

# Swing Independence and the "Bouncing Ball" Exercise

BY JON BELCHER

These exercises were inspired by the late Shelly Manne. He could create the illusion of a ball being dropped on the snare without interrupting the jazz time feel. Our goal is a fluid technique that allows us to create rhythmic illusions which can float across barlines and to provide more expressive comping behind a soloist.

For the sake of clarity, the exercises do not show the hi-hat and bass drum in the notation. Refer to the patterns below to see what the feet are doing in the two different time signatures used in the Exercises.

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is in 4/4 time, with a snare line (top line) and a bass line (bottom line). The snare line has eighth notes with accents, and the bass line has quarter notes. There are two triplet markings over the snare line. The bottom staff is in 3/4 time, with a snare line and a bass line. The snare line has eighth notes with accents, and the bass line has quarter notes. There is one triplet marking over the snare line.

To successfully create the bouncing-ball illusion in Exercise 1, do not swing the eighth notes. Play the snare line with a literal interpretation of the note values. Do swing everything else. In addition, play gradually softer (decrescendo) with the left hand (snare).

Next, using the 3/4 bass drum/hi-hat pattern as a foundation, play Exercise 2. Both exercises will work best at a moderate tempo in the quarter note = 160 range, but try them faster and slower. Also, try substituting the bass drum for the snare.

Finally, Exercise 3 looks at two related independence challenges. They are polyrhythmic, and interesting as well because of the 3/4 time. The first two measures contain the 3-against-2 polyrhythm between the snare line and the quarter notes of the pulse. Notice how the snare pattern overlaps the barline.

The last measure contains the 4-against-3-polyrhythm between the snare line and the quarter notes of the pulse. To emphasize the polyrhythmic relationships, play the bass drum on all three beats of the measure.

Remember to try all three exercises at different tempos, and try substituting bass drum for snare. I recommend recording your practice sessions to see if you really have created the illusion of a bouncing ball.

## Exercise 1

The image shows two musical staves for Exercise 1 in 4/4 time. The top staff has a snare line (top line) with eighth notes and a bass line (bottom line) with quarter notes. The snare line has accents and triplet markings. The bottom staff has a snare line with eighth notes and a bass line with quarter notes. There are triplet markings over the snare line.

## Exercise 2

The image shows two musical staves for Exercise 2 in 3/4 time. The top staff has a snare line (top line) with eighth notes and a bass line (bottom line) with quarter notes. The snare line has accents and triplet markings. The bottom staff has a snare line with eighth notes and a bass line with quarter notes. There are triplet markings over the snare line.

### Exercise 3

The musical notation for Exercise 3 is written on a single staff in 3/4 time. It consists of two phrases. The first phrase is six measures long. Measures 1, 3, and 5 contain triplets of eighth notes. Measures 2 and 4 contain eighth notes with a triplet bracket over the first three notes. The second phrase is two measures long. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes, and the second measure contains a quarter note followed by a triplet of eighth notes. The exercise concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

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