

Drumset Audition Tips

Basic Drumset Patterns

These basic patterns are examples of one way these rhythms are played. Variations are permitted and desired as long as the general style or feel is maintained. The key word here is basic. So the answer to your questions is: "No, you don't have to play them exactly as written!" Important note: When playing a drumset pattern for an audition, don't play 57 varieties of that pattern. Pick one, then establish and maintain a solid groove. Remember to keep solid time when playing your fills! Practice with a metronome!

Reading Drum Charts

Rule #1 - Always read the words on the chart. They are important!

Words like "to stix", "On bell" and "cresc" are very important. They give you an idea of what the composer wanted. The most important part of playing a drum chart is figuring out what the composer wanted. The main questions to ask are:

- 1) What is the *Style* of the piece? (Swing, Rock, Funk...)
- 2) What is the *Tempo*? (q=120, Bright Swing, Ballad...)
- 3) What is the *Form*? How many measures are in each section of the piece? - Rehearsal mark locations will usually give you this info.

Rule #2 - Don't play the notes exactly as written. So what are all those notes for?

Basic Rhythm Patterns - If you know the style of the piece, you may ignore the written beat patterns and play something that you know will work.

Small figures above the staff - These cue marks are rhythms that another section of the band is playing. Sometimes all you want to do is use these to keep your place in the music - especially if the rhythms are very complex or "thick." Other times you will "kick" the figures. Usually short notes with accents are played on a drum, and long accented notes (tied notes, dotted quarter or longer notes) are played with a simultaneous hit of the BD and cymbal. The tricky part of playing cued notes is editing - figuring which ones to play, and which to leave out.

Regular size notes in the staff - These usually indicate important rhythms that the composer wants you to play. See above for suggestions on how to do this. be aware of two things:

- 1) A rhythm written on the snare and bass drum lines isn't usually played on the snare and bass. Play the rhythm in a musical fashion selecting various drums and cymbals that are appropriate.
- 2) A solo or fill indicated with a rolled cymbal note is not always placed on the cymbal. Instead, fill around the drumset if it sounds more appropriate.

Important Note - With beginner level drum charts - the composer often will write something that will sound OK if played exactly as written - because the assumption is that the player has little or no experience with which to interpret the chart. These charts serve as a foundation for what will eventually sound good.

I hope this helps you interpret the audition piece and any other drum chart you run into. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at FinkDrum@aol.com. Good Luck!

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