A Chart-a-Day:

Get Your Bands Sight Reading!

Dr. Dyne Eifertsen
Director of Jazz Studies
American River College

Overview

Musicians who spend a little time each day sight reading gain skills that carry through their life and career.

The Benefits of Daily Sight Reading

- Confidence
- Awareness
- In the present moment
- Concentration
- Pattern recognition
- Rhythmic subdivision
- Style recognition/interpretation
- Tempo assimilation
- Improved recovery from mistakes/continuity

A Balanced Approach

Balance of the need for festival preparation with the duty to teach all aspects of musicianship. Festival preparation works on:

- Attention to detail
- Deeper understanding of style
- Pattern recognition
- Confidence on specific charts

How often should we sight read?

- Daily
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- A little of something more often is better than nothing!

Where do I get charts to sight read?

- Trade out with other area schools
- Local Colleges
- Community Jazz Bands (They are a great resource for classic charts that are hard to get!)

What Level of Charts?

- Read one level below what you typically play for festivals
- Keep it simple
- Positive vibes!
- Better to read accurately at a lower level than sloppy at a higher level
- Watch frustration levels!
- Foster and develop confidence

The Sight-Reading Process:

- First thing in rehearsal - wakes up brains!
- Allow only 8-10 minutes for entire process
- Have chart on stands turned around so they cannot see it (no peeking!)
- Have a recording of a tune in a similar style playing as they enter
- Prep
- Sight read
- Pass back in score order

The Sight-Reading Process:

For the director…

- Study the score
- As the director, know the chart intimately
- Or, go in cold…
- Listen to the demo recording
- Make markings in your score
- This is not sight reading for the director unless desired

Time to Read!

- Turn stands around
- Complete focus/no talking or questions
- Address basics (2 minutes)
  - Style (familiar or not?)
    - Swing/Rock/Latin?
    - Artist specific?
  - Tempo - can any student guess?
  - Time Signature
  - Key signature (maj/min?)
    - Does it change?

Road Map

- Go through entire piece
- Get band used to the process so it becomes instinct
- Pick soloists and how many times through form for each
- Indicate backgrounds

Song Form

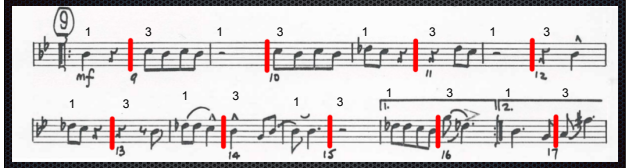
- Blues
- 32-bar
- Modal
- Especially important for rhythm section and soloists
  - Great to have them sing a few bars to get style
  - Look for trouble spots (dense) and focus on those:
    - Soli
    - Shout chorus

Rhythm Section

- Reinforce that the drums are in “time keeping” mode/keeping band together
- Get as much as they can but don’t stop
- Focus on:
  - Forward momentum
  - Dynamic forecasting
  - Simple and clear time

Sight Reading Tips

- Keep eyes moving forward
- Do not rest during rests/active listening
- During rest, look ahead and prep for what comes next
- Focus on rhythmic information
- Play “shapes” of phrases
- Look for imaginary halfway point in measure/ division of measure (1& 3)



Moten Swing Excerpt

Sight Reading Tips

- Director can give numbers or letters while reading
- Remind students that it is not about perfection
- It's about building confidence and consistency
  - Make mistakes, but recover quickly
  - Play strong and confident
  - Read what is above and below the notes and rhythms
    - Dynamics
    - Articulations

Takeaways

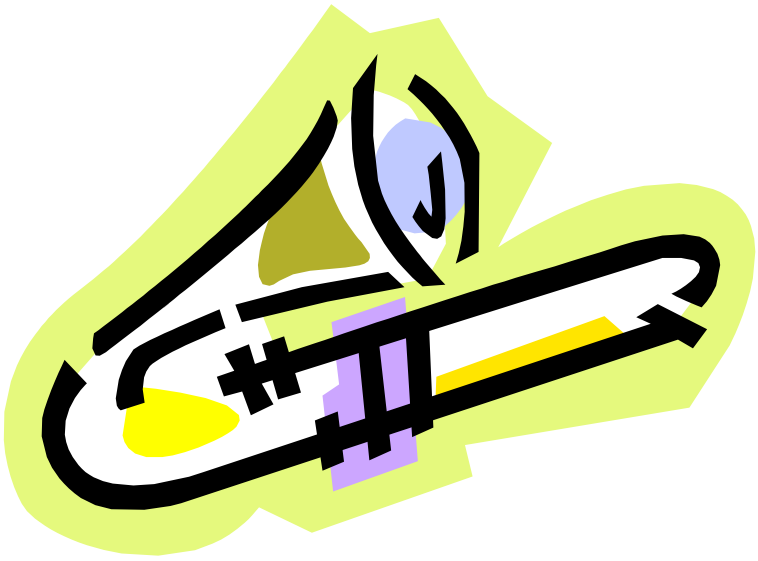
- It's all about the process
- Judgement-free zone
- It will improve your bands:
  - Sound
  - Rhythm
  - Blend and balance
- Can lead to quicker results with your festival/concert music

Takeaways

- Above all, make sure your own sight reading abilities are sharp

- If you are not comfortable with jazz:
  - Observe community groups or college bands
  - YouTube

Jazz Ensemble Rhythm Exercises



by

Dr. Dyne Eifertsen
Professor, Music
Director of Jazz Studies
American River College

Jazz Ensemble Rhythm Exercises

Rhythm is a key component in a tight jazz ensemble. This collection of rhythm exercises for jazz band is to be used as a tool to strengthen the rhythmic integrity of the ensemble. The exercises may be used in several ways:

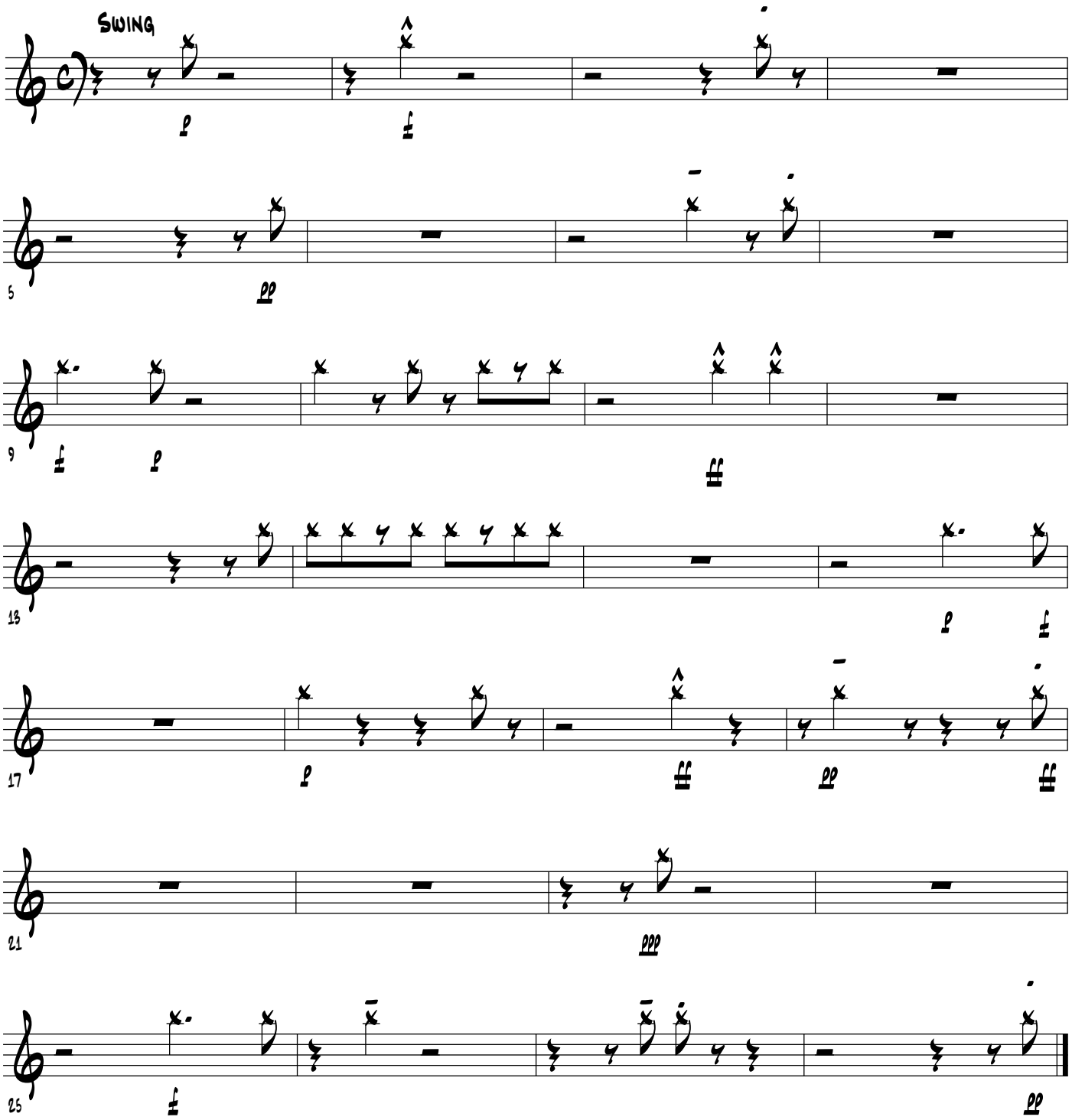
- Individual practice (enhance the abilities of those needing help with sight-reading)
- Section practice (Saxes, trombones, trumpets, and rhythm section for setting up ensemble figures)
- Ensemble practice (Use as a brain warm-up before rehearsal)
- As a singing exercise

Each exercise is based on a particular style of jazz (swing, Latin, jazz-rock, ballad, etc.) and includes dynamics and articulation. Some rhythmic figures are pulled from the cannon of important jazz ensemble charts and will be easily recognized by experienced players.

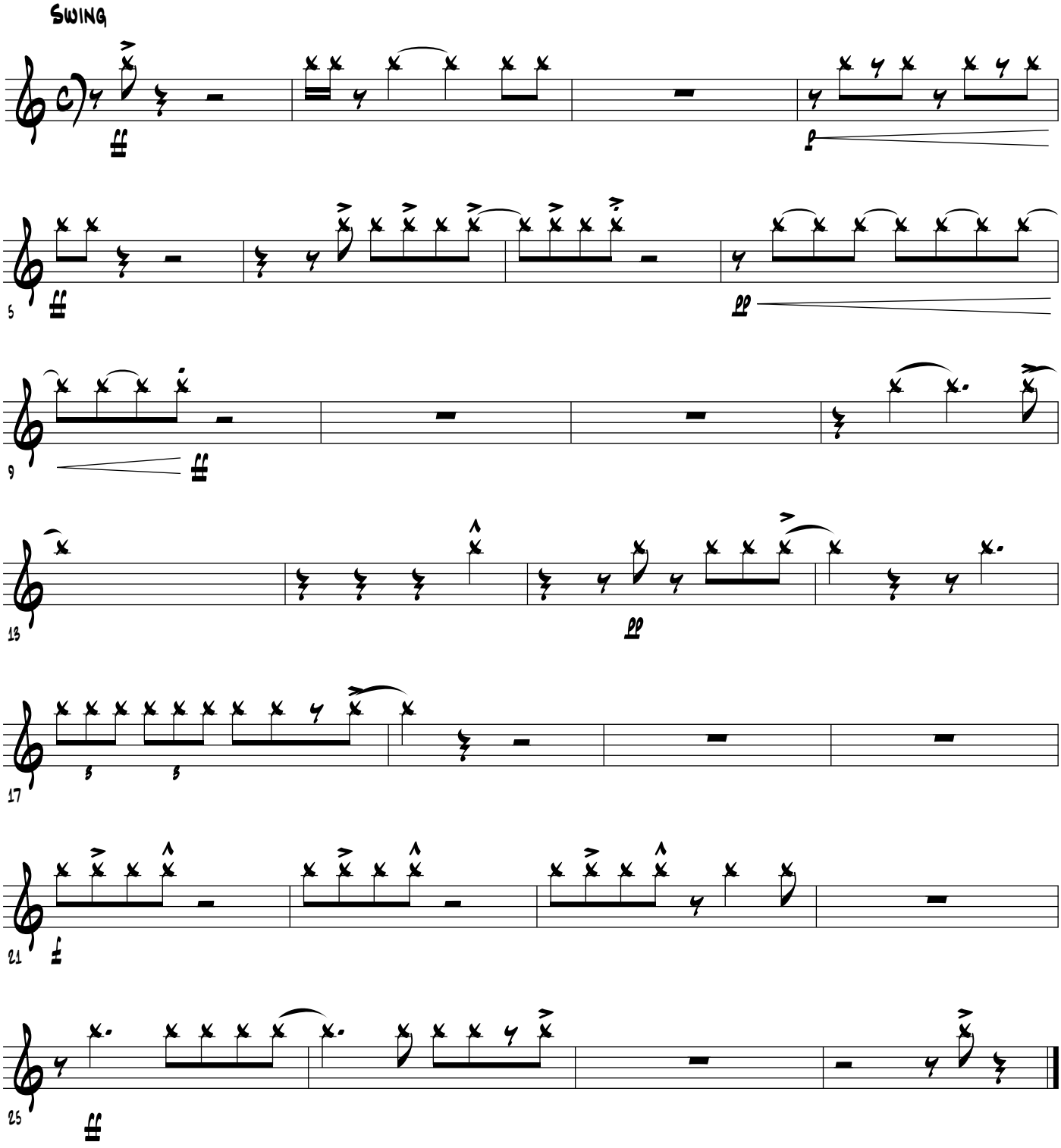
These exercises deal specifically with rhythm, dynamics, and articulation. Note heads have been replaced with an "x" notation as to not imply a specific pitch. Directors should give a specific pitch to play the rhythm on or call out a chord such as a G7 and have the ensemble members pick a note. I have purposely done away with changes of pitch so the players can focus specifically on rhythm, dynamics and articulation. Tempos should be played at the director's discretion and tempo changes will increase effectiveness.

Dr. Dyne Eifertsen
Professor, Music
Department Chair
American River College
eifertdc@arc.losrios.edu
(916) 484-8676
4700 College Oak Drive
Sacramento, CA 95841-4286

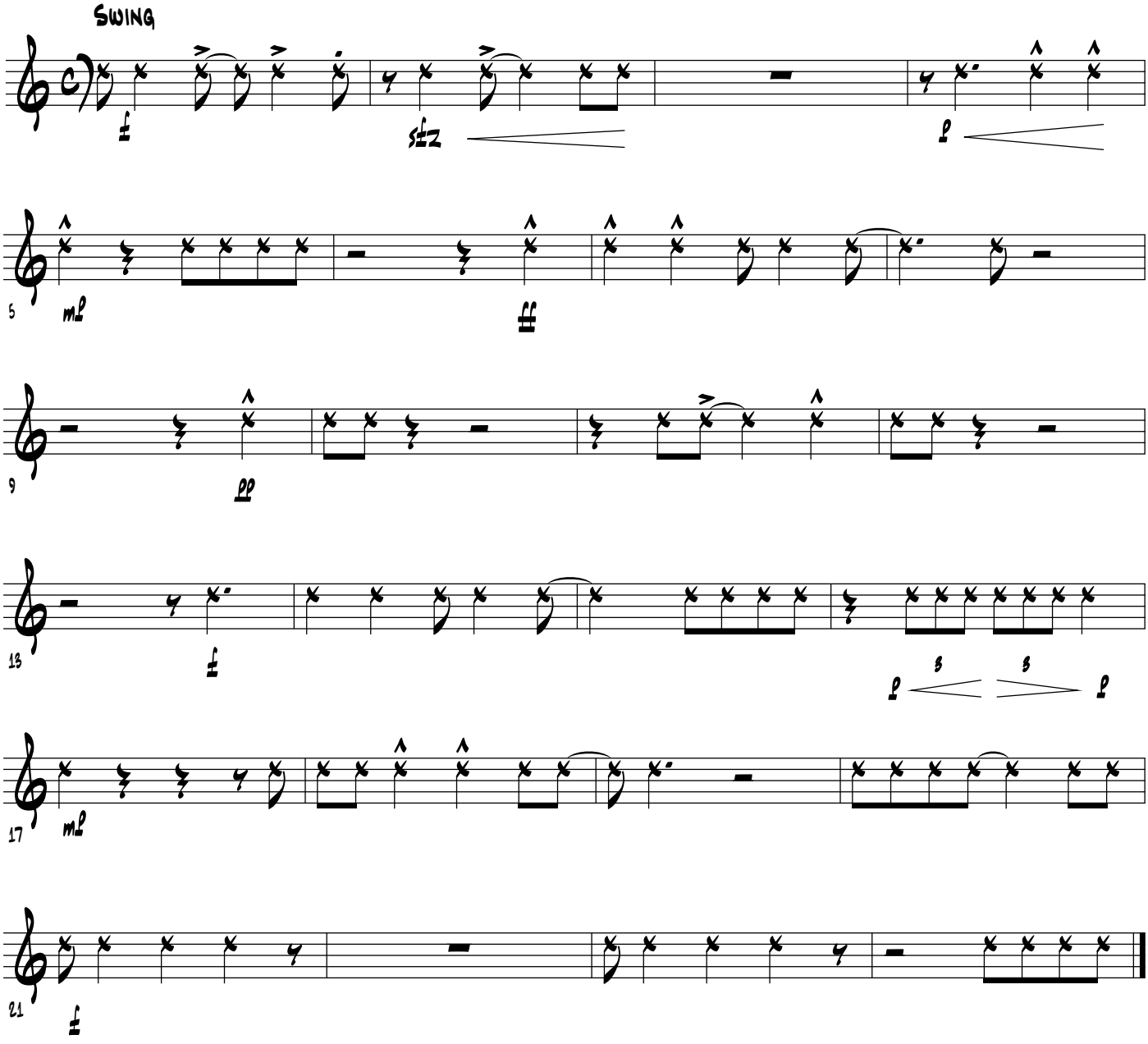
Warm-up #1



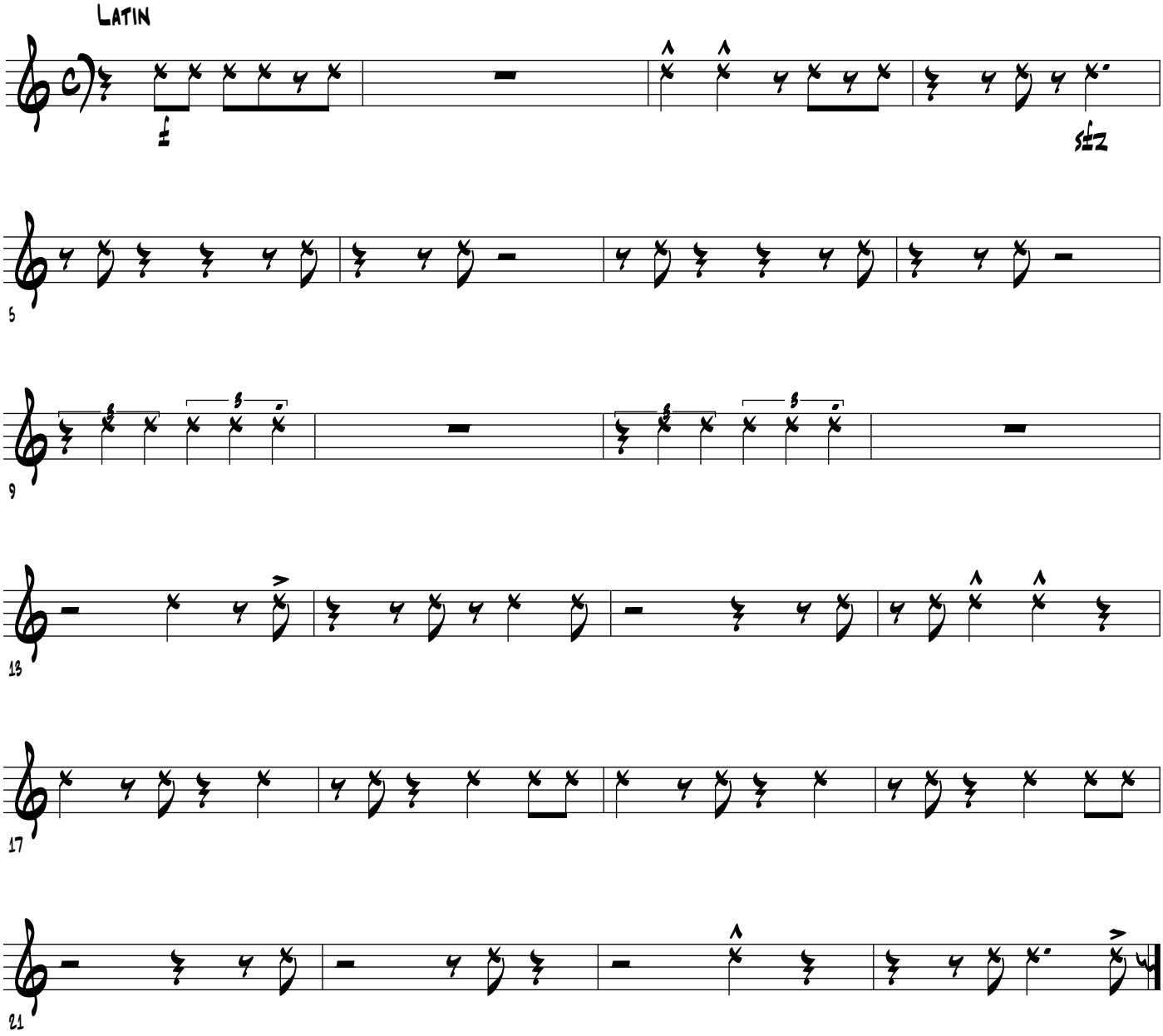
Warm-up #2



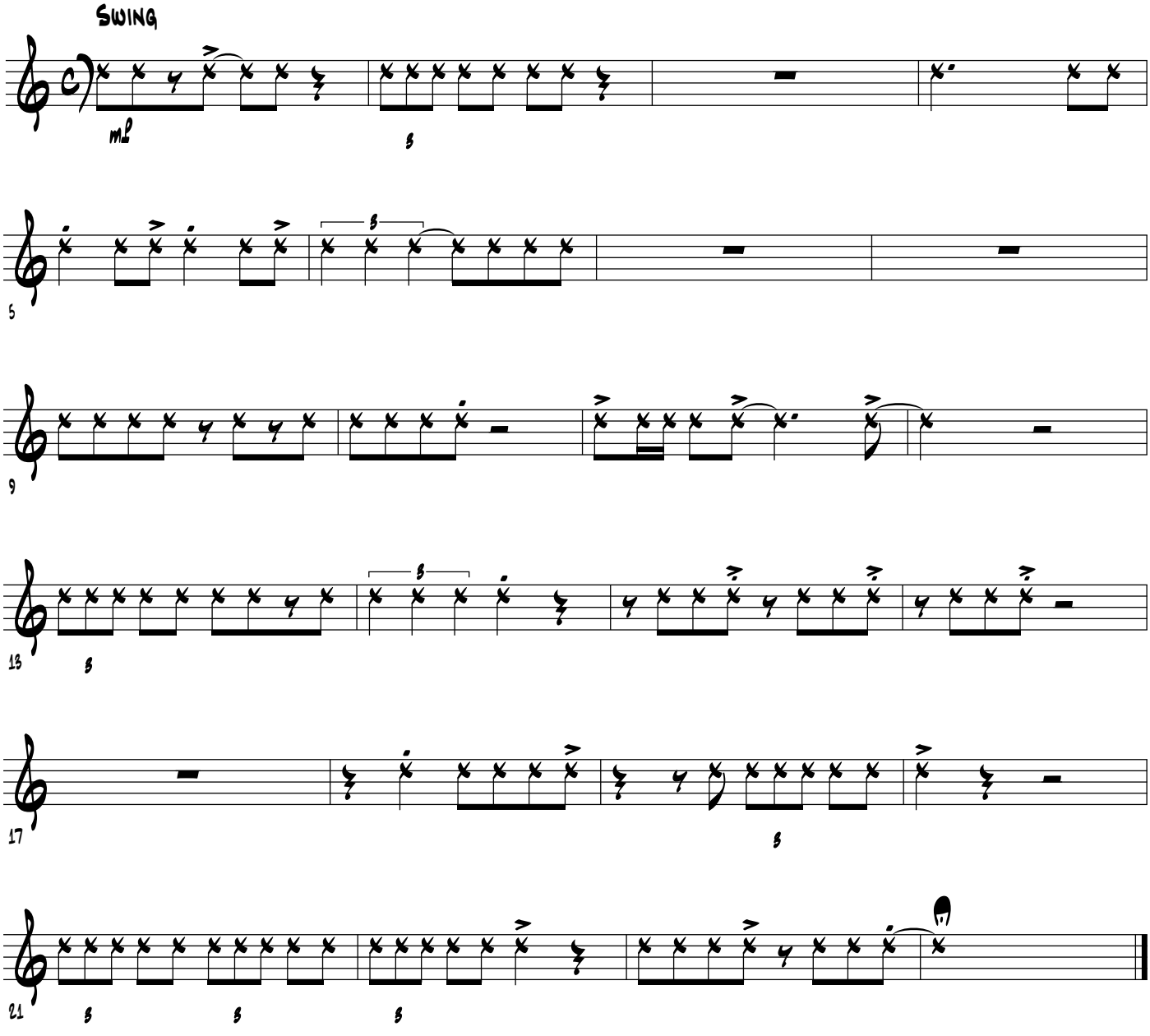
#1 Basie Swing



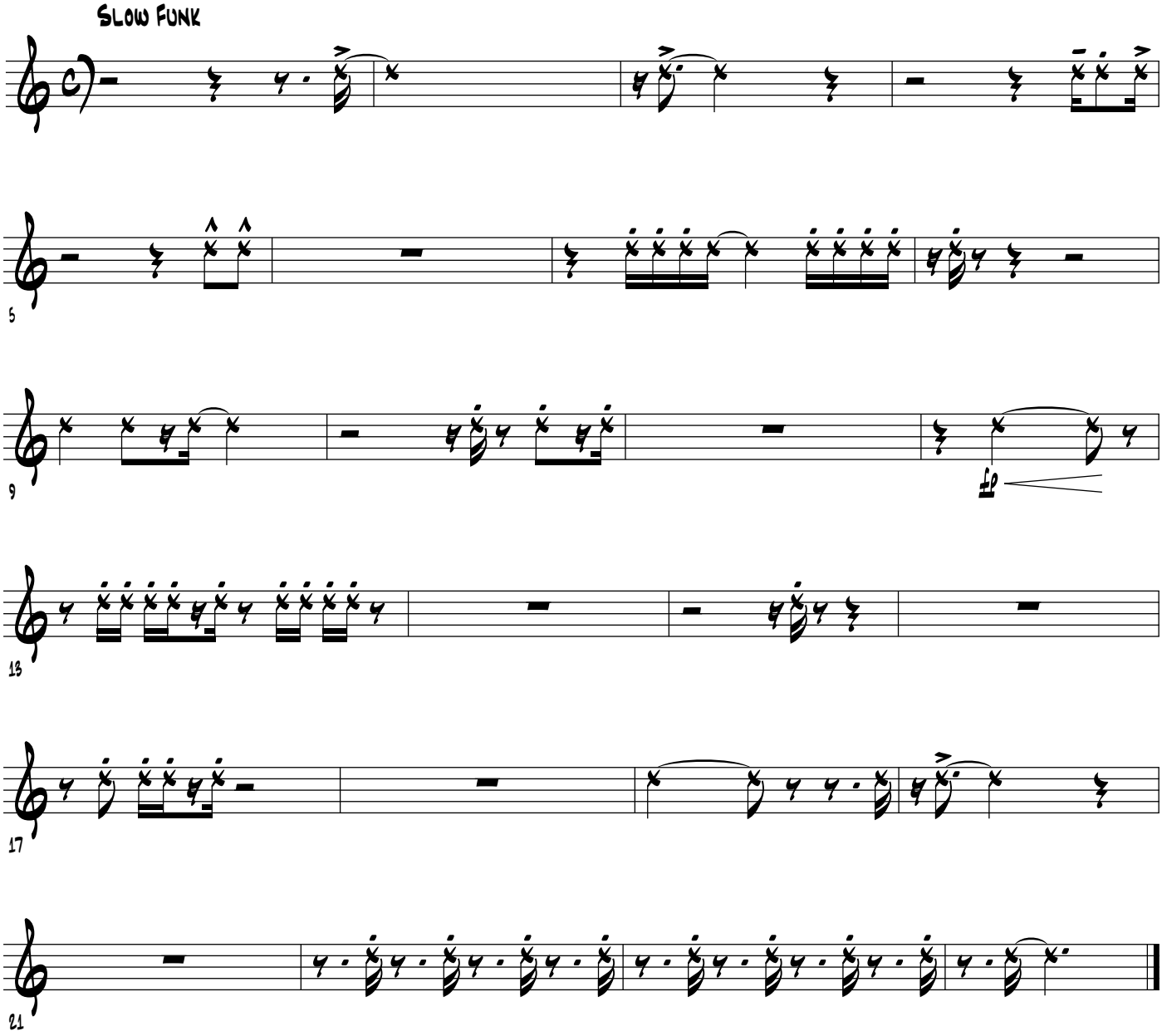
#2 Latin



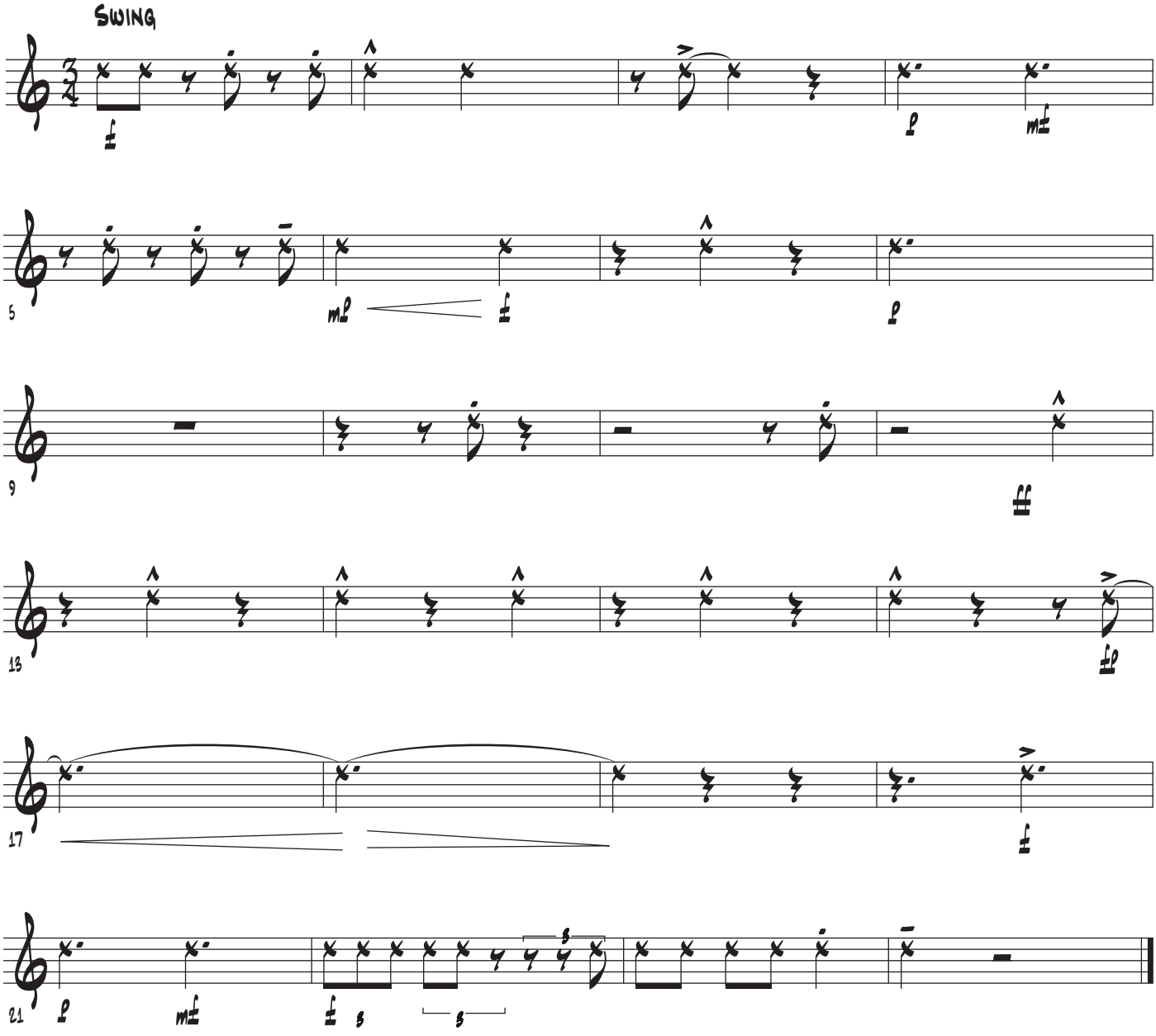
#3 West Coast/Cool



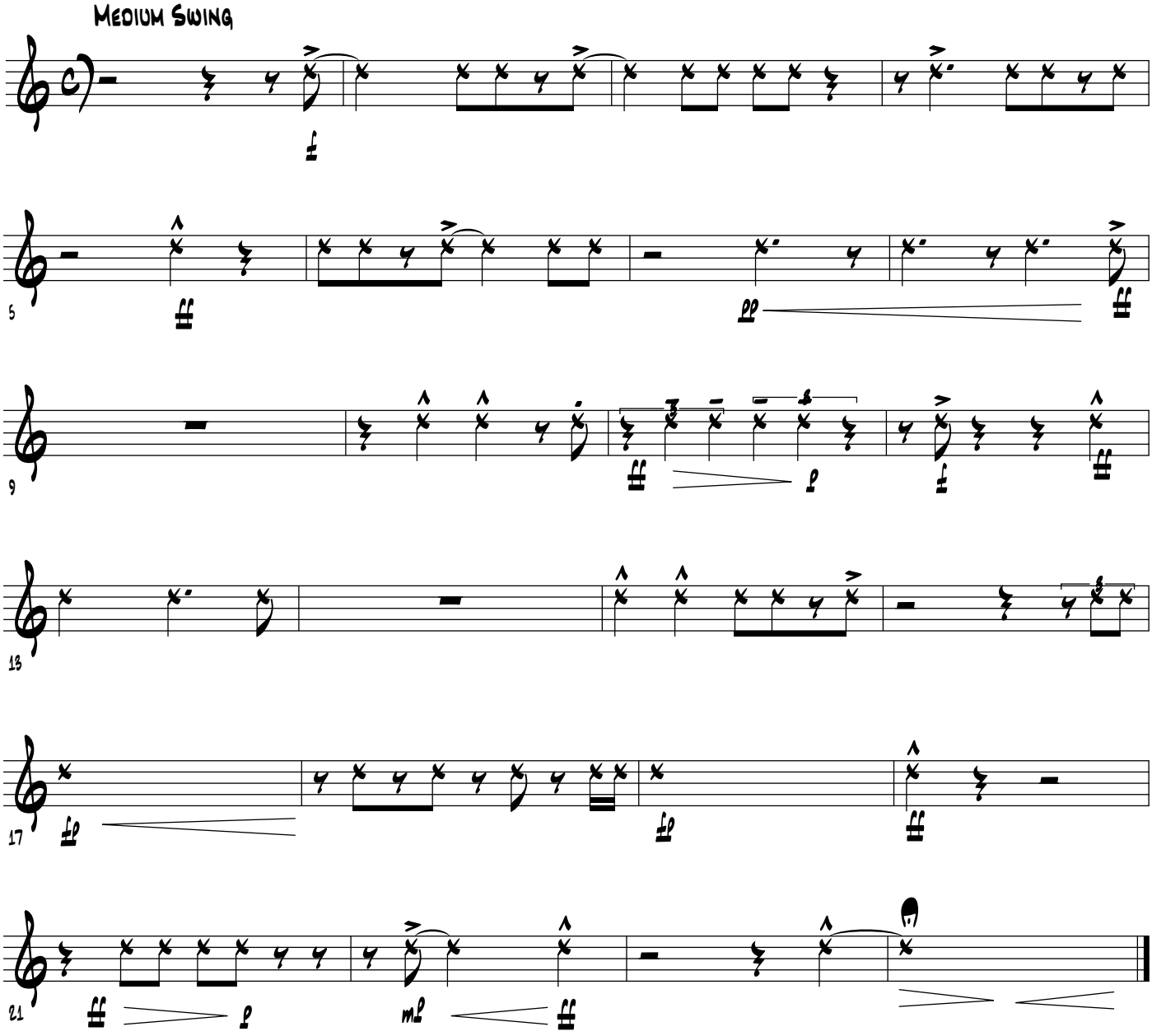
#4 Funk/Rock



#5 3/4 Swing



#6 Medium Swing



Big Band Style Reference

This Big Band Style reference is intended as a resource for both novice and experienced big band directors. The reference contains numerous big band recordings from various periods and genres of jazz along with a brief description of the era, style, and key stylistic components of the work.

Compiled by:
Dr. Dyne Eifertsen
Director of Jazz Studies
American River College
EifertDC@arc.losrios.edu

Year	Name	Song	Style	Comments
1928	Duke Ellington	The Mooche	Slow Swing	Feature clarinet trio and excellent for examining individual styles of soloists.
1932	Benny Moten	Moten Swing	Swing	Represents the classic laid-back Kansas City swing style with focus on blues inspired improvisation.
1937	Count Basie	One O'Clock Jump	Med. Swing	Classic Basie opening, simple, use of space, with foreshadowing of boogie-woogie in his solo. All-American Rhythm Section with Freddie Green guitar strum on all four beats.
1937	Benny Goodman & His Orchestra	Sing, Sing, Sing	Swing	Every drummer should know the high-energy solo intro by Gene Krupa. Lots of early swing styling of brass pitted against reeds.
1938	Artie Shaw & His Orchestra	Begin the Beguine	Med Swing	Classic dance band number. Heavy use of vibrato. Clarinet feature. Tight section and ensemble figures.
1939	Glen Miller Orchestra	In The Mood		This war-era dance classic features call and response between reeds and brass with a stop-time winds soli in the middle. Great template for music of this era and a study in big band dynamics.
1940	Duke Ellington	Caravan	Latin	Excellent example of shaping a long musical phrase. Great use of modal improvisation. Example of ostinato rhythm performed by rhythm section. Blend of tonal colors through diverse instrumentation and mutes in brass are a challenge. Listen for ensemble balance.
1940	Claude Thornhill & His Orchestra	Snowfall	Slow Swing	Piano feature interspersed with sustained chords from winds. Good example of balance within a big band.
1940	Duke Ellington	Satin Doll	Slow Swing	Great example of dance band arrangement. Shows proper balance of sections and use of mutes in brass. Use of melodic improvisation in solos.
1941	Duke Ellington	Take The "A" Train	Med. Swing	Prime examples of jazz articulation. Young rhythm sections should examine this model and play along with recording.

Year	Name	Song	Style	Comments
1947	Dizzy Gillespie & His Orchestra	Manteca	Latin/Cuban	Excellent Example of Cubop in a big band style. Swing intermixed with Latin feel.
1955	Count Basie	April in Paris	Med Swing	Great example of balance in a sax soli with strong alto saxophone lead. Melodic, legato trombone solo.
1956	Stan Kenton	Fuego Cubano	Latin	Film score style Latin chart with heavy use of Latin percussion and fiery brass. Multiple tempo changes are challenging. Brighter than typical big band sound.
1961	Duke Ellington	Anitra's Dance: Peer Gynt Suite	Up-tempo Swing	Young drummers should analyze drumming on this track. Use of clarinet solo. Heavy build up to strong shout chorus featuring trombone section.
1961	Quincy Jones	Quintessence	Ballad/alto sax feature	Soloists should observe the use of melodic embellishment by the saxophonist. The rhythm section lays down a very simple, but propelling groove while setting up ensemble backgrounds.
1966	Buddy Rich Big Band	Big Swing Face	Med. Swing	Articulation and tight ensemble work are key in this recording. Jazz articulations are overly exaggerated helping to propel the swing feel.
1968	Buddy Rich Big Band	Mercy, Mercy, Mercy	Med. Soul	Phil Wilson's arrangement of Mercy employs a Detroit soul feel that is reminiscent of Motown. Bass players should key in on Motown style bass playing developed by bassist James Jamerson.
1969	Thad Jones/ Mel Lewis	The Groove Merchant	Shuffle	A persistent triplet feel propels the band in this light shuffle arrangement. Excellent sax soli create a template for tight, balanced playing.
1969	Thad Jones/ Mel Lewis	Tow Away Zone	Funky/Soul Jazz	This is a great example of funky/soul jazz style in a big band setting with active bass playing, use of wah-wah pedal on guitar, and funky drum grooves. Soulful soloists incorporate many of the soul jazz elements into their improvisations.

Year	Name	Song	Style	Comments
1974	Woody Herman	A Child Is Born	Ballad	Lush ballad featuring Woody on clarinet. A study in sustain of line, texture, and range of dynamics. Sax solo features great use of chord-scales in improvisation.
1974	Woody Herman	La Fiesta	Latin - Fast	Excellent example of fast Latin style in ¾ time. Ideal listening to demonstrate importance of forward motion in music.
1978	Rob McConnell & the Boss Brass	Confirmation	Up-tempo Swing	The ensemble soli in the middle of the arrangement is particularly impressive. Demonstrates the importance of listening across the ensemble with a focus on phrase styling and balance. Section entrances and cutoffs are particularly impressive.
1979	Woody Herman	Woody n' You	Up-tempo Swing	Ideal listening for big band trumpet and trombone players. Great example of drum fills between ensemble passages. Trumpet solos burn.
1981	Jaco Pastorius	Liberty	Med. Light Swing	This recording is a study in time. The introduction features a winds soli minus rhythm section that grooves hard. And displays individual internal rhythm. The orchestration is expansive utilizing piccolo, steel drums, harmonica, synthesizers, and Latin percussion.
1982	Woody Herman	Four Brothers	Up-tempo Swing	One of the great examples of an all-star sax section soli. Short sax solos demonstrate what can be stated in a short solo.
1998	Arturo Sanduval	Sandunga	Med. Latin	Tight ensemble execution and use of Latin percussion make this funky performance exciting. Listeners should pay particular attention to the powerful beginnings of phrases. Amazing ensemble soli playing creates a wall of sound.

Year	Name	Song	Style	Comments
2000	Steve Spiegl Big Band	Then and Now	Ballad	Rhythm sections should notice the transitions into and out of double-time sections.
2000	Quincy Jones/ Sammy Nestico	Ya Gotta Try…Harder	Up-tempo Swing	Contemporary take on Basie Band style. Lead trumpet players should pay particular attention to this recording as a style template. Very technical trombone solo. Sax soli lead by soprano sax. Low-register instruments particularly well represented in this recording.
2000	Quincy Jones/ Sammy Nestico	Grace	Ballad/soprano feature	Well-balanced and shaped opening. Electric bass is quite active in an almost Motown style.
2000	Quincy Jones/ Sammy Nestico	Joy of Cookin'	Funk	Shows exaggeration of accent and articulation necessary for funk playing as an ensemble. Tune volleys between funk and swing, an often times difficult switch.
2001	Mingus Big Band	Fables of Fabus	Swing	The contemporary Mingus Big Band instills the sense of creativity of the original Mingus bands in this recording. A mix of swing, Latin, double time, and free large group improvisations will stretch the abilities of any big band. Use of shouts, hollers, and singing by the winds create a feeling of joy.
2002	Toshiko Akiyoshi	March of the Tadpoles	Up-tempo Swing	Contemporary big band writing. Trombonists should pay particular attention to the extensive trombone soli and solo.
2003	Bob Mintzer Big Band	Gently	Med. Swing	Written and performed in the style of Gil Evans, this recording is an example of subtle playing in a large ensemble. The rhythm section remains below the winds with quiet propulsion. Note balance of woodwind doubles and brass.
2005	Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band	Count Bubba	Up-tempo Swing	The epitome of the popular modern jazz ensemble. This recording features incredible section solis and solos that elevate the possibilities of big band performance.

Notes

1. Duke Ellington, "The Mooche," *The Duke-The Essential Collection*, Columbia/Legacy C3K 65841.

2. Benny Moten's Kansas City Orchestra, "Moten Swing," *Ken Burn's Jazz: The Story of America's Music*, Columbia/Legacy C5K 61432.

3. Count Basie, "One O'Clock Jump," *One O'Clock Jump*, Columbia CL 997.

4. Benny Goodman and His Orchestra "Sing, Sing, Sing," *Ken Burn's Jazz: The Story of America's Music*, Columbia/Legacy C5K 61432.

5. Artie Shaw and His Orchestra, "Begin the Beguine," *Ken Burn's Jazz: The Story of America's Music*, Columbia/Legacy C5K 61432.

6. Glen Miller Orchestra, "In the Mood," *Ken Burn's Jazz: The Story of America's Music*, Columbia/Legacy C5K 61432.

7. Duke Ellington, "Caravan," *The Best of Duke Ellington*, Capitol Records CDP 7 91223 2.

8. Claude Thornhill and His Orchestra, "Snowfall," *Snaowfall*, Living Era CD AJA 5542.

9. Duke Ellington, "Satin Doll," Capitol Records CDP 7 91223 2.

10. Duke Ellington, "Take the "A" Train," *Ken Burn's Jazz: The Story of America's Music*, Columbia/Legacy C5K 61432.

11. Dizzy Gillespie and His Orchestra, "Manteca," *Ken Burn's Jazz: The Story of America's Music*, Columbia/Legacy C5K 61432.

12. Count Basie, "April in Paris," *April in Paris*, Verve 314 512 402-2

13. Stan Kenton, "Fuego Cubano," *Cuban Fire*, Capitol T-731

14. Duke Ellington, "Anitra's Dance: Peer Gynt Suite," *Three Suites*, Columbia CK 46825.

15. Quincy Jones, "The Quintessence," *The Quintessence*, IMPD-222

16. Buddy Rich Big Band, "Big Swing Face," *Mercy, Mercy*, Pacific Jazz CDP 7243 8 54331 2 2.

17. Buddy Rich Big Band, "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," *Mercy, Mercy*, Pacific Jazz CDP 7243 8 54331 2 2.

18. Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band, "The Groove Merchant," *Central Park North*, Solid State SS18058.

19. Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band, "Tow Away Zone," *Central Park North*, Solid State SS18058.

20. Woody Herman Big Band, "A Child is Born," *Giant Steps*, Fantasy 9432.

21. Woody Herman Big Band, "La Fiesta," *Giant Steps*, Fantasy 9432.

22. Rob McConnell and the Boss Brass, "Confirmation," *Rob McConnell and the Boss Brass/Again Vol. 1,*, DOUGLASS PHONODISC DMds A1849.

23. Woody Herman, "Woody n' You," *The Concord Years*, Concord Jazz CCD 4838.

24. Jaco Pastorius, "Liberty," *Word of Mouth*, Warner Bros. 3535-2.

25. Woody Herman, "Four Brothers," *The Concord Years*, Concord Jazz CCD 4838.

26. Arturo Sanduval, "Sandunga," *Hot House*, N2K-10023.

27. Steve Spiegl Big Band, "Then and Now," *Then and Now*, Sorcerer SMP-1002.

28. Quincy Jones/Sammy Nestico, "Ya Gotta Try…Harder," *Basie and Beyond*, Qwest/Warner Bros. 947792-2.

29. Quincy Jones/Sammy Nestico, "Grace," *Basie and Beyond*, Qwest/Warner Bros. 947792-2.

30. Quincy Jones/Sammy Nestico, "Joy of Cookin'," *Basie and Beyond*, Qwest/Warner Bros. 947792-2.

31. Mingus Big Band, "Fables of Fabus," *The Essential Mingus Big Band*, Dreyfus 36628.

32. Toshiko Akiyoshi, "March of the Tadpoles," *DVC Night Jazz Band*, DVC 002.

33. Bob Mintzer Big Band, "Gently," *Live at MCG with Special Guest Kurt Elling*, MCG Records/Telarc MCGJ-1016.

34. Gordon Goowin's Big Phat Band, "Count Bubba," *Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band: XXL*, Silverline Records 281206.