

Sight Reading For Bass

Rhythm Studies - Eighth & Sixteenth Notes

By Cliff Engel

If you take an analytical approach to sight reading standard notation and break it down into its fundamental components, you are left with two primary variables consisting of notes and rhythms. Since there are only 12 unique pitches in the Western-based musical alphabet, memorizing their positions on the staff in the bass clef as well as on the fingerboard of your instrument is a relatively easy task. The much more challenging aspect of sight reading standard notation is experienced in learning to instantly recognize rhythms. Unlike notes where there are a relatively few number of them, the rhythmic combinations you could be potentially presented with in a piece of standard notation are practically limitless.

In this lesson, we will work through a collection of rhythm studies exercises comprised of eighth and sixteenth note combinations in an effort to increase the proficiency of your rhythmic recognition skills when sight reading standard notation for bass. Since the principal goal of this lesson is to improve rhythmic acuity as it pertains to sight reading, these rhythm studies exercises have been notated using rhythmic notation. This is the type of notation that a drummer would be required to read in a percussion-related chart.

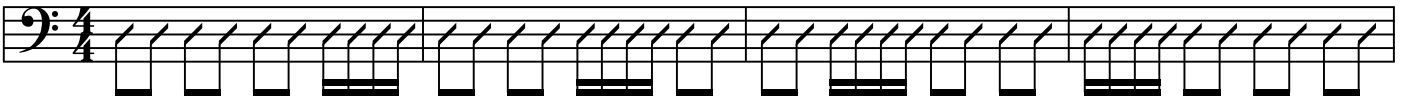
Initially, you won't need your bass to practice rhythm studies. Because we are focusing on rhythmic recognition independent of note recognition, we are not concerned with notes. In fact, specific notes will be completely irrelevant when working with rhythm studies. To acquire maximum results from these exercises, simply begin by clapping through these rhythms at a tempo that is as slow as you need it to be in order to play the rhythms perfectly in time without making any errors and then increase the tempo accordingly.

Be sure to practice all of these rhythms against the steady, even pulse of a metronome or drum machine. Begin with a tempo that is slow enough to minimize mistakes but at the same time is fast enough to push you and create a challenge. From there, gradually increase the tempo. Because this lesson is quite lengthy, I would recommend breaking down these examples into smaller sections to make them more manageable. At first, try to play through these rhythms in one, two, four, eight, and twelve bar segments without pausing. Eventually, your goal should be to play through complete pages in their entirety without stopping due to a mistake. If any errors occur, stop and correct them before proceeding, and if you are having a particularly difficult time with a measure, decrease the tempo significantly so that you don't allow yourself to become frustrated and continue to reinforce bad habits through inaccuracy. Most musicians will overlook the significance of elemental exercises like these and rush through them in a sloppy fashion in order to get to more advanced material, but don't sacrifice accuracy for speed because this will be counterproductive to our long term goals. The best sight readers can be presented with standard notation, sight read that material perfectly on the first take, and make their performance sound like a prepared piece of music that they have been playing for years.

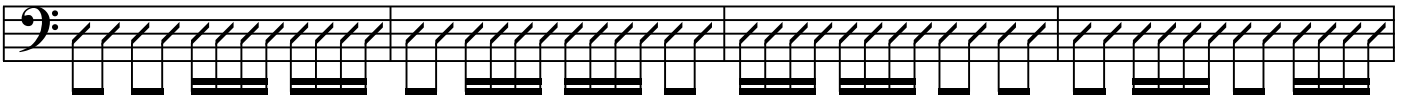
After you feel comfortable with these rhythms and can clap through them flawlessly, apply them to your bass by simply choosing any single note or combination of notes on your instrument and then allow those notes of your choice to sound for the durations that are indicated in the rhythmic notation of these rhythm studies exercises. Any note on the fingerboard or even any open string can be utilized to complete these exercises. Again, start at a slow tempo and then gradually build from there. If any of the exercises seem easy, simply increase the tempo. With all the rhythmic variability possible, no matter how fast you can read through these rhythms error-free, you can always improve your rhythmic recognition skills and heighten the degree of difficulty by increasing the tempo. Becoming a proficient sight reader of standard notation on an advanced level is a process that takes dedication and time. This isn't a subject area that anyone is going to have completely mastered within just a couple weeks or even a couple months.

Although these exercises may seem somewhat dry, great strides can be made in your ability to sight read standard notation over a relatively short span of time by concentrating on these basic rhythmic recognition exercises. By becoming a proficient sight reader, you will see your options as a working bassist increase exponentially because you will be able to more effectively communicate with other musicians. There are so many gigs available which require the ability to read standard notation. Whether your goal is to become a commercial session bassist, a member of the college jazz ensemble, bass chair of the local symphony orchestra, play in the school musical, or provide support in your community church, becoming a proficient sight reader will only increase your opportunities and chances of obtaining these gigs. Not only does being able to sight read greatly increase your value as an in-demand bass player, but as an additional benefit, it also makes your practice sessions much more productive since you are able to use that time more efficiently and cover more material.

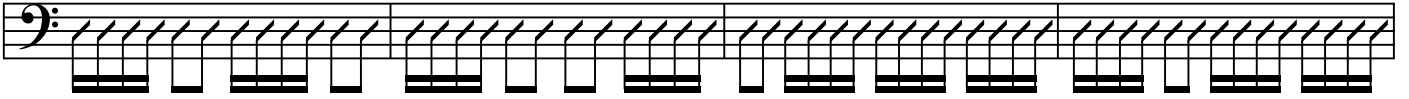
1



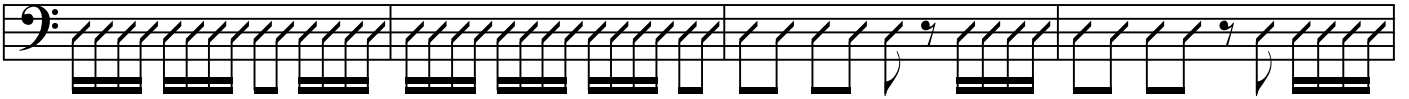
5



9



13



17



21



25



29



33



37



121



125



129



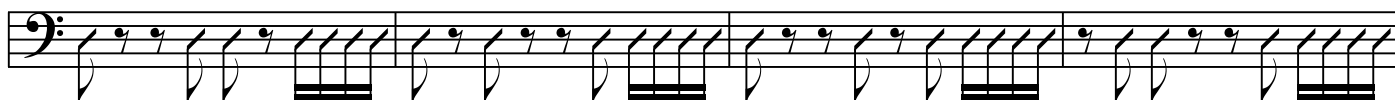
133



137



141



145



149



153



157



161



165



169



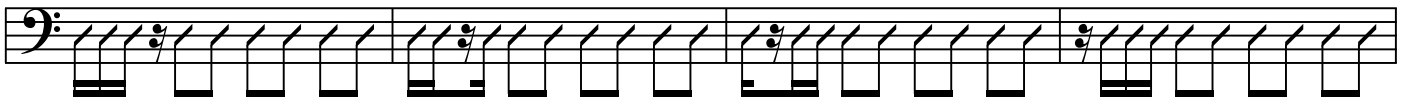
173



177



181



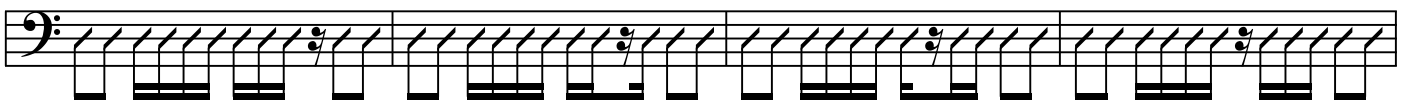
185



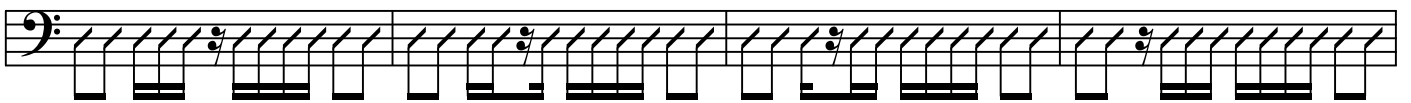
189



193



197



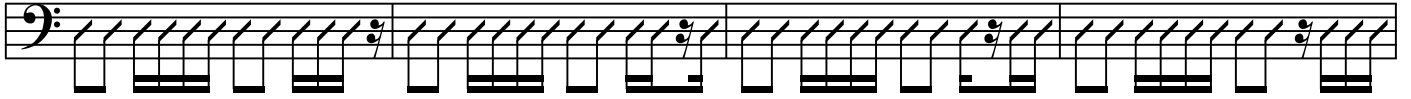
201



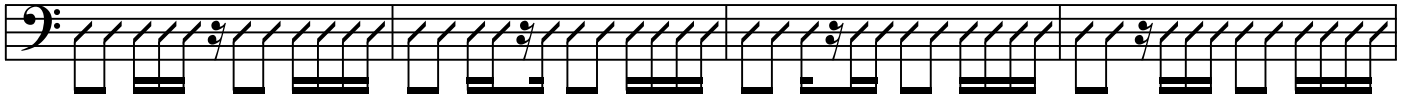
205



209



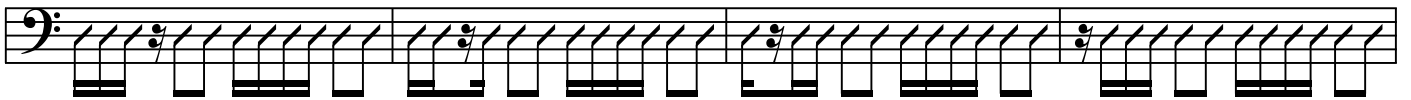
213



217



221



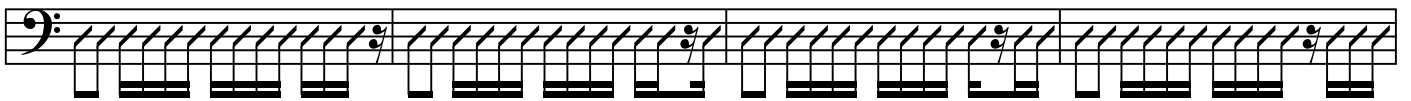
225



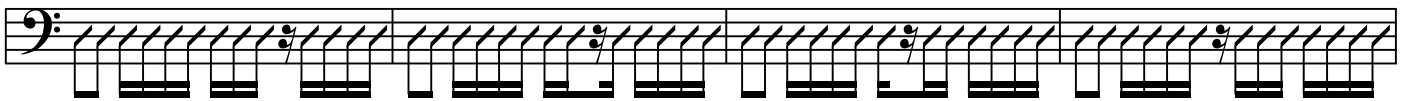
229



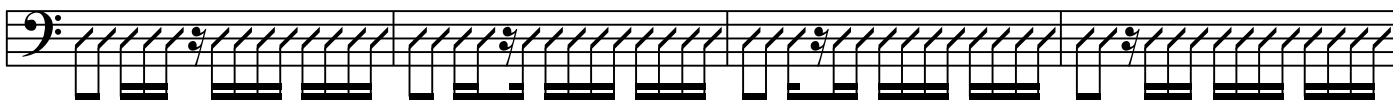
233



237



241



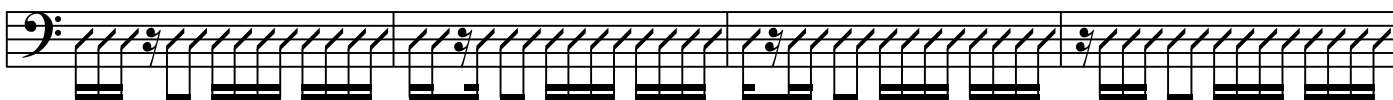
245



249



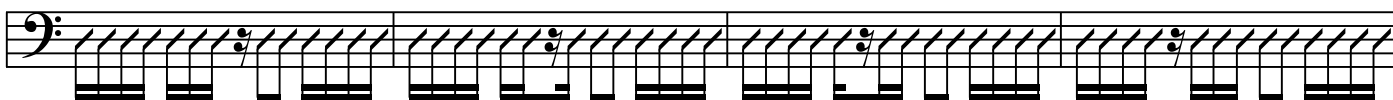
253



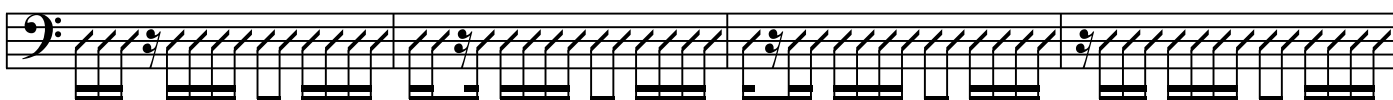
257



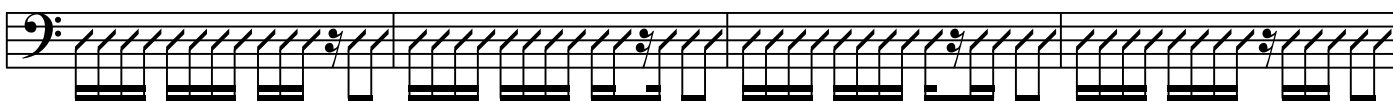
261



265



269



273



277



281



285



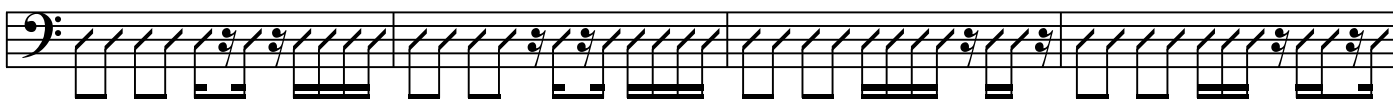
289



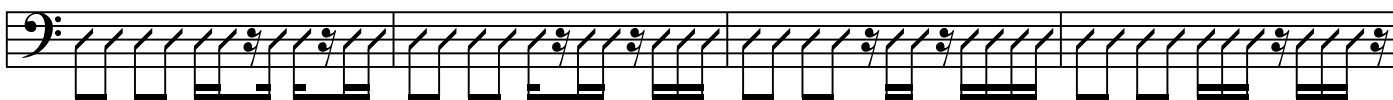
293



297



301



305



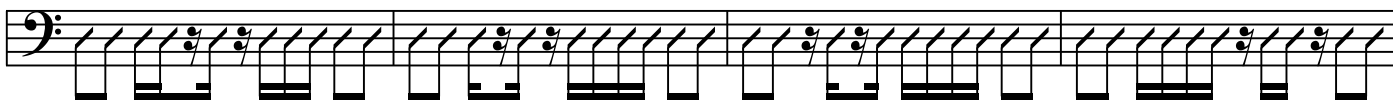
309



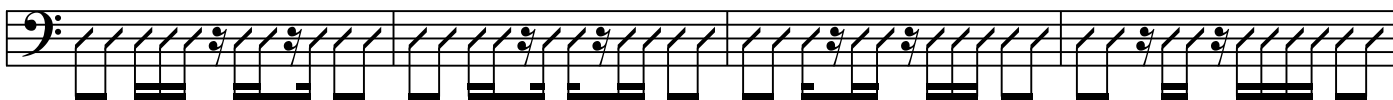
313



317



321



325



329



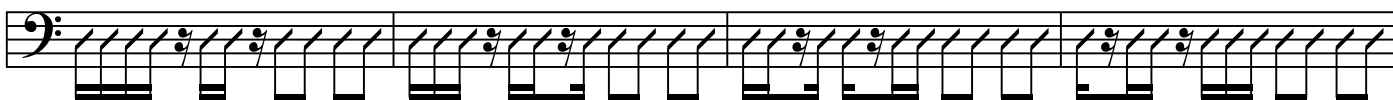
333



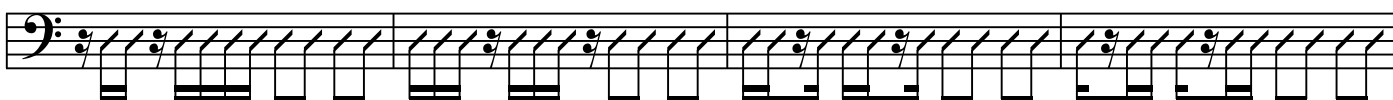
337



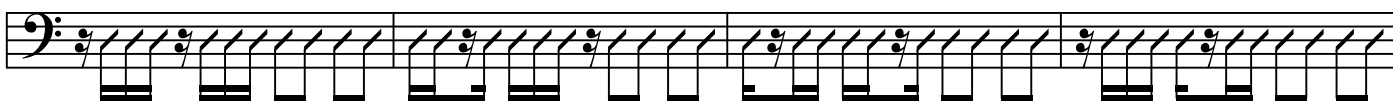
341



345



349



353



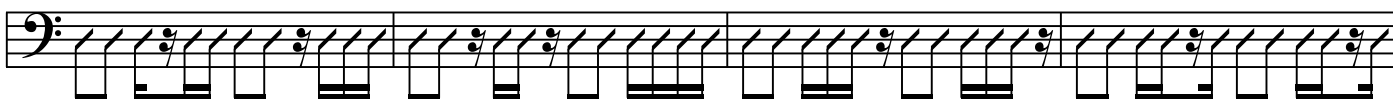
357



361



365



369



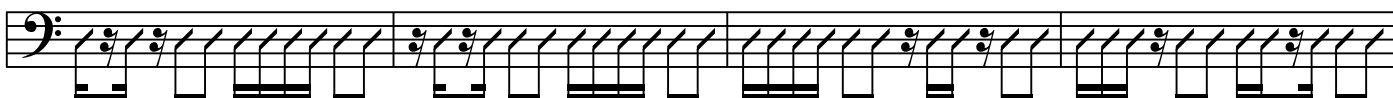
373



377



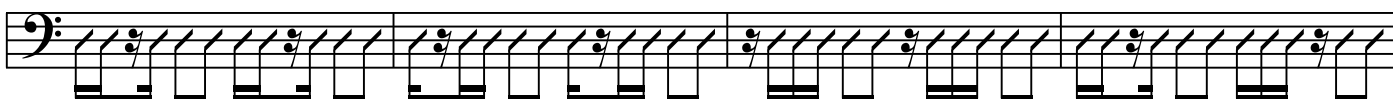
381



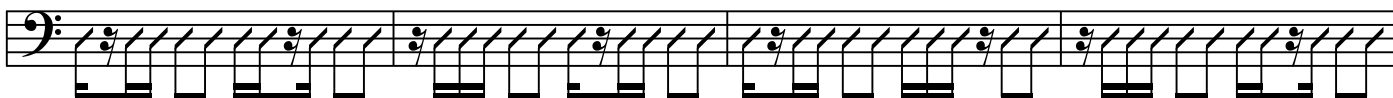
385



389



393



397



401



405



409



413



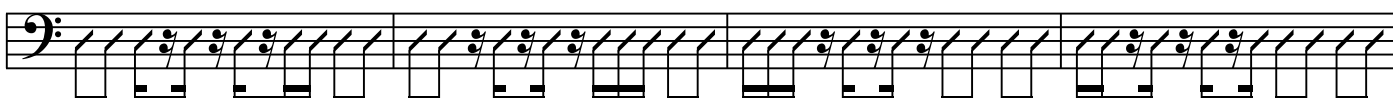
417



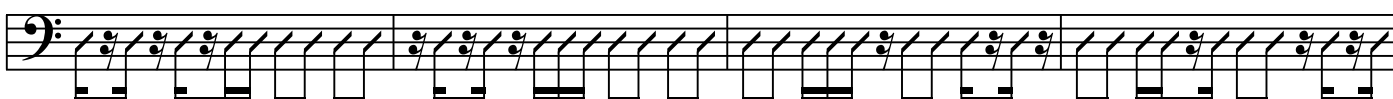
421



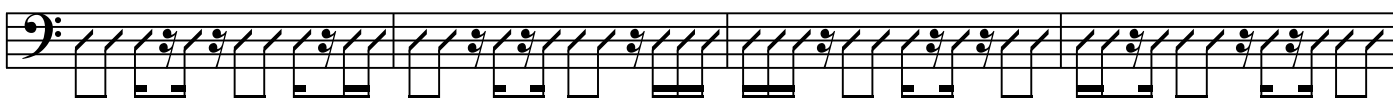
425



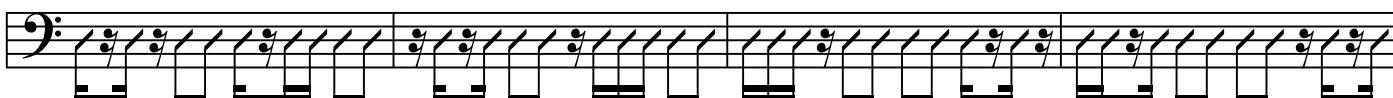
429



433



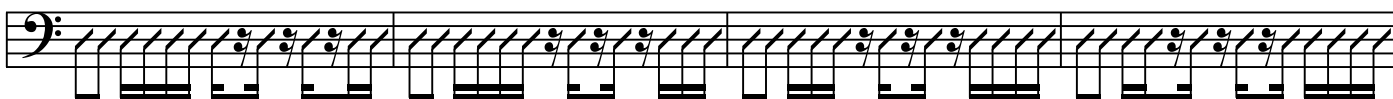
437



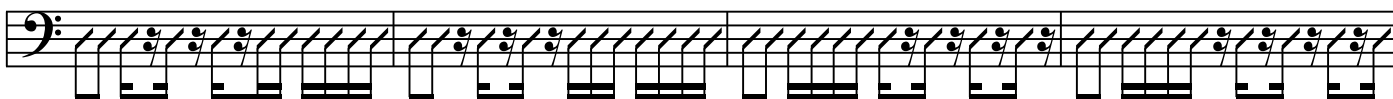
441



445



449



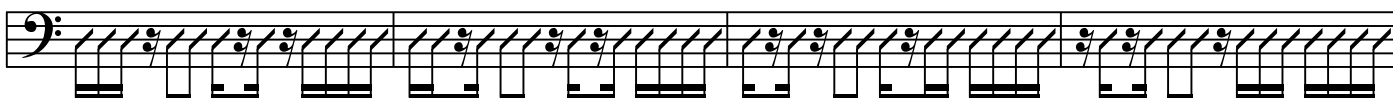
453



457



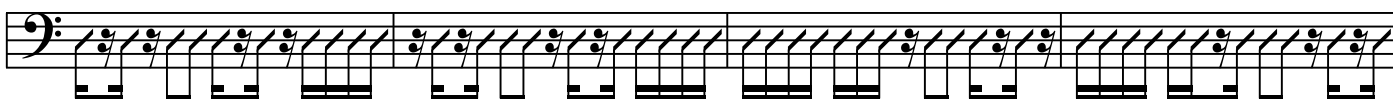
461



465



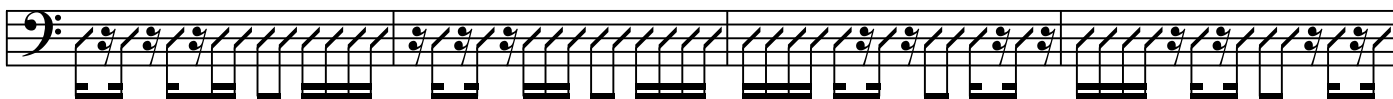
469



473



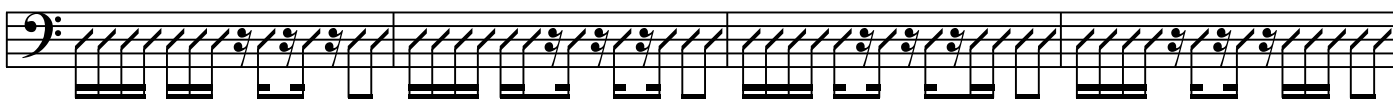
477



481



485



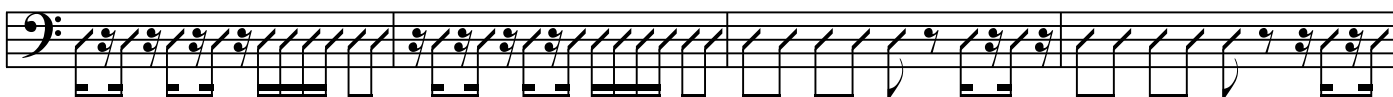
489



493



497



501



505



509



513



517



521



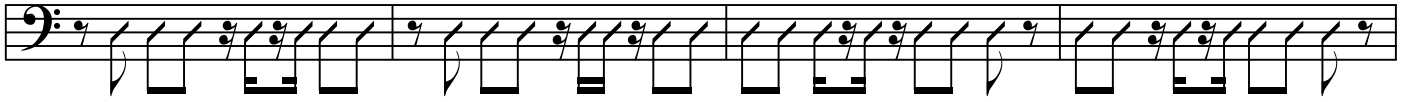
525



529



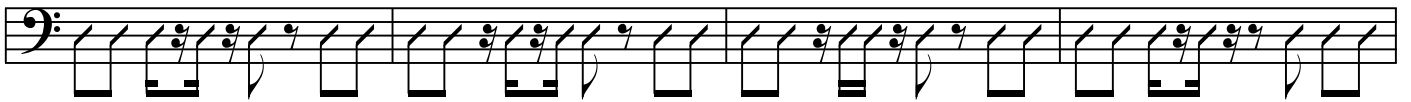
533



537



541



545



549



553



557



561



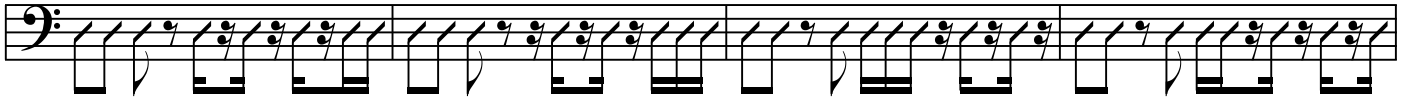
565



569



573



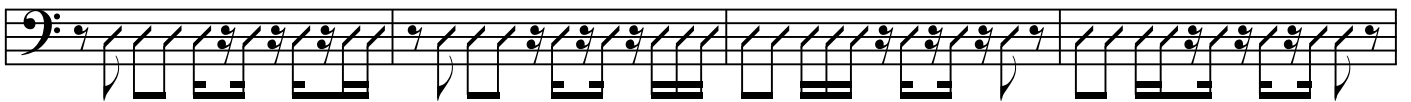
577



581



585



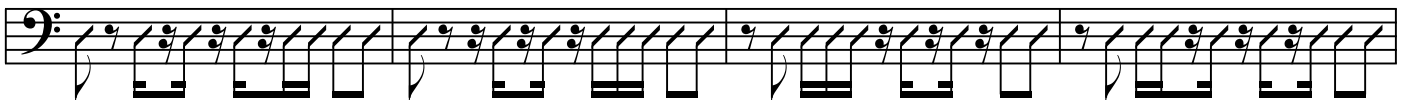
589



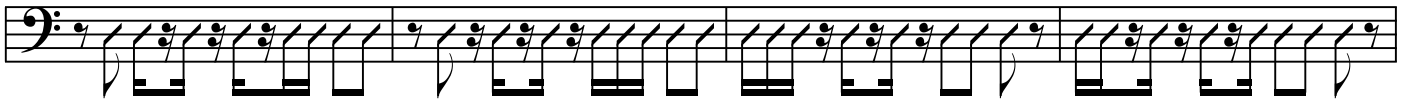
593



597



601



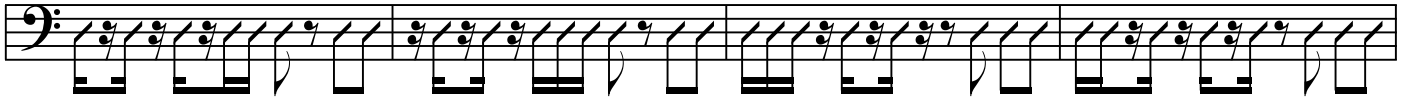
605



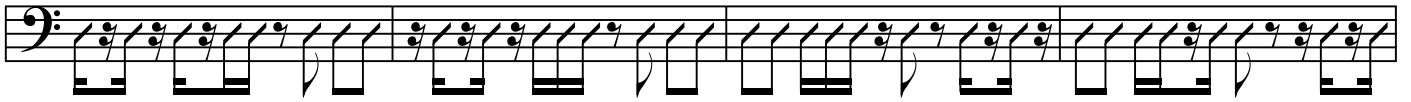
609



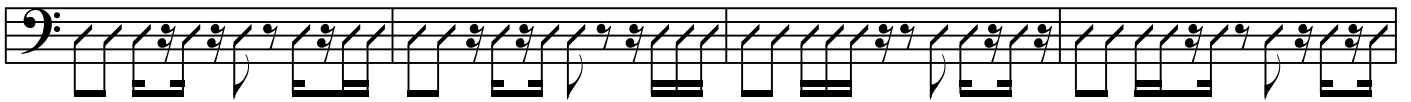
613



617



621



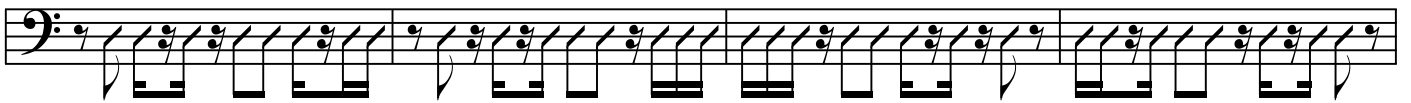
625



629



633



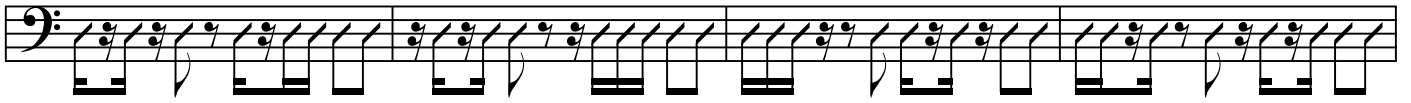
637



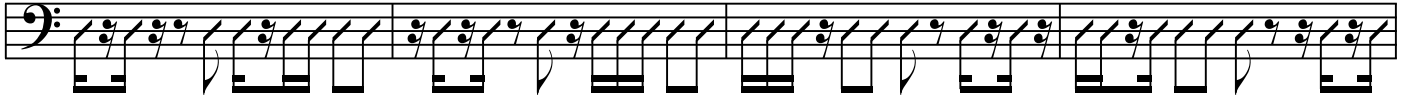
641



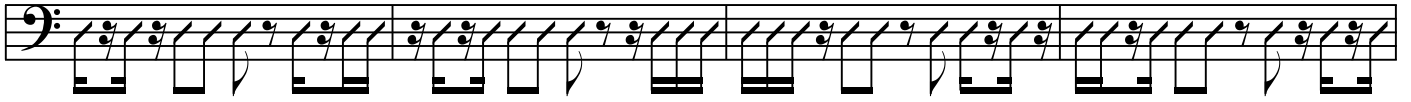
645



649



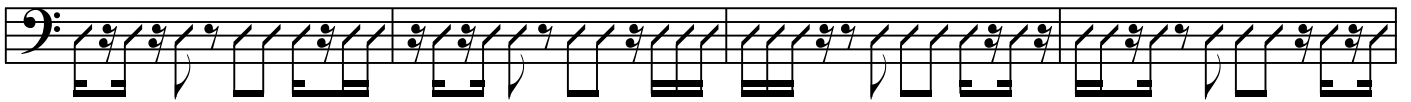
653



657



661



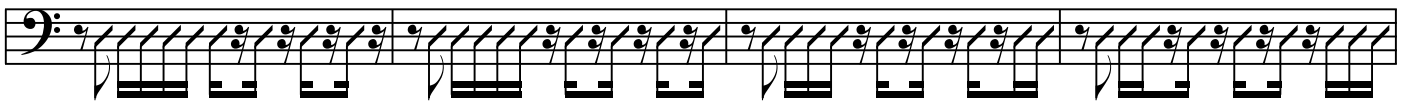
665



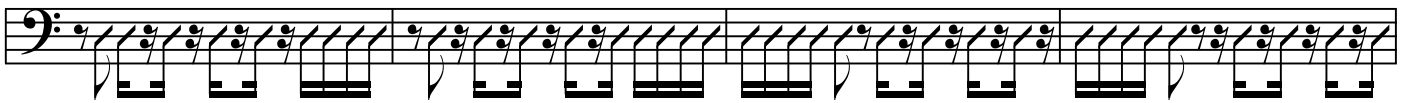
669



673



677



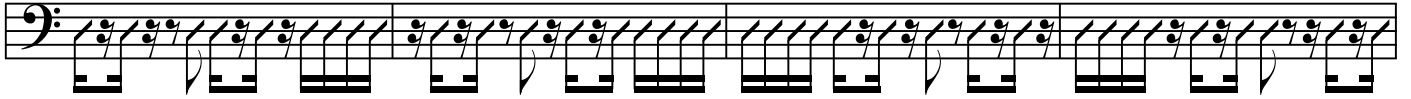
681



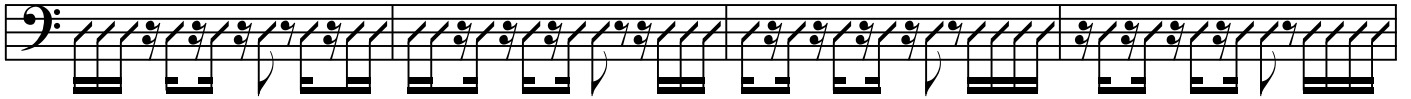
685



689



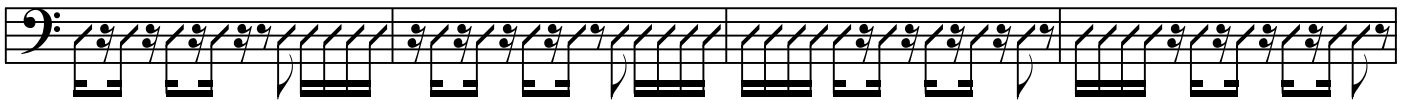
693



697



701



705



709



713



717



721



725



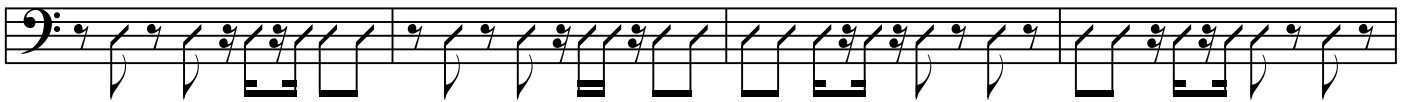
729



733



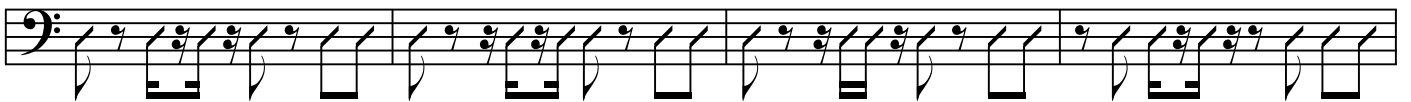
737



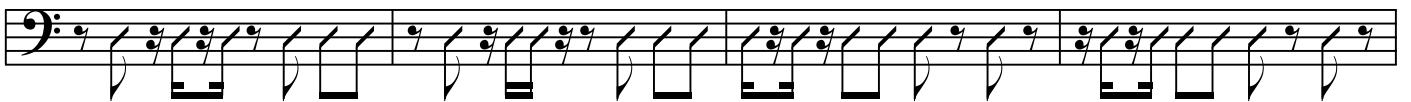
741



745



749



753



757



761



765



769



773



777



781



785



789



793



797



801



805



809



813



817



821



825



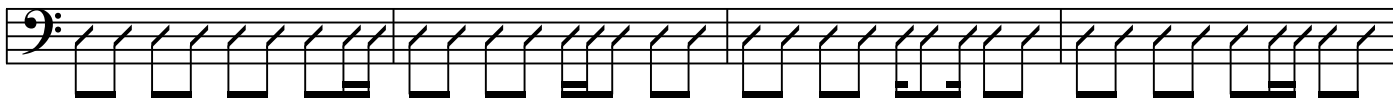
829



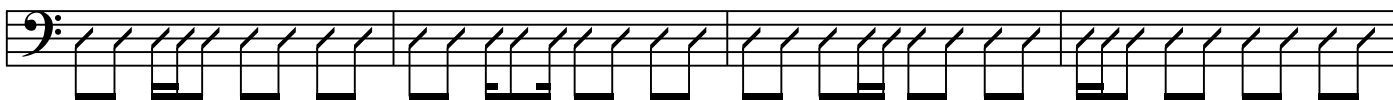
833



837



841



845



849



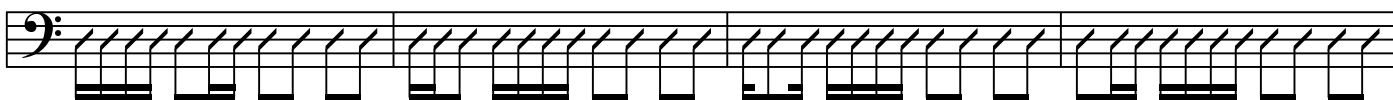
853



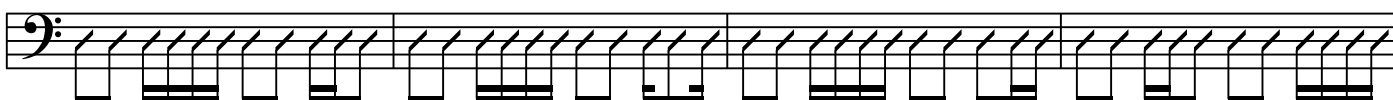
857



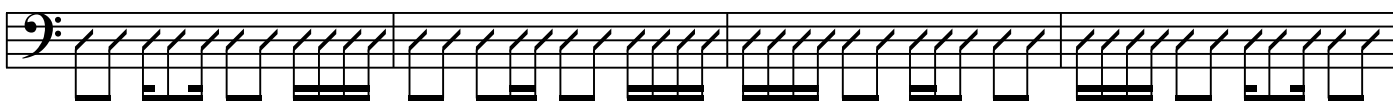
861



865



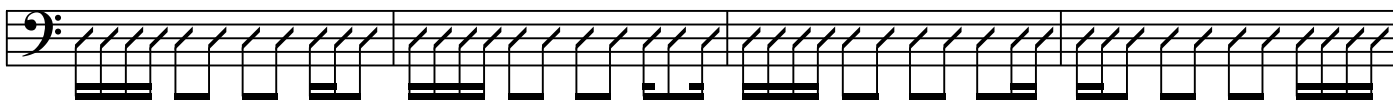
869



873



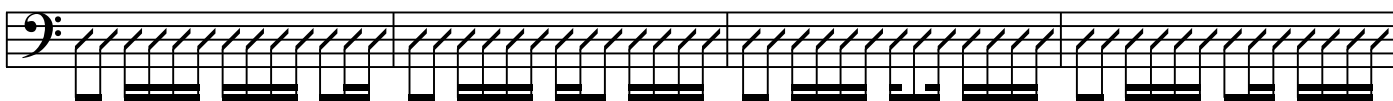
877



881



885



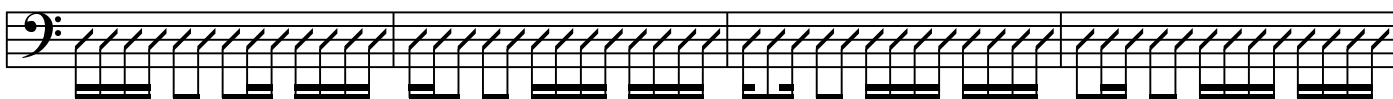
889



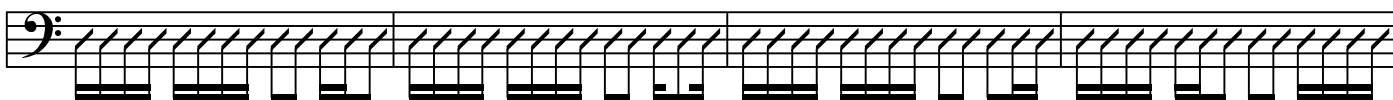
893



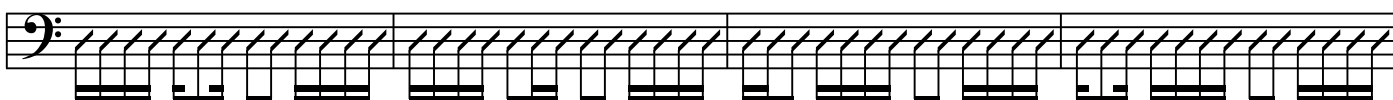
897



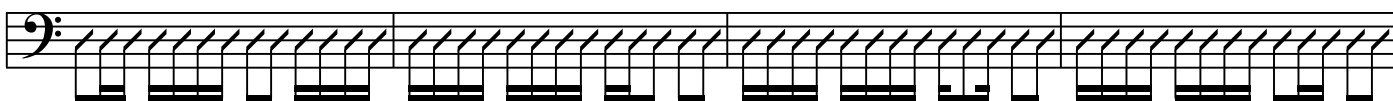
901



905



909



913



917



921



925



929



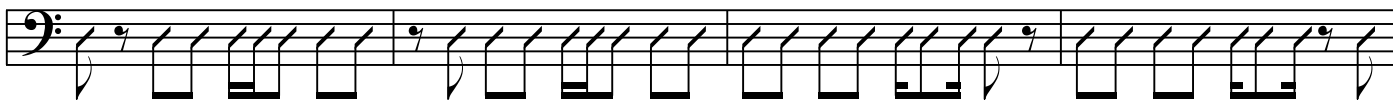
933



937



941



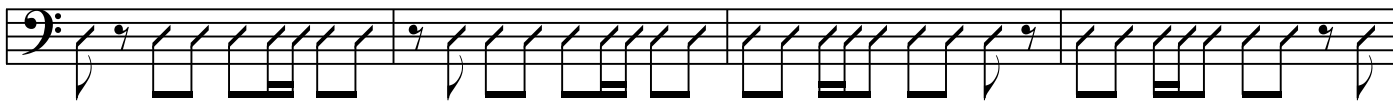
945



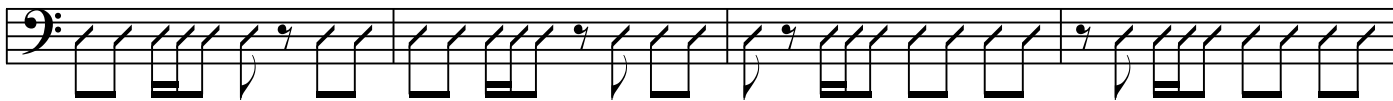
949



953



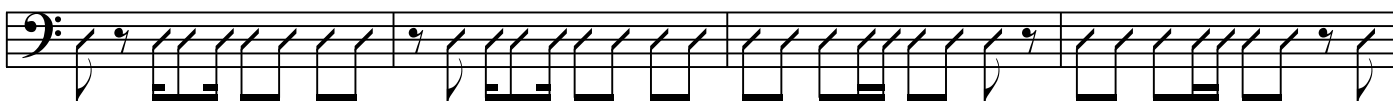
957



961



965



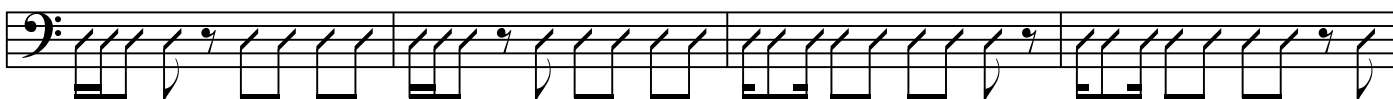
969



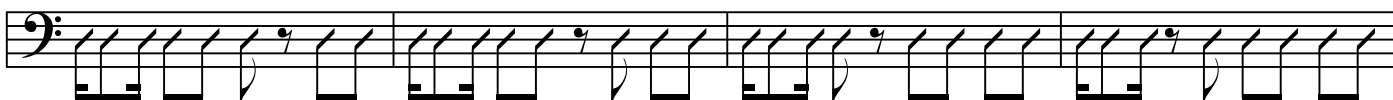
973



977



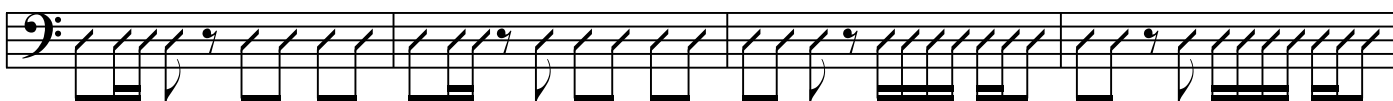
981



985



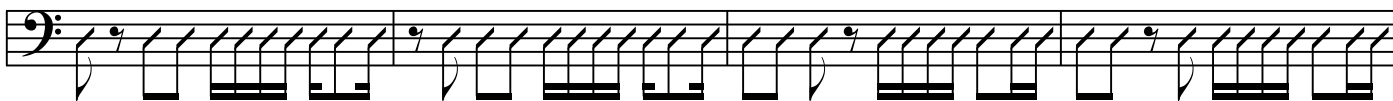
989



993



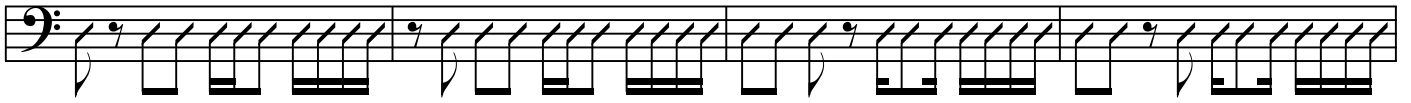
997



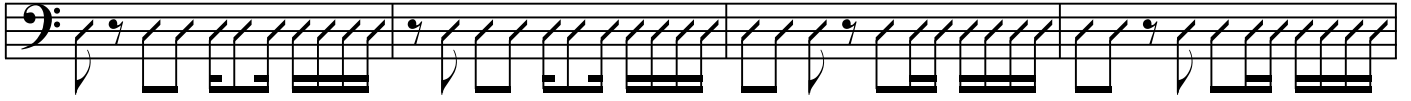
1001



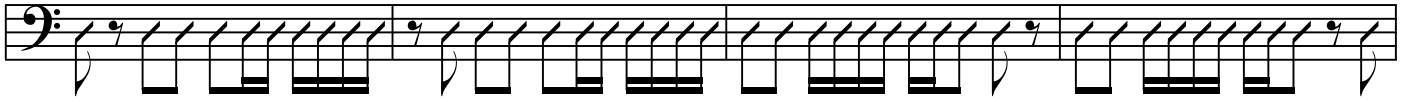
1005



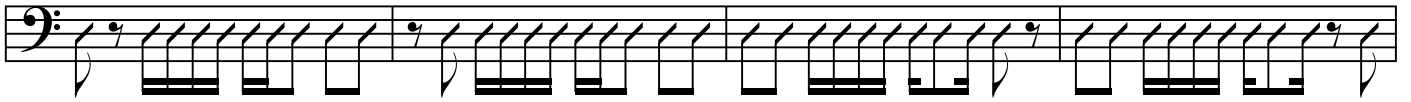
1009



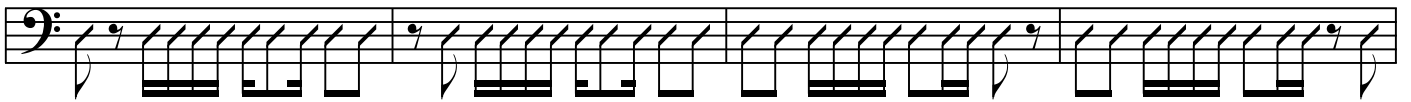
1013



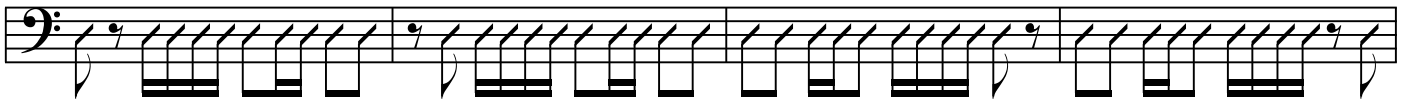
1017



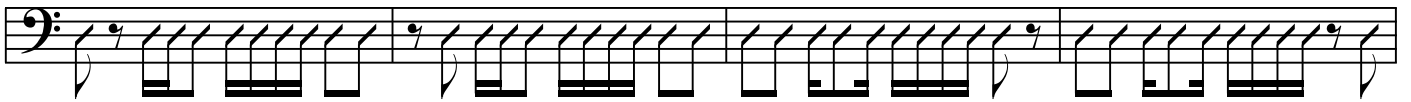
1021



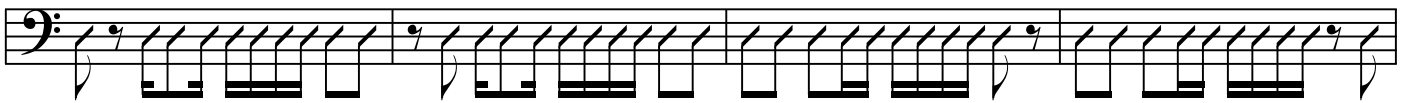
1025



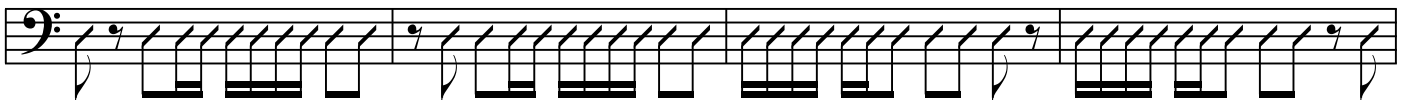
1029



1033



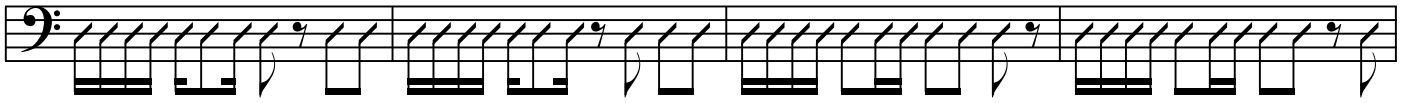
1037



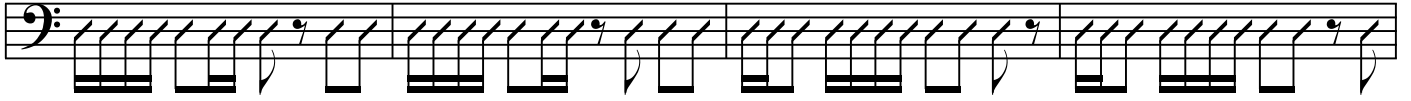
1041



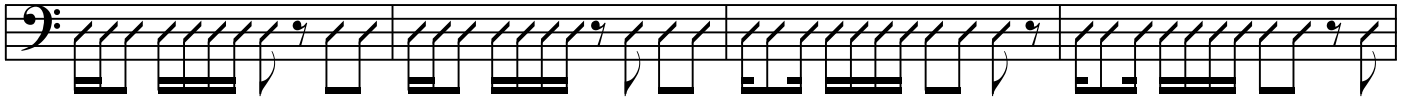
1045



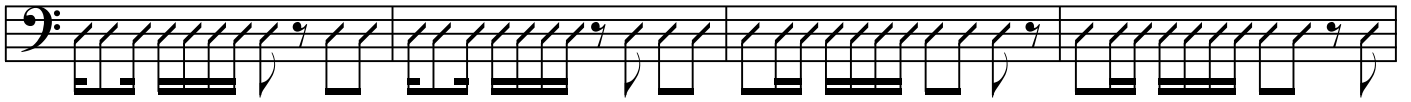
1049



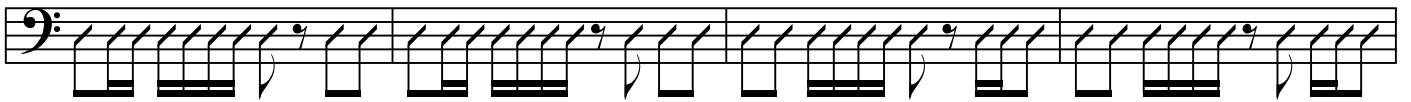
1053



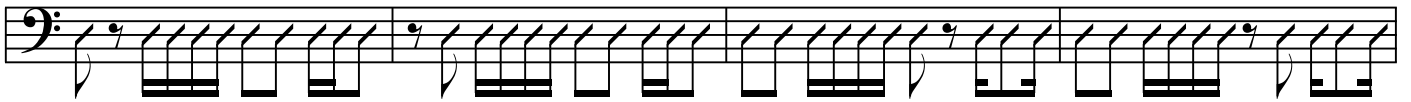
1057



1061



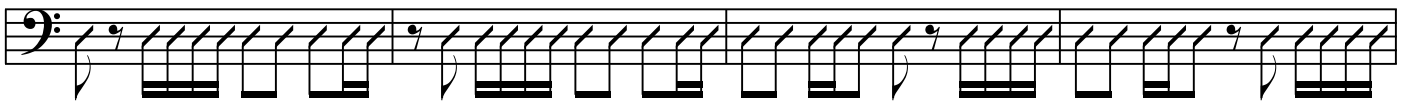
1065



1069



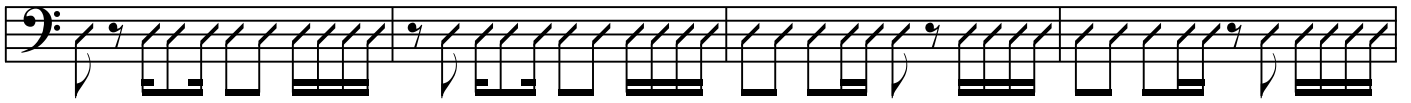
1073



1077



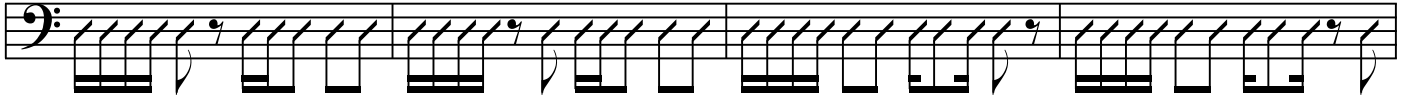
1081



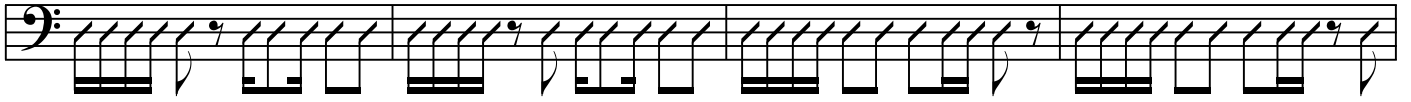
1085



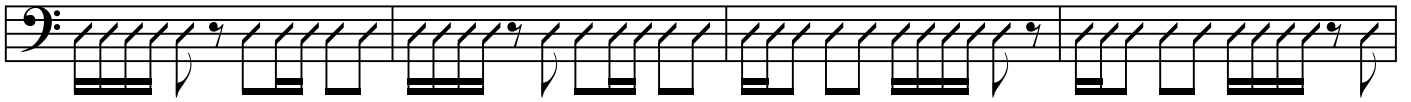
1089



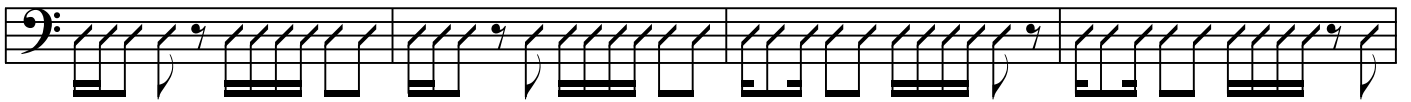
1093



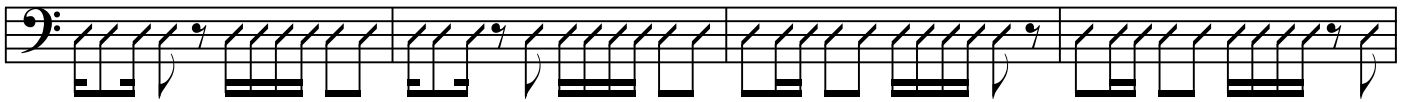
1097



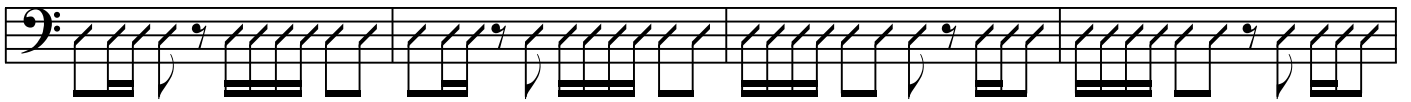
1101



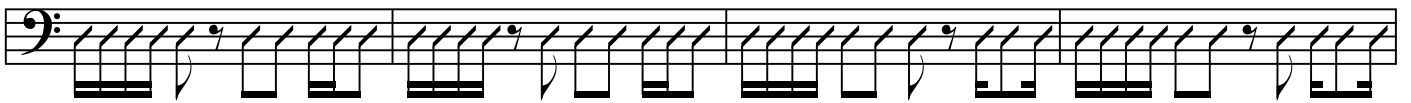
1105



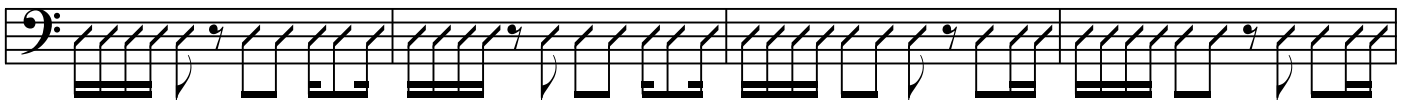
1109



1113



1117



1121



1125



1129



1133



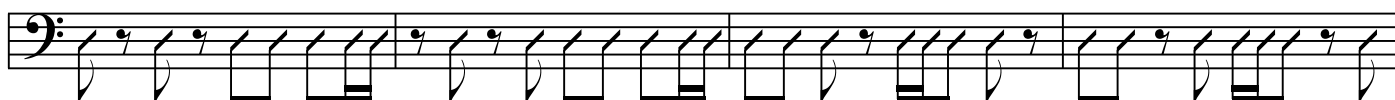
1137



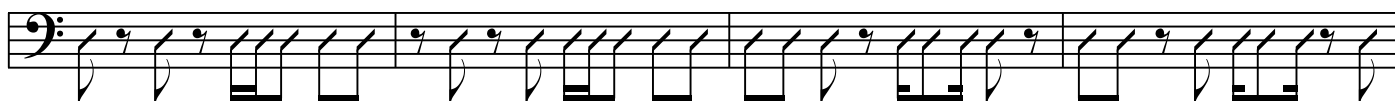
1141



1145



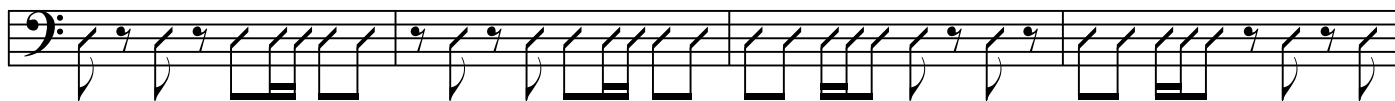
1149



1153



1157



1161



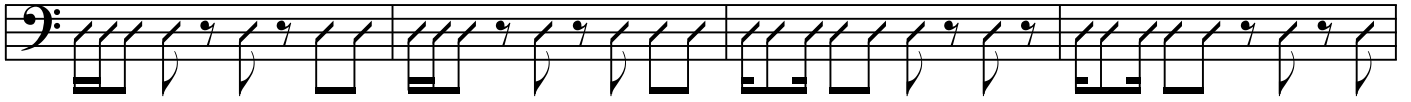
1165



1169



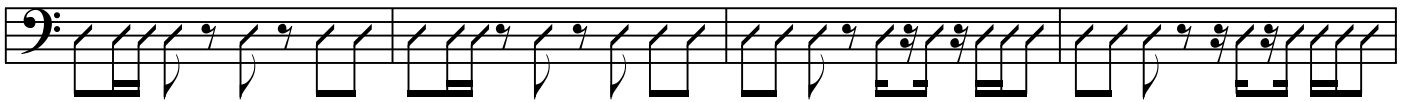
1173



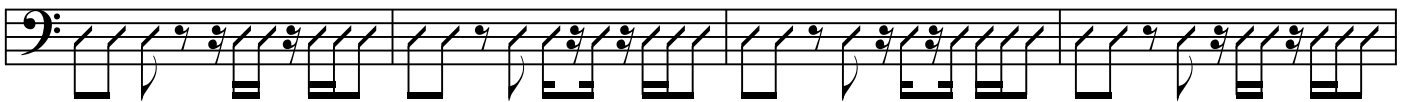
1177



1181



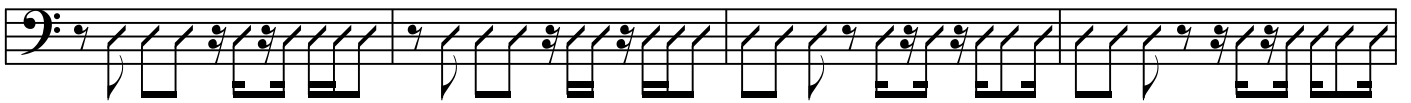
1185



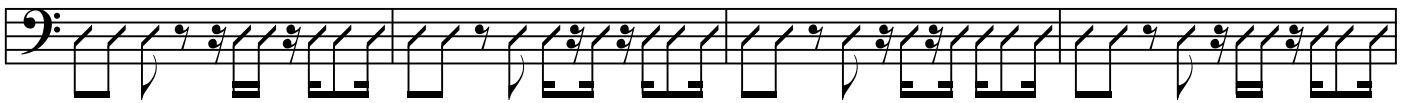
1189



1193



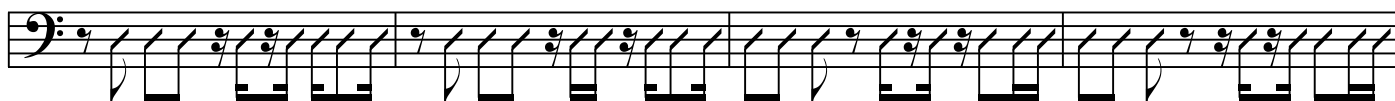
1197



1201



1205



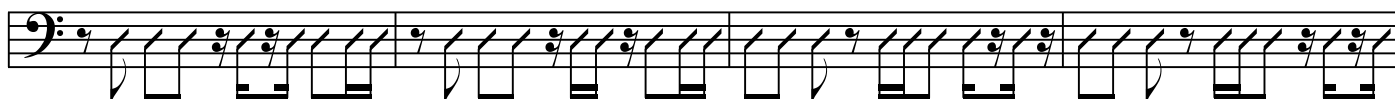
1209



1213



1217



1221



1225



1229



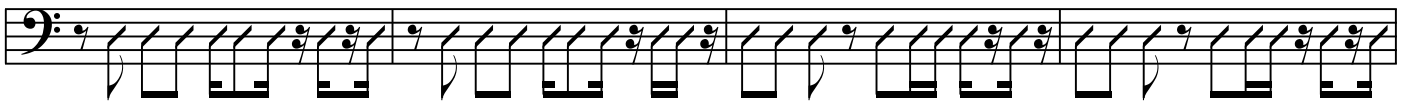
1233



1237



1241



1245



1249



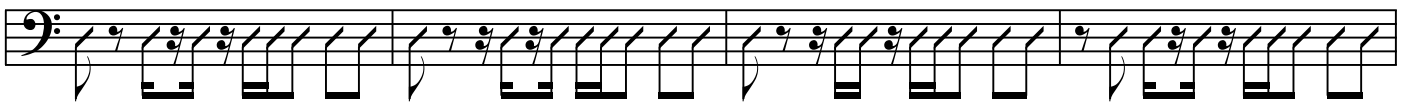
1253



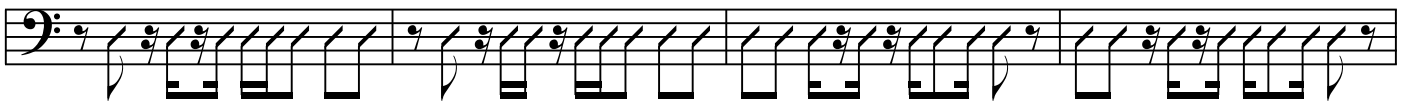
1257



1261



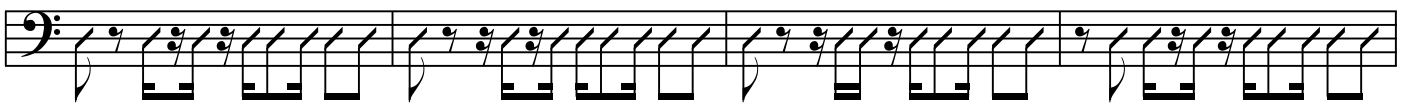
1265



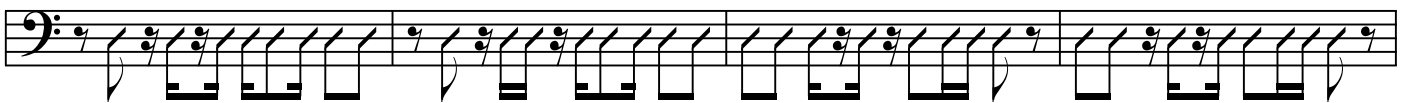
1269



1273



1277



1281



1285



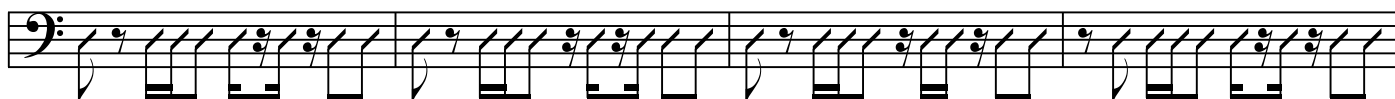
1289



1293



1297



1301



1305



1309



1313



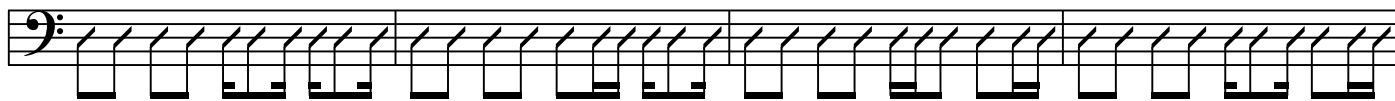
1317



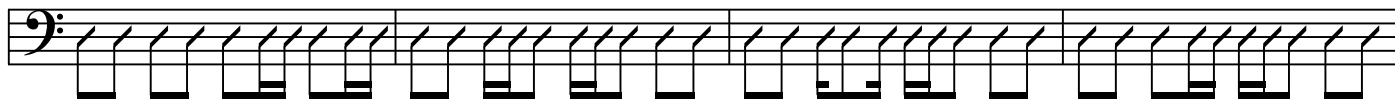
1321



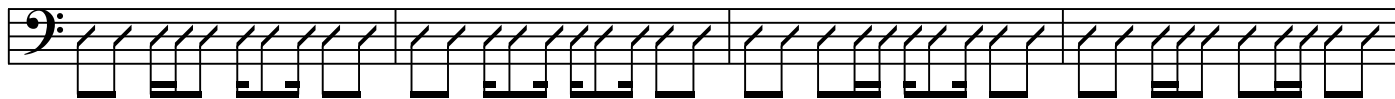
1325



1329



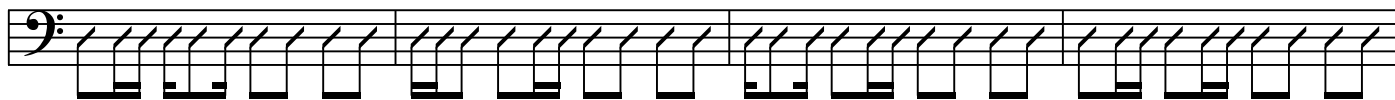
1333



1337



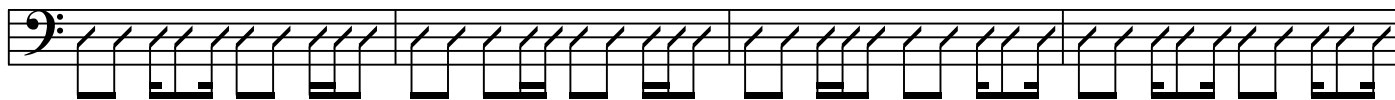
1341



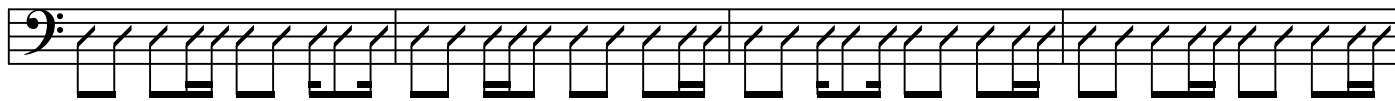
1345



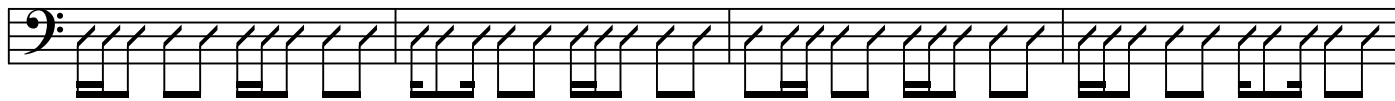
1349



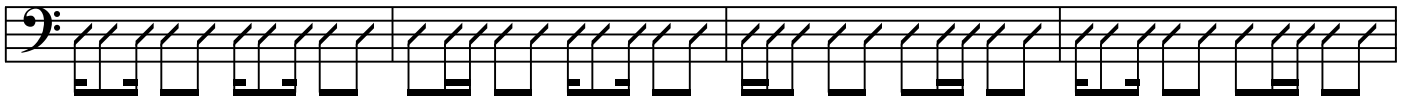
1353



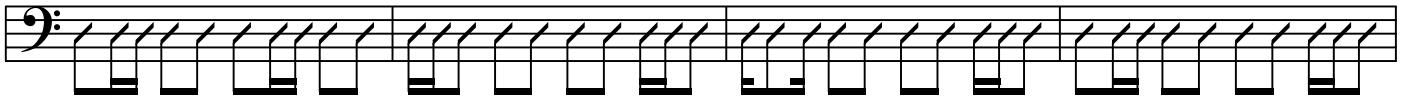
1357



1361



1365



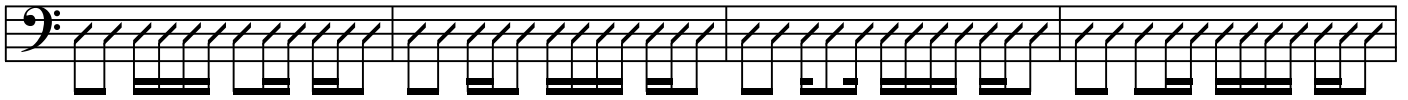
1369



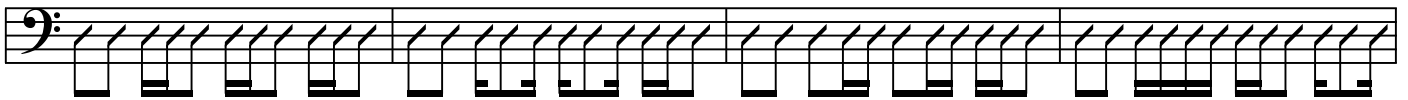
1373



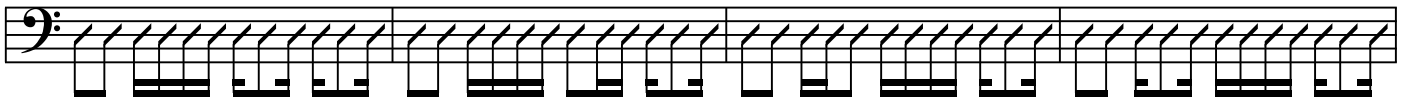
1377



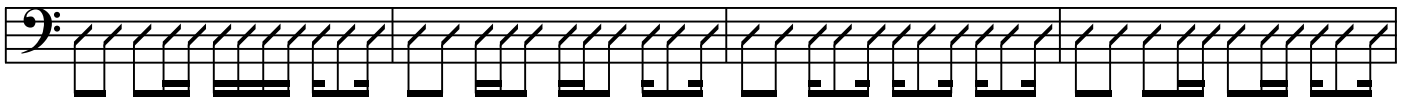
1381



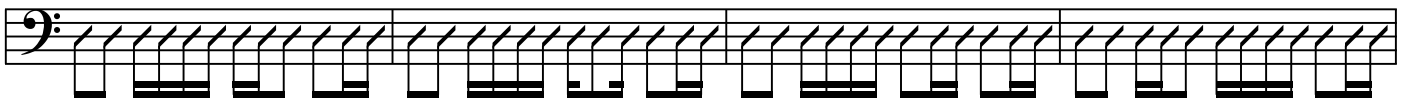
1385



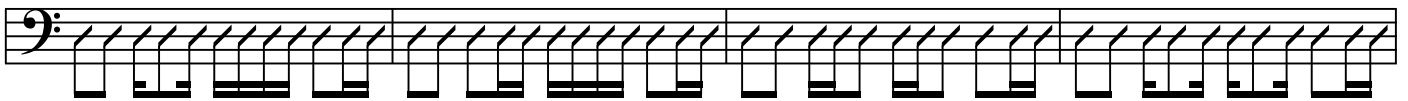
1389



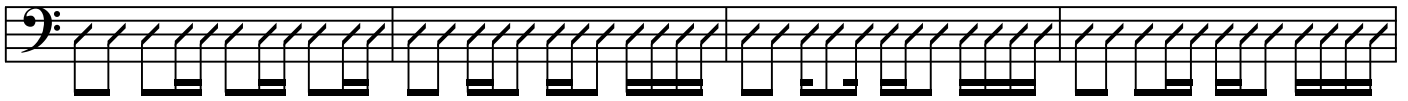
1393



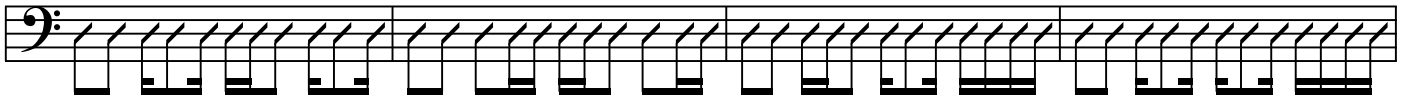
1397



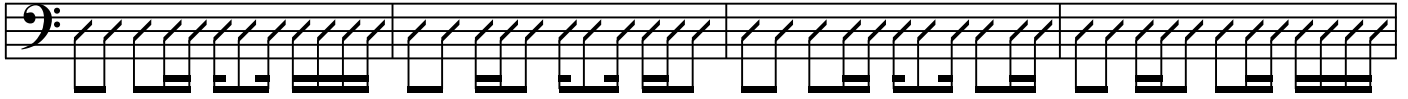
1401



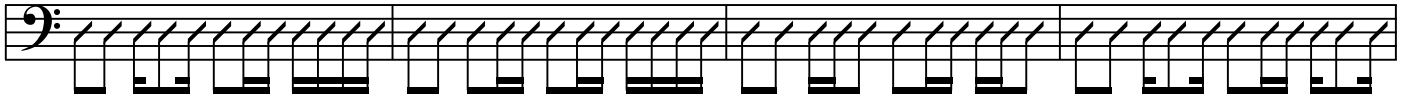
1405



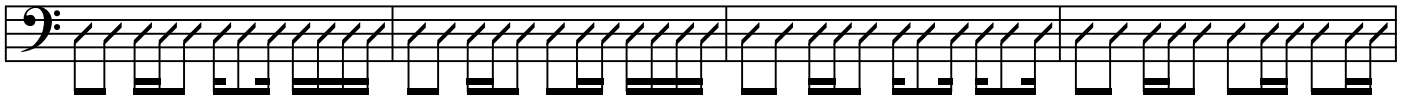
1409



1413



1417



1421



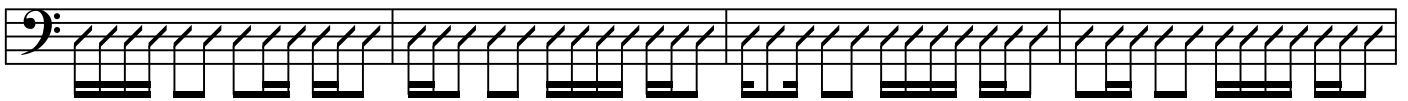
1425



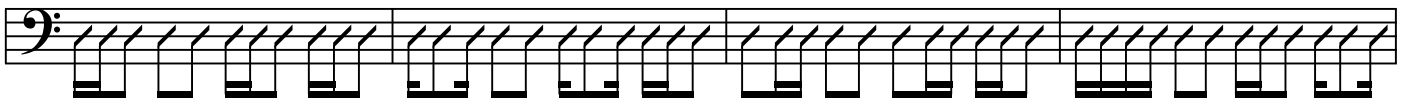
1429



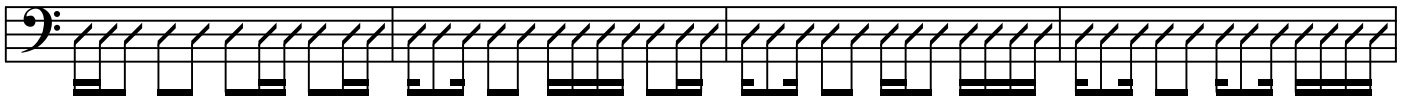
1433



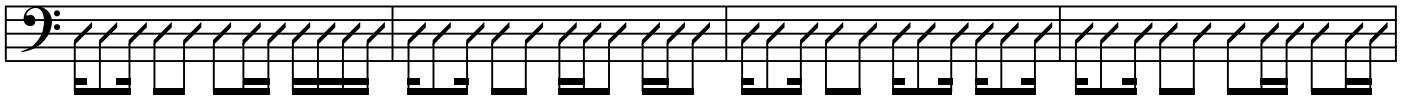
1437



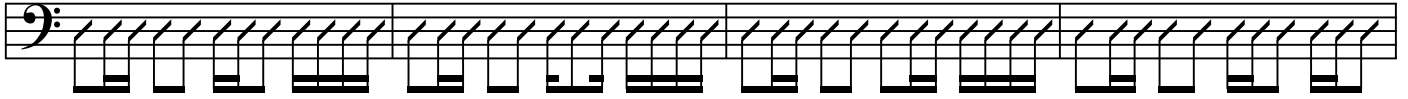
1481



1485



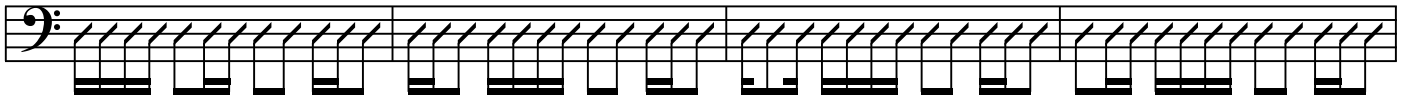
1489



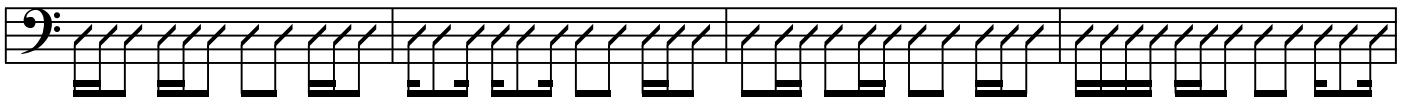
1493



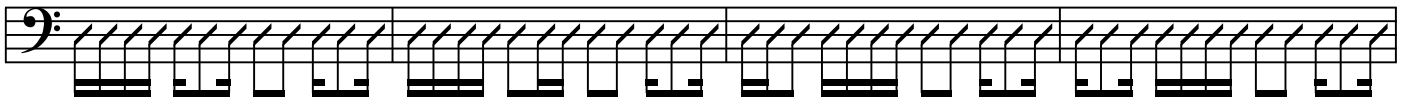
1497



1501



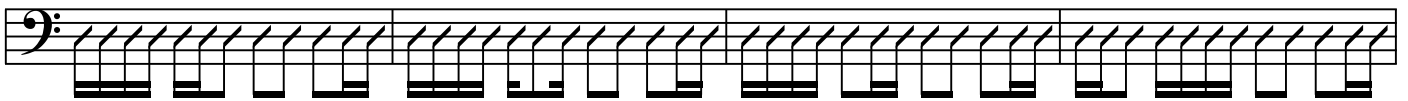
1505



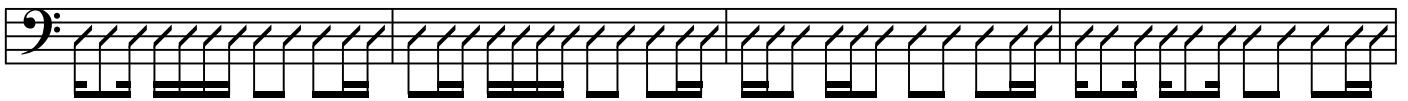
1509



1513



1517



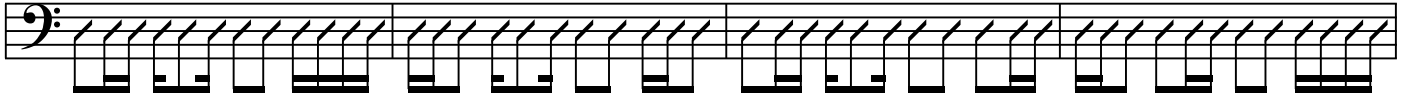
1521



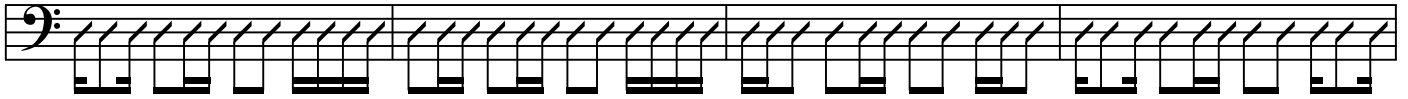
1525



1529



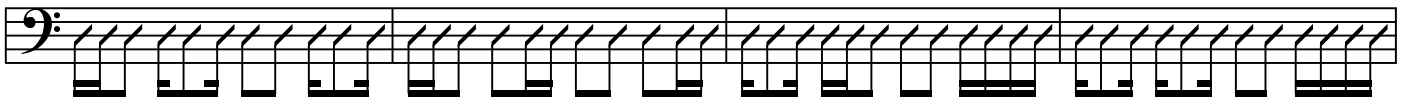
1533



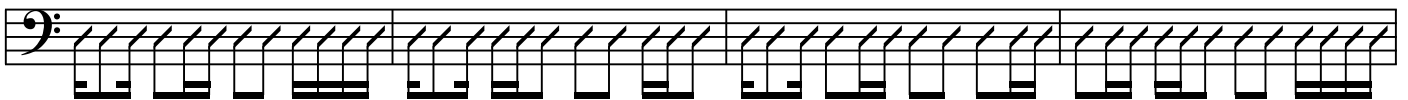
1537



1541



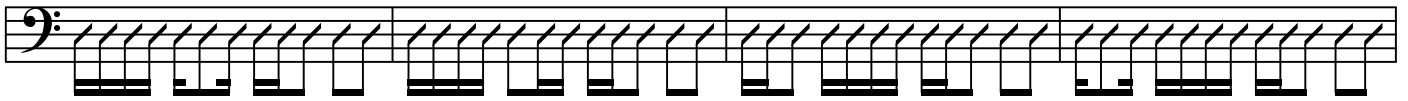
1545



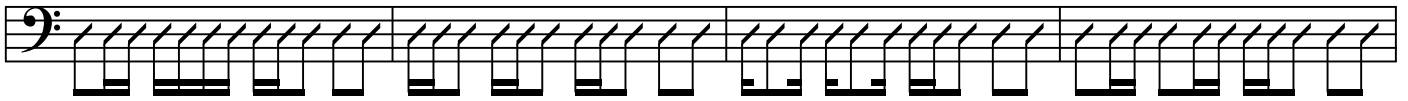
1549



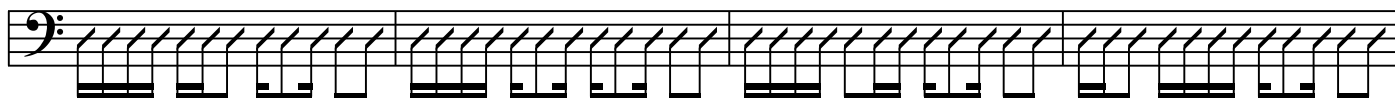
1553



1557



1561



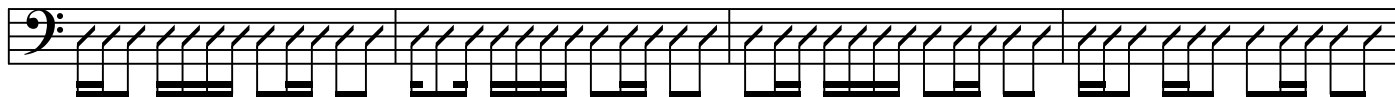
1565



1569



1573



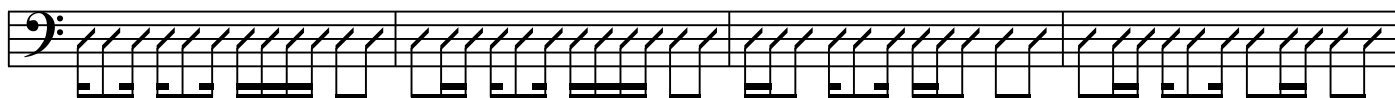
1577



1581



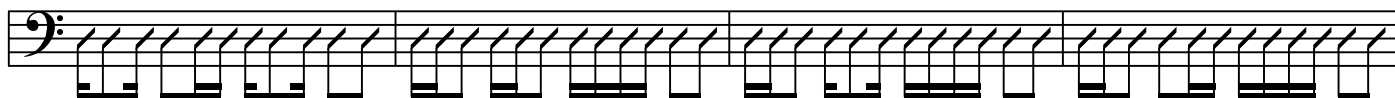
1585



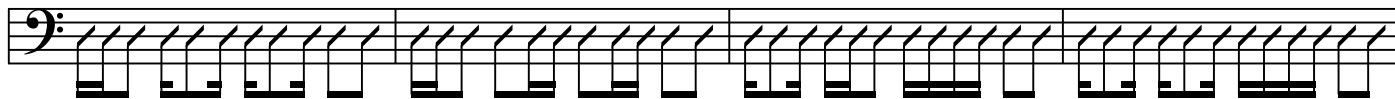
1589



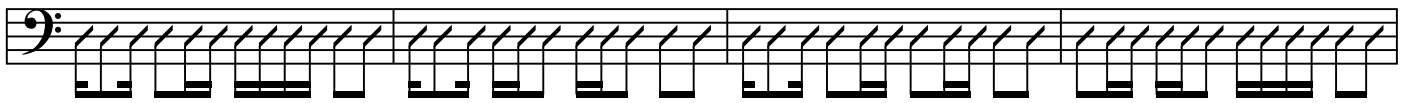
1593



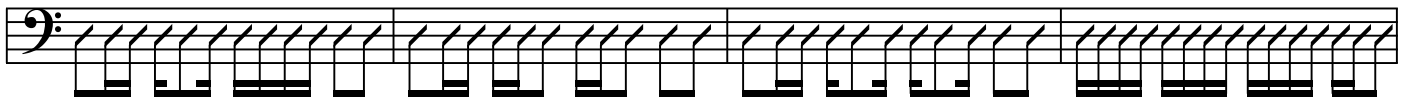
1597



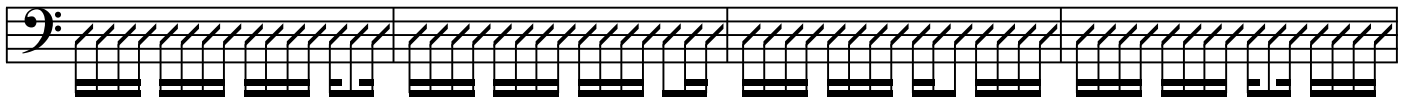
1601



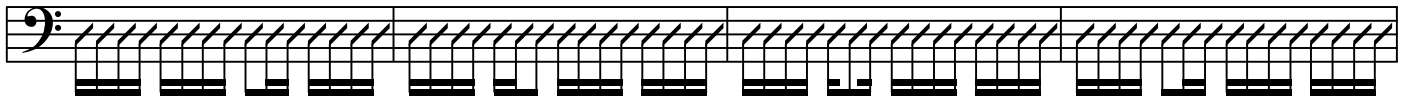
1605



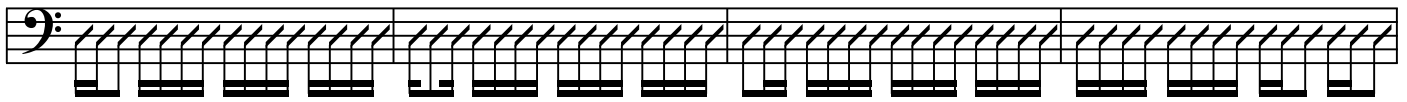
1609



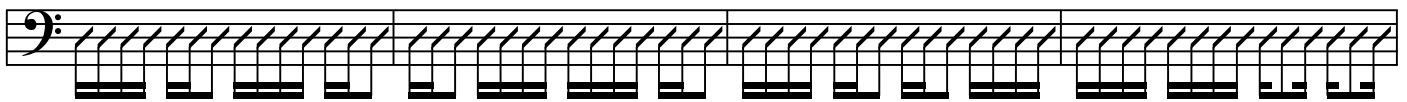
1613



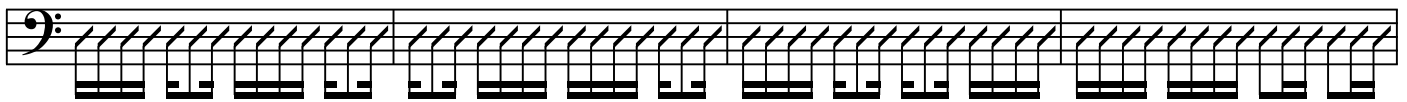
1617



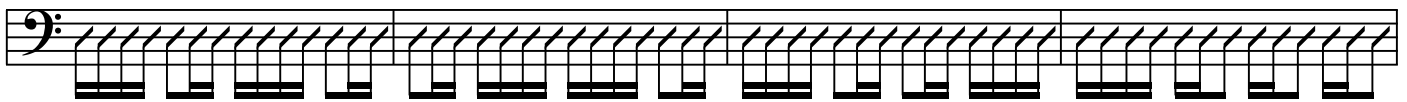
1621



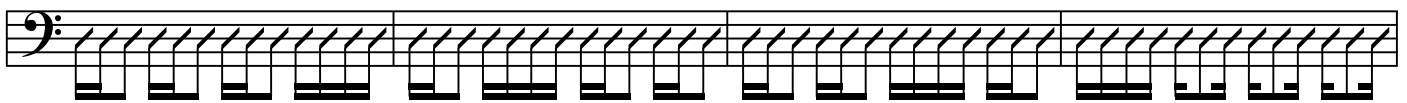
1625



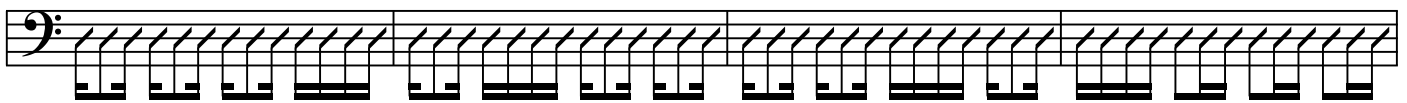
1629



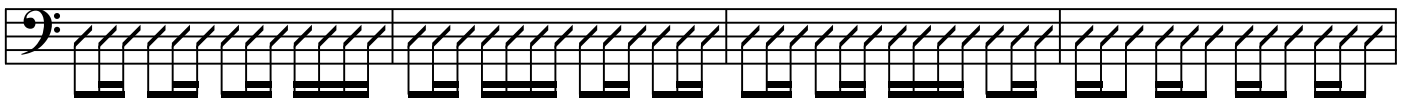
1633



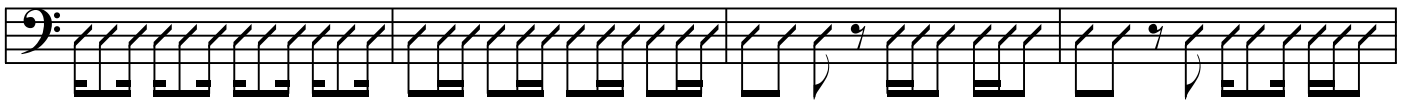
1637



1641



1645



1649



1653



1657



1661



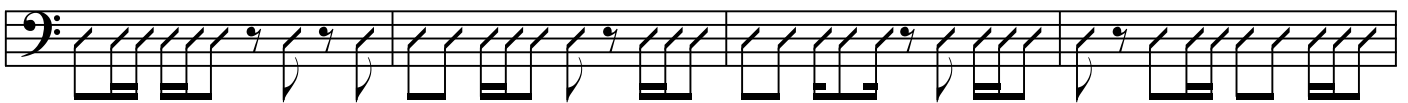
1665



1669



1673



1677



1721



1725



1729



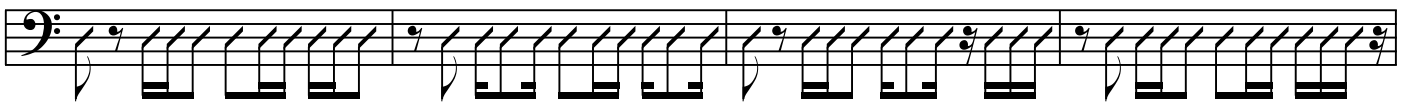
1733



1737



1741



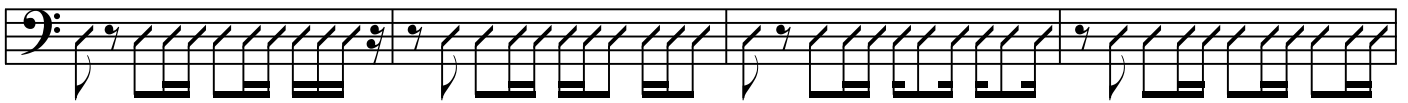
1745



1749



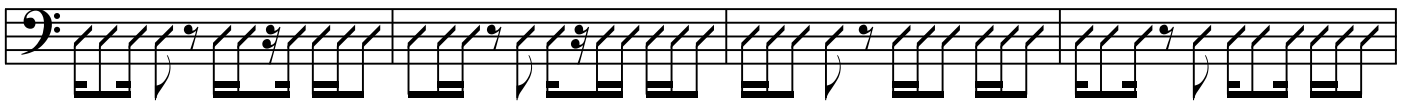
1753



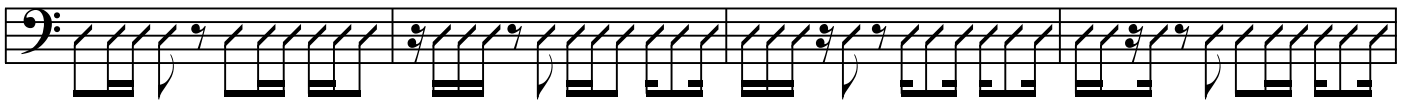
1757



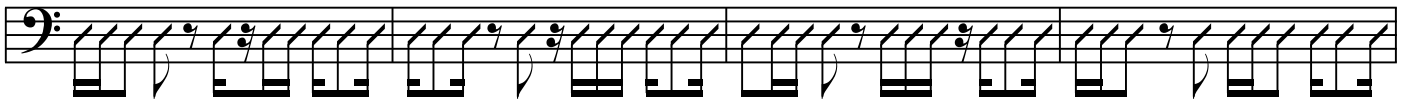
1761



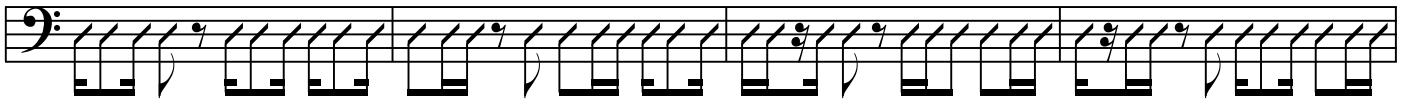
1765



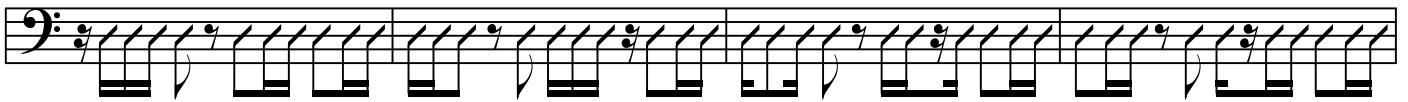
1769



1773



1777



1781



1785



1789



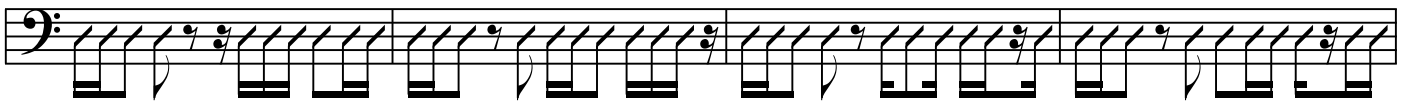
1793



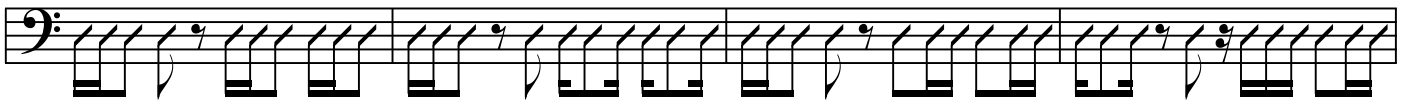
1797



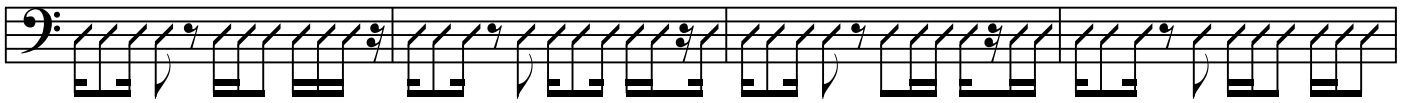
1801



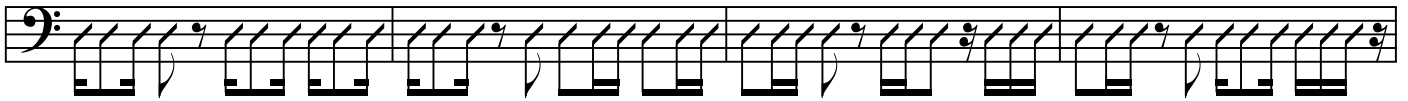
1805



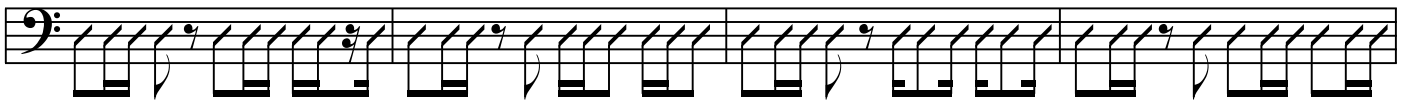
1809



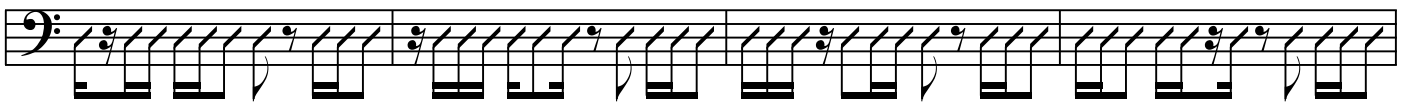
1813



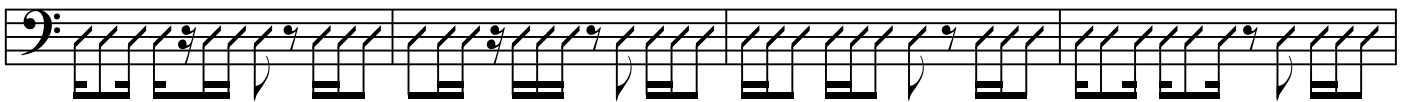
1817



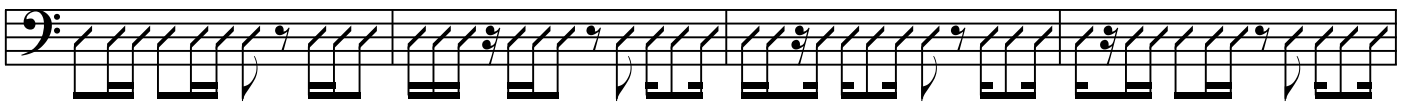
1821



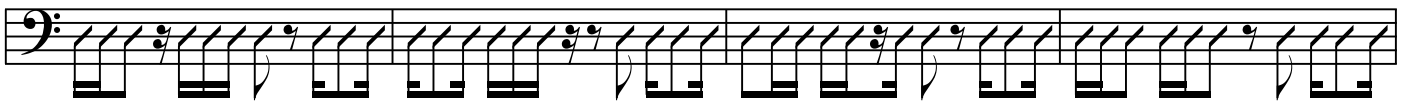
1825



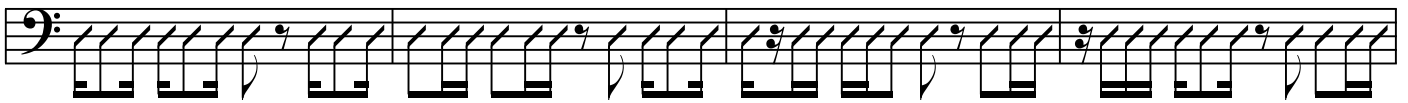
1829



1833



1837



1841



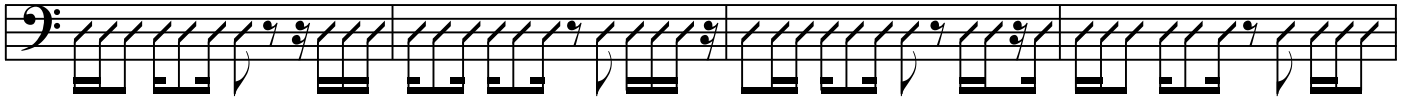
1845



1849



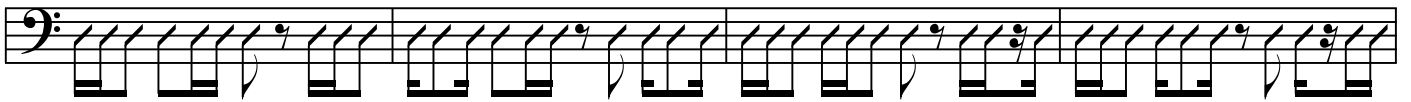
1853



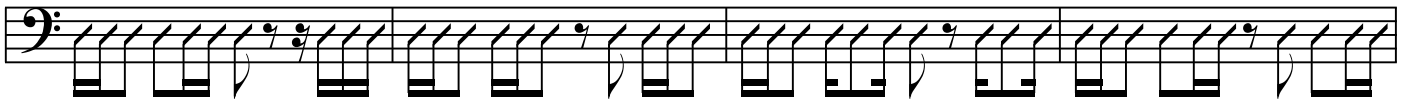
1857



1861



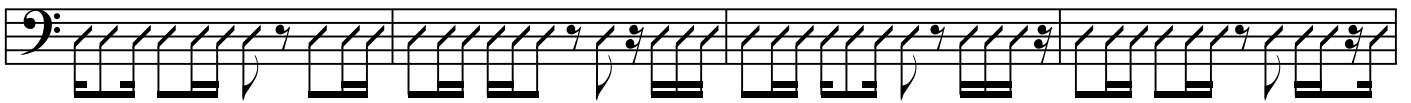
1865



1869



1873



1877



1881



1885



1889



1893



1897



1901



1905



1909



1913



1917



1921



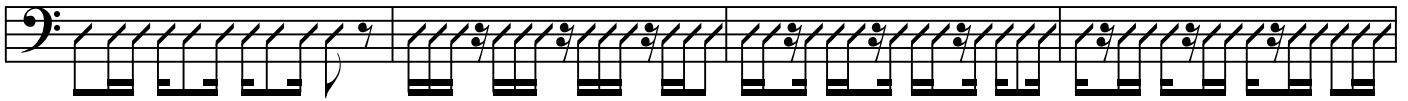
1925



1929



1933



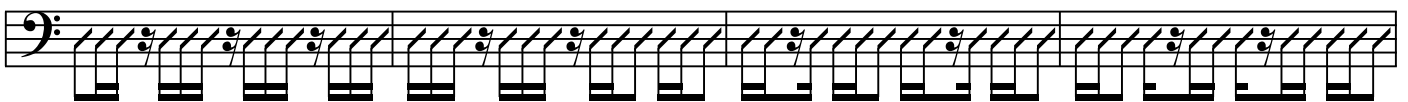
1937



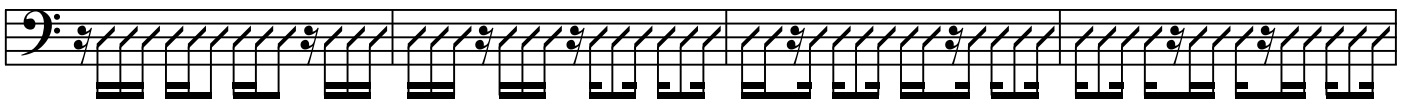
1941



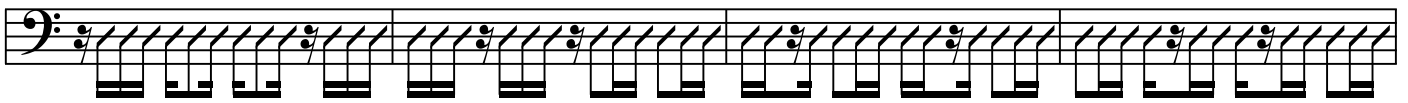
1945



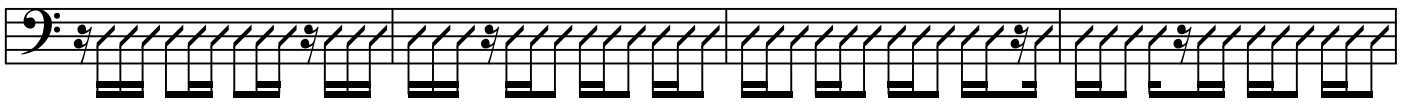
1949



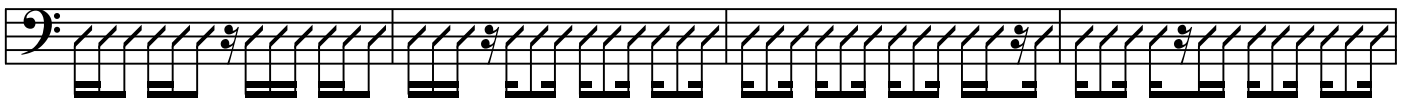
1953



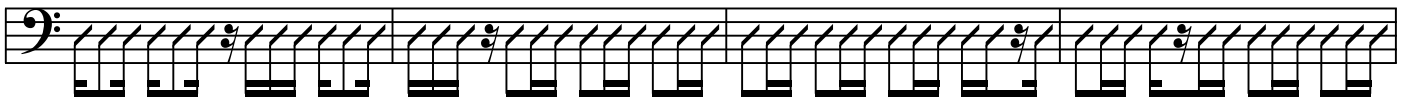
1957



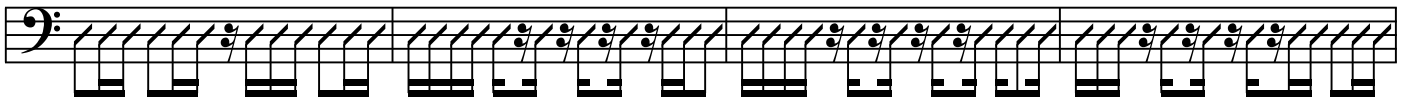
1961



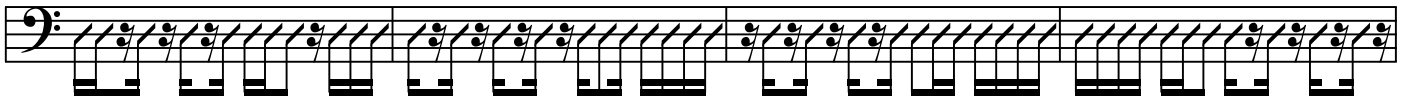
1965



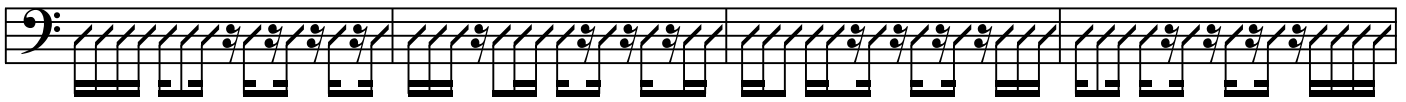
1969



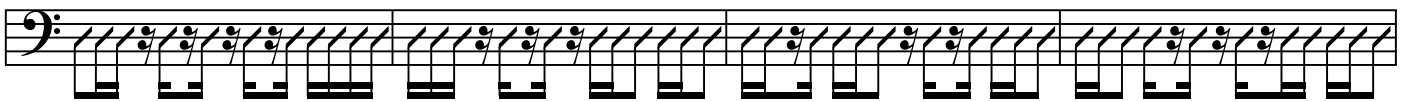
1973



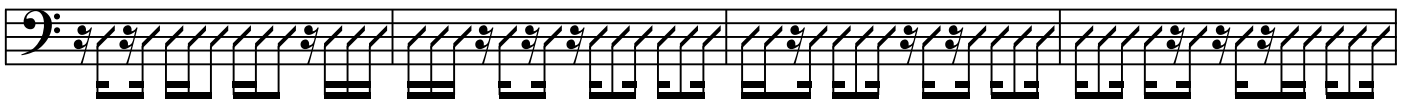
1977



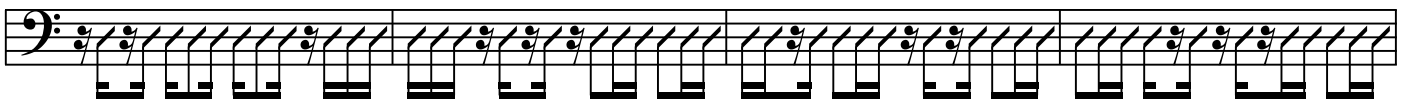
1981



1985



1989



1993

