

ESTA Stockholm – Sept 30, 2022

Strings as a Rhythm Section – How to Accompany in Jazz, Rock etc.

- Handout -

In jazz, the „rhythm section“ refers to the instruments playing accompaniment throughout: Drums, bass, piano and guitar. Usually, they follow a sequence of chords that make up the tune.

You can use your string instrument not only to play improvised solos or melody, but also to accompany other instruments or singers, playing different roles or functions of the rhythm section:

- Bass role: mainly the root notes of the chords, often on the heavy beats (violinists can do this, too!)
- Percussive role: percussion, percussive sounds, rhythmic notes and chords
- Chord function: Chord notes (3, 5, 7, 9 etc of the chords), double stops and larger chords

You can also mix these different roles, playing all three at once.

Inventing Accompaniment (preplanned or improvised):

- Play basslines:
- Basic bass (root note of the chord)
 - Alternating bass (root & 5 of chord)
 - Walking bass (only in swing feel)
 - Bossa/samba figures, etc.
 - Riffs or hooks: short melodic patterns („Stand By Me“, etc.)
- Play percussive elements:
- Play percussion on the string instrument
 - Add chops (arco), slaps (pizz), other dead notes or percussion
 - Imitate drum patterns using low & high strings for different drums
- Play any rhythm pattern:
(pizz or arco)
- As bass: on root note of the chord (choose style & pattern)
 - Alternating root and other notes, changing back & forth
 - On chord notes (arpeggios or chords)
 - On double stops on root and 5 („power chords“ = rock styles)
 - On double stops of chord notes (1, 3 5 or 7, etc.)
- Some playing techniques:
- pizz: Walking bass pizz
 - Bossa/samba bass pizz
 - Strumming
 - Finger picking
 - Bossa Nova pizz (chords & bass in polyrhythmic patterns)
 - Dead notes
 - arco: Chopping
 - Groovebowing
 - Rhythmic string changes
 - Dead notes
 - ...etc.

Imitate all kinds of styles (jazz, rock, soul, funk, brazilian, cuban, bulgarian, flamenco...)

Imitate all kinds of instruments (bass, guitar, percussion...)

Next level: Try thinking in 2 voices - play a simple melody, and on every new chord, find a chord note that you can play simultaneously with the melody as a double stop

Performance Practice: Afroamerican Music vs. European Classical Music

Here are some general ideas on performance practice (Aufführungspraxis) of afroamerican music styles: As string player, you're probably most familiar with classical performance practice. This differs in several ways from afroamerican performance practice.

Here are some basic ideas to get you started:

Some important differences:

Afroamerican Music	vs.	European classical music
<i>Steady pulse</i> („inner drummer“) Rhythm concept of „groove“	vs.	<i>Flexible meter</i> (rubato; main notes often played a bit longer than others, etc.)
<i>nonhierarchical rhythm organisation</i> (main notes can be anywhere in the bar; independent accents)	vs.	<i>hierachical rhythm organisation</i> (main notes are more often on 1 than on 2, 3 or 4, and much less often on offbeats)
<i>polyrhythm/accents against the beat</i> 2 or more simultaneous layers of rhythm	vs.	<i>usually not polyrhythmic</i>

The main question while playing: „How can I communicate my inner drummer?“

1) The easiest way: *play all the notes* my „inner drummer“ is playing = a continuous chain of 16th notes.

If I play pauses between the notes, I can communicate my „inner drummer“ by

2) *Beginning each note clearly*, with a consonant („ta“ or „pa“), and by

3) using *rhythmic sounds in the pauses*:

a) dead notes (or „ghost notes“), as in

- GrooveBowing (continuous bowing movement. Play only the accents loud. In between accents, dampen the string while bow softly wipes the string & sounds like shaker. In other words: fill in all gaps between the „normal“ notes with a continuous train of dead notes)

- and Strumming (pizz technique for chords: move your strumming hand back and forth over the strings continuously, as guitarists do. On your accents, strike the strings; and on other beats play dead notes (= strum empty airstrokes or strike muted strings for a more percussive sound) (similar to Groovebowing!)



or b) louder percussive noises, as in

- Chopping (percussive sounds with bow: miniature downbow choking the string & miniature upbow releasing the string)

- Slaps (in pizzicato mode: slap the string against the fingerboard)

- pizzicato dead notes (pluck a dampened string to make a percussive, toneless sound)

4) *Playing clear endings of notes*, stopping the bow on the string (especially before pauses, so they become „active pauses“) („doodat“ vs. „dooda“)

5) In *swing* grooves, notation is interpreted in ternary fashion: where  is written, you play 

- Accentuate against the beat (on the offbeats= the „And“), and slur the notes against the beat as well

- Swing legato: Play chains of eighth-notes legato (always keep the bow moving)

- Play with heavy bowing arm, keep in contact with the string. To end notes, stop your bow on the string.

6) *percussion* on the instrument

7) *more pizzicato techniques* (e.g. bossa nova pizzicato, flamenco guitar tricks, walking bass, ...)

Summary of general ideas for playing techniques in afroamerican music :

- Concept of rhythm: a) steady pulse, b) independent accents, c) polyrhythm
- Do what you can to communicate your „inner drummer“ to the listeners
- Right hand: Use your fingers and wrist (articulated, „speaking“, rhythm-oriented playing style)
- Heavy bowing arm; the default/neutral/passive position of the bow is on the string
- Rhythmize your bow
- Rhythmize your left hand: dampen strings, play hammer-ons & pull-offs, etc. - joining right hand
- Left hand: no vibrato or rare vibrato.

Literature for Jazz and Improvisation

Jazzstandards (Lead Sheets):

The Real Book - Hal Leonard (3 books; treble or bass clef)

The New Real Book - Sher Music (3 books) (tlw. Available as pdf) ...etc.

Music theory

Frank Sikora - Neue Jazz-Harmonielehre (Schott)

Marc Levine – Jazz Theory book (Advance Music) ...etc

Learning Improvisation

Martin Norgaard: Jazz Fiddle Wizard-collection (3 books, available for Vi, Va or Vc)

Improvisation School for strings, *beginner-intermediate* (Mel Bay)

Jerry Coker Patterns for Jazz (for any instrument)

Getting to know typical rhythms, licks & patterns

Jim Snidero Easy Jazz Conception (15 Etudes for jazz phrasing with CD) (for Vi, Va or Vc, *intermediate-advanced* (Advance Music)

Fred Lipsius Learning Key Jazz Rhythms, *and*

Fred Lipsius Playing Through the Blues (both etudes for jazz phrasing, with CD, *intermediate-advanced* (Advance Music) (a.o. for Vi or trombone)

Sheet Music For Students

Solo und Duo

Christopher Norton Micro Jazz for Starters, Microjazz (Pop, *Beginners*) (Schott)

Michael Radanovic Jazzy Duets (2Vi), Jazzy Tunes (Vi + piano) Jazzy Violin (Vi & piano) and Jazzy Cello (Vi & Vc) - Jazzy tunes, *intermediate* (Universal Edition)

Gabriel Koeppen Numerous books for 1,2 or 3 Vc, *different playing levels* (Edition Gabricelli/Peters)

Susanne Paul Die Groovestrich-Schule (2Vi or 2Vc), *intermediate-advanced* (Ponticello Edition)

Mike Rutledge Music of the City Jungle (Vi & Klavier) – 2 books with 12 pieces in all keys

Mike Block (Ed.) Contemporary Cello Etudes (Berklee Press)

Larger Ensembles

S.Paul, J.Piezunka, Groovy Strings (2-3-voice Ensemble pieces in 1st position (Vi, Va & Vc),

N.Kruse&M.Rutledge: (with text on teaching methods etc. (in German) & CD-ROM – Groove exercises, playing techniques, performance practice, etc. *beginner-intermediate* (Breitkopf & Härtel)

Practice Tools & Playalongs

Lead Sheets & CD: By Jamey Aebersold (106 books)

By Hal Leonard (189 books)

Internet: On Youtube, type in „tune name Karaoke“ or „tune name Play along“

Playalong Software/Apps (you can also program your own chords)

e.g. iReal Pro (App for iOS & Android, PC & Mac) (around 15€) www.irealpro.com

Band-In-A-Box (for PC oder Mac) (around 130-270\$) www.bandinabox.com

Session Band Jazz App (App for ios) www.sessionbandapp.com (Jazz1,2,3,4) 6-9\$

Slowing Down Audio Recordings

z.B. Anytune (for Android (ca. 17€), ios (15€), or mac (35€))

ABRSM Speedshifter (App for Android & iOS; Software for Mac oder PC) (3-5€) (simpler)

More:

Keith Johnstone: Improvisation and the Theater (ideas for free improv games, warmups, etc)

Jeffrey Agrell Improvisation for Classical Musicians

Darol Anger Blues on the Fiddle; Chops & Grooves (DVD lessons) (Homespun Tapes)

Ari Poutiainen Stringprovisation (Book on playing & fingering strategies for jazz violin)

...and youtube, etc.

String Players in Jazz etc.

String Ensembles: Harry Lookofsky, Turtle Island String Quartet, MOVE String Quartet, String Thing, Radio String Quartet, Triology, Modern String Quartet, Zapp Quartet, Netnakisum, Kusimanten, Kaleidoscope String Quartet, Crooked Still, Punch Brothers...

Violin/Viola: Stéphane Grappelli, Jean-Luc Ponty, Zbigniew Seifert, Didier Lockwood, Stuff Smith, Joe Venuti, Eddie South, Lakshminarayana Shankar, Spade Cooley, Mark O'Connor, Mark Feldman, Darol Anger, Ulli Bartel, Hajo Hoffmann, Tobias Preisig, Iva Bittová, Héloïse Lefebvre, Fabiana Striffler...

Cello: Oscar Pettiford, Hank Roberts, Eric Friedlander, Ernst Reijseger, Jacques Morelenbaum, Rushad Eggleston, Stephan Braun, Martin Klenk, Svante Henryson, Vincent Ségal, Lester St.Louis...

Bowing Bassists: Georg Breinschmid, Carlos Bica, Renaud Garcia-Fons, Edgar Meyer...