

Patrick R. F. Blakley's Visual Portfolio

A serious professional with more than 15 years of experience in music and conceptual/visual design.

ABSTRACT

This Visual Portfolio has been set up to allow the reader to understand Patrick's background in visual and conceptual design as well as offer applied examples for real world scenarios. The style and goals covered throughout this document will be apparent within all content provided.

INTRODUCTION

I am a percussionist from Syracuse, NY. I work with award winning Percussive Theater and Winterguard groups as a concept designer, drill writer and audio editor. I marched four years of drum corps and podiumed in the 2006 I&E event on tenor drums. I have even written a book called Quadratics for advanced tenor drummers. I own a custom drum shop called B Meson Custom Percussion and sell drums internationally. I am an endorsed drumset artist with Epiarch Drums out of Waterloo, Iowa and perform with local groups in a variety of styles including progressive, fusion, alternative and experimental.

REPUTATION & APPROACH

Patrick is an international medalist and has performed for four years with the five-time World Champion Drum Corps Syracuse Brigadiers. He has received the gold medal in numerous regional and national competitions. He has also achieved a bronze medal at the Drum Corps Associates World Championship solo contest.

Patrick is also an instructor and consultant for many New York State Field Band Conference bands and New York State Percussion Circuit ensembles. This list includes many of the top groups such as Paul V. Moore High School's field band and percussive theater, both of which became state champions numerous times and the latter reaching an impressive four-time gold medal streak while working with Patrick. Central Square Middle School's parade band, Liverpool High School's Percussive Theater, Phoenix High School's percussive theater, Oswego High School's parade band and Cicero North Syracuse's percussive theater are among other top groups that Patrick has consulted with both visually and musically.

EXPERIENCE

Patrick has been performing music as far back as he can remember. He began playing percussion instruments in 1993 with concert instrumentation. He has performed with symphonic bands, orchestras, choruses, jazz bands, rock bands, fusion bands, marching bands, percussive theaters and then drum and bugle corps. His teaching career began in late 2002 with both marching and concert percussionists. He also began teaching privately to students interested in advanced marching percussion and drum set. Patrick would also substitute teach K-12 for two years specializing in music, fine arts, language, history and science.

HONORS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

International Medalist

Syracuse Brigadiers Drum & Bugle Corps, 2003-2006

- Performed four years with the five-time World Champion Drum Corps
- Gold medal in many regional and national competitions
- Bronze Medalist at the Drum Corps Associates World Championship solo contest

NYSFBC/NYSPC Instructor and Consultant

Consultant for high school percussive theater and field band groups, 2004-Present

- Visual and Musical Instruction – Paul V. Moore H.S.
- Music Arrangement and Composition – Paul V. Moore H.S.
- Music Instruction – Central Square M.S.
- Music Consultation – Liverpool H.S.
- Visual and Concept Design – Phoenix H.S.
- Visual and Music Consulting – Oswego H.S.
- Visual and Music Consulting – Cicero North Syracuse H.S.

Teaching Experience

Instructed classes from 1 – 120 students, 2003-Present

- Rhythms of Central New York, K-6
- Central Square School District, K-12
- Liverpool Central School District 8-12
- Oswego School District, 8-12
- Phoenix School District, 8-12
- Cicero North Syracuse School District, 7-12
- Private Instruction, 10-12

CONCEPTUAL AND VISUAL DESIGN

I primarily focus my time on the visual aspect of percussive theater. Concept design is the first step towards a successful production and from there the visual display must convey the story.

My visual design is a non-transitional style with the emphasis obviously on staging. This means that every set is in itself a strong form rather than relying on transitional 'soft' forms. Staging is always the key factor in a successful show which allows for the performer's potential success with regards to the listening situations.

With all of this in mind I convey the concept and story in a well thought-out and organized manner and have the ability to adapt to new ideas as well as musical changes throughout the evolution of the show.

The audience will be guided through the story in a creative way while at the same time being entertained all while presenting the performers with opportunities to learn.

I use the definitive 3D writing software for visual design which is Pyware3D. This allows for the concise depiction of mental image to physical representation of that image. It also allows for the ability to adjust the design and allows room for changes to ideas and implementation of new concepts without recreating entire pages by hand.

I also am very familiar with MakeMusic's Finale as well as Avid Technology's Sibelius software which can be helpful when designing a visual concept around staging. Being able to actually see exactly which section is playing what or, more technically challenging, when individuals in a section are spotlighted which can prove difficult in the staging phase. Having an electronic copy of sheet music and being familiar with both Finale and Sibelius while using Pyware3D means the designs can be explored in even greater depth and detail.

Electronic media creation also allows for simple distribution throughout an entire staff. Visual aspects can be changed and rearranged from any computer with the software as well as sent to its destination with ease.

DESIGNING A SUCCESSFUL CONCEPT

Designing a concept is a difficult task to do well. A successful concept needs to do many things to promote a story and have a resolution that will all fit the genre of music and movement with usually no speaking directly to the audience.

First of all there should always be a primary goal. My primary goal with a concept is to do it effectively without the need for a narrator to bridge the gap between the audience and the story. Different primary goals could include things like simply pushing the member's ability by challenging each of them in a specific way, or perhaps being unique among a competitive group or class, and even just learning from possible mistakes in a previous season. Having a goal always pushes the designers in an initial direction rather than allowing for stagnation.

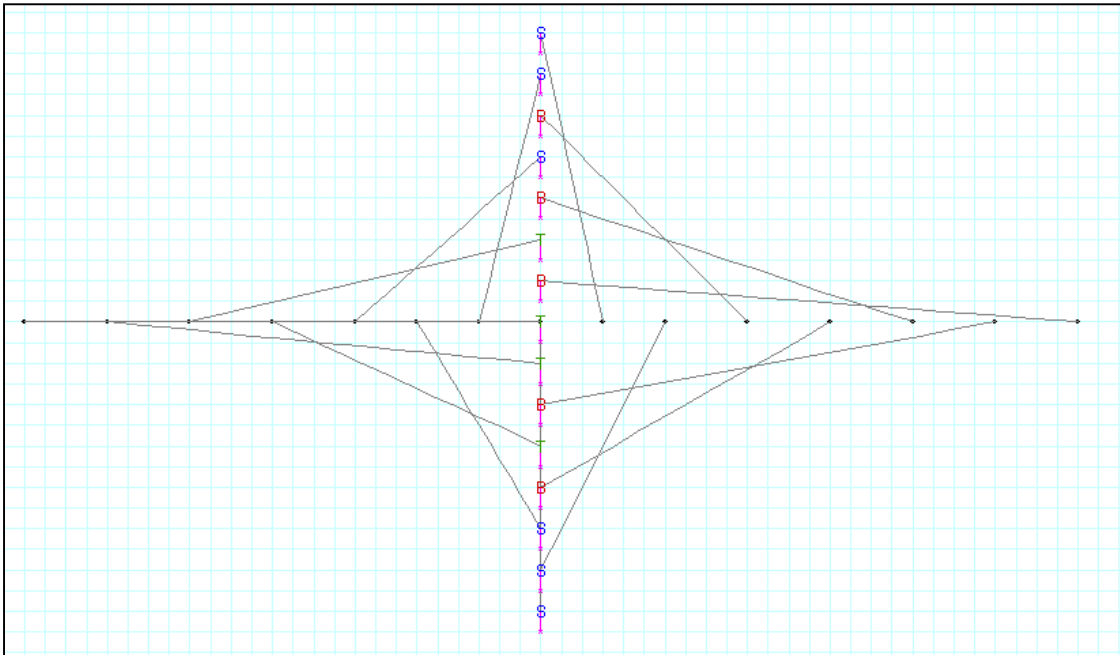
After setting a goal or two it is time to choose a method of achieving that goal in the long term. This means deciding on a concept. Creating the right concept is a difficult task in that there are many things to overcome immediately such as group size, group ability, and even difficulty to arrange musically. All of these decisions need to reflect the primary goals, otherwise you are not setting up yourself or your group for success.

I always think of the activity as a percussive theater. This means that it is more than just drumming that occurs indoors and during the winter. "Percussive Theater" promotes the idea that members are performers instead of just drummers. I even go so far as to see them all as actors as opposed to musicians alone. The gym floor is a stage and our performers use their instrument to convey emotion and ideas as opposed to dialogue. Each individual is a character in the story and instead of learning lines they learn music which, just like learning lines, there is more to learning music than notes on a page. These ideas work hand in hand with the idea that this is a theatrical performance and not just something that takes place indoors during the winter.

VISUAL DESIGN

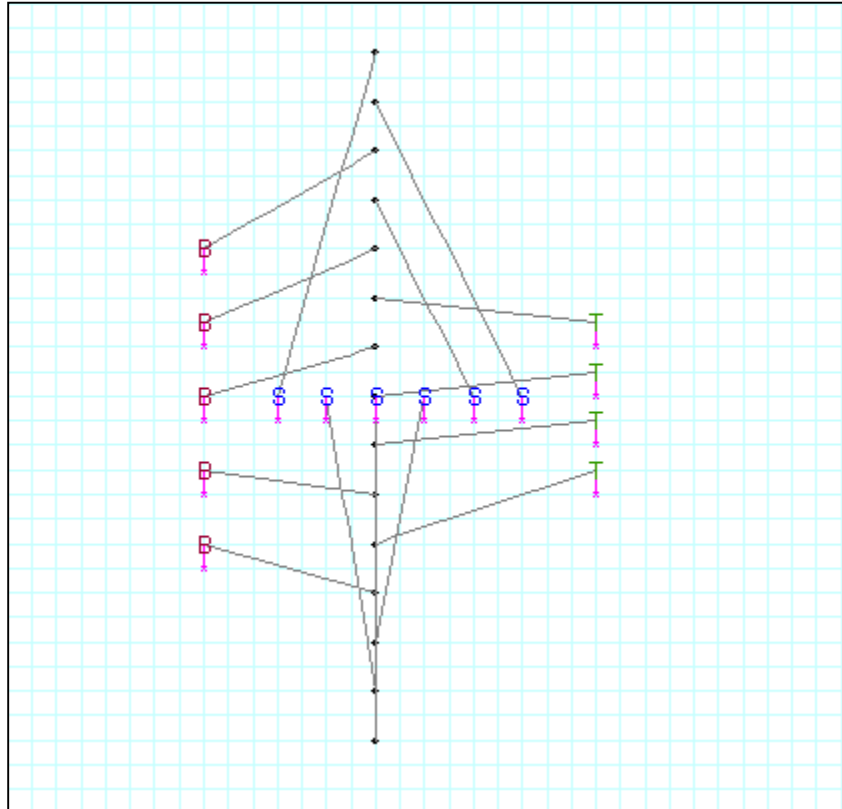
To give some visual examples I've chosen some ideas from previous adaptations as examples of my work. The non-transitional style is something that is difficult to achieve but the result is more rewarding because each form is a solid set distinguishing itself from the previous as well as the next. To break this idea down into a very simple example you can view the image below.

The small dots represent where the performer was in the previous set and the colored letters show where they are currently. The black lines are just visual aids to the path the performer travelled. Basically what is shown is a set of forms that has no soft transition, meaning there was no need for a sub-set to get to the next desired visual formation.

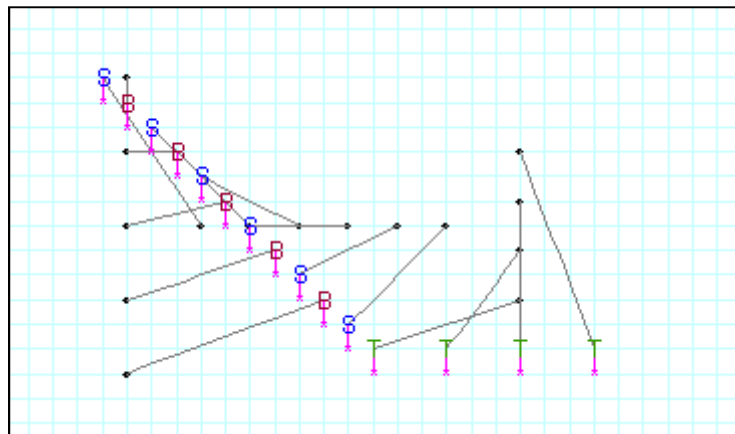


Starting from the horizontal line, the next desired form is a vertical straight line. There is only one reasonable way to do this, without a sub-set, in a short number of counts. That is to have each performer take the same size route, instead of having the middle performer (green 'T') remain stationary and the outside members (blue 'S') rotate along the outside of the form; every member is doing the same amount of work to get to their next spot on the floor. You should also notice that the colors then get mismatched in the vertical line, and this is alright for one (usually two) reason(s): Every member is within a reasonable listening distance (meaning that the speed of sound is not compromising their ability to play exactly together) and the second reason usually is because the colored sections will be sorted out in an upcoming set. This is a very basic example of non-transitional drill, more advanced examples are to follow.

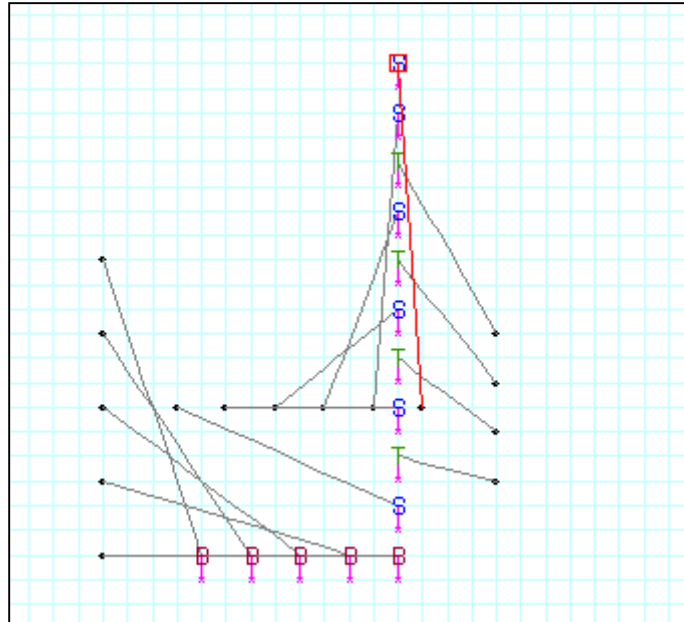
Continuing from the example on the previous page lets assume that the snares will be spotlighted in the coming phrase so we want to set them up for success by giving them the optimal listening situation. The image below shows a possible next set to set up the snare section (blue 'S').



By having them in a horizontal line they can listen in easily. The bass and tenor sections in vertical lines help reduce distraction and give attention to the snare section. From here we can then assume the tenor section will have a spotlight section and set them up for success as well.

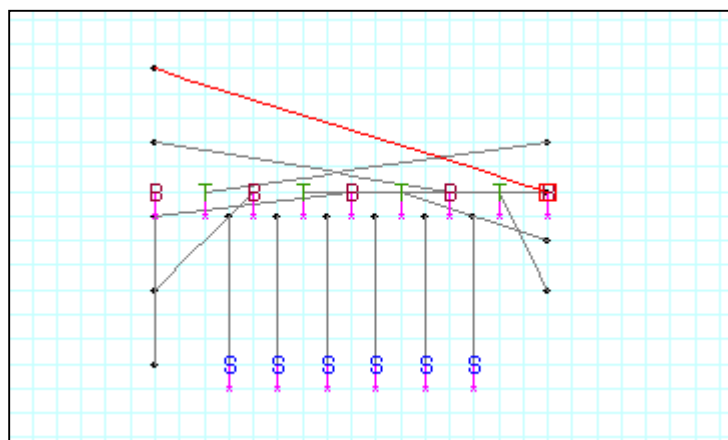


The last example shows how the audience's attention can be directed at the tenor section to further emphasize their featured musical phrase. But instead lets say the bass section was featured musically, rather than the tenor section. The below example shows this possibility.



Again, the vertical line behind the basses draws attention down toward them while at the same time achieving a less distracting form. This example also demonstrates how each member is doing the same amount of work, notice the bass section, each member is traveling the same distance while maintaining order and avoiding a possible collision with the snare section. Note that this is evident in all of these examples.

So instead of either of these situations, lets now assume that the snare section continued their feature into these counts rather than a different section being focused. The below example shows a possible successful idea.



Again, notice each member doing relatively the same amount of work regarding step size. Also, if you study any of these images with the previous set you can see how I use momentum to gain an advantage within each set. Keeping in mind that drums weigh quite a bit compared to the human body, momentum is a huge factor that is normally overlooked. None of the members are required to perform a stop-and-go in the reverse direction (against their momentum). It is not always a viable option to avoid momentum shifts, but usually, if you look for it, the answer can be found which then works in the performer's favor. Also, and probably obviously, each performer is not asked to take unreasonable step sizes. This can sometimes nullify an idea simply because it is asking too much of a performer with a heavy drum, solutions can easily be found within reason and it works in the long term by not draining the performers physical ability anywhere within the show.

Hopefully this has been an insightful look into some ideals that I maintain throughout my work. They scratch the surface of the possibilities for a truly successful show as well as an entertaining one. The concept and story should be as clear as if we were using words and the visual ideas coupled with the musical colors can create something immense, more than words.

With the right ingredients and a bit of determination the possibilities will present themselves without doubt. We hold all the keys.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick R. F. Blakley', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Patrick R. F. Blakley

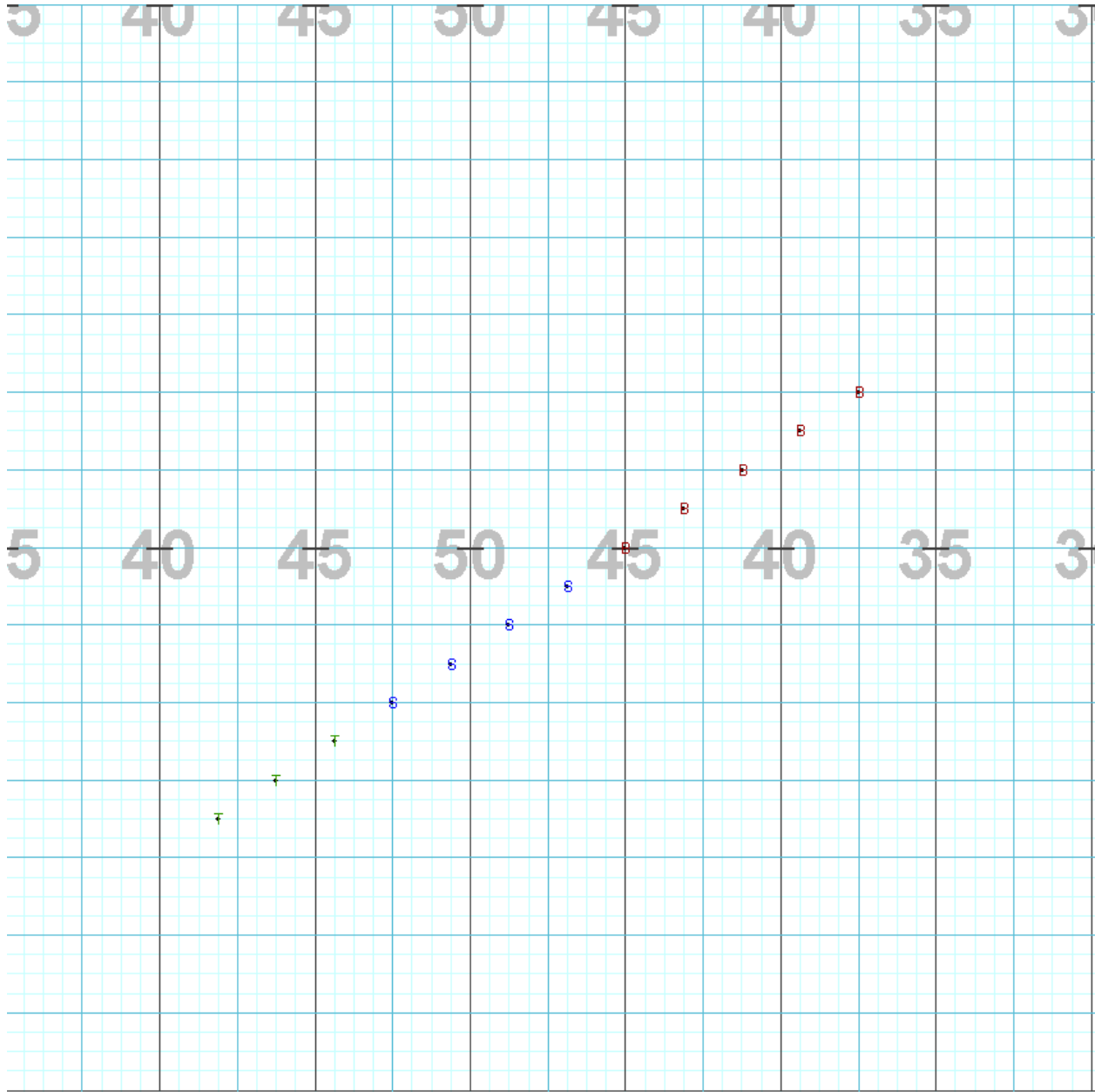
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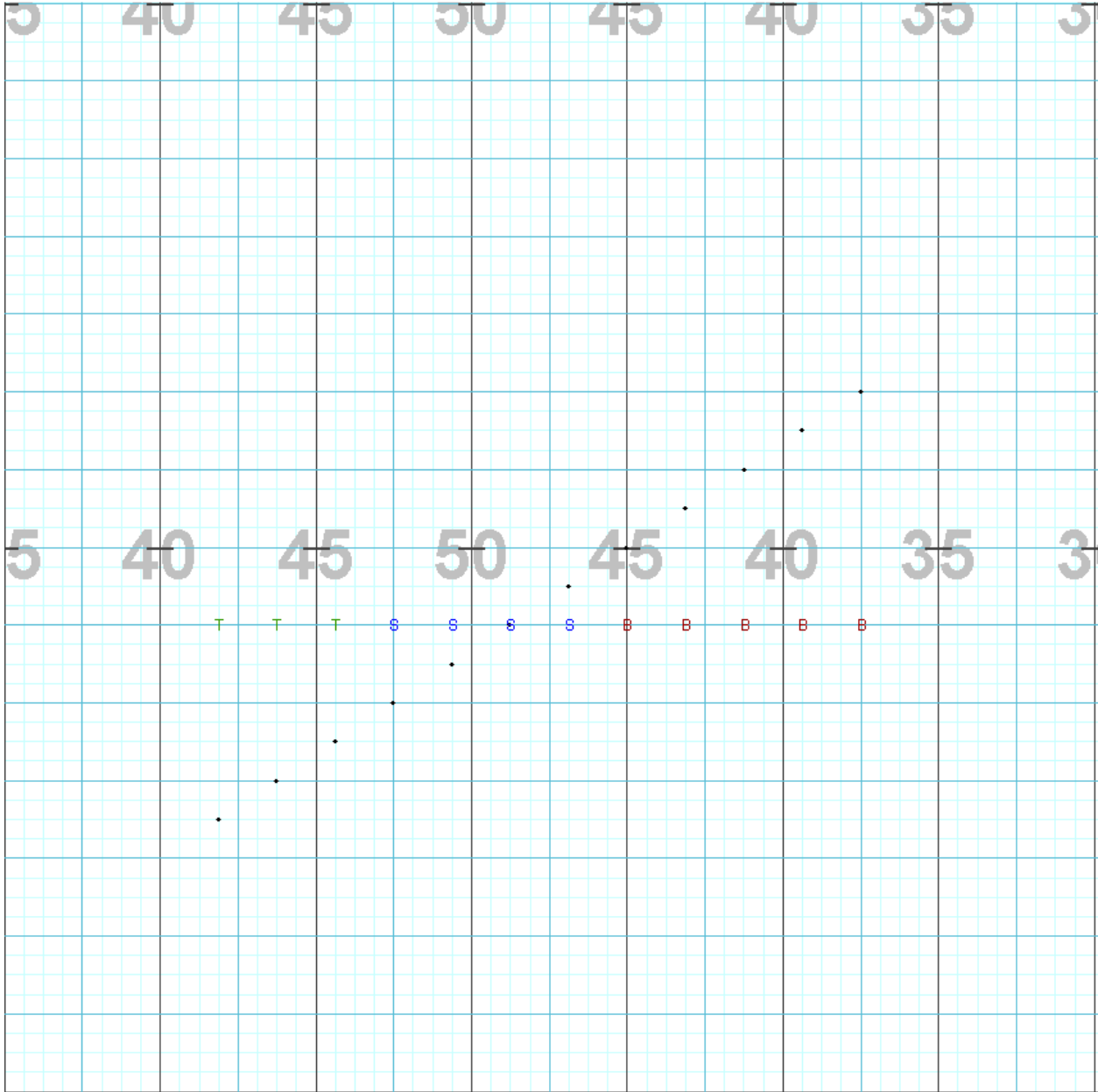
Attached below is a drill excerpt from a percussion feature with a 12-piece battery.

Opening Set



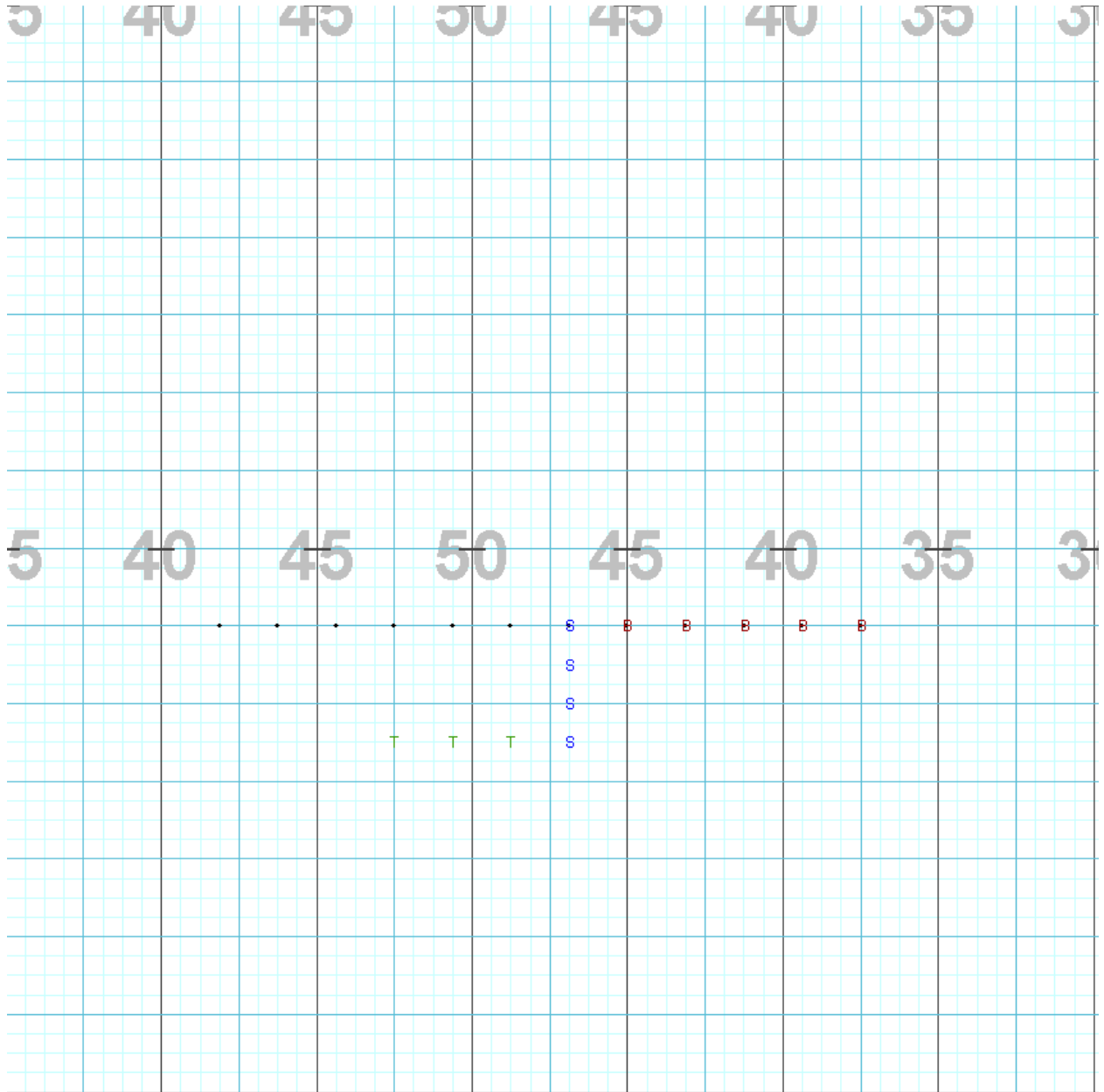
1

12 counts: battery break



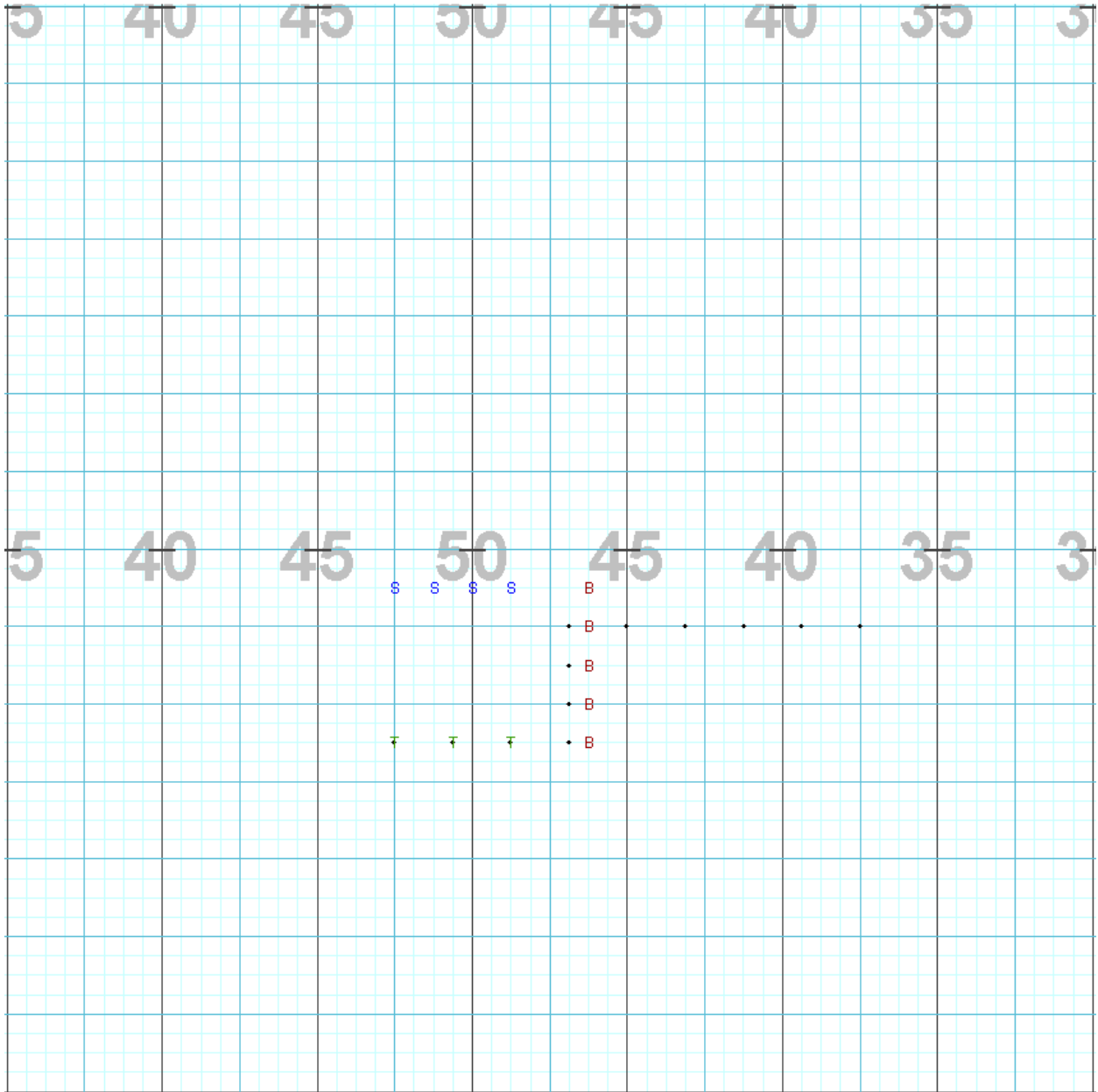
2

8 counts: Bass Feature



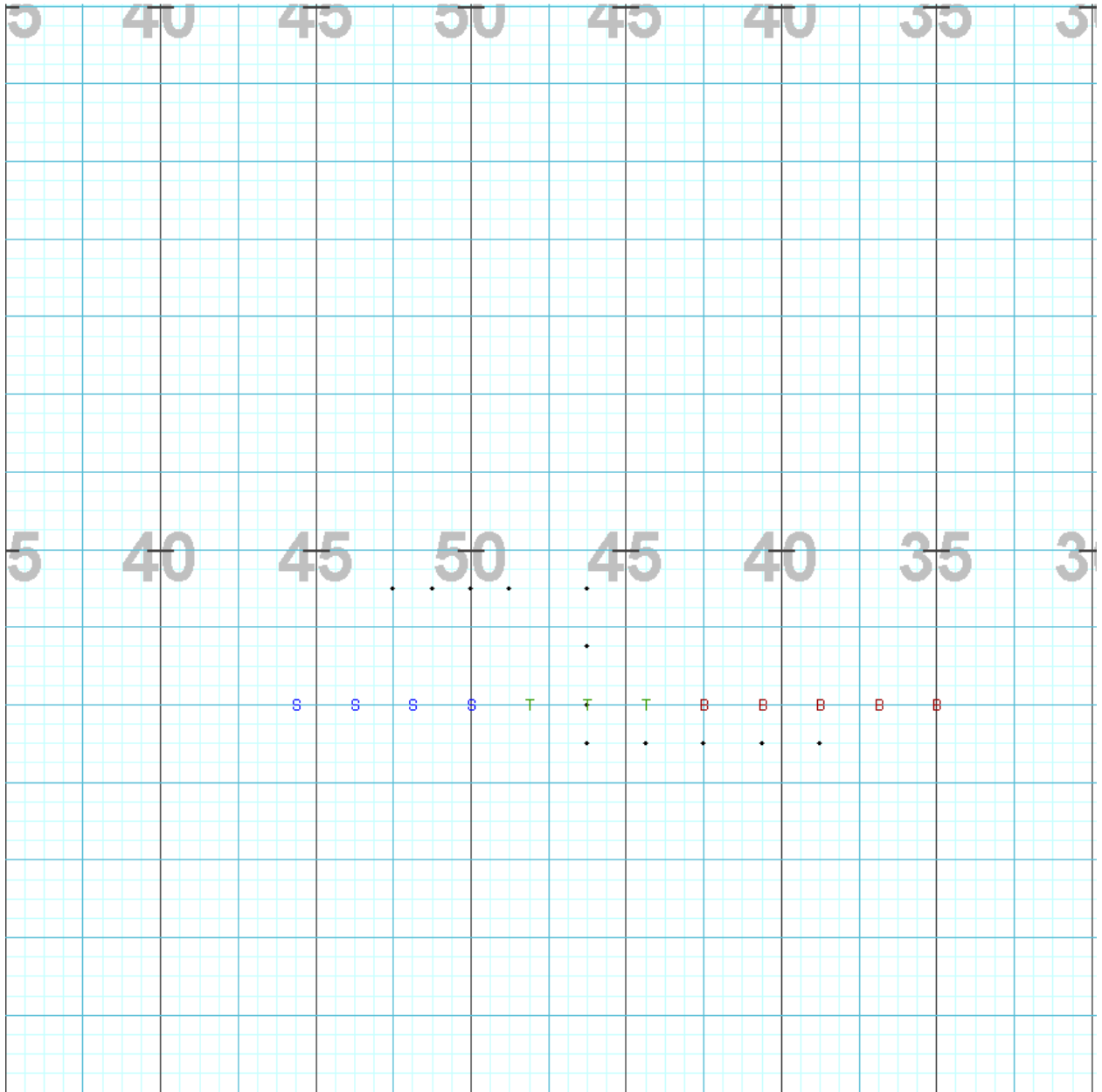
3

8 counts: tenor feature



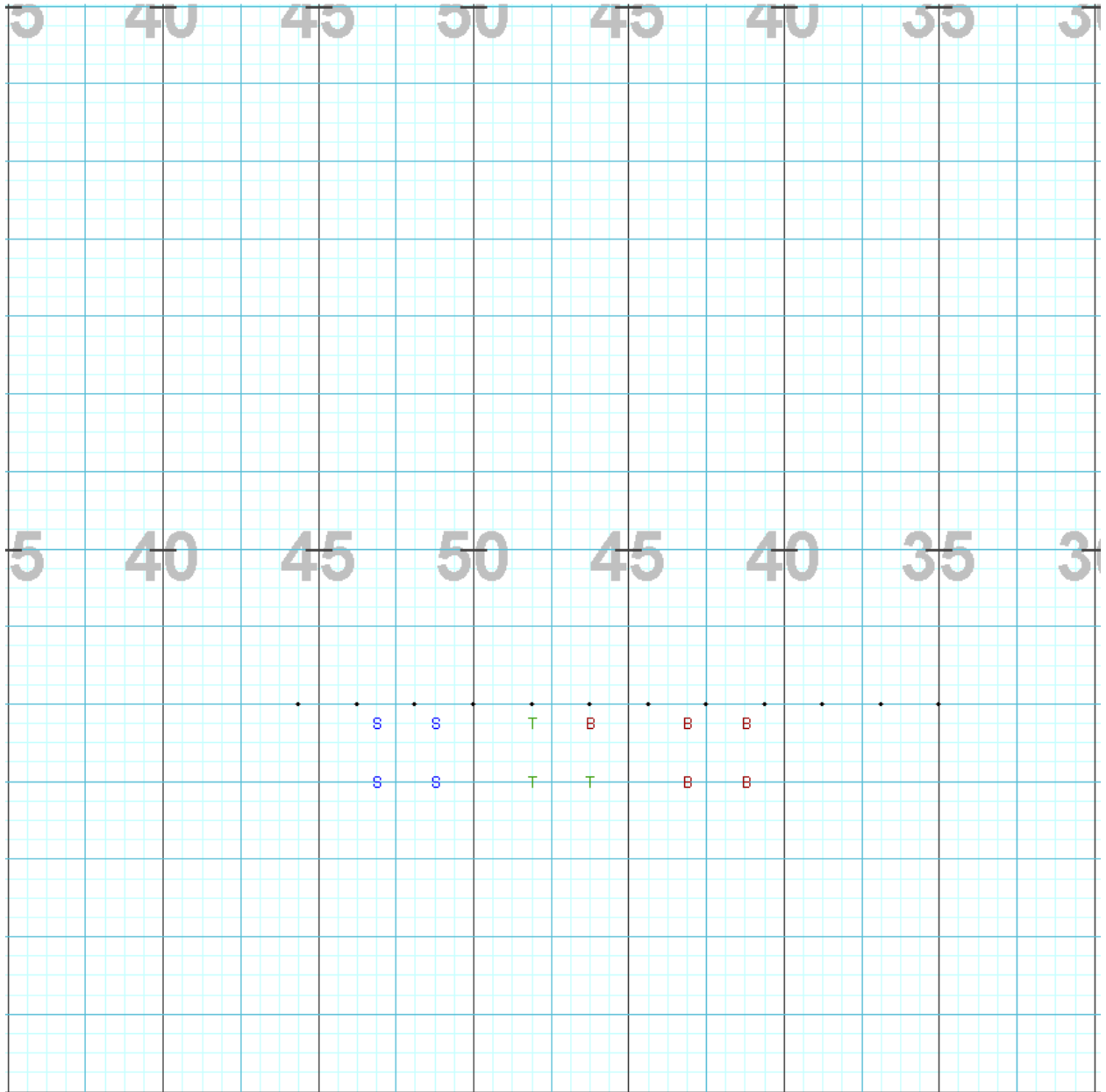
5

8 counts/hold 12: battery feature



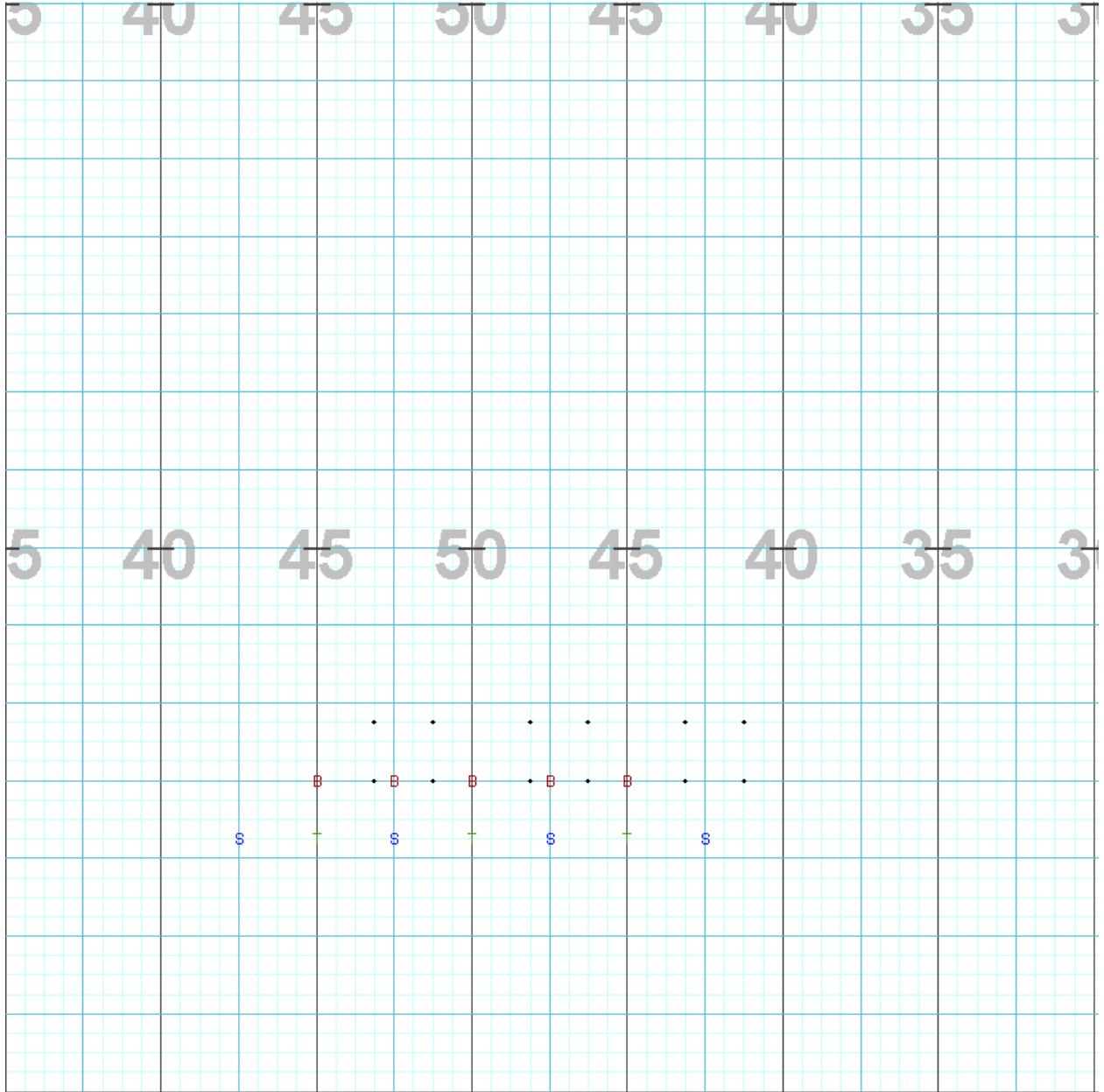
6

8 counts: pit feature/break



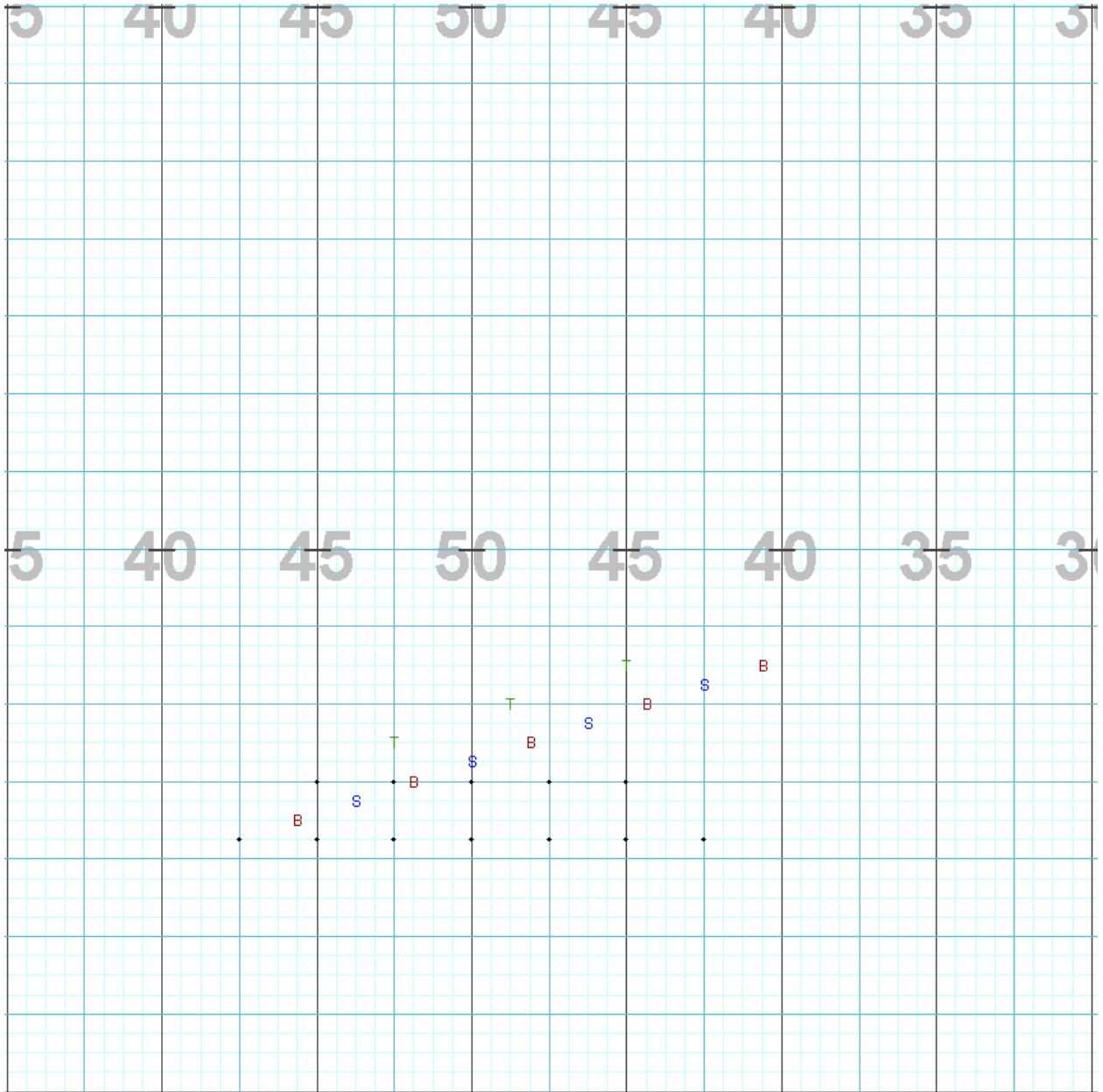
7

8 counts/hold 8: percussion impact



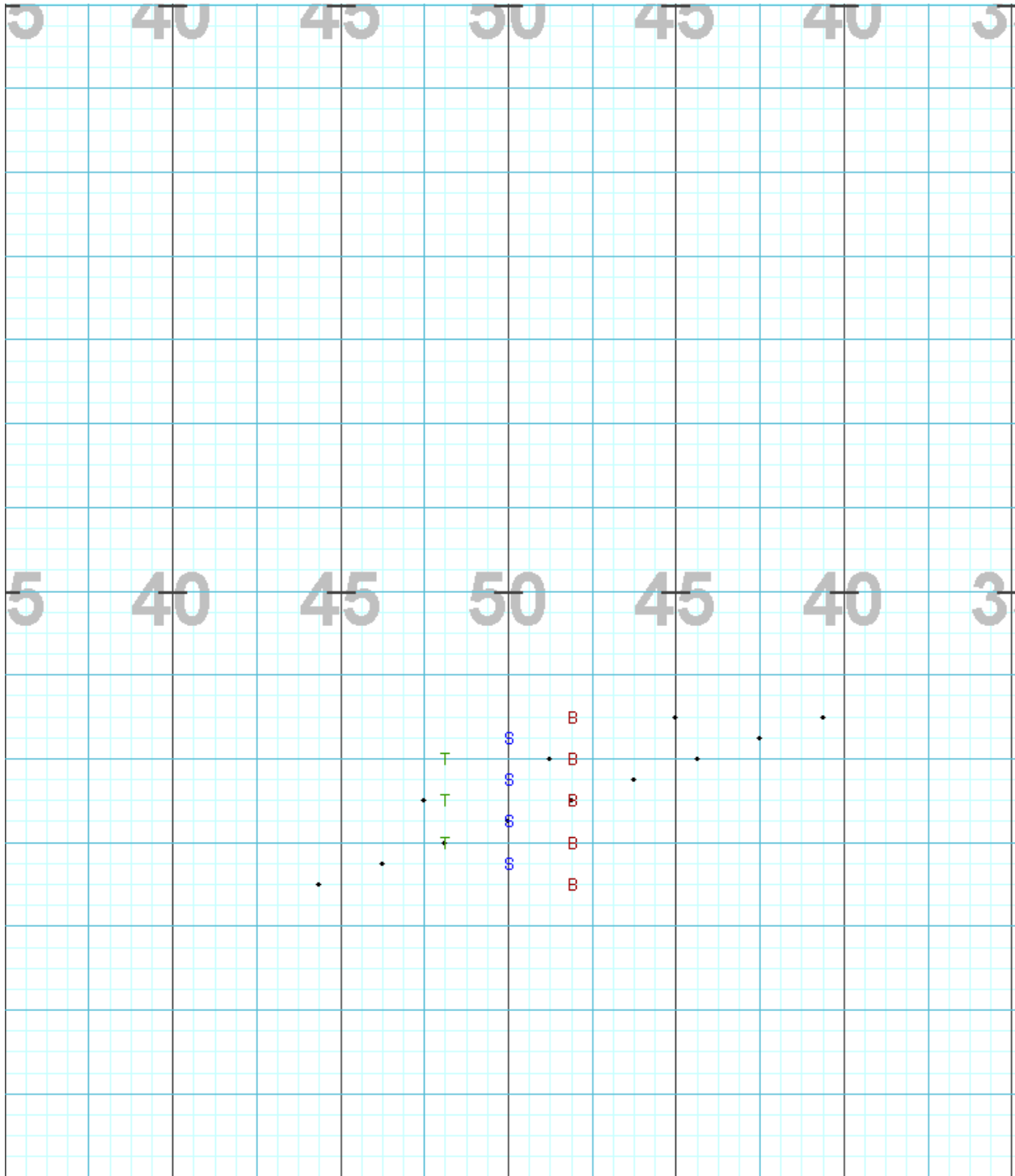
8

12 counts: decrescendo/tenors out



9

8 counts: mezzo-piano/snare with pit



10

6 counts/hold 16: crescendo into resolution to end

