

Phrasing, part 2

The second part of developing phrasing is learning to combine the concept of playing **from** the upbeat with an understanding of clave. Remember from section 5 that clave divides the musical phrase into two equal halves. Let's look at the gua-gua pattern one more time to see what this means. If we were to write it in one bar,

EXAMPLE 1a

gua-gua, written in one bar



we would not see that it should be musically expressed as an "A-B" phrase. Now let's write it as a two bar phrase, and play it again, emphasizing the difference between the two halves.

EXAMPLE 1b

gua-gua, written in two bars:



Think of the second bar as the resolution of the first bar, almost as if the part were a call and response. Doesn't this feel better?! What we find is that when we play as if half of the phrase "asks" and the other half "answers," the music takes on the best feel. Keep the call and response concept of the rhythm, and you will find the right swing.

Now we have to add Spirology to the "A-B" phrasing concept. Let's write the stick part so you can see both concepts:

CD track 2

EXAMPLE 2

gua-gua, phrased correctly, and in two halves



Sing this out loud to yourself, and notice how totally different the phrase sounds and feels when it is viewed in this manner.

RUMBA GUAGUANCO PARTS

It is not an accident to me then, that the low drum part of Rumba Guaguanco falls at the end of each half phrase. Here is the part by itself:

EXAMPLE 3

Lowest drum, Rumba Guaguanco, as written in Western notation

B B B O B B B O

L R L R L R L R

Now let's look at where the two open tones of the low drum part fall in relation to the gua-gua pattern. Do you see that the open tones naturally complete each half phrase? (Please note that the dash indicates the where the tumba's open tone completes the phrase.)

EXAMPLE 4

gua-gua

low drum

L R L R L R L R

B B B O B B B O

To conclude then, our task when learning to phrase is to:

- 1) take the complete statement and divide it into two halves
- 2) start each half on the anticipation
- 3) view the second segment as a response to the first one.

From now on, we'll call these three tasks "the formula."

I know this is a somewhat unusual concept, and it will take some time to internalize. Let's put a number of different rhythmic examples into "the formula" to help you get acquainted with the whole idea. We will do so by writing a part out in normal Western music notation, and then writing it in Spirology:

EXAMPLE 5a

2-3 Matanzas Segundo part, as written in Western notation

O tc T H H T T H H T T H H T T

R R L R L R L R L R L R L R L