

CHAPTER 2

4/4 RHYTHMS

AUTHENTIC DJEMBE RHYTHMS/SONGS

FANGA

Fanga is the name of a song, dance, and rhythm... as are all of these Djembe rhythms. It is from Nigeria and was taught here in the USA by Babatunde Olatunji. Babatunde Olatunji was really responsible for the USA being exposed to West African music back in the late 1960's- early 1970's.

There is a certain dance for each different rhythm, and a different song. Sometimes the same Djembe rhythm is used and a different song is sung. Fanga is a welcoming song... a song sung to guests before sharing a meal with them. It is also a blessing song. "Fanga... Alafia... Ashay, Ashay". Alafia means peace, and Ashay means spirit. It is one of the most common Djembe rhythms you will hear in the USA,

I think because it's catchy and fairly easy. Check out the notation for the Djembe parts in Fanga.



Here are the words to Fanga.

- A { Fanga ... Alafia... Ashay, Ashay;
Fanga ... Alafia... Ashay Ashay.
- B { Ashay, Ashay ... Ashay, Ashay;
Ashay, Ashay... Ashay, Ashay.

Here is the melody notation for Fanga.

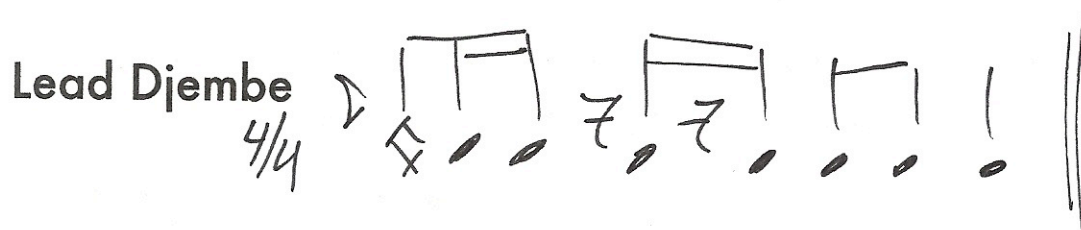
MELODY NOTATION

A

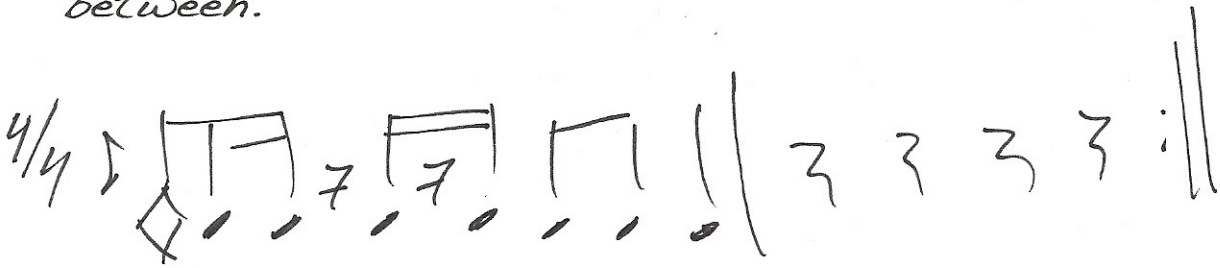
B

Here are some exercises that will help you in playing Fanga. First, learn each part and memorize. If you are working in a group, have everyone play in unison. Play the first part a multiple of 4... I suggest at first 8 or 16 times. Then go directly on to the next part. Do this cycle through the Djembe parts in unison several times, the more the better. I remember once Joe Morello, famous jazz drummer/teacher ... Dave Brubeck Take Five Solo ... said "If you don't know it, you haven't played it enough". So simple, but true. Next, split the Djembe parts up, I suggest at first 2 or more on each part. Now go through 8 times and switch to the next part. This will prove harder than you might think because you can be distracted by the other parts being played.

This is an important lesson in music. Paying attention to your own part but having your ears open to the other parts being played is so important in playing together. Then try a trio with one player on each part. Remember play a multiple of 8, not a random amount of times. Most music, even West African music, has a symmetry to it and multiples of 4 or 8 are extremely common. Okay... let's look at the next aspect of Djembe ensemble... the 'call'. The call is a rhythm played by the lead drummer. It is a signal that cues starting, stopping, and also dance changes. Each song has it's own specific call. Check out the call on the next page.



This 'call' is used in many different 4/4 rhythms.
Let's practice the call, with a measure rest in
between.



Now let's have a volunteer to be the lead drummer.
Play the call and the rest of the group come in
with designated parts. Here are some suggestions.
First, have everyone play in unison, starting with the
first part, playing until the lead drummer plays the
call again. Then, go on to the next part. Remember
it's not only about our hands but also includes our
minds. These exercises will make us think and pay
attention. Next, have $\frac{1}{2}$ the class play the 1st part,
and the other $\frac{1}{2}$ play the 2nd. Play for while and
have the lead drummer play the call and switch
parts. If there are 3 parts, split the class so that
a $\frac{1}{3}$ plays the 1st part, a $\frac{1}{3}$ plays the 2nd part, and

a 1/3 plays the 3rd part. Also remember these are exercises designed to improve your playing of the rhythms. When traditionally played the groups members know what part to play. Next let's all play the call, and play the first Djembe part again. Play 5 to 10 minutes and then play call and go to 2nd part. repeat and do 3rd part.

Now you should really be feeling it physically !
Let's look at the next aspect of Djembe ensemble... the Doun Doun... the bass drums of the Djembe ensemble. Here are the Doun Doun parts for Fanga.

4/4 Bell

Down

In The Gambia Doun Douns are played typically by one player playing 2-3 drums and a bell part. The drums are played with one hand, and the bell is played with the other. This can provide some great opportunities for coordination and independence. In

Guinea each player plays one drum, and also a bell part. There are basically 2 styles of Djembe and we will focus on what I have learned which is 'village style'.

You may wonder how we know when to stop! The lead drummer, at the end of the dance will play a repetitive roll which will catch the attention of the group. See page 46 for more on the 'roll'. Then the lead drummer will play the call... and the next 'beat one' everyone will play... and that's the end. However, groups will organize these rhythms/songs with their own twists and turns and not every group plays exactly the same song form. Once again... roll... then call... then end on 'one'. Okay we are now really sinking our teeth into Djembe music. Let's look at another great exercise that will help us in further understanding West African rhythm.

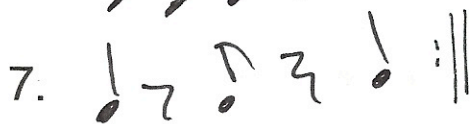
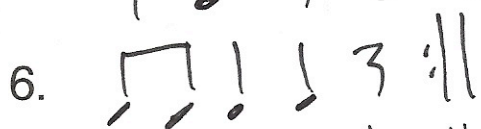
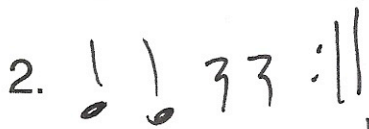
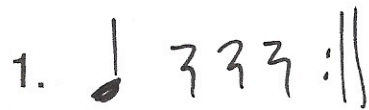
BASIC POLYRHYTHMS/ COORDINATION

Okay, so we've got our hands going and we are building our comfortability and endurance by doing the previous exercises on a regular basis. Now let's get the whole body involved.

WALK THE PULSE

Let's take a gentle manageable pulse and start walking in place. First... in 4/4 time. Count 'one' two' three' four' with the steps and keep starting back at 'one'. Now let's add the hands, clapping some rhythms. After mastering these basic rhythms, try adding the voice. Then try creating some of your own. Remember, repetition, repetition, repetition!

CLAP



MORE POLYRHYTHM/ COORDINATION EXERCISES

1. 11.

2. 12.

3. 13.

4. 14.

5. 15.

6. 16.

7. 17.

8. 18.

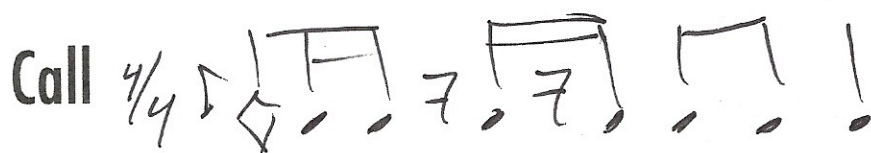
9. 19.

10. 20.

CHAPTER 3

KUKU

Our next rhythm/song/dance is Kuku. Like Fanga it is a very popular rhythm played in the USA. Kuku was originally a circle dance for the women, celebrating the return from fishing. It is also known as a harvest rhythm. Now it is played at many different occasions. The call is the same as Fanga.



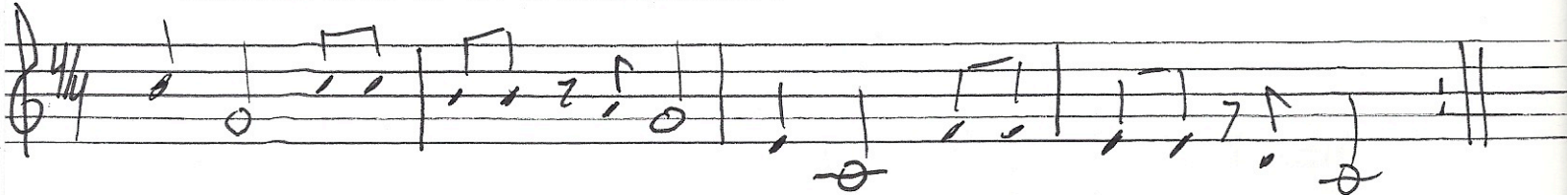
As in many of these songs/rhythms, there are different words depending on what region of West Africa it is sung. Here is one simple version.

Oh iya ! i tu Kuku fon yeh

Oh yes ! Play the Kuku for me.

Here is the melody notation for Kuku.

MELODY NOTATION

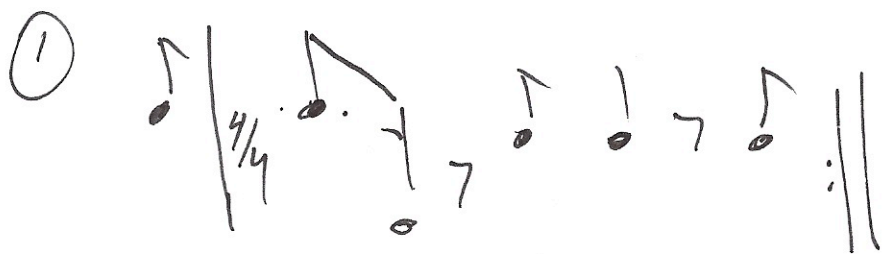


Now for the Doun Doun. Here are 2 parts.

*Note. Depending on where you study and whom you study with, parts to the Djembe and Doun Doun rhythms can vary. It is not uncommon to hear "This is the 2nd part to Fanga !" "No.... this is the 2nd part of Fanga." Once again different regions have

different parts to these rhythms. Some Djembe players feel very strongly about what is the 'correct' part. I find it's best to always preface a song/ rhythm with " This is the way Famadou Konate taught me Fanga" or "This is Amadou Joof's version of Kuku. This can eliminate any arguments on whether the Djembe part is 'correct.' There are some real purists out there, and yet some have never even been to West Africa! Always take 'this is the only right part' with a 'grain of salt.'


KUKU DOUN DOUN PARTS

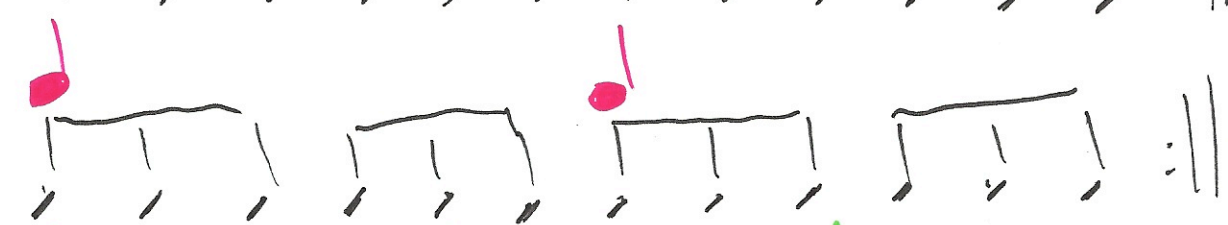


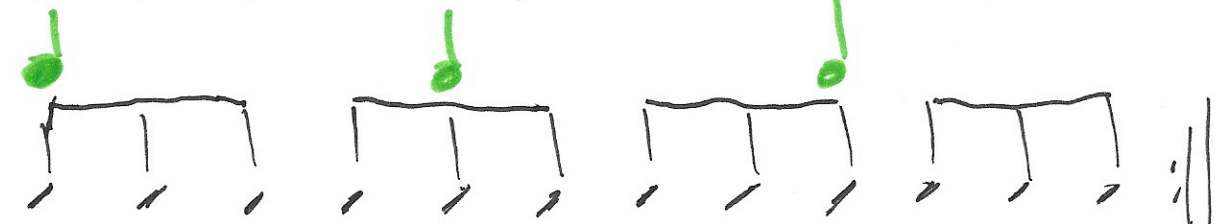
MORE POLY RHYTHMIC EXERCISES

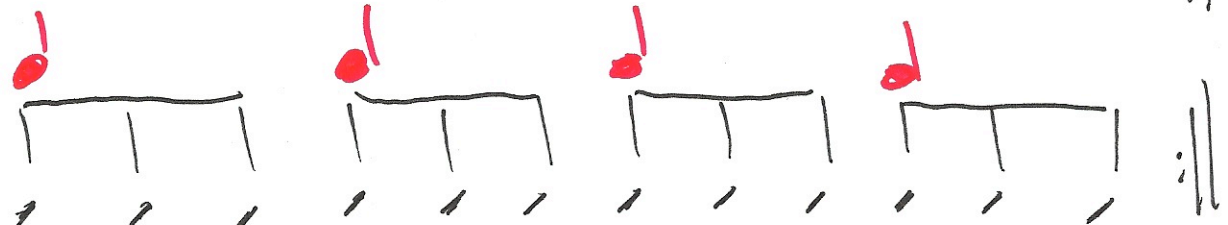
Here is a great practical exercise for learning and feeling all the possible pulses in 12/8. Sometimes 2 of the pulses will be so strong that we can even consider a song having 2 pulses, most commonly 3 against 4, or 2 against 3. West African music uses polyrhythms much more than our music. Also practice going from different combinations to further improve your feel and understanding of how these pulses are connected; and how they can make the music more than one dimensional. In the notation we will start at 1 ... playing just the 1st note. Then we will play 2 ... playing on beats 1 & 3. Then 3 ... playing on one, 2nd partial of 2, and 3rd partial of 3. Then 4 ... which is the primary pulse... beats 1,2,3,4. Now finally 6... 1st and 3rd partial of 1 and 3, 2nd partial of 2 and 4. Okay... let's try it!

12/8 PULSE/SECONDARY PULSE EXERCISES

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 