
HYLTON MUSIC DESIGN
NEXT LEVEL
PROGRESSIVE MUSICAL TRAINING
FOR YOUR
MARCHING ENSEMBLE
DIRECTOR
FULL ENS. RED.

How to use this curriculum

NEXT LEVEL is built so that you can use the materials in full or in part with your entire marching band, winds, indoor percussion, and even in sectional and solo practice over multiple seasons and years so that your students progress evenly through their development. This set of exercises is not meant to be played in its entirety, daily. Choose the exercises that will most help your students at their current ability level and slowly challenge them over the course of weeks/months to LEVEL UP!

We all know that our ensembles are only as good as our best and worst players; therefore, this program focuses on the individual's needs and how all students can progress at their own pace, thereby reducing bad habits and maximizing improvement within the ensemble setting.

Why Fundamentals?

- It can be difficult to get students to understand the true importance of fundamentals; they just wanna play the cool stuff without investing much time into their technique. Educators have to get students to understand that fundamentals are the very basis of everything they play and getting better on their instrument is directly related to how well they can perform. ***"The better you get, the more fun you'll have!"***
- Buzz Words:
  - ***"Wanna play cool/difficult music? then you've gotta have great fundamentals."***
  - ***"Great performers can do the easy/boring stuff really really well. That's what gives them the skill to do the really difficult things"***

- Don't worry about your number of players or fitting the instrumentation of the packet, just choose what part(s) will be the best fit for your individual students.
- Use exercises to diagnose and fix technique issues
  - Finding places in your repertoire that the students' can't handle? - fit an exercise to the repertoire skill: tonguing: articulation ex., scalar passages: flexibility or dexterity ex., etc.
  - Want to expand your brass players' range? - work on the flexibility exercises.
- Build your daily fundamentals routine
  - choose 1-2 exercises per category (breathing, long tones, flexibility, articulation/style, chorale).
- Use our exercises as jumping off points
  - once an exercise is learned, change it up or add other techniques to further challenge your students. For instance: change the tempo, add dynamics, change the articulation, try it in a different octave, try it in a different scale, key, or mode, etc.
- When learning new exercises
  - go slow! not just the tempo but also the pace of learning... (phrase by phrase).
  - Give students a minute on their own for each exercise (or even each phrase) before diving in.
  - Go phrase by phrase, paying attention to the more difficult key signatures/skills.
  - You might only do 1 phrase of each exercises that day but you can make better progress going slowly, it's about ***Quality not Quantity.***
- Adapt the material to be more specific to your goals.
  - Change the dynamics of exercises to match your repertoire goals for the day.
  - A specific rhythm
  - a specific scale/chord.

The **Winds Materials** contain up to 3 parts for every instrument - All 3 'parts' can be performed by different students simultaneously.

- Level 3 - Full/Challenging Range, most difficult.
- Level 2 - approx. grade 3, more challenging range and difficulty.
- Level 1 - approx. grade 2, most basic, reduced range and difficulty.
    - Even advanced players can go back to level 2 or 3 for a faster tempo or to try a different octave, etc.
- Chords of different quality are included at the end of most exercises, use these to work tuning, balance, etc.
    - have the students pick a note or assign them to play the same one each time (i.e. root, 5th, 3rd).

The **Percussion Materials** are also built to be progressive but with a different layout.

- Have your beginner mallet students start with the glock/bells part on any mallet instrument then progress to the more difficult parts (e.g. marimba 2 mallet, marimba 4 mallet, etc.).
- Each warm can function as a stand alone "lot tune" or as a combined warm-up exercise. You can also use battery and front ensemble warm-ups separately. With the wide range of techniques covered in the packet you can find the specific and essential skills that you are looking for to level up your percussion ensemble.

Best Practices:

- Don't just play through things and expect to automatically get better - actually work on a specific skill or detail and make a noticeable improvement each day/session.
- Take time to hear individual sections or sub sections playing. There's a LOT going on in every exercise, hearing everything while everyone plays simultaneously is not easy.
- It's better to do small chunks or phrases than long exercises: ***Quality not Quantity***
- Have individuals play for the group! Celebrate your students achievement by having them perform for the class and receive praise for their progress.
    - This is a great way to develop confidence amongst all of your performers, no matter their level. Challenge them to play a short excerpt of something for the class, right there on the spot. "it doesn't have to be challenging - just choose something you can perform at a high level and execute!"
    - for less experienced players it might be a simple breathing exercise or single long tone phrase.
- once an exercise has been learned, create variety by adding dynamics, changing articulation patterns, etc. choose techniques that your students need to develop based on the challenges of your repertoire.
- Put exercises "on the move" with - marching in a block, circle drill, across the floors, easy choreography, etc.

Winds Introduction

Wind Instruments - Rules for Always:

- **Stay Relaxed**
    - Relaxation is absolutely crucial at all times. Tension will hinder good tone and efficiency of playing.
    - We often make playing harder on ourselves simply because we are creating tension in our embouchure, tongue, throat, hands, and shoulders.
        - Continually check these areas as you practice, especially on "difficult" passages.
    - There will always be some tension creeping in. Find it and release it again and again and again...

- **Think "Song and Wind" -** As you play or think through musical lines, sing every detail of the music in your head and move your air to motivate the line.
- **Hear (Imagine) the sound that you want to play**
    - Approach this in a very practical manner and take time to analyze how you truly sound (tone, style, volume, etc.). Start by listening to high quality professional performers. Listen often, especially before and during a practice session. Aim to match tone, articulation, style, EVERYTHING! It's not rocket science so don't overthink it, just pretend you ARE the performer you're emulating.... Before you can create beautiful sounds, you must know what they sound like. Your ear is the best tool of musicality that you have, finely tune it!

- **Flow Air**
    - Feel the air as it passes by the lips/embouchure.
    - Practice wind patterns and air/valve frequently.
    - Don't micromanage muscles.
        - When we focus too heavily about the intricacies of how our embouchure and tongue work, we tend to overuse the musculature; keep a check on things and modify when needed, but do it from a sound and/or flow standpoint. For instance: If your tone sounds bright, rather than over analyzing your embouchure, listen to examples of dark tone quality and work on matching what you hear. Changing our aural concept of things can fix many technical issues. Always concentrate on sound and flow while playing.

- **Be Aware**
    - Your awareness as a performer is critical. Keep your mind focused on the present moment so that you notice every detail of the musical line.
    - After reps you should be able to tell us what went wrong and what went right, from timing to quality of sound and more...
    - Long rehearsals are a daily occurrence. Notice when you start to lose mental focus and bring your attention back to the present.
    - Memorize a phrase and play it away from the sheet music. Taking away the visual distraction will help you focus more intently on the sounds you are making.

- **Be Confident!**
    - YOU can be the best brass player in the world! The only thing holding you back is yourself.

        - Confidence is key. Believe in yourself!
    - Things are only difficult if you tell yourself they are…
    - Focus on breathing, relaxation through nervous situations. Don't let your approach to high quality sounds change; trust in the technique and it will save you!

Efficiency is a word you will hear a lot when it comes to our individual playing. We want the maximum amount of tone with the least amount of tension and mouthpiece pressure. This puts the least amount of impact on your chops and body which will improve the quality of everything you do, making those difficult licks much easier!

The **Percussion** packet is designed with multiple uses and possibilities in mind. Each warm up can function as a stand alone “lot tune” or as a combined warm-up exercise for winds and percussion. You can also use battery and front ensemble warm-ups separately. With the wide range of techniques covered in the packet you can find the specific and essential skills that you are looking for to level up your percussion ensemble.

Battery:

If performing with the winds or front ensemble, exercises with the same number of measures can be mixed and matched based on what your ensemble needs. You can also take short excerpts of each exercise to focus in on specifics techniques and isolate rhythms to enhance timing.

Level 1: All sections play snare part in unison for total understanding of exercises.
Level 2: Tenors/Bass Line play arounds and split parts to develop instrument specific skills.
Level 3: Incorporate various dynamics (i.e. soft playing, crescendo and decrescendo)

Front Ensemble:

The front ensemble portion covers two and four mallet playing, auxiliary, timpani, drum set and electronics. There are several options depending on the skill level and size of your group.

Two Mallets

It is important to note that the the levels are not ranking the instruments in order of difficulty but are based on the difficulty of the notes in the exercise. Vibraphone presents many new challenges to the students with the incorporation of the pedal. The exercises written for vibraphone are designed for enhancement that skill. However as your players are leveling up they can play the marimba exercises on vibraphone for more of a challenge.

Level 1: Glockenspiel (beginner level)
Level 2: Vibraphone (intermediate)
Level 3: Marimba (advanced)

Four Mallets

The Marimba and Vibraphone parts for the exercises are intended to develop instrument specific skills. Progressing through the packet will cover all of the necessary building blocks for four mallet technique.

Rack Players

While you can go through the progression of levels with your players, instrument selection should be taken into account for part selections. No need to bring out the entire percussion cabinet just for warm-ups. Feel free to use the instruments you have and play the rhythms written in the exercises.

Level 1 BD/Tamtam (novice)
Level 2 Rack 3 (beginner)
Level 3 Rack 2 (intermediate)
Level 4 Rack 1 (Advanced)

Drumset

The packet is set up to help establish better timing and coordination for your drum set player. Main focus is keeping a steady beat!

Level 1 (beginner) Keep the groove! Simplify them if needed.
Level 2 (intermediate) As written
Level 3 (Advanced) Embellish grooves and improvise fills.

Electronics:

The fastest developing section in the modern front ensemble. These exercises are to serve as a way make the electronics an everyday addition to the ensemble.

Synths

Level 1: Sampler (novice) Intended for players with minimal melodic note reading skills. Develops timing and feel for performing various samples they may encounter during a show. There are three types of samples Short-S Riser-R and Boom-B.

Level 2: Synth 1 (beginner) Focuses on bass clef and parts similar those supporting low end in performance. Can play single notes instead of octaves to start with.

Level 3: Synth 1 w/Samples (intermediate) Introduces multi-tasking, can begin by only playing risers and booms to simulate moments they may perform during the show.

Level 4 Synth 2 RH Only (intermediate/advanced) begins to develop basic piano skills that are similar to what they may perform during the show.

Level 5 Synth 2 Both Hands (advanced)

Level 6 Synth 2 RH Hand Marimba (super advanced) In case you have the synth player who also a skilled pianist that needs a little more challenge.

Samples

We have included three sets of samples. Each sample set includes (4) Short (4) Risers and (4) Booms Feel free to mix and match the samples from each sound family. Allow the students to select the samples for each exercise. The main goal using samples as part of the warm-up is to make the performers more aware of their responsibilities during the show. It will also give a chance to work the gremlins out of the electronic setup prior to the performance!

Best Practices:

- Don't just play through things and expect to automatically get better - actually work on a specific skill or detail and make a noticeable improvement each day/session.

- Take time to hear individual sections or sub sections playing. There's a LOT going on in every exercise, hearing everything while everyone plays simultaneously is not easy.
- It's better to do small chunks or phrases than long exercises: ***Quality not Quantity***
- Have individuals play for the group! Celebrate your students achievement by having them perform for the class and receive praise for their progress.
    - This is a great way to develop confidence amongst all of your performers, no matter their level. Challenge them to play a short excerpt of something for the class, right there on the spot. "it doesn't have to be challenging - just choose something you can perform at a high level and execute!"
    - for less experienced players it might be a simple breathing exercise or single long tone phrase.
- once an exercise has been learned, create variety by adding dynamics, changing articulation patterns, etc. choose techniques that your students need to develop based on the challenges of your repertoire.
- Put exercises "on the move" with - marching in a block, circle drill, across the floors, easy choreography, etc.

Percussion Section Essentials

Setup

Even before playing a single note set the foundation with a consistent warm up position. Students should take pride in looking a like a pro even before they strike the downbeat. Attention to these details prior to playing will in turn help the students pay more attention to the details of playing.

Typical Battery Setup (left to right) Tenors - Snares - Bass Drums
*Cymbals can either go next to tenors or behind the snares

Try to avoid having all three sections in one straight line. Tenors and Bass drums should be at an angle similar to a concert arc but with the sections in a straight line. Use similar spacing between each player, this will help replicate the spacing they will use while marching. - *Think stick and a fist between each player.*

It is important to keep the focus toward the center of the warm up set. Imagine either an instructor or a conductor being in middle and eye should be directed towards that position. This will help the battery with watching the drum major on the field or creating a better posture for performance during the show. Reminding them to keep heads up will also raise their awareness level for listening, matching player to player and assisting with visual demands on the field.

Metronome

It is highly recommended that the battery works on the warm ups with a metronome. Many of the exercises are written to help strengthen rhythmic timing. The students ability to play rhythms with good timing will improve overall tempo control from the ensemble as well as help clean up any “dirty” moments they may have in the show music. The stronger the entire group is playing in time the more success you will have developing a consistent music ensemble.

For front ensemble I recommend keeping the metronome behind the group so they train their ears to listen back while on the field.

Using the metronome creatively

Once the battery is solid playing with the regular quarter or big beat metronome play around with the subdivision the met. i.e. instead of quarters set it to half notes (or even whole notes!) to help the students achieve the next the level of rhythmic understanding. The alterations will keep the students from being completely reliant on the metronome to keep time for them.

If battery is struggling with certain rhythms in an exercise you can also put more subdivisions through the met (8ths, 16ths, triplets). I would also advise slowing the exercise down so the players can have a better understanding of how individual rhythms line up with the rhythmic subdivisions.

Marking Time

Battery members should mark time while playing warm ups. This allows for deeper connection between feet and hands as they are working through the basics. Doing so should help with better foot timing while marching as well as better rhythmic timing overall.

How to Practice

It's not WHAT you do as much as HOW you do it. Don't just choose to practice the most difficult exercises, practice the easy ones and make them amazing. Be mindful about how you sound, take time to stop and think both before and after you play a phrase.

Reinforcing great quality and making solid progress on things is much more important than long hours of unfocused practice. Practicing should not be a grueling thing that you hate doing and it should not be a 'once in a while' occurrence. Find a way to love it and incorporate it into your daily routine. Try not to practice for more than 45mins-1hr at a time so that your mind and chops stay "fresh." You can accomplish something in as little as 5 minutes if you are focused and specific.

Practice the SKILLS you need! The exercises are just a means to get there. Don't just practice the exercises because you need to learn them. Focus on the skills they serve, Tone, Flexibility, Style, Range, Articulation, etc. Develop your skills through experimentation.

Have a goal for your practice session. Be focused and specific with what you do and how you do it. For instance:

> ***"I have 10 mins to practice and i've already warmed up. I'll do a 5 minute rewarm (hit the 5 step warmup process) and then I'll spend about 5 minutes working on the "flex 2" exercise to get the accents to pop out easier."***

Get in a good warmup everyday! 5-30 mins of fundamentals before you practice repertoire - this can even happen at the beginning of class before rehearsal begins. Technique maintenance (exercises) and repertoire (show music) should be covered and improved upon every day, even if it's only 5-10 mins.

Ways to practice:

- Don't just Play it - Sing it, put it on a pad, rhythm only, pitches only, etc.
- Loop it:
    1. pick a small chunk (as few as 2 notes, as many as 2 measures).
    2. start a met or steady tempo.
    3. play the passage with a few beats of rest in between (I.e play 4 beats, rest 4 beats).
    4. repeat again and again (5 to 50 times) focusing on fine tuning your playing.
- The Practice Cycle
    - identify the problem/goal.
        - Example: "I keep missing the Bb on beat 3 in measure 37."
    - Isolate and solve the issue at a manageable tempo.
        - Pick the smallest chunk of material that you need to fix the issue (could be as little as 1 or 2 notes, as much as a few measures).
        - Example: "I'll play just measure 37 at a much slower tempo, making sure I'll do it correctly each time OR go even slower"
        - for more in depth issues you may need to experiment with different techniques.
            - for example, "I can't get to the high note" isolate just that note, work your way up to it, make it feel comfortable, etc.
    - Once the problem is solved, repeat it several times at least 5 or 10 or 1,000,000 times...

        - If you do this repetition work without first fixing the issue, you're simply practicing the wrong way and that will start to solidify the problem.
        - Put the segment back into context
            - Example: "I'm going to play the whole phrase now and make sure I still get the Bb in measure 37"

Suggested Practice Materials

- Binder with sheet protectors.
    - NEXT LEVEL sheet music
    - Show Repertoire
    - Mechanical Pencils
- Tonal Energy App for iOS or Android (http://tonalenergy.com/ $3.99)
    - Includes metronome.
    - Used for practicing with drones.
    - Used to work on tuning and intonation in the practice room.
    - For examining **just** vs. **equal** temperament.
- Phone/tablet/laptop to record audio/video of yourself.

Use this **Warmup Process** every single time you approach the instrument - even if you only have 5 mins total or you have already played that day, hit every category properly:

1. **Relaxation/Breathing** (1-10 mins)
    - Get your mind and body right. Stretch/Relax the body.
    - Use assorted Breathing exercises.

2. **Buzzing/Establish Vibration** (1-5 mins)
    - Buzz the mouthpiece/reed or leadpipe/barrel/head joint
        - Get the vibration to happen as easily as possible. Efficiency is key!
    - The AIR tells the lips what to do - forget about how the chops feel and just flow good air.
    - Establish the flow/pitch then do some 'sirens' (expanding glissandos up and down)
    - **Make sure the posture/breathing is still great quality!**

3. **Long tones** (1-10 mins)
    - Can be written exercises or just start random notes (start in a comfortable range).
    - Great Tone is the focus!
    - Get a great **start - middle - end** of every note.
    - Make sure the posture/breathing is still great quality!

4. **Flexibility** (1-10 mins)
    - Taking the great tone you've already established and moving it around the instrument. Gradually work your way up and down from a comfortable range with slurs, scales, etc.
    - Brass lip slurs/WW's scales and octave key leaps.
    - Make sure the Breathing, posture, and tone should are still great quality!

5. **Style/Articulation** (1-10 mins)
    - Play scale(s) or a short phrase of music with different articulations.
        - staccato, accented, legato, etc.
    - Breathing, posture, and tone should still be great quality!

Practice Cycle

1. **Find the problem**
2. **Fix it**
3. **Rep it**
4. **put it back into context**

- Don't just play the same thing the same way and expect a difference. Make a specific change.
- Don't rep bad playing before you've fixed a problem - you'd just be reinforcing bad habits.
- When you're trying to fix a problem - Experiment with different ways of doing it,
- Don't be afraid to fail - that's how we learn!
- Practice singing, wind patterns (no instrument), air and valve, buzzing/leadpipe, etc. before you play it.
- Record yourself and listen back. You might hate it at first - like hearing your own voice over the phone but get to a level where you enjoy hearing yourself!

Learning New Music/exercises

You'll be expected to learn new repertoire on you own to have it ready for camps and rehearsals. Learn new music with the best possible quality so that bad habits are minimized.

- Jumping right into a new exercise or piece of music that is above your level can spur bad habits to creep in (Tension, bad airflow, over articulation, etc.). Simplify your learning process by reducing the difficulty:
    - Listen to it first.
    - Sing it.
    - Air and Valve it.
    - Play it like a Chorale - slowly, lyrically, and connected at a steady tempo.
    - Play it in a comfortable register (lead parts can be learned down an octave).
    - Start with the more lyrical or less demanding sections and work your way into the more technical ones.
- Memorization of exercises will truly help your students progress. Internalizing any type of material, from exercises to repertoire, allows the students to stop looking at the page and concentrate more on the sounds they are hearing and sensations the body is experiencing.
    - many exercises have the same sequence of going down a minor third and back up so once they learn/memorize the 1st half, they already know the 2nd half.

Wind Pattern/Air and Valve

Use this technique every single day! It's the absolute best way to practice and will payoff amazingly when it's done correctly.

- Do everything you do while playing except vibrating the lips.
    - Correct posture, relaxation, airflow, fingers, articulation, etc.
- "Wind pattern" - is without the horn...

    - Use the hand/skin as a monitor.
- “Air and Valve” - is with the horn...
    - listen to the sound of the air as it passes through the horn.
- Use it to practice short and long phrases, long tones, flexibility, style, double tonguing, EVERYTHING!
- It lets the chops rest but you get another rep in...

Singing

Make singing part of your daily practice. You don’t need to have the best operatic voice, it’s all about internalizing the music. Pay attention to every detail from the pitch and volume to the style and articulation - do everything as you want it to sound on the horn.“If you can sing it, you can play it!

Use of Drones for practice

The use of pitch drones while playing long tones, flexibility, and other exercises can be very helpful in locking in tone and pitch. We will incorporate this into our sectionals and full ensemble warmups.

1. Get the Tonal Energy app out and hook it into some good speakers (try not to use headphones - you need to hear the drone and your tone equally).
2. Set it on the root of your exercise (I.e. for F remington use F, For Bb major scale use Bb, etc.)
3. Play along with the drone and get pitch and tone to lock in at all times.

Common Problems

- 90% of the time it’s an Air problem!!!
    - Air is the first thing to check and fix when having a playing problem.
    - Use air/valve and wind patterns (with the hand monitor) regularly. Pay detailed attention to how the flow of air is working, especially in problematic phrases in order to fix technical problems.
    - Do 3-5 ‘wind’ reps before playing a phrase. This will help you cultivate good flow and relaxation. Always hear the music in your head as you do it and make sure the flow of air is just right for what you want to happen musically.

- We tend to get more tense when we perceive a passage as ‘difficult.’ Notice yourself get tense and relieve the tension - go back to playing the difficult parts air and valve or slow tempo and keep the tension out, then patiently speed it back up or put it back into context.
    - Tension will manifest in the shoulders, hands, neck, etc. and also in the tongue, keep the tongue light and relaxed at ALL times!

- Don’t make the same mistake the same way over and over. Try something different. Don’t assume that you aren’t good enough to master everything or that it will take months for you to improve. The technique of playing a brass instrument is something anyone in good health can master. Approach it as if you’ve just gotta figure it out, not do the same thing for months on end... Figure out how to play with an amazing tone, Figure out how to slur easily, It’s all just coordination, truly, ANYONE can do it with some experimentation! just **FIGURE IT OUT**!

- When you're having trouble with a technique in music (i.e. "the slur in measure 7 is not coming out clearly). Strip away the other things around it to simplify. Take away the style, play with a comfortable dynamic, go slower, etc. Simplify all else in order to just work on that one technique. Once you master the thing begin to add the other parts of the music back in, one by one.

Best Practices (for practicing)

- Before and during your practice session, listen to recordings of great players in order to input their sound into your ears and then reproduce it.
- Before you do an exercise, practice the skill that it addresses. For instance, before doing your flexibility, practice your slurs out of time to get great quality, then put it in time on the exercise.
- Choose a good venue where you can properly hear yourself and perform all tasks (including visual) effectively.
- Hit the 5 fundamentals categories in every practice session - it can be done in as little as 5 mins.
- NEVER let your breathing suffer. If you encounter a problem in a phrase the first thing to assess is if your posture and breathing is correct.
- Do wind pattern/air and valve reps often!
    - 1-3 air and valve reps before each time you play a phrase or lick.
- When trying to fix a problem, use experimentation, do it too loud, too soft, too much air, not enough air, lots of tongue arch, not enough arch, etc. This is how we can fine tune our playing and solve technical problems.
    - For instance: "*I'm having trouble slurring from e to g (concert d to f). It just won't come out without tonguing it.* - Well, we know that a higher note needs faster air and that the back of the tongue needs to arch to make the air go faster - so practice wind patterns on e to g arching the tongue too much, then play it... If that doesn't work try a large volume of air... etc. - **Experiment with too much, then not enough then, fine tune it...**
- When "repping" a lick or phrase try it in a "loop."
    - choose a steady tempo and repeat the phrase with 4 or more beats of rest in between.
    - This will help you really focus on fine tuning the phrase.
    - It's only to be done after a phrase has be "fixed." - don't rep bad playing.

Exercises

Breathing

If you play a wind instrument... air is your fuel for sound. Tank up fully and often. If you play percussion, calm breathing is very important while playing.

Prep for exercises (choose 1-2 from each category)**:**

- Quick Stretch:
  - start with a 2-5 min stretch of the upper body, arms, neck, shoulders, etc.
- Relaxation:
  - “Tension release” - 3...2...1... Squeeze every muscle in your body from your toes to your eyelids while sucking in a tense breath (for approx 10 secs). Then relax every muscle in your body with a calm sigh. Mentally scan your body for any tension and let it go.
  - “big sigh” - just a simple big breath in and calming sigh out, arms up on the inhale, down on the exhale. This is great to check tension at anytime, especially after long exercises or in the middle of rehearsal.
- Expansion (exercises that help expand our usable lung capacity).
  - “Breathe/hold/stretch” - take a full breath in and hold it, keep taking tiny sips as you stretch your upper body for approx. 5-10 seconds. Then big sigh out.
  - “In sip sip, Out push push” - at a slower tempo (72-96bpm) in quarter notes: 1. Full inhale 2. sip 3. sip - 1. full exhale 2. push out 3. push out. Make sure then inhale/exhale is as full as possible then work hard on the sip and push for expansion.
- Flow - these 3 exercises help to visualize the flow of air and can also be used to teach articulation quality.
  - “paper airplane” - take a full breath then flow air slowly and smoothly like gliding a paper airplane. Not hard or the airplane will crash, smooth and steady exhale until you’re comfortably empty. Use the arm on the inhale and exhale just like you’re throwing the plane.
  - “dart” - take a full breath and flow one quick staccato note exhale. Quick like a dart, stay relaxed, let the abs work to motivate the air. Use the arm on the inhale and exhale just like you’re throwing the dart.
  - “bow and arrow” - for big dynamics... take a full breath then release the full amount of air quickly like the arrow. Use the arms on the inhale and exhale just like you’re drawing and releasing the bow.
- Other Ideas/Options
  - Show Segments - Choose a short (:10-30 sec) excerpt from your show (probably full ensemble moment) and use it on air/valve or wind pattern on hand.

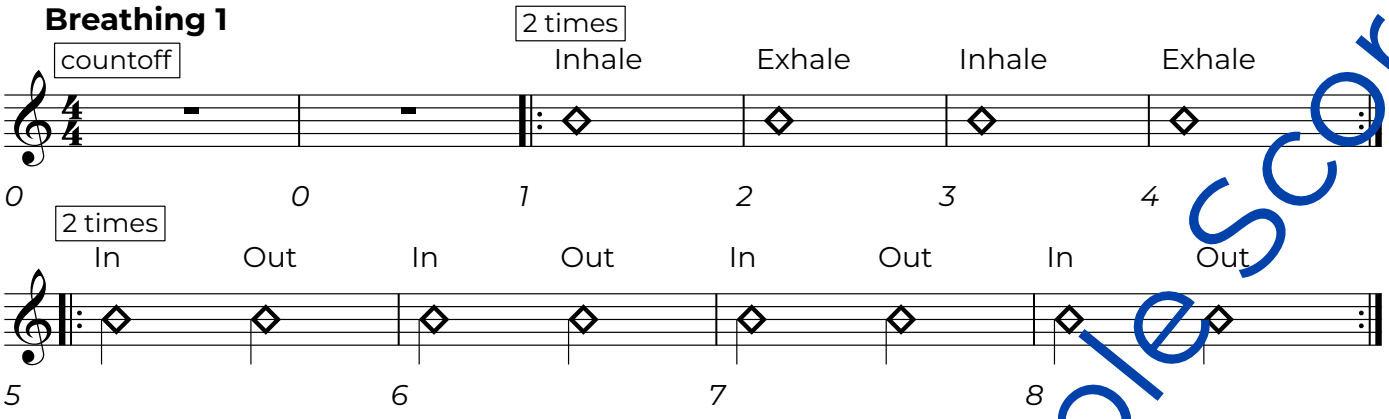
Breathing Rules for Always:

- Air is always moving (never hold your breath) - no stagnation.
- Air uses momentum from in to out - there should be a quick turn around from in to out with no hesitation or delay.
- Use a full 1 or 2 count breath at all times - (faster tempi need 2 counts, slower tempi need 1 count). Sometimes this will be altered as needed in show repertoire.
- Even if you only have time for 3 good breaths at the beginning of your warmup/practice, DO IT!

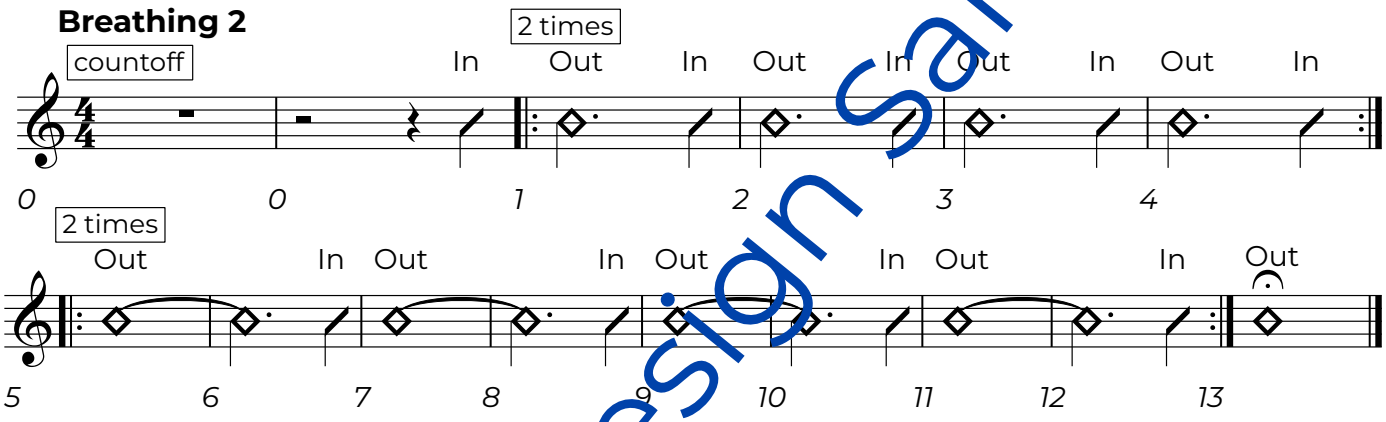
Focus points:

- Keep the entire body as relaxed as possible.
- Posture should be tall and open.
- Open oral shape, think AH or OH.
- Very little sound on inhale and exhale, not even a whispered “haaa.” just the sound of the air passing the lips.
- “Breathe to expand, don’t Expand to breathe” - Meaning, don’t move your shoulders or belly on purpose, just focus on the breath and the body will work properly.
- “Quick Turnaround of Air” - don’t slow or stop the air between inhale/exhale.
- “Breathe Low” - like a pitcher filling a glass - from the bottom to the top.

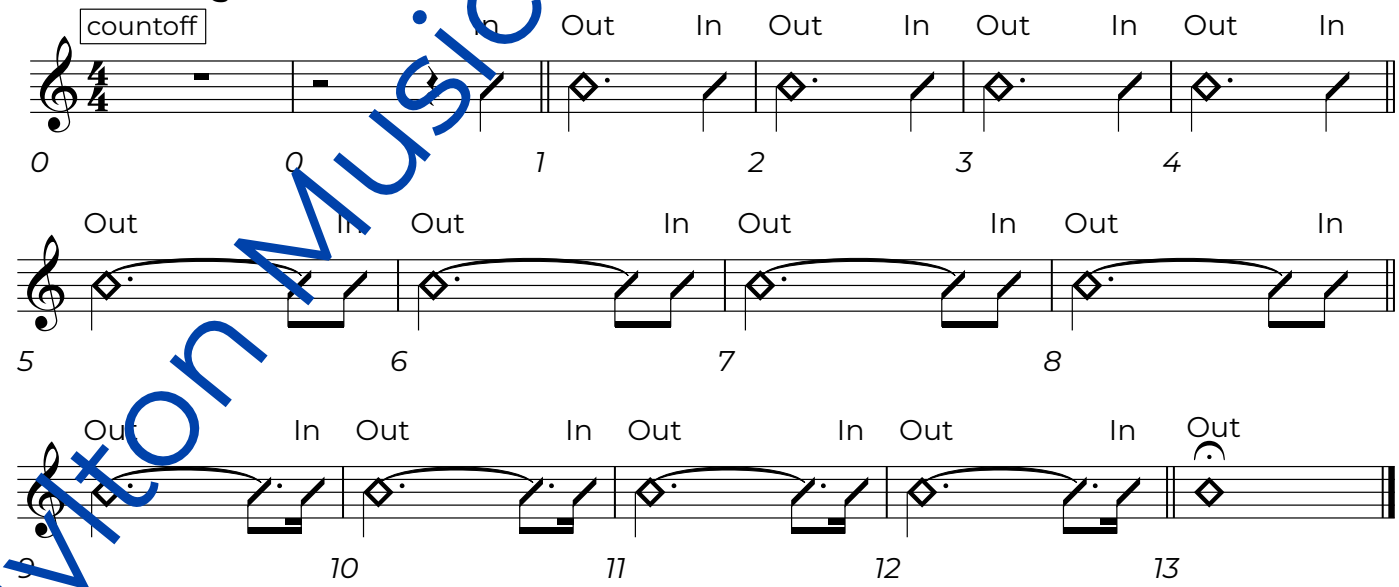
Breathing 1



Breathing 2



Breathing 3



Prep for Long tones:

Singing

Singing can be used to pinpoint a variety of musical factors including tone, pitch, shaping, dynamics, and style. Use an open oral syllable (I.e. “dahhh”) and experiment singing with different syllables for different playing techniques.

- Tone production - feel free vibration in the abdomen/sternum and face/forehead.
- Matching intonation and pitch.
- You should be able to sing all exercises and repertoire with correct pitch, timing, etc.
- **“If you can sing it, you can play it”**

Embouchure

The Wind player’s embouchure tends to be too much of a concern for many students and players. Yes, it is an important part of playing the instrument but we usually focus on it and micromanage it too much, resulting in improper air flow and tension in the body. Set it and forget it. Just think ***“song and wind.”***

The lips/reed/air column should vibrate just like the vocal cords do when you sing. Put the lips together in the correct shape and blow to get the result you want. Don’t press or force them together, just let them touch; ***“Firm Corners, Relaxed Center.”*** The mouthpiece and your instrument will do a lot of the work for you if your air is correct.

It only takes 3 days of playing 1 hour a day for the embouchure to be “in shape.” Also, by the age of 5, children already possess the amount of lip compression to play high Bb. It doesn’t take muscle, just coordination!

- Think firm (not tight) corners and a relaxed center/aperture.
- The corners simply keep the “setup” of the lips in place but should not squeeze…
- The air and the embouchure must be “balanced” to play with best sound and efficiency. We often use unwanted tension in the lips which deadens the tone and make playing feel more difficult - get the center of the lips to relax.
- The corners/lips should not be micromanaged. - don’t squeeze to go higher and relax to go lower, just keep them the same and change the air.
- Mouthpiece Pressure should be minimal at all times, just enough to create a seal for the air.
    - Sometimes as our corners get tired during long rehearsals we tend to use more pressure to compensate, fight against this by keeping pressure light.
    - Marching brass players tend to use too much pressure when moving and playing in order to stabilize pitch. Don’t fall into this bad habit. Stabilize the upper body in order to get feet out of the sound.
- The jaw and face should have very minimal movement while playing. Be on the lookout for a “chewing” motion when articulating or slurring. Also, when moving from the low to the upper register, the teeth should not open and close. This “pivot” of the embouchure happens on instruments like the French horn when covering 4 octaves of range but should not be in effect for our purposes.

- The teeth do NOT need to to be very far open. This is a common misconception amongst band directors. Putting 2 fingers between your teeth to 'open' up your sound is absolutely incorrect. It puts the embouchure out of position.
    - For high brass instruments the teeth should be approx. 3 millimeters open (think regular sized drinking straw).
    - For low brass instruments the teeth should be approx. 5 millimeters open (think big gulp straw - shout out to Mark Richardson the big gulp King!).

Buzzing/Vibration

Establishing vibration on your mouthpiece is the first step to playing with great tone quality and efficiency. It must be done with proper breathing and airflow yet we generally tend to under play and squeeze the lips tighter to get the buzz out. Getting vibration in the lips is as easy as doing a "flappy" (blowing through the lips to make them shake and relax) - playing the horn should essentially feel the same as this. The lips are vibrating freely without being tight and the air is flowing freely out of the body.

On the **Mouthpiece**:

1. Begin just by blowing air with no tonguing, utilizing a great breath, then let the lips come together and begin to vibrate. Any pitch that comes out is fine.
    - Get a resonant, full buzz, not nasally or tight.
2. Now practice your starts and stops with half notes or whole notes still no tonguing.
    - steady tempo, great breath and great tone on the start, great follow through, and clean release.
3. The next step is to match pitch.
    - choose a note between a low Bb and concert F and use a drone.
    - get the note to start right on the pitch with a great breath and without tightness in the aperture.
4. Once you've got that, move on to playing some sirens or even a short melody while keeping the same quality.

On the **Leadpipe** ("Foghorn") - take your main tuning slide out:

1. Begin just by blowing air, utilizing a great breath, then let the lips come together and begin to vibrate. Depending on your instrument, a concert D or Eb should stabilize.
    - Get a resonant, full buzz, not nasally or tight.
2. Now practice your starts and stops with half notes or whole notes.
    - steady tempo, great breath and great tone on the start, great follow through, and clean release.
3. On the lead pipe you'll only have a few notes that 'center' but you can still practice glissandos up to the high partial and down to the pedal range.

Buzzing Rules for Always:

- Everyday, practice starting with no tongue, it gets the air to start the vibration. Connect breath to vibration - quick turnaround with no delay or tension. Add the tongue back in when playing exercises.
    - The hesitation can create “stagnant” air and tension in the body.
- The breath must still be great or your foundation will crumble…
- The lips should always feel as loose as a “flappy.”

FAQ/troubleshooting:

- “*My buzz won’t start on time*” - Relax the face and get the air to go farther away sooner. Blow to the resonating point to create the “standing wave” - don’t blow to the lips but through the horn, think far away but not loud…
- “*My lips feel tight when I buzz*” - Your lips are probably too tight Genius! Relax and do some flappys, start the buzzing over with lower pitches and get the air to do the work. Make the buzz feel like the flappys.
- “*I can’t go very high or low on sirens*” - Make sure you aren't getting tighter or looser as you change pitch. try more airflow and encourage the back of the tongue to ascend and descend with you.

Long Tones

Tone is probably the most important aspect of our development. It absolutely essential in our activity that we demonstrate great quality of tone at all dynamic levels, registers, and in all styles of playing. Our goal is to have every single player in each section exactly match each other in tone. Through modeling, listening to recordings, and singing we will develop the proper character of tone within our sections and the full ensemble.

As an individual you MUST listen to high quality recordings of professional players on your instrument in order to input those sounds into your ear. This is the best possible way of helping to achieve great tone quality. Then, you simply have to dedicate some time to achieving it. Tone development should not take decades to master, it just takes a musical individual who has the sound in their ear and experiments to achieve it.

Working on tone:

1. Establish the vibration.
    - Start out by just blowing air through the horn with a great breath.
        - Quick turn around of air - no hesitation.
    - Let the lips come together and play a comfortable note.
2. Find the center of pitch.
    - slowly move the pitch slightly up and down to find the center - stop thinking about your lips and just “sing through it”.
        - The center is the most resonant part of the note and should sound open (I.e. Ahhh).
        - We often play above the center - let the lips relax and the pitch fall into the center. You may need to motivate the air to lock it in (not loud).
        - You should hear the tone Open (Ahhh) and close (Errr) as you move the pitch.
3. Lock in the center of pitch by blowing the right quality of air and don’t let the lips take over by engaging.
4. Put it in to use in a long tone exercise.

Long Tones Rules for Always:

- Tone should be the same from **Start-middle-End** of each note.
    - Air flow steady throughout.
- All notes should sound with the same tone.
    - don’t let the tone go bad when making the leap to a different note.
- Full breath on every phrase.

Best Practices:

- It’s great to give your wind players a few mins on their own to establish a good sound before starting the exercise.
- Brass can do a rep of long tones buzzing on the mouthpiece to bridge the gap between breathing and long tones. This gives directors a moment to hear just WW’s.

- Make sure you are always taking a great breath and turning the air around quickly so that the tongue can stay relaxed and you'll get lots of vibration in the lips.
- If the tone is changing on certain notes (check 12/123 combo) make sure the oral shape is correct/ consistent.
- On note changes, don't think up or down, think forward.

Long Tones #1

countoff

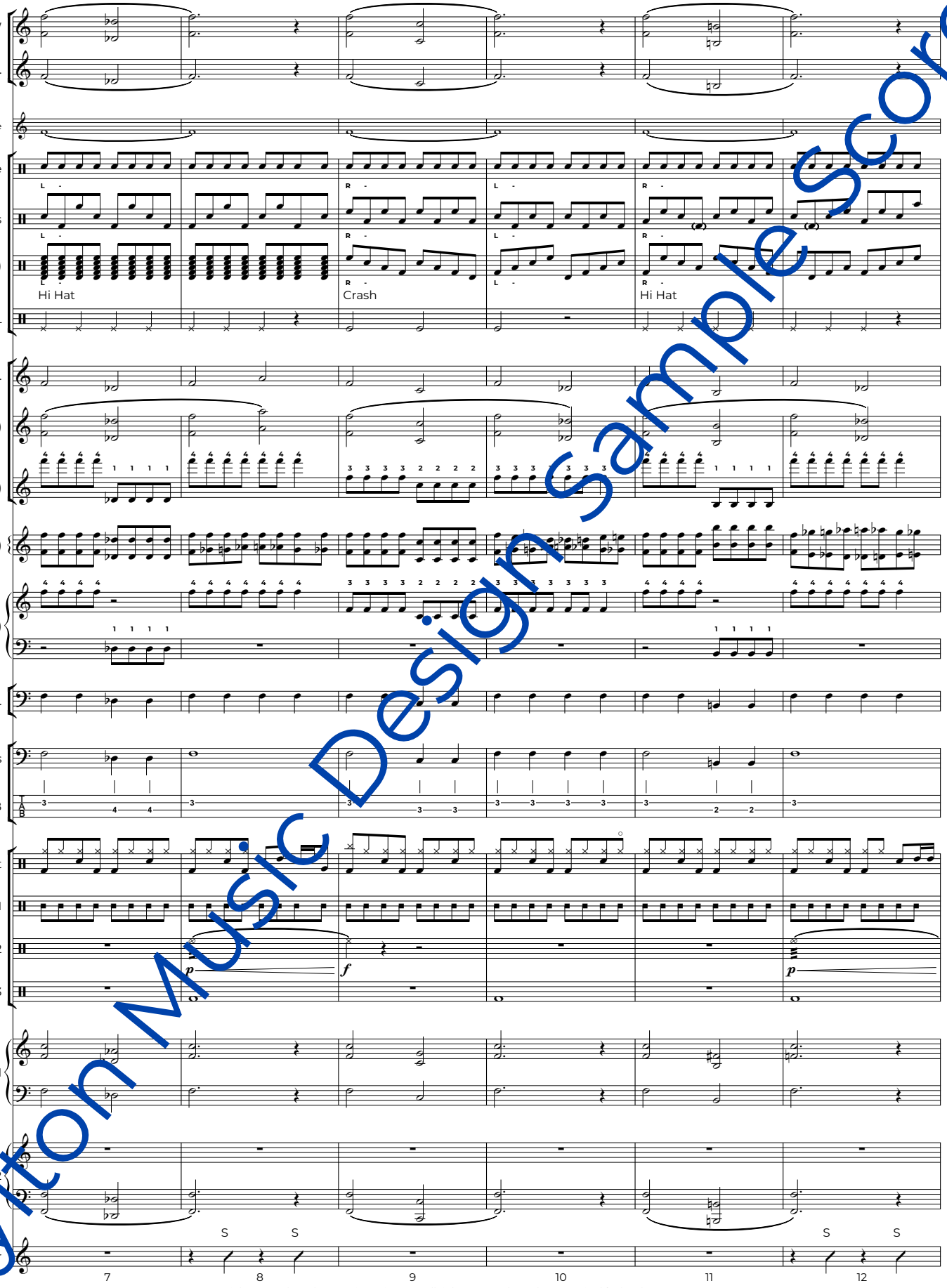
WW
Brass
Drone
SnareLine
TenorLine
BassLine (5)
Cymbal Line
Glockenspiel
Vibes (2 mall.)
Vibes (4 mall.)
Mar. (2 mall.)
Mar. (4 mall.)
Timpani
Bass Guitar
Bass TAB
Drumset
Rack 1
Rack 2
Rack 3
Synth. 1
Synth. 2
Sampler

8-8-16
Crash
Hi Hat
Crash
Single Independent Strokes
Shaker
Concert BD
RH
LH

S = Short
R = Riser
B = Boom

0 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

NEXT LEVEL - Full Ens. Reduced Score (in C)



Long Tones #2

countoff

WW

Br.

Drone

Drone

Snare

Accent Tap

Tenors

Accent Tap

Bass (5)

Accent Tap

Cym.L

Hi Hat Sizzle Hi Hat Sizzle Hi Hat

mf

Glock.

Vib. (2 mall.)

Vib. (4 mall.)

Mar. (2 mall.)

Mar. (4 mall.)

Timp.

Bass

Bass TAB

Dr.Set

Rack 1

mf

Sus or China

Rack 2

Concert BD

mf

Rack 3

mp *mp*

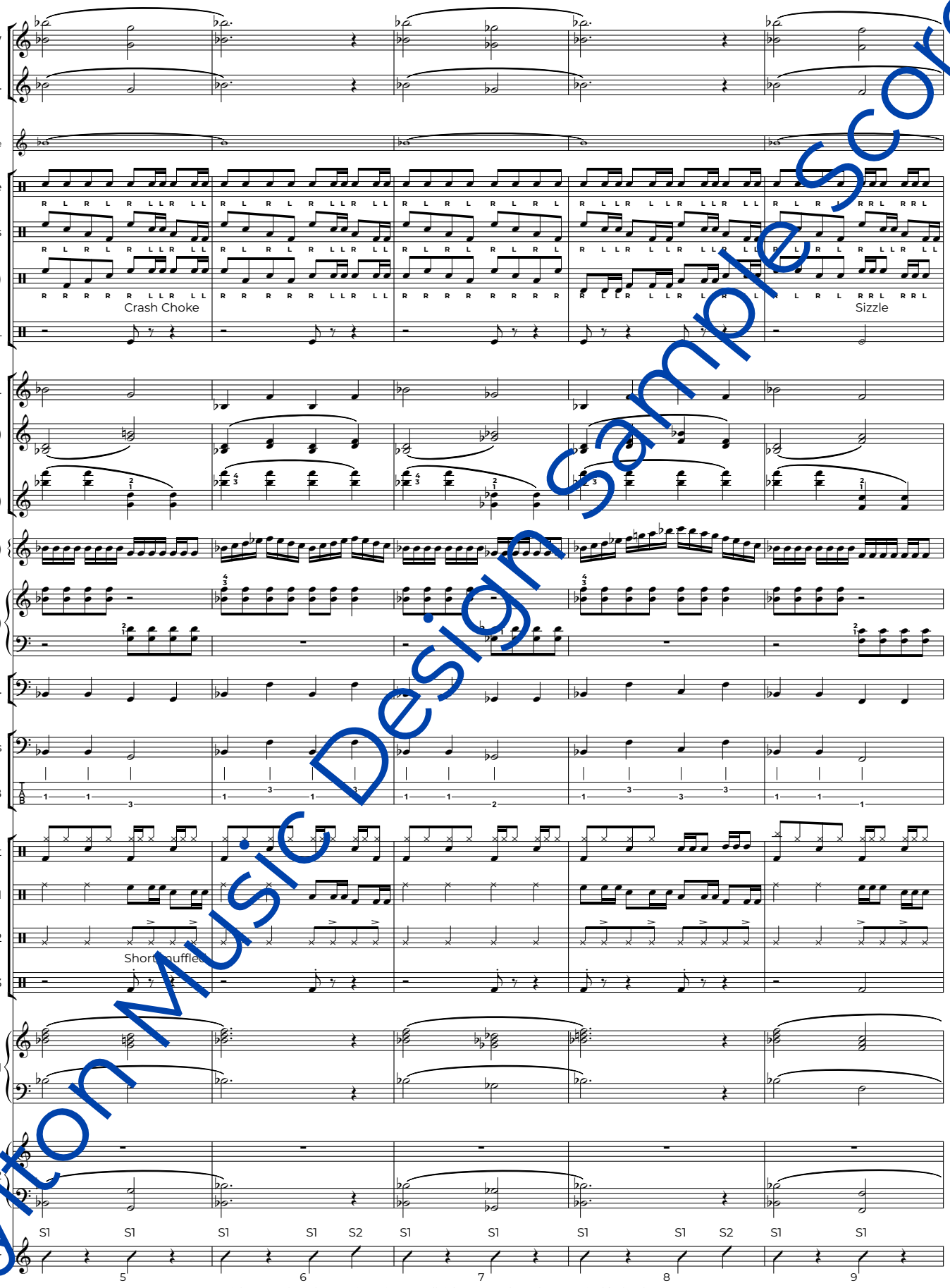
Synth. 1

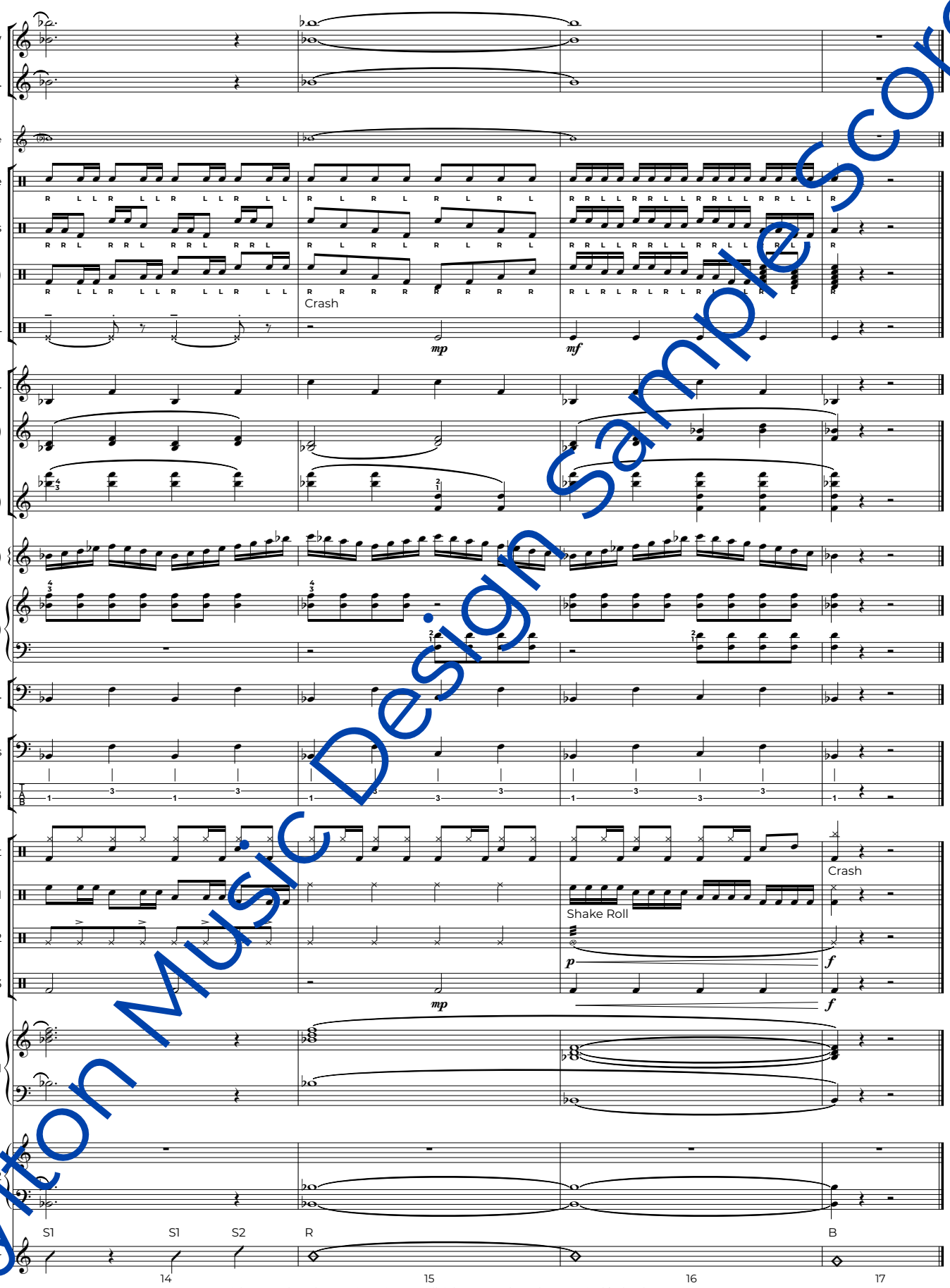
Synth. 2

S S S

Sampler

0 0 1 2 3 4 5 6





Long Tones #4

countoff

WW

Br.

Drone

Drone

Snare

A/B

Tenors

A/B

Bass (5)

A/B

Hi Hat

Sizz choke

Hi Hat

Sizz choke

Hi Hat

Sizz choke

Cym.L

Glock.

Vib. (2 mall.)

Vib. (4 mall.)

Mar. (2 mall.)

Mar. (4 mall.)

Double Vertical Strokes

Timp.

Bass

Bass TAB

Dr.Set

Woodblock/Temple Block

Rack 1

Triangle

Rack 2

BD + Tam tam

Rack 3

mp

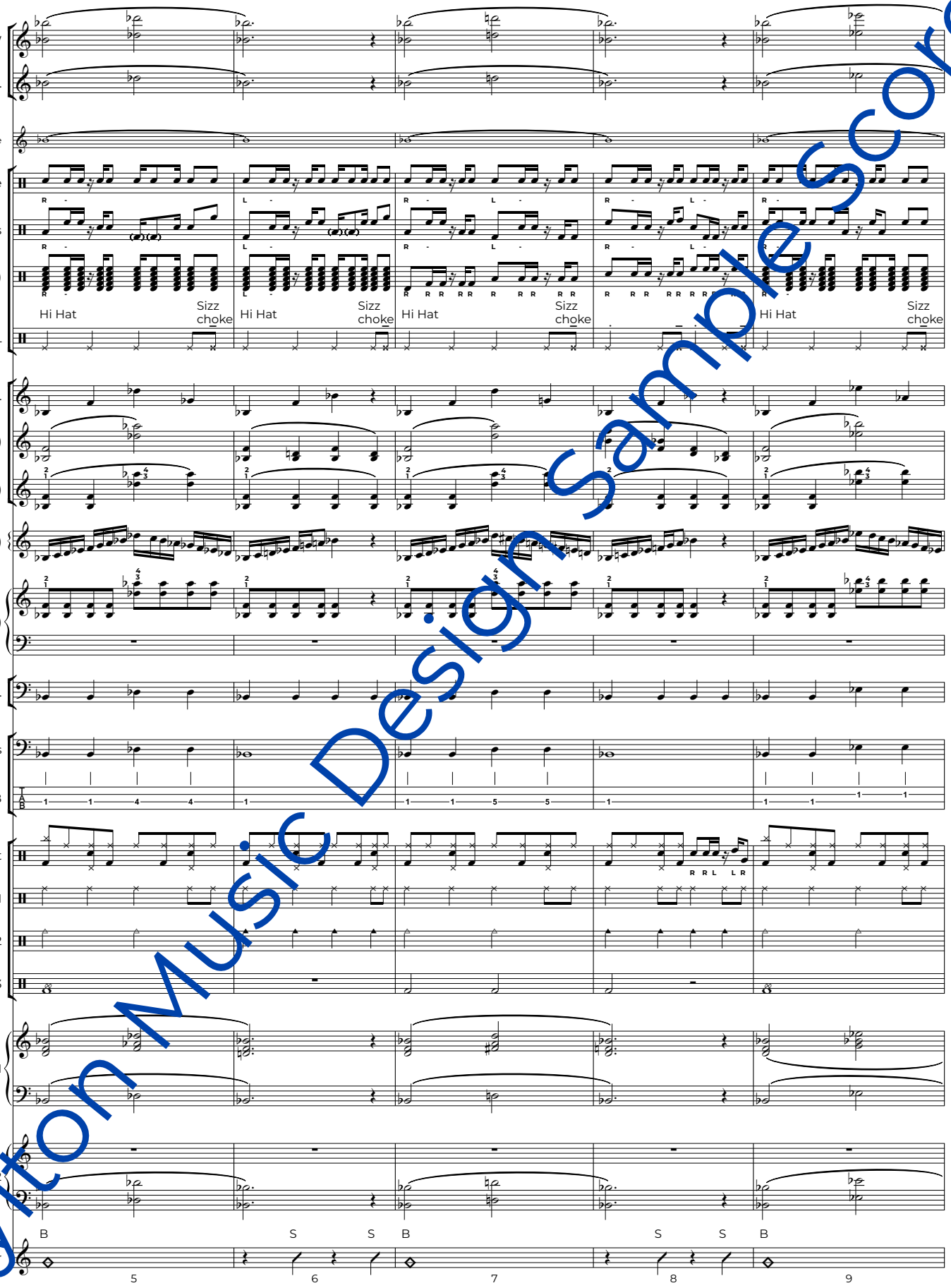
Synth. 1

Synth. 2

Sampler

B S S B S S

0 0 1 2 3 4



7/8 Long Tones

♩ = 120 - 180

WW

Br.

Drone

Drone

7/8 Accent Taps and Diddles

Snare

7/8 Accent Taps and Diddles

Tenors

7/8 Accent Taps and Diddles

Bass (5)

Hi Hat

Crash

Hi Hat

Cym.L

Glock.

Vib. (2 mall.)

Vib. (4 mall.)

Mar. (2 mall.)

Mar. (4 mall.)

Timp.

Bass

Bass TAB

Dr.Set

Cowbell

Woodblock

Rack 1

Rack 2

mp

Concert BD

BD + Tam

Rack 3

mp

Synth. 1

LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH LH RH

Synth. 2

S1 S2 S1 S2 S1 S2 S1 B S1 S2 S1 S2

Samp.

0 0 1 2 3

Flow Studies

Flow studies are used to help train our air in the most efficient way. Keep the airstream steady - don't pulse on notes or drastically change the flow as you ascend/descend. Feel the line of notes flow away from you like throwing a paper airplane.

Flow Studies help to transition between long tones and flexibility by including the passing tone between the notes of the harmonic series which helps the player to stay relaxed and focus on moving the right quality of airflow for efficiency of playing without using tension.

Best Practices:

- not meant to be taken very fast or slow. Stick to 88-108-ish bpm and mf or mp dynamic for the best result.
- Great tone and feel relaxed on every note, especially the highest/lowest.
- Practice with a drone on F or Bb (Tonal Energy App).
- Both ascending and descending should feel easy if you are using the best flow. If you feel tight/stuck when going down, you're probably using too much tension to go up.
- The air should be steady without changing flow on different notes.
- Brass back of the tongue changes should change slightly as you ascend/descend.
- practice Wind Patterns/Air and Valve to make sure the air flows correctly.
- If you feel stuck on the way down, you got tense on the way up.

Flow Studies

NEXT LEVEL - Full Ens. Reduced Score (in C)

♩ = 88-108

countoff

WW Level 3

WW Level 2

WW Level 1

Brass Level 3

Brass Level 2

Brass Level 1

Paradiddle Builder

SnareLine

Paradiddle Builder

TenorLine

Paradiddle Builder

BassLine (5)

Hi Hat

Sizzle

Hi Hat

Sizzle

Hi Hat

Cymbal Line

Glockenspiel

3rd's

5th's

Vibes (2 mall.)

Vibes (4 mall.)

Mar. (2 mall.)

Mar. (4 mall.)

Timpani

Bass Guitar

Bass TAB

Drumset

Triangle

Rack 1

Sus. Cym.

Rack 2

Concrt BD

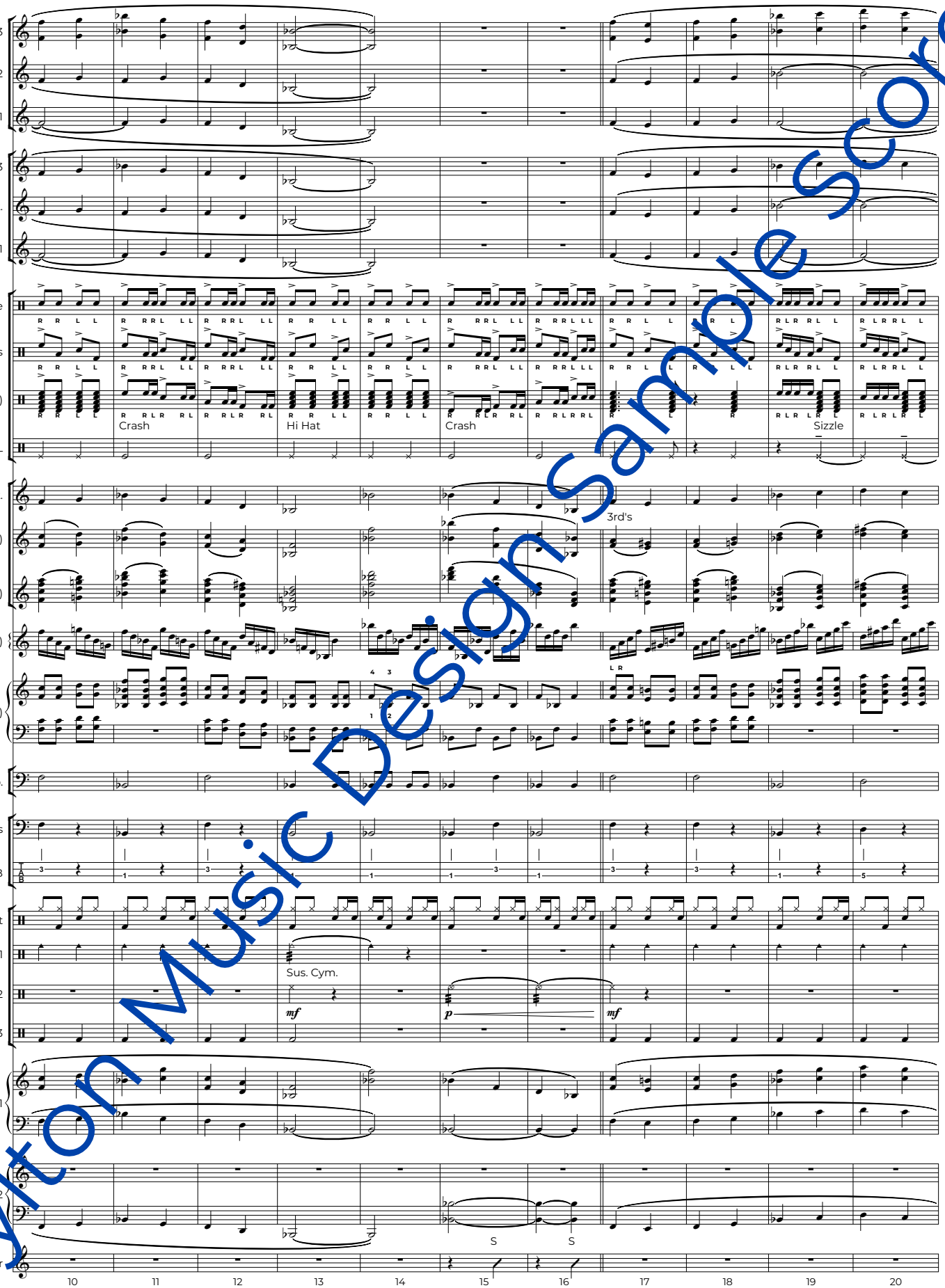
Rack 3

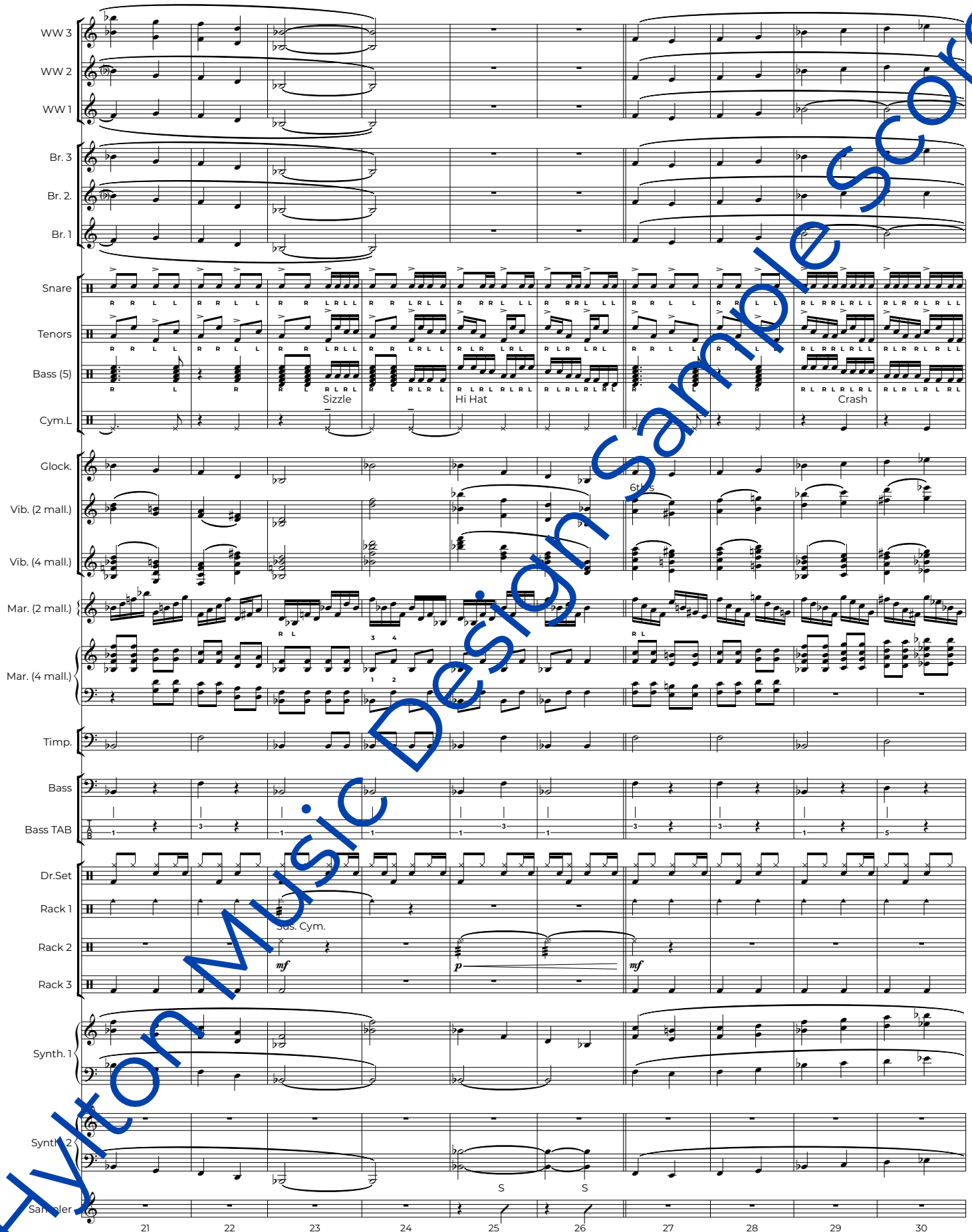
Synth. 1

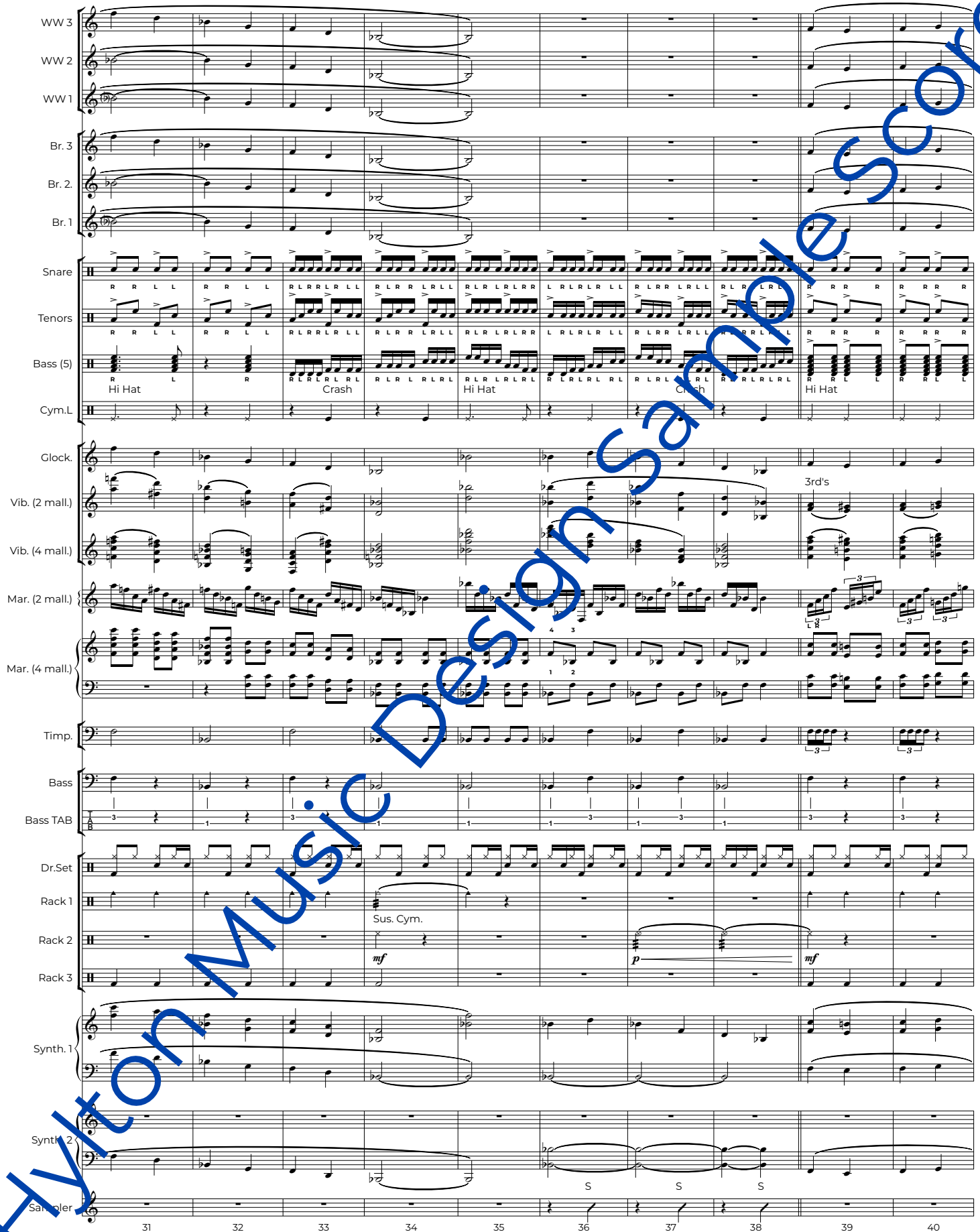
Synth. 2

Sampler

0 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9







Flexibility

Think of flexibility exercises NOT at strength builders but as coordination exercises. It does NOT take a lot of muscle to play an instrument, even ridiculously high notes or fast phrases. It is all about coordinating the speed of air (brass tongue arch) with the instrument, while keeping the aperture/vibration relaxed.

For the Woodwinds

In the marching arts, woodwinds get to do much of the "flashy" fast technical moments, therefore, the flexibility exercises are written to begin development of your scalar patterns. Work on:

- keeping a steady flow of air for a big resonant tone.
- working the fingers mechanically and quickly without tension.
- keep fingers close to the instrument "no fly aways."
- challenge yourself with extended ranges.

For the Brass

Brass don't change the embouchure, just think **Flow** of air, keep it moving forward, and use the **tongue arch** to change notes; If you're doing it right, the embouchure will follow suit.

- To ascend, the air must go faster to increase the speed of the lip vibration.
- To descend, the air must go slower to decrease the speed of the lip vibration.
- The most important thing is that the air continues to flow and motivate the vibration of the lips.

Tongue Arch is necessary in order to change partials in a "lip slur." Experiment with different singing syllables in order to practice this:

Low Bb/C = "Ah or OO"
Concert F/G = "Eh" as in "left"
Middle Bb/C = "Ihh" as in "lift"
Middle D/E = "Eee" as in "leaf"
F/G and Above = "EEE" (in the upper register the airstream may even sound like a hiss or whistle.

***This is not an exact science matching syllable to note, but it will help to understand how the arch works to make the air change speed.

It works the same was as whistling, whistle a glissando up and down and see what your tongue does. Yep, it should work in the same fashion on the horn.

Troubleshooting:

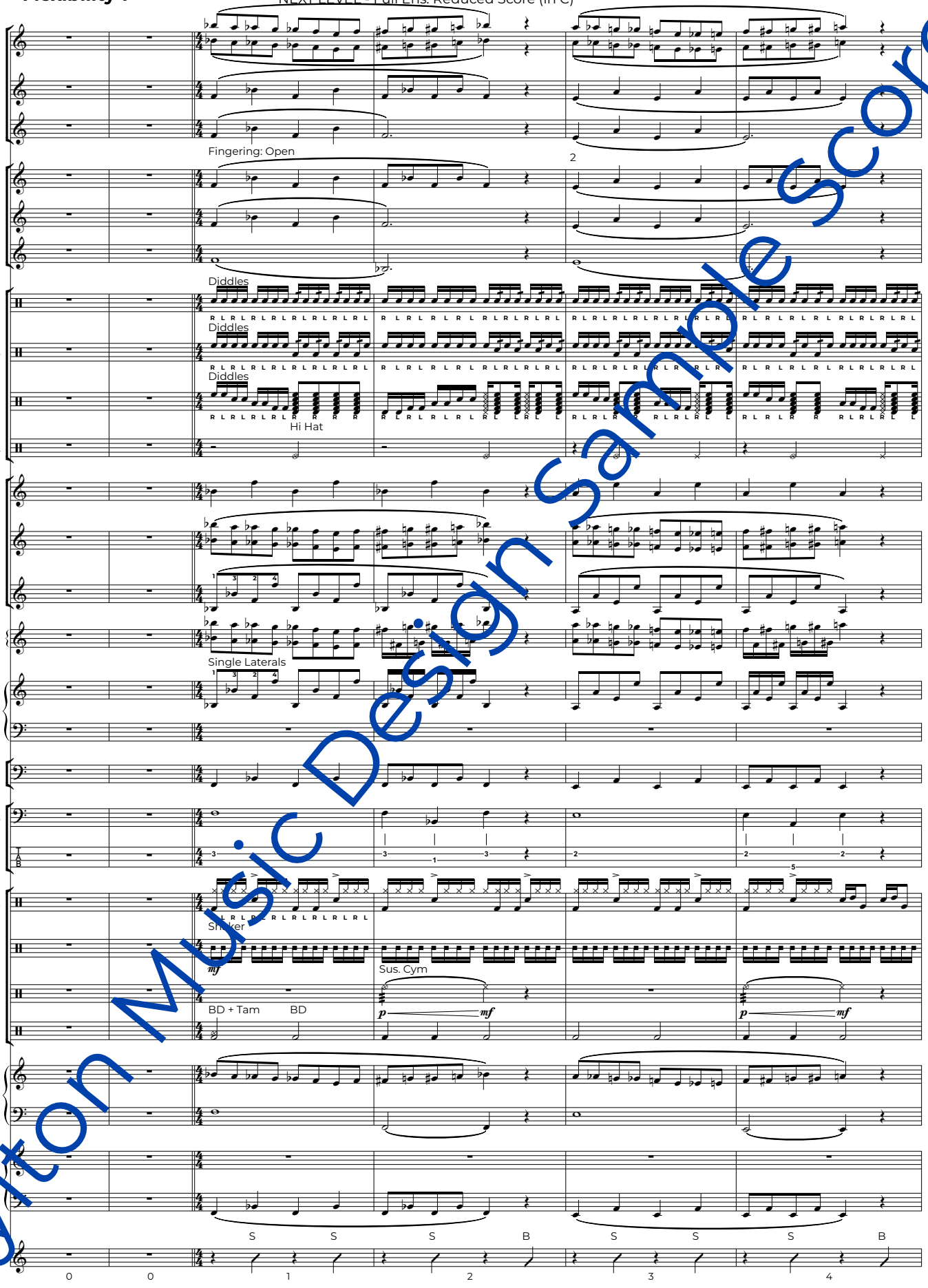
1. Make sure you have warmed up properly and have great response of tone, if not, go back to long tones and get the air to turn around quickly to start the note.
2. Start in a comfortable middle range, F or middle Bb partials, on any valve combo. Usually our air is too slow, so starting on a lower combo (I.e. 1 & 2, 1 & 3, or 123) can make things a bit easier.

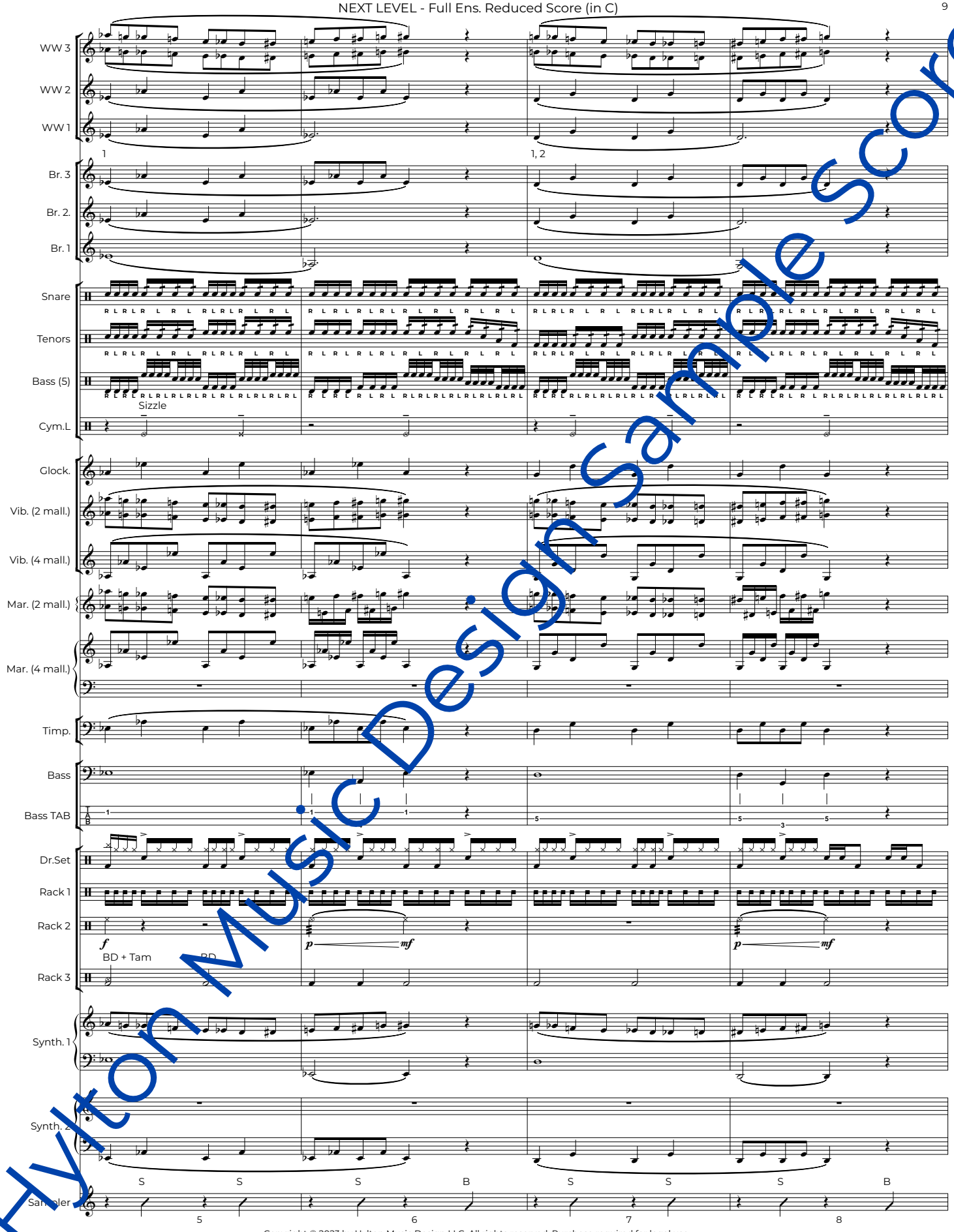
3. Work your way up and down 1 partial (I.e. F to middle Bb) and get it to be smooth with no “bumps” between the notes. If you hear “bumps” go back to wind patterns and make sure the air is motivated/ fast enough with the tongue arch.
4. Begin to expand to higher and lower partials. Make sure to get a great breath and re-breathe as soon as you lose the motivation of air.

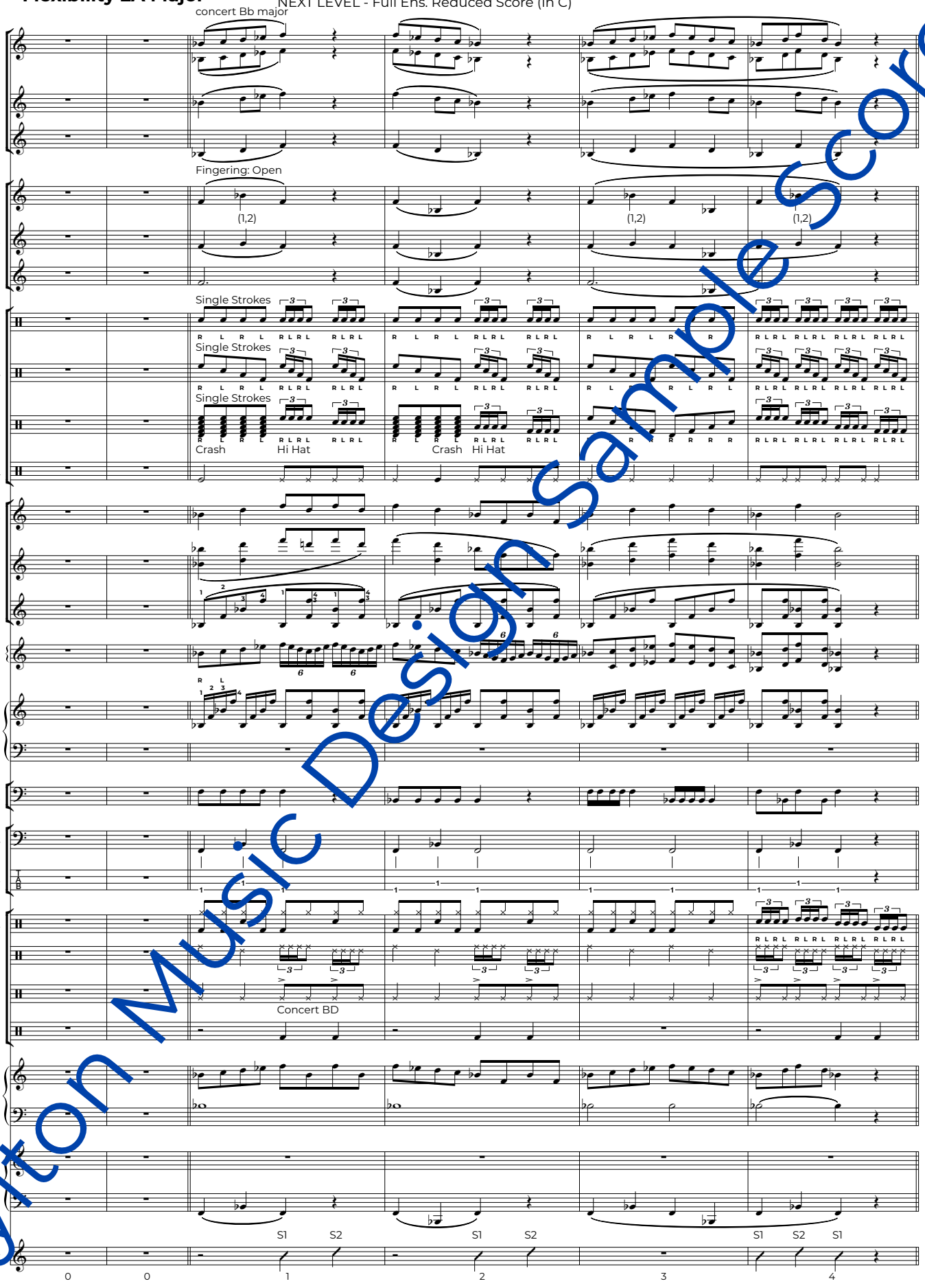
Best Practices:

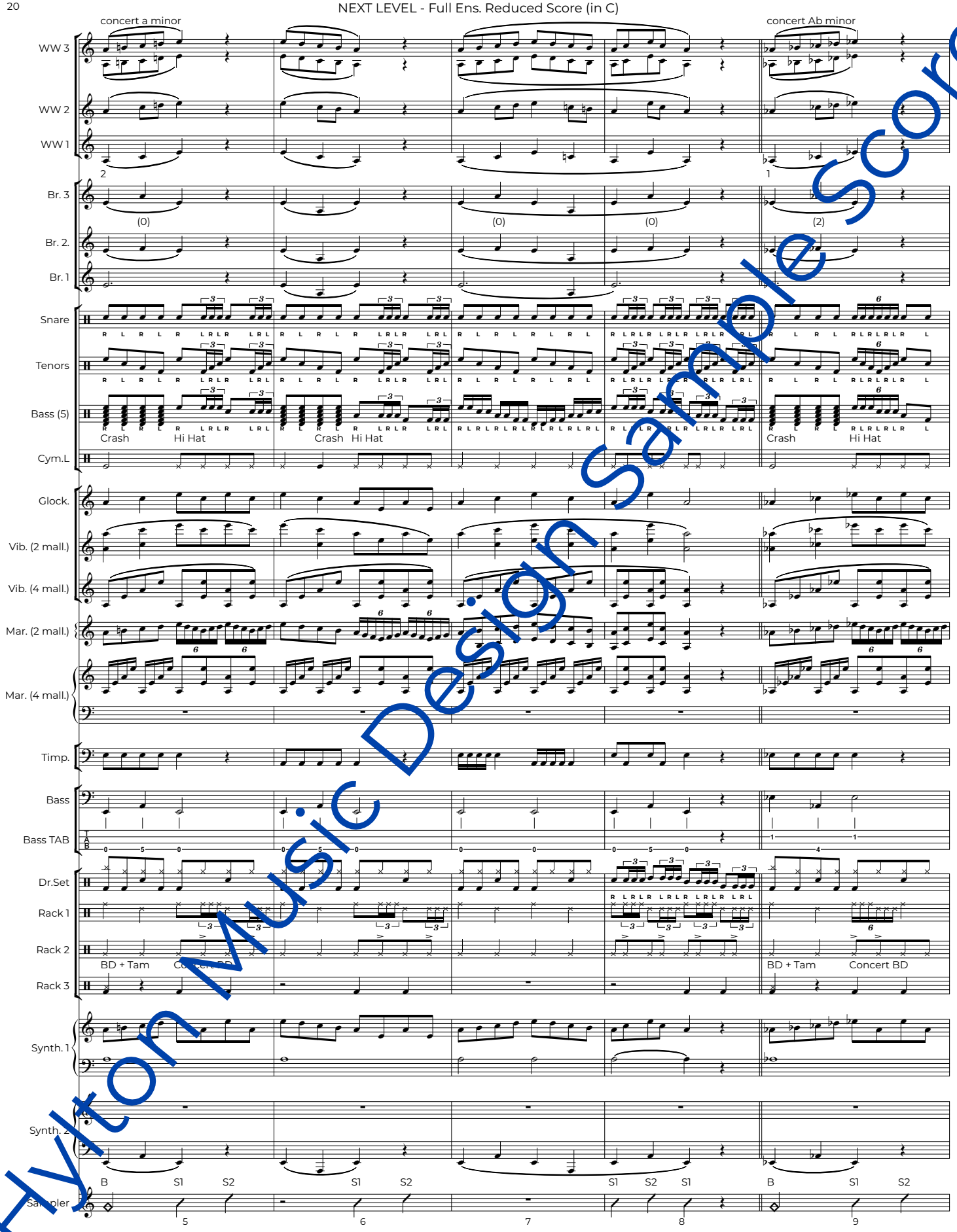
- Get a great Breath on every rest!
- Don’t Micromanage the embouchure, just set it and forget it. Don’t squeeze as you go higher and relax as you go lower, FLOW AIR!
- *“I can’t get up to a certain note - the sounds stops or feels really difficult.”* You are most likely getting tense and prohibiting the airflow. Relax the body and do some air and valve making sure to follow through every note change. Pretend you are crescendoing when you go up and always keep the air moving forward, even when you descend. Keep the aperture relaxed so that it can vibrate freely and keep an open tone.
- Always feel relaxed like you just blowing air. As soon as you start to squeeze or tighten your lips, face, hands, or shoulders you are only working against yourself. It really is easy as long as you figure out the air flow and coordination of the tongue arch.
- Make sure your breathing and tone are always best quality. You should not have to sacrifice these things in order to get the slur out. Having good air and tone will always make it easier to play. It’s all about efficiency.
- If your face or body feels tired after doing a moderate amount of flexibility, you are probably using tension or mouthpiece pressure. Only the corners should feel fatigued at times.
- The center of the lips where the mouthpiece rests should not feel fatigued unless you haven’t played in weeks. If it does, you are most likely using too much mouthpiece pressure.

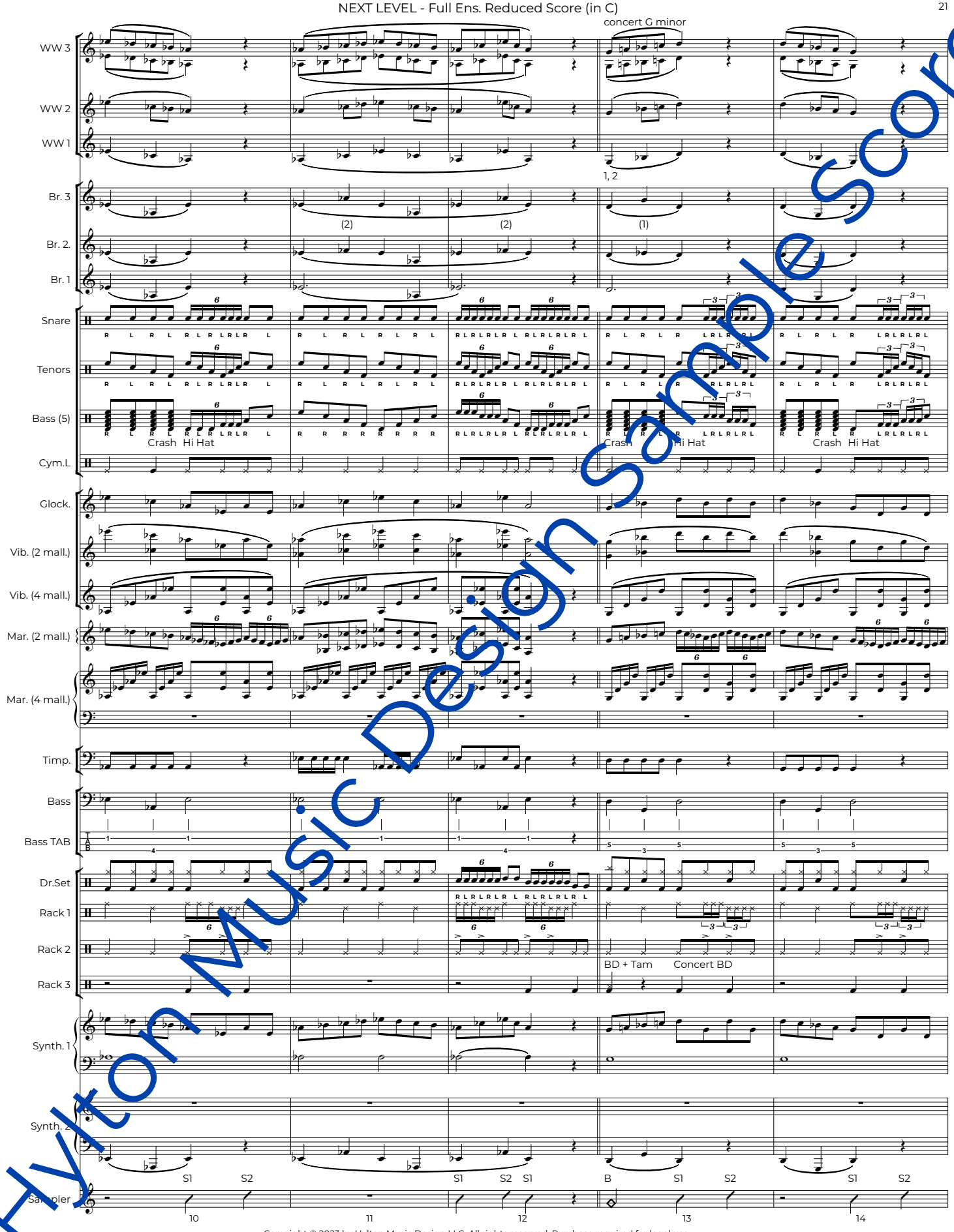
Flexibility 1



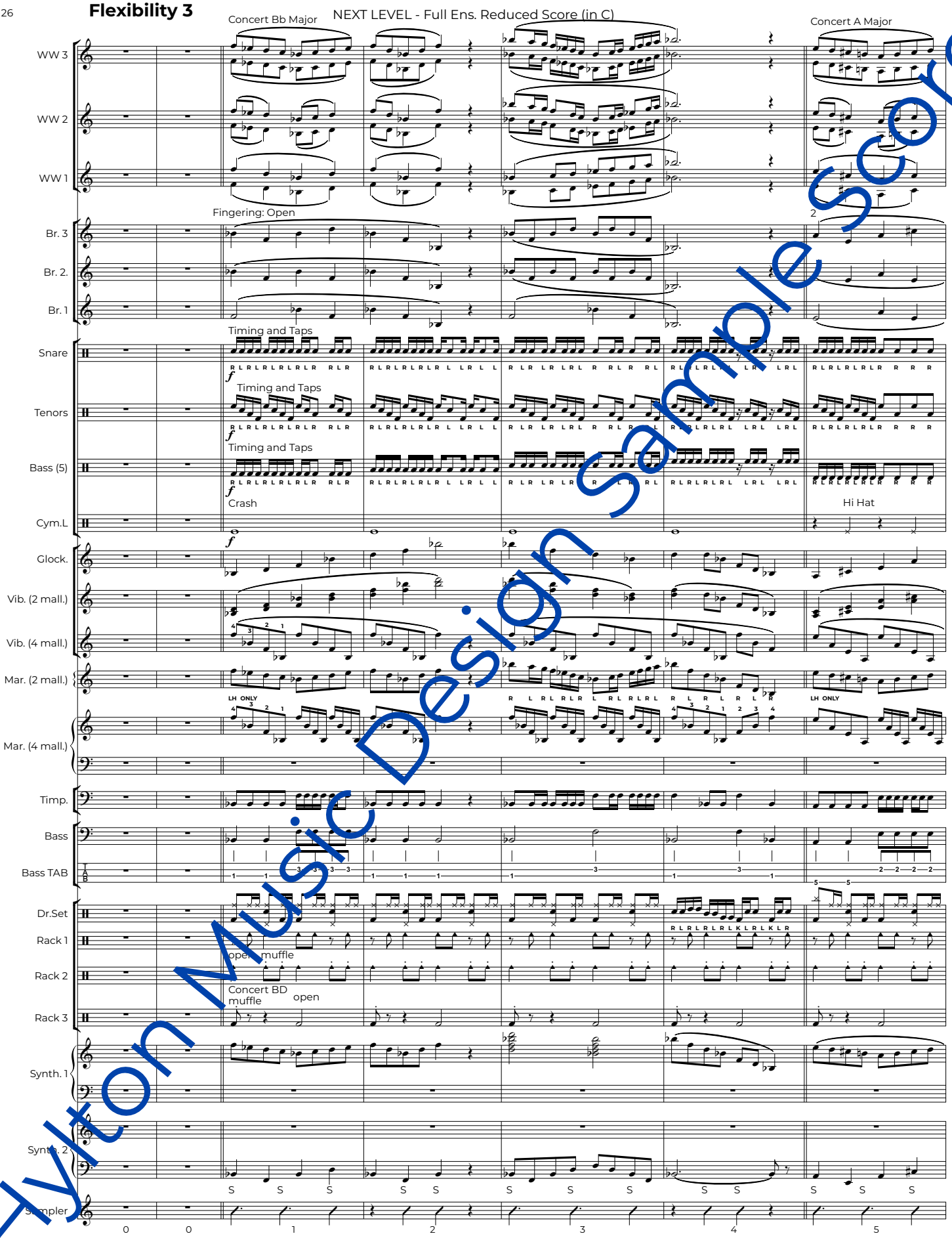


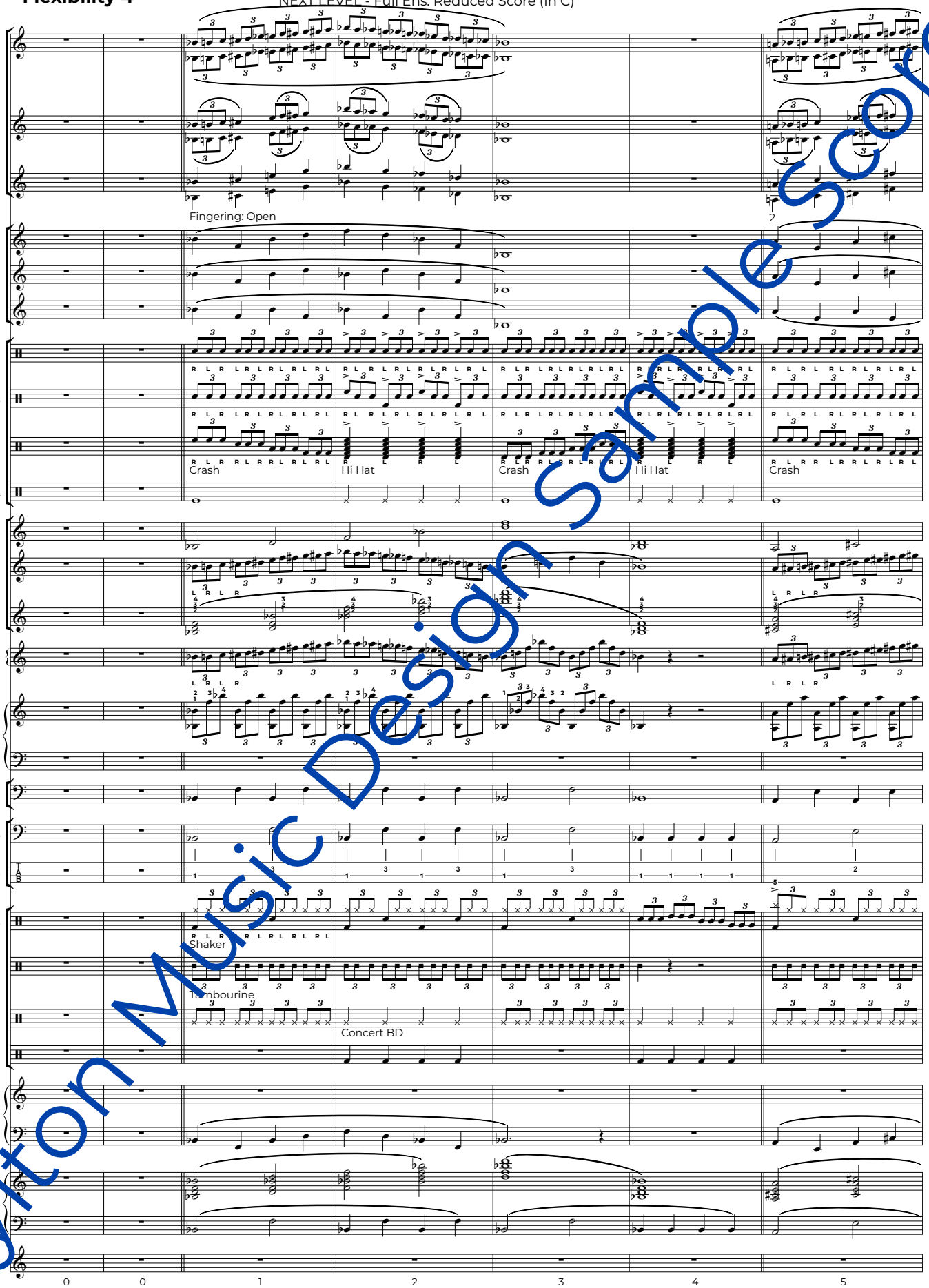


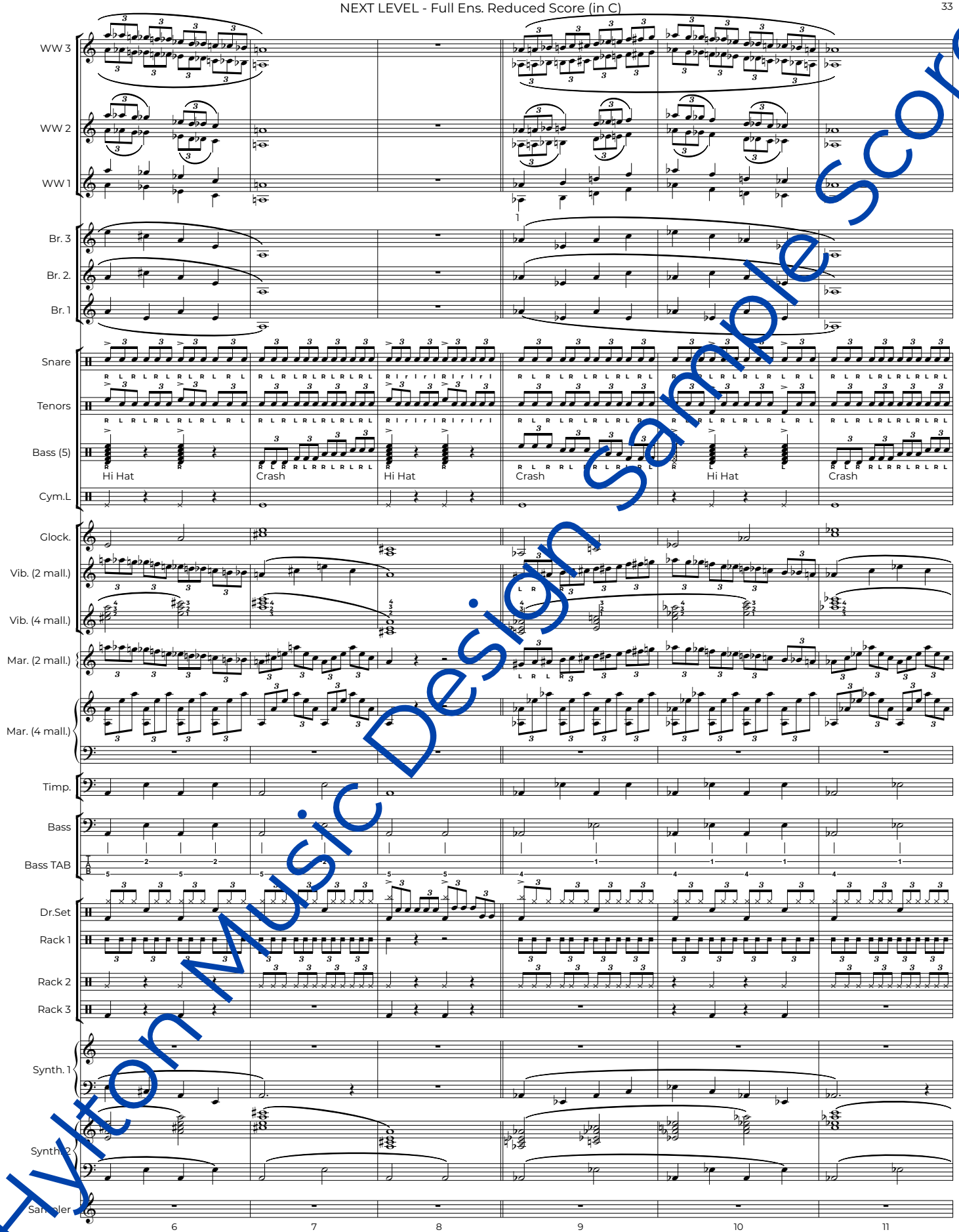


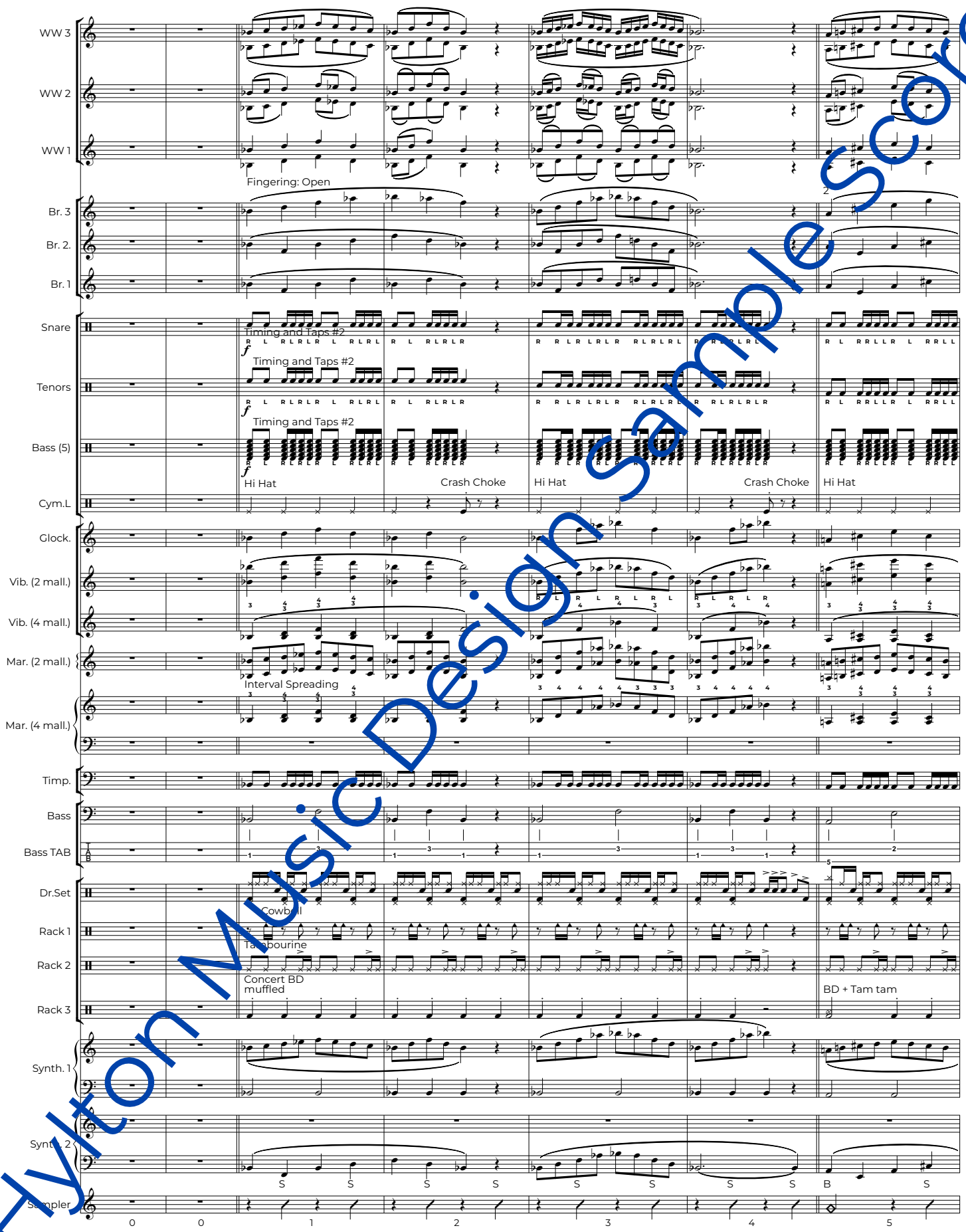


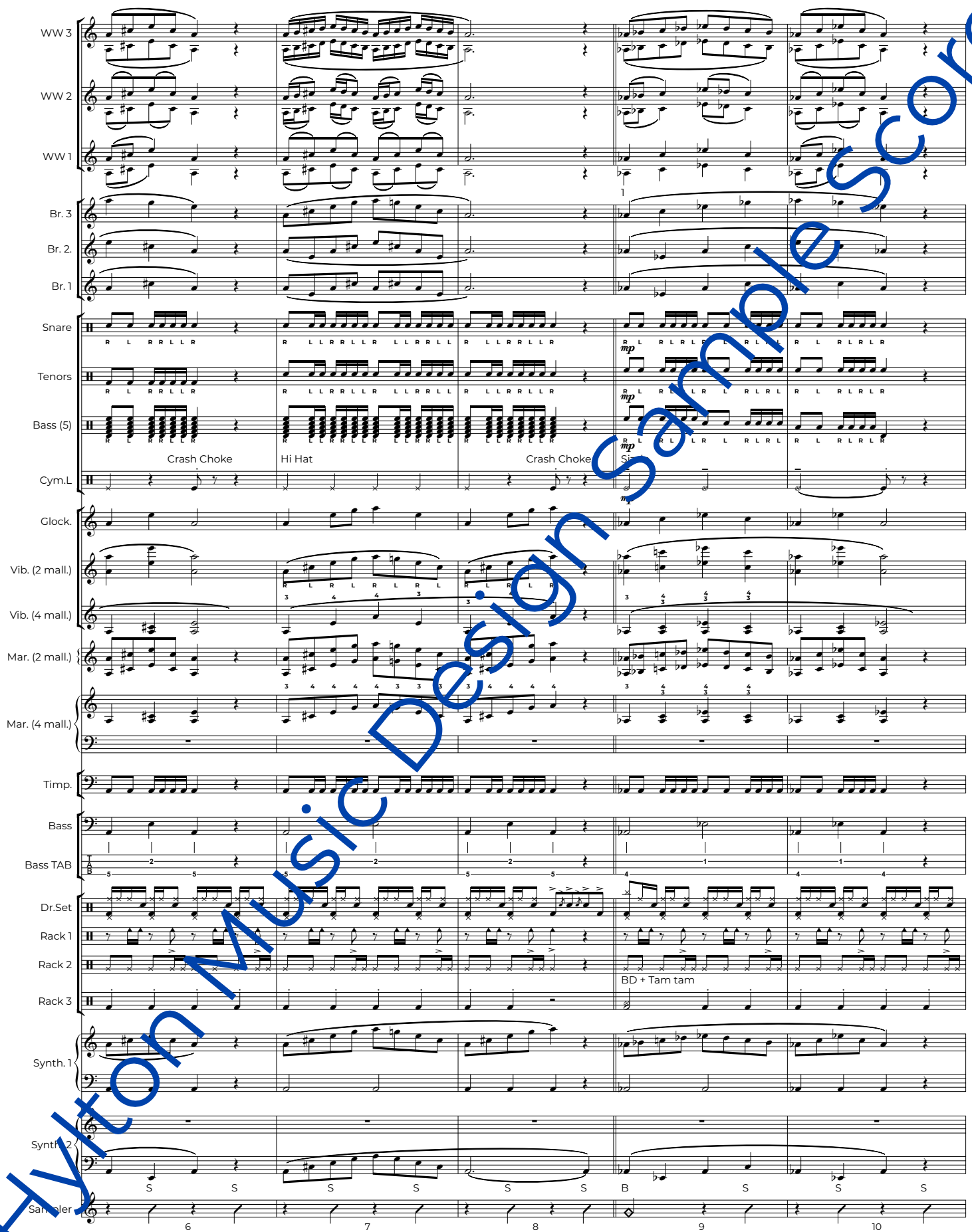
Flexibility 3











Dexterity

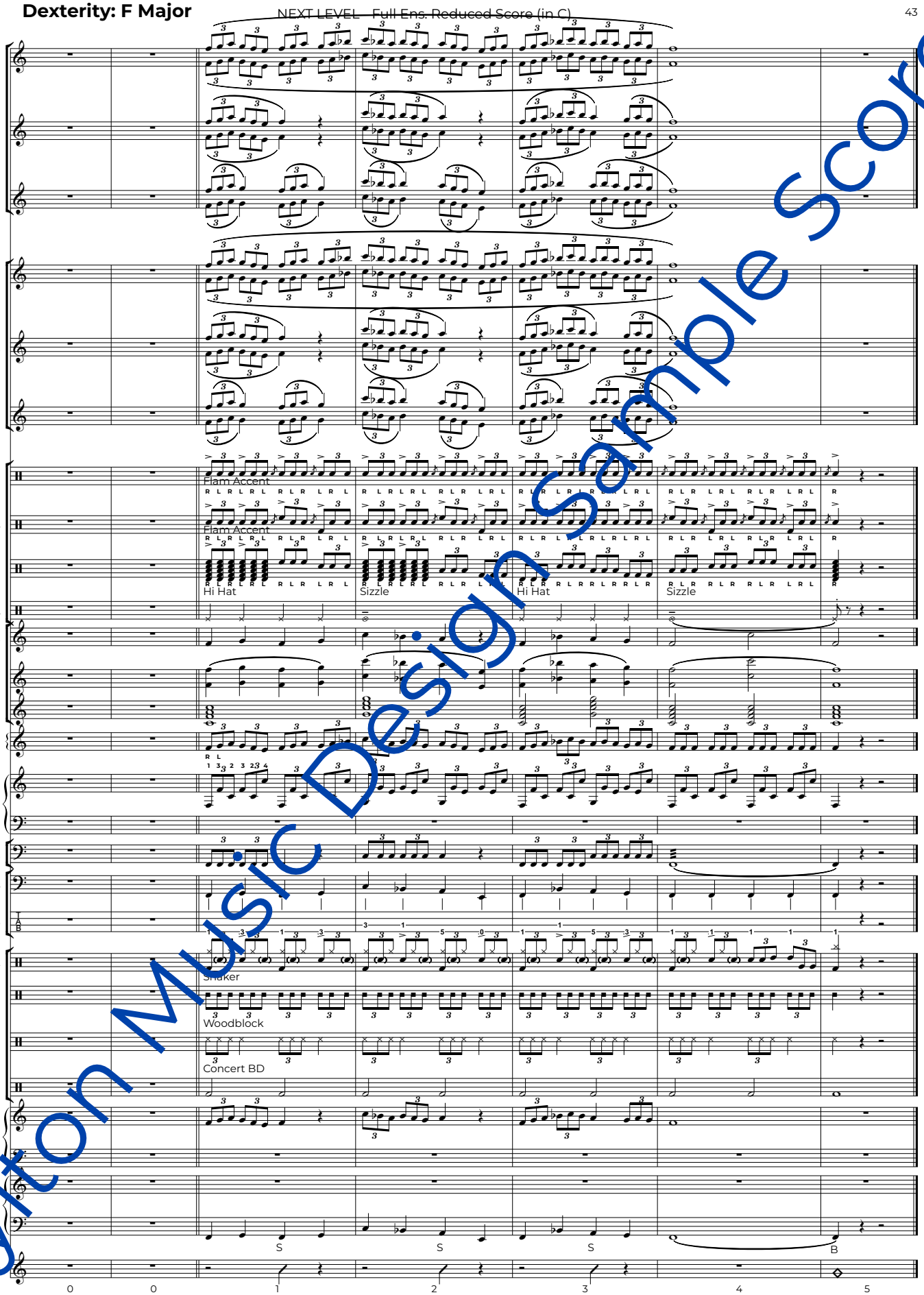
Finger dexterity is all about training the fingers to work mechanically so that they move quickly at all tempos and bring clarity to fast “run” passages. Just like in flow studies, it’s very important to keep steady airflow through “running” notes making sure the air doesn’t pulse or change on different notes.

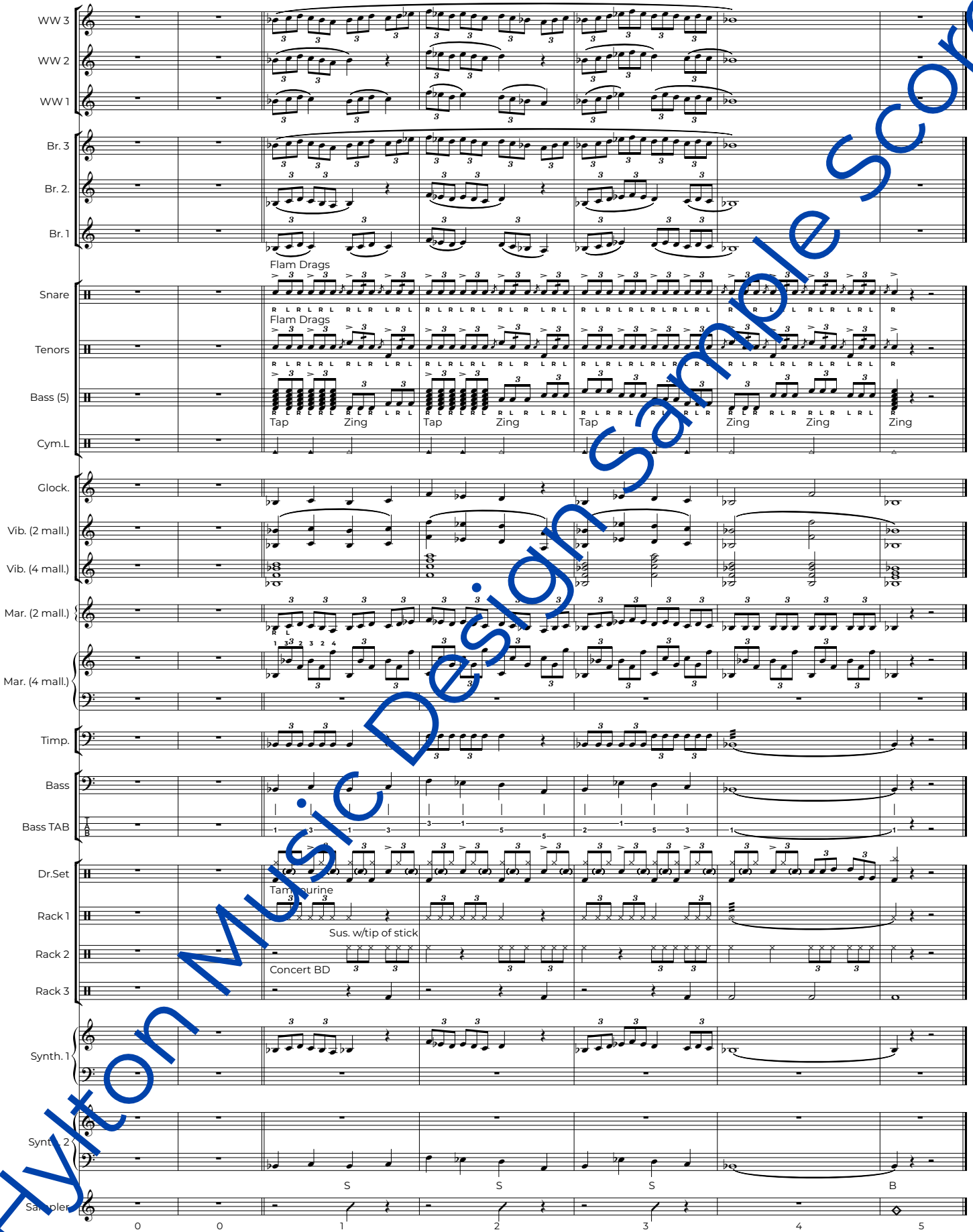
By default, the dexterity exercises should be slurred throughout so that students can isolate the fingers. Once students have a good grasp of the finger technique you can add/experiment with different articulations (e.g. slur 3, all staccato, slur 2 tongue 1, etc.)

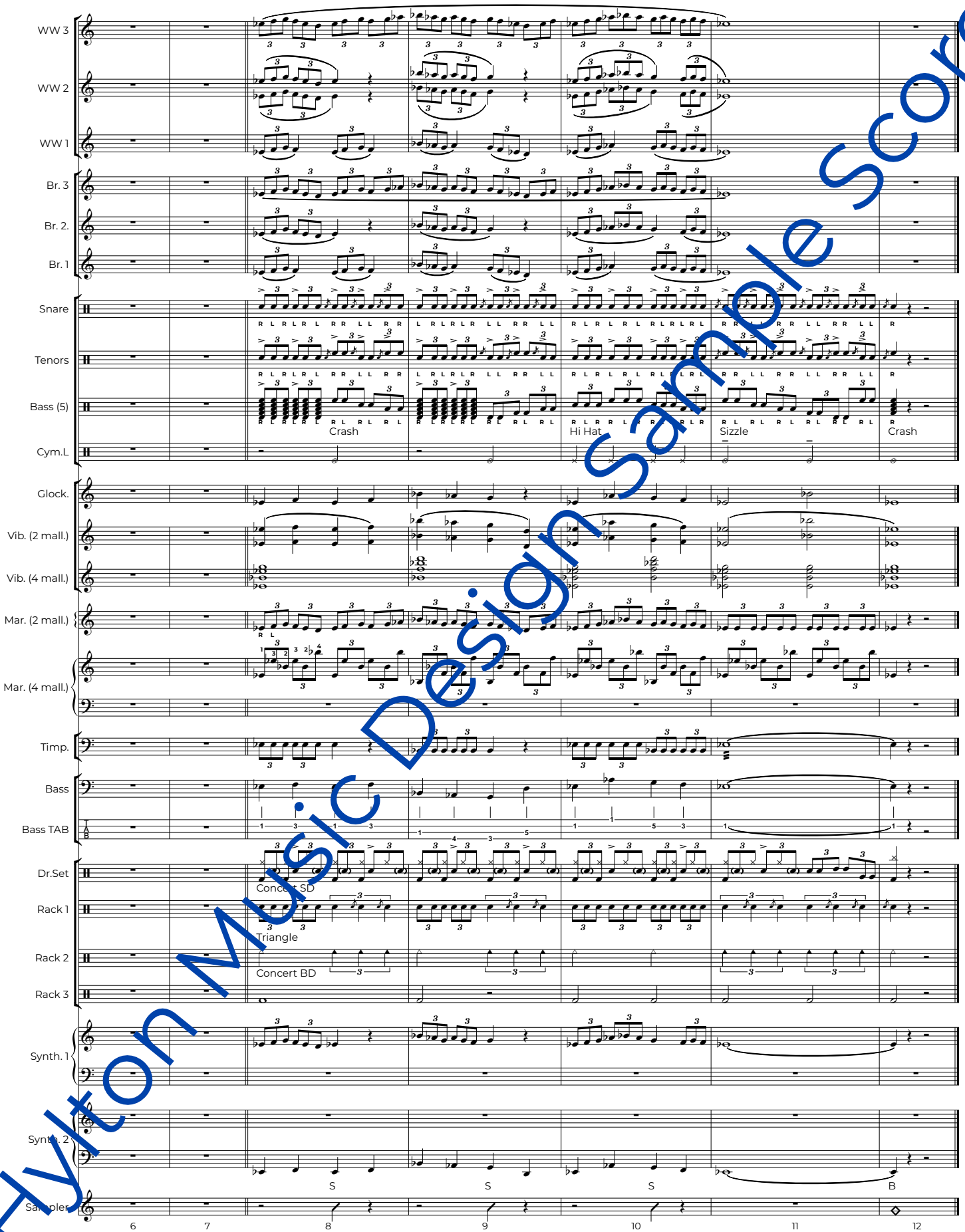
Multiple octaves are included in the parts.

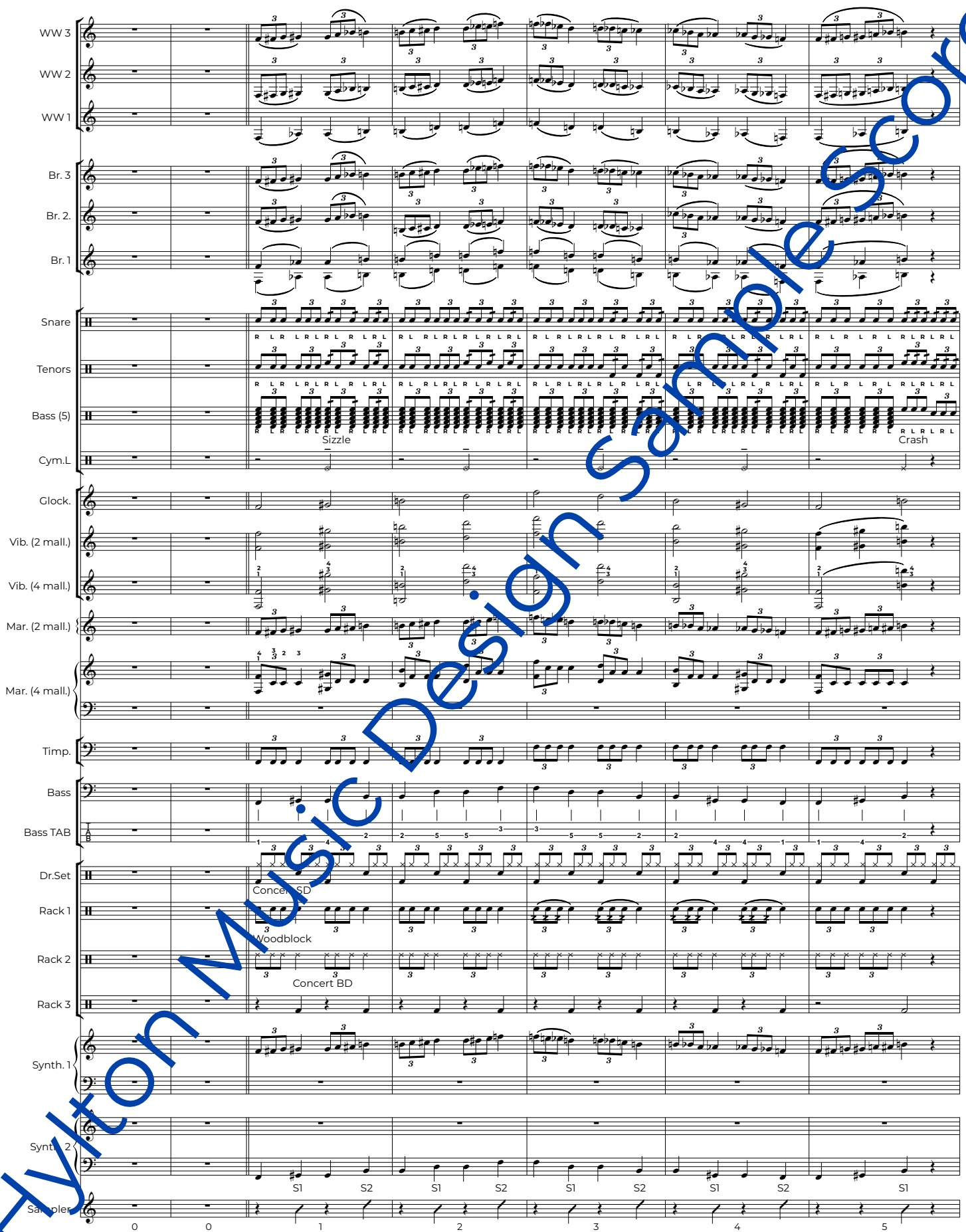
Best Practices:

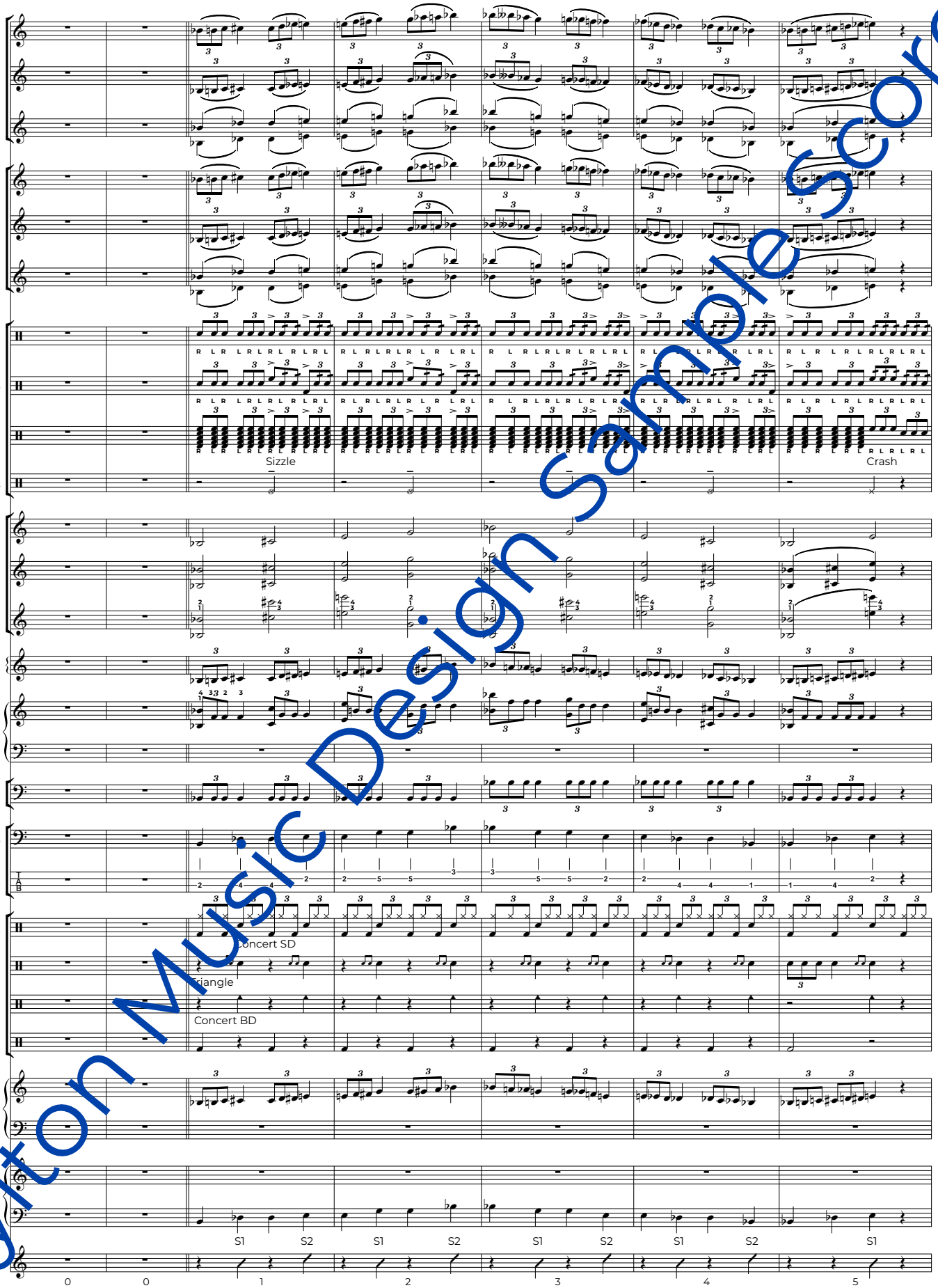
- Keep the air steady, don’t pulse or swell on individual notes.
- Keep the embouchure still, don’t tighten or loosen. check your relaxation in all registers.
- Listen for clarity of tone and quick note change.
- Practice just the fingers, very slowly, to train muscle memory.
- Memorize the exercises and practice away from the page.
- Sometimes it can be daunting to read every note (especially the chromatic ex.); instead, try to memorize the scale and then follow the pattern.











Style and Articulation

We often think so much about the mechanics of how our body works while playing that we overcompensate; this especially happens with articulation. We begin to think about our tongue and how it works and before you know it we are tonguing everything too hard and forgetting about the tone and style of playing. Generally, it's better to focus on style and shaping of tone in order to circumvent technique problems and produce a better quality of sound with more musicality.

Listening and singing is our best way of defining style and dynamics. You should be able to properly sing ALL articulations on anything you play.

Articulation are all made to happen by the shape of the AIR, the tongue only helps to bring clarity to the beginning of the note. **"Shape the air - the tongue is just along for the ride."**

Best Practices:

- Keep the tongue light and relaxed.
- The tip of the tongue (**"1 tastebud"**) should barely touch the point in the mouth where the upper teeth meet the hard pallet (gums) OR reed.
    - It's better to think of the tongue touching the air on the way out...
- The air should not be stopped and stored behind the tongue to begin notes, causing an explosive attack.
- The air defines the style and articulation at all times. The tongue simply "clarifies" the start of the note. the abdominal muscles will probably pulse on staccato notes if you're doing it right.
- The tongue should not stop the air at any time. Especially on releases!
- Focus on the Song and Wind, NOT how your tongue is working.
- Do plenty of air and valve reps; No "thud" tongue sound on Air and Valve - this means that your tongue is getting the way of the air.
- staccato notes should sound light and bouncy.
- Be sure that the jaw stays in place when the tongue articulates.
- consecutive notes should feel like 1 flow. (e.g. four 16th notes should blow like 1 quarter note). practice replacing the the short notes with a long one for steady flow.
- Make sure the tongue arch/oral shape is still in the correct level while multiple tonguing.

Articulation 1

- suggested stagger breathing spots, "A's" breathe at the end of the 1st measure, "B's" breathe at the end of the 2nd measure, etc.

Articulation 2

- a very simple exercise that combines intervals with articulation. It's not about speed but all about clarity of articulation and make the slurs and the staccatos have the same great tone quality.
    - you can use this same pattern on any scale/mode.
    - you can go both ascending and descending.
- combines slur and staccato. get a great tone and good quality airflow from the slur to the staccato. Many players cut down on the vibration when going to staccato changing the quality of sound.
- keep the same amount of air flow on the staccato as the slur - don't let the notes get 'clipped'

Articulation 3

- combines a slur, staccato, and full length quarters while moving around the horn to practice agility. Really work the wind patterns on this one and make sure every note is the correct length.
- keep the tongue light or you might start to get stuck on certain notes.
- brass don't "open up" the oral shape too much on the low notes or you'll get stuck.

Articulation 4

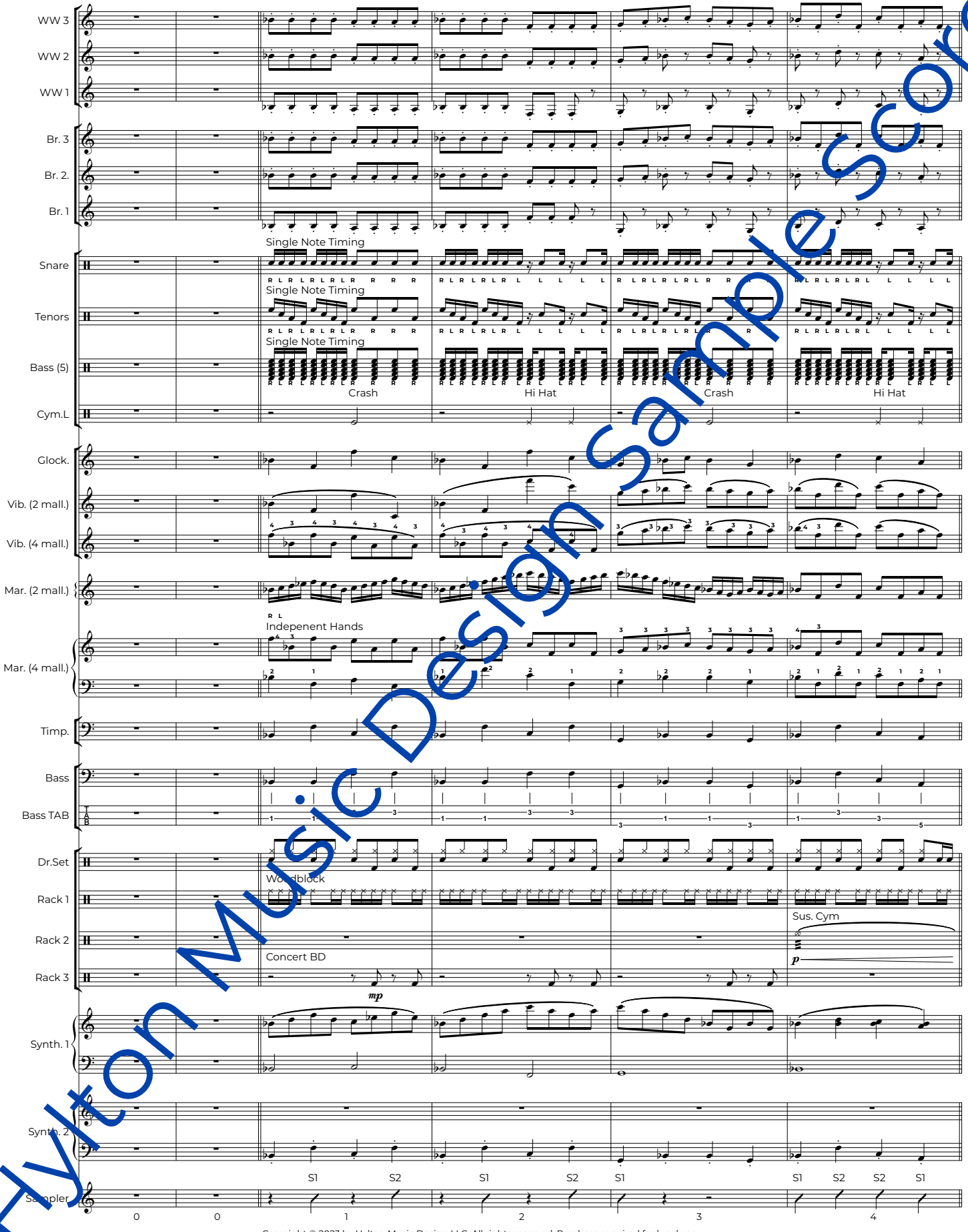
- can be used on any scale or mode, up and down, down and up, you can start by only going up/down a few notes. As students get more comfortable you can go up and down the whole octave or even more.
- the space between phrases could be used to call out commands/give quick tips.
    - “repeat that phrase/next phrase,” “steady air,”
- The most important thing is that you get a great resonant sound by focusing on the airflow and not letting the tongue create a choppy sound.
    - Practice multiple tonguing in the following ways:
        - don’t play staccato, think full length 16th notes.
        - Slowly like a chorale, and full length/lyrical notes.
        - Air valve/wind pattern/leadpipe and make sure every note has clarity and good flow.
        - All on concert F making every note sound exactly the same.

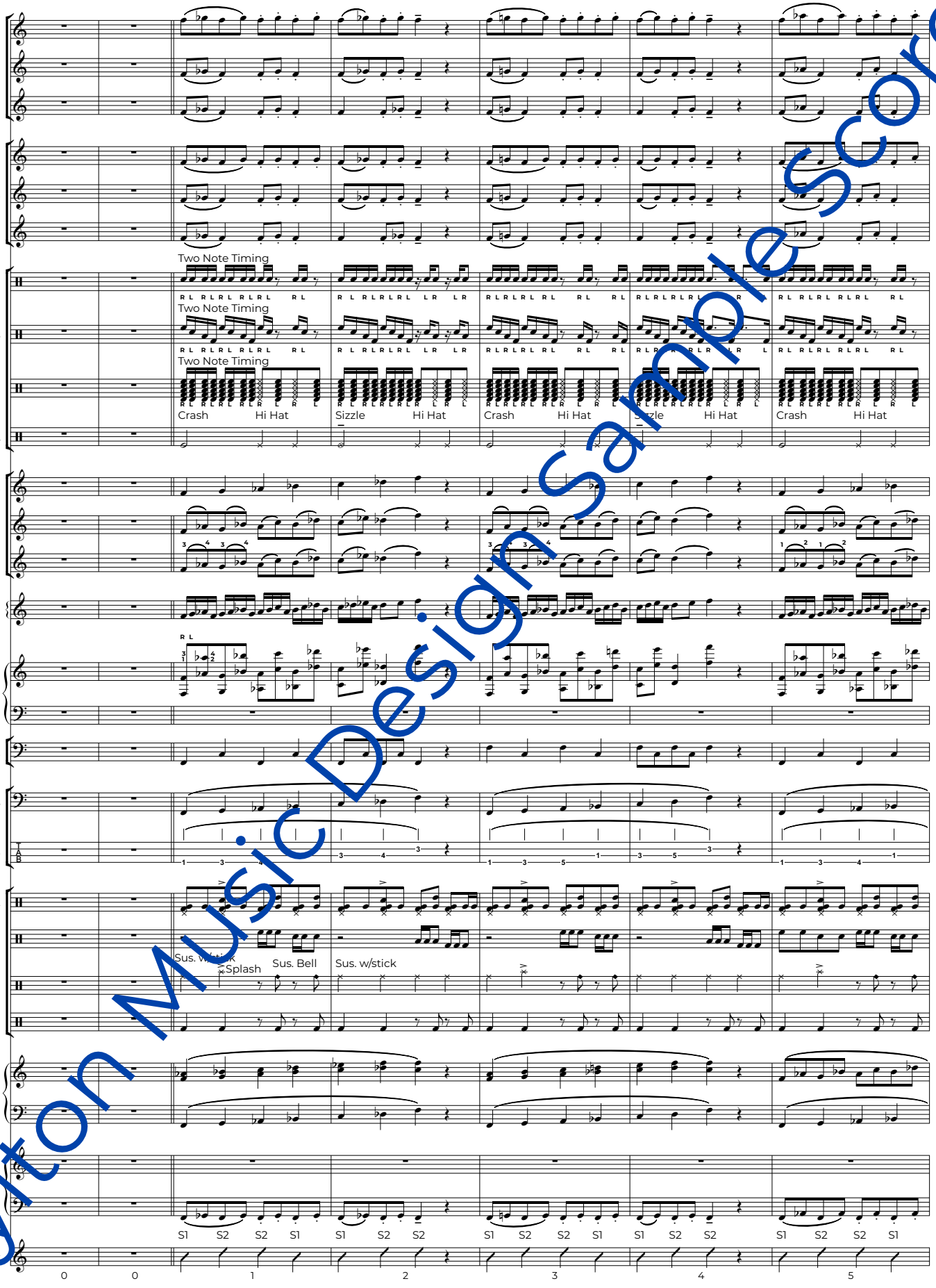
7/8 Articulation 1 -

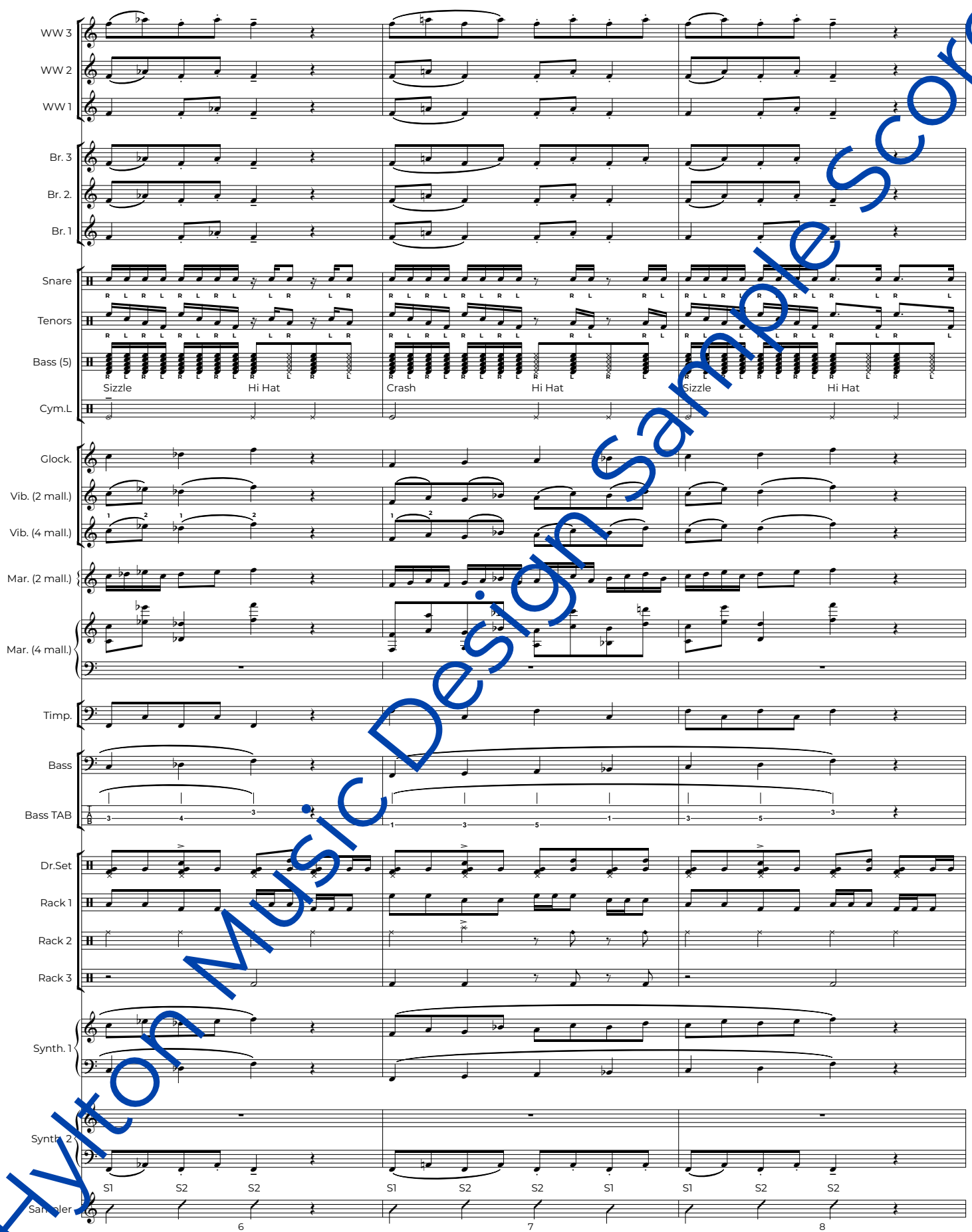
- each Level has a different subdivision of the 7/8.
- when putting 7/8 on the move you can either use a steady 7 steps of quarter notes or ‘observe’ the ‘hiccup’ and make the division of 3 in each 7 a slower step.

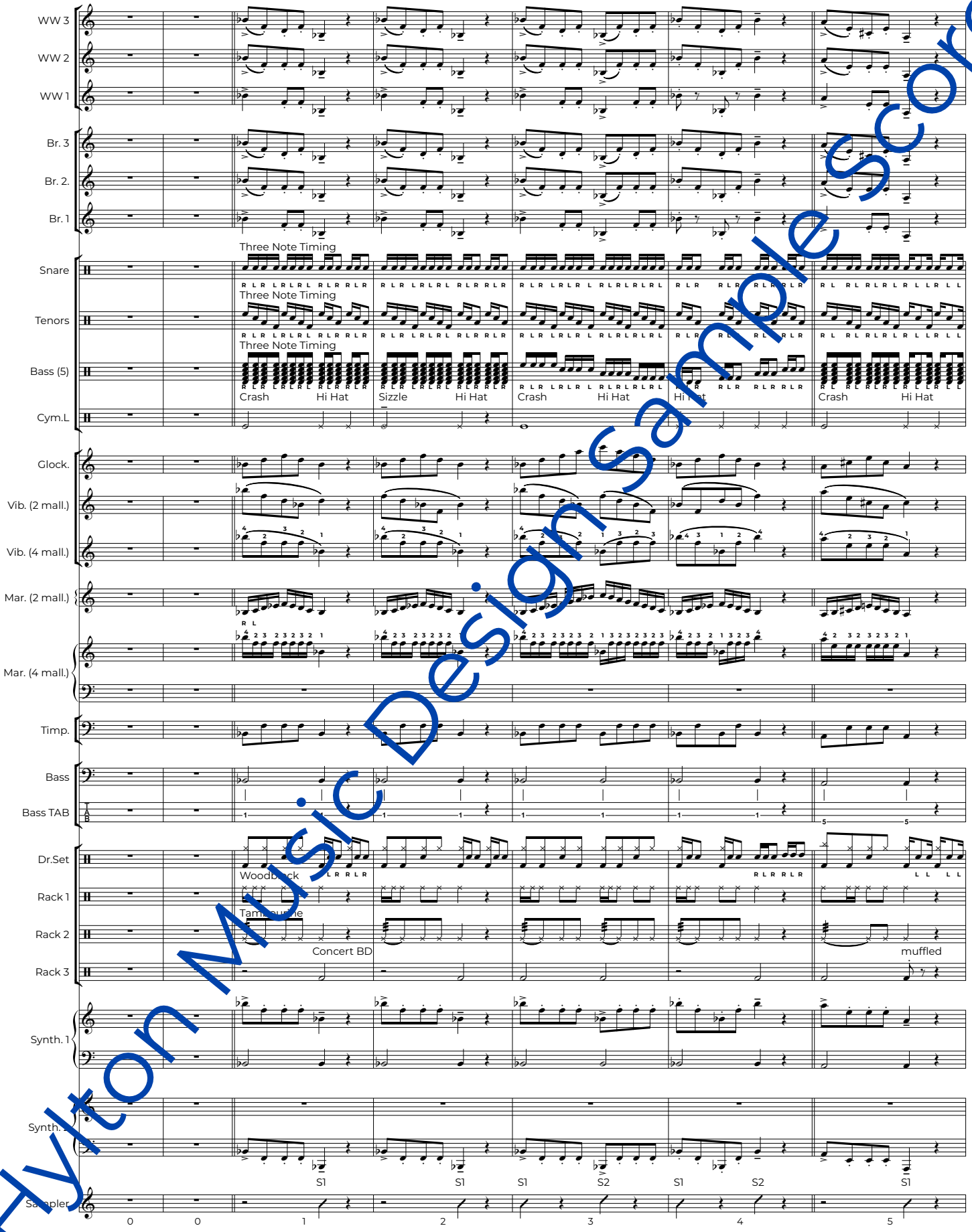
7/8 Articulation 2 -

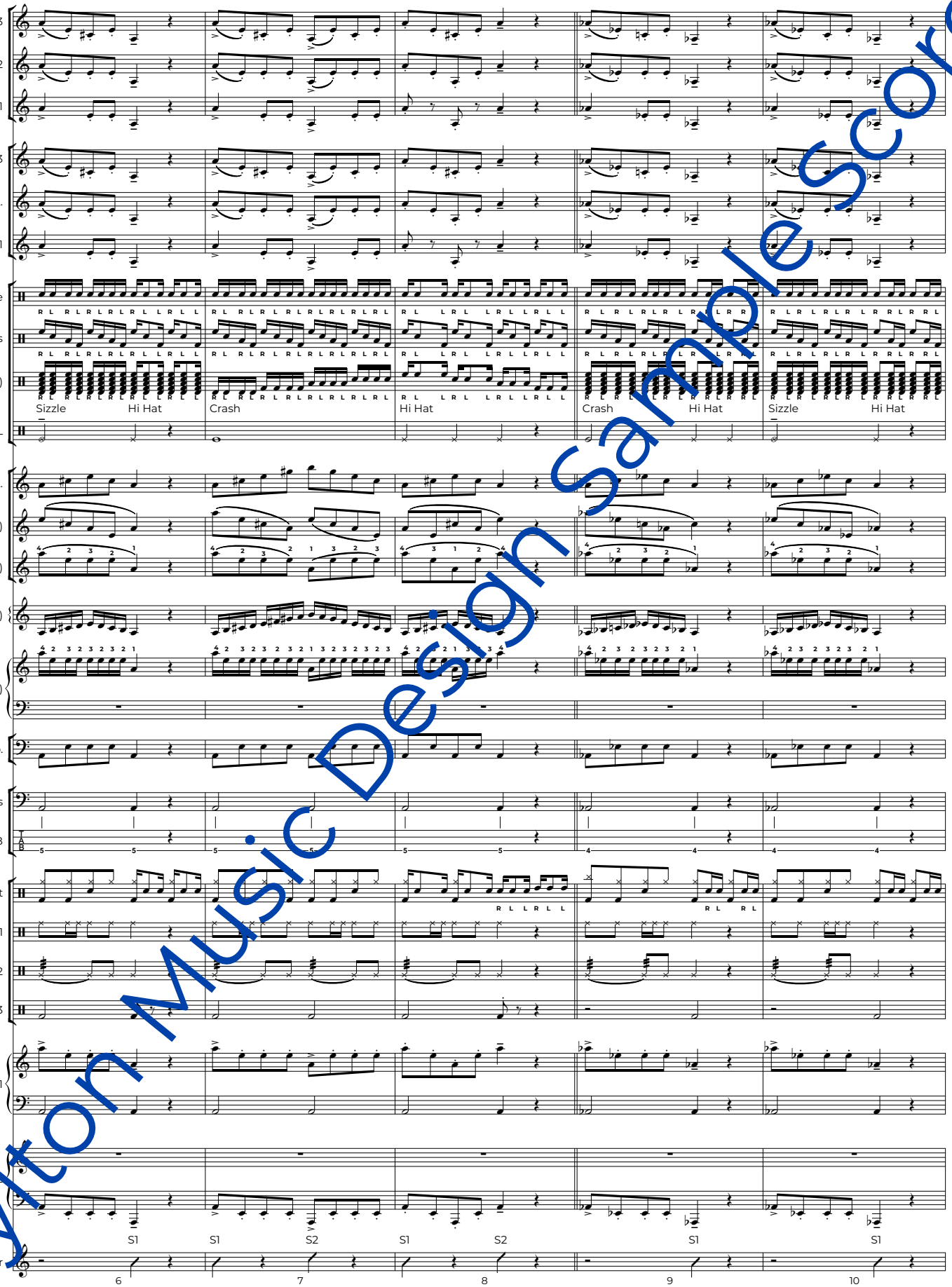
- the 4/4 bar is used as a buffer to check foot timing and give students a second to get back on track.



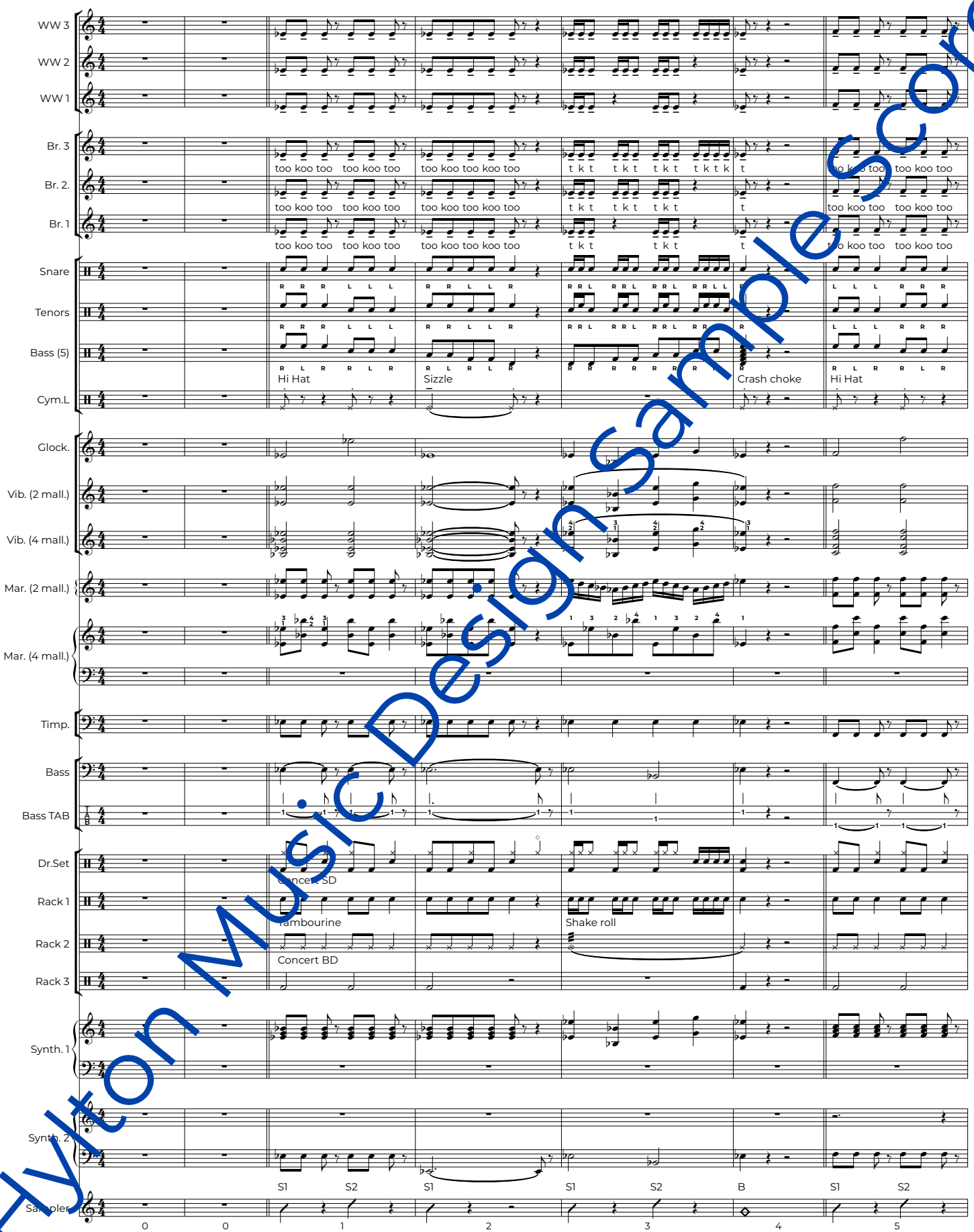


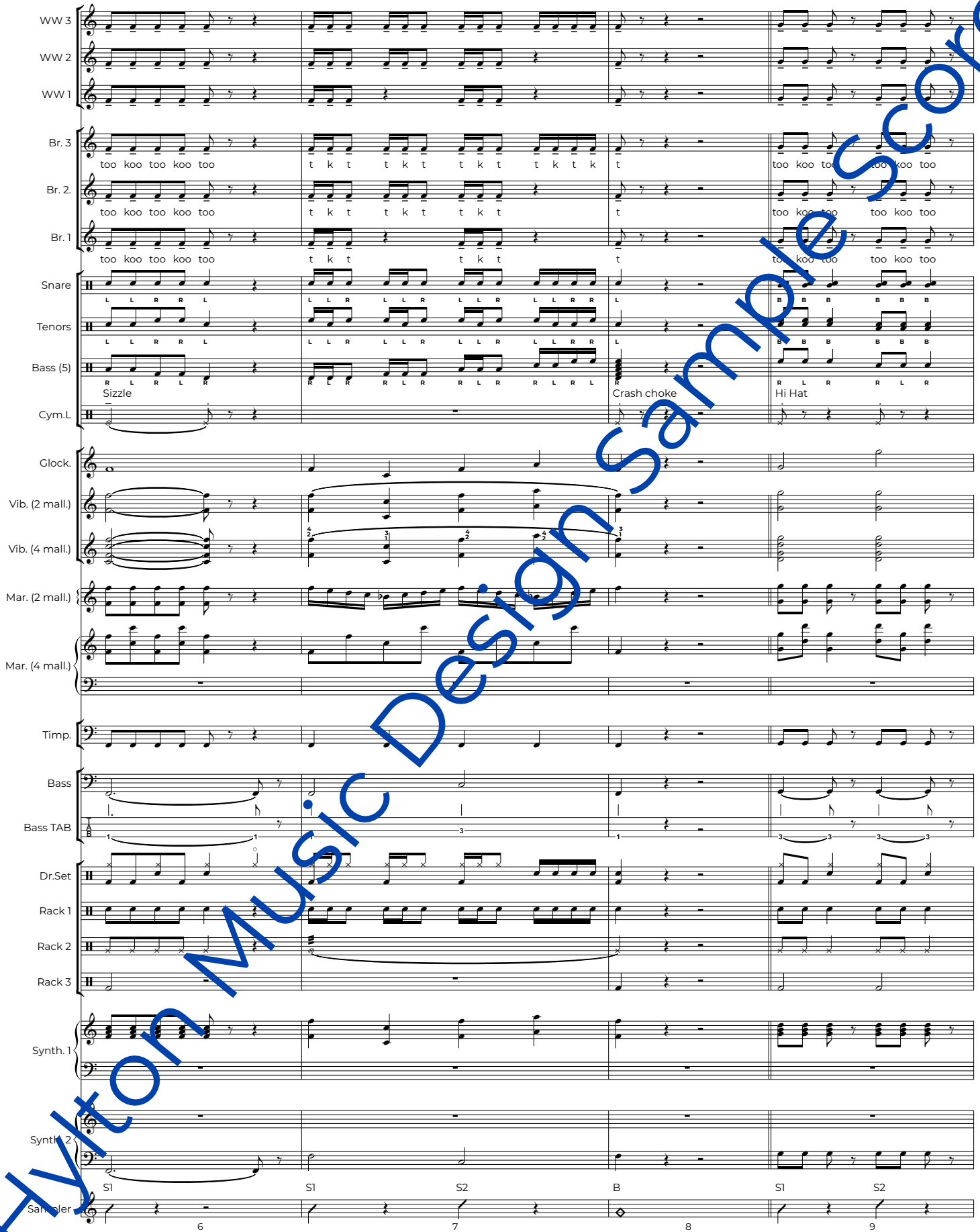


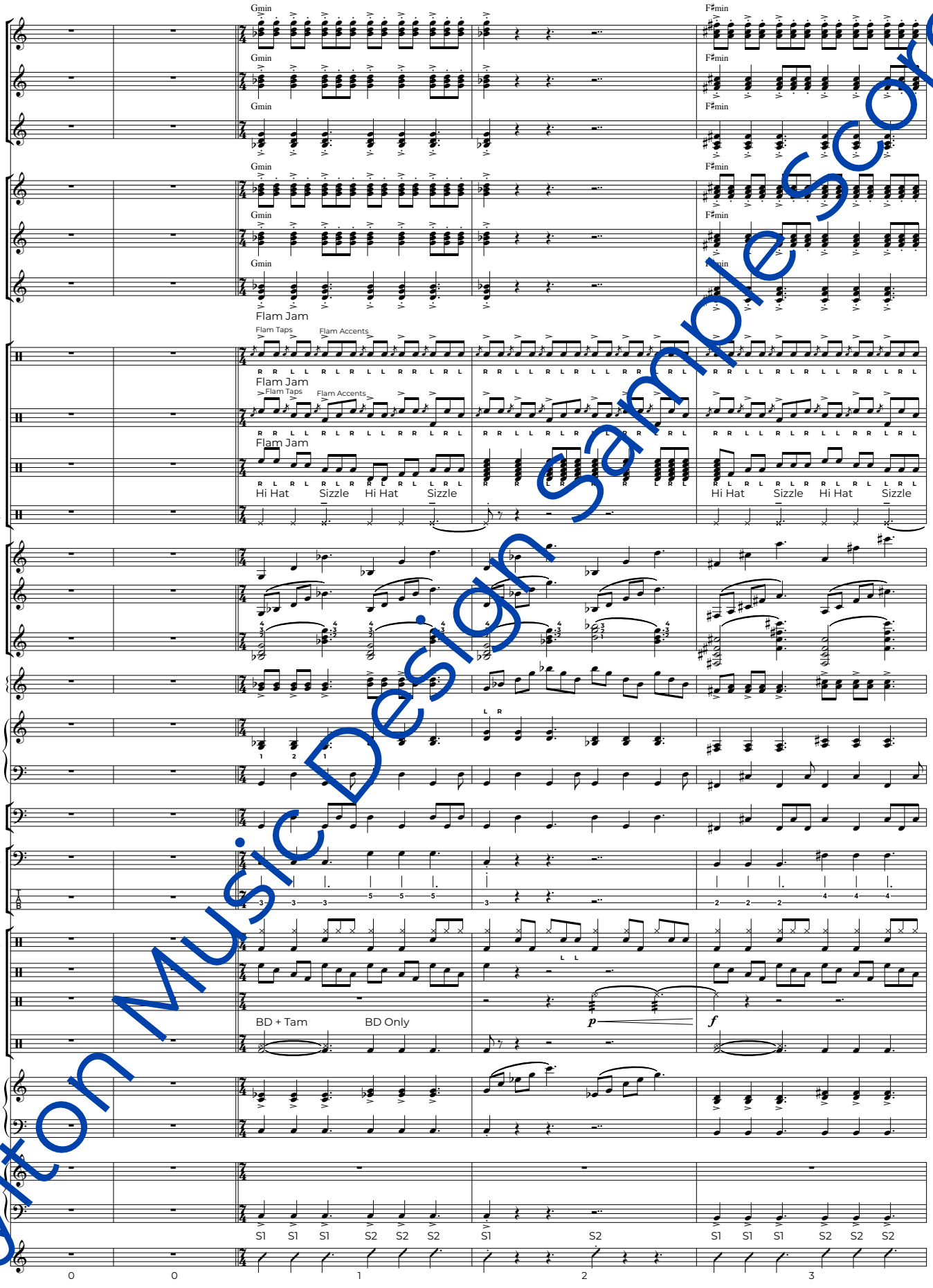


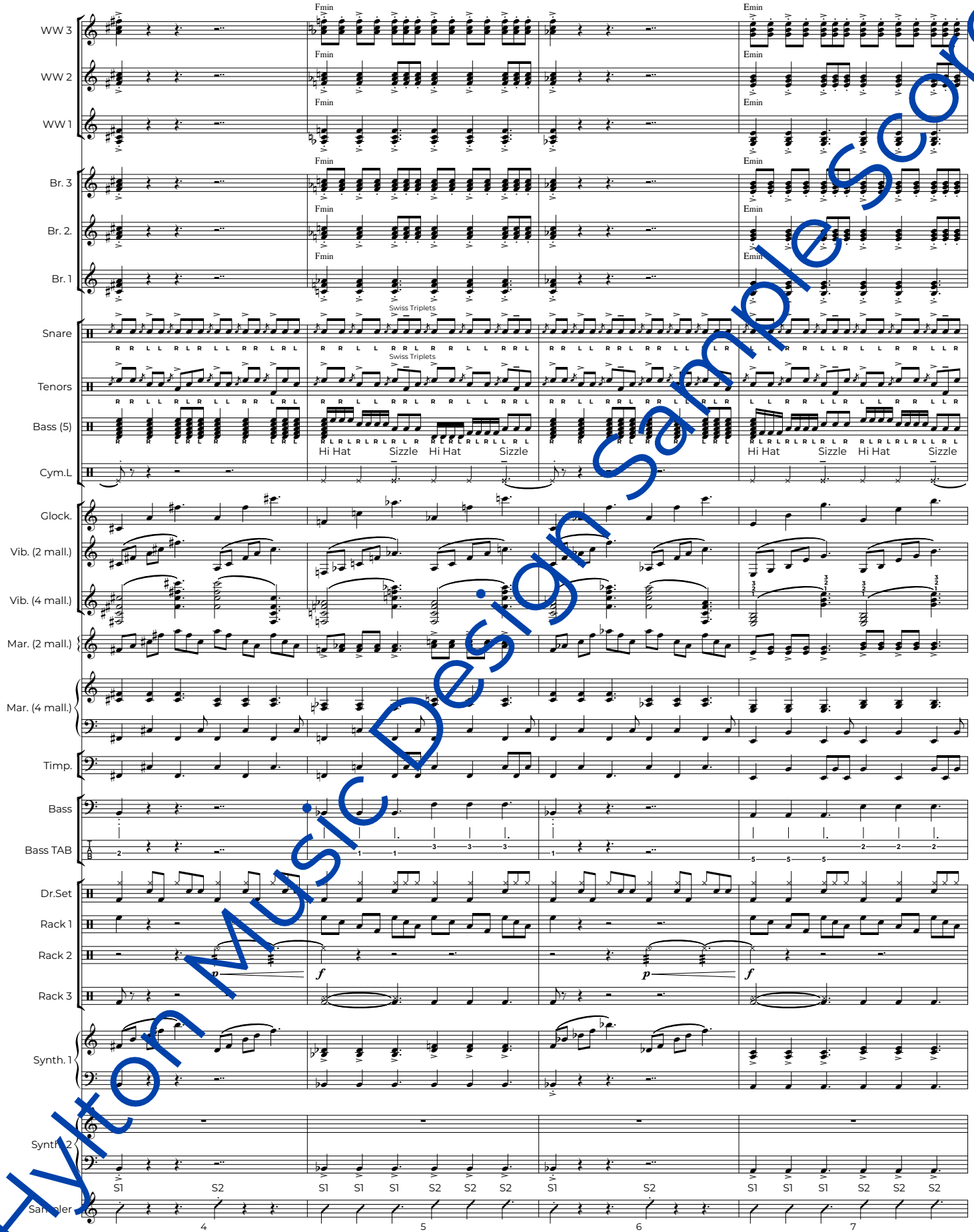


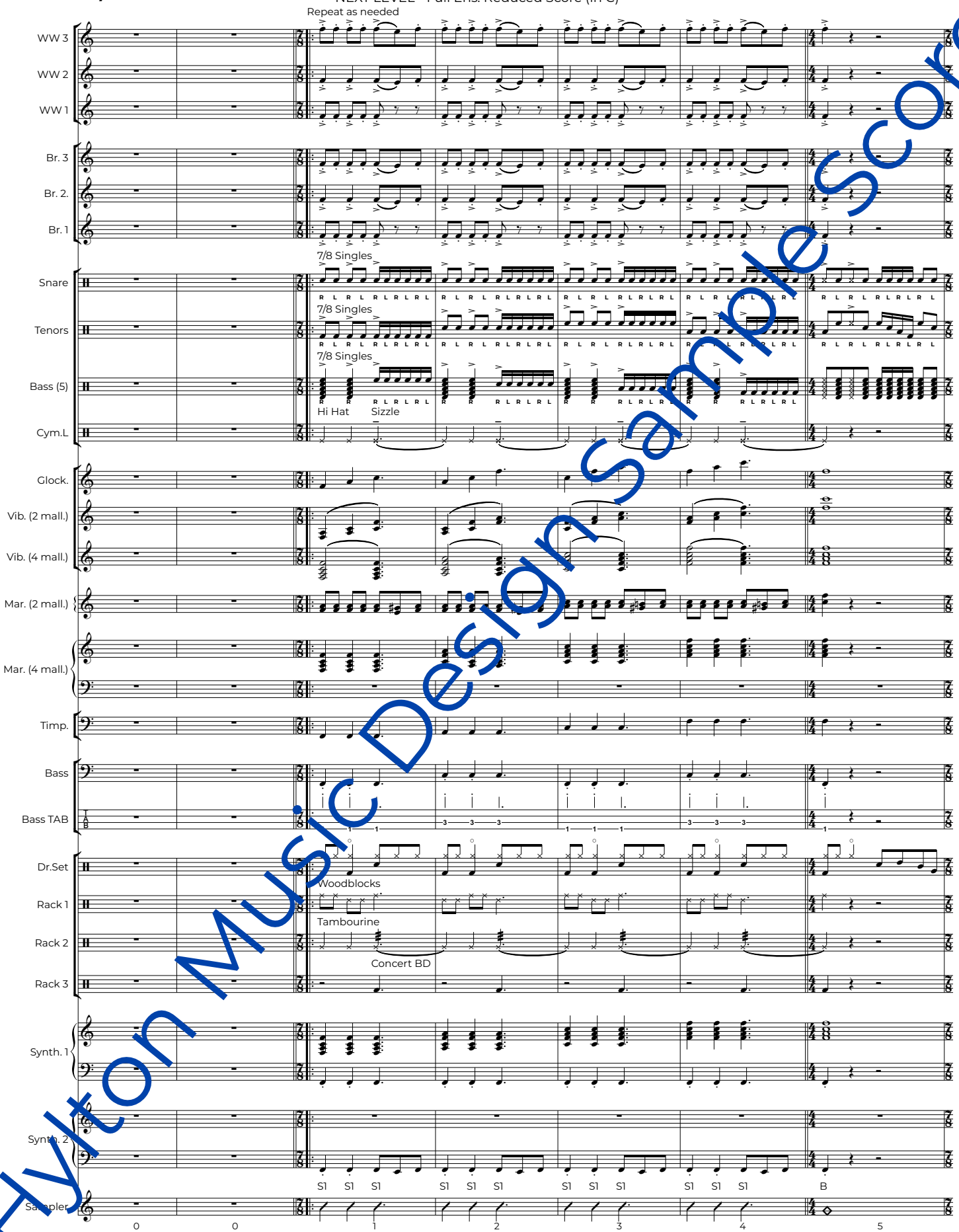
Articulation 4 (fast/double tonguing)











Style Guide

The Winds style guide is used to teach/define the style of different articulations.

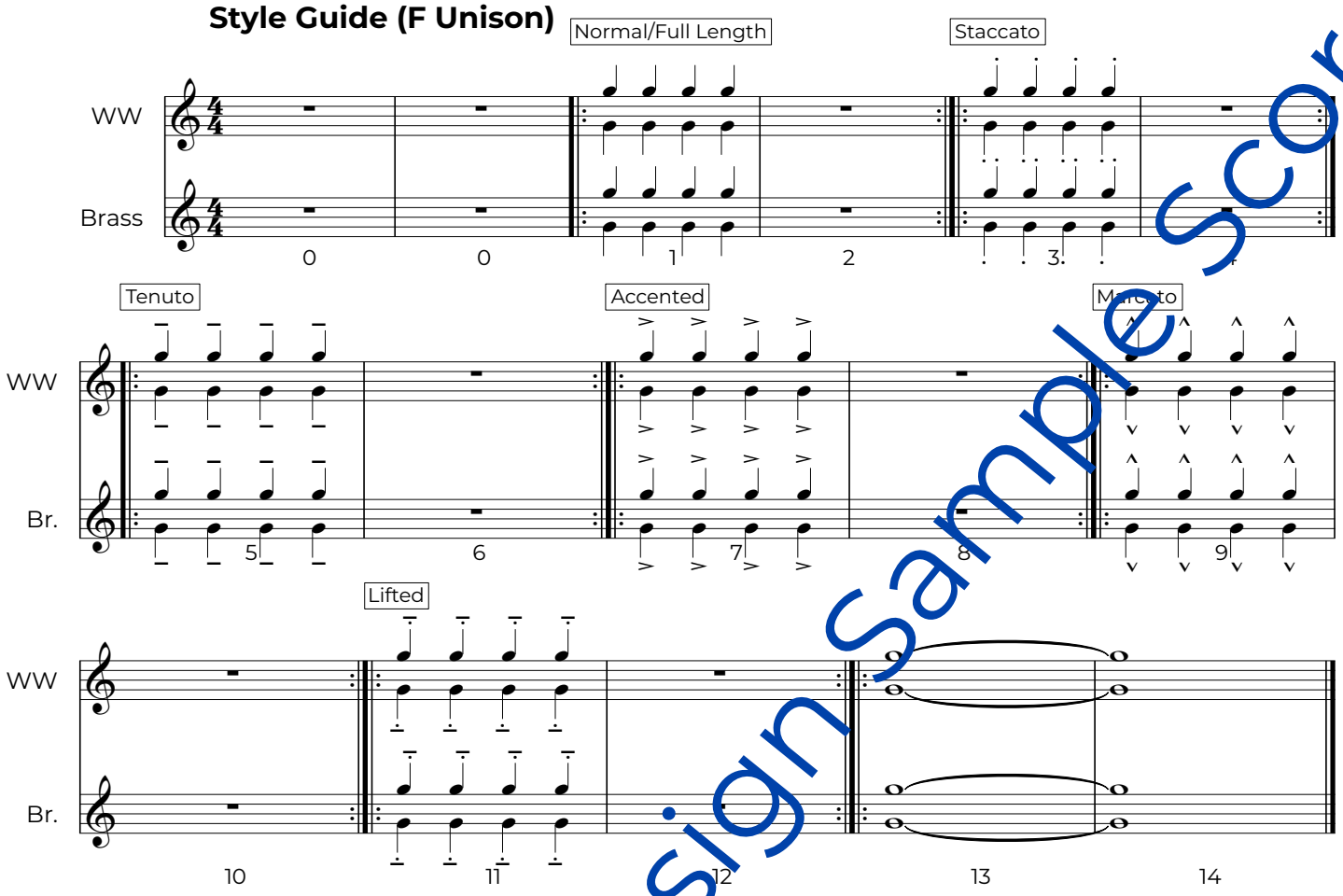
- **Normal/Full Length** - 100% length with a clear tongue. Mechanical and clear.
- **Staccato** - can be defined as 50% of the written note length (or less if you prefer) and should be light, not pecky or harsh.
- **Tenuto/Legato** - full length 100% notes with a really light tongue in between; lyrical and smooth like a chorale.
- **Accented -** 10% more air on the downbeat with a slight decay. The style of the excerpt will dictate the length of note. Sometimes they'll be full length and sometimes they'll be detached (as a default use 75% or 100% length).
- **Marcato -** Short (can be 50%) and accented.
- **Lifted -** (a difficult one to define...) a smooth quiet entrance with more emphasis in the middle of the note, then a taper at the end - like the shape of a football.

Dictate which version (F Unison, F Maj., Bb Maj.) to play and even make up new versions based on any key or chord.

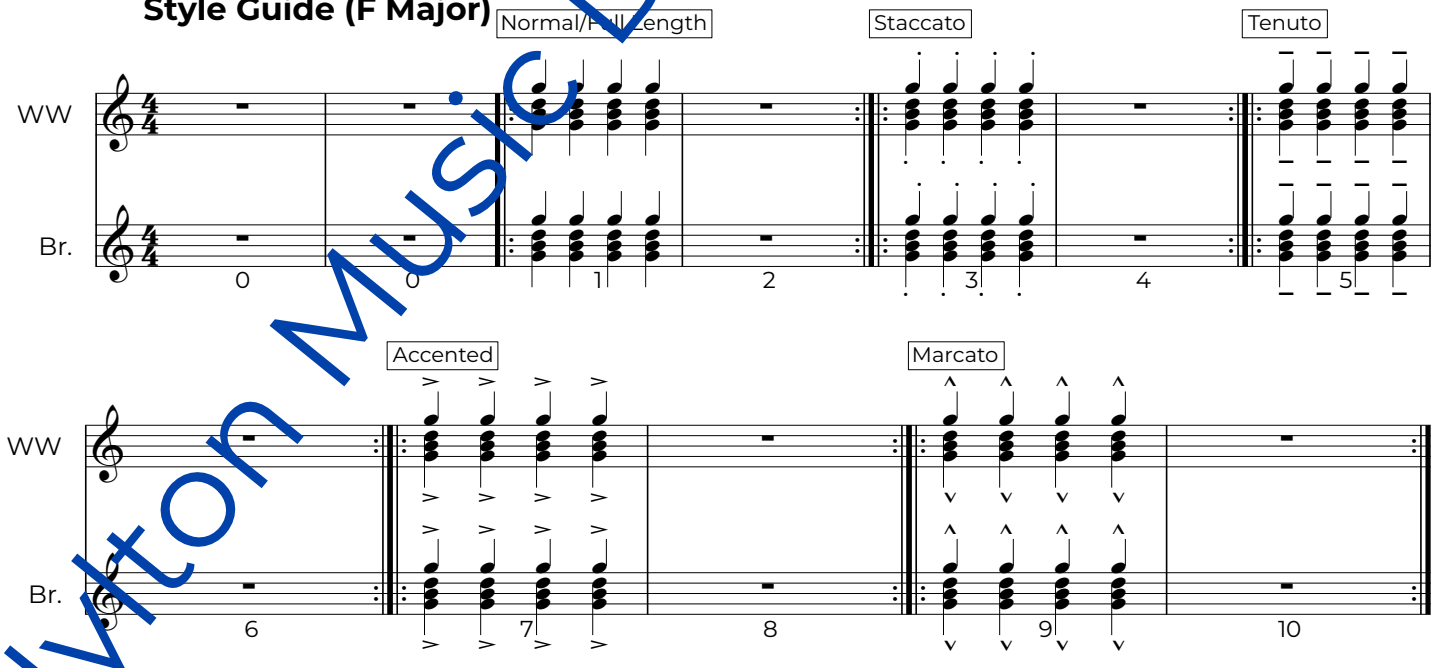
The **Style Etudes** are used to practice different styles in a musical setting rather than in a sterile sounding exercise. Learn them all slurred, all legato, long accented, detached accented, and make up new sounds. They are to be memorized in both major and minor.

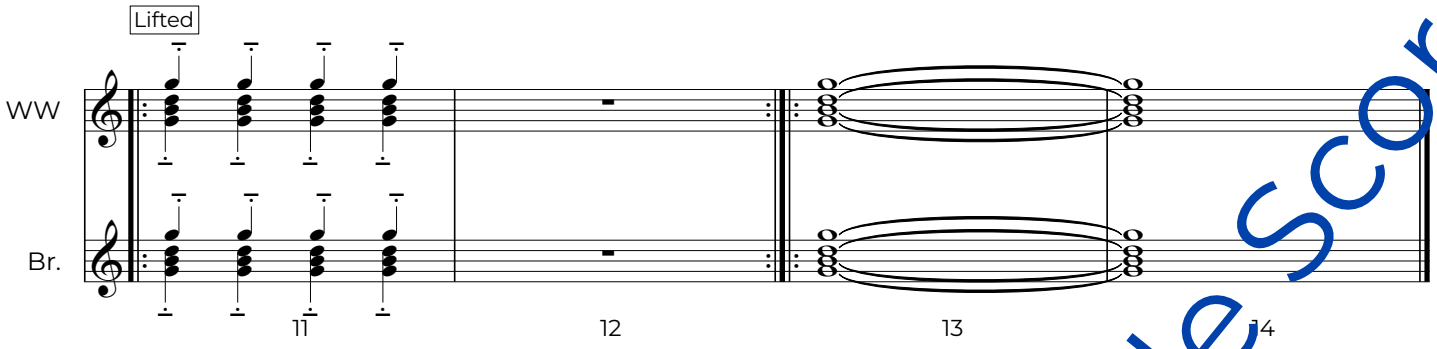
- written in 4 part style, each instrument has 3 of the 4 parts based on range. Having everyone play the topmost part for their instrument will automatically be balanced.
- use the style guide to determine which styles/articulations you want to work on that day.
    - "This time, slur everything" "slur all 8ths, staccato all quarters" etc.
- It's best to have all "bass" parts (bass clarinet, bari sax, tuba) play the same line: "All low people play Part 4"

Style Guide (F Unison)

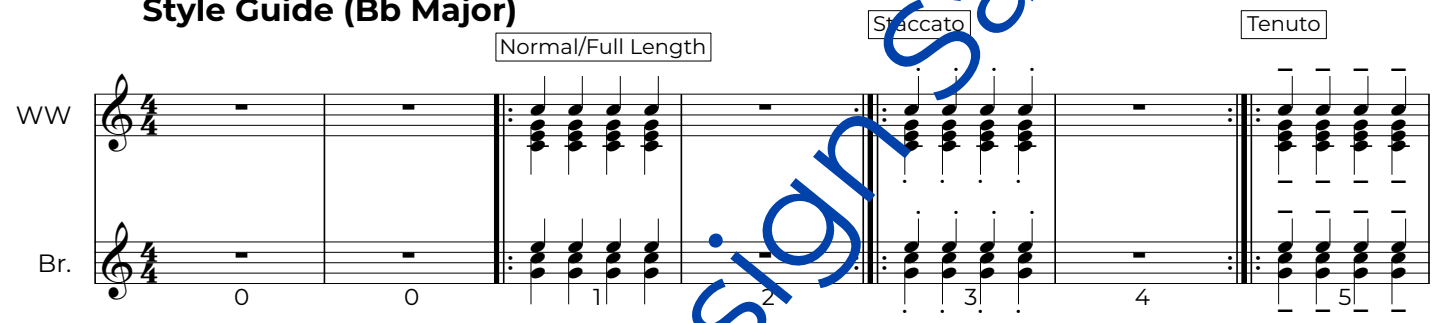


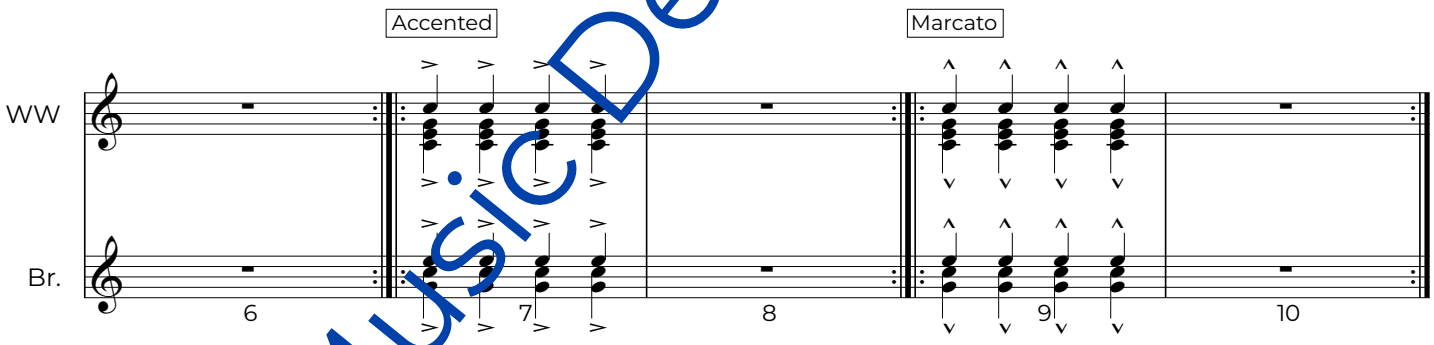
Style Guide (F Major)

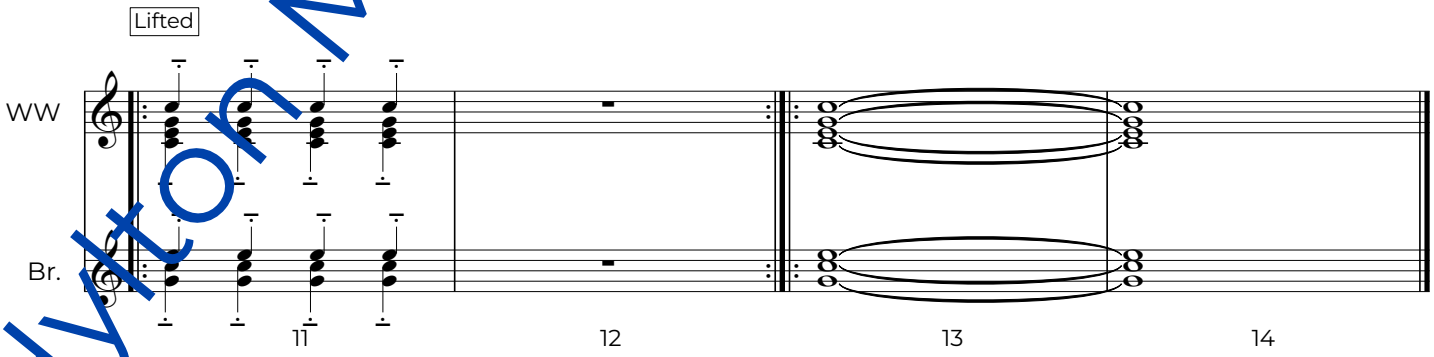




Style Guide (Bb Major)







Style Etude (Major)

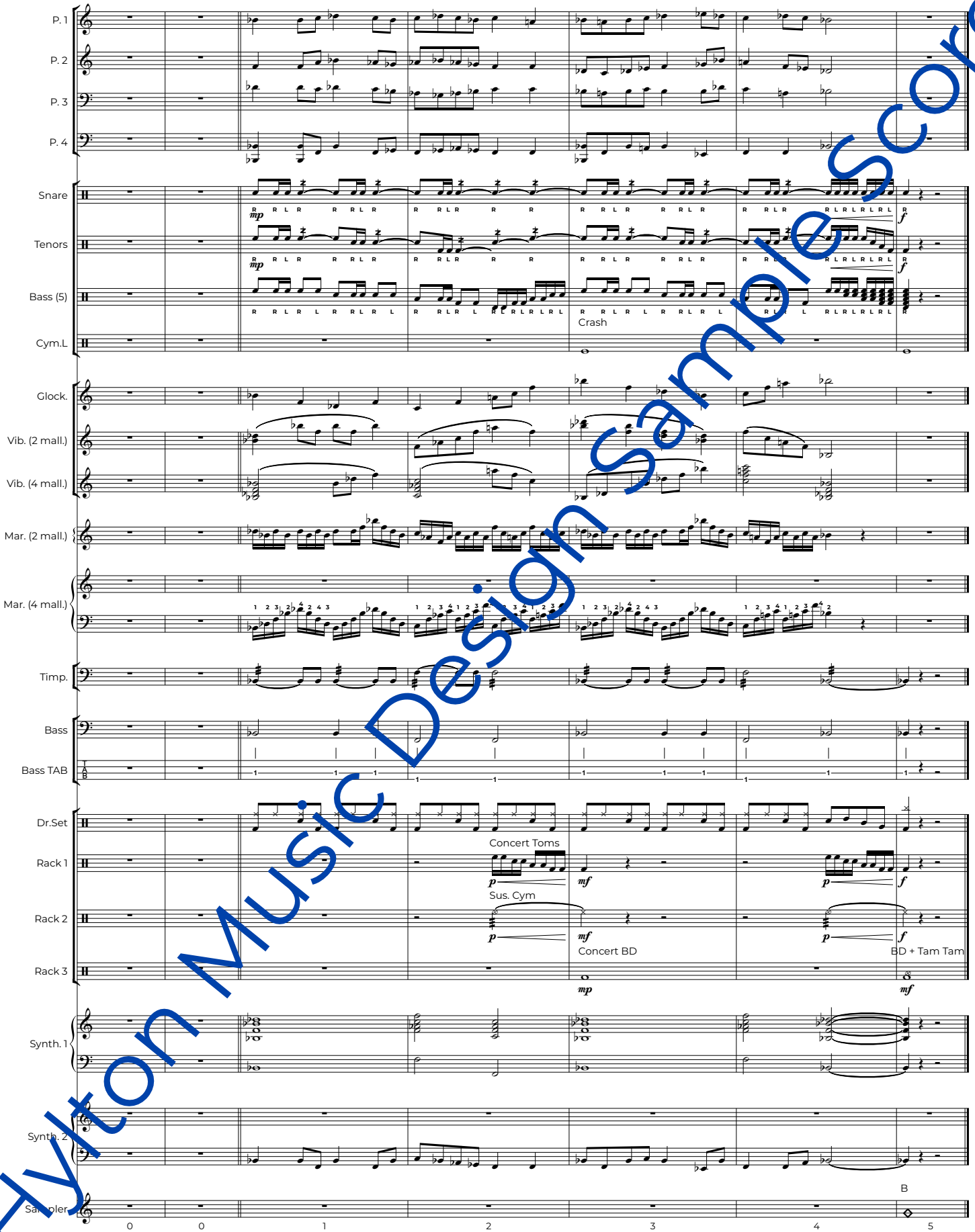
NEXT LEVEL - Full Ens. Reduced Score (in C)

♩ = 88-108

countoff

Part 1
Part 2
Part 3
Part 4
SnareLine
TenorLine
BassLine (5)
Cymbal Line
Crash
Glockenspiel
Vibes (2 mall.)
Vibes (4 mall.)
Mar. (2 mall.)
Mar. (4 mall.)
Timpani
Bass Guitar
Bass TAB
Drumset
Rack 1
Concert Toms
Sus. Cym
Rack 2
Concert BD
Rack 3
BD + Tam Tam
Synth. 1
Synth. 2
Sampler
B

0 0 1 2 3 4 5

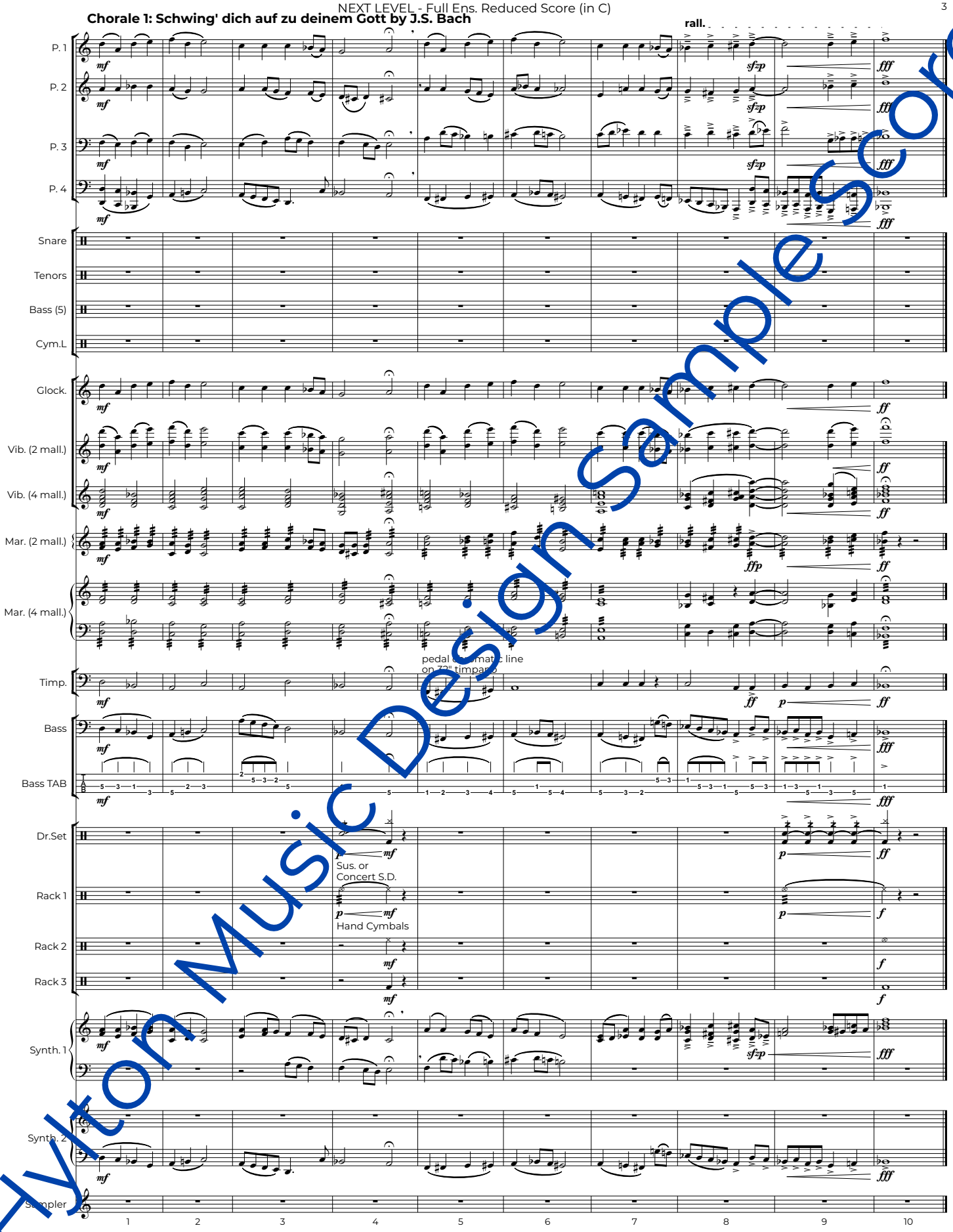


Chorales

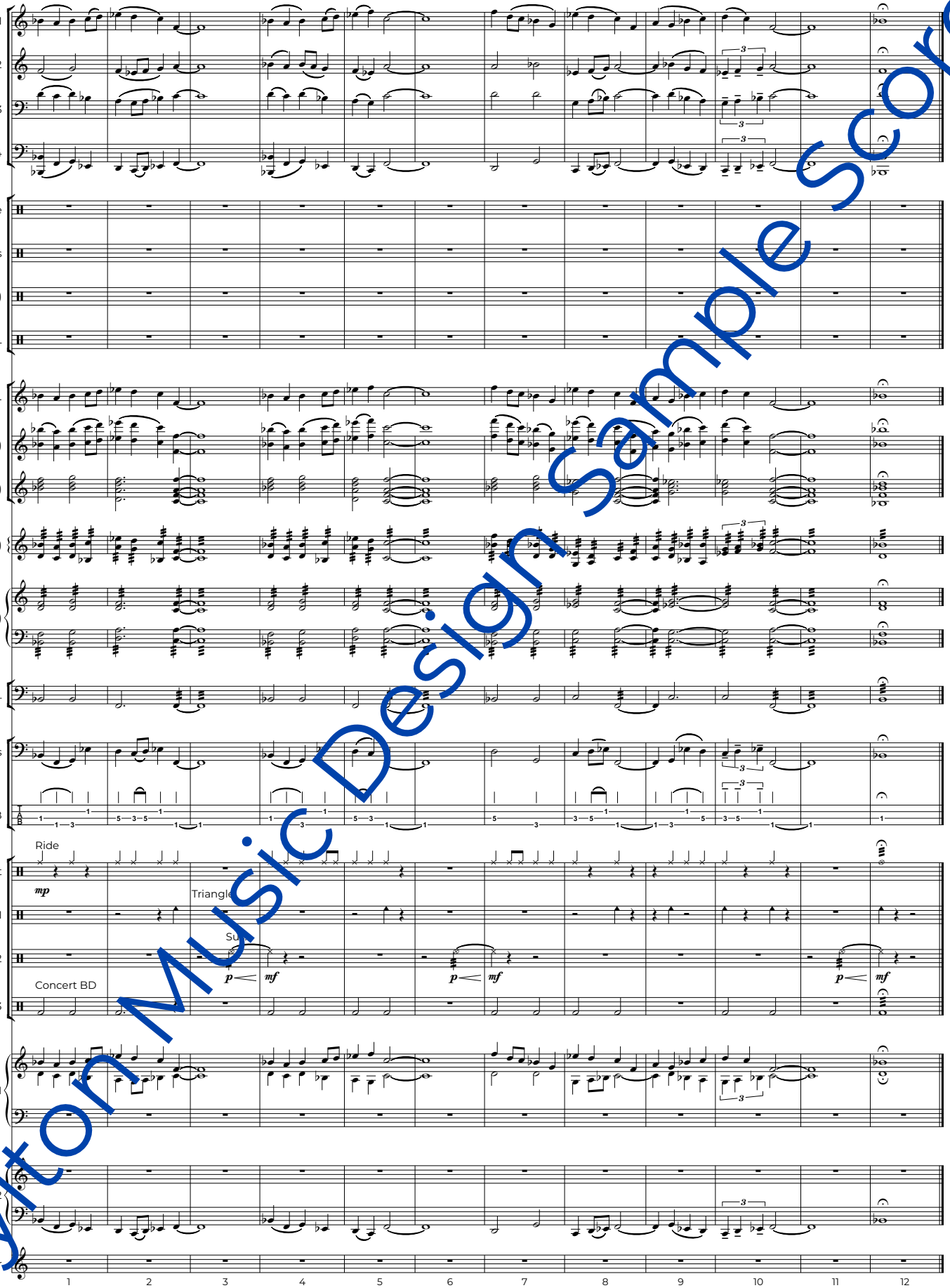
Chorales are set in 4 parts. Each instrument has 3 of the 4 parts based on range. Having everyone play the topmost part (on their page) for their instrument will automatically be balanced voices. There is some minor trading of parts on certain instruments to create better voice leading at times.

- Play with the full ensemble AND have your students form small groups to play 1 on a part, trio-style.
- In full ensemble low instruments (Bass Cl., Bari Sax, Tuba) should play the same part (their topmost part) for good clarity.
- Train your students to listen for the melody or “part 1.” to practice ensemble balance and listening.
- To test timing, “Bop” the chorales (have students only play 1 staccato note for each note) - this allows you to hear every note change to find who’s moving early/late.

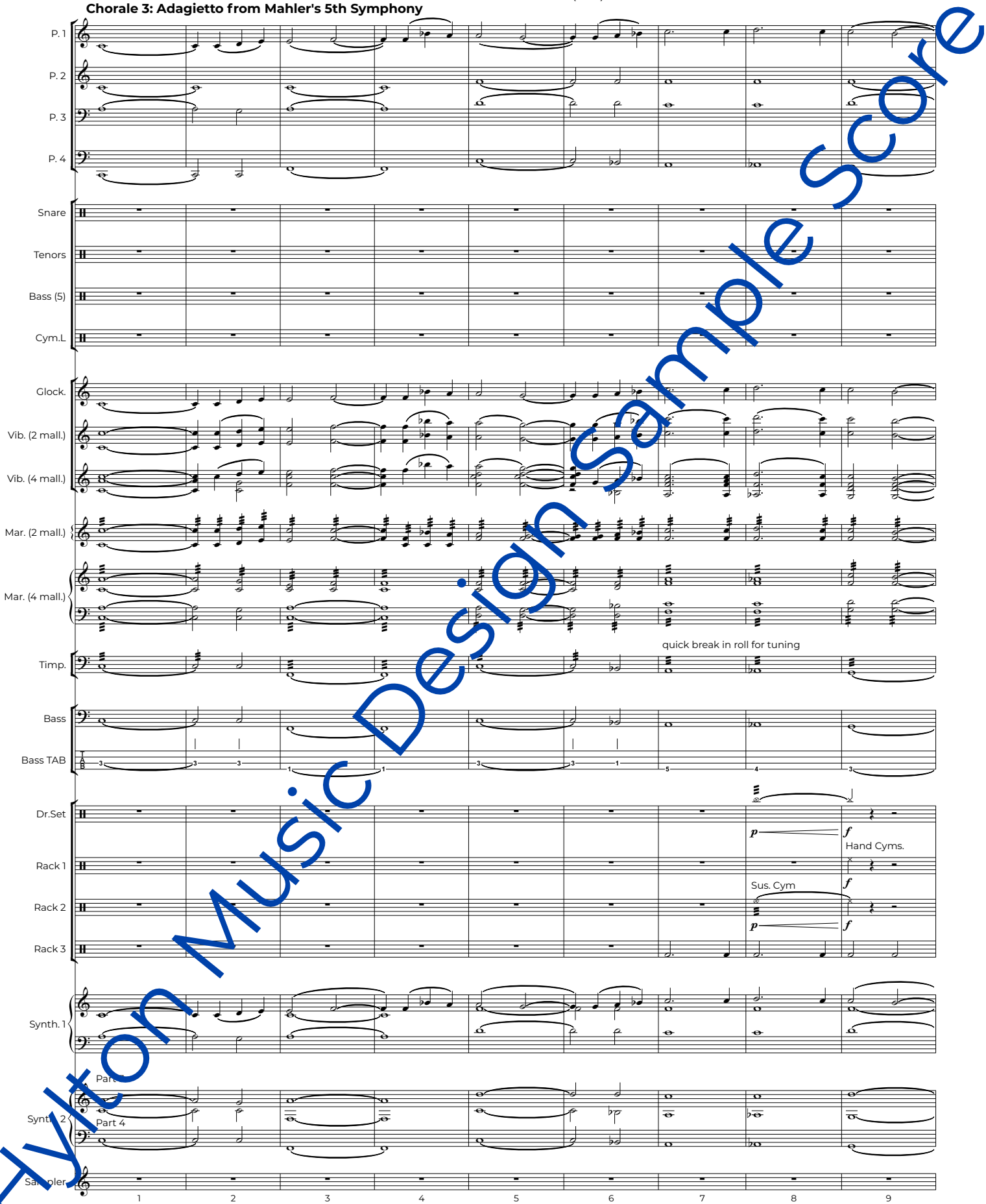
Chorale 1: Schwing' dich auf zu deinem Gott by J.S. Bach

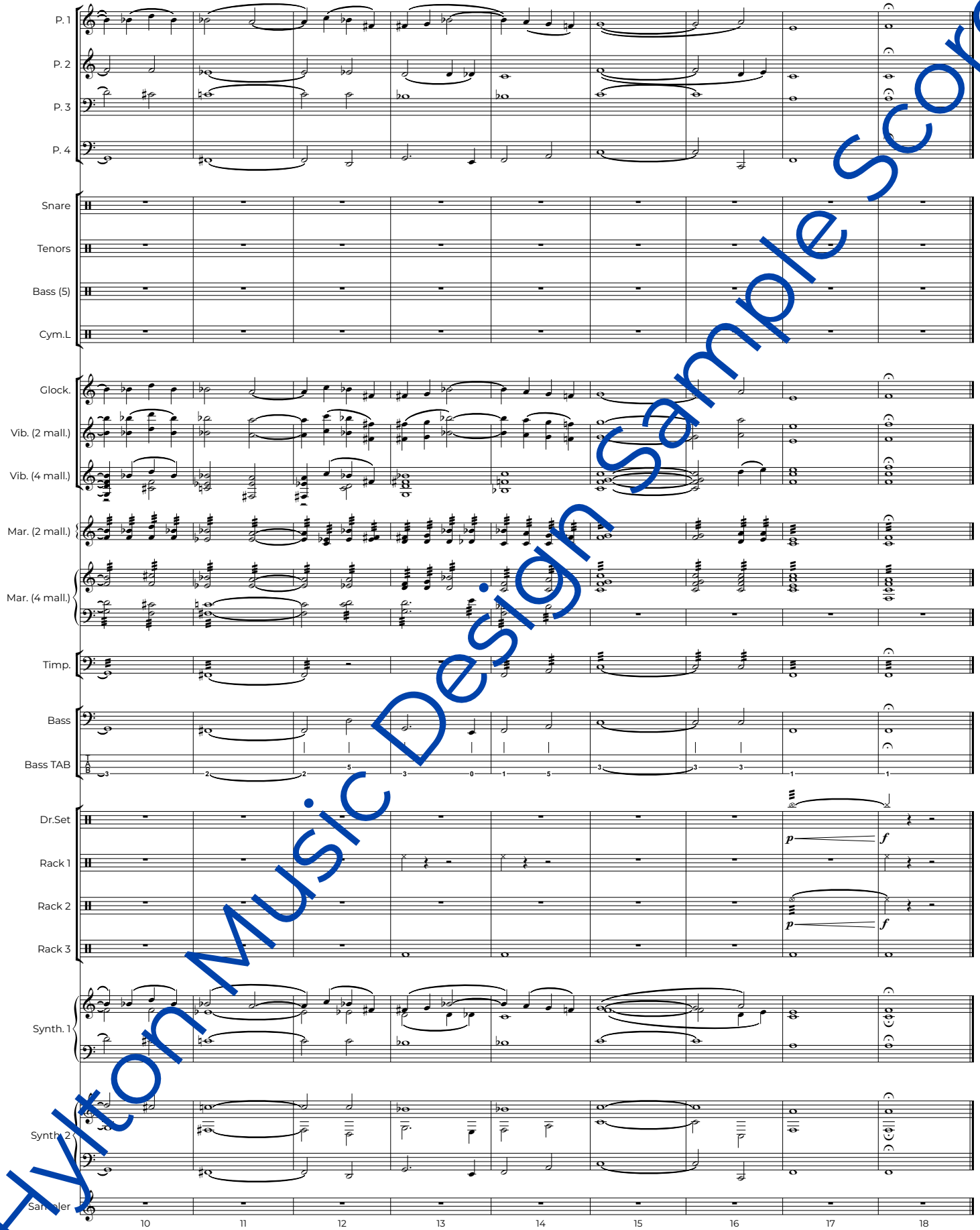


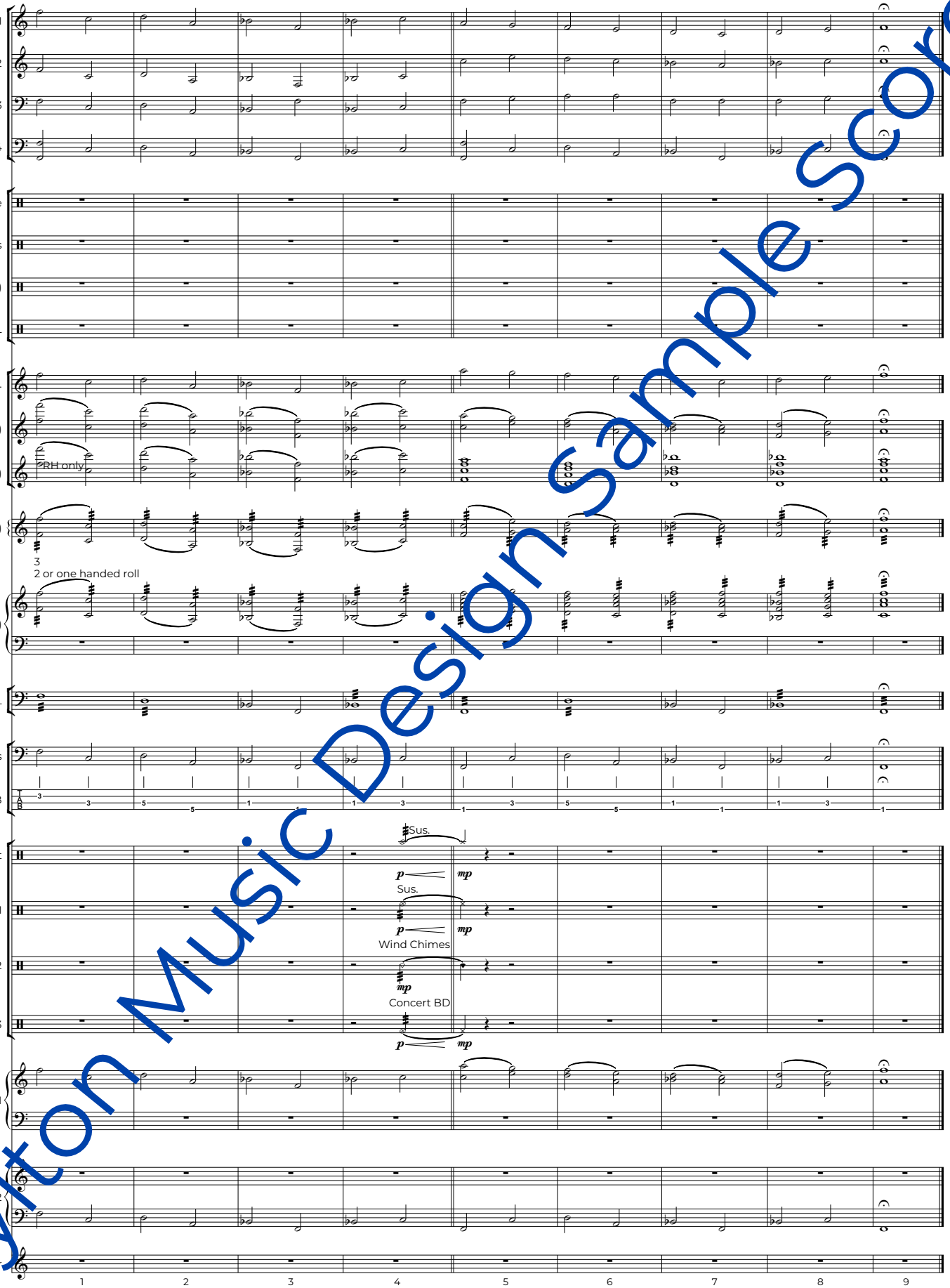
Chorale 2: Horkstow Grange by Grainger



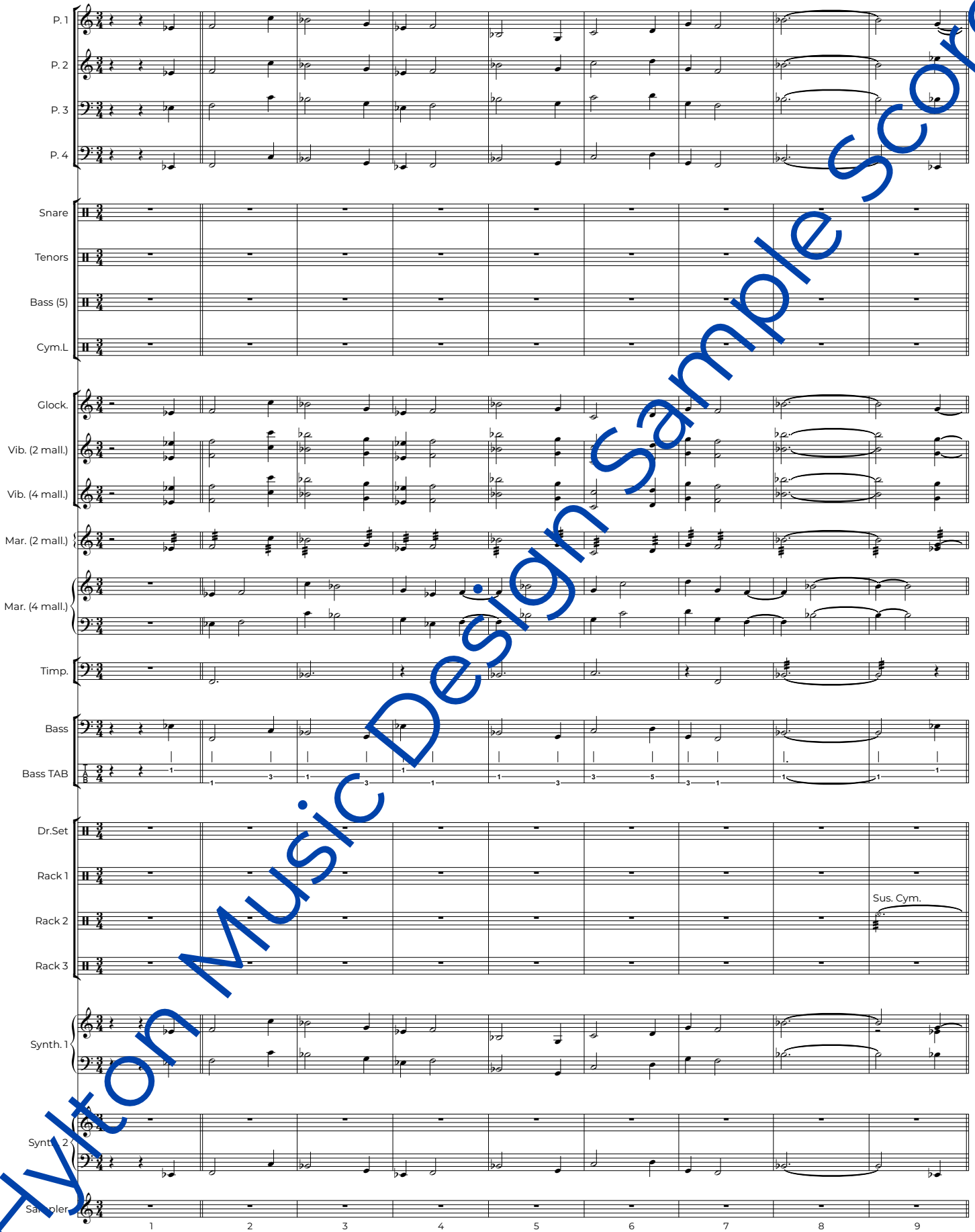
Chorale 3: Adagietto from Mahler's 5th Symphony

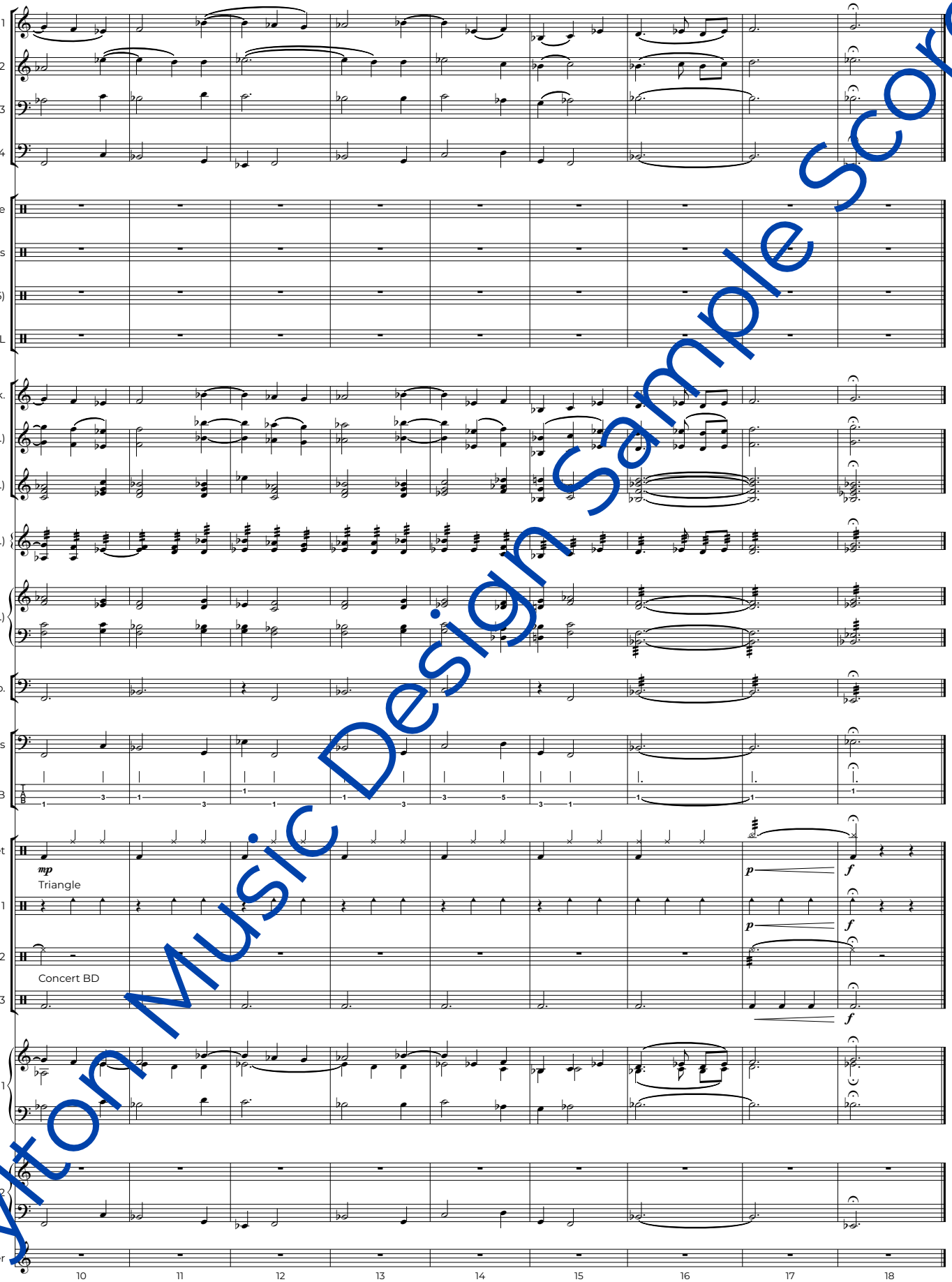




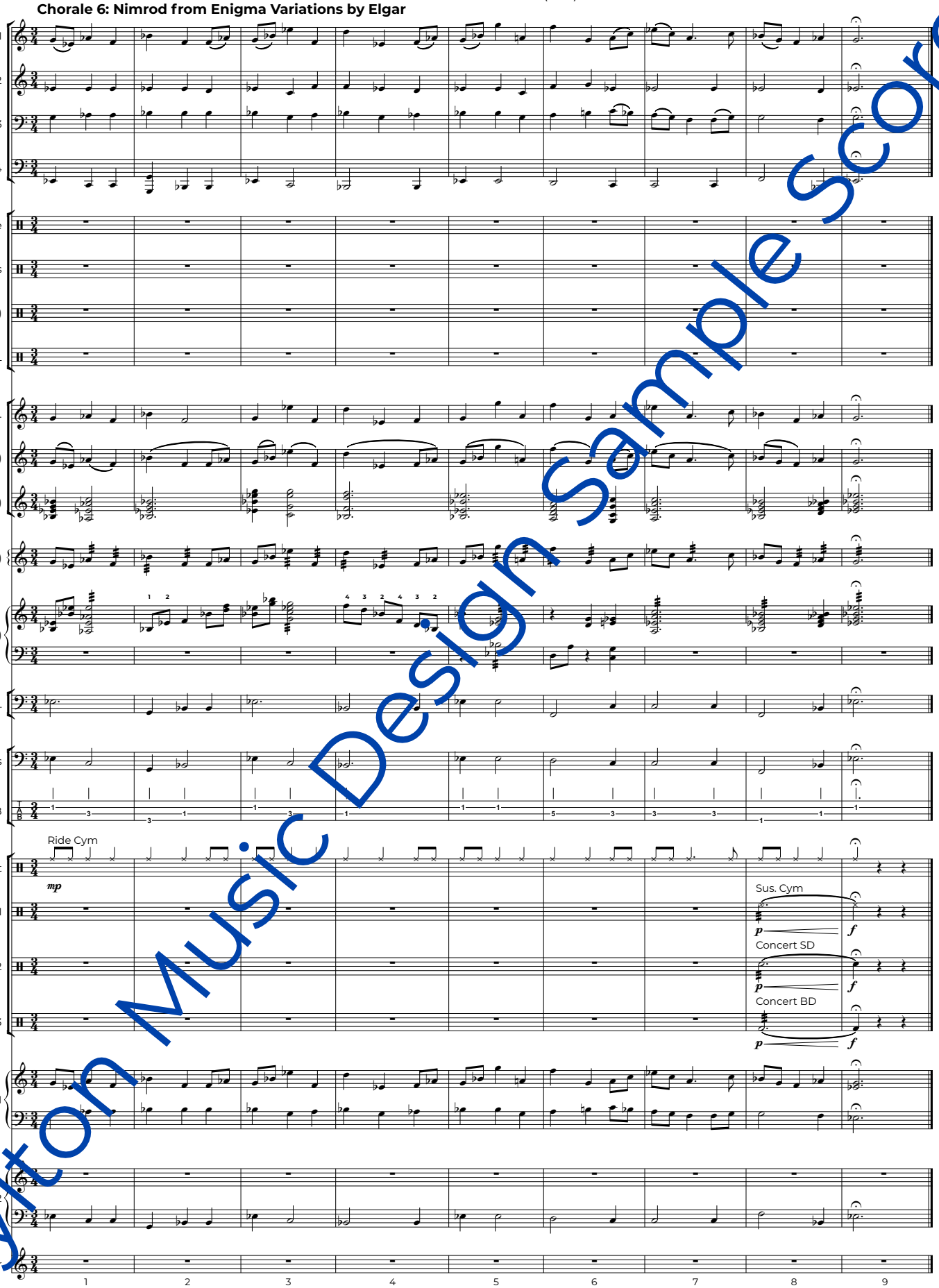


Chorale 5: Chaconne from 1st Suite by Holst

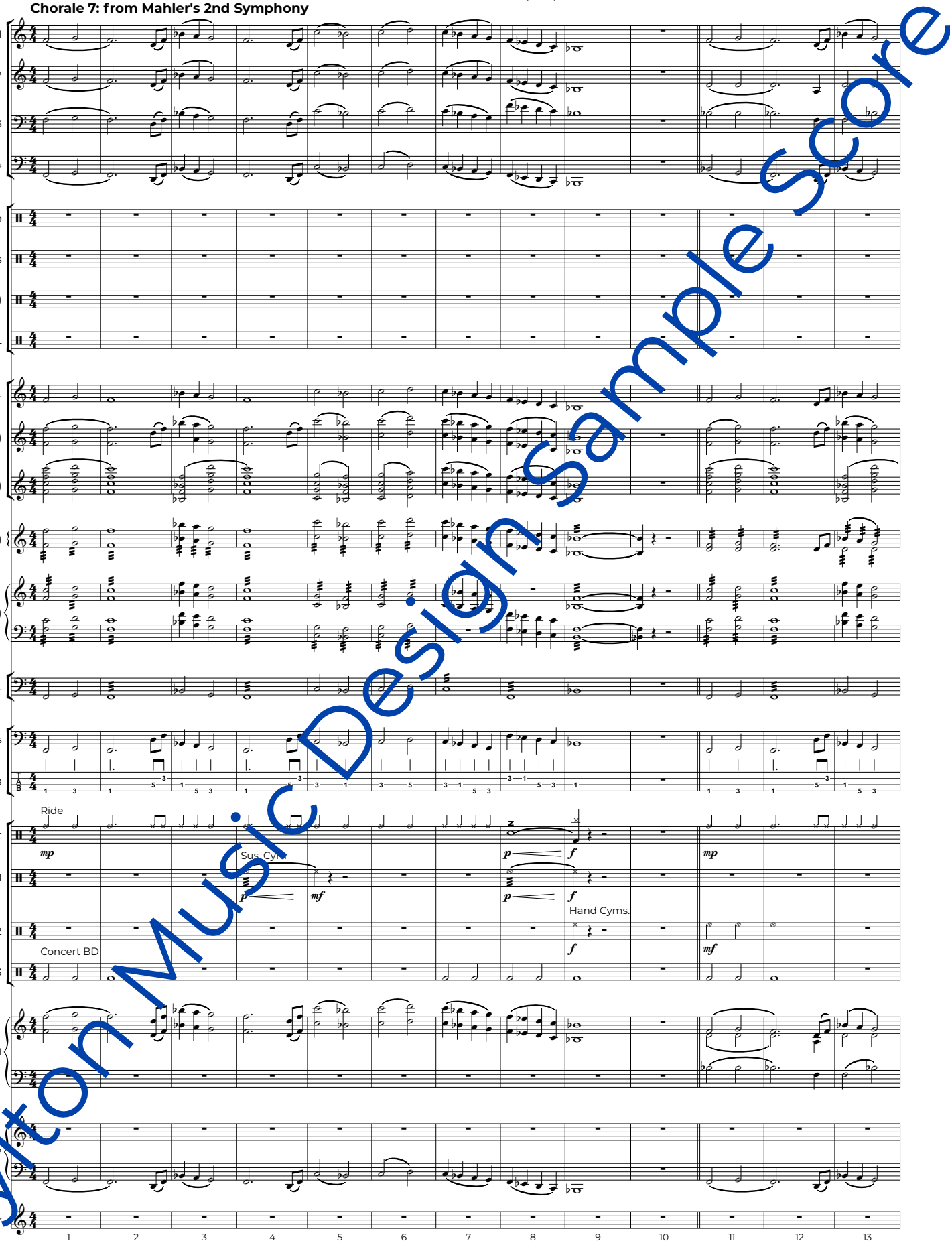


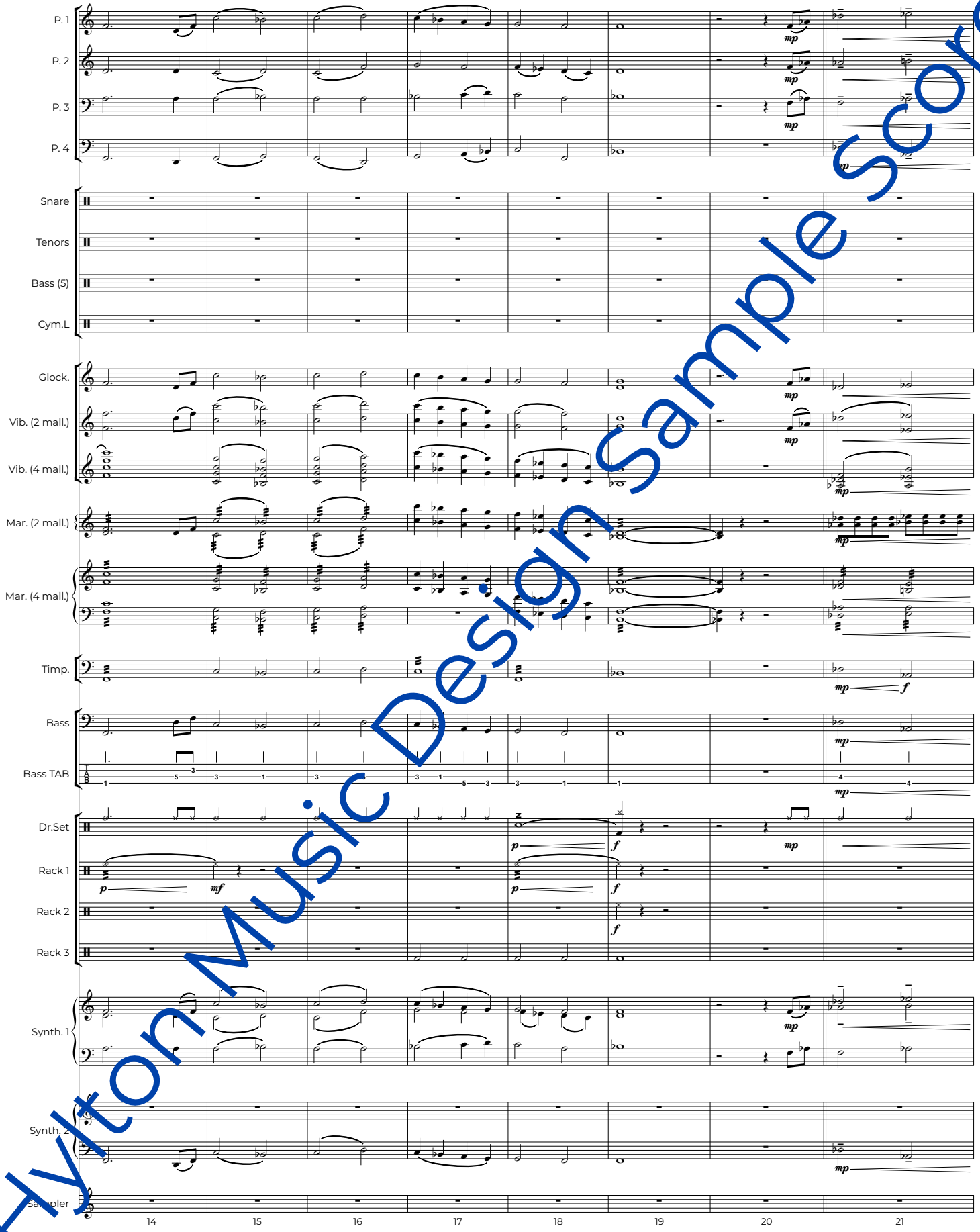


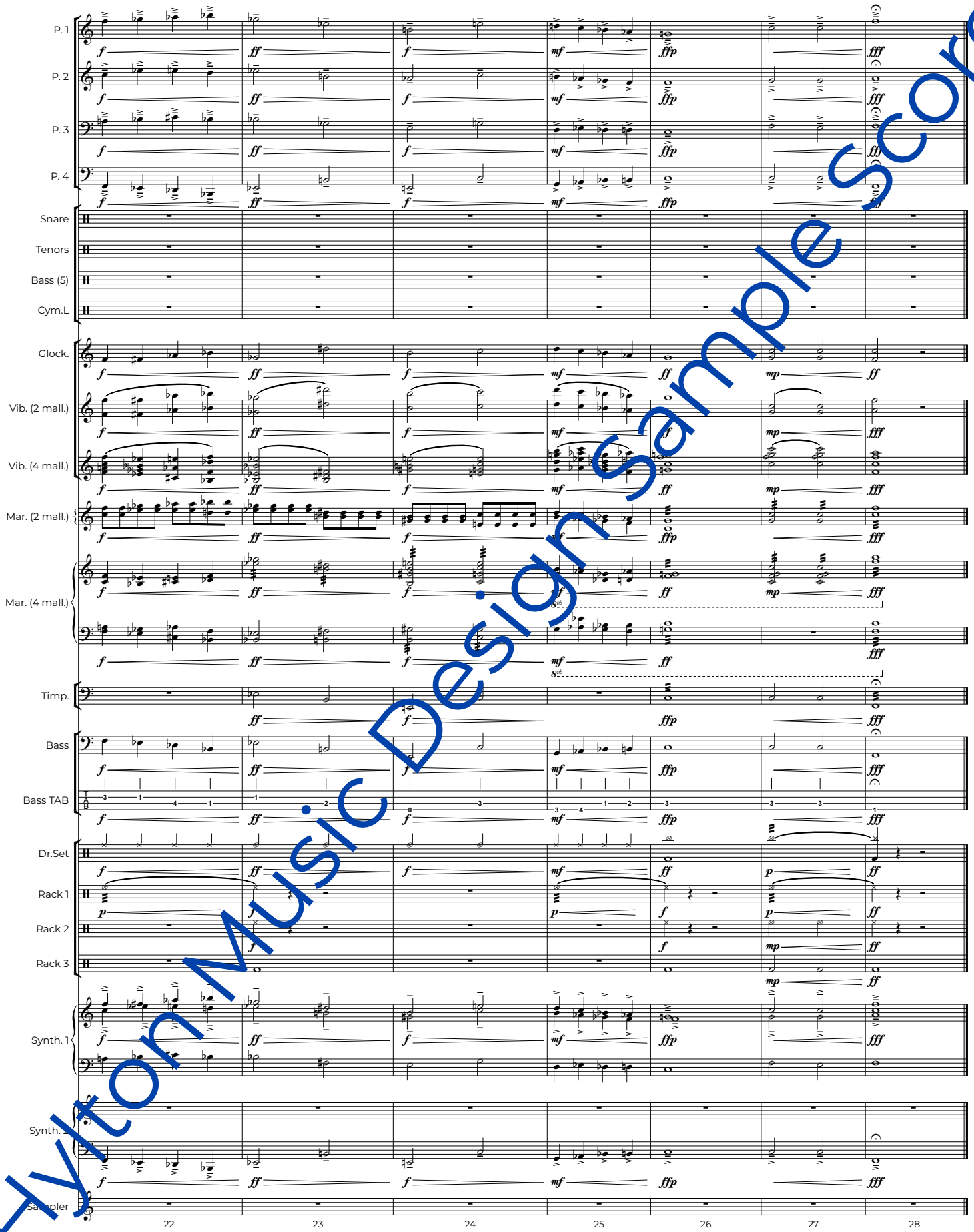
Chorale 6: Nimrod from Enigma Variations by Elgar



Chorale 7: from Mahler's 2nd Symphony







Playing in a Marching Ensemble

Timing

Timing is crucial in every exercise and every second of the show. Each of us needs to develop a strong sense of timing so that we can detect errors in timing as well as tempo fluctuation during rehearsal. We will often encounter situations in the drill/staging on the field where we have to adjust the timing of certain performers so that the full ensemble sounds together from the box. We will practice some difficult listening/timing situations in the winter months in order to practice this skill.

Section Playing

On top of your individual development we have to learn to come together and perform effectively as an ensemble. The underlying goal is to have every performer sound and look exactly the same while performing with the highest level of energy and training.

We often have trouble in the early season with performers “laying out” when they are tired or out of breath. For balance purposes you must make yourself play when you are supposed to be playing, even if it sounds bad initially, you’ll never improve if you don’t play.

Matching/Balance

It’s crucial that every performer matches the players around them regarding intonation, pitch, style, and more. This requires every performer to be highly aware and listening in their “trios” at all times. Practice modeling and matching by listening to your section leader or instructor play a short phrase and then repeat it, modeling the exact sound you heard.

Staggered Breathing

Sustained sound at all dynamic levels is the hallmark of any good ensemble. Staggered breathing simply means that you don’t breathe at the same time as the other players in your section. Directors/leaders can assign general early/middle/late breathers or even assign individuals to breathe on specific counts of the musical phrase.

- Exit the sound undetected (fade out)
- Take a full breath (1-2 or more counts)
- Re-enter the sound undetected (fade in)

Visual Responsibilities

Physical preparedness for the marching arts. It's just like a sport! (but harder LOL)

- Aerobic Activity - the marching arts can be one of the most intense aerobic activities there is. You need to be in good physical shape in order to perform properly.
    - A healthy diet and workout routines are important.
    - Running and other cardio workouts will help your body and mind prepare.
- Physical Flexibility
    - incorporate stretching into your individual musical warmup routine, it creates better muscles and prevents injury.
- Injury Prevention - injuries occur often in the marching arts. We need to take care of our bodies so that we don't have to sit out of rehearsal or worse yet, end your season due to a debilitating injury.
    - Normal wear and tear on the body will happen, rest and replenish!

Posture

Proper body alignment and body usage is crucial for relaxation and efficiency. The body should be tall and long creating space in the abdomen for proper breathing as well as lifting the upper body off of the hips/ lower body for smooth marching carriage. The ears, shoulders, hips, knees, and anklebones should be in a relative straight line. Make sure that the head placement (ears in line with shoulders) is in a neutral position, not creating tension in the neck and throat.

Buzz Words:
- "Be Tall"
- "find relaxation in your posture"
- "Feel the string pulling up from the top of your head like a marionette"
- "Shoulders tense/squeeze up, then let them fall"
- "Bring the instrument TO YOU, not the other way around"
- "pretend you have the Superman "S" on your abdomen and always show it to the audience"

Mark time/Step outs

We will experiment with a modification to our step outs and mark time for 2018. Step outs will be 2 full steps forward/backward with a point/stop on step two, a left foot replant on count 3, and back to close for the mark time. We will experiment with a full foot off the ground mark time. This trains body control while stationary - "If it ain't on the move..." Strive to always look and feel so in control of your body it's as if you are standing still. No auxiliary movement (i.e. rocking back and forth, bouncing, etc.).

Buzz Words:
- "Feet in time/Drive your feet"
- "full 8 to 5 step every time" (if taking step outs)
- "stay tall on the step out, don't sink down"
- "quick initiation" - put lots of energy into the step off.

Visual Best Practices:
- Learn about how your body works and feels. Listen to what it tells you. If you back is sore you may be standing incorrectly. If your neck hurts, you may be holding tension in it.

- Continually check your posture, especially after standing for long rehearsals. As soon as your upper body begins to sag or lean you'll be wasting precious energy and creating tension.
- Experiment with finding good posture at all times; even when you are simply walking or standing normally. Get your body in tune.
- Incorporate marching and choreography, even if just a few steps, into your practice routine. It can be something you learned or even something you are just improvising.

Tuning

The only truly effective tuner that can be used during performance is **YOUR EAR**. Spend your musical practice time effectively training your ear by listening to recordings of yourself and others and being hyper aware of your sound while playing. Also, practice singing. I bet you can't sing a chromatic scale 1 octave and land perfectly on the last note without going out of tune. Check it with a pitch drone....

You must first have a good tone before you can effectively put your instrument in tune. A lot of people skip this important step and then constantly struggle with playing properly, much less, in tune. Also, use your ears to make sure that you play musical lines and exercises in tune with yourself. You shouldn't play a phrase and be sharp on the way up and flat on the way down...

The process of tuning your instrument:

1. You should be at least moderately warmed up. Don't look at the tuner yet until you are!
2. Play concert F and get your best sound. You may need a pitch bend to lock in the center of the note.
3. Play concert F, G, A, Bb slurred and hold the Bb.
4. When you feel like the Bb has a great tone and is locked into the center, finally look at the tuner and see where it is. Adjust the instrument, not your embouchure! (you've gotta know how to find the center of pitch... Otherwise you'll never be able to tune effectively)

Tuning in Repertoire

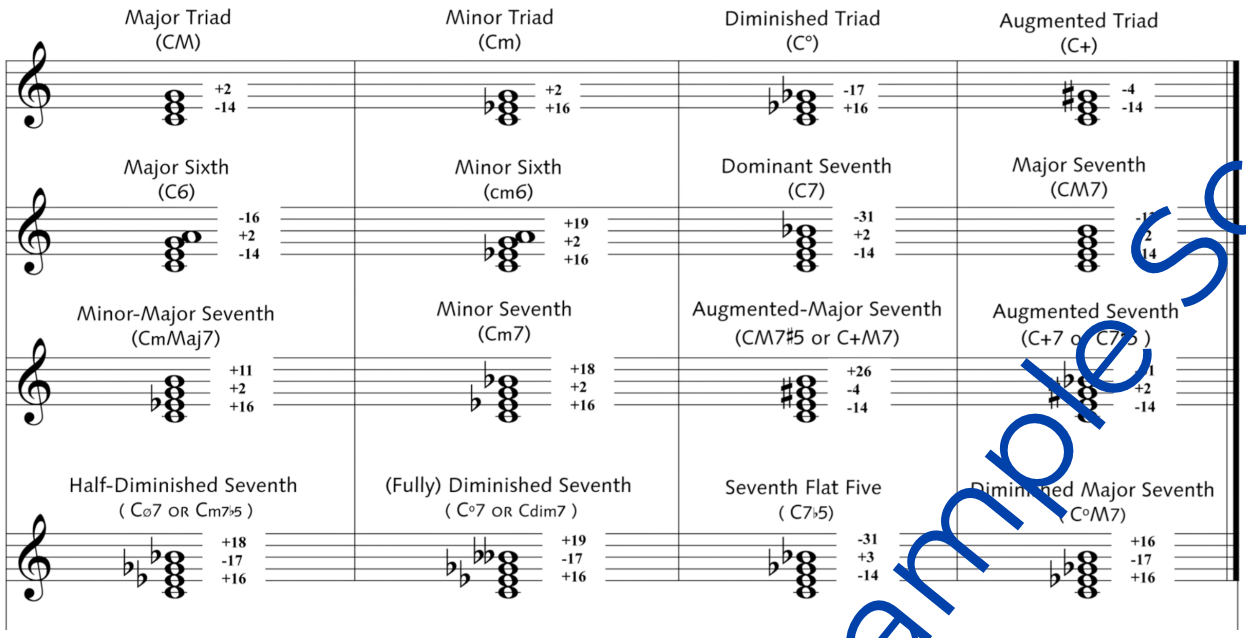
Again, cultivating your ear is really the only effective way of playing in tune at all times. You can't take a tuner with you into a performance and even if you did, it just wouldn't help.

Keep in mind, there's a big difference between **"Equal Temperament"** and **"Just Temperament."** Chordal instruments like the piano are not able to adjust the tuning of notes on different chords, however, when we play or sing in an ensemble we should adjust chord tuning so that it's "just temperament." It simply means that the notes are truly in tune based on the vibration frequencies of each note and that the chord will "ring" more. Once you hear "just" and "equal" temperament compared side by side the difference is astounding! Check out the chart below, the 3rd's and 5th's of chords must be adjusted when held so that they are actually in tune. Grab the Tonal Energy app and sustain a chord (CEG or BbDF) touch the tab at the top left corner that adjusts between equal and just temperament and listen to the difference. Yep... I bet some of you have never heard about temperament.... mind blown...

This **Chord Tuning Chart** shows the needed adjustments in "cents." You can practice locking in different chord tones by using the Tonal Energy app. Sustain the root and 5th in Tonal Energy and play the third or sustain R/3rd and play the 5th. Don't adjust the lips to be in tune just listen for the best tone and hear the 'beats' in the sound wave.

Practicing with Drones

Practicing with drones is a great way to work on your individual intonation and clarity of pitch. Make it a habit of putting on a drone from Tonal Energy when you practice long tones and other exercises. We will experiment with making play along tracks with metronome and drones for you to utilize in your practice.



You can also put on a drone to play scales slowly for intonation on each note. Listen for the beats in the sound wave and get the best tone.

You can use drones with:

- Buzzing
- Long tones
- Scales
- Flexibility
- Anything that stays relatively in the same key for a phrase or more.

Tuning FAQ/Troubleshooting/Best Practices

- "*My tuning slide is really far out and I'm still sharp.*" Unless you're standing in 125 degree heat (not likely) you are probably playing with a really tight aperture. listen to your tone, if it's not great (sounds thin, nasaly, pinched) then go back to square one… (fix your tone)
    - Also, as you move your tuning slide, the center of pitch moves with it. Each time you adjust the instrument, find the center of pitch again…
- If you're in a normal temperature environment there's no reason that your tuning slide should be very far from it's "factory" spot (approx. 1-2 centimeters out depending on your instrument). If you have to move the slide a lot (like a whole inch) you are probably not playing in the center of pitch.
- If the tone sounds nasally you may be above pitch. If the tone sounds airy and is difficult to steady, you may be below pitch.
- When concentrating on tuning, don't shy away from it, this will actually make it more difficult to tune. Keep supporting the sound with good airflow and listen for the "beats" in the sound wave.
- The "beats" will get slower as you get closer to the pitch and faster as you move away. When we play chords, its the correct frequency (speed) of the beats that makes it sound in tune.

High Volume/Intensity Playing

Playing at high levels of intensity and volume is an integral part of the marching arts. It's essential that we maintain great quality of sound and style at these dynamics and it will take some time to develop throughout the season. Overall, your approach to the instrument needs to be one of projection at ALL dynamic levels; "**get your sound to the box at all times**."

Just like in everything we play, the air is what determines your dynamic level and relaxation is still absolutely essential at all times.

It's possible to utilize a system of airflow to help define and check dynamic levels. It's not a perfect science but it's a good way to help us understand proper air flow (*For Reed instruments, the uppermost and lowermost dynamic counts tend to be less applicable, since there's generally more resistance from the reed/mouthpiece*). At approximately 100 bpm, taking a full breath and getting comfortably empty, your air should flow steadily for all of the counts. Practice these with wind patterns, air/valve, and playing. It's all about the flow!

pp = 24 counts
p = 20 counts
mp = 16 counts
mf = 12 counts
F = 8 counts - (Forte is generally "as loud as you can play with no 'edge' in the tone")
FF = 6 counts
FFF = 4 counts

Bright versus Loud

As you work into big dynamic levels be sure that you aren't getting tense or micromanaging the embouchure. Yes the embouchure may firm up in order to keep the aperture in place but don't think about it, just think about the tone. The tone will begin to have "edge" above Forte but it should never become brighter or more nasally in quality. Keep the tone dark and stay in the center of the pitch. Also, articulation should not be harsh at loud volumes: do everything the same as mezzo forte, just flow more air!

Listen to some videos of major orchestras (Chicago, New York, Vienna, Berlin, - especially German orchestras cultivate a dark tone) playing heavy repertoire (Mahler, Wagner, Bruckner, etc.). Notice that the players don't look tight as they play big, they've mastered the flow.

To work into bigger dynamics:

1. Play a note in your comfortable range (near F or Bb) at Mezzo Forte.
    - Make sure you have a great tone and are playing in the pitch center.
2. Crescendo to Forte without letting the tone or pitch change.
    - Think flow of air and don't change anything else.
    - Try it with a tuner to check yourself.
3. Now start a note at Forte with great quality and crescendo to FF, etc.
    - If you lose quality or feel tension, go back a step...

Volume FAQ/Troubleshooting/Best Practices:

- When playing in environments where you can't hear yourself well (full band warmup time, pep band, etc.) be careful that you aren't playing overly loudly or brightening your tone in order to hear yourself. This may also apply to some marching band drill staging.
- When practicing big volumes, get into the right frame of mind. Imagine yourself in the stadium, or better yet, go into a big space and fill it up with sound. Think broadly, and "epic"-ly with your 'audiation' and while playing.
- Stay loose and relaxed! check your hands, shoulders, neck while playing and relieve the tension.
- Balance your loud playing with quiet playing. After a loud rep play some soft tones in a comfortable range or low tones, check good response and light mouthpiece pressure.

Therapy

If you play with the best efficiency at all times (good flow, no tension, minimal pressure, etc.) your chops will feel great! However, after long rehearsal days and lots of big dynamic levels we often need therapeutic treatment for the body and the chops. You'll probably need it at times in your own practice both after and within your session. Though if you find your chops 'hurt' after every time you play, you are most likely not playing efficiently.

- Minimize mouthpiece pressure
- Use Low Tones/Pedals and don't blast them! Louder is not better.
- Check for tension in your body, especially neck, shoulders, upper back, face/forehead.