

DRUMMERS COLLECTIVE SERIES

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# AFRO-CUBAN RHYTHMS FOR DRUMSET

By Frank Malabe  
and Bob Weiner



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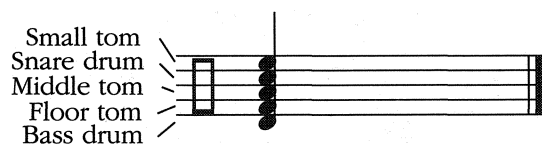
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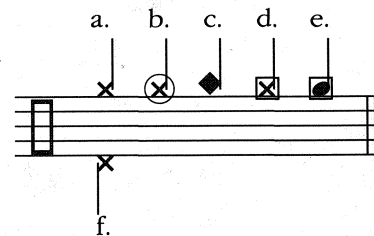
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## KEY



Ⓡ/Ⓛ = rim shot

- a. Cymbal or hi-hat with hand
- b. Ride cymbal bell
- c. Cowbell
- d. Side of floor tom
- e. Side of timbales
- f. Hi-hat with foot



All other information not in the key can be found before each exercise. Optional notes are indicated by parentheses ( ). Words appearing in **bold print** can be found in this book's Glossary.

# FOREWORD

*Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset*, by Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner, is an introduction to Afro-Cuban rhythms including the history, traditional instruments and basic styles of Afro-Cuban music. We explore the possibilities of adapting these rhythms to the drumset, an instrument which is not traditionally played in Afro-Cuban music. This book and cassette are part of a series that includes *Brazilian Rhythms for Drumset* and *New Orleans Rhythms for Drumset*. The material contained in all three books was developed over several years in a course called "Third World Rhythms for Drumset," which is taught at Drummers Collective in New York City.

**Frank Malabe** was born in New York City and began his professional playing career in the 1950's with the Angel Rene Orchestra. In the 1960's and '70's, Frank performed and recorded with top Latin bands and bandleaders, including Pete Terrace, Tito Puente, Louie Ramirez, La Plata and La Playa Sextets, Willie Colon, The Alegre All-Stars, Tito Rodriguez, Celia Cruz, Jon Lucien, Bill Watrus, Johnny Pacheco, and Larry Harlow. Frank has recently worked and recorded with Charlie Palmieri, Dave Valentin, and Bob Mintzer, as well as playing Afro-Cuban folkloric music with the group Patakin. In addition, Frank is an instructor at the Harbor Performing Arts Center and at Drummers Collective in New York, where he teaches conga and the creative possibilities of Afro-Cuban rhythms as applied to drumset. Frank has also given master classes at the Eastman School of Music, and in the town of Bahia in Brazil.

**Bob Weiner** has played many styles of music as a free-lance drummer, including folk, funk, fusion, jazz and big band, as well as African, Caribbean, Jewish and Middle Eastern music. Working with Harry Belafonte from 1981 to 1986, Bob gained experience and exposure playing traditional calypso, Brazilian, reggae, African, and gospel music. Bob has also worked with the popular South African singer Letta Mbulu, American jazz singer Dianne Reeves, and Caribbean singer Jon Lucien, as well as Hugh Masakela, Herbie Mann and The Andy Statman Klezmer Orchestra. Bob organized the "Third World Rhythms for Drumset" course at Drummers Collective in 1984.

The cassette tape is the focal point of this project. At first listen, try to get a feel for the instruments and rhythmic phrasing. An exercise number and introduction is given before each exercise on the tape. These *audio cues* correspond to the information in the gray boxes before each example in the book. You may want to write in specific tape cues corresponding to the counter on your cassette player in the major sections of the book (or before each exercise) to help you reference the tape quickly. Due to the large number of musical examples included on the tape, most of the exercises are not long enough to play along with. We felt that it was more important to provide as many examples as possible to introduce the many different rhythms and styles of Afro-Cuban music.

The topics covered in Sections 1 through 4 include the Afro-Cuban 6/8 feel, different clave patterns, palito, cascara, and bell patterns, all of which form the foundation of the rhythms that follow. Sections 5 through 9 cover the rhythms *guaguanco*, *conga*, *mozambique*, *songo* and *merengue*. The rhythms are played in their traditional form and then adapted to the drumset. Section 10 contains two patterns by Frank Malabe that are derived from various Afro-Cuban rhythms and arranged for two drumsets. The tape concludes with a medley of different rhythms from the book played on both conga and drumset. The first time through features clave, conga and drumset and the second time only conga and clave so that you can play drumset along with the tape. We suggest that you progress slowly through each section, carefully studying the material. There is a lot of information here and taking it step by step will prove worthwhile.

These rhythms are part of a living musical tradition. Seeing and hearing where they belong in the music is essential. Recordings can help tremendously; seeing live performance is even better. We've listed an extensive discography in the back of the book with suggested recordings in the different areas of Afro-Cuban folkloric and popular music. The introduction, bibliography and glossary will help explain this unique and rich musical tradition.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The musical examples on the tape were played by the following:

**Louis Bauzo** Tumbadora (conga drum), Bell, Shekere

**Frank Malabe** Tumbadora, Drumset, Bell

**Michael Spiro** Tumbadora, Shekere, Palito

**Bob Weiner** Drumset, Timbales, Bell, Clave

Recorded at Dessau Studios, N.Y.C. Engineered by Drew Vogelmann and David Sardi. Remixed by Doug Epstein.

We would like to express our gratitude to the following people for their invaluable help in preparing this book: Louis Bauzo and Ramon Rodriguez from the Harbor Performing Arts Center for their cooperation and help with the historical aspects of this book; Ken Gumbs and Dan Dawson from the Caribbean Cultural Center who provided us with many of the photographs; John Gray for compiling the bibliography; John Riley for his ideas and help with the musical transcriptions; Tony Martucci for giving the musical examples a "test run;" Rene Lopez, for help with the discography; Jacqui Russell, for editorial assistance and English-language "judgment calls;" Ellen Forney, who painstakingly typed and corrected the original manuscript; and a very special thanks to Rob Wallis and Paul Siegel for their support and funding of this project, allowing us to publish a book of this quality. Last, we would like to thank Jack Waltrip, Emily Moorefield, and Dan Thress for their commitment and dedication, without which this book would not have come to completion. The generous cooperation of all these people made *Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset* a reality.

### Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner

Frank Malabe would like to dedicate this book to Anthony, Yvette, and Rio.





Caribbean Cultural Center

## SECTION 1

### AFRO-CUBAN 6/8 FEEL—BEMBE, FOLKLORIC FEEL

Some of the fundamental rhythms in West Africa are based on 6/8 feels. In Cuba, one popular 6/8 feel is known as **bembe**, originating from the word *bembes*, which are religious gatherings that include drumming, singing and dancing.

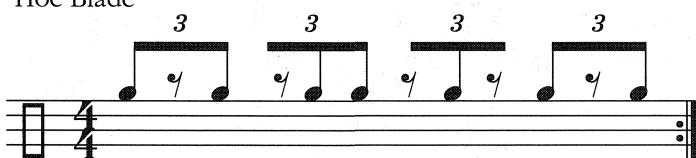
Let's listen to an example of the Afro-Cuban 6/8 feel played in a folkloric setting. This example is played on a *hoe blade*, *shekeres* (hollowed-out gourds with beads loosely wrapped

around them), and *conga drums* (tumbadoras). This feel, played in Cuba, is completely African in style and instrumentation. Similar rhythms are heard throughout West Africa, especially in Nigeria (the Yoruba tribes) where much of the African population in Cuba originated. You'll hear the entire feel, and then each instrument solo, to show how the individual parts interlock.

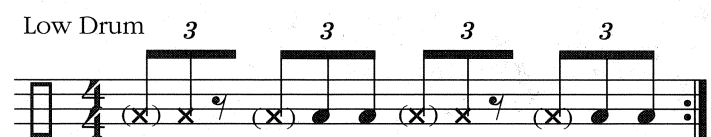
#### SECTION 1, Afro-Cuban 6/8 feel, Bembe (folkloric feel)



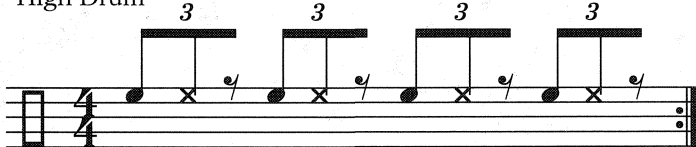
Hoe Blade



Low Drum

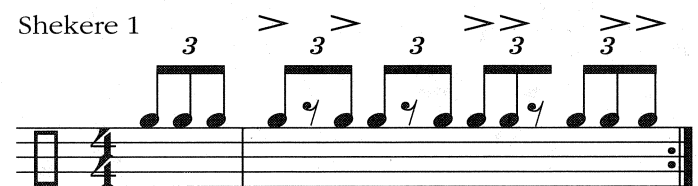


High Drum



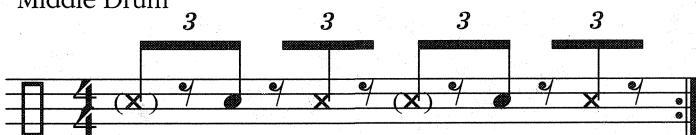
● = open tone      x = slap

Shekere 1



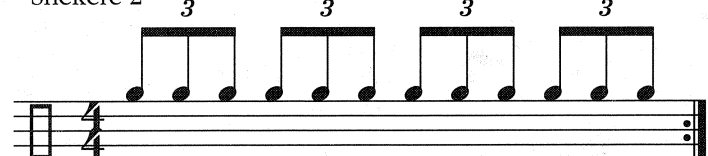
> = hitting the base of the shekere

Middle Drum



(x) = bass note with palm down on drum

Shekere 2



## 6/8 CLAVE PATTERN

It's essential to understand the importance of **clave** in Afro-Cuban music. Clave is a Spanish word meaning "key." The clave is the key to the rhythm being played, serving as a skeletal rhythmic figure around which the different drums and percussion instruments are played.

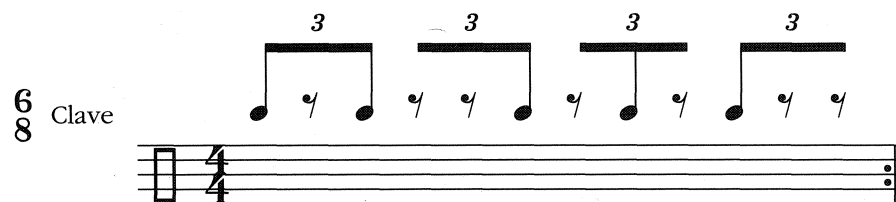
Any rhythmic figure can serve as a clave. We will be using what have become the most popular and important claves in African and Afro-Cuban music.

The clave rhythm is typically played on an instrument called **claves**, two round, solid pieces of wood which are struck one against the other. Clave figures can also be played by clapping your hands, hitting your drumsticks together, playing a cross stick on the snare drum or striking the side of the floor tom. Claves are used in Afro-Cuban folkloric and dance music, but are not usually played in Afro-Cuban 6/8 feels. We are playing the 6/8 clave only to show how it relates to the 6/8 cowbell pattern.

### Exercise 1 6/8 clave counted in 6/8 time

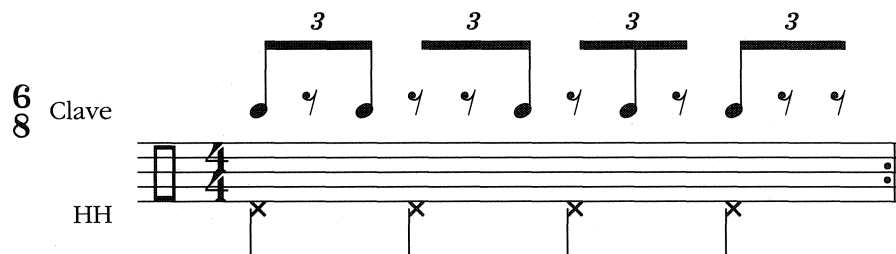


### Exercise 2 6/8 clave in 4/4 time, with triplets



Now play quarter-notes on the hi-hat with your foot along with the 6/8 clave figure, while counting eighth-note triplets.

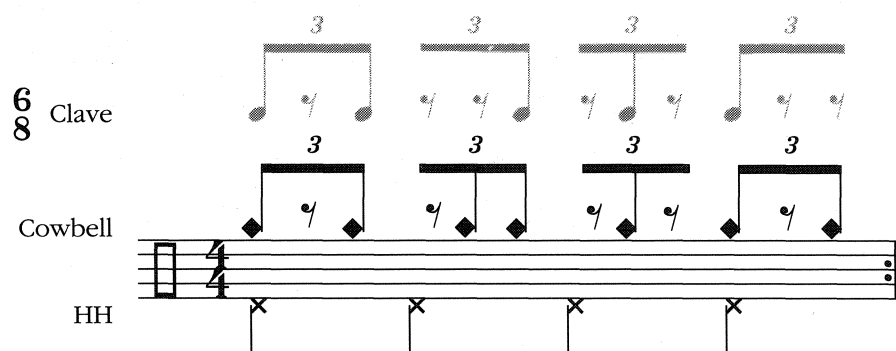
### Exercise 3 6/8 clave counted in 4/4 time, with hi-hat on quarter-notes



## 6/8 Cowbell pattern

The 6/8 cowbell pattern corresponding to the 6/8 clave sounds like this:

### Exercise 4 6/8 Cowbell pattern with hi-hat on quarter notes



Playing quarter notes on the hi-hat helps lock in the bell pattern. Notice that this pattern is actually the clave figure with pickup notes before the third note and the first note of the clave pattern.

Again, the clave is *not* traditionally played in 6/8, we're only showing how the 6/8 clave relates to the 6/8 cowbell pattern.