

NOTE GROUPING

BY JOSH GOTTRY

By way of comparison, note grouping in music is very similar to letter grouping or reading of text. And just like reading, with time and practice it gradually becomes easier. Note grouping can be divided into two types - single line recognition and interval recognition. Both are necessary in keyboard percussion playing and each type has several common applications.

SINGLE LINE RECOGNITION

The most obvious and most frequently used single line pattern in music is the scale. By scale, I don't necessarily mean the A^b major scale. I actually mean a set of notes - any amount from four to forty - which move in one direction without skipping or doubling any notes. Here a few examples:



You might also regularly encounter 3-5 note melodic patterns which can be repeated on starting on different pitches. These patterns can be sequenced rhythmically with the beat . . .



or contrary to the beat.



Two other common sequences you may encounter are ascending or descending thirds . . .

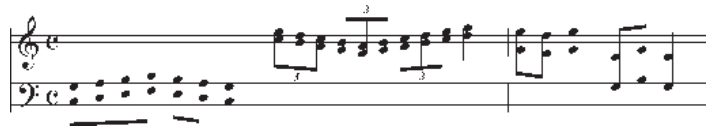


or patterns repeated at the octave.



INTERVAL RECOGNITION

Interval recognition is primarily used in passages where you are expected to perform two or more notes at a time. In these circumstances, identifying the distance between notes can allow you to read one set of pitches and simply maintain the appropriate interval for the other pitches. One of the easiest types of interval recognition is to identify consistency. For example, notice in each of these measures, the distance between the two notes remains the same.



Notice in these measures, the top or bottom note is constant while the other pitch is moving.



Especially in 4-mallet keyboard playing, you will want to begin to recognize common intervals within chords (3rds, 4ths, 5ths, & 6ths). You'll also benefit from identifying common chordal voicings (closed, open, 7th chords). For example:



CONCLUSION

You would certainly never consider sounding out words like "cat" or "the" while reading a book. At the same time, why tediously identify every pitch in an obvious musical pattern. The more confident you are in identifying "musical words" the better music reader you will be.



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