Dave Soldier

String Quartet #1 opus 3
with percussion

original version for amplified string quartet and trap drums
or alternate version for acoustic quartet and hand percussion

"The Impossible"

1. Open Hydrant
2. Walking on the Third Rail
3. Ron visits the Polymer Lounge
4. For His Bad Self
5. She put my head under the water

composed in 1987, premiered 1988
this transcription April 16, 2011 version

about 25 minutes

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Performance notes for "The Impossible Quartet"

This can be performed either by an amplified quartet with an American style "trap" drum set – i.e., rock or rhythm & blues style drums; or by a normal acoustic string quartet with quieter hand percussion.

The piece is highly influenced by rhythm and blues, and directly quotes James Brown's *Papa's Got a Brand New Bag* in the 4th movement, as well as hip hop, the sounds of the New York City subways, and children's street games.

The guitarist, cellist, and drummer *must* know the James Brown original – the cellist can deviate from it at will, but must know the overall structure of the melody, and can quote from it or not. There is an untimed "cadenza" for the cello on the last phrase.

Each player has *improvised solos*, and these are marked by "hatches". The improvisations must relate to the surrounding material, but you have otherwise freedom to play what you would like. In some cases I place some advice on the approach to the solo. One overall piece of advice is to leave breaths, i.e. silences between phrases, or it will be hard to build in more tensions. Consider that leaving breath is natural for wind instruments that developed the rhythm and blues solo traditions – for inspiration you may like to listen to saxophone players like Maceo Parker and Hank Crawford. In some cases I write chord changes above the improvised sections.

For open repeat solos, just know who cues and make sure they don't go on too long. Depending on context, the other players can make impromptu variations on their repeated parts, particularly if the soloist is going on a little too long.

The 1st and 5th movement can both use a recording of kids playing street games in the background. This is a good excuse for someone in the quartet to go outside and record them.

String techniques

There are numerous unusual techniques in this piece, and here are some guidelines. When in doubt, use my 1992 recording by the Soldier String Quartet on *Sojourner Truth* as a guide – but don't feel trapped by that recording if you have ideas on how to improve on it or add your own personality.

Lines without noteheads are used to indicated microtonal glisses between the pitches that are shown. Don't worry much about making these exact, they can be expressive sounding glisses that sound satisfying to you.

Speech pitch is indicated by square boxes on the noteheads. Speech pitch imitates spoken inflections, and hence is made of microtonal glissandos. It is played by stopping the string with the left hand over rather than under the instrument, to

enforce intonation that is only approximate. Pinch the string between your thumb and index finger and slide it around the notes indicated to help you to sound like someone speaking or rapping. It helps to think of spoken phrases and to emulate the intonation of them.

The cello has notes in pizzicato sections marked with an "x" notehead. These are percussive and made by *slaps* by the left hand on the neck. They should imitate a snare drum backbeat or a handclap. In pizzicato areas, consider where a "*slap bass*" approach should be used, a classic jazz technique where the strings are plucked hard enough to bounce a bit on the neck.

The second violin and viola also use *slaps* on the neck as marked by an x notehead, which are meant to emulate handclaps. These can be pretty loud and should be, especially for amplified instruments.

Wavy lines over a note means to make a large wobble in the pitch.

The violas's siren imitates a police or ambulance, and use whatever approach you would like including electronics.

"*Squealy noise*" means imitate the squeak sounds of bad subway brakes.

The end of the first movement and first section of the second imitate a subway. They should be differentiated sounds, with the end of the first out of phase with each other and very ponticello, choosing different notes. The top of the second is everyone together in time, and the amplified strings can use distortion if a "fuzz box" is available.

The guitar chord

The fourth movement has the second violinist playing a single chord (an E9) on the guitar for the James Brown number. For amplified quartet it should be an electric guitar, for the acoustic quartet, an acoustic guitar is fine. Of course this can be played by the percussionist instead, or by the other violinist if the second takes the first's part. It could even be played by a guest who plays the guitar, who in this case sits on stage of the entire piece to play about 3 measures of music of one chord.

Drums and percussion

The drum kit uses the snare on the middle line, bass drum on lowest line, cymbals on space above upper line and toms in lower line. The cowbell near the end is indicated. My experience is that drummers prefer this kind of notation more than writing out every note. Essentially any kind of drum kit with any drums can work so long as the drummer has worked on the parts.

For the acoustic quartet, quieter hand percussion is used. At this time and place, the best preference for a basic drum is probably the flamenco style cajon, which has developed as an instrument over the past twenty years and can hold all of

the patterns of the drum kit. This is based on the Cuban cajon used in rumba, but they have added a snare to the inside of the box. Nevertheless, the instrument is not known universally and it is impossible to predict if it will continue to be well established, and if so, where. Thus percussionists can choose there own instruments, but simply must be aware of the different patterns required, and for that listening to the original recording is a good guide.

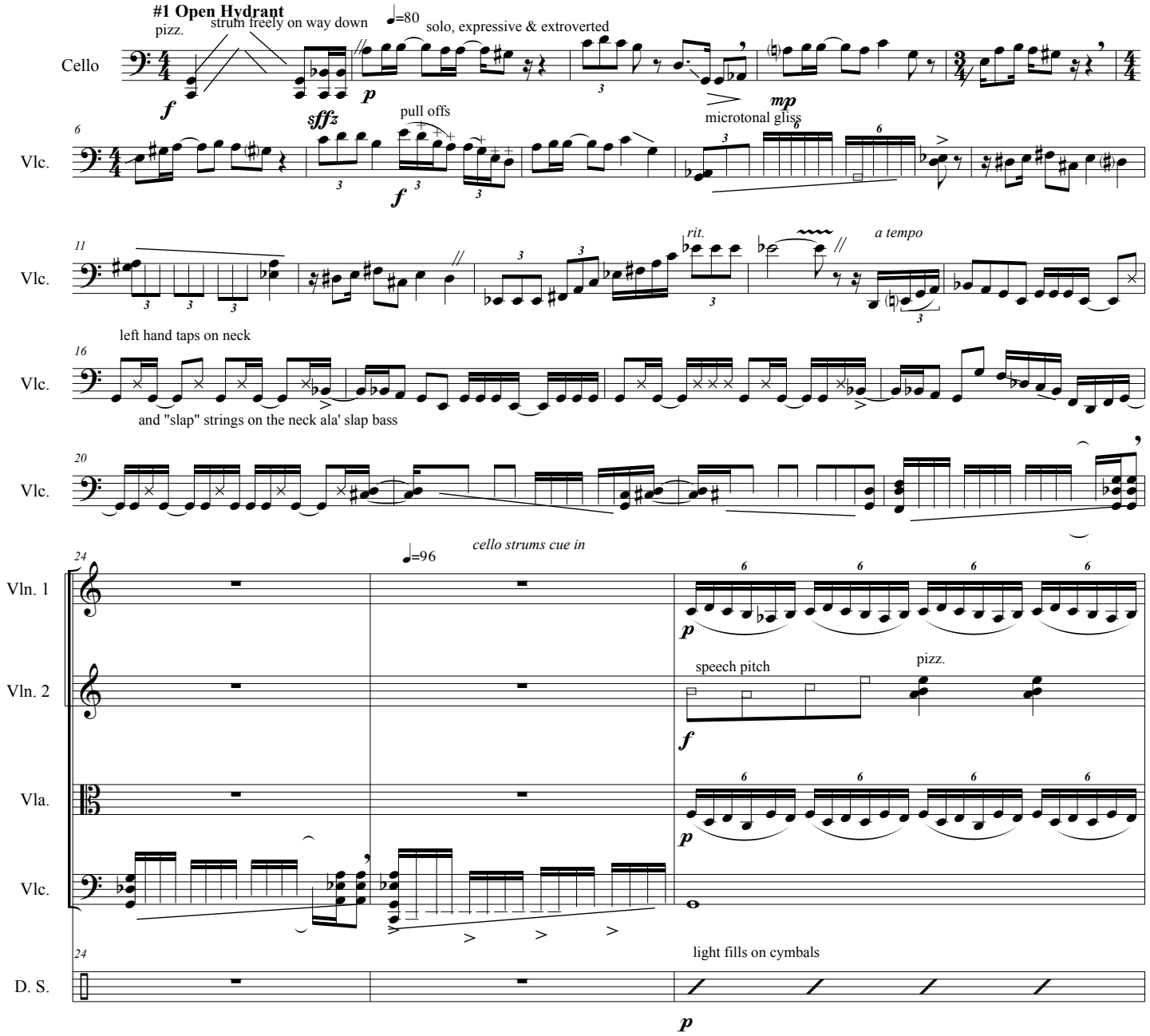
In addition to the cajon, a hand percussionist requires cymbals and a cowbell for the last movement. A hi-hat may be useful, and a boxing ring bell is nice. Bongos are useful as long as they can be played quietly to not obscure the strings.

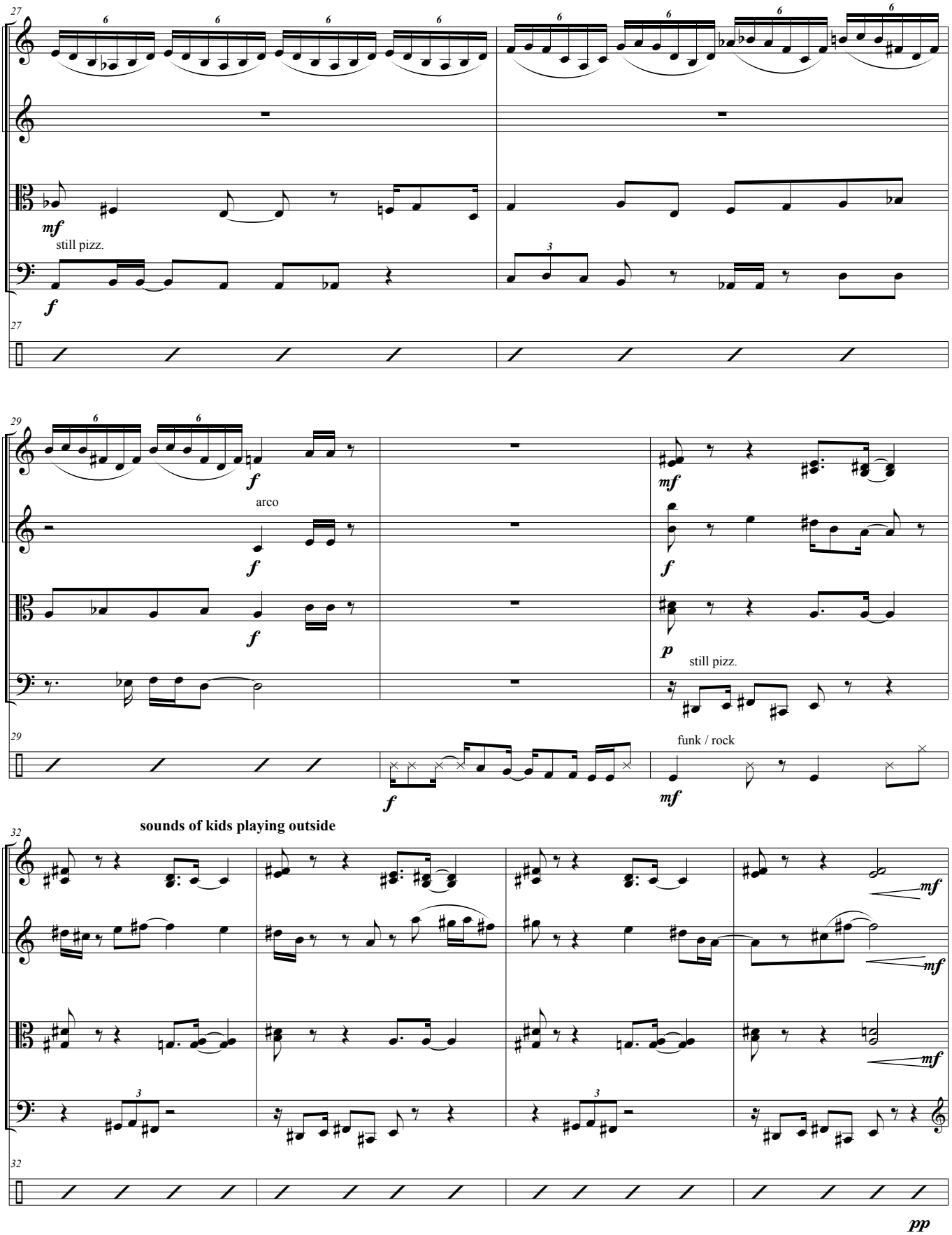
-Dave Soldier NYC April 18, 2011

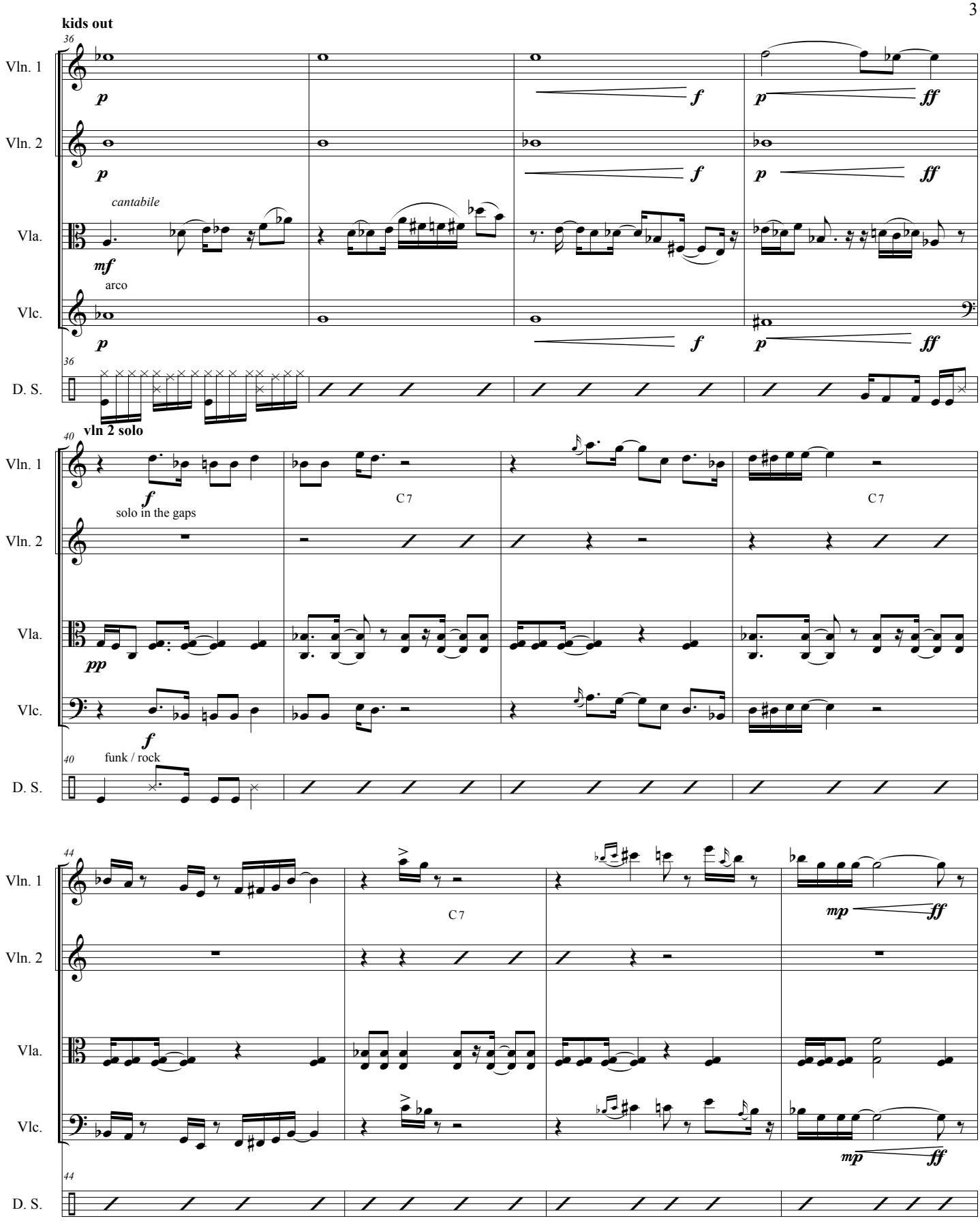
Score
1987
version April 16, 2011

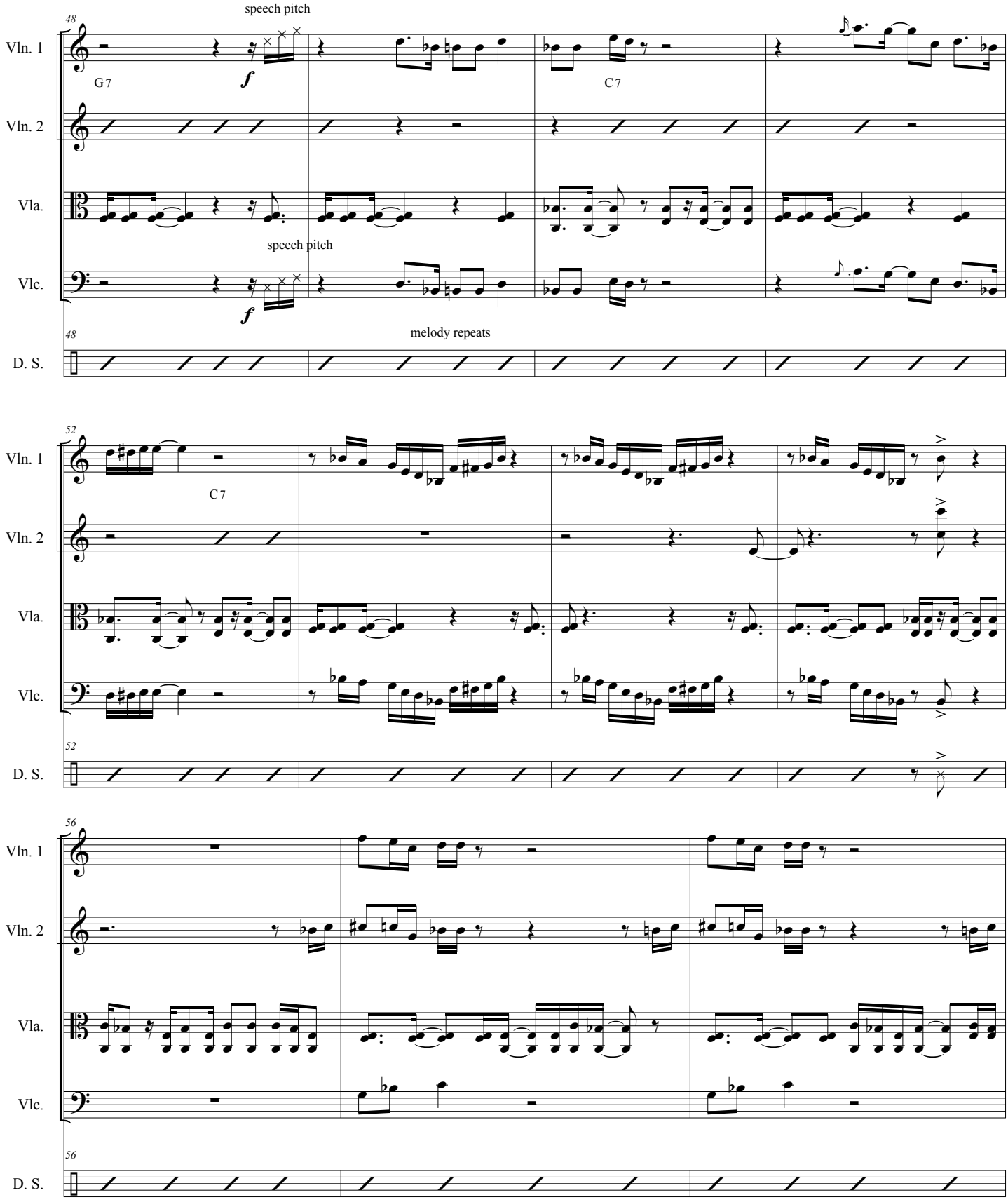
String Quartet #1
The Impossible

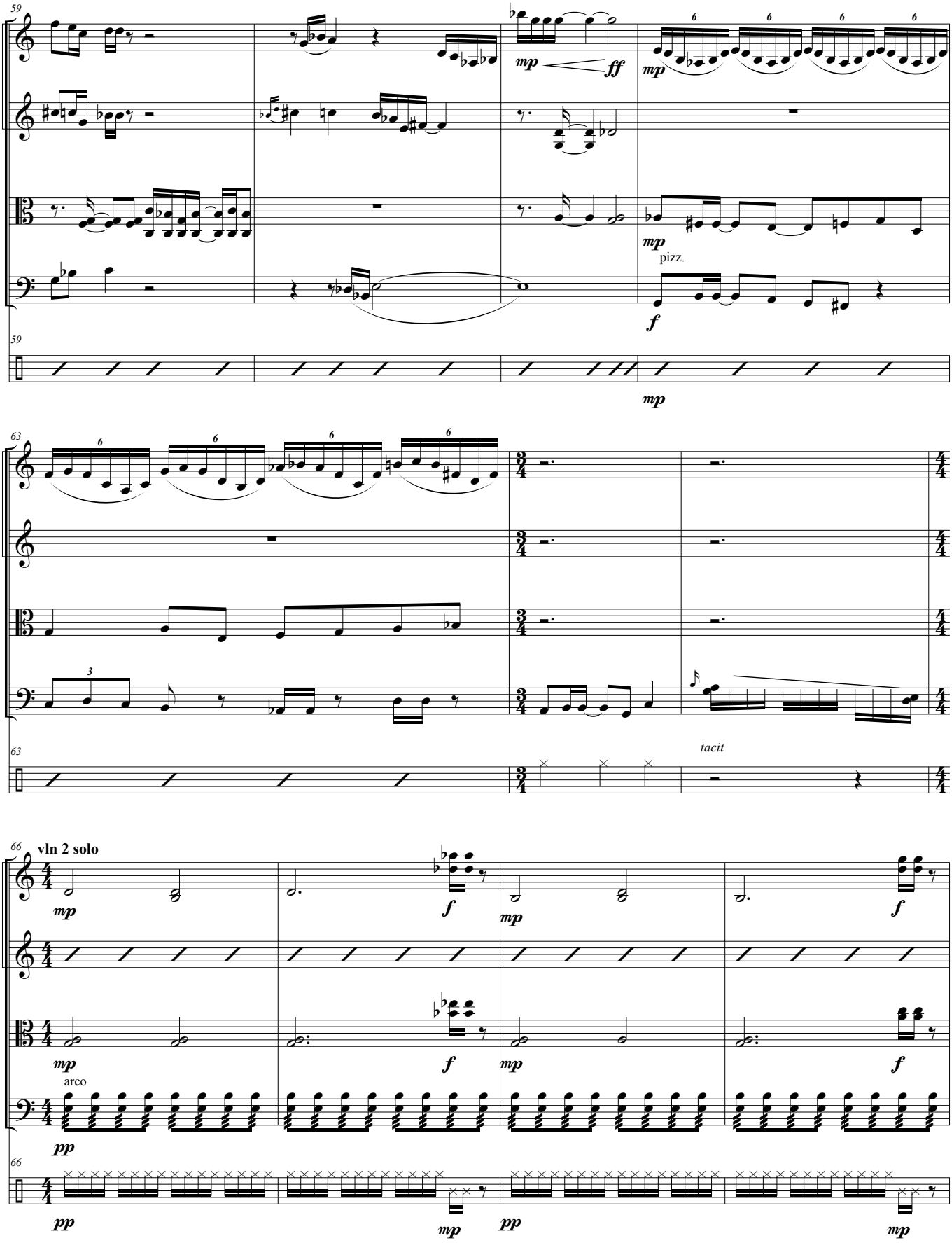
Dave Soldier

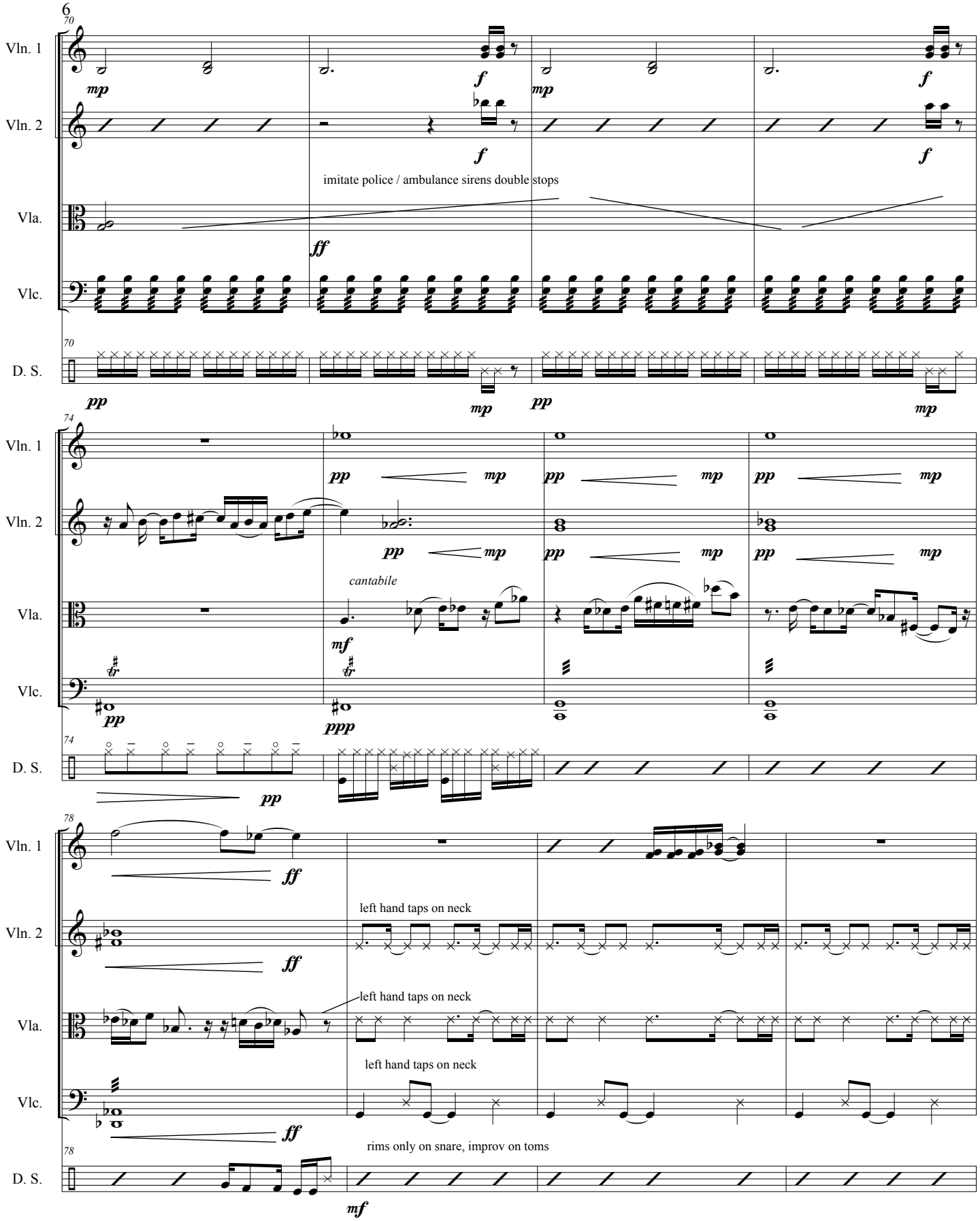


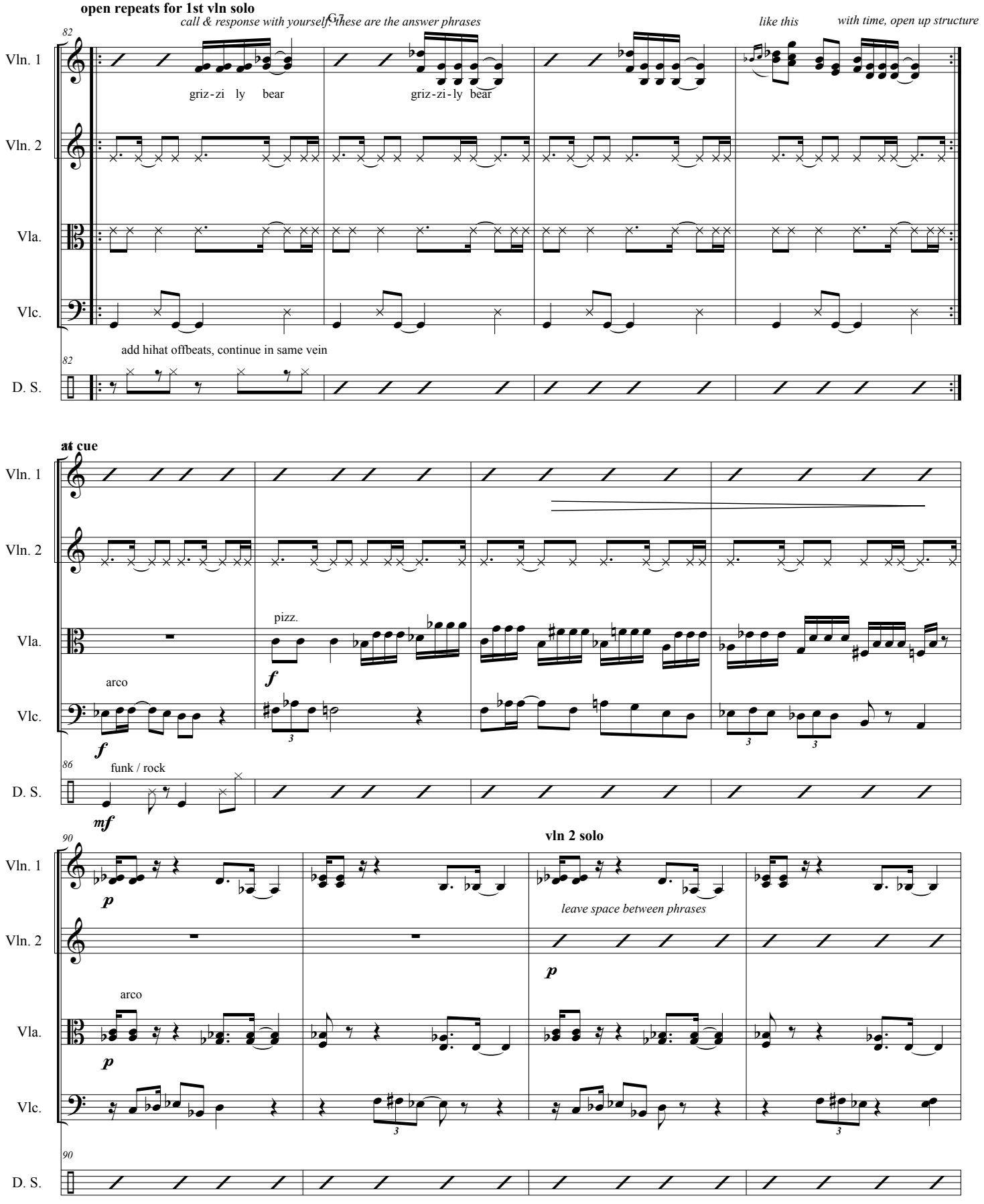

27
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
mf
still pizz.
f
29
arco
p
still pizz.
funk / rock
32
sounds of kids playing outside
pp

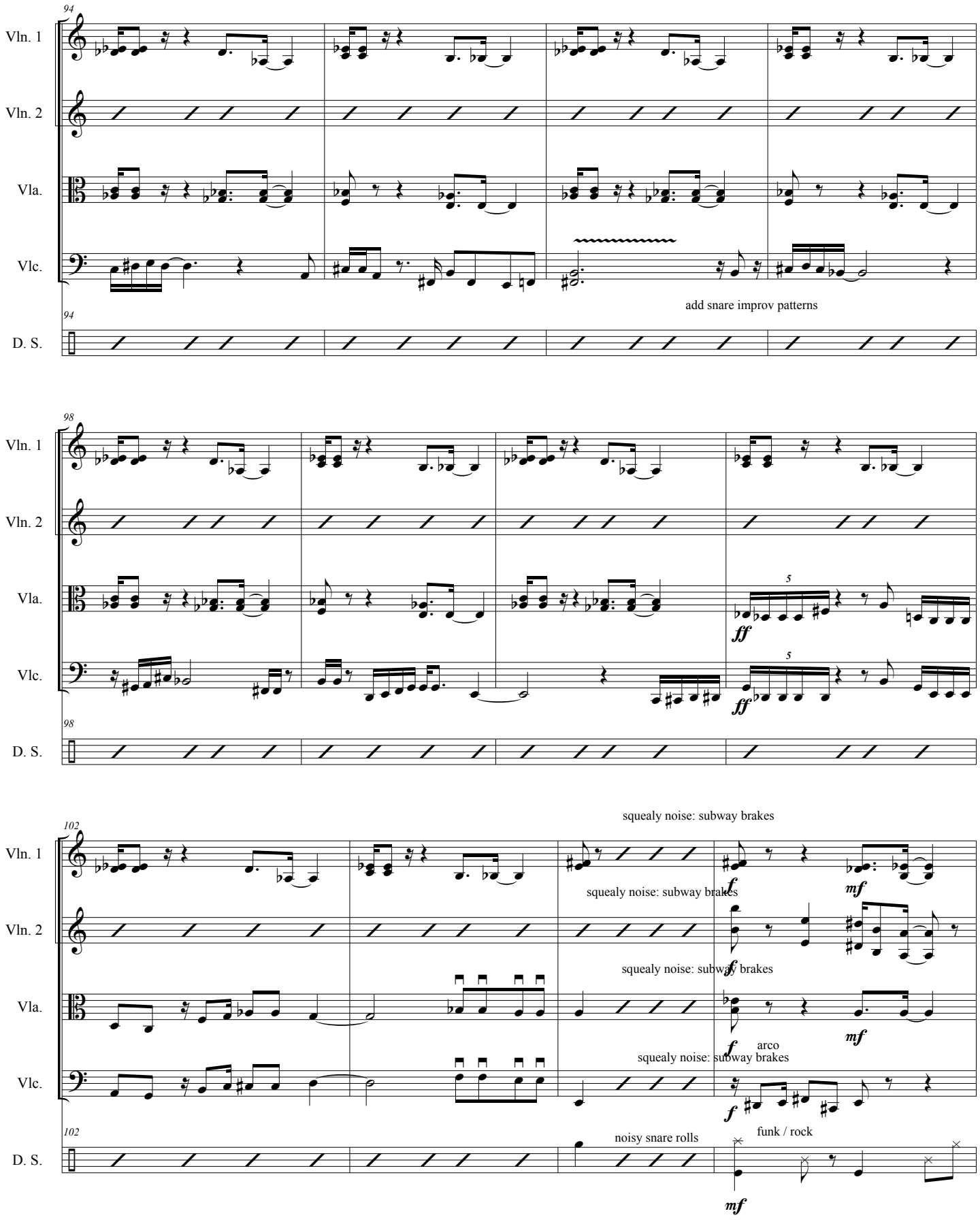

kids out
36
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
p
f
p
ff
cantabile
mf
arco
vln 2 solo
40
f
solo in the gaps
C7
pp
funk / rock
44
mp
ff

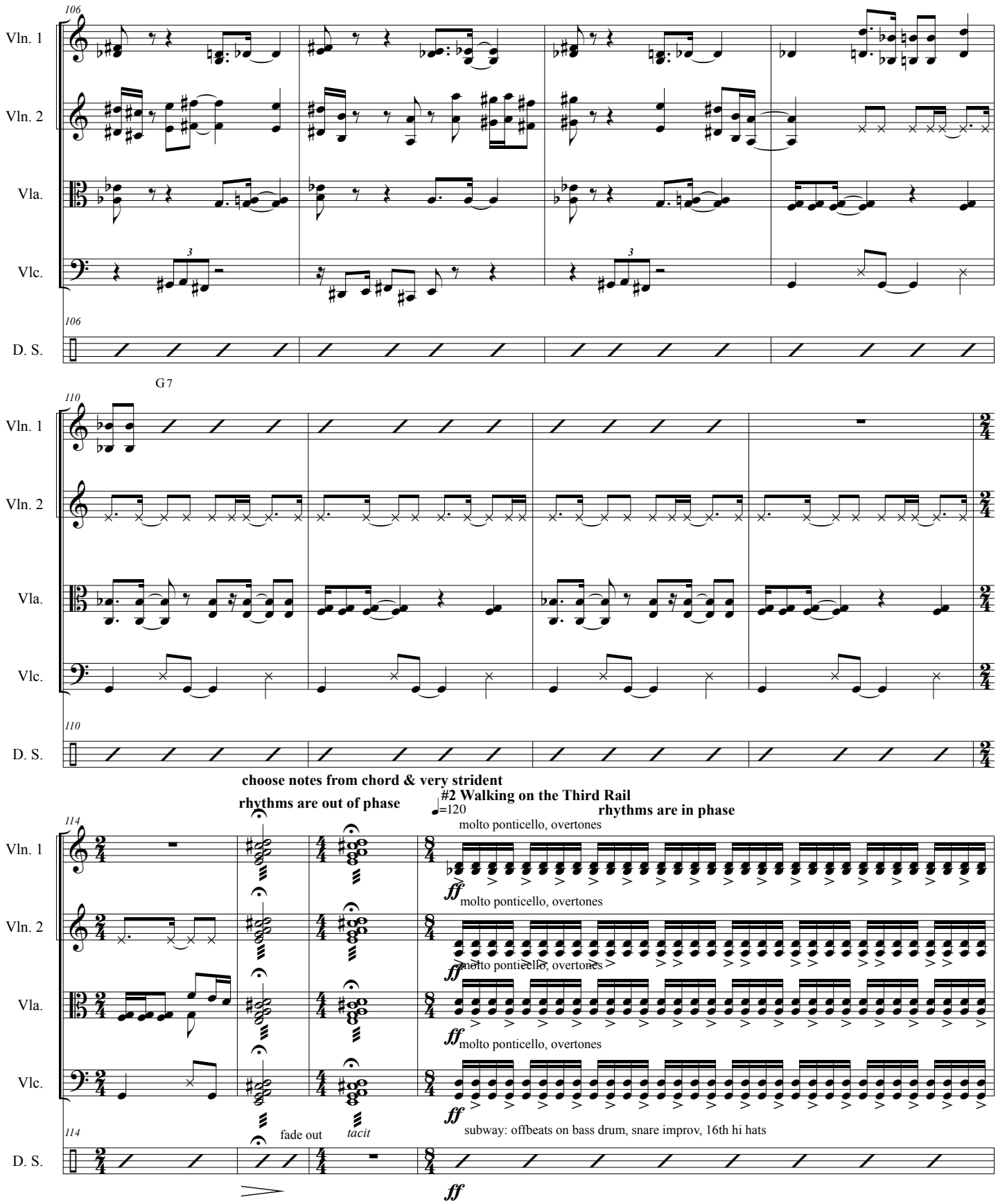

48
speech pitch
Vln. 1
G 7
f
C 7
Vln. 2
Vla.
speech pitch
Vlc.
f
48
melody repeats
D. S.
52
Vln. 1
C 7
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
52
D. S.
56
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
56
D. S.

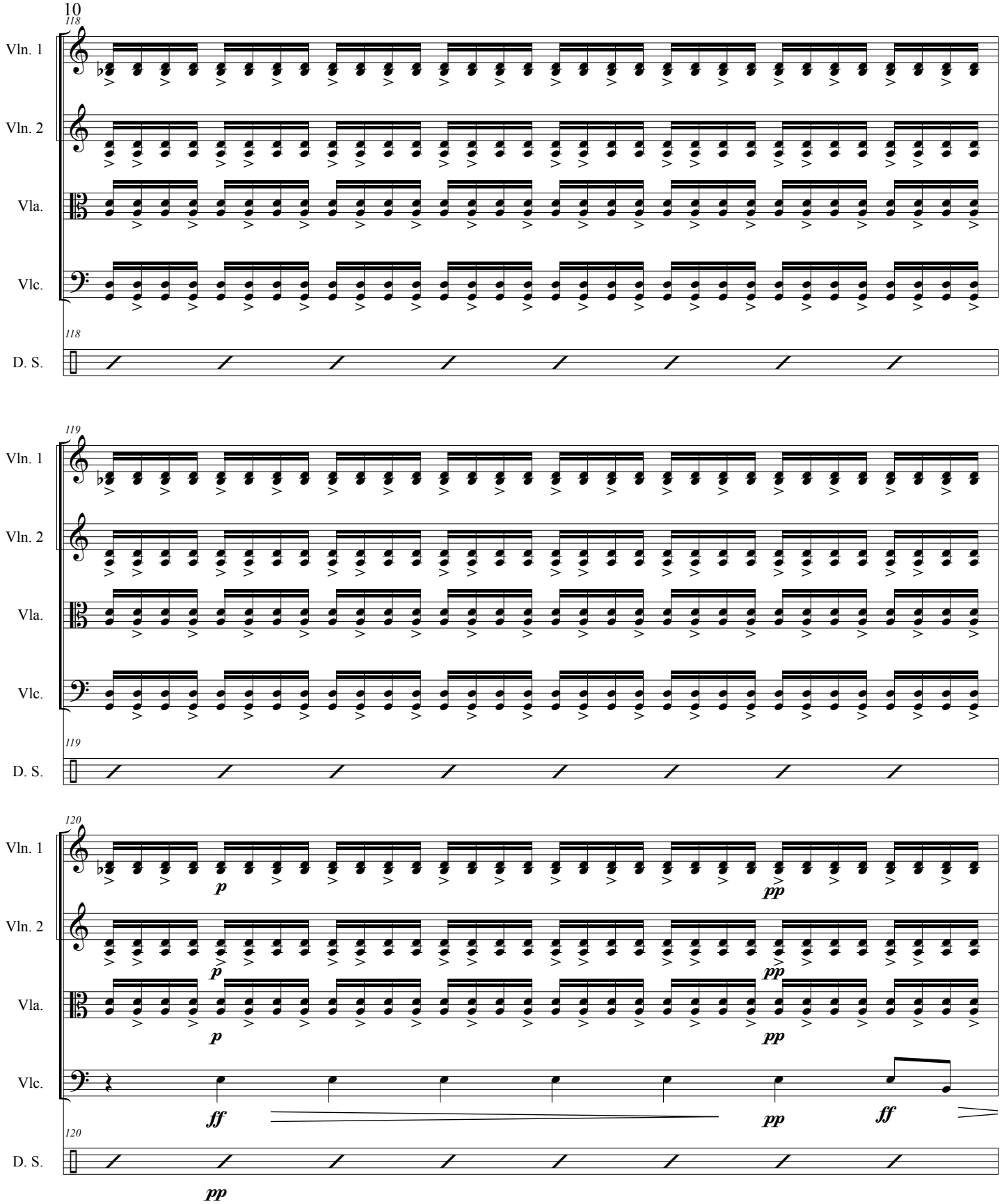

59
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
mp
ff
pizz.
f
63
tacit
66
vln 2 solo
arco
pp

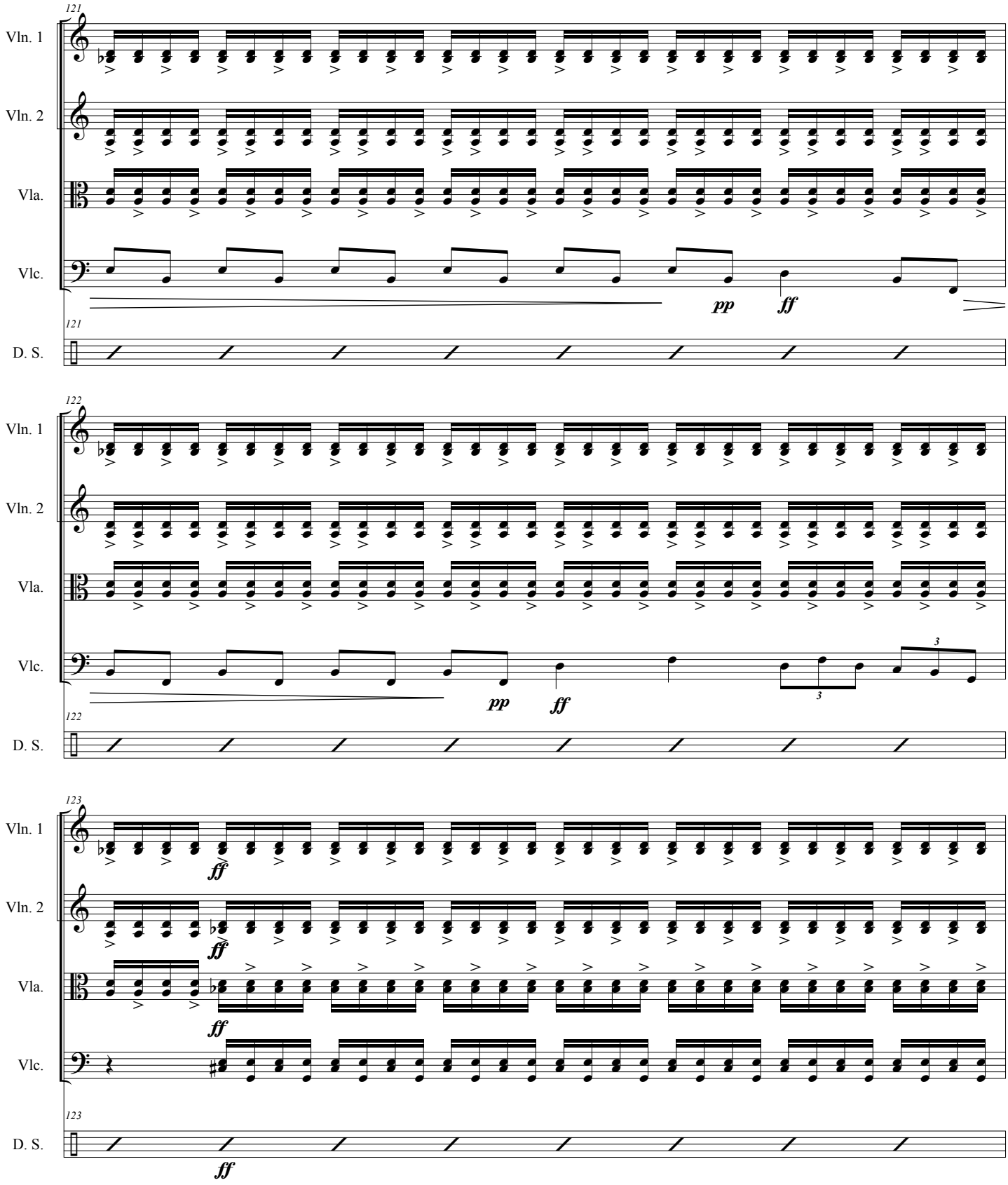

70
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
mp
f
mp
f
f
f
imitate police / ambulance sirens double stops
ff
pp
mp
pp
mp
74
pp
mp
pp
mp
pp
mp
cantabile
mf
pp
ppp
pp
78
ff
ff
left hand taps on neck
left hand taps on neck
left hand taps on neck
ff
rims only on snare, improv on toms
mf

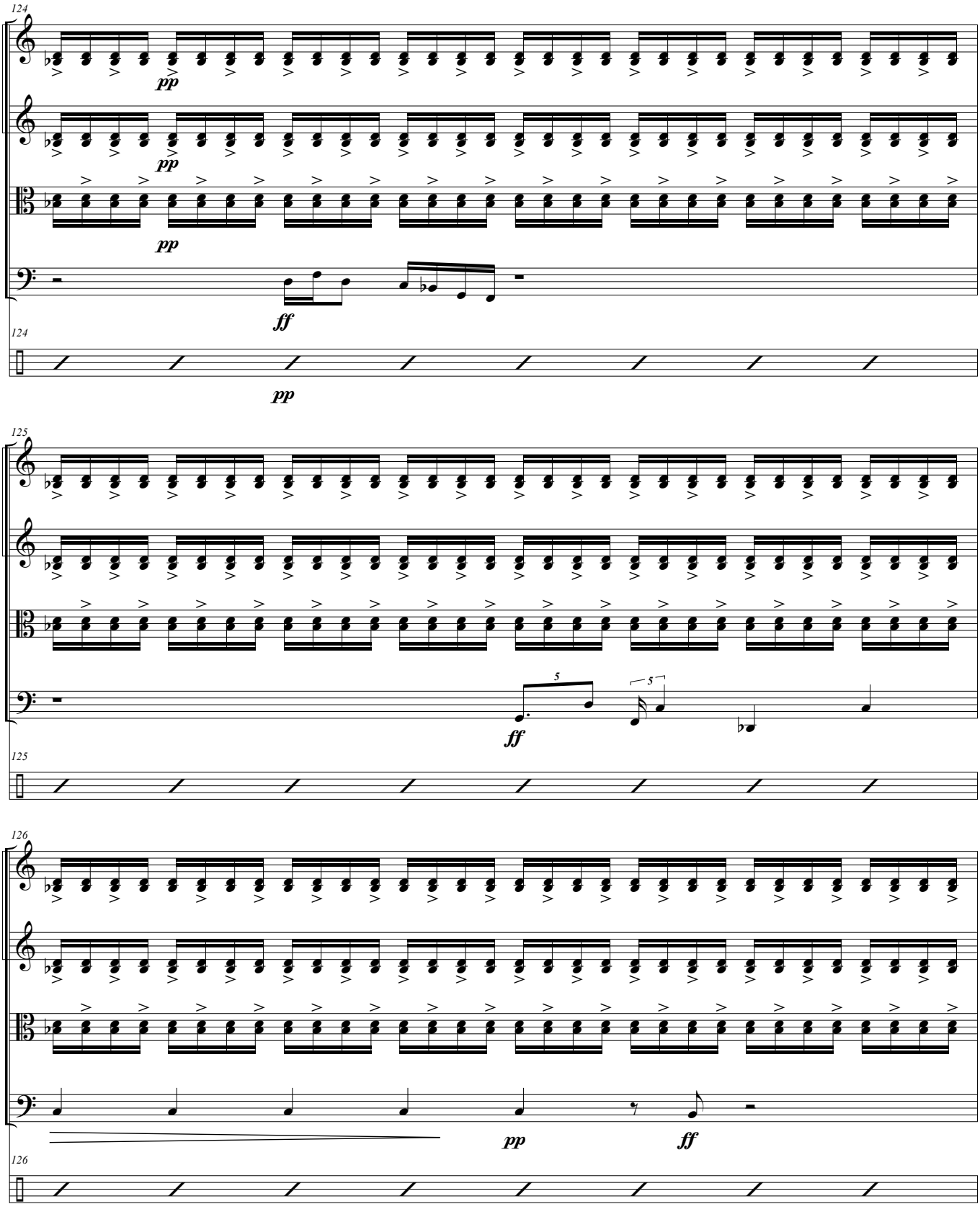

open repeats for 1st vln solo
call & response with yourself: these are the answer phrases
C-7
like this
with time, open up structure
82
Vln. 1
griz-zi ly bear
griz-zi-ly bear
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
add hihat offbeats, continue in same vein
82
D. S.
at cue
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
pizz.
Vla.
f
arco
Vlc.
f
3
3
3
86
funk / rock
D. S.
mf
90
vln 2 solo
Vln. 1
p
leave space between phrases
Vln. 2
p
arco
Vla.
p
Vlc.
3
3
90
D. S.

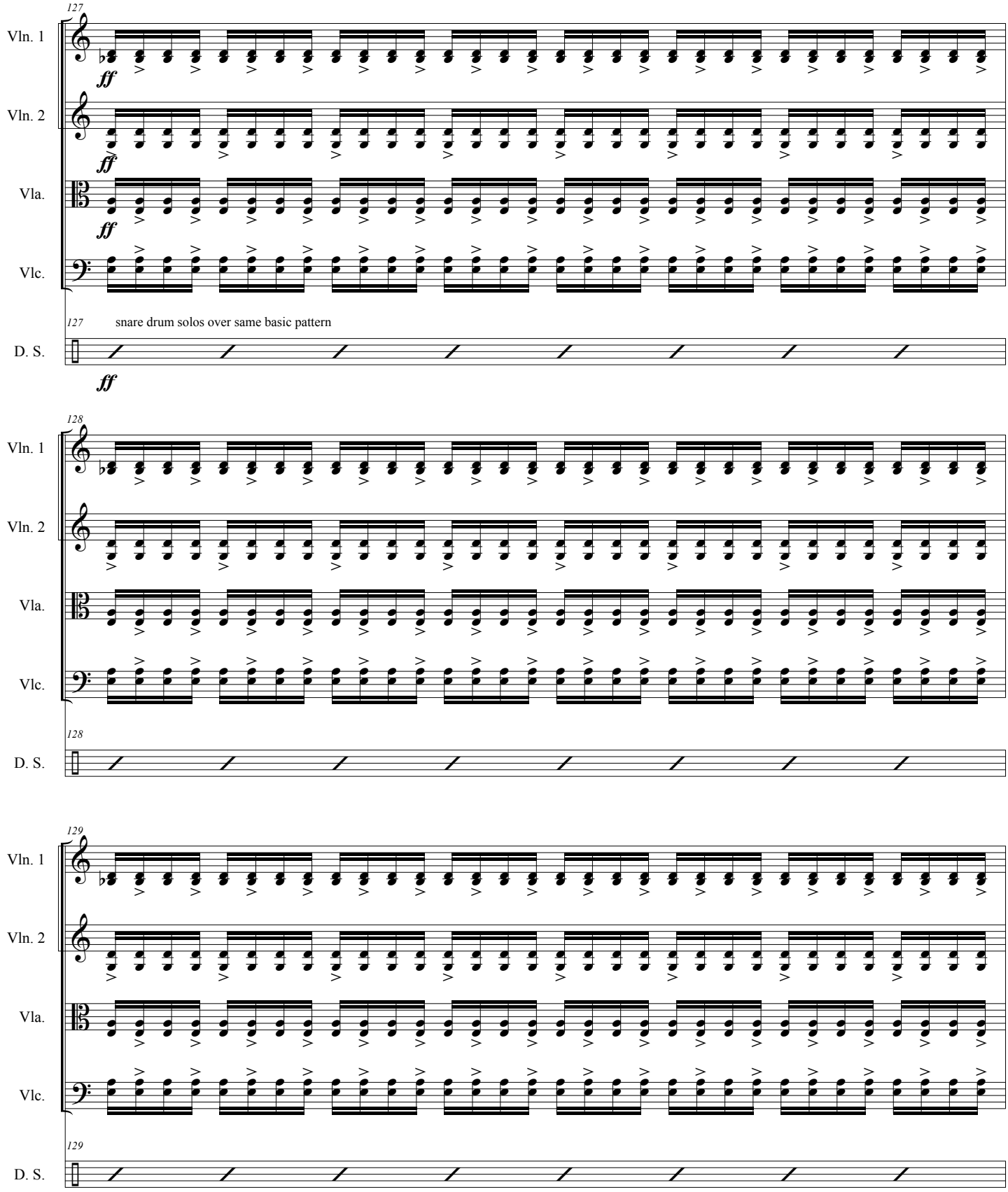

94
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
add snare improv patterns
94
D. S.
98
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
5
ff
Vlc.
5
ff
98
D. S.
102
squealy noise: subway brakes
Vln. 1
f
mf
squealy noise: subway brakes
Vln. 2
f
squealy noise: subway brakes
Vla.
f
mf
arco
squealy noise: subway brakes
Vlc.
f
102
noisy snare rolls
funk / rock
D. S.
mf

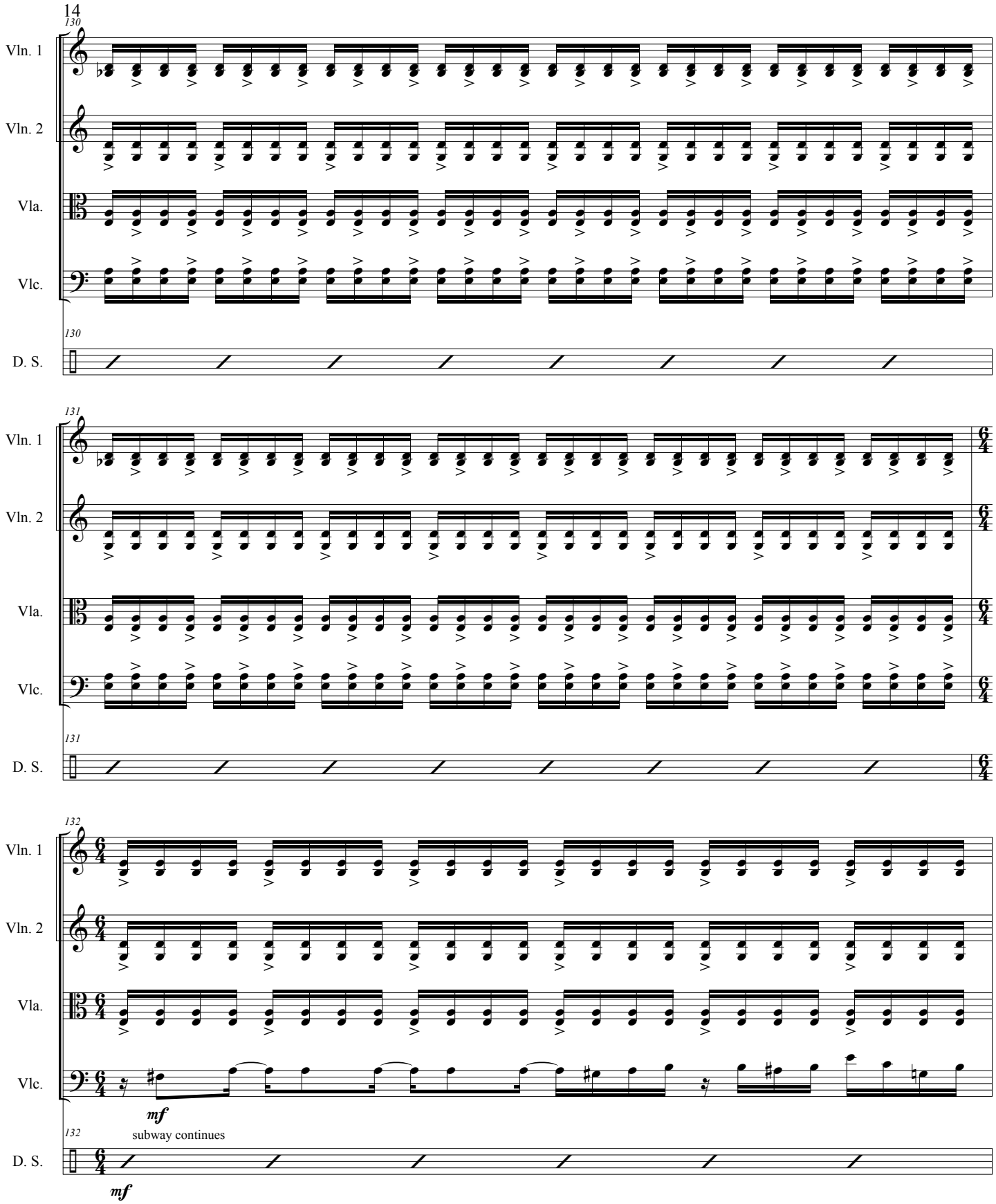

106
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
G 7
110
choose notes from chord & very strident
rhythms are out of phase
#2 Walking on the Third Rail
♩=120
rhythms are in phase
molto ponticello, overtones
ff
fade out
tacit
subway: offbeats on bass drum, snare improv, 16th hi hats

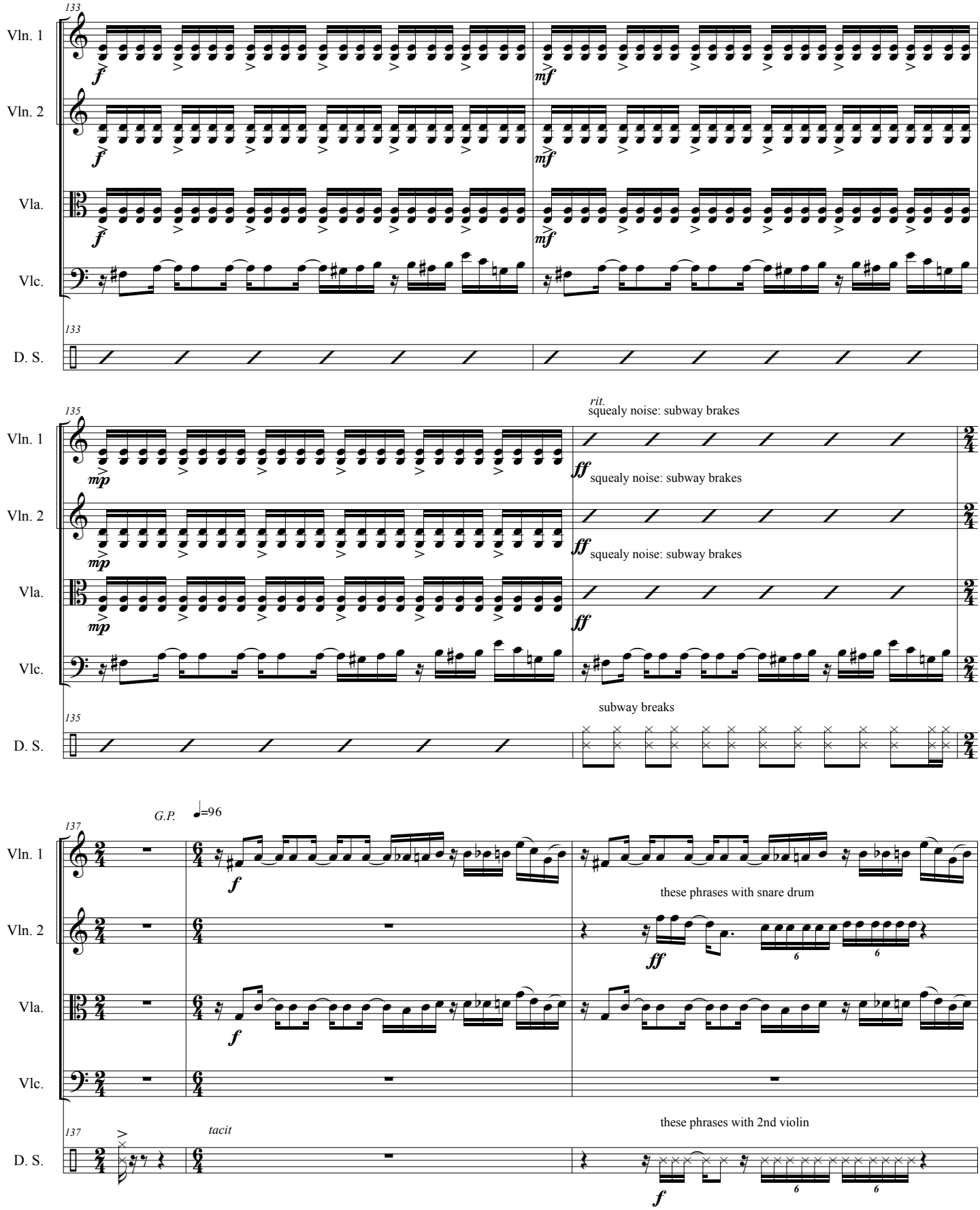

118
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
118
D. S.
119
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
119
D. S.
120
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
120
D. S.
p
pp
ff
pp


121
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
pp
ff
121
D. S.
122
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
3
pp
ff
3
122
D. S.
123
Vln. 1
ff
Vln. 2
ff
Vla.
ff
Vlc.
123
D. S.
ff

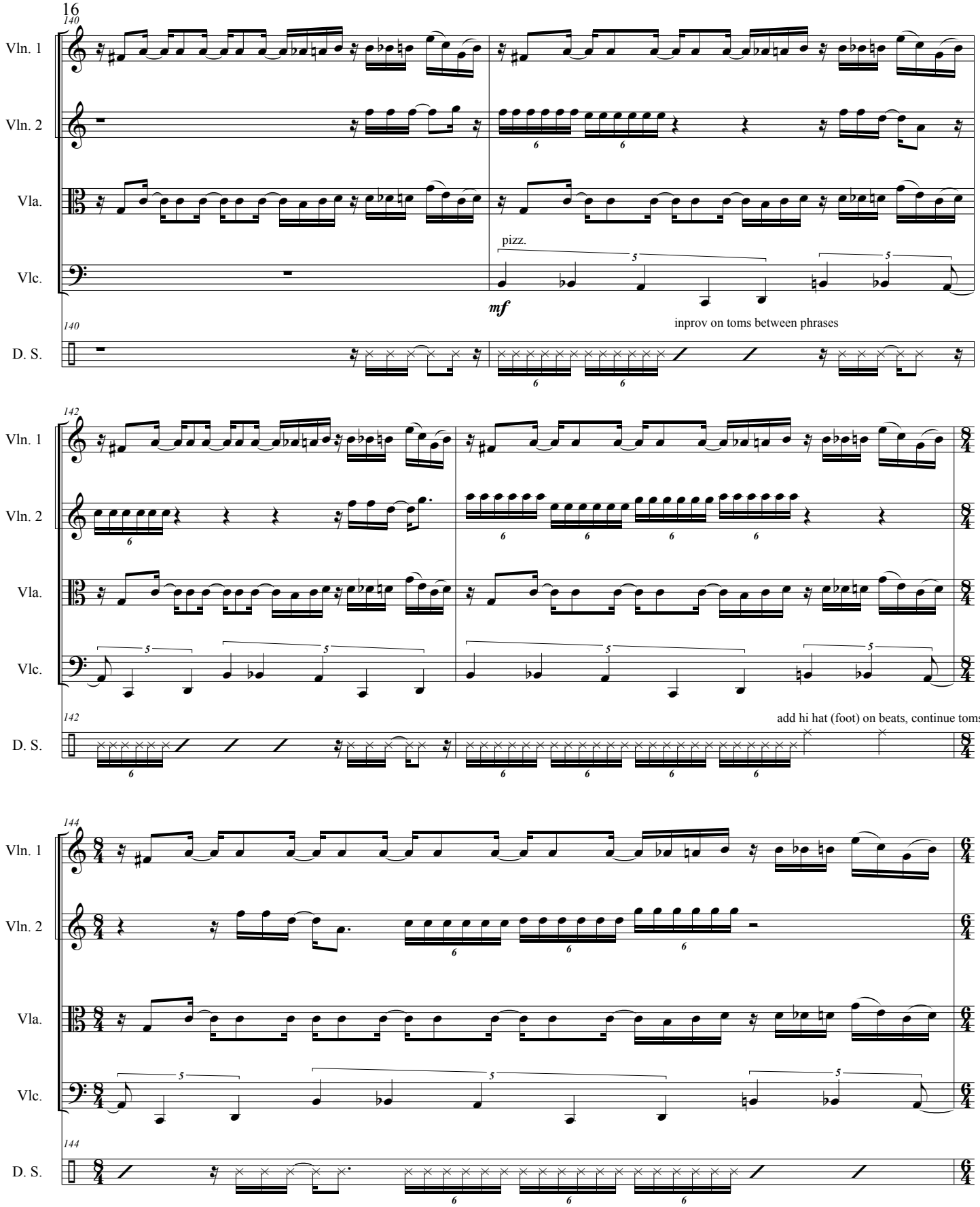

124
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
pp
pp
pp
ff
pp
125
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
5
5
ff
126
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
pp
ff

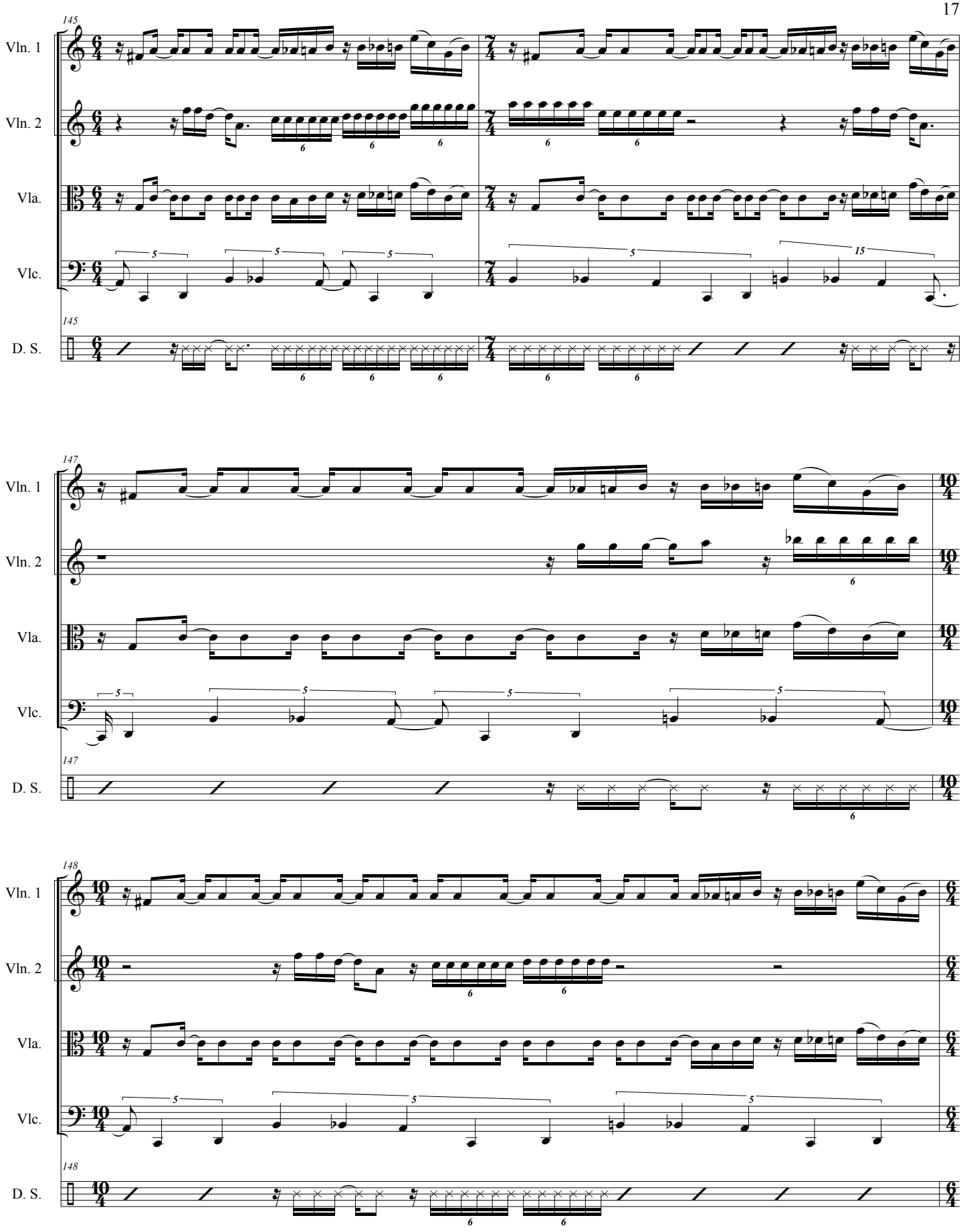

127
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
ff
127
snare drum solos over same basic pattern
D. S.
ff
128
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
128
D. S.
129
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
129
D. S.

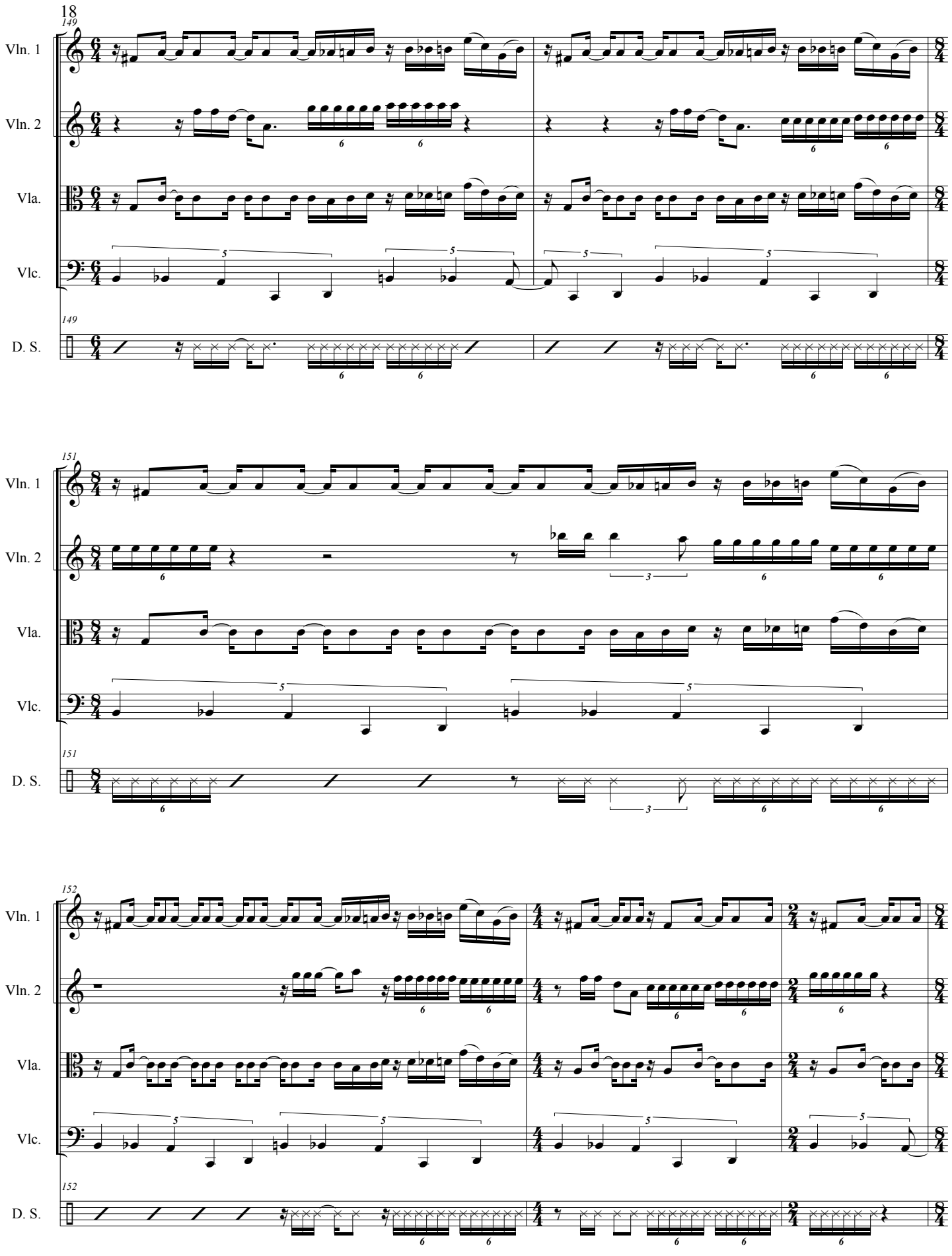

130
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
130
D. S.
131
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
131
D. S.
132
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
mf
subway continues
132
D. S.
mf

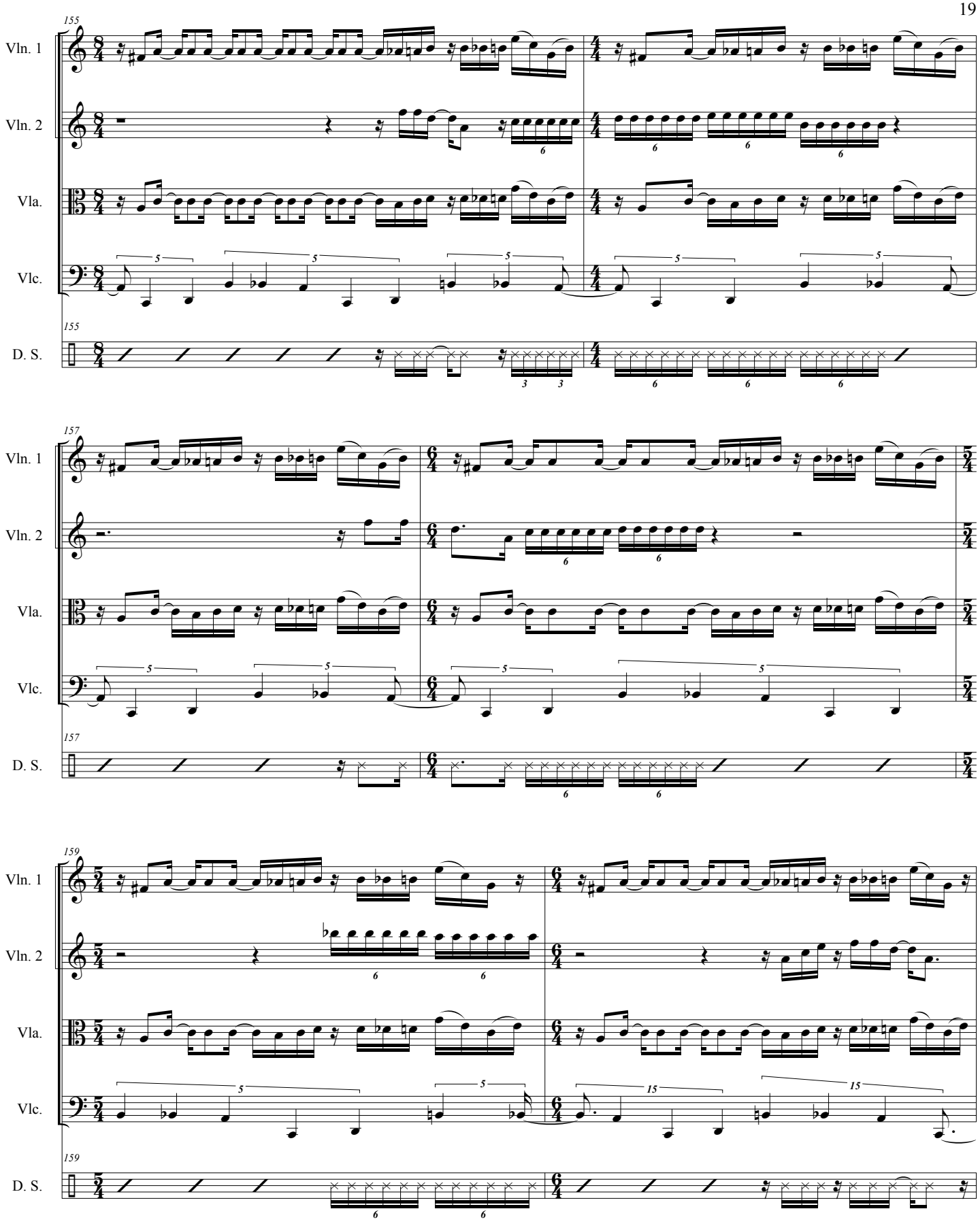

133
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
f
mf
135
rit.
squealy noise: subway brakes
mp
ff
subway breaks
137
G.P.
=96
these phrases with snare drum
tacit
these phrases with 2nd violin
6

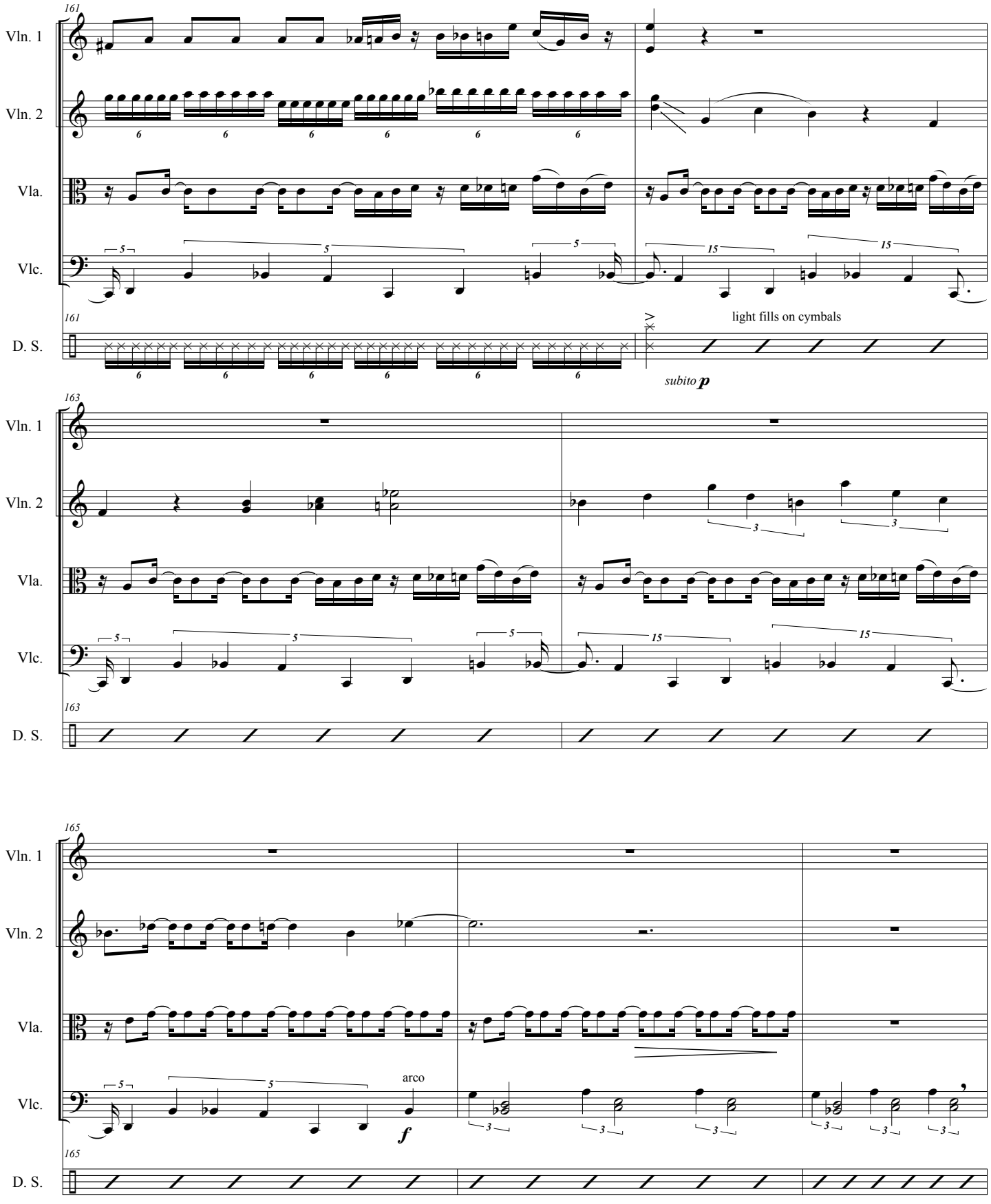
16

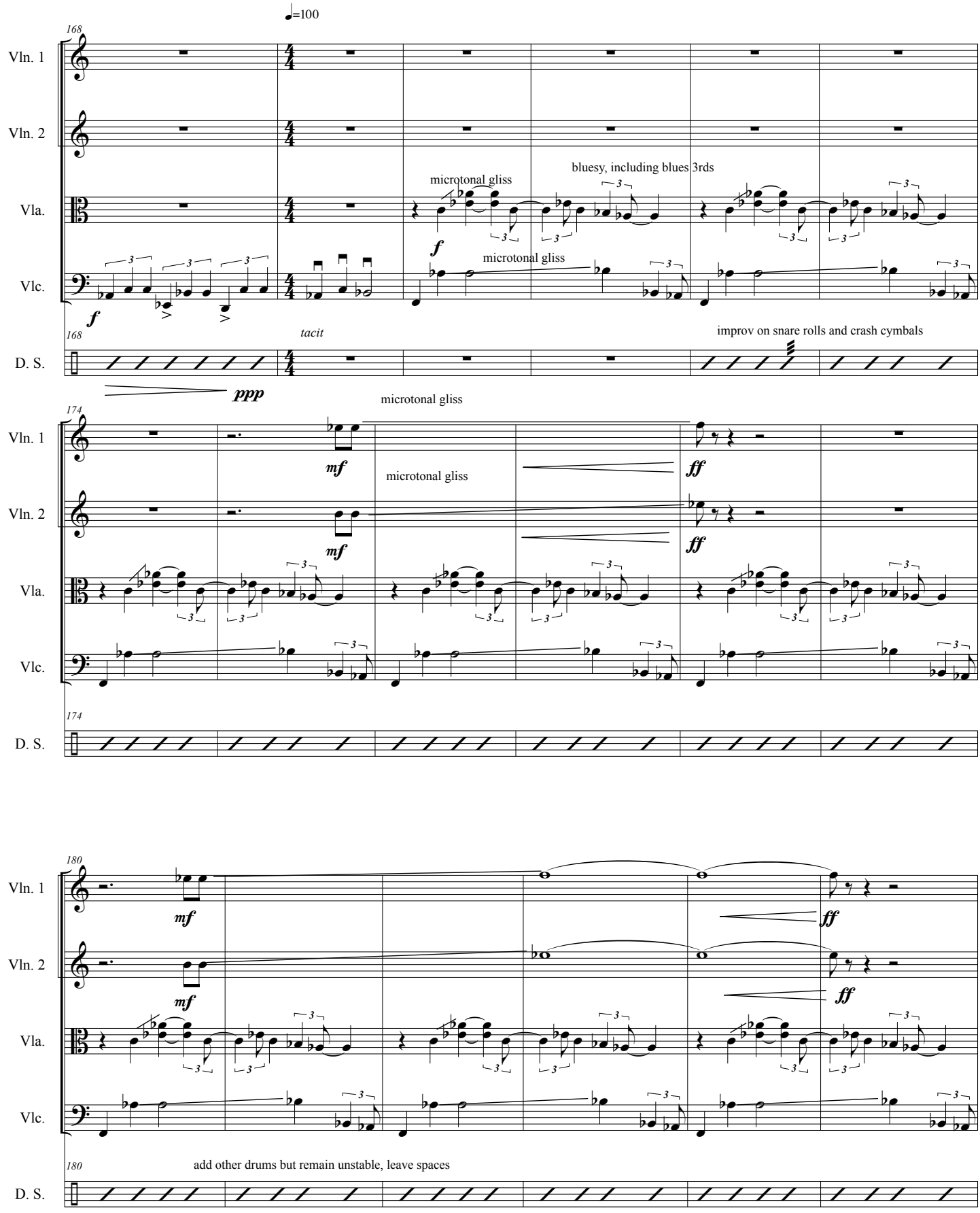

140
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
pizz.
mf
140
D. S.
inprov on toms between phrases
142
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
142
D. S.
add hi hat (foot) on beats, continue toms
144
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
144
D. S.

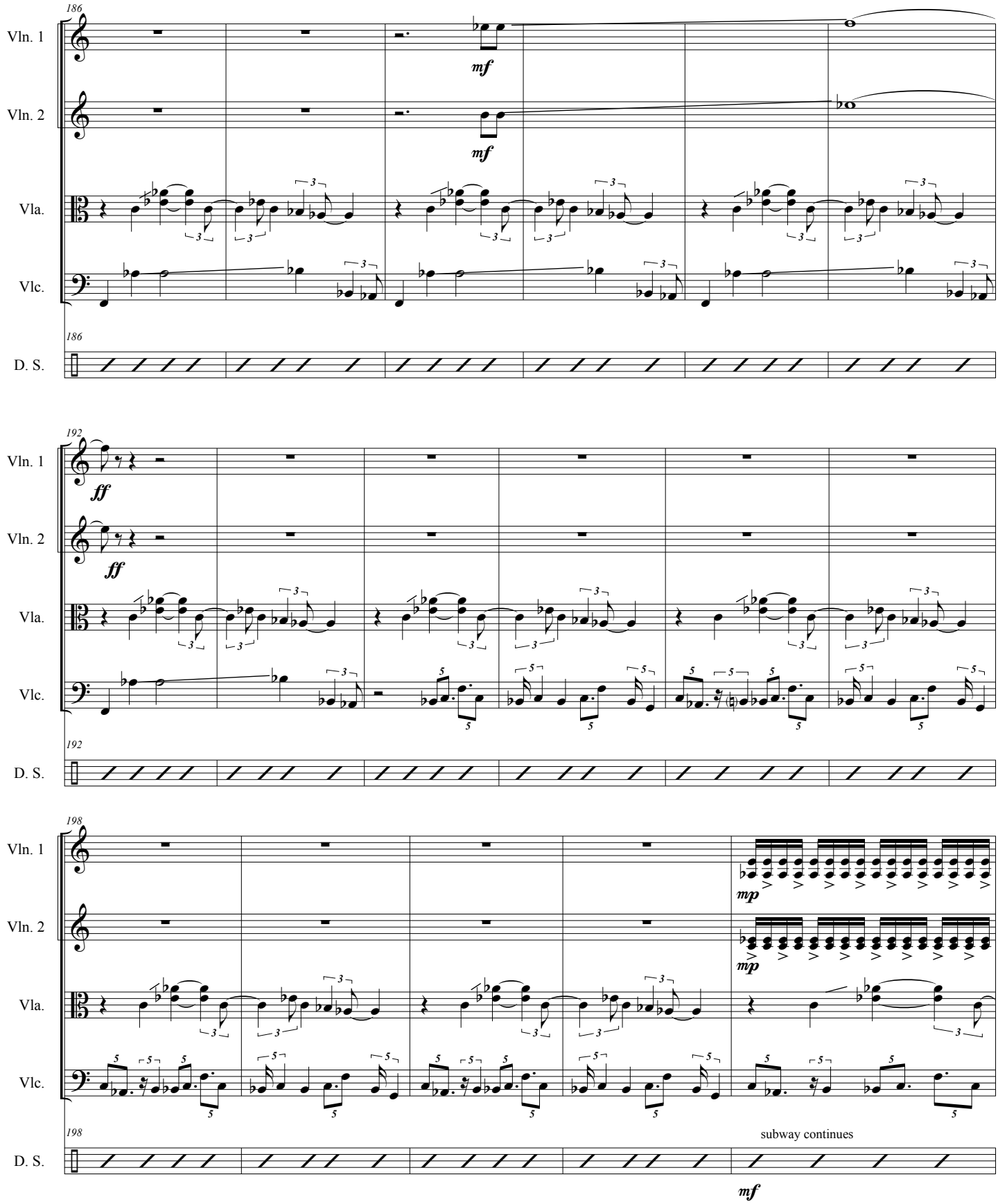

145
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
147
148

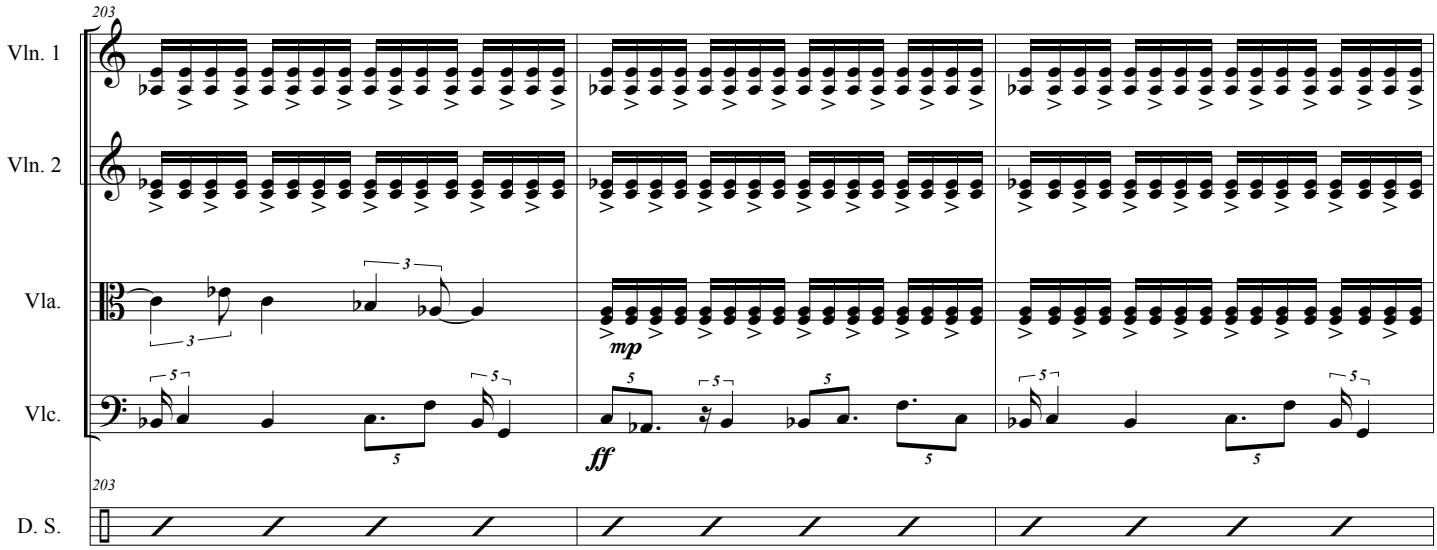

149
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
149
D. S.
151
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
151
D. S.
152
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
152
D. S.

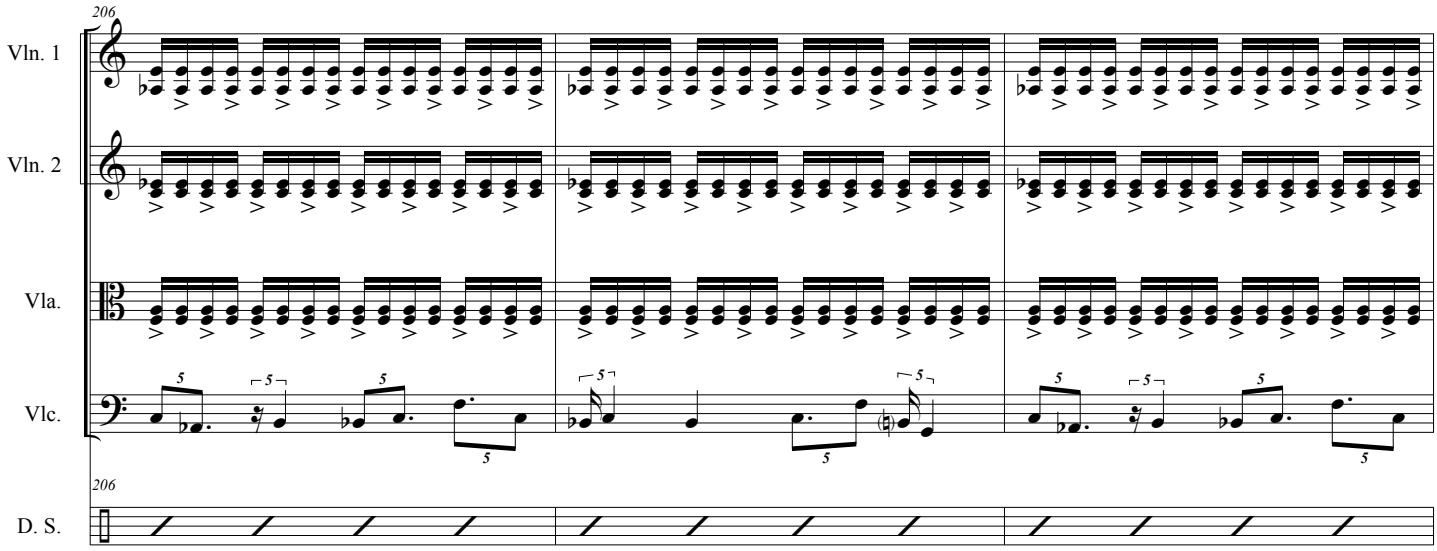

155
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
155
D. S.
157
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
157
D. S.
159
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
159
D. S.


161
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
light fills on cymbals
subito p
163
165
arco
f

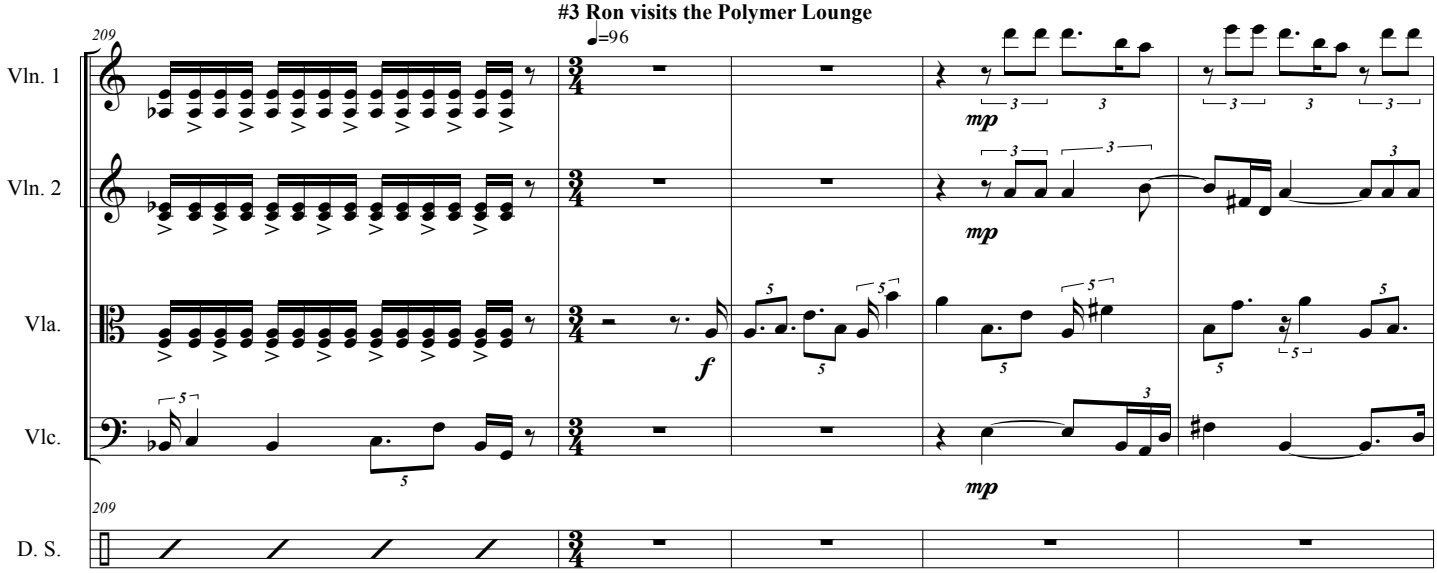

♩=100
168
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
f
microtonal gliss
bluesy, including blues 3rds
microtonal gliss
tacit
improv on snare rolls and crash cymbals
ppp
174
mf
microtonal gliss
ff
180
add other drums but remain unstable, leave spaces

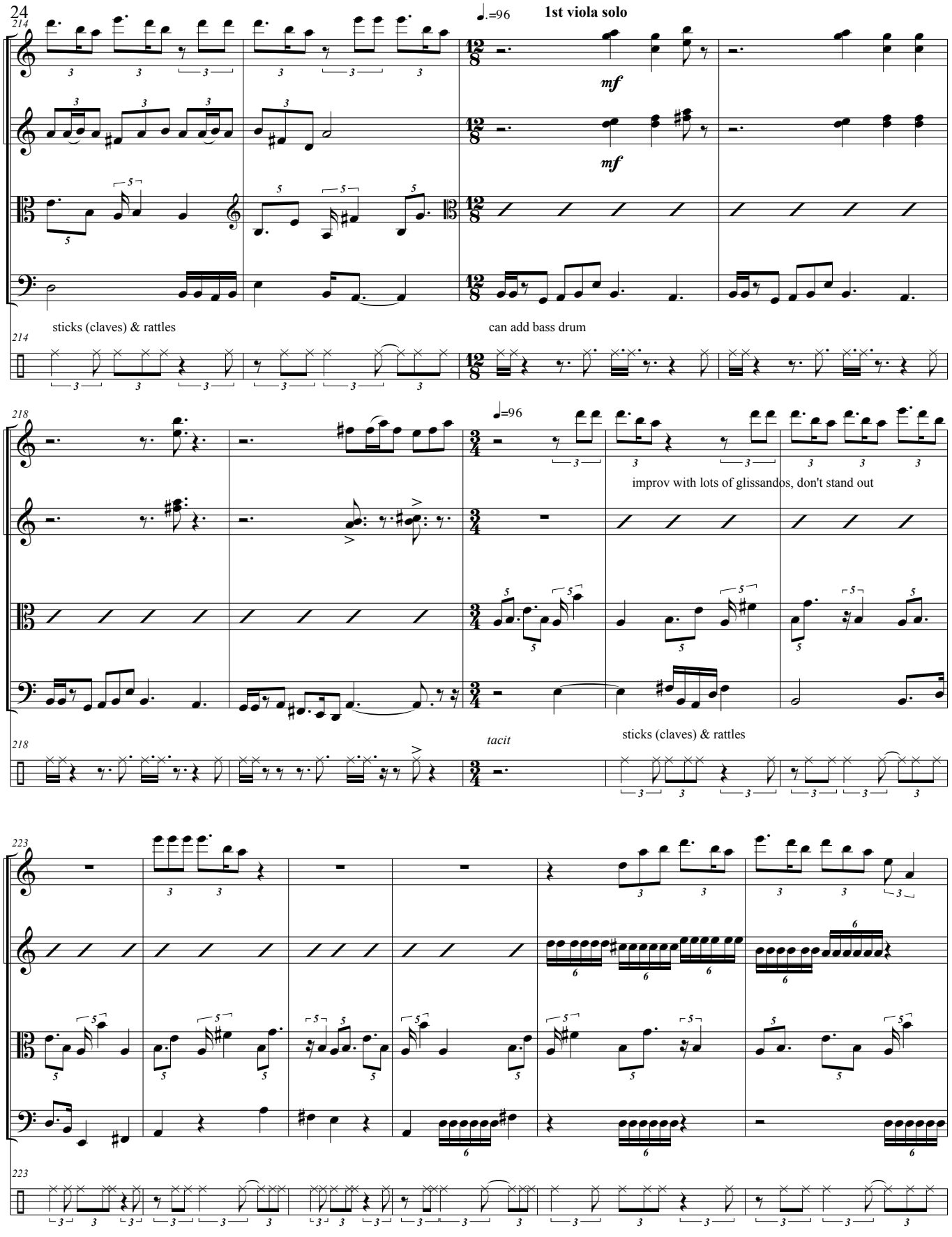

186
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
mf
mf
192
ff
ff
198
mp
mp
subway continues
mf

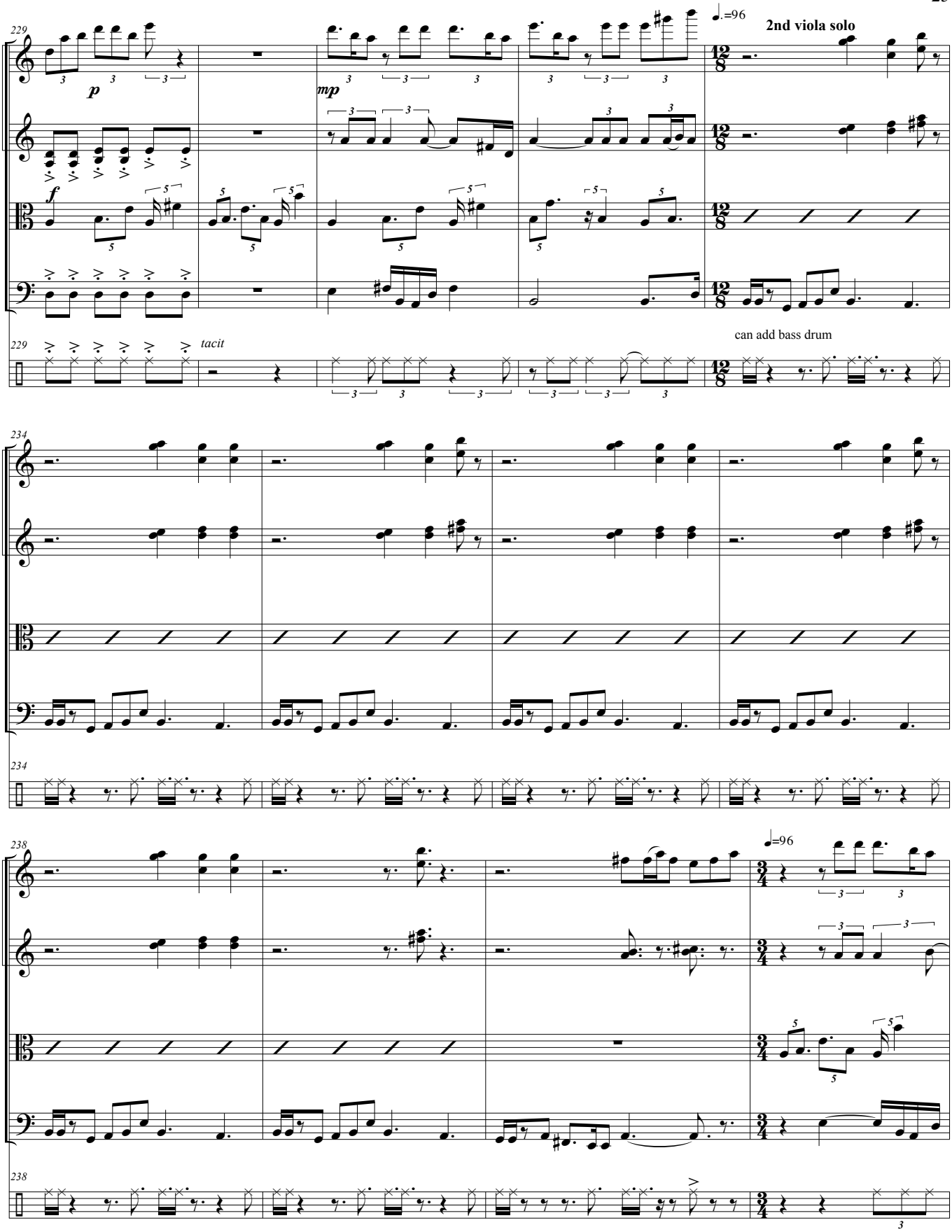


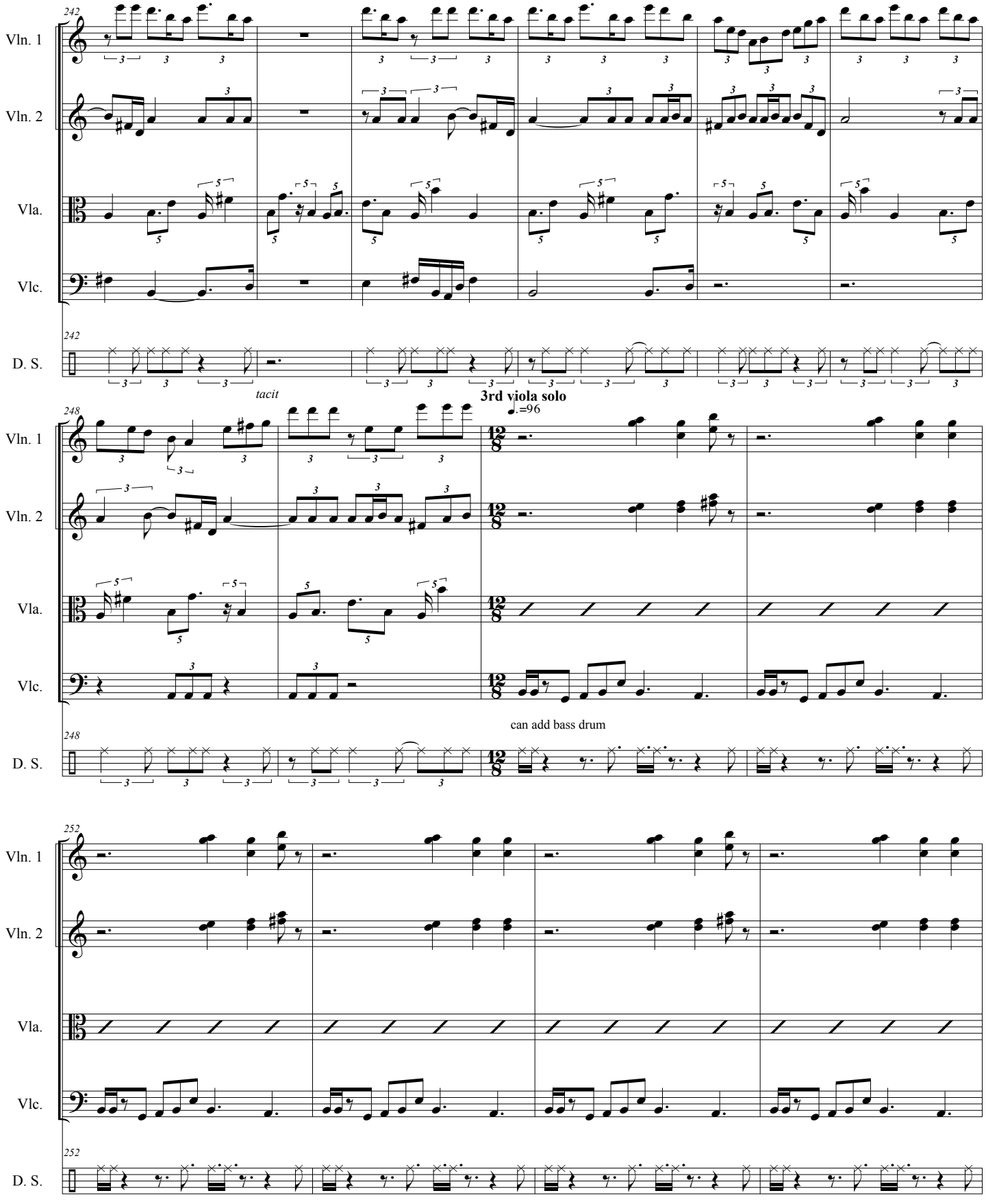


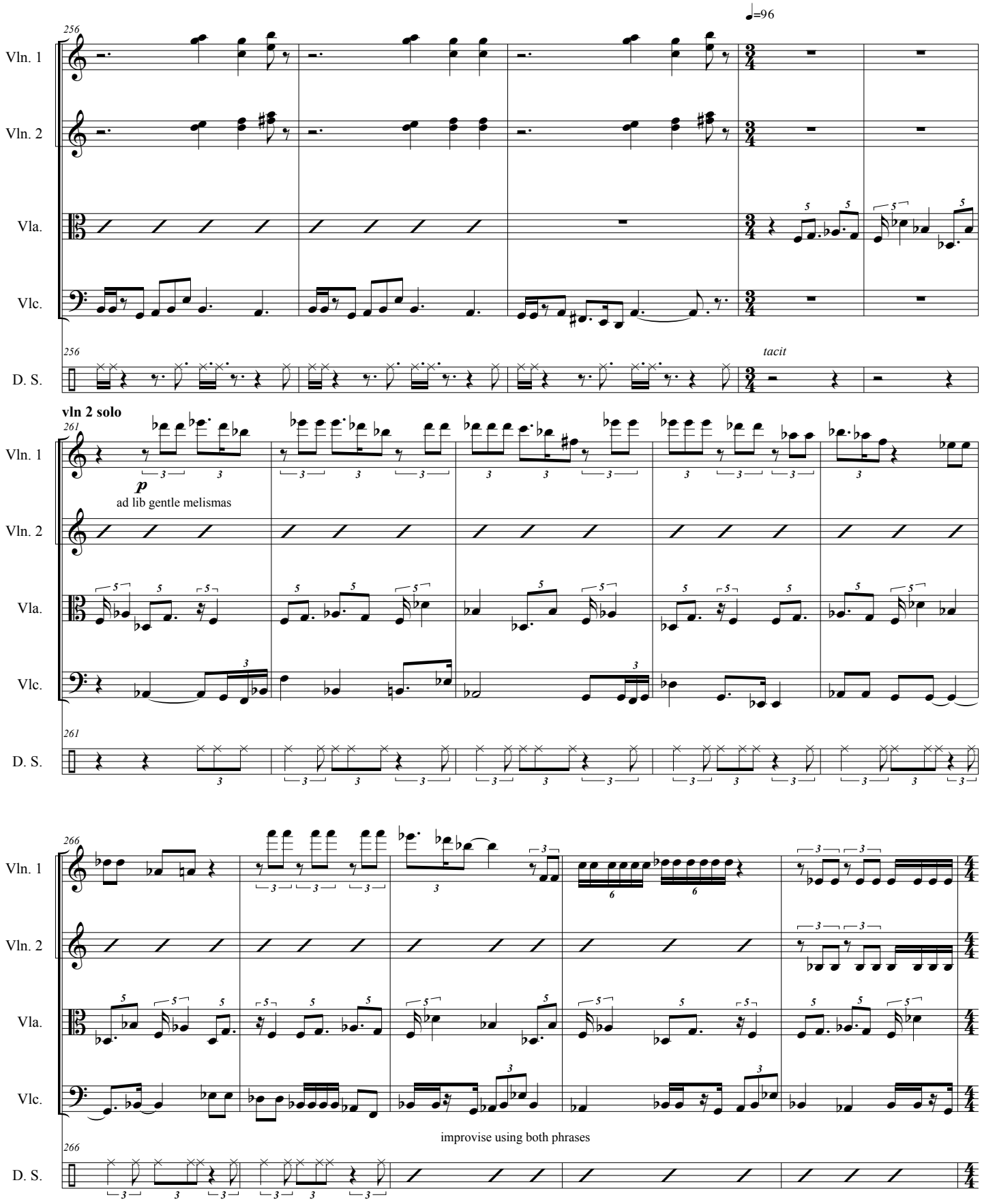
#3 Ron visits the Polymer Lounge

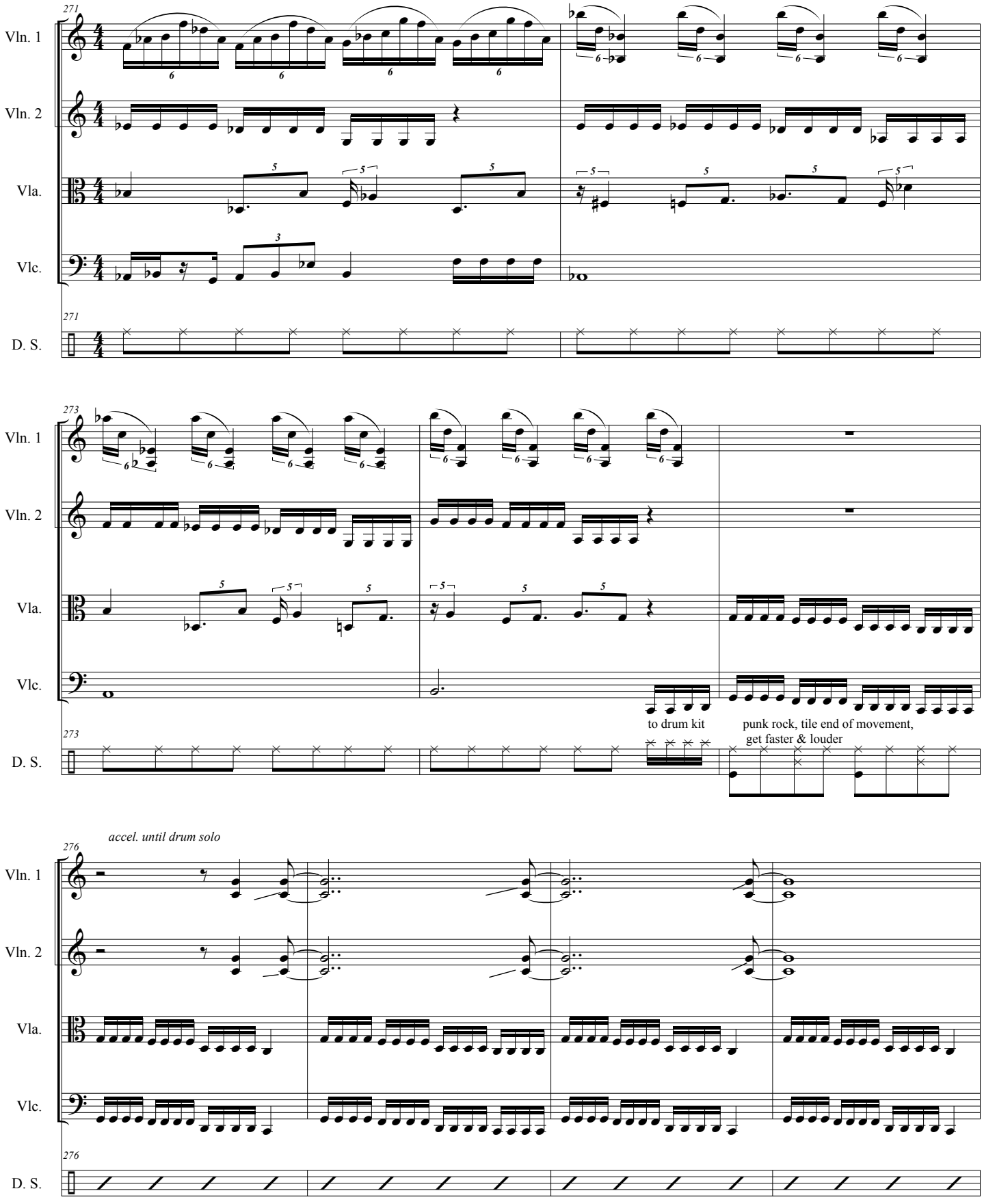


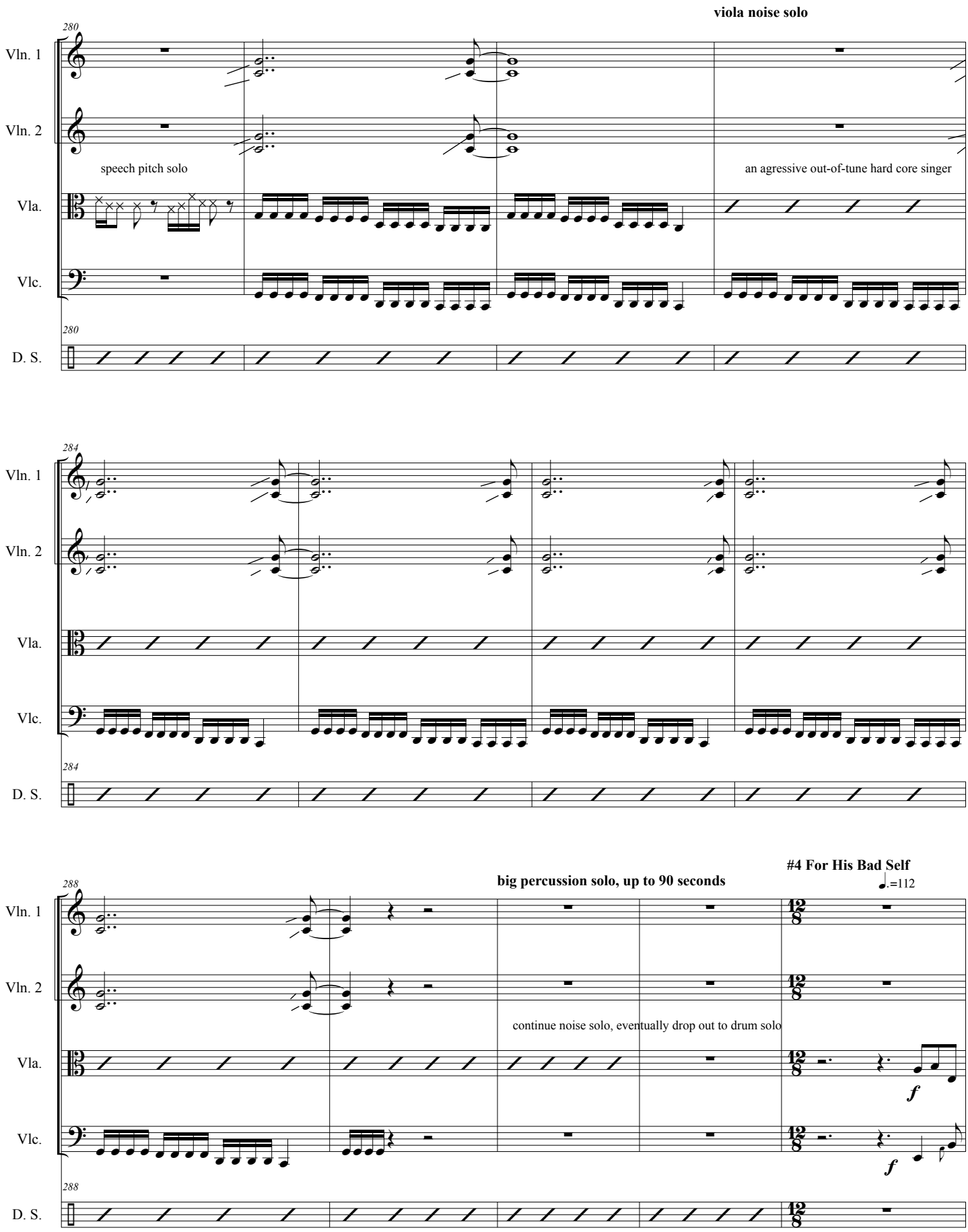

214
♩.=96
1st viola solo
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
mf
mf
sticks (claves) & rattles
can add bass drum
D. S.
218
♩=96
improv with lots of glissandos, don't stand out
tacit
sticks (claves) & rattles
223

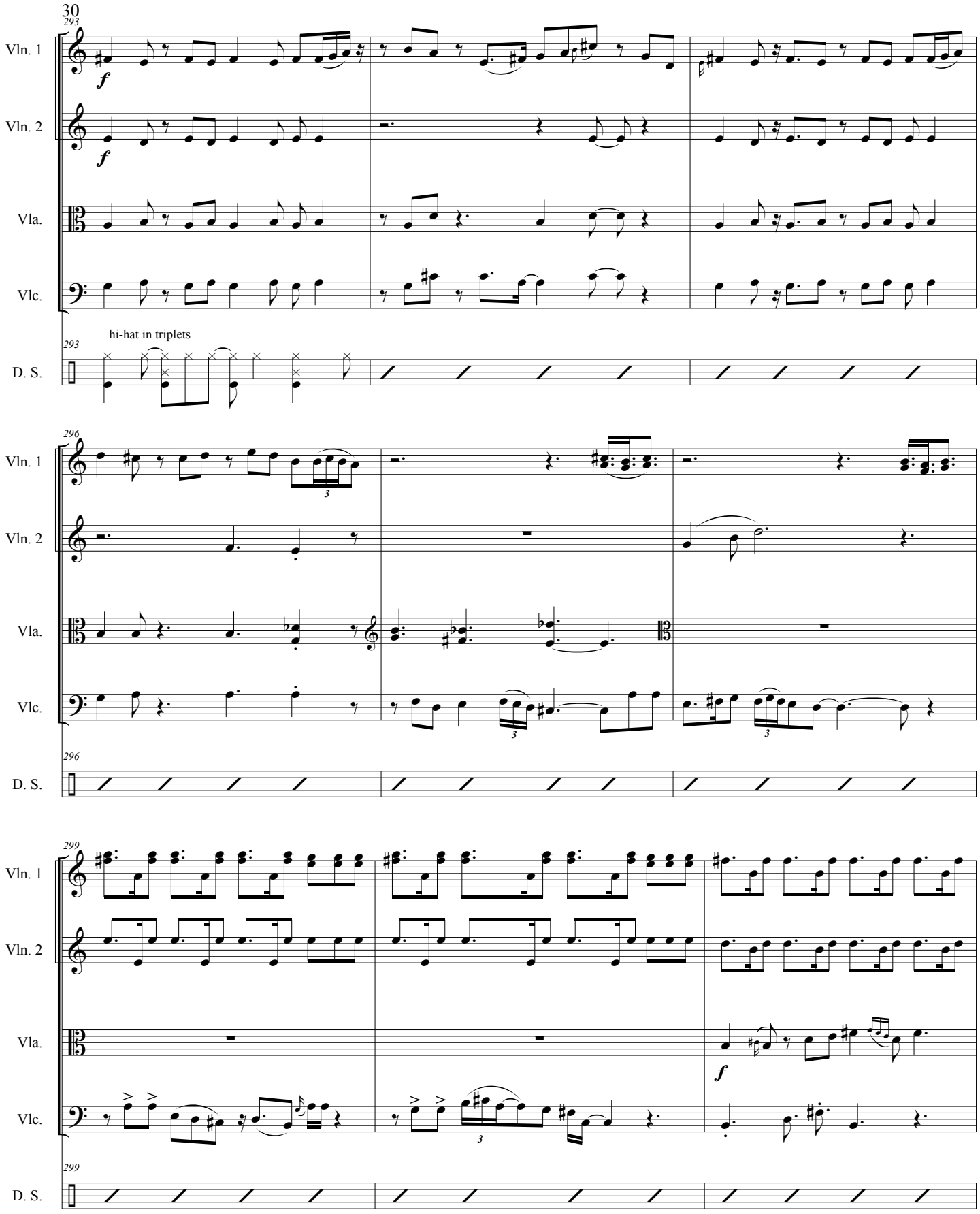

229
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
p
mp
f
tacit
♩.=96
2nd viola solo
can add bass drum
234
238
♩=96

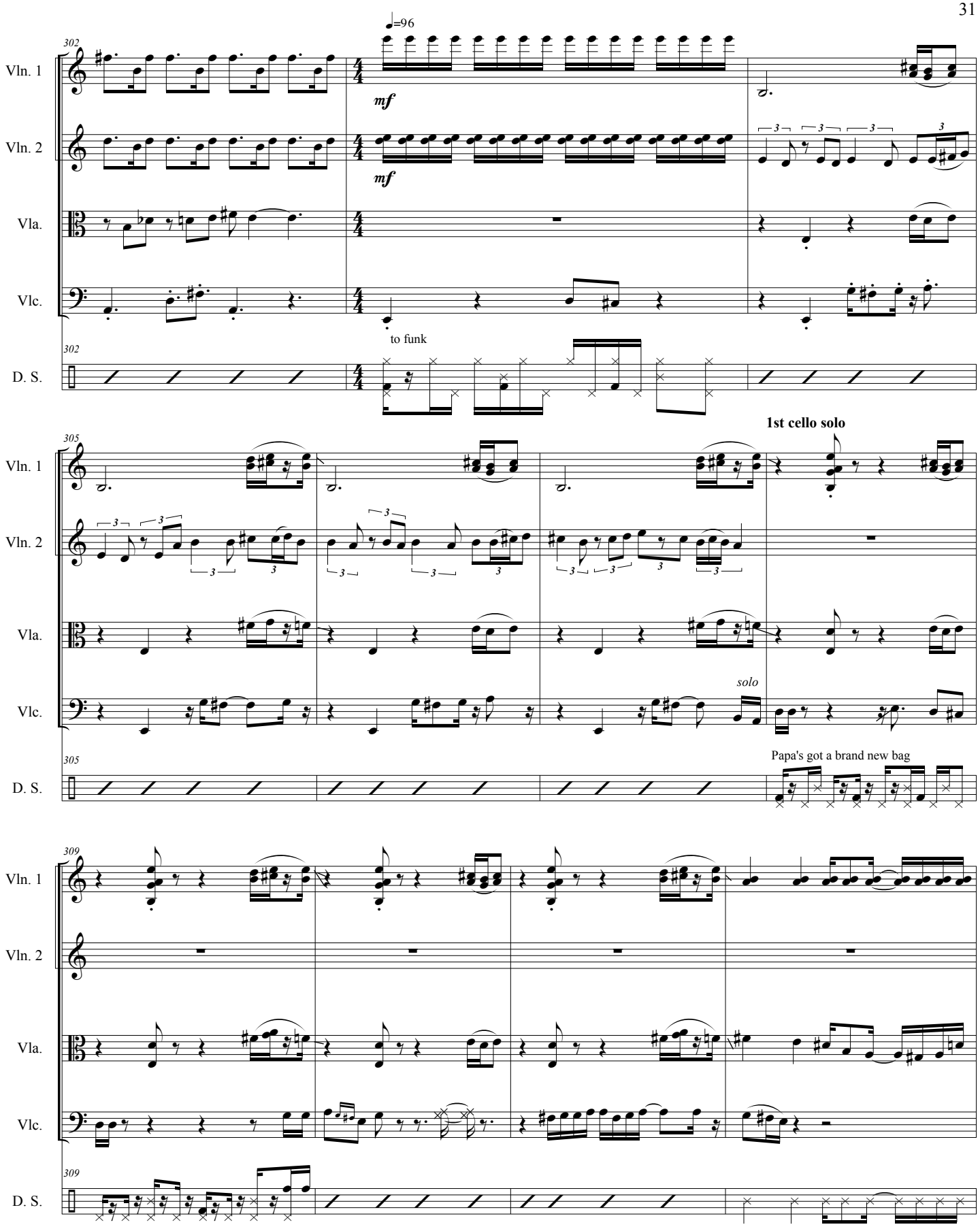

242
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
242
tacit
3rd viola solo
248
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
248
can add bass drum
252
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
252

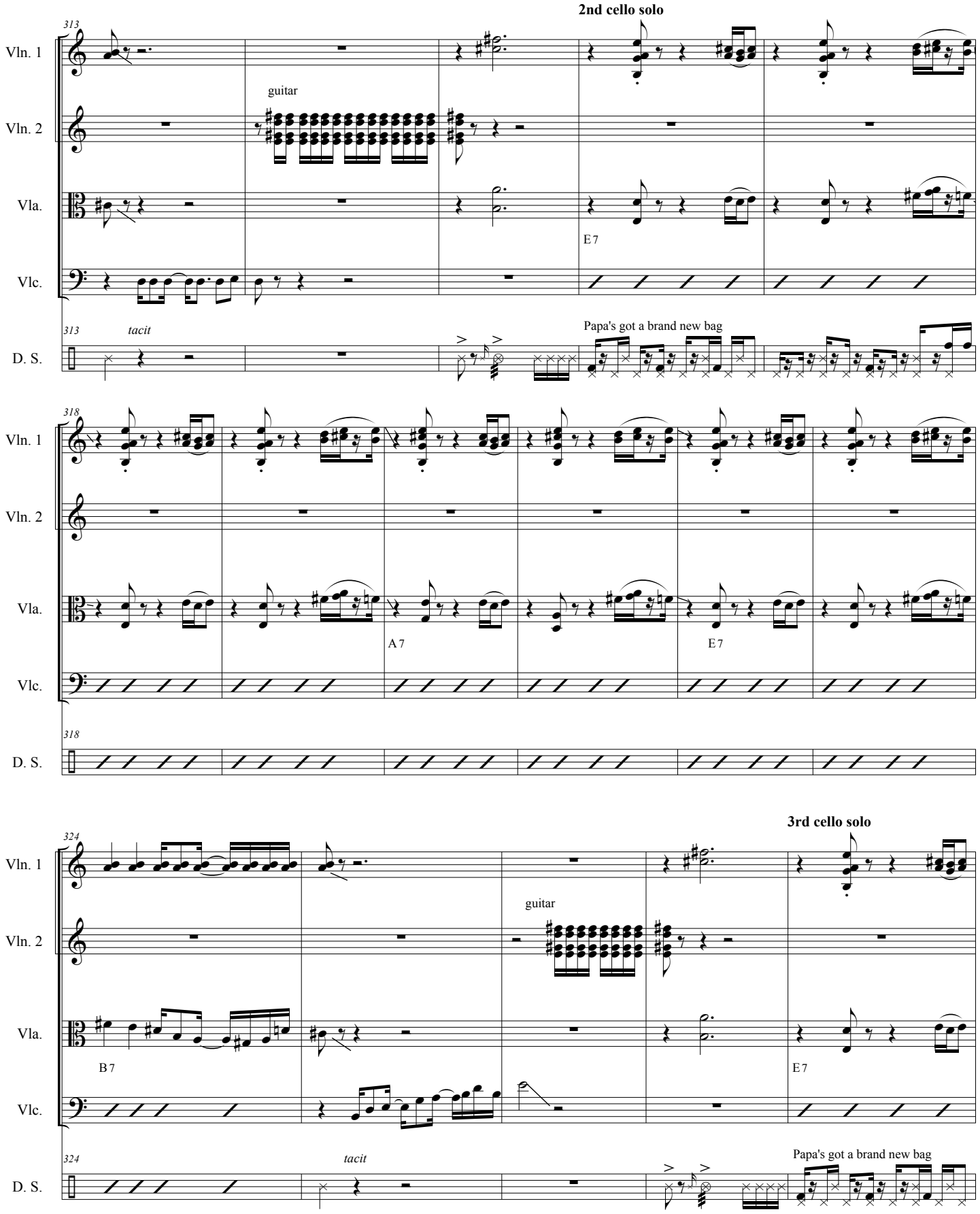

♩=96
256
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
tacit
vln 2 solo
261
p
ad lib gentle melismas
266
improvise using both phrases

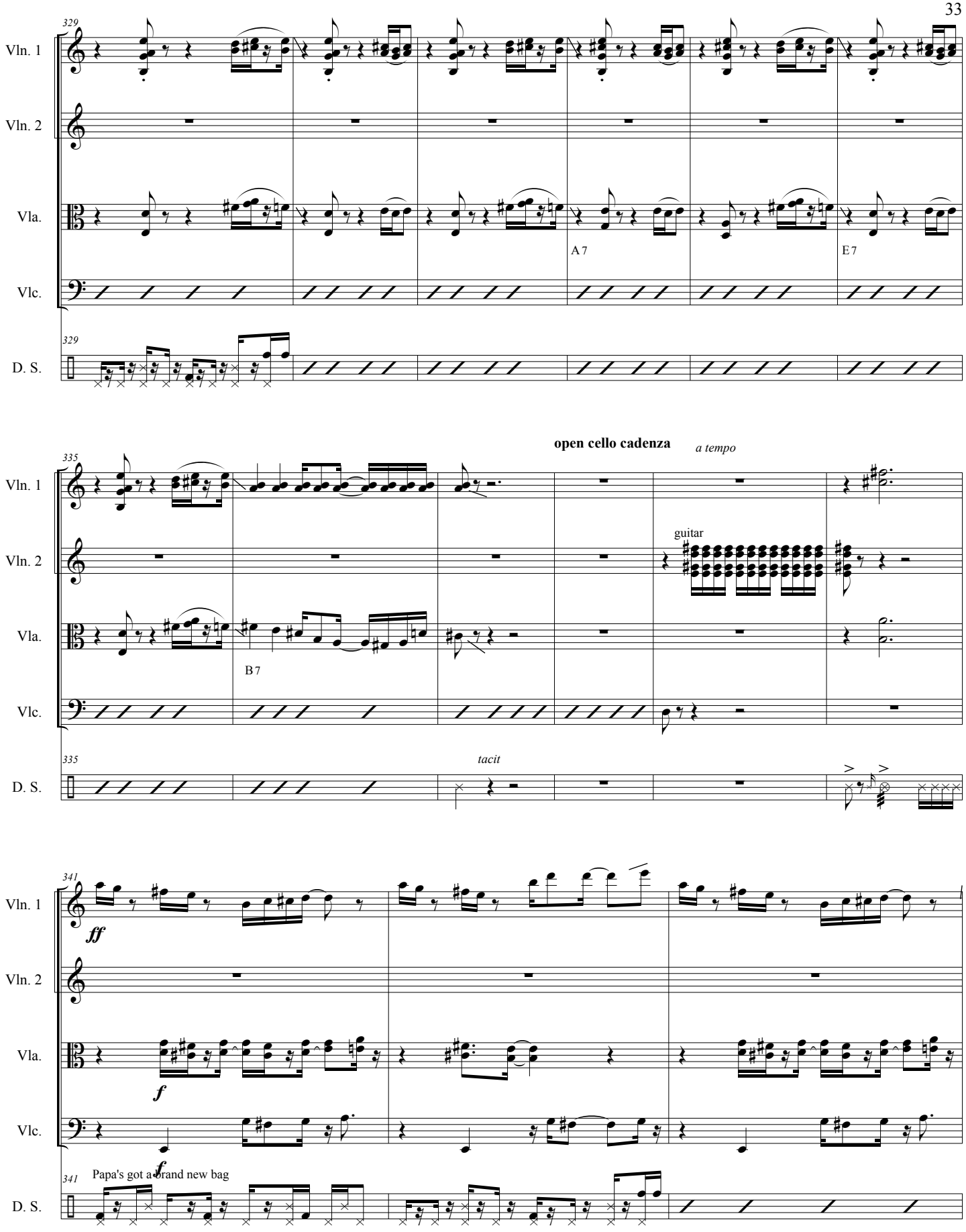

271
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
273
to drum kit
punk rock, tile end of movement,
get faster & louder
accel. until drum solo
276


viola noise solo
280
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
speech pitch solo
an agressive out-of-tune hard core singer
Vla.
Vlc.
280
D. S.
284
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
284
D. S.
#4 For His Bad Self
big percussion solo, up to 90 seconds
288
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
continue noise solo, eventually drop out to drum solo
Vla.
Vlc.
288
D. S.


30
293
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
hi-hat in triplets
D. S.
296
299
f
3

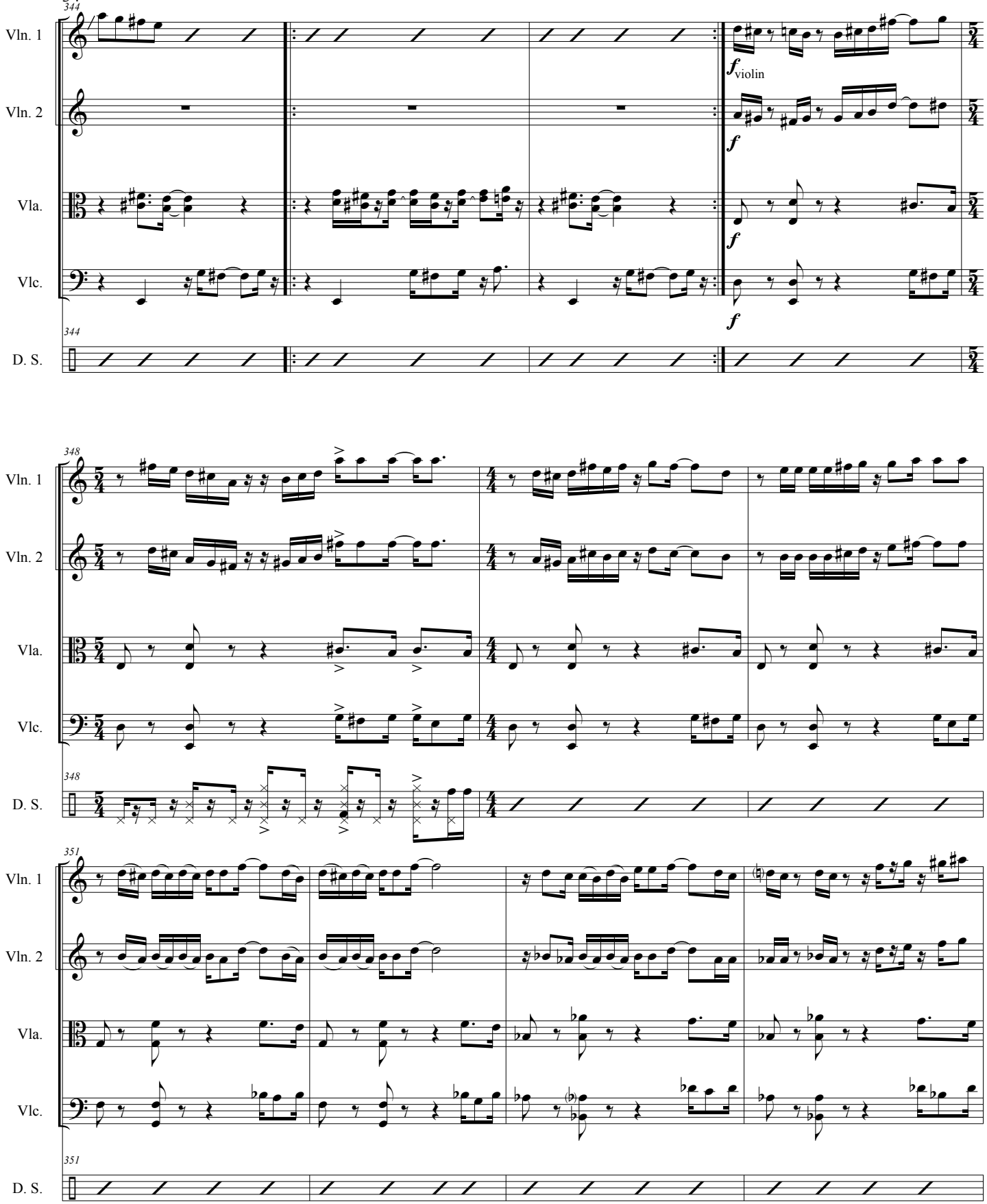

♩=96
302
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
mf
mf
to funk
305
1st cello solo
solo
Papa's got a brand new bag
309

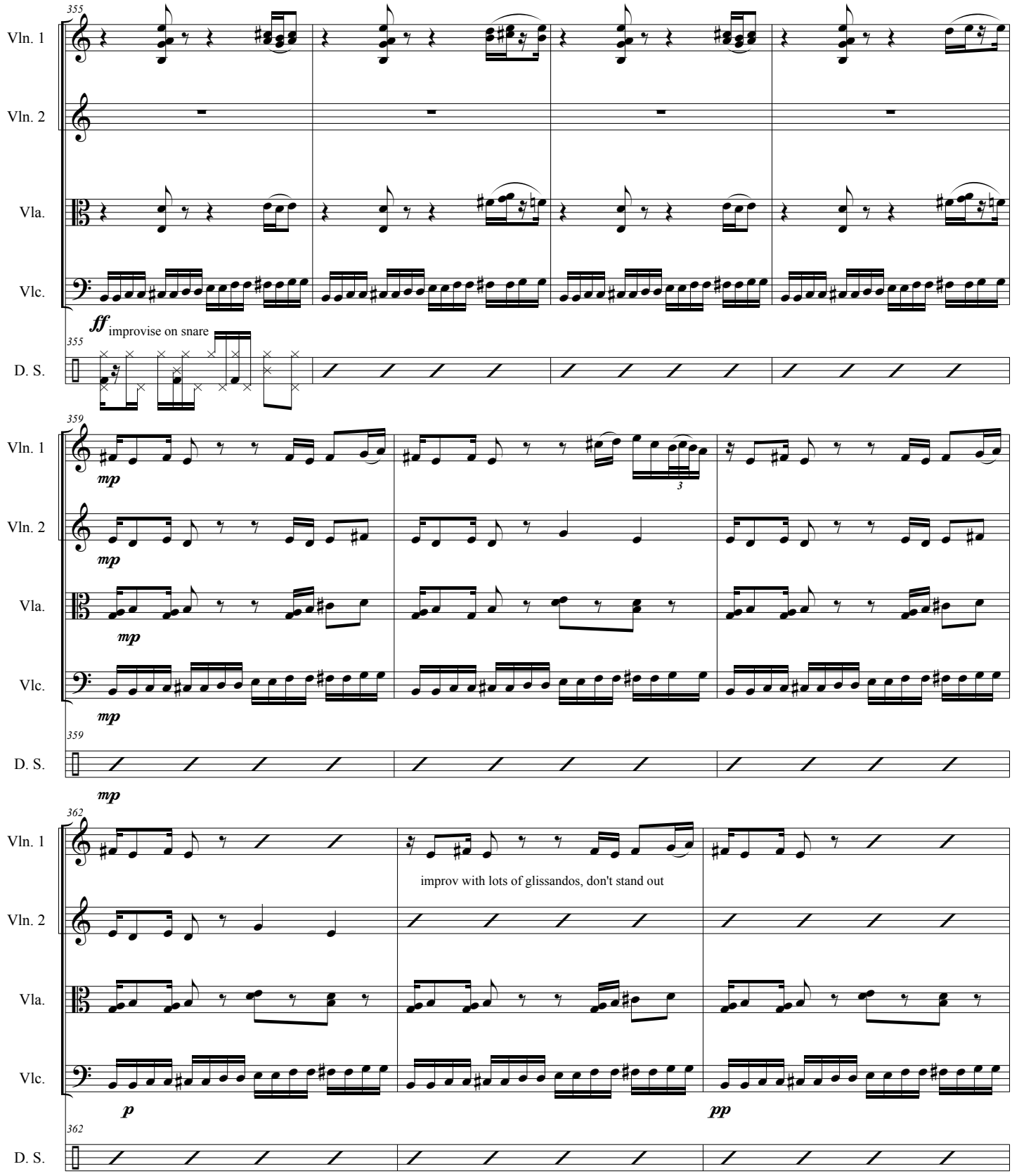

2nd cello solo
313
Vln. 1
guitar
Vln. 2
Vla.
E 7
Vlc.
313
tacit
Papa's got a brand new bag
D. S.
318
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
A 7
E 7
Vlc.
318
D. S.
3rd cello solo
324
Vln. 1
guitar
Vln. 2
Vla.
B 7
E 7
Vlc.
324
tacit
Papa's got a brand new bag
D. S.

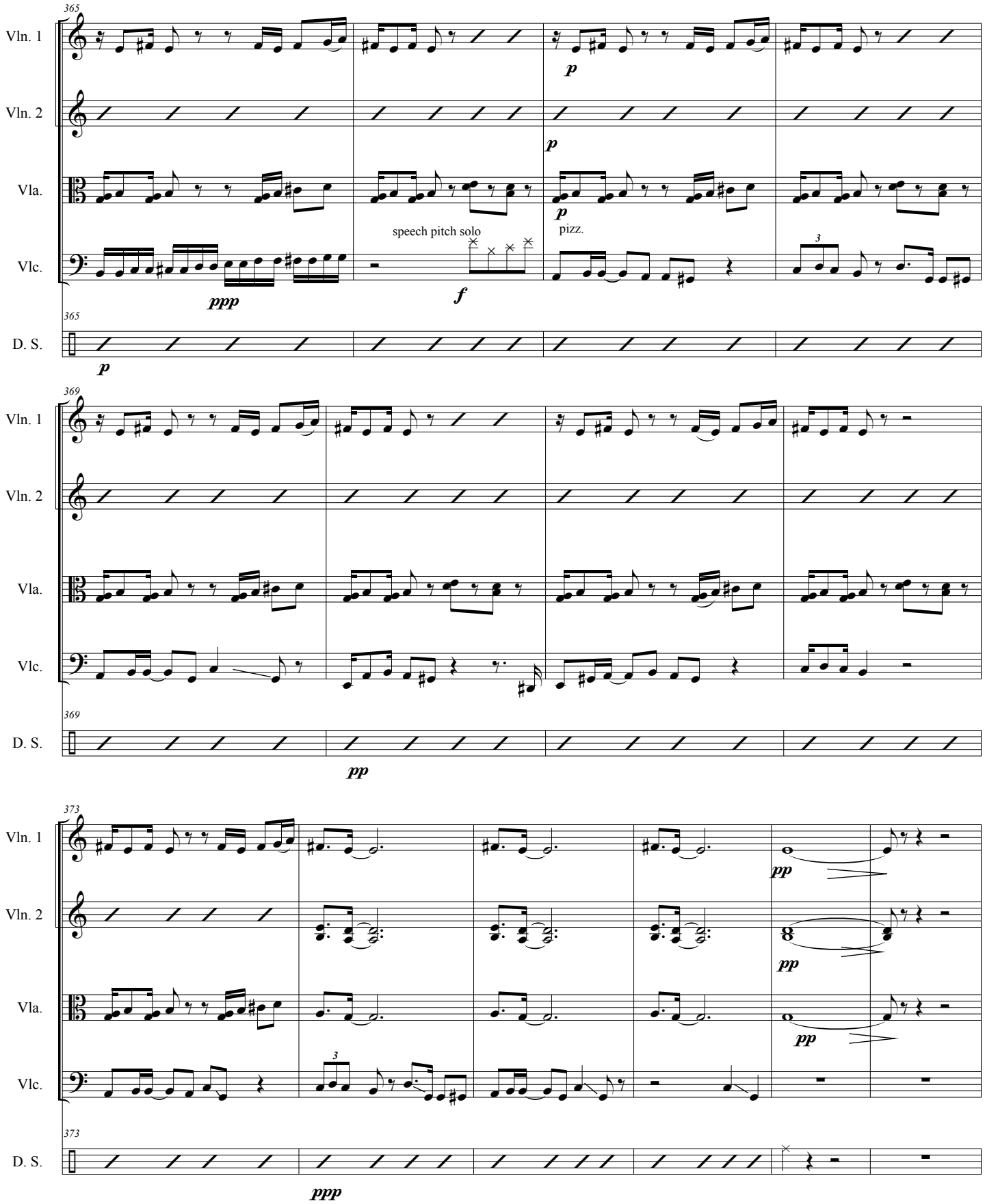

329
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
A 7
E 7
335
open cello cadenza
a tempo
guitar
B 7
tacit
341
ff
f
f
Papa's got a brand new bag

34

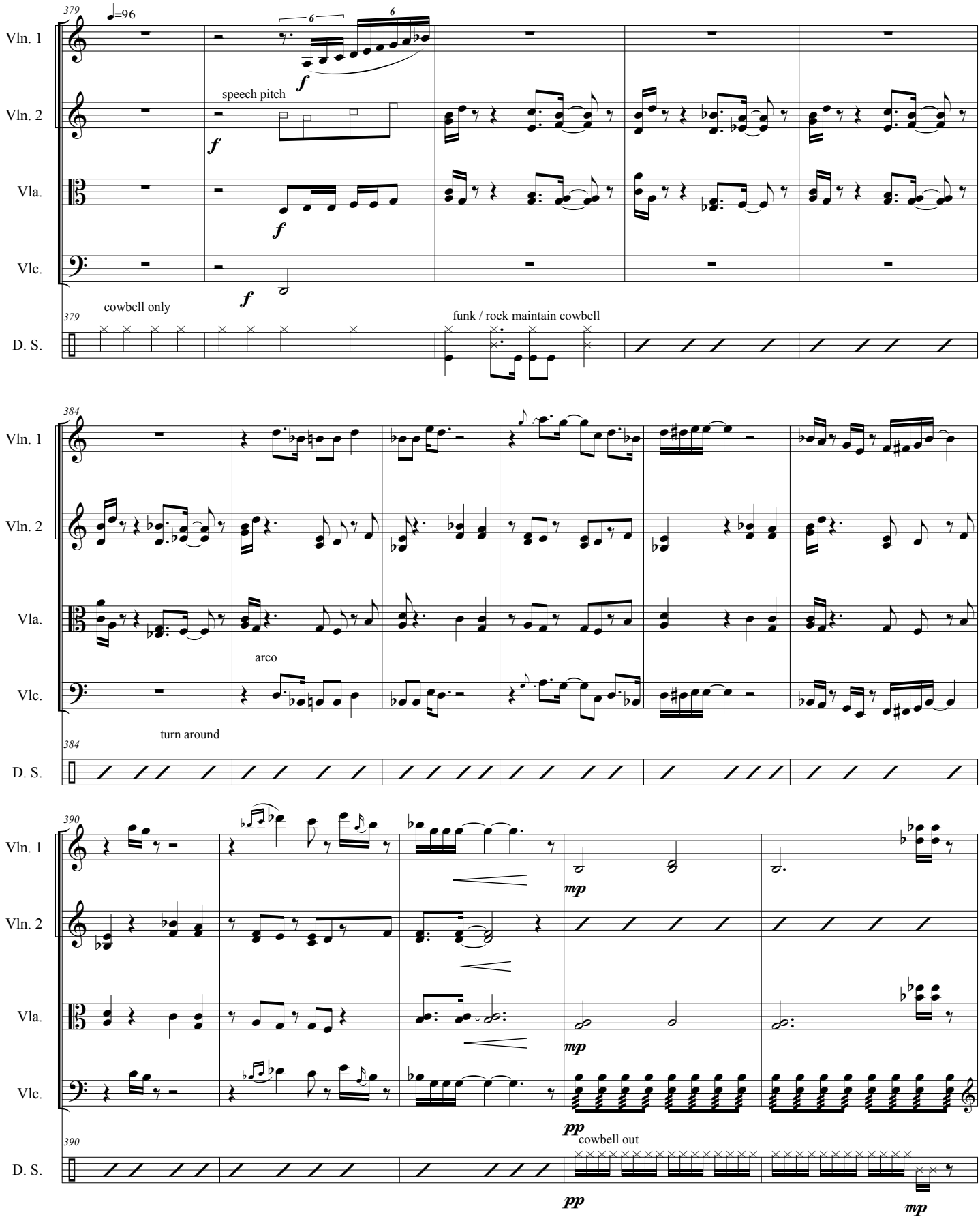
open repeats for 1st vln solo

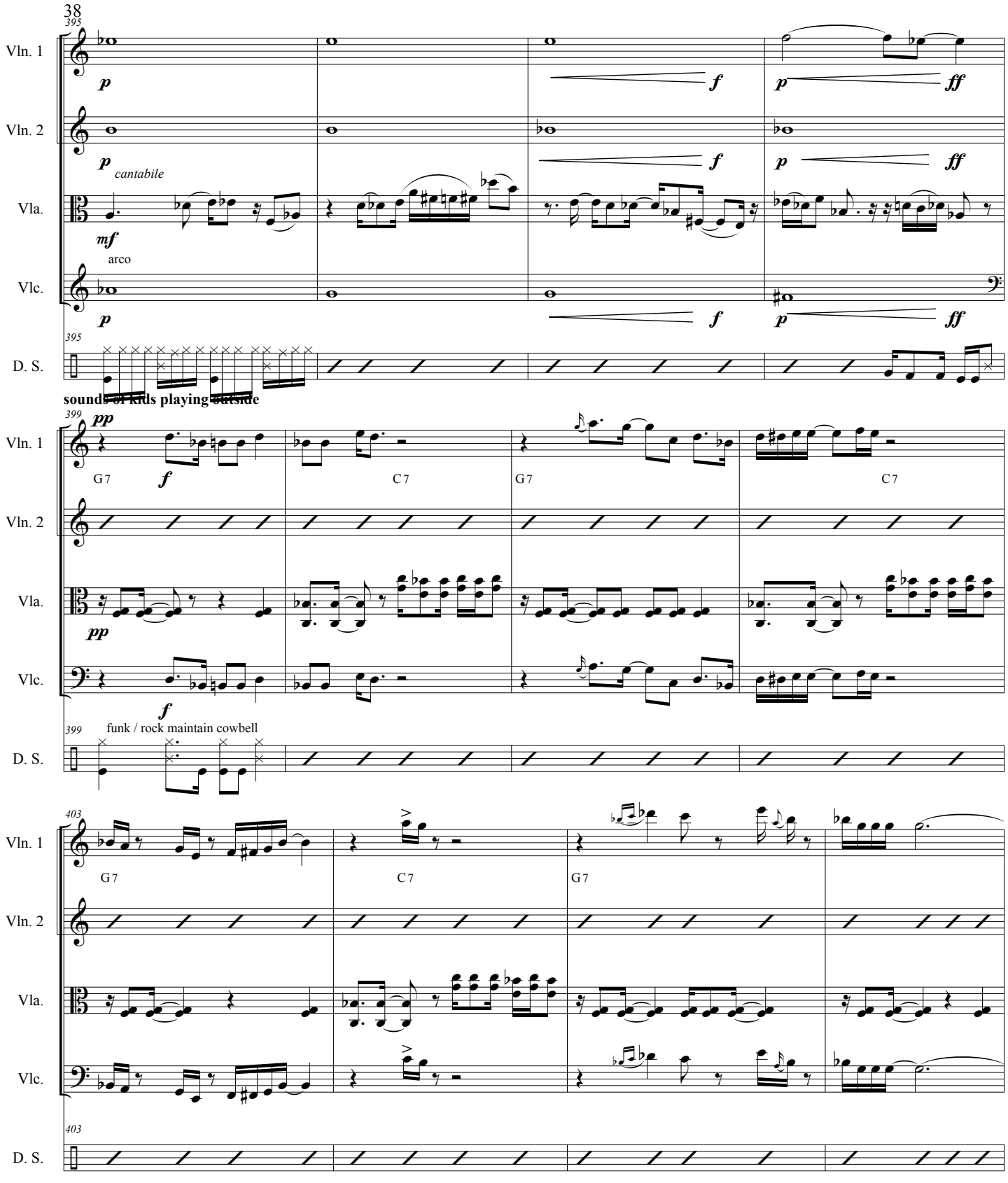


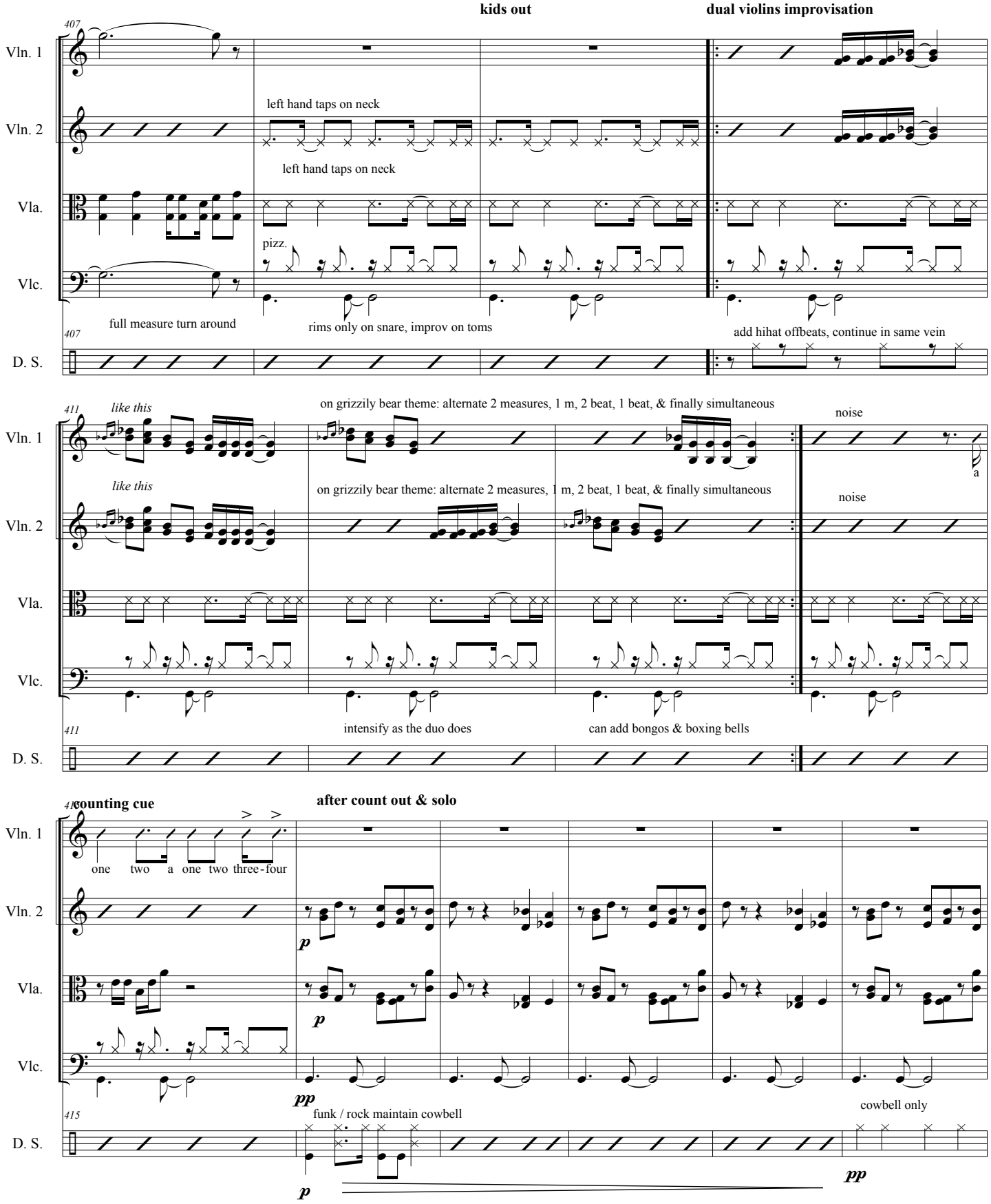

355
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
ff improvise on snare
355
D. S.
359
Vln. 1
mp
3
Vln. 2
mp
Vla.
mp
Vlc.
mp
359
D. S.
mp
362
Vln. 1
improv with lots of glissandos, don't stand out
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
p
pp
362
D. S.

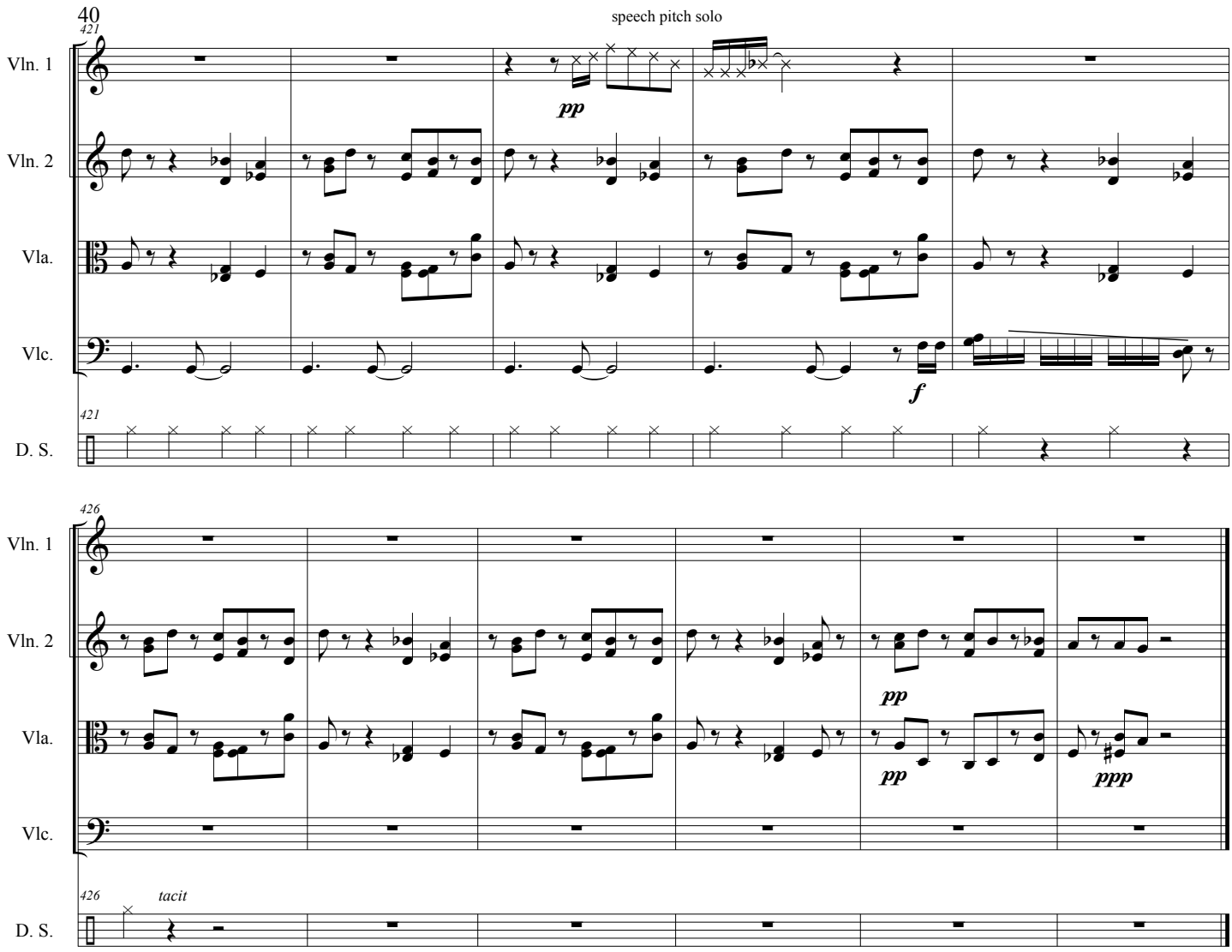

365
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
p
ppp
speech pitch solo
f
pizz.
3
369
pp
373
ppp

#5 She put my head under the water




38
395
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
p
cantabile
mf
arco
f
ff
sounds of kids playing outside
399
pp
G 7
C 7
funk / rock maintain cowbell
403


kids out
dual violins improvisation
407
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
left hand taps on neck
left hand taps on neck
pizz.
full measure turn around
rims only on snare, improv on toms
add hihat offbeats, continue in same vein
411
like this
like this
on grizzily bear theme: alternate 2 measures, 1 m, 2 beat, 1 beat, & finally simultaneous
on grizzily bear theme: alternate 2 measures, 1 m, 2 beat, 1 beat, & finally simultaneous
noise
noise
a
intensify as the duo does
can add bongos & boxing bells
415
counting cue
after count out & solo
one two a one two three-four
p
p
pp
funk / rock maintain cowbell
cowbell only
p
pp


421
speech pitch solo
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
D. S.
pp
f
426
tacit
pp
pp
ppp