VIDEO GAME MUSIC ANALYSIS

- For Educational Use Only -

Gerudo Valley

from The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

Composed by Koji Kondo
Transcription/Analysis by Seventh Sam
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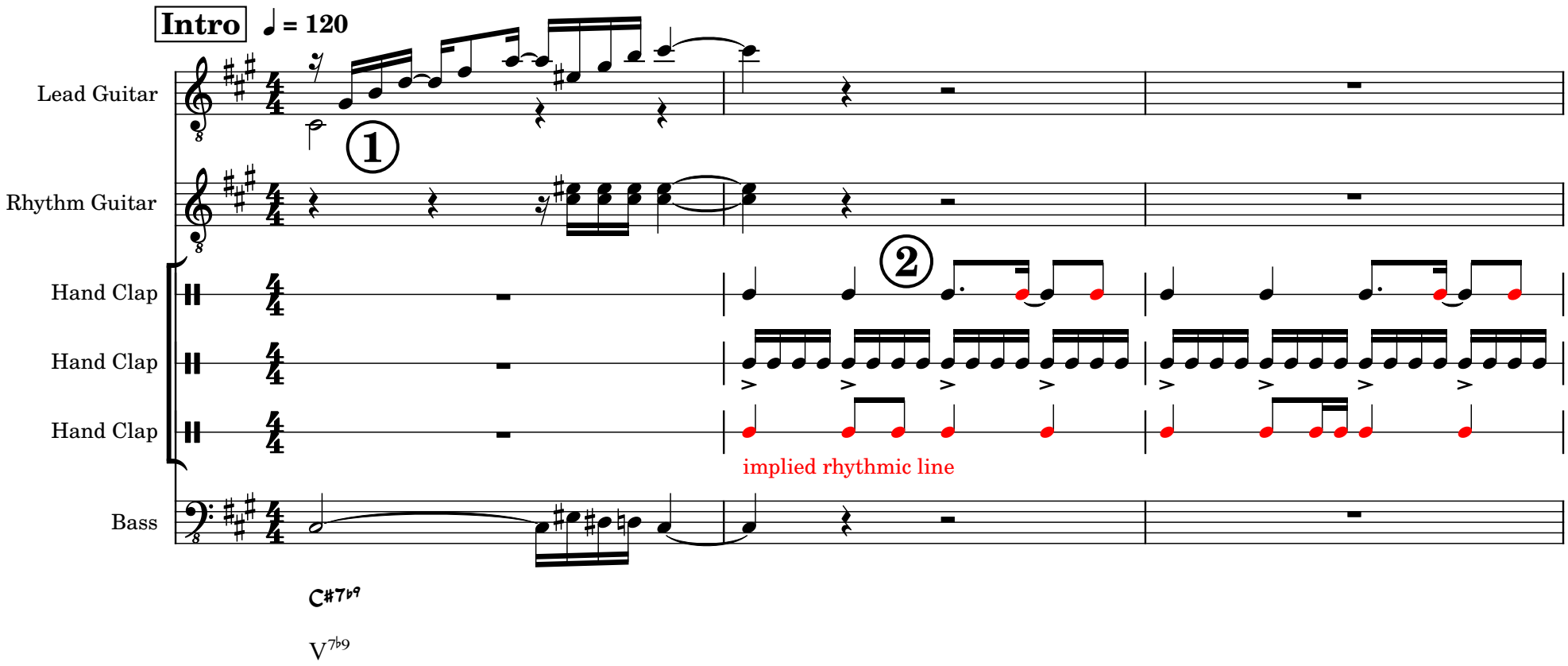
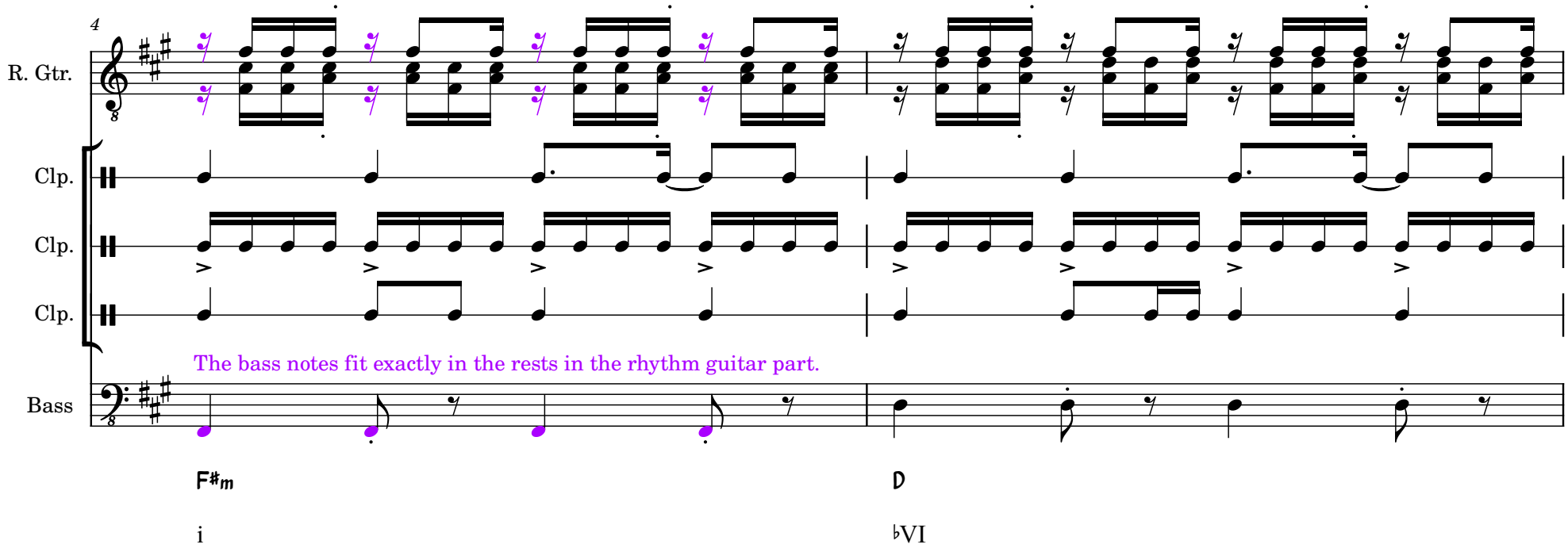


(1) - This first measure, consisting of an intriguing melodic flourish on a guitar, serves a functional purpose beyond that of an introduction: it works as a "transition" between scenes. Since this part of the music does not loop, it means that the player will only hear it when they *first enter* Gerudo Valley. This built-in cue then serves to aurally transport the player into Gerudo Valley: the guitar gets their attention, the claps get their head bobbing, and the enjoyment commences :-)

(2) - Kondo does a few very clever things with the percussive rhythm of the track:

a) Instead of actual instruments, he uses samples of hand claps that are panned across the stereo stage. This gives the impression of a gathering of people, all clapping along to the instrumentals. This causes the music to sound unmistakably "folk" and musically implies many things about the Gerudo: they're outside of "high civilization", they're a tight-knit and small community, they have a distinct culture/tradition, etc.

b) The three rhythmic lines are constructed and accented in such a way that a "composite" line is heard as the main rhythm. To put it another way, you could think of the top staff as the snare, the middle as the hi-hat, and the bottom as the kick...

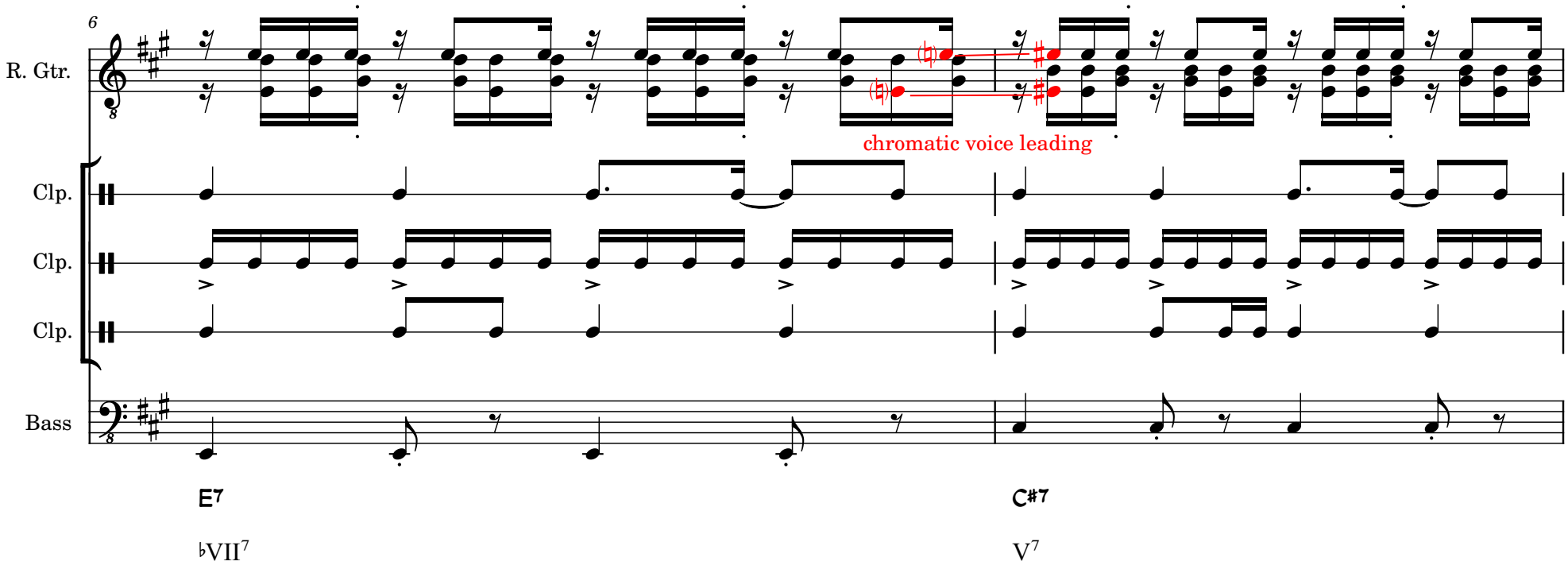


Harmonically speaking, the *entire* track is built around a i -> bVI -> $bVII^7$ -> V^7 progression. Why?

- The progression is a slightly modified version of the Andalusian Cadence (i -> bVII -> bVI -> V). This cadence brings the listener's ear the unmistakable sound of Spanish folk music, a musical culture Kondo is deliberately borrowing from in order to set the overall tone for the Gerudo.

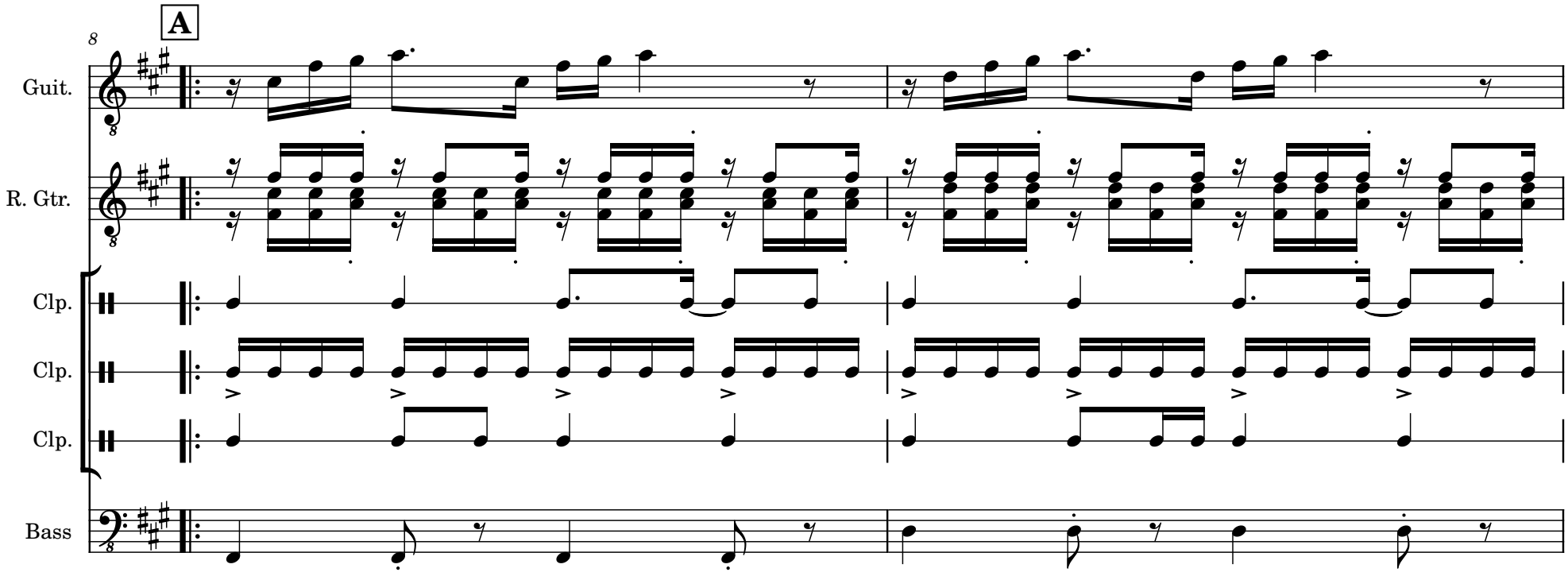
- Since all the chords are in root position, the bass line moves by alternating leaps; this has a very satisfying "circular" sound that allows the progression to repeat itself for a long time without getting stale.

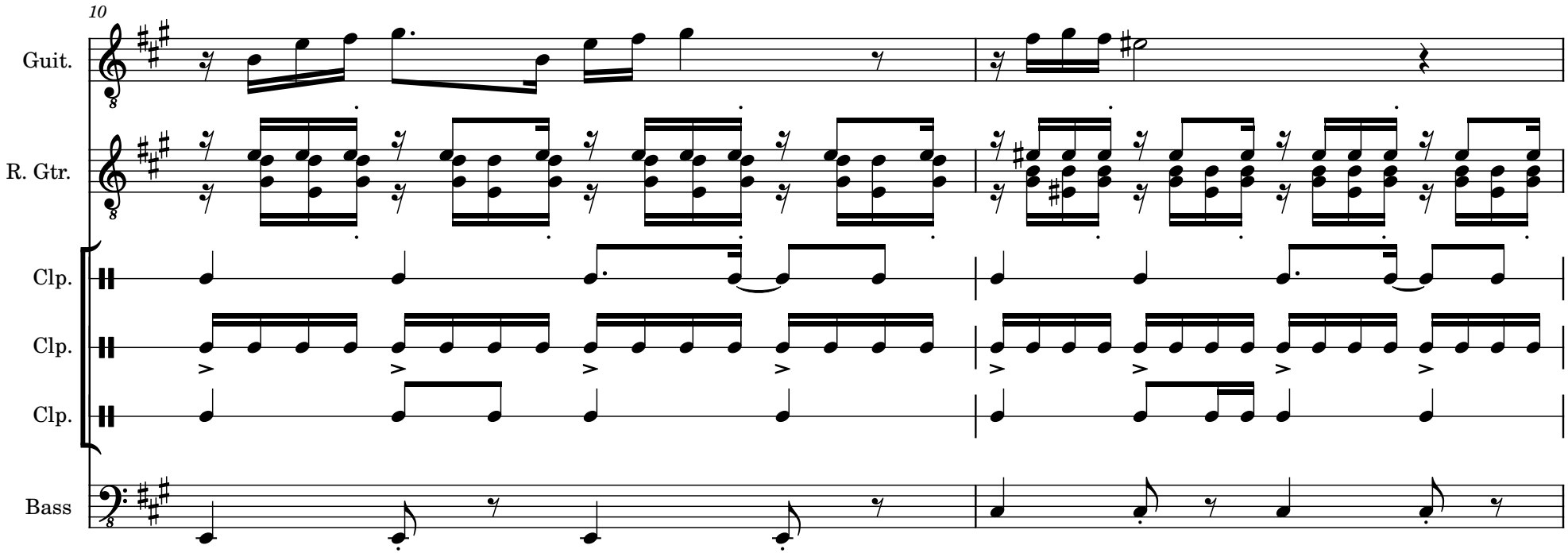
- The static, unchanging nature of the harmony allows for the melody to take center stage and meander about...kind of like the player wandering around the desert, looking for adventure!

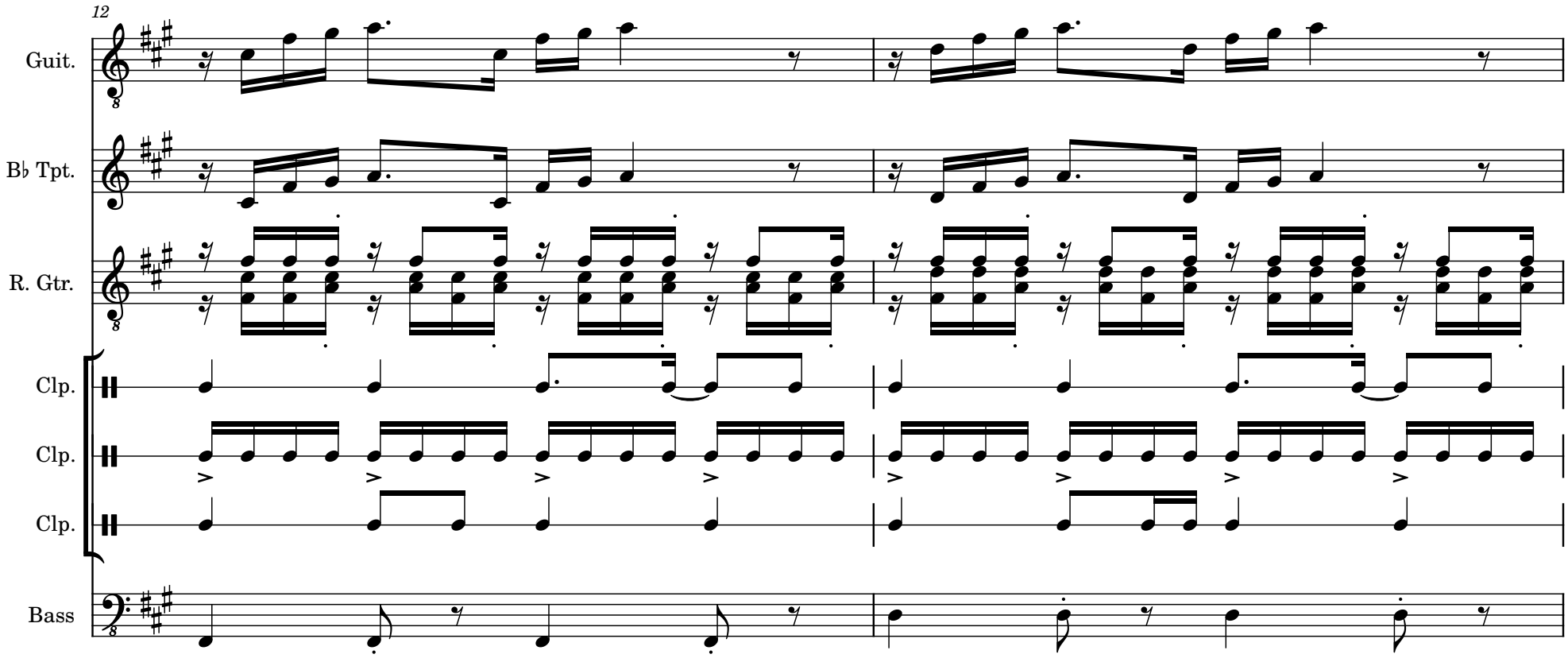


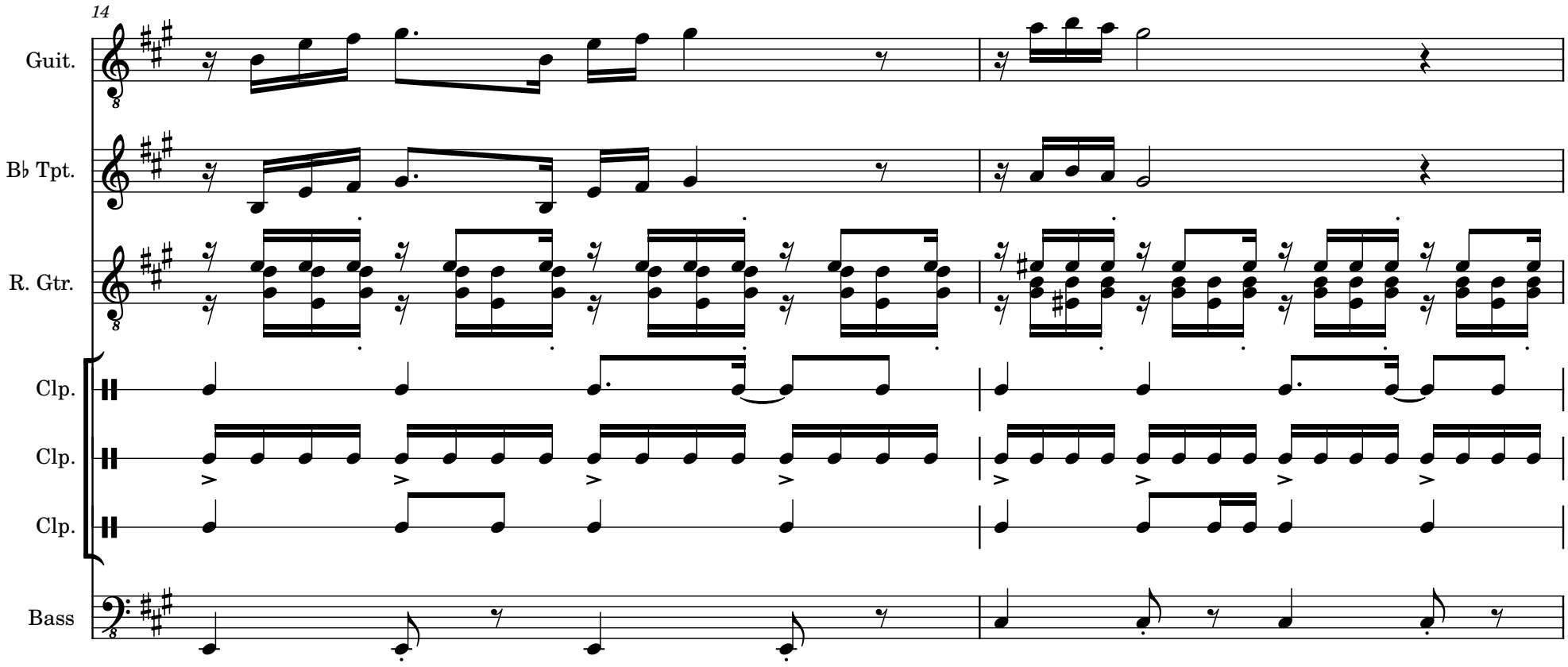
About the instrumentation...

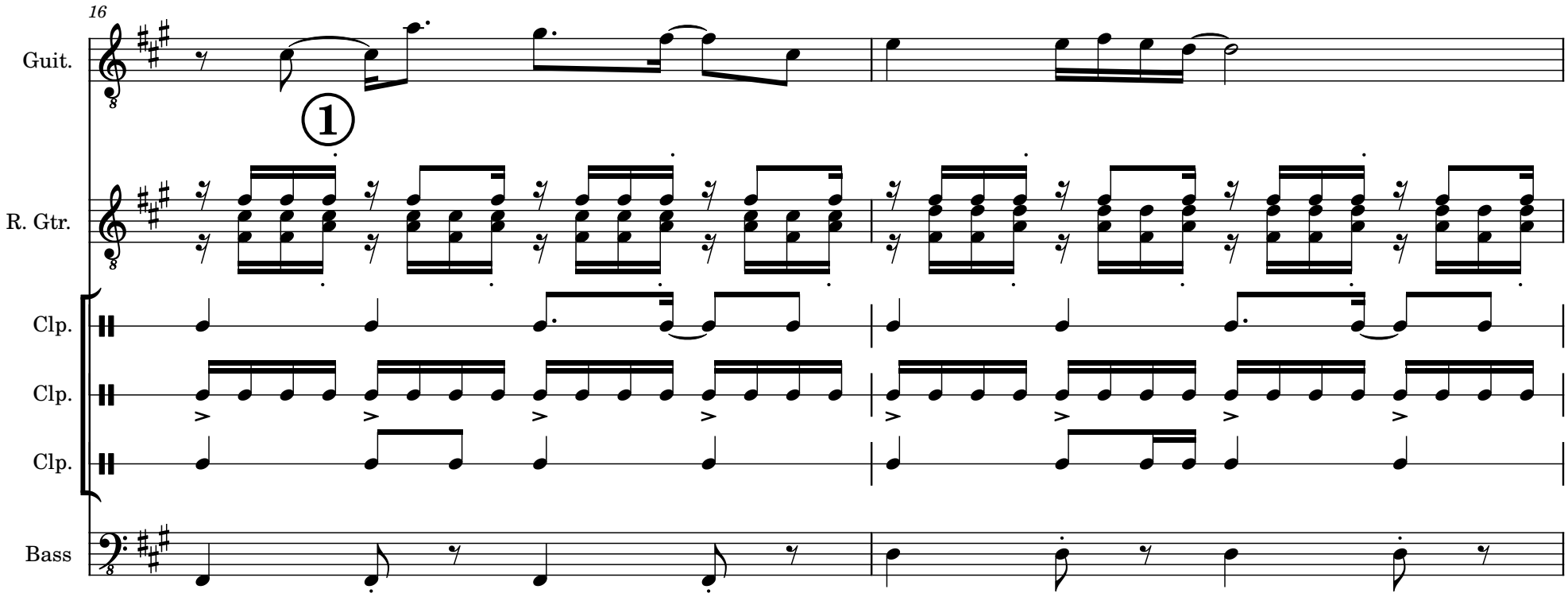
Every instrument (well, the samples of the instruments, to be precise) is chosen to evoke the sound of Spanish folk music. Of course, there is plenty more to that musical culture than guitar strumming and trumpets, but Kondo is painting with a pretty broad brush in this track. Of primary importance, then, is that this track sounds much, *much* different than the sweeping, symphonic textures of the rest of the soundtrack; this sets the Gerudo apart and carves a distinct territory for them in the world of the game.


A
8
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass


10
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass


12
Guit.
B♭ Tpt.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass


14
Guit.
B♭ Tpt.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass



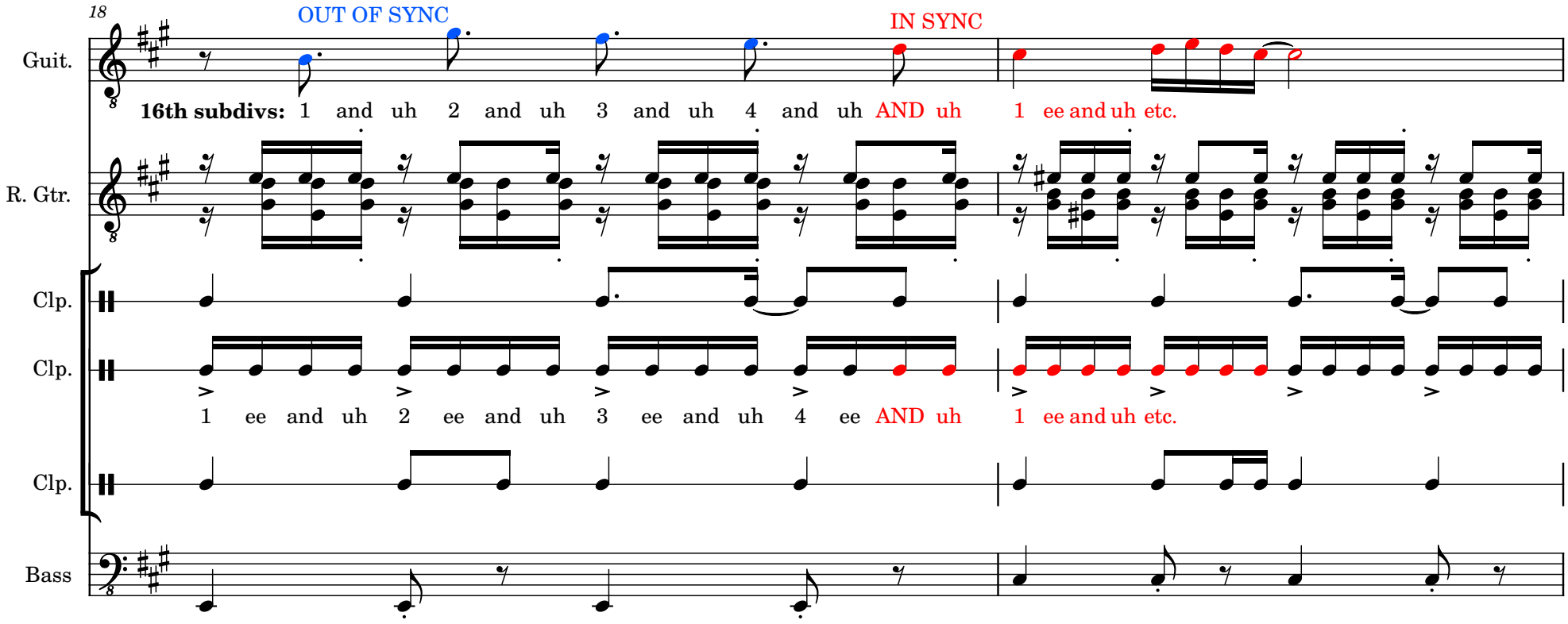
(1) There's a specific kind of rhythmic effect going on here that I quite enjoy:

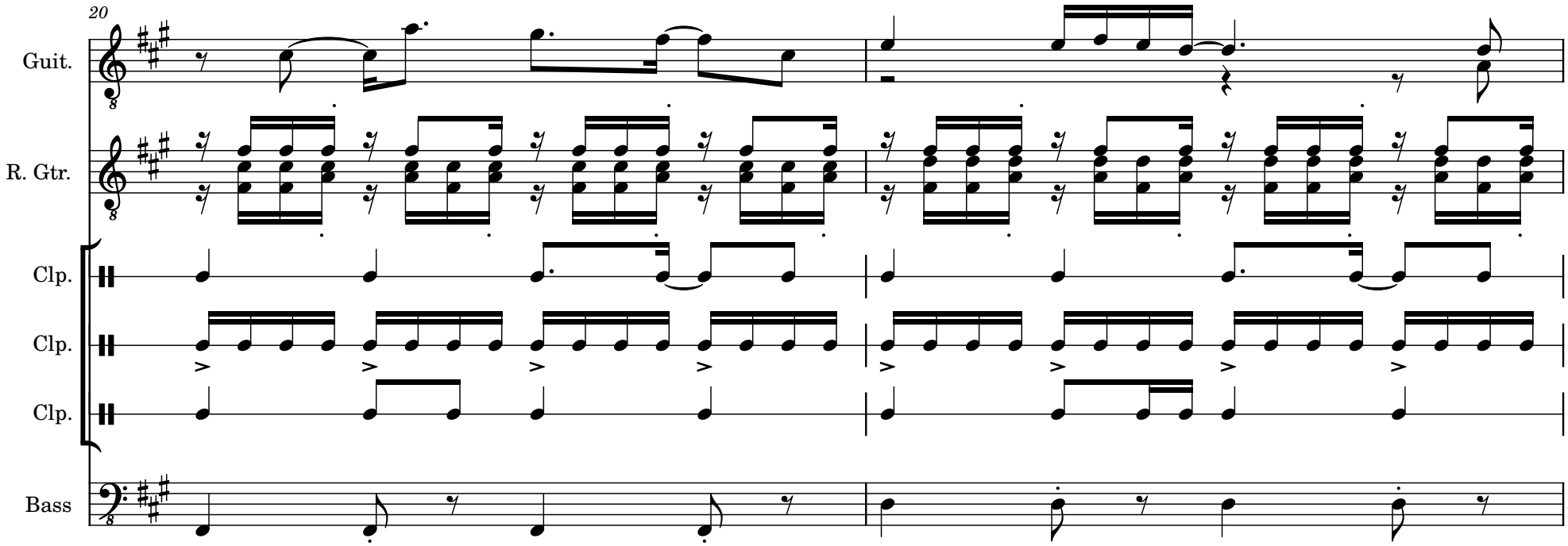
This phrase is clearly syncopated, but the *way* it's syncopated creates a compelling push-pull effect. The first measure (mm. 16) starts on the first downbeat and then groups each pulse by 16th subdivisions until the final downbeat. This final downbeat *snaps* the melody back into sync with the 4/4 pulse of the rest of the elements, as heard in the second measure (mm. 17).

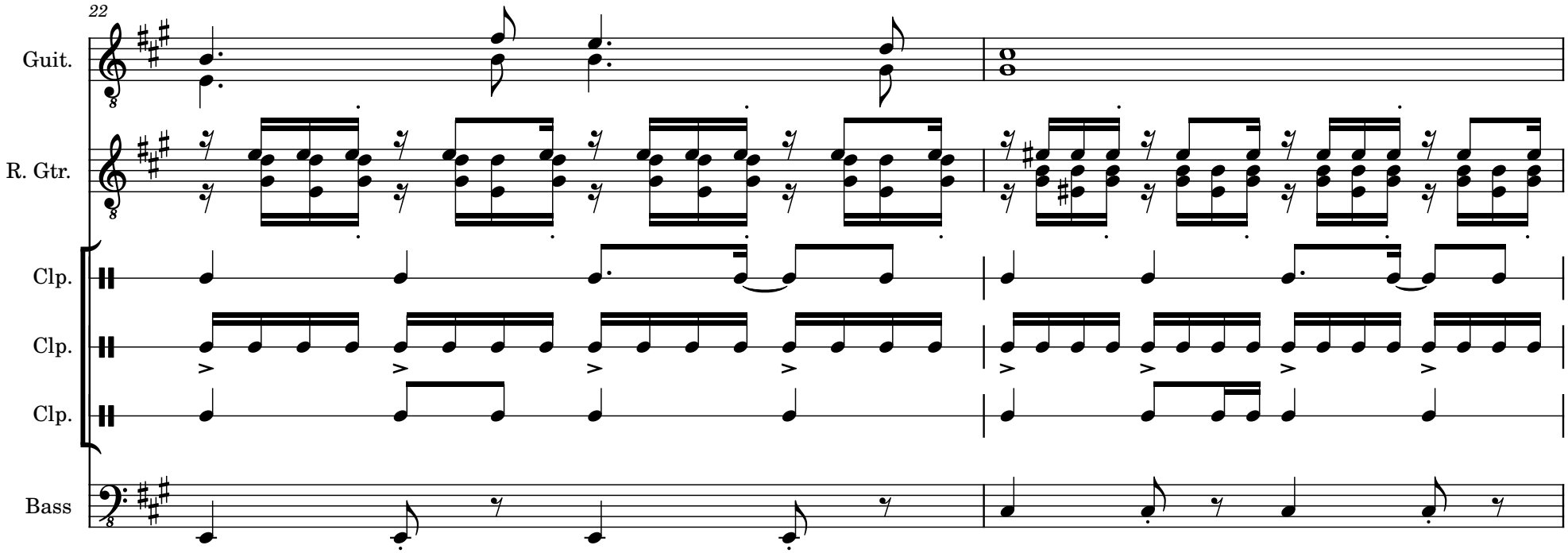
Out of Sync -> In Sync -> Repeat

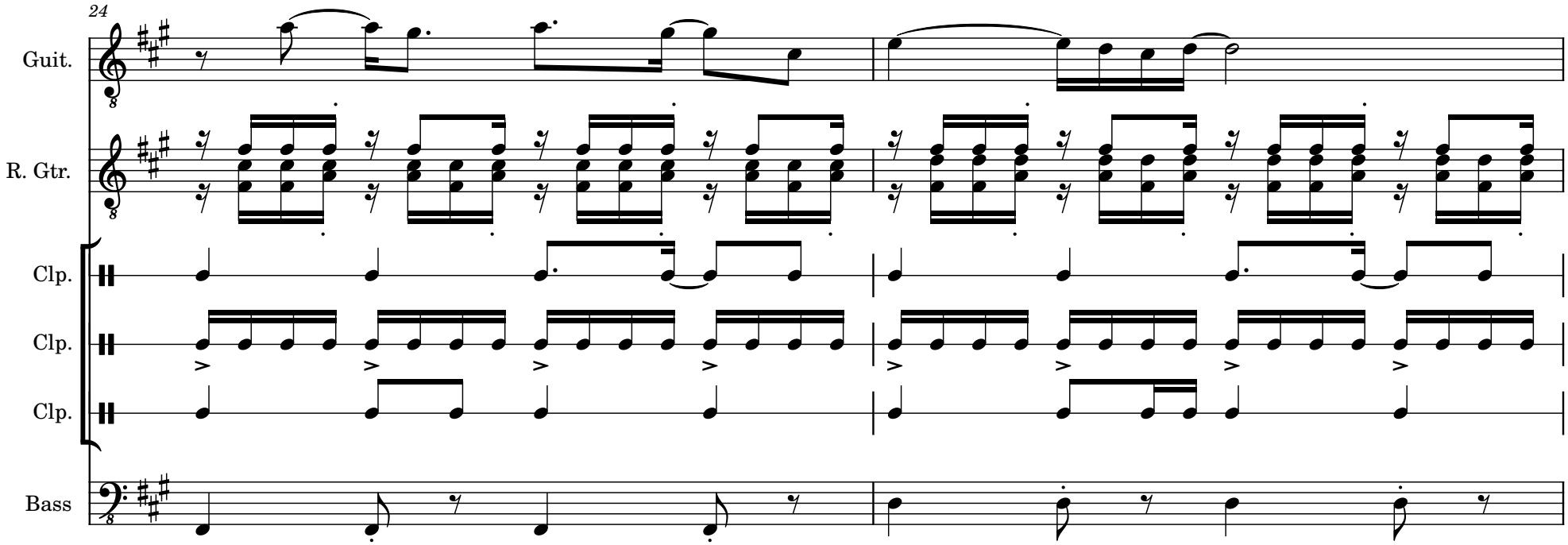
That was quite a nerdy mouthful, so I've changed the notation and coloration on the next page for you to see a visual representation of what I'm going on about.

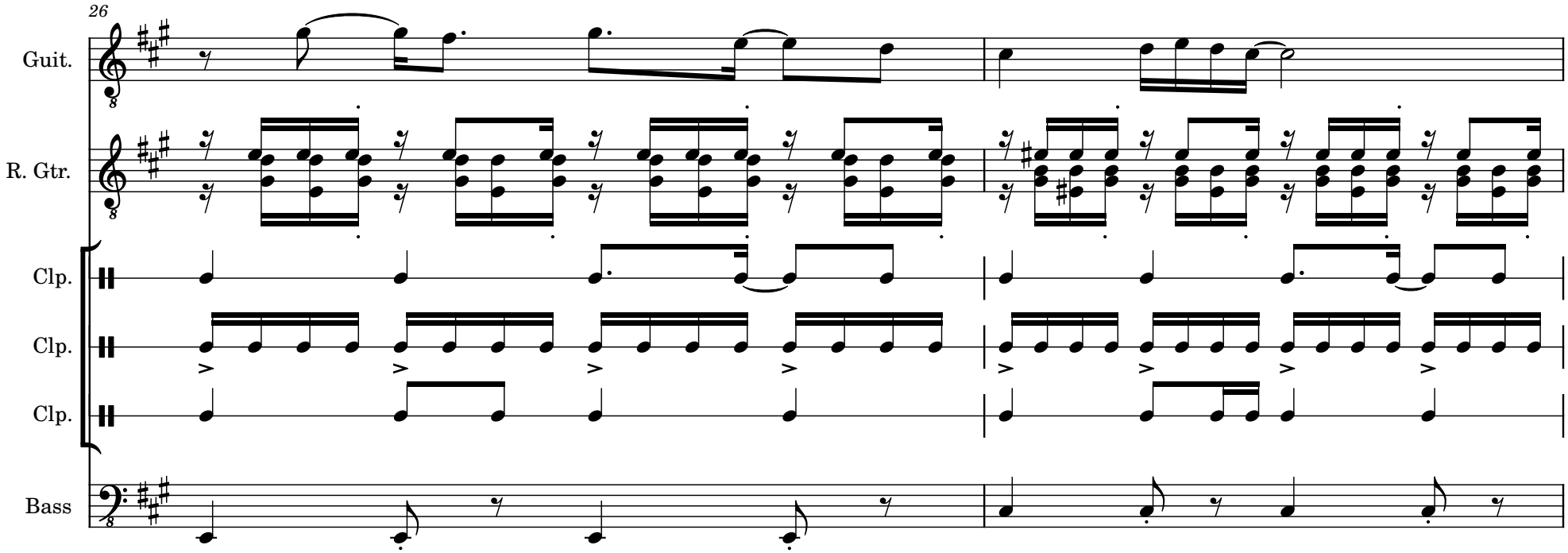
The reason I find this worth noting is because Kondo is using *rhythm* (as opposed to modulation, new chords, new instrumentation, effects, etc.) to keep the music going over all the other, quite static elements.
More tools for the toolbox...

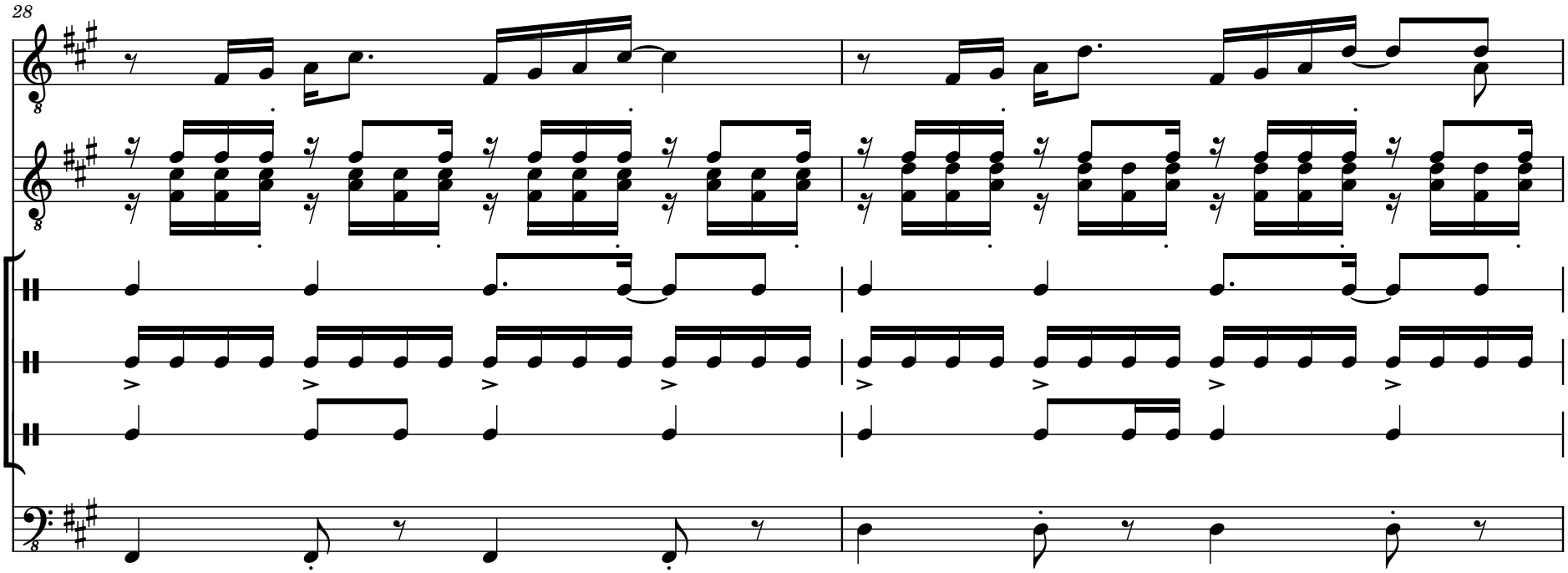

18
OUT OF SYNC
IN SYNC
Guit.
16th subdivs: 1 and uh 2 and uh 3 and uh 4 and uh AND uh 1 ee and uh etc.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
1 ee and uh 2 ee and uh 3 ee and uh 4 ee AND uh 1 ee and uh etc.
Clp.
Bass

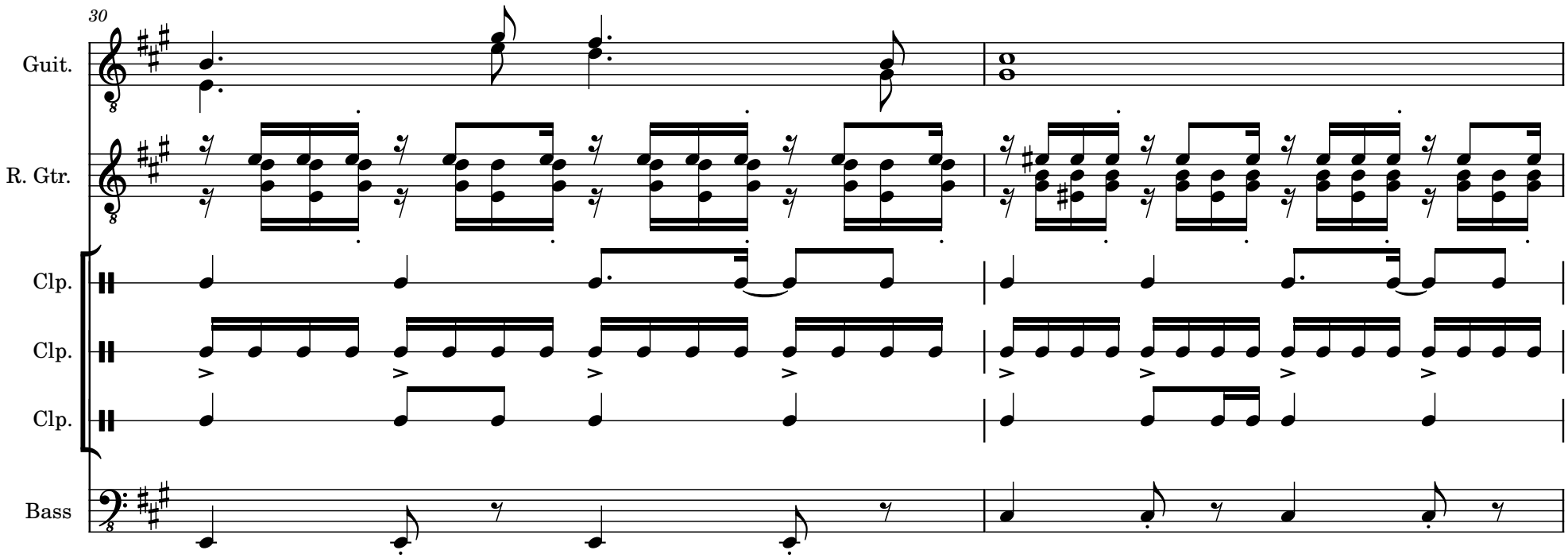

20
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass

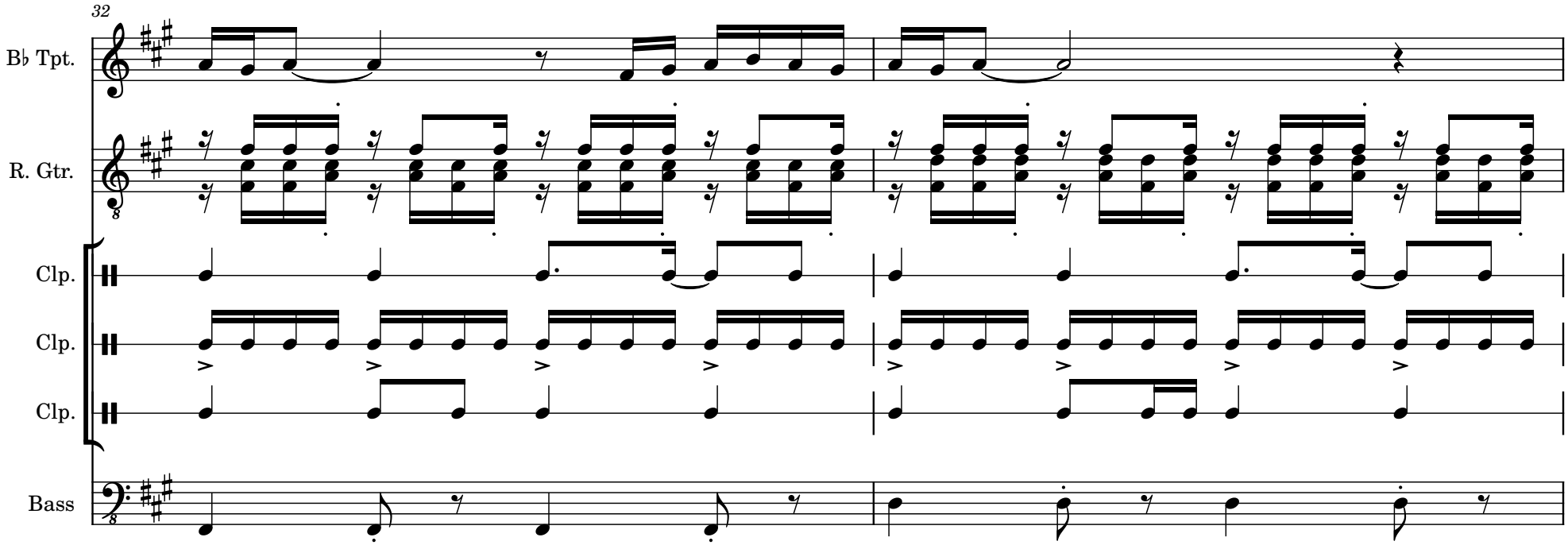

22
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass

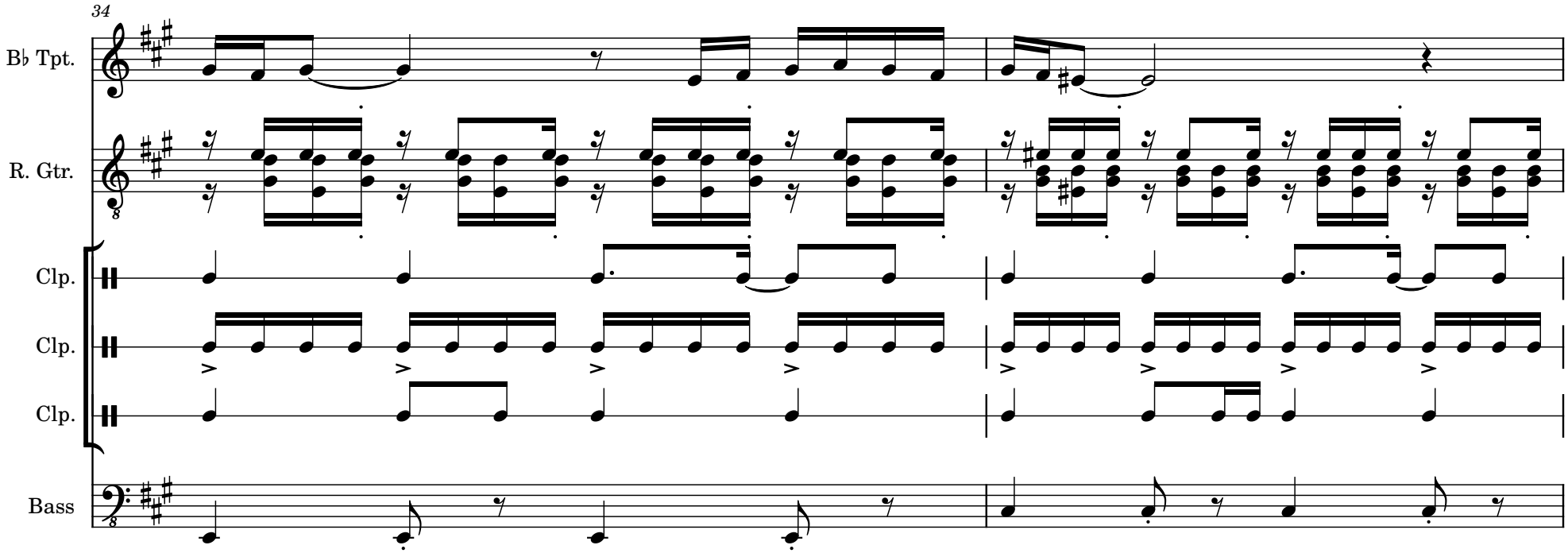

24
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass

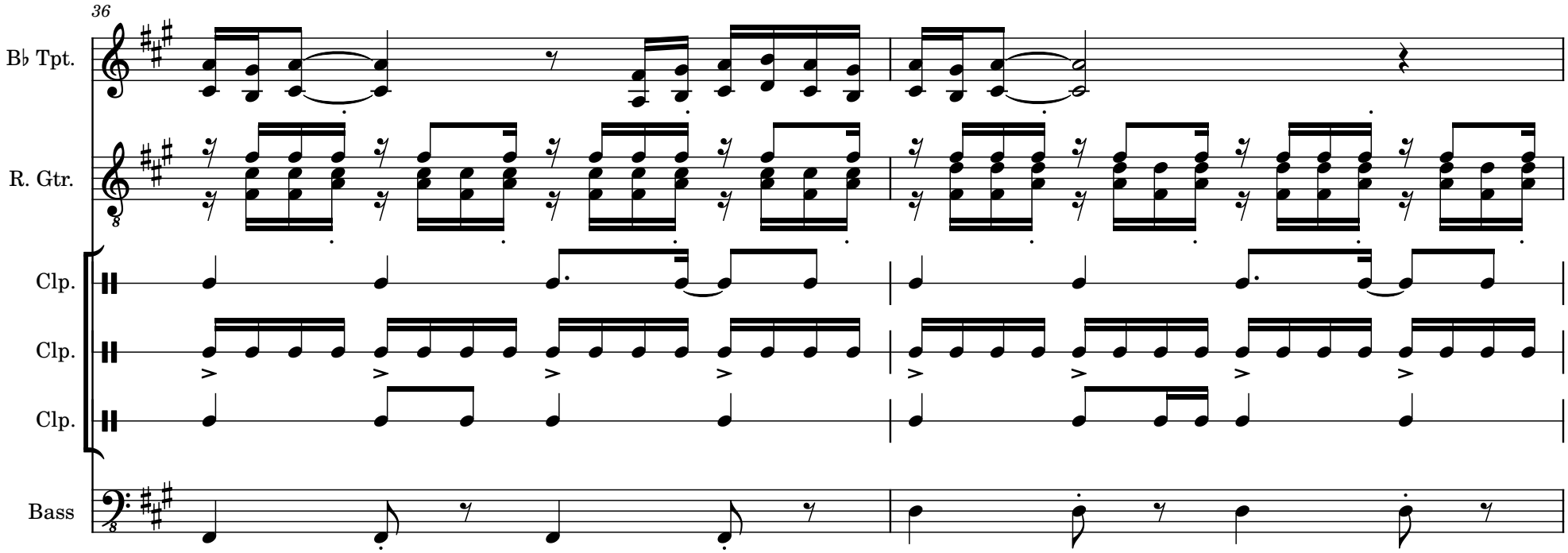

26
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass


28
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass


30
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass

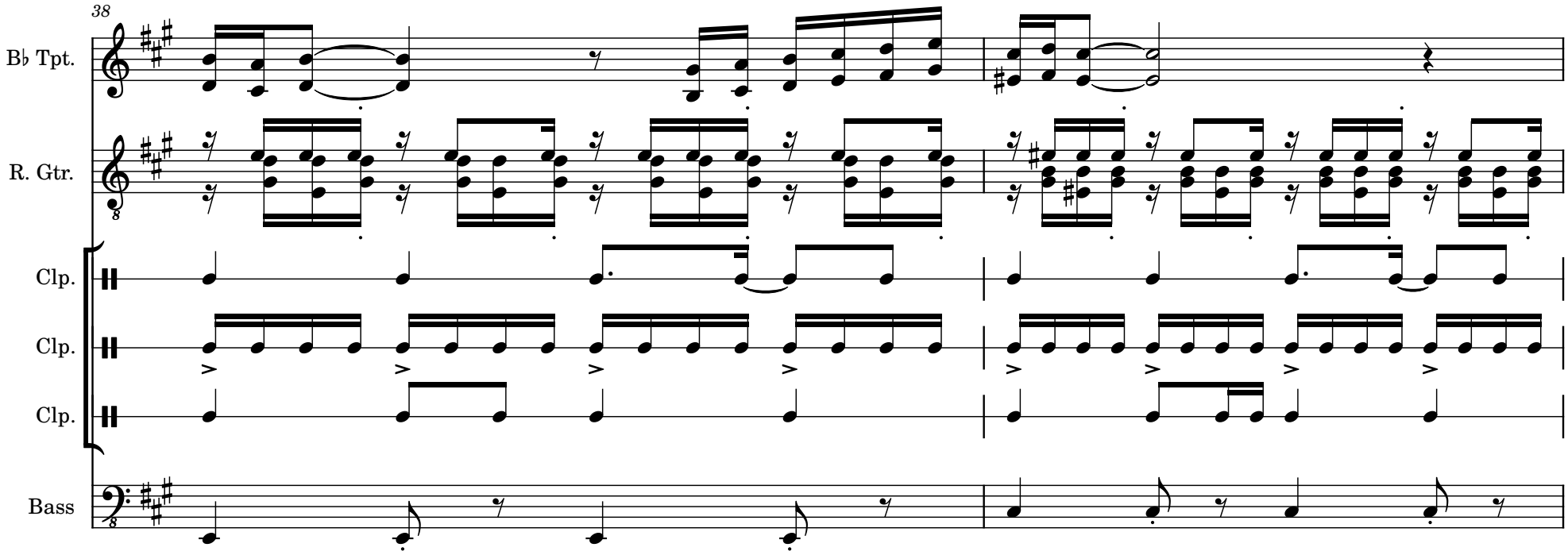

32
B♭ Tpt.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass

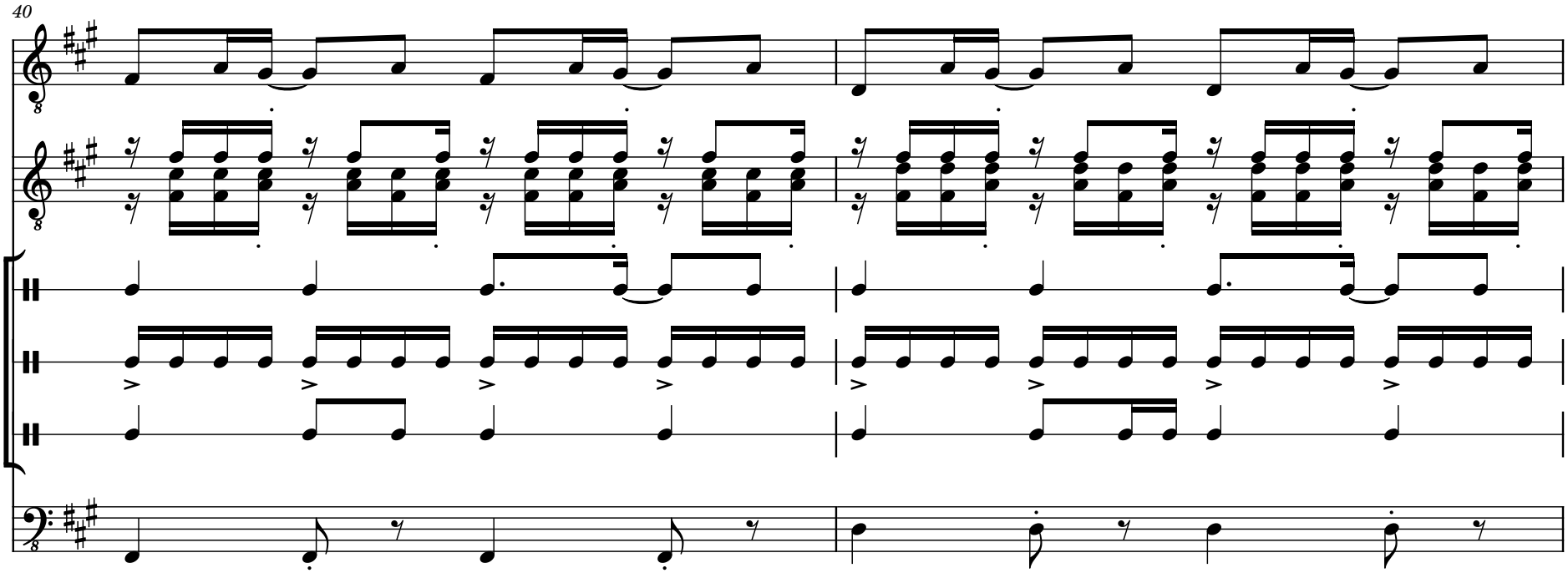

34
B♭ Tpt.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass

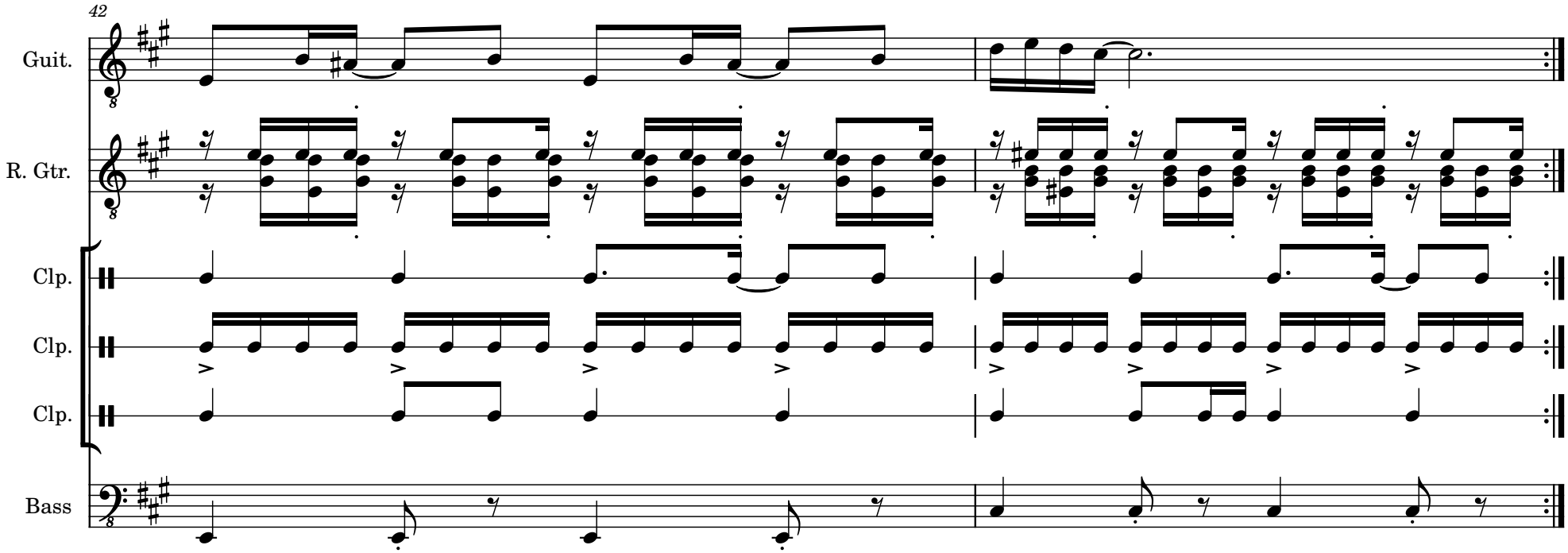


(1) - Doubling the trumpet a 6th below (instead of a 3rd above) reinforces the melody - by adding both harmonic and textural weight - while allowing it to remain the same. The highest pitch is (often) heard as the main line, so a third above would change the melody to one that was, well, a third above...

Also, to my ear, parallel sixths tend to sound more serious, edgy, and dramatic for some reason; all of these qualities go well with the serious and *myst*erious Gerudo...


38
B♭ Tpt.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass


40
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass


42
Guit.
R. Gtr.
Clp.
Clp.
Clp.
Bass