Jazz at Lincoln Center Library

BRAGGIN' IN BRASS

BY DUKE ELLINGTON

Transcribed by David Berger for Jazz at Lincoln Center

F U L L S C O R E

This transcription was made especially for *Essentially Ellington* 2006:
The Eleventh Annual Jazz at Lincoln Center High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival

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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, since there are mistakes and alterations from the original intent of the music in the recording. You should have your players play what's in the score.

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

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

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

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

6. Vibrato is used quite a bit to warm up the sound. Saxes (who most frequently represent the sensual side of things) usually employ 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 sub-tone in the lower part of their range in order to blend properly with the rest of the section. This music was originally written with no dynamics. It pretty much follows the natural tendencies of the instruments; play loud in the loud part of the instrument and soft in the soft part of the instrument. For instance, a high C for a trumpet will be loud and a low C will be soft.

8. Quarter notes are generally played short unless otherwise notated. Long marks above or below a pitch indicate full value: not just long, but full value. Eighth notes are played full value except when followed by a rest or otherwise notated. All notes longer than a quarter note are played full value, which means if it is followed by a rest, release the note where the rest appears. For example, a half note occurring on beat 1 of a measure would be released on beat 3.

9. Unless they are part of a legato background figure, long notes should be played somewhat *fp*; accent and 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 using alternate slide positions. It would be easier to move the tuning slide, but part of the sound is in the

struggle to correct the pitch. If this proves too much, stick with the pixie—it's pretty close.

14. The drummer is the de facto leader of the band. He establishes the beat and controls the volume of the ensemble. For big band playing, the drummer needs to use a larger bass drum than he would for small group drumming. A 22" 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 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 2 and 4 (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° 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 is where the climax most often happens.

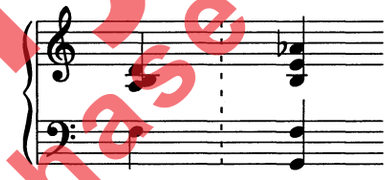
Soli: a harmonized passage for two or more instruments playing the same rhythm. It is customary for horn players to stand up or even move in front of the band when playing these passages. This is done so that the audience can hear them better and to provide the audience with some visual interest. A soli 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 Ryan Keberle for editing the score.

BRAGGIN' IN BRASS

INSTRUMENTATION:

Reed 1 - Alto Sax	Trombone 1
Reed 2 - Alto Sax	Trombone 2
Reed 3 - Tenor Sax	Trombone 3
Reed 4 - Baritone Sax	Guitar
Trumpet 1	Bass
Trumpet 2	Drums
Trumpet 3	

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION:

Composer: Duke Ellington
Arranger: Duke Ellington
Recorded: March 3, 1938 in New York
Time: 2:44
Master Number: M-773-1
Original Issue: Brunswick 8099

Currently Available on CD:
The Duke: Duke Ellington – The Essential Collection 1927-1962
Columbia/Legacy
C3K 65841

Personnel: Duke Ellington, piano; Wallace Jones, Cootie Williams, trumpets; Rex Stewart, cornet; Joe Nanton, Lawrence Brown, trombones; Juan Tizol, valve trombone; Barney Bigard, Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwick, Harry Carney, reeds; Fred Guy, guitar; Hayes Alvis, Billy Taylor, bass; Sonny Greer, drums.

Soloists: Cootie Williams, trumpet; Rex Stewart, cornet; Lawrence Brown, trombone; Williams, trumpet.

—Clifford Priess, Jazz at Lincoln Center

REHEARSAL NOTES:

- This 1938 masterpiece contains a difficult trumpet soli and a nearly impossible trombone soli. Along with 2 trumpet solos and a trombone solo at breakneck speed, Ellington surely was **Braggin' In Brass** when he recorded it. To be sure there is no more spectacular 3 minutes in Ellington's entire repertoire and certainly no piece that is more about sheer fun.

- This piece is essentially an update of **Tiger Rag.** The form is a long 3-part introduction in A♭ (4 bars + 8 bars + 8 bars), 1 chorus (32 bars including the traditional 2-bar break in bars 15 and 16) of **Tiger Rag** for the trumpets, 1 chorus of **Tiger Rag** in D♭ for the trombones, a 40-bar interlude in E♭ consisting of *aa* (V to I) *bb* (breaks on the tonic) and an 8-bar modulation to A♭. Next is a chorus of **King Porter Stomp** (aa' for solo trombone) and a final chorus of **Tiger Rag** for solo trumpet call and response with the ensemble in the grandstanding manner of Louis Armstrong. The piece ends by going into halftime for the final cadence.

- This is a Swing Era chart that pays tribute to our New Orleans roots. During the Swing Era there were many attempts to capture the spirit of New Orleans within the big band setting, some (like **South Rampart Street Parade**) more successful than others. **Braggin' In Brass** goes one step further; Ellington successfully weds the two idioms. At once this is a high-powered swing chart as well as fitting neatly into the New Orleans format. The New Orleans counterpoint is omitted, but the simple chord progressions, breaks, use of multi-strained form and most importantly the wildness conjure up the Crescent City's contribution to the world of music.

- The successful performance of this virtuosic piece of music requires a solid time feel at a breakneck tempo from the brass and rhythm sections. There is no room for stragglers. Everyone must stay on the front part of the beat—more of a '20s feel than '30s. This will give the music a lift. The fast tempo necessitates a light feel or the weight will slow it down. Establish it right away in the introduction—especially the offbeat syncopations in the brass at **A**. Lots of accent and low volume for the duration so that the on-the-beat players notes will be heard in counterpoint.

- The trumpet soli at **C** is essentially a voiced-out version of Freddie Jenkins' solo on Ellington's earlier **High Life**. It starts with a quote from the clarinet solo in the New Orleans classic, **High Society**. This is a typical Jenkins solo; lots of flashy eighth notes at a fast tempo. Part of the charm of this soli is the use of the tightly closed plungers with French straight mutes (commercially known as "pixie mutes") inside. For the trumpets to be heard, the rhythm section must be soft in volume, but firm in feel.

- As in all of Ellington's music, I strongly advise against the use of any amplifiers. Their presence will force the bass and/or guitar to bury the trumpets and also make the rhythm section feel heavy. The phrasing in the trumpets follows the pattern set out in the first four bars: lots of legato slurs, accents on the upper notes, ghosting the lower notes and short accented quarters. I recommend that the trumpets practice their parts individually and then as a section, starting very slowly and gradually picking up speed. If the final high F on the 7th bar of **F** presents a problem, you can substitute either the D or B♭ as the highest note and re-voice the triad down from there: D, B♭, F or B♭, F, D.

- The trombone soli is written in hocket style. The trombones are playing a 3/8 pattern that arpeggiates a diatonic chord progression—much in the manner of the main melody of **In The Mood**. The trick here is that the trombonists alternate notes with each other. That coupled with the fast tempo creates a dizzying effect unlike any other in music that I know of. This hocket effect is alternated with normal trombone soli writing in an interesting pattern of measures: 4+4, 6+2, 4+4, then reverse the order (concerted first)—6+3+3. This is one of the most difficult passages to perform in all of the jazz literature. We are all taught to play with the instruments around us, but in order to play the hocket properly, the trombones need to be totally independent. If any of them plays at the same time as either of the other two, they are wrong. This will require a serious amount of rehearsal time starting very slowly and gradually getting faster. Accents are essential. Each trombonist must play with

absolute authority. This will require tuning out the other players and concentrating entirely on his/her part and staying in time—not unlike when you first sang **Row, Row, Row Your Boat** in a round and stuck your fingers in your ears so that you wouldn't become confused by the other singers. As with the trumpet soli, the use of straight mutes in the trombone section is essential to the lightness and variety of color for the overall piece.

- The trumpet solo at **K** is quite lengthy and could be divided among two players; the first playing from **K** to **P**, and the second from **P** to **T**. This will leave a third trumpet solo from **V** to the end. If you have three players that can handle these solos, that would be even more effective than having two soloists and one of your players not get to solo. **V** and **W** should be played as written (to fit in with the call and response with the ensemble). If the written notes at **X** and **Y** are too high, the trumpet soloist could just play his B♭ all the way through and end on a C, or he/she could improvise something different respecting the call and response at **X**. In contrast to the solos being muted, I strongly suggest that the solos be played open. Besides contrast of color, the open horns are louder and brighter, thereby helping the piece to build towards the climax.

- The saxes need to play their long notes soft and smooth up to a bar before **T** where they need to use accents in their call and response with the brass. **V** to the end is arranged in a typical 4-voiced tutti style with the lead trumpet doubled down the octave in the baritone sax and 2nd trombone. This is the lead, and to establish it as such, each of those 3 players should bring their part out slightly. Conversely, the lead alto should understand that his/her part is not the lead and respect the lead trumpet and baritone sax.

- The rhythm section has a very supporting role to play. The drummer should stay with the brushes to keep the feel light. The bass and guitar need to anchor the time. Stay on top and absolutely firm and constant. The 2 feel is very hard for young players to master because they are used to feeling the bass on every beat. The secret is that the bassists needs to feel beats 2 and 4 as if he were playing them and then get the biggest accent and sound on 1 and 3 letting the acoustic sound ring. This will create buoyancy that the whole band can sit on.

- Obviously this is a very difficult chart to play. Not many bands in the world have ever done it successfully or even tried, but I must tell you that it is possible. I played trumpet on it with the National Jazz Ensemble in the mid-'70s, conducted it with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in 1992 and worked with a high school group from Connecticut in the mid-'80s who played the heck out of it. This will take six strong brass players and a ton of commitment. You might want to give it a try even if you never perform it. Your students will learn a lot from the experience—not the least of which is that the level of ensemble playing in the Ellington Orchestra was beyond category, and set an extremely high standard that we can all aspire to.

—David Berger

Editor's Note: Transcriptions are available of **Tiger Rag, South Rampart Street Parade,** and **King Porter Stomp.** They are part of the *Essential Jazz Editions,* published by Alfred Publishing Co., Inc. and edited by David Baker.

WYNTON MARSALIS ON PLAYING ELLINGTON'S MUSIC:

Duke Ellington's music is about finding a groove and swinging, and it has in it what the real meaning of hipness is. When you play his music, it makes you hip. It starts to feel good to you because it's very optimistic and rich. There's so much room in his music for you to play. His music does not have fear in it.

Swinging is about coordination: attaining an equilibrium of forces that many times don't go together. Someone who loves to swing is a great facilitator, and Duke Ellington is the very greatest of the great facilitators, because he played every style of rhythm that we know. He had his rhythm section with Sam Woodyard on the drums and Jimmy Woode on the bass and the rhythm section with Sonny Greer on the drums and Jimmy Blanton playing the bass. And they don't swing in one style. They had the shuffle swing; slow, slow, deep-in-the-pocket groove swing; church grooves; the Afro-Cuban pieces; ballads with the brushes; exotic grooves on an album like *Afro-Bossa*.

When you come into contact with Duke Ellington, you're interacting with the very substance and essence of what American life is about. It takes a while to really understand what it is, but it's worth that. It's worth that extra effort it takes. Because once you understand it, it transforms your life and opens you up to a world of beauty that perhaps you didn't know existed.

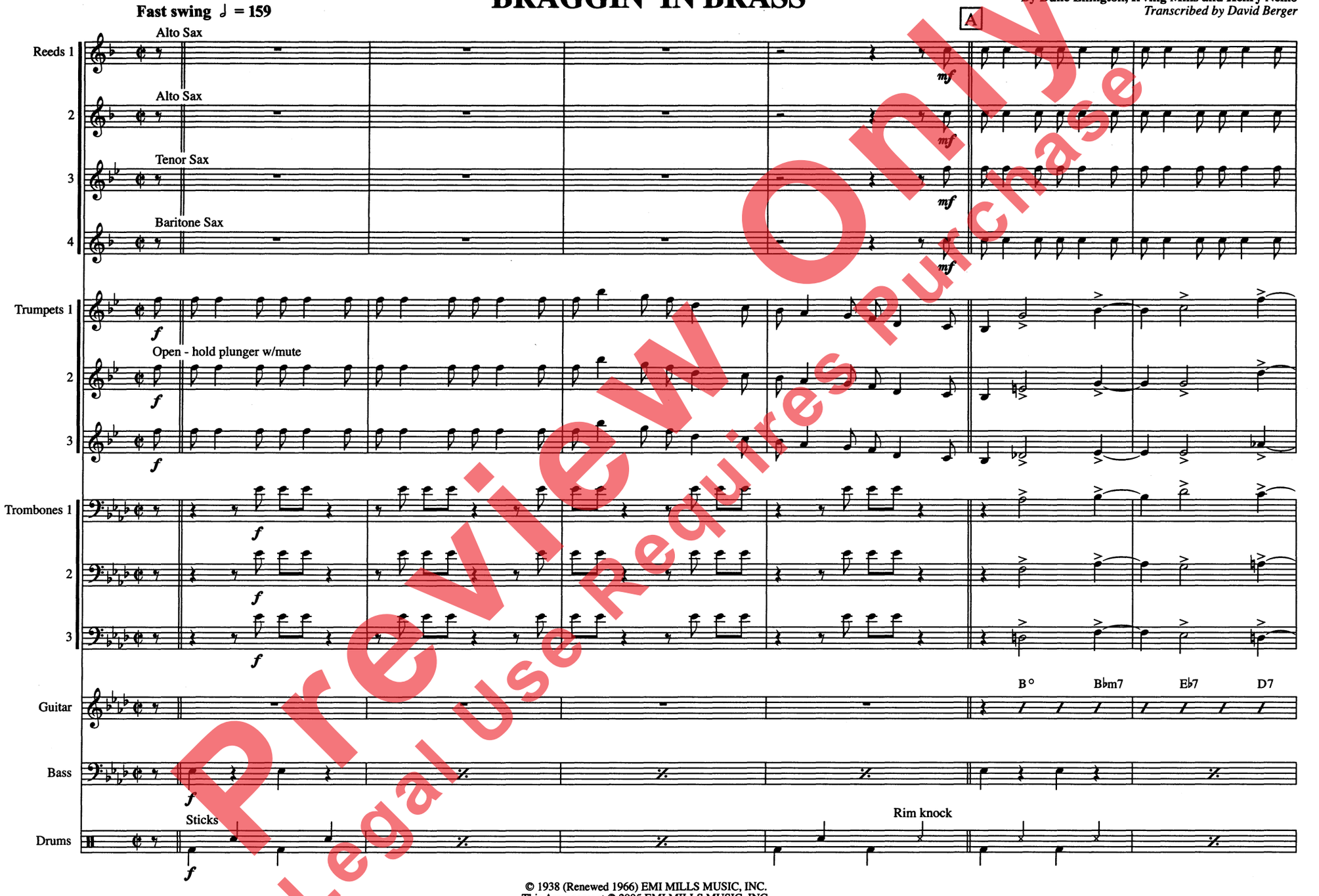
CONDUCTOR

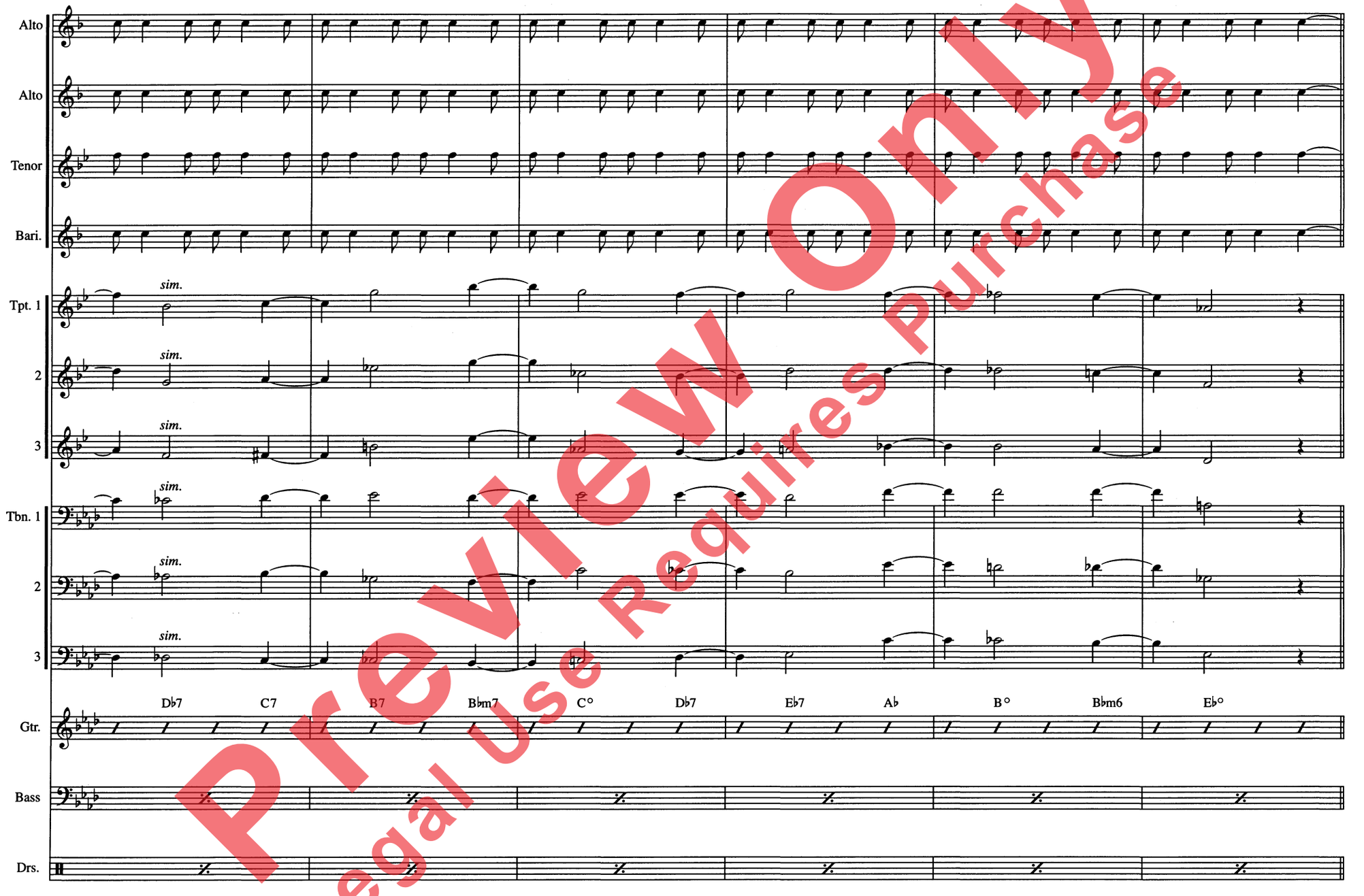
Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Essentially Ellington

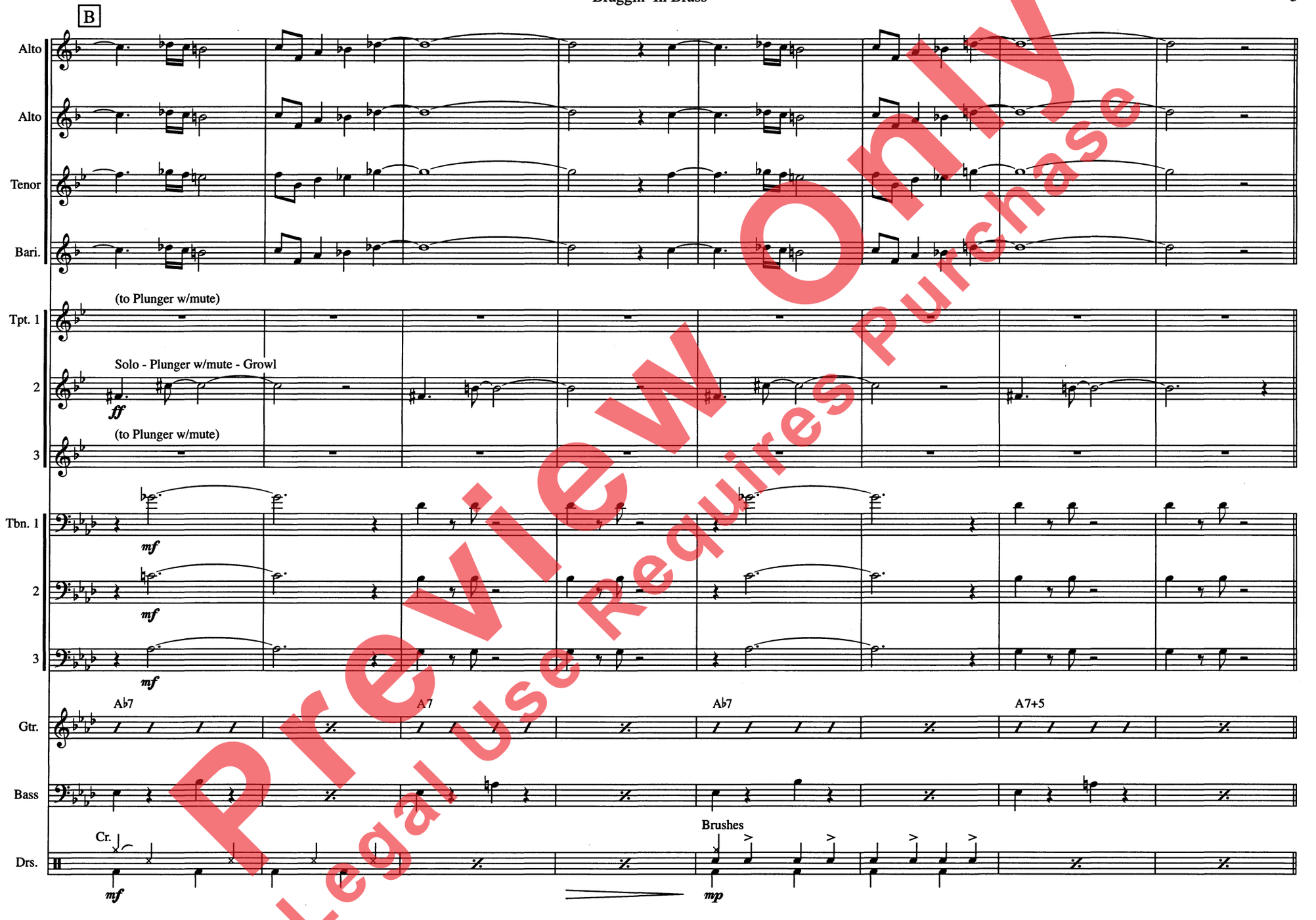
BRAGGIN' IN BRASS

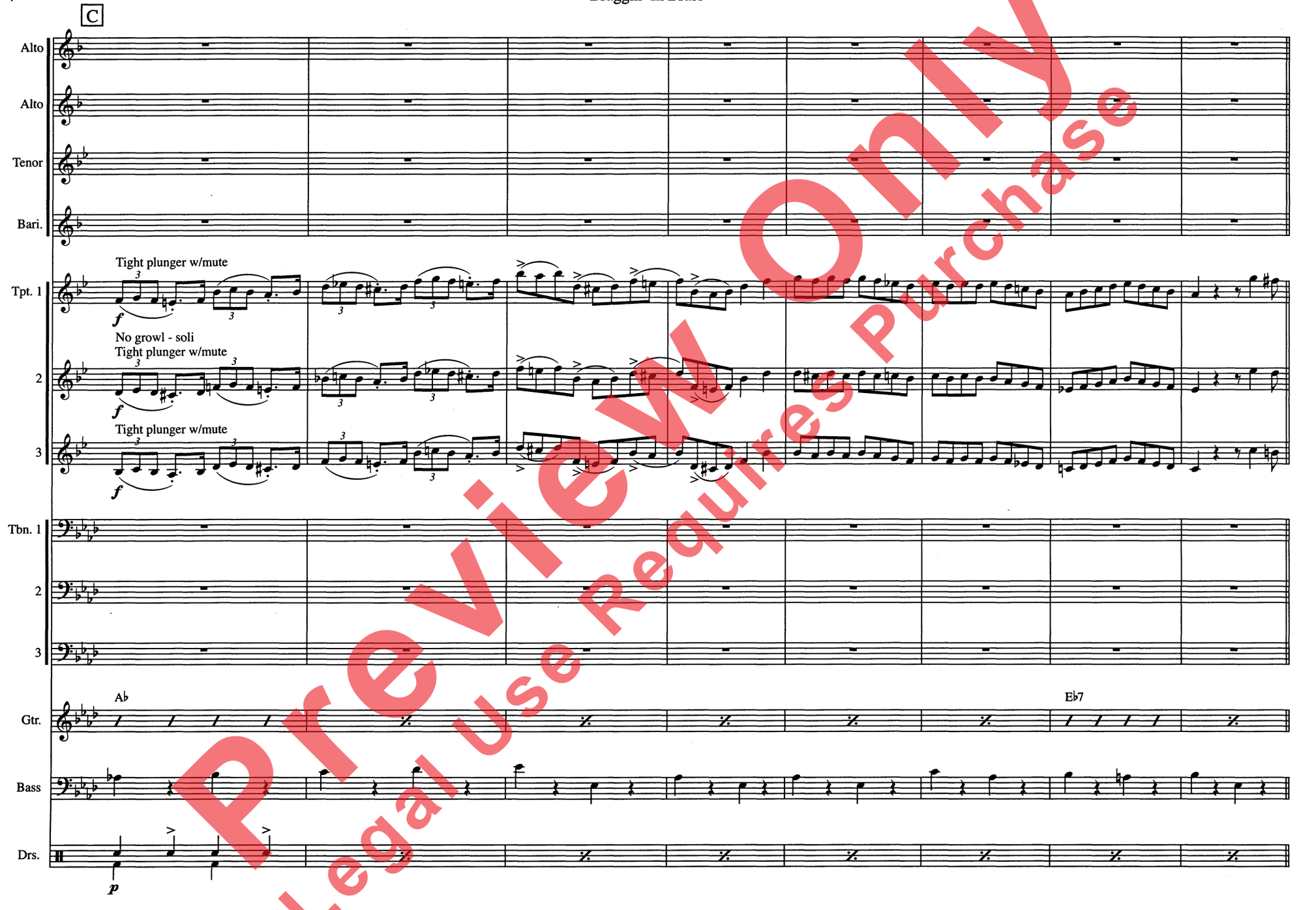
By Duke Ellington, Irving Mills and Henry Nemo

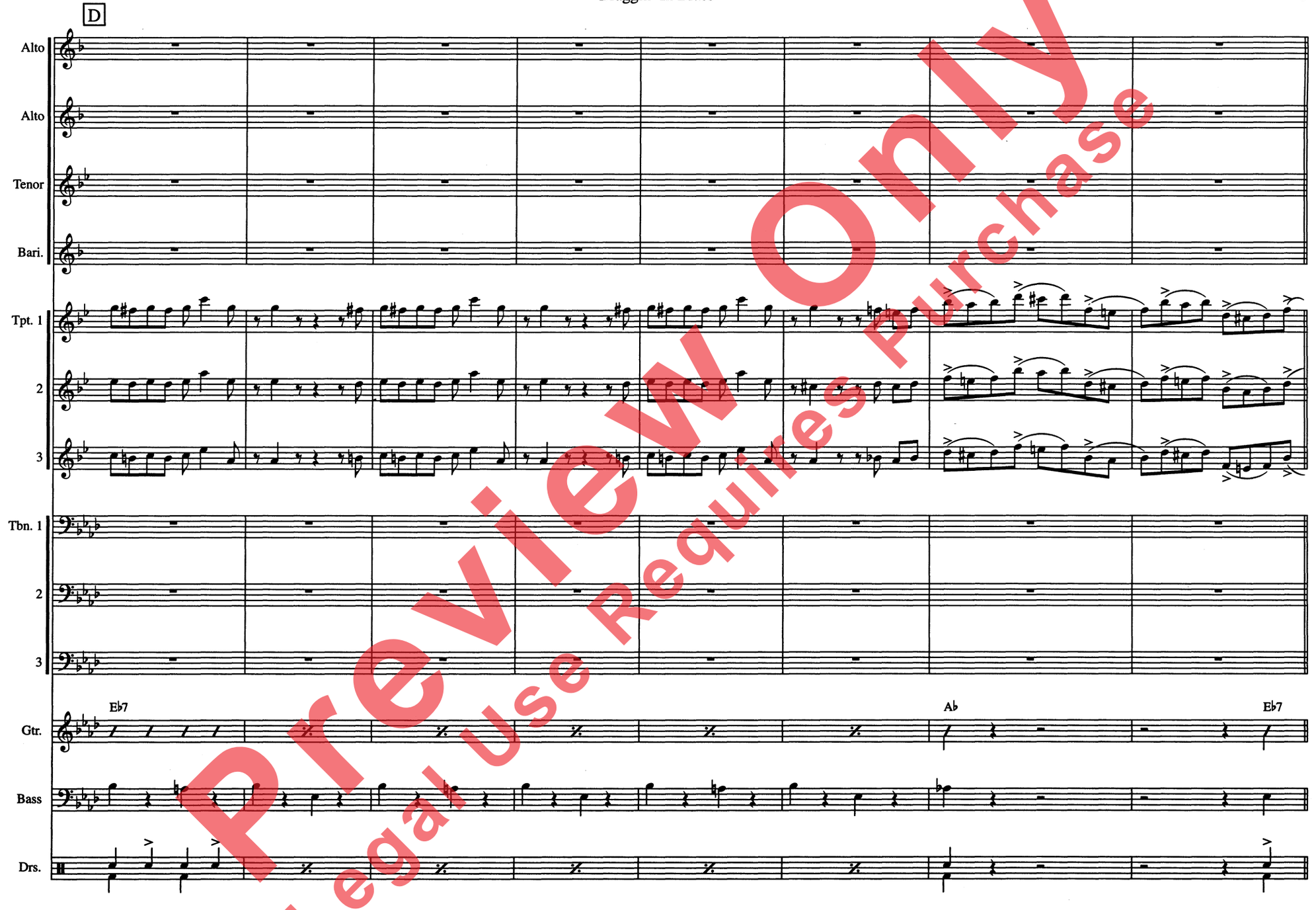
Transcribed by David Berger

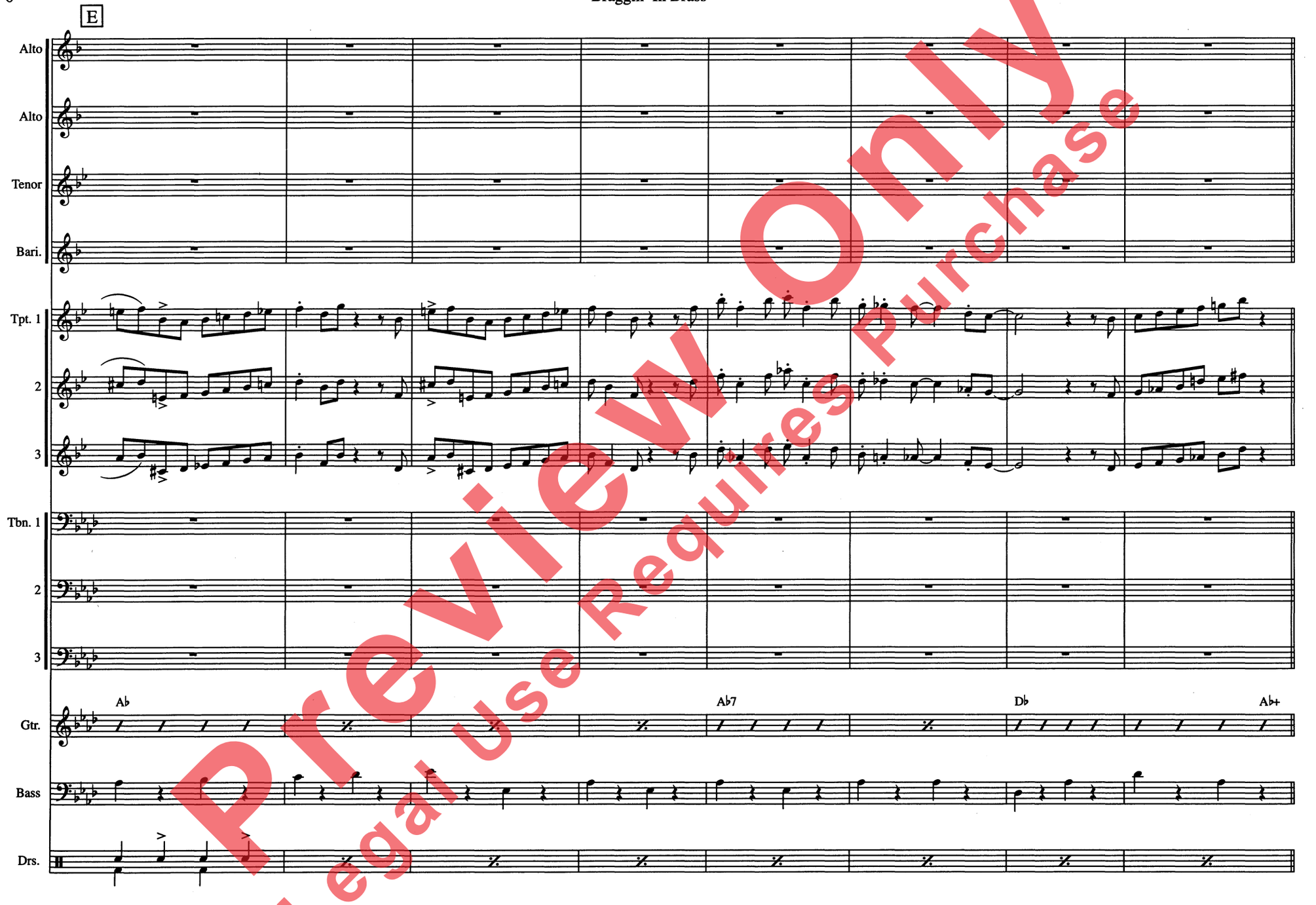


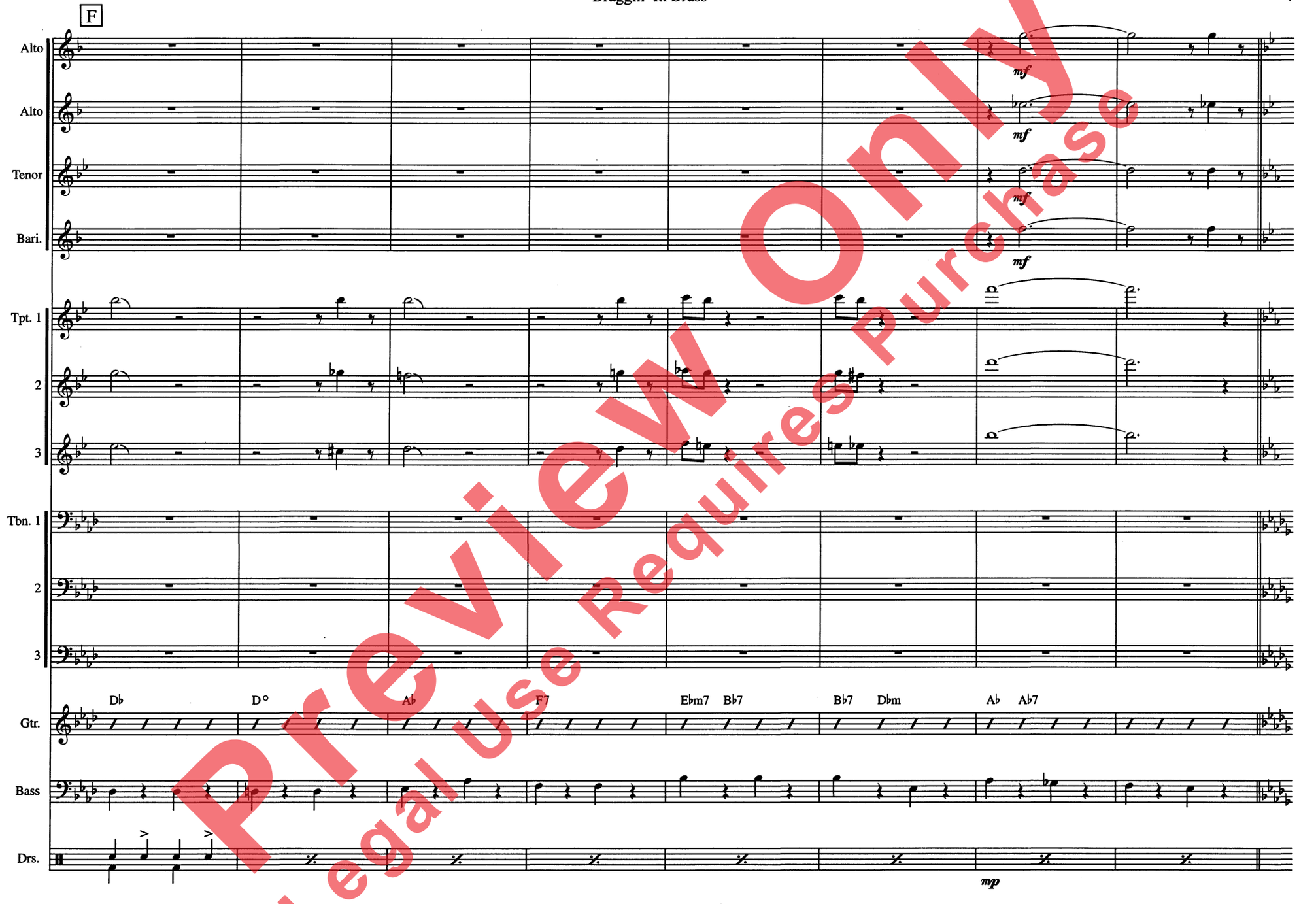


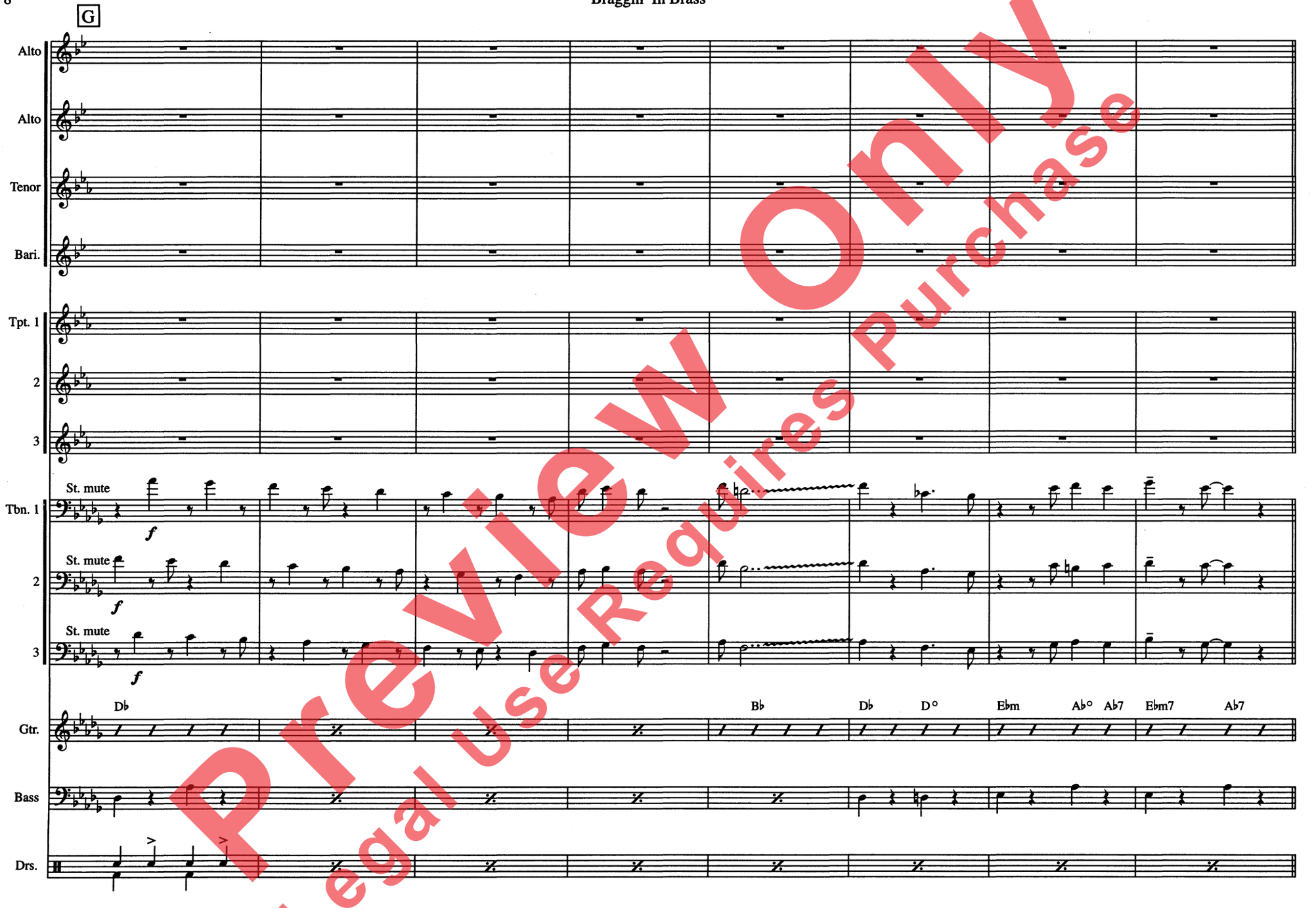


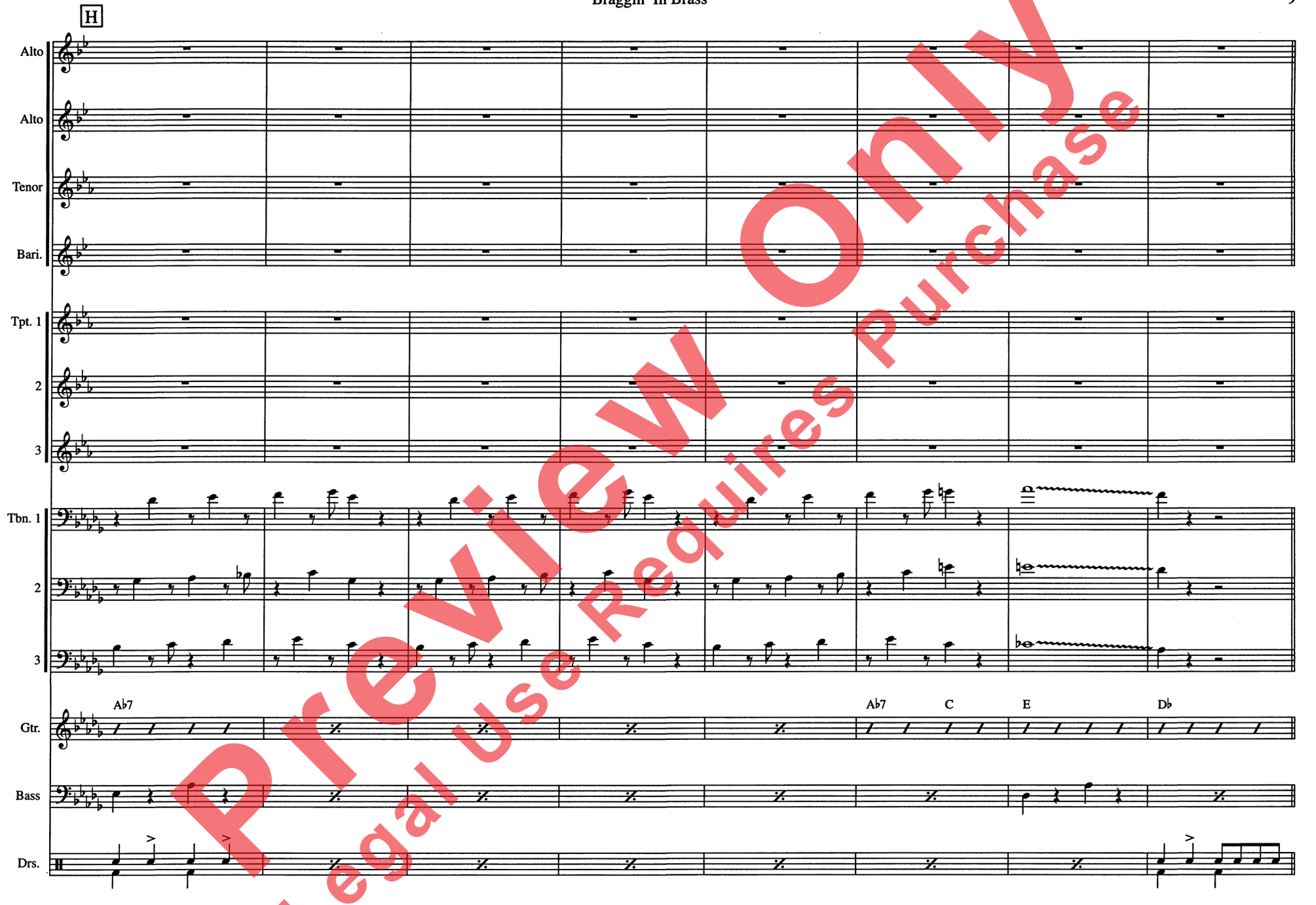


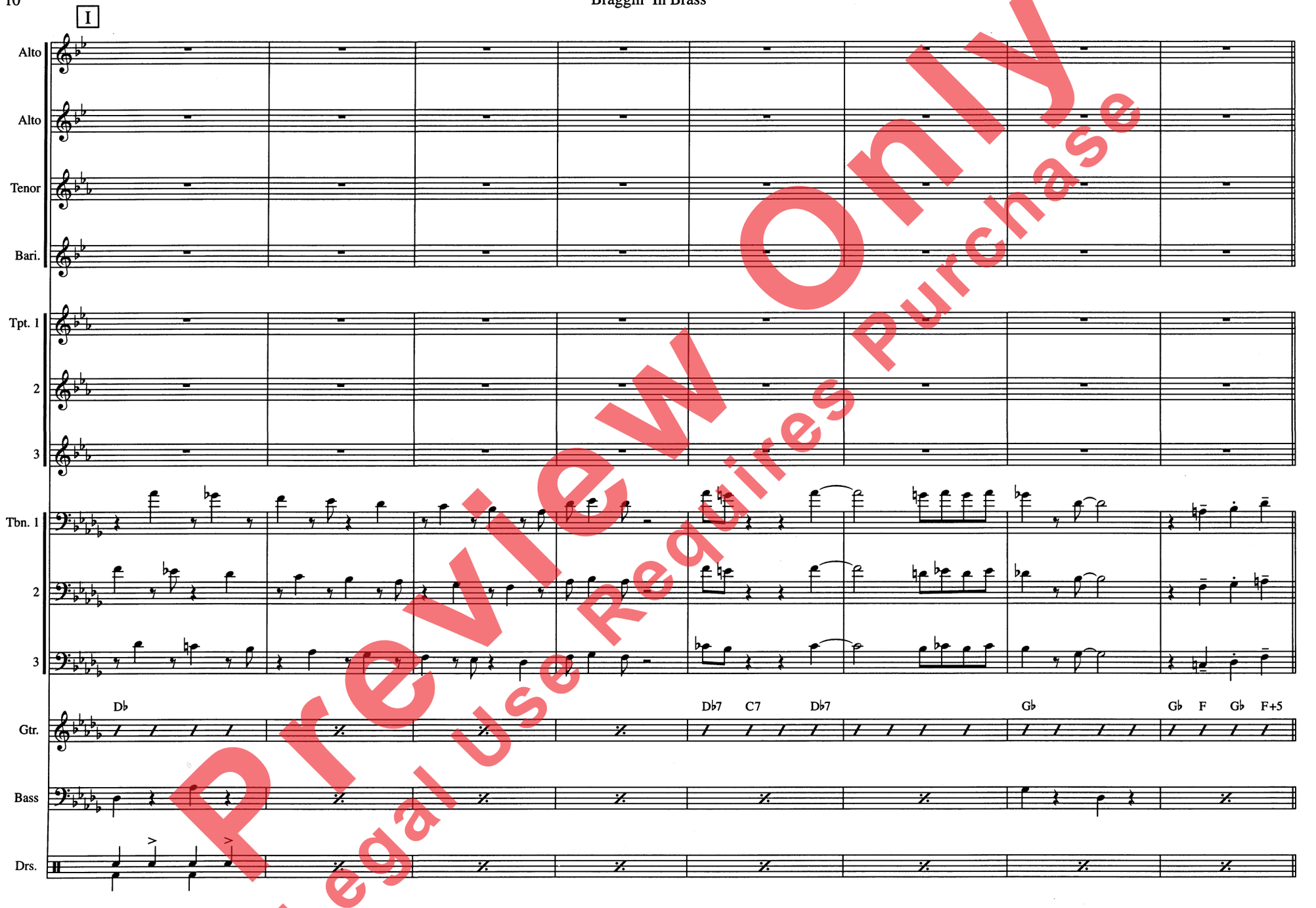


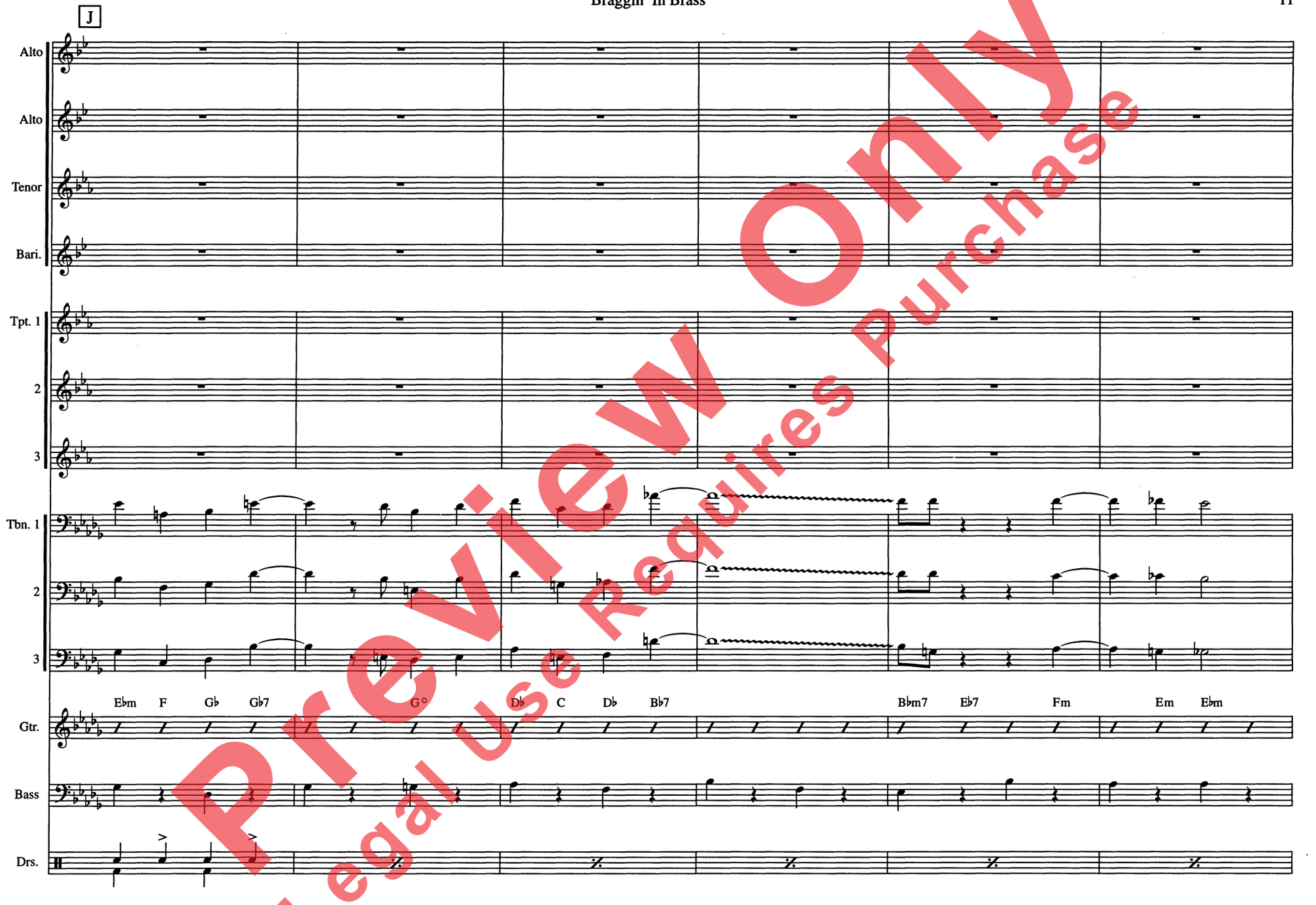


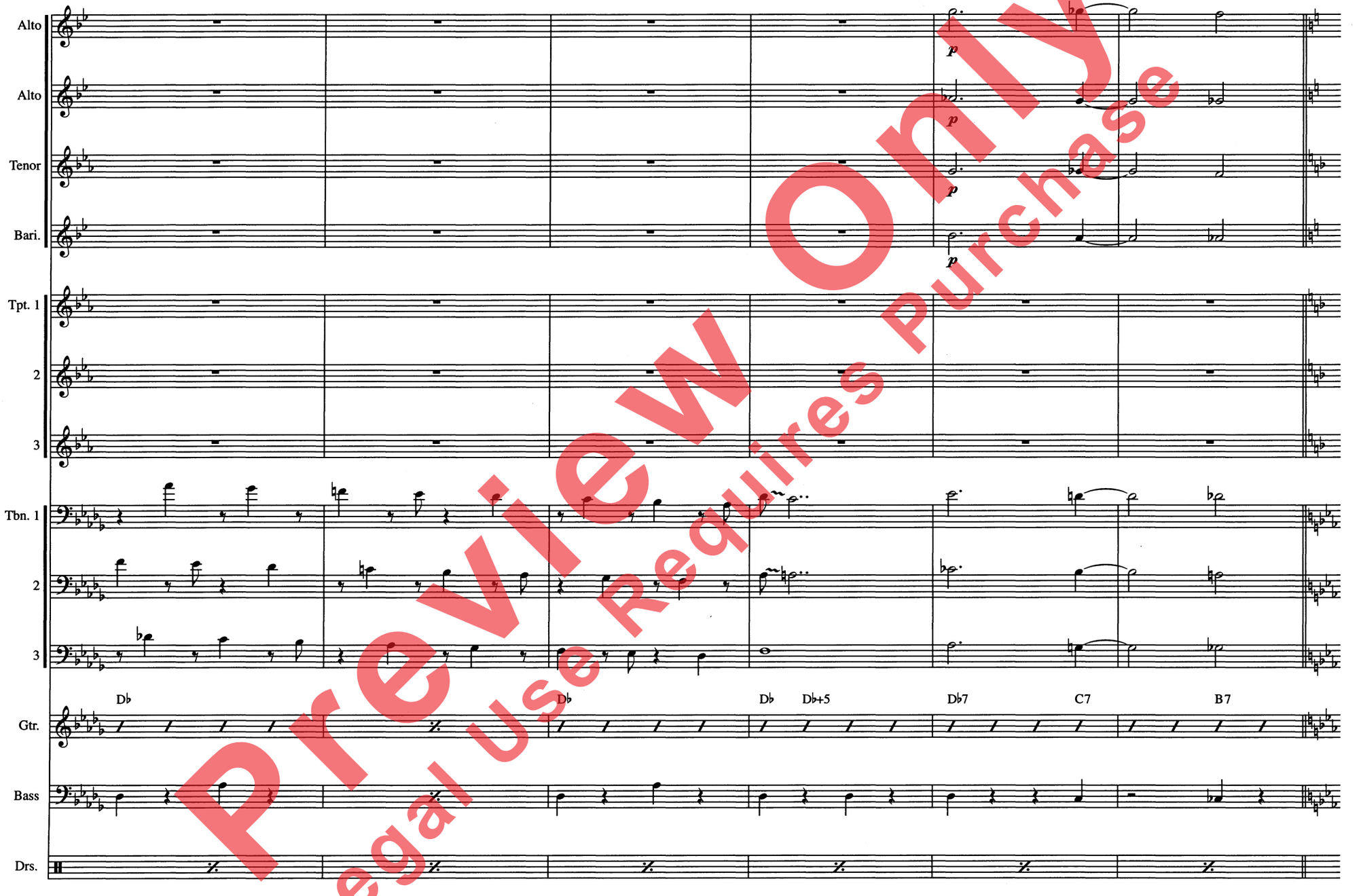


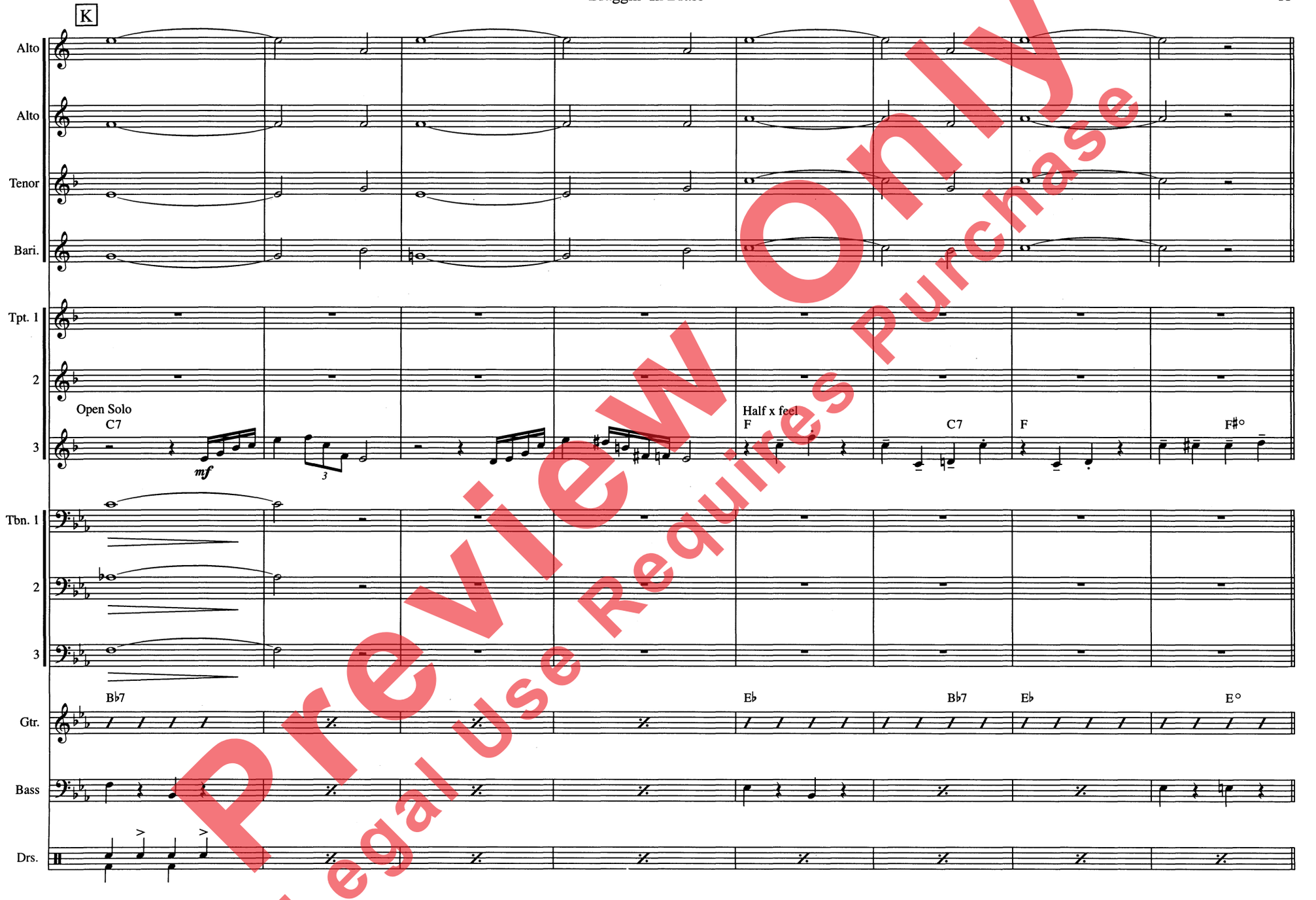


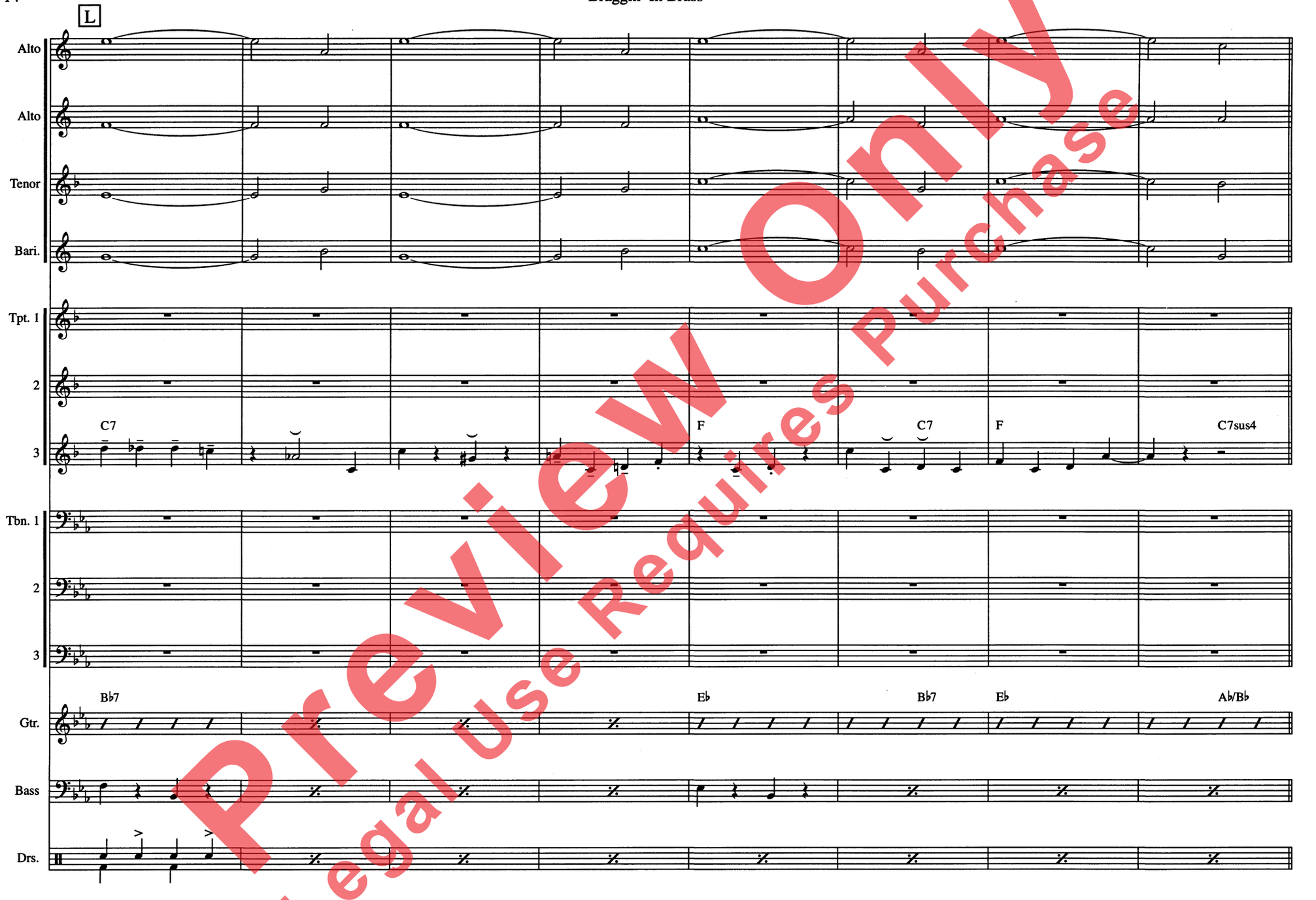


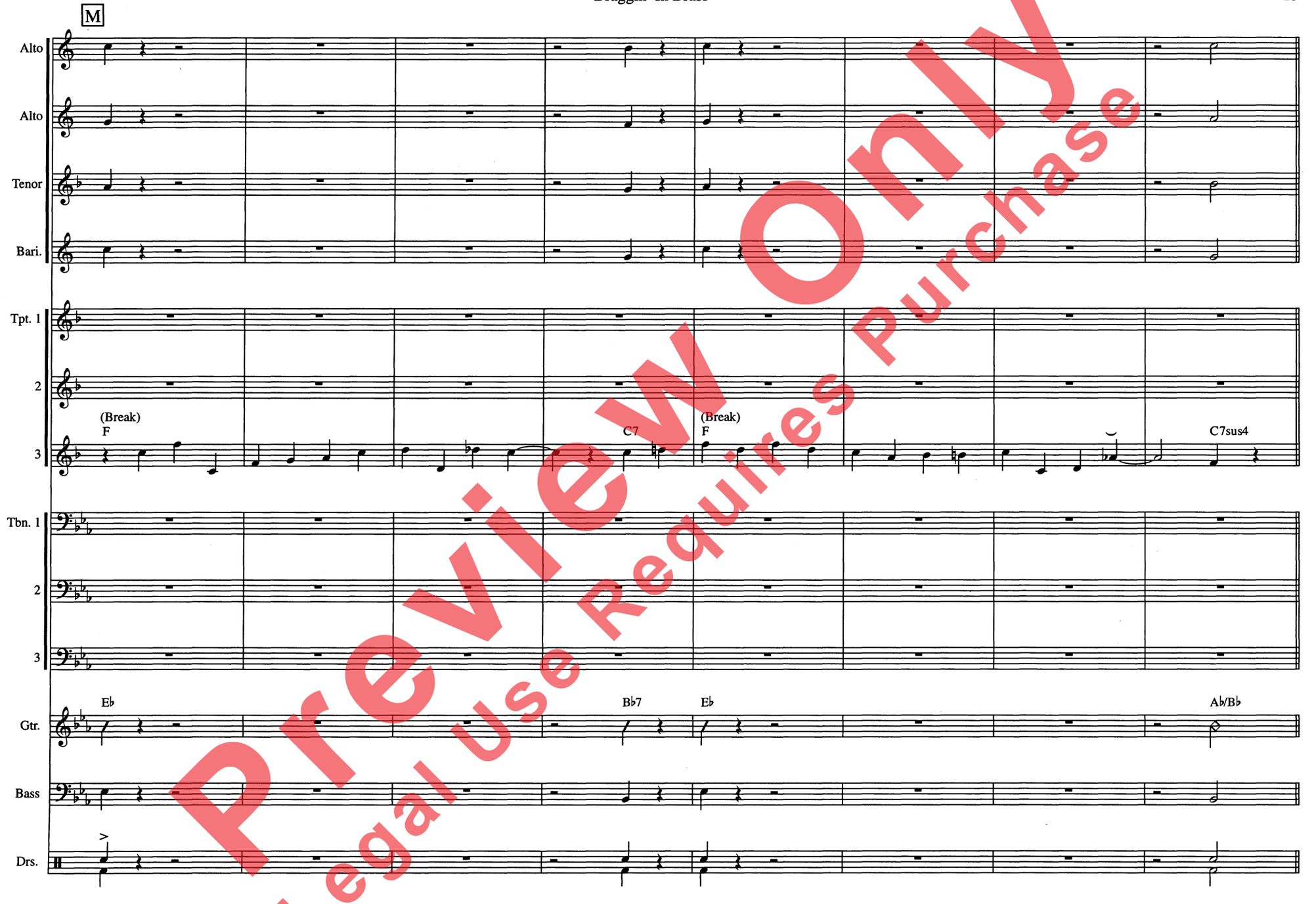


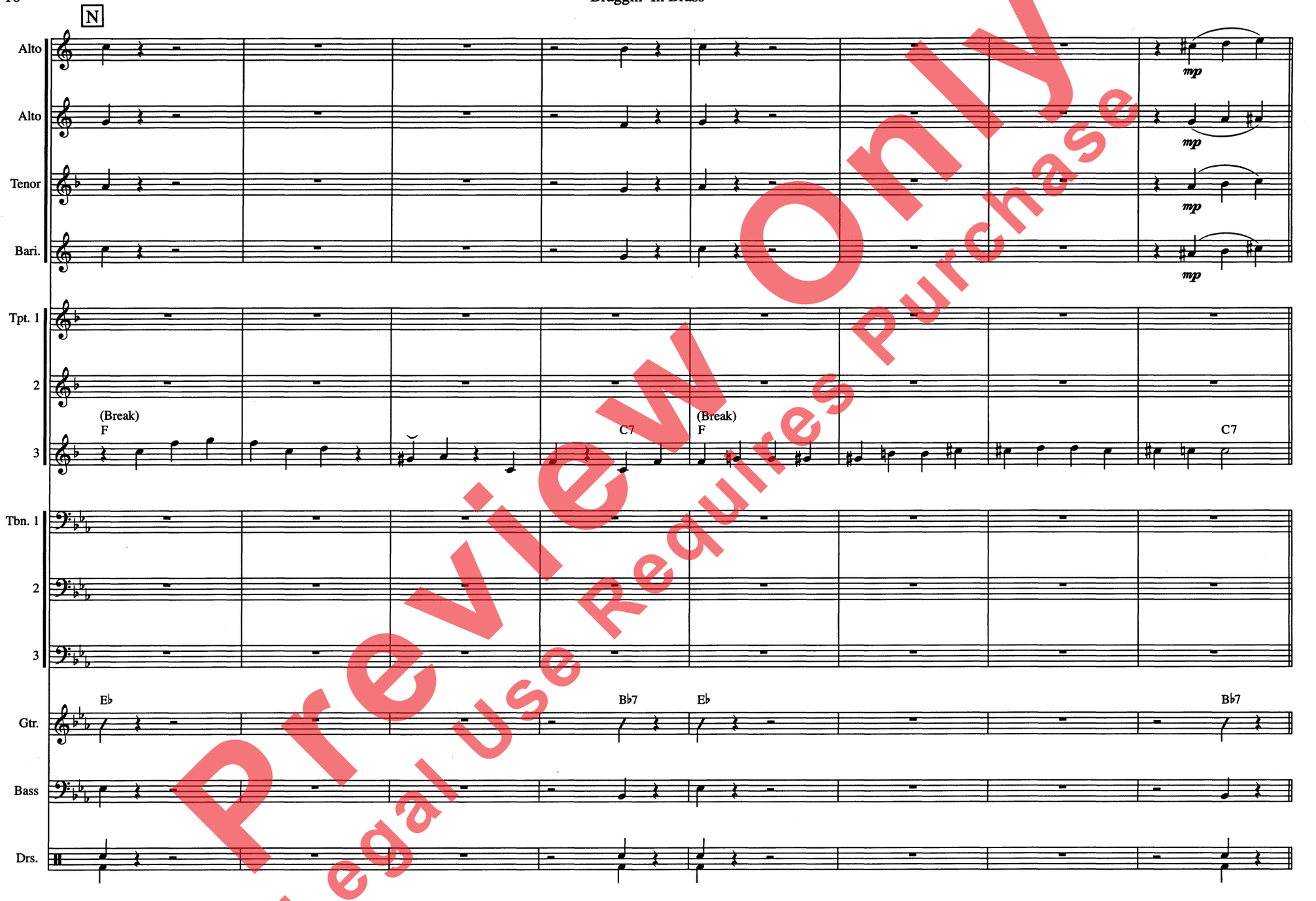


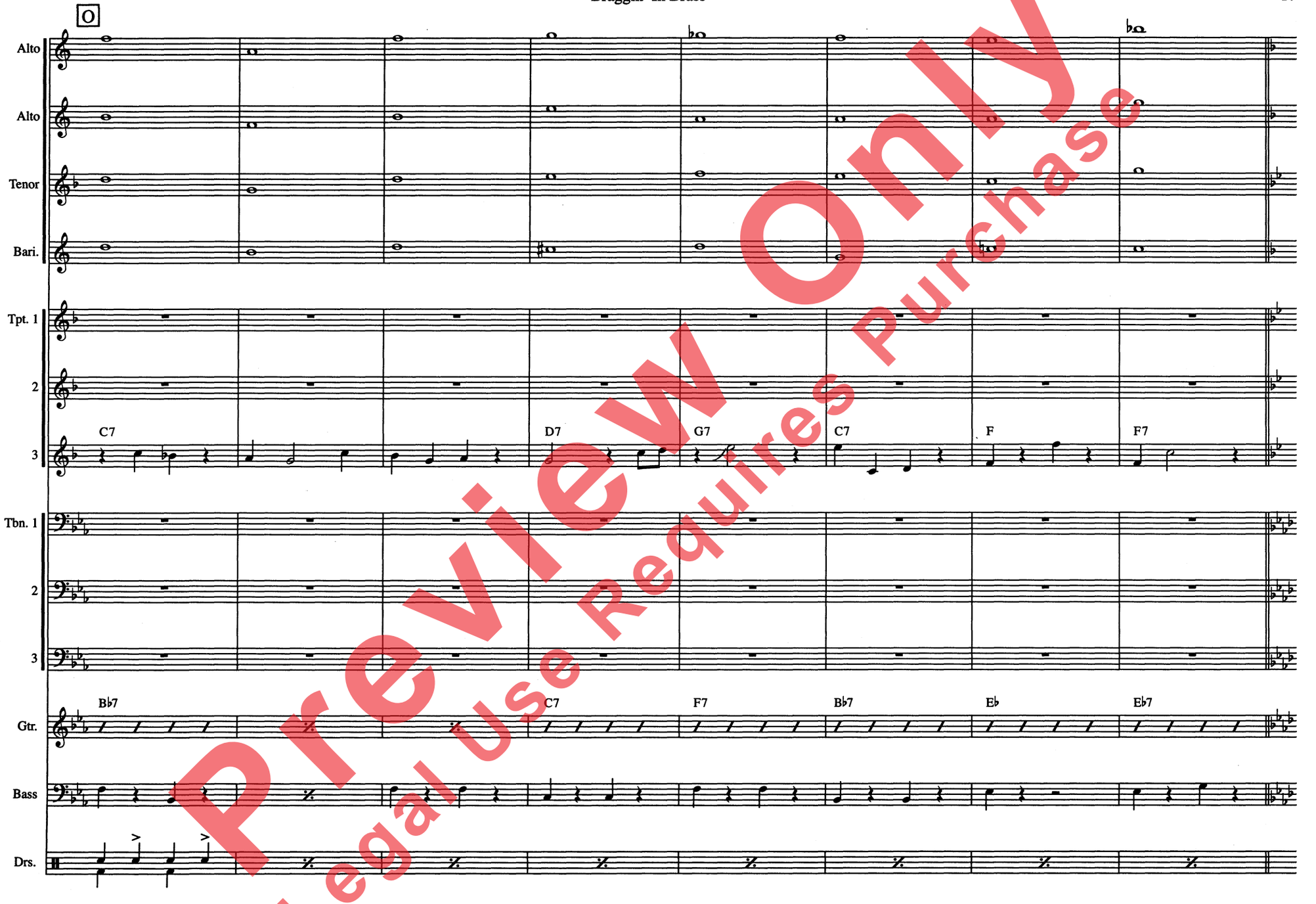


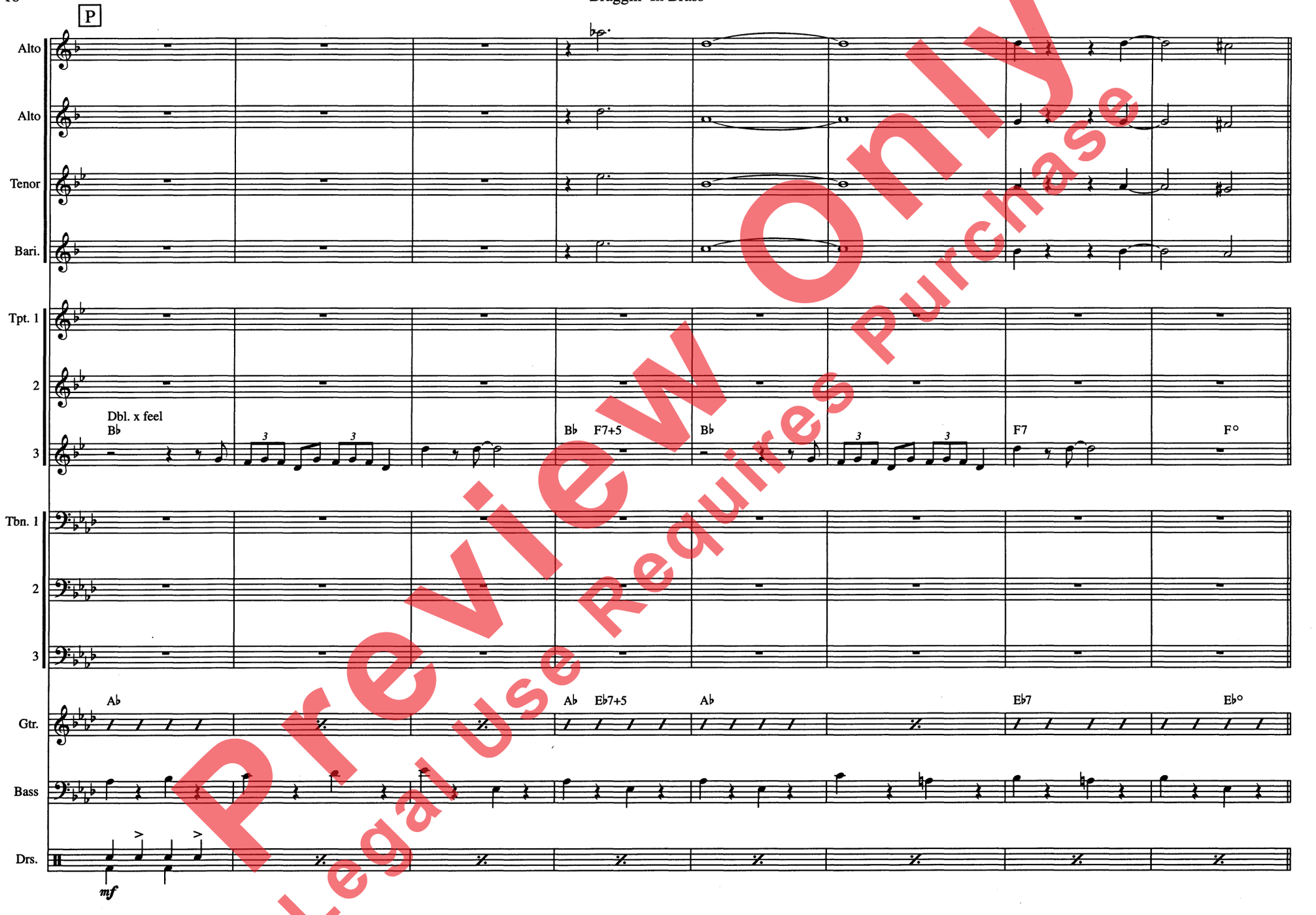


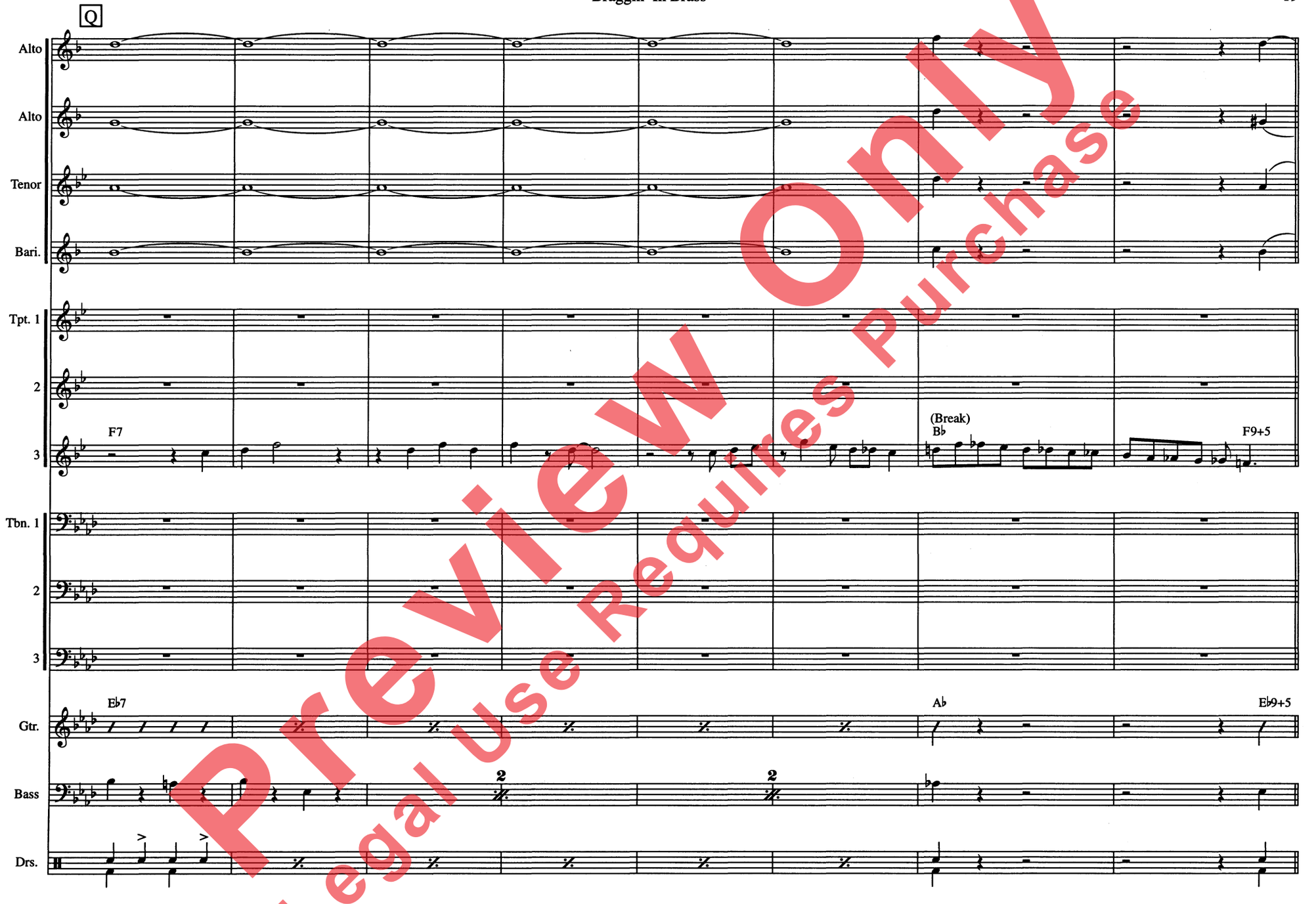


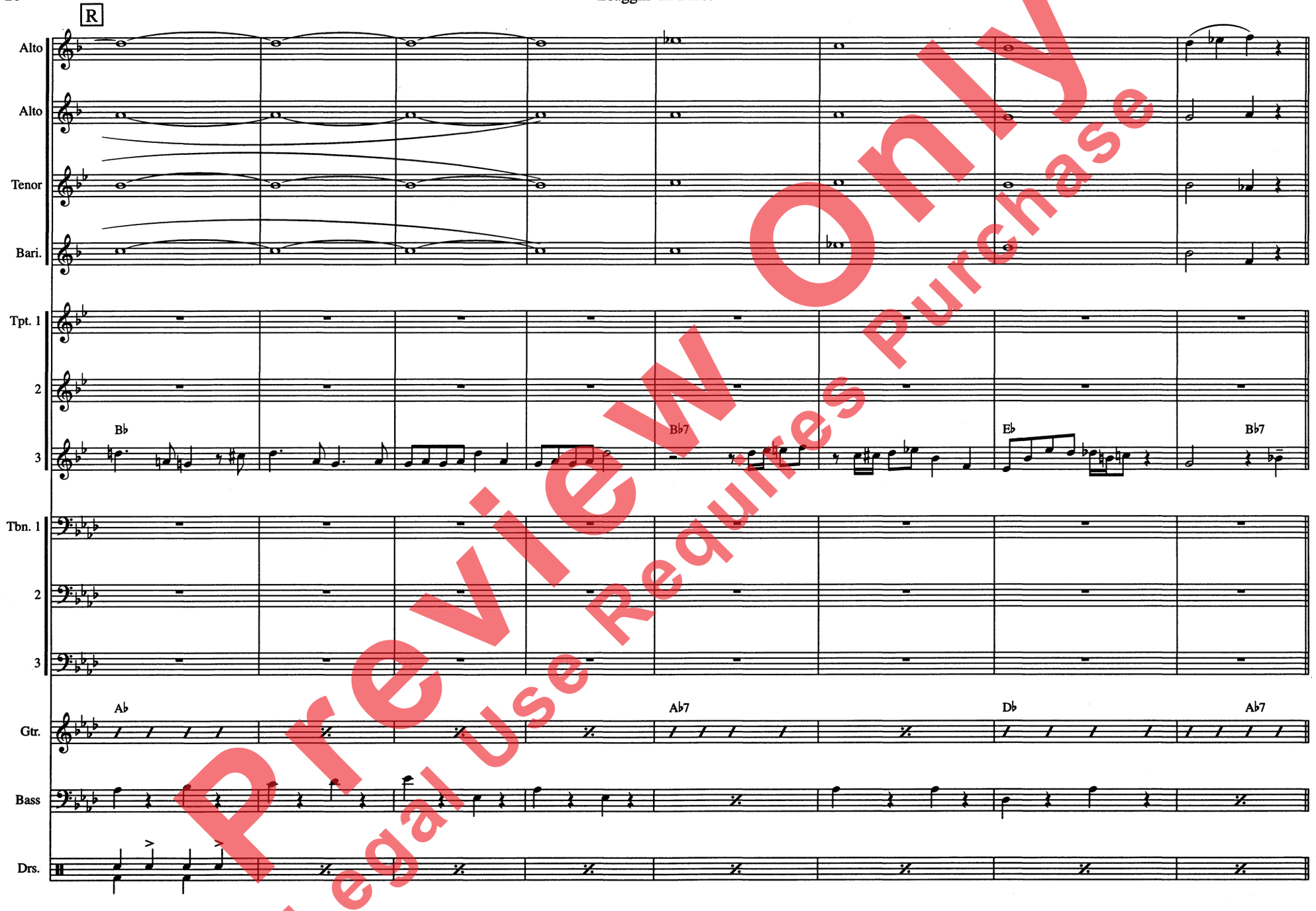


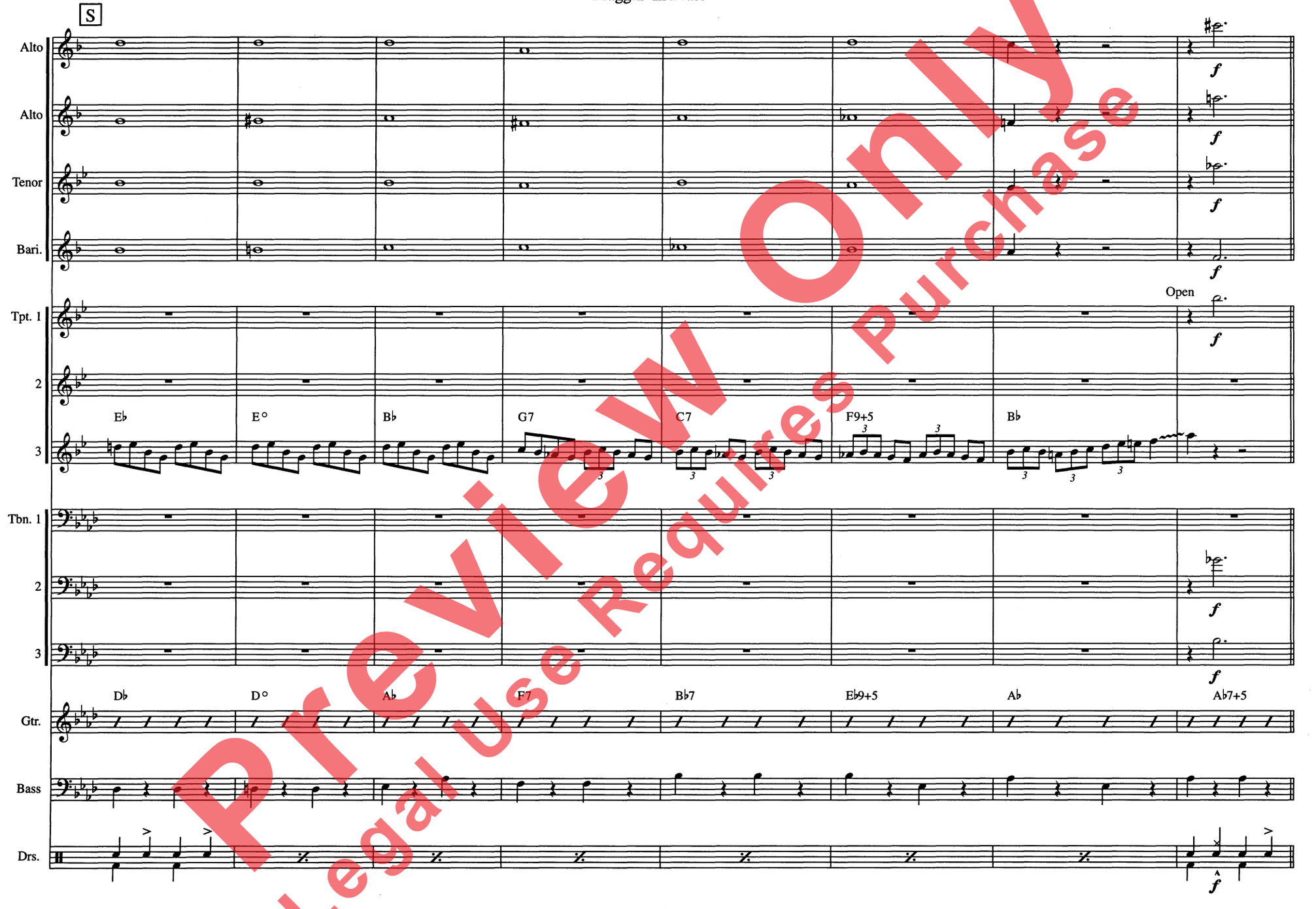


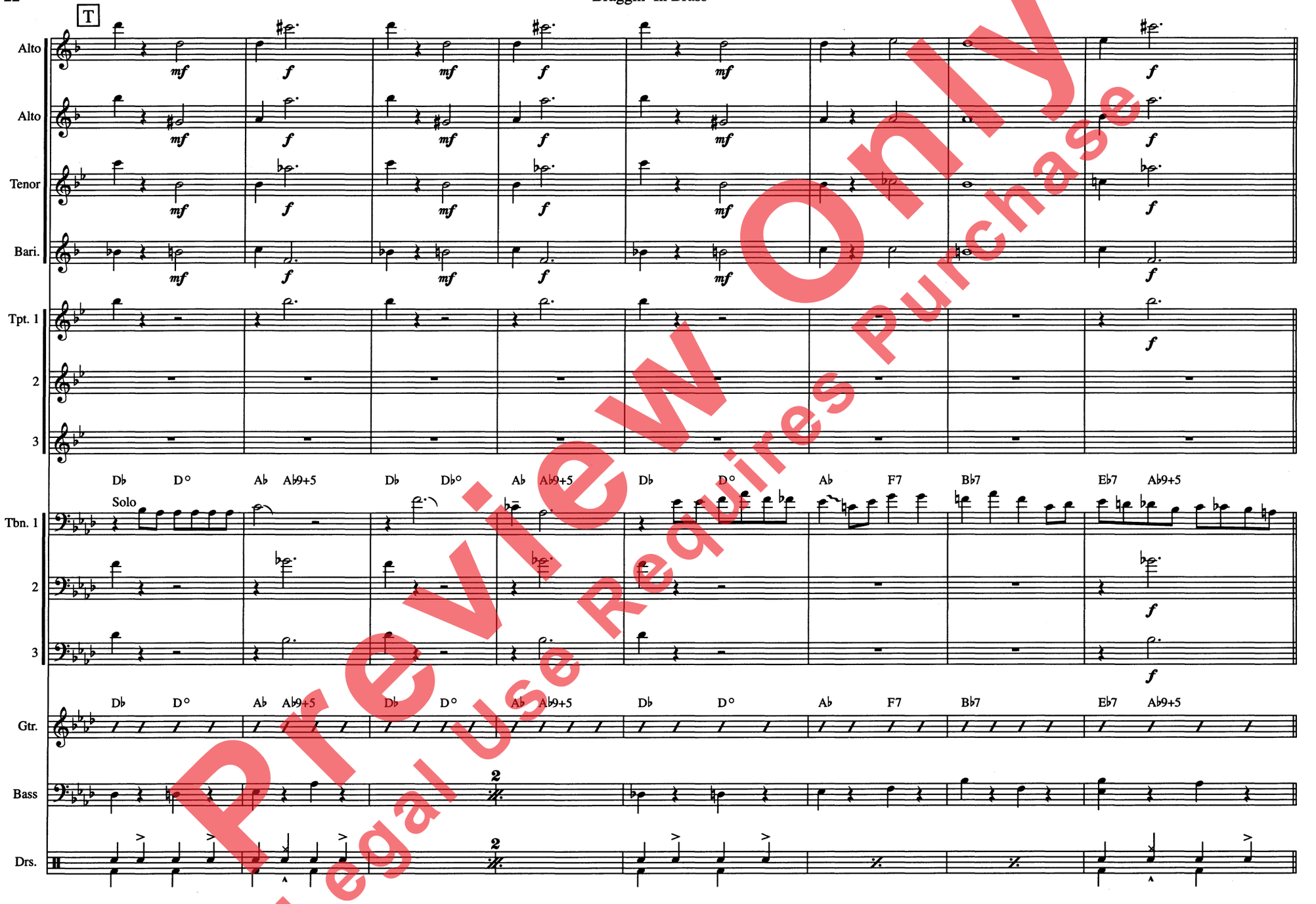


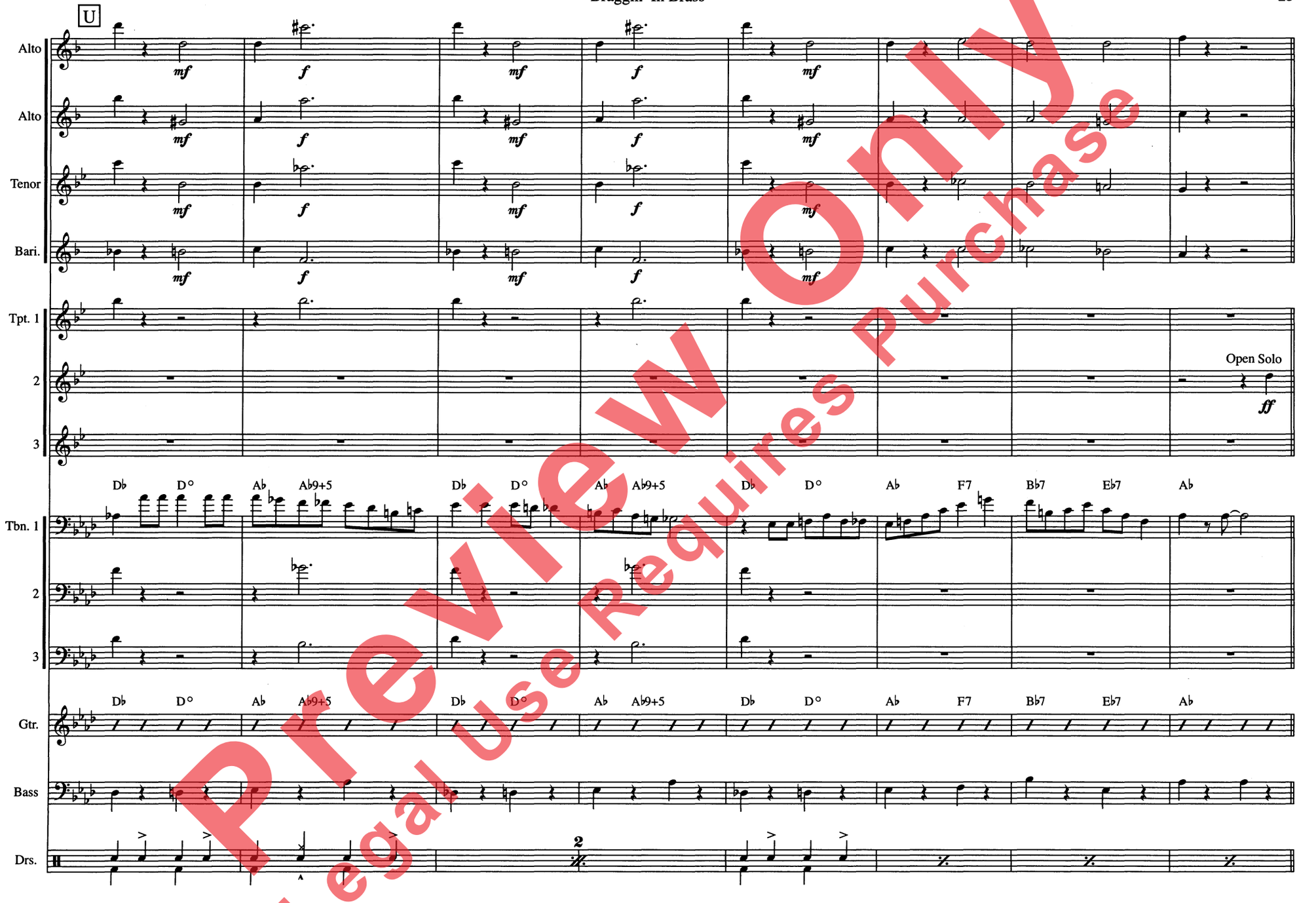


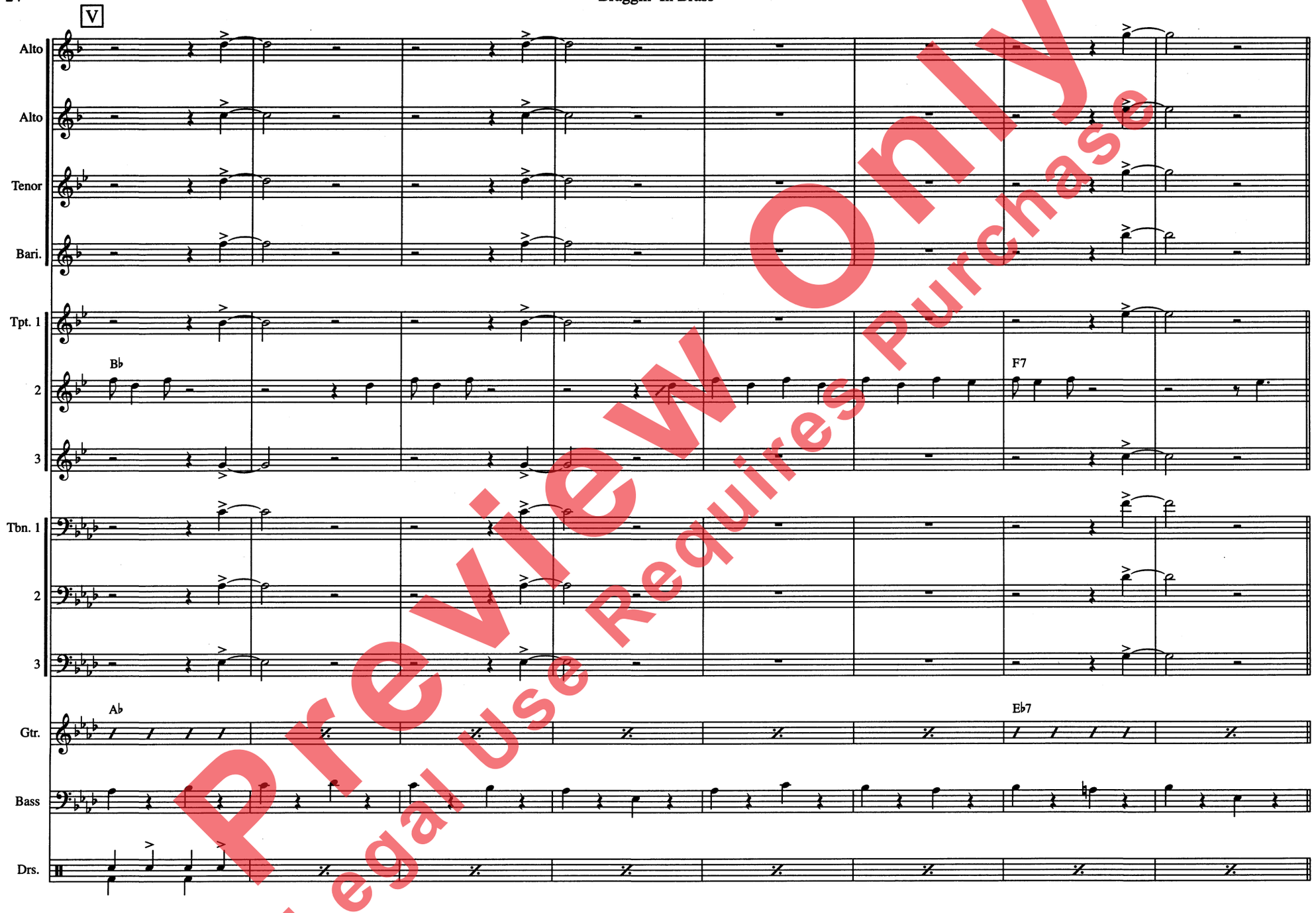


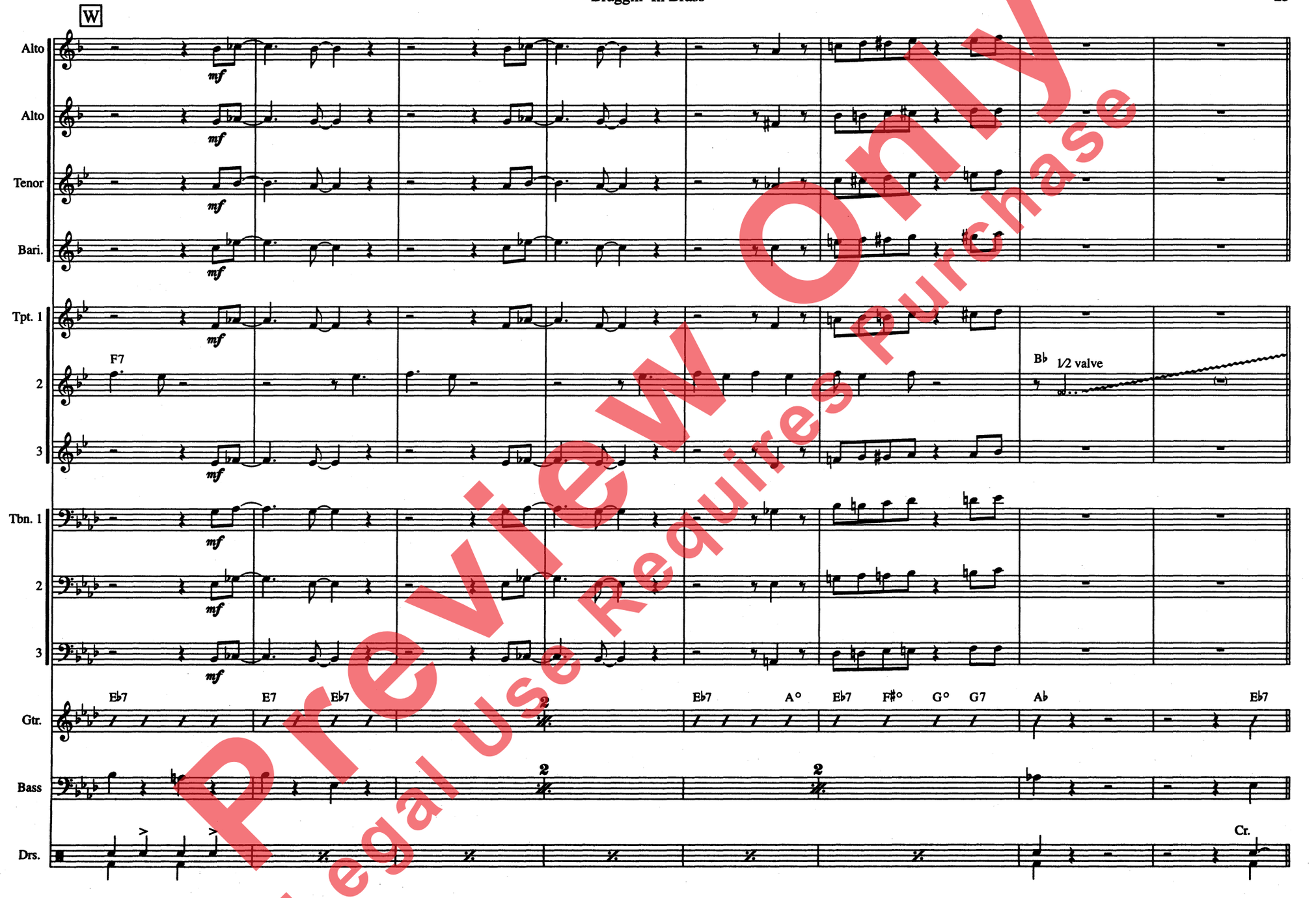


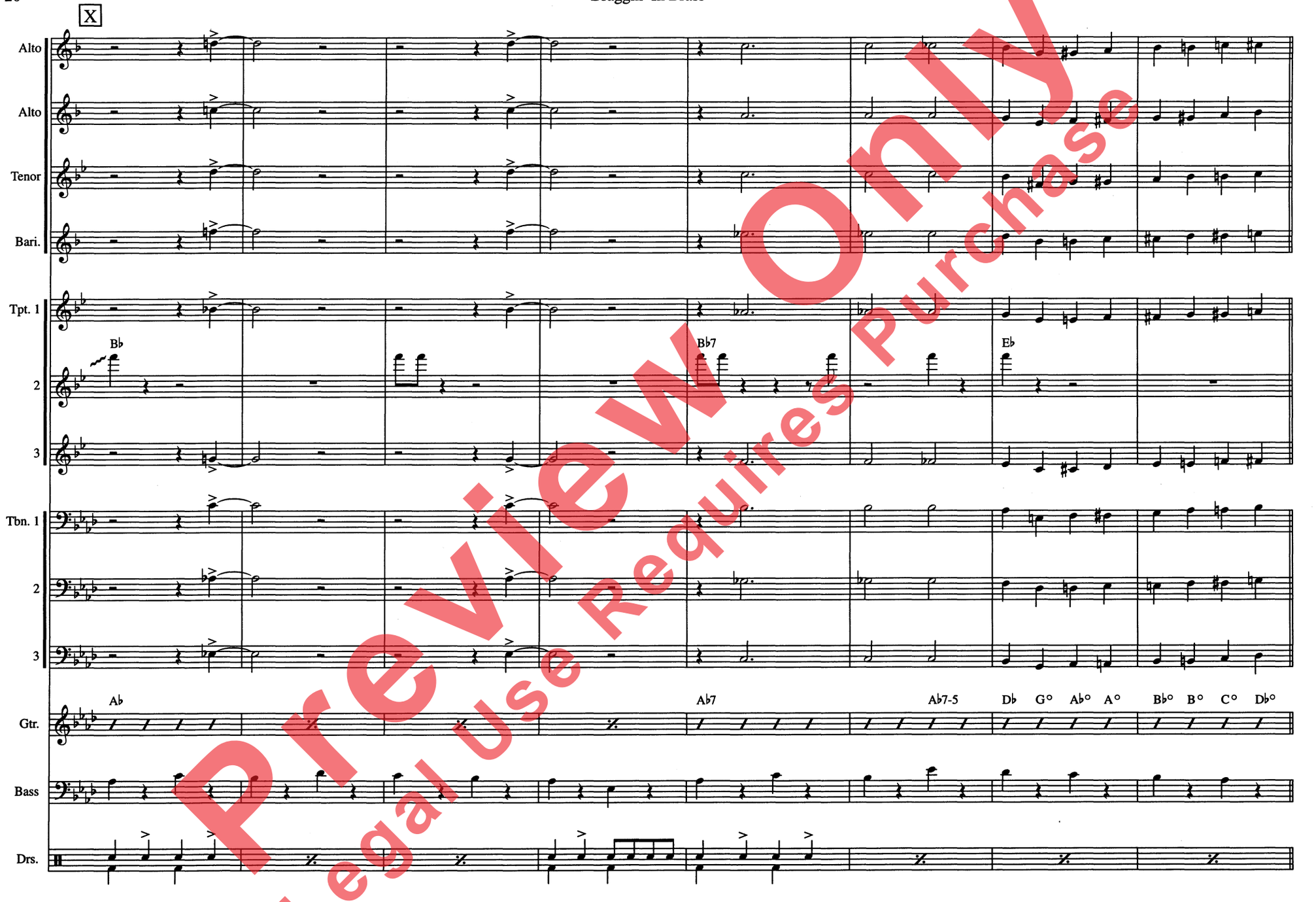


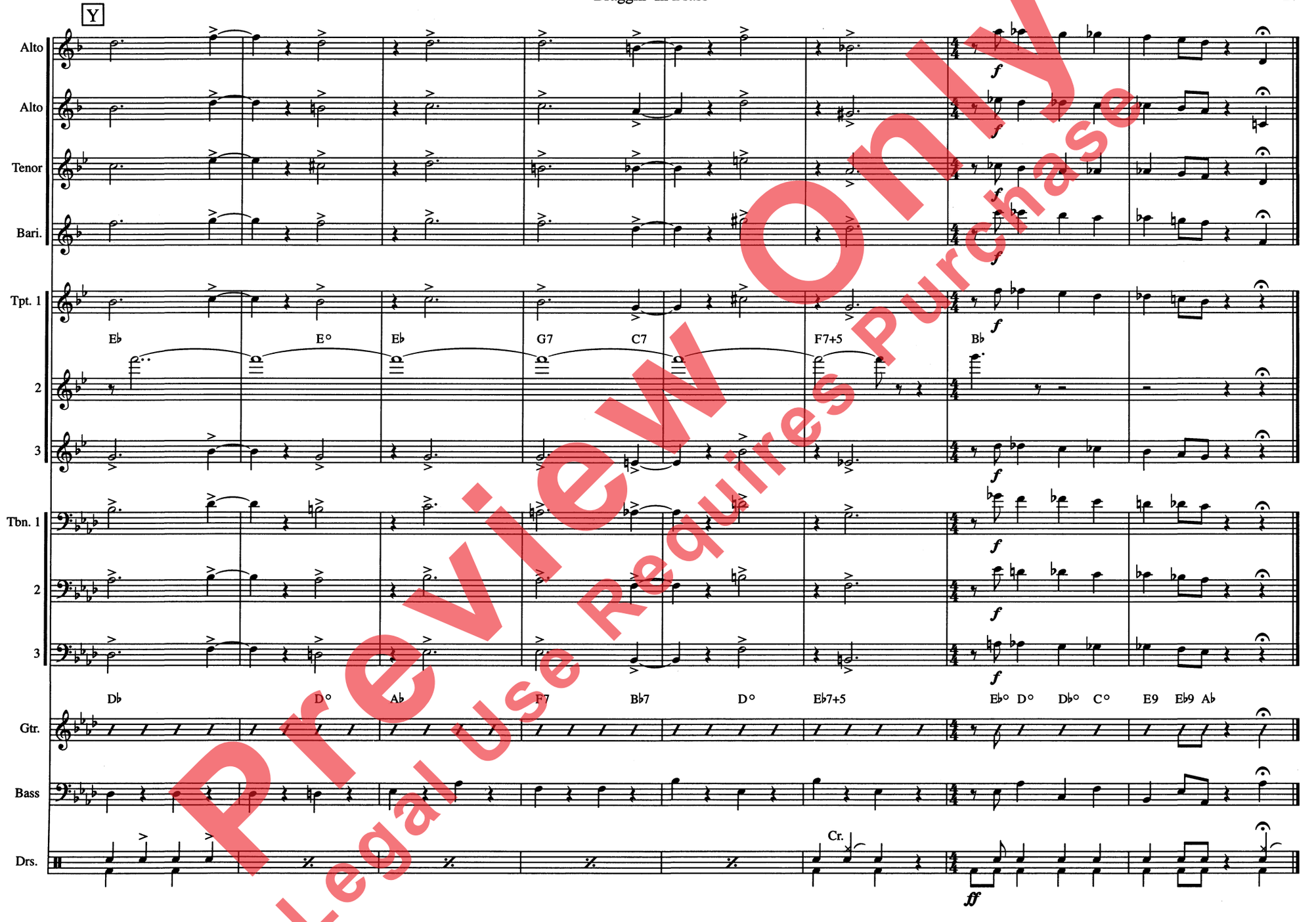












Essentially Ellington

The *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival *(EE)* is one of the most unique jazz programs for high school bands in North America. *EE* extends the legacy of Duke Ellington by widely disseminating his music, in its original arrangements, to high school musicians for study and performance. Utilizing Ellington's music challenges students to increase their musical proficiency and knowledge of the jazz language. *EE* consists of the following initiatives and services:

- **Supplying the Music:** Each year Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC) transcribes, publishes, and distributes Duke Ellington charts (along with additional educational materials) to high school bands in the U.S., Canada and American schools abroad.
- **Talking About Duke:** Throughout the school year, band directors and students correspond with professional clinicians who answer questions regarding Ellington's music. *EE* strives to foster mentoring relationships through e-mail correspondence, various conference presentations, and the festival weekend.
- **Sharing Experiences:** Students are encouraged to enter an essay contest by writing about an experience they have had with jazz music. The first-place winner earns the honor of naming a seat in Frederick P. Rose Hall—home of Jazz at Lincoln Center.
- **Professional Feedback:** Bands are invited to submit a recording of their performance of the charts either for entry in the competition or for comments only. Every submission receives a thorough written assessment.
- **Finalists and In-School Workshops:** Fifteen bands are selected from competition entries to attend the competition and festival in New York City. To prepare, each finalist band receives an in-school workshop led by a professional musician. Local *EE* participants are also invited to attend these workshops.
- **Competition & Festival:** *EE* culminates in a three-day festival at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall. Students, teachers, and musicians from across North America participate in workshops, rehearsals, and performances. The festival concludes with an evening concert at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall that features the three top-placing bands, joining Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in an all-Ellington performance.
- **Band Director Academy:** This professional development program for band directors is designed to enhance their ability to teach and conduct the music of Duke Ellington and other big band composers. Led by prominent jazz educators each summer, this short program integrates performance, history, pedagogy, and discussion into an intensive educational experience for educators at all levels.

As of May 2005, *EE* has distributed scores to more than 3,500 schools in all 50 U.S. states, schools in Canadian provinces, American schools abroad, and schools in Western Australia. Since 1996, more than 200,000 students have been exposed to Duke Ellington's music through *EE*.

Alfred Music Publishing Co., Inc. is the official print music publisher for Jazz at Lincoln Center.

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Jazz at Lincoln Center

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER is a not-for-profit arts organization dedicated to jazz. With the world-renowned Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra and a comprehensive array of guest artists, Jazz at Lincoln Center advances a unique vision for the continued development of the art of jazz by producing a year-round schedule of performance, education, and broadcast events for audiences of all ages. These productions include concerts, national and international tours, residencies, weekly national radio and television programs, recordings, publications, an annual high school jazz band competition and festival, a band director academy, a jazz appreciation curriculum for children, advanced training through the Juilliard Institute for Jazz Studies, music publishing, children's concerts, lectures, adult education courses and student and educator workshops. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, Chairman of the Board Lisa Schiff, President & CEO Derek E. Gordon, Executive Director Katherine E. Brown and Jazz at Lincoln Center board and staff, Jazz at Lincoln Center will produce hundreds of events during its 2005-06 season. In October 2004, Jazz at Lincoln Center opened Frederick P. Rose Hall - the first-ever performance, education, and broadcast facility devoted to jazz. For more information, visit www.jalc.org.

For more information about *Essentially Ellington* please contact:

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