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About this Book

The idea of this book is to give an up-close view and comprehension of my application of the Brazilian rhythms on the drum set. I have developed these grooves during the 33 years of my career as a professional drummer, with 20 of those years playing with Brazilian legendary composer, singer, and guitar player João Bosco.

This book contains exercises to develop the independence in order to play the Brazilian styles with more confidence and comfort, allowing you to explore your own creativity.

It is my opinion that listening is the most important thing in music. Like any other language, we start listening to other people talking and then, little by little, we start developing our vocabulary to finally speak the language naturally, with fluence. It is very important to listen to the great masters of Brazilian music in order to “dive” deeply into the vast ocean of this music.

For me, music is a living energy and a deep form of communication. I am so grateful for being a musician, for all the great people I got to know through music, the many wonderful places I saw and all the light and energy music brings to my life. I feel so blessed to have been playing with and listening to so many wonderful musicians throughout my life, with whom I learned and still learn so much. I thank them all very deeply.

It is impossible to talk about Brazilian music without talking a lot about rhythm and about Africa. And, coming from a percussive root, all Afro/Brazilian styles have this aspect of conversation and “trust-each-other” feel between all the players—just like a tribe.

Since the 15th century, unfortunately, more than 15 million people were brought as slaves from Africa to the “New World” of America. More than 80 percent went to Brasil and the Caribbean Islands. Fifteen percent went to the Spanish colonies in Central and South America. Only 5 percent went to the United States. We can barely imagine the many different peoples, cultures, religions and languages (like Umbundo, Quimbundo, Quicongo, Ioruba, etc.) mixed up in the colonies. I believe rhythm and music comprised the little common ground for all the people coming from the distant Africa.

From this initial sadness, however, a very rich reality was born: Brasil is a big mix of music, colors, sounds, religions, rhythms, ethnicities, culture and language accents. Like the great poet Vinícius de Moraes said, “Samba is the sadness that swings.”



The Rhythmic Collective Unconscious

I really believe there is a common ground unifying the rhythms of many cultures, countries and continents. Invisible and unnamable rhythmic archetypes live inside the hearts of many different human beings and nations and are the responsible for the foundation of the many rhythms and music styles of the world.

Some old tribal beats resonate in our souls when we listen to Brazilian rhythms, a tribal beat from Angola, a drum solo by Elvin Jones, a tabla player playing in a Kirtan or the old Taiko drums from Japan. Some of these rhythms may perhaps receive a different name from their original source, and this name can vary from place to place (or even inside the same country; Brasil has continental dimensions, for example). But there is some mysterious pulse communicating through the rhythms, trying to tell us a story, trying to awaken inside our souls the old fires from ancient times.

Some of the rhythmic cells in this book can tell you a story, activate the old fire inside your heart and can, I hope, make you feel the joy of music and rhythm while you study and practice them. Have fun!

Kiko Freitas

Part 1: Samba Layers

I like to think about the Afro-Brazilian rhythms as “layers” of sounds that speak to each other, creating a rhythmic conversation. Music is a language, and it is very important to listen with attention before you start talking, just like we do when we start to learn a new language.

We basically have 3 layers of sounds in samba: the low layer, the middle layer and the high layer.

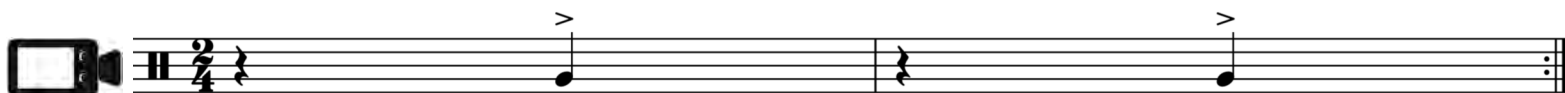
A) Low Layer: This layer of sounds is the responsible for the pulse of samba, giving the basic foundation of the time and groove. The low layer is formed by three surdos (instrument very similar to a floor tom): first surdo, second surdo and third surdo.

The *first surdo* is the lowest pitched instrument in samba. This instrument is responsible for playing the second beat of the 2/4 measure, the strongest part of the samba rhythm.

The *second surdo* is a little higher pitched than the first surdo and plays the first beat of the 2/4 measure of the samba rhythm.

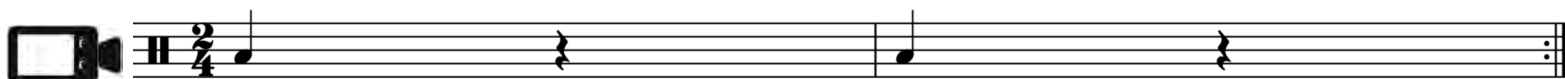
Here we have the first surdo:

Fig. 1



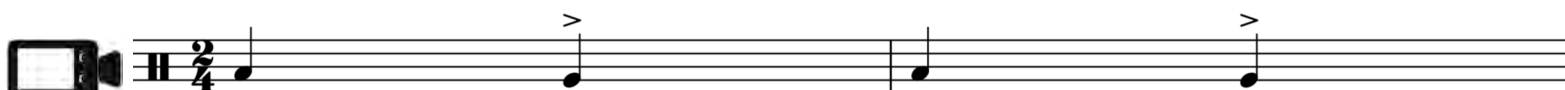
And here we have the second surdo:

Fig. 2



In the example below, we have the first and second surdos playing together:

Fig. 3



The third surdo is the smallest of the three surdos and it is also the highest pitched. This surdo plays figures between the two quarter notes played by the first surdo and second surdo. Each samba school has a different pattern to this instrument. The *third surdo* “cuts” between the first and second surdos, therefore it is also called the *cutting surdo*.

Part 2: Independence Applied to Samba-Using Tamborim Drives

After you feel comfortable playing the tamborim pattern while you sing the four sixteenth notes individually, all the written combinations (Fig. 18) and the bass drum patterns (Fig. 19), it is time to combine all this percussive voices in a samba groove. In the next example, I will combine the tamborim (played on the hi-hat) with one of the snare drum combinations plus one of the bass drum patterns.

Fig. 22 – Tamborim + Snare Drum **a**

Fig. 23 – Tamborim + Snare Drum **b**

Fig. 24 – Tamborim + Snare Drum **a** + Bass Drum **b**

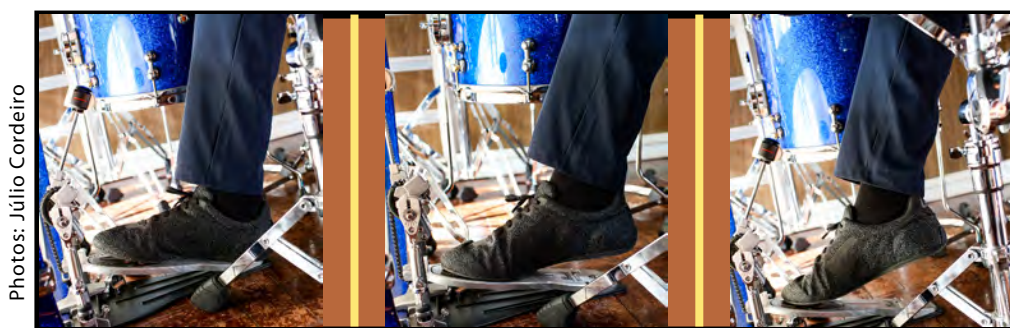
Fig. 25 – Tamborim + Snare Drum **b** + Bass Drum **a**

Fig. 26 – Tamborim + Snare Drum **h** + Bass Drum **d**

Fig. 27 – Tamborim + Snare Drum **c** + Bass Drum **c**

Part 3: Left Foot Independence

Here are some examples of how to develop independence for the left foot on the hi-hat. A good idea is to play (and first sing) the tamborim pattern (here played on the cowbell) while you play each one of the sixteenth notes with the left foot independently.



The following examples are to be played with the left foot (right foot if you are lefthanded) using the hi-hat or a cowbell played with a pedal. The idea is to have more freedom to develop your creativity and fluidity when you play the grooves.

Fig. 33

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)