BLI-BLIP

FROM "JUMP FOR JOY"

BY DUKE ELLINGTON AND SID KULLER

Transcribed by David Berger for Jazz at Lincoln Center

FULL SCORE

This transcription was made especially for *Essentially Ellington* 2004:
The Ninth Annual Jazz at Lincoln Center High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival.

Major support for *Essentially Ellington* is provided by
The Jack and Susan Rudin Educational and Scholarship Fund,
Surdna Foundation, Danny Kaye and Sylvia Fine Kaye Foundation,
Verizon Communications, and Verve Music Group.

Additional support is provided by The Heckscher Foundation for Children, the National Endowment for the Arts, Citigroup Foundation, the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, The Charles Evans Hughes Memorial Foundation, The New York Times Company Foundation, Gail & Alfred Engelberg, Elroy and Terry Krumholz Foundation, Robert E. and Elizabeth Anne La Blanc Foundation, and other generous funders.

This vocal transcription was made possible with support from the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation.

Jazz at Lincoln Center and Warner Bros. Publications gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and support provided in the publication of this year's *Essentially Ellington* music series:
EMI Music Publishing, Famous Music Corporation & Mr. Irwin Z. Robinson, Hal Leonard Corporation, Music Sales Corporation / Tempo Music Inc., WB Music Corp., the George Gershwin Family Trust, and especially the Estates of Duke Ellington and Mercer Ellington

ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON
Annual High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival

Jazz at Lincoln Center

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 four or five 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, 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 that 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 her. 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 a heavy vibrato on harmonized passages and a slight 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 at times. Try to match the speed of vibrato. 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 subtone 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*, 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 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 mutes create a wonderful sound (very close to the human voice), but they also create some intonation problems that must be corrected by the lip only. 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" 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 end together.

17. Brass must be very precise when playing short notes. Notes must be stopped with the tongue, à la Louis Armstrong!

18. 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."

GLOSSARY

The following are terms that 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 tonic to the sub-dominant and cycle back to the tonic: I V/IV IV #IV^{o} I (second inversion) V/II V/V V I.

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.

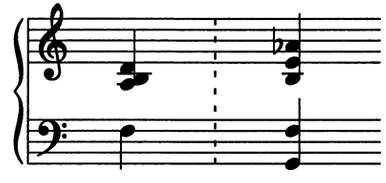
Soli: a harmonized passage for two or more instruments playing the same rhythm. It is customary for horn players to stand up or even move in front of the band when playing these passages. This is done so that the audience can hear them better and to provide the audience with some visual interest. A soli sound particular to Ellington's music combines two trumpets and a 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 of 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 ♭9 and a 13. 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: what players play: a tune or series of notes.

HARMONY: chords and voicings.

ORCHESTRATION: instrumentation and tone colors.

—David Berger

Special thanks to Andrew Homzy for editing the score.

BLI-BLIP

INSTRUMENTATION:

Reed 1 - Alto Sax
Reed 2 - Alto Sax
Reed 3 - Clarinet
Reed 4 - Tenor Sax
Reed 5 - Baritone Sax
Trumpet 1
Trumpet 2/Vocal
Trumpet 3 (opt. Cornet)
Trombone 1
Trombone 2
Trombone 3 (opt. Valve)
Guitar
Piano
Bass
Drums

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION:

Composers: Duke Ellington and Sid Kuller
Arrangers: Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn
Recorded: September 26, 1941, in Hollywood, CA
Time: 3:04
Master Number: PBS-061686-1
Original Issue: Victor 27639

Currently Available on CD:
Never No Lament: The Blanton-Webster Band—Duke Ellington
Bluebird (RCA/BMG) 82876508572

Personnel: Duke Ellington, piano; Wallace Jones, trumpet; Ray Nance, trumpet and vocal; Rex Stewart, cornet; Lawrence Brow and Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, trombones; Juan Tizol, valve trombone; Otto Hardwick, Johnny Hodges, Barney Bigard, Ben Webster, and Harry Carney, reeds; Fred Guy, guitar; Jimmie Blanton, bass; Sonny Greer, drums.

Solo Order: Ray Nance, vocal; Ben Webster, tenor sax; Nance, trumpet; Jimmie Blanton with orchestra; Nance, vocal.

REHEARSAL NOTES:

- **Bli-Blip** (both words pronounced with a soft "i," as in "blimp") started as a production number from a musical show entitled *Jump for Joy,* which was composed by Duke Ellington and featured his great orchestra of 1941. The show centers around the death of Jim Crow and features black performers speaking and behaving the way they did on a daily basis and not how they were expected to act before the Civil Rights Movement. The show, produced by Sid Kuller, was more than 20 years ahead of its time, and although the Los Angeles run was successful, it never made it to Broadway. In 1959 Ellington attempted an updated version of it in Miami, but it too did not have legs. Nevertheless, this show left us with two standards (**Jump for Joy** and **I Got It Bad**) and several other fine pieces (**Bli-Blip, Chocolate Shake, Rocks in My Bed,** and **Giddybug Gallop**). Several of the show's charts, including **Bli-Blip,** were arranged by Ellington and Strayhorn working together.

- The form is AABA: the A section is a variant on the changes from **I Got Rhythm,** and the bridge changes are same as **Honeysuckle Rose.** The intro is an eight-bar inverted pyramid, a four-bar vamp on "Rhythm Changes" (trombone call-and-response) followed by an eight-bar vocal call-and-response on a more developed chord progression based on "Rhythm Changes." What follows at **A** is a vocal chorus with a two-bar tenor break added at the end, which would usually lead into a tenor solo starting with the A section of the tune, but instead we are given an eight-bar trumpet solo on the bridge at **F.** Letters **G** through **J** comprise a full chorus of ensemble/bass duet. Letter **K** is the same as the first 12 measures of the chart. **L** to the end is a wild coda that incorporates all the motives of the piece.

- Dynamics are important to the success of this chart. At the top of the chart, each entrance must be strong and declarative and end with a ***fp*** long note. The ***fp*** allows for the next entrance to be heard. The vocal chorus at **B** is accompanied by the saxes and rhythm section. Although we want these backgrounds to be swinging, there should be no question who is more important. We need to hear the vocalist's words at a comfortable volume. The same goes for the backgrounds to the trumpet solo. The ensemble chorus at **G** is marked ***mf***, which allows for the bass to participate on equal footing. The crucial concept here is intensity from both the ensemble and the bass. Just because it is not loud doesn't mean it can't be intense.

- The trumpet solo originally featured Ray Nance, who also sang the melody. For those bands that would like to give their singer a chance to scat, you might substitute a vocal solo for the trumpet solo. Also, if you would like to open up the chart for a solo or solos, this is the spot to do it. I suggest inserting entire choruses here rather than just the bridge. The written background in the saxes on the bridge can be played on cue.

- Another convention used during open solo sections is to improvise riffs behind the soloist with each section (saxes, trombones, and trumpets) responsible for creating its own riffs. When combining sections, the secret is for each riff to be short and simple, leaving plenty of room for the other section or sections to respond. The principle of call-and-response is essential to the riff process. Also, the soloists' section will often not participate to avoid confusing the listeners as to who has the melody and who has the background.

- Sometimes when successful riffs are found, they are committed to memory and become part of the arrangement. Just as often they remain an improvisatory section of the piece. Today many bands use riffing on blues charts, but it was also common practice on "Rhythm Changes" and even other simple tunes like **Honeysuckle Rose** and **Sweet Georgia Brown.** Since **Bli-Blip** has a bridge, you can repeat the riff throughout all the A sections and leave the bridges to the rhythm section and soloist. Although a riff may continue for several choruses on the blues, it is good to limit each riff to one chorus on AABA forms. When the chorus is finished, return to having only the rhythm section accompany or set a new riff.

- A word of caution: Economy. Long solo sections with riffs that are not related to the motives of the piece will make your performance schizophrenic. When I set riffs, I generally will grab a figure from the chart and transform it into something that is easy to remember and sounds good when you keep repeating it. Although Count Basie's band had a reputation for the best riffing, this was common to many bands. When I had the great opportunity to see the Ellington band in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, they were masters at setting riffs. Having your band play riffs is great for getting everyone involved, playing by ear, and composing on the spot. Most of all, it's great fun.

David Berger

COMMENTS FROM WYNTON MARSALIS:

- The intro to **Bli-Blip** is a variation on the Latin clave and must be played tightly and with intensity. The "Ya Yas" played by the second trombone require a lot of air and courage.

- At letter **A** the ensemble call-and-response with the singer should seem realistic.

- Saxes must play with style and control at letter **B.**

- The singer carries the swing with quarter notes at letter **D.** Pay close attention because though they seem straightforward, quarter notes are always the hardest notes to swing.

- The call-and-response between the singer and the saxes at one before **E** is tricky and intricate. Pull it off with style and it will sound good, good, good.

- The trumpet solo at letter **F** is a like a herald trumpet solo in the style of Louis Armstrong. Use this opportunity to familiarize students with Louis Armstrong.

- At letter **G** the band *tutti* accompanies a walking bass solo; here dynamics are very important. Everyone must listen to the bass. This passage is a lesson in balance and syncopation, especially the playful thematic treatment of rhythm from **I** to **J.**

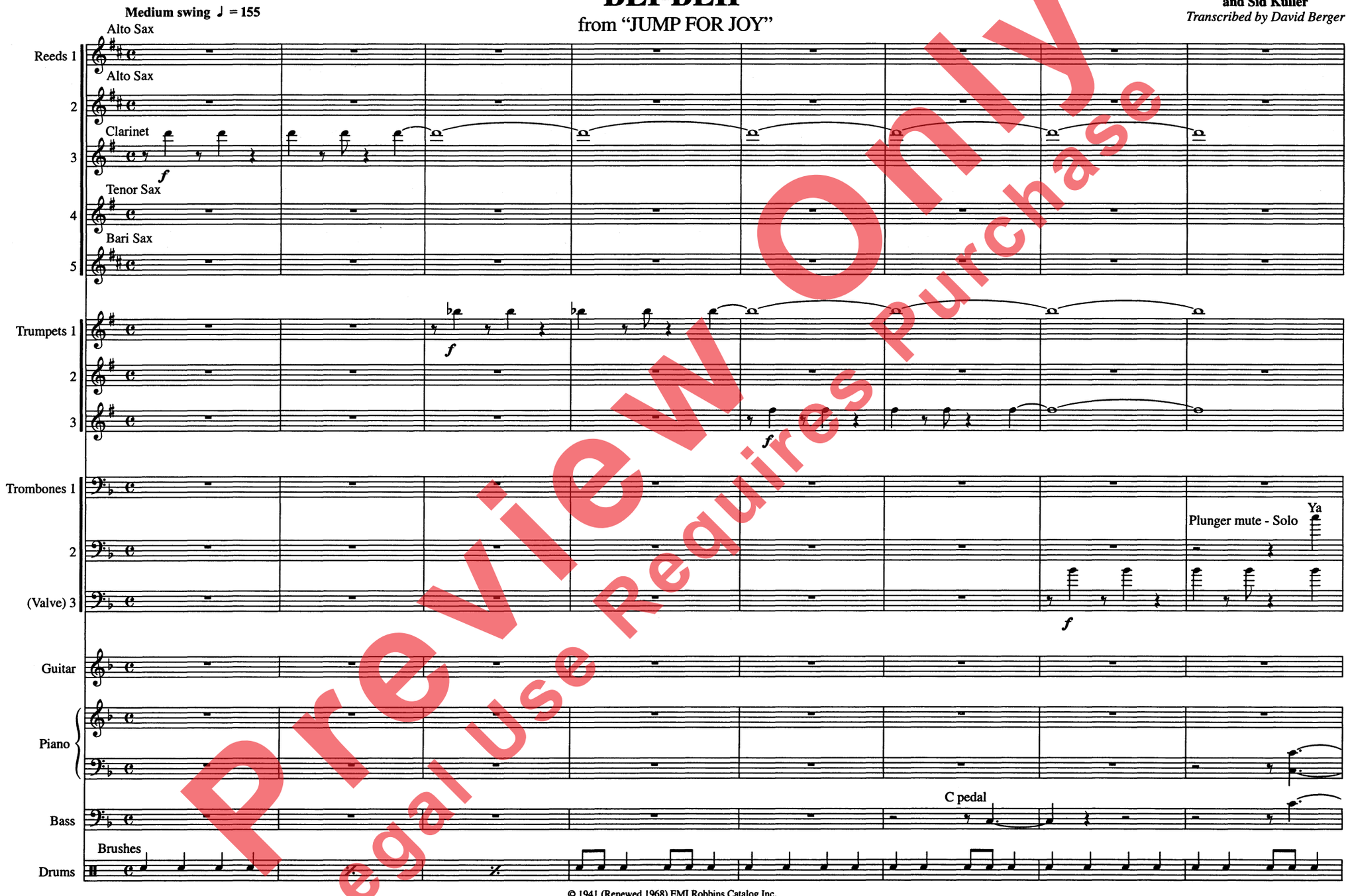
- The first four bars of **L** are balanced by bars 8, 9, and 10 after **L.** This is a great tag for a great arrangement.

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Essentially Ellington

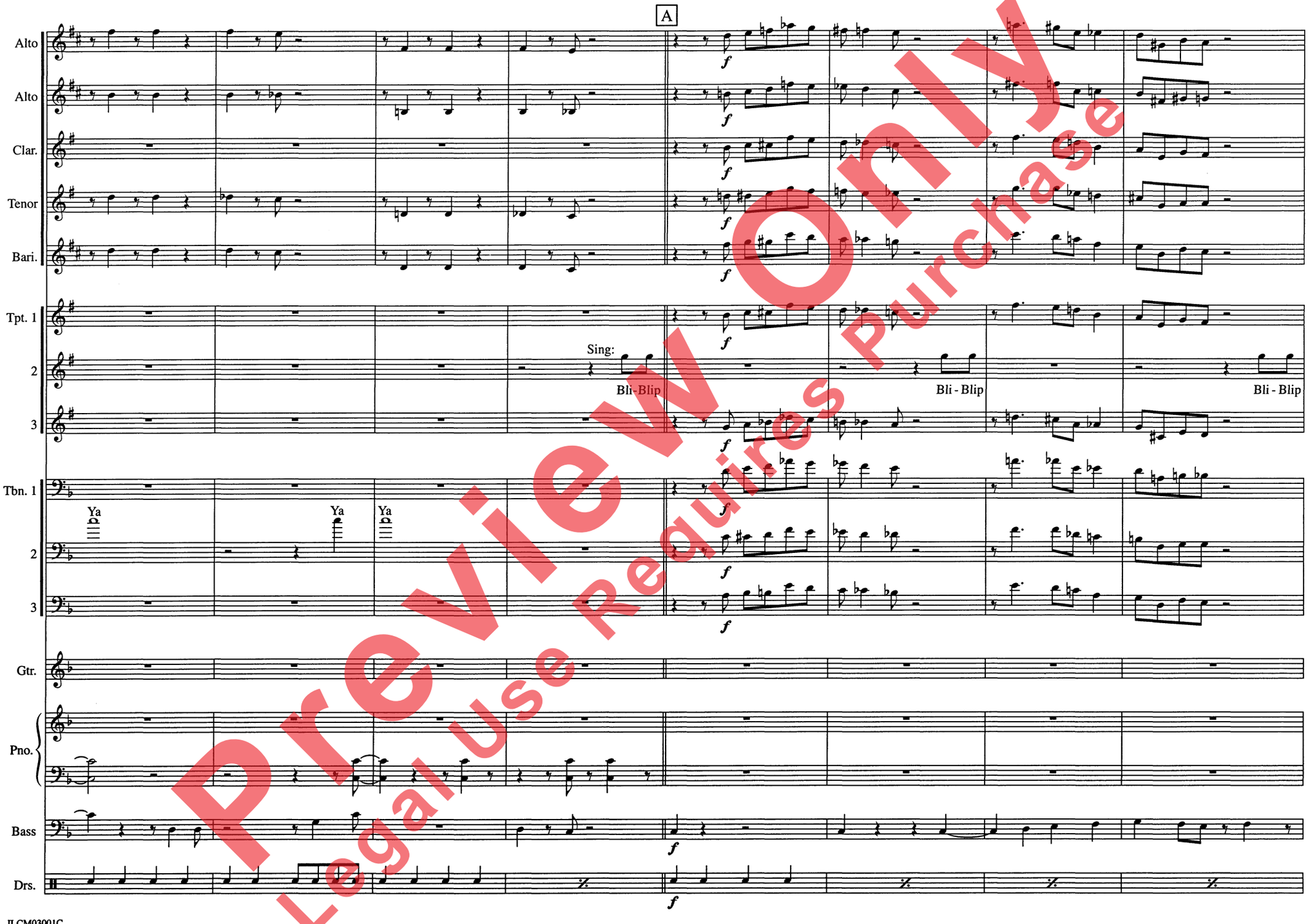
BLI-BLIP

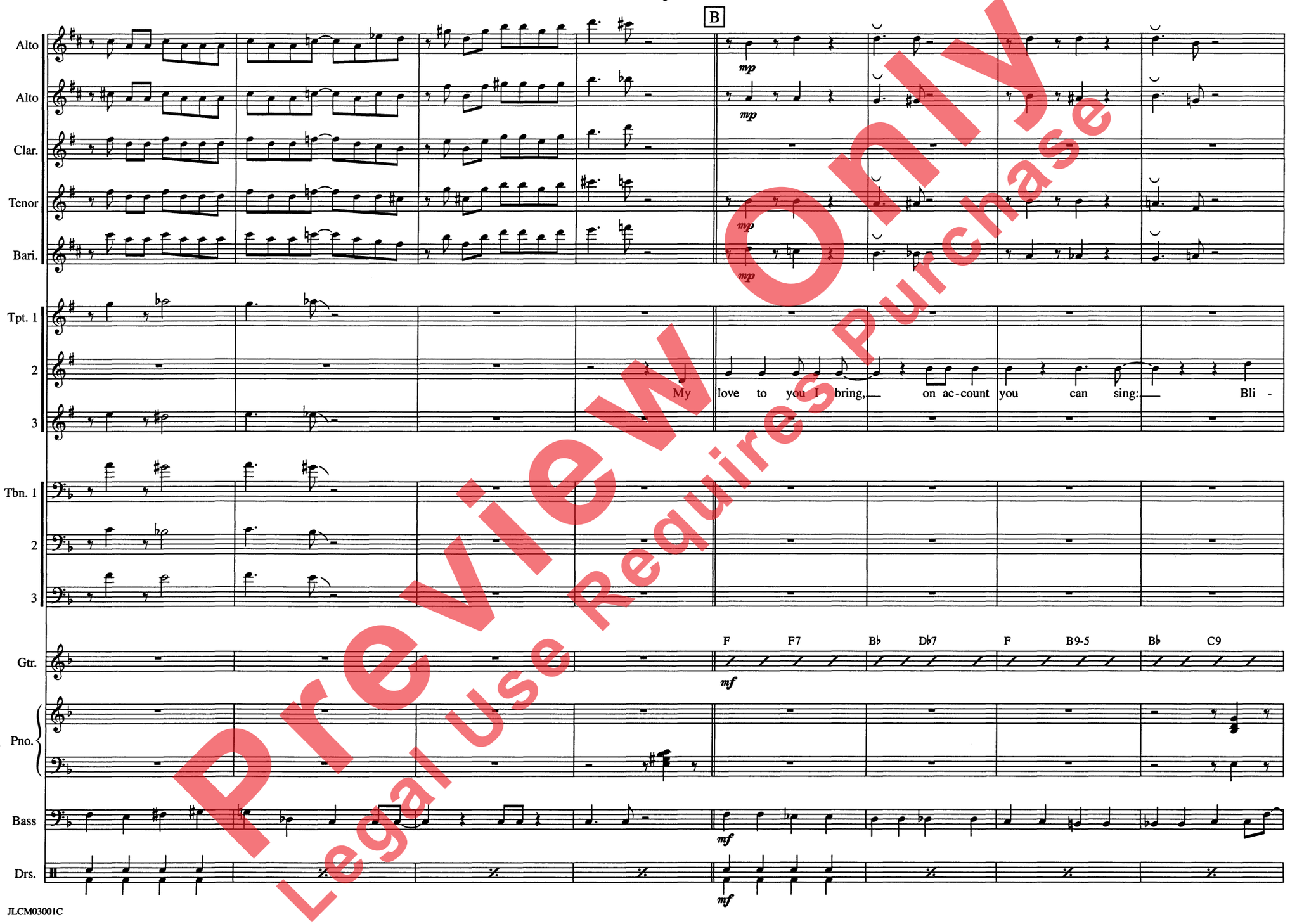
from "JUMP FOR JOY"

By Duke Ellington and Sid Kuller
Transcribed by David Berger

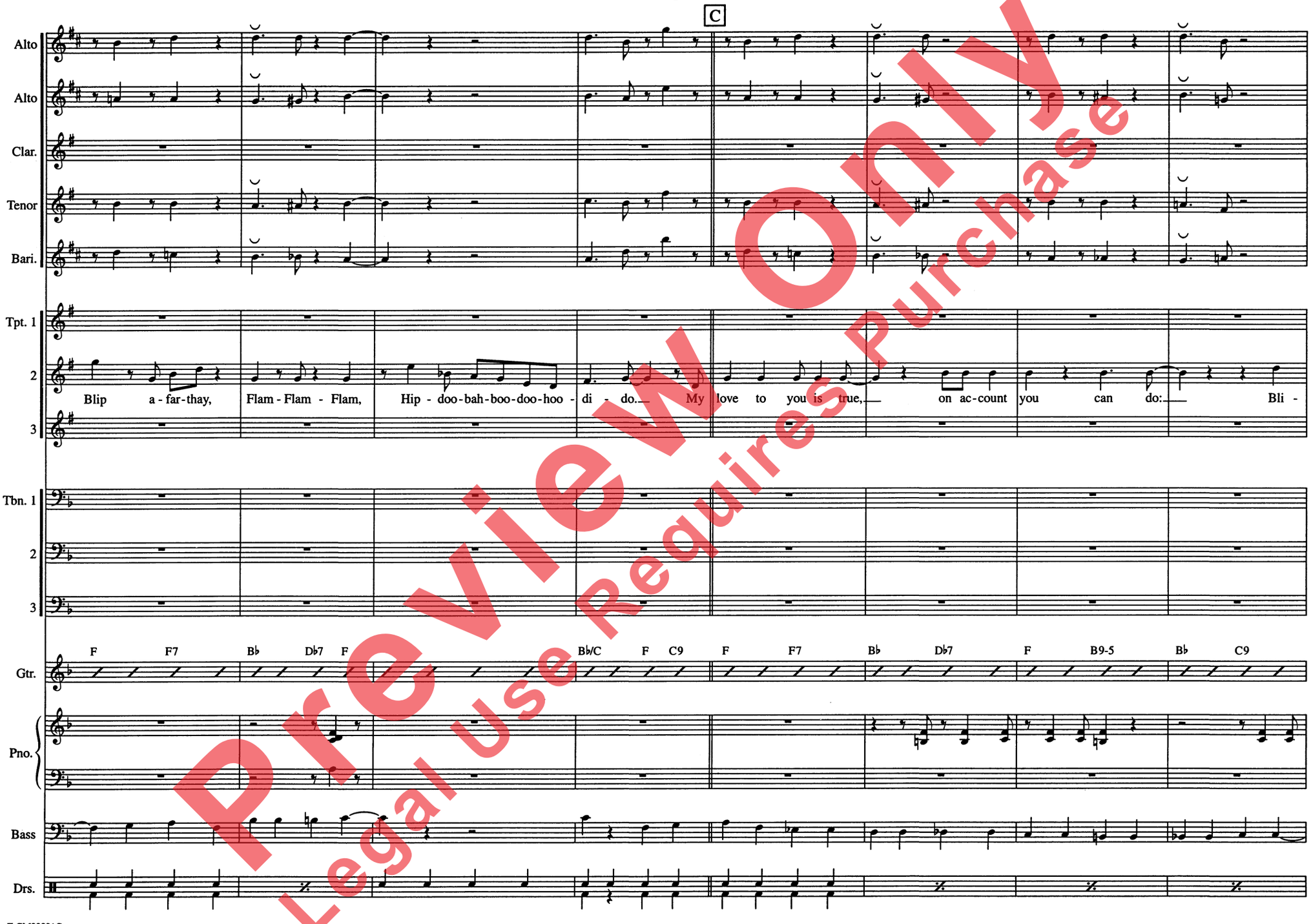


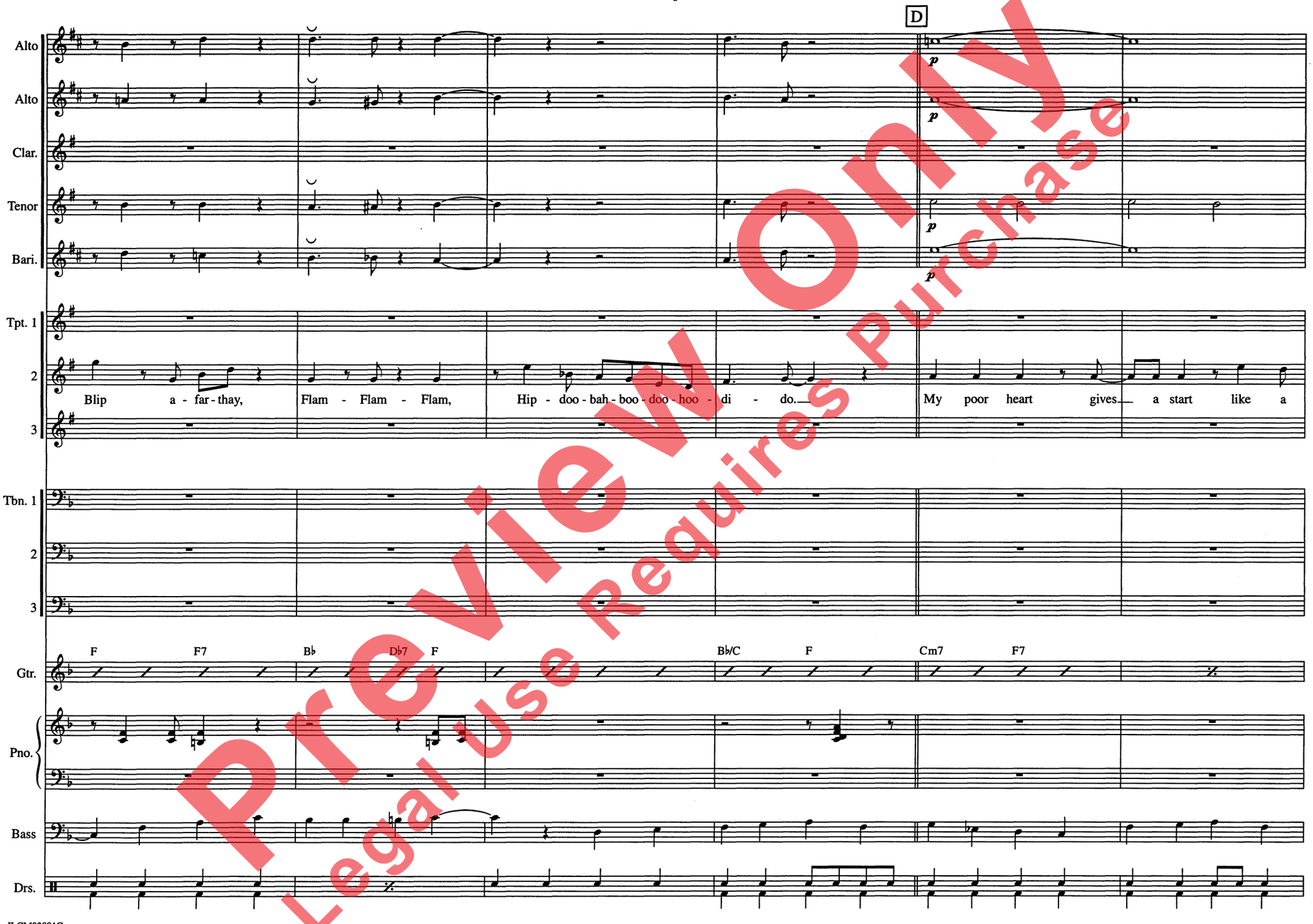
Bli-Blip

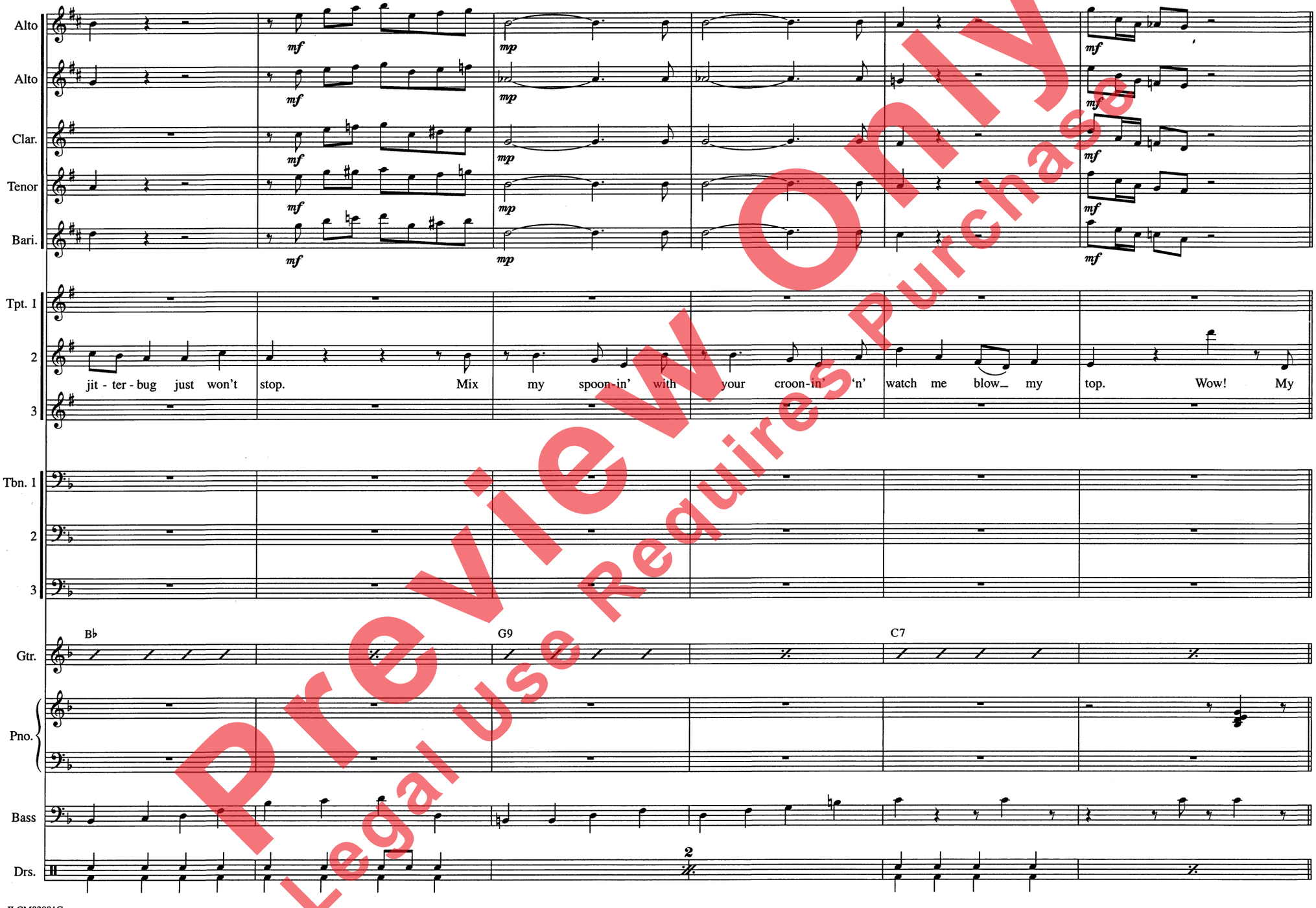


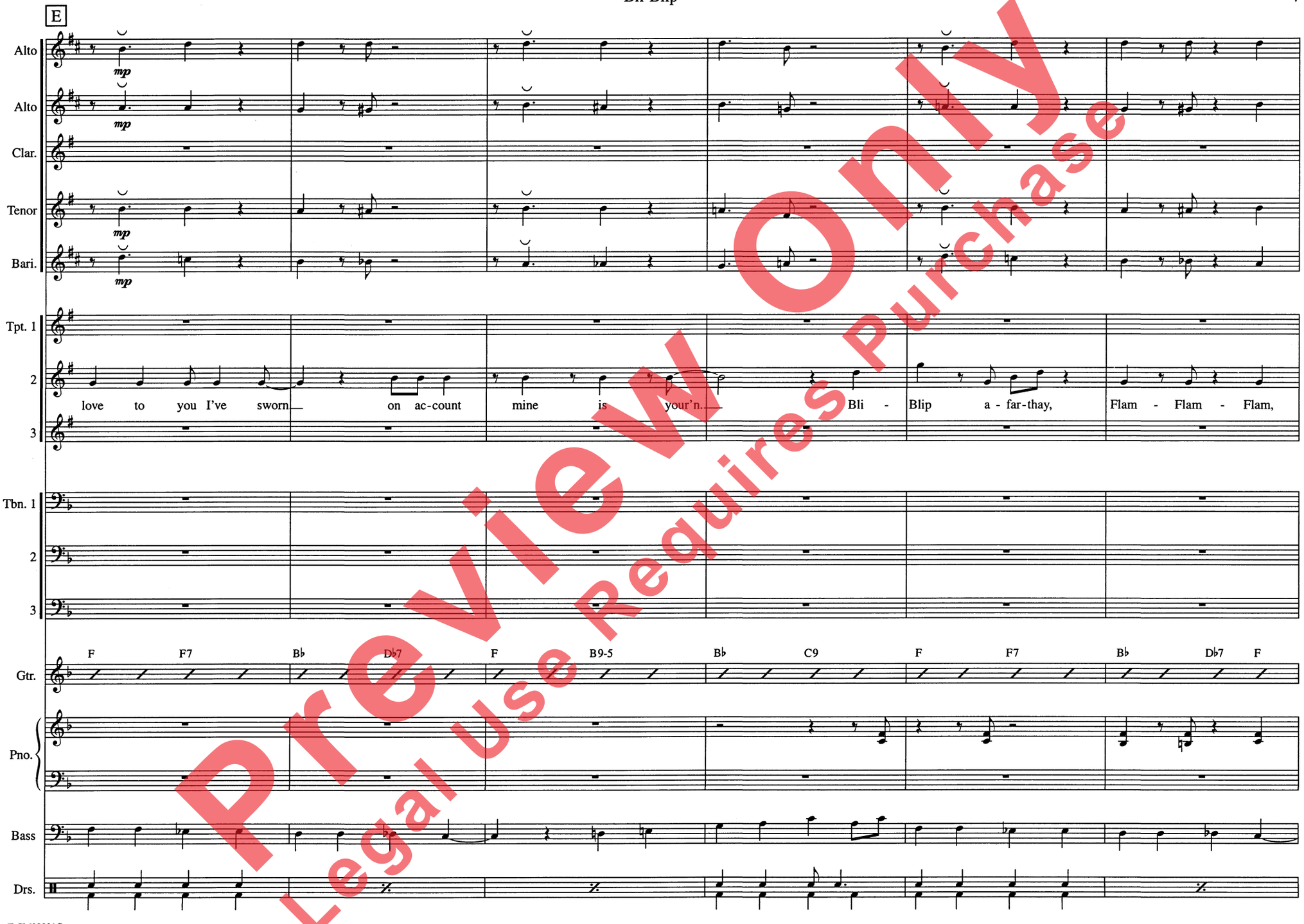


Bli-Blip

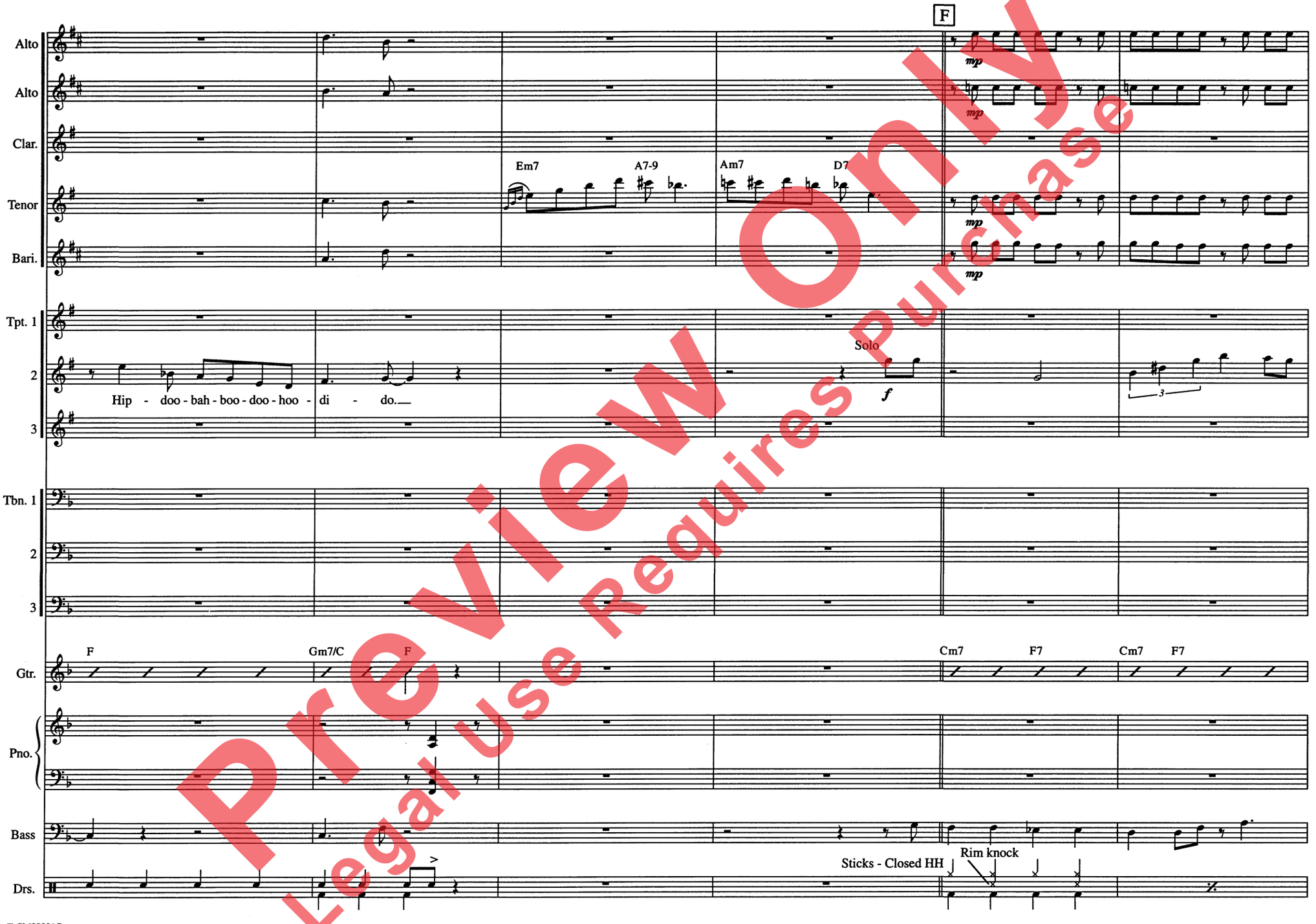


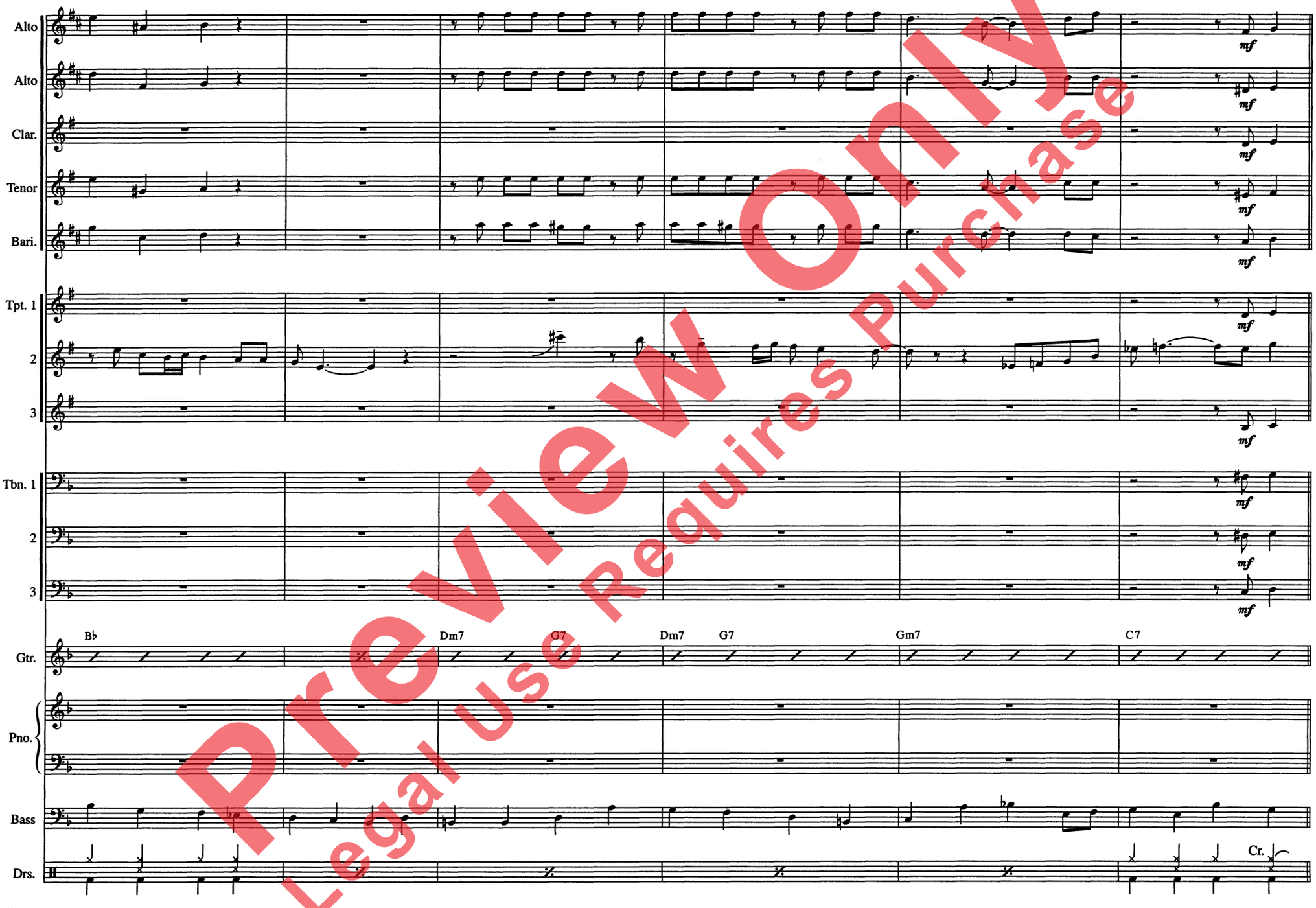




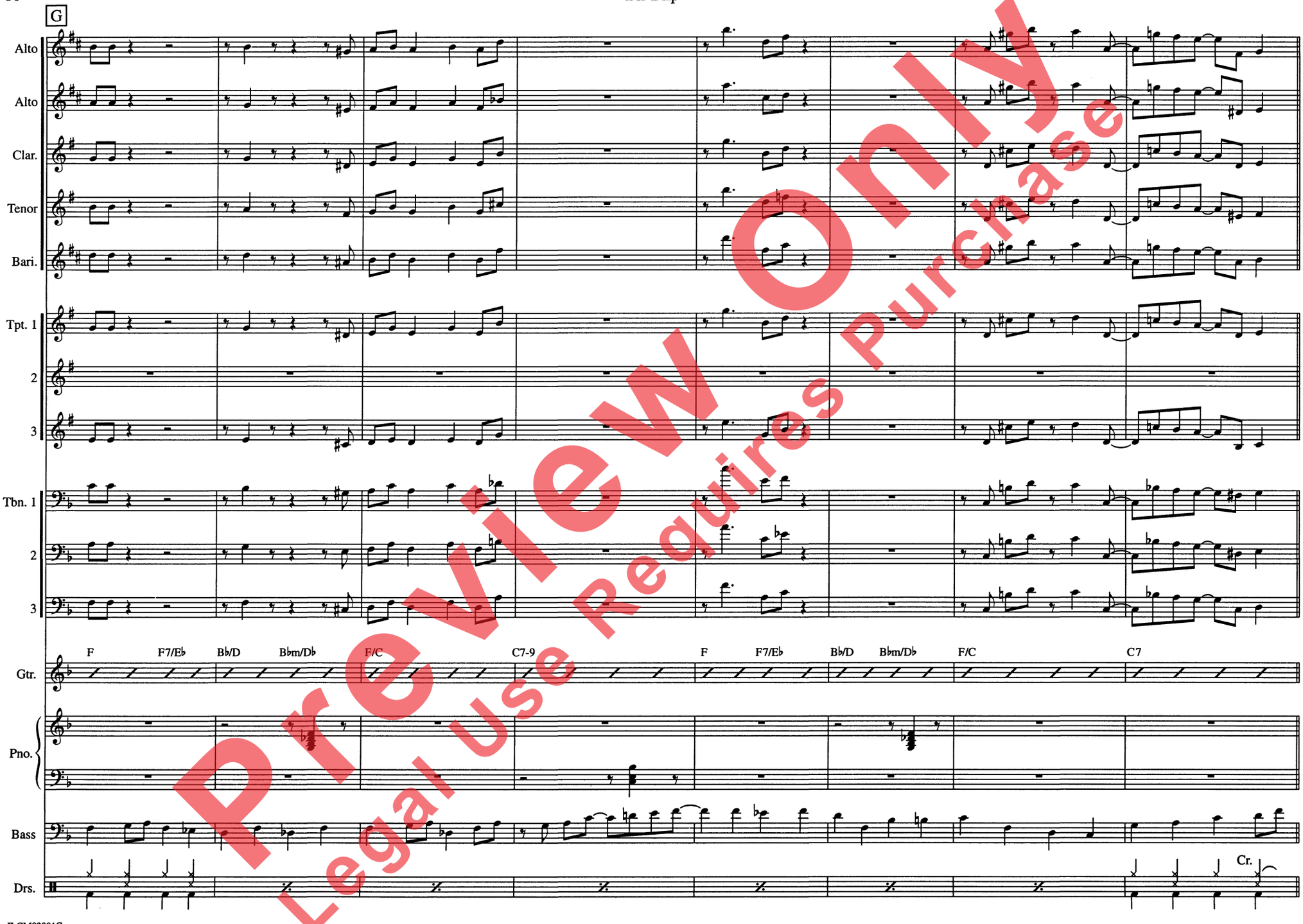


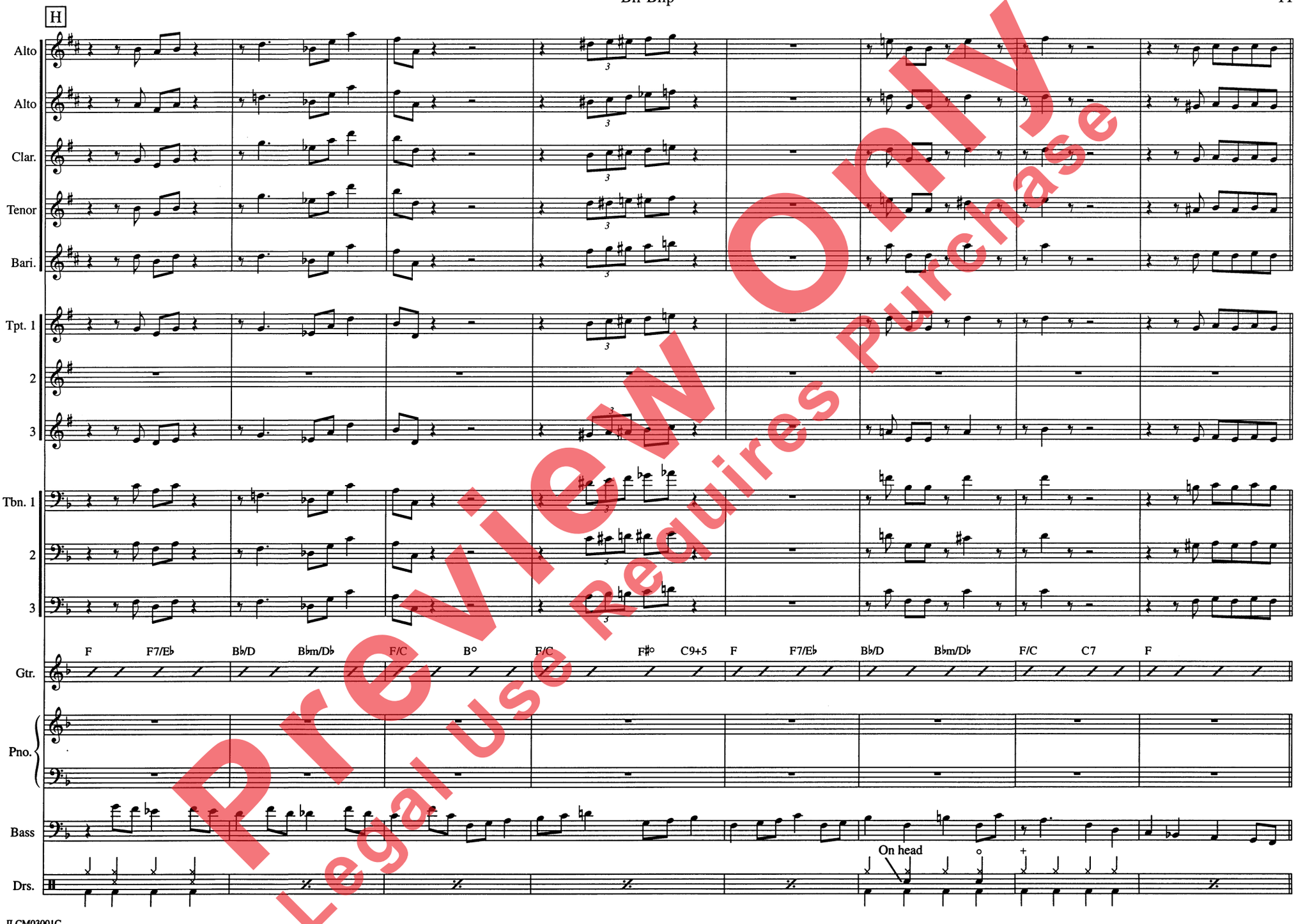
Bli-Blip





Bli-Blip





Bli-Blip