Stylistic Composition
2017-18

Seminar 2 – 14 February 2018
Processes

David Pocknee
david.pocknee@hud.ac.uk

Assignment 4: Ensemble piece in the style of Steve Reich

Recap

Compose a c.8 minute repetitive piece for a chamber ensemble in the style of Steve Reich's *Eight Lines (Octet)* and with the same instrumentation. The piece should utilize at least 1 minute of unrepeated material.

The piece should consist of three to five sections with appropriate transitions between each section. The relationship between material in different sections should be taken into account. The assignment should show an economical approach to the use of material and should be a complete piece in itself, with thought given to how to begin and end.

Create stylistically-appropriate rhythmic and melodic patterns, and consider the rhythmic and melodic structures of such material. You should use the techniques covered in class (e.g. phase shifting, augmentation, and additive and cumulative processes).

The assignment should be typeset using notational software. It should be uploaded to Grade Centre by 11:59 pm on **Thursday 3 May 2018.** Your submission should contain two files: a pdf of the score and the file from your notation software (e.g. a Sibelius/Finale/Musescore/Lilypond file).

You should aim to submit a draft of this assignment in class on **Wednesday 25 April** for formative feedback. If you have any queries regarding this assignment, contact david.pocknee@hud.ac.uk.

Processes

Music As A Gradual Process

Steve Reich (1968) from *Writings On Music 1965-2000*:
"I do not mean the process of composition but rather pieces of music that are, literally, processes.

The distinctive thing about musical processes is that they determine all the note-to-note (sound-to-sound) details and the overall form simultaneously. (Think of a round or infinite canon.)

I am interested in perceptible processes. I want to be able to hear the process happening throughout the sounding music.

To facilitate closely detailed listening a musical process should happen extremely gradually.

Performing and listening to a gradual musical process resembles:

Pulling back a swing, releasing it, and observing it gradually come to rest;
Turning over an hour glass and watching the sand slowly run through to the bottom;
Placing your feet in the sand by the ocean's edge and watching, feeling, and listening to the waves gradually bury them.

Although I may have the pleasure of discovering musical processes and composing the musical material to run through them, once the process is set up and loaded it runs by itself."

http://www.bussigel.com/systemsforplay/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Reich_Gradual-Process.pdf

PENDULUM MUSIC

FOR MICROPHONES, AMPLIFIERS, SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS

2, 3, 4 or more microphones are suspended from the ceiling by their cables so that they all hang the same distance from the floor and are all free to swing with a pendular motion. Each microphone's cable is plugged into an amplifier which is connected to a speaker. Each microphone hangs a few inches directly above or next to it's speaker.

The performance begins with performers taking each mike, pulling it back like a swing, and then in unison releasing all of them together. Performers then carefully turn up each amplifier just to the point where feedback occurs when a mike swings directly over or next to it's speaker. Thus, a series of feedback pulses are heard which will either be all in unison or not depending on the gradually changing phase relations of the different mike pendulums.

Performers then sit down to watch and listen to the process along with the audience.

The piece is ended sometime after all mikes have come to rest and are feeding back a continuous tone by performers pulling out the power cords of the amplifiers.

Steve Reich 8/68

- *Pendulum Music* (1968)
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fU6qDeJPT-w

Eight Lines

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Np9yApXD94

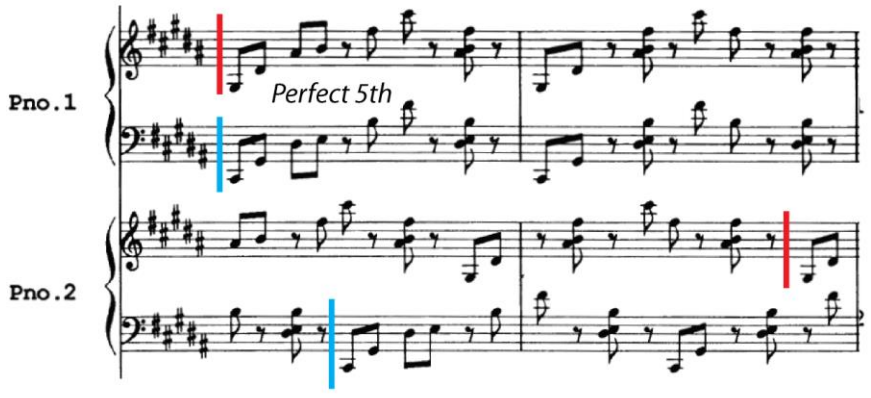
Types Of Processes

- Phase Shifting
- Additive Process
- Augmentation
- Cumulative Process

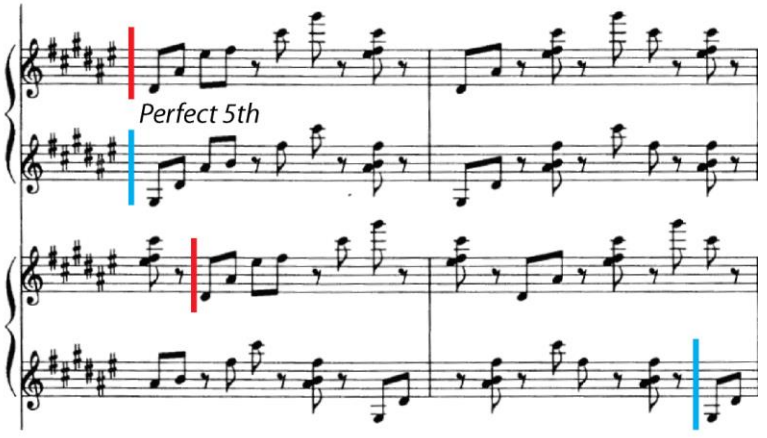
Phase Shifting

Phase Shifting In The Pianos

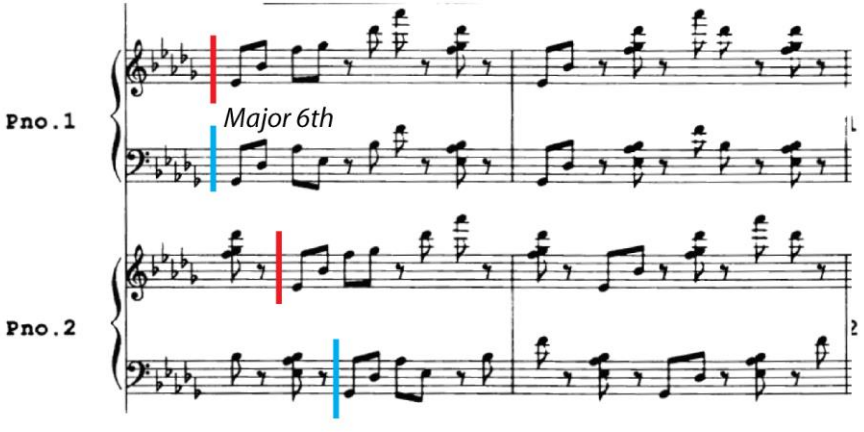
Rehearsal 13 (Section I)



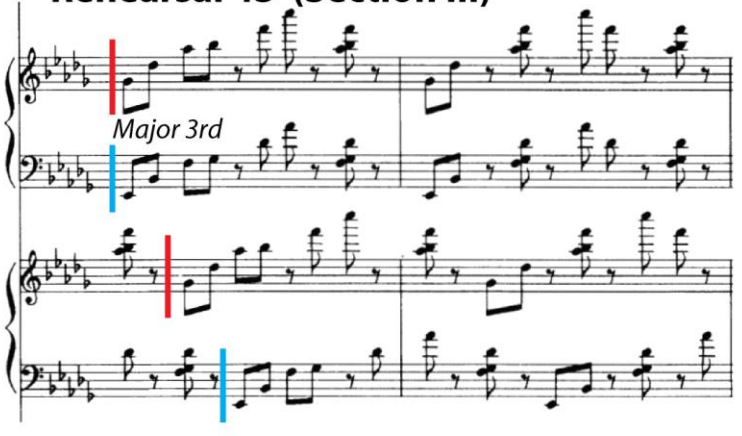
Rehearsal 19 (Section II)



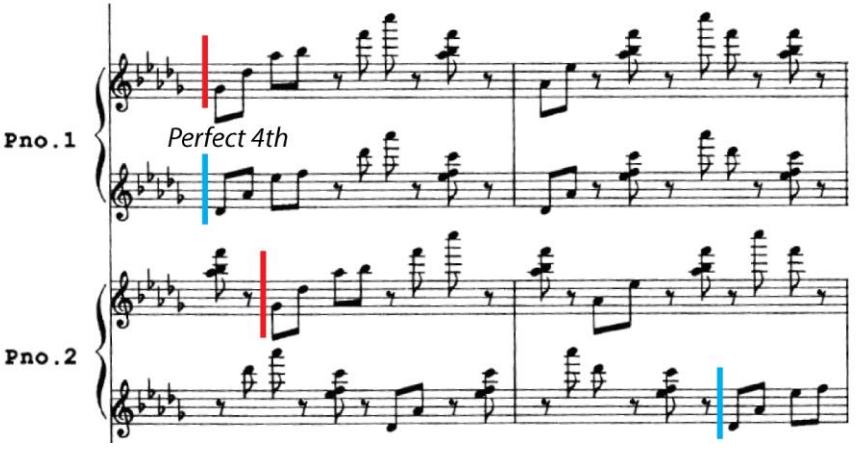
Rehearsal 39 (Section III)



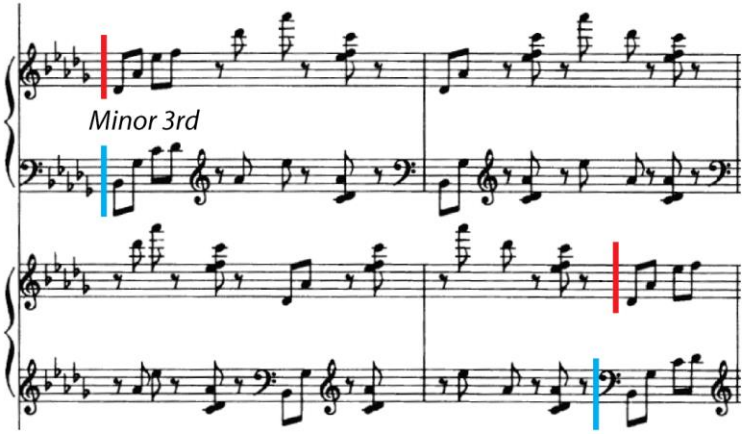
Rehearsal 43 (Section III)



Rehearsal 52 (Section IV)



Rehearsal 71 (Section V)



Additive Process

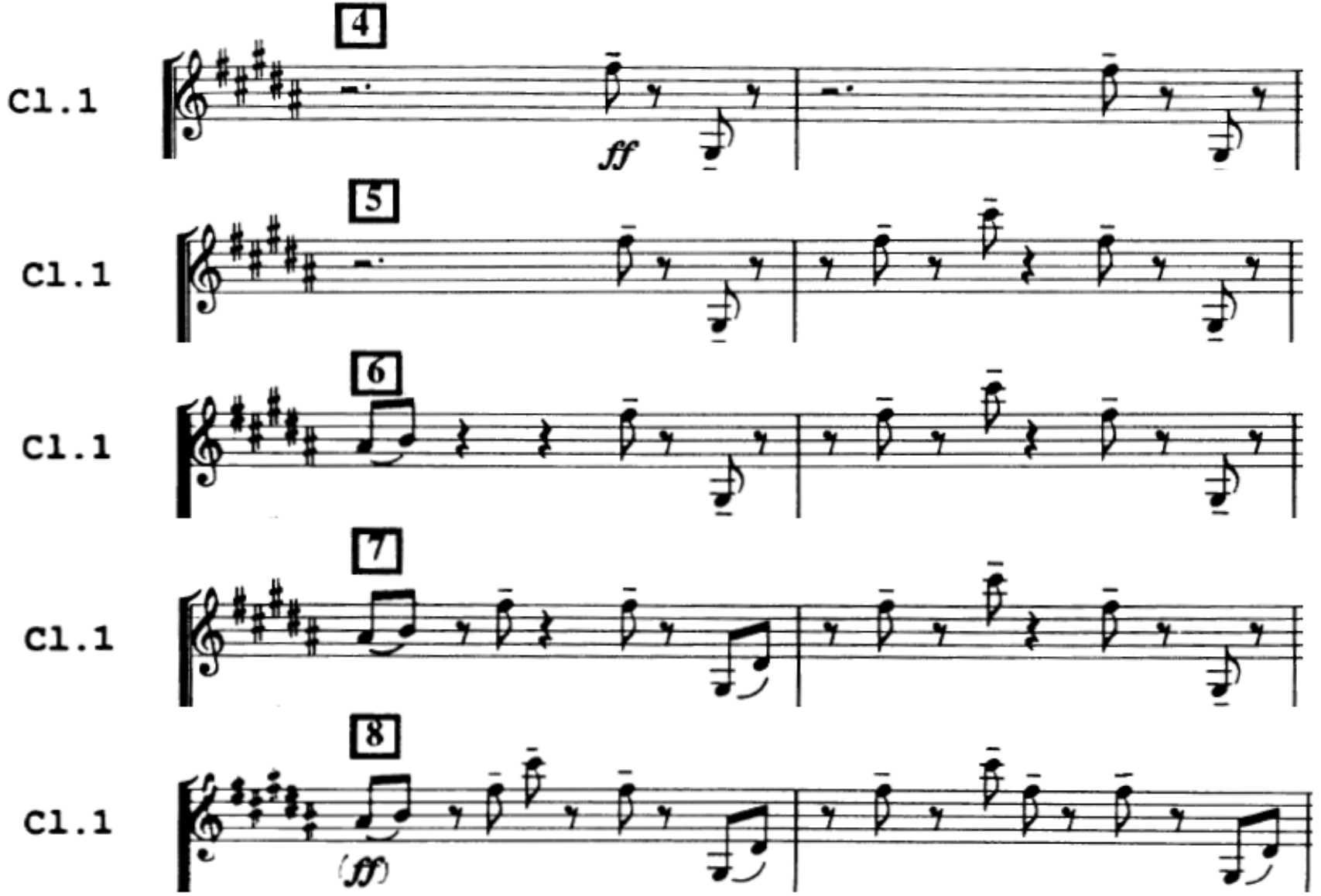
Music For Pieces of Wood (1973)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LbmvD7ytDc

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy2kyRrXm2g

Additive Canons in *Eight Lines*

Clarinet 1, Rehearsal Mark 4



Augmentation

Augmentation In *Eight Lines*

Augmentation:

- *Four Organs* (1970)

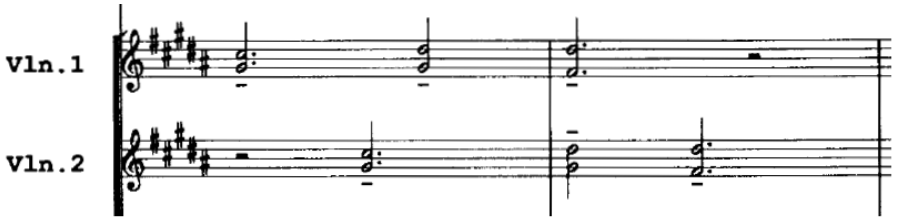
  "*Four Organs* is composed exclusively of the gradual augmentation (lengthening) of individual tones within a single (dominant 11th) chord. The tones within the chord gradually extend out like a sort of horizontal bar graph in time. As the chord stretches out slowly resolving to the tonic A and then gradually changing back to the dominant E, a sort of slow-motion music is created. The maracas lay down a steady time grid of even eighth-notes throughout, enabling the performers to play together while mentally counting up to as much as 256 beats on a given cycle of sustained tones."

  – Steve Reich – *Four Organs* – *Program Note* from "Writings On Music"

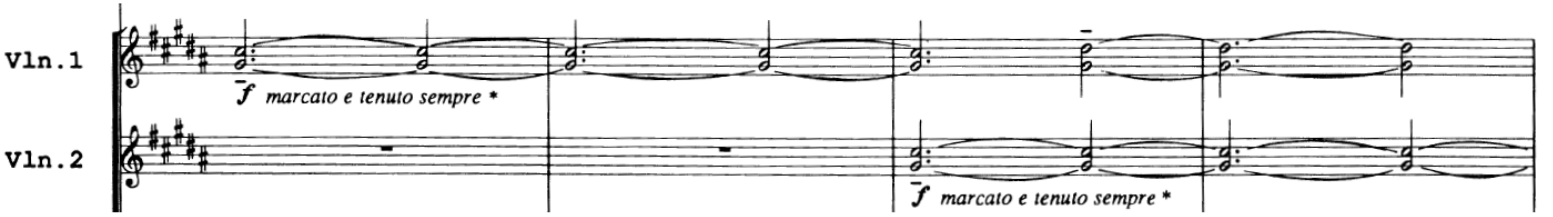
Four Organs

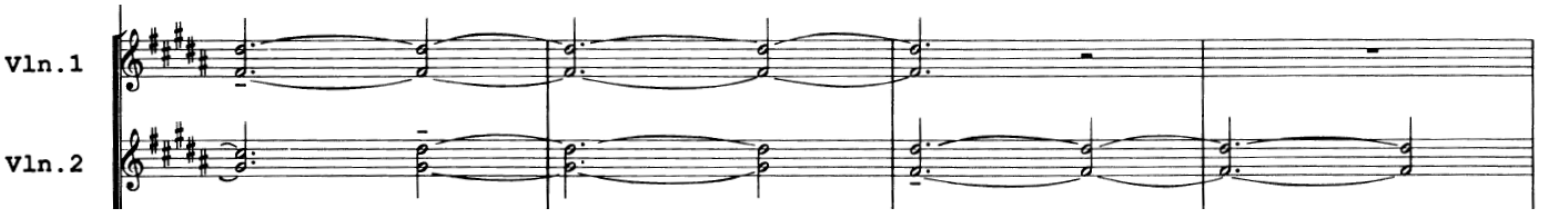
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8ummi3d3Cs

Violins 1 & 2, Page 1

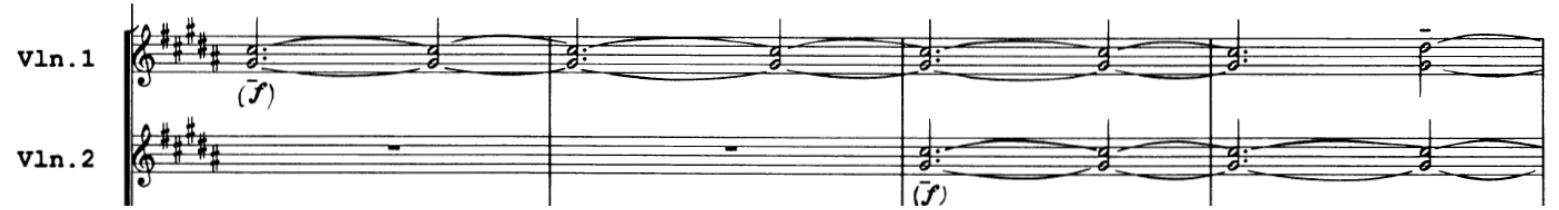


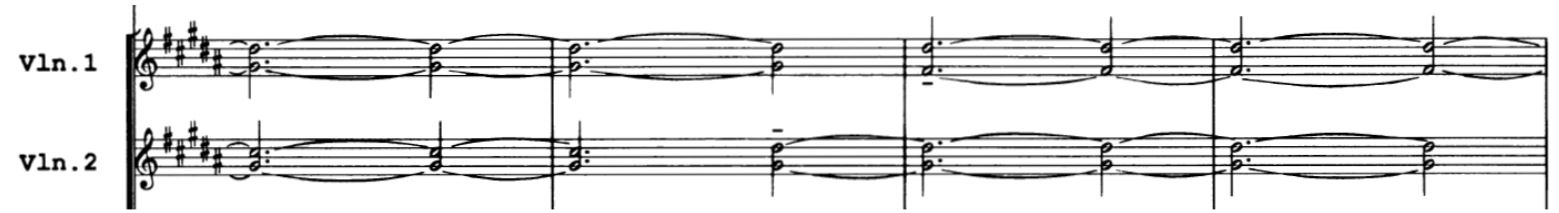
Violins 1 & 2,
Rehearsal Mark 4

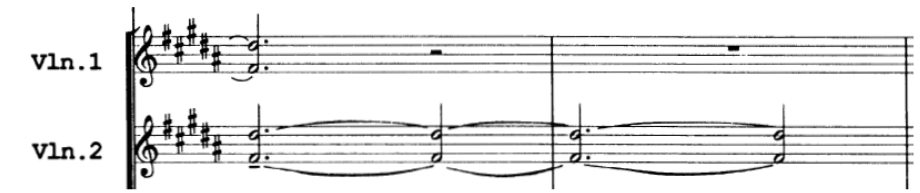




Violins 1 & 2,
Rehearsal Mark 8



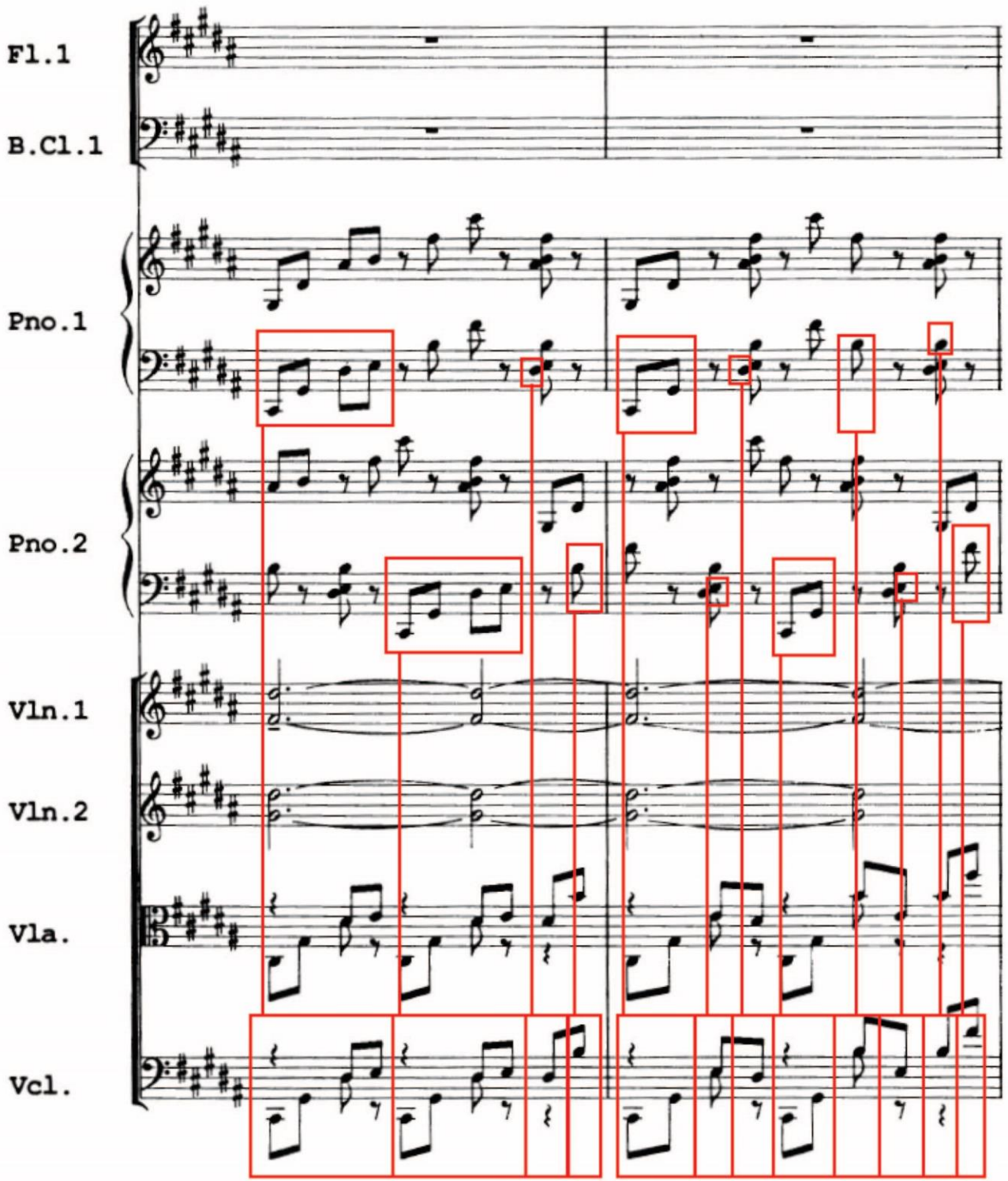




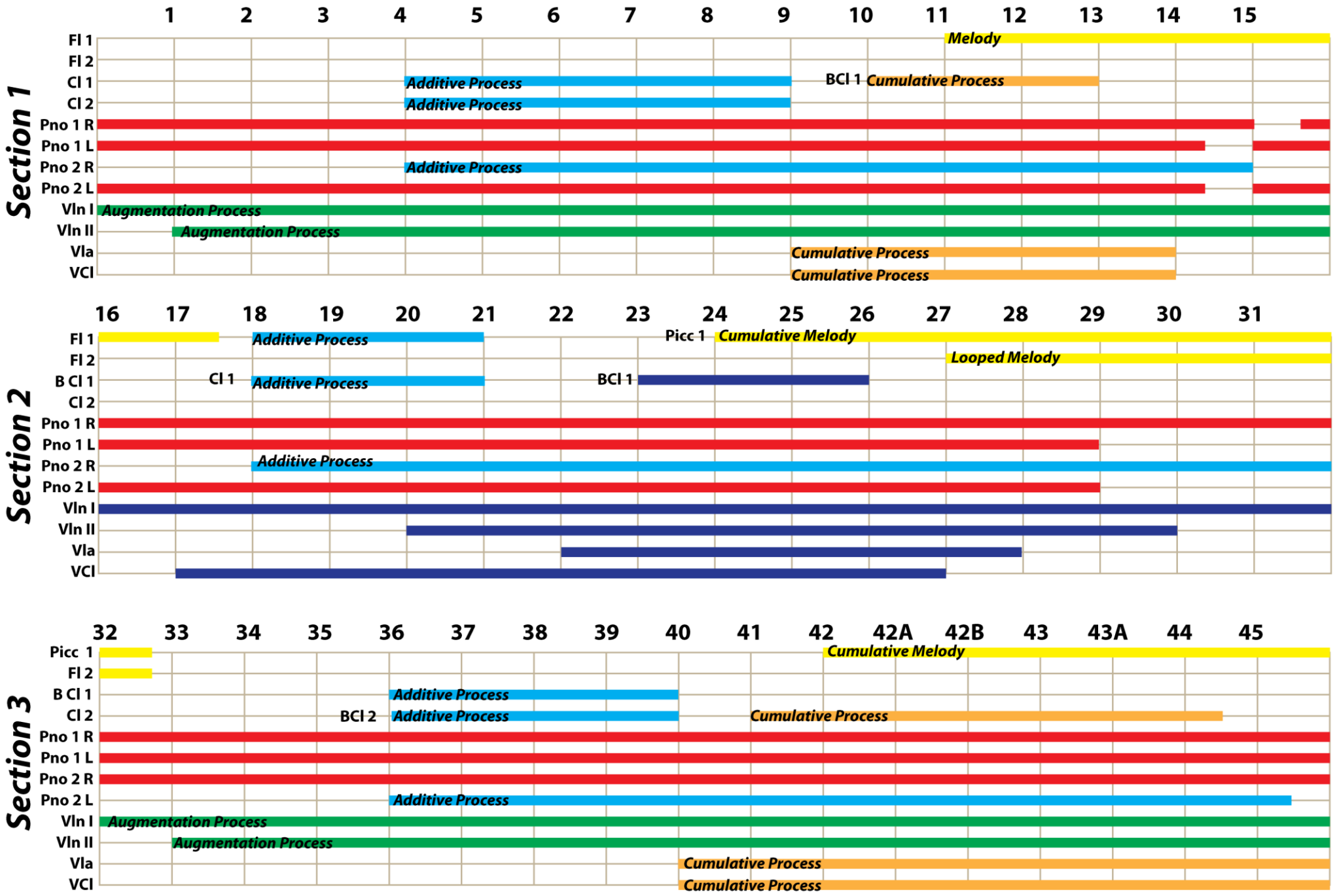
Cumulative Process

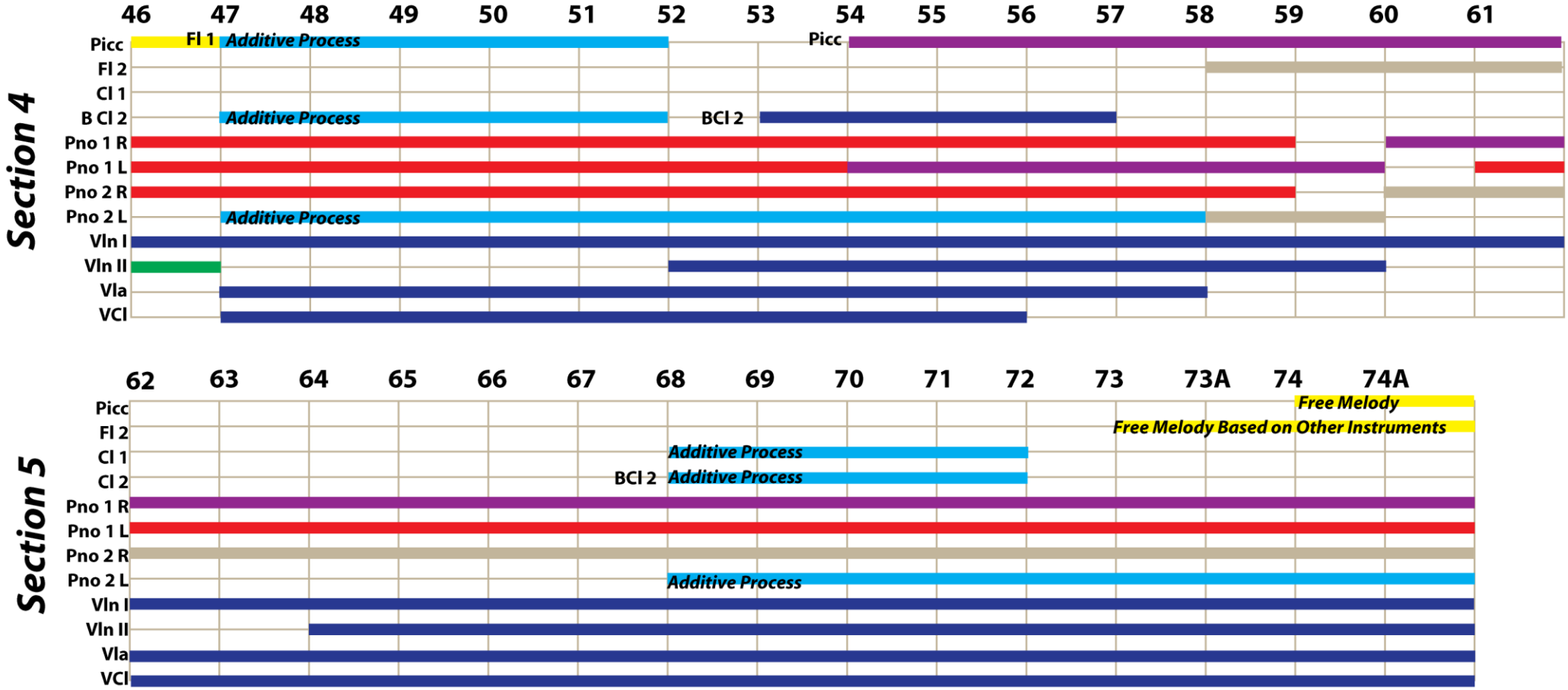
Cumulative Processes in *Eight Lines*

(four bars before the start of Rehearsal Mark 10)



Formal Plan of *Eight Lines*





Note: For clarity, all rehearsal marks are shown as the same length, but in reality they vary between 2 and 12 bars in length

Harmony:

- *Vermont Counterpoint* (1982)
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlRdZu9oM7o