a journal of the Society for Music Theory

MTO 8.4 Examples: Leydon, Towards a Typology of Minimalist Tropes

(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)
http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.02.8.4/mto.02.8.4.leydon.php

Figure 1. Parameters that construct the “musical subject”

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"*Vocality*, *gesture*, and *agency* may be drawn together to motivate a synthesis that forms the experience of an active agent or 'persona' in a musical work."

-- Naomi Cumming, "The Subjectivities of *Erbarme Dich*," *Music Analysis* 16/1 (March 1997), p. 11

TIMBRE
- affords vicarious *vocality*

GESTURE
- affords vicarious *kinesthesia*

SYNTAX
- locus of "will" or *intentionality*

Figure 2. Middleton's "repetition strategies"

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MUSEMATIC repetition

- repetition of "musemes," short motivic fragments
- projects a single-leveled "groove"

DISCURSIVE repetition

- repetition of syntactically complete units (e.g. phrases, strophes)
- projects a hierarchically organized discourse

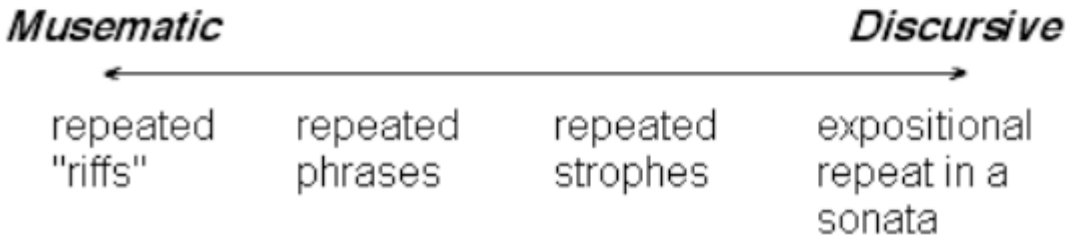

Figure 3. Three accounts of the signifying potential of musical syntax

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Cumming:

gesture - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - vs - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - syntax

= physical movements of the body = the will, intentionality

Middleton:

musematicity - - - - - - - - - - vs - - - - - - - - - - - - - - discourse

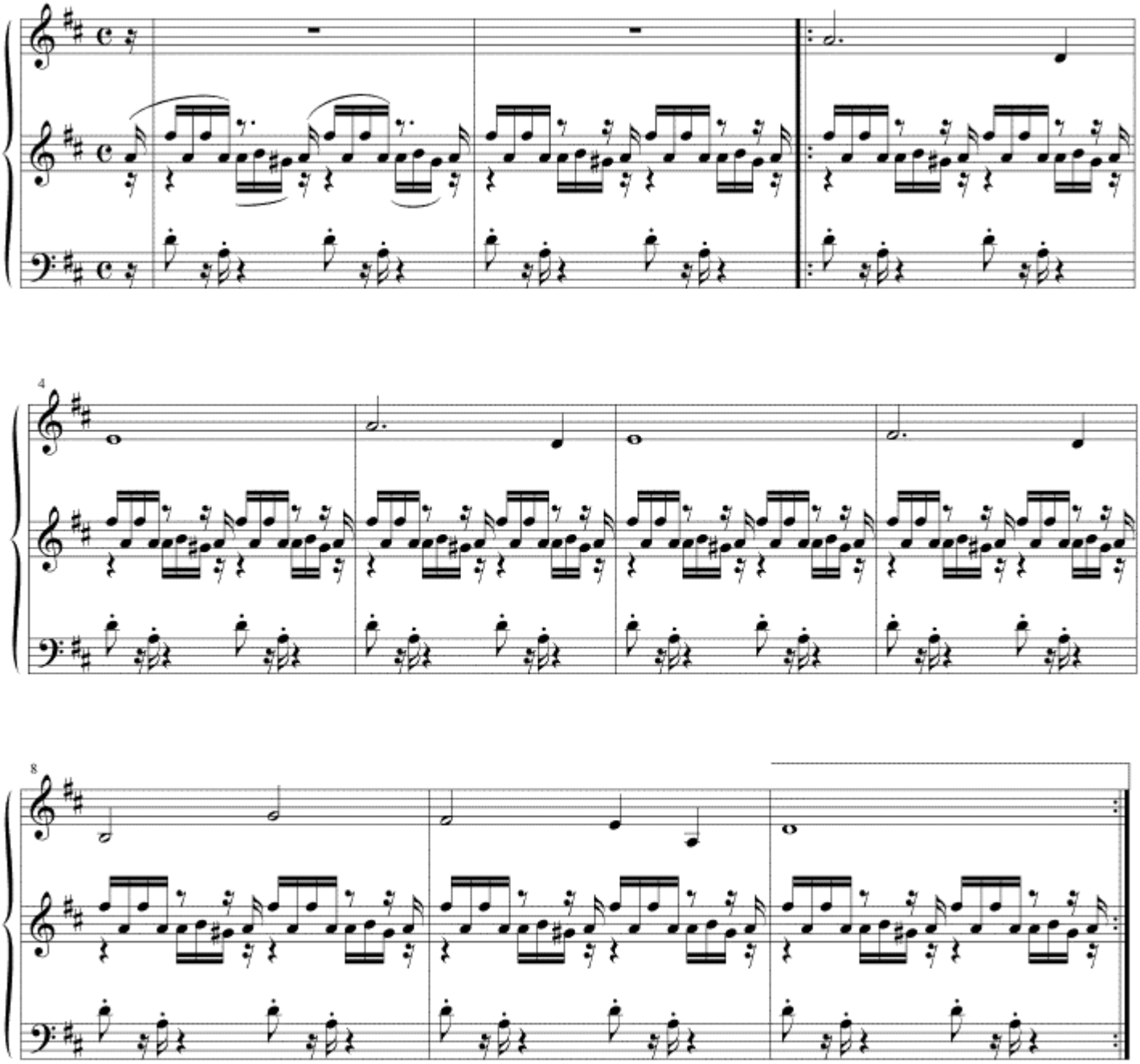
= "psychic resonance" = "investment" of energy

Meyer:

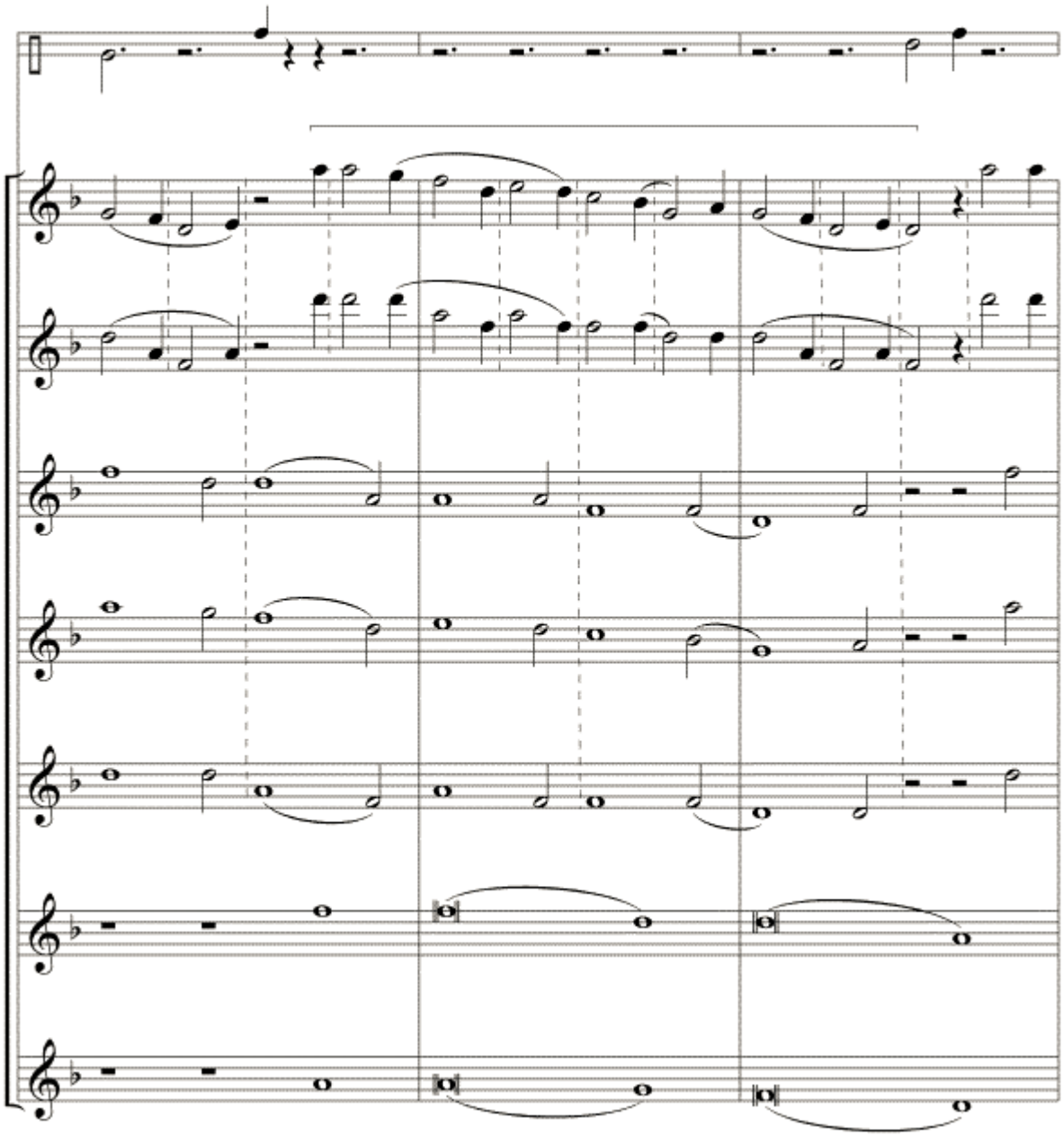
statistical parameters - - - - - vs - - - - - - - - - - syntactical parameters

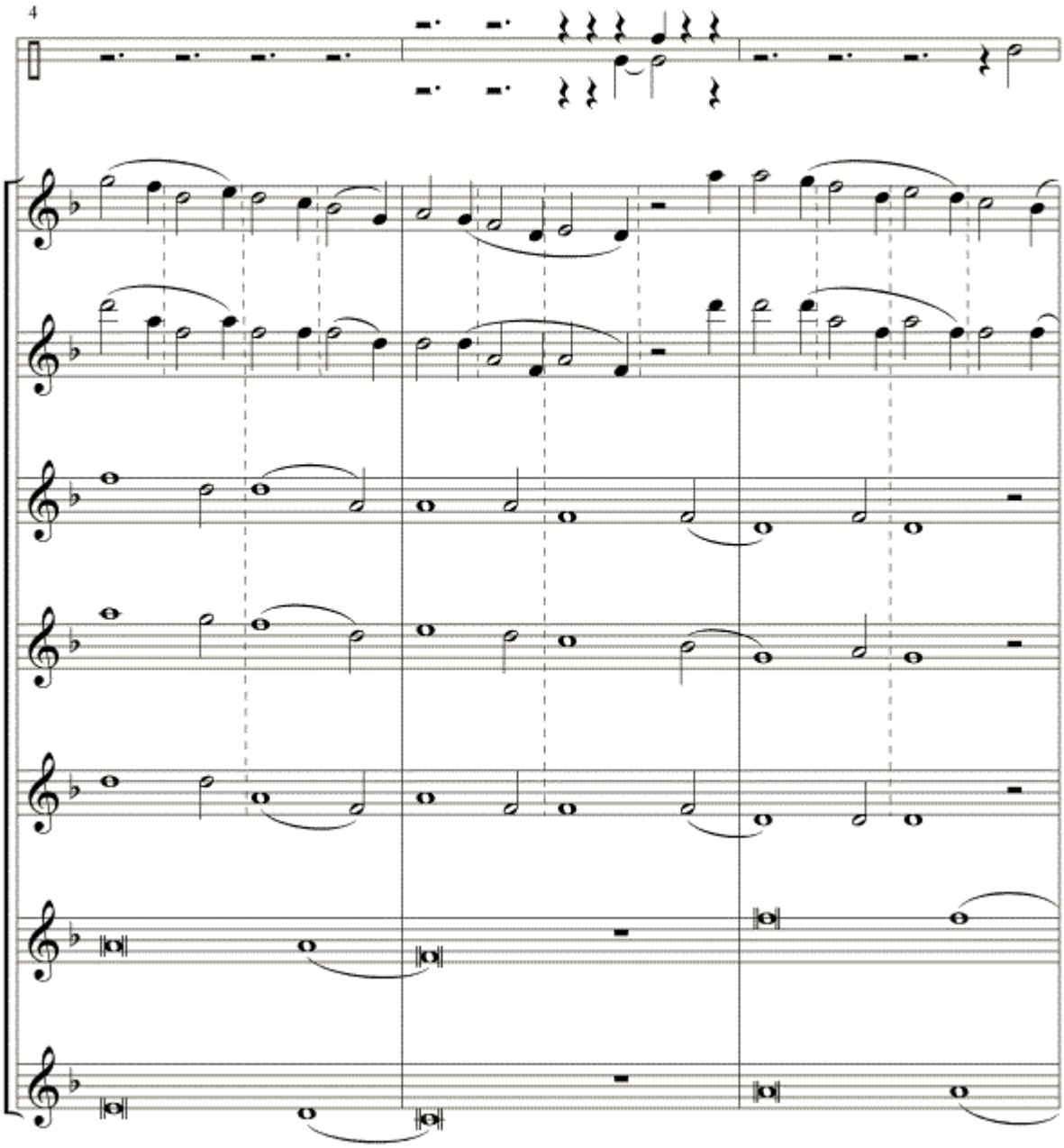
= physio-motor response = cognitive response

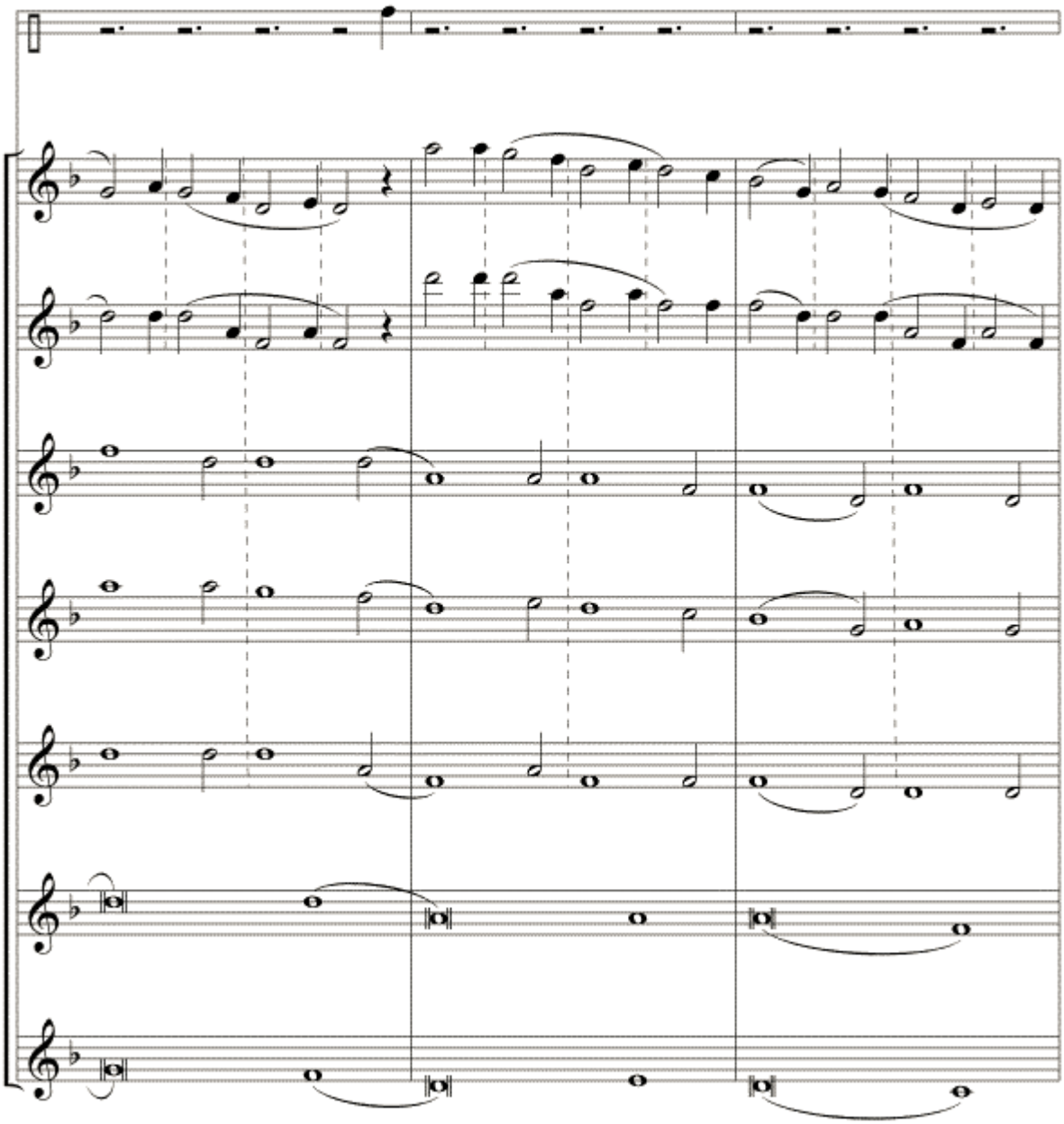
Example 1. Raymond Scott's *Soothing Sounds for Baby*, mm. 1–10



Example 3. Arvo Pärt, “Arbos,” mm. 17–28







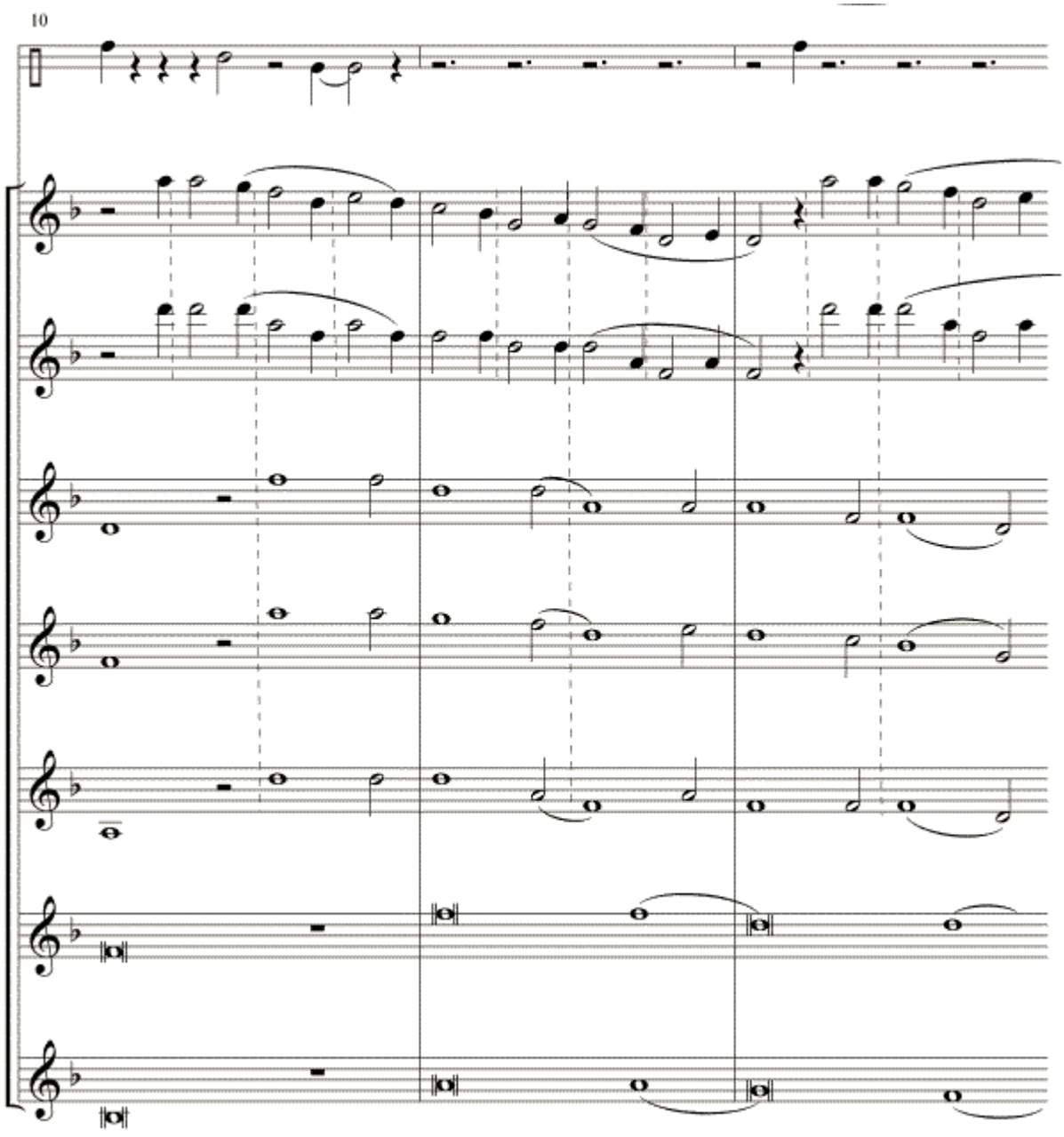


Figure 4. Six repetition “tropes” with some representative works

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maternal

repetition evokes a 'holding environment', or regression to an imagined state of prelinguistic origins
(Raymond Scott's *Soothing Sounds for Baby)*

mantric

repetition portrays a state of mystical transcendence
(Arvo Pärt's "liturgical minimalism"; John Adams's *Shaker Loops*)

kinetic

repetition depicts (or incites) a collectivity of dancing bodies
(Spring Heel Jack; various electronica)

totalitarian

repetition evokes an involuntary state of unfreedom
(Rzewski's *Coming Together*, Andriessen's *De Staat*)

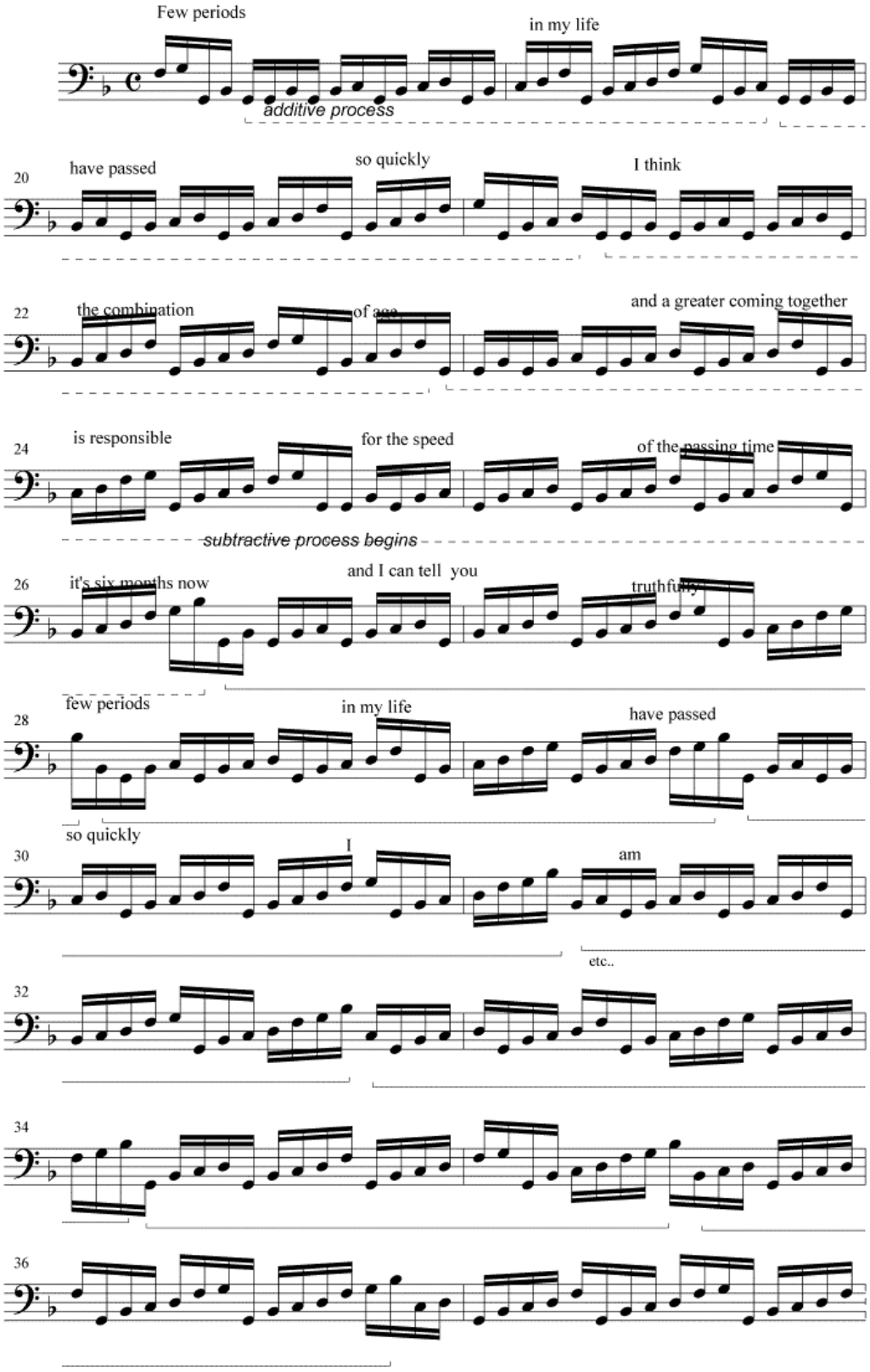
motoric

repetition evokes an indifferent mechanized process
(Nyman's *Musique à Grande Vitesse*, Adams's *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*)

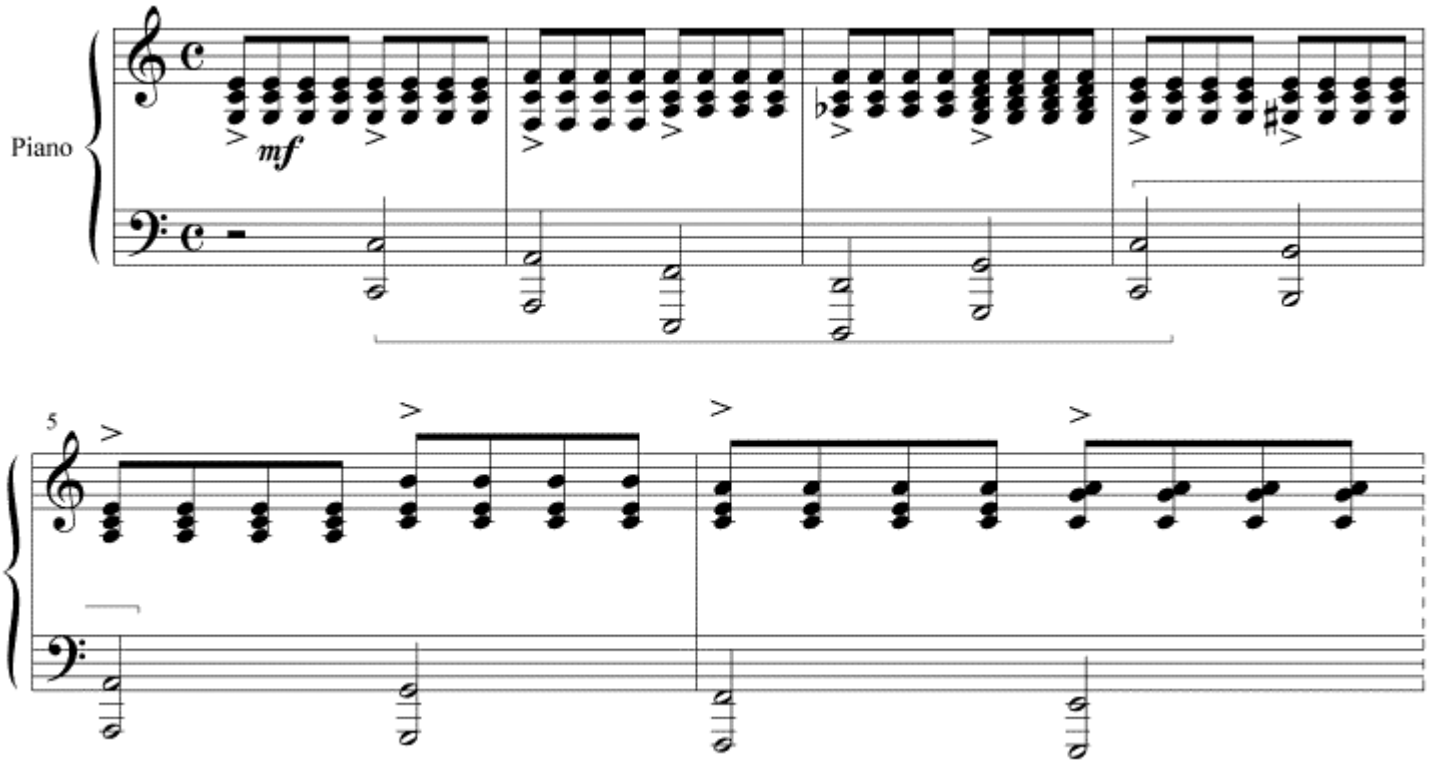
aphasic

repetition conveys notions of cognitive impairment, madness, or logical absurdity
(Nyman's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Satie's *Vexations*)

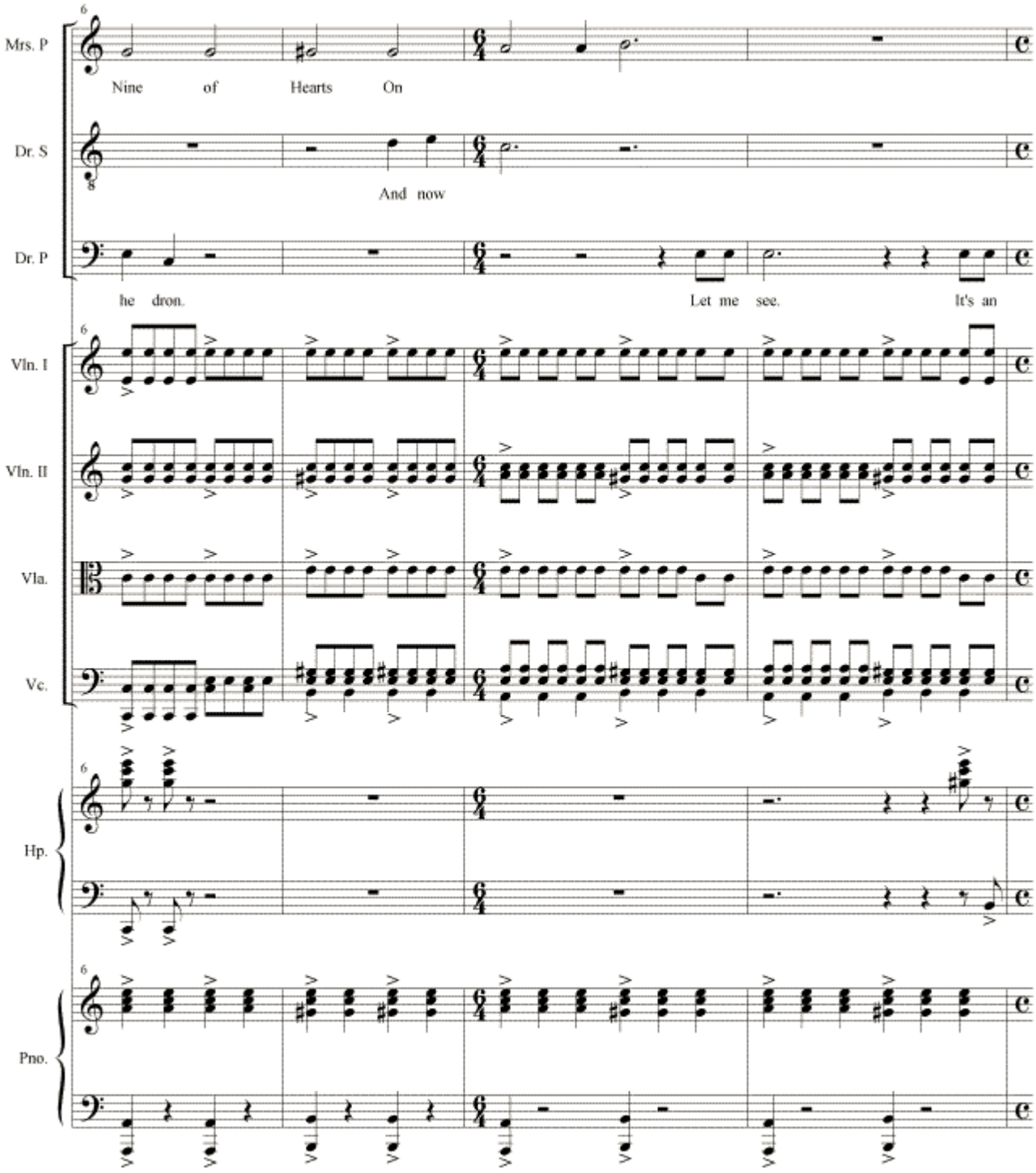
Example 4. Frederic Rzewski, *Coming Together*, mm. 18–37

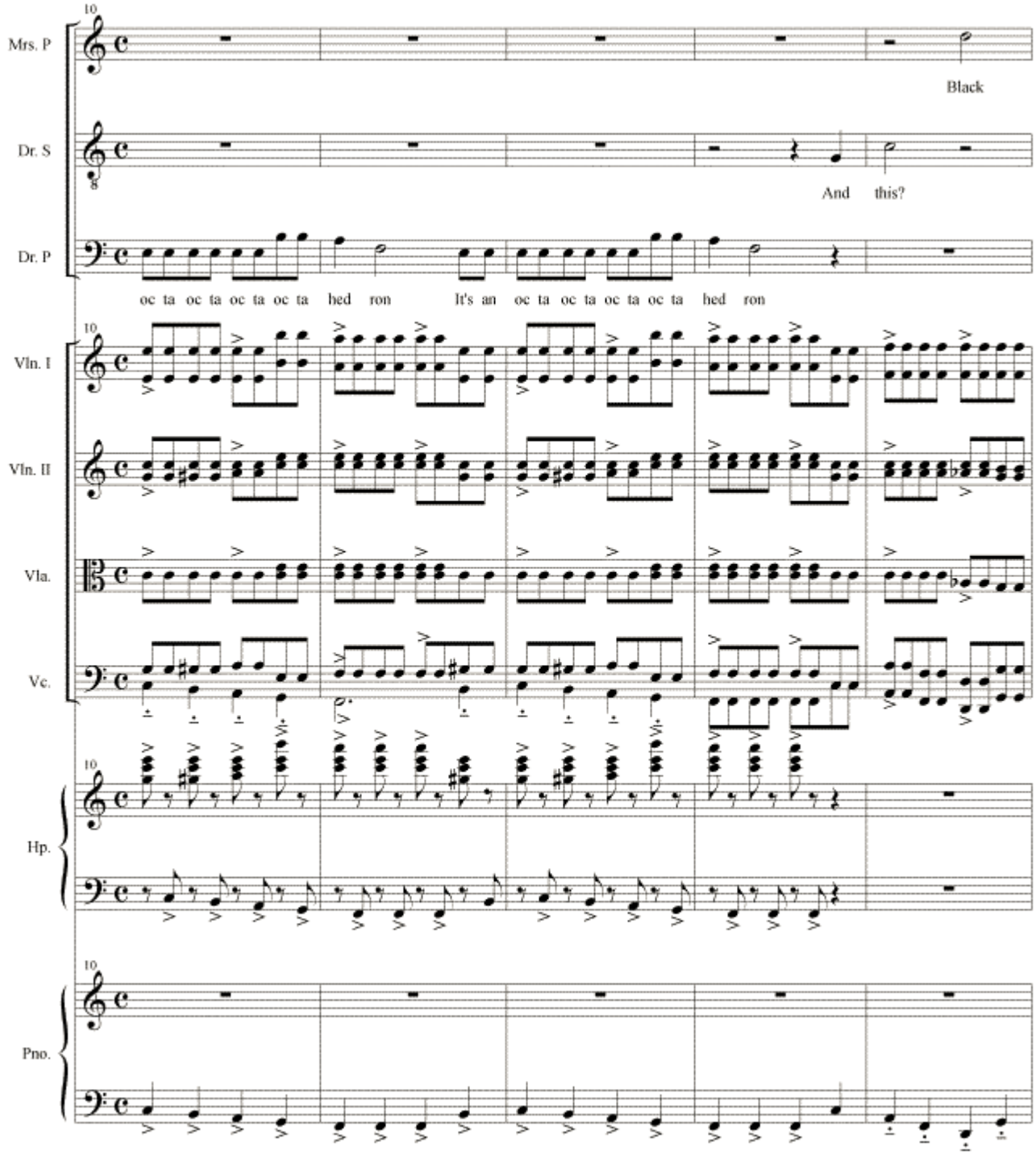


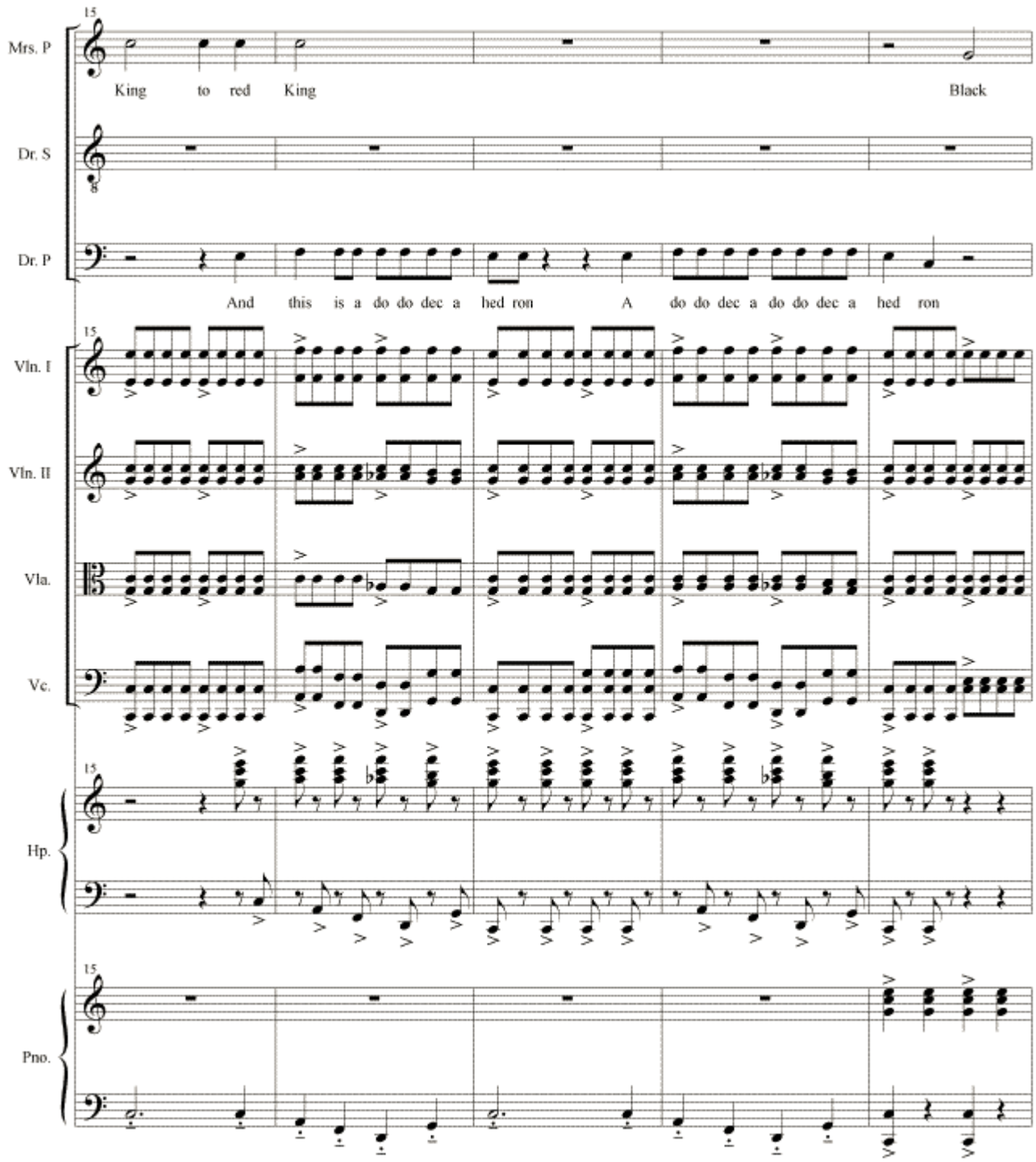
Example 6a. Robert Schumann, “Ich Grolle Nicht” from *Dichterliebe*, mm. 1–6

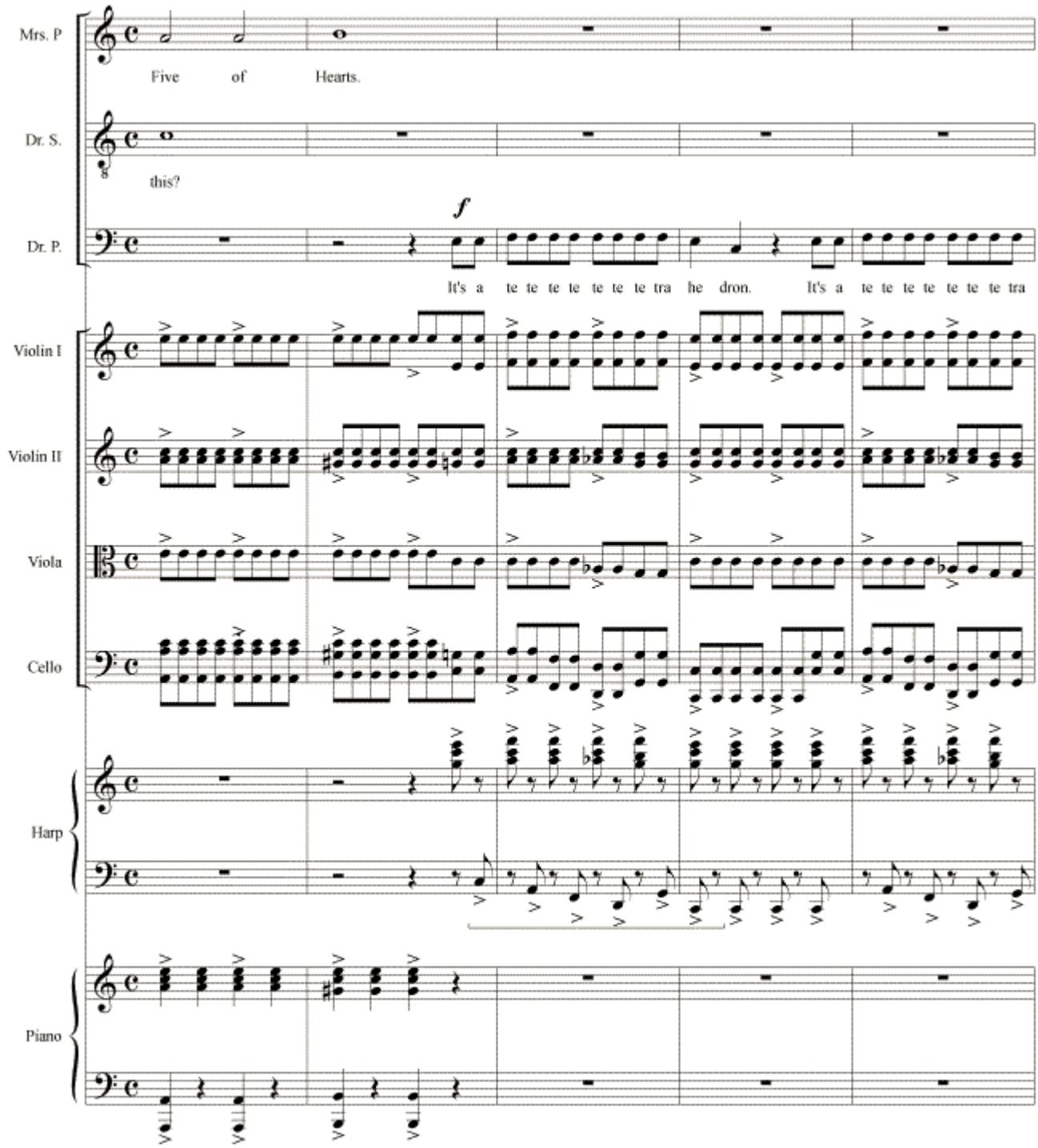


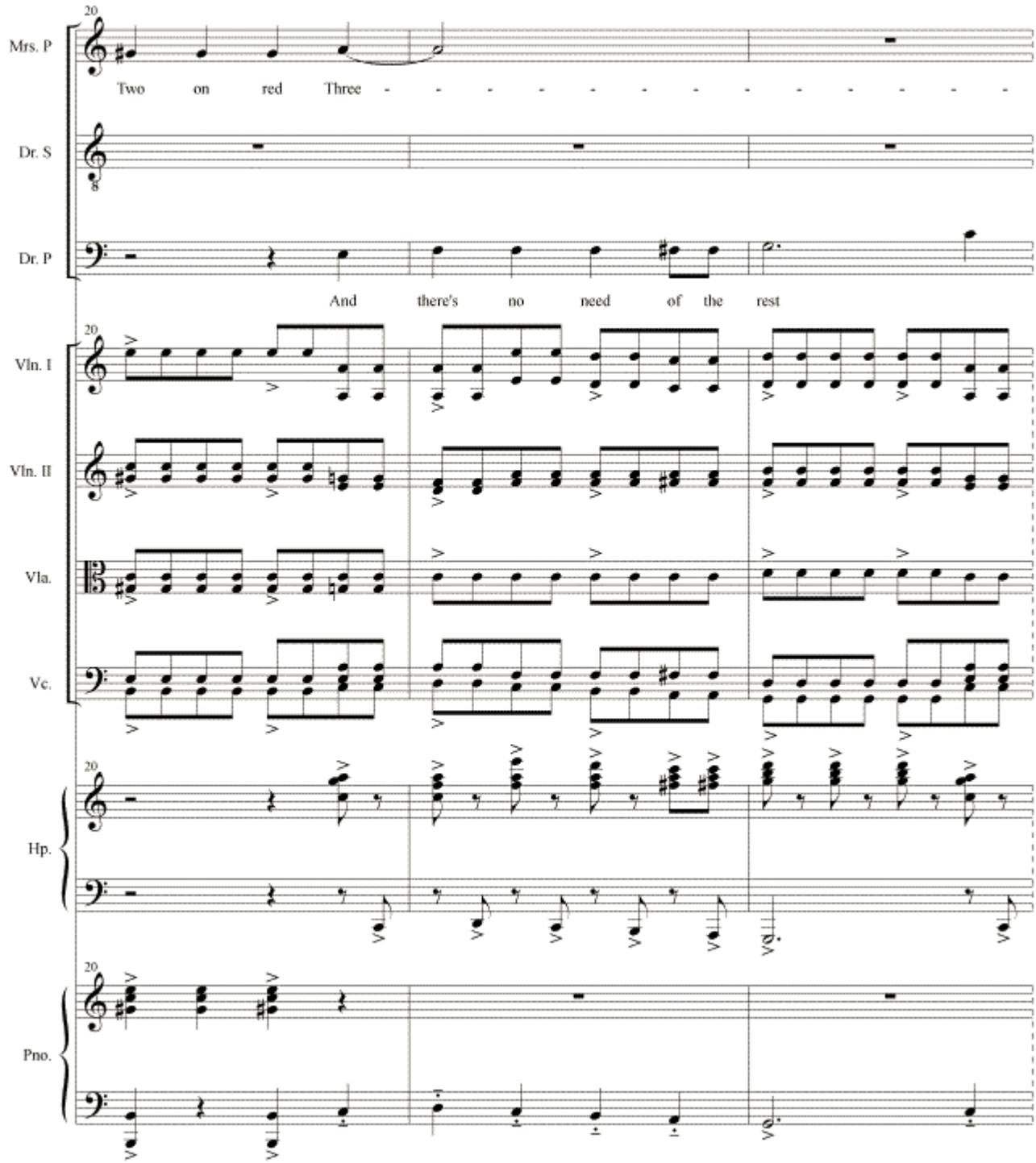
Example 6b. Nyman, “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat,” mm. 601–622



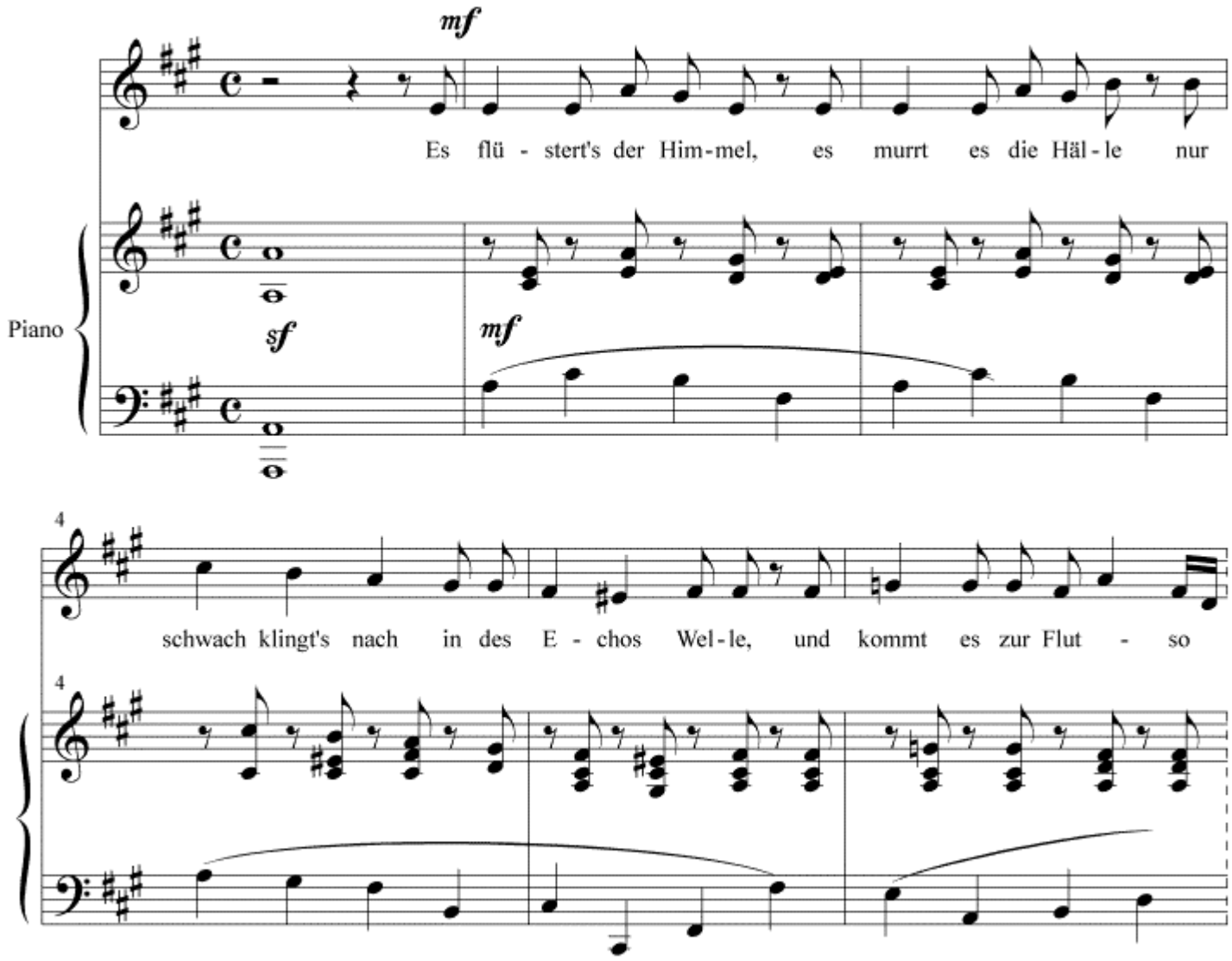

10
Mrs. P
Black
Dr. S
And this?
Dr. P
oc ta oc ta oc ta oc ta hed ron It's an oc ta oc ta oc ta oc ta hed ron
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
Pno.


15
Mrs. P
King to red King
Black
Dr. S
Dr. P
And this is a do do dec a hed ron A do do dec a do do dec a hed ron
15
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
15
Hp.
15
Pno.

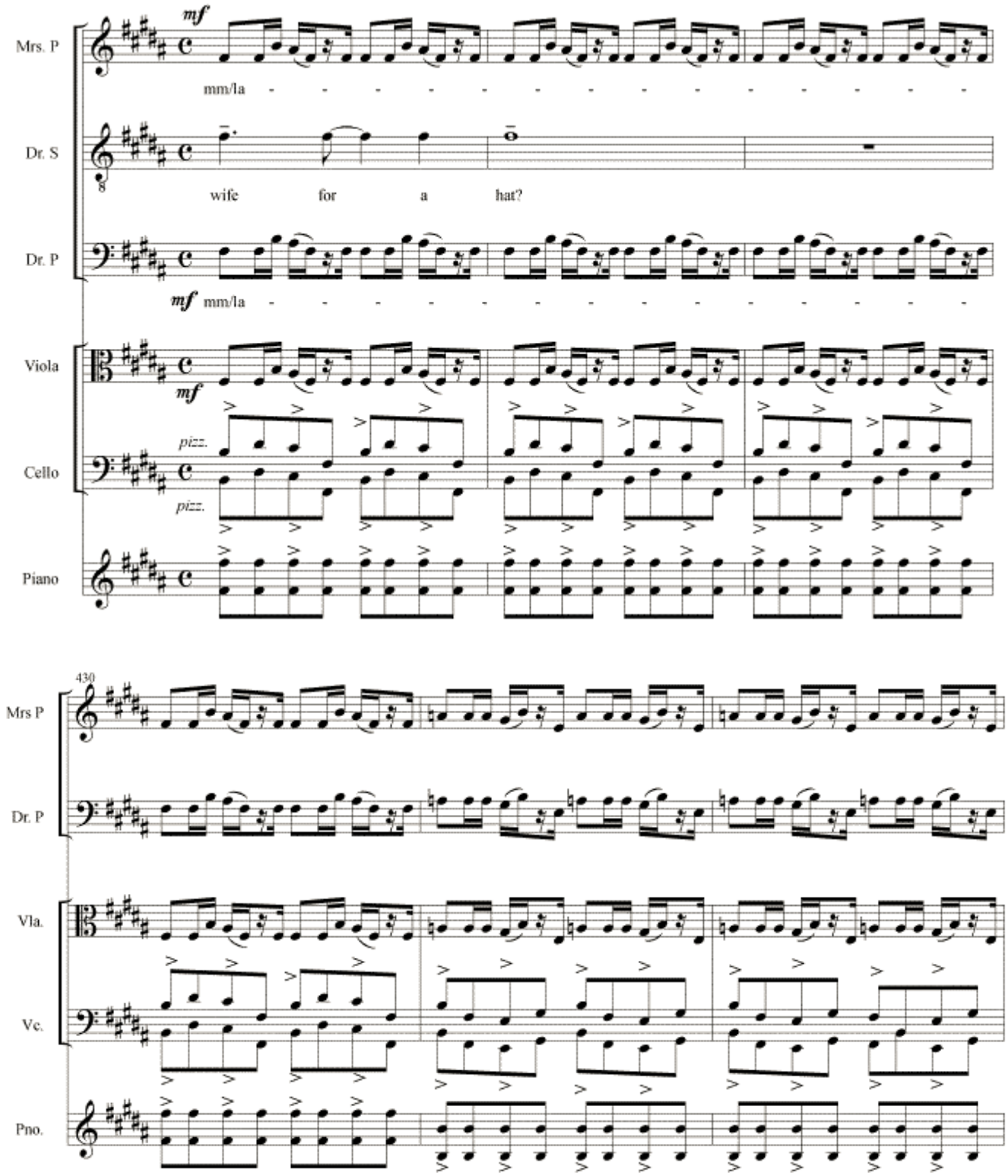

Mrs. P
Five of Hearts.
Dr. S.
this?
Dr. P.
f
It's a te te te te te te te tra he dron. It's a te te te te te te te tra
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Harp
Piano

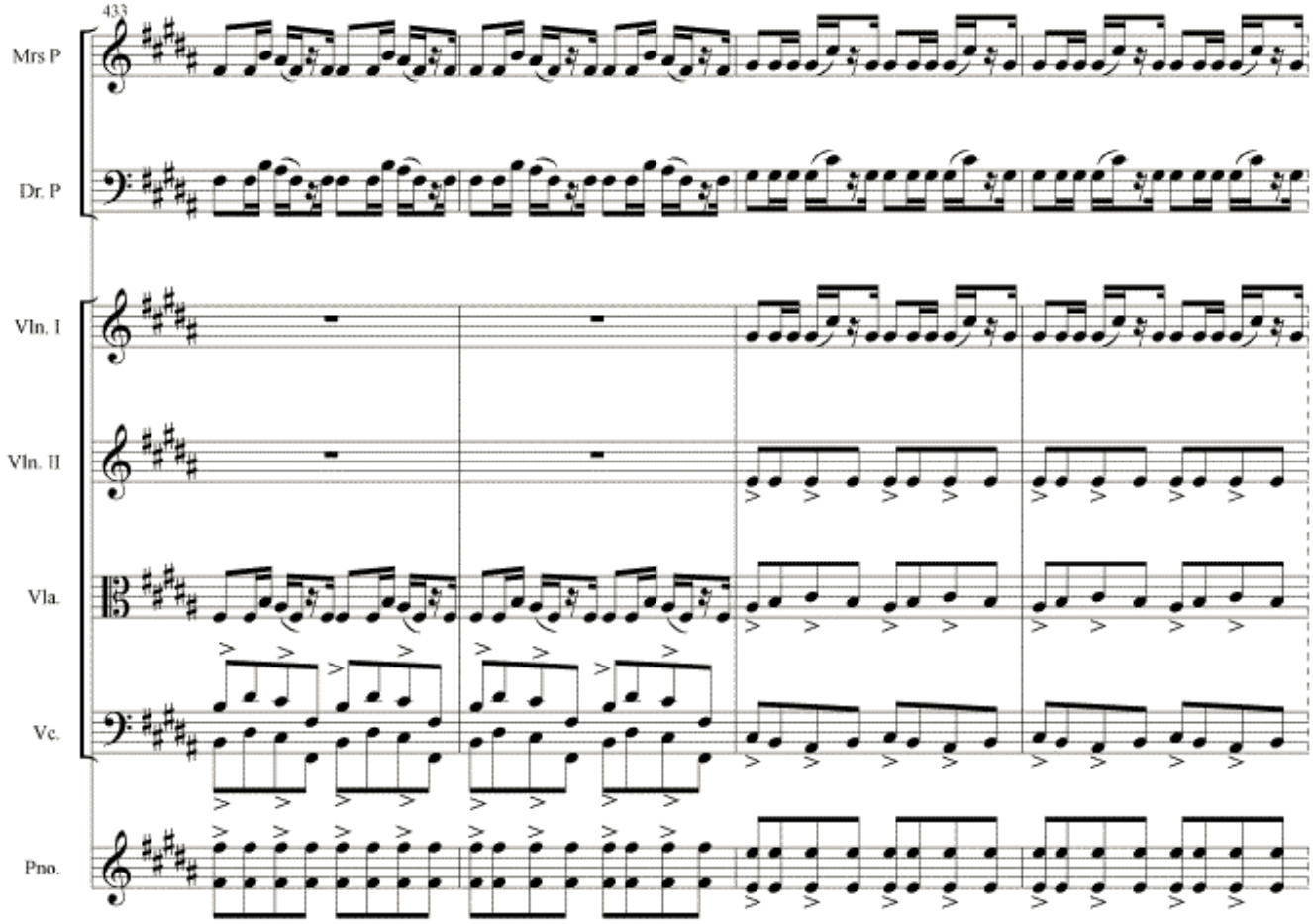

20
Mrs. P
Two on red Three - - - - - - - - - - - - -
Dr. S
Dr. P
And there's no need of the rest
20
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
20
Hp.
20
Pno.

Example 7a. Schumann, “Rätzel,” mm. 1–6



Example 7b. Nyman, “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat,” mm. 427–435




433
Mrs P
Dr. P
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Pno.