

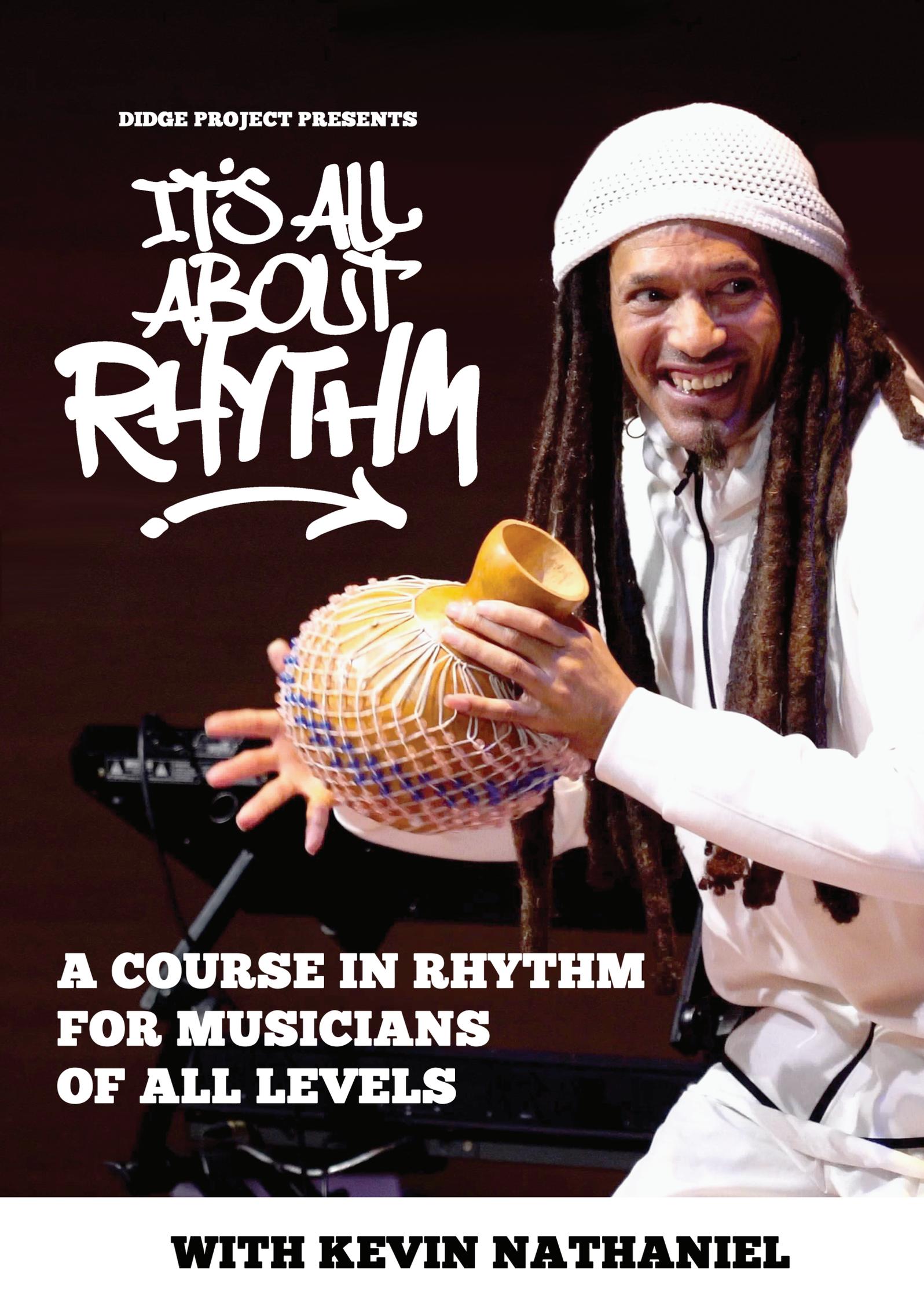
**DIDGE PROJECT PRESENTS**

# IT'S ALL ABOUT RHYTHM



**A COURSE IN RHYTHM  
FOR MUSICIANS  
OF ALL LEVELS**

**WITH KEVIN NATHANIEL**



# Introduction

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Welcome to It's All About Rhythm. This class is for beginner to intermediate level musicians who want to improve their sense of timing and, well, rhythm. We want to give you the tools to be able to play some really solid rhythms on any instrument, to be able to play better with other musicians, and to ultimately take your music to a higher level.

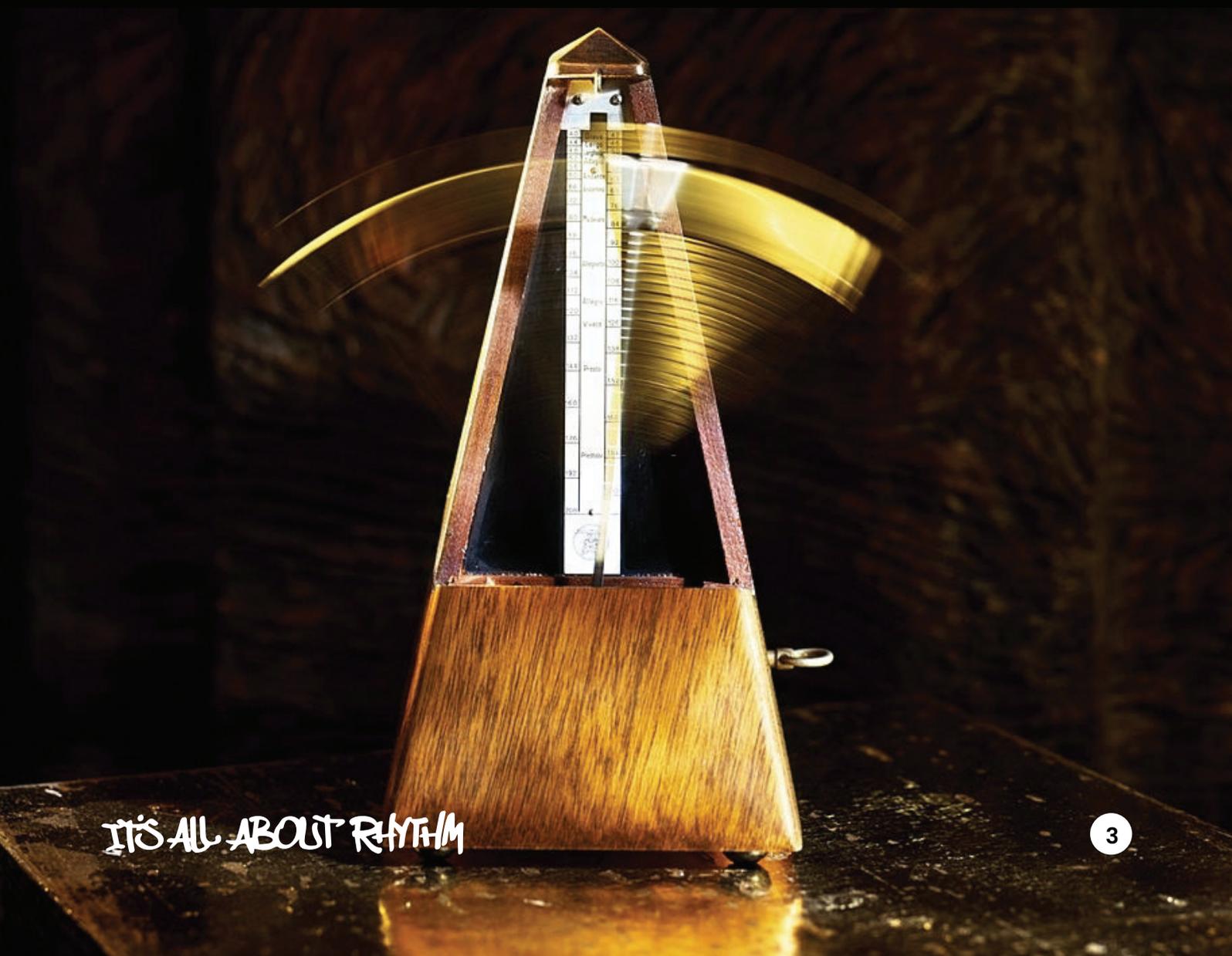
**Rhythm** is one of the four fundamental elements of music, the other 3 being **melody** (linear movement of notes), **harmony** (interaction between multiple notes) and **dynamics** (intensity of sound). What is rhythm? For a simple definition we can say that rhythm is the position of the notes within time. But for those of us who have spent any time playing music, we know that there is much more to rhythm than this simple definition.

As you go through the exercises in this course, you can clap, step your feet, sing and even dance to the various patterns. As these patterns become more and more complex, you will become more and more rhythmic yourself.

**Kevin Nathaniel**

# The Metronome

In this course we use a metronome. The metronome is a device that will give you an idea of time moving in a linear way. It's only one idea of time. Time and rhythm are much bigger than what a metronome can illustrate. But we are going to use the metronome to get you in the door to rhythm, and as it moves you into much larger ideas of rhythm, you will no longer need the metronome and perhaps you may not even want it.



IT'S ALL ABOUT RHYTHM

## Applying this course to your music

The material in this course has to do with rhythms that you could easily apply to any instrument and also to your voice. Whatever instrument, whatever field of music you are involved in, this kind of study is a common denominator. This practice is for whatever instrument, whatever musical style you are involved in.

## How to best use this course

This course is for you to participate with, so please clap along with us and play these rhythms with us. Everything we present here is for you to learn, so we recommend that you engage yourself with the exercises by participating musically as you watch, listen or practice the exercises on your own with (or without) a metronome.

## The importance of walking while you practice

As you walk around while you practice these rhythms, you will begin to feel that inner metronome inside of you. Be playful about this practice because the more fun you have with it, the more you are going to learn.

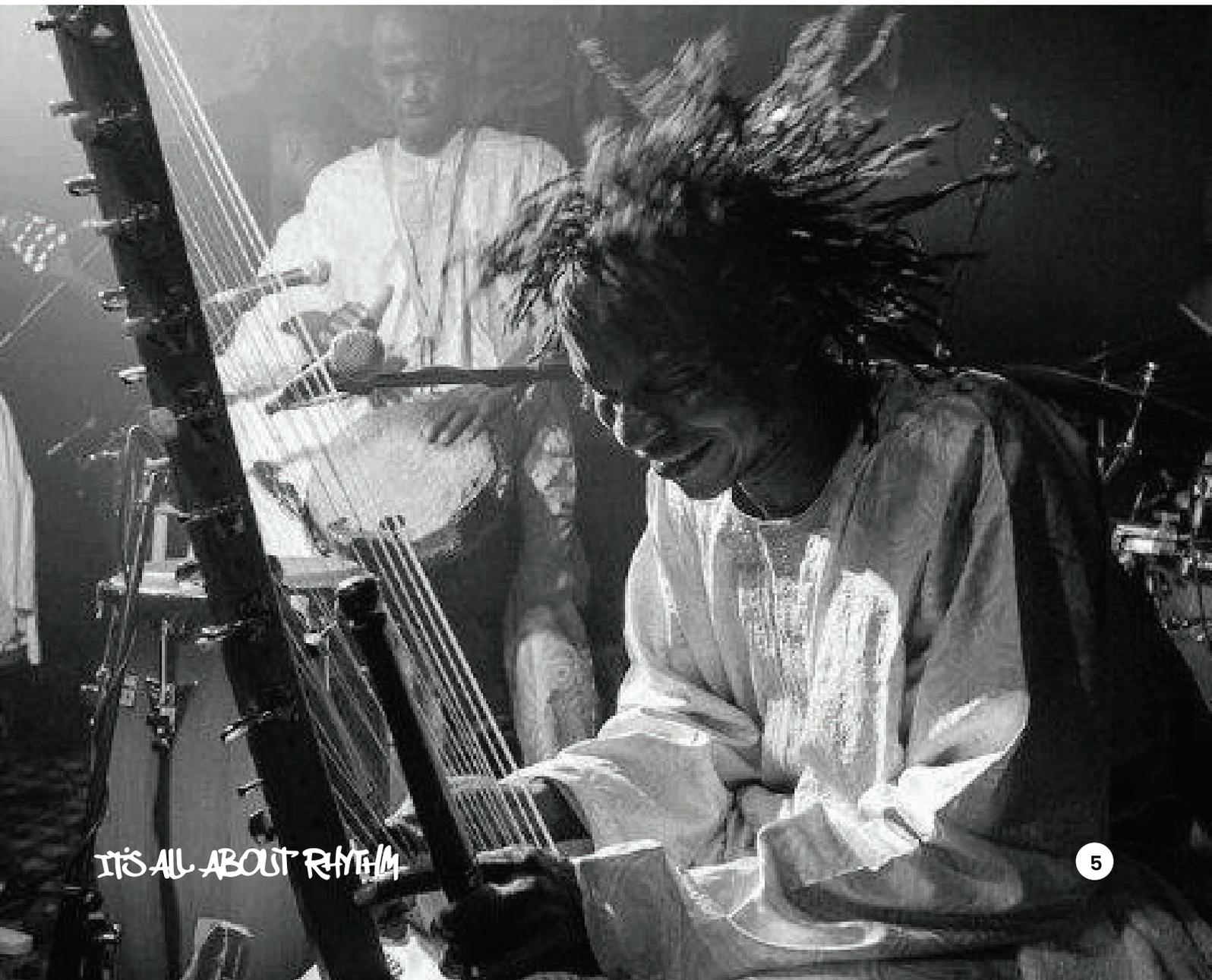


IT'S ALL ABOUT RHYTHM

## What advice would you give to people who want to improve their rhythm?

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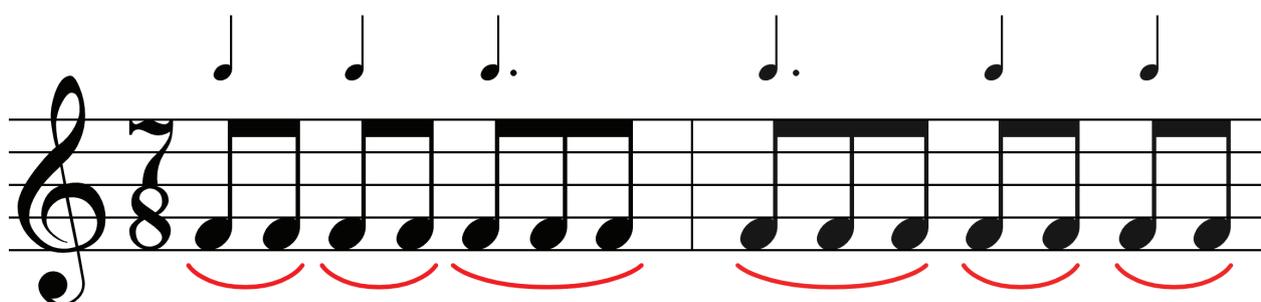
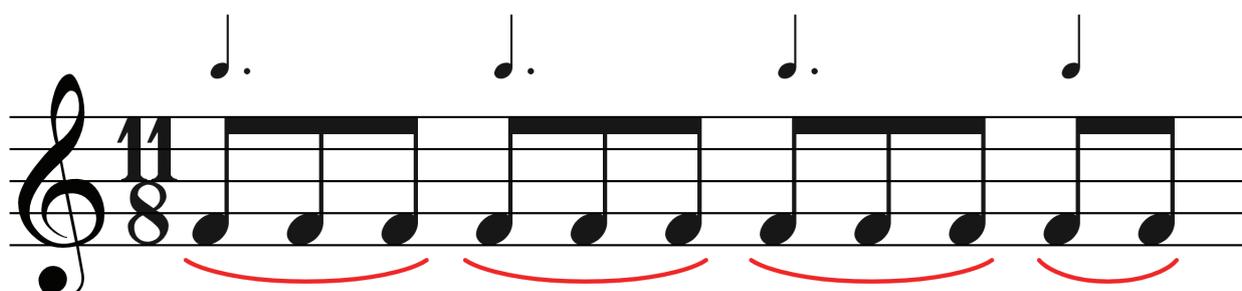
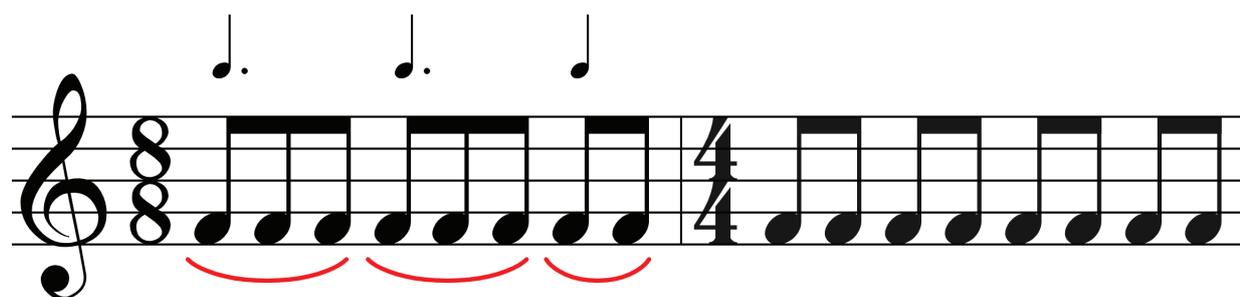
It's the stepping and dancing through the rhythms, scattin' the rhythms, it's that sort of multi-level approach that you take, so in other words, if you are playing an instrument, try playing the instrument and walking, try playing the instrument and scattin' (singing) rhythms at the same time, even try walking, playing and scattin' at the same time. Then go back to the single activity of playing. If you add these elements to it, it's going to expand your process and then when you are dealing with the more simple focus you will feel a little more at home. Something from your expanded, multi-modal practice will be translated back into your more focused practice.



## Why learn odd meters?

It's very important to learn rhythms in different cycles because at some point in your musical development you will want to layer rhythms, for example creating combinations of cycles in 3 beats, 5 beats, 6 beats, 8s, 13s, etc. You may want to layer these cycles and make them flow at the same time and find out where they land together and where they diverge. In this process you are actually going to stretch your melodic capacity. The melodic capacity will change depending on what cycles you are choosing. Some rhythms that you couldn't play in one cycle, you will be able to play in another cycle. Some melodies won't even come to your mind unless you are playing a certain rhythm cycle.

### Examples of Odd Meters in Western Musical Notation



# Why is it important to learn rhythm?

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All music is contained in what we call rhythm. A lot of us tend to separate rhythm as if it's something that functions on its own separately, but rhythm is part of everything. We don't recognize a melody unless it has a rhythm to it, unless it has some defined interval or space that we can recognize. If you were to play a melody from a famous song, but changed the length and timing of the notes drastically, it would be very difficult to recognize the song. The more that we come in touch with rhythm, the more we develop our command of the other aspects of music. To go deeply into rhythm is to be able to dive into a network of constantly moving gears which are all connected to each other and all connect to the greater whole. So learning rhythm is really a way to be able to reach out to every other aspect of music.

We are rhythmic beings. Our breath is rhythm, our heart beat is constantly moving in a rhythm, we are constantly doing things rhythmically. There are many things going on in our bodies that are rhythmic. Understanding and learning about rhythm is basically a way of listening to everything that is happening around us.

## The importance of rhythm for singers and instrumentalists

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In music rhythm gives you a sense of being able to feel that you can play whatever the instrument or whatever the occasion is. You can take an instrument that maybe you've never played before and develop something on that instrument. Rhythm is extremely important for people who are using just their voices, because if you are using your voice in a rhythmic fashion, then it's going to be musical, however it's placed. It's important for singers to focus on rhythms because if they are singing beautiful rhythms or are locked into the rhythm of the music, it is going to help shape the music. Being "in the groove" rhythmically will make the music sound really clear for everybody and it will make the music move.

# Rhythm in World Music

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Often in the society that we live in, we constantly hear rhythms in 4 and 8 that are basic, simple, predictable rhythms, but in other parts of the world we don't hear that all the time. We will hear rhythms that are hard to discern right away. We will hear rhythms in 5s and 13s and 11s, and all sorts of cycles and you will hear the beauty of that shape. So diving into rhythm will allow us to be able to find our way into music in other parts of the world much easier. We might be able to find what's happening, say, in West Africa, where we might hear rhythms in 12/8. Often times those rhythms can come in so many different packages that it's hard to tell where it's going or where the 1 is. But if you are studying rhythms and playing rhythms from early on then for most rhythms you hear, you will find a way into them.

## The importance of practicing slowly

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Practicing anything slowly is very important because when you practice slowly, you begin to see the very subtle nuances and clues that show you what is happening. When you are going fast, oftentimes you get used to the overall shape but you don't get to see the little colors and tiny speckles and things give the music it's whole shape. When you practice these things very slowly, the internal parts of the pattern become so clear to you that when you start speeding up the tempo, you can read, hear and play the rhythms much easier. So we highly recommend practicing any aspect of music slowly, whether it be rhythm, melody, harmony, etc.



# What is a clave?

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*“the clave rhythm shares a name with the clave instrument, a pair of high-pitched sticks used to tap out the clave rhythms”*

Throughout this course you will hear the term clave mentioned, and for good reason. A clave is a syncopated rhythmic pattern that gives structure to the feel of the music. Three common claves which we cover in this course are the caribbean clave, the son clave and the bossa clave. There are many other claves that come from all different parts of the world. To name a few places where we hear them most commonly: African music, Latin American music, Middle-Eastern music, flamenco. Again this is just a short, incomplete list of music where you can hear claves.



## "Dancing" with time

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Oftentimes we get introduced to counting music early on. We hear people count 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. and that helps us to get a sense of the underlying pulse. But that pulse is not really dancing itself. Rhythms are dancing, and claves are dancing. When you start to play rhythms, especially claves, these are dancing patterns. We are literally taking time and dancing with it, or you could say we are dancing with time. If you consider where our concept of time may have come from, then why not make all of your life a dance? Why not make all of your sense of time a sense of dance?

# The 48 Rhythm Exercises

Here are the 48 exercises covered in the It's All About Rhythm video course. Feel free to clap along or play with these exercises on any instrument.

<b>1.</b>				
<b>2.</b>				
<b>3.</b>				
<b>4.</b>				
<b>5.</b>				
<b>6.</b>				

7.



8.



9.



10.



11.



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23.



24.



**25.**



**26.**



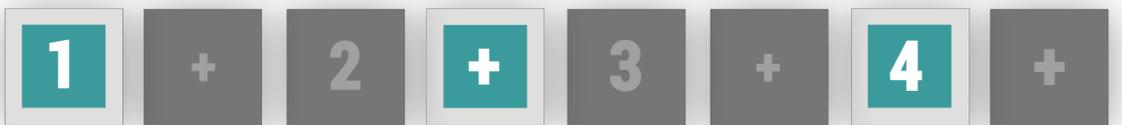
**27.**



**28.**



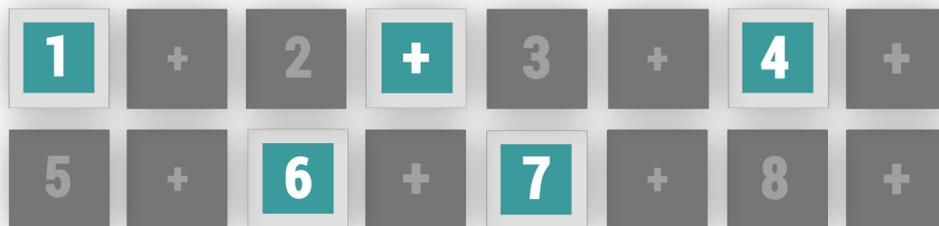
**29.**



**30.**



**31.**



**32.**



**33.**



**34.**



**35.**



**36.**



**37.**



**38.**



**39.**



**40.**



**41.**



**42.**



43.



44.



45.



46.



47.



48.



# About Kevin Nathaniel



My name is Kevin Nathaniel and I was born in Detroit, Michigan, which is Motown, a musical mecca. Growing up in Detroit I heard music everywhere, but I didn't think I was going to play music because there were so many incredible musicians around at the time and I didn't think I could do what they were doing. It wasn't until I was practically out of college where I had some experiences listening to music coming out of Africa, and something told me I need to play music, I need to start playing, I had to start learning and get involved with instruments and making instruments.

So the first instruments I got involved with playing and making were mbiras, aka kalimbas. I started building and playing these instruments and that was a path for me. From there I began to learn more about other instruments. I played many different instruments throughout my reach so far, but it started out with what sort of door opened when I got involved with mbira music and especially mbira music out of Southern Africa and Zimbabwe which took me into all sorts of other kinds of music. So that's where I started.

**Check out Kevin's personal website at**

<http://kevinnathaniel.com/>

# About Didge Project

Didge Project is a music media company, blog, video channel, producer of courses and events, instrument store and a collective of musicians who want to help you use music as a tool for uplifting yourself and others around you.

On our site you will find tips and tutorials to help you become a better musician, didgeridoo lessons, instrument features and reviews, and reports on the latest scientific research and spiritual discoveries merging through the medium of sound.

When we began in 2008 our main focus was on teaching how to play the didgeridoo, a wind instrument originating in aboriginal Australia and also said to be present in ancient Mayan times. After working with countless people it became apparent that most musicians play multiple instruments and that we have the community resources to help all musicians get better results. While we still provide didgeridoo lessons, classes and programs, our focus is to provide tutorials for music and instruments from all around the world. Visit us for great music resources at [www.didgeproject.com](http://www.didgeproject.com)





## **Other Courses from Didge Project**

**The Circular Breathing Mastery Course**

**The Didgeridoo Skills Course**

**The Overtone Throat Singing Course**

**Didge For Sleep**