1 Melody Harmonization:
The Basic Technics and the Linear Approach

The ability to harmonize any given melody in an appropriate style is an essential skill for the professional arranger. The traditional four-part close position voicings will be most useful in order to illustrate the basic technics of melody harmonization. This is because four voices are necessary to express most chord types which are commonly used in jazz, and close position voicings make it easier to identify the particular chord tones in relation to the root. The voicings will usually contain the root, third, fifth and seventh or the third, fifth seventh and ninth, although these notes may be chromatically altered. The linear approach can be more clearly illustrated by open position voicings. Open voicings enable the listener to hear the individual instrumental lines more easily. Before considering the technics, however, it is necessary to analyze the given melody in relation to the following features:

1) Chord arpeggios or movement from one chord tone to another.

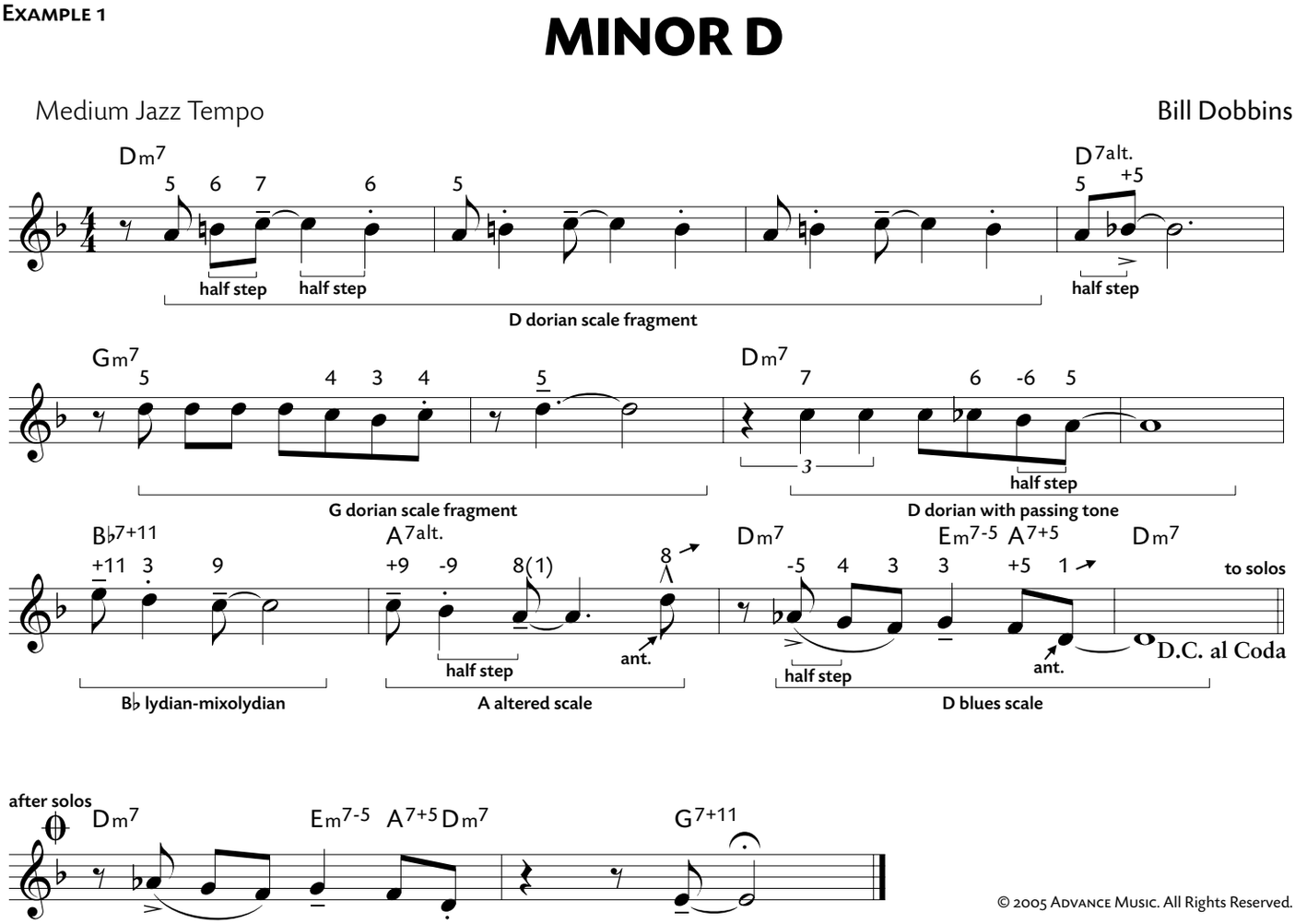
2) Scales or scale fragments.

3) Melodic movement by half-step.

4) The relationship of each note in the melody to the accompanying chord.

Example 1 includes the melody and chord progression of ***Minor D*** with an analysis of the features listed above.

Example 1



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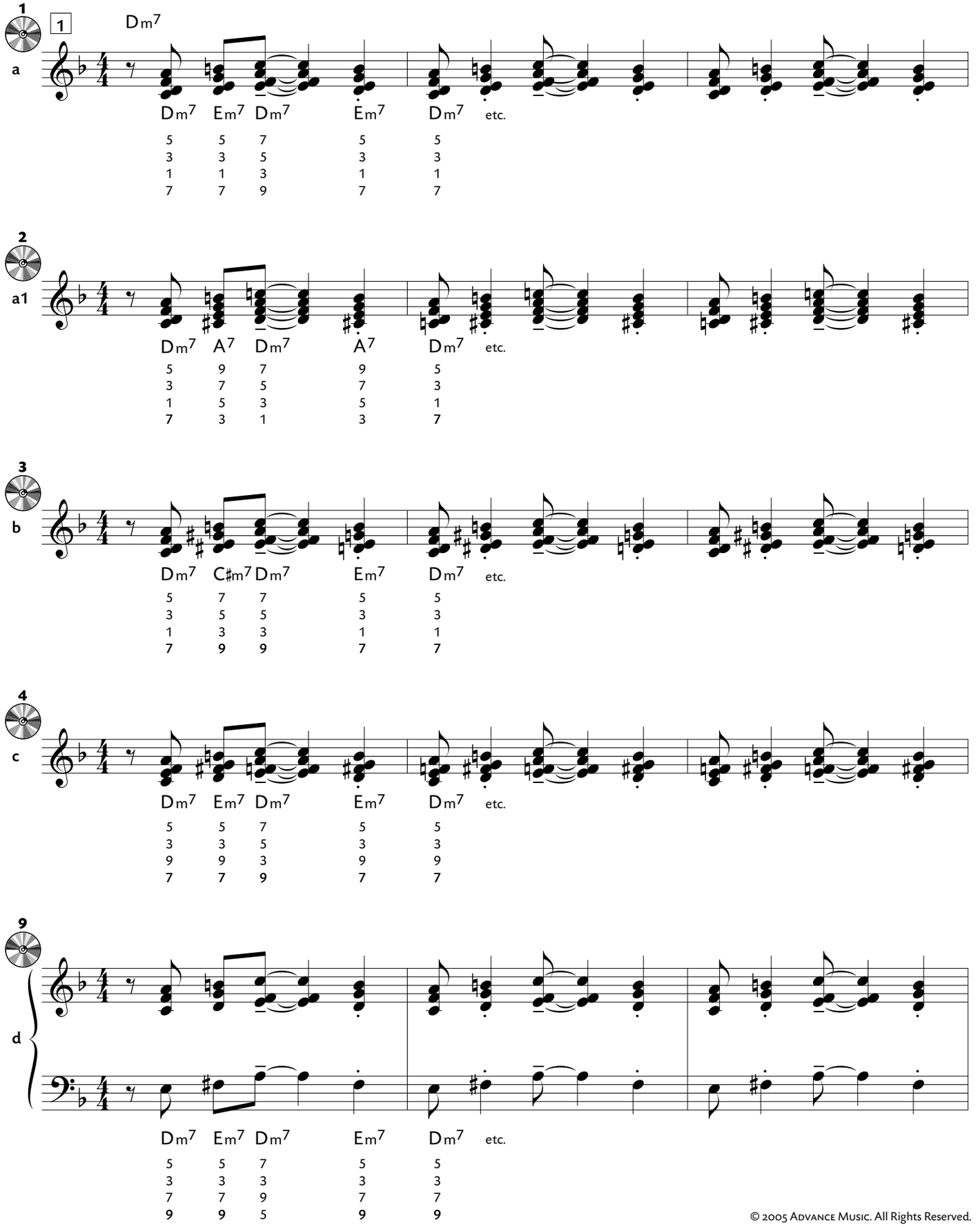
Example 2

MINOR D

Medium Jazz Tempo

Bill Dobbins



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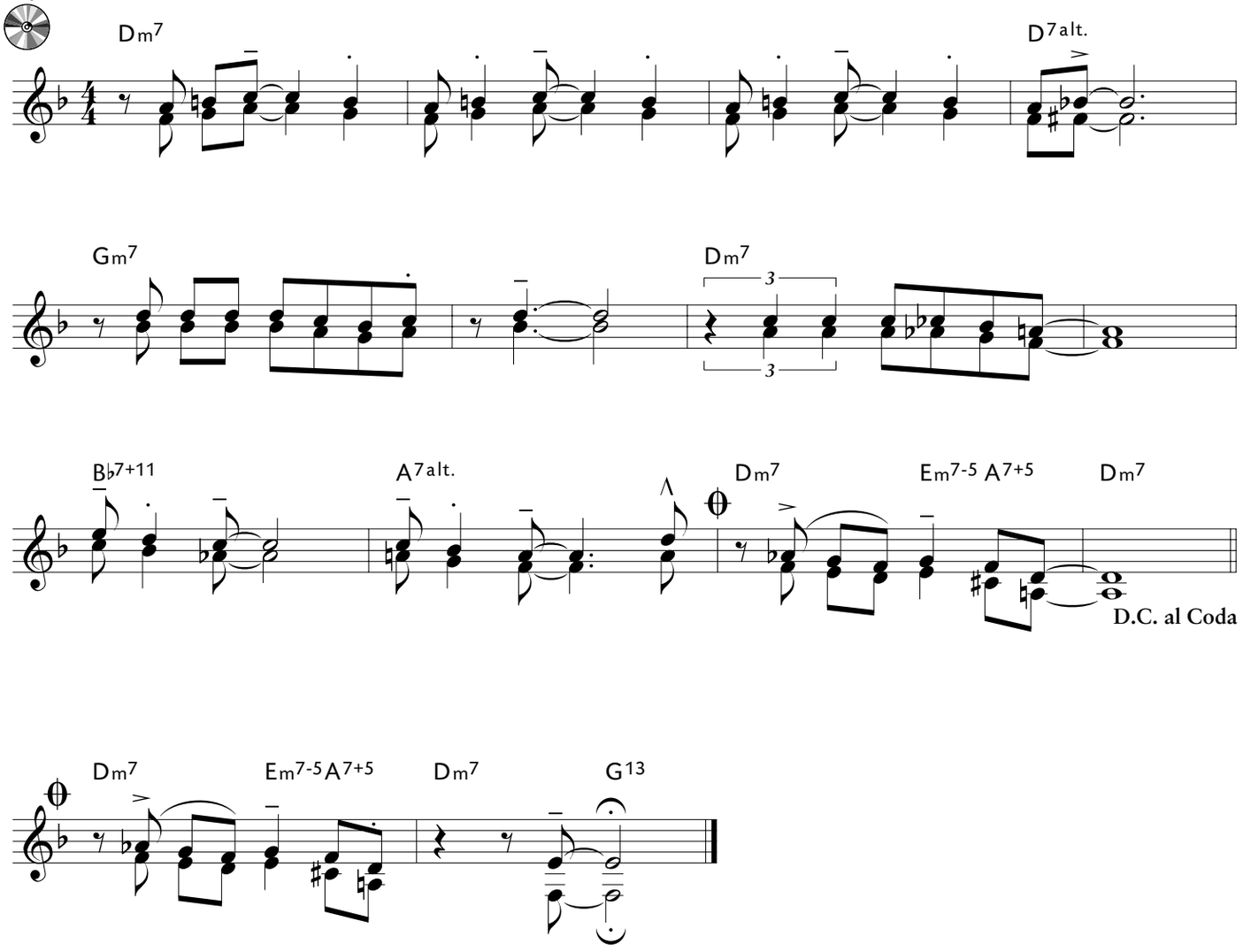
Example 3

MINOR D

Medium Jazz Tempo

Bill Dobbins

10



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Suggested orchestration:	Melody: trumpet, flugelhorn, soprano sax, alto sax or clarinet 2nd voice: alto sax, tenor sax or clarinet

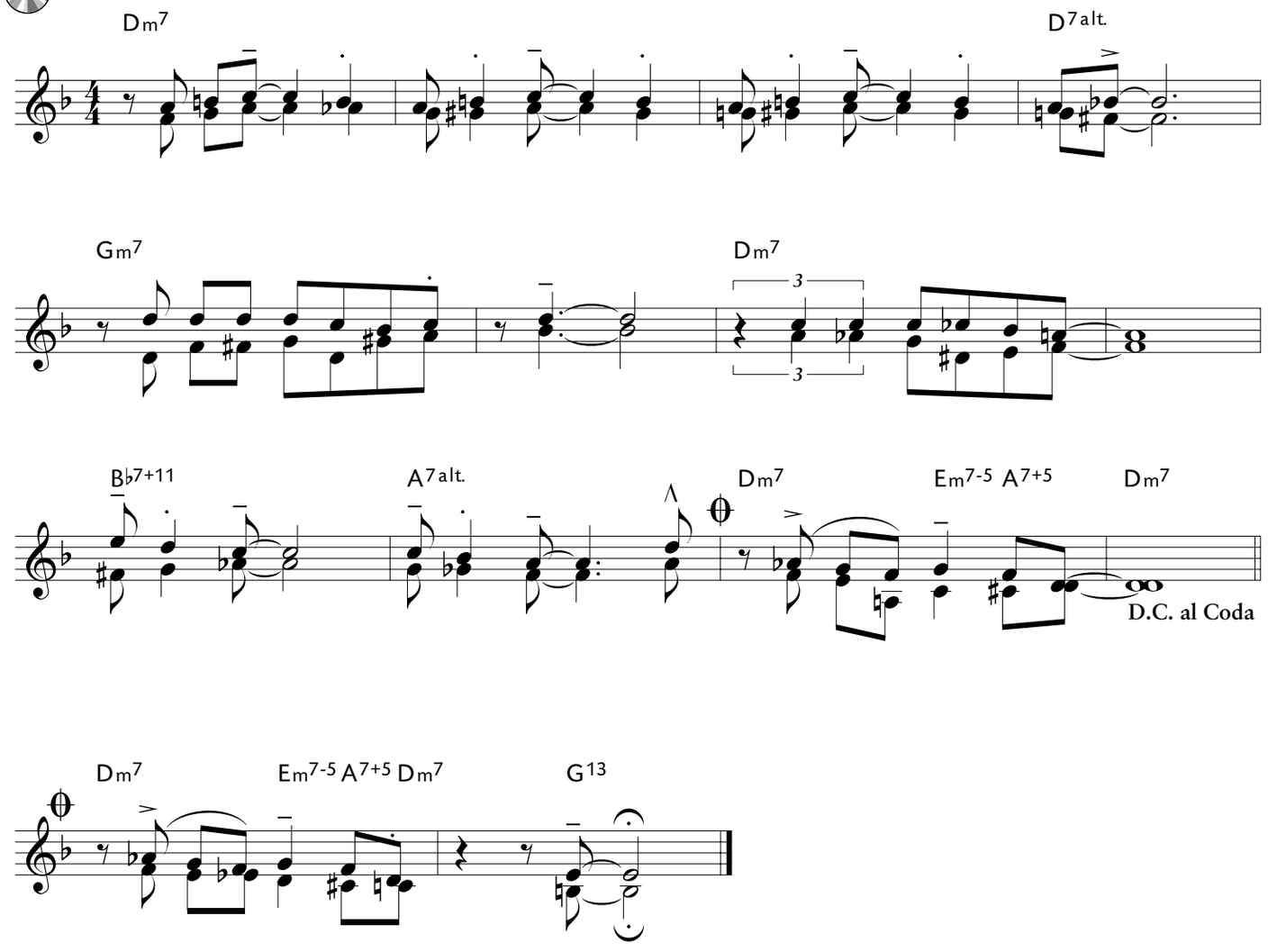
Example 4

MINOR D

11

Medium Jazz Tempo

Bill Dobbins



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Suggested orchestration:	Melody: trumpet, flugelhorn, soprano sax, alto sax or clarinet 2nd voice: alto sax, tenor sax, clarinet, bass clarinet or trombone

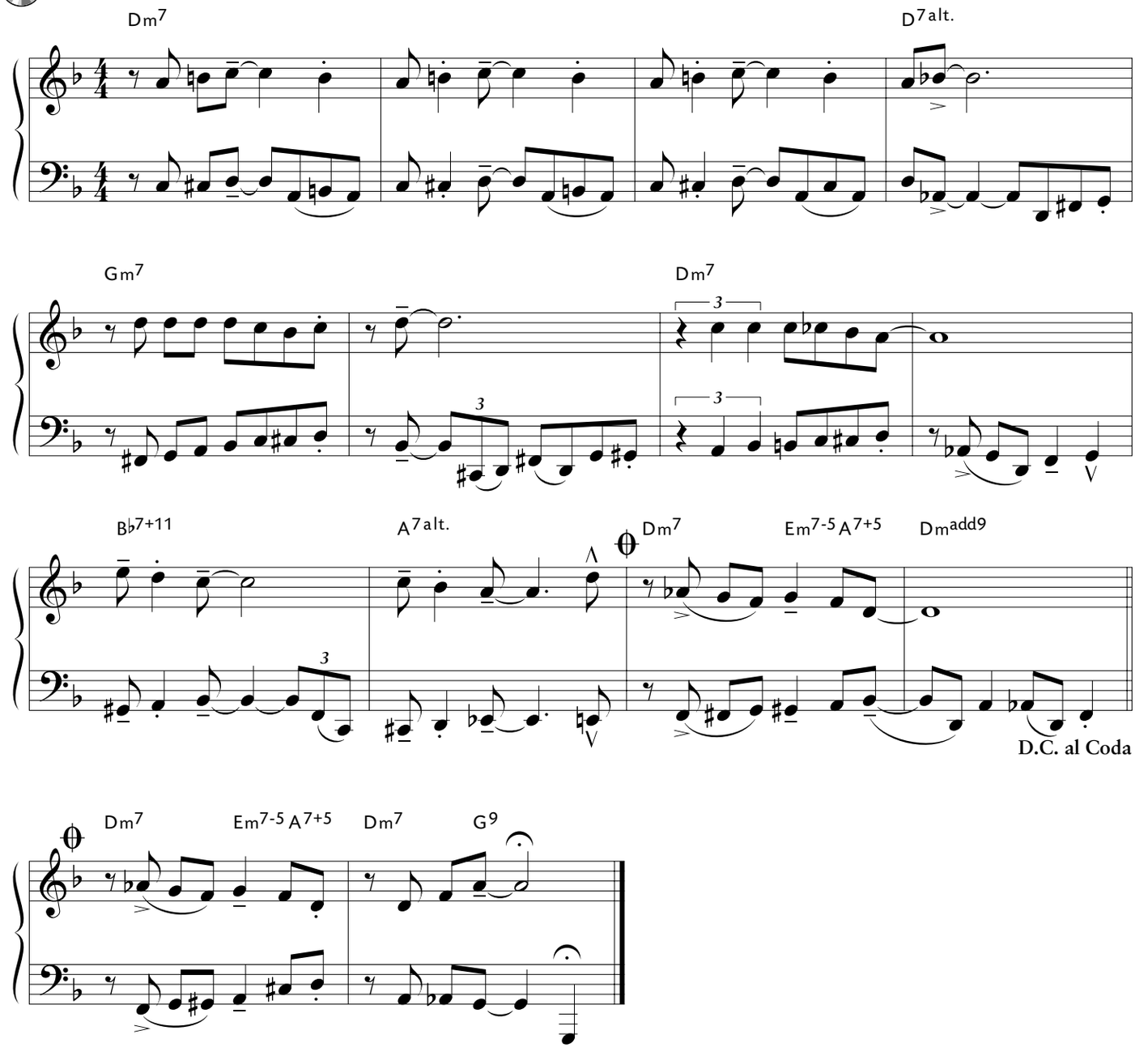
Example 5

MINOR D

12

Medium Jazz Tempo

Bill Dobbins



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Suggested orchestration:	Melody: trumpet, flugelhorn, soprano sax, alto sax or clarinet 2nd line: string bass

Example 10

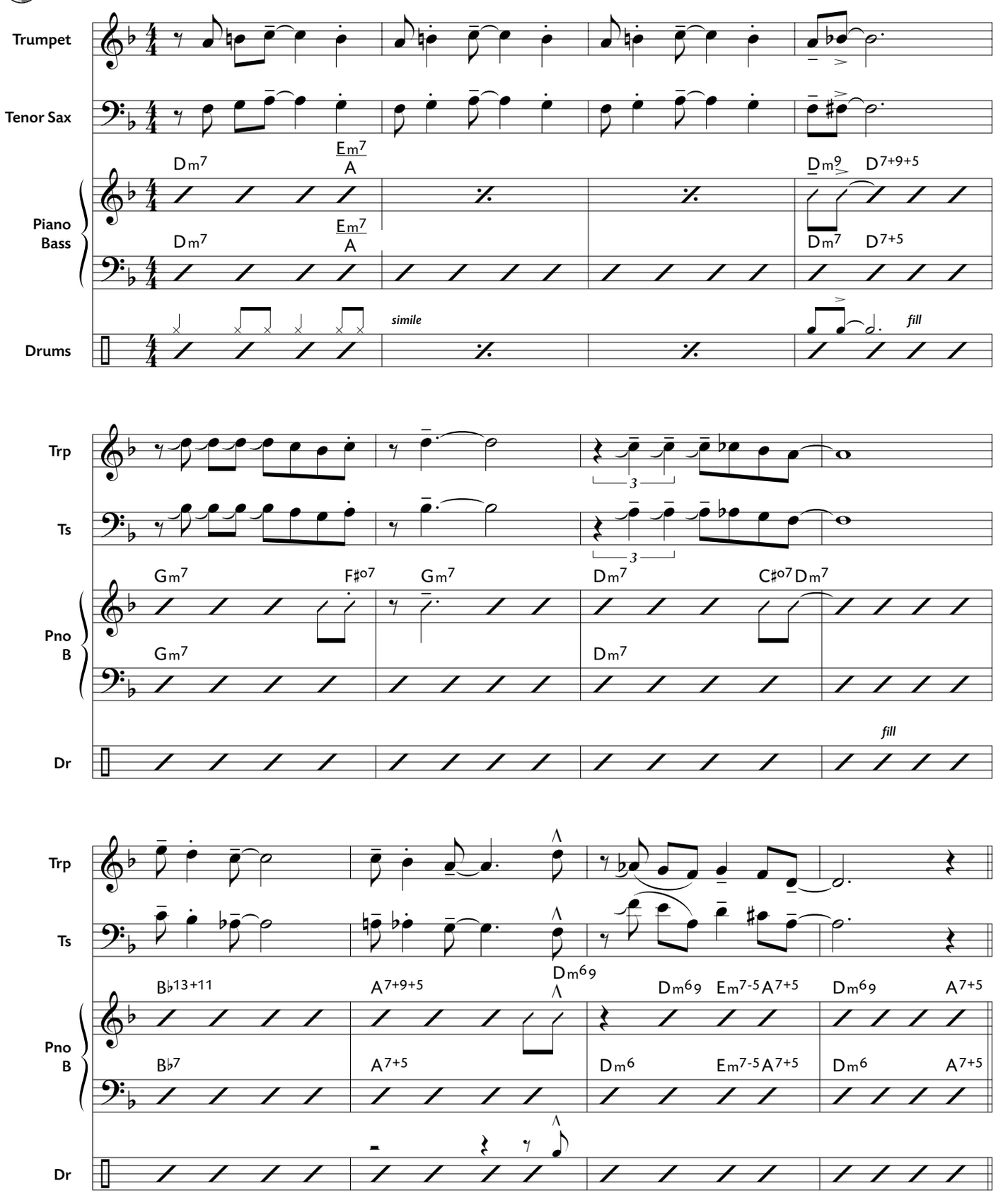
MINOR D

Concert Score

16

Medium Jazz Tempo

Bill Dobbins



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Example 11

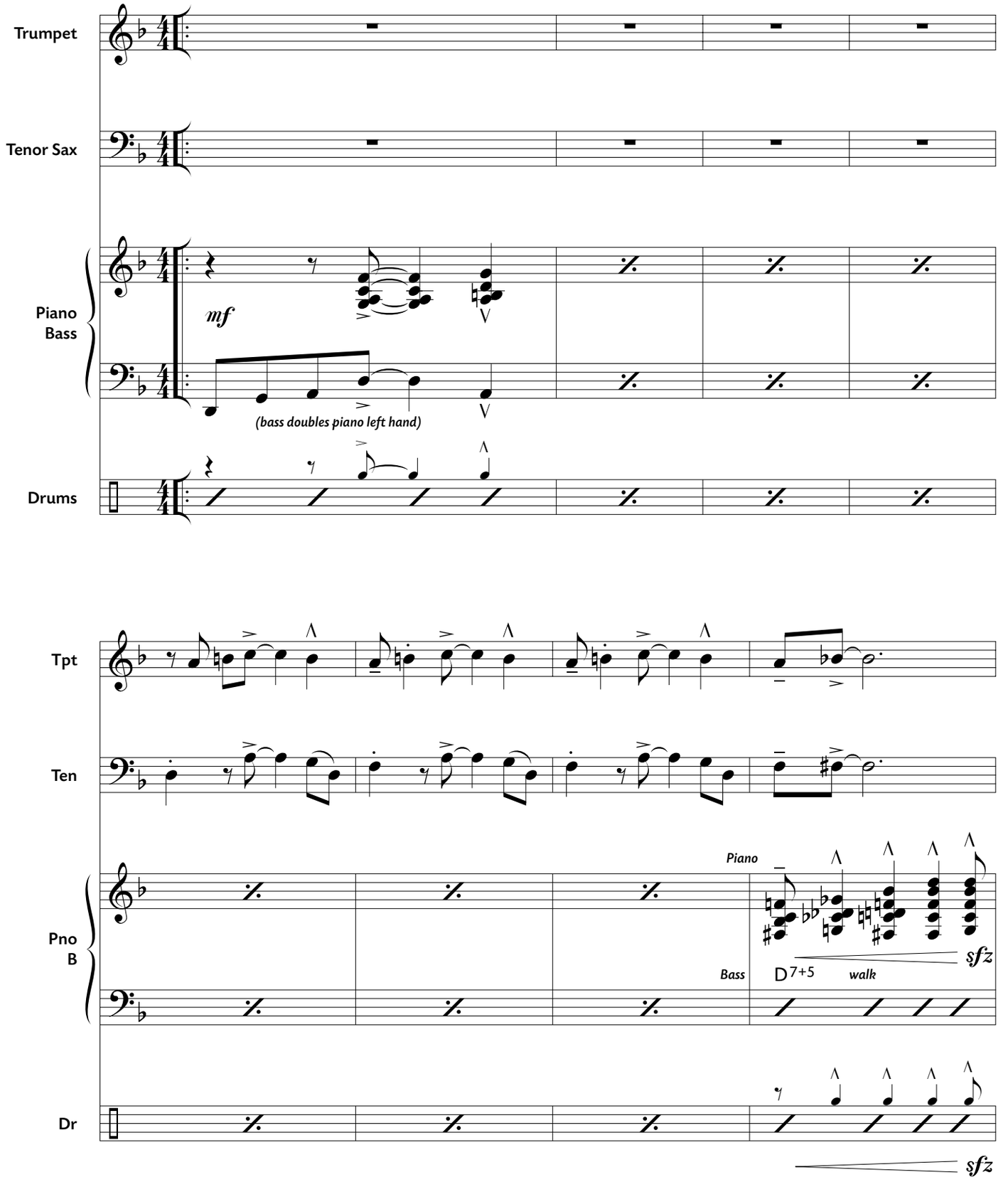
MINOR D

Concert Score

17

Medium Shuffle

Bill Dobbins



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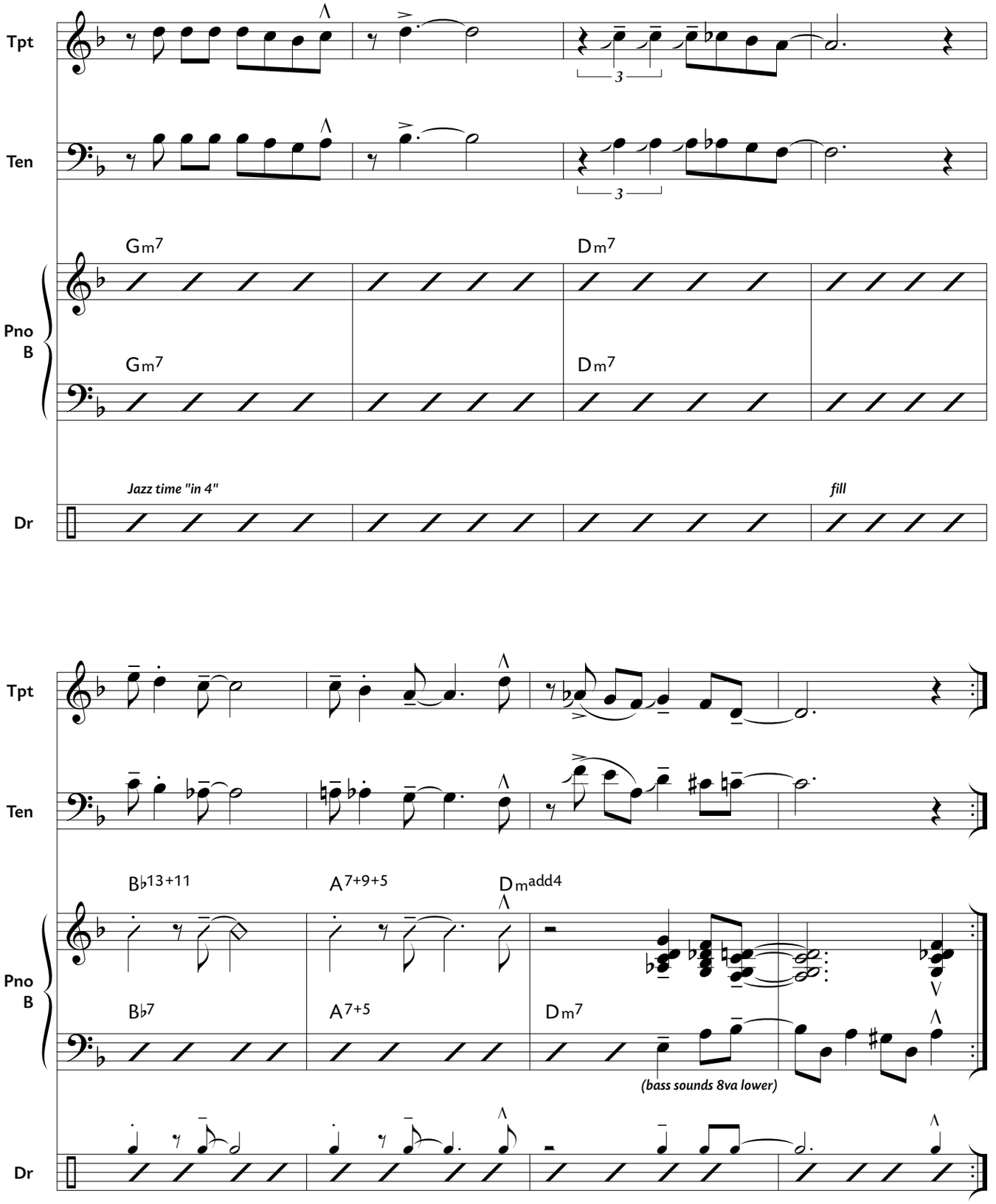

Tpt
Ten
Pno
B
Dr
Gm7
Dm7
Gm7
Dm7
Jazz time "in 4"
fill
3
3
Tpt
Ten
Pno
B
Dr
B♭13+11
A7+9+5
Dmadd4
B♭7
A7+5
Dm7
(bass sounds 8va lower)

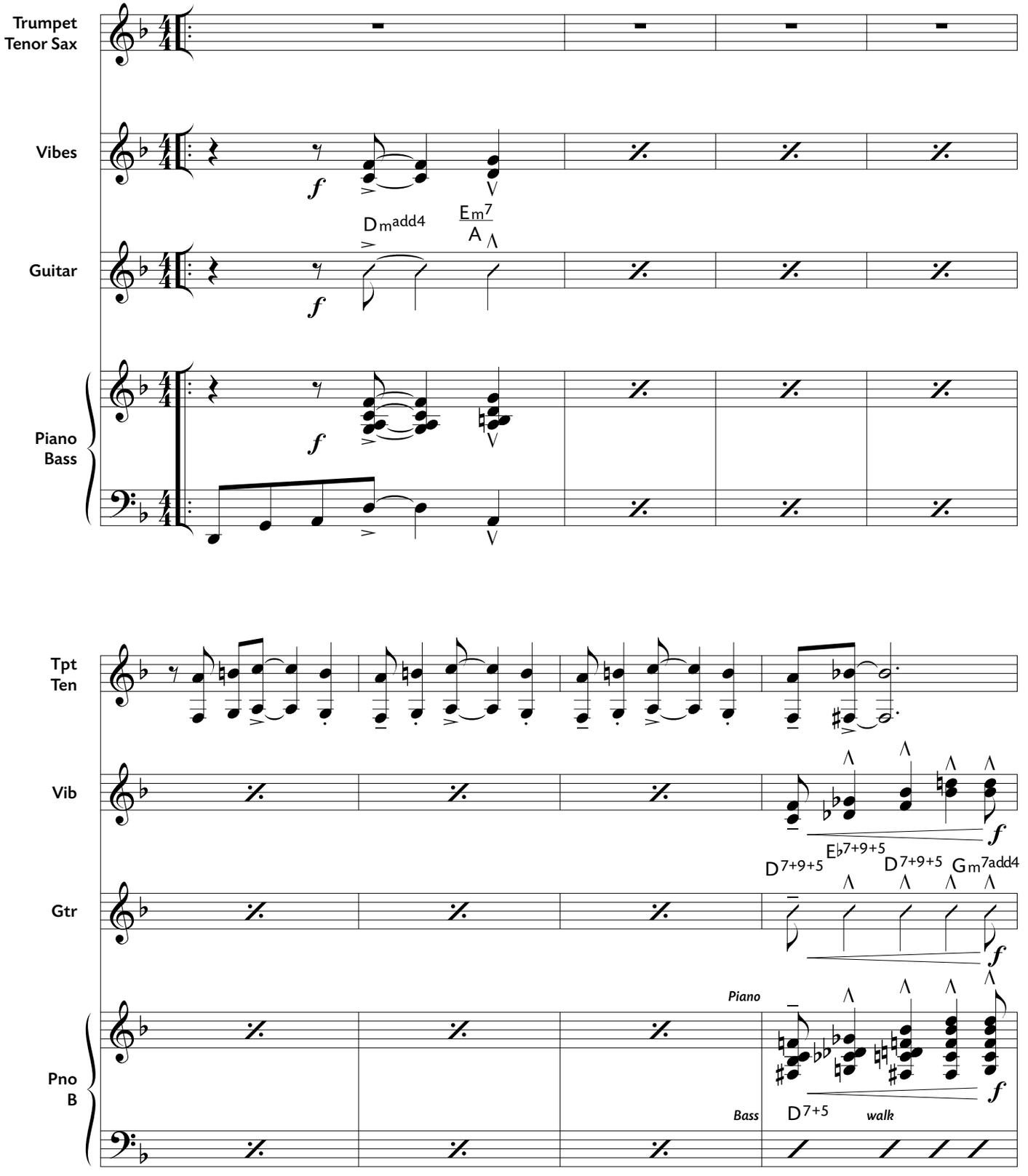
Example 12

MINOR D

Concert Score

Medium Shuffle (♩ = 132)

Bill Dobbins



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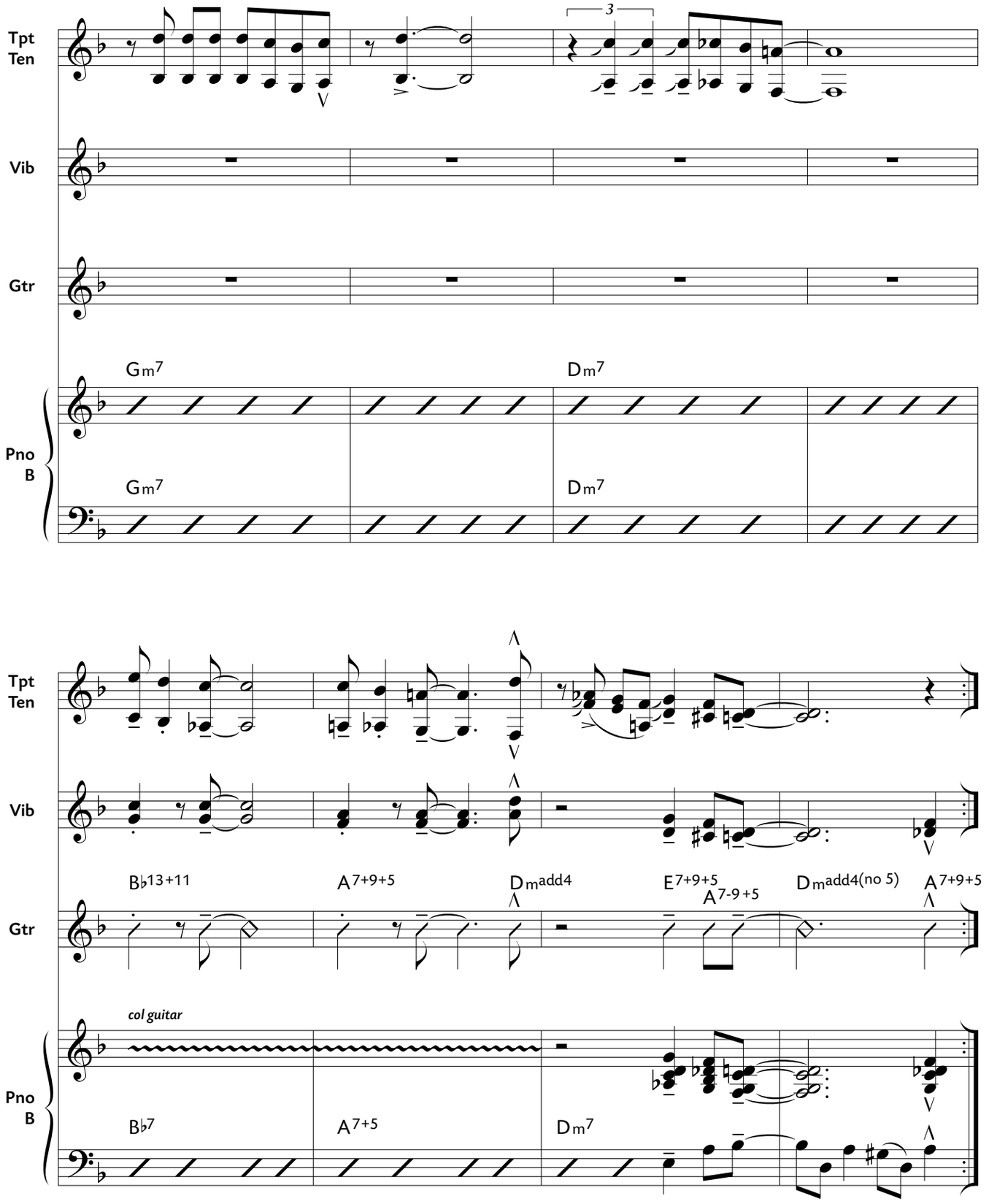
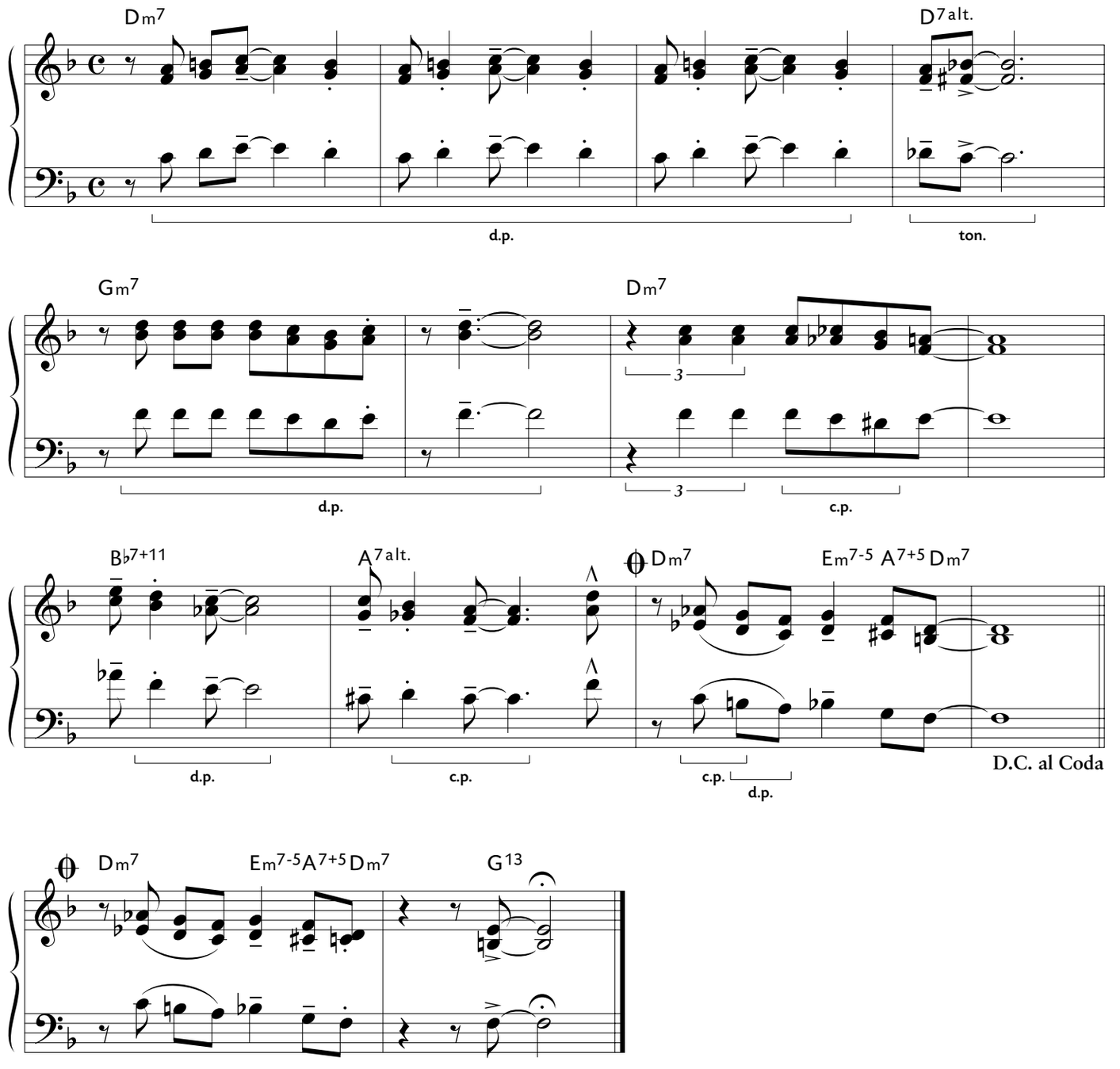

Tpt
Ten
Vib
Gtr
Pno
B
Gm7
Dm7
Gm7
Dm7
3
Tpt
Ten
Vib
Gtr
Pno
B
B♭13+11
A7+9+5
Dmadd4
E7+9+5
A7-9+5
Dmadd4(no 5)
A7+9+5
col guitar
B♭7
A7+5
Dm7

Example 16

MINOR D

20 Medium Jazz Tempo — Bill Dobbins



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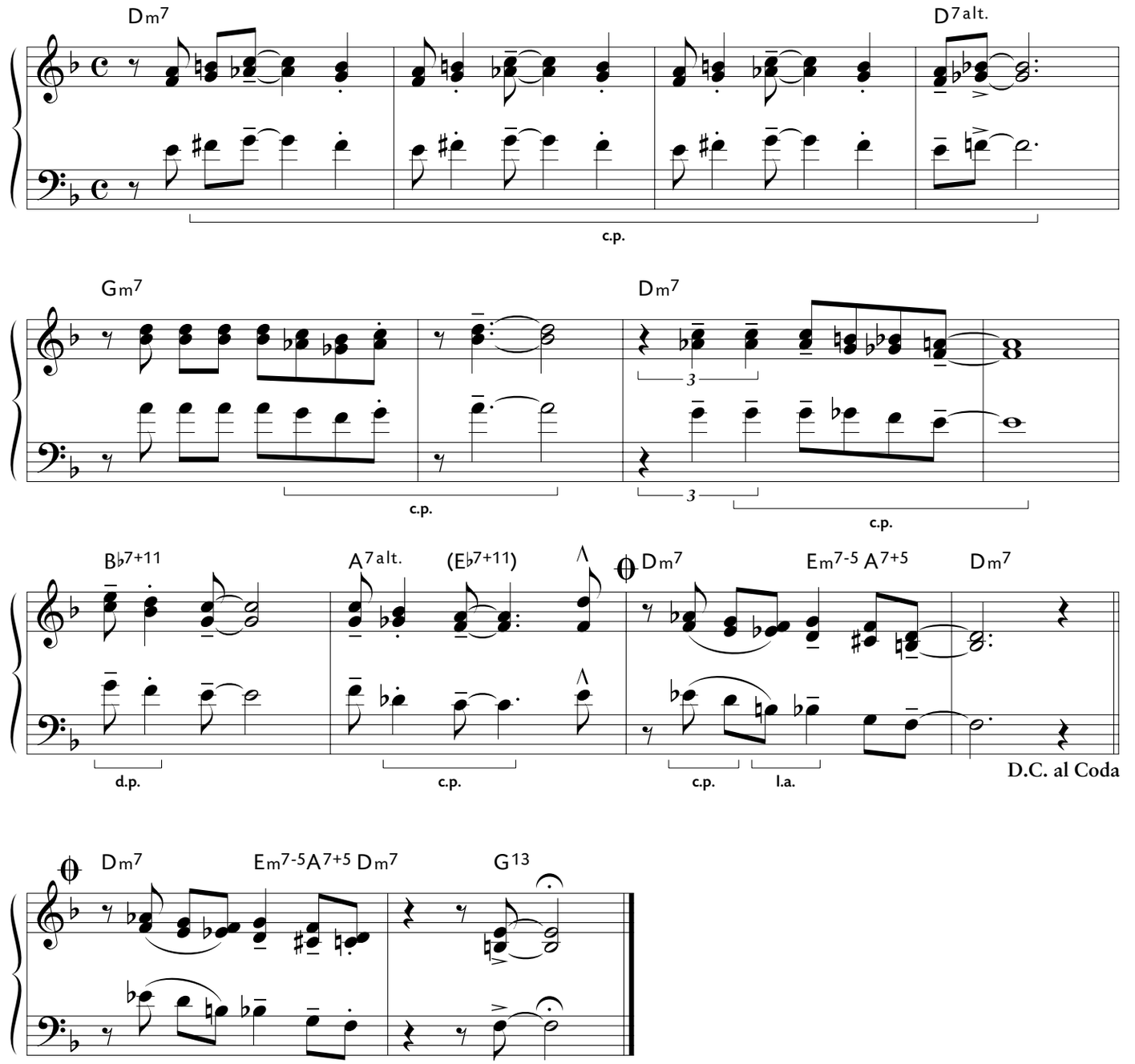
Suggested orchestration:	1st voice: trumpet, flugelhorn or alto sax 2nd voice: tenor sax 3rd voice: trombone or baritone sax

Example 17

MINOR D

21 Medium Jazz Tempo — Bill Dobbins



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Suggested orchestration:

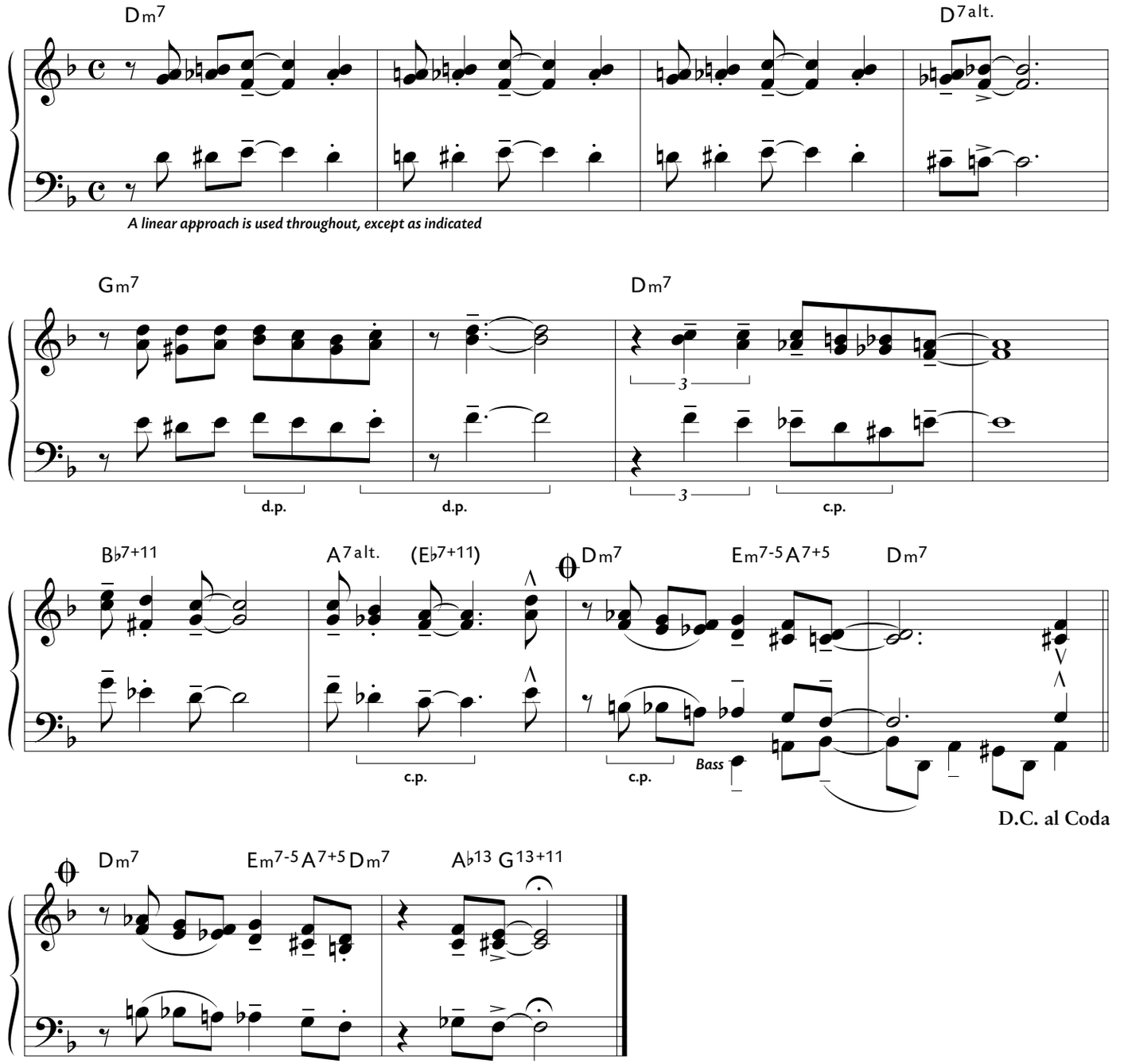
1st voice: trumpet, flugelhorn or soprano sax
2nd voice: alto sax
3rd voice: trombone or tenor sax

Example 18

MINOR D

22 Medium Jazz Tempo

Bill Dobbins



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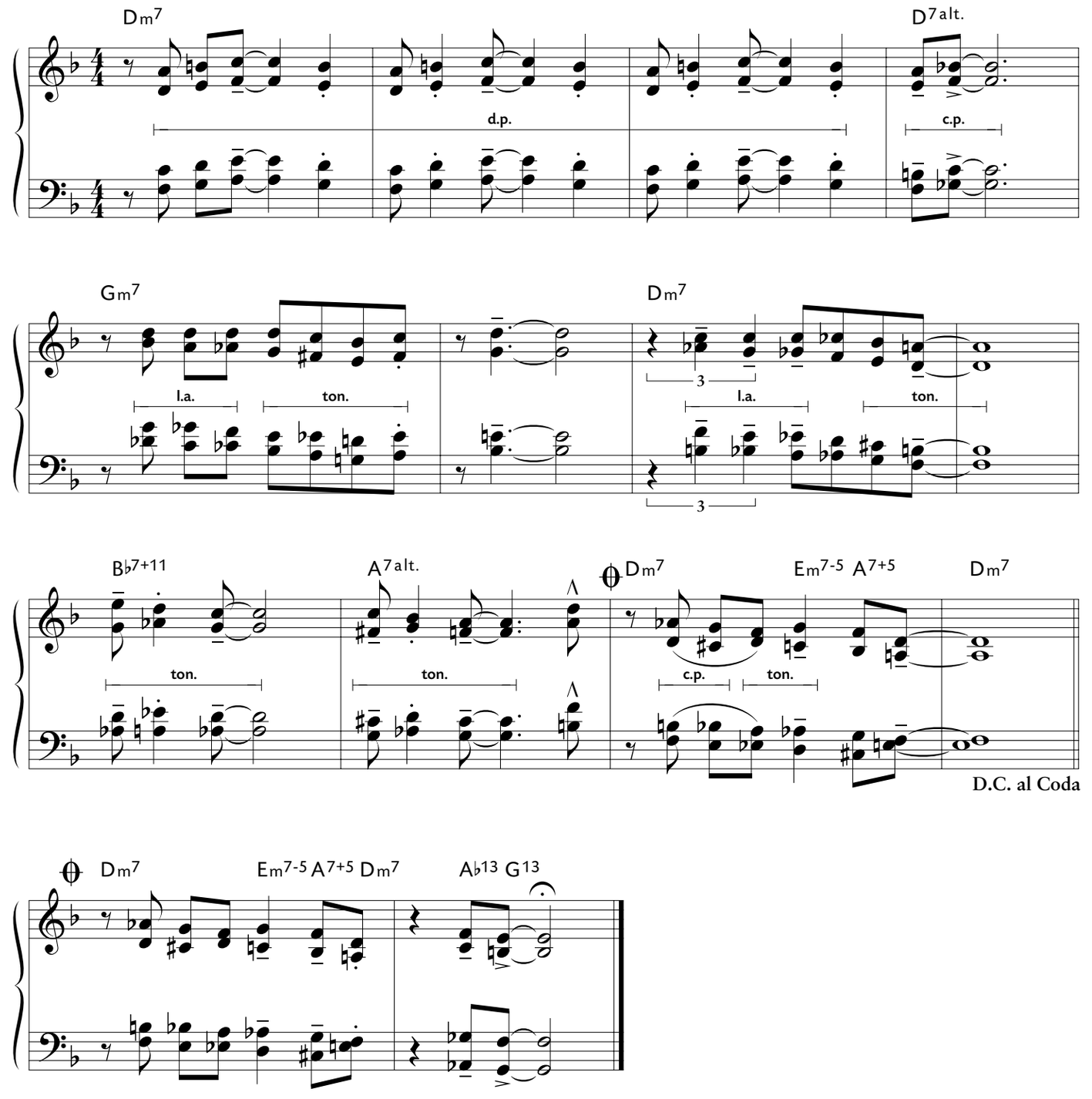
Suggested orchestration:	1st voice: trumpet, flugelhorn or alto sax 2nd voice: tenor sax 3rd voice: trombone or baritone sax

Example 22

MINOR D

26 Medium Jazz Tempo

Bill Dobbins



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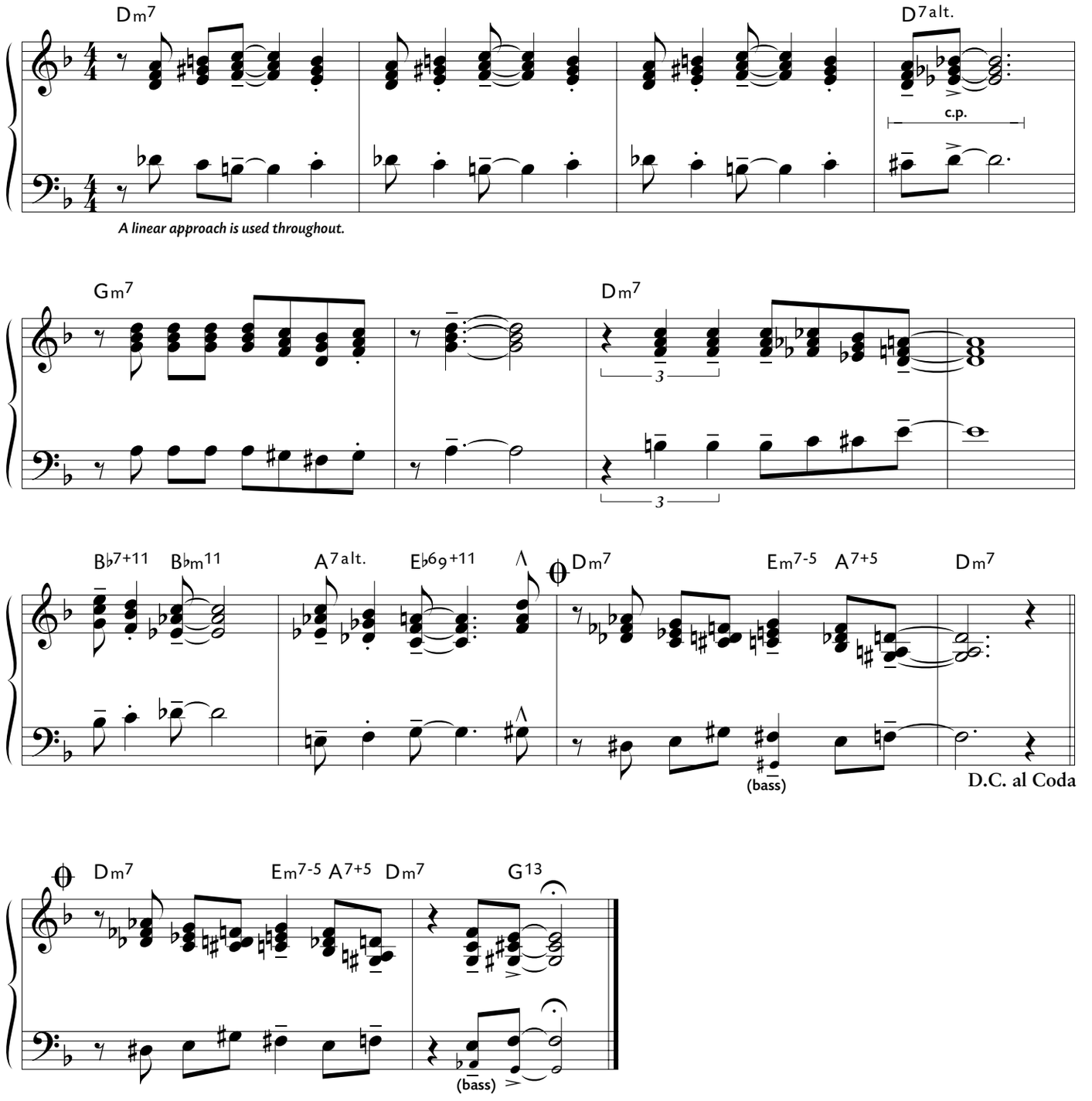
Suggested orchestration:

1st voice: trumpet, flugelhorn or alto sax
2nd voice: tenor sax
3rd voice: trombone or tenor sax
4th voice: baritone sax

Example 23

MINOR D

27 Medium Jazz Tempo — Bill Dobbins



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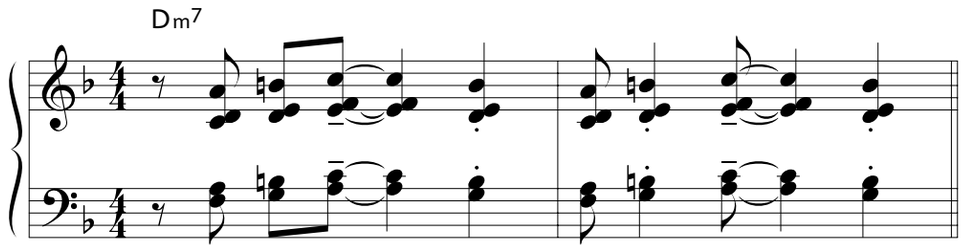
Suggested orchestration:

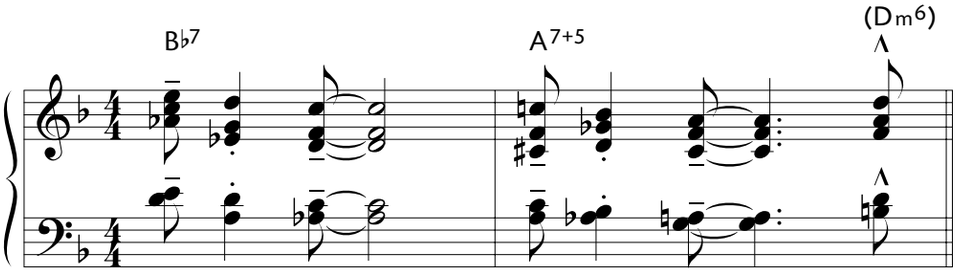
1st voice: trumpet or flugelhorn
2nd voice: trombone or alto sax
3rd voice: tenor sax
4th voice: baritone sax

6 Writing for Five Horns

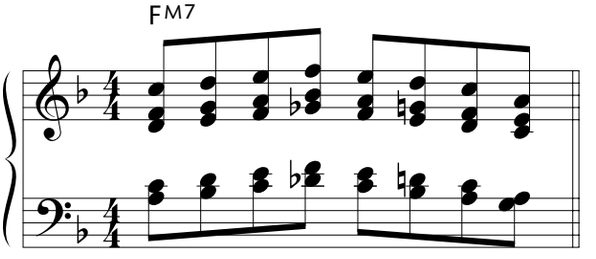
The simplest way to harmonize a melody for five horns is to begin with a basic four-voice harmonization, then double the melody one octave lower. In this way, the basic harmonization of ***Minor D*** in Example 22 can be easily revised for five horns.



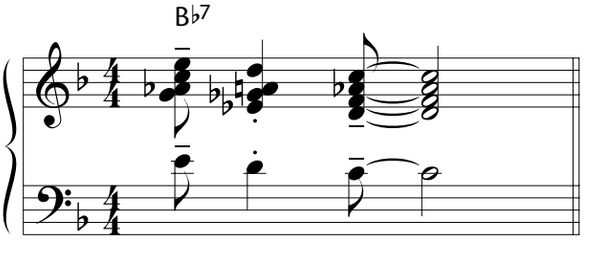
Measures 9 and 10 from Example 22 must be simplified in order to work well in such a basic context.



The basic harmonization of ***Blues for Barry*** in Example 25 can be revised in the same way.



Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn used this technic very effectively in close position. Close position sounds strong when there are extensions or altered tones in the melody.



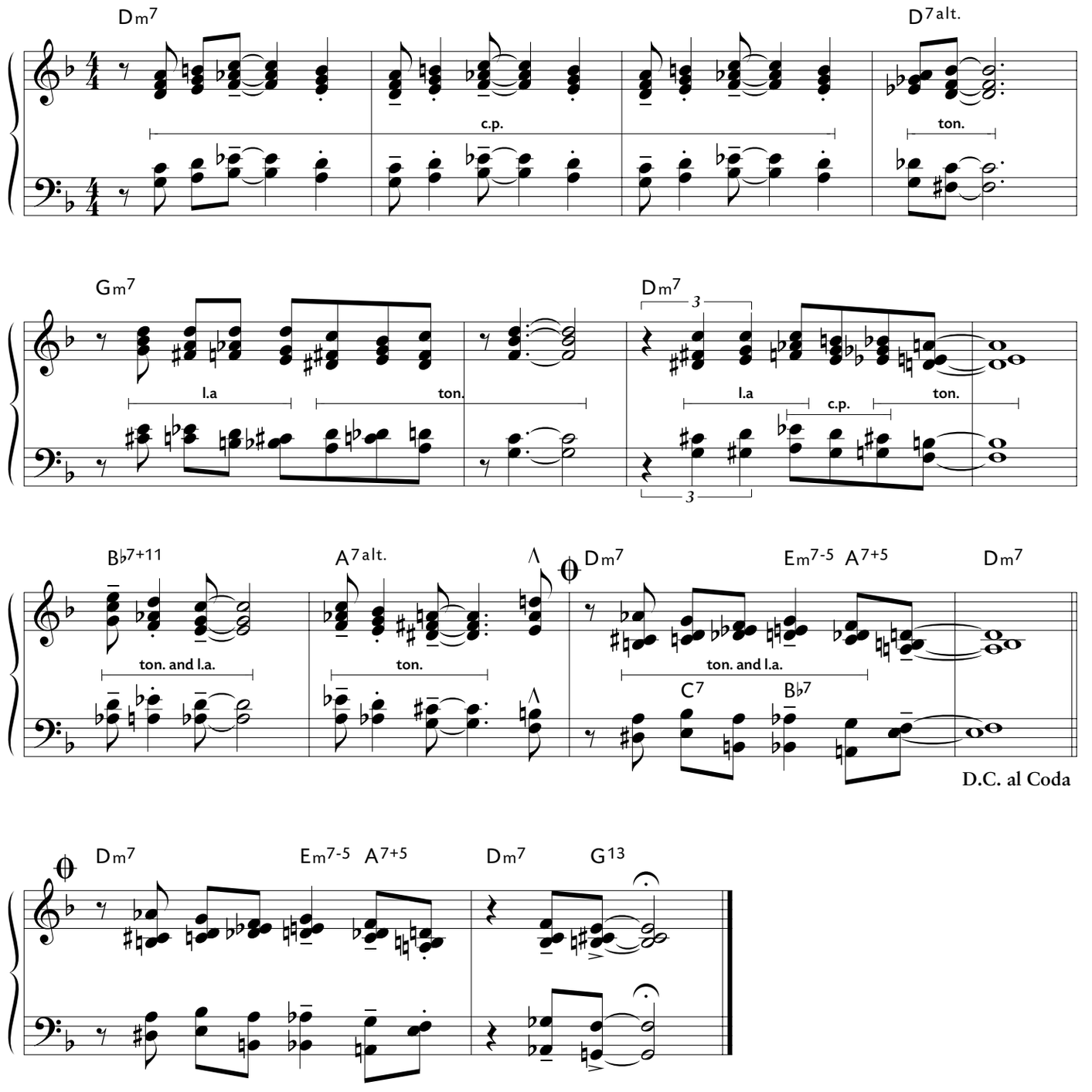
Example 27

MINOR D

31

Medium Jazz Tempo

Bill Dobbins



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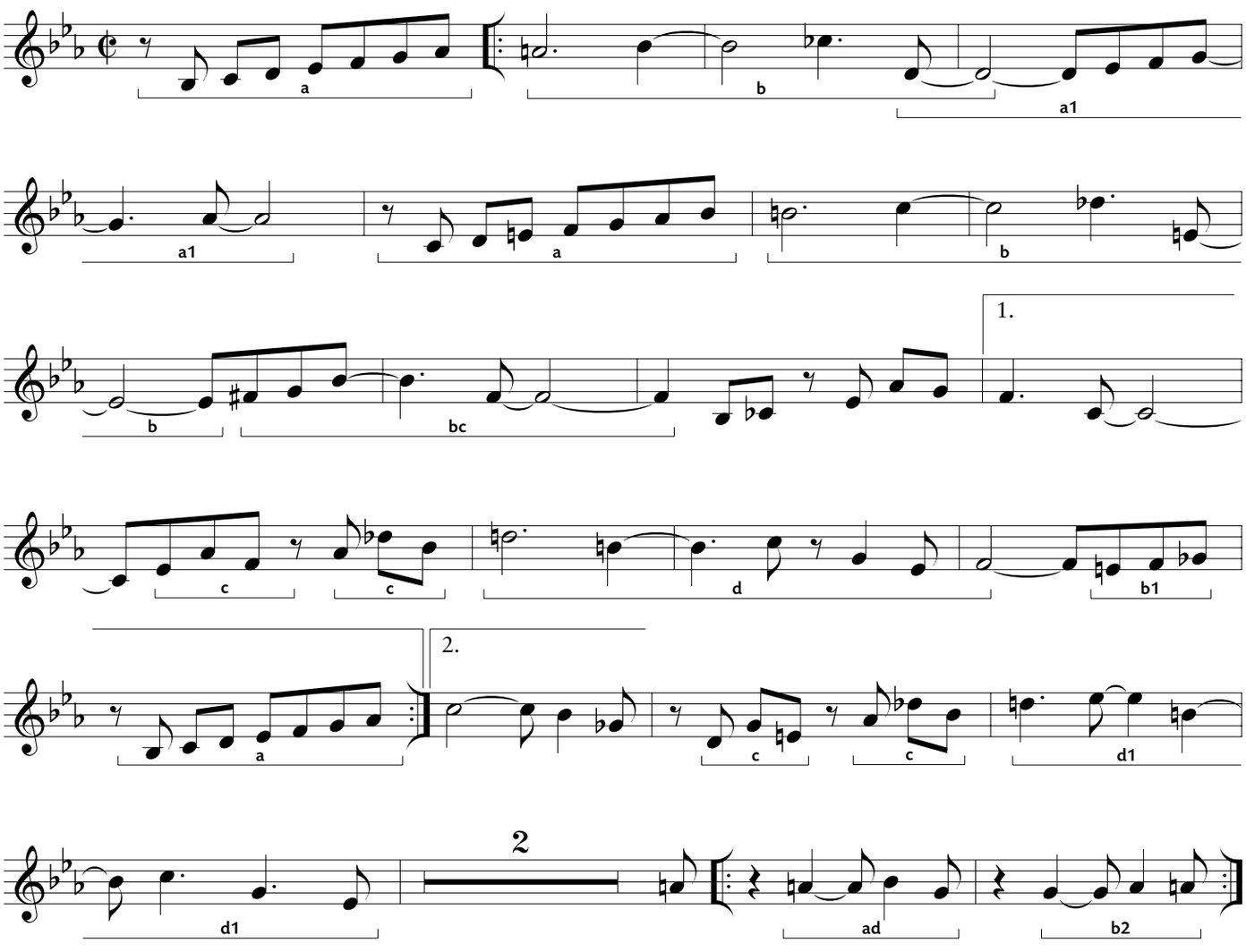
Suggested orchestration:

1st voice: trumpet, flugelhorn or soprano sax
2nd voice: alto sax
3rd voice: tenor sax
4th voice: tenor sax or trombone
5th voice: baritone sax

SUITE FOR SWEE' PEA

This extended composition is dedicated to Billy Strayhorn, whose nickname was "Swee' Pea." The entire composition developed from a single tune, ***Swee' Pea's Samba***, which is the theme of part III. The vamp from this tune (measure 9 of part III) is based on the opening sounds of a famous Strayhorn composition, *Chelsea Bridge*. The beginning of the theme of ***Swee' Pea's Samba*** is a reharmonization of the first two notes of the vamp (a♮-b♭).

A kind of backwards development was used in this suite. The motives from the theme of part III were used to compose parts I and II. In this way, part III is a summation of everything which is heard in the first two parts. It unites all the earlier motivic ideas into a simple 32-bar theme. Because of this, I chose to emphasize only one or two motives in each of the various sections which make up parts I and II.

Example 30 is a motivic analysis of the melody of ***Swee' Pea's Samba***, showing the particular motives which are used in many varied forms throughout the entire suite.

Example 30