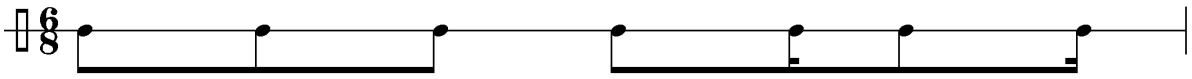
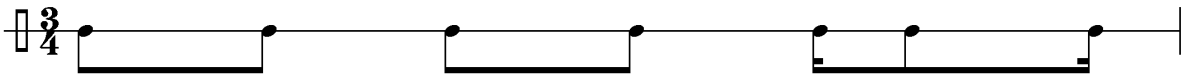
Web Feature 3.2

Dave Matthews Band, "Drive In, Drive Out" [1996]

"I hear more than I'd like to," Matthews sings at the beginning of this song, and when faced with the conflicting metric groupings in this song, the listener may sympathize. The guitars in the introduction play a riff with a rhythm that would appear to fit into $\frac{6}{8}$ meter:



On the other hand, it could just as easily, and logically, be grouped into $\frac{3}{4}$ as follows:



Here, then, is the crux of the metric conflict that drives much of the song. For example, some elements in the texture, such the vocals that enter at [0:22], fit better into a $\frac{3}{4}$ meter. At times, such as at [0:46–1:09], the vocals are emphatically in $\frac{3}{4}$. During the chorus at [1:09–1:30], $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ seem to uneasily coexist, with the vocal line mostly in $\frac{3}{4}$ and certain elements in the accompaniment—notably the snare drum and the violin accents—implying a $\frac{6}{8}$ meter. Whereas these meters are superimposed in the chorus, the following section [1:30–2:03] alternates between $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$, in a "call and response" fashion.

This kind of metric interaction—sometimes superimposed, sometimes alternating—continues for much of the song until the extremely active instrumental section at [3:35–3:59], where a repeated line in $\frac{5}{8}$, played by saxes and violin, is juxtaposed over the prevailing $\frac{6}{8}$ in the rest of the instrumental texture. Where two or more meters are actually superimposed in this fashion, the result is **polymeter.** Here is a most extreme variety of polymeter, the two meters becoming seriously "out of sync" by

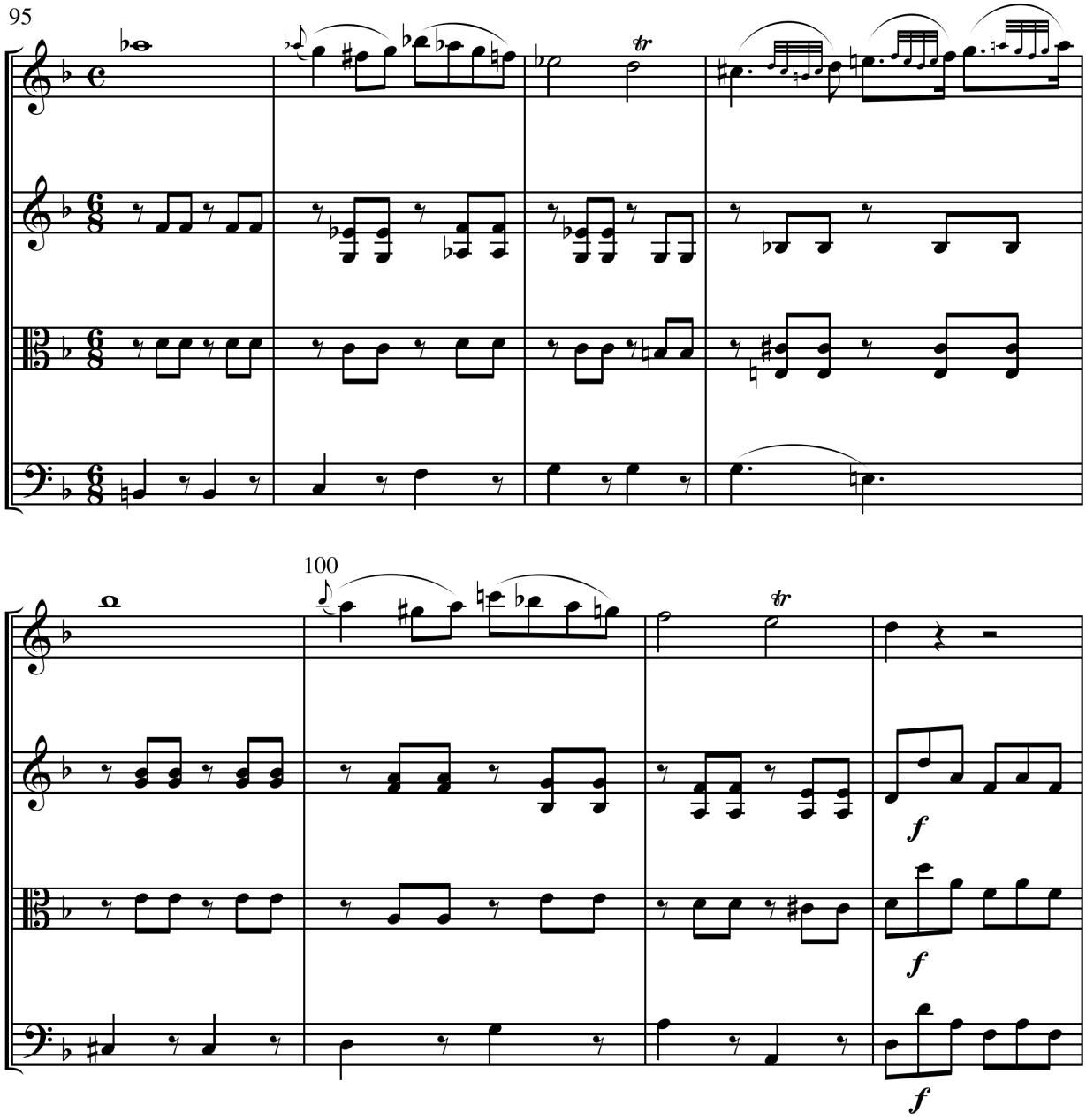
the end of each phrase. The last appearance of the $\frac{5}{8}$ riff at the end of each phrase is therefore truncated, the last note left off. Thus, the two competing groupings can be seen as something like:

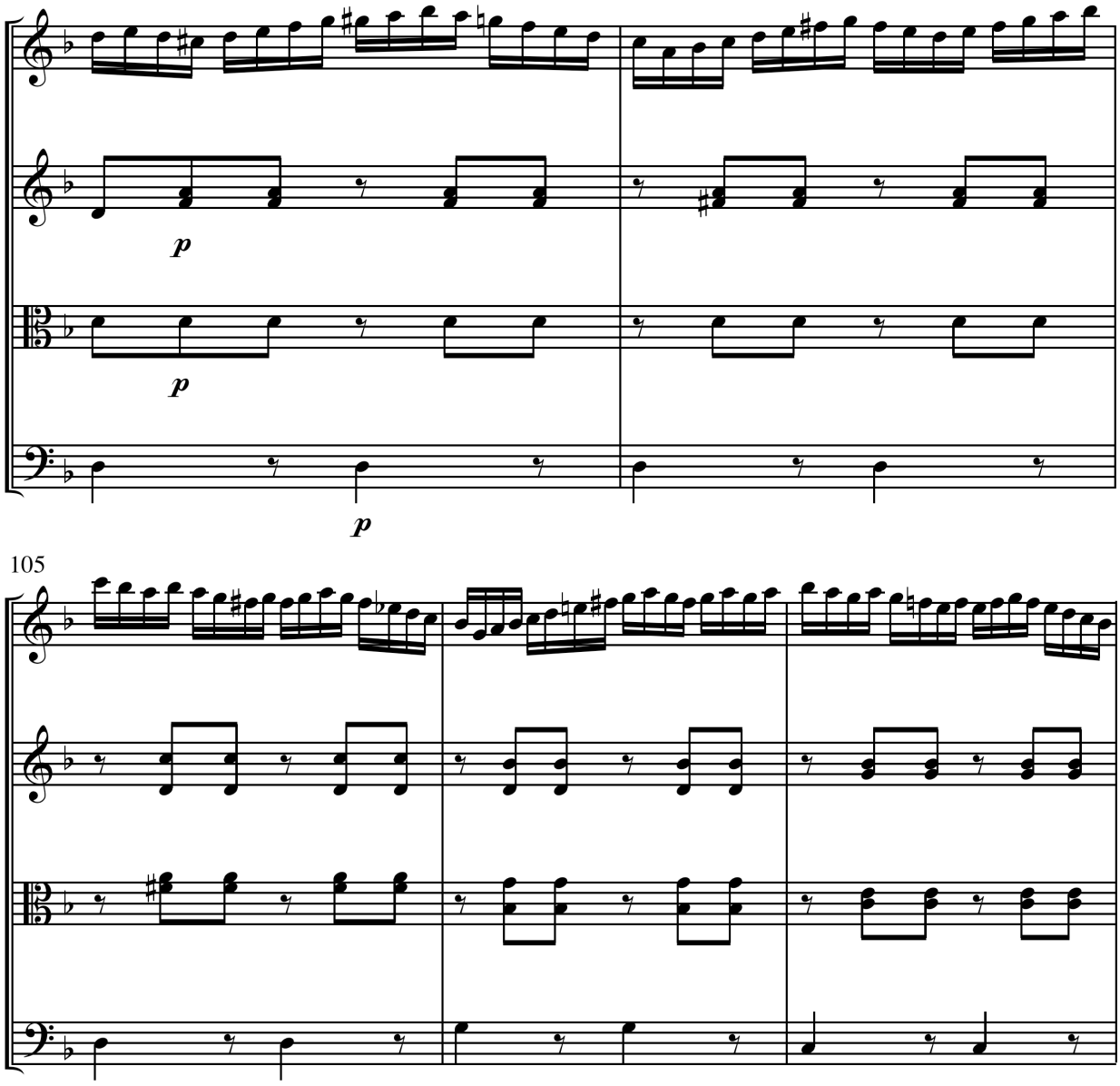
5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 4 (= 24 eighth notes)
over
6 + 6 + 6 + 6 (= 24 eighth notes)

$\frac{5}{8}$ is an example of **additive meter,** which is addressed in more detail at the end of chapter 3.

Lest we think that polymeter is a twentieth-century innovation, the final movement of Mozart's Quartet for Oboe, Violin, Viola and Cello, K. 370 (368b), composed in 1781, contains a passage in which the oboe part is notated in $\frac{4}{4}$ while the

other instruments are notated in $\frac{6}{8}$ (Web Example 3.1).





Web Example 3.1. Mozart, Quartet for Oboe, Violin, Viola and Cello, K. 370 (368b), iv, mm. 95–107.