Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

Music Faculty Publications & Performances

Music

2011

Practicar / Practicing Tips

John M. Cipolla

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/mus_fac_pub

Part of the Music Pedagogy Commons, and the Music Performance Commons

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Music Faculty Publications & Performances by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

Western Kentucky University

From the SelectedWorks of John M Cipolla

Summer July, 2011

Practicing Tips

John M Cipolla, *Western Kentucky University*

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/john_cipolla/65/

Practicing

By Dr. John Cipolla
Western Kentucky University, E-mail: john.cipolla@wku.edu

Below are a number of approaches to practicing technical passages that utilize varied rhythms, meters, and poly rhythms.

Introduction

1) Inspire yourself! There will be days when you won't feel like practicing. This is why it is important to always be listening to excellent musicians to learn from and model after so that one looks forward to practicing. It is through this continual listening that one actually develops the desire to "want" to continue to learn and grow as a musician. Always listen to live players and high-quality recordings to inspire yourself to practice and improve.

2) Organize your practicing. Put practicing in your daily schedule planner. Practice in the morning when you are most awake, and if possible, practice at the same time and in the same space each day. Items to have available when practicing are an instrument in good mechanical repair, a music stand, a pencil, a metronome, an electronic tuner, and a chair. Other helpful items-a good quality digital recorder to listen to listen and critique yourself immediately while you are practicing and *The Tuning CD* (http://www.wix.com/raschwartz/the-tuning-cd#!). *If at all possible, these last two items will help make the practice process very efficient, immediately revealing areas in need of improvement in an aural way so the player learns to react to them immediately, training your instincts.*

Start your practice session with breathing exercises, then move to tone development exercises, slurred scales, then scales with various articulations, etudes, solo repertoire/chamber/ensemble repertoire, and finish the practice session with some improvisation. Your teacher can guide you through specifics of each of these areas.

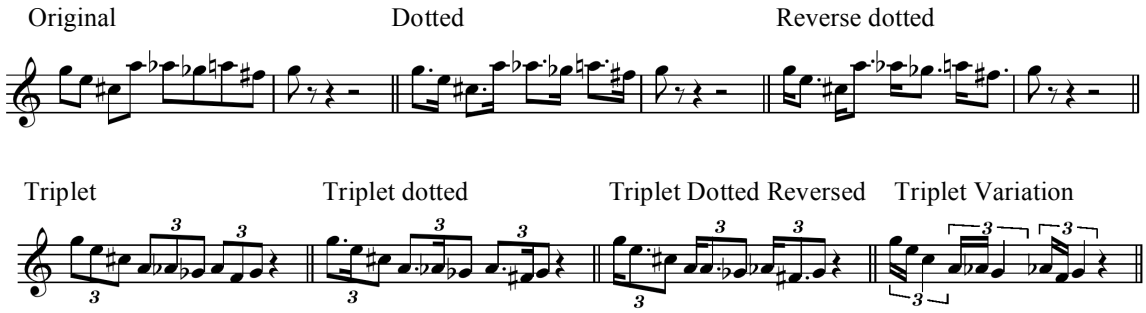
3) Ways to practice technical passages

- Fundamental Practice Techniques
  - Rhythm variation
  - 5 and 1 method by Peter Hadcock, former Eb clarinet, Boston Symphony
  - Add a note, backwards, one note at a time
  - Moving the beam to create a new downbeat
- Advanced Practice Techniques
  - Changing the number of notes under a beam
  - Moving the beam under each new number of notes under a beam
  - Polyrhythms
    - 2:3, 3:2, 3:4, 4:3
    - First tapping these rhythms with the hands
    - Playing passages/scales with steady pulse of the metronome

Fundamental Practice Techniques

Rhythm Variation

Play the phrase with rhythmic variations. Some of the more common ones are suggested below. Always start at a slow tempo so as to play all the notes correctly and reinforce the correct execution of the passage, then gradually increase the tempo.

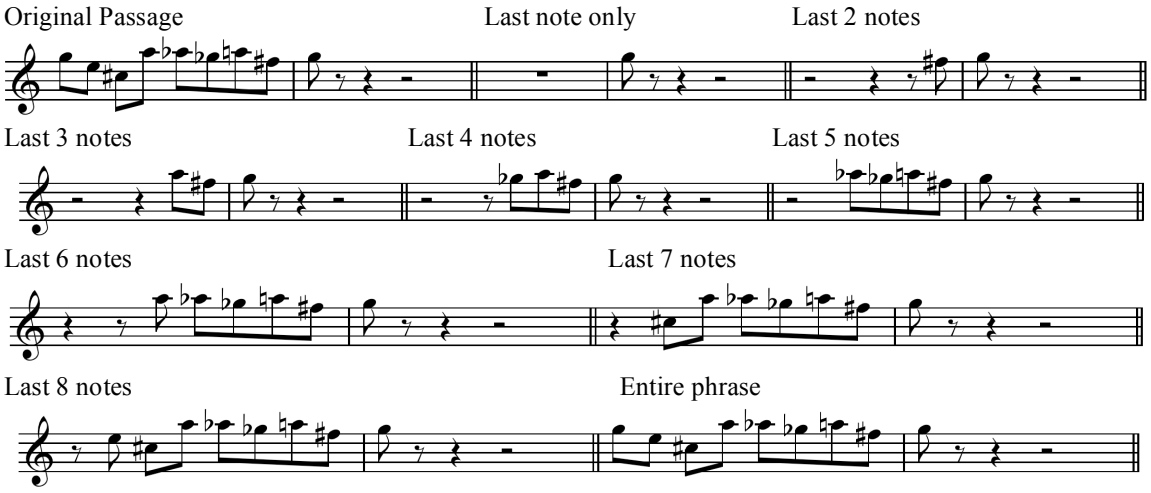


Five and One Method

- Isolate passage (work on only one or two bars at a time)
- Play passage one time at half the performance tempo
- Move metronome up three clicks (or if digital, move up 7 (ex. 50 to 57)
- Play passage one time
- Move metronome down 2 notches (or if digital, down 4 (ex. 57 to 53)
- Play passage 5 times
- Repeat process moving metronome up 3, play once, down two, play 5 times until you reach performance tempo. By moving metronome up 3 notches, you are pushing yourself slightly, but not enough to make a mistake. By playing five times at a slightly slower tempo, you are reinforcing your digital finger memory and correct execution of the passage.
- This method really works if you follow the steps exactly.

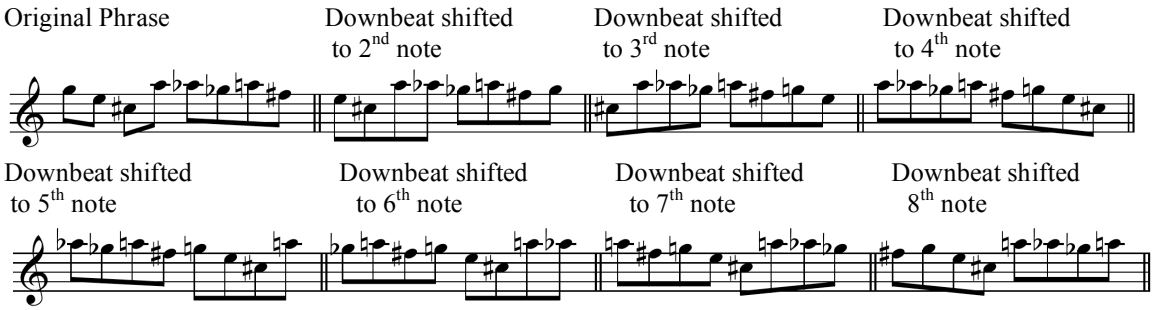
Add a note, backwards, one note at a time

Play passage starting with the last note, gradually adding one note at a time, moving backwards to the beginning of the passage. It is recommended to do this at a slow enough tempo to play the phrase perfectly with no mistakes, then repeat the entire process of adding notes, each full cycle increasing the tempo slightly.



Moving the beam to create a new downbeat

Each bar starts with a new note as the new downbeat by moving the beamed notes to the right by one note. The downbeat is shifted in each permutation until the phrase loops around to the original form. Start at a slow tempo so the phrase is played perfectly, then gradually increase the tempo.



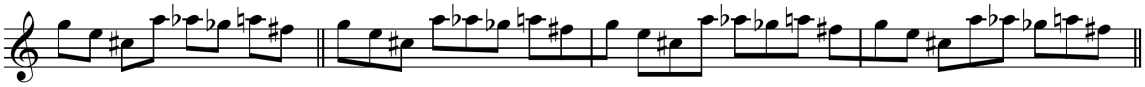
Advanced Practice Techniques

Changing the number of notes under a beam

Start with two notes under a beam, then increase by one note at a time until you get to eight. Vary articulations when practicing with this technique.

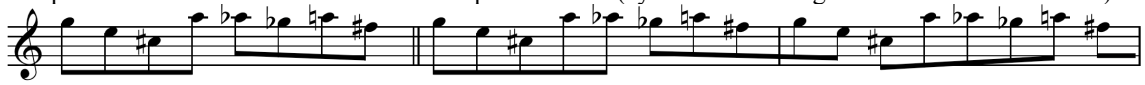
Original Phrase

Groups of 2 notes

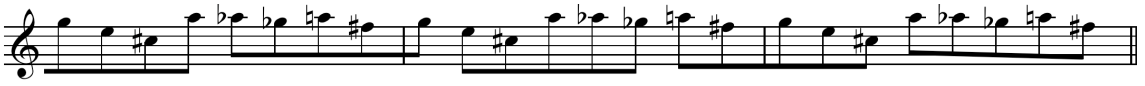


Groups of 3 notes (cycles back to original downbeat after 3 bars)

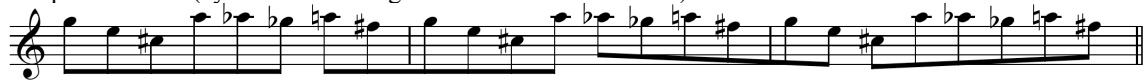
Groups of 4 notes



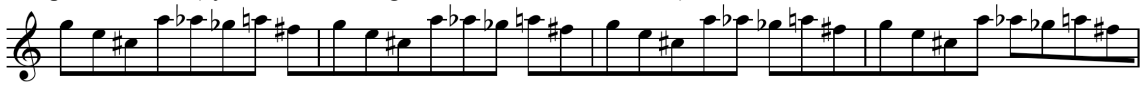
Groups of 5 notes (cycles back to original downbeat after 5 bars)



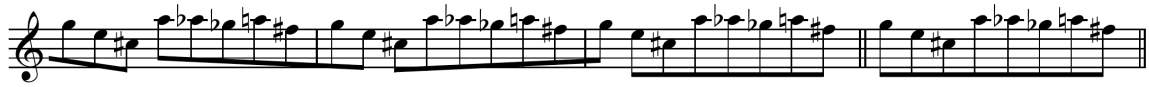
Groups of 6 notes (cycles back to original downbeat after 3 bars)



Groups of 7 notes (cycles back to original downbeat after 7 bars)



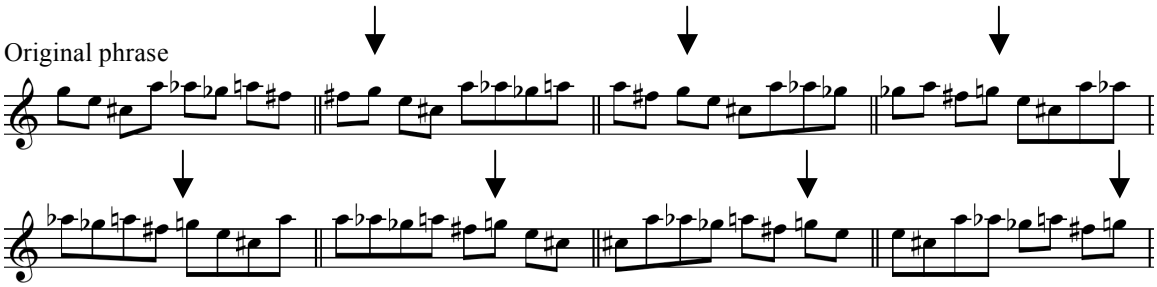
Group of 8 notes



Moving the beam under each new number of notes under a beam

This exercise is a combination of the earlier fundamental technique of moving the beam over by one note at a time, but it is applied to each group of notes in the previous exercise. This approach yields many permutations so only one example will be provided. The arrows display where the original phrase started.

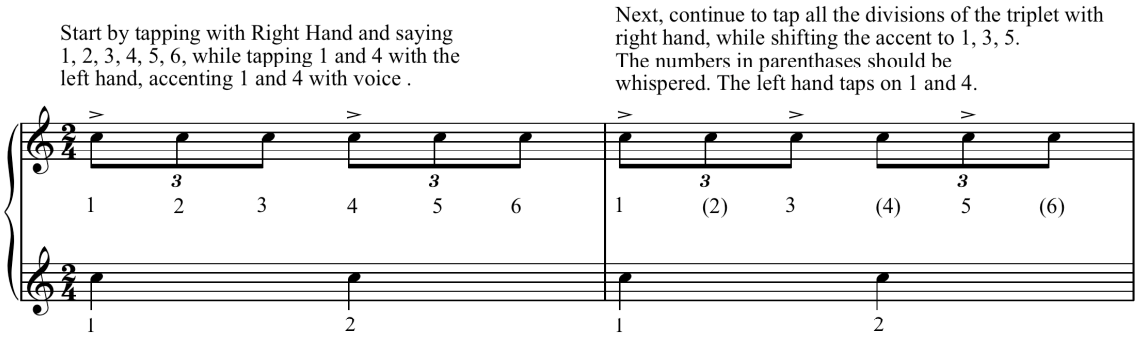
Original phrase

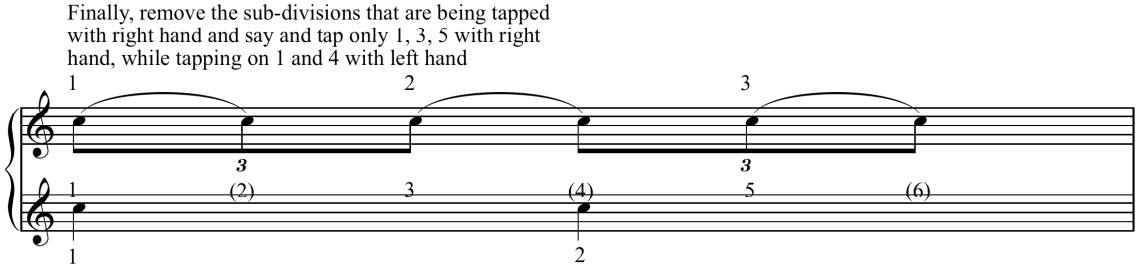


Polyrhythms

Two against Three/Three against Two

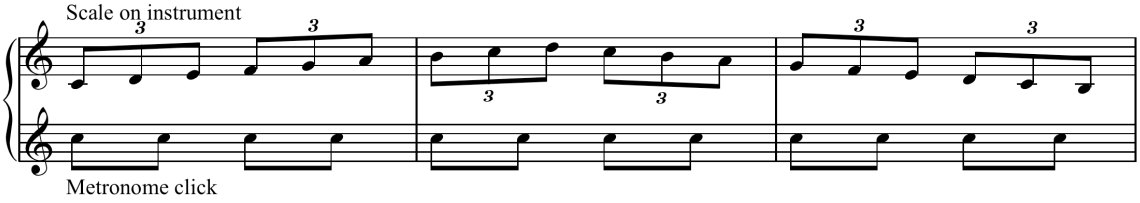
This exercise can be done tapping on a drum or the legs to start with, and then can be moved to the instrument. Start with hands tapping at the same time and while tapping 2 in one hand and 3 in the other, vary saying 1, 2, 1, 2, then 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3 so you develop a feel for what the 2 feels like against the 3 and how the 3 feels against the 4.



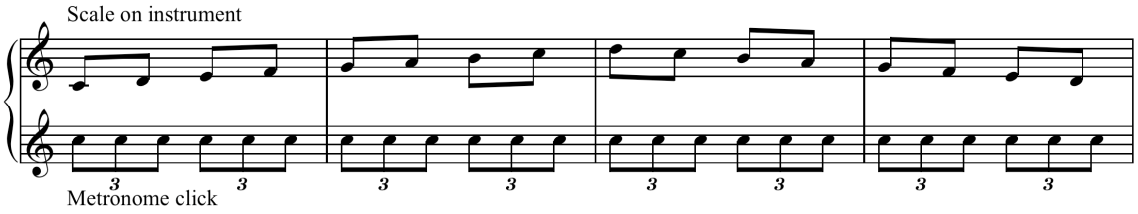


Three Against Two

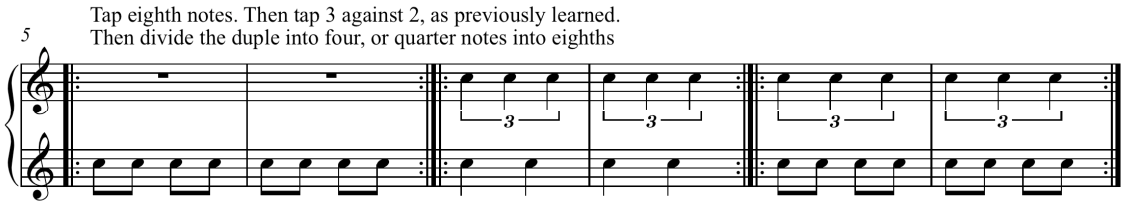
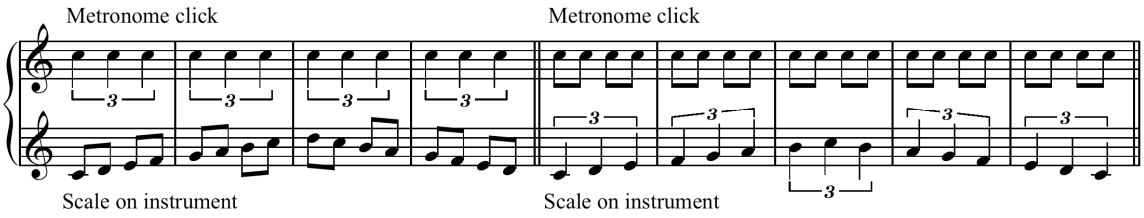
In this exercise, put the metronome on 60. The metronome beats the quarter note while scale is played in triplets against the quarter note.



Two Against Three
Next, the metronome beats each eighth note of an eighth note triplet, while scale is played in eighth notes against the triplet.



Three Against Four/Four Against Three
Do this same type of exercise with 3 against 4 and 4 against 3.



Three Against Four/Four Against Three on the instrument
Next, try playing a scale with the metronome on either three clicks against the four scale notes, or the other way around, four clicks against the three scale notes. Try this with various scales, beyond one octave, and at various tempos.