

John Ling

# Third Rail

four episodes for solo snare and sequenced piano



**Third Rail** by John Ling

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# Program Notes

*Third Rail* is comprised of four sections: *Voltage*, *Traction*, *Crossroads*, and *Third Rail*, respectively. Inspired by a train system, the piece conveys a sense of motion, of wandering and searching. *Third Rail* speaks to the traveler within all of us, and through its musical dialogue portrays the many journeys that life takes.

## Performance Notes

*Third Rail* is about motion. The creative spark that led to the piece's composition was a train system—Phoenix's METRO Light Rail, to be exact.

Care must be taken to ensure that the snare drum blends well with the audio accompaniment. The piece may be performed on an orchestral snare drum or a rudimental snare drum. In either case, the drum will most likely demand a relatively tight tuning, perhaps muffled, to allow the denser passages to remain articulate. The techniques and sounds demanded will lend themselves to a heavier pair of sticks.

The stick shot in measure 7 of *Traction* is to be played by striking the right stick upon the left, while the left is still resting upon the drum in the position from which the preceding rim knock was played.

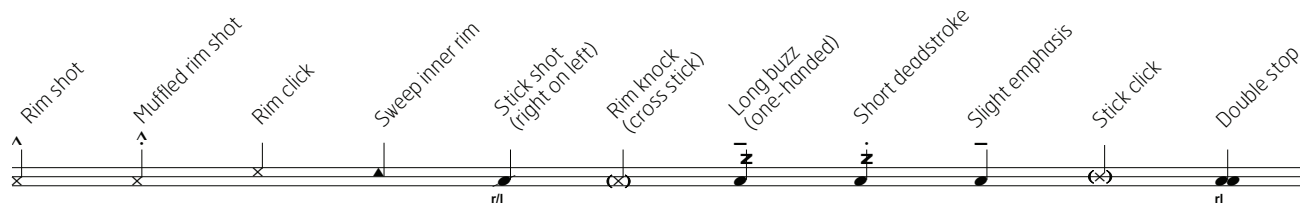
The “sweep inner rim” technique called for in *Crossroads*, denoted by triangular noteheads, is achieved by having the bead of the stick resting upon the drumhead and making a quick, outward motion so that the bead slides across the surface of the drumhead until it strikes the rim. The bead of the stick should not touch the drum after it has struck the rim. Each instance of this sweep technique is preceded by a buzz stroke so that the bead is already resting upon the drumhead when the sweep is played. Note that the last grace note of *Traction*, a dead stroke, is intended to set up the first rim sweep in *Crossroads*, so the stick should be left resting on the head between the two movements.

A word of caution to the percussionist: Although the snare drum part is written along the lines of the rudimental idiom, it should not be interpreted in that strict, regimented manner, but rather in the expressive sense of a chamber work. Liberties may be taken with colors and phrasing. What is not expressly notated should be seen as open-ended.

Lastly, *Third Rail* should be a joy to perform and to watch. Good luck!

—John Ling

# Notation Legend



## Audio Playback Options

This piece requires the accompaniment of a sequenced piano. On the included CD-Rom, you'll find the source audio files used to accompany the piece. To best synchronize the complexity of the performed snare drum part and to accurately begin various movements, a click track is recommended. For this reason, there are two different versions of the audio accompaniment being offered, depending on what sort of audio system you have available.

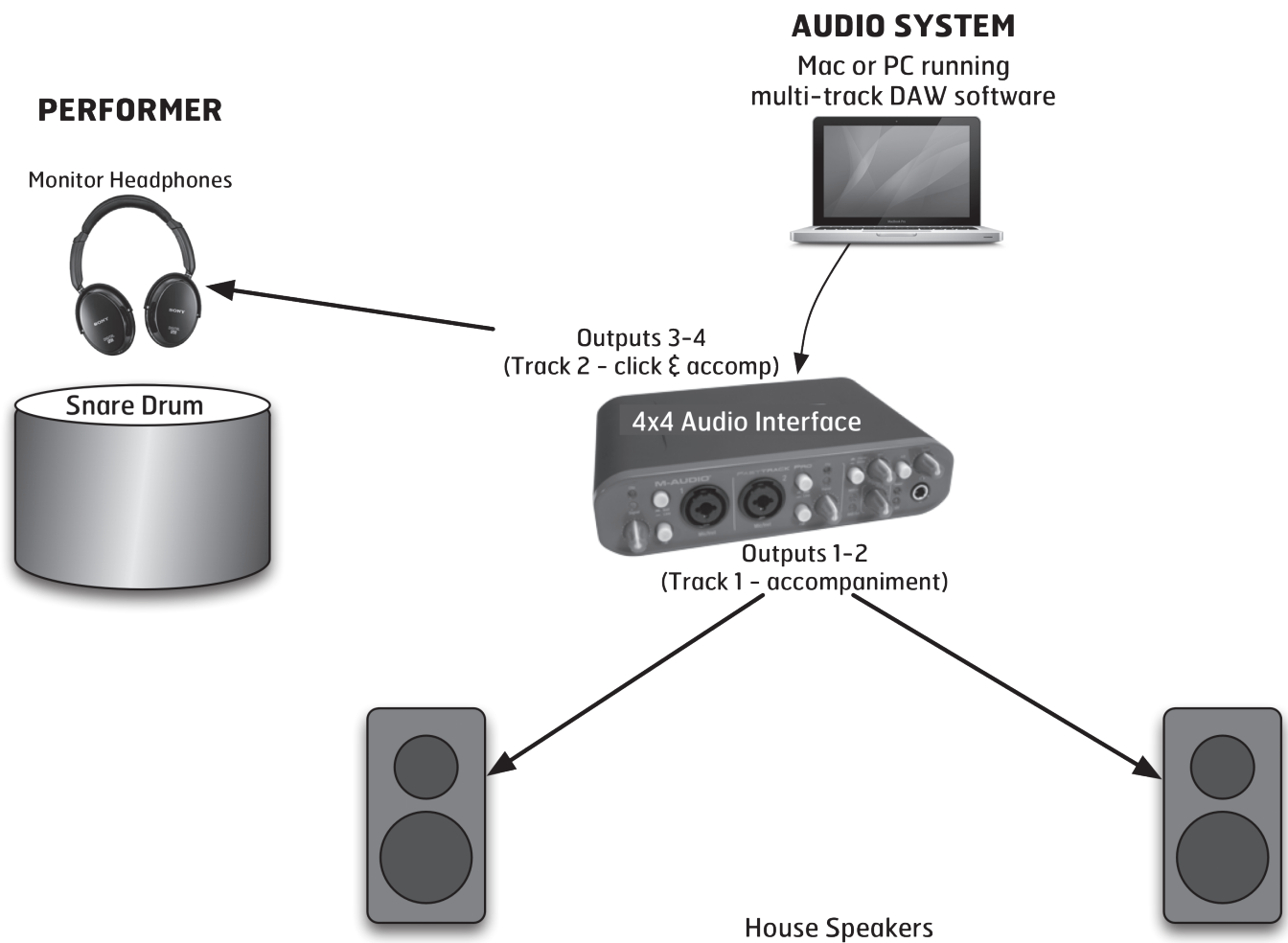
The recommended approach is the **stereo version**, which comes with two tracks of stereo audio (accompaniment and click track). The stereo version would require you to play back the two audio tracks from a multitrack software program (i.e., Apple Logic, Steinberg Cubase, MOTU Digital Performer, Ableton Live, etc.), with the accompaniment being routed to the audience/PA speakers and the click track being routed to the performer via a common 4-channel audio interface. Using the stereo version will allow for the audience to fully experience the effects of the stereo image.

Alternately, a **mono version** is included in cases where the resources or equipment aren't available to route multiple tracks of audio. In this version there's simply one stereo audio file in which the click track is panned all the way to the left channel for the performer to monitor. Then the PA speakers would be set up so they only receive the right channel of audio. This channel can be configured to play back through two speakers; however it will still be a single (mono) audio signal.

# Setup Examples

## STEREO VERSION (recommended)

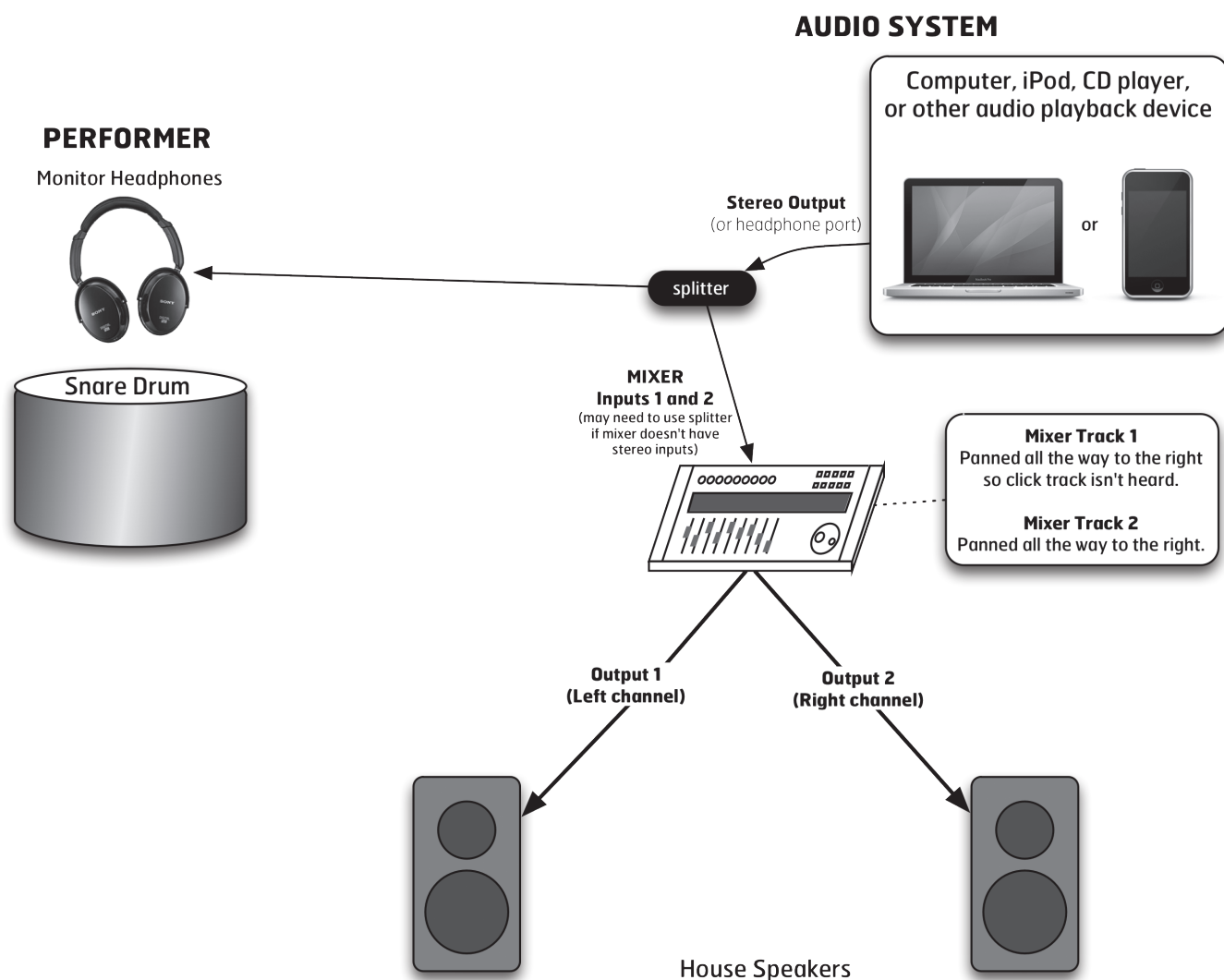
- **Audio System Requirements:**
- Mac or PC
- Multitrack DAW software (Logic, Cubase, Live, Digital Performer, etc.)
- Audio interface with at least 4-channel output
- Powered speakers (or passive speakers plus amplifiers)
- Monitor headphones (preferably in-ear)





## MONO VERSION

- **Audio System Requirements:**
- Audio playback device (iPod, computer, CD player)
- Splitter (to send signal to mixer and performer)
- Mixer
- Powered speakers (or passive speakers plus amplifiers)
- Monitor headphones (preferably in-ear)



## Alternative Mono Setup

Depending on your PA gear, here's an alternative to the diagram above the mono version setup. If your speakers have parallel in/out ports, simply send the right channel of the mixer to the right speaker, then run a cable from the "out" port of the right speaker to the "in" of the left.

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## I. Voltage

$\text{♩} = 180$

2  
audio intro

*p* *mp* *pp*

7

*mf*

11

6 3

*p*

15

5

*mf* *p*

18

3

*f*

22

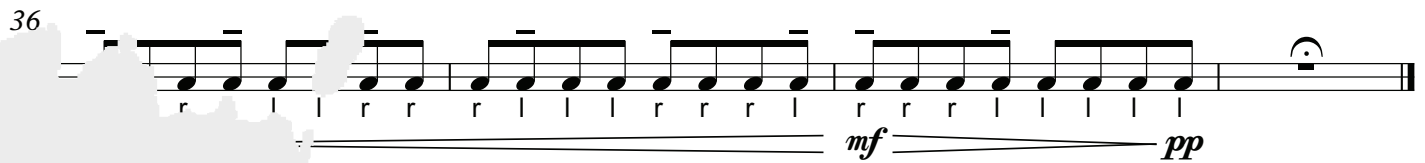
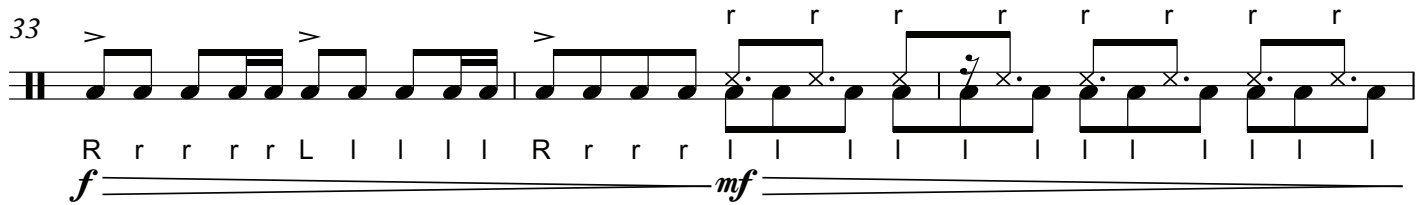
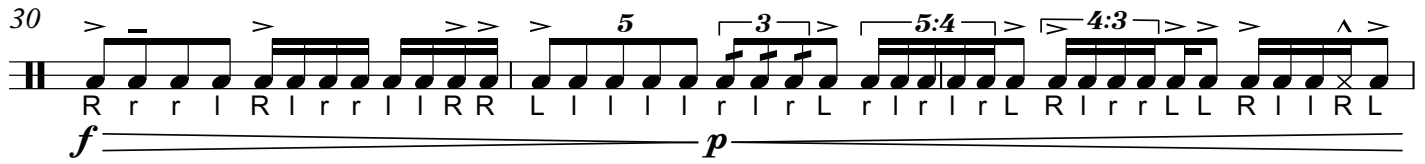
3 3

*f* *ff*

25

*ff*

Sample Image



Sample  
Image

## II. Traction

♩ = 200

The musical score for 'Traction' is written in 5/4 time with a tempo of 200 beats per minute. It consists of seven staves of music, each with a measure number (1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19) at the beginning. The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamics are indicated by *p* (piano), *f* (forte), *ff* (fortissimo), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). There are also accents (>) and triplets (3) marked throughout the piece. The score is set against a background of a stylized map of the United States.

Staff 1 (Measure 1): *p* *f*

Staff 2 (Measure 4): *ff* *mp*

Staff 3 (Measure 7): *f* *ff*

Staff 4 (Measure 10): *f* *mp*

Staff 5 (Measure 13): *f* *mp*

Staff 6 (Measure 16): *p*

Staff 7 (Measure 19): *p*

Sample  
Image

21   
*mp* *p*

24   
*f*

27   
*p* *f* *mf*

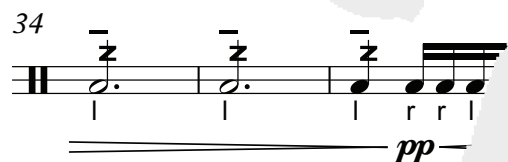
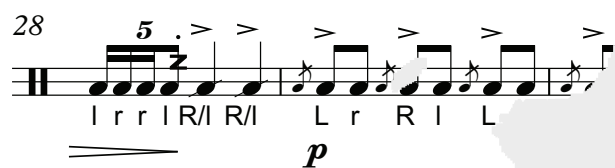
30   
*mf*

  
*fp* *ff* *fff*

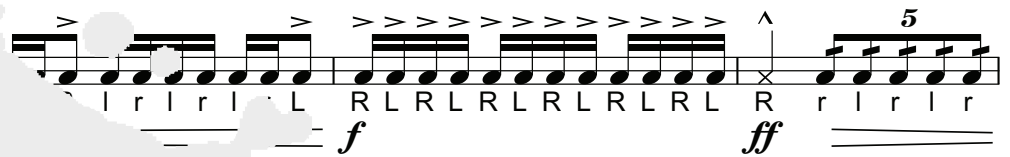
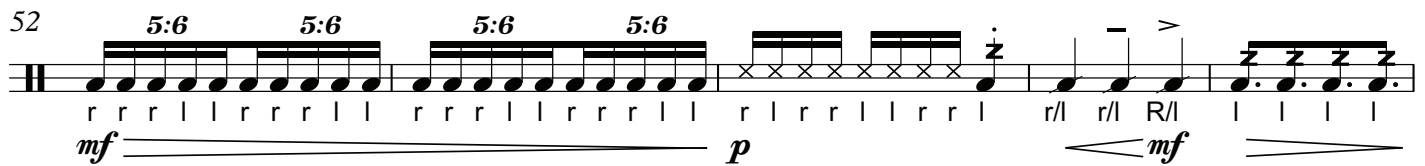
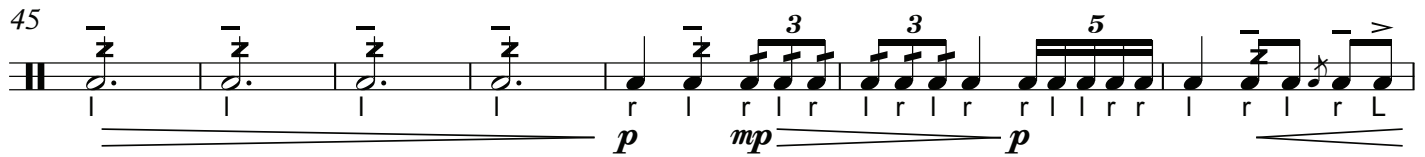
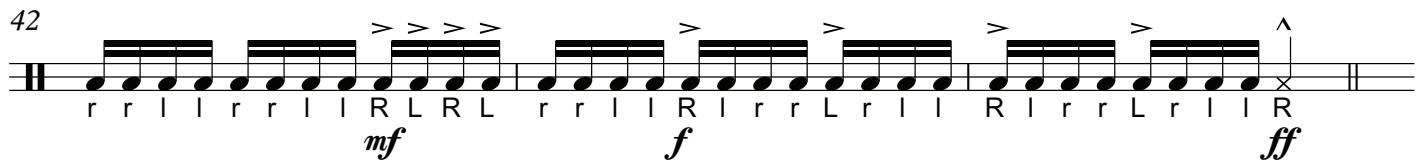
Sample  
Image

### III. Crossroads

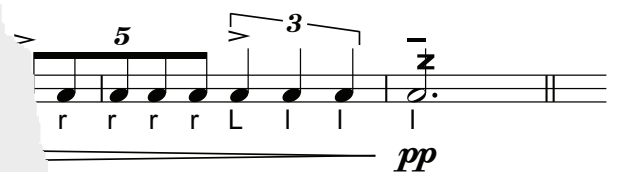
♩ = 220



Sample  
Image



Sample  
Image



## IV. Third Rail

$\text{♩} = 180$

4

*mf* *mp*

8

11

*p* *mf* *p*

14

*f*

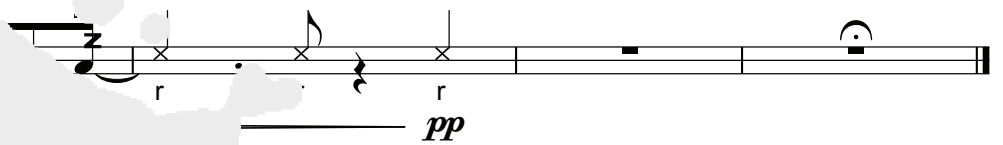
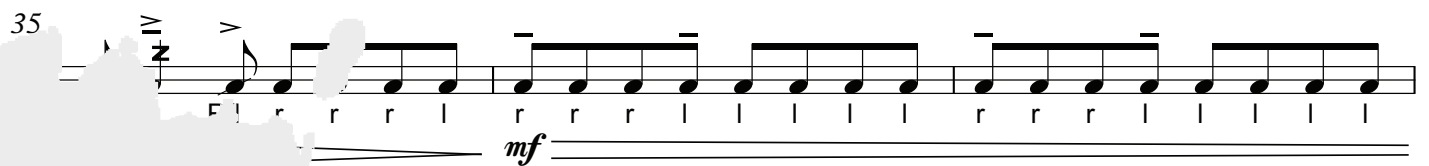
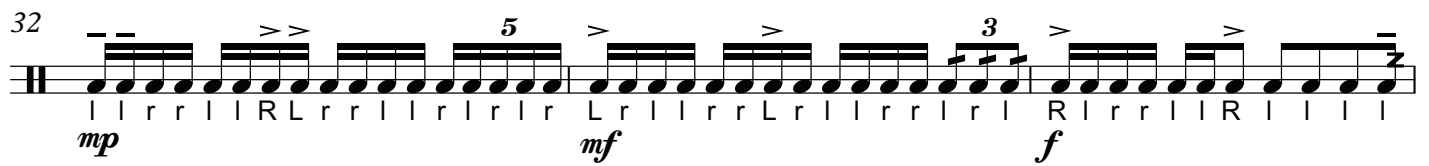
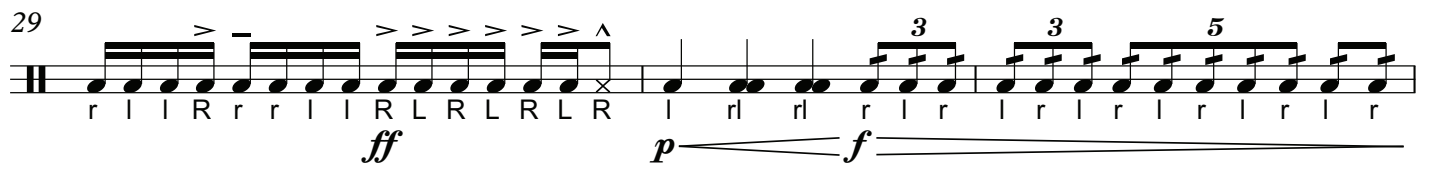
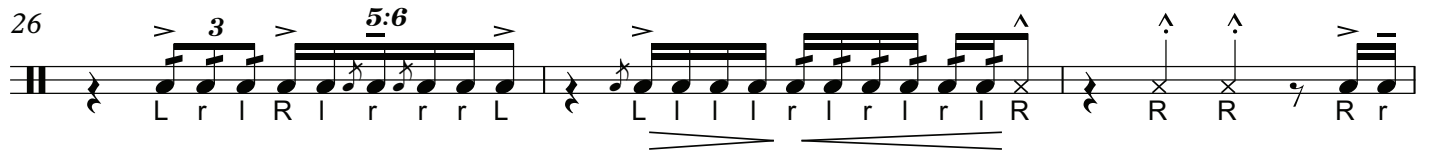
17

20

23

Sample Image





Sample  
Image

