

Wolosodon and Jondon

Hans Camp North 2017

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Alternative Names and Spellings

Wolosodon = Woloso, Wolosofoli, Wolossodon, Ouolosodon, also sometimes called Jondon!
Jondon = Jon, Jonfoli, Djondon; Sumalen is closely related, arguably essentially the same piece, certainly with the same dunun part and feel.

Songs

A *horon* is a freeborn person; *-ya* means -ness or -hood; so *horonya* is freeborn-ness or, loosely, freedom. *Jonya* is slave-ness, ie slavery.

Nya bere jonya, é horonya *I'm very much in slavery (?), you freedom*
Nya bere jonya, nye biye horonya *I'm very much in slavery, I see freedom there*

Sung with Wolosodon. From lessons with Matché Traoré. Hans's attempted translation!

Ayao doko, jon degunyo
Ayao doko, o bé woloso

Ay ao doko jon ba degunyo
Ay ao doko, o bé woloso

Sung with Jondon. From Abdoul Doumbia's "Anke Dje Anke Be" Book & CDs (end Tr 21).

Cultural Significance

Jon means slave (sometimes translated as serf) in Maninkakan and Bamanakan; *woloso* means “house-born” – a house slave, born to a slave owned by the household, who would have had a higher status than other slaves. Slaves were commonly taken in warfare between different groups, so a freeborn (*boron*) could become a *jon*. In theory, members of the artisan castes (the *numu* blacksmiths, *garanké* leatherworkers, and *jeli* musicians/orators) would never have been enslaved as their artisan status set them apart. The rhythms Wolosodon and Jondon (literally slave-dance) were played in the slaves’ honour and for them to dance to. Some of the dance movements are very provocative, and early European explorers were shocked by the slave dancing that they saw. Today, some people in Mali would still trace their ancestry back to *jon* or *woloso* origins, and the dances are sometimes performed at celebrations. In Bamako, the Bamana, Maninka and Khassonka ethnic groups all play versions of the Woloso and Jon rhythms.

Notes on the Feel

Wolosodon is usually played with a feel made up of squashed 3s (3 notes per short beat), but often the second note per beat is left unplayed, leaving swung 2s (2 notes per short beat).

Straight 3s	| . . . . . | 1 2 3 1 2 3 | (for comparison)
Squished 3s	| . . . . . | 1 2 3 1 2 3 | short-mid-long-short-mid-long
Swung 2s	| . . . . . | 1 2 1 2 | long-short-long-short
Straight 2s	| . . . . . | 1 2 1 2 | (for comparison)

Jondon is usually played in a kind of uneven 3s, with the option to squeeze in a 4th note. I’ve changed the feel to make it more simply 4-ish:

Straight 3s	| . . . . | 1 2 3 | (for comparison)
Uneven 3s	| . . . . | 1 2 3 | long-mid-short: traditional Jondon
Squished 4s	| . . . . | 1 2 3 4 | short-mid-long-mid: traditional Jondon solos
Hans’s 4s	| . . . . | 1 2 3 4 | gentle mid-mid-long-mid: Hans’s version
Straight 4s	| . . . . | 1 2 3 4 | (for comparison)

Sources and References

Lessons with Séga Cissé, Sedu Danté, Lamin Tounkara, Matché Traoré and above all Drissa Koné are the direct source for much the material here. However, in many places I’ve made adjustments and added my own ideas. Break 1 is from Drissa Koné, Break 2 and 3 my own creation, and the Jondon breaks are based on Drissa Koné solos. Further ideas and inspiration came from versions of the rhythms on the recordings and in the books listed below. Yamadu Bani Dunbia’s recordings were particularly useful, featuring lots of solos in swung 2s. (W is for Woloso-, J for Jondon.)

Drissa Koné, on youtube (search “Drissa Kone werbisndu”) (W)

Drissa Koné, “Kurubamako” CD (W)

Drissa Koné, “Djembe rhythms aus Mali” CD and Book with Stephan Rigert (W)

Mamadou Sidibé, “Village Drumming” CD (W, though the track’s called Jondon)

Yamadu Bani Dunbia, on “Bamakofoli” CD (W)

Yamadu Bani Dunbia, on “The Art of Jenbe Drumming/the Mali Tradition” (W)
and Rainer Polak’s accompanying “Jenbe Realbook”

Abdoul Doumbia, “Anke Dje, Anke Be” CD and Book, with Matthew Wirzbicki (W&J)

Drissa Koné on youtube (search “Drissa Kone guedom”) playing Sumalen, which is almost the same thing as Jondon

Jaraba Jakité, on “The Art of Jenbe Drumming/the Mali Tradition Vol. 2” CD (J aka Sumalen)
and Rainer Polak’s accompanying “Jenbe Realbook Vol. 2”

Wolosodon Basics

In the break below, ? is some kind of movement/action – you could make up your own actions.

Intro / Break 1

									R	L	R	L	R	L	R			
									|	S	T	T	T	|	T	T	/	
L	R	L						L	R	L		L	R	L				
/	B	B	B	.	?	|	.	?	.	B	B	B	.	B	B	B	.	/
/	O	O	O	.	?	|	.	?	.	O	O	O	.	O	O	O	.	/
L	R	L							R	L	R	L	R	L	R			
/	B	B	B	.	?	|	.	?	.	.	S	T	T	T	|	T	T	/
/	O	O	O	.	?	|	.	?	.	.	.	.	.	.	|	.	.	/
L	R	L						L	R	L	R	L		L	R			
/	B	B	B	.	?	|	.	?	.	B	B	B	B	B	.	B	B	/
/	O	O	O	.	?	|	.	?	.	O	O	O	O	O	.	O	O	/
/	B	B	B	.	?	|	.	?	.	.	S	T	T	T	|	T	T	/
/	O	O	O	.	?	|	.	?	.	.	.	.	.	.	|	.	.	/
/	B	B	B	.	?	|	.	?	.	B	B	B	B	B	|	B	B	/
/	O	O	O	.	?	|	.	?	.	O	O	O	O	O	|	O	O	O //

Accompaniment Parts

Bell	[x . x x . x | x . x x . x | x . x x . x | x . x x' . x]
Dunun	[O O . C | . C . O | O . O . | C . C' .]
Or 2 drums	[L L . H | . H . L | L . L . | H . H' .]

The same part written with the doubles bell part in line, and again in pared-down binary notation:

Dunun	[O . O x . C | x . C x . O | O . x O . x | C . x C . x]
Dunun	[O O x C | x C x O | O x O x | C x C x]

Alternatively, the **Dunun player's bell** could just follow the Dunun, without adding any extra notes. This allows you go faster, particularly if you're not practised at playing fast bell.

Bell (easier)	[x . . . . | x . . .' . .]
(harder)	[x . . x . . | x . . x' . .]
Hi Konkoni	[. . C . O O | . . C .' O O]

Bell	[x | x . x x . x | x . x x' .]	Same part, written with bell in line:	[x | O . x x' .]
Lo Konkoni	[ . | O . . . . | O . . .' .]		

Jembe 1	[S | T . S B . S | T . S B' .]	or	[S | T . S B' .]
	L R R L L R R L		L R L R

Jembe 2	[B | S . T S . B | S . T S' .]	or	[B | S . T S' .]
	L R R L L R R L		L R L R

Jembe 3	[S . . S T T | S . . S' T T]
	R L R L R L R L

Jembe 4	[T T S S | B B S' S]
	R L R L R L R L

More Breaks and Jondon Basics

Break 2 same as Break 3 below, but going straight from the call to *.

Break 3 (add extra **B** on the end for Outro)

| **S S T T T T T T T T T T** . //

B **B** . **S S T T S S** **B** | **S** . **B** **S** | . **B** **S** . //

O **O** **O** | **C** . **O** **C** | . **O** **C** . //

B **B** . **S S T T S S** **B** | **S** . **B** **S** | . **B** **S** . //

O **O** **O** | **C** . **O** **C** | . **O** **C** . //

B **B** . **C** | . **B** - **B** - | **B** - **B** . **T** | . **B** - **B** - //

O **O** **O** - **O** - | **O** - **O** **O** - **O** - //

B **B** . **S S T T S S** **B** | **S** . **B** **S** | . **B** **S** . //

O **O** **O** | **C** . **O** **C** | . **O** **C** . //

*

B **B**

O **O**

↙ [**T T T T S | S** **T T T T B | B**] × 3
 [. . **C | C** . . **O | O**]

↖ **T T S S** . | **B** **S** . **S S S S S S S** . | **B** . **B** . | **B** . **B** . //

. . . | **O** **C** | **O** . **O** . . | **O** . **O** . . //

For an Outro or to segue to Jondon, add a fifth and final **B**. To continue into Jondon play Break 4, below. The feel shifts and so does the tempo, sort of! One of Wolosodon's long slow beats equals two beats of Jondon, but if you were counting short beats in Wolosodon then the beat tempo stays the same.

Jondon Break 4 † is the final extra **B** from Wolosodon, or the last note of a Jondon echauffement

†

↘

[. . **S** | . **B S S** | **B** . **S** . | **T T** . **T | T** . . **S** | . **B S S** | **B** . **S** . | **T T** . **T | T** /

[. | | **O O** . **O | O** | | **O O** . **O | O** /

/ . . **S** | . **B S S** | **B** . **S** . | **B T** . **B | T** . **B T** | . **B T** . | **B T** . | **B T** . | **B T** . | **S** . . ' **T | T**]

K / | | **x O** . **x | O** . **x O** | . **x O** . | **x O** . | **x O** . | **C** . . ' **O | O**]

D / | | **O O** . **O | O** . **O O** | . **O O** . | **O O** . | **O O** . | **C** . . ' **O | O**]

Jondon Accompaniment Parts

- [**x | x** . **x x | x** . **x x | x** . **x x | x** . **x**]
- [**O | O** . . **C | C** . . **O | O** . **O'** . **C** . .] Dunun
- [**L | L** . . **H | H** . . **L | L** . **L'** . **H** . .] Or with 2 Dununs
- [**O | O** . **x x** | . **x** . **O | x** . **O'** . **x x** .] Dununba (First Lead Phrase)
- [**O** . **x** . | **x** . **O** . | **O** . **x'** . | **x** . **O** .] Hi Konkoni
- [**O** . **x** . | **O** . **x** . | **O** . **x'** . | **O** . **x** .] Lo Konkoni
- [**S** . . **S | S** . **T T | S** . . ' **S | S** . **T T**] Jembe 1
 R L R R L R L R R L
- [**T | T** . **S S | B** . **S T | T** . **S' S | B** . **S**] Jembe 2
 L R R L R R L R R L R R

Woloso Dunun Variations – Advanced

BEGINNING SECTION play each phrase 4 times then move on; each section once or twice

0 Normal

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O x | C x C x] O O x

1 “PiPi”

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O x | C C x O] O O x

BALLET SECTION the dash symbols, – , just mean that the feel is faster, in 3s instead of 2s

0 Normal

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O x | C x C x] O O x

2 “Tutu”

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O O | x C x O] O O x

3 “Fan”

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O O | x O – O –] O O x

4 “4-4”

[O O x C | x C x O | – O – O – O | x O – O –] O O x

STAR SECTION nb) Skip this section when accompanying the Advanced Solos

0 Normal

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O x | C x C x] O O x

* “4-Star”

[O O x C | x C x O | – O – O – O | – O O – O –] O O x

** “Milky Way”

[O O x C | x C x O | – O O – O O | – O O – O] O O x

GOLDDILOCKS SECTION

0 Normal

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O x | C x C x] O O x

5 “Baby Bear”

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O x | C x C x /

/ O O x C | x C x O | O O x O | O O x O] O O x

6 “Mama Bear”

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O x | C x C x /

/ O O x C | x C x O | O O O O | x O O O] O O x

7 “Papa Bear”

[O O x C | x C x O | O x O x | C x C x /

/ O O x C | x C x O | O O O O | O O O O] O O x

8 Echauffement – “Lots of Baby Bears”

| O O x C | x C x /
[O | O O x O | O O x]

A Wolosodon Lower Intermediate Solos

[O O . C | . C . O | O . O . | C . C .] O O .

1ai 2 × [. | . . . | $\underset{R}{S}$. $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ | . . $\underset{R}{S}$. | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$.]

ii / . | . . . | $\underset{R}{S}$. $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$. $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ /

/ $\underset{R}{S}$. $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$. $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$. $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ | . . $\underset{R}{S}$. | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$. /

And then all the above again, but with slaps and tones swapped round:

bi 2 × [. | . . . | $\underset{R}{F}$. $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ | . . $\underset{R}{F}$. | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$.]

ii / . | . . . | $\underset{R}{F}$. $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ | $\underset{R}{F}$. $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ /

/ $\underset{R}{F}$. $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ | $\underset{R}{F}$. $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ | $\underset{R}{F}$. $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ | . . $\underset{R}{F}$. | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$. /

4 4 × { [$\underset{L}{B}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$. $\underset{L}{B}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$. /

/ $\underset{L}{B}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$.]

3i 3½ × { [$\underset{?}{S}$ | . $\underset{?}{S}$. $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$. $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$. $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$. /

ii / $\underset{?}{S}$ | . $\underset{?}{S}$. $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | $\underset{L}{T}$ | . $\underset{?}{S}$. $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$.]

ending / $\underset{?}{S}$ | . $\underset{?}{S}$. . $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | $\underset{L}{T}$. /

Call / . | . . . | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$

If there's enough time, you could squeeze in this extra solo before the call:

4 4 × [$\underset{L}{S}$ | $\underset{R}{B}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{B}$ $\underset{R}{S}$. | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{S}$ | . . $\underset{R}{T}$. $\underset{R}{T}$. | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{S}$. . /

/ $\underset{L}{S}$ | $\underset{R}{B}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{B}$ $\underset{R}{S}$. | $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ $\underset{L}{T}$ $\underset{R}{T}$ | . . $\underset{R}{T}$. $\underset{R}{T}$. | $\underset{R}{S}$ $\underset{L}{S}$ $\underset{R}{S}$. .]

C Wolosodon Upper Intermediate Solos

[O O . C | . C . O | O . O . | C . C .] O O

[S . . T | S . B . | S . T T T T S . B .] × 4 1a
R L R R R R L R L R R

[S S' . T | S S B . | S S T T T T S S B .] × 4 b
R R L R L R R L R L R L R L R L R

2ai 4 × [. | . . . B | S S S . | . b T T T T S S . /
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

ii / . | . . . B | T S T S | T S T S | T S .]
L R L R L R L R L R L R L

c / . | . . . [B | S S S T | S S S] × 4
L R L R L R L R L R

d [S | T S T S | T S T] × 3
L R L R L R L R L R

whole section × 2? / S | T S .]
R L

3i 4 × [S S S S S S S . | B S . S . S | . S . B S . | B S . . . /
L R L R L R L R L R L L L L L ? R L ? R L

ii / S S S S S S S . | B Č . B Č . | B Č . B Č . | B Č . . . /
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

iii / S S S S S S S . | B S . S . S | . S . B S . /
L R L R L R L R L R L L L L L ? R L ?

/ B T . T . T | . T . B T . | B S . S . S | . S . B S . | B S . . .]
R L L L L L ? R L ? R L L L L L ? R L ? R L

/ S S S S S S S . |
L R L R L R L R L

4a [T T S S S .] × 4
R L R L R

b [T T S S S S | T T S S S . /
R L R L R L R L R L R

/ T T S S S . | T T S S S .] × 2
R L R R L R L R L R

c [T T S S S S] × 4
R L R L R L

d [T S S T S S] × 3

>Break 1 / T S S S . . | S T T T | T T T B | B B . . /
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

D.1 Wolosodon Advanced Solos

*Play S slaps 1st and 4th times only

[O O . C | . C . O | O . O . | C . C .] O O .

1* 4 × [SS|S S S S S . | TS . TS . | . . TTTT S | S]
LRLRLRLRL RLR RLR LRLRLRLRL

2i 2 × [B | BB S SS . | . . . TTS | TTS SS . |]
LRLRLRLRL LRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL

ii 5 × [B | BB S SS]
LRLRLRLRL

3* 4 × [SS|S S S S S . | TTS SS . | TTS SS . /
LRLRLRLRL RLRRLRLRL RLRRLRLRL

/TTS SS . | TTS SS . | TTS SS S | SSS SS . | BČ . . .]
RLRLRLRLRL RLRRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL

5a [SS|S S S . .] × 3
LRLRLRL

b [SS|S S S . . TTTT T . .] × 3
LRLRLRL LRLRLRL

c [SS|S S TTTT SS|S S TTTT] × 3
LRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL

/S | S/
L R**

6i** 4 × [. | B | TS TS | . . TTTT S | S/
LRLRLRLRLRL LRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL

ii / . | B | S . F S . . | . . TTTT S | S]
LRLRLRLRLRL LRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL

** Miss out solo 6 if time is tight, instead go straight from the end of solo 5 to solo 7

7 4 × [S | S . B B . S | S . B B . S | S . TTTT S | S . B B .]
LRLRLRLRLRL LRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL

//

8 4 × /SS|S S S S S . | TS SS S | SSS STT /
LRLRLRLRLRL RLRRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL

/SSS STT | SSS STT | STT STT | STT STT /
RL

/SSS STT | SSS S . . /
RLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL

Break 2 /SS TTTT TTTT TTTT TTTT TTTT TTTT TTTT . | B B .
RL

D.2 Jondon Advanced Solos

[T|T . . S|S . S B|B . B . |B . .] play [1a, 1a, 1b, 1a] × 4 **1a**
L R L R R L R R R

T|T . . S|S . S B|B . B S|S . S **1b**
L R L R R L R R L R R

2 **[T|S S S S|S . . B|S S S S|S . .]** × 4
L R L R L R L R L R L R

3 **[S T T S|S T T S|S T T S|S T T S] × 4**
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

|S . . S|. B S S|B . S . |T T . T|T etc (**Break 4**)
R R L R L R R R L L R

Miscellany

Other elements to cover in an advanced djembe class

- Work on Jondon swing and play the B solos with Hans's swing or traditional Jondon swing (see Notes on the Feel, page 2)
- Work on the break calls for Jondon and Wolosodon

Wolosodon Alternative Konkoni Parts

Bell	[x |x . x x . x |x . x x .]	same parts, written with bell in line:
Konkoni 3	[. |O . O . . . |O . O . .]	[x |O . O x .]
Konkoni 4	[. |O . . . . . |O . . O .]	
Konkoni 5	[. |O . . O . . |O . . O .]	[x |O . x O .]
Konkoni 6	[O O . . C .] (no bell)	

Key to the Notation

ESSENTIALS

- [] brackets appear around a phrase which is to be repeated; the brackets sometimes coincide with a bar line, so the bar line gets covered up
- | bar line (before a note on the strong beat)
- ⋮ “half” bar line (before a note on the weaker beat)
- space / short rest

The grey bar, below, marks the side of the rhythm in which the dunun plays on-beat: **○ ○ C C**

JEMBE NOTES (Also see Starts, Stops & Links below)

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| B bass | F tone flam | @ clap |
| T tone | S slap flam | B optional note [not bold] |
| S slap | B bass/slap flam | b optional note [lower case] |
| C closed slap | | |
| Č closed slap muted with your other hand | | |

TRIPLETS

- T T T T** “triplet”; the first 3 notes in this example take up the same time as the first 2 notes below
- T T T** non triplets, ie normal-speed notes (for comparison); see how the 4th note on the first line is level with the 3rd note of the second line

HANDING

- R/L strong/weak hand (left-handers generally play the opposite way to right-handers)
- R/L* suggested handing [italics] (if a few notes are in italics, then you could choose to switch those specific notes over; if a whole line is in italics you could do it completely the other/your own way)
- F/S “fast”/“slow” hand; it’s difficult to decide which hand to start some phrases on, so you will have to decide which is your “fast” hand to determine your handing preference.

DUNDUN NOTES

- dundun open note (+bell at same time, unless the bell part is written out on a separate line)
- C** dundun closed note (+bell, as above)
- x** bell only
- c** optional note [lower case] (+bell, as above)
- H/M/L** high/medium/low

IN BREAKS

- T*** lead/call [italics] **B** optional call [not bold] or call for Hans only
- B** unison response [double underline]

STARTS, STOPS & LINKS

- /** phrase continues on next line, or is continued from the previous line; I’ll only put these in sometimes, and the rest of the time I hope the continuation is obvious from the context
 - /** as above, but on top of a barline
- When moving between solo phrases or dundun variations, you can generally just move down from one line to the next. If a transition is not so straightforward you may see:
- ↘** follow the arrow to go from one phrase to the next
 - ⋯↘** as above, but only follow the arrow when you’ve played the first phrase as many times as necessary
 - '** end a phrase here the last time round
 - B** start phrase here first time [underline]
 -]○** a note or a few notes in grey after the] are a kind of sneak preview of what comes next; the same notes will appear in black at the beginning of the phrase within the [...] and/or on the next line
 - B[** a note or a few notes in grey before the [are a “lead-in”; you play them the first time round, and you only play them again if they appear again in black before the]

LIMITATIONS AND DISCLAIMER

One thing I often find fiddly to describe through my notation is how you lead in to phrases, repeat them and change between them in the sequences I teach. The idiosyncracies of each piece and the grammar of its phrasing can make it seem natural or economical to write out these aspects of the musical structure in a particular format, so the format of my notation can be quite different for different pieces. Sometimes, I'll want to keep the format compact in order to fit a whole long solo series, break or other section of material on a single page, and this can slightly compromise how quick and easy the notation is to read.

Even if you battle to understand how my notation handles phrasing and linking, you may then be frustrated to find I make frequent typos with these little details, and I'm liable to change my mind about how I want to link phrases up during a class anyway! The notation isn't perfect for explaining these kind of things, so try to make sense of them by listening or asking questions. In any case, the creation of strictly arranged sequences is just a device for teaching, so we can practise in unison, or for creating a unison performance.

Some common features of jembe music's tricky timing – particularly swing feels, also flams, triplets and other rolls – could be written in several different ways. Often the simplest-looking ways to write them don't represent the timing very accurately, so a greater amount of interpretation is needed, relying on your ears and familiarity with the genre to turn simple-looking notation into music that sounds right. Sometimes I find ways to notate things with greater accuracy and detail. The downside is that this makes the notation more complex to read, and there's always still a degree of interpretation required anyway. I've written a little more below about how I notate swing, triplets and flams, and their elusive timing, but often the best way to understand the feel of musical features like these is just to listen carefully! And do ask questions.

SWING

It's hard to show the feel, or 'swing', of the rhythms, so although the spacing of notes represents their timing it's only a (sometimes crudely) quantised approximation. Simple notation assumes that beats are divided into subdivisions of equal length, but that's a false assumption if there's any swing in the music – as there usually is. Sometimes I'll space the notes individually to try to show the swing timing better, but even then, I'll normally only space them to the average swing feel, and I won't always show the subtler variations of swing for different phrases. For rhythms with the simplest kind of 'long-short-long-short', jazz-like swing, I usually don't bother spacing the notes out to represent the swing at all; instead I often just write these rhythms in 'equal' or 'straight' 4s, and the reader has to know to interpret the notation with the typical swing added in.

TRIPLETS

T T T T The first 3 notes here are a 'triplet'; they take up the same amount of time as the 2 notes below
T T T These are non-triplets, or normal-speed notes, for comparison; notice how the 4th note on the first line is level with the 3rd note of the second line

I don't use this notation with small Ts for triplets as often as I once used to. The complexities of Malian swing muddy the question of when a triplet really is a triplet. Sometimes a triplet-ish phrase might sound like **T T T T**, or like **TTT T**, or like something in between!

FLAMS

The difference between a wide flam and two close but separate notes is just semantics. If I've written a flam with a single symbol (**F**, **S**, **§**, **B**, **E**, **#**) it's likely to be a 'tight' flam, with the two notes very close together. But most flams have at least a bit of 'width', so I might just be trying to keep the notation looking simple! The alternative is to write them as two separate notes (**TT**, **SS**, **SC**, **BS**, **BT**, **TS**), which allows you to compare their timing with other phrases more easily. If you're used to playing only tight flams then it will be better to think of my wider flams as double notes – i.e. close but separate notes – so that you take due care in placing the two notes correctly, the correct width apart. This can also help keep your arms moving freely. But if you do think of any pair of notes as an actual flam, concentrate on getting the *first* note on the intended timing. You should beware any standard western notation for jembe music with grace notes indicating flams, as this implies the *second* note of the flam is on the timing, which is almost always the wrong way round.