Ten Helpful Hints for Drumset Cymbal Notation

by Norm Weinberg

1. Always include a legend, which illustrates all of the notational symbols used in the piece.

2. Cymbals should be written with "x" noteheads. This will help distinguish cymbal notes from notes for other instruments in the drumset. For notational values of a half-note or longer, the notehead should be an open diamond.

3. When the ride cymbal is written on the top line of the staff and the hi-hat cymbal is written on the first space above the staff, a clear distinction between these two instruments is possible.

4. If more than three crash cymbals are required, their staff positions should be above the second ledger line.

5. When specifying an exact type (splash, sizzle, China, etc.) or size of cymbal, include this information in the legend of the composition instead of creating a new notehead or articulation marking.

6. All hi-hat notes are assumed to be closed, this way only open hi-hat notes need an articulation sign. Closed hi-hat articulations should be included only if their use will clarify a passage.

7. If an open hi-hat note is followed by a closed hi-hat played with the stick, it isn’t necessary to indicate the hi-hat closing with the foot.

8. All cymbals should be allowed to ring for the entire length of their natural decay unless written with the "choke" articulation. The articulation for "let ring" should be used only when it will make a passage more clear.

9. When indicating strokes played on the bell of the cymbal, the clearest indication is to write the word "bell" above the passage. If bell notes and normal notes change so often that text becomes cumbersome, use a pictogram of a cymbal with a stick striking the bell.

10. When creating new sounds for cymbals, create new articulation markings rather than using normal musical symbols in a new or contradictory manner.

Norm Weinberg
associate professor and director of percussion studies at The University of Arizona. He has performed as the principal timpanist/percussionist with the Corpus Christi Symphony and as principal timpanist with the Jerusalem Symphony, among others. His most recent book, Guide to Standardized Drumset Notation, has set a worldwide standard and is published by the Percussive Arts Society.

Notation Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hi-Hat</td>
<td>Hi-Hat</td>
<td>Hi-Hat</td>
<td>Ride</td>
<td>Ride</td>
<td>Crash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Articulations

Open | Closed | Half Open | Let Ring | Choke | Roll Stroke | On Bell

More information can be found in the "Guide to Standardized Drumset Notation," published by the Percussive Arts Society, Inc., 701 N.W. Penn Ave., Lawton, OK 73507