VIDEO GAME MUSIC ANALYSIS

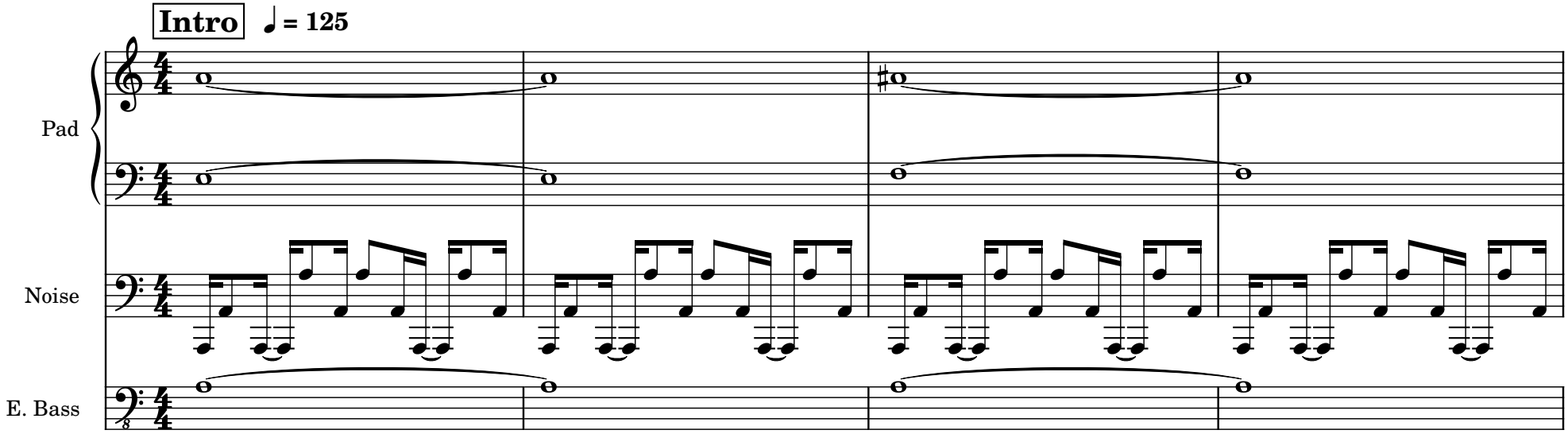
- For Educational Use Only -

Kefka's Tower

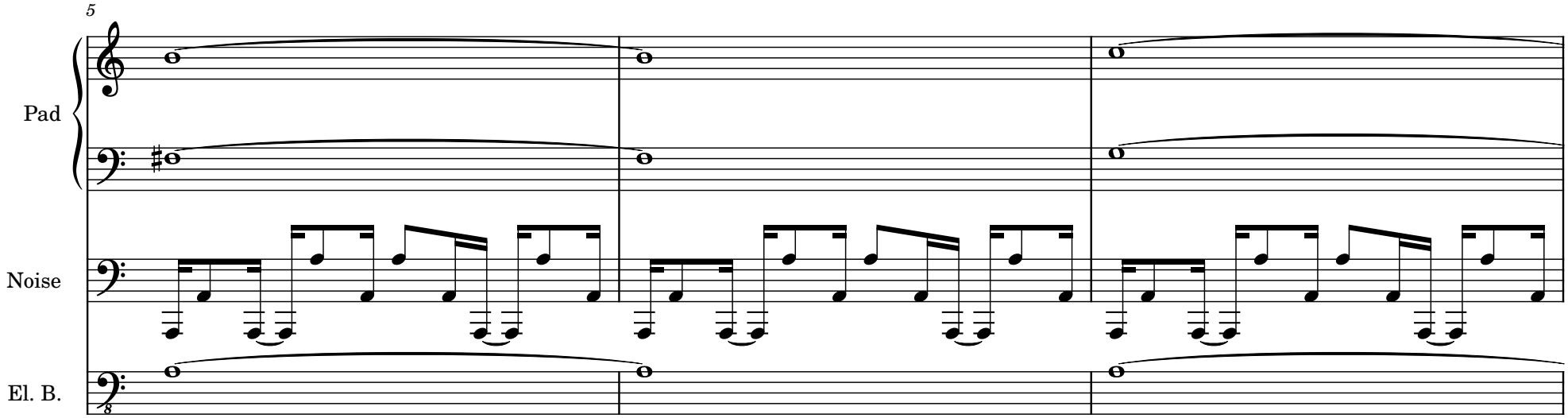
from

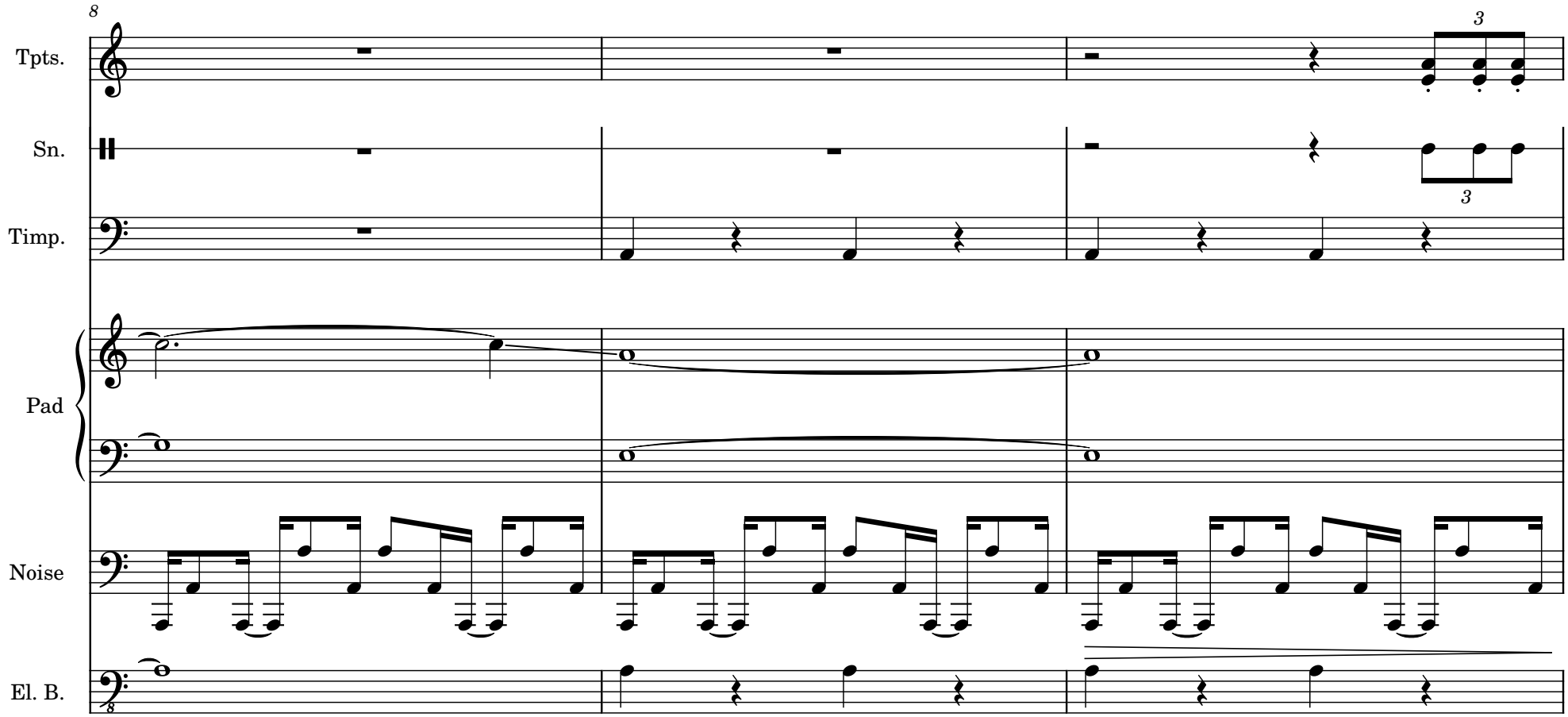
Final Fantasy VI

Composed by Nobuo Uematsu
Transcription/Analysis by Seventh Sam
www.seventhsam.com



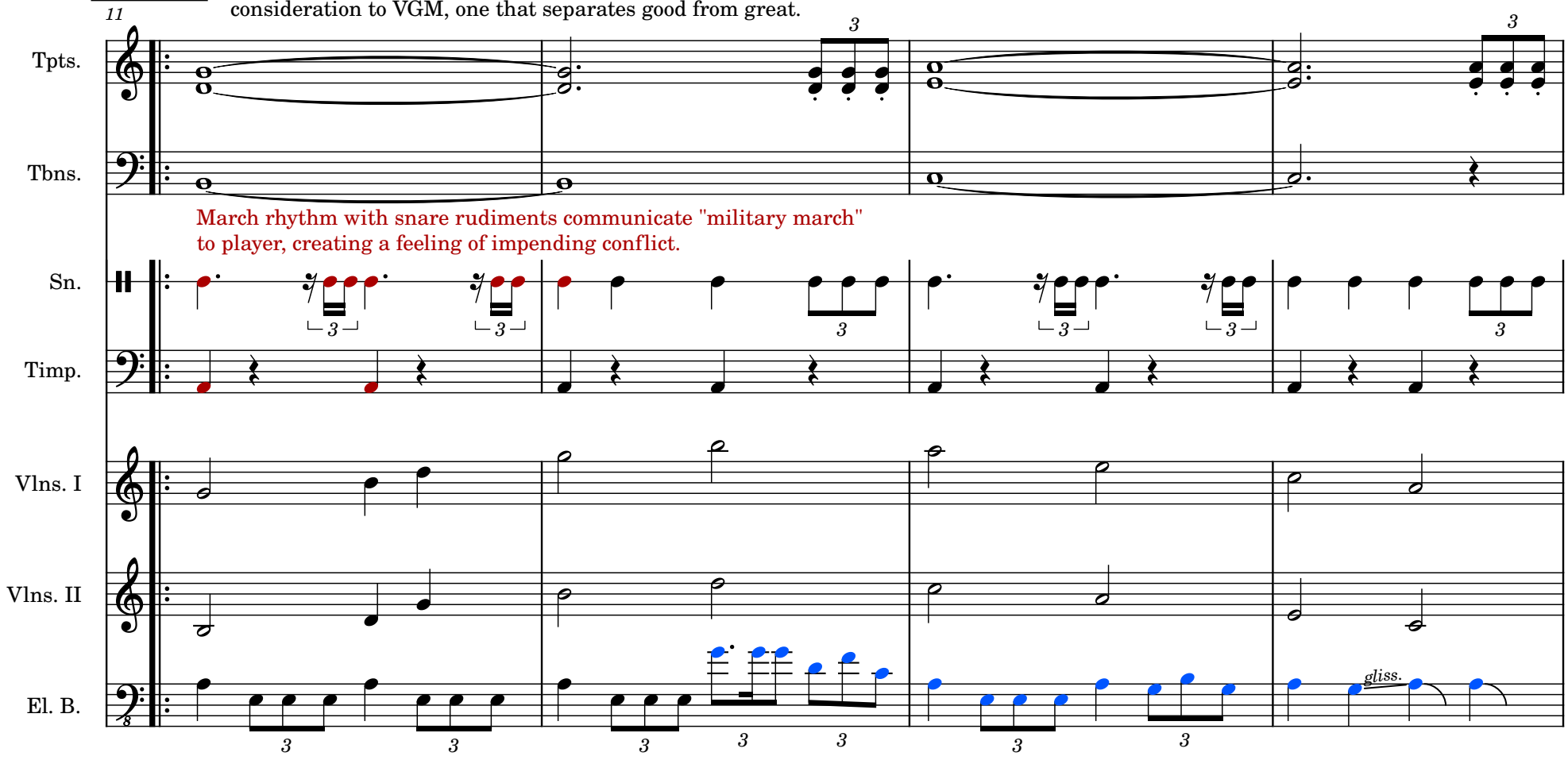
Synth heavy texture contrasts with the mainly orchestral timbre of the OST, making this level special (it is the final dungeon). The chaotic, rising tension from the open harmony and syncopated rhythm characterize madness of Kefka without leaning too far into cliche.


5
Pad
Noise
El. B.

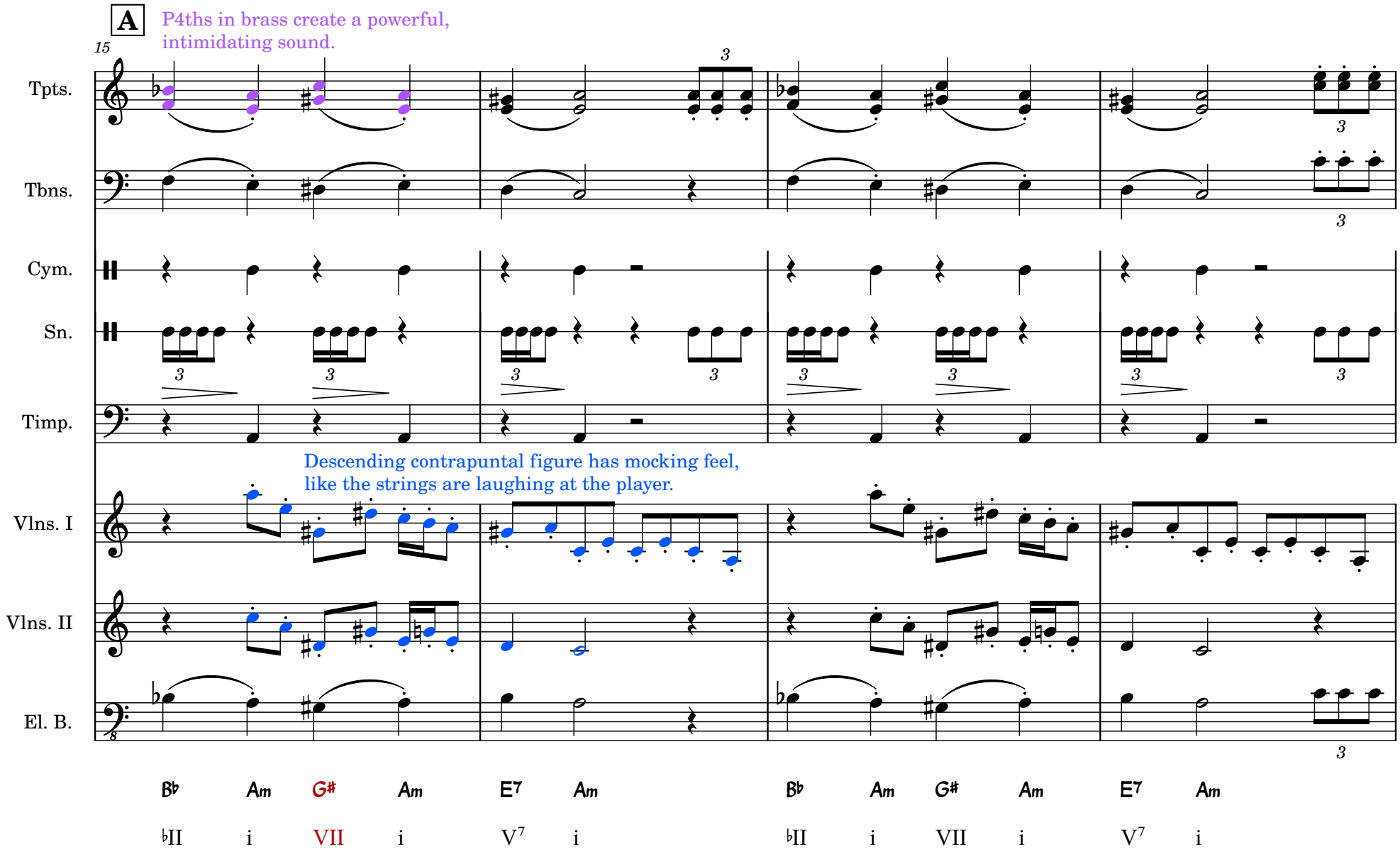

8
Tpts.
3
Sn.
3
Timp.
Pad
Noise
El. B.
8

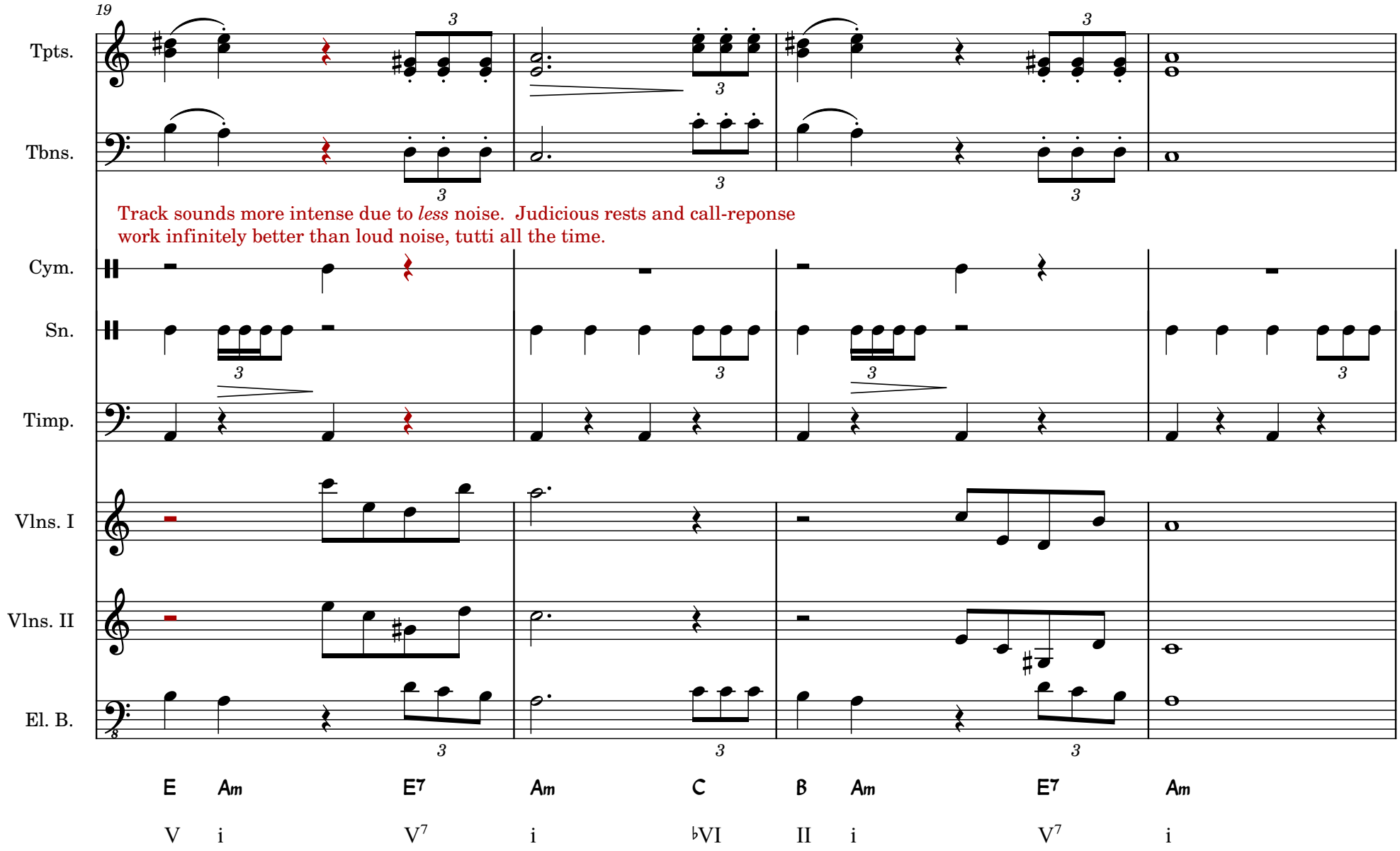
Bridge

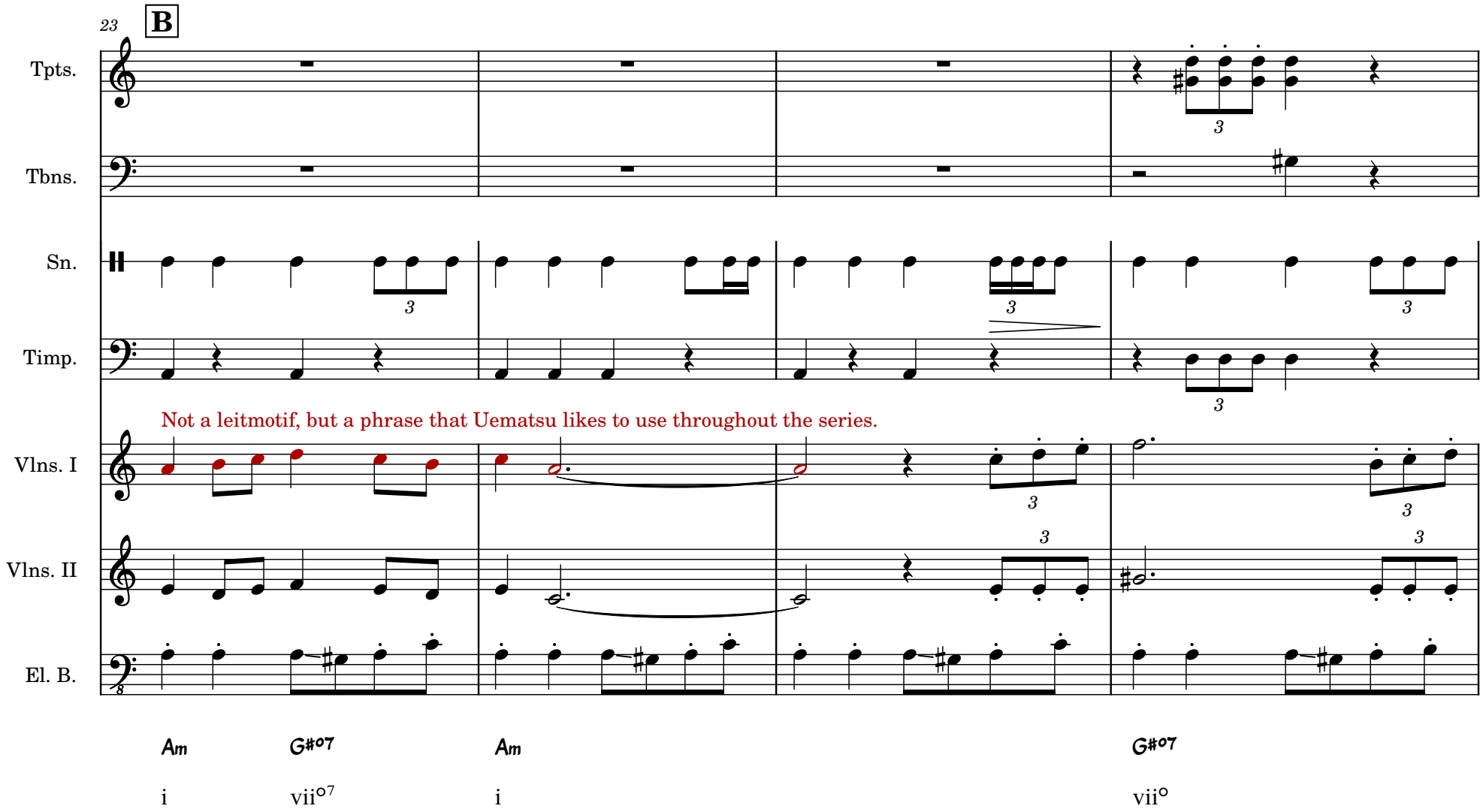
This 4 measure bridge is *very* similar to the four measure bridge right before the end of the track (repeat line). This makes for a very well-crafted, seamless loop since a) the player has already heard this material and b) the last four measures could *start* the track. The listener remains unaware of where the start and stop begins, and the loop is all the better for it. This is a specific consideration to VGM, one that separates good from great.

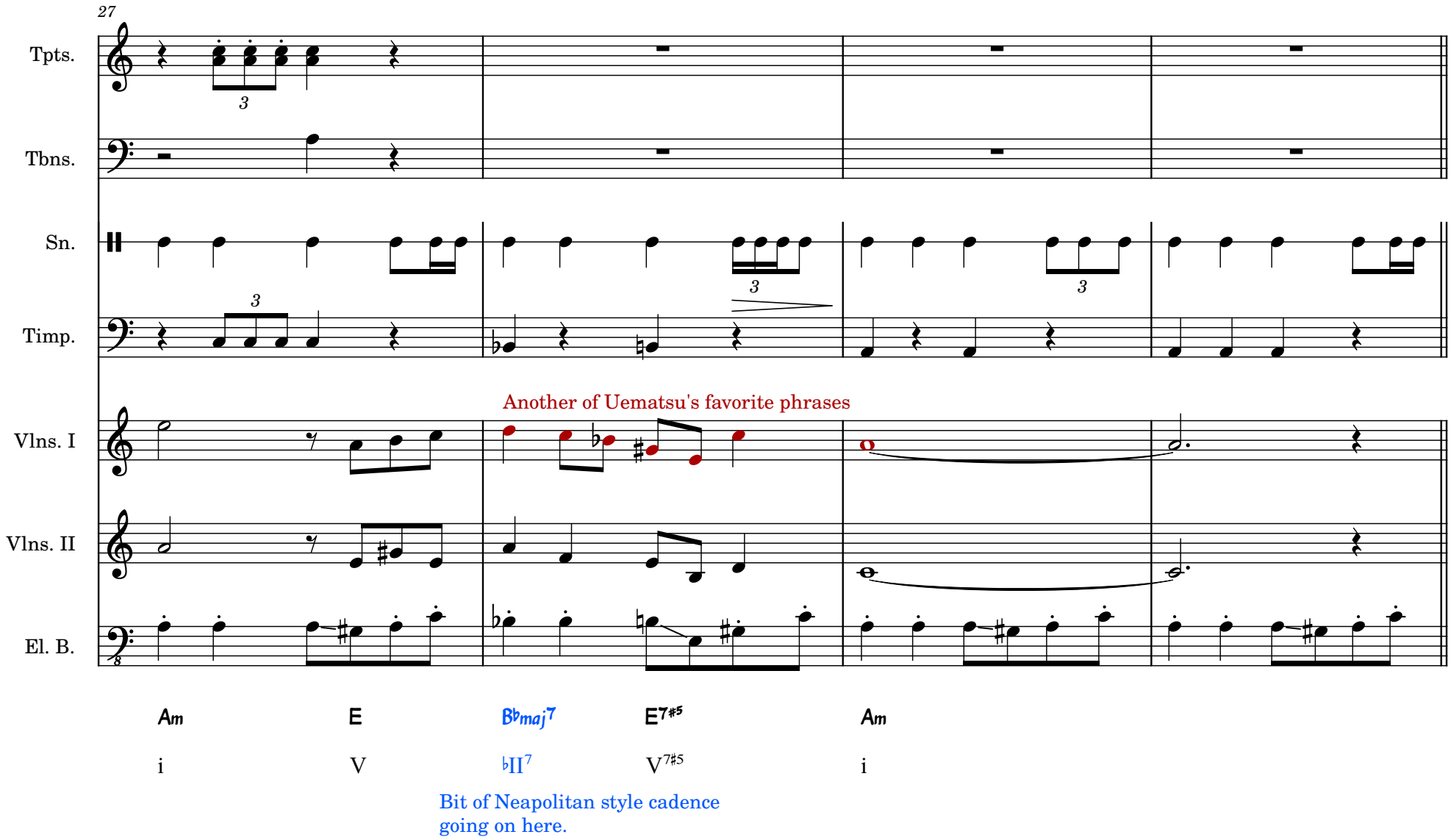


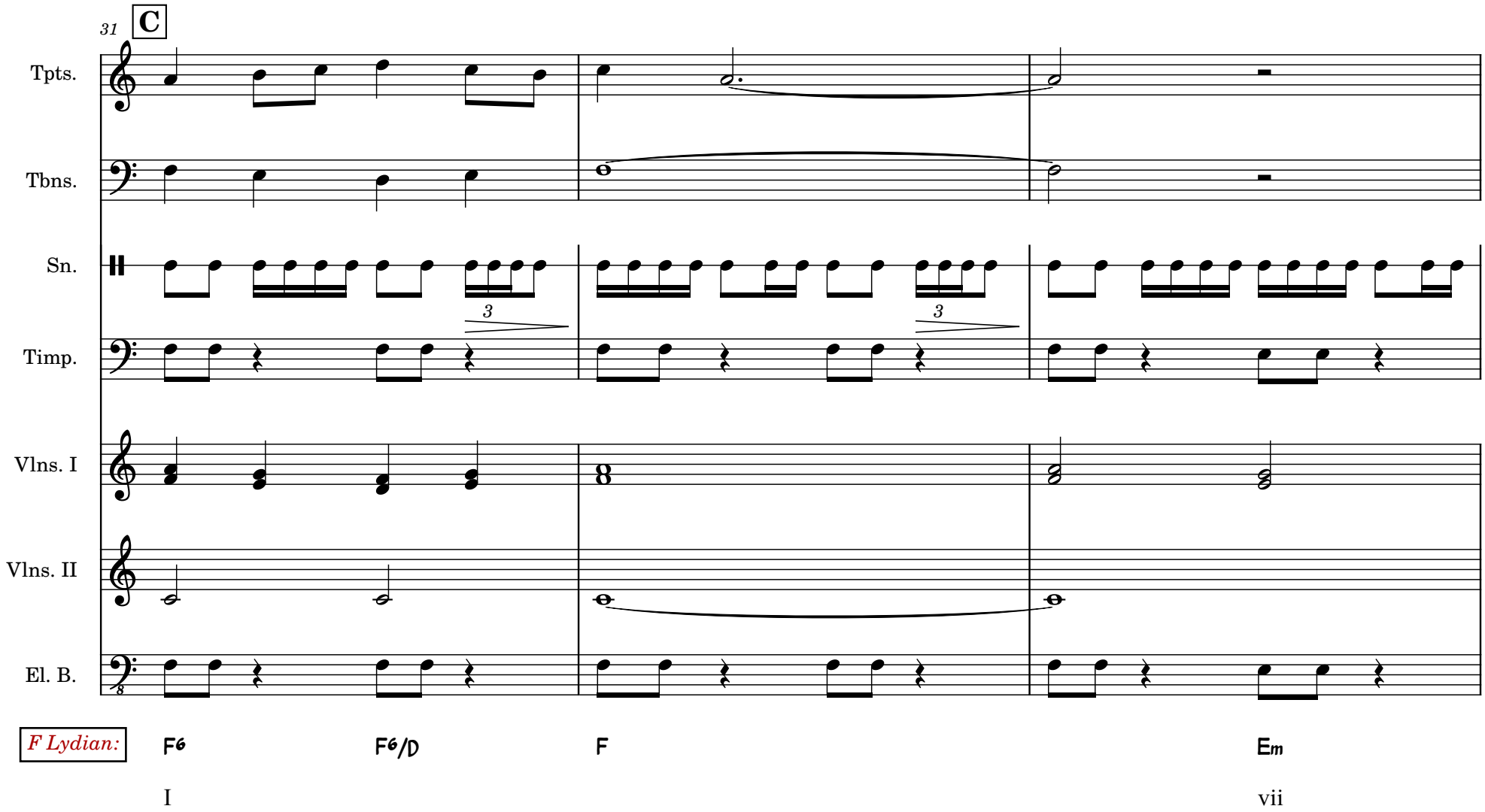
Uematsu writes some amazing bass lines. It's a fantastic choice born of limitation - not enough voices for cello + DB. Instead, he injects the track with a punchy groove that gives it attitude (and memorability)


A
P4ths in brass create a powerful, intimidating sound.
15
Tpts.
Tbns.
Cym.
Sn.
Timp.
Descending contrapuntal figure has mocking feel, like the strings are laughing at the player.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
El. B.
B♭ Am G♯ Am E7 Am
B♭ Am G♯ Am E7 Am
♭II i VII i V7 i
♭II i VII i V7 i
Replacing usual leading tone diminished with full major triad creates punchy, sinister chromaticism.

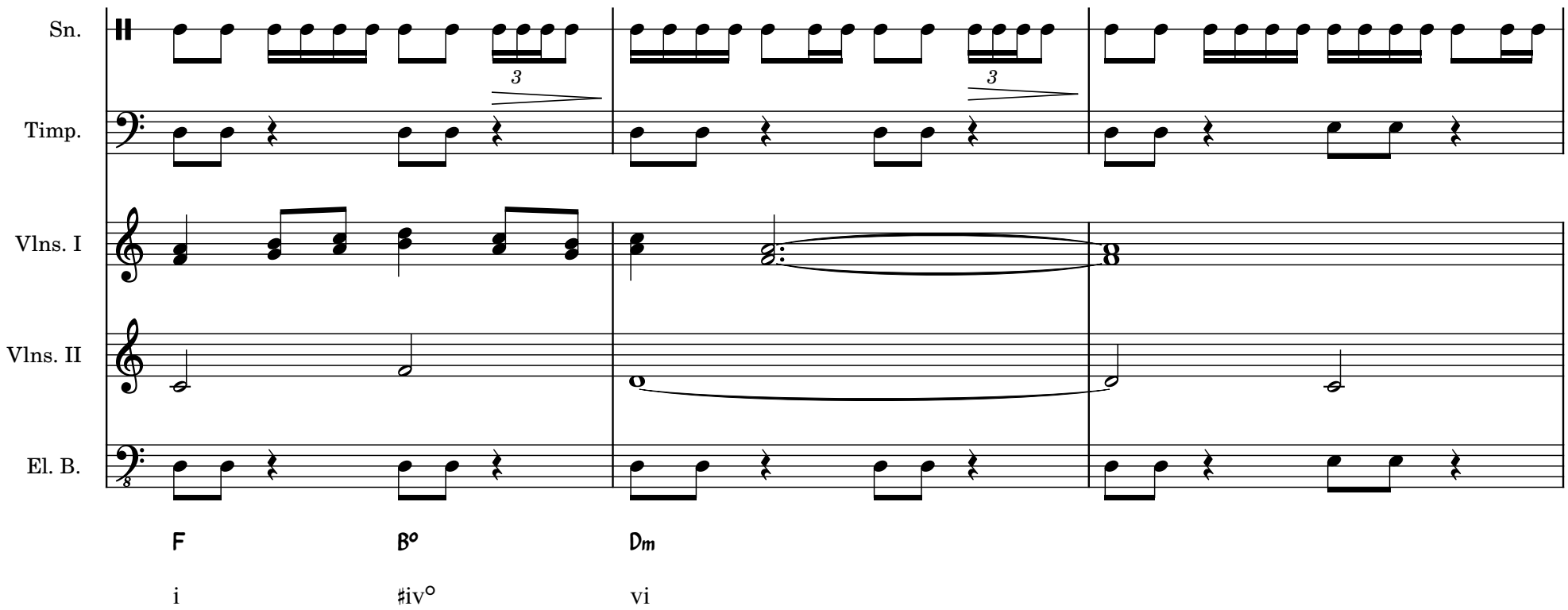

19
Tpts.
Tbns.
Track sounds more intense due to *less* noise. Judicious rests and call-reponse work infinitely better than loud noise, tutti all the time.
Cym.
Sn.
Timp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
El. B.
E Am E7 Am C B Am E7 Am
V i V7 i ♭VI II i V7 i

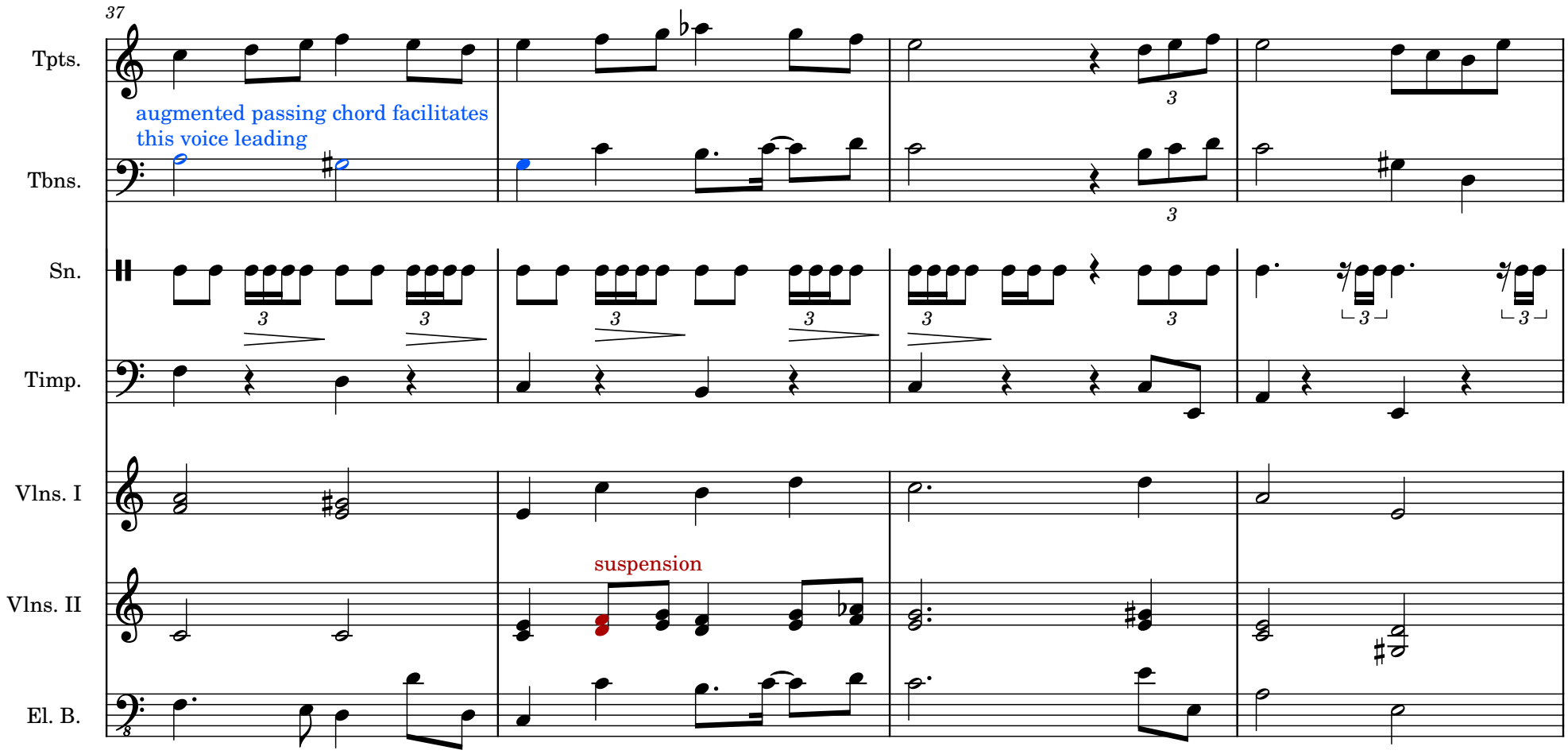

23
B
Tpts.
Tbns.
Sn.
Timp.
Not a leitmotif, but a phrase that Uematsu likes to use throughout the series.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
El. B.
Am
G#07
Am
G#07
i
vii°7
i
vii°


27
Tpts.
Tbns.
Sn.
Timp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
El. B.
Another of Uematsu's favorite phrases
Am
E
B♭maj7
E7♯5
Am
i
V
♭II7
V7♯5
i
Bit of Neapolitan style cadence
going on here.



Shift to parallel Lydian, a common technique
Uematsu uses to introduce contrast into his tracks.
Creates a "sliver of hope" feel when juxtaposed with the rest of the track,
which is fitting since this is the pre-amble to final battle.

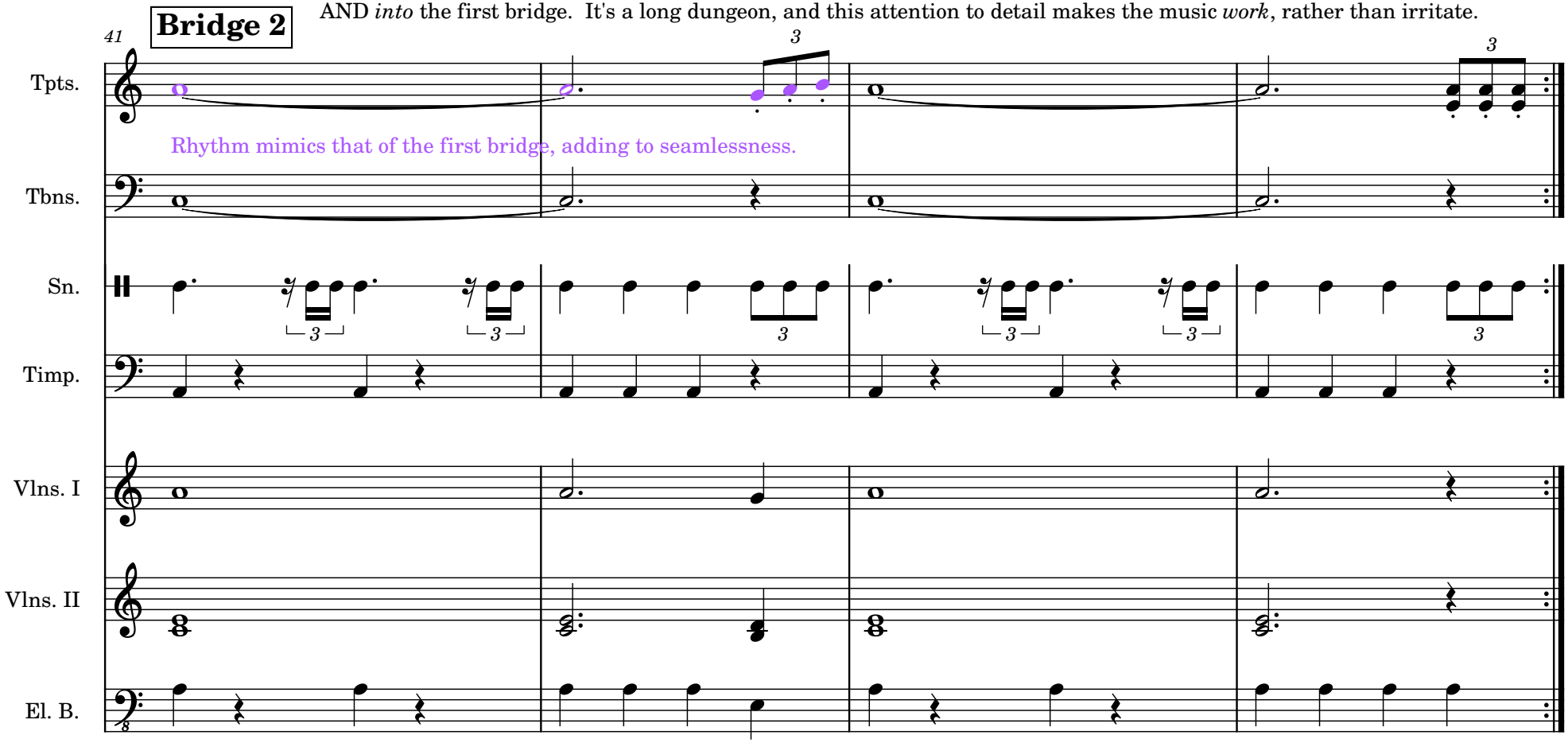

Sn.
Timp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
El. B.
3
3
F
B°
Dm
i
♯iv°
vi



F	**C+**	**C**	**B°7**	**C**	**E7**	**Am**	**E7**
	C+ acts as a passing chord						
I	V^{+}	V		***Key of A:*** ♭VI	V^{7}	i	V^{7}
	Key of C:	I	vii^{o7}	I			

Economical use of pivot chords to modulate back to relative minor and return to tonic key ***well before the loop*** <-- IMPORTANT!

This track is a stellar example of this technique. These four measures flow perfectly *from* the previous measure AND *into* the first bridge. It's a long dungeon, and this attention to detail makes the music *work*, rather than irritate.



Am — G — Am

i — ♭VII — i

Subtonic harmony is re-iterated before loop point, making it harder for listener to tell where the repeat actually is.