Stockbridge High School

Marching Percussion Ensemble Packet

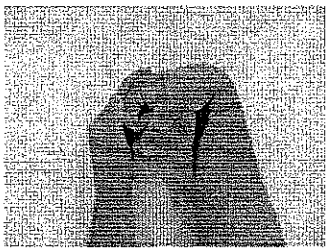
Mallets

Stretching

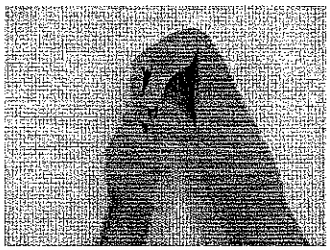
It wouldn't make sense for an athlete to never stretch before or after exercise, so it likewise doesn't make sense to never stretch hands or wrists. In order for hands to move correctly and be able to make corrections, they need to be nimble and agile. Here are a few recommended stretches. These stretches can help prevent and alleviate conditions such as tendonitis and carpel tunnel.

Make a loose fist with the thumb outside the palm. Gently push the hand downwards to stretch the tendons on top of the wrist.

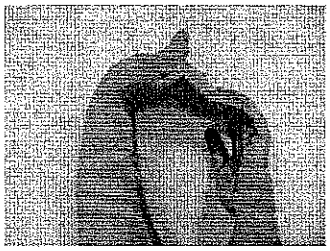
Hold for a few seconds and **slowly** release the fingers down.



Gently pull fingers down, Hold for a few seconds and **slowly** release.



Flex the wrist backwards and pull the fingers down. Hold for a few seconds and **slowly** release.



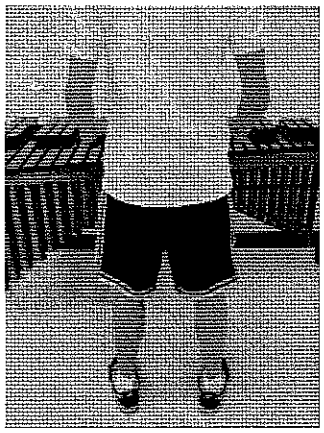
It is imperative that to release **slowly** when releasing a stretch. Releasing too quickly can make the muscle cramp. After stretching, slowly shake your hand from side to side to get blood moving again.

We also recommend every percussionist to purchase earplugs as a precautionary measure against hearing loss.

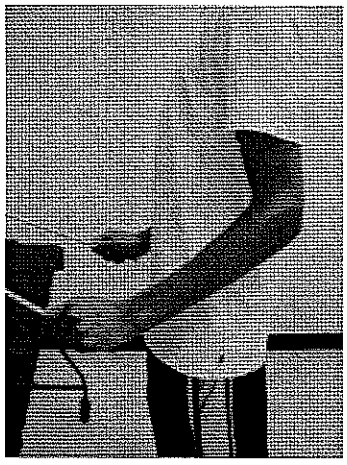
Keyboards

Posture/Stance

Before a note is played it is crucial that to understand how to stand behind the instrument. Many people jump right into playing without taking time to think about how they are standing and they end up getting into some bad habits that are difficult to after awhile. You should stand with your feet shoulder-width apart with your knees NOT locked. This will allow maximum mobility behind the instrument because weight will often need to be shifted from side to side or move the body all together. Do not cross legs, have weight on only one foot, or lean to one side.

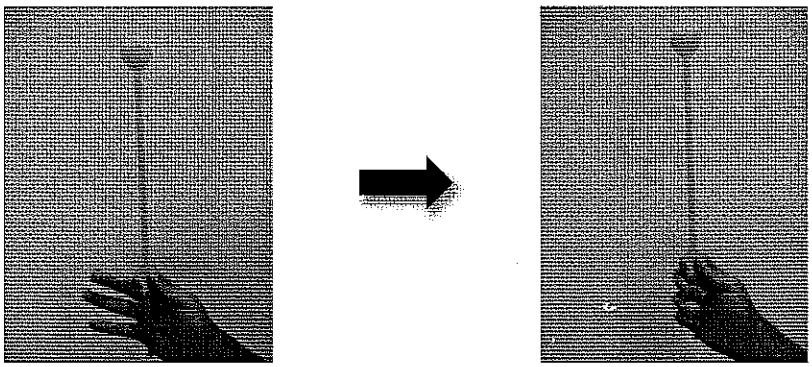


In addition to the legs and feet being set, good posture must also be a focus with the back, neck, and head. Motion with the arms or hands stem from the back, so if the back, neck, and head are not in alignment, motion isn't being used efficiently and health problems may arise. The elbows should be next to the body, not behind your body. Make sure the head is up and not staring down with the top of the head, as this again enforces another bad habit.



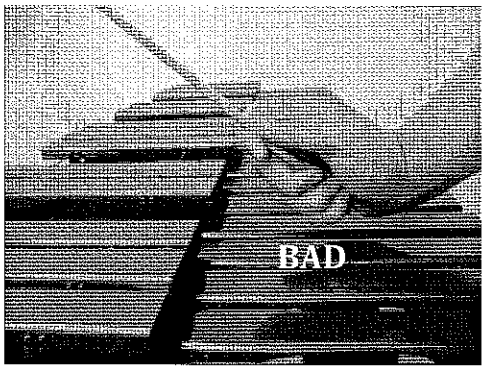
Grip

Like any lever, the primary element of grip is the fulcrum. The fulcrum is between the index finger at the first knuckle and the pad of the thumb. While this is the most important part of the grip it is often mistaken as the point that should have a lot of tension. THIS IS NOT TRUE! Yes there needs to be a certain amount of pressure to hold on to the mallet but the mallet should be able to move inside the cavity of your palm while playing.



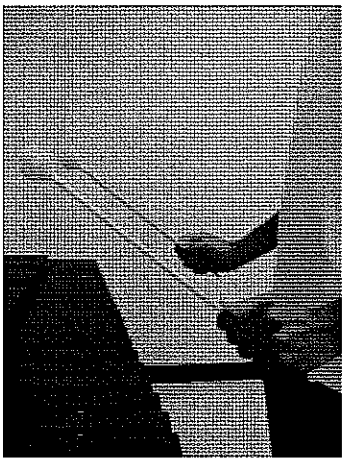
It is easiest to determine too tight of a grip during a sustained roll; it is often one of the times where the mallets will move the most inside the hand. Remember the rubber pencil trick where the pencil was wiggled up and down to make it look as if it were made of rubber? Try doing it with the arm. That combination of wrist and fingers is similar to what the hand should look like while rolling. To complete the grip, simply wrap the other fingers loosely around shaft. This is another point in the process where many people grab on too tightly. This can create poor sound quality, hand speed fatigue, accuracy problems, and could also lead to physical problems such as tendonitis or carpel tunnel syndrome. Relaxation is key while playing.

Make sure the wrists are not fully extended to a 90° angle. This is especially a problem for tall people because many percussion instruments are too low. Adjust instruments when possible to correct height, which about 6" below the belly button. **Do not play with your wrists in this position**.



Stroke

The easiest way to think of the wrist motion is 'Start up, End up.' Every single note's home base should be at an up position. While keeping the wrists relaxed and low to the instrument, the heads of the mallets should start up and off the instrument, fall down to strike the bar, and end up in the same position that they started in. Most of the motion is from the wrist, but there needs to be some give in the fingers to allow the mallet to come all the way up to full extension (vertical) and to alleviate any tension in the wrist. Since the bars won't produce much rebound, make sure that the lifting motion after bar contact is not forced. It should be relaxed natural looking, not sharp and angular.

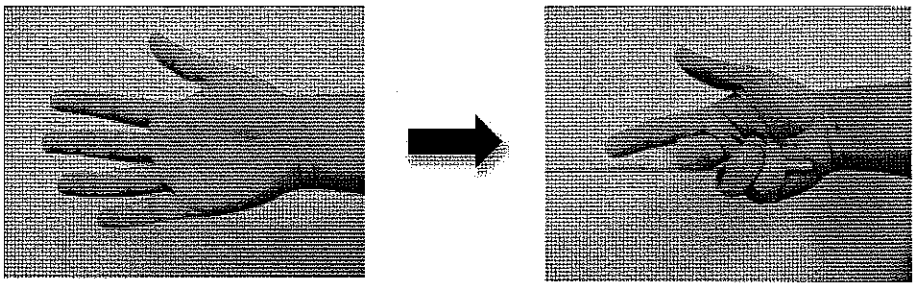


Make sure that there is some give in the grip of the mallet. The stroke should not be isolated wrist movement to the extent where nothing else moves. The tightness of the back fingers can have a tremendous amount of effect on the hand and stroke. Allow the mallets to move slightly inside the palm.

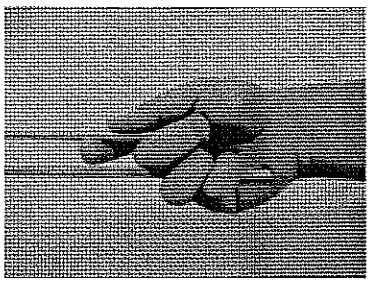
A common analogy is to "pull the sound out" of the keyboard. While this image can help, there still does need to be some amount of downward force to initiate movement. This initiation comes from the fulcrum. The fulcrum is what throws the mallet toward the bars. What is most important is what happens **after** the mallet makes contact with the bar. Start Up, End Up.

Stevens Grip (4-mallet)

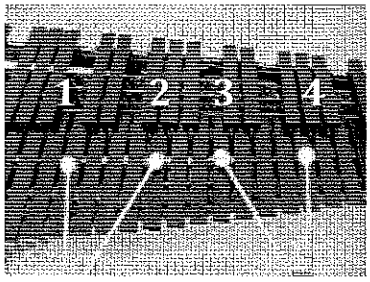
This is one grip for holding 4 mallets that is widely used today. It is a very versatile 4-mallet grip. Again, relaxation is paramount to the success of 4-mallet playing. First hold the hand out as if you were going to shake someone's hand. Put one mallet between your ring and middle fingers about a half-inch from the butt of the shaft and wrap those two fingers around the shaft. Don't pull with these fingers too tightly. Much of the pain and discomfort when playing with 4 mallets is from gripping too tightly with these two fingers. Again, the shaft should be able to move within this part of the grip and within these 2 fingers. Try doing the rubber pencil trick again holding the mallet in this position. Let the mallet shaft move. Don't restrict its movement.



To complete the grip, put the other mallet between the index finger at the first knuckle and the pad of the thumb. The middle finger will also wrap around the shaft slightly as well. Take out the other mallet and do the rubber pencil trick with only this mallet. Again, let the mallet move and learn how to control it.



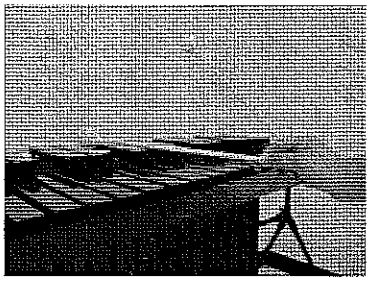
Each of the mallets has a corresponding number attached to them as a reference for stickings. From left to right, mallets are numbered 1-4.



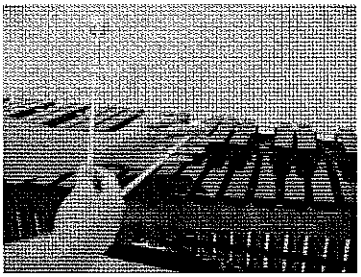
Stroke

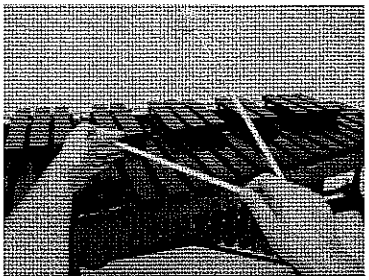
Just as with two mallets, the concept of stroke is based on 'start up, end up.' Each mallet should return to this position after each stroke. Whether 2 or 4 mallets, each stroke should be straight up and down. This concept can change slightly when holding 4 mallets, however.

Certainly the guiding factor is every stroke motion being straight up and down. However, if we are playing with only one of the mallets at a time, a rotation takes place to allow one mallet to play while the others do not move. For example, playing with mallet 3 would mean the hand should rotate around mallet 4 to allow mallet 3 to move upward. This concept is the same for the opposite case where the outside mallet is playing and the rotation take place around the inside mallet.

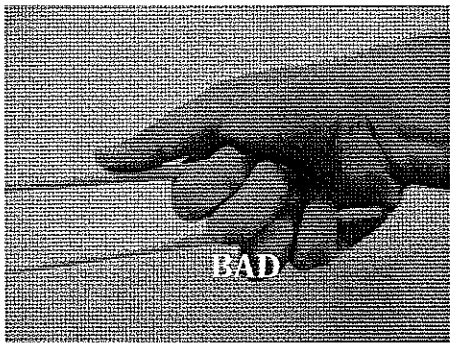


One way to see what the stroke should look like in slow motion is to hold the shaft of the tacet mallet between your fingers allowing it to rotate as the other mallet moves up and down. For example, put the shaft of mallet 4 between your fingers and rotate mallet 3 upwards and downwards and vice versa.

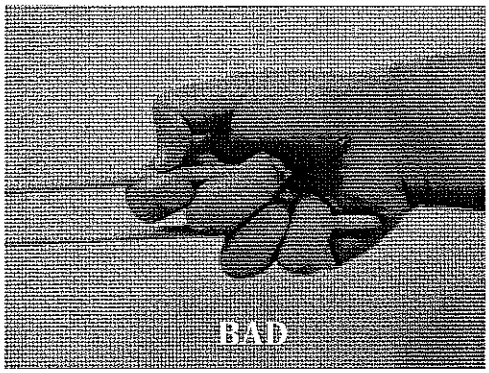




A common tendency is to "pull your trigger finger." This means that the index finger is pulled too far back on the mallet shaft. Especially when starting, this may seem like an easy fix, but by doing this, the grip and stroke are fundamentally changed. This will produce a poor stroke motion and poor sound quality.



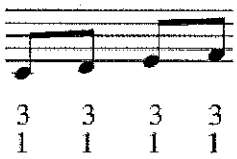
Another common tendency is to inch the thumb up on its tip for the same reason: stability. Be sure to keep the proper fulcrum at all times. Comfort with the technique, grip, and stroke will come with time. Do not sacrifice technique for a quick and easy fix. These tendencies will cause more problems down the road.



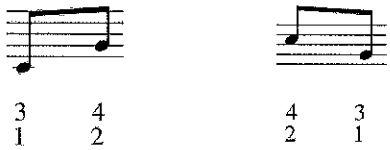
4-Mallet Stroke Types

These 4 different stroke types dictate different sticking patterns, which in turn, dictate that the wrist move in different ways to accommodate these stickings. These stroke types are what make up 4-mallet literature and should be practiced independently from the music that is to be performed. The two lines of numbers represent two possible sticking options for the corresponding music.

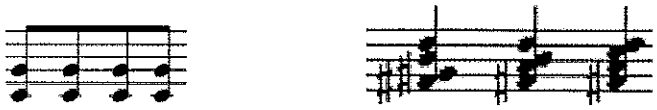
Single Independent strokes are when only one mallet in a hand plays a note. This would be where the rotation concept comes into play that was discussed earlier.



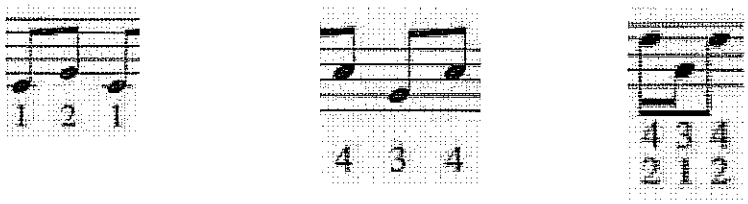
Double Lateral strokes are when one mallet in a hand plays directly after the other mallet in that same hand. This motion can be either an inward (1-2 or 4-3) motion or an outward (2-1 or 3-4) motion.



Double Vertical strokes (also sometimes referred to double-stops) are 2 or more mallets play at the same time. This would be used for block chords. The wrist is used primarily in this stroke, as compared to rotation of the wrist for the other strokes.



Triple Lateral (multiple lateral) strokes start the same as double-laterals, but they add more notes in the same hand. In this case, it means 3 alternating notes in the same hand.



EIGHT ON A HAND

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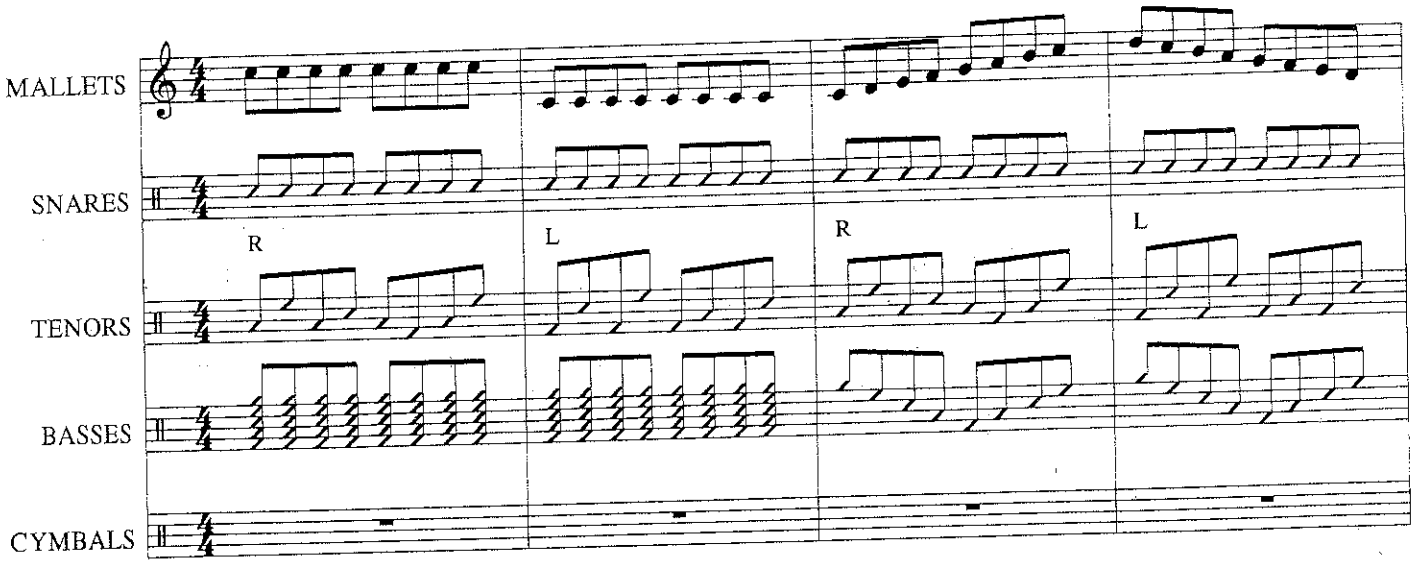

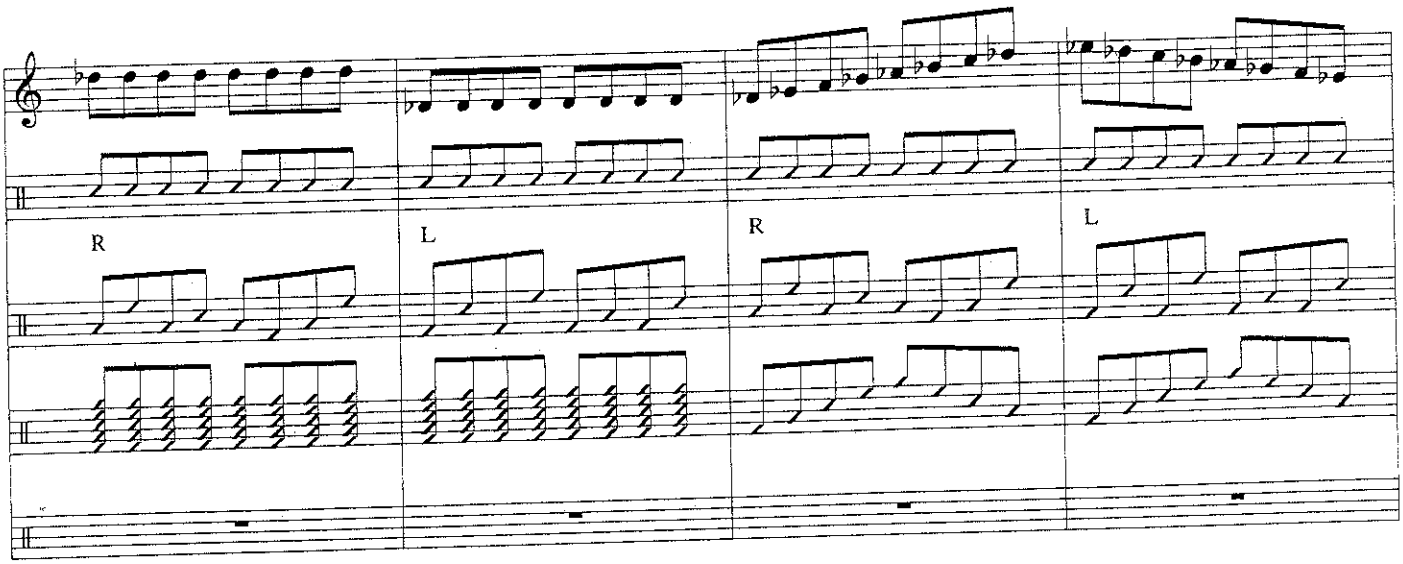

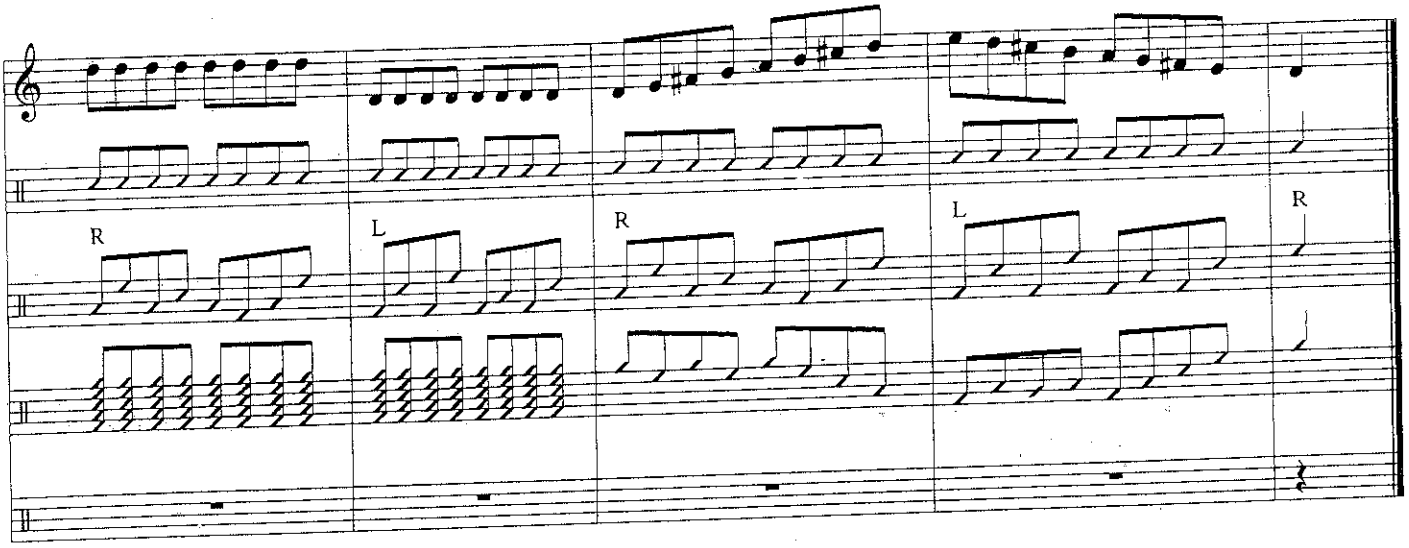

5/8,7/8, 9/8

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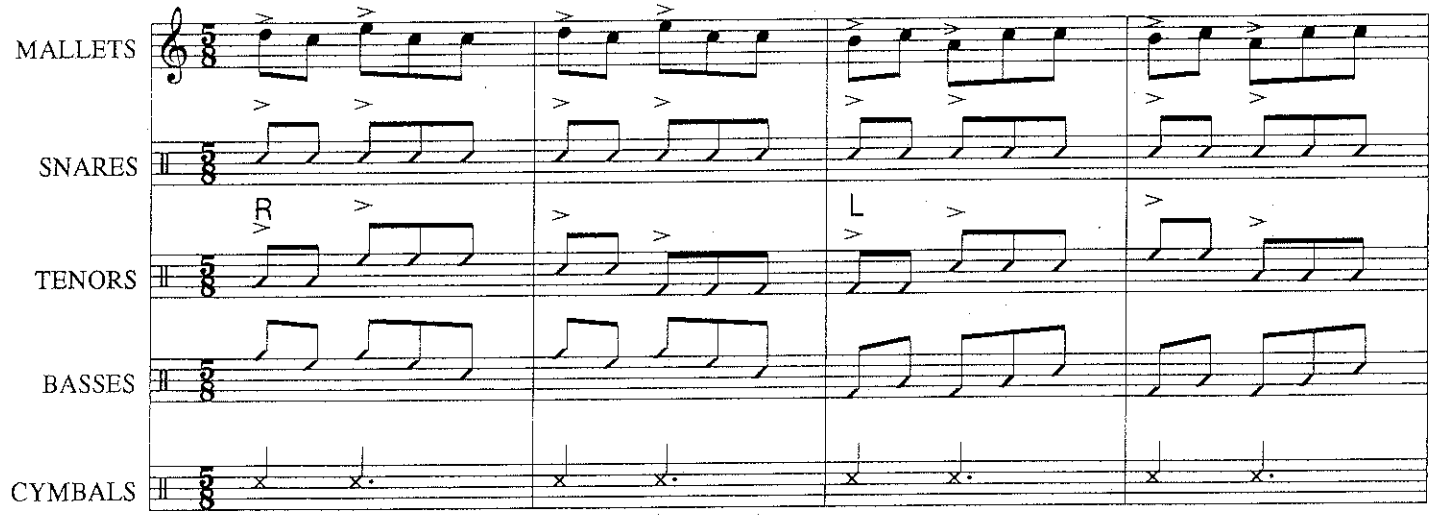

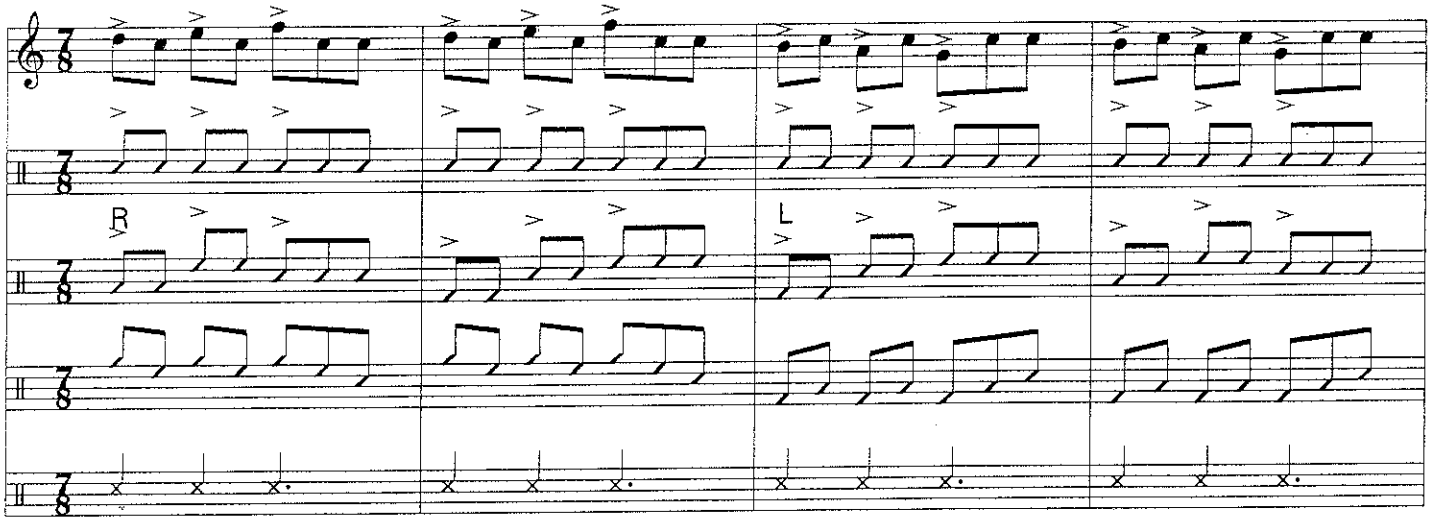

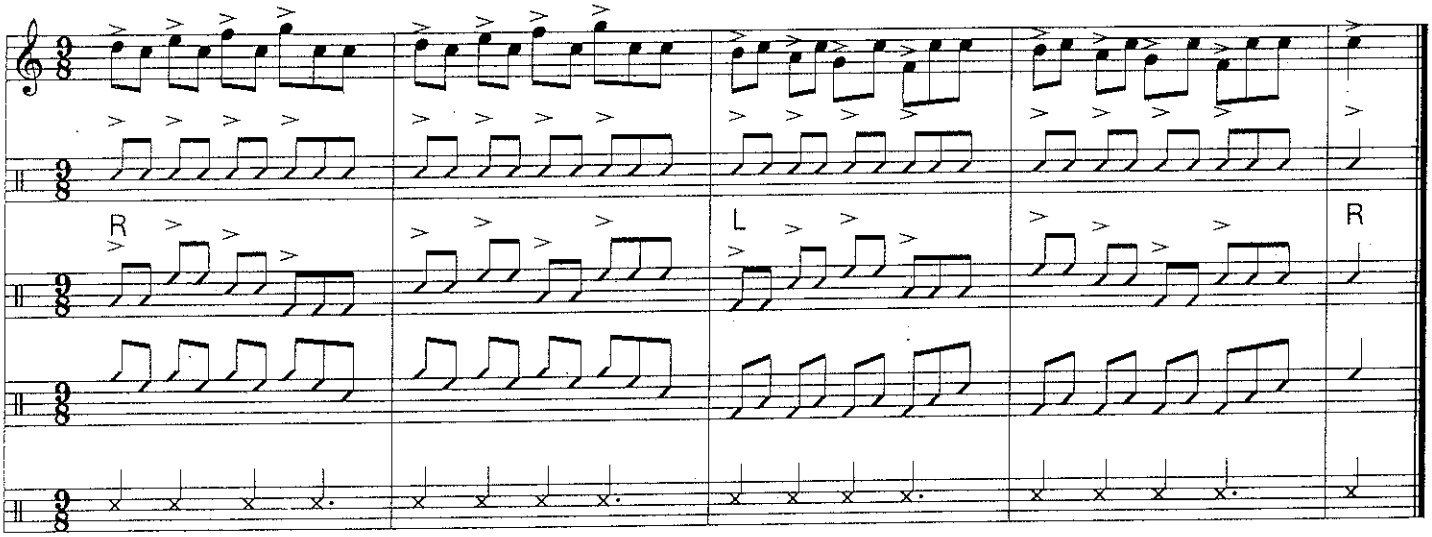

DOUBLE, TRIPLE COMBO

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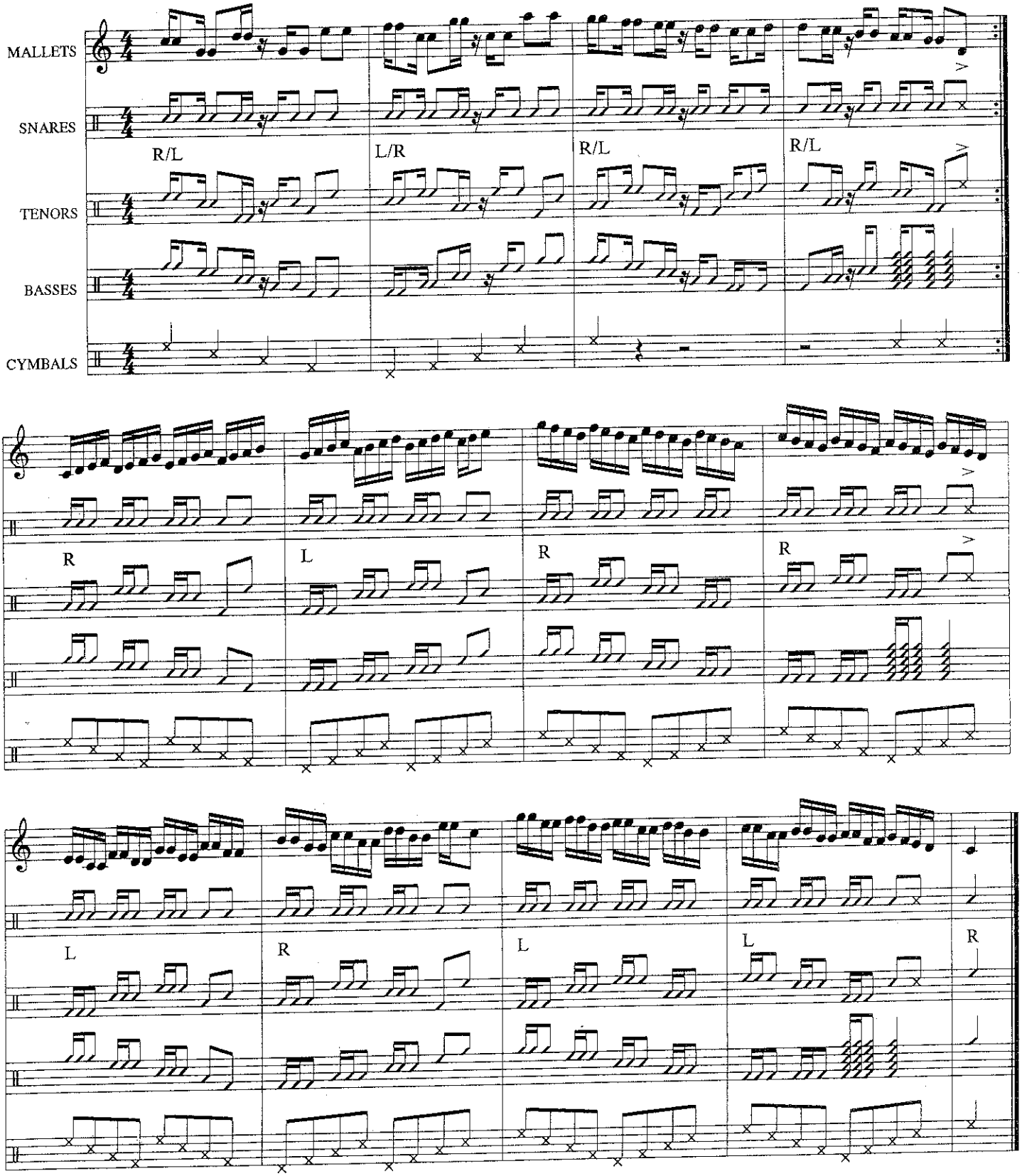

16TH TIMING

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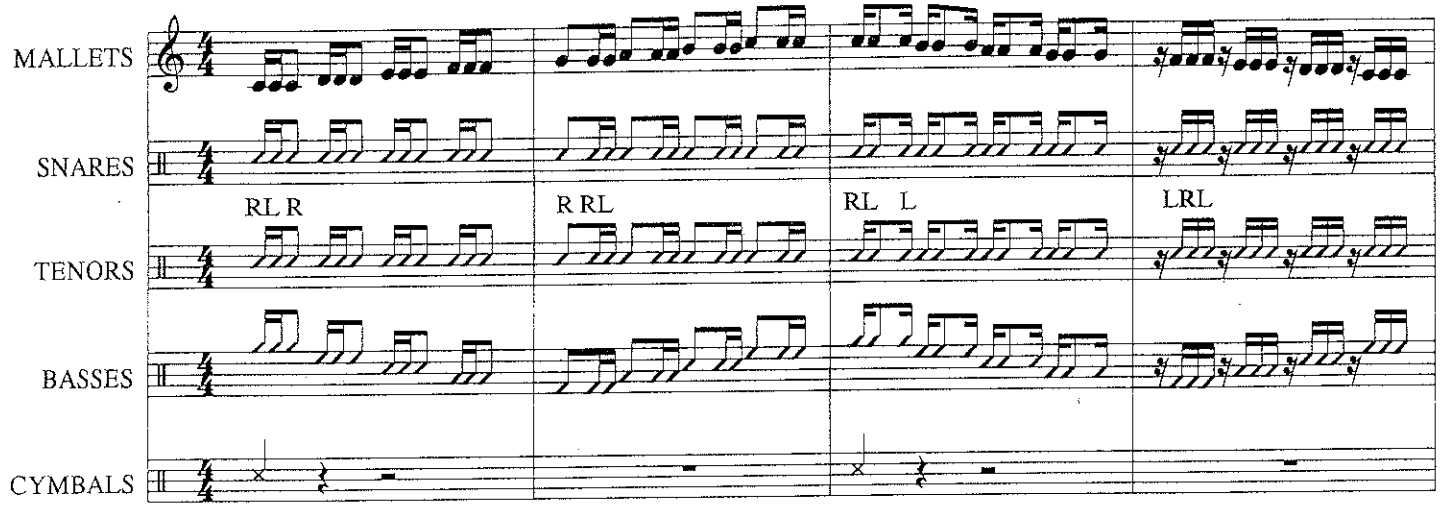

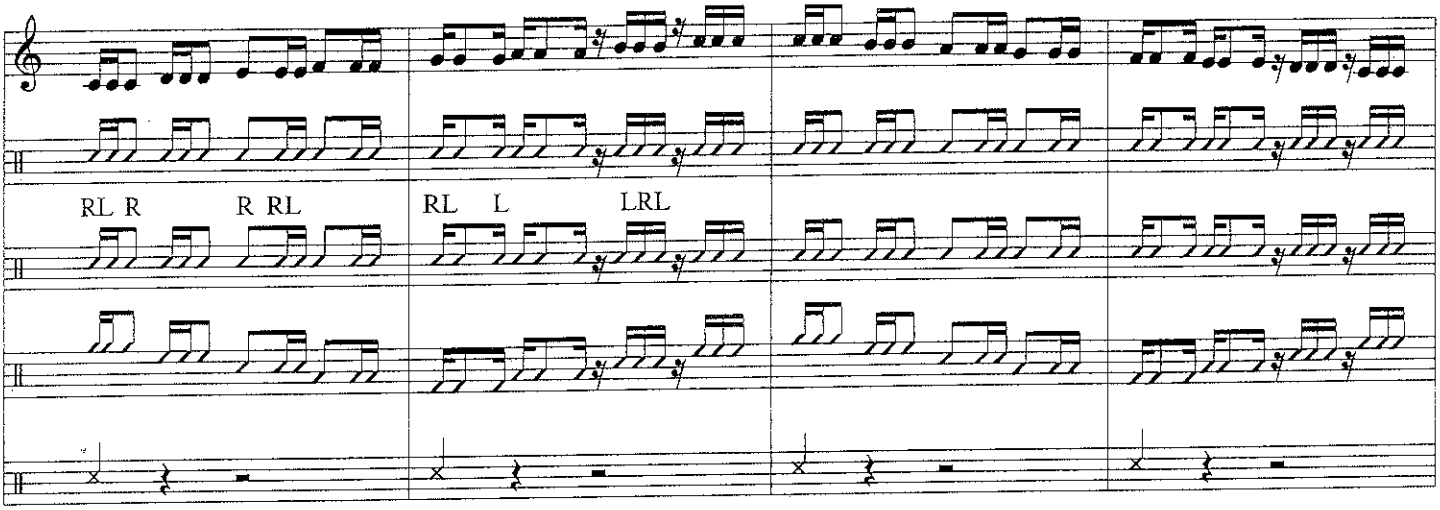

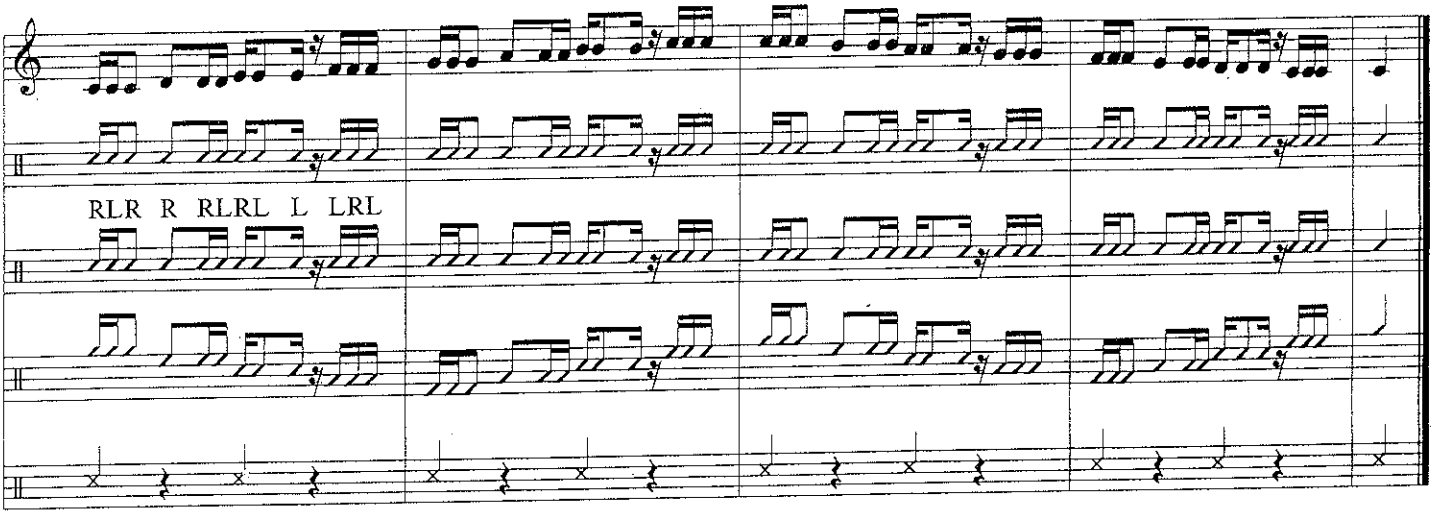

SINGLES EXERCISE

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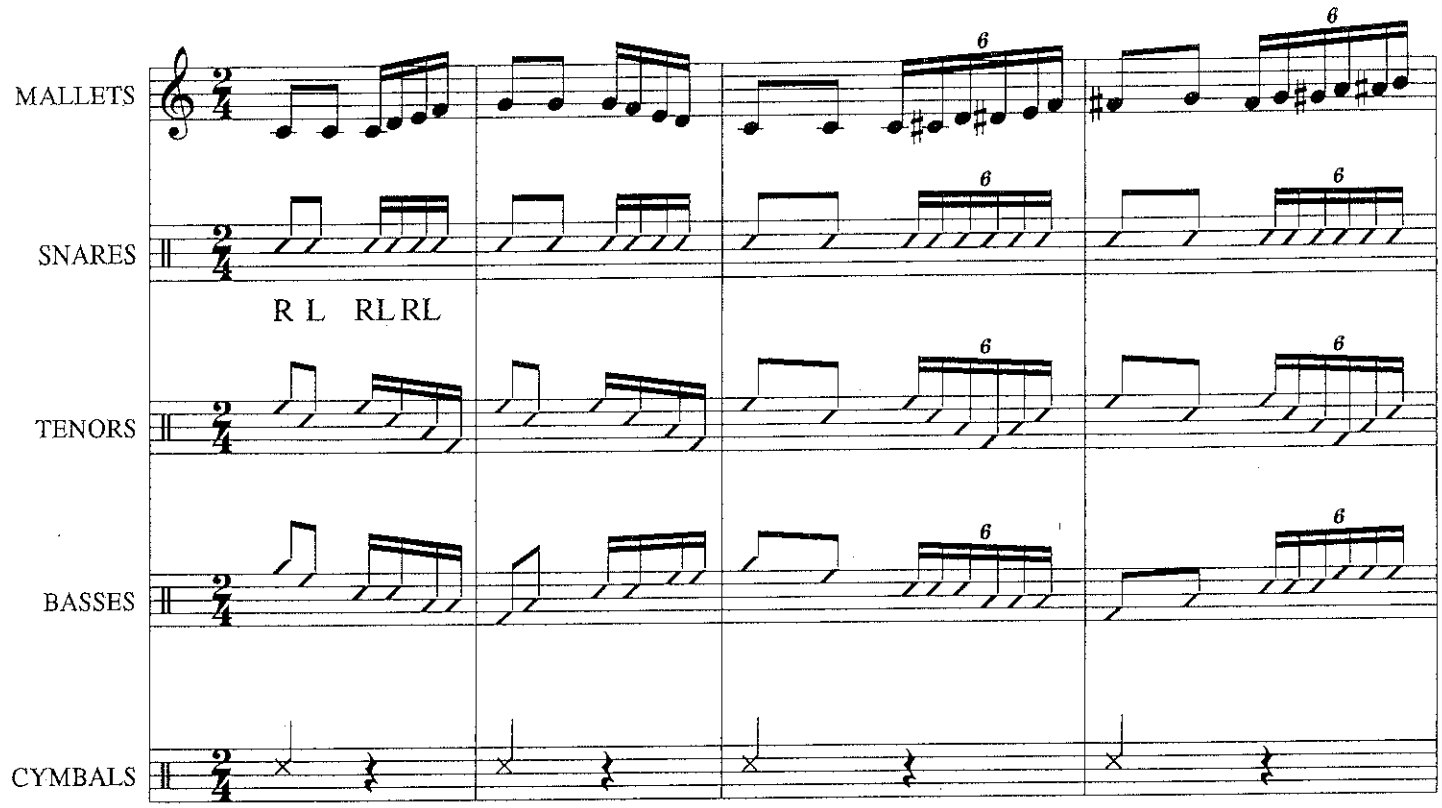

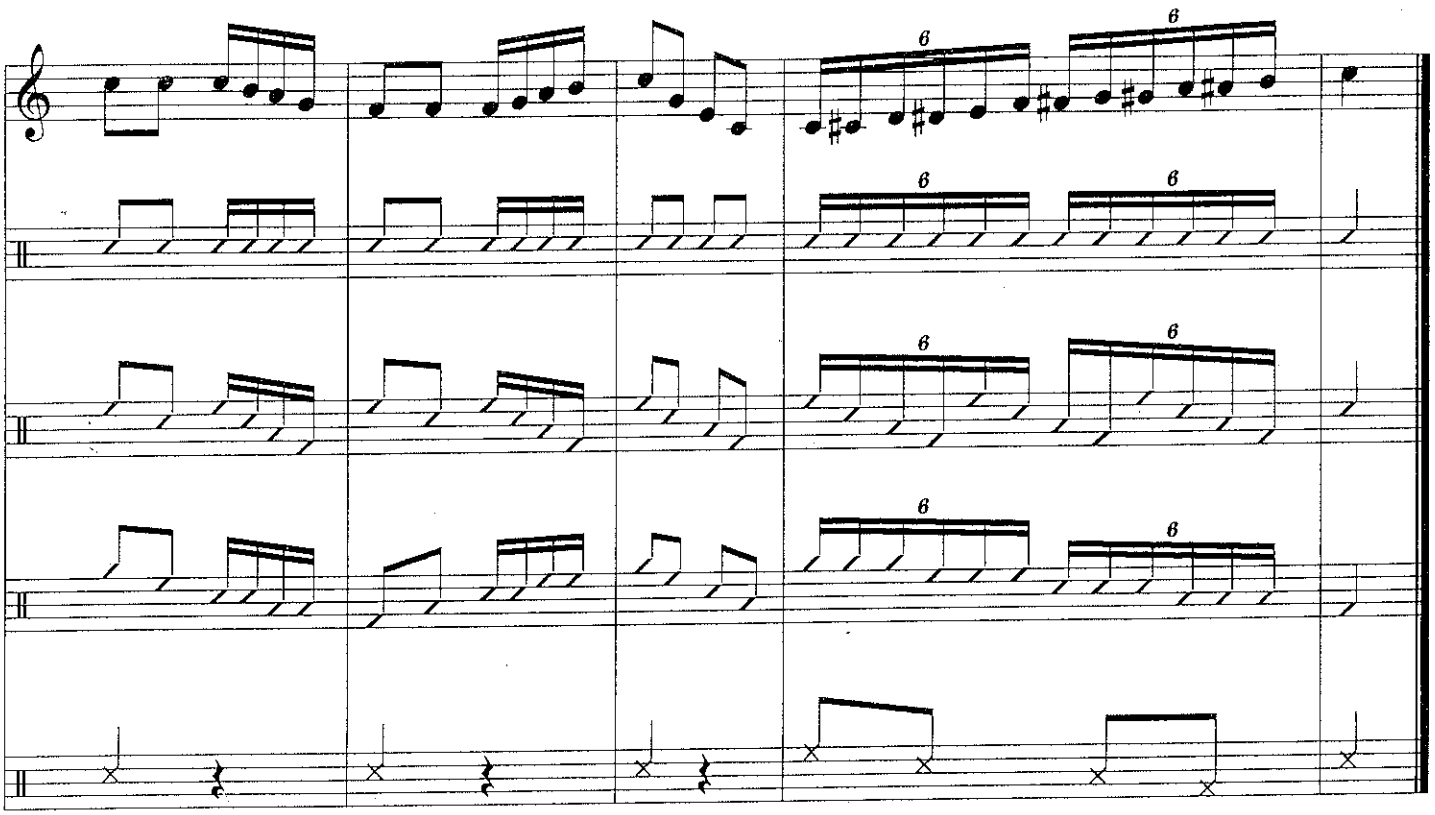

16TH-32ND TRANSITION EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1

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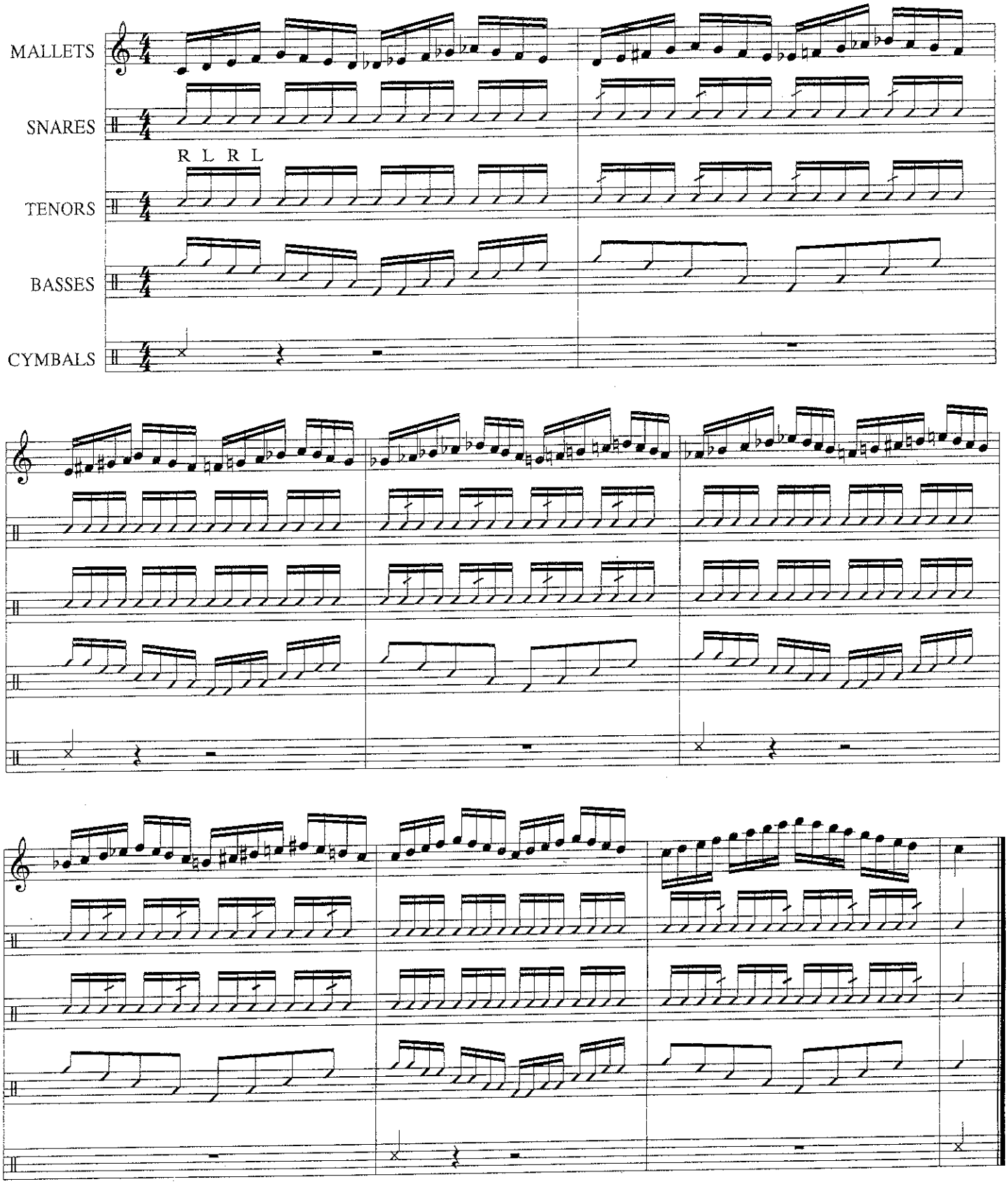

16TH-32ND TRANSITION

EXERCISE 2

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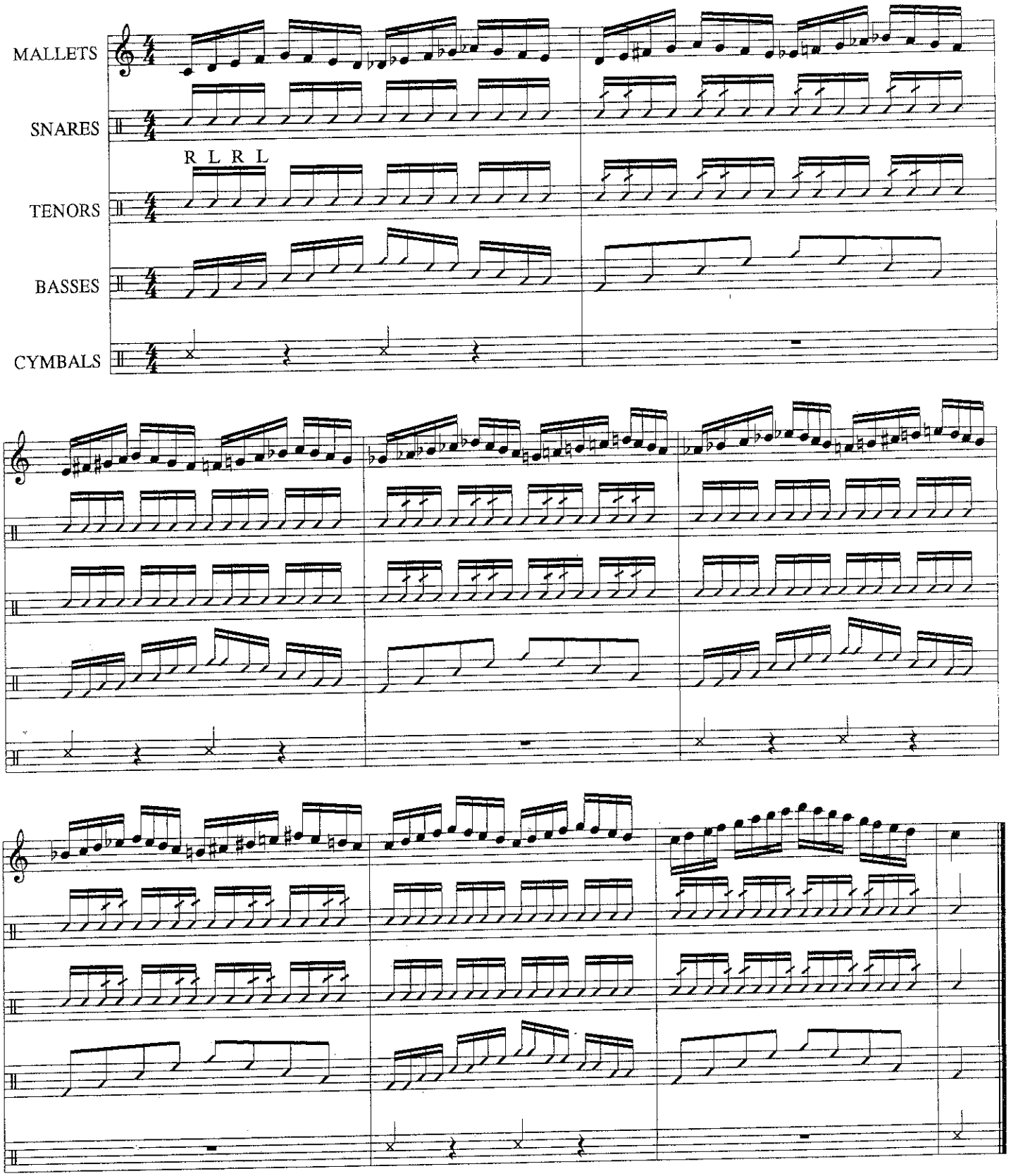

ROLLS

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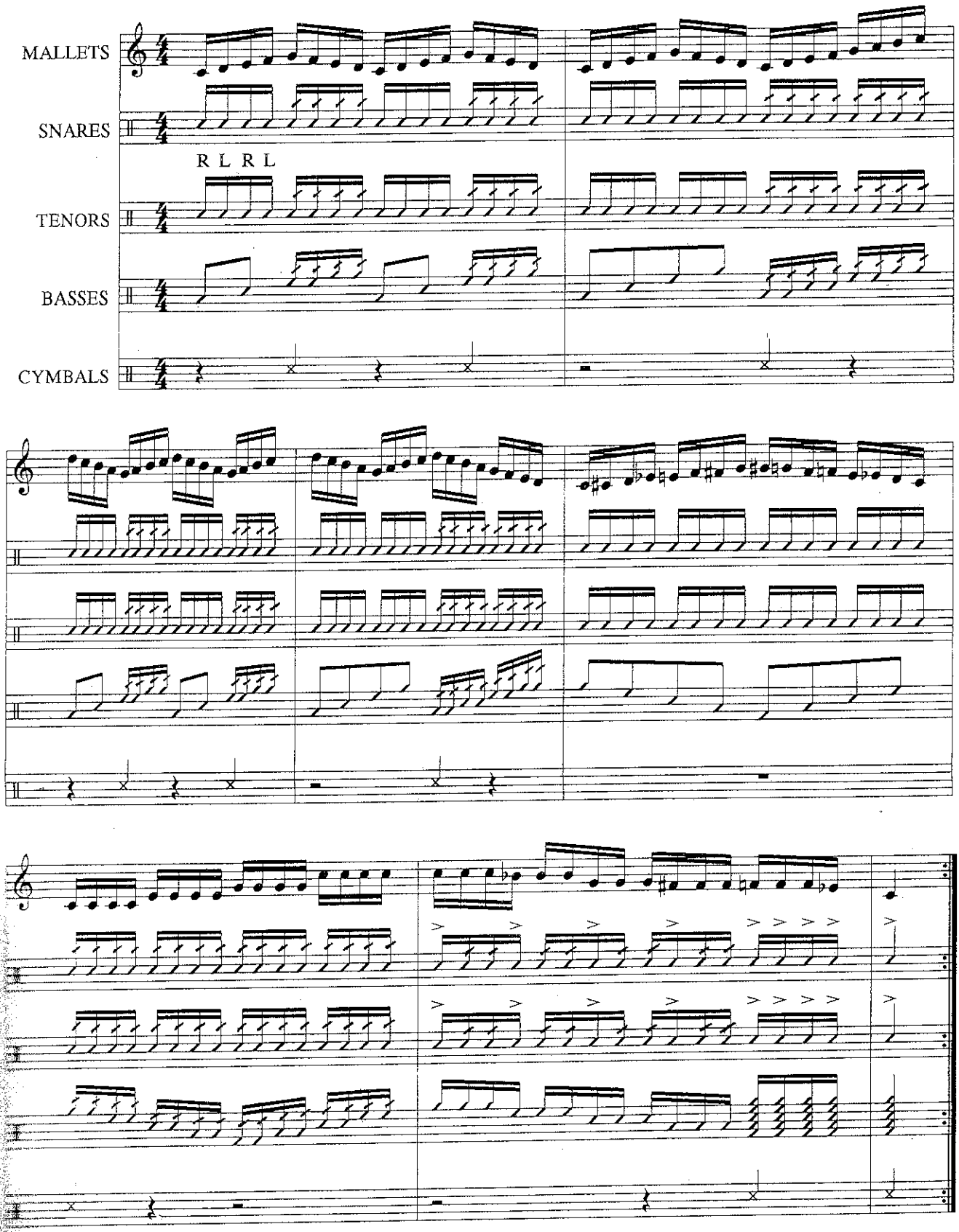
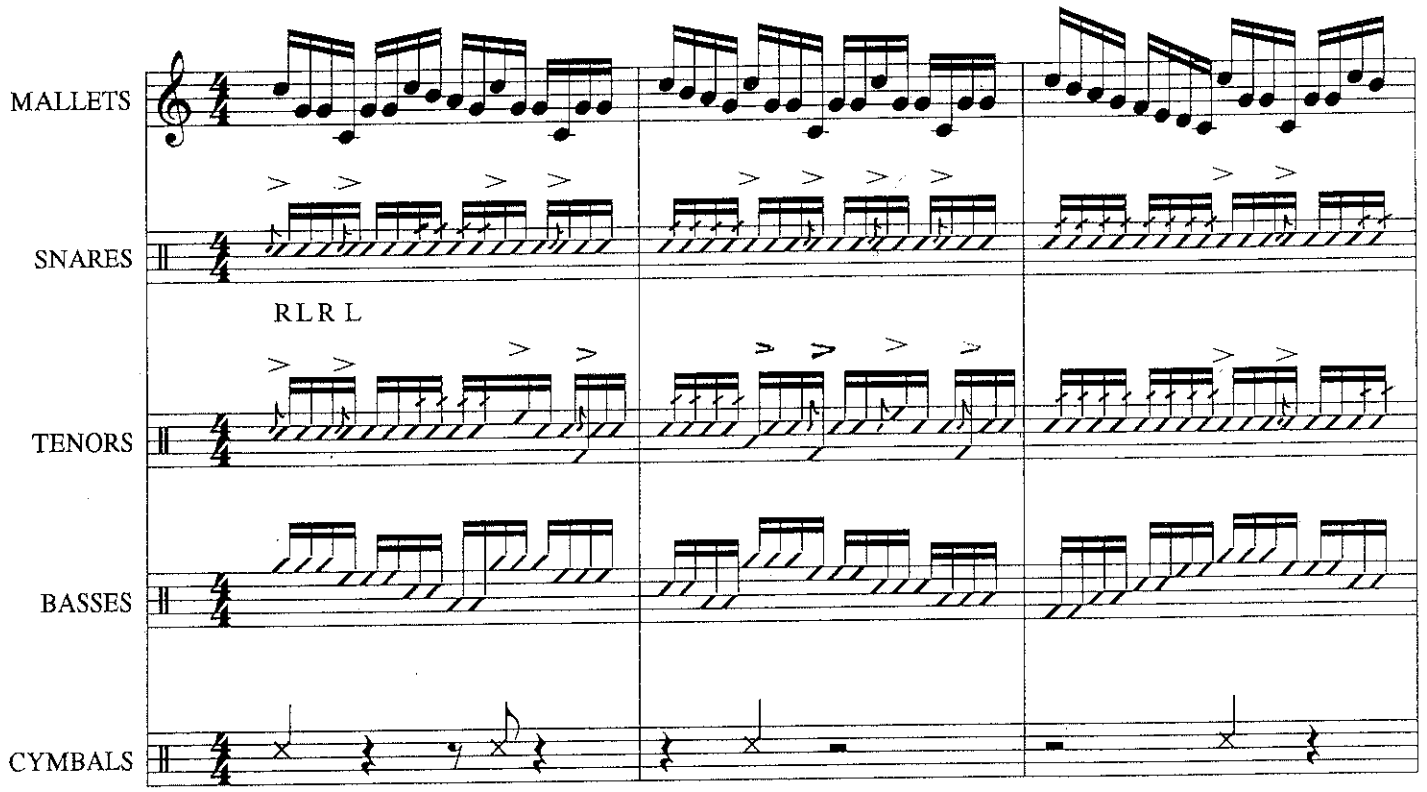
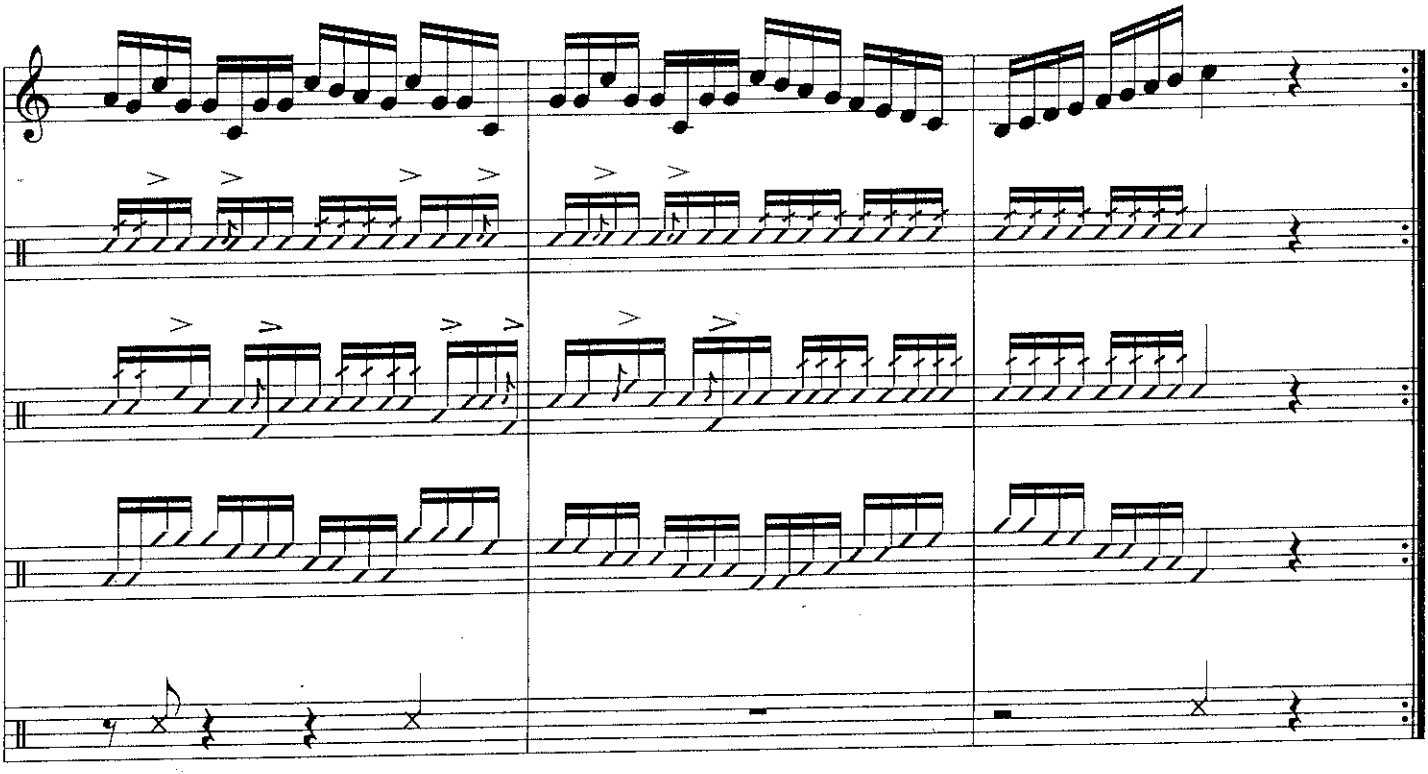


BLUE DEVILS FLAM EXERCISE

S. H. S. DRUMLINE 1994

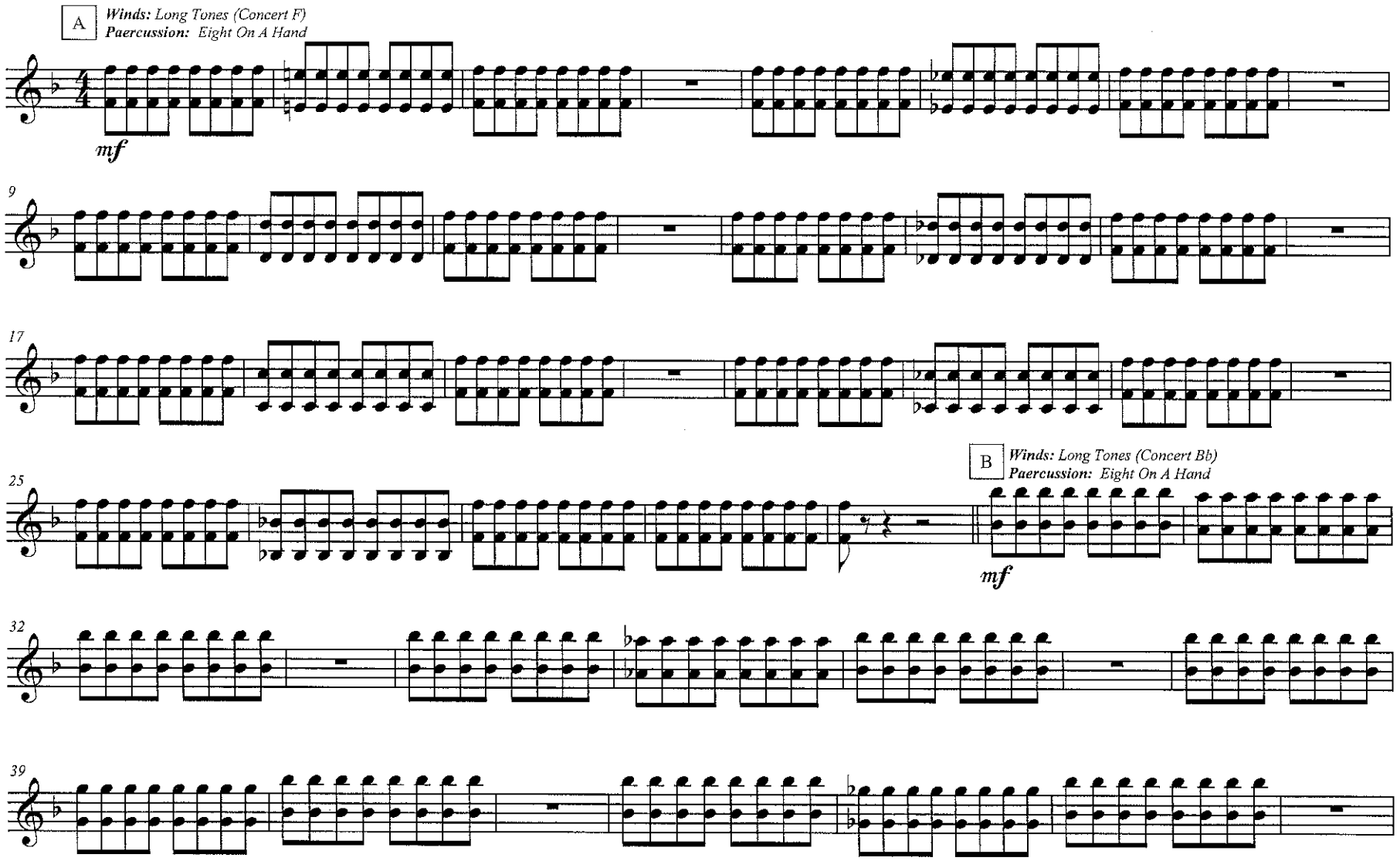




Mallets

MARCHING BAND WARM-UP

Arr. *Mike Bearden*



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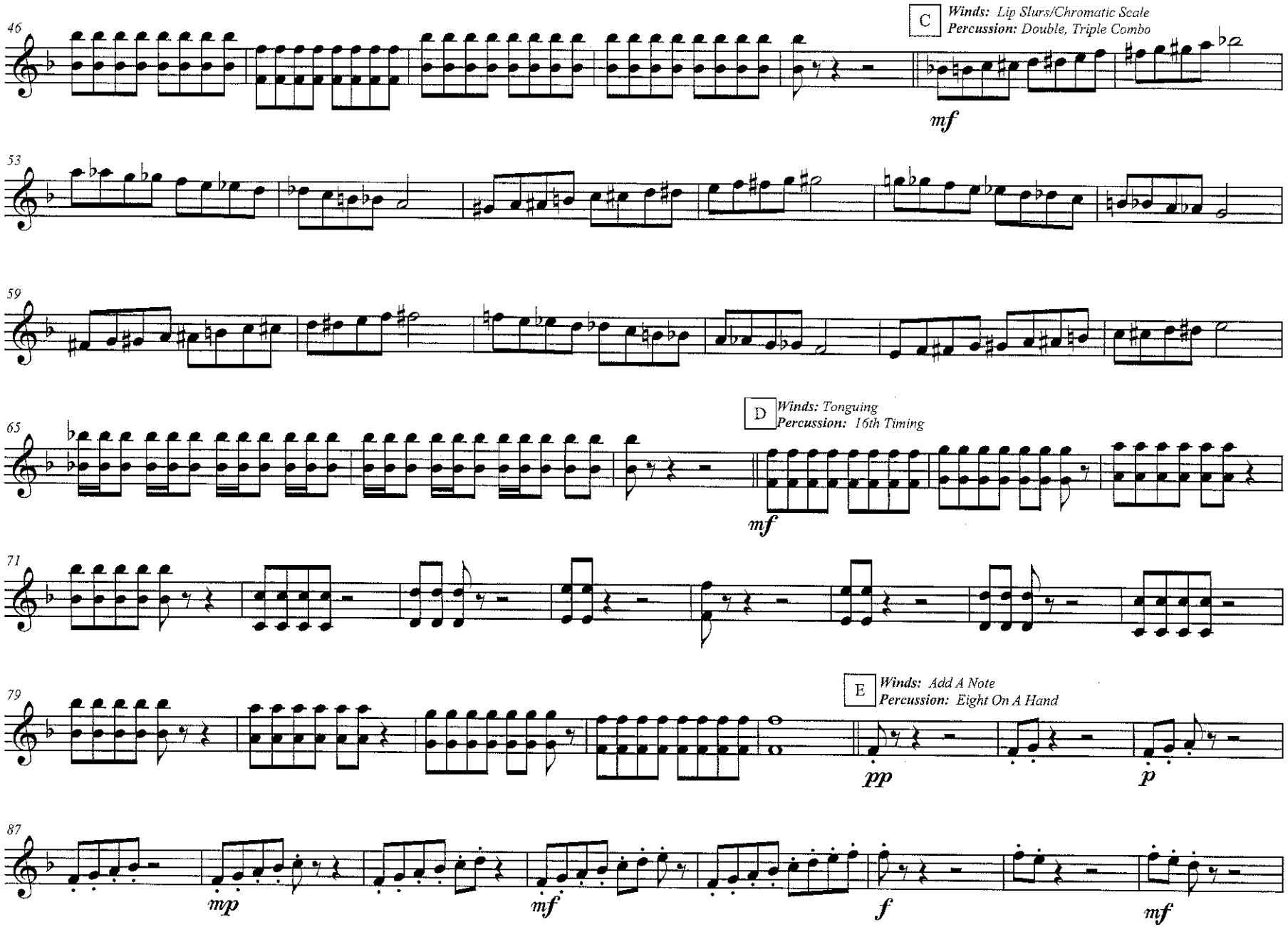
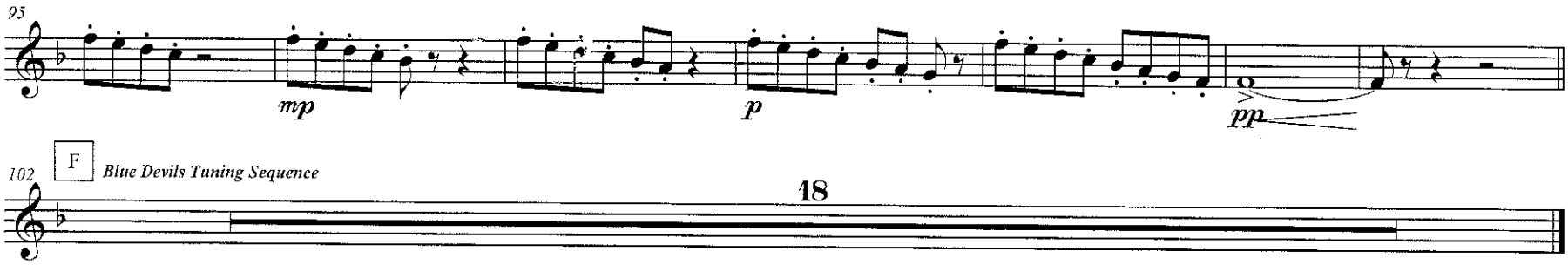
Marching Band Warm-up



Marching Band Warm-up