Adrian Sutton

Concerto for violin and orchestra

FULL SCORE



PROGRAMME NOTE

The inspiration for this concerto came in several guises. When living in Brighton, Adrian remembers staring in wonder at seagulls that appeared to be hanging stock still in the sky, hovering on a thermal current. The same image impressed him years later while on holiday on the South African coast, staying with friends whose house overlooked the vast expanse of False Bay. He began thinking how he might musically describe the world from the gull's point of view.

Another prompt came from his former agent Claire Baughan, who suggested he might consider writing a work that could act as a companion piece to The Lark Ascending by Vaughan Williams, a tone poem for violin and orchestra that has long been a favourite with British audiences.

The final piece of the puzzle came when, several years ago and rather randomly, I gave Adrian a copy of Jonathan Livingston Seagull by Richard Bach and suggested its themes would work well set to music. A cult classic from the seventies, the story tells of how Jonathan the gull is rejected from his flock, finds a mentor, learns about forgiveness and love, and achieves transcendence through the perfection of his flight.

Adrian's concerto picks up on some of those themes and the overall shape of the story, while not being tied to any of its detail. Where Vaughan William's lark soars over the earth, so the gull will over the ocean.

There are three movements through-composed into one journey, with the gull our guide on the violin throughout.

The gull's travels start by circling over an ocean panorama, with a soft figure in muted strings and harp suggesting a gentle seesaw of thermal currents. The wide descending intervals of this motif immediately give a sense of space and freedom and of a bird content in flight. The rhythms tighten into 'Scottish snaps' as the gull tries out more challenging moves: steep banks, nose dives and quick slips of direction. As the orchestra begins to battle against this display, so the gull responds with a defiant solo, a lyrical cadenza.

After the solo, the thermals return and the gull is left to fly high and alone, contemplating the sky and what might lie beyond. This is the second movement. A quiet accompaniment sustains the flight from below, with the violin finding its highest reaches. The harmonies shift and pose questions, but a calm pervades.

The final movement is an assertion of power and energy. The gull is transfigured, pure spirit and light, and flies untrammelled while the seas and wind seethe below. It is an exercise in perpetual motion, of keeping the music aloft throughout, surprising at every turn.

There is an invitation to hear in the music a reflection of Adrian's own personality and journey: keeping going despite adversity, celebrating life in the now, seizing the day — and in so doing, finding release.

- Jonathan James

Instrumentation

2 Flutes (2nd dbl. Piccolo)
2 Oboes (2nd dbl. Cor Anglais)
2 Clarinets in A
2 Bassoons

4 Horns in F 2 Trumpets in C 2 Tenor trombones Bass trombone

Percussion (2 players): Bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal

Timpani

Harp

Violin solo

Strings min. 12.10.8.6.4

Duration: ca. 25 mins

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1. Thermals







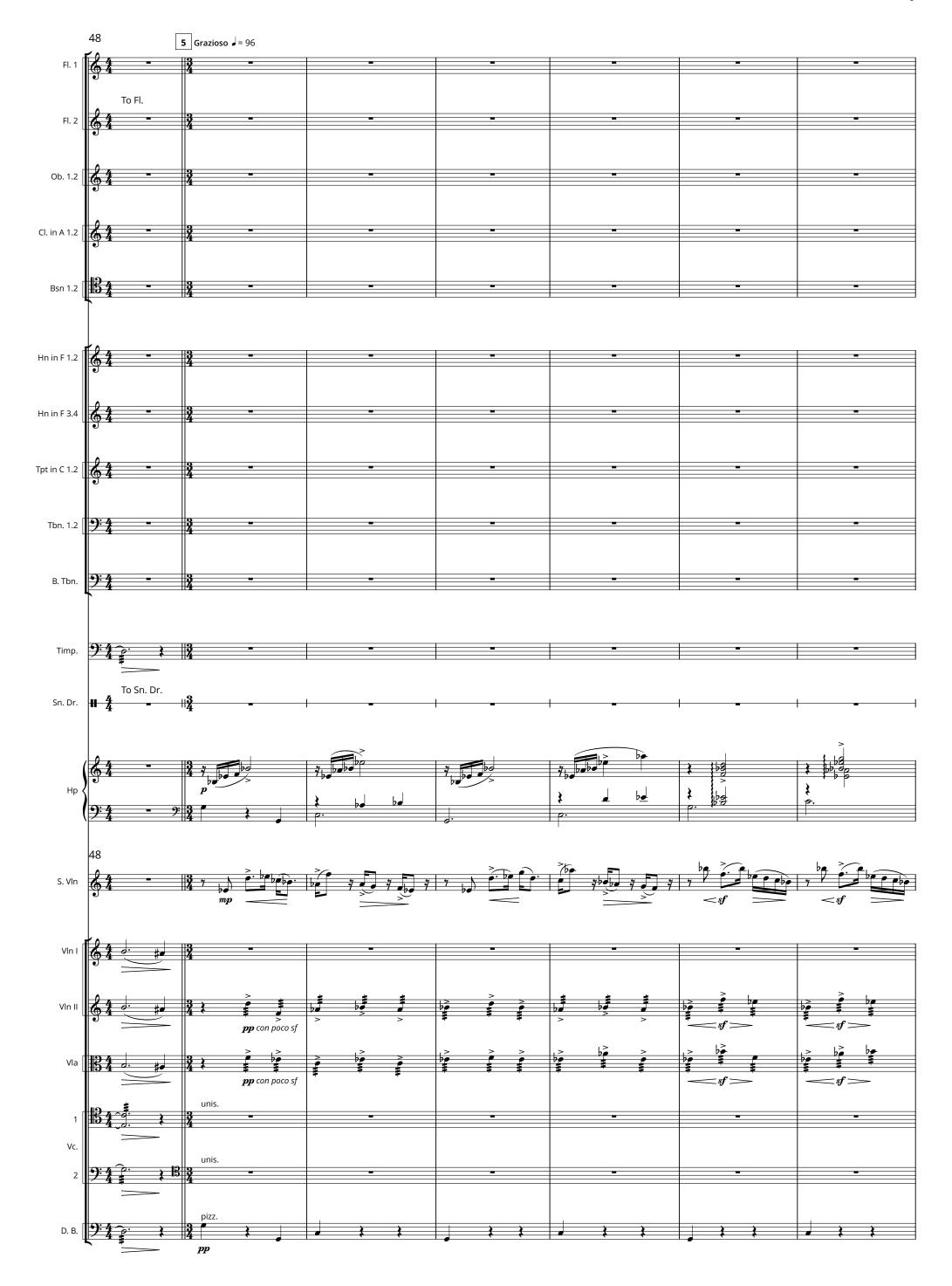












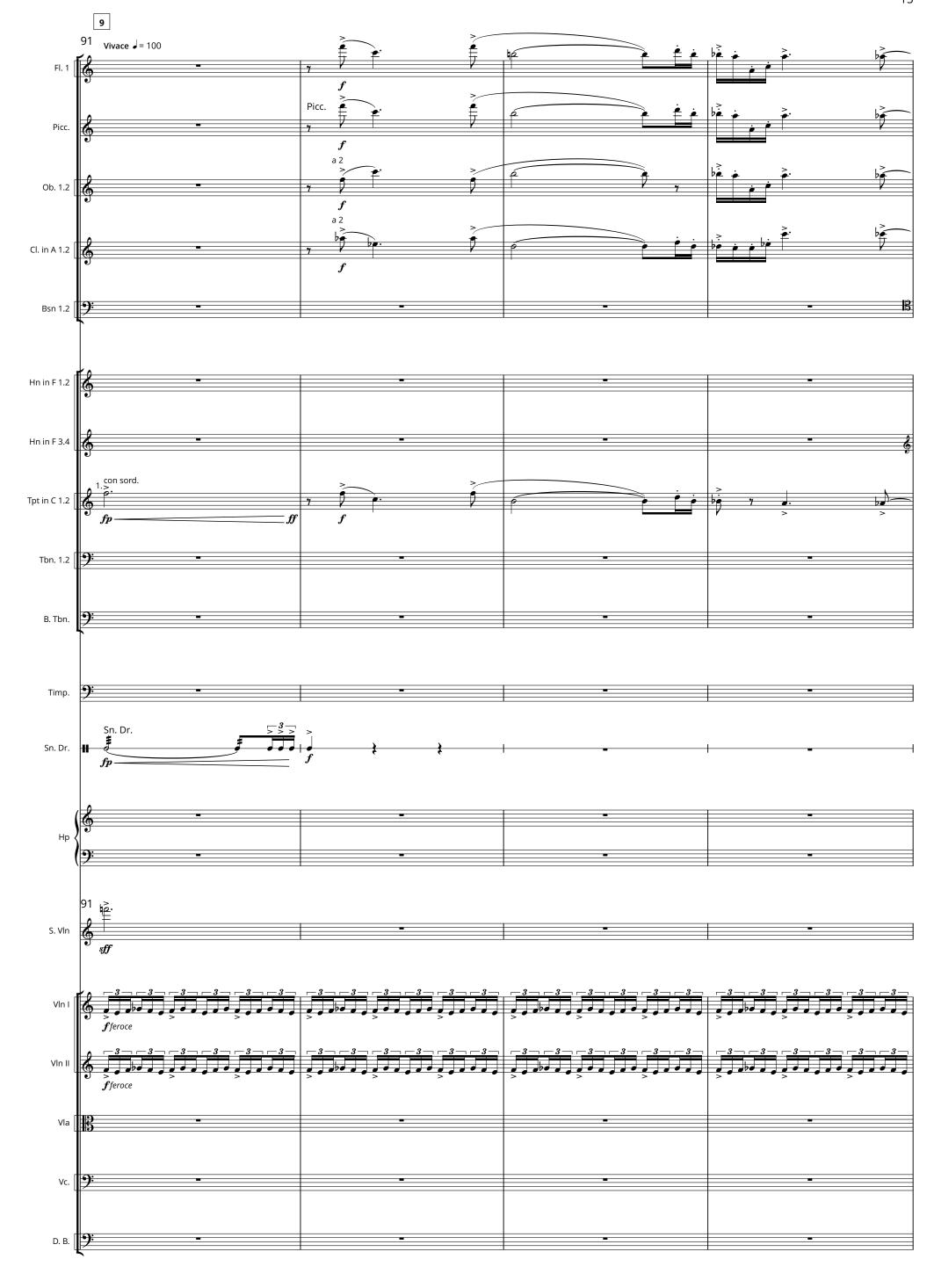






















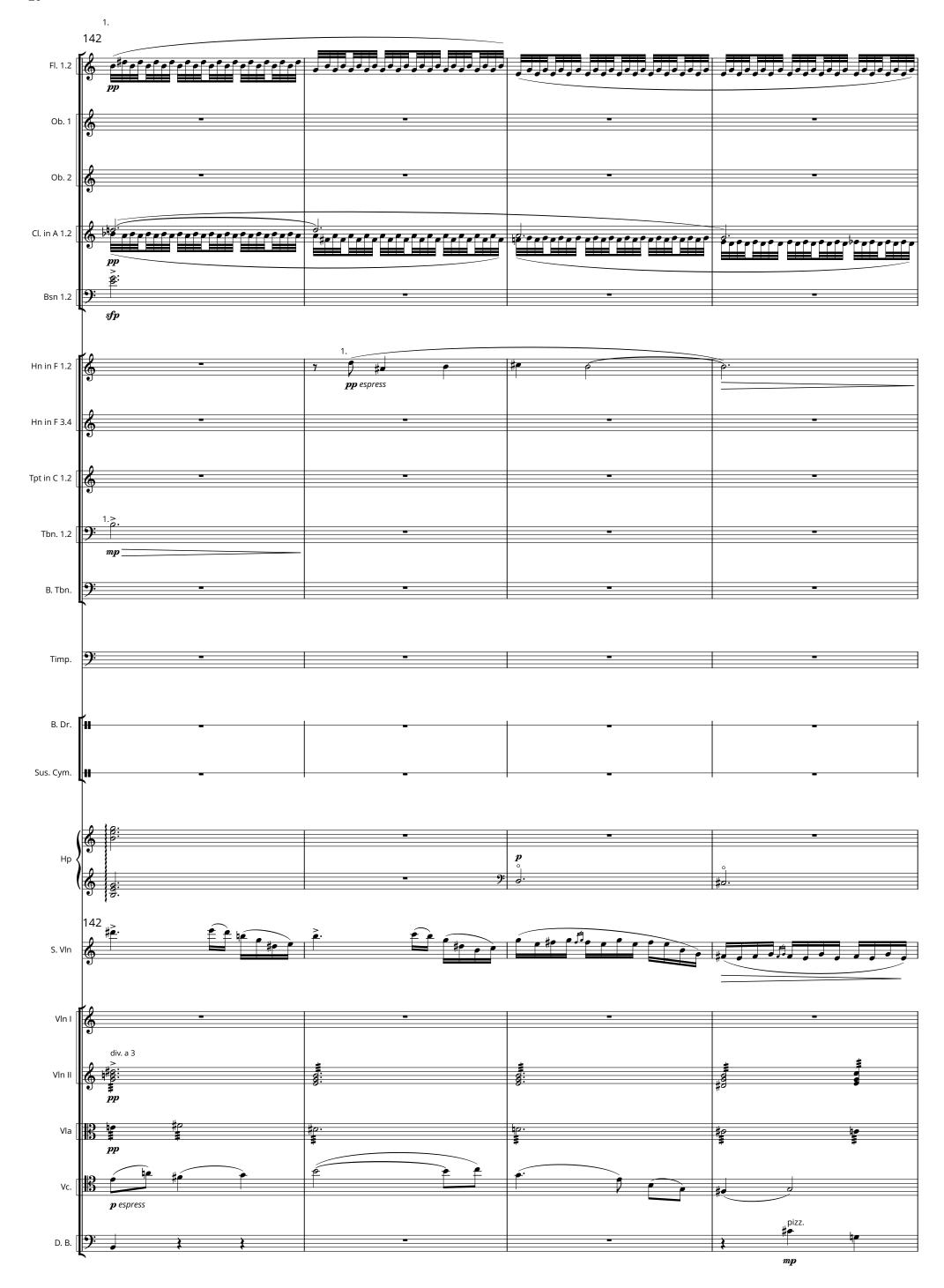


















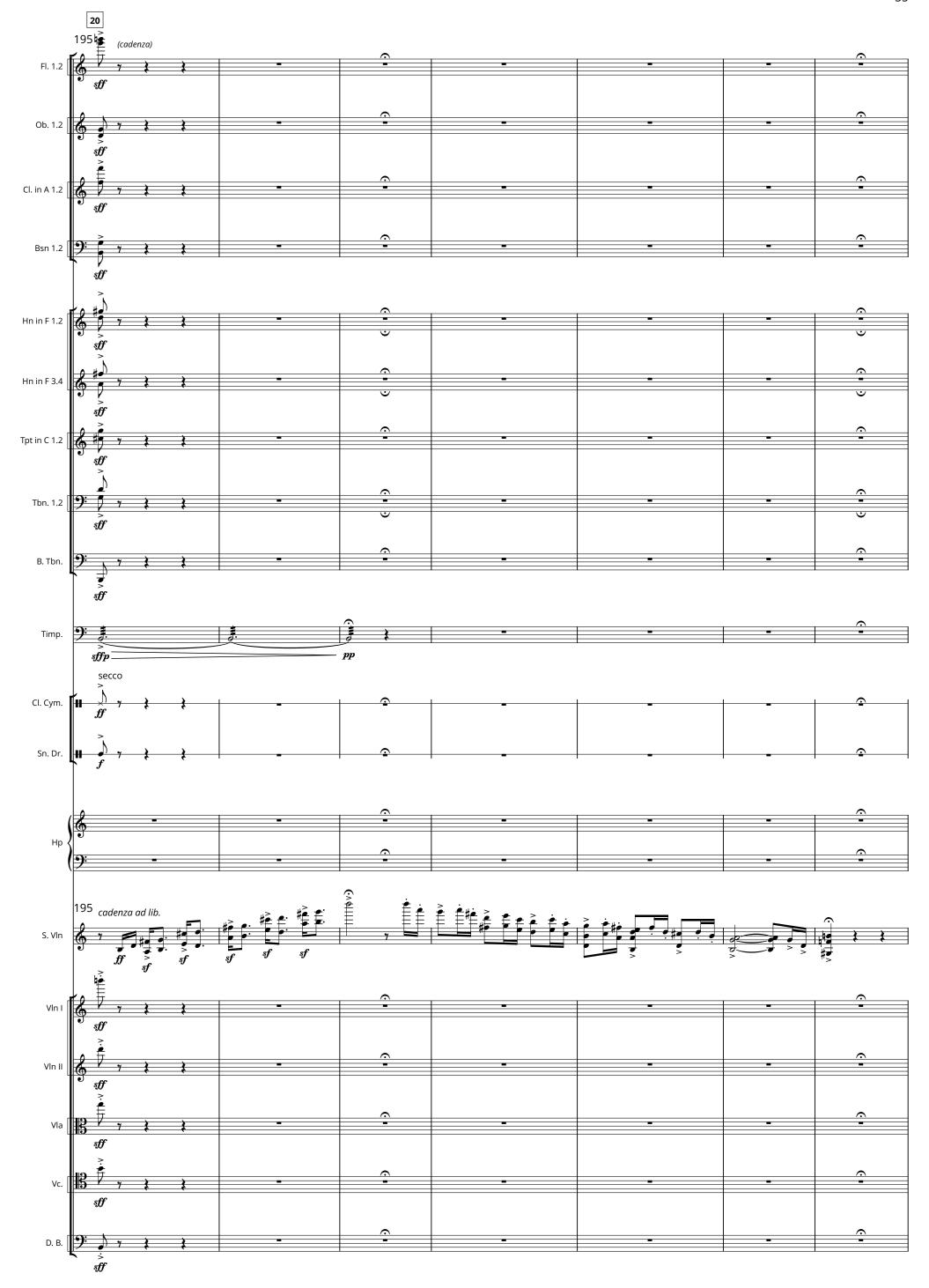


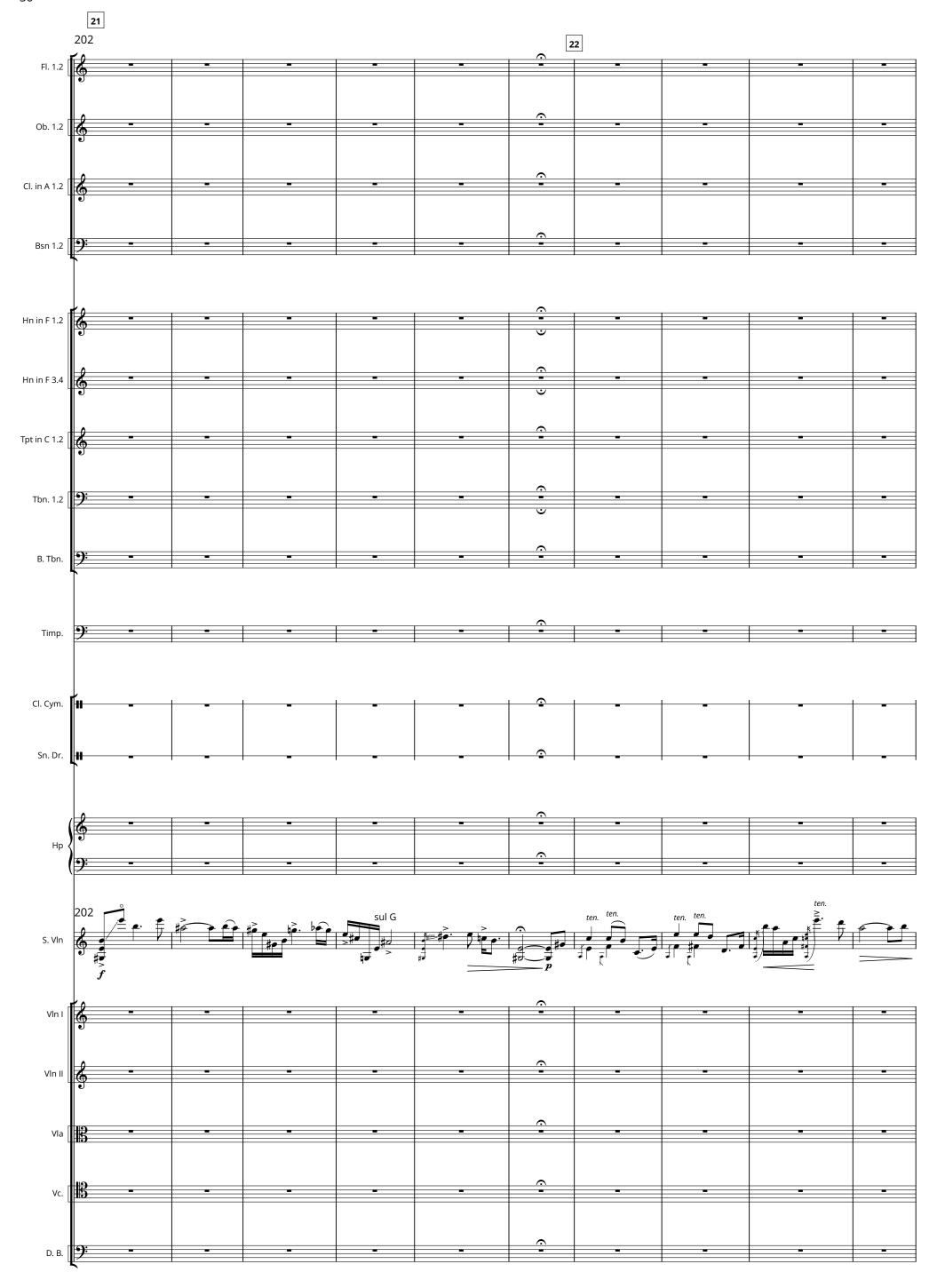


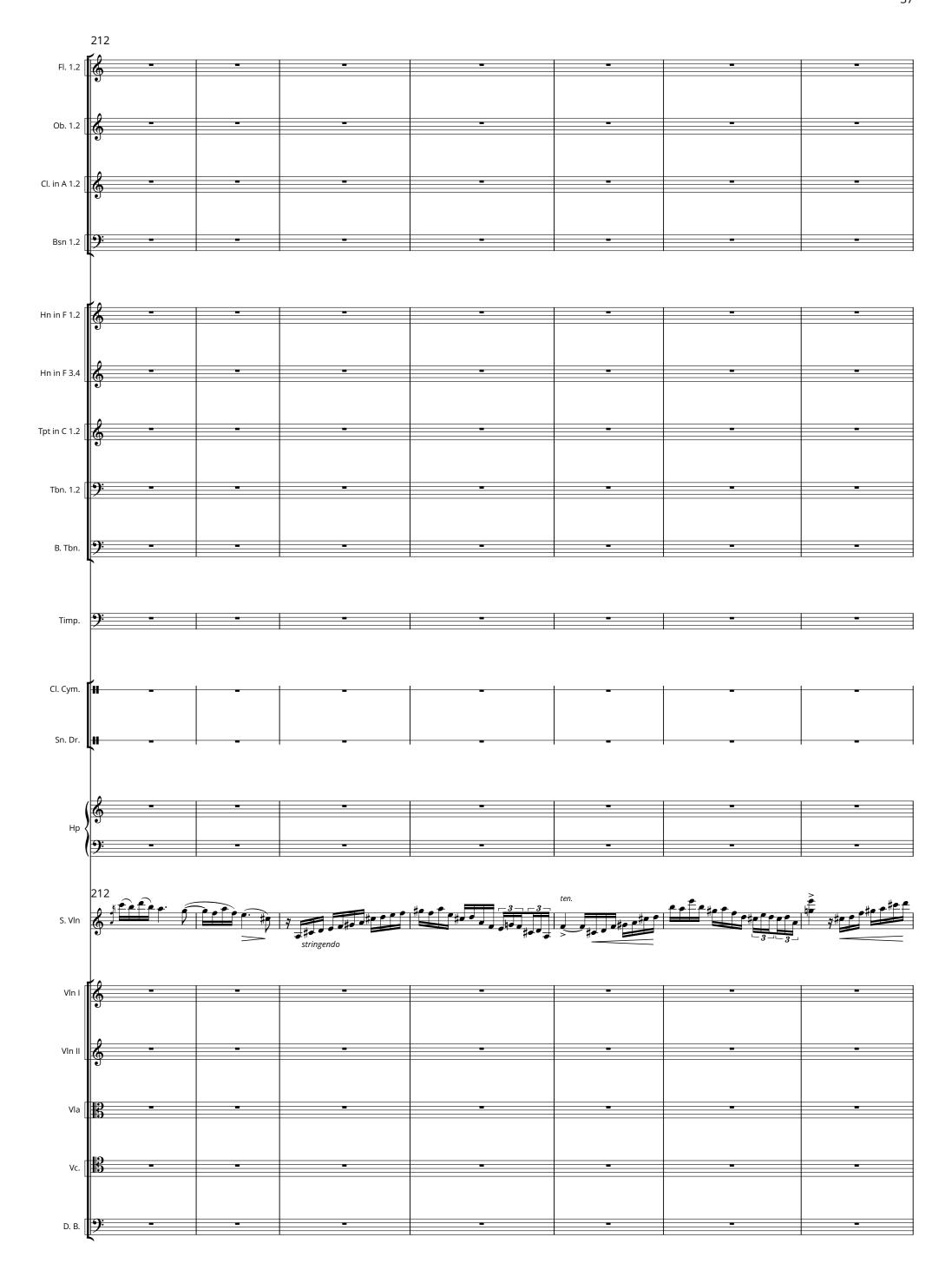


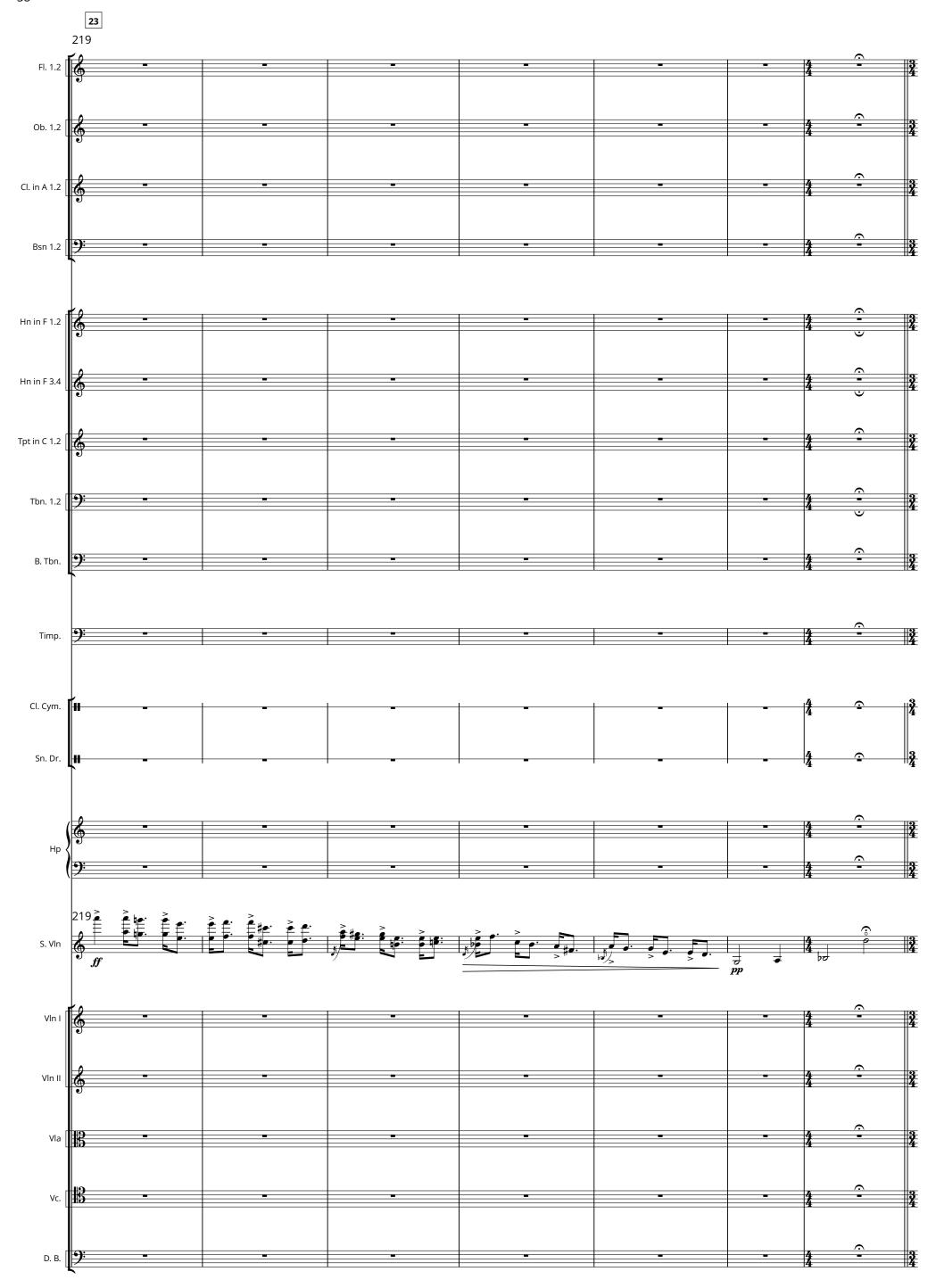




























2. Far Cliffs

