Marimba Boot Camp

Dr. Adam Groh
Graceland University

Special Thanks!

Overview

- Setup Considerations
- Technique and Sound Production
- Musicality and Interpretation
- Pedagogical Issues
- Resources

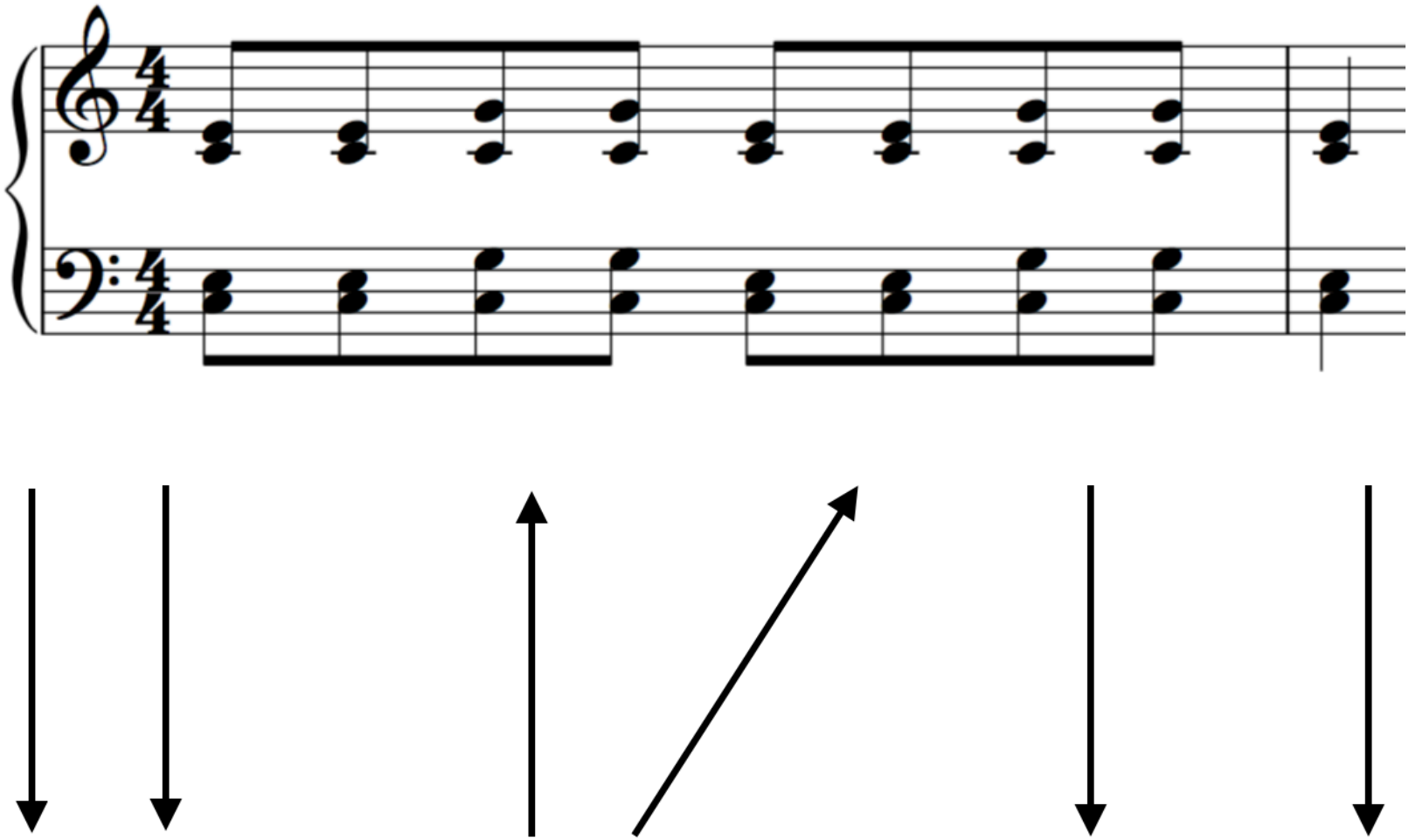
Setup Considerations

- Instrument Position
  - Height
  - Ensemble Placement
- Music Stand Placement
  - Tessitura
  - Reading Skills
- Body Positioning
  - Tessitura

Technique and Sound Production

- Grip
  - 2 mallet components
    - Proper fulcrum point
  - 4 mallet components
    - Don't choke up on outer mallets
    - Outer mallet is at first knuckle of middle finger, not in webbing
    - Don't collapse index fingers
    - "French" grip basis – thumbs on top

Interval Changes

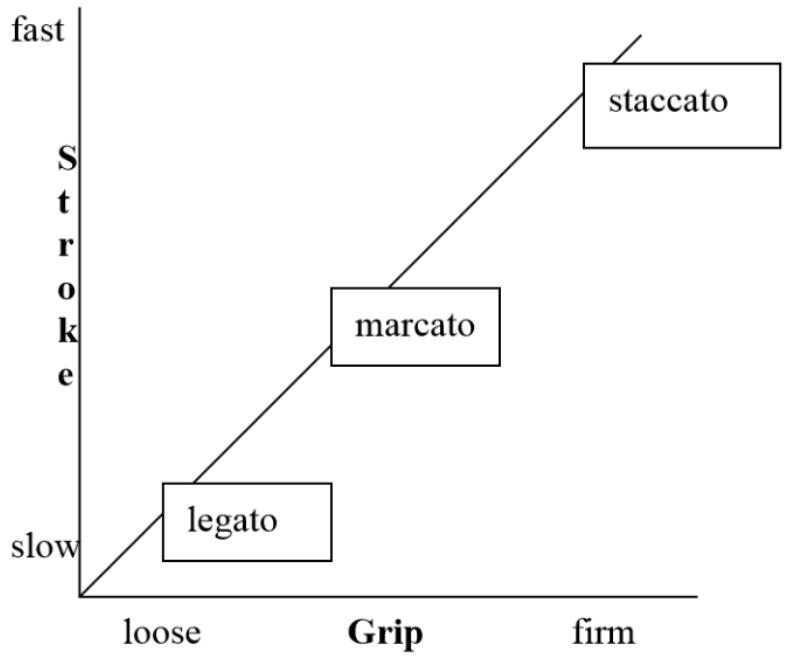


Technique and Sound Production

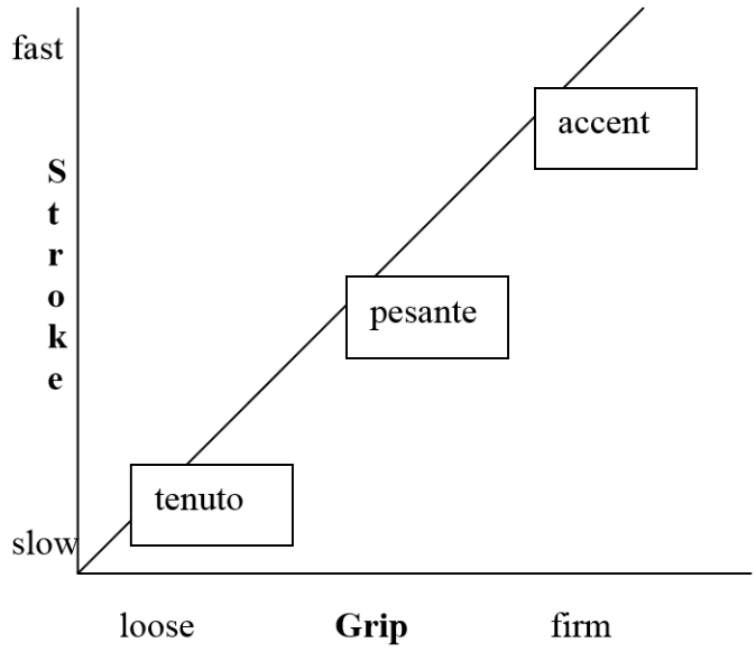
- Stroke
  - Wrist oriented stroke
  - Default should be fluid and legato – not piston
  - Mallets and wrists should be low
  - Anticipate the next note(s)
    - Interval changes on upstroke
- Articulation
  - Mallet Choice
    - Harder = More articulation
    - Heavier = More volume

Articulation

UP STROKE



DOWN STROKE

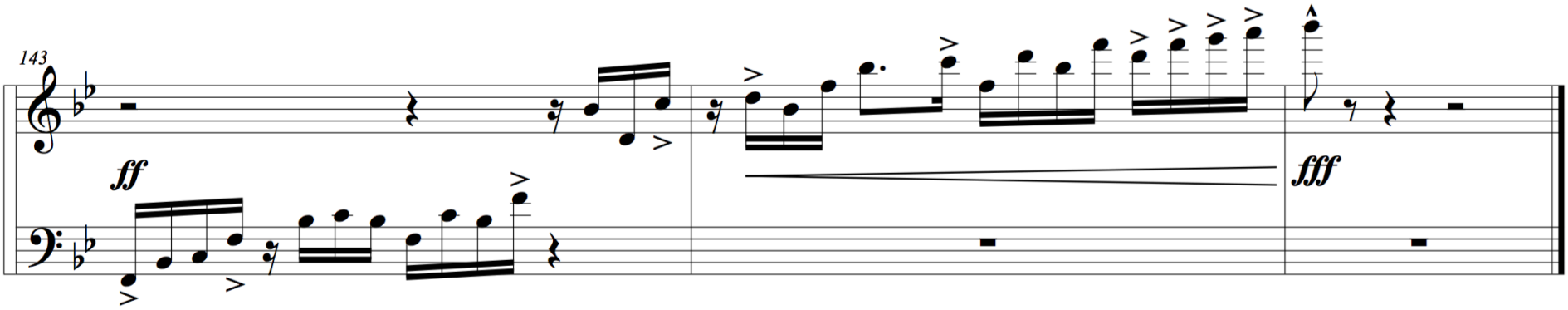


Technique and Sound Production

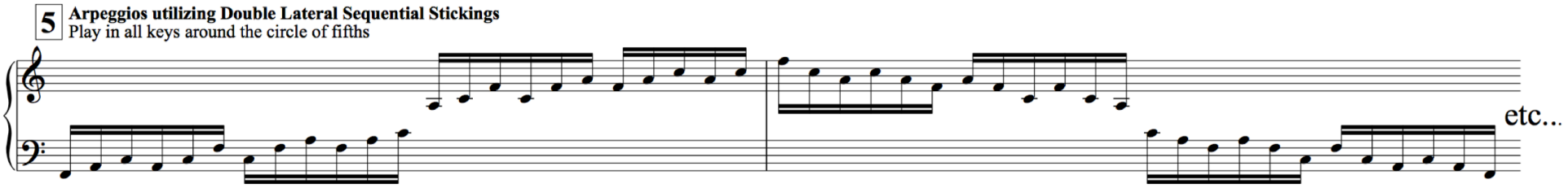
- Bar Placement
  - Two levels of accuracy
    - Correct pitch
    - Correct placement on bar
- Body movement/choreography
  - Center body in playing range
  - Anticipate large leaps/movements with body first
  - Avoid “chasing” the mallets

Body Movement

- Ozley – *Flourish* for Marimba and Wind Ensemble



Body Movement



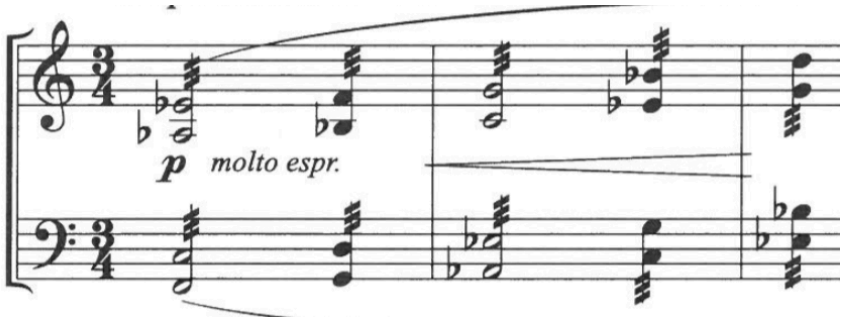
Musicality and Interpretation

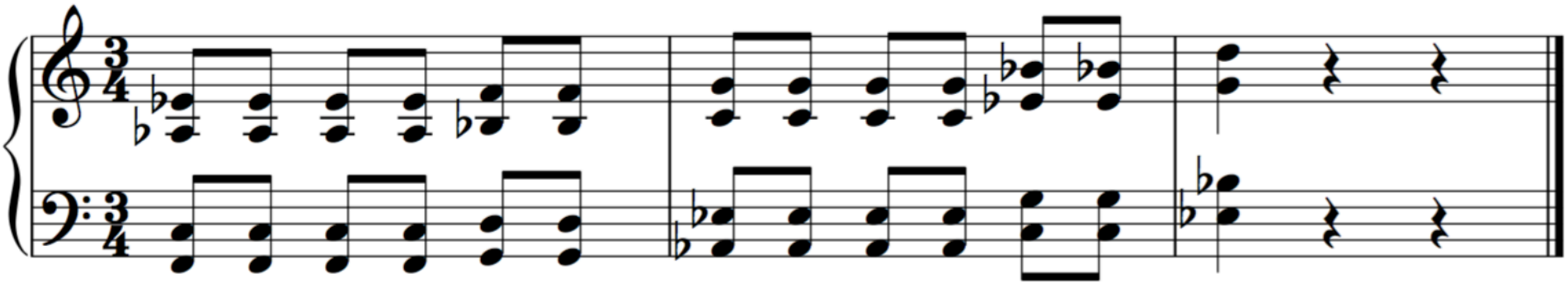
- Choosing stickings
  - Avoid doubles/consecutive mallets
  - Double in same plane, or from upper manual to lower manual

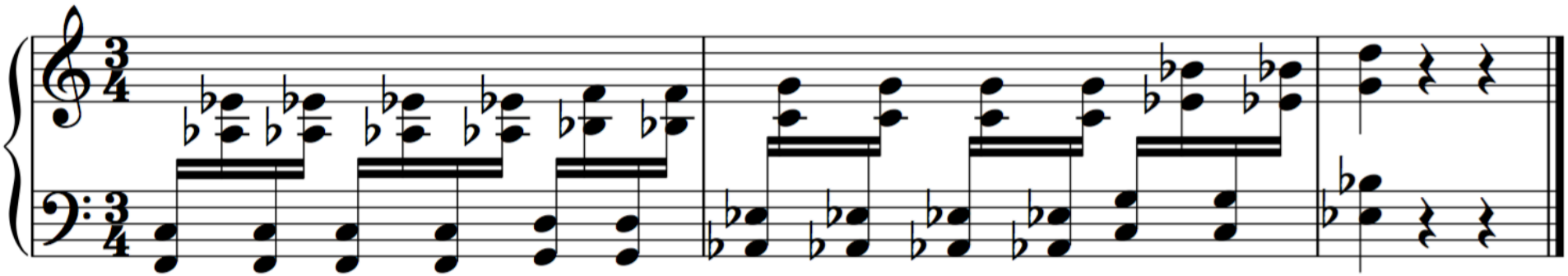
Musicality and Interpretation

- Interpreting rolls
  - LH lead is default
  - “Blocking” chords
  - Tips for smooth rolls
  - Creating phrasing and motion
  - Mallet selection

Rolls



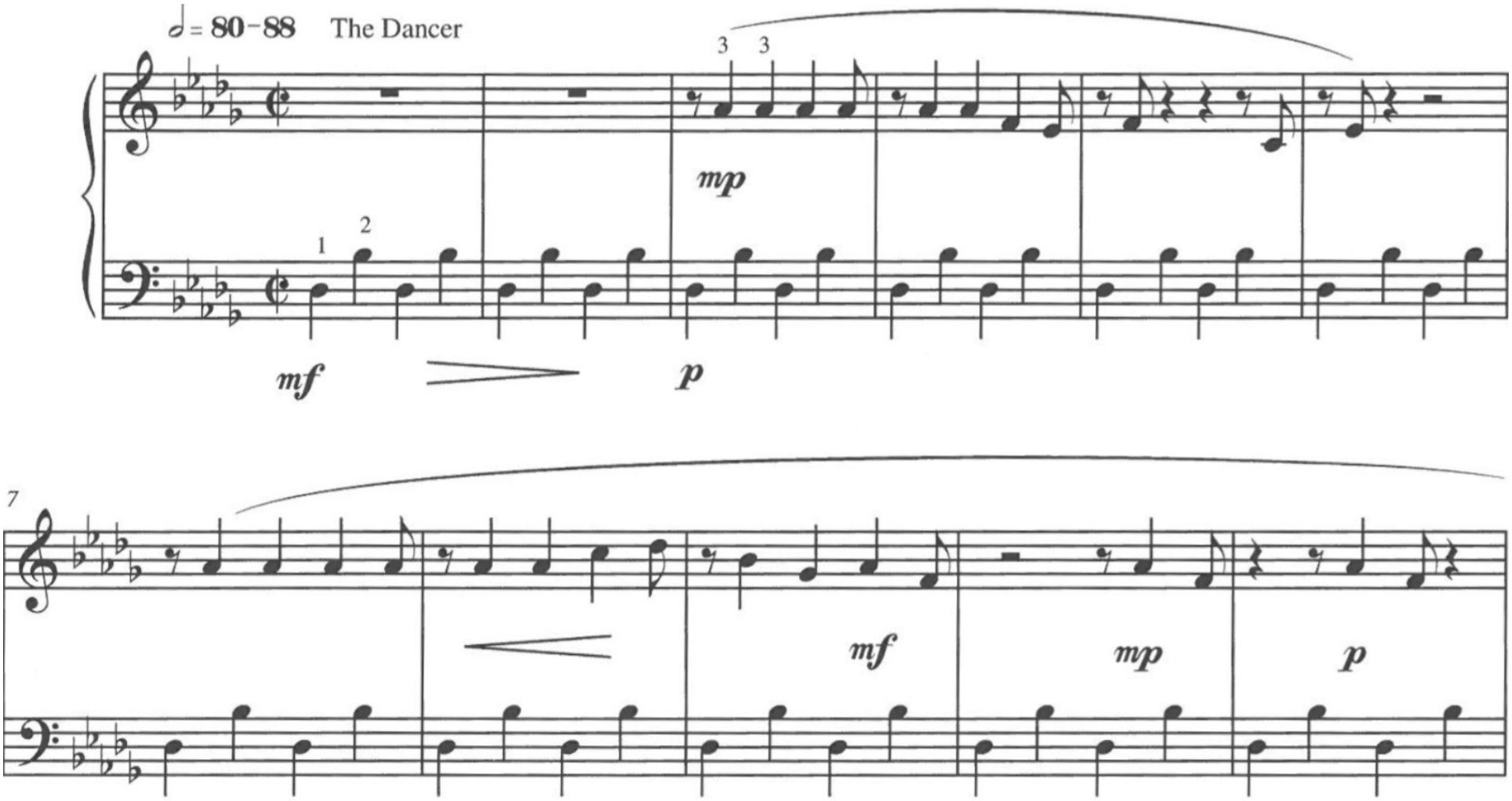




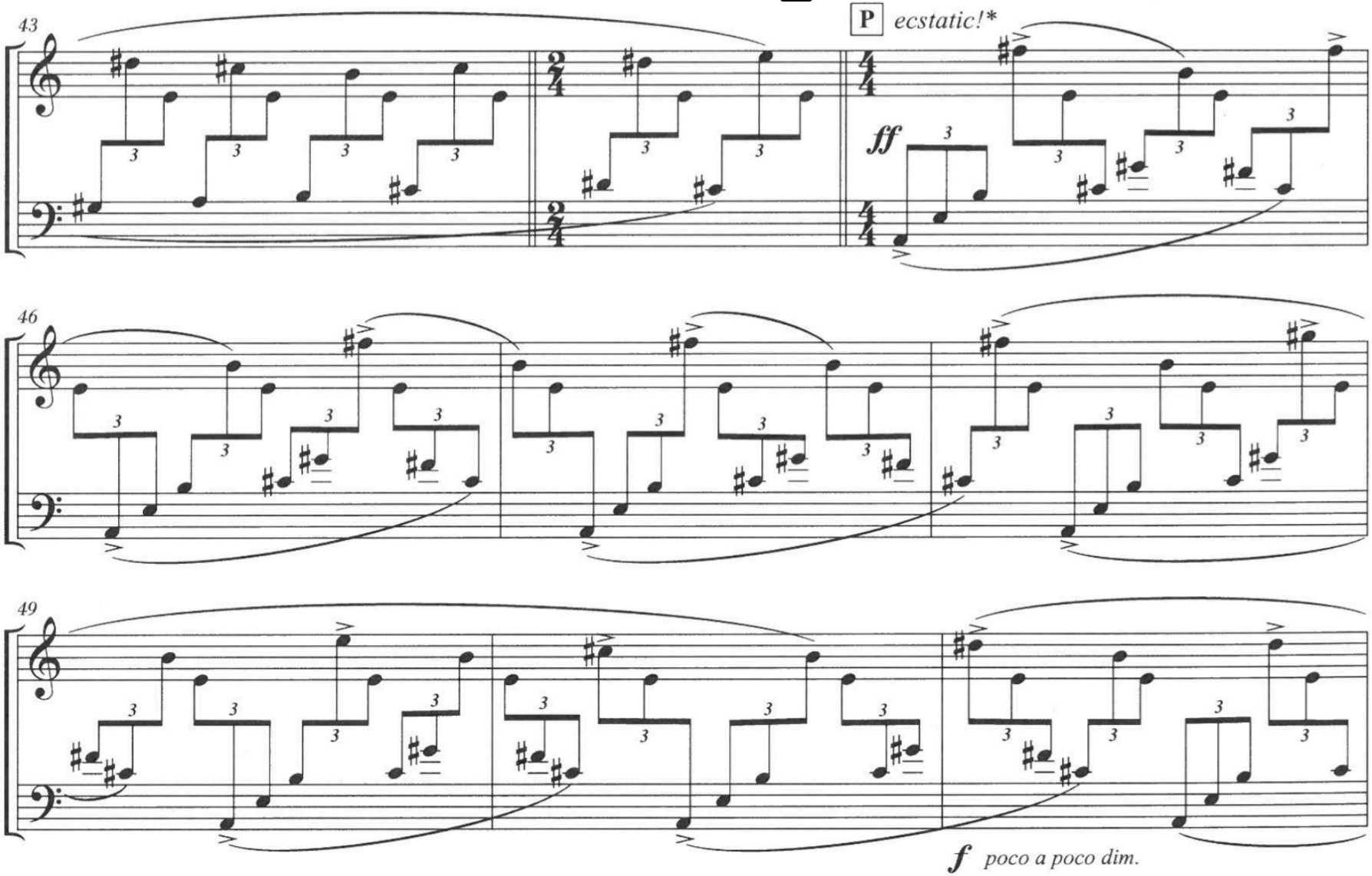
Musicality and Interpretation

- Voicing
  - Clarity of individual voices within an overall texture
  - Often melody vs. accompaniment
  - Use dynamics, articulation, and touch to balance individual voices in a particular passage

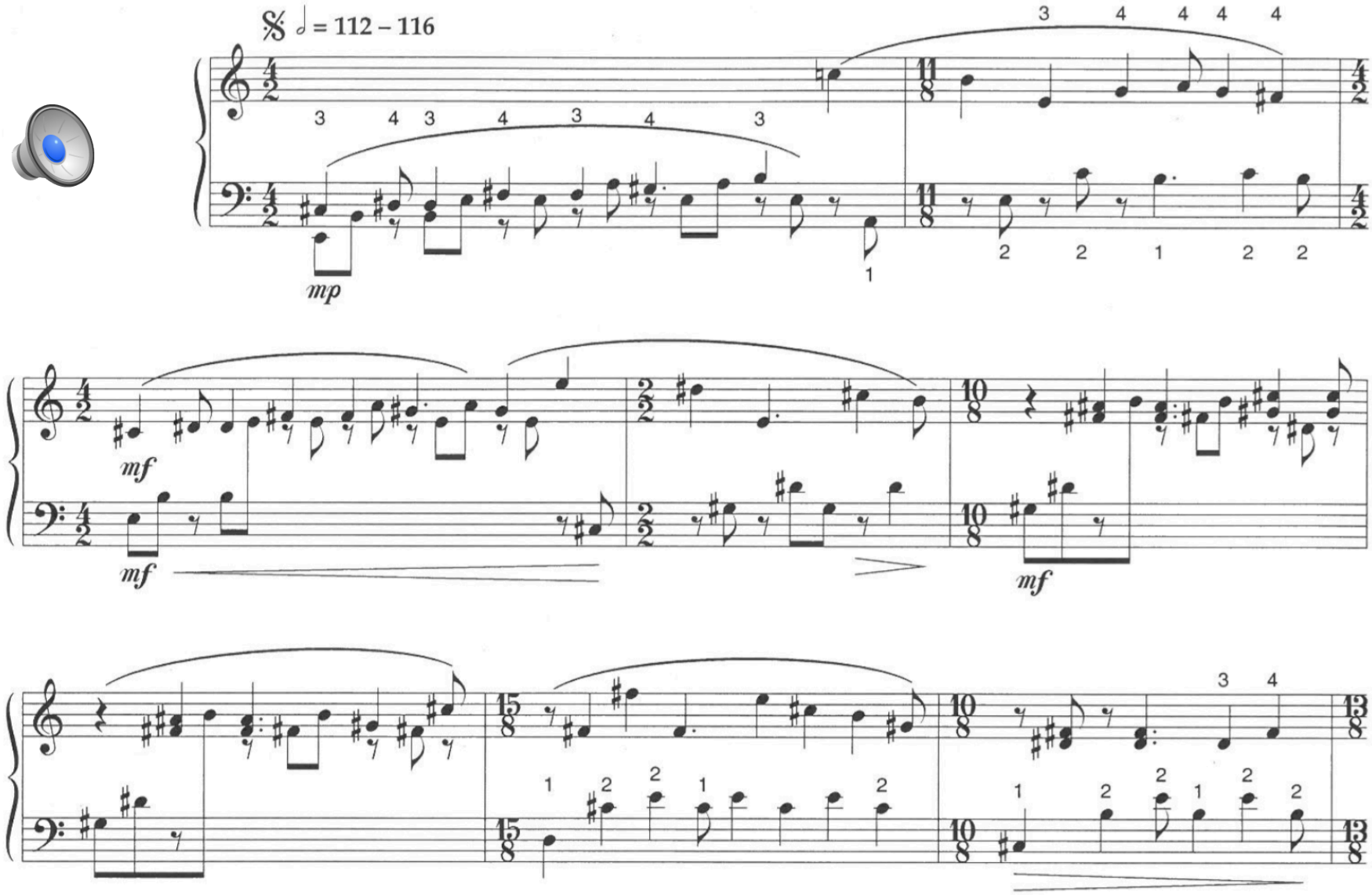
Voicing



Voicing



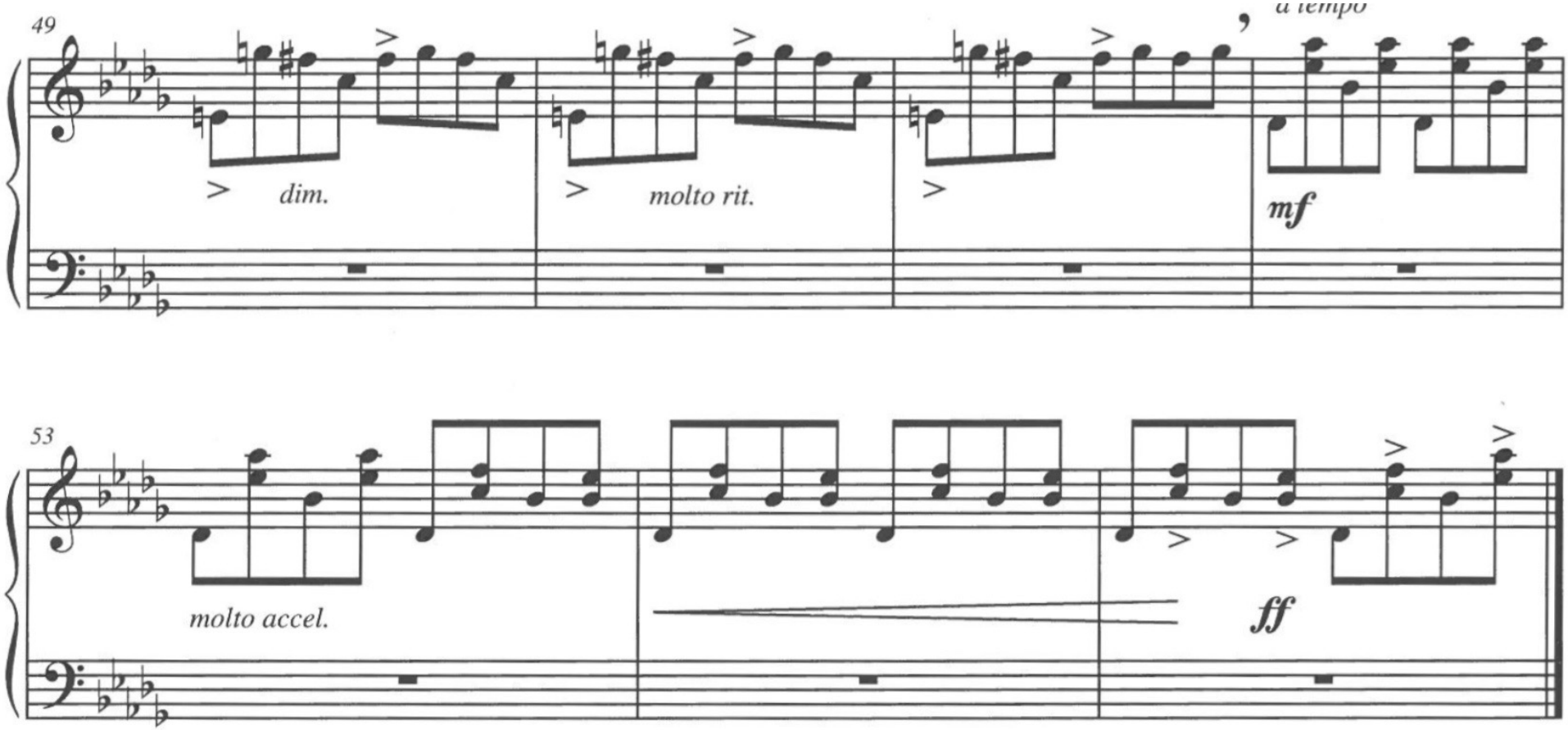
Voicing



Musicality and Interpretation

- Creating sustain
  - Bars have a fixed sustain length
  - Length is all about perception
  - Audience will follow the mallets
- Dealing with space
  - Be calm and confident
  - Don't be in a hurry/rushed
  - "Prep, step, breath"

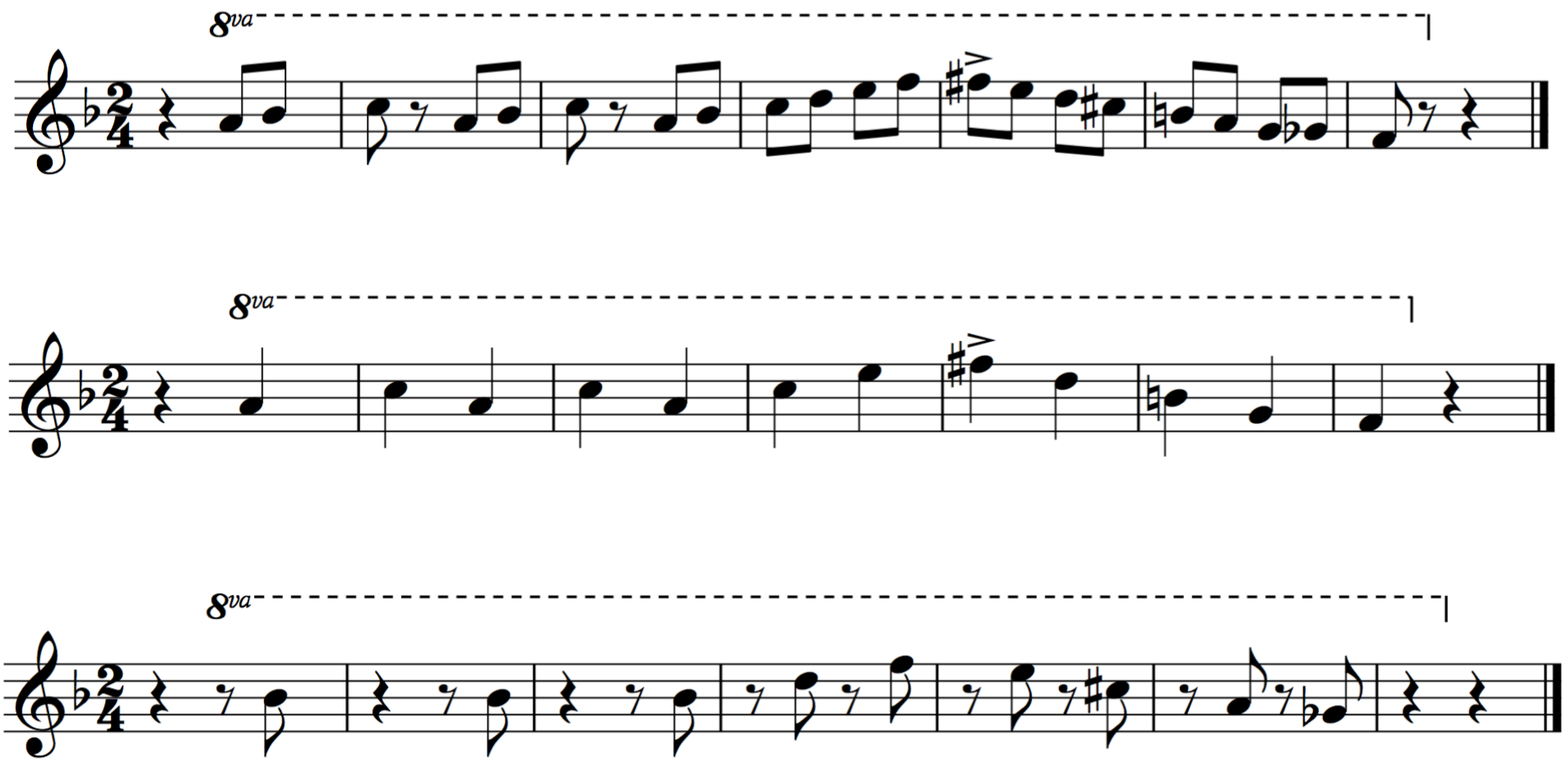
Space and Sustain



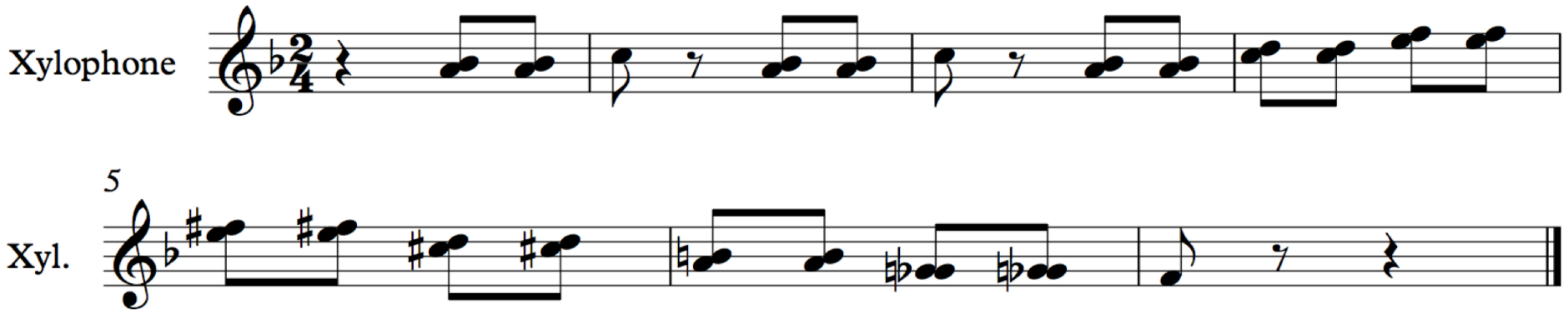
Pedagogical Issues

- Developing technique outside of repertoire
  - Warmups, exercises, and fundamentals
- Recommended Literature
  - Avoid the impulse to rush through repertoire
- Practice Techniques
  - Slow practice techniques
  - Hands apart
  - “Chunking”
  - Working in reverse
  - Blocking (again)

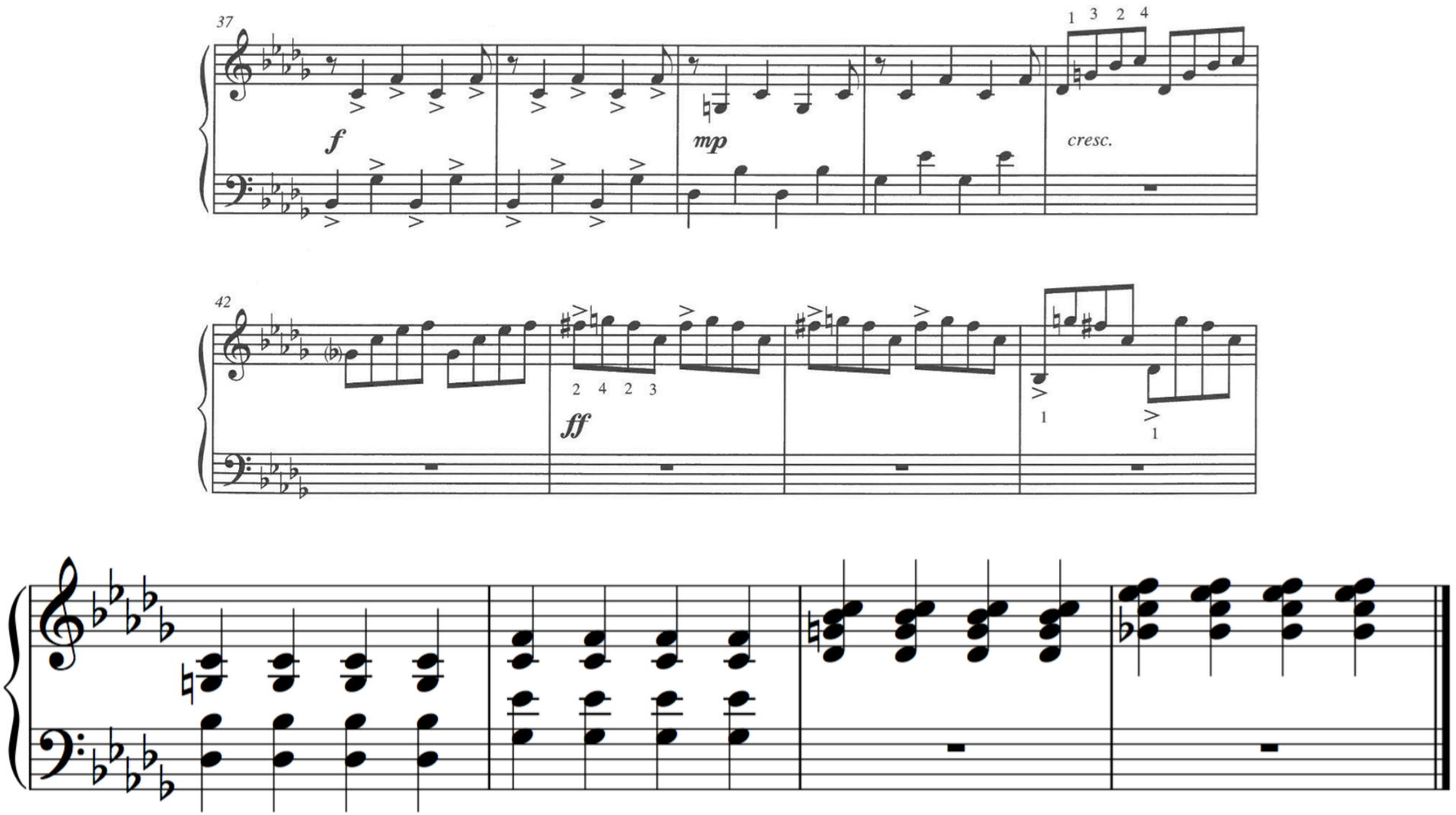
Hands Apart



Chunking



Blocking



Resources

- Book/Repertoire List (see handout)
- Online Resources
  - Percussion Axiom TV (Tom Burritt)
  - Vic Firth 4 Mallet Marimba Series (Julia Gaines)
  - Marimbalogy
  - Vic Firth Percussion 101

Thanks for coming!

All slides and handouts will be available at:

www.adamgroh.com