Chopsticks (2016)

for Soldier's Tale Septet

Brendon Randall-Myers

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Program Note

Chopsticks is part a set of pieces about memory and technology called *Anthology,* written for the New York-based Exceptet. *Anthology* is a mixtape of misremembered/ reinterpreted music and experiences, and a catalog of technology's continual reinvention of the means to serve basic and timeless needs. It's about versions and facsimiles, the ways humans and machines understand their pasts, and the way those pasts interact with each other in the present. Each piece draws on older music that I know and love; each uses technology to reimagine, amplify, and distort that music; and each showcases a different member of the ensemble as a way to transform the ensemble.

This plays out quite differently in the two pieces I initially wrote for the group, but both draw inspiration from folk music traditions I interacted with as child in West Virginia. *Chopsticks* started with my memories of hammered dulcimer music and barn dances, filtered through percussionist Mark Utley's propensity for modifying instruments and my love of Scelsi and mosh pits. The sonic focus of the piece is an acoustic guitar both prepared and played with chopsticks, run through a 4W tube amplifier.

Anthology was commissioned by Exceptet and MATA.

Duration: ca. 10'

Instrumentation: violin, double bass (doubling woodblocks), Bb clarinet, basson, trumpet, trombone, percussion

Performance Notes

General notes:

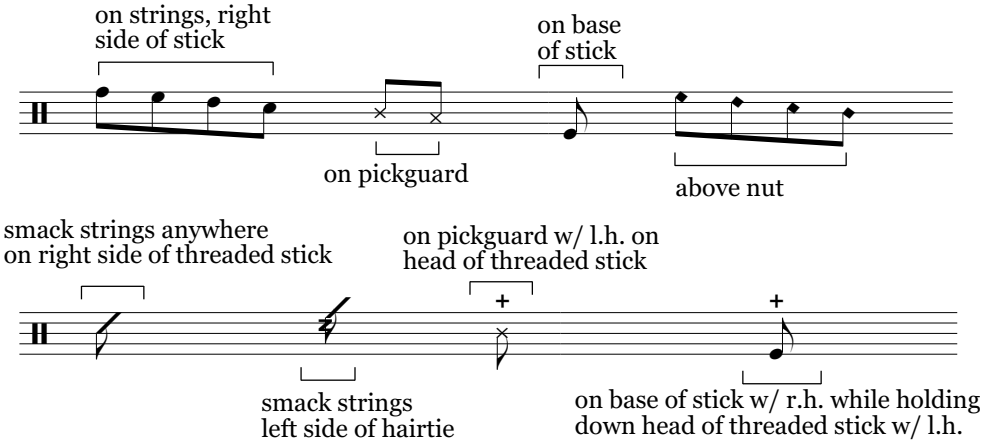
- All instruments should be miked and amplified for balance, particularly the violin and double bass.
- Repeats indicate total numbers of times to play a cell - e.g. 3x means play the material in repeats a total of three times.
- The bass player begins the piece playing two woodblocks, ideally sitting on a high stool on his/her right side.

Percussion preparation and amplification:

The percussion part for this piece is played entirely on an acoustic/electric steel-string guitar, preferably a cheap one that you don't mind beating on with chopsticks. It needs to be prepared and amplified as follows:

- The guitar should tuned to an open D Minor chord (low to high DADFAD) and prepared with a hair tie wrapped loosely around the 5th fret, and a chopstick threaded over/under through all six strings at the node where the 24th fret would be.
- The guitar should be amplified using the output from the guitar's quarter inch output, run into a lunchbox guitar tube amp. The amp needs to be low enough wattage (1-4W) that it starts distorting at a volume low enough to balance with brass. The amp itself should be miked for balance with the rest of the ensemble.
- You should use light, cheap chopsticks for both preparation and playing, which shouldn't damage the strings or pickguard, and they have better bounce.
- For more detailed instructions and photos of preparations and playing techniques, please visit: www.brendonrandallmyers.com/chopsticks-guitar-prep
- For a live recording that gives a good sense of audio balance (and how the guitar should sound), please visit: youtu.be/WB7d6QTw2vA

Percussion key and techniques:



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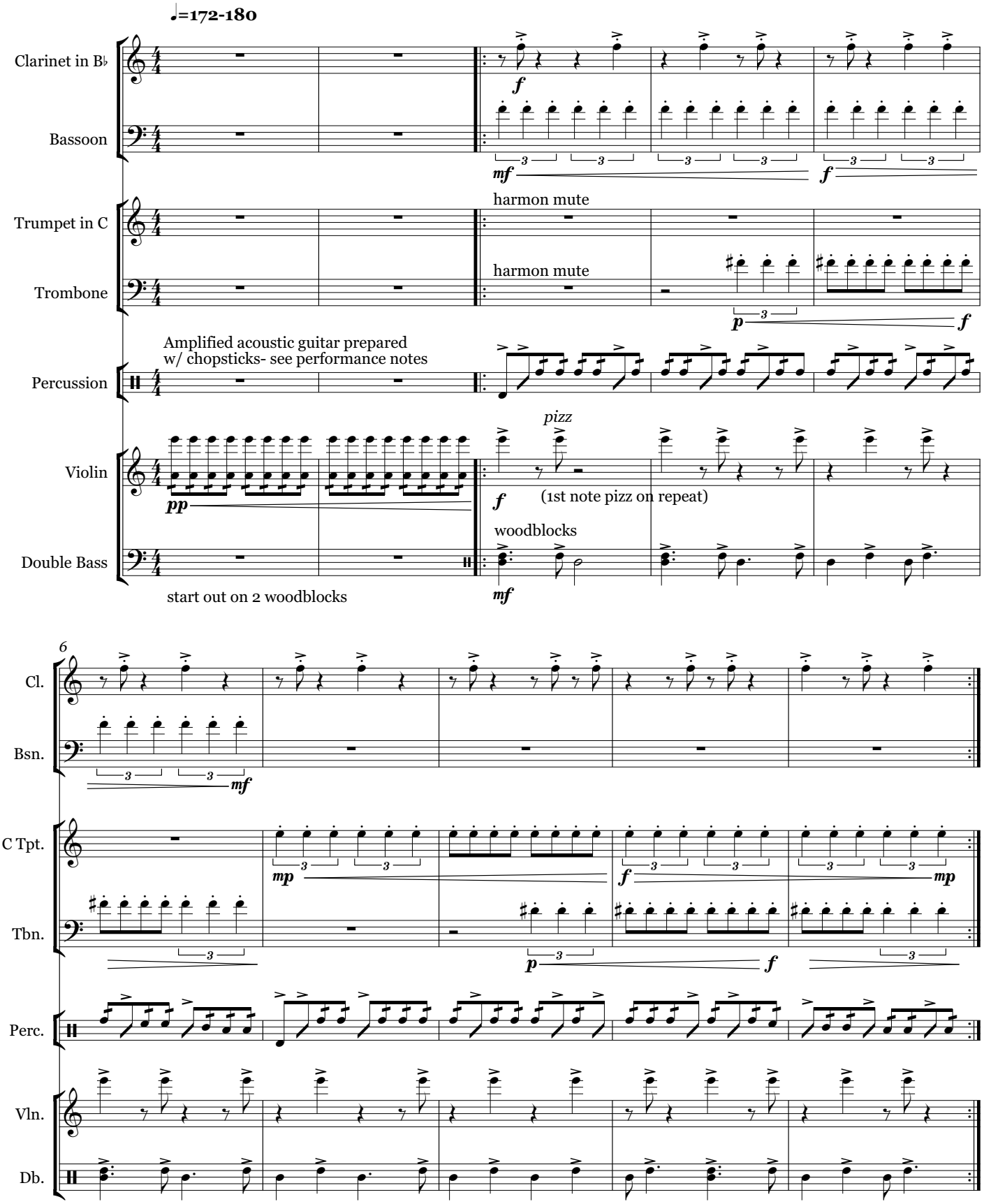

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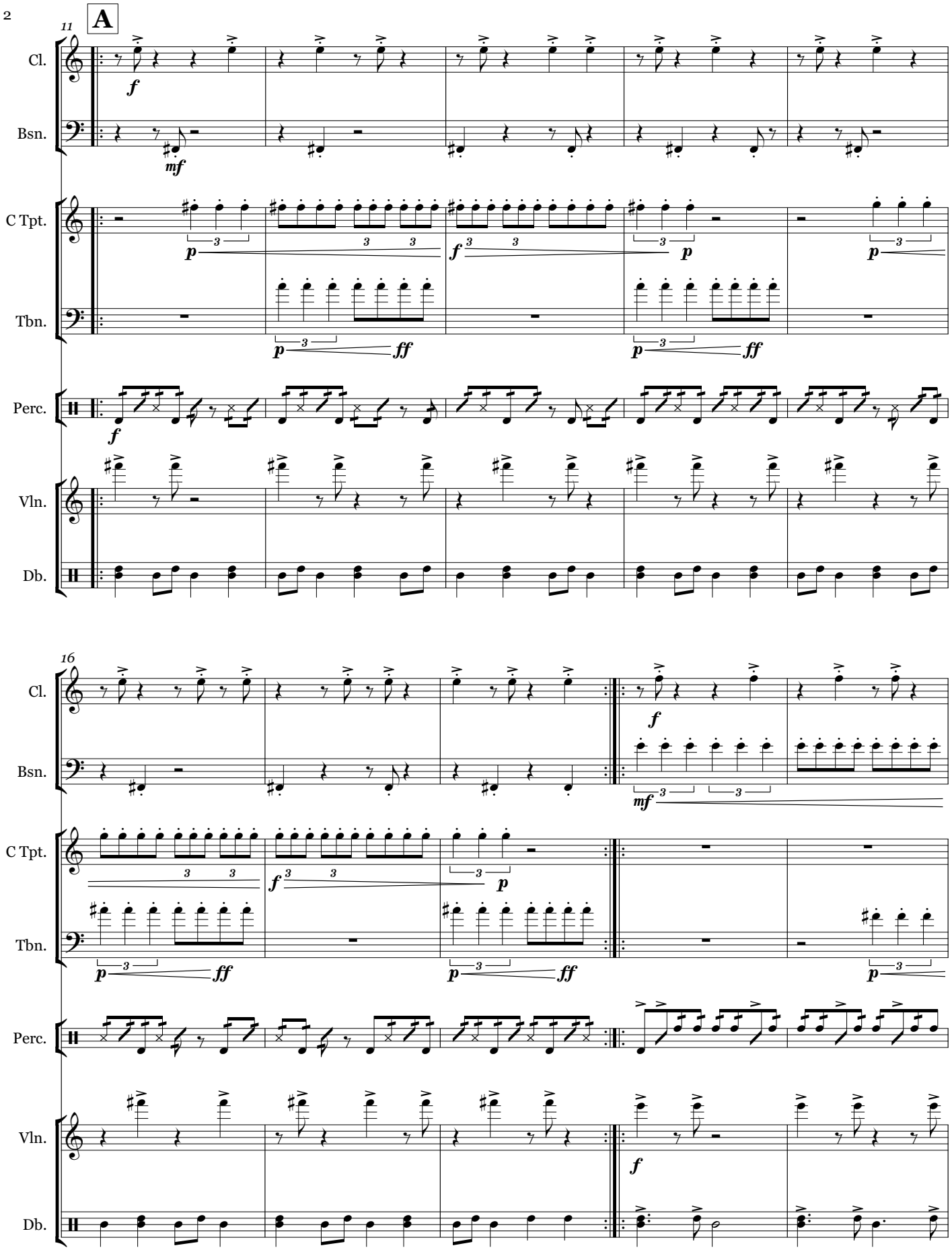
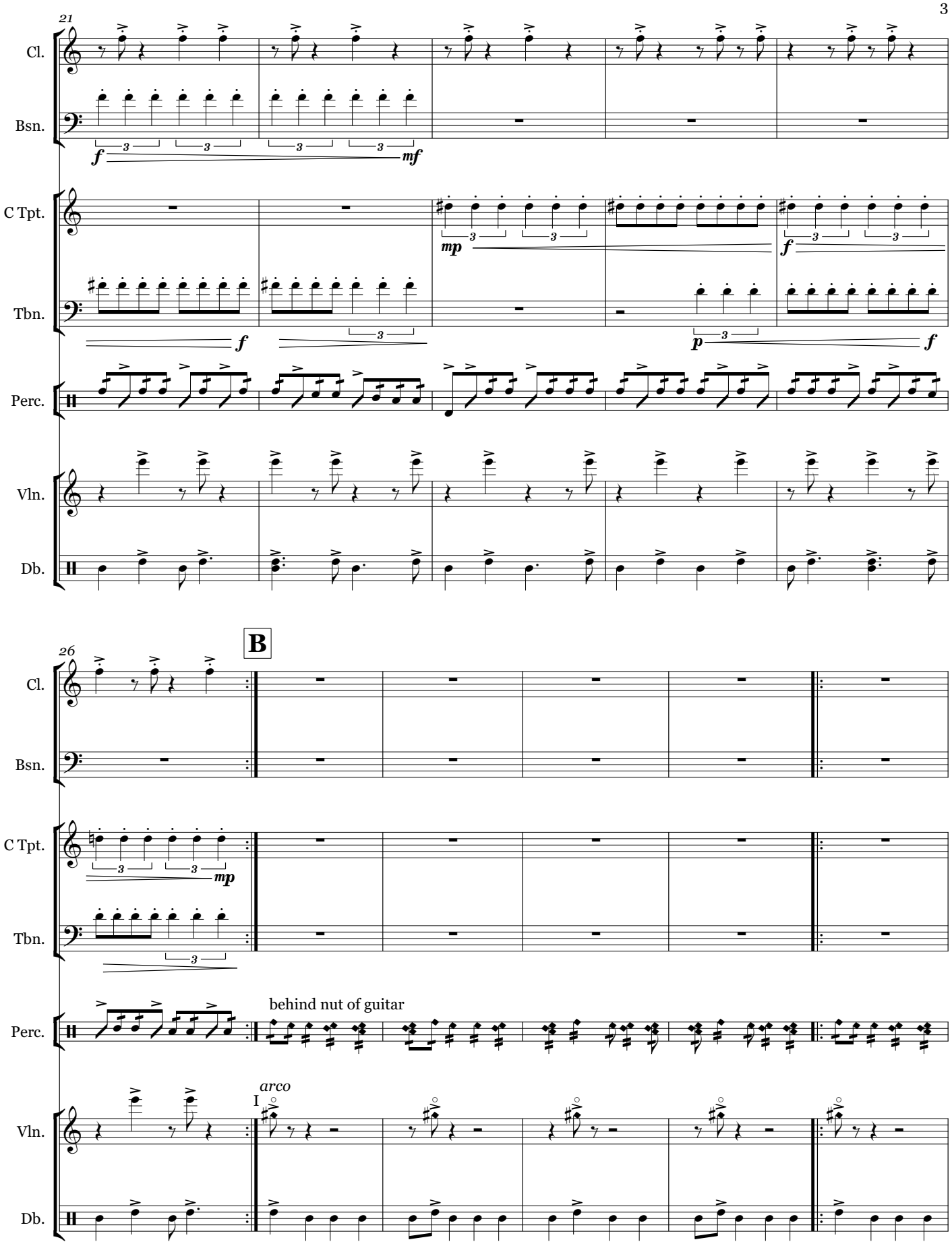
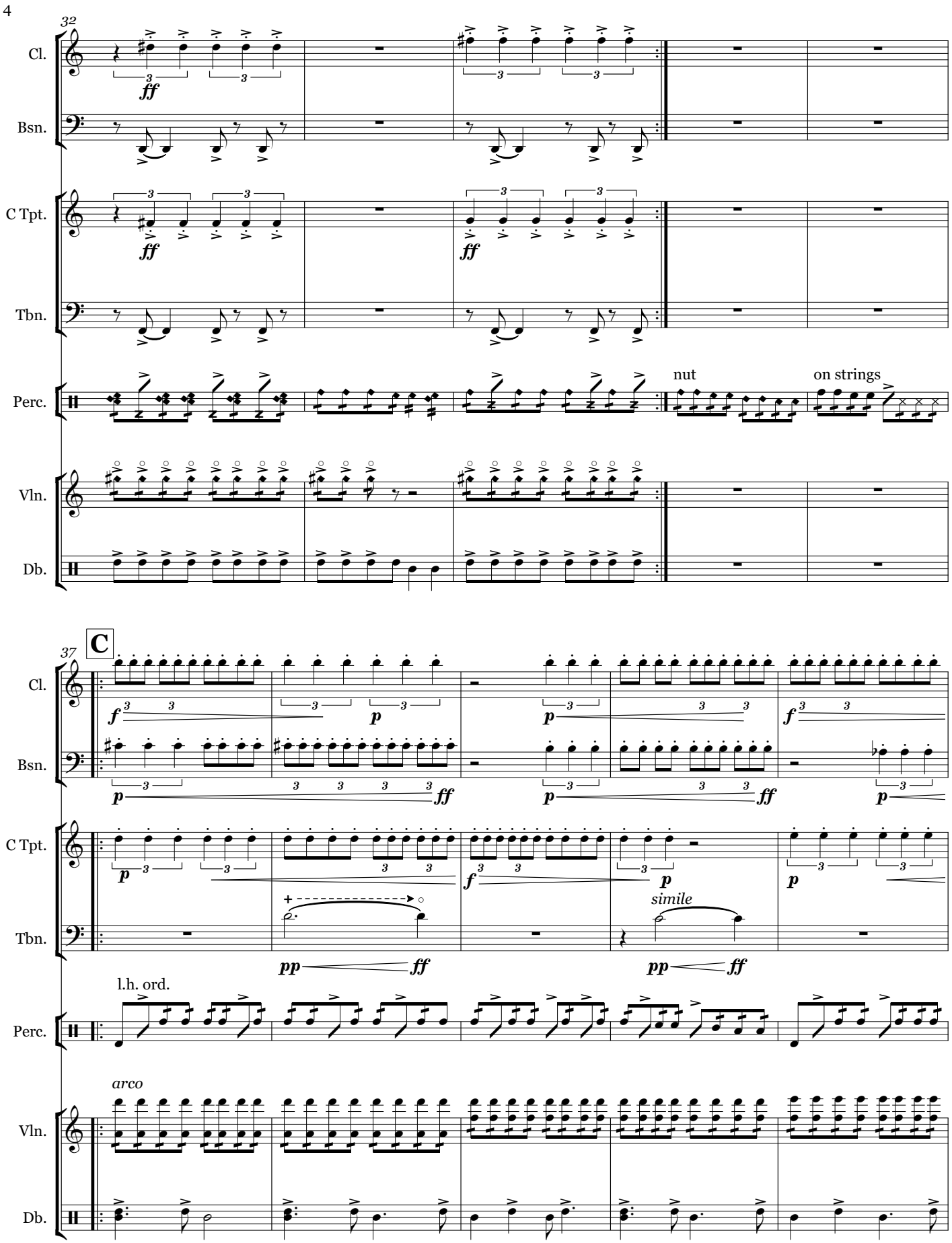
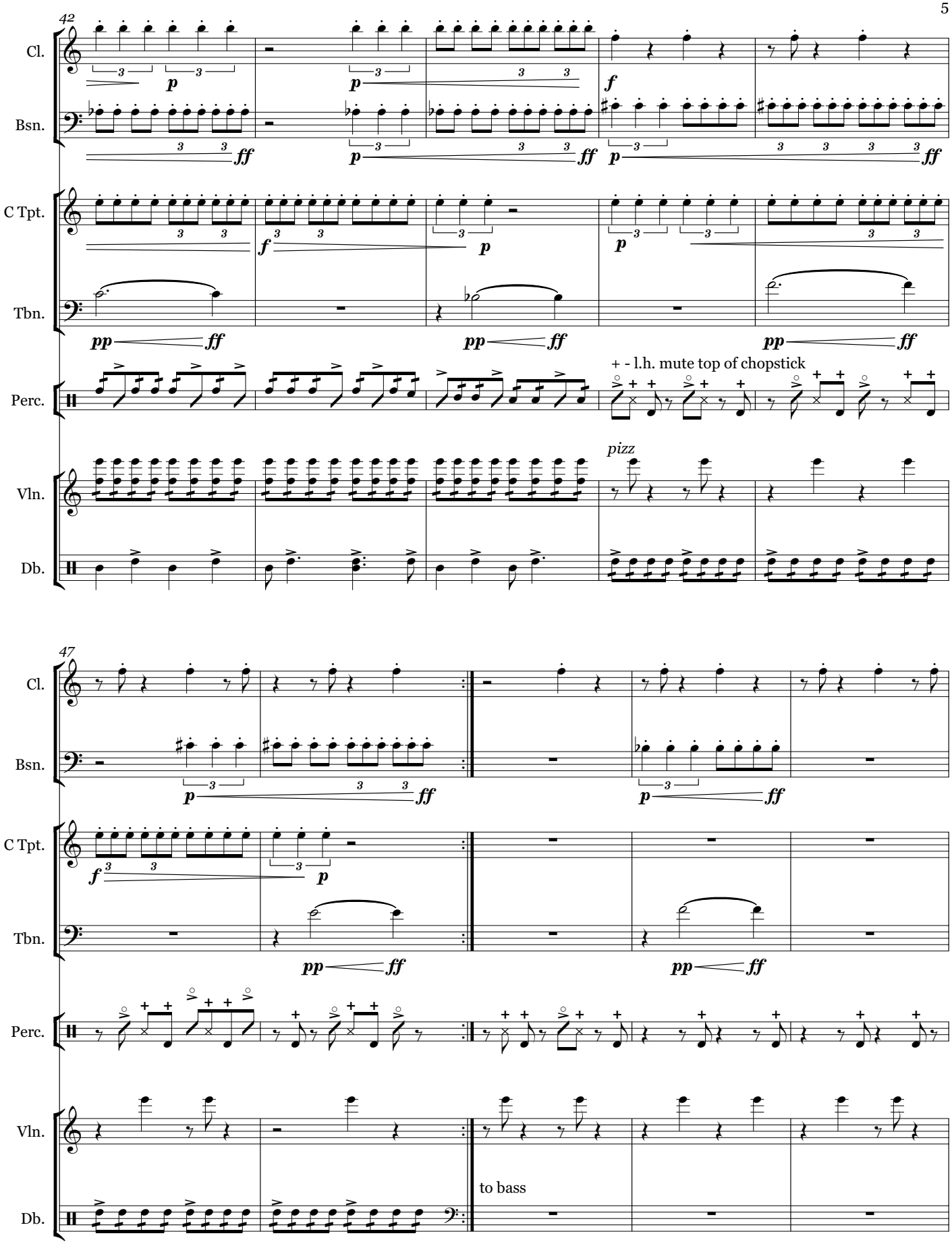
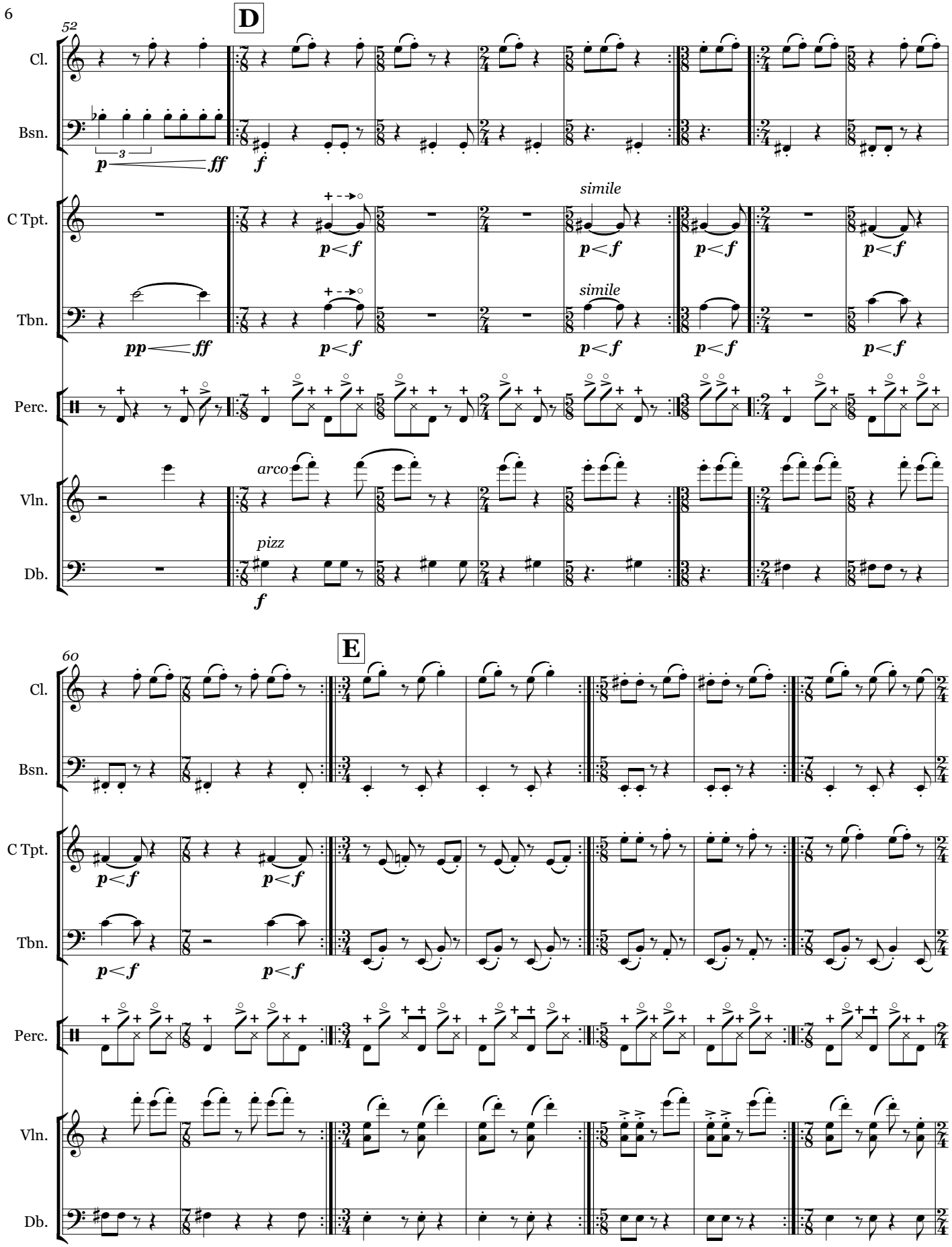
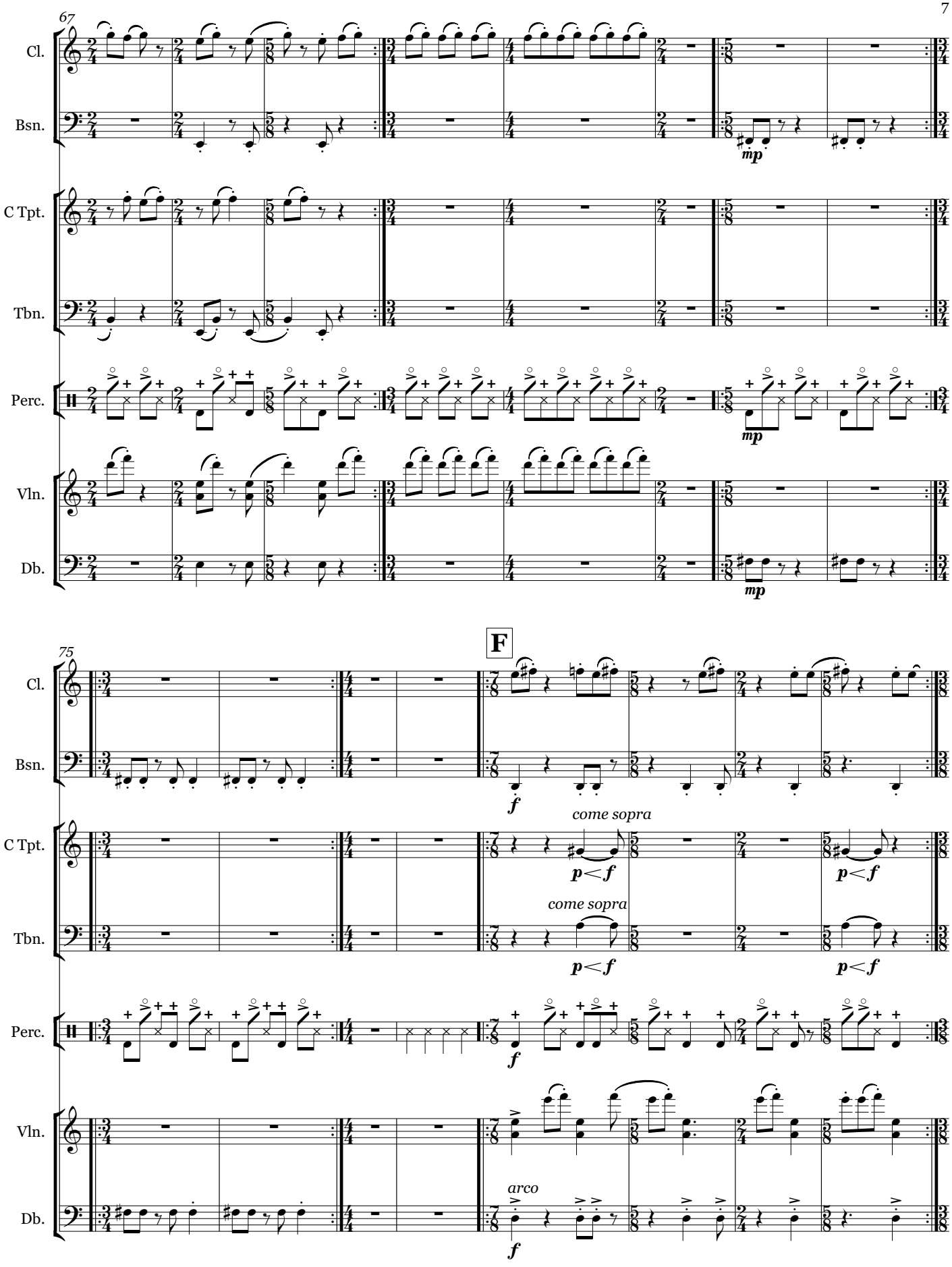

A
11
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
16

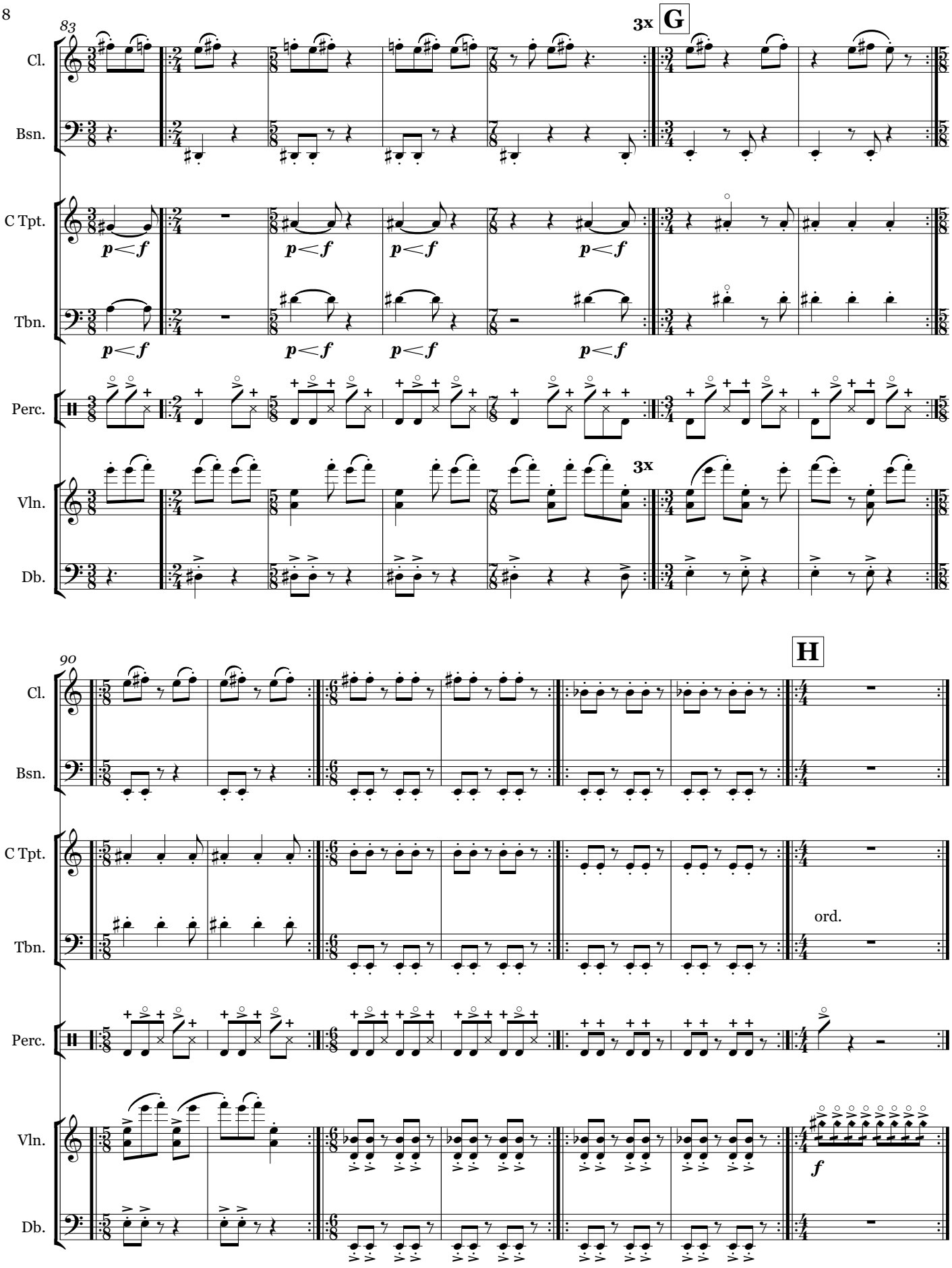

21
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
f
mf
mp
f
p
f
26
B
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
mp
behind nut of guitar
arco
I


32
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
nut
on strings
C
37
simile
l.h. ord.
arco


42
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
+ - l.h. mute top of chopstick
pizz
47
to bass


52
D
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
simile
arco
pizz
60
E


67
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
mp
75
F
f
come sopra
p<f
arco


83
3x
G
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
p<f
3x
90
H
ord.
f

97

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

pp f p pp f

pp f p pp f

pp f p pp f

pp f p

behind nut of guitar

103

3x

I

p ff p ff

ff ff

f ff ff

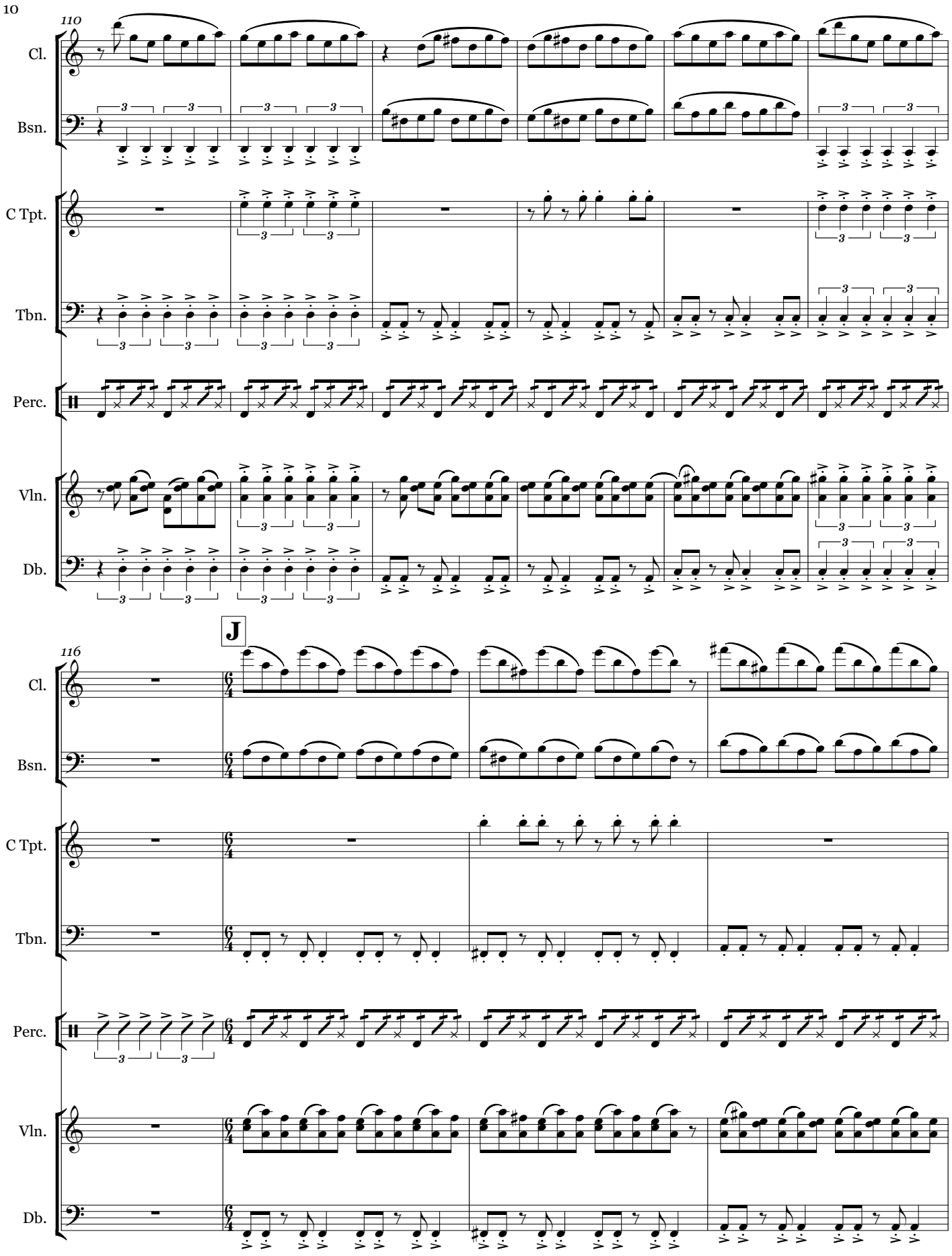
ff ff

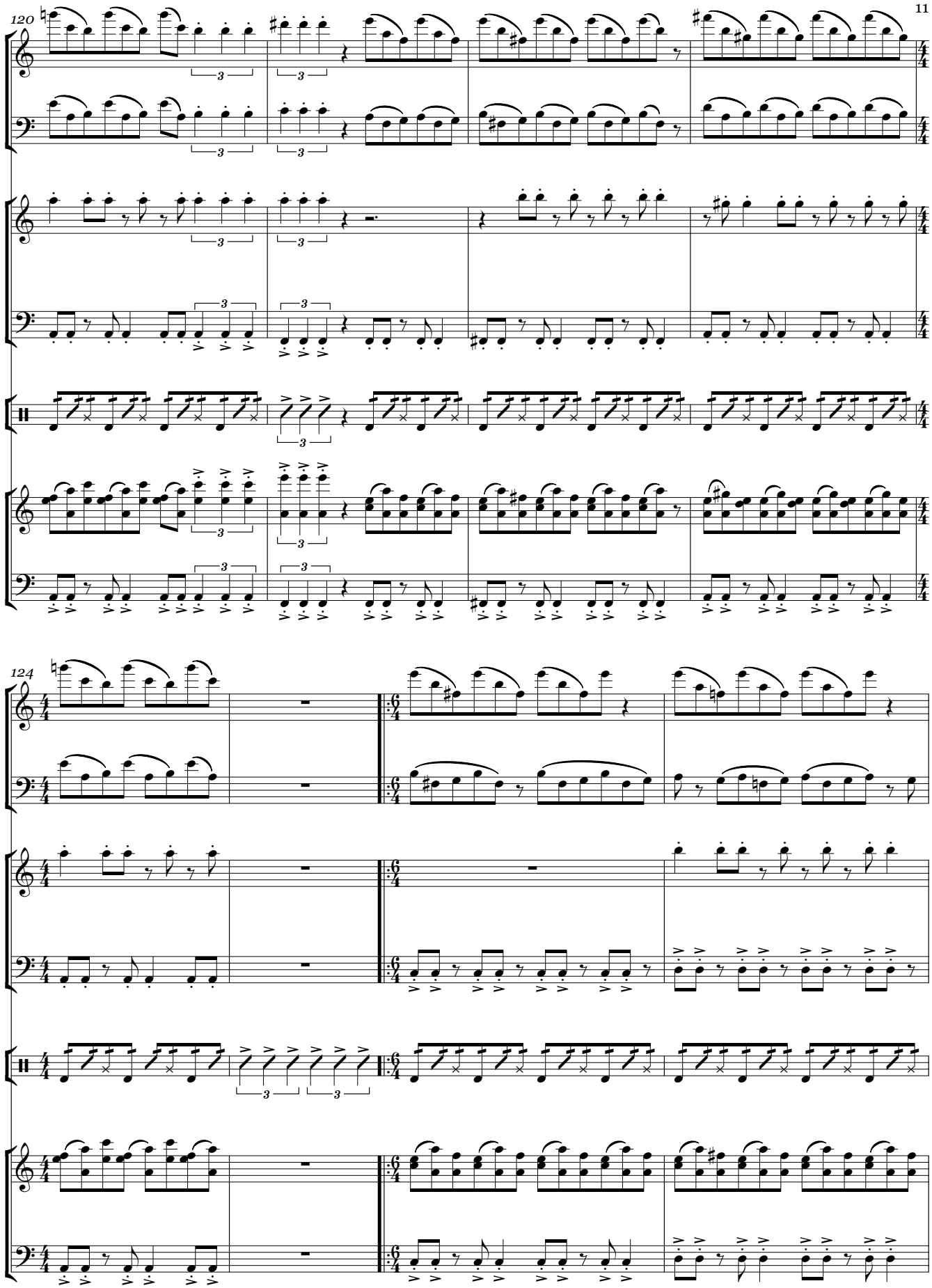
ff improvise variations on pattern in this section when it feels good

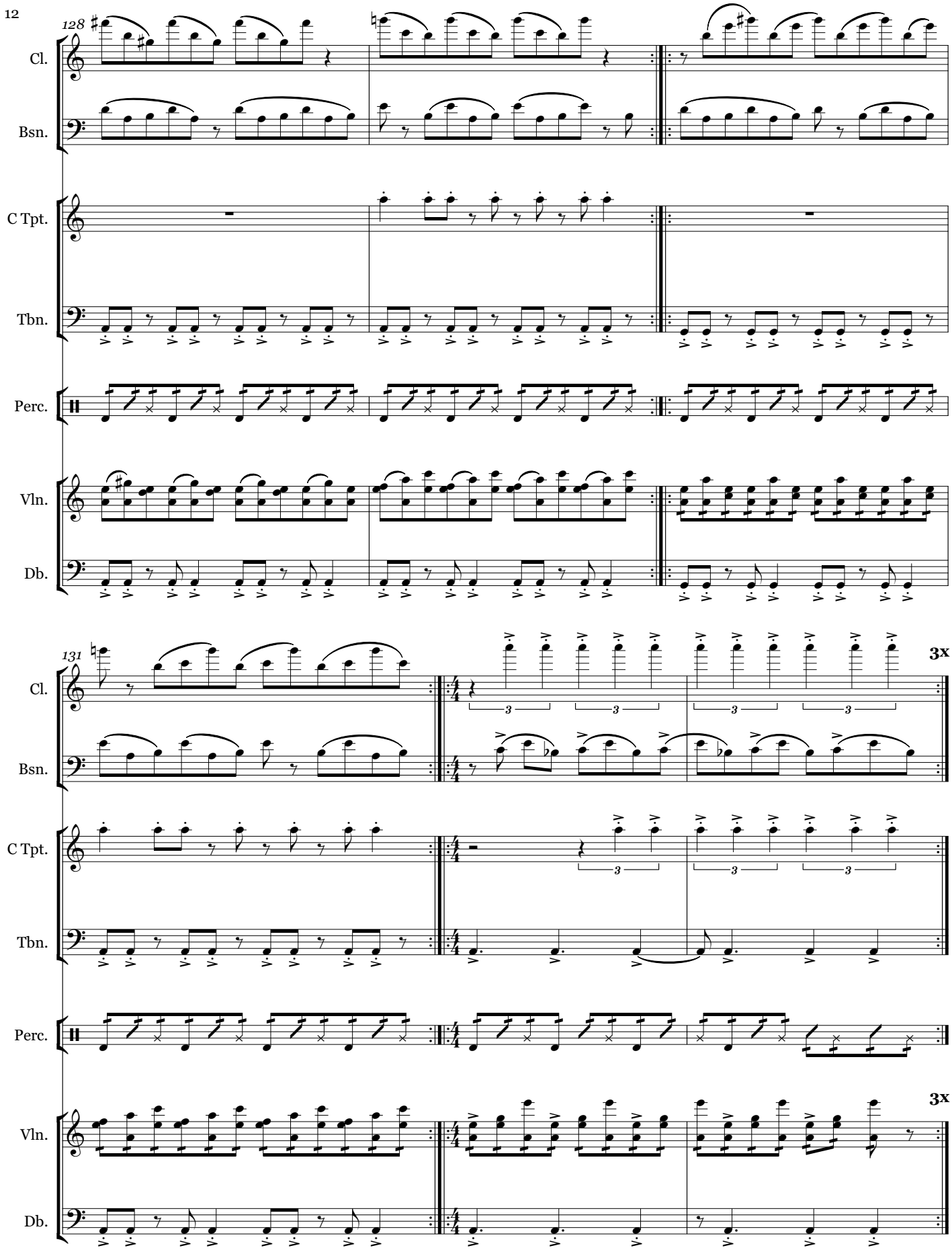
3x

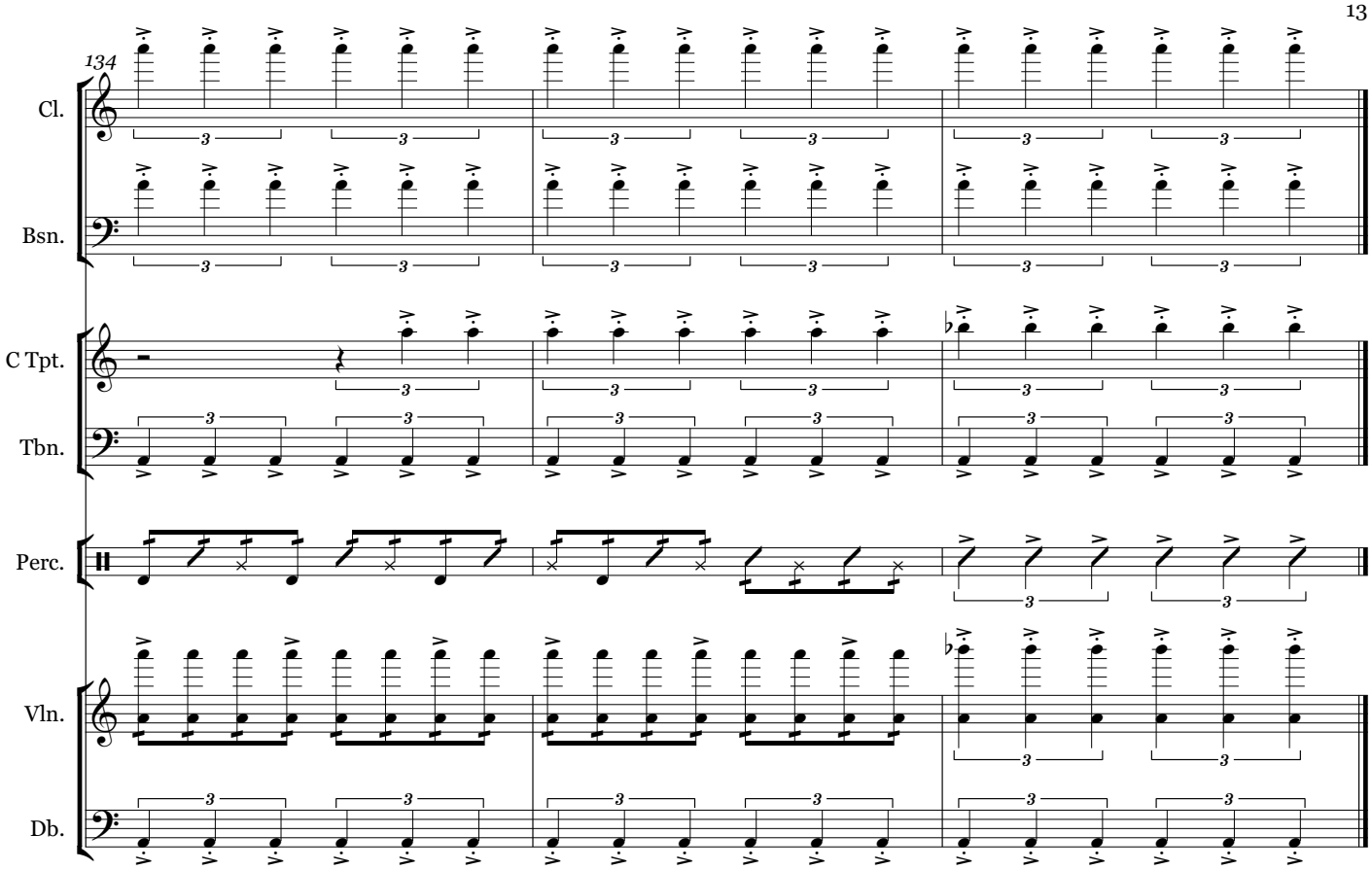
ff p ff

ff


110
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
116
J
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.


120
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
124
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.


128
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.
131
3x
3x


134
Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.