

Mystic South Conference 2023 Workshop

These are ODD Times: Drumming Outside the Fours

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Description:

It's time to break out of your rhythmic rut! Western music is usually based on a four-count rhythm, so that's what we naturally tend to play. But if you can break away from the Four, you open up a whole world of musical possibilities! Odd-time rhythms, common in Balkan and Middle Eastern music, can put you in a completely different head- and soul-space whether you drum for ritual or for pleasure. Bring your own drum of any kind, or I will have some extras available. No knowledge of musical theory required, just a willingness to play around with the count!

Notation:

The notation used here is based on Middle Eastern percussion, as that is the notation most commonly used for frame drumming. That doesn't mean you have to limit yourself to playing on frame drums only. Try it on any drum and see what happens.

- D** "Doom" or low sound, usually played with dominant hand close to the middle of the drum head. Equivalent in West African notation is "Bass" or "Gun."
- T** "Tek" or high sound, usually played with dominant hand on the rim/edge of the drum. Equivalent in West African notation may be either "Tone" or "Slap," depending on the feel desired.
- K** "Ka" or accent high sound, usually played with one or two fingers of non-dominant hand on the rim/edge of the drum. No actual equivalent in West African notation, though you can certainly play "Tone" or "Slap" to fill in those notes.

Capitalized letters are intended to be stronger than lowercase letters, which are true accents or filler notes.

The first line of each of these rhythms is the base or "open" version of the rhythm. Additional lines are alternate or filled-in versions of the rhythms. Often it is easier to learn a rhythm by playing the filled-in version first, until you are comfortable with the timing. Also, don't feel that you just have to play the same version of the rhythm over and over – feel free to mix them up for more variety and fun! Also, these aren't the only 7/8 and 9/8 rhythms out there; they are simply ones that I am familiar with and that you are most likely to encounter.

There is more rhythm information available at my website, <https://drumwoman.artofthefirebird.com>.

Rhythms in 7/8 Time

Laz

Turkish 7/8 rhythm. Northern region, along the Black Sea. 2 + 2 + 3 construction.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D		T		D		
D	k	T	k	D	k	k

Kalamatiano

Greek 7/8 rhythm. From Kalamata (yep, the place where the olives come from). 3 + 2 + 2 construction.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D			T		T	
D	k	k	T	k	T	k

Dawr Hindi

Arabic 7/8 rhythm, possibly originated in India. 3 + 2 + 2 construction.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D	T	T	D		T	
D	T	T	D	k	T	k

Rhythms in 9/8 Time

Karsilama aka Aksak

Turkish 9/8 rhythm, known as a 'limping' rhythm. 2 + 2 + 2 + 3 construction.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
D		T		D		T	T	
D	tk	T	tk	D	tk	T	T	tk
D		T		D		T	T	T
D	tk	T	tk	D	tk	T	T	T

Gypsy 9

Unknown origin. 9/8 rhythm. 2 + 2 + 2 + 3 construction.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
D		D		T		T	T	
D	tk	D	tk	T	tk	T	T	tk
D	D	D		T		T	T	tk
D	D	D	tk	T	tk	T	T	tk