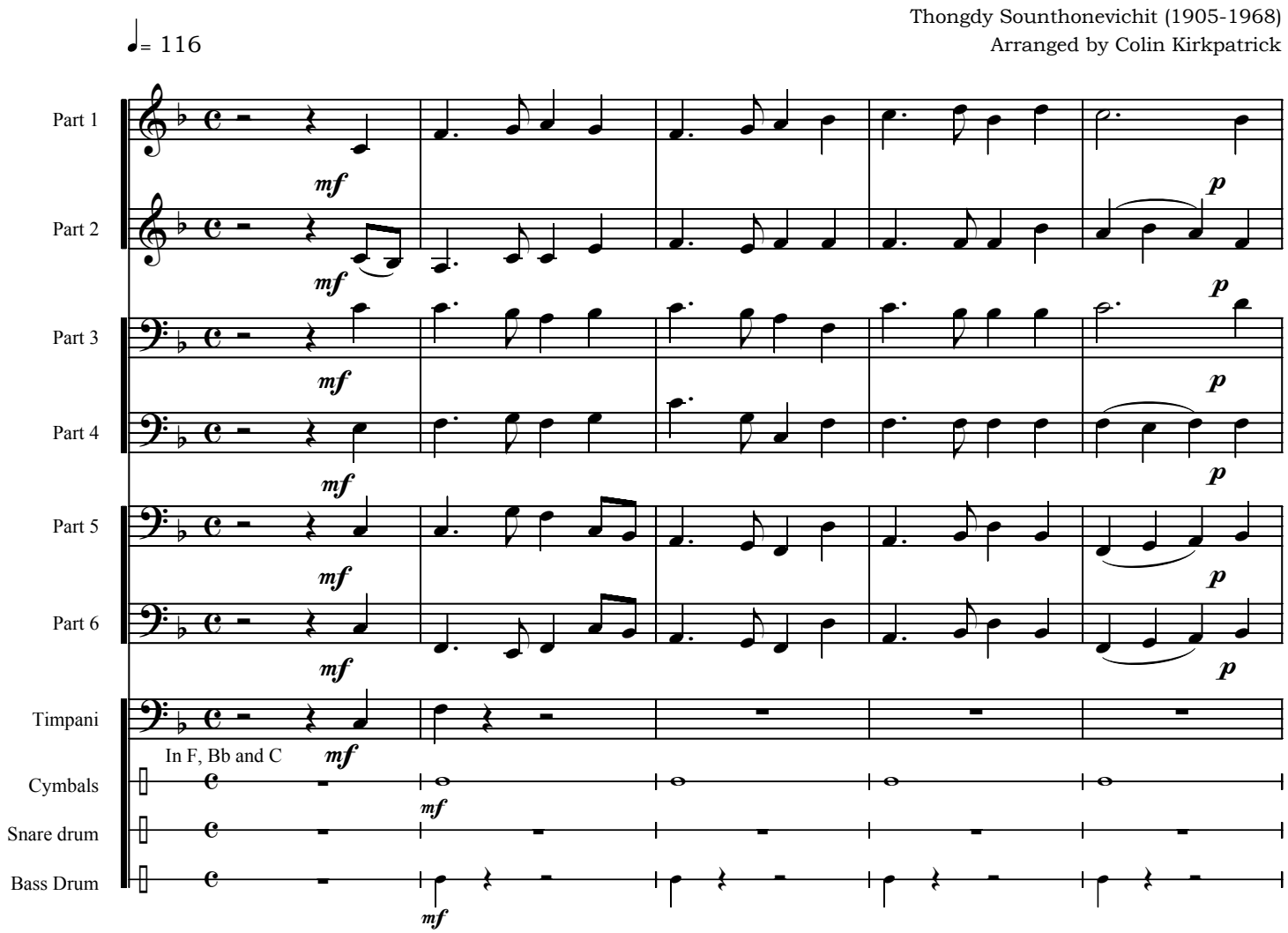
National Anthems Online

LAOS PDR: Phayng Xat Lao

Laos, officially known as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, is a landlocked communist state in South East Asia. It is bordered by Burma, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. The history of Laos goes back to the Kingdom of Lan Xang (*Kingdom of a Million Elephants*) which existed from the 14th to the 18th century. Between 1893 and 1949, Laos was a French colony and today, the country still retains many traces of the French language and cuisine. It was the French who gave the country its modern name "Laos". Independence came to Laos in 1945. A long civil war ended when the communist Pathet Lao came to power in 1975. The country has a diverse ethnic composition and only around 60% belong to the largest ethnic group, the Lao. The spoken language is very similar to that of north east regions of Thailand and the written language shares many similarities with the Thai alphabet.

Western music was introduced into Laos during the French colonial period, and from the 1920s, light music was performed widely by local artists in the dance halls, clubs and restaurants of the capital Vientiane. One of the most prolific composers of this period was Dr Thongdy Sounthonevichit, who wrote many popular songs. In 1941, Dr Thongdy wrote the music to Pheng Xat Lao. (The "x" is pronounced as the English "ch", so that the second word is simlar to English word "chart".) The song was adopted as the National Anthem in 1947 when the Kingdom of Laos was created. After the Communists came to power in 1975, the Royal Family was desposed but the anthem was retained. The version performed today uses words by Sisana Sisane, one of the leading Laos songwriters of the last thirty years.

Thongdy Sounthonevichit (1905-1968)
Arranged by Colin Kirkpatrick



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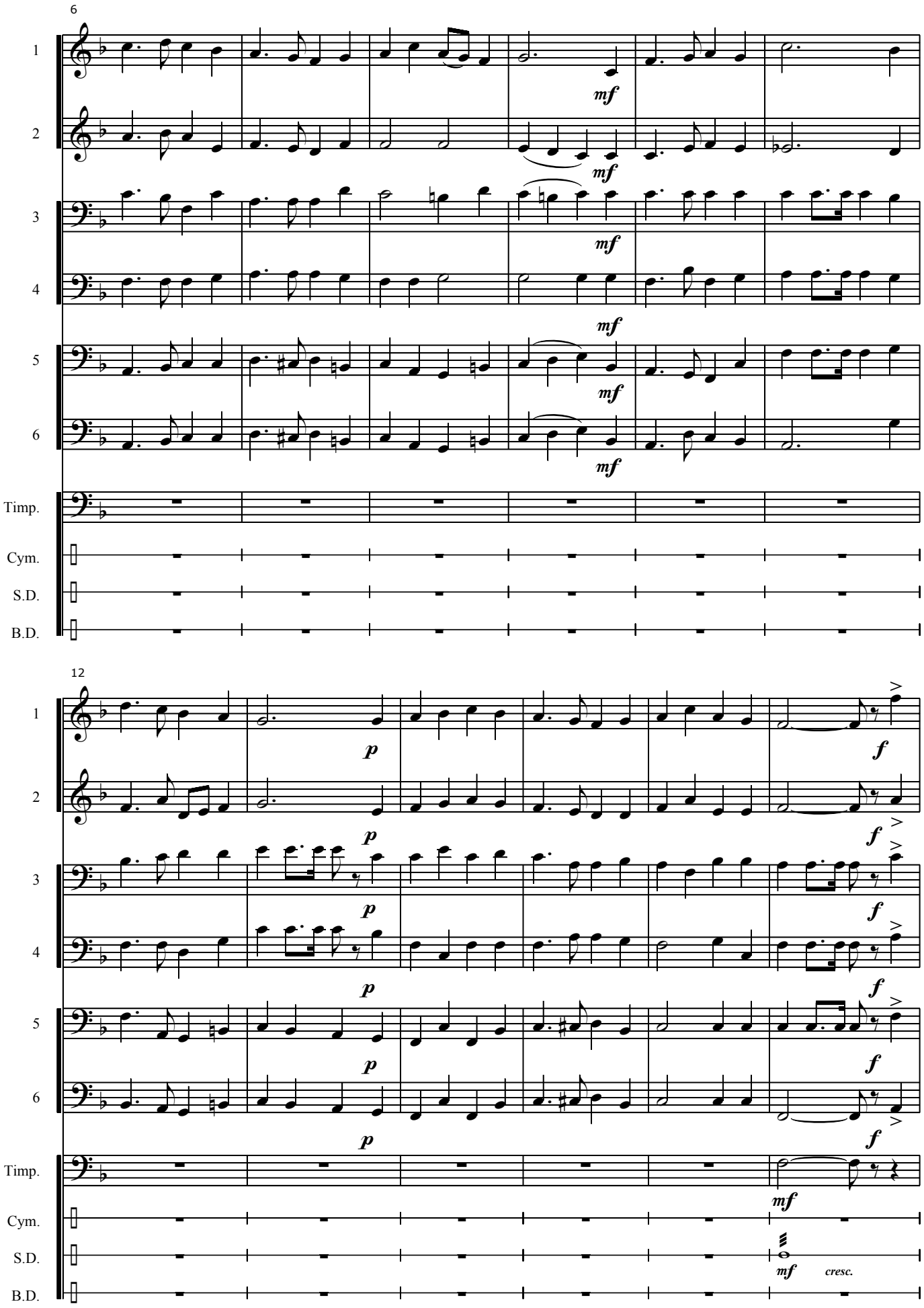
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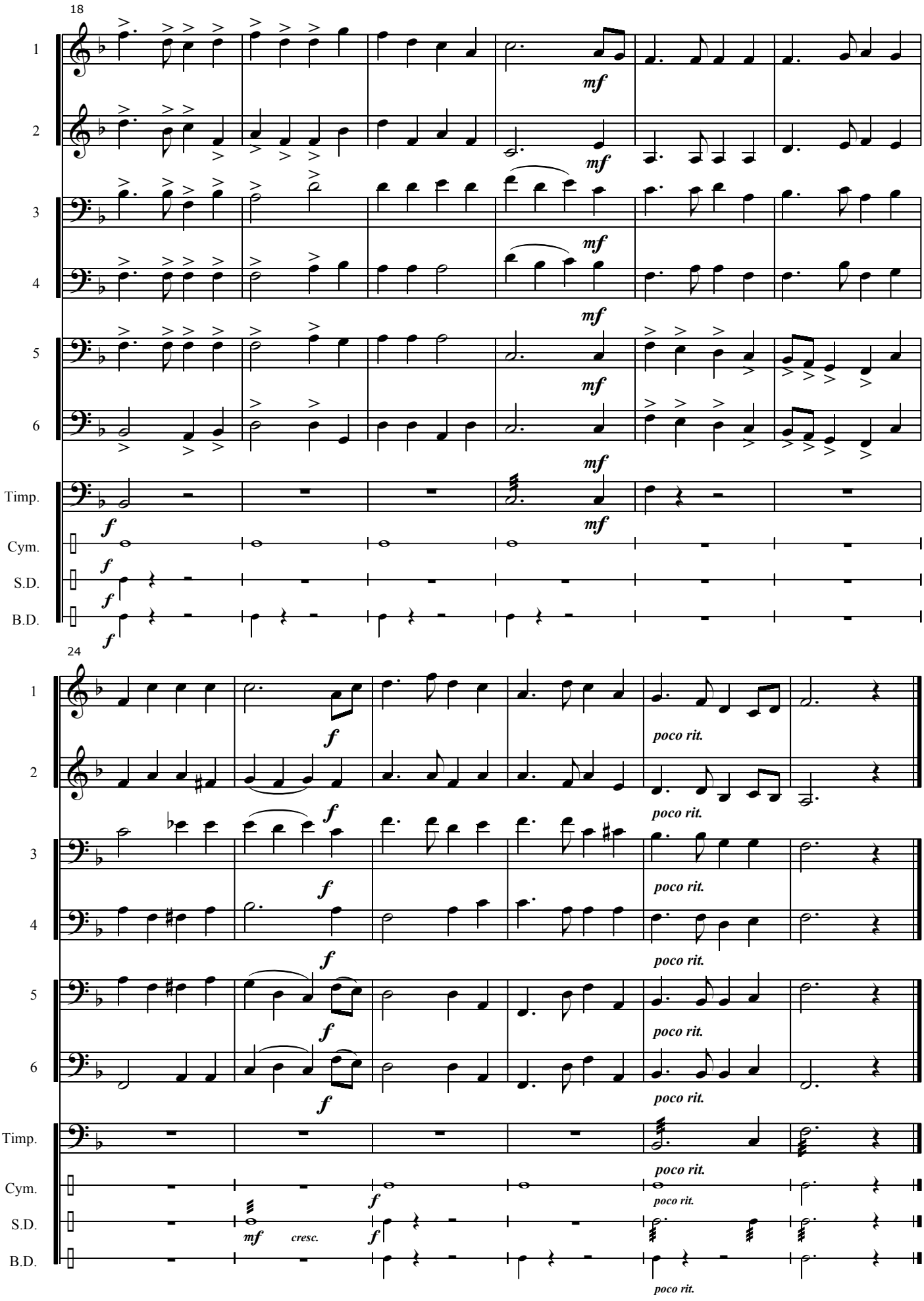
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