NORTH STAR

INDEPENDENT

2026 Front Ensemble Audition Packet

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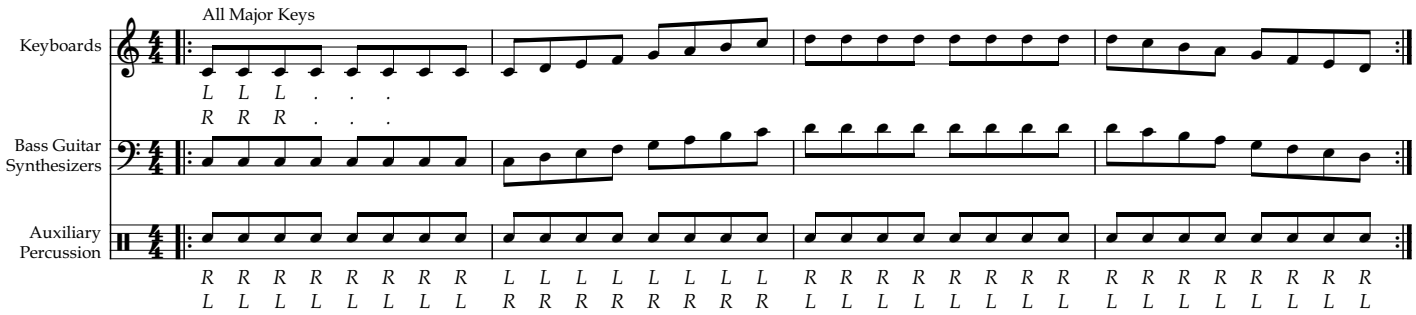
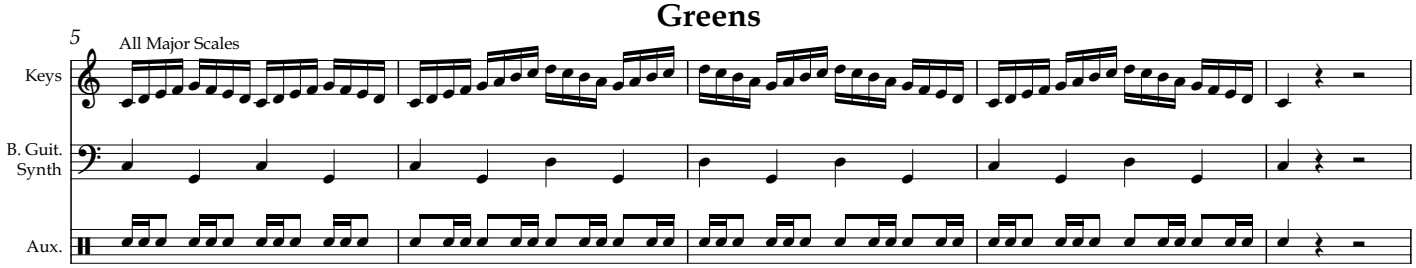
NSI 2026 Front Ensemble

2 Mallet Exercises

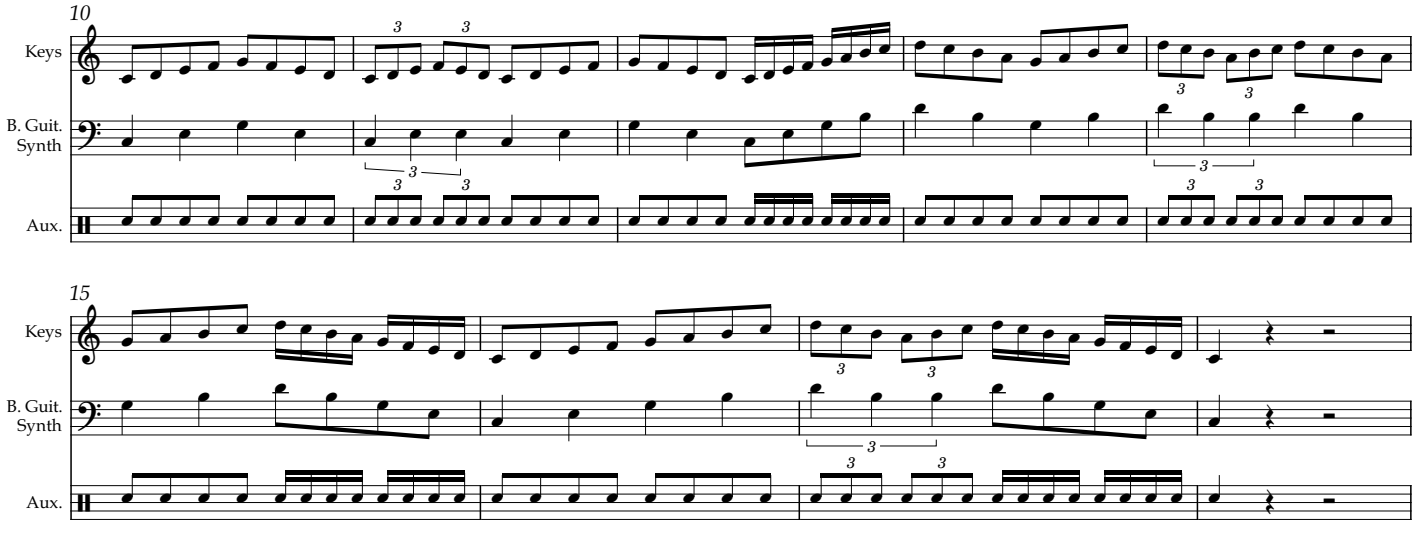
Singles



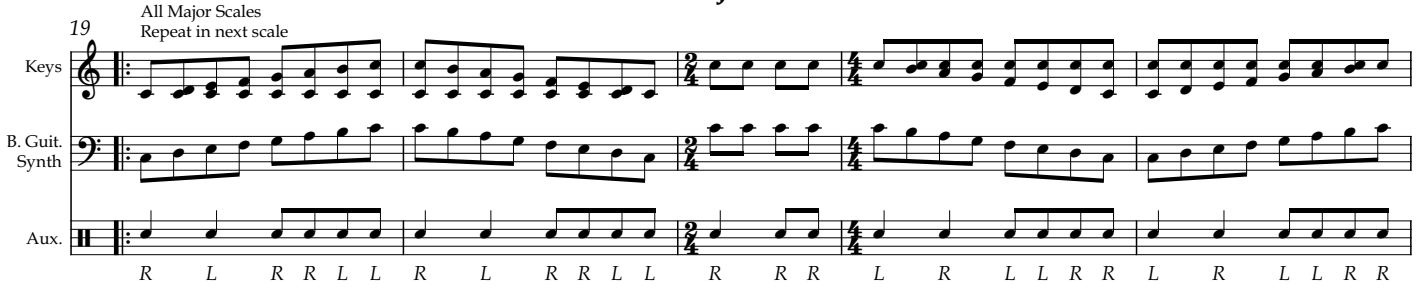
Greens



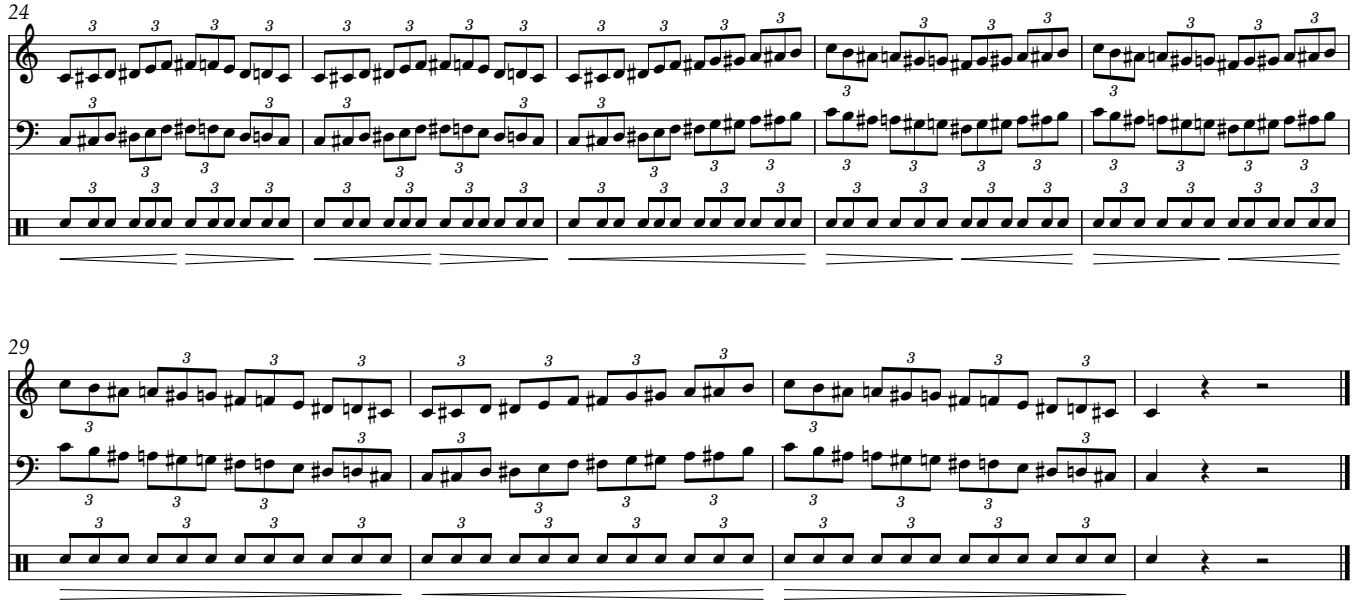
Rhythm Greens



LockJaw

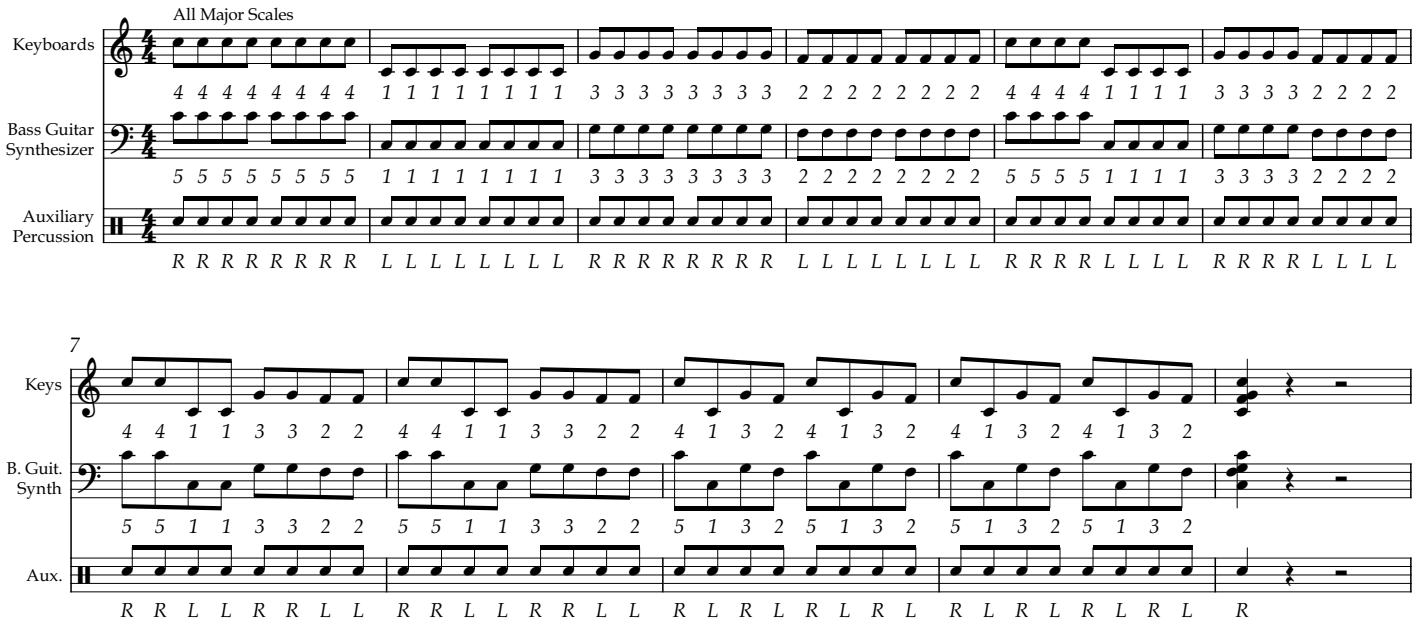


TriClops

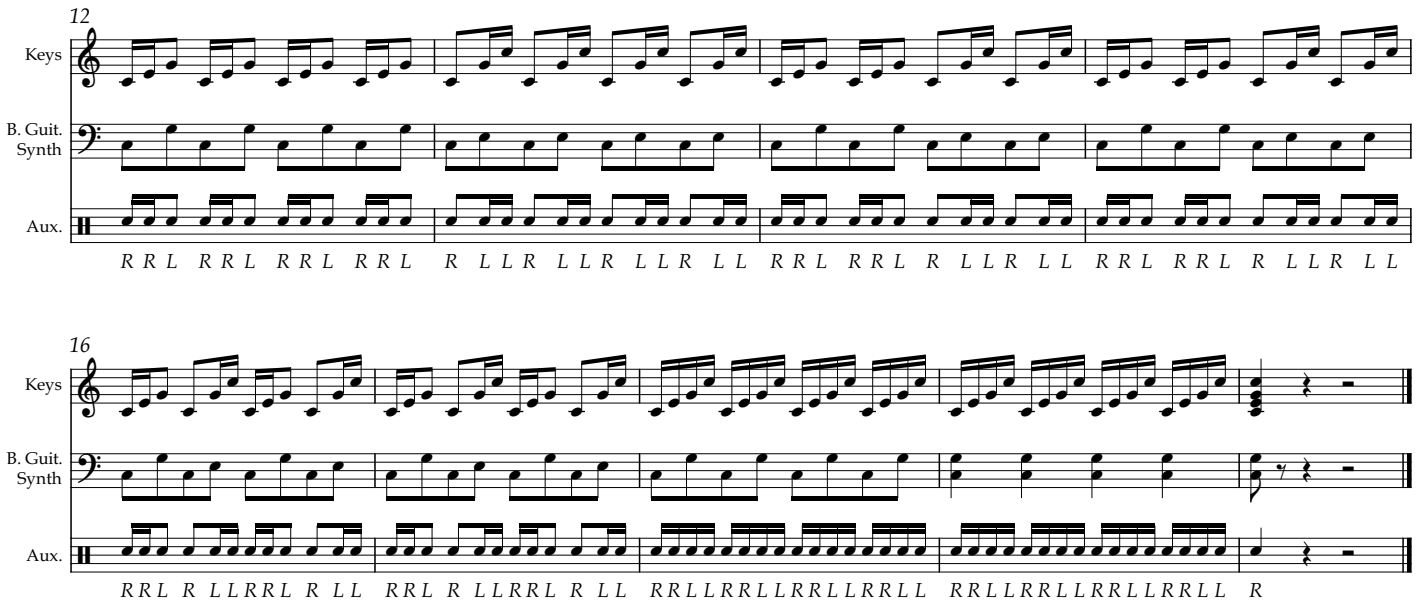


4 Mallet Exercises

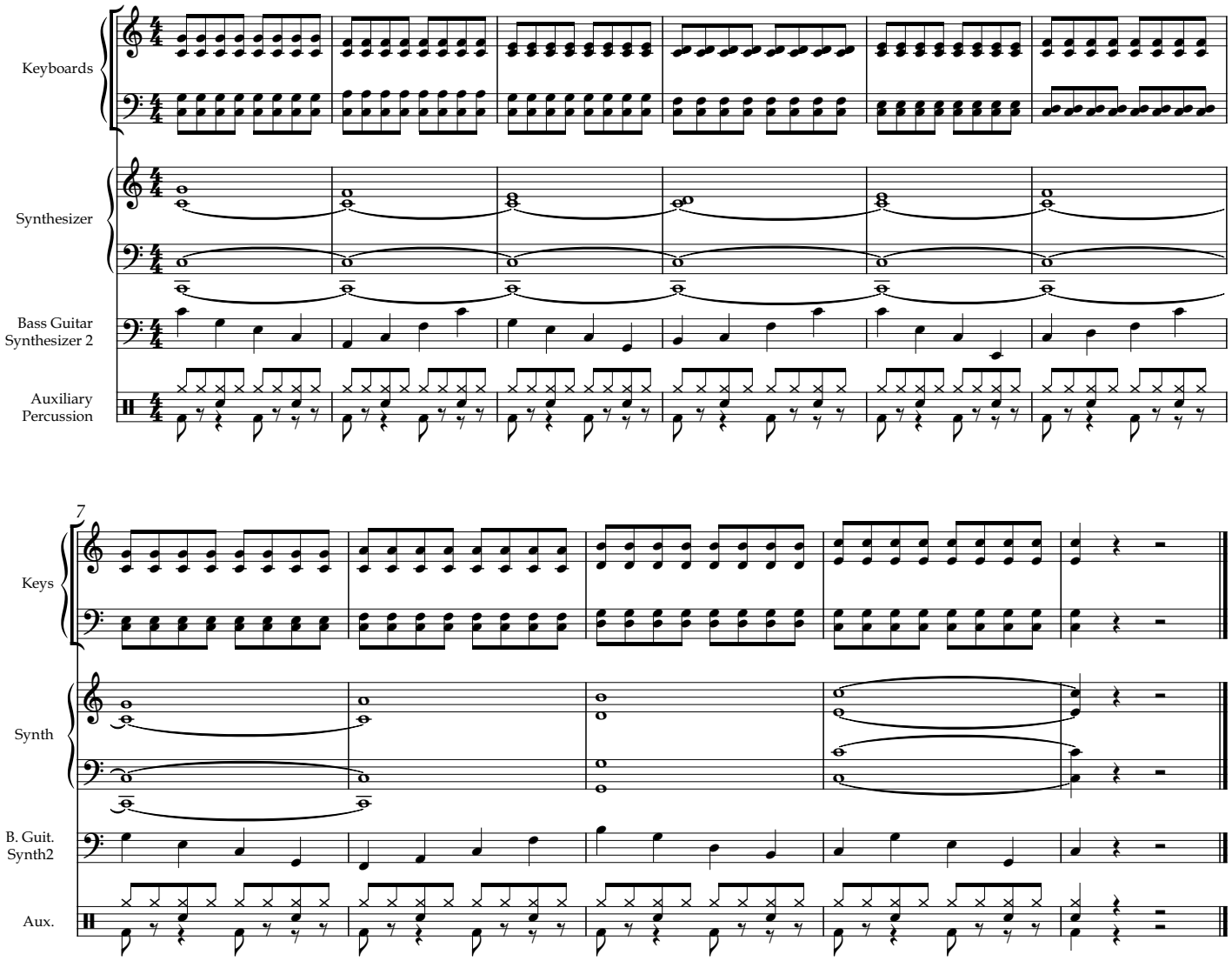
Alternating Independence



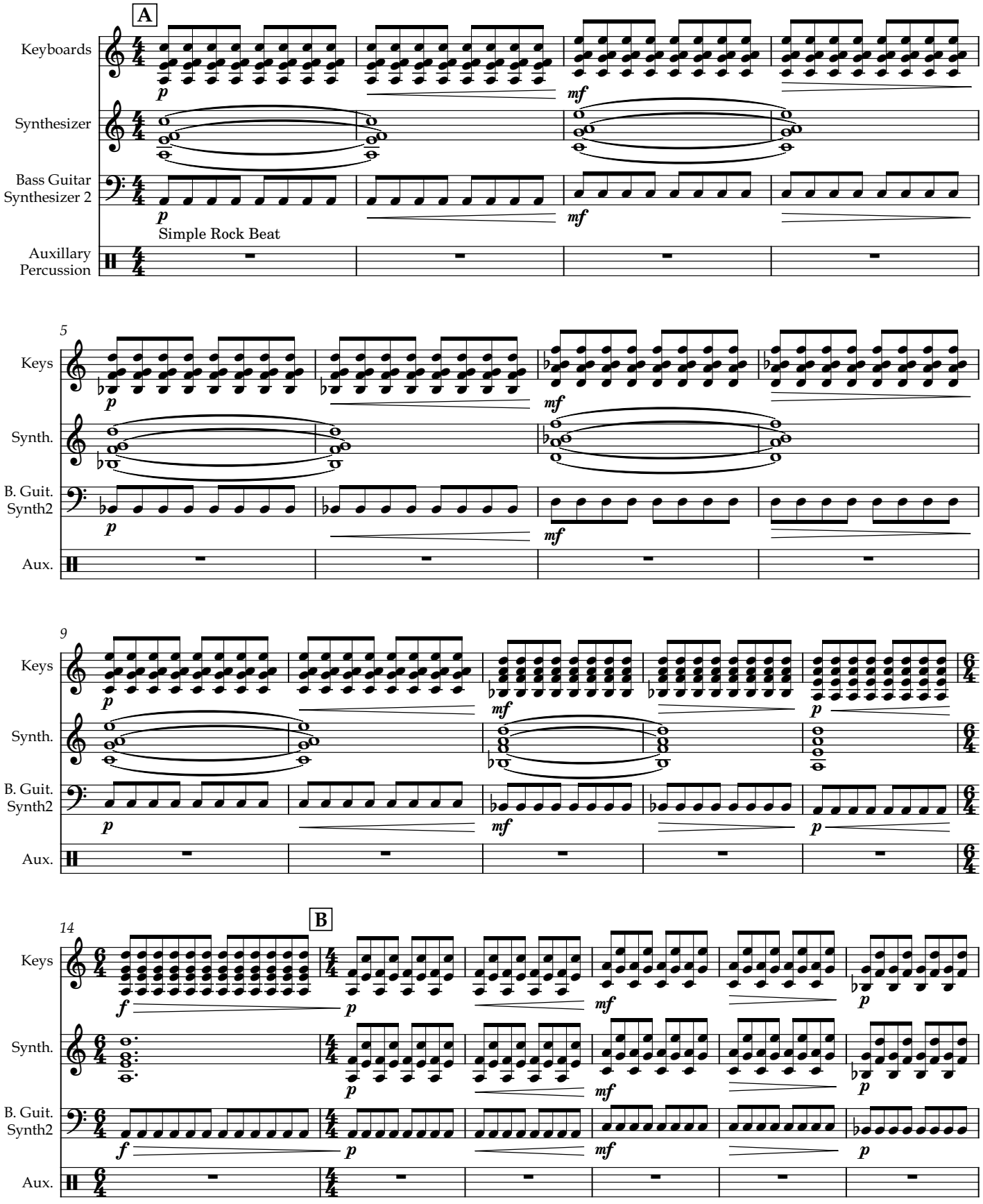
16th Note Chromatic Permutations Builder

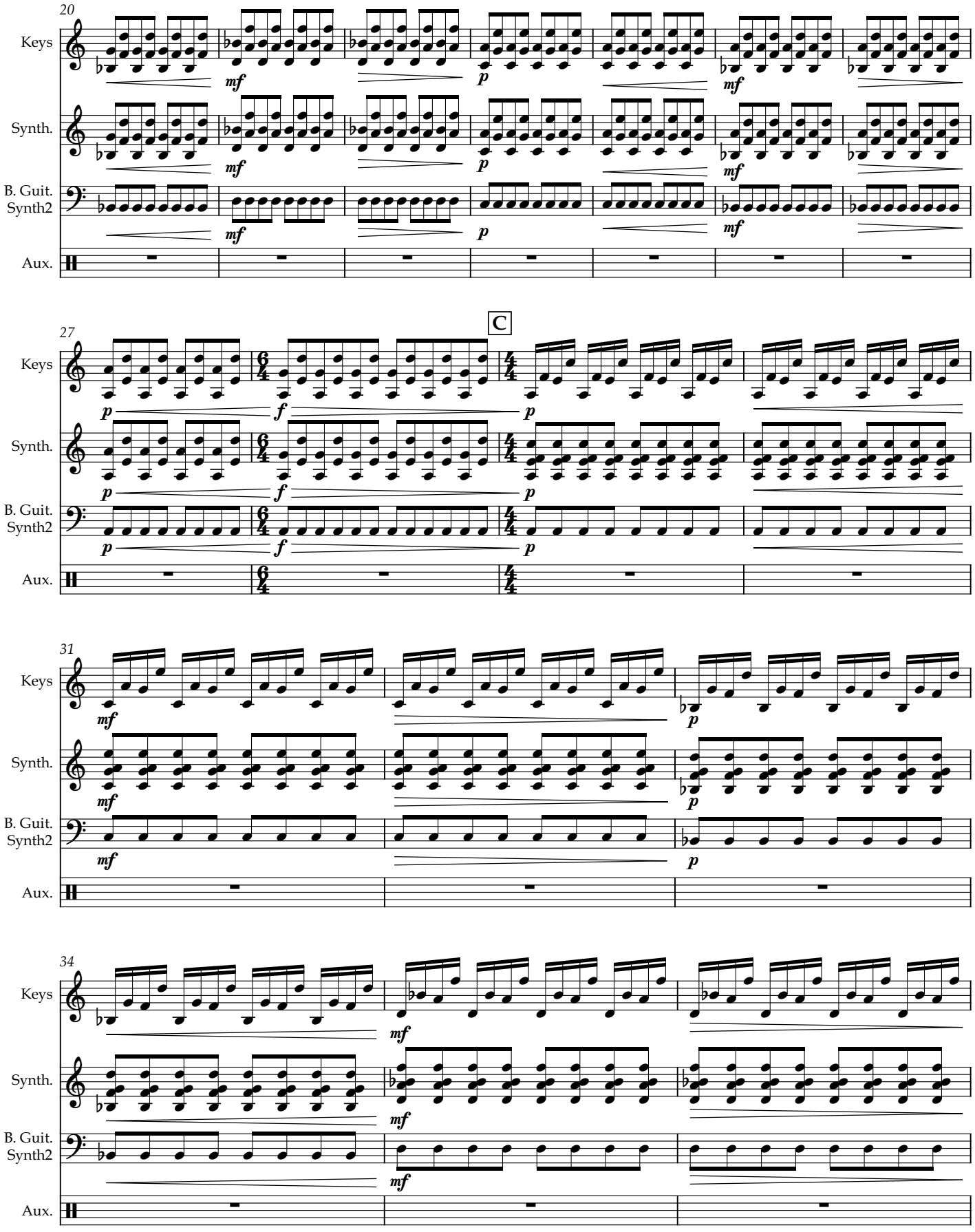


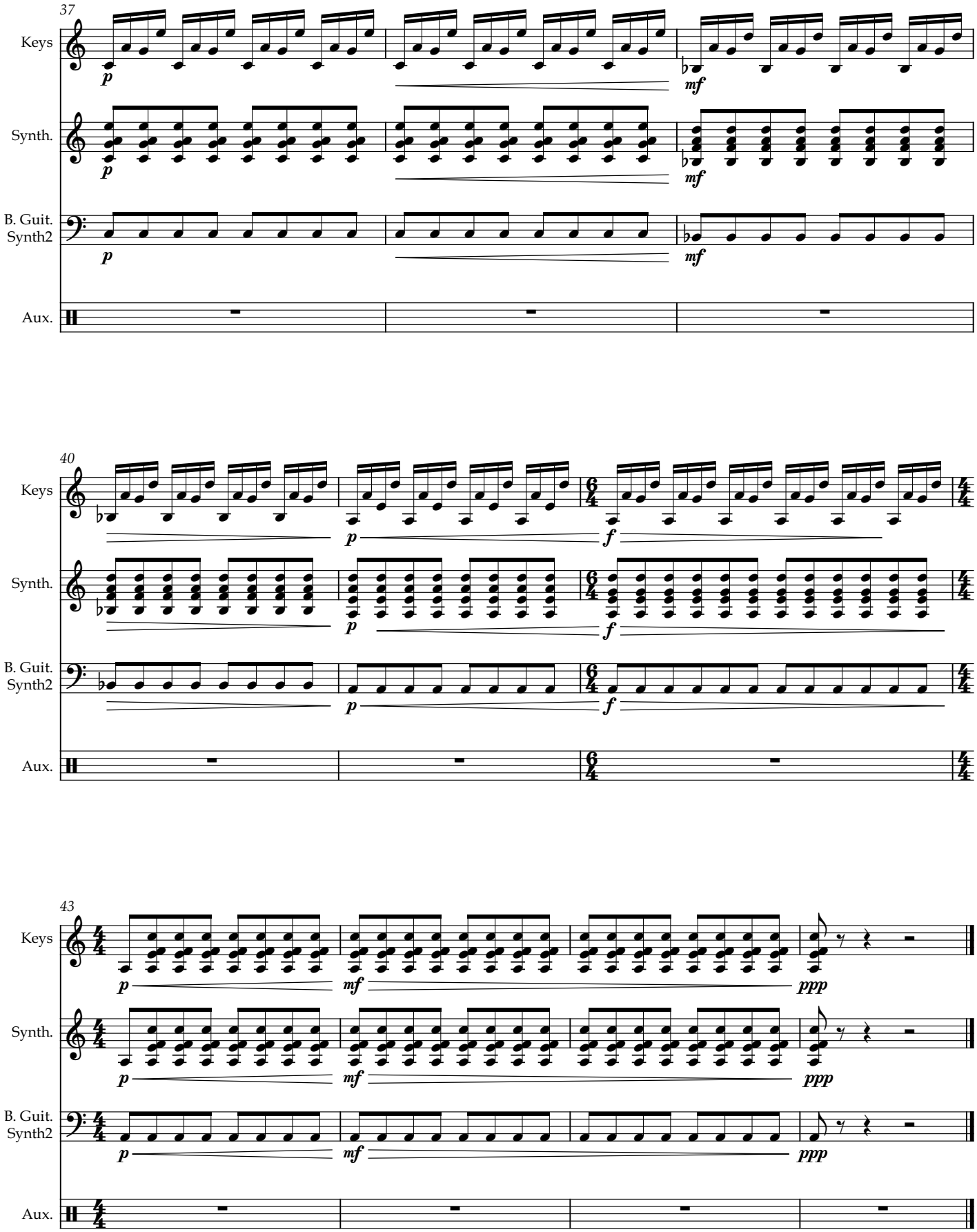
London Bridge



Waves


A
Keyboards
Synthesizer
Bass Guitar
Synthesizer 2
Simple Rock Beat
Auxillary
Percussion
5
Keys
Synth.
B. Guit.
Synth2
Aux.
9
Keys
Synth.
B. Guit.
Synth2
Aux.
14
B
Keys
Synth.
B. Guit.
Synth2
Aux.

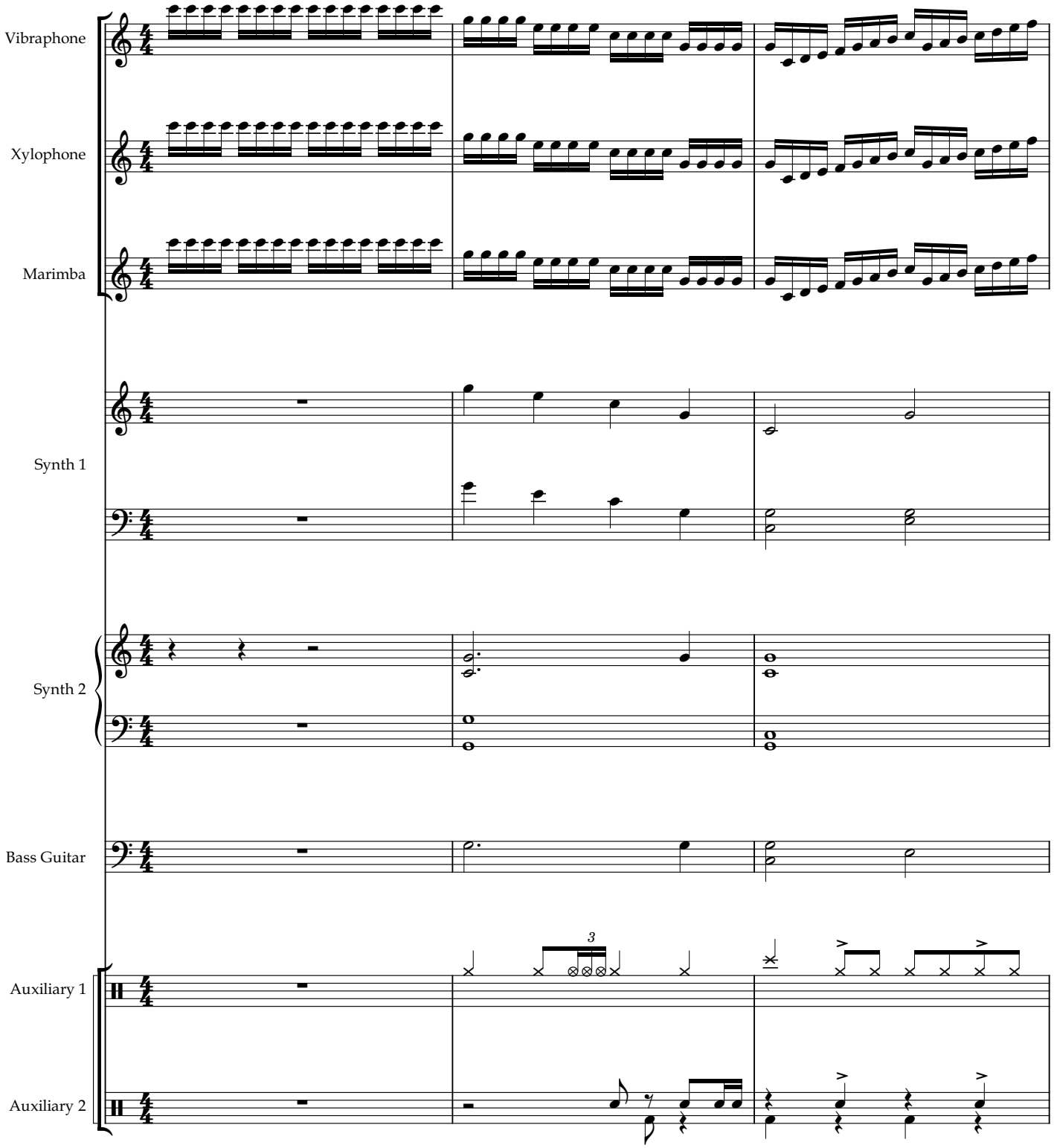

20
Keys
Synth.
B. Guit.
Synth2
Aux.
mf
p
mf
27
C
Keys
Synth.
B. Guit.
Synth2
Aux.
p
f
p
31
Keys
Synth.
B. Guit.
Synth2
Aux.
mf
p
34
Keys
Synth.
B. Guit.
Synth2
Aux.
mf

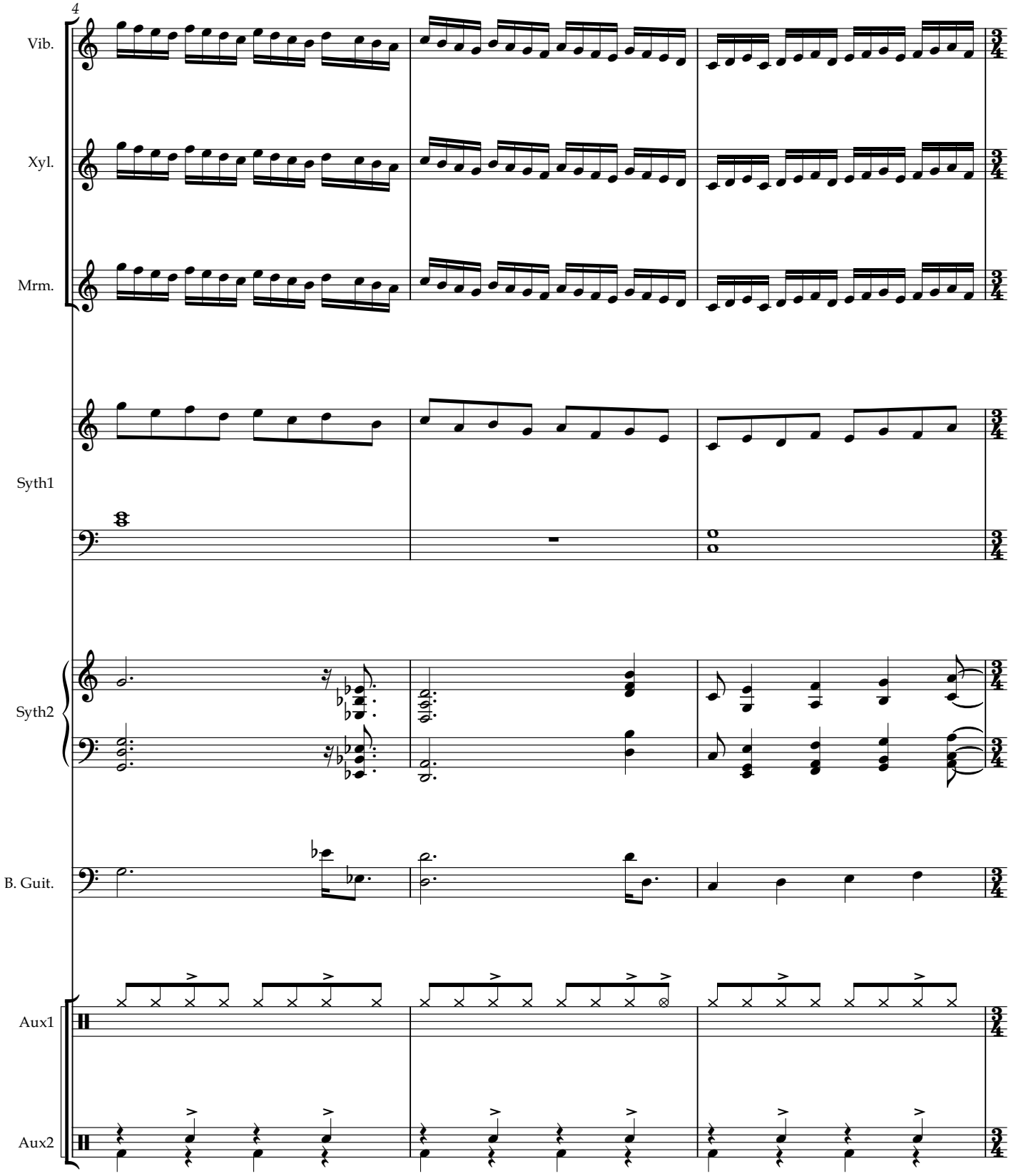

37
Keys
Synth.
B. Guit.
Synth2
Aux.
p
mf
40
f
43
ppp

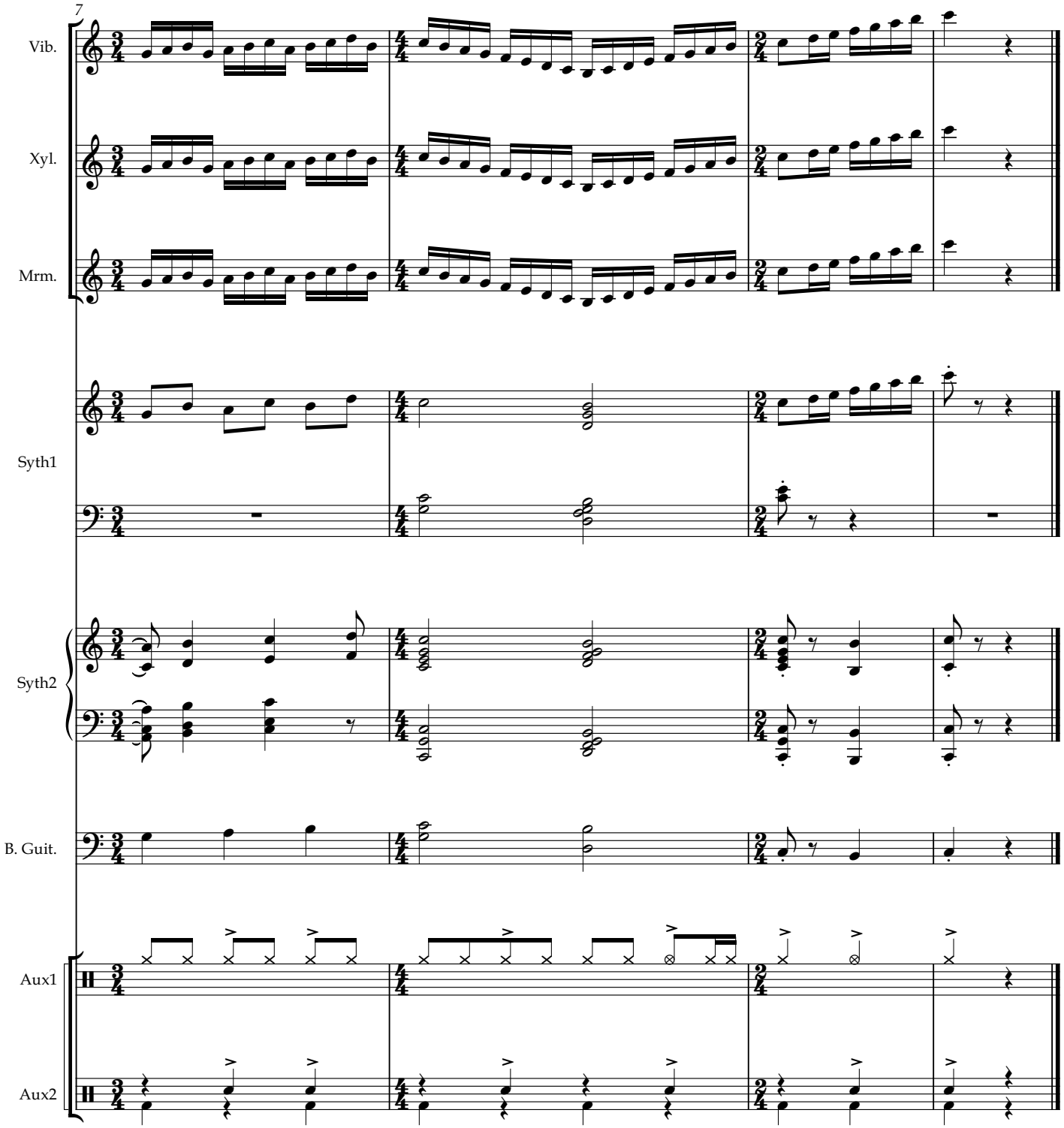
Dirt

Play w/ 2 mallets or 4 w/ insides

Blue Devils FE




4
Vib.
Xyl.
Mrm.
Syth1
Syth2
B. Guit.
Aux1
Aux2

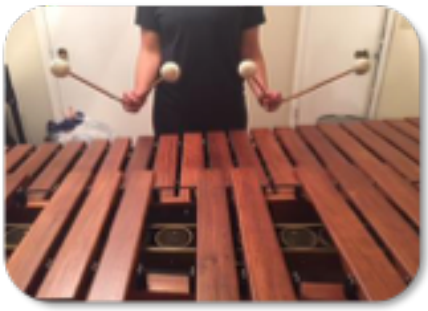
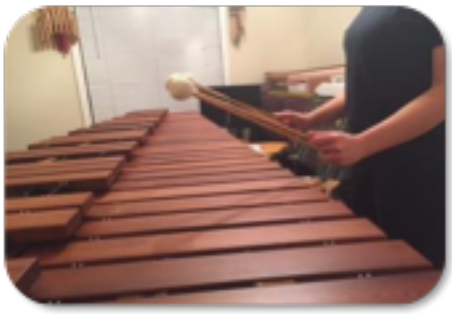

7
Vib.
Xyl.
Mrm.
Syth1
Syth2
B. Guit.
Aux1
Aux2

Keyboard Guidelines

Approach

When approaching a mallet instrument, make sure the instrument is at the appropriate height before setting your hands. The top of the keys should be at the same height as your waist or belt. Your feet should be shoulder-width apart and at an appropriate distance from the keyboard (one foot should be slightly in front of the other, so, you can move back and forth between manuals). This distance is determined by the length of your arm in relationship to the type/size of the instrument. When you put your mallets in the center of the bar on the natural keys, your forearm should be slightly below level. If your forearm is completely level, then you need to lower the instrument.

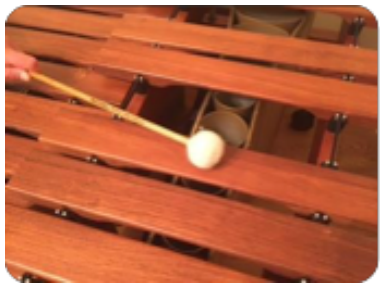
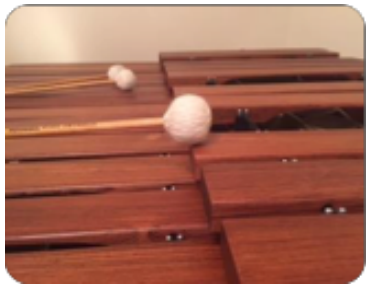
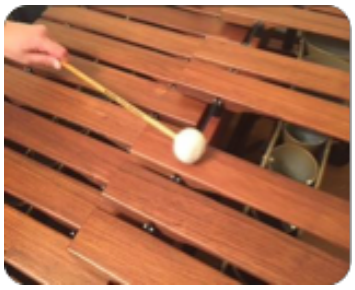
When playing vibraphone, the right foot will be on the pedal and the left will be comfortably behind the pedal. The balance point will be between the heel of the right foot and the ball of the left foot. When playing in the highest register it is suggested that the left foot go behind the right, to make sure the keys are played in the correct playing zone.

Playing Zones

The correct playing zones for all keyboards are in the center of the bar directly over the resonators. For the accidentals it is best to aim for the top of the resonator tube to ensure that you play directly in the center of the bar. When playing on the edges of the marimba (not applicable to vibes, xylo, or bells), you must make sure that you are playing on the very EDGE of the key, so that you can produce a good full sound. Do Not Play on the NODES!

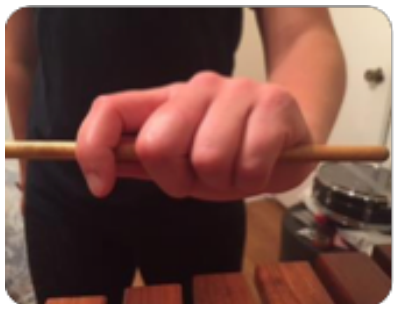
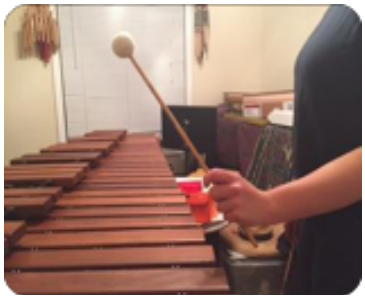
Yes Yes No

Two-Mallet Technique

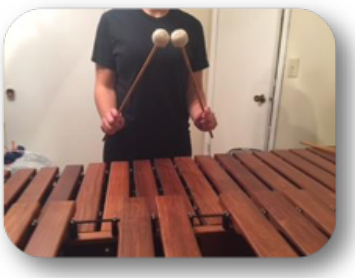
Grip

We use the “rear fulcrum” 2-mallet grip. The mallet is held on to by the middle, ring, and pinky fingers with around 1 ½ inches from the back of the hand to the end of the mallet shaft. The thumb and index finger then wrap around the mallet as seen in figure 2, these two fingers should not place any pressure on the mallet. The hand should not be flat but turned in at a slight angle. The wrist and arms should form a natural angle that puts no stress on the wrist joint.

Stroke

From the set position of about a half-inch above the bar, the stroke begins with the head of the mallet and then is continued through the wrist and arm in a fluid motion.
The mallet should come directly up and not away or towards the body or move from side to side. At a moderate tempo the stroke will be mostly wrist and less arm. As the tempo increases the stroke will become all wrist, while as the tempo decreases you will incorporate of the arm to connect the strokes. The speed of the mallet coming down to make contact with the board should never change, but the speed of the upstroke will be determined by how slow or fast you are playing. When playing slow connected strokes the mallet should feel like there is a rubber band attached to the keys, so when you move the mallet up it will be as if you are trying to stretch the band and when you initiate the downward motion, the mallet will shoot downward, as if you gave in to the pull of the rubber band.

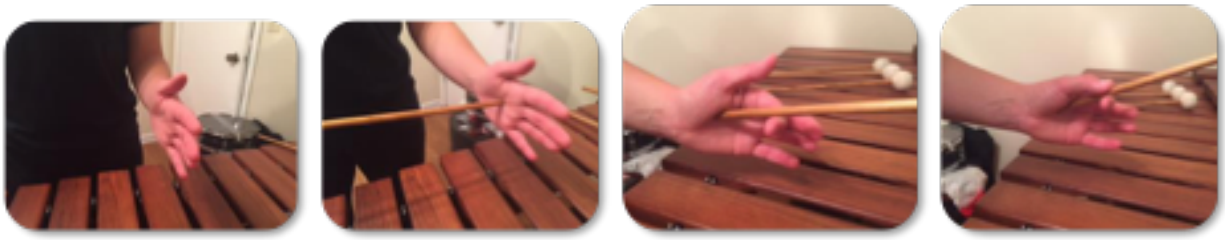


Four-Mallet Technique

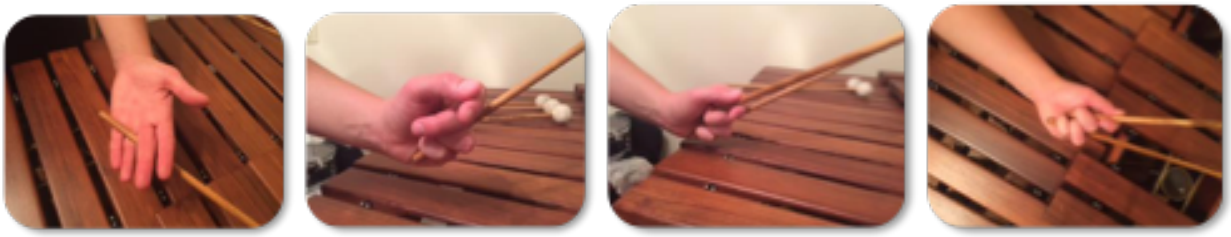
Grip

We use the cross grip and Steven's technique when playing with four mallets. When beginning to learn Steven's technique, we highly recommend purchasing **"Method of Movement" by Leigh Howard Stevens**. This method book has everything you could possibly need to fully understand the grip and different ways you can strike the instrument.

1. **Turn your hand sideways in a "Handshaking" position. For the inside mallet, put the "butt" of the mallet in the center of the palm, slightly above the "life-line" that goes around the thumb pad.**
2. **Curve out your pointer finger as if you were creating a perch for a small bird. The mallet will rest on the third joint of the pointer finger, directly above the fingernail.**

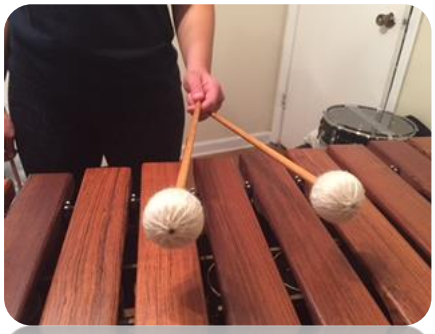


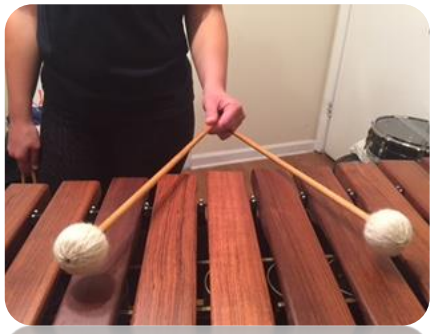
3. **The outside mallet will be placed in between the middle finger and the ring finger directly under the first joint (knuckle). The pinky and ring finger will then wrap around the bottom of the shaft.**
4. **The thumb will rest on the top of the mallet creating a fulcrum for the inside mallet. The middle finger will then create stability by resting on the bottom of the shaft. (Your middle finger will either be on top of the shaft or slightly wrapped around it, depending on your hand size.)**



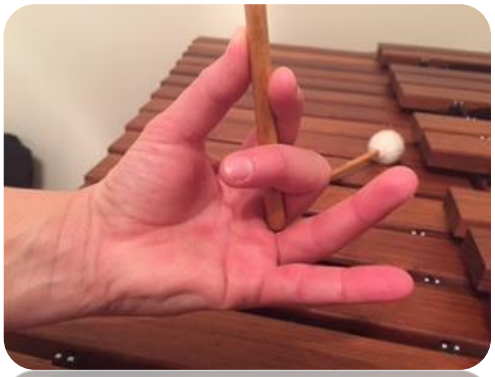
Interval Changes

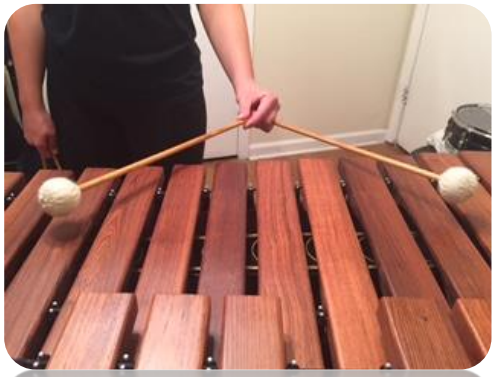
When changing intervals your goal should be to always keep your thumb on top of the mallet and facing towards the ceiling. You should also make sure to keep your "perch" out and never curl your finger into your palm. Interval changes up to a seventh should always be done by "spinning" or rolling the mallet shaft in between the pointer finger and thumb. As you roll to a larger interval you will see that your pointer finger begins to straighten as your thumb remains on top of the mallet.





When using **extended octave grip** for long use of octaves or octaves at the bottom of the keyboard, your mallet will roll up your palm towards the base of your fingers. The inside mallet will "lock" in to position at the base of the middle finger and at the top of the palm. This can be found on pg. 12-14 in **M.O.M.**





Playing with Four Mallets: How to Hold Them
by Emily Tannert Patterson and Josh Gottry
April 19, 2021

BURTON GRIP

"The Burton grip was developed by jazz vibist Gary Burton and is one of two cross grips where the shafts of the mallets cross inside the hands. This grip is typically used with rattan shafts but may also be used with birch shafts."

Grip

1. "Start by laying the mallets in front of you on a flat surface. At this point, the shafts should be perpendicular to your body and parallel with each other. Cross the mallet shaft of the outside mallet on top of that of the inside mallet about 2/3 of the way towards the back end of the mallet (about where you would typically grab a snare drum stick)."


2. "Insert your index finger into the top quadrant of the "X" that is formed by the mallet shafts. Wrap the thumb and remaining fingers around the mallets and pick them up. The thumb and index finger will meet on opposite sides of the inside mallet, in a fulcrum position similar to holding a single mallet in each hand. The middle finger should rest on the shaft of the outside mallet as it passes through the hand. The ring and pinky finger will curl around the back end of the inside mallet."



Interval Changes

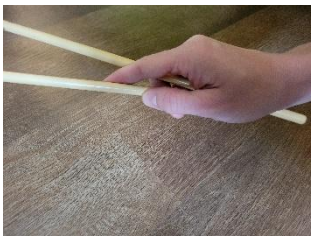
1. “To widen the interval between the mallets, pull the index finger toward the palm and pull the shaft of the outside mallet up toward the base of the fingers with the pinky and ring finger.”


2. “To widen further, move the thumb in between both mallets (along with the index finger).”




3. “To narrow the interval between mallets, point the index finger straight ahead, and push the mallet heads towards each other with the thumb while also using the back fingers to squeeze the mallet shafts together inside the hand.”





“When using Burton grip, mallets are typically numbered from highest to lowest: right-hand outside mallet is number 1; right-hand inside mallet is 2; left-hand inside mallet is number 3; left-hand outside mallet is 4.”

Synthesizer Guidelines

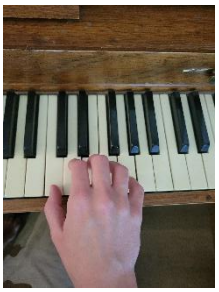
Approach

When approaching a synthesizer, make sure that all required cords are plugged in where appropriate. Be sure any additional electronics being utilized with the synth are plugged in and connected, powered on, and set up appropriately.

Understand that a synthesizer functions very similarly to a piano. Therefore, outside of the electronic components, the approach will the be the same.

Basic Hand Position

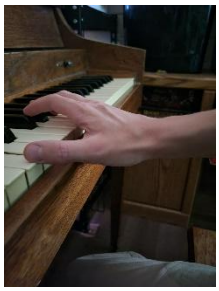
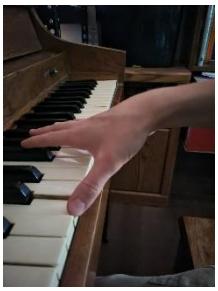
1. Your hands should be curved naturally and comfortably. When placed over the piano or synth keyboard, each finger should be touching its own key.
2. The back of your hands should be close to being level with the ground, which means your wrists will be somewhat elevated. This creates a sort of bridge effect with your fingers. You can also think of there being a tennis ball in between your hand and the keyboard.

Large Intervals

1. When you need to reach large intervals between your thumb and pinkie, such as 7ths, octaves or 9ths, open your hand naturally by allowing your fingers to spread until your fingers can reach the interval. Your fingers may only be able to reach the interval if they are touching the edges of the keys. This is completely okay.
2. As you spread your fingers, check your wrist and the back of your hand. The back of your hand should still generally be level to the floor, or even slightly angled downward toward your wrist. The tendon that moves from your thumb and through your wrist will likely form close to a straight line.
3. Do not let your wrist pop up into an arch from your hand angling upward away from the keys. This causes tension and can cause serious pain and potential damage if continued.

Yes Yes No

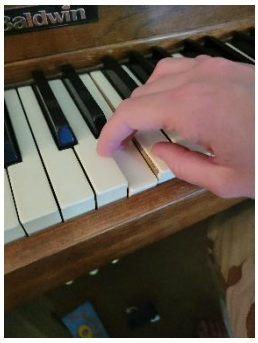




Thumb Under/Hand Over

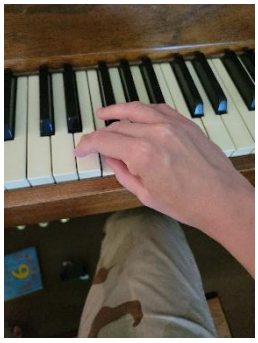
When playing many consecutive notes, at times you do not have the range to reach notes or have enough fingers on a hand to play all the notes. At moments like these you utilize the thumb under/hand over technique. This technique can be used moving to and from large or small intervals.

Remember that when playing piano or synth your shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers all need to be relaxed. This is especially important when utilizing this technique.

1. **Thumb Under:** When playing notes moving from your thumb toward your pinky, your thumb will move under the palm and other fingers to reach the next note. Once your thumb has reached the key to be played, simply move your other fingers to their normal state and continue playing.



2. **Hand Over**: When playing notes moving from your fingers toward your thumb, your palm and fingers will move over your thumb until you can reach the next note to be played with your other fingers. You will then move your thumb to its normal position as you continue playing.



'Stroke'

When pushing down a key on a synthesizer or piano keyboard, use only the motion and weight of your fingers. When only one finger on a hand is playing a note, there should not be any initiation from the wrist or arm.

Fingers not actively pushing down on a key should remain close to the surface of the keys or can lightly rest on the keys, depending on the context.

Stretching

Warming up your muscles and stretching are important for good performance and preventing injury, as well as aiding recovery and healing after activity.
Here are a few hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, neck, back and leg stretches.

1. Wrist Loosening and Warming Stretches: With your hands comfortably out in front of you, do each of these for a few seconds… pretend to tap a surface in the air at a moderate speed with your palms down so that your hands move up and down, initiating from the wrist… then turn your hands so your palms are facing each other and slice through the air up and down, initiating from the wrist… then jazz hands… then putting your hands palm to palm and fingers to fingers (nice and flat), bring them close to your chest so your wrists almost touch it and lift your elbows up so your hands and arms make 90 degree angles. Then rotate your arms together forward and back so your hands slice through the air up and down.
2. Wrist extensions: Extend your arm forward with your palm facing down. Use your other hand to gently pull your fingers back towards your forearm, feeling a stretch in your wrist and possibly hands, fingers, and forearm. Repeat with palm facing up. Be certain you include your thumb with your other fingers.
3. Forearm stretches: Place your hand flat against a wall, or work with a partner, then turn your body away from the wall, feeling a stretch in your forearm.
4. Shoulder Rolls: Rotate your shoulders forward and backward in a circular motion to loosen them up. Add your arms to the motion to give a deeper stretch to your shoulders, and even some stretch in your upper arms.
5. Cross-Body Shoulder stretch: Bring one arm across your body and use the other hand or arm to gently pull it closer. You should feel a stretch in your shoulder. Rotating your arm so the palm of your hand changes from facing down to facing up (or visa versa) will shift the stretch slightly.
6. Neck rolls: from a seated or standing position, let your head hang toward your chest, then slowly roll it clockwise or counterclockwise over your shoulder till you are looking up toward the sky with your head hanging back and continue over your other shoulder until your head returns to its starting position. Then reverse direction.
7. Trunk Rotations: From a standing position with your feet slightly apart, rotate your torso back and forth allowing your arms to follow the motion.
8. Back Twist: From a seated or standing position, gently twist your torso from side to side, holding each twist for a few seconds.
9. Seated Hip Flexor Stretch: Sit with one leg extended and the other bent, leaning forward to feel a stretch in the front of your hip and upper thigh of the bent leg.
10. Calf Raises and Reverse Calf Raises: In a standing position with your legs and feet slightly apart slowly raise your heels up and down so your weight moves between your entire foot and the balls of your feet. Balancing on a stairstep on the balls of your feet, with your legs and feet slightly apart, slowly lower your heels down and back up.