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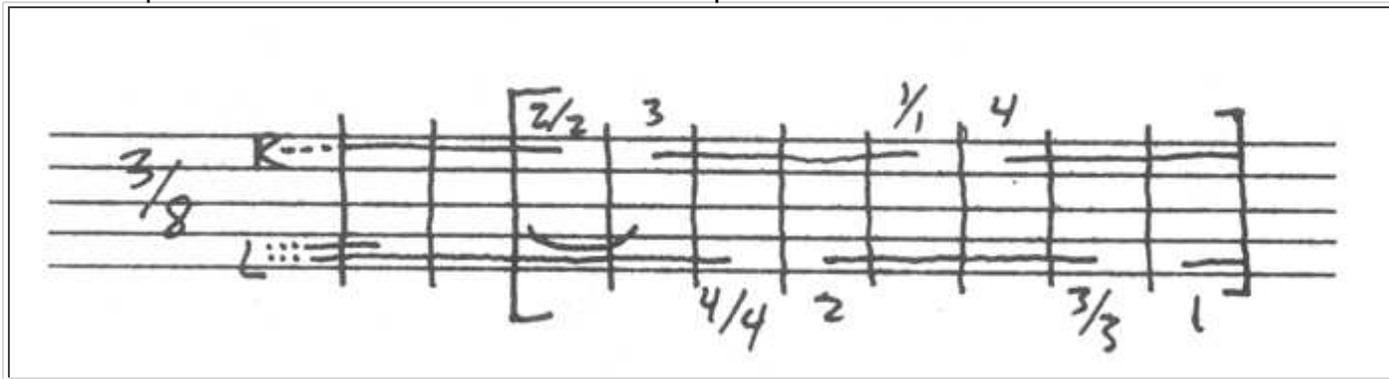
A WRITTEN NOTATION FOR DESCRIBING BALL JUGGLING TRICKS

by Dave Storer

This note is in response to the question about juggling notation from David LeDoux in the [October-November '77 Newsletter](#). Last summer I began thinking about the same thing. I guess what got me started was the Editor's description of a threeball trick in the March-April '77 issue. After reading it, and rereading it, and about two hours of trying it, I finally figured it out. I also figured that there had to be a better way to describe it than English. If musicians had to describe music the way we describe juggling, we'd have very little good music.

So I came up with a more compact and precise method of describing "the" threeball trick. In the process I developed a complete notation for all the ball variations I can do (30 to 40) and a lot that I can't.

Here's the description of the three ball trick with a brief explanation of the notation.



One beat is the time it takes to throw or catch a ball. An exchange takes two beats. The vertical lines mark the beats. In one beat one hand can throw or catch, but not both.

The 3/8 means 3 balls, 8 beats before repeating. R and L denote Right and Left hand actions; top space for Right, bottom for Left.

The heavy black lines show hand movement carrying a ball. Breaks in the heavy line show movement of an empty hand.

The numbers refer to throwing or catching positions. From left to right, at waist level, they are numbered 3, 1, 2, and 4. (In a regular cascade, throws are from 2 to 3 and from 1 to 4. Catches would be made in position 3 with the left hand and 4 with the right hand.)

The number at the beginning of a heavy line is the position of the hand for catching. The hand then carries the ball (heavy line) to the position numbered above the / at the right end of the line. This is the position of the hand when the ball is thrown. The number below the / tells to which position to throw. (In the three-ball cascade, the notation for the right hand would be a series of 4 -----2/3.)

The [and] show where one cycle starts and ends. The arc over some of the left-hand lines shows that the left hand moves under the right.

The three ball trick is a rather difficult one to start with, but the notation very dramatically reduces the space required to describe the trick and increases the precision. If everyone knew the notation, many tricks could be described in a small space. Also, you could completely describe an entire ball routine. I've also found the notation very useful in thinking about new tricks and in figuring out the transition moves necessary to go smoothly from one trick to another.

I have written a five page description of my complete notation system, and for \$1 to cover the cost of reproduction and mailing, I'll send a copy. My address is Cedar Rapids, IA

I don't know whether this notation will catch on or not, but for me, anyway, it sure beats wading through a long English description of a trick.

[Editor's note: The complete description includes methods for noting additional hand positions, types of throws and catches, rhythm, and gives a number of examples. Notational methods may not be everybody's cup of tea, and this particular method will not be the last word; but those of you who are interested in this sort of thing will find that Dave Storer has made substantial progress in developing a workable system of juggling notation.]