LASA Front Packet

What is the Front Ensemble?

The **Front Ensemble**, often called the **"Pit,"** consists of all **mallet instruments**, **auxiliary percussion** (such as drum set, rack, bass drum, and gong), and a **synthesizer**.

Although the Front Ensemble does not march, it plays one of the **most important roles** in the marching band. Members help **bring the show to life** through **musicality**, **expression**, and **body movement**, providing both the **emotional foundation** and **musical drive** for the ensemble.

Need to Know - Audition Process - Marching Season

- **All students** are expected to play the provided exercises during both the **audition process** and the **marching season** using **2-mallet technique**; Playing **Poly Scales** chromatically through the first 5 Scales (C, C#, D, Eb, E), **Purple** through the first 5 Scales in the Circle of Fifths (C, G, D, A, E), and **2x2** all the way through. All Exercises will be played at the lowest tempo marked in the packet.

- **All exercises**, including scales, must be learned in **all 12 Major Scales** by the start of the school year.

- **All 4-mallet exercises** should be played using **Stevens Grip** for all keyboard instruments. **Stevens grip will be taught at the beginning of summer band camp.**

- Remember — even though this is a **competitive activity**, our main goal will always be:

TO HAVE FUN!

Contact

If you have any questions or concerns. Please feel free to email me: Nicolas Uranza (Mr. Uranza) (nicolas.uranza@gmail.com)

2-Mallet Technique (Matched Grip)

Matched Grip is achieved by holding one mallet in each hand with **three main points of contact**, all of which should remain connected during playing. The grip should start about **one-third of the way up the mallet**, leaving **no more than an inch** of mallet extending out the back of your hand.

Points of Contact

1. **Fulcrum (Thumb and Index Finger)**
    - The **thumb and index finger** form a capital **"T"** shape, with the mallet parallel to the thumb.
    - This is your **main point of contact** and should always remain stable.
2. **Foundation (Middle and Ring Fingers)**
    - These fingers **wrap around the mallet** to support the grip.
    - Apply **light pressure**—enough to control the mallet without squeezing or creating tension.
3. **Stabilizer (Pinky Finger)**
    - The pinky **wraps lightly** around the mallet beneath the other fingers.
    - The mallet should rest against it, maintaining contact at all times. Avoid letting it drift away while playing.

Grip and Posture Tips

- Your **thumbs should face each other**—imagine they have faces looking at one another.
- Avoid turning your thumbs upward toward the ceiling or inward, pointing down towards the floor.
- The **stroke motion originates from the wrist**, not the forearm or shoulder.
- Keep your **arms relaxed** to allow free blood flow and prevent tension or injury.
- The **forearm may be used occasionally**, but wrist movement should remain your primary motion source.

4-Mallet Technique (Stevens Grip)

The 4-Mallet grip builds upon the foundation of 2-Mallet Matched Grip, but it's a more **complex and nuanced technique**. It won't feel natural at first—patience and consistency are key.

There are **three main points of contact** in Stevens Grip, each crucial for control and tone production.

Points of Contact

1. **Inside Mallets (Mallets 2 and 3)**
    - The mallet rests in the **middle of the palm** and on the **first joint (perch)** of the **index finger** (starting at the nail joint).
    - The mallet should sit securely with **minimal movement**.
2. **Fulcrum (Thumb and Index Finger)**
    - Similar to Matched Grip, but with a slight variation:
        - The **index finger wraps around** the mallet so it rests on the **first joint**, while the **thumb sits on top**, with nails **facing each other**.
3. **Outside Mallets (Mallets 1 and 4)**
    - These mallets sit **between the ring and middle fingers**, held gently by the **pinky and ring fingers**.
    - The mallet should rest **below the middle-finger knuckle**, supported but not squeezed.

Grip and Positioning Tips

- Only **about half an inch** of mallet should extend past the back (the "meaty" part) of your hand.
    - Too much extension can make alignment and control more difficult.
- Keep a **relaxed hand**—no unnecessary squeezing or pressure.
- Some **calluses** will naturally form with practice; this is part of the learning process.
- The **middle finger** serves as the **foundation** of this grip, providing tone quality and balance for the inside mallet.

Rotation and Motion

- The **primary motion still comes from the wrist**, but there are additional rotation mechanics unique to this grip:

    1. **Vertical Wrist Stroke:**

        - Same as in 2-mallet playing—an **up-and-down** wrist motion that stays relaxed and fluid.

    2. **Inside Mallet Rotation:**

        - Rotate **around the outside mallet**, so your **thumb nails turn upward toward the sky**, then rotate back until the nails face each other again.

    3. **Outside Mallet Rotation:**

        - Rotate the **outer mallet around the inner one** using the wrist.

        - When done correctly, you should be able to **see your pinky knuckle** as the wrist turns outward.

Audition Information

During Spring Band Camp students will work with Mr. Uranza on the exercises listed below. Then, during the audition, students will perform the exercises on their own. This audition will help Mr. Uranza place students into the correct section of percussion (Front Ensemble or Battery.)

Students will be assessed on the following elements:

- Timing
    - maintaining steady pulse, both musically and physically moving the body "pulsing" (aka moving the body to certain beats of the music)
- Rhythmic Accuracy
    - performing the notated rhythms and notes correctly
- Technique
    - using the techniques described above and also taught in middle school and during our Spring Band Camp

NOTE: though students will only audition for either Battery **or** Front Ensemble, students may not be placed into the section they audition for (e.g. a student who auditions for Battery may be placed on Battery **or** Front Ensemble depending on their audition and the overall needs of the percussion section)

LASA Warmup Packet

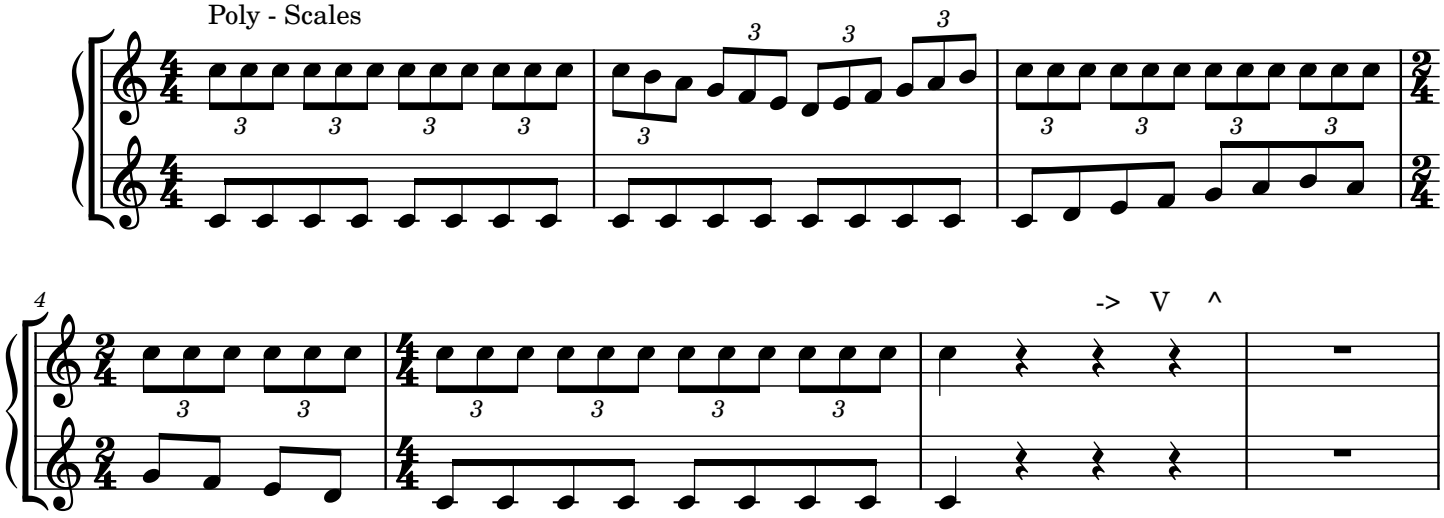
You don't know enough about what you don't know

Nicolas Uranza

Learn In All 12 Scales

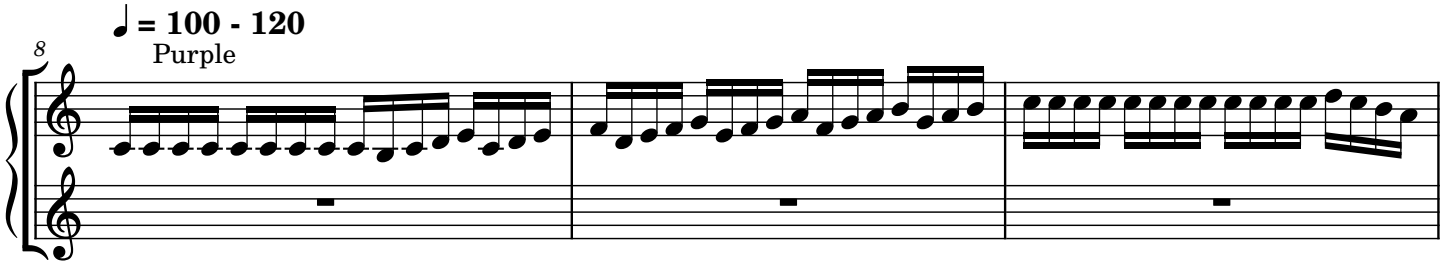
♩ = 72

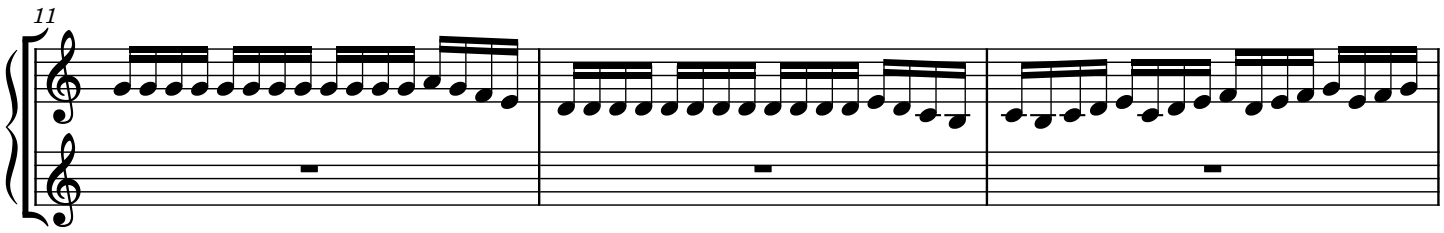
Poly - Scales

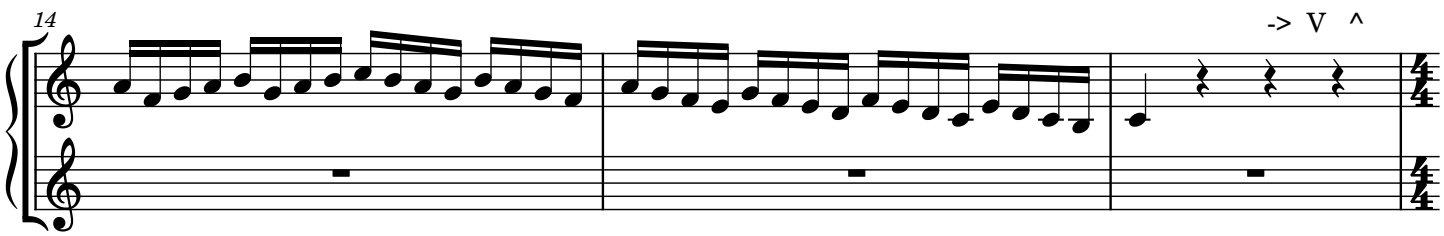


♩ = 100 - 120

Purple



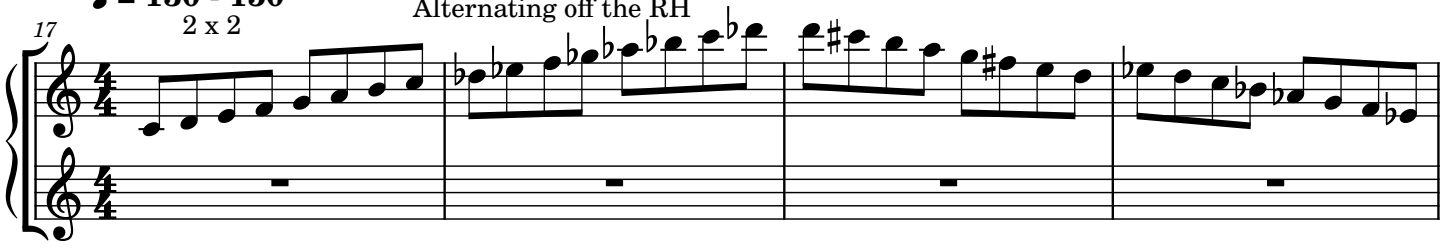


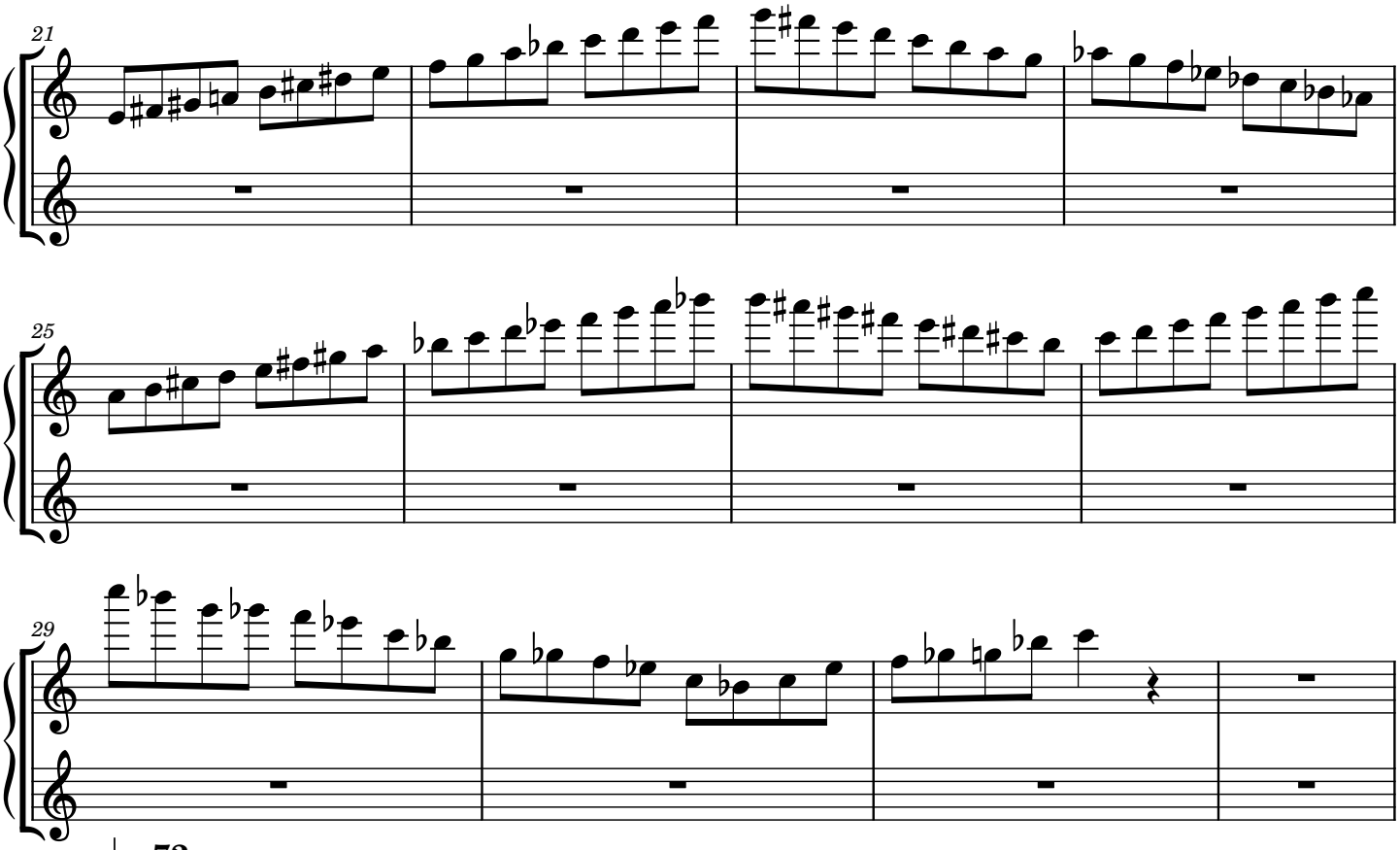


♩ = 130 - 150

2 x 2

Alternating off the RH

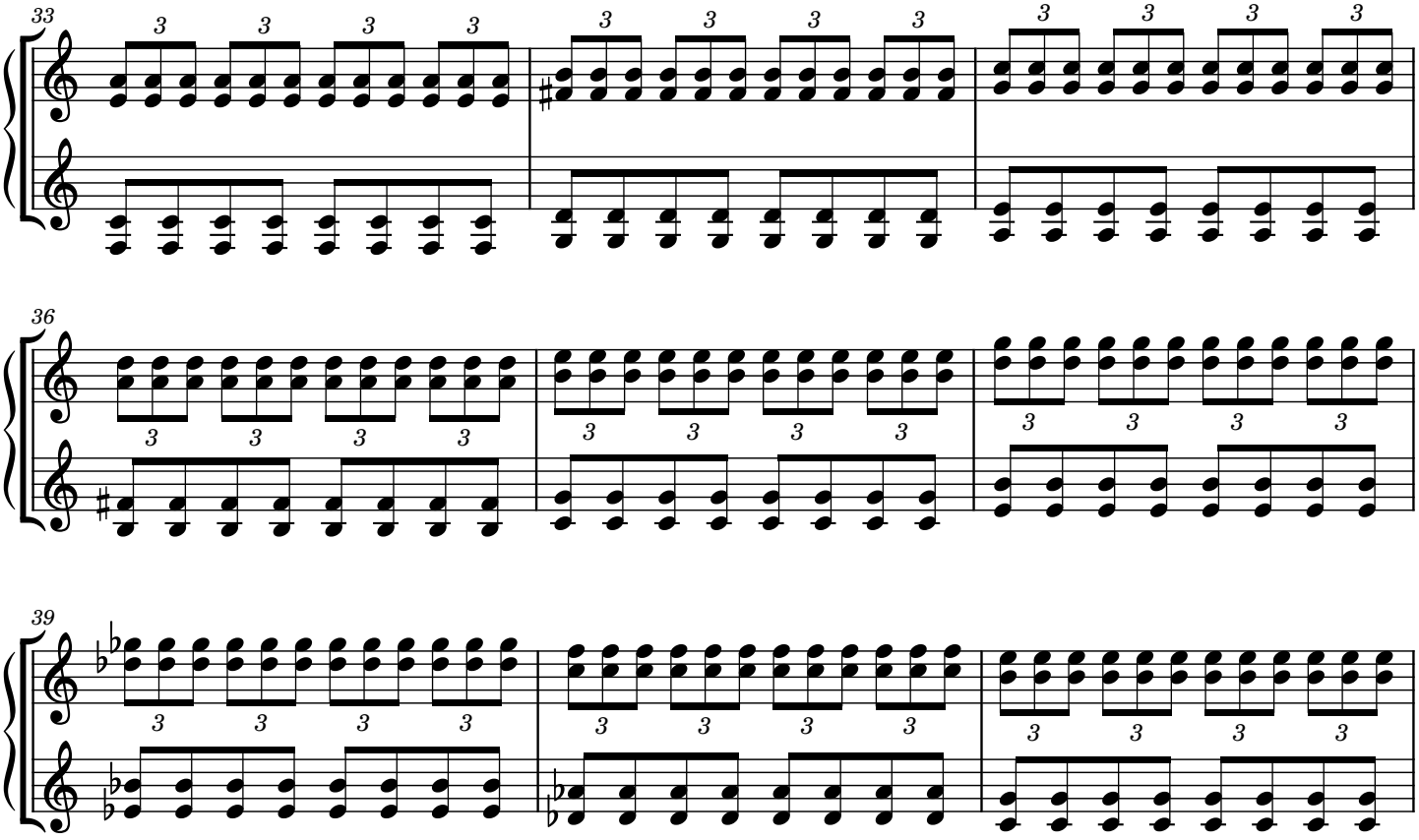


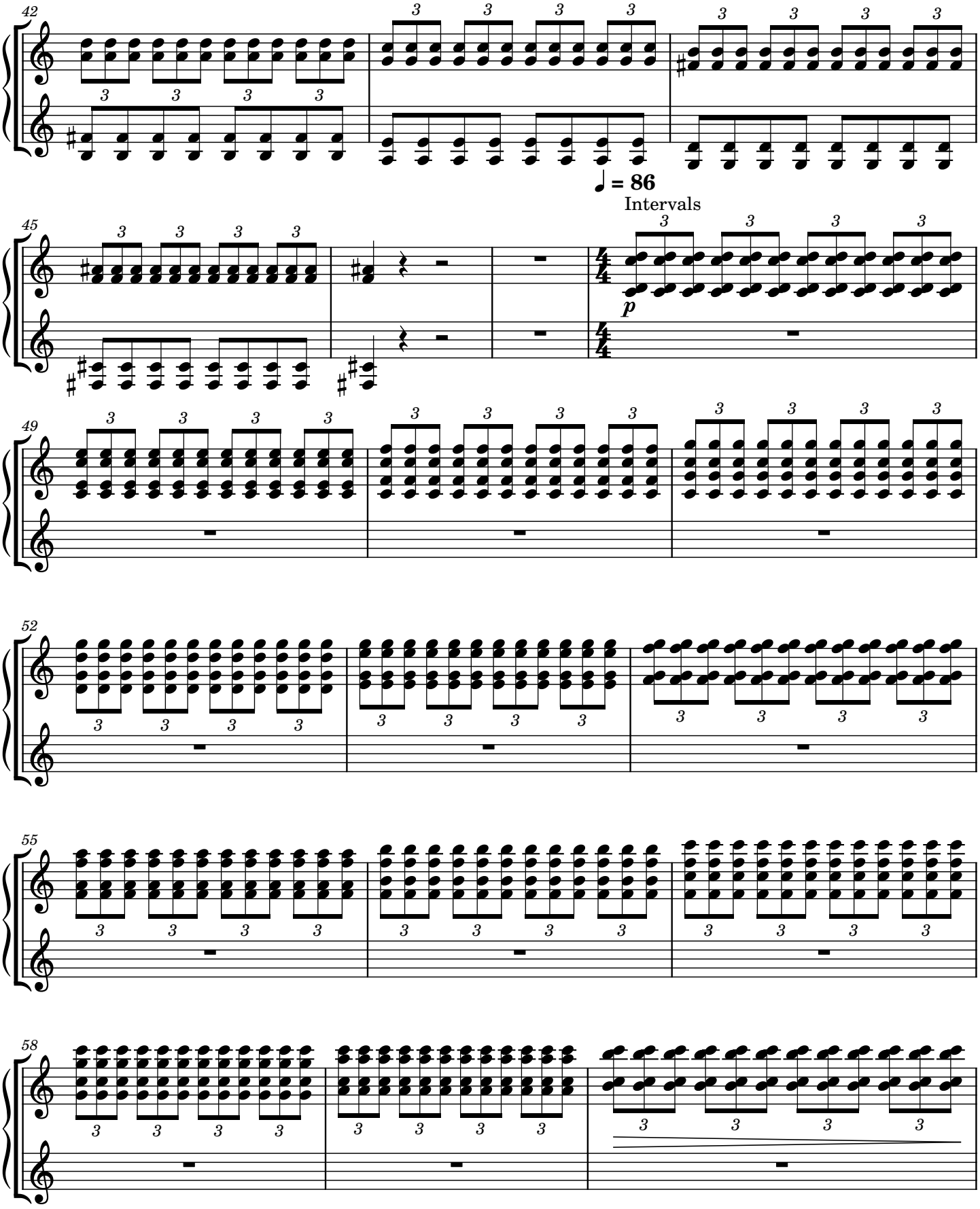


♩ = 72

Poly - Broccoli

Block Chords, Block LH Alt RH, Alt Both Hands

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♩ = 86
Intervals
45
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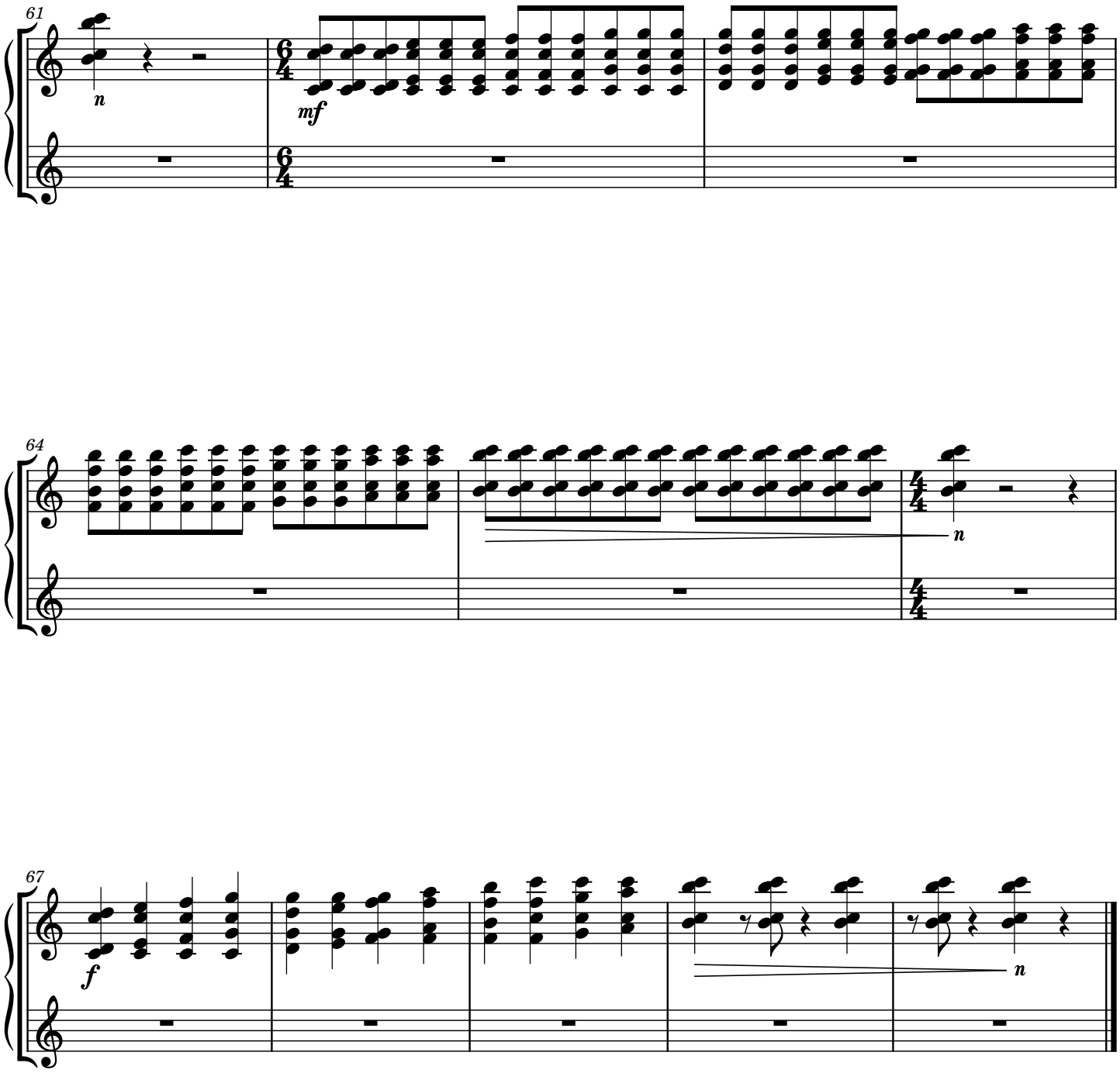
49
52
55
58


61
n
mf
64
n
67
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n