

6/8 Time

Two Against Three (CD:16)

In some ways, “two against three” is the opposite of 4/4 time. It is slippery, shape-shifting, hard to nail down, and magical.

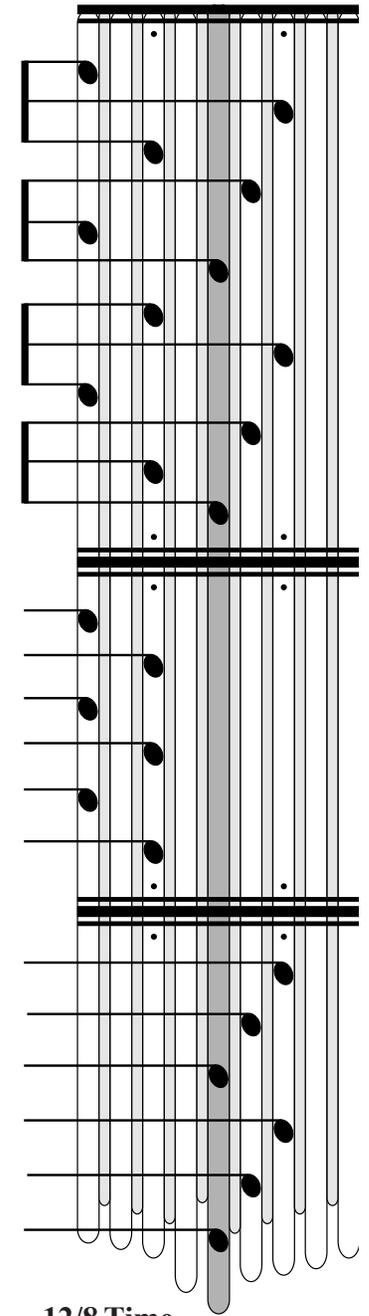
In the exercise on the left, all the notes on the upper row of tines are played by the right thumb, and all the notes on the lower row are played by the left thumb. The right thumb is way over in territory normally governed by the left thumb.

To start, dissect this piece into the left thumb part and the right thumb part. The left thumb plays a three note pattern that could be from “Three Blind Mice”. However, the right thumb is actually playing just a two note pattern. This is a classic “3 against 2” pattern. The first two measures start with the left thumb, the second two measures is the same pattern, but starting on the right.

The “3 against 2” pattern is its own sort of Zen Koan. You may need to sit with this pattern for many hours before it starts to change you. After you can do it with your eyes closed (literally), try to focus your mind on just one part - first choose left, as that is the familiar theme. Then, spend a few minutes letting the left thumb go on “automatic pilot” while you breath your consciousness into the right thumb. Can you really feel the right thumb doing three patterns of two notes and going in and out of tension with the left side doing something else?

A Different Example (CD:17)

The exercise to the right is another example of a “3 against 2” pattern, but the right hand does the two three-note patterns, while the left hand does three two-note patterns. At first, we break up the right and left parts. When we join them, we have set these notes into triplets. That is just a suggestion for how to feel the music. On the other hand, you could just as well play the final measure as six pairs of eighth notes, thus changing the emphasis and the feel, but not the notes.



12/8 Time