Better by Sight

(Four Steps to Mastering Sight Reading)

Tyler Arcari

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ISBN 978-1-64402-261-0

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About the Author

Tyler Arcari (b. 1989) is a composer, arranger, author, and clinician whose music is played around the world. He received his B.A. and M.S. degrees in music education from Troy University where he studied with composer Ralph Ford and Euphonium under Dr. Mark J. Walker. As a teacher, Tyler has taught at both the middle and high school levels. Tyler's primary focus when writing has been for the young musician. He became passionate about and interested in the needs of developing musicians as a classroom teacher and finds writing for musicians at this level to be very rewarding.

Tyler's music can currently be found published through Excelcia Music Publishing, Wingert-Jones Publications, Kendor Music Publishing, and Carl Fischer Music. His original works have been featured across the globe, and appear on numerous state contest lists and events such as the Midwest Clinic International Band and Orchestra Conference. As an arranger and commissioned composer, Tyler has worked with many high school, university, and community groups as well as professionals such as Carl Hilding "Doc" Severinsen and vocalist Holly Shelton. As a Clinician, Tyler regularly appears as composer- in- residence as well as guest clinician for honor bands and festivals.

Currently, Tyler serves as the Director of Music Production and Editing at Excelcia Music Publishing LLC, Wingert-Jones Publications, Kendor Music Publishing, and RBC Publications. In his spare time, Tyler enjoys playing fantasy-world video games and building his own computers. He is an avid animal lover and lives in Lakeland with his wife Heather, their three rabbits named Marshmallow, Maximus, and Oatmeal, their peach cat named Otis, and dog named Hilda.

About *Better by Sight*

As an educator, I have always been meticulous about sight reading preparation. Like many states, ours includes a yearly assessment that requires students to read a piece of music with limited preparation time. I often found myself repeating instructions yearly, using a "by rote" method to teach students what to look for and how to mentally prepare for sight reading. We practiced these techniques weekly, but when it came time to perform under pressure, I wasn't always confident in their ability to recall the steps.

I also realized that beyond performance music, there was little in the way of fully-orchestrated sight reading etudes that actually sound like real music.

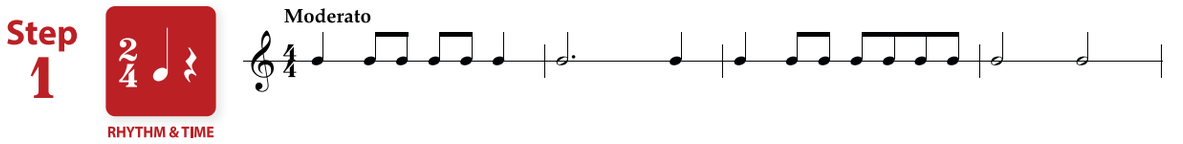
This realization led me to create a simple, yet systematic approach to sight reading. ***Better by Sight*** focuses on building an internal priority map when reading music so the fundamentals of sight reading become second nature. Reflecting on my own experiences and observing skilled sight readers, I understood the need for a method that builds habits naturally, regardless of the type of music. Compartmentalizing the process into four essential steps allowed me to present any piece in manageable chunks. Once a skill was mastered, it could occur in the background while students focused on the next challenge.

Think of it like a synchronized swimming team. Members must judge their position in the pool, the position of others, coordinate their movements, and execute those movements accurately—all while focusing on more complex tasks. Similarly, ***Better by Sight*** helps musicians develop a routine that makes the basic aspects of sight reading habitual, allowing them to concentrate on the more intricate parts of playing music, such as expressive playing.

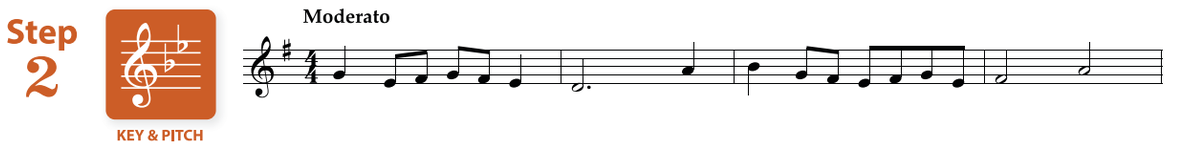
—Tyler Arcari

How to Use

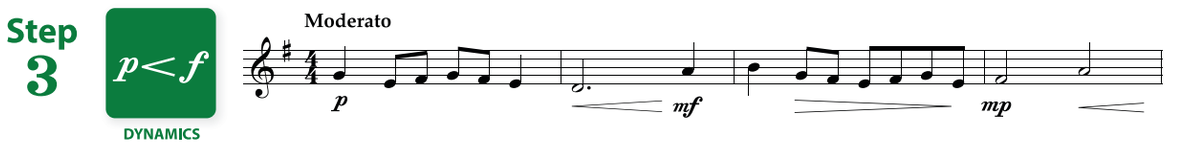
The beauty of **Better by Sight's** system is its simple step-wise structure. Each base unit is set up in a similar format: four steps which progressively add musical concepts until by step four, the entire etude is presented. This creates an internal priority for the musician, who begins to view each etude in this way before and during sight reading. Additionally, a "mastery" step is included at the conclusion of each basic unit for an entirely fresh sight reading experience.



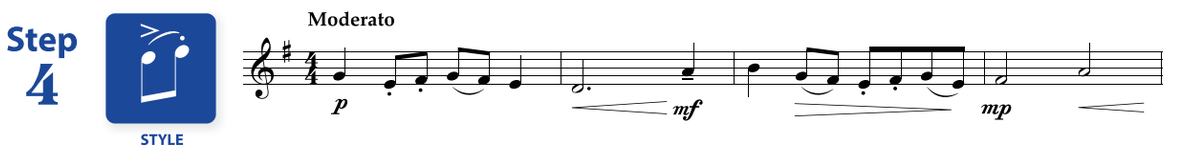
Step 1: Rhythm & Time The first concept presented for each exercise is rhythm and time. Focus on counting, clapping, or playing the rhythm on a single pitch.



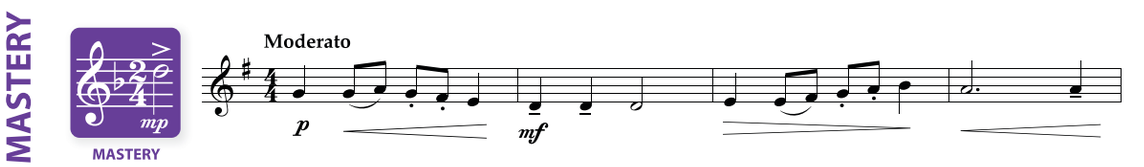
Step 2: Key & Pitch adds the exercise's pitch and key to the exercise. Think of this as building on to the foundation that was set for the exercise during the rhythmic step.



Step 3: Dynamics begins layering in more expressive concepts on to the foundation set by the first two steps. Focus on the dynamic contrast and variations of dynamic indicators.



Step 4: Style The final step is two-fold. Initially, this is where we add the musical "details" to the exercise, including slurs, tempo alteration, articulations, and other stylistic markings/texts. Beyond that, this reinforces the priority map with the first "complete" presentation of an etude.

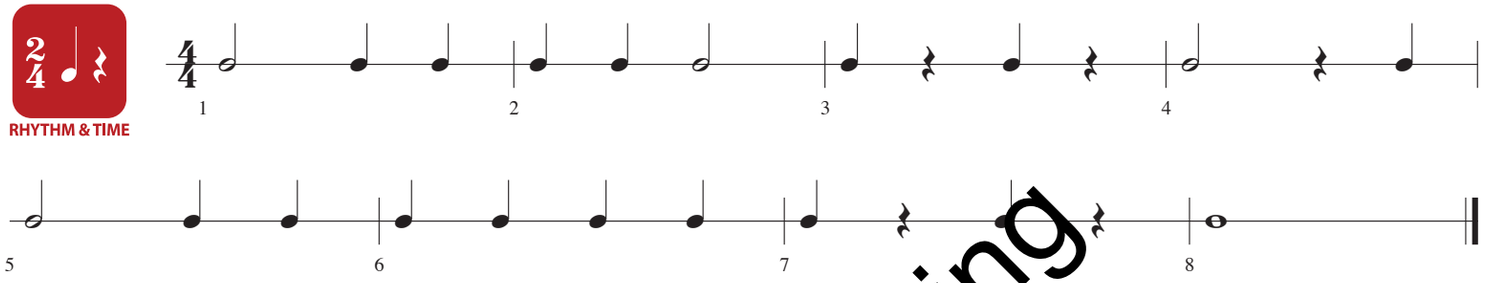


Mastery: The **Mastery Etude**, in all its forms should be considered a full and complete sight reading etude. This exercise can be used to apply whatever specific pedagogy you employ prior to sight reading, while also focusing on concepts that were reinforced in the previous unit.

Extended Mastery Etudes: At the conclusion of each unit (Units 1 –7) as well as the final unit of the book (Unit 8.1 – 8.3) - Much larger **Mastery Etudes** are presented for authentic sight reading practice.

RHYTHM & TIME

Moderato



KEY & PITCH

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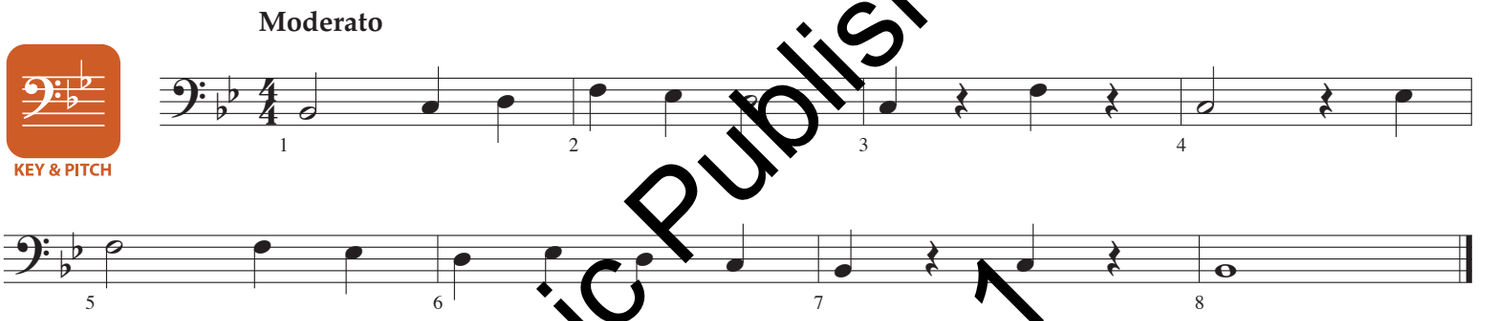

DYNAMICS

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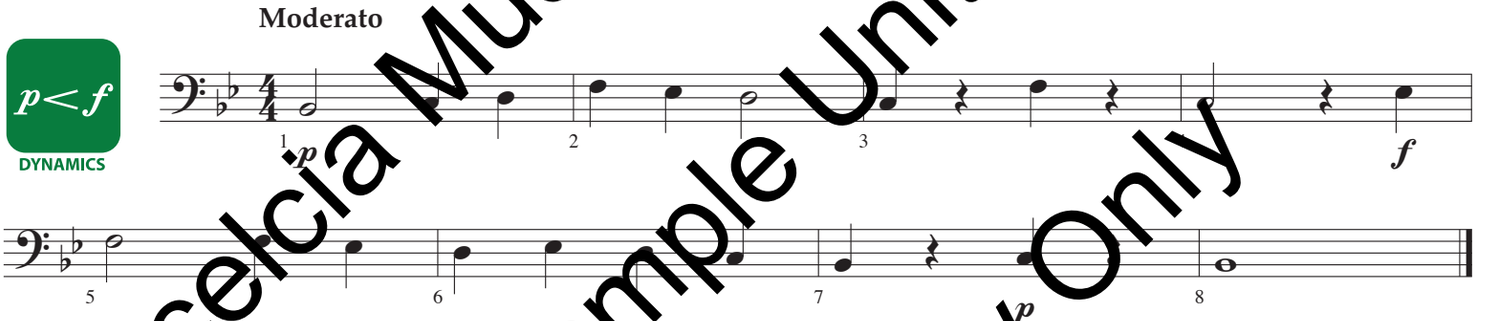

STYLE

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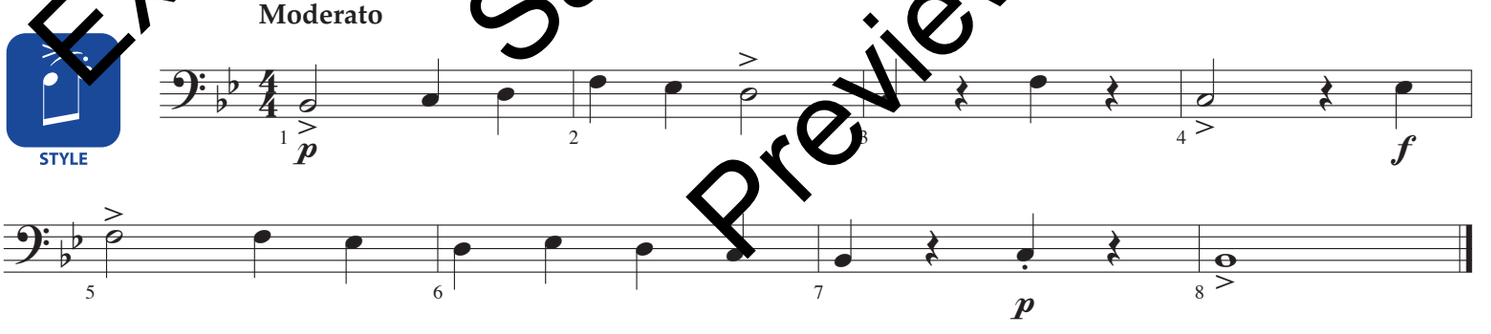

MASTERY

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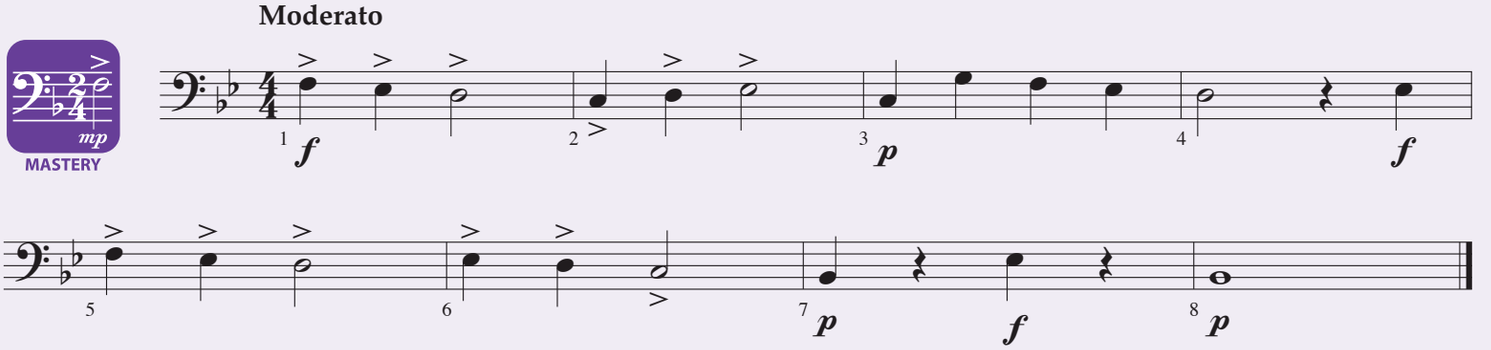

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Sample Unit 1
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RHYTHM & TIME

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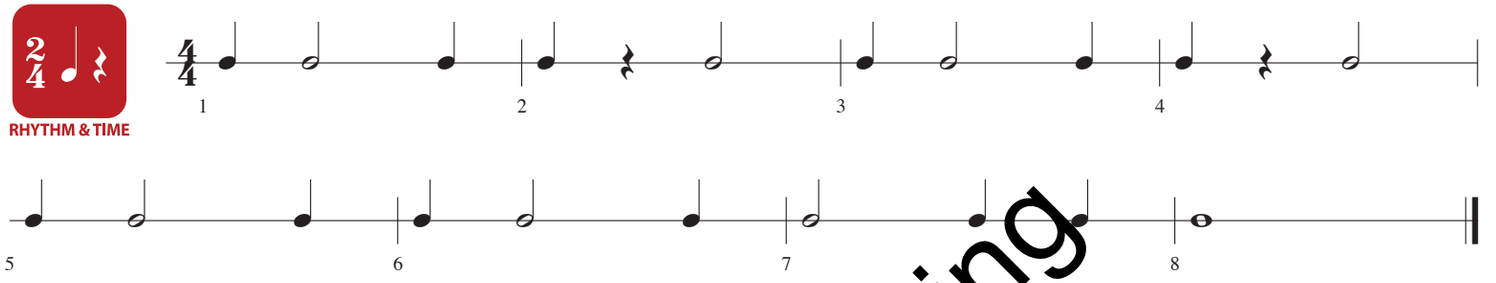

KEY & PITCH

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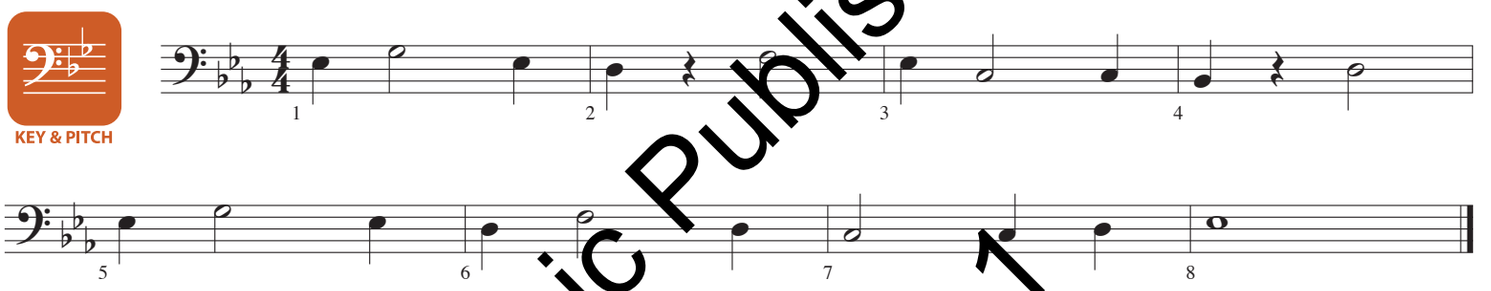

DYNAMICS

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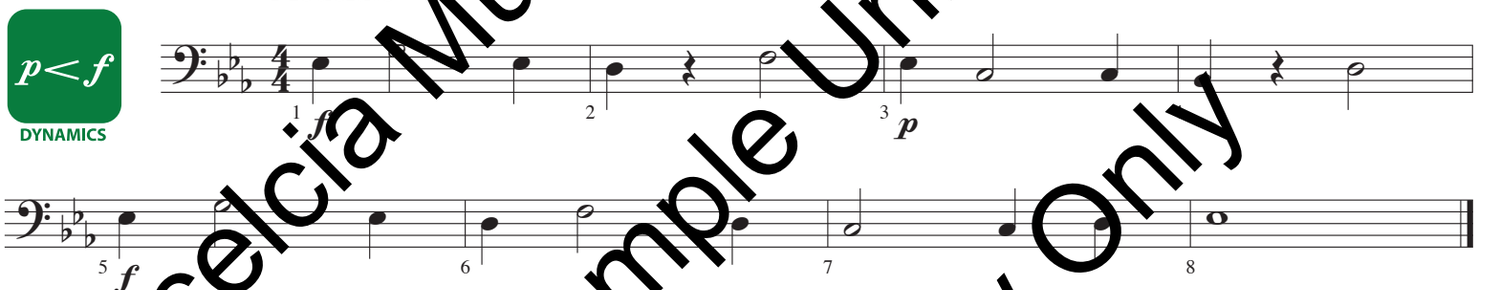

STYLE

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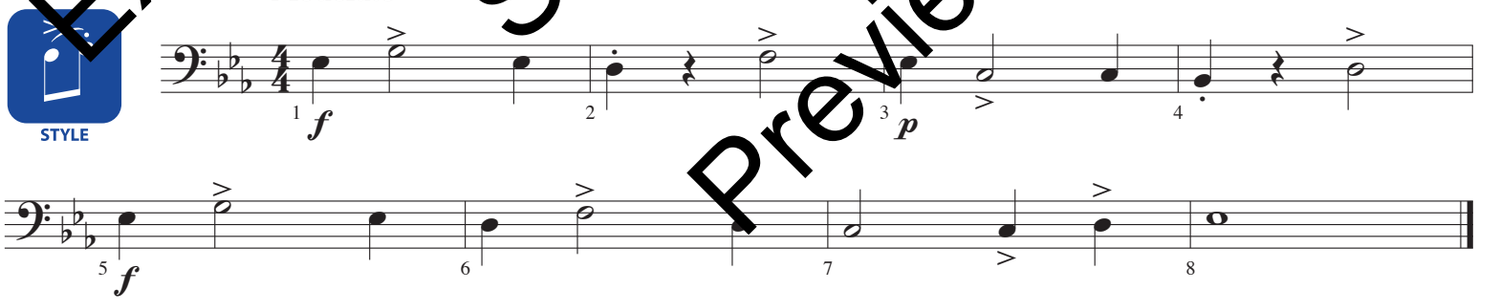

MASTERY

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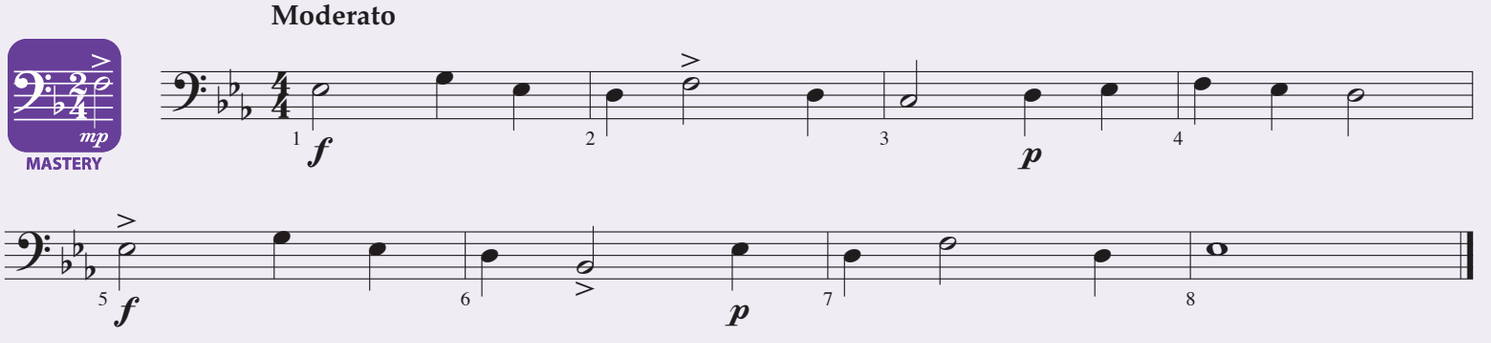

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Sample Unit 1
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MASTERY 1

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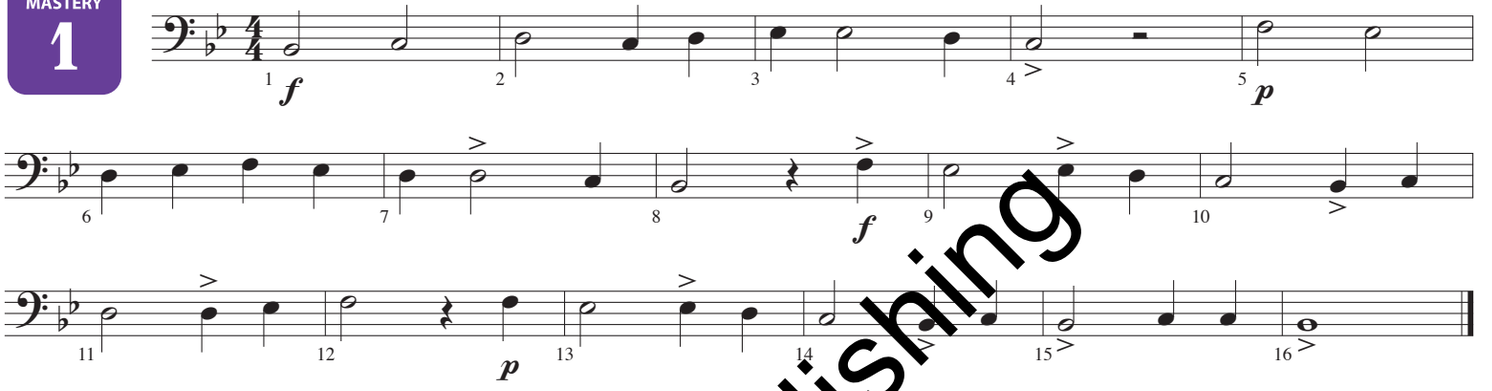

MASTERY 2

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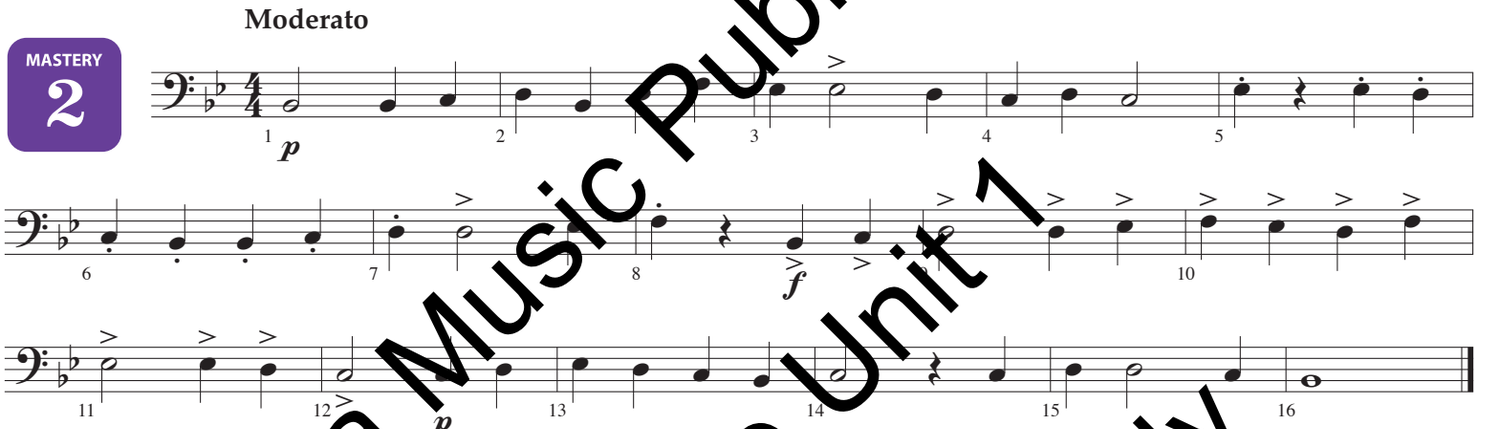

MASTERY 3

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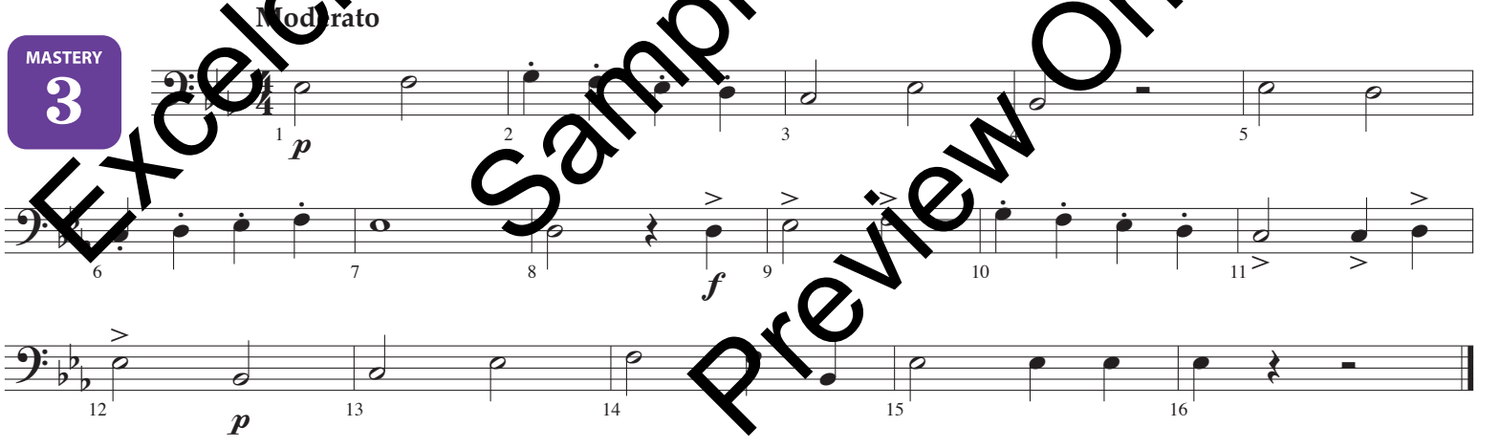

MASTERY 4

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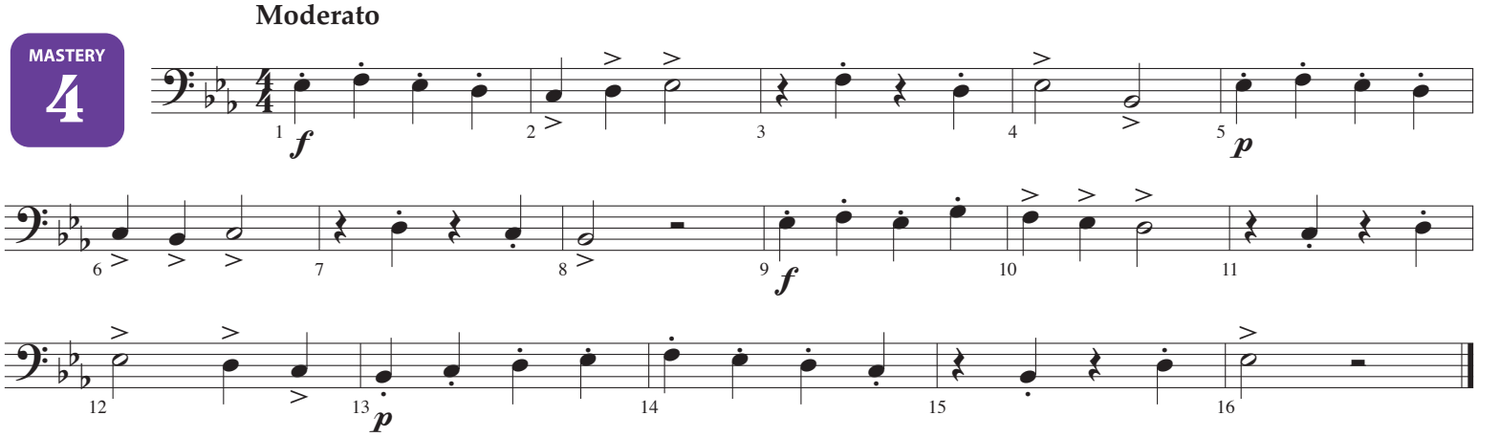

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Sample Unit 1
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