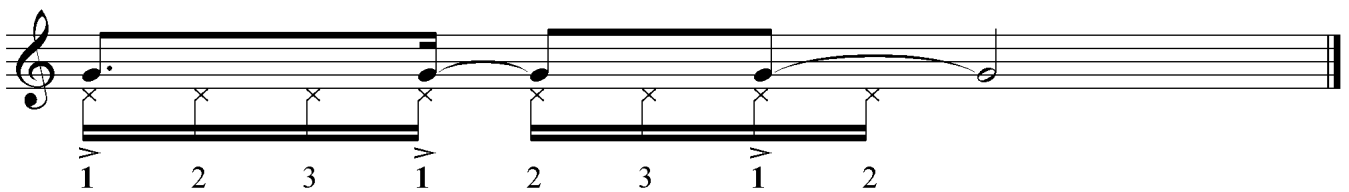


Understanding contemporary rhythms

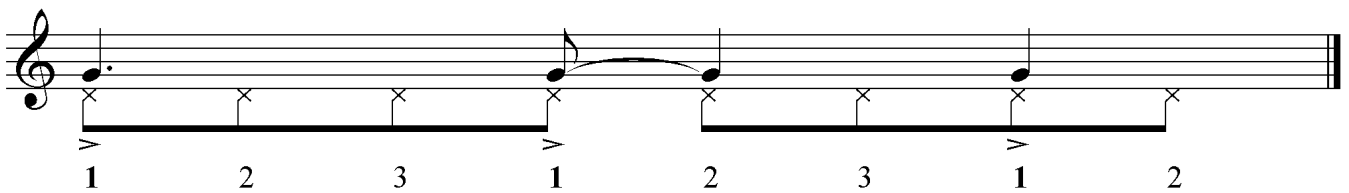
Once you can use different chords and inversions properly it's time to tackle the Achilles heel of most keyboard players—rhythm. While guitarists naturally add rhythm to a piece of music it's much harder work for a keyboardist. It's often easy to play very 'straight' rhythms (like crotchets on each beat of the bar) which can be effective but are not enough in contemporary music. The kind of music we listen too and sing in church is quite syncopated. This means that the notes we play and sing often come in between the beats of the bar. Although most people quite naturally sing this way it can often be hard to play syncopated rhythms.

There is one rhythm which dominates much contemporary worship music. If we are to be effective keyboard players we must get to grips with it and use it well. Here it is:



The rhythm we need to play is written on the 'G' at the top whilst the semiquavers underneath can help us to work out how it is constructed. You can work out any complicated written rhythm by finding the longest note that will subdivide into the whole rhythm (in this case a semiquaver) and laying that underneath the original rhythm. Once you've done that add accents wherever you should play a note and call that number one each time. Here you get the rhythm 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2.

A good variation on this rhythm is to double the notes in length and forget the minim at the end of the bar:



This rhythm is also used widely in contemporary music. Try to play songs you know using both of these rhythms. You may need to slow things down to get them exactly right before speeding up again. Do try to be very precise about playing this kind of rhythm as it can make a real difference in driving a song forward.