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CREATIVITY AND THE EVOLUTION OF MUSICAL IDEAS: PUTTING THE CREATIVE PRINCIPLES OF AUSTIN KLEON TO WORK

By

DUSTIN SCHULZE, Master of Music

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Music

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
May, 2020

CREATIVITY AND THE EVOLUTION OF MUSICAL IDEAS:
PUTTING THE CREATIVE PRINCIPLES OF AUSTIN KLEON TO WORK

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APPROVED:

_____
Dr. Stephen Lias, Thesis Director

_____
Dr. Courtney Carney, Committee Member

_____
Dr. Gregory Grabowski, Committee Member

_____
Dr. Jamie Weaver, Committee Member

_____
Pauline M. Sampson, Ph. D.
Dean of Research and Graduate Programs

ABSTRACT

All composers internalize the musical ideas of other composers and infuse them into their own original work. But the fear of being labeled "derivative" causes most composers to shy away from talking about these influences openly and directly. In Austin Kleon's book, *Steal Like an Artist*, he faces the issues of influence and imitation in a deliberately self-aware fashion. The principal objective of this thesis will be to internalize the musical ideas of other composers and infuse them into an original musical work of my own, entitled *Kyros*. By articulating the exact way in which I am using the work of others, I will be demonstrating one of the most important and vulnerable acts in the creative process, which is attempting to create something unique, and serving as a real-world illustration of the concepts espoused in Kleon's book.

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CHAPTER 1 – STEAL LIKE AN ARTIST

Creativity can be a difficult topic to discuss in any concrete way, especially since there is so much we still do not know about the brain and creative thinking. The topic of musical creativity, or coming up with musical ideas, is also difficult to articulate. Composing a piece of music is such a subjective and individualized endeavor that it is difficult to systematize a "correct" way to do it. Austin Kleon, in his book, *Steal Like an Artist,* states that "What a good artist understands is that nothing comes from nowhere. All creative work builds on what came before. Nothing is completely original."[1]

This thesis is about testing his theory first hand, and putting a spotlight on the act of using the musical ideas of others for the creation of a unique composition. This project also seeks to demonstrate and investigate the inner process of creativity, and how that process commingles with other people's ideas. Kleon believes that all creative work builds off the creative works of others, which goes against a common assumption that in order to be original, you have to think independently from everybody else. Kleon also believes that nobody is born with their own unique voice, and

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[1] Austin Kleon, *Steal Like an Artist* (New York Workman Publishing, 2012), 7.

that at some point you have to copy others, or pretend to be your heroes.[2]

In the world of classical music, one can find countless examples of composers borrowing and copying the ideas of other composers. It seems inevitable that the music of the past will permeate the music being created right now, in at least some small way. But rather than try to deny or obfuscate this point, Kleon has openly celebrated it, and calls for us to embrace and utilize the ideas of all the people who have contributed to the creative landscape. This is not, however, to be confused with plagiarizing or taking credit for someone else's work, but rather sharing in the creative communal processes that have allowed progress in any aspect of human existence to take place.

Steal Like an Artist illuminates the concept that nothing new is created without using material from the past.[3] The principal objective of this thesis will be to detail the ways in which I deal with the complexities of imitating others as a path to creating something unique. By embarking on this experiment I intend to put Kleon's thesis into direct practice, and I will be showing that borrowing ideas can be an essential part of the creative process.

One of the most salient points explored through Kleon's book is that creativity is not a hermetically sealed process. Coming up with new ideas is often times a messy, indefinable, and shared undertaking. I believe that "Stealing," or using the material of past composers and remaking it, has been an essential tool in the development of Western

[2] Kleon, 33.

[3] Ibid., 7.

classical music. One of the reasons Western music has changed and evolved so much is due to the large number of composers borrowing each other's ideas and reapplying them to their own unique circumstances. Kleon writes, "Seeing yourself as part of a creative lineage will help you feel less alone as you start making your own stuff. I hang pictures of my favorite artists up. They're like friendly ghosts. I can almost feel them pushing me forward as I'm hunched over my desk."[4]

For example, it is evident by looking at the classical canon that a single composer did not invent the sonata form; rather, it was slowly sculpted over many years. Many people contributed to the development of what we now call the standard sonata form, chipping away at it little by little, and copying and sharing each other's new variation of it until it reached its most codified version. When a composer recognizes a useful tool of another composer, they will often assimilate it into their vocabulary. This is how an art form progresses through time. The steady momentum of borrowing and remaking eventually leads to new musical territory for others to investigate and explore.

Take the well-known Spanish folk song, *Jota Aragonesa.* As Timothy Judd points out, this melody was taken by Franz Liszt and incorporated into his *Spanish Rhapsody* for solo piano. It was then assimilated in a horn solo in the third movement of Gustav

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[4] Kleon, 17.

Mahler's third symphony.[5] Incorporating ideas of past composers is done not just by using past melodic or structural ideas. Any aspect of musical expression that is deemed effective can be called upon to enhance one's own compositional aesthetic. Borrowing from other composers may be a conscious or subconscious act, but it has always been done and will continue to be done as long as we listen to other people's music and read about their ideas.

To serve as a proof-of-concept for Kleon's theories, I have composed a piece of music for orhcestra that uses the compositional ideas of other composers. The elucidation of how I did this will show the inherent collision of creation and imitation, which is not often revealed. The ideas that I gleaned, and how I incorporated them, will be openly dissected in a methodical and rigorous manner. Examining this process will show the inner workings of Kleon's concept in detail. My hope is that this thesis will start an ongoing conversation about how musical ideas are generated.

I have chosen six recent pieces written by composers that I believe I can use to make my composition effective and applicable to the current zeitgeist of classical music. Each has specific compositional ideas that are aesthetically and intellectually pleasing to me, and I have used them to generate my own creative thrust. The compositions from which I extracted ideas are:

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[5] Timothy Judd, " Good Composers Copy, Great Composers Steal," *The Listener's Club* (blog), April 27, 2016, https://thelistenersclub.com/2016/04/27/good-composers-copy-great-composers-steal/.

Anthracite Fields (2014) by Julia Wolfe

Balance Problems (2013) by Nico Muhly

C (2011) by Hannah Lash

Respiri (2016) by Juri Seo

Symphony No. 4, from Mission San Juan (2007) by Kevin Puts

wed, version for piano trio (2018) by David Lang

The following chapters will define the specific aspects from each piece that I used and examine their construction. I have systemically gathered the ideas of all the aforementioned composers and stockpiled them into my own swipe file, which Kleon espouses in his book. "Keep a swipe file. It's just what it sounds like- a file to keep track of the stuff you've swiped from others…Need a little inspiration? Open up the swipe file."[6]

I did not start composing the piece until after I analyzed the specific ideas I chose to use. Also, I used all of these ideas in an unrestrained manner, but I made sure to pay close attention to exactly how I used them, for the purpose of my own thesis. After describing these specific musical passages in detail, I will discuss the ways and means in which I amalgamated these ideas into my own piece. It is also important to note that these

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[6] Kleon, 22.

pieces represent classical music on the front edge of its evolution. Most of these works have not been analyzed in any great detail, so this thesis will create fresh commentary on recent pieces of art.

Kleon Illustration 1[7]

[7] Kleon, 7.

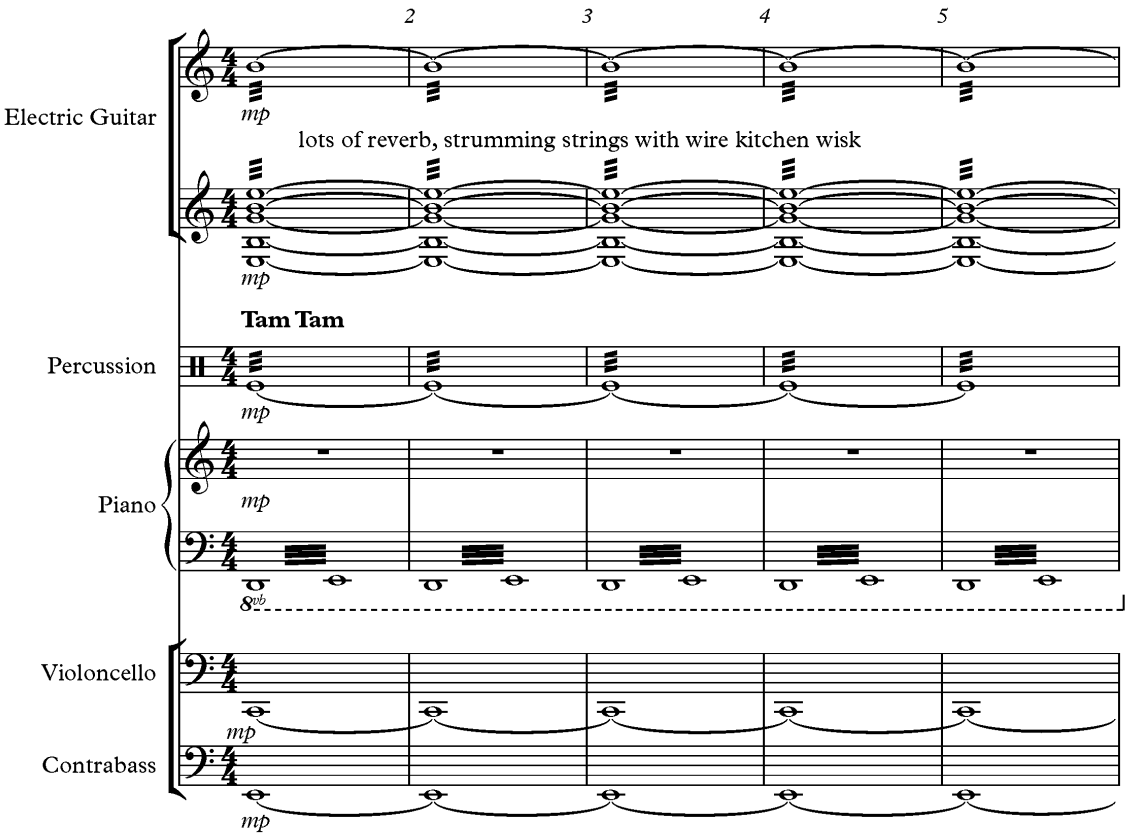
CHAPTER 2 – MUSICAL IDEAS

Anthracite Fields (2014) by Julia Wolfe

Anthracite Fields is an oratorio for choir and chamber ensemble by the American composer Julia Wolfe. It was premiered in 2014 and awarded the Pulitzer Prize for music in 2015. In this work, Wolfe brings attention to the men and women working in the Pennsylvania Anthracite coal region, whose livelihoods were difficult and dangerous.[8] For the purpose of this project, ideas were only mined from movement one, entitled "Foundation."

The ambience of the first movement provided the inspiration I needed to start my own work. The movement begins by stating a drone and intermittently interrupting it with jarring and dissonant instrumental outbursts. Multiple instruments, including a tam tam, piano, electric guitar, cello, and contrabass, are used to establish the ominous drone at the outset (see Musical Example 1).

[8] Julia Wolfe, *Anthracite Fields* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 2014).

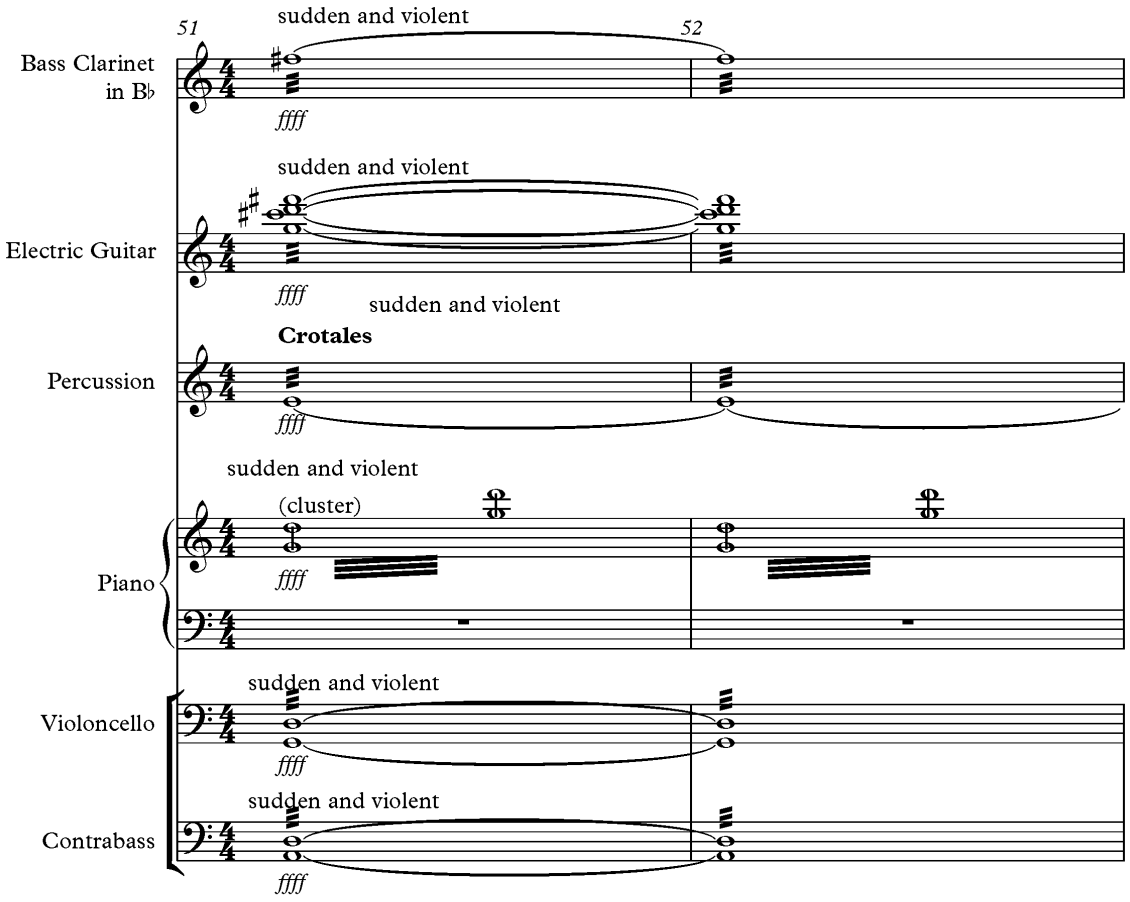


Musical Example 1- Anthracite Fields drone

The total effect of these combined instruments sustaining their respective pitches creates a nebulous landscape, with the sustaining harmony essentially amounting to a C major chord superimposed over an Em7. Juxtaposing these two chords, of which the root of one is the third of the other, is an idea Stravinsky used in his *Symphony in C*, over

seventy years ago.[9] It is not known whether Wolfe was aware of this idea before she used it in *Anthracite Fields,* but it is interesting to note how it permeated through time.

The violent interjections that regularly interrupt the drone counterbalance the sustained polychord and occur with no warning at all (see Musical Example 2).



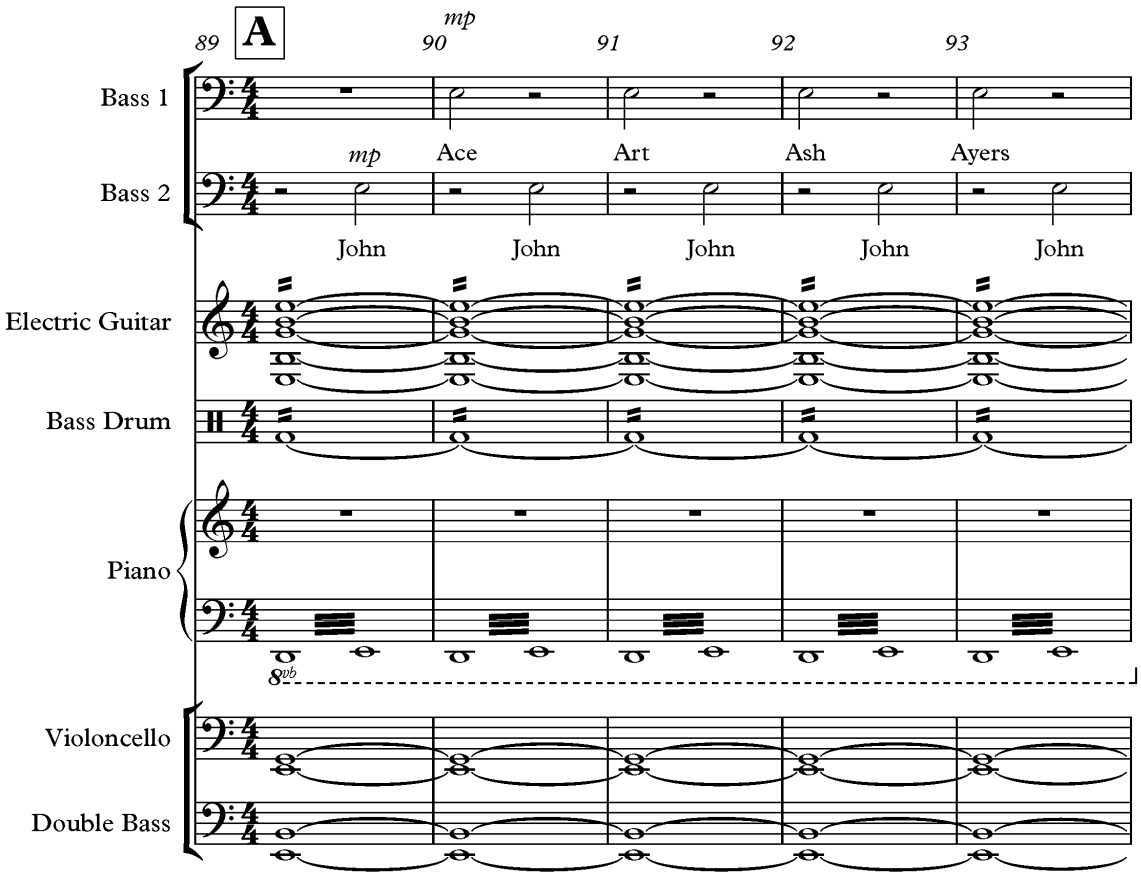
Musical Example 2- Anthracite Fields interjections

[9] Joseph Strauss, *Remaking the Past: Tradition and Influence in Twentieth-Century Music* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1990).

This creates a stark contrast to the low, static rumblings of the sustained tones. In a sense, what is created is a blunt polarity of alternating registers and dynamic levels, which seem to supplant the traditional tonic-to-dominant opposition. The crotales add to the jarring sonority by the player performing a tremolo on the dissonant interval of a semitone. The psychological effects on the listener can be effective in this movement.

A sense of a pulse is non-existent from the start and is only established about three and a half minutes in. When it does enter, it occurs in the bass voice, which starts propelling the piece forward (see Musical Example 3). The intensity then, is continuously increased, as more complex rhythmic values are slowly layered in by different instruments and different vocal registers. The increasing stratification generates more rhythmic dissonance while the drone continues in the background.

I kept the emotional landscape of this movement in mind while I was composing my piece. I blended in some of the features of Wolfe's opening to help shape the initial scaffolding of the beginning section of my work. I also paid special attention to the registral and dynamic polarity that Wolfe poignantly crafted, especially in the way she created a stark contrast between the pitches and dynamics of each recurring statement of the interjections.



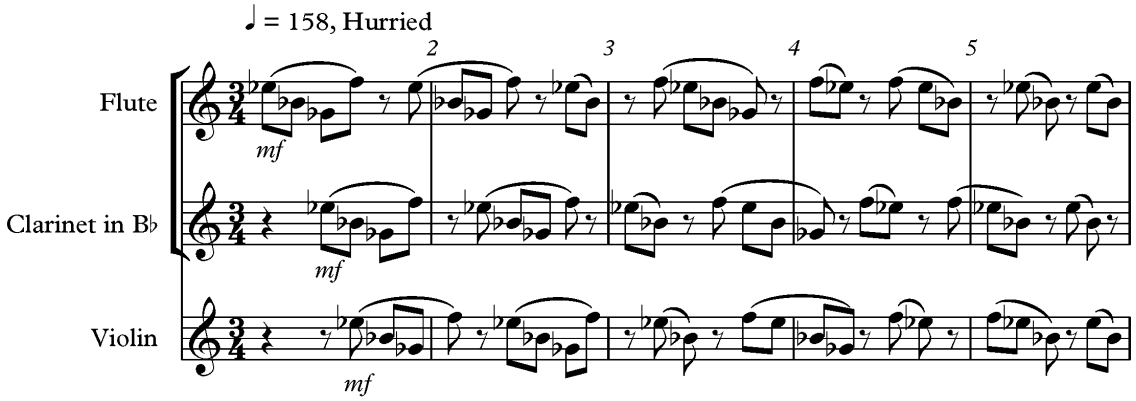
Musical Example 3- Anthracite Fields vocal pulse entry

***Balance Problems* (2013) by Nico Muhly**

The contemporary New York City composer, Nico Muhly, wrote *Balance Problems* in 2013. It was the title track to yMusic's sophomore album, *Balance Problems*. Muhly's piece for chamber ensemble includes flute, clarinet in Bb, trumpet in C, violin (doubles guitar), viola, and cello. *Balance Problems* displays the characteristics of Nico Muhly's aesthetic, which is overtly existential, while not being trite or derivative. His music also tends to wear its emotions on the surface, which is why it appeals to me.

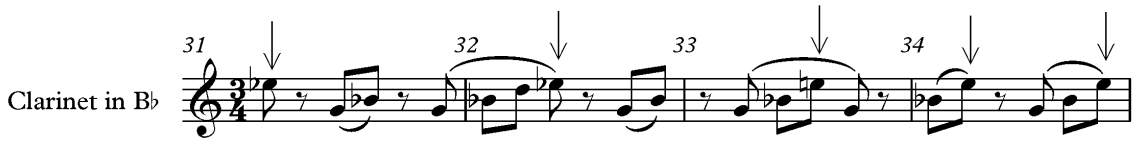
Unlike *Anthracite Fields*, *Balance Problems* has a rhythmic motor from start to finish (with the exception of a grand pause), that creates a perpetual propulsion, which is almost Baroque in its phrasing. Cadential pauses are evaded so that there is never a full sense of completion to any one section. Muhly's motor is characterized by asymmetrical, arpeggiated, overlapping, eight-note patterns that do not adhere to the bar lines. In fact, Muhly rarely acknowledges bar lines or any sort of typical balanced phrasing, which contributes to its continuous linear texture.

Within the pulsating rhythmic cells are layers of eighth-note figures that make up the scaffolding of the whole linear structure (see Musical Example 4). The intervals used in these overlapping figures are mostly triadic and quartal, giving the piece a diatonic quality. The idea of using a continuous flow of arpeggiated figures that overlap bar lines is common, but Muhly's composition is unique in the way he uses the orchestra and systematically varies selected pitches.



Musical Example 4-Balance Problems rhythmic cell layers

A device Muhly uses with these motor figures is what I will call a semitone expansion. For example, while outlining a repeated triad or other intervallic pattern, either the highest note or the lowest note will expand by a semitone while leaving everything else the same (see Musical Example 5).

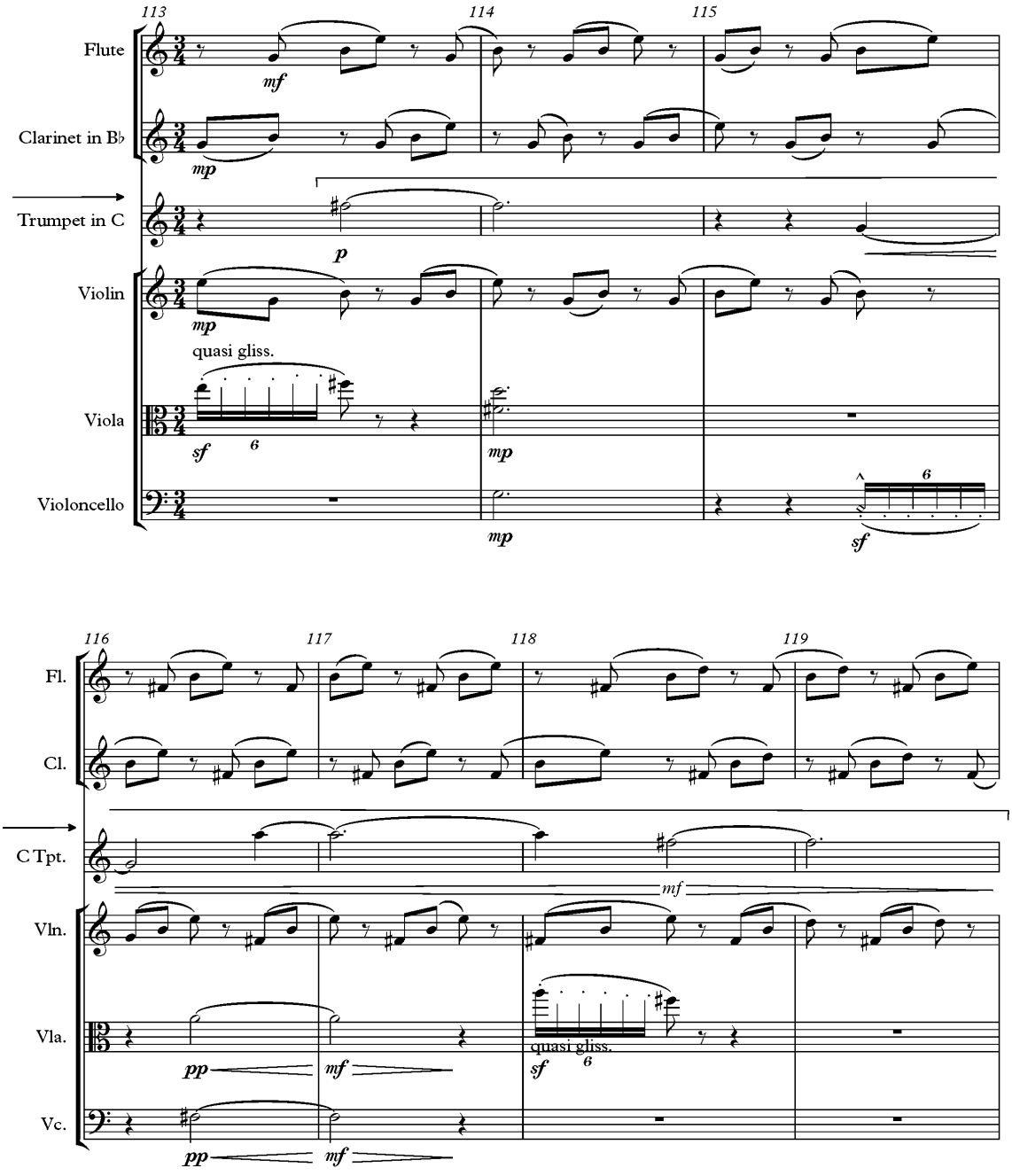


Musical Example 5- Balance Problems semitone expansion

The semitone expansion he employs is a subtle movement, yet it has an easily recognizable effect. This alters the harmonic quality of a chord while being very economical with its amount of pitch variance. The orchestration of Muhly's repetitive motoric patterns creates a seamless and unremitting quality. However, as soon as this

texture starts to become stale, part of the motor is transferred to the acoustic guitar. This is how the flow of the piece remains cohesive, while still achieving variety.

The melodic fabric that is woven into the texture makes this piece unique, and more than just a Glassian essay. Muhly creates long and arching melodic gestures that jaggedly lay across the landscape. These are mostly utilized in the upper register of the trumpet, or the high end of the cello, which mesh well within the fabric. These melodic gestures are also unique because the pitch changes do not predictably sync with the motoric movement, and this keeps them from sounding stale. Also, in order to create a pull of dissonance within these long lines, the melody often takes on a note that is a half step or whole step below one of the repeating pitches in the eighth-note fabric (see Musical Example 6). I believe that these strategic dissonances are the key to the effectiveness of the melodic gestures, and I have tried to assimilate this idea into my own piece.



Musical Example 6-Balance Problems trumpet melody

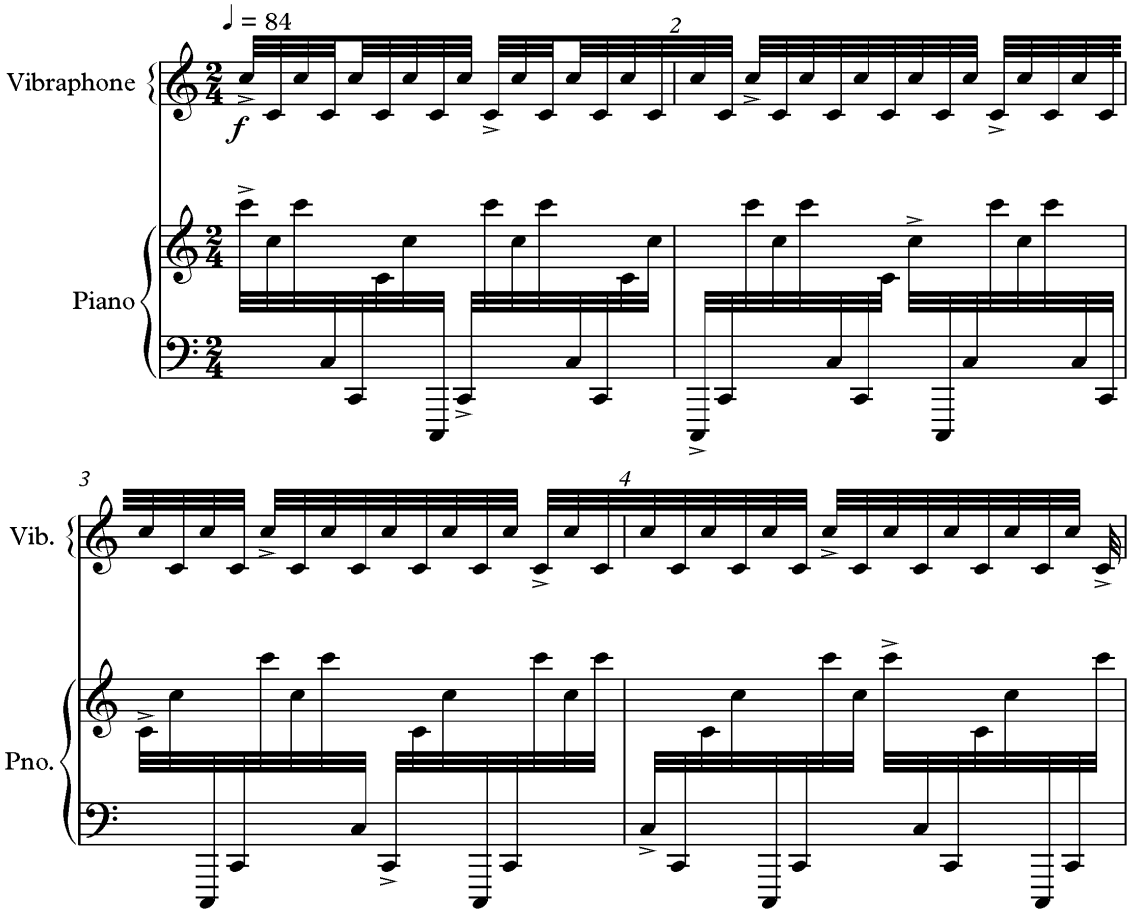
***C* (2011) by Hannah Lash**

C had its premiere on November 3rd 2011, in Sprague Hall (New Haven), by Paul Kerekes and Michael Compitello.[10] Lash's piece for vibraphone and piano utilizes a perpetual rhythm throughout its content, similar to *Balance Problems*; however, the rhythmic and motoric implications are not the focus here. The ideas I gleaned from *C* are two-fold: the use of a unique rhythmic pedal point, and the linear pitch content.

At the beginning of the piece Lash creates a pedal in both instruments. All of the included pitches are from the same C pitch class, with six different notes, that span six octaves (see Musical Example 7). Lash creates a vibrant aesthetic by utilizing the same pitch-class linearly over multiple octaves. The sound of this pedal is unmistakably crisp and unique.

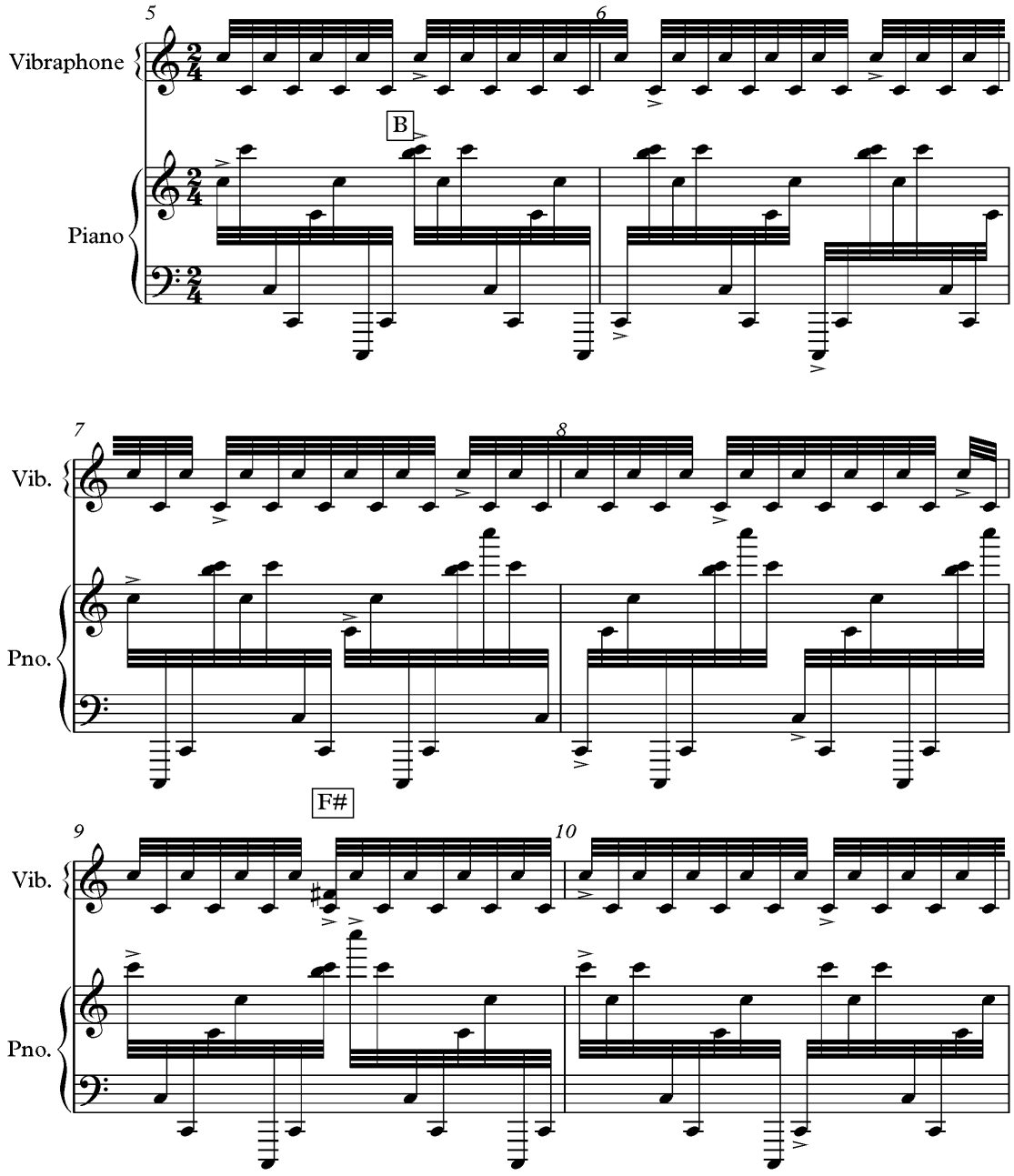
After the pedal is established at the beginning of the piece, it gradually changes. Lash systematically introduces different pitches into the perpetual thirty-second-note motion, and progressively colors the static texture of Cs. The farther the piece progresses, the quicker different notes are introduced into the fabric. This has a sound analogous to that of a dam about to break, which first leaks in different isolated sections, until finally the whole wall bursts, and a torrent of water comes raging through.

[10] Hannah Lash, "Works", accessed March 1, 2020, http://hannahlash.com/works/.

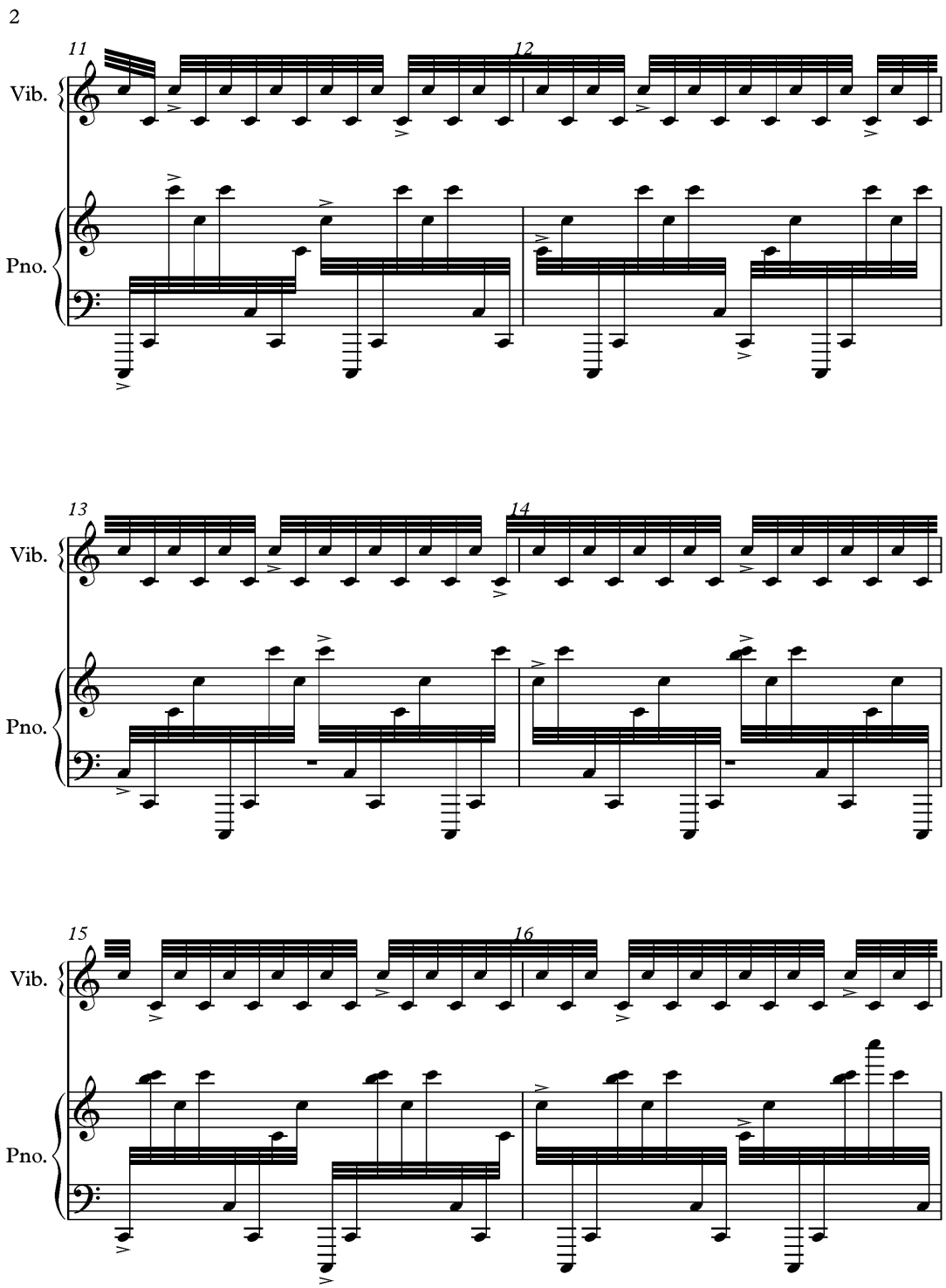


Musical Example 7- C pedal

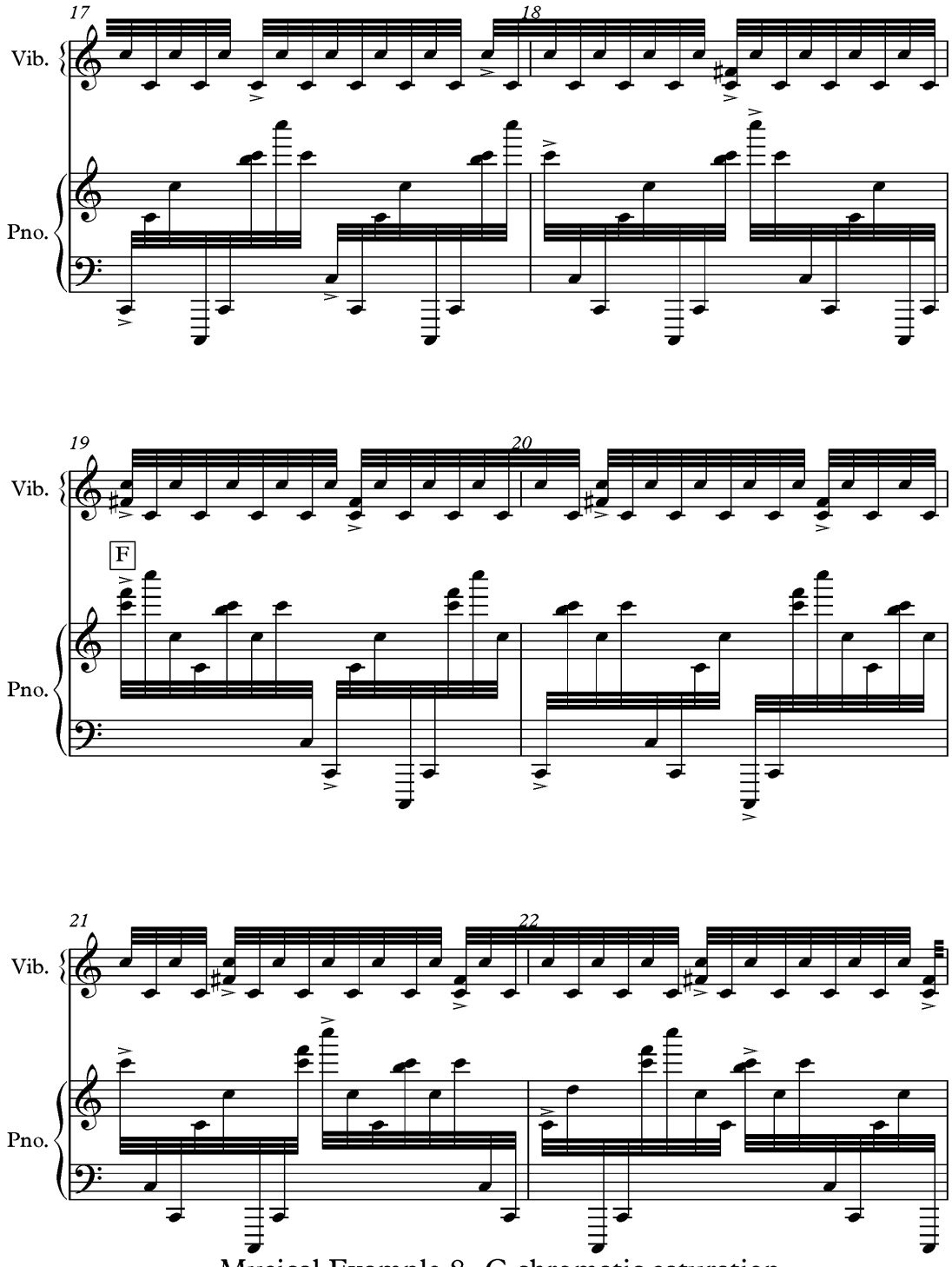
All of the other pitch classes systematically breach the pedal in this order: B-F#-F-A-G-C#-A#-E-G#-D-Eb. What is interesting about this order is that the two most dissonant intervals are presented first (see Musical Example 8).



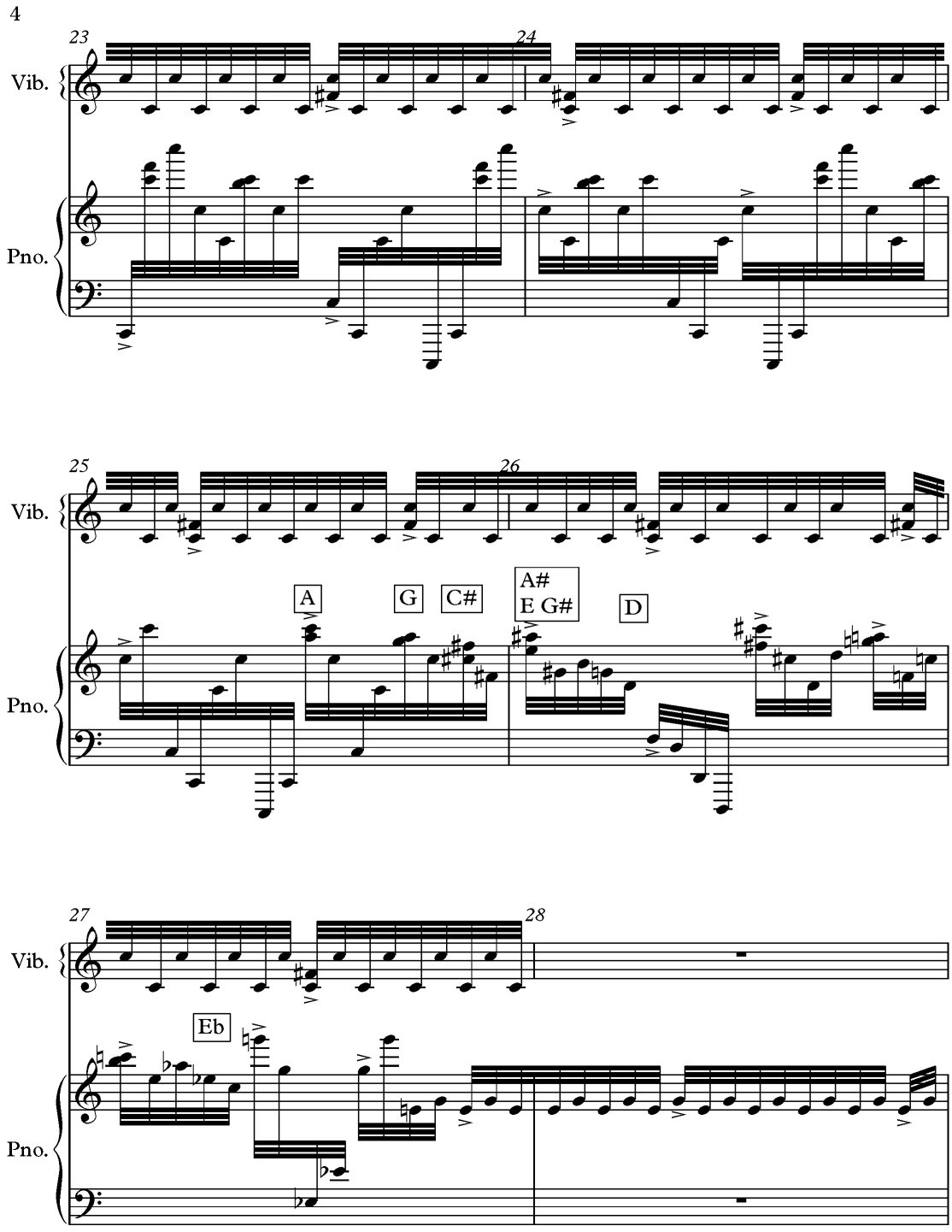
Musical Example 8- C chromatic saturation



Musical Example 8- C chromatic saturation



Musical Example 8- C chromatic saturation



Musical Example 8- C chromatic saturation

The progressive chromatic saturation Lash employs plays an important role in the aural effectiveness of the piece. Also, the overwhelming consonance at the beginning of the work is counteracted by the biting dissonance of a major seventh and a tritone. Then, once the pitch saturation has been completed, the pedal ceases and the thirty-second-note texture becomes a kaleidoscopic variation of intervallic sequences and patterns. I took this idea and incorporated it into my own work, but with a more complex rhythmic foundation.

C is essentially a one-to-one counterpoint of two voices that have repeated patterns of opposing lengths, which overlap to form a frenzied race. The harmonic intervals that are created from the ever-changing patterns only last a thirty-second note each, though. This technique makes it difficult to sustain attention on a particular interval, while instead engaging in a blurring of dissonant and consonant fragments that melt together. These synthetic scalar fragments are also in constant competition for aural supremacy with each other. Lash, though, makes sure that one never senses a dominating line by instead keeping our auditory memory from retaining any particular moment for very long.

I kept Lash's kinesthetic aural gamesmanship in mind while composing my own work. I have also attempted to create pitch sequences that melt together to form fleeting auditory moments within my composition.

***Respiri* (2016) by Juri Seo**

Juri Seo's *Respiri*, is an homage to the late modernist composer, Jonathan Harvey (itself, a reflection of Kleon's view of creative inheritance). *Respiri* is a string quartet composed in 2016, and recorded for her sophomore album by the Argus Quartet. Seo uses some of the compositional ideas found in Harvey's string quartets, from which I will glean for my work.[11]

One of the ideas used throughout this piece is the symmetrical pentatonic scale. This scale creates a central axis that expands symmetrically outward.[12] Specifically, the intervals used are alternating major seconds and minor thirds. For example, based on the note C, the scale would comprise of C, D, F, G, and Bb. These intervals are symmetrical going backwards and forwards from C, and create a harmonic field that Harvey believed represented the individual's freedom from desire.[13]

Seo does not use this scale exclusively in her work, or in the exact way that Harvey did, but it does appear in certain ascending figures (see Musical Example 9).

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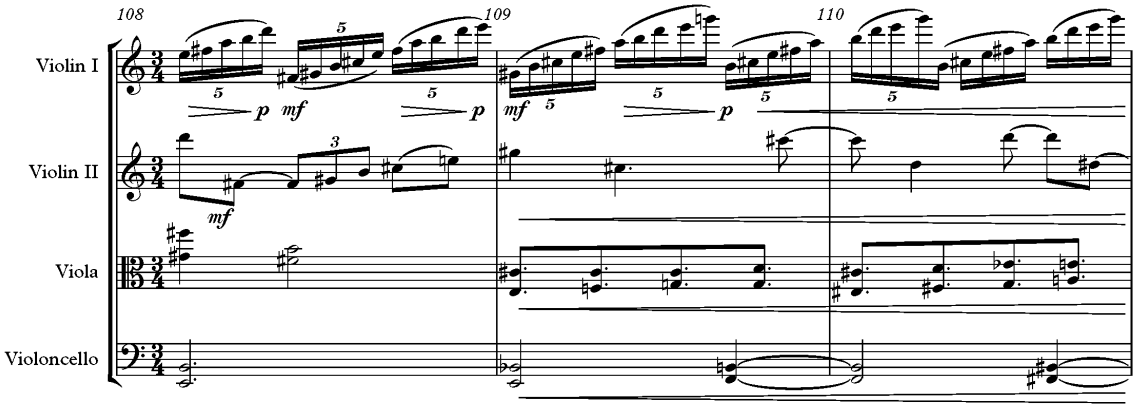
[11] Juri Seo, *Respiri* (Princeton New Jersey: Juri Seo. 2016).

[12] Ibid.

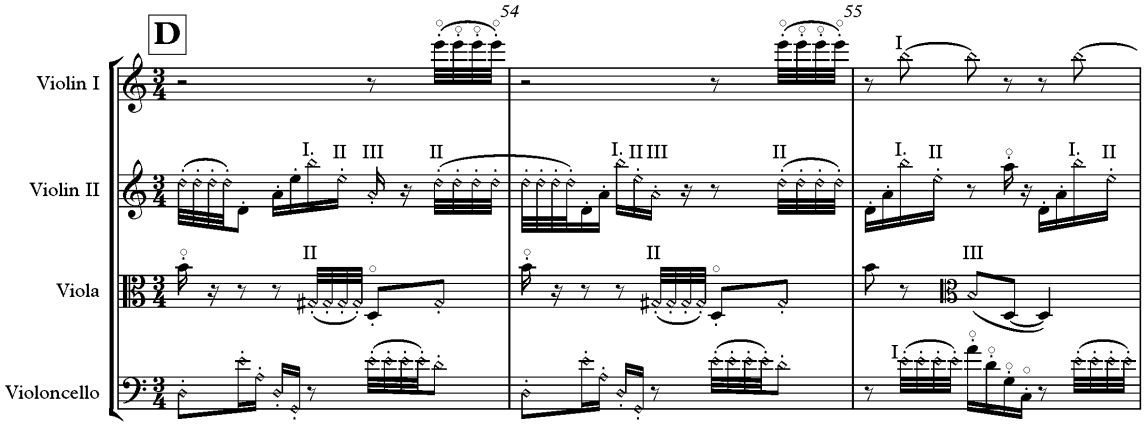
[13] Ibid.



Musical Example 9- Respiri symmetrical pentatonic scale

Another pattern this scale contains is quartal intervals, which Seo uses predominantly. The use of the symmetrical pentatonic scale and quartal intervals is part of what gives this piece such an expansive sound. One of the interesting aesthetics of the work is that is does not sound particularly tonal, yet it also does not sound chromatically inundated either. There is not one semitone interval in this entire piece, which makes it sound neither diatonic nor chromatic. Instead, it wafts along in a timeless cloud of ambivalence, while being paradoxically purposeful in its movement. I have tried to capture some of this meditative quality in my piece as well.

Another unique aspect of this piece is the rhythmic use of a four-note jeté on harmonics, which is utilized often (see Musical Example 10).



Musical Example 10- Respiri four-note jetés

The jetés are mostly used as a soft textural effect in conjunction with other sounds and rhythms. Seo's application of this technique creates a dancelike rhythmic pulse, which is otherwise absent. It also breaks up the monotony of the sustained, pulseless texture that permeates most of the piece.

I used this technique in a more aggressive and rhythmically driven manner within the entire string section to counterbalance the drone that I borrowed from *Anthracite Fields*. This idea, coupled with the expansive sound of the symmetrical pentatonic scale, added a layer of depth to my work that I feel is particularly interesting and unique.

***Symphony No. 4, from Mission San Juan* (2007) by Kevin Puts**

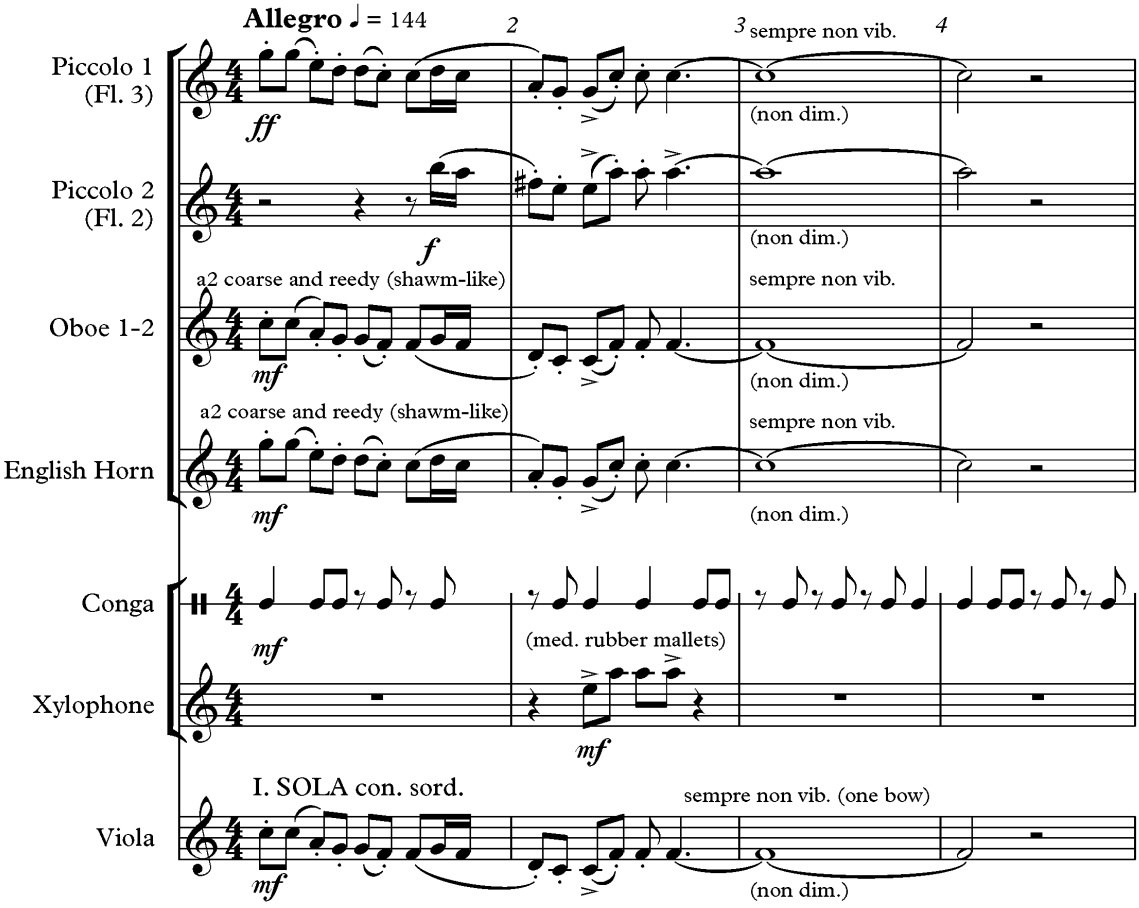
Kevin Puts' Fourth Symphony was premiered at a Spanish mission in the town of San Juan Baptiste.[14] According to him, this work was inspired by the culture of the city and the acoustics of the mission building.[15] The compositional idea I utilized from this work was taken from movement two of his symphony, entitled *ARRIQUETPON (the diary of Francisco Arroyo de la Cuesta, 1818).*

The crux of this idea is a juxtaposition of contradictory musical material. Puts employs two disparate musical styles that compete for prominence as they simultaneously interact throughout the movement. The first style laid out is a light dancelike feel in the woodwinds, accompanied by a conga ostinato (see Musical Example 11).

[14] Kevin Puts, *Symphony No. 4, from Mission San Juan* (Berlin: Aperto Press. 2007).

[15] Ibid.

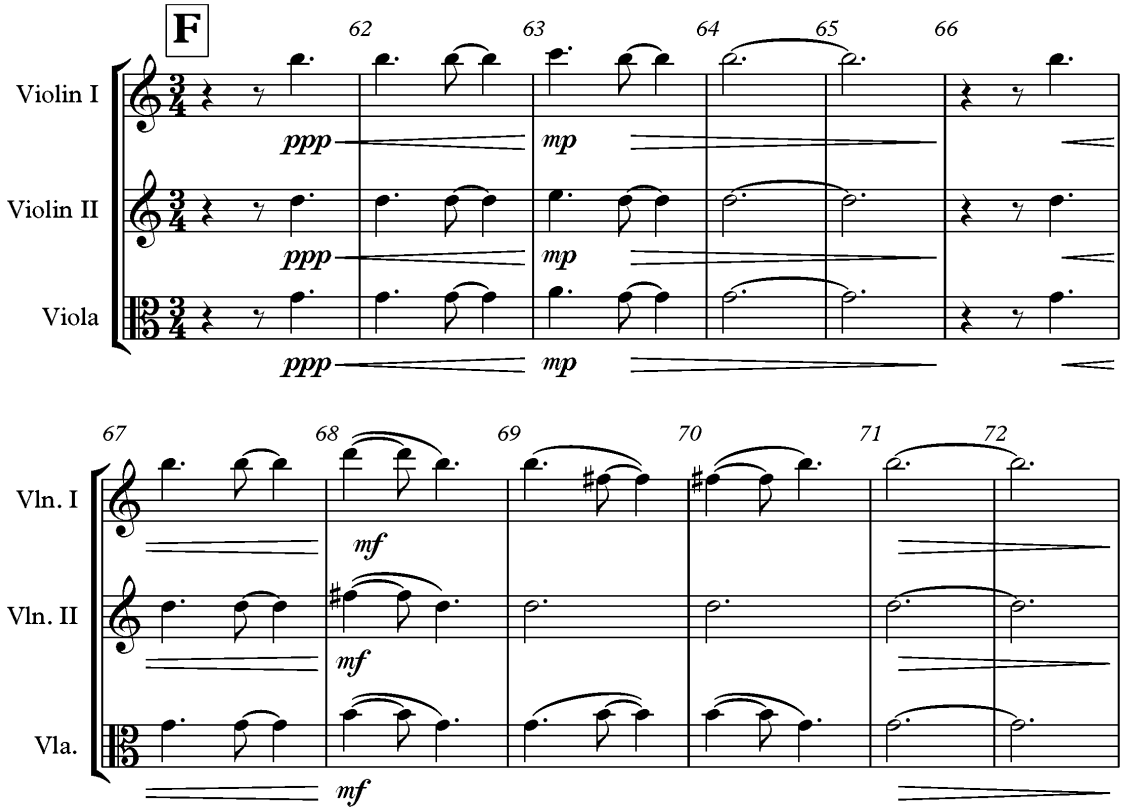
II. ARRIQUETPON (the diary of Francisco Arroyo de la Cuesta, 1818)



Musical Example 11- Symphony No. 4 dancelike feel

He crafted melodies that are punctuated with slurred-to-staccato eighth-note figures, which give the texture a fragile and thin quality. The conga pattern is an even and monotone three-measure repeated ostinato. This texture has a syncopated upbeat feel that moves along at a comfortable and even pace in a 4/4 meter.

On the other end of the spectrum, Puts has created a rich, emotionally charged melody in the strings that is longing to be recognized. His melody is in a competing 3/4 meter where the rhythms are comprised of dotted-quarter notes (see Musical Example 12).



Musical Example 12- Symphony No. 4 romantic melody

These repeated rhythms make it seem as though there is a metric modulation to a slower two-beat feel. This, however, is just an implied metric modulation, for the piece does not actually change tempo. These two competing metric feels add to the

juxtapositional intrigue, and counterbalance the dancelike woodwind texture. Puts' longing dotted-quarter-note melody crescendos and decrescendos in and out of the texture, temporally displacing the light dance feel, which creates a contradictory sonic panorama. Instead of sounding awkward and out of place though, this juxtaposition feels organic and intriguing.

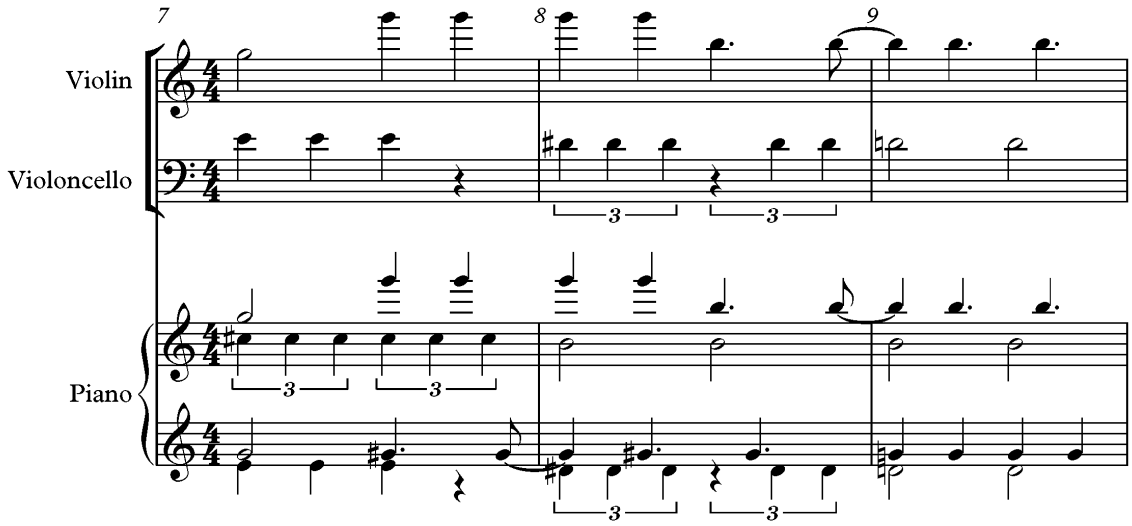
The string melody is monophonic and played by all of the string instruments except the bass. The linear motion is parallel and generally diatonic, while the harmonic intervals create simple but effective triads in root position. Puts does not use a complicated framework for this melody, but it is very effective nonetheless. Also, what makes his idea interesting is how the opposing styles interact and contradict each other in paradoxical and nuanced ways. I took this idea and tried to create a similar musical interaction in my piece.

***wed* (2018) by David Lang**

David Lang's piece, *wed* (sic) is part of a collection of pieces called *Memory Pieces*, and was commissioned by the American Conservatory Theatre for the Kronos Quartet. His work was written originally as incidental music for a production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and scored for string quartet. He subsequently arranged it as a stand-alone piece for piano trio, to which my thesis refers. Lang calls for this piece to be played "subdued and still, devoid of almost all expression."[16]

The idea I chose to focus on in this work is his use of polyrhythmic counterpoint. Lang's counterpoint and superimposition of inherently clashing rhythms is what give this work its interest, in my opinion. For example, he frequently superimposes a set of quarter-note triplets over a set of dotted quarter notes (see Musical Example 13).

[16] David Lang, "Memory Pieces", accessed March 28, 2020, https://davidlangmusic.com/music/memory-pieces.

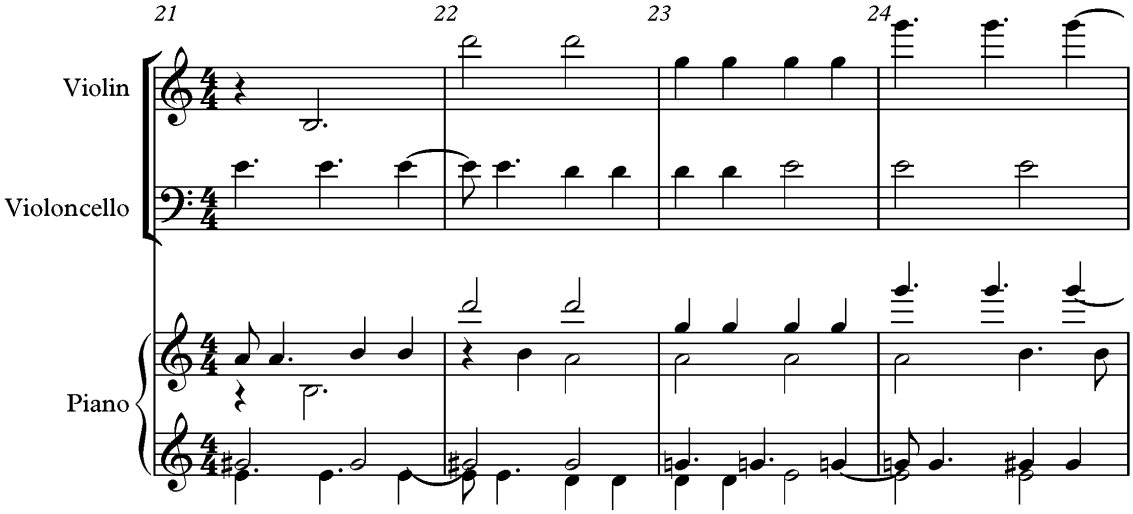


Musical Example 13- wed rhythmic incongruence

These two incongruent rhythms combine to create a unique composite rhythm. The resulting linear structure does not produce a recognizable rhythm that could be written out very easily with one voice. Lang seems to capitalize on this incongruence to create a rhythmic dissonance that pairs well with his uses of harmonic dissonance. I believe that he stacks these two disparate rhythms together to purposely make the listener feel uneasy, almost as if to convince us that there is a mistake.

From a harmonic standpoint, Lang uses an abundance of major and minor seconds. The profusion of these and other dissonant intervals create the biting sounds that are immediately obvious. However, there are triadic sonorities within the piece that act as a respite from the sustained rhythmic and harmonic dissonance. These consonant moments appear at precise points when they are the most effective. The two triads that

are most prominent and anchor the work are E major and G major. These two chords are the scaffolding in which the entire construction seems to revolve around. Also, there are many times when these triads are used with a tone added to them. Both are often accompanied with an A, creating an added fourth to the E triad, and an added second to the G major triad. By adding an A to both chords, it establishes two invariant tones between them that bond them closer together (see Musical Example 14).



Musical Example 14- wed triadic scaffolding

One of the side effects of Lang's polyrhythmic counterpoint is a particular demand on the performer to be extremely accurate with their specific rhythm. The timing discrepancy in superimposing a dotted quarter note over a quarter note triplet is minute, but important for the musical effect. I found it rather difficult to write in a rhythmic clash of this particular kind for a full orchestra, while still being confident that performers

could accurately agree on an interpretation. I tried to be sensitive to this demand while utilizing Lang's idea in a way that could be achievable for a large ensemble. The remaining chapters will illustrate the manner in which I integrated the aforementioned ideas into my composition, *Kyros*.

Kleon Illustration 2[17]

[17] Kleon, 39.

CHAPTER 3 – A NEW COMPOSITION

DUSTIN SCHULZE

KYROS

for orchestra

2020

Full Score

INSTRUMENTATION

2 Flutes

2 Oboes

2 Clarinets in Bb

Bass Clarinet in Bb

2 Bassoons

4 Horns in F

3 Trumpets in Bb

3 Trombones (2 Tenor, 1 Bass)

Tuba

4 Percussionists
- Timpani, Medium Tom Tom
- Concert Bass Drum
- Crash Cymbals, Tambourine
- Chimes

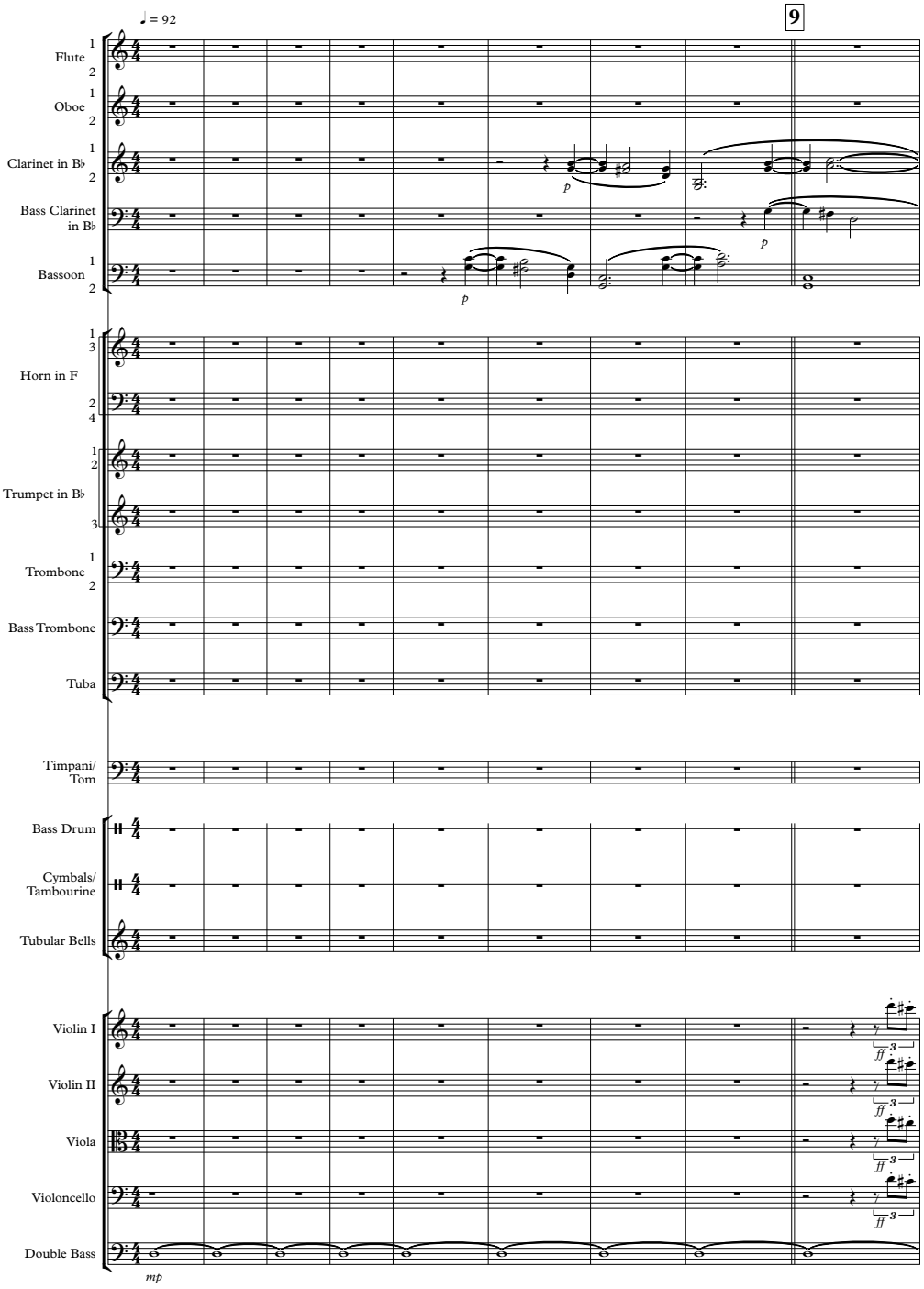
Strings

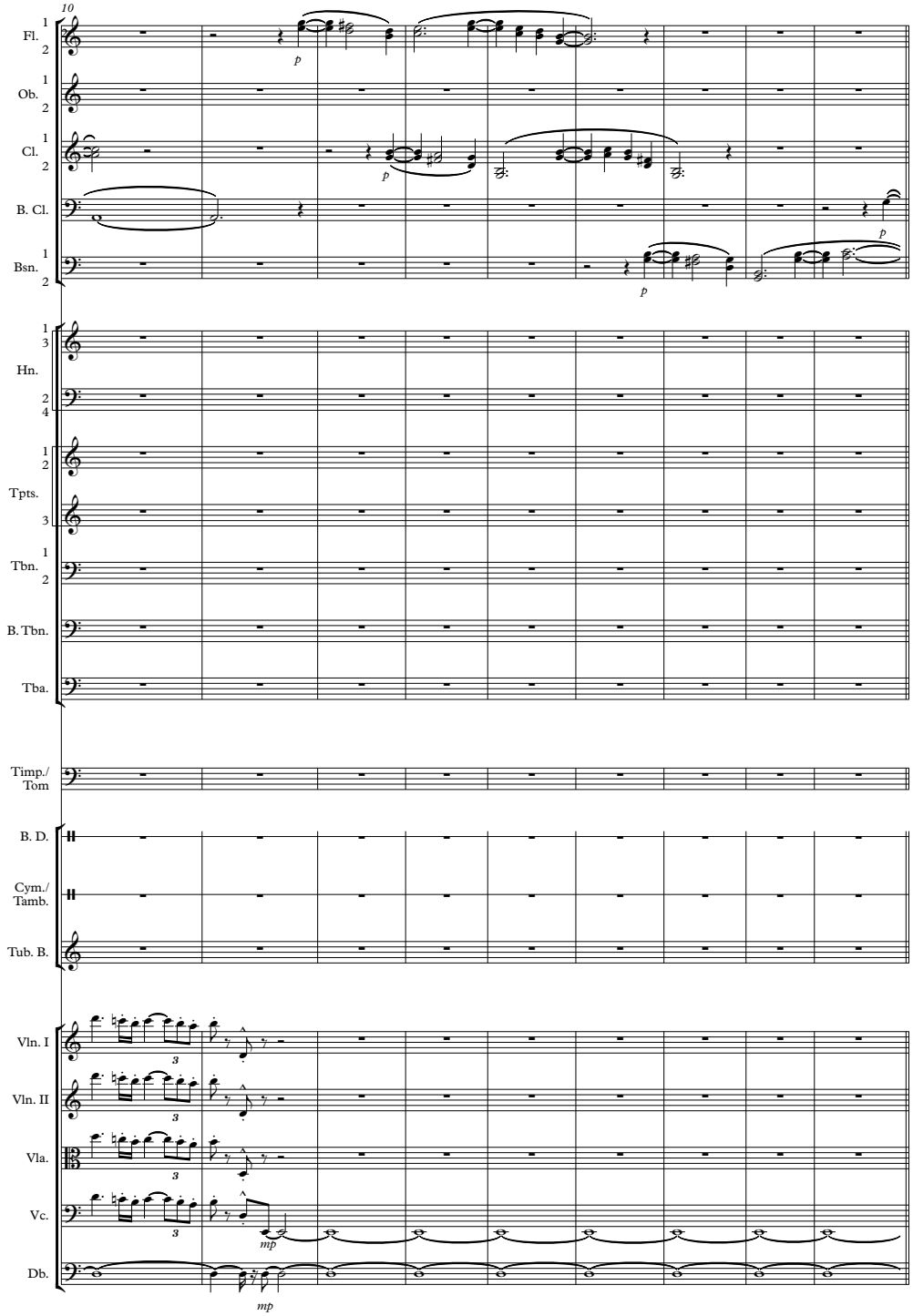
duration ca. 6:00

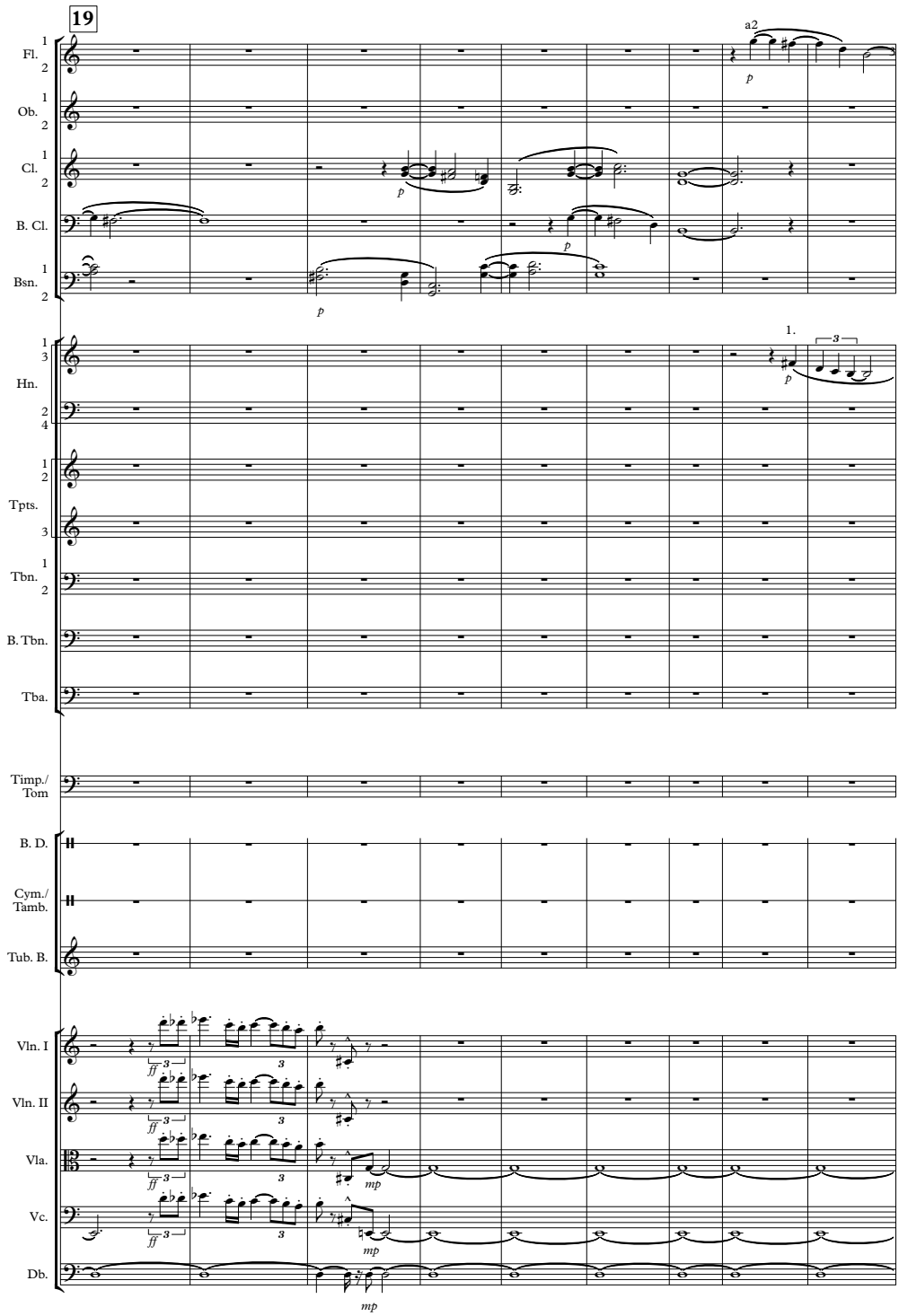
SCORE IN C

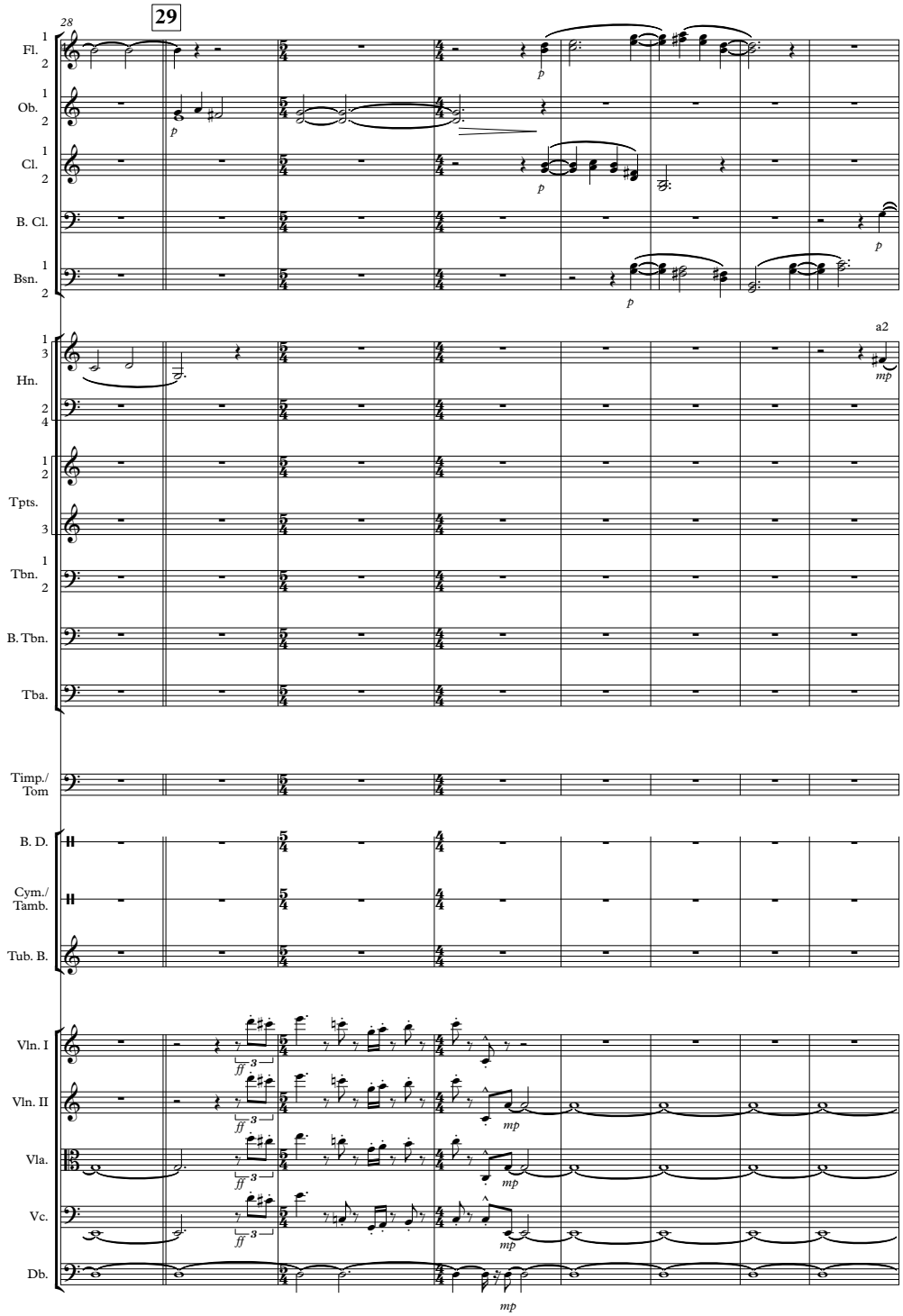
KYROS

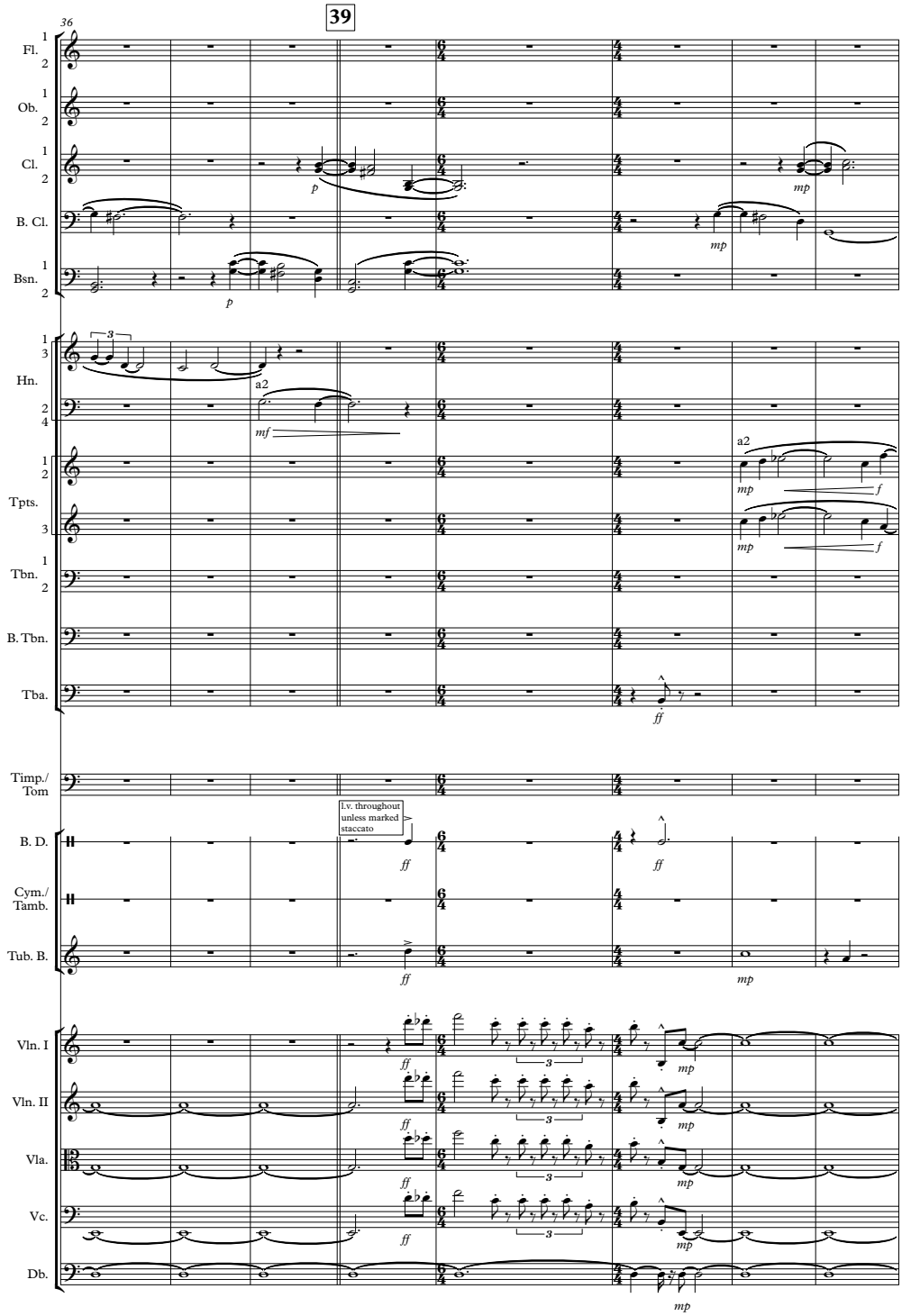
Dustin Schulze

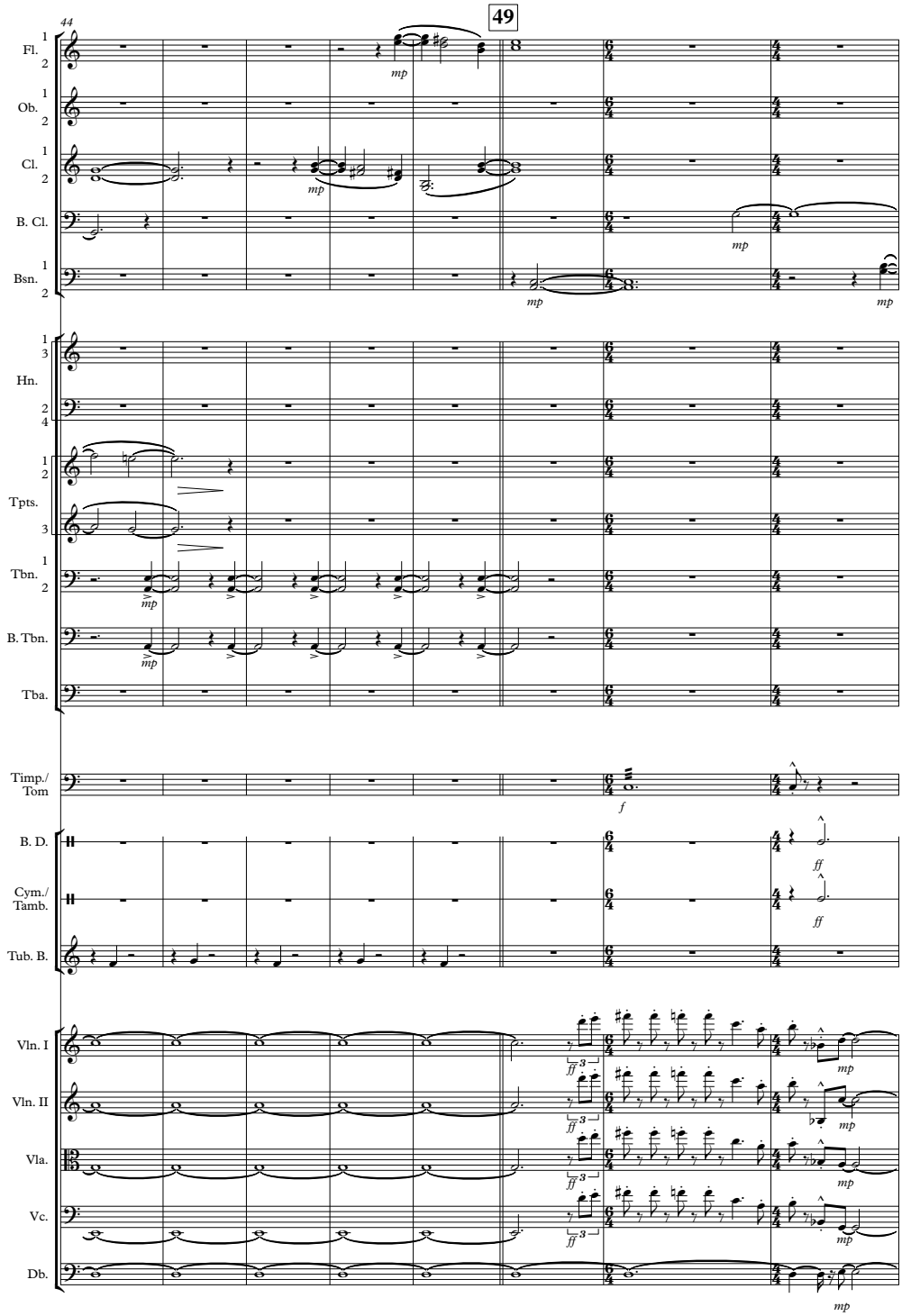


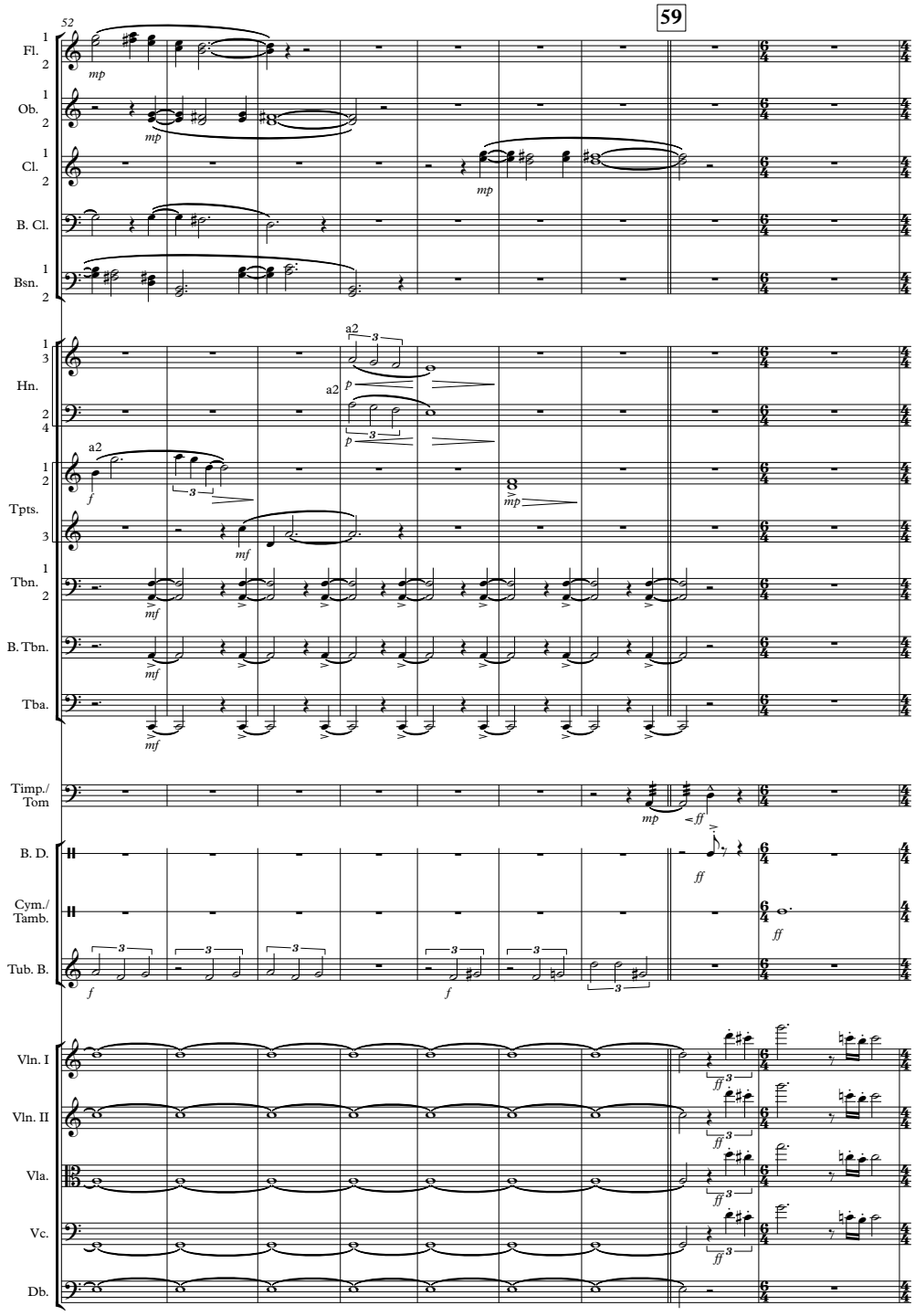

10
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./ Tom
B. D.
Cym./ Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p
mp

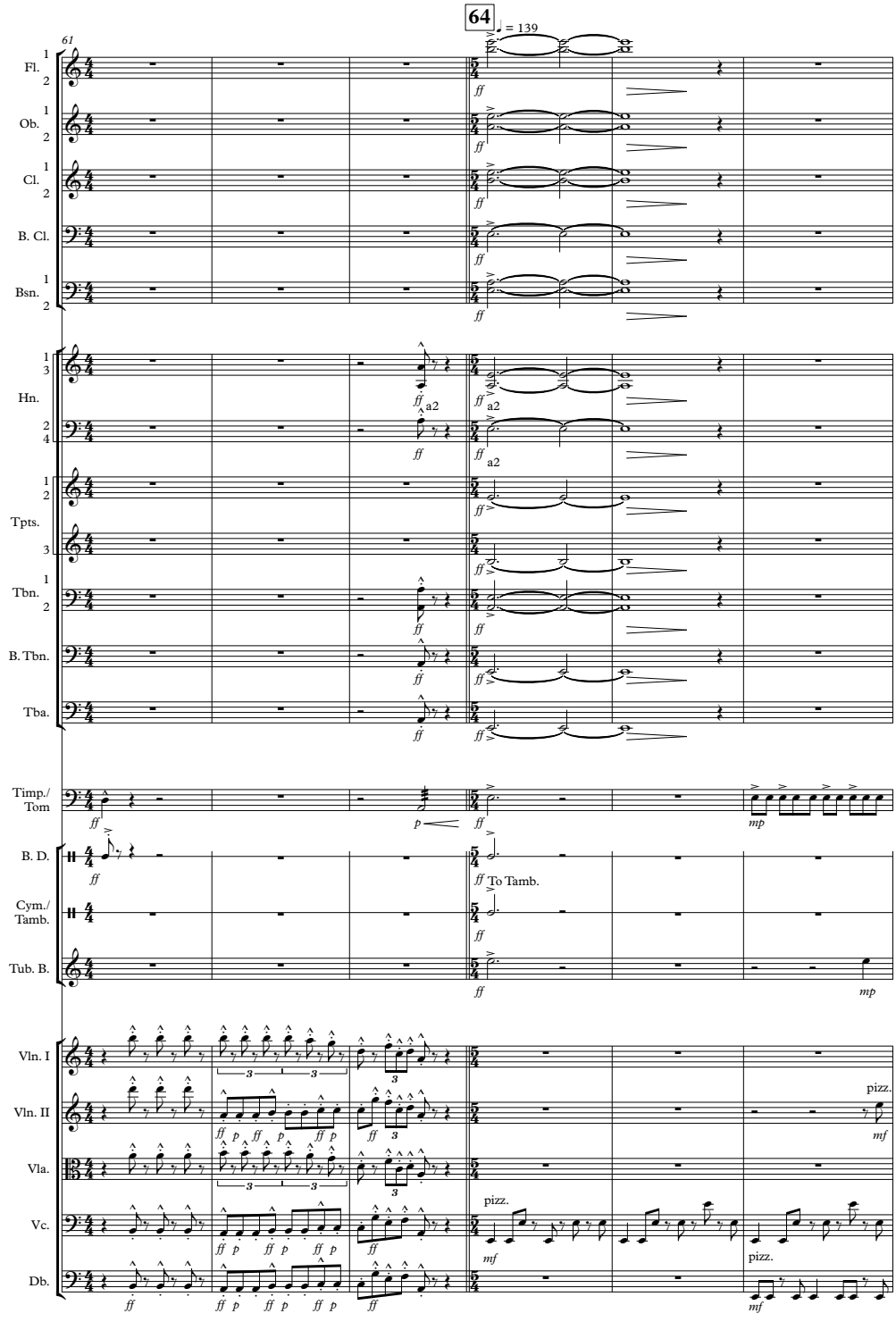

19
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./ Tom
B. D.
Cym./ Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a2
1.
p
ff
mp

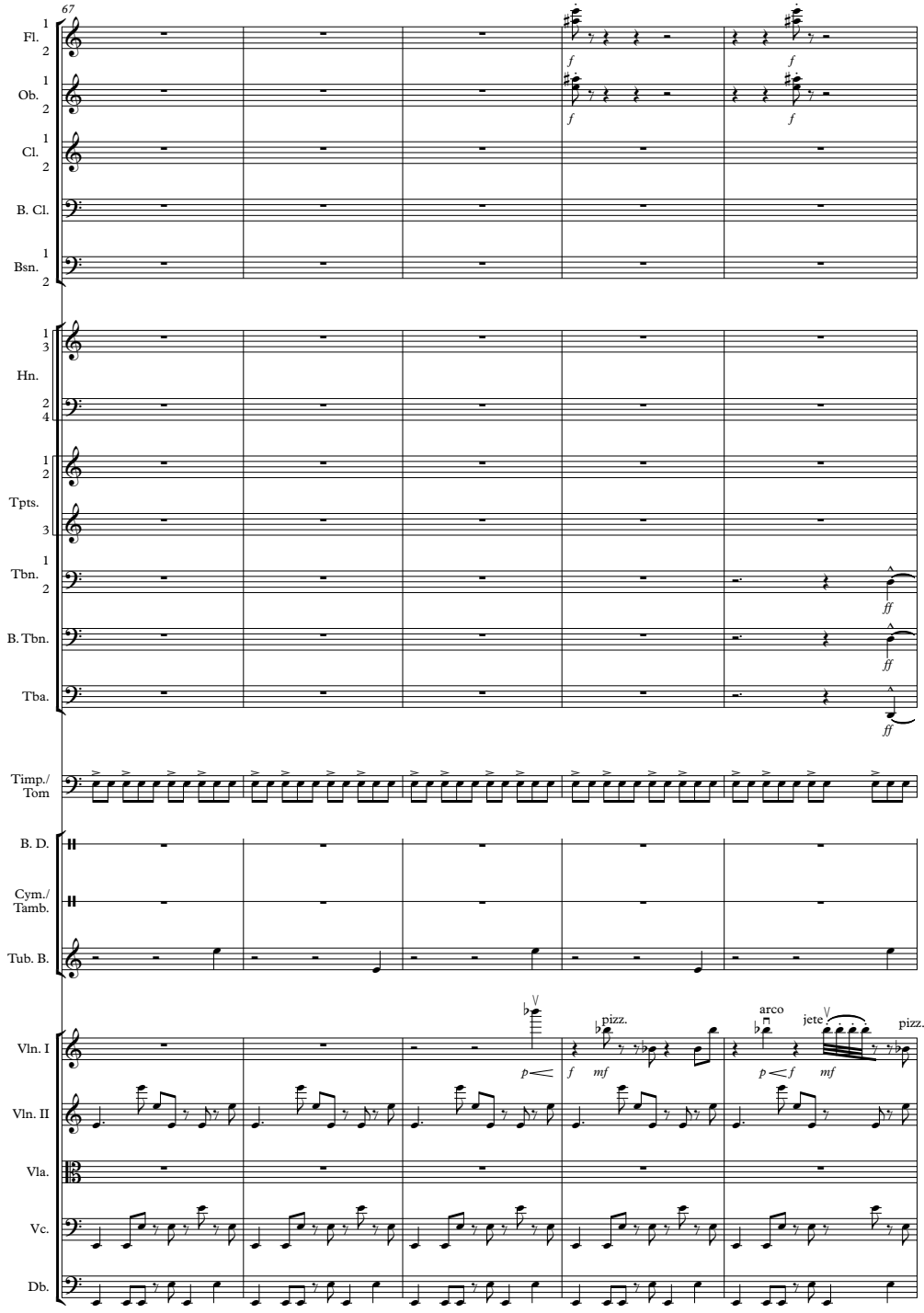

28
29
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
a2
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./ Tom
B. D.
Cym./ Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

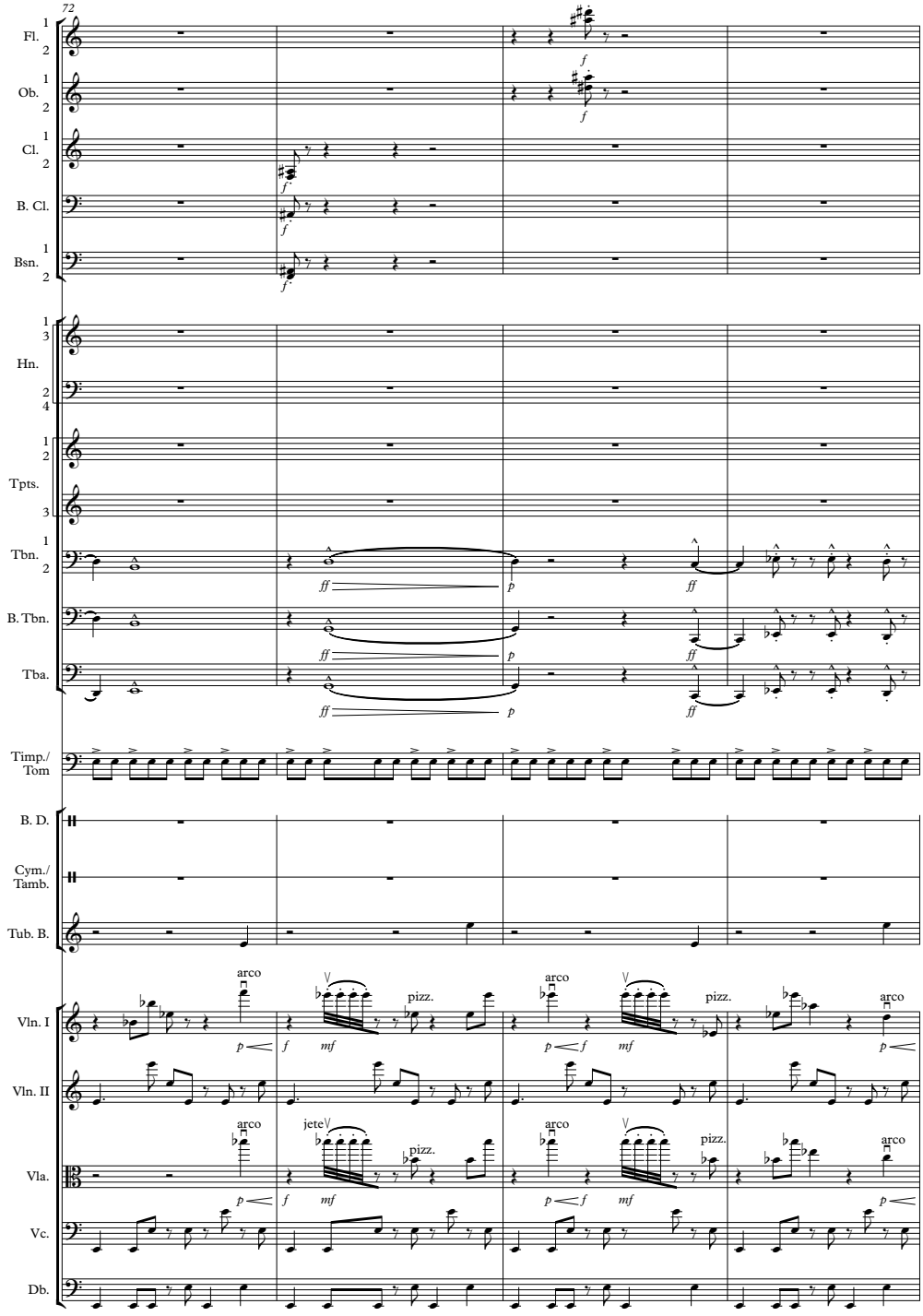

39
36
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./ Tom
B. D.
Cym./ Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a2
l.v. throughout unless marked staccato

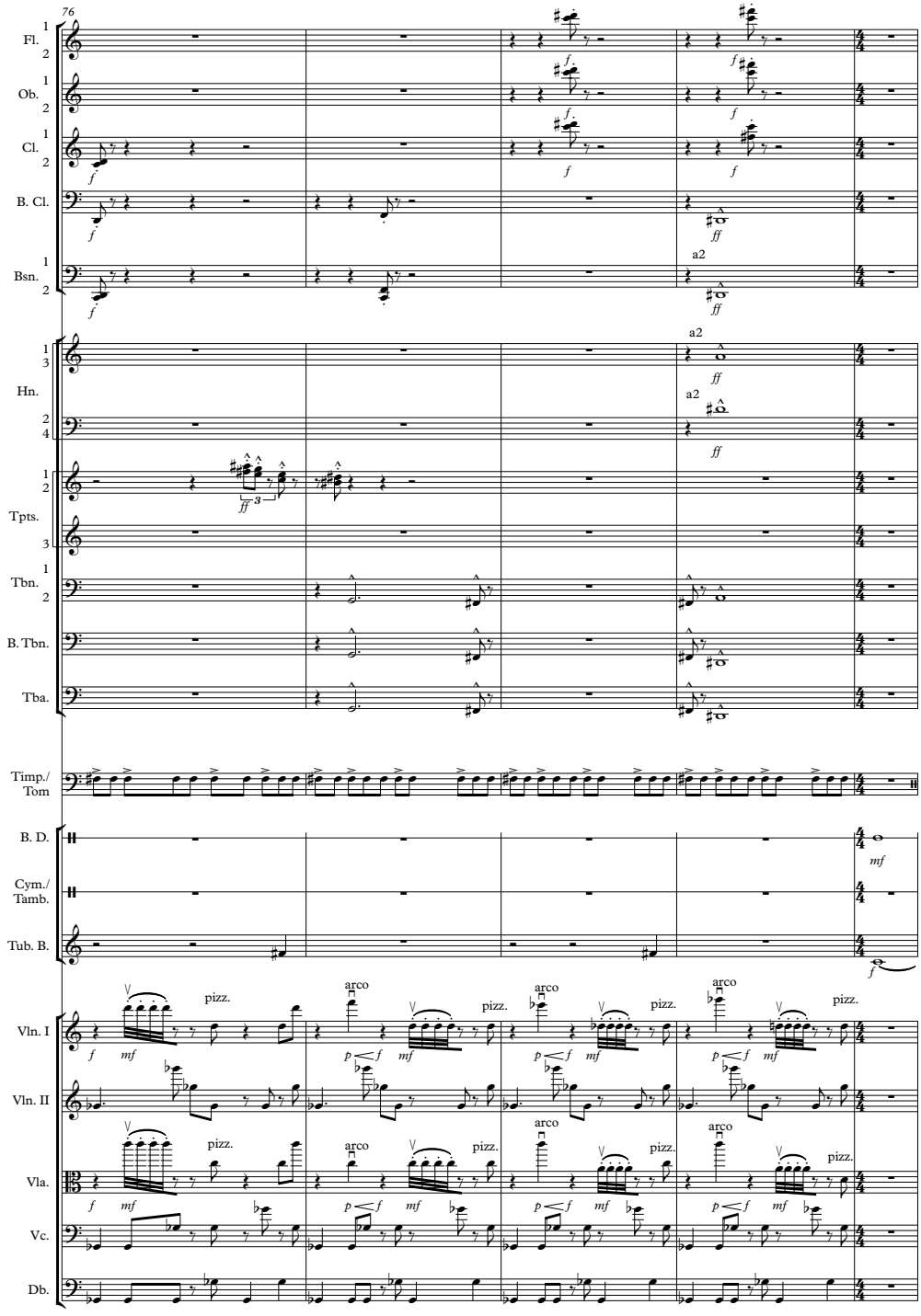

44
49
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./
Tom
B. D.
Cym./
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mp
f
ff

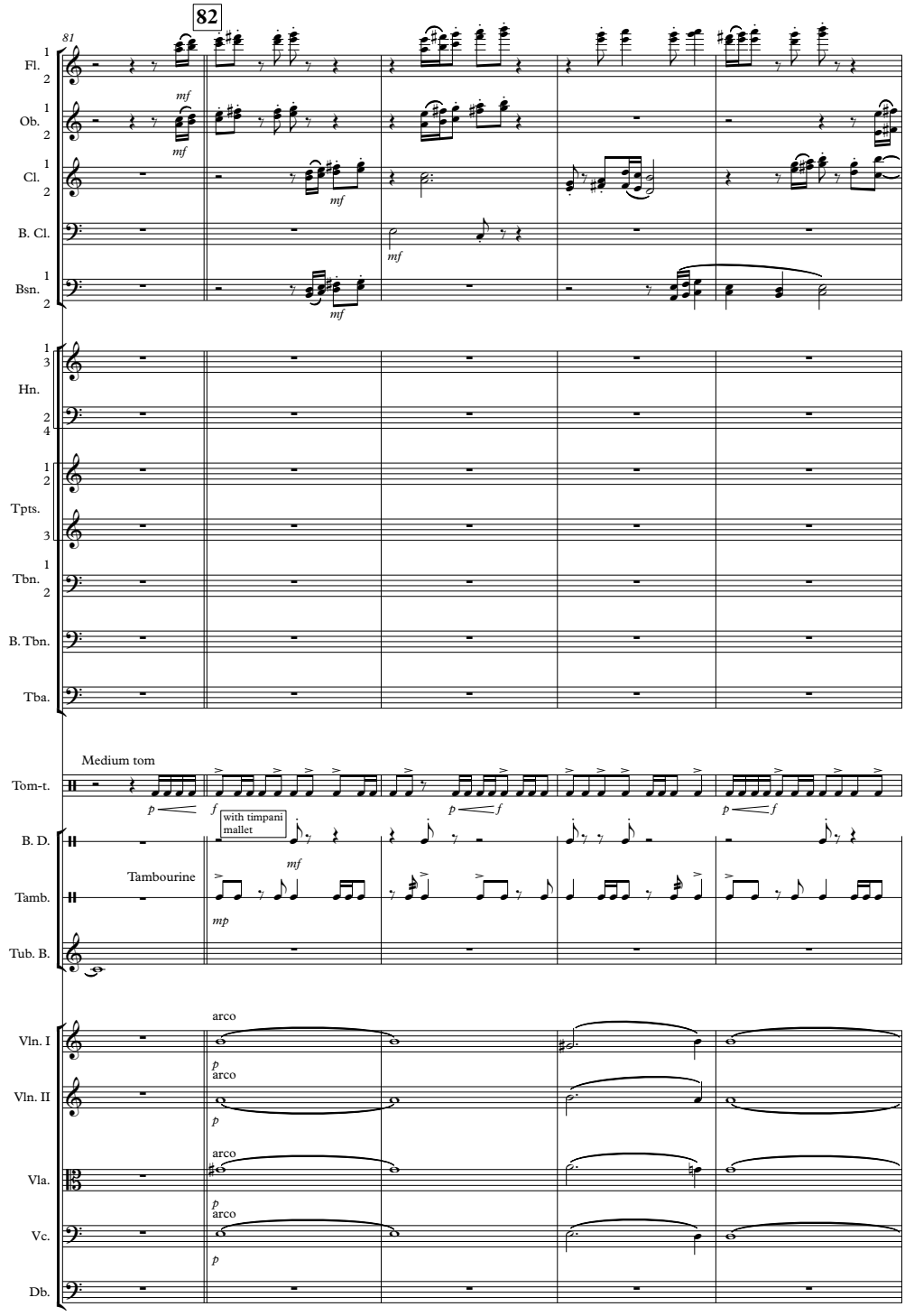

52
59
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./ Tom
B. D.
Cym./ Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a2
mp
mf
f
p
ff

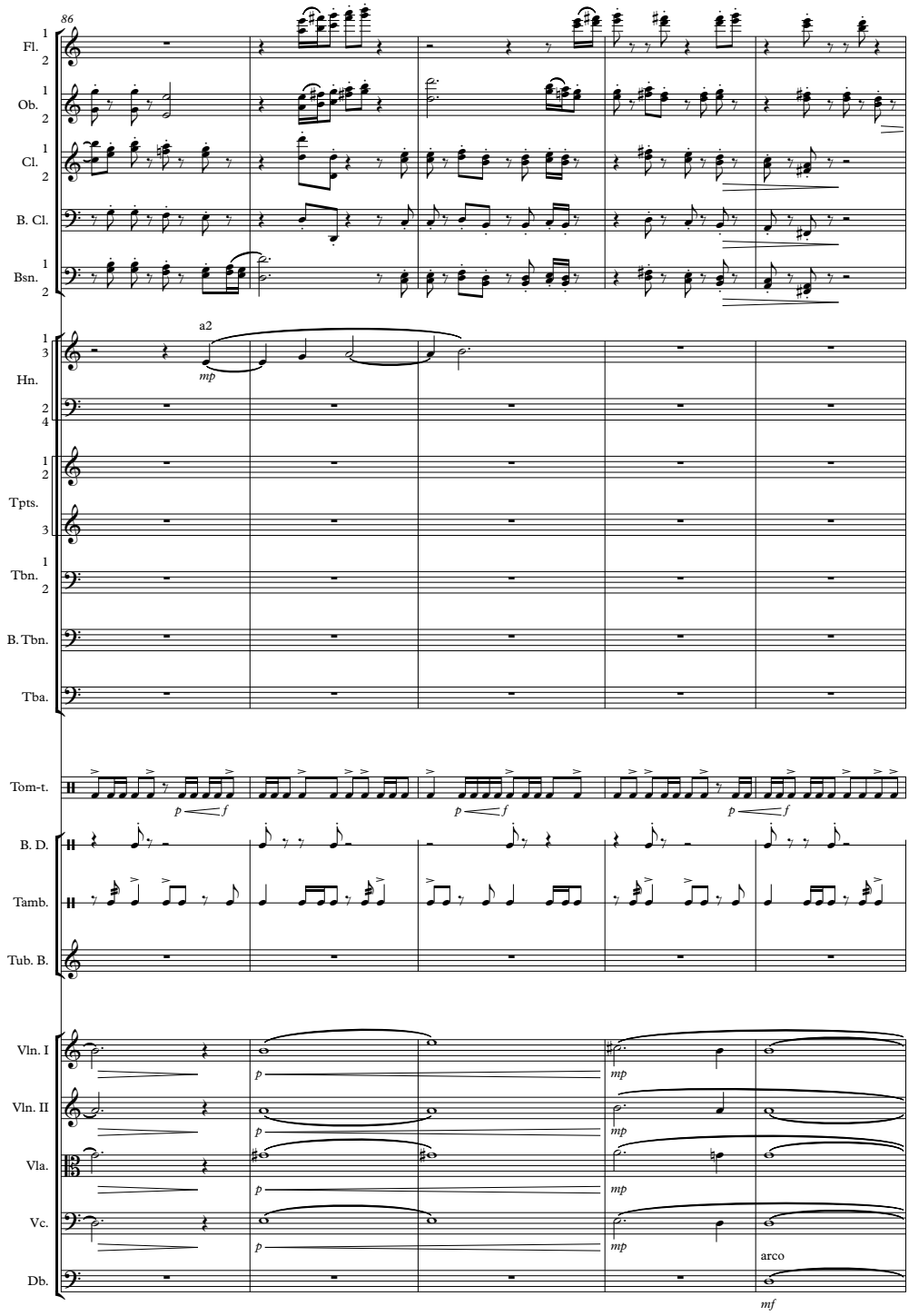

64
♩ = 139
61
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./ Tom
B. D.
Cym./ Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a2
To Tamb.
pizz.

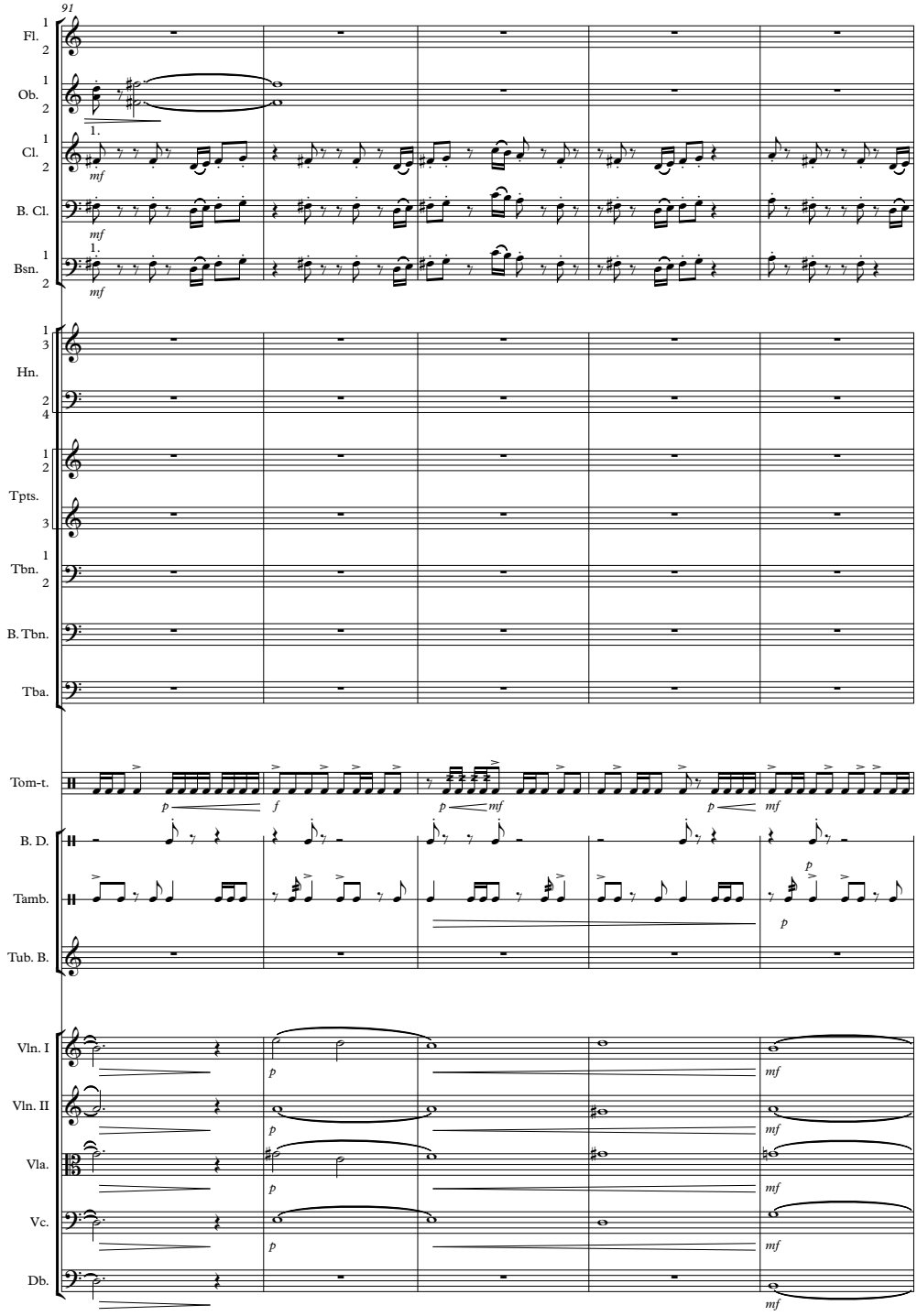

67
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./ Tom
B. D.
Cym./ Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pizz.
arco
jete
pizz.

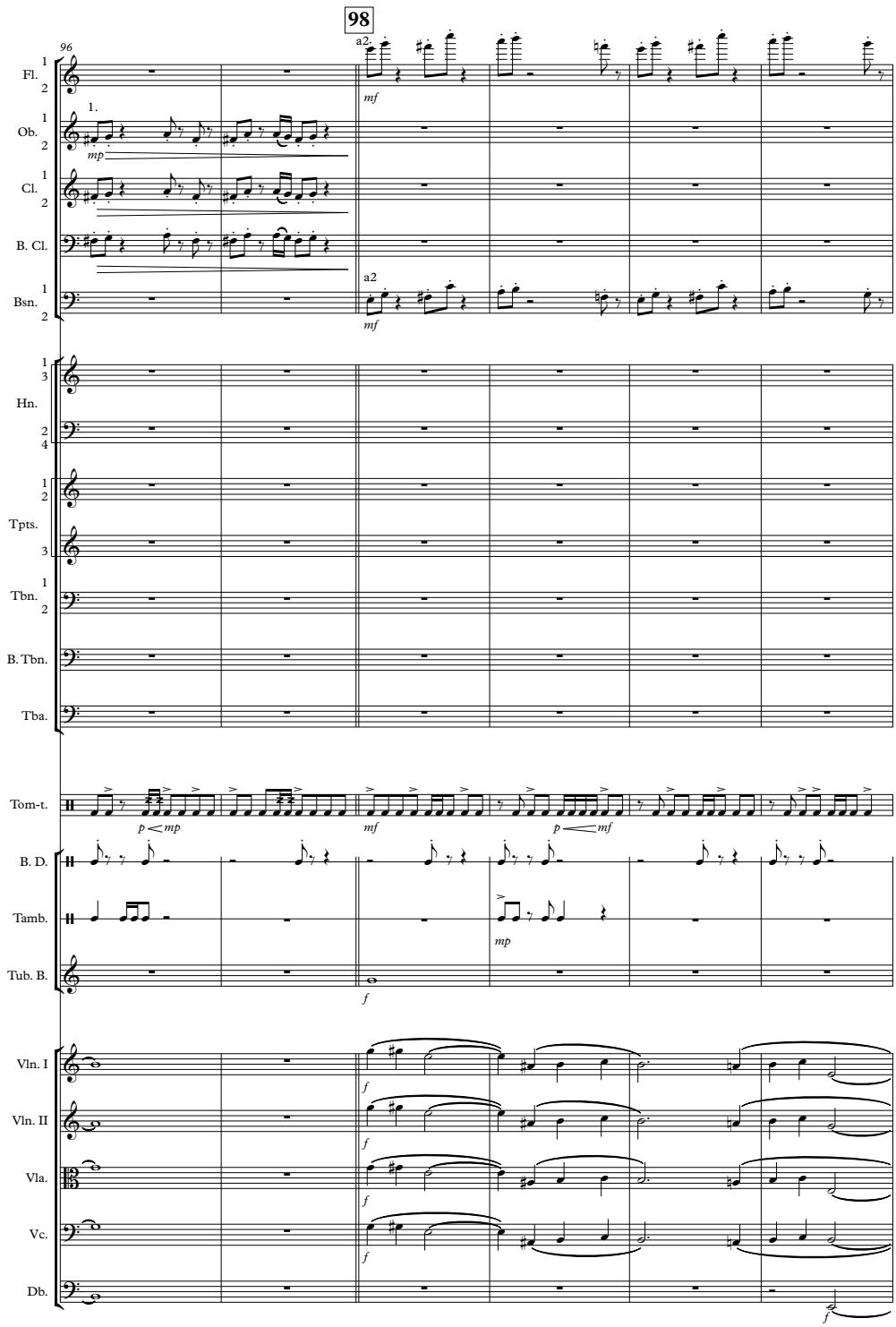

72
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./ Tom
B. D.
Cym./ Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
arco
pizz.
jete

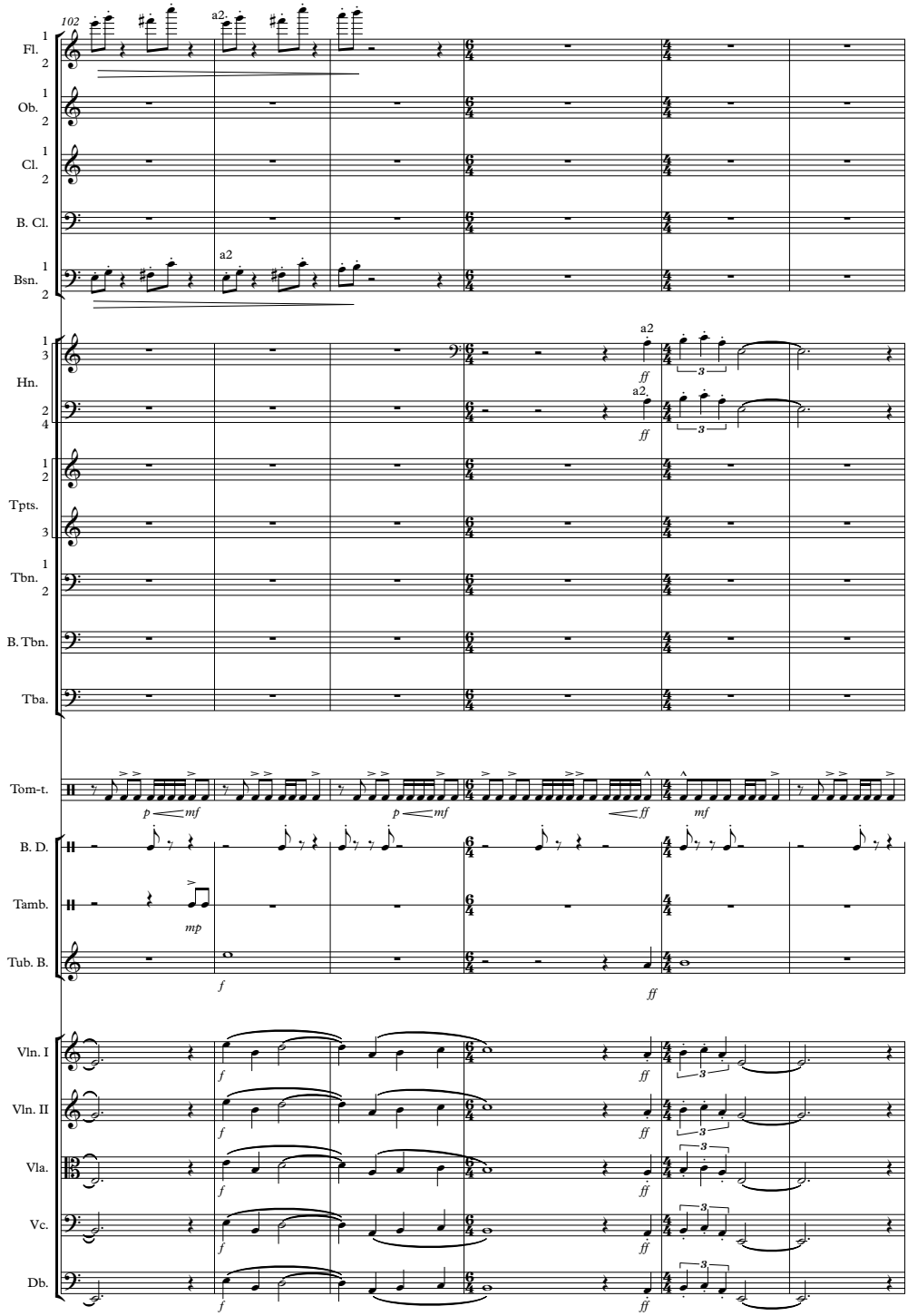

76
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timp./ Tom
B. D.
Cym./ Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a2
pizz.
arco

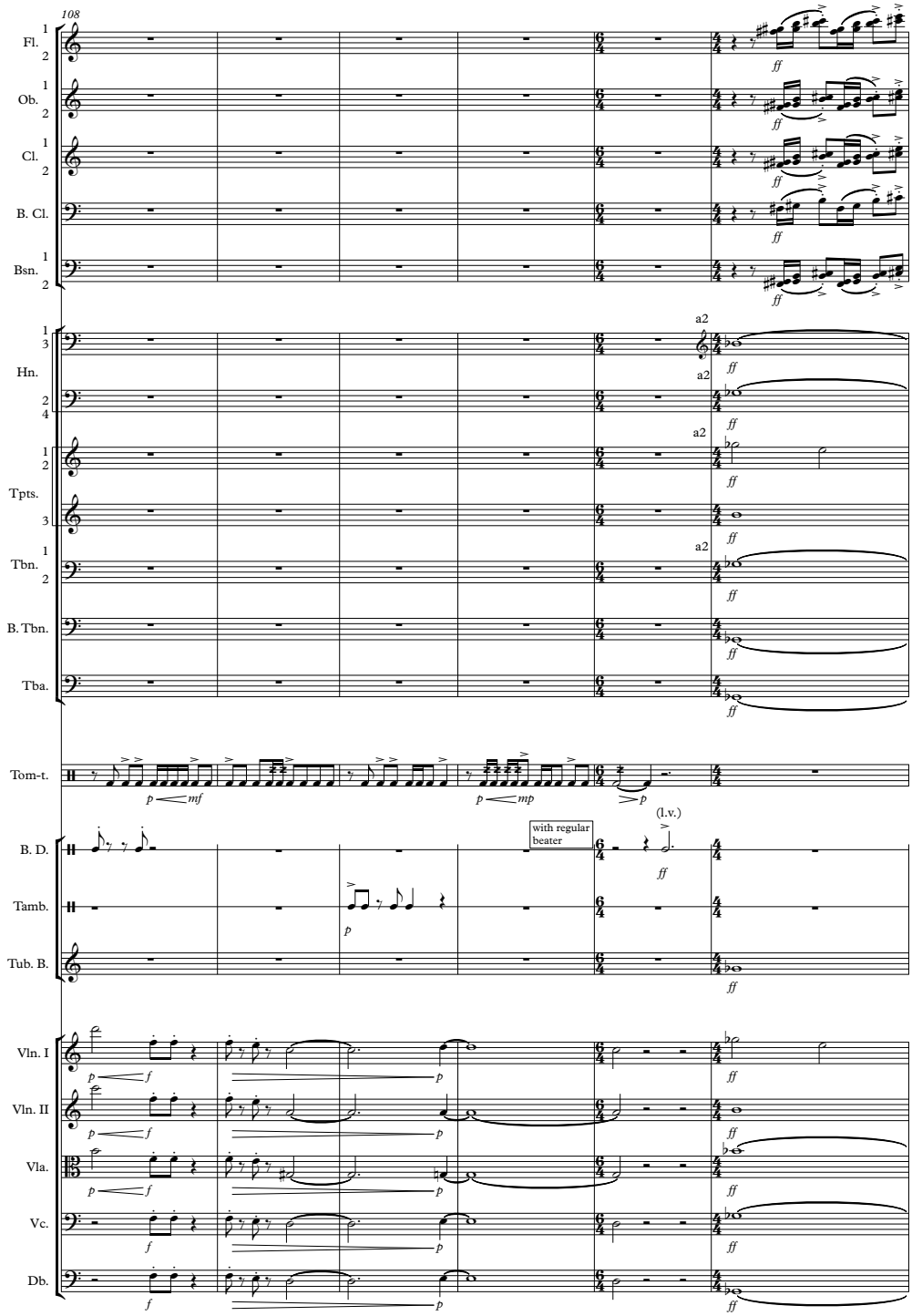

82
81
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
Medium tom
with timpani mallet
B. D.
Tambourine
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
arco
mf
mp
p
f

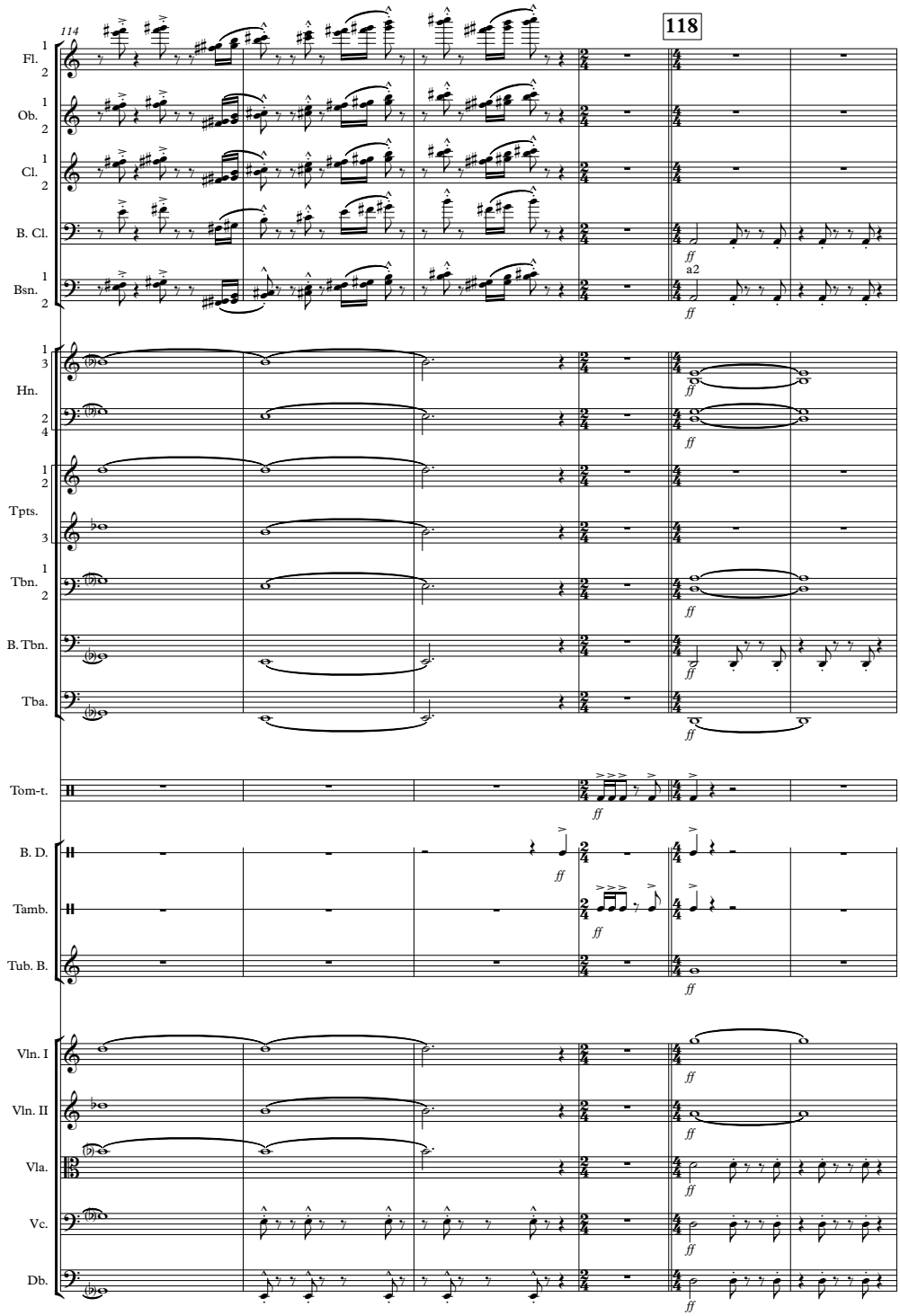

86
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
a2
mp
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
p
f
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mp
arco
mf

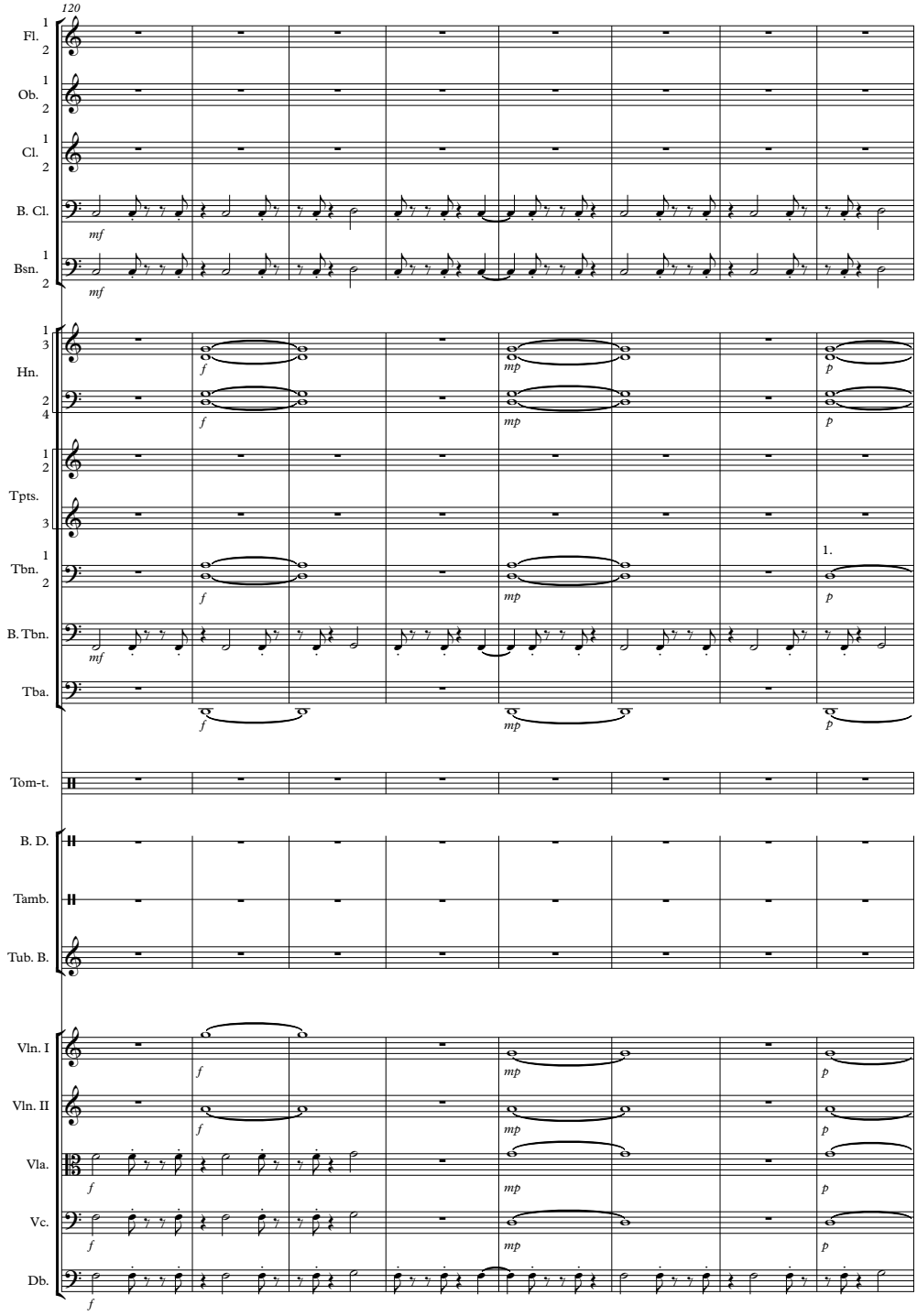

91
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

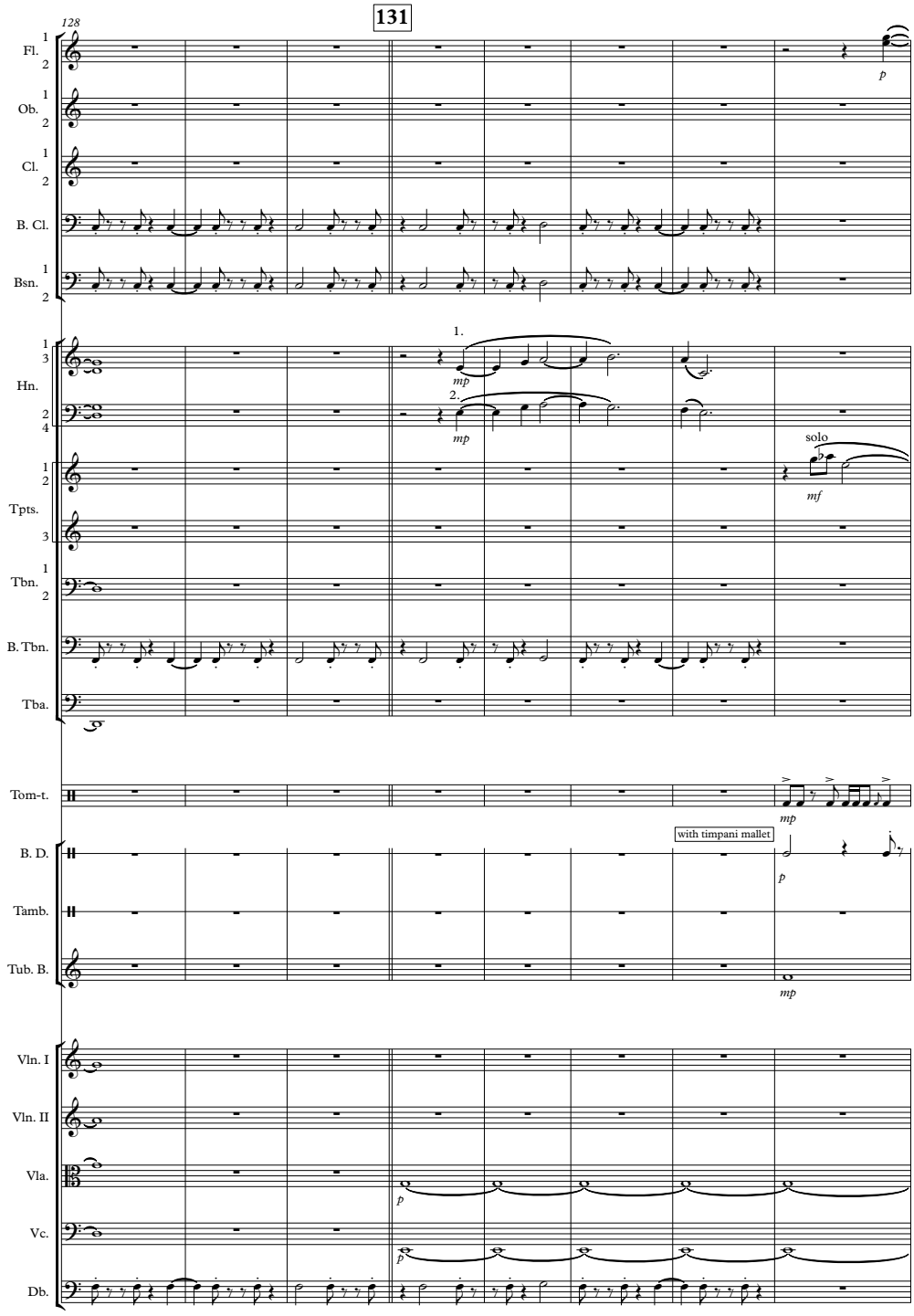

98
96
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
1.
a2
mp
mf
p < mp
mf
p < mf
mp
f

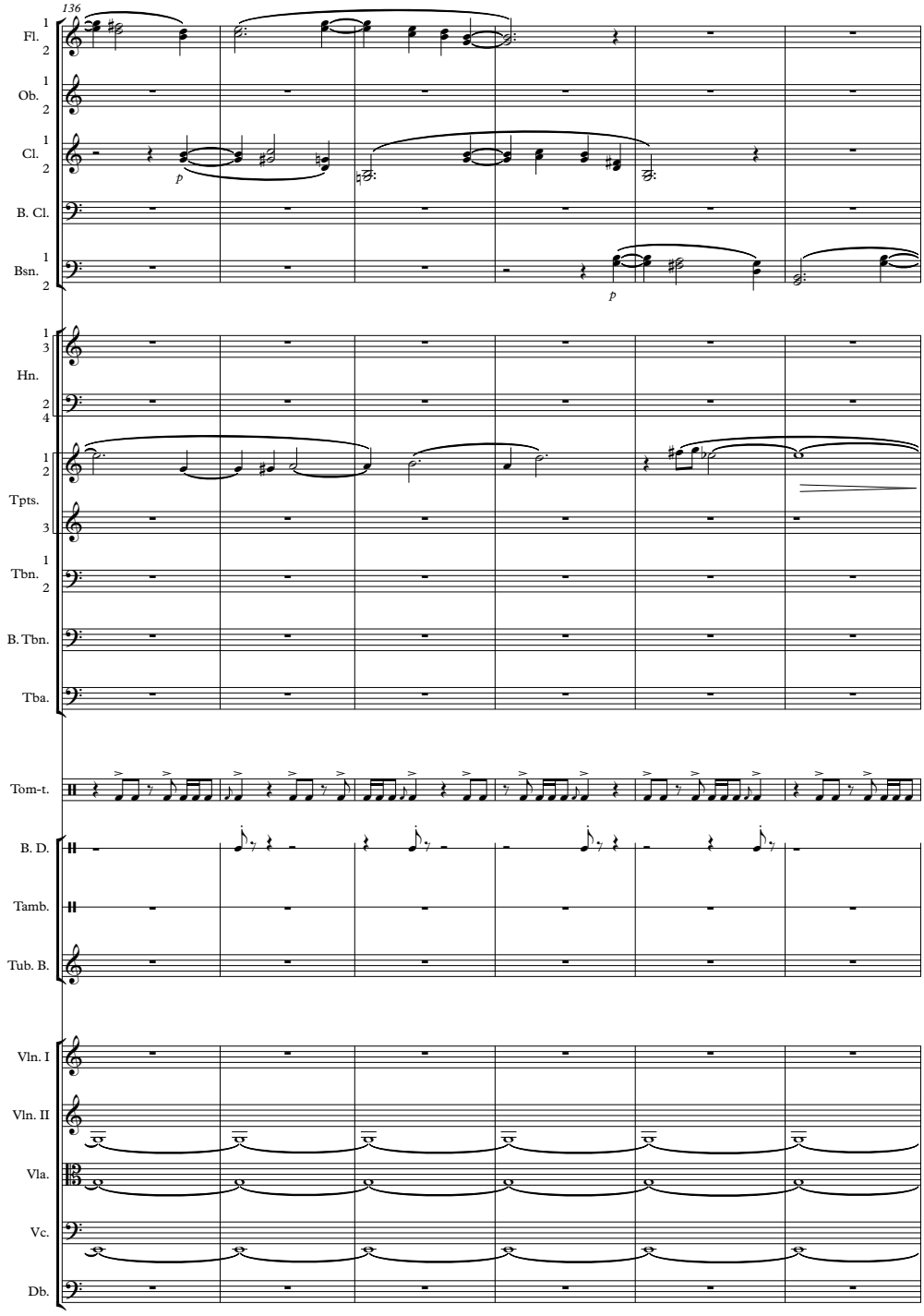

102
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a2
p
mf
mp
f
ff

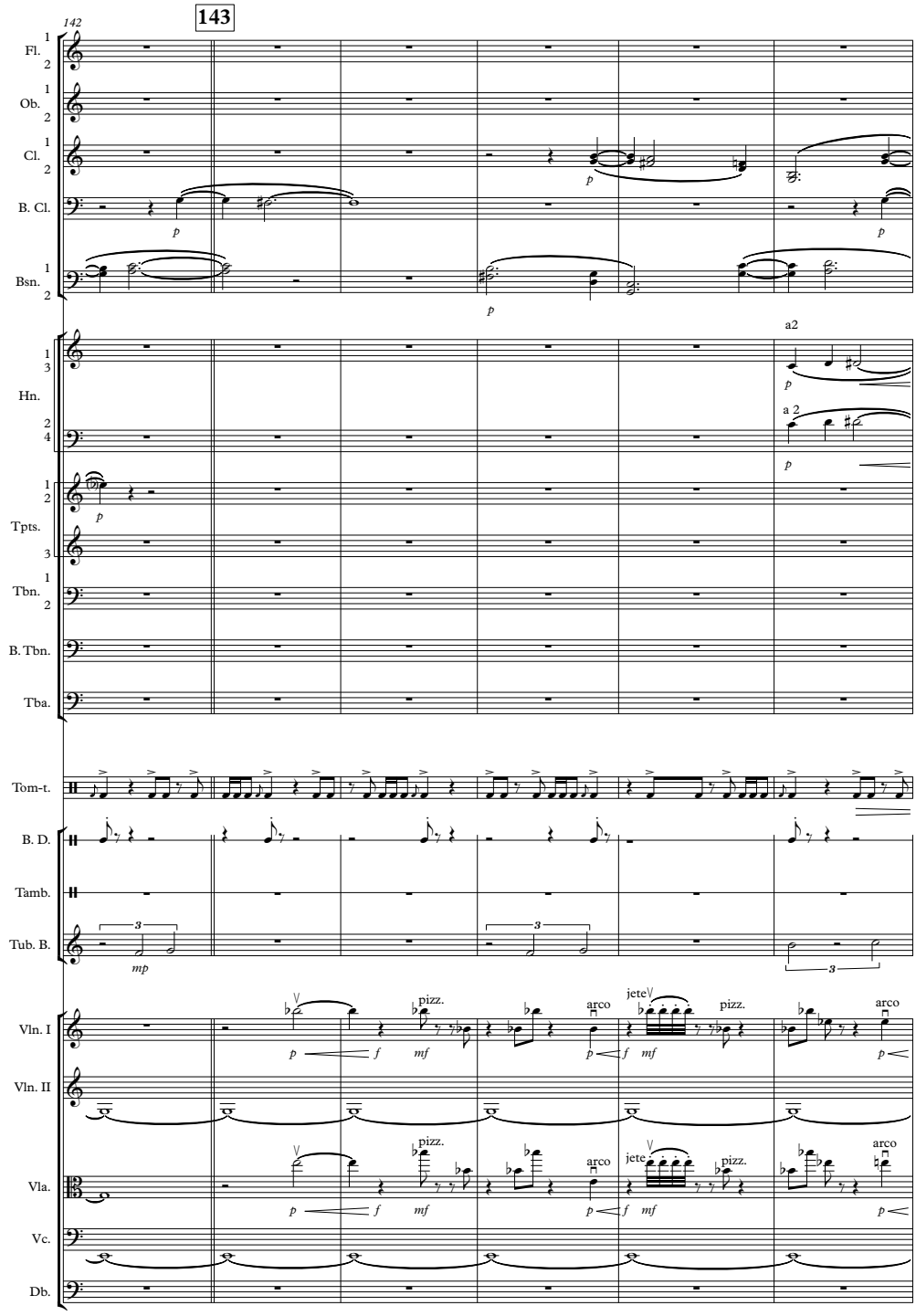

108
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a2
with regular beater
(l.v.)

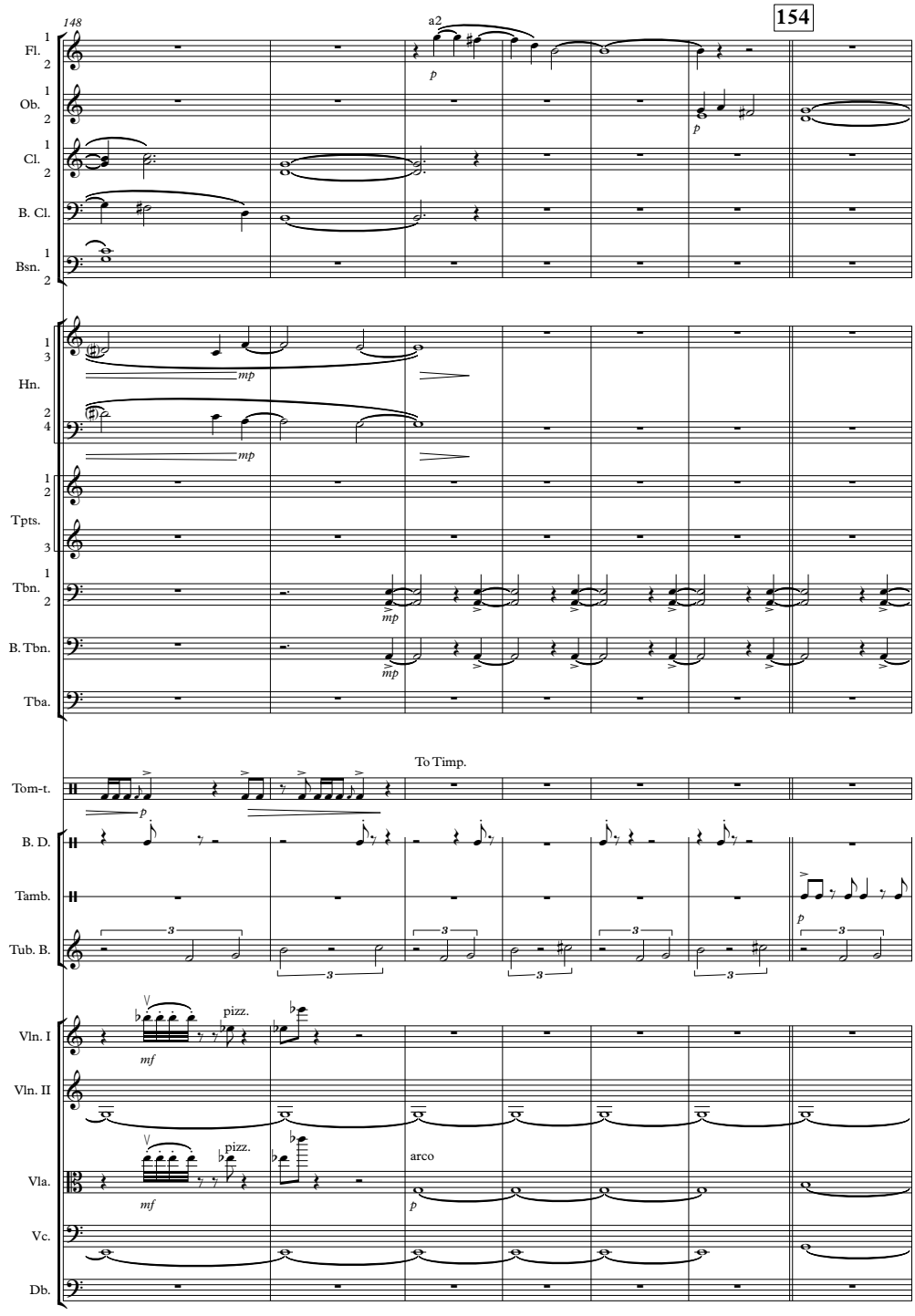

114
118
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
ff
a2

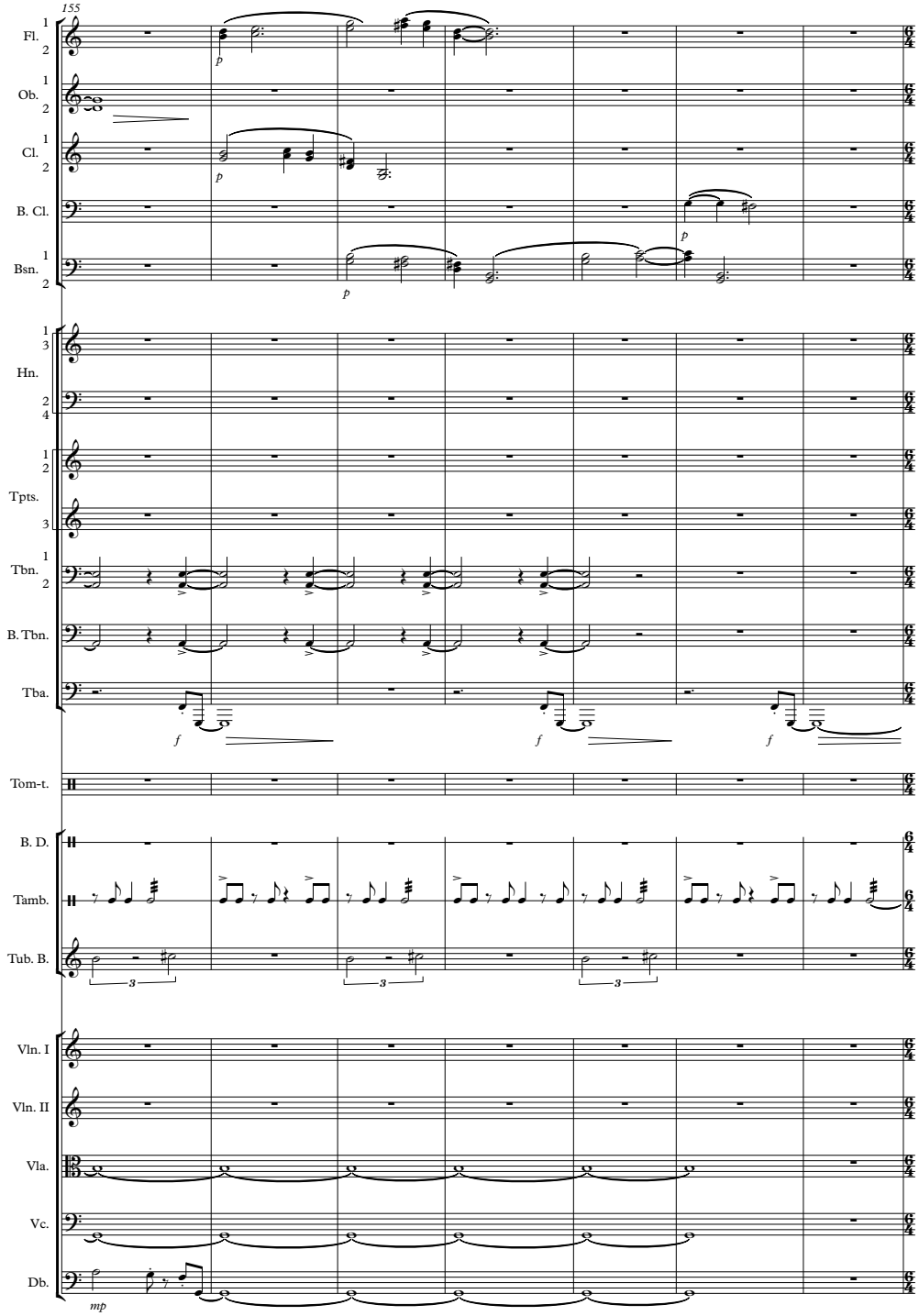

120
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mf
f
mp
p
1.

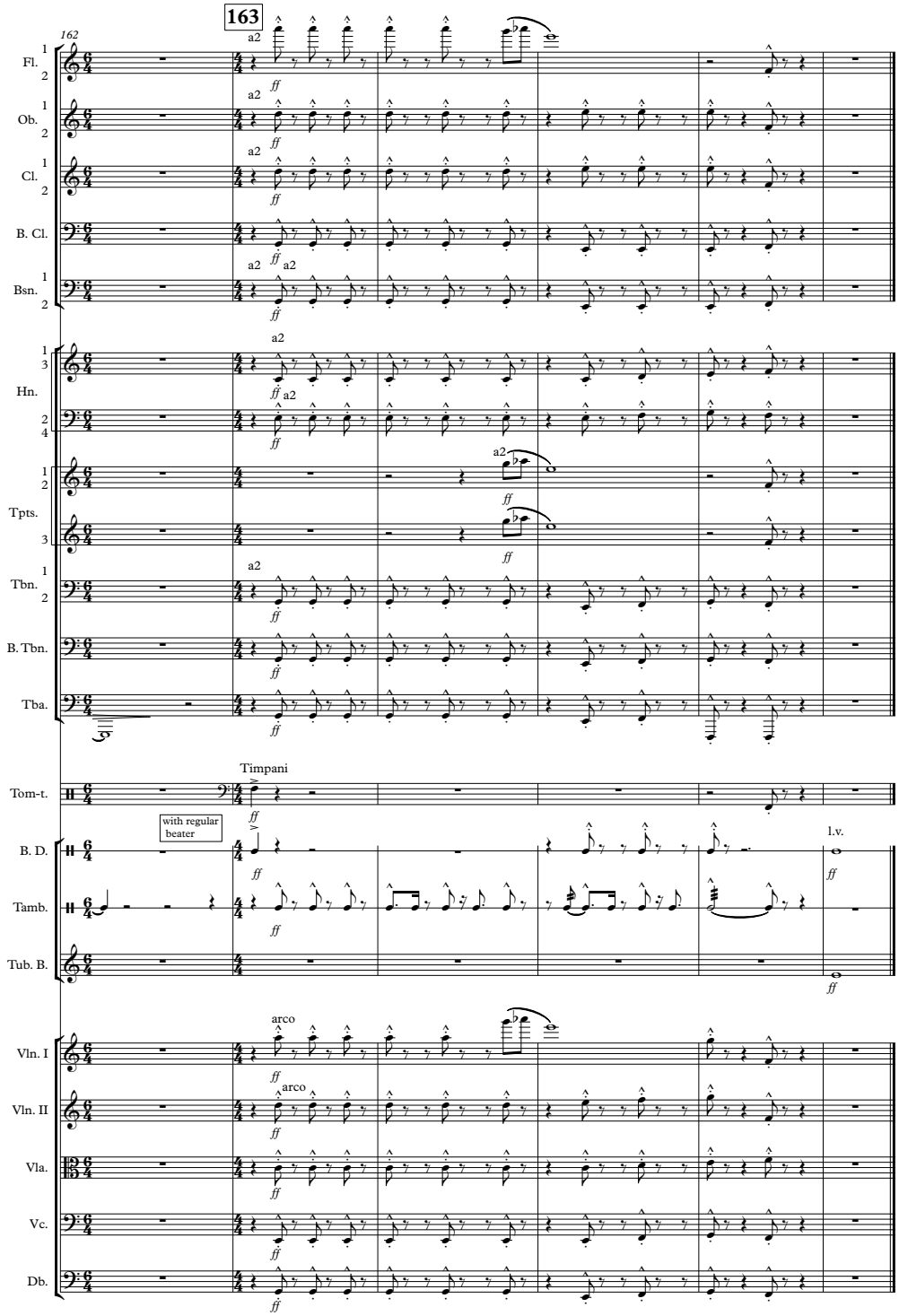

131
128
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
1.
2.
mp
p
mf
solo
with timpani mallet


136
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p
p


142
143
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a2
a 2
pizz.
arco
jete
p
mp
f
mf


148
154
a2
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
To Timp.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pizz.
arco


155
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Tom-t.
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p
f
mp


162
163
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpts.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Timpani
Tom-t.
with regular beater
B. D.
Tamb.
Tub. B.
l.v.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a2
arco
ff

Kleon Illustration 3[18]

[18] Kleon, 148.

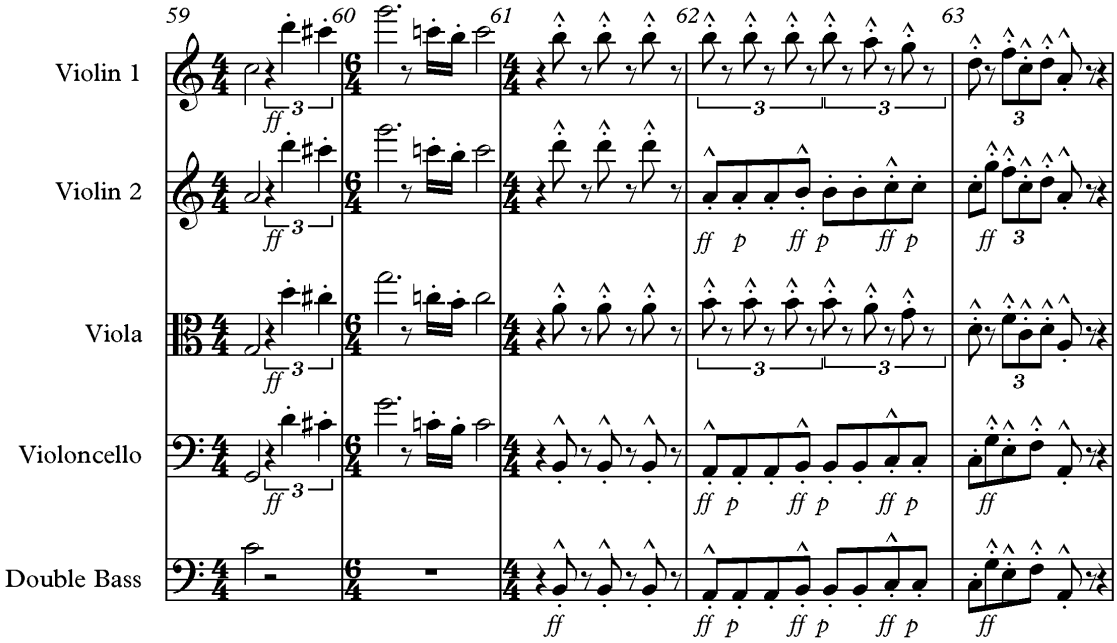
CHAPTER 4 – POST-COMPOSITION ANALYSIS

Rather than undertaking a chronological analysis of all the elements employed in *Kyros*, this chapter will maintain its focus on creative influence as espoused in Kleon's *Steal Like an Artist*. Thus, I will revisit each of the works discussed in Chapter 2 and trace how the selected traits are embodied in my own work. It should also be noted that the title of the piece, *Kyros*, does not have any programmatic implications.

Anthracite Fields (2014) by Julia Wolfe

My composition begins with a drone as *Anthracite Fields* does, but whereas in Wolfe's piece it is drawn out over the whole movement, I used it as a condensed introduction. I also limited the time between the interjections in order to move the narrative along faster. My initial plan for the overall structure of *Kyros* was to have contrasting sections, so I collapsed the timespan of the drone in order to cover more material in a shorter piece.

The drone I constructed systematically builds from the low to high strings as repetitions occur. I sought to build a chord that included all the notes of the symmetrical pentatonic scale based on D. With each new pass of the drone, a new note is stacked on, which increases in volume and intensity towards the climax of the first section, which occurs at measure 59 (see Musical Example 15).



Musical Example 15- Kyros first section climax

The interjections I use create a musical polarity, and are rhythmically based, in order to establish a contrast with the nebulous drone. I created these figures using only the string section, so as to keep a separation of the winds and strings in order to further develop the idea of polarity. My string interjections also develop and expand intervallically in order to increase the anticipation towards the aforementioned climax.

Furthermore, the interjections in *Anthracite Fields* do not necessarily create a separate moving narrative, whereas mine are the focal point of the whole section, and recapitulate at the end to create a sense of cohesion. They are constructed using short, staccato bow strokes, which set up a stark contrast to the long tones of the drone.

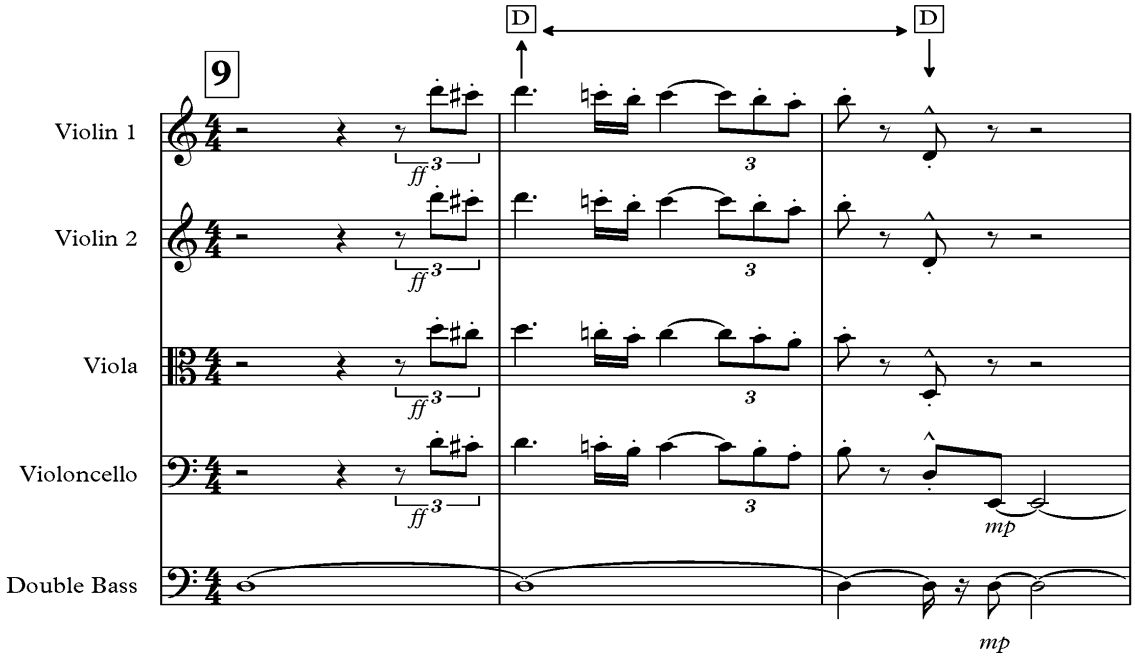
Finally, I have chosen to make the wind texture more active and developmental than the voices and winds in *Anthracite Fields*. I use the winds in *Kyros* to create counter lines, yet they are not active enough to disrupt the static texture. These lines weave in and out, overlapping with the timbre of the strings. Also, the lines are mostly harmonized with thirds, in order to create a richness to supplement the string drone. Starting at measure 26, the brass instruments slowly build into the mix with melodic gestures that sporadically entangle themselves with the drone. The low brass instruments also initiate a strong organ-like motor, propelling the whole ensemble to the climax of the first section.

As evidenced in this opening, I have taken the effective premise of Wolfe's drone-interjection model and adapted it to create the introduction of my own work. It should be evident that I did not simply repeat the same compositional idea in *Anthracite Fields*; rather I evolved, amalgamated, and built upon it with my own voice and creativity. As Kleon suggests, I am part of a lineage of ideas, and I am using them to suit the needs of the particular soundscape in my own piece.

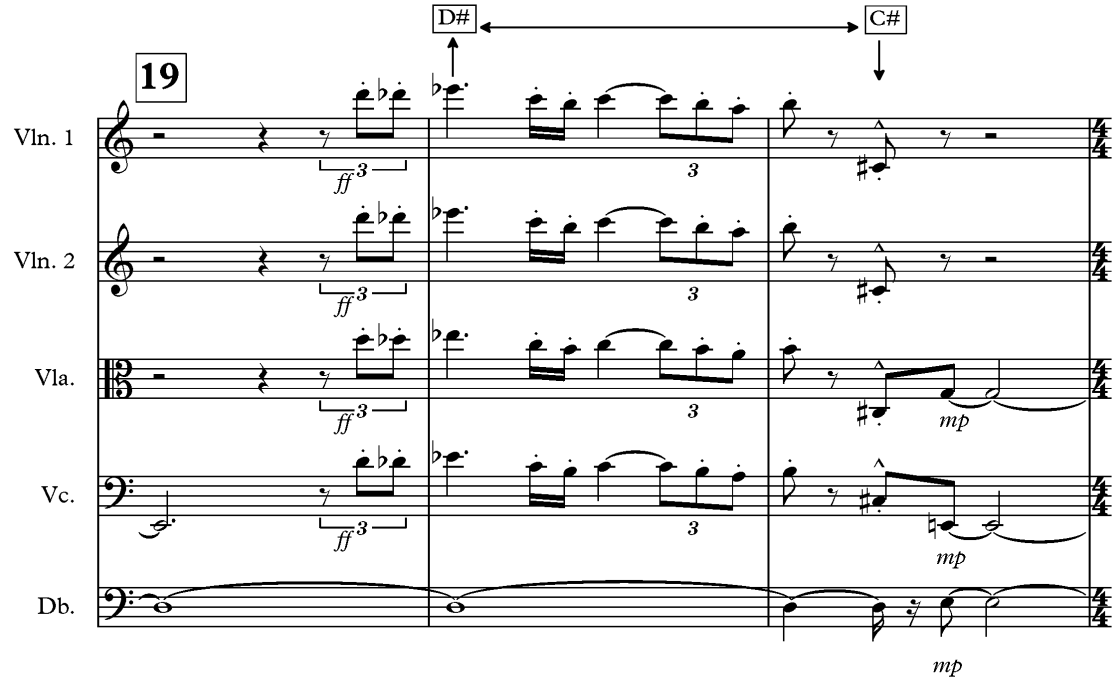
***Balance Problems* (2013) by Nico Muhly**

Muhly's technique of taking a musical figure, repeating it, and altering the shell of it by expanding it, is one of the ideas I used during my drone interjections. I created a rhythmically aggressive string phrase, while continually developing it with each repeat, and expanding its outer core by a semitone each time. The outward chromatic alteration of the phrase creates a desire for resolution. I believe that implementing this idea adds intrigue to the introduction by generating a cumulative buildup towards the climax at measure 59.

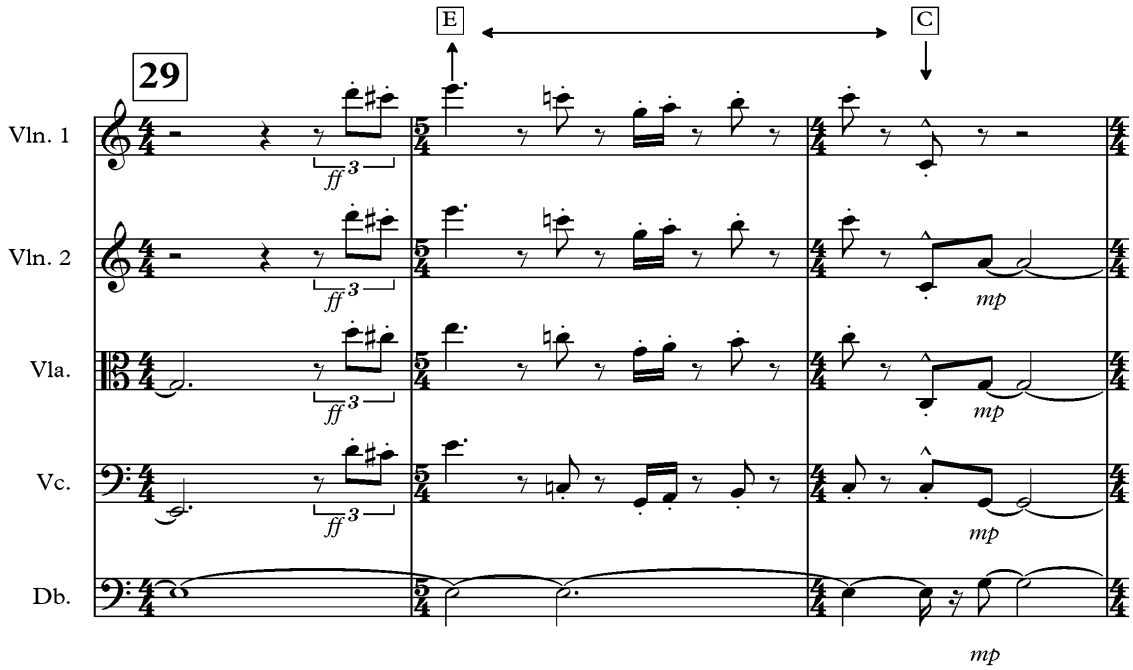
The musical figure I used to add the semitone expansion to is much more than a repeated three-note arpeggiating loop that is used in *Balance Problems*. The interjections are subtly evolving phrases, which expand chromatically outward during every pass-through (see Musical Examples 16.1-16.6). The effect of the expanding interjections may not be directly noticeable while listening, yet throughout each repetition it becomes more apparent that an accumulation of tension is occurring. Maintaining the basic structure of the figure through chromatic expansion preserves the comfort of repetition, while still attaining thematic progress. Muhly's semitone expansion was just the idea I needed while constructing my drone interjections.



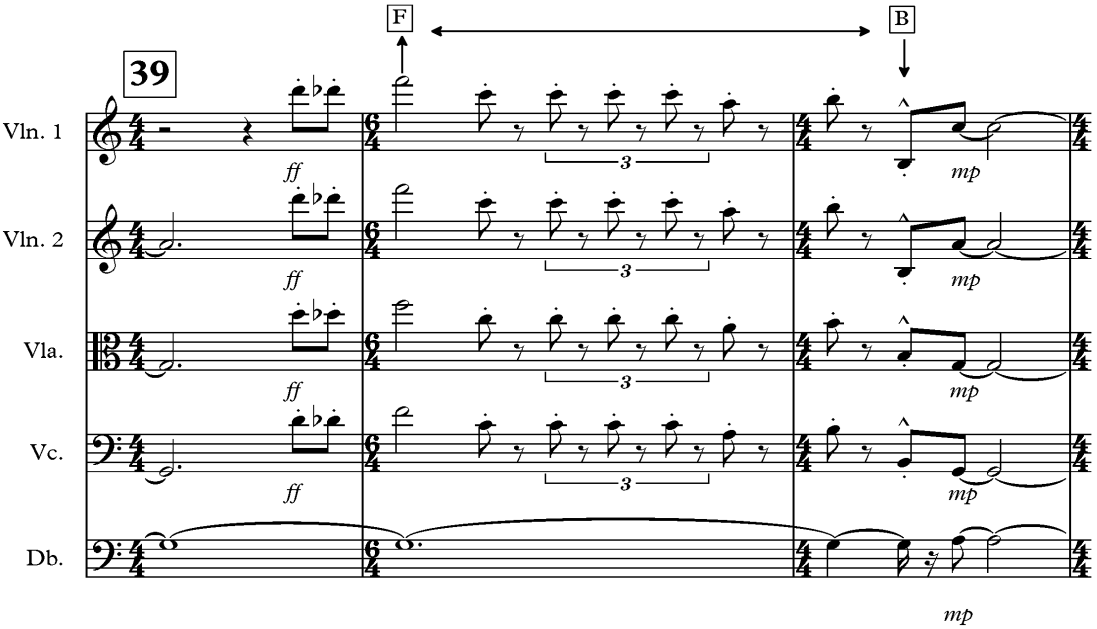
Musical Example 16.1- Kyros interjection expansion mm. 9-11



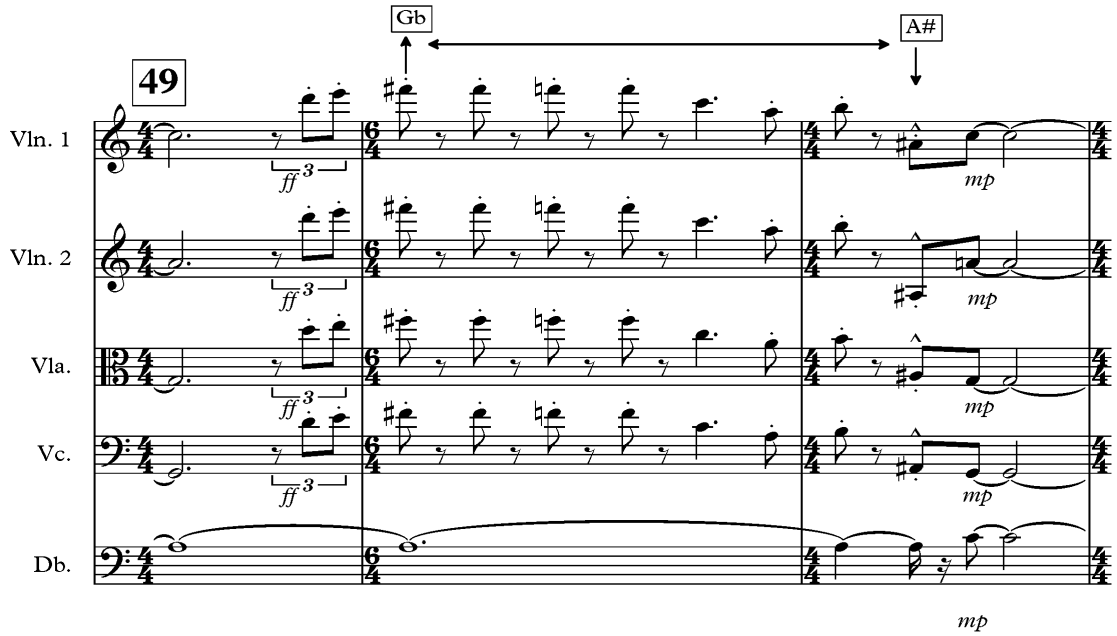
Musical Example 16.2- Kyros interjection expansion mm. 19-21



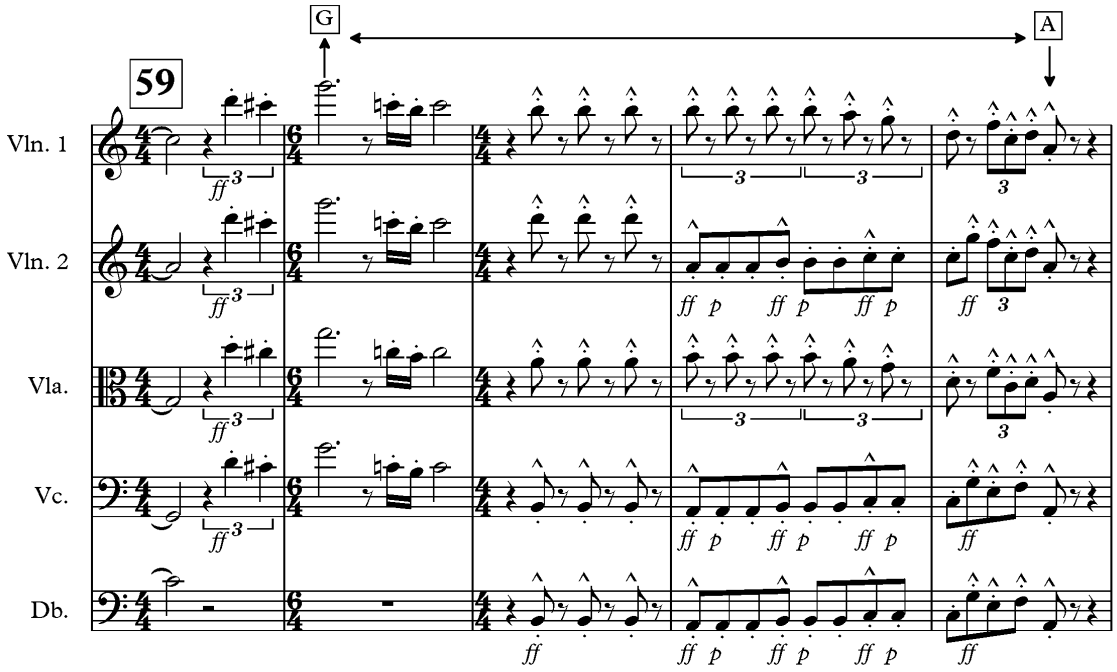
Musical Example 16.3- Kyros interjection expansion mm. 29-31



Musical Example 16.4- Kyros interjection expansion mm. 39-41

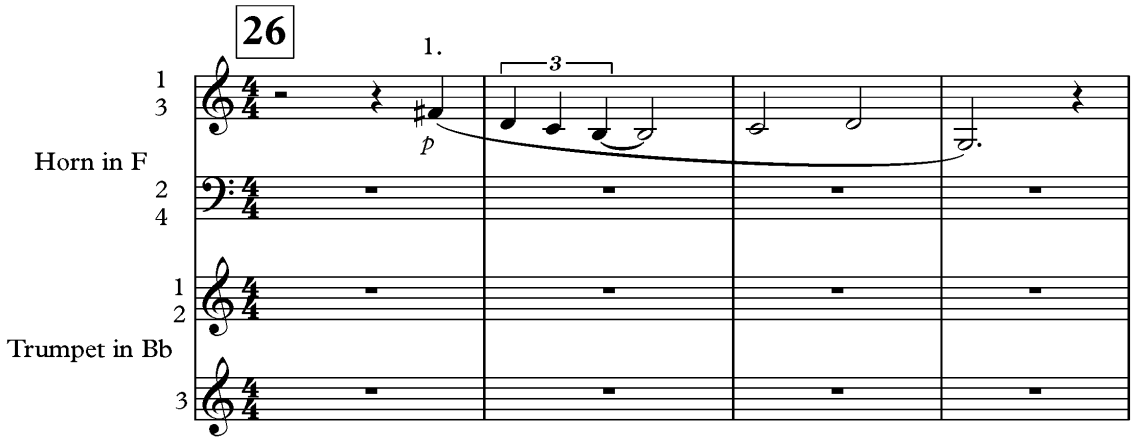


Musical Example 16.5- Kyros interjection expansion mm. 49-51

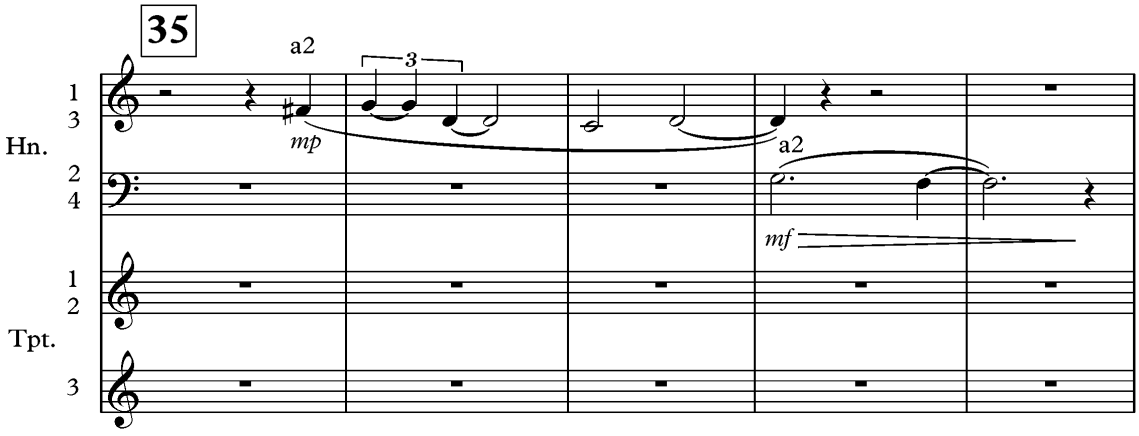


Musical Example 16.6- Kyros interjection expansion mm. 59-63

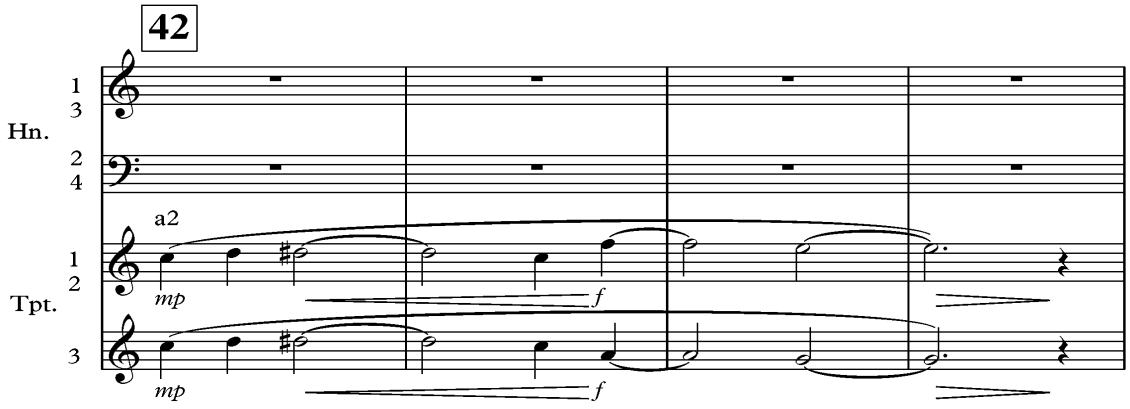
I also tried to incorporate the style of Muhly's brass gestures in my piece. I crafted and interspersed a series of brass figures with a similar feel to the trumpet figures in *Balance Problems* (see Musical Examples 17.1-17.8).



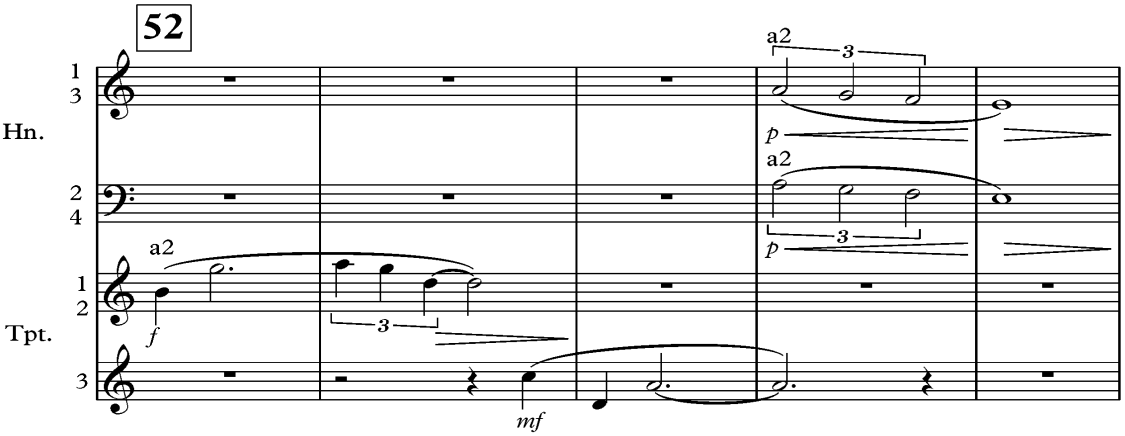
Musical Example 17.1- Kyros brass melodies mm. 26-29



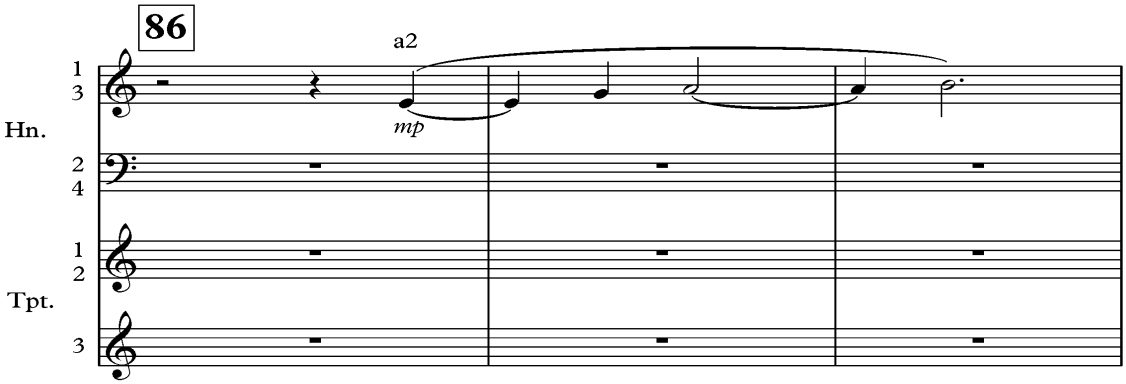
Musical Example 17.2- Kyros brass melodies mm. 35-39



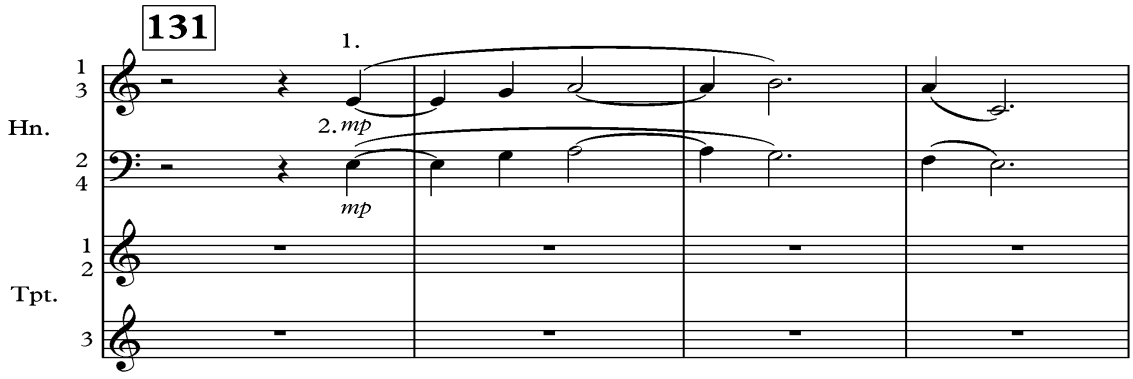
Musical Example 17.3- Kyros brass melodies mm. 42-45



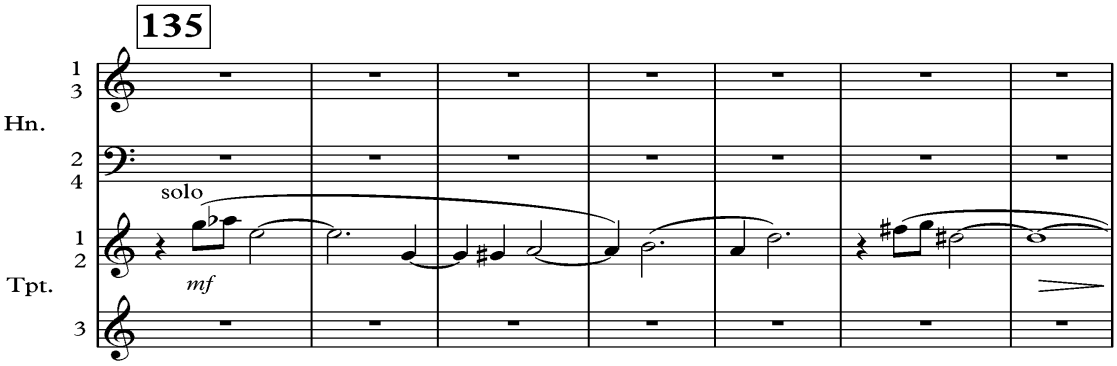
Musical Example 17.4- Kyros brass melodies mm. 52-56



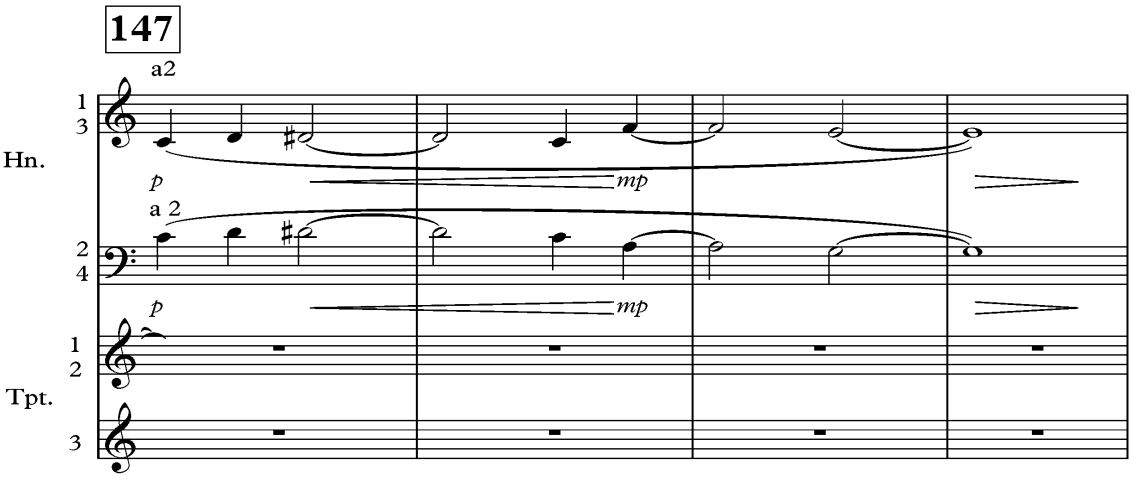
Musical Example 17.5- Kyros brass melodies mm. 86-88



Musical Example 17.6- Kyros brass melodies mm. 131-134



Musical Example 17.7- Kyros brass melodies mm. 135-141

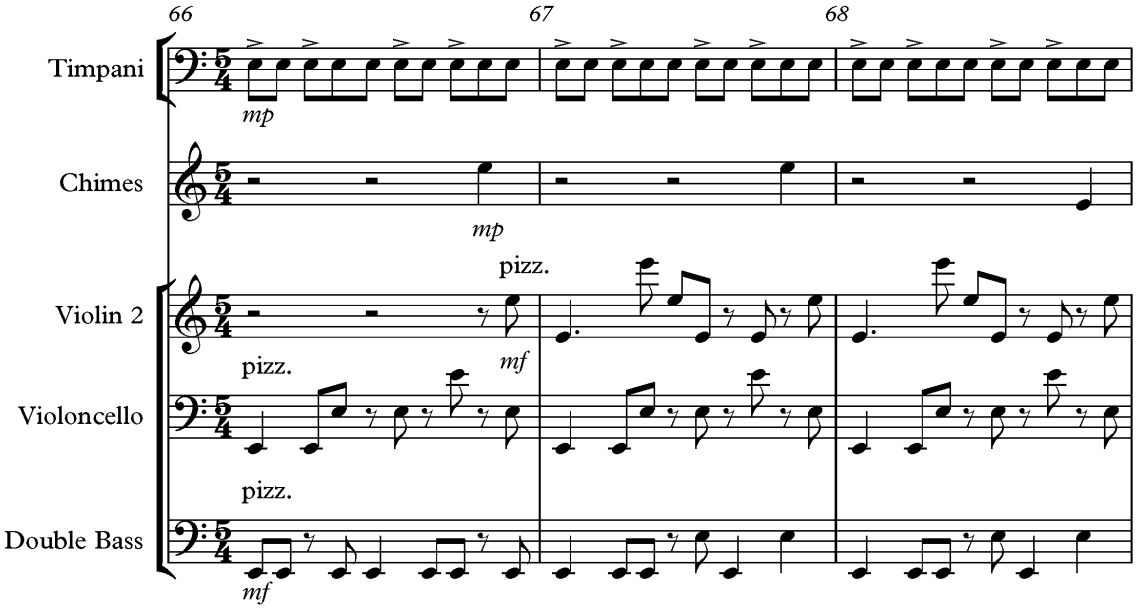


Musical Example 17.8- Kyros brass melodies mm. 147-150

I went to this idea every time I needed something melodic to add to the existing fabric, yet not too directional in nature. Muhly's melodic figures float effortlessly over the top of the texture without too much harmonic disruption, and I hope I achieved a similar result. I also made sure that my melodic figures did not conform to any bar lines, as not to create a sense of pronounced meter and pulse.

***C* (2011) by Hannah Lash**

For the second section of *Kyros* I used Lash's idea of a pedal point that progressively introduces other pitch classes, starting with the most dissonant ones. I found this tactic to be quite effective in my piece. I started by creating a series of pizzicato ostinatos, which are supported by the timpani and chimes, all using the same pitch class, E. (see Musical Example 18).

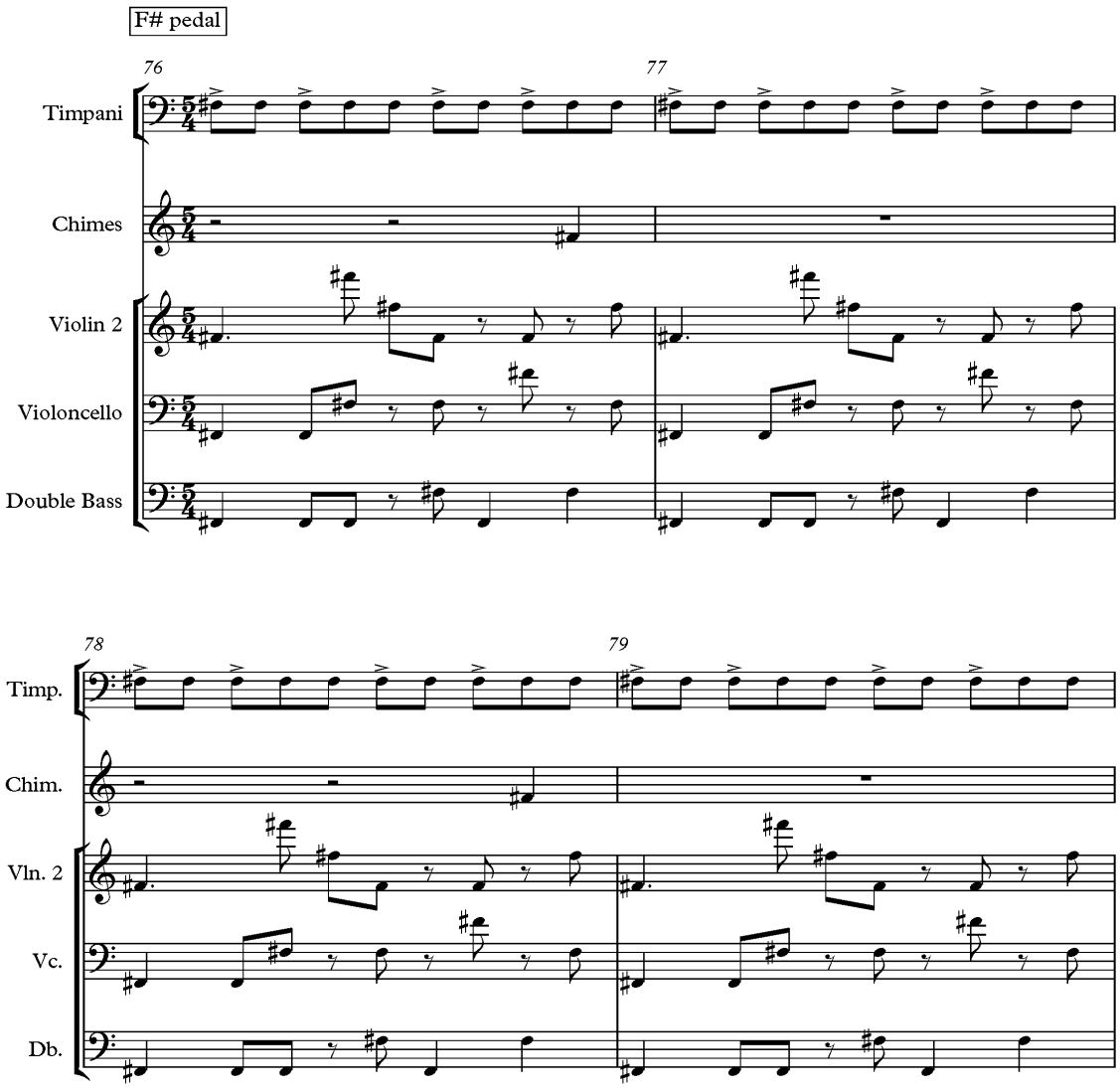


Musical Example 18- Kyros ostinato pedal

From there I systematically layered in other pitches, starting with the most dissonant ones. First, the tritone appears in the violin 1 and viola, which are echoed and accentuated by the woodwinds. Second, the interval of a major seventh is injected, which

has a biting sound to it, just like the effect it has in Lash's work. From there, other intervals are added in at varying successions, which create a distinct contrast from the first section of the piece. The interplay of these dissonant intervals with the pedal point, harness the static, yet unstable effect that I desired in this part of *Kyros*.

One of the things I did different from Lash, however, was shift the pedal point up a whole step starting at measure 76 (see Musical Example 19). I did this because I wanted to dislodge the tonal center and create a sense of insecurity. Also, with the rhythmic pedal lasting so many measures, I felt as though my texture was too monotonous, and desired to keep the listener in a more engaged state of anticipation. By starting this section off with Lash's technique, I was able to create something that fit my needs for the aesthetic I was trying to craft.



Musical Example 19- Kyros pedal shift

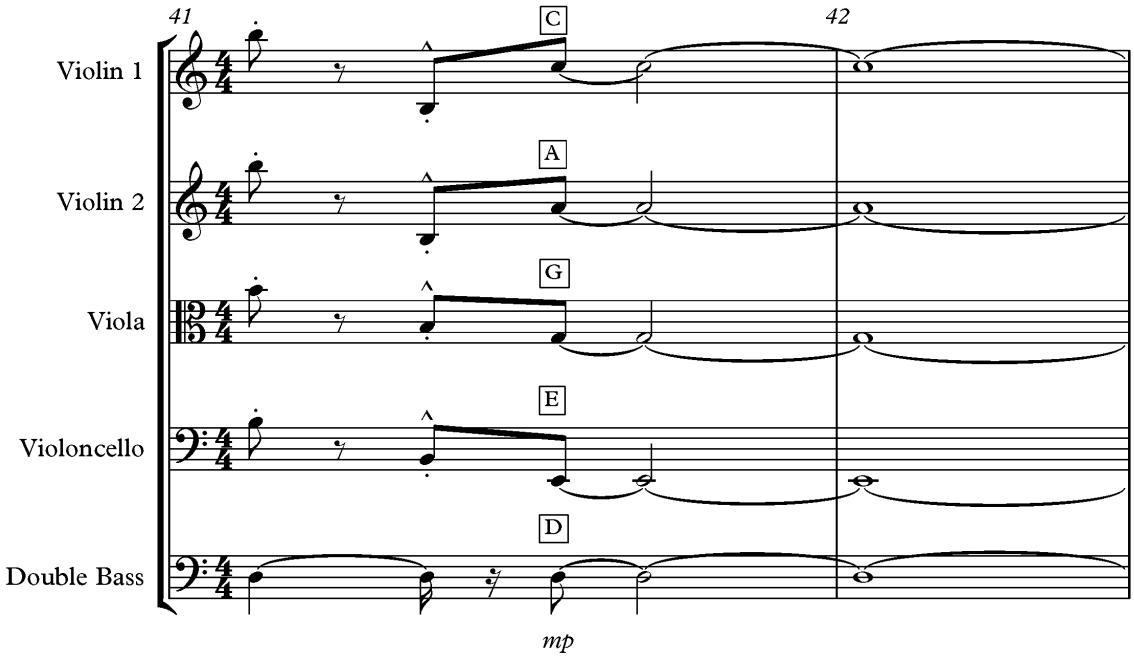
***Respiri* (2016) by Juri Seo**

I attempted to take two ideas from *Respiri* to assimilate into my own work; however, in the end I only used one of her ideas. The idea I did not use was to infuse my piece with statements of silence, which would have created brief moments of contrast within the continuous flow of my musical narrative. I could not, however, find a place for these moments that truly felt organic and purposeful. But, *Respiri*'s meditative pauses will still remain in my swipe file, as I am sure there will be another opportunity to amalgamate this idea into one of my future works.

The one idea I did use was her pentatonic scale, although I did not incorporate it as a way to create a symmetrical axis the way she did. I used this scale for its harmonic implications specifically to create a stacked quartal harmony, which is the basis for my drone stacking in the first section of my work. This scale is used in *Respiri* linearly, as a scaffolding to create running passages to move her piece forward. I found that stacking the notes of this scale vertically was exactly the sound I was looking for in creating my drone.

The harmony I created in the first section is comprised of the notes D-E-G-A-C, which combine to sound not too dissonant, but not stable either. The intervallic combinations underpin this scale are what I believe creates the beautiful and expansive sound of *Respiri*, which I also hope comes across in my work.

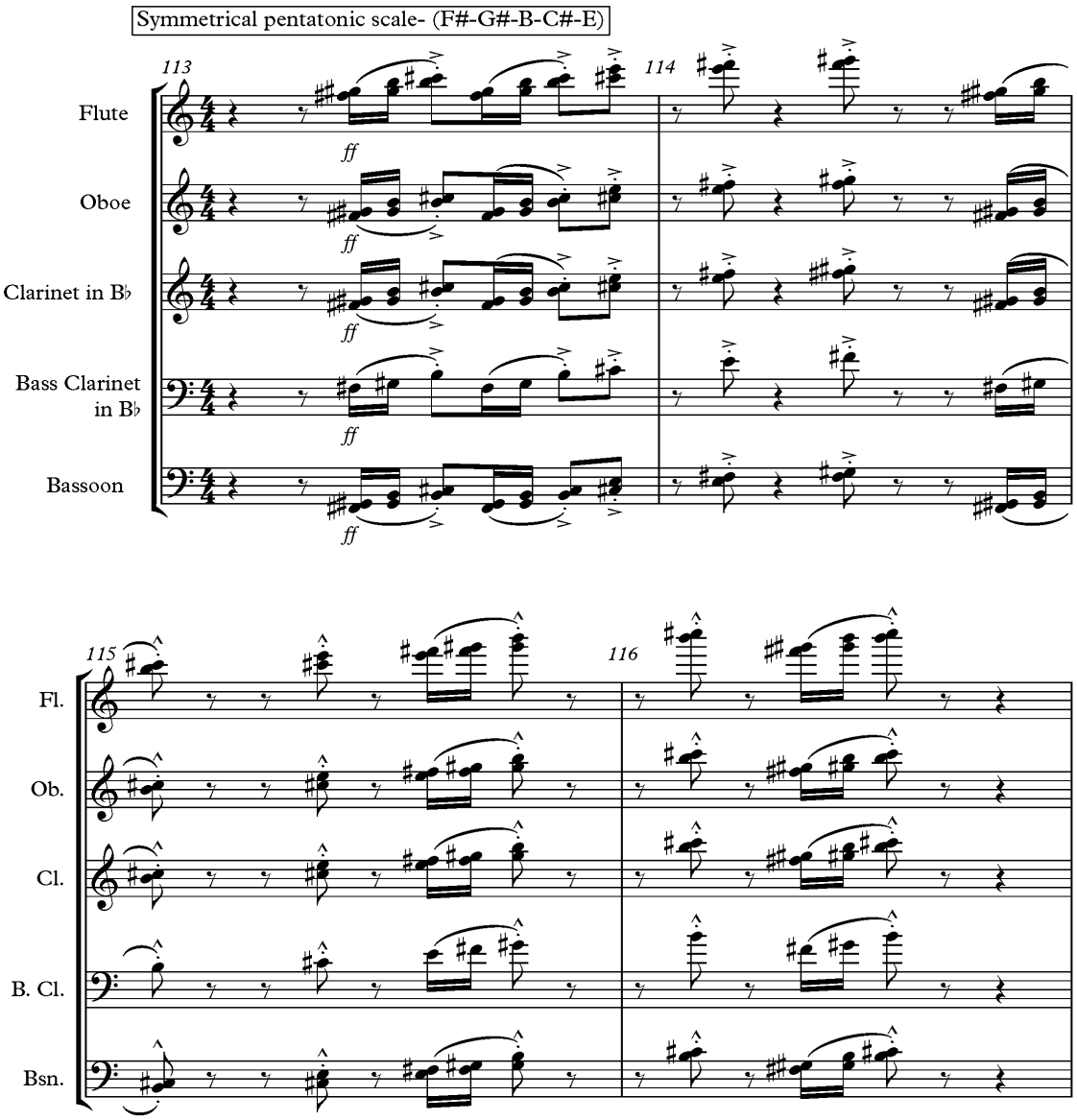
I built the drone chord from the lowest string instrument up, and layered it in one note at a time between the drone interjections. This establishes a progressively stacked harmonic texture that sounds neither major nor minor. The whole chord finally comes to fruition in measure 41 (see Musical Example 20).



Musical Example 20- Kyros completed pentatonic scale harmony

After the entire chord has been established, the pitches cycle upward through the string section after the next interjection, creating the harmony, E-G-A-C-D. By doing this, a sense of harmonic shifting occurs, even though the notes of the complete chord do not change. Also, the last four measures of the piece bring this chord back around, where it acts as a sort of culminating function, finally resolving to the note E.

There is one other significant place I used this pentatonic scale, and that is for an ornamental woodwind passage during the climax of *Kyros*. (see Musical Example 21).



Musical Example 21- Kyros woodwind pentatonic scale phrase

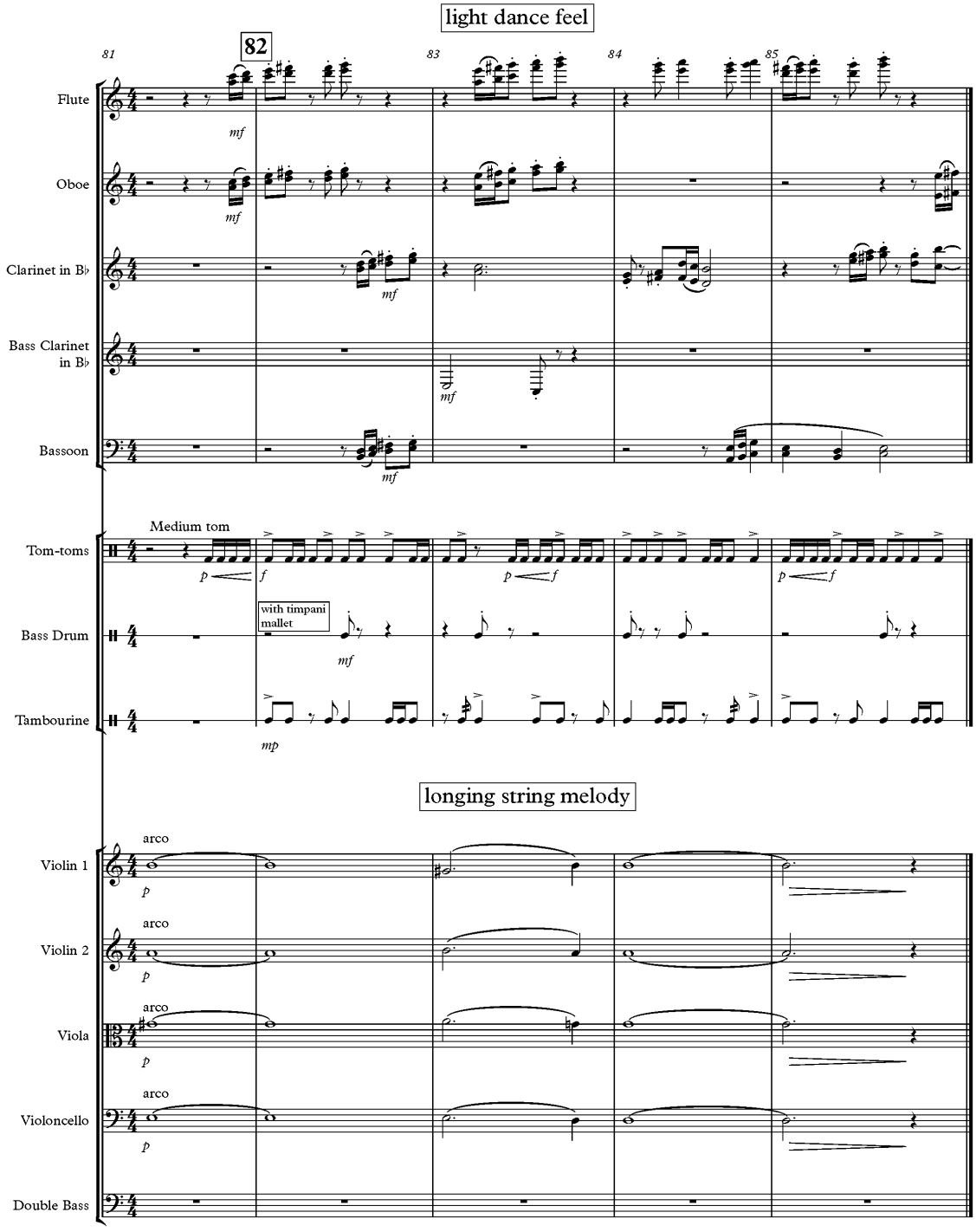
Pictured above, the jagged woodwind phrase is constructed horizontally by an F# pentatonic scale that alternates by major seconds and minor thirds. This pitch collection contains the notes F#-G#-B-C#-E, and I felt that this series of notes lent itself well to decorate the sustained tones of the brass and string choir. There are two notes in the string and brass sections during this climax that do not fall within this scale, and they are C and Bb. This creates an interesting rub between the two contrasting parts, and gives the woodwind passage a grittiness that I was hoping to achieve. I added the final touch to it by stacking the next note up in the scale, on top of the first layer, within the instruments that have two players. This allows the woodwind passage to be slightly more dissonant in order to cut through the long tones more effectively.

I first attempted to construct this woodwind passage with a pitch collection having even fewer tones in common than the string and brass section. However, this sounded too conflicted to me. I finally settled on the F# pentatonic scale because I believe it provided the right amount of dissonance for this moment in the piece.

***Symphony No. 4, from Mission San Juan* (2007) by Kevin Puts**

The way Kevin Puts juxtaposed two disparate styles of music on top of each other in his piece immediately resonated with me, and I knew that I wanted to find a way to use that idea in my composition. Puts, of course, is not the first composer to do this, but I find it interesting the way he counterbalances a longing and sentimental string melody with a light dance feel. He does this by slowly bringing in an emotionally robust melody that hides underneath a conga ostinato that is peppered with syncopated woodwind figures. The string melody swells in and out of the fabric at multiple times during the movement.

Puts' melody inspired me to create my own longing string melody, which slowly overtakes a woodwind and percussion jaunt and subdues it by sheer volume and emotion. I created a percussion ostinato with the tambourine and tom, which is simultaneously paired with the lush string melody and intricately linked to aforementioned harmonic motion used in *wed* (see Musical Example 22). I also sought to create a clash of competing tonalities and tempos. My string melody moves at a glacial rate compared to the frontward pulsing staccato woodwind figures. I imply two contrasting tempos, yet they are both, in fact, moving to the same underlying pulse.

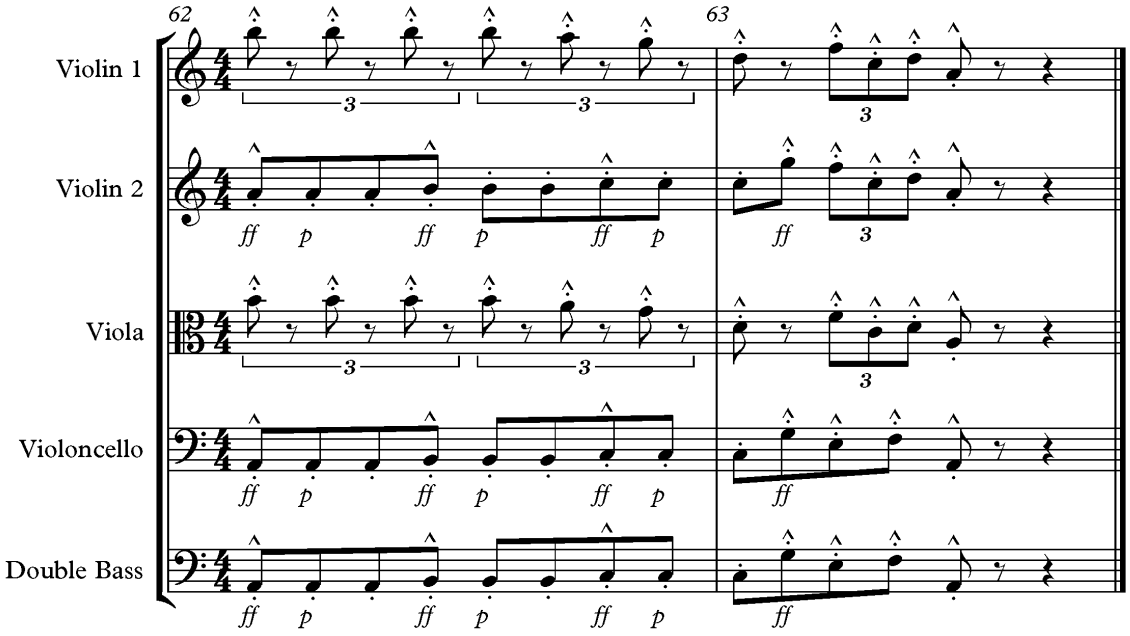


Musical Example 22- Kyros juxtapositional styles

As this section progresses, a crossfading happens between the two competing stylistic entities, as the overpowering string section inevitably swallows up the woodwinds and percussion. Like Puts, I did not construct this section with two literally different tempos, but rather faintly imply it. Puts was able to weave two divergent styles together in a way that worked seamlessly, which was much more challenging to do than I anticipated. By using his idea, I had to disassemble and analyze it to see what made it work so effectively. Then it took me many attempts to make the two parts come together in a synergistic way, while still remaining independent entities. Of all the ideas I borrowed from these composers to use in *Kyros*, this one was the most laborious to integrate.

***wed* (2018) by David Lang**

I harvested two ideas from Lang's piece and nested them within the ideas I gleaned from some of the other pieces. There were some passages in my composition that I felt needed some rhythmic and tonal friction, so I went to Lang's use of polyrhythmic counterpoint incorporated throughout *wed*. In measure 62 of *Kyros*, I overlaid quarter-note triplets onto eighth notes to produce an intense rhythmic dissonance (see Musical Example 23).



Musical Example 23- Kyros rhythmic incongruence

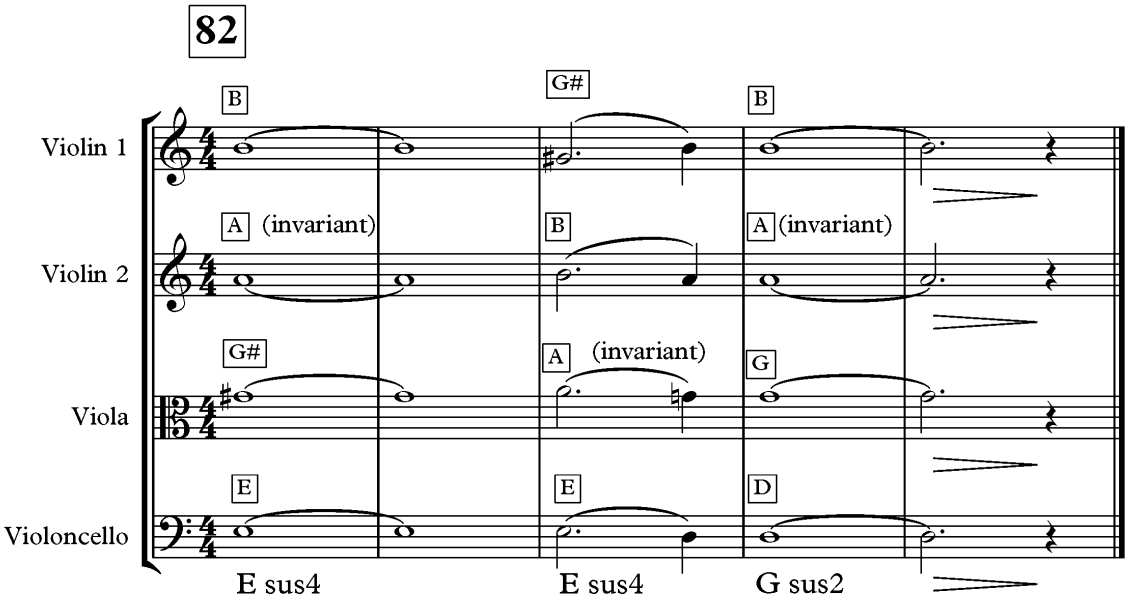
I also made the eighth-note passage heavily accented on every third note, which essentially pits dotted quarter notes, quarter-note triplets, and moving eighth notes against each other. In measure 63, the eighth notes continue in the cello and basses, while the upper strings end the phrase with an eighth-note triplet, creating a culminating clash of incongruent rhythms.

I chose to use Lang's rhythmic idea sparingly and only when I really wanted to establish heavy musical turmoil, which was only needed (in my opinion) during the final interjection of the first section proper. I also sculpted the counterpoint within these rhythmic lines as contrary motion to create further independence. I did not use harsh chromaticism within the resulting intervals of the polyrhythms because I still wanted to have a sense of aural smoothness to the phrase and not pull against the already established quartal harmony.

And finally, some of the harmonic movement of my longing string melody utilizes a chordal movement that is present in *wed*. Lang often used a succession of an E major triad to G major triad, while adding the non-chord tone A to both of them, as an apparent connecting tissue. I found this two-chord progression appealing because of the chromatic shift downward from G sharp to G natural in creating the root of the second chord. These chords create a progression that negates any diatonic implications because they are not closely related to any one key. Having an A in both chords yields an invariant note connection, and also act as suspension tones. This makes an E sus4 chord

moving to a G sus2 chord, which was immediately appealing to my ears when I first listened to the piece, even though I did not know what it was.

I started crafting my longing melody while using these two chords as scaffolding. This progression, however, ultimately became just a starting point, even though the exact chords remain in the final product (see Musical Example 24).



Musical Example 24- Kyros harmonic motion with invariant tone

By improvising with these two chords, I was ultimately led to the complete longing melody in *Kyros*. Sometimes when I am composing, just the act of improvising a melody over a set of two chords can provide enough sparks to create an entire section of music.

Kleon Illustration 4[19]

[19] Kleon, 149.

Postlude

After finishing this project, I realized many things about my creative process that gave me a closer look at the inner workings of generating an idea. First of all, one thing that makes our brain so powerful is that we can run mental simulations. This, no doubt, is an adaption that helped our ancestors survive by being able to simulate a situation before taking the risk of doing it in the real world. What I noticed about my idea making process is that I constantly ran simulations in my mind. I would take one of the ideas I had chosen to use in my piece and play them through my mind's ear, while altering things as I kept simulating. If I heard something in my head that piqued my interest, I would then try to transfer it to a physical medium such as my voice or a piano, then reevaluate it. This process of improvisation and mutation on an idea, I believe, is the essence of how I mostly come up with my compositional ideas.

I also realized that existing ideas gave me something to start running simulations with, which is why I think creativity can be such a cumulative endeavor. I now believe that improvisation through mental simulation can be a powerful tool at coming up with unique ideas. One just needs an initial musical fragment to simulate, which is where Kleon's concept comes into play. I hope now I can contemplate ways to strengthen my musical simulator so that I can create more significant and wide-ranging alterations of the original starting material.

Also, while completing this project, I often found that even if I did not specifically use a certain musical idea of another composer, the mere act of hearing it and thinking about it had an impact on my piece. In a way, this thesis became not only about borrowing other composers' ideas and reshaping them for my own work, but also about creating my own ideas through the inspiration of other composers' styles. I believe that my musical creativity often needs a spark for an idea to come into my head, and that spark can come from any style of music.

By intensely listening to the pieces of the composers in my thesis, their creativity acted as a much-needed catalyst for generating my own composition. I did not foresee how much of a role exposing myself to different pieces of music in this way, would affect the crafting of my own work. My thesis ultimately became much more than synthesizing and retrofitting already existing ideas of other composers; it became a penetrating introspection of how I consciously and subconsciously use the external world to generate my own thoughts and ideas.

In the end, this experiement has been profound for me in many ways. I have realized more than ever that human existence is a communal endeavor, and that extends through the arts and music composition. In an effort to become original, I have always attempted to run away from my influences in order to find my individuality. This process has taught me that that may have been the wrong approach. Composing *Kyros* using Kleon's principles has allowed me to strengthen my own personal expression *through* my influences, instead of running from them. Writing music is a cumulative process that

every composer, past and present, is a part of, and I will embrace that more confidently as I continue to grow musically.

Kleon Illustration 5[20]

[20] Kleon, 148.

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VITA

Dustin Schulze is a composer who does not limit himself to any particular genre or medium of music. He grew up in New Braunfels, Texas and received his Bachelor's degree from the University of North Texas in percussion performance. He has also received his Master's degree in composition, studying under Dr. Stephen Lias at Stephen F. Austin State University. His works have been performed at the Midwest, PASIC, and TMEA conferences, and are played regularly at concert halls and universities all over the world. Dustin continuously strives to create music that is diverse, distinctive, and sonically stimulating.

Dustin Schulze
108 E. Lower Crabapple Rd. #811
Fredericksburg, TX 78624

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