

LESSON 70

KONOKOL

Konokol is the Southern Indian system for creating rhythmic groupings as popularized by Jazz Fusion virtuoso John McLaughlin.

The basic concept is to use syllables in place of numerals to determine beats.

Ex.1 shows a 'rhythm scale' with the konokol naming system for beat groupings of 1 to 5.

ex1.

= DA
 = TA KA
 = TA KI TA
 = TA KA DI MI
 = DA DI GI NA DUM

Try doing the usual count for ex 2. it's a bit of a tongue twister right ? now give ex.3 a go, it's easier and feels more 'organic'. TIP - to hear where beat 1 is, clap on the 1 - that's the start of the cycle.

ex2.

count 1 e and a 2 ta ta 3 e and a 4 ta ta

ex3.

say TA KA DI MI TA KI TA TA KA DI MI TA KI TA
 ↑
 clap

Konokol is particularly useful in dealing with odd times. Let's take 7/4 for instance.

An option for ex.4 is to break the count into something like 1 2 3 4 - 1 2 3 or 1 2 3 -1 2 3 4. Either way it's still a bit clumsy.

ex4.

count 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Let's check out the Konokol approach. The potential groupings of 7 are : 4 + 3 / 3 + 4 / 2 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 3 + 2 / 3 + 2 + 2 / 2 + 5 / 5 + 2.

say TA KA DI MI TA KI TA
 say TA KI TA TA KA DI MI
 say TA KA TA KA TA KI TA
 say TA KA TA KI TA TA KA
 say TA KI TA TA KA TA KA
 say TA KA DA DI GI NA DUM
 say DA DI GI NA DUM TA KA

Say the konokol for each example and clap on the beginning of each sub-division (underlined in red). Repeat each example to get a feel for the transitions generated.

While breaking up bars into subgroups is not unique to Konokol, it's Konokol's unique way of verbalising the rhythmic units that makes it so flexible and natural.