Drumset Concepts Volume V:
A Styles-Based Guide to Big Band Drumming
by Rich MacDonald

Instructions

The ten chapters in this book are designed to be used in a variety of ways.

- As a package, a wide range of styles and considerations are presented for drummers to tackle the challenges in big band music. Care has been taken to include both traditional and modern approaches to the repertoire. For the beginning to intermediate-level student, the pedagogy contains suggestions for simplifying the various concepts. The advanced student will also find ample material for study.

- Each chapter may be studied individually to achieve competence in the given style for that chapter. By design, all of the pedagogical material is transferable to other compositions/arrangements in the represented styles. I envision one use for this book will be a resource guide for directors of high school and college ensembles to give their drummers a strong foundation in the big band domain. Directors may find that the compositions themselves will work well to program with their groups.

- Advanced students and professional players may wish to dive into the charts and playalong tracks right away. The tracks provide the user with options of using the click (metronome) or not, and all of the chapter playalongs include portions of the arrangements in smaller dosages.

How to use this book

The pedagogy is set up with a series of concepts for each chapter, relating to the issues inherent with each style. The common concepts for each chapter include:

- A detailed analysis and summary of the form of each composition and arrangement – and the drummer's adaptation throughout the piece to those formal sections.

- A comparison between the written part from the composer and the edited part that I have created – along with reasons for the edits.

- A discussion of unique technical considerations for each style – generally broken down to their simplest patterns and then built up for use in the context of the pieces for students of all levels.

- A detailed appendix for each chapter with links to representative recordings and other resources for the user to investigate professional approaches to the given styles. Most of these are YouTube links that open separate windows in a browser.

- Additional appendices links to audio, video and pdf resources that are outlined at various points in the chapters.

- An interactive table of contents for each chapter. I have found the use of bookmarks is a useful tool (provided by the app) for navigating around the document(s). Also, in Apple's Books app, the Grid option (top menu) offers thumbnails for each page for easy navigation.

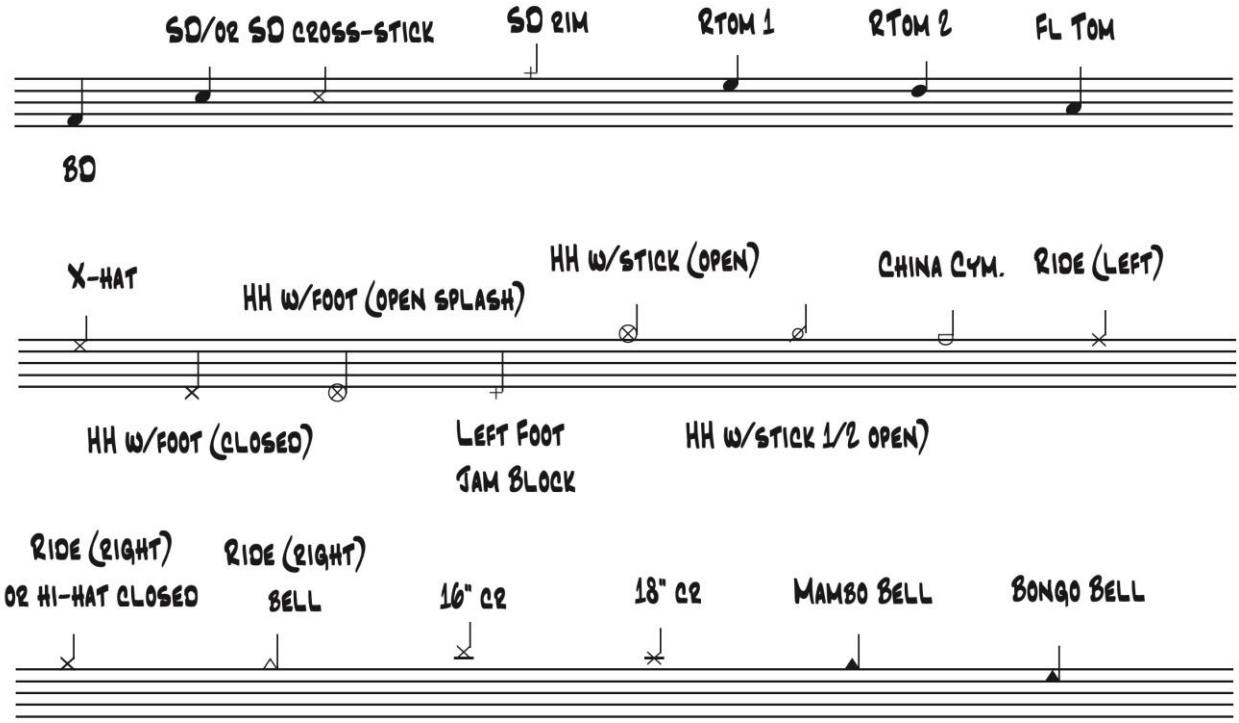
Assuming you are working from a smartphone, tablet or a laptop, it may be useful for you to print out some of the pdfs to have available to you while you work with the playalong files. The pdfs for all the chapters are available for printing from my website (macdrummusic.com).

The volume of material can be daunting at first, but visits to the chapters can be distilled to specific goals. For example, you may want to spend one session just taking in the Representative Recordings or Other Sources in the Appendices. Another visit may be to dive into the technique studies of a given chapter, and yet another could be to focus on working through specific playalong files. The goal is to supply in-depth study and analysis, while learning the style from a variety of experience levels. Often, we teachers implore our students to "listen to jazz," but the access to music is now so overwhelming that it can become paralyzing. Here, I have tried to minimize this glut of information by supplying very specific resources. They certainly aren't exhaustive, but they are definitely pertinent.

I am also creating Spotify playlists for additional listening options. The first one I have created is The Swing Playlist:
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/19NmbD7GeiPU7mpYR4chbB?si=d6726579e0024fa2

This is a collection of 50 standard swing tunes from a variety of artists. More to come...

Drumset Key to Notation:



Notes: This key to notation covers all ten chapters of Drumset Concepts Vol. V. There are a few discrepancies – especially in the chapters on Latin styles - Ch. 2: Brazilian Bossa Nova and Samba and Ch. 4: Afro-Cuban Mambo. These chapters include additional keys for the Latin instruments illustrated in the text and videos.

Rhythmic Figure Integration (RFI) explained

In several of the chapters, I mention the term Rhythmic Figure Integration – or its acronym, RFI. Sometimes, I include a rather involved explanation of it; and at other times, I assume the reader has some information already. The most detailed explanation of RFI occurs in Chapter One, when I am speaking of the amount of attention given to rhythmic figures at different points in the chart, *Stompin' on a Riff*.

Quoting directly from chapter one: [Rhythmic Figure Integration] "is a term I use to describe different levels of my response to rhythmic figures in the ensemble. Sometimes these figures are 'section' figures – played by a particular section of the ensemble - as often occurs under a soloist. At other points these are 'ensemble' figures involving all the horns

(and other rhythm section players in varying degrees). A medium RFI would be appropriate for section figures under a soloist...a high RFI is appropriate for shout choruses [or other places] where the full ensemble is playing together."

As a player and a teacher, I have found this interpretive concept to be one of the most challenging (and rewarding) considerations that show up in a big band context. We drummers have an obligation to the music to play a certain groove per the style of the piece we are playing. But in a big band, that groove can be augmented with as many as eighteen or more other players, sometimes supplementing the groove; or often, soaring over the foundation of the rhythm section, and calling for the drummer to do something to recognize (integrate) these musical ideas (rhythms) into the fabric of the groove.

I like using the analogy of driving a bus when playing drums in a big band. Imagine you are driving a bus loaded with eighteen members of a jazz choir. The director loves to sing through the concert material as you are traveling to the next gig. You are a part of the concert in that you have several places where you need to chime in with the choir. So, as you are travelling down the road, you willingly add in your parts to the whole – but NEVER do you take your eyes off the road, or your hands away from the wheel. In this way, you are an integral part of the journey – you might even say that you are <u>leading</u> the journey in that you need to know the route to the destination (form/architecture of the arrangement), your speed on the road (tempo of the tune), and all the mechanical nuances of your bus (style of the chart).

We could apply this same metaphor to smaller groups as well – having a conversation with a few people in the front of the bus while supplying your consistent groove to the trip.

As in all musical situations, taste and experience are large factors in determining the amount of integration needed at any point, but the expectation from the drummer is always groove first.

Chapters: Composition Titles and Composers
Styles Represented

1. *Stompin' on a Riff* – David Berger
   Swing ala Count Basie

2. *Deliberation* – John Wasson
   Brazilian Bossa Nova and Samba

3. *Ummmm* – Ayn Inserto
   Hip-Hop and Contemporary Swing

4. *Winds Out of the East* – Michael Philip Mossman
   Afro-Cuban Mambo

5. *Lebreton Flats* – Rob Lussier
   Swing Shuffle

6. *Event Horizon* – Gerald Stockton
   Rock and Funk in 4/4 and ¾ time

7. *Translucence* – Dean Sorenson
   Ballad and Jazz Waltz

8. *I Should Have Known* – James Miley
   ECM straight 8th-note

9. *Bayaka* – Chuck Dotas
   Afro-Cuban 12/8 Meter, Latin Mixed Meter and Swing

10. *Magnificent Madness* – Adam Meckler
    Contemporary Rock and Funk in Odd Meter