UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

Date: 9 June 2004

I, Gabriel Ottoson-Deal,

hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Music

in:

Composition

It is entitled:

Angelitos de papel
for string quartet

This work and its defense approved by:

Chair:

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Angelitos de papel

for string quartet

A thesis submitted to the

Division of Research and Advanced Studies
of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

in the Division of Composition, Musicology, and Theory
of the College-Conservatory of Music

2004

by

Gabriel R. Ottoson-Deal

B.M., The Ohio State University, 1999

Committee Chair: Dr. Michael Fiday

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Abstract

Angelitos de papel is a study in the relationship between composition, notation, and performance. Each of its three movements proposes a different relationship between these three aspects of a musical work. In the first movement, the composition includes strict control of the turning of pages, which is normally left up to the performers. This draws attention to the (normally extraneous) sound of paper rustling, and creates a dramatic tension between the performers and the paper parts as the accelerating page turns become increasingly frantic. In the second movement, graphic notation gives specific instructions to the performers, and they are asked to do things (playing the paper parts instead of their instruments, and various theatrical actions) that are outside the standard performance practice of the string quartet. However, they have quite a bit of freedom to determine timing, for example choosing how long repeated patterns should continue. The theatrical incursions into this movement dramatize a range of responses to the paper itself, from fascination with the sounds it makes to frustration and even violence.

In the third movement, verbal instructions leave the performers great freedom, the composer's role being to lay out a situation and framework for the performers' spontaneous improvisation rather than to control the details of the performance. The return to the use of the parts as notation (rather than as instruments) occurs in a bemused atmosphere; and the function of the notation is transformed, as is the resulting music, by the gamelike situation set up by the verbal instructions for this movement. The section of free improvisation near the end allows the performers to transcend the limits of the notation (both the conventional notation of the parts and the verbal instructions) for a short time. Nonetheless, even in the free improvisation, the musical materials are limited to those provided by the composer; and the Epilogue, though played from memory in performance, is composed and notated just as strictly (and conventionally) as the opening of the piece, even though the exact route the performers take to reach it is left up to them to find.

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Performance Notes

Materials: Score, 4 practice parts, 4 performance parts. (The practice parts are intended to facilitate learning the notes of the first movement, without the additional complication of the page turns found in the performance parts. They also include the graphic notation for the second movement and instructions for the third, which are not found in the performance parts.)

There should be no breaks between the movements. The total duration is dependent on the performer's choices in the aleatoric and improvisatory sections, but should range about15'-25'.

I. music paper (Duration: 6'-7')

VS in the score and practice parts indicates a page turn in the performance part. These page turns are a composed part of the piece and should be studied and practiced like every other aspect of the music. They should be clearly audible; subtle amplification may be used to assist this. At first, where there is plenty of time for each page turn, they should be timed to occur where marked in the score (e.g. the page turn in the cello at m. 45 should occur at the end of that measure, overlapping the end of the viola's 16th-note run), though they should not be too rhythmic or artificial. Later, from the unison page turn at m. 81 on, the amount of time allowed for each page turn becomes progressively shorter, and the turns should simply be made as quickly as possible. From m. 102 on, the page turns begin to approach impossibility, and the music will eventually fall apart under the burden; try to resist this, but ultimately allow it to happen. After m. 129 there is no more notated music in the performance parts, marking the beginning of the second movement, whose graphic notation follows in the score and practice parts.

II. paper music (Duration: ca. 5'-10')

Ideally, the second and third movements should be performed from memory; they are not included in the performance parts since they include instructions for manipulating the parts themselves. The element of theater in the second movement requires particular attention. For much of this movement the timing is unspecified; the notation is roughly spatial, but the relationship between horizontal distance and time varies depending on the needs of space and visual clarity. The performers should take increasing freedom in the timing of events as the piece progresses.

III. angelitos (Duration: ca. 5'-10')

The third movement is an improvisation based on the notated music of the first movement. Instructions, and sample fragments for the improvisation, are found in the score and practice parts. The sample fragments are intended as suggestions, and the improvisation should not be based solely on them. At the end of the improvisation, the Epilogue should be played from memory to close the performance.

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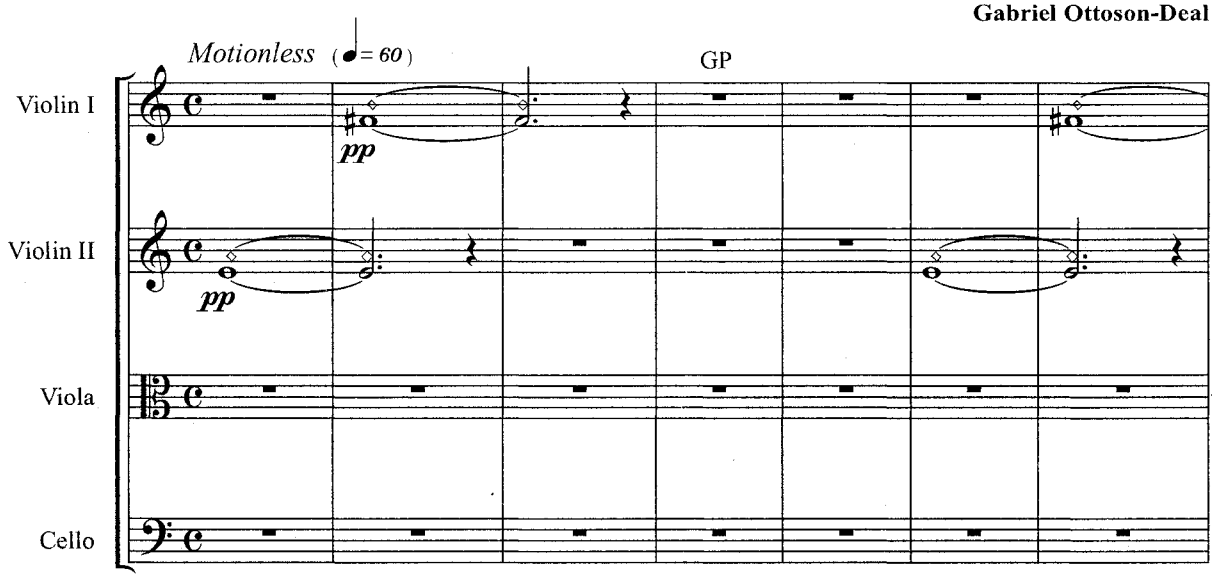
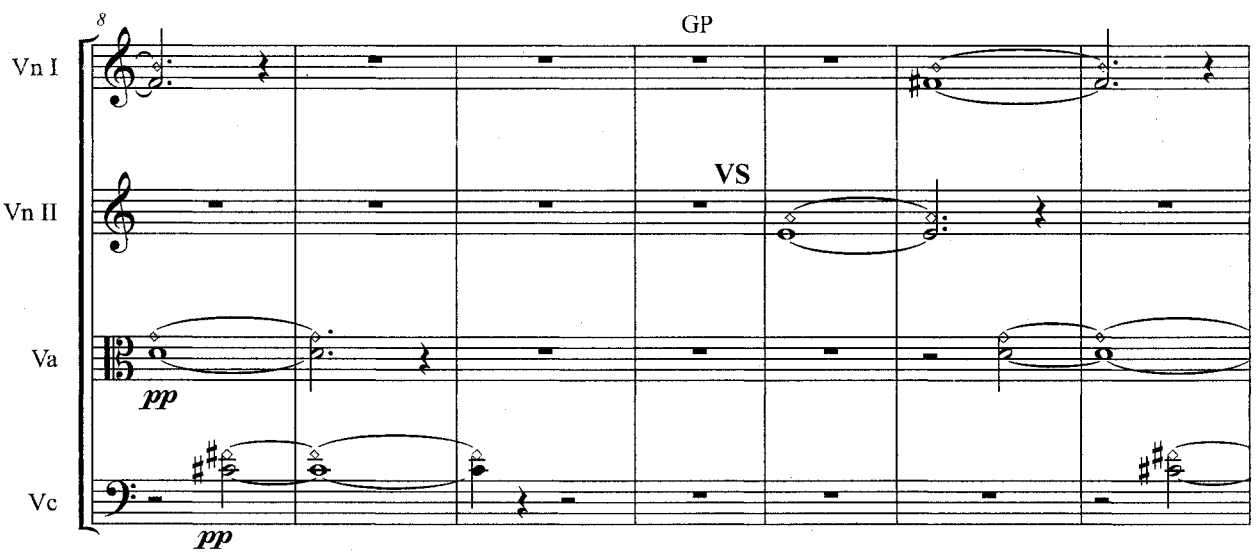
Angelitos de papel

I. music paper

Gabriel Ottoson-Deal





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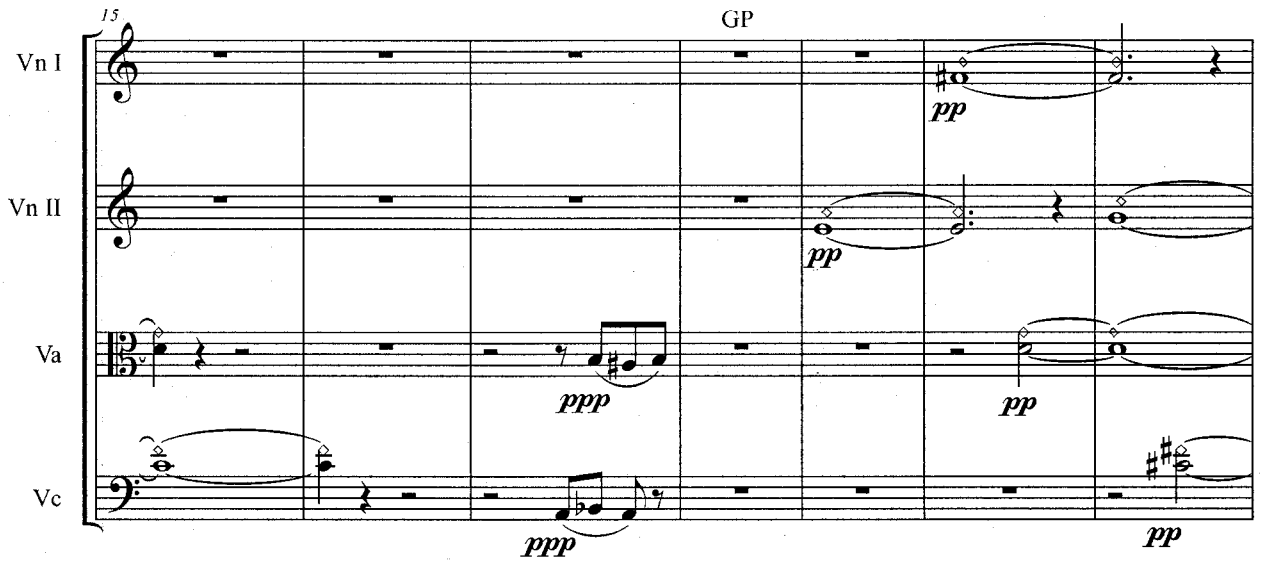

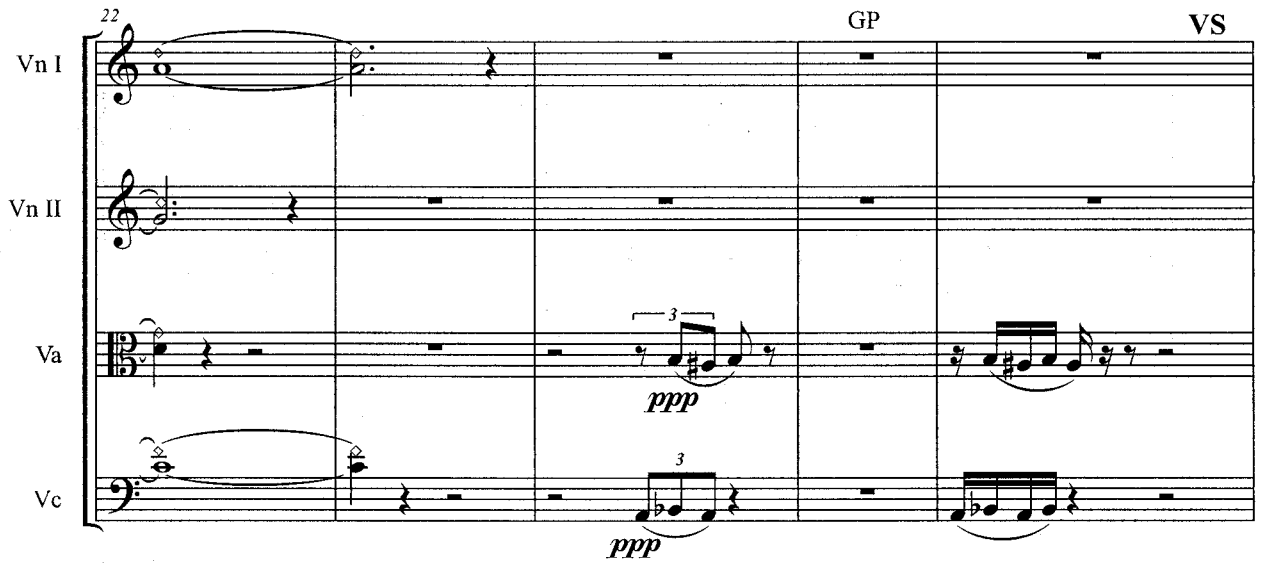

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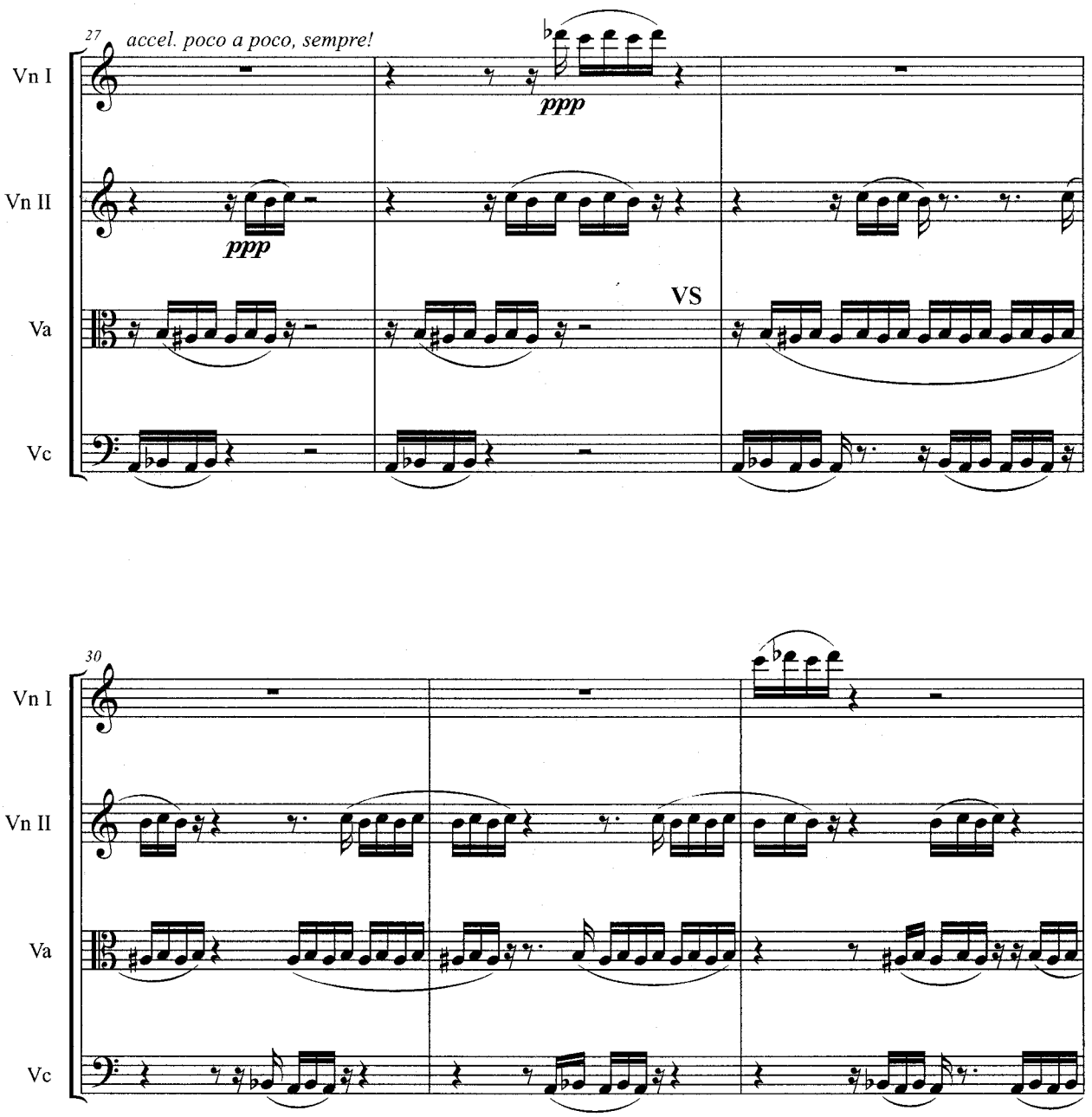

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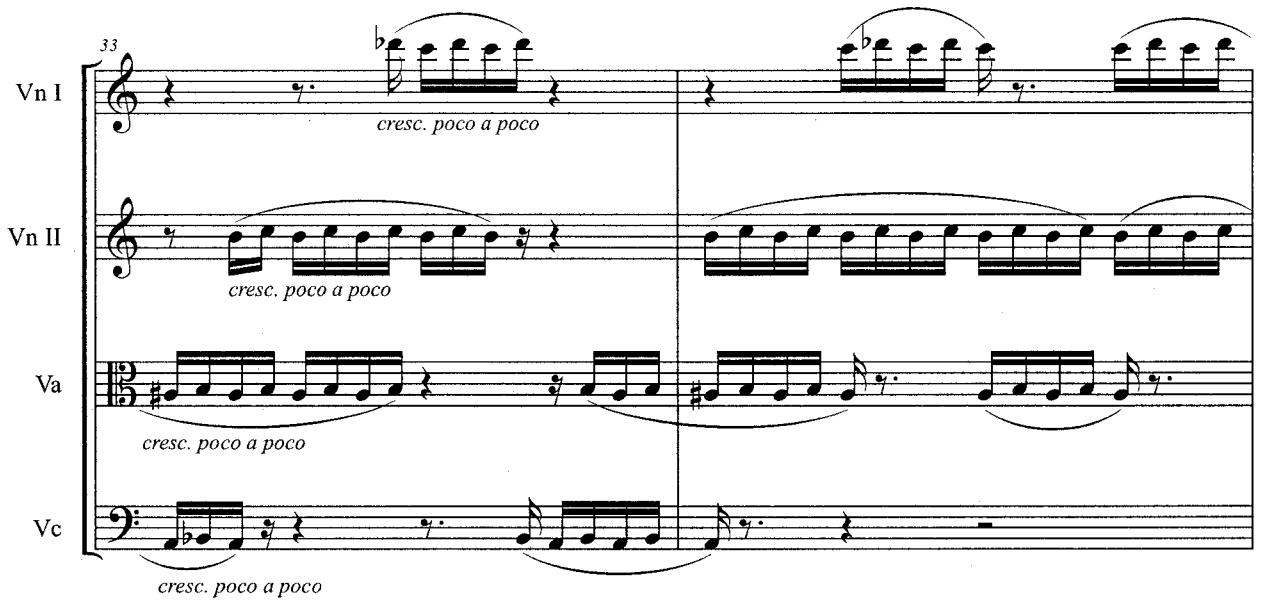

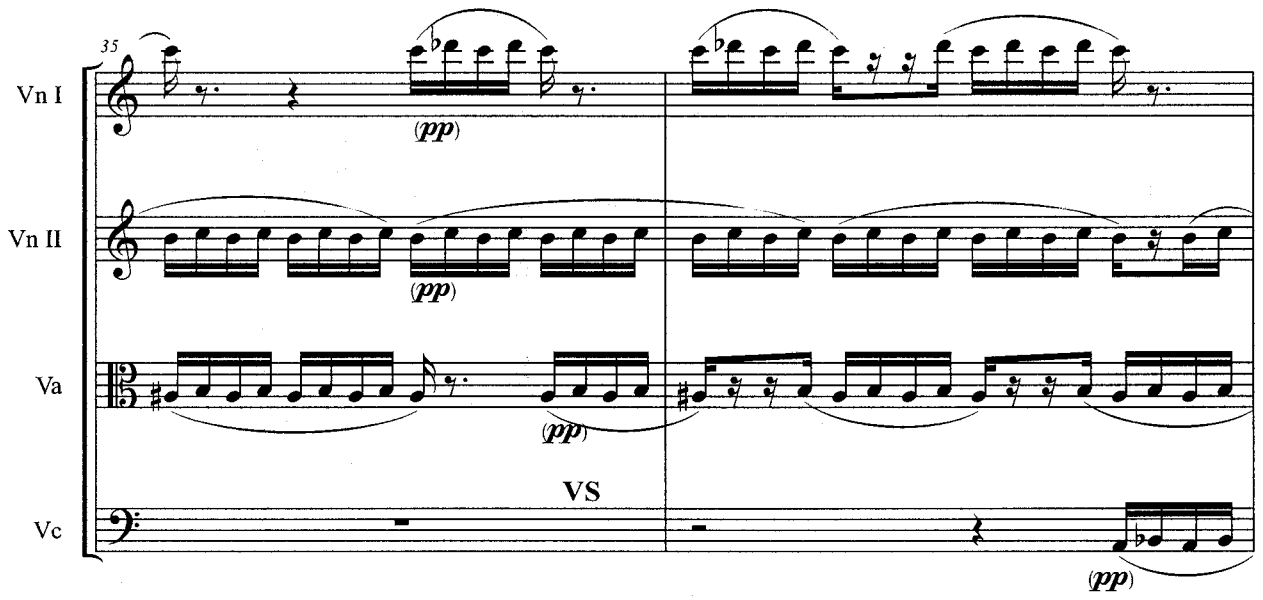

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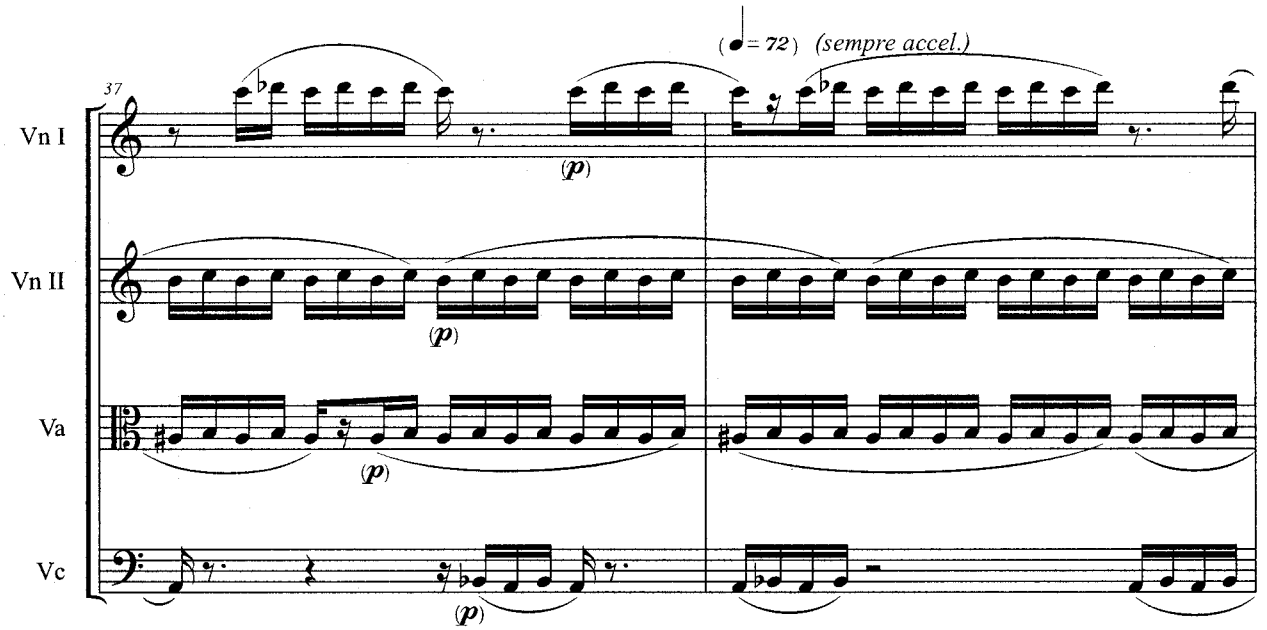

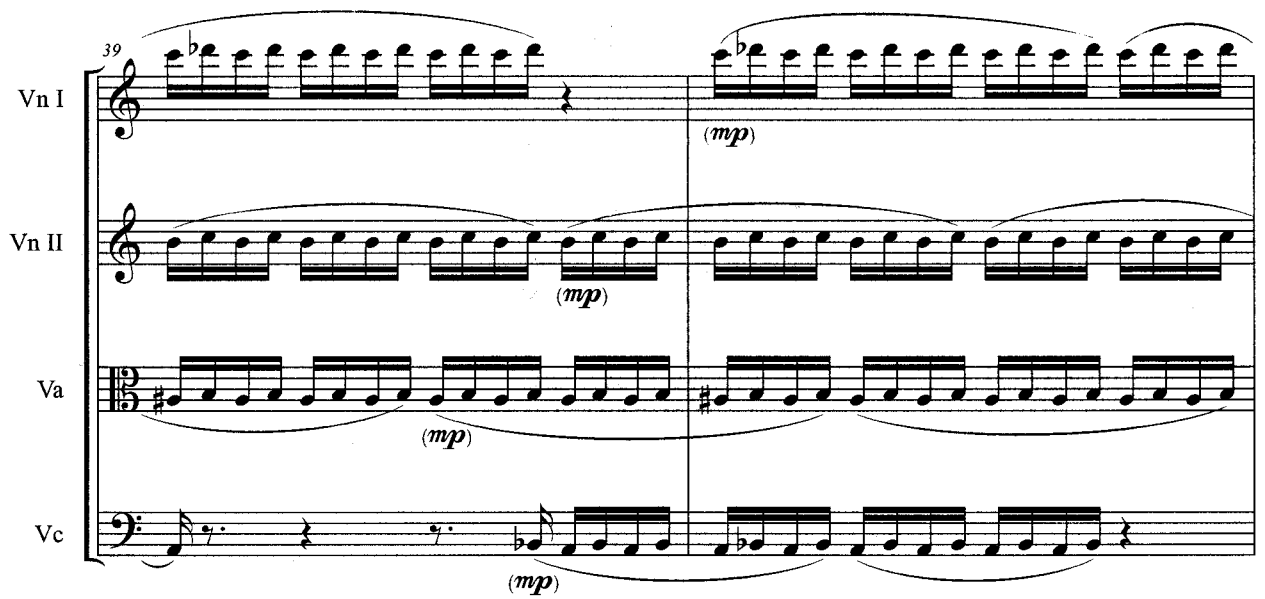

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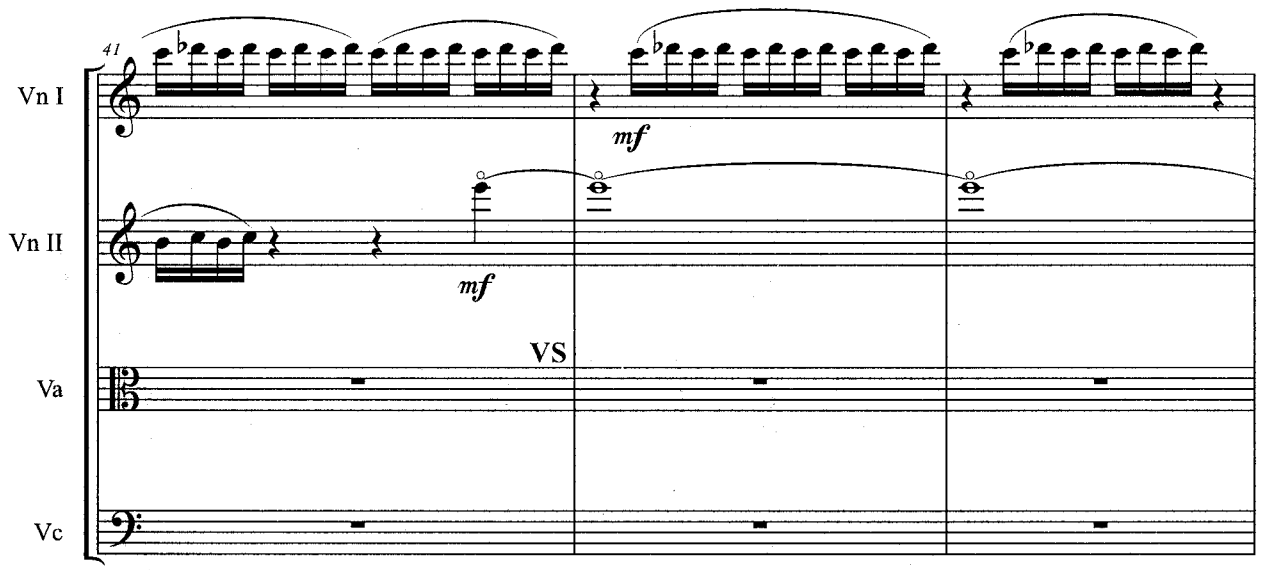

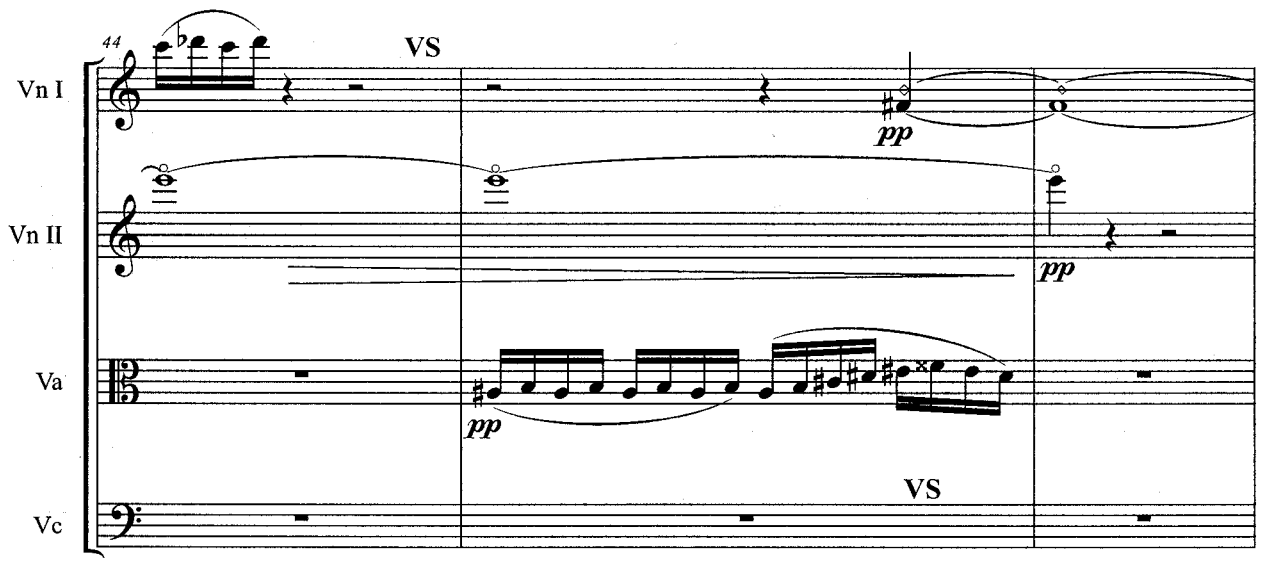

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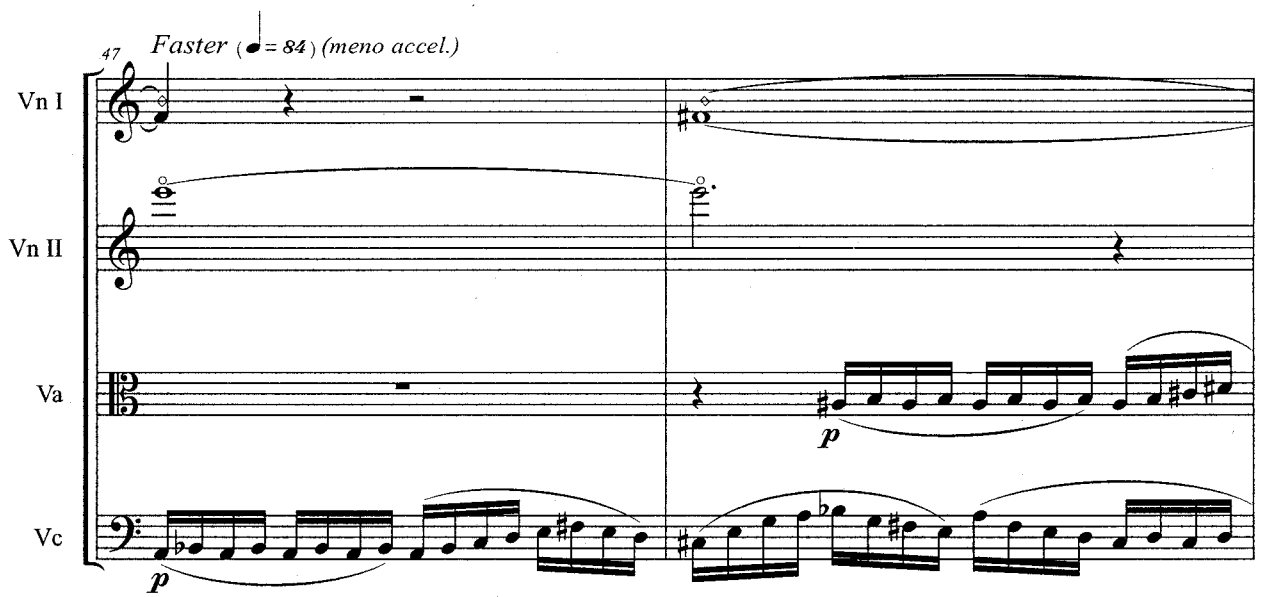

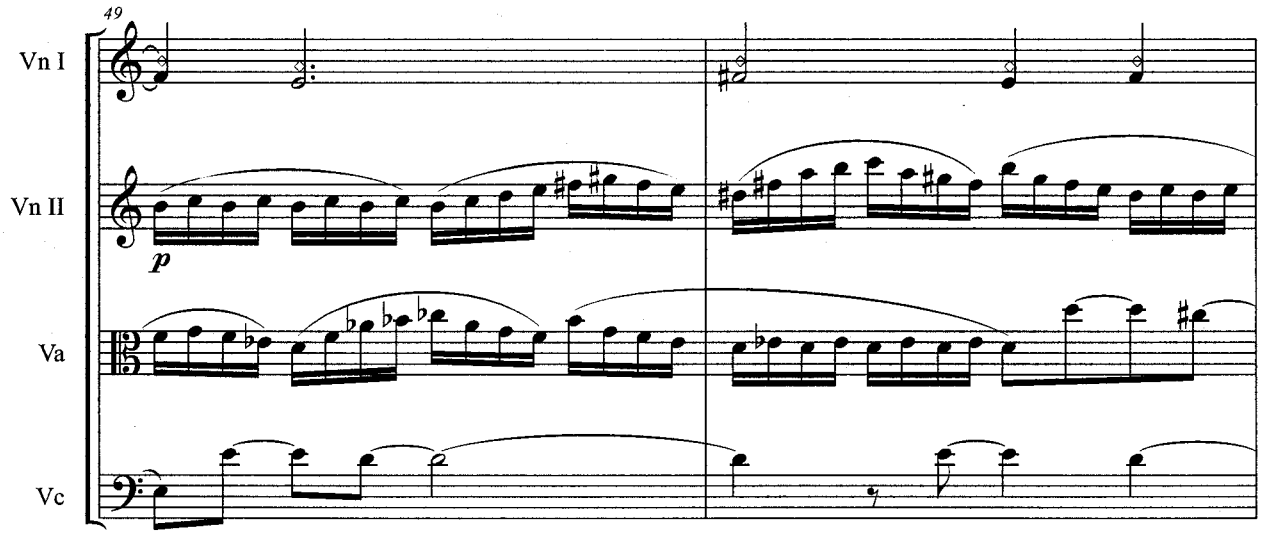

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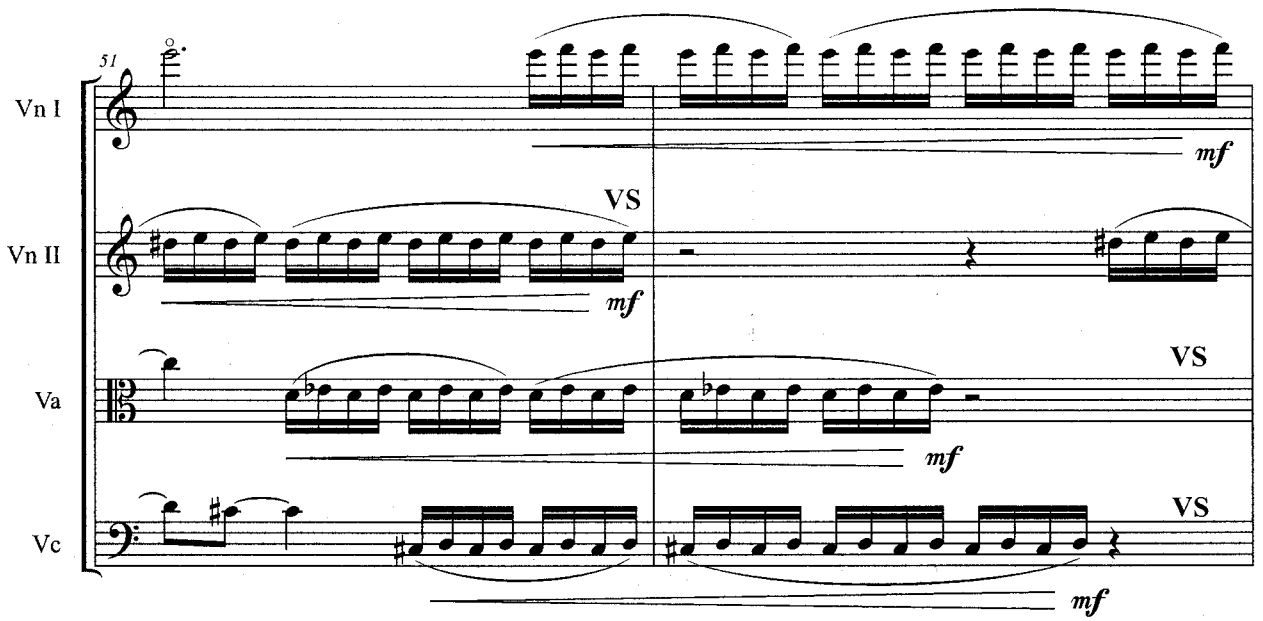

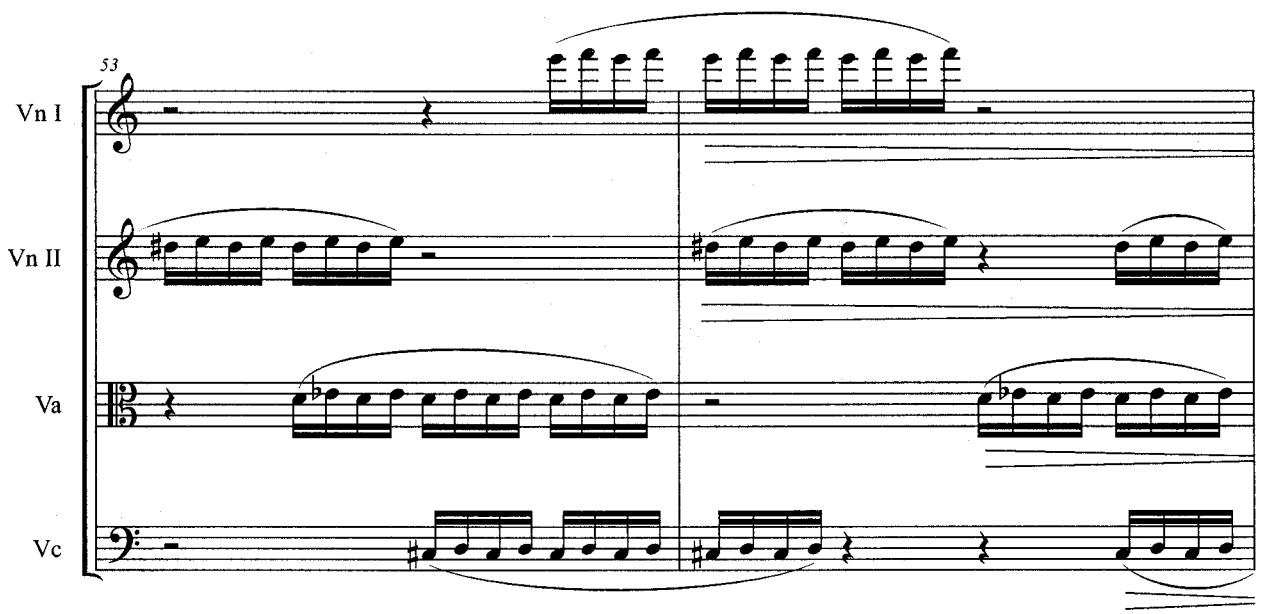

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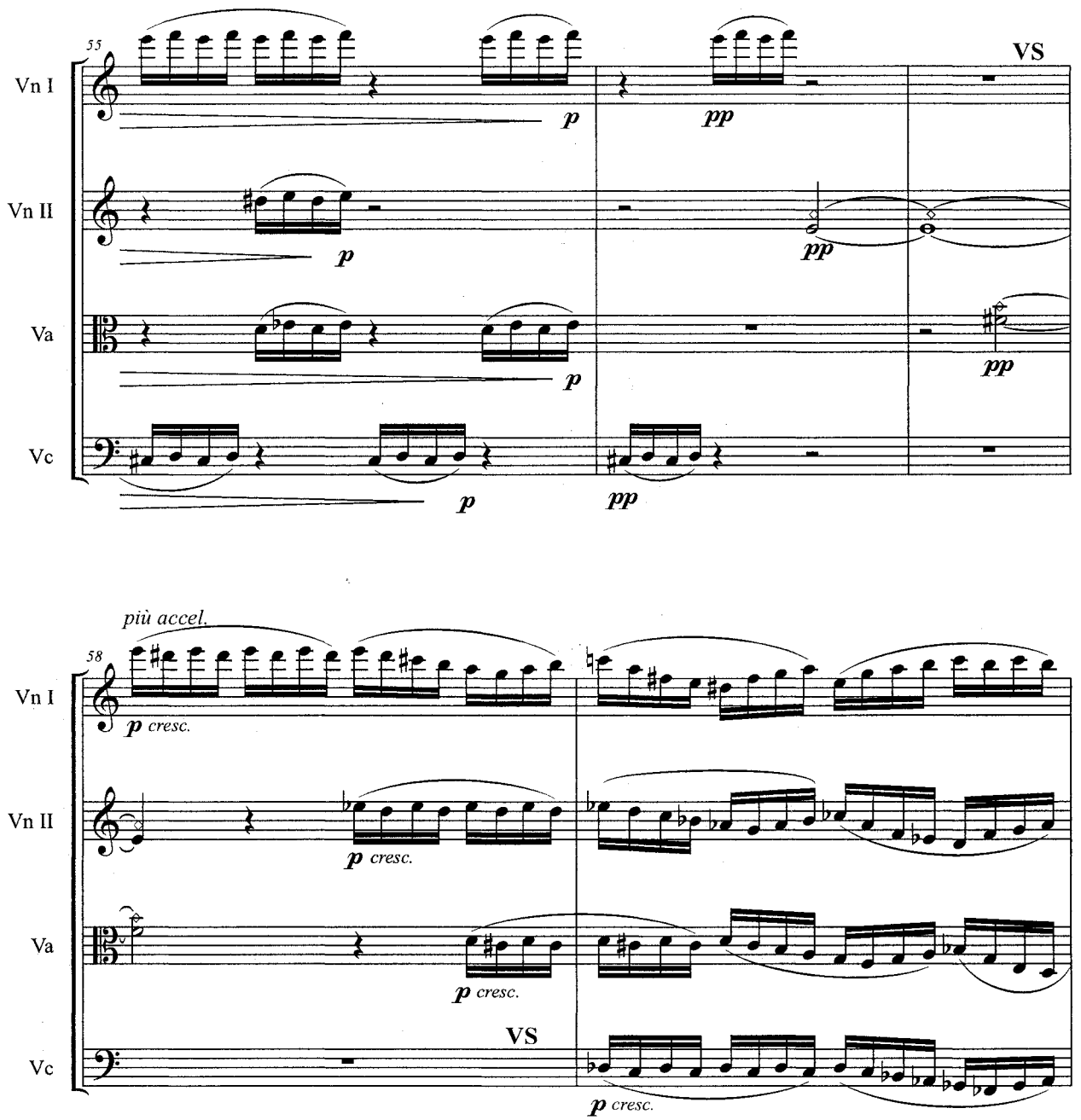

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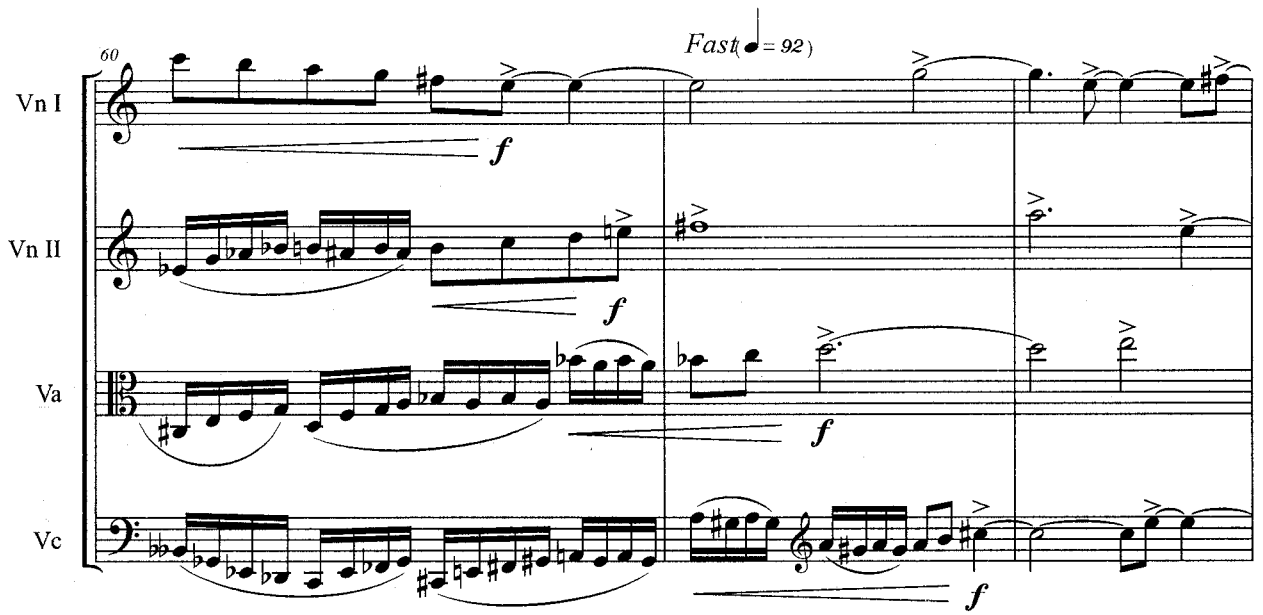

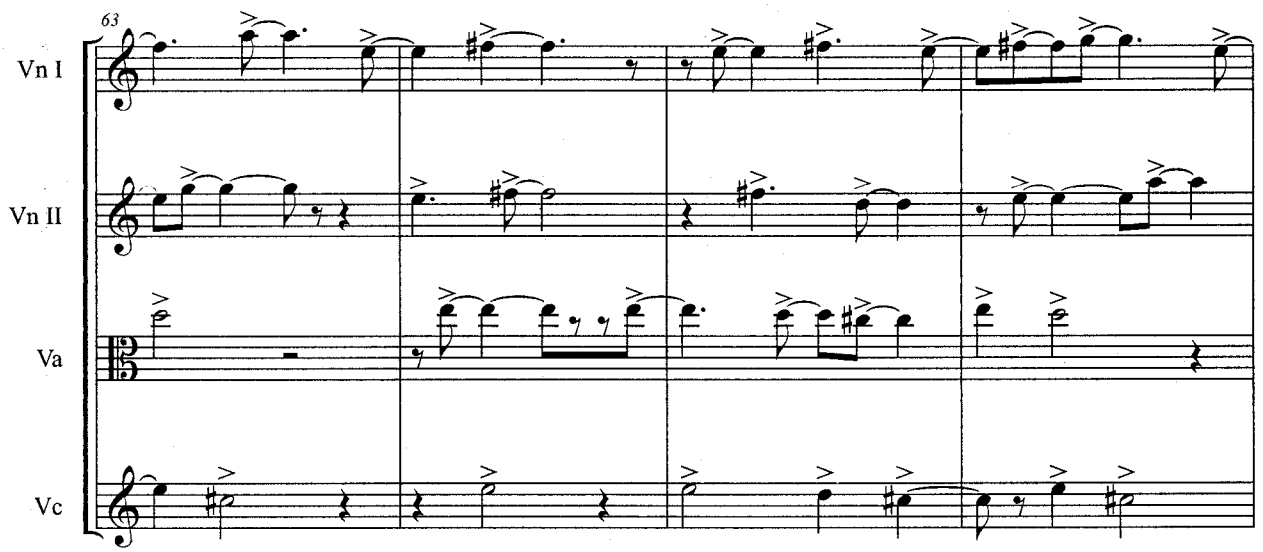

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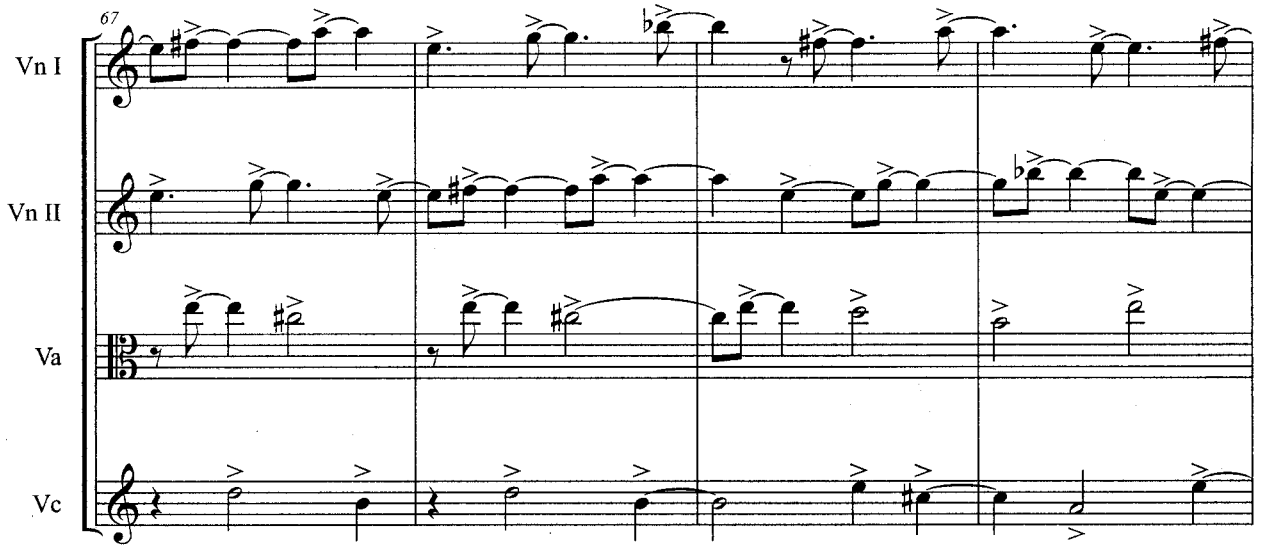

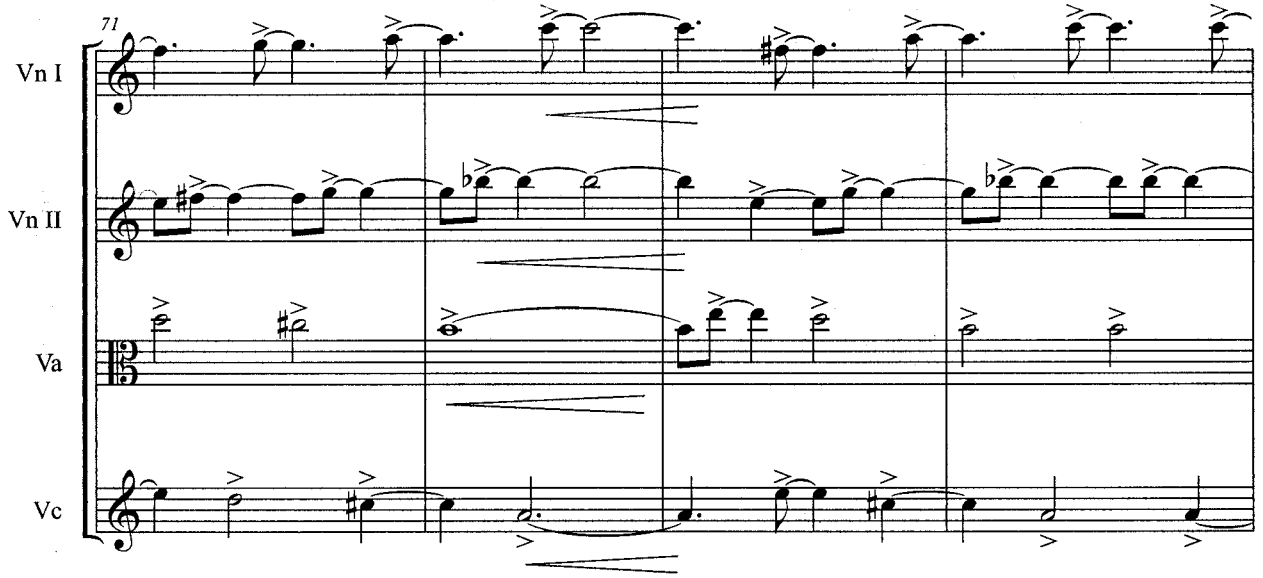

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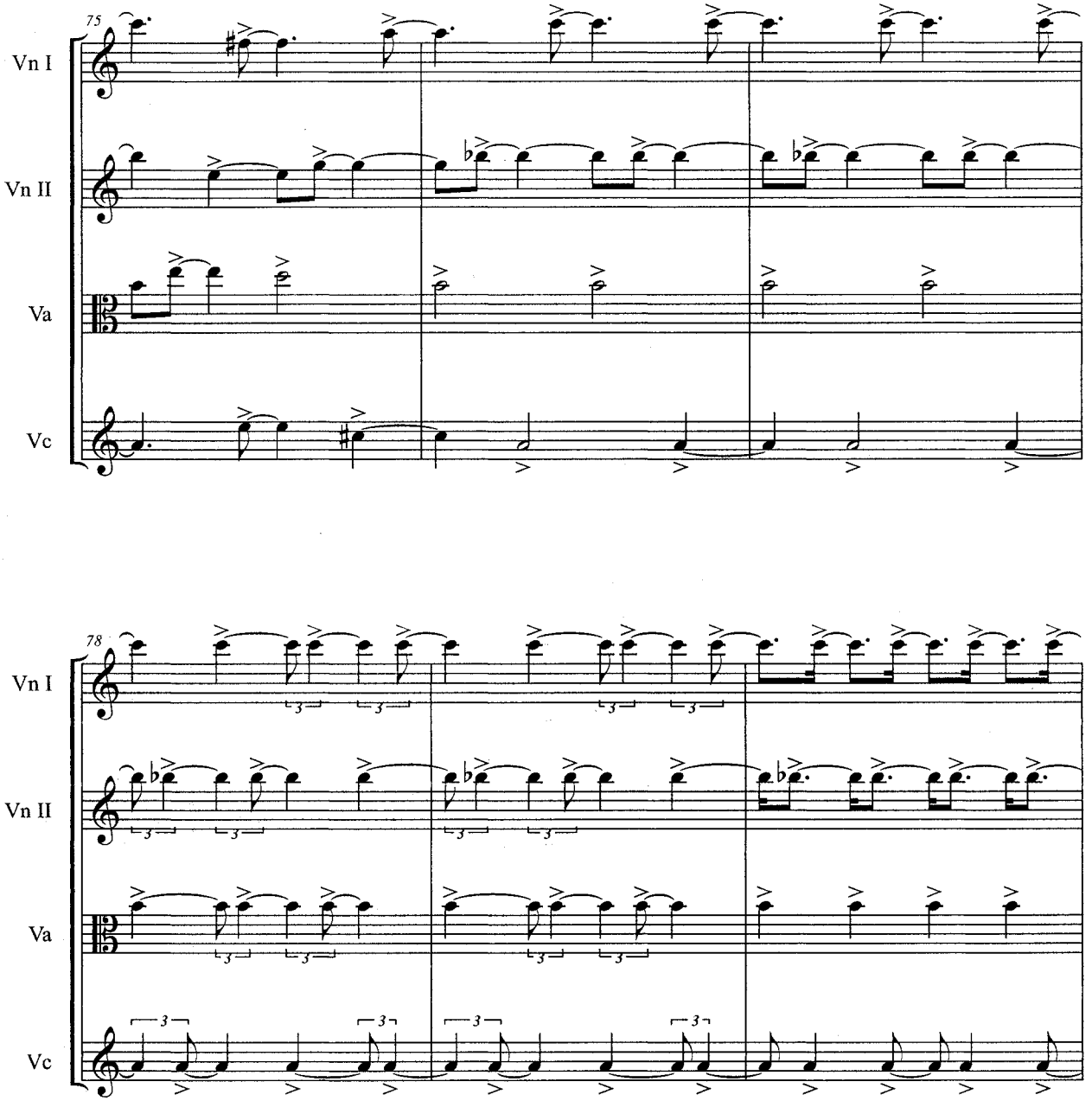

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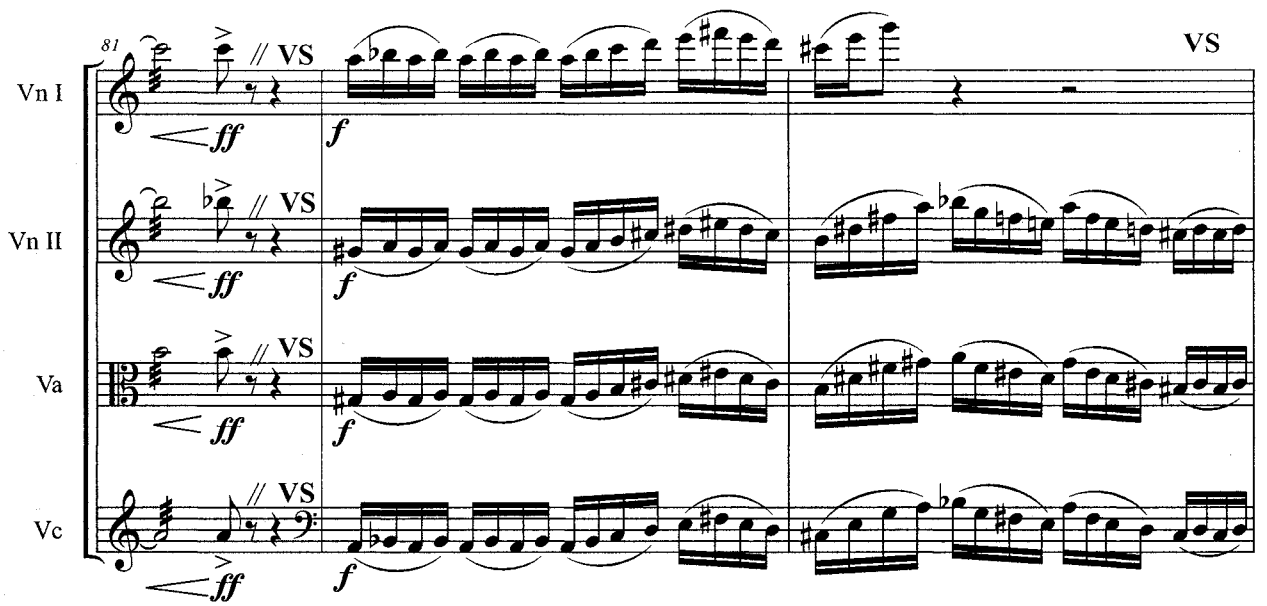

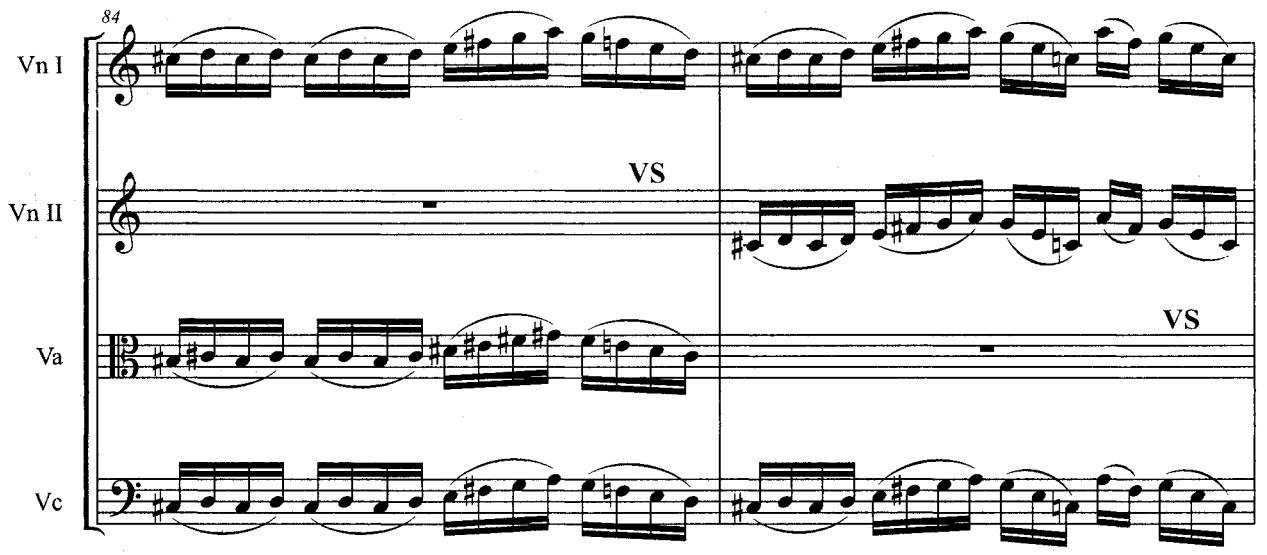

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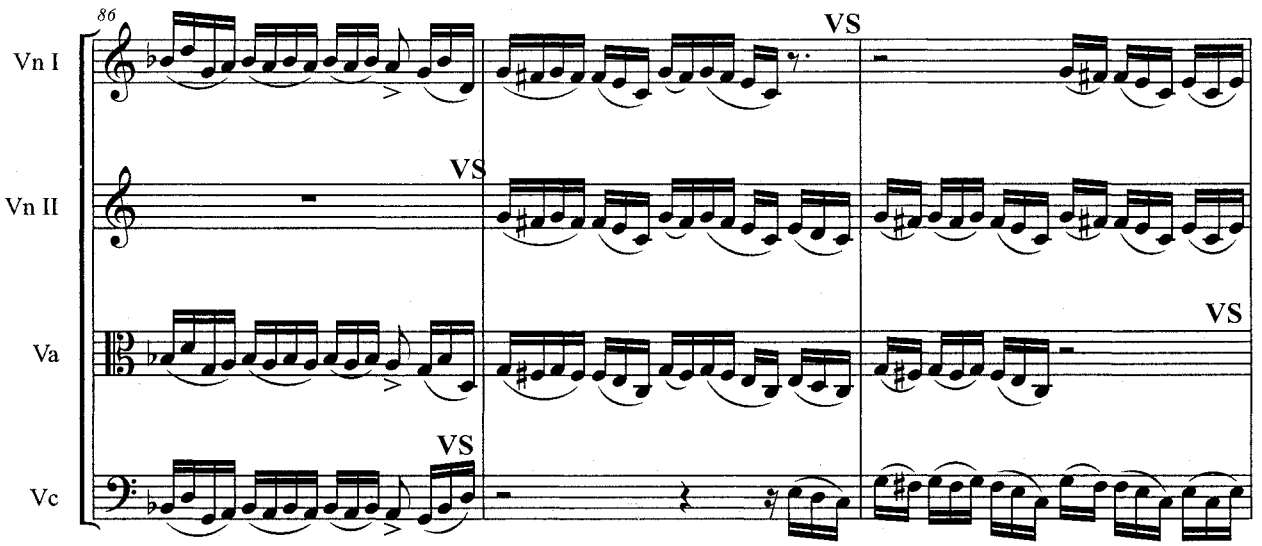

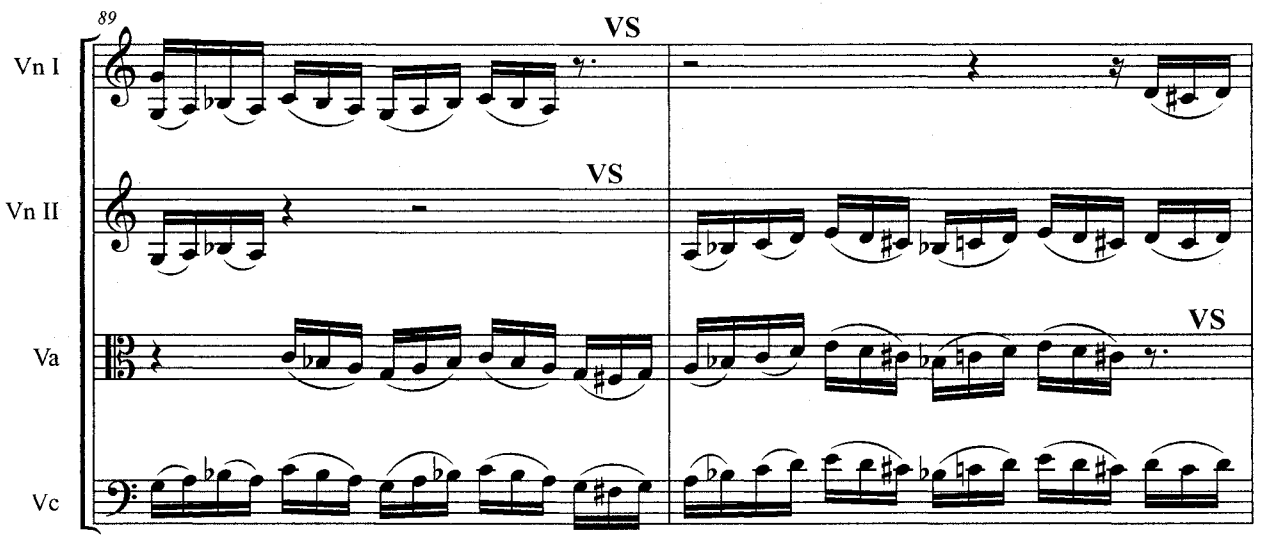

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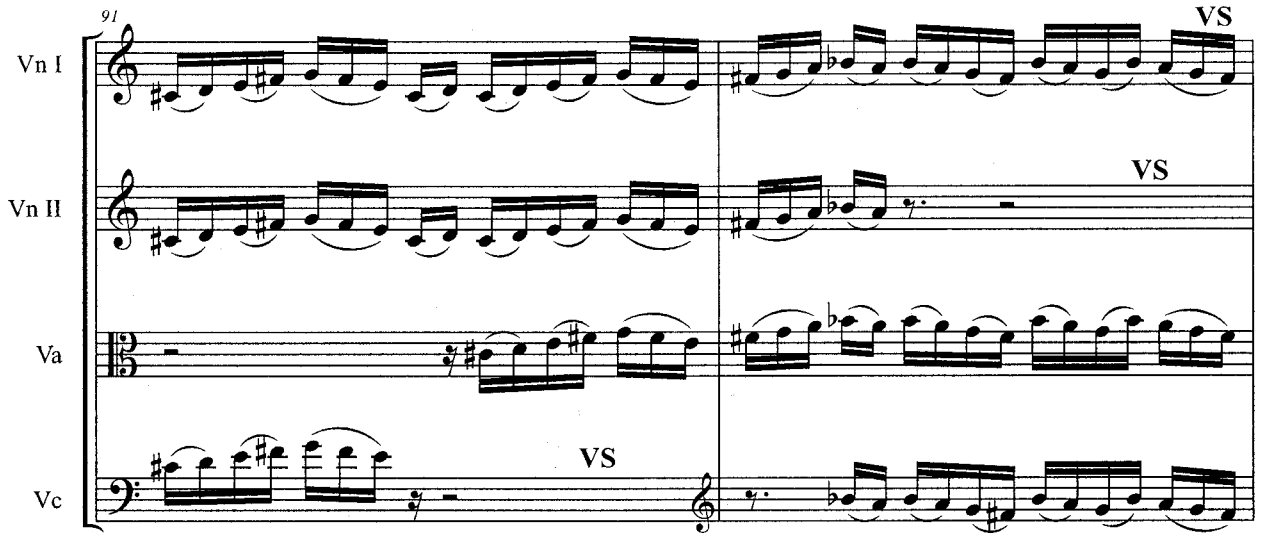

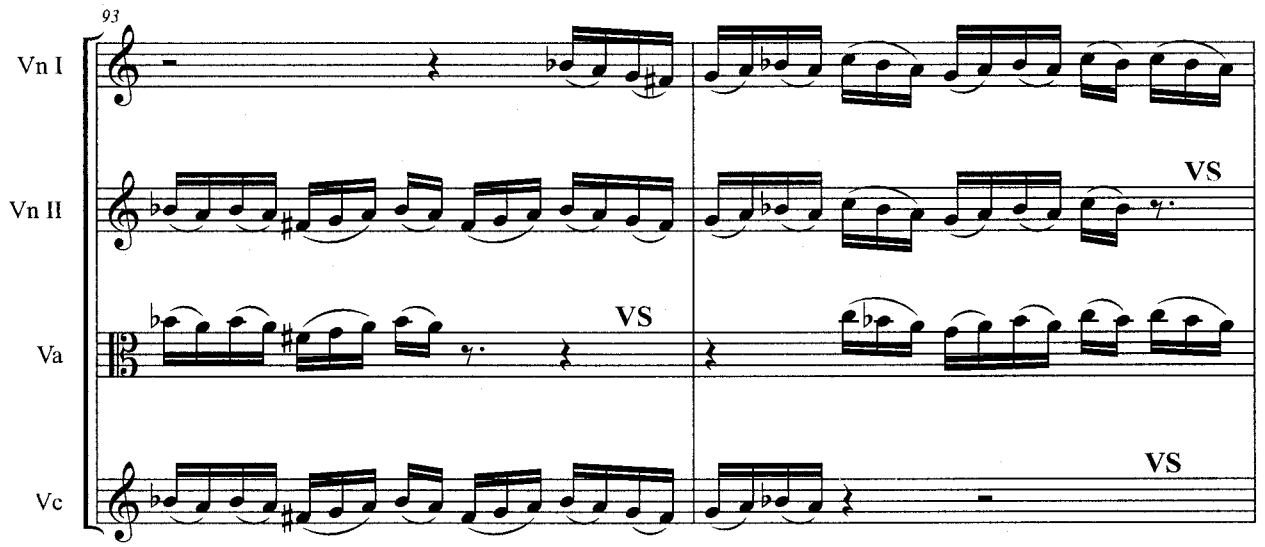

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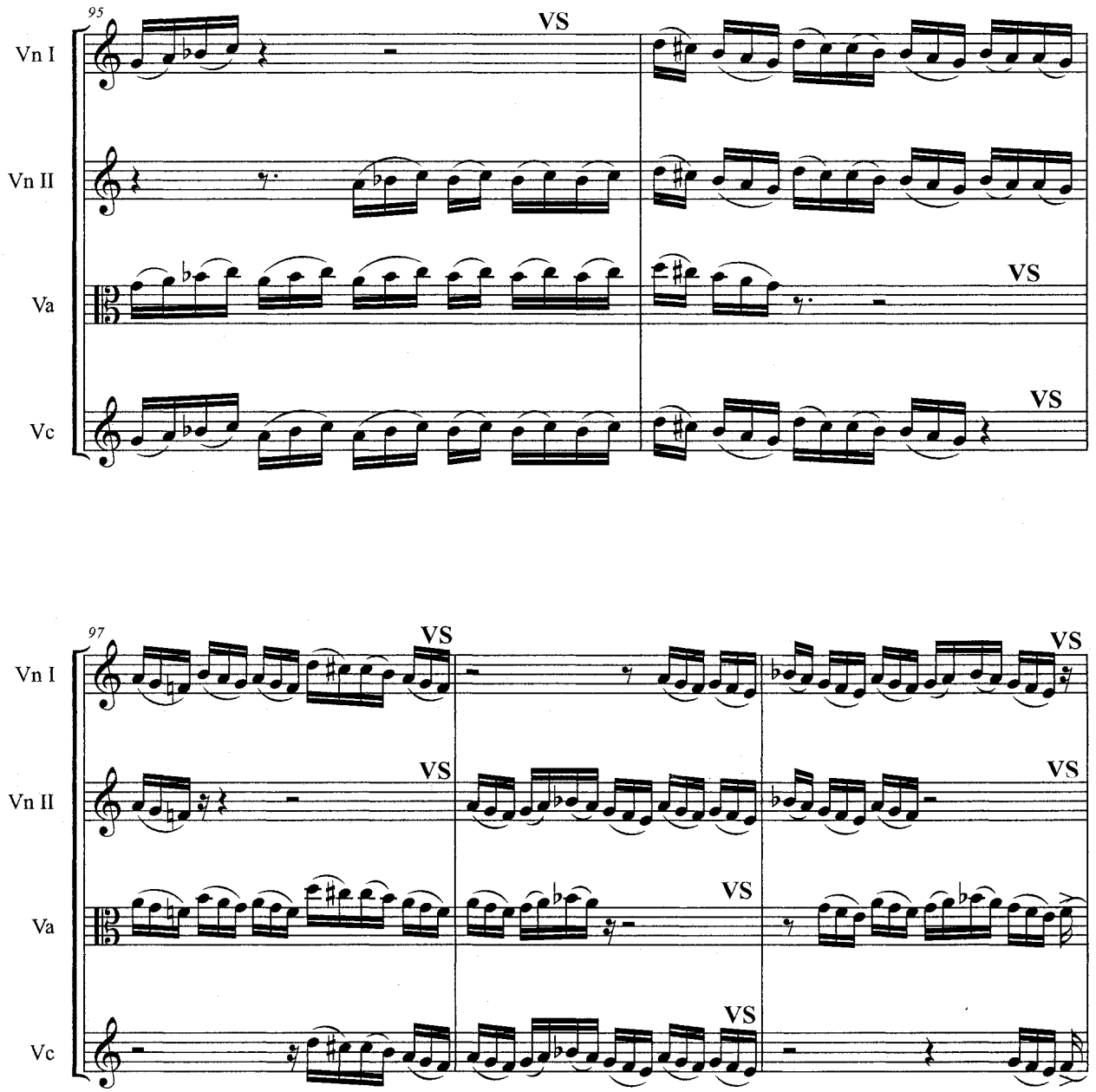

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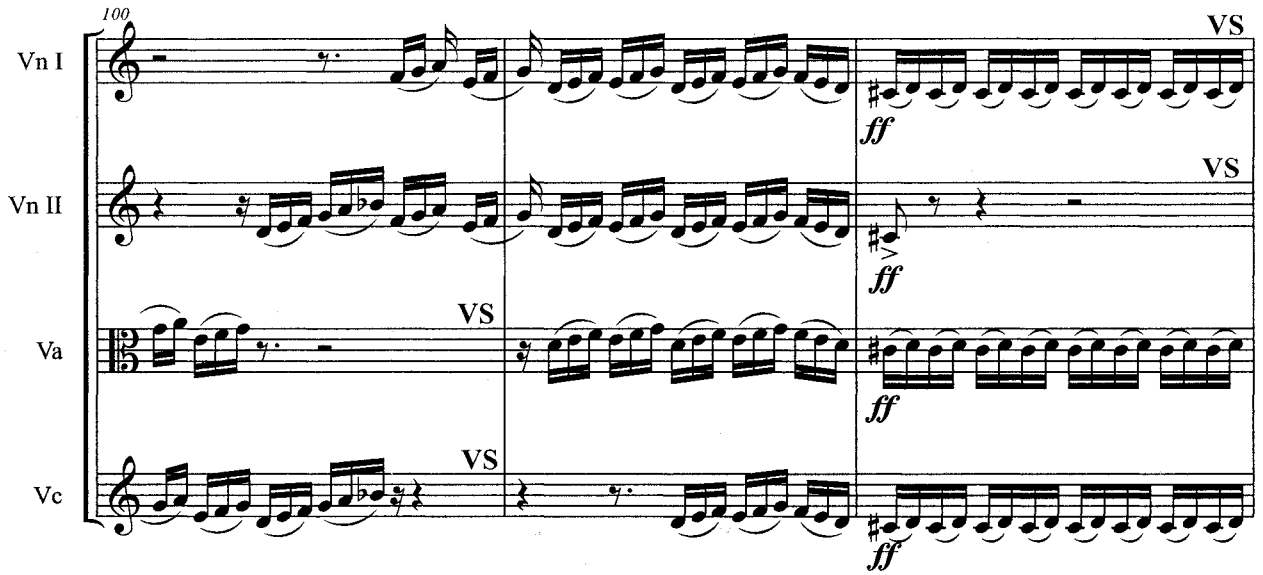

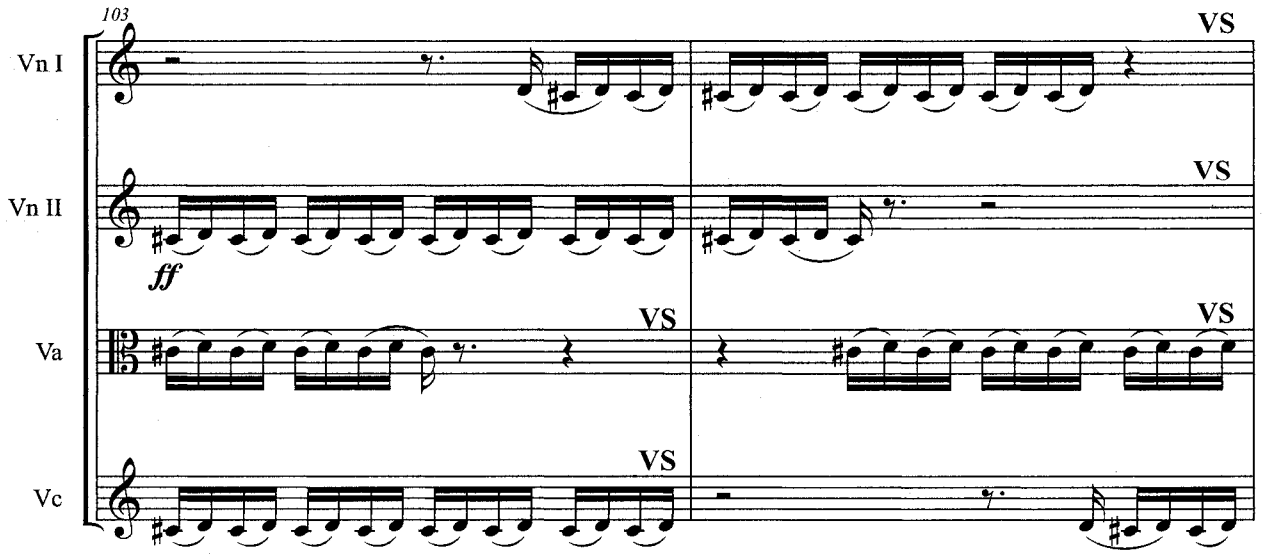

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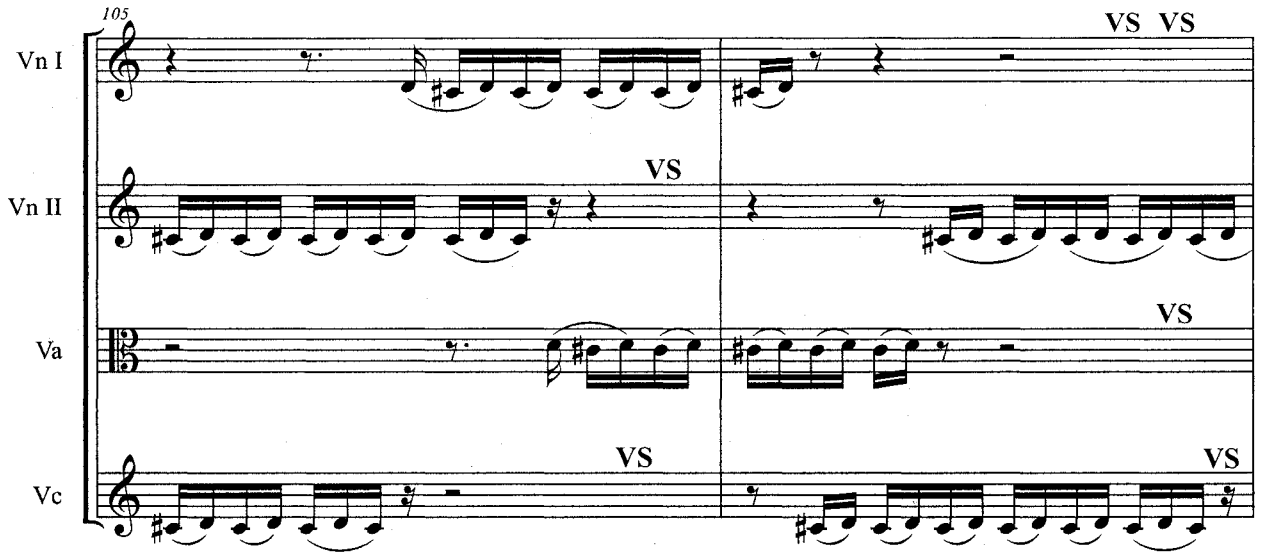

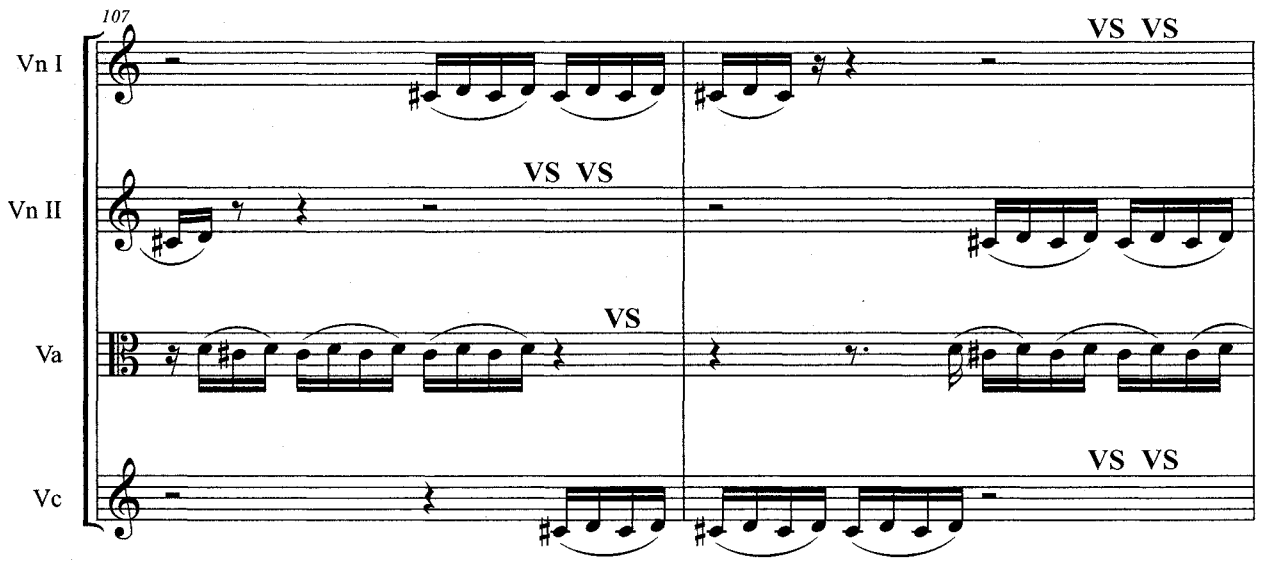

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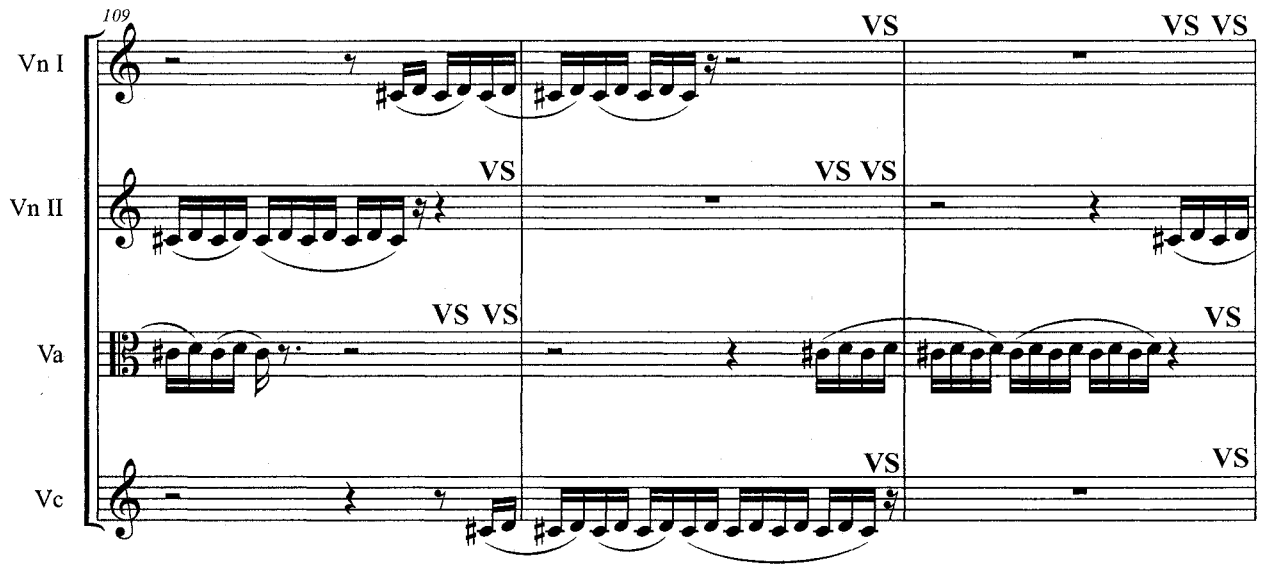

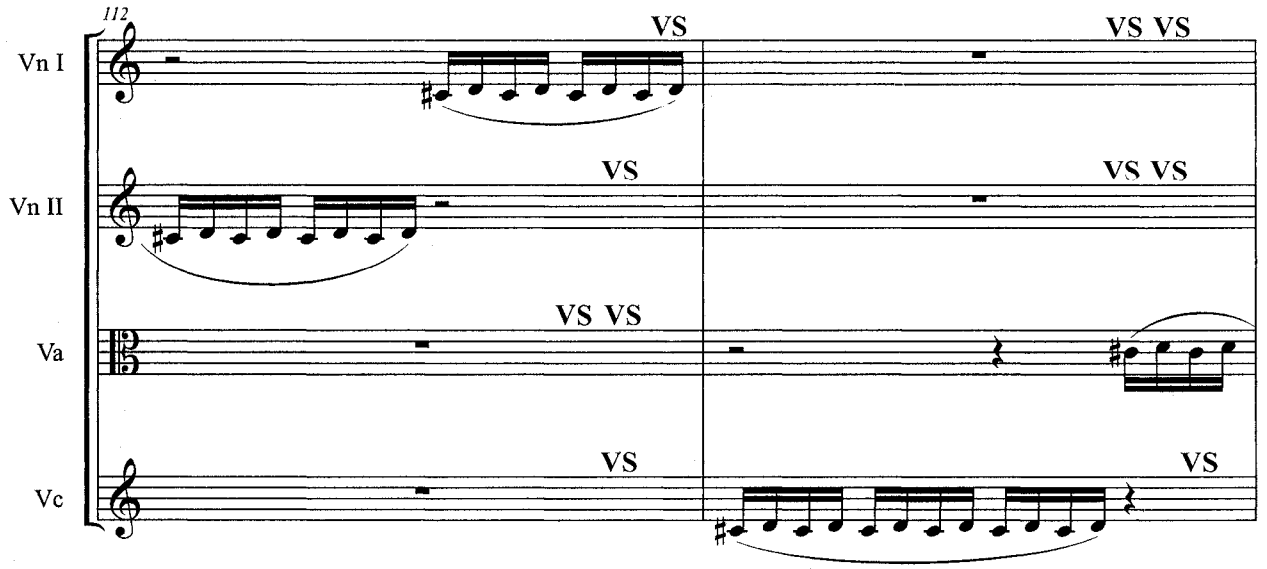

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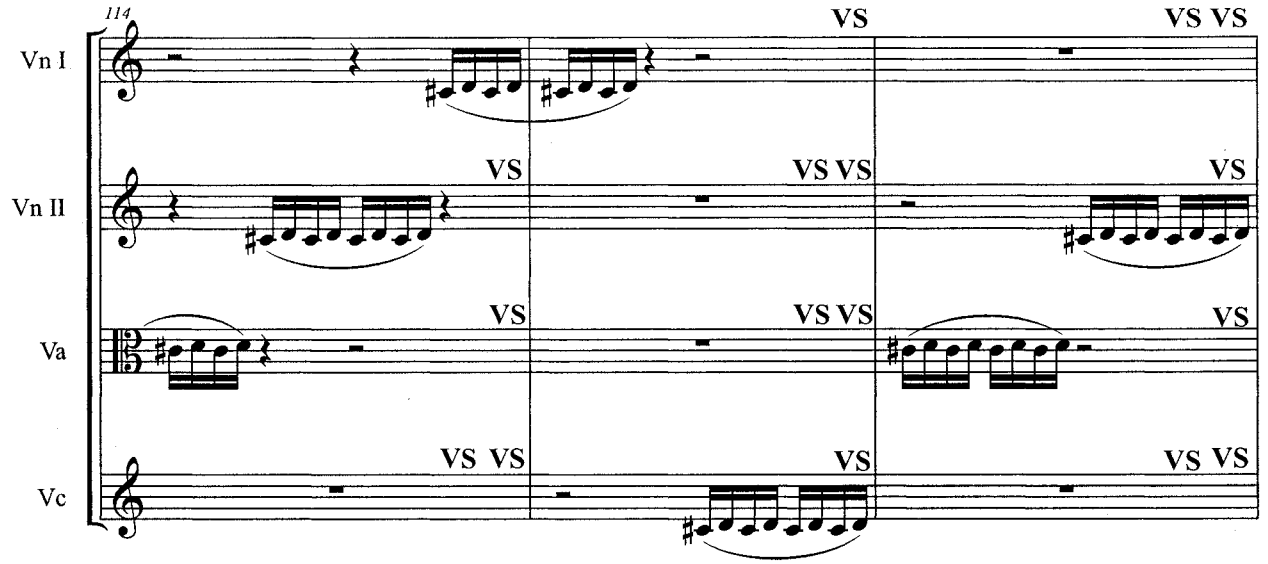

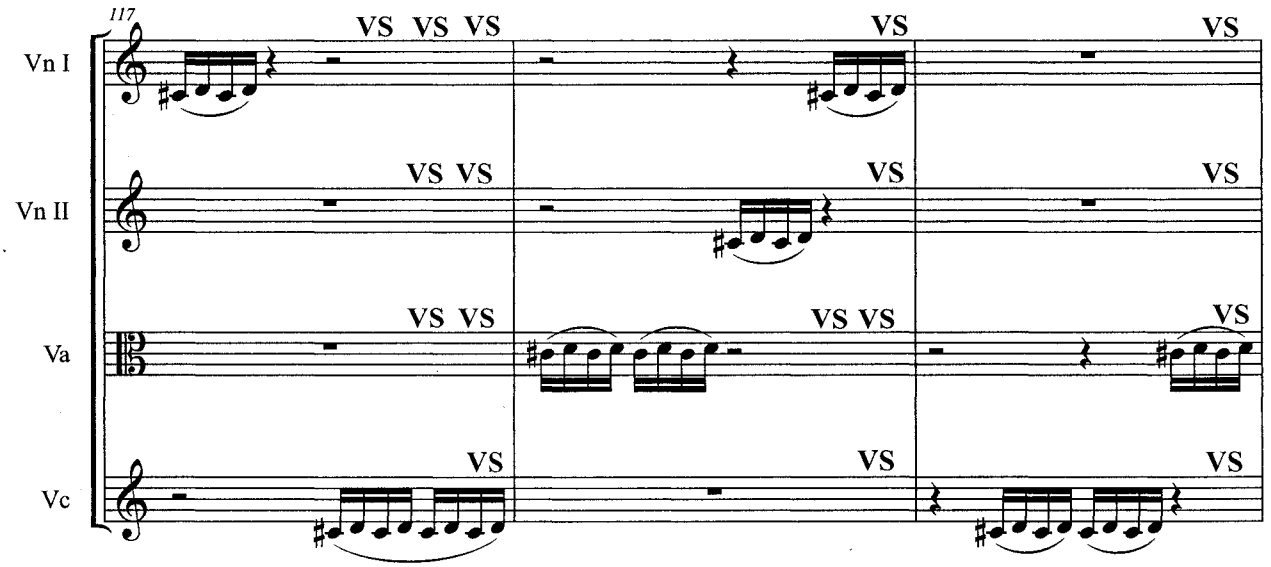

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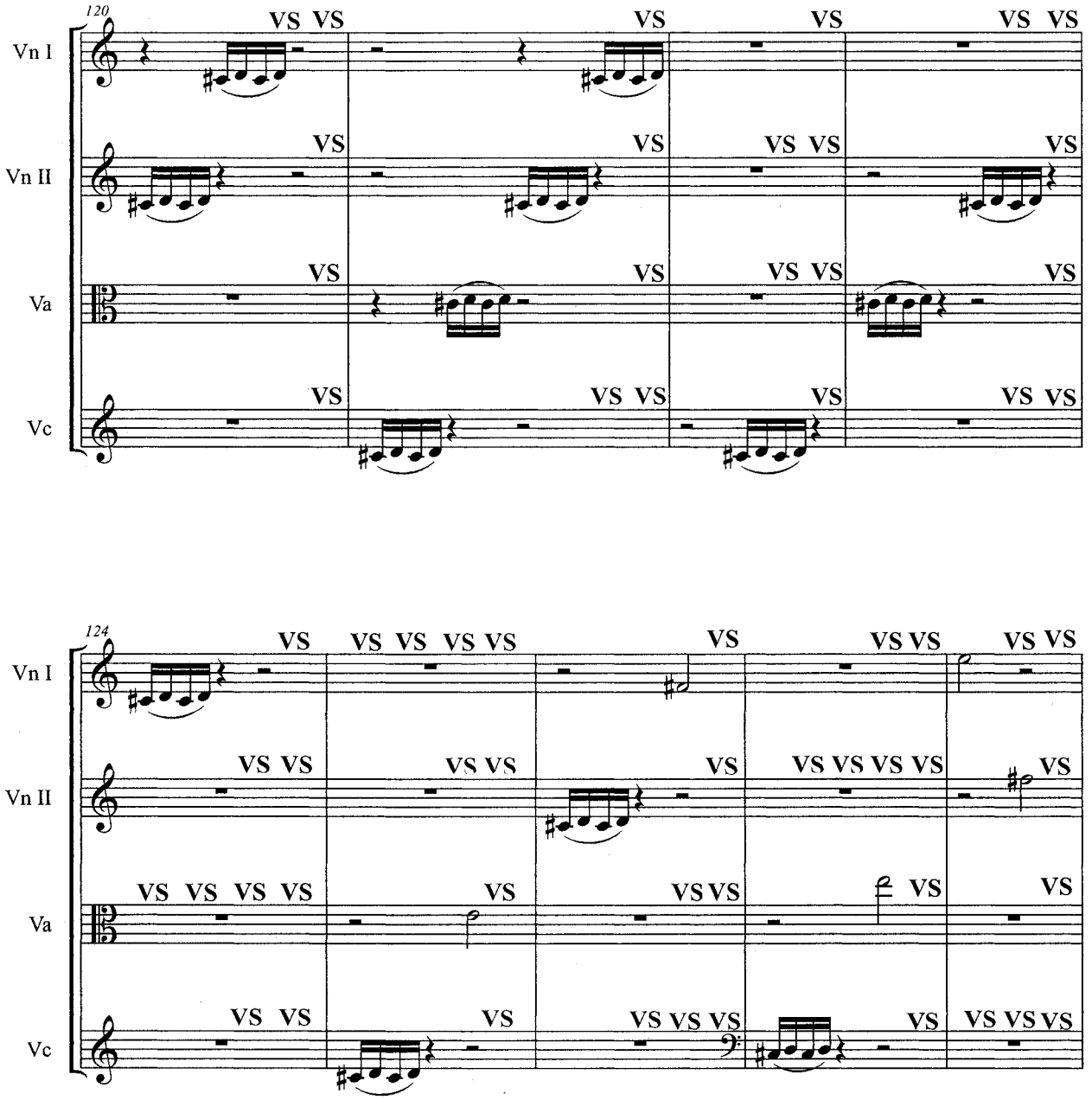

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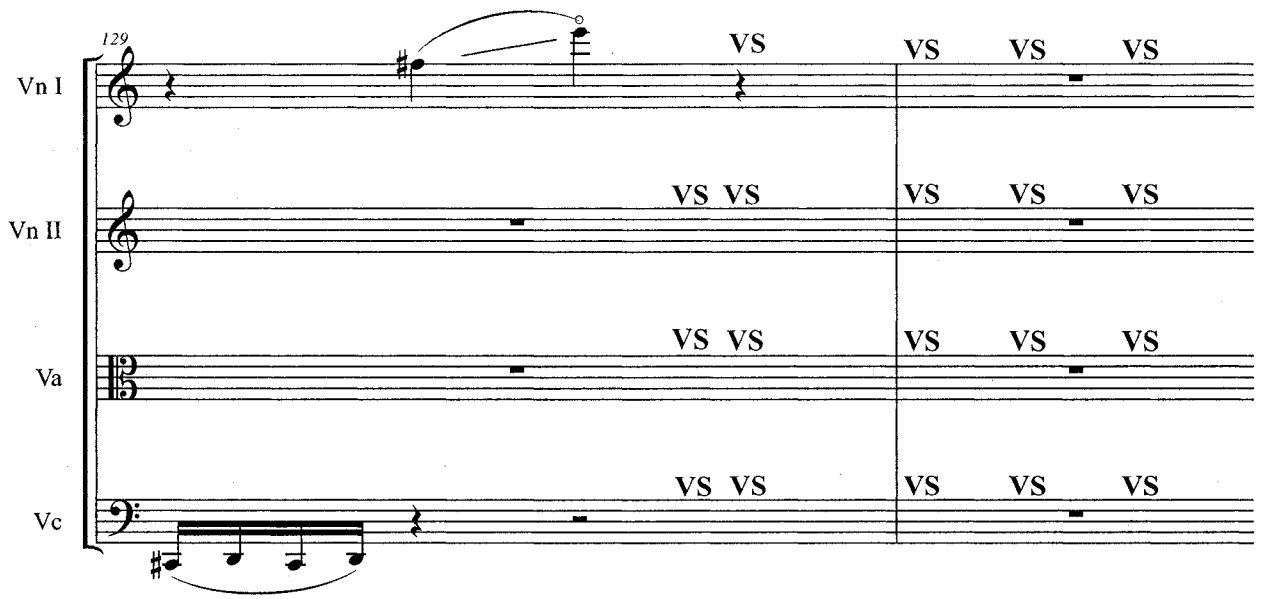

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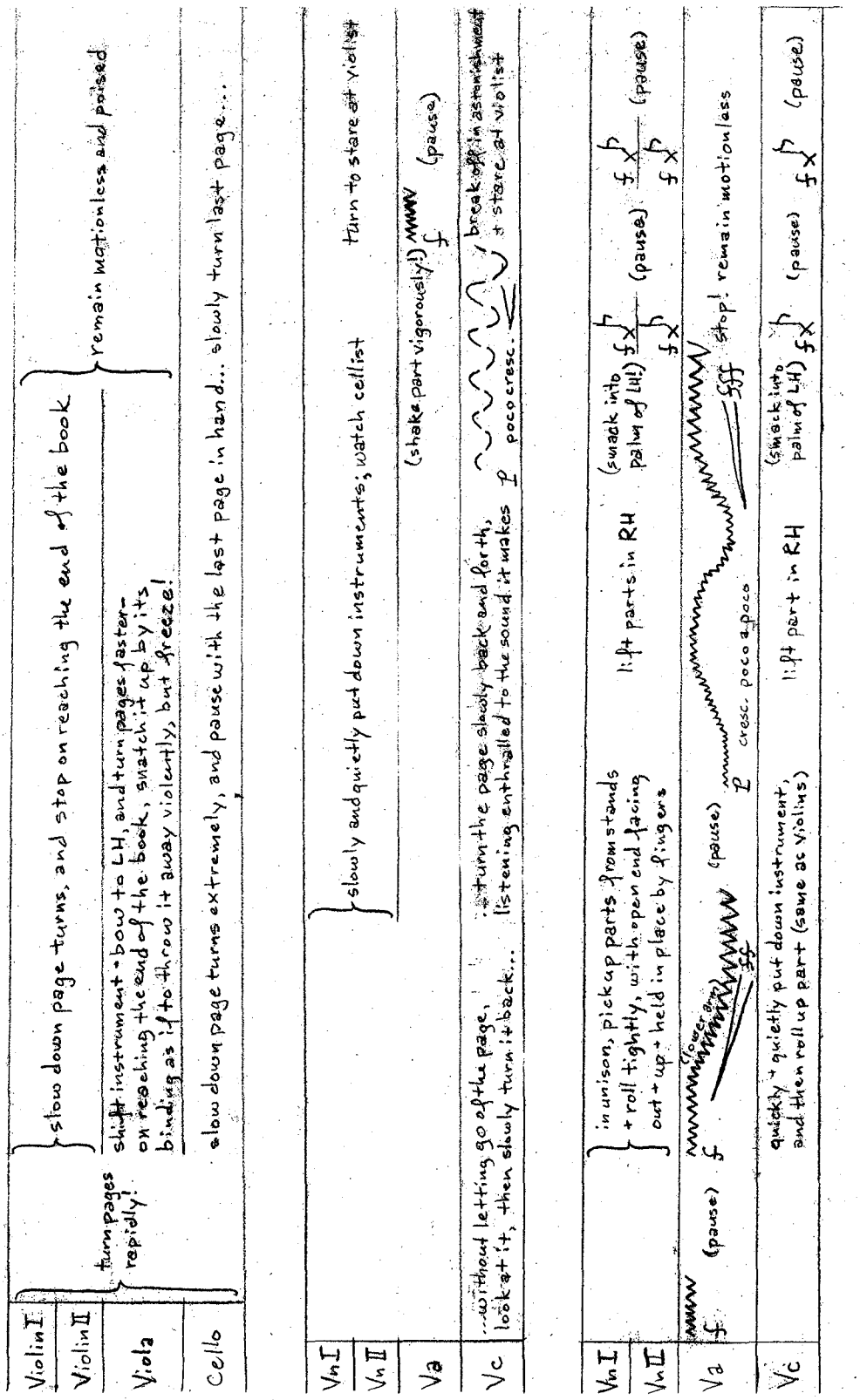
II. paper music



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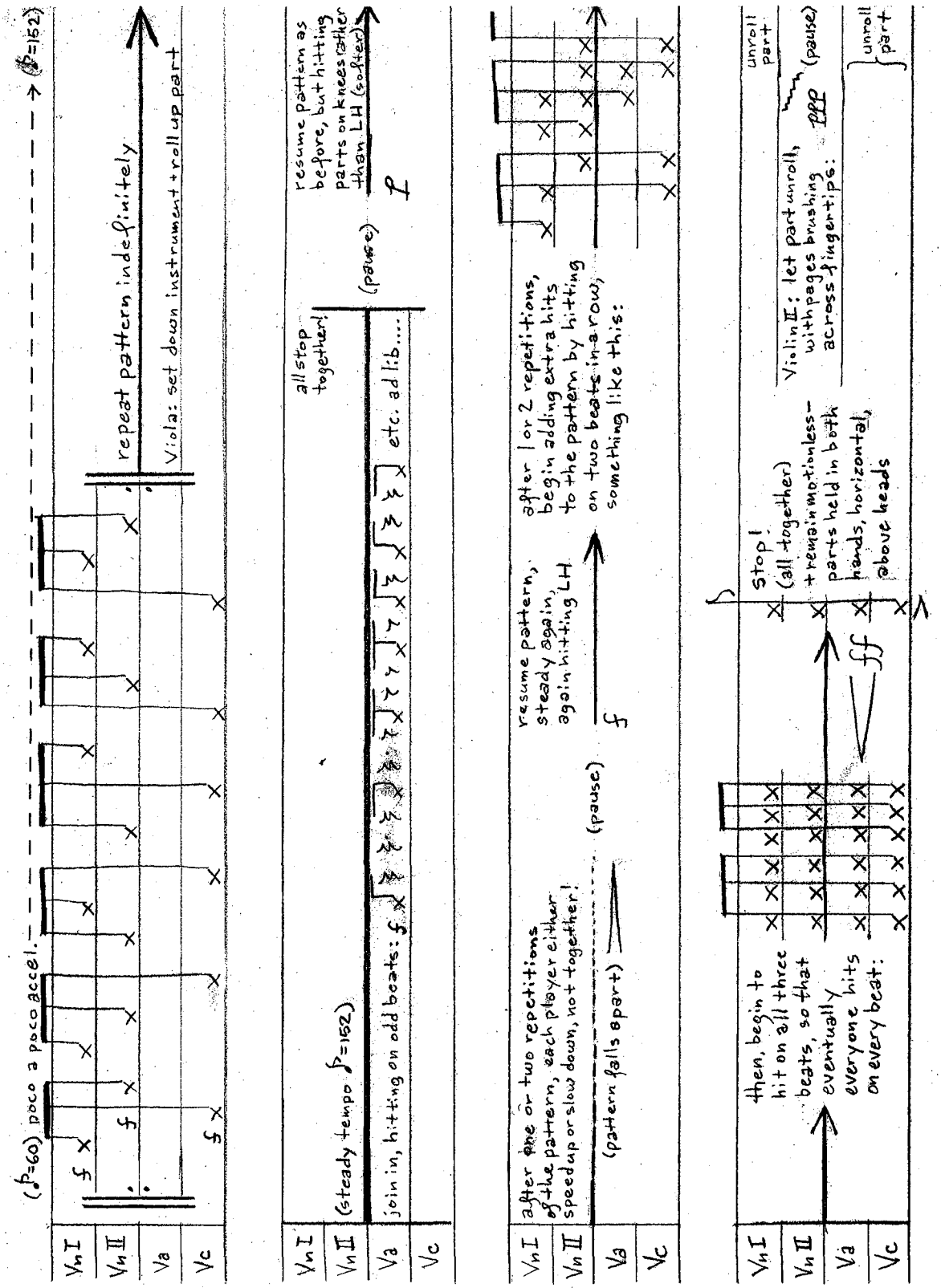

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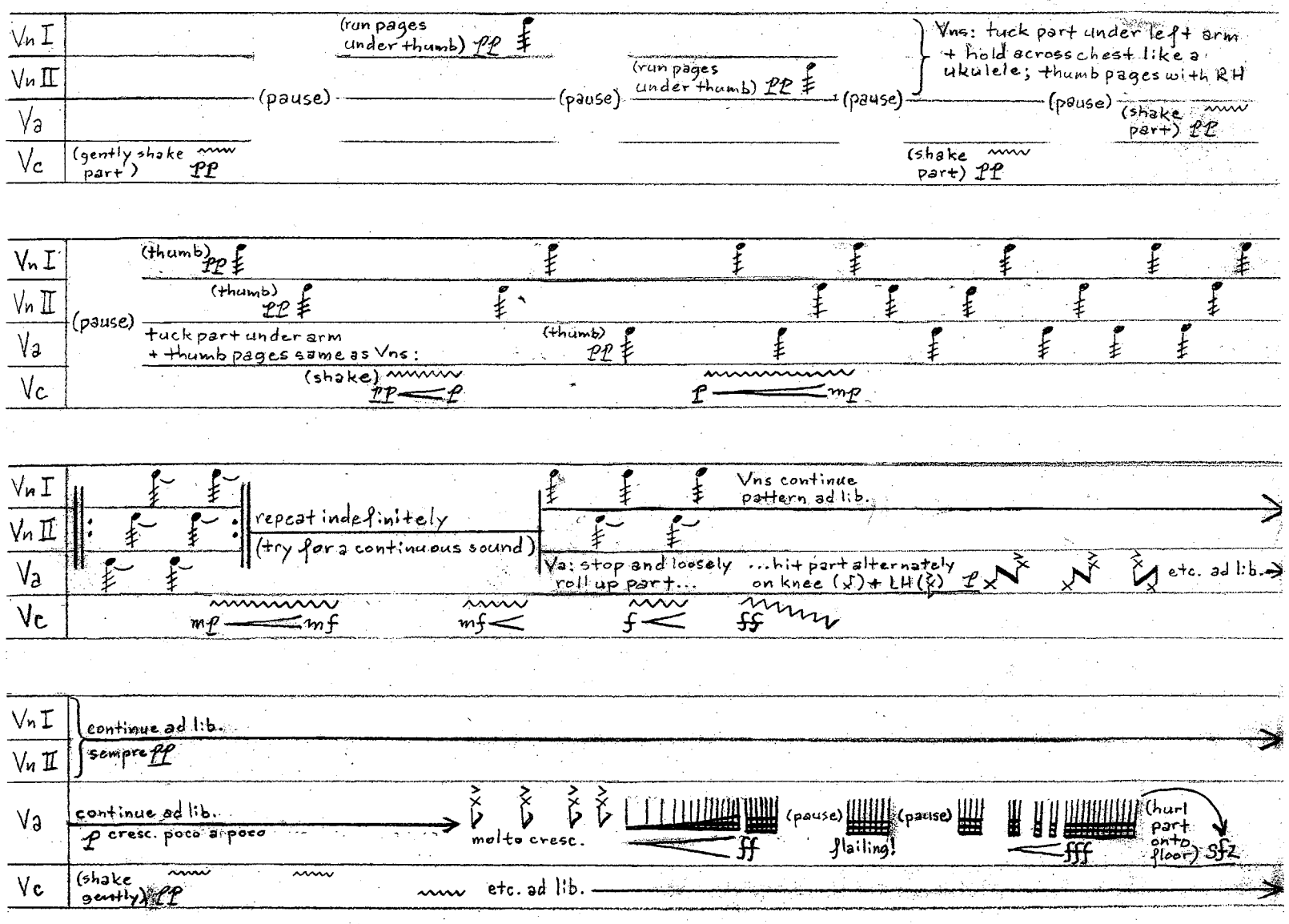

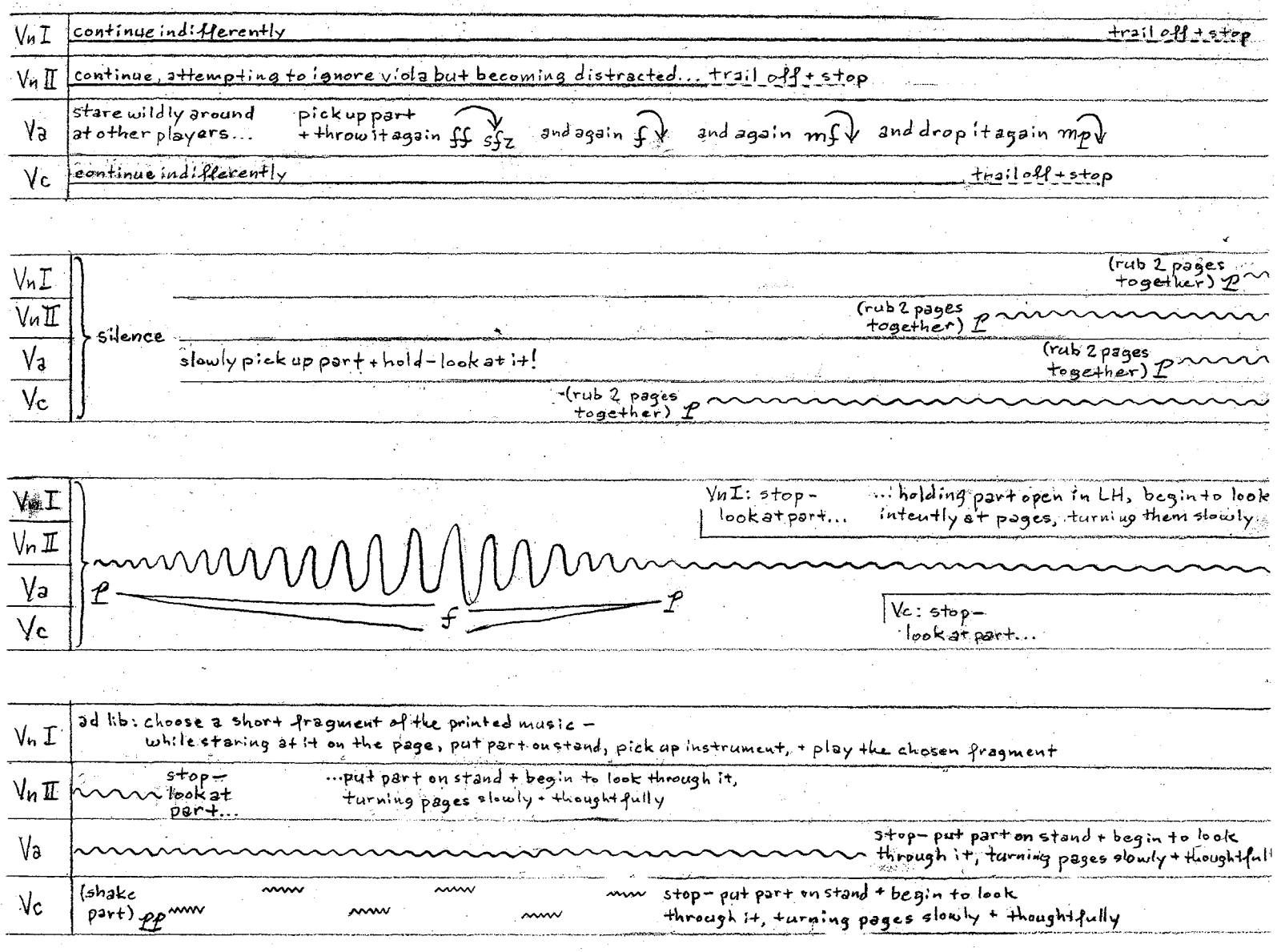

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III. angelitos

Continue turning slowly and thoughtfully through the pages of the parts: look intently at the pages, as though rediscovering the music printed on them. One by one, pick up your instruments, still intent on the parts. Then take turns choosing short fragments of the printed music to play (from 1-2 notes to 1-2 measures). For the most part, choose fragments from different pages each time, and avoid choosing fragments in the order in which they appear in the printed music.

At first, let each fragment appear in isolation, surrounded by near silence; play and listen to the fragments thoughtfully. Then (after a minute or so), begin choosing fragments that respond to one another somehow. Gradually reduce the amount of time between them (this means you will have less time to choose the next fragment) so that the fragments chosen by the quartet begin to assemble into a continuous string.

Eventually (after another minute or so), start to overlap fragments, and begin to build up a polyphonic group improvisation made out of these fragments of the first movement. As the pace accelerates and the texture becomes denser, you should find yourself turning pages faster and faster between fragments. When this would begin to hamper the improvisation, stop choosing fragments from the printed music and improvise freely, no longer looking at the parts but still using the musical materials of the first movement (for suggestions see the sample fragments and patterns on the next page).

The improvisation should remain contemplative in mood, though increasing in intensity. Over the course of about three to five minutes, build to a climax; then let the music slowly dissipate. Close by playing the Epilogue from memory.

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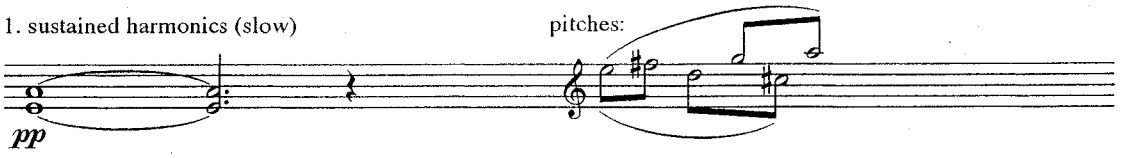
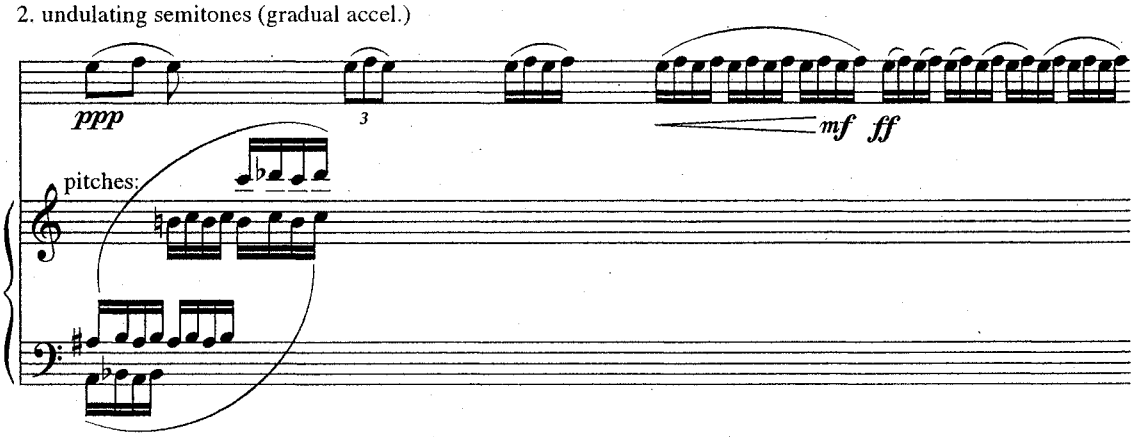
sample patterns

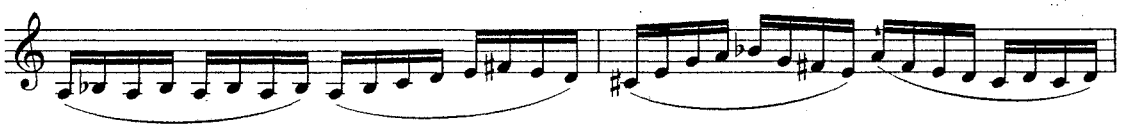
1. sustained harmonics (slow)



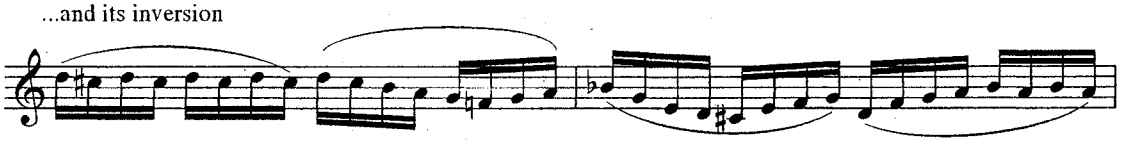
2. undulating semitones (gradual accel.)



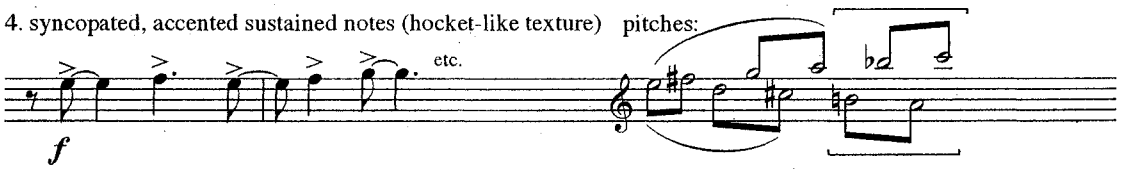
3. fugato subject (fugato at the minor ninth)...



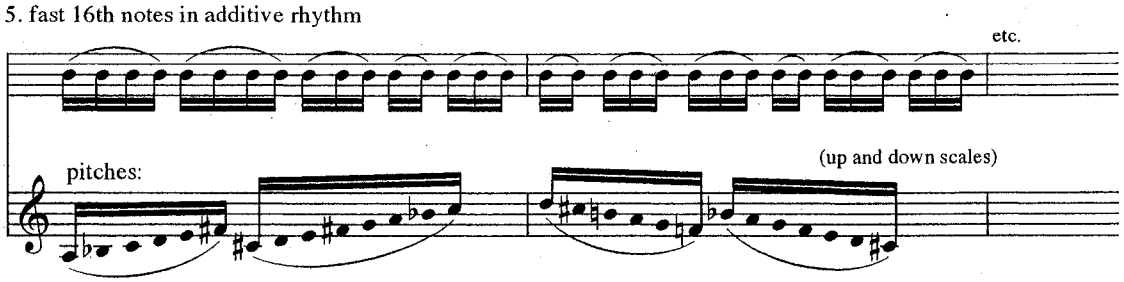
...and its inversion



4. syncopated, accented sustained notes (hocket-like texture) pitches:



5. fast 16th notes in additive rhythm



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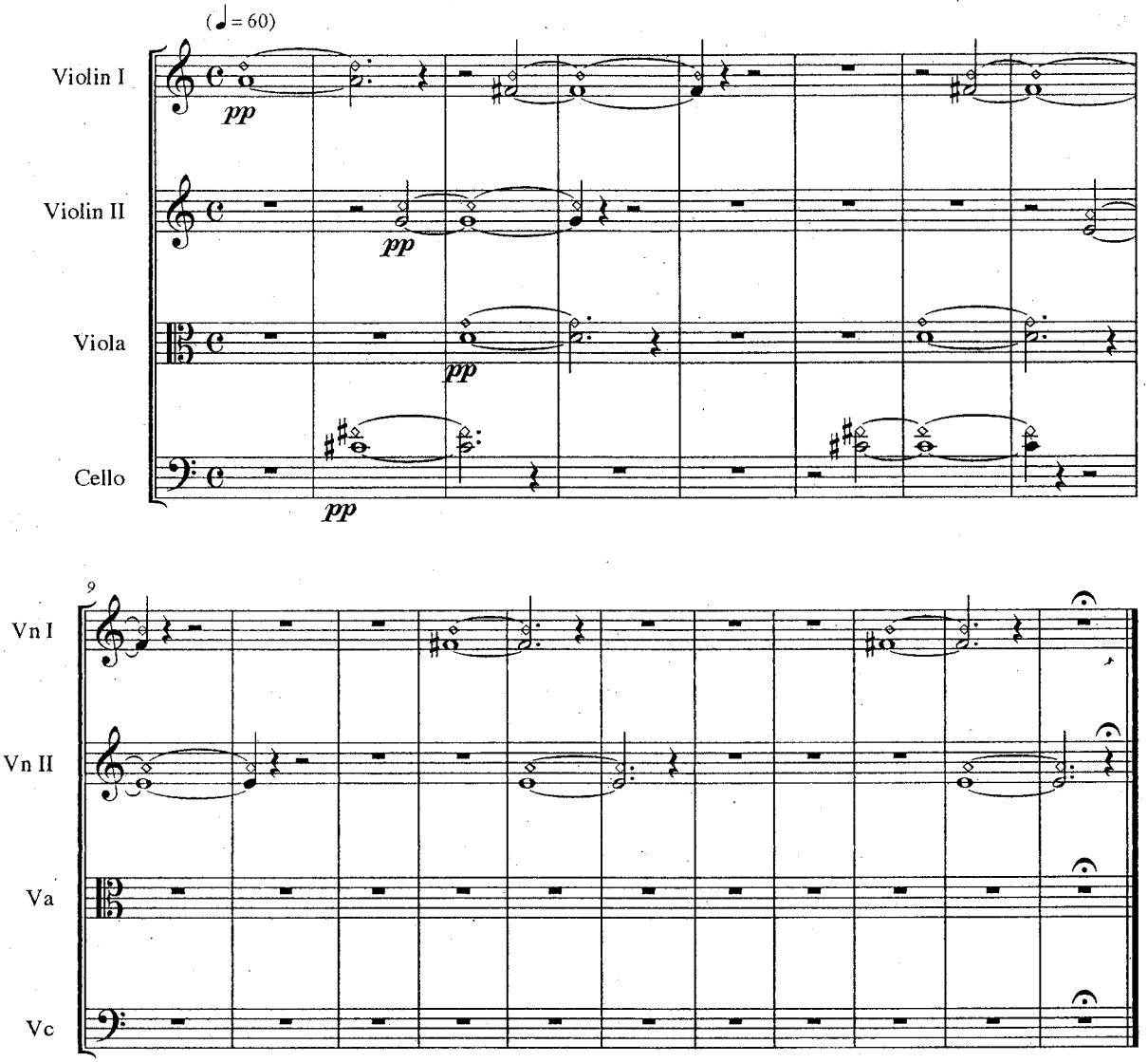
Epilogue



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