take note of is the consistent two measure phrase happening between the snare drum and mounted tom.



Isolating the snare drum and mounted tom

This overlapping rhythmic idea that Blackwell is playing, is very common in most traditional Ghanaian drum ensembles. The bass drum can be considered the timeline tier, due to its sounding on beats one and three for most of the transcription with a slight variation at points. In measures 1-16 The snare drum is playing most of the sounds, while the mounted tom is playing on some of the same beats or filling in the space. At this point we can assign the snare drum to the lead tier and the mounted tom to the support tier. The two voices are complementary, while one is outlining the basic beat, the other is stating off-beat sounds and they reverse the relationship in the second half of the phrase. The pattern can be heard as two statements of off-beat rhythm in the snare voice in the first measure,

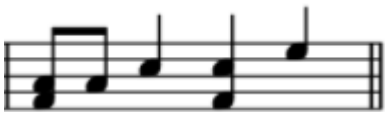
answered by off-beat mounted tom strokes in the second measure. Such an overlap is consistent with some Ghanaian lead and support rhythm sequences.



M. 17-28

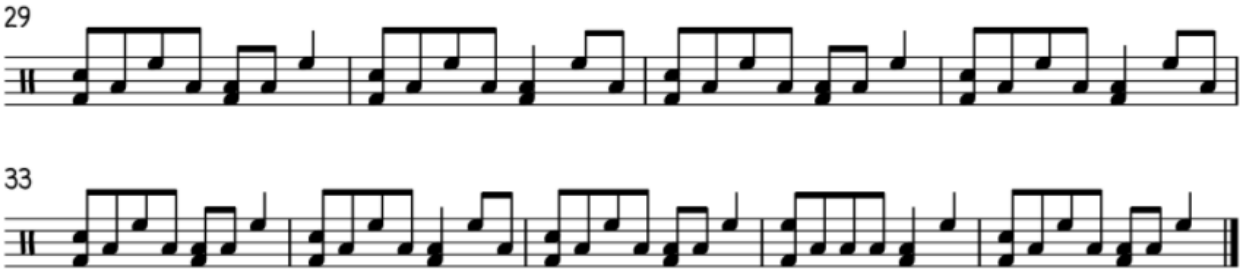
In measures 17-27, the ensemble enters, and the groove is slightly altered. The mounted tom is still playing the same exact rhythm as at the start of the piece, while the snare drum rhythm is moved to the floor tom. The same dialogue from measures 1-16 is still there but given a different sound with the new orchestration of the rhythm. Blackwell changed the feeling of the groove with just one drum, to let listeners know there is change with this tonal and timbral alteration.

In jazz, when going to a new section the drummer can still maintain the groove, but can switch surfaces to give the piece musical shape.



M. 28

Measure 28 is a break into a new section. After a series of repetitive patterns, Blackwell plays this contrasting measure to signal a new section. One of the most important parts in a Ghanaian ensemble are cues to let the ensemble know that a new section is coming.



M. 29-37

After the cue from measure 28, Ed Blackwell changes the rhythms of his initial groove from measures 1-27 into something new for measures 29-37. The overall ideas, in relation to our pyramid, are still present but the orchestration and rhythms have changed. In this drum break, Blackwell moves the mounted tom to beats two and four, the snare drum is moved to beat one, and the floor tom plays around the other drums, creating a two bar phrase. This shift parallels how lead and support drum conversations

develop in traditional Ghananian drum ensembles, where the lead drum moves to a new call, occasionally only slightly altered, followed by new responses from the supporting drums.

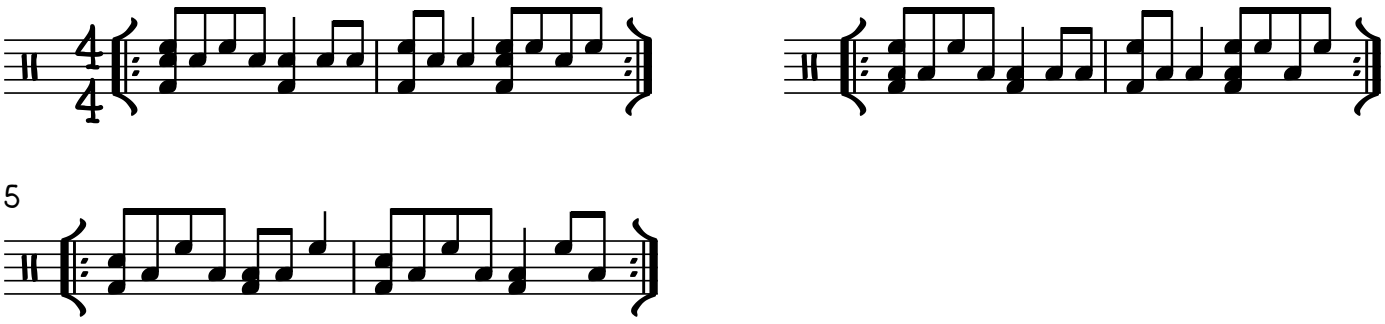
Additional Ideas

Applying the concept of a Ghanaian drum ensemble can be difficult. It is more conceptual thinking, than practical. Ed Blackwell is a unique player and captures the essence of a drum ensemble, with additional influences of other indigenous music cultures over his career. The exercises below will give us a better approach on how to apply essential elements of a Ghanaian drum ensemble to the drumset.

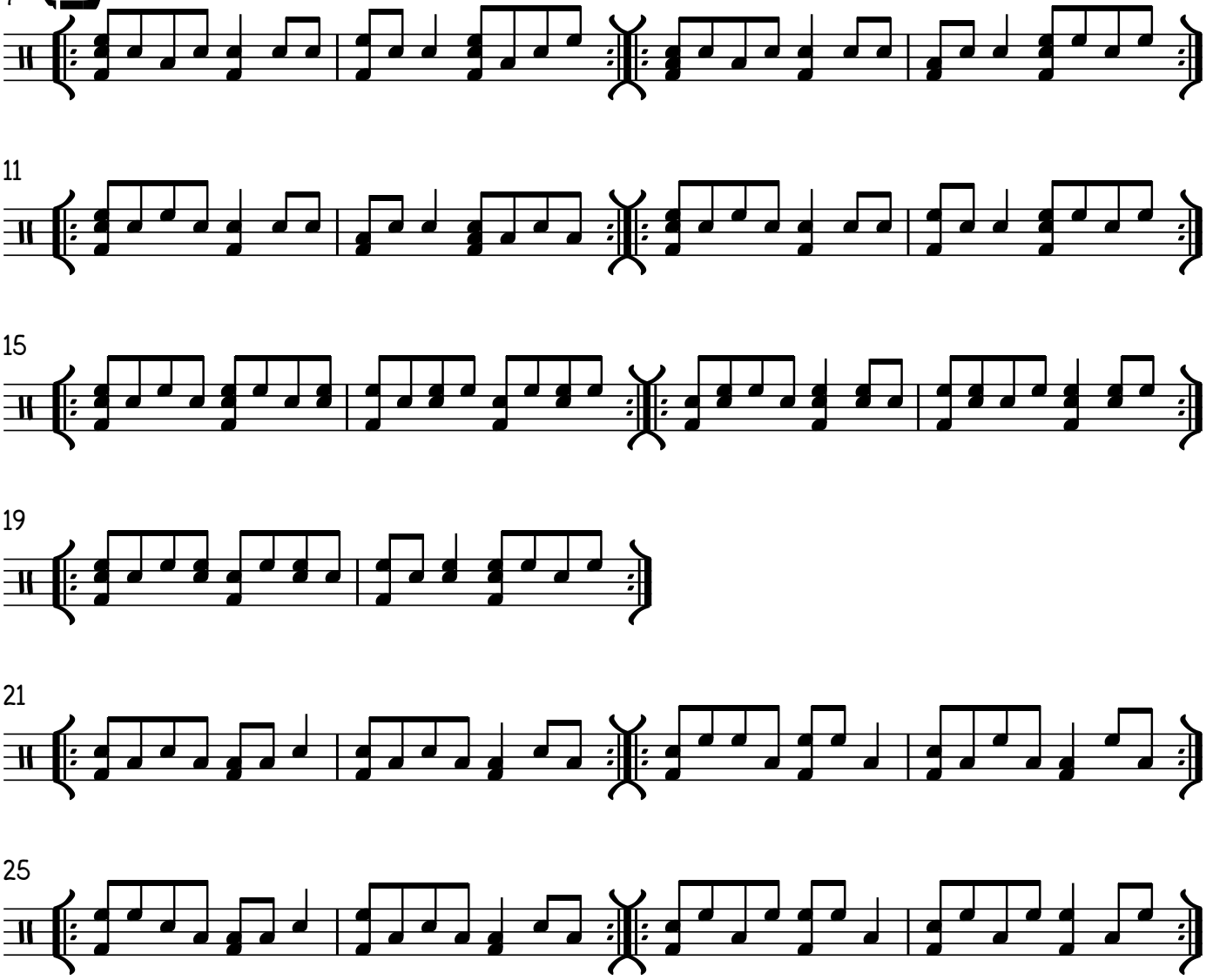
APPROXIMATING A DRUM ENSEMBLE
ED BLACKWELL

Joe Boulos

(A) Ed Blackwell Examples

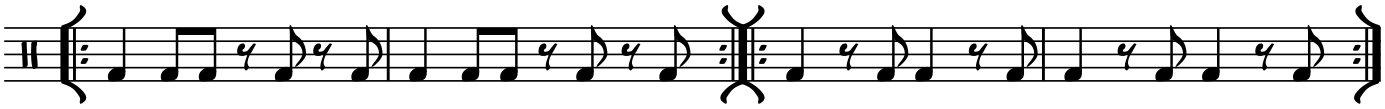


(B) Variations on Ed Blackwell

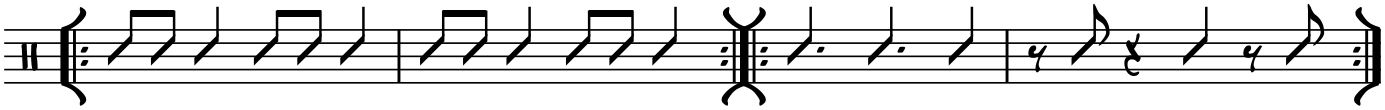


C

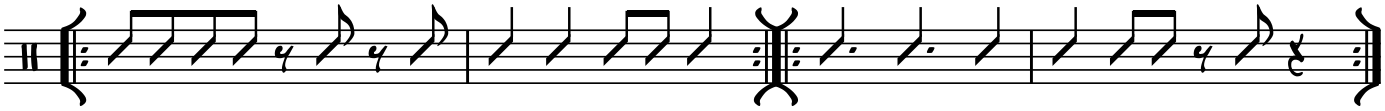
29 Additional Ideas
Foot Patterns



33 Layering Patterns



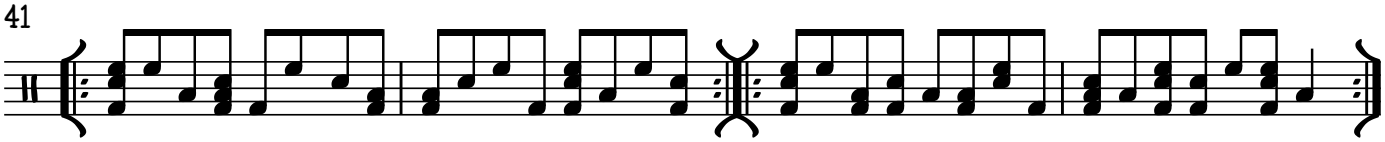
37



Select a foot pattern, a layering pattern for your left on the snare drum and a layering pattern for your right hand to orchestrate between the toms

Orchestration Examples

41



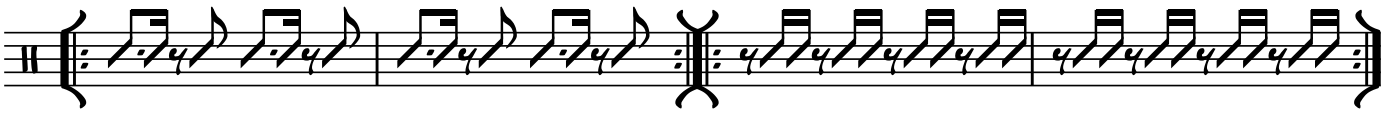
ADAPTATIONS OF A TRADITIONAL GHANAIAN PIECE

D

Gahu

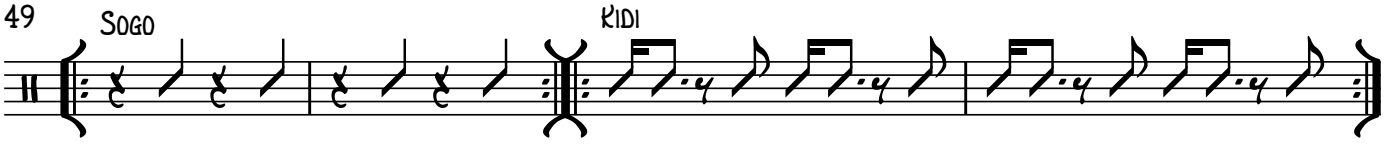
Gangkogui

45



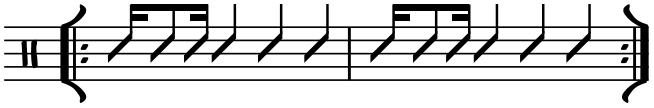
Kagan

49 Sogo



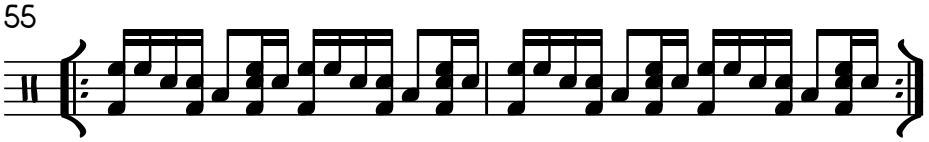
Kidi

53 Atsimevu - Basic Pattern



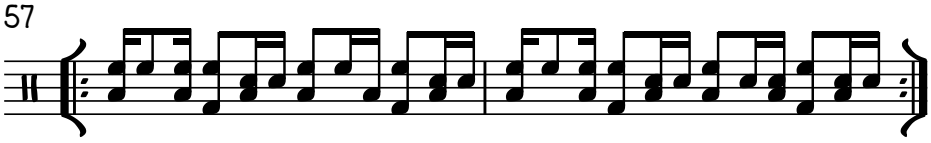
Due to drum ensembles consisting of multiple players, when creating adapatations for drumset you have to orchestrate certain parts of the ensemble to create the sound of multiple players

55



Kidi on rack tom - right hand
Kagan on snare drum - left hand
Sogo on floor tom - right hand
Gangkogui on bass drum

57



A reduction of atsimevu, kidi, and Kagan on rack tom, and snare drum - Left Hand
Gangkogui on floor tom - right hand
Sogo on bass drum

The approach in letter D is applicable to many other indegnious drum ensembles

Conclusion

If you plan on continuing further studies of this specific material, the literature and listening examples below will help in your journey. To enrich the experience of your studies beyond the jazz setting, you should seek recordings of African master artists and ensembles playing traditional pieces. If possible, you should go beyond books and videos, and study with master artists of the culture, ideally living in the culture to experience the music and dance in their cultural context. This will help to gain a deeper meaning and understanding of this music in order to perform it respectfully and with integrity.

One drummer that should be mentioned is royal hartigan, a well known ethnomusicologist who has taken these concepts and applied them to many other indigenous musical traditions and their adaptations to the drumset in African American traditions. You will find examples of hartigan's work under listening examples, and literature.

The concepts used in this document are also translatable to research of other indigenous music. There will also be additional literature on applying African diasporic music to drumset, such as Afro-Cuban music adaptations.

Listening Examples

Songs Referenced in the Document

- Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. "Oh, By The Way". Track 1 on Oh, By The Way, 1982, Timeless Records.
- Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. "Sortie". Track 2 on Indestructible, 1966, Blue Note Records.
- Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. "United". Track 4 on Roots and Herbs, 1961, Blue Note Records.
- Max Roach. "Blues Waltz". Track 1 on Jazz in 3/4 Time, 1957, EmArcy Records
- Ornette Coleman. "T.&T.". Track 2 on Ornette!, 1962, Atlantic Records

Additional Albums

Akoko Nante Ensemble. *Nkrabea.* CD Baby, 2015

Art Blakey. *The African Beat.* Blue Note Records 1962.

Blood Drum Spirit. *Time Changes.* Royal Hartigan, 2019.

Guy Warren. *The Divine Drummer.* RetroAfric 2002.

McCoy Tyner. *Asante.* Blue Note Records, 1974.

royal hartigan. *Blood Drum Spirit.* Innova, 2003.

Solomon Ilori. *African High Life.* Blue Note Records, 1963.
Obo Addy. *Okropong (Traditional Music of Ghana).* Santrofi Records, 1989.

Old and New Dreams. *Old and New Dreams*. ECM Records, 1979

Various Artists. *African and Afro American Drums.* Folkways Records, 1954.

Various Artists. *Ghana - Rhythms of the People.* City Hall Records, 2000.

Literature

Method books to support further study of concepts

Ghana

- "*West African Eve Rhythms for Drumset".* Royal J. Hartigan. Tapspace.
- "*West African Rhythms for Drumset".* Royal J. Hartigan, Abraham Adzenyah, and Freeman Donkor. Manhattan Music.

Other African Countries and the African Diaspora

- "*African Rhythms and Independence for Drumset".* Mokhtar Samba. Music in Motion Films.
- *"Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset".* Frank Malabe, and Bob Weiner . Hudson Music.
- *"A World of Rhythmic Possibility".* Dafnis Prieto. Dafnison Music.
- *"Riddim: Claves of African Origin".* Billy Martin. Music in Motion Films.

Additional Books

- *"Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer".* Jim Chapin. Alfred Music.
- *"Dancin' on the Time".* Royal J. Hartigan. Tapspace.
- *"The Art of Bop Drumming".* John Riley. Hudson Music.

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Chernoff, John Miller. "*African Rhythm and African Sensibility : Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms"*. A Phoenix Book. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Hartigan, Royal James, Abraham Adzenyah and Freeman Donkor. "*West African Rhythms for Drumset".* New York, NY: Manhattan Music, 1995.

Jazz Video Guy. "An Art Blakey Story - Indestructible". Youtube video, 47:35. September 22nd, 2020.

Locke, David. "*Drum Gahu! : A Systematic Method for an African Percussion Piece"*. [Performance in World Music Series], No. 1. Crown Point, IN: White Cliffs Media, 1987.

Monson, Ingrid T. "*Freedom Sounds : Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa"*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Moorland-Spingran Research Center. "An Interview with Legendary Jazz Musician Max Roach". Youtube video, 1:00:15. November 9th, 2017.

Nketia, J. H. Kwabena. "*The Music of Africa"*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974.

Olatunji, Babatunde, Robert Atkinson, and Akinsola A Akiwowo. "*The Beat of My Drum : An Autobiography"*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2005.

Ramsay, John. *"Art Blakey's Jazz Messages".* New York, NY: Manhattan Music, 1994.

Redstrmwtch. “ED BLACKWELL STORY Pt. 1”. Youtube Video, 14:50. April 14th, 2011

Schmalenberger, David J. “*Stylistic Evolution of Jazz Drummer Ed Blackwell: The Cultural Intersection of New Orleans and West Africa”.* PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2005.