to Richard Stoltzman

Event Horizon

for Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra

by

Karen Amrhein

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Event Horizon

Event Horizon was composed after reading William J. Kaufmann's *Black Holes and Warped Spacetime*, an armchair excursion through some of the most mysterious and magnificent phenomena in the universe. The title of my piece is taken from the term that astronomers use to describe the perimeter of a black hole. In theory, all matter and energy that crosses this threshold cannot escape the unimaginably immense gravitational pull of the hole. The event horizon is, quite literally, the point of no return—nothing in the known universe can withstand a black hole in its own neighborhood.

The first movement, *Prelude*, opens with the solo clarinet stating a variation on the primary theme, above a quiet string tremolo. Following this introduction, the orchestra introduces the secondary material, a climbing melodic line in mixed meters, which is stated in three sequential sections. A secondary theme is then offered, followed by two variations. A brief restatement of the secondary material is followed by the primary theme, then the piece concludes with a second variation on this primary theme.

The second movement, *Night*, features the clarinet prominently, in music that is by turns both elegiac and energetic. After a brief introduction, the clarinet enters with a climbing melodic line which soon falls back to earth and a variation on the introductory material. From here, the music drives forward to a dissonant climax. A slower, more reflective, section follows, which builds to the second, more triumphant, climax. This is followed by a brief clarinet cadenza. The piece then concludes with a restatement (this time by the piano) of the clarinet's opening theme: stirrings within the cosmic night.

Event Horizon (the third movement) opens with a crescendoing piano cluster—my depiction of the violent death of a great star and its transformation into a black hole. Following this *Implosion*, the piano and strings evoke a dance of electrons, as they swirl in the whirlpool of energy that was once a sun. The *Electron Dance* leads into the *Vortex* where this stellar cauldron spins itself into oblivion. The *Vortex* is characterized by staccato chords in the piano accompanying a very brief counterpoint in the clarinet and strings. After a parting glissando and two brief bars of staccato chords, the clarinet and first violin begin a *Descent* into the heart of the black hole. Everything is crushed into a piano cluster and finally a lone B. This is the *Singularity*, a place/moment in space-time where mass and gravity are both infinite and the very fabric of the universe is punched out of existence as we know it, or through into another universe, perhaps.

I chose a black hole of the latter variety, and following the music's descent into the maelstrom we cross an *Einstein-Rosen Bridge*, and travel *Through the Wormhole* (a variant of the *Electron Dance*) to *The Other Side*. Here, in this unknown region of the universe, or even a new universe altogether, we are quickly led to a passacaglia entitled: *This Realm of Earth and Air*. This realm, a musical depiction of a new world, comprises the entire second half of the piece. It is a relentless series of variations on and above a driving modal bass line. The work concludes with an ascending chromatic line and a final staccato accent.

In addition to Mr. Kaufmann's fine book, I am indebted to Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez and his *Luciernagas* for inspiring me to write this piece.

Karen Amrhein
Baltimore, Maryland
February 2002

Instrumentation

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet (B♭)
Bassoon

2 Horns (F)
Euphonium (Trombone ossia)

Marimba
Piano

Clarinet (B♭) Solo

Violins 1 (8)
Violins 2 (8)
Violas (6)
Cellos (6)
Double Basses (4)

to Richard Stoltzman

Event Horizon

for Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra

Duration: 15 Minutes

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)

Prelude

♪ = **144** *freely and expressively throughout*

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet (B♭)

Bassoon

♪ = **144** *freely and expressively throughout*

Horns (F) 1&2

Euphonium

Marimba

pp

Piano

Clarinet (B♭) Solo

p

div. solo / tutti

8va

p

♪ = **144** *freely and expressively throughout*

Violins 1

pp

Violins 2

pp

Violas

pp

Cellos

Double Basses

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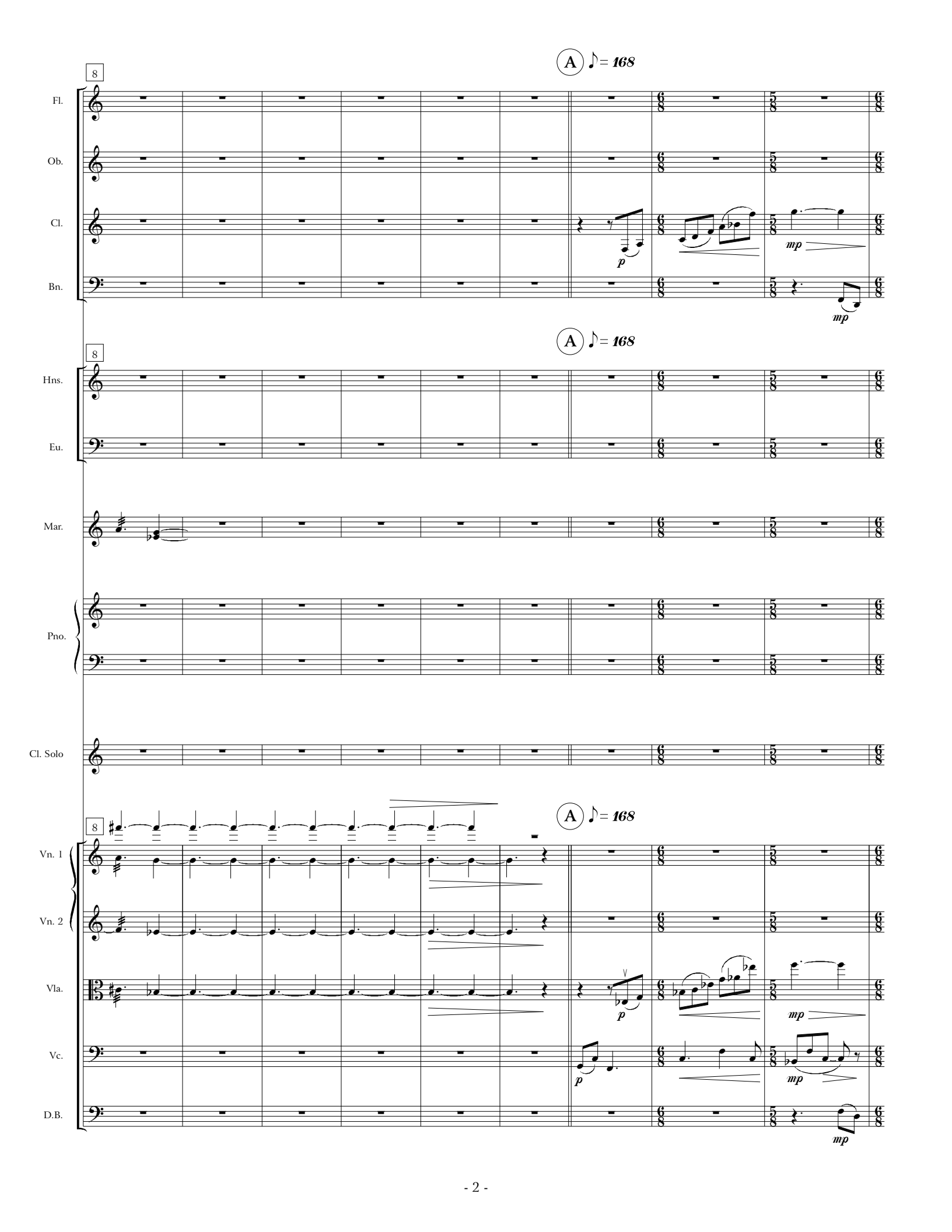
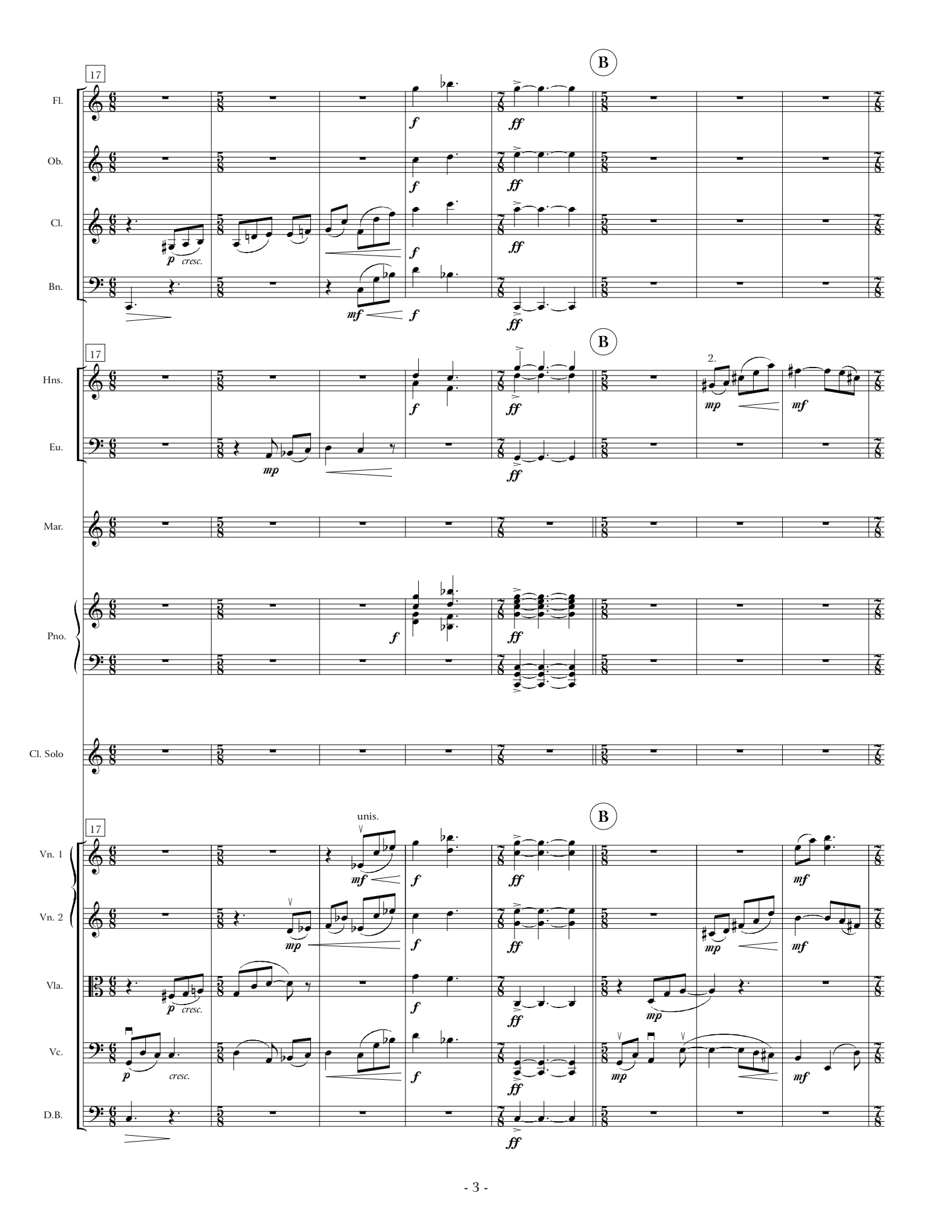
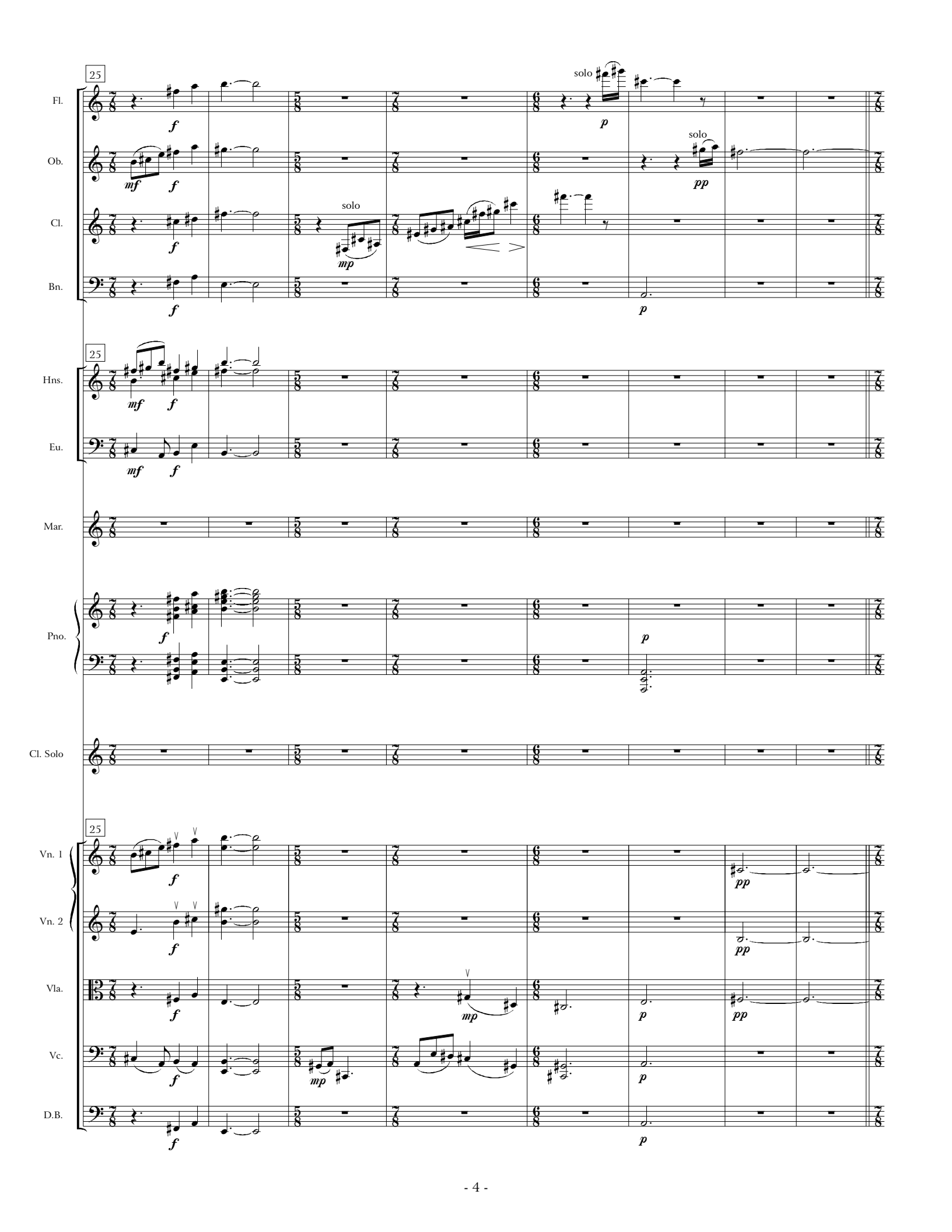
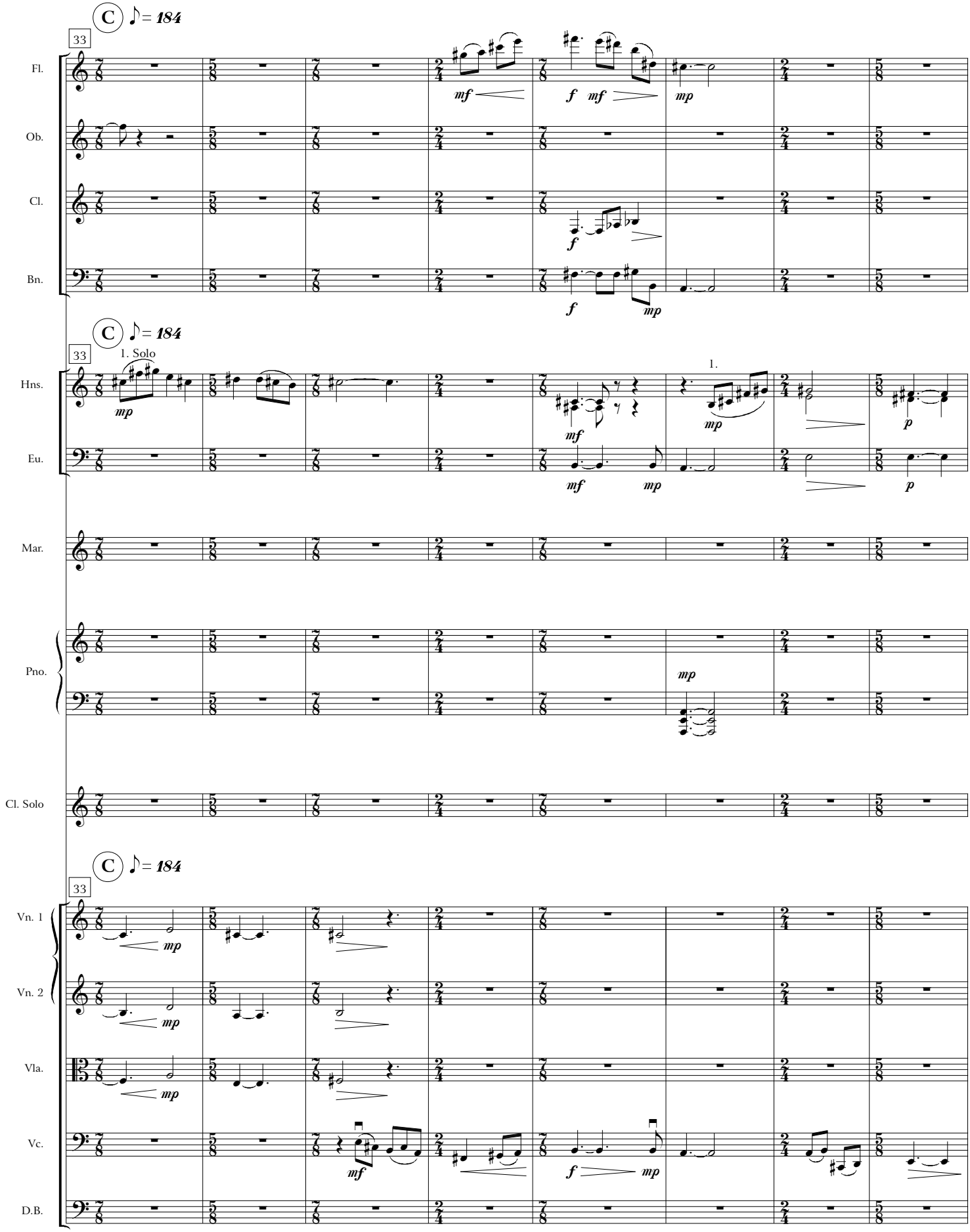

A ♪= 168
8
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bn.
p
mp
mp
A ♪= 168
8
Hns.
Eu.
Mar.
Pno.
Cl. Solo
A ♪= 168
8
Vn. 1
Vn. 2
Vla.
Vc.
D.B.
p
mp
p
mp
mp


17
B
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bn.
Hns.
Eu.
Mar.
Pno.
Cl. Solo
Vn. 1
Vn. 2
Vla.
Vc.
D.B.
unis.
2.
p
cresc.
mp
mf
f
ff


25
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bn.
Hns.
Eu.
Mar.
Pno.
Cl. Solo
Vn. 1
Vn. 2
Vla.
Vc.
D.B.
solo
f
mf
mp
p
pp


C ♪= 184
33
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bn.
mf
f mf
mp
f
f
mp
C ♪= 184
33
1. Solo
Hns.
Eu.
mp
mf
mf
mp
1.
mp
p
p
Mar.
Pno.
mp
Cl. Solo
C ♪= 184
33
Vn. 1
Vn. 2
Vla.
Vc.
D.B.
mp
mp
mp
mf
f
mp