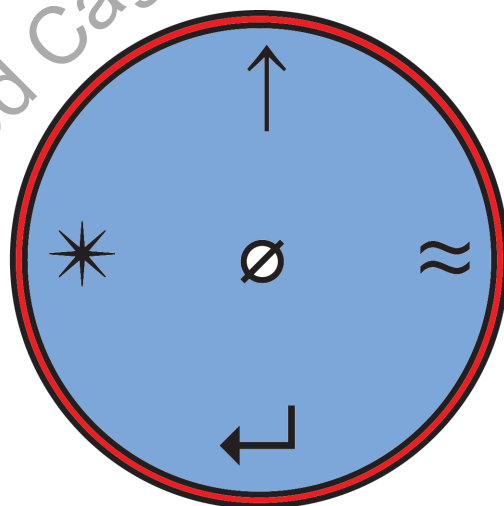




ONE BY ONE

Exercises for Rhythmic Development

JARROD CAGWIN



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Preface

The concepts discussed in this book are designed to give any performer or composer, regardless of musical background, a further insight into the world of rhythm. The methods I teach have evolved from diverse studies of various cultures and the rhythmic structures in their music, however, the principal foundation which I will build upon will be the rhythmic system from South India. The classical music of South India, known as *Carnatic* music, is built upon a logical rhythmic structure that has advanced for well over two thousand years. The material I present in this book is by no means a treatise on Indian music; however, I use the rhythmic training as a method that can be applied to virtually any music with a rhythmic base. The primary component of this method is the utilization of a phonetic rhythmic solfege, known as *Solkattu*. *Solkattu* consists of various syllables that traditionally represent the sounds produced on the *Mridangam*, the chief classical drum in *Carnatic* music. These syllables, when recited in certain combinations, represent numeric rhythmic phrases which can develop into quite complex rhythmic dialogues. With practice these syllables can be easily and precisely articulated, which in turn integrates a more precise consciousness of rhythm within ones' musical mind. I have adapted a method of using hand, arm, diaphragm, and overall balance control to aid in learning the correct rhythmic inflection of the *Solkattu*. This is entirely my method, one which I developed over years of study and teaching.

There exist many *languages* of rhythm in the world. However I find the system using *Solkattu* to be a good basis for training and interpreting rhythms from any culture, from Western classical music to the intense polyrhythmic structures found in Africa. With this book, my aim is to introduce my method of using this system so one can train and develop a deeper concept of rhythm.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my colleagues of the *Ensemble Modern* and to Christiane Engelbrecht and Michael Kasper at the *International Ensemble Modern Academy*. Very special thanks to my good friends Rumi Ogawa and Rainer Römer, whose friendship and influence is unexampled.

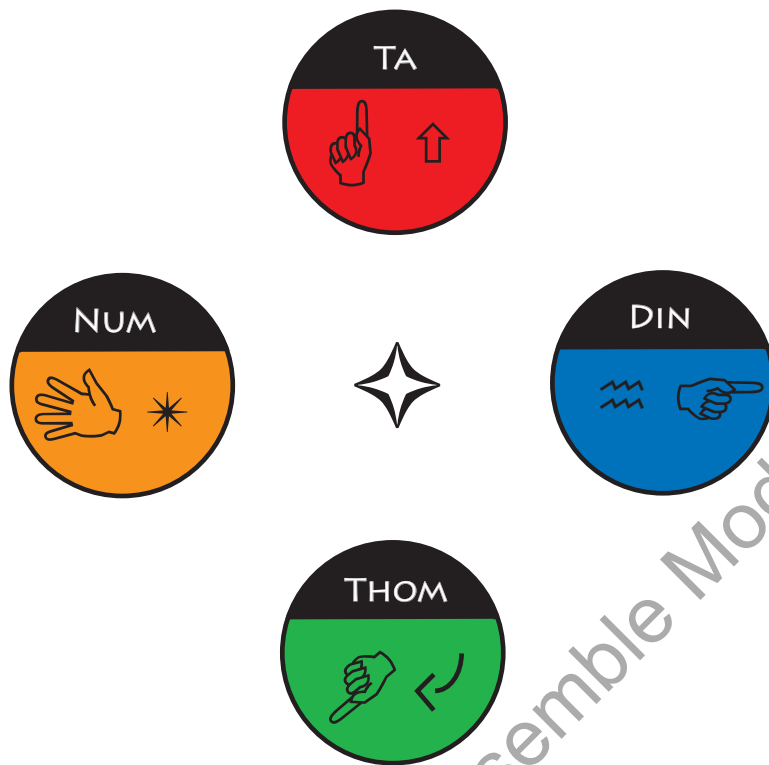
To my instrument maker Norbert Eckermann: words can not say enough to express my gratitude.

Jarrold Cagwin, 2009

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SOLKATTU FAMILY



The *Solkattu Family* is comprised of four principal sounds: *TA*, *DIN*, *THOM*, *NUM*, and their corresponding variations. In order to produce the sounds and create a flowing body rhythm each of these four syllables are connected with a breathing and diaphragm control technique. The *TA* group contains short staccato sounds that are produced by constricting the diaphragm and projecting the syllables upwards through the body. The *DIN* group, pronounced “D-E-E-N”, has sounds project forward from the center of the body and that create more vocal chord resonance. *THOM* sounds, pronounced like “D-O-O-M”, are low guttural sounds that pass through the abdomen and are directed down and to one side. Consider the *TA* group as “call” sounds, short and directed upwards, and the *THOM* group as “response” sounds, abdominal sounds being directed down, to the side, and behind. With these two principal sounds, a basic up / down motion can be felt in the body. *DIN* is a very expressive sound with more tonal and legato qualities. *DIN* can be considered the bridge between *TA* and *THOM*. It can be a passive sound, or an aggressive legato extension of *TA*. The combination of *TA DI THOM* creates a controlled flow of the breath and a reflexive rhythm with the diaphragm. The final of the four principal syllables is *NUM*, pronounced “N-A-H-M”. It is an aggressive sound executed with the same diaphragm constriction as *TA*, however, the sound is projected outward from the body like a star burst; meaning that the sound and body energy should “radiate” outwards in all directions.

The execution of these sounds, along with the hand / arm directions, are further explained on the following pages.

SOLKATTU HAND DIRECTIONS

POSTURE

It is important to maintain good posture when practicing and performing; this will aid in maximizing oxygen intake and will keep the diaphragm in optimum condition. When seated, keep the feet flat on the floor with the legs neither too close together nor too far apart. Keep the back straight and the shoulders square and balanced. Imagine two axis going through the body, vertically and horizontally, that cross in the center of the breastbone. Approximately three centimeters below the breastbone is the central focal point of the diaphragm, and the Start / Return point for the hand movements. Take some minutes to stretch the lungs and the diaphragm by taking long, deep breaths with complete exhalation.



START / RETURN (S/R) POSITION ∅

This is the resting position of the directing hand (can be the right or left hand). It is from this position that all of the *Solkattu* gestures originate. It is also the return position and the center of balance. The arm is raised laterally without raising the shoulders with the hand position approximately two centimeters from the body. It is important to imagine a line extending from the elbow through the wrist and out through the fingers as if the entire forearm were a bow for a cello or contrabass. The hand and fingers need not be stiff with tension, however, the wrist should not bend.



Ta ↑

From the S/R position, imagine the front side of the hand quickly rotating 180° around an axis at the elbow so that the palm of the hand gets flipped up and the back of the hand is parallel to the ground. At the same time the diaphragm is contracted, forcing the air out of the lungs. The distance from the diaphragm to the top of the head feels to stretch slightly upwards. The syllable *Ta* is at the same time recited. It is important to keep the diaphragm constricted and the breath halted at the end of the sound. The feeling should be that the sound is springing up and out of the body along the vertical line that extends above the head. After the sound is produced, relax the diaphragm and return to the S/R position.



DIN ≈

From the S/R position the abdomen is expanded while exhaling and the diaphragm is relaxed. The hand and arm extend forwards in straight line as if being pushed by the abdomen. Simultaneously the syllable *Din* is said with a long tone following the direction of the hand. The vibration of the vocal chords should clearly be felt in the middle of the breastbone. The balance of the body shifts slightly forward, thereafter returning to the S/R position. The diagram shows the motion of the hand (red lines) and the origin and follow through of the sound (blue lines).



THOM ↵

From the S/R position the arm drops down and to the side, without dropping the shoulders. The wrist line touches the naval. This should cause the balance of the body to shift slightly to one side. The diaphragm relaxes, the lungs exhale, and the syllable *Thom* is simultaneously recited. The direction of the sound should appear to move from the abdomen through and the behind the body. Do not twist the torso or lean with the shoulders to the side. The balance moves from the abdomen.



NUM ✨

From the S/R position the same rotation of the arm and hand as in the first movement of *Ta* is executed. The arm rotates again around a 180° axis. The diaphragm contracts, and the air in the lungs is forced out. Contrary to the *Ta* movement, the hand is strengthened with maximum tension extending through each finger. The palm is directly over the central focal point, and it should feel as if a burst of energy is coming out of the fingers in all directions. Simultaneously the syllable *Num* is recited.



PRELIMINARY EXERCISES: TA DIN THOM NUM

The style of notation I use to explain some exercises is in *Solkattu* script notation. This is a simple way to write the syllables and see the underlying pulse. It is advisable to use a metronome to ensure accuracy with the tempo.

Each “_____” represents one pulse, or one click on the metronome. Each click synchronizes with the beginning of each line. For example, if the metronome is set with one click at 40 beats per minute ($\text{♩} = 40$), then every “_____” represents one pulse. The syllables / subdivisions of the pulse are contained from one pulse (underline) to the next.

Ex.1: $\text{♩} = 40$ * Ta Ta Ta Ta
 ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Ex. 2: $\text{♩} = 40$ Ta Ta Ta Ta Ta Ta Ta Ta
 ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

In Ex. 1, there is only one syllable per underline, precisely on every click of the metronome. In Ex. 2, there are two syllables per underline, equally spaced between each click of the metronome. In musical notation, Ex. 1 would be the equivalent of quarter notes and Ex. 2 eighth notes.

* The symbols under the syllables correspond to the hand movements and function only as a visual reminder.

Ta = ↑ Din = ≈ Thom = ← Num = *

$\text{♩} = 40$ (maximum)

① ||: Ta (repeat 8x), Din (8x), Thom (8x), Num (8x) :||
 ↑ ≈ ← *
 (4x) (4x) (4x) (4x) :
 (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) :
 (1x) (1x) (1x) (1x) :

② ||: Ta Ta (8x), Din Din (8x), Thom Thom (8x), Num Num (8x) :||
 ↑ ↑ ≈ ← ← * *

Continue with the same form: 4 repeats, 2 repeats, no repeats

③ ||: Ta Ta Ta (8x), Din Din Din (8x), Thom Thom Thom (8x), Num Num Num (8x) :||
 ↑ ↑ ↑ ≈ ≈ ≈ ← ← ← * * *

Continue with the same form: 4 repeats, 2 repeats, no repeats

④ ||: TaTaTaTa, DinDinDinDin, ThomThomThomThom, NumNumNumNum :||
 ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ≈ ≈ ≈ ≈ ← ← ← ← * * * *

Continue with the same form: 8 repeats, 4 repeats, 2 repeats, no repeats