Learning a new piece of music
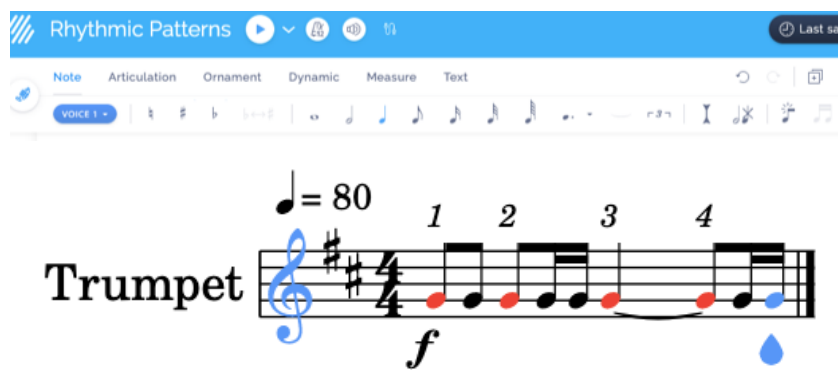
- It can be important for the student to gain a real understanding of the structure of the whole piece from the beginning: what sections re-occur; what keys does the piece travel through and so on.
- Listen to recordings of the piece(s) with the score. This will help to get the overall feel of the piece ... the aural template. This can be really important.
- Then try using a 'jigsaw practice' approach: divide the piece into sections and play the different sections in different (random) order. This has many advantages, including being able to re-start a piece at any given point after an error.
- Start to rehearse the piece(s) at a very low metronome speed – perhaps 60 beats per minute (bpm), and then gradually increase the tempo. 60 bpm may feel painfully slow but make sure that the piece is perfect at this speed before you move on. By the time you're in the 80 bpm stage, the passage or piece should be technically correct and the amount of repetition in getting that far means that it will also be easier to remember.
- Try small sections from memory.

- Play the piece(s) with the piano, if it is accompanied.
- Make recordings of yourself playing in order to review progress. If you have a mobile phone, you can use that.
- If you are still having difficulty speeding up, try to work out how you are conceptualising the musical phrases. Are you thinking of them in small chunks or even single notes? If so, this may be the reason why you're having difficulty speeding up. Think about how you are remembering the piece(s) and try to build larger structures which you can then sing, hear in your head or see in your mind in some way (perhaps as colours or emotions etc.). This might help you to process bigger chunks as a whole allowing more automatic processes to play the piece whilst monitoring which chunk you are on.
- Your aim is to acquire muscle memory for the piece(s). If you have DCD/dyspraxia this may take longer as this affects the brain signals

from the gross muscle groups such as the hand and arm. This is more likely to be the source of a problem with playing at speed than a low processing speed. See the BDA Music document on DCD/dyspraxia and music.

- Computer software (such as Sibelius or ProTools) can be used to support this approach by producing, for example, **specific rhythmic patterns** from the piece, and thus allowing a visual representation of the music which can be annotated for each individual. See the example below

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