

Beginner's Guide to

BiG BaND DRUMMiNG

Includes play-along mp3s for all exercises and charts

Anthony Stanislavski



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthony Stanislavski is a drummer, educator and author from Melbourne, Australia. He prides himself on his ability to play many different styles of music and devotes himself to his craft by continuing to learn and develop as a musician. At the age of 18, Anthony joined the Australian Army Band as a percussionist and during his seven-year service, he toured Australia and overseas, performing with the likes of Guy Sebastian and Marina Prior. He studied with some of Australia's most prolific drum teachers including Simon Barker, Graham Morgan, Peter Blick, Dave Beck and Ronny Ferella, and has completed a Bachelor of Music Performance at the Victorian College of the Arts.

As a performer, Anthony has performed at many high profile events including the ANZAC Day Clash at the MCG, the Australian Grand Prix, the Japan Self-Defence Forces Marching Festival, and the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo Melbourne. He performs regularly in rock, jazz, Irish and country bands. As an educator, Anthony teaches drum kit, percussion and music theory at some of Melbourne's most prestigious schools including Caulfield Grammar School and Luther College.



PREFACE

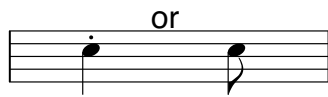
Soon after I joined the Australian Army Band I was put onto the drum chair in the big band. At that stage I was quite inexperienced in the style but had to learn very quickly how to not only read the charts, but to also drive the band and sound authentic at the same time. During the years that followed I was lucky enough to be mentored by some very experienced military drummers, and in time I developed a logical method of how to quickly learn any big band chart put in front of me. It is now time that I pass on this knowledge to you.

Over the past few years I have written many exercises that I teach to my own students and have now compiled these into a method that covers some very important big band drumming skills. *The Beginner's Guide to Big Band Drumming* is designed to educate the inexperienced drummer on how to interpret big band charts and focuses on the difference between short and long note orchestrations, section vs. ensemble figures, and how to approach rests and fills. Every exercise in the book is accompanied with four backing tracks, ranging from 90 to 180 bpm.

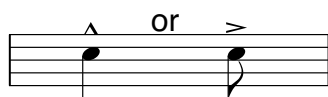
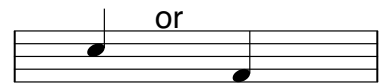


NOTE LENGTHS

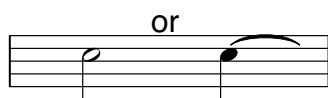
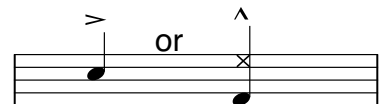
One of the most important aspects of interpreting drum charts is understanding the difference between short and long notes. Once you understand this concept, it is important to choose the drum and/or cymbal that matches the note length along with the articulation. The left column below shows the different notes and the right shows the matching drum kit options.



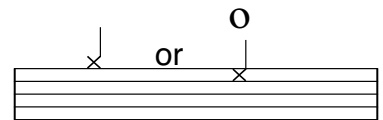
Unaccented short notes



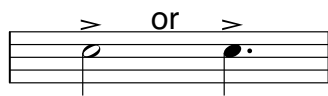
Accented short notes



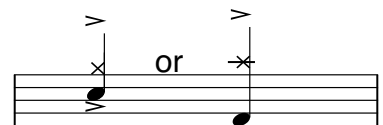
Unaccented long notes



Accented long notes are nearly always orchestrated with both a cymbal and a snare or kick. The long note is represented by the cymbal and the accent is represented by the snare or kick.



Accented long notes



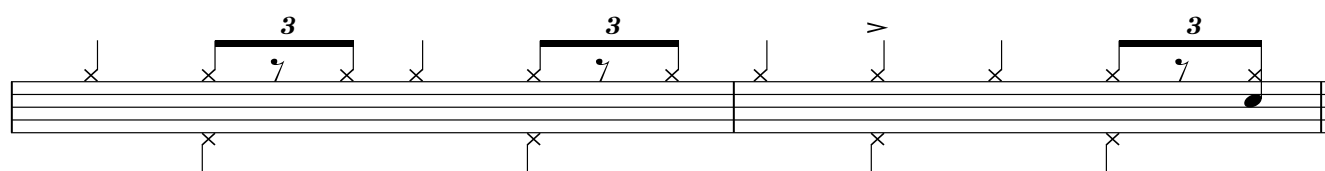
SECTION FIGURES

Section figures are phrases played by specific instrument groups such as the saxophone (sxs), trumpet (tpts) or trombone (tbns) sections and are usually notated on the drum chart above the staff. The abbreviations *sxs*, *tpts* or *tbns* will often be written in brackets next to the figure. Lower register instruments such as the trombone or bass are sometimes notated below the staff. Each section has their own tone quality, or *timbre*, and it is important to understand how these variations in tone blend with the drum kit. As a member of the rhythm section it is the drummer's role to provide steady time and to “set-up” and “catch” the section figures with either the snare drum or kick drum, with consideration to the section's timbre.

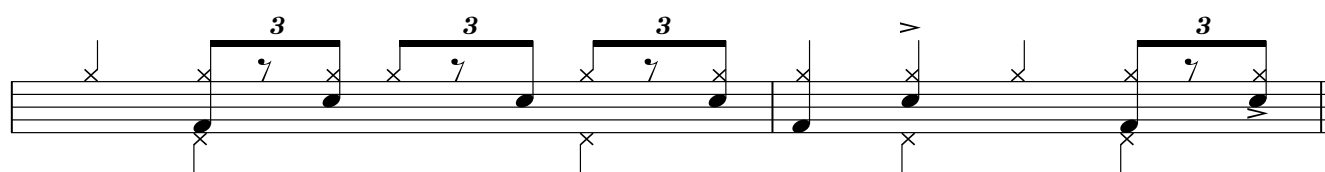
Let's take a look at this section figure below and then consider how to interpret it depending on the section:



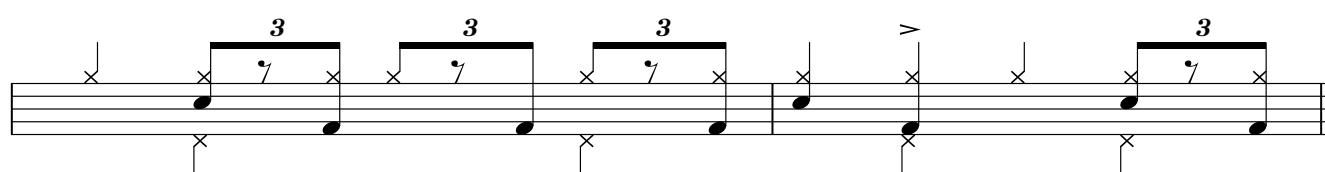
The **saxophone section** is the most mellow in timbre. As the drum kit is comparatively brighter in sound, it is best to stay out of the way to avoid drowning out the section. The drummer only needs to play the basic swing feel and catch some rhythms, unless indicated otherwise. Below is an interpretation of the figure if it were played by the saxophone section. Notice the subtle accent on the ride cymbal in bar 2 and the unaccented snare on the last beat. This is a good example of how to stay out of the way whilst providing a solid time feel.



The **trumpet section** is brighter in timbre and is therefore sonically similar to the drum kit. This also grants the drummer more room to embellish the phrase. The drummer should identify the accented notes and think of these as “target” points and then aim to play these notes with the snare and set them up with the kick. Below is an interpretation of the figure if it were played by the trumpet section.



The **trombone section** is darker in timbre but similar to the trumpets in the way that there is room to embellish. Take the target notes and aim to play these with the kick drum and set them up with the snare drum. Below is an interpretation of the figure if it were played by the trombone section.



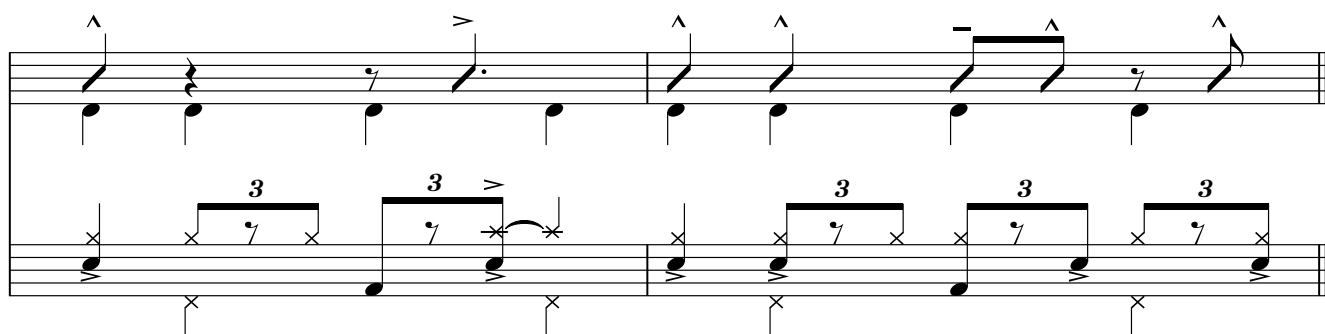
ENSEMBLE FIGURES

Ensemble figures are phrases played by most, if not all, sections of the band in rhythmic unison. It is the drummer's job to help set-up and catch the figures in a way that is clear to the members of the ensemble. A very clear way to do this is to play a snare or a kick on the beat before the figure commences.

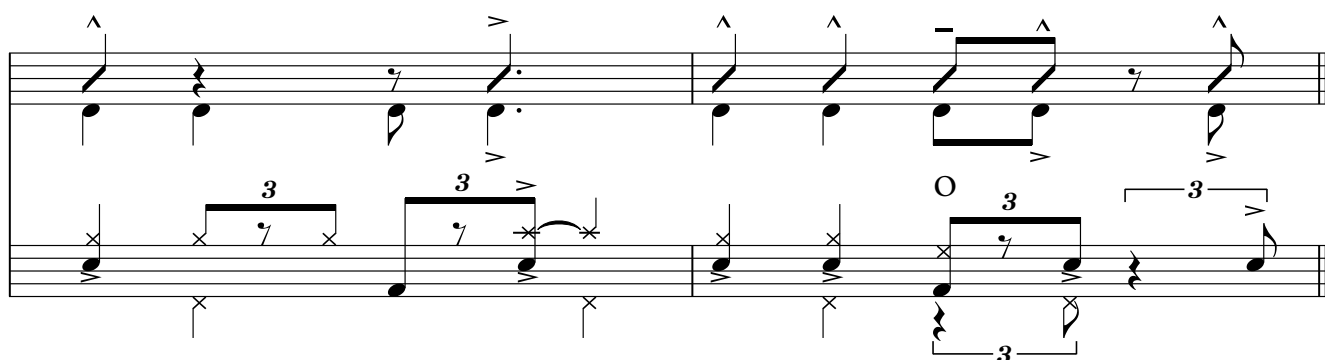
The figure below uses the most common method of ensemble figure notation. Sometimes ensemble figures will be written the same as section figures above the staff, but they will usually have "Ensemble" or "ens" written alongside it. This figure implies that all instruments are in rhythmic unison.



Occasionally ensemble figures will have the bass rhythm notated at the bottom of the staff. The figure below implies that ensemble figures are played while the bass and drums continue to play time. The drummer must continue to play the basic swing pattern whilst catching and setting up the ensemble rhythms with a combination of snare, kick, and crash cymbals, depending on the articulation and dynamic.



The figure below has the bass playing time but is also catching the ensemble rhythms. Take note of the rest on beat 4 in the second bar. As both the ensemble and the bass have a rest on the same beat, this implies that the drummer should also rest.



LONG NOTES 2

- Track 13 - 90 bpm
- Track 14 - 120 bpm
- Track 15 - 150 bpm
- Track 16 - 180 bpm

1

(SXS)

Exercise 1, (SXS), consists of two staves. The top staff features a series of eighth notes with a repeat sign, followed by a half note with an accent. The bottom staff contains a sequence of triplets of eighth notes, with some notes marked with an accent. The exercise is divided into two measures by a repeat sign.

2

Exercise 2 consists of two staves. The top staff features a series of eighth notes with a repeat sign, followed by a half note with an accent. The bottom staff contains a sequence of triplets of eighth notes, with some notes marked with an accent. The exercise is divided into two measures by a repeat sign.

3

Exercise 3 consists of two staves. The top staff features a series of eighth notes with a repeat sign, followed by a half note with an accent. The bottom staff contains a sequence of triplets of eighth notes, with some notes marked with an accent. The exercise is divided into two measures by a repeat sign.

4

Exercise 4 consists of two staves. The top staff features a series of eighth notes with a repeat sign, followed by a half note with an accent. The bottom staff contains a sequence of triplets of eighth notes, with some notes marked with an accent. The exercise is divided into two measures by a repeat sign.