Groove Train

Concerto for drumset, percussion ensemble, brass, and woodwinds

by

Joe Porter

Porter Publications

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CONCERTO FOR DRUMSET, PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE, BRASS, AND WOODWINDS

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Program Notes

My first instrument was the drum set and I have always wanted to compose a piece to feature the drum set. After I decided to write a piece for the drum set, I thought great…. but now what will I write it about?

I grew up in a small coal mining town in the Rocky Mountains, in Fernie, British Columbia. In Fernie, at least two trains pass by every day from the coal mines. While an undergraduate student, I worked four summers in the coal mines to help pay for University. I was around trains a lot and I developed an interest in the sounds of trains.

I decided having the theme of trains would be perfect for a drumset feature piece. With that in mind, the listener should think about the many sounds associated with trains. Whether it's the steam, the low rumble of the engine, the big train horn, a railroad crossing, or the train starting up like an old locomotive.

While composing, I experienced a stumbling block regarding the sound of the train horn. In the percussion ensemble, there are no instruments that could imitate this sound as well as brass and woodwinds could. I decided to add an instrument combination with the train horn sound in mind: a flute, two french horns and two tenor saxophones, with the hope that this combination would sound like a real train.

The train horn sound was problematic from a composition perspective. I had a very distinct pitch relation in mind: D, F, A, and B. The problem with this pitch relation is that the D, F and A, spell out a minor triad, but in the key of D minor, the B should be a B flat. I did three things with this issue: firstly, I adapted some sections to compose in D minor. Secondly, I used the D, F, A and B to spell out the dorian mode and composed a majestic section. Thirdly, if you use these four pitches and weigh hard on the B, it creates the locrain mode. The locrain mode is very dark, and I used it to create a dark and driving section.

Finally, it was my intention to add my own touches on trains. The piece gives many sounds of the train but it shouldn't be taken as a complete programmatic piece. As a "drummer" I am always thinking about groove in music and I hope some of the sections portray this theme.

Joe Porter – February, 2014

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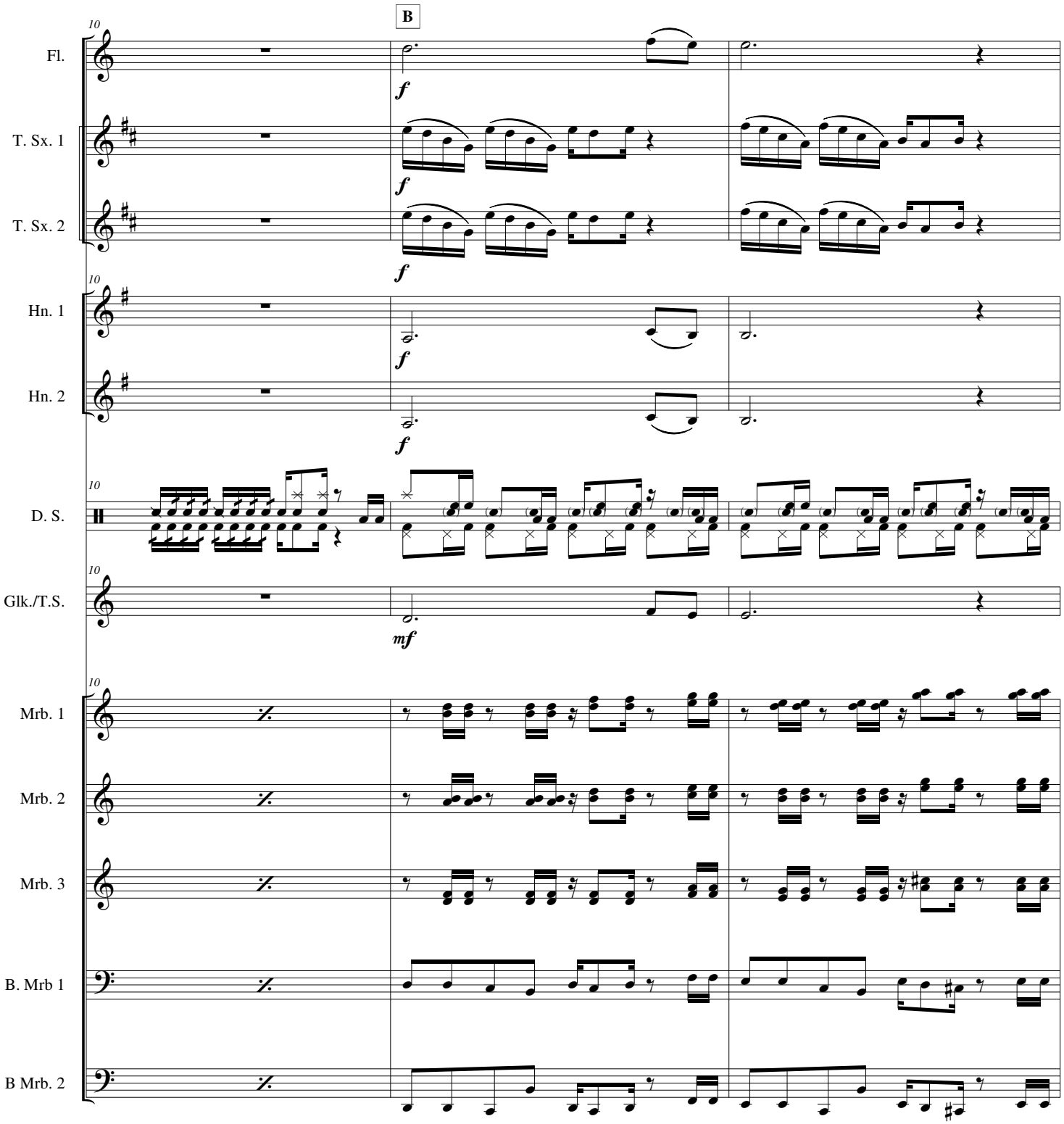
Performance Notes

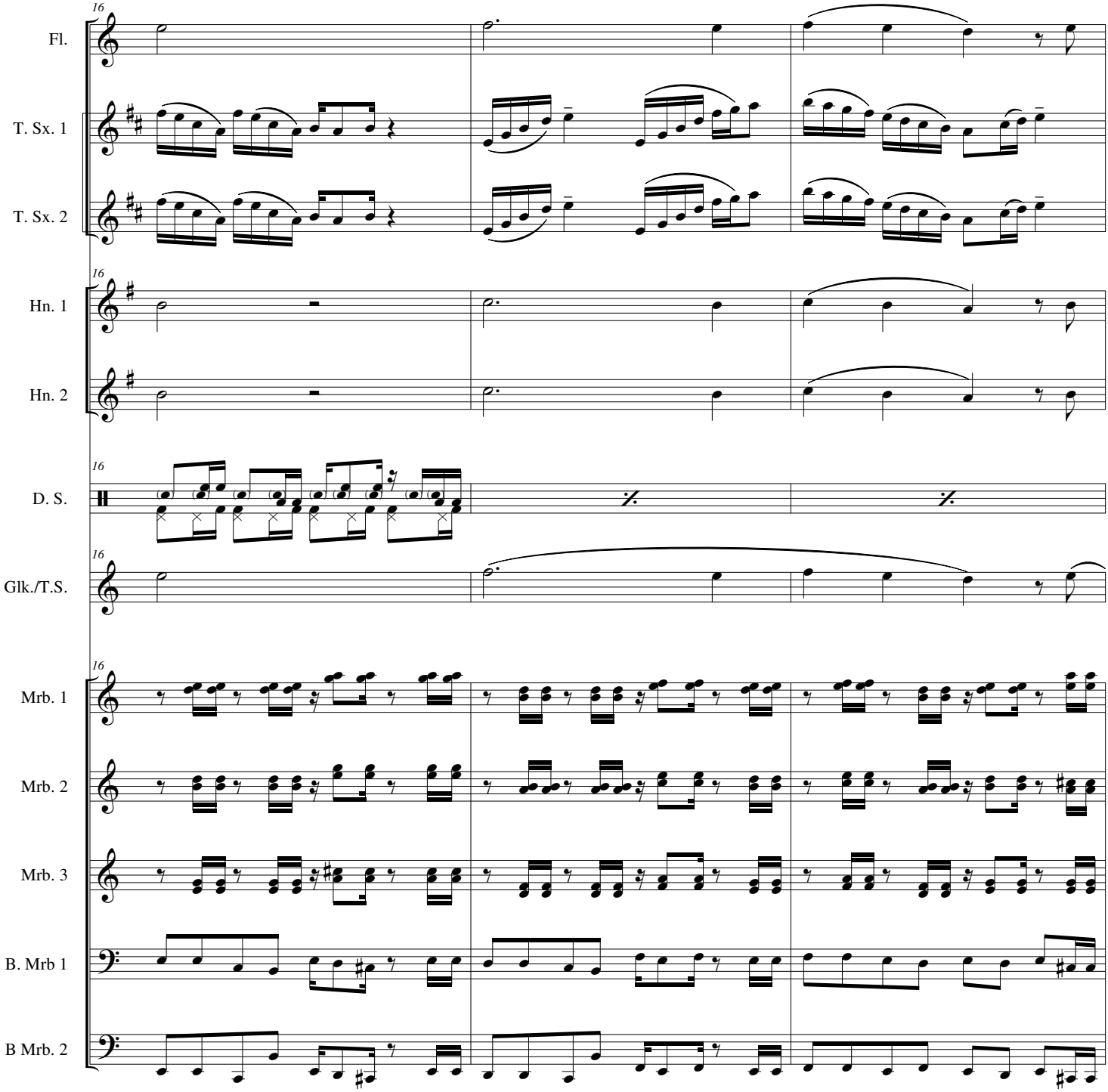
The Drumset part of this concerto is written out, however the soloist should not take the notation 100% literally. For example, cymbal notation is not specific and the player can choose which cymbals to use. There is a lot of room for improvisation, especially in the cadenzas. The big cadenza at [H] provides the larger structure, however the interpretation is left to the soloist. The fill into the Reggae Section [J] may be changed.

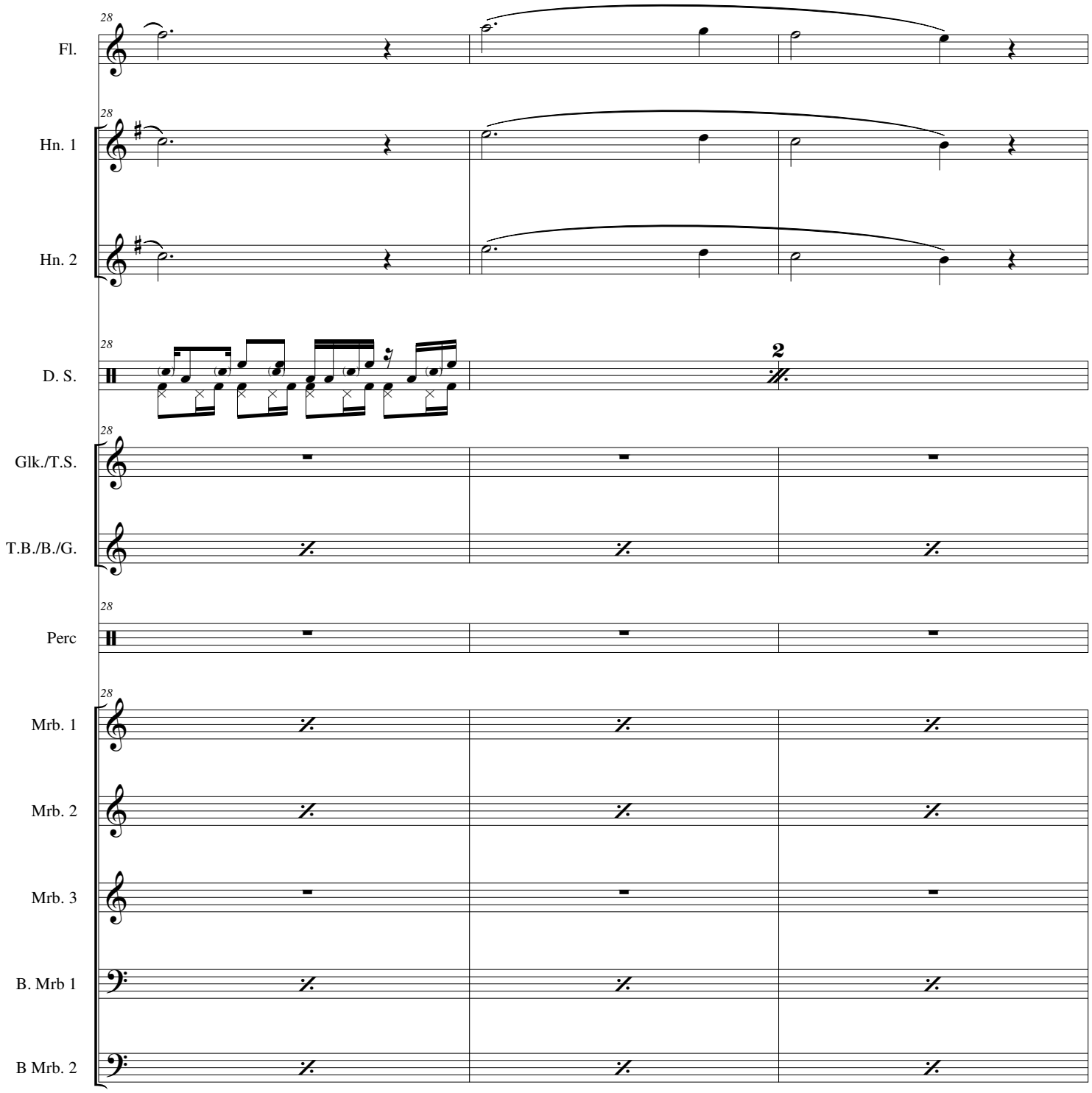
Pay careful attention to the dynamics of the piece. If the horns and woodwinds cannot be heard, make them play louder, or even add microphones as necessary. The dynamics give the overall impression, but a pianissimo is not the same with a drumset soloist as it is with a violin soloist! Make the necessary adjustments. Some parts may be doubled.

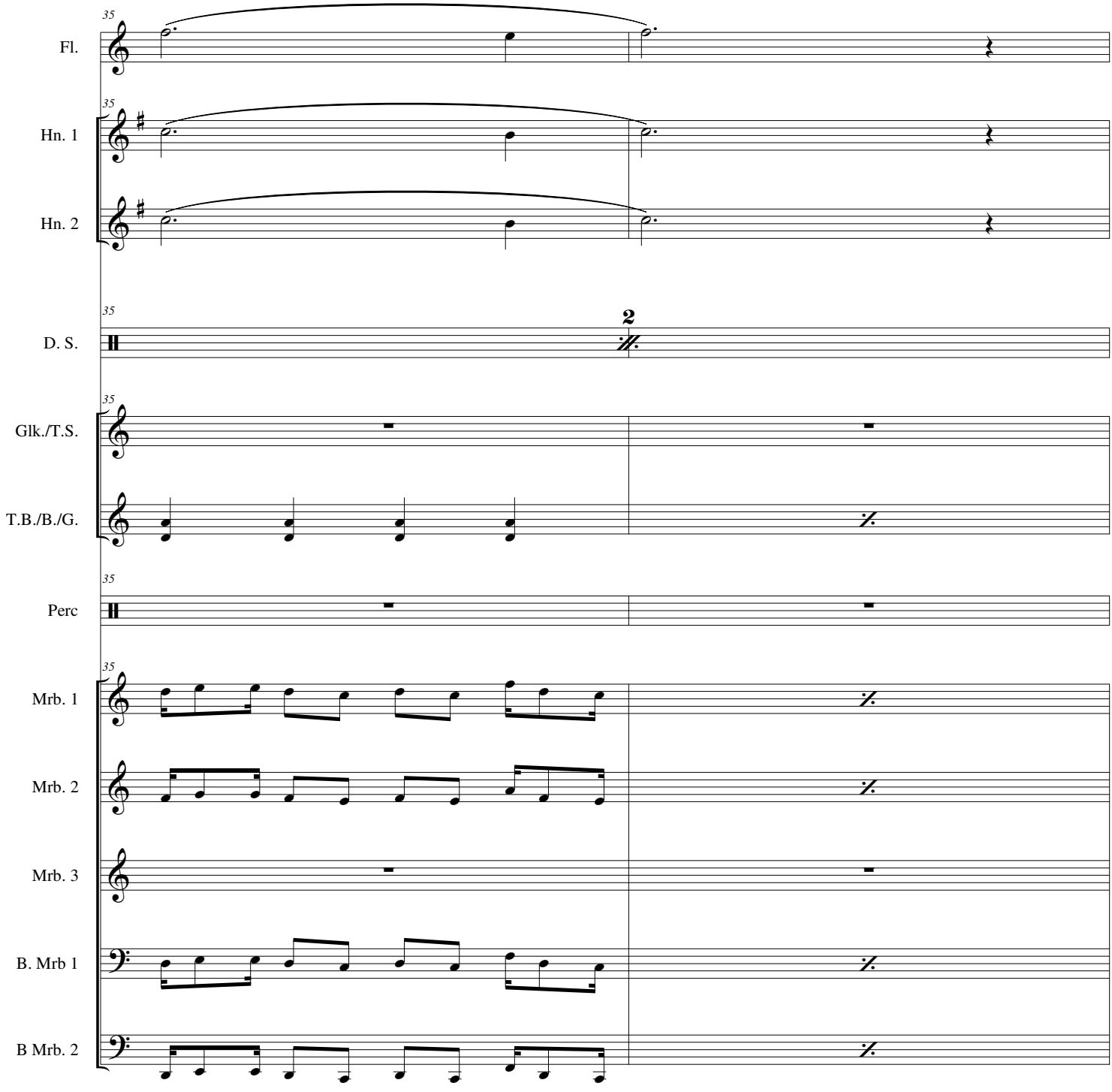
The approximate length of the piece is 13 minutes.

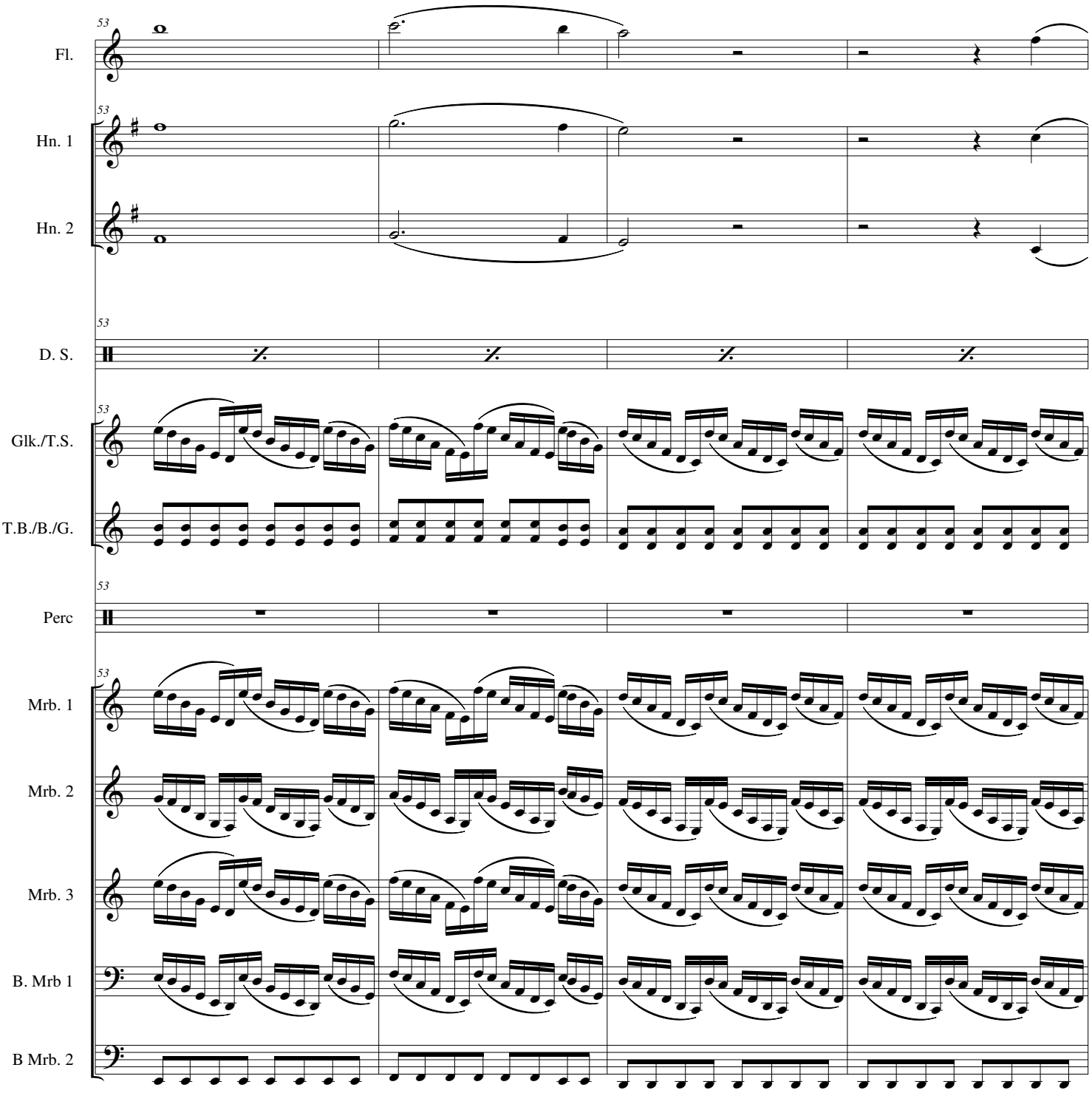
Recommended Setup:

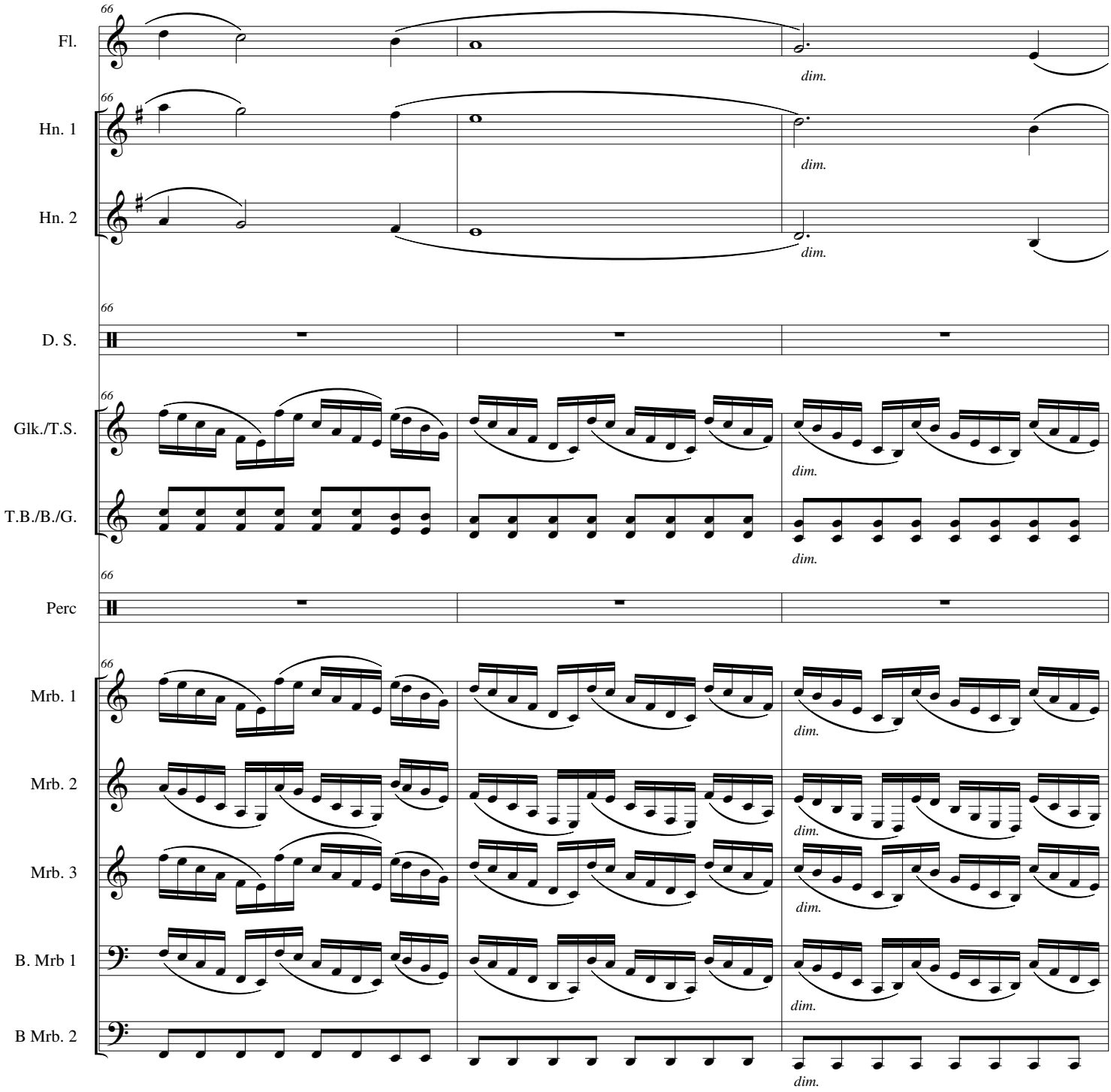

B
Fl.
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
D. S.
Glk./T.S.
Mrb. 1
Mrb. 2
Mrb. 3
B. Mrb 1
B Mrb. 2
10
f
mf

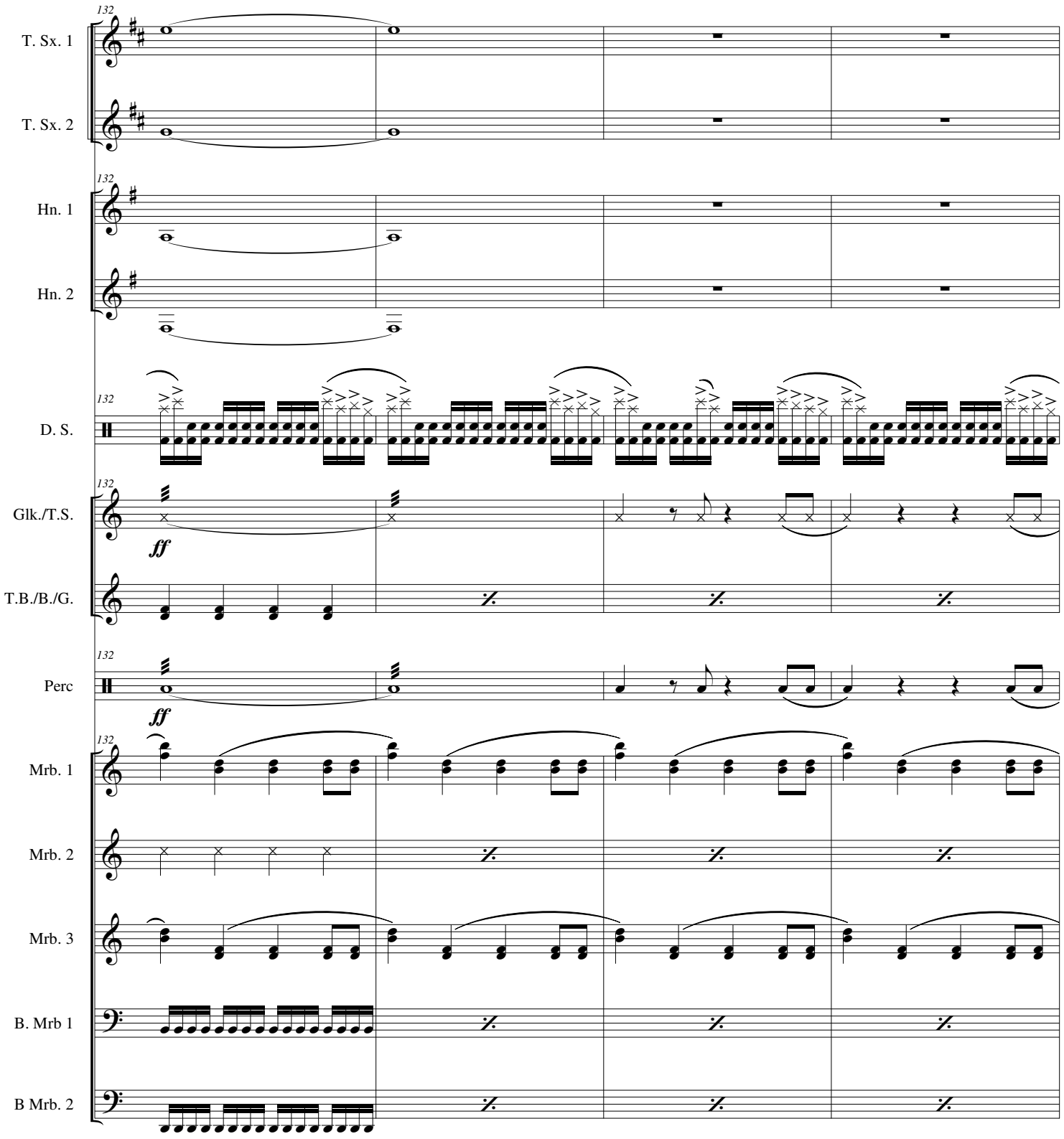

16
Fl.
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
D. S.
Glk./T.S.
Mrb. 1
Mrb. 2
Mrb. 3
B. Mrb 1
B Mrb. 2

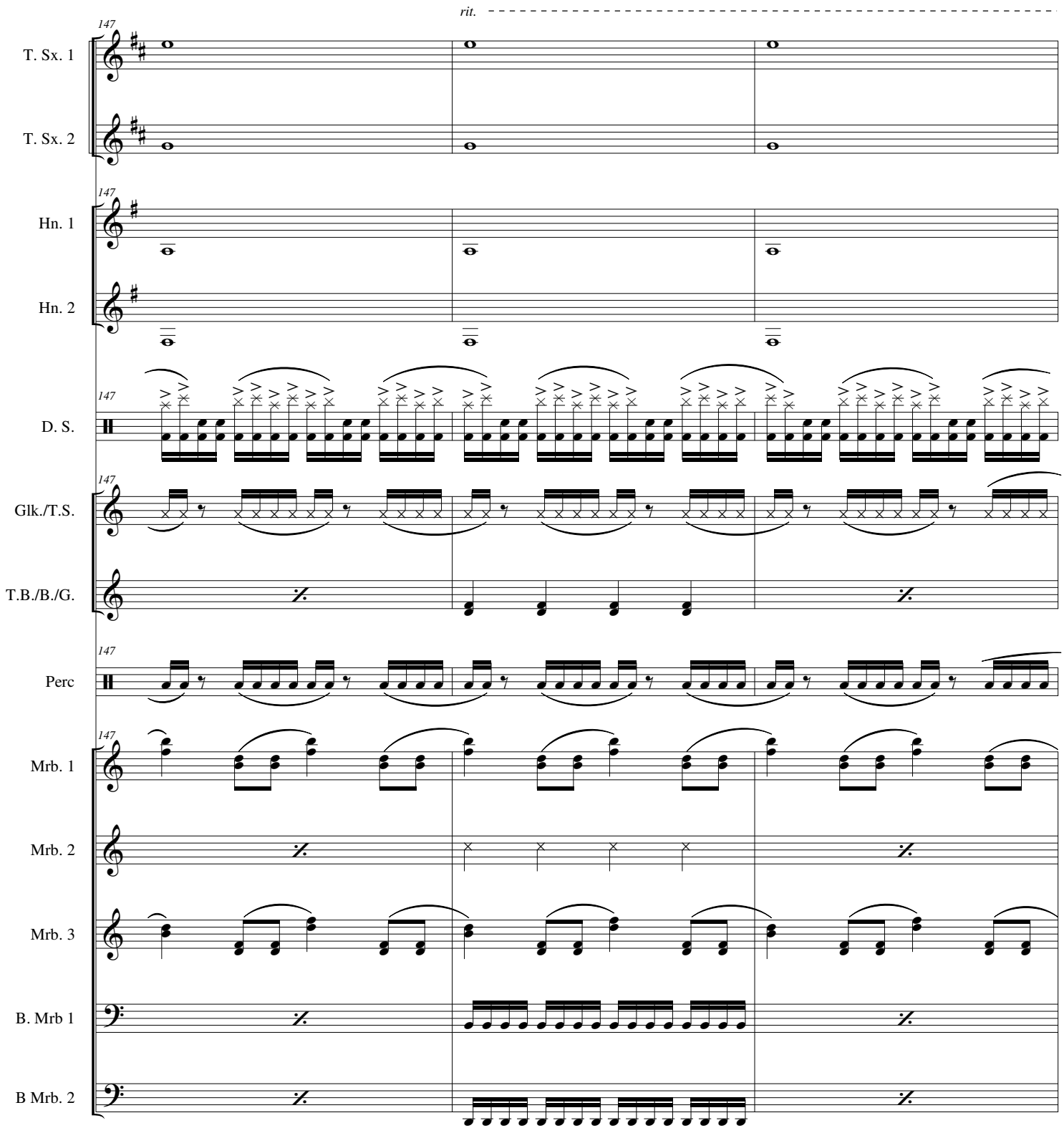

28
Fl.
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
D. S.
2
Glk./T.S.
T.B./B./G.
Perc
Mrb. 1
Mrb. 2
Mrb. 3
B. Mrb 1
B Mrb. 2


35
Fl.
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
D. S.
2
Glk./T.S.
T.B./B./G.
Perc
Mrb. 1
Mrb. 2
Mrb. 3
B. Mrb 1
B Mrb. 2


53
Fl.
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
D. S.
Glk./T.S.
T.B./B./G.
Perc
Mrb. 1
Mrb. 2
Mrb. 3
B. Mrb 1
B Mrb. 2


66
Fl.
dim.
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
D. S.
Glk./T.S.
T.B./B./G.
Perc
Mrb. 1
Mrb. 2
Mrb. 3
B. Mrb 1
B Mrb. 2


132
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
D. S.
Glk./T.S.
ff
T.B./B./G.
Perc
Mrb. 1
Mrb. 2
Mrb. 3
B. Mrb 1
B Mrb. 2


rit.
147
T. Sx. 1
T. Sx. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
D. S.
Glk./T.S.
T.B./B./G.
Perc
Mrb. 1
Mrb. 2
Mrb. 3
B. Mrb 1
B Mrb. 2