Practices in Visual Media

By

Brock A. Chart

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Music Composition, and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music.

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Date Defended: August 25, 2017

The thesis committee for Brock A. Chart certifies that this is
the approved version of the following thesis:

Practices in Visual Media

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Chair: Dan Gailey

Date Approved:

Practices in Visual Media

At approximately 13 minutes in length *Practices in Visual Media* aims to explore composition with a wide variety of instrumentation, genre, and style inspired by different platforms of visual media. The idea of the piece was to recreate real-world scenarios that a commercial composer might encounter professionally. Each movement is based on a different form of visual media that I've rescored with original music such as a movie trailer, cartoon theme song, TV commercial, and the soundtrack from a video game.

I've also learned from personal experience that commercial composers are expected to have professional sounding products from the earliest stages of production. Audio production has become an integral part of the commercial composer's skill set. When writing *Practices in Visual Media,* I transcribed and attempted to recreate several works from today's leading film composers to learn more about the audio production techniques they used and tried to apply them to my own compositions.

IT Movie Trailer:

The *IT* movie trailer was the most difficult movement to write because of the amount of editing involved. Movie trailers often cut to different scenes or camera shots frequently and sometimes in high action sequences they can change several times in just a few seconds. The original trailer music used by Warner Brothers divided the trailer into several distinct sections with different music for each. I approached the trailer in a similar fashion and cut the trailer into three sections.

The main theme for the movement is based in D minor and is played by a celesta. Since the antagonist in the film is a clown and most of the story is based around children, I wanted the theme to sound like a "wind-up" music box. Music boxes make me think of innocence and memories of my childhood; he feelings from the music box mixed with the dark, ominous undertones from synthesizers layered together create a perfect setting for King's classic novel.

Rick and Morty Opening Theme:

This cartoon is about a brilliant, alcoholic scientist named Rick and his less talented nephew, Morty, as they have adventures together through space, time, and other dimensions. To compliment the show's themes of science and technology, I chose to use synthesizers for all of the instrumentation and sound effects in this movement to create a more electronic timbre.

I admire the classic sci-fi soundtracks like *Star Wars* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* and have noticed that they have a similar harmonic language. Most of the harmonic movement is based around thirds, which can create "other-worldly" sounds and feelings of unpredictability. I used similar harmonic motion in my movement. The main theme is in A minor, but throughout the piece I also use colors from A melodic minor. The piece starts in A minor which then moves to the tritone Eb, then to the mediant C#, and the submediants of A melodic minor, F and F#. The melody mostly outlines the harmonic movement while providing some tonal tension with suspensions on downbeats, and rhythmic tension with syncopation against the driving, repetitive percussion.

Coca-Cola Commercial:

In this movement I used the actor's actions in the commercial to create my own story and lyrics for a short pop song; a typical teenage love story on a beach fueled with Coca-Cola. In my

free time I listen to pop music and am particularly drawn to Motown and soul music. I used those artists as inspiration for this movement.

I started this movement by writing the chorus or the "hook" first and building the verses around that. Creating a catchy chorus is difficult, but I've found that a melody that's easy to sing, a rhythm that feels good to dance to, and lyrics that are easy to remember are great rules to follow. The tune is straightforward and mostly follows I – IV for the verse and on the chorus the harmony descends by whole steps and half steps from vi - V7/V ending with a IV - V - I in F.

Lord of the Rings – Return of the King:

Being a *Lord of the Rings* fanatic, I wanted to honor this movement closer to Howard Shore's original score in terms of orchestration, timbre, and themes. Shore uses a full orchestra with a mixture of tonal and modal themes to act as *leitmotivs* for LOTR. In this scene the enemy army has the city surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, but the warriors of Rohan are about to save the day.

I use the strings to create tension and uneasiness in the opening as Gandalf is about to be struck down. Strings start to play the Rohan theme slowly as the Nazgul turns his head when he hears the war horns. At this point the piece still has dark undertones as the audience only sees camera shots of the enemies and warriors in shadow on the horizon. Horns then join Rohan's theme giving the piece a warmer timbre as the camera changes shots to show the allied Rohan flag and army. The music comes to a standstill with horns in unison when the camera focuses on the Rohan King looking over the battlefield. War drums begin pounding as the camera cuts to the enemy surrounding the city and powerful brass in perfect fourths adds to the drama as the camera shifts to the worried faces of the protagonists. Brass and percussion continue to build the tension to a climax when the trumpets stack dissonant intervals against a low A pedal. The

Rohan King rides away to shout battle orders and the percussion takes center stage again with added snare drum. Strings add a rhythmic motif over the percussion and the brass enters with a strong, triumphant D major chord as the camera pans out over the allied Rohan army. The repetitive percussion and strings provide momentum and unease as the final battle orders are given and enemy spears are lowered. Now orchestrated out for the brass, Rohan's theme thunders over the percussion and strings as the Rohan King rides gallantly down the line inspiring his soldiers before the charge.

Although I have used MIDI instruments in my recording ideally the piece would be performed with real musicians.

No Man's Sky:

No Man's Sky is a video game that was released in 2016 for PS4, Xbox 1, and PC. The game is different from others in the sci-fi genre because most of the gameplay focuses on exploration instead of the shooting found in more violent sci-fi games. The game uses an algorhythm that randomly generates planets that players can visit and explore. Each planet has drastically different environments with unique ecosystems full of plant and animal life based on the climate and makeup of the planet.

Composing for video games is different than other forms of visual media because game developers usually ask for the music to be a mixture of through-composed music and "looped" music. Looping is an audio production technique where an audio file will continuously play itself over, and over again. This technique is used in video games because the music needs to adapt and flow seamlessly based on what the player is doing in the game. In *No Man's Sky* each planet would have a bank of different loops of varying sizes; some will have only sound effects and more ambient textures while others will be more musical. Game developers can program the

game to randomize the loops in each bank, and set up parameters to ensure no repetitions of the same loop. With this movement I challenged myself to create both a through-composed piece, and a loop for *No Man's Sky*.

For the opening instrumentation I used strings and brass because I wanted a similar sound as some of the classic sci-fi scores like *Star Wars* or *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Since *No Man's Sky* is largely focused on exploration, I wanted the music to be shaped around curiosity, space, and imagination. The main theme is based in C Lydian but the piece doesn't stay in the same key center for long. As for orchestration, the strings provide a warm texture with open fifths and extend out the seventh chord while the brass provide the melody, counterpoint, and support.

The loop itself is minimal and exaggerates space, which I think adds to the feeling of isolation and exploring alone on a planet. I used a mixture of digital, and acoustic instrumentation with several audio effects, synthesizers, and sound effects to create my soundscapes. The loop begins with ambient sci-fi sound effects and provides an open atmosphere for the player to look around for the first time. An acoustic piano loaded with audio effects lays the groundwork for the tonality of the loop and the melody that has an improvisational tone which features perfect fifths and syncopation. Synthesizers then join in under the piano to provide more bass support and additional ambience. Starting in m. 33 the tail end of the piano melody is repeated over and over. With the reverb and the delay from the piano effects, the repetitive piano motif provides an interesting texture for a new melody to shine. Other synthesizers join in to change the overall groove of the loop and provide a more stable rhythmic pulse. In m. 41 synthesizers introduce the new melody and key center of F Lydian. A few bars later another synthesizer provides playful counterpoint over the melody and repeats. This repetition continues for a few cycles until the layers begin to drop out one by one thinning

the texture down to the ambient sci-fi sounds from the beginning. The ambient sci-fi sounds clear out the aural pallet before starting the loop again in 05:36:00 of the video.

Writing *Practices in Visual Media* has been a challenging, but rewarding experience. It was a project rooted in professional development and to prepare myself for future, real-world scenarios. Since starting on the project I've talked with several filmmakers for feedback, criticism, and to find out exactly what a director thinks about when choosing music. I've gotten some excellent feedback from them and I was fortunate enough to be asked to write the music for a director in L.A., who's making new short comedy for the Screen Actor's Guild in September 2017 called *Sunshine*. I plan to continue rescoring more scenes from films and other visual media on my own time for personal development and my portfolio.

IT TRAILER PART I

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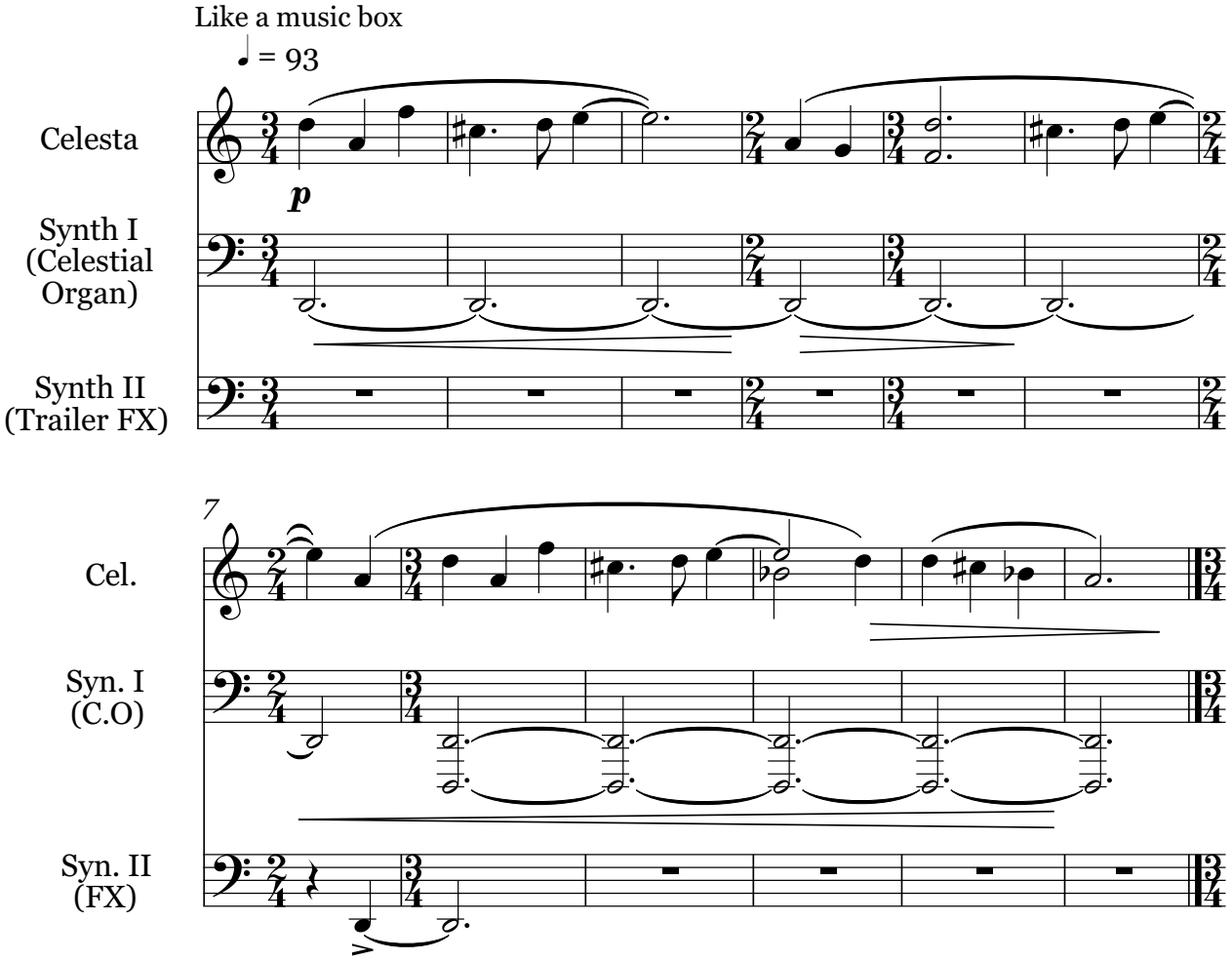

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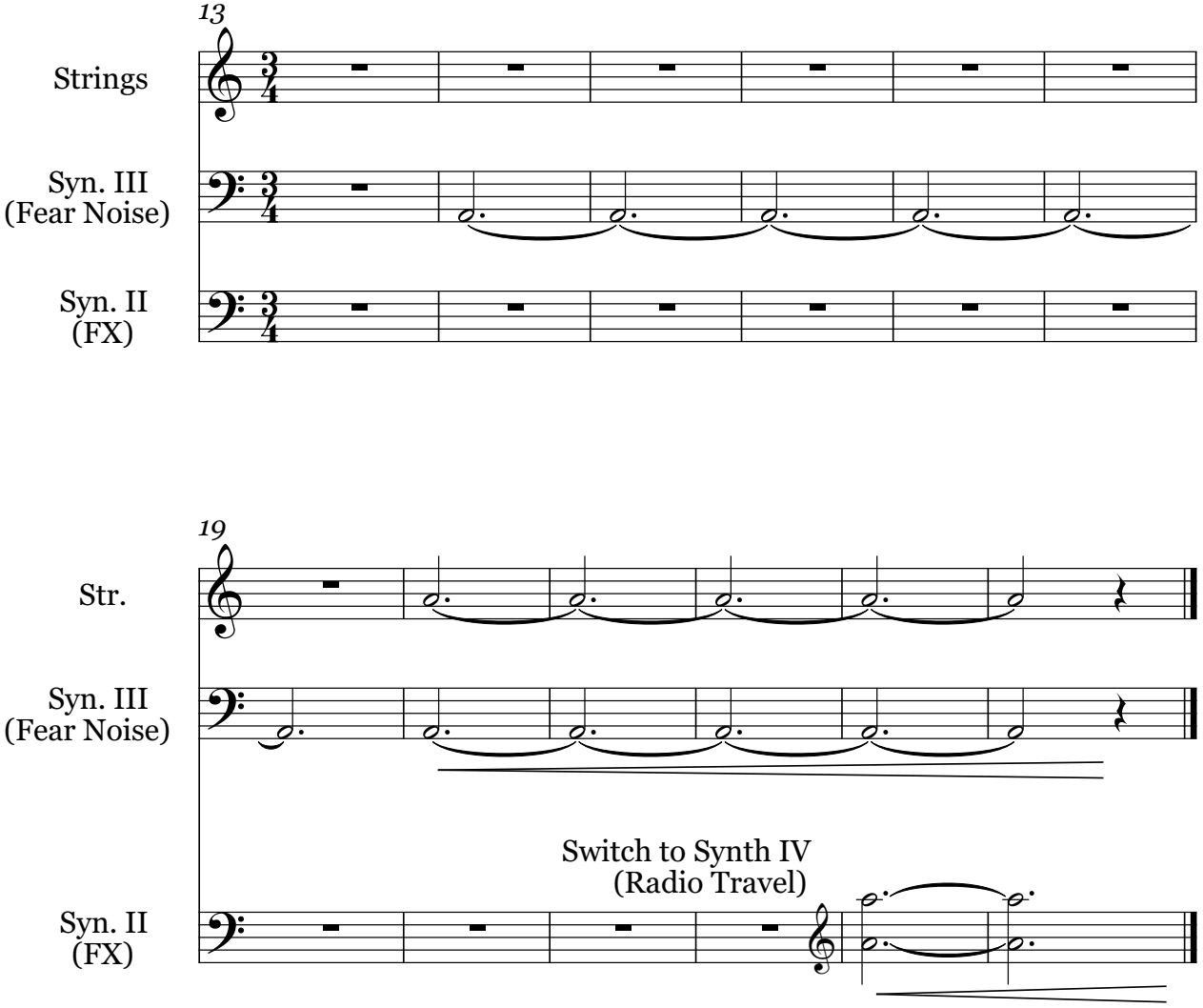
13
Strings
Syn. III
(Fear Noise)
Syn. II
(FX)
19
Str.
Syn. III
(Fear Noise)
Switch to Synth IV
(Radio Travel)
Syn. II
(FX)

IT TRAILER PART II

00:45:06

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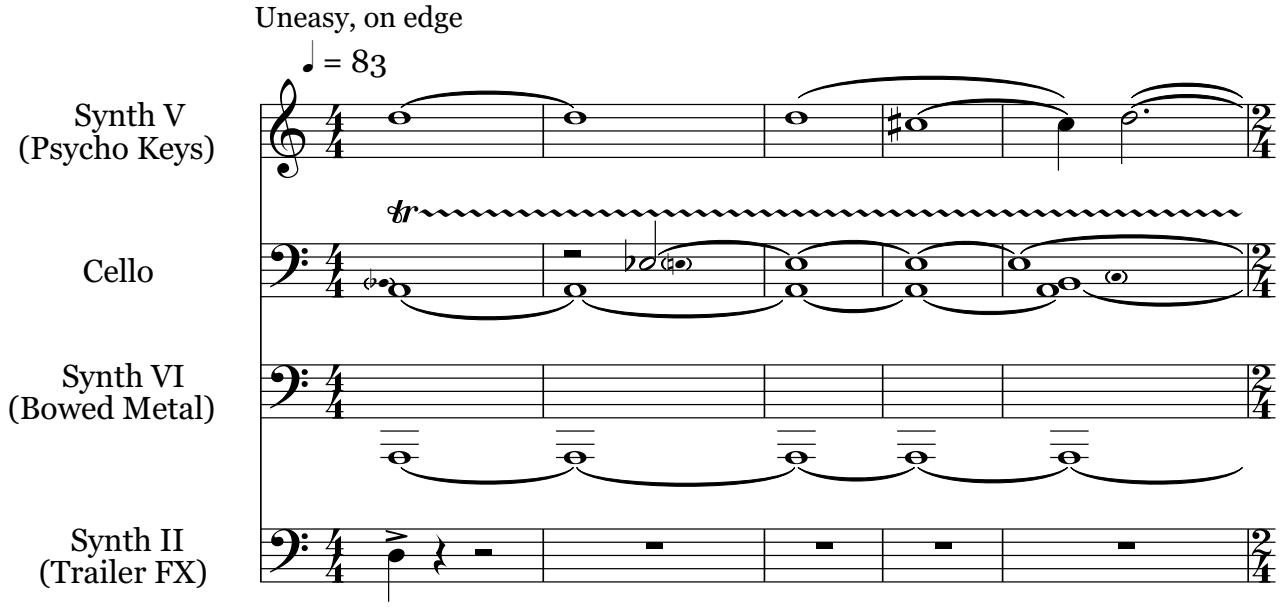

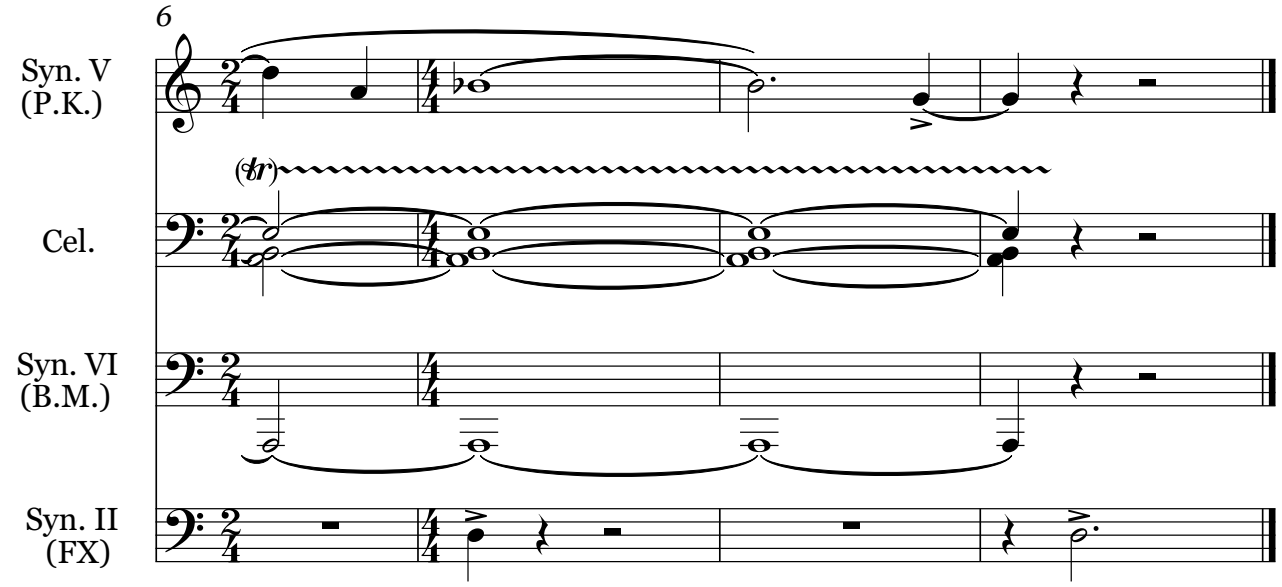

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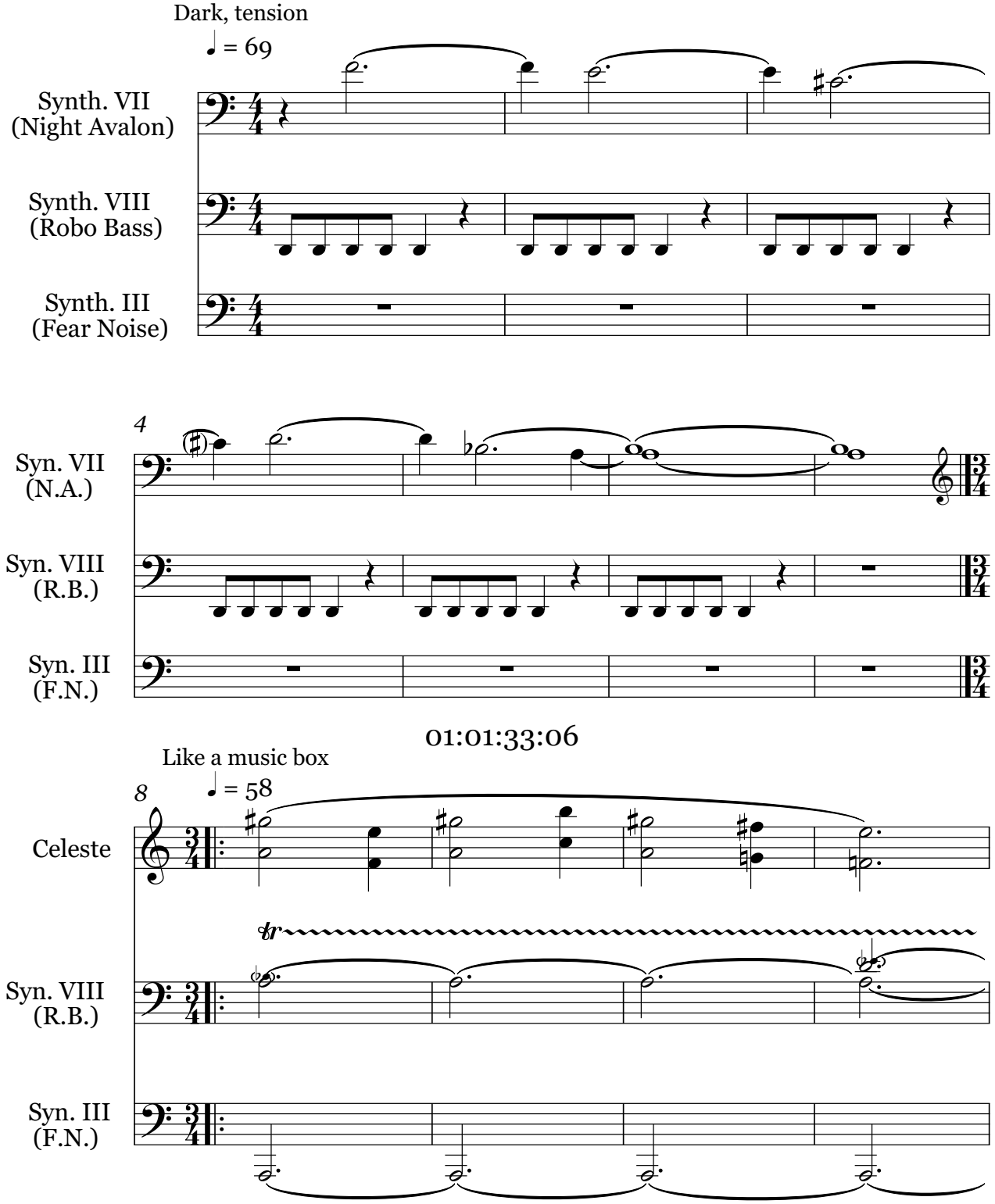

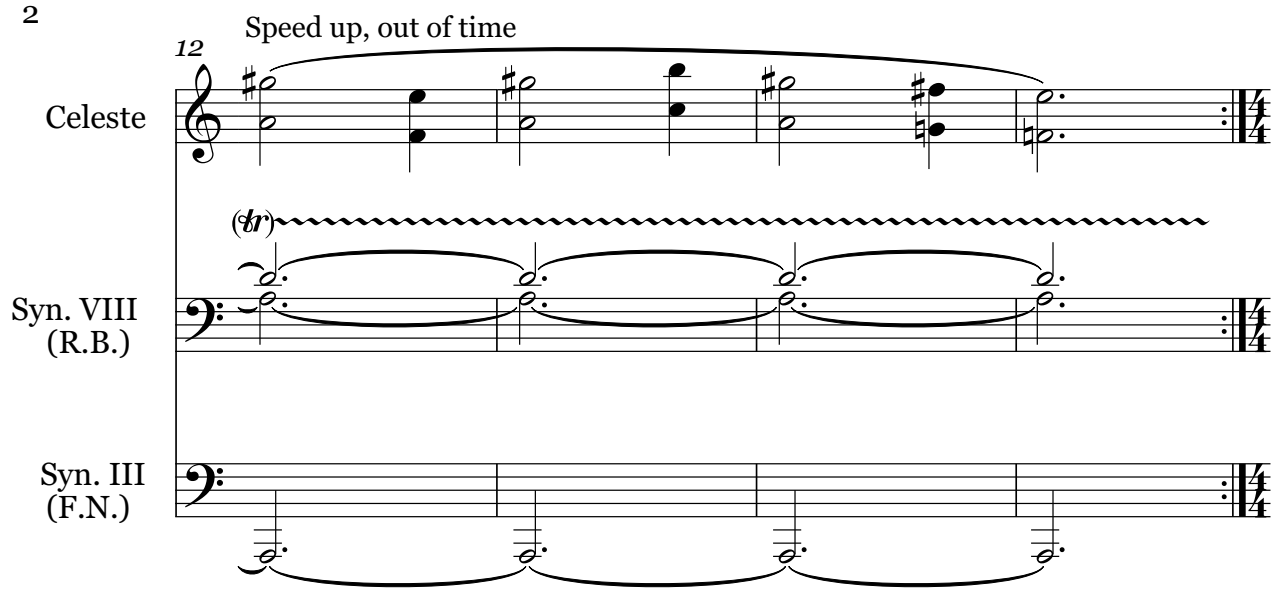

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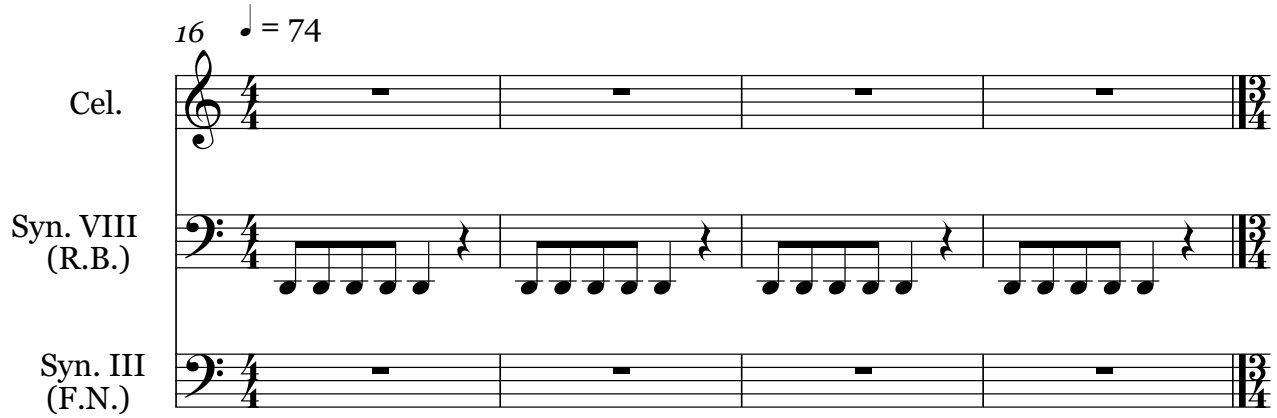

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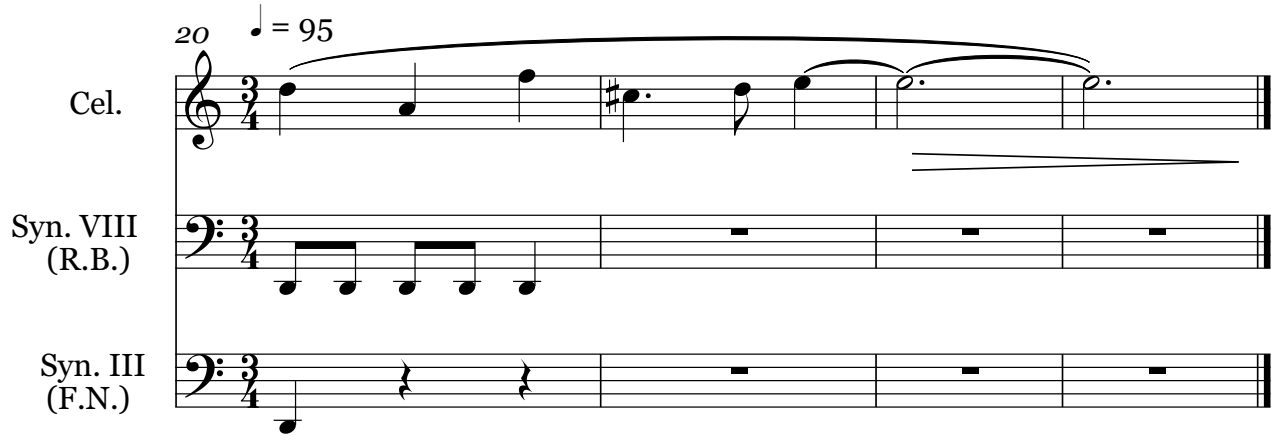
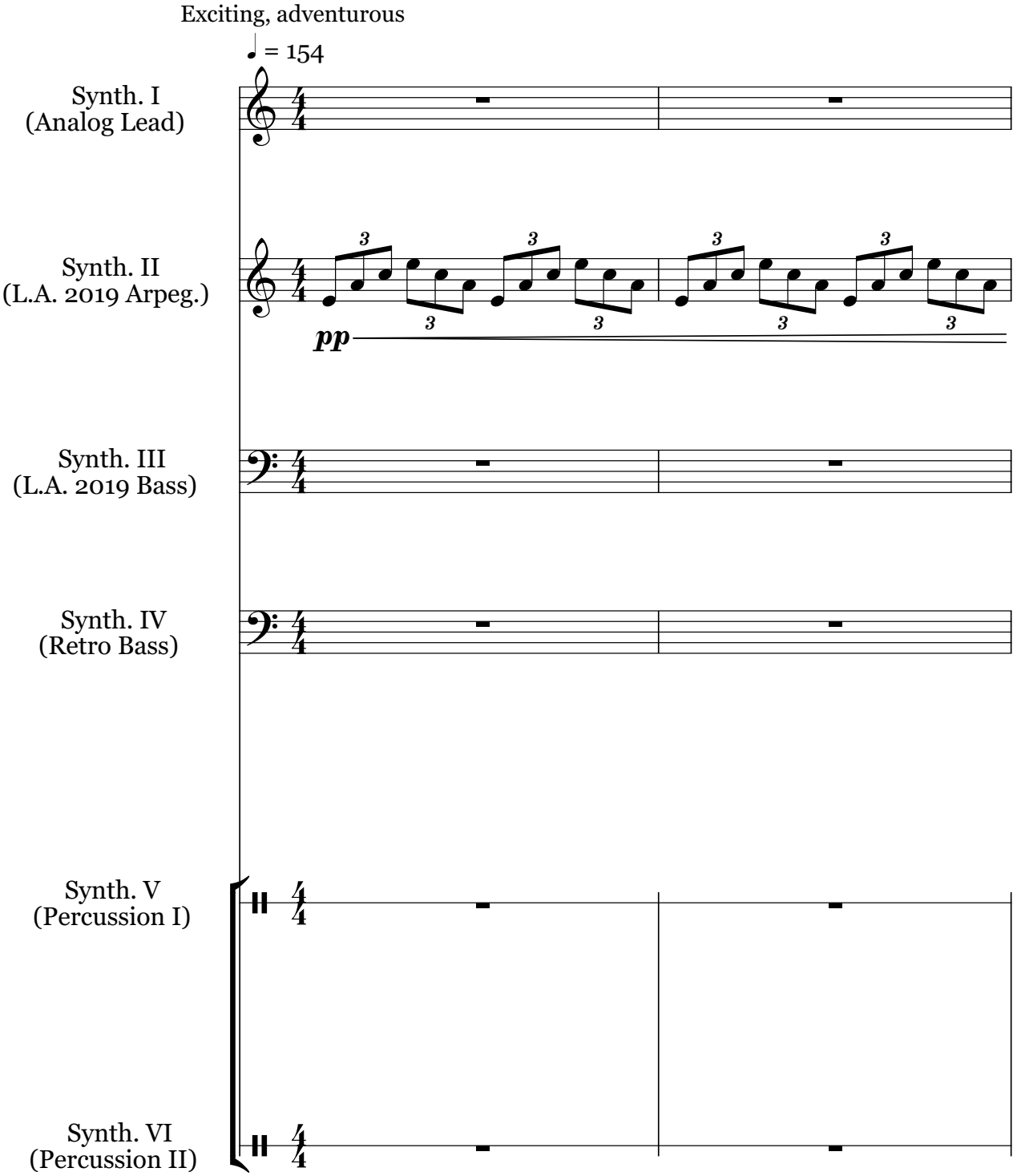
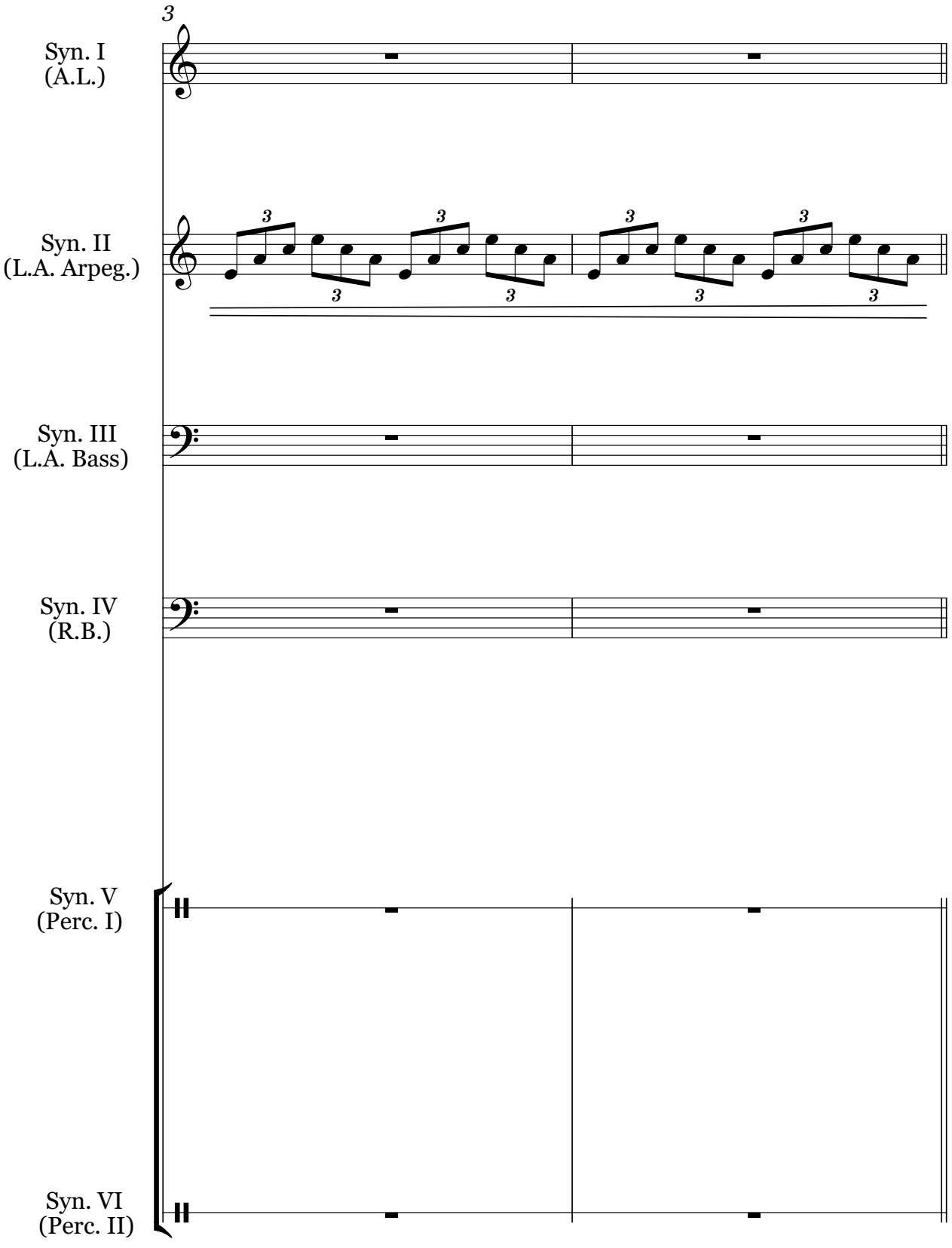
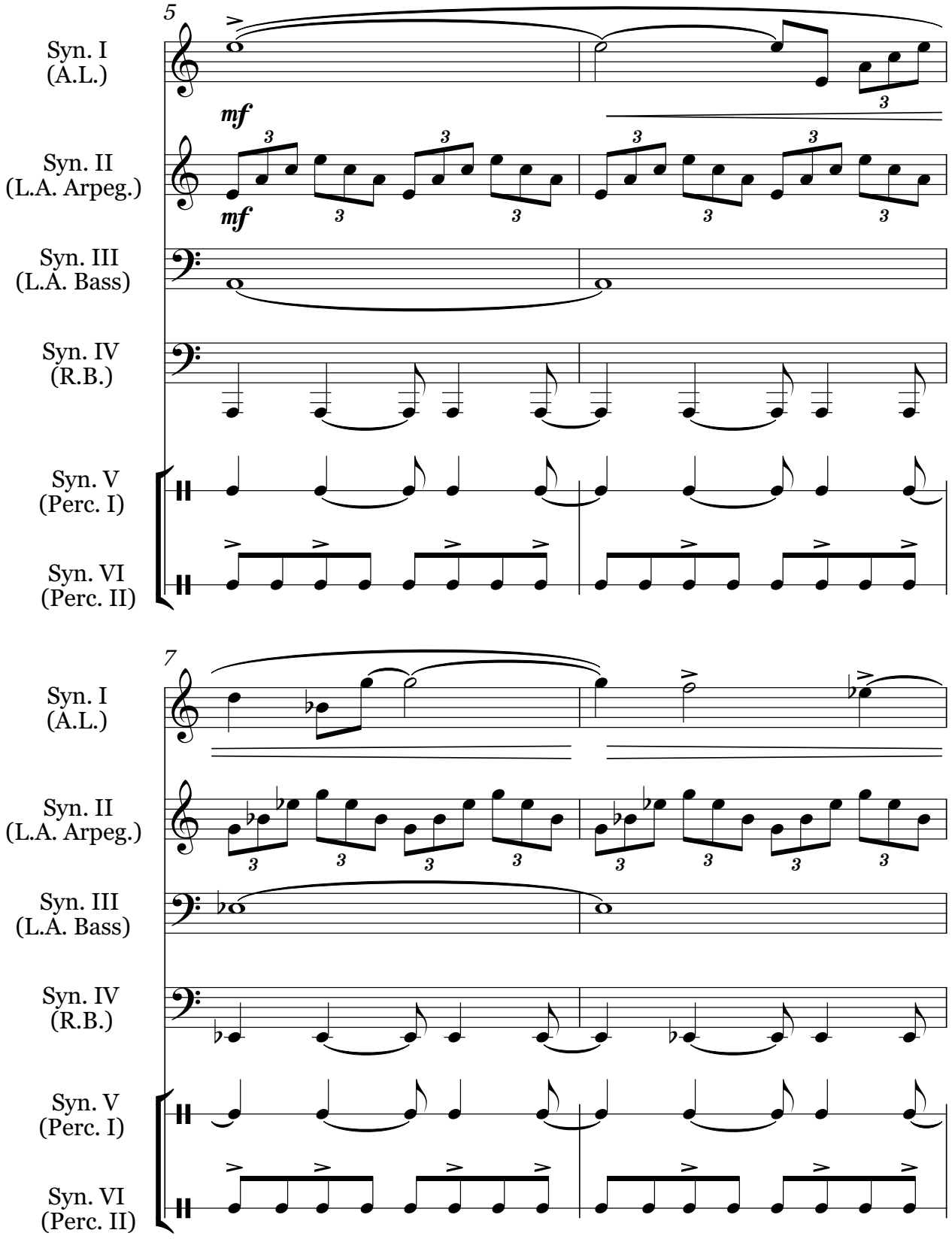


RICK AND MORTY INTRO - RESCORE

Brock Chart, 2017




3
Syn. I
(A.L.)
Syn. II
(L.A. Arpeg.)
Syn. III
(L.A. Bass)
Syn. IV
(R.B.)
Syn. V
(Perc. I)
Syn. VI
(Perc. II)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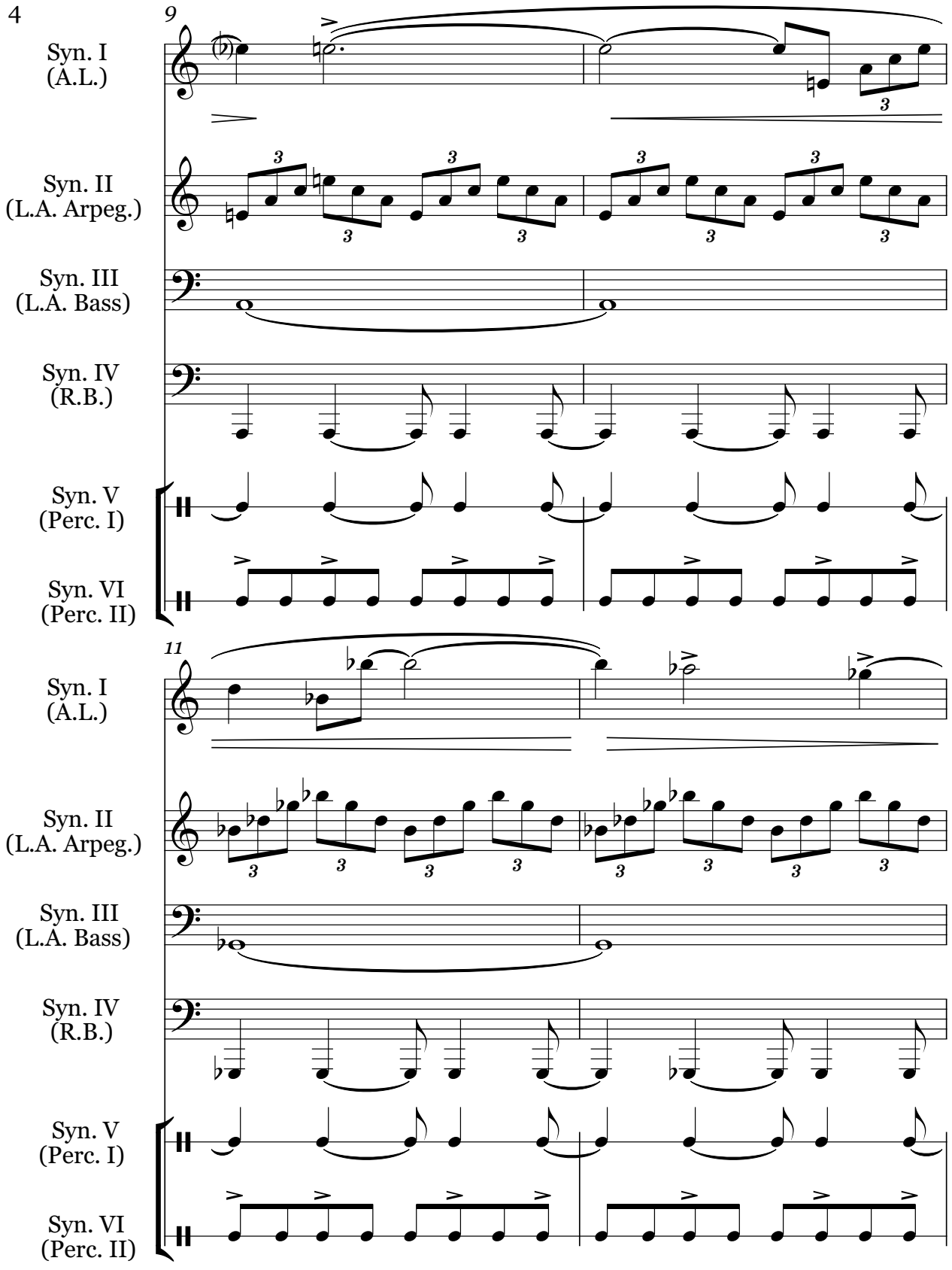
Syn. I
(A.L.)
mf
Syn. II
(L.A. Arpeg.)
mf
Syn. III
(L.A. Bass)
Syn. IV
(R.B.)
Syn. V
(Perc. I)
Syn. VI
(Perc. II)
7
Syn. I
(A.L.)
Syn. II
(L.A. Arpeg.)
Syn. III
(L.A. Bass)
Syn. IV
(R.B.)
Syn. V
(Perc. I)
Syn. VI
(Perc. II)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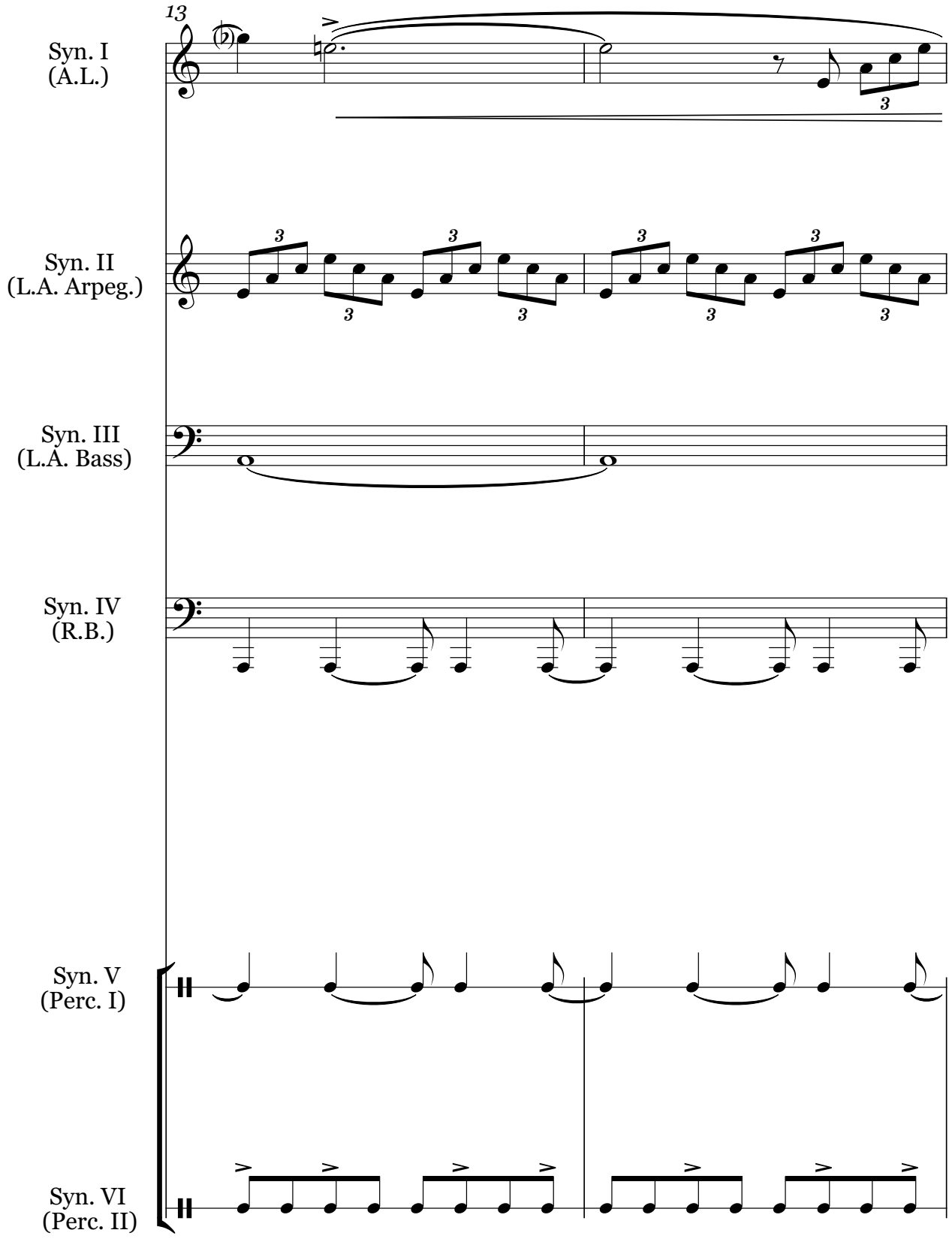
Syn. I
(A.L.)
Syn. II
(L.A. Arpeg.)
Syn. III
(L.A. Bass)
Syn. IV
(R.B.)
Syn. V
(Perc. I)
Syn. VI
(Perc. II)
11
Syn. I
(A.L.)
Syn. II
(L.A. Arpeg.)
Syn. III
(L.A. Bass)
Syn. IV
(R.B.)
Syn. V
(Perc. I)
Syn. VI
(Perc. II)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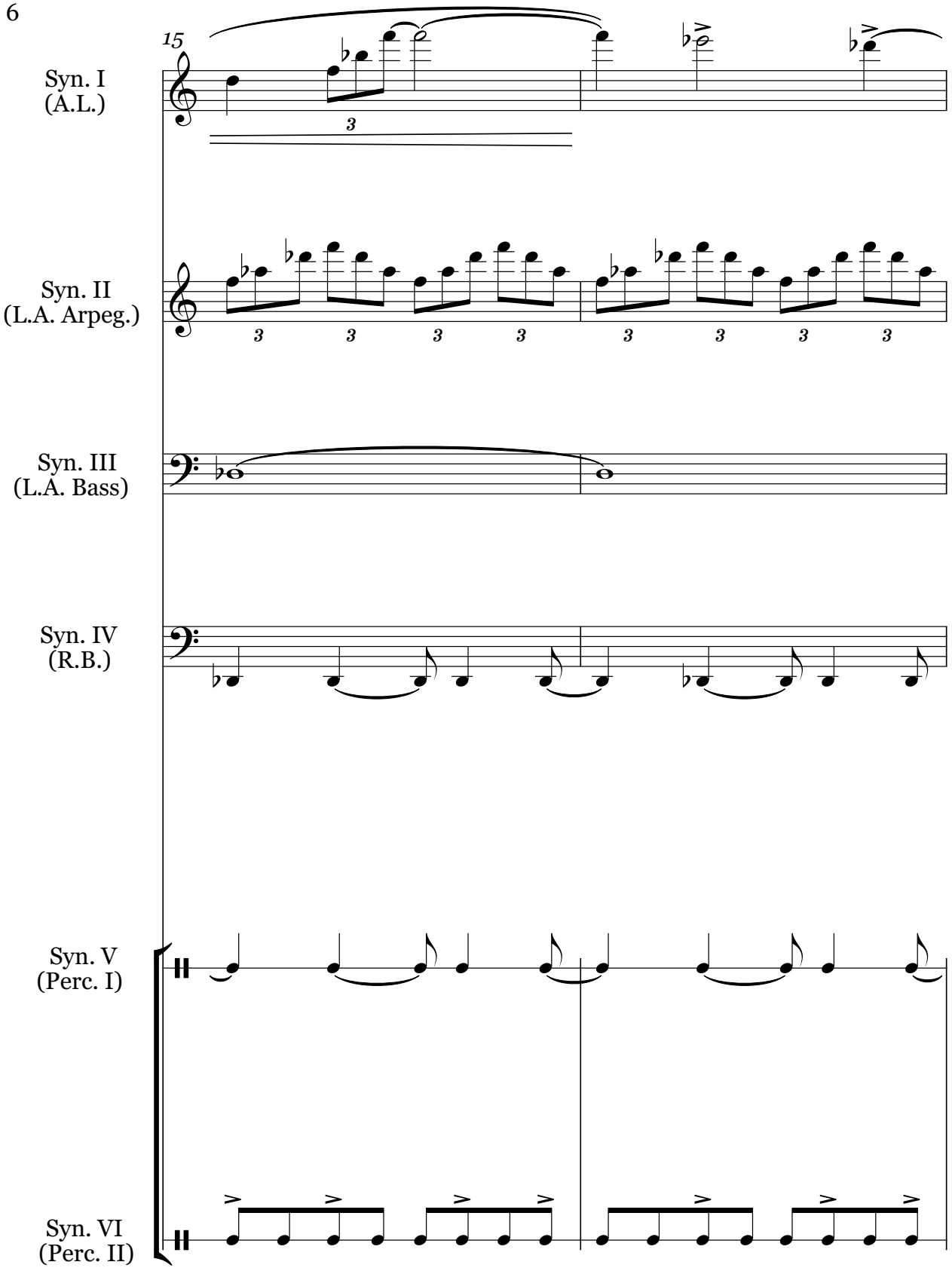
Syn. I
(A.L.)
Syn. II
(L.A. Arpeg.)
Syn. III
(L.A. Bass)
Syn. IV
(R.B.)
Syn. V
(Perc. I)
Syn. VI
(Perc. II)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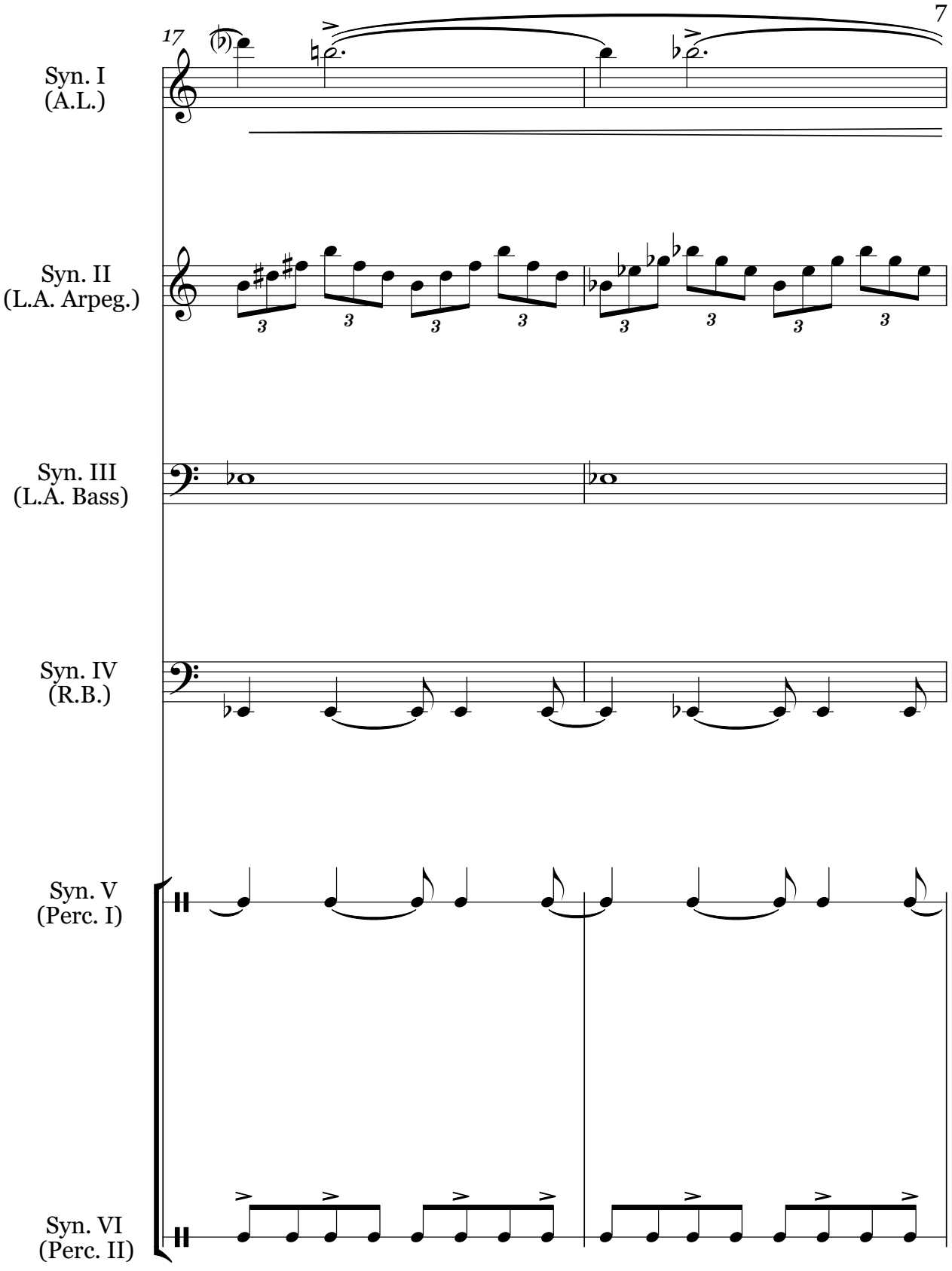
Syn. I
(A.L.)
Syn. II
(L.A. Arpeg.)
Syn. III
(L.A. Bass)
Syn. IV
(R.B.)
Syn. V
(Perc. I)
Syn. VI
(Perc. II)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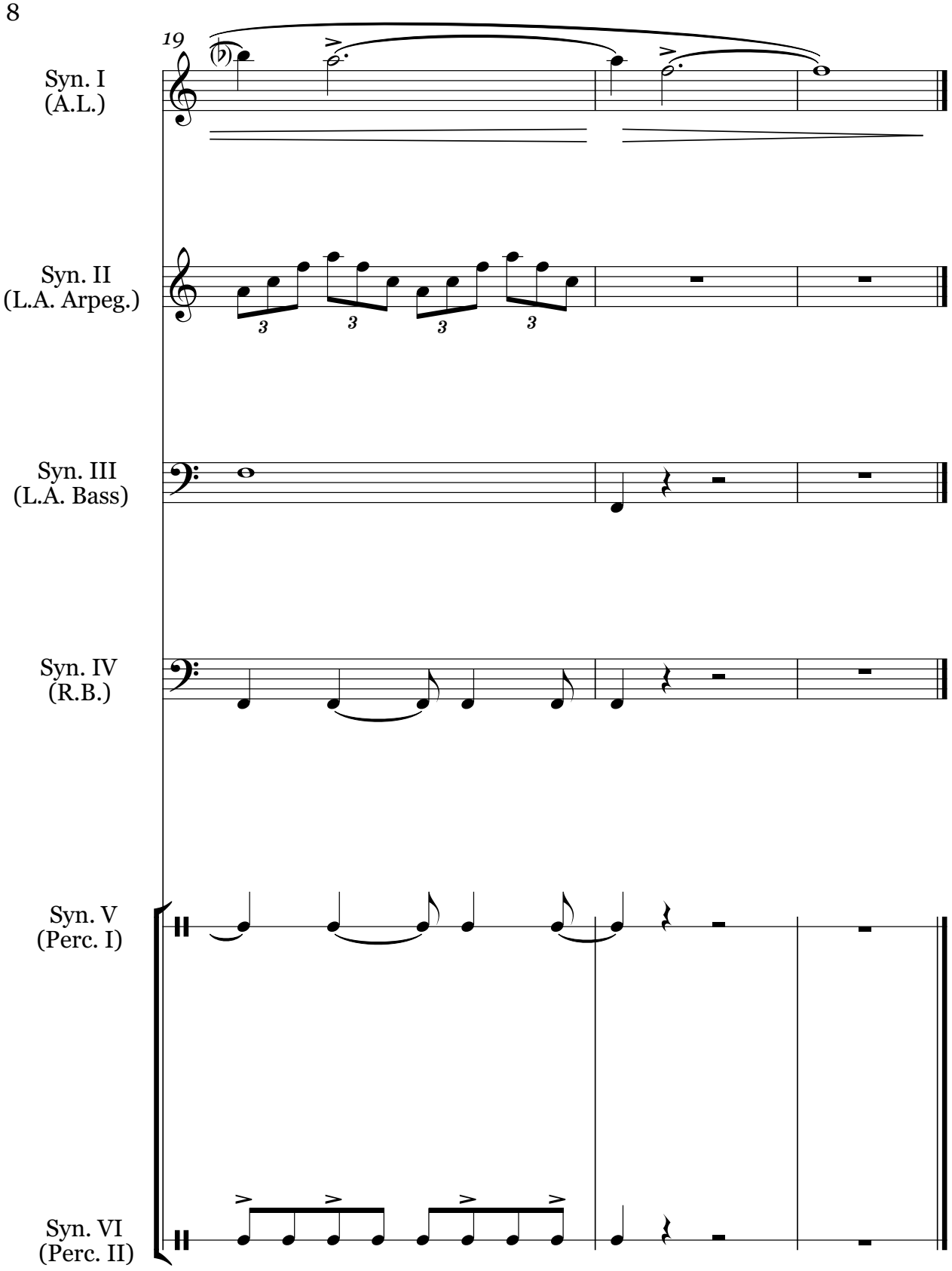
Syn. I
(A.L.)
Syn. II
(L.A. Arpeg.)
Syn. III
(L.A. Bass)
Syn. IV
(R.B.)
Syn. V
(Perc. I)
Syn. VI
(Perc. II)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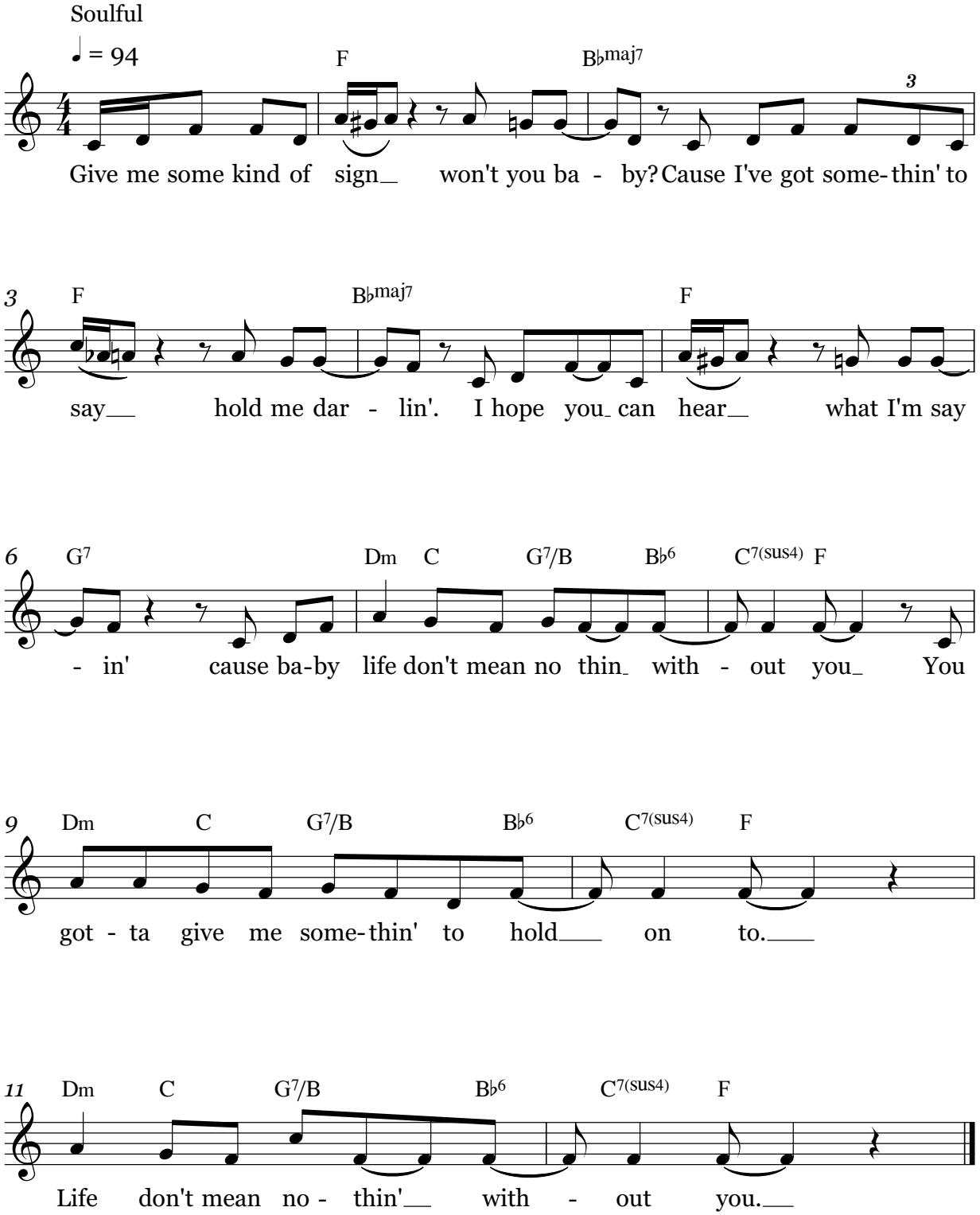
Syn. I
(A.L.)
Syn. II
(L.A. Arpeg.)
Syn. III
(L.A. Bass)
Syn. IV
(R.B.)
Syn. V
(Perc. I)
Syn. VI
(Perc. II)

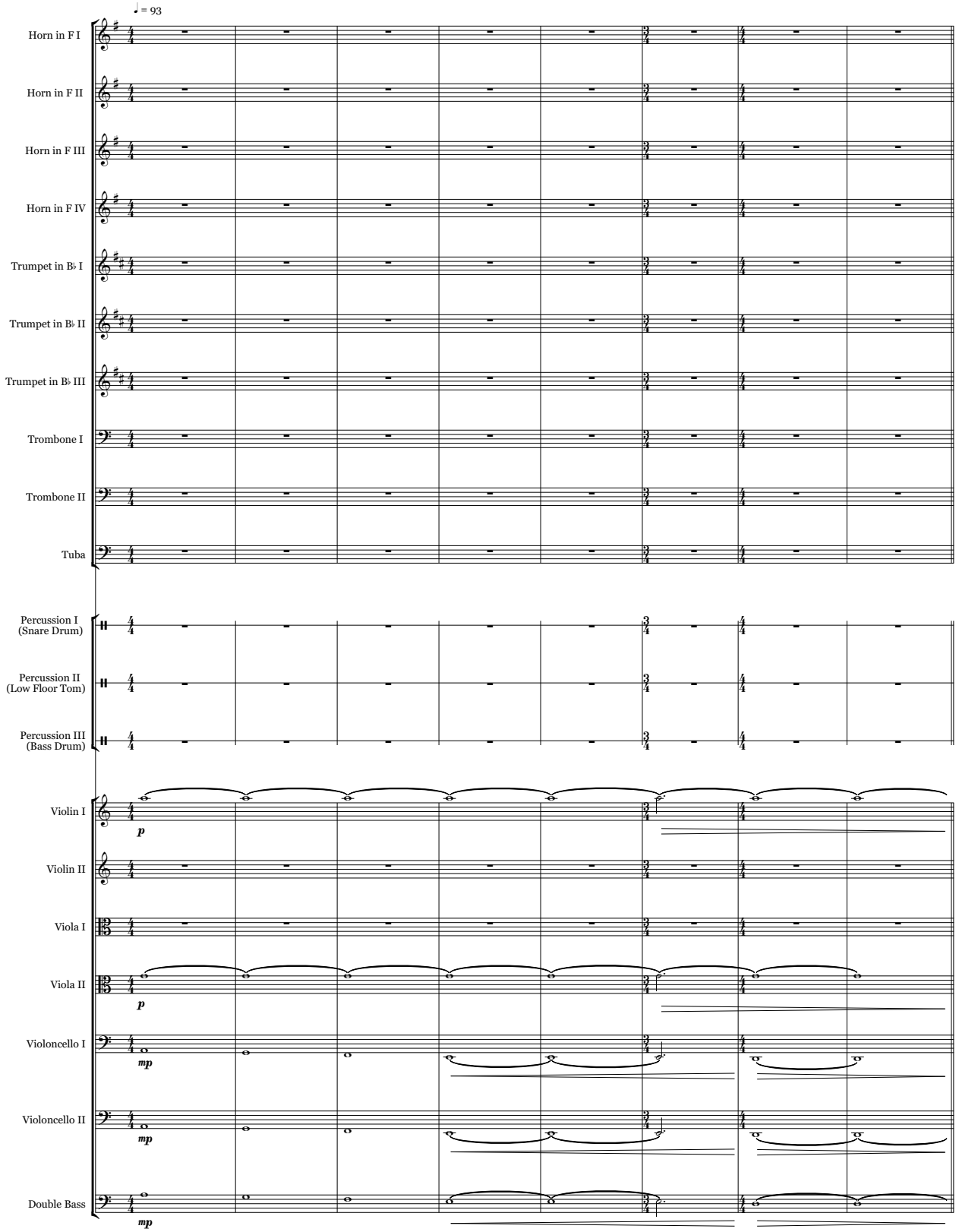
COKE COMMERCIAL - RESCORE

Brock Chart, 2017



LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING - RESCORE

Brock Chart, 2017



00:16:18

9 ♩ = 58

2

9

Hn. I

Hn. II

Hn. III

Hn. IV

Tpt. I

Tpt. II

Tpt. III

Tbn. I

Tbn. II

Tba.

Perc. I

Perc. II

Perc.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc. I

Vc. II

Db.

mf

mf

pp

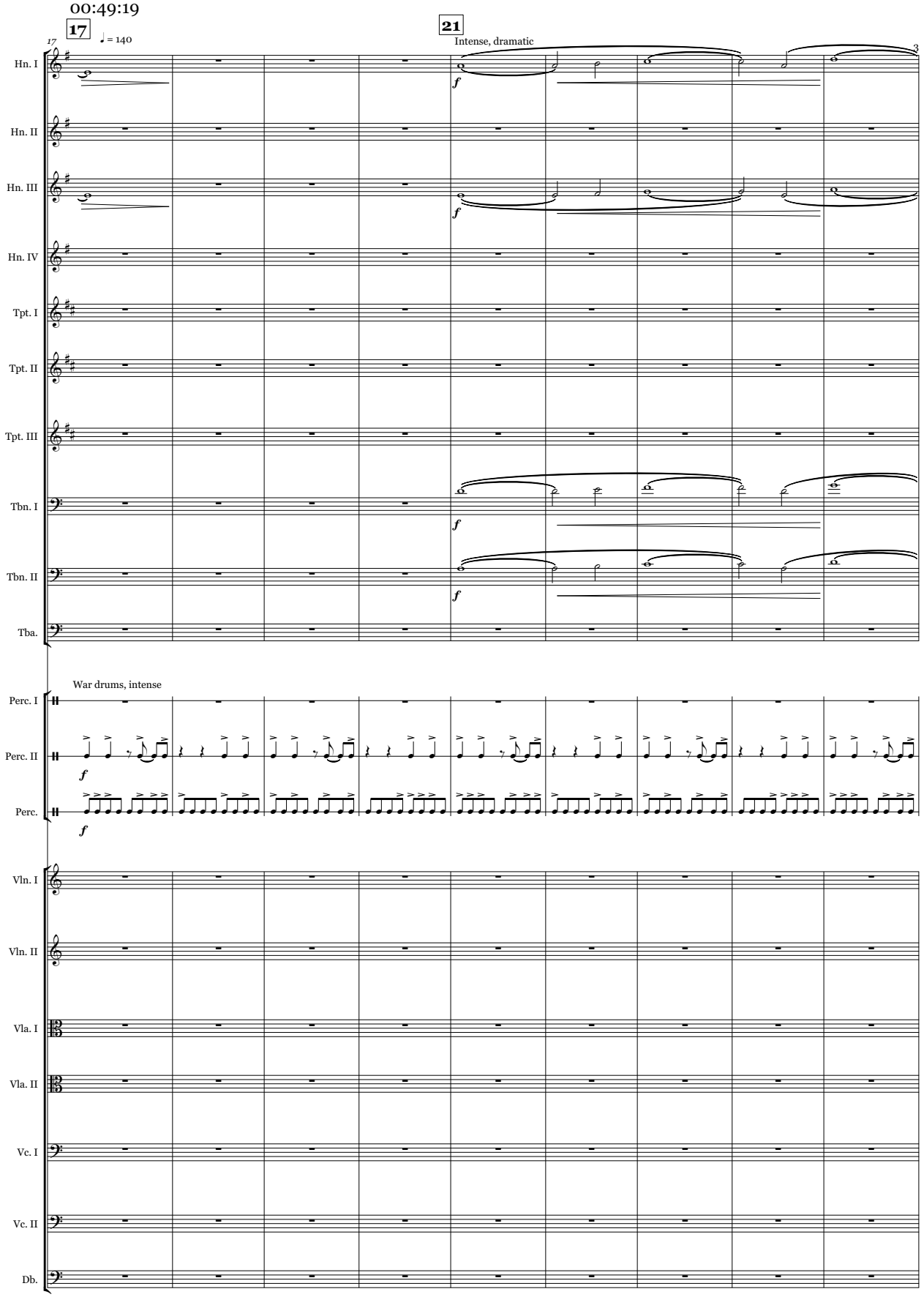
mp

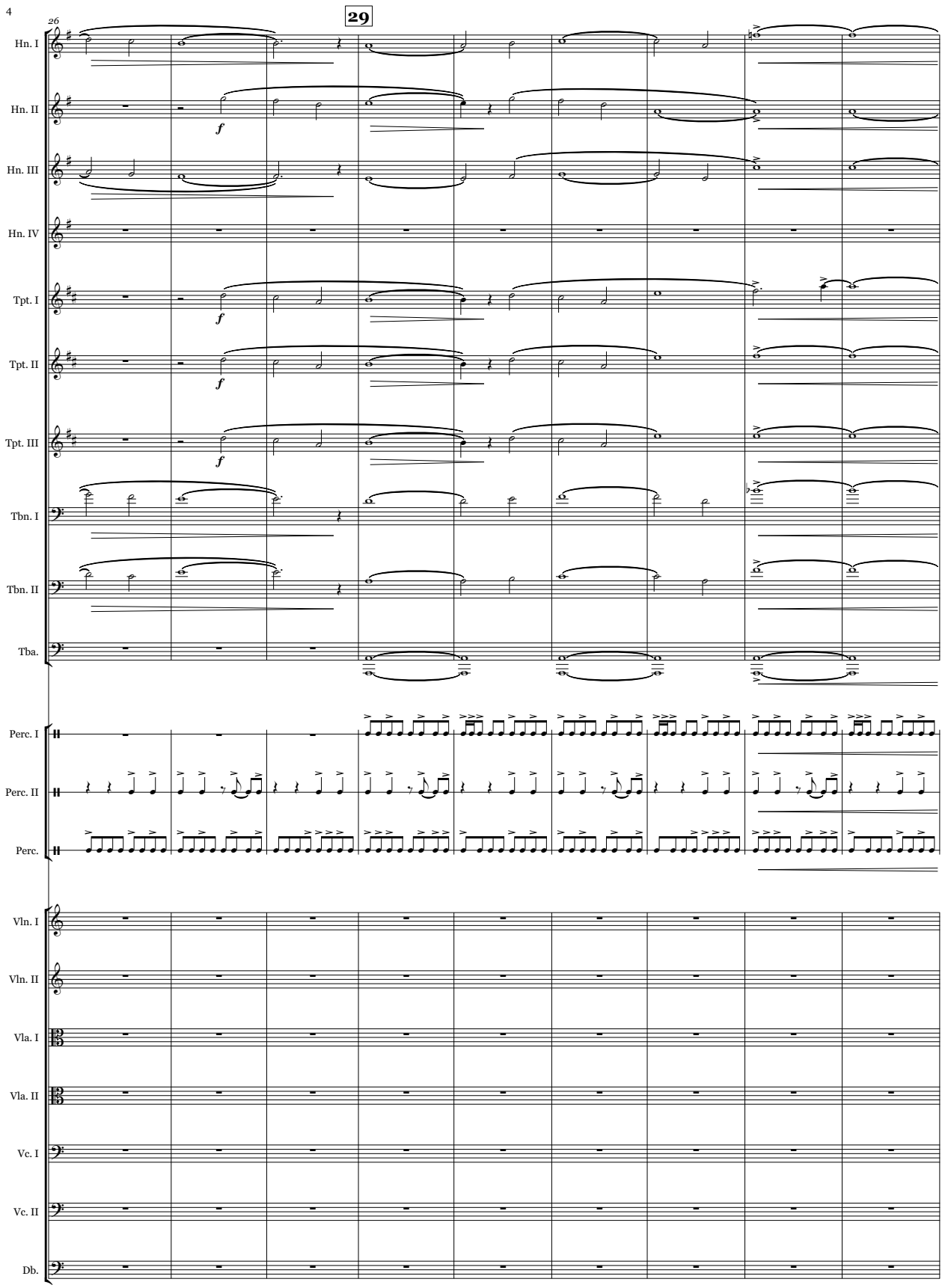
mp

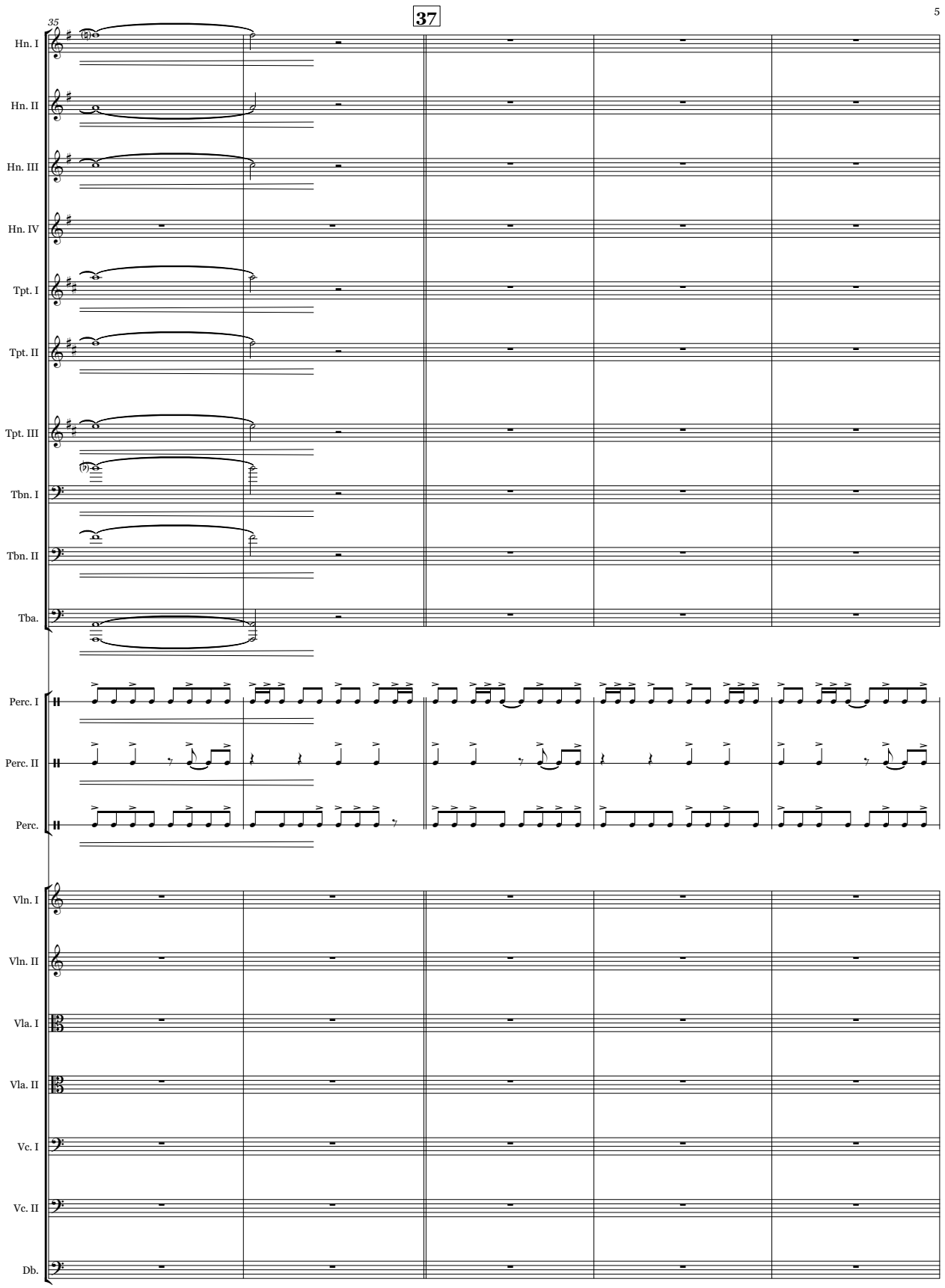
mp

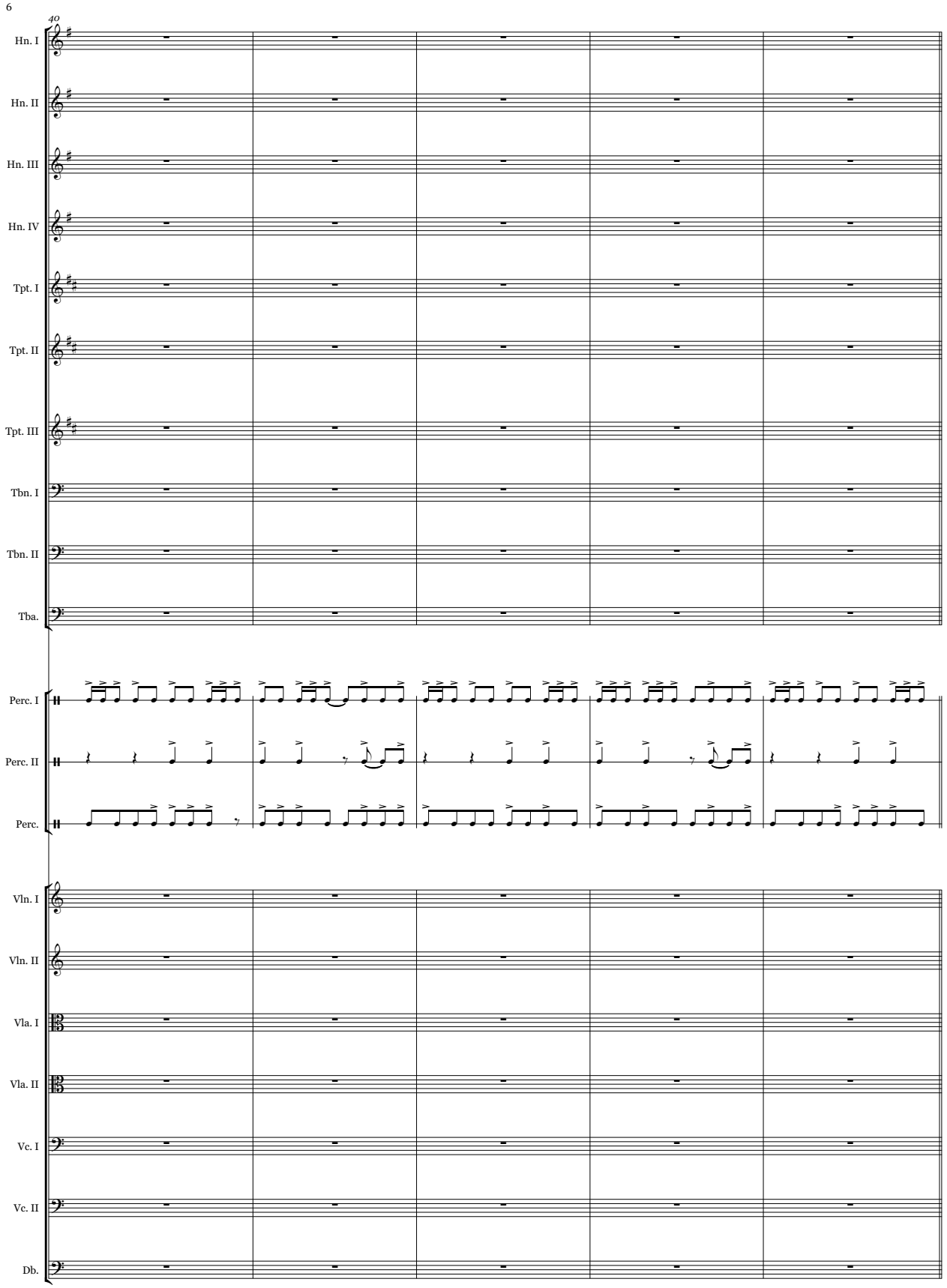
mp

mp


00:49:19
17
♩ = 140
21
Intense, dramatic
3
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hn. III
Hn. IV
Tpt. I
Tpt. II
Tpt. III
Tbn. I
Tbn. II
Tba.
War drums, intense
Perc. I
Perc. II
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
Db.


26
29
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hn. III
Hn. IV
Tpt. I
Tpt. II
Tpt. III
Tbn. I
Tbn. II
Tba.
Perc. I
Perc. II
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
Db.
f

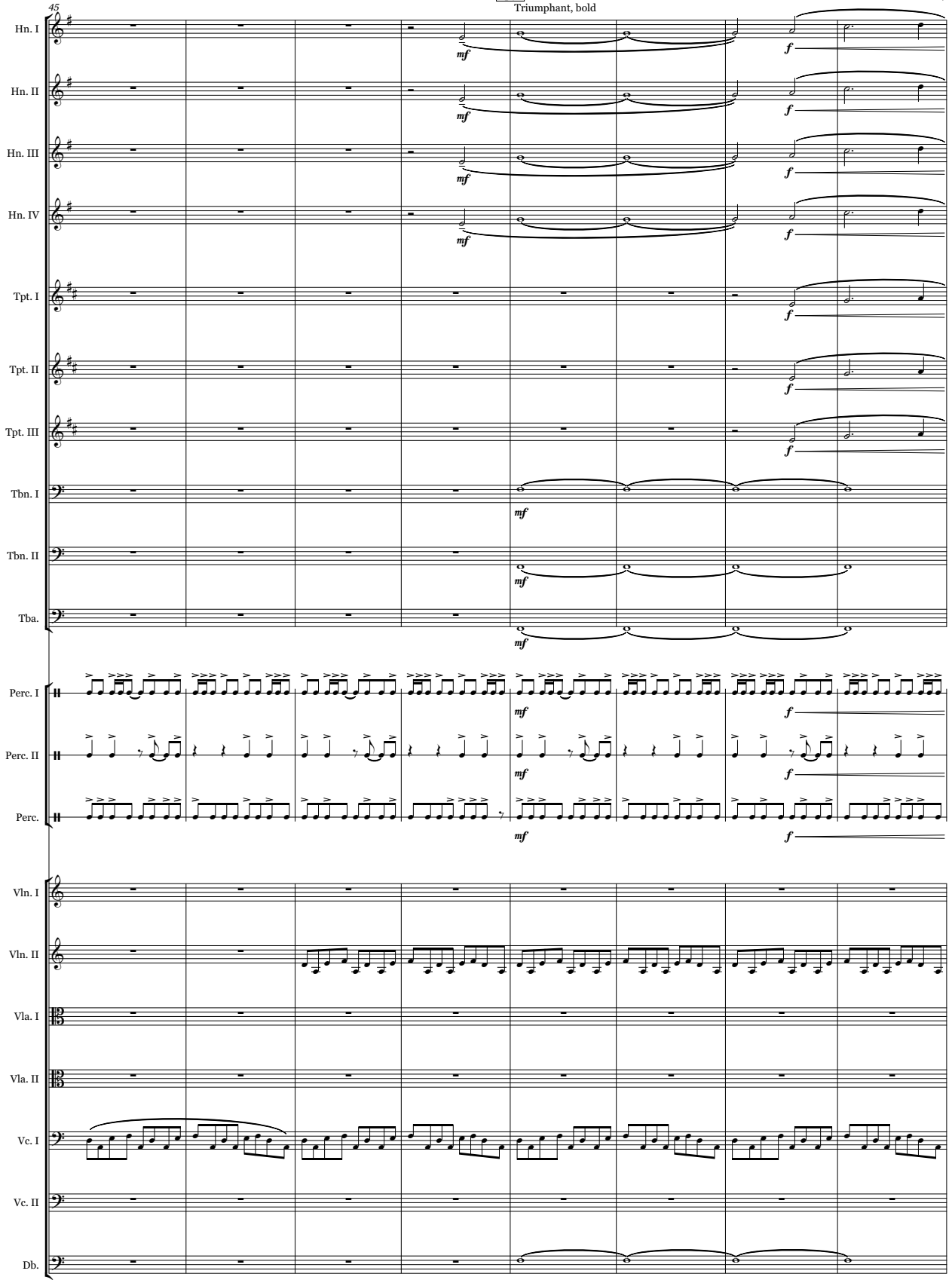

37
35
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hn. III
Hn. IV
Tpt. I
Tpt. II
Tpt. III
Tbn. I
Tbn. II
Tba.
Perc. I
Perc. II
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
Db.

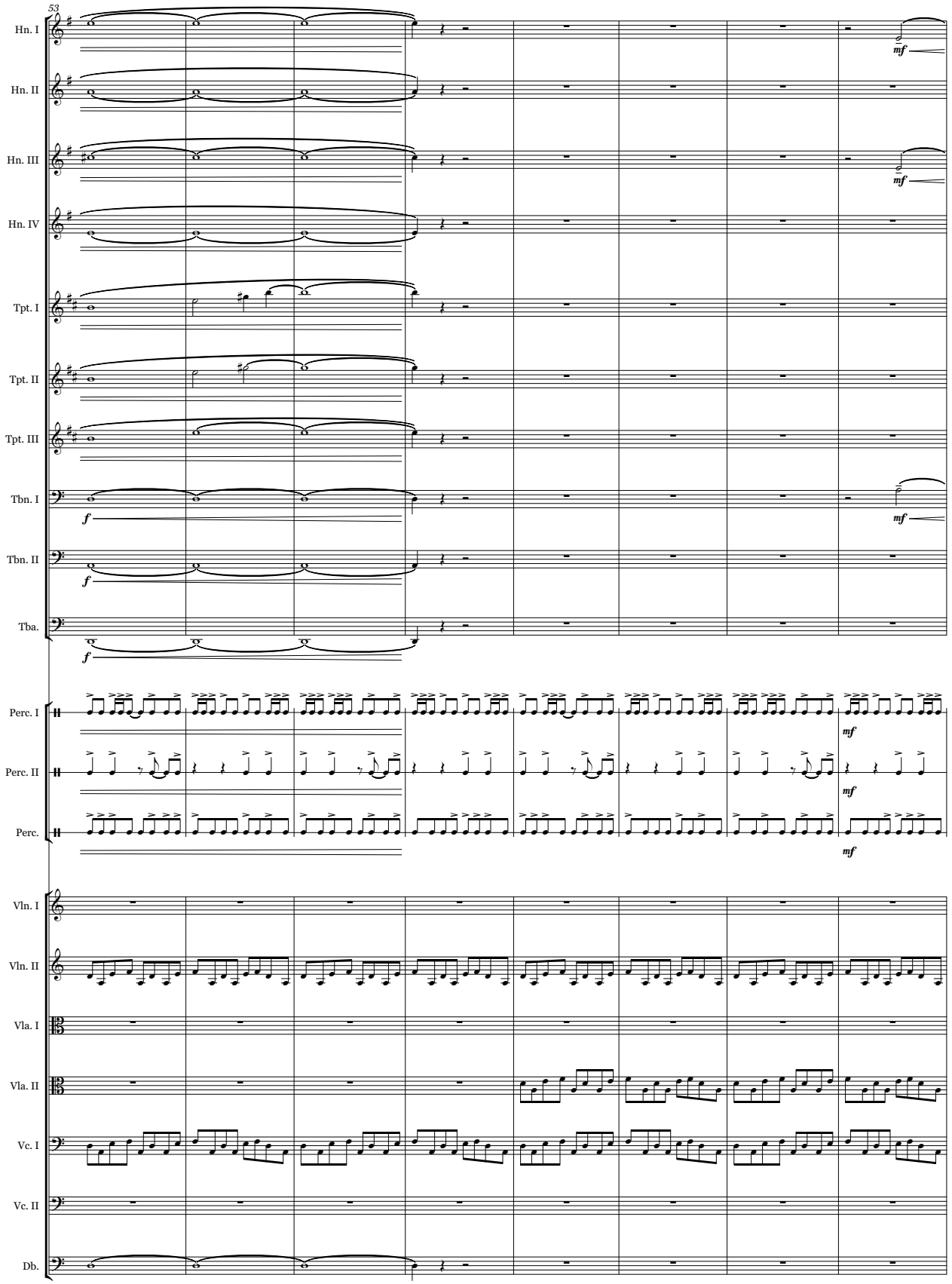

40
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hn. III
Hn. IV
Tpt. I
Tpt. II
Tpt. III
Tbn. I
Tbn. II
Tba.
Perc. I
Perc. II
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
Db.

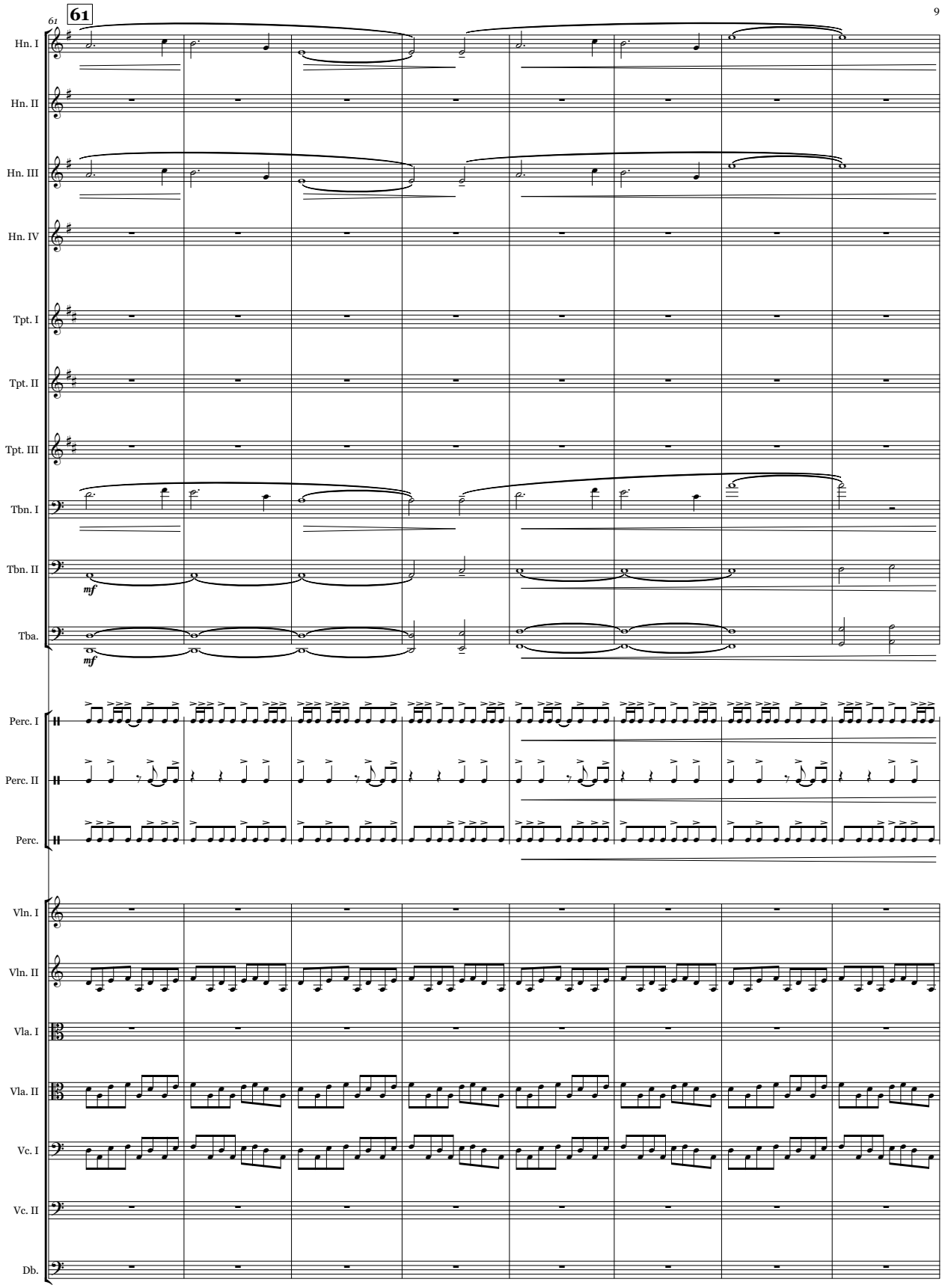
49

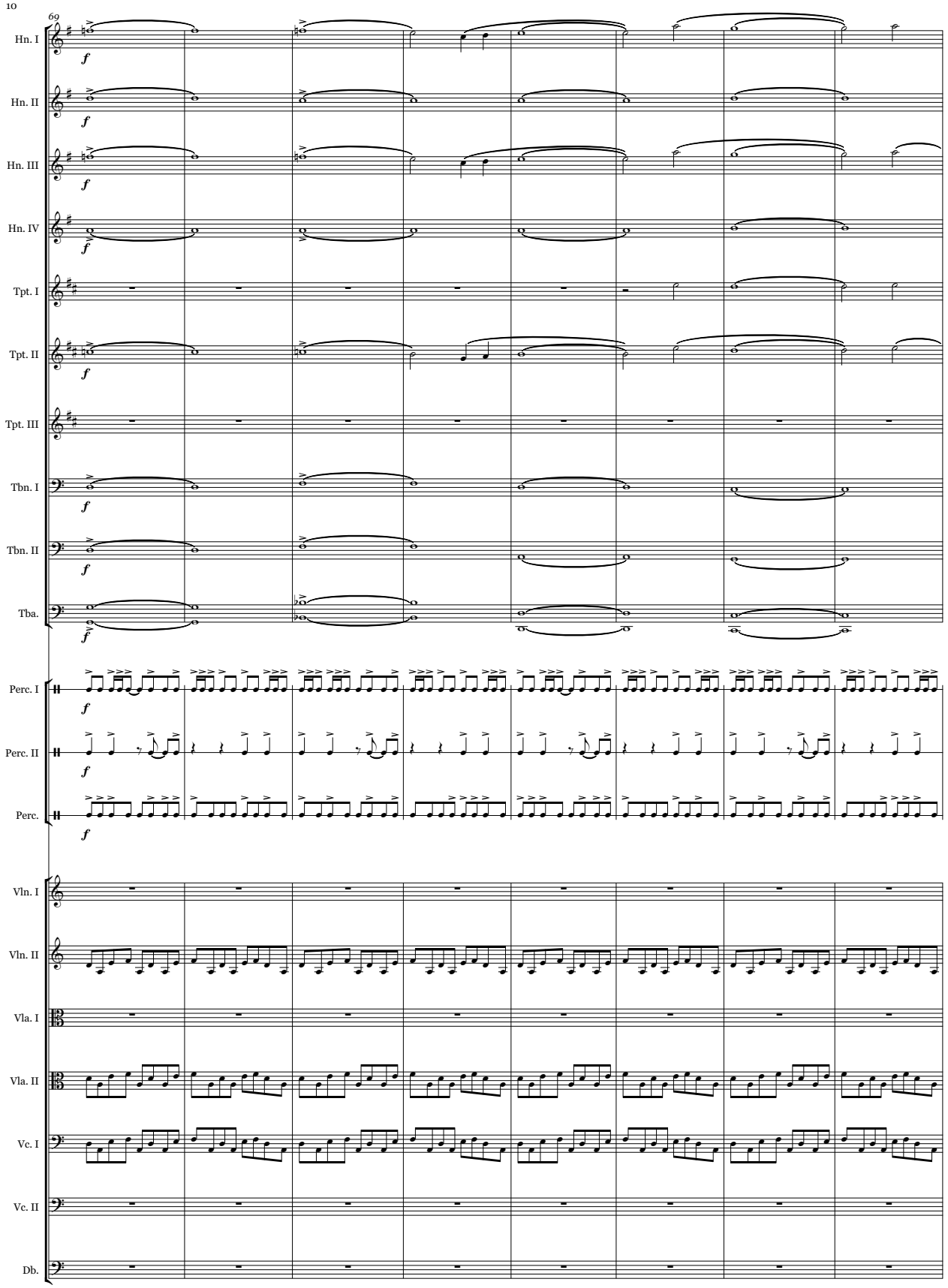
Triumphant, bold

45



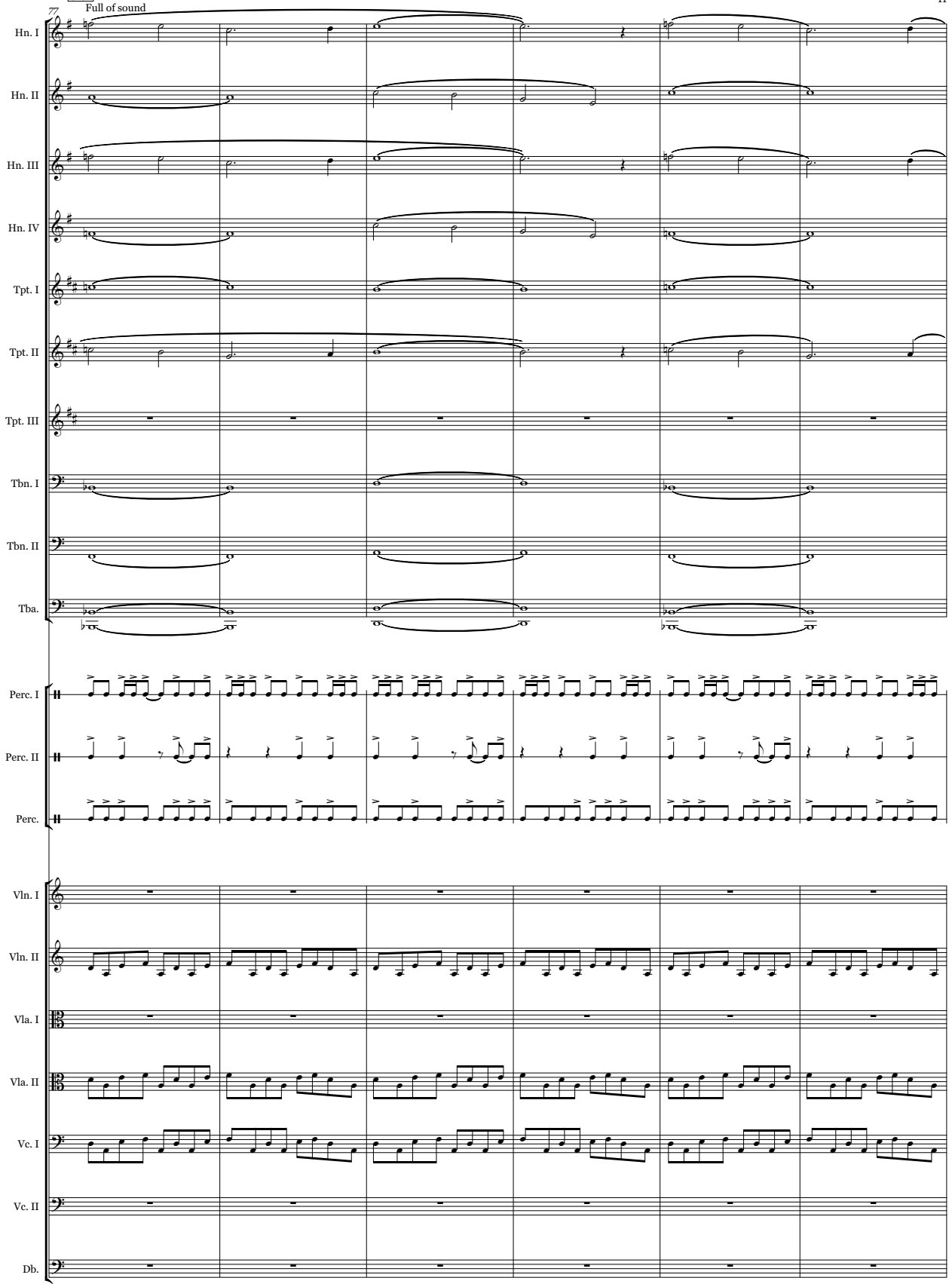

53
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hn. III
Hn. IV
Tpt. I
Tpt. II
Tpt. III
Tbn. I
Tbn. II
Tba.
Perc. I
Perc. II
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
Db.
f
mf

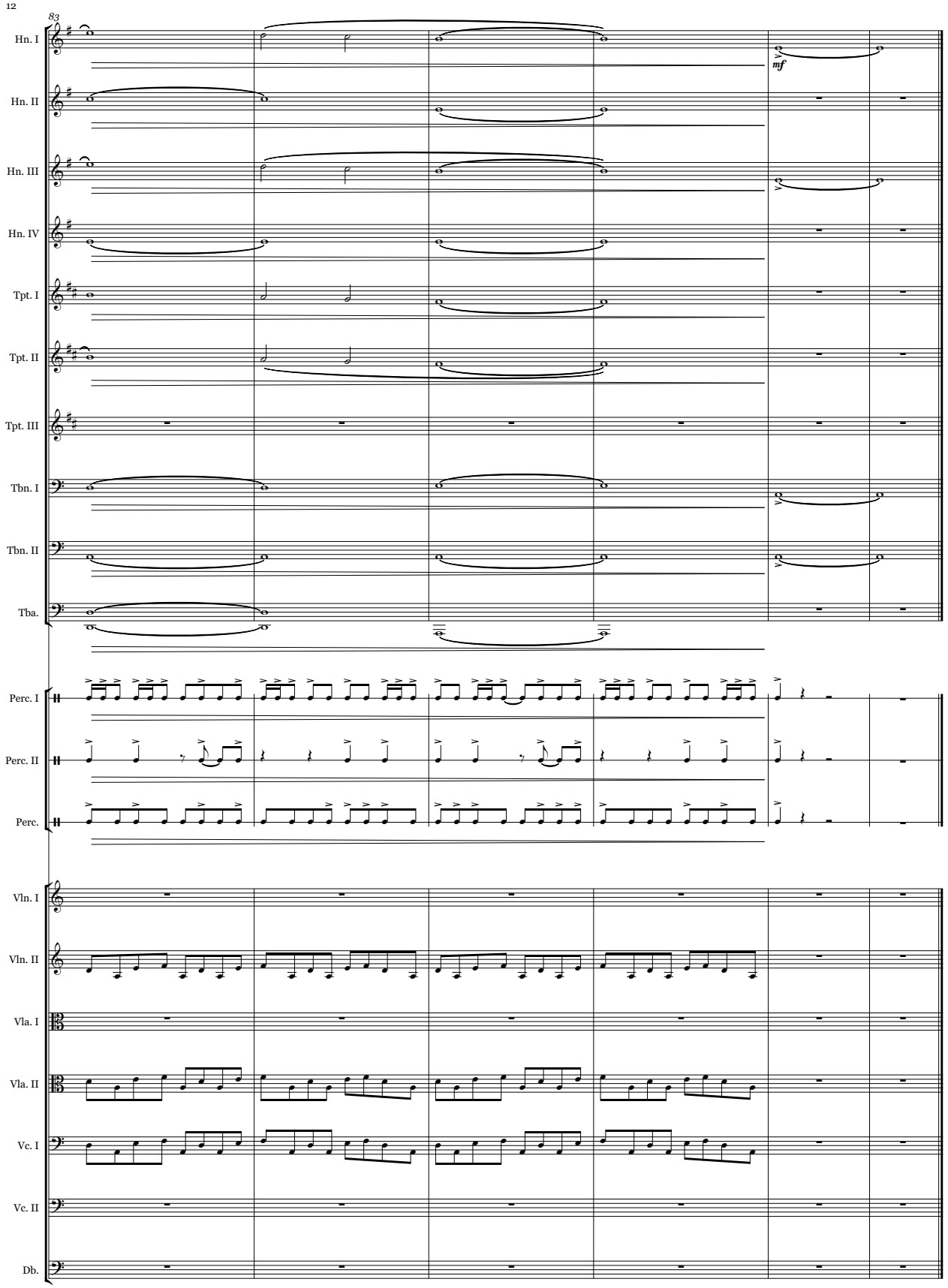

61
61
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hn. III
Hn. IV
Tpt. I
Tpt. II
Tpt. III
Tbn. I
Tbn. II
mf
Tba.
mf
Perc. I
Perc. II
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
Db.


69
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hn. III
Hn. IV
Tpt. I
Tpt. II
Tpt. III
Tbn. I
Tbn. II
Tba.
Perc. I
Perc. II
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
Db.

77

Full of sound



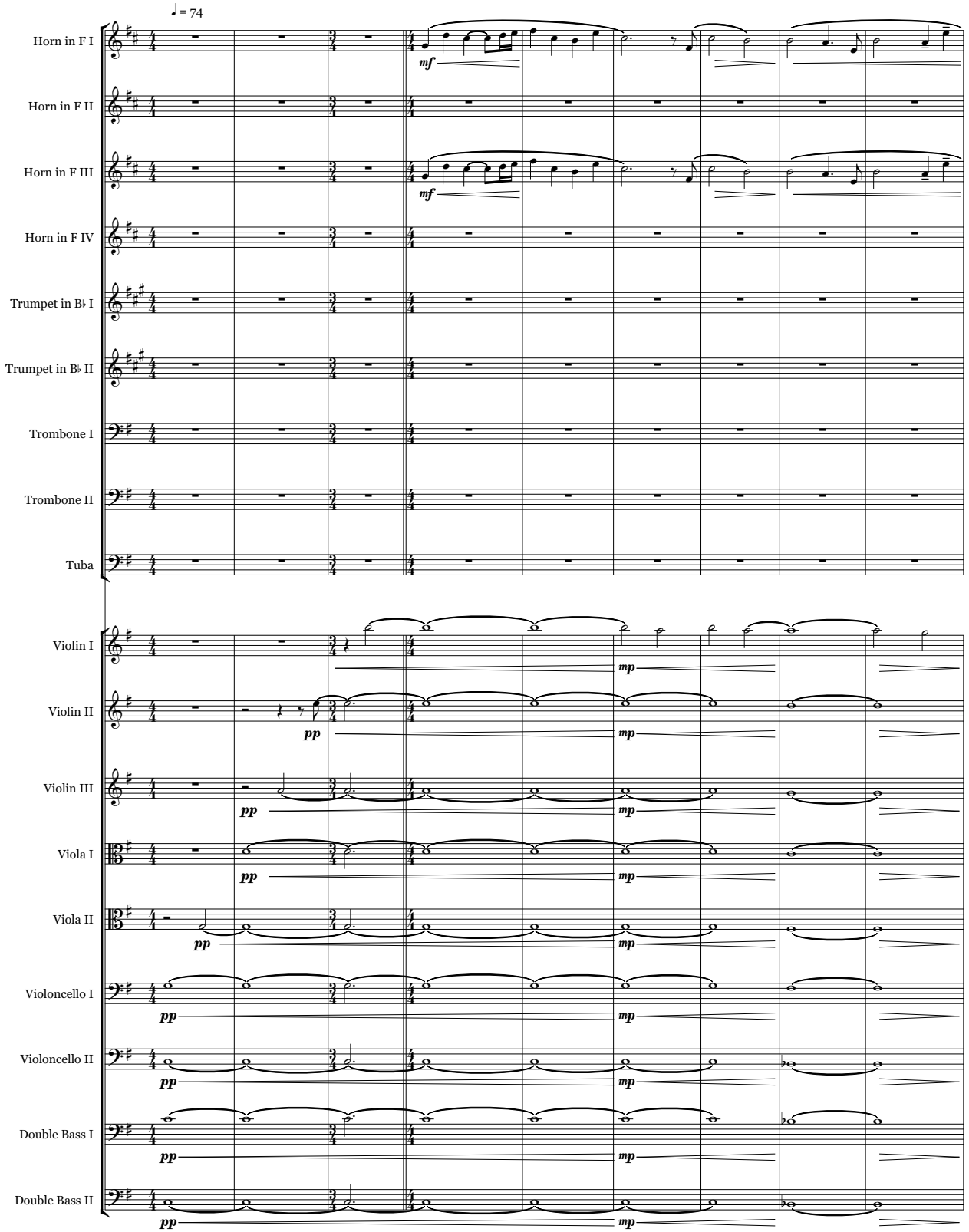

83
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hn. III
Hn. IV
Tpt. I
Tpt. II
Tpt. III
Tbn. I
Tbn. II
Tba.
mf
Perc. I
Perc. II
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
Db.

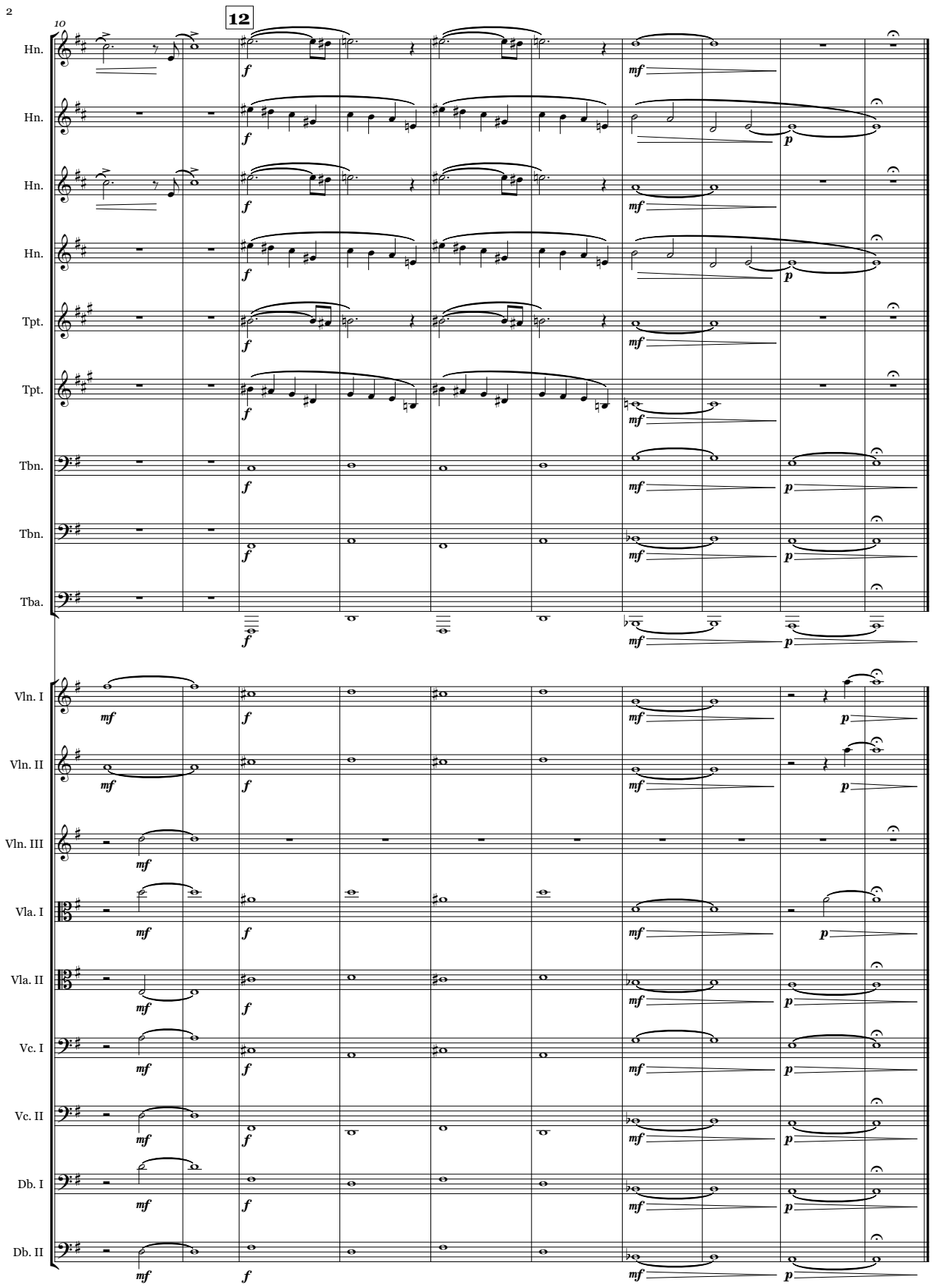
NO MAN'S SKY OPENING - RESCORE

Brock Chart, 2017

Full of wonder, and curiosity

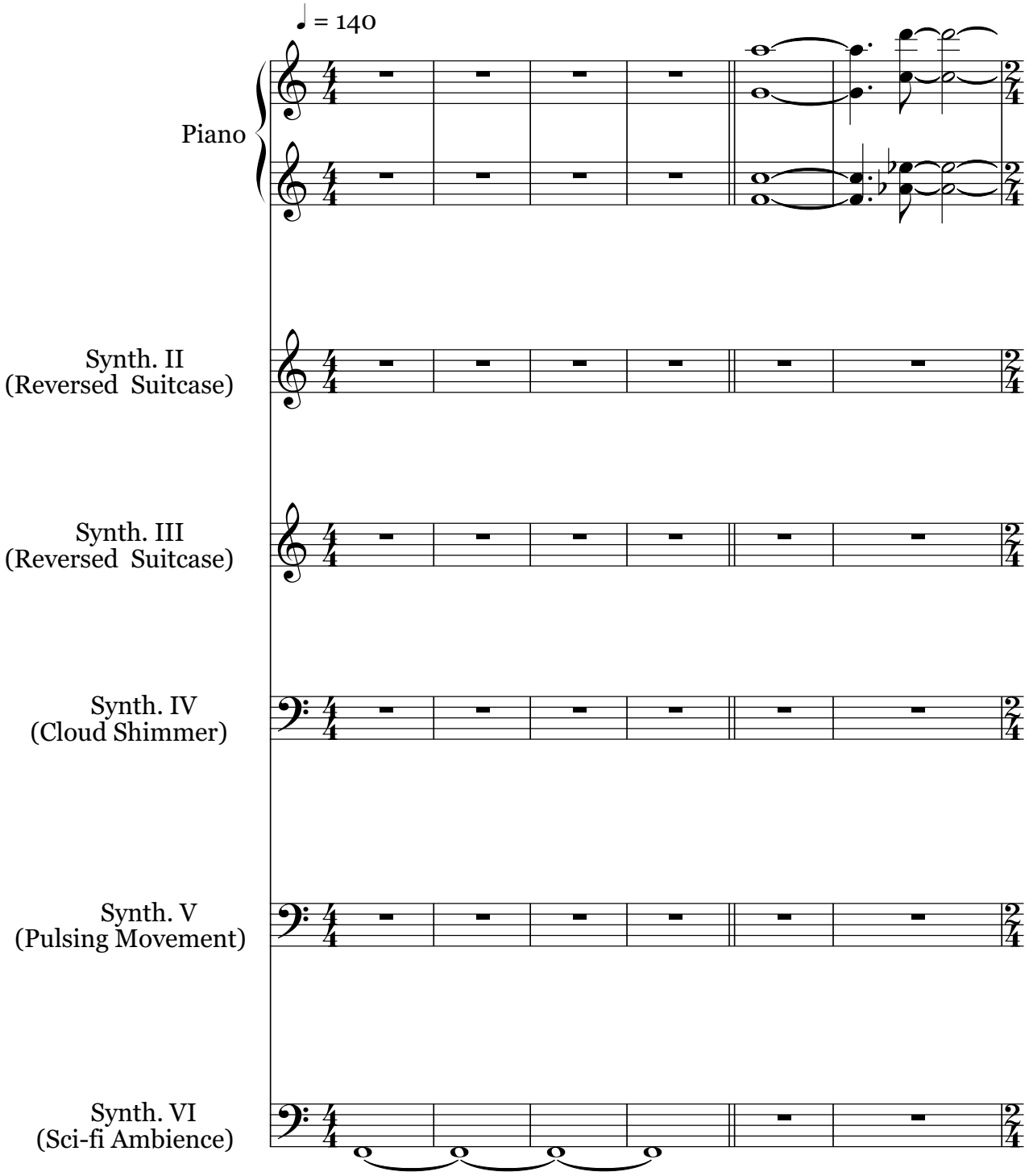
♩ = 74

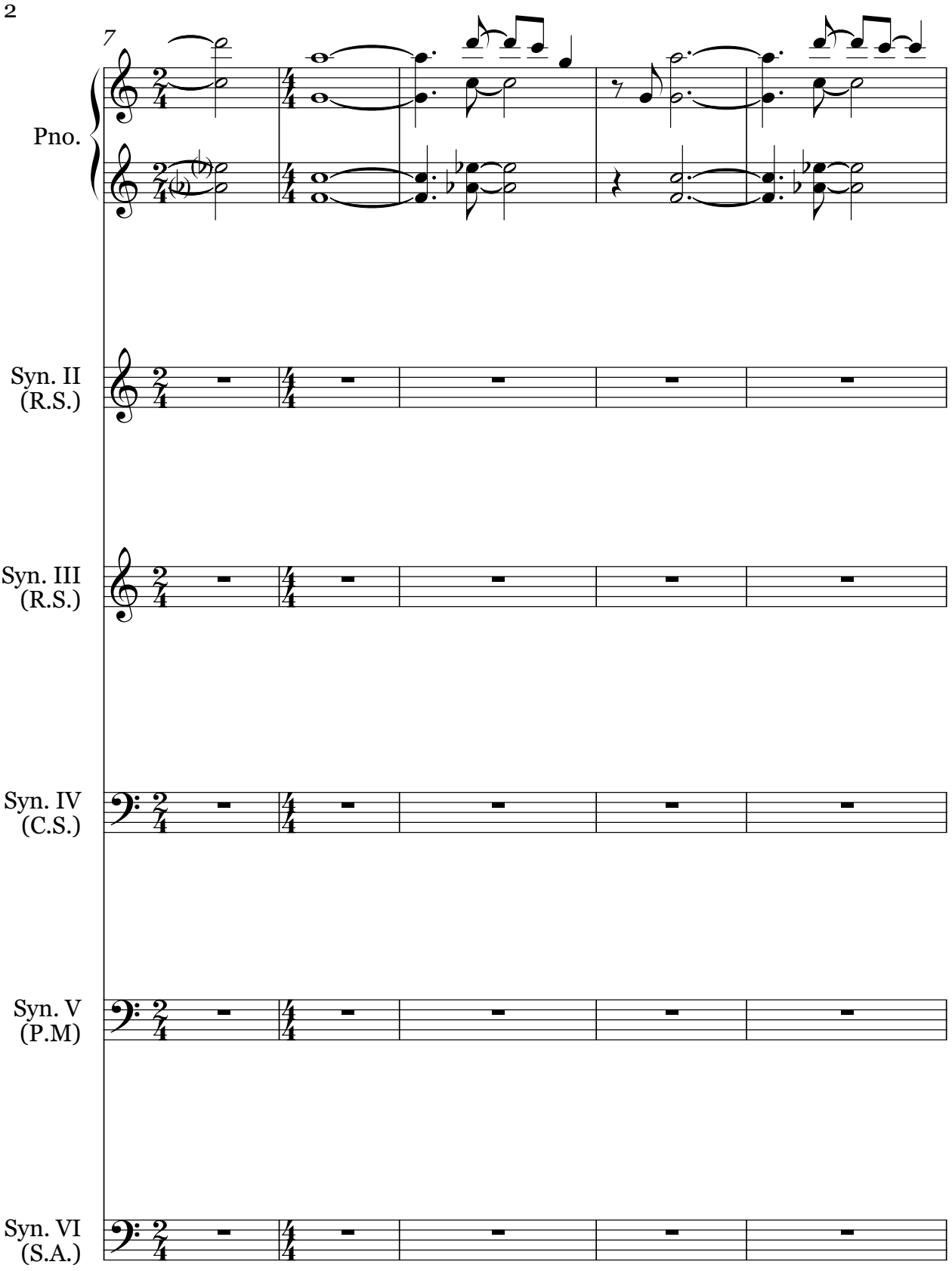


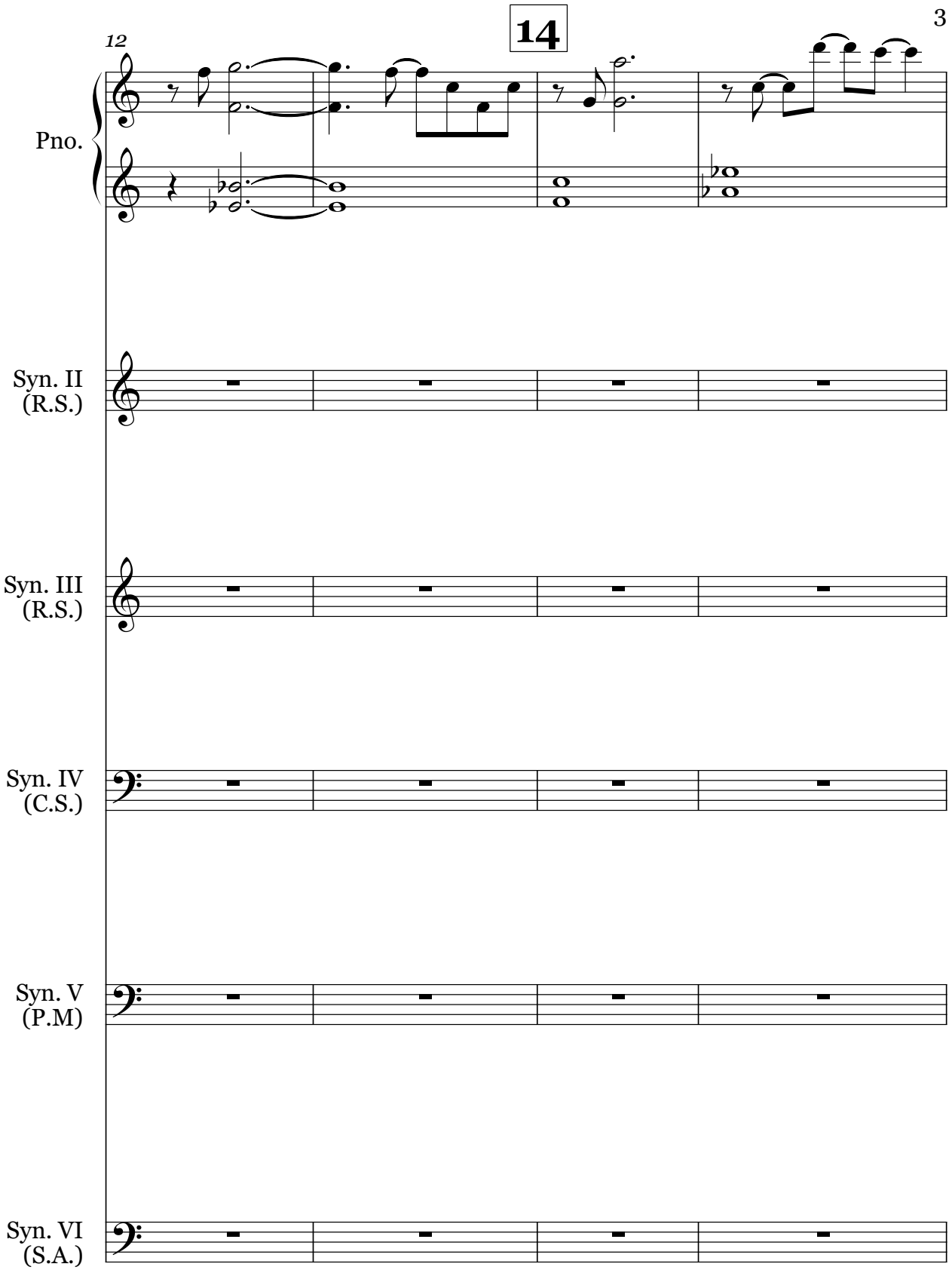

10
12
Hn.
Hn.
Hn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tbn.
Tba.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. III
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
Db. I
Db. II
f
mf
p

NO MAN'S SKY LOOP - RESCORE

Brock Chart, 2017




7
Pno.
Syn. II (R.S.)
Syn. III (R.S.)
Syn. IV (C.S.)
Syn. V (P.M)
Syn. VI (S.A.)


14
12
Pno.
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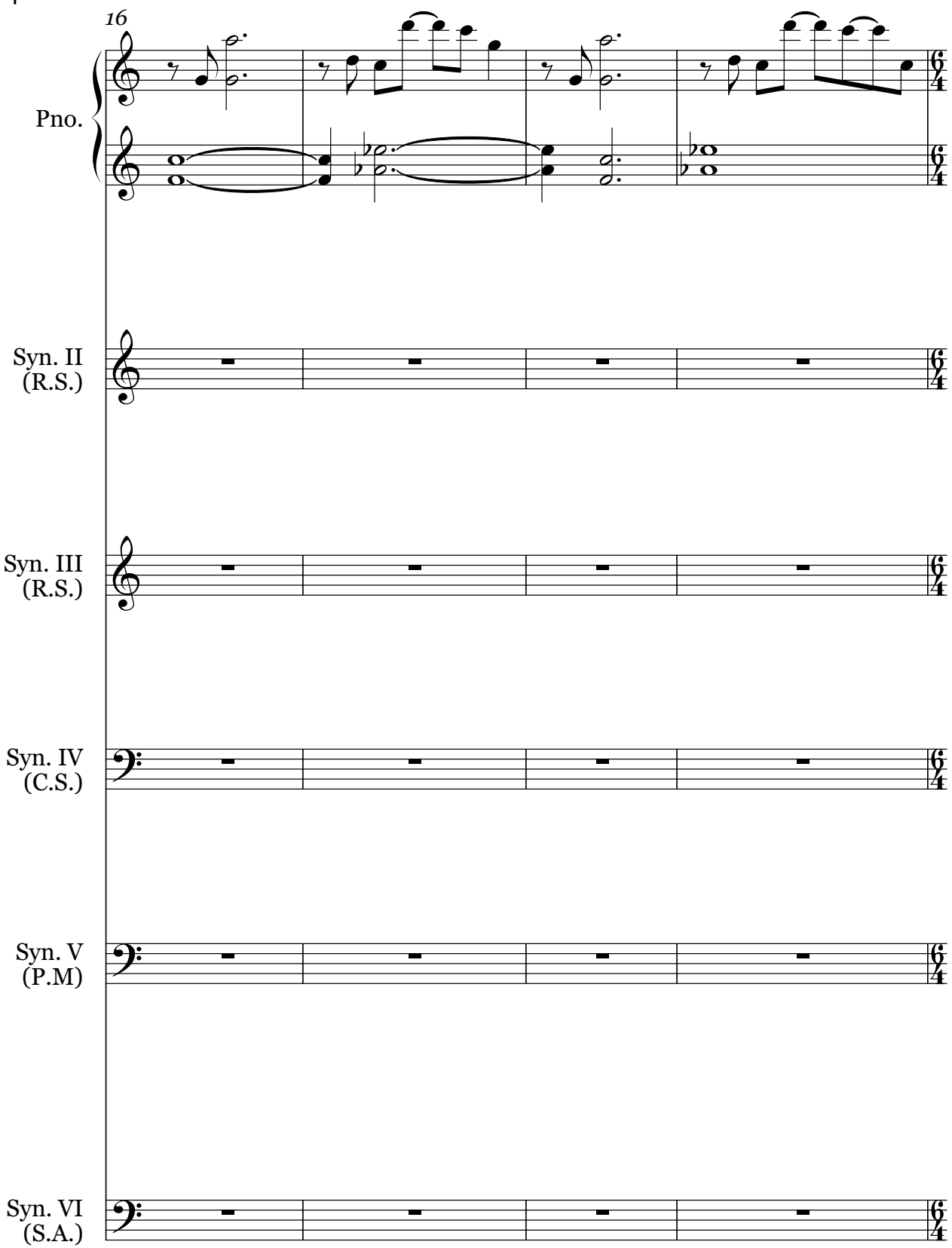
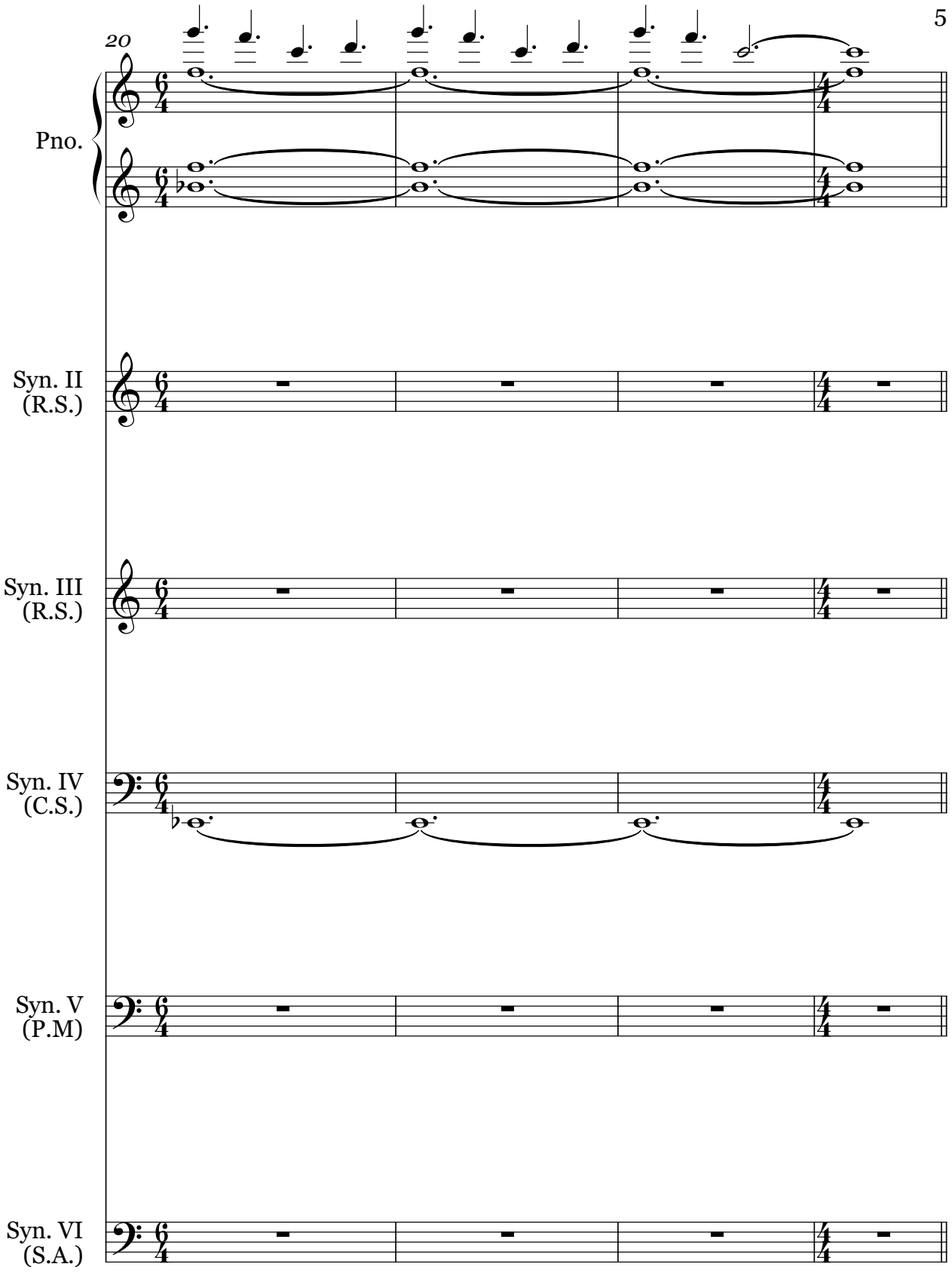
Syn. III (R.S.)
Syn. IV (C.S.)
Syn. V (P.M)
Syn. VI (S.A.)


16
Pno.
Syn. II (R.S.)
Syn. III (R.S.)
Syn. IV (C.S.)
Syn. V (P.M)
Syn. VI (S.A.)


20
Pno.
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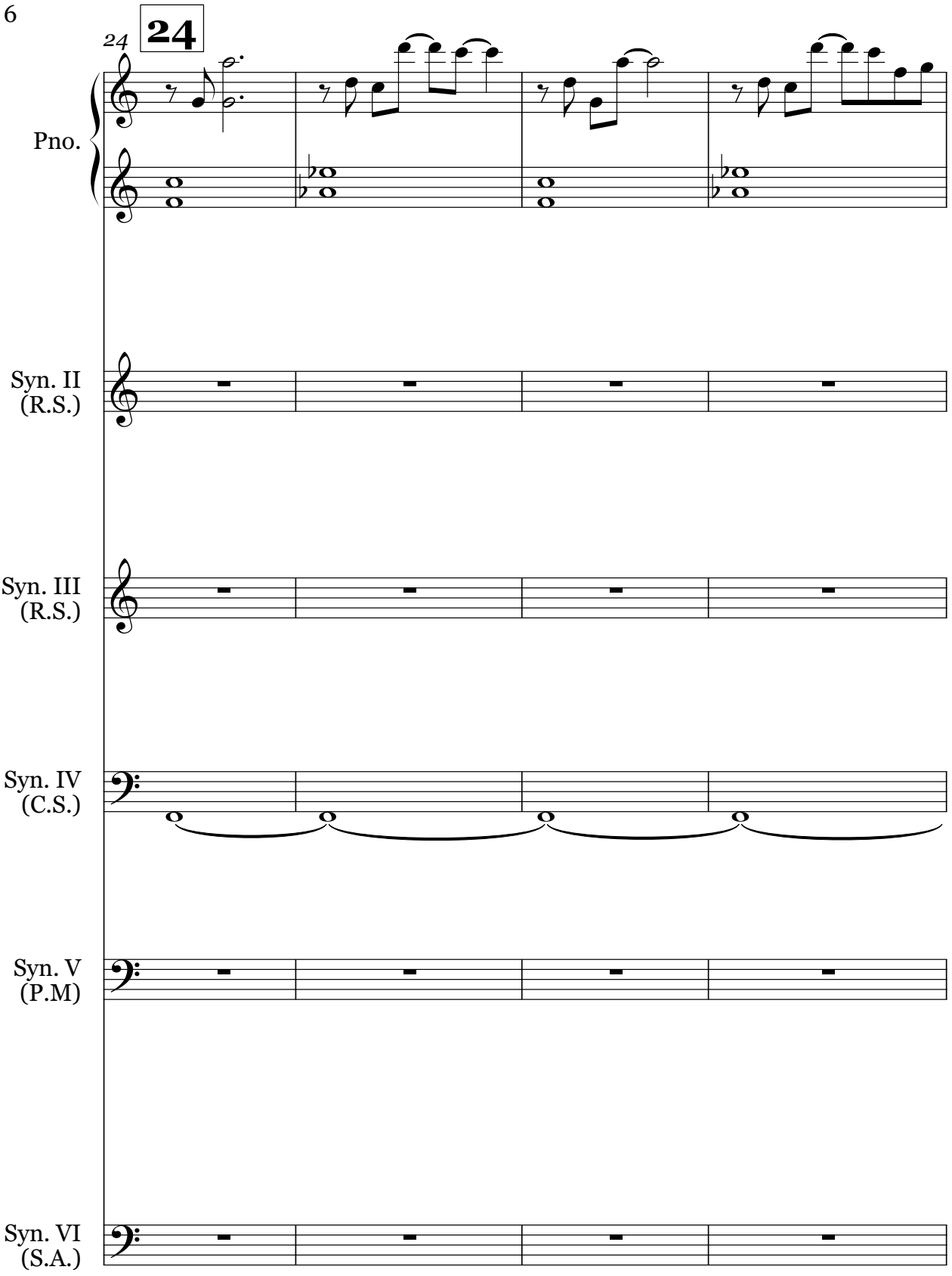
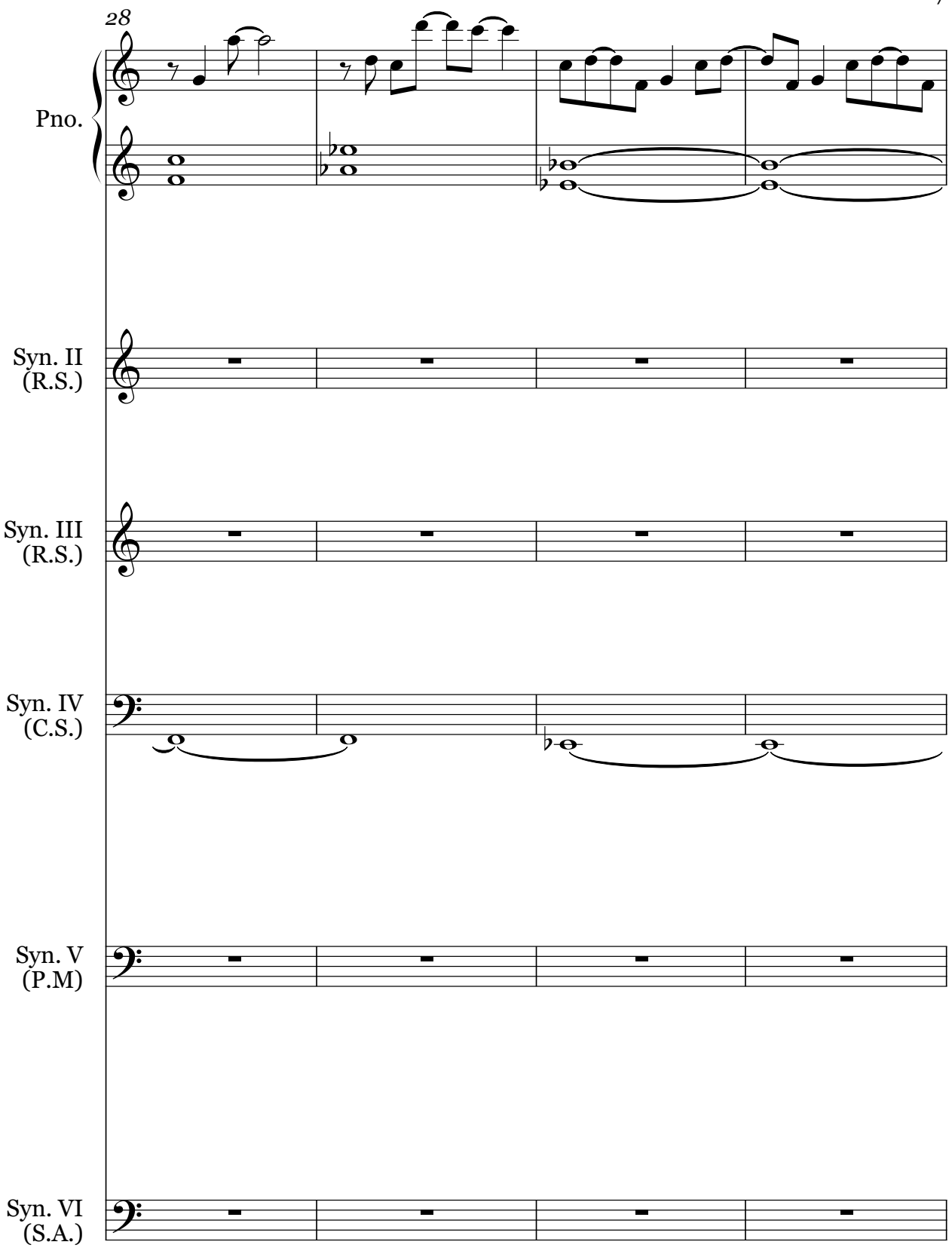
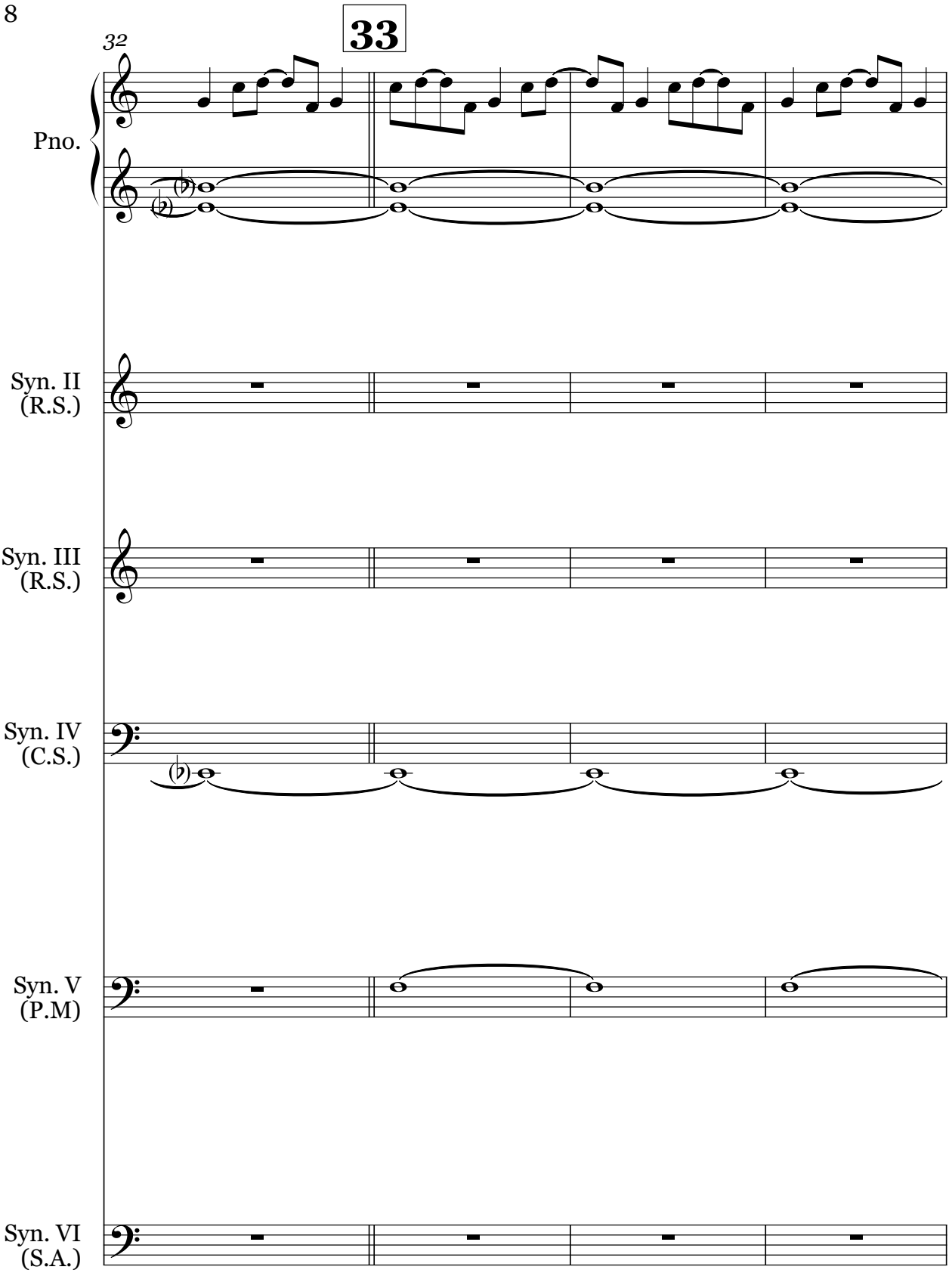
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


24
24
Pno.
Syn. II
(R.S.)
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


28
Pno.
Syn. II
(R.S.)
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


32
33
Pno.
Syn. II
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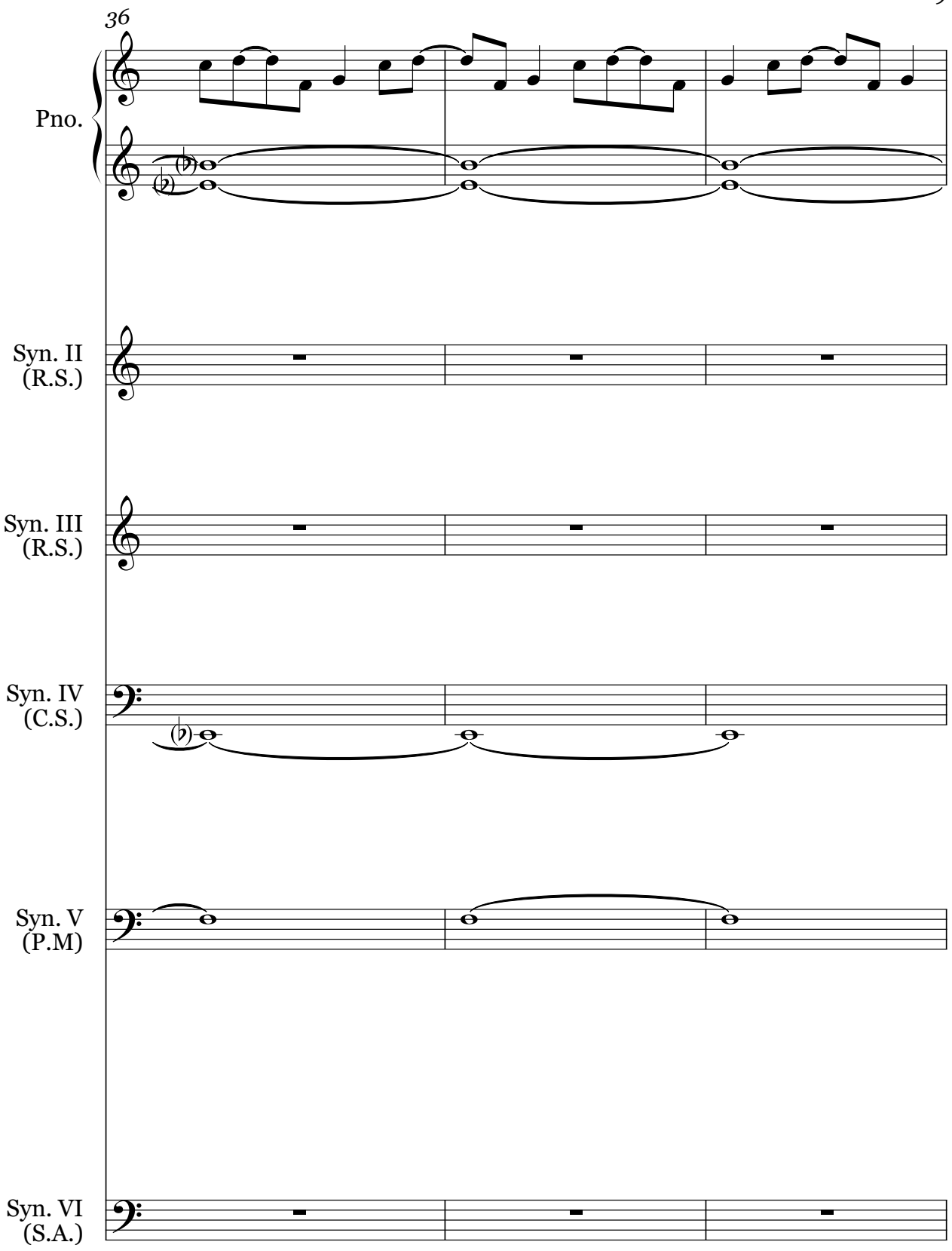
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


36
Pno.
Syn. II
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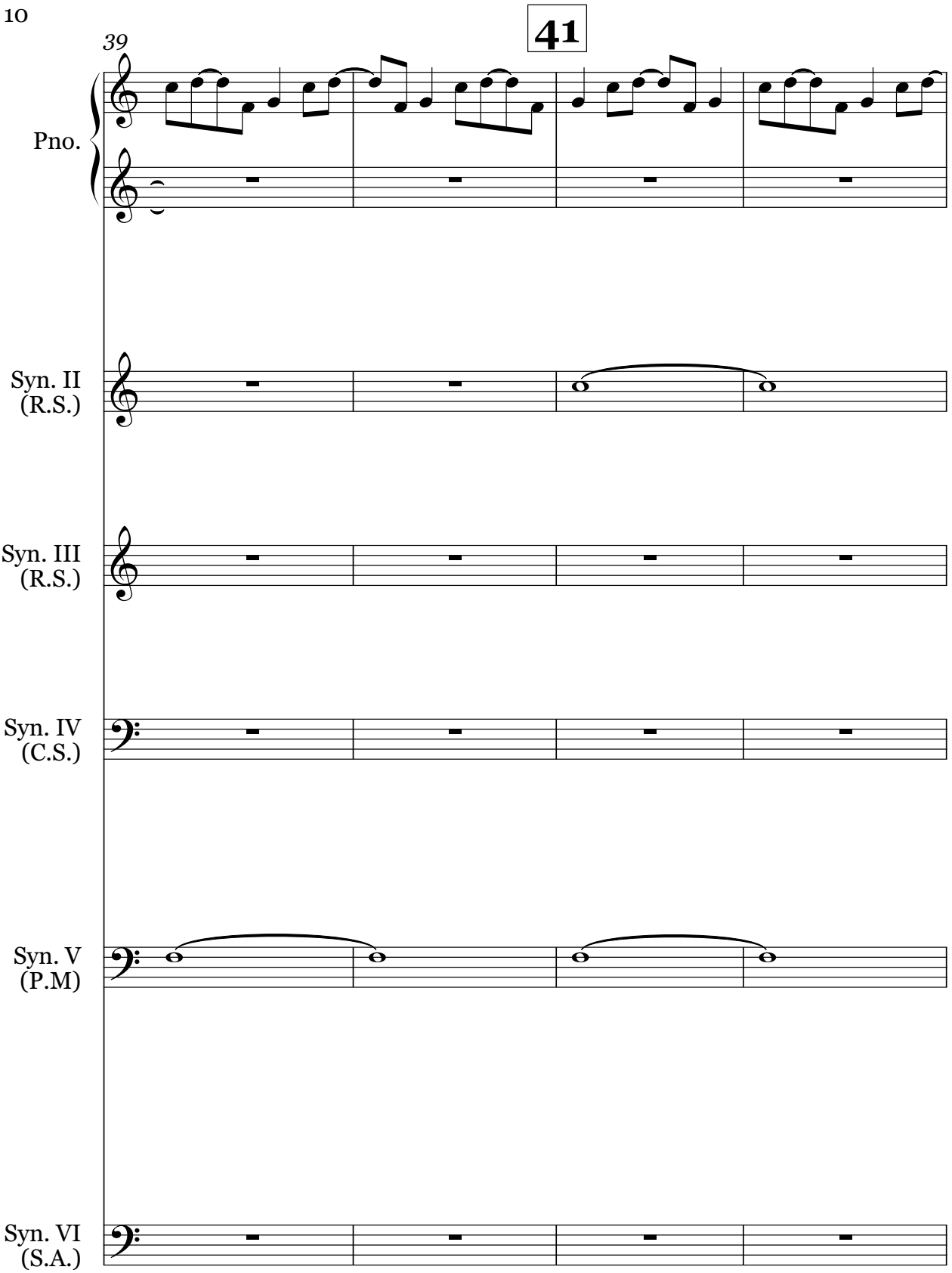
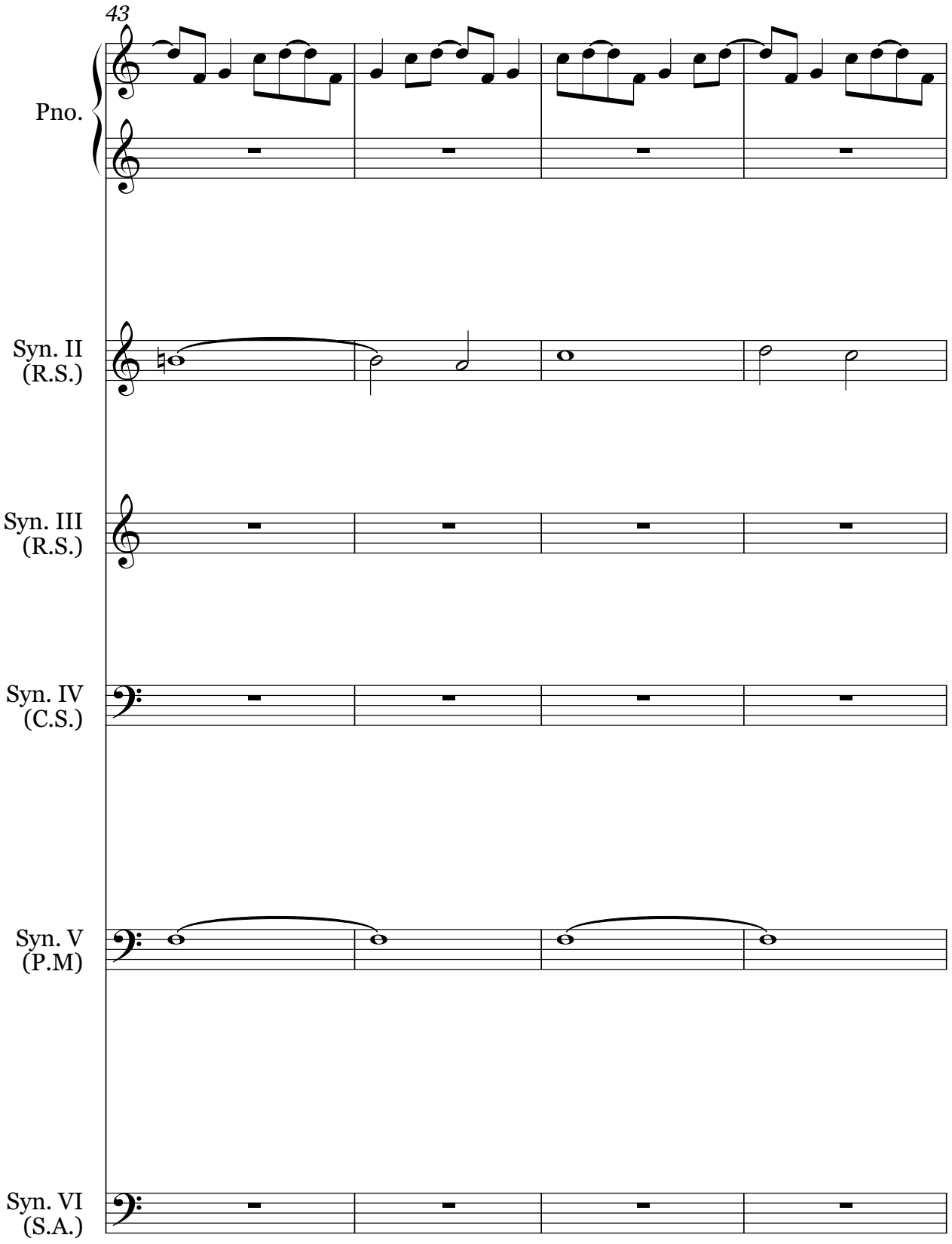
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


41
39
Pno.
Syn. II
(R.S.)
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


43
Pno.
Syn. II
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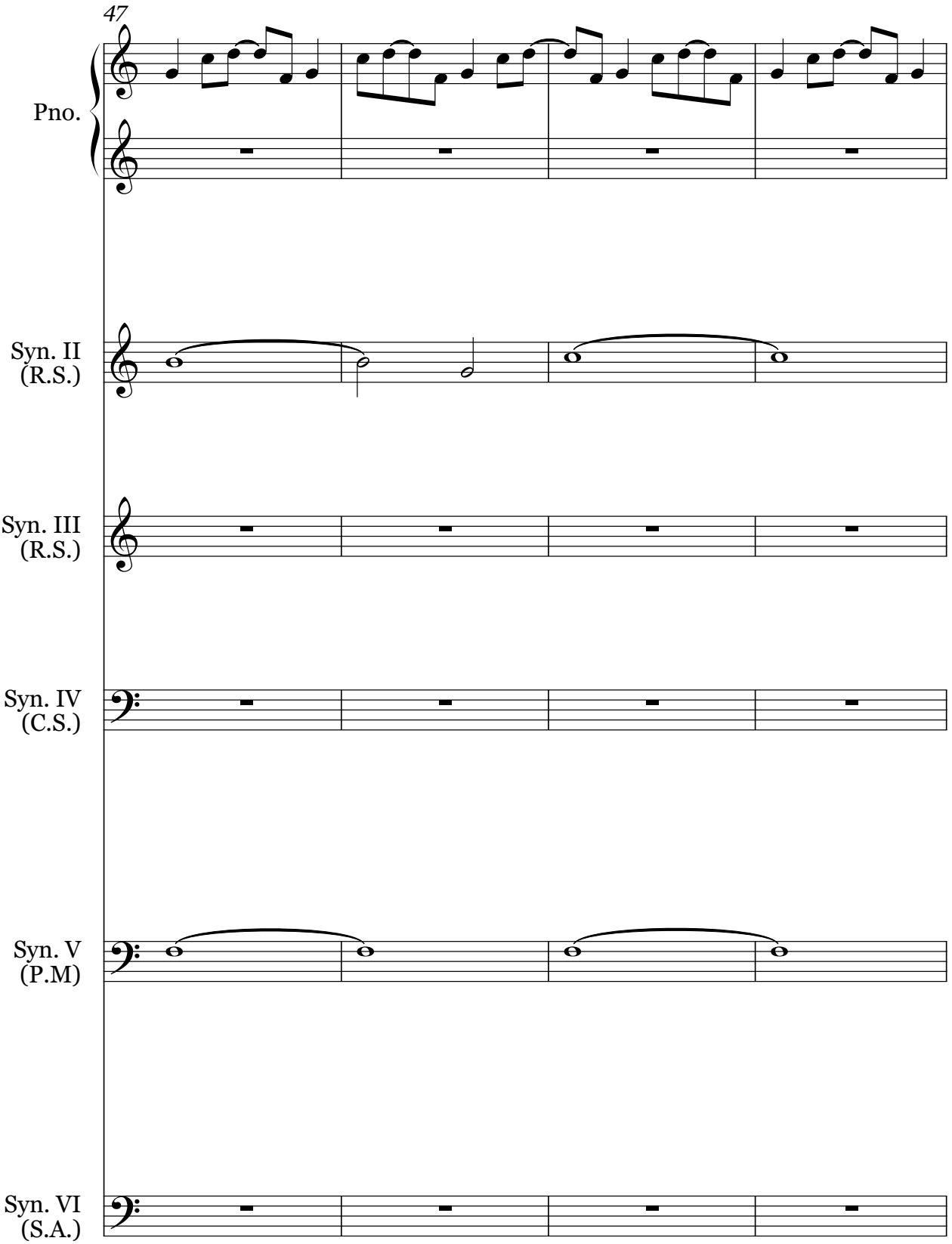
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


47
Pno.
Syn. II
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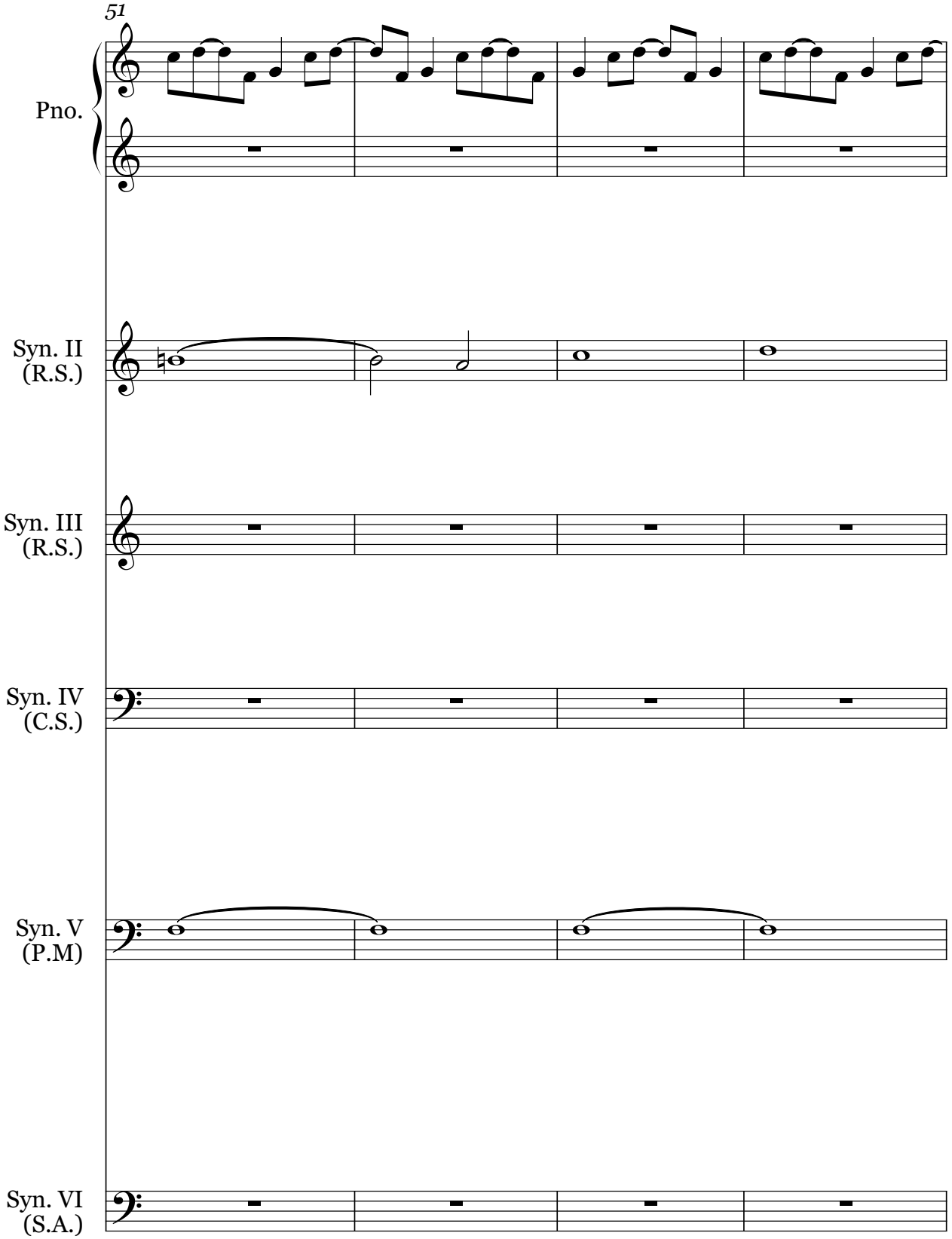
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


51
Pno.
Syn. II
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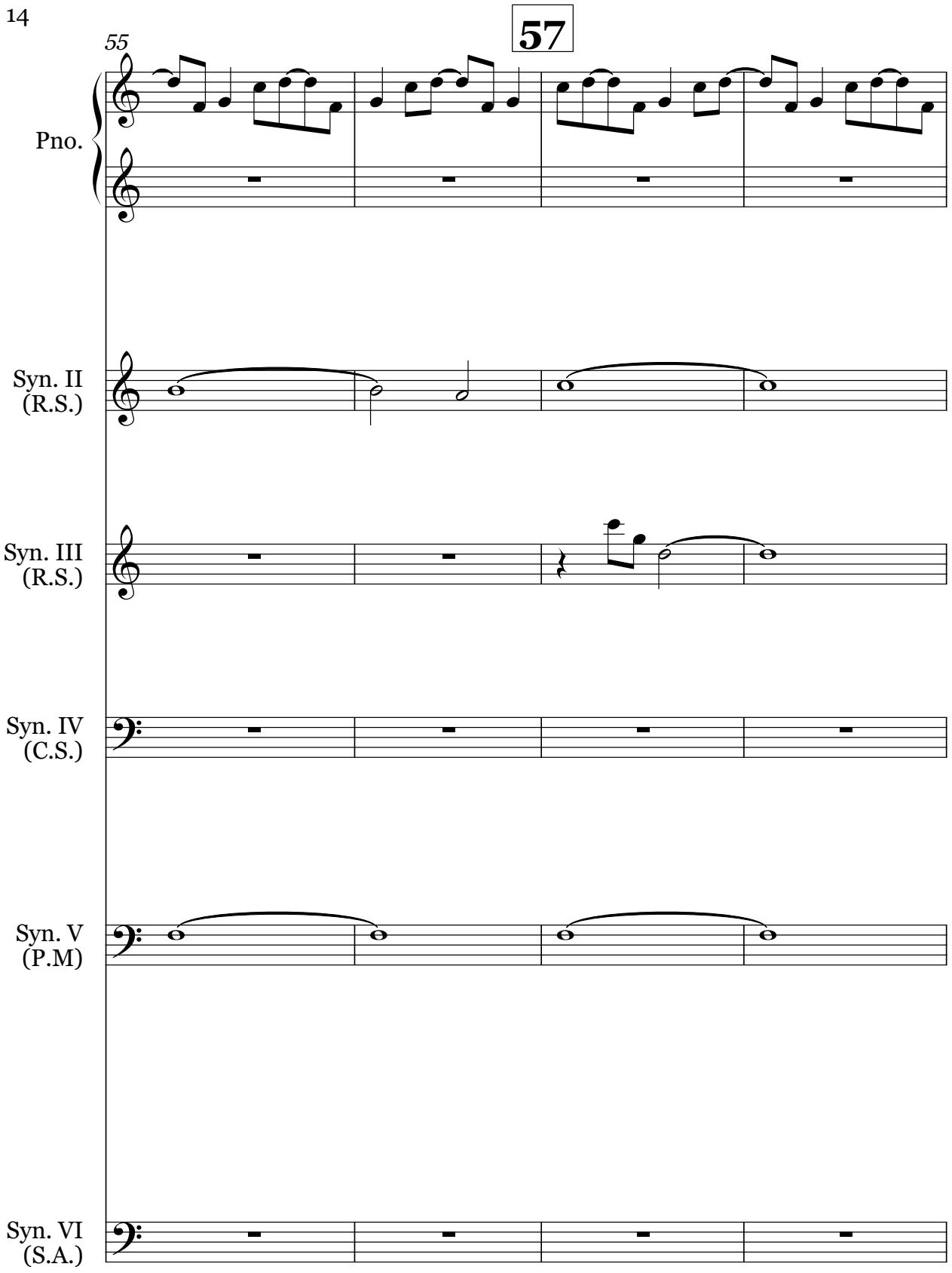
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


57
55
Pno.
Syn. II
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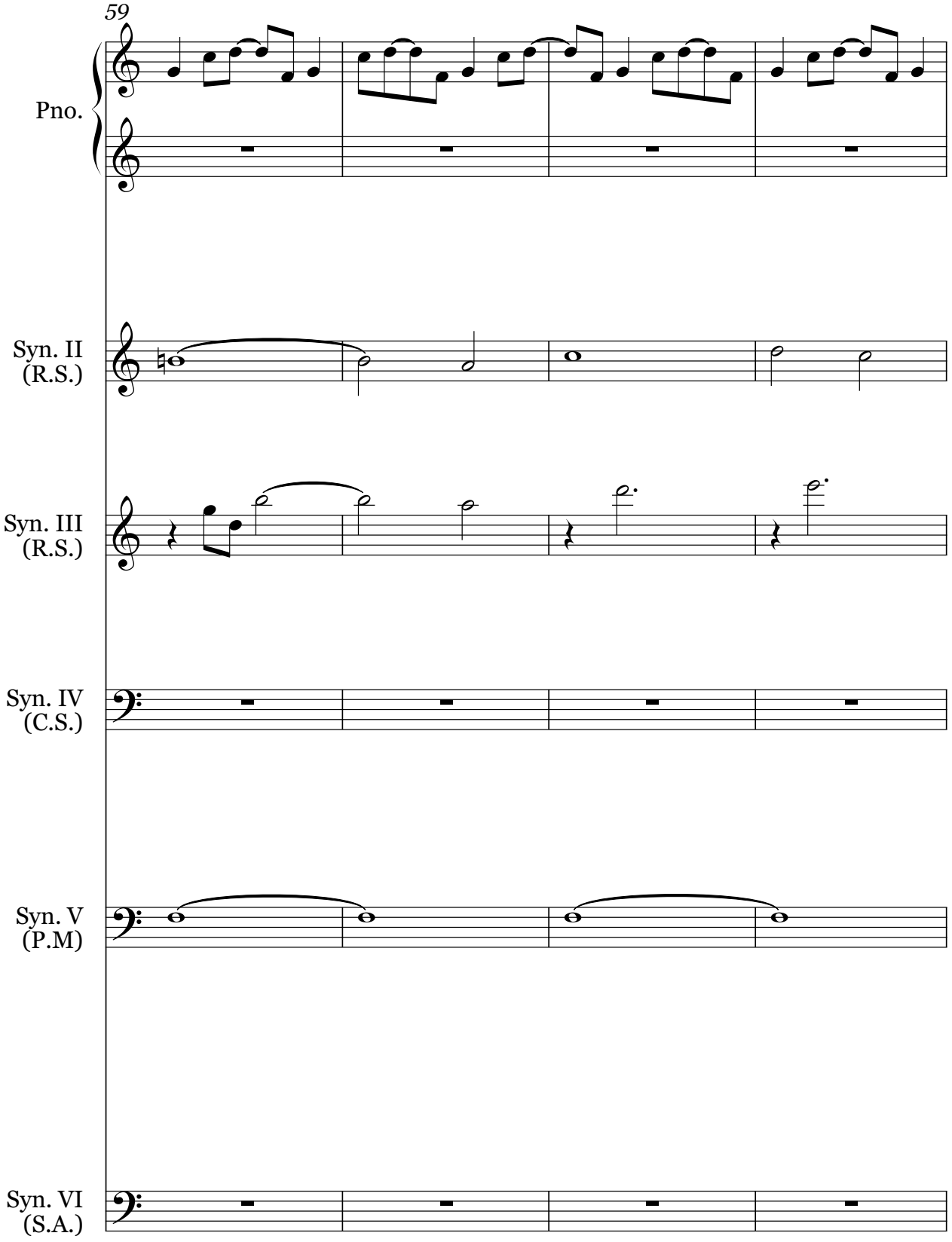
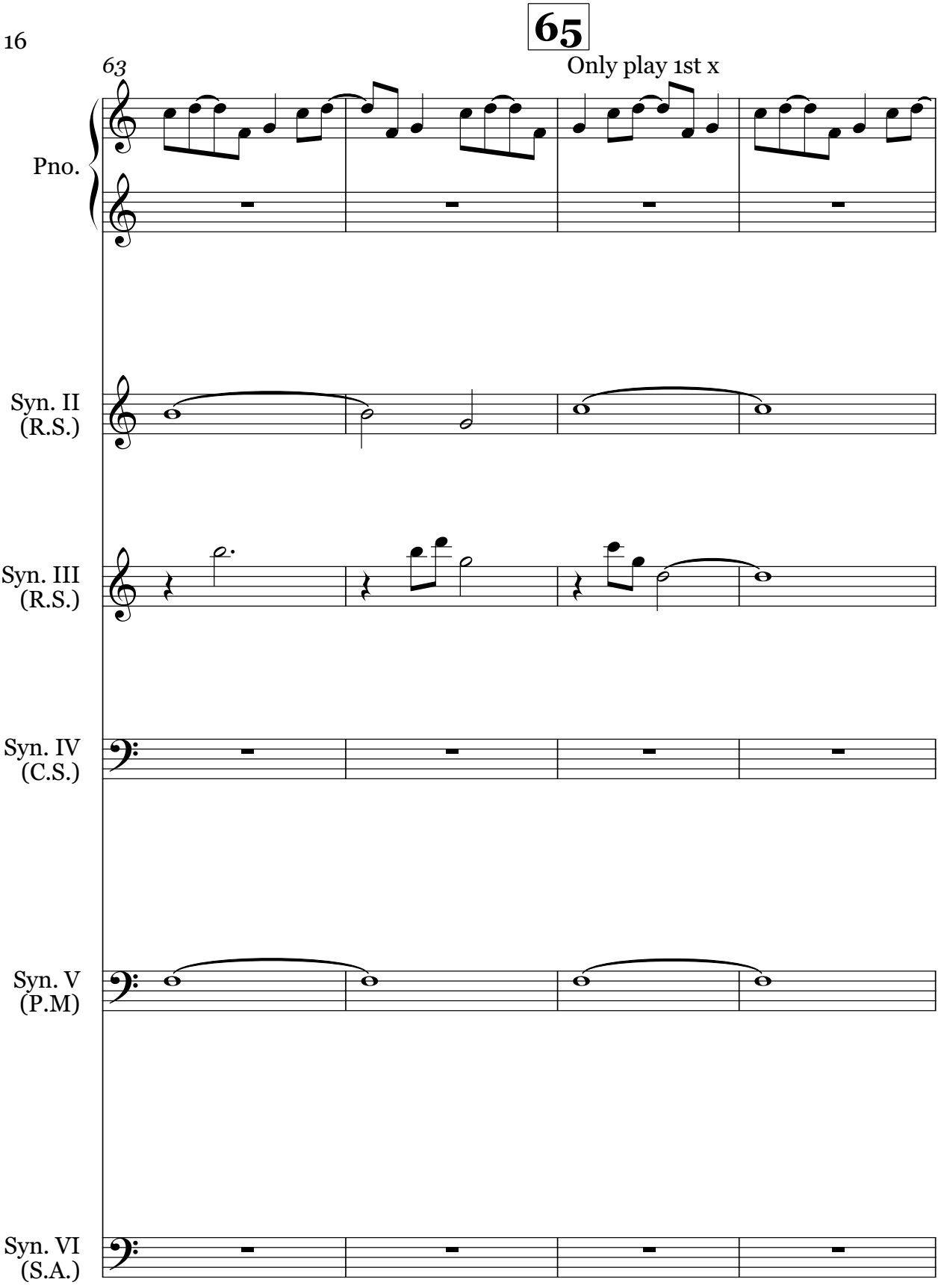
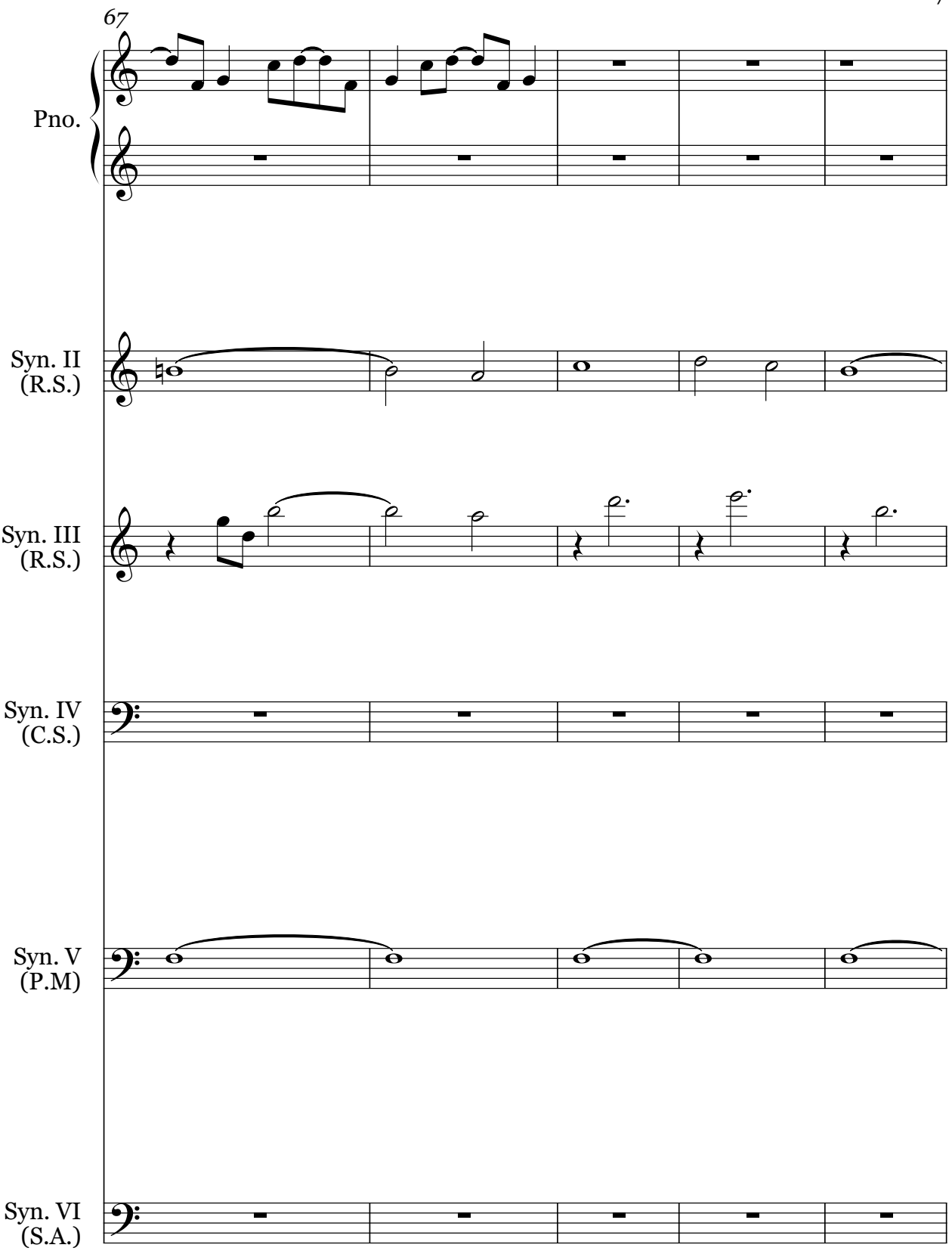
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


59
Pno.
Syn. II
(R.S.)
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


65
63
Only play 1st x
Pno.
Syn. II (R.S.)
Syn. III (R.S.)
Syn. IV (C.S.)
Syn. V (P.M)
Syn. VI (S.A.)


67
Pno.
Syn. II
(R.S.)
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)

73

72

Pno.

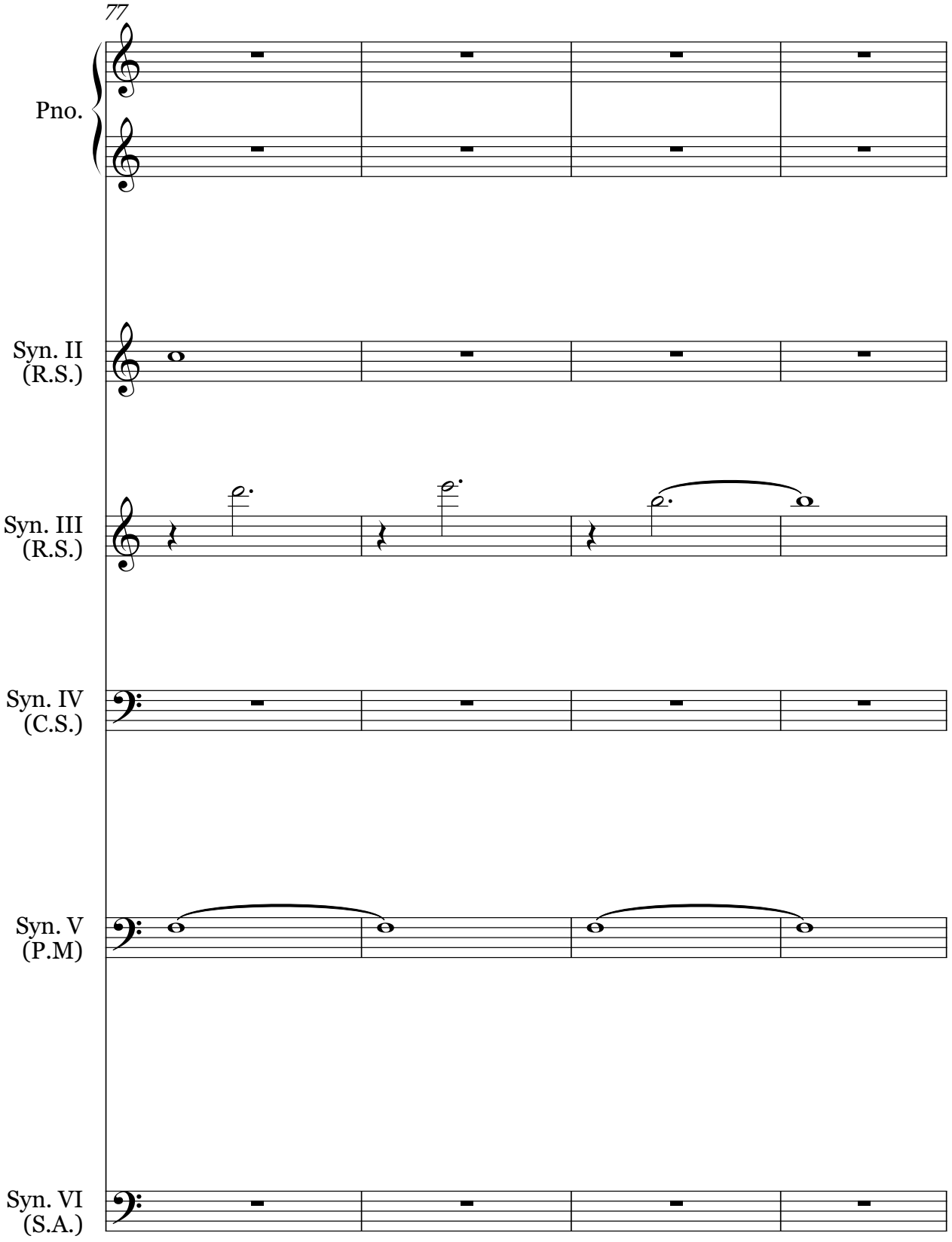
Syn. II (R.S.)

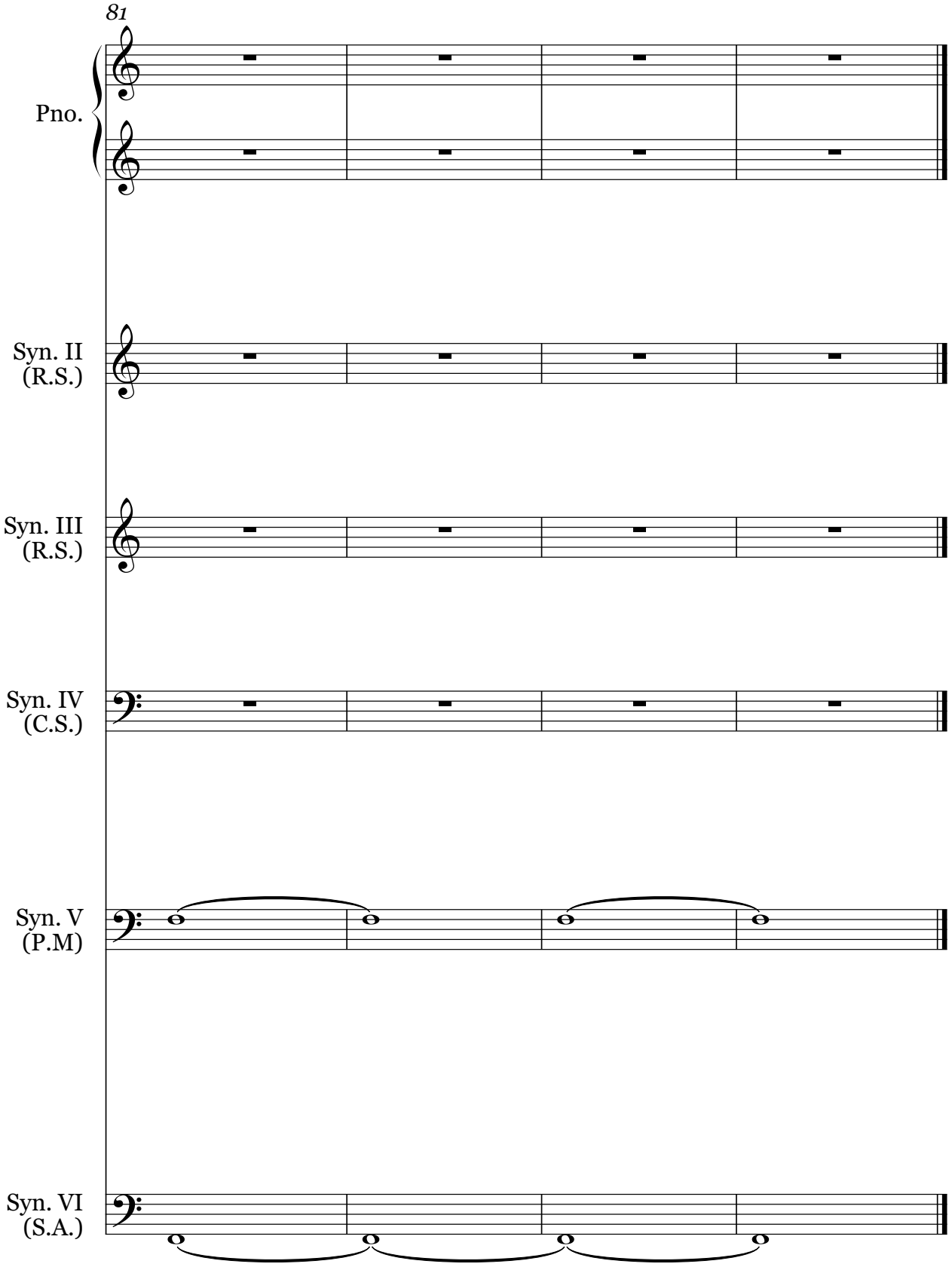
Syn. III (R.S.)

Syn. IV (C.S.)

Syn. V (P.M)

Syn. VI (S.A.)


77
Pno.
Syn. II
(R.S.)
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)


81
Pno.
Syn. II
(R.S.)
Syn. III
(R.S.)
Syn. IV
(C.S.)
Syn. V
(P.M)
Syn. VI
(S.A.)