

Achiagbekor for Drumset

BY MARK POWERS

Awar dance of Ghana's Ewe people, Achiagbekor (or Agbekor, also spelled Atsiagbekor) utilizes a 12/8 bell pattern that will be familiar to anyone who has studied Afro-Cuban rhythms. To apply Achiagbekor to the drumset, begin by playing the bell pattern on the ride cymbal or cowbell with your right stick while keeping a dotted-quarter-note pulse on the hi-hat with your left foot.

Example 1 shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes for Ride cym or Cowbell, Hi-hat w/pedal, BD (Bass Drum), SD (Snare Drum), Small Tom, Mid Tom, and Low Tom. A legend below the staff defines 'Muted stroke' as a note with an 'x' above it and 'Open Tone' as a note with a dot above it.

Example 1

Example 2 shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes labeled 'dzi', 'to', 'to', 'dzi', and 'dzi'.

Some of the supporting drums play combinations of short, muted strokes (pressing the stick into the head) and regular open tones (pulling the stick away after the stroke). The low-pitched totodzi plays a series of muted and open tones, “speaking” its own name.

Example 2

Example 3 shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes labeled 'dzi', 'to', 'to', 'dzi', and 'dzi'.

Combine this with Example 1, playing totodzi's open tones on the bass drum.

Example 3

Example 4 shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes labeled 'dzi', 'to', 'to', 'dzi', and 'dzi'.

The next step is to add the other Ewe supporting drum parts to the mix with your left stick. Totodzi's “twin,” kroboto, also plays muted and open tones, embellishing on her sibling's pattern.

Example 4

Example 5 shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes labeled 'dzi', 'to', 'to', 'dzi', and 'dzi'.

Now play kroboto's open tones on the mid tom, combined with Example 3.

Example 5

Example 6 shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes labeled 'dzi', 'to', 'to', 'dzi', and 'dzi'.

The high-pitched kagan (or kaganu) is the smallest drum used in Achiagbekor and has two parts: one played during slow Agbekor and another for the fast sections.

Example 6

Example 7 (fast) shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes labeled 'dzi', 'to', 'to', 'dzi', and 'dzi'.

Example 7 (slow) shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes labeled 'dzi', 'to', 'to', 'dzi', and 'dzi'.

In place of kroboto, add each of the kagan parts to Example 3, played on the snare drum (snare off) with your left stick.

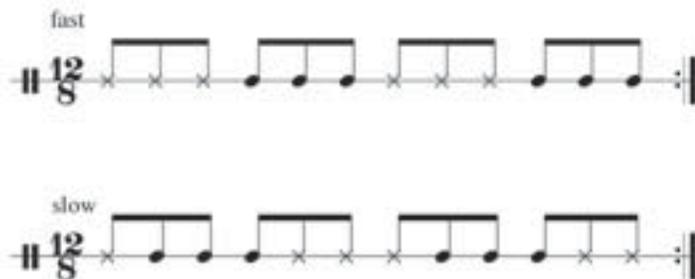
Example 7

Example 7 (fast) shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes labeled 'dzi', 'to', 'to', 'dzi', and 'dzi'.

Example 7 (slow) shows a musical staff with a 12/8 time signature. The notation includes notes labeled 'dzi', 'to', 'to', 'dzi', and 'dzi'.

Like kagan, kidi has different parts for slow and fast Achiagbekor sections.

Example 8



Combine the open tones from each of kidi's rhythms to Example 3, this time with your left stick on the high tom.

Example 9



Practice each exercise slowly, focusing on dynamic balance between all four limbs. Be patient; exploring these rhythms will broaden your horizons, increase independence, and supply you with many new ideas that can be applied to any style of music you play.

Mark Powers spent the fall of 2003 in Ghana, West Africa, studying the music of the Ewe and Ga people. Mark is a freelance percussionist and educator, an adjudicator for the Wisconsin School Music Association, and co-holder of the Guinness World Record for longest drum roll by a group. PN

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