We Have Less Time Than You Think

for violin and electronics
~8:30

composed by Howie Kenty

for violinist Adrianna Mateo

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Program Notes:

We Have Less Time Than You Think deals with the fact that we humans do not really have long: on the smaller-scale, in terms of the things we attempt to immediately accomplish, and on relatively larger scales, in the time we can spend with each other, the duration of our individual existences, and the collective lifespan of the human race. One of the truer clichés, time passes in a blur, fluidly and easily escaping attempts to stop or slow its flow, with certain events standing out in hindsight as demarcations of structural points. In my own experience, the longer I have existed, the more the passage of time seems to speed up exponentially; I certainly feel like I have less time than I thought I did.

An audio recording of the piece is available at the following link online:
http://hwarg.com/content/music/composition/h_kenty-we_have_less_time_than_you_think-adrianna_mateo-violin.mp3

Technical Notes:

Aside from the spoken words, all sounds in this piece were generated using only violin samples. After conceptualizing the piece, to create the electronic material, I needed recordings of a number of violin gestures. I created several prerecording scores of small sections detailing these gestures (included as Appendices 1-4), and recorded these samples with violinist Adrianna Mateo. These were then processed using pitch shifting, spectral convolution, filters, spacial processing, layering, manipulation via sampler, and so forth. In the score itself, there are two staves added in addition to that of the violinist: the grand staff indicates the approximate sounds of the electronics, while the staff below indicates the laptop operator's performance instructions, for live realization.

Accompanying this score are the files necessary to perform the live electronics for the piece, available at the online links below. The physical setup is simple, requiring a computer, an audio interface, a microphone set up for the performer that feeds into the computer's audio interface, a MIDI controller or two, and stereo speakers. The laptop operater accompanies the violinist using the software program Ableton Live (v8.1.3), along with iZotope's Iris software sampler (v1.00.748), triggering samples, adjusting volume controls as necessary, and adjusting live spacialization processing. The performer's microphone is fed into a track in Live, where compression, delay, and reverb are applied to the violin and spoken material.

In the laptop operator's instructions, notes indicated with standard noteheads are to be played on a keyboard and held for the durations indicated; this is to play the Iris sampler. Notes with X noteheads are used to trigger samples of the indicated name in Live, via MIDI controller, computer keyboard, or other method. In the included Performance Configuration diagram, I have shown the equipment I use for live performance, but any suitable substitution can be found for any of the parts. The Korg nanoKontrol's default button, knob, and slider parameters are mapped to the fourteen samples to be triggered, main volume, sample playback and sampler volumes, violin/speaking input monitor volume, and delay and reverb wet/dry signals, but any person familiar with a basic knowledge of Live can remap these to their own controller or computer keyboard in the program's "MIDI" mode. To successfully copy the Iris patch, search the hard drive for the "Iris Content" folder and place the included "Iris Library" folder there (merge as necessary with any existing folders). (It should be notated that all effects processing within Live is done using Live's own effects, except for iZotope's Ozone 4 mastering plugin, which is used on the master bus for general equalization and compression; this isn't strictly necessary, and lacking that plugin, the user can add EQ and compression as necessary.)

Electronic performance materials (Ableton Live project, Iris Patch, and PDF score) are available at the following online link:
http://hwarg.com/content/score/h_kenty-we_have_less_time_than_you_think_electronic_performance_materials.zip

Howie Kenty, 2013

We Have Less Time Than You Think

Performance Configuration

Laptop running Ableton Live with iZotope Iris

USB Cables

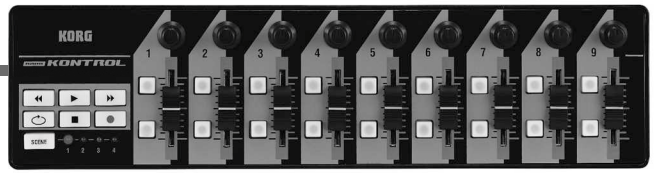
Keyboard Controls Iris Sampler

Violin/ Speaking

USB Cable

Audio Interface/ Microphone

MIDI Controller Controls:
- **Triggering of Samples 1 - 14**
- **Main Volume**
- **Sample Playback and Sampler Volumes**
- **Violin/Speaking Input Volume**
- **Delay and Reverb Wet/Dry**



Speaker L

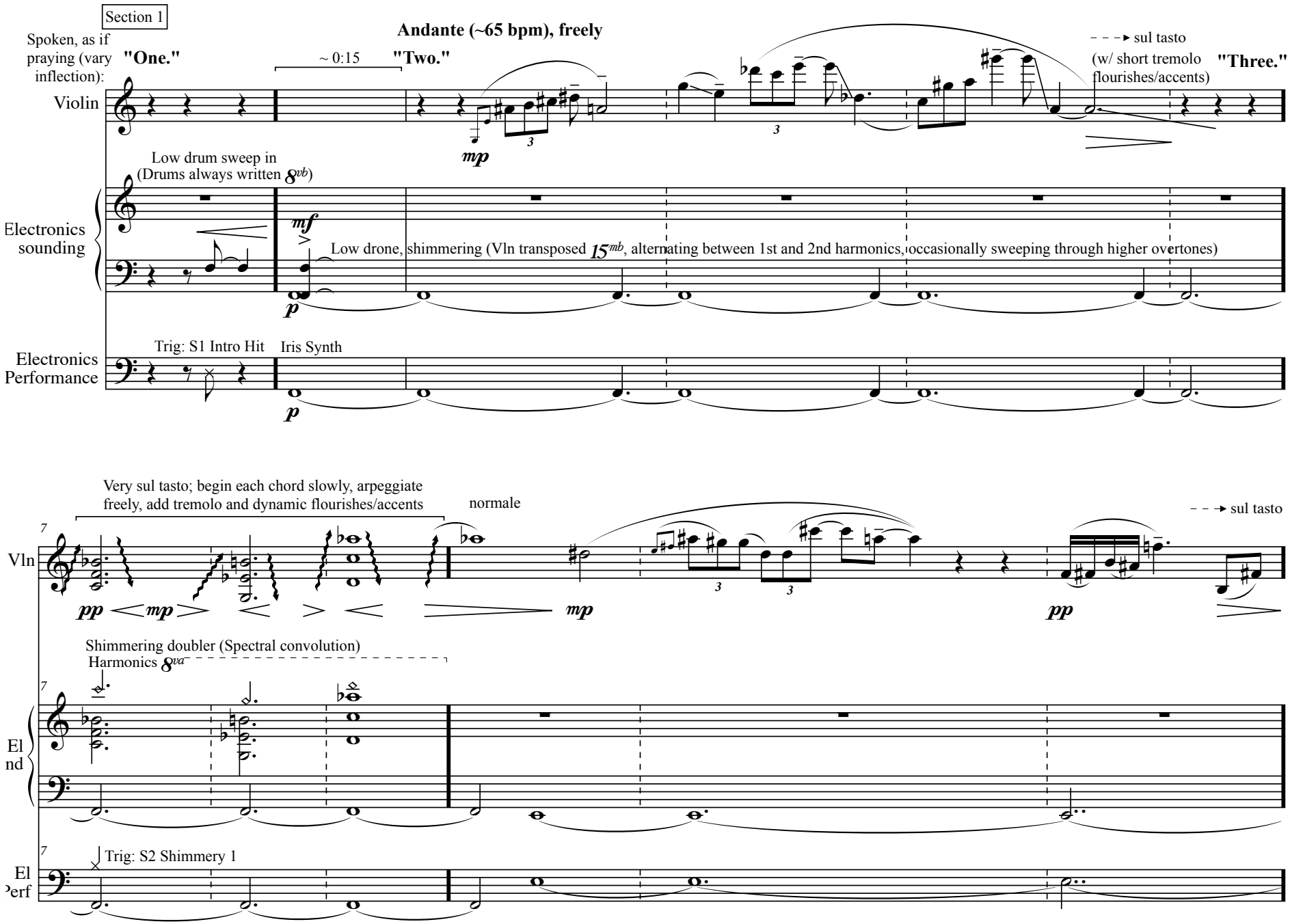
Speaker R

Audio Cables, Includes All Output:
- **Electronics**
- **Instrument Monitoring and Processing**

Score

We Have Less Time Than You Think

Howie Kenty



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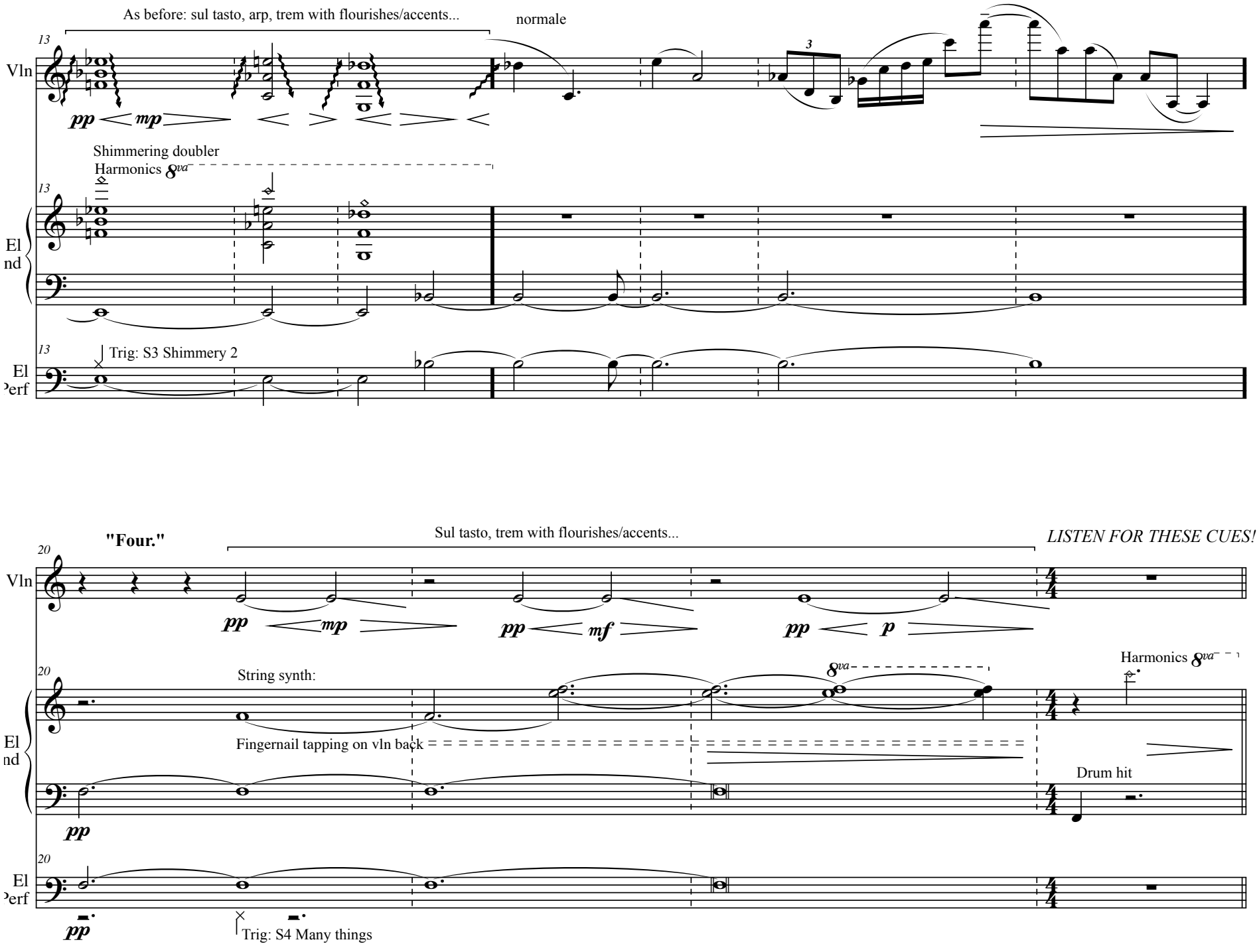
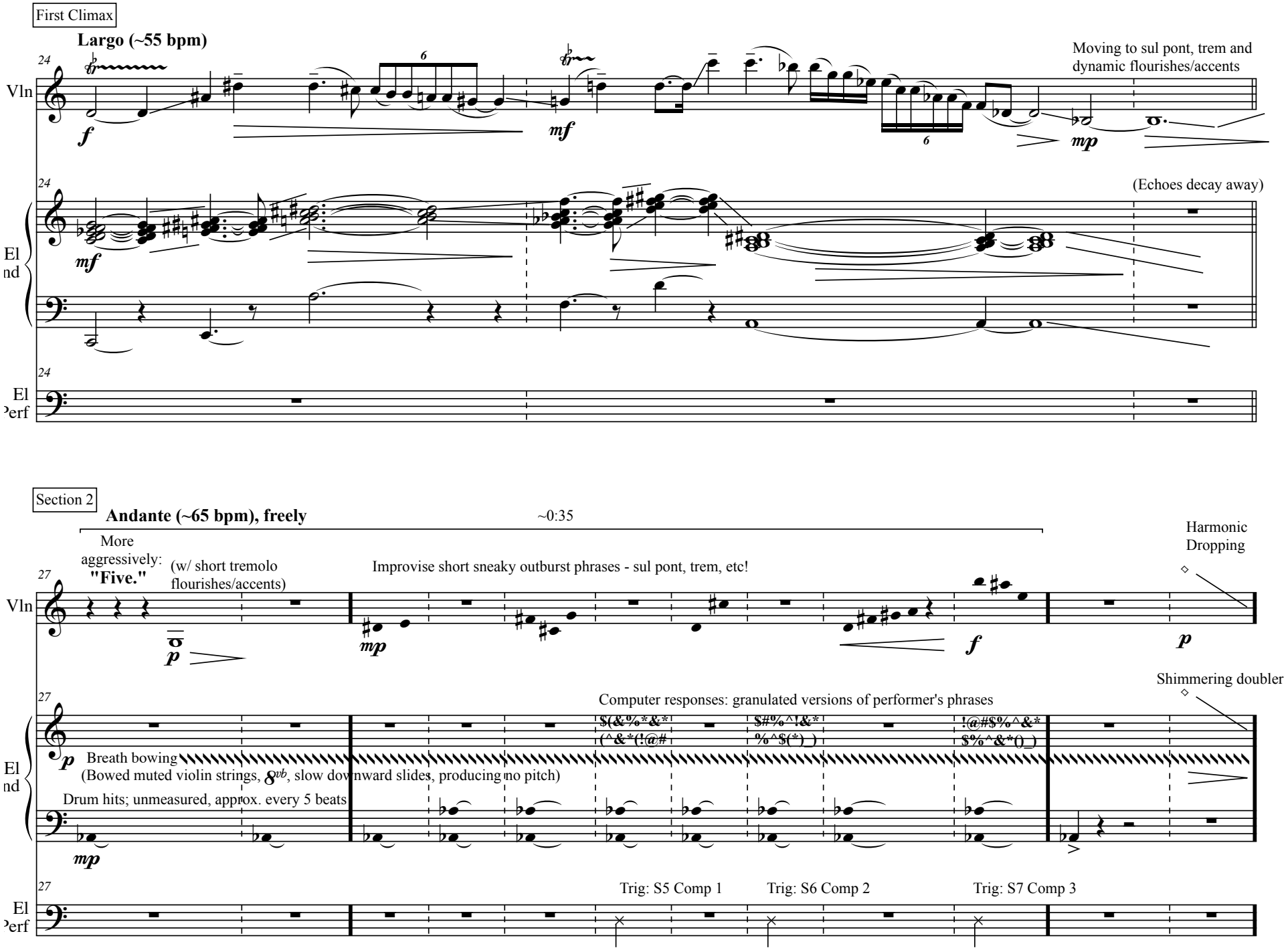
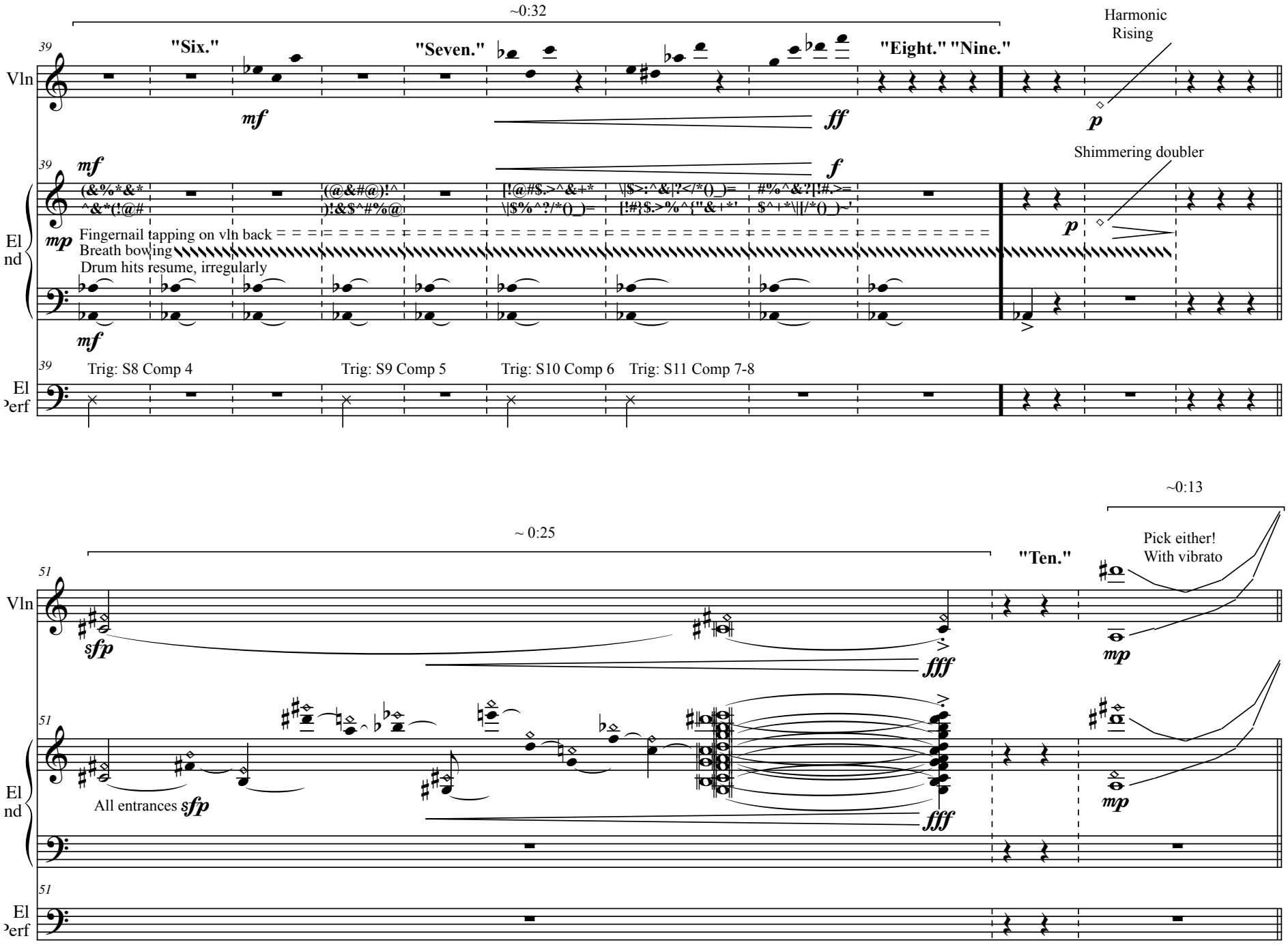
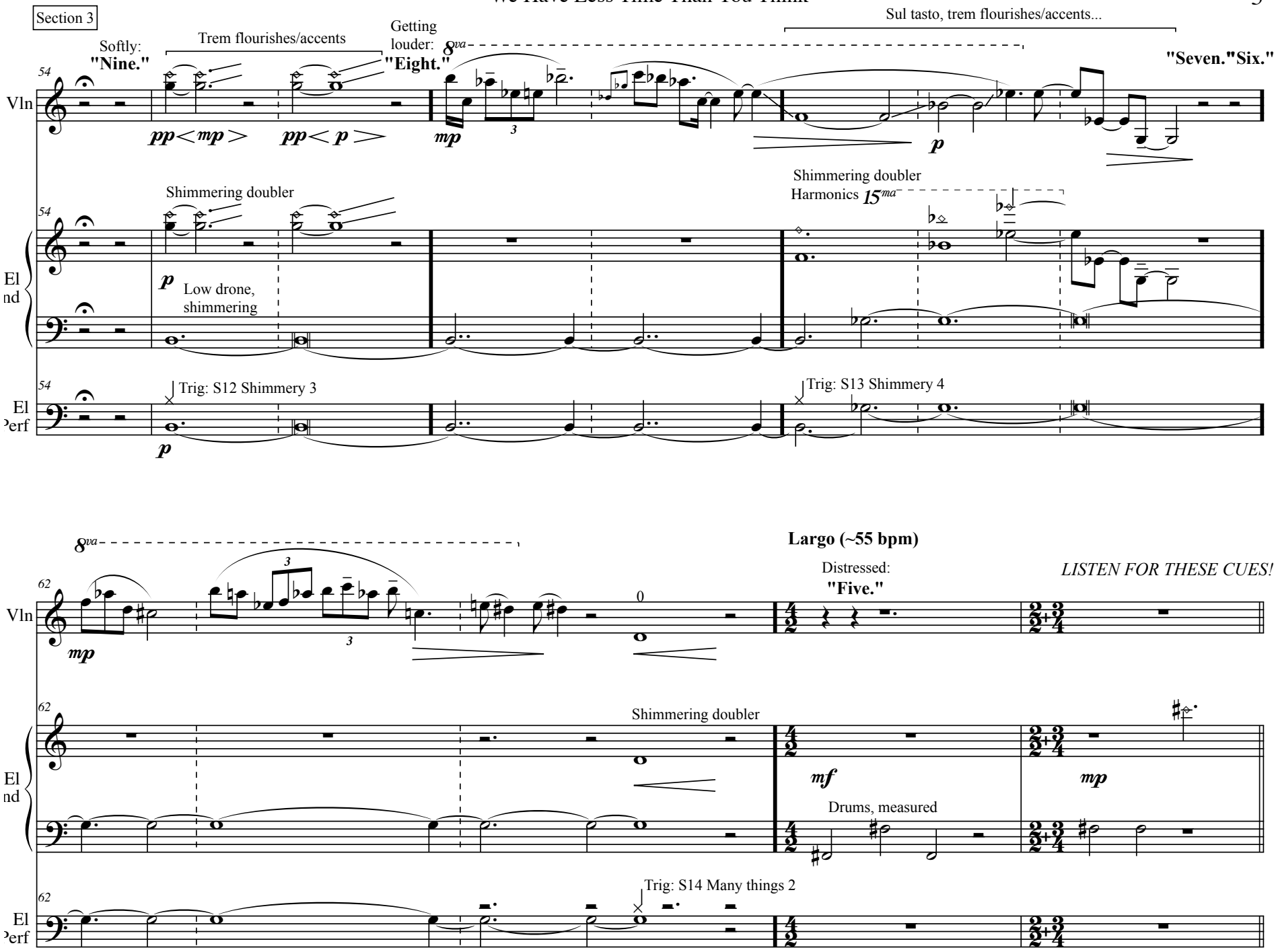
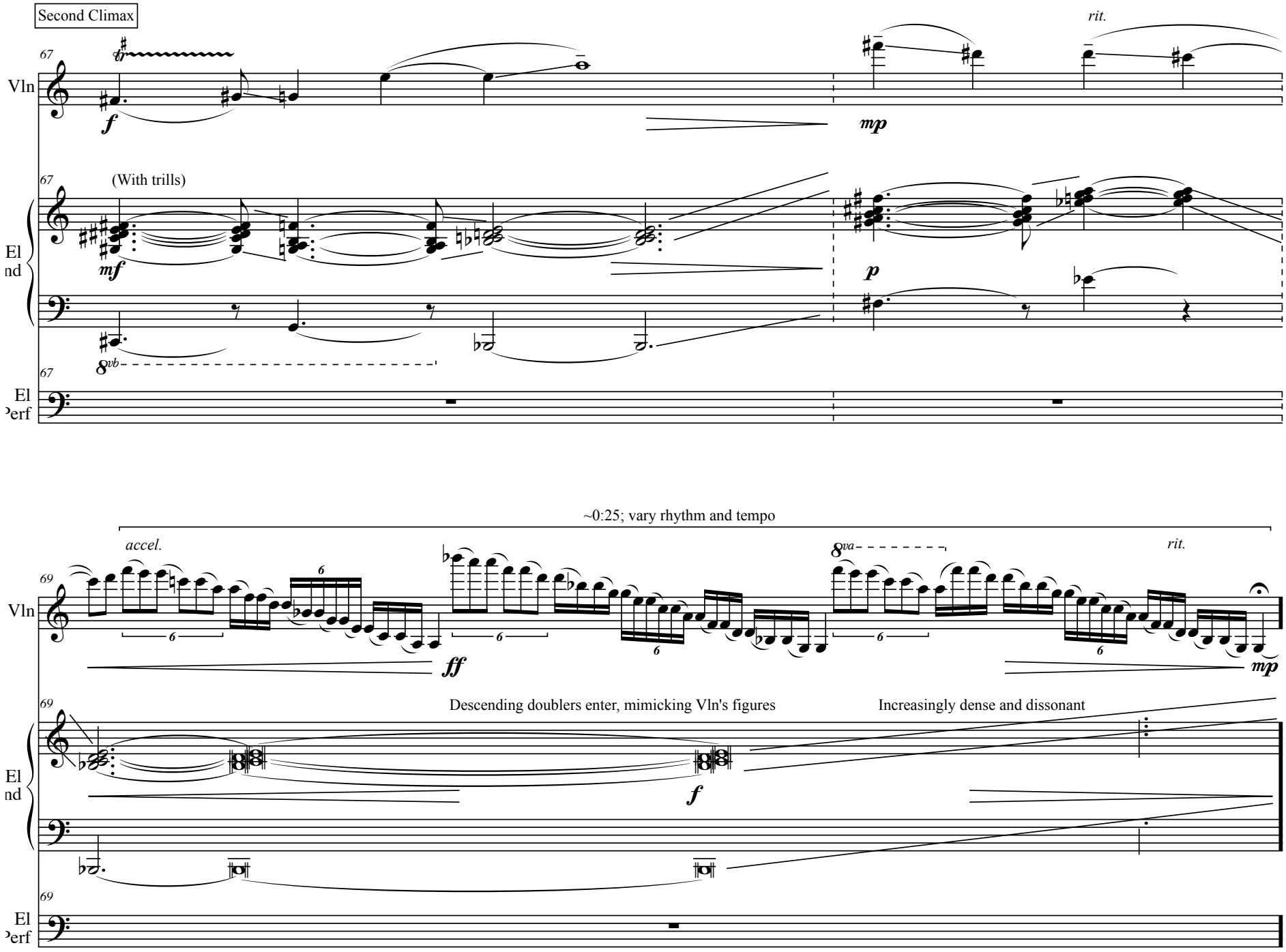
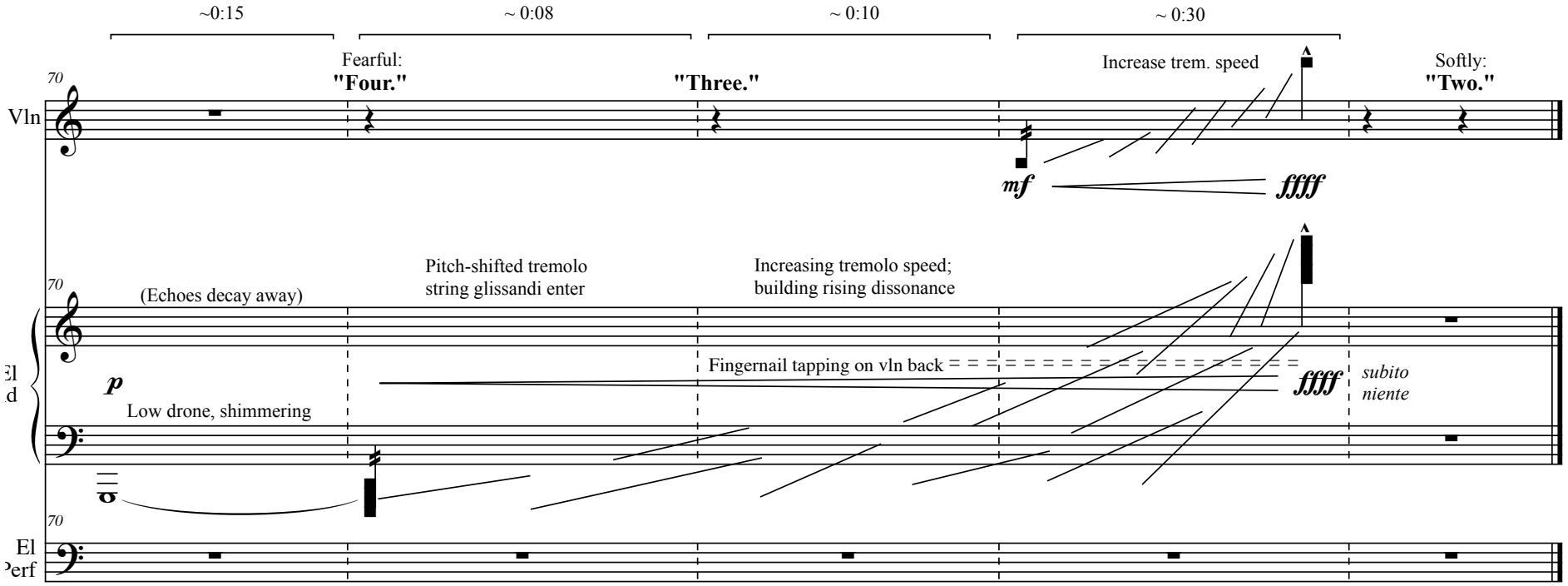

As before: sul tasto, arp, trem with flourishes/accents...
normale
13
Vln
pp mp
Shimmering doubler
Harmonics 8va
El nd
Trig: S3 Shimmery 2
El Perf
"Four."
Sul tasto, trem with flourishes/accents...
LISTEN FOR THESE CUES!
20
pp mp
pp mf
pp p
String synth:
Harmonics 8va
Fingernail tapping on vln back
Drum hit
Trig: S4 Many things


First Climax
Largo (~55 bpm)
Moving to sul pont, trem and dynamic flourishes/accents
(Echoes decay away)
Vln
El nd
El Perf
Section 2
Andante (~65 bpm), freely
~0:35
More aggressively: "Five."
(w/ short tremolo flourishes/accents)
Improvise short sneaky outburst phrases - sul pont, trem, etc!
Harmonic Dropping
Shimmering doubler
Computer responses: granulated versions of performer's phrases
$(&%*&*
(^&*(!@#
$#%^!&*
%^$(*)_)
!@#$%^&*
$%^&*()_)
Breath bowing
(Bowed muted violin strings, 8vb, slow downward slides, producing no pitch)
Drum hits; unmeasured, approx. every 5 beats
Trig: S5 Comp 1
Trig: S6 Comp 2
Trig: S7 Comp 3


~0:32
"Six."
"Seven."
"Eight." "Nine."
Harmonic
Rising
Vln
mf
ff
p
39
mf
f
Shimmering doubler
(&%*&*
^&*(!@#
(@&#@)!^
)!&$^#%@
|!@#$.>^&+*
\|$%^?/*()_)=
\|$>:^&|?</*()_)=
[!#}$.>%^{"&+'*'
#%^&?[!#.>=
$^+*\|[/*()_)~'
Fingernail tapping on vln back
Breath bowing
Drum hits resume, irregularly
El
nd
mp
p
mf
39
Trig: S8 Comp 4
Trig: S9 Comp 5
Trig: S10 Comp 6
Trig: S11 Comp 7-8
El
Perf
~ 0:25
~0:13
"Ten."
Pick either!
With vibrato
51
Vln
sfp
fff
mp
All entrances sfp
El
nd
El
Perf

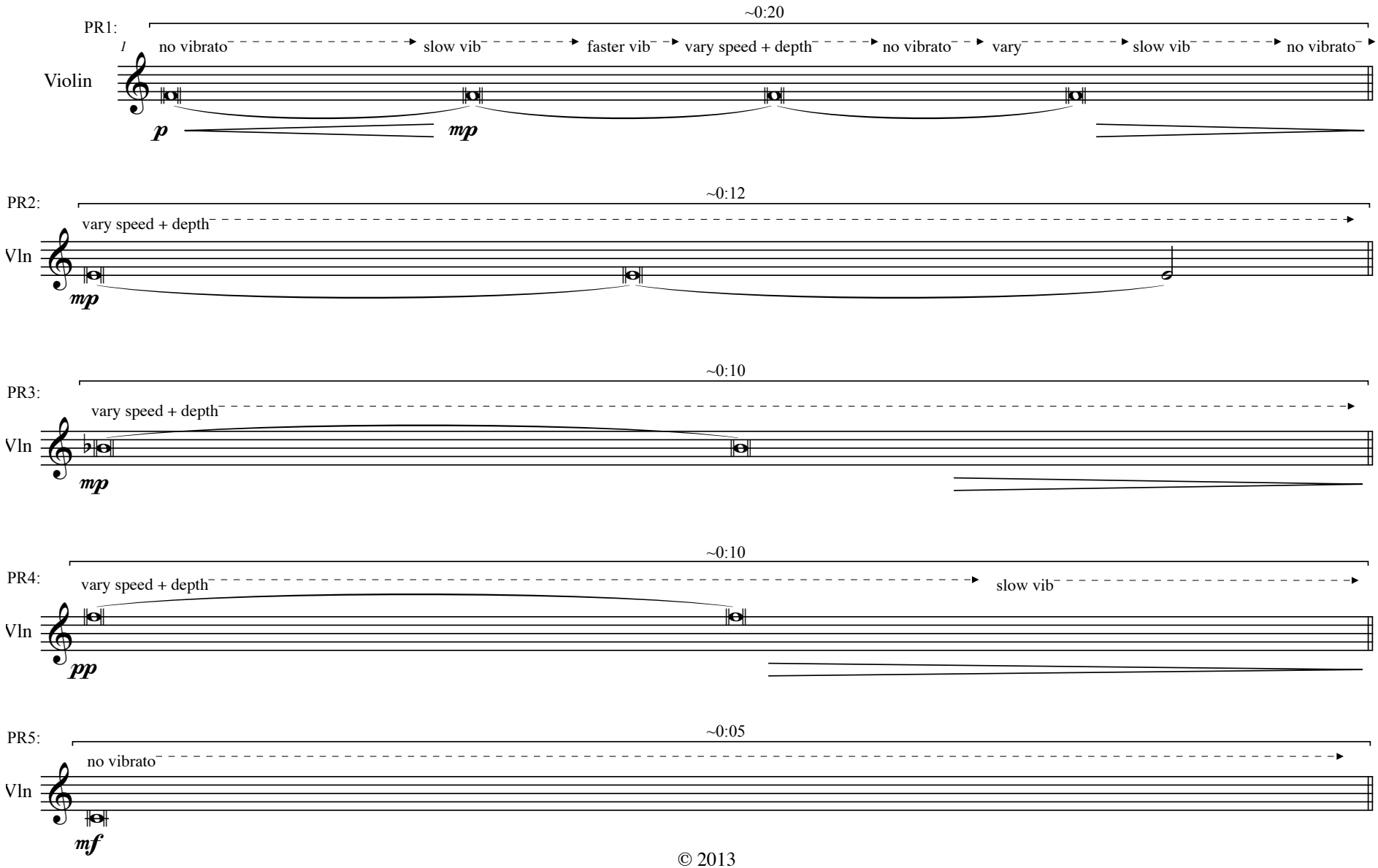

Section 3
Softly:
"Nine."
Trem flourishes/accents
Getting louder:
"Eight."
8va
Sul tasto, trem flourishes/accents...
"Seven."
"Six."
Vln
pp < mp >
pp < p >
mp
p
Shimmering doubler
Harmonics 15ma
El nd
Low drone, shimmering
Trig: S12 Shimmery 3
Trig: S13 Shimmery 4
El Perf
Largo (~55 bpm)
Distressed:
"Five."
LISTEN FOR THESE CUES!
mf
Drums, measured
Trig: S14 Many things 2


Second Climax
rit.
67
Vln
f
mp
(With trills)
El
nd
mf
p
8vb
El
Perf
~0:25; vary rhythm and tempo
accel.
8va
rit.
69
ff
mp
Descending doublers enter, mimicking Vln's figures
Increasingly dense and dissonant
f


~0:15
~ 0:08
~ 0:10
~ 0:30
Fearful:
"Four."
"Three."
Increase trem. speed
Softly:
"Two."
70
Vln
mf
ffff
Pitch-shifted tremolo
string glissandi enter
Increasing tremolo speed;
building rising dissonance
(Echoes decay away)
Fingernail tapping on vln back
p
Low drone, shimmering
ffff
subito
niente
El
d
El
Perf

We Have Less Time Than You Think - Appendix 1: PRs 1-5

Precordings 1-5 were used to general the "Low drone, shimmering" texture appearing in numerous places throughout the piece, most prominently from mm. 2 - 22 and mm. 55 - 64. These samples were fed into iZotope's Iris sampler and pitched shifted down several octaves, also lengthening them. Additionally, Iris's selective filtering was used to cut out all but certain partials, used to create both oscillation between the 1st and 2nd harmonics, the shimmering effect in the higher partials, and the whisper of the noise found between pitched partials.



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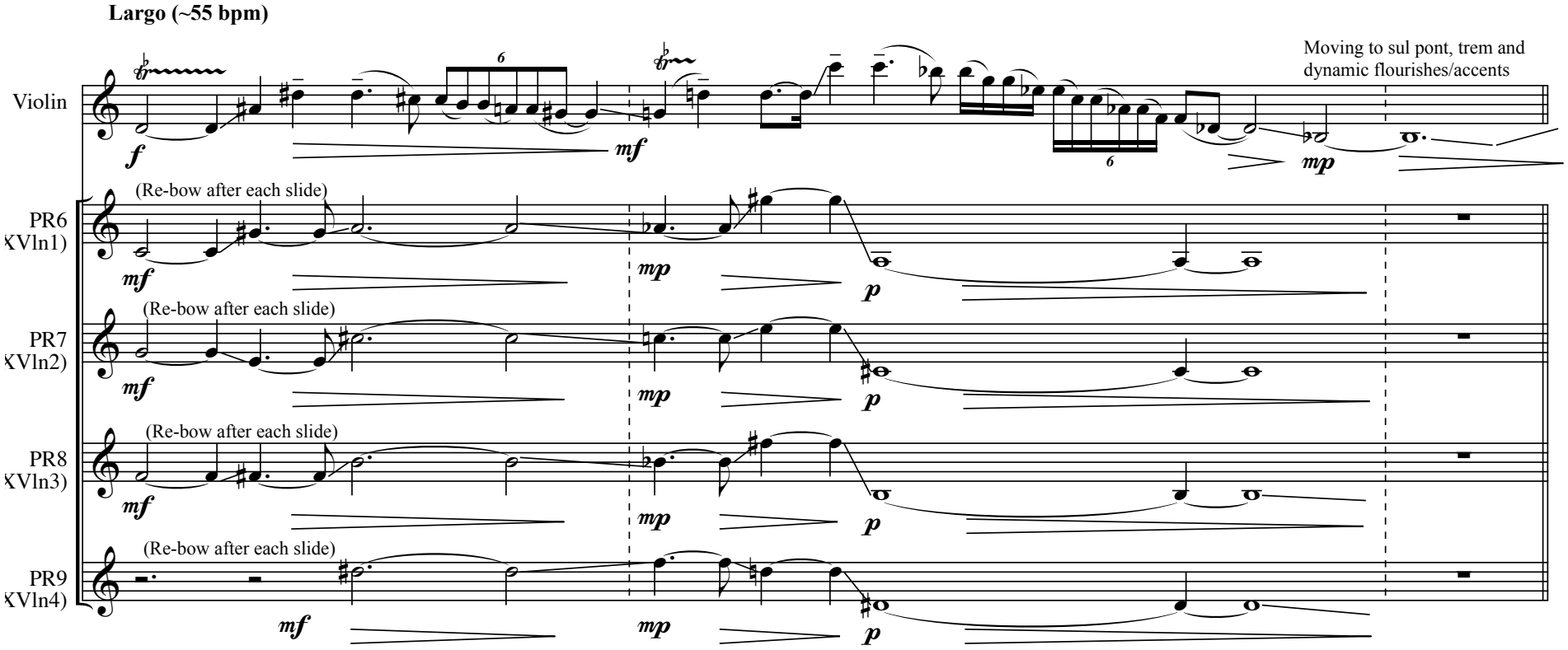
We Have Less Time Than You Think - Appendix 2: First Climax and PRs 6-9

Prerecordings 6-9 consist of the extra violins that make up the texture for the "first climax" of the piece, at m. 24. The first extra violin slides from the lowest note of the first chord (excluding the notes in the lead violin's line) to the highest note of the second chord, to the lowest of the third, and so on. The second extra violin slides from the highest note in the first chord to the lowest in the second chord, and so on, with the other violins taking up this pattern, or its inverse, with whichever notes remain in the chord. These were all recorded separately, and given light spectral, spacial, and filter processing. (Incidentally, many of the melodic elements found in the lead violin when playing solo are derived from the figures in these extra violins.)



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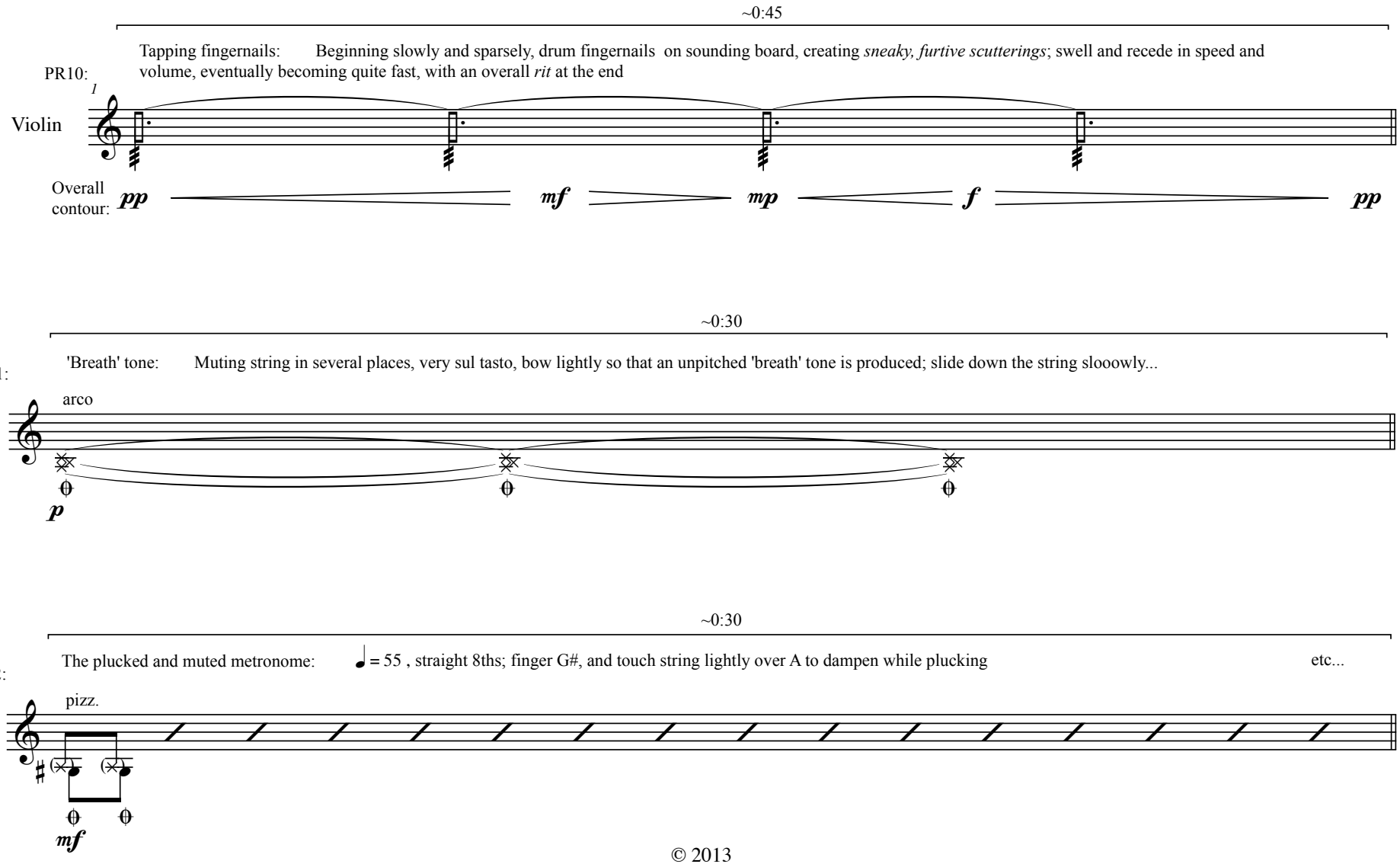
We Have Less Time Than You Think - Appendix 3: PRs 10-12

Prerecordings 10-12 were used for various textural elements. PR10 was edited and layered against itself, appearing at mm. 20-22, mm. 39-47, and at m. 72. Several transposed and lengthened versions of PR11 were filtered and layered against each other to form the bed of Section 2, mm. 27-49. The pizzicato plucks in PR12 were transposed down either two or three octaves and used to create all of the "Drum" sounds in the piece, including the intro hits in mm. 1 and 2, the climax harbinger in m. 23, the off-kilter irregular pulse in Section 2, mm. 27-48, and so on.



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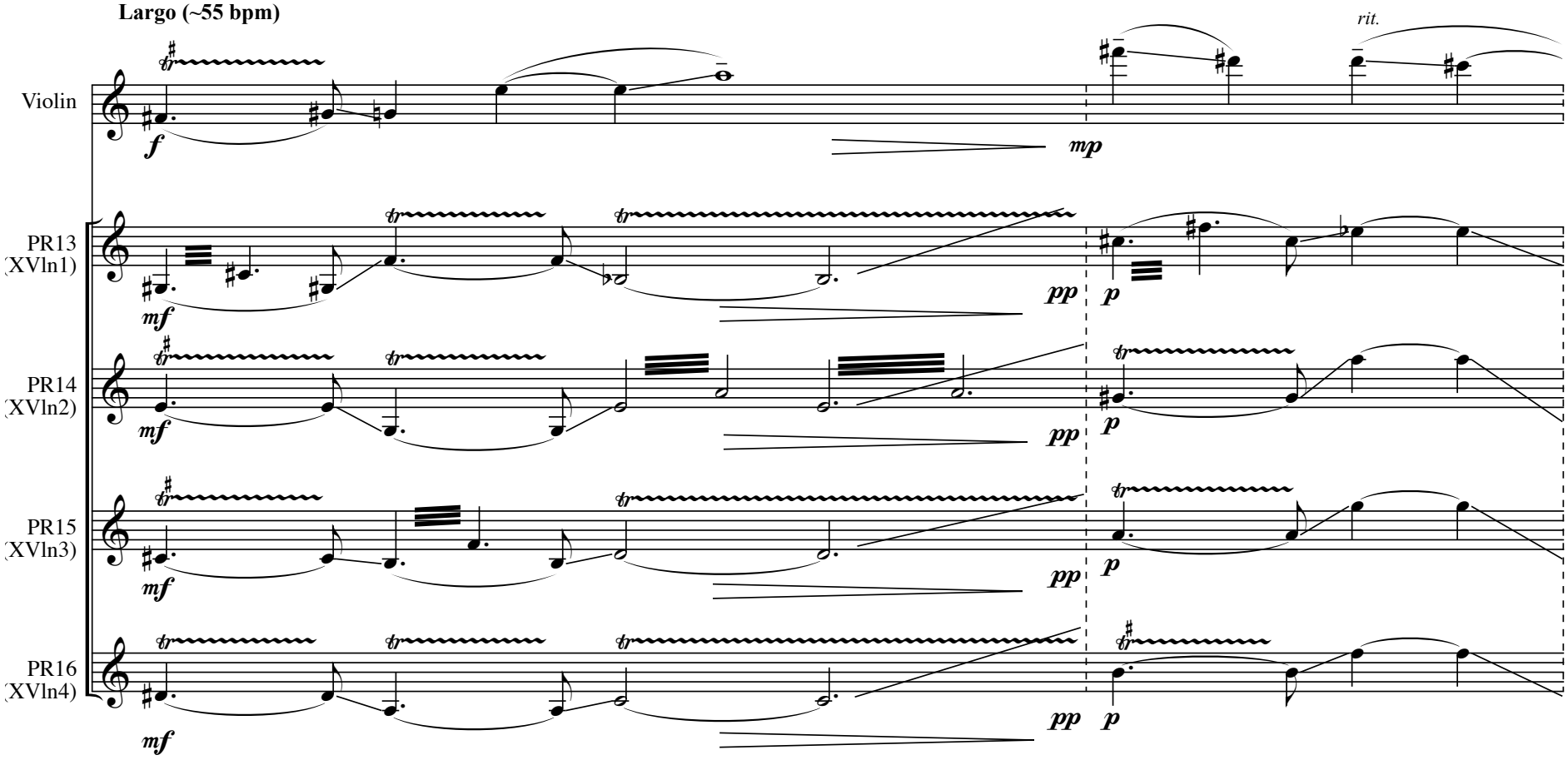
We Have Less Time Than You Think - Appendix 4: Second Climax and PRs 13-16

Prerecordings 13-16 are used in the same way PRs 6-9 are in the first climax, although the second climax, at m. 67, is transposed a half step higher, and the trills and tremolos give it a more active texture. Several versions of the lead violin lines occuring here in the third measure of the precording score were edited and layered over the lead violin, giving a thicker texture of descending thirds.



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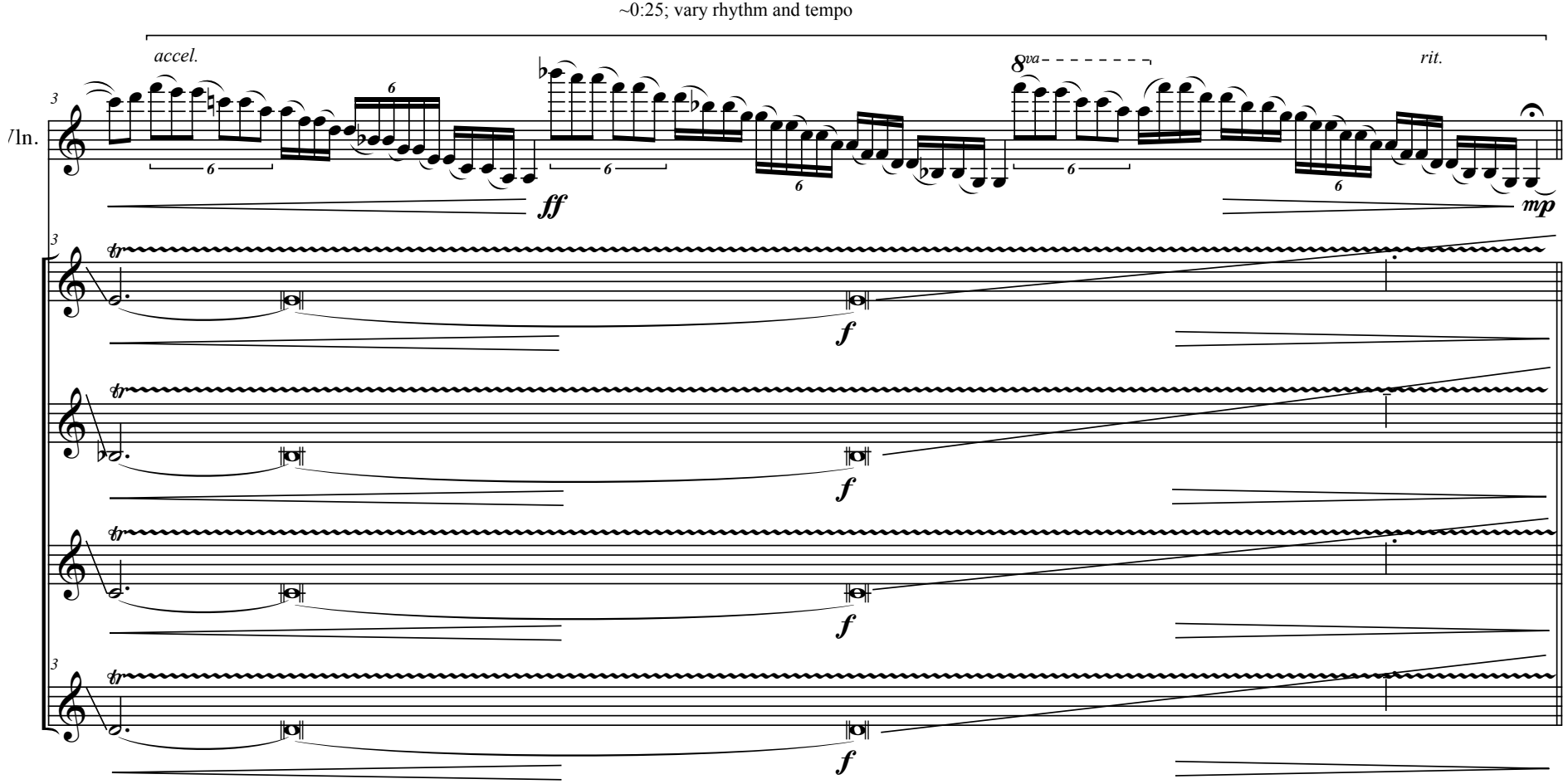
~0:25; vary rhythm and tempo
accel.
8va
rit.
/ln.
ff
mp
f
f
f
f