# Fairfield High School Front Ensemble Information and Technique Packet-2015

Welcome! The percussion staff is very excited to welcome you to the ensemble as we begin preparing for the upcoming season!

This packet lays-out our expectations of you and examines all of the skills necessary for you to develop throughout the season into a strong individual contributor to the overall success of the ensemble. Definitions of techniques and their corresponding exercises have been included as a formal introduction to the kind of music we will be playing this year.

At a minimum, students must have a basic ability to read music and demonstrate rhythm control. We will teach you everything else you need to know. All new techniques will be defined throughout this packet and more formally explored over the course of the months ahead. A majority of the rehearsal time will be spent examining technique and learning exercises up until the season begins with the full marching band. After that, we will focus on learning and cleaning the fall marching band season competition show for the remainder of the season.

Any student who is willing to learn and has a passion for music and music performance is welcome and encouraged to attend as many pre-season rehearsals as possible so that by the time camps begin in late July, all students have the necessary solid technical foundation and mastery of the exercises which will ensure our ability to field the most competitive ensemble possible.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me or any of the other percussion staff members. We are all eager to help in any way that we can.

Jake Gibson jacobgibson91@hotmail.com

# **Expectations**

### What you will need during every rehearsal-

**Music:** You will need to purchase a 3 ring binder in which you will keep all of your music. Any paper or exercises in this packet should be placed in the binder and *you need to have it at every rehearsal*. Within the binder, you will need sheet protectors. It gets windy outside and rains sometimes. The sheet protectors help keep your music from ripping or getting wet. After your music is given to you, it is <u>your</u> responsibility to take care of it!! You can't learn your show without your music!!!

**Pencil:** You must have a pencil at every rehearsal. Many things will be written on your music (measure numbers, drill sets, stickings, etc...) You must write on your music with a pencil, not a pen. Sometimes things are written and defined, and later may be changed again. You can't erase a pen, so you must have a pencil.

Water Bottle: Marching Band is an outdoor activity. In the summer, we spend 90% of the day outside rehearsing. The days get very hot and you will need to stay hydrated. You must bring water, in a bottle, to be kept close to you during rehearsal. I don't want anyone to get sick during rehearsal so water breaks will be given frequently. Students will not be allowed to go get a drink from the water fountain inside the school when we are rehearsing outside in order to keep the pace of rehearsal moving. We will take extended breaks but most water breaks will be given as a "gush and go" in which case everyone will grab a sip of water and then return directly to rehearsal. During sectional time alone from the battery and the wind section, water breaks will be very relaxed, when we rehearse with the battery or the full band, we will only take water breaks when the entire band takes a water break. Do yourself a favor and bring a water bottle to every rehearsal.

\*\*\*Forgetting one of these at a rehearsal will result in running a lap\*\*\*

#### **Attendance**

Attendance at all rehearsals and performances is mandatory. Each student should refer to the attendance policy as defined by the marching band directors. The attendance policy is not different from the full marching band policy but it is important to take note of these regulations:

As stated during the drumline informational meeting, rehearsals through the winter are not formally "mandatory," but you should think of them as though they are. Your ability to compete and contribute to the success of the ensemble is directly correlated to your attendance. In short, when you miss rehearsals, the group suffers.

Keep in mind, we will work on new things each rehearsal, so if you miss a rehearsal, you will be responsible for the material that was covered in the previous week. Attendance is vital to developing the skills and technique that you will need throughout the season. If you miss a rehearsal, you will be behind.

#### **Conflicts and Vacations:**

Conflicts and vacations are normal throughout the summer. Missing rehearsal due to a prior commitment or a previously planned vacation is understandable, but you must communicate any such conflicts as soon as they are recognized. We encourage students to participate in a variety of activities other than music so as conflicts come up, I recommend communication in 3 ways: Verbally, tell someone (preferably me or another staff member) if you need to miss rehearsal. In writing: Write a note and make sure you hand it to us prior to your absence. Email: Email me as soon as conflicts come up. Every conflict is negotiable so long as you communicate them to us. It is not acceptable to skip rehearsal with no notice because you had something else that was already scheduled at that time. Please communicate about missing rehearsals.

Vacations are excused absences but we must know about them prior to the scheduled vacation. It is extremely import to avoid scheduling

vacation time between July 20<sup>th</sup>-August 14<sup>th</sup> as these are band camp weeks.

#### **Emergencies:**

Obviously, in the event of an *actual* emergency, you are excused from rehearsal. Hopefully this is self-explanatory. If an actual emergency arises and you are not able to make it to rehearsal, take care of what needs to be taken care of and try to communicate that with someone who is at rehearsal. If you cannot communicate with anyone at that time, try to make contact as soon as you are able so we know where you are and that you are safe.

#### **General rehearsal comments:**

The biggest part about attendance is communication. Please keep updated with emails because rehearsal times might change or locations might change and the best way to stay connected when we are not together is through email. The marching band directors should first be notified of any and all absences but it is important to let someone on the percussion staff know if you will not be at rehearsal.

Overall, just be at rehearsal. You should want to be at rehearsal. This is a fun activity and we will have fun during every rehearsal, but you can't have fun and you can't learn if you aren't there...

### Rehearsal and Etiquette

Rehearsal begins and ends at the time that is noted in the schedule. This means that we start playing when rehearsal begins and we stop playing when rehearsal ends. There is a great deal of set up and tear down that is needed for rehearsals. The band room is set up for class, not for our rehearsals. The expectation is to be set up and ready to play when rehearsal is supposed to begin. Come early, at least 15 minutes. You should come early to help set up and start warming up before rehearsal begins so that you can start rehearsal already a little bit warmed up. The style of music we will be playing will test our physical abilities. A thorough warm up is needed in order to prevent injury and perform at the highest level possible. Arriving

early will help you prepare yourself mentally and physically to have a productive rehearsal.

We will conclude rehearsal when rehearsal ends in the schedule. Students are not allowed to leave until everything is set up and put away the way that it was found before rehearsal began. We have had trouble with students in the past who do not help set up or tear down the room for rehearsals. Please do your part and help set up and put everything back the way that it was at the end of each rehearsal. This means that students probably won't be released until 15 minutes after rehearsal ends (this time varies depending on where we rehearse and how much we have to do to put everything away) You get to go home when everything is done so if we move quickly, we all can get out of rehearsal at a decent time. No student is allowed to leave until everything is put away.

This is a group activity, you don't perform the show by yourself, everyone does. So everyone is required to work as a team to make an efficient process before and after rehearsals. Help each other out so we can all go home after rehearsals end.

**Etiquette**: This will be described in detail during rehearsals. Etiquette will change depending on the rehearsal setting.

### Rules of Etiquette-

No talking during rehearsals - Especially when a staff member is talking. Talking while a staff member is talking will result in running a lap.

No hacking - Hacking is playing by yourself during rehearsal or playing when someone is talking. We all play or we all don't play. We will play a lot, you will be given plenty of time to learn music and practice new skills. Playing while a staff member is talking is disruptive and stops the flow of rehearsal.

<u>Awareness</u> - Always be aware of what is going on in rehearsal. Be self-sufficient in learning new things. If someone isn't speaking directly to you, still pay attention, as the material will probably apply to something that you need to know. Always listen to instructions and perform correctly the first time that it is asked. Following instructions the first time is a simple way to get better quicker. When we don't follow instructions, we will

stop and do it again until everyone performs the correct instructions.

No phones during rehearsal - Students are not allowed to use their phones during rehearsal. Exceptions will be made in emergency situations and in the event that Groupme is viewed for rehearsal purposes only. If a student needs to contact a parent or has something they need to take care of that is not an emergency, they must ask for permission during rehearsal. Phones can be used freely during breaks.

<u>Play YOUR instrument</u> - You will be designated a particular instrument(s). Take care of your instrument(s). This means, don't let anyone who isn't supposed to play your instrument, play your instrument. Don't play anyone else's instrument (this mostly applies to the wind section)

"Rule Five: Be self-disciplined: this means finding someone wise or smart and choosing to follow them. To be disciplined is to follow in a good way. To be self-disciplined is to follow in a better way." -John Cage

# IPT (Individual Practice Time) and Practicing outside of rehearsal

Rehearsals in the early part of the season will focus on technique development and learning music. The music we will learn are the exercises in this packet as well as the music that will be performed in the fall marching band competition show. In order to learn the show, we will spend a great amount of time in rehearsal learning notes and memorizing music. IPT will be given to develop technique and learn notes during rehearsal, but there is not enough time in rehearsal to focus on individual issues. That time should be spent outside of rehearsal.

#### Practice!!!

Each week will be an assessment of your individual development. Each week we want to be better than we were the previous week. You should spend time independently in order to focus on your individual needs in order to get better outside of rehearsal. You must practice each week. Practice logs will not be documented, but we will know who has and who hasn't been practicing outside of rehearsal.

You get to choose how well you will perform this season. That depends on how much you focus on learning new techniques during rehearsals and then how much you practice outside of rehearsal. There is a difference between rehearsing and practicing. We will rehearse as a group. Practicing takes place independently outside of rehearsal. Please practice.

### **Emails and Groupme**

Emails are the easiest way to get a hold of me. I will use email a lot this season to send out instructions or materials that you will need during the season. Please check your email frequently. Do not hesitate to email me if you have any questions or concerns.

#### jacobgibson91@hotmail.com

Groupme is a new app that we will use this year. It is a free app found on the app store for Android and Apple phones. The app generates a chat-room that lets member send texts to a single group of people who are subscribed to that group. This app lets the staff and students communicate quickly and professionally if information needs to be distributed in a moment's notice. Please download the Groupme app and we will add you to the Groupme that was created just for students in the front ensemble. If you do not have a smart phone, you can subscribe to the Groupme chat with text messages. Let me know if you are unable to download Groupme or do not want to use your phone as a means of communication.

#### **Maintenance**

**Instrument Care-** You are responsible for your instrument. Take care of it. Some of our instruments are rather old and we want to keep using them for many years to come. Instruments are not tables. Don't put water bottles or personal belongings on boards at any point. Music can be placed on instruments for moving purposes.

Be aware of any issues you are experiencing with your instrument. Try to fix little issues on your own, if you need help, find an

upperclassmen to see if they can help, if they can't fix it, then find a staff member.

Cover instruments when they are not being played. When we are outside, the sun can bring keyboards out of tune if they are uncovered for too long. Protect your instrument by keeping it covered when you are not playing it.

Check all joints and wing nuts. Moving your instrument can loosen joints and compromise the integrity of instrument frames. Periodically check to make sure all joints are tight and bolts are fastened securely.

Mallet and Cymbal Bags-Someone will be designated to take care of mallet and cymbal bags. Mallets should remain in mallet bags outside of rehearsal. Your cymbal arm should be set up and removed after every rehearsal. The cymbal arm should go in the back of your mallet bag outside of rehearsal. Your cymbal will be kept in a bag outside of rehearsal. Make sure you take your cymbal and return your cymbal to its designated bag.

Moving-When me move (from the band room to outside, to the truck, to warm up, to the field, etc...) you are responsible for pushing or carrying all of your equipment. Make sure you have everything you need before we begin playing. \*\*\*Vibraphones-Raise your pedal any time you move your instrument. Lower the pedal when you set up your instrument and are ready to begin playing.

## **Football Games, Competitions and The Truck**

The truck will be loaded by the parents of the Pit Crew. Your responsibility is to make sure everything is taken apart properly so that they parents can load the truck easily. Our instruments can take a beating on the truck so it is important that we make sure everything is secure when we push out to load the truck. All instruments must be covered prior to loading the truck. If your instrument goes in a case, put it in the case and leave it out so it can be loaded.

We do not have the luxury of having a football stadium in the same location as rehearsals. Prior to every football game, each student must report at the time that the truck needs to be loaded. Students should push their equipment out so the pit crew can load the truck. Once everything is outside, students are released to report to the football stadium.

For competitions, the load process is very similar as football games. There will be a rehearsal prior to competitions so report to rehearsal rather than the load time.

After every football game and competition, students are required to report back to the band room in order to help unload the truck and put everything back in the band room and make sure the band room is set up. \*\*\*No student is allowed to leave until everything is put away. Once everything is put away and set up properly, everyone will be dismissed together. This goes back to the team effort. Everyone should work together in making sure that everything is taken care of after football games and competitions.

Please read and reread these expectations. If we all work together and do what is expected of us, we can all achieve a level of performance that is higher than we have ever achieved here at Fairfield.

Now, let's get to the good stuff!!!

# Approaching the Keyboard

Our approach to the keyboard is the start of our entire look and approach to playing. When standing behind the keyboard we want a tall, confident, and experienced look. How we stand behind the board is the first impression that we give our audience, because when we step behind the board we are saying that not only are we ready to play, but that we are ready to throw down and impress anyone around us.

**Posture**: To start off our body should be set around the notes we are about to play with feet shoulder width apart and knees relaxed (nothing drastic, just not "locked"). This is all pretty standard posture; there should just be no walking behind the instrument while we are playing. Our shoulders are back and our head is held high (No Slouching!)

**Vibraphones:** Your right toes will be on the pedal. This is to ensure that your right foot/heel will be providing balance for you as you move behind your keyboard with your left foot.

**Set Position:** Both mallet heads sharing the space over the key where you are starting from with mallets about 1 inch above the keyboard. This is also true with four mallets.

**Preps:** Prep strokes are small motions from the set position that indicate tempo. They are initiated by the center marimba player and followed by the rest of the ensemble. This is a small and defined motion that initiates from the wrist. As we prepare to play, the prep stroke serves as a "count-off" in lieu of an audible source of timing. This will be further explained at rehearsals.

**Uniformity:** Marching band is an activity that is based in uniformity of approach. Different from a symphonic setting, we routinely ask several people to perform unison or similar parts. Through uniformity we convey a sense of professionalism and confidence to the audience. Posture, facial expressions, moving from instrument to instrument, mallet changes, and pulling instruments on the field are all taken into account. Uniformity is essential in producing balanced sounds from player to player, as well as a unified interpretation of the music we are performing.

# **Two-Mallet Technique**

Step 1: Divide the mallet shaft into thirds with your eyes.

Step 2: You will place the lowest third (opposing the mallet head) in the palm of your hand griping the mallet with your bottom three fingers. Your pointer finger and thumb should line up directly on the third division of the mallet leaving 1" of the mallet sticking out of the back of your hand.

\*Ninety percent of the stroke should come from the wrist so it is important that the technique in the hand is solid. The back three fingers should remain closed into the palm and the index finger can be slightly relaxed (but not pointed). The other ten percent should come from the arm as an extension of a full wrist stroke.\* \*A marimba or a vibraphone played with mallets does not have rebound so this approach allows us to create our own rebound for the Piston Stroke.\*

Top View Side View





# **Two-Mallet Stroke Types**

**Piston Stroke:** A type of stroke where the starting and stopping point are the same (with the exception of horizontal motion across the keyboard creating a Shift). The first motion is always DOWN\*\*\* This will be repeated and referred to many times during rehearsals. No wasted motion is created by a piston stroke. You go straight down to play and straight up to return back to the original playing position. The stroke is relaxed yet precise. At slower tempos there will be a pause in between the strokes, and as the tempos increases you want to smoothly connect the motion when it becomes comfortable to do so. **Legato Stroke:** The downstroke is the same speed as that of the

**Legato Stroke:** The downstroke is the same speed as that of the piston but the recovery is slower on the upstroke, creating a "slowmo" movement upwards from the note. The movement is always lead by the mallet head and should look/feel like you are slowly pulling every bit of sound possible out of the bar. The arm is used at times to create a more fluid look and to generate more sound from the bars in louder passages. Most legato strokes will have either a defined ending beat or continue the motion until the next note. Common mistakes with this include pushing forward with the mallets, using too much arm, and generally overdoing it. This technique will be used most often in the Vibraphones, but will be utilized throughout the ensemble. (Don't over think this; this is something that will be defined on an individual basis involving individual parts)

**Shift:** When going from one note to another you use the return stroke of a piston stoke to travel to your next destination. We will refer to it as a "checkmark" type of motion.

# **Four-Mallet Technique**

We will use Stevens grip on both Vibes and Marimba. I believe this grip to be the most efficient in stroke consistency and interval changing along with unified technique across our keyboard section. From left to right, mallets are numbered 1-2-3-4...

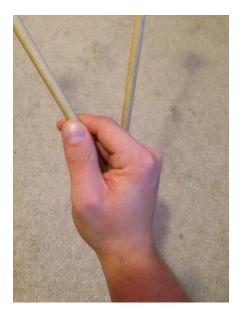
The following process is the same for both hands.

**First:** Grip a mallet with your pinky and ring finger. There should be minimal excess mallet protruding from the bottom of your pinky. These fingers should be locked but not squeezing. Tension in these fingers causes poor technique, eventual fatigue and medical problems in the wrist and fingers.

**Second:** Place the back of another mallet in the palm of your hand just under your thumb muscle. Your middle finger is holding the mallet into your palm/thumb muscle. Your pointer finger acts as a perch for the inside mallet (2 or 3) and the mallet should be able to rest without any pressure in your hand.

**Third:** Place your thumb on the inside mallet (2 or 3) directly over your pointer finger perch. The thumb should sit flat, directly on the mallet at the first knuckle of the pointer finger pointed down toward the mallet head. This will allow you to freely change intervals.

**Top View** 



**Side View** 



# 4 Mallet Stroke Types

There are four stroke types that we will use with the Stevens Technique: (It is highly recommended that all students purchase a copy of *Method of Movement* by Leigh Howard Stevens. This will serve as our 4-mallet manual and it is an excellent resource).

#### 1. Double Vertical Strokes:

Follow the same guidelines for the 2-mallet piston stroke. This stroke should be played primarily with the wrist. In order to check and see that you are turning your wrist correctly, you should see your wrist "pop" up as the mallets strike the bars. This wrist pop should NOT be exaggerated; it is a natural result of performing the stroke correctly with the wrist. Gradually, we will learn to incorporate the arm into the stroke. The mallets should travel straight up and down without any side-to-side motion. Make sure to keep your fingers relaxed!

## 2. Single Independent Strokes:

We will primarily be using this stroke type for mallets 2 and 3 (the inside mallets). The set position will be the same as Double Verticals. The playing position will be achieved by rotating the "active" mallet around the unused mallet (i.e.: mallet 3 will rotate around mallet 4). In order to develop independence, in this case, with the inside mallets, it is important to keep the outer mallets as still as possible. The outer will be defined as being half the height of the playing position. In order to achieve this DON'T USE ANY TENSION!! Relaxed fingers act as shock absorbers; tension will cause the outer mallets to twitch vertically and/or horizontally. Make sure that you keep your index finger and thumb firm, but relaxed. This will help to keep control of the inside mallets.

# 3. Single Alternating Strokes:

This stroke type is closely related with the Single Independent stroke, but without concern for motion in the other mallet. The set position and playing position are the same as in the Double Vertical stroke. As one mallet strikes the bar, the other mallet will raise slightly. Be sure to not simply rotate the wrist: instead, think of the pivot point as bouncing from one mallet to the next. This will allow us to control the articulation, rhythm and dynamic of each mallet. It is important to note that TEMPO is a major determining factor for when a Single Alternating stroke TURNS INTO a one-handed roll motion. As the tempo increases, the ability to control each mallet will decrease, until the motion is solely a rotation of the wrist. To define this stroke as it

differs from single independent strokes, in each hand individually, one mallet will play THEN the other mallet will play. One mallet and then the same mallet is an execution of the single independent stroke.

#### 4. Double Lateral Strokes:

Double Lateral strokes should not operate like the other 3 stroke types. The goal here is to produce TWO strokes through ONE hand motion. Again, the set position and playing position are the same as a Double Vertical stroke. In the case of the outside Double Lateral stroke, play as if you were going to perform a Single Independent stroke (the outside mallet will strike the bar first) and then rotated your wrist counter-clockwise to strike the bar with your inside mallet. The motion of your wrist should be similar to turning a doorknob. In order to achieve a consistent sound from mallet to mallet, you will need to use a lot of "torque" in your wrist. Also, be sure to keep your index finger and thumb firm, but relaxed!

The most common technique problem that occurs while playing with Steven's technique is the placement of the index finger. Make sure that you are not pulling your index finger in while playing; it should remain in the T position with your thumb. Any questions will be answered at rehearsals, or you can email me at any time.

### **Rhythm Section**

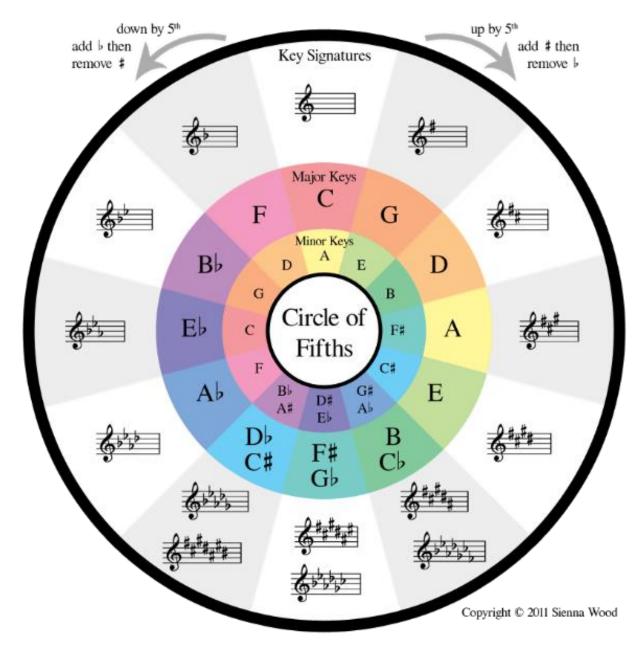
The rhythm section of the front ensemble consists of synthesizers, electric and bass guitars, drum set and auxiliary percussion. Anyone who is interested in playing any of these instruments must come in with a basic understanding of the technique that applies to that instrument. The rhythm section is a very important part of the front ensemble as it adds the electric colors that cannot be produced by acoustic instruments and auxiliary percussion creates many ornamental elements. Although there is not a huge emphasis of a technical approach in this packet, these instruments are vital to creating various sounds that will add to the overall general effect of the ensemble.

# **Student Contract Agreement**

I have read this packet in its entirety and understand the expectations and rules that have been listed. I agree to comply with all regulations and policies as stated.

Student's Printed Name
Student's Signed Name
Student's Signed Name
Parent's Signed Name
<b>-</b> .
Date:
***Please sign and return by February 12 <sup>th***</sup>

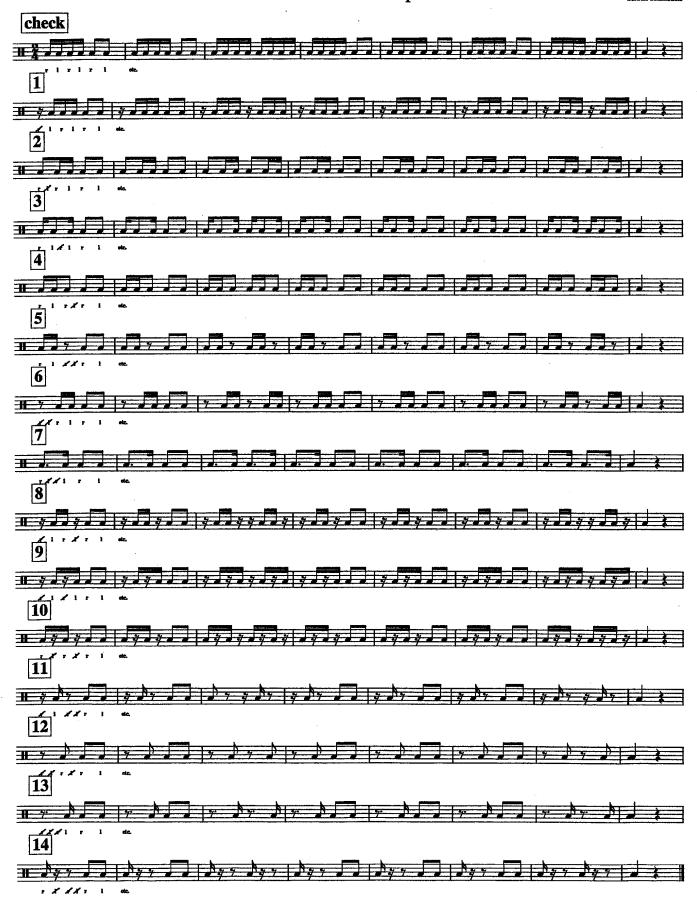
# The Circle of 5ths



The circle of 5ths will be used as a guide to learning all 12 of the major scales. Here you will find the key signature to each scale. Use this to figure out how each major scale is played.

Order of Flats: BEADGCF

Order of Sharps: FCGDAEB



# Lock Jaw All Major Keys



# Green Scales All Major Keys



Something Useful
Be prepared to play this Chord progression in multiple ways.
Double verticles, 16th permutations (1432,1234,4231 etc)



# Broccoli



# For A Long Time

Lee Allman





