Video Audition Requirements

Due June 1st

GENERAL VIDEO REQUIREMENTS

The video should include your **instrument** and **full body**, with an **audible metronome**.

The whole video can be recorded in separate takes. The staff does ask that you **label each exercise on-screen along with the bpm used**.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS EXACTLY!

Mallets:

Green in all 12 major keys, one rep per key at 110 bpm

Metric Mess 1 rep at 100bpm, 110bpm, and 120 bpm

Vertical Strokes 1 rep at 100 bpm

Space and Timing 1 rep at 70 bpm and 90 bpm

Broccoli 1 rep at 80 bpm

Bass Guitar:

OcTWOves in 6 major keys or your choice, one rep per key at 80 bpm

Fight Song: 1 rep @ 144 bpm

Start Wearing Purple: 1 rep @ 104 bpm

Guitar:

Green in 6 major keys or your choice, one rep per key at 80 bpm

Fight Song: 1 rep @ 144 bpm. (PIANO TOP LINE, BOTTOM OCTAVE IF APPLICABLE)

Start Wearing Purple: 1 rep @ 104 bpm. (PIANO TOP LINE, TOP OCTAVE IF APPLICABLE)

Piano:

OcTWOves in all 12 major keys, one rep per key at 90 bpm

Fight Song: 1 rep @ 144 bpm

Start Wearing Purple: 1 rep @ 104 bpm

JMU Marching Royal Dukes
Front Ensemble

OVERVIEW

Thank you for your interest in the 2025 JMU Marching Royal Dukes front ensemble percussion section. Our goal as a staff is to create a positive and fun experience as well as give you a well-rounded education in the world of marching percussion. The exercises in this packet will be used throughout the audition process and the regular season.

APPROACH

It is important to note that our philosophies are not the right OR wrong way of approaching marching percussion, it is just how we approach it here in the MRDs. In general terms when auditioning, it is important to make sure you are comfortable behind the instrument, play in a natural and relaxed manner to achieve a full sound, and most importantly, have fun!

Please email Josh Sheppard at sheppajc@dukes.jmu.edu for any questions regarding this packet and/or auditions.

Technique

The technique concepts that we implement are of our combined experience as both performers and educators. There are many different techniques throughout the world of percussion, and it is most important that you find a technique that is healthy/maintainable and more importantly achieves the sound you're looking to produce as an artist.

Posture

Perception is reality. A confident posture not only creates an idea about your music before you play a note, but also promotes genuine confidence within the musician. The performer should stand behind their instrument in a strong, yet relaxed manner. The idea is to be comfortable and assertive. Here are some things to remember when standing behind the instrument:

Posture Checklist	
☑	Stand as tall as possible with feet flat on the floor shoulder width apart.
☑	Shoulders back, chest out and relaxed.
☑	Arms resting relaxed at the side.

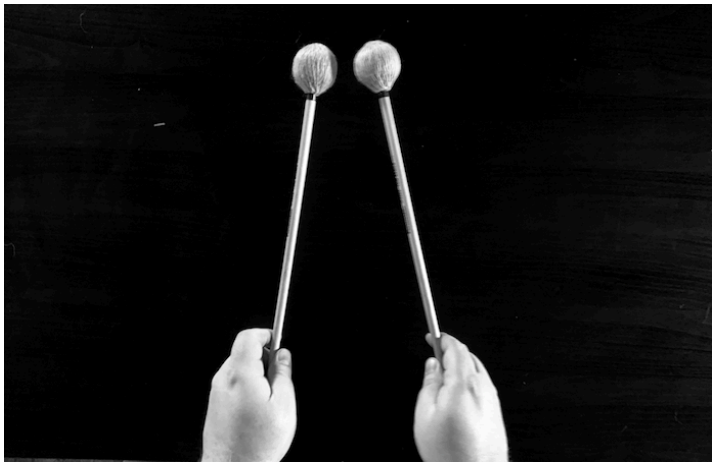
Two Mallet Technique

Start with one mallet and divide the shaft into thirds. Your hand will be entirely in the back third of the mallet. Place the mallet between your pointer finger and thumb, forming a “Capital T” with the mallet in between. Back fingers then wrap around the mallet with about ½ of an inch sticking out (about the size of a paperclip.) Although we placed our pointer finger and thumb on the mallet first, they will not be gripping the mallet or exerting any pressure onto the shaft, they are merely guiding forces that help you play the correct notes.

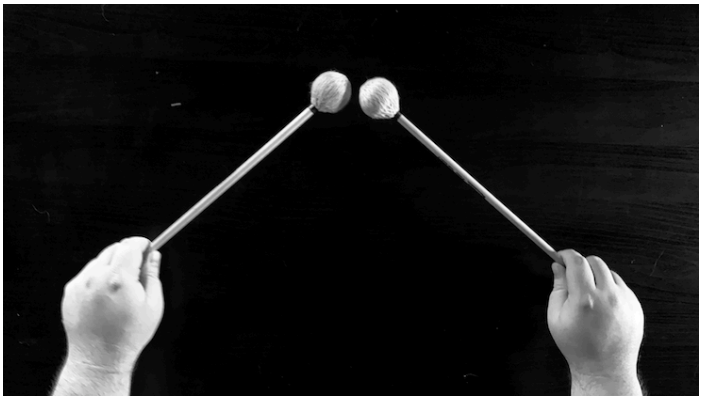
There should be no tension in the hands and it is important to remain relaxed. Make sure there is some space between your pointer and middle finger, as well as between the middle finger and ring finger. The hands then come down to the playing position, resting about an inch off the bar. You’ll know you’re at one inch when the mallet shafts are parallel with the bars creating no angle for height.

Wrists should be at your side creating a triangle with the mallets

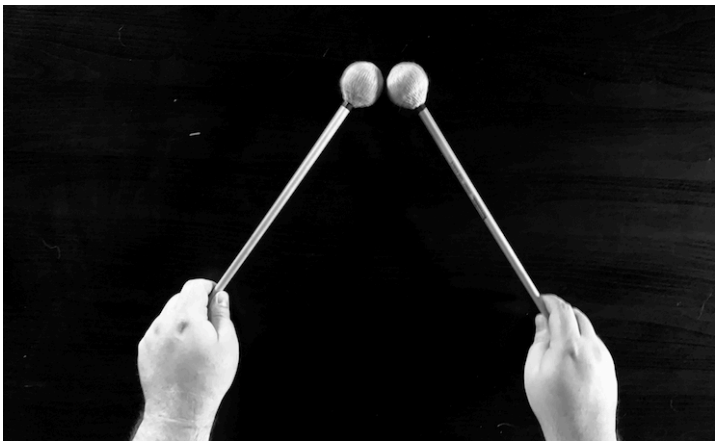
This angle is too small.



This angle is too wide.

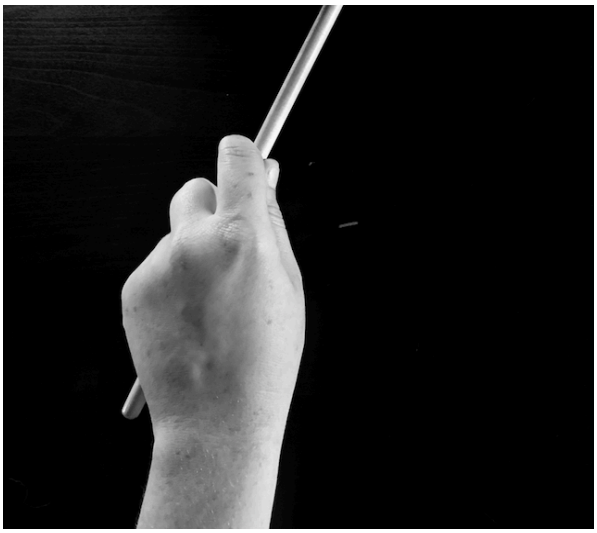


This angle is just right!

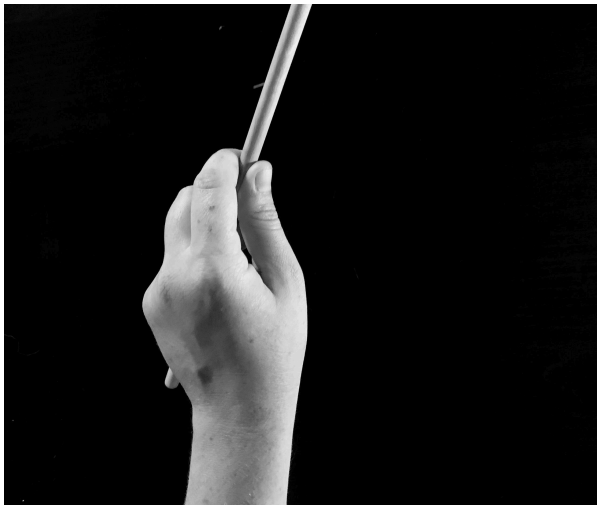


Now let's adjust your wrist angle. Start with the pointer fingers pointing at the ground, and then turn them slightly inward. This should create a natural playing position and allow the optimal range of motion for the wrist.

If you're unsure if your angle is correct try this silly trick. Imagine there are faces on your thumbnails. If these faces are looking right at each other, your hand is too flat. If the faces are looking at the ceiling they are too vertical (this is what we'll strive for when we play four mallets.) The faces should be right in the middle of too flat and too vertical.

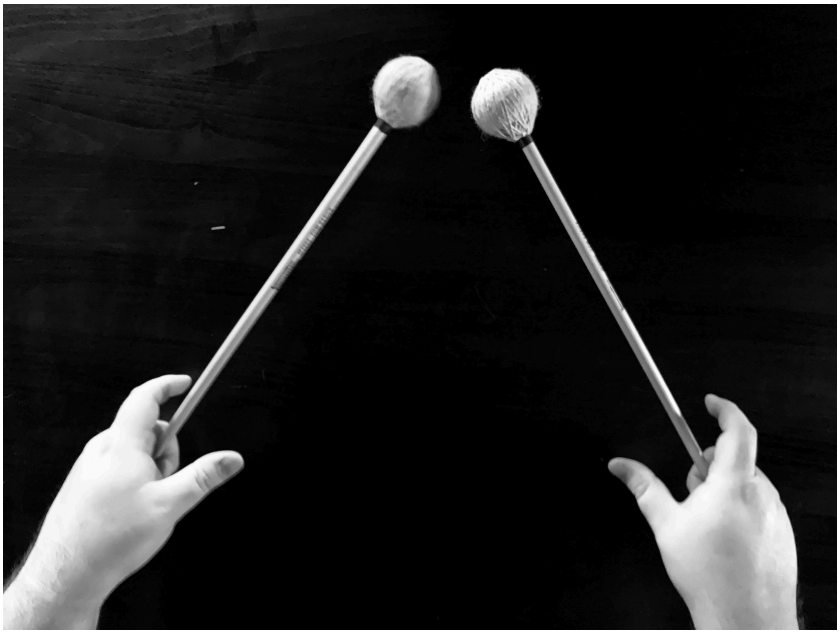


Too flat



Correct

At tempi below 190 bpm we will implement a technique known as “Rear Fulcrum” that helps project and give more power to each stroke. While this is definitely not the only technique it is one that creates a strong, resonant sound that is easy to unify between members of the ensemble. With more advanced performers we will adjust what parts of the hands are activated in order to achieve the sound needed by the music. The best way to introduce this concept is a technique called “Crab Claws”. Leave the back fingers attached and lift your thumb and pointer finger.

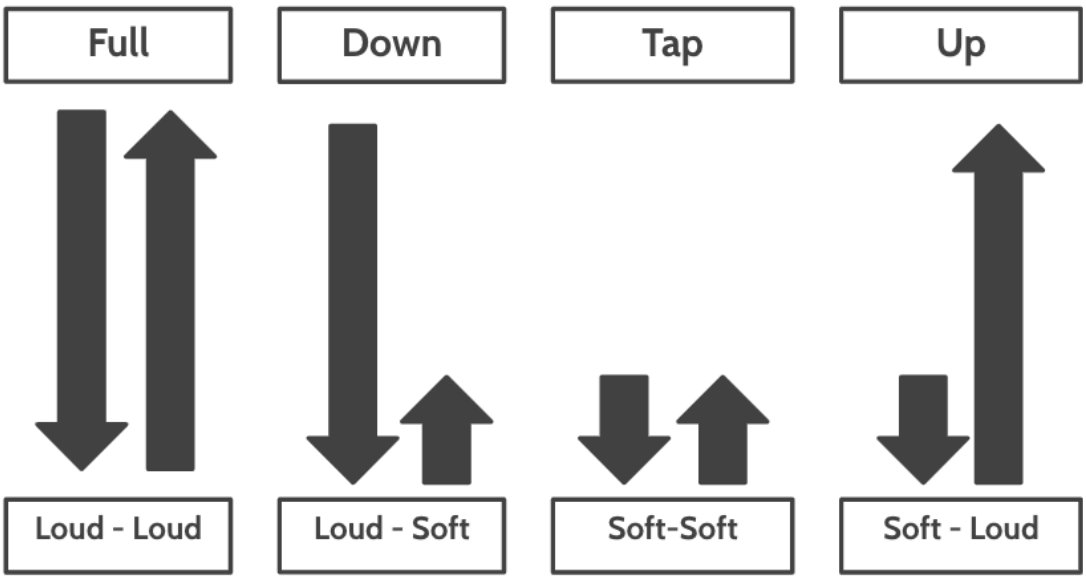


You can then play exactly as you would with the two fingers on, using a wrist-based stroke. The mallets might feel floppy or unsupported when your index fingers are off the shaft, this is fine. Play a few simple exercises, using only your back three or two fingers. After this is more comfortable, add the front two fingers back on the mallet and use them to help guide the mallet, they should rest gently on the shaft and stay attached but should not squeeze or move the mallet around.

Note: Before you add the front 2 fingers the mallet will “wiggle” around more than you will probably be comfortable with. This is normal, as the main job of the thumb is to keep the mallet from flying up and hitting your face.

Stroke Types

There are four main strokes that make up everything percussionists play. **Every stroke begins with a wrist-initiated motion**. It is important to note that mallets spend the majority of time in the air above the instrument and not close to the instrument while developing technique. It is recommended that the strokes are introduced in this order, as it will directly apply to the first exercise, *Full, Down, Tap, Up*.



The first of these strokes is the **Full Stroke**. Mallets begin in the "up position" (for now, this is as high as the mallets can comfortably reach for the player usually around 12-9 inches from the surface of the keyboard) the wrist initiates the stroke down striking the board before returning to the up position. This is for a note that is loud and is going to continue being loud.

- ➔ One type of full stroke is called the **Piston Stroke**. This stroke returns to the top home position almost immediately, matching the speed that it had on the way down to the board. You should envision a rubber band snapping up. If the instructor is taking a picture of the ensemble, the mallets should only be caught in the up position because of how quickly they are moving. This stroke type has a few different benefits. It creates a huge powerful short direct sound. It allows you to play fast passages as your upstroke is always at lightning speed. Lastly, it is simple to make this stroke unified in a large ensemble making the performers more likely to be effective when they're expressing emotion with their music. A group of people doing the exact same thing can be very effective when done correctly.

➔ The second type of full stroke is called the **Legato Stroke**. These are full strokes that are in constant motion, similar to the motion of dribbling a basketball. The hand has to move down to push the basketball down, and flex up to catch the basketball and push it back down. *It is important to note that the arm should not be a part of this stroke, at least at the very beginning of training.* The arm can be incorporated for dynamics above forte, but should never be the initial power source behind a stroke. The benefits of legato strokes are sound and aesthetic related. The legato stroke not only creates a legato sound on the instrument rather than an articulate sound, but it also makes the ensemble "look" legato thus reinforcing in the audience's mind the correct feel and emotion for the phrase.

The next stroke is the **Down Stroke**. Mallets begin in the up position and the wrist initiates a stroke down. The player then uses the wrist to inhibit the rebound of the mallet, and the stroke is complete with the mallets hovering about 1-2 inches above the bar. We call this the "down position". This is for passages that are loud and then call for a softer volume. Down stokes are most likely to be squeezed. Make sure your wrist is simply staying down to make this happen and that you're not squeezing the mallet to stop it from rebounding.

The third stroke is the **Tap Stroke**. From "down position", the wrist initiates a stroke down. This stroke is for a note that is soft and will continue being soft. You should still use the same velocity you used when playing a full stroke, just at a lower height. Think of this as a full stroke but at a low height.

The fourth stroke is the **Up Stroke**. From about 1-2 inches above the bar, the wrist initiates a stroke down and then lifts to "up position". This is for a note that is soft and followed by a loud note. This stroke requires a lot of energy, and make sure it is all coming from the wrist.

Two Mallet Technique Checklist
☑ Capital T with pointer finger and thumb.
☑ Pointer fingers point down, then turn inward.
☑ Strokes are always initiated by the wrist.

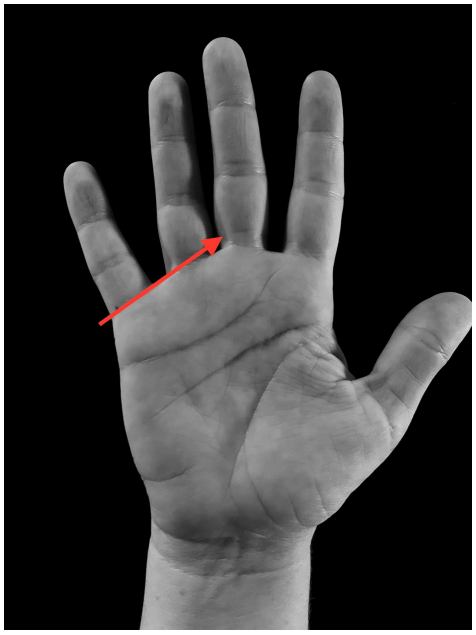
Four Mallet Technique

Stevens Grip

This text will focus on the Stevens technique. While Burton and traditional grip are wonderful and definitely have their place in music, we feel that Steven's grip is the least limiting and allows us to play fast passages, every interval, and translates well to holding 2 mallets. In the following sections, we will refer to "inside mallets" and "outside mallets". From left to right, the mallets are numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4. Mallets 1 and 4 are the outside mallets and mallets 2 and 3 are the inside mallets.

Mallets 1 and 4

We will begin with the outside mallet first. Lay it along the folds of the first knuckle in the pinky and ring fingers, close to where the palm ends. Acknowledge that it is going to move out of this position, but it is best to start with it there.



When you wrap the fingers around, there should be about the length of a breath mint sticking out (approximately ¼ of an inch).

Here is the ultimate secret that will make you good at keyboarding.
(Not really but...it is pretty important and game changing.)

The outside mallet should rest against the middle finger knuckle, NOT in the webbing of the fingers. It will be anchored by the bone and the callous you develop. The mallet may move around at first until this becomes more comfortable. Keep working to put the mallet shaft right against the knuckle as it will move around a lot before you develop calluses to keep it in place. If you're having trouble keeping it in place try playing on your floor or a pillow on a regular basis. Holding a small interval like a third will quickly build up these "finger shelves" necessary to keep the outside mallet in place.

This position is far more stable for the outside mallets and keeps them from wiggling when you're playing faster passages with inside mallets. Remember blisters are "normal" but also can mean you're squeezing too hard. You should wrap your hands with medical tape or a bandaid if you see blisters begin to develop or your skin begins to tear. Though four mallets can be painful when first developing the technique, it does get better and more comfortable with patience, time, and practice.

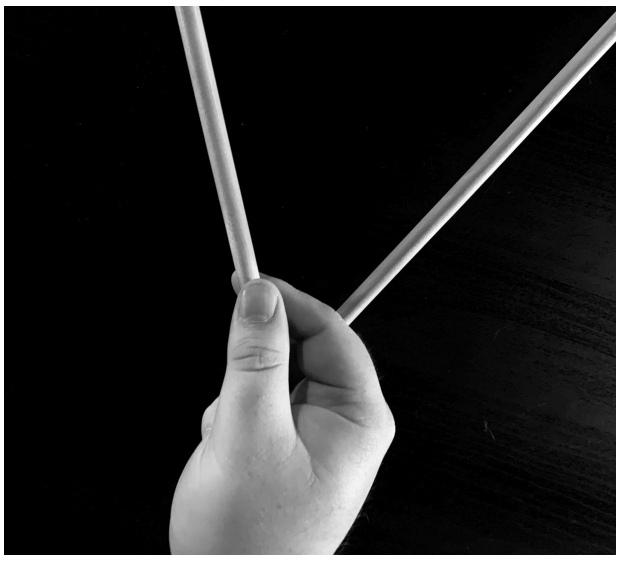
Mallets 2 and 3

Once the musician is comfortable with the outside mallets, shift to the inside mallets. The inside mallets should be placed in the center of the palm (for now). This position will shift as different intervals are required. The mallet will then be placed with the pointer finger pointing straight out, creating a perch for it to rest on:

You should be able to balance the mallet between the index finger perch and under their thumb muscle (fatty part of the thumb).

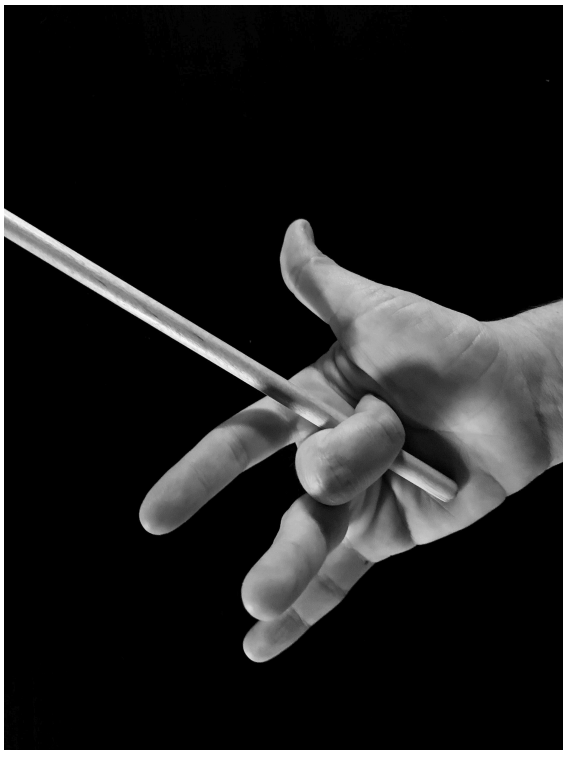
Then, lay the thumb gently on top, where it will just rest and not pinch.

The grip for this mallet is so relaxed that the mallet should be easily dislodged if pulled on. Thumbs should face the ceiling, not the opposite hand as we did while playing with two mallets. Make sure the thumb is resting flat on the mallet shaft, not bent upwards like a small thumb hill.



Lastly, the middle finger should start resting on the base of the inside mallet, striving to not wrap it around the mallet. The example on the left is a common mistake. The middle finger should strive to look as pictured below.

BAD



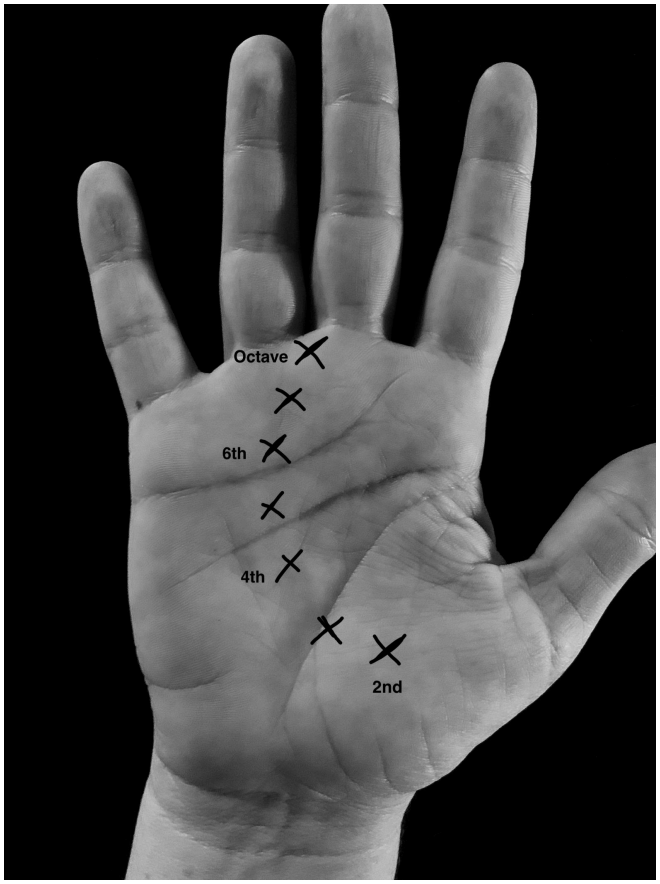
GOOD

Intervals

Intervals refer to the distance from one note to another. For instance, in a root position C major chord, the left hand will hold a major 3rd (C and E) and the right hand will hold a perfect 4th (G and C). In order to change intervals the index finger and middle fingers create a lever that uses a push pull motion to move the mallets into the correct position. Make sure as you change intervals you are not putting too much pressure on the thumb to move the mallets in or out. The thumb will move and roll over the mallet shaft, but the mallet itself is moved by the pointer and middle finger.

The further the mallet is up in your hand, the wider the interval becomes. Shifting from a 2nd to an octave, the mallet will travel in a half moon shape. There is a specific spot in your hand for every interval, this may change person to person depending how the size of your hand. This will also change based on the instrument you are playing and the octaves of that instrument.

Four Mallet Technique Checklist	
☑	Capital T with pointer finger and thumb.
☑	Outside mallet resting against the knuckle
☑	Flat thumbnails facing the ceiling

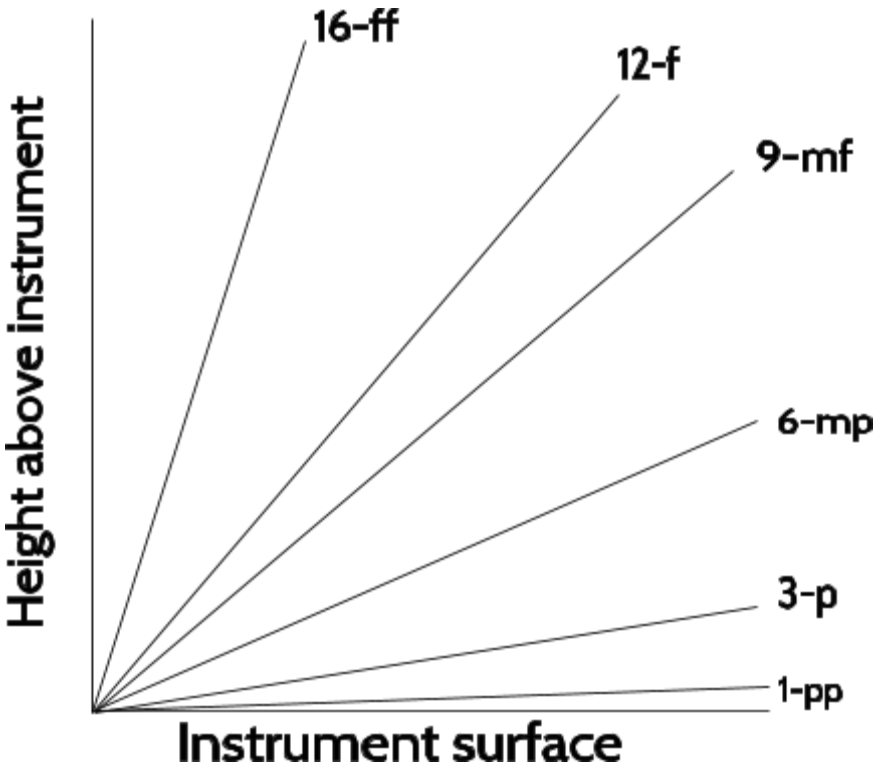


Heights and Dynamics

There are many ways to determine dynamics and heights so for our purposes we will be using this chart. It is important to understand that this chart is a guide and is not an end all be all. When playing in an ensemble setting we use this as a base so all players can aim for the same height. The most important thing to remember is to follow your leader and match their heights. More important than matching heights is making sure you are using your ears and LISTENING to your balance in the ensemble. If you can't hear your neighbor, assume you are too loud.

In theory....if we are all using the same velocity into the board and the same heights we should create a well blended unified sound. This is sometimes not so because some individuals may be striking the instrument with more tension, velocity, or arm than the other performers.

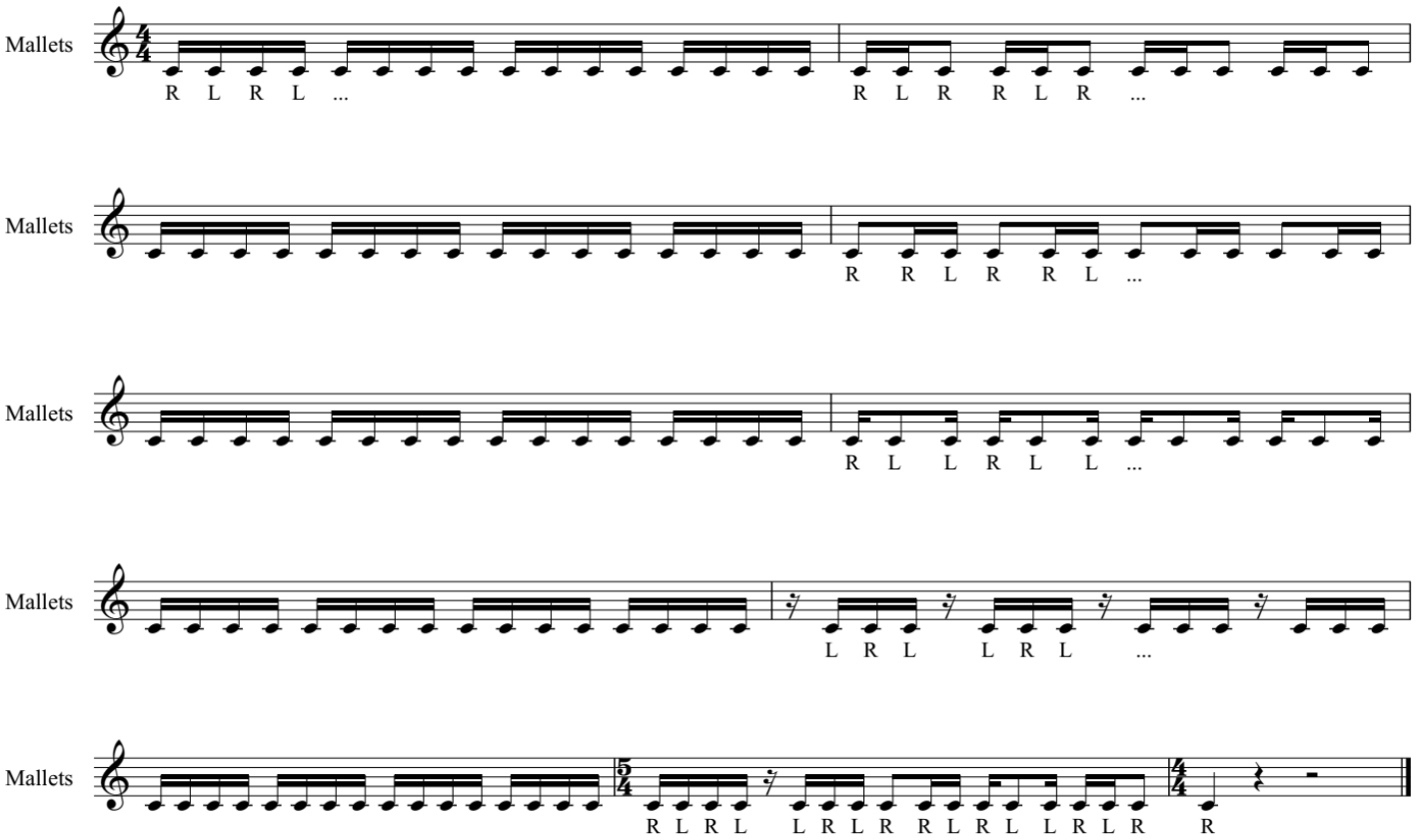
For our purposes heights should be as follows (numbers indicate inches)



Is pp always one inch? No. Is forte always 12? No. This all depends on what you as an artist need for the particular passage of music. The above chart is simply a mental guide that we can all use to start off on the same page. Remember....the main goal is blending and listening to those around you. Most people are challenged by the difference in mp and mf, so make sure to practice those more than you work on your forte height.

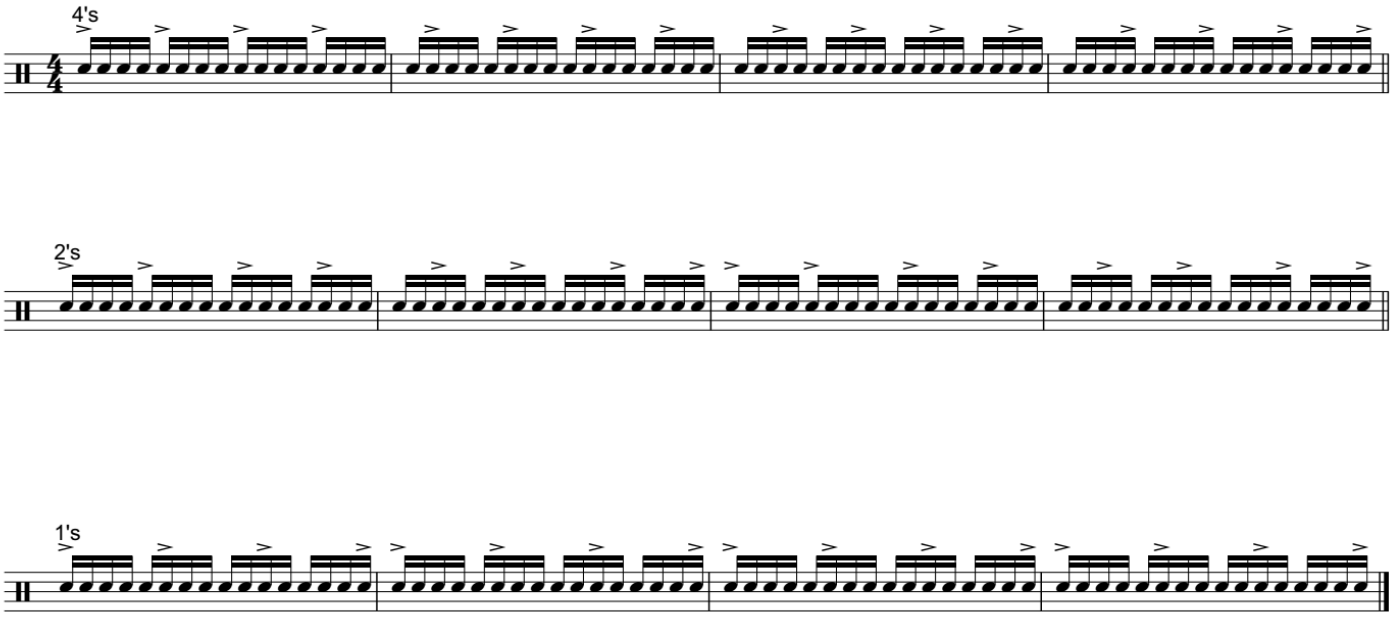
Sixteenth Timing

On drum pad or one note
Tempo = 60+ bpm



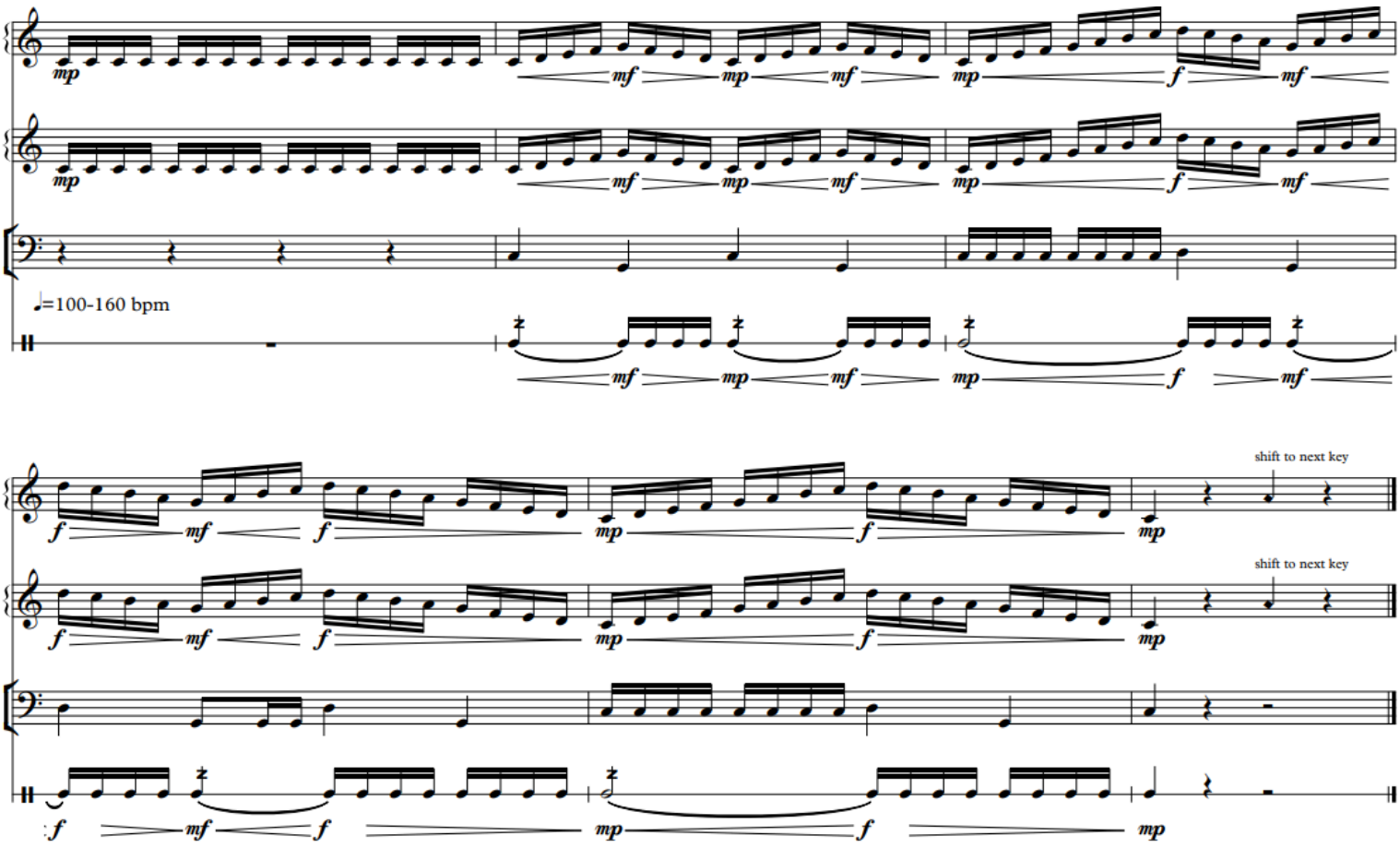
4-2-1 Grid

On drum pad or one note
Tempo = 60+ bpm



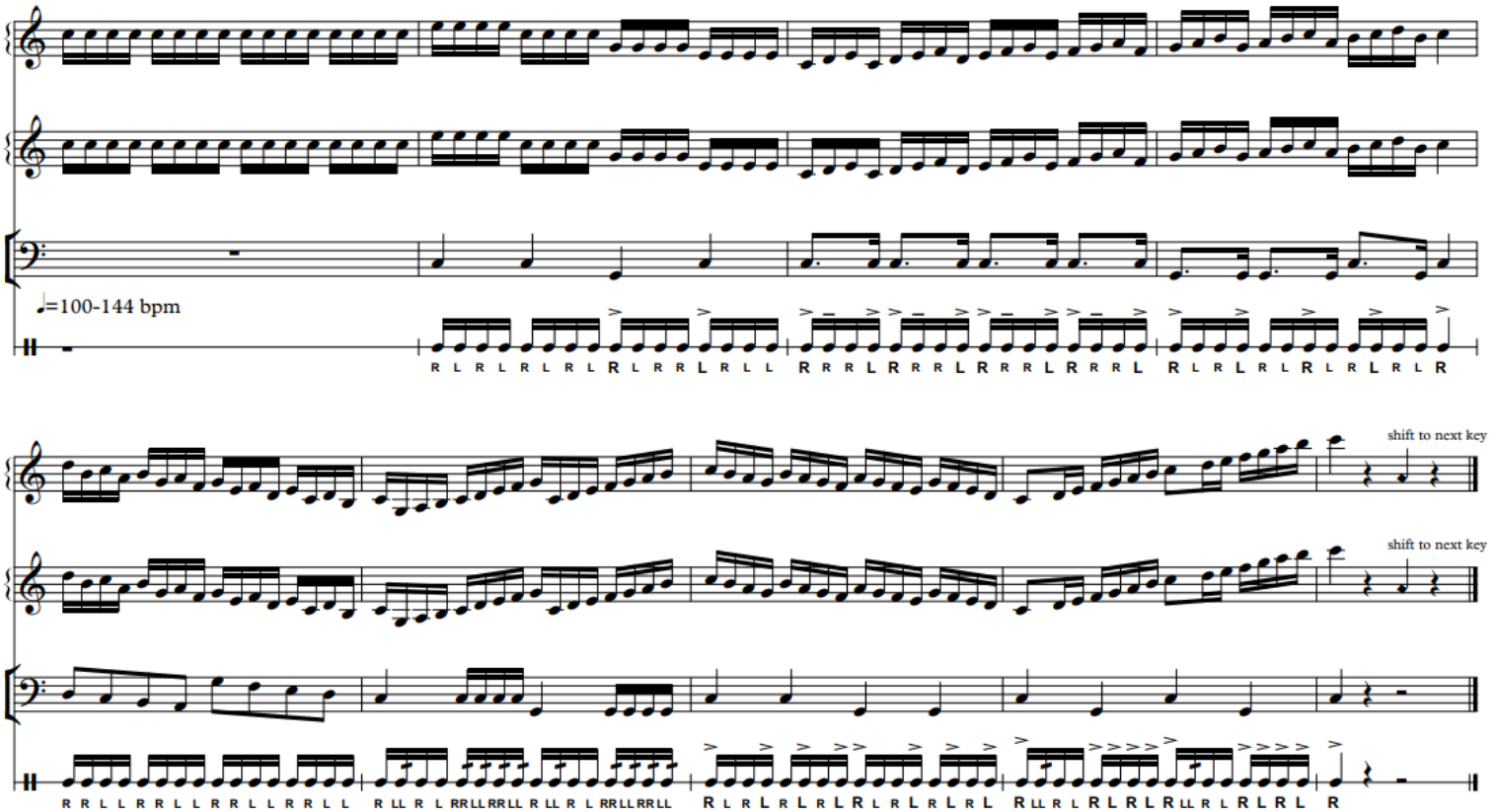
Green

In all 12 major keys, with and without dynamics
Tempo = 70+ bpm

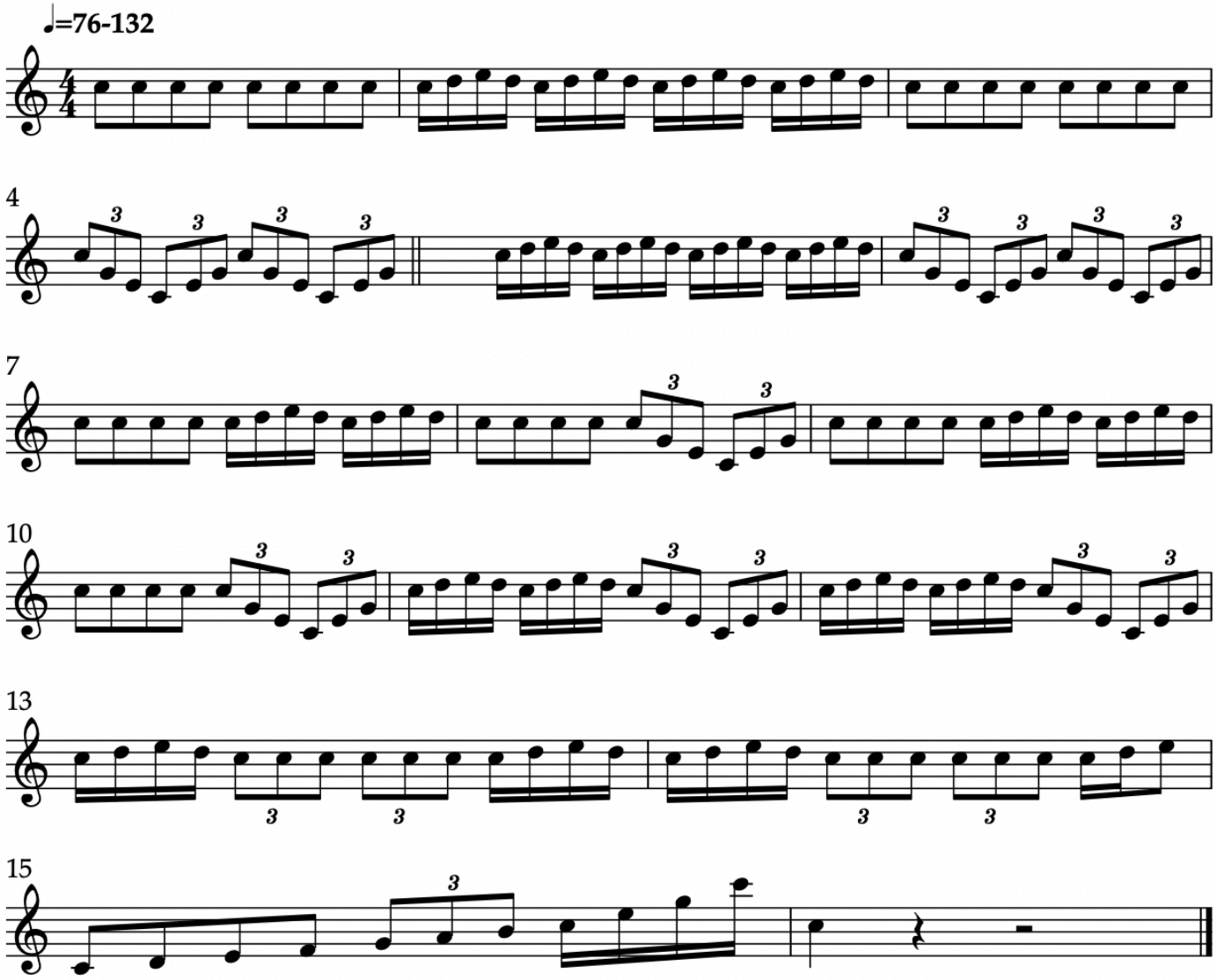


Timing with Two

In all 12 major keys
Tempo = 70+ bpm

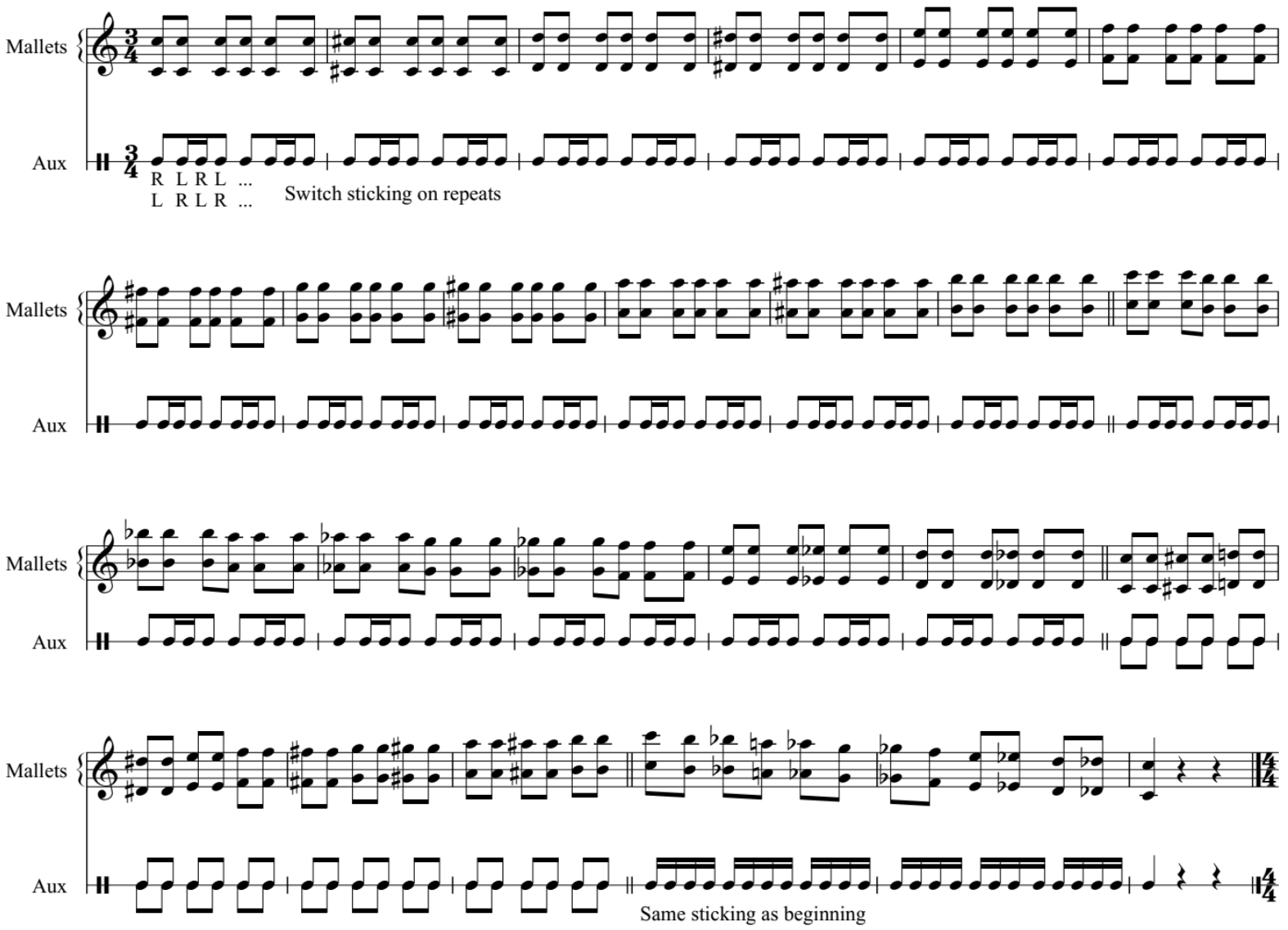


Metric Mess



6-3-2-1

Tempo = 60+ bpm

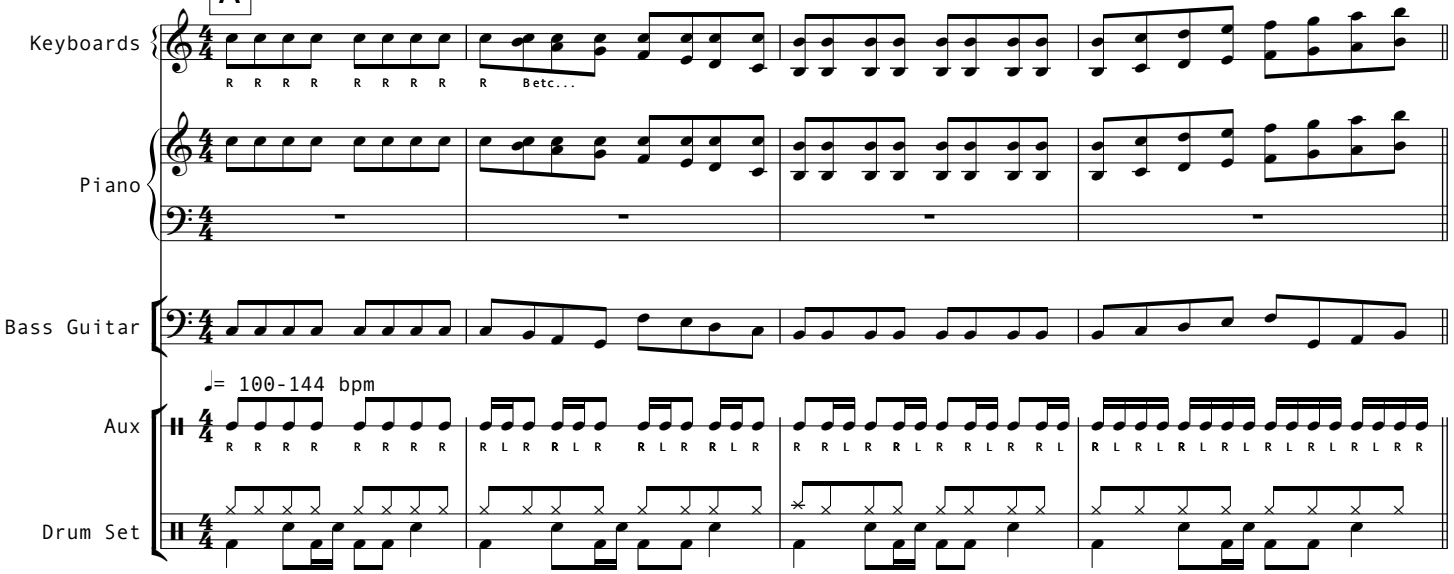


OcTWOves

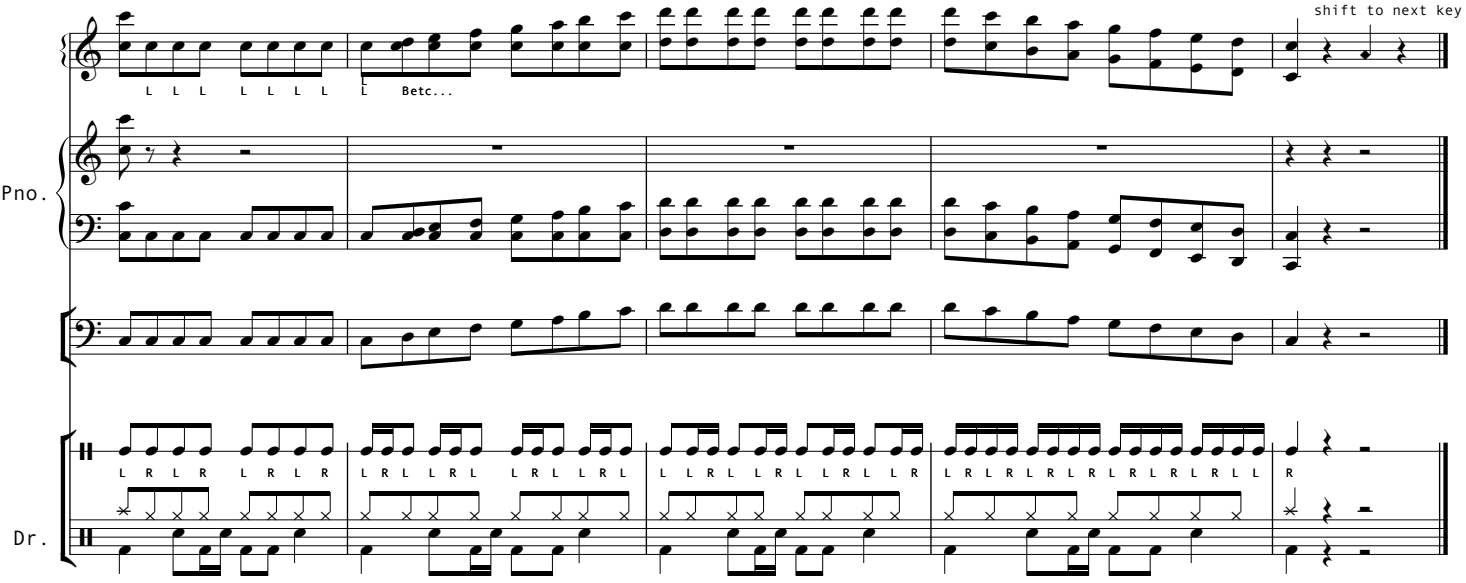
Audition Camp: Will focus on the first 6 keys of the circle of 4ths
In all Major keys

♩= 100-144 bpm

A

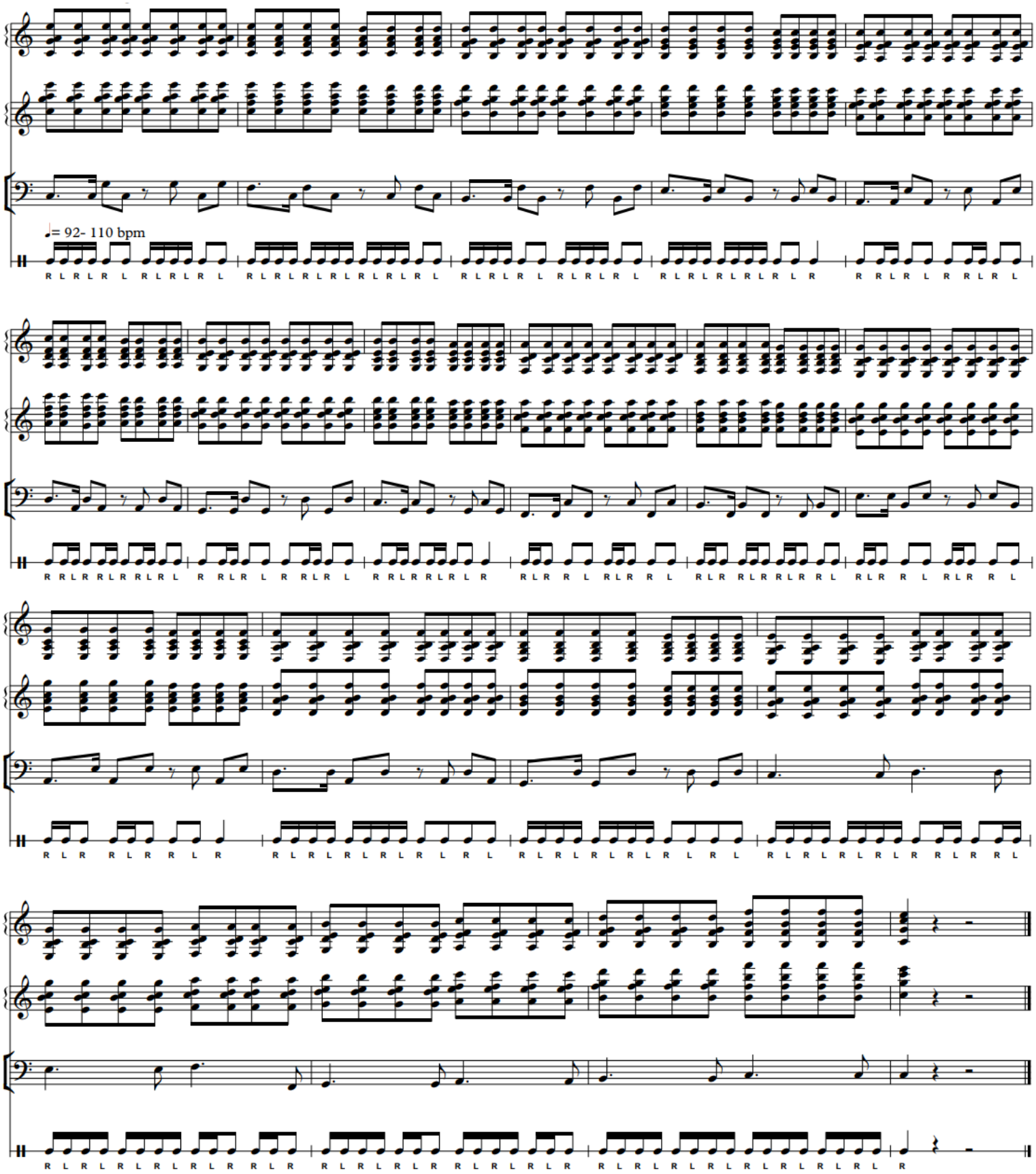


B



Vertical Strokes

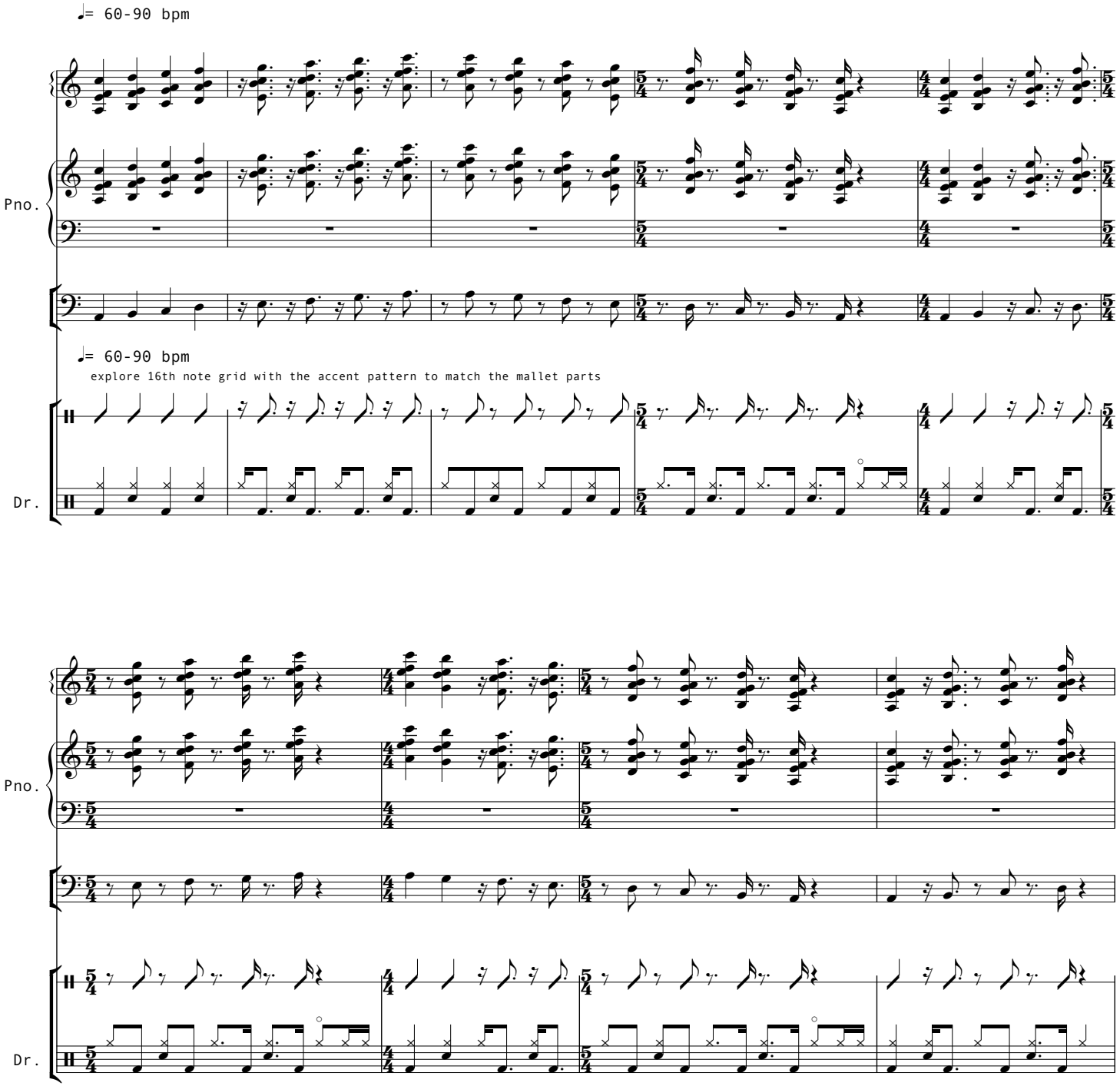
In all 12 major keys
Tempo = 70+ bpm

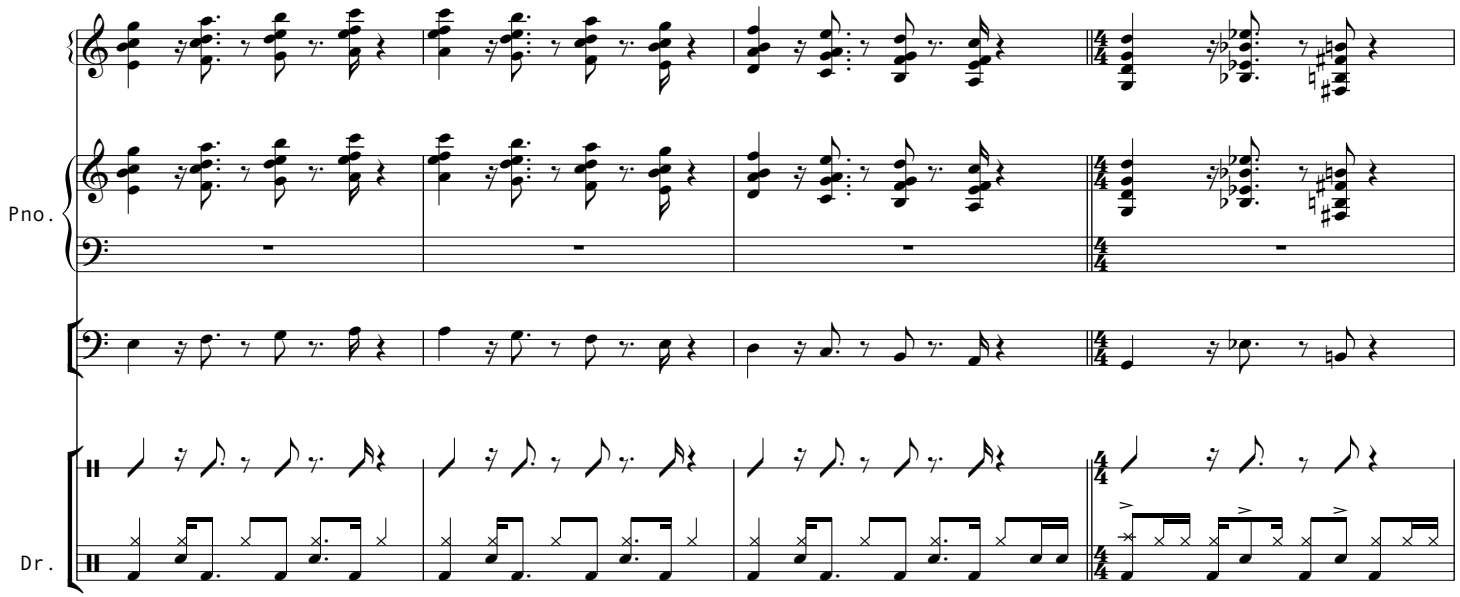


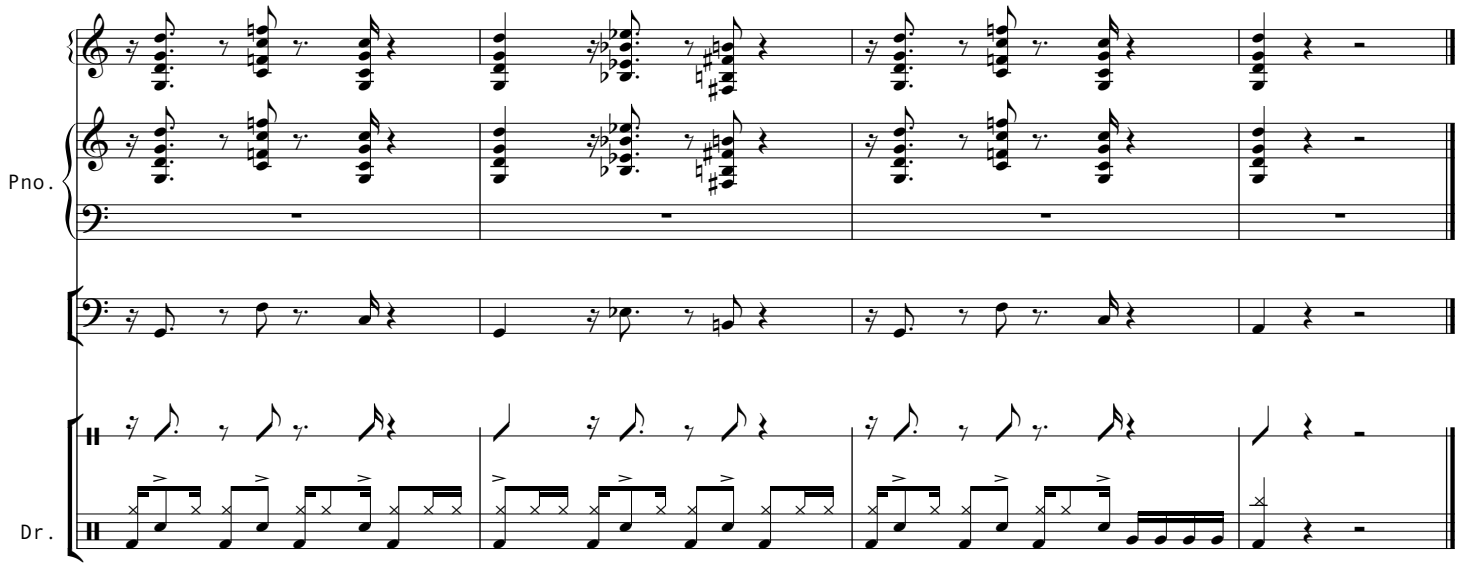
Played with different permutations:

"Out-In", "In-Out", "13.24", "24.13", 1234, 1243, 123234, 432321

Space and Timing




Pno.
Dr.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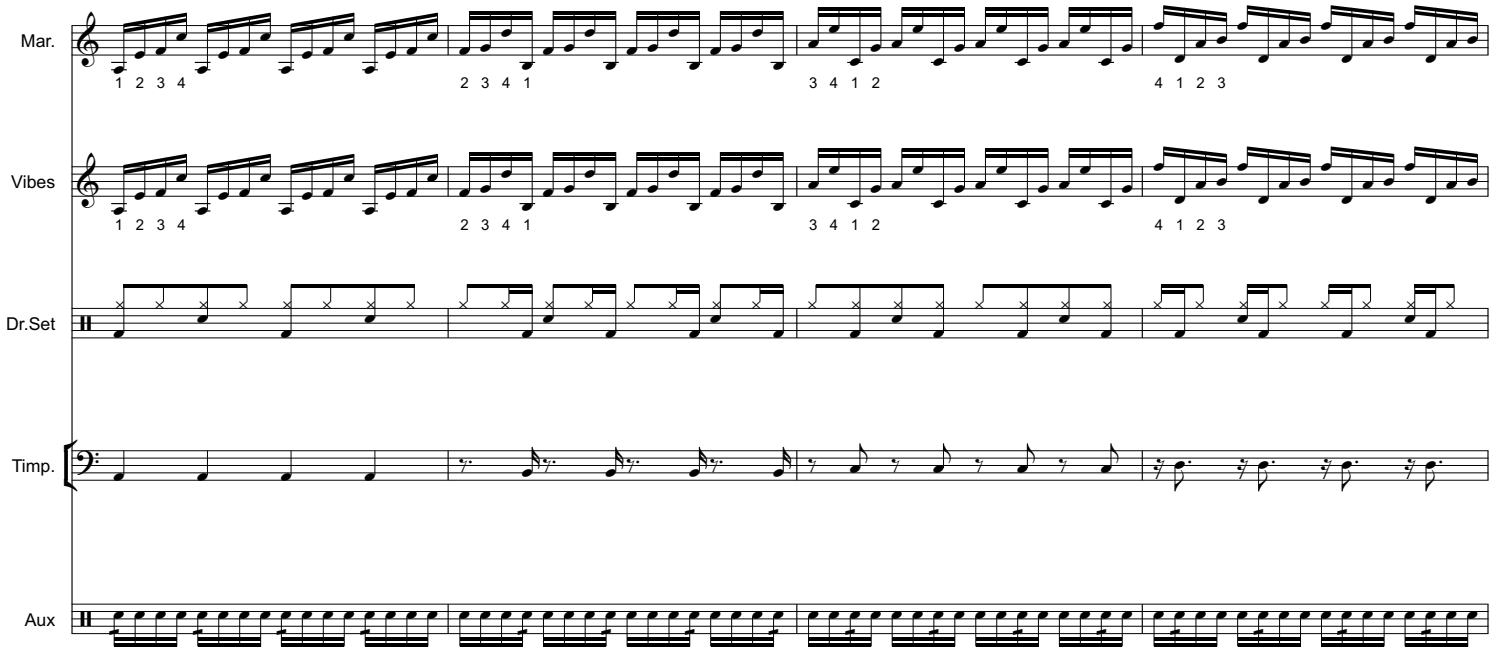
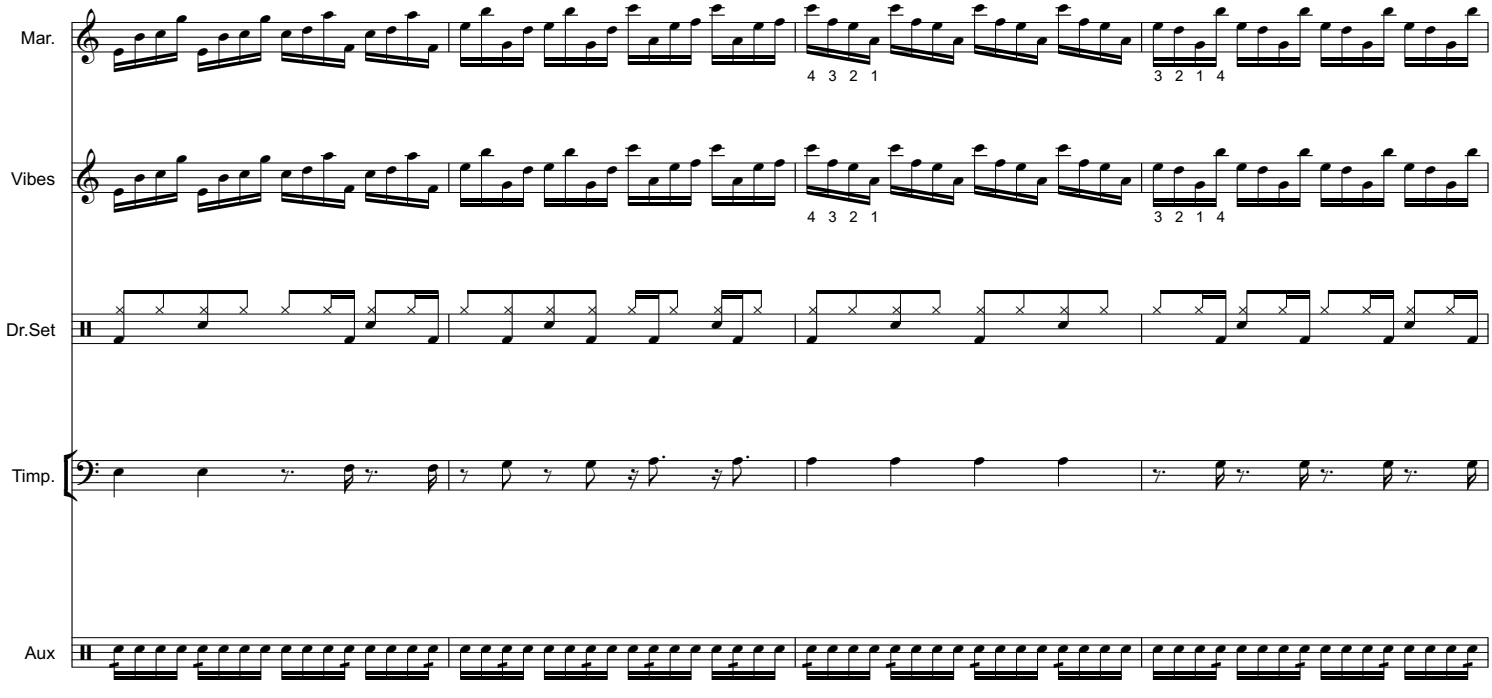
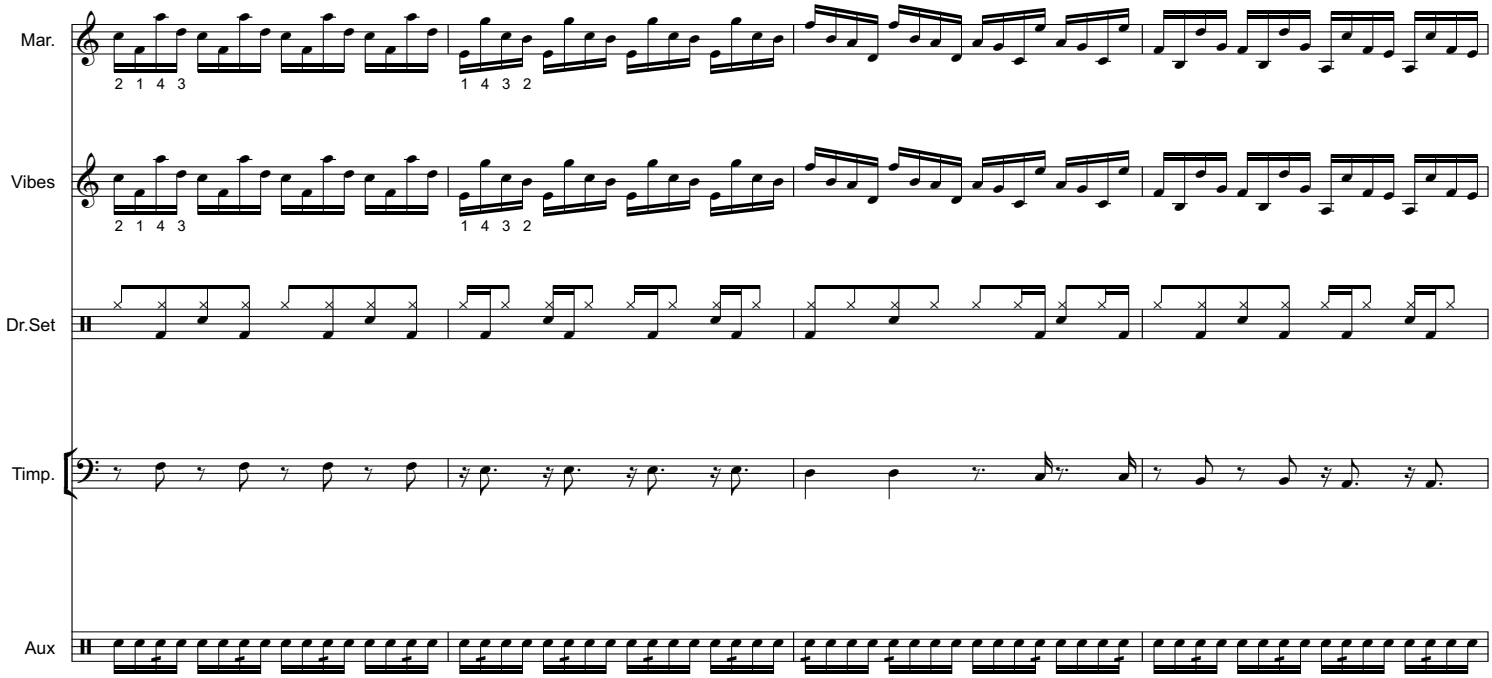
Broccoli

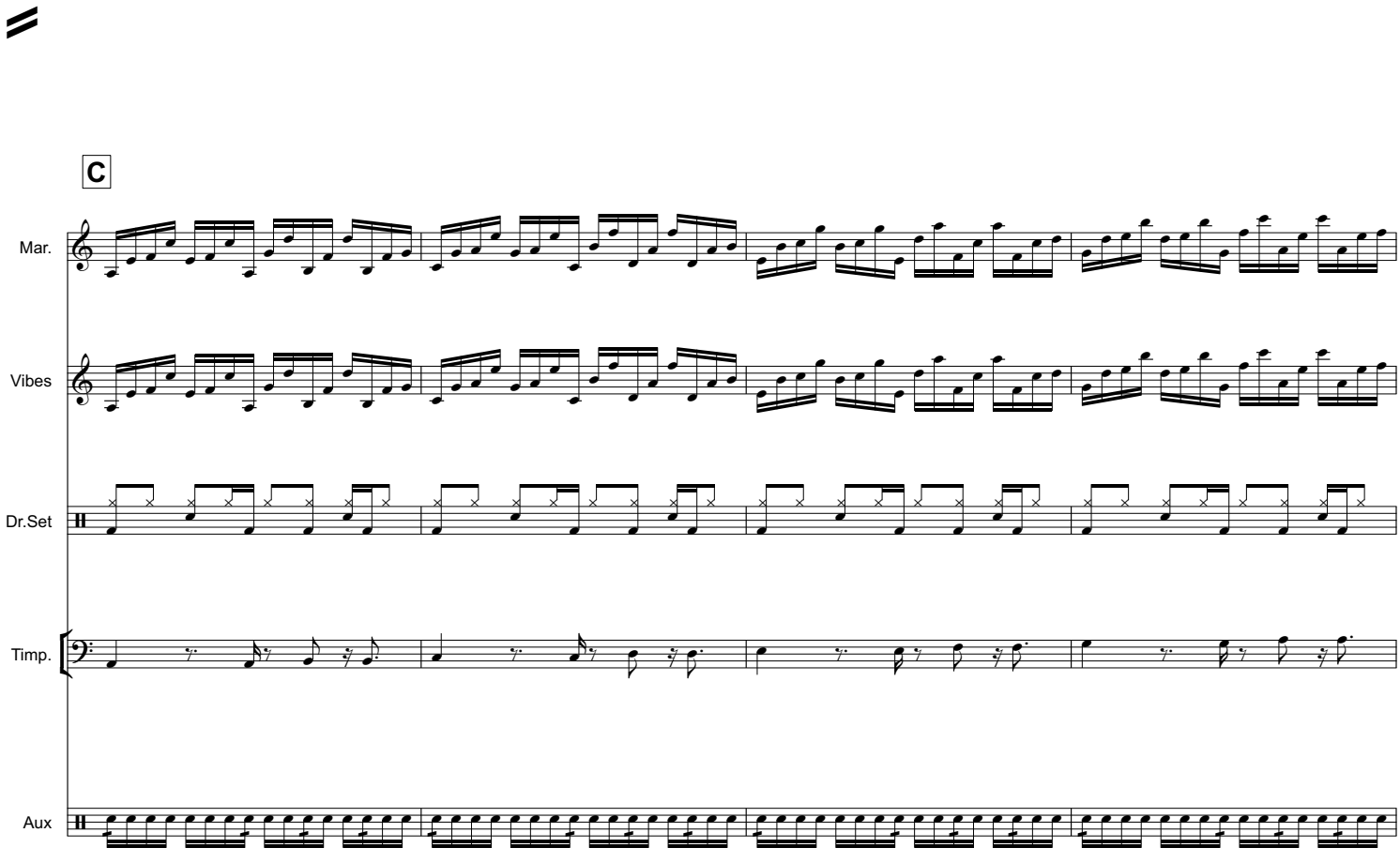
A ♩=80-110



B




Mar.
2 1 4 3
1 4 3 2
Vibes
2 1 4 3
1 4 3 2
Dr.Set
Timp.
Aux


C
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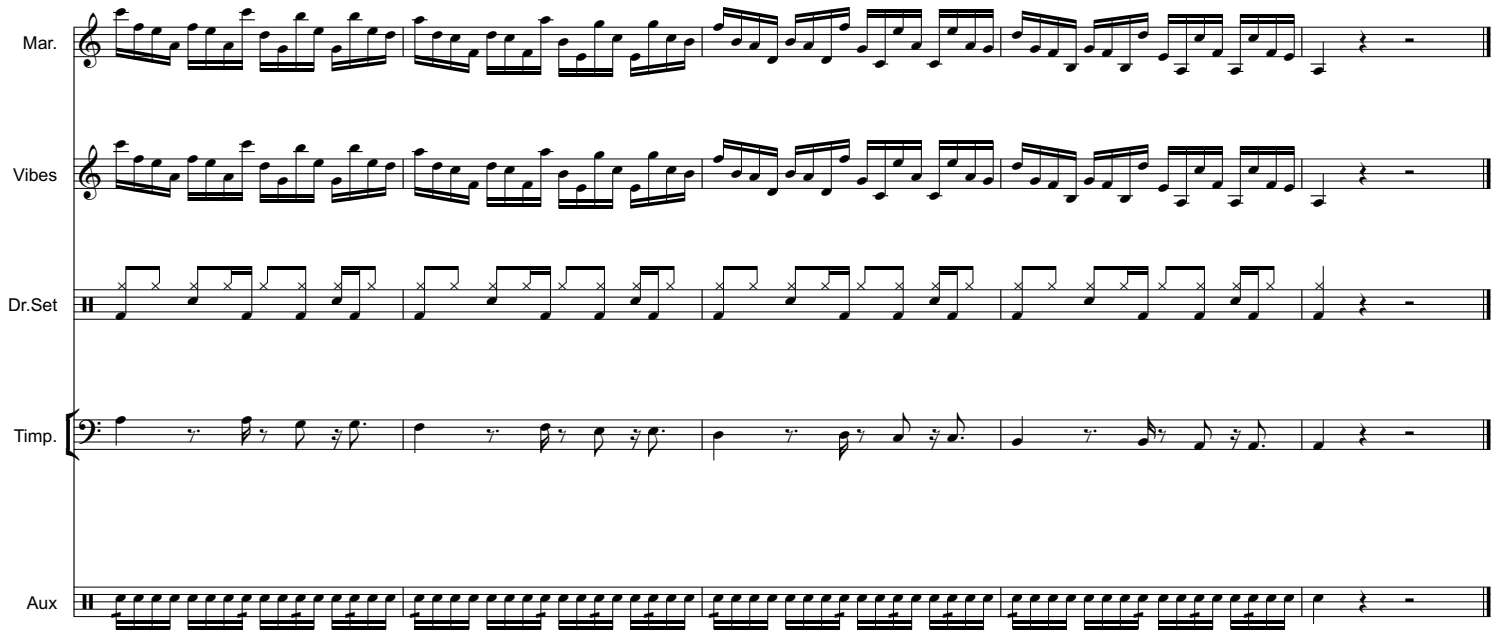


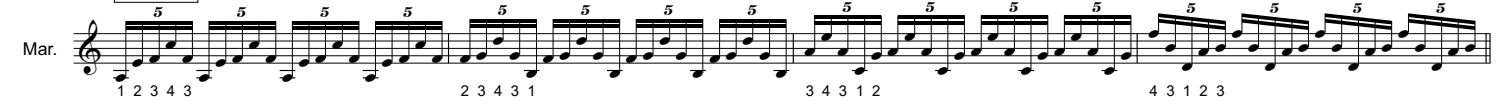
Fivelet Broccoli

This is meant to show the perms.
Be sure to also play through the 2's and 1's
just like 16th broccoli both ascending and descending

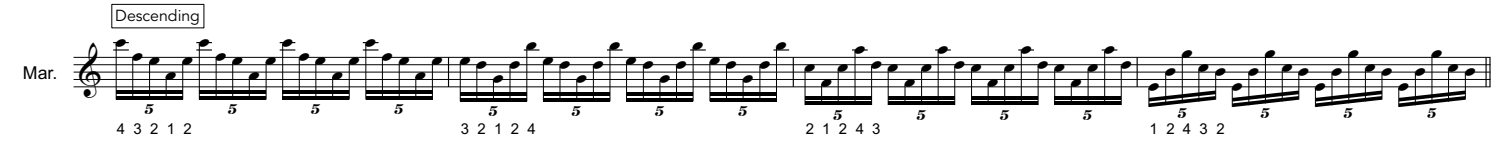
Drumset adlib on this pattern.
Synth plays mallet part.

♩=60-100

Ascending



Descending

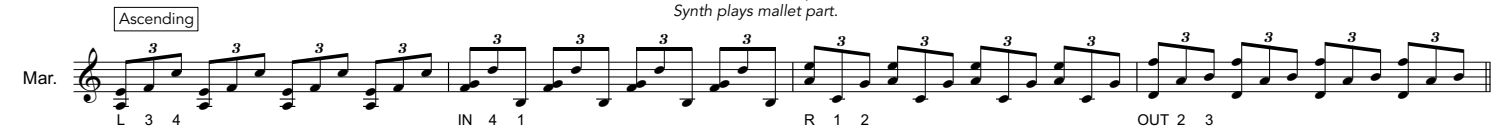


Triplet Broccoli

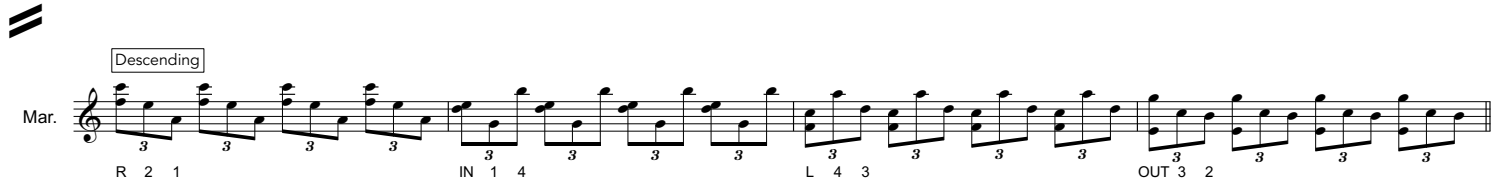
This is meant to show the perms.
Be sure to also play through the 2's and 1's
just like 16th broccoli both ascending and descending

Drumset adlib on this pattern.
Synth plays mallet part.

Ascending



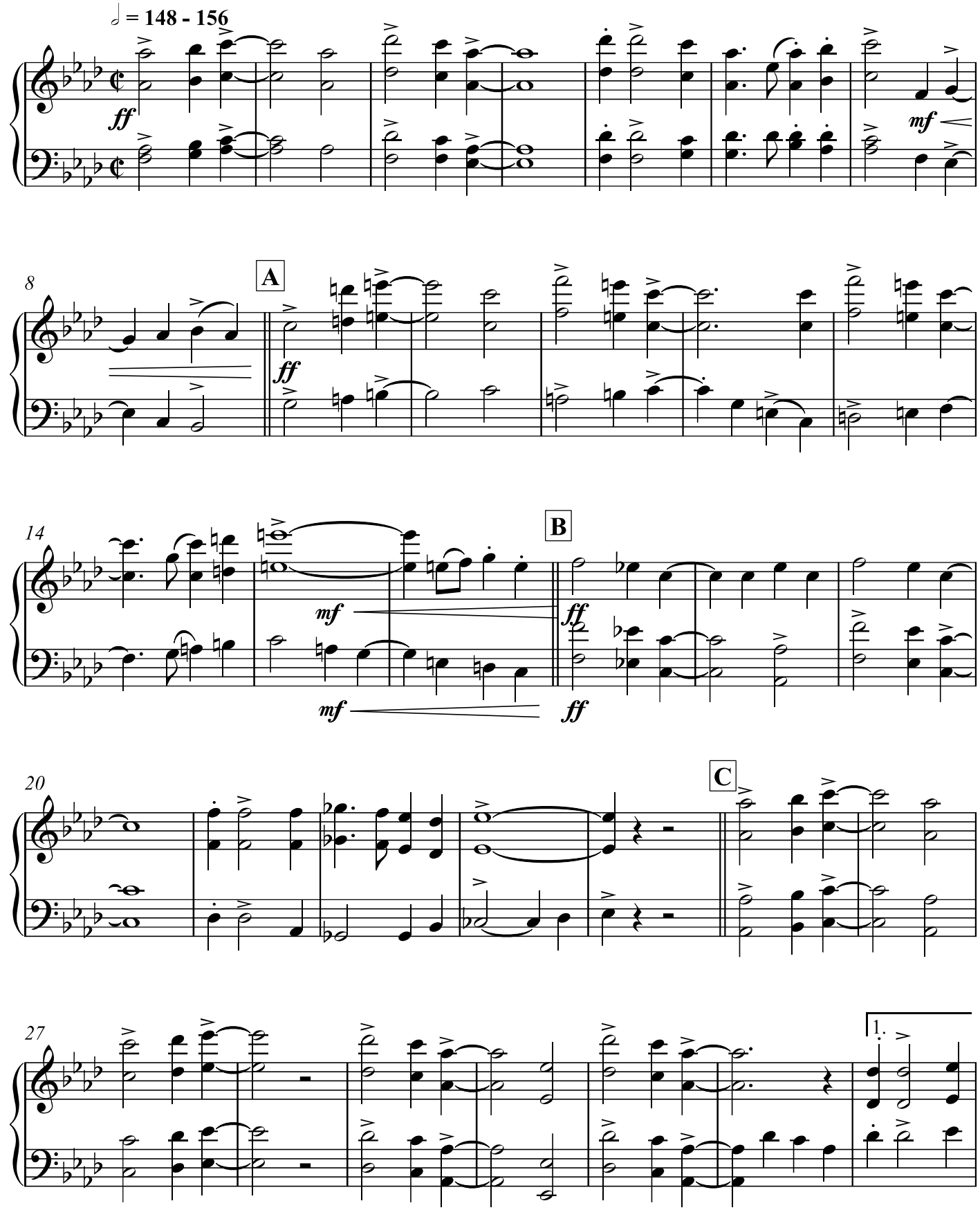
Descending



JMU Fight Song

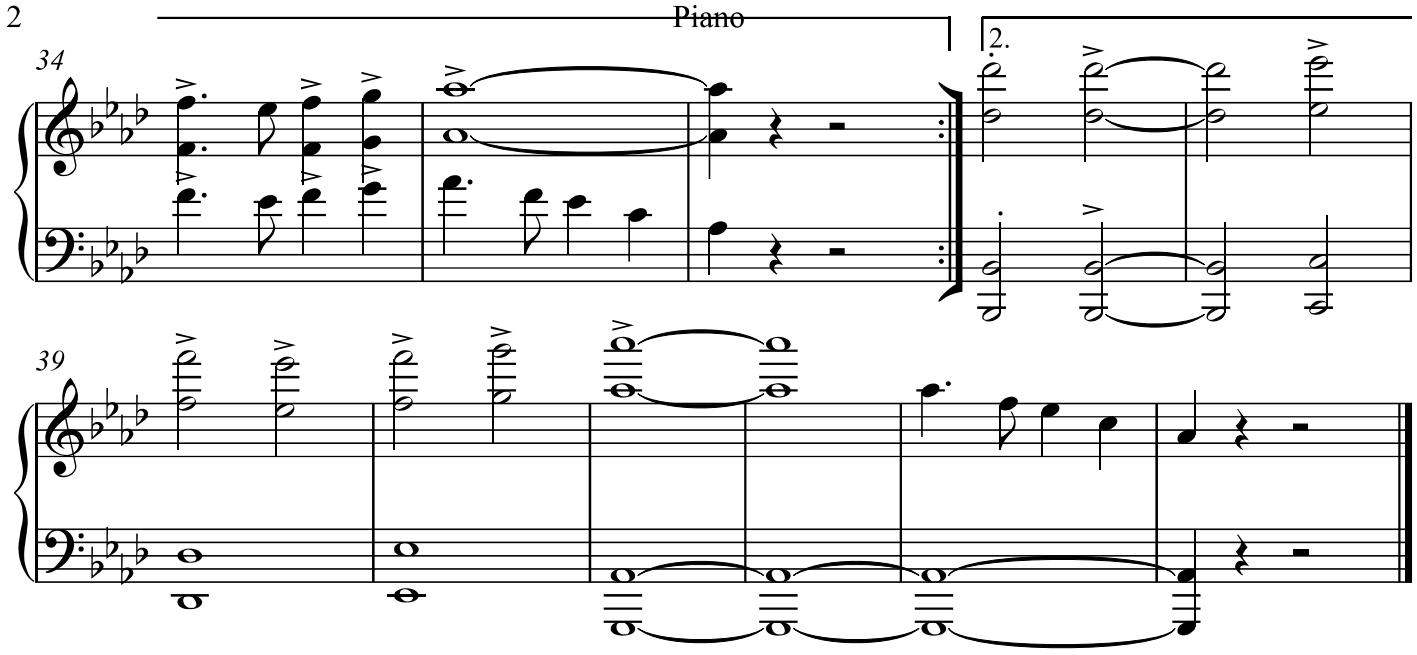
Piano

Arr. Elijah Steele



V.S.

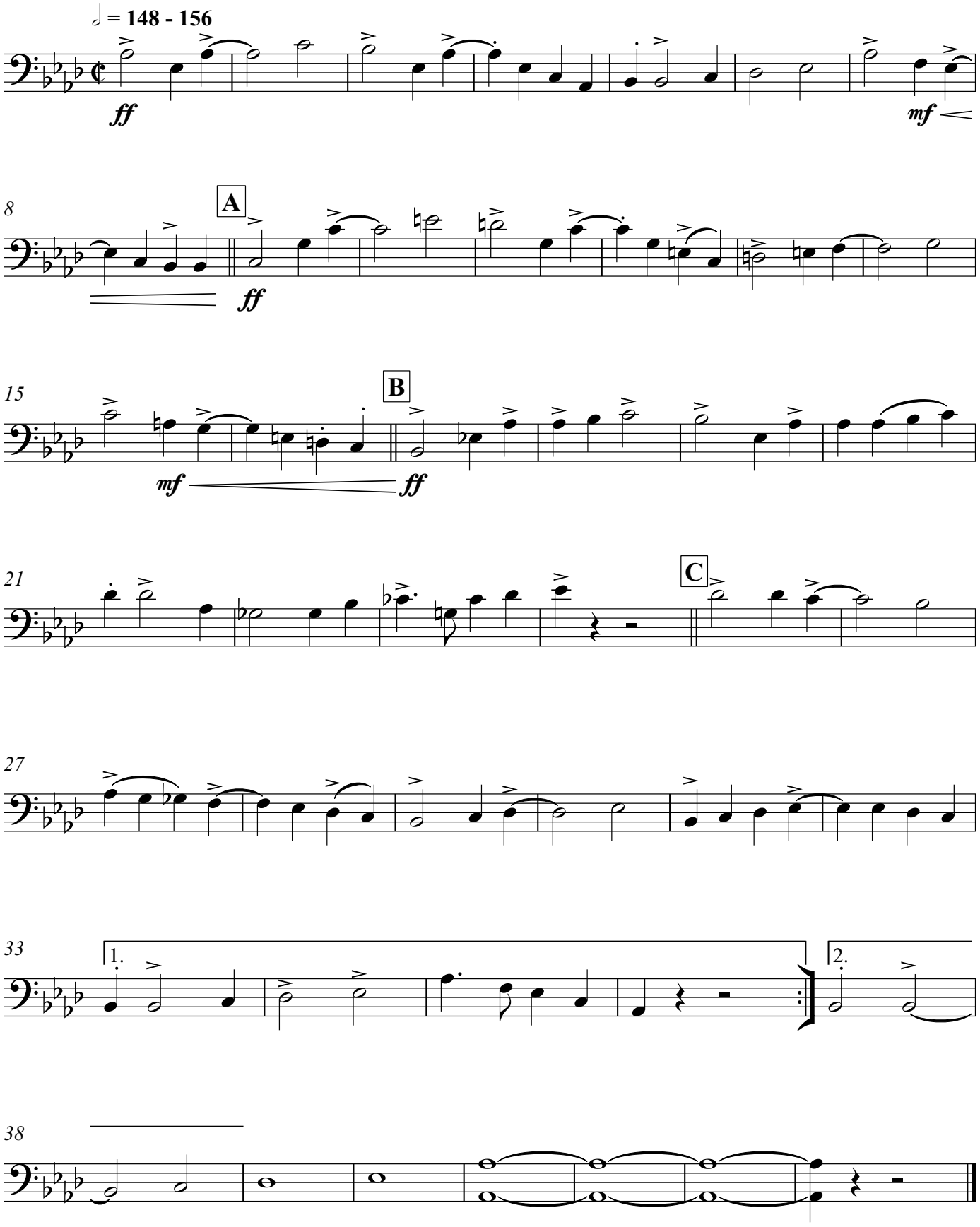
Piano



JMU Fight Song

4-string Bass Guitar

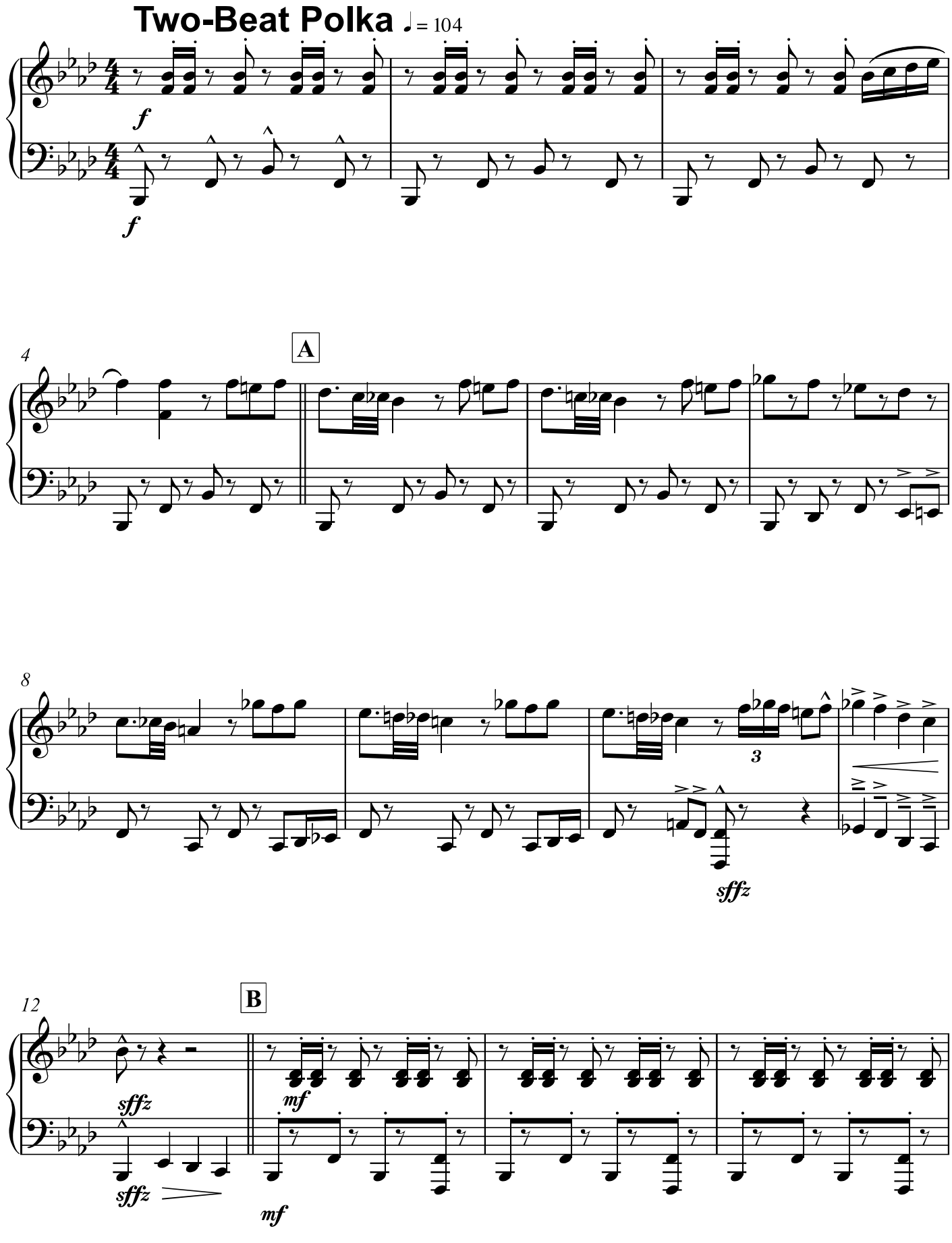
Arr. Elijah Steele

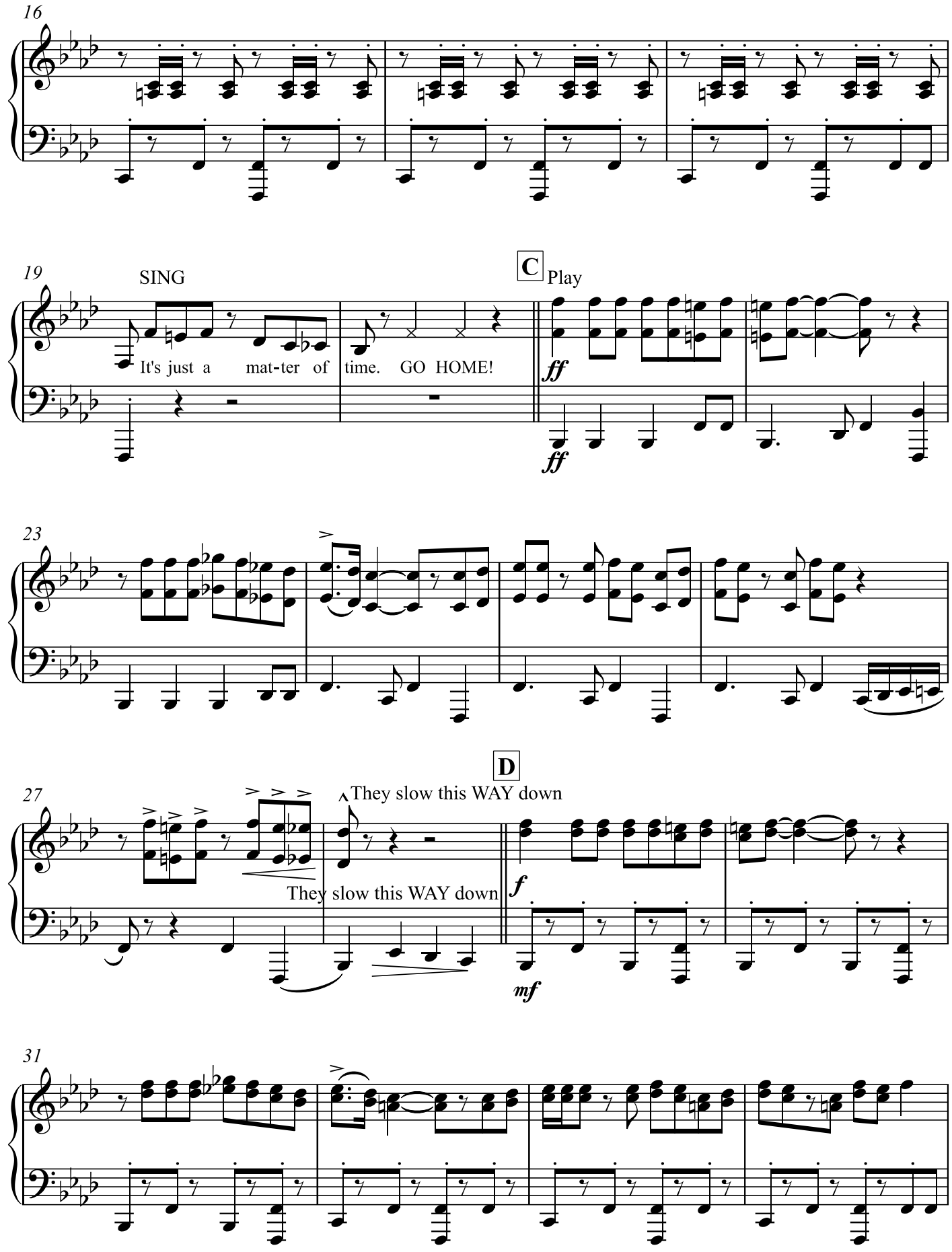


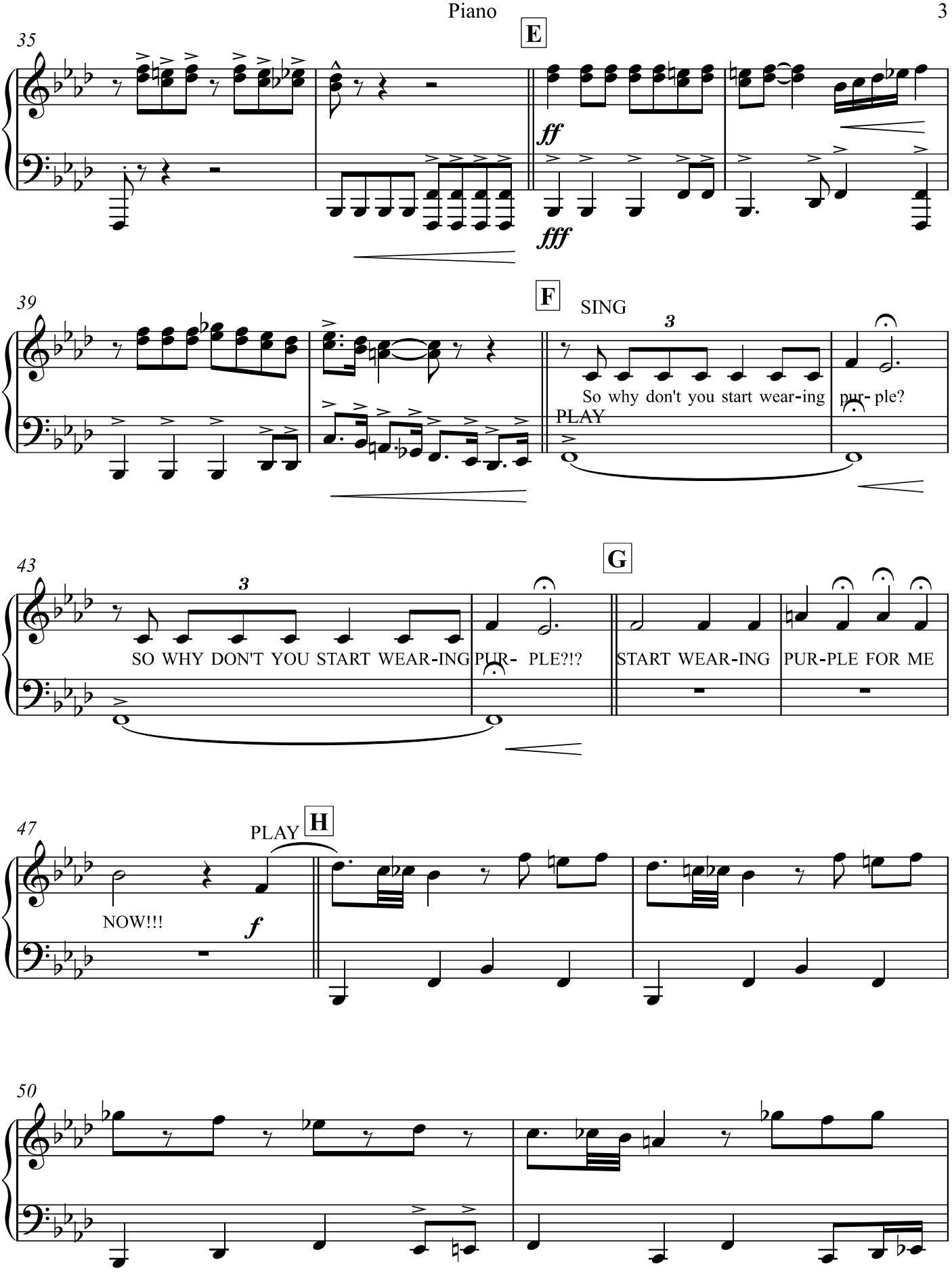
Start Wearing Purple

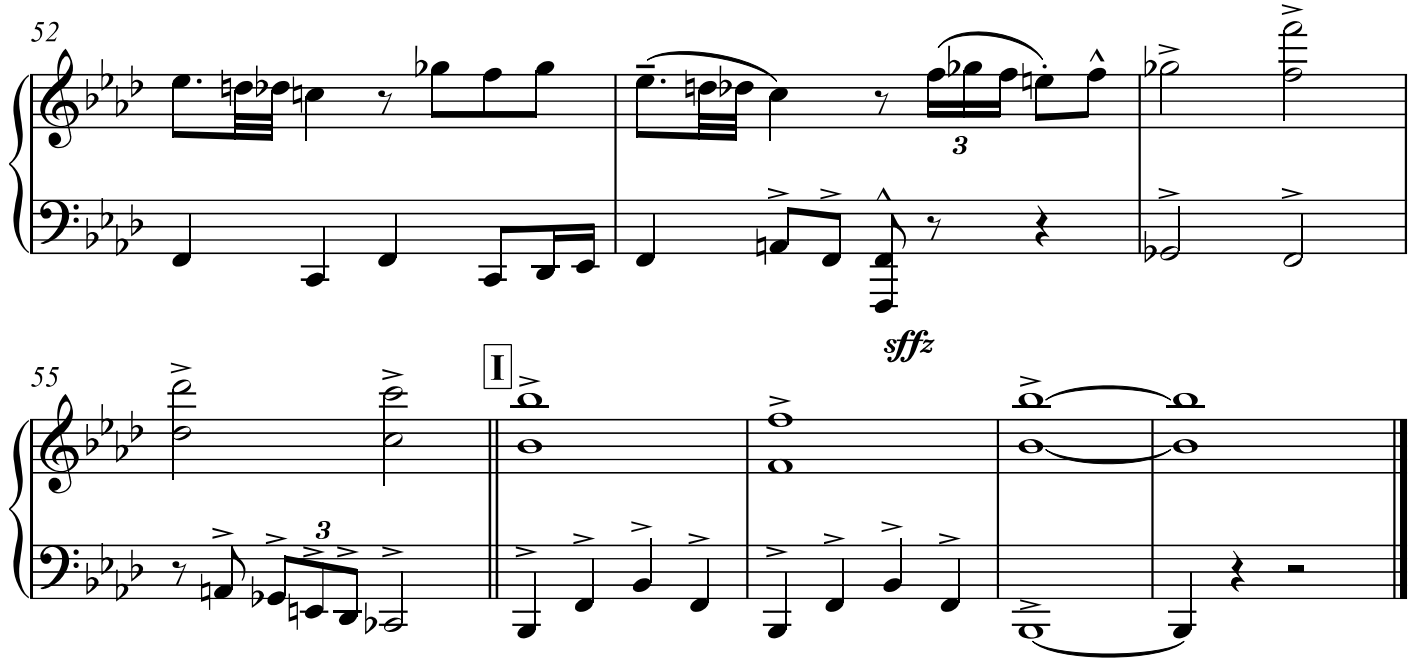
Piano

Arr. Elijah Steele




16
19
SING
It's just a mat-ter of time. GO HOME!
C
Play
ff
ff
23
27
They slow this WAY down
They slow this WAY down
D
f
mf
31

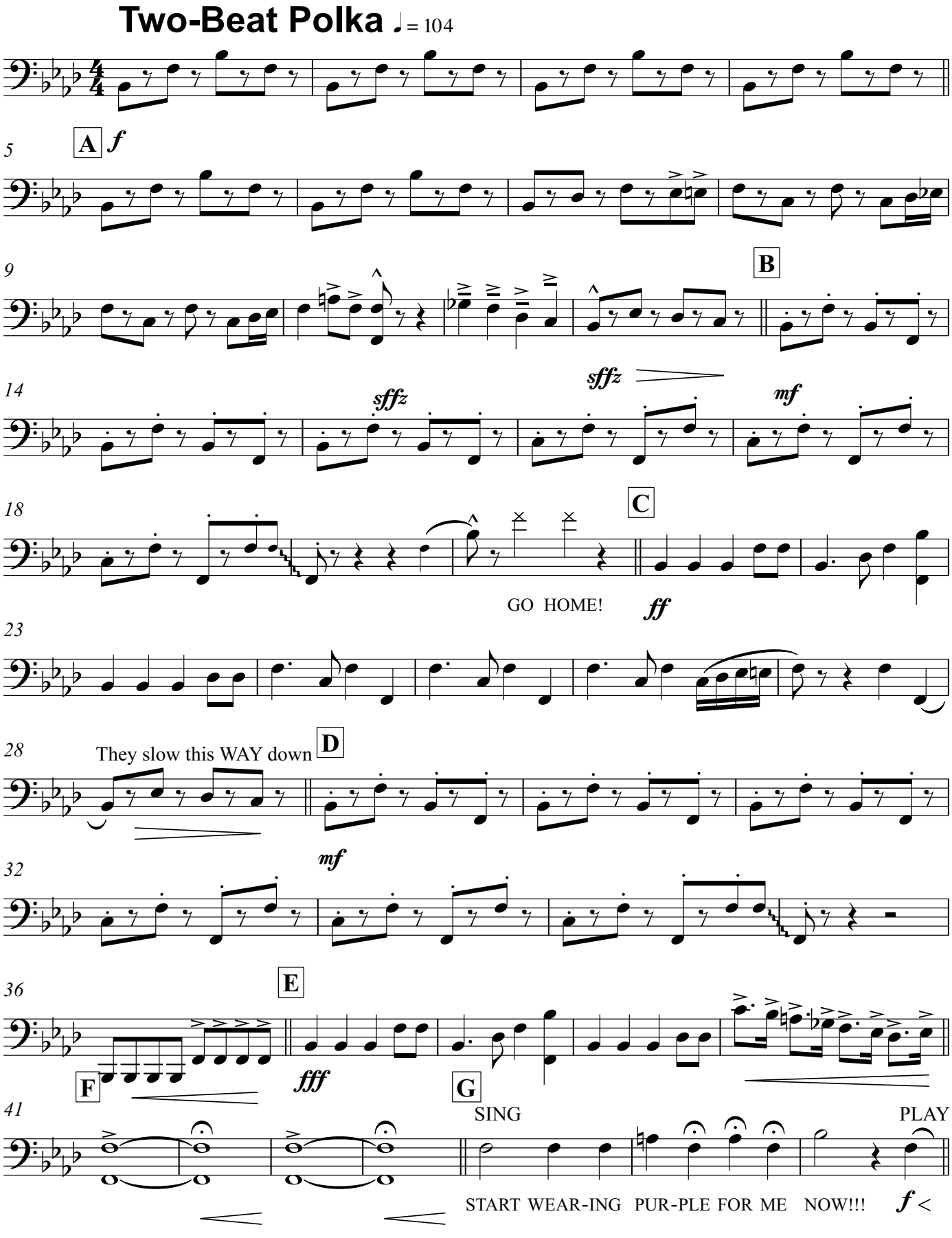

35
E
ff
fff
39
F
SING
3
So why don't you start wear-ing pur- ple?
PLAY
43
G
3
SO WHY DON'T YOU START WEAR-ING PUR- PLE?!?
START WEAR-ING PUR-PLE FOR ME
47
H
PLAY
NOW!!!
f
50


52
3
sffz
55
I
3

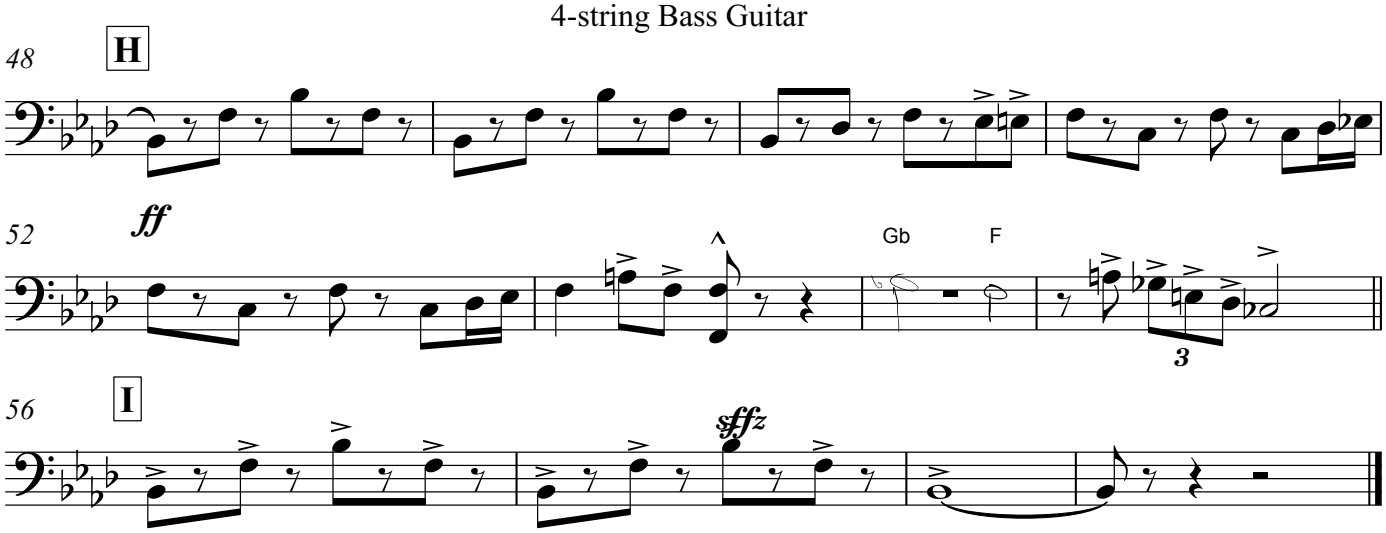
Start Wearing Purple

4-string Bass Guitar

Arr. Elijah Steele



V.S.


48
H
52
ff
Gb
F
3
56
I
sffz