Wynton Marsalis, Managing and Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center

St. Louis Blues

By W.C. Handy

Arranged by Duke Ellington

As performed by the Duke Ellington Orchestra

Transcribed by Christopher Crenshaw for Jazz at Lincoln Center

Full Score

This transcription was made especially for Jazz at Lincoln Center's 2015–16 Twenty-First Annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program.

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essentially ELLINGTON

jazz

NOTES ON PLAYING ELLINGTON

At least 95% of modern-day large ensemble jazz playing comes out of three traditions: Count Basie's band, Duke Ellington's band, and the orchestrations of small groups. Those young players interested in jazz will be drawn to small groups for the opportunity to improvise and for practical reasons (it is much easier to organize 4 or 5 people than it is 15). Schools have taken over the task (formerly performed by dance bands) of training musicians to be ensemble players. Due to the Basie Band's popularity and its simplicity of style and emphasis on blues and swing, the better educators have almost exclusively adopted this tradition for teaching jazz ensemble playing. As wonderful as Count Basie's style is, it doesn't address many of the important styles developed under the great musical umbrella we call jazz. Duke Ellington's comprehensive and eclectic approach to music offers an alternative.

The stylistic richness of Ellington's music presents a great challenge to educators and performers alike. In Basie's music, the conventions are very nearly consistent. In Ellington's music there are many more exceptions to the rules. This calls for greater knowledge of the language of jazz. Clark Terry, who left Count Basie's band to join Duke Ellington, said, "Count Basie was college, but Duke Ellington was graduate school." Knowledge of Ellington's music prepares you to play any big band music.

The following is a list of performance conventions for the great majority of Ellington's music. Any deviations or additions will be spelled out in the individual performance notes which follow.

1. Listen carefully many times to the Ellington recording of these pieces. There are many subtleties that will elude even the most sophisticated listener at first. Although it was never Ellington's wish to have his recordings imitated, knowledge of these definitive versions will lead musicians to make more educated choices when creating new performances. Ellington's music, though written for specific individuals, is designed to inspire all musicians to express themselves. In addition, you will hear slight note differences in the recording and the transcriptions. This is intentional, as there are mistakes and alterations from the original intent of the music in the recording. You should have your players play what's in the score.

2. General use of swing phrasing. The triplet feel prevails except for ballads or where notations such as even eighths or Latin appear. In these cases, eighth notes are given equal value.

3. There is a chain of command in ensemble playing. The lead players in each section determine the phrasing and volume for their own section, and their section-mates must conform to the lead. When the saxes and/or trombones play with the trumpets, the lead trumpet is the boss. The lead alto and trombone must listen to the first trumpet and follow him. In turn, the other saxes and trombones must follow their lead players. When the clarinet leads the brass section, the brass should not overblow him. That means that the first trumpet is actually playing "second." If this is done effectively, there will be very little balancing work left for the conductor.

4. In Ellington's music, each player should express the individuality of his own line. He must find a musical balance of supporting and following the section leader and bringing out the character of the underpart. Each player should be encouraged to express his or her personality through the music. In this music, the underparts are played at the same volume and with the same conviction as the lead.

5. Blues inflection should permeate all parts at all times, not just when these opportunities occur in the lead.

6. Vibrato is used quite a bit to warm up the sound. Saxes (who most frequently represent the sensual side of things) usually employ vibrato on harmonized passages and no vibrato on unisons. The vibrato can be either heavy or light depending on the context. Occasionally saxes use a light vibrato on unisons. Trumpets (who very often are used for heat and power) use a little vibrato on harmonized passages and no vibrato on unisons. Trombones (who are usually noble) do not use slide vibrato. A little lip vibrato is good on harmonized passages at times. Try to match the speed of vibrato. In general unisons are played with no vibrato.

7. Crescendo as you ascend and diminuendo as you descend. The upper notes of phrases receive a natural accent and the lower notes are ghosted. Alto and tenor saxophones need to use sub-tone in the lower part of their range in order to blend properly with the rest of the section. This music was originally written with no dynamics. It pretty much follows the natural tendencies of the instruments; play loud in the loud part of the instrument and soft in the soft part of the instrument. For instance, a high C for a trumpet will be loud and a low C will be soft.

8. Quarter notes are generally played short unless otherwise notated. Long marks above or below a pitch indicate full value: not just long, but full value. Eighth notes are played full value except when followed by a rest or otherwise notated. All notes longer than a quarter note are played full value, which means if it is followed by a rest, release the note where the rest appears. For example, a half note occurring on beat one of a measure would be released on beat three.

9. Unless they are part of a legato background figure, long notes should be played somewhat fp (forte-piano); accent then diminish the volume. This is important so that the moving parts can be heard over the sustained notes. Don't just hold out the long notes, but give them life and personality: that is, vibrato, inflection, crescendo, or diminuendo. There is a great deal of inflection in this music, and much of this is highly interpretive. Straight or curved lines imply non-pitched glisses, and wavy lines mean scalar (chromatic or diatonic) glisses. In general, all rhythmic figures need to be accented. Accents give the music life and swing. This is very important.

10. Ellington's music is about individuality: one person per part—do not double up because you have extra players or need more strength. More than one on a part makes it sound more like a concert band and less like a jazz band.

11. This is acoustic music. Keep amplification to an absolute minimum; in the best halls, almost no amplification should be necessary. Everyone needs to develop a big sound. It is the conductor's job to balance the band. When a guitar is used, it should be a hollow-body, unamplified rhythm guitar. Simple three-note voicings should be used throughout. An acoustic string bass is a must. In mediocre or poorly designed halls, the bass and piano may need a bit of a boost. I recommend miking them and putting them through the house sound system. This should provide a much better tone than an amplifier. Keep in mind that the rhythm section's primary function is to accompany. The bass should not be as loud as a trumpet. That is unnatural and leads to over-amplification, bad tone, and limited dynamics. Stay away from monitors. They provide a false sense of balance.

12. Solos and rhythm section parts without chord changes should be played as is or with a little embellishment. Solos and rhythm section parts with chord changes should be improvised. However, written passages should be learned because they are an important part of our jazz heritage and help the player understand the function of his particular solo or accompaniment. Soloists should learn the chord changes. Solos should not be approached as opportunities to show off technique, range, or volume, but should be looked at as a great opportunity to further develop the interesting thematic material that Ellington has provided.

13. The notation of plungers for the brass means a rubber toilet plunger bought in a hardware store. Kirkhill is a very good brand (especially if you can find one of their old hard rubber ones, like the one I loaned Wynton and he lost). Trumpets use 5" diameter and trombones use 6" diameter. Where Plunger/Mute is notated, insert a pixie mute in the bell and use the plunger over the mute. Pixies are available from Humes & Berg in Chicago. Tricky Sam Nanton and his successors in the Ellington plunger trombone chair did not use pixies. Rather, each of them employed a Nonpareil (that's the brand name) trumpet straight mute. Nonpareil has gone out of business, but the Tom Crown Nonpareil trumpet straight mute is very close to the same thing. These mute/plunger combinations create a wonderful sound (very close to the human voice), but they also can create some intonation problems which must be corrected by the lip or by using alternate slide positions. It would be easier to move the tuning slide, but part of the sound is in the struggle to correct the pitch. If this proves too much, stick with the pixie—it's pretty close.

14. The drummer is the de facto leader of the band. He establishes the beat and controls the volume of the ensemble. For big band playing, the drummer needs to use a larger bass drum than he would for small group drumming. A 22" or 24" is preferred. The bass drum is played softly (nearly inaudible) on each beat. This is called feathering the bass drum. It provides a very important bottom to the band. The bass drum sound is not a boom and not a thud—it's in between. The larger size drum is necessary for the kicks; a smaller drum just won't be heard. The key to this style is to just keep time. A rim knock on two and four (chopping wood) is used to lock in the swing. When it comes to playing fills, the fewer, the better.

15. The horn players should stand for their solos and solis. Brass players should come down front for moderate to long solos, surrounding rests permitting. The same applies to the pep section (two trumpets and one trombone in plunger/mutes).

16. Horns should pay close attention to attacks and releases. Everyone should hit together and release together.

17. Above all, everyone's focus should remain at all times on the swing. As the great bassist Chuck Israels says, "The three most important things in jazz are rhythm, rhythm, and rhythm, in that order." Or as Bubber Miley (Ellington's first star trumpeter) said, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

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GLOSSARY

The following are terms which describe conventions of jazz performance, from traditional New Orleans to the present avant garde.

Break • within the context of an ongoing time feel, the rhythm section stops for one, two, or four bars. Very often a soloist will improvise during a break.

Call and response • repetitive pattern of contrasting exchanges (derived from the church procedure of the minister making a statement and the congregation answering with "amen"). Call-and-response patterns usually pit one group of instruments against another. Sometimes we call this "trading fours," "trading twos," etc., especially when it involves improvisation. The numbers denote the amount of measures each soloist or group plays. Another term frequently used is "swapping fours."

Coda • also known as the "outro." "Tags" or "tag endings" are outgrowths of vaudeville bows that are frequently used as codas. They most often use deceptive cadences that finally resolve to the tonic or they go from the sub-dominant and cycle back to the tonic.

Comp • improvise accompaniment (for piano or guitar).

Groove • the composite rhythm. This generally refers to the combined repetitive rhythmic patterns of the drums, bass, piano, and guitar, but may also include repetitive patterns in the horns. Some grooves are standard (i.e., swing, bossa nova, samba), while others are manufactured (original combinations of rhythms).

Head • melody chorus.

Interlude • a different form (of relatively short length) sandwiched between two chorus forms. Interludes that set up a key change are simply called modulations.

Intro • short for introduction.

Ride pattern • the most common repetitive figure played by the drummer's right hand on the ride cymbal or hi-hat.

Riff • a repeated melodic figure. Very often, riffs repeat verbatim or with slight alterations while the harmonies change underneath them.

Shout chorus • also known as the "out chorus," the "sock chorus," or sometimes shortened to just "the shout." It is the final ensemble passage of most big band charts and where the climax most often happens.

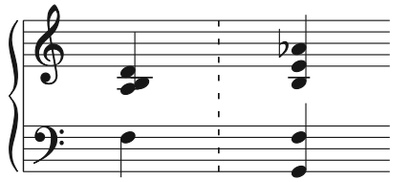
Soli • a harmonized passage for two or more instruments playing the same rhythm. It is customary for horn players to stand up or even move in front of the band when playing these passages. This is done so that the audience can hear them better and to provide the audience with some visual interest. A soli sound particular to Ellington's music combines two trumpets an trombone in plungers/mutes in triadic harmony. This is called the "pep section."

Stop time • a regular pattern of short breaks (usually filled in by a soloist).

Swing • the perfect confluence of rhythmic tension and relaxation in music creating a feeling euphoria and characterized by accented weak beats (a democratization of the beat) and eighth notes that are played as the first and third eighth notes of an eighth-note triplet. Duke Ellington's definition of swing: when the music feels like it is getting faster, but it isn't.

Vamp • a repeated two- or four-bar chord progression. Very often, there may be a riff or riffs played on the vamp.

Voicing • the specific spacing, inversion, and choice of notes that make up a chord. For instance, two voicings for G7 could be:



Note that the first voicing includes a 9th and the second voicing includes a 9th and a 13th. The addition of 9ths, 11ths, 13ths, and alterations are up to the discretion of the pianist and soloist.

THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

The following are placed in their order of importance in jazz. We should never lose perspective on this order of priority.

Rhythm • meter, tempo, groove, and form, including both melodic rhythm and harmonic rhythm (the speed and regularity of the chord changes).

Melody • a tune or series of pitches.

Harmony • chords and voicings.

Orchestration • instrumentation and tone colors.

— David Berger

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ST. LOUIS BLUES • INSTRUMENTATION

Vocal

Reed 1 – Alto Sax

Reed 2 - Alto Sax

Reed 3 – Clarinet/Tenor Sax

Reed 4 - Tenor Sax

Reed 5 – Bari Sax

Trumpet 1

Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

Trumpet 4

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Trombone 3

Guitar

Piano

Bass

Drums

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer • W.C. Handy

Arranger • Duke Ellington

Recorded • September 3, 1946 in Hollywood

Master # • D6VB-2129-1

Original Issue • Victor 20-2327 (78)

Currently available on CD • RCA 09026-63394 (*The Duke Ellington Centennial Edition: The Complete RCA Victor Mid-Forties Recordings*) [3 CDs]

Currently available as digital download • Amazon, iTunes (Duke Ellington: *The Complete RCA Victor Mid-Forties Recordings*)

Personnel • Duke Ellington (leader, piano); Shelton Hemphill, Taft Jordan, Cat Anderson, Francis Williams, Harold "Shorty" Baker, Ray Nance (trumpet); Lawrence Brown, Claude Jones, Wilbur DeParis (trombone); Johnny Hodges, Russell Procope (alto sax); Jimmy Hamilton (clarinet and tenor sax); Al Sears (tenor sax); Harry Carney (baritone sax); Fred Guy (guitar); Oscar Pettiford (bass); Sonny Greer (drums); Marion Cox (vocal)

Soloists • Jimmy Hamilton (clarinet); Marian Cox (vocal); Al Sears (tenor sax)

REHEARSAL NOTES

• If one tune can be said to be at the root of the world's obsession with the blues and all the music that came from it, it is the **St. Louis Blues**. W.C. Handy used a phrase he heard spoken by a distraught woman in St. Louis – "My man's got a heart like a rock cast in the sea" – as the inspiration for a tune that mixed a 16-bar tango section with a the blues. It became a huge hit when published in 1914, and two jazz versions from the 1920's – Bessie Smith's (with Louis Armstrong on trumpet) and Armstrong's own four years later, cemented it in the jazz repertoire.

• Ellington recorded two very different and atypical versions before this 1946 one. The first, made in 1928, was a "symphonic" jazz version with a choir and strings in addition to his band, and the second one, four years later, featured his Brunswick Records label-mate Bing Crosby. It's too bad that he never recorded the 1940 arrangement that exists only on live recordings. It was a crazy, abstract up-tempo take on the tune with everyone going crazy. You can find it on the November 1940 recordings of the band in Fargo, North Dakota.

• Unlike most Ellington pieces, which have great variations of intensity, mood and orchestration, this arrangement starts with a driving beat and never lets up. Even when the dynamics come down at the second vocal, the drive doesn't let up. Here we encounter an amazing mixture of simple riffs and far-out backgrounds. They must be played with equal conviction to make the performance come off cohesively. As the years went by, the band played this slightly faster, but do not take it at a tempo that your band can't find a deep groove at. This original tempo is really the best one.

• Try rehearsing the intro going right into the last chorus. This can help the band settle in on one tempo and lessen the urge to rush things as the piece progresses.

• Spend time with each individual chorus, and don't move on to the next one until you have really nailed it down. Once the pattern is set for not accepting errors and real concentration, it'll be much easier to bring the entire performance together.

• Brass in the intro should phrase like the Ellington recording. Listen to it and mark the parts accordingly. Rehearse brass and reeds separately at first to insure accuracy. Make sure the clarinet lead is firmly established and blended in reeds.

• Reed backgrounds at **A** are primarily rhythmic. Try singing them first, with an emphasis on accuracy,swing, and accents. Note the prominence of the baritone in the blend. This is a characteristic Ellington effect.

• Brass at **B** can be played in stands or hats to ensure the *mp* dynamic level. The reed quarter note on the downbeat of measure two is to be leaned on. The rhythm section can try playing with a crisp beat here, saving a wider, legato sound for later.

• Everything changes at **C**. Imagine that you've gone from playing at a jazz dance to playing a dramatic scene in an opera. The phrasing becomes exaggeratedly precise and almost stiff, with a dramatic flair. Short notes are really short, the high reed passages should stand out, and the whole feeling should contrast greatly with what came before. Make a big crescendo in the last measure of **D** to emphasize the *sub. p* at **E**.

• Even though **E** is marked *p*, make sure that the rhythm section keeps a tight intensity – don't let it drop! Horns should exaggerate the crescendo in the fourth measure for dramatic effect. Rehearse brass and reeds at **F** to make sure that they all land on the eighth note on the and-of 2 together, as well as making the crescendo on the third and fourth measures. The rhythm section has their own crescendo starting at **F**. Note how smoothly Ellington has extended this blues chorus to 16 measures!

• The goal at **G** is for the band to sound like one person. This is another section that might be sung first to get it in everyone's bones.

• This is not just another blues in C – it is the **St. Louis Blues**. All soloists should keep the melody and the arrangement in mind as they play. Throwing in their "usual" blues things doesn't work. The challenge for soloists in Ellington's music is always relating to the context of the solo – what came before and what is to follow. If you insert more soloists (and if you don't have to, don't), make sure you don't lose the compositional and thematic thread of the tune. Try having each soloist repeat the last phrase of the previous solo.

• Pay close attention to the dynamics at **J** and **K**. Without them, everything that came before will be far less effective.

-Loren Schoenberg

To listen to original recordings, view interactive videos of Wynton Marsalis leading the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in rehearsals, and obtain rehearsal guides for the *Essentially Ellington* 2015-16 repertoire please visit jazz.org/EE.

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CONDUCTOR

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Essentially Ellington

ST. LOUIS BLUES

W.C. Handy
Arranged by Duke Ellington
Transcribed by Christopher Crenshaw

Swing ♩ = 160

Vocal — 1 hate

Reeds 1 — Alto Sax — straight 8ths

2 — Alto Sax — straight 8ths

3 — solo Clarinet — straight 8ths

4 — Tenor Sax — straight 8ths

5 — Bari Sax — straight 8ths

Trumpets 1, 2, 3, 4

Trombones 1, 2, 3

Guitar

Piano

Bass

Drums

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A

Voc.: to see that eve nin' sun go down. I hate to see that eve nin' sun go down, 'cause

Alto, Alto, Clar., Tenor, Bari: *mp*

Tpts. 1, 2, 3, 4

Tbns. 1, 2, 3

Gtr.: C7 F7 C7 F7 C7 *mp*

Pno.: *mp*

Bs.: *mp*

Drs.: closed sock *mp*

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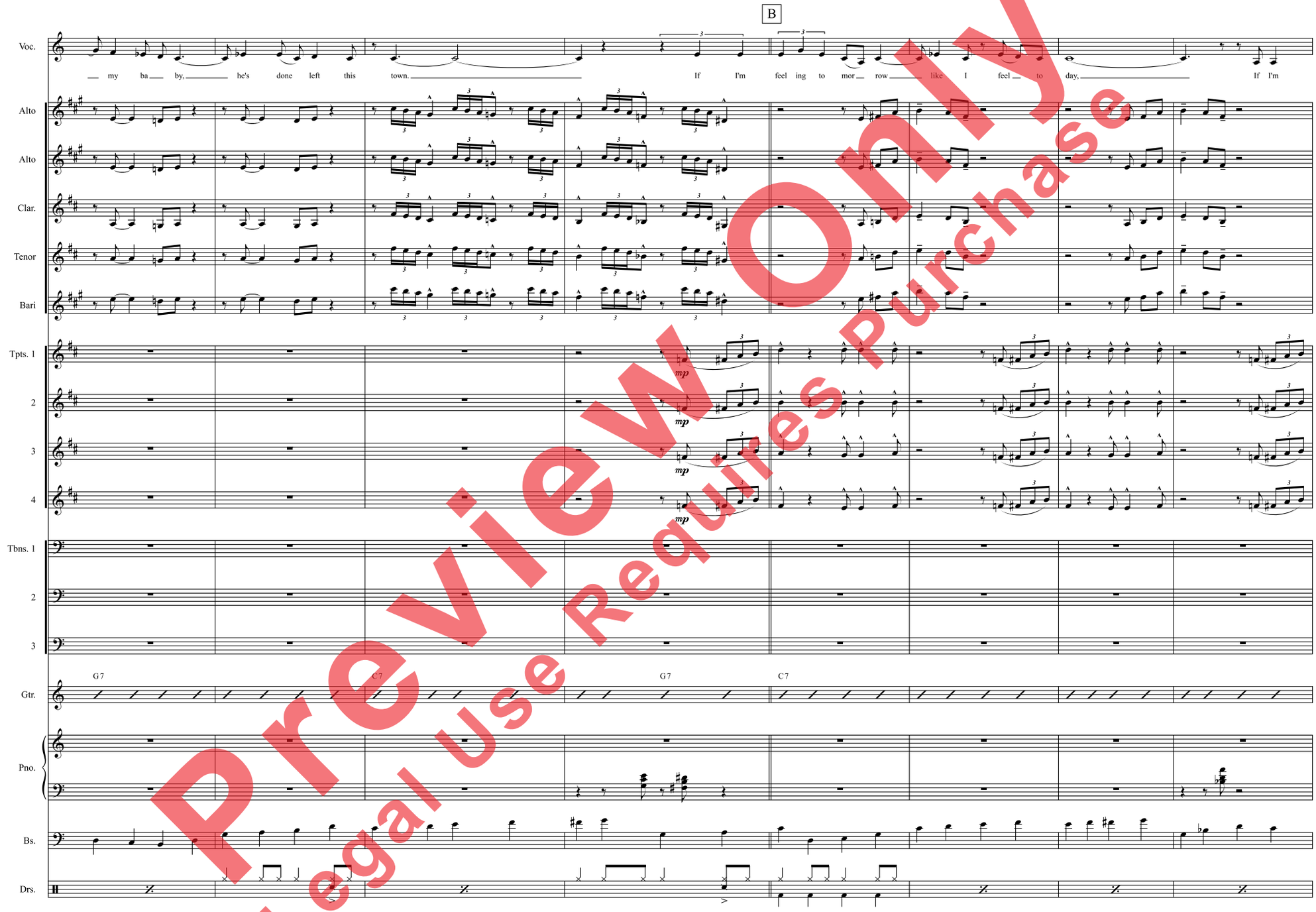

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Voc.
feel in' to mor row like I feel to day, I'm gon na pack my trunk and make my get a way St. Lou

Alto
Alto
Clar.
Tenor
Bari

Tpts. 1 — to cup mute
2 — to cup mute
3 — to cup mute
4 — to cup mute

Tbns. 1
2
3

Gtr. — F7 C7 G7 C7

Pno. — C#o7

Bs.

Drs. — open sock

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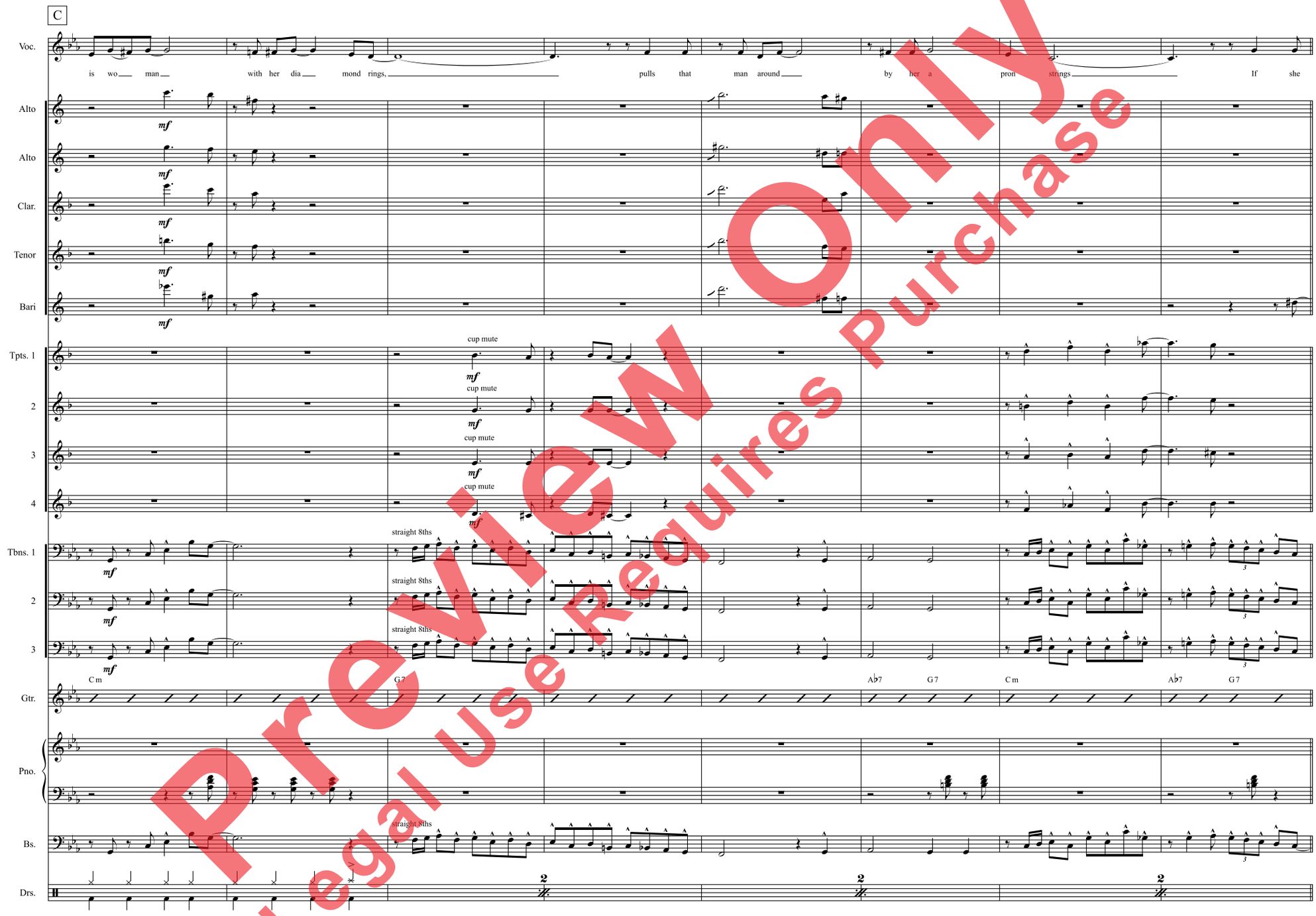

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D

Voc.: did n't have a Cad il lac and a great big pot of gold, that man of mine wouldn't have been so bold the one she stole!

Alto, Alto, Clar., Tenor, Bari: swing

Tpts. 1, 2, 3, 4: to open; open

Tbns. 1, 2, 3

Gtr.: Cm-5 Cm Cm+5 Cm6 Dm7-5 G7 Cm D7 G7

Pno.

Bs.

Drs.

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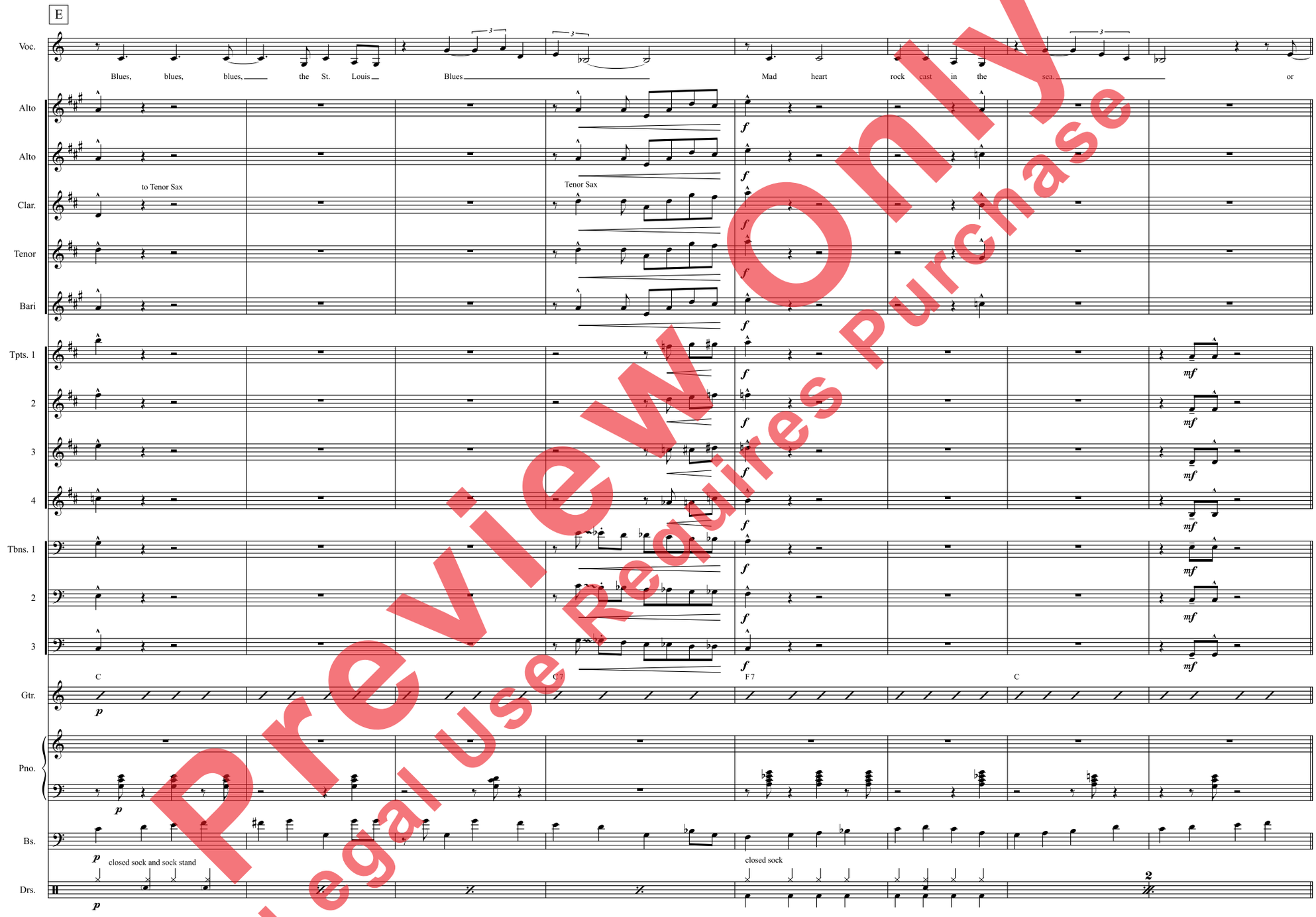

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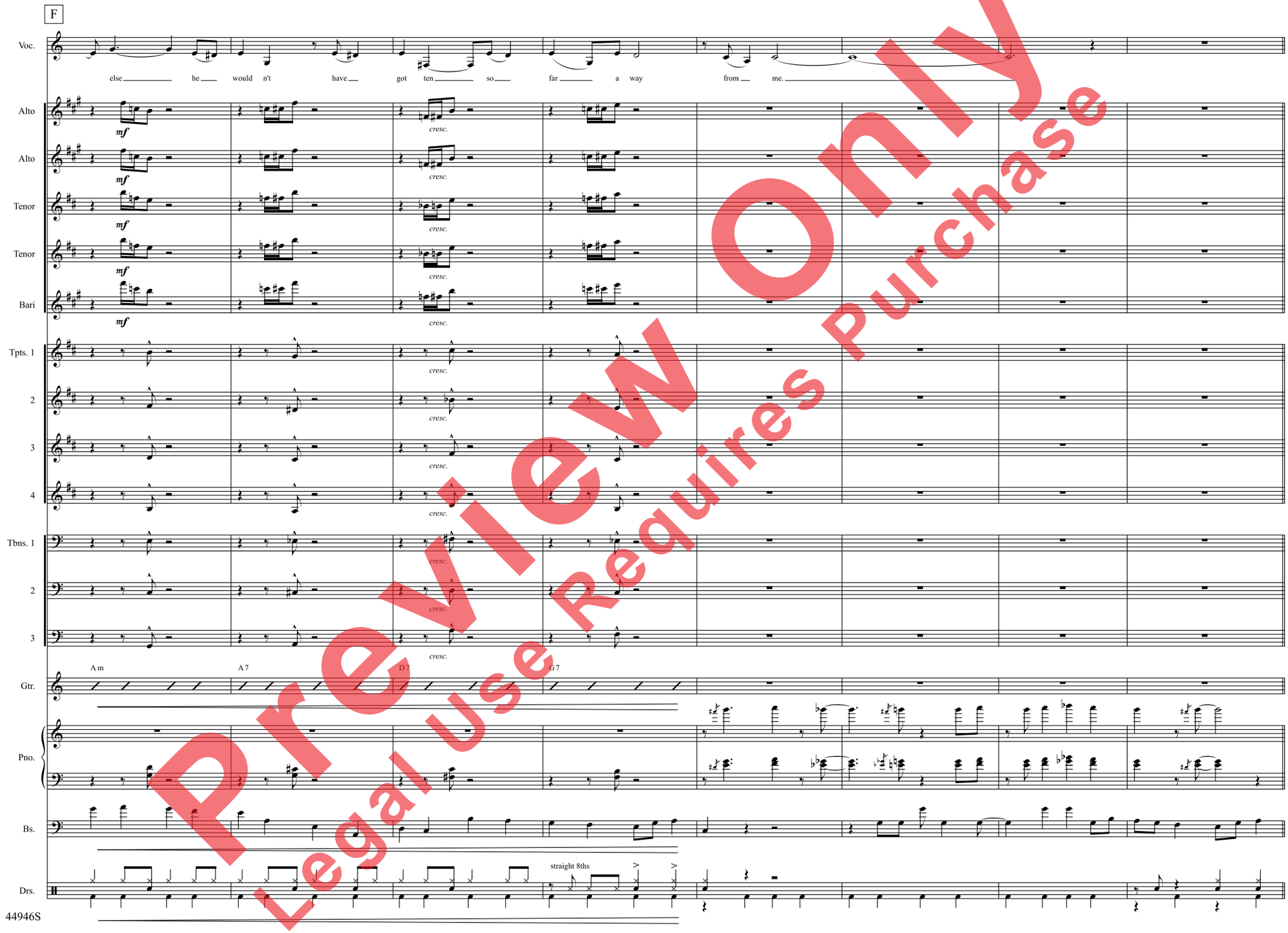

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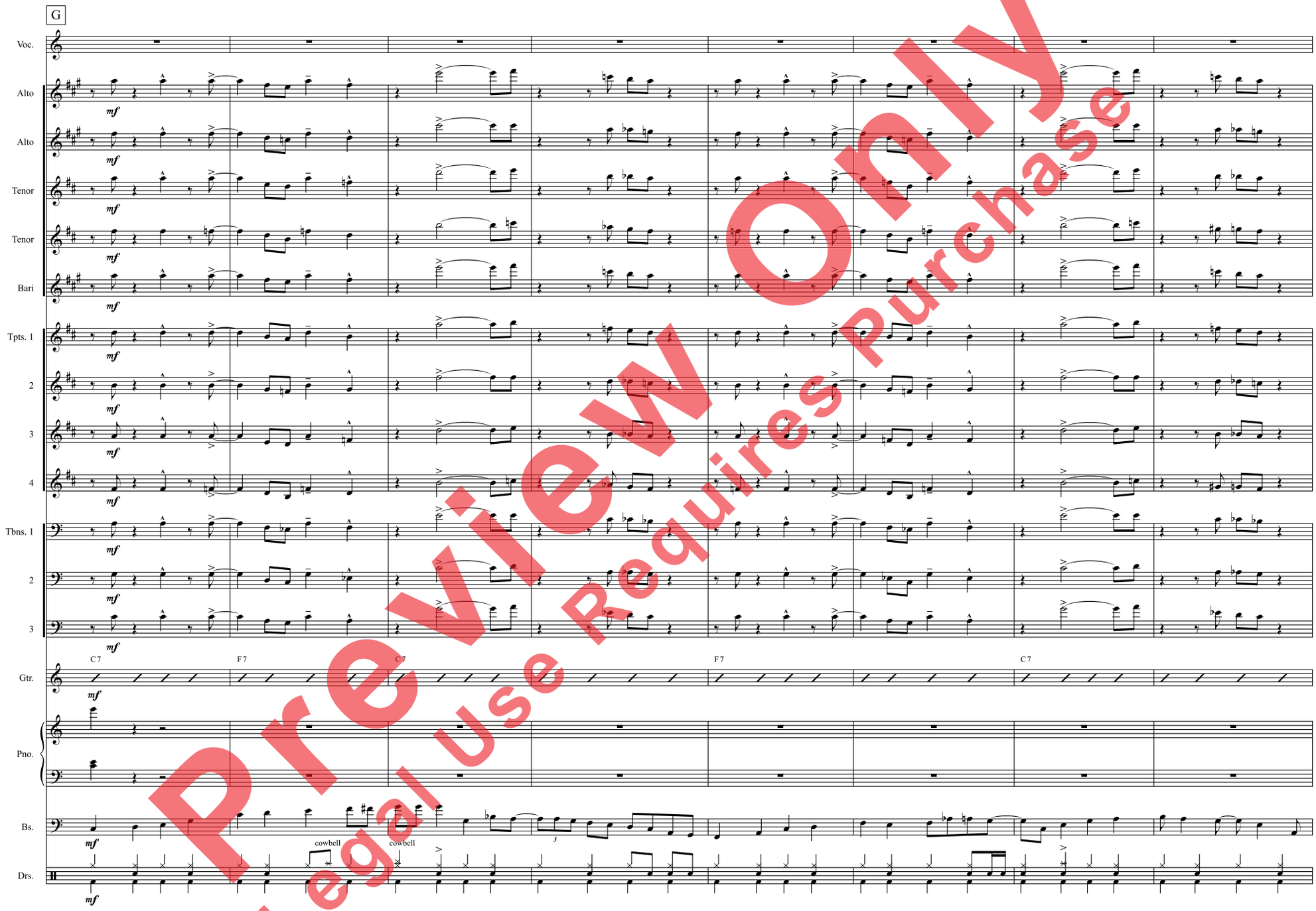

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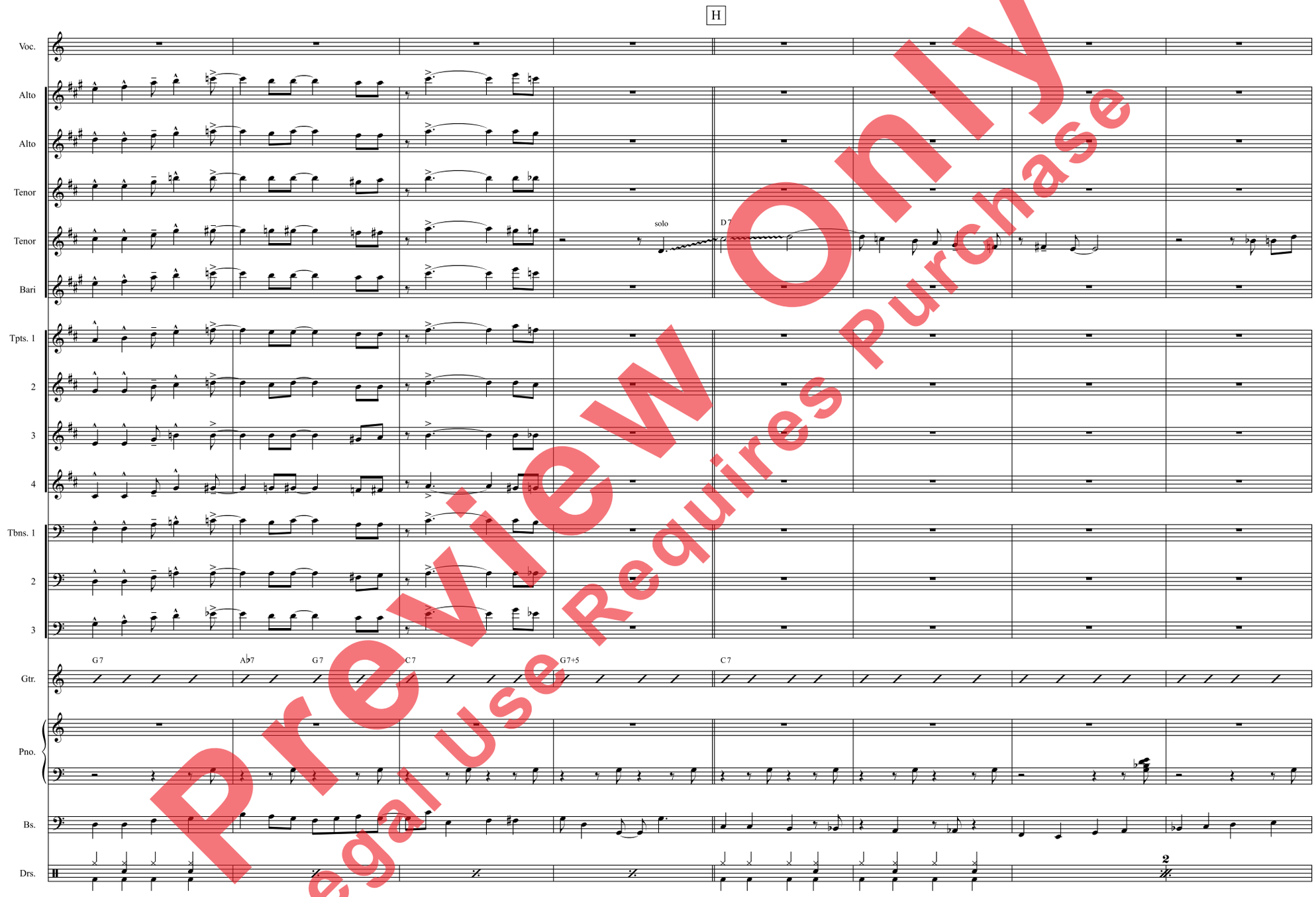

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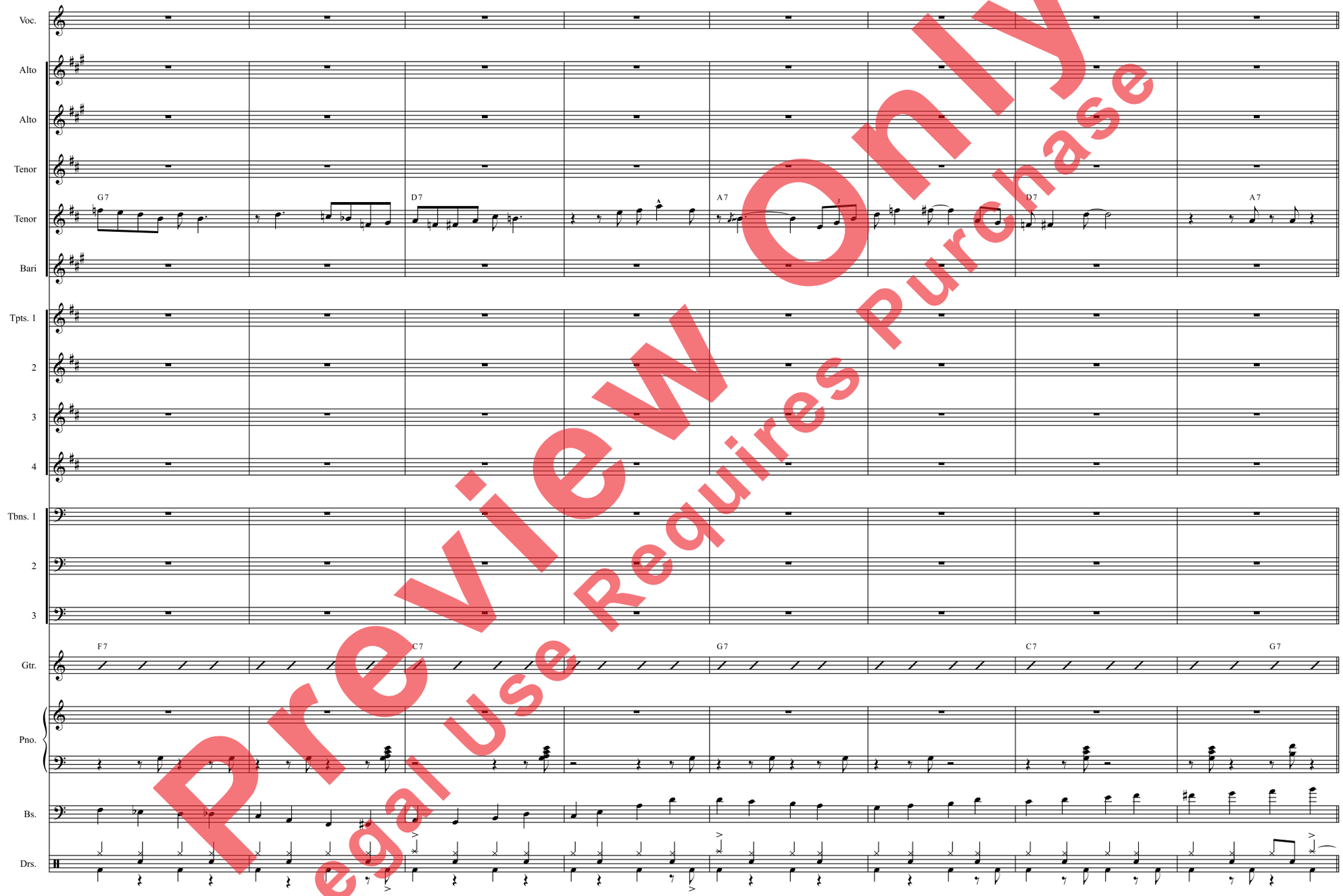

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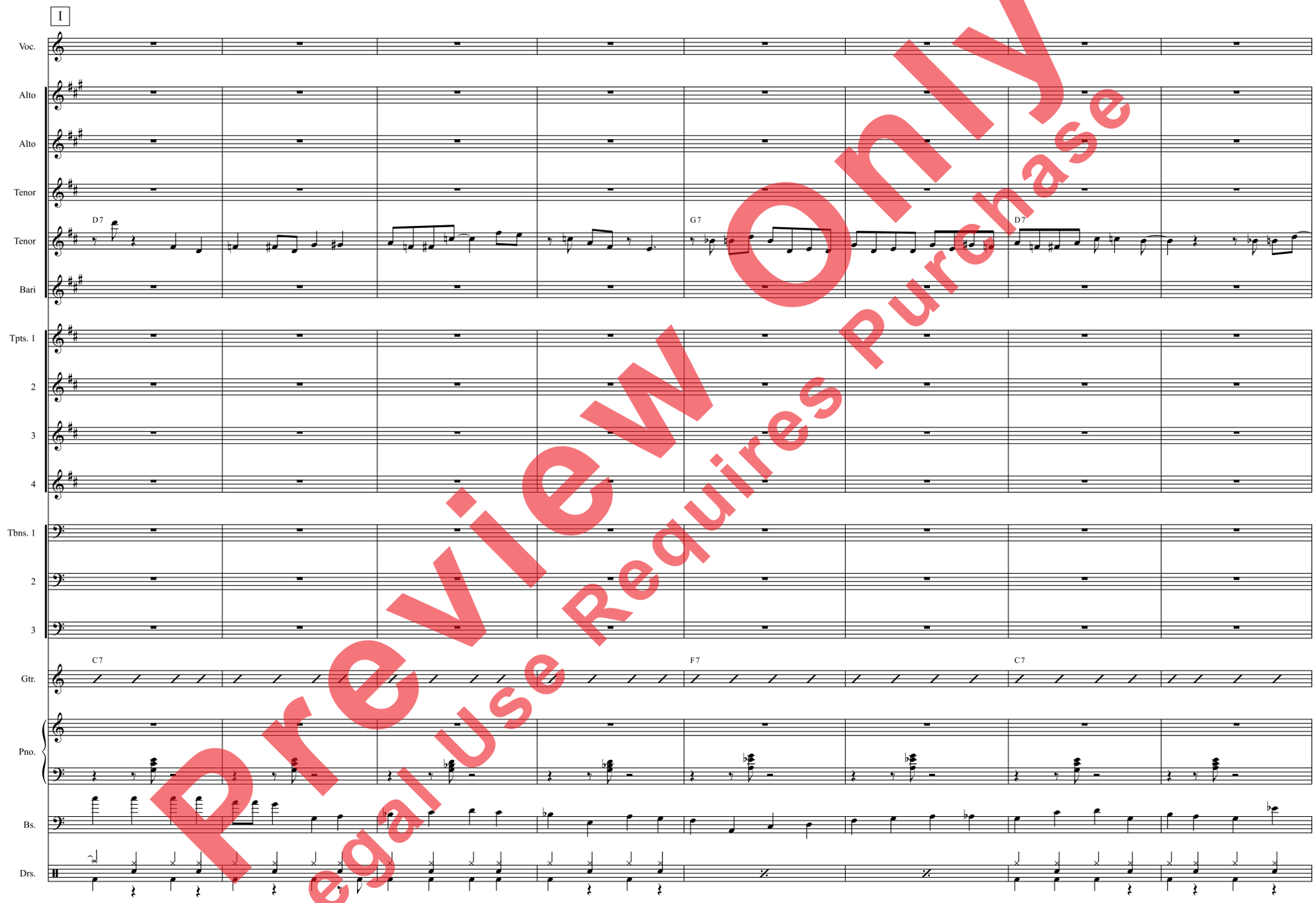

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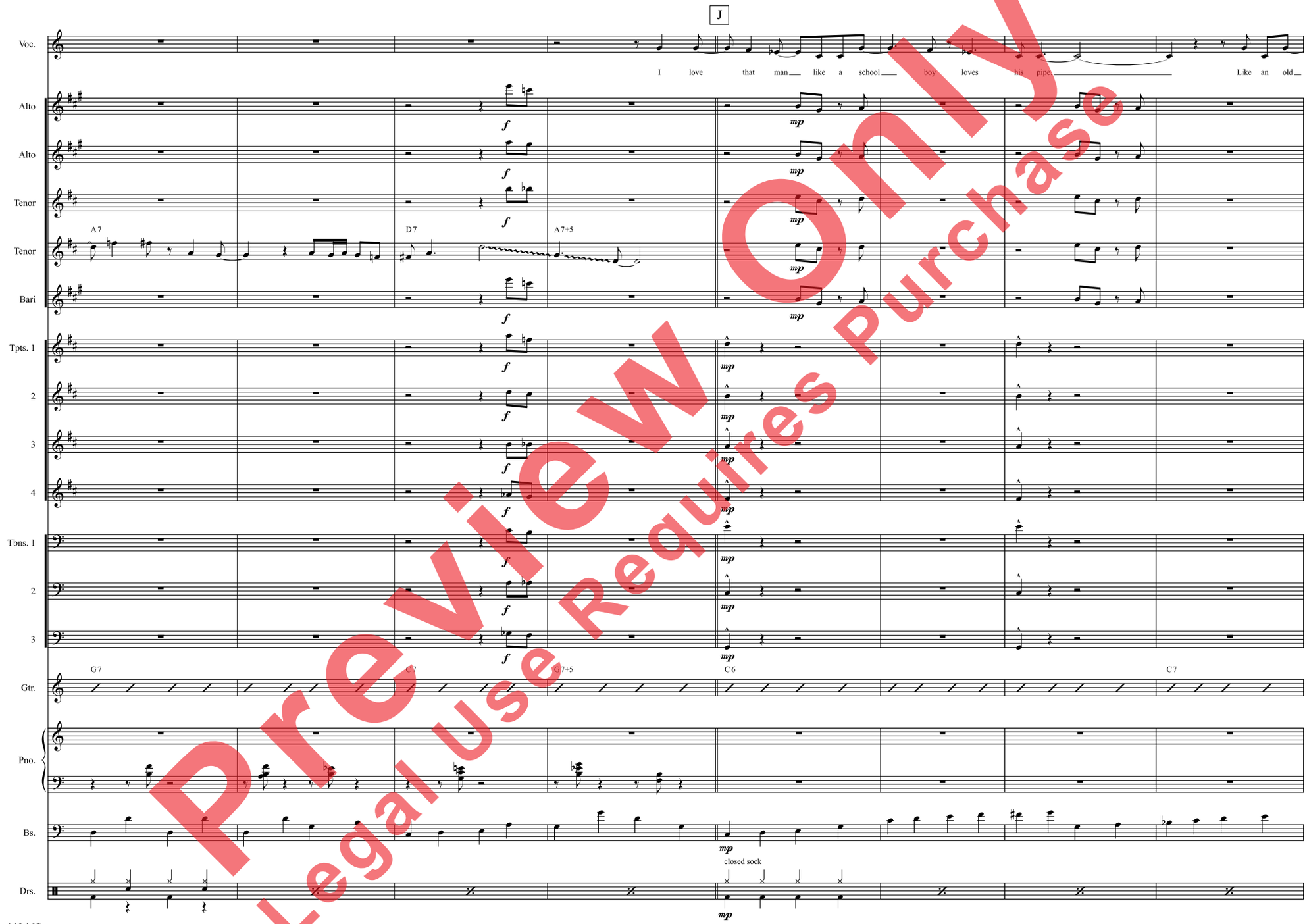

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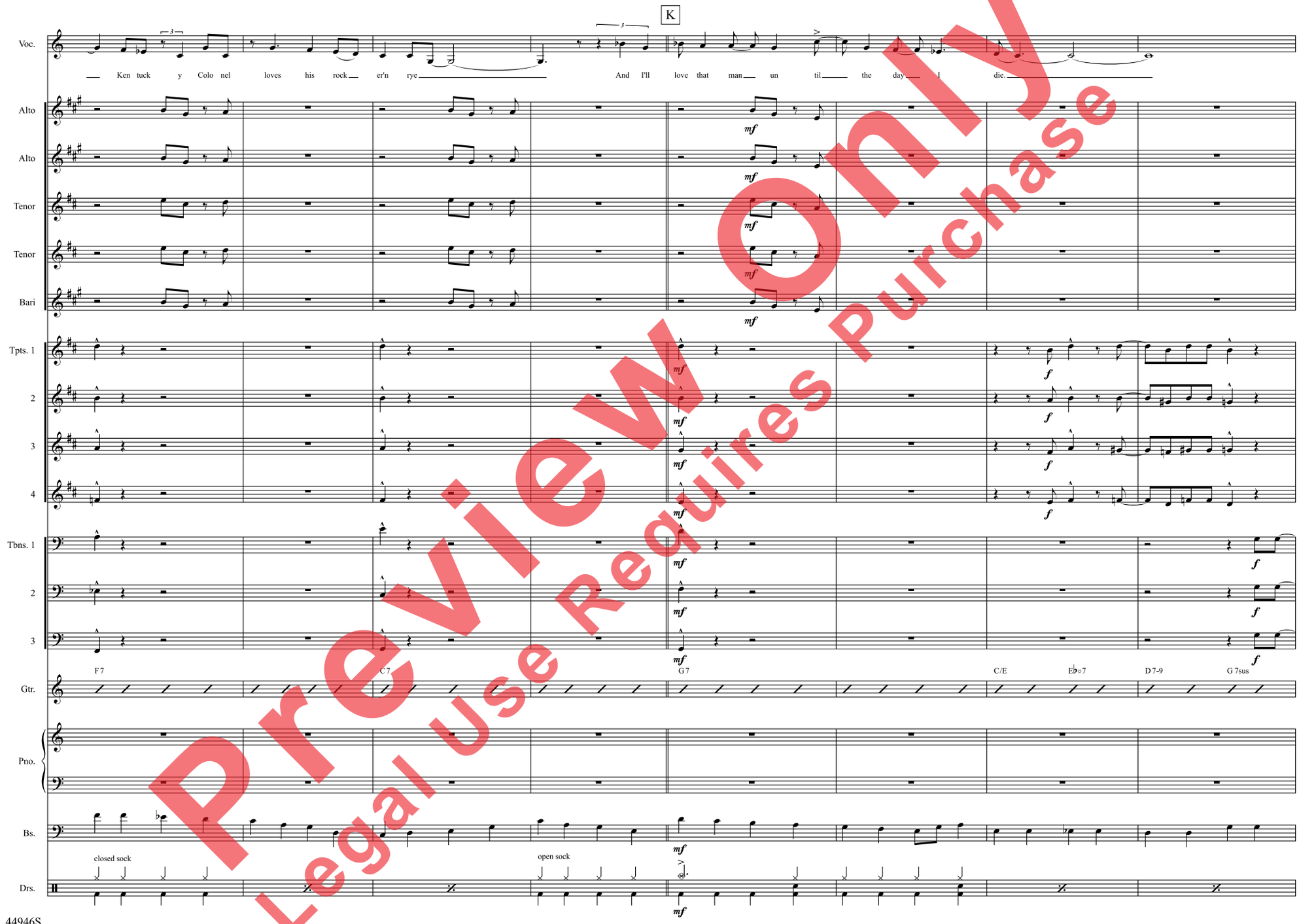

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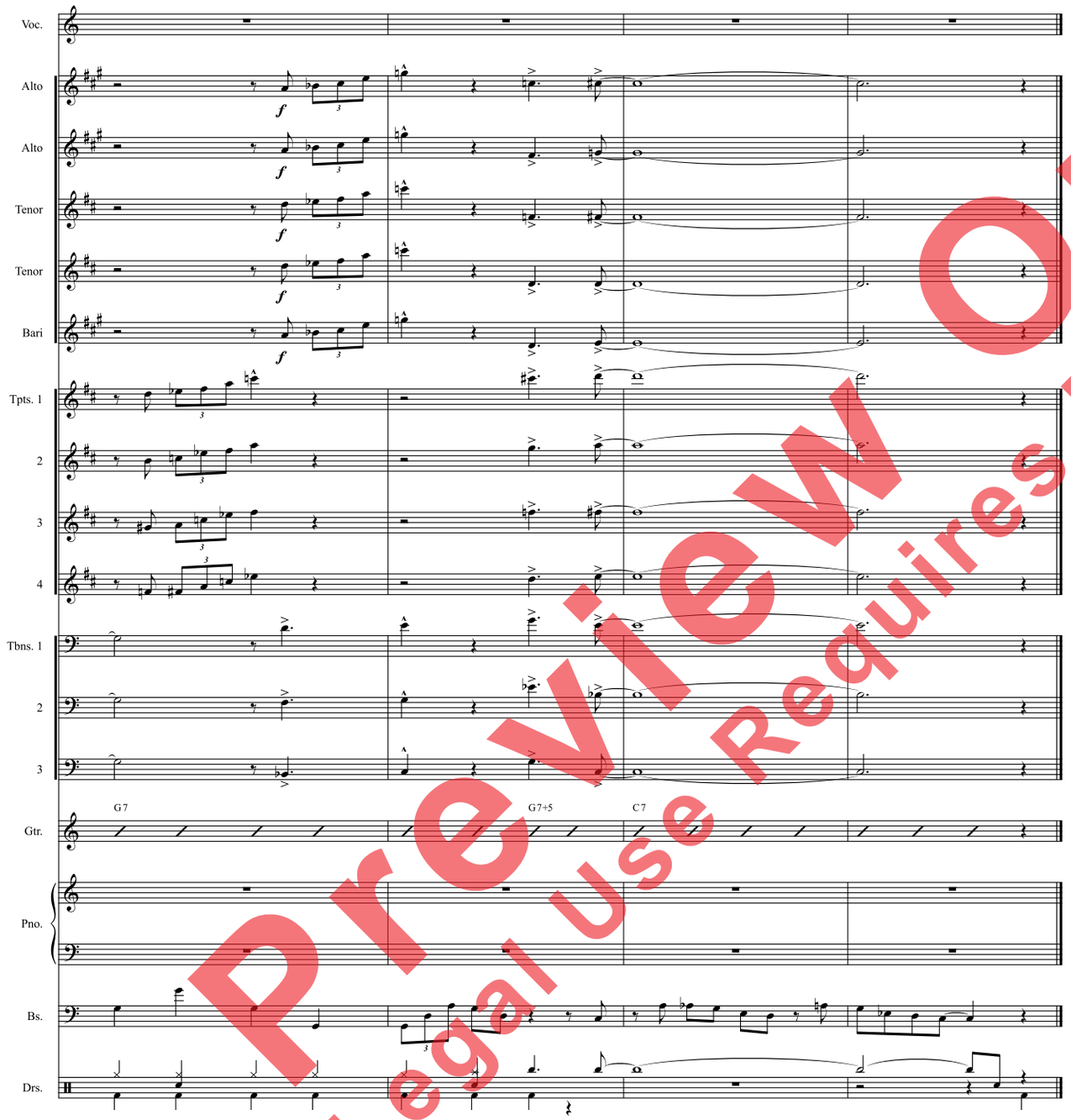

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The *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program (*EE*) is one of the most unique curriculum resources for high school jazz bands in the United States, Canada, and American schools abroad. *EE* extends the legacy of Duke Ellington and other seminal big band composers and arrangers by widely disseminating music, in its original arrangements, to high school musicians for study and performance. Utilizing this music challenges students to increase their musical proficiency and knowledge of the jazz language. *EE* consists of the following initiatives and services:

Supplying the Music
Each year Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC) transcribes, publishes, and distributes original transcriptions and arrangements, along with additional educational materials including recordings and teaching guides, to high school bands in the U.S., Canada, and American schools abroad.

Talking about the Music
Throughout the school year, band directors and students correspond with professional clinicians who answer questions regarding the *EE* music. *EE* strives to foster mentoring relationships through email correspondence, various conference presentations, and the festival weekend.

Professional Feedback
Bands are invited to submit a recording of their performance of the charts either for entry in the competition or for comments only. Every submission receives a thorough written assessment. Bands are also invited to attend *EE* Regional Festivals for an opportunity to perform and receive a workshop.

Finalists and In-School Workshops
Fifteen bands are selected from competition entries to attend the annual Competition & Festival in New York City. To prepare, each finalist band receives an in-school workshop led by a professional musician. Local *EE* members are also invited to attend these workshops.

Competition & Festival
The *EE* year culminates in a three-day festival at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall. Students, teachers, and musicians participate in workshops, rehearsals, and performances. The festival concludes with an evening concert that features the three top-placing bands, joining the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis in concert previewing next year's *EE* repertoire.

Jazz at Lincoln Center Band Director Academy
This professional development session for band directors is designed to enhance their ability to teach and conduct the music of Duke Ellington and other big band composers. Led by prominent jazz educators each summer, this companion program to *EE* integrates performance, history, pedagogy, and discussion into an intensive educational experience for band directors at all levels.

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