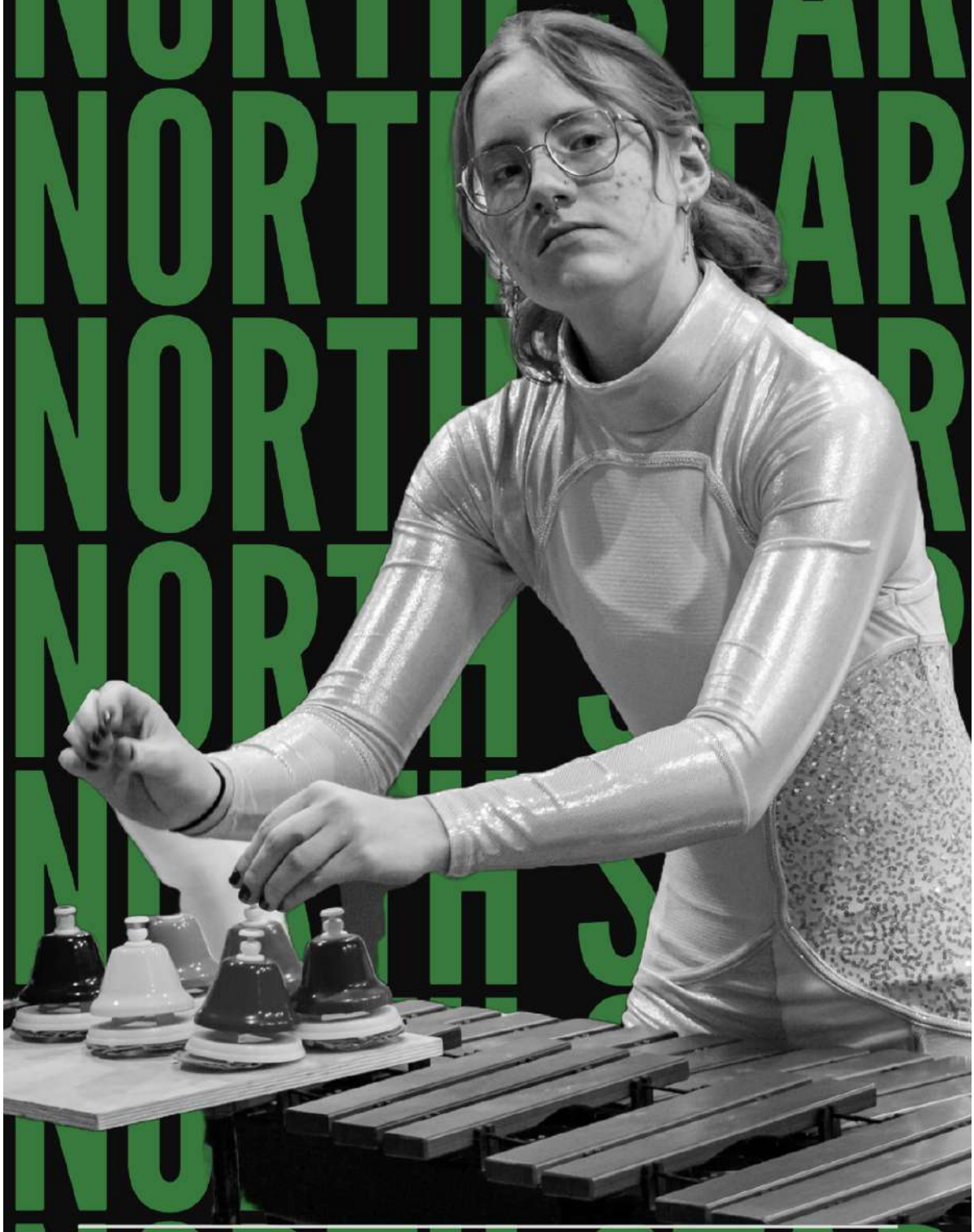
# 2025 FRONT ENSEMBLE PACKET



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# *Two Mallet Technique*

## *Summary*

We must define our technical style and create a working vocabulary for this ensemble to rehearse effectively. To summarize greatly, our technique will revolve around the following:

1. A relaxed hand position with a natural curve to the fingers.
2. Playing from the wrist while keeping our shoulders and elbows relaxed.
3. Creating the look and feel of natural rebound.

## *Grip Criteria*

1. Hold the mallet between the index finger's first knuckle and the thumb's pad. The other fingers should be wrapped around the mallet, relaxed and natural.
2. The palm’s angle should be as flat as possible to the instrument without causing tension.

## *Setup Behind the Instrument*

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart with relaxed knees, centering your body in the register of the instrument you will be playing.
2. In the set position, the mallets/wrists are up at the height of the dynamic you will play. The mallets are slightly angled toward each other.
3. Elbows are relaxed.
4. Make sure there is a natural curve to the hand.

## *Stroke Guidelines*

1. Continue to follow all grip criteria and setup guidelines.
2. Mallet pathway is straight up and down (no slicing).
3. The mallet head moves first, not the forearm or arm. If the mallet head moves first, this means you are playing from the wrist.
4. Check your height of rise consistency. Duplicate your stick heights to achieve a more consistent sound.

## *Stroke Types*

### *FULL Stroke*

This stroke can be played in either a legato or a piston style. The mallet starts at the height of the dynamic you will play and returns to the same height. Full strokes are the most common type of stroke and can be repeated one after another. This stroke can be played in a legato or piston style (along with all the strokes below).

### *DOWN Stroke*

The mallet starts at the height of the dynamic you will play but does not return to the previous height (no rebound). At the point where the mallet strikes the bar, the wrist stops and does not lift back up. The mallet will slightly rebound due to a small bounce (don't let the mallet "dead stroke" on the bar). This stroke is ideal for going from a loud to a soft passage of music and maintaining stroke efficiency.

### *TAP Stroke*

"Tap" refers to a rudimental drumming stroke, where the stick only plays 1-3 inches off the head. For our purposes, tap strokes are full strokes at a very low height. They can also be played in a legato or piston style.

### *UP Stroke*

The mallet starts at a low height (tap stroke height) and, after striking the bar, rebounds to the height of a full stroke. This stroke is ideal for going from a soft to a loud passage of music and maintaining stroke efficiency.

Stroke Styles

### *The Legato Stroke*

In this case, the word legato refers to the look of the stroke (smooth and connected) rather than the sound it produces. The mallets move smoothly and connectedly between the downstroke and the upstroke without interruption. The downstroke is slightly accelerated, and the upstroke is slower and slightly decelerated. This excellent general-purpose stroke will be used for most of our music and exercises.

### *The Piston Stroke*

The piston stroke requires a downstroke that accelerates more than the legato stroke and a natural, decelerating upstroke (like dribbling a basketball). There is a noticeable pause between strokes. This stroke is excellent for shifting in slower passages that

demand the utmost accuracy and for practicing double vertical strokes when using four mallets.

***Shifting***

Shifting is how you move from one note to another. The shift must be a part of your stroke's recovery (or rebound). In other words, while your mallet is coming off the bar you just struck, it is headed in the direction of its next target. Though this sounds like a simple concept, it will get a little more complex when considering having four mallets in our hands and changing intervals and dynamics. The most common problem is waiting too long to shift. Efficient shifting will lead to greater accuracy and consistency.

***Flow***

The four-stroke types discussed above can be played in many combinations and have many musical applications. When mastered, they will give you technical efficiency to enable you to relax while playing.

Flow is the ability to combine the above concepts and guidelines into one fluid idea. This will allow you to see and experience the "bigger picture" in the music (musical and rhythmic phrases, dynamics, and expression). This is a big part of becoming a great performer.

## *Four Mallet technique*

***Overview***

The primary four mallet grips we use are Stevens Grip and Burton Grip. Both will be taught at clinics and audition camps. These grips can be used on any mallet Instrument; however, a good rule of thumb is to use Stevens Grip on Marimba and Xylophone and Burton Grip on Vibraphone. When using four mallets, the mallets are numbered from 1 to 4, going left to right. When it comes to two mallets playing, Stevens Grip will use mallets 2 and 3, while Burton Grip will use mallets 2 and 4.

***Grip set up: Stevens Grip and Burton Grip***

For detailed information on Stevens grip, please read Method of Movement by Leigh Howard Stevens, and for detailed information on Burton grip, please read Simply Four by Gifford Howarth. These are great books to have in your collection. I also recommend watching these youtube videos for four mallet grips.

Stevens Grip Link. Burton Grip Link.

***Four Mallet Stroke Types***

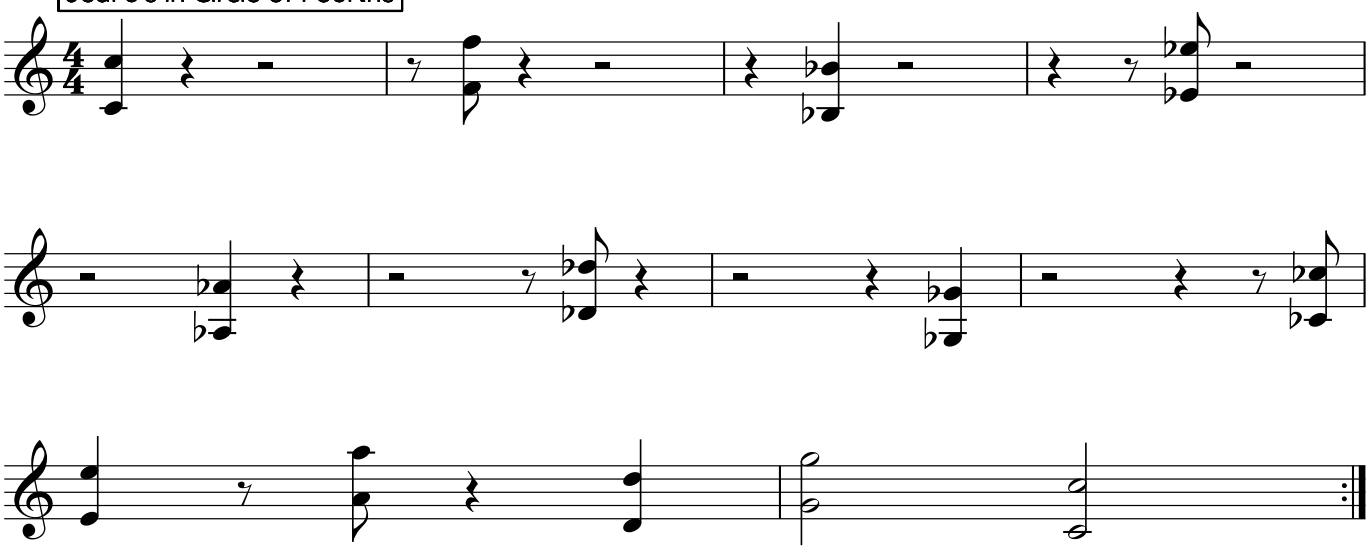
Almost all of the concepts and techniques described above also apply to four-mallet playing. In addition, there are 4 Stroke types we'll use throughout the season.

1. ***Single Independent:*** A single note played by either the inside or outside mallet.
2. ***Single Alternating:*** A single note pattern to be played by the same hand, alternating the inside and outside mallets.
3. ***Double Vertical:*** These are double notes which are played simultaneously by the same hand or with both hands together.
4. ***Double Lateral:*** These are fast, rhythmically adjacent notes played by the same hand going inside mallet to outside mallet or vice versa.

Mallet Instrument

# Two Mallet Exercises

Jedi 8's in Circle of Fourths



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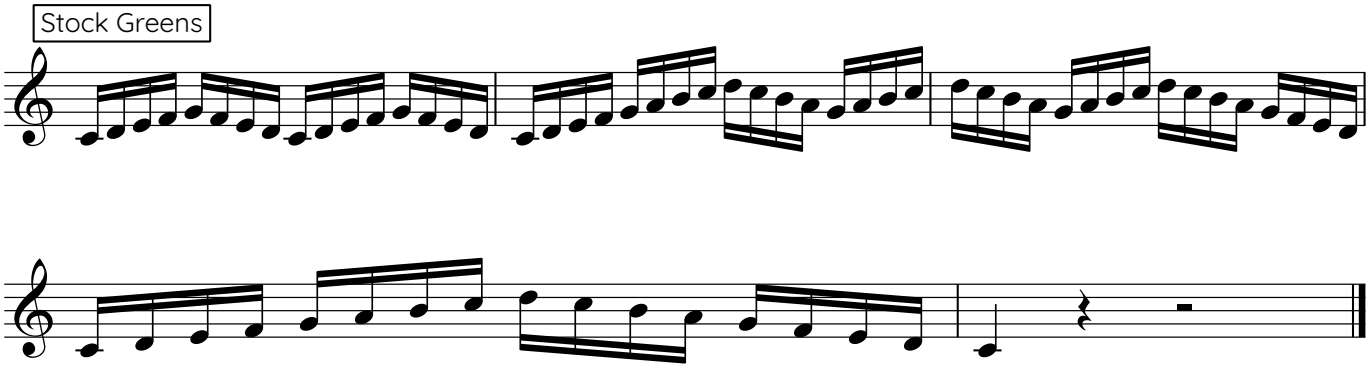

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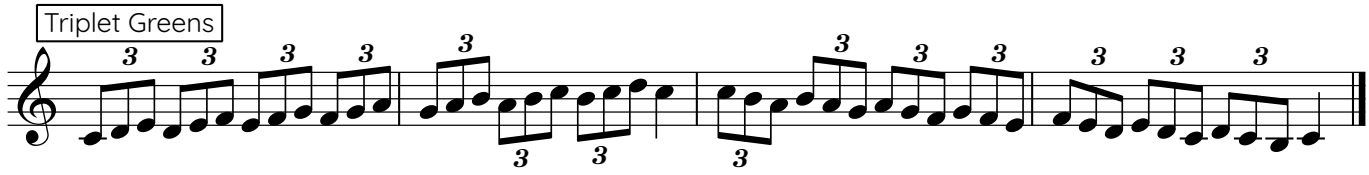

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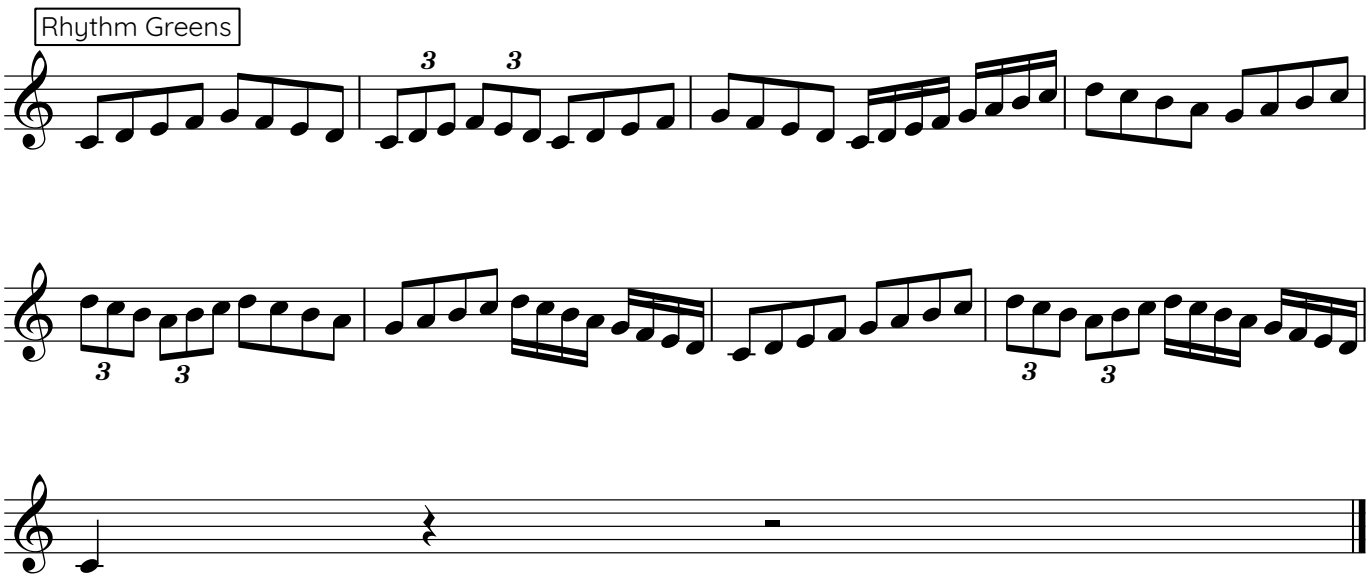
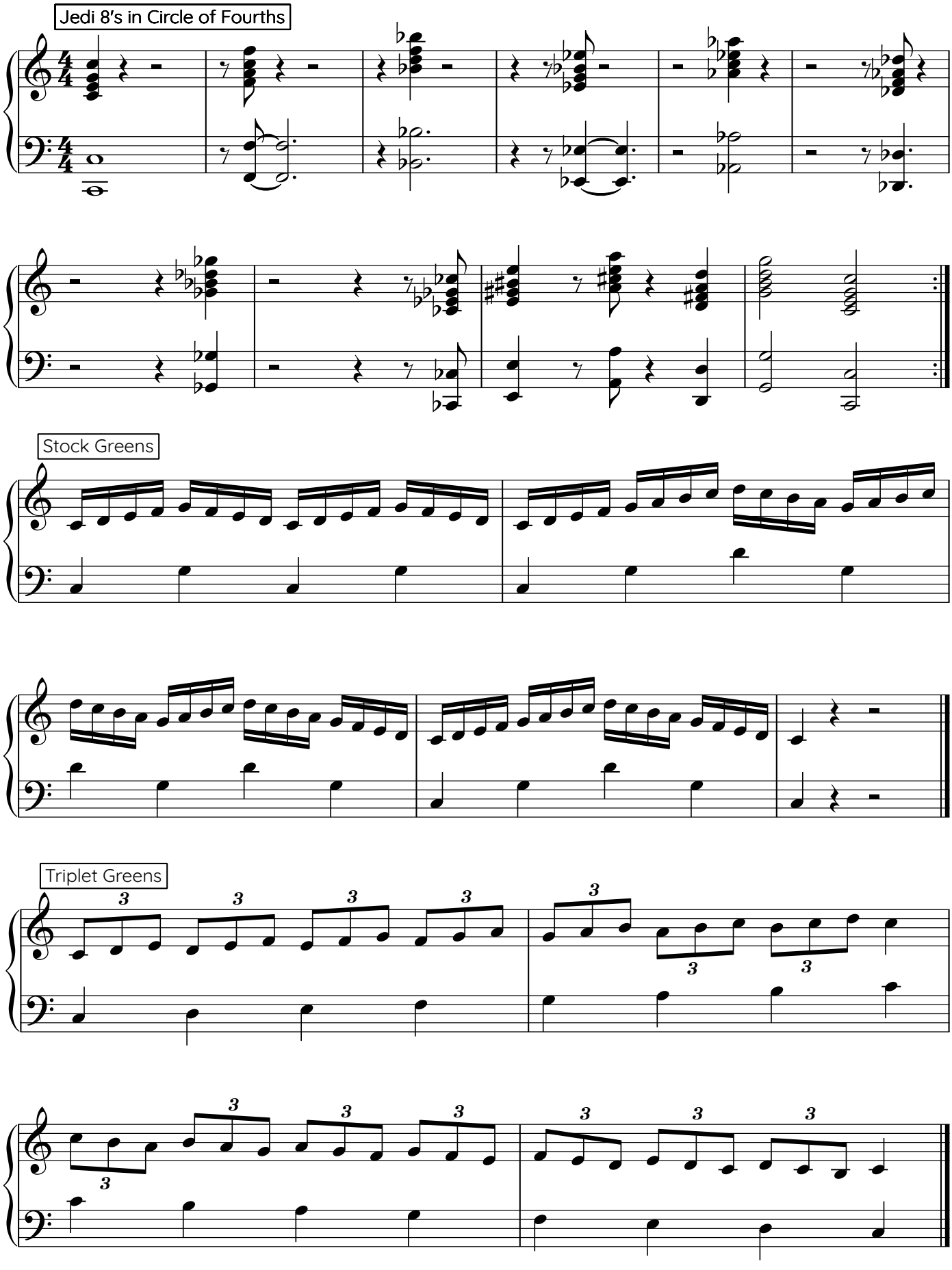
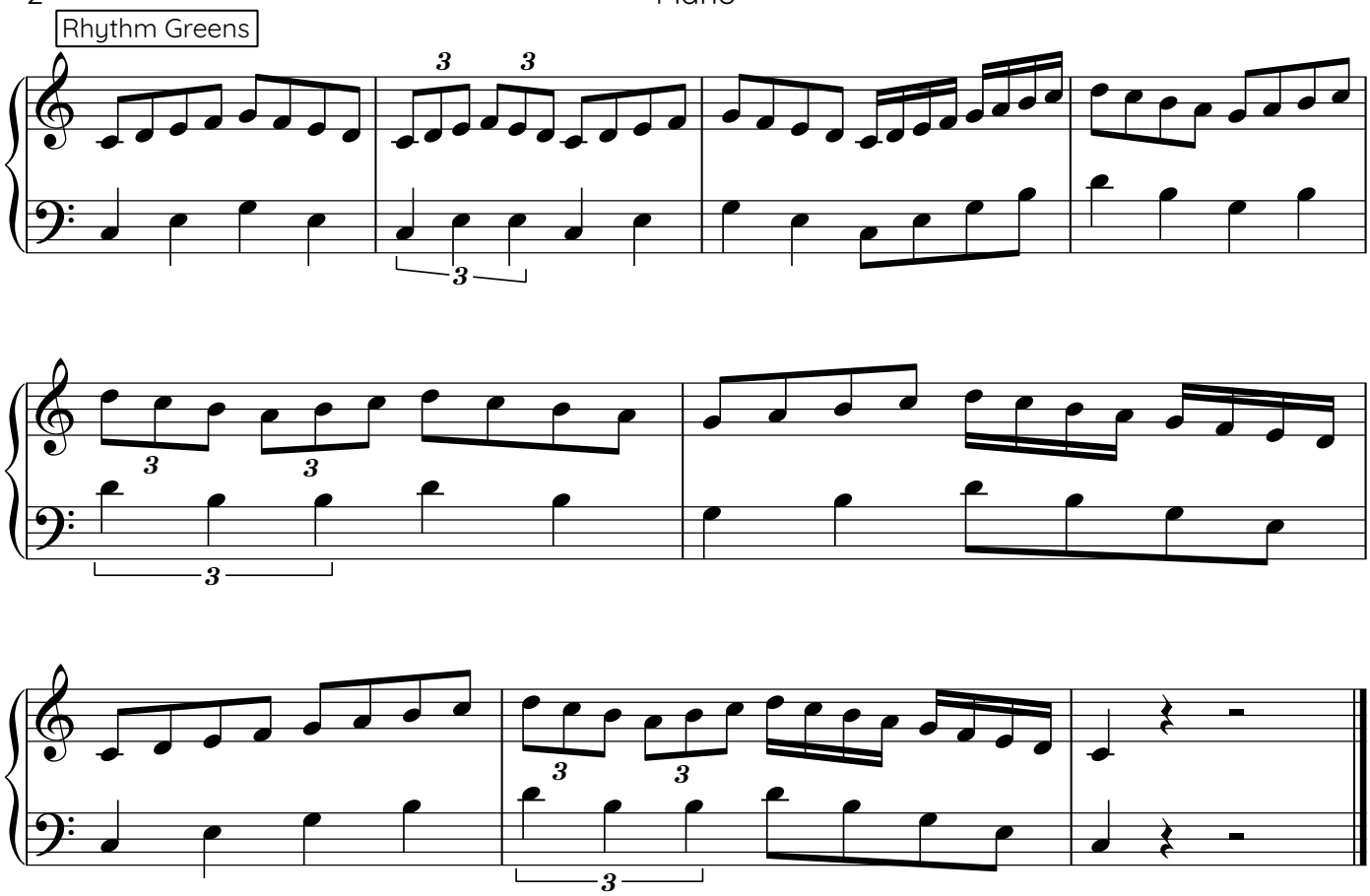


# Two Mallet Exercises

Piano

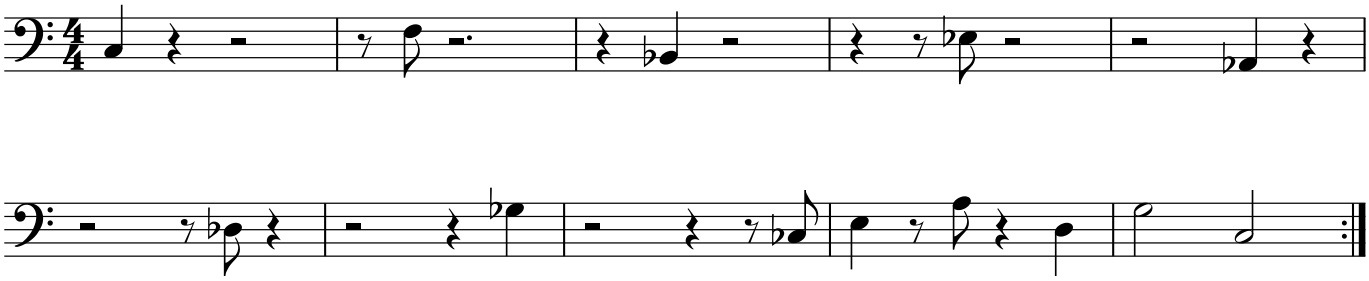



Rhythm Greens

# Two Mallet Exercises

Electric Bass

Jedi 8's in Circle of Fourths



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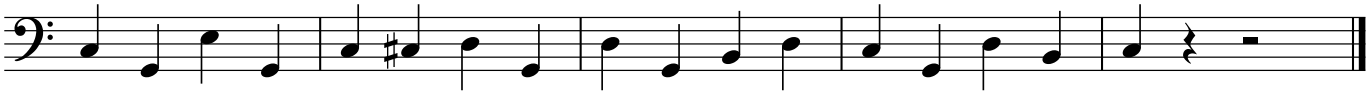

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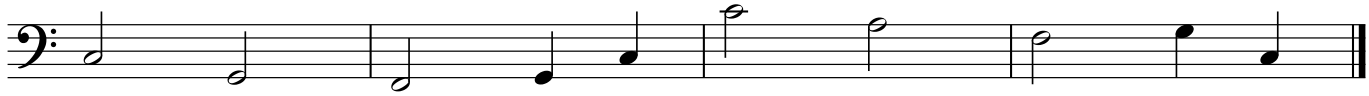

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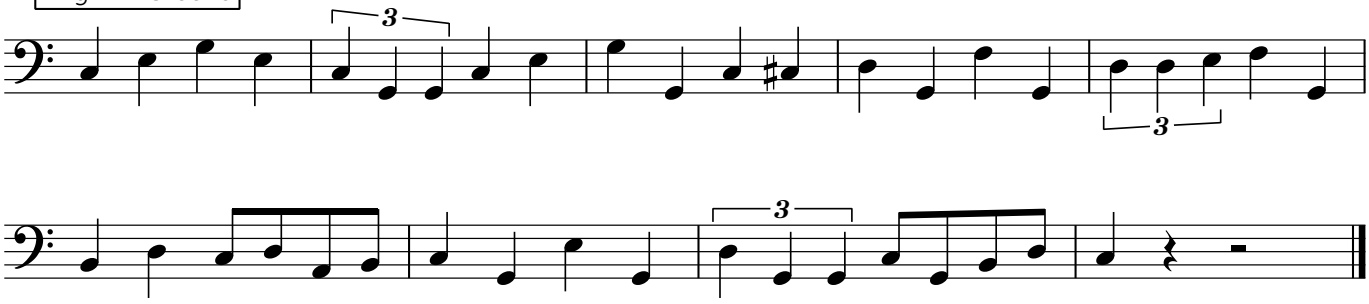
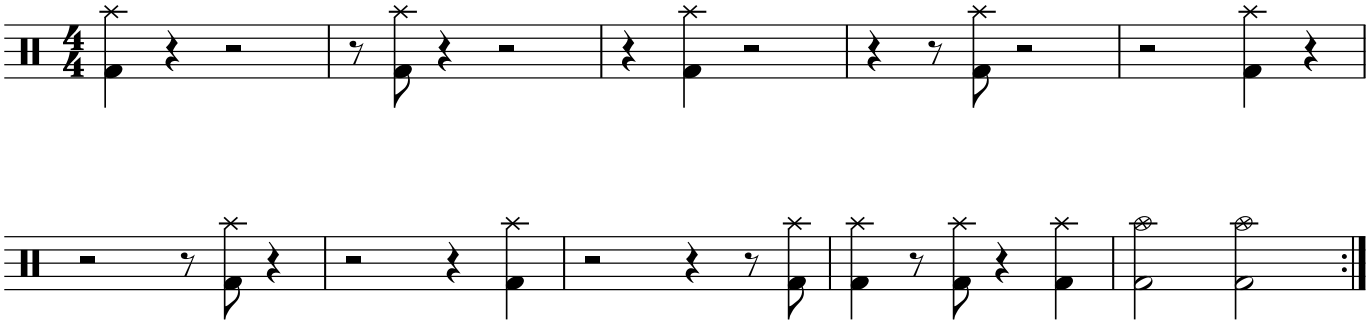


# Two Mallet Exercises

Drum Set

Jedi 8's in Circle of Fourths



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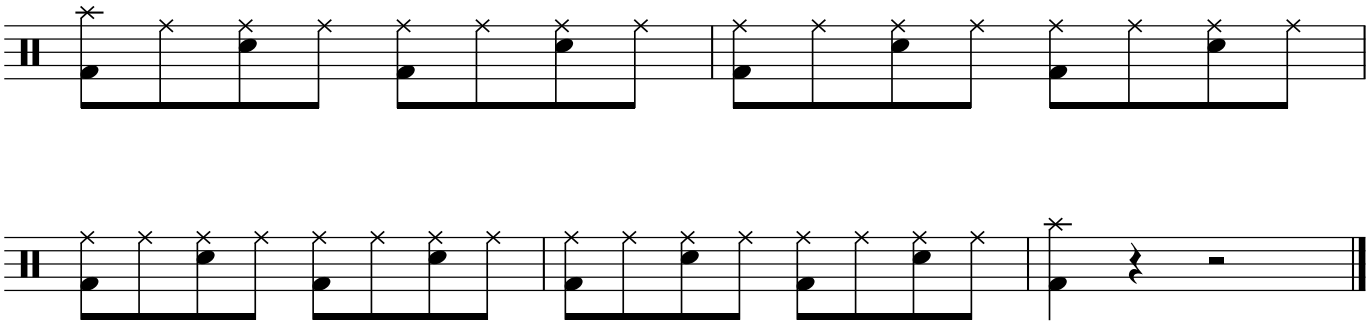

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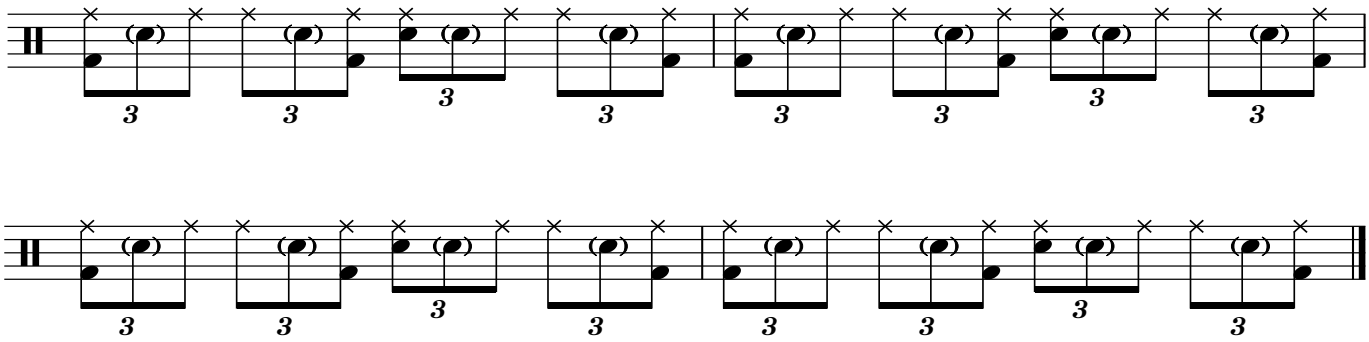

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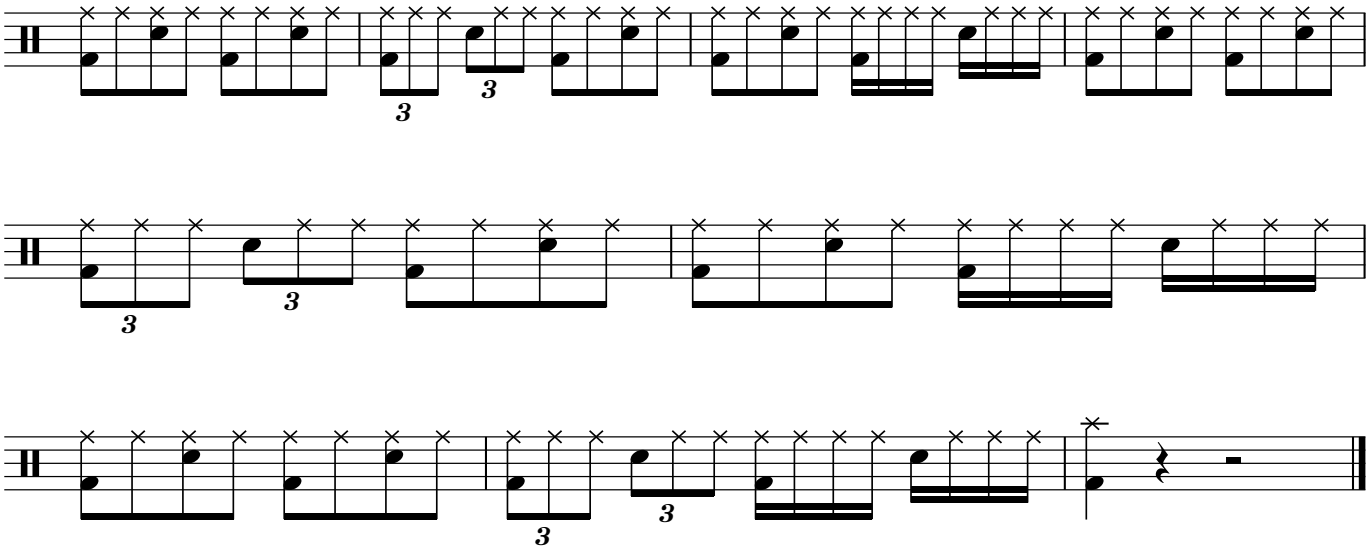
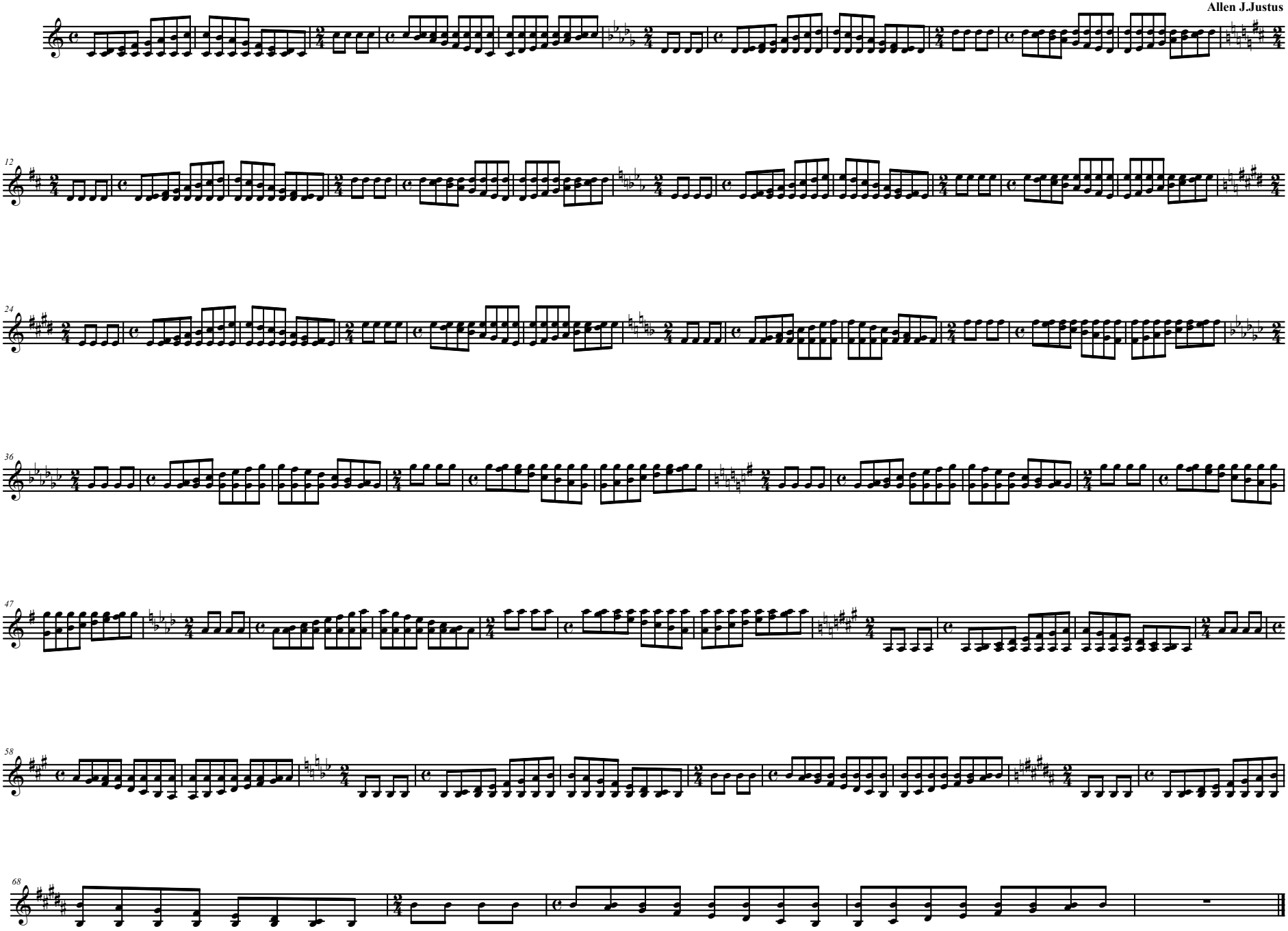


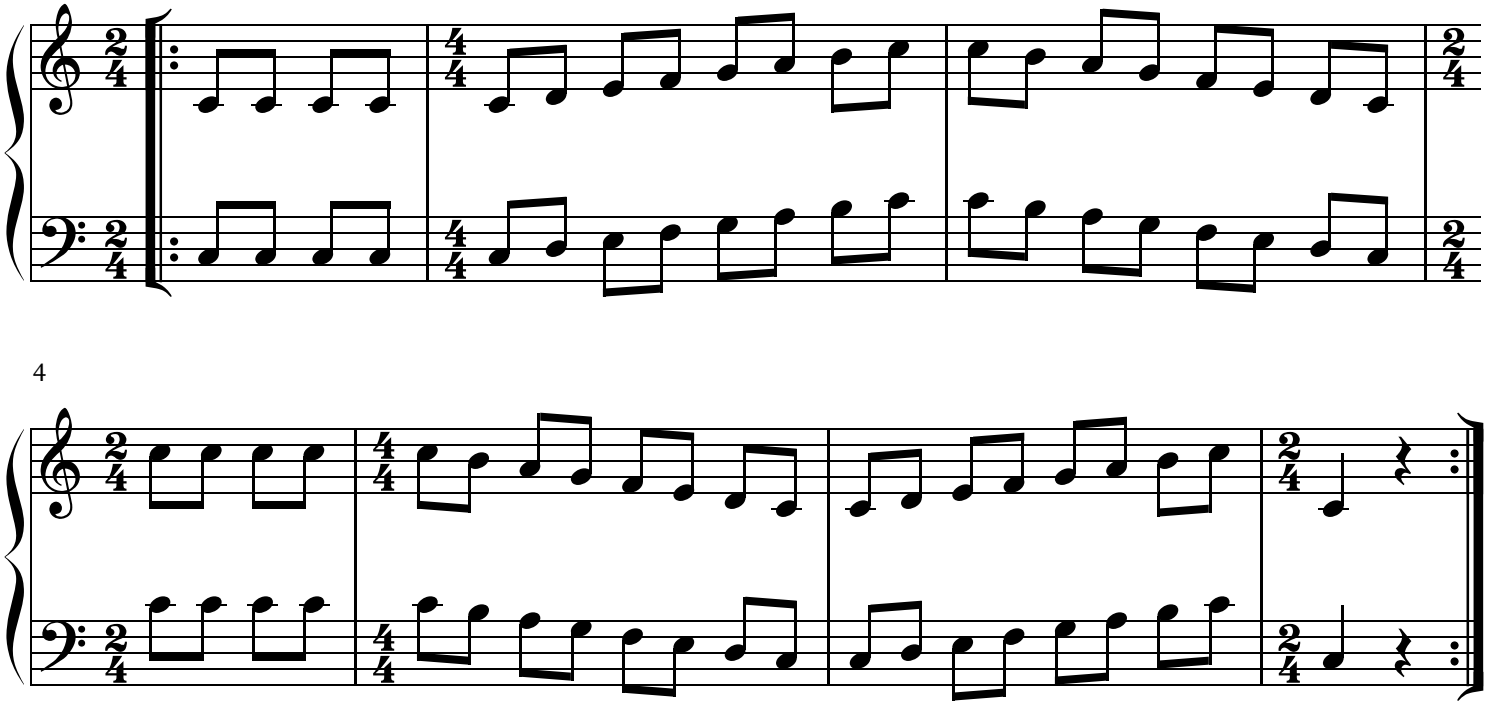
# Lock Jaw  Major

Allen J.Justus



# Lock Jaw

All 12 Major Scales



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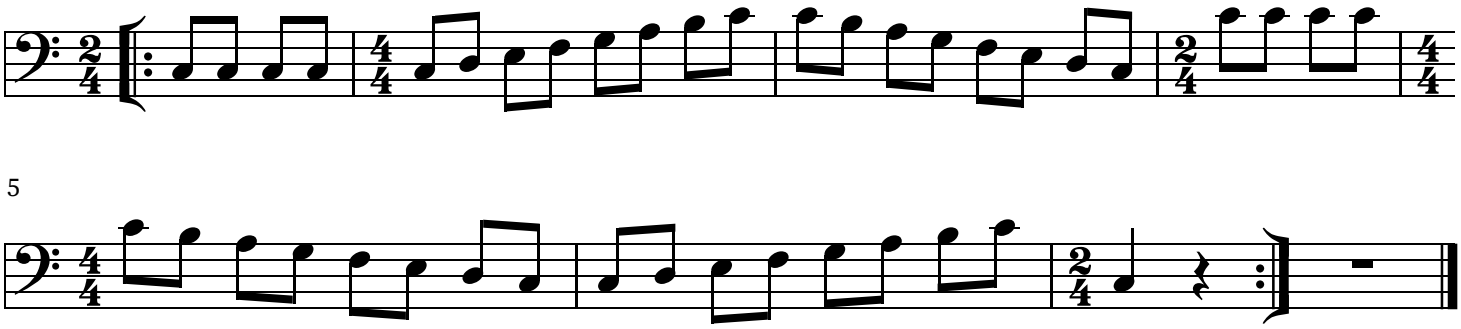
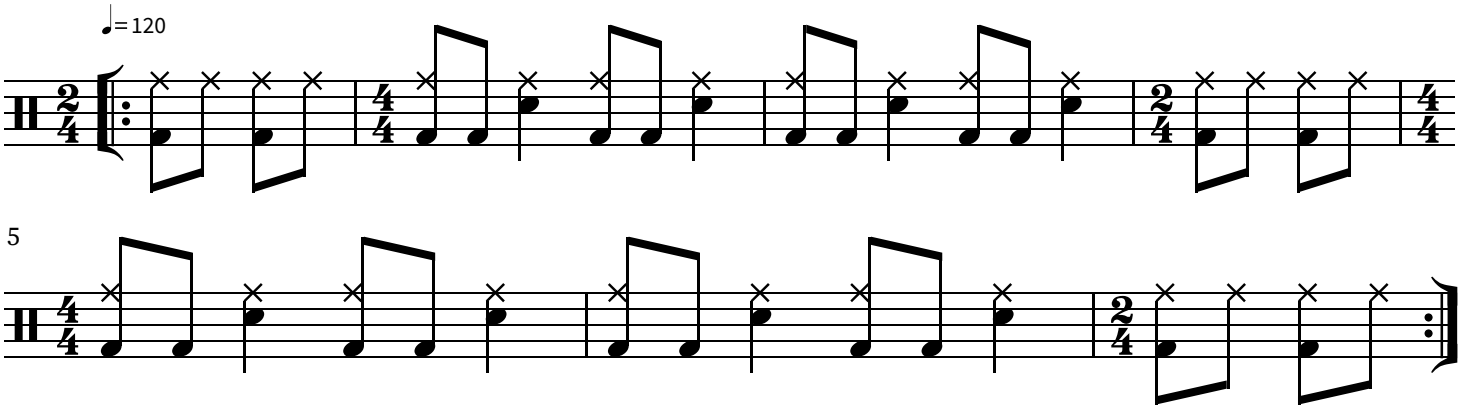
# Lock Jaw



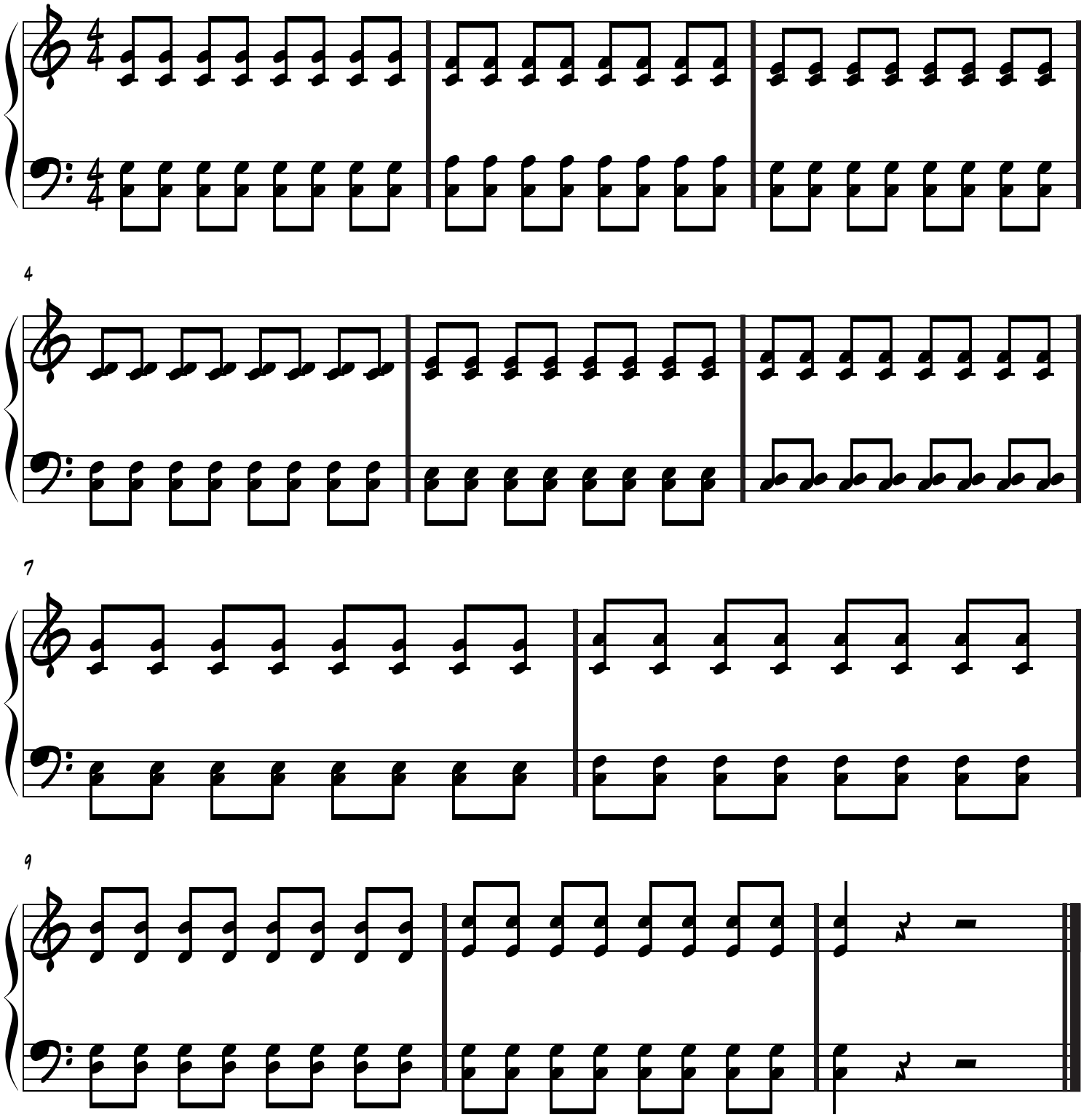
# Lock Jaw

Drum Set



# London Bridge

Be prepared to play with any permutation

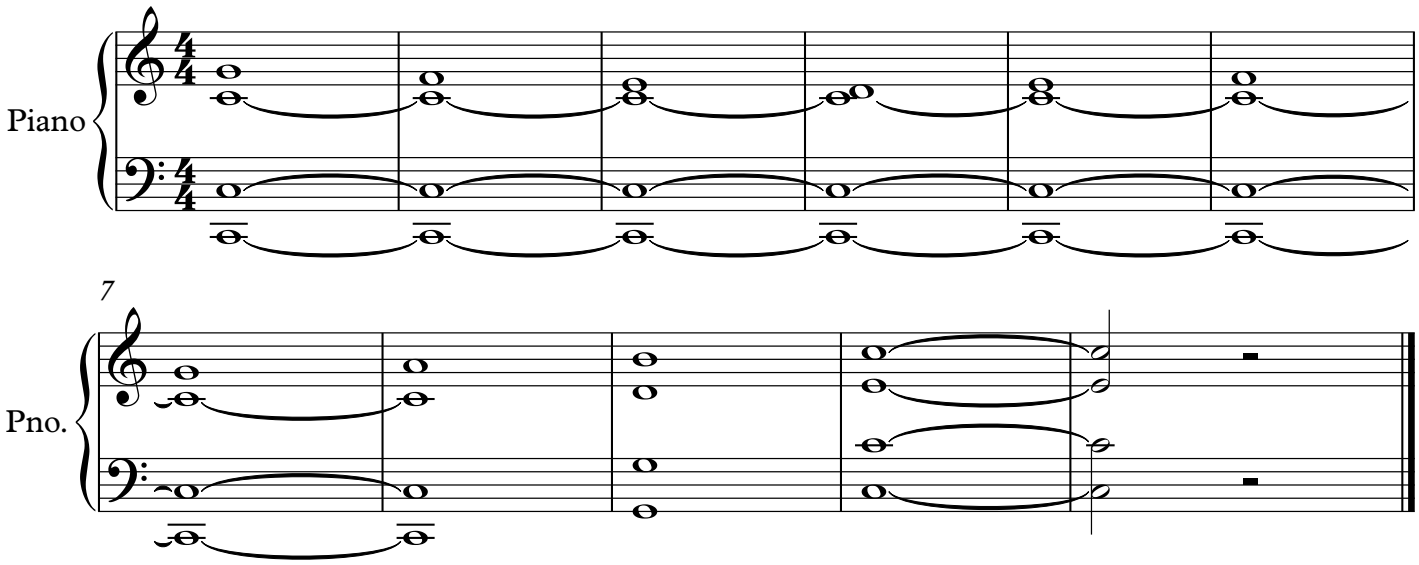


# London Bridge

Be prepared to play in any permutation or major scale

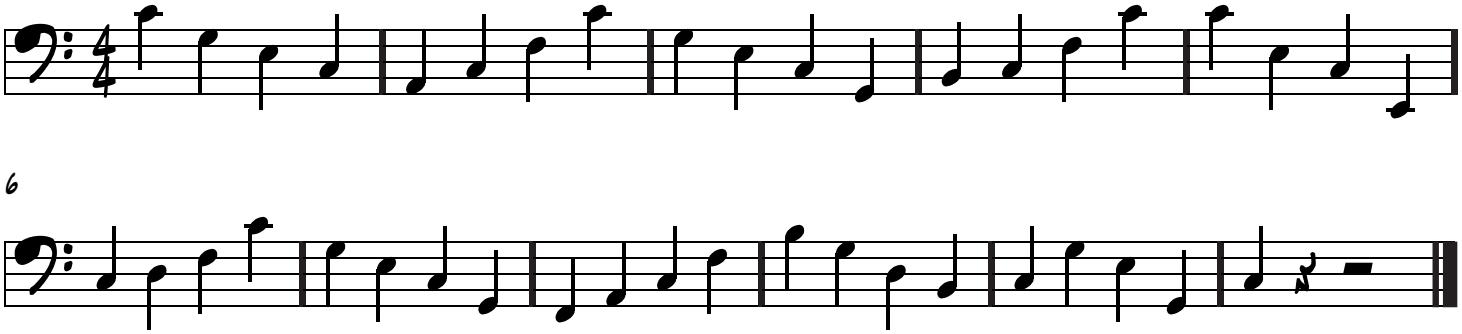
Synth

*Synth Pad*



# London Bridge

Be prepared to play with any permutation and any accent pattern



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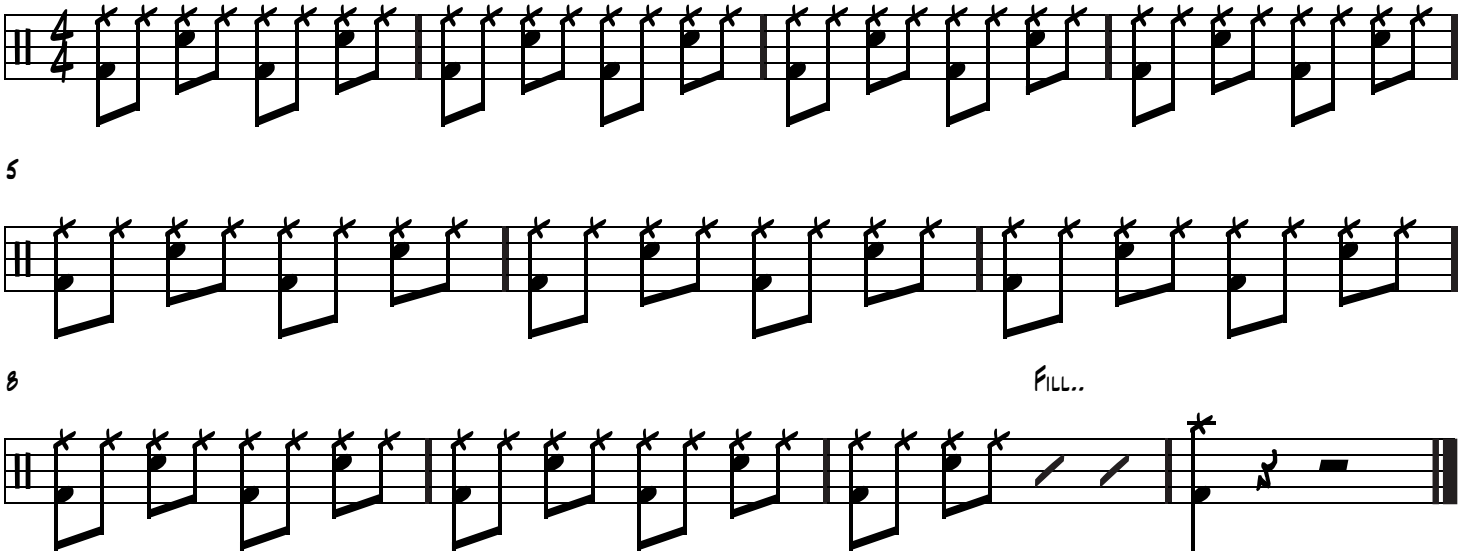
# London Bridge

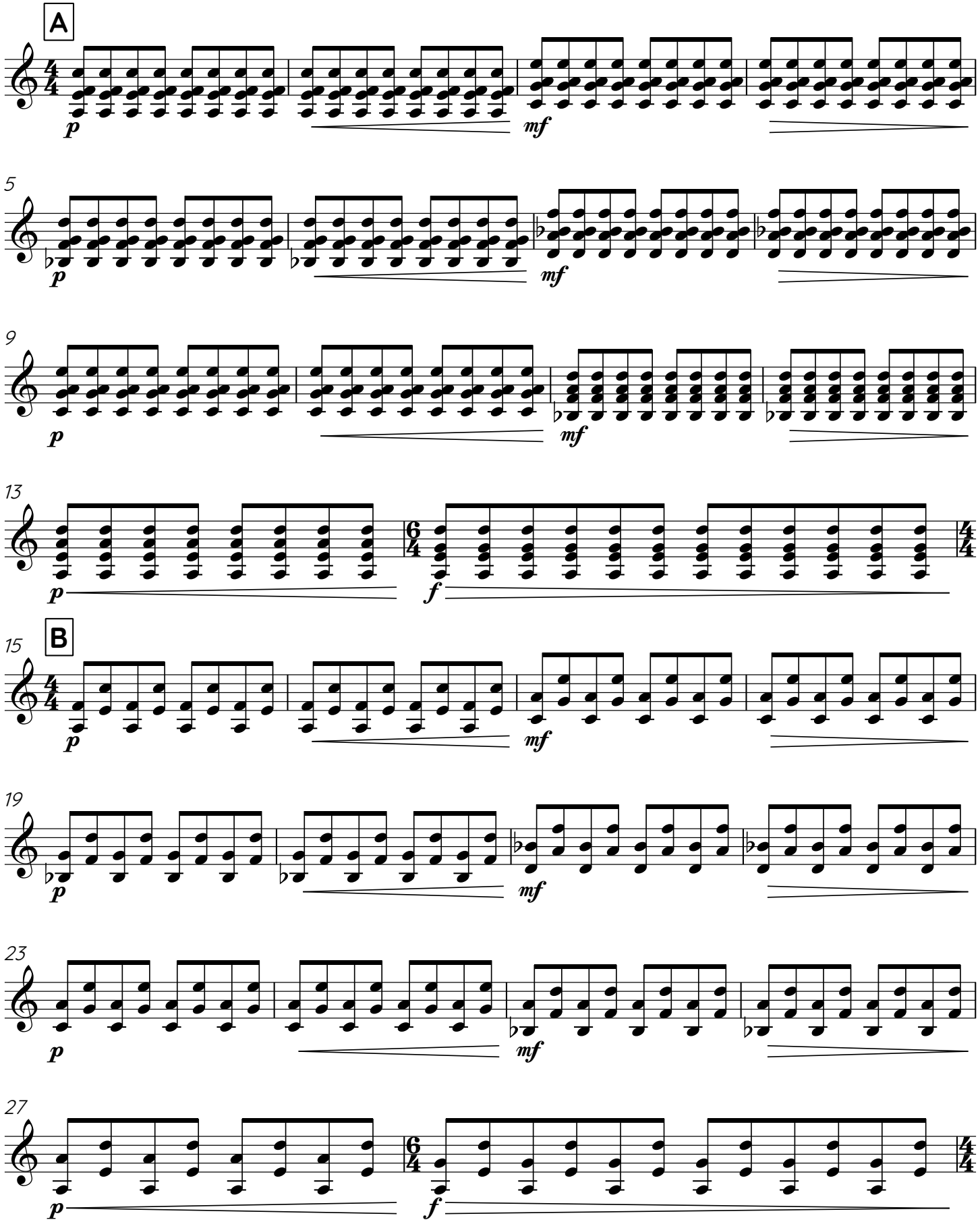
Be prepared to play with any permutation and any accent pattern

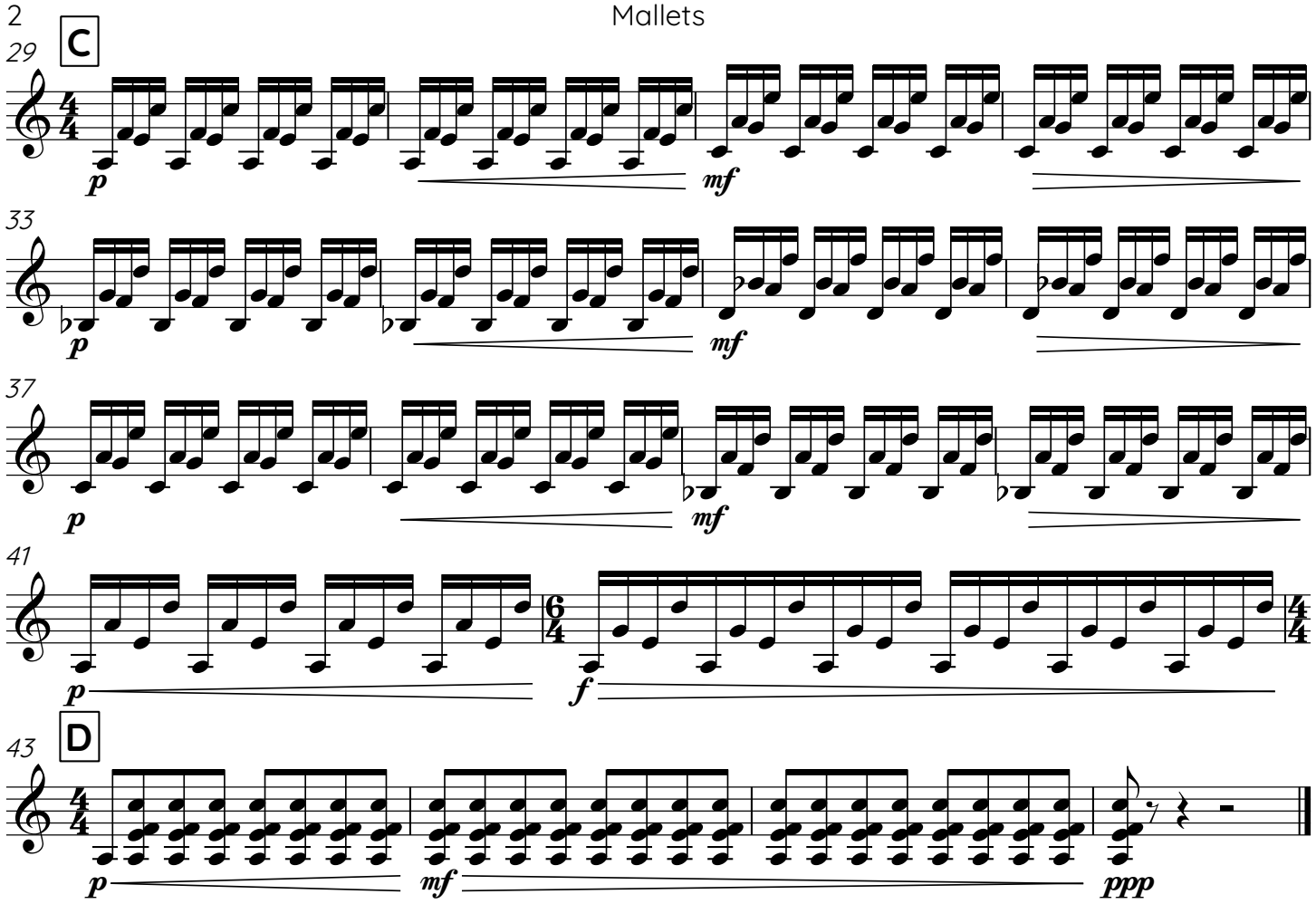


# Waves

Mallets

Tom Gierke

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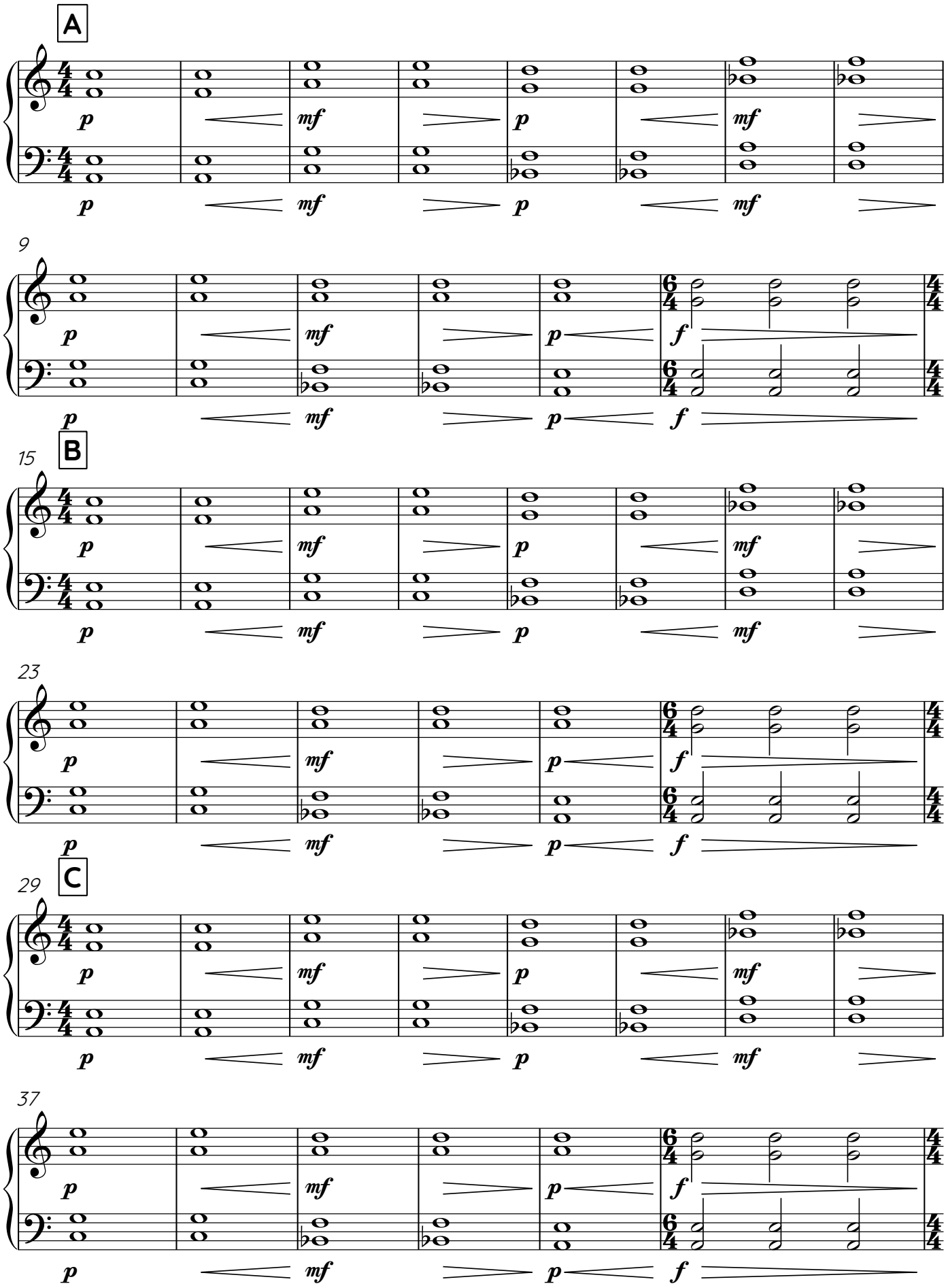
# Waves

Piano

Tom Gierke

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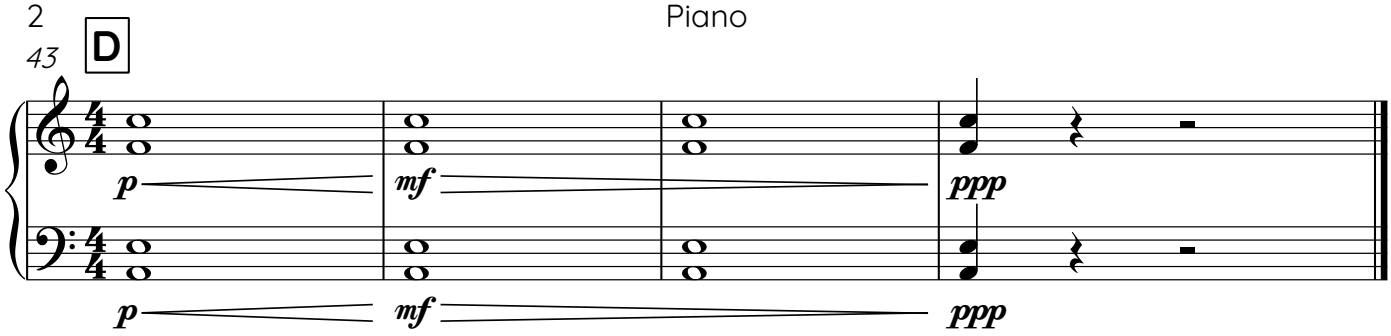
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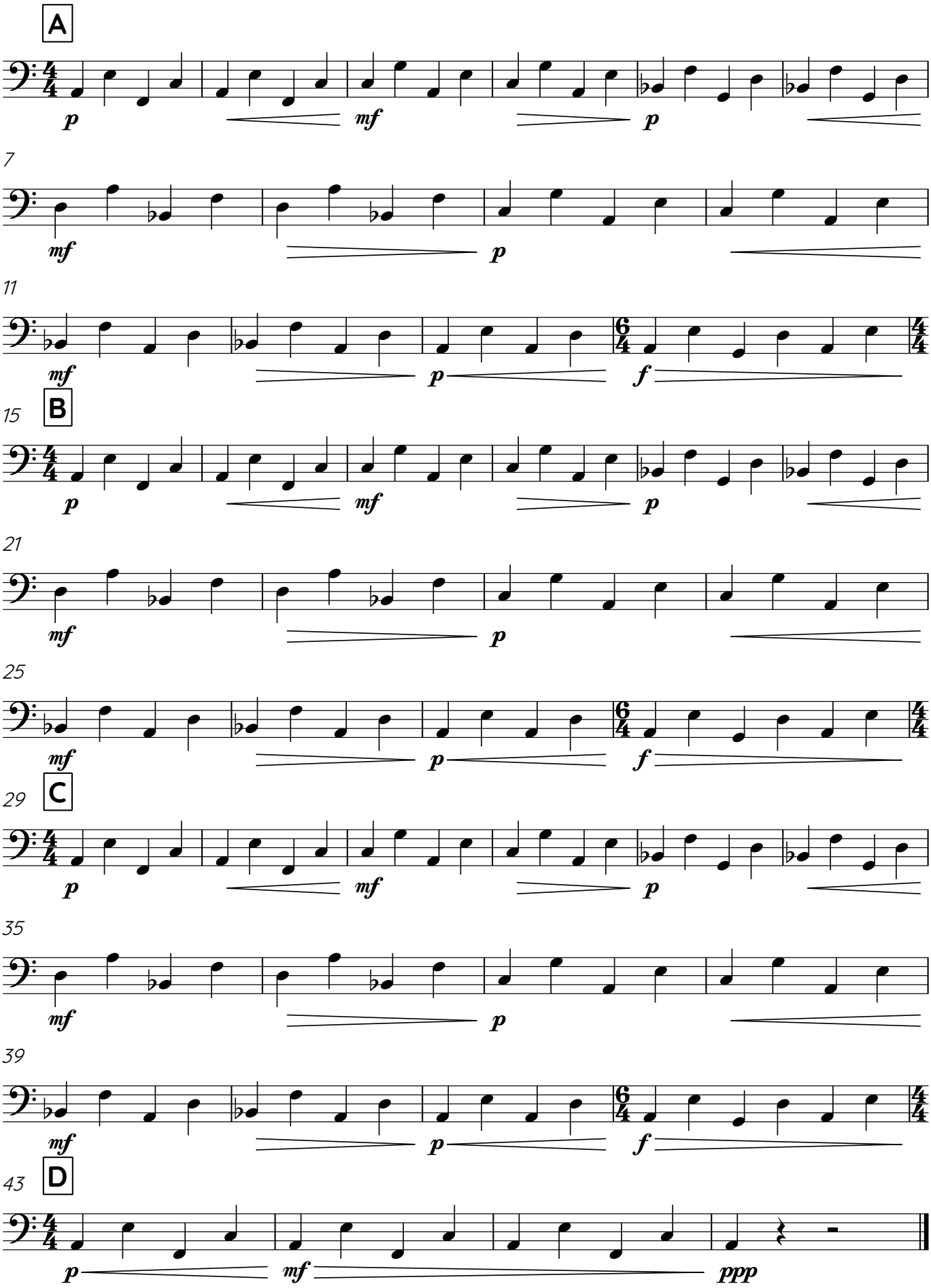
# Waves

Electric Bass

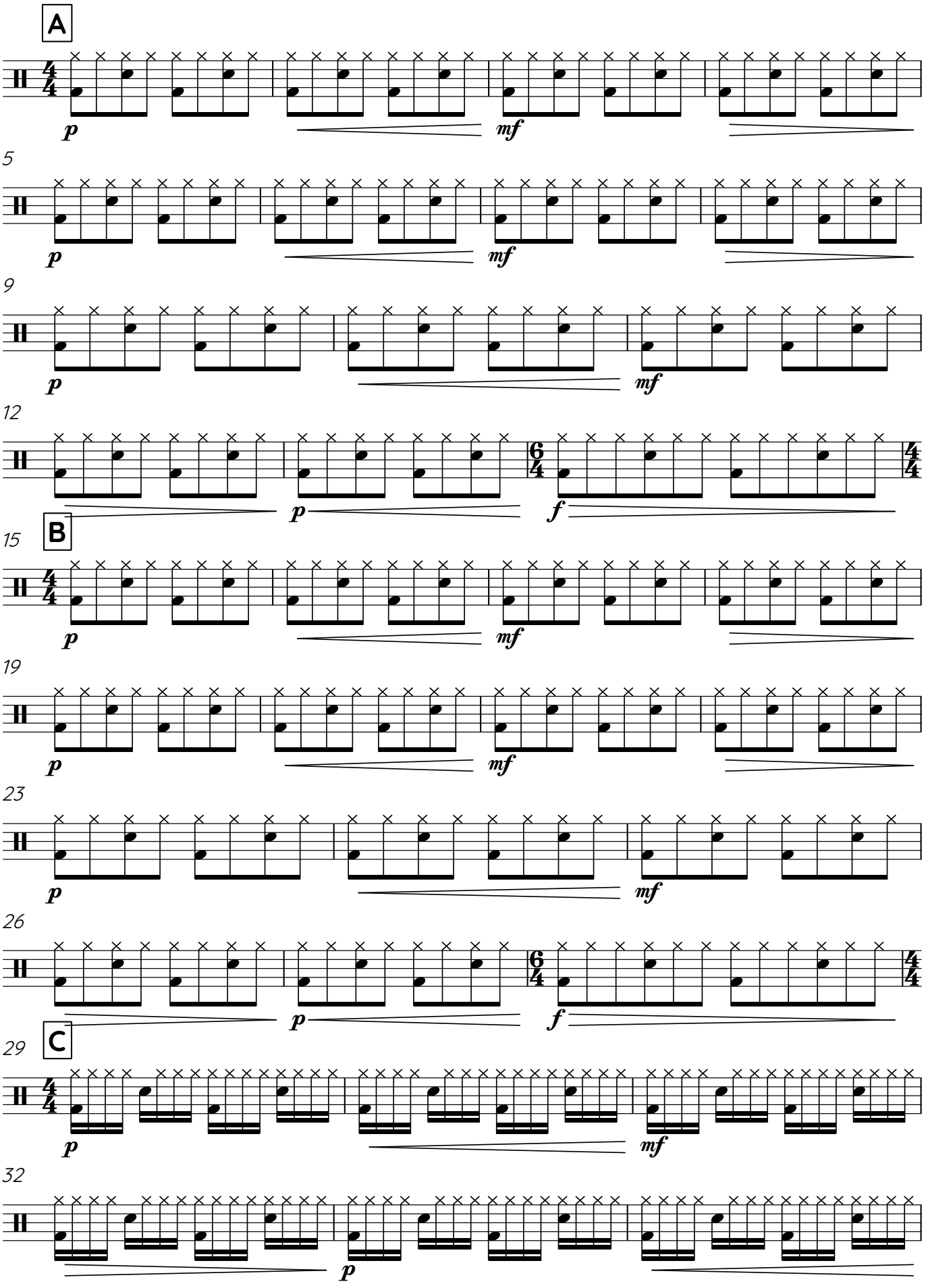
Tom Gierke



# Waves

Drum Set

Tom Gierke

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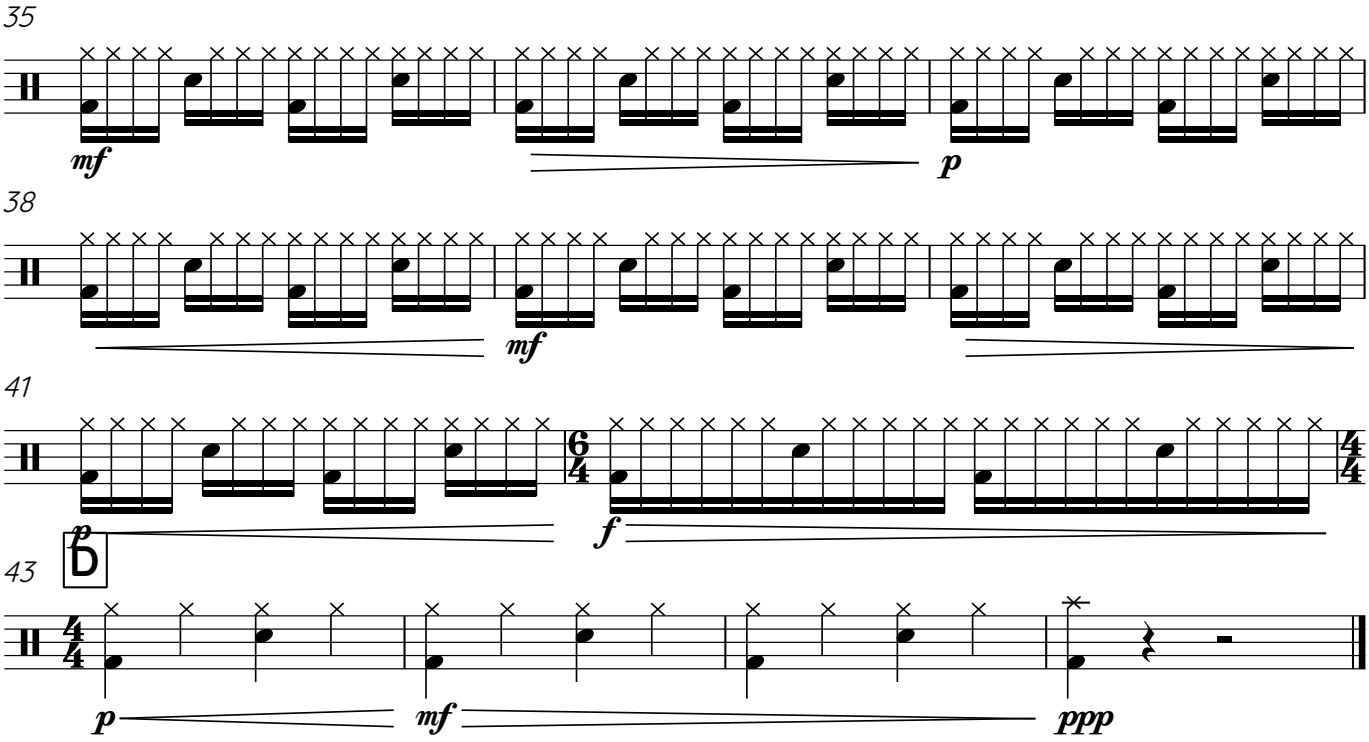
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