Andrea La Rose

# advertising changed my life

an opera scene

2001

music and libretto by the composer.

characters:
businesswoman – soprano
friend of businesswoman – mezzo-soprano
train conductor/homeless man – baritone
passengers – speaking part, one or more people

orchestra:
clarinet
viola
percussion
piano I
piano II

The scene takes place on the R train from Union Street in Brooklyn to Union Square in Manhattan, where businesswomen discuss the joy of finding discarded items and the weird behavior of strangers, a homeless man begs for money, and everyone waxes poetic about the ads that shine down from above.

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ASCAP

I wrote this opera scene for the new music ensemble, conTempo, at Brooklyn College, who gave it a workshop performance shortly after it was finished. The ensemble consists of whomever signs up for the class, which is why the "orchestra" for this work is the rather atypical scoring of clarinet, viola, percussion, and two pianos. It was eventually premiered by the Graduate Center Contemporary Ensemble.

I had been living in New York City for about six months, and between travelling and busking, I had already spent a lot of time in the subway. Since this was such a large part of my New York experience, it seemed like a natural choice for the subject matter. Musically, I wanted to portray several aspects of being on the subway: the motor rhythms, squeals and bells of the train; the way the conductors talk at one moment like an irate mother and at other moments like a smarmy salesman; and the craziness of people busking or trying to sell things on the train. I also wanted to capture something of the way people normally talk, while still having something melodically appealing, so I combined "chant notation" (just noteheads to indicate pitch but nothing to indicate rhythm) with blues scales. Basically, the scene is an eight-minute recitative, without quite sounding like one.

In real life, nothing actually happens on the subway that is plot-worthy, so I decided to keep it that way in my piece. For about two weeks, whenever I rode on the subway, I took a small notebook and jotted down ads, everything the conductor said, conversations I had with a friend of mine, things homeless people said as they asked for money. At one point I fell onto someone as the train jerked forward; he commented angrily, and that became fodder for the libretto, too. After surveying what I had collected, I found the juxtaposition of the ad texts – promoting the wholesome goodness of an education at the New School, proper behavior in the subway, and everyone's favorite omnipresent dermatologist, Dr. Zizmor – and the typical sad speech of a homeless person has its own dramatic propulsion. Subway riders, from investment bankers to hipsters, to the homeless, are bombarded by these ads daily, and yet, how much do they affect our lives?

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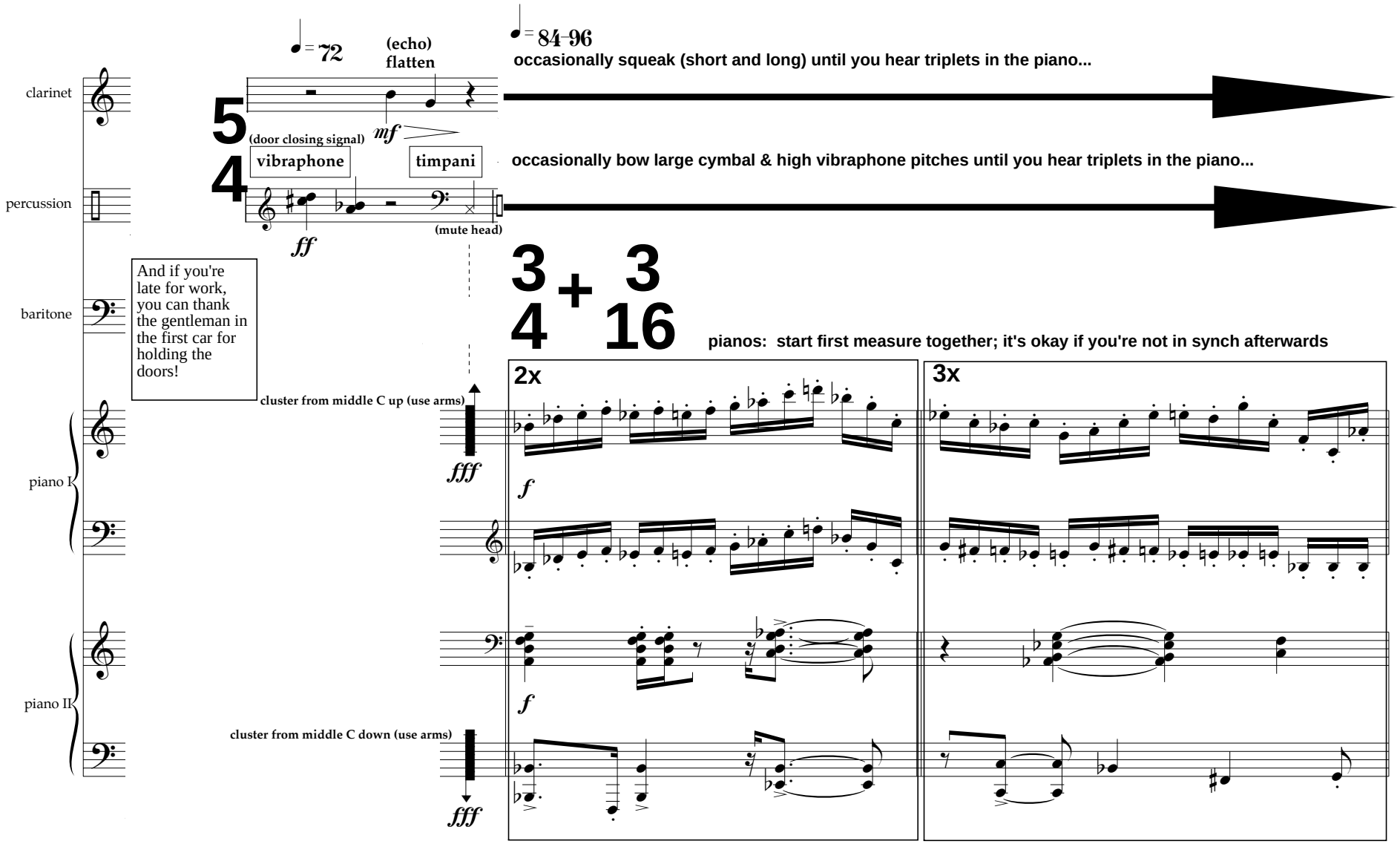
an opera scene

Andrea La Rose

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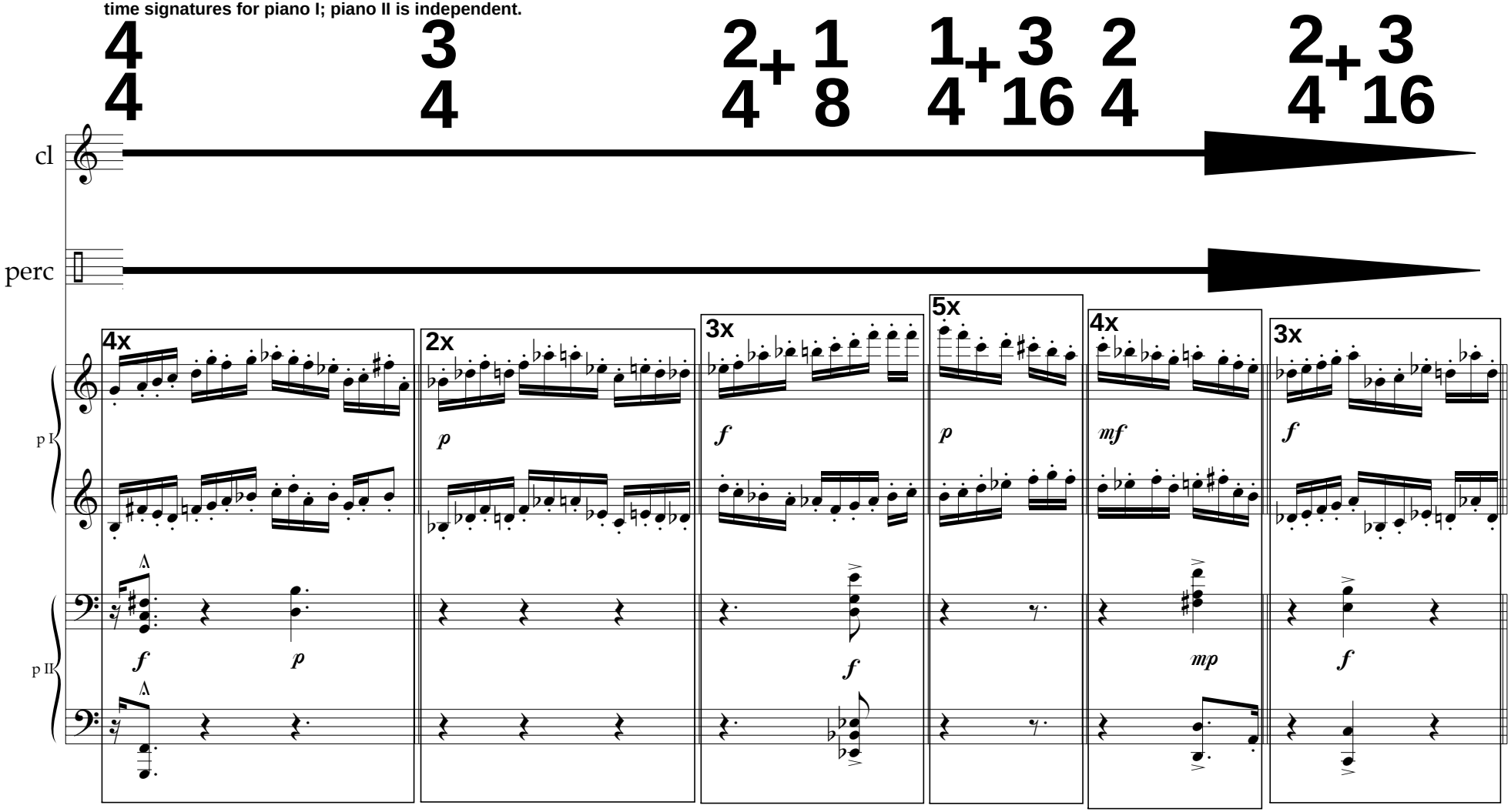
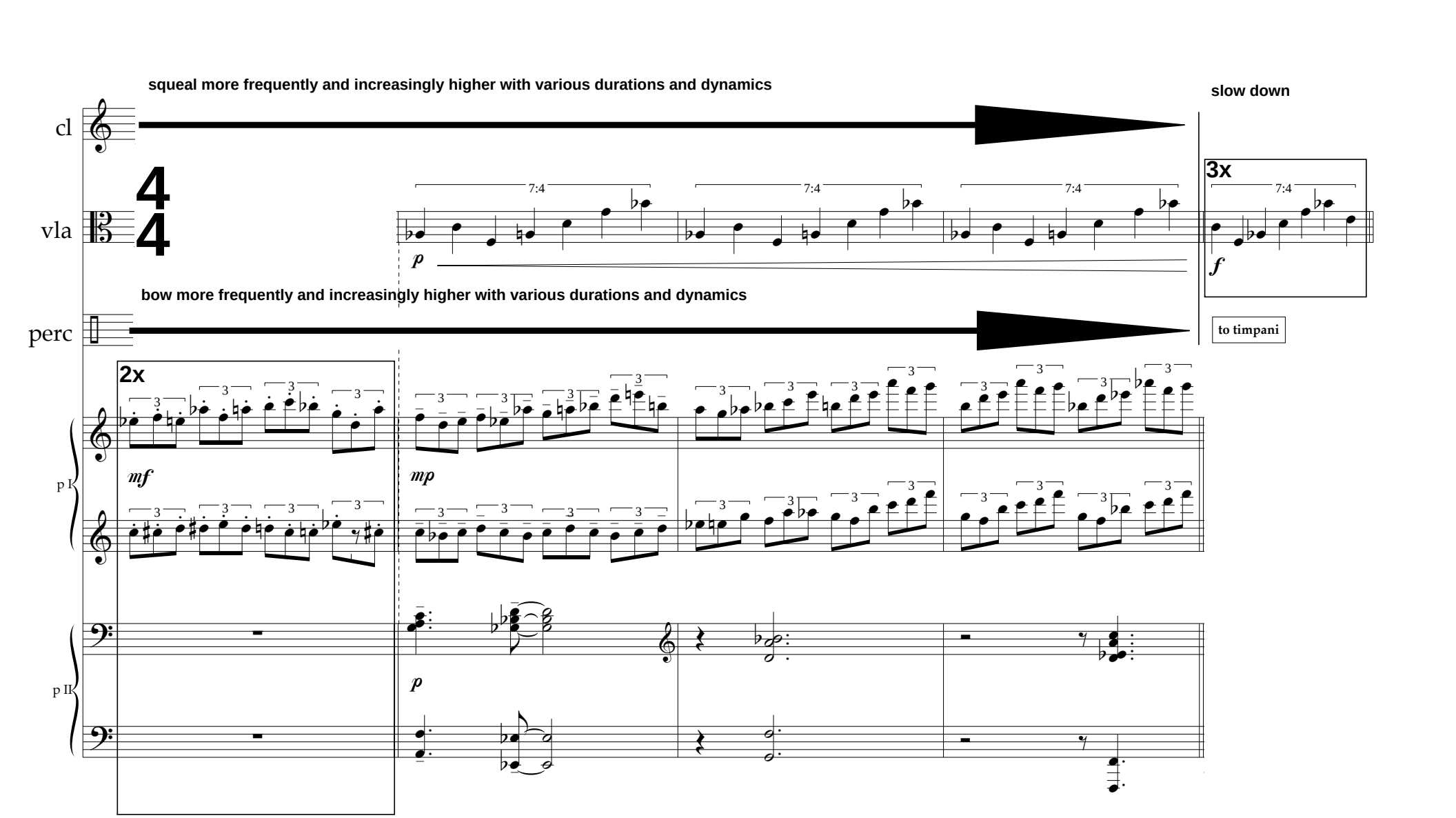
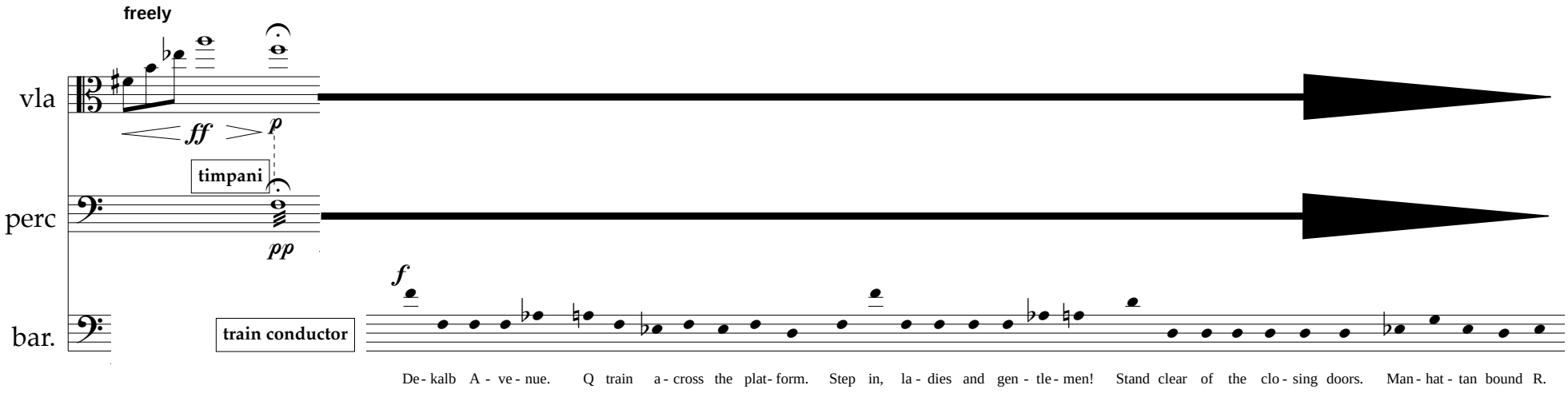
time signatures for piano I; piano II is independent.

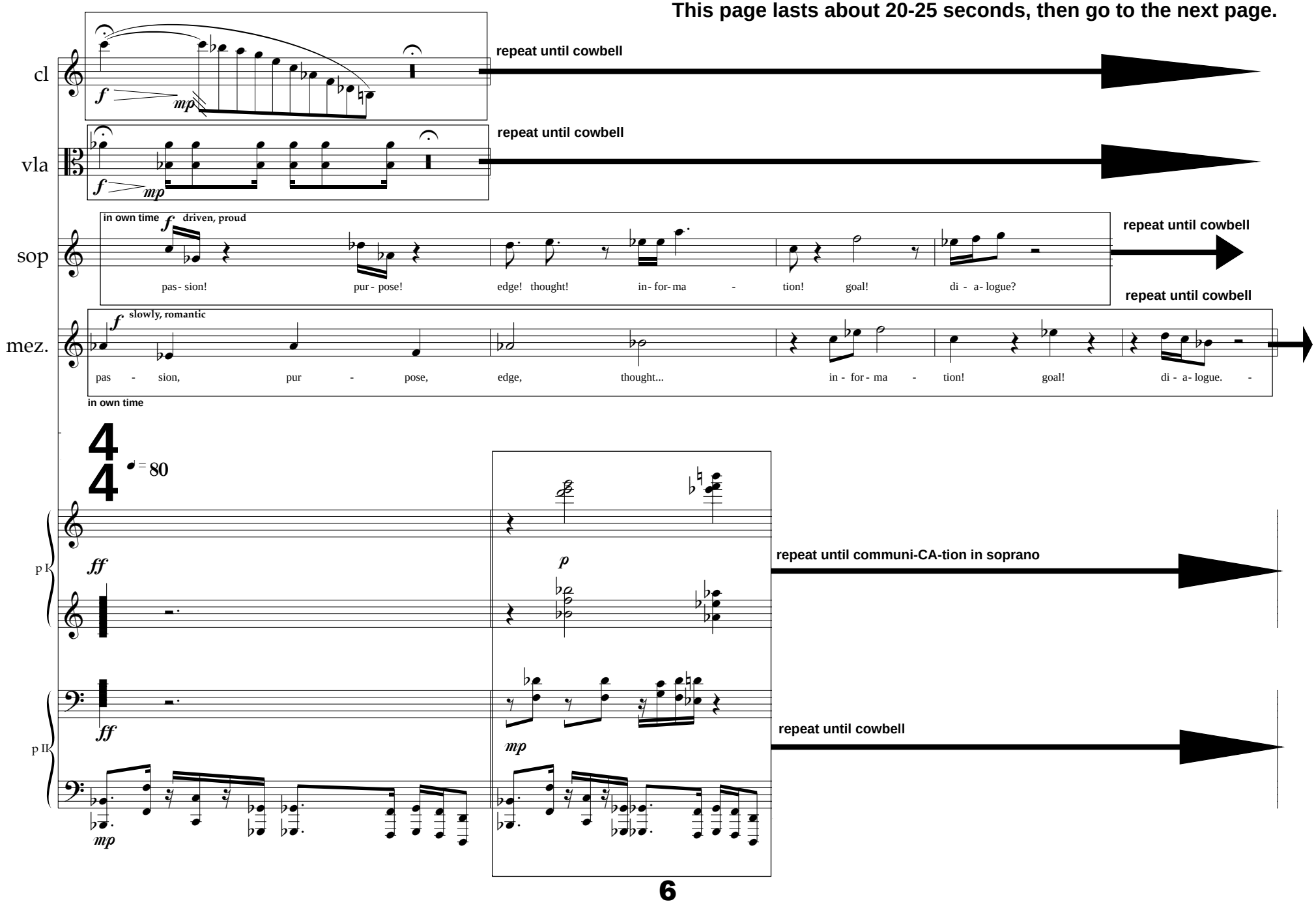


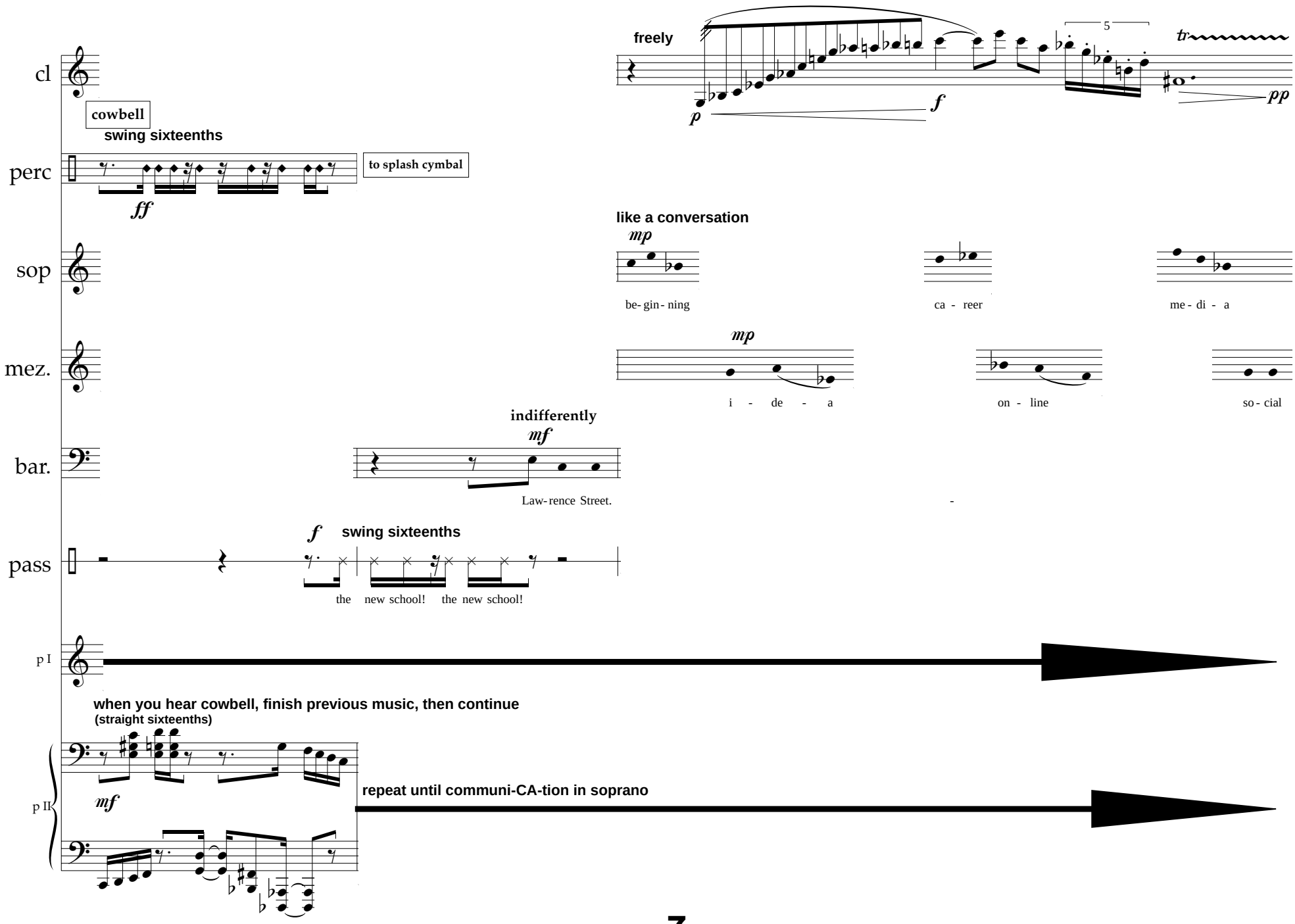

squeal more frequently and increasingly higher with various durations and dynamics
slow down
cl
vla
perc
4
4
7:4
7:4
7:4
3x
7:4
p
f
bow more frequently and increasingly higher with various durations and dynamics
to timpani
2x
mf
mp
p
p I
p II

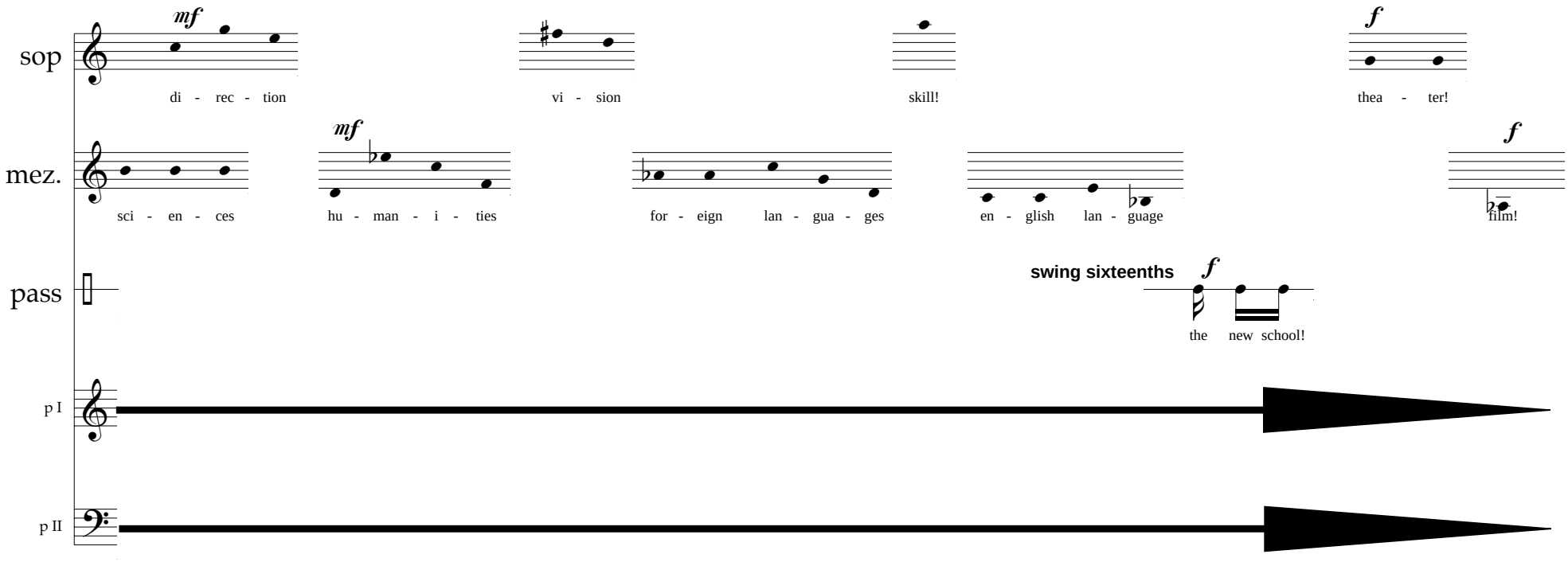

freely
vla
ff
p
timpani
perc
pp
bar.
train conductor
f
De- kalb A - ve - nue. Q train a - cross the plat- form. Step in, la - dies and gen - tle - men! Stand clear of the clo - sing doors. Man - hat - tan bound R.

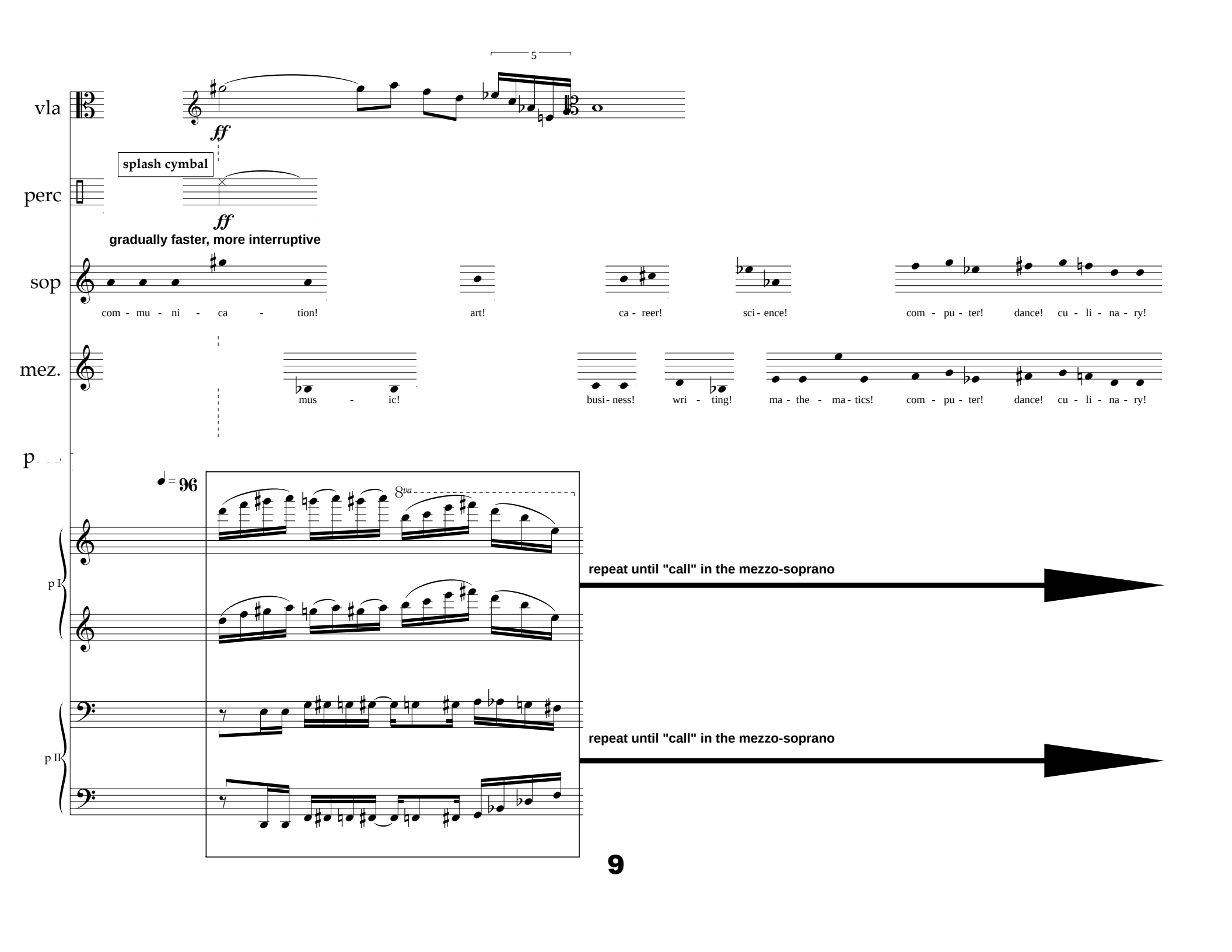
(slide)
cl
ff
fp
hold to final (third) "door slam"
vla
fp
perc
f
to cowbell
slightly exasperated
sop
struggle with doors, pulling them open as they try to close
f
pas-sion, pur-pose, edge,thought!
mez.
enter subway, boldy
f
pas - sion, pur-pose, edge, thought!
bar.
Law renceStreet is next.
pass
mumble, repeatedly
do not hold doors.
p I
f

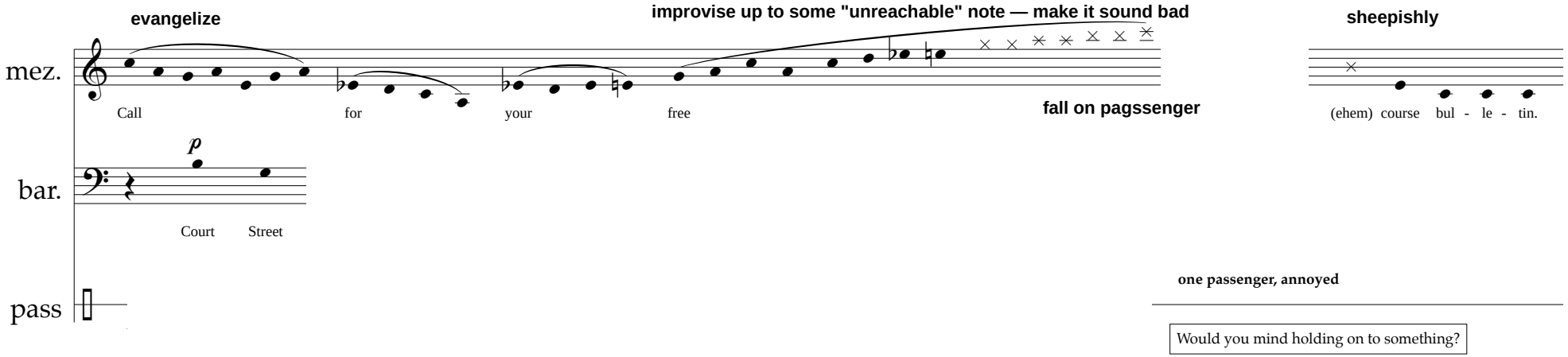
**This page lasts about 20-25 seconds, then go to the next page.**

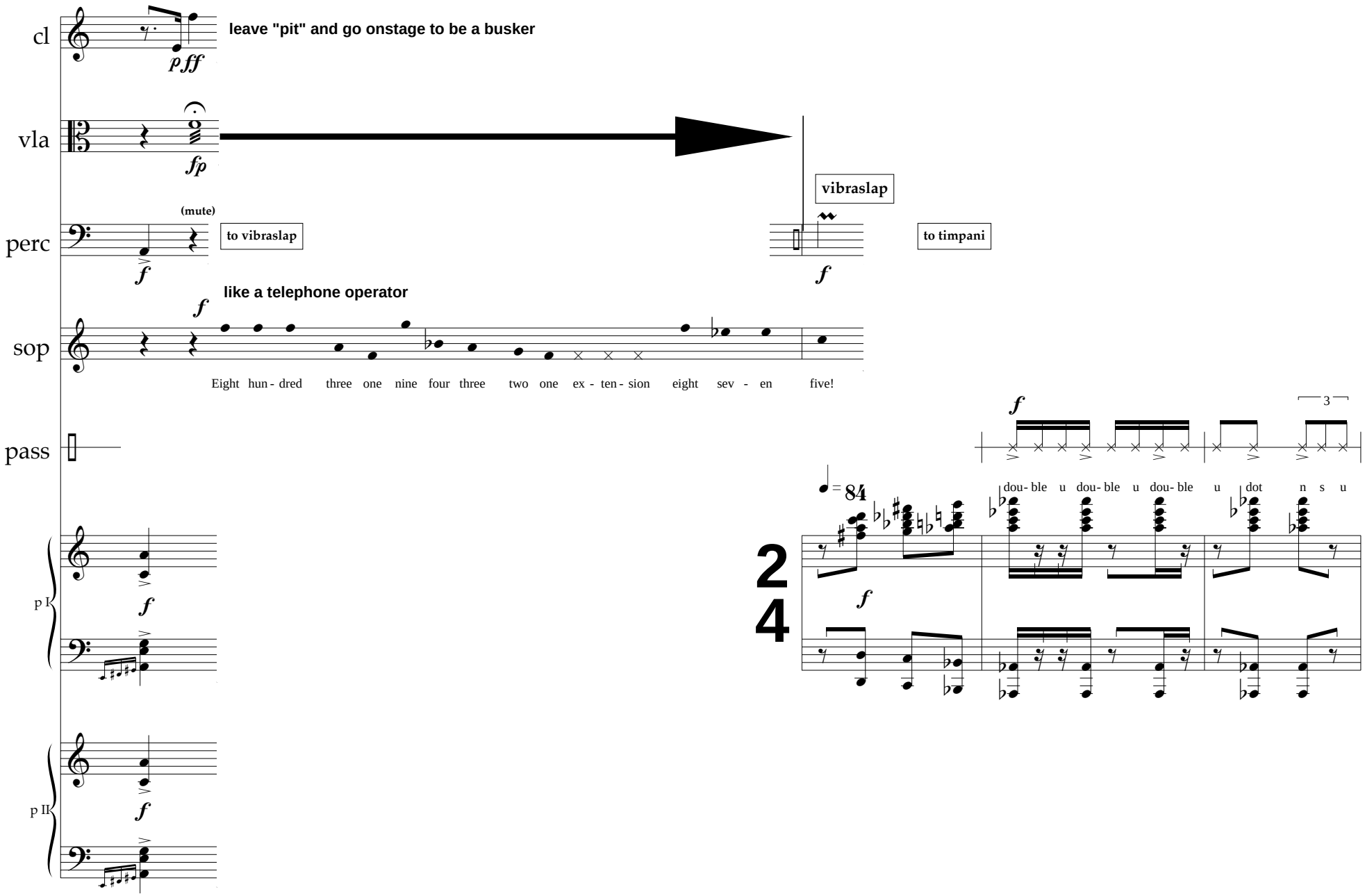


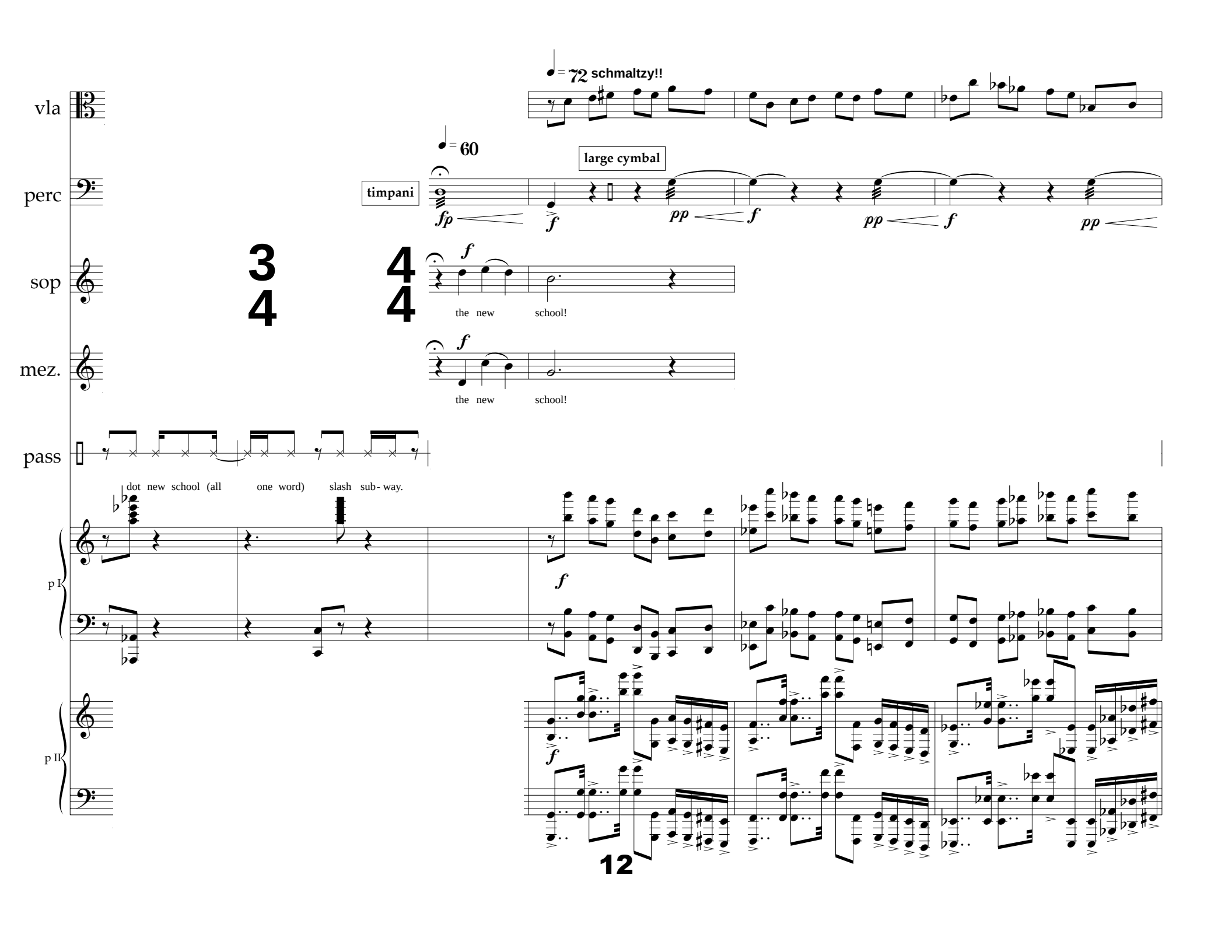

cl
cowbell
swing sixteenths
perc
to splash cymbal
ff
sop
mez.
bar.
indifferently
mf
Law- rence Street.
pass
f
swing sixteenths
the new school! the new school!
freely
5
tr
p
f
pp
like a conversation
mp
be- gin- ning
ca - reer
me - di - a
mp
i - de - a
on - line
so - cial
p I
when you hear cowbell, finish previous music, then continue
(straight sixteenths)
p II
mf
repeat until communi-CA-tion in soprano

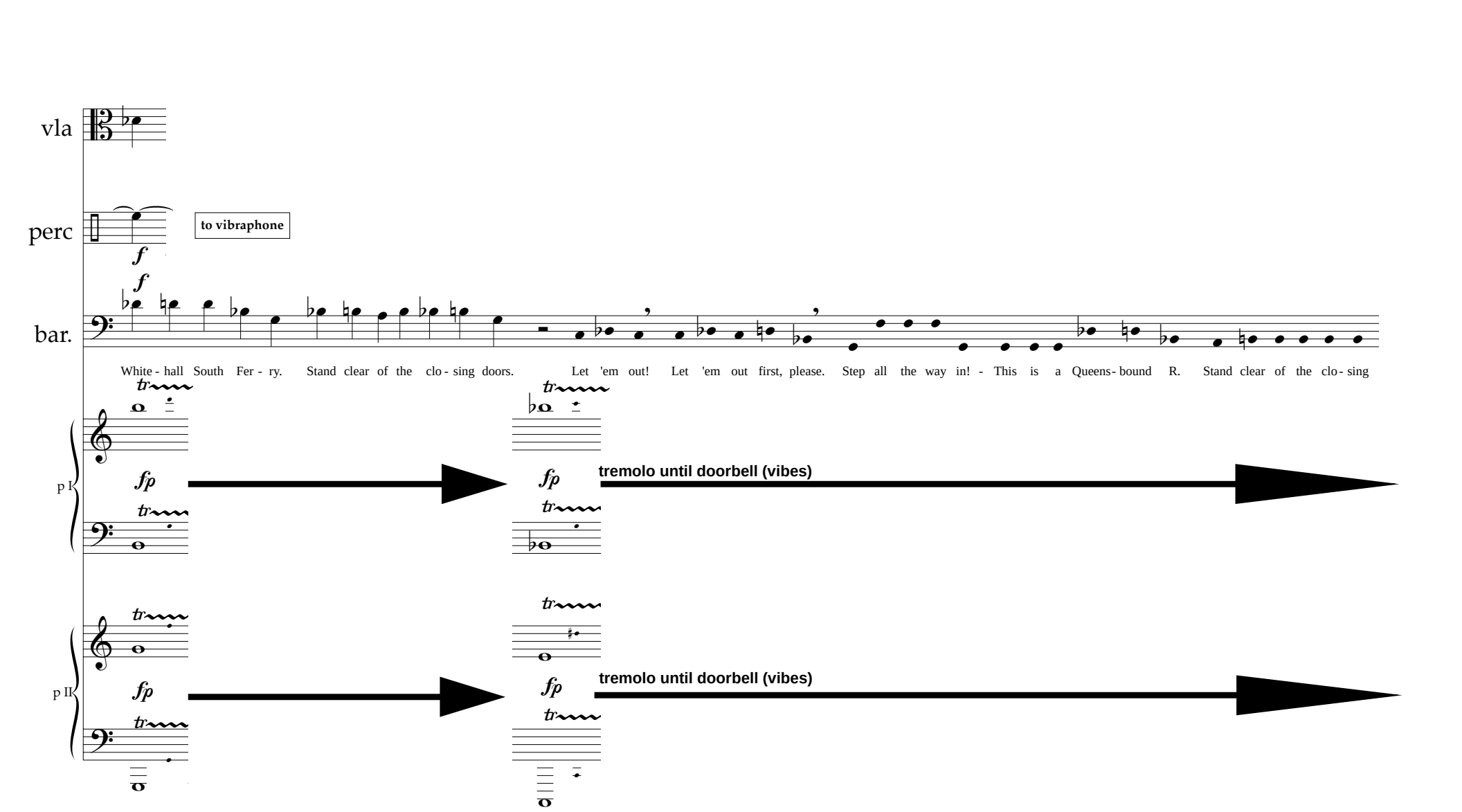

sop
mez.
pass
p I
p II
mf
di - rec - tion
vi - sion
skill!
f
thea - ter!
mf
sci - en - ces
hu - man - i - ties
for - eign lan - gua - ges
en - glish lan - guage
f
film!
swing sixteenths
f
the new school!

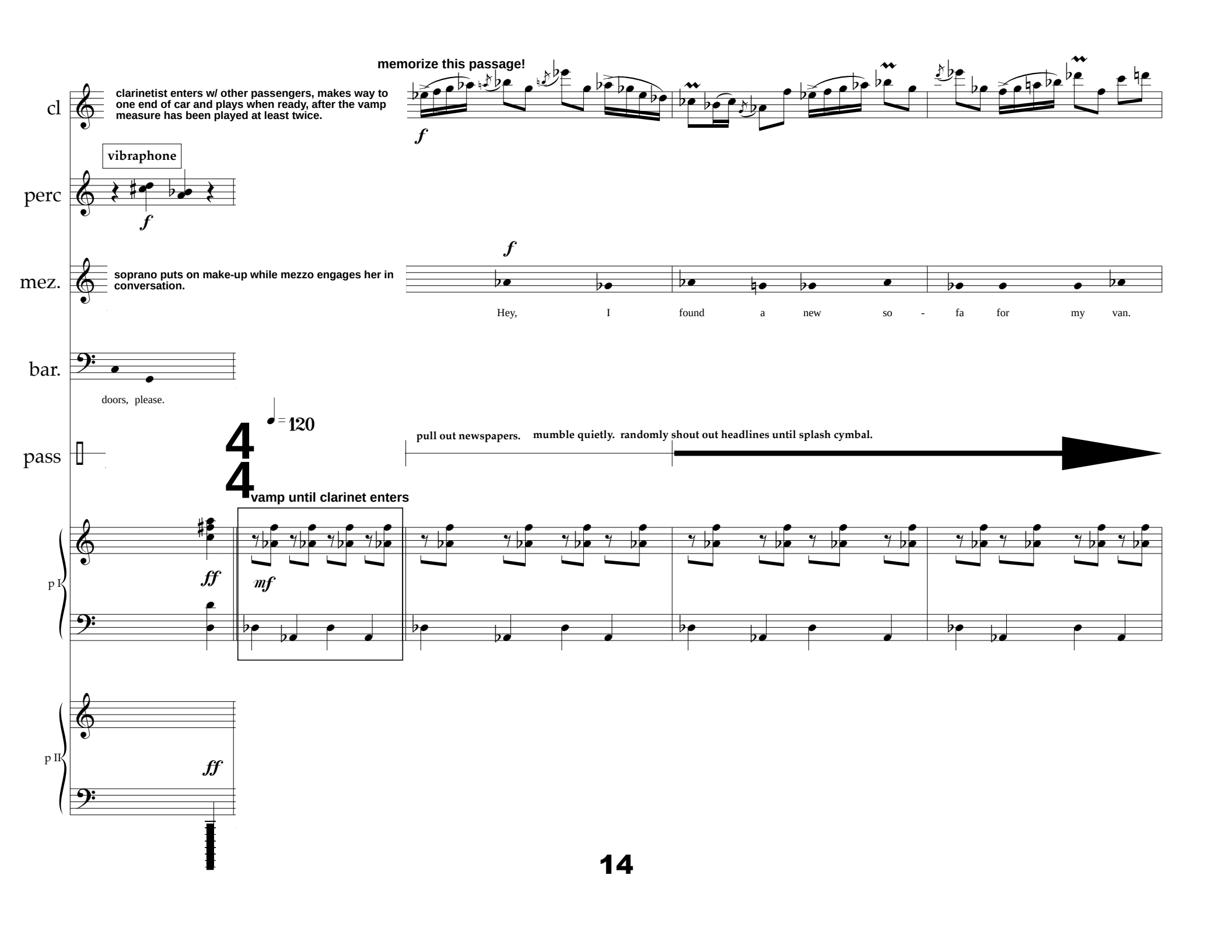

5
vla
ff
splash cymbal
perc
ff
gradually faster, more interruptive
sop
com - mu - ni - ca - tion!
art!
ca - reer!
sci - ence!
com - pu - ter!
dance!
cu - li - na - ry!
mez.
mus - ic!
busi - ness!
wri - ting!
ma - the - ma - tics!
com - pu - ter!
dance!
cu - li - na - ry!
p
♩ = 96
8va
p I
p II
repeat until "call" in the mezzo-soprano
repeat until "call" in the mezzo-soprano

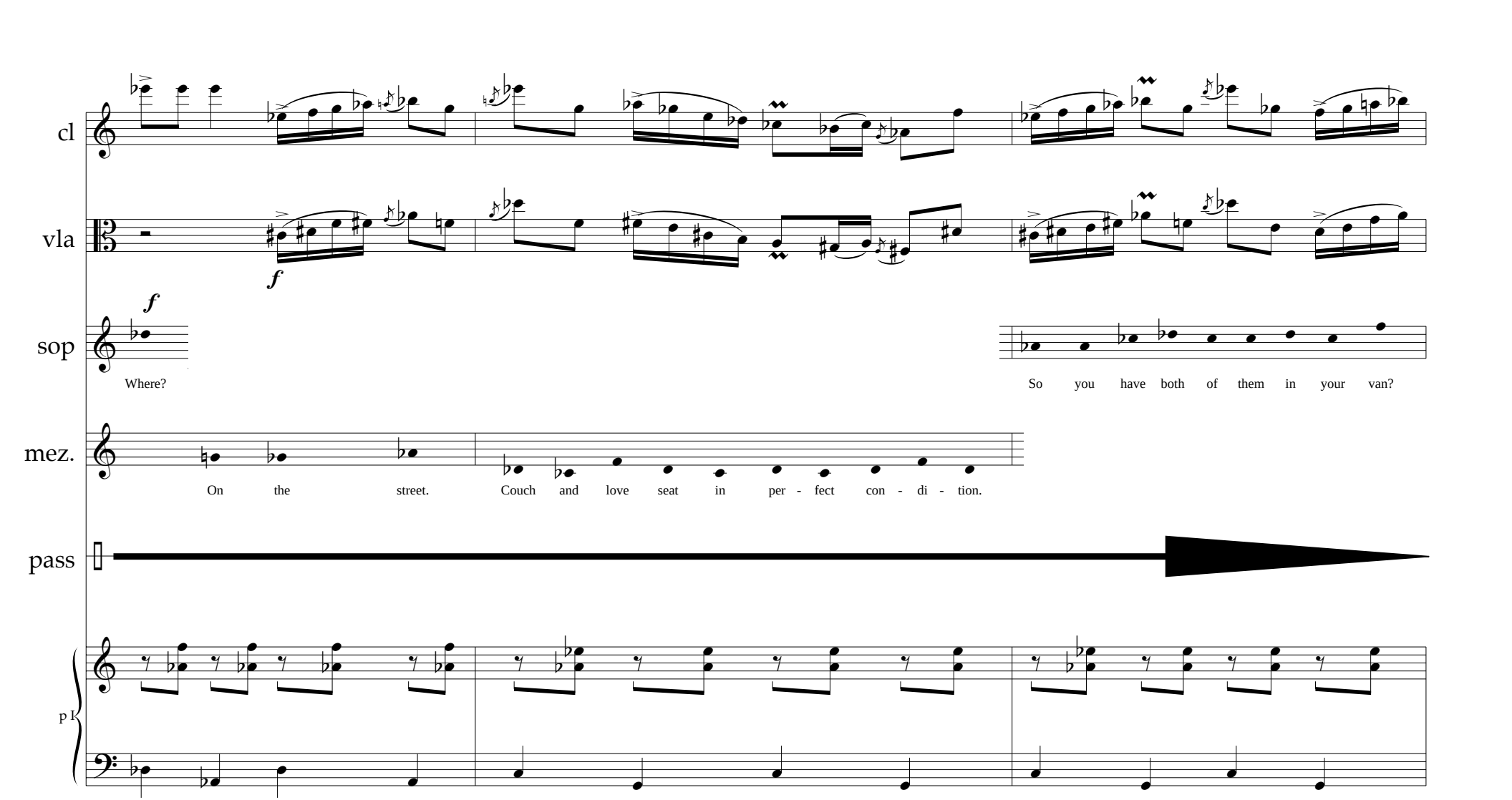

evangelize
improvise up to some "unreachable" note — make it sound bad
sheepishly
mez.
Call
for
your
free
fall on pagssenger
(ehem) course bul - le - tin.
bar.
p
Court
Street
pass
one passenger, annoyed
Would you mind holding on to something?


cl
leave "pit" and go onstage to be a busker
pfff
vla
fp
vibraslap
(mute)
perc
to vibraslap
to timpani
f
f
like a telephone operator
f
sop
Eight hun - dred three one nine four three two one ex - ten - sion eight sev - en five!
pass
f
3
dou- ble u dou- ble u dou- ble u dot n s u
= 84
2
4
f
p I
f
p II
f

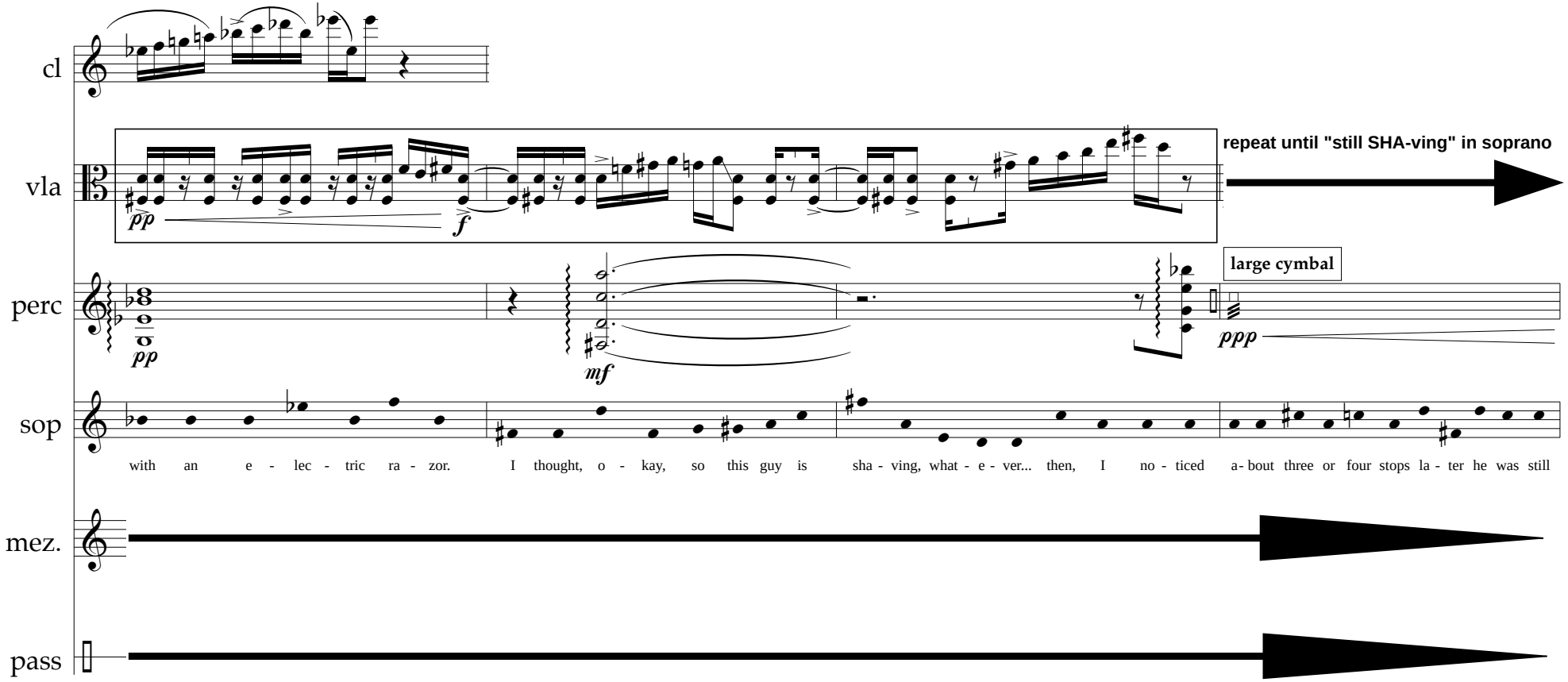

vla
perc
sop
mez.
pass
p I
p II
♩= 72 schmaltzy!!
♩= 60
timpani
large cymbal
fp
f
pp
3
4
4
4
the new school!
the new school!
dot new school (all one word) slash sub- way.
12

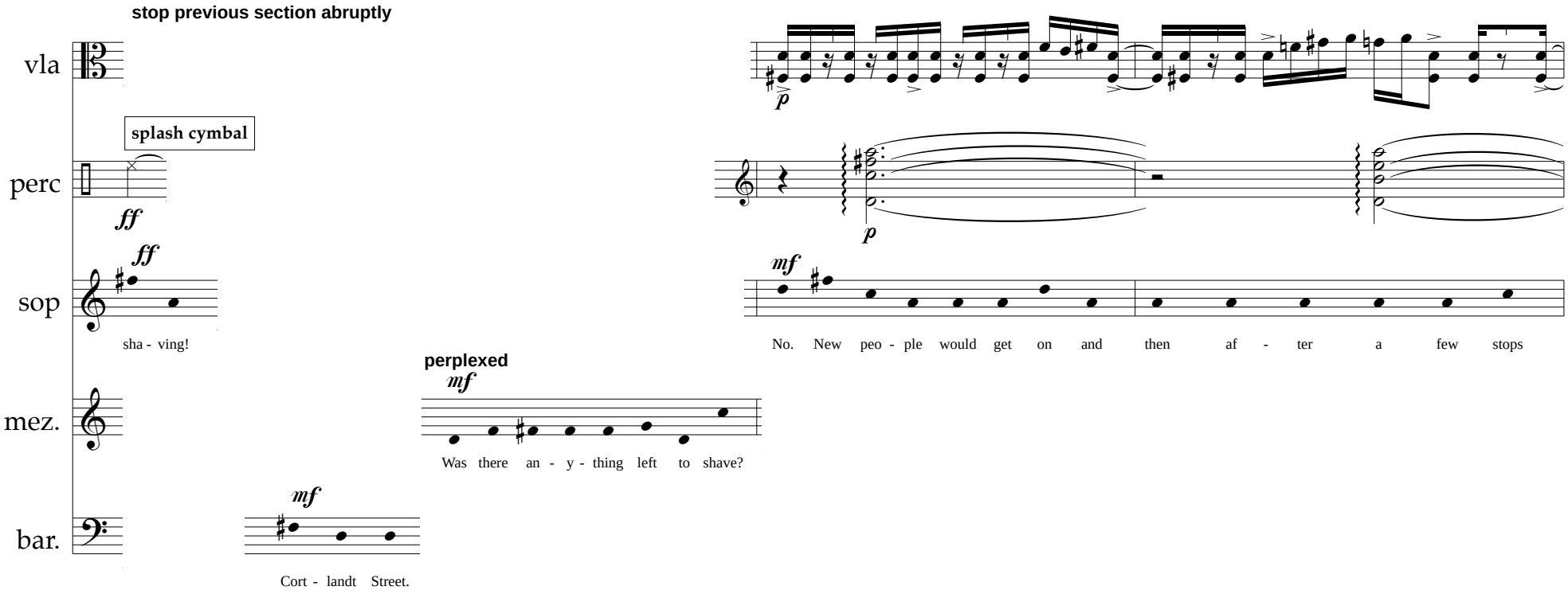

vla
perc
to vibraphone
bar.
White - hall South Fer - ry. Stand clear of the clo - sing doors. Let 'em out! Let 'em out first, please. Step all the way in! - This is a Queens - bound R. Stand clear of the clo - sing
p I
p II
tremolo until doorbell (vibes)
tremolo until doorbell (vibes)

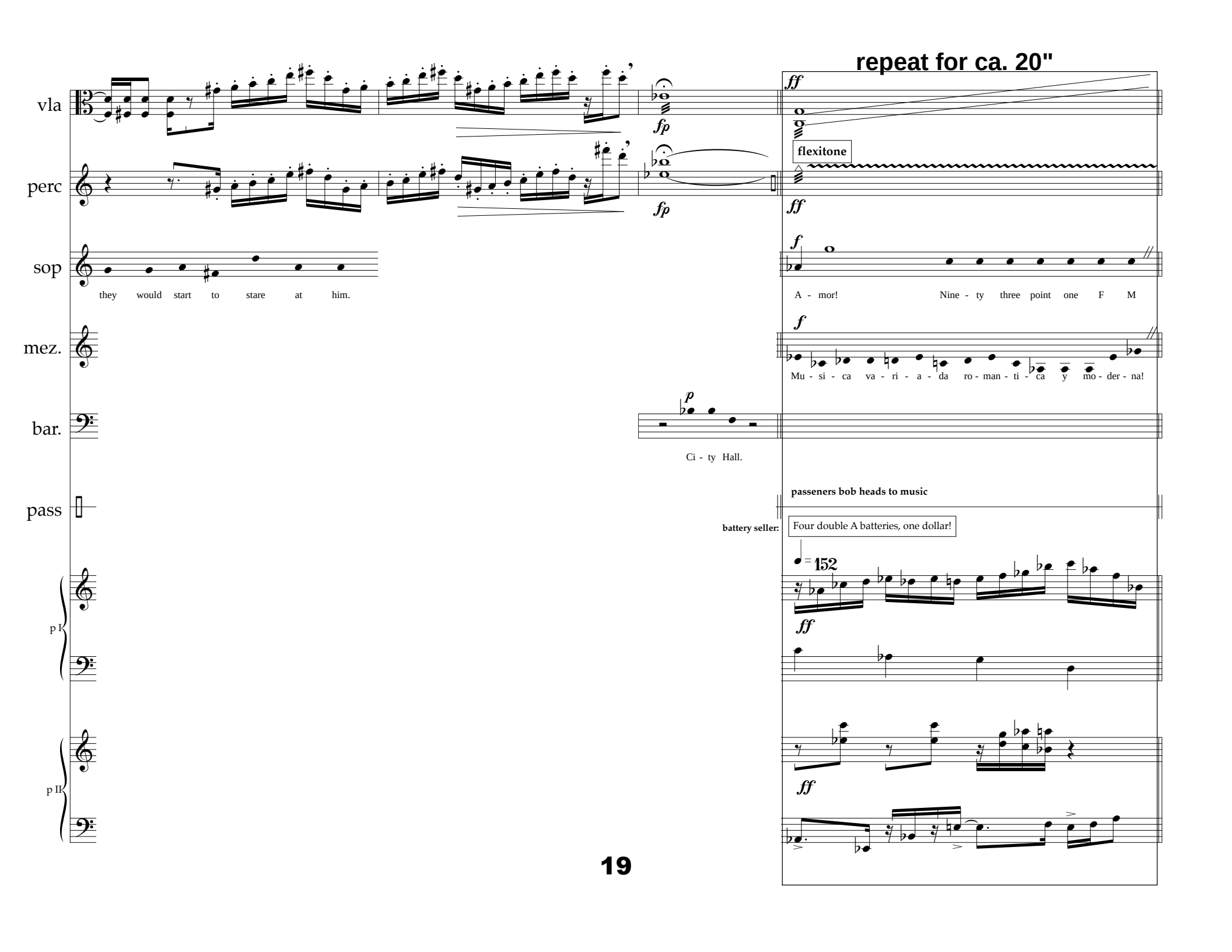

memorize this passage!
cl
clarinetist enters w/ other passengers, makes way to one end of car and plays when ready, after the vamp measure has been played at least twice.
vibraphone
perc
mez.
soprano puts on make-up while mezzo engages her in conversation.
Hey, I found a new so - fa for my van.
bar.
doors, please.
pass
pull out newspapers. mumble quietly. randomly shout out headlines until splash cymbal.
120
vamp until clarinet enters
p I
p II

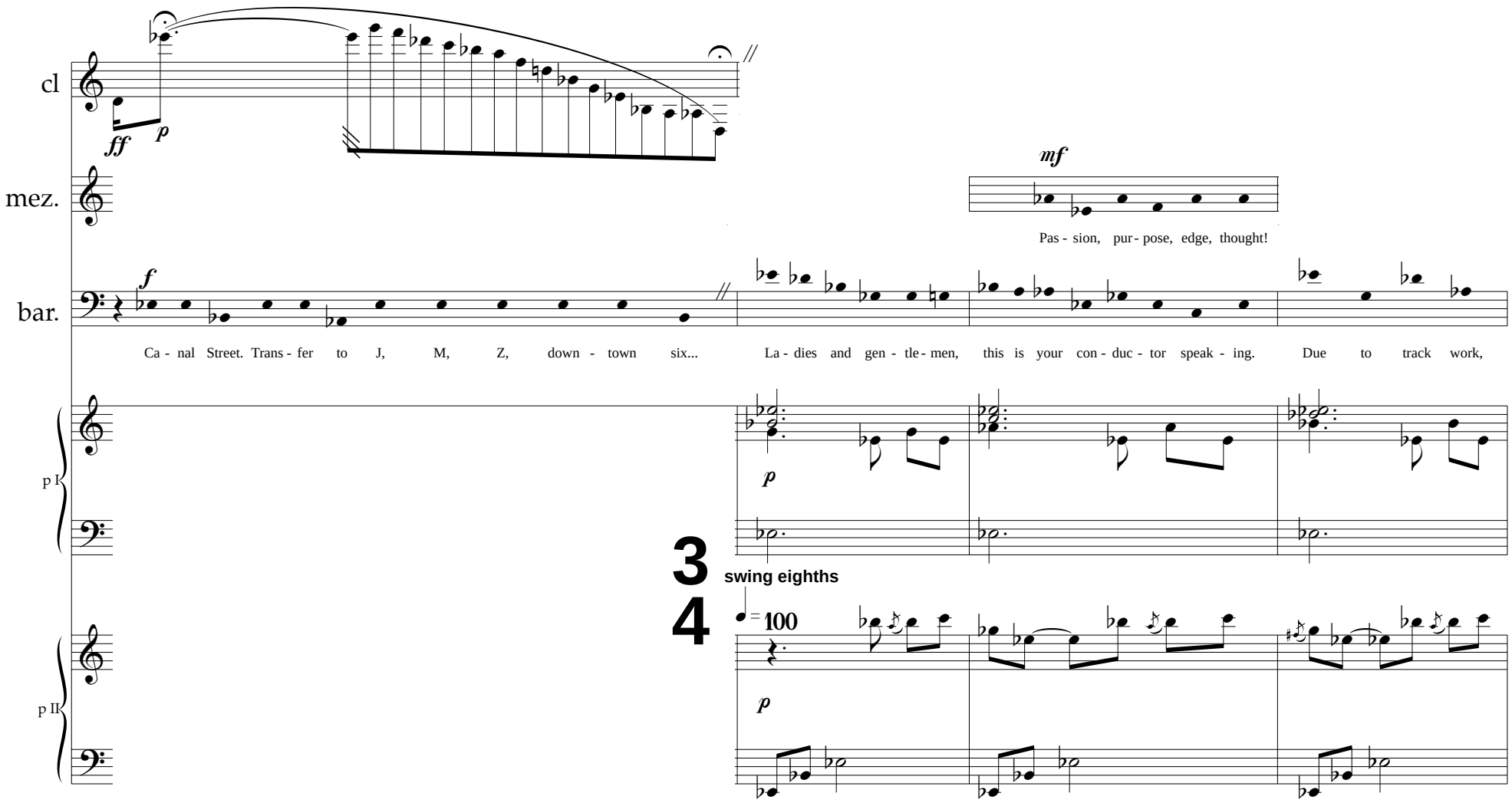

cl
vla
f
sop
f
Where?
So you have both of them in your van?
mez.
On the street.
Couch and love seat in per - fect con - di - tion.
pass
p

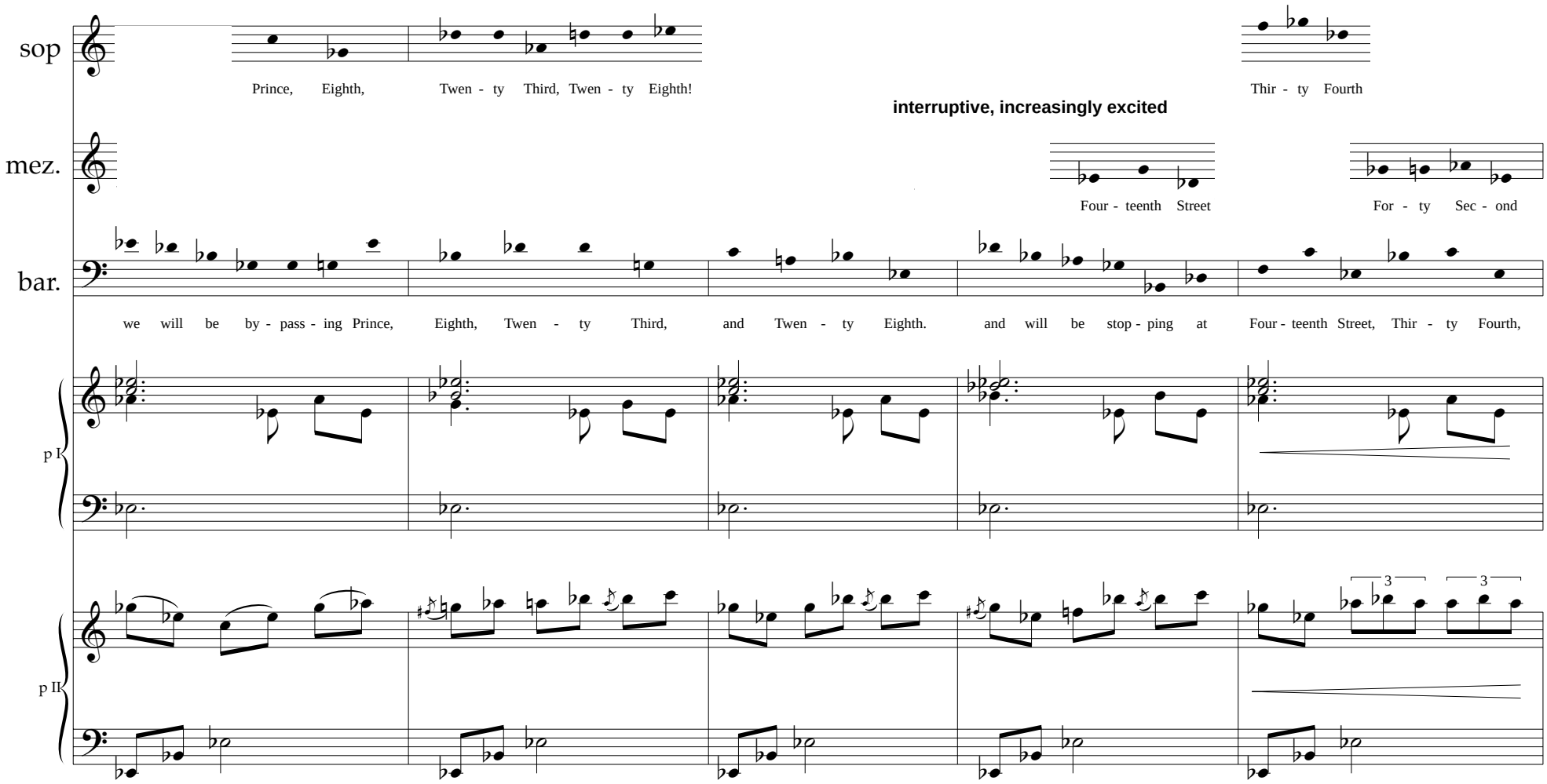
cl
vla
perc
sop
mez.
bar.
pass
p I
clarinet continues in the same tempo, everyone else:
♩ = 80
motor on medium speed
always roll from low to high
mp
f
One time, I got on the train, and this dude was sha - ving
read newspaper, nod occasionally, hum along with clarinet (does not have to be exact). continue to hum, even after clarinet has stopped, until "still SHA-ving" in the soprano.
No. Just the love seat. The couch was too big.
mp
Rec - tor Street.

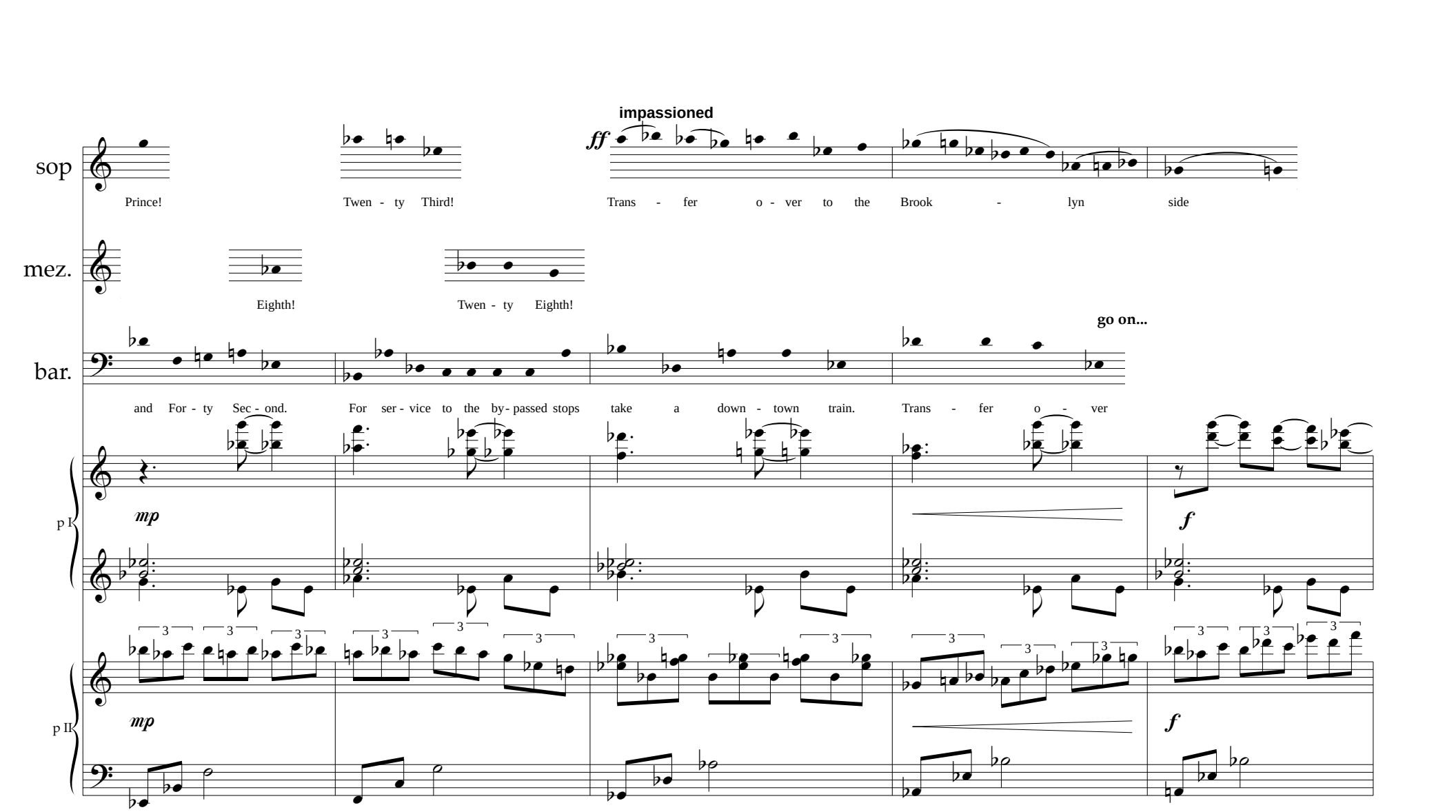

cl
vla
perc
sop
mez.
pass
repeat until "still SHA-ving" in soprano
large cymbal
pp
f
mf
ppp
with an e - lec - tric ra - zor. I thought, o - kay, so this guy is sha - ving, what - e - ver... then, I no - ticed a- bout three or four stops la - ter he was still

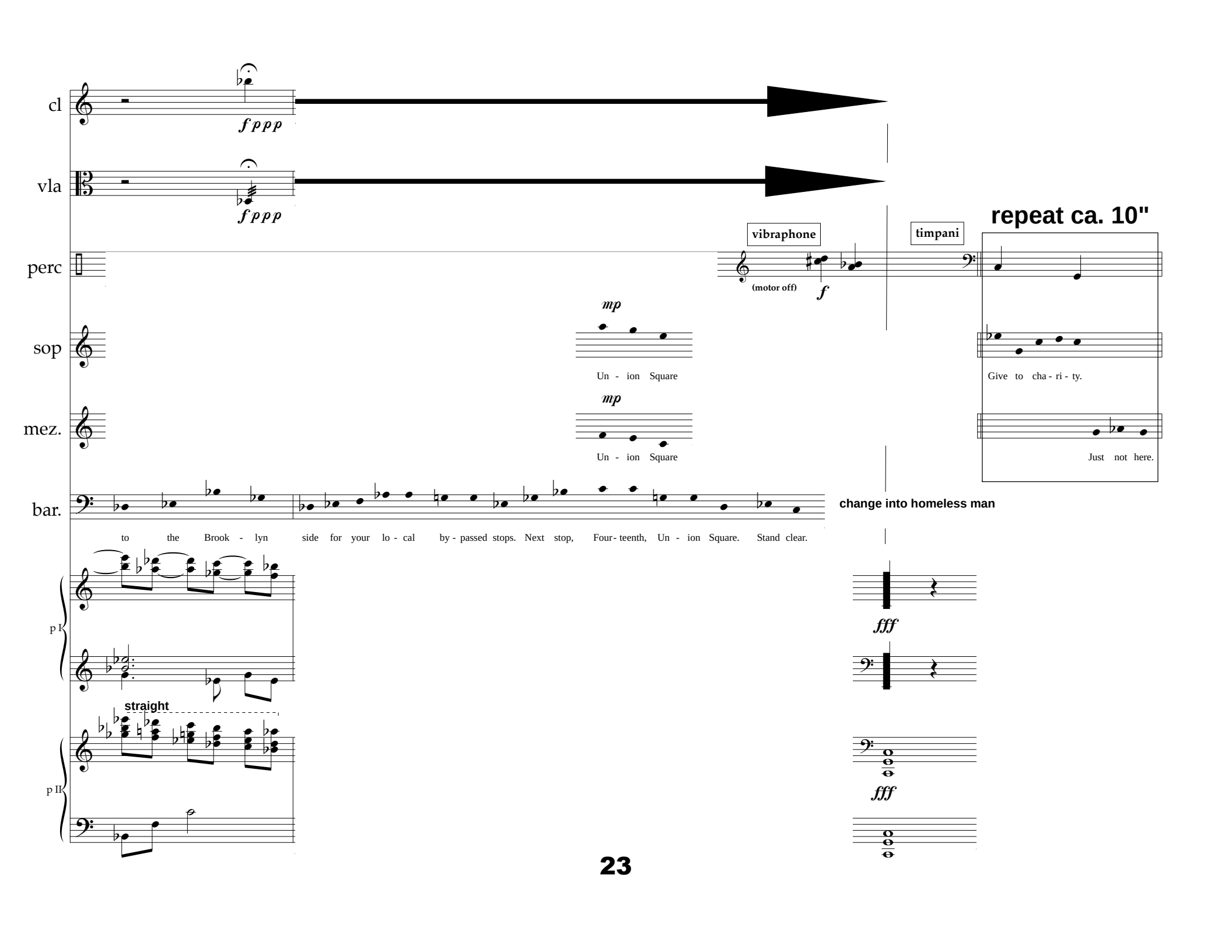

stop previous section abruptly
vla
splash cymbal
perc
ff
ff
sop
sha - ving!
mez.
perplexed
mf
Was there an - y - thing left to shave?
bar.
mf
Cort - landt Street.
p
p
mf
No. New peo - ple would get on and then af - ter a few stops

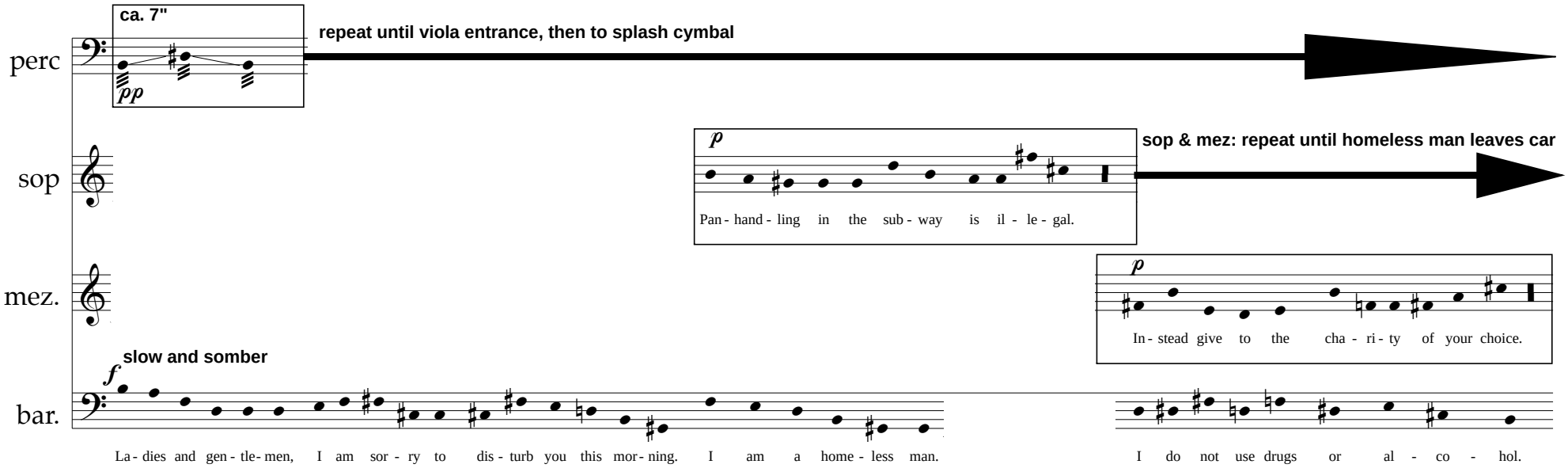

repeat for ca. 20"
vla
perc
sop
mez.
bar.
pass
p I
p II
fp
fp
ff
flexitone
ff
f
they would start to stare at him.
A - mor! Nine - ty three point one F M
f
Mu - si - ca va - ri - a - da ro - man - ti - ca y mo - der - na!
p
Ci - ty Hall.
passeners bob heads to music
battery seller:
Four double A batteries, one dollar!
= 152
ff
ff
ff

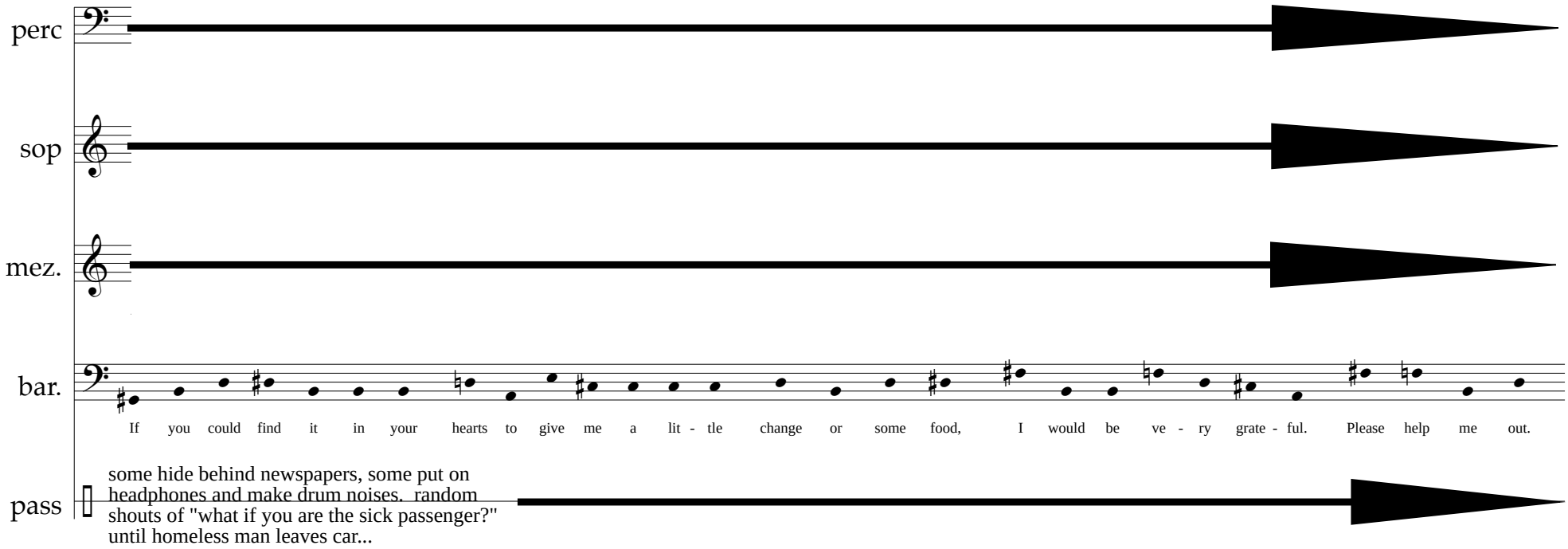

cl
mez.
bar.
p I
p II
ff
p
mf
Pas - sion, pur - pose, edge, thought!
f
Ca - nal Street. Trans - fer to J, M, Z, down - town six...
La - dies and gen - tle - men, this is your con - duc - tor speak - ing. Due to track work,
p
3
4
swing eighths
= 100
p

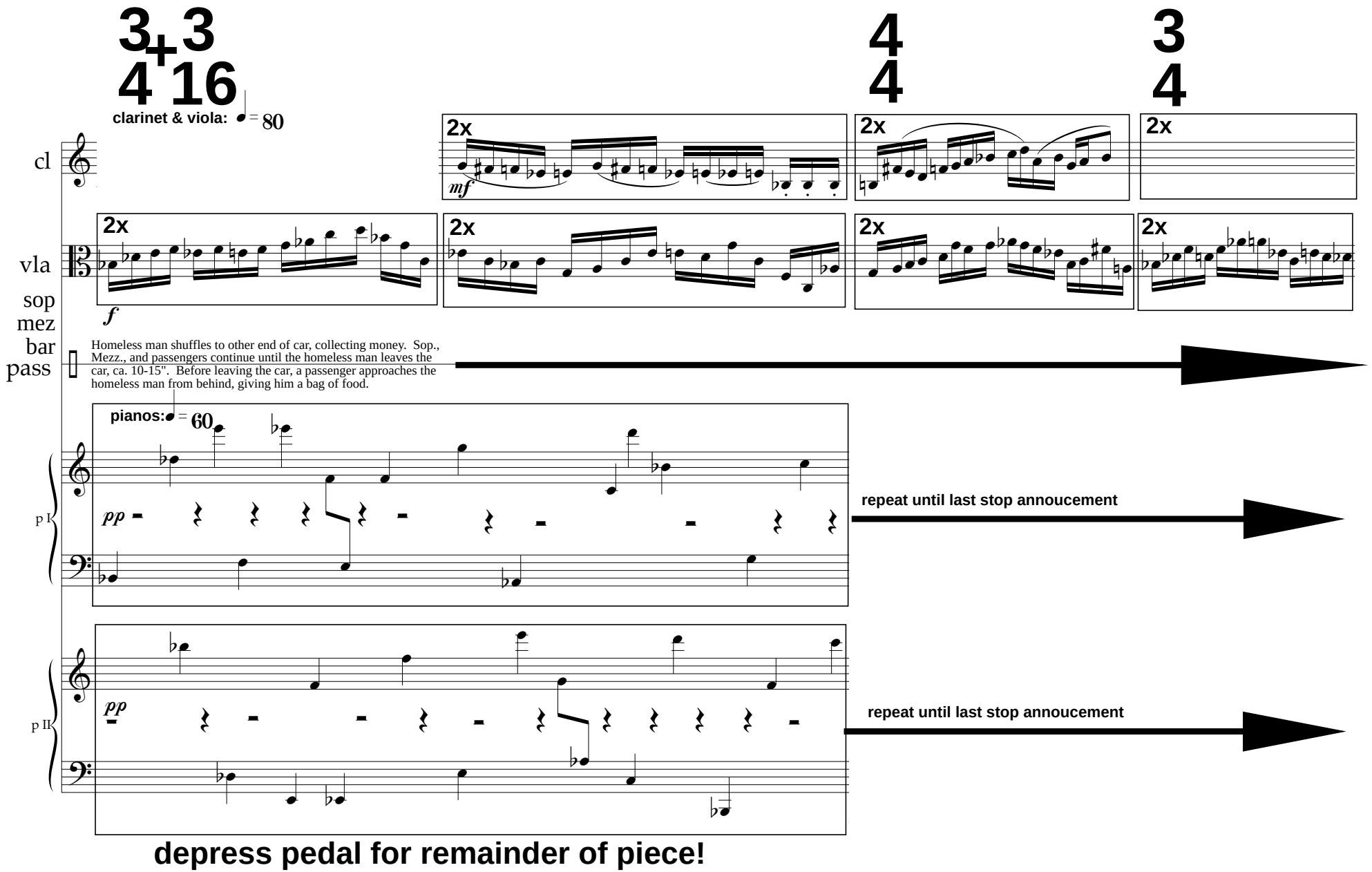

sop
Prince, Eighth, Twen - ty Third, Twen - ty Eighth!
Thir - ty Fourth
interruptive, increasingly excited
mez.
Four - teenth Street
For - ty Sec - ond
bar.
we will be by - pass - ing Prince, Eighth, Twen - ty Third, and Twen - ty Eighth. and will be stop - ping at Four - teenth Street, Thir - ty Fourth,
p I
p II
3
3

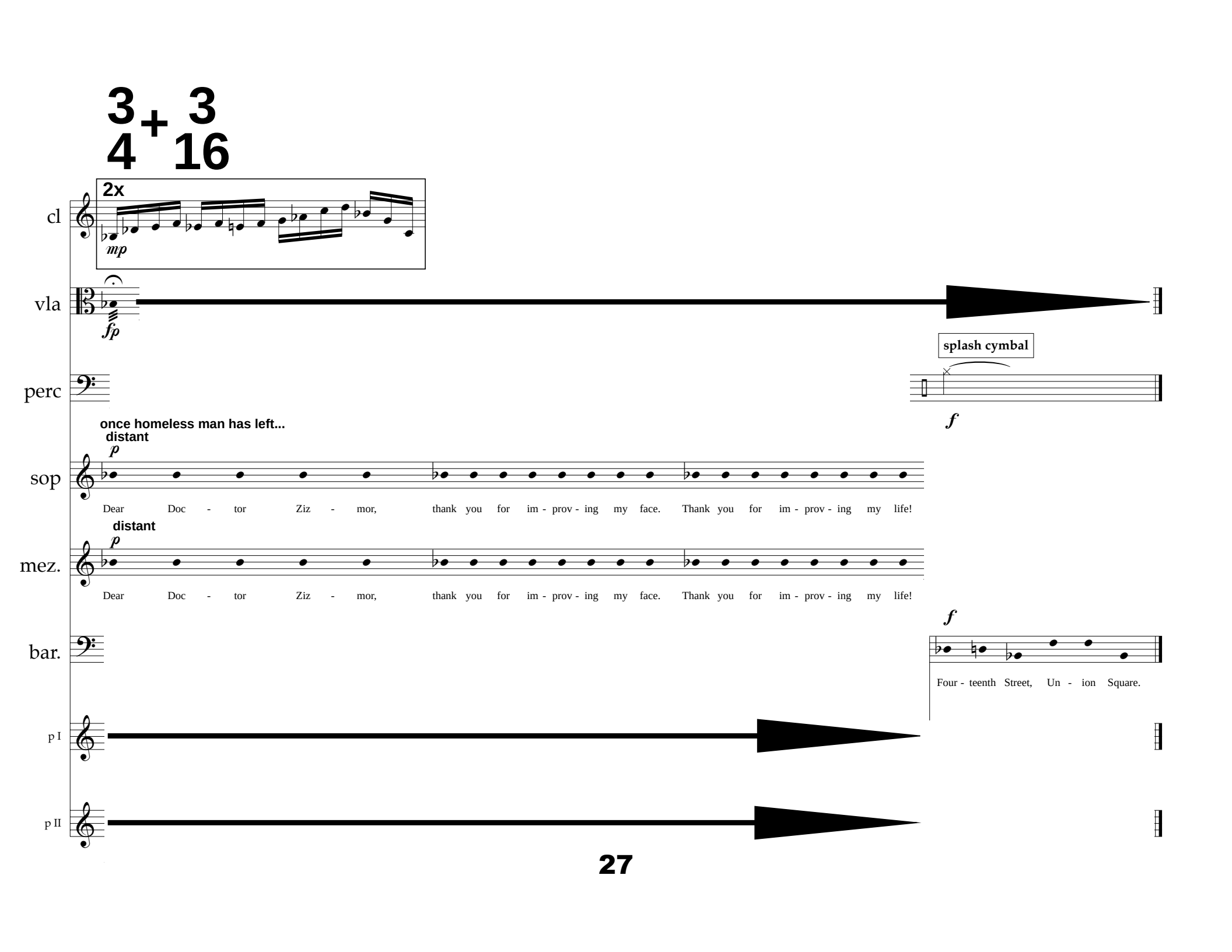

impassioned
sop
mez.
bar.
p I
p II
Prince!
Twen - ty Third!
Trans - fer o - ver to the Brook - lyn side
Eighth!
Twen - ty Eighth!
go on...
and For - ty Sec - ond.
For ser - vice to the by- passed stops take a down - town train.
Trans - fer o - ver
ff
mp
f
3


cl
vla
perc
sop
mez.
bar.
p I
p II
f p p p
vibraphone
(motor off)
f
timpani
repeat ca. 10"
mp
Un - ion Square
Give to cha - ri - ty.
Just not here.
to the Brook - lyn side for your lo - cal by - passed stops. Next stop, Four - teenth, Un - ion Square. Stand clear.
change into homeless man
fff
straight


ca. 7"
repeat until viola entrance, then to splash cymbal
perc
pp
sop
p
Pan - hand - ling in the sub - way is il - le - gal.
sop & mez: repeat until homeless man leaves car
mez.
p
In - stead give to the cha - ri - ty of your choice.
slow and somber
f
bar.
La - dies and gen - tle - men, I am sor - ry to dis - turb you this mor - ning. I am a home - less man.
I do not use drugs or al - co - hol.


perc
sop
mez.
bar.
If you could find it in your hearts to give me a lit - tle change or some food, I would be ve - ry grate - ful. Please help me out.
pass
some hide behind newspapers, some put on headphones and make drum noises. random shouts of "what if you are the sick passenger?" until homeless man leaves car...


3+3
4 16
4
4
3
4
clarinet & viola: = 80
cl
vla
sop
mez
bar
pass
2x
mf
f
Homeless man shuffles to other end of car, collecting money. Sop., Mezz., and passengers continue until the homeless man leaves the car, ca. 10-15". Before leaving the car, a passenger approaches the homeless man from behind, giving him a bag of food.
pianos: = 60
p I
p II
pp
repeat until last stop annoucement
repeat until last stop annoucement
depress pedal for remainder of piece!


3+3
4 16
2x
cl
mp
vla
fp
splash cymbal
perc
f
once homeless man has left...
distant
p
sop
Dear Doc - tor Ziz - mor, thank you for im - prov - ing my face. Thank you for im - prov - ing my life!
distant
p
mez.
Dear Doc - tor Ziz - mor, thank you for im - prov - ing my face. Thank you for im - prov - ing my life!
f
bar.
Four - teenth Street, Un - ion Square.
p I
p II
27