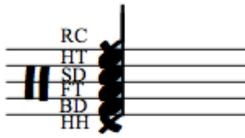


LEGEND



Swingin' Transitions For Drummers

By Keith Hall

It is safe to say that all of us have either listened to or played in a young jazz group and that we are well aware of that awkward point in the music...when the drum-fill transition approaches and the very excited drummer either rushes, drags, freezes or plays something completely inappropriate. I cringe when I hear this because I know that with a little practical coaching the drummer could sound much more confident and provide a smoother transition.

After many years of teaching and performing, I have learned that these transitions can sometimes make or break a song (performance). If the transitions are seamless and they help the music to flow, then it makes for a much more enjoyable musical experience for everyone.

Recently, I have begun writing specific transitions and fills for my drum students to use as a spring board for their own creativity. Many drummers, including myself, have come from a rock or pop background, so thinking of a swingin' transition isn't the first thing that our hands gravitate towards. Because swing is based on triplets, I have designed some simple triplet-accent patterns as a place to begin.

Triplets

Let's begin by playing triplets while alternating Right, Left, Right etc...

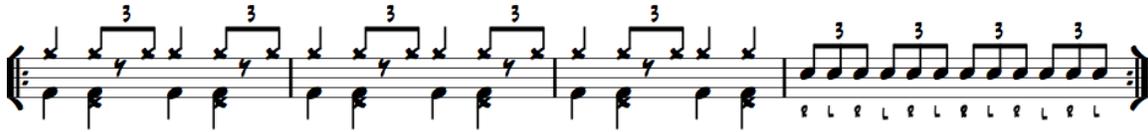
Ex. 1



Since most American music is grouped in four-bar phrases I like to have my students practice with this in mind. This trains them to hear and feel the length of a 4-bar phrase and eventually they won't have to count or think about them.

Begin by playing 3 bars of swing time and then use triplets on the 4th bar as a transition. Feel free to keep the feet going through the triplets.

Ex. 1A



The important thing with this is to have a seamless transition going from the swing time to the triplets and back again. Practice these with a metronome so that you work on keeping the tempo consistent throughout.

“Imitate, Orchestrate, and Create”

Imitate

One of my mottos is “Imitate, Orchestrate, and Create.” We must first copy and imitate what we hear or see, secondly move it around the kit to hear different sonic possibilities and finally begin to turn it inside out and backwards as we create our own ideas based off of the original material.

Now we will add some accents to the triplets and develop what I call ‘Rhythmic Melodies’. The idea is to make the accents very clear and much louder than the other notes so that you only really hear the accents. I call these ‘Rhythmic Melodies’ because they are ‘singable’ and are easy to remember.

Ex. 2



Ex. 3



Start these on the snare drum first with the same foot pattern. Practice these until you get very comfortable with the sticking and accents.

Now play it as a fill at the end of a 4-bar phrase.

Ex. 2A

Musical notation for Ex. 2A, showing a sequence of rhythmic patterns. The first three measures feature a steady quarter-note pulse with accents on the first and third notes of each measure. The fourth measure transitions to a triplet of eighth notes. The fifth measure returns to the quarter-note pulse. The final measure features a triplet of eighth notes with accents on the first and third notes. Below the staff, the rhythm is indicated by 'R' and 'L' characters: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L.

Ex. 3A

Musical notation for Ex. 3A, showing a sequence of rhythmic patterns. The first three measures feature a steady quarter-note pulse with accents on the first and third notes of each measure. The fourth measure transitions to a triplet of eighth notes. The fifth measure returns to the quarter-note pulse. The final measure features a triplet of eighth notes with accents on the first and third notes. Below the staff, the rhythm is indicated by 'R' and 'L' characters: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L.

Again, the idea is to make the transitions seamless as you go from playing time to triplets and back to playing time. Don't forget the metronome!

You can also try longer phrases:

-8-bar phrases: 7 bars of time plus a one-bar fill.

-12-bar phrases: 11 bars of time plus a one-bar fill.

Orchestrate

Once you get comfortable with these on the snare drum you can now begin to orchestrate these rhythmic patterns around the drum kit.

Let's orchestrate the previous ideas. Notice the right hand accents are orchestrated on the floor tom and the left hand accents are orchestrated on the high tom.

Ex. 2B

Musical notation for Ex. 2B, showing a sequence of rhythmic patterns. The first three measures feature a steady quarter-note pulse with accents on the first and third notes of each measure. The fourth measure transitions to a triplet of eighth notes. The fifth measure returns to the quarter-note pulse. The final measure features a triplet of eighth notes with accents on the first and third notes. Below the staff, the rhythm is indicated by 'R' and 'L' characters: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L.

Ex. 3B

Musical notation for Ex. 3B, showing a sequence of rhythmic patterns. The first three measures feature a steady quarter-note pulse with accents on the first and third notes of each measure. The fourth measure transitions to a triplet of eighth notes. The fifth measure returns to the quarter-note pulse. The final measure features a triplet of eighth notes with accents on the first and third notes. Below the staff, the rhythm is indicated by 'R' and 'L' characters: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L.

Create

Now let's try to create our own phrases first by connecting the snare and orchestrated patterns together to make a 2 or 4-bar pattern. Remember to keep the feet going.

Ex. 2C

Ex. 2C musical notation: A 4-bar rhythmic exercise on a single staff. The first two bars contain a snare pattern (quarter notes with accents) and the last two bars contain an orchestrated pattern (eighths with accents). Both are grouped as triplets. Foot notation 'R L R L R L R L R L R L' is written below the staff.

Ex. 3C

Ex. 3C musical notation: A 4-bar rhythmic exercise on a single staff. The first two bars contain a snare pattern (quarter notes with accents) and the last two bars contain an orchestrated pattern (eighths with accents). Both are grouped as triplets. Foot notation 'R L R L R L R L R L R L' is written below the staff.

Let's connect pattern 2 and 3 together in a 2-bar pattern on the snare only.

Ex. 2D

Ex. 2D musical notation: A 4-bar rhythmic exercise on a single staff. The first two bars contain a snare pattern (quarter notes with accents) and the last two bars contain an orchestrated pattern (eighths with accents). Both are grouped as triplets. Foot notation 'R L R L R L R L R L R L' is written below the staff.

Orchestrate it.

Ex. 3D

Ex. 3D musical notation: A 4-bar rhythmic exercise on a single staff. The first two bars contain a snare pattern (quarter notes with accents) and the last two bars contain an orchestrated pattern (eighths with accents). Both are grouped as triplets. Foot notation 'R L R L R L R L R L R L' is written below the staff.

Reverse them both.

Ex. 4D

Ex. 4D musical notation: A 4-bar rhythmic exercise on a single staff. The first two bars contain a snare pattern (quarter notes with accents) and the last two bars contain an orchestrated pattern (eighths with accents). Both are grouped as triplets. Foot notation 'R L R L R L R L R L R L' is written below the staff.

Ex. 5D

Ex. 5D musical notation: A 4-bar rhythmic exercise on a single staff. The first two bars contain a snare pattern (quarter notes with accents) and the last two bars contain an orchestrated pattern (eighths with accents). Both are grouped as triplets. Foot notation 'R L R L R L R L R L R L' is written below the staff.

You can see that there are numerous ways to create fun and challenging patterns for yourself.

Now let's use these 2-bar patterns as transitions.

Begin by alternating 2 bars of swing time with 2 bars of the new pattern.

Ex. 2E

Musical notation for Example 2E. The first two bars show a swing pattern with accented triplets (marked with a '3' and an accent) on the snare drum. The next two bars show a triplet pattern with accented eighth notes (marked with a '3' and an accent) on the snare drum. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a double bar line at the end.

Ex. 3E

Musical notation for Example 3E. The first two bars show a swing pattern with accented triplets (marked with a '3' and an accent) on the snare drum. The next two bars show a triplet pattern with accented eighth notes (marked with a '3' and an accent) on the snare drum. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a double bar line at the end.

Now play 4 bars of swing time and play 4 bars using the snare ideas for 2 bars and orchestrating for 2 bars.

Ex. 4E

Musical notation for Example 4E. The first four bars show a swing pattern with accented triplets (marked with a '3' and an accent) on the snare drum. The next four bars show a triplet pattern with accented eighth notes (marked with a '3' and an accent) on the snare drum. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a double bar line at the end.

This is the common practice of trading 4's which happens quite often in a jazz performance. Making these transitions smooth and seamless will help the music flow and make the performance fun and more exciting for everyone.

I hope that you take this concept of "Imitate, Orchestrate and Create" and apply it many other ways including playing time and improvising. The possibilities are endless!

Check out some of my favorite drummers including Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, Billy Hart, Ed Thigpen, Jimmy Cobb, and Vernel Fournier, (just to name a few!) These great drummers are all masters at incorporating these types of accented triplet patterns. I encourage you to listen

to them and other great drummers on classic recordings, as you look for ways to increase your jazz drum vocabulary. Have fun and keep swingin'!

Keith Hall is a performer and educator having performed with Betty Carter, Sir Roland Hanna, Luciana Souza, Curtis Stigers, Steve Wilson among others, and his own band Tri-Fi. He is the jazz drum set professor at Western Michigan University and is the Director of the Keith Hall Summer Drum Intensive held in Kalamazoo, MI. For more info or questions please visit www.KeithHallMusic.com