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CHAPTER ONE

RHYTHM

In this chapter let's learn to play and recognize standard rhythmic groupings. Jazz rhythms are typically combinations of eight notes and rests. Now that last statement is a gross understatement, but we gotta start somewhere, and jazz is basically an eight note groove.

The first set of examples in this chapter are based on eight subdivisions. We will read both notes and rests. All notes are placed on the D pitch in bass clef. This was done to isolate the rhythm without having to worry about pitches. We are doing rhythm training, and rhythm pattern recognition. All good reading is simply a matter of recognition and execution.

The tempos are listed at a rate where the rhythms are comfortable to play. The tempos are also slow enough to easily count the subdivisions - 1+2+3+4+. Counting is vital to learning to read well. Actually, counting is easy by itself. The challenge is counting and playing at the same time. You may need to slow down the tempo quite a bit to practice counting and playing together. It's just like learning to pat your head while rubbing your tummy. Count out LOUD! Don't be afraid, and don't think counting is dumb or childish. Count! "One and Two and Three and Four and One and Two and Three and Four and...."

The most difficult things to play in music are the rests. In reading, this is doubly difficult. By the way, long notes are the same as rests; we are not moving. This is where the counting is so important. In my teaching, I constantly illustrate this by having students play a piece in which they make mistakes. Often they make those "dumb" mistakes, the simple stuff. I tell all my students, "If you make a mistake, the material is not so dumb and simple." I then have them play it again with me counting loudly. It is shocking how many fewer mistakes they make when I am counting 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +. Then I have them count out loud while I play the piece. This seems to help them appreciate the need to count while they are reading music.

Feel free to write the counting numbers and the "ands" over the music. I did this for years in my reading, and it helped tremendously. I still do this if I am reading, and I step in a hole a couple of times.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first staff starts with a '1' below the first measure. The notes are on the D line (F2). The first measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The second measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note. The third measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The fourth measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Above the third measure is the counting '3 + 4 +' and above the fourth measure is a circled '3'. The second staff starts with a '5' below the first measure. The first measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The second measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note. The third measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The fourth measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Above the second measure is the counting '2 +', above the third measure is '3 + 4 +' with an accent (>) over the third note, and above the fourth measure is '2 +' with an accent (>) over the first note.

EXAMPLE 4

$\text{♩} = 50$

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

1

5

9

13

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

17

21

25

RHYTHM ETUDES

Music, like all languages, has patterns and phrasing. Jazz rhythms are very definitive in their organization. Certain one-measure rhythmic patterns seem to want to be followed by specific one-measure rhythms. This quite often creates call-and-response phrasing. This is one of the characteristics that makes jazz swing.

Good rhythmic phrasing can be heard and felt on numerous levels. As you play these etudes, feel the phrasing. When the phrasing is right, you can often anticipate the upcoming rhythm. Play the following etudes in time, with the metronome, from beginning to end, non-stop. COUNT!

EXAMPLE 21

$\text{♩} = 60$

1

5

9

EXAMPLE 22

$\text{♩} = 60$

1

5

9

EXAMPLE 50

$\text{♩} = 54$

1

5

EXAMPLE 51

$\text{♩} = 54$

1

5

EXAMPLE 52

$\text{♩} = 54$

1

5

EXAMPLE 82

BOSSA NOVA

♩ = 116

1

5

9

13

17

D.C. AL CODA

21

25

29

EXAMPLE 104

$\text{♩} = 50$

1

5

EXAMPLE 105

$\text{♩} = 50$

D⁻⁷ G⁷ C Maj⁷ C^{#-7} F^{#7} B⁻⁷ E⁷ A Maj⁷

1

F^{#-7} B⁷ E Maj⁷ F⁻⁷ B^{b7} E^b Maj⁷ E⁻⁷ A⁷

5

EXAMPLE 106

$\text{♩} = 60$

1

5

9