

STAR

North

Independent Percussion



**Celebrating 10 seasons
of North Star Independent**

Don't miss this opportunity to showcase your talent and passion for the marching arts! Whether you're aiming for victory or simply enjoying the sport, our ensemble promises an unforgettable experience.



Display until April 2027



2027 Mallets
Audition Packet

~ Two Mallet Technique ~

Knowing how to properly hold our mallets is the first step in being able to produce a high-quality sound at a high level, and is the first step of us **becoming the instrument**.

Initially, when you hold your mallet, it helps to imagine it broken into three equal parts(excluding the mallet head) this will inform us on where to place our hands(fig. 1).

The **fulcrum** is the point where the mallet hinges. Our fulcrum will be created by the ring and pinky fingers by fully wrapping them around the stick to hold the mallet along the *interdigital fat pad* of the hand(fig.2). Use just enough strength to hold the mallet in place when in motion. **STAY LOOSE**

This **back fulcrum** is used to free up our **wrist motion**, and utilize the **weight** of the mallet to our advantage. The pointer finger/thumb are gently placed on the mallet on the lower third split(fig. 1) for **maximum accuracy of notes**. The middle finger will be the intermediary between these two sensations to create a comprehensive grip. Use the figures 3-5 below for reference

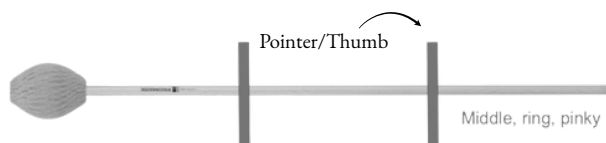


fig. 1

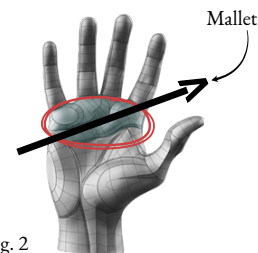


fig. 2

More important than anything else in this packet...**STAY RELAXED**. If at any point, while preparing these exercises, you feel tense, or in shooting pain, pause and reassess. Slow down the tempo of the exercise and slowly build. Great playing habits are built slowly and deliberately.



fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5

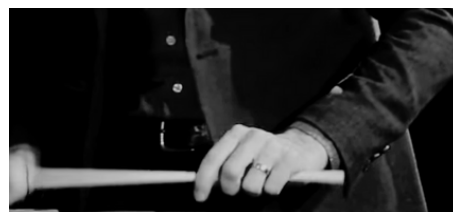


fig. 5.5

~ Two Mallet Exercises! ~

Practice Tips

- Every single time you play you should use a metronome. Use it to discipline yourself. Both for excellence and for timing purposes.
- Play the exercise slow enough that you can be **excellent** every time.
 - Excellent - Correct notes with correct rhythmic accuracy. Relaxed and healthy technique throughout.
- Use your practice time as opportunity to grow. Play the thing you want to avoid. Learn what is hard. Push yourself.
- Find checkpoints. Look into the music for repetitive figures, notes that help guide the material and so forth, practice those checkpoints.
- **Don't play the whole exercise every time!** Playing things measure by measure is more effective than trying to put everything together every time.
- Start with the end in mind. Are you trying to learn an exercise? Move it across more keys? Pick up the tempo? Pick a goal and start with that. And when you accomplish it. Move on with your life.
- Let things simmer. Your brain needs time to digest much like your body does, smaller frequent doses of practice are better than gorging on material infrequently. If you must practice in long infrequent bursts, break up your practice to feel like small focuses to allow your brain time to capture all of the information.
- You play because you love to play! Find the love for practicing. Find your why, and practice to accomplish that. If one can utilize discipline it is much easier to grow under the promise of progress than it is to grow under the fear of failure.

~ Four Mallet Technique ~

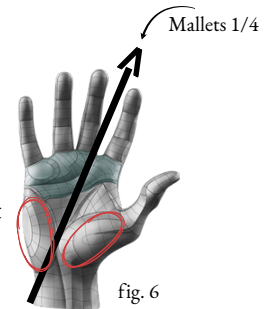
At Gold Spike Percussion we will utilize both **Stevens** and **Burtons** grips. Our Wood section will be largely focused on Stevens grip and our Metals Section will be largely based in Burtons. That being said, it is the expectation that all auditioning for mallets should be proficient in both grips.

BURTONS GRIP

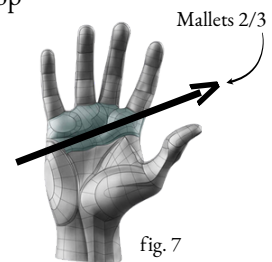
Burtons is the ultimate building block to understanding 4-mallet techniques and proficiencies hence it being advisable for all interested in the practice of 4-mallets to start with Burtons Grip. Burton's was developed by Gary Burton on the vibraphone to give **ultimate control of chordal structure** while maintaining a fluid motion of individual mallets for fast rhythmic passages.

Holding the mallets:

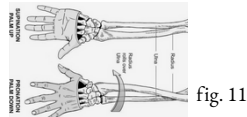
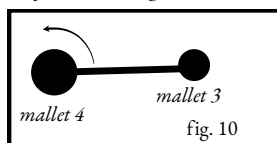
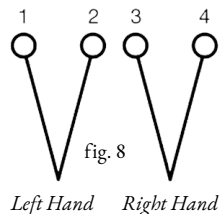
To hold Burtons, first take the **outside mallets** - 1,4 - and place them vertically between the pointer and middle finger on each hand.(fig. 6 and 7) The mallet should follow the natural pattern of the hand into the crease between the *thenar and hypothenar eminence*.(fig. 6) The 'tail' of the mallet meaning the portion of the mallet that protrudes beyond the palm should not exceed 2" in length.



Next, place the **inside mallets** - 2,3 - on top of the outside mallets, in the same position that 2-mallet grip is held in the hands. Withholding the fact that the inside mallets are placed on top of a second mallet the base grip should be exactly the same as two mallet grip. The pinky and ring finger will hold the mallet in place, while the pointer and thumb help direct the mallet with accuracy.



To move intervals - use your pinky, ring, thumb and pointer to pivot the inside mallet to differing interval sizes. At the larger interval sizes, your thumb will become placed on the inside on the mallet to hold the interval stable and in place.(fig. 9)



Outside Motion - Moving our outside mallets - 1,4 - should feel almost identical to our two mallet motion with the caveat that we will have to relax to navigate the additional weight and balance of a second mallet.

Inside Motion - Moving our inside mallets - 2,3 - will begin to feel more like unto Stevens grip where the wrist has to rotate via the forearm using *supination* and *pronation*.

STEVENS GRIP

Stevens grip is the most common grip in the marching arts. Built for fast permutations, thick rhythmic textures, and cross register playing it is generally perfect for our use case. Developed by Leigh Howard Stevens, this grip is meant to be the **rhythmically capable grip**, while still allowing for chordal ease.

Understanding the Motions

Stevens grip is the most common grip in the marching arts. Built for fast permutations, thick rhythmic textures, and cross register playing it is generally perfect for our use case. Developed by Leigh Howard Stevens, this grip is meant to be the most **rhythmically capable grip**, while still allowing for chordal ease.

First, outstretch the hand like reaching for a handshake bending the arm at the elbows to remain in playing position. Allow your hand to relax and ‘hang’ slightly. (fig. 12)



fig. 12

Before placing mallets in the hand, feel the muscle motion of lifting the hand (still in handshake position) and letting it return to a relaxed state. (fig. 12) At the height of the motion the thumb nail will be pointed at the shoulders and at its lowest it will point towards the shoulders.



fig. 13

While experimenting with this motion, also experiment with *supination* and *pronation* of the arm to point the palm. (fig. 13) It is helpful to do this rhythmically in slow to fast patterns - Take any of the exercises above and rotate the arm in time with the exercises, this will help develop a **strong** and **healthy** motion with Stevens grip.

Holding the mallets

Mallets 1 and 4 - Outsides



fig. 14

First, place the mallet between the middle and ring finger and wrap the pinky and ring finger around the stick holding it much like our previous grips. The mallet will follow the edge of our hand. The ‘tail’ of the mallet should not exceed 1" in length.

Mallets 2 and 3 - Insides

While holding the outside mallets, and while holding the ‘handshake position,’ place the base of the inside mallets in the center of the palm. Use the middle finger to lightly wrap around the base of the mallet to hold it in place. Then rest the mallet on the first knuckle of the pointer finger and gently place the thumb atop the mallet just enough to hold it in place.



fig. 15

Interval Changes

For interval sizes from 2nd's to 6th's (roughly), a player should extend and retract the pointer finger without breaking or changing the point of connection between the thumb and pointer. For larger intervals, a player will move the base of the mallet from the center of the hand to between the middle and ring finger knuckles on the *interdigital fat pad*. Use the middle finger to accomplish this motion.

MOVING 4 MALLETS

As we move the mallets we must understand the terminology of the grips, to best prepare and to understand the motions.

The 4 Main Motions

Double Verticals

Double Verticals are when **both** mallets on the **same** hand play **simultaneously**. - See *Passive Aggressive and Dramatic Intervals* (fig. 16)

~ **Burtons:** The motion will be 'identical' to that of 2-mallet matched grip.

~ **Stevens:** This will use the 'Handshake' motion identified in the Stevens Grip portion of this packet

Single Independents

Single Independents is when **one** mallet is played **per hand** at a time. - See *Passive Aggressive and all two mallet exercises*. (fig. 17)

~ **Burtons:** View the motion breakdown per mallet on the Burtons page.

~ **Stevens:** This motion will use the *pronation* and *supination* of the arm. Outside mallets will initiate from the pinky and ring fingers, and inside mallets will initiate from the middle finger/thenar eminence - The playing mallet will 'rotate' around the non-playing mallet - **PLAY SLOW DELIBERATE MOTIONS FIRST!**

Single Alternating

Single Alternating is when **two** mallets are played **per hand** with **two motions**. - See *Passive Aggressive and Broccoli*

~ **Burtons:** Same as Single Independents but in rapid succession

~ **Stevens:** Same as Single Independents but in rapid succession - **PLAY SLOW DELIBERATE MOTIONS FIRST!**

Double/Triple Laterals

Single Independents is when **two** mallets are played **per hand** with **one motions**. - See *Passive Aggressive and Broccoli*

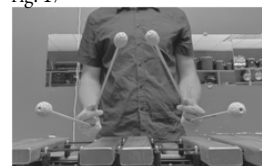
~ **Stevens:** This is considered the 'double stroke' of the front ensemble. There are two ranges of motion to play the outside mallet then the inside mallet. We will play those back to back with a fluid arm rotation. Keep the arm vertically still. Both mallets will experience a downstroke sensation one after the other, only lifting by the wrist after both notes have been played.

fig. 16



For further breakdowns of all technique, recordings of exercises, and play along tracks please scan the QR Code Below:

fig. 17



~ Four Mallet Exercises! ~

Practice Tips

- All two mallet exercises are also four mallet exercises!
- Every single time you play you should use a metronome. Use it to discipline yourself. Both for excellence and for timing purposes.
- Play the exercise slow enough that you can be **excellent** every time.
 - Excellent - Correct notes with correct rhythmic accuracy. Relaxed and healthy technique throughout.
- Use your practice time as opportunity to grow. Play the thing you want to avoid. Learn what is hard. Push yourself.
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Dynamics

Throughout the season you will hear the staff talk about **sound quality**, here are some of the goals while working on our sound:

- Sound quality is the **clarity** of each note, not volume.
- Play with **weight** at every dynamic.
- As a baseline, we will play everything in the **center** of the key for the best sound (some chord shapes will be on the edge)

Disclaimer: all of our dynamics can change based on the musical context in the show. However, we will set a baseline of dynamics so we can be clear with our starting points.

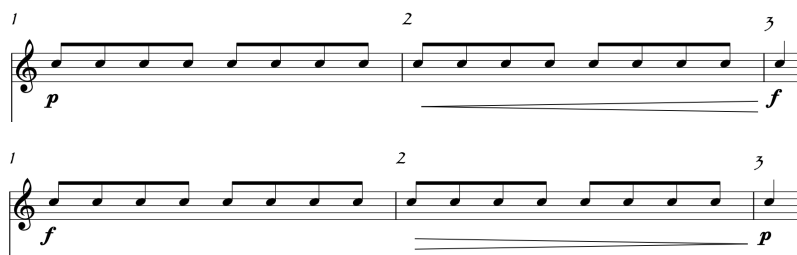
We will define dynamics as follows:

- **p** - Mallets parallel to the keys, still full weight
- **mp** - Mallets 1 mallet head above the keyboard
- **mf** - Mallets halfway between mp and f
- **f** - Wrists pulled back at full extension, no arm added
- **ff** - Wrists pulled back at full extension, a small amount of arm added

As dynamic energy is one of our **3 kinds of energy**, we need to be able to play **consistent dynamics**, **moving dynamics**, and **jumping dynamics**.

To isolate **consistent dynamics**, we can pick any one of our dynamic definitions from above and work on achieving that using any of the timing exercises in the packet. This can be achieved on a single surface. After isolating the **Timing** and **Dynamic** energies, we can add **Note accuracy** by playing any of our exercises at a single dynamic.

We can isolate **moving dynamics** by playing 8th note based exercises on a single surface.



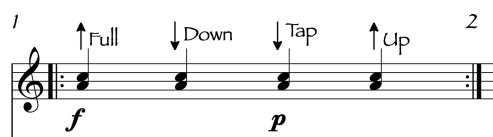
We should work on our crescendos and decrescendos starting and ending at all dynamic levels.



To apply **Note accuracy**, we can then play the written dynamics for **Barkley**, **Dirt**, **Chord progression 2**, and **Pizza**.

A way we can isolate our **jumping dynamics** is by working on our 4 basic stroke types:

- **Full stroke**: Start at full extension, end at full extension
- **Down stroke**: Start at full extension, end at parallel
- **Tap stroke**: Start at parallel, end at parallel
- **Up stroke**: Start at parallel, end at full extension



While we play through this, be picky about the defined height, and make sure the weight stays the same at all dynamic levels.

To apply this to our exercises, we can use an example in **Barkley**: we have a **mp** to **f** jump in dynamic. Our **mp** stroke should start one mallet head above the keyboard and rebound all the way to full wrist extension in order to accurately play the next **f** note.



Checklist:

- ☐ Be picky with the heights!
 - Don't lift before you play.
- ☐ Play with consistent weight at all dynamic levels.
- ☐ Bar placement affects dynamic quality. Play in the centers!

Lateral Strokes

A lateral stroke is similar to an alternating stroke but only uses one motion that creates 2 notes in one hand.

The set position is the same as a **double vertical stroke**.

There are 3 steps to perform this motion - we will start slow and separated and as we speed up, it is important to **smooth** out the motions to create one stroke.

1. The inside mallet stays up as the outside mallet **rotates** down to the keyboard
 - o This now should feel like an inside mallet stroke.
2. The inside mallet plays a **down stroke**, ending with both mallets down.
3. Lift both mallets together evenly back to set.

Checklist!

- ☐ This needs to be a smooth connected motion.
- ☐ Don't lift the outside mallet before you play it.
- ☐ The inside mallet needs to be just as strong as the outside (if not stronger).
- ☐ Rotation based motion, no need to add arm.

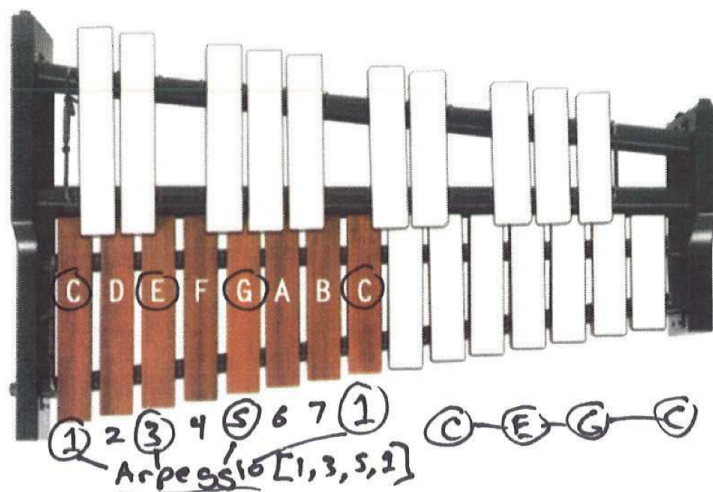
Lateral Stroke Bonus Exercises!

In order to build up to playing **Pizza** (our main lateral exercise) we will work through this progression of exercises at 90 bpm.

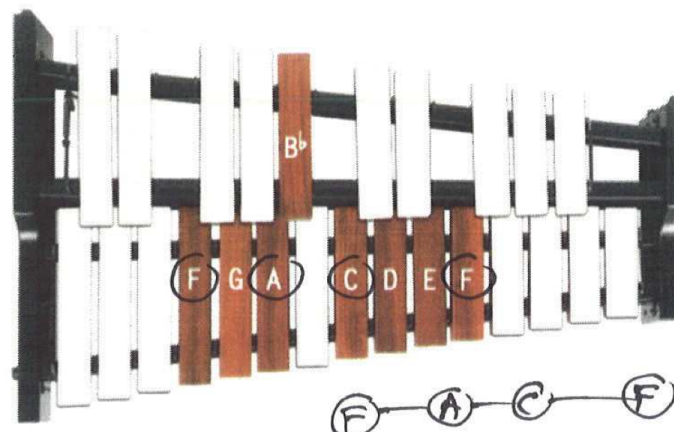
12 Major Scale and Arpeggio Cheat Sheet

Order of Flats:
Bb Eb Ad Db Gb Cb Fb

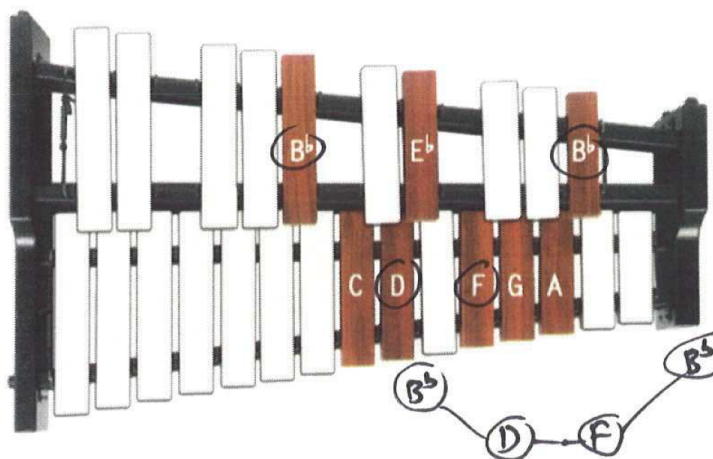
0 Flats (b) or Sharps (#)



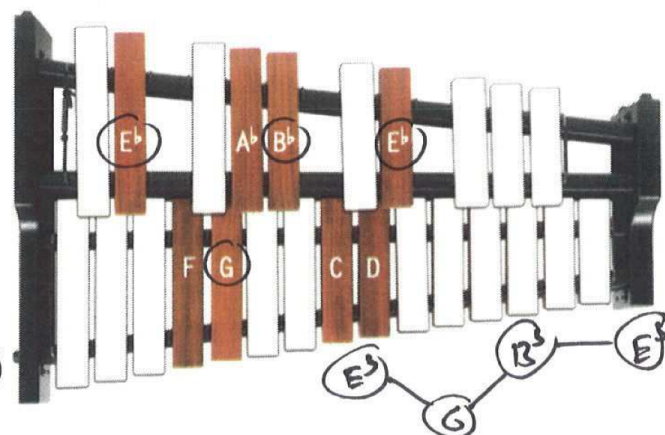
1 Flat



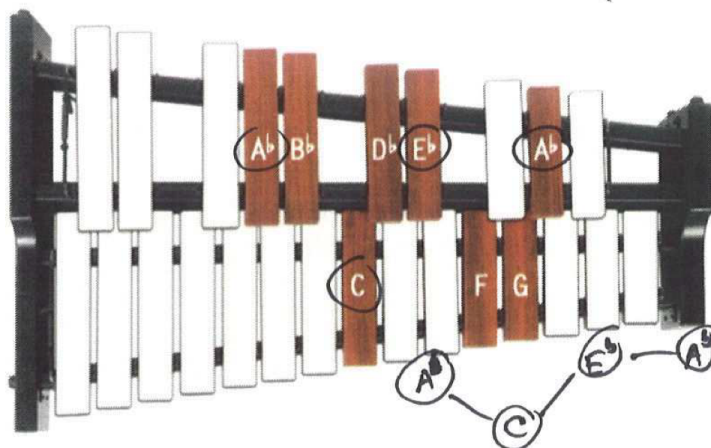
2 Flats



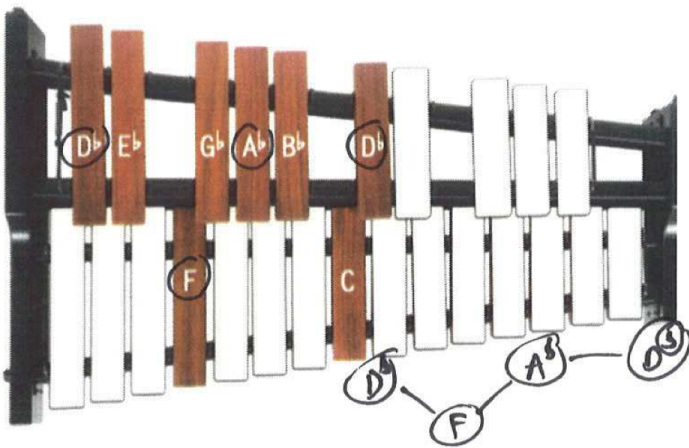
3 Flats



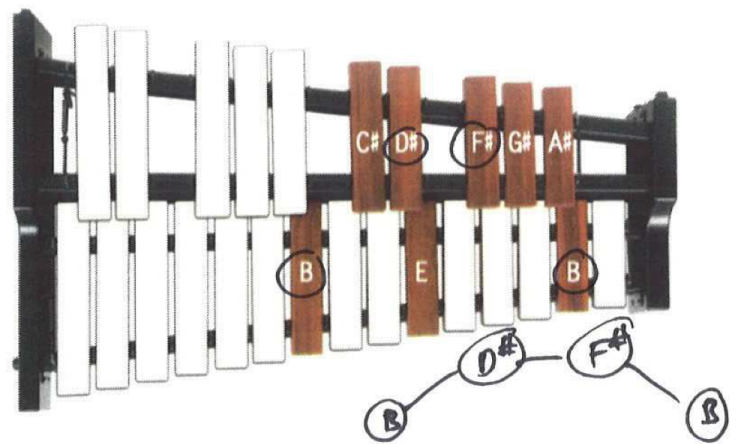
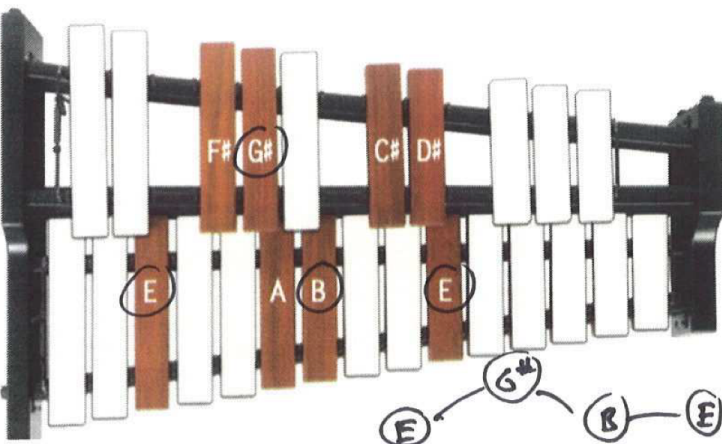
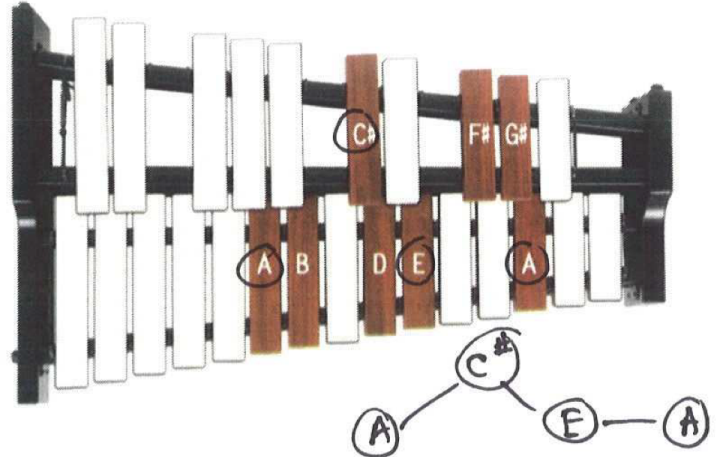
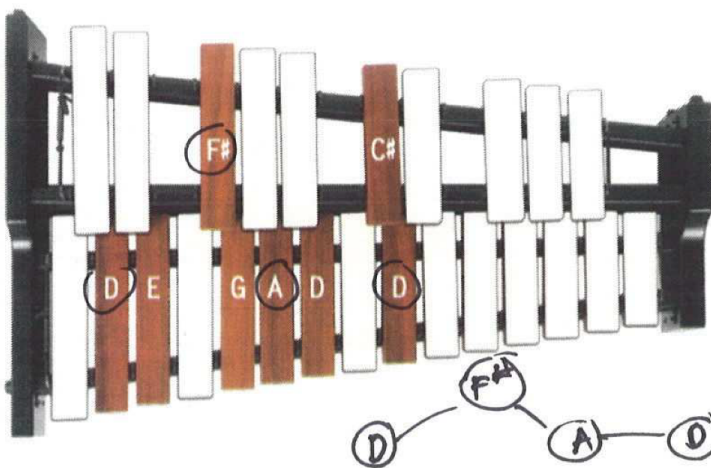
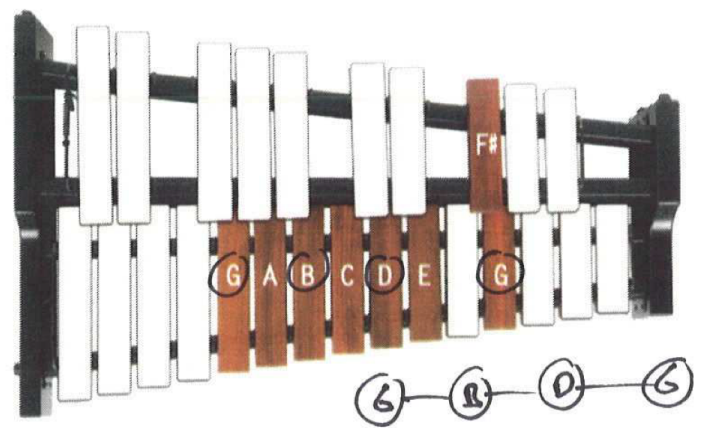
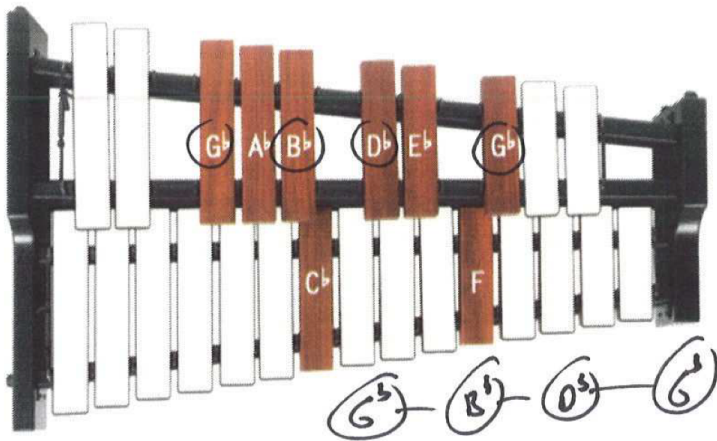
4 Flats



5 Flats



Order of Sharps:
F# C# G# D# A# E# B#



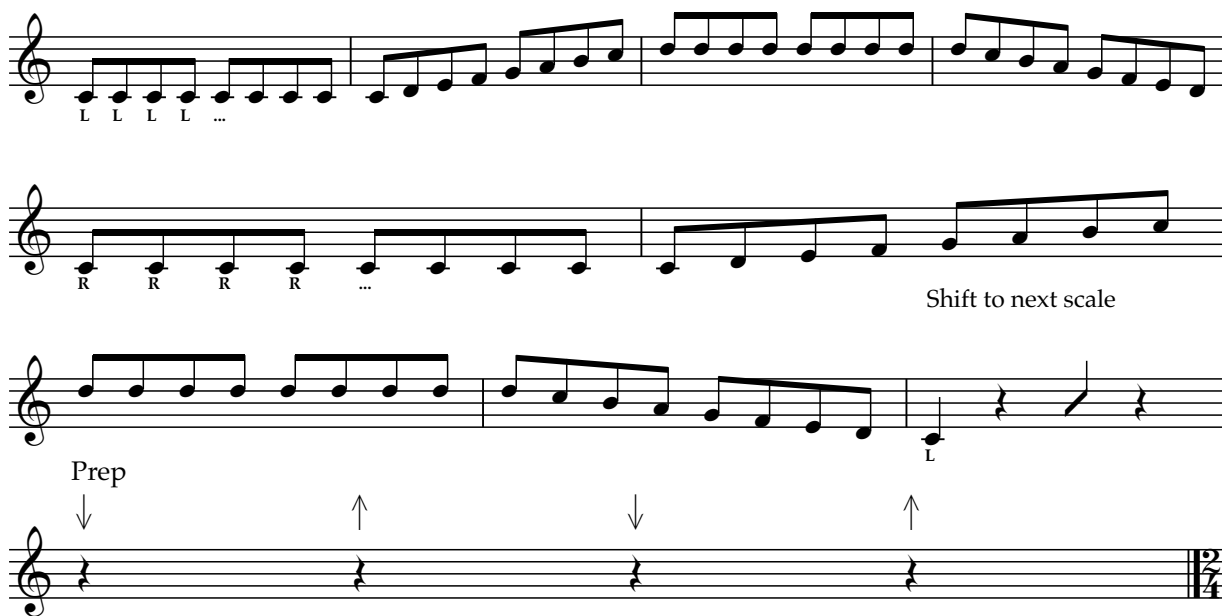
Mallets

Front Ensemble Packet

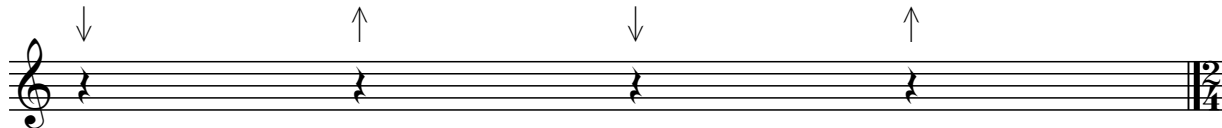
Jedi Eights



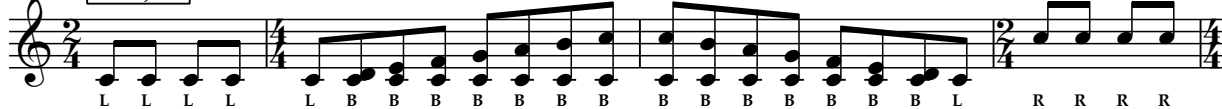
Single



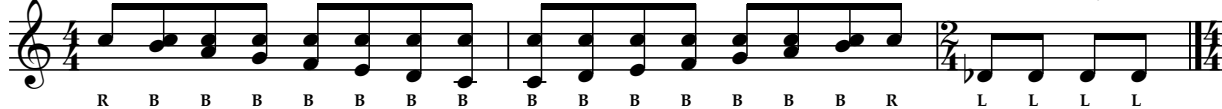
Prep



Lockjaw



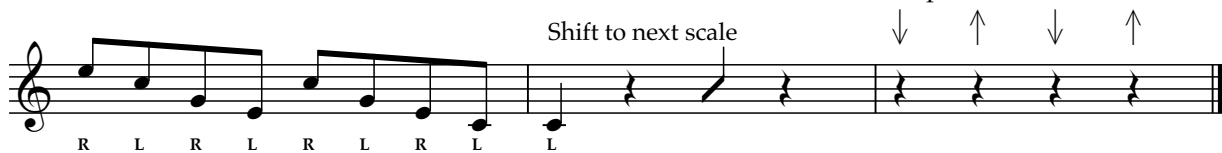
Continue Chromatically



Rapid Arpeggios



Prep



Rhythm Greens

Rhythm Greens

3 3

3 3

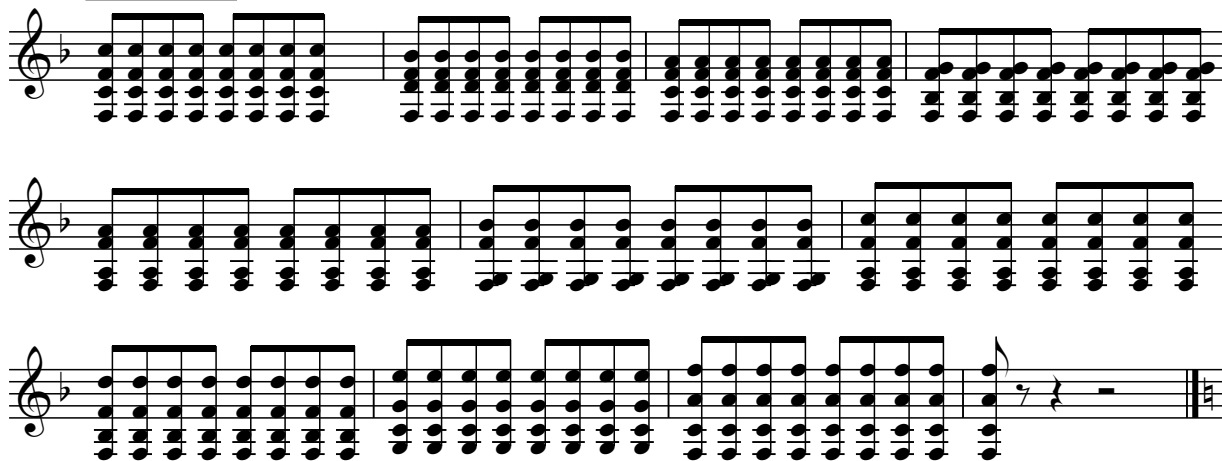
3 3

Shift to next scale

Prep

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

Silver Bridge



PIZZA!!!!

R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R L R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2

R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R L R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2

R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R L R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2

R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R L R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2

L R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2

R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R L R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2

R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R L R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2

R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R L R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2 R 1 2

WHOO

L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L R L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3

L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L R L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L

R L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L R L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3

L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L R L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L

R L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L R L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3

L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L R L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L 4 3 L

NOTES

date _____

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 28 horizontal dotted lines.

