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Introduction

Welcome to *The New Method for Afro-Cuban Drumming*. In this book I've put together examples of my style of playing drum set. You'll find that there are not many names or styles mentioned (i.e., songo, timba, mambo). This book and my playing represent a fusion of all these styles. Every example you will read and listen to (all exercises are recorded) is taken from my little box of experiences which I brought from Cuba.

Here in the United States I have been exposed to many musical concepts. I find myself playing a bit differently from when I first arrived, inspired by being in the United States, and learning so much from the musicians with whom I've performed. This is what I will share with you as well.

My concept came primarily from listening to jazz. Jazz has helped me to think more musically. *The New Method for Afro-Cuban Drumming* is for all drummers who do not necessarily want to learn the authentic way of Cuban-style drumming but more a fusion of these styles. Please remember that this is only my way of playing. There are many other drummers, Cubans and non-Cubans, who play these styles amazingly. Each one has a particular voice and concept. I hope that my style and concepts help to answer some of your questions.

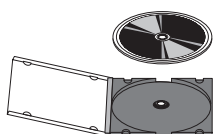
Clave is a word and concept that most drummers, I find, take too seriously. That being said, you as the drummer are responsible for this element. It can be musically and rhythmically dangerous if you don't interpret the clave in the right way. What is the right way? You can answer this question yourself if you listen to music and dedicate some time to analyzing the styles of Cuban music. Then you'll be more likely to understand the clave and its role. But, don't take it too personally or too seriously. Sometimes it's the people you're playing with who will direct where the clave is going to be. Many times you will share the stage with musicians who don't know the style as well as you do. Then it is your responsibility to make them sound good. If you don't feel the clave in the right place, don't force it. The Cuban clave is very strong and it can be as beautiful as it can be ugly if not interpreted and played the right way. The *cáscara* pattern can sometimes do the job of the clave rhythm by itself (without the need to state the clave), and this can be further helped by adding some of the bass drum examples presented in Chapter 3. All of these examples will work perfectly with almost any bass or piano tumbáo.

In this book you will hear the clave change from son to rumba. This has been done to emphasize the musical fact that the rhythmic patterns work well with both claves.

Example 58 in the book is a combination of bass drum patterns that fit with the clave. You can use this example in many different ways. Practice all of the examples in a variety of ways. Play them "as is," play them as two-bar phrases, read them from the end to the beginning, and make up your own combinations and phrases. Make sure you play musically when you are performing these patterns.

The concept of *The New Method for Afro-Cuban Drumming* is to help you modernize Afro-Cuban styles and fuse them into your own style. Within this book you may find patterns you recognize and others that you do not. Don't worry about names. Just learn the examples and add them to your own concept of playing drums.

Audio Examples



Throughout this book, you will find an icon similar to what you see here located next to notation examples. To listen to the audio example, simply click the icon or notation, and playback will begin! Its just that simple!

Words of Advice

The best advice I can give to all drummers and percussionists who really want to learn these styles is to listen to the music carefully. Don't just listen to the drums. Listen to every single detail of every instrument. This is the best way to understand the concept of communication between instruments. Second, listen to as much music as you can, from Latin-jazz and straight ahead jazz, to salsa, son, and timba. These styles have been played for years by great musicians from all around the world.

I hope this book will help you in some way. There are many more ideas that can be added to these examples. Just be creative, musical, and always respect the language and authenticity of all musical styles.

Respectfully,
Jimmy Branly

Technique Tips

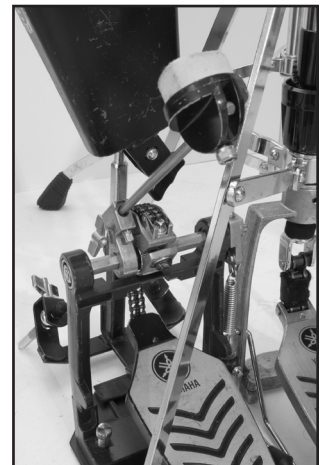
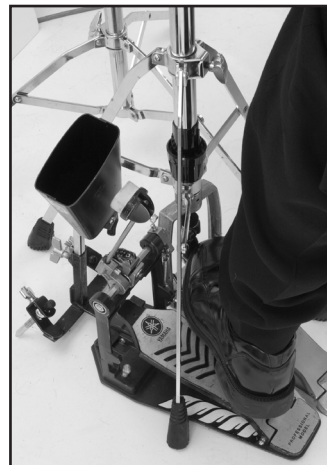


These pictures show a technique used by many timbaleros that can also be applied to the drum set. Pressing the index finger onto the stick as you strike the head muffles

the drum sound. The same technique can be applied to the shell of the floor tom or the cowbell.

Here is how I play the cowbell with the pedal when I want both the sound of the bell and the hi-hat. Notice that I slide the heel of the foot to the left in order to play the cowbell.

This picture shows what you can do to any pedal that you are using to play the cowbell next to the hi-hat. Take the beater on the right side of the sprocket and move it to the left side of the sprocket, this will allow the beater motion to move freely, without being hindered by the leg of the hi-hat stand.



Notation Key

R.H. on Hi-Hat L.H. on Hi-Hat (except where notated) Ride Crash

Open Hi-Hat Mambo Bell Cha Cha Bell Hi Tom Floor Tom

Snare Ghost Note Rim Shot Bass Drum

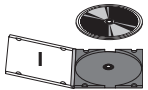
Cha Cha Bell with Left Foot Shell of Floor Tom Hi Hat Clicks with Left Foot Open tone on the Snare Drum (snare off)



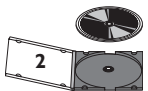
Chapter 1

The Clave

In order to understand how all of the examples presented in this book relate to Afro-Cuban drumming, we will start with the clave. The clave is a binary rhythmic pattern that serves as a foundation for the polyrhythms that are played over it. In this two-bar pattern there is one measure of three beats (known as the 3 side), and one measure of two beats (known as the 2 side). The clave can start on either side as shown in these two examples of son clave.



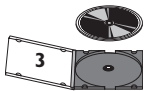
1. 3-2 Son Clave



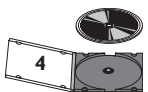
2. 2-3 Son Clave



These next two variations of the clave are called rumba clave. In rumba clave there is a beat displacement of an eighth-note on the 3rd beat of the 3 side.



3. 3-2 Rumba Clave




4. 2-3 Rumba Clave

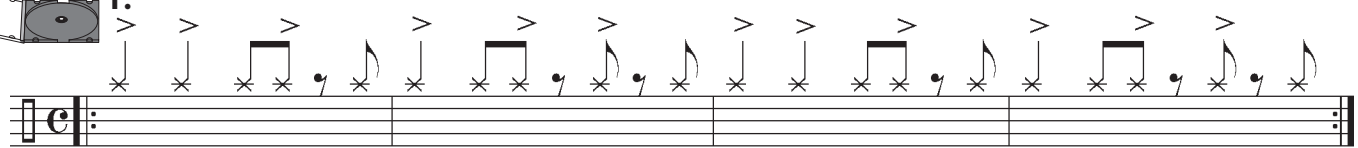



Chapter 2

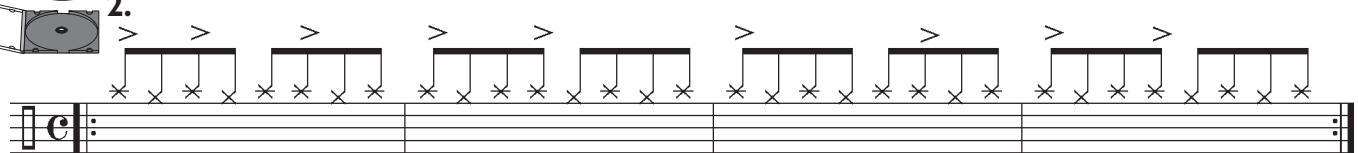
The Cáscara


Now that we have an understanding of how the clave sounds, let's add the cáscara rhythm over it. *Cáscara* literally means "shell" as it refers to the shells of the timbale drums. More important, it is the syncopated rhythmic pattern played by the timbalero. When playing the cáscara pattern on the drum set, the closed hi-hat is used as a substitute for the shell sound (although the shell of the floor tom can be used as well). In Afro-Cuban music the cáscara is usually played during the verses and piano solos as it precedes the bell pattern played during the *coros* (chorus sections). These next examples demonstrate some grooves utilizing cáscara in 2-3 clave. The clave overdubs are two cycles of son clave followed by two cycles of rumba clave.

5  1.



6  2.



7  3.

