TULANE UNIVERSITY

MARCHING BAND

FRONT ENSEMBLE TECHNIQUE AND INFORMATION HANDBOOK



Welcome! I am very excited that you have chosen to participate in the Front Ensemble at Tulane University! Your desire to become a part of this marching percussion ensemble is a testament to your desire to work hard, play well, entertain diverse audiences, and express your musical passion. The success of this group will be a direct result of an intense work ethic, dedication, and adherence to the program's core values from you and all members who come before and after you. The following handbook has been compiled to assist you in your percussive journey. The TUMB Percussion Section provides many great opportunities for you as a student and, as with all great programs, there is much preparation and support required to make the "TUMBline" a rewarding experience for all. Your goal is to be the best you can possibly be in music and in life! With the tools provided in this program, you will meet and exceed the expectations you create for yourself! If you are unable to find the answer to your questions in the following packet, or have any other questions about the world of marching percussion and the opportunities it can provide, please contact me at any time. Now! The world of marching percussion awaits! Good luck!

—Andrew K. Szypula, Assistant Director of Bands (504) 450-0486 aszypula@tulane.edu

THE FOUR "A"s

<u>ATTENDANCE-</u> If you attend rehearsals consistently, you will fulfill your potential for improvement, for reaching the goal of being the best that you can possibly be.

ATTITUDE- When your attitude is consistently positive and objective, and you are eager to learn despite the challenges that may arise, you can — and will — achieve the goals you set for yourself and that the Tulane Percussion Section sets for itself as an ensemble.

AWARENESS- Always be aware of yourself in your surroundings. Understand that you are an essential, yet very small, piece of a much larger puzzle. Know your role. Demonstrate consistently that you understand your responsibilities. Doing those things will enhance your day-to-day experience. You will learn much more than you think by simply being aware of what's happening outside your own little world. How well you integrate yourself into the larger effort will determine the ultimate progression and success of the whole group.

ABILITY- in the end, your actual performance ability, as opposed to your potential, will be the direct result of the level of your commitment to the previous "A"s. Your ability improves in proportion to your attendance, to your attitude and to your awareness.

As a member of the Tulane Percussion Section, you will be measured against the A's. They are your standards. Your degree of success will reflect how well you've mastered them.

All members will be held to all instruction given. It is your job to apply the changes given by your instructors and maintain them as you are inevitably going to receive more and more instruction throughout the year.

OTHER WORDS OF WISDOM

- Understanding and buying in to our program and approach will be of the utmost importance to the success of the TUMB.
- Remember, actions always speak louder than words.
- We want to transform our promise to be the best we can be into a reality. That will
 mean demonstrating a remarkable level of discipline as an ensemble and as
 individuals within an ensemble.
- We will strive to be on the same word of the same page at all times.
- Together, we will focus in rehearsal and after rehearsal on living up to our mission.
- Understand that how you conduct yourself on a consistent basis will color your individual experience and the experience of the entire ensemble. We want everyone to have the most positive and enjoyable experience possible; so please be sure that you are always working with the staff and your colleagues toward excelling on all levels.
- · Being great at anything is a ton of fun.
- The aspiration to be great is one thing; to be great is something else.
- You must grasp the dimensions of the work ahead of you, the discipline and mindset that are needed to achieve authentic greatness as an individual and as part of an ensemble.

The challenge may be greater than you now imagine it to be.

Nonetheless, are you up for it?!

TAKING CARE

CARE FOR THE INSTRUMENTS:

Your instruments are owned by Tulane University and are to be treated with the finest care. Nothing should EVER be placed on top of keyboard instruments, drums, or timpani for any reason short of mallets, sticks, and covers. Instruments are to be covered and stored at all times when they are not being played. During breaks in rehearsals, the equipment is to be lined up in an orderly fashion to give a refined and professional look to the equipment and to the group. Mallets and sticks are never to be placed on the ground/floor. No one outside the membership of a section is permitted to play any instrument without permission from an instructor.

There is a large amount of heavy equipment associated with marching percussion and every member will be responsible for their assigned items. A system will be developed where every member is responsible for something. Speed and care is important, especially in performance settings.

CARE FOR YOUR HEALTH:

At no time should anyone play while hurt without us knowing about it. If you suspect a physical problem due to your playing, you MUST inform us immediately. We are not doctors, but if something can be done for you we will take care of it. If not, please understand that we need to avoid creating any lasting injuries such as tendonitis. The technique program is designed to avoid these problems. Stick to the technique, work diligently to make adjustments to match the technique and you shouldn't have any problems. There is no use in trying to hide a previous or current injury that may hold you back from playing to your fullest.

We learn a *lot* of music. Music learning skills are paramount and time management is key. As a student at Tulane University you are already expected to perform at a high academic level. Manage your time to make sure you balance your academic studies with the time required to learn a new halftime show. Don't get overwhelmed. Plan ahead, ask for help, and let us know if you're having trouble!

CARE FOR THE GROUP:

There are many parts of this activity that go well beyond playing and marching. Far more important is how well you work with the group, how well you interact with others from different backgrounds, different ability levels, different ages, and different experience levels. Remember the As! We are all in this together and you have to take care of each other no matter what. Part of your experience will include your ability to become part of the group and bring others into the group. You are all in competition with yourselves and each other and you should help each other become great!

TECHNIQUE

Technique, or how you play your instrument, is the foundation of the Tulane Percussion Section. Just as a house cannot stand without a firm foundation, musicians cannot perform without a proper approach to their instrument. We will spend a great amount of time focusing on *technique*. It is expected that you will dedicate a large portion of your time to practicing the Tulane Percussion technique program. The most basic concepts should be worked on daily. These basic concepts should then be constantly applied to your exercises and music to lead you toward becoming a highly skilled musician. A solid *technique* program is absolutely crucial to our success as a percussion ensemble.

POSTURE:

Feet will be shoulder width apart with knees slightly bent, to enable movement behind the instruments. Feet should be slightly angled outward to facilitate shifts around the instrument. For most instances, the torso and shoulders will stay parallel with the keyboard. Each keyboard should be at an appropriate playing height. Keep shoulders square and head up. No Slouching!

Vibraphones: right **toes** only will be on the pedal. This is to ensure that the right foot/heel will be providing balance as you move behind the keyboard with the left foot.

SET POSITION:

Mallet heads are aligned equally at full wrist extension above the keyboard, which is also the top of the Piston Stroke. Distance between mallet heads will change depending on the interval to be played. Mallet heads should angle in and create an "A" shaped frame that is maintained as we move around the keyboard. Keep the wrists low and do not use your arm to raise the mallets.

Stay relaxed at all times.









2 MALLET TECHNIQUE - MIDDLE FULCRUM:



Divide the mallet shaft into thirds. Place the bottom third in the palm of your hand gripping the mallet with your pinky and ring fingers. Your index finger and thumb should line up directly on the third division of the mallet leaving approx. 2" of the mallet sticking out of the back of your hand. The thumb and index finger should connect with the mallet at your first knuckle. A natural space should occur between the first and second and the thumb and index fingers.

At most tempos we will encounter (for the exception of very brisk tempos) the front and back of your grip should be relatively relaxed. The back should be a tad more stable to create a solid foundation, but the front between the thumb and index finger should be relaxed until very fast tempos. The "middle fulcrum" makes use of the weight of your arm with the added benefit of more dexterity and more moderate to brisk tempos as in front fulcrum.

Ninety-five percent of the stroke should come from the wrist so it is important that the technique in the hand is solid. The back fingers should remain closed into the palm and the index finger can be slightly relaxed (but not pointed). The other five percent should come from the arm as an extension of a full wrist stroke. There will be exceptions at times but this will be the standard. A marimba or vibraphone played with mallets does not have rebound so this approach allows us to create our own rebound for the Piston Stroke. The mallets should feel heavy in your hands. Be sure that most of the weight that you feel is in the middle of your grip. Not the front or back.

2 MALLET STROKE TYPES:

PISTON STROKE: The starting and stopping point of the stroke are the same (with the exception of horizontal motion across the keyboard creating a SHIFT). The piston stroke is straight down to play and straight up to return back to the original playing position. No wasted motion is created by a piston stroke. The stroke is relaxed yet precise, and it does not connect to the next stroke.

LEGATO STROKE: This is our general stroke and will be used the most often within the mallet ensemble. It is a relaxed, smooth, and connected stroke. When playing exercises like Legato Strokes and Scales, the wrist creates a constant full range of motion to generate a very natural looking/sounding stroke.

2 Mallet Technique - cont'd

SHIFT: When going from one note to another, we will use the upstroke of a piston stoke to travel to your next destination. We will refer to it as a "checkmark" type of motion. This is very helpful when moving through tricky 4 mallet chords, or when making large leaps around the instrument. The main function of the stroke is to get you where you need to be sooner, which then allows you to play more accurately and with a better sound.

4 MALLET TECHNIQUE - STEVENS GRIP:

The following process is the same for both hands.

Stevens grip, named after it's creator Leigh Howard Stevens, is the most commonly-used 4-mallet grip in the United States and in the marching percussion world.

GENERAL CONCEPTS:

- The wrists move in a "chopping" motion rather than the "patting" motion used in 2-mallet technique
- · Palms face each other
- Knuckles are stacked vertically
- Thumbnails are facing the ceiling





OUTSIDE MALLET:



Grip the mallet with your pinky and ring finger. The pinky is our "anchor" and must wrap all the way around the mallet providing the foundation for the grip. There should be about an inch to an inch and a half of mallet protruding behind your pinky. (NOTE: this is actually a modified Stevens grip, many online resources will say to have only a half inch of mallet behind the pinky. This modified grip provides a bit more stability and power for the high demands of marching applicatinos). The outer mallet should go up at about a 45 degree angle in relationship to the forearm. This will ensure the mallets will hang evenly when the inner mallet is added to the grip.

4 Mallet Technique - cont'd

INSIDE MALLET:

Place the mallet in the center palm of your hand just under your thumb muscle. Your middle finger is wrapped around the mallet, holding it into your palm/thumb muscle with the fingertip (similar to Spider-Man's web shooting action!) Your index finger now acts as a shelf for the inside mallet, and the mallet should be able to rest without any pressure in your hand. We will call this the "bridge". Just like any real bridge, it must never falter or bend. The index finger must always stay out and never curl into your hand at any time.









SETUP:

Finally, place your thumb on the inside mallet directly over the first knuckle of your index finger. The thumb rests on top of the mallet and applies only the minimal amount of pressure to keep it in place. The thumb contacts the mallet with the fleshy part of the thumb, not the tip of the thumb (as seen right). Do not bend your thumb and introduce extraneous pressure. This will allow you to freely change intervals as well as maintain a relaxed grip.







With two mallets in each hand, hold the mallets firmly in the "chopping" position. The mallets should naturally rest in the interval of about a fifth. Lower your hands to the instrument (or the floor if an instrument is not available) and press down so the mallets become even horizontally. Lift the wrist using the "chopping" motion and keep the mallets aligned.



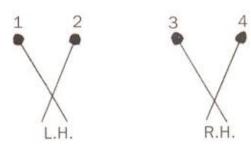




4 MALLET STROKE TYPES:

There are four basic stroke types that we will use with the Stevens technique:

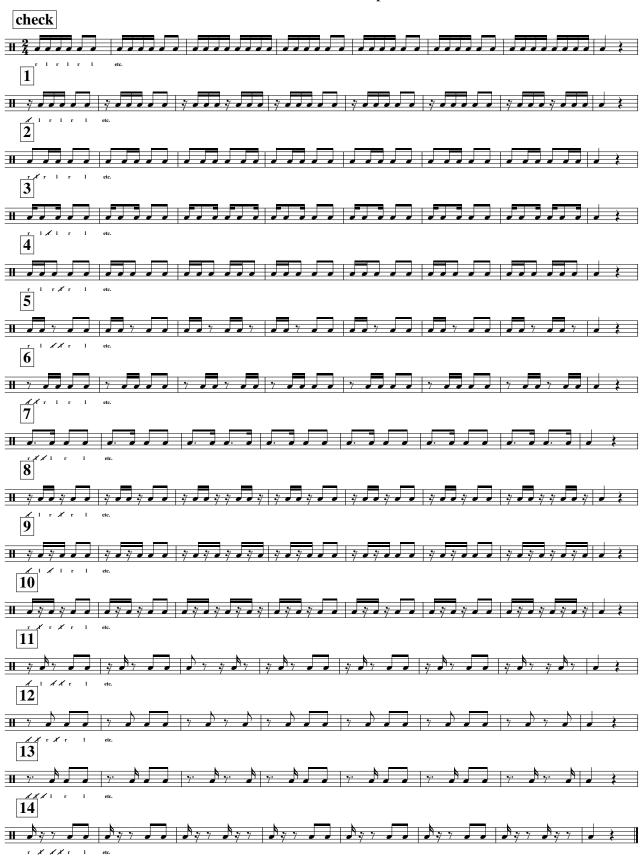
- 1. Double Vertical strokes
- 2. Single Independent strokes
- 3. Single Alternating strokes
- 4. Double Lateral strokes

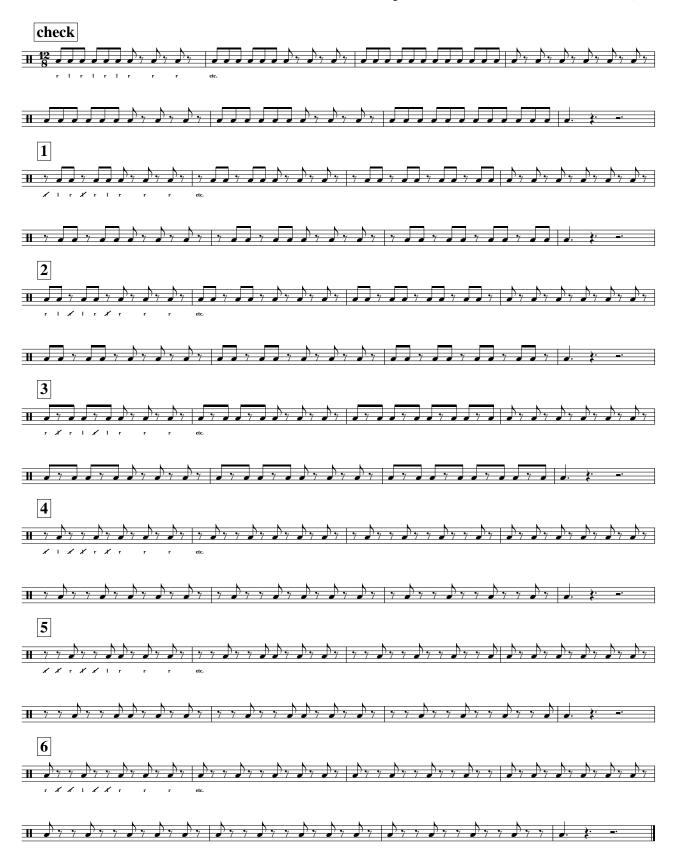


- 1. DOUBLE VERTICAL STROKES: This stroke should be played primarily with the wrist. The thumbs will remain on top of the grip the entire time. Never turn the hand flat as in our 2 -mallet grip regardless of difficult intervals (major seconds, etc). Both mallets must remain parallel to the keyboard at all times to eliminate flamming of the mallets. Gradually, we will learn to incorporate the arm into the stroke. The addition of using arm should be a byproduct of a relaxed stroke with correct technique. Do not misinterpret this for using arm to execute the stroke. The mallets should travel straight up and down without any side-to-side motion. Make sure to keep your fingers relaxed and the speed of the stroke fluid and consistent.
- 2. SINGLE INDEPENDENT STROKES: We will primarily be using this stroke type for mallets 2 and 3 (the inside mallets). The playing position will be achieved by rotating the "active" around the unused mallet (i.e.: mallet 3 will rotate around mallet 4). In order to develop independence, in this case, with the inside mallets, it is important to keep the outer mallets as still as possible. The outer will be defined as being half the height of the playing position. Relaxed fingers act as shock absorbers—tension will cause the outer mallets to twitch vertically and/or horizontally. Make sure that you keep your index finger and thumb firm, but relaxed. This will help to keep control of the inside mallets. When at set position, the outer mallets should be slightly angled up, not parallel with the keyboard. This should happen naturally.
- 3. SINGLE ALTERNATING STROKES: This stroke type is closely related with the Single Independent stroke, but without concern for motion in the other mallet. The set position and playing position are the same as in the Double Vertical stroke. As one mallet strikes the bar, the other mallet will raise in response much like a pendulum transferring its momentum. Be sure to not simply rotate the wrist: instead, think of the pivot point as bouncing from one mallet to the next. This will allow us to control the articulation, rhythm and dynamic of each mallet.
- 4. DOUBLE LATERAL STROKES: The standard Double Lateral stroke is most commonly used for the "ripple roll" or "lateral roll" technique. It should not operate like the other 3 stroke types. The goal here is to produce TWO strokes through ONE hand motion. Again, the set position and playing position are the same as a Double Vertical stroke. In the case of the outside Double Lateral stroke, play as if you were going to perform a Single Independent stroke (the outside mallet will strike the bar first) and then rotate your wrist counter-clockwise to strike the bar with your inside mallet. The motion of your wrist is similar to turning a doorknob. In order to achieve a consistent sound from mallet to mallet, you will need to use a lot of "torque" in your wrist. Be sure to keep your index finger and thumb firm, but relaxed!

DYNAMIC LEVELS

$$f$$
 — forte - 12" 67.5 degrees





Partials Timing Exercises



TUMBpit Exercise Packet

Piston Strokes



Legato Strokes





Green Scales





Summertime





















Spatial Awareness



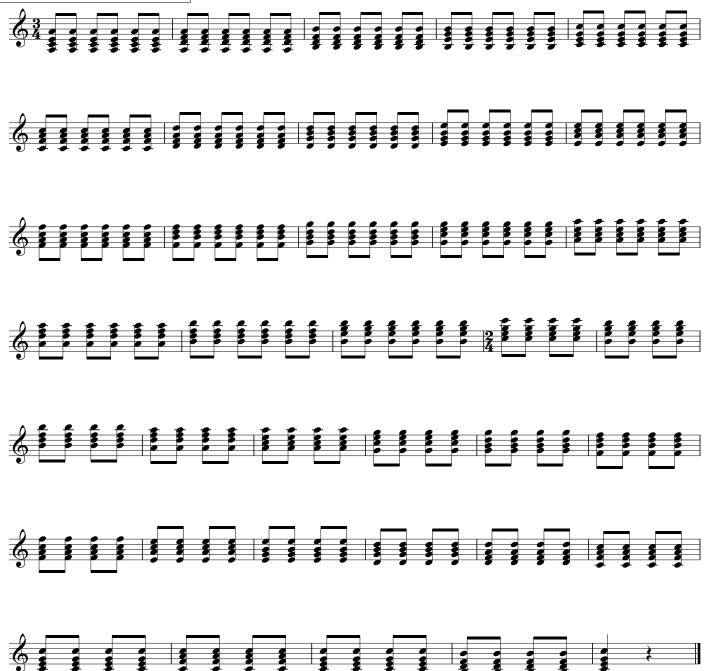








Chordal Inversions



TUMBpit Exercise Packet - p. 5

Permutation Variations







The Lonelyness of Santa Claus

Andersson/Arr.Montalvo

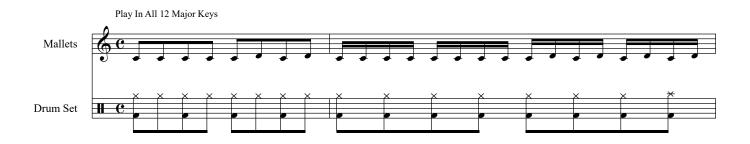


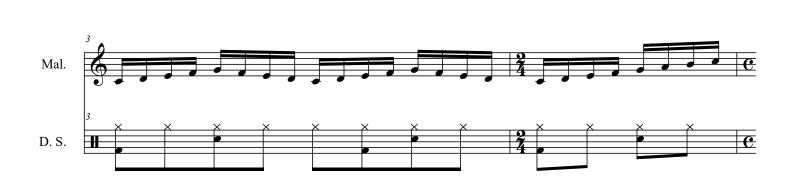


Montalvo

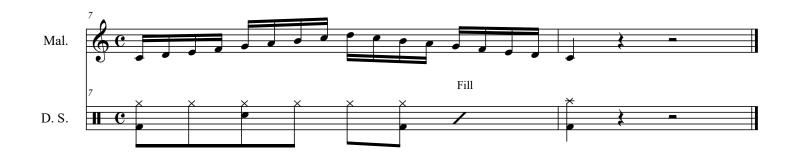


TUMB Scales

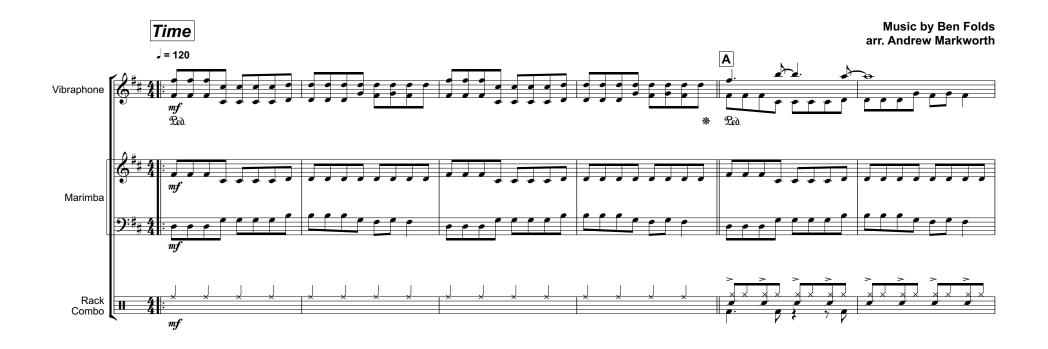


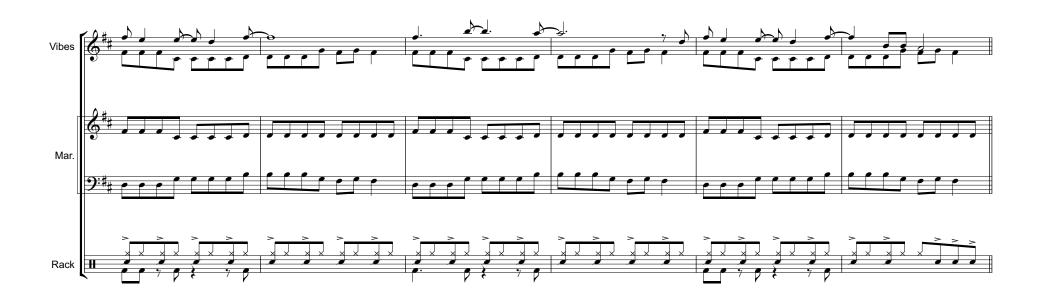












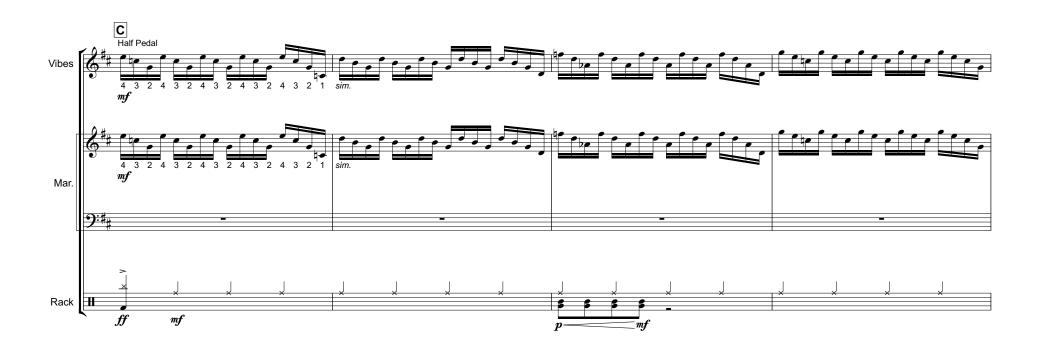


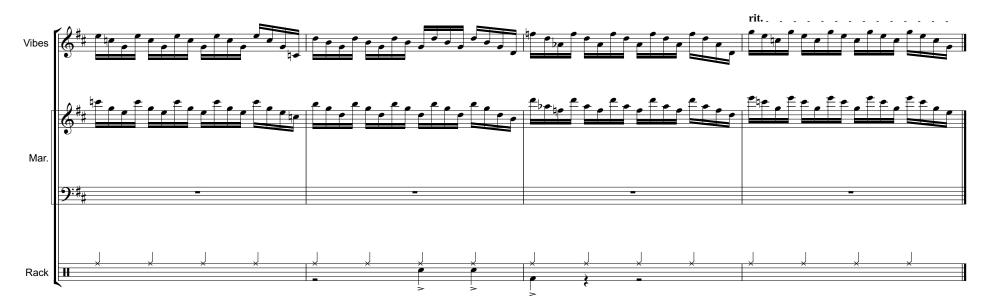








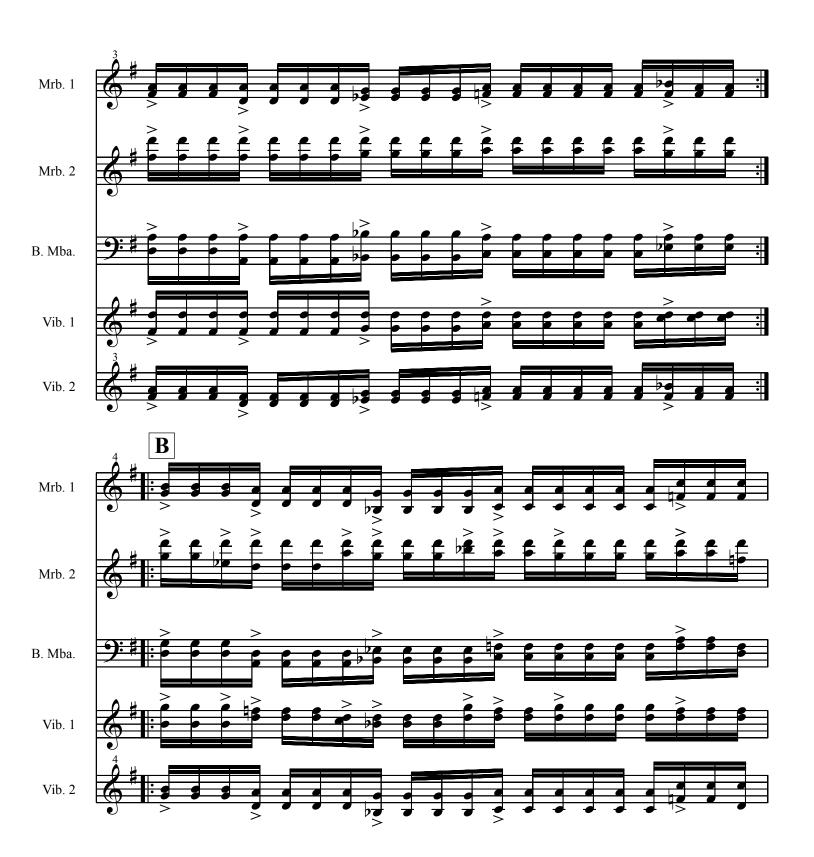


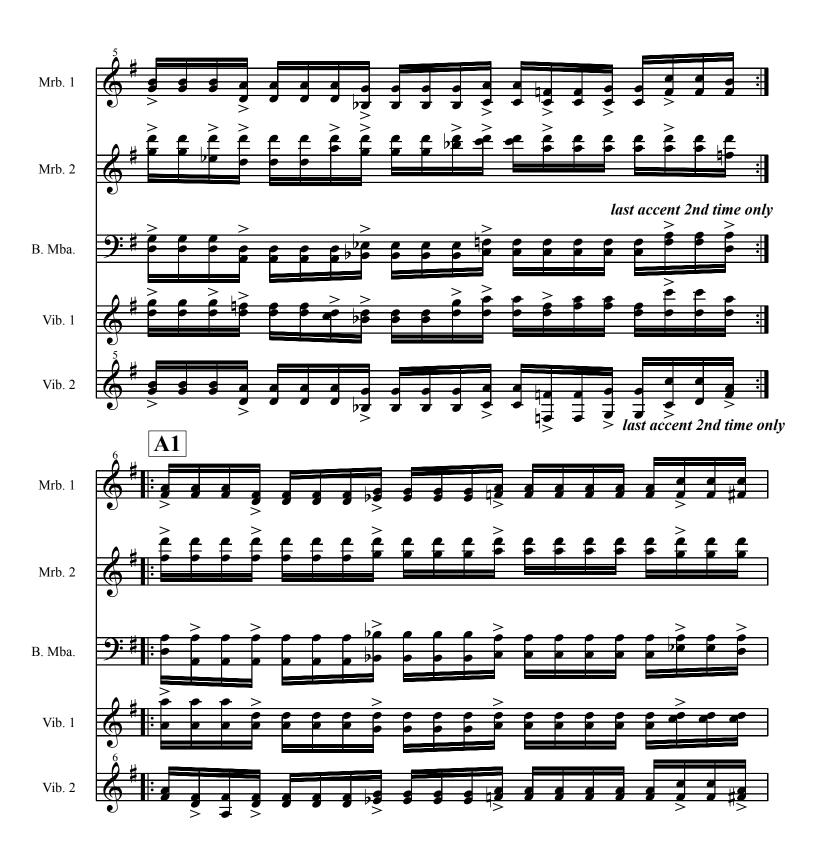


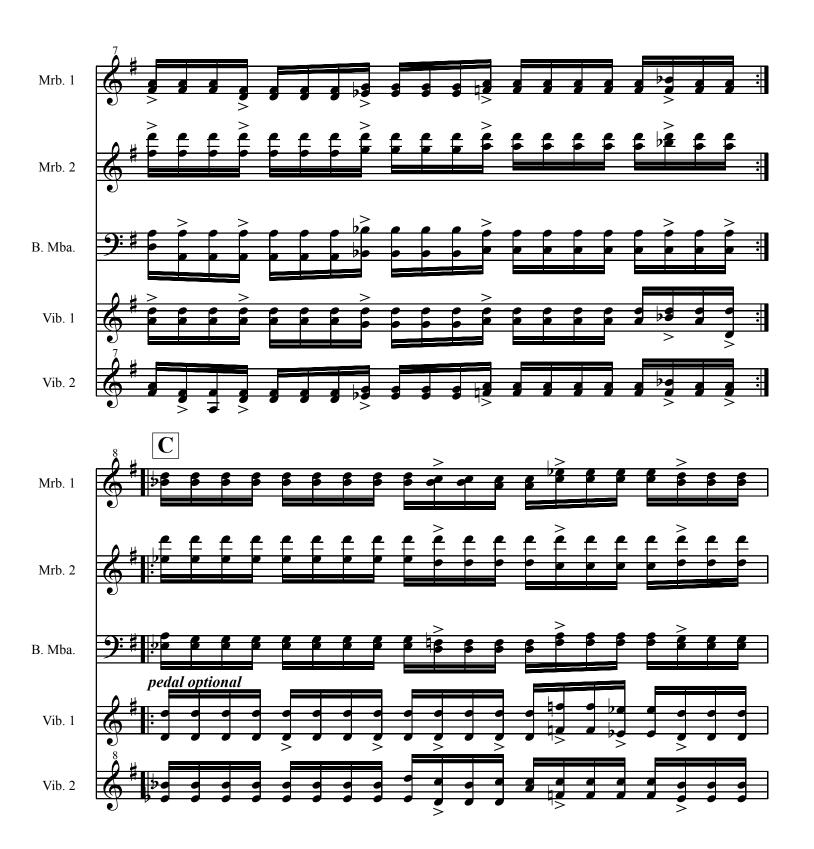
everything in its right place

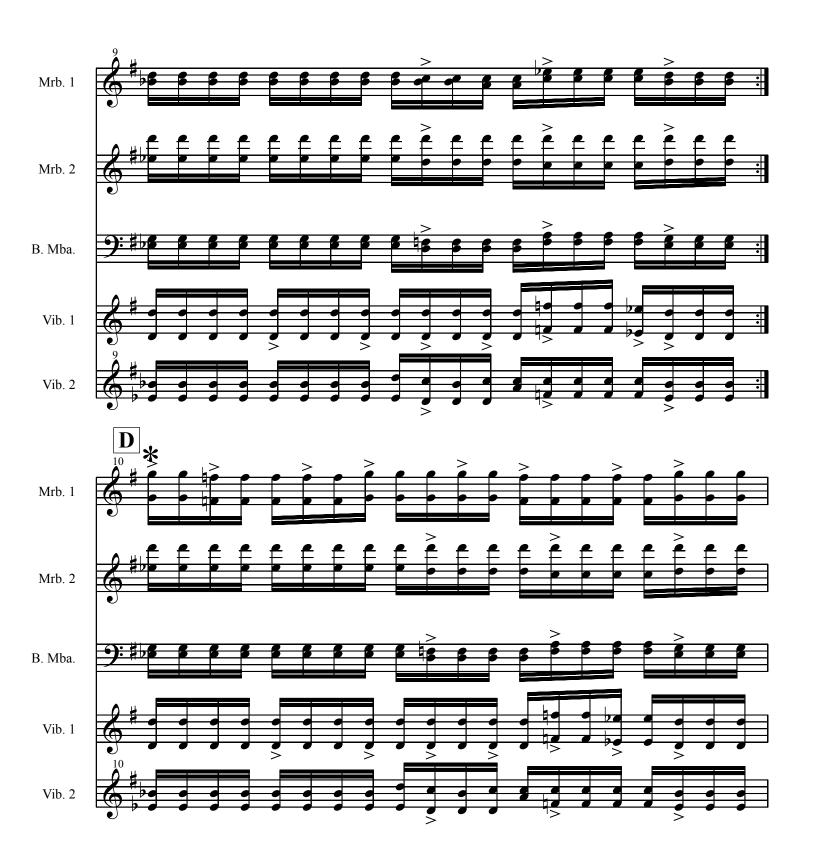
Radiohead/Adams

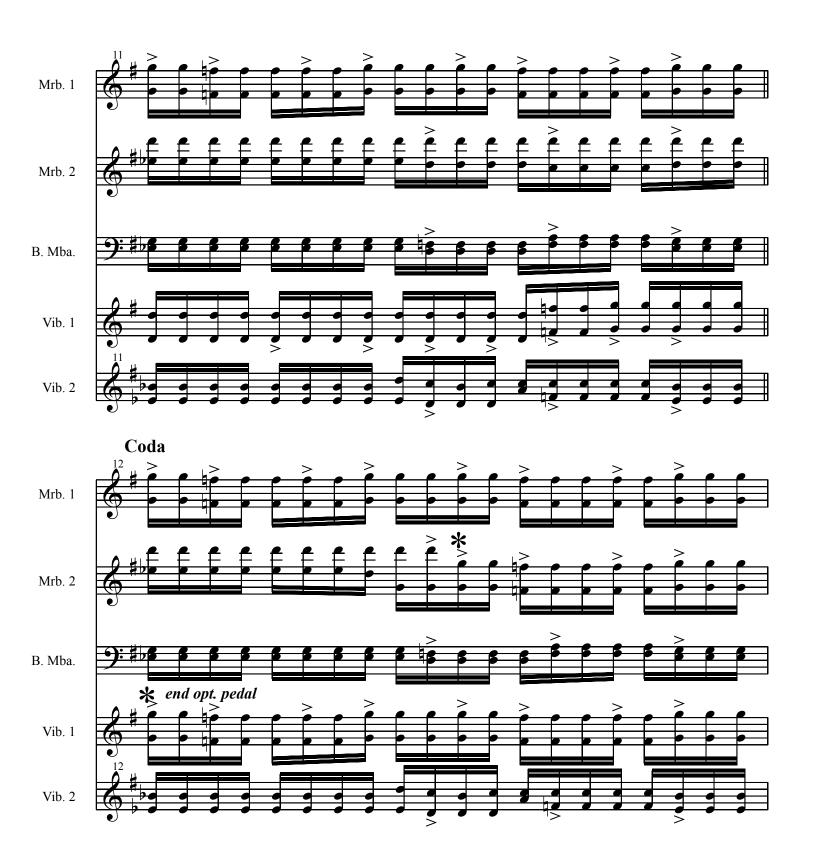


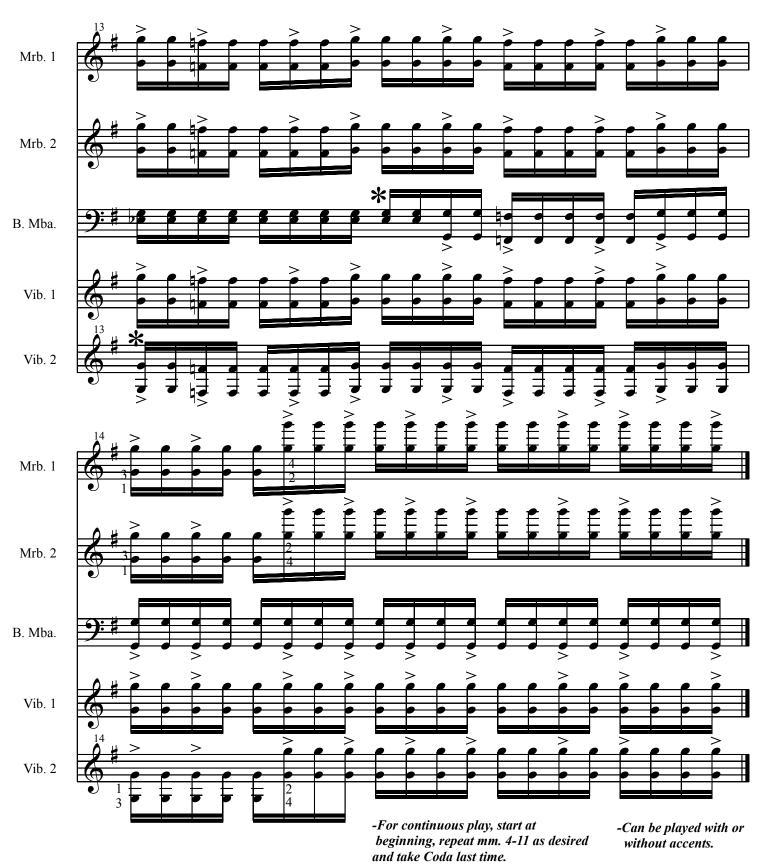












-Can be played with or without repeats.

-Accents should be only one level higher than non-accents. (i.e. 15"-12")