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DPhil in Music (Composition)
University of Oxford

Dialogues, Encounters, and Entanglements: Developing a compositional practice which reimagines and examines relationships between humans and nature.

Dissertation Word Count: 24,942

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Abstract

This thesis argues that music and the arts have vital roles to play in exploring sustainable relationships to our environments, and in reconnecting us to our human and more-than-human communities. Through my own compositional processes and informed by the fields of eco-musicology, cultural ecology, anthropology, and cultural geography, I am examining how a compositional practice can acknowledge the anthropocentric ways that we seek to frame and materialize nature, and the interconnections between humans and nature which can be expressed in new music. The emotional and physical connections that we form with our surroundings, both human and natural, and the ways that we form these bonds has become a defining theme in my work.

My maternal heritage and home in the West of Scotland on the Isle of Arran and my father's origins on the Greek island of Chios in the Eastern Aegean provide a theoretical and compositional framework in which to challenge the dichotomies of the pastoral and explore instead the potential of heterogenous landscapes formed through interaction and creative encounter. Studies of human enmeshment within landscape in both islands expose the problems with dualistic perspectives on humans and their environments, suggesting the need for complication of these binaries.

The two central chapters explore the ways that music can express an ecology of interwoven life forms through analysis of two specific areas of the compositional process. Compositional approaches to time will be discussed in relation to two pieces for solo instruments, followed by a further chapter which will analyse approaches to timbre in several recent pieces for string instruments. Time, space, and matter emerge as central ideas in the compositional process, and, through the lens of my dual island heritage, I unpack the ways in which I use

these features to express entanglements between humans and nature. The dissertation is accompanied by a portfolio of six compositions, developed alongside the written commentary through an integrated creative research process in which compositional practice and critical reflection continually informed one another.

Portfolio of Compositions

1. ***Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock…*** for solo guitar (c. 8'20'')
2. ***Mastiha*** for string orchestra (c. 8'40'')
3. ***Rock, Salt, Air, Water*** for string quartet (c. 5'00'')
4. ***Within the drifting contours of the land…*** for violin and piano (c. 9'00'')
5. ***March (Ice melting, petals unfurling)*** for orchestra (c. 11'00'')
6. ***ISOLA*** a song cycle for soprano and piano (c. 25'00'')

Context – Moving Beyond the Pastoral: An identity formed between two islands

I have a dual island heritage: my home is on the Isle of Arran in the west of Scotland, while my paternal family are from the Greek island of Chios in the eastern Aegean. The connection between human life and the landscapes of these islands is, and always has been, the central influence on my music. This prefatory chapter sets my music, compositional thought, and practice into context through the work of key theorists, tracing the origins and progression of this study from initial concerns with the pastoral and post-pastoral, to my current focus on aural interaction with landscapes, and particularly island landscapes, as inhabited sites of human/more-than-human action, movement, displacement, and loss. As the compositional research developed, I found that the post-pastoral served primarily as the starting point for questioning inherited human-nature binaries. The research shifted towards phenomenological concerns with

embodied listening, material interaction, and lived experience, and this progression is reflected in both the dissertation and the accompanying portfolio.

This dissertation draws together perspectives from philosophy, ecology, geography, anthropology, visual arts, and literature. These disciplines are approached not as separate bodies of thought but as interconnected strands whose points of encounter shaped the compositional process. The research also engages with contemporary compositional practices that have explored new approaches to musical time, materiality, and timbre. Throughout the development of the portfolio and dissertation, the work of composers including Kaija Saariaho, Per Nørgård, Harrison Birtwistle and, more recently, Outi Tarkiainen has informed my thinking about these concerns. These composers are not presented as stylistic models but as compositional reference points whose work provides an important musicological context for the research.

Depictions of nature have been used as a means of expression in culture since ancient times. Works which have formed the foundations of Western literature and art, such as Virgil's *Eclogues* and Theocritus' *Idylls,* were rooted in the pastoral, depicting Arcadian landscape as a space for reflection on states of unrest and on the political climate of the time. Paul Alpers' discussion of the work of Virgil draws attention to the pastoral as a mode of thought, focused on the divide between humans and nature in idealised landscapes. In Virgil's *Eclogues* the differing fates of Meliboeus and Tityrus are told through pastoral song, the shepherds' music existing in parallel with that of nature. Meliboeus's exiled situation is in stark contrast with the security of Tityrus. The unrest of the era is demonstrated through reference to Meliboeus's plight; he can no longer work as a shepherd having had his land repossessed. Tityrus too has faced the same situation but, unlike Meliboeus, he was able to travel to Rome and appeal to a God who granted him back his land. Alpers states that this dialogue between the two shepherds can be seen to 'undermine the very notion of pastoral: its idyllic landscape represents a fantasy that is dissipated by the recognition of political and social realities'.[1] Unlike Erwin Panofsky's claim that in Virgil 'human suffering

[1] Paul Alpers, "What Is Pastoral?" *Critical Inquiry* 8 no. 3 (1982): 451.

and superhumanly perfect surroundings create a dissonance',[2] Alpers argues that 'there is, if anything, a consonance between suffering and ideal landscape';[3] the idyll offered by a retreat into the landscape is a figment of the imagination, created in response to the instability of human life in the contemporary world. The impossibility of Arcadia is defined further by Peter Marinelli when he describes the pastoral as representing 'one of the most deeply rooted instincts of mankind to claim that the world is too much for us and to find an escape'.[4] Terry Gifford's 'post-pastoral' attempts to collapse this divide between humans and nature acknowledging a more interconnected 'creative-destructive universe ... in a continuous momentum of ... growth and decay'.[5] The post-pastoral emerges as an acknowledgement of the central pastoral tension between different eco-systems and ways of life, whether urban/rural, natural/man-made, or human/more-than-human.

The complex interconnection between human life and the natural world, foregrounded in the post-pastoral, involves friction. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing situates this friction in 'the zone of awkward engagement'[6] where encounters and interactions can have profound impacts on human relationships with their local environments. This friction can be destructive, but it can also lead to collaborative encounters and creative resistance. Friction has the potential to be an agent of change capable of bringing 'the unpredictable heterogeneity of worlds … into being'.[7] Tsing's zone of awkward engagement speaks to my dual island identity, split between two extremes of Europe, and speaks to the necessity of difference in any productive encounter; a heterogenous landscape can be formed from the entanglement of diverse coexistences across difference. It is by navigating between approaches to the key dyads complicated by

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[2] Erwin Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 300.

[3] Alpers, "What Is Pastoral?," 453.

[4] Peter Marinelli, *Pastoral: The Critical Idiom,* ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen, 1971), 9–10.

[5] Terry Gifford, *Pastoral: The New Critical Idiom* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), 153.

[6] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[7] Anna Tsing, "Frictions," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization*, ed. George Ritzer (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog222.

the post-pastoral that this friction informs productive compositional processes, providing the tension through which my music begins to speak.

In an age of climate crisis, the dissonance which arises from confronting our anthropocentric perspective feels necessary and productive. Rachel Mundy has argued that it is vital to 'adopt an active role in reimagining music's orders outside of established human/non-human, culture/nature, humanities/science dyads',[8] urging for musical thought processes to include the assemblage which arises from frictional interactions between these dyads. Throughout this thesis I use the prism of entanglement to describe dynamic and interwoven relationships in the human/more-than-human dyad. This draws upon Aaron S. Allen's description of eco-musicology as a 'musicology that seeks to understand not just music, musicians and/or musical communities, but also their interconnections in the world, both natural and socially constructed'[9] and on Donna Haraway's citing of trouble, complexity, and messiness as the only means of becoming truly interconnected within the world as it currently exists.[10] In the early stages of this research process I began to question how it might be possible to move beyond the dualistic and oppositional nature of the binaries suggested by the pastoral, and create a sound world from the frictional, tensile, in-between spaces in these key binary pairings. Influenced by Tsing, Mundy, and Haraway, I propose frictional entanglement, a complication of the dualistic pairings in the pastoral, as a means of connection and creative engagement with society. This research began with the following questions, which arose from awareness of my composition as an expression of the frictional duality and in-betweenness, so central to my identity between the islands of Arran and Chios:

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[8] Rachel Mundy, *Animal Musicalities: Birds, Beasts and Evolutionary Listening* (Middeltown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2018), 5.

[9] Aaron S. Allen, "Colloquy," in "Ecomusicology: Ecocriticism and Musicology," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 (2011): 393.

[10]Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin with the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

- How can I create sound worlds through entanglement of key binaries related to the post-pastoral (human/nature, nature/culture, and objective distance/ subjective immersion)?

- Could this approach create a web of musical interactions in each piece, lending an ecological framework to each composition, transporting it beyond simply work 'inspired by' the natural world?

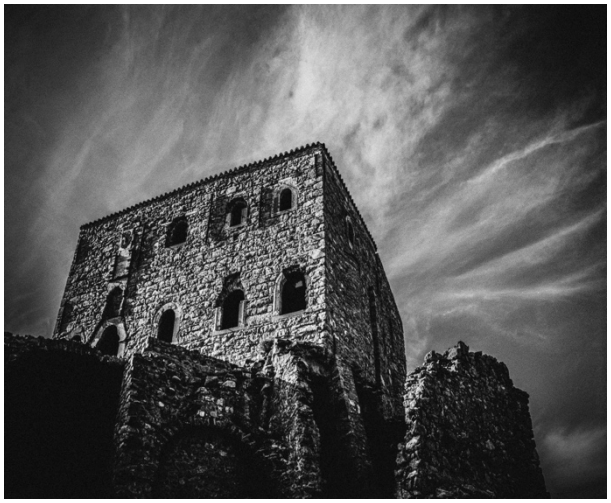
Although the post-pastoral provided an important conceptual starting point, the compositional process gradually revealed that my central concern was less with challenging binaries as an abstract critical framework than with understanding how humans experience themselves as embedded within landscapes through acts of listening, movement, labour, and material engagement. Consequently, the research increasingly drew upon phenomenology, alongside landscape theory, to articulate the embodied relationships that emerged through the compositional process. This shift in perspective was shaped particularly by John Wylie's conception of landscape as complex and multi-layered, consisting of contrasting paired parameters. Wylie's reframing of the binary dyads in traditional landscape studies as 'intimate [sites] of continual interaction'[11] has had a direct impact on my compositional approaches in this thesis. Wylie's second landscape parameter of proximity/distance is particularly relevant to the compositional process. The act of listening and attuning to landscape situates one *within* a space, rather than viewing it from a distance. In 'sounding out' Nature and amplifying its voice through a focus on re-imagining its aural properties, listening in and *with*in, the act of composing can become a way of bridging the divide between the observed landscape (namely its physical forms as seen and charted), and the inhabited, perceived, and experiential landscape. This phenomenological understanding of landscape as a performative space in which humans experience and engage with their surroundings became the lens through which I conceived and developed my musical expressions of human/nature entanglement.

[11] John Wylie, *Landscape* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 9.

My growing awareness of the ocularcentrism in normative definitions of landscape exposed a further key research question: How can my creative practice express sensory interactions with landscape beyond the visual, and, more broadly, how does awareness of multisensory encounter within an environment change the engagement with landscape? The following chapters trace how this phenomenological orientation increasingly shaped both the compositional processes and the theoretical framework developed through the research. Throughout this dissertation, comments concerning the expressive qualities of the compositions and their possible reception are intended as interpretative reflections from my perspective as composer. Musical listening is inherently subjective; the diversity of meanings that listeners discover through their own encounters remains one of the defining qualities of musical experience.

Listening to Silence: Studies of Displacement and Loss on Arran and Chios, influenced by Rachel Carson, Nan Shepherd and Pauline Oliveros





Credit – John Perivolaris – *Ossuary at Nea Moni and Ruins at Anavatos, Island of Chios.*

In 'Silent Spring', Rachel Carson draws attention to the loss of sounds within nature. In a 'spring without voices'[12] a foreboding silence reigns over a landscape of destruction, depleted by the DDT chemical pesticides which were being widely used

[12] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London: Penguin, 1963), 22.

following the second world war. Carson's manifesto focuses not only on the silencing of the voices of nature, but on humans losing the ability to listen to their surrounding world. Without the ability to listen, we lose the ability to interact, respond, and empathise with our environments – human and more-than-human.

Arran's liminal position on the periphery of the ancient Gaelic kingdom of Dalriada has led to issues of cultural clearance through centuries. In more recent history, the Highland Clearances had a profound effect on the island and its people (known as Arranachs). There are many sites on Arran which still bear the scars from the Clearances, offering a unique standpoint on Rachel Carson's idea of silence and loss through a focus on historical and social dispossession. Thorbjørn Campbell describes the process from the start of the eighteenth century as a time when 'lesser aristocrats were metamorphosed from barbarous tribal chieftains lording it over semi-autonomous private domains to wealthy proprietors, anxious to maximise profits from their landed estates'.[13] On Arran this led to the trustees of the Duke of Hamilton in 1766 instructing estates manager John Burrel to change the runrig farming methods which had been present on Arran for centuries. The runrig agricultural system was structured around the clachan system of small groups of dwellings sharing common agricultural land. Burrel set about dividing up this land and making each farmer responsible for his own independent plot in an attempt to maximise profits without any concern for the human consequence. Although Burrel's plans were minimised by a lack of action from the Duke of Hamilton's estate, the number of tenant families on Arran still reduced from around 1000 to around 250 meaning that 750 families were left facing unemployment. Other barriers, such as the lack of transport from Arran and the Gaelic language spoken by many of the families, meant that employment in other parts of mainland Scotland wasn't an option for most. Burrel's initial plans paved the way for a later, and even more damaging, realisation of these clearance plans in 'decreets of removal'[14] issued by the Hamiltons from 1814. This led to the period

[13] Thorbjørn Campbell, *Arran: A History* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2007), 127.
[14] M. C. Storrie, "Landholdings and Population in Arran," *Scottish Studies* 11, no. 1 (1967): 54–55.

known as The Clearances in which anti-Gaelic racism[15] and a desire to maximise profits further led to mass evictions across the island, suspiciously undocumented and erased from history, except for in certain remaining records such as those of the Kirk Sessions at Kilbride, when the island poor would come forward for assistance, which rose from twelve poor out of 2,545 in 1793 to fifty poor out of 2,397 in 1835.[16]

Chios also occupies a fragile and peripheral position, separated from Turkey by only the Chios Strait. The island has its own history of cultural clearance and occupation, with the most widely known example of forced removal being the Massacre of Chios carried out by Ottoman Troops during the Greek War of Independence in 1822. Due to the commercial benefits of precious mastic resin, Chios was familiar with the threat of occupation and unrest. It had been occupied by the Genoese for over two centuries from approximately 1346 to 1566 and faced frequent pirate invasions and raids into the nineteenth century. However, the mass murder, enslavement, and displacement during the Spring of 1822 saw suffering on a different scale to any experienced by the island up to that point. The London born Chiot Philip Argenti (a soldier, diplomat, and historian committed to ensuring that Chios' history wasn't forgotten) stated that 'before the massacre the total resident population was 120,000, after the massacre it was but 30,000'.[17] Roughly 50,000 women and children were sold as slaves and up to 20,000 people were forced to flee the island as refugees leading to a Chian diaspora which continues into the present day, in part due to the ravaged state of post-occupation Greece following the Second World War. My father and I are a part of this ongoing contemporary Chian diaspora.

Immortalised by Delacroix in his controversial 1824 painting 'The Massacre of Chios', the events of 1822 caused shock internationally with C. M. Woodhouse writing that the massacre 'did more than any act of the war so far to commend the

[15] The islanders were described by William Anton in a report for the Board of Agriculture in 1810 as 'blamefully ignorant, indolent, and wedded to many prejudices and bad habits'. [W.M. Mackenzie, *The Book of Arran,* new ed. by J. A. Balfour (Minnesota: Franklin Classics Trade Press, 2018), 212.]
[16] Robert MacLellan, *The Isle of Arran* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970), 208.
[17] Philip P. Argenti, ed., *The Massacres of Chios, Described in Contemporary Diplomatic Reports* (London: John Lane, 1932), xxxi.

Greek cause to Europe'.[18] This galvanising effect was not purely caused by a sympathetic reaction to the tragedy, but was in part due to Europe's problematic 'othering' of the Ottomans, with the Times of London demonstrating colonial attitudes of the time when it asked 'Who can, without shuddering, read of the total ruin, the universal desolation of our famed and once happy isle?'.[19] Chios remained under Ottoman rule until 1912 when it rejoined Greece following the Balkan Wars.

Both islands still bear the scars of these destructions, displacements, and losses. In Arran the 'Glens of Silence'[20] remain sites of forced removal. North Glen Sannox on the Northeastern tip of the island still contains the remains of a township, cleared of its inhabitants in 1829 during the Arran Clearances. The displaced Arranachs' homes and runrigs still lie within the glen, their ruined stone walls embedded within the landscape.[21] Many of those displaced emigrated to Canada, with members of the Sannox community settling in Inverness township, Quebec, where they built a replica of the church constructed at Sannox in 1822.[22] The secluded coastline in this part of the island is similarly marked by ruins. Laggan Cottage looks across the Firth of Clyde to the islands of Bute and Cumbrae. This modest dwelling, used now as a bothy by passing hikers, is the only roofed cottage remaining within what was, before the Clearances, a substantial community. On Chios, the scars of occupation still have the capacity to shock. In Nea Moni, an eleventh century monastery complex situated in the wooded slopes of Mount Provatos in the centre of the island, a vast ossuary filled with the skulls of those who sought refuge in the monastery during the massacre runs along the wall of the entrance. The Byzantine mosaics within the monastery are some of the finest examples in Greece but they bear the traces of the destruction of 1822 when the monastery was burned and plundered by Ottoman troops. The artists' use of

[18] C. M. Woodhouse, *The Greek War of Independence, Its Historical Setting* (London: Hutchinson, 1952), 87–88.
[19] Yianni John Charles Cartledge, "The Chios Massacre (1822) and Early British Christian-Humanitarianism," *Historical Research* 93, no. 259 (2020): 59.
[20] David Craig and David Paterson, *The Glens of Silence: The Landscapes of the Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2004).
[21] Historic Environment Scotland, "Arran, North Glen Sannox," *National Record of the Historic Environment*, NRHE ID 40214.
[22] Sannox Christian Centre, "The History," https://www.sannox.org/about/the-history/.

metal oxides and pure gold sheets still fills the monastery with a unique light, but a closer look reveals the missing eyes and faces of the saints on many of these artworks. The mountain village of Anavatos in the northwest of the island, thought to have been created by workers from Nea Moni in the Byzantine era, acted as a fortress from Medieval times until the massacre when it was largely abandoned. Many of the inhabitants are said to have thrown themselves off the cliffs to avoid enslavement and capture. Now it remains as a haunting 'ghost town'; the presence of those atrocities can be felt through the absence of life in this living monument.

The quietness of these sites of displacement is a defining characteristic which unites these islands situated at opposite ends of Europe. A pastoral nostalgia, in which the remnants of these habitations become symbolic of a romanticised way of life lost to modernisation, has led to a submergence of the violence which occurred in these ecosystems. Doreen Massey's view of space as 'a simultaneity of unfinished stories'[23] connects to the visible interruption of lives in these landscapes. While these sites certainly are contemplative and meditative, the deeply unsettling nature of their silences defies comforting clichés and stereotypes of 'simpler' ways of life. These are landscapes irreparably changed by destructive, unmonitored human intervention. The devastation caused in these 'zones of awkward interaction' is memorialised in the physical form of the ruins embedded within the landscape. But another awkward interaction is vital to our engagement with the frictional forces in these contested spaces. We can encounter these island landscapes as complex sites of embedded power and hierarchy, and as spaces of action, displacement, and forced movement. Rachel Carson's work suggests that it is through listening to environments, to listening *beyond and through* the uncomfortable silence so pregnant with the failings of the past and present, that we can redevelop our connection to specific ecosystems.

These 'silent' sites of displacement on Arran and on Chios are representative of the enmeshment between humans and natural landscape. These were not only horrific

[23] Doreen Massey, "Some Times of Space," in *Olafur Eliasson: The Weather Project,* ed. Susan May (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 108.

social tragedies. The violent removal of human presence in these island sites created environmental degradation. The loss of traditional farming systems during the Clearances led to destructive forms of land management, designed for profit rather than sustainability, which caused overgrazing and a loss of biodiversity. The fertile agriculture of Chios, its mastic groves, orchards, and vineyards, were reduced to ash and rubble during the massacre, with the number of unburied corpses in the land and sea causing the spread of typhoid. Human presence (or absence) is an ecological force; we are a part of the specific ecology of a place; our impacts alter the landscape. In Carson's work silence acts as a metaphor for ecological imbalance, representative of a severance between humans and their surroundings.

Nan Shepherd cited listening as an integral part of her lifelong dedication to the Cairngorms National Park, interacting with the mountain range's inherent unknowability through all the senses, rather than approaching it in a delusional spirit of conquest. Shepherd's writing expresses the ways that her local ecosystem grows 'with the knowledge that is a process of living',[24] through a co-mingling of existences over time in a particular location. Shepherd writes that 'the silence is all but absolute, and listening to it one slips out of time';[25] this kind of silence is not a total absence of sound and can be listened *into* as a means of kinship with, and understanding of, one's surroundings. Although written in the 40s, Shepherd's 'A Living Mountain' was published in 1977, twelve years before the release of Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening album. Oliveros described her practice of Deep Listening as a lifetime practice centred around the expansion of consciousness through profound attention to one's acoustic environment. Through its emphasis on the expansive potential of slowing down, in Deep Listening time becomes a fluid cumulation of past, present, and future in which the listener might develop awareness of the 'entire space/time continuum of sound'.[26] Contemporary conceptions of time that privilege productivity and measurable units of experience risk fragmenting our sense of time as a shared,

[24] Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, [1977] 2011), 1.
[25] Shepherd, 46.
[26] Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (New York: Deep Listening Publications, 2005), 16.

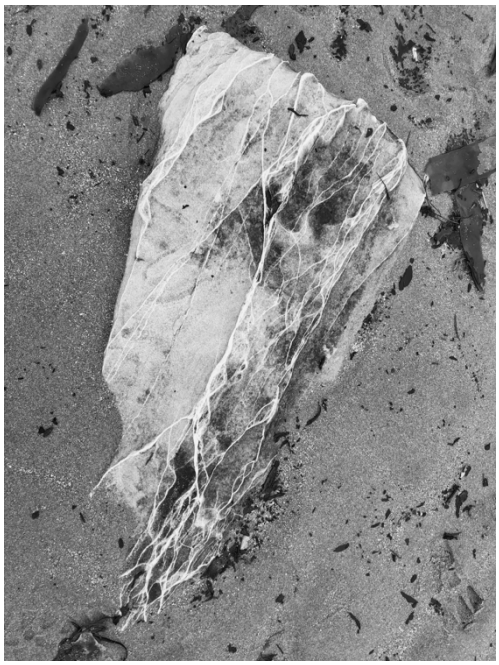
relational continuum. Massey's conception of space as an 'intertwining of ongoing trajectories'[27] complicates any straightforward separation of space and time.[28] Through her work in the Cairngorms, Shepherd suggests a way of 'slipping out' of our own individual present and into time as a continuum, bonded with the space, the community, and with the specific ecologies in which we find ourselves. Oliveros' deep listening practice encourages a broader view of the *shared* moment which comes into being through connection to our environment. Awareness of the communal unfolding of time in specific places enables us to re-establish our relationships in particular ecosystems. Through Massey's notion of space as 'a cut through' of multiple simultaneous trajectories, we become aware that 'Movement, encounter and the making of relationships take time'.[29]

[27] Massey, "Some Times of Space," 108.
[28] Through Massey's work, time is no longer understood as a succession of isolated moments, and space is no longer the passive container for those moments. Instead, place emerges as an entangled site of unfolding stories, movements, and encounters.
[29] Massey, 108.

Inscribing Time - *Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock...* (for solo guitar) and *A Tree's Spiral of Time* (for solo piano)



Credit – John Perivolaris - *Island of Chios*



Credit – Electra Perivolaris – *Isle of Arran*

"Ecological awareness means thinking and acting ethically and politically on a lot of scales, not just one...[recognizing] that from grasses to gorillas to gargantuan black holes, *everything has its own time*, its own temporality." - Timothy Morton.[30]

Rachel Sussman has been influenced by the ways that the photographic medium can reference multiple scales of time within a single image. In her series 'The Oldest Living Things in the World', Sussman merged the disciplines of art and science, collaborating with biologists to locate and photograph organisms which have been continuously alive for two thousand years or more. One of her images shows the Spruce Gran Picea, a tree in Sweden which has been alive for 9550 years. Despite its steadfast presence across millennia, the tree in the photograph is not majestic and strong; its fragile form stands alone in a barren landscape, distinct against a perpetually changing sky. The medium of photography has always shared an intriguing relationship with time. The single moment captured by the camera seems to exist in an eternal, unfolding present tense. Henri Cartier-Bresson's 'decisive

[30] Timothy Morton, *All Art Is Ecological* (London: Penguin, 2018), 32–33.

moment'[31] alludes to the tension that exists in photography between past, present, and future; a photograph is the result of a fleeting moment, different elements of life meeting by chance before moving on in their separate directions. The photograph captures this momentary intersection, a moment that might otherwise have been missed in the blink of an eye as life is forced on into the future. Sussman's work expresses the ability of photography to somehow capture a vast sense of past and future within the single fleeting moment. Although we only see the Spruce Gran Picea standing its current form, its 9550-year life span seems to expand out from the present moment depicted in the photograph, so that the viewer imagines the past life of the tree, the evolution of its fragile, weather-beaten form over millennia, whilst also imagining the future of the tree, the transformations it will undergo through the next centuries. In this way, photography, and perhaps all visual art, exists in a suspended present.

Both pieces I will discuss in this chapter were composed at a very early stage of the research process. They have provided an essential exploration of temporalities in the compositional process. Excerpts from the scores are included through this chapter to illustrate the discussion. I was seeking to alter the listener's perception of durational time through my composition, expressing the divergences between lived time and 'clock time'. In the traditional pastoral this suspension is created by the nostalgic desire for a prelapsarian past, coupled with an awareness of the impossibility of this desire as life is inevitably propelled forward into the future. Like photography, music is a temporal medium, experienced in a moment-to-moment form, presenting both a challenge and an opportunity to subvert notions of abstract linear time.[32] I was seeking to address this through the compositional processes I devised in these two pieces. I established a series of compositional aims that guided the development of both *Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock....* (solo guitar) and *A Tree's Spiral of Time* (solo piano):

[31] Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment* (Göttingen: Steidl, [1952] 2018).
[32] The temporality of photography is explored masterfully by Roland Barthes in his short book *Camera Lucida*.

- To explore the expression of more-than-human temporalities through the pacing and structure of solo instrumental music.
- To create multiple interacting temporal scales through the compositional process.
- To investigate how a short composition might evoke evolutionary and geological processes spanning millennia.
- To develop relationships between micro and macro-structure that reflect the evolving physical form of a geological landscape.

To begin discussion of the construction of the pieces, I would like to turn to Henri Bergson, particularly his book *Creative Evolution* (1907). Bergson challenges the notion of abstract time and space in which events are seen to be linear moments which exist in a straight continuum from the past to the future, stating that 'a medium of this kind is never perceived; it is only conceived'.[33] For Bergson, time was duration: an emergent process in which time is subjective and unpredictable, overlapping and layering in a multi-dimensional and continuous flow.

Both *Waves caress* and *A Tree's Spiral* are centred around growth and transformation, the evolution of musical ideas and themes reflecting the physical evolution of the material world through time. My compositional approach to growth in both pieces was intended to subvert linear notions of time as 'progress'. *Waves caress* is influenced by the layers of time which exist at the southern end of Arran. The piece is split into 4 distinct sections, through which I aimed to chart the evolving form of one of the volcanic rock formations left over from continental drift which line the coastline of my home. A sense of growth and transformation begins in the first section of the piece (bars 1–44) and is initially shown through a written-out augmentation of pitch and tempo within the individual phrases. For example, in the first phrase of the piece (bar 1 to the second beat of bar 5) the acceleration of the momentum through shorter note values, the ascension in pitch, and the widening registral span of the guitar in the closing chords of the phrase is apparent. As this first section progresses acceleration

[33] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* trans. Arthur Mitchell (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983), 156.

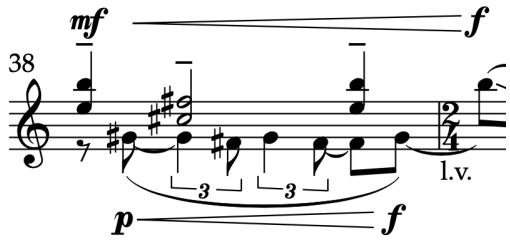
becomes not just speed and growth through phrases but an acceleration of different strands of ideas coming together.

In *Waves caress*, the approach to time as strands of musical ideas layering can best be shown through the development of the central motif of the piece. The shifting F sharp to G sharp figure first heard in bar 1 layers underneath stable perfect fifth and fourth chords in a repeating theme, first heard in bar 38. This motif becomes central to the sense of transformation in this piece, repeating again in bar 56, towards the end of the second section (bars 45–70), but this time the motif is interrupted by a high glissando figure in the following bar. Through these first two sections of the piece this motif is almost like a cantus firmus, a point of stability which allows context to the shifting and changing musical material which surrounds it. However, in the third section of the piece (bars 70–97) this central motif is fragmented and interrupted, with its stability compromised in bar 73 by harmonics and shifts in register, and then in bar 79 by accelerando figurations leading to snap pizzicato moments and erratic ascending and descending figures moving between extremes in the range of the guitar. In this section widening intervals and contrasts in register give the motif a sense of greater profundity, reflecting the experience and age which are shown in the rock's depth of physical texture.

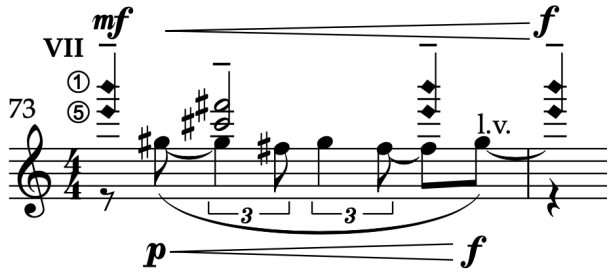
In the final fourth section (bars 97–123) the contrasting, layering strands of musical ideas struggle to find a new form. A new theme in bars 100–103 emerges which brings together the different layers of the central motif from earlier in the piece. The perfect fifth (B–E), first heard as a sustained dyad layering above the central motif in bar 38, now reappears above a shifting harmonic bass reminiscent of the spread harmonies heard earlier in the piece. The single bar central motif now spans over three bars, ending with the F sharp to G sharp figure heard throughout the piece from bar 1. The extended theme repeats again in bars 107–110. This ending theme brings together the key motifs from the past sections of the piece, the layers of time and experience overlapping with each other and transforming the past ideas into something new. Time is layered in space — the life of the rock is one of development and experience, corresponding with Bergson's notions of time as lived duration, moving in a linear

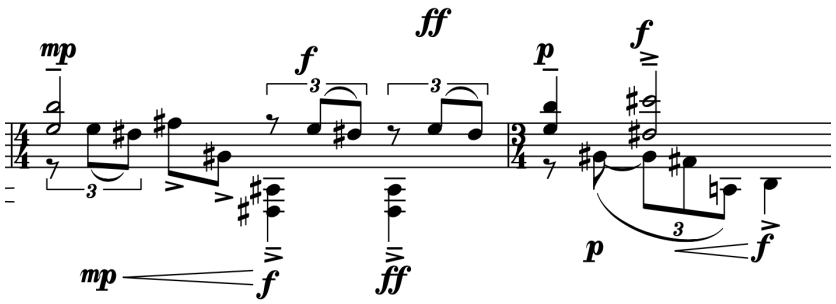
fashion but not in straight line. Bergson's time instead forms deepening spirals which expand horizontally and vertically at the same time as lived experiences layer and transform the past. From bar 119 the repetition of the opening bars of the piece, which lead into a new fading final melodic line, suggests that this ending is also an opening. The past isn't truly in the past but is part of the physical form of the rock; the initial layer in its formation heard at the very start of the piece is still present at the end, a way of expressing an awareness of the existence of all forms of the rock through time — all past versions layer together to give its present form.

SCORE EXAMPLE 1 – A central motif begins to establish itself, first heard in bar 38 and repeated again in bars 56 and 65.

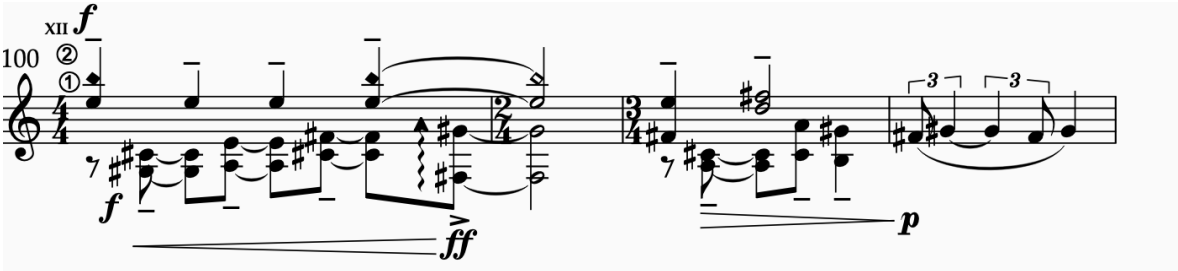


SCORE EXAMPLE 2 – The stable motif from earlier in the piece is now transforming with harmonics appearing in the upper part of the line in bar 73, before it transforms entirely in bars 85-86, becoming gestural with the lower voice descending dramatically.





SCORE EXAMPLE 3 – A new extended theme emerges in bars 100-103, bringing together different layers of the central motif from earlier in the piece (eg. the perfect fifth dyad first heard in bar 38 and the F sharp to G sharp figure heard throughout).



In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour directly references Bergson's layered, non-linear approach to time with the following statement; "We do have a future and a past, but the future takes the form of a circle expanding in all directions and the past is not surpassed but revisited, repeated, surrounded, protected, recombined, reinterpreted and reshuffled. Elements that appear remote if we follow the spiral may turn out to be quite nearby if we compare loops … Such a temporality does not oblige us to use the labels 'archaic' or 'advanced'... In such a framework, our actions are recognised at last as polytemporal".[34] Latour's conception of polytemporality raises the question of how multiple temporal relationships might be articulated musically. While Latour describes the coexistence of multiple temporalities philosophically, Jonathan Kramer demonstrates how linear and nonlinear principles may coexist within a single musical work, their interaction shaping different levels of musical structure.[35] Kramer describes linearity as arising from the implications established between successive musical events: in strongly goal-directed music, earlier events create distinct expectations, so that the significance of the present is shaped by the expected destination.[36] This model corresponds closely to a teleological understanding of musical time, particularly in tonal music where instability is directed towards resolution. By contrast, nonlinearity arises from organising principles that are not dependent upon the linear chains of implication, or the fulfilment of a single expected destination.[37] Kramer's distinction provides a useful musicological lens through which Latour's conception of polytemporality can be understood musically: local processes of implication and transformation may unfold within broader formal relationships that resist a single overarching teleological narrative. In *Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock…*, I sought to retain audible processes of transformation while weakening the impression that they move towards one predetermined goal. Recurrence and variation instead allow different stages of the rock's imagined history to remain

[34] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. C. Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 75.
[35] Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988), 20–21.
[36] Kramer, *The Time of Music*, 20–21.
[37] Kramer, *The Time of Music*, 20–21.

simultaneously present within the unfolding form, reflecting the polytemporal conception of time described by Latour.

I came to view the volcanic rocks on Arran's southern coastline as embodiments of the polytemporal. Within a single rock, layers formed across millennia remain physically present together. Envisaging the rock's form evolving over time enabled me to experiment with a different relationship between process and large-scale form in my music. This piece is not about representing the rock but about using its geological form and temporal evolution to develop my own approach to musical form. Harrison Birtwistle described the experience of listening to his music as being 'like looking at an object … every view is unique but the object exists irrespective of the way it's viewed'.[38] Jonathan Cross relates this object-like conception of form to Birtwistle's repeated disruption of straightforward temporal continuity, in which musical material may be revisited from altered perspectives rather than contained within an uninterrupted narrative of development.[39] In the compositional process of *Waves caress* I was seeking to create a form in which music occupies time like an object occupies space, reflecting the layers of experience which exist within the rock and crucially the inextricable link between time and physical space. Structural geologist Marcia Bjornerud creates the term 'timefulness' (as an alternative to the overused 'timelessness') to describe the way in which rocks shows us the symbiosis between time and physical space, defining this timefulness as 'an acute consciousness of how the world is made by – indeed made of – time... wherever anything lives, there is, open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed'.[40] When approached in this way, time is not an abstract concept marked by cycles of a clock, and becomes instead a physical element of the material world.

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[38] Harrison Birtwistle in conversation with Paul Griffiths, *New Sounds, New Personalities* (London: Faber & Faber, 1985), 191.

[39] Jonathan Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 138–149.

[40] Marcia Bjornerud, *Timefulness: How Thinking Like a Geologist Can Help Save the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), prologue.

Per Nørgård demonstrates how time and form act together as one in his work when, talking of his Fifth Symphony, he asks the listener to 'imagine that those smallest units are always overtaken by bigger patterns taking in the perception of your eyes, in this way, imperceptibly, you will always follow the bigger, slower waves of the acceleration, because they are multi-layered, they can scope into different layers'.[41] Here Nørgård highlights the complex relationship shared between micro-scale development of musical motifs in a note-by-note transformation, and macro-scale evolution of the piece as a whole. This led to a further question which I investigated through the composition of these pieces:

- How is it possible to be influenced by both the micro-patterns of nature and its larger forms and structures without either dominating the musical perception I sought to cultivate through the compositional process?

Both *Waves caress* and *A Tree's Spiral* are influenced by large physical formations. However, the moment-to-moment development of each piece was influenced by a more internal sense of form, developing the lines and motifs gradually as a means of building the piece. In this way, the micro-scale and the macro-scale are very entwined; the moment-to-moment development of musical ideas is traced onto a much larger sense of the form of the work, linked to natural formations and patterns, and also to the sense of micro and macro in the natural world, the vast structures and the tiny details which exist within these. Although composed in one single movement, Nørgård's Fifth Symphony is composed of multiple 'hierarchical branches', described by the composer as being 'rather like a rainbow of speeds'.[42] This compositional approach to multiple cycles of time and pulse existing at the same time to create the form of the music was developed by Nørgård earlier in his career during a phase which he describes as 'a concentrated period on the Nordic sound'.[43] The influences

[41]Per Nørgård, quoted in Martin Anderson, "The Many Patterns of Per Nørgård*," Tempo* 202 (1997): 7.

[42] Nørgård in Anderson's "The Many Patterns of Per Nørgård," 7.

[43] Nørgård, 4.

from Sibelius led to Nørgård's development of his distinctive early compositional style, working with infinity rows where 'the germ of a motif, as little as just two tones, will unfold infinitely'.[44] Nørgård described this as 'small forms in small forms in small forms' relating this to 'the kinds of pattern that are close to the patterns of nature ... that's what fascinating about fractals: they are nature-like. So it's not the expression, but it's the inevitable vehicle for expression'.[45] Musicological accounts of Nørgård's infinity series similarly emphasise its hierarchical temporal organisation. Kullberg describes replicas of the series as recurring at different structural levels in original and inverted forms, allowing local patterns to interact within a potentially unbounded larger system.[46]

As demonstrated above through the transformation of the central motif, in *Waves caress the skin of ancient rock...* I worked with micro-forms to build the larger structure of the piece. For example, the first appearance of another central musical theme, from the second beat of bar 18–bar 24, is used alongside the motif detailed previously as a secondary repeating 'cantus firmus' line throughout the piece, the intervals and shapes within this line forming the basis for many of the musical lines which trace the transformation of the rock. This first appearance of the line follows an undulating shape like that of the wave formations at the opening of the piece, reflecting the smooth circular form of the young rock. Within this outer shape, the line is built from internal shapes and interval relations, beginning with a descending octave glissando between bars 18–19 which is echoed in the transition between bars 19–20, now one octave lower and replacing the glissando with a tremolo octave E. The line then gradually ascends through bar 20 with 7th and 9th glissandi leading to the highest point of the line, and the piece, so far. It then descends suddenly from the peak B to a low G sharp, before making a harmonic shift to the first C and F natural of the line. I created smaller echoes of shapes within the line, for example at the very end of the

[44] Nørgård, 4.

[45] Nørgård, 6.

[46] Erling Kullberg, "Beyond Infinity: On the Infinity Series—The DNA of Hierarchical Music," in *The Music of Per Nørgård: Fourteen Interpretive Essays*, ed. Anders Beyer (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 71–106.

line, in the transition between bars 23–24, I echo the ascent from the E in bar 20 to the high B in bar 22, compressing this into a semiquaver figuration from an F sharp to a G, reflecting the chromaticism of the semiquaver shapes from earlier in the piece, leading to a high B but now one octave lower than in bar 22. I was working closely with a photograph of the surface of the rock when composing this line, concentrating on reflecting both the overall form of the rock and the intricate lines, like veins, running through it. This awareness naturally led to the development of my compositional approach, creating 'small forms in small forms in small forms'[47] to reflect the depth of patterning whilst also expressing the transformation over time, the internal shapes, intervals shifting and altering almost imperceptibly within the wider structure of the piece.

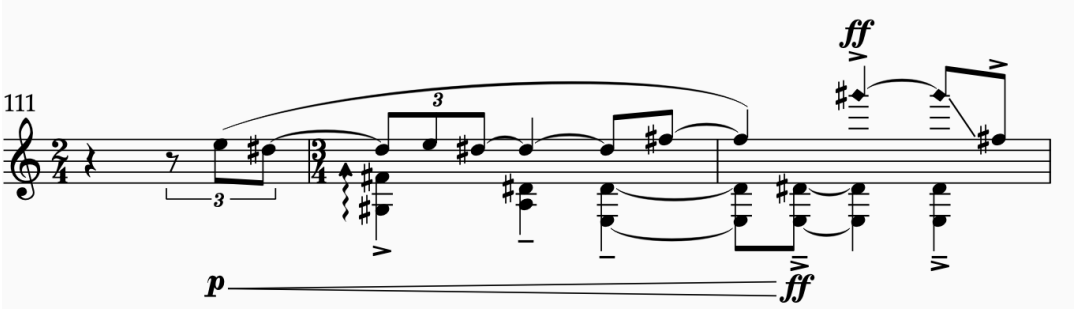
When the line reappears in its transformed state from bar 111, there are further echoes of the original shapes within the line. The rock's earlier curved form is now marked by experience, angular and jagged. The descending movement to the low E in the first part of the original line is still present as it is split into two voices from bars 111–113. The upper voice fluctuates between E and D sharp mirroring the 7th glissando from D sharp to E in bar 20, whilst the lower voice descends to the low E, now as a 7th chord rather than an octave as before. An ascending accelerando passage follows in bar 114 leading to a statement of the B–A E–D sharp figure from bar 22 but now with the lower voice breaking this high melodic line. I used this lower voice within the final transformation of the melody to add weight, evoking the age and experience of the rock, with the development of its form over time traced in the development of the original line. The lower voice of bar 115 ascends over a 7th, and the E at the end of the bar glissandos through a 9th to the beginning of bar 116, mirroring the 7th and 9th glissandi in bar 20 but now an octave higher. In bar 116, once again, gravity is added to this high melody by the entry of the lower voice. The low G sharp appears as before but now in a tremolo figure breaking the ascent to the high B in bar 117. The line then descends to the B two octaves lower passing through two descending 6th chords,

[47] Nørgård, 6.
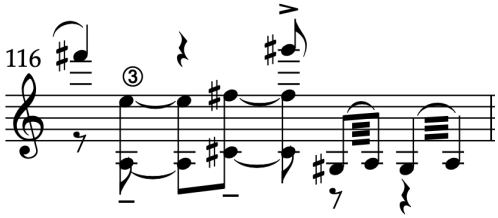
reflecting the weighted use of 6th chords in bar 102 and 109. This final appearance of this melody is centred around a general descending shape, with multiple smaller descending figures within it, aiming to create a sense of the transformed, weighted, profound shape of the experienced rock. The internal shapes within the undulating line of the original are developed to reflect the transformation; the rock is no longer young and smooth but is marked by the passage of time, layers of experience have formed within and on the surface of the rock.[48]

[48] Latour's concept of the 'actant' is pertinent to this discussion. The 'actant' is a central concept in Actor-Network Theory (ANT), referring to any entity – human or non-human (objects, technology, living organisms) – that acts, produces, effects or modifies a situation. Borrowed from semiotics, actants possess agency by transforming, modifying, or enabling actions within a network, challenging the notion that only humans hold power. The rock is not simply acted upon but enables the flow of time.

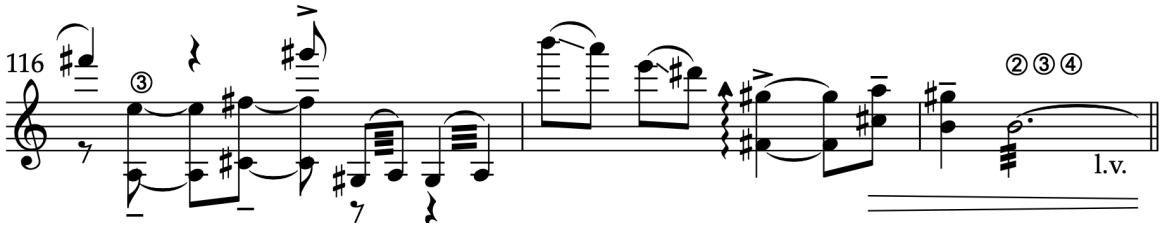
SCORE EXAMPLE 4 – The upper voice fluctuates between E and D sharp mirroring the 7th glissando from D sharp to E in bar 20, whilst the lower voice descends to the low E, now as a 7th chord rather than an octave as before.



SCORE EXAMPLE 5 – In bar 116, once again, gravity is added to this high melody by the entry of the lower voice.



SCORE EXAMPLE 6 – The line then descends to the B two octaves lower passing through two descending 6th chords, reflecting the weighted use of 6th chords in bar 102 and 109.



The idea of the polytemporal as an unfolding of time and narrative in multiple layering strands, with different scales of time existing simultaneously is also displayed in *A Tree's Spiral of Time* for solo piano. This piece was influenced by the rings of time within tree trunks, a natural display of Latour's 'loops' where, far from being linear, time has 'the form of a circle expanding in all directions'.[49] Basing a piece on these tree rings allowed me to further experiment with my approach to musical form. The overall structure of the piece consists of four tree rings, with a repeating central theme separating each tree ring section from the next. The first tree ring section is the outermost and largest ring within the tree trunk, representing the most recent time held within the tree. As the piece progresses the listener moves inwards through the rings, gradually reaching the innermost ring within the tree trunk and the deepest most ancient form of time held within the tree. The structure which I imagined reverses linear time as we move from 'the modern/ the present' progressively deeper into 'the past' through the course of the piece. This presented compositional challenges in creating a sense of development, but of a kind of reverse progress, altering perceptions of linear progress through the handling of musical material. Similarly to in *Waves caress,* I visualised the piece as taking on the form of the tree trunk, a living being that holds time within itself. To reflect this sense of Bjornerud's 'timefulness', both pieces return to a central theme (or themes) which is repeated multiple times through the piece in its varying states, allowing the transformation to be perceivable and felt by the listener. These points of stability in both pieces were intended to allow the transformation of the central themes to become audible and perceivable by the listener — not as a linear transformation of 'progress' but as a development as the layers of experience grow.

The first time that the repeating central theme is heard is from bars 8–19 when it follows an introductory passage built from fluctuating tremolo harmonies. The use of tremolo then defines the central theme and becomes a recurring feature in each iterance of the theme throughout the piece, even as other elements of the theme

[49] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern,* 75.

transform. Although much of the discussion in this first chapter is motivic, the use of tremolo in *A Tree's Spiral* suggests that this concern with pitch is part of a broader response to environment, encompassing issues of timbre, register, and rhythm (these issues will be covered in detail later in the thesis).

A pianist's single-note tremolo creates an uneven, pulsating quality, especially when it must be played with a single finger owing to repeated tremolo layering in multiple other piano voices (for example, in bars 9–10). This combined with the expressive marking of 'trembling' beneath the first of these tremolo markings, was intended to capture the sense of a living, breathing organism, unfreezing the static pitches into a trembling and uneven pulsation, especially in places where tremolo pitches layer, for example in the upper piano voices in bars 10–11. Jenny Odell challenges the capitalist notion that everyone/everything shares the same time which can be divided into compartments to increase progress and productivity. Discussing her observations of a single branch of a California buckeye tree in a park local to her home, Odell documents the physical changes of the buckeye branch over the course of a year concluding that the 'branch was a clock – but unlike the clock at home, it would never return to its original position. Instead, it was a physical witness and record of overlapping events, some of which happened long ago and some of which are still occurring.'[50] Odell goes on to define this 'exercise in observation' as "unfreezing something in time … To do this means releasing something or someone from their bounds as a supposed stable, individual entity existing in abstract time, seeing them not only as existing within time, but also as the ongoing materialisation of time itself … The literal tree in front of you is encoding time and change at this literal moment.'[51] The relevance of this passage to both *A Tree's Spiral* and *Waves caress* is apparent. The tremolo in *A Tree's Spiral* is just a single technique used to create this sense of 'unfreezing in time' which Odell describes with such clarity. The perceived expansion of a single pitch into a shimmering sonority not only suggests a pulsating

[50] Jenny Odell, *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock* (New York: Random House, 2023), 139.

[51] Odell, 139.

current reflecting the internal life of the tree but also connects to a more general sense of expansion of register and resonance throughout this piece, deepening the field of perception and spatialising the sound. Peter Wohlleben draws our attention to the importance of vibration and resonance to trees as he writes 'trees communicate by olfactory, visual and electrical signals' and 'by sound waves … [the] roots crackling quietly at a frequency of 220 hertz.'[52]

This tremolo becomes one of the only persistent and unchanged features of the central theme as it undergoes transformation progressively to create the sense of deepening time as the listener descends within the tree rings. Tree Ring 1 (bars 20–67), the outermost surface ring, begins with a performance instruction to play 'on the surface of the keys'. The light surface touch on the piano keys through fast staccato semiquaver passages, combined with the erratic accenting of certain notes within the phrases and the high register of both the upper and lower piano voice without any sense of timbral space was intended to give a sense of linear moment-to-moment time passing without any real progression of the musical ideas. The accented quavers at the end of each phrase don't bring any sense of climax or resolution and this section feels as if it's cycling on itself as the same motifs recur with almost imperceptible changes. When the central theme returns in bars 68–79 it is unchanged by the outermost ring and remains the same as its initial iteration. In Tree Ring 2 (bars 80–118) however, there is a greater sense of change as we move into the tree. The left hand is now instructed to play with a 'deeper touch than the right hand' and there is a wider gap in register between the upper and lower voicings. There are interruptions reminiscent of Tree Ring 1, for example the accented semiquavers on the last beat of bar 83, and these become progressively immersed within the line (for example in bars 90–91 they appear to exist in dialogue with the more lyrical surrounding material). When the central theme returns from bars 119–126 it is now altered as the left hand moves into the bass clef creating a wider timbral space between the voicings. From the end of the first phrase in bar 121 the hands move four octaves apart with the right hand playing

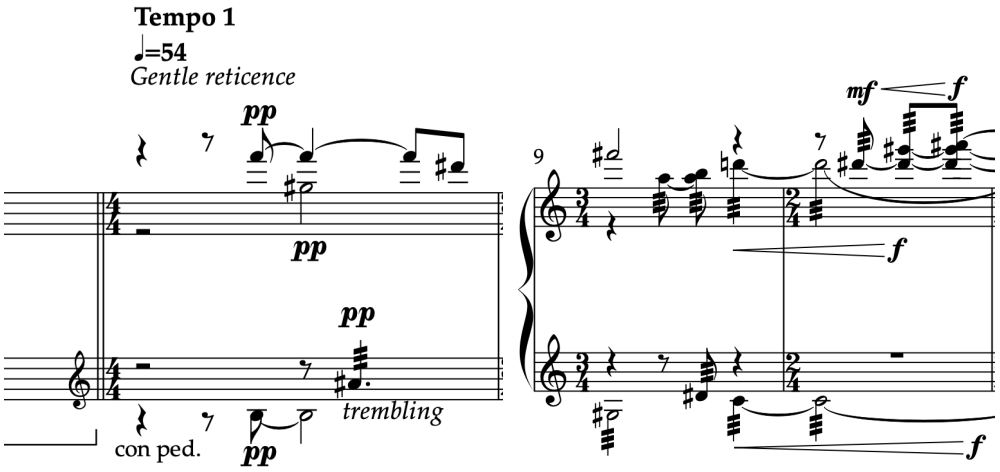
[52] Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees* (London: William Collins, 2017), 12–13.

accented octave chords. The significance of this is shown by the fermata in bar 123. The theme is shorter than previously and ends with a feeling of unfinished change partly due to the sparse texture created by the wide gap in register and the exposed 6ths in bars 125–126. The drop of a 7th from D–E as the final interval of this central theme in the left hand further creates a sense of unfinished transformation. In Tree Ring 3 (bars 127–145) the pianist is asked play with 'depth of tone' as the musical material moves towards the centre of the tree. The presence of the C sharp octave chord in bar 134 marks a turning point in the piece as the gaps in register between the hands widen even further before the widest space so far in bar 140. There is a sense of deepening intensity and experience at the reiteration of the central theme from bars 146–150; the high and low extremes of the piano are used, with the upper and lower voices reaching a gap of 6 octaves apart. The C sharp octave from bar 134 foreshadows the harsh high octaves from bar 147 which were previously delicate tremolo pitches. Tree Ring 4 (bars 151–164) is the innermost ring in the centre of the tree, and the extreme slowness of the tempo (40–54bpm) seeks to create the sense that this tree ring exists outside time, or outside our notions of time. I use three staves in this final tree ring section to show the separation of the different layers of musical material which span the full range of the piano with each layer acting as an independent but also an *interdependent* voice. The depth of texture here suggests the notion of layers in the polytemporal again as these different voices moving at different paces and times occur simultaneously. The final iteration of the central theme from bars 165–170 shows a complete transformation, ending with an exposed 5th spanning 6 octaves between the upper and lower voice. The high tessitura of both voices in the first tree ring to this use of the full span of the piano by the end of the piece signifies the important of register to the sense of transformation, experience and deepening layers and complexity of time in this piece. The above analysis has demonstrated how we move backwards in time through the piece: transformation occurs, and 'progress' becomes a process of widening musical textures as different scales of time overlap and layer in nature. In this way, progress through the piece can be imagined as a vertical deepening as multiple layers build over each other.

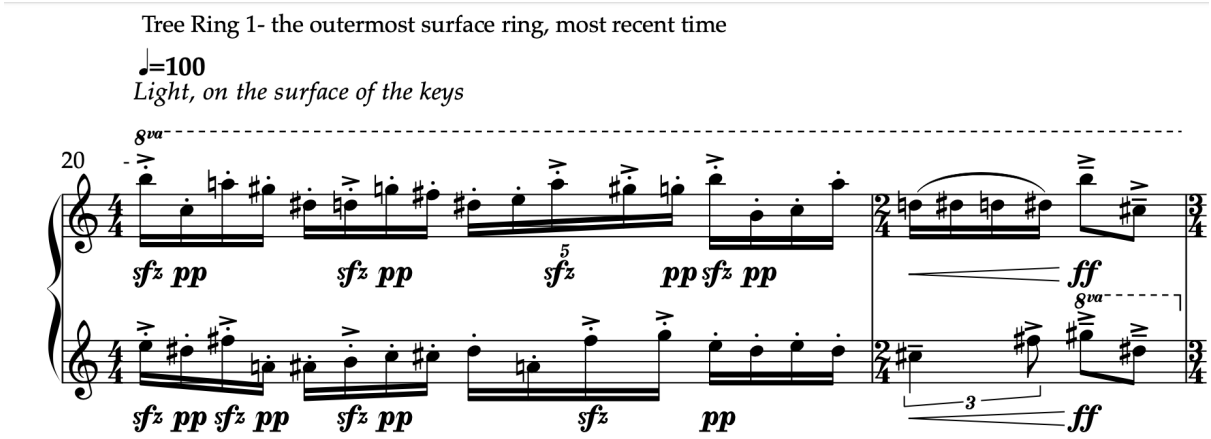
Vitally, in both *Waves caress* and *A Tree's Spiral* resonance, register, and time are all fundamentally connected. Rather like Bergson's notion of spiralling and deepening circumcentric rings of time, I came to think of the relationship to time in these pieces as one of depth, rather than horizontal linear movement. The expansion of texture and register occurs progressively, through the resonance of the tremolo in *A Tree's Spiral* and the development of polyphonic voices on the solo instruments in both pieces, which widen the registral field and create a deepening perception of space. The two questions posed in the programme note of Lindberg's *Related Rocks* for two pianos, two percussionists and electronics seem particularly relevant to my exploration of resonance and register in relation to perceptions of time; "What internal life can be distinguished in a sound or texture? How do we move from one situation to another in time?"[53]

[53] Risto Nieminen, *Programme Note to Related Rocks* (London: Chester Music, 1997), trans. Nick Le Quesne.

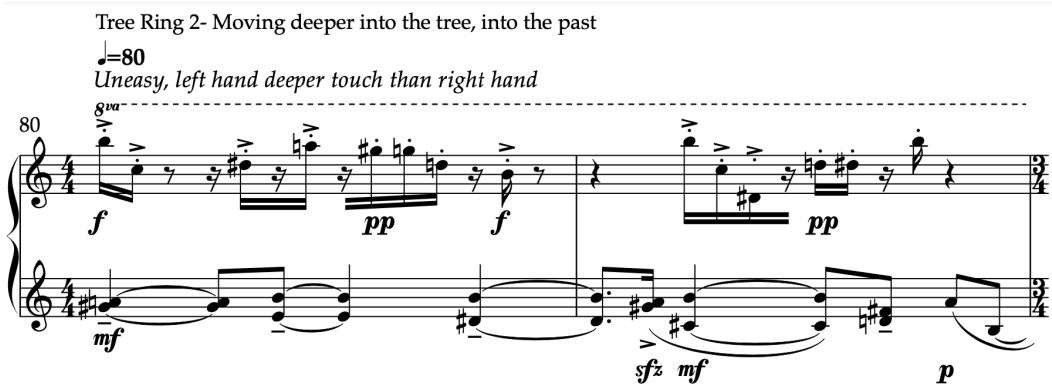
SCORE EXAMPLE 7 – Bars 8–10 introduce the use of ‘trembling’ tremolo as a defining theme.



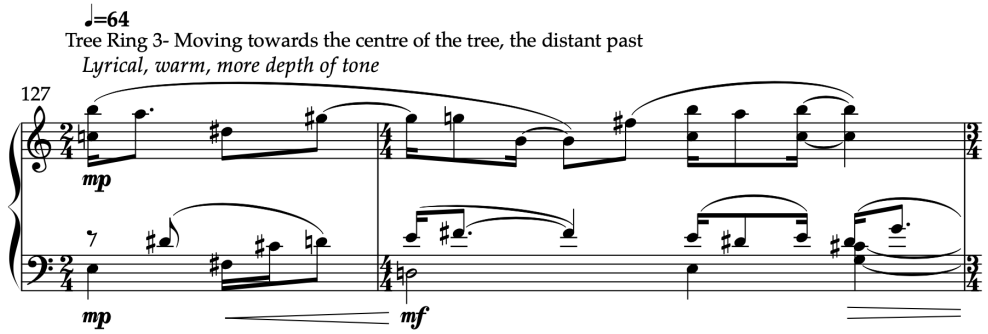
SCORE EXAMPLE 8 – The start of Tree Ring 1 (bars 20–21). A light surface touch on the piano keys through fast staccato semiquaver passages is combined with the erratic accenting of certain notes within the phrases and the high register of both the upper and lower piano voices.



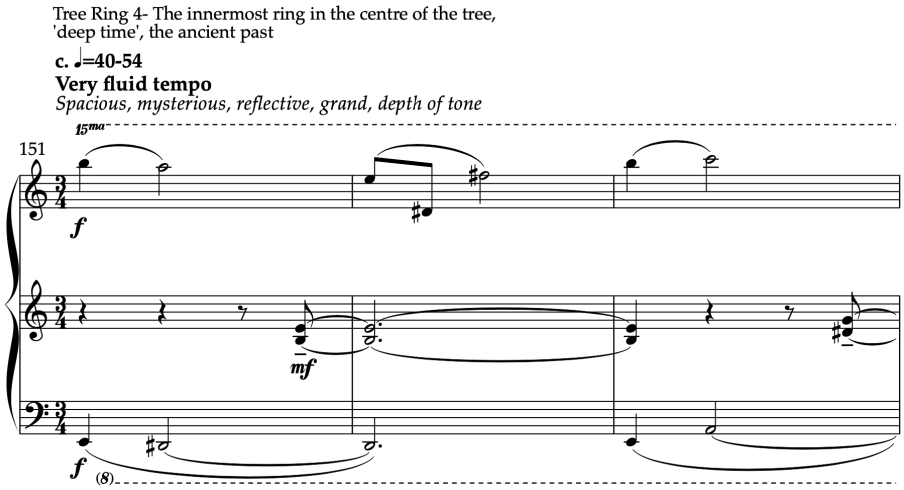
SCORE EXAMPLE 9 – The start of Tree Ring 2 (bars 80–81). The left hand is now instructed to play with a ‘deeper touch than the right hand’ and there is a wider gap in register between the upper and lower voicings.



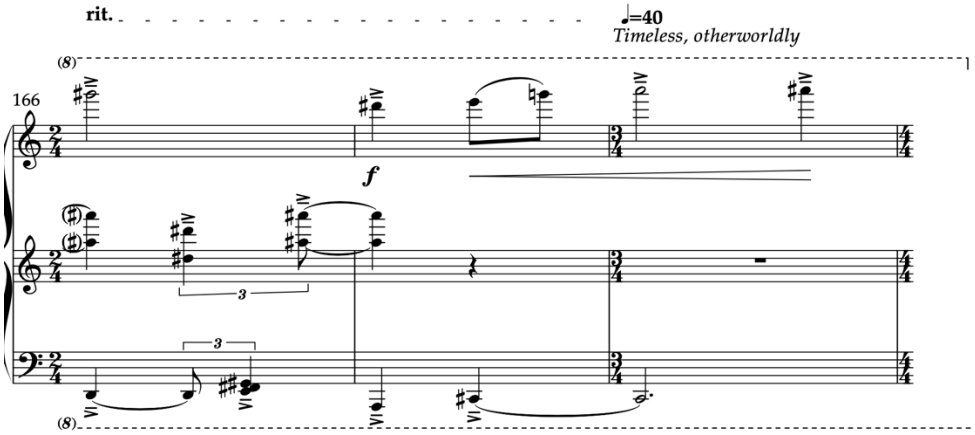
SCORE EXAMPLE 10 – In Tree Ring 3 (bars 127–145) the pianist is asked play with ‘depth of tone’ as the musical material moves towards the centre of the tree.



SCORE EXAMPLE 11 – Tree Ring 4 (bars 151–164) is the innermost ring in the centre of the tree, and the extreme slowness of the tempo (40–54bpm) seeks to create the sense that this tree ring almost exists outside time.



SCORE EXAMPLE 12 –The high tessitura of both voices in the first tree ring expanding to use of the full span of the piano by the end of the work (below) signifies the importance of register to the sense of transformation, experience, and deepening layers of time in this piece.



In *Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock...* and *A Tree's Spiral of Time* I seek to give the landscape a voice, 'sounding out' the layers of time within the landscape and 'unfreezing' the rock and the tree trunk in time. The material form, texture, and evolution of both natural formations informed my process. In these pieces I came to think of time and form as acting together rather than as separate musical parameters. There is a symbiosis between time and space in geology and also within tree trunks, and these natural formations provided useful metaphors for temporality which I could use to visualise my approach to perceptions of time, creating musical form through both moment-to-moment change, and in the overall structuring of the pieces. Both Bergson and Bjornerud suggest that our connection to space is closely linked to our connection to time; time and space are physical and can be perceived through close observation of nature. Odell's approach to 'unfreezing something in time' acknowledges the unfolding of time in physical space and can also transform the 'unfrozen' object or commodity into a living subject; the California buckeye branch unfurls and grows throughout the year; the volcanic rock evolves through the course of a human lifetime and far beyond. The inanimate is transformed into the animate, sentient, and living, and new scales of time and life co-exist with the human. As Timothy Morton suggests: 'realising that there are lots of different temporality formats is basically what ecological awareness is. It's equivalent to acknowledging in a deep way the existence of beings that aren't you, with whom you coexist'.[54] Through both pieces I drew upon music's temporality to develop processes which could evoke a different sense of time, expressing the evolution and growth of non-human life forms.

The research process increasingly revealed that the temporal relationships explored in *Waves caress* and *A Tree's Spiral* are encountered through embodied acts of listening and material engagement. The compositional engagement with Bergson's conception of duration revealed that questions of temporality could not be separated from questions of embodied engagement with the more-than-human world. This prompted a

[54] Morton, *All Art is Ecological,* 66.

shift in the research towards phenomenology and the materiality of sound, through which processes of making, cultivation, and perception became the central focus of the next chapter.

Strings of Connectivity – Timbral Entanglements in:

1. *Mastiha* for string orchestra
2. *Rock, Salt, Air, Water* for string quartet, *Within the drifting contours of the land …* for violin and piano, and *March (Ice melting, petals unfurling)* for period orchestra



Credit @John Perivolaris – *Pistacia Lentiscus, Island of Chios, Greece*

'I want to think of making . . . as a process of *growth*. This is to place the maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials.' – Tim Ingold. [55]

'I rarely draw what I see – I draw what I feel in my body. Sculpture is a three-dimensional projection of primitive feeling: touch, texture, size and scale, hardness

[55] Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art, and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), 21.

and warmth, evocation and compulsion to move, live, and love. Landscape is strong - it has bones and flesh and skin and hair.' – Barbara Hepworth. [56]

My family name, Perivolaris, derives from the Greek word 'perivoli' (περιβόλι) which translates to mean 'orchard'. The name translates to mean 'orchard keeper' (Περιβολάρης). The fertile soil of Chios is particularly known for the cultivation of the mastic-bearing *Pistacia Lentiscus* tree. Mastic cultivation is a process I have always felt drawn to, both because of its central place in the global identity of Chios, with the mastic tree resin existing since antiquity as the island's main export, as well as its powerful role in the lives of islanders through the centuries. My Chiot family were merchant seamen and my great-great-grandfather Delemis may well have been involved in the export of mastic to the Otttoman empire, the Levant, the Black Sea region and, perhaps, Europe. Despite the efforts of many through the ages to transport seedlings and encourage the growth of mastic groves in other lands, mastic trees will only flourish in the soil of Chios, giving the area a Protected Designation of Origin from the European Union. Through a complex cultivation process the trees release a white resin which is used in a myriad of ways, including in pharmaceutical products and as a unique botanical flavouring in food and drink. The precious commodity of mastic has led to conflict through the ages but remains a vital economic source to those from the island.

The long and tumultuous history of mastic production is masked by the fragrant beauty of the mastic orchards of Chios, which cover whole hillsides in the south of the island. Southern villages, such as those of Mesta and Pyrgi (the latter famous for the geometrical relief designs 'xysta' decorating its buildings), are still known as mastic villages or 'Mastichochoria' so tied up are their fates with the ongoing history of mastic production. These villages, and the southern and western coastlines of the island, bear the traces of the struggle involved in protecting mastic. The network of 'vigles', medieval watchtowers built by the Genoese during their occupation of Chios as a defence fortification against the pirates who regularly invaded the island, remain

[56] Barbara Hepworth, "A Sculptor's Landscape," in *Drawings from a Sculptor's Landscape* (London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1966), 11.

along the coast whilst the labyrinthine tunnel passageways built during the Byzantine period to connect the second storeys of houses in the Mastichochoria villages acted as escape routes for villagers under attack. These are physical reminders of the brutality, as well as the income and wealth, which mastic brought to Chios. Cultivation of mastic has always been political, the crop and its success tied to the fates of islanders, with the vigles in use until the mid-eighteenth century. The complex history of the island has been governed by this natural commodity.

Nowadays, the Chios Gum Mastic Growers Association manages the cultivation of mastic, a measure introduced by islanders in 1938 to liberate themselves from their exploitation and poverty at the hands of external commercial networks. The dialogue between the ongoing hardships faced by those in the Association and the embodiment of laborious age-old cultivation practices is the focus of *The People of Mastiha*, a 2023 collaboration between social anthropologist Dimitris Tsouchlis, Chian environmental photographer Stratis Vogiatzis, and Chian humanitarian worker Vicky Chaziri. This research project gives visibility to the individuals behind current mastic production on the island, beginning with an extensive list of questions including, 'What's the profile of a mastiha producer today? What has changed about the cultivation process? Do they consider the trees a blessing or a curse? Do they see any risks in the changes that are taking place?'[57] 'The People of Mastiha' is effective in the way that it acknowledges the commercial aspects of mastic cultivation whilst retaining a central focus on the spiritual connections which emerge through the embodied physical practices of mastic cultivation. Photographs of workers' hands, coated in white mastic dust, cradle the precious mastic droplets (known as the 'Tears of Chios' after their distinctive shape); in the words of Yannis from Pyrgi taken from one of the testimonials, 'Mastic, how can I say it, is a part of our life and it keeps being such since we were little kids, it is inside us this thing, not just as an income but as everything.'[58] Now, mastic cultivation is a finely tuned extractive process in which human life works in tandem with the mastic orchards, but in ways which maximise

[57] Dimitris Tsouchlis in *The People of Mastiha,* trans. Michael Eleftheriou (Athens: Agra Publications, 2023), 7.
[58] Yannis from Pyrgi, testimonial in *The People of Mastiha,* 118.

productivity, leading many to fear both for the trees and the Chians 'that the link between producer, crop and trees has indeed been broken, at least in part.'[59] *The People of Mastiha* shines a light on the ongoing spirituality behind the mastic farming processes with relations between the orchards and their human carers as connective links which have bonded humans with their surroundings for centuries on Chios, but which now, in an age of mass productivity, have become fragile and close to breaking.

This tense bond between humans and their external surroundings is also portrayed in Barbara Hepworth's string sculptures. In a 1946 sculpture *Pelagos*, which translates from the Greek meaning 'Deep Sea' (or to be more precise, intercontinental oceanic depth), the lines of seven taut strings are enclosed within two curved arms of wood. The strings are embedded into these curved forms, with Hepworth linking the form of *Pelagos* to the view from her studio in St Ives where she was 'enfolded (but with always the escape for the eye straight out to the Atlantic) by the arms of the land to the left and the right'.[60] The strings conversely act as an entry point and a barrier; their translucency means we can see within the sculpture but they block complete access, whilst 'the spiral takes hold of one's hand and arm'.[61] Hepworth described the strings in her work as representing a 'pull' that she had experienced within the landscape.[62] Hepworth's strings are vibrational and resonant, both in the sonic and in the symbolic sense.

In her 1946 article in *Polemic* on Hepworth's work, E. H. Ramsden asked 'Is it not by the interpenetrations of the material, … the stringing and the inner tensions of the configured whole that a sense of the cosmic rhythm of life which transcends all forms through which it is given is evoked?'[63] Via this question Ramsden introduces several areas of Hepworth's work, especially as expressed in her string sculptures, which will

[59] Tsouchlis in *The People of Mastiha,* 11.
[60] Barbara Hepworth, quoted in Matthew Gale and Chris Stephens, *Barbara Hepworth: Works in the Tate Collection and the Barbara Hepworth Museum, St Ives* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), 100.
[61] Hepworth, *A Sculptor's Landscape,* 13.
[62] Barbara Hepworth, quoted in E. H. Ramsden, *Sculpture: Theme and Variations, Towards a Contemporary Aesthetic* (London: Lund Humphries, 1953), 42.
[63] E. H. Ramsden, "The Sculpture of Barbara Hepworth," *Polemic: A Magazine of Philosophy, Psychology and Aesthetics* no. 5 (September–October 1946): 33–34.

become important to discussions surrounding my recent piece composed for string orchestra, *Mastiha*. This refers to the idea of frictional 'interpenetrations' between materials which are component parts of a whole, the strings acting as tensile connective bonds which are vibrational and taut, alive to the world around them.

In her essay, Ramsden introduced a central tension of the sculptor's art, namely the way that she gives material form to invisible states and processes of transformation. According to Ramsden, 'The process of transformation … is that of which the artist, above all others, is most profoundly aware. But while to recreate the patterns of experience in terms which become progressively more evanescent is for the poet sufficiently arduous a task, for the sculptor … the problems involved are immeasurably more complex, … since to him belongs the necessity of giving tangible shape to ideas and intuitions which ordinarily transcend the limits of artistic faith.'[64] I often think of my compositional process as one of chiselling into a hard substance, a material and physical process enacted through my own labour, but this leads me to question how and why I draw this parallel between sculpting into a physical substance, and composing with sound. Is it due to the connection in my work to material nature, especially to the geological and elemental, as well as to the physical presence of humans within these external spaces as expressed through an awareness of the effort and labour of the performer and their instrument?

In a Tate Paper entitled 'Figure and Landscape: Barbara Hepworth's Phenomenology of Perception', Rachel Smith explores Hepworth's work through the lens of phenomenological philosophy. Smith draws parallels between Hepworth's expression of gestalt psychology through her work, in which the perception of the world occurs as an embodied and interconnected whole, and the discourse surrounding a phenomenology of perception, particularly as expressed in the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.[65] Merleau-Ponty argues that the body is the point of contact within the

[64] Ramsden, 33.

[65] Gestalt psychology proposes that perception is organised as meaningful wholes rather than assembled from separate sensory parts. Merleau-Ponty develops this principle phenomenologically, comparing perception to melody: just as notes only gain meaning through their relation to the musical whole, lived experience cannot be understood by isolating it into separate components. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behaviour*, trans. Alden L. Fisher (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 47–50.

external world and therefore becomes the site of perception. Hepworth acknowledged her preoccupation with gestaltism, stating that 'For me, the whole art of sculpture is the fusion of these two elements'[66], the elements in question being that of the human figure and the spirit as one element bound together, and landscape as the other element. There are parallels between Hepworth's use of this interwoven dyad, oppositional but fused, as a way of creating a tautness or tension in her sculptural practice, and my own exploration of human/nature dyads as a frictional device for my own compositional practice.

In his 1945 treatise *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty argued for 'the primacy of lived experience'[67] stating that 'Our constant aim is to elucidate the primary function whereby we bring into existence, for ourselves, or take a hold upon, space, & the object or the instrument, and to describe the body as the place where this appropriation occurs'.[68] This is a key definition of phenomenology, siting it as a fusion of the objective and external with the subjective and experienced; through 'the object or the instrument', or in other words, through the connection with the material and physical, and through action, we undergo a 'primary function' as we create or connect to external space and the surrounding world. This was exemplified by Hepworth when she wrote 'I rarely draw what I see -- I draw what I feel in my body'.[69] I will return to the work of Hepworth, and through the lens of her work, to this phenomenological discourse throughout this chapter. It holds a central relevance to my practice and to the following exploration of physical engagement within nature through a focus on enacted processes, and on sound.

It is the in-between space between subject and object in phenomenological discourse, 'the inevitability of contact between the body and the surrounding world'[70], which make it so relevant to this discussion of human labour and cultivation processes in the land; in gestalt philosophies, perception becomes process-based and it is in continual

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[66] Hepworth, *A Sculptor's Landscape,* 9.
[67] Rachel Smith, "Figure and Landscape: Barbara Hepworth's Phenomenology of Perception," *Tate Papers* no. 20 (Autumn 2013): 3.
[68] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 178.
[69] Hepworth, *A Sculptor's Landscape,* 11.
[70] Smith, "Figure and Landscape: Barbara Hepworth's Phenomenology of Perception," 3.

lived processes enacted from within the physical world where understanding lies. E. H. Ramsden stated: 'it is the modes of interconnectedness of things rather than the things themselves … the process of 'becoming' rather than the state of the 'become' that is ultimately significant.'[71] Ramsden draws here upon the importance of action and the in-between space in dyads. It is the physical actions embedding the body into the world which hold meaning, in the constructivist sense of building understanding through experience. In working the land, humans live and feel the world through physical action. Tsouchlis writes of mastiha farming that 'experience becomes custom and knowledge in the villages. It is passed on from adults to children in an experiential way, through seeing, talking and doing.'[72] All of the compositional methods discussed in this thesis (including in the previous *Inscribing Time* chapter) are centred around the expression of external processes through my own compositional process; the external which I am seeking to express becomes internal through the compositional process before becoming external again in performance, where I hope those relationships may be encountered by the listener.Whether they are human labouring or cultivation processes in the land, or natural geological processes, or even the embodied process of the performer being made apparent to the listener, it is the physical and embedded process of 'becoming', of 'being-at-the-world-from-within-it'[73], which preoccupies me as humans are transformed by the land, their lives becoming shaped by their surroundings.

From the beginning of the 1950s Barbara Hepworth started to use steel rods in place of taut string, notably in her work *Apollo* created for a production of Sophocles' *Electra* in St Denis's production at London's Old Vic theatre in 1951. *Apollo* is a piece which engulfs and surrounds those who come near it, both through its expansive, looping metal forms, but also in the far-reaching shadows these forms cast. Rather like Derek Jarman's use of the word 'chained'[74] to describe his relationship to

[71] Ramsden, *The Sculpture of Barbara Hepworth,* 33.
[72] Tsouchlis in *The People of Mastiha,* 9.
[73] Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia A. Dreyfus, "Translators' Introduction," in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), xii.
[74] Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature* (London: Vintage, [1992] 2018), 77.

the land in the creation of his garden in Dungeness, Hepworth's steel rods express the tensional nature of being embedded within the world, a state which conversely Hepworth described in relation to *Apollo* as reaching 'outwards and upwards'.[75] In other words, the friction here lies in the need to become enmeshed *within* in order to freely become a *part of* and extend beyond the confines of the body and the (isolated) self. Merleau-Ponty expressed this when he said, 'Insofar as I have hands, feet; a body, I sustain around me intentions which are not dependent on my decisions and which affect my surroundings in a way that I do not choose'.[76] Rachel Smith writes that in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, 'A reciprocal relation was established with things perceived and categories of subject and object ceased to apply.'[77] As our effect on the world around us comes under ever greater scrutiny in age of climate crisis, it is important to remember that we are not isolated beings but are instead 'chained' into our surroundings, and into our responsibilities to these surroundings, 'a participant in amongst a world of active materials.'[78]

Anna Tsing's ecological 'friction'[79], introduced in the earlier chapters of this thesis, takes on new meanings when examined in the context of timbre in my pieces for string instruments. Rachel Smith posits that 'String is a symbol of interconnectivity … It exerts upon its viewer [or listener in our case] a sensation comparable to its own tautness, an increased sense of tension.'[80] Indeed, this interplay between connectivity and frictional tension which will be explored in the following discussion of my composition *Mastiha* may well be string's 'vital value'[81], a term used by Merleau-Ponty to describe the body's experiential understanding of substances.

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[75] Barbara Hepworth, quoted in *Contemporary British Sculpture* exhibition catalogue (London: Arts Council, 1958), 12; quoted in Gale and Stephens, 132.
[76] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 385.
[77] Smith, "Figure and Landscape: Barbara Hepworth's Phenomenology of Perception," 17.
[78] Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art, and Architecture*, 21.
[79] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[80] Smith, "Figure and Landscape: Barbara Hepworth's Phenomenology of Perception," 14.
[81] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 61.

1. *Mastiha* (2023) for string orchestra



Credit @John Perivolaris

‘There is no representation at the level of perception: there is only flesh in touch with itself … That is the essence of the reversibility relation; not that the tree I see sees me, but that I am visible from the standpoint of the tree as it is from mine because we are both made of the same stuff: the flesh of the world.’ – On Maurice Merleau-Ponty, M. C. Dillon.[82]

Through *Mastiha*, a piece for string orchestra which is influenced by, and charts the process of, mastic cultivation on Chios, it became clear that I’m using timbre to express the frictional bonds between humans/nature. In the process of writing this piece I was reflecting upon the following research aims:

[82] M. C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 2nd ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 170, quoted in Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone* (London: Routledge, 2004), 19.

- To use timbre to, in the words of Ingold, "place the maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials".[83]

- To develop approaches to timbre as a means of expressing the frictional bonds which exist between humans/nature in working relationships, for example in the manual labour of mastic cultivation, developing methods which invite heightened awareness for the listener of the embodied effort and labour of the musicians.

- To use the tense, frictional, but also connective properties of the strings, drawing on the symbolism *and* physicality of these properties, to inform an approach to timbre in which the material substance of the taut strings is used to express the tensions within an enmeshed, embedded view of subject and object, with the resultant sound as a metaphor for this.

- To develop an awareness of timbre in my compositional process, as a means of expressing a physical, material, phenomenological relationship within nature alongside the imagined and perceived aspects of landscape through the material qualities of the sound itself.

- To develop a progressively complex layering of sound, combined with distinct timbral contrasts, through the structure of a piece of music in order to create a sense of multi-layered, cyclical (and non-linear) narrative thread.

In their introductory article on timbre at the head of a collection of essays on the topic, Emily I. Dolan and Alexander Rehding consciously avoid defining the term, positing that 'to talk about timbre means to constantly define and redefine it'.[84] Unlike other musical parameters, timbre emerges in their study as 'a messy complication'[85] when seen through the lens of a primarily pitch-based means of understanding sound. Daniel Villegas Vélez extends this further by situating timbre 'as a remainder — … the "and

[83] Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art, and Architecture*, 21.
[84] Emily I. Dolan and Alexander Rehding, "Timbre: Alternative Histories and Possible Futures for the Study of Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 5.
[85] Dolan and Rehding, "Timbre: Alternative Histories and Possible Futures for the Study of Music," 1.

also" of any attempted description of sounds.'[86] Dolan and Rehding instead call for the 'need to develop new tools' for the study of timbre, requiring 'our eyes, our ears, and our imaginations.'[87] I see this study of *Mastiha* as my answer to the pair's call for greater imagination in understanding the importance of timbre in pieces of music.[88] I am interested in unpacking the blurred boundaries which exist without hierarchy between timbre and the other parameters which make up my music, as well as between auditory timbre and the other senses. Indeed, it is this messiness and elusivity of timbre which means it is ideally poised to express those aspects of the study of human/nature entanglements which preoccupy me the most ; the experiential encounters which bring humans into their closest dialogue with, and understanding of, nature, including during labour and cultivation of the land, as well as the physical and the material elements of this relationship.

Villegas Vélez draws upon the phenomenologist perspective introduced earlier in this chapter, acknowledging that 'timbre is not only auditory but also visual, tactile, physical and physiological. Timbre, like the body, sits at the nexus of experience … [and]… is an interface between various ontological and social registers'.[89] That idea of an interface between different modes of being, a focal point of existence and experience, takes me back to Hepworth's string sculpture *Pelagos*, the tautness of the drawn out strings seeming to reference that most central, primal, and tense bond between a figure and their surrounding landscape, connective and pregnant with embodied awareness. From the very start of *Mastiha*, the tension of the drawn-out strings within the string orchestra is made apparent by suspended solo pitches which swell separately from a niente dynamic to fortissimo tutti sections within the first fourteen seconds of the piece. This, combined with the staggered entry of each solo part coming in at progressively shorter time intervals, gives a sense of growth, tension and agitation at this early point in the work. These first nine seconds or three bars of

[86] Daniel Villegas Vélez, "The Matter of Timbre: Listening, Genealogy, Sound," in *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 10.
[87] Dolan and Rehding, "Timbre: Alternative Histories and Possible Futures for the Study of Music," 7.
[88] The work of Dolan and Rehding seems to draw on Robert Erickson's 1975 work *Sound Structure in Music*, which discusses timbre as a musical element equal in importance to, and entwined inextricably with, pitch.
[89] Villegas Vélez, "The Matter of Timbre: Listening, Genealogy, Sound," 29.

the piece are crucial and symbolic in introducing a central tension and dialogue within the piece as whole; that of individuals grappling with the tensed, drawn out string as a means of expression, the bodily action and effort of playing a stringed instrument, the uncoordinated unfolding of the sound envelope in individual string voices and lines, and the ways that these single voices or threads expand into a interwoven myriad of voices; they are component parts of an interconnected whole. In other words, the frictions and encounters between individual and communal unfolding of sound and line defines the timbre in this piece, drawing upon key aspects of mastic cultivation itself, including the tension between individual effort in mastic labour and the importance of this to the communal life on Chios, as well as the non-human communities of mastic groves, each individual of which will follow its own personal growth cycle and formation, often regardless of the human intervention. This leads back to E. H. Ramsden's siting of 'the interpenetrations of the material … and the inner tensions of the configured whole' as key to the creation of 'a sense of the cosmic rhythm of life'.[90] If the material in the case of *Mastiha* is an awareness of the individual instruments and performers within the collective, then my treatment of timbre here creates a frictional interpenetration between many individuals as they weave together in a myriad of ways.

After the initial growth of the five solo string voices into layered tutti sections the vibrational resonance of the tensed string is made even more audible through the falling semi-tonal figures which pass between the parts, and through the glissandi which begin to permeate the texture. The semi-tonal figurations – often heard in quintuplet or triplet semiquaver fluctuations – lie somewhere between the delay, sustain, and release in the Attack Delay/Decay Sustain Release (ADSR) sound envelope[91] and blur the division between these transitions, suspending the sound in a tense in-between region. At this early stage in the piece, they are established as a way of creating a dense weave of varying sound envelopes layered over one another – a tense, frictional, material timbre which draws on the visual stimulus of the weaving

[90] Ramsden, *The Sculpture of Barbara Hepworth,* 34.
[91] Villegas Vélez, "The Matter of Timbre: Listening, Genealogy, Sound," 29.

trunks and branches of mastic groves, the surface of their bark being made up of multiple ridged lines which feel gnarled and roughly textured when touched. This is an example, within the first bars of the piece, where I draw on the multi-sensory and the experiential in my treatment of timbre throughout the work.

The glissandi become masked within layers when they are heard in only one part at a time, further complicating the interweaving of opposing sound envelopes, but are far more audible when heard in homorhythmic duo moments. The first appearance of the glissandi, which becomes a pervasive feature as the piece progresses, is in bars 7–8 in a homophonic line shared by the cello and double bass sections, a short passage which introduces the importance of rhythmic unison, homophony, and especially synchronized glissandi movement, to the development of the piece. These glissandi duets in the very opening of the piece introduce an important element which is developed through the whole work, that of the duet as a musical device which highlights further the offset timbral balance between individual voices as they move between attempts at a collective sound and individual lines. Hepworth's use of the connective tautness of strings as demonstrative of a 'pull'[92] into a landscape is mirrored here in the push and pull created by the string glissandi combined with the crescendo-diminuendo dynamics which swell in and out.

In fact, homorhythmic duets are some of the only moments in the work when the sound envelope unfolds in unison between the parts. The cello and double bass passage detailed above is heard again from bar 39, anticipating the development of this short passage into a full duet section from bars 64–70, in which all the other parts are stripped away to expose the celli and basses. Although initially the two parts attempt to move as one, the Attack-Delay-Sustain-Release occurring in unison from bars 64–67, this is undermined at bars 68–70 as the moments of attack and release (heard in the dynamics and phrase structure) slip out of kilter and the parts break out of the rhythmic unison which has contained them. Moments like at bars 68–70 show the fragility of the collective moments in this piece when the sound attempts to unfold

[92] Hepworth, quoted in Ramsden, *Sculpture: Theme and Variations, Towards a Contemporary Aesthetic*, 42.

in a unified manner; as the moments of attack and release slip out of kilter there is an audible tension between the individuals' effort of mirroring each other's movement along and across the taut strings.

The features outlined above serve to draw attention to the individual lines and voices within the collective sound, and, even within the tutti sections themselves, the audible divergences between each individual instrumental timbre. Even at this early stage in the piece, the human labour behind the gesture and the sound is made audible, in much the same way that *The People of Mastiha* makes the people behind the labour process visible; through drawing attention to the individual voices within the weave, the bodies and the effort behind the playing is made visible, and the physical experience of both playing and listening is brought to the forefront. In phenomenological discourse, the body is the central site of sensory experience, making the 'pure impressions'[93] of a Cartesian separation of body and mind seem impossible. This is, in a way, almost opposite to that which is idealised in many Western classical music traditions, when the player is treated as an invisible vessel for the pure sound to pass through, and multiple players blend together, identity-less, within the traditional orchestral set-up. In his treatise on embodied listening, Jean-Luc Nancy writes that 'timbre is the resonance of sound: or sound itself. It forms the first consistency of sonorous *sense* as such, under the rhythmic condition that makes it resound.'[94] This definition of sound as resonance, and of timbre as central to the creation of resonance, is particularly relevant to *Mastiha*. The unstable vibrational resonance of a mass of individually textured string voices, which is a central feature of the taut timbre of the string orchestra collective in general, is used as a frictional device through which I sought to evoke the materiality of the mastic groves—their physical texture, appearance, and, for me, even their imagined scent. This approach is developed through the work and is central to the narrative strands and to the structure which emerges through my tracing of the mastic cultivation process. The external, almost sectional form, of the piece, and the internal forms enter into layering

[93] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 5.
[94] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 41.

dialogues. I will proceed to discuss the unfolding narrative of *Mastiha* – a narrative that is far from linear and single stranded and is instead rooted in a complex interlocking of multiple lives (human and non-human) in a cyclical process of setbacks combined with progress – but first, I will turn again to the work of Tim Ingold.

It is the interplay between line, narrative, and embodied experience of place in the work of Ingold which make his ideas particularly relevant to my study of timbre in *Mastiha*. In the process of linking his theories of lines to his experiences as a cellist, Ingold draws on qualities relevant to all string instruments writing that 'the player pulls a melody as if he were stretching out a line … the fingerboard itself is like a landscape in which the player has to find his or her way, and in which every note is like a place you find, blessed with its own peculiar vibrational properties, harmonic resonances and timbre'.[95] Here Ingold seems to articulate the specific qualities which I have been attempting to detail in my discussion of foregrounding individual string timbres within the collective whole. Furthermore, it seems that the expression and movement of individual lines in and out of collective textures is central to Ingold's vision, in particular two kinds of line which he defines as 'threads and traces', writing that they 'appeared to be not so much categorically different as transforms of one another. Threads have a way of turning into traces, and vice versa. Moreover, whenever threads turn into traces, surfaces are formed, and whenever traces turn into threads, they are dissolved.'[96]

It is through the notion of threads and traces that Ingold is able to argue convincingly against the line as a static object, suggesting instead that a line does not have to be linear in the conventional sense but is a substance of 'movement and growth'[97], a Bergsonian idea I will discuss further below, which becomes central to my treatment of line as the basis for timbre in *Mastiha*. The movement between threads and traces is another way of articulating the slipperiness of timbre in *Mastiha* — rather than seeing

[95] Tim Ingold, *Lines* (Abingdon: Routledge, [2007] 2016), xvii.
[96] Ingold, 2.
[97] Ingold, 2.

timbre as something fixed, a quality of the instruments or even of the individual players themselves, timbre is instead the result of multiple enmeshed lines, strands, or threads, creating the impression of surfaces of traces that come together and break apart in looping cycles. Although the work follows the successive stages of mastic cultivation, this continual process of entanglement means that musical materials are experienced less as a sequence of stages than as recurring and interwoven strands, creating a spiralling and multi-layered sense of progression. The notion of 'wayfaring' adopts a new significance in this context. This embodied form of journeying through a place, not in a linear fashion from pre-planned point to pre-planned point, but in a 'guided, flowing movement from place to place … within the landscape of memory'[98] is a mental and a physical movement within an enmeshed landscape and, crucially, is a progression *within* and not just simply *through*. Merleau-Ponty also drew on the idea of threads as connective bonds within the body; his notion was of 'intentional threads'[99] which accumulate and embed the body into the external, an idea which combines with those of Ingold's threads and traces to take on great relevance in the forthcoming discussion.

The idea of individual voices slipping outside and breaking apart momentarily from the communal begins to define the structure of this work with increasing frequency as it progresses, drawing further attention to the qualities of the individuals within the collective timbre. Following the initial movement from solo voices to massed in the first bars of the work, the first major appearance of solo threads expanding into a collective weave of traces occurs in bars 14–18. The first solo iteration of a previously heard double bass motif occurs in bar 14 signalling a return of the complete orchestra which seems to grow again together, the attack and suspension falling together again in bar 15 before this is offset by the passing of a fluctuating violin utterance moving from Violin II to Violin I which moves apart from the other sections as it takes on the line in bar 16, and becomes a solo voice in bar 17. This breaking off of Violin I from the other voices instigates a staggered return of the collective once again. This is yet

[98] Ingold, 16.
[99] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 83.

another example of the ways that the timbral treatment of the part writing weaves together and breaks apart the sound envelope of the individual and the collective in the piece, a process that repeats and reoccurs throughout in cycles throughout the work. Another example of this is heard in two solo cello moments which occur in these opening loop sections, first appearing in a short descending triplet figuration in bar 36, and again at bar 62 as a phrase ending. These serve as fragmentary auditory reminders of the instability of the collective sections, in which the solo string voices which make up the surface of traces can break off at any time into divergent threads.

The opening section of Mastiha [bars 1–78] cycles continually around on itself in loops. I conceived this section as the period of initial growth of a mastic orchard – the individual trees starting off as seedlings and as separate beings which entwine together whilst rising at their own fluctuating pace. Here, timbre affects the listener's perception of rhythm and metre; the interlocking, opposing sound envelopes further enhance the sense of rhythmic fluctuation, irregularity and non-linear growth, and serve to highlight further the tensions in the sound yet again. The players are held together by the collective expansion and contraction in tempi and metre despite their individual, unfolding, and often conflicting, sound envelopes. The movement of individual string threads in and out of collective traces is central in further creating the sense of a multi-stranded narrative; the often accented, down bow attacks, the growth of dynamic and movement within the lines through the delay and sustain, and the release moments between individual players and between sections slip in and out of unity and focus. As a result, the moments when the attack, suspension of sound, and the release do come together are particularly impactful, for example in bar 32 the accented down bow gesture is heard in rhythmic unison for the first time, occurring between the viola and cello sections. This unified gesture seems to herald the full orchestra moving into homophony in bars 33 and 34, the dynamics of each section swelling together over two sustained semibreves. However, this synchronicity cannot last, and the sections progressively slip apart into another multi-stranded loop from bar 39, a recurrence of the one previously heard at the opening from bar 7.

From bar 78, the piece breaks away from the looping cycles of individual growth and into a new section. The rhythm is simplified into a repetitive rising figure comprising two crotchets and a semibreve. Between bars 78 and 85, the texture is reduced to distinct homophonic layers, with the string sections moving together in groups of two or three. In this section, I was attempting to draw on the individual trees which have now grown from seedlings and are beginning to entwine together into communities, the fluidity of interlocking mastic tree trunks and branches being one of their defining characteristics. Despite the rhythm and texture described above being key elements in the sense of greater cohesion at this moment in the piece, it is in fact the timbral cohesion which affects the perception of the rhythm and the feeling of unity, as the phrase structure and sound envelope align between the sectional groups. Even as the sectional threads begin to slip out of the collective traces from bar 86, they are unified through the fugal imitation between parts and are swiftly brought back together in bar 90 through unison down bow gestures in the violin II, viola and cello sections. This process recurs from bar 92 as solo threads break off and entwine in an enmeshed texture before the down bow gesture in 104 leads the listener into a passage formed of two unified tutti groups from bar 109. These slip out of kilter again, only momentarily returning to rhythmic unison in bar 115. Whilst the material in these central moments of the piece might appear to be stabilising, the multi-stranded instability of moving threads and traces becomes even more apparent; the slower pace and rhythmic clarity mean that the breaking down of surfaces of traces, and the falling apart of the sound envelopes between parts, become more impactful than in the looping opening. This is embodied in defined gestures of collective synchronization which rapidly break down to more heterophonic movement, giving a sense of unattainable progression, for example through the accented down bow gesture which reaches its strongest collective utterance yet in bar 109, only to fall apart once again. It is as if the frenetic movements of the opening section have become distilled here but continue to loop and cycle within themselves, resisting linear cohesion.

The string lines in Hepworth's *Pelagos* are straight, tensed, and direct. Mine in *Mastiha* are entangled, knotted, and woven into a web. I see this as an extension of

Hepworth's connective strings which lie taut and pregnant with the possibility of entanglement. The movement together in increasingly distinct layers through this section of *Mastiha* gives more power to the movement of threads which break apart from the collective; as parts often move in tandem with another part, individual threads now become larger threads as they join together and the dialogue between these larger, unified threads creates an imitative, cycling texture of interwoven traces. This is reflective of the impossibility of single-track linearity in the process of mastic cultivation, the success of which lies in the patience and endurance of humans as they face constant setbacks and work to coordinate themselves and their working rhythms with the living orchards and the individual trees within. The rising and falling three note motif (introduced in bar 78) which attempts to entwine all the string sections together through these passages serves to draw further attention to the tension inherent in even attempting to create this linearity. This motif attempts to resurface multiple times, for example from bar 101, but each time it is broken by rhythmic unison gestures, for example between the viola and cello in bar 104, which lead into individual layered movements again. Amongst this layering dialogue between sections, the moments of collectivity, however brief, leave a profound impact.

Indeed, the final section of the piece initially appears to be far more rooted in the collective whole, as it begins with rhythmic unison triplet groups in all sections from bar 124. A passage following this formed of imitative, hocketing figurations leads back to an ending passage formed of synchronised accented triplets from bar 133, in which the sound envelopes between the parts appear to have reached a forceful resolution. Here at the end of the piece I was using this collective gesture to draw on the three sharp incisions which are cut into the surface of the bark once the groves are mature to release the tear drops of mastic resin from within, an emergence which hides its strength as a precious commodity in its deceptively delicate form. Amidst this, threads continue to break away from the whole; a melodic motif, which I named the 'tear drop motif' in reflection of the formation of mastic tear drops on the surface of the bark, appears in the violin sections in bar 135, foreshadowing a return to the single layering threads of the opening at the very end. The double bass thread from bar

141 is formed of duplet groupings which become offset against the homorhythmic triplets in the other parts, giving a sense of the instability which remains present even within the now seemingly stable collective. The cycling, staggered entries of the triplets are reminiscent of the opening, the individual threads requiring effort to move together into a trace. The emergence of the 'tear drop' motif in the violin I section in bar 155, which then breaks off even further into a solo violin voice at bar 159, appears to recall the single layering threads of the opening, an awareness which is heightened by the gestural collective incision motif which preceded this. Although the closing harmony provides a clear sense of arrival, the gradual dissolution of the collective 'tear drop' motif into a single sustained violin line at the end of the work recalls the solitary thread which began the work. In this sense, the ending functions not simply as closure but also as a return from trace to thread, suggesting that the cultivation process remains cyclical rather than complete; the process will continue to bring islanders on Chios into frictional contact with the land and elements through their all-consuming nurture of the mastic groves. Just as the closing solo violin recalls the opening violin line heard in bar 1, traces return to threads, allowing the cultivation cycle to begin again. Or, as expressed by one of the mastiha producers quoted in *The People of Mastiha*: 'time has twelve months, but mastiha fourteen. Because, with mastiha, there is always more work to do than can be done, and the work will always require more time than you have to spend on it.'[100]

Villegas Vélez acknowledges that 'timbre remains irreducible: a differential parameter that uniquely allows us to engage with the materiality of sound.'[101] Indeed, the relevance to my process of situating timbre as 'a differential parameter' has emerged in my exploration of composing 'Mastiha'. Timbre is used as a signifier of difference between individual string voices within the collective whole, a means of enhancing and magnifying the already existing frictional resonance of the weave of string voices, and perhaps it has also emerged, throughout the discussion above, as a way of blurring the boundaries between the embodied human experience of working amongst the

[100] Anonymous mastiha producer quoted in Tsouchlis, *The People of Mastiha*, 9.
[101] Villegas Vélez, "The Matter of Timbre: Listening, Genealogy, Sound," 8.

mastic groves and the environmental sensitivities and physicality of the trees themselves — the human merging with the non-human in a labour process which has developed and adapted continuously over millennia. My approach to timbre in the composition of this piece, through its focus on the phenomenological, could emerge as a parameter which can simultaneously communicate different modes of being – human and non-human – for example in the foregrounding of the string players' effort in grappling with the tensed strings of their instruments which slips in and out of moments of fusion, the parts and voices weaving together and layering as the trunks and branches of mastic trees in the orchards. However, it remains impossible to prescribe any fixed meaning to timbre. In "The Paradox of Timbre", Cornelia Fales draws on the work of Pierre Schaeffer to undermine the notion of timbre as a fixed and unchanging object, suggesting that the gap between what she describes as the 'acoustic world' and the 'perceived world' can be made audible through the use of differentiated timbres.[102] When understood in relation to the body, the listener, and the act of hearing, timbre remains a slippery parameter, shifting in meaning and dependent on individual perception. Perhaps it is in the gap which Fales acknowledges where the true interest in timbre lies. The space between timbre as perceived/heard by the listener and the physical sound itself is reminiscent of the in-between space central to other key dialogues in this study; the human/non-human or, particularly in the case of *Mastiha*, nature as experienced and utilised by mankind/ the existence and consciousness of nature regardless of human intervention. Through my use of timbre as the central compositional element in *Mastiha* I have attempted to undermine the notion of a harsh division between the physical natural world and the subjective human experience of this and suggest instead that, as in the gap between the perceived sound/the actual sound which is central to the notion of timbre itself, the in-between space, so central in human working relationships to the land, holds the most creative power and offers us insights into the dangers of labelling the non-human as 'inanimate'. Without denying that nature holds its own consciousness regardless of human interventions, it is through engaging with the world through lived processes

[102] Cornelia Fales, "The Paradox of Timbre," *Ethnomusicology* 46, no. 1 (2002): 58.

that we animate our surroundings within our own imaginations and perceptions. Crucially, I am not suggesting a hierarchy of lived subjective experience over all else — but rather that the polarisation of the subjective and the objective into opposing camps is neither helpful nor creatively productive.

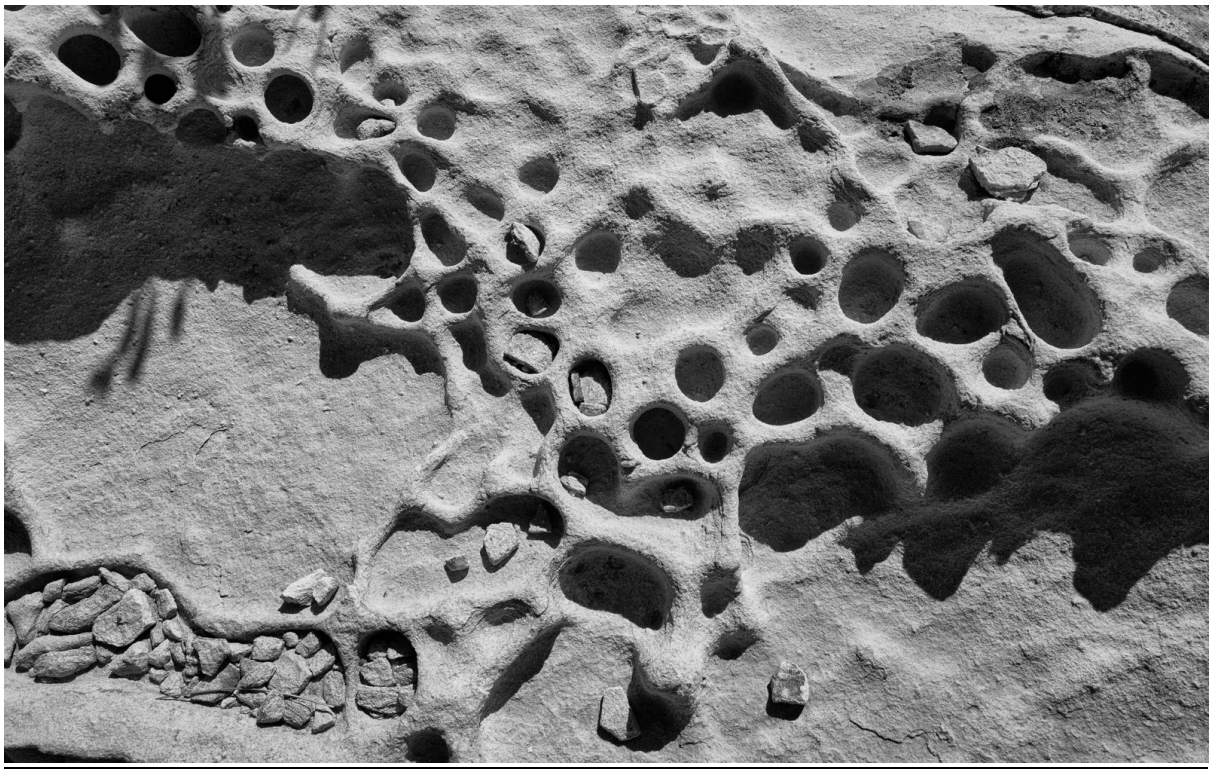
Too often human labour in the landscape is hidden, covert, and made to be invisible. Brian Elliott's *Landscape and Labour* provides an important literary context for this discussion by examining the relationship between working life and representations of place.[103] Ironically, those who truly are 'within' the land, embedded into it through working processes, are often those who are erased. Influenced by *The People of Mastiha*, my composition of *Mastiha* seeks to address this, making the individuals behind the labour visible, as well as expressing the entwinement of the spiritual, practical, physical, and material through land labour practices. The uncertain and frictional aspects of the shaping of lives through a land-based working relationship, and a reliance on a cultivation practice, become clear from the turbulent history of Chios outlined through this thesis.

A study of cultivation and labour processes in the land has emerged as a means of analysing the human/nature dichotomy in perhaps its most fractious form; as humans attempt to control growth, to exert influence onto the living landscape, to battle against the elements and against economic hardship through hard manual labour in the land, the tension between the external, unstable, unpredictable, and ultimately unknowable forces of Nature enter into a dialogue with human life. A central motivation behind my composition is to bring the spiritual and the interior into contact with external, physical and material nature. My connection to Chian mastic cultivation has enabled me to question why labour in the land, arguably the closest human connection one can form with the physical and material qualities of nature, is often excluded in art and music that explores the spiritual connections we form with the natural world. Is this due to issues of class, yet another means of exclusion and erasure within the landscape and a framing device imposed by those who can look upon the

[103] Brian Elliott, *Landscape and Labour* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2021), vii–xx.

land from a distance, choosing who or what is allowed to be acknowledged within the idyll? Through making the human labour behind the gesture and the sound visible and audible, invisible patterns of human effort, privilege, and exclusion become crucial to my process, and might become manifested in my writing. A myriad of relationships to land are held within, and are symbolised by, the Chian relationship to mastic groves. The mastic cultivation process with which I have had contact has emphasised the ways that working relationships with the land hold multiple tensions and irreparable contradictions. In *Mastiha*, string acts as a symbolic and as a sonic connector; an entangled Bergsonian source of fluid development and movement with a vital role to play in expressing the vibrational and taut resonances which exist between human activity and the landscape.

2. *Rock, Salt, Air, Water* for string quartet, *Within the drifting contours of the land …* for violin and piano, and *March (Ice melting, petals unfurling)* for period orchestra [2024-2025]



Credit @John Perivolaris – *Tafoni at Emporio, Island of Chios*.

As previously described, my approach to timbre in *Mastiha* attempts to express the sentience of the non-human, challenging the dichotomy between human and non-human life forms. In his study *Interspecies Communication: Sound & Music beyond Humanity*, Gavin Steingo focuses on the sonic expression of communication between humans and non-humans, arguing that 'adequately capturing interaction on this register requires developing a model of communication prior to, and outside of, language.'[104] What is crucial here is Steingo's use of the word 'interaction' when referring to the communicative bonds between humans and non-humans; communication here is not necessarily language-based but is a physical and active process involving the recognition of the animateness of another life form. I composed *Rock, Salt, Air, Water* and *Within the drifting contours of the land…* as part of the same exploration into the ability of timbre to act as an in-between space for various dualities central to the study of human interaction with nature, drawing upon Villegas Vélez's positioning of timbre as 'an interface between various ontological and social registers: divine-human; animal-human; nature-culture'.[105]

Rock, Salt, Air, Water, a short piece for string quartet, attempts to express the layering physical processes of weathering in which salt, air and water combine with the surface of rocks to create the geological formation of tafoni, a texture of cavities and holes which can be seen on rocks along the coastlines of Arran and Chios. These layering processes of weathering are communicated by the musicians of the ensemble as they enact their own overlapping processes within a structure of frictional materials which act upon each other in continual looping cycles of deepening and enmeshed layers of sound. The musicians each become 'a participant in amongst an active world of materials'[106], they are each 'the maker' and the 'participant' in Ingold's statement as

[104] Gavin Steingo, *Interspecies Communication: Sound & Music beyond Humanity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024), 1.

[105] Villegas Vélez, "The Matter of Timbre: Listening, Genealogy, Sound," 42.

[106] Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art, and Architecture*, 21.

they trigger and stimulate the next transformative loop through their interlocked gestures.

The opening duet between Violin I and Violin II introduces the importance of overlapping dialogical processes to the piece. The fluctuating quintuplet and sextuplet figurations, played very close to the bridge of the violin, create an ephemeral, translucent effect which delicately layers between the two parts. Within the first four bars of the piece several different processes of transformation have already been enacted; the first violin's semitonal semiquaver figures morph into a sustained trill from the second beat of bar 2, whilst the second violin emerges out of the first violin's ongoing figurations, on a held harmonic pitch which moves through a glissando slide down to its own semiquaver phrases. Here, and throughout this opening duet, the musical materials act upon each other between the parts, transforming and impacting each other. This is timbre used in another way to express physical processes, and especially in the case of tafoni, those which are not just metaphorically frictional but literally frictional and corrosive. This is a process of labour from within nature without human intervention, enacted and expressed through the musicians to create an entangled dialogue between human and non-human through the piece.

In Finnish composer Outi Tarkiainen's work for solo violin entitled *Kunnes kivi halkeaa* or *Until the Stone Splits*, the material quality of the string is emphasised (through the use of pressurised, guttural bowing techniques and instructions to play on the edge of the strings) as a means of creating a sense of embeddedness within the growing layers of the sound world, akin to the textural and physical process of a rock breaking apart. Described by Andrew Mellor as 'a monologue for violin that obsesses over two adjacent notes [which are] prized apart by an overwhelming grief'[107], the composer creates a sense of a physical widening gap opening as the piece progresses, one which conversely seems to root the listener within the sound whilst remaining

[107] Andrew Mellor, *The Northern Silence: Journeys in Nordic Music and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 116-117.

ephemeral, free and transcendent. This piece symbolises the interest in the in-between space and in the entangled gap between object and subject both in its programmatic narrative and its exploration of the engulfing emotion of grief through the imagery of the title, but also in its treatment of timbre and sound itself which conjures the frictions between the individual world of emotions and the ways in which this subjective world becomes entangled into the external, physical world.

In *Within the drifting contours of the land…* there is a deepening of layers within the violin sound to conjure a sense of being within and amongst the materials of a place, rooted to the earth but not fixed. The compositional process in this work was designed to move between and beyond the binary dualistic nature of the following dyads:

- Maps / Lived experience - human experience of land in labour, journeying, and wayfaring.
- Objective / Subjective
- Distance / Immersion (embodied, felt, physical, material)

In this piece I aimed to use layers in sound to conjure a depth of place and atmosphere. From the very start of the piece a duality is introduced within the violin sound itself, as a lower voice formed of repeated pulsating open strings is layered with ascending semiquaver passages in the upper voice. This upper voice and lower voice dual layering of the violin sound is established at the start as part of an interconnected whole, rather than being oppositional; the two voices become fused momentarily at points where strident solo line passages unite elements from both layers, for example at the start of the second system, when the strident G, previously heard on the open string, is heard again but this time one octave higher, transforming into a solo phrase which rises and falls into a semitonal interval reminiscent of the upper voice figurations. When the piano enters after this initial solo violin opening the sense of the duet as part of a fused whole is emphasised through the expansive rising and falling broken chord-like shapes on the piano which underpin the rising violin line. The dissonant piano harmonies from bars 7–10 create a sense of internal shifting tension but still within the context of an interwoven whole.

The 'active role'[108] promoted by Rachel Mundy in reimagining oppositional dyadic thought processes and relations is expressed in this piece through the awareness of the bodily act of playing the violin. As the layers in the sound grow, the awareness of the performer's effort behind the gestures is also heightened. From letter B, the initial duality of upper and lower voices in the violin sound begins to expand outwards even further, with down bow double stop gestures in the second system of B which emerge again in the fourth system of B out of dialogic exchanges between accented bowed and pizzicato pitches. The interplay between fragile, fluid sounds and rooted, gestural figurations is emphasised from letter D as the violinist moves between flautando, tremolo pitches played close to the fingerboard, and strident solo lines, which culminate in a pure and glass-like harmonic pitch in bar 41. From letter E the dialogue between bowed and pizzicato layered voices becomes more gestural with double stops in the pizzicato upper voice which lead into a repeated, rhythmic double stop motif, eventually leading to a glissando slide down to a strong oscillating gesture in bars 50 and 51 played with a guttural and strained quality close to the bridge of the instrument. This gesture leads into the final section of the piece, a restrained, transformed, and reflective passage in which the violinist retreats and advances within the texture, eventually retreating into the distance in the final bars. The moments without at least two layers within the violinist's sound become increasingly less frequent through the development of the piece and the thickest piano textures emerge in the final bars of the work, in five and six-part chords from bars 63–67. Through bringing the linear, horizontal movement into contact with a more vertical, multi-layered approach to development in this piece I have attempted to express a physical experience of traversing, and of wayfaring *within* a landscape; the violinist's embodied entanglement with the material of her instrument acts as a metaphor for an enmeshment within the land through the physical action of journeying and traversing. Alfred North Whitehead posited that 'Our perception of natural events and natural

[108] Mundy, *Animal Musicalities: Birds, Beasts and Evolutionary Listening,* 5.

objects … is a perception from *within* nature.'[109] Merleau-Ponty's 'intentional threads' take on new relevance here ; Rachel Smith argued that these threads mean 'that when seeing a landscape or a work of sculpture, it is perceived by the whole body which feels it can enter it'[110] (the 'pull' into Hepworth's string sculptures).[111] In my conception of the work, *Within the drifting contours of the land…* invites a bodily mode of engagement shared between performer and listener, one of entering within rather than observing from outside. Merleau-Ponty's defining of space as a 'theatre of action'[112] draws again upon the physical as a means of active enmeshment into the surroundings. Crucially within this 'theatre of action', perception is conjoined with time. The tempo fluctuations in this piece, the violinist creating her own time in solo passages which fluctuate between different tempi centres, are yet another way of creating a sense of embodied active effort as the violinist expresses the shifting perspectives of experience and the fluidity of this state of entanglement. As in Tarkiainen's *Until the Stone Splits*, *Within the drifting contours of the land…* demonstrates how a feeling of journeying within and becoming embedded can be on an intimate scale and is not necessarily reliant on large instrumental forms.

Drawing on phenomenological philosophies, in *Within the drifting contours of the land…* space becomes a 'theatre of action' which I intended to invite the listener to inhabit alongside the performers as they journey within a layering and gestural landscape of sound. Indeed, these notions of external space as a site in which we act and have profound impacts suggest that phenomenological philosophies on the embedded nature of perception have taken on a new relevance in the context of an age of growing ecological awareness, in which we seek to understand our role within an altered planet.

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[109] Alfred North Whitehead quoted in Ramsden, *Sculpture: Theme and Variations, Towards a Contemporary Aesthetic*, 418.
[110] Smith, "Figure and Landscape: Barbara Hepworth's Phenomenology of Perception," 10.
[111] Hepworth in Ramsden, *Sculpture: Theme and Variations, Towards a Contemporary Aesthetic*, 42.
[112] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 121.

Reflecting upon his own theories, Merleau-Ponty asked, ‘How can any thing ever really and truly present itself to us, since its synthesis is never a complete process…?’[113] To rephrase his question, if phenomena come into being through experienced perception how can they ever have a fixed state? Natural elements never exist in an immovable fixed state/form and there is a profound challenge but also a great opportunity in expressing this through music for live performers, which similarly never exists as an immovable object in its dependence on numerous living, and therefore fluid and unstable, factors. In the composition of *March (Ice melting, petals unfurling)*, I treated the Mendelssohn-era orchestra as a historical ecology; the unbalanced, unpredictable sonorities of these transitional instruments, acting within an interdependent web, were intended to draw attention to the entangled dialogue between the musicians (the human) and the materials with which they interact (the more-than-human). By foregrounding the unstable material properties of the instruments, for example in the use of glissandi and portamenti on the gut strings, sliding figurations on the period oboe, and exposed natural horn themes, the work allows musical identity to emerge through frictional interaction; the processes of transition suggested by the title (melting, unfolding and becoming) are realised through the embodied behaviour of the instruments themselves rather than represented descriptively. I sought to articulate Bergson's cumulative duration within this fragile habitat as the period instruments embody a multiplicity of times unfolding simultaneously in performance. Even the performance directions describe states of perception ('As if the world is waking up' and 'As if from a distance heard over the landscape', for example), emphasising that the work explores changing relationships between performer, material, and environment. The work therefore imagines the orchestra as a heterogeneous landscape within which the musicians continually negotiate their relationships with active materials. Musical form emerges through these embodied interactions, positioning the performers as participants embedded within the environment they help to create.

[113] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 385.

In her 1943 article on Hepworth's practice, E. H. Ramsden wrote that 'Nature is an inclusive term and the theoretic detachment of man is as arrogant as it is fallacious. But the recognition of man's essential unity with the forms of the world brings another acknowledgment, no less inescapable … For if it be said that man's perceptions of Nature are from within Nature … then it cannot be denied that his intellectual activities … are equally a part of Nature and belong … to the totality we call life.'[114] In other words, Nature is defined not as objective, separate element to humans, which they can choose to connect with or not, but as an inclusive whole, incorporating all human activity, be it intellectual or physical manual labour. From the embeddedness of human perception in external experience comes an awareness of the interconnectedness of all phenomena, or 'the totality we call life'.

Writing in 1966, Barbara Hepworth stated, 'Whenever I am embraced by land and seascape, I draw ideas for new sculpture: new forms to touch and walk around, new people to embrace'.[115] To return to Ingold's statement situating 'the maker as a participant in a world of active materials' which began this chapter, the processes explored here, despite the tensions within, are connective ones. Through varying approaches to the slippery musical parameter of timbre, I have explored ways in which the body is central to the process of becoming embedded *within*, the musicians' wayfaring enmeshed with that of the listener through their awareness of the musicians' effort and labour as they venture amongst those materials of the external world which have actively shaped my compositional process.

[114] Ramsden, *Sculpture: Theme and Variations, Towards a Contemporary Aesthetic*, 418.

[115] Hepworth, *A Sculptor's Landscape,* 11.

ISOLA [2022-2025] a song cycle for soprano and piano: Synthesis and Reflection





Credits @John Perivolaris –*ISOLA*

The final work discussed in this thesis, *ISOLA*, a song cycle for soprano and piano, occupies a significant position at the end of the portfolio as it draws together many of the questions explored throughout this research concerning temporality, materiality, embodiment, human–nature interconnection, and, most explicitly, identity and belonging. The cycle sets poems by my father, John Perivolaris, and emerged through

an extended dialogue with his photographic practice, particularly a series of landscape images that deliberately blur geographical and perceptual boundaries between Arran and Chios. Begun during the first coronavirus lockdown in spring 2020, the photographs and accompanying poems developed from an experience of enforced isolation on Arran and gradually dissolved distinctions between the two islands until they became a single imagined landscape that shapes John's experience and imagination. This imaginative landscape is rooted in our family's history of migration: my grandparents left Chios in their early twenties to begin a new life in Canada, where my father was born, before the family later settled in the United Kingdom. As the third generation shaped by this migration, questions of departure, belonging, return, and identity have formed a significant part of my own relationship with both islands. Drawing upon this family history, together with our experiences of life between two contrasting islands at opposite ends of Europe, *ISOLA* explores musical form as a means of articulating fluid states of belonging, journeying, remembrance, and return. Neither the poems nor the photographs were treated as material to be represented musically. Rather, they became integral to the compositional process, providing ways of thinking about relationships between place, memory, movement, and identity. In this way, *ISOLA* marks an important transition in my compositional practice, moving beyond the specific geographies which influenced earlier portfolio works. Instead, landscape becomes a relational space through which broader questions of identity and migration can be explored. Across the cycle, each song inhabits a different experiential state associated with diaspora, from departure to forgetting, pursuit, memory, liminality, and return, so that the work unfolds less as a geographical journey than as an exploration of shifting relationships between environment, identity, and memory.

Because *ISOLA* synthesises the central themes of the research, the discussion that follows differs slightly from the analytical approach in the preceding chapters. While it includes detailed exploration of structure, timbre, and embodiment in the cycle, it also broadens its focus, reassessing the central research questions of the thesis. It

draws connections between portfolio works, positioning *ISOLA* as a point of reflection on the wider compositional research process.

Throughout this research, I have explored how musical form can move beyond teleological models of development by allowing recurrence to function as transformation rather than repetition. This idea first emerged through the discussions of *Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock...* and *A Tree's Spiral of Time* in the chapter *Inscribing Time*, where recurrence became a means of articulating multiple coexisting temporalities rather than a single linear trajectory. Although a detailed discussion of *March (Ice melting, petals unfurling)* lies beyond the scope of the dissertation, the work represents an important stage in the development of these compositional concerns. Both the large-scale cyclical architecture of the work and the recurrence of transformed sectional material allow musical identity to emerge through continual processes of becoming rather than fixed thematic repetition, reflecting the ecological emphasis on continual emergence and relational transformation developed elsewhere in the portfolio. The recurring exposed horn theme acts as a shifting structural thread linking successive sections, while the transformed return of the unfolding opening material at the conclusion of the work suggests return not as repetition but as renewal, shaped by the preceding musical journey. *ISOLA* extends these concerns, allowing recurrence to explore processes of memory, migration, and belonging. Musical return functions not only as a formal principle but as a way of expressing how identity is continually transformed through acts of departure and return. In *ISOLA*, both the internal forms of the individual songs and the large-scale architecture of the cycle are shaped through repetition, alteration, transformation, and the cyclical recurrence of musical materials, gestures, and images in continually shifting contexts. The cycle's overarching form traces a journey of departure, memory, transformation and return, through which musical ideas are continually revisited.

The recurrence of the opening piano line, first heard at the start of *Prologue – All the Harbour Could Not Hold*, is central to the exploration of musical returns as a means of invoking circular time in the cycle. This eight-quaver motif repeats and unfolds

through rubato in the first seven bars of the cycle, avoiding cadential closure. It is heard again in the final bars of the prologue, establishing itself as a central theme of the work. The entire cycle is framed by this line which recurs in the closing song *Epilogue – All the Harbour Could Not Hold*, setting the same text as the prologue. However, the returning musical material in the epilogue bears the traces of the transformative journey which has occurred, not through alteration of the material but through a re-ordering and a shift in context; this final song begins with the tenuto low register musical idea which was first heard in bar 27 of the prologue, with the opening right hand piano line only reappearing in a shortened version at bar 15 of the epilogue. The cycle ends with the voice joining an extended version of the opening right hand piano line for the first time, in a hummed unison marked initially as 'Wistful, longing but calm, at peace', and finally as 'in reverie, dream-like state'. Through changing the structural position and context of this central opening theme, I aimed to transform its perceived identity without altering the material itself. The return invites recognition of familiar material within a changed musical context, so that the listener's memory of the preceding musical journey becomes central to the theme's renewed meaning. This relationship between recurrence and transformation likewise shapes the internal form of each individual song. In the first song after the prologue, *Lethe – Oblivion*, an ascending piano figure is heard twice before forming the foundation beneath the hummed vocal line. At bar 48 this sequence returns, with both the opening piano material and the hummed vocal gesture recurring. Rather than simply repeating earlier events, however, this return prepares the song's central transformation as the voice breaks away into an extended unaccompanied line at bar 64. The repeat of vocal passages in the approach to this solo line, which transition from soft humming marked 'as if dreaming, longing' to loud sung pitches marked 'awakening, with shock', gives this moment particular structural significance, so that recurrence builds expectation before there is a decisive change in the music. When the piano returns at bar 77, material first heard at bar 17 reappears with only one textual alteration: 'Gold in the distance' becomes 'Cold in the distance'. I intended this return to be experienced not as the repetition of familiar material but as its narrative and dramatic recontextualisation. Although the musical material remains unchanged, its position

within the unfolding form, together with the listener's memory of the intervening musical events, alters its expressive meaning. In this way, memory functions as a formal principle within the cycle as earlier material remains active within the present.

Daniel March's exploration of Kaija Saariaho's music as 'an interplay between music in a state of transformation and music that stays in the same place'[116] provides a useful point of comparison for understanding memory as a formal principle in *ISOLA*. In his analysis of Saariaho's second string quartet *Terra Memoria* (2007), March argues that the work 'sets out to invoke the apparatus of memory',[117] while Saariaho herself describes the piece as one in which 'some aspects of [the musical material] go through several distinctive transformations, whereas some remain nearly unchanged, clearly recognizable ... Here earth refers to my material, and memory to the way I'm working on it.'[118] Saariaho uses recurrence to allow earlier musical ideas to transform within the unfolding musical present. *Terra Memoria's* cyclical quality arises through the continual return of musical materials within a unified harmonic field: at a local level, recurring gestures and playing techniques continually overlap and evolve, while at a larger structural level central motifs return in altered contexts, allowing familiarity and transformation to coexist throughout the work. This provides a useful musicological context for reflecting upon *ISOLA*, where returning musical materials acquire new significance through their changing structural position and relationship to the musical journey. This compositional approach was, in part, informed by John's photographic practice. Whereas the discussion of Cartier-Bresson in *Inscribing Time* centred around photography's relationship to the captured moment, and the implications of past and future within this moment, John Perivolaris's photographic series instead dissolves distinctions between places, memories, and moments of time. Rather than documenting a single instant, they create images in which multiple temporal and geographical experiences overlap. This shift had a direct impact upon my

[116] Daniel March, "Music, Memory and Kaija Saariaho's *Terra Memoria*," in *Kaija Saariaho: Visions, Narratives, Dialogues*, eds. Tim Howell, Jon Hargreaves and Michael Rofe (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 27.
[117] March, "Music, Memory and Kaija Saariaho's *Terra Memoria*," 28.
[118] Kaija Saariaho, quoted in Daniel March, "Music, Memory and Kaija Saariaho's *Terra Memoria*," in *Kaija Saariaho: Visions, Narratives, Dialogues*, eds. Tim Howell, Jon Hargreaves and Michael Rofe (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 29.

compositional process, encouraging me to think about musical forms capable of sustaining continual processes of return, memory and transformation. In this way, the relationship between recurrence and transformation becomes more than a formal device. It provides the principal means through which the temporal concerns explored throughout this research, including polytemporality, lived duration, and non-teleological musical form, are brought together within the architecture of the cycle.

Just as *ISOLA* synthesises the temporal concerns explored throughout the portfolio, it also brings together the relational approach to musical sound that emerged through the research. In *Mastiha*, timbre became an interface through which relationships between human and more-than-human forms of life could be explored. In *Within the drifting contours of the land...*, these relational concerns developed through layered musical processes in which fluctuating tempi and continually shifting musical strands drew attention to the performer's embodied negotiation of the musical material. In *ISOLA*, these concerns converge within the continually evolving relationship between voice and piano. Instead of functioning as melody and accompaniment, the parts act as two musical agencies whose identities are continually shaped through interaction. From the opening of the cycle, the voice emerges from the sustained resonance of the piano rather than entering as an independent melodic line. This establishes a relationship that continues throughout the cycle, in which the piano creates a sonic landscape from which the voice emerges and within which it continues to move. For example, in the third song, *Departure*, the compressed registral range of the vocal line, emerging at bar 9 above the sustained piano sonorities, creates the impression that the voice is suspended within the piano's continuing resonance rather than projected above it. In this song the vocal line occupies the interior of the piano's widely spaced registral field, creating a sense that the two parts inhabit the same sonic space rather than functioning as separate musical layers. The fluctuating temporal field reinforces this sense of immersion as voice and piano inhabit the same evolving musical environment. With the exception of *Entre Chien et Loup*, each song begins by allowing the piano to establish this acoustic landscape before the voice gradually

emerges within it, expressing landscape not as a passive backdrop but as an immersive space that precedes and shapes human experience.

The use of humming reinforces the relational approach to musical sound and also draws upon an earlier exploration of presence and absence associated with the histories of the Arran Clearances and the Massacre of Chios. Suspended between language, speech, and embodied vocal sound, the humming voice occupies a threshold in which semantic meaning recedes, allowing absence and memory to be articulated through timbre rather than text. Humming first appears in the opening song after the prologue, *Lethe – Oblivion*, where oscillating hummed figures gradually expand into fully sung pitches at bar 13, marked 'Awakening, with shock'. Instead of projecting text from outside the surrounding musical environment, the voice remains immersed within the sonic environment established by the piano as an embodied sonic presence: the soft humming merges and blends with the fluid piano lines. The significance of humming extends beyond individual songs. The cycle concludes with the voice returning in hummed unison with the opening piano line, so that the final musical gesture withdraws once again from fully articulated language into shared timbral presence. In this way, the relationship between voice and piano extends the ecological concerns developed throughout the portfolio, articulating relationships between humans and landscapes through embodied musical encounter.

In *ISOLA*, the continual interaction between thresholds – between humming and singing, recurrence and transformation, memory and forgetting, departure and arrival – became a compositional means of resisting fixed musical identities, reflecting the fluid experiences of migration and memory explored through the compositional dialogue with John Perivolaris's textual and photographic practice. Viewed across the portfolio as a whole, the compositional developments in *ISOLA* demonstrate a gradual shift in the research. Earlier investigations into musical expressions of multiple temporalities and material processes increasingly became inseparable from broader questions of perception. *ISOLA* brings these strands of the research together within a single interdisciplinary work, in which poetic language, photographic practice, and

musical structure continually reshape one another through the compositional process. In doing so, the cycle does not simply conclude the portfolio, but reflects upon the wider compositional discoveries made throughout the research, demonstrating how questions of time, materiality, and embodiment ultimately converge within a musical language that understands landscape in ecological terms, not as a fixed geography but as a continually evolving network of relationships between memory, identity, and place.

Conclusions: Durational Ecologies

"Space … is the sphere of the possibility of the existence of more-than-one"
Doreen Massey.[119]

Throughout this research I have brought into dialogue thinkers from philosophy, ecology, anthropology, geography, literature, and musicology. While these writers emerge from different historical moments and disciplinary traditions, they are united less by a common theoretical school than by a shared concern with the relationships between temporality, embodiment, and the more-than-human world. Their ideas have not functioned as a single methodological framework but as points of creative encounter, each offering different ways of thinking through the compositional questions that emerged during this research.

Bergson's model of lived duration defines the present moment as both prospective and retrospective. Through this lens, existence becomes a multi-stranded movement of both forward momentum and lived embeddedness: a horizontal and vertical deepening of matter and memory. Within the ecological and phenomenological framework developed throughout this dissertation, Bergson's conception of duration invites an understanding of human life as fundamentally relational rather than autonomous, embedded within wider material and temporal continuities. This understanding resonates with several of the thinkers who have informed this research, most notably Latour, Haraway, Tsing, and Morton, who each question, in different ways, models of progress and productivity that privilege human autonomy at the expense of ecological interdependence. Their work suggests that contemporary environmental crises are not only ecological problems but also reflect particular ways of imagining relationships between humans, time, and the material world. My research, which began as an exploration of the post-pastoral in compositional processes, has gradually become an investigation of time and materiality in composition. Throughout this process I have

[119] Massey, "Some Times of Space," 109.

sought to explore how music might express the entanglements between matter and time, and how compositional practice might offer new ways of imagining human experience as ecologically embedded within a wider unfolding continuum.

Jenny Odell's reading of Hannah Arendt's distinction between fabrication and political action in *The Human Condition* offered a particularly productive way of thinking about the relationship between artistic practice and social change. Odell draws on Arendt to question the notion that meaningful action can arise through withdrawal from collective life.[120] In *The Human Condition*, Arendt focused on the age-old naivety of believing that the craft or design of a single person can replace political action, influenced by Plato's republic and his archetype of the philosopher-king creating 'his City as the sculptor makes a statue'.[121] Drawing on the distinctions between democratic, pluralistic actions as essentially uncontrollable, and individual making (or 'fabrication') as a manipulatable craft, Arendt wrote that retreats from the chaotic realm of society 'always amount to seeking shelter from action's calamities in an activity where one man, isolated from all others, remains master of his doings from beginning to end'.[122] Rather like Donna Harraway's recognition of messy entanglement as the only means of true participation in the world, Arendt's detection of the philosopher-king's risk to the fundamentals of both democracy and political process exposes a key point which has emerged through my research; seeking to undermine the cliché of the lone artist retreating into the separate realm of Nature for inspiration, this thesis argues that artistic practices engaging with environmental questions are strengthened when they emerge from embedded relationships with particular places and communities rather than from an imagined separation between humanity and nature. Arendt's distinction also clarifies an important implication of my own research. I am not suggesting that an individual artistic process can replace collective action or achieve the same goals. Instead, artistic practice offers a different mode of engagement, capable of reshaping perception, attention, and relationships to

[120] Jenny Odell, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy* (London: Melville House, 2019), 49–50.
[121] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 143.
[122] Arendt, 220.

the environments we inhabit. Through challenging the idea of retreat and suggesting a more socially connective and entangled participation within the world, Nature is reframed not as a separate realm one can escape into but as a conjoined part of all human life. This is about creative connection rather than distance – or as Joseph Beuys defined it a 'haupstrom';[123] a vital connective intensity necessary for art to fulfill its inherent power in stimulating social change.

Through Bergson's central assertion, that for every living being 'time is just the stuff it is made of',[124] matter becomes inseparable from its duration. Time becomes an unpredictable, irregular and creative force; the 'élan vital'[125] (or vital impetus) which binds us together with other organisms into a polyphonic mesh. The phenomenological depth inherent within this vision of duration encourages an experiential understanding of environment which scientific data alone cannot provide. Time cannot be broken down into isolated fungible units and still contain life. The durational time on which all life forms depend is instead a cumulative flow of movement between different states. Just as Bergson compared the progression through life as akin to two spools (the unrolling 'future' spool and the rolling 'memory/past'spool) connected by a thread (duration/'the stuff of life'), music as an inherently durational form also contains this cumulative potential. Whilst a composer can attempt to avoid linear development, the living entity of a piece of music always contains its past events within its unfolding present; the past 'swells incessantly' in a process of becoming. Simply put, music exists through this vital impetus as it is the transition *between* notes or musical events, the 'flow' between them, which propel a piece of music forward and outwards rather than the individual notes or gestures in isolation.

Music's capacity to enact cumulative duration speaks to its power in expressing and exposing latent forms of consciousness. Throughout this thesis I have discussed the

[123] Hans-Joachim Müller, *Harald Szeeman: Exhibition Maker* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 83.
[124] Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* 10.
[125] Bergson, 89.

ways that musical forms can encourage us to see landscapes, ecosystems, and natural phenomena not as static objects but as ongoing temporal occurrences. The fluid movement which propels a piece of music in its own process of growth is the same movement which can blur the boundaries between human and non-human life forms; an awareness of the 'timefulness'[126] which unites organisms. And this timefulness is not limited to the organisms within the ecosystem, but also to the site in which they exist. Doreen Massey employs Bergson's ideas in her study of space as an entangled site of encounter, writing that space 'is not the static simultaneity of a closed system but a simultaneity of movements'.[127] In other words, space is another agent of movement within the ecological web; far from a static container of consciousness, it shifts and changes, comprising a plurality of times and stories. Rather like Bjornerud, Massey urges for a reimagination of space bonded to time stating 'You can't hold places and things still. What you *can* do is meet up with them … Here, in that sense, is not a place on a map. It is that intersection of trajectories, the meeting-up of stories; an encounter'.[128] So encounter emerges out of an engagement with the multiplicity of contemporaneous unfoldings of time within space, or through 'a lively awareness of the dimension of coevality'.[129] To embed yourself within a space you must first become entangled through direct encounter with the becomings of others. Miles Richardson's stipulation that the unseen physical connections we form with our surroundings (a process that he defines as 'sensing nature')[130] become psychological over time is reflected in Olafur Eliasson's idea of 'seeing yourself sensing'.[131] The difference is that Eliasson writes not of a latent process, but of a heightened awareness of this sensed connection as a key element in his artistic process. An artistic process focused on this widening of perspective could act as a means of reflection on direct encounter, an invitation to greater awareness of the self as one element within a space in process, coexisting with a multitude of others.

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[126] Bjornerud, *Timefulness: How Thinking Like a Geologist Can Help Save the World.*
[127] Massey, "Some Times of Space," 108.
[128] Massey, 108.
[129] Massey, 110.
[130] Miles Richardson, *Reconnection: Fixing Our Broken Relationship with Nature* (London: Pelagic Publishing, 2023), 55.
[131] Olafur Eliasson, quoted in Massey, "Some Times of Space," 111.

I would like to end this thesis with the work of two very different artists I recently encountered – Finnish textile sculptor Maija Lavonen and Aboriginal Australian artist Emily Kam Kngwarray. Lavonen's practice is centred around a slow and laborious hand craft in which monumental textile sculptures are built up through the traditional weaving together of warp and weft threads, resulting in minimalist pieces which distill her childhood experiences of Finnish forests and coastlines into material form. Kngwarray's work, which spans from immersive painted canvases to vast hanging batiks, expresses the aboriginal concept of 'Country' through layered motifs drawn from the specific desert ecosystem of Alhalker, in the Sandover region in the Northern territory. Although coming from entirely contrasting backgrounds, both Lavonen and Kngwarray worked with line, form and textiles as an expression of their reciprocal, corporeal entanglement within specific localities. Both artists suggest a form of bioregionalism: an understanding of identity and belonging grounded in reciprocal relationships with the ecological characteristics of a place rather than in political boundaries or nationality.[132] As digital technologies advance at alarming rates, purposeful interaction with our immediate surroundings becomes an ever more political act; it is now easy to connect with the 'world' at large from behind a screen whilst remaining isolated from our local communities. Many of the principles articulated by bioregionalism have long been embodied in Indigenous communities such as Kngwarray's. Investigating mosses as a portal into those elements of our surroundings which transcend 'the limits of ordinary perception', Robin Wall Kimmerer draws from her indigenous heritage when she writes that 'Learning to see mosses is more like listening than looking'.[133] Listening becomes a metaphor here for intimate attention to our ecosystems and the beings of which they are comprised. To put it another way, through enacting a different kind of listening *into* our local environments it might be possible to discover the hidden music of existences which form a myriad of unseen webs around us.

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[132] Peter Berg, "Bioregions," in *The Biosphere and the Bioregion: Essential Writings of Peter Berg*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Eve Quesnel (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 61–63.
[133] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses* (London: Penguin, 2021), 10.

Small islands provide the ideal sites for an outward-looking form of bioregionalism. Physical outliers, their boundaries are defined by the ocean; clear but fluid, limiting but also connective. In 2026, as the impacts of climate change deepen, islands such as these could offer a condensed view of the possibilities still open to us, suggesting a re-integration of human lives, non-human lives, land, and sea as component parts of an interconnected whole ecosystem. The dialogue between time, space, and matter acts as a stimulus, a framework, and a metaphor in my compositional process, offering a model for exploration of interwoven narratives, cultures, histories and identities in the islands of Chios and Arran. Through this research process the idea and act of encounter has extended beyond these islands into a wider view of the compositional process as a site of new interaction with my surroundings. Initial influences from these islands as intense microcosms of the external world have extended to a way of being in the world which in turn changes my process and the resultant music. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing writes that 'A wheel turns because of its encounter with the surface of the road; spinning in the air it goes nowhere. Rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick alone is just a stick. In both cases, it is friction that produces movement, action, effect'.[134] It is only through direct contact with an 'other', through encounter of specific local ecological realities, that any kind of environmental or social movement can occur. This research process has been an attempt to express in music the frictional point of contact between life forms and their environments, so necessary to any kind of collaborative survival. The creative tension between different forms of being is the central stimulus for the pieces of music composed in this thesis.

[134] Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection,* 5.

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Electra Perivolaris

Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock...

for solo guitar

Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock... for solo guitar.
An International Guitar Foundation commission.

Duration
c. 8 minutes 20 seconds approximately.
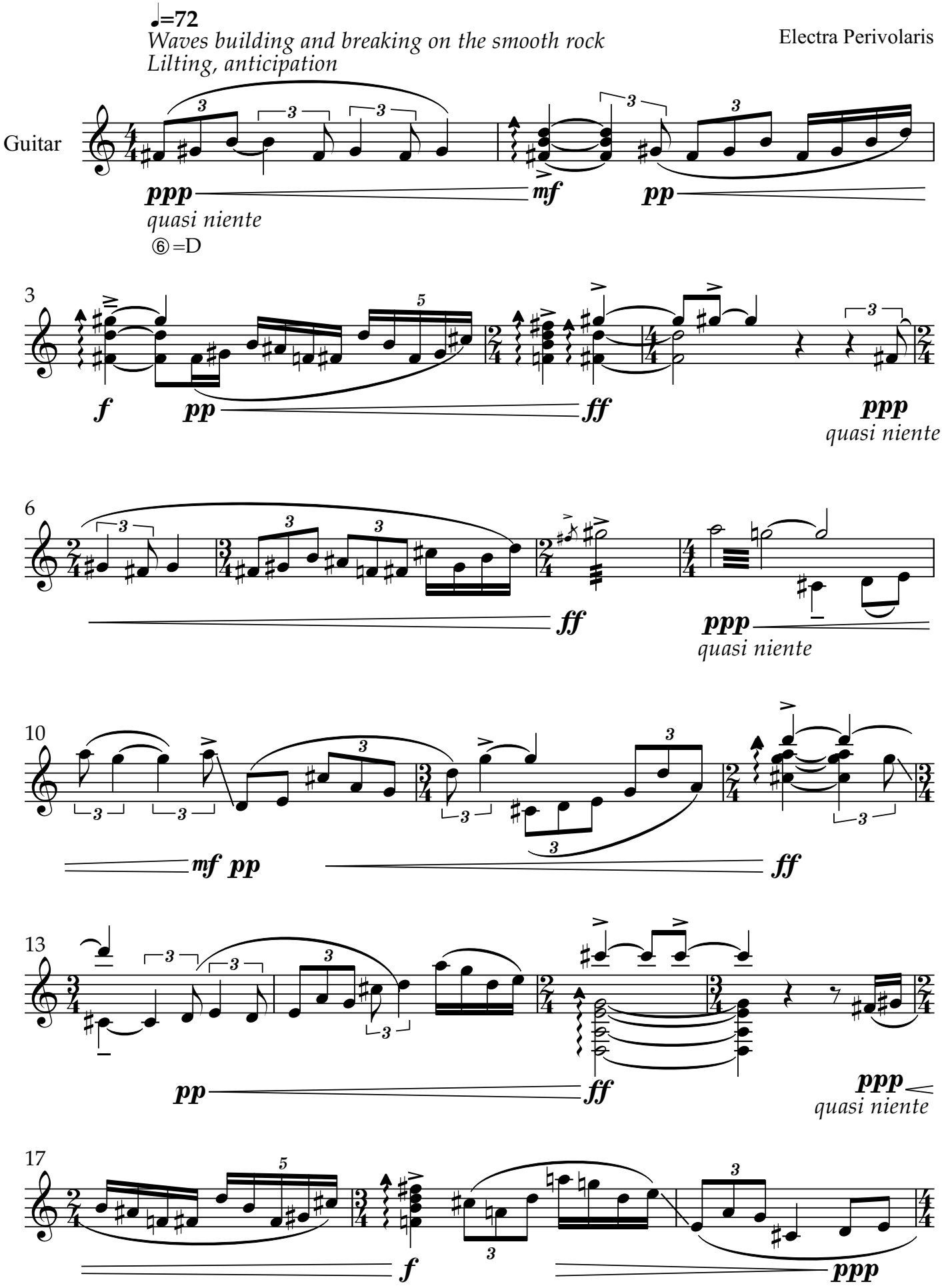
First Performance
'La Leona' concert of the International Guitar Foundation Festival, Kings Place, London.
18th July 2021.

Programme Note
This piece depicts the transformation of a rock on the coastline below my home on the Scottish Isle of Arran. Many of the rocks on the beaches at the Southern tip of the island are ancient volcanic rocks, scarred and bearing the traces of the evolution of the earth over millions of years. The movement of the waves is eternalised in the ridges and patterns formed on the surface of the rocks. The process of transformation is ongoing and will last for many more millennia as the form of the rock shifts and changes so gradually that it could be almost imperceptible to the human eye. This vast geological sense of time exists outside our human life span, and yet we can access this deeper time through the physical presence of natural formations like these rocks.
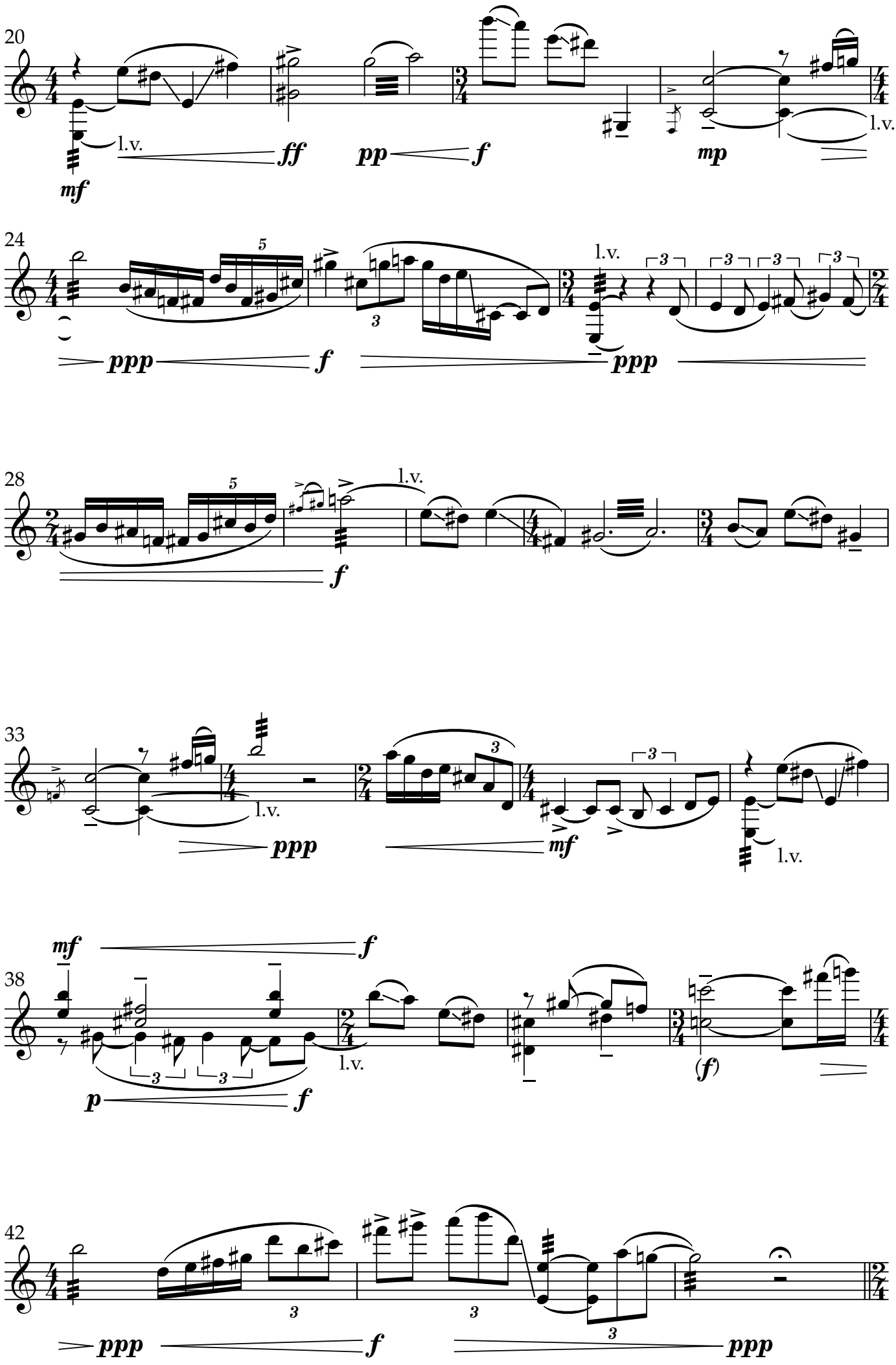
Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock... follows the journey of the rock as it takes on its form, the ever changing nature of the sea transforming the rock as it moves against its surface. From the start of the piece I use a cantus firmus which develops throughout to reflect the changing form of the rock. The waves lap around the young, smooth rock at the start of the piece, before progressing to a faster, shimmering motion pulsating against the surface of the rock and then a violent beating motion as a sea storm transforms the rock. The cantus firmus rock emerges in the final section of the piece, profound and strong, still with its original essence but now transformed.
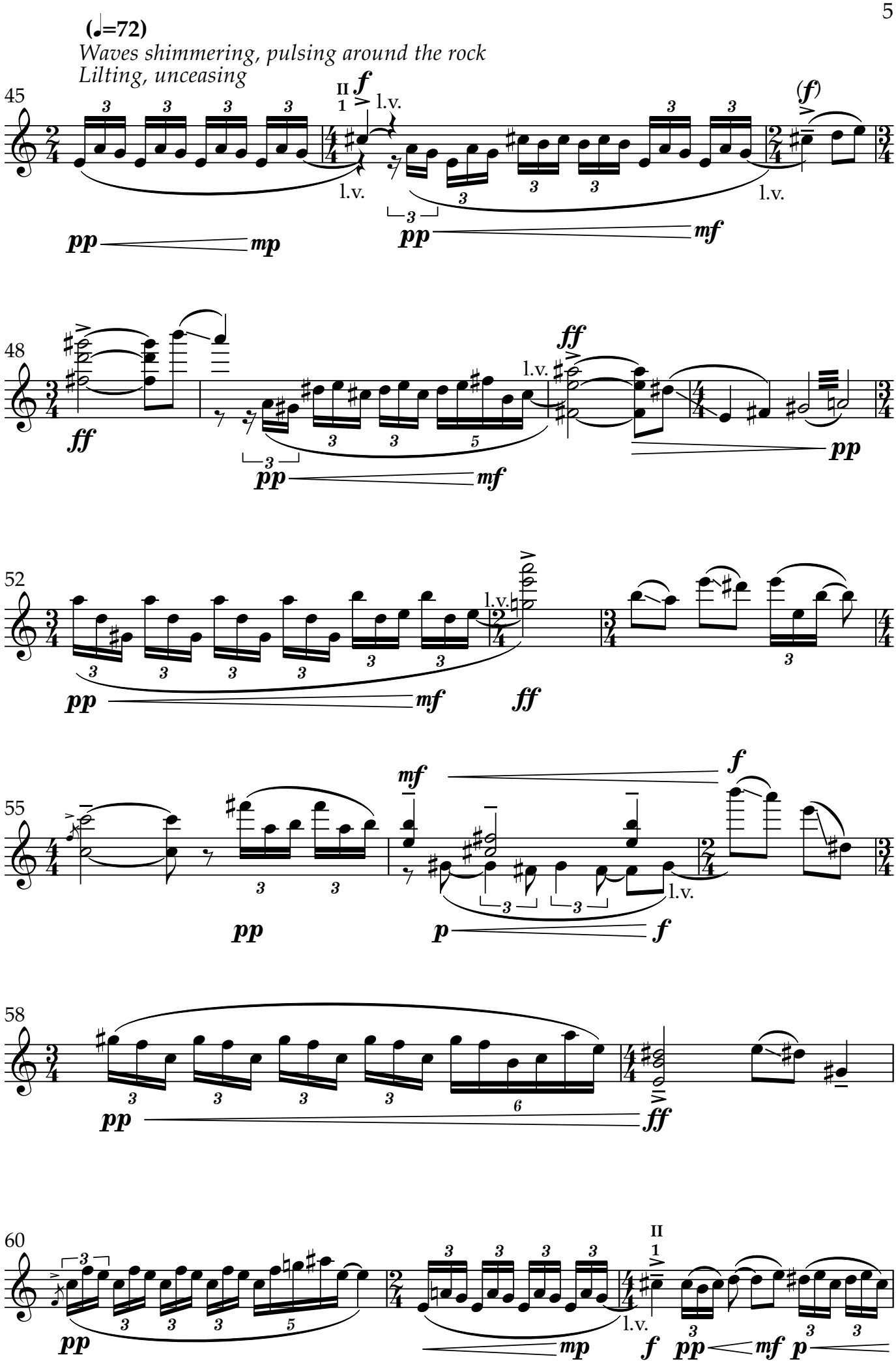
In this piece I trace a natural process which occurs over millennia, allowing this process to directly influence my composition.
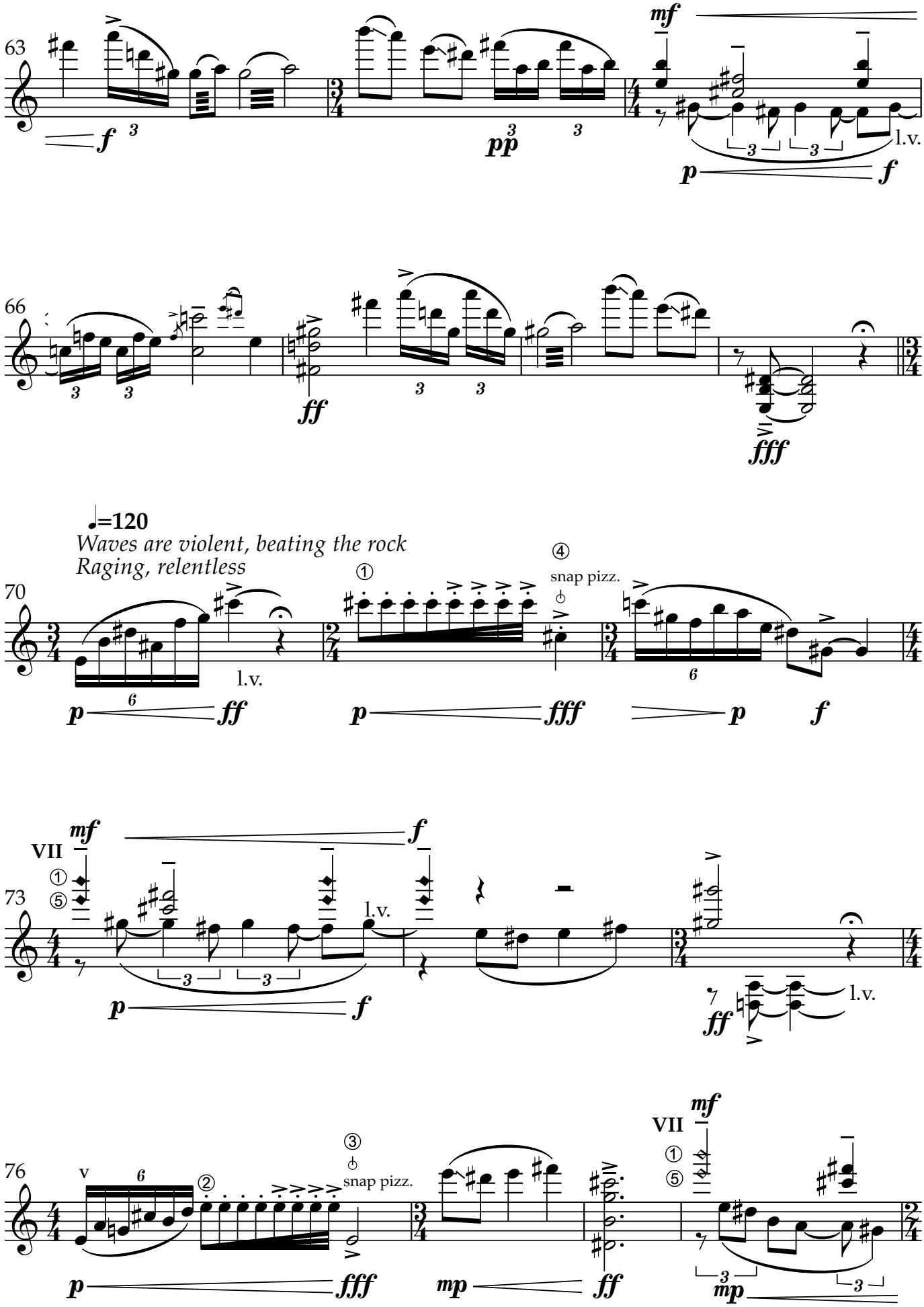
Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock...
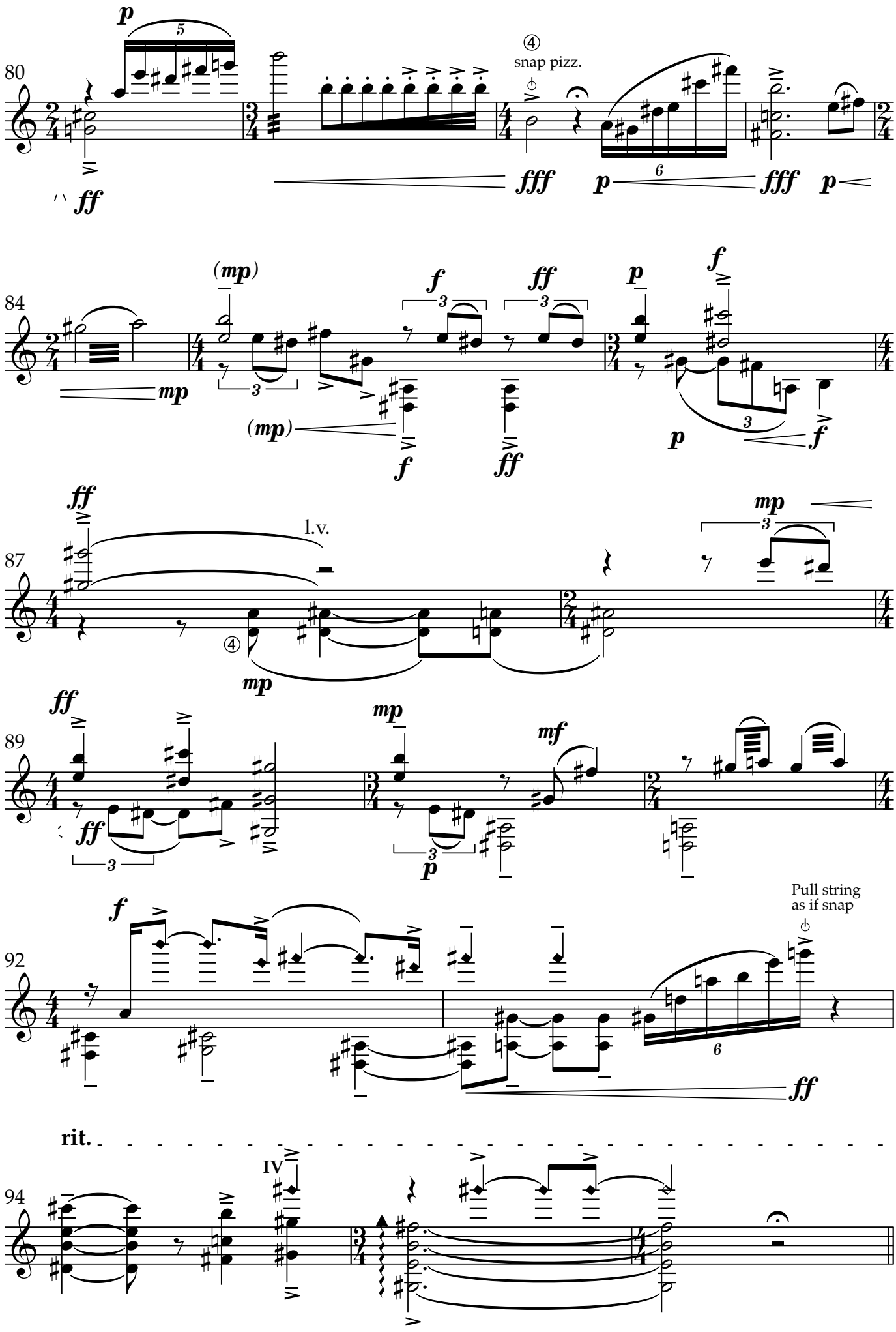


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20
l.v.
mf
ff
pp
f
mp
l.v.
24
ppp
f
l.v.
ppp
28
f
l.v.
33
l.v.
ppp
mf
l.v.
38
mf
f
p
f
l.v.
(f)
42
ppp
f
ppp


(♩=72)
Waves shimmering, pulsing around the rock
Lilting, unceasing
45
48
52
55
58
60
l.v.
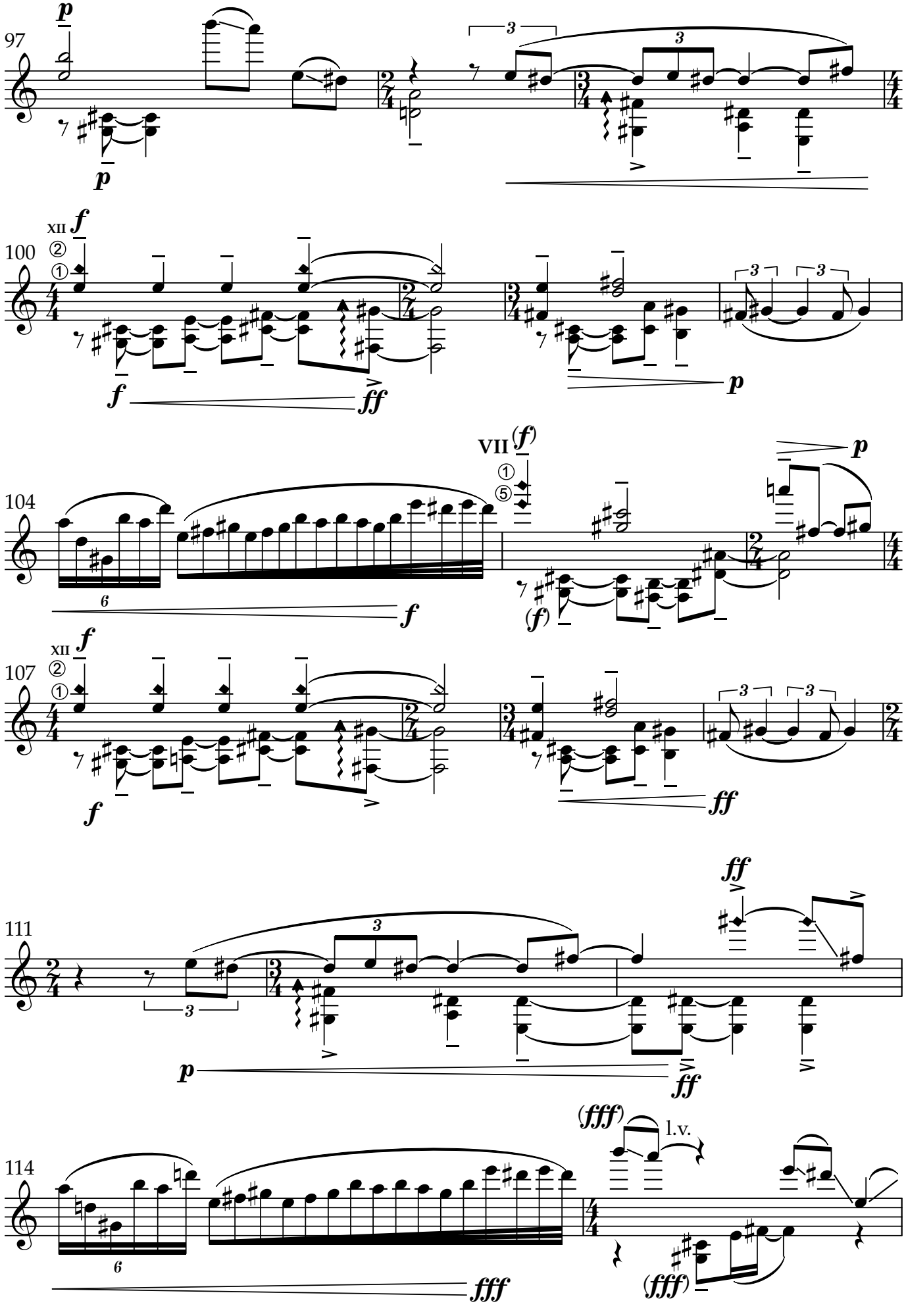

63
f
pp
mf
p
f
l.v.
66
ff
fff
♩=120
Waves are violent, beating the rock
Raging, relentless
70
①
④
snap pizz.
l.v.
p
ff
fff
p
f
VII
73
mf
f
p
f
l.v.
ff
l.v.
76
v
②
③
snap pizz.
p
fff
mp
ff
VII
mf
mp
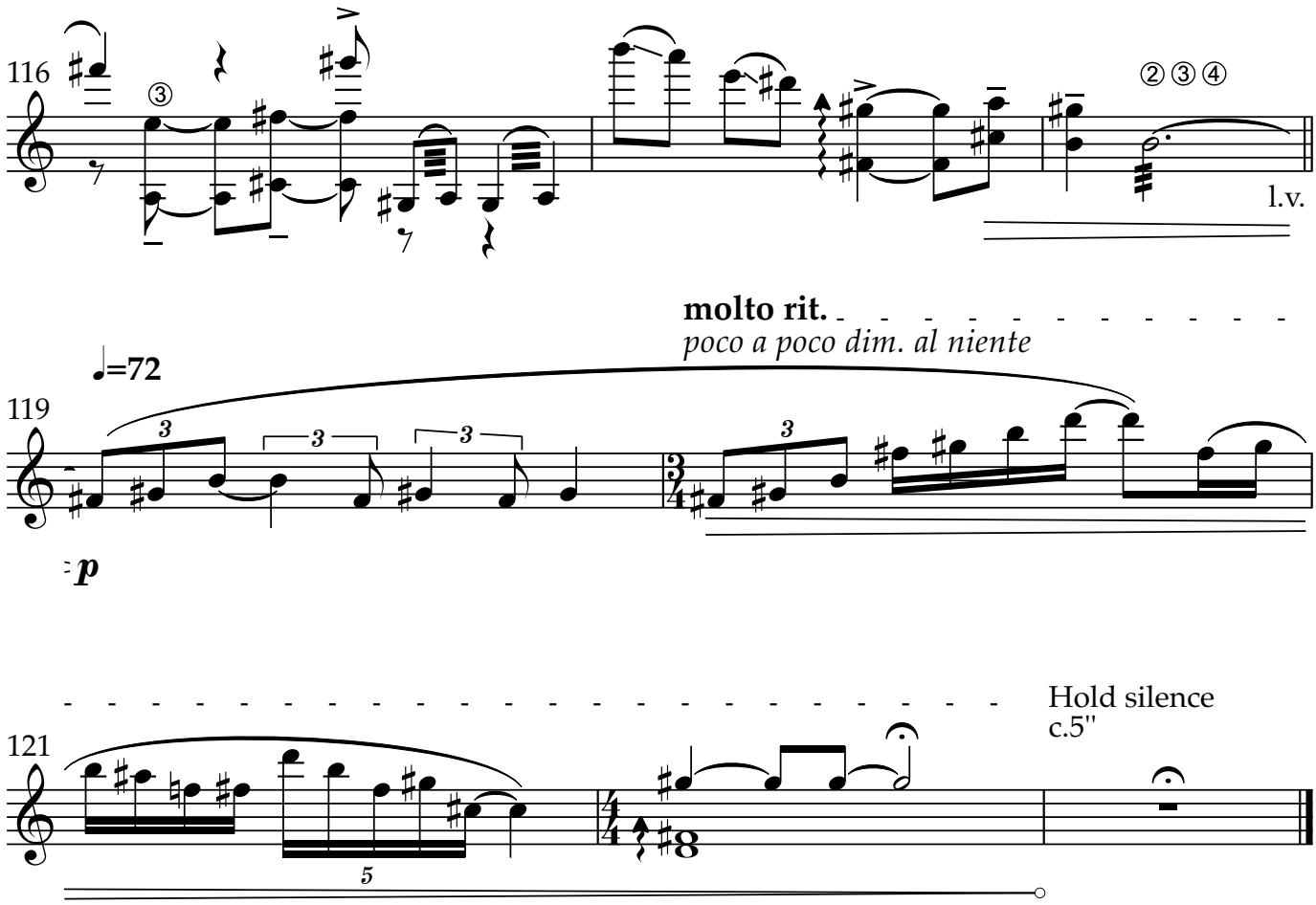

80
84
87
89
92
94
snap pizz.
l.v.
Pull string
as if snap
rit.
IV

♩=60

Profound, strong

The storm has passed, the rock stands, transformed




116
③
②③④
l.v.
molto rit.
poco a poco dim. al niente
♩=72
119
3
3
3
3
p
Hold silence
c.5"
121
5

Electra Perivolaris

Mastiha

for string orchestra



Mastiha for string orchestra. The Royal Philharmonic Society commissioned Electra Perivolaris as one of its 2023 Composers to write this work for the Presteigne Festival.

First Performance
Presteigne Festival Finale, Monday 28th August 2023.
Presteigne Festival Orchestra with conductor George Vass.
St Andrew's Church, Presteigne.

Instrumentation
String Orchestra:
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Celli
Double Bass

Duration
c. 7'00"

Programme Note
Mastiha is influenced by the mastic tree, one of the most important elements of the ecology of the Greek North Aegean island of Chios where my father's side of the family are from. The process of extracting mastic, a resin used to form medicines, food, drinks, and pharmaceutical products, from the trees on Chios is an ancient process which has linked the island community of Chios to their naturally fertile surroundings in a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature since Greek antiquity, dating back approximately 2,500 years and continuing as one of the most important exports of Chios to the present day.

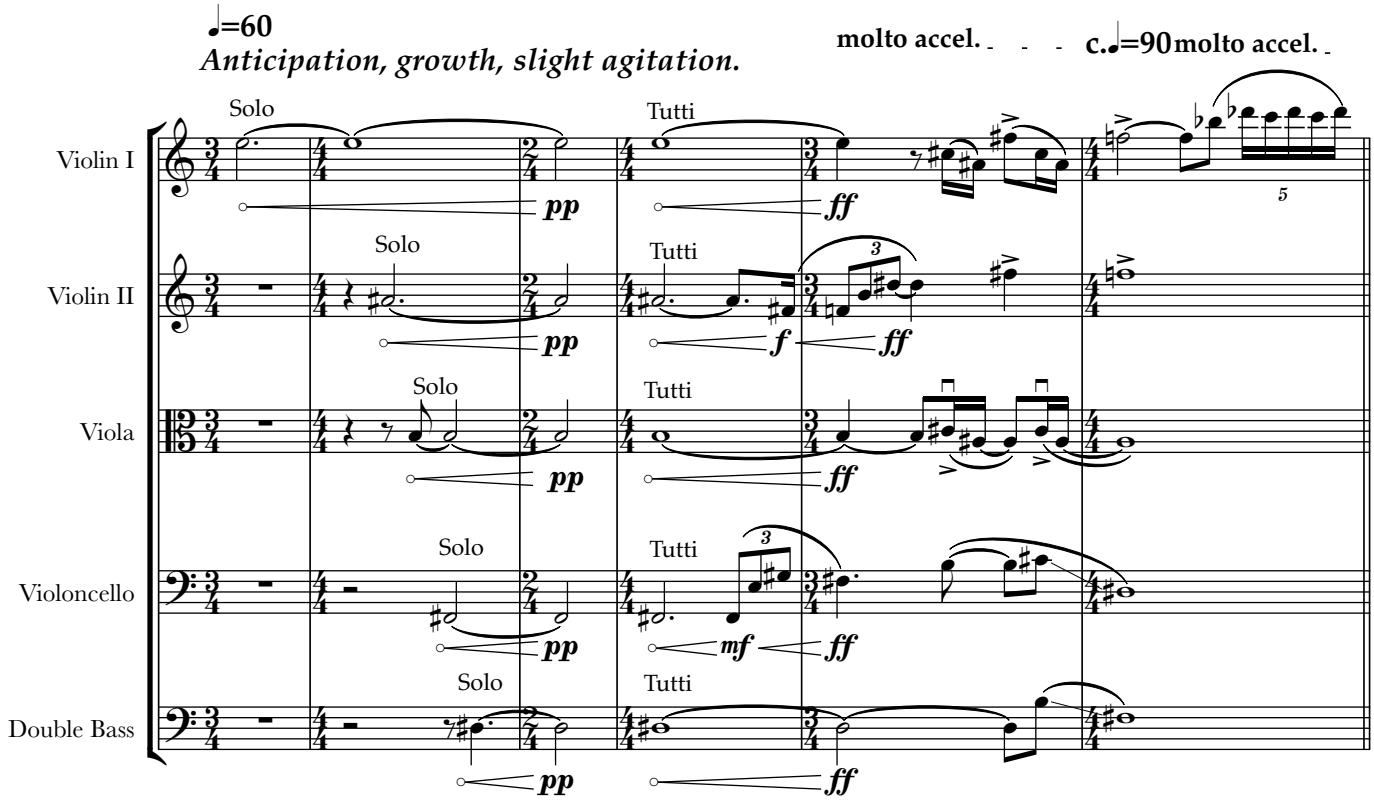
The mastic orchards which cover large swathes of the hills on Chios provided the starting point for this piece. Although it is through-composed, I structured the piece according to the different stages in the process of mastic production, starting with the growth of the orchards. In the opening section of my piece the strings move between solos and full sections, swelling in dynamic over shifting harmonies and cyclic melodies as the single tree seedlings blossom into a full orchard. The second section of the piece is slower paced, focusing on the interlocking, entwining trunks and branches of the community of trees, still growing together but at a more gradual pace than before. A rising and falling melodic motif emerges which entwines all of the string sections together. The third and final section is influenced by the sharp incisions (represented by groups of three accented notes) which islanders then make in the surface of the trees, allowing the resin to form white tear drops at the sites of the incisions giving mastic its name, 'tears of Chios'. The rising and falling melody from before becomes a 'tear drop' motif, inspired by the purity of these shapes of resin which hang from the trees, sparkling in the clear Aegean blue light before falling to the ground and being cleaned and collected by farmers. Mastic cultivation continues to link the lives of islanders to the present natural landscape of Chios in a cyclic process of renewal, protection and growth and I hope that my piece reflects this.
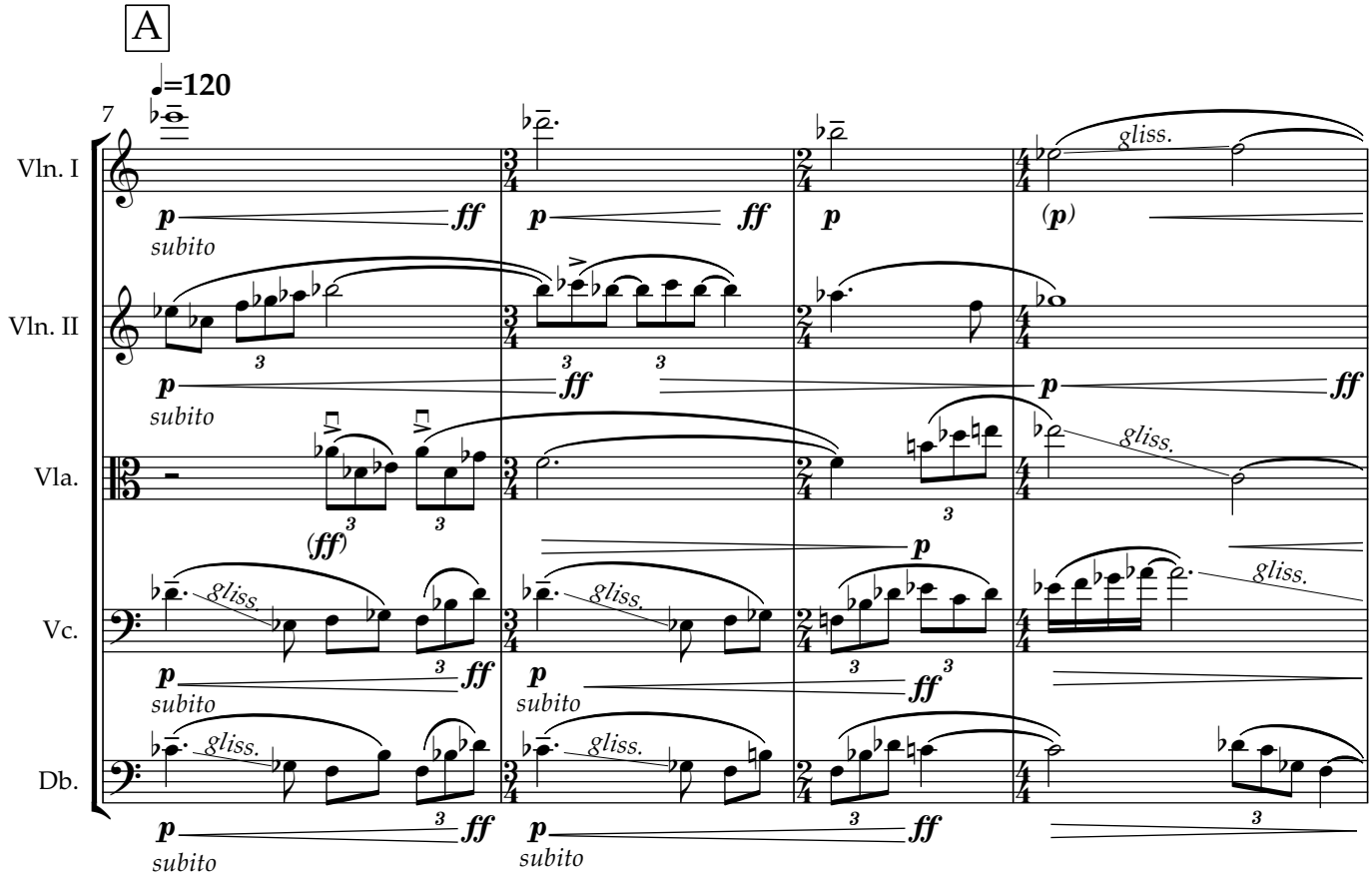
A Royal Philharmonic Society Commission

Mastiha
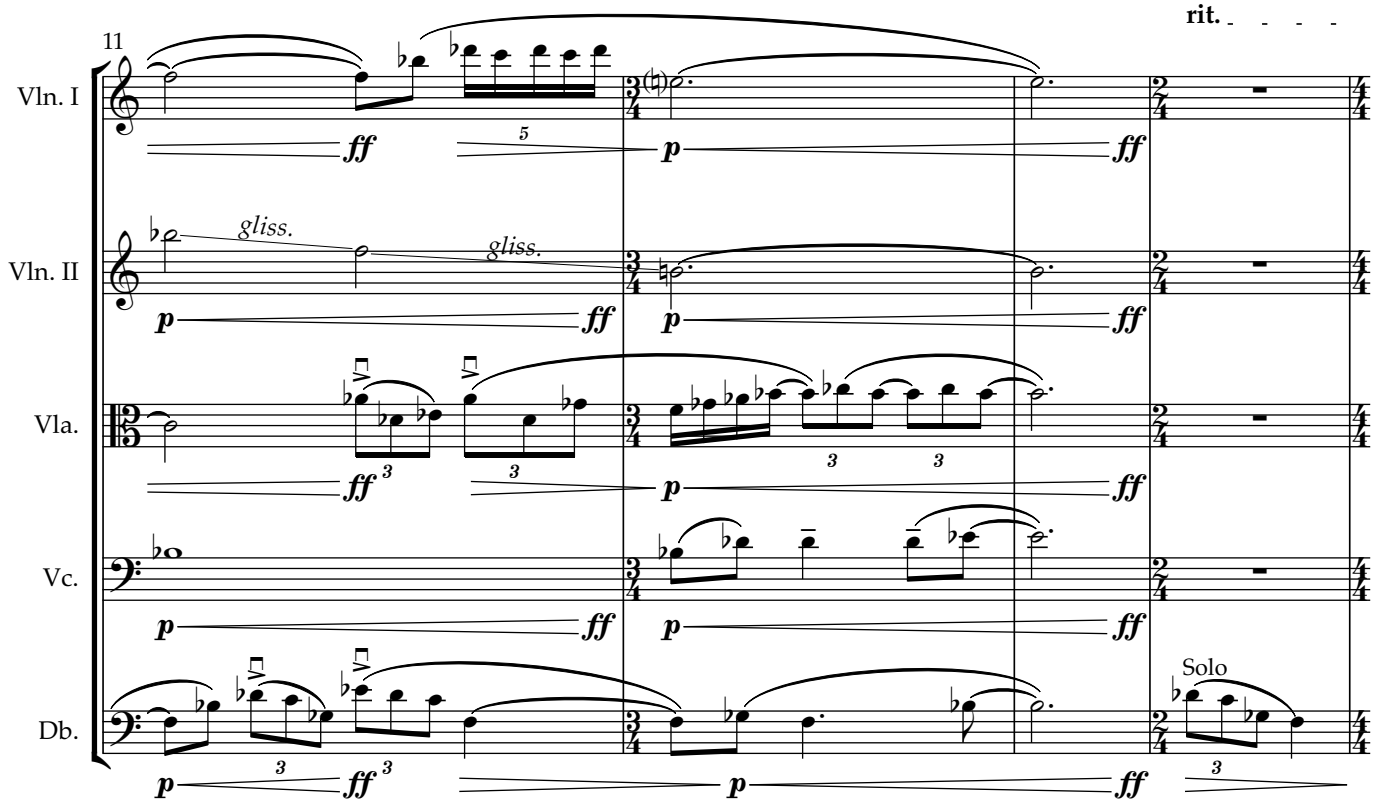
for George Vass and the Presteigne Festival

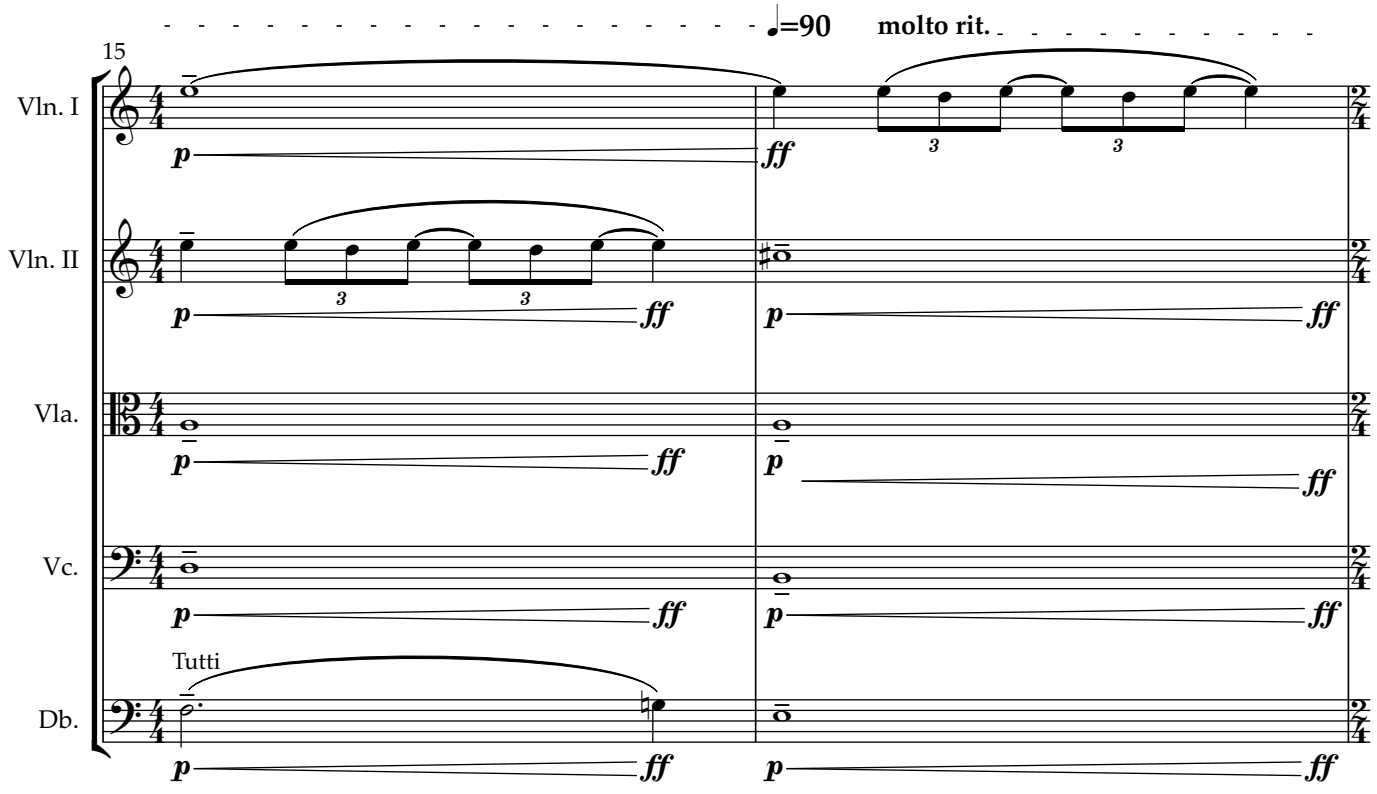
Electra Perivolaris

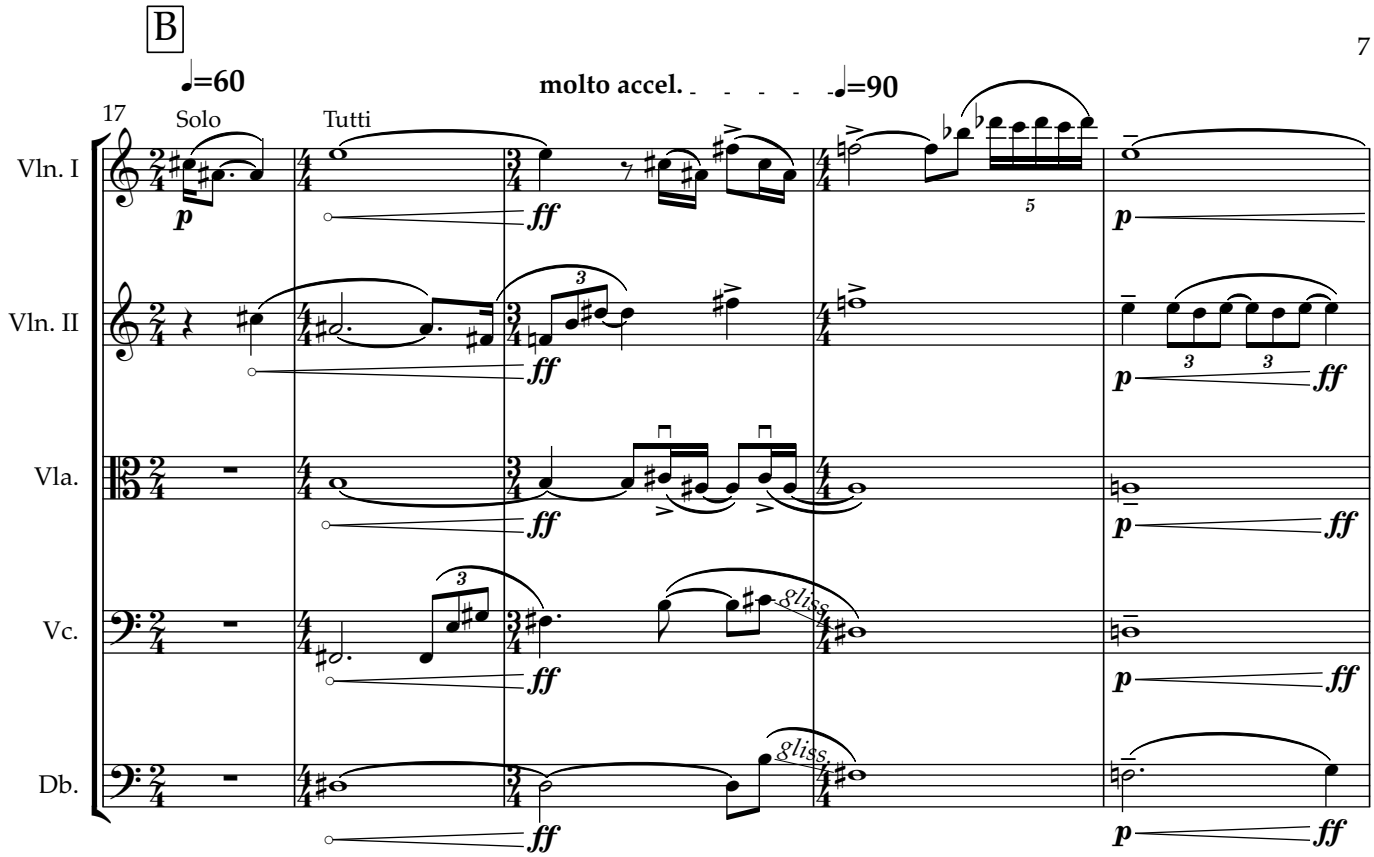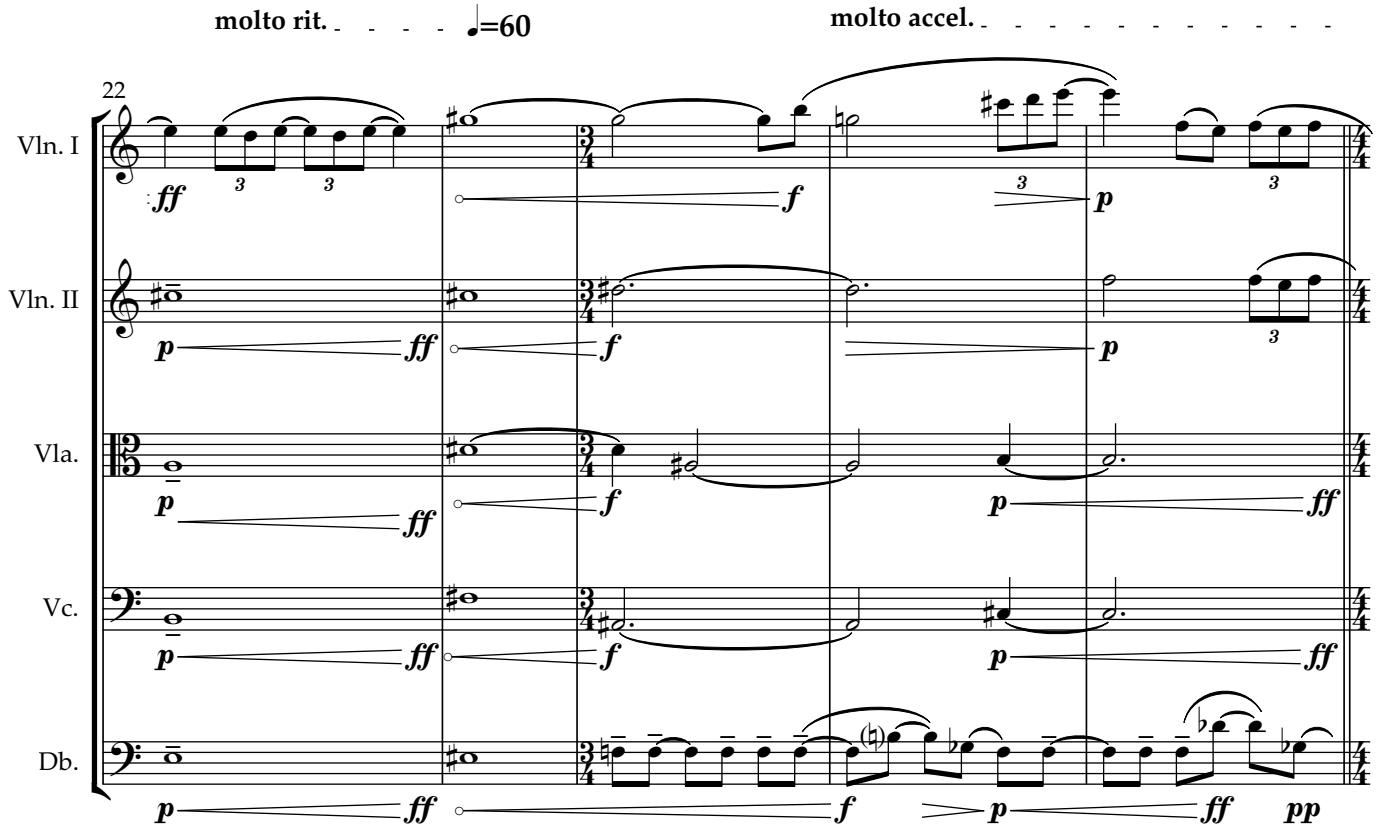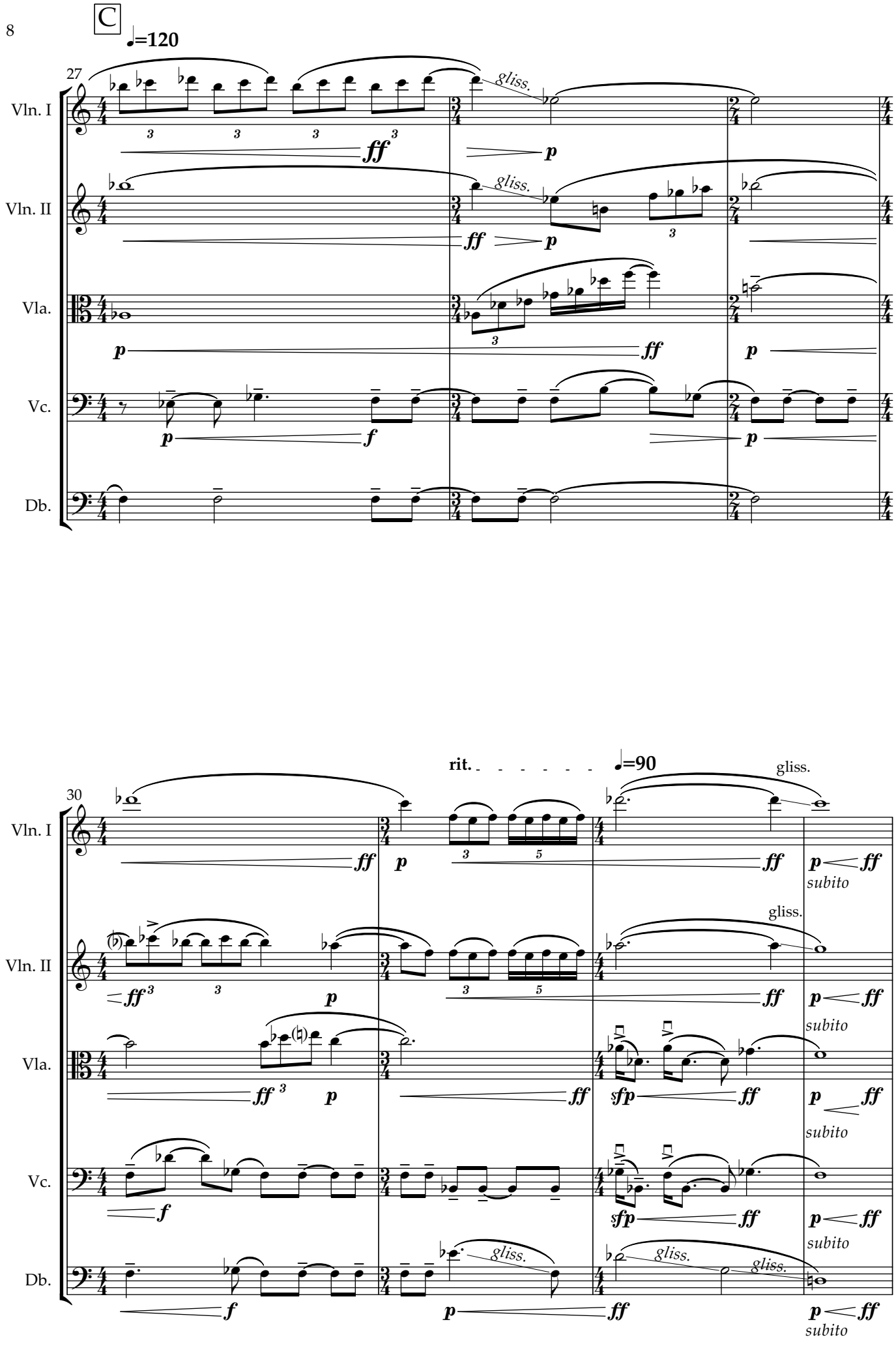




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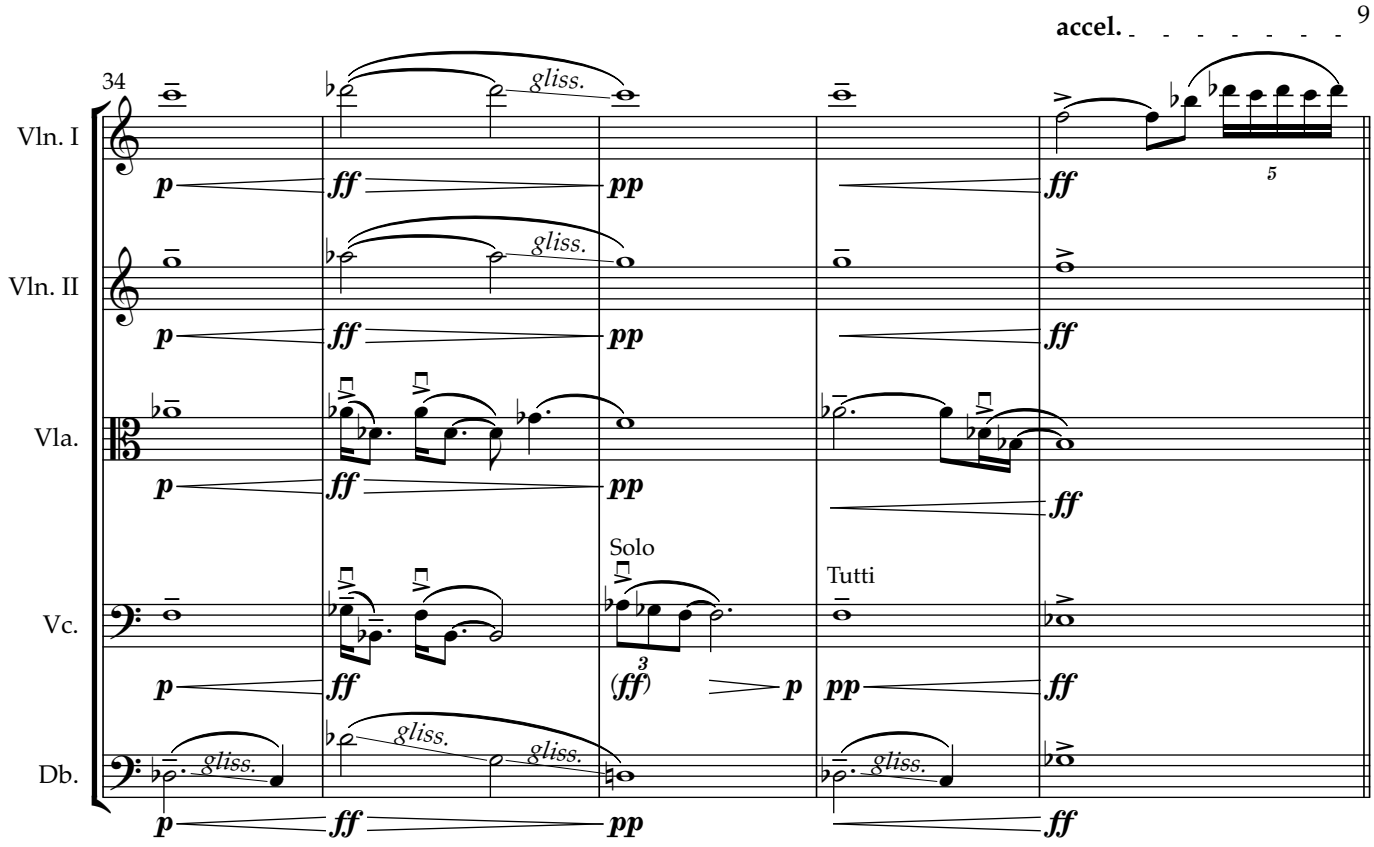

11
rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
gliss.
Solo
ff
p
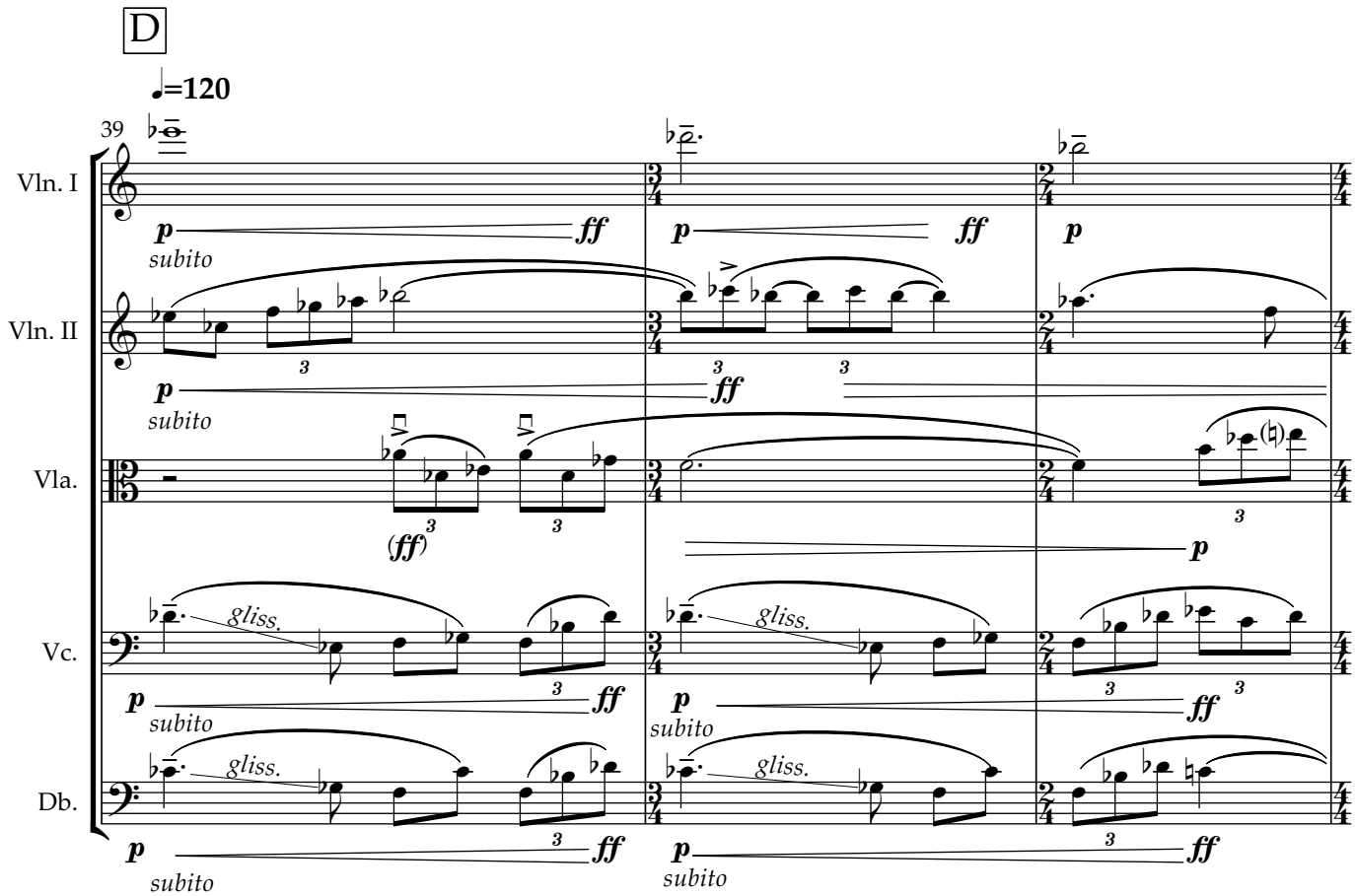

15
♩=90
molto rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Tutti
p
ff
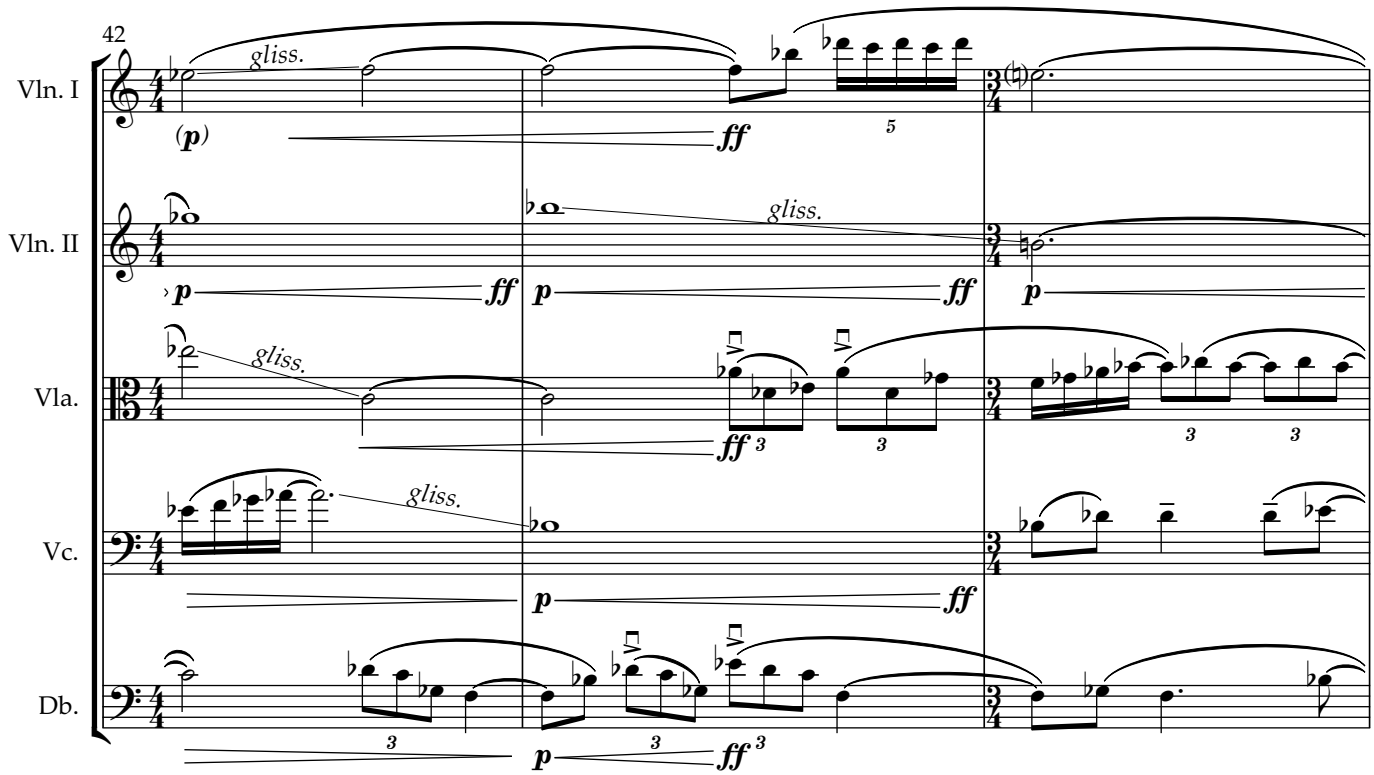

B
♩=60
molto accel.
♩=90
17
Solo
Tutti
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
gliss.
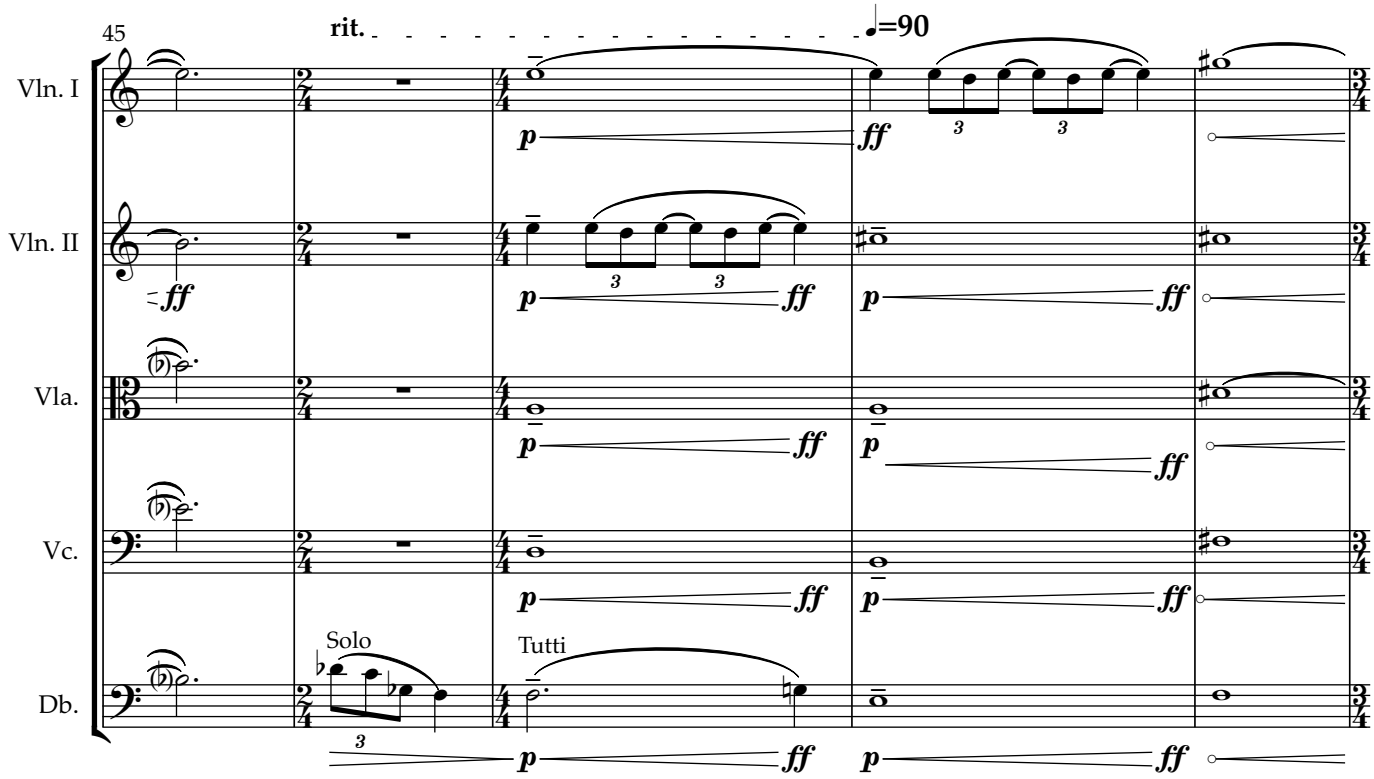

molto rit.
♩=60
molto accel.
22
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
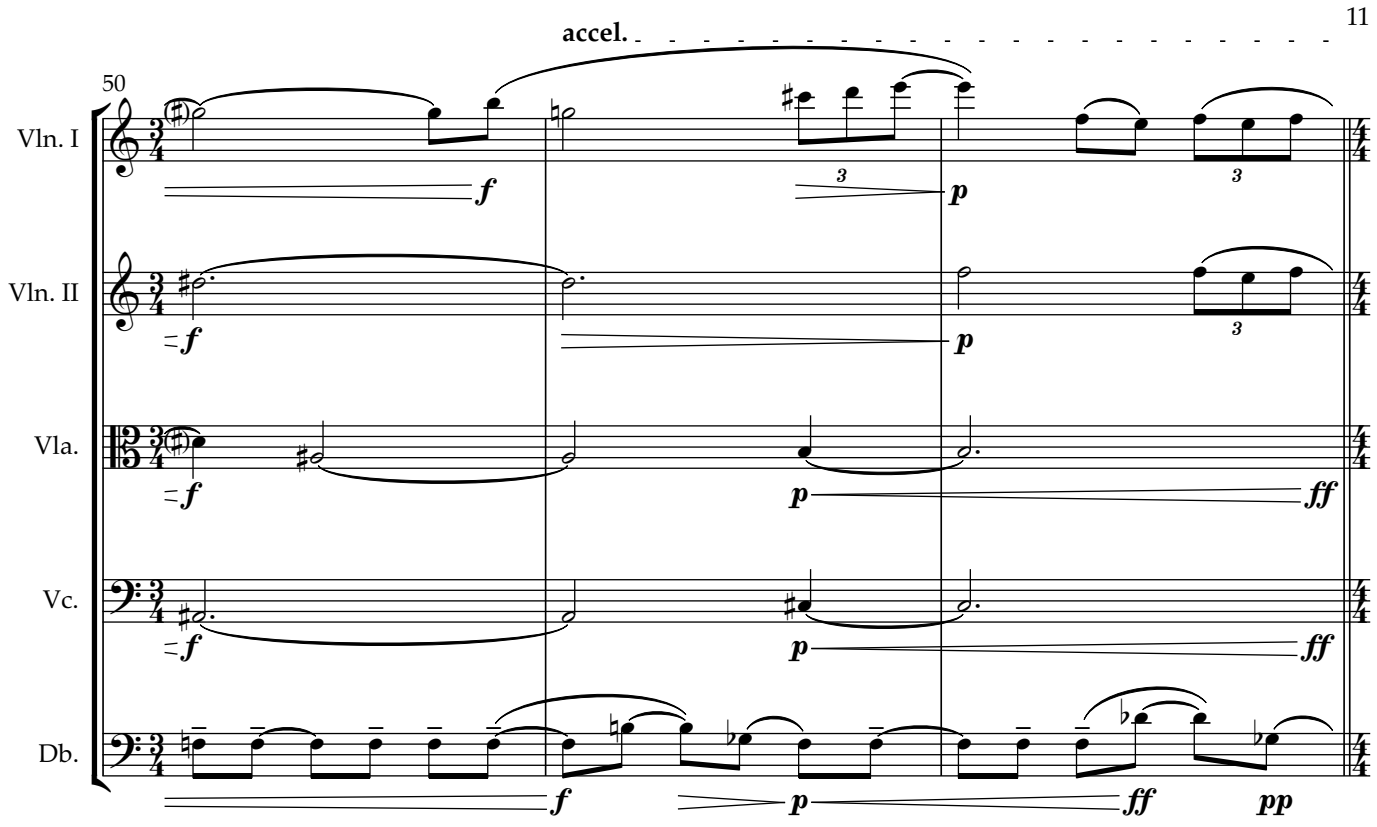

C
♩=120
27
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
ff
p
f
rit.
♩=90
30
subito
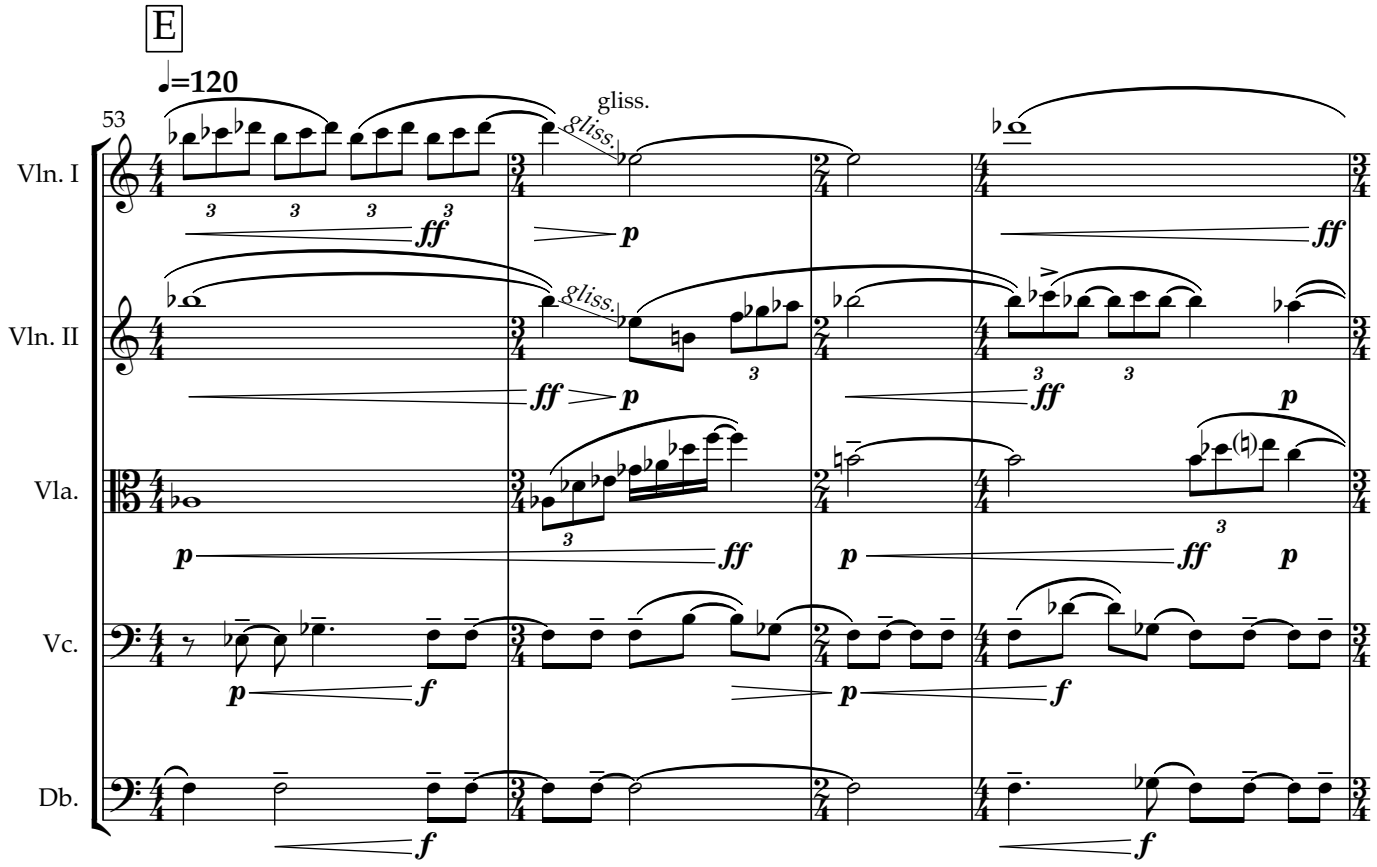

accel.
34
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
Solo
Tutti
p
ff
pp
(ff)

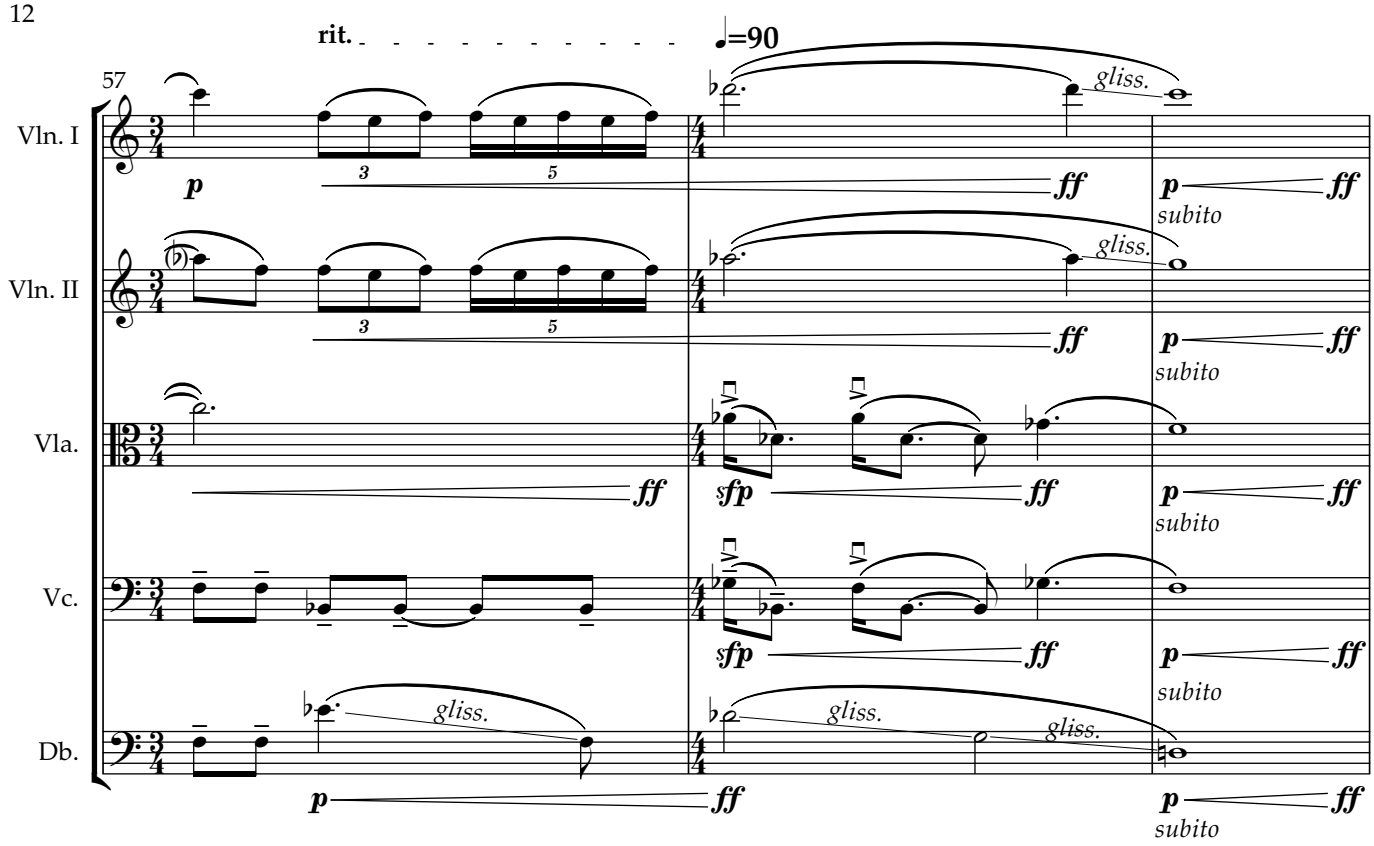

D
♩=120
39
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
p
ff
pp
(ff)
subito

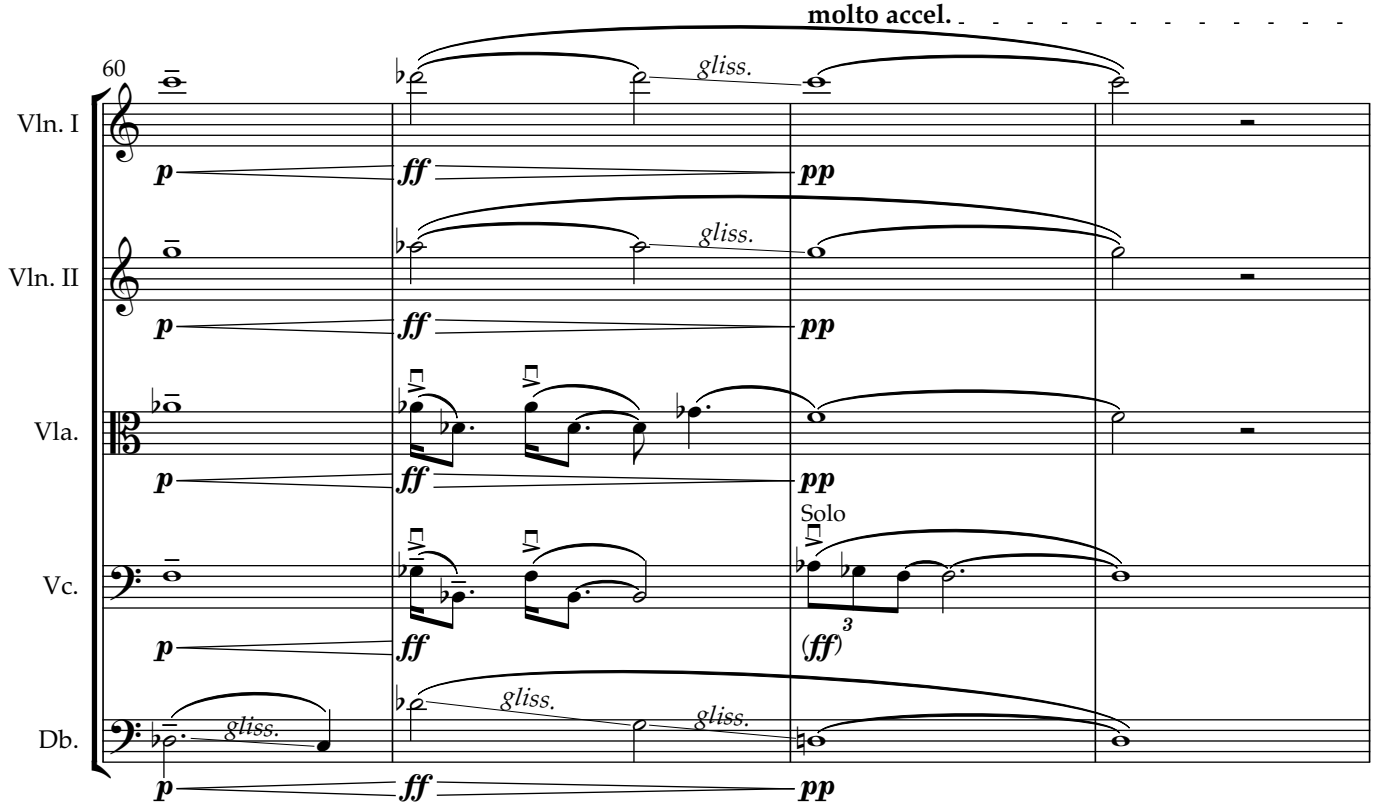

42
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
(p)
ff
p
3
5

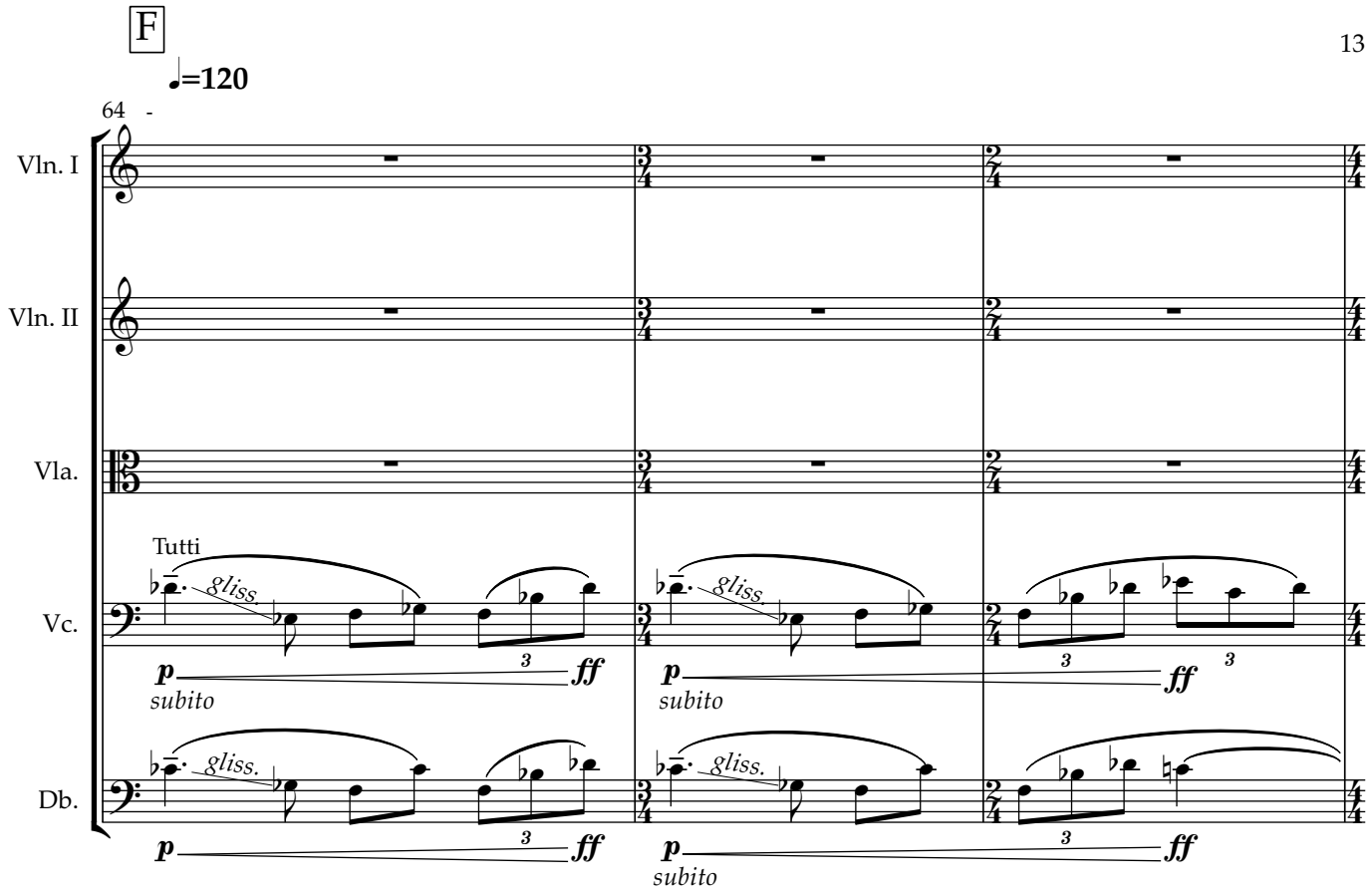

45
rit.
♩=90
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Solo
Tutti
p
ff
3
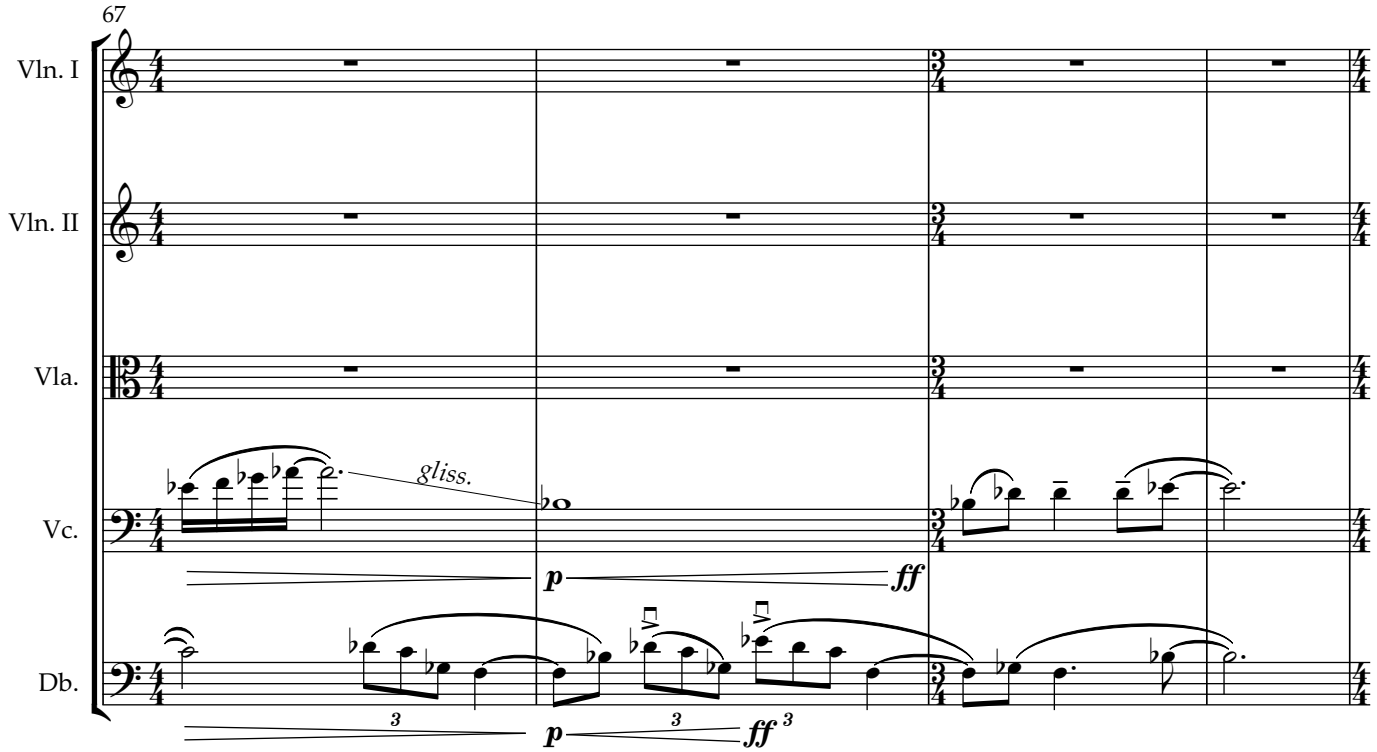

accel.
50
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
f
p
ff
pp
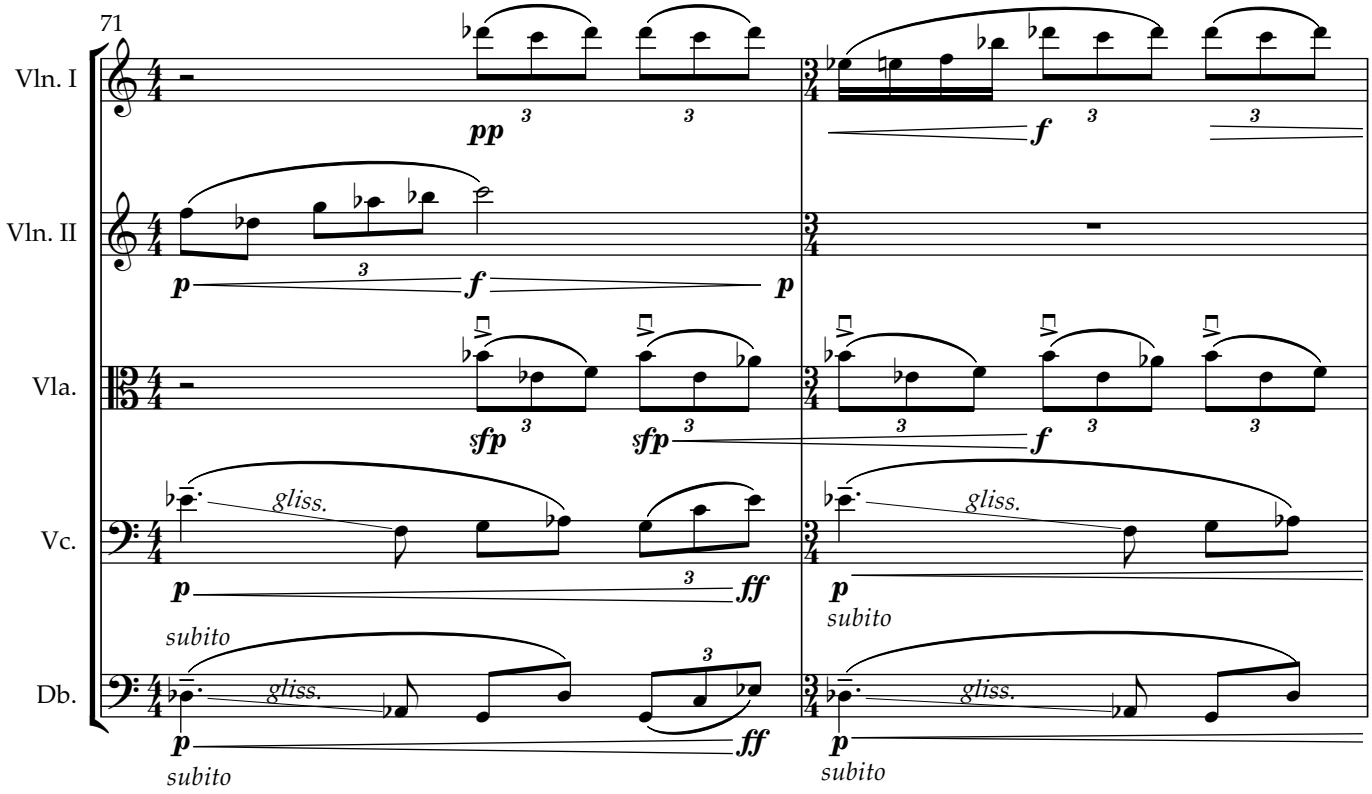

E
♩=120
53
gliss.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
ff
p
f

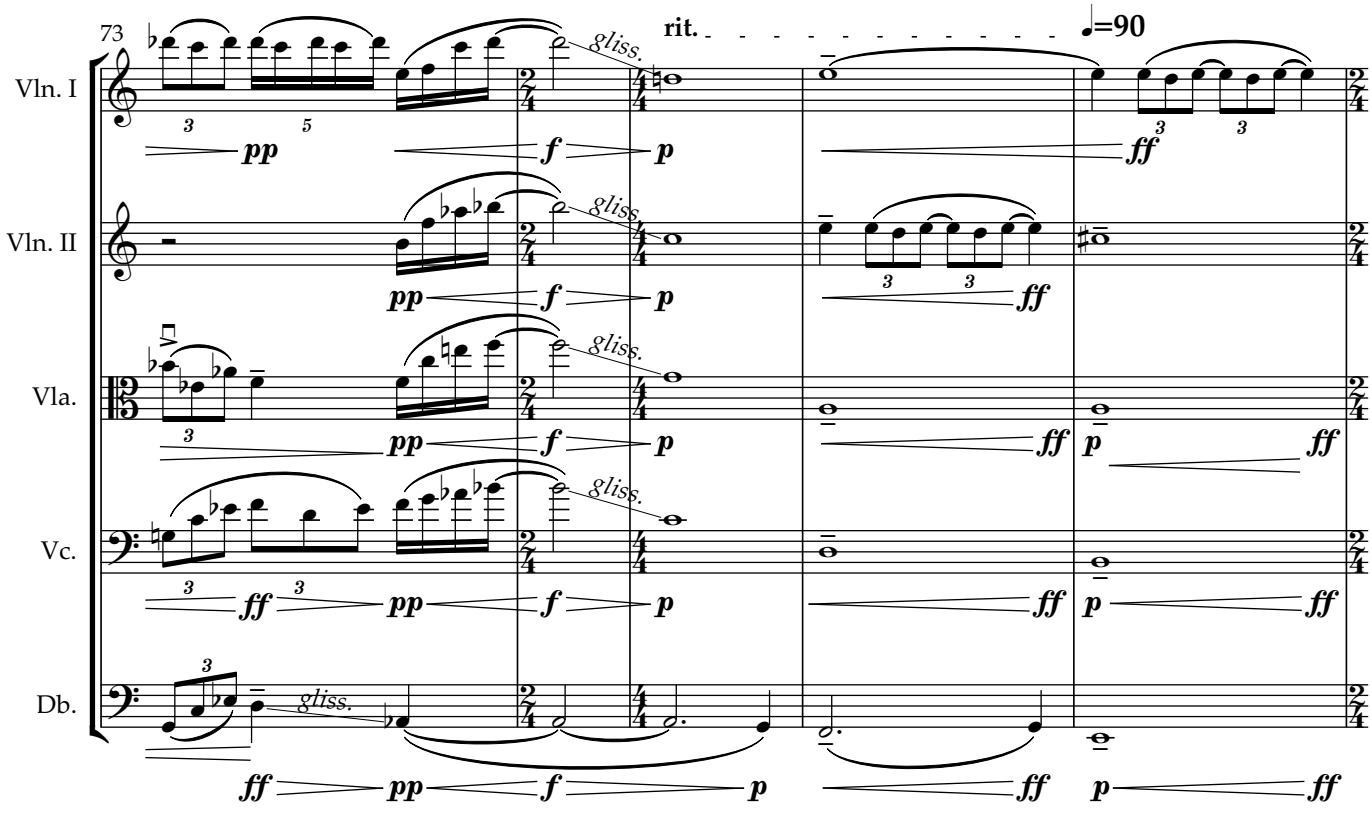

rit.
♩=90
57
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
subito


molto accel.
60
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
Solo


F
♩=120
64
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Tutti
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
p
ff
subito
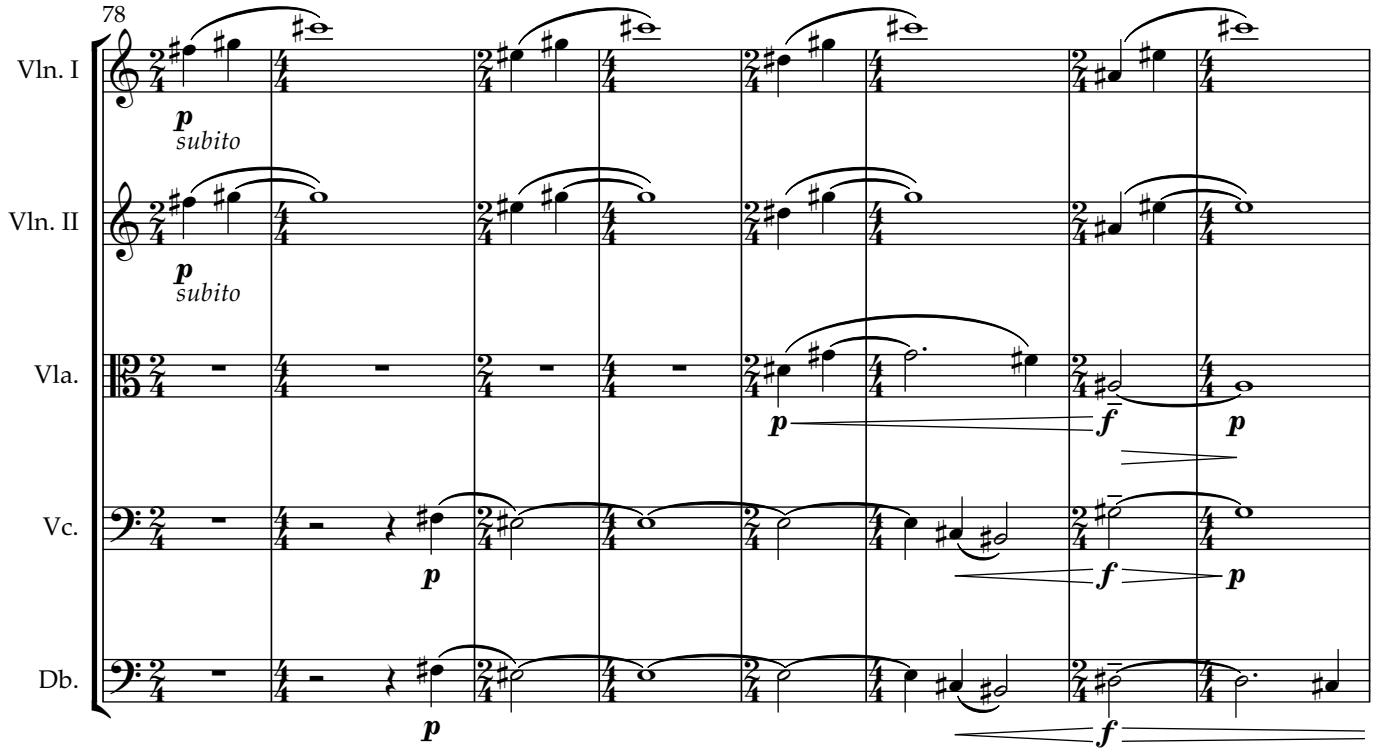

67
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
p
ff


71
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pp
f
p
sfp
ff
gliss.
subito


73
rit.
♩=90
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pp
f
p
ff
gliss.

G
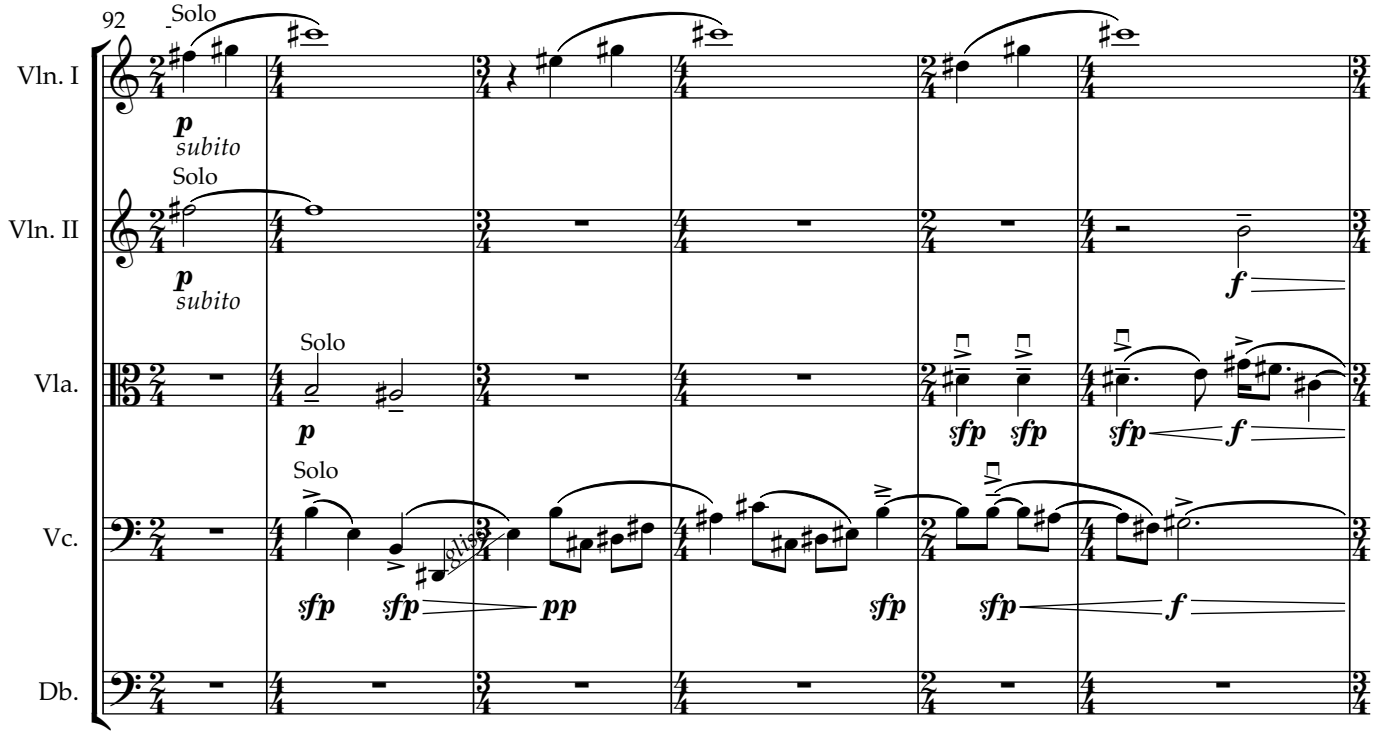
Sudden clarity, focused and pure sound
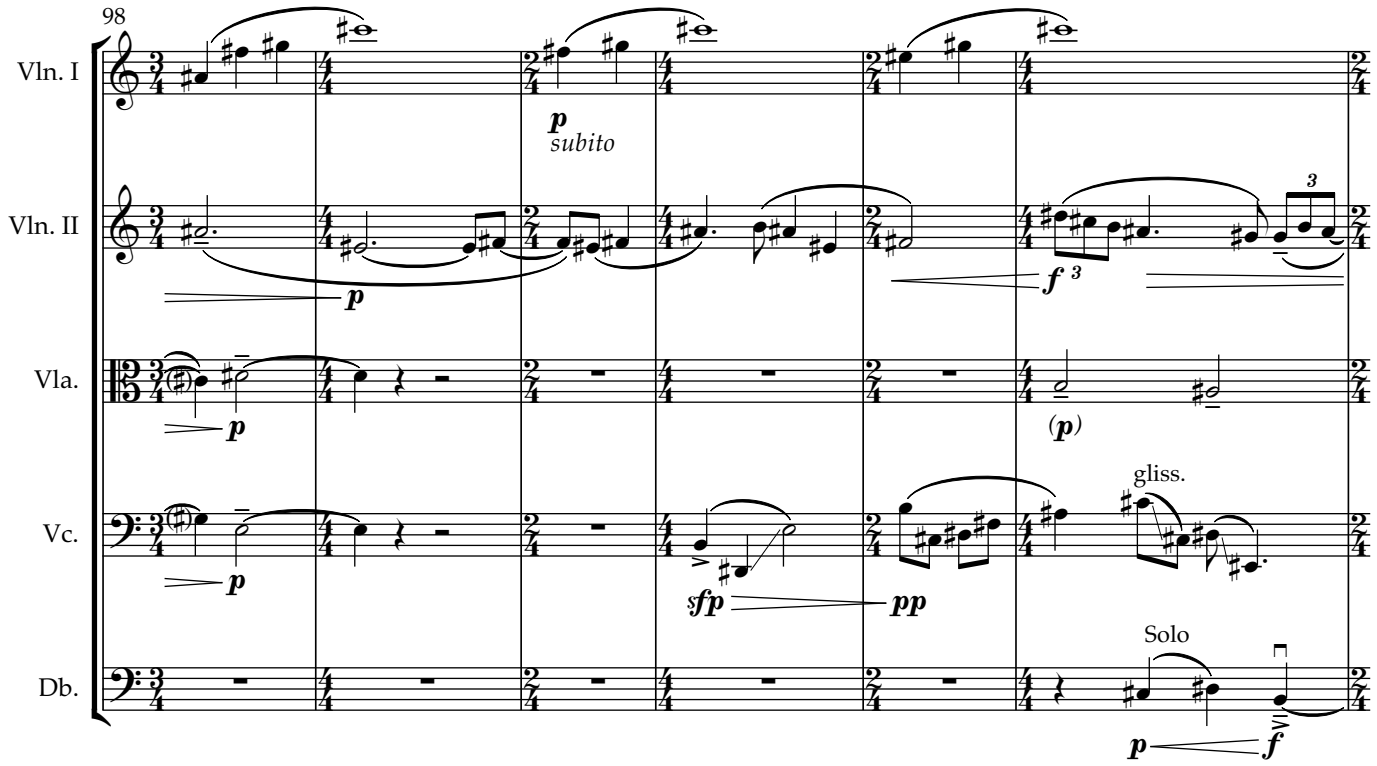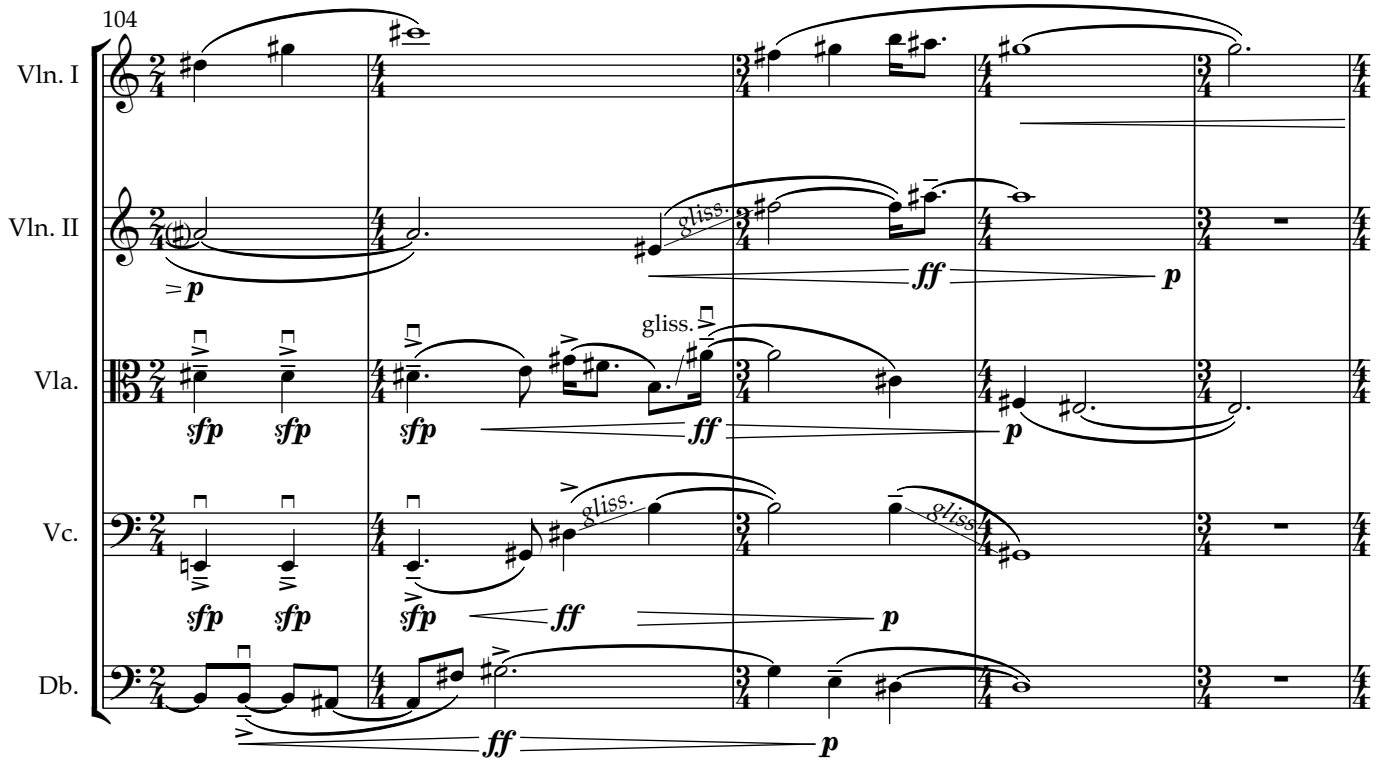


H
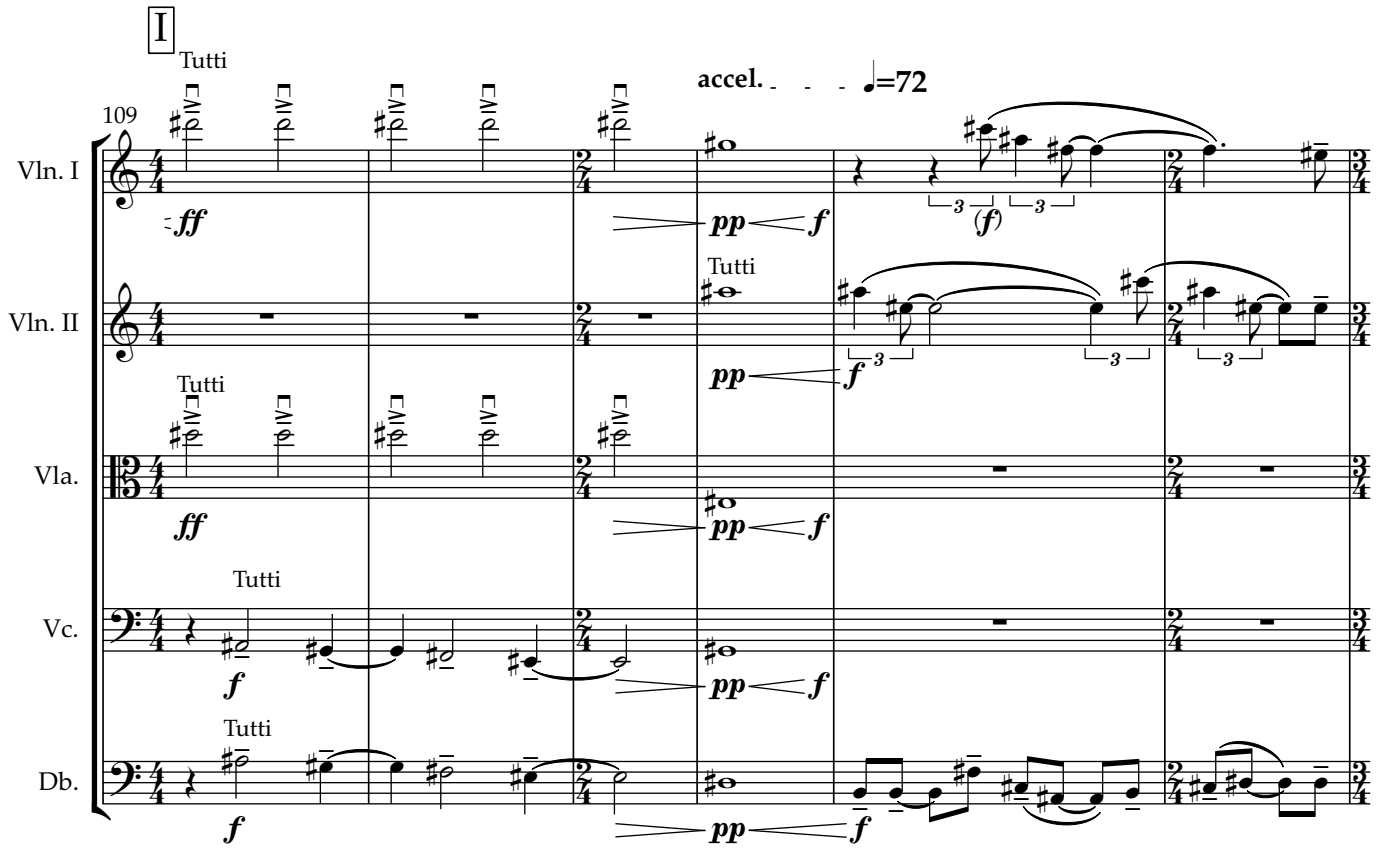
♩=60
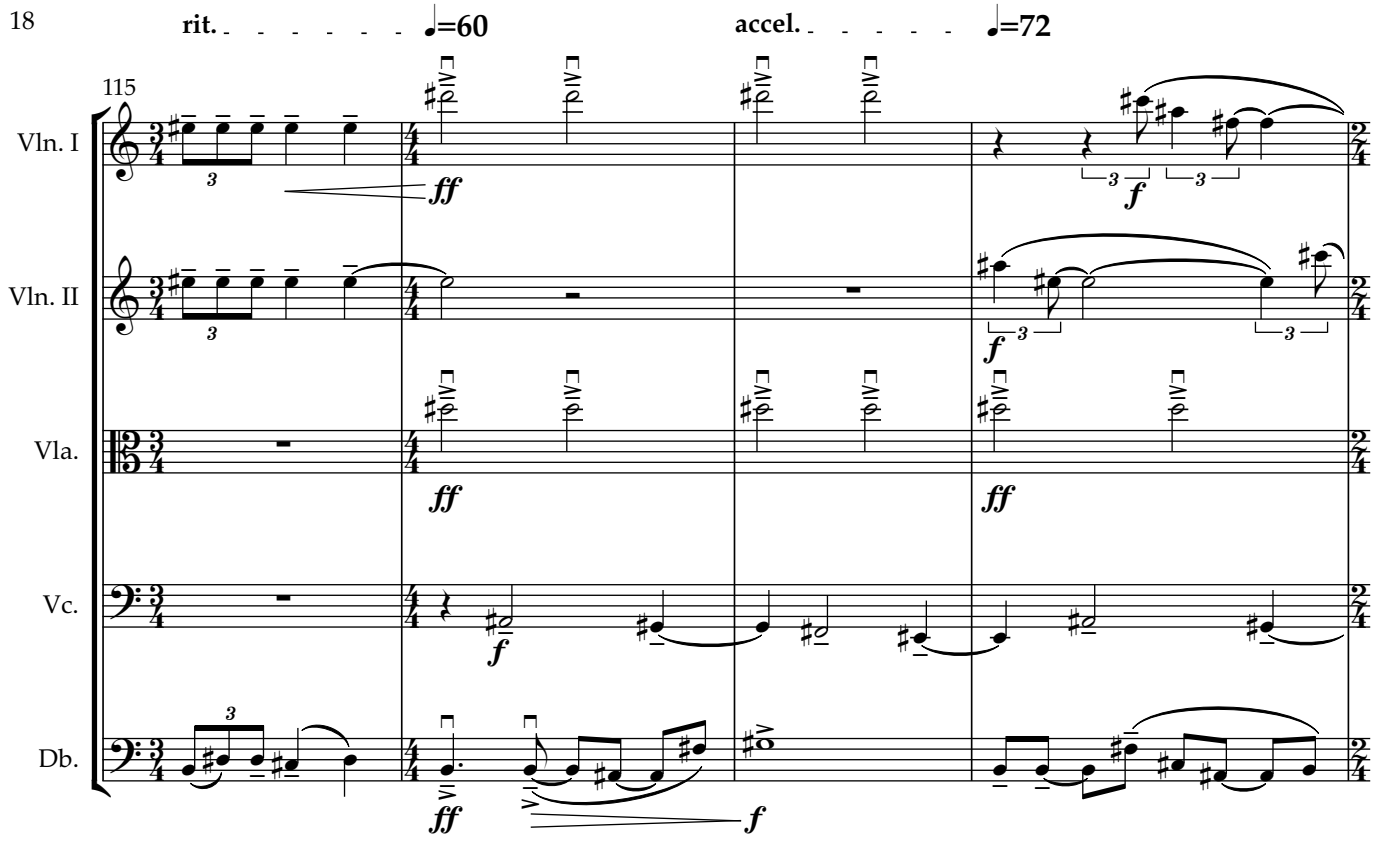
Reflective, unstable, still with a sense of growth

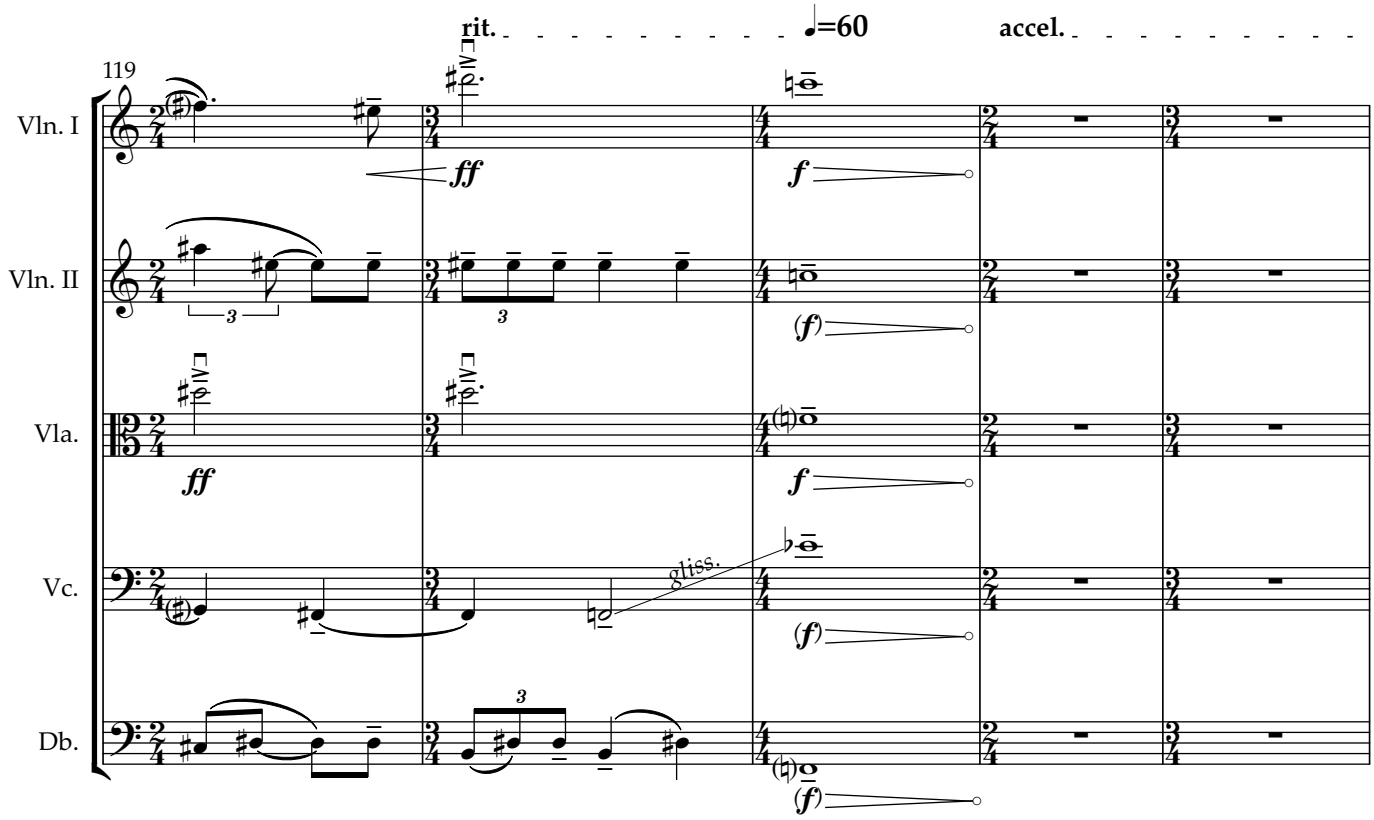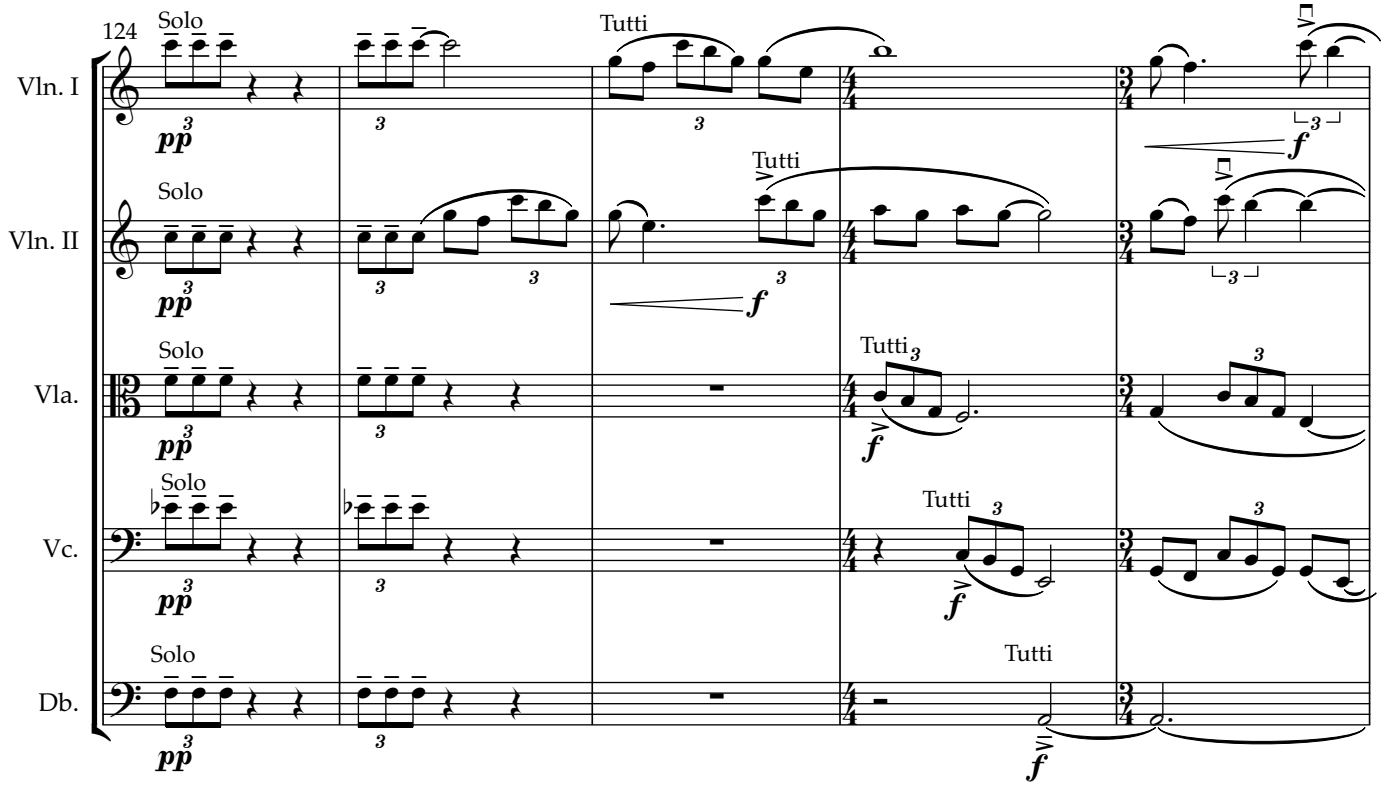





104
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
sfp
ff
p
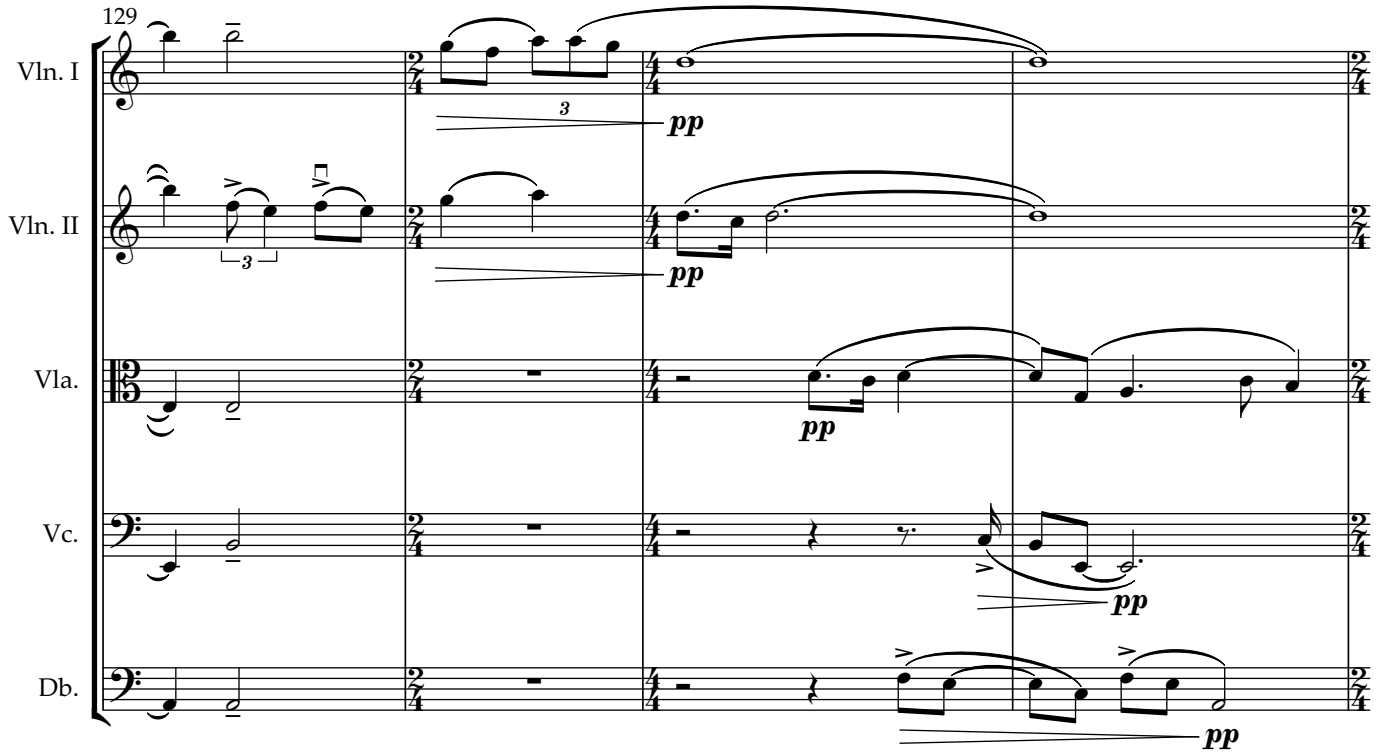

I
Tutti
109
accel.
♩=72
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Tutti
ff
pp
f
(f)
3


rit.
=60
accel.
=72
115
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
ff
f


rit.
=60
accel.
119
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
ff
f
gliss.

J ♩=72


124
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Solo
Tutti
pp
f


129
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pp

K

133

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

gliss.

gliss.

harm.

accel. ♩=90

139
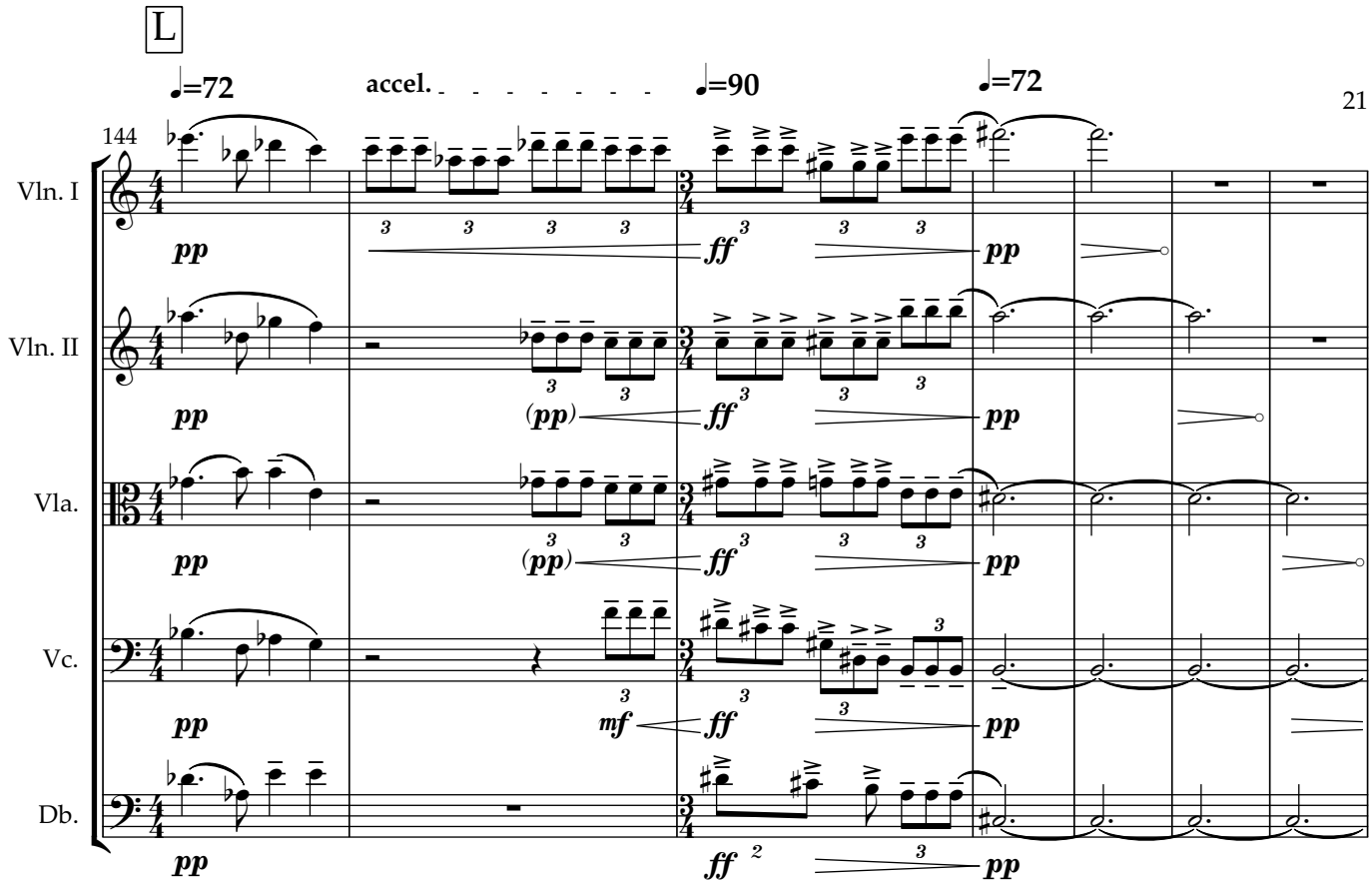
harm.

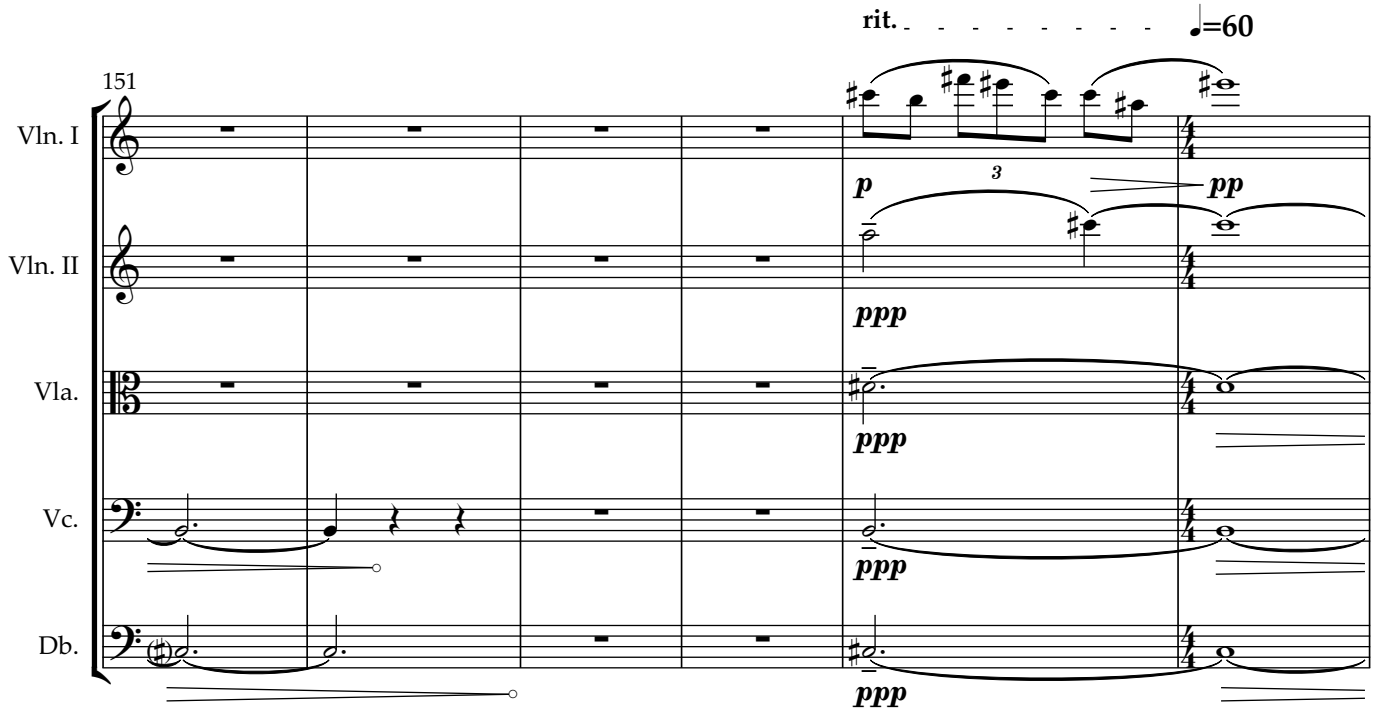
harm.

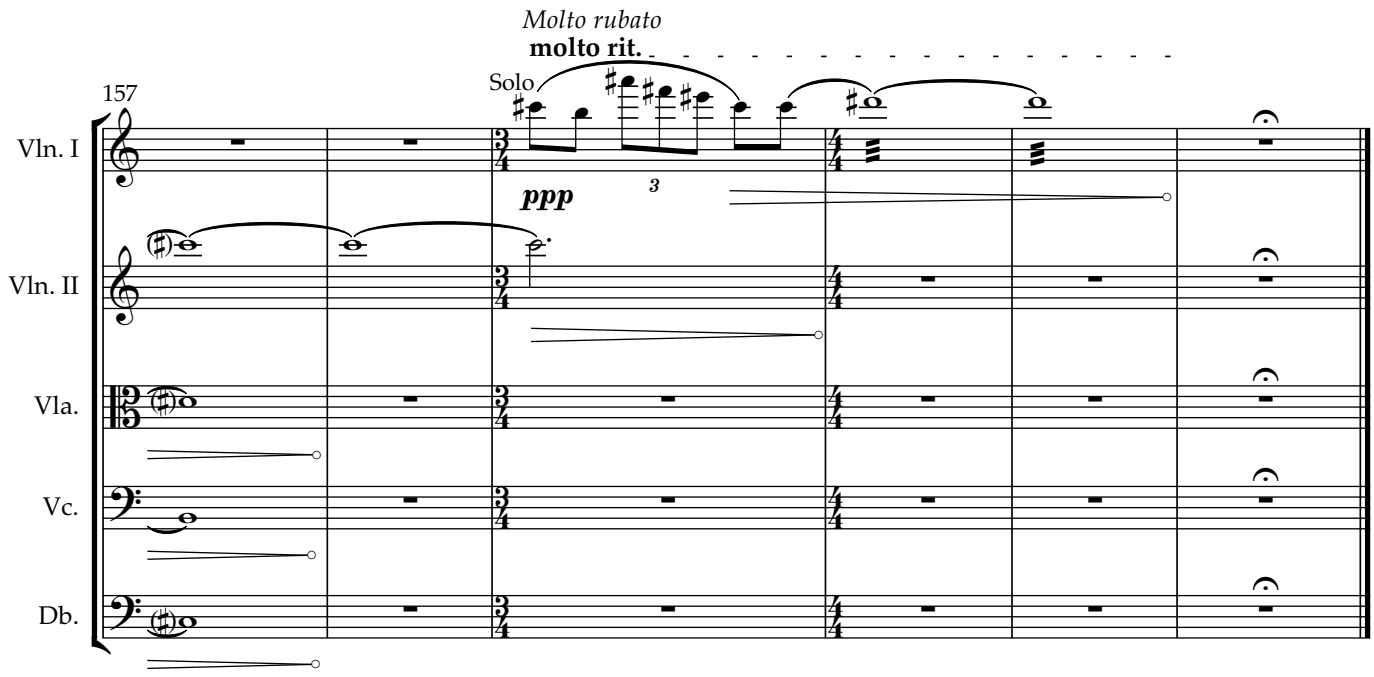
harm.

harm.

harm.


L
144
♩=72
accel.
♩=90
♩=72
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pp
ff
mf
(pp)


151
rit.
♩=60
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p
pp
ppp


157
Molto rubato
molto rit.
Solo
ppp
3
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

Electra Perivolaris

Rock, Salt, Air, Water

for string quartet

Rock, Salt, Air, Water for string quartet, a Young Classical Artist Trust commission, in collaboration with the Cosman Keller Art & Music Trust.

First Performance
The Atenea Quartet, 29th September 2024, Holywell Music Room, Oxford.
Followed by a UK concert tour given by the Atenea Quartet, including a premiere at London's Wigmore Hall on 1st October 2024.

Instrumentation
String Quartet (Violin I, Violin II, Viola and Cello)

Duration
Approximately 5 minutes.

Programme Note
Rock, Salt, Air, Water is the first piece I have composed as part of the YCAT Composer Fellowship. It is specially composed for YCAT Associate Ensemble The Atenea Quartet, a string quartet based in Basel, Switzerland.

This piece is influenced by a geological formation called tafoni, a texture of cavities and holes which can be seen on rocks along the coastlines of my home on the Scottish Isle of Arran and also on the Greek Aegean Island of Chios, the island from which the Greek side of my family originate. Tafoni is created in a process of weathering in which salt, air and water combine with the surface of rocks. The different natural elements act together to create unique and intricate signatures and patterns in rock. In this piece I aimed to reflect the multiple overlapping processes which create the tafoni, as one natural element acts upon another in a continual looping process, layers building upon layers.

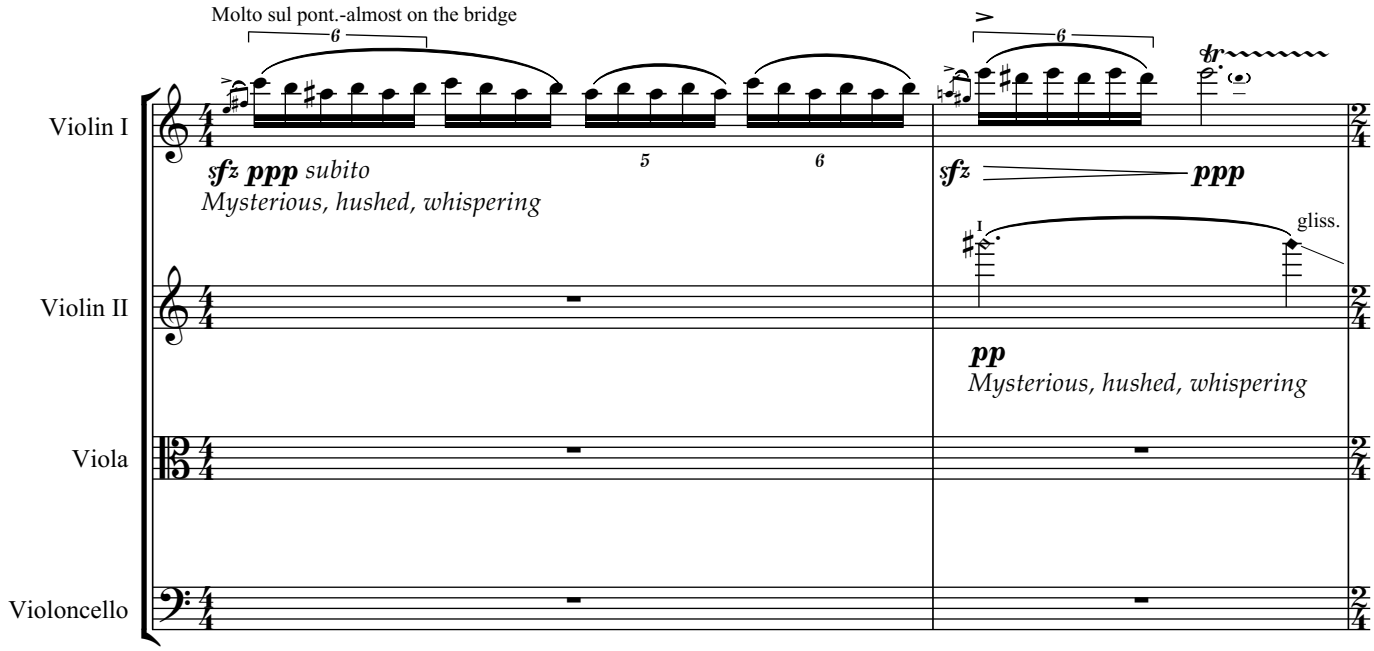
Rock, Salt, Air, Water

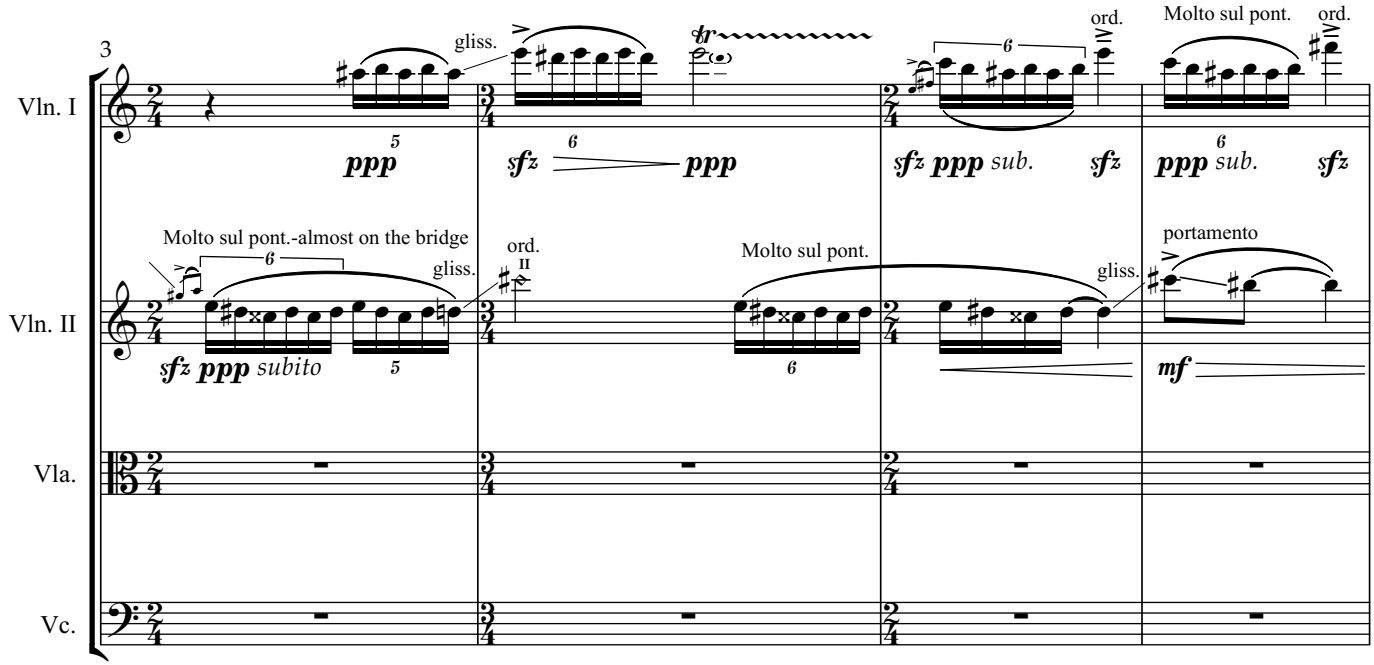
For the Atenea Quartet

Electra Perivolaris
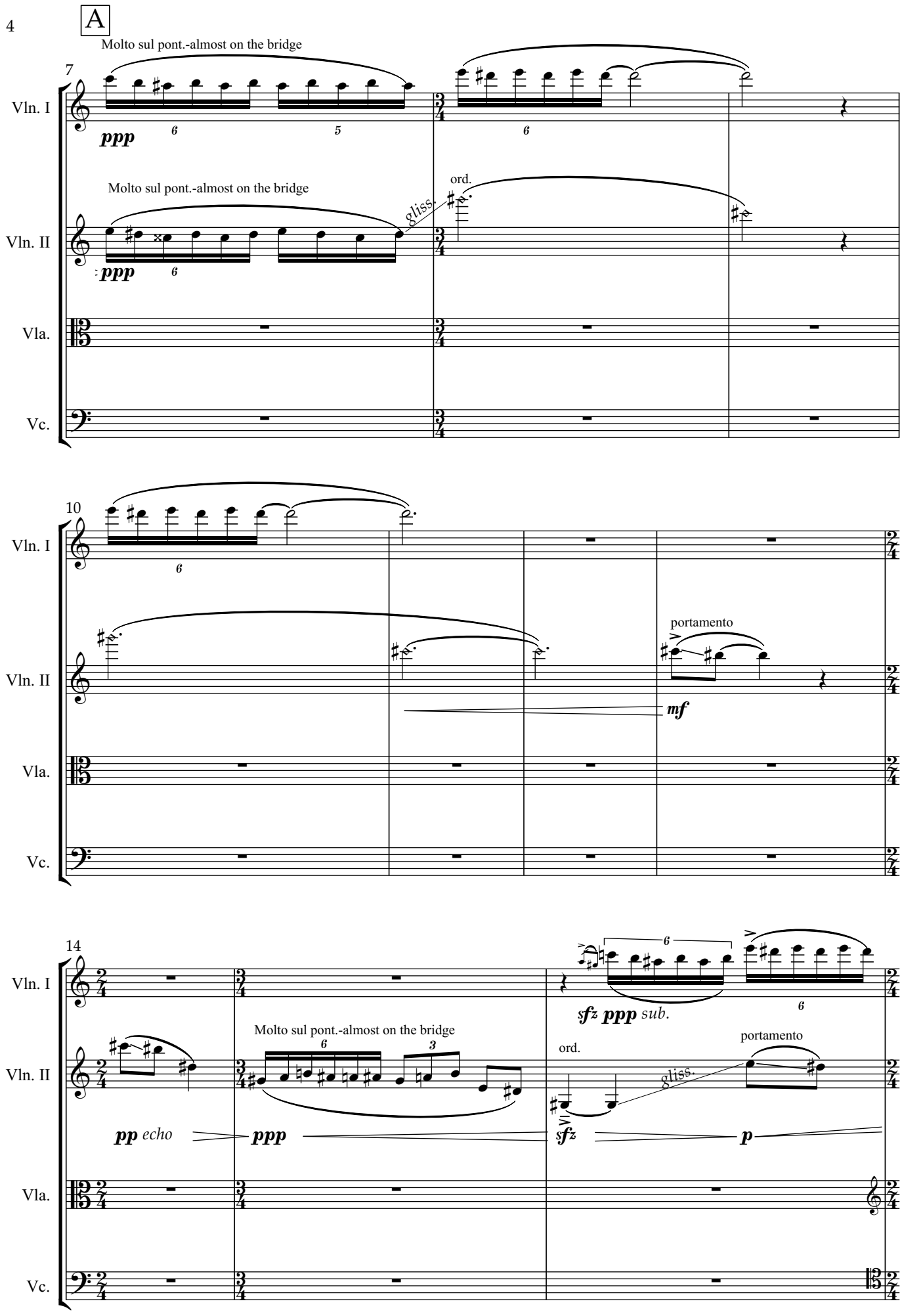
♩=72
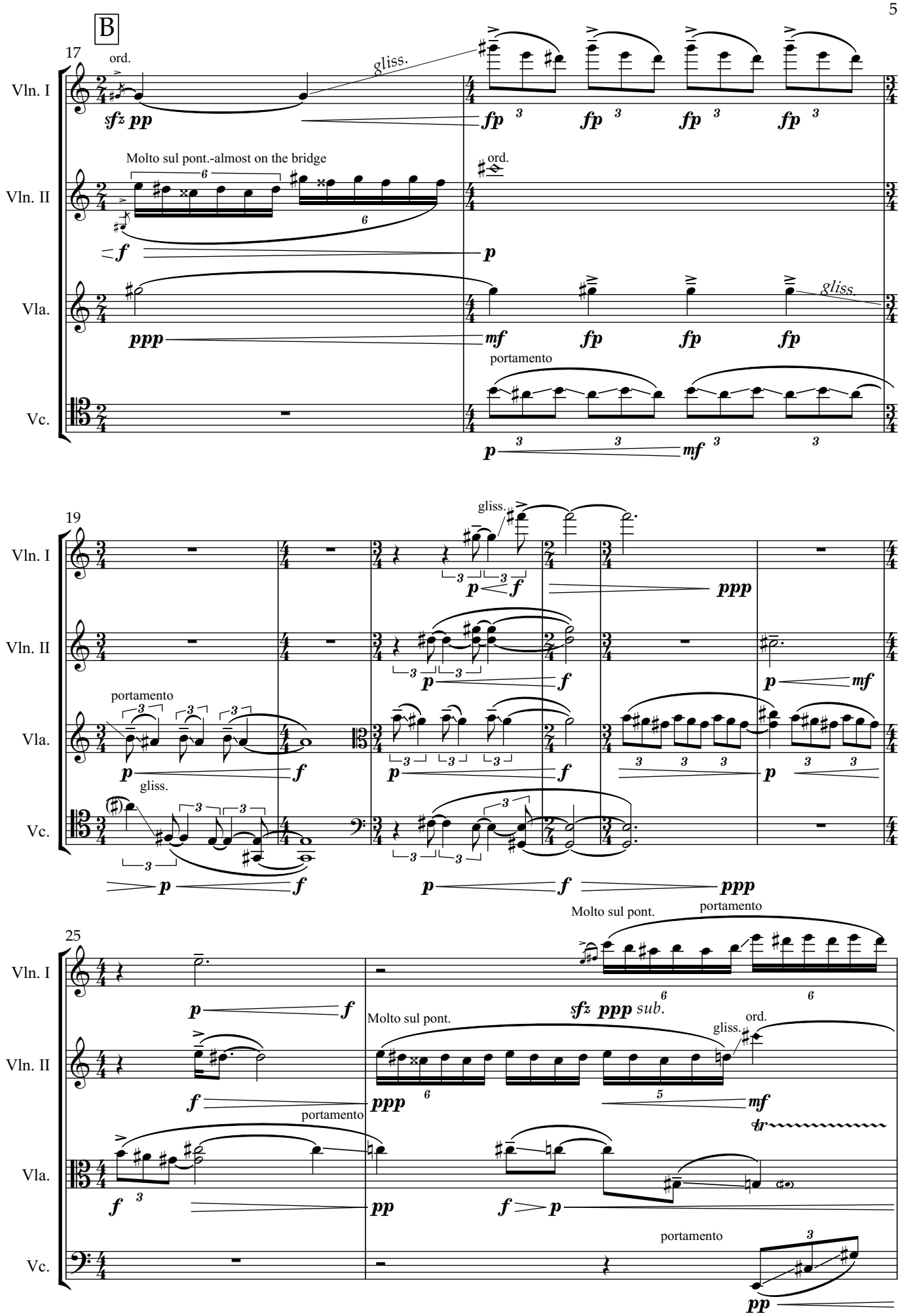
Visceral, ebb and flow like a force of nature
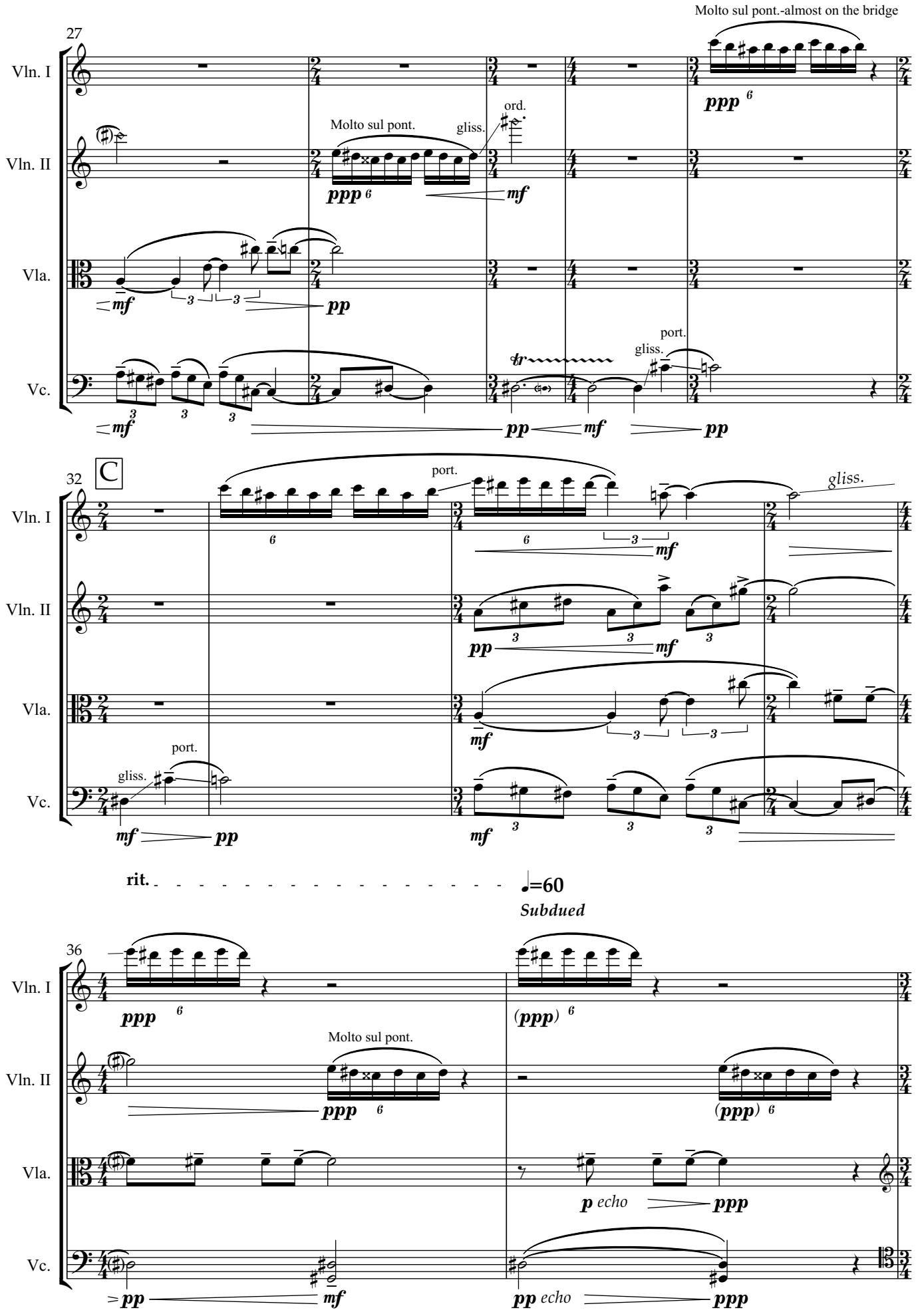


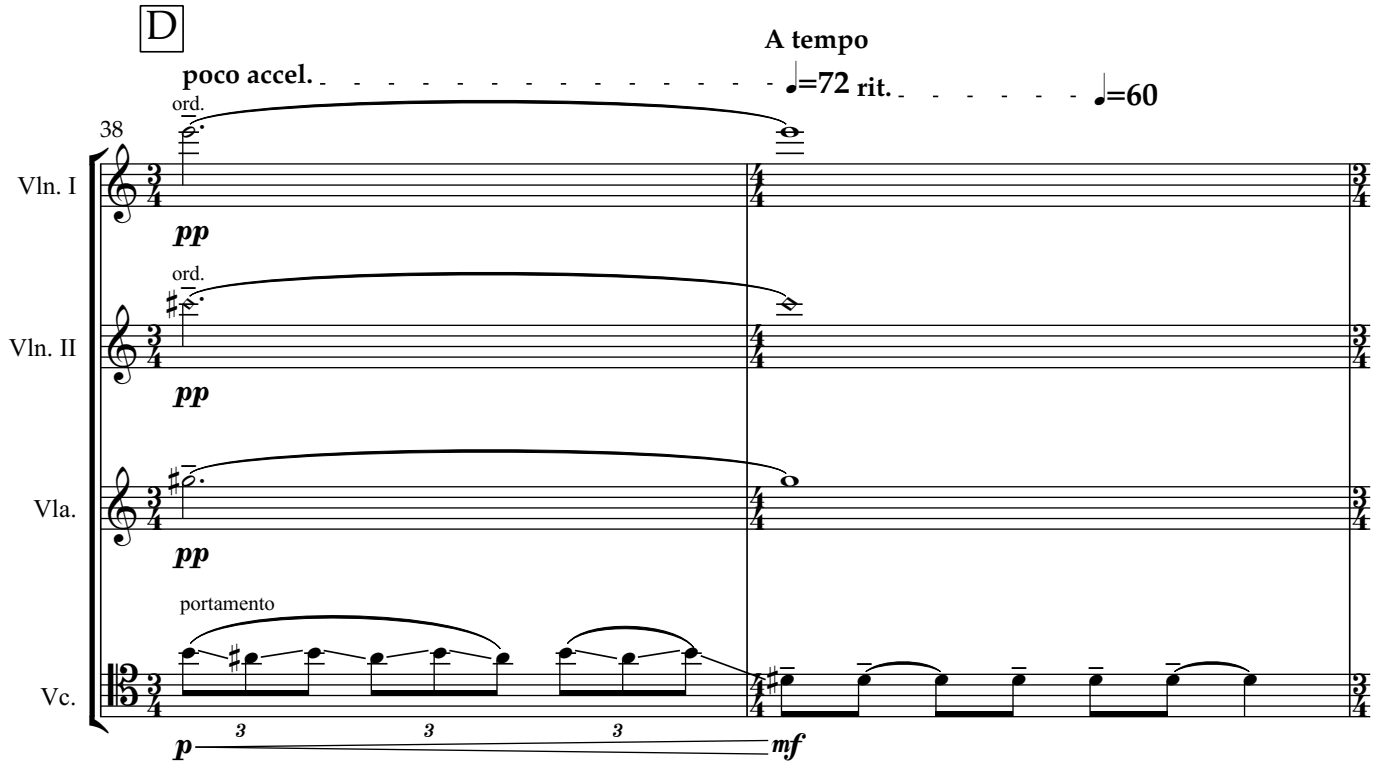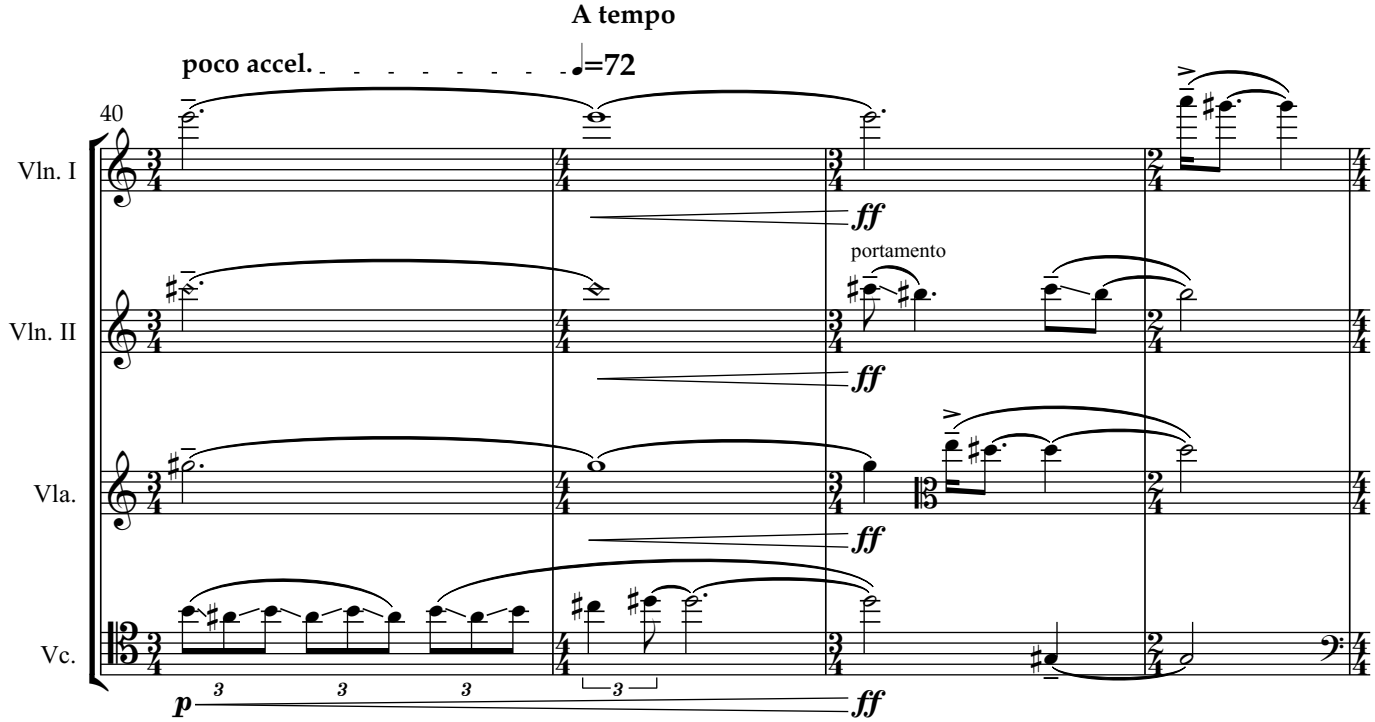


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A
Molto sul pont.-almost on the bridge
7
Vln. I
ppp
Molto sul pont.-almost on the bridge
ord.
gliss.
Vln. II
ppp
Vla.
Vc.
10
Vln. I
Vln. II
portamento
mf
Vla.
Vc.
14
Vln. I
sfz ppp sub.
Molto sul pont.-almost on the bridge
ord.
portamento
Vln. II
pp echo
ppp
sfz
gliss.
p
Vla.
Vc.


B
17
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
ord.
gliss.
sfz pp
fp
Molto sul pont.-almost on the bridge
ppp
mf
portamento
19
ppp
25
Molto sul pont.
sfz ppp sub.
tr
pp
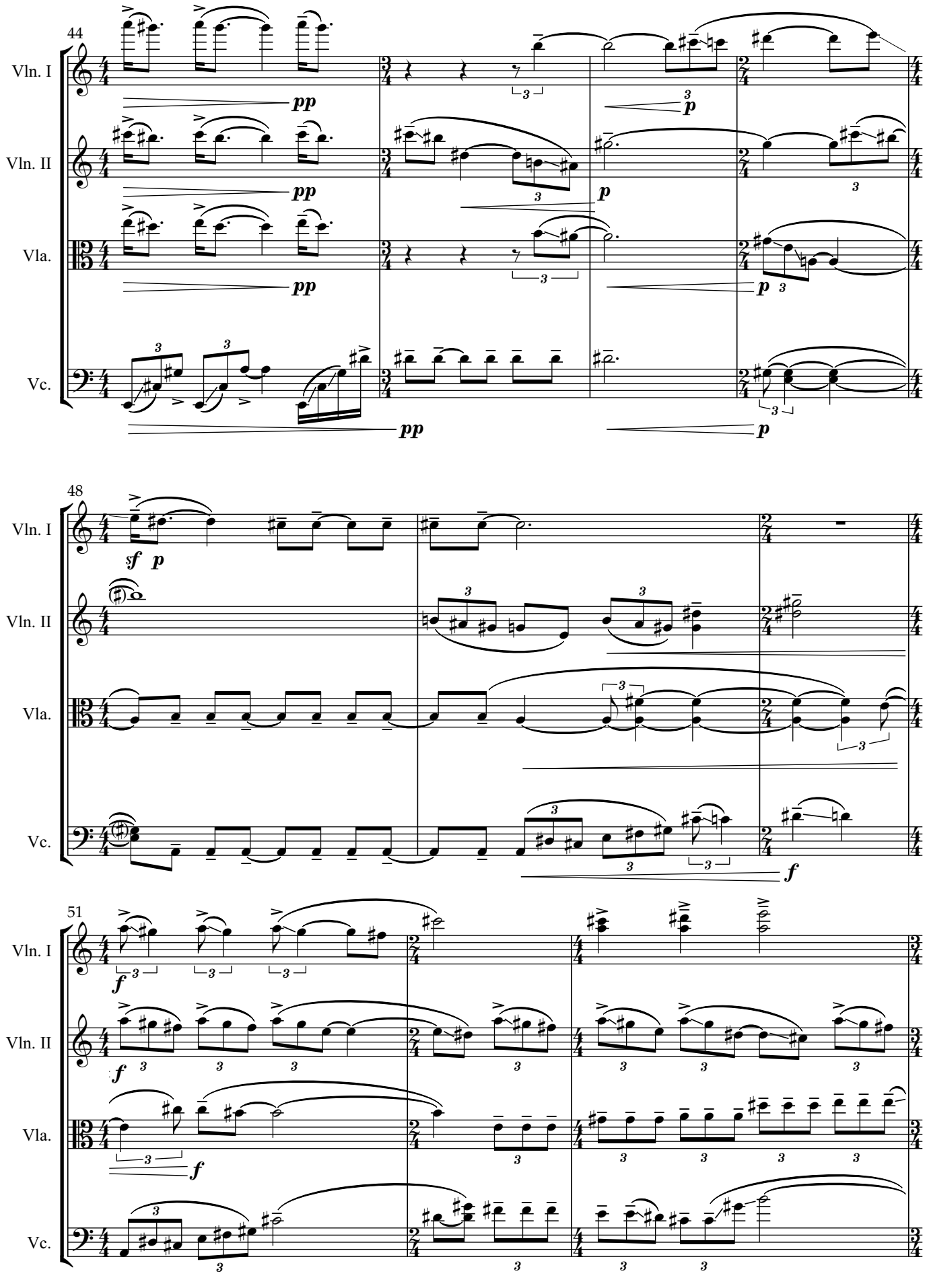

27
Molto sul pont.-almost on the bridge
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Molto sul pont.
gliss.
ord.
port.
gliss.
32
C
port.
gliss.
port.
gliss.
rit.
♩=60
Subdued
36
Molto sul pont.
p echo
pp echo
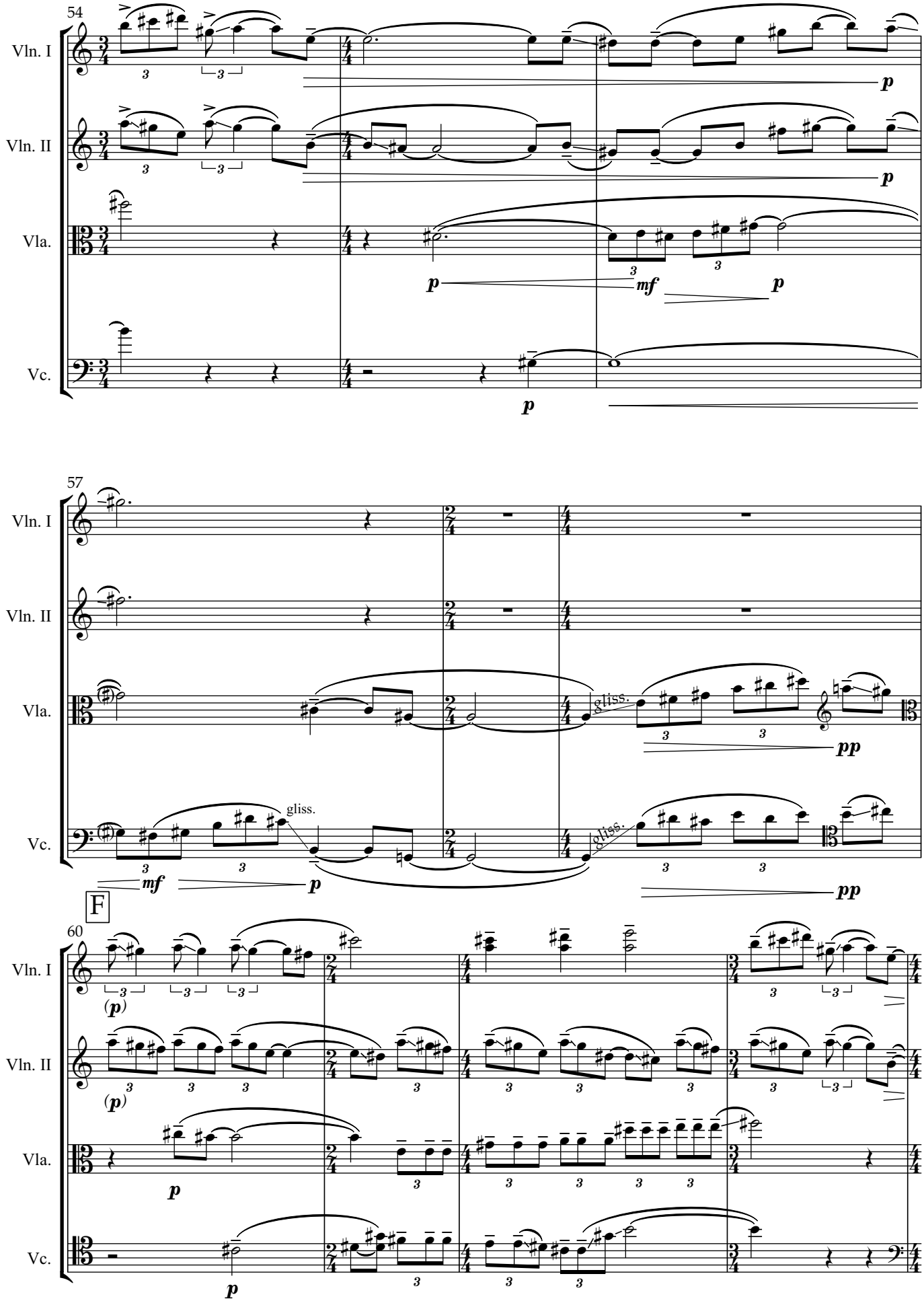

D
A tempo
poco accel.
♩=72 rit.
♩=60
38
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
ord.
pp
portamento
p
mf

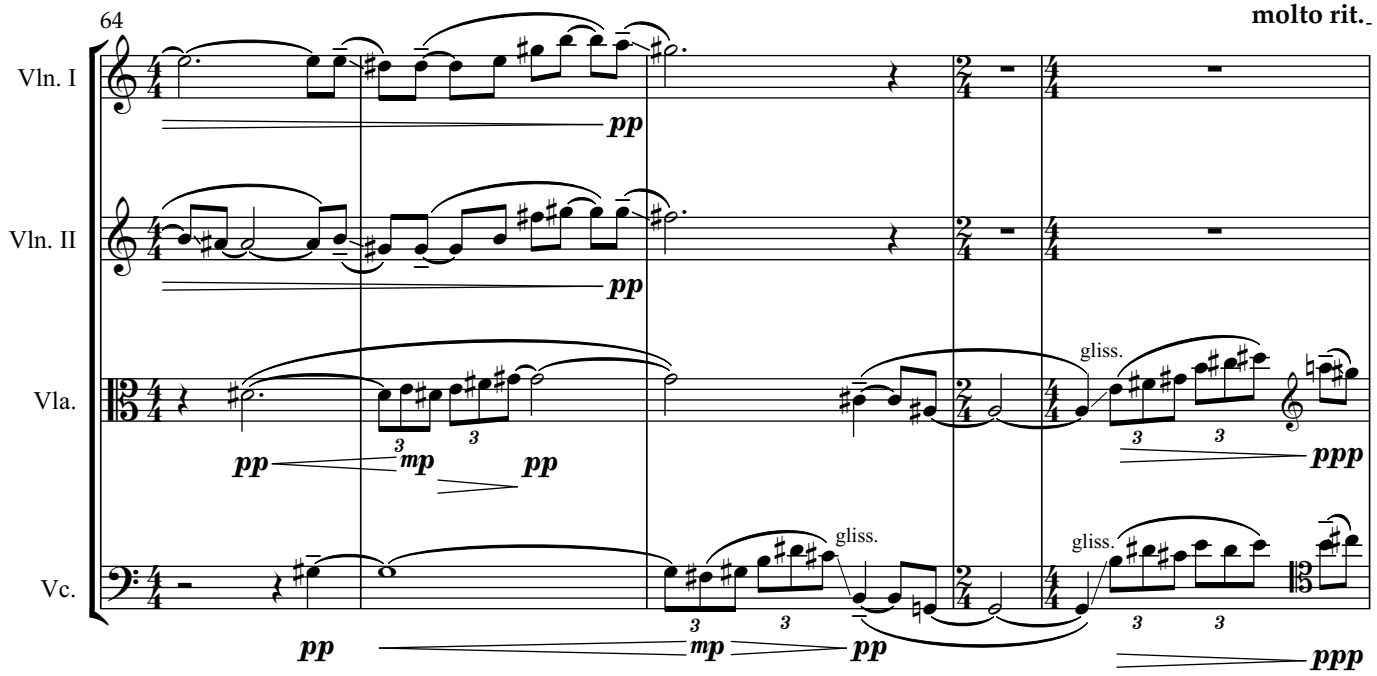

A tempo
poco accel.
♩=72
40
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
ff
portamento
p

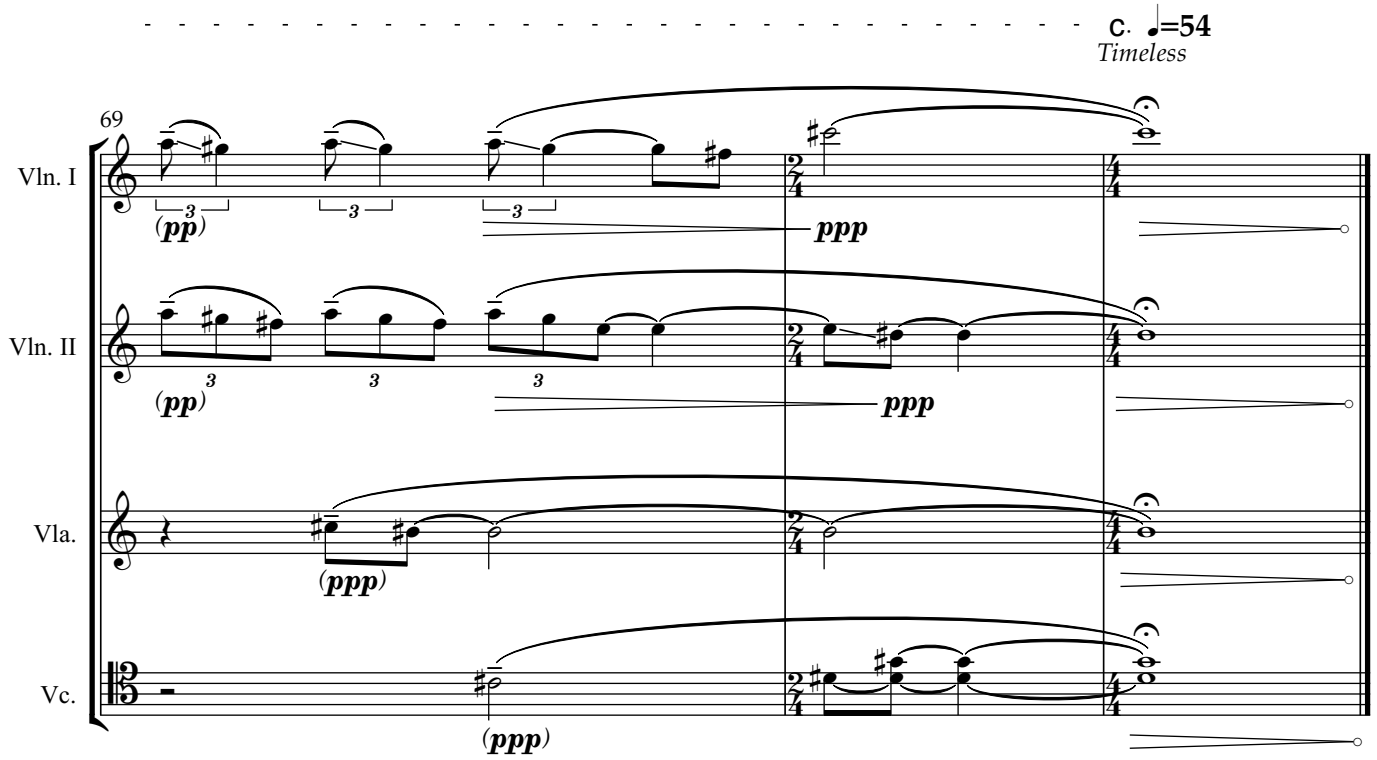
E

molto rit. - - - - - - - - - - ♩=60




54
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
p
mf
57
gliss.
pp
F
60
(p)


64
molto rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pp
mp
pp
gliss.
ppp


C. ♩=54
Timeless
69
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
(pp)
ppp
(ppp)

Electra Perivolaris

Within the drifting contours of the land...

for violin and piano

Within the drifting contours of the land ... , a Young Classical Artists Trust Commission, in collaboration with the Cosman Keller Art and Music Trust.

First Performance(s)
YCAT UK tour from 27th March - 5th April 2025, including a recital at Wigmore Hall, London on 1st April 2025.
Njioma Chinyere Grevious - Violin
Joseph Havlat - Piano
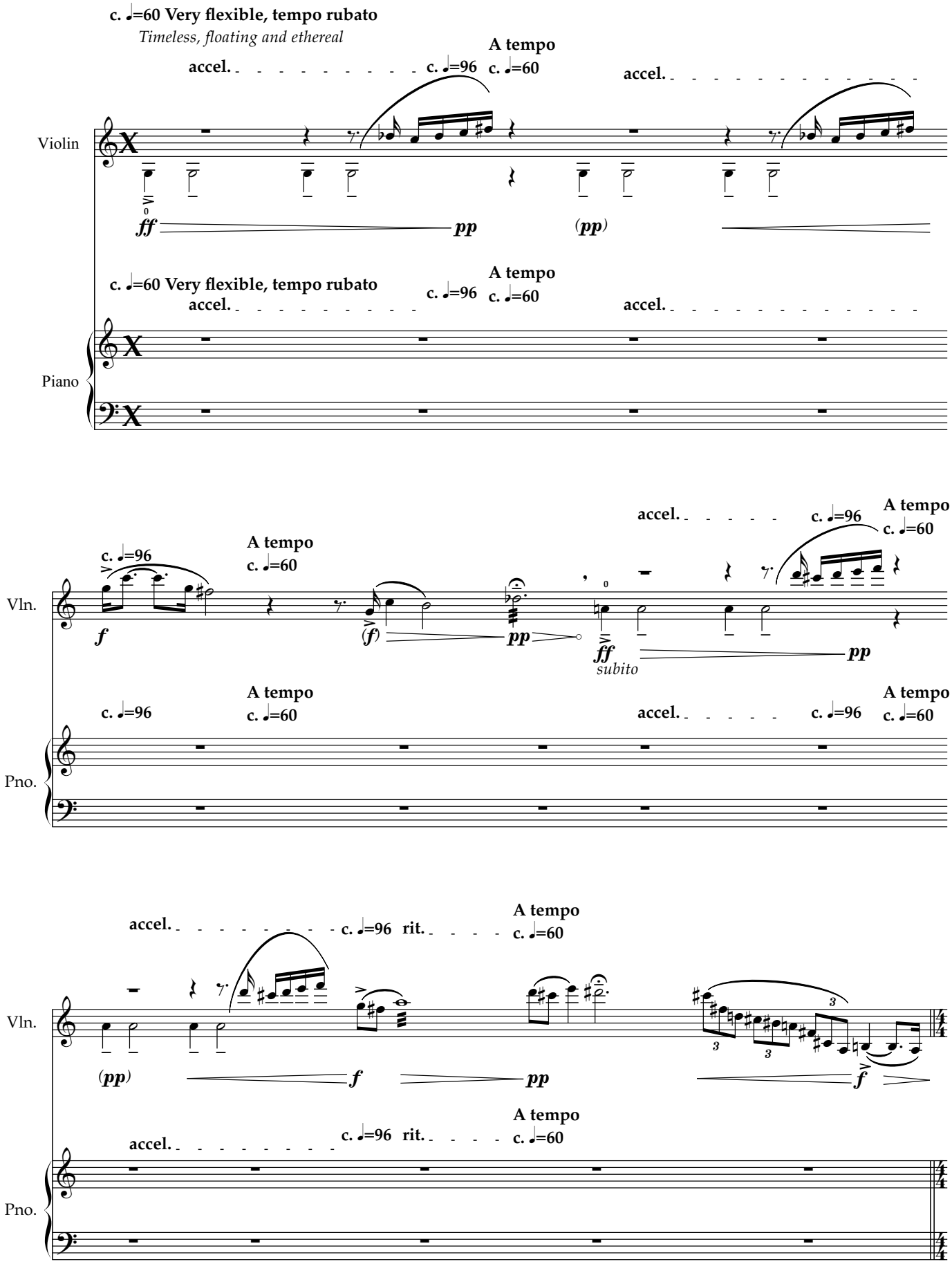
Programme Note
Within the drifting contours of the land ... was commissioned as part of my YCAT Composer Fellowship. The piece emerged out of the following question; How I can use layers in sound to conjure a depth of place and atmosphere in my music? This question arose through my fascination with maps of the two islands which form my identity, those of the Scottish Isle of Arran and the Greek Aegean island of Chios. Maps encourage us to join the dots from place to place in straight lines, and to feel the contour lines of mountain ranges in two dimensions. The experience of being within these two island landscapes is very different to this.

In this piece I wanted to create the feeling of standing and moving within a landscape. Whether it be urban or natural, a feeling of place is embodied - a place is not defined by the lines traced over a map but through a felt sense of texture, atmosphere, and presence/absence. This piece draws upon the gestural qualities of playing a string instrument in an attempt to conjure a journey through a place, the linear violin strings leading us on a path that is far from straight, but is instead taut and tense, requiring physical effort and transformation.
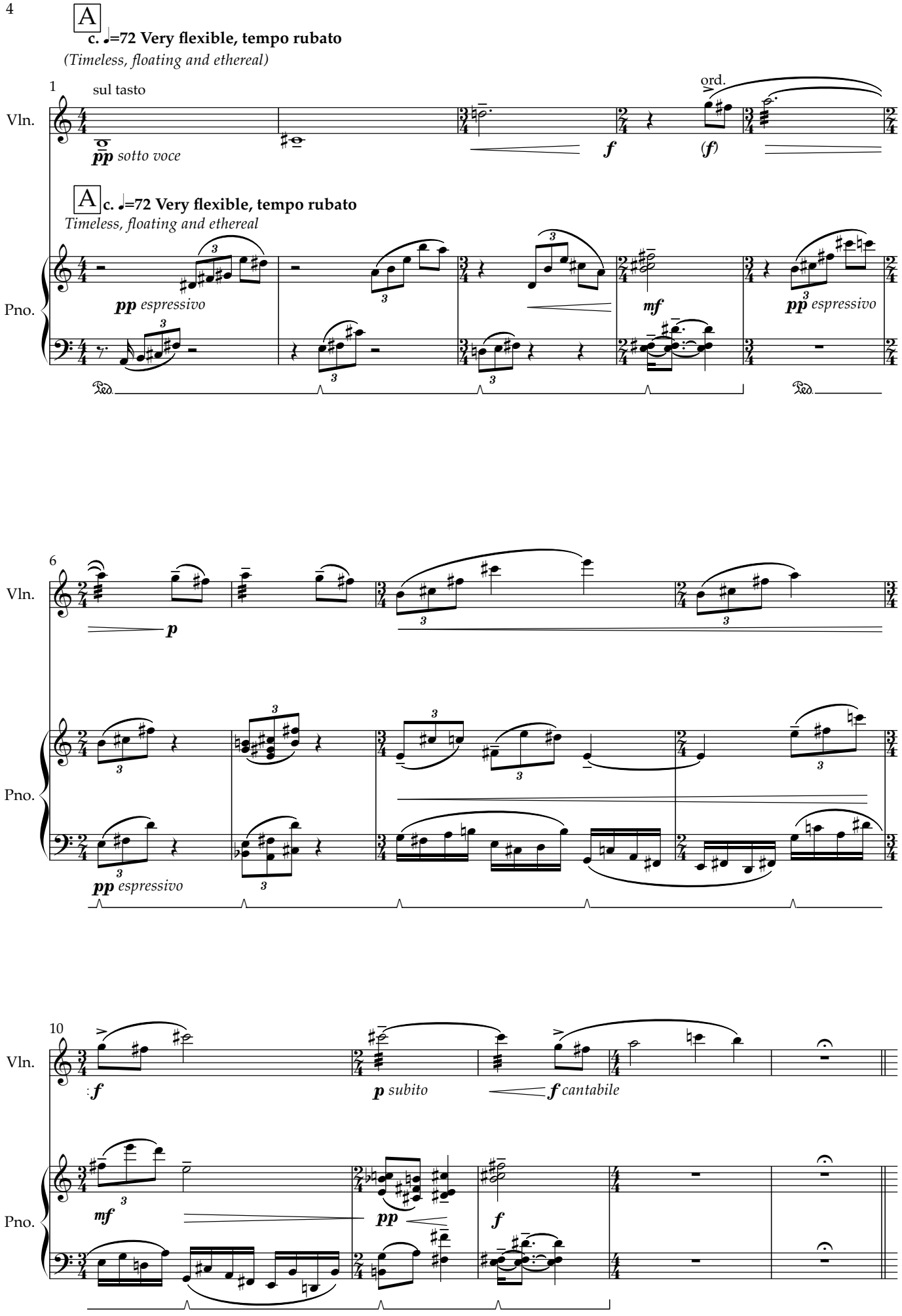
Within the drifting contours of the land ...
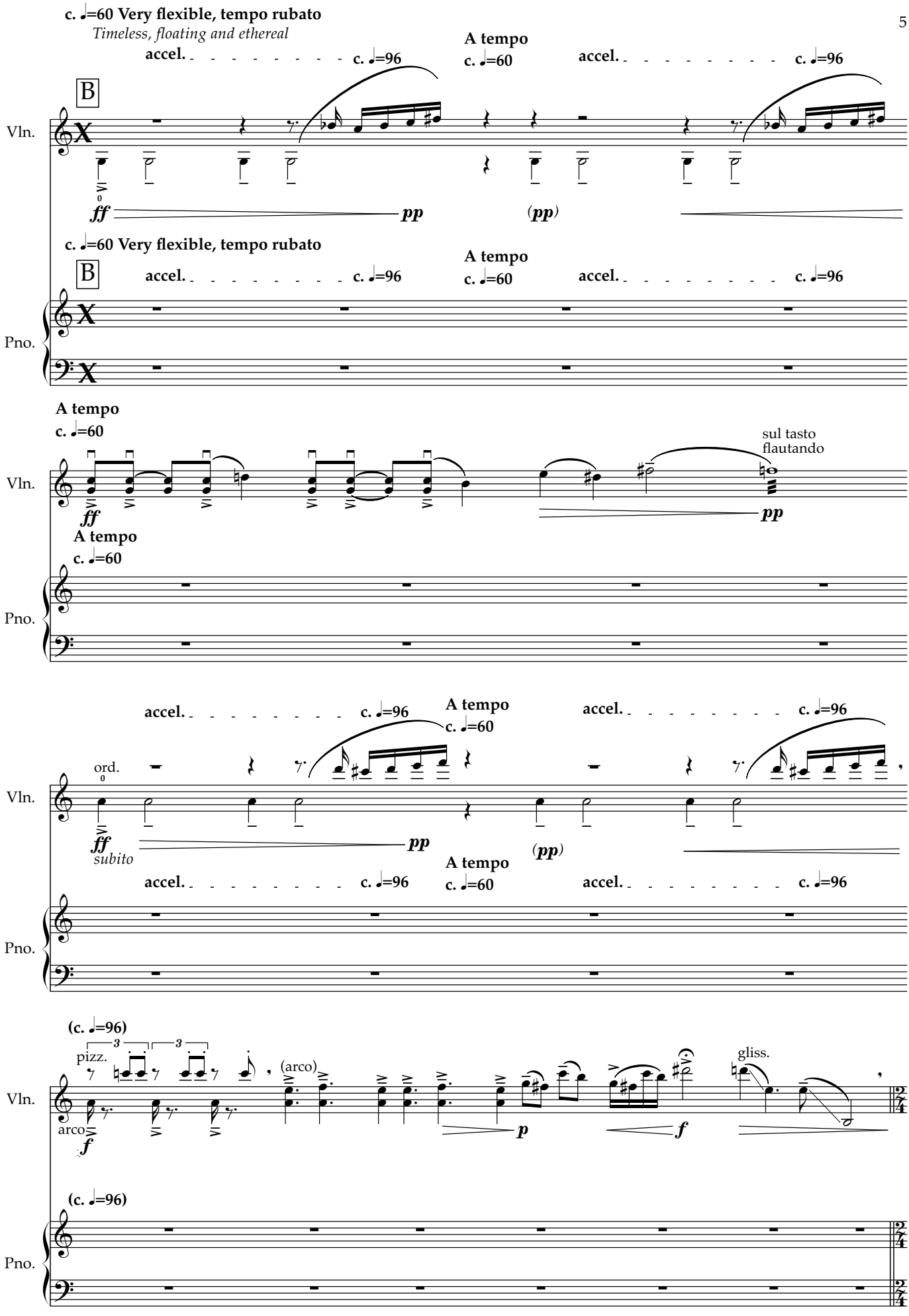
for Njioma Chinyere Grevious

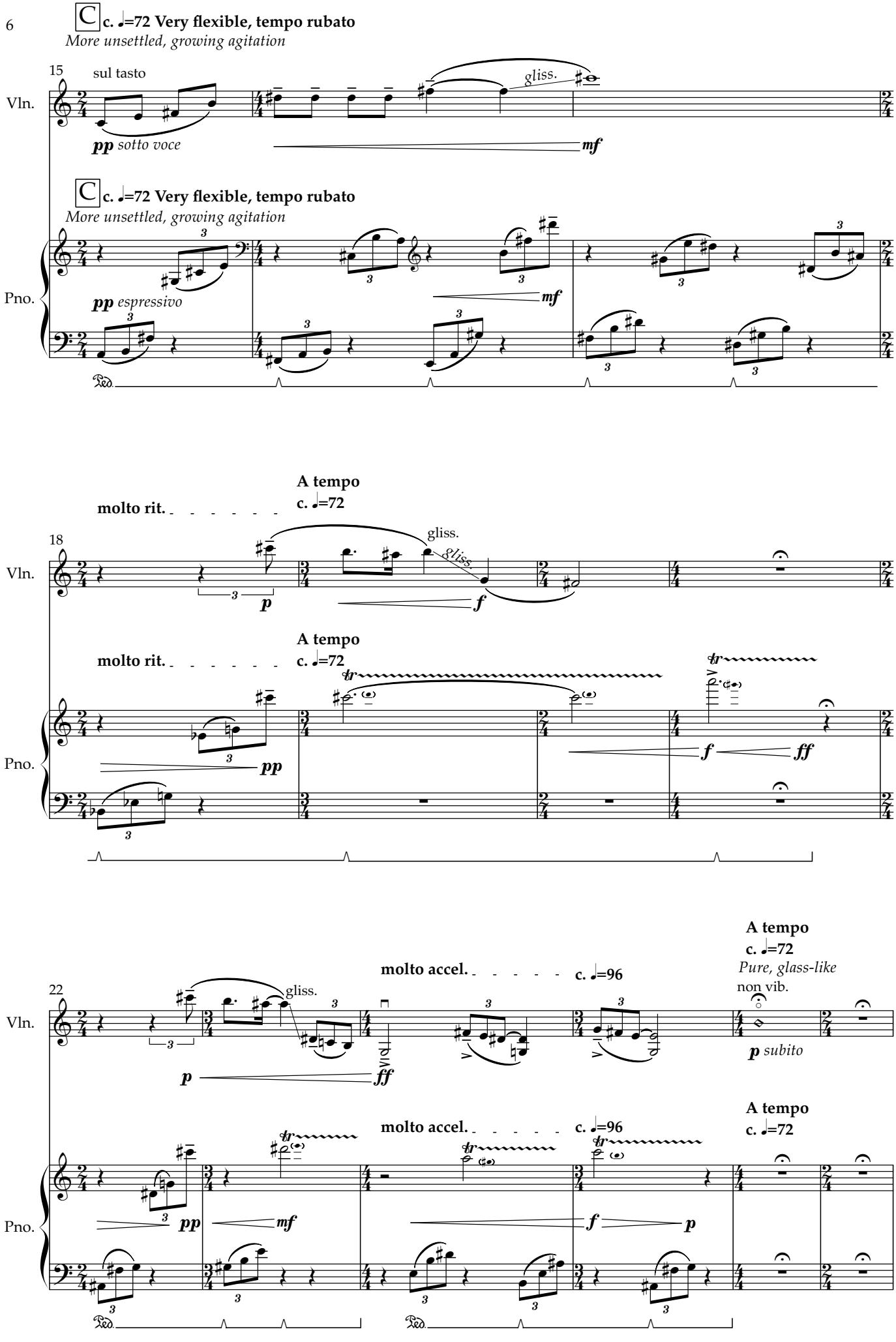
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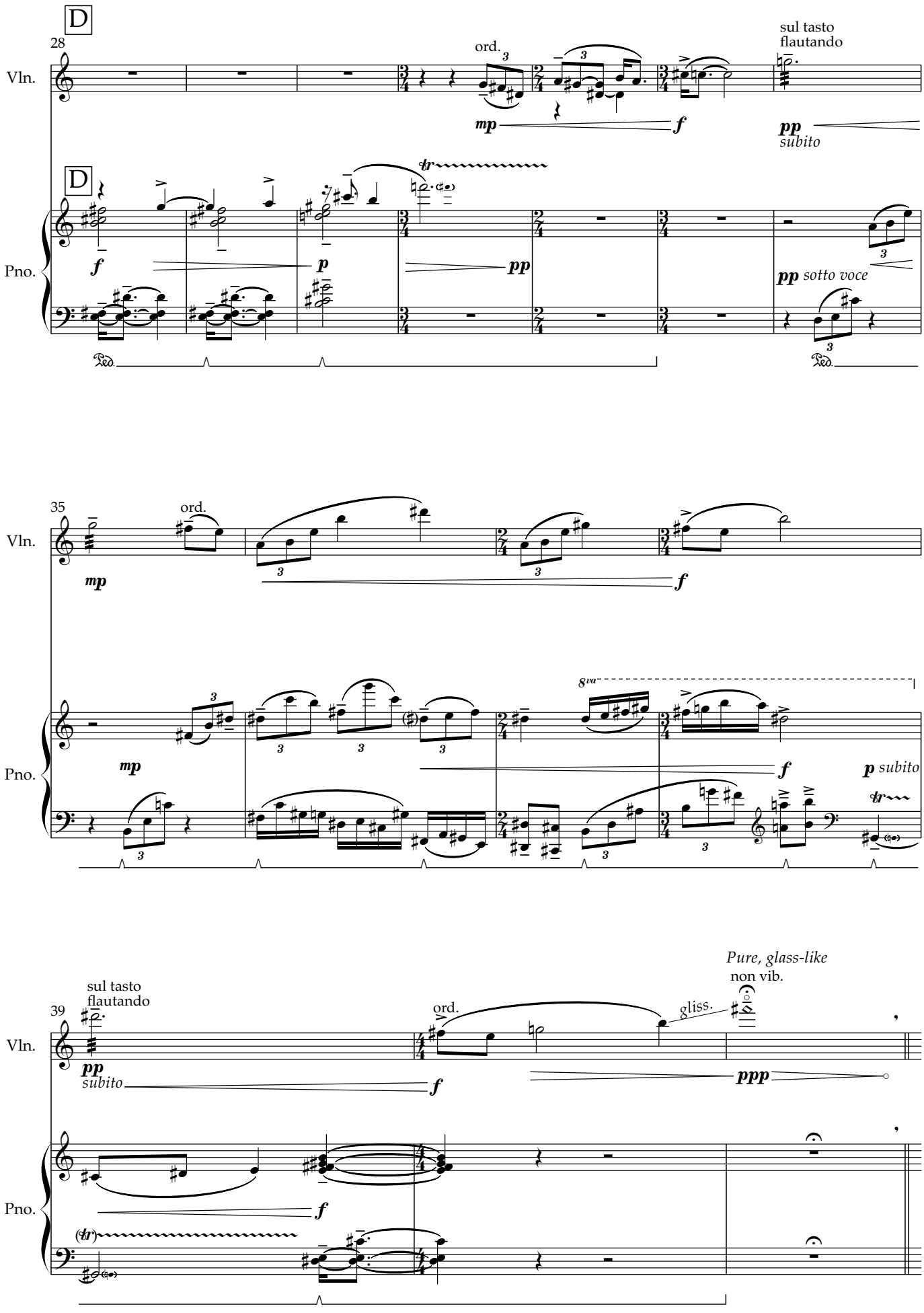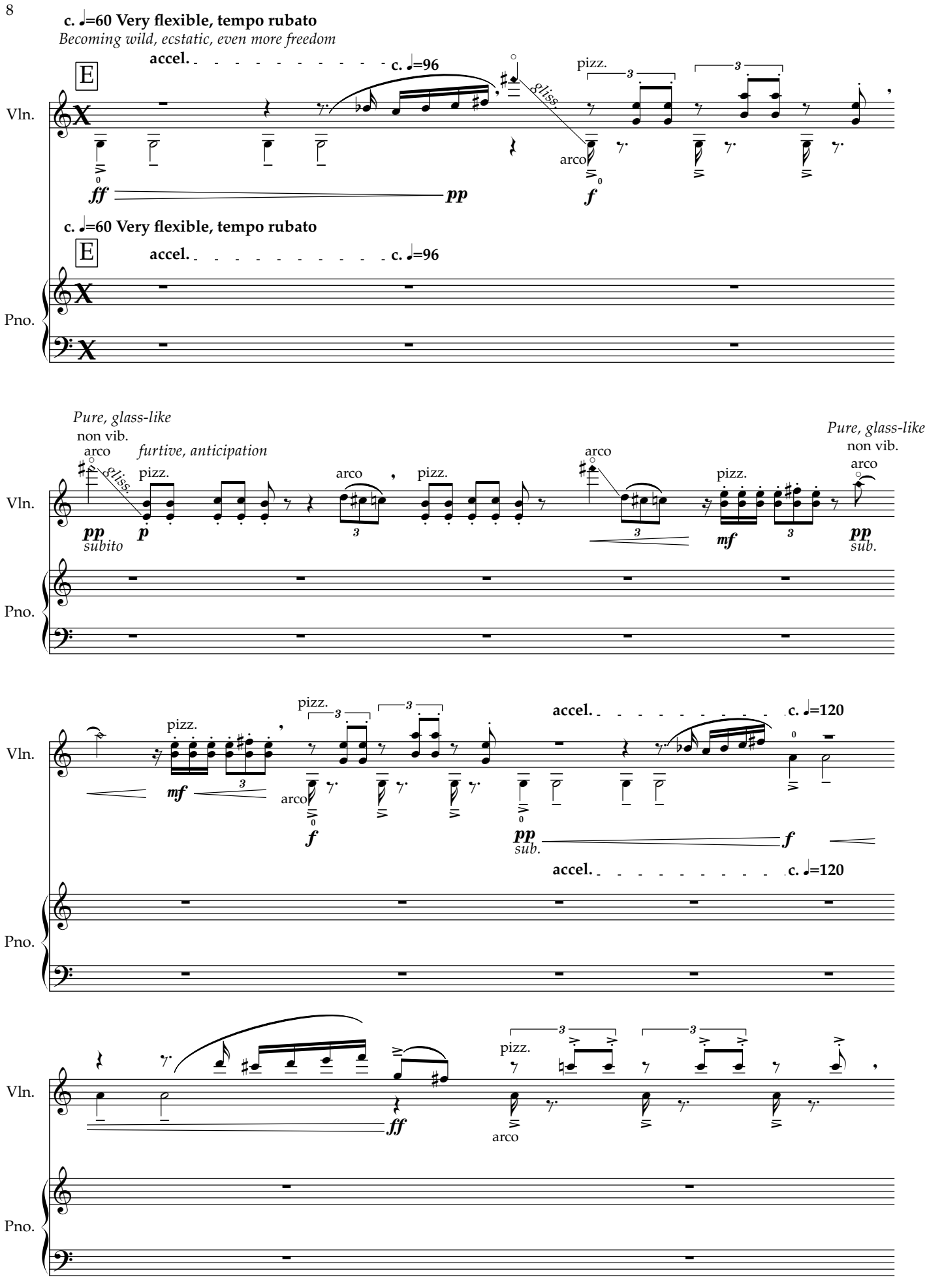


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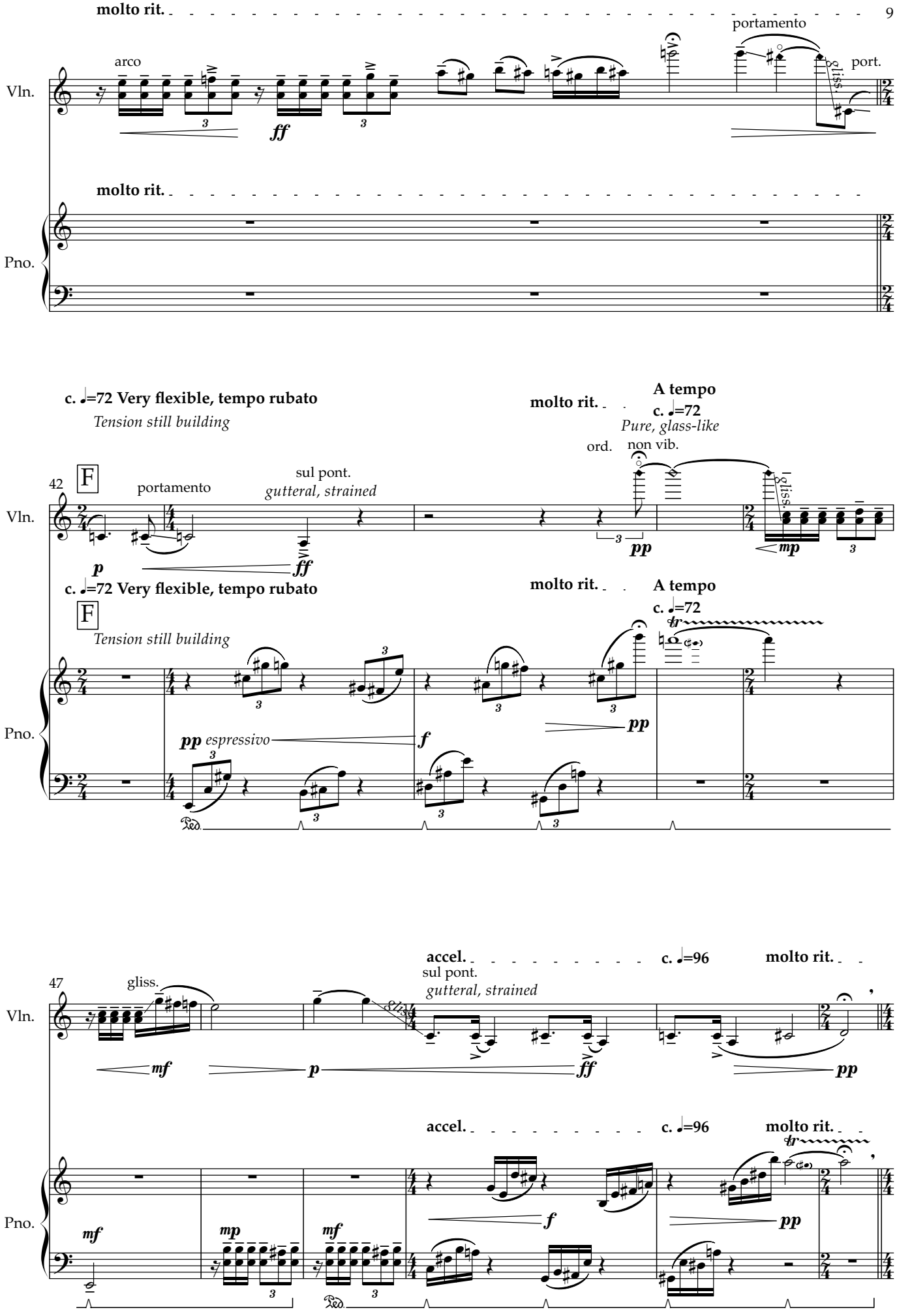

A
c. ♩=72 Very flexible, tempo rubato
(Timeless, floating and ethereal)
1
sul tasto
Vln.
pp sotto voce
f
ord.
(f)
A
c. ♩=72 Very flexible, tempo rubato
Timeless, floating and ethereal
Pno.
pp espressivo
mf
pp espressivo
6
Vln.
p
Pno.
pp espressivo
10
Vln.
f
p subito
f cantabile
Pno.
mf
pp
f
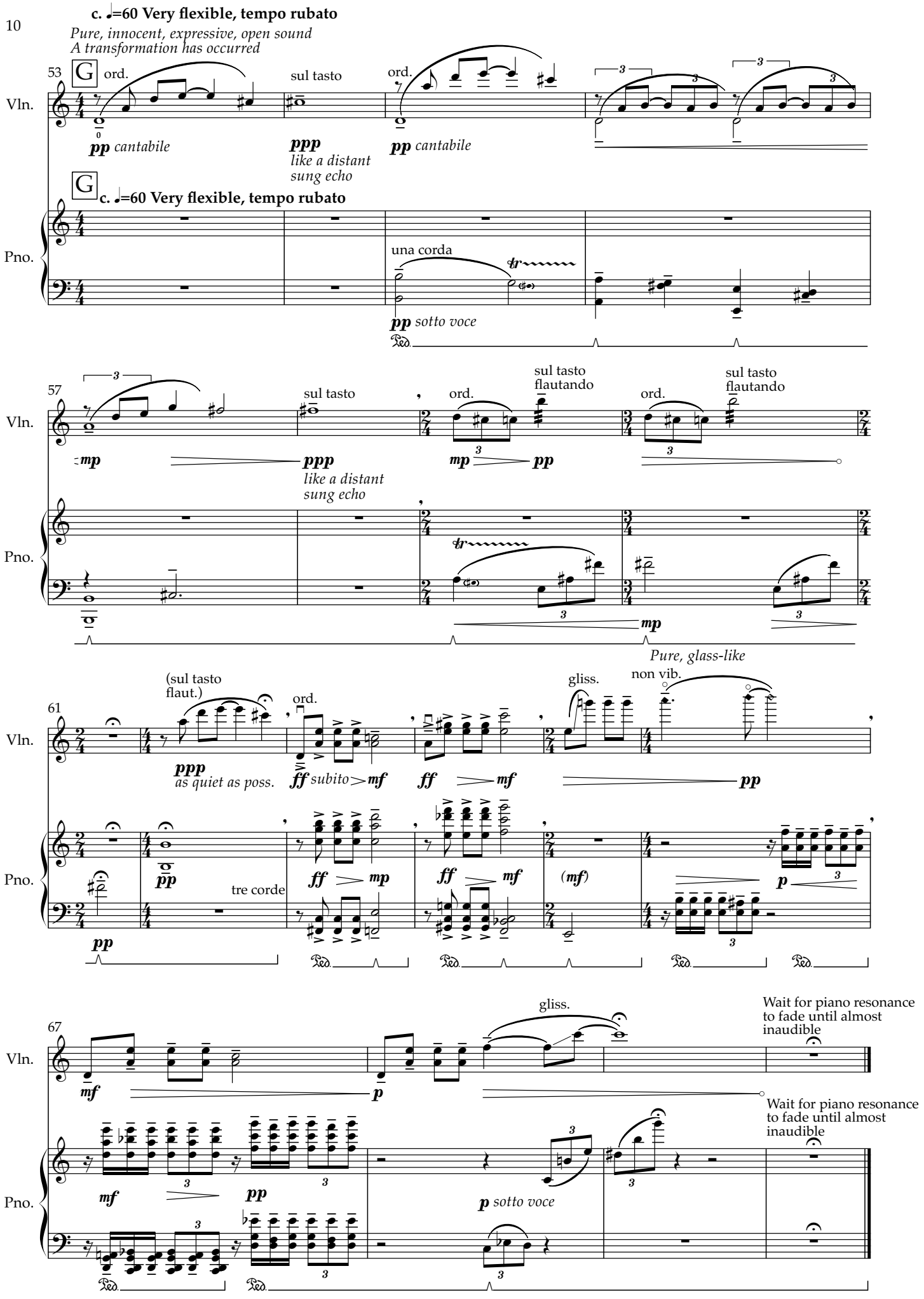

c. ♩=60 Very flexible, tempo rubato
Timeless, floating and ethereal
accel.
c. ♩=96
A tempo
c. ♩=60
B
Vln.
Pno.
ff
pp
(pp)
sul tasto
flautando
ord.
subito
(c. ♩=96)
pizz.
(arco)
arco
gliss.
f
p


C c. ♩=72 Very flexible, tempo rubato
More unsettled, growing agitation
15
sul tasto
Vln.
pp sotto voce
gliss.
mf
C c. ♩=72 Very flexible, tempo rubato
More unsettled, growing agitation
Pno.
pp espressivo
mf
molt rit.
A tempo
c. ♩=72
18
Vln.
p
gliss.
gliss.
f
molt rit.
A tempo
c. ♩=72
Pno.
pp
f
ff
molto accel.
c. ♩=96
A tempo
c. ♩=72
Pure, glass-like
non vib.
22
Vln.
p
gliss.
ff
p subito
molto accel.
c. ♩=96
A tempo
c. ♩=72
Pno.
pp
mf
f
p


D
28
Vln.
ord.
mp
f
sul tasto
flautando
pp
subito
D
Pno.
f
p
pp
pp sotto voce
35
ord.
mp
f
8va
p subito
39
sul tasto
flautando
ord.
gliss.
Pure, glass-like
non vib.
ppp


c. ♩=60 Very flexible, tempo rubato
Becoming wild, ecstatic, even more freedom
accel.
c. ♩=96
E
Vln.
pizz.
gliss.
arco
ff
pp
f
c. ♩=60 Very flexible, tempo rubato
accel.
c. ♩=96
E
Pno.
Pure, glass-like
non vib.
arco
furtive, anticipation
gliss.
pizz.
pp
subito
p
mf
sub.
accel.
c. ♩=120


molto rit.
portamento
arco
port.
gliss.
Vln.
molto rit.
Pno.
c. ♩=72 Very flexible, tempo rubato
Tension still building
molto rit.
A tempo
c. ♩=72
Pure, glass-like
ord.
non vib.
42
F
portamento
sul pont.
gutteral, strained
gliss.
Vln.
c. ♩=72 Very flexible, tempo rubato
molto rit.
A tempo
c. ♩=72
F
Tension still building
espressivo
Pno.
47
gliss.
accel.
sul pont.
gutteral, strained
c. ♩=96
molto rit.
Vln.
accel.
c. ♩=96
molto rit.
Pno.


c. ♩=60 Very flexible, tempo rubato
Pure, innocent, expressive, open sound
A transformation has occurred
53
G
ord.
sul tasto
ord.
Vln.
pp cantabile
ppp
like a distant
sung echo
pp cantabile
G
c. ♩=60 Very flexible, tempo rubato
Pno.
una corda
pp sotto voce
57
sul tasto
ord.
sul tasto
flautando
ord.
sul tasto
flautando
Vln.
mp
ppp
like a distant
sung echo
mp
pp
Pno.
mp
Pure, glass-like
61
(sul tasto
flaut.)
ord.
gliss.
non vib.
Vln.
ppp
as quiet as poss.
ff subito
mf
ff
mf
pp
Pno.
pp
tre corde
ff
mp
ff
mf
(mf)
p
67
gliss.
Wait for piano resonance
to fade until almost
inaudible
Vln.
mf
p
Wait for piano resonance
to fade until almost
inaudible
Pno.
mf
pp
p sotto voce

Electra Perivolaris

March

(Ice melting, petals unfurling)

for Classical/early Romantic period orchestra

March (Ice melting, petals unfurling) , an Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment commission, inspired by Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's ' 'Das Jahr': 12 Characterstücke and Postlude from 1841.

Instrumentation
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets (1&2 doubling Cl. in A)
2 Bassoons

2 Natural Horns

1 Timpanist

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Celli
Double Basses

Duration
Approx. 10 minutes.

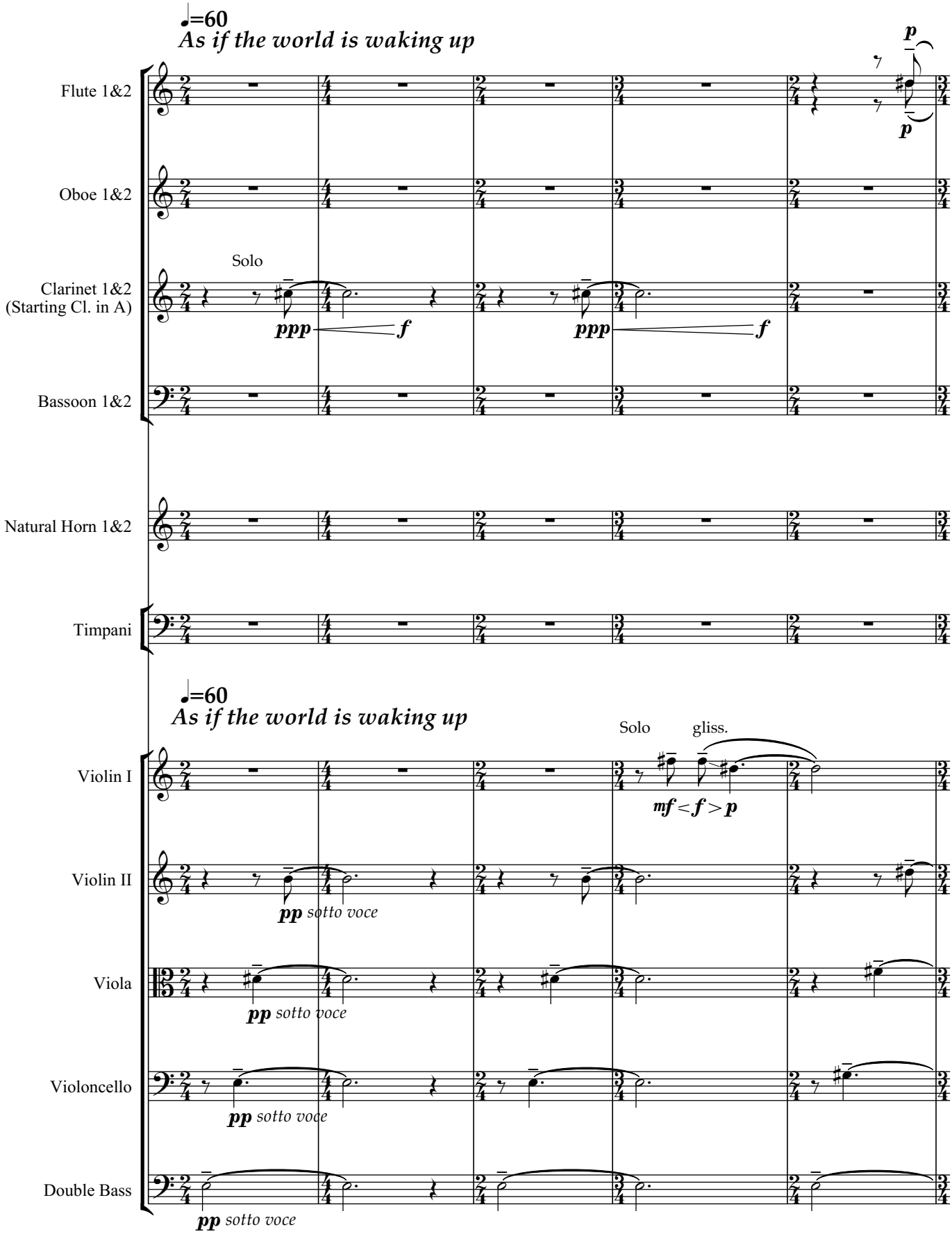
Performance Notes
The string writing in this piece is characterised throughout by portamenti and glissandi markings. There should be an audible difference between portamenti and glissandi with the port. markings indicating an shorter slide, closer to the second note, almost like an inflection or bend to the landing pitch. In contrast, the gliss. markings indicate a longer slide, beginning from the start of the first note.

Programme Note
When asked by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment to choose a month from Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's 'Das Jahr' for solo piano to inspire a new work I would compose for Classical/early Romantic period orchestra, the month of March immediately stood out to me. The piece I have composed draws upon the dialogue between Winter and Spring which I felt when listening to Fanny's March, the almost capricious energy of Winter melting away with the ice as the joy and warmth of Spring start to take over, flower petals unfurling and the earth blooming and blossoming again. In this piece I have explored the contrasts between darkness and light which seem to characterise the month of March, the 'muffled bells' in the Goethe quotation at the start of Fanny's manuscript for March heralding the world waking up to Spring once again.
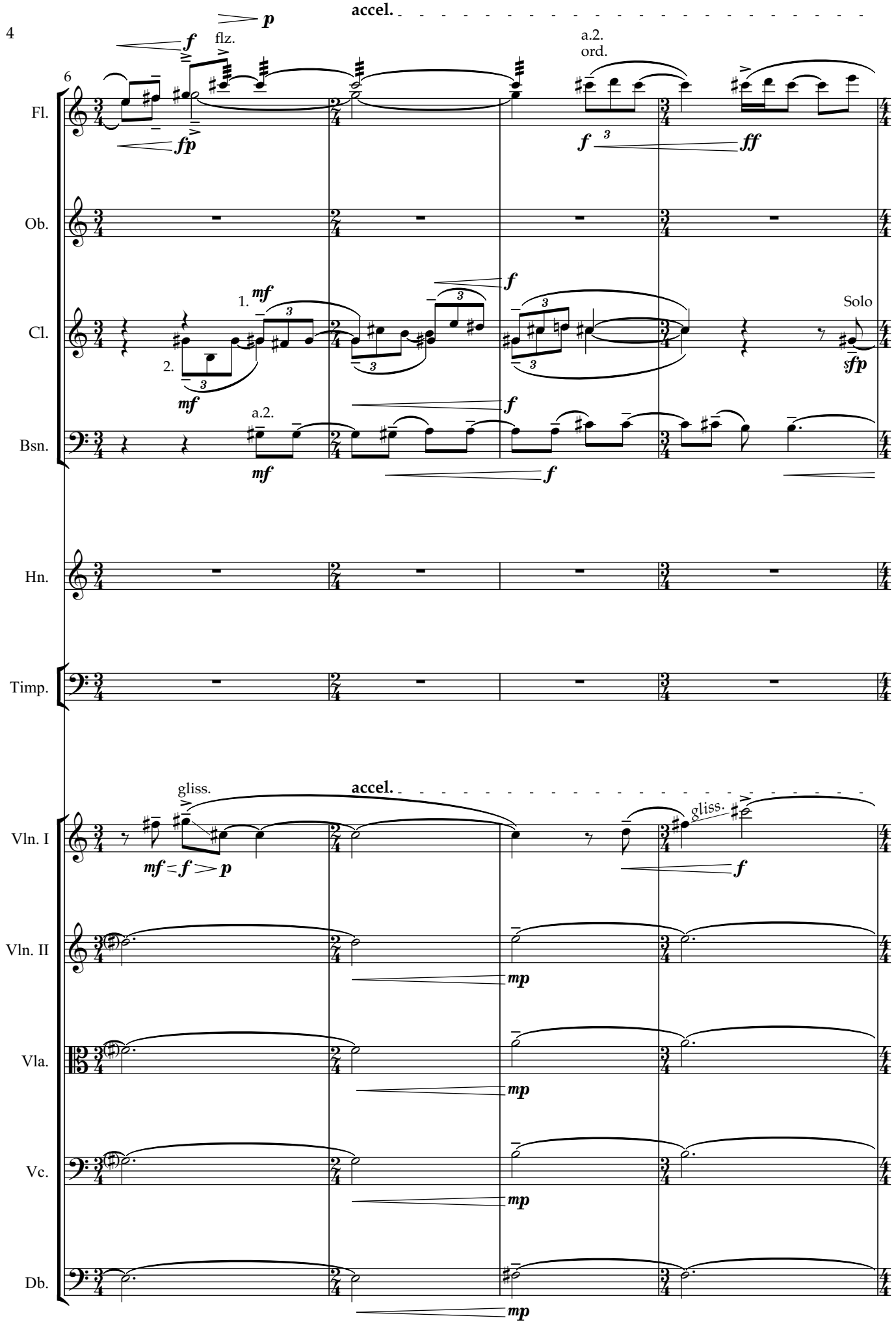
SCORE IN C

March
(Ice melting, petals unfurling)

Electra Perivolaris



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accel.
p
f
flz.
6
a.2.
ord.
Fl.
fp
f
3
ff
Ob.
Cl.
1.
mf
f
3
2.
mf
Solo
sfp
Bsn.
a.2.
mf
f
Hn.
Timp.
gliss.
accel.
gliss.
Vln. I
mf = f > p
f
Vln. II
mp
Vla.
mp
Vc.
mp
Db.
mp

♩=96
With a sense of growth, slightly muted ecstasy

A

10

Fl.

flz.
or 'lou-lou' tonguing

p ***mp*** ***p*** ***mp*** ***p***

Ob.

Cl.

ff

Bsn.

ff

Hn.

Timp.

♩=96
With a sense of growth, slightly muted ecstasy

A

Vln. I

Tutti

gliss.

gliss.

p ***p*** ***mf*** ***pp*** ***mf***

Vln. II

pp *sotto voce*

Vla.
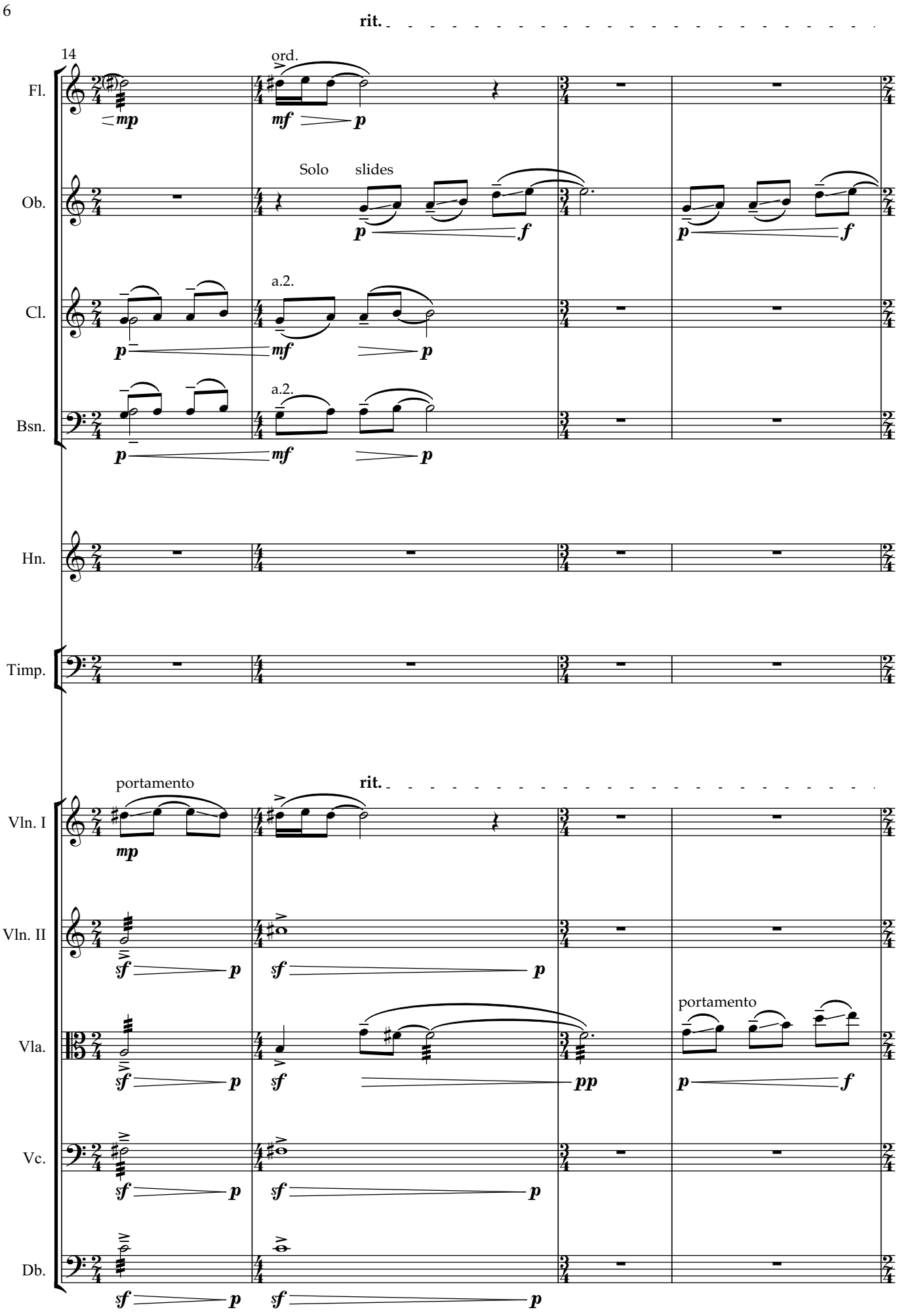
pp *sotto voce*
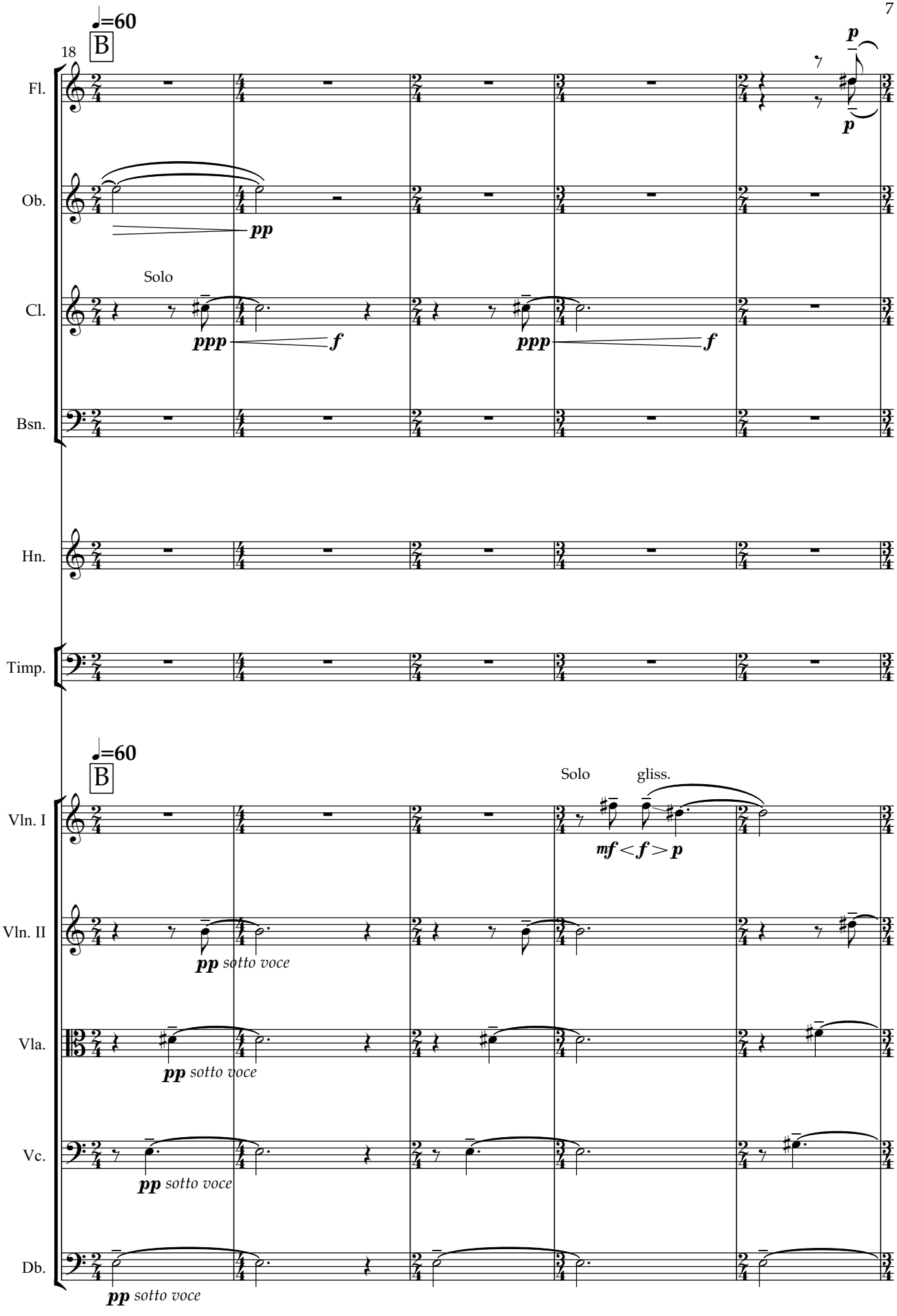
Vc.
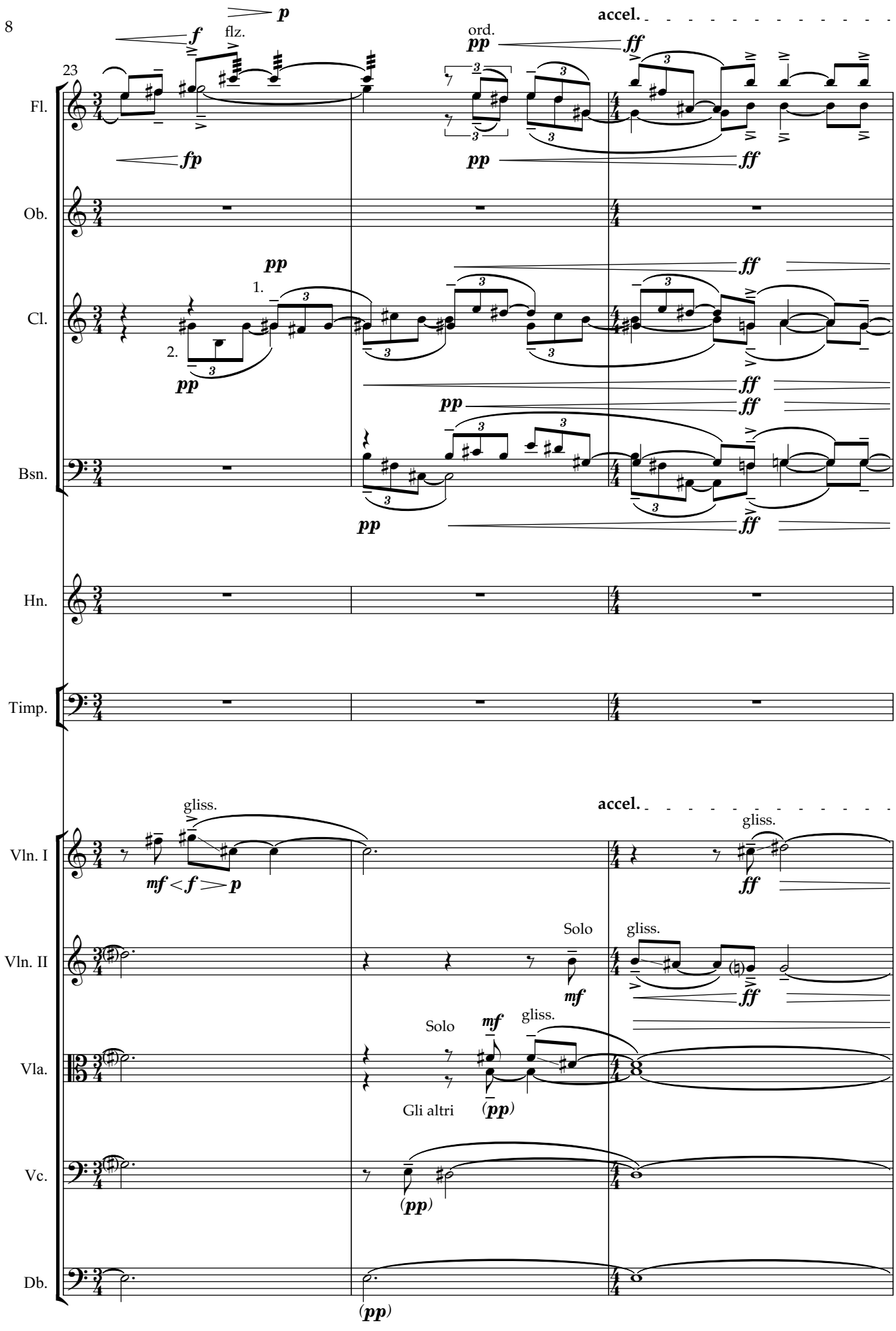
pp *sotto voce*
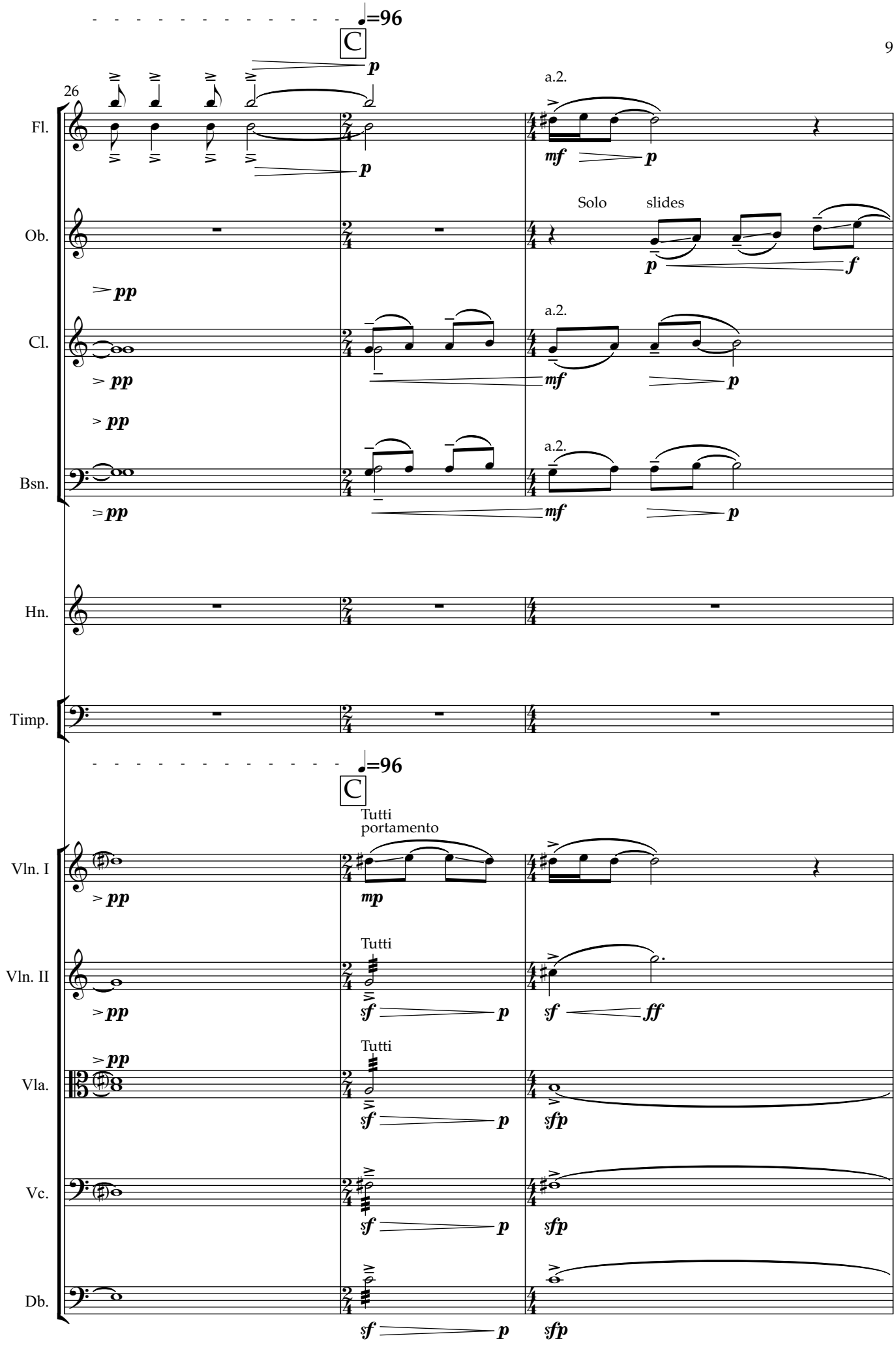
Db.
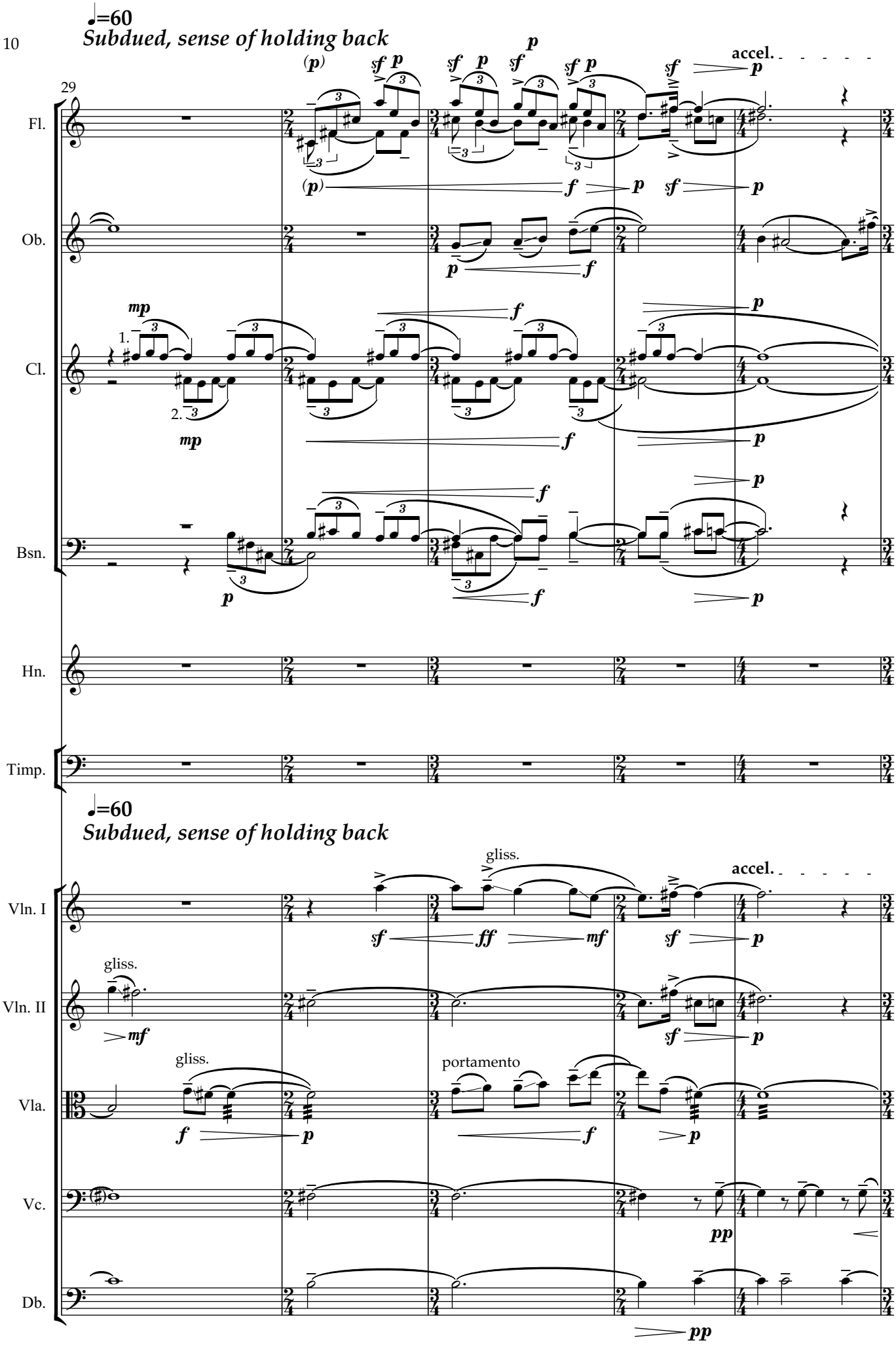
pp *sotto voce*
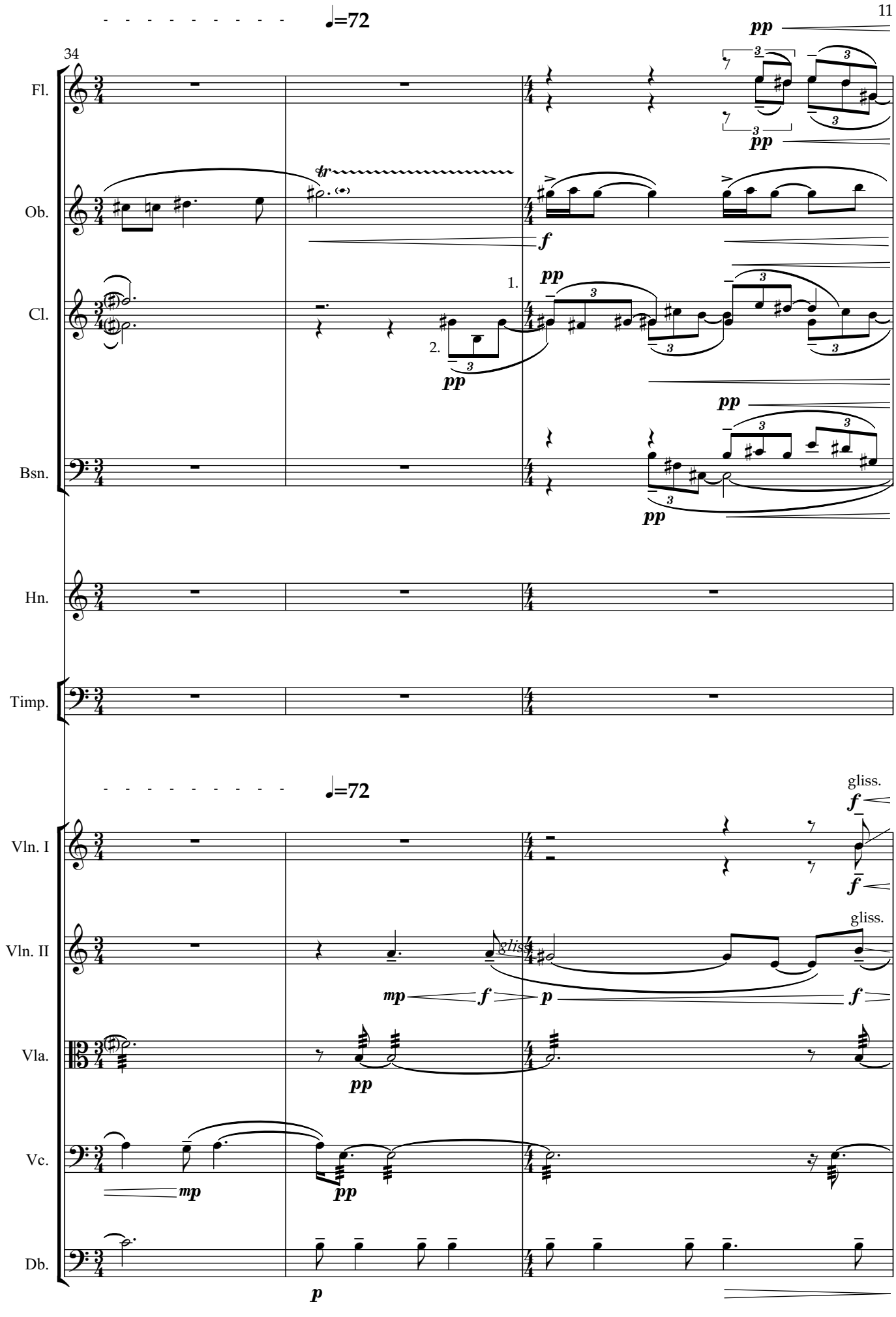

rit.
14
ord.
Fl.
mp
mf
p
Solo
slides
Ob.
p
f
a.2.
Cl.
mf
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
portamento
rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
sf
Vla.
pp
Vc.
Db.
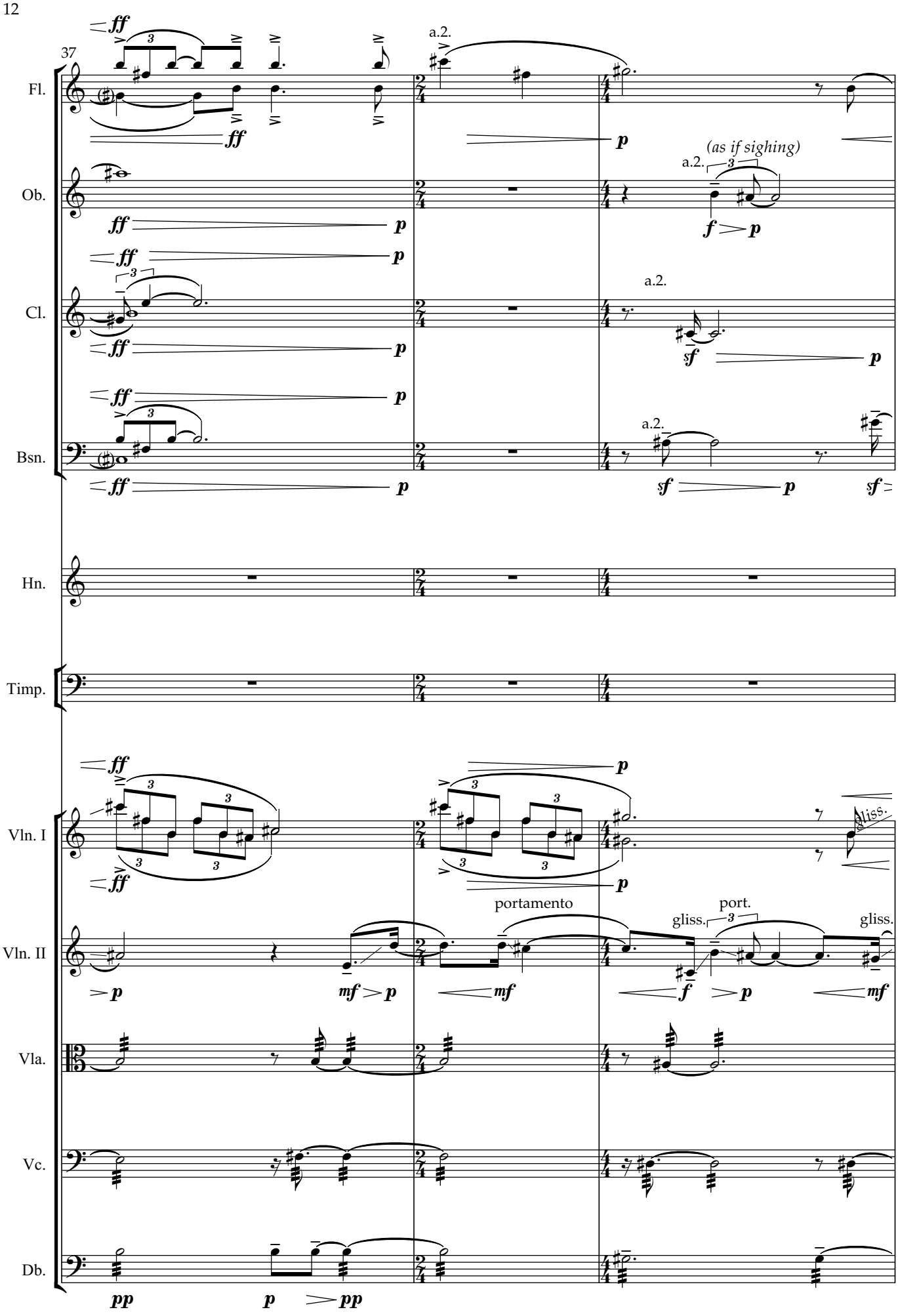

♩=60
B
18
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Solo
gliss.
pp
ppp
f
mf < f > p
pp sotto voce
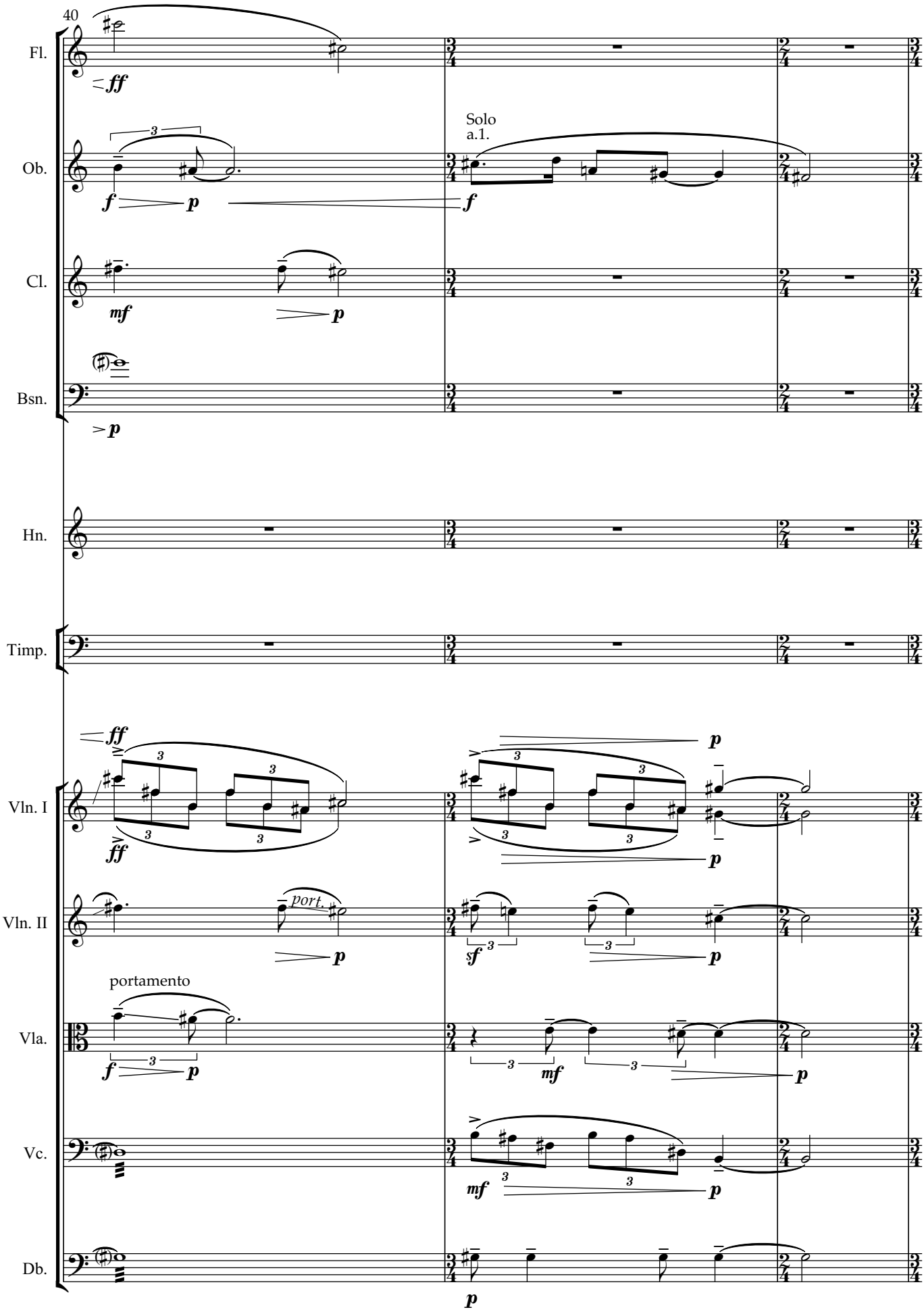

23
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
flz.
ord.
accel.
gliss.
Solo
Gli altri
1.
2.
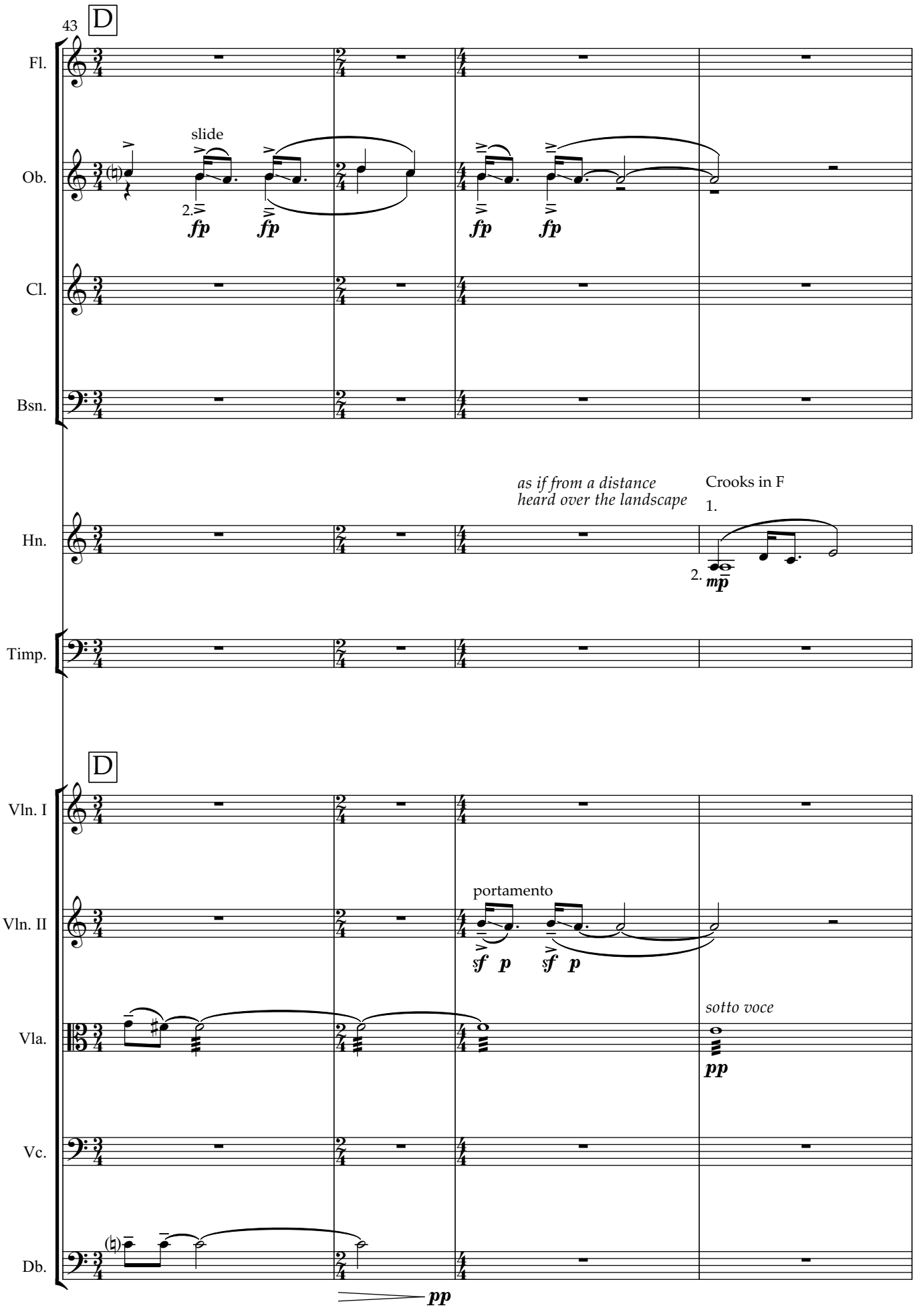

♩=96
C
26
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p
pp
mf
f
mp
sf
ff
sfp
a.2.
Solo
slides
Tutti
portamento
Tutti
Tutti
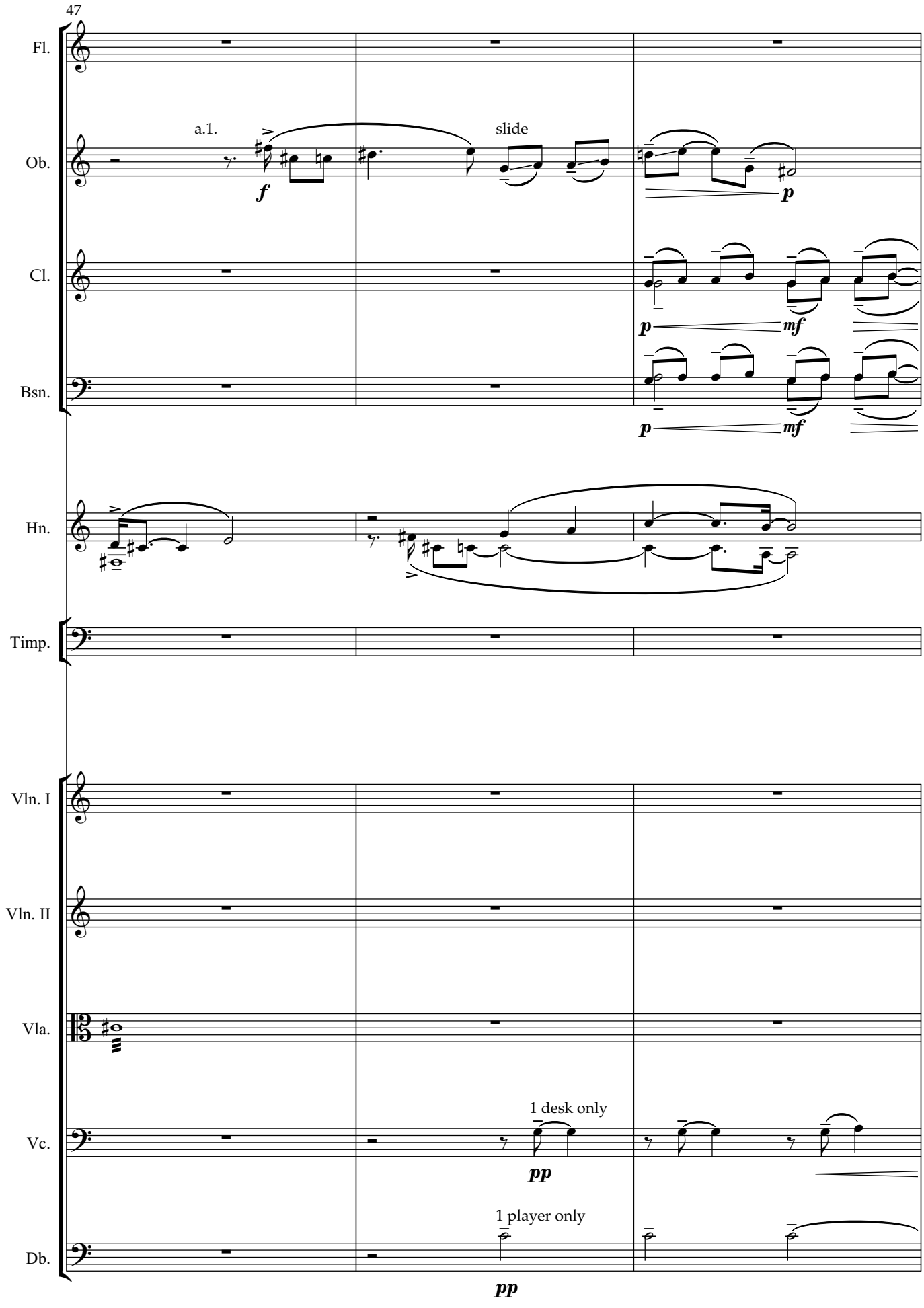

♩=60
Subdued, sense of holding back
29
accel.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
♩=60
Subdued, sense of holding back
gliss.
accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
gliss.
portamento
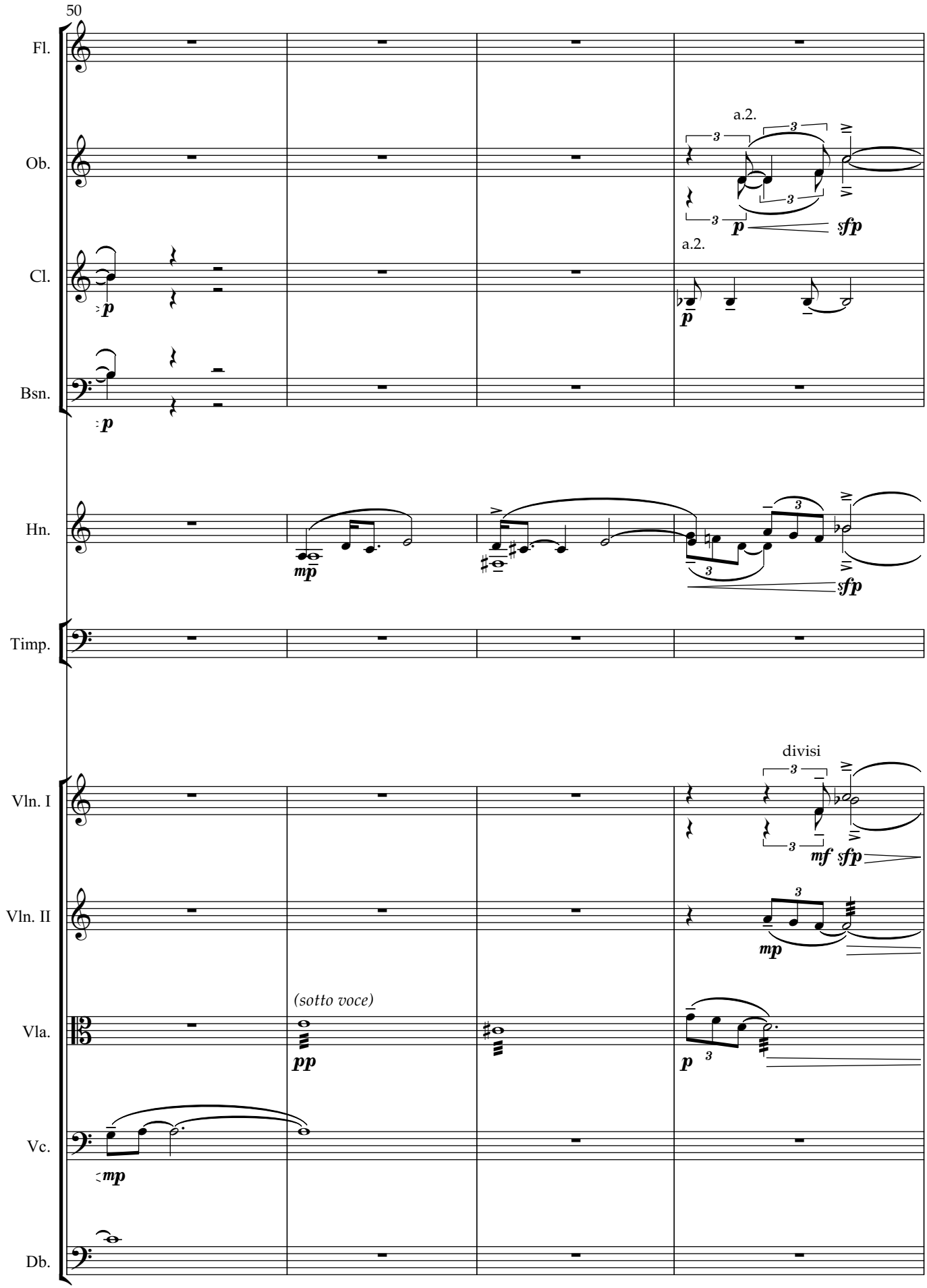

♩=72
34
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pp
f
1.
2.
mp
p
gliss.
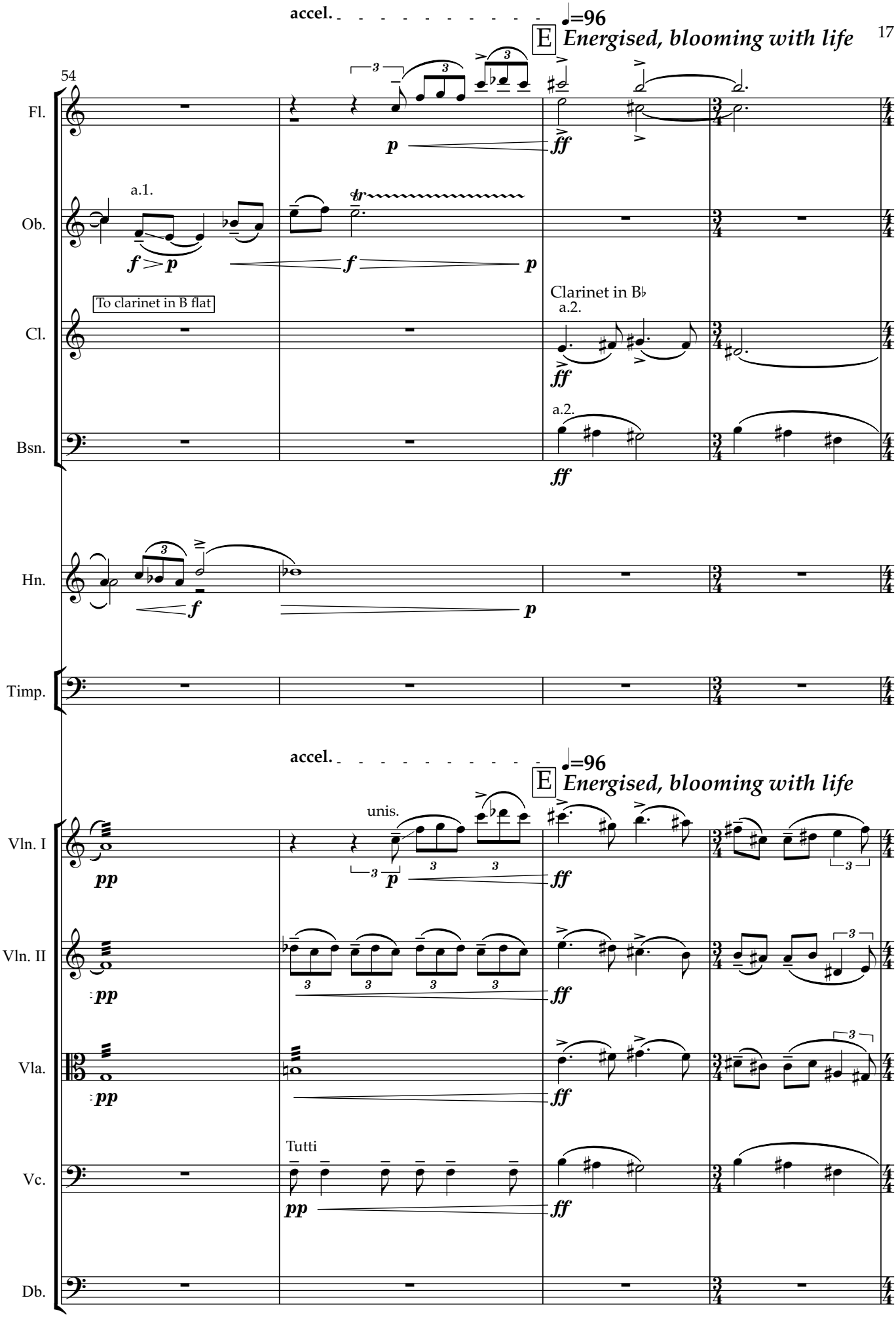

37
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a.2.
(as if sighing)
portamento
port.
gliss.
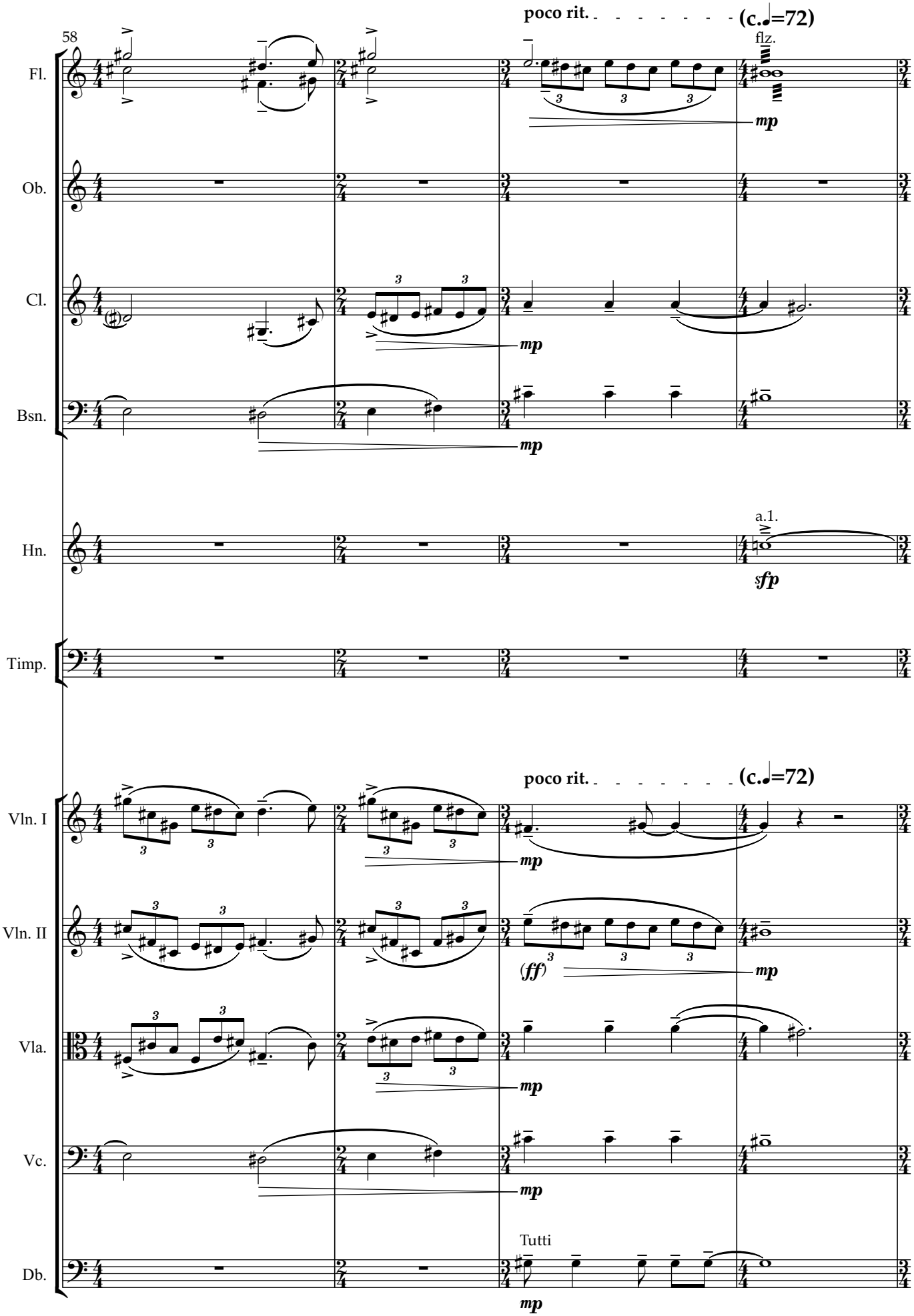

40
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Solo
a.1.
port.
portamento
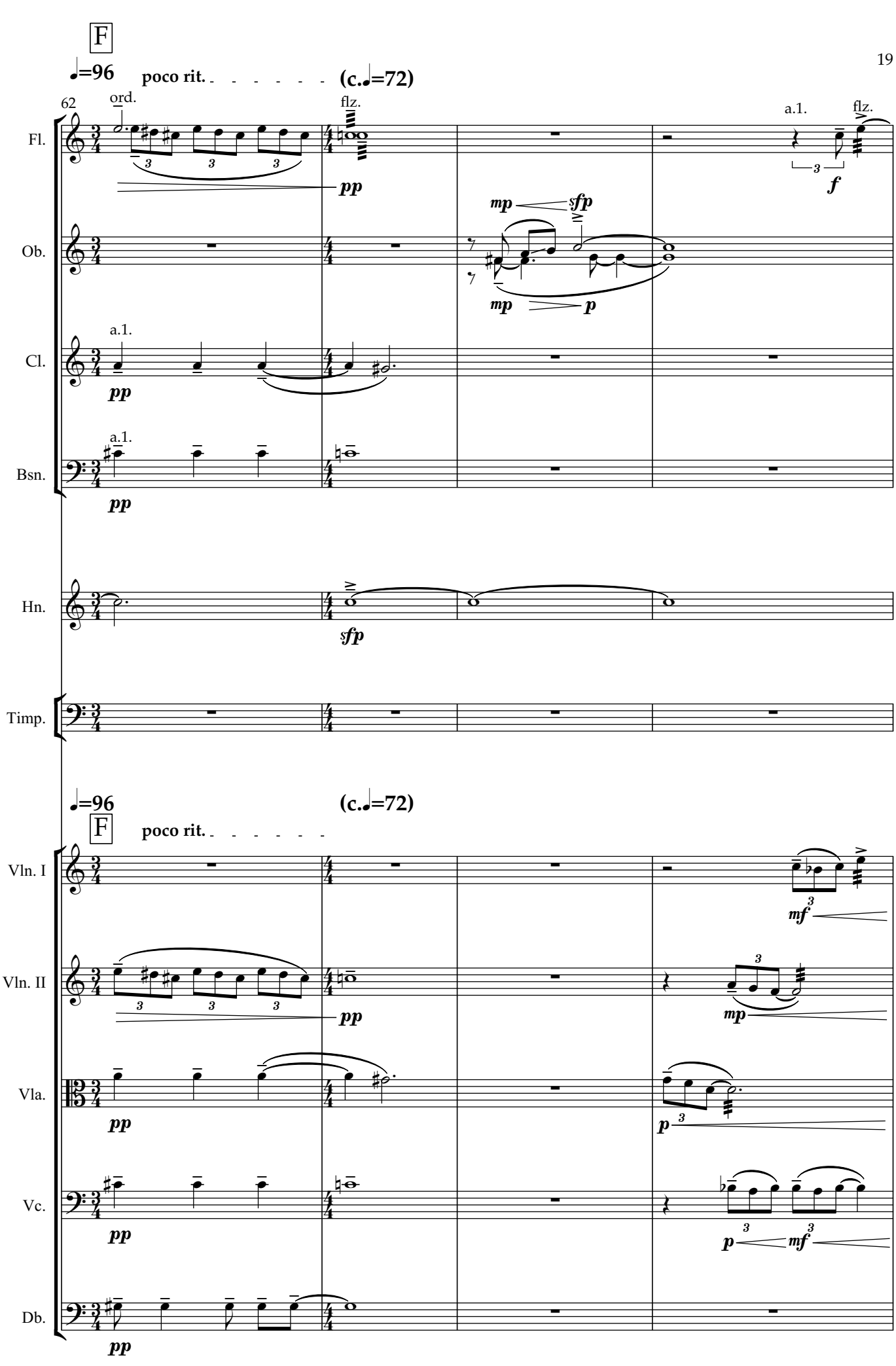

43
D
Fl.
Ob.
slide
2.
fp
fp
fp
fp
Cl.
Bsn.
as if from a distance
heard over the landscape
Crooks in F
1.
Hn.
2.
mp
Timp.
D
Vln. I
Vln. II
portamento
sf
p
sf
p
Vla.
sotto voce
pp
Vc.
Db.
pp
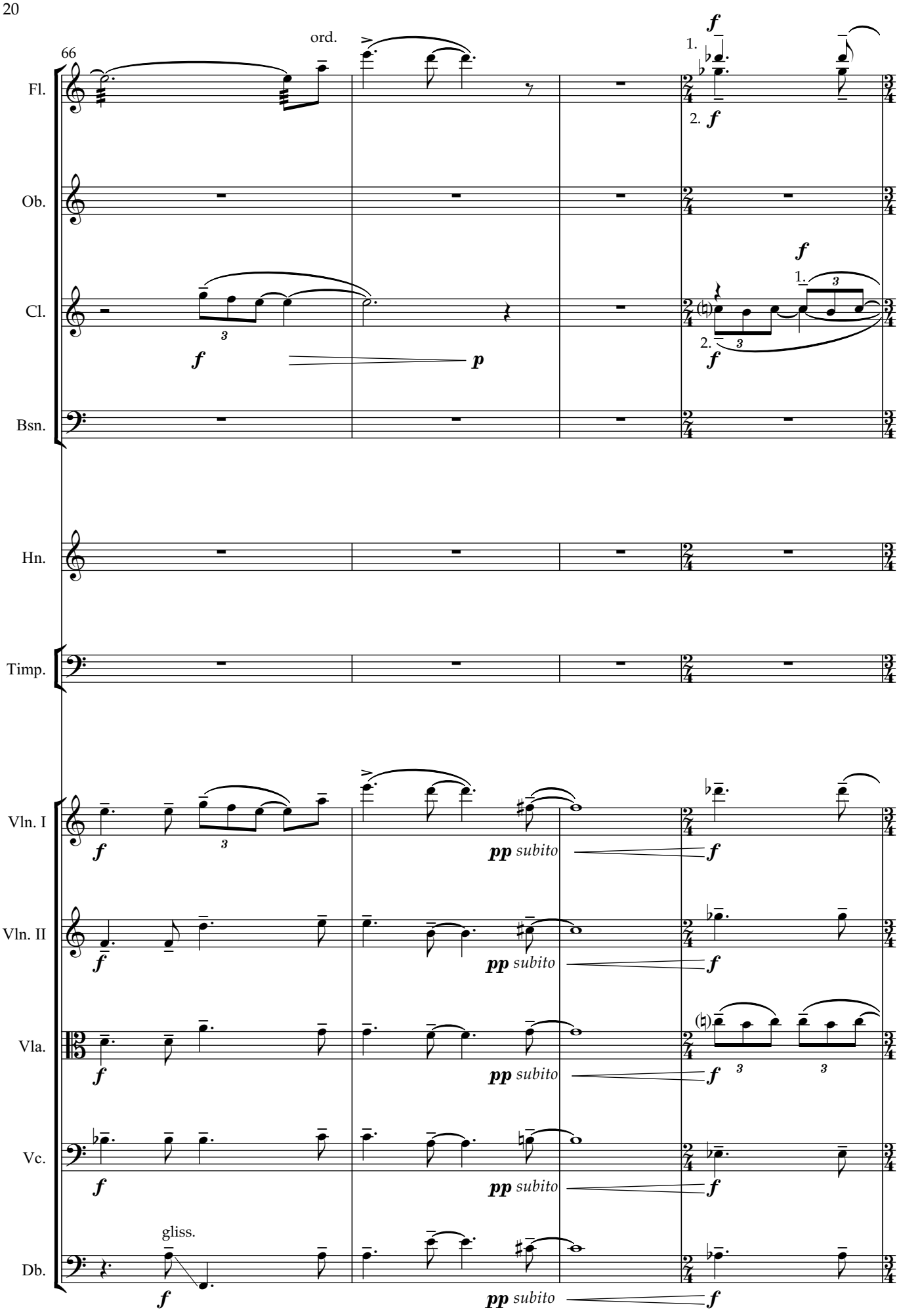

47
Fl.
Ob.
a.1.
slide
f
p
Cl.
p
mf
Bsn.
p
mf
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
1 desk only
pp
Db.
1 player only
pp
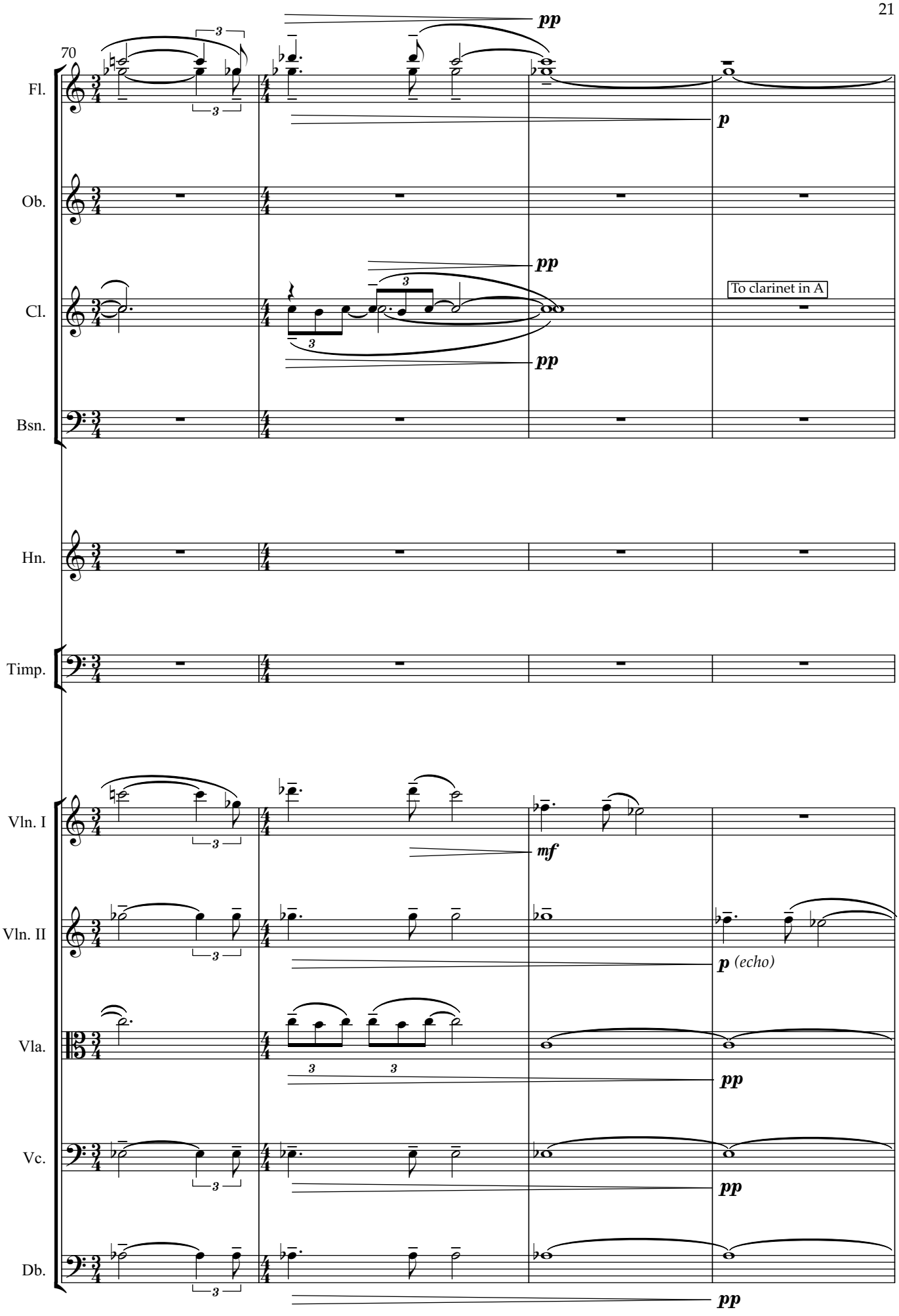

50
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
a.2.
a.2.
divisi
(sotto voce)
p
mp
pp
mf
sfp
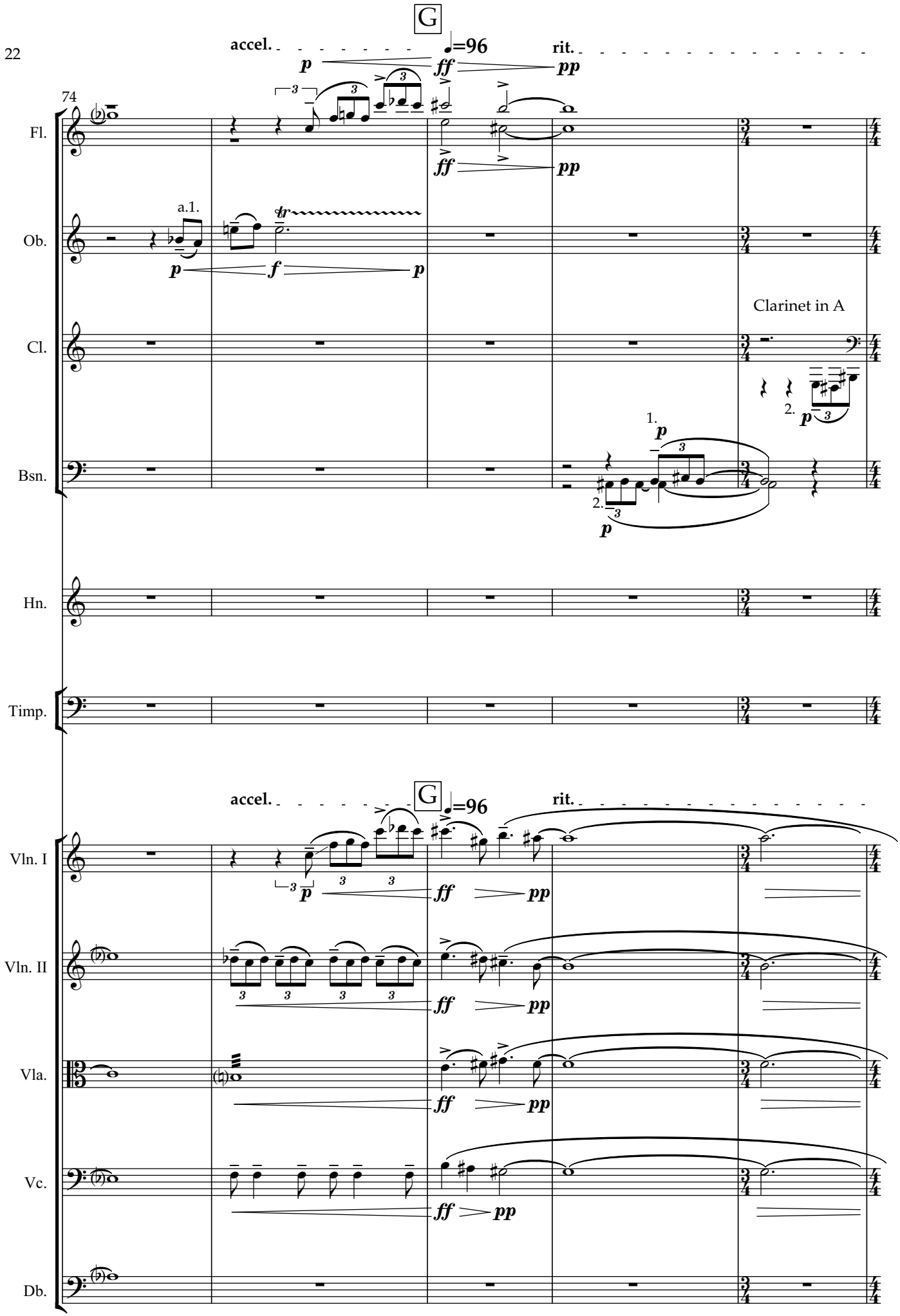

accel.
♩=96
E
Energised, blooming with life
54
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
a.1.
To clarinet in B flat
Clarinet in B♭
a.2.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
unis.
Tutti
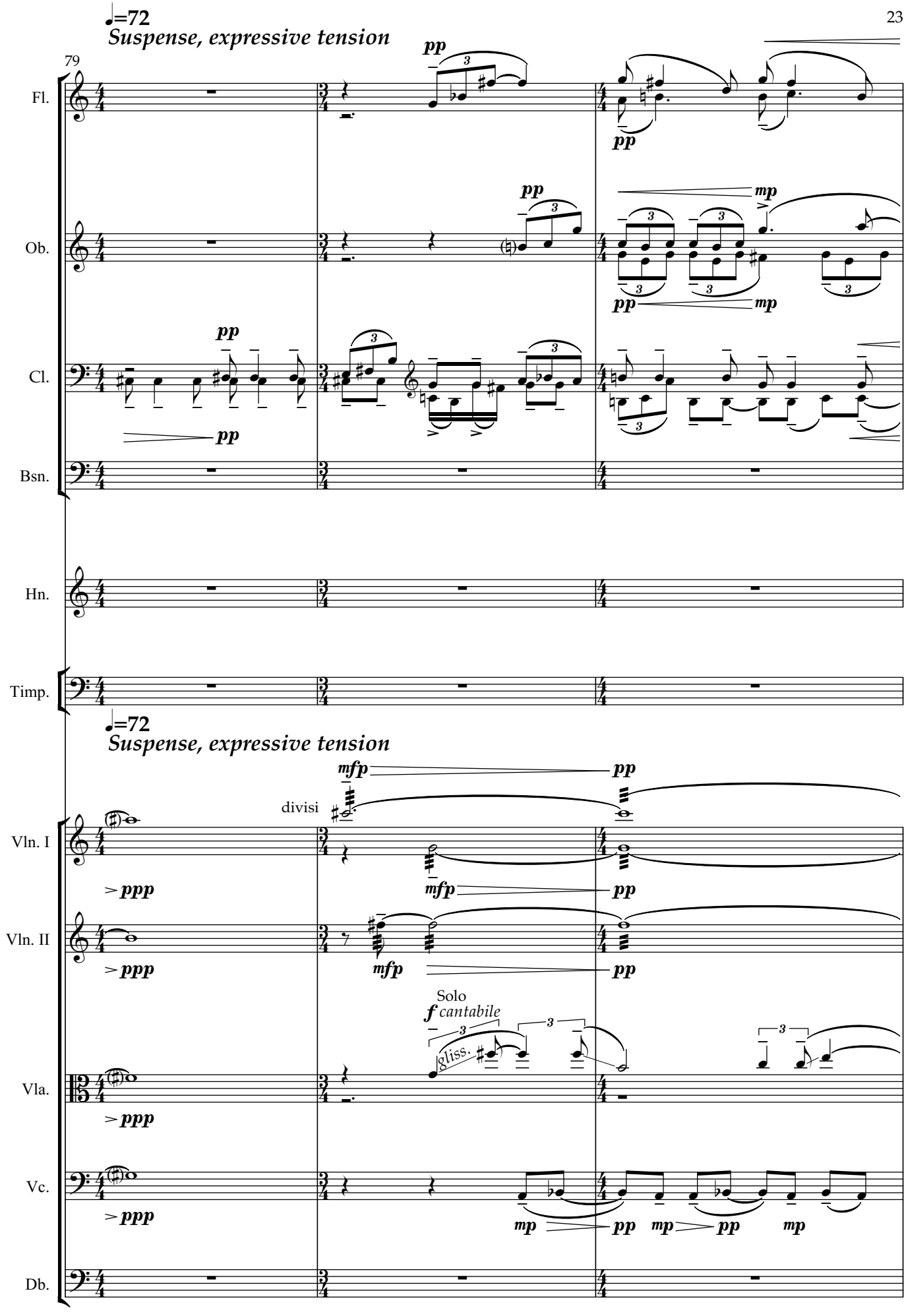

poco rit.
(c.♩=72)
58
flz.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
mp
Hn.
a.1.
sfp
Timp.
poco rit.
(c.♩=72)
Vln. I
Vln. II
(ff)
Vla.
Vc.
Tutti
Db.
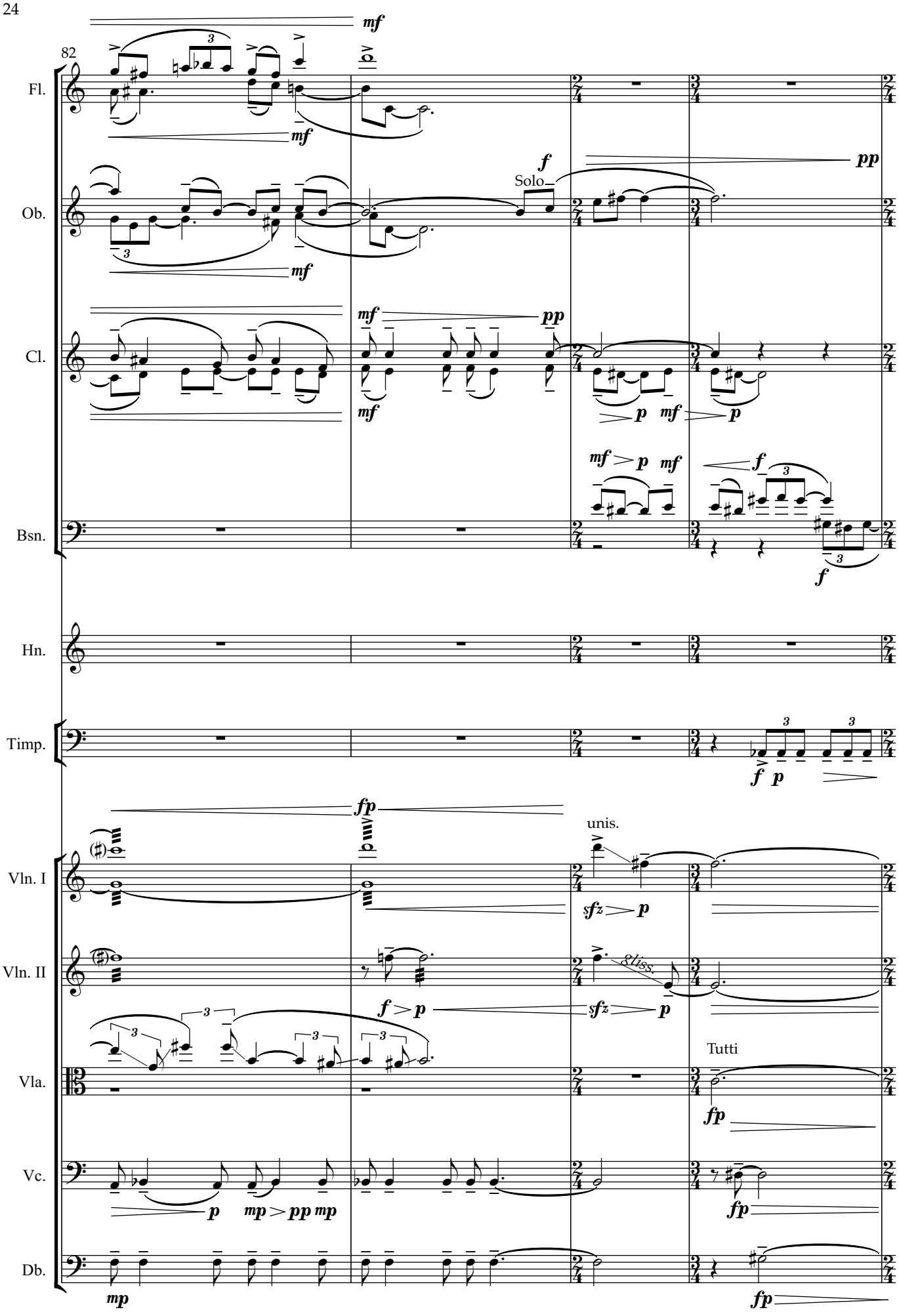

F
♩=96
poco rit.
(c.♩=72)
62
ord.
flz.
a.1.
flz.
Fl.
pp
mp
sfp
Ob.
mp
p
a.1.
Cl.
pp
a.1.
Bsn.
pp
Hn.
sfp
Timp.
♩=96
(c.♩=72)
F
poco rit.
Vln. I
mf
Vln. II
pp
mp
Vla.
pp
p
Vc.
pp
p
mf
Db.
pp
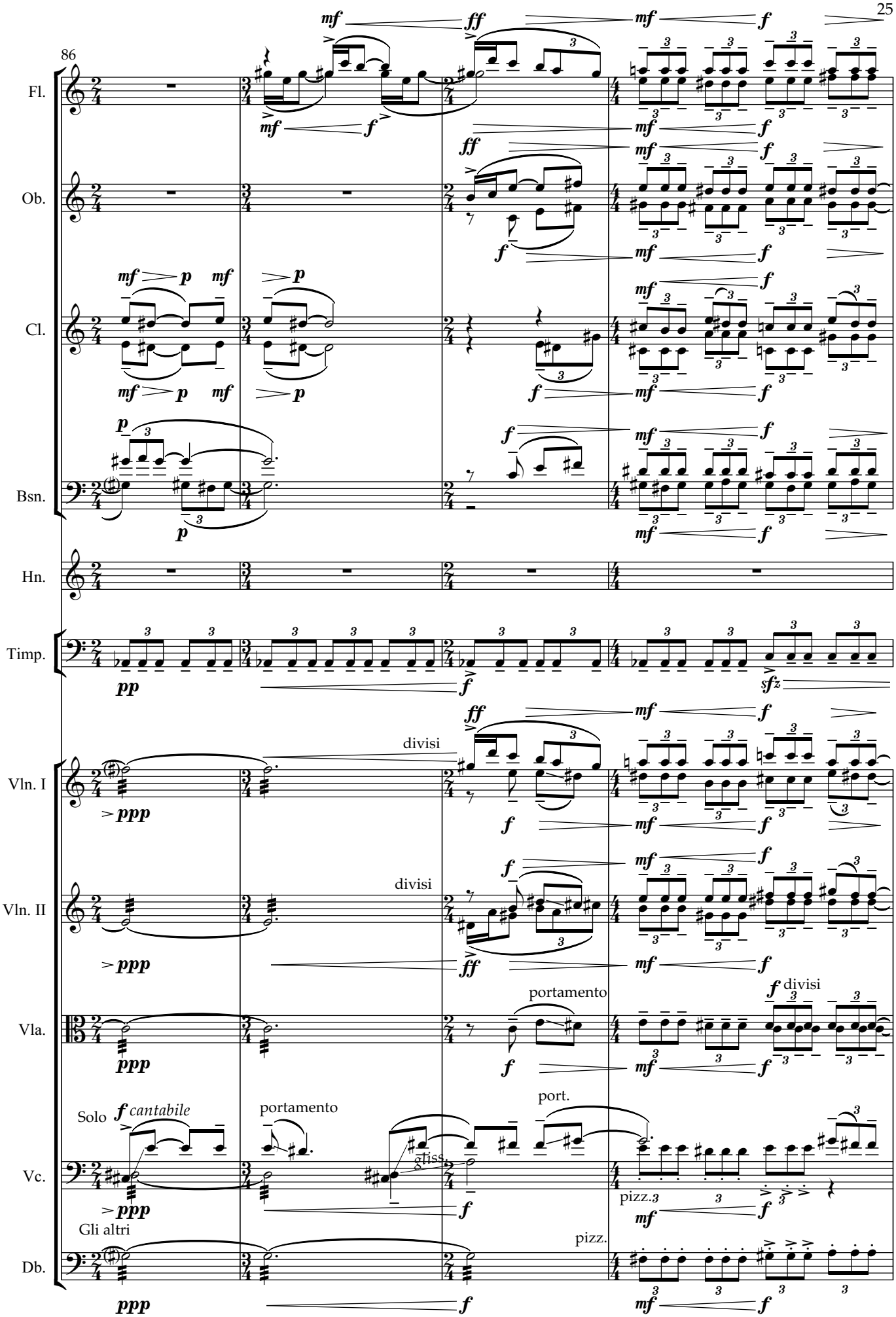

66
ord.
1.
2.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
f
p
pp subito
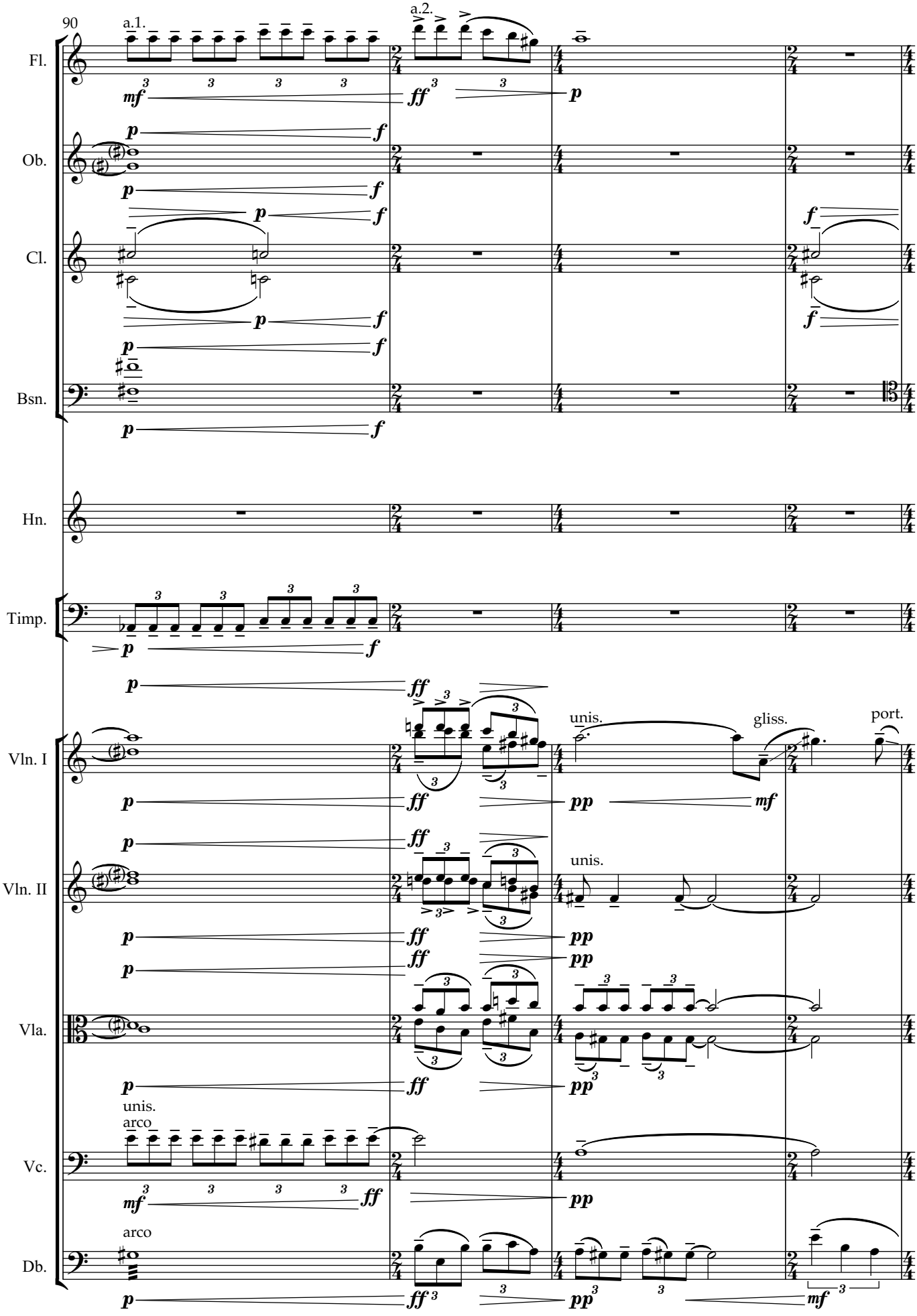

70
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pp
p
pp
pp
To clarinet in A
mf
p (echo)
pp
pp
pp
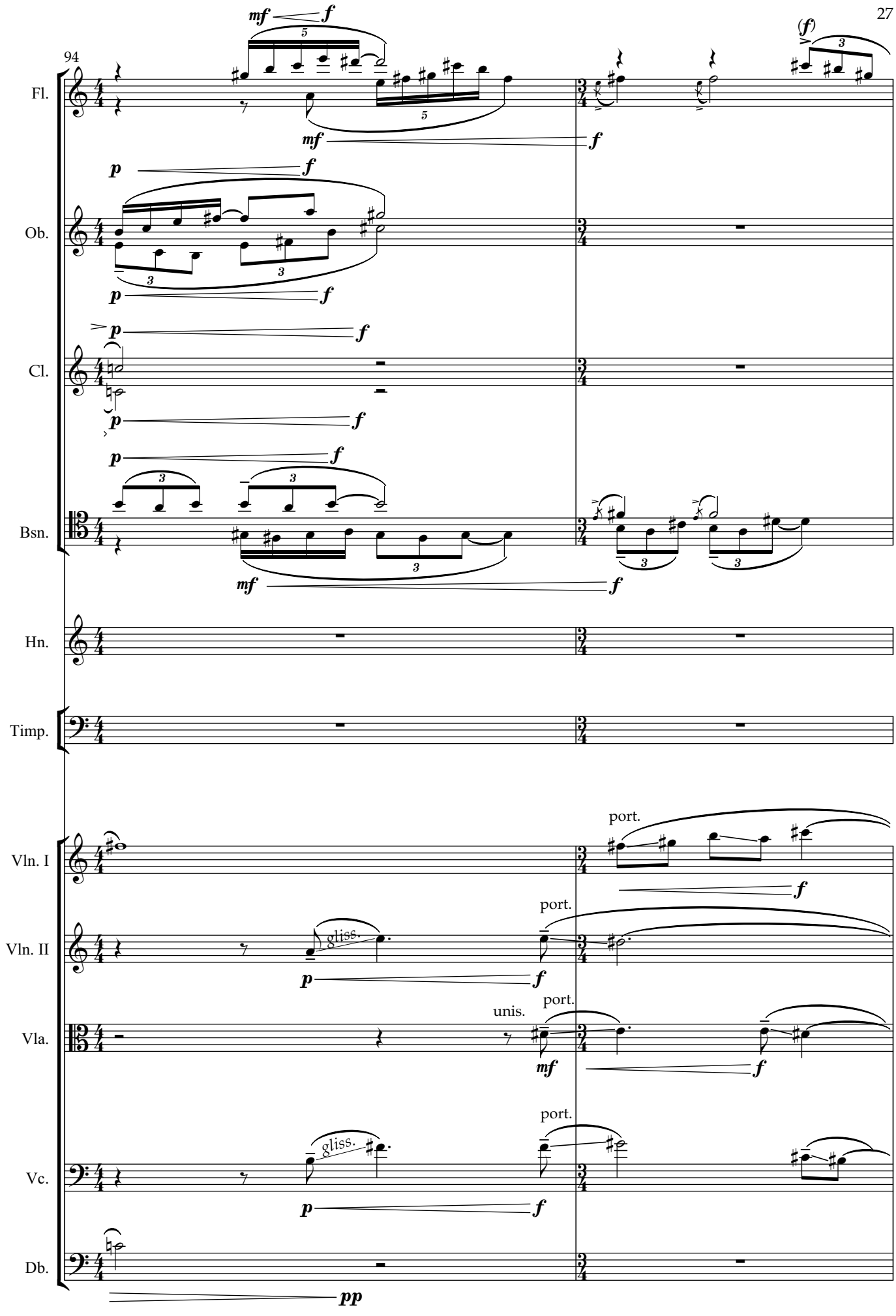

G
accel.
♩=96
rit.
74
Fl.
Ob.
a.1.
Cl.
Clarinet in A
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
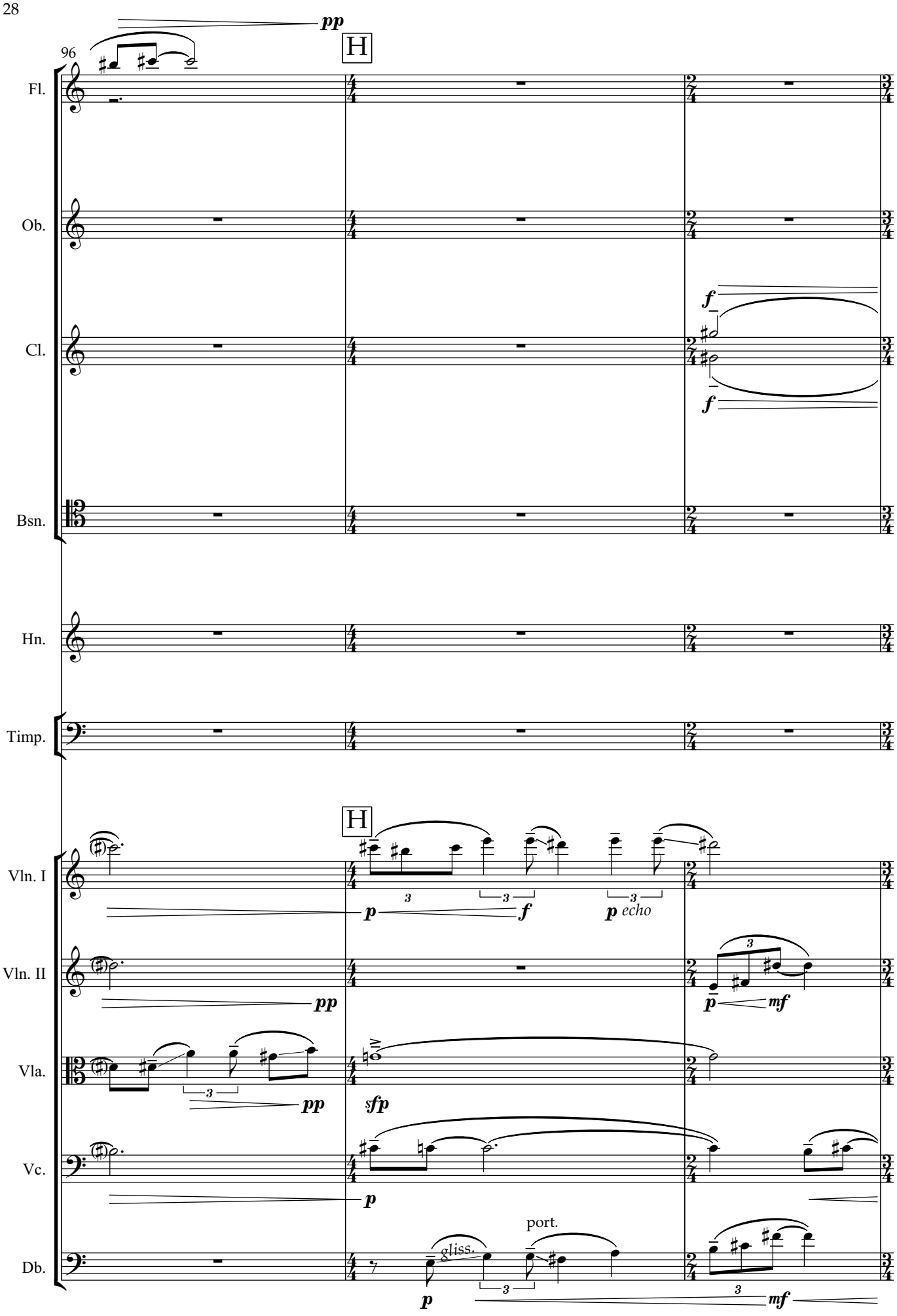

♩=72
Suspense, expressive tension
79
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
divisi
Solo
cantabile
gliss.
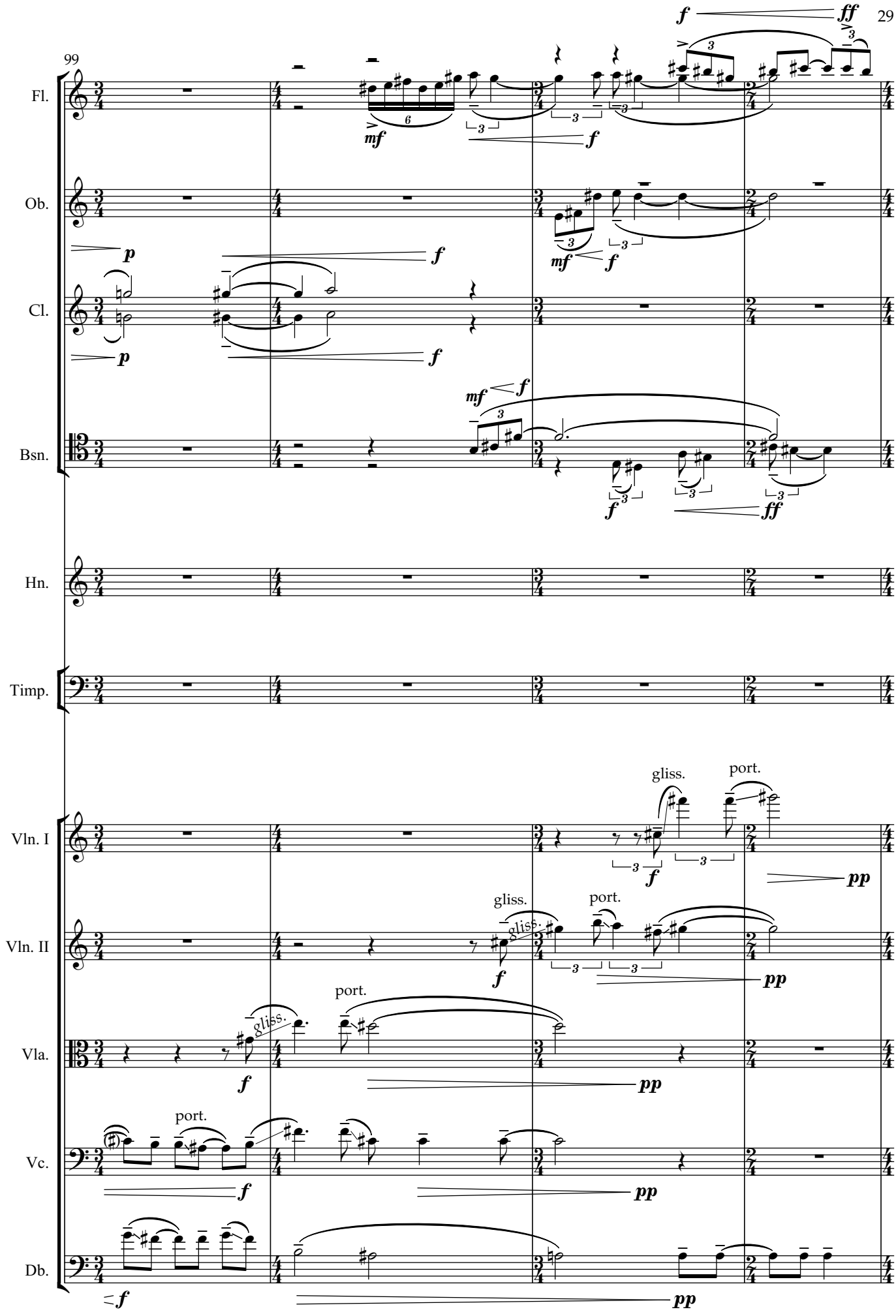

82
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Solo
unis.
gliss.
Tutti
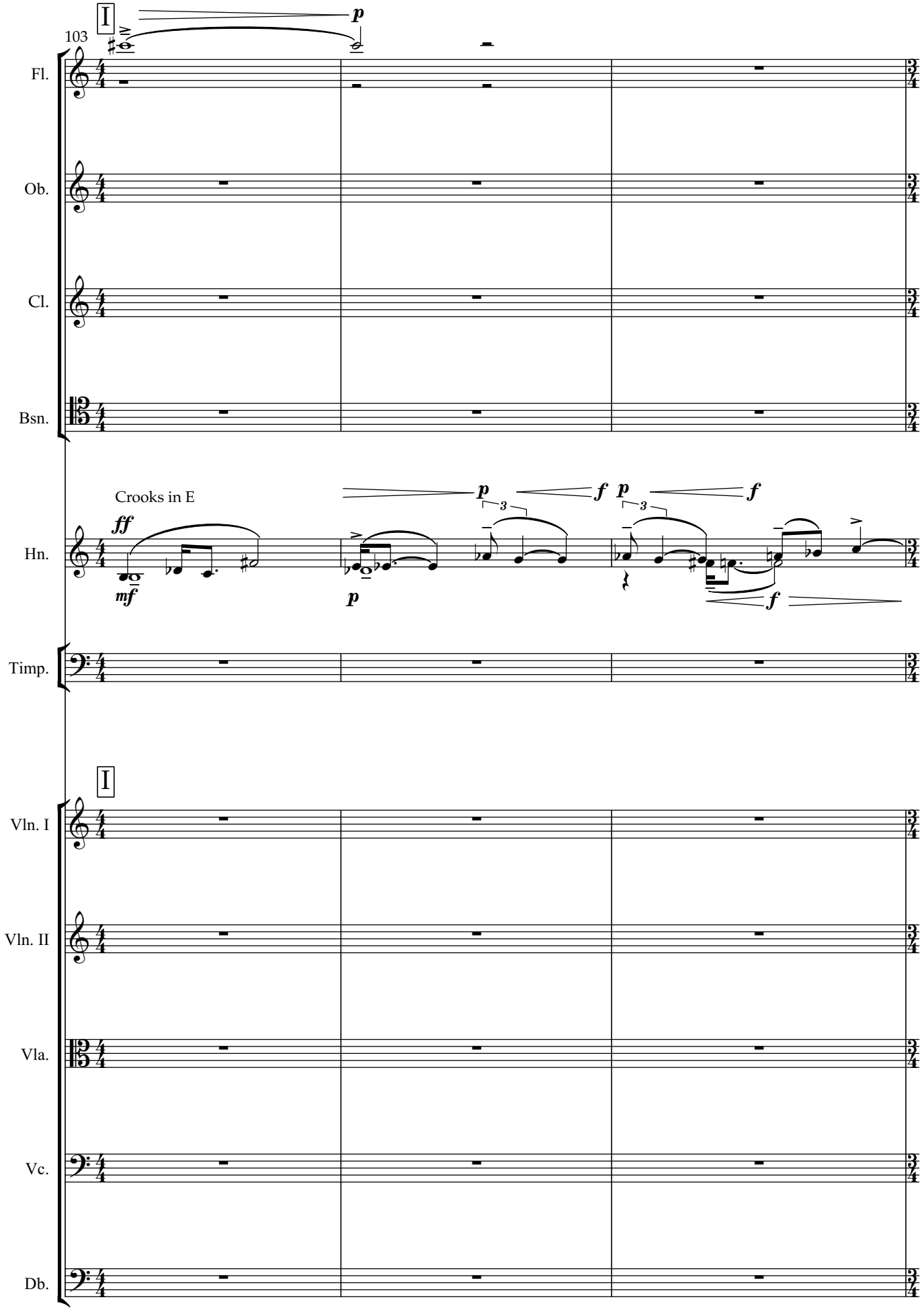

86
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
divisi
portamento
Solo
cantabile
port.
gliss.
pizz.
Gli altri
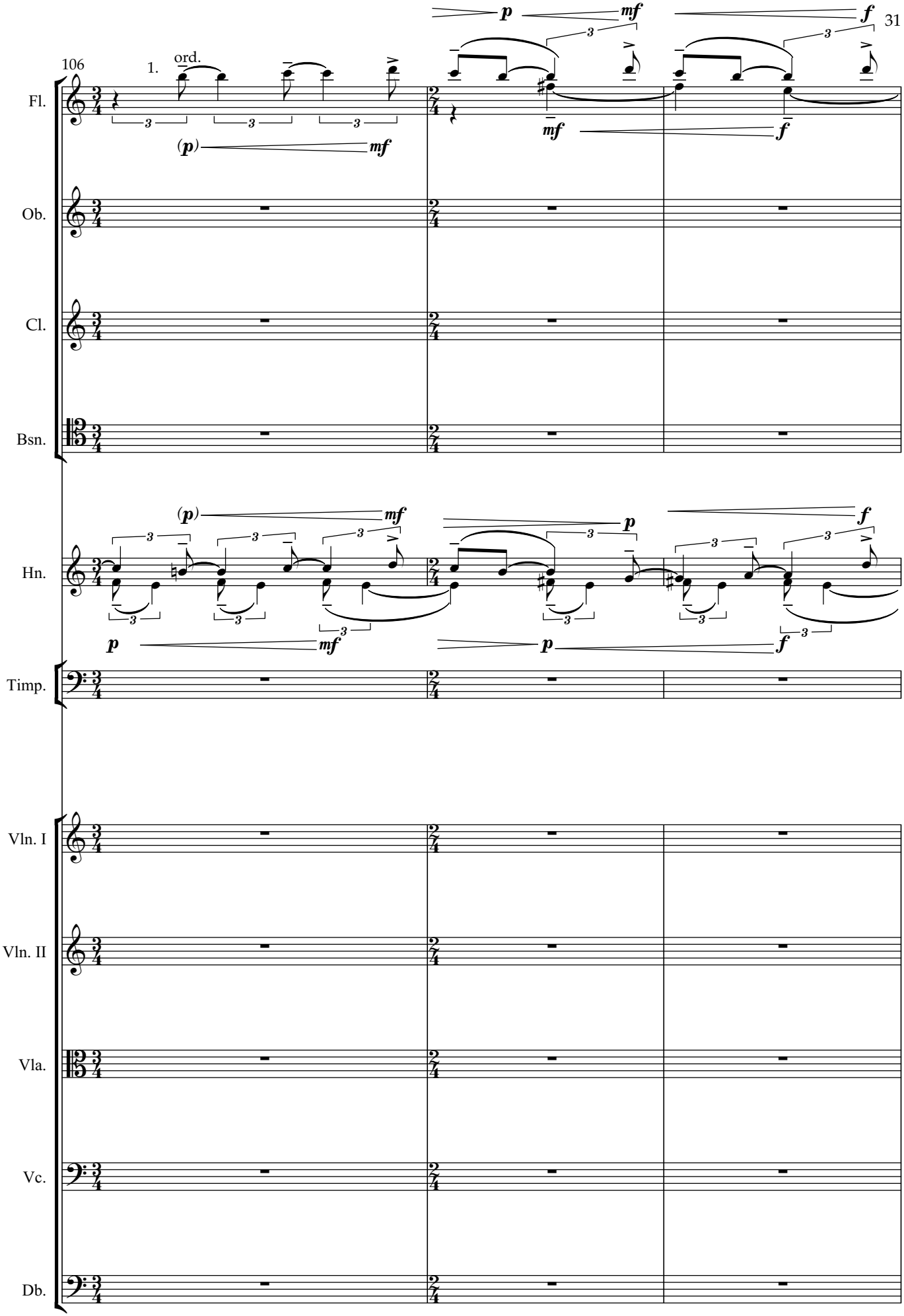

90
a.1.
a.2.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
unis.
gliss.
port.
arco
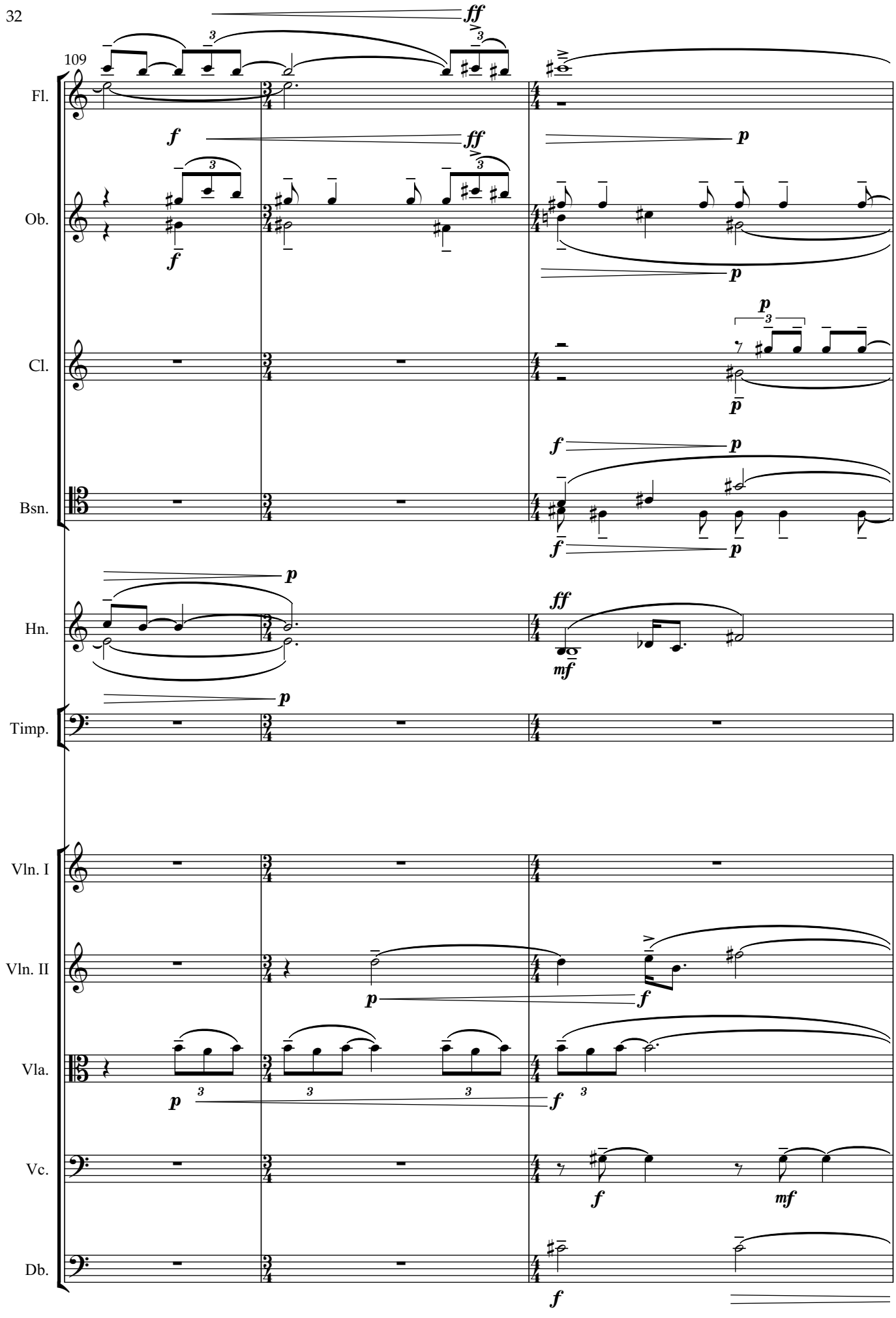

94
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mf
f
(f)
p
pp
port.
gliss.
unis.
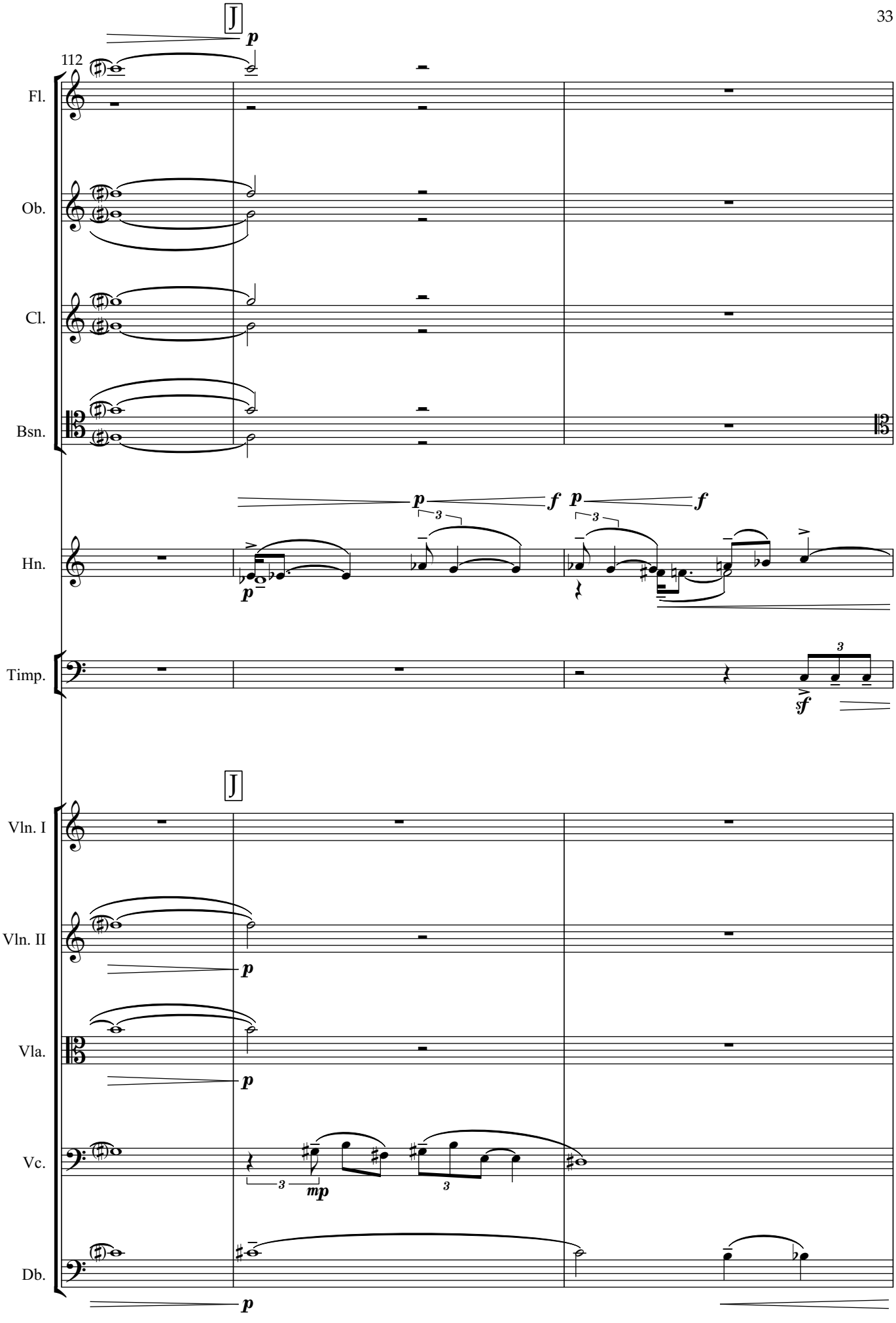

96
pp
H
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
f
f
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
H
Vln. I
p
f
p echo
Vln. II
pp
p
mf
Vla.
pp
sfp
Vc.
p
port.
gliss.
Db.
p
mf
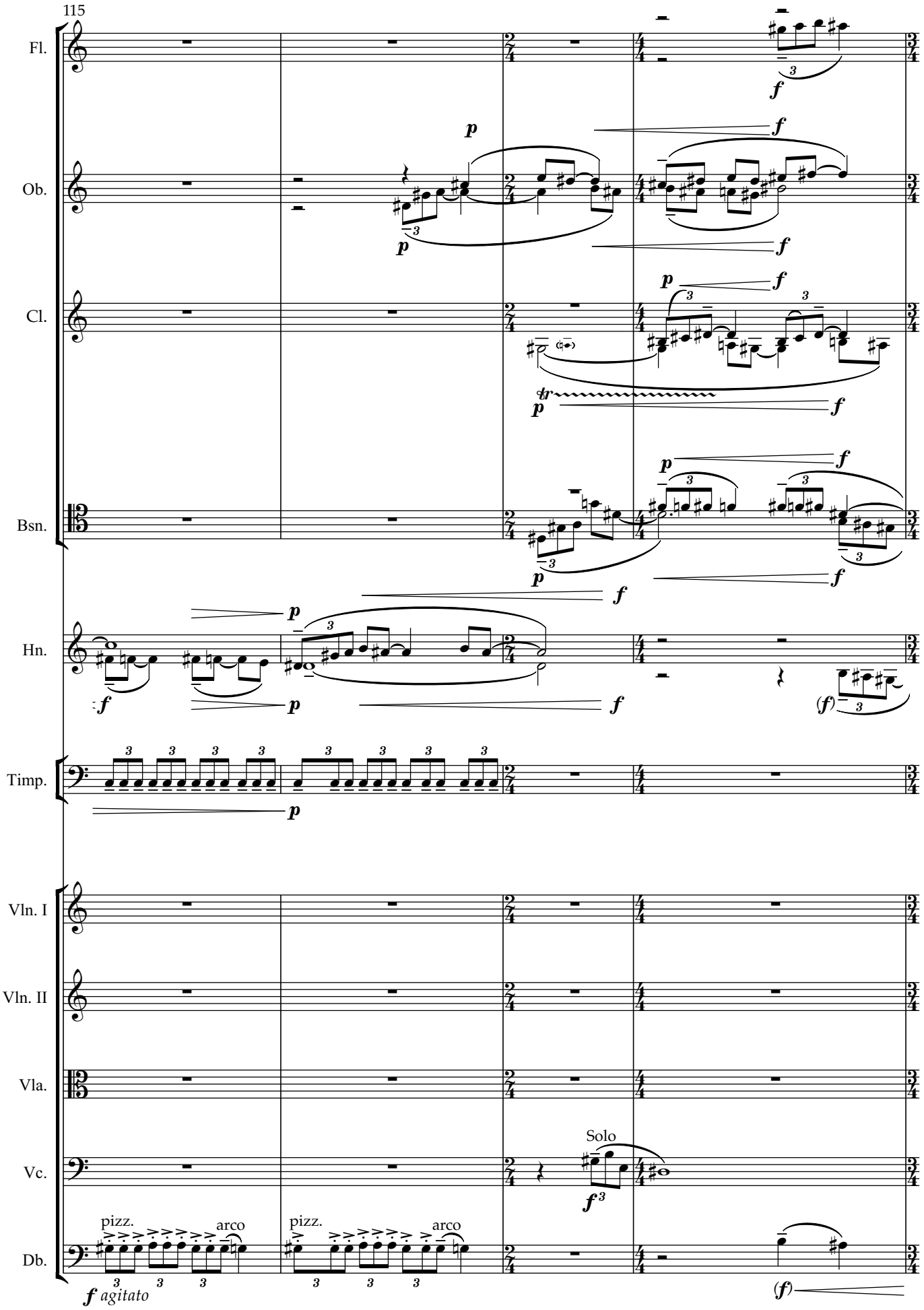

99
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
port.
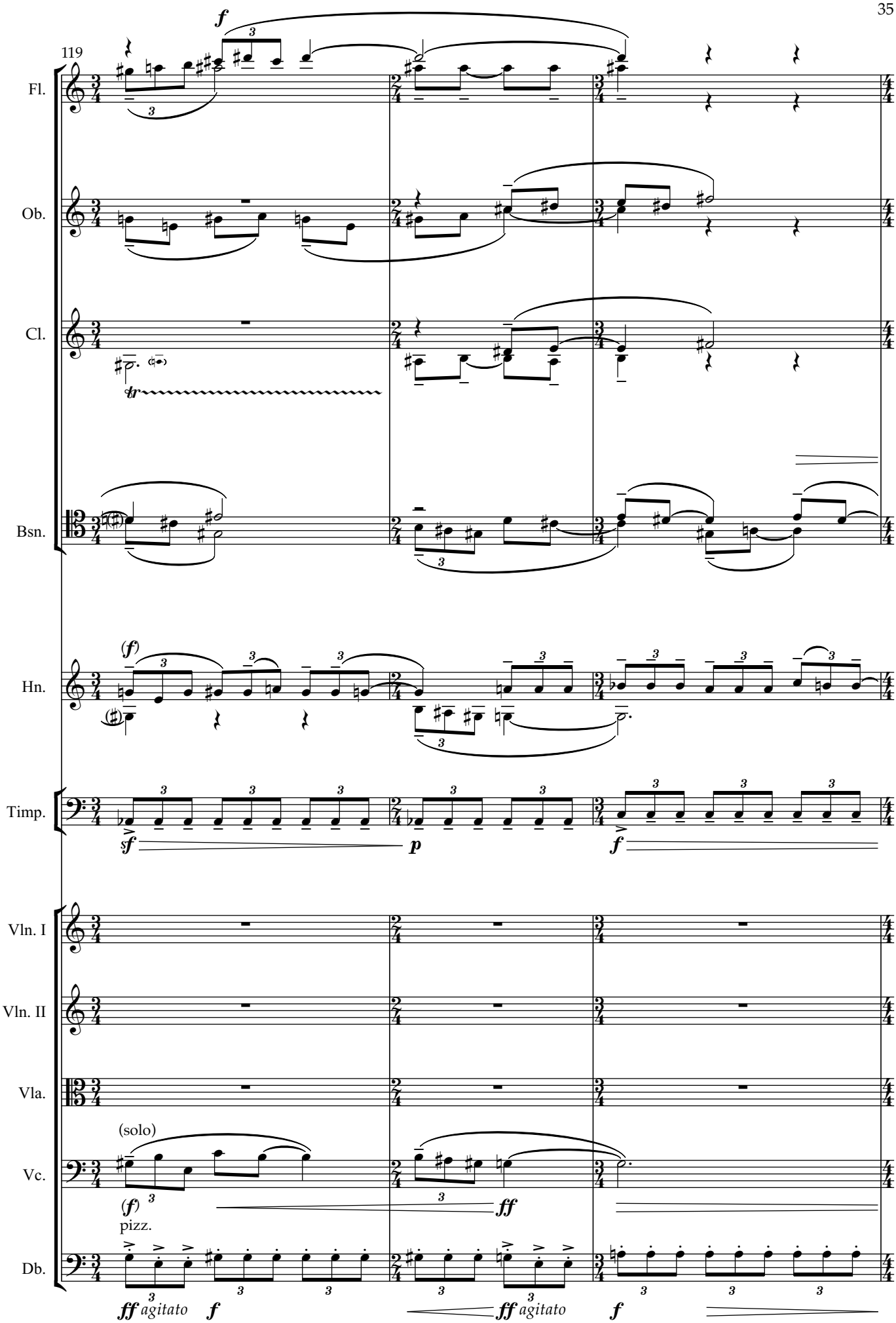

I
103
p
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Crooks in E
ff
mf
p
p
f
p
f
Hn.
Timp.
I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
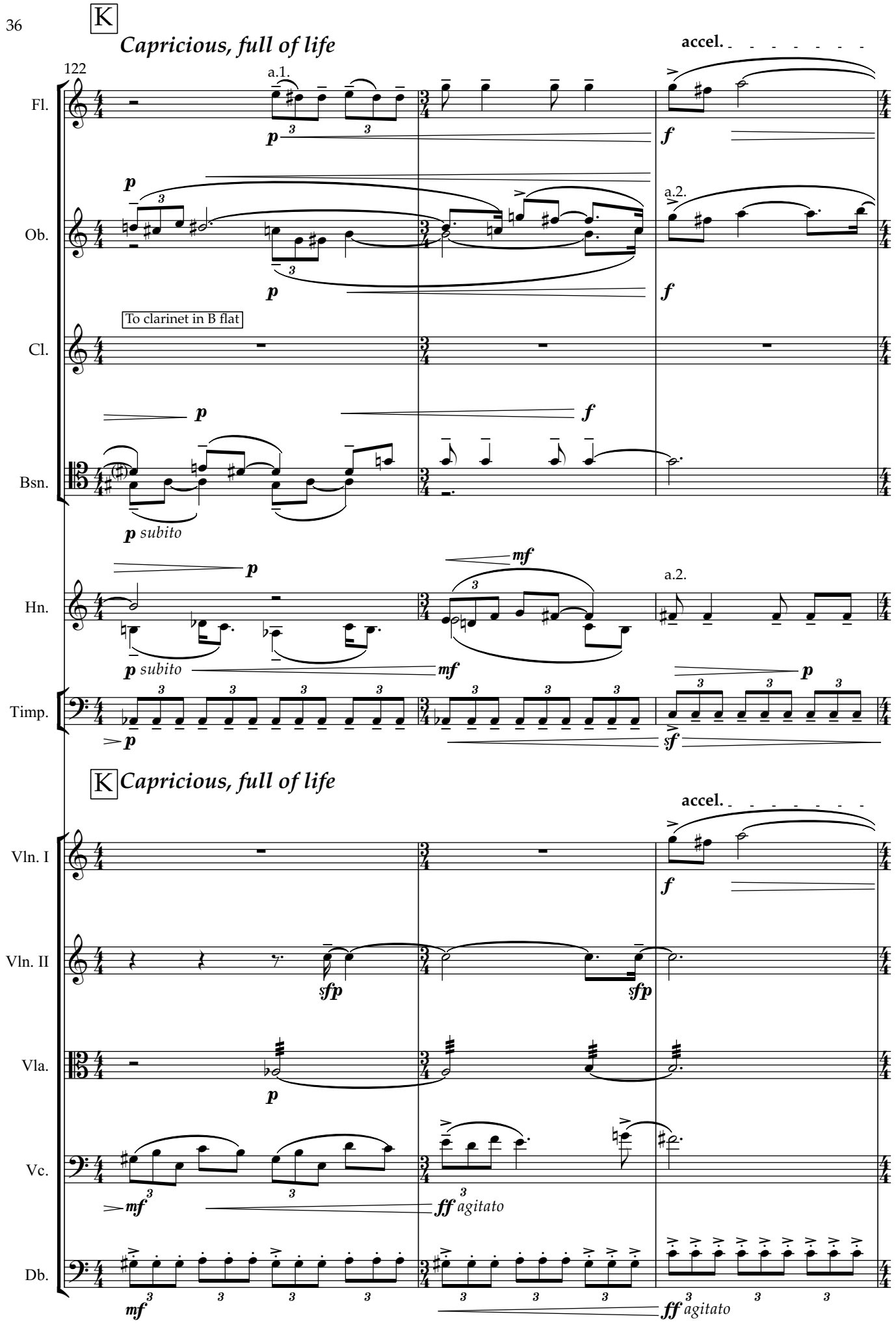

106
1.
ord.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
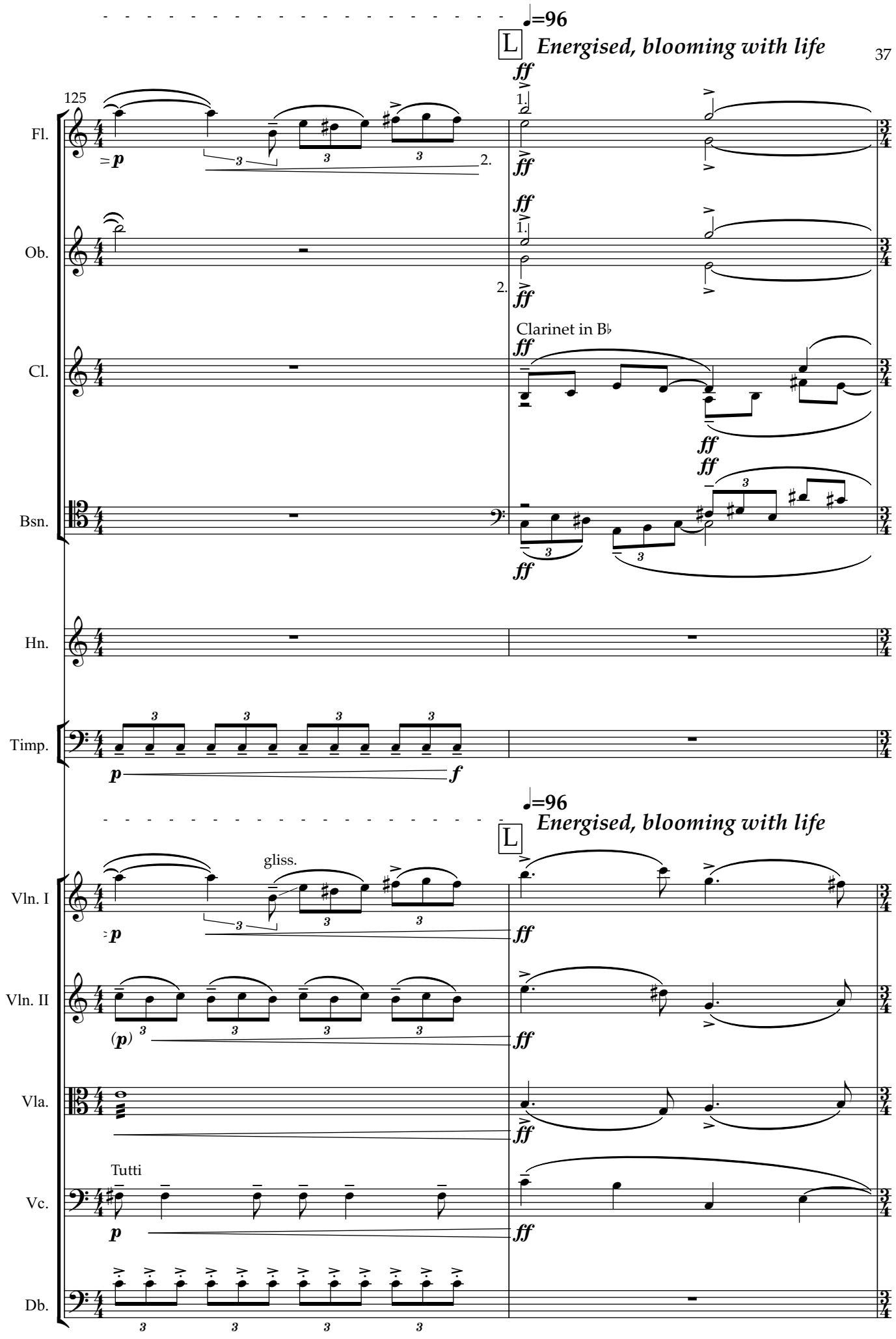

109
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
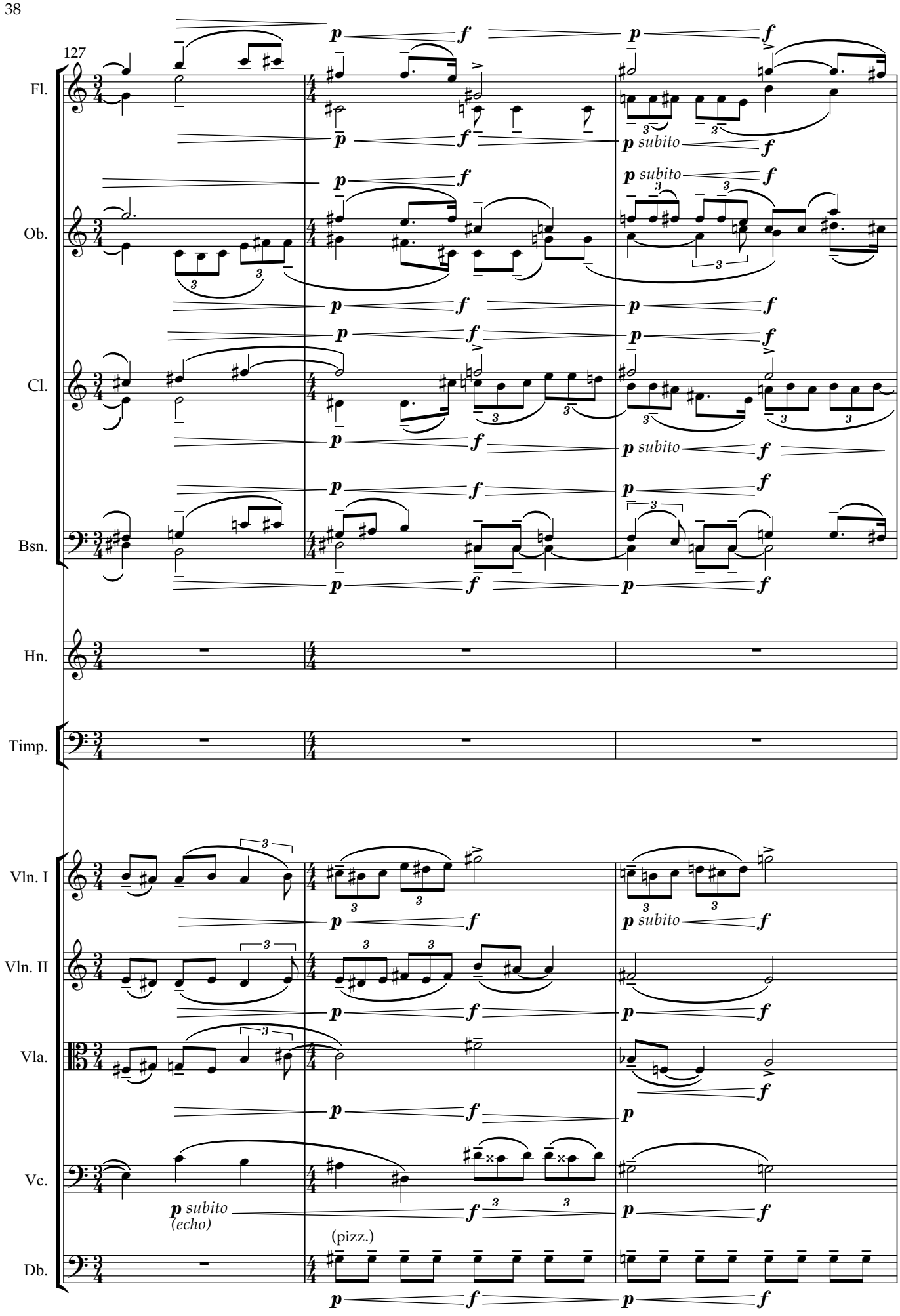

J
p
112
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
p f p f
3
3
Hn.
p
Timp.
3
sf
J
Vln. I
Vln. II
p
Vla.
p
Vc.
3
mp
3
Db.
p
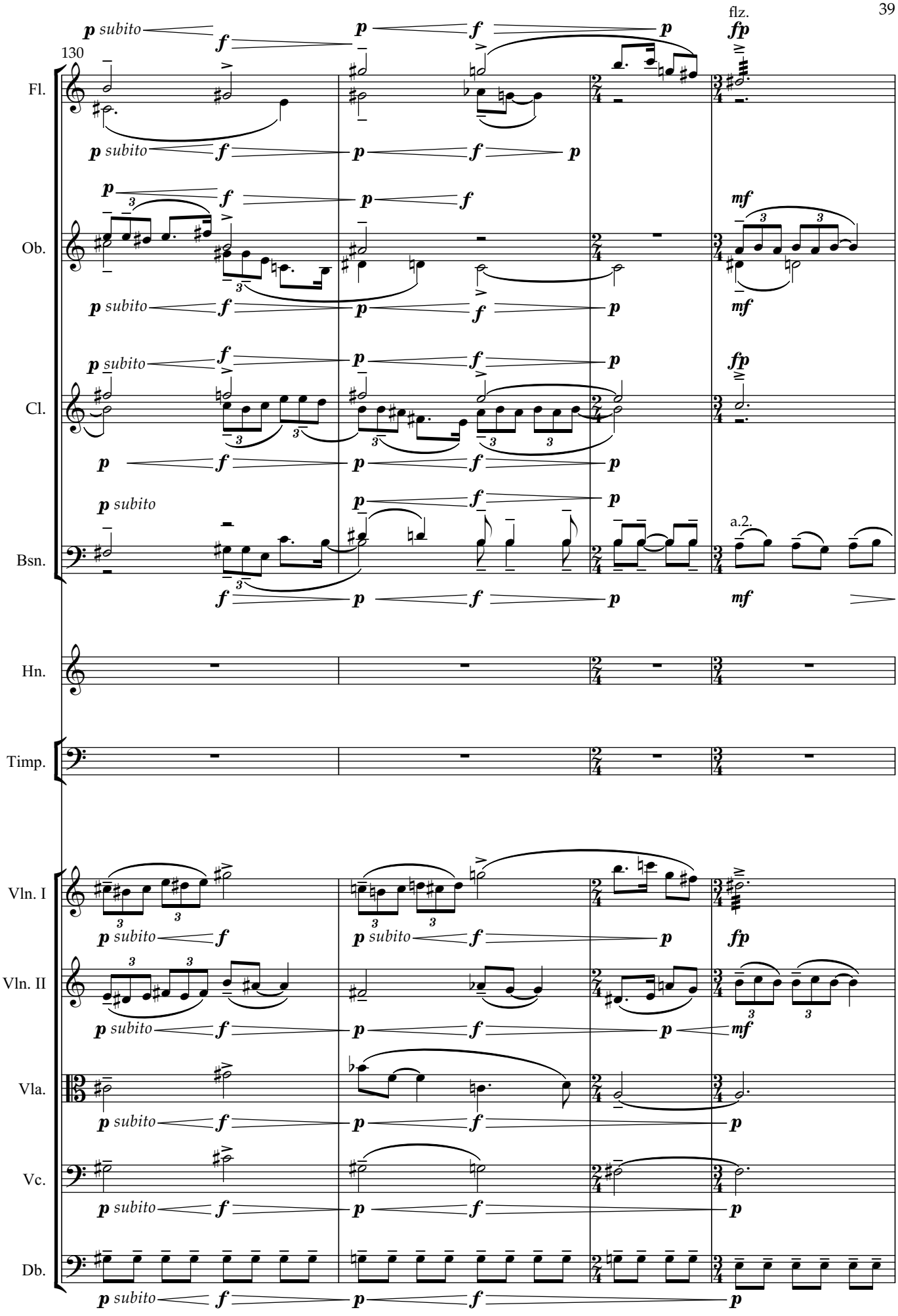

115
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Solo
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
agitato
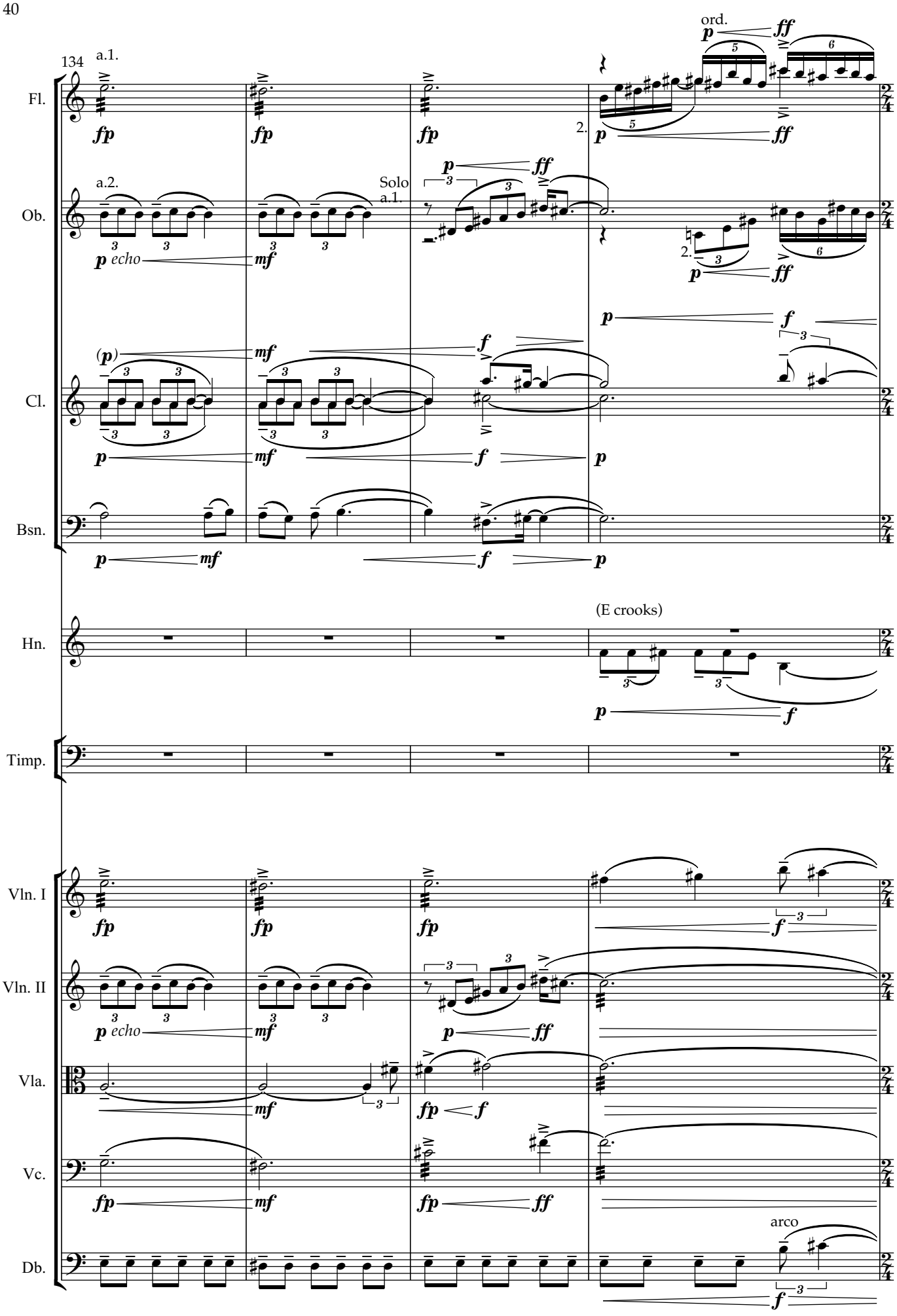

119
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
(solo)
pizz.
agitato
agitato
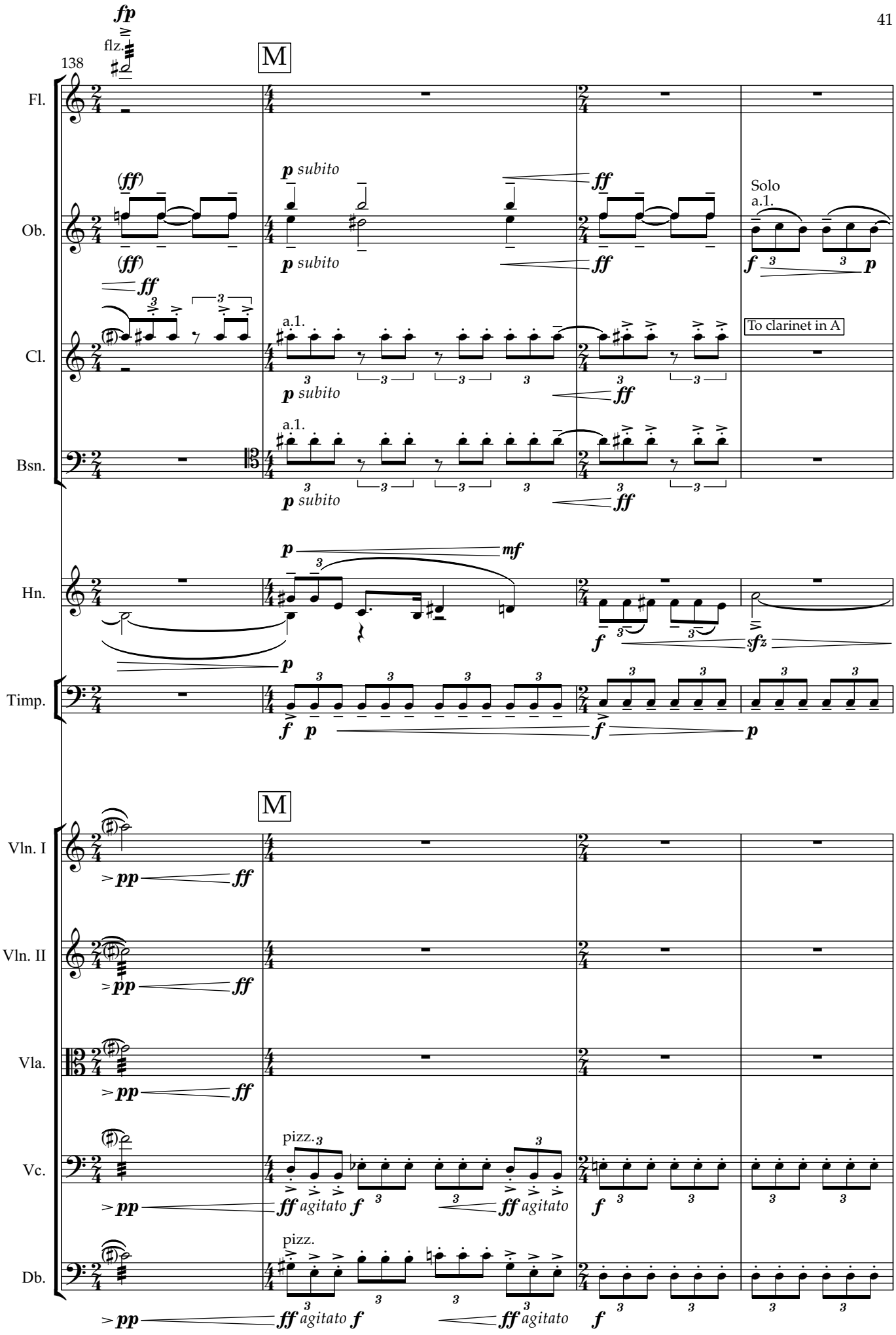

K
Capricious, full of life
accel.
122
a.1.
Fl.
Ob.
a.2.
To clarinet in B flat
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
K
Capricious, full of life
accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
agitato
agitato
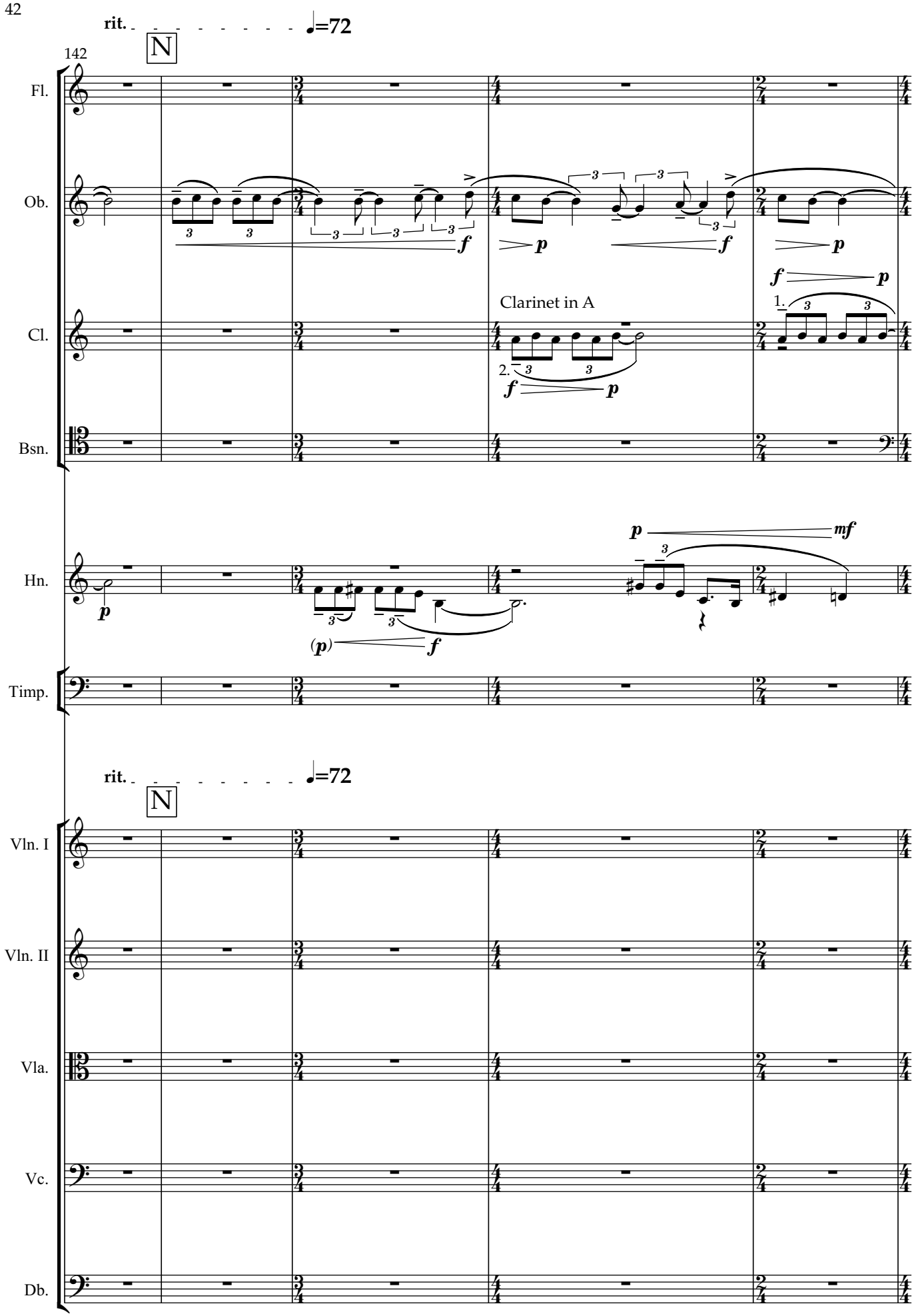

♩=96
L
Energised, blooming with life
125
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Clarinet in B♭
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
Tutti
p
ff
1.
2.
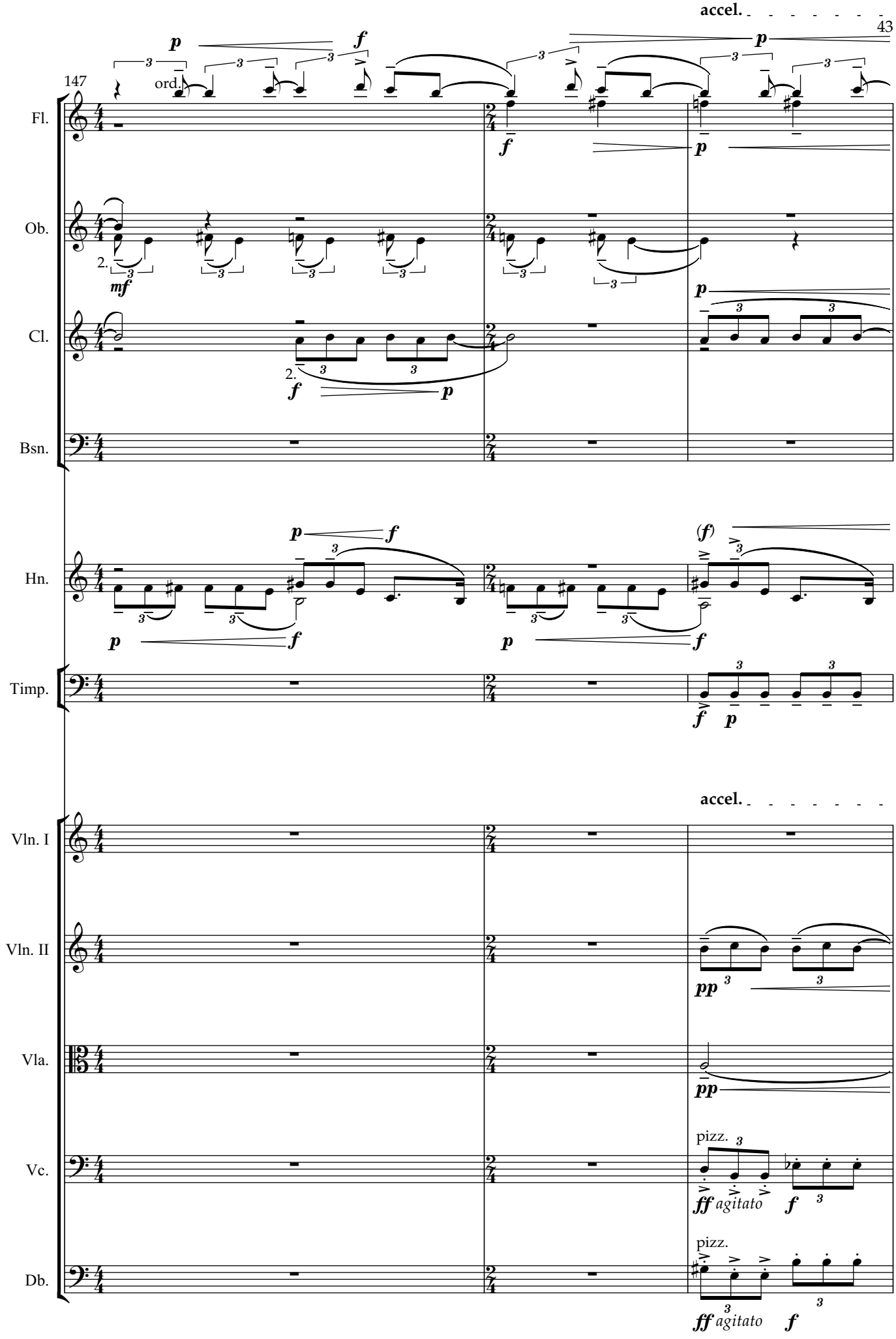

127
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p subito
(echo)
(pizz.)
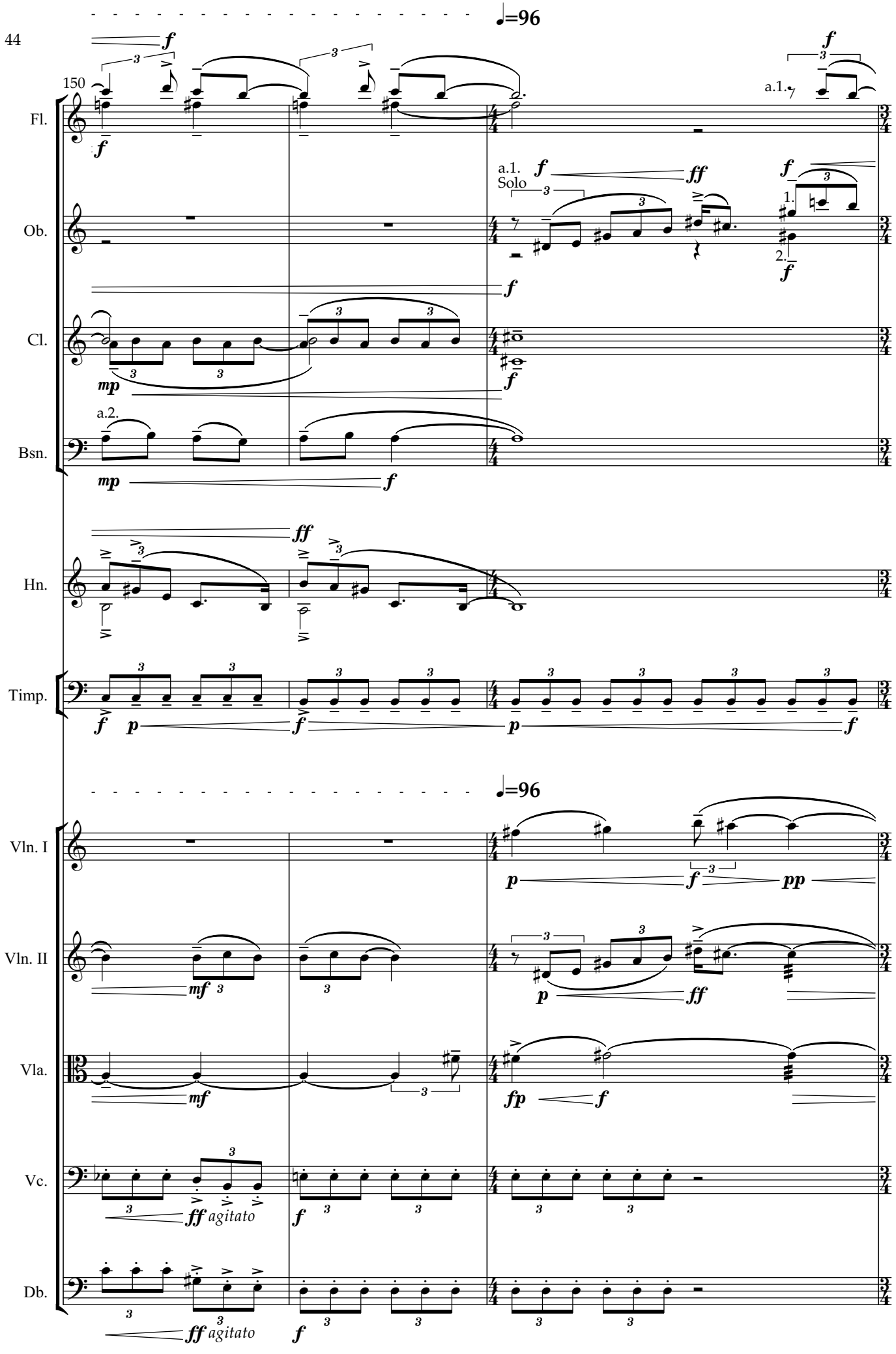

130
flz.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
a.2.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p subito
f
p
fp
mf
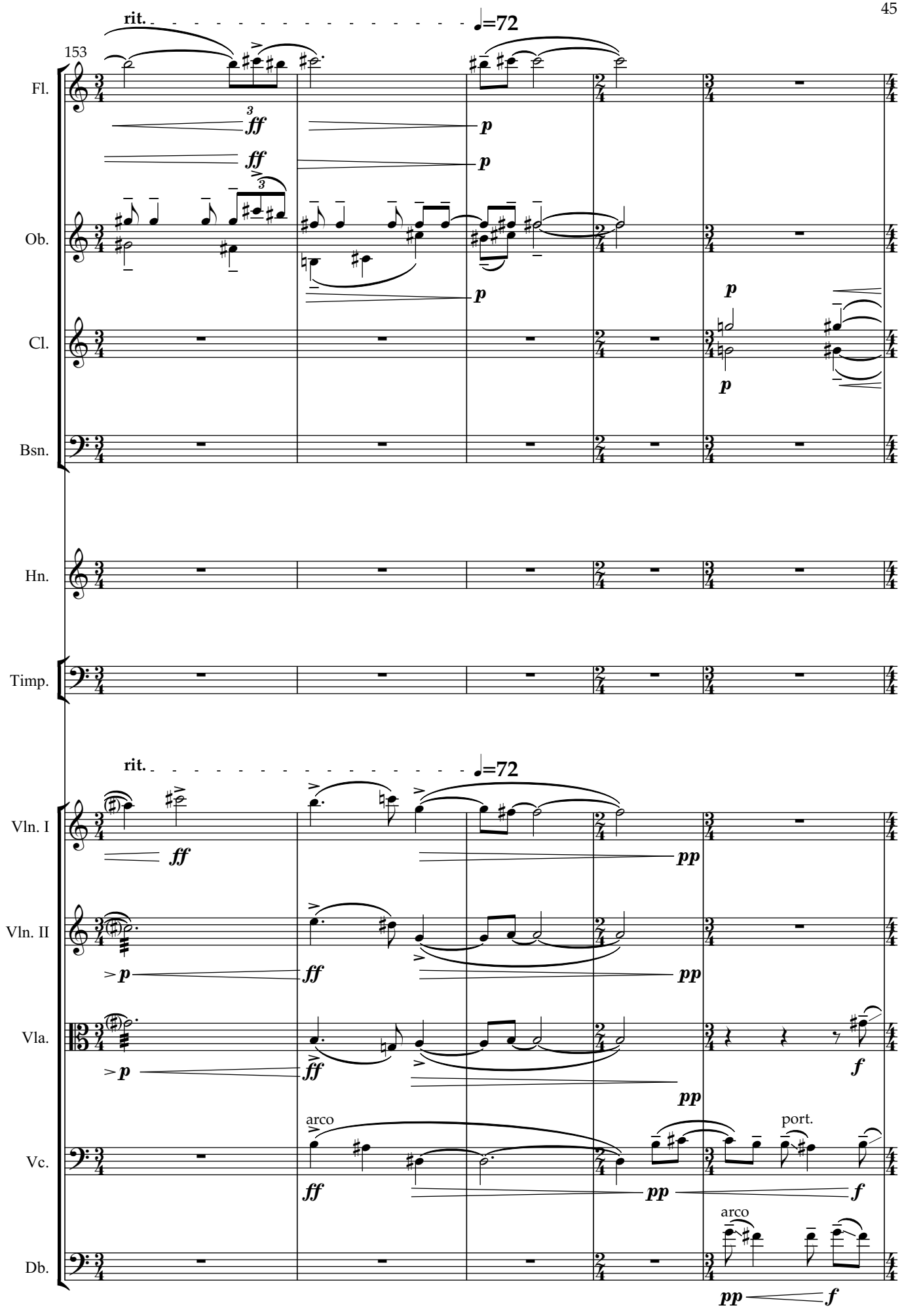

134
a.1.
Fl.
Ob.
a.2.
Solo
a.1.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
(E crooks)
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
ord.
arco
echo
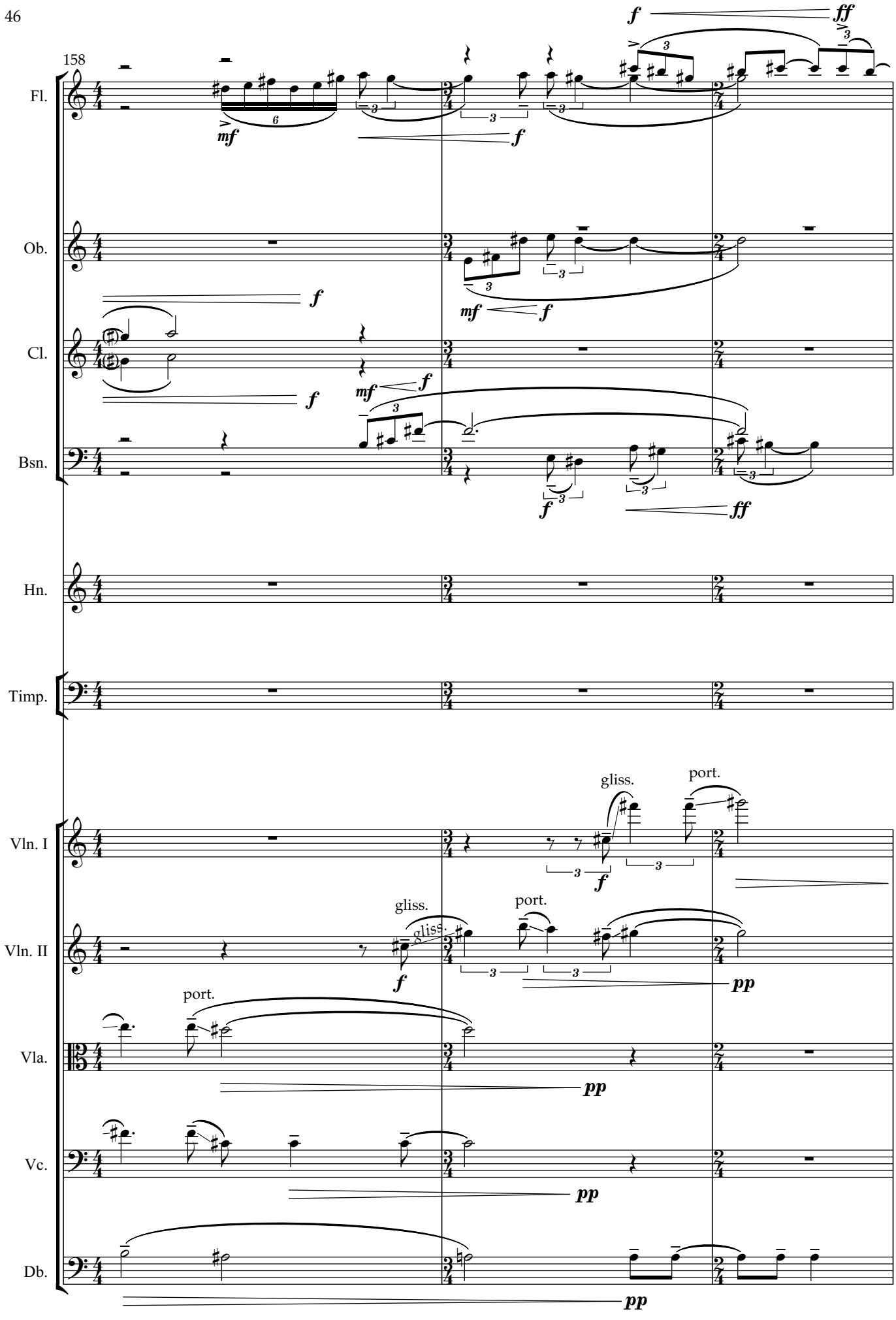

138
fp
flz.
M
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
(ff)
ff
p subito
a.1.
Solo
a.1.
To clarinet in A
p
mf
f
sfz
pp
pizz.
agitato


rit.
♩=72
N
142
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Clarinet in A
1.
2.
Hn.
Timp.
rit.
♩=72
N
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.


accel.
147
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
ord.
pizz.
agitato
accel.


♩=96
150
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
a.1.
Solo
a.2.
1.
2.
♩=96
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
agitato
agitato


rit.
♩=72
153
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
rit.
♩=72
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
arco
port.
arco


158
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
port.

O

Open, honest, expressive, as if petals unfurling, ice melting

pp

161

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Timp.

O

Open, honest, expressive, as if petals unfurling, ice melting

Vln. I

pp gliss. ***mf*** ***pp*** *sotto voce* ***mf*** 3 3 gliss.

Vln. II

port. ***mf*** gliss. ***pp*** *sotto voce* gliss. ***mf*** > ***pp*** *sotto voce*

Vla.
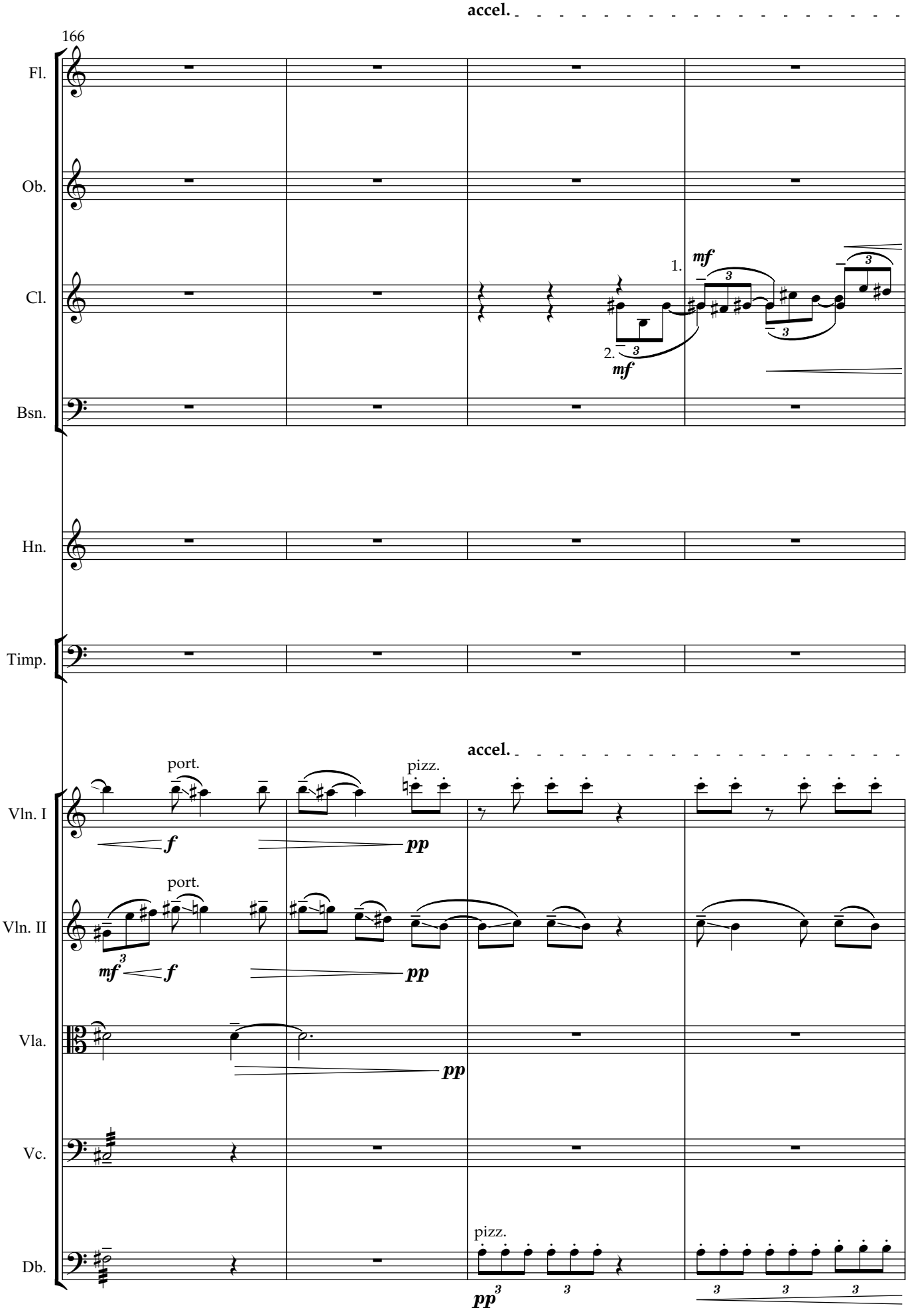
pp gliss. ***f*** *cantabile* gliss. port. 3
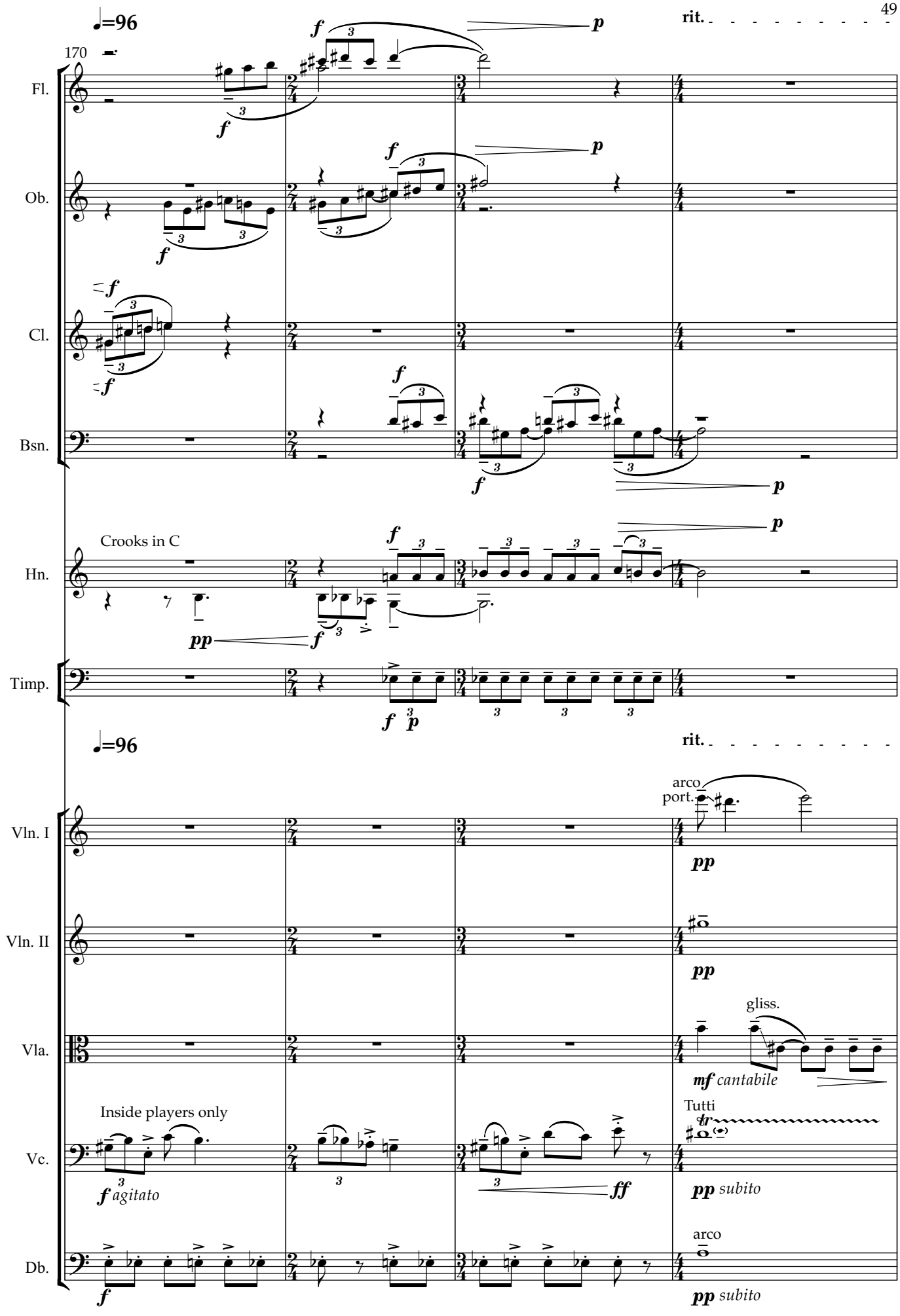
Vc.
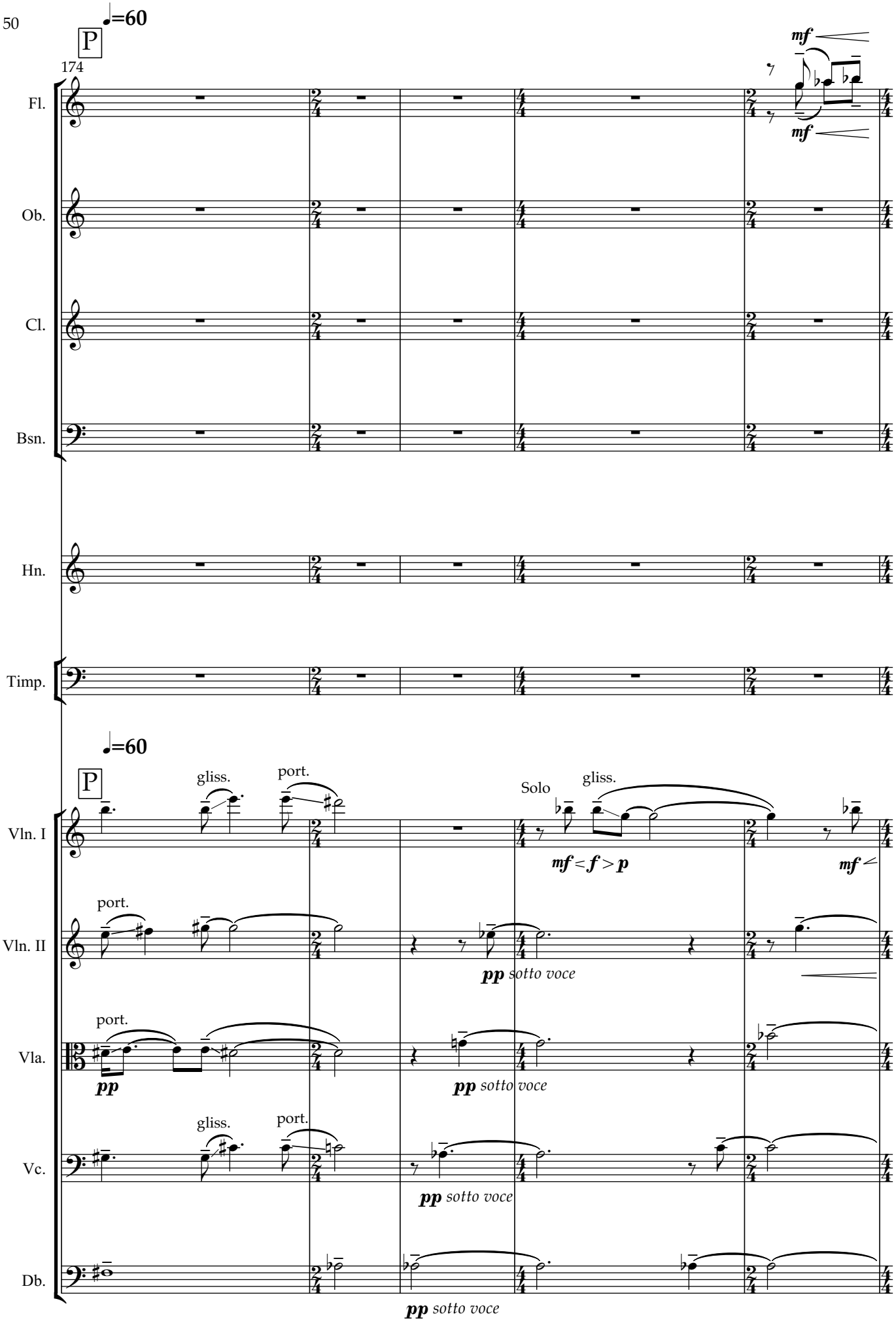
pp gliss. ***mf*** ***pp*** *sotto voce*
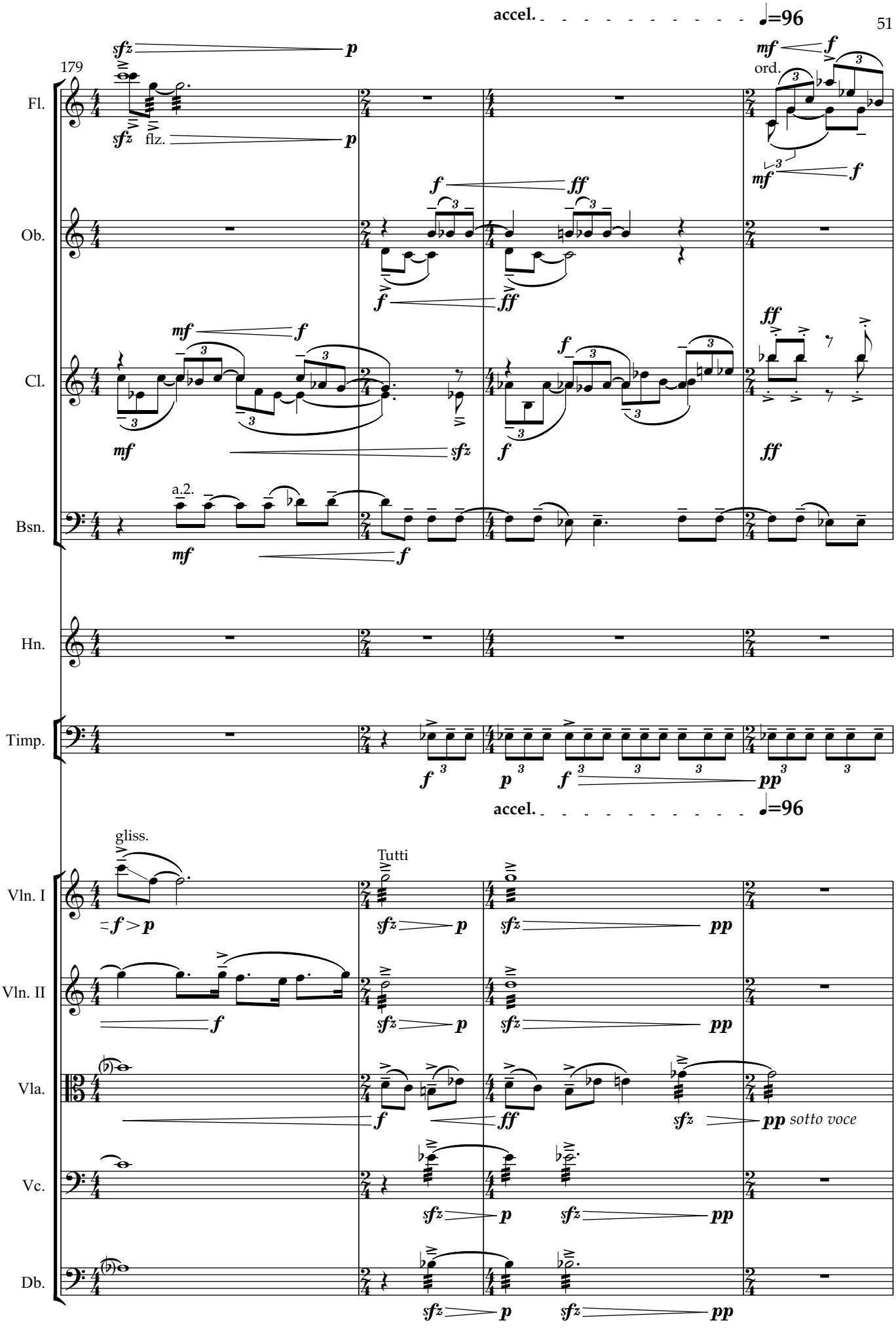
Db.
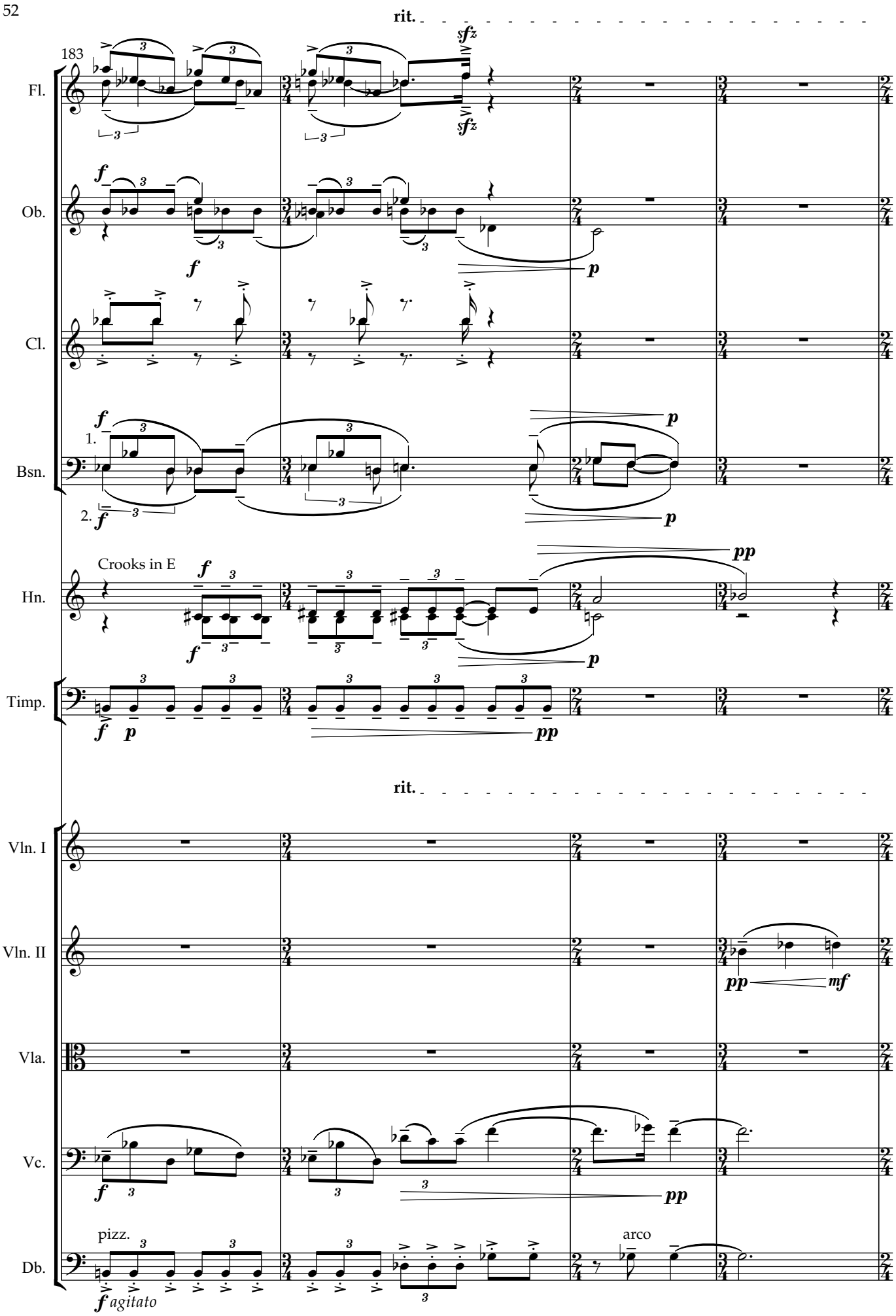
pp gliss. ***mf*** ***pp*** *sotto voce*
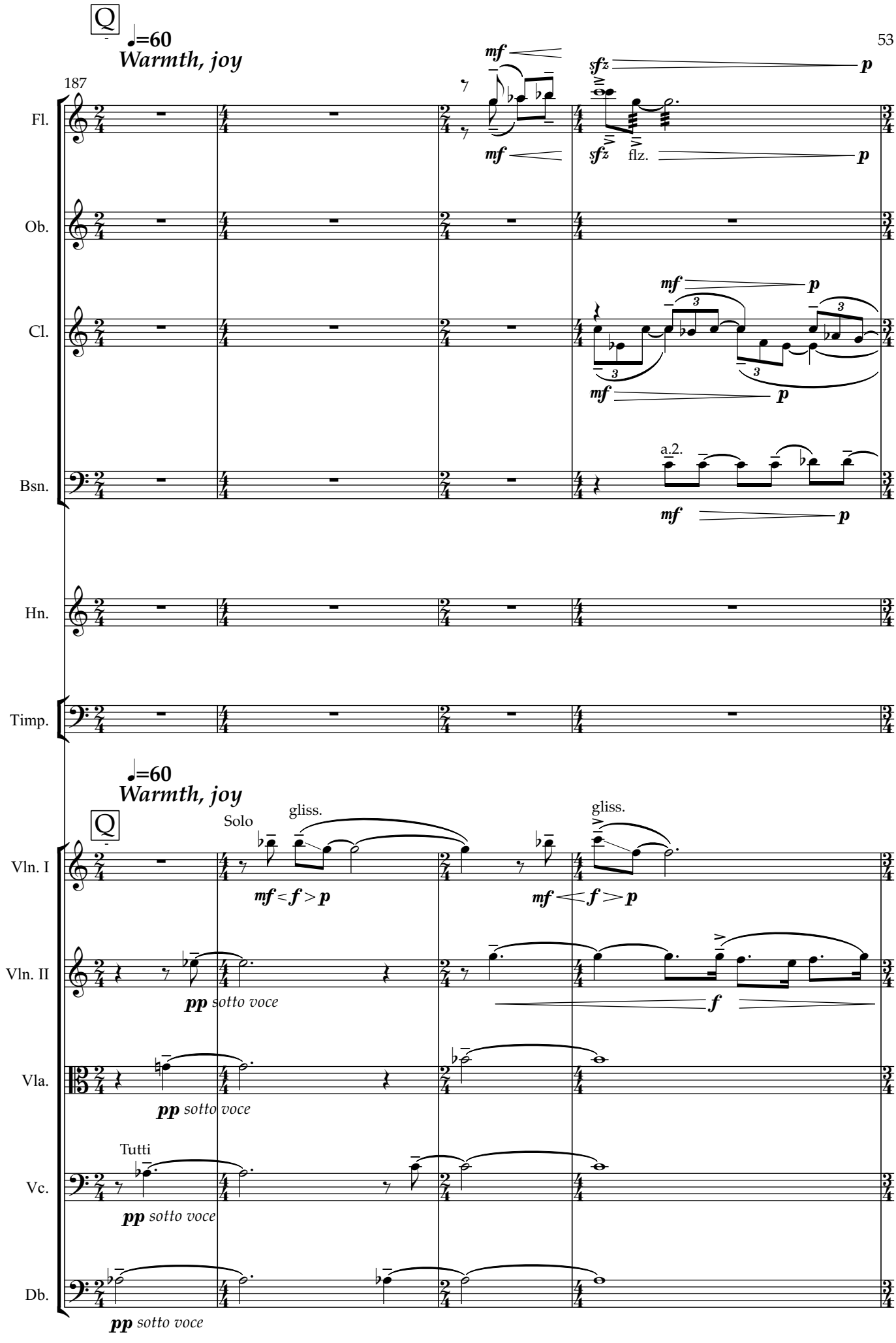

accel.
166
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
1.
2.
mf
mf
accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
port.
port.
pizz.
pizz.
f
pp
mf
f
pp
pp
pp
3
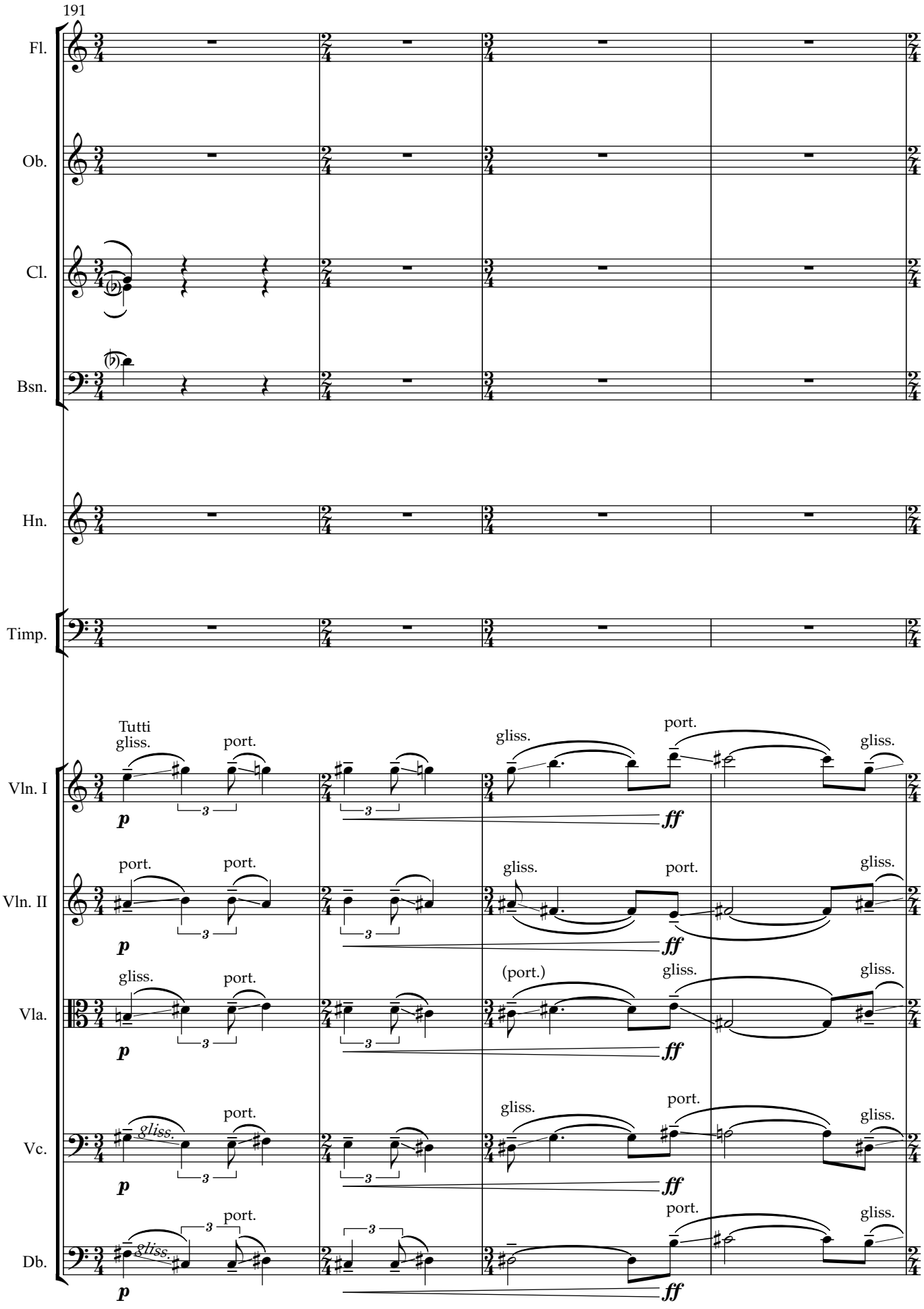

♩=96
rit.
170
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Crooks in C
Hn.
Timp.
♩=96
rit.
arco
port.
Vln. I
Vln. II
gliss.
Vla.
mf cantabile
Inside players only
Tutti
Vc.
f agitato
ff
pp subito
arco
Db.
pp subito
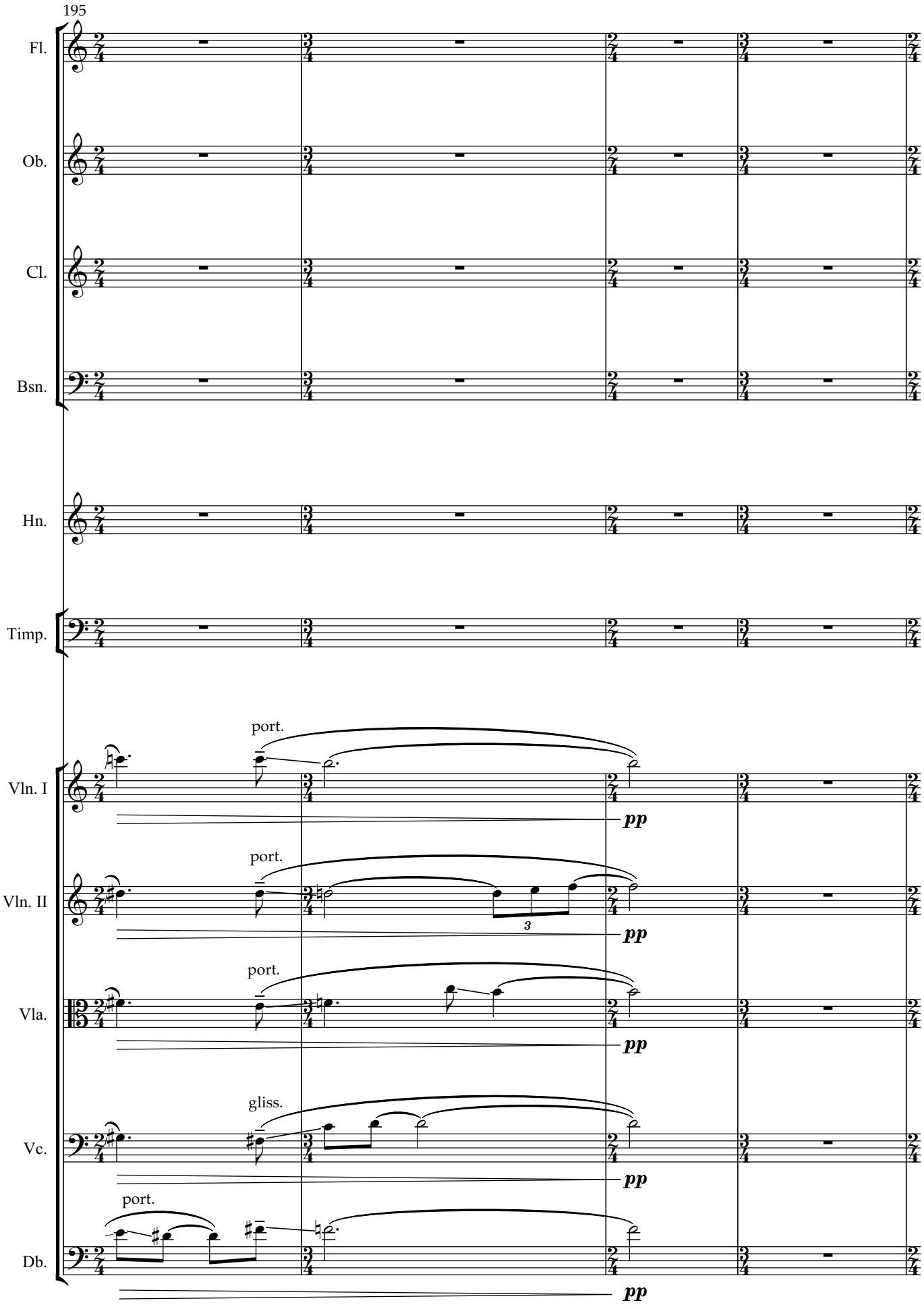

P
♩=60
174
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
mf
mf
P
♩=60
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
gliss.
port.
Solo
gliss.
mf < f > p
mf
port.
pp sotto voce
port.
pp
pp sotto voce
gliss.
port.
pp sotto voce
pp sotto voce
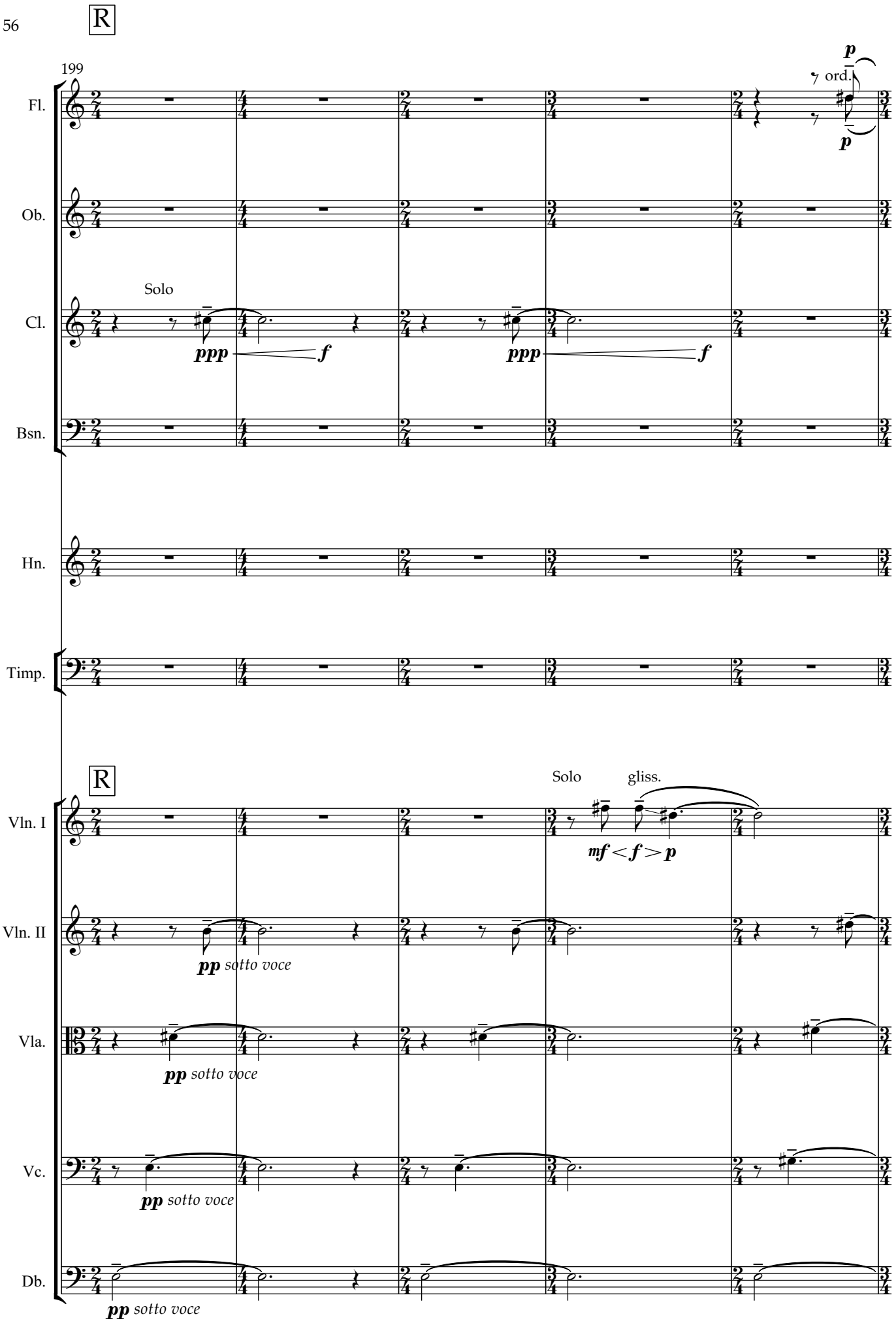

accel. ♩=96
179
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
ord.
flz.
a.2.
accel. ♩=96
gliss.
Tutti
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
sotto voce
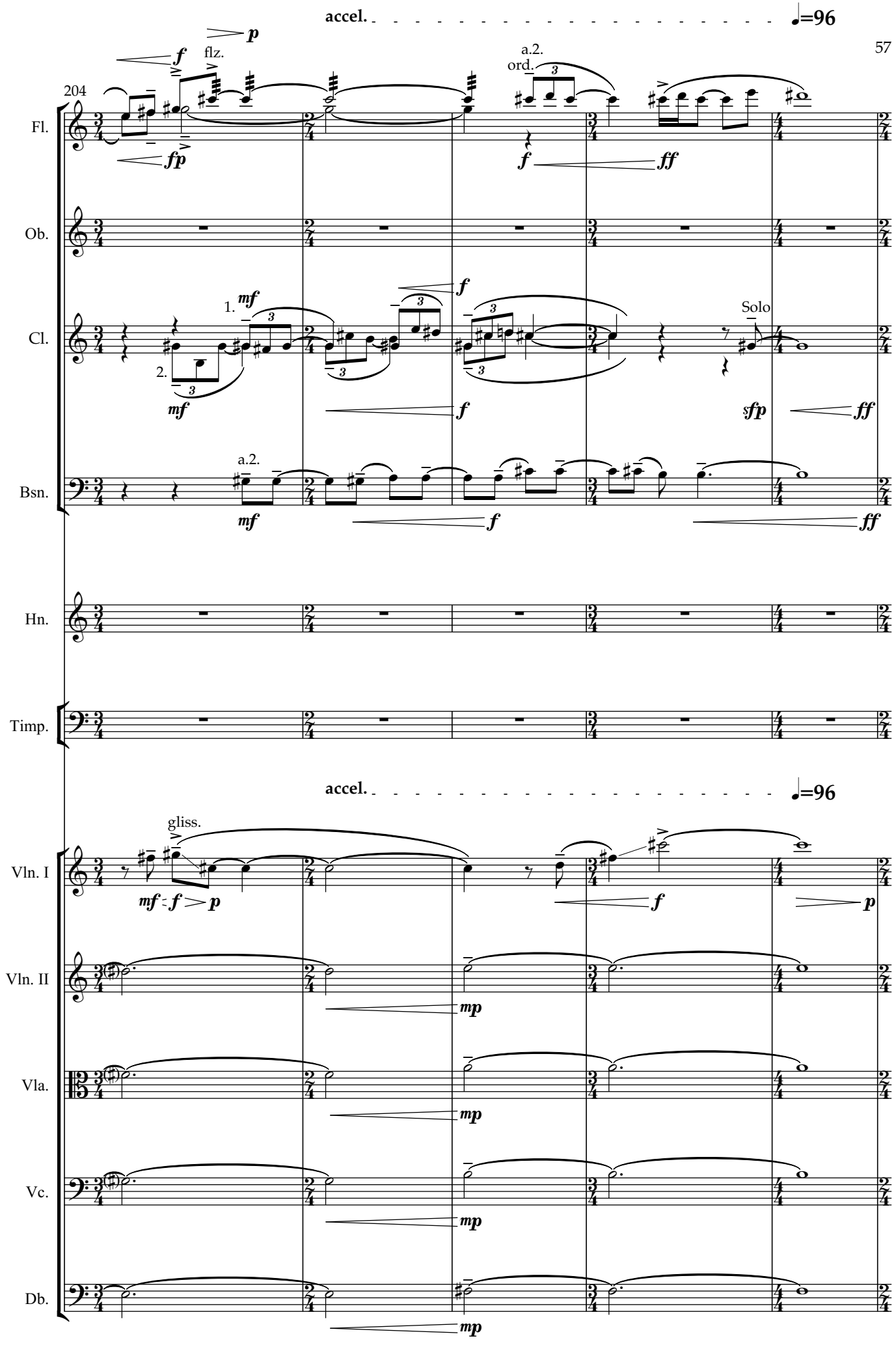

rit.
183
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
1.
2.
Crooks in E
Hn.
Timp.
rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
pizz.
arco
agitato


Q
♩=60
Warmth, joy
187
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
mf
sfz
p
flz.
a.2.
Q
♩=60
Warmth, joy
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Solo
gliss.
mf < f > p
pp sotto voce
f
Tutti


191
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Tutti
gliss.
port.
(port.)
p
ff
3


195
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
port.
port.
port.
gliss.
port.
pp
pp
pp
pp
pp
3


R
199
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
Solo
ppp
f
ppp
f
p
ord.
p
R
Solo
gliss.
mf < f > p
pp sotto voce
pp sotto voce
pp sotto voce
pp sotto voce


accel.
♩=96
204
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
flz.
a.2.
ord.
1.
2.
Solo
a.2.
accel.
♩=96
gliss.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

S ♩=60

As if the world is waking up (again), with renewed energy
Magical, mysterious, effervescent

209

Fl.

Ob.

Solo

Cl.

Bsn.

(E crooks)

Hn.

Timp.

S ♩=60

As if the world is waking up (again), with renewed energy
Magical, mysterious, effervescent

Vln. I
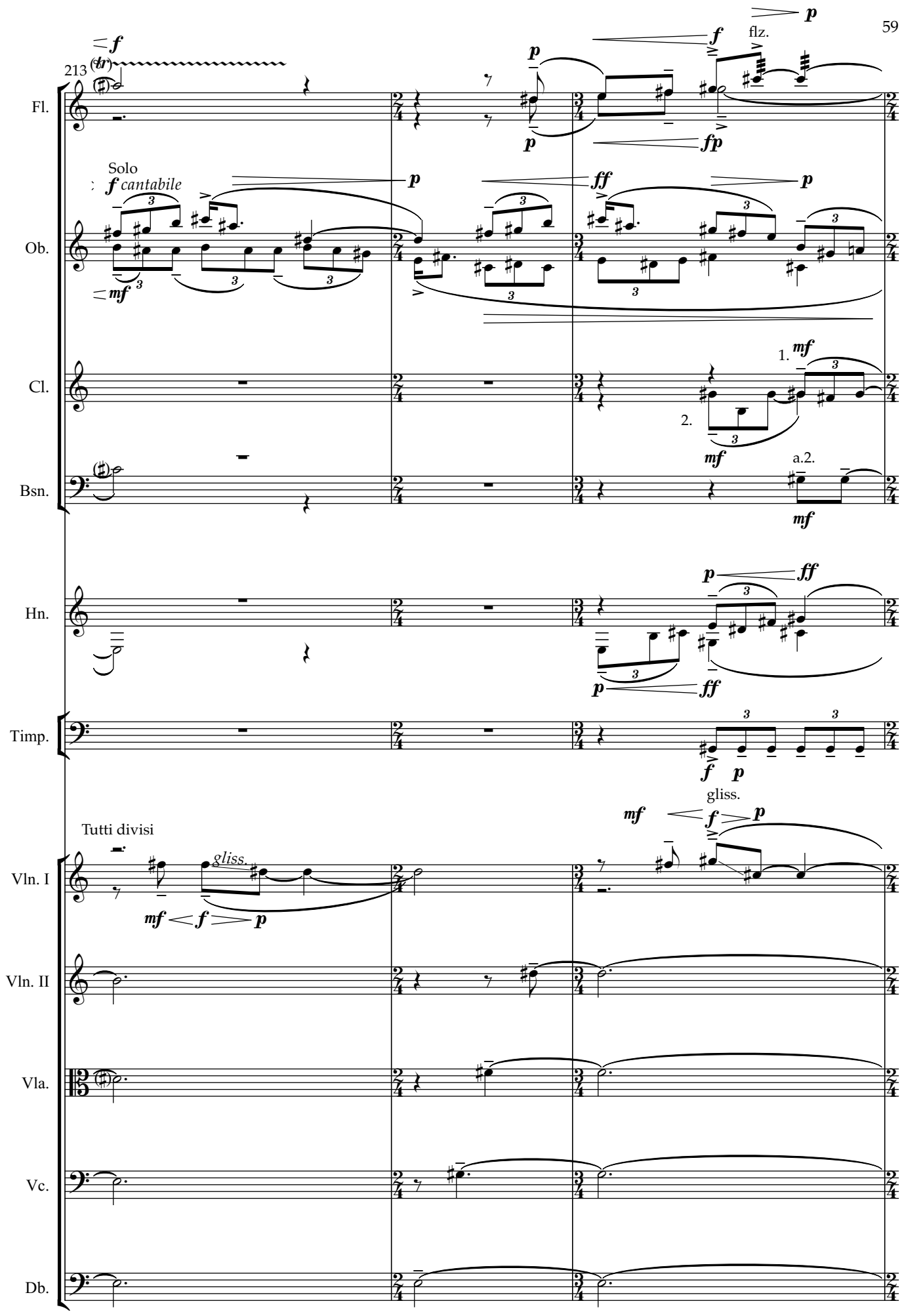
Vln. II
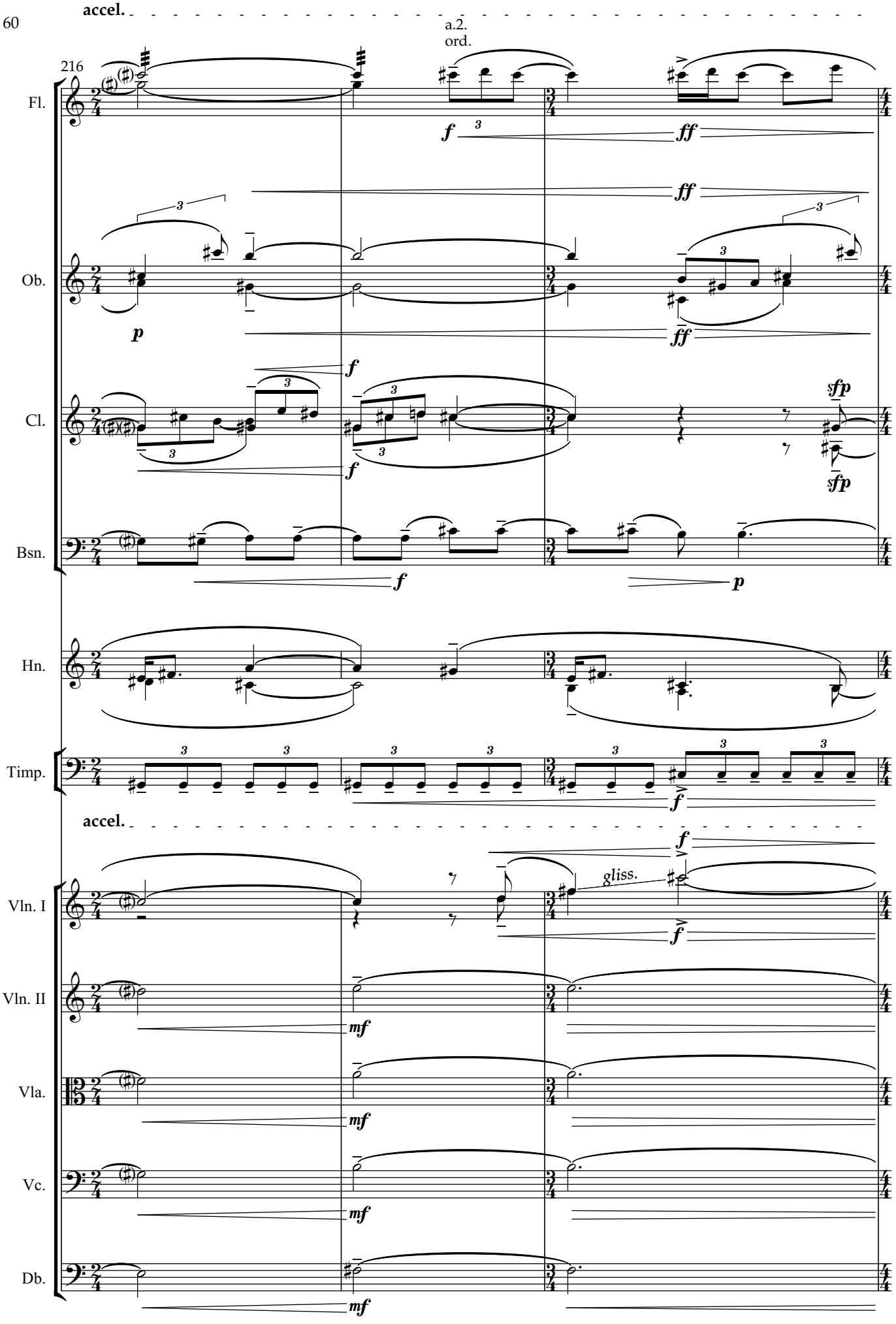
Vla.
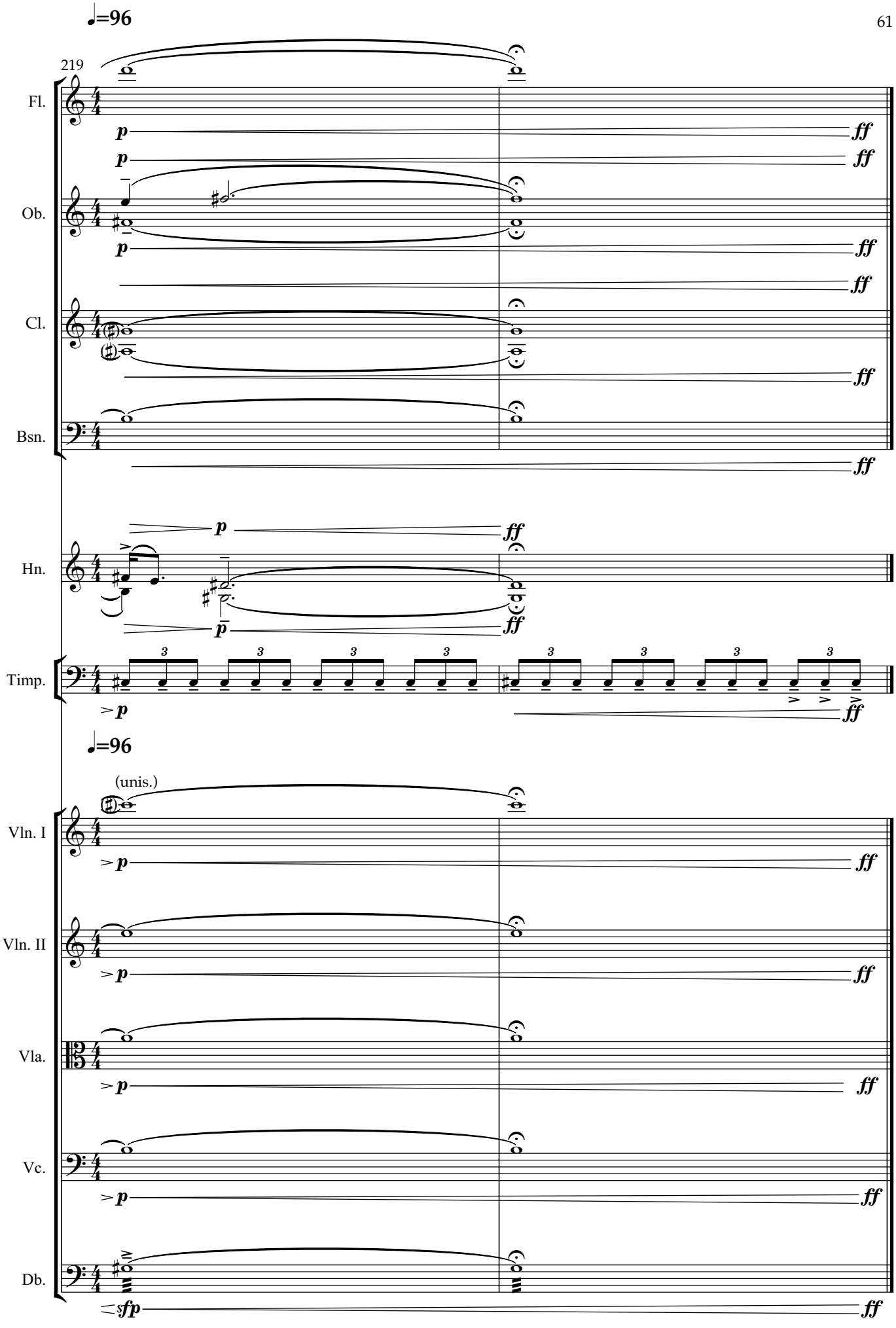
Vc.

Db.

sotto voce


213
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
flz.
Solo
cantabile
1.
2.
a.2.
gliss.
Tutti divisi


accel.
a.2.
ord.
216
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
accel.
gliss.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.


♩=96
219
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Timp.
♩=96
(unis.)
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p
ff
sfp

Electra Perivolaris

ISOLA

A Song Cycle for Soprano and Piano

Prologue - All the Harbour Could Not Hold

I. Lethe - Oblivion

II. Following Eurydice

III. Departure

IV. Entre Chien et Loup

Epilogue - All the Harbour Could Not Hold

ISOLA, a song cycle for soprano and piano, setting the words of John Perivolaris.

First Performance
Workshopped during the Oxford Lieder Festival 2022 and the Oxford International Song Festival 2025 by Katie MacDonald and pianist Thomas Eeckhout.

The full cycle received its premiere at **sound***festival* in a lunchtime concert recital given by Héloïse Bernard and Electra Perivolaris at the piano.
Cowdray Concert Hall, Aberdeen, Scotland.
23rd October 2025.

Duration
Full song cycle - c. 25'00"
Prologue - c. 3'00"
I. Lethe-Oblivion - c.6'00"
II. Following Eurydice - c. 2'00"
III. Departure - c. 5'00"
IV. Entre Chien et Loup - c. 2'00"
Epilogue - c.2'00"
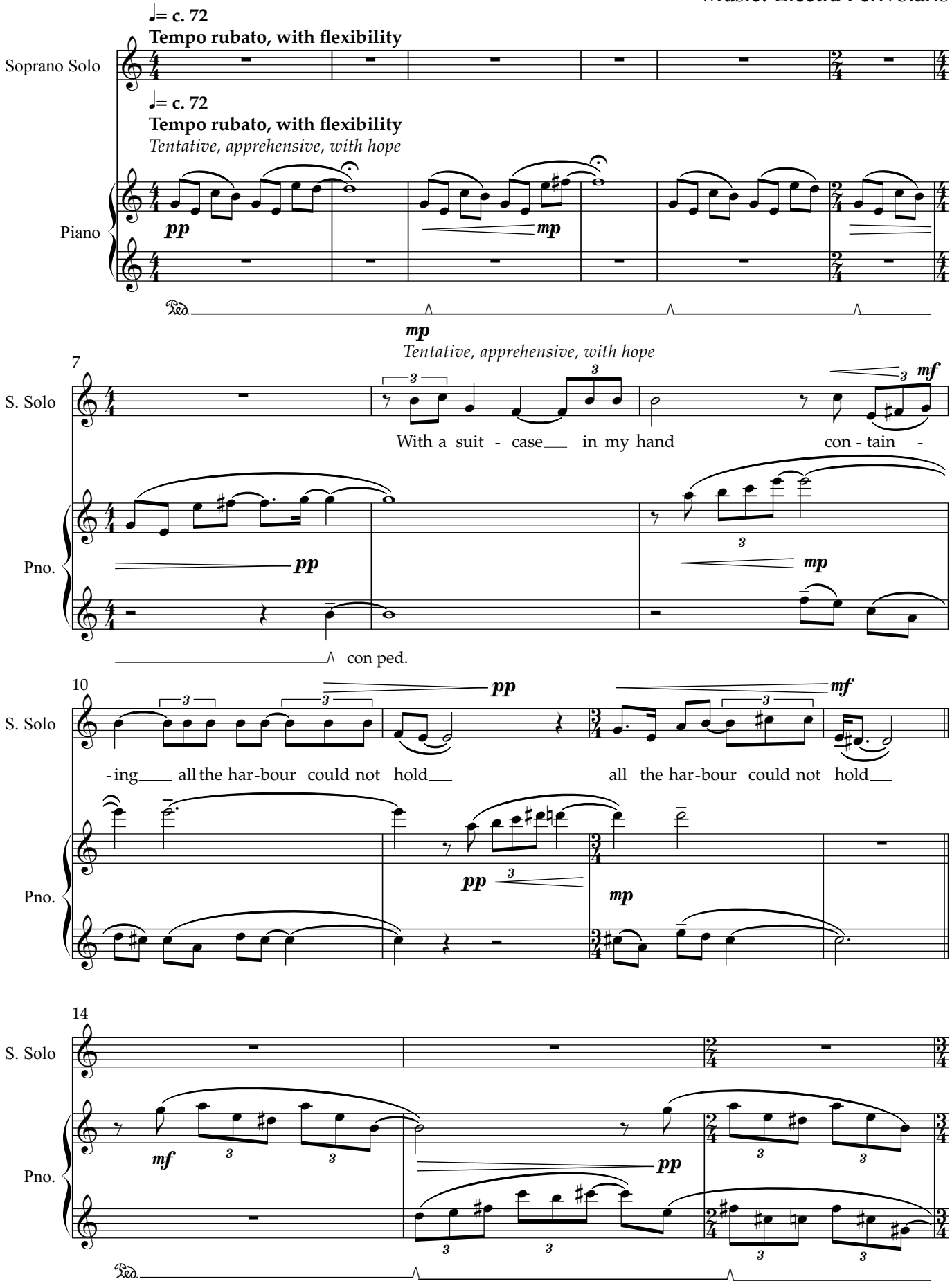
Programme Note
This new song cycle has been shaped by a series of images taken by photographer and writer John Perivolaris at the opposite ends of Europe, in the Western Isles of Scotland and the islands of the Eastern Aegean, acknowledging the fact that our lives are defined by our family origins in the Greek island of Chios and the Scottish island of Arran. The image series was begun in April - May 2020, in a period of enforced isolation on Arran during the first coronavirus lockdown in the UK. This led John to find parallels between islands at the edges of Europe to the point where in this work they merge to become the Island that defines his experience and imagination. John wrote a series of five poems to accompany the photographs that comprise ISOLA, a series that reflects on the island as an existential condition, in the context of European migration. The texts also provide the lyrics for this song cycle I have composed under the same title. Drawing on the island themes of the images and text, the composition is influenced by the way that disapora can enable the creation of musical forms which challenge notions of binary musical and personal identities. The composition explores the entanglement of these myriadic identities whilst challenging the notion of islands as spaces of detachment and distance, expressing them instead as places of inhabitation and immersion.

(Electra Perivolaris, 2025)
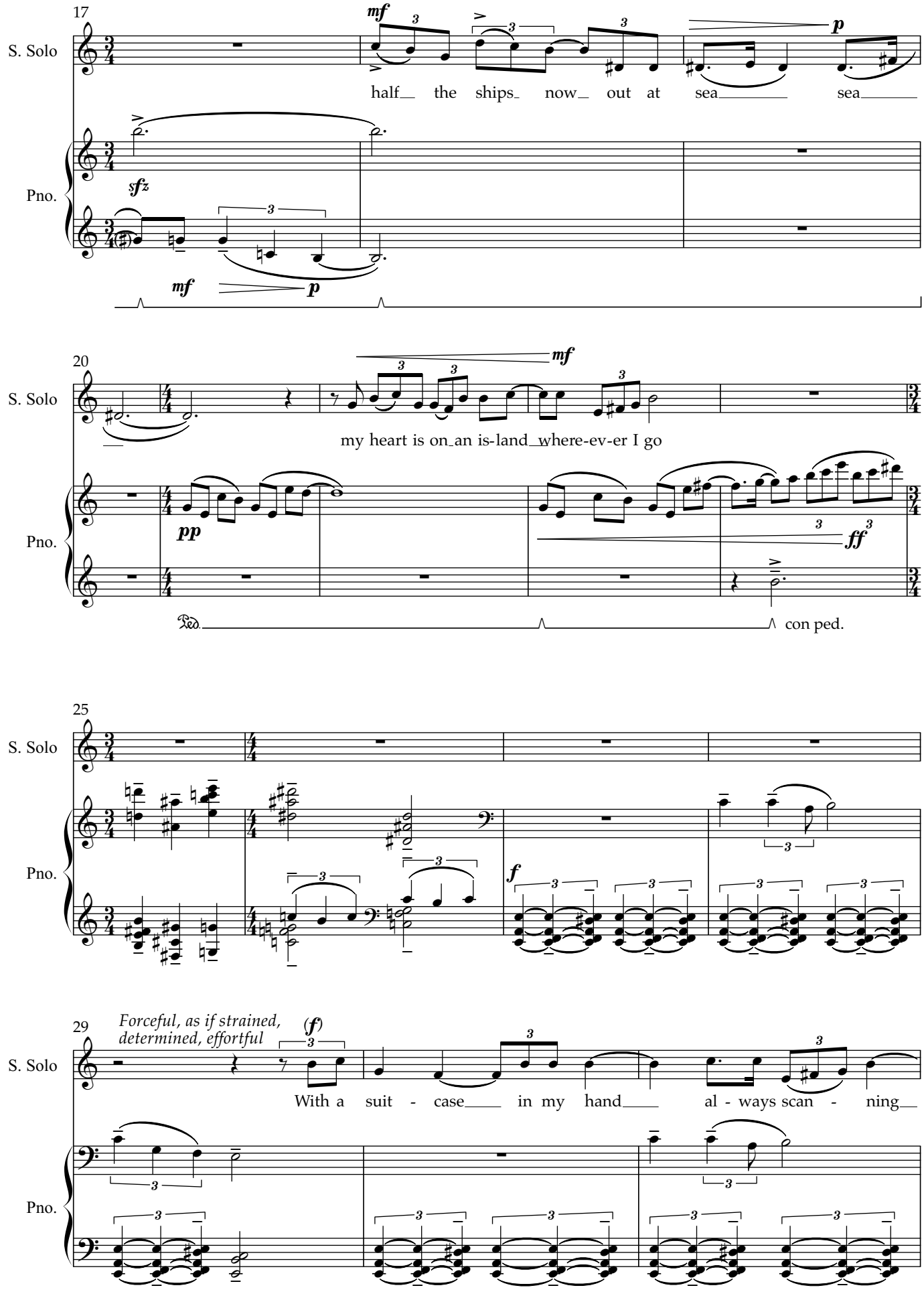
Prologue
All the Harbour Could Not Hold
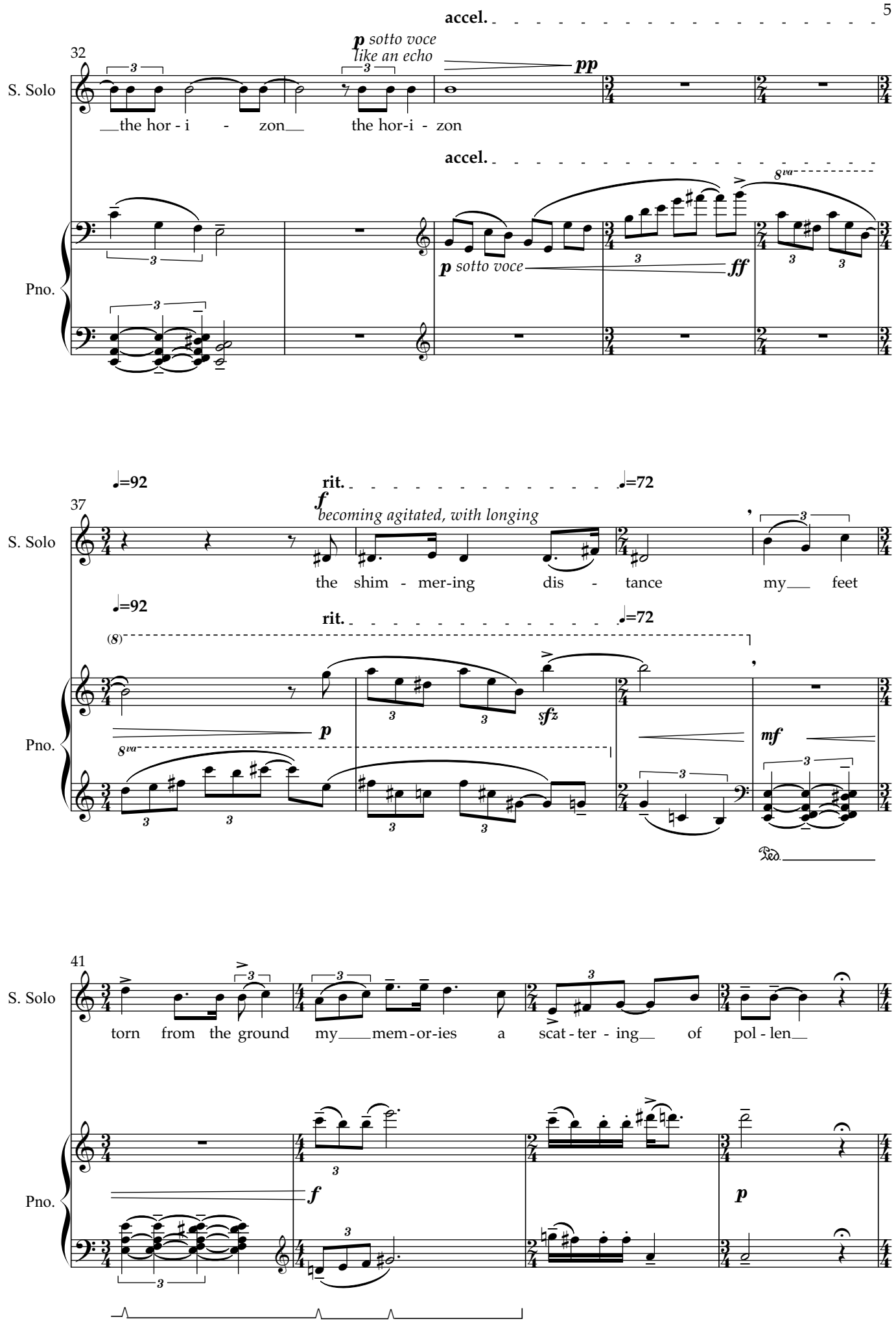
Words: John Perivolaris
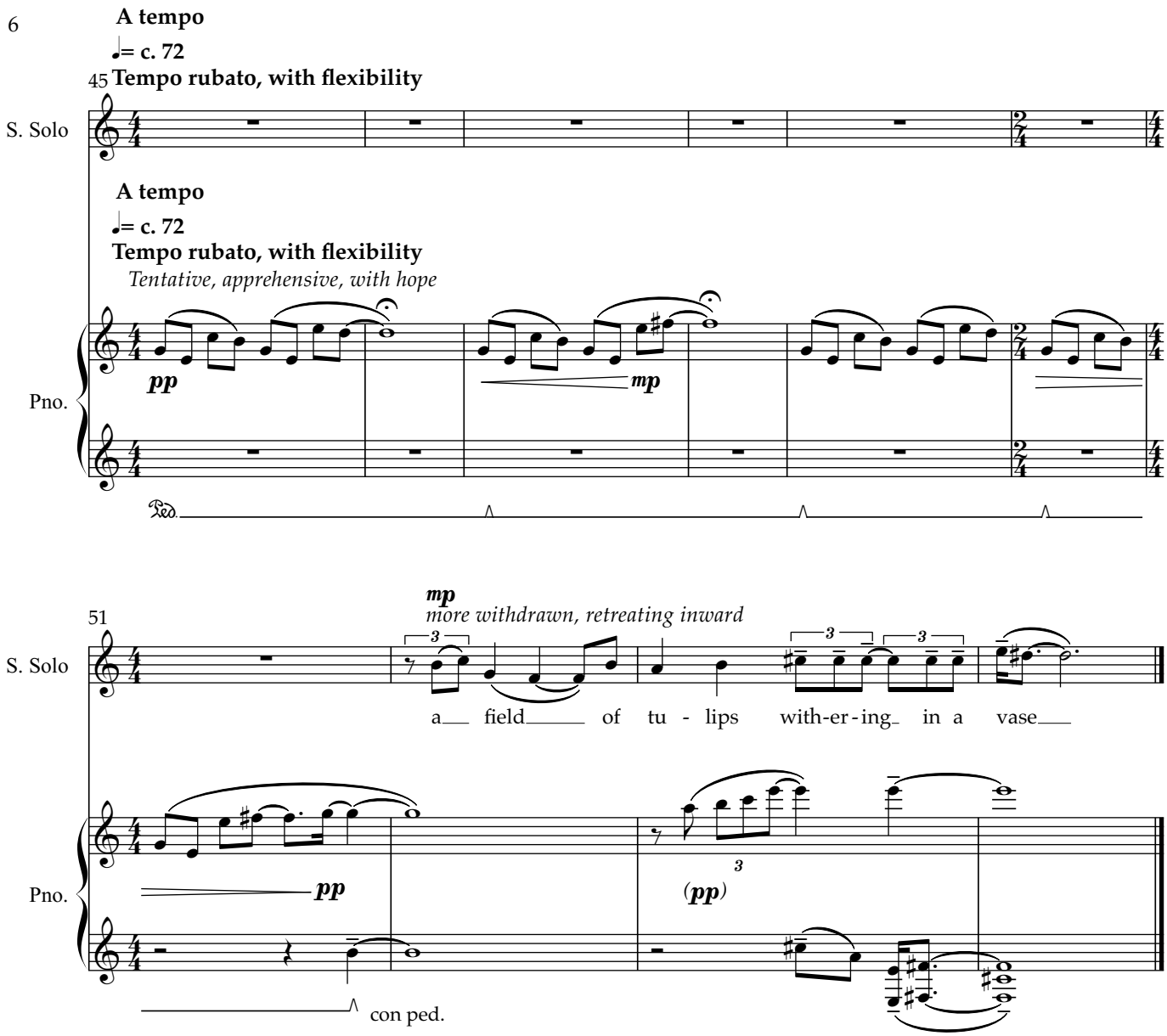
Music: Electra Perivolaris



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17
S. Solo
Pno.
mf
p
half the ships now out at sea sea
sfz
mf
p
20
S. Solo
Pno.
mf
my heart is on an is-land where-ev-er I go
pp
ff
con ped.
25
S. Solo
Pno.
f
29
Forceful, as if strained, determined, effortful
(f)
S. Solo
Pno.
With a suit - case in my hand al - ways scan - ning
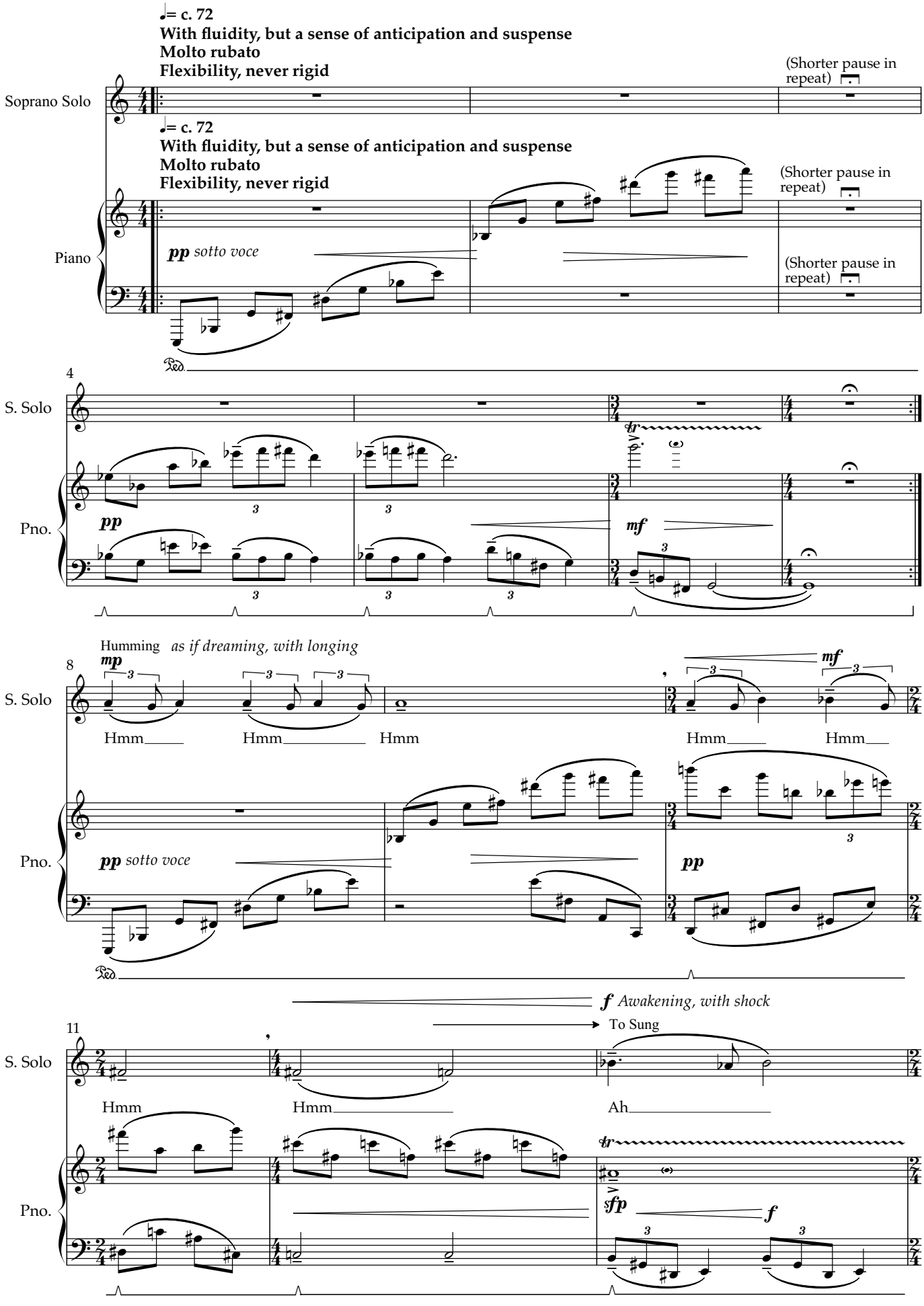

accel.
32
S. Solo
p sotto voce
like an echo
pp
the hor - i - zon
the hor-i - zon
accel.
8va
Pno.
p sotto voce
ff
♩=92
rit.
♩=72
37
f
becoming agitated, with longing
the shim - mer-ing dis - tance my feet
♩=92
rit.
♩=72
(8)
p
sfz
8va
mf
Ped
41
S. Solo
torn from the ground my mem-or-ies a scat - ter - ing of pol - len
Pno.
f
p


A tempo
♩= c. 72
45 Tempo rubato, with flexibility
S. Solo
A tempo
♩= c. 72
Tempo rubato, with flexibility
Tentative, apprehensive, with hope
Pno.
pp
mp
Ped.
mp
more withdrawn, retreating inward
51
S. Solo
a field of tu - lips with-er - ing in a vase
Pno.
pp
(pp)
con ped.
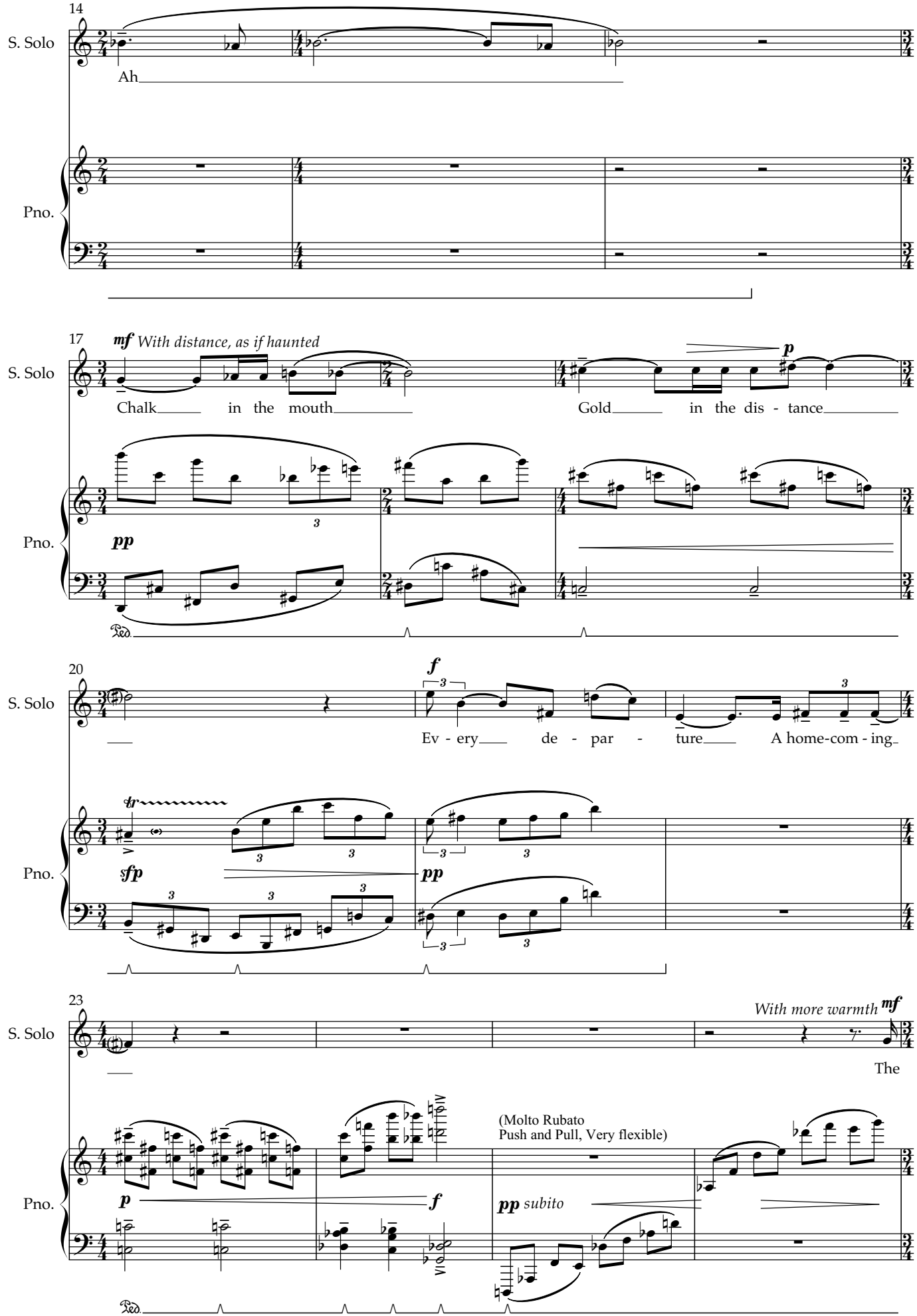
I. Lethe - Oblivion
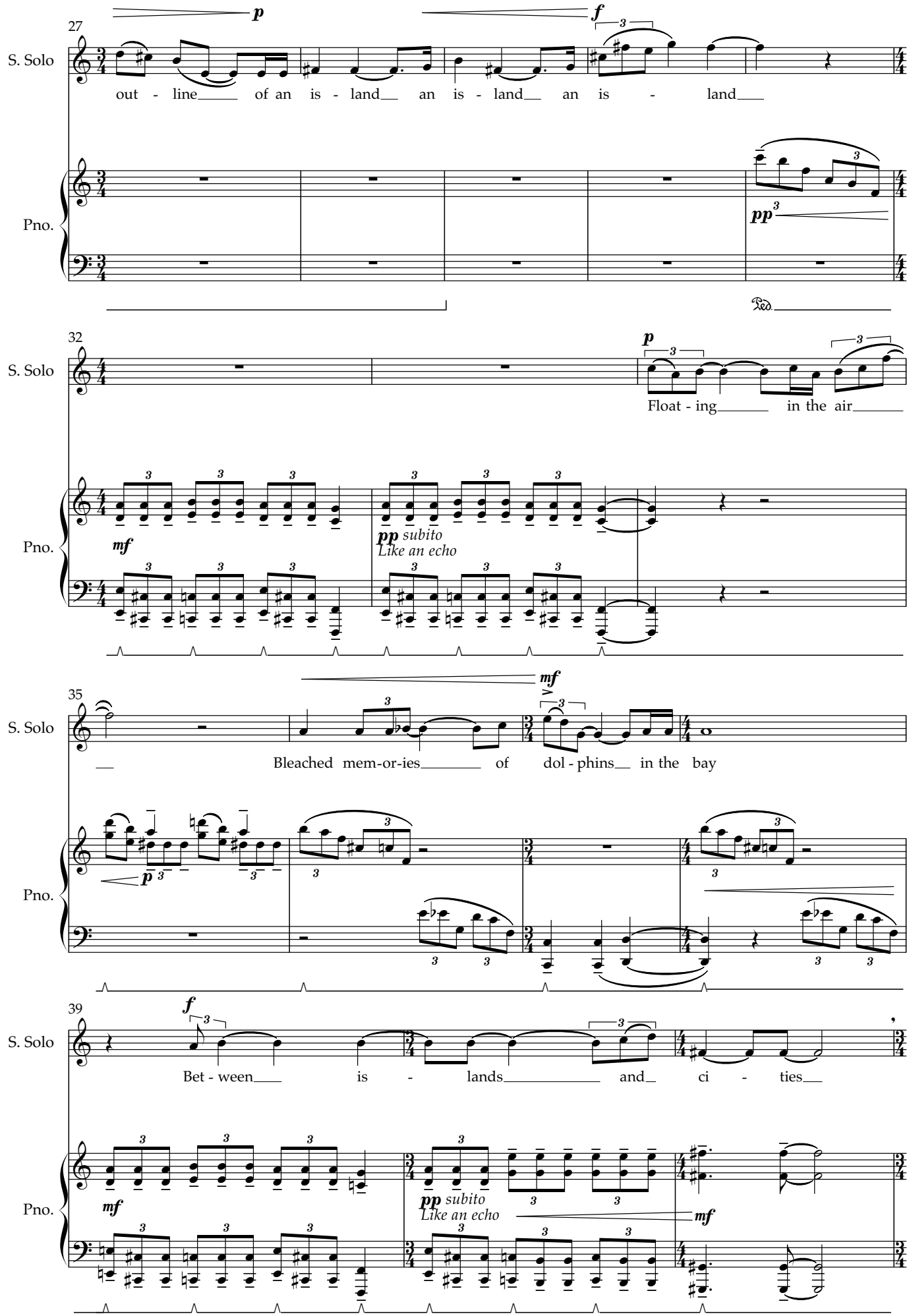
Words: John Perivolaris
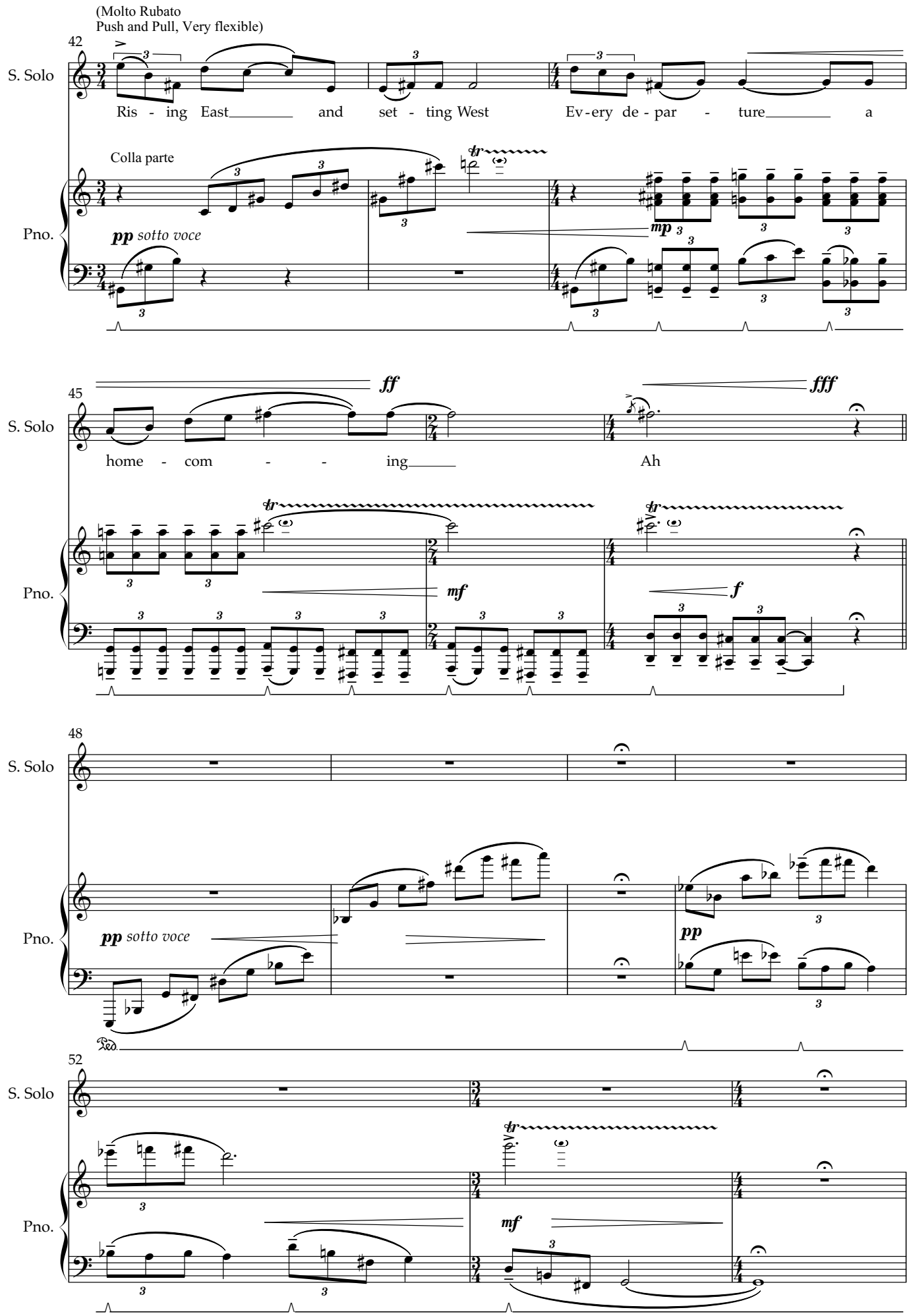
Music: Electra Perivolaris
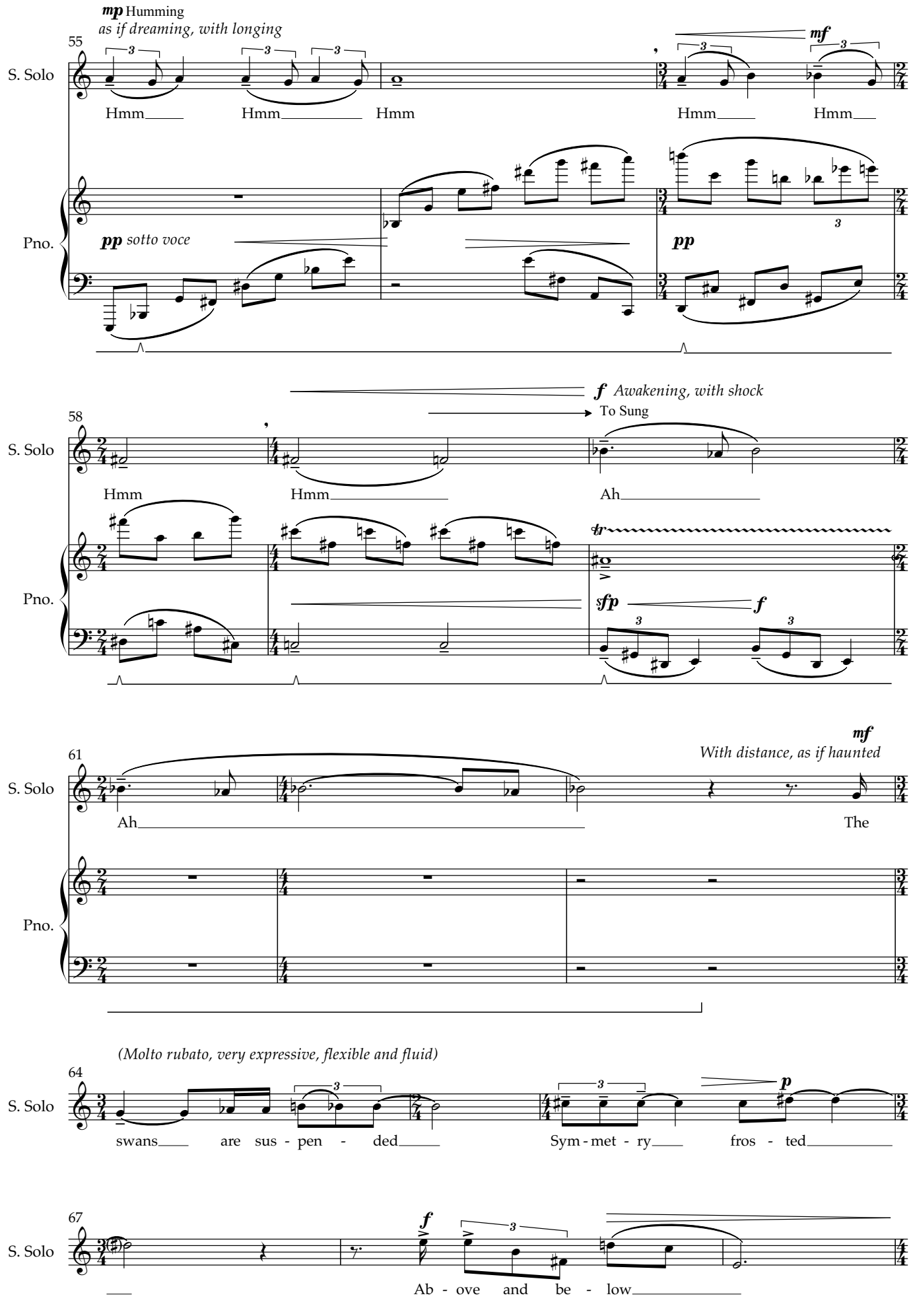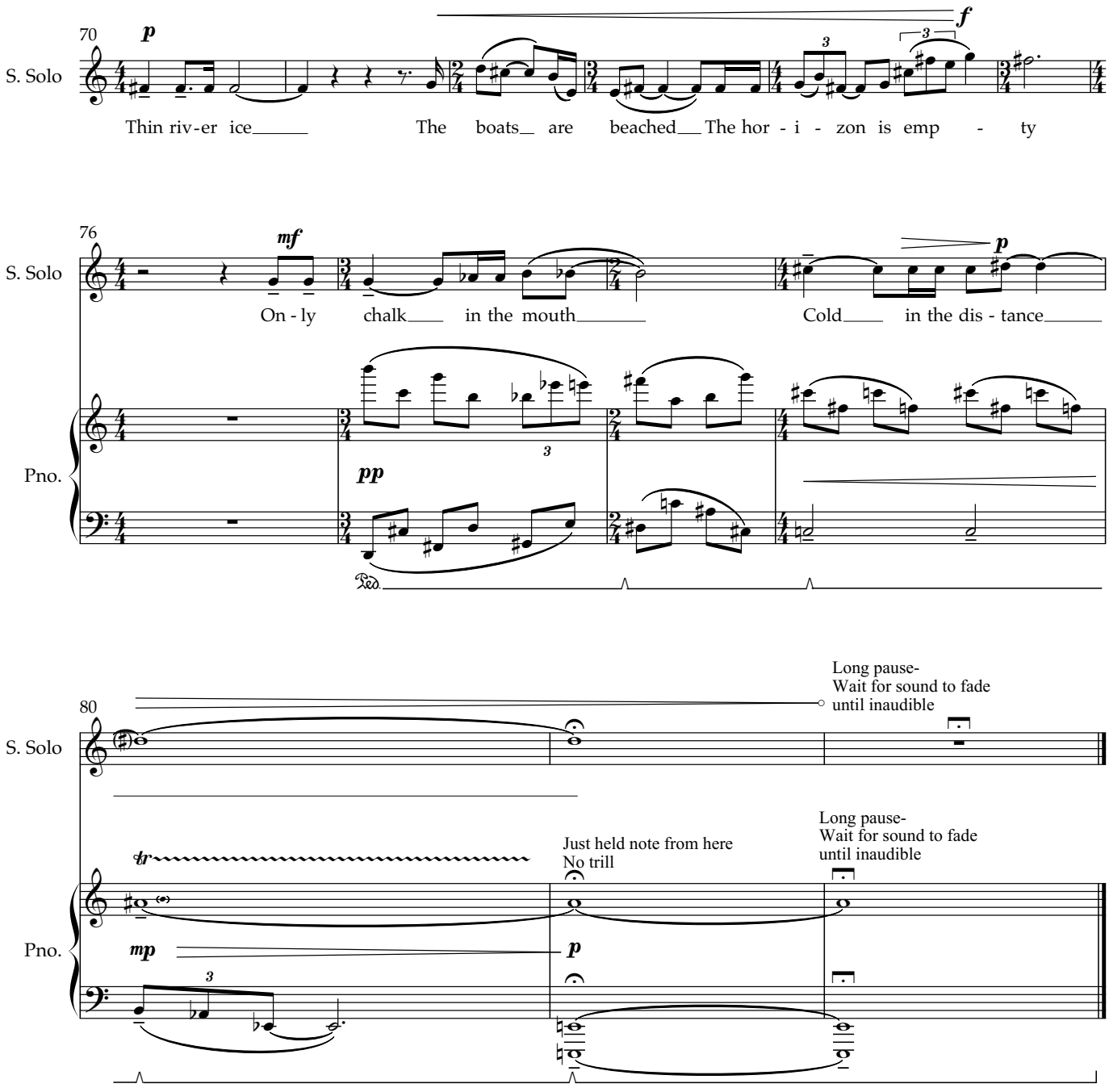


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14
S. Solo
Ah
Pno.
17
mf With distance, as if haunted
S. Solo
Chalk in the mouth
p
Gold in the dis - tance
Pno.
pp
20
S. Solo
f
Ev - ery de - par - ture A home-com - ing
Pno.
sfp
pp
23
With more warmth mf
S. Solo
The
(Molto Rubato
Push and Pull, Very flexible)
Pno.
p
f
pp subito


27
S. Solo
p
f
out - line of an is - land an is - land an is - land
Pno.
pp
Ped.
32
S. Solo
p
Float - ing in the air
Pno.
mf
pp subito
Like an echo
35
S. Solo
mf
Bleached mem-or-ies of dol - phins in the bay
Pno.
p
39
S. Solo
f
Bet - ween is - lands and ci - ties
Pno.
mf
pp subito
Like an echo
mf


(Molto Rubato
Push and Pull, Very flexible)
42
S. Solo
Ris - ing East and set - ting West Ev-ery de - par - ture a
Colla parte
Pno.
pp sotto voce
mp
45
S. Solo
ff
fff
home - com - - ing Ah
Pno.
mf
f
48
S. Solo
Pno.
pp sotto voce
pp
52
S. Solo
Pno.
mf
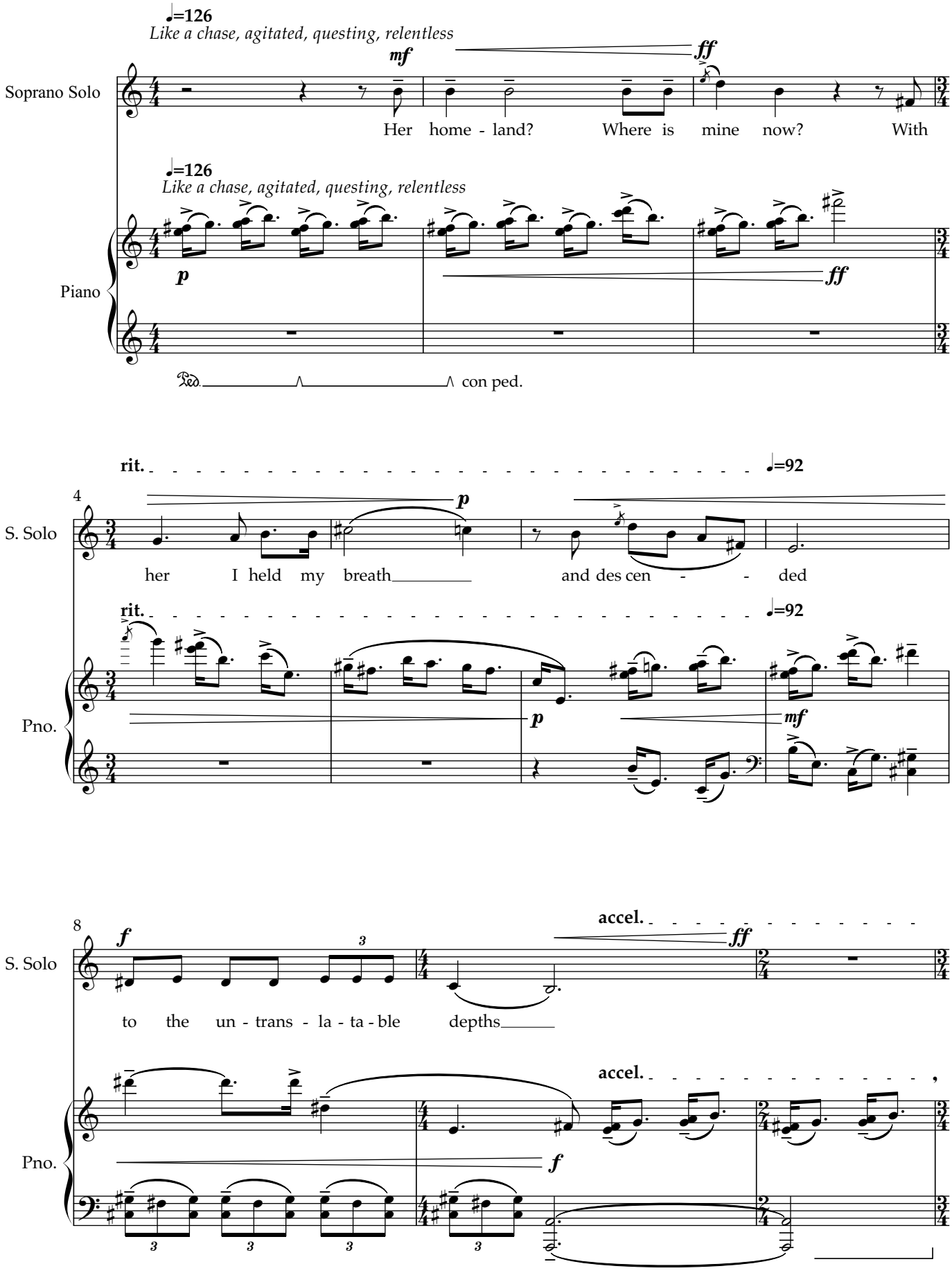

mp Humming
as if dreaming, with longing
55
S. Solo
Hmm
Hmm
Hmm
mf
Hmm
Hmm
Pno.
pp sotto voce
pp
f Awakening, with shock
To Sung
58
S. Solo
Hmm
Hmm
Ah
tr
Pno.
sfp
f
mf
With distance, as if haunted
61
S. Solo
Ah
The
Pno.
(Molto rubato, very expressive, flexible and fluid)
64
S. Solo
swans are sus - pen - ded
Sym - met - ry fros - ted
p
67
S. Solo
f
Ab - ove and be - low


70
S. Solo
p
f
Thin riv-er ice
The boats are beached
The hor - i - zon is emp - ty
76
S. Solo
mf
p
On - ly chalk in the mouth
Cold in the dis - tance
Pno.
pp
Ped.
80
S. Solo
Long pause-
Wait for sound to fade
until inaudible
Pno.
tr
mp
Just held note from here
No trill
p
Long pause-
Wait for sound to fade
until inaudible
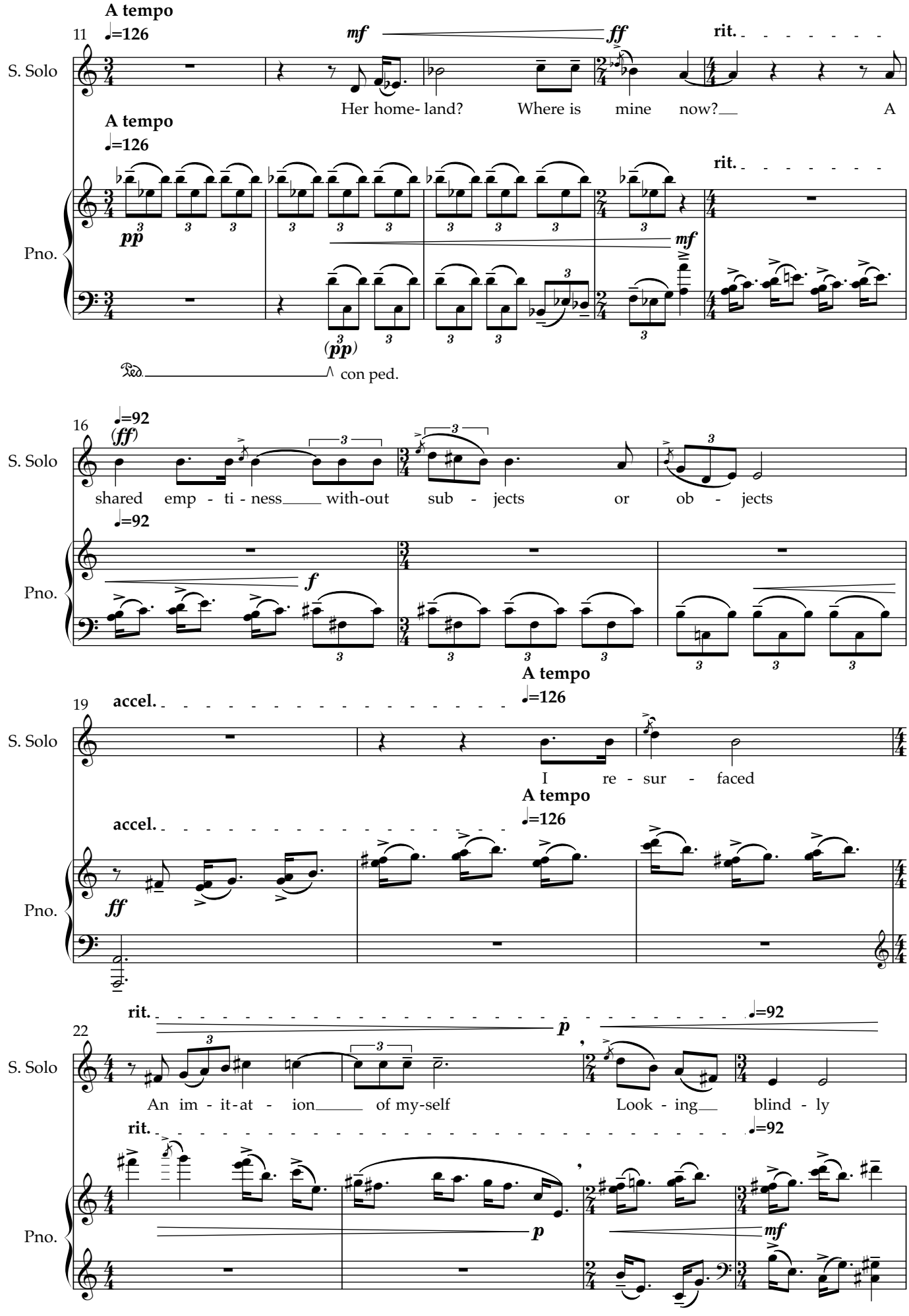
II. Following Eurydice
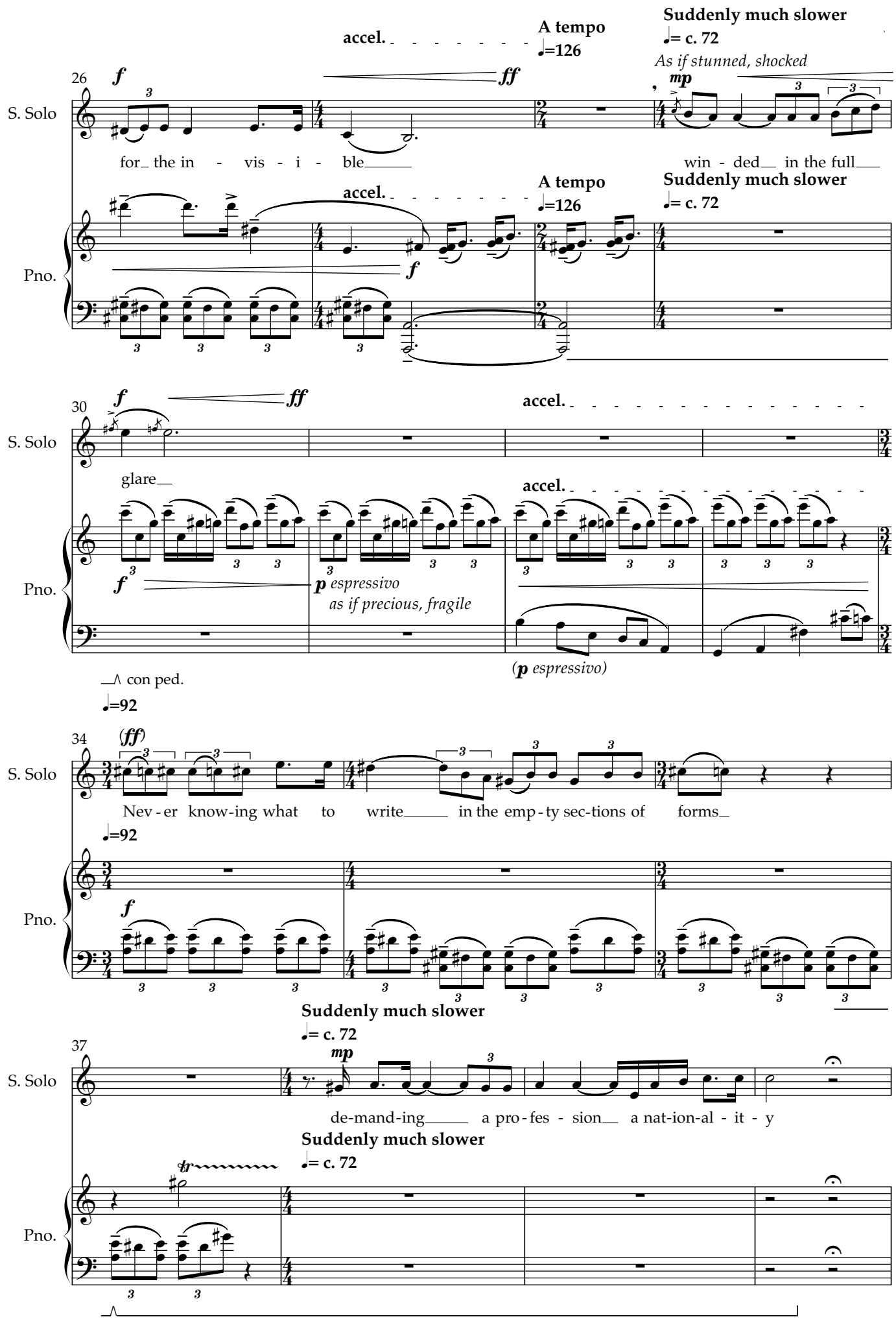
Words: John Perivolaris
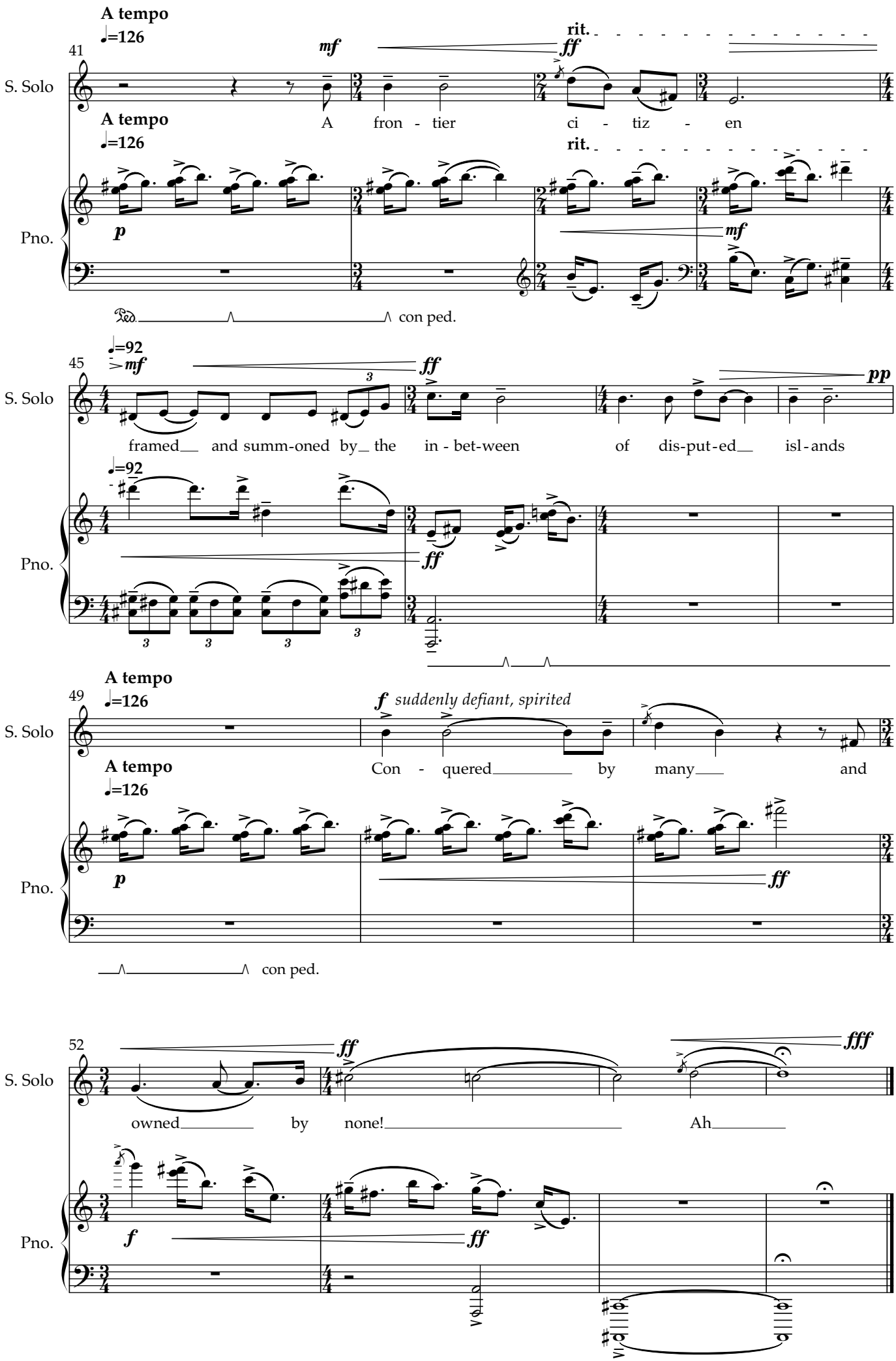
Music: Electra Perivolaris



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A tempo
11
♩=126
mf
ff
rit.
S. Solo
Her home- land? Where is mine now? A
A tempo
♩=126
rit.
pp
mf
(pp)
Ped.
con ped.
16
♩=92
(ff)
S. Solo
shared emp - ti - ness with-out sub - jects or ob - jects
♩=92
f
Pno.
A tempo
♩=126
19
accel.
S. Solo
I re - sur - faced
A tempo
♩=126
accel.
ff
Pno.
rit.
p
♩=92
22
S. Solo
An im - it-at - ion of my-self Look - ing blind - ly
rit.
♩=92
p
mf
Pno.

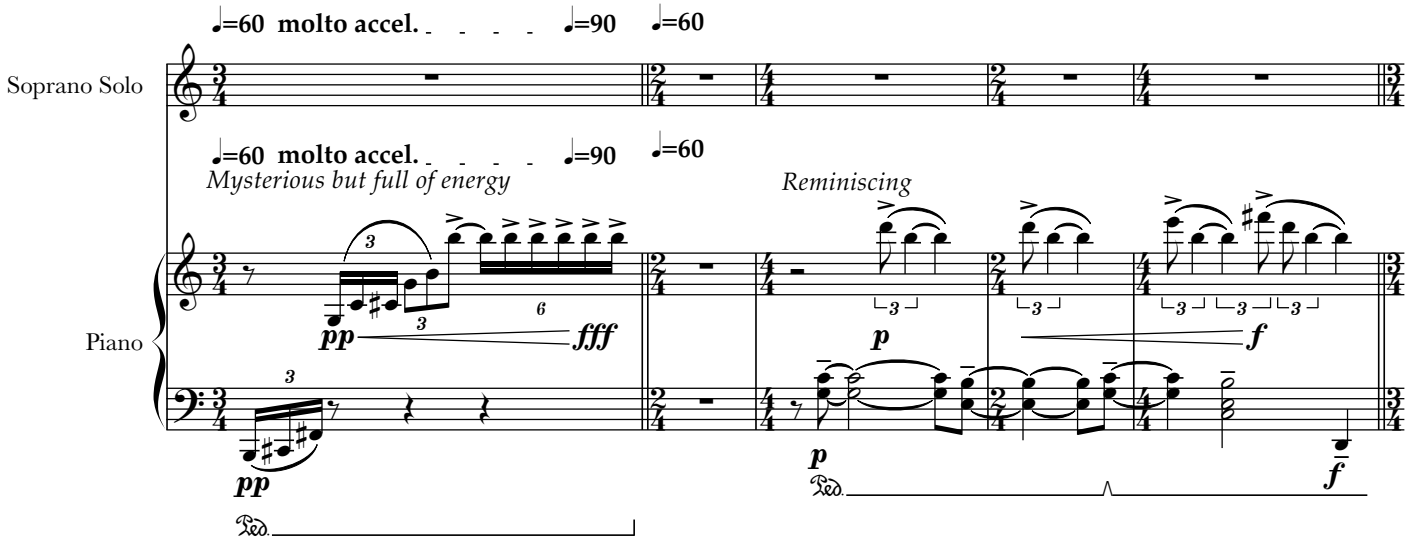

26
S. Solo
Pno.
f
ff
accel.
A tempo
♩=126
Suddenly much slower
♩= c. 72
As if stunned, shocked
mp
for the in - vis - i - ble
win - ded in the full
30
glare
p espressivo
as if precious, fragile
(p espressivo)
con ped.
♩=92
34
(ff)
Nev - er know-ing what to write in the emp - ty sec-tions of forms
37
de-mand-ing a pro - fes - sion a nat-ion-al - it - y
tr
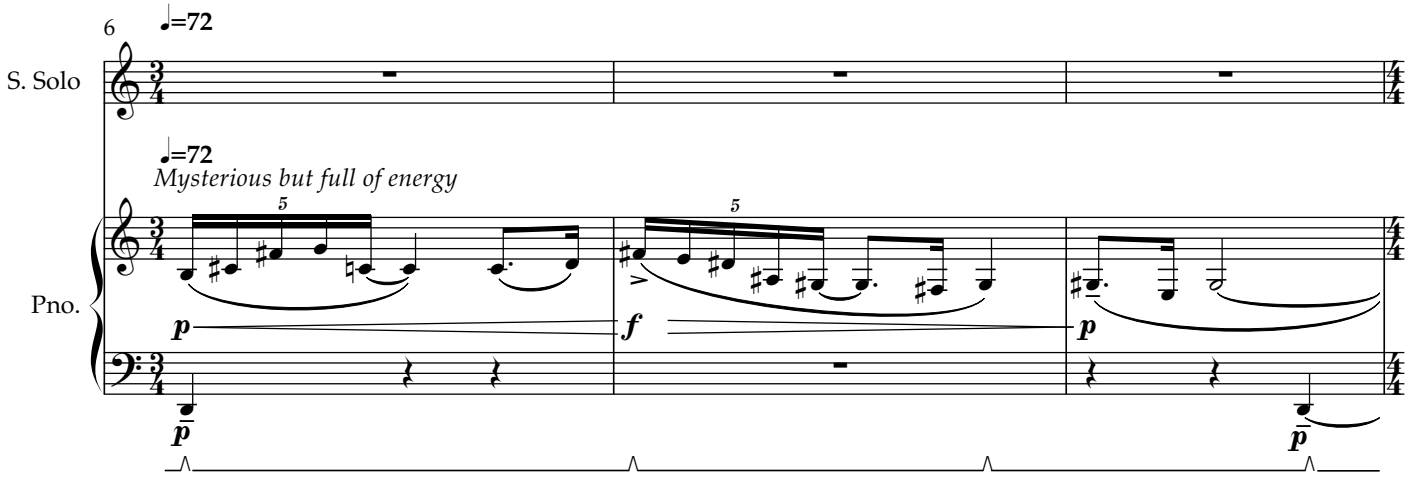

A tempo
♩=126
41
mf
ff
rit.
S. Solo
A fron - tier
ci - tiz - en
Pno.
p
mf
con ped.
♩=92
45
mf
ff
pp
framed and summ-oned by the in - bet-ween of dis-put-ed isl-ands
A tempo
49
f suddenly defiant, spirited
Con - quered by many and
p
ff
con ped.
52
fff
owned by none! Ah
f

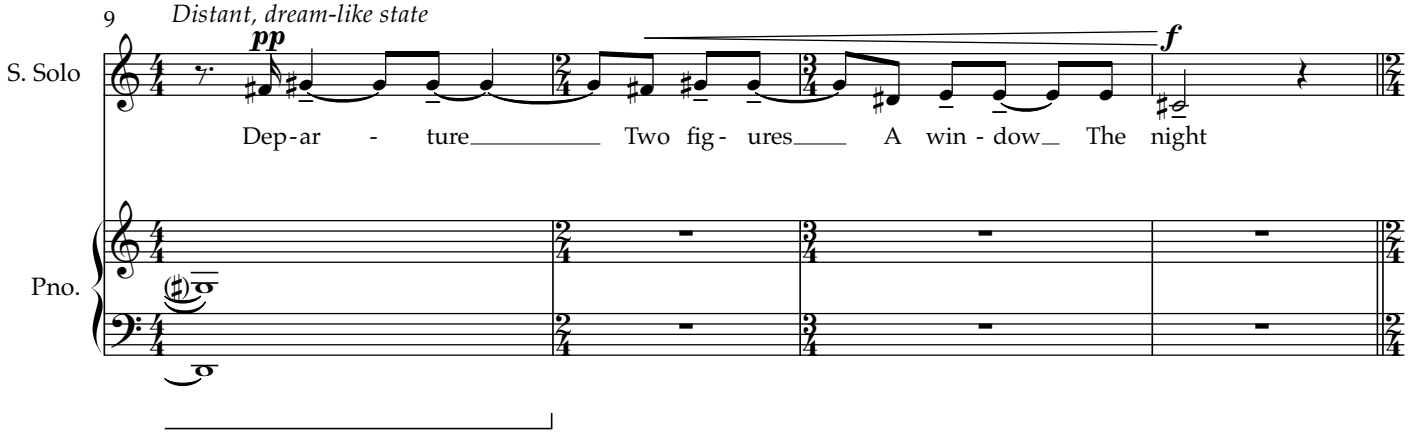
III. Departure

Words: John Perivolaris
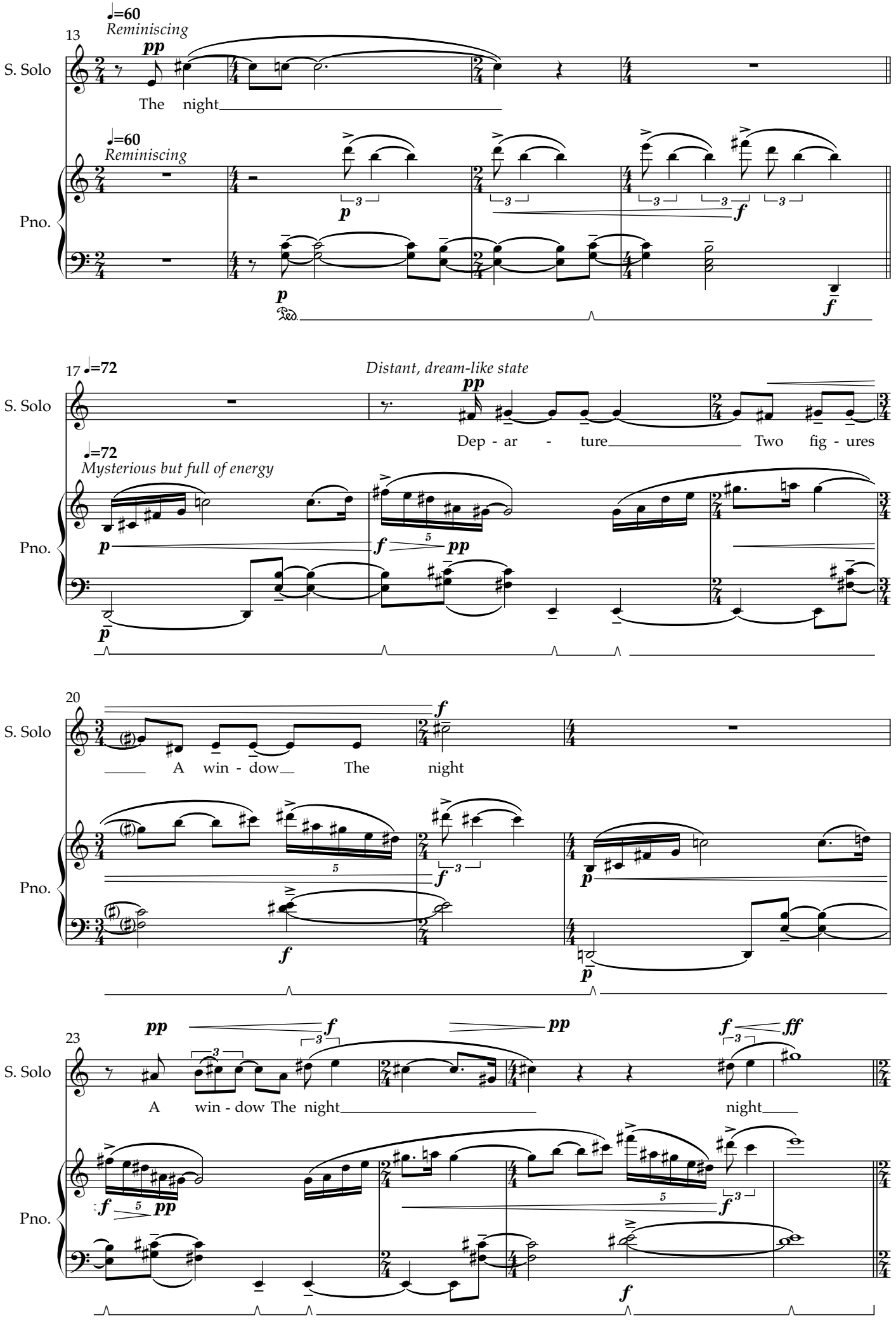
Music: Electra Perivolaris
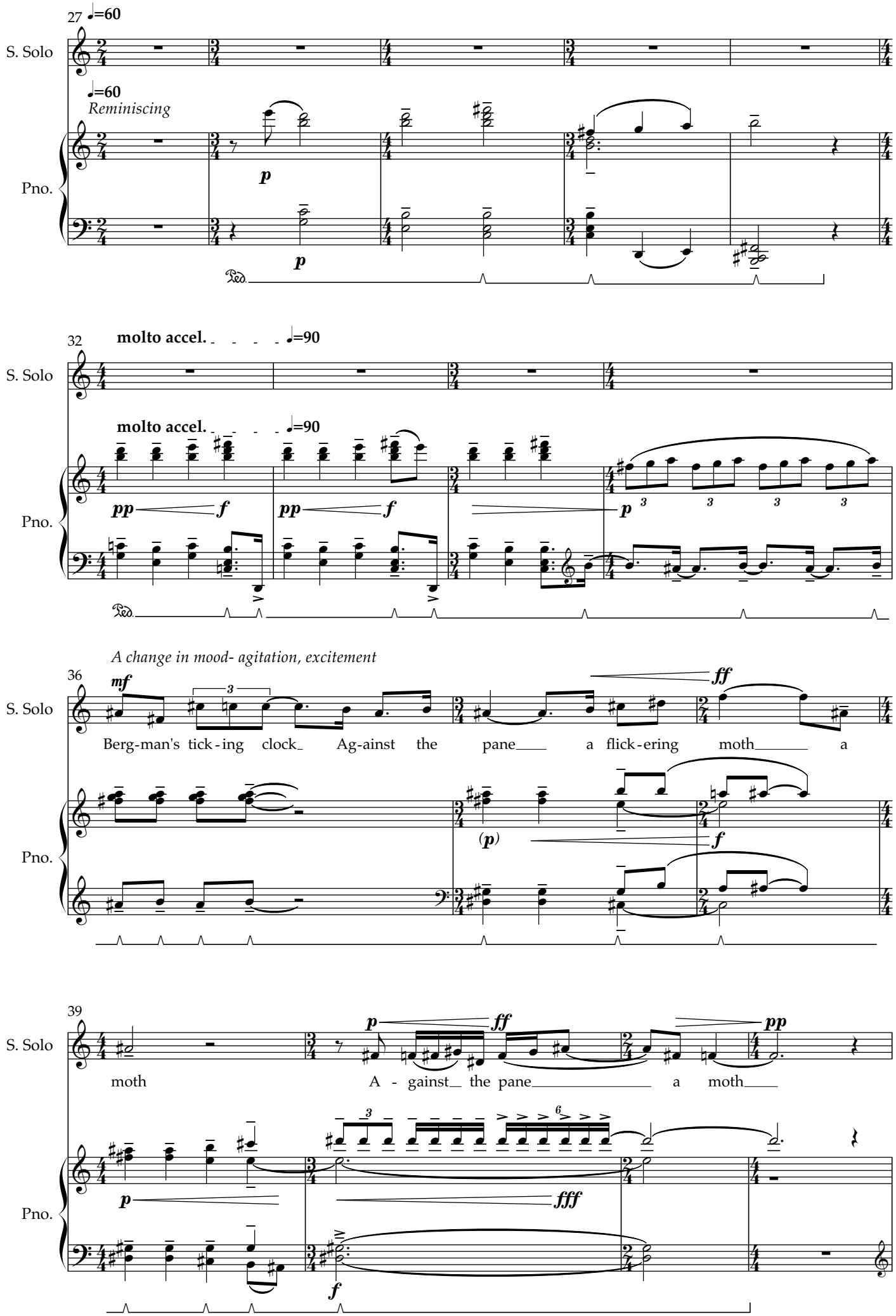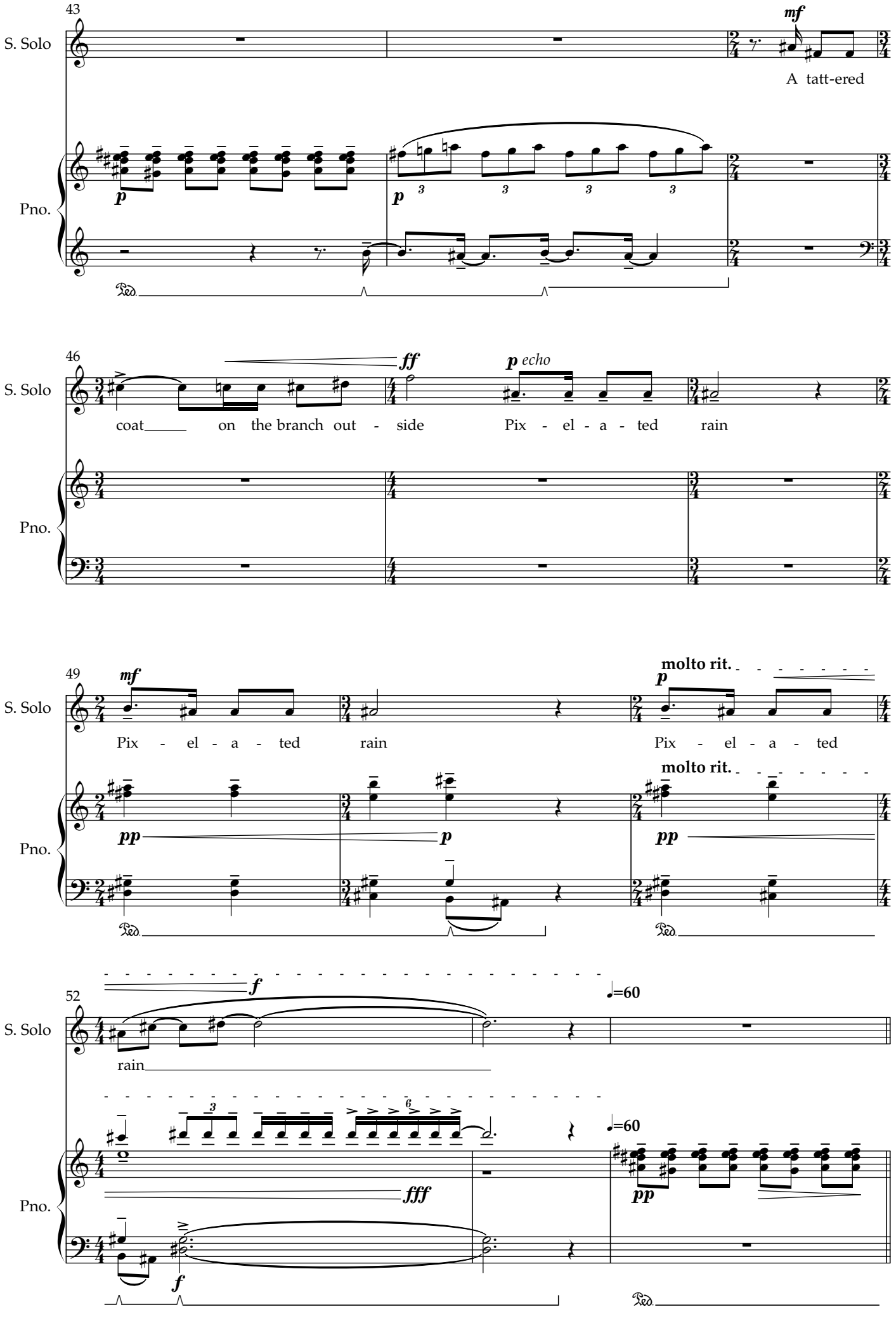




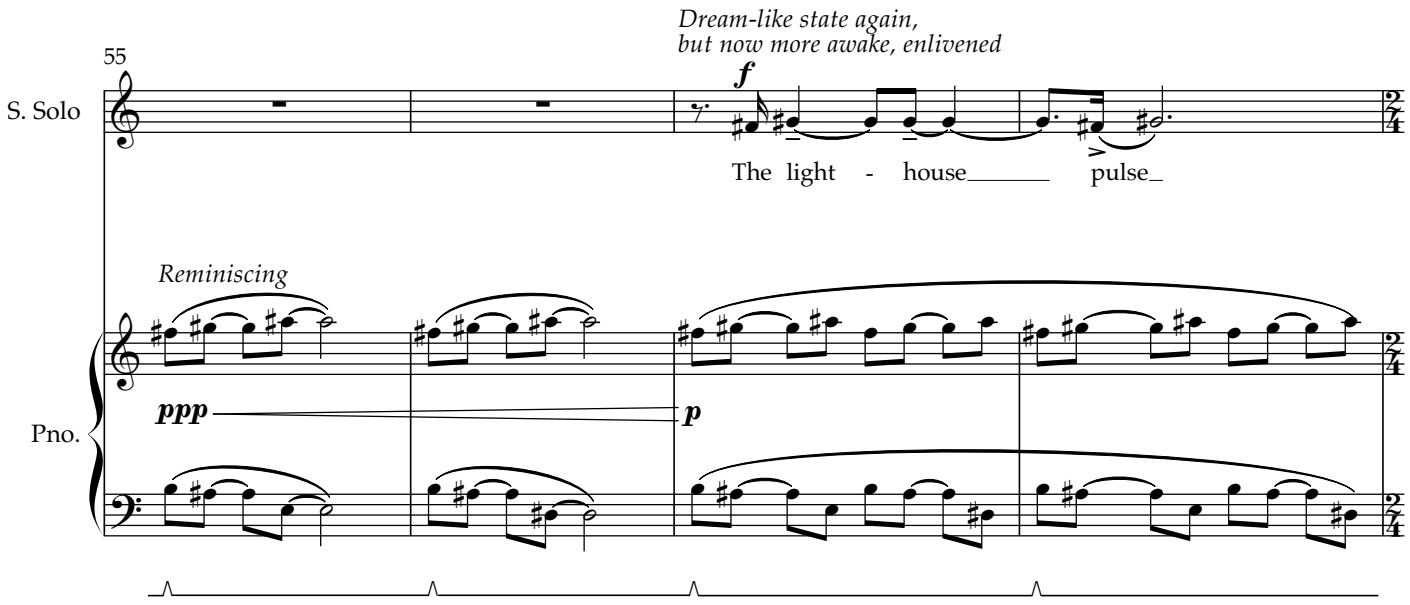


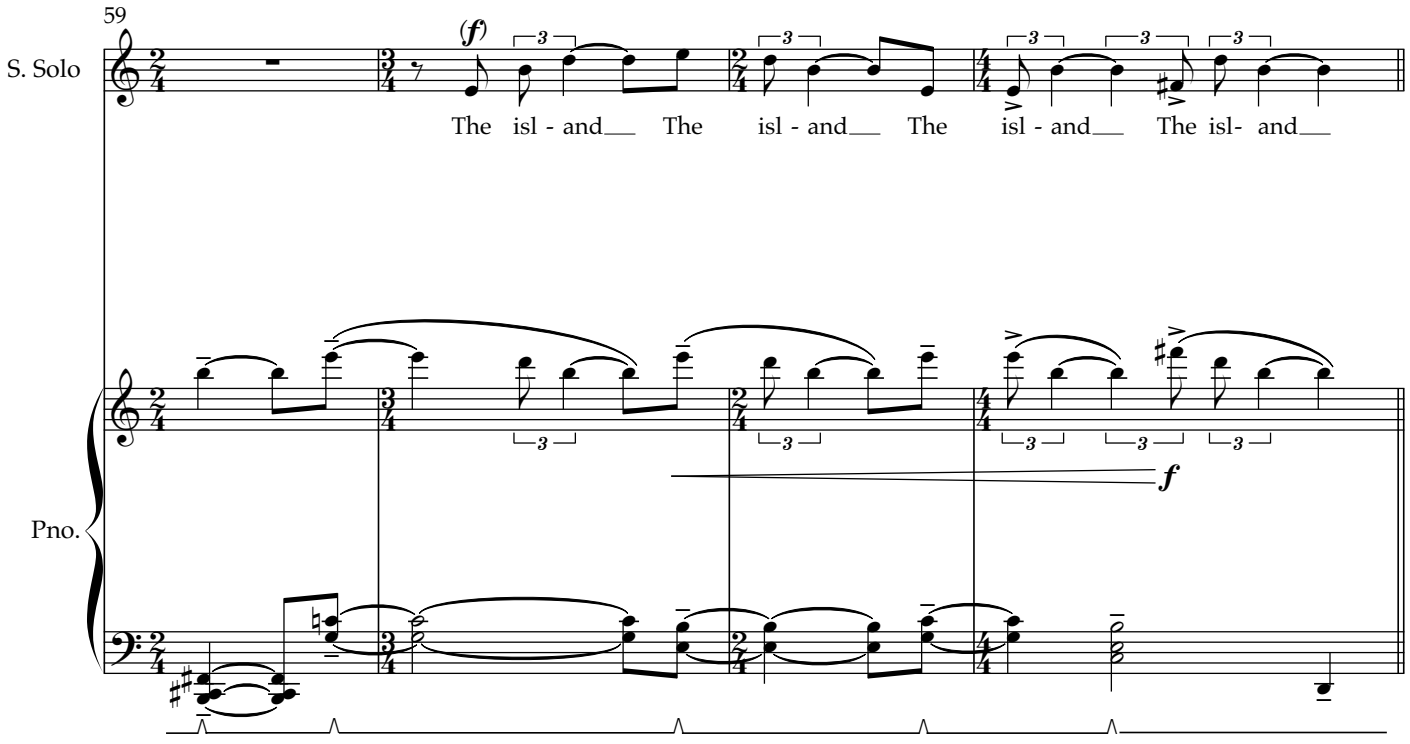
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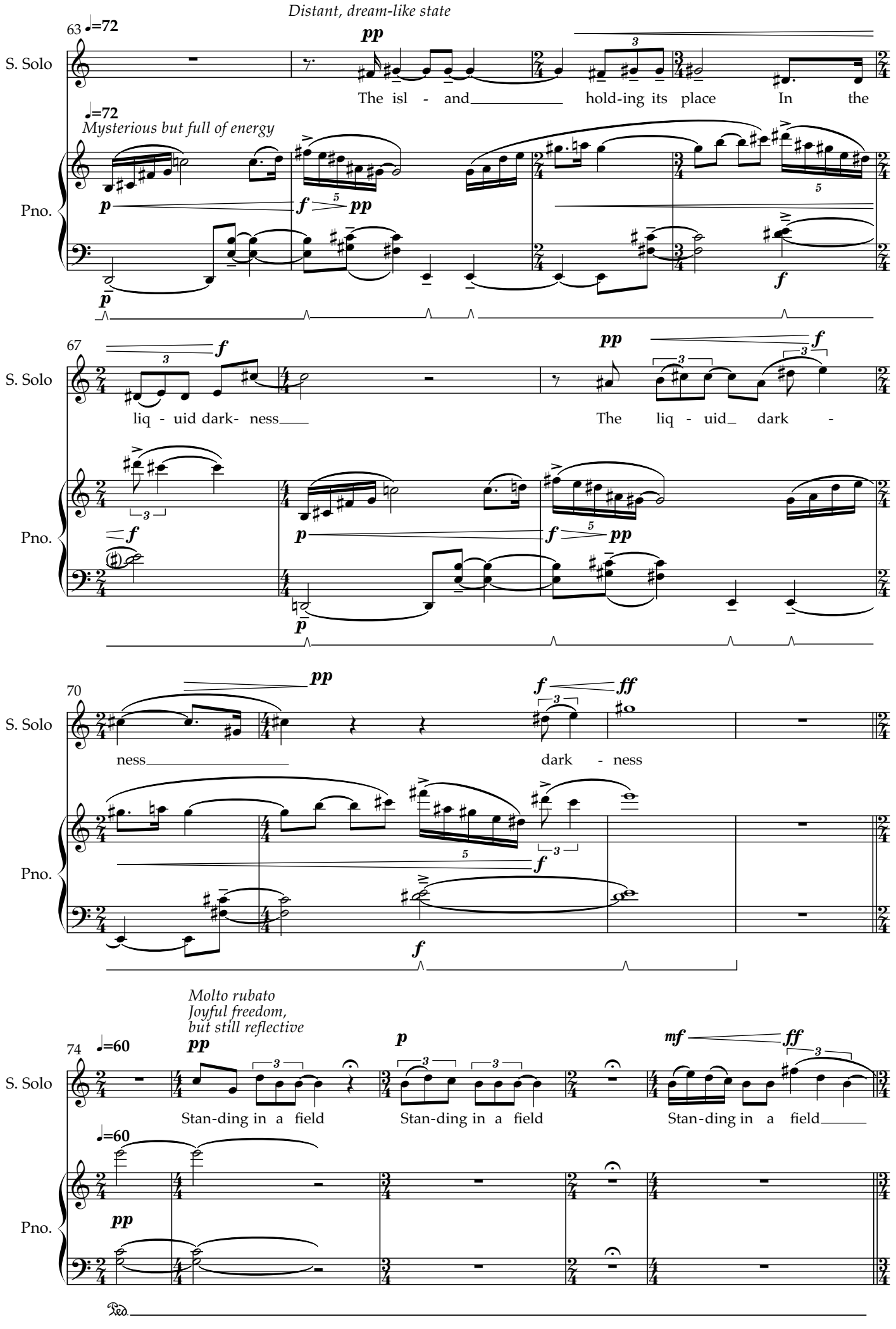

13
♩=60
Reminiscing
S. Solo
pp
The night
♩=60
Reminiscing
Pno.
p
f
17
♩=72
Distant, dream-like state
S. Solo
pp
Dep - ar - ture
Two fig - ures
♩=72
Mysterious but full of energy
Pno.
p
f
pp
20
S. Solo
f
A win - dow
The night
Pno.
f
p
23
S. Solo
pp
f
pp
f
ff
A win - dow The night
night
Pno.
f
pp
f
f
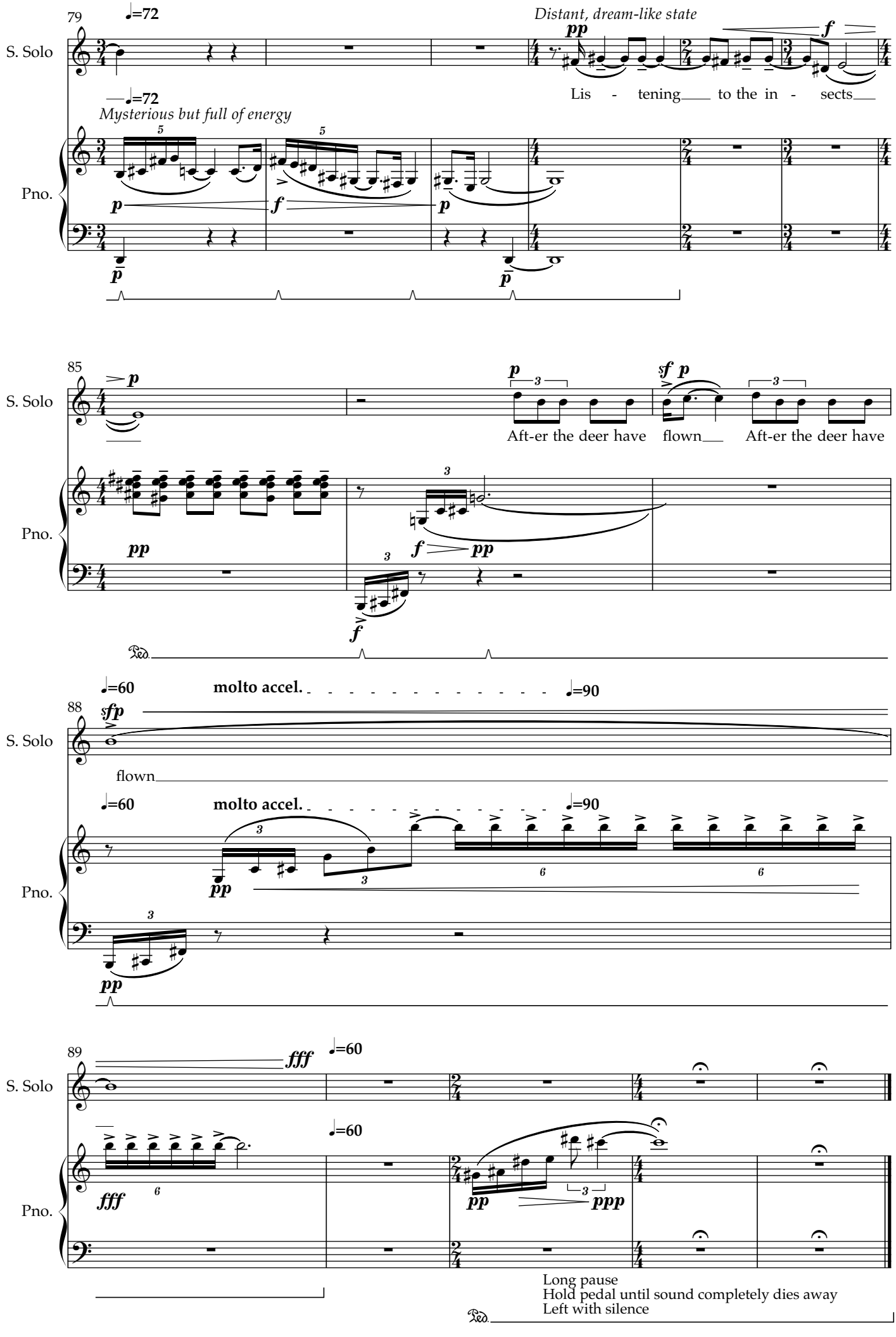

27
♩=60
S. Solo
♩=60
Reminiscing
Pno.
p
p
Ped.
32
molto accel.
♩=90
S. Solo
molto accel.
♩=90
Pno.
pp
f
pp
f
p
3
3
3
3
Ped.
A change in mood- agitation, excitement
36
mf
S. Solo
ff
Berg-man's tick-ing clock_ Ag-ainst the pane___ a flick-ering moth___ a
Pno.
(p)
f
39
S. Solo
p
ff
pp
moth A - gainst_ the pane___ a moth___
Pno.
p
fff
f


43
S. Solo
Pno.
mf
A tatt-ered
p
p
3
3
3
3
Ped.
46
S. Solo
Pno.
ff
p echo
coat on the branch out - side Pix - el - a - ted rain
49
S. Solo
Pno.
mf
Pix - el - a - ted rain
molto rit.
p
Pix - el - a - ted
molto rit.
pp
p
pp
Ped.
Ped.
52
S. Solo
Pno.
f
rain
=60
3
6
fff
=60
pp
f
Ped.


55
S. Solo
Pno.
Dream-like state again,
but now more awake, enlivened
f
The light - house pulse
Reminiscing
ppp
p


59
S. Solo
Pno.
(f)
The isl - and The isl - and The isl - and The isl- and
f
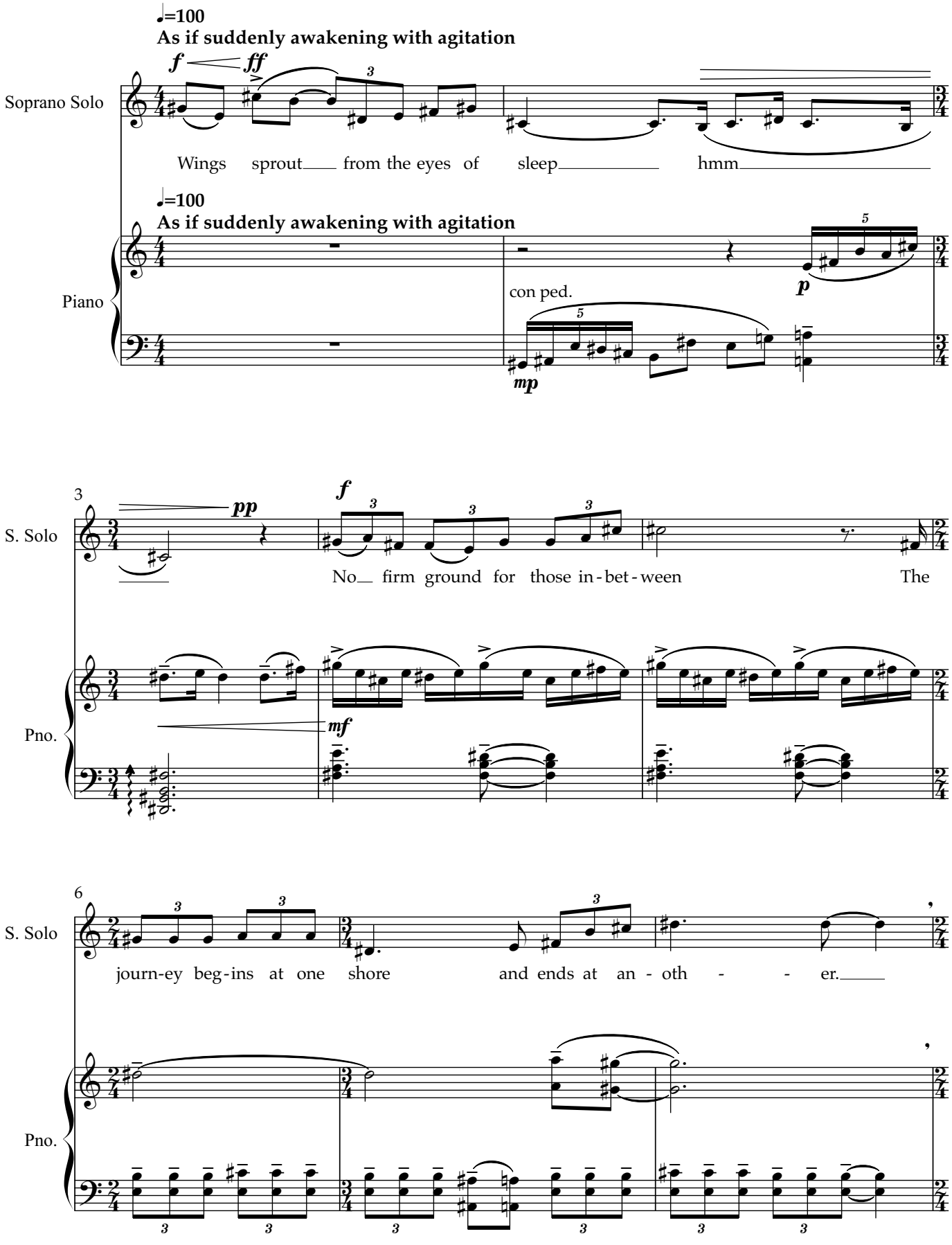

Distant, dream-like state
63
♩=72
pp
S. Solo
The isl - and hold-ing its place In the
♩=72
Mysterious but full of energy
Pno.
p
f
pp
f
67
f
pp
f
S. Solo
liq - uid dark- ness
The liq - uid dark -
Pno.
f
p
f
pp
70
pp
f
ff
S. Solo
ness
dark - ness
Pno.
f
f
Molto rubato
Joyful freedom,
but still reflective
74
♩=60
pp
p
mf
ff
S. Solo
Stan-ding in a field
Stan-ding in a field
Stan-ding in a field
♩=60
Pno.
pp
Ped.


79
♩=72
Distant, dream-like state
S. Solo
Pno.
Lis - tening to the in - sects
♩=72
Mysterious but full of energy
85
Aft-er the deer have flown Aft-er the deer have
88
♩=60
molto accel.
♩=90
flown
89
fff
Long pause
Hold pedal until sound completely dies away
Left with silence
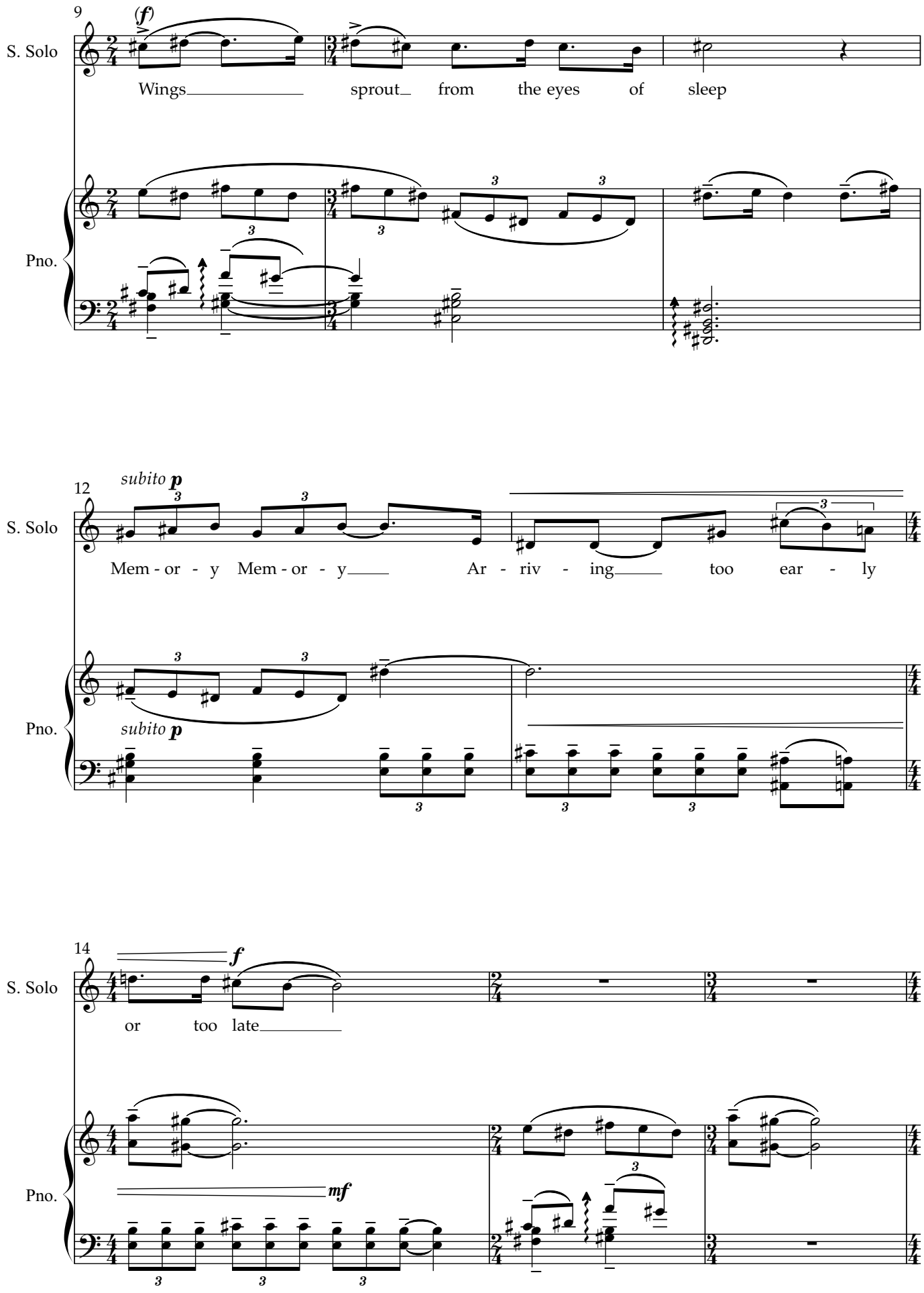
IV. Entre Chien et Loup

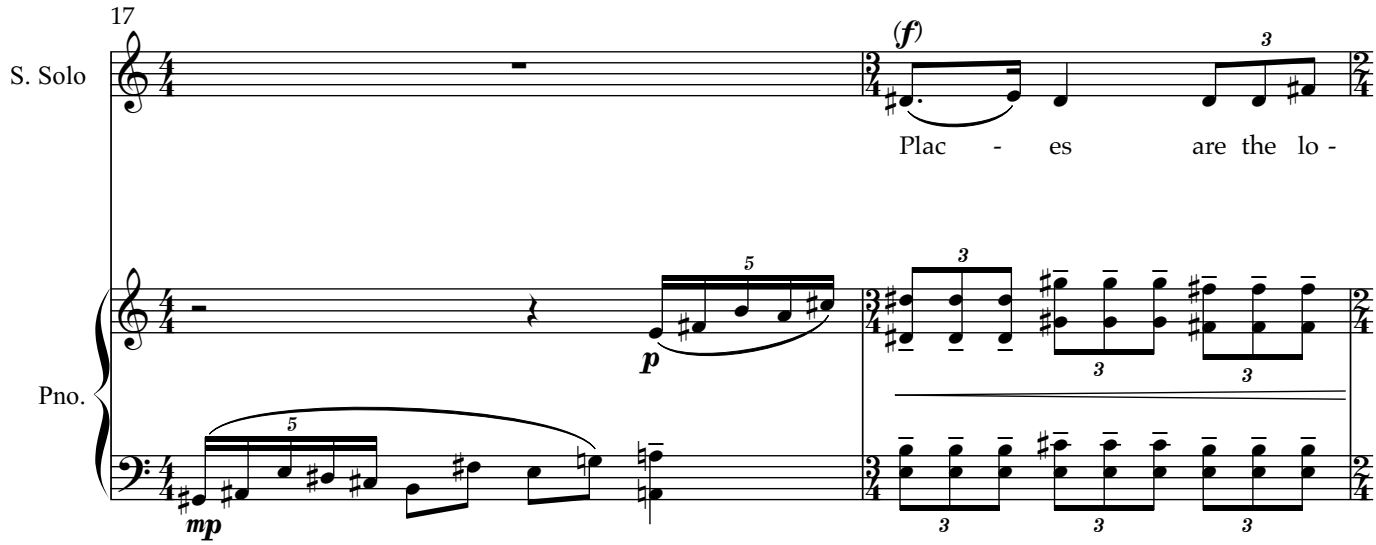
Words: John Perivolaris

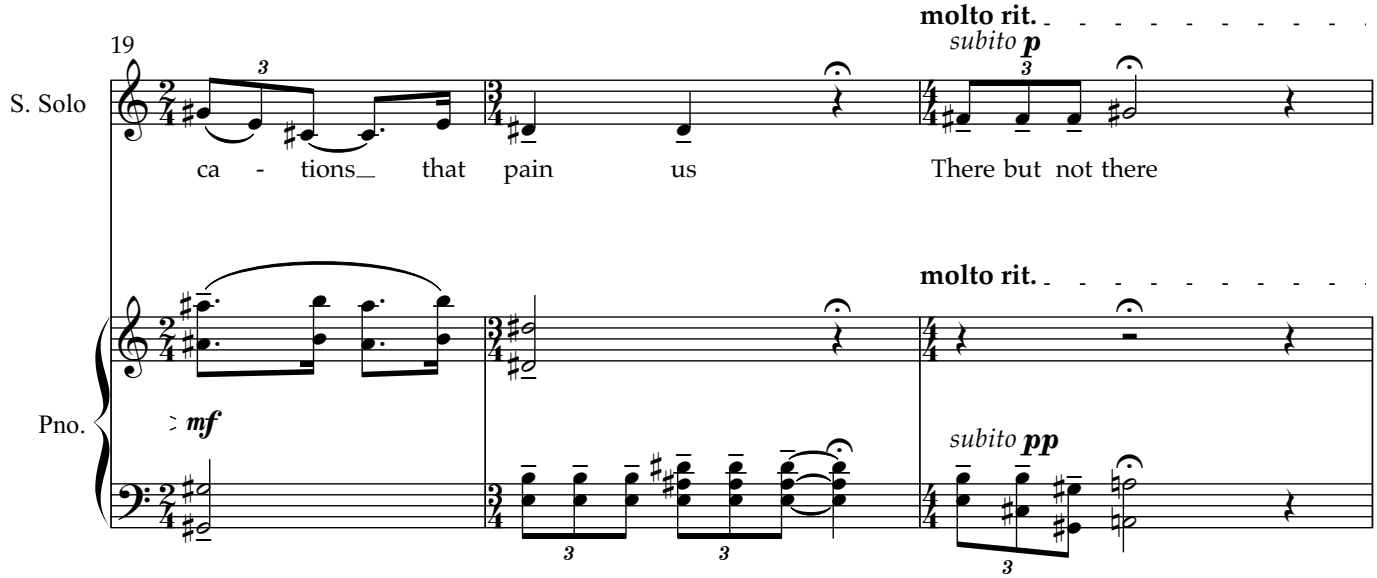
Music: Electra Perivolaris



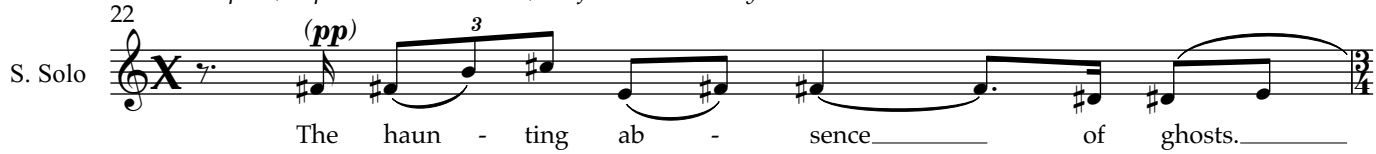
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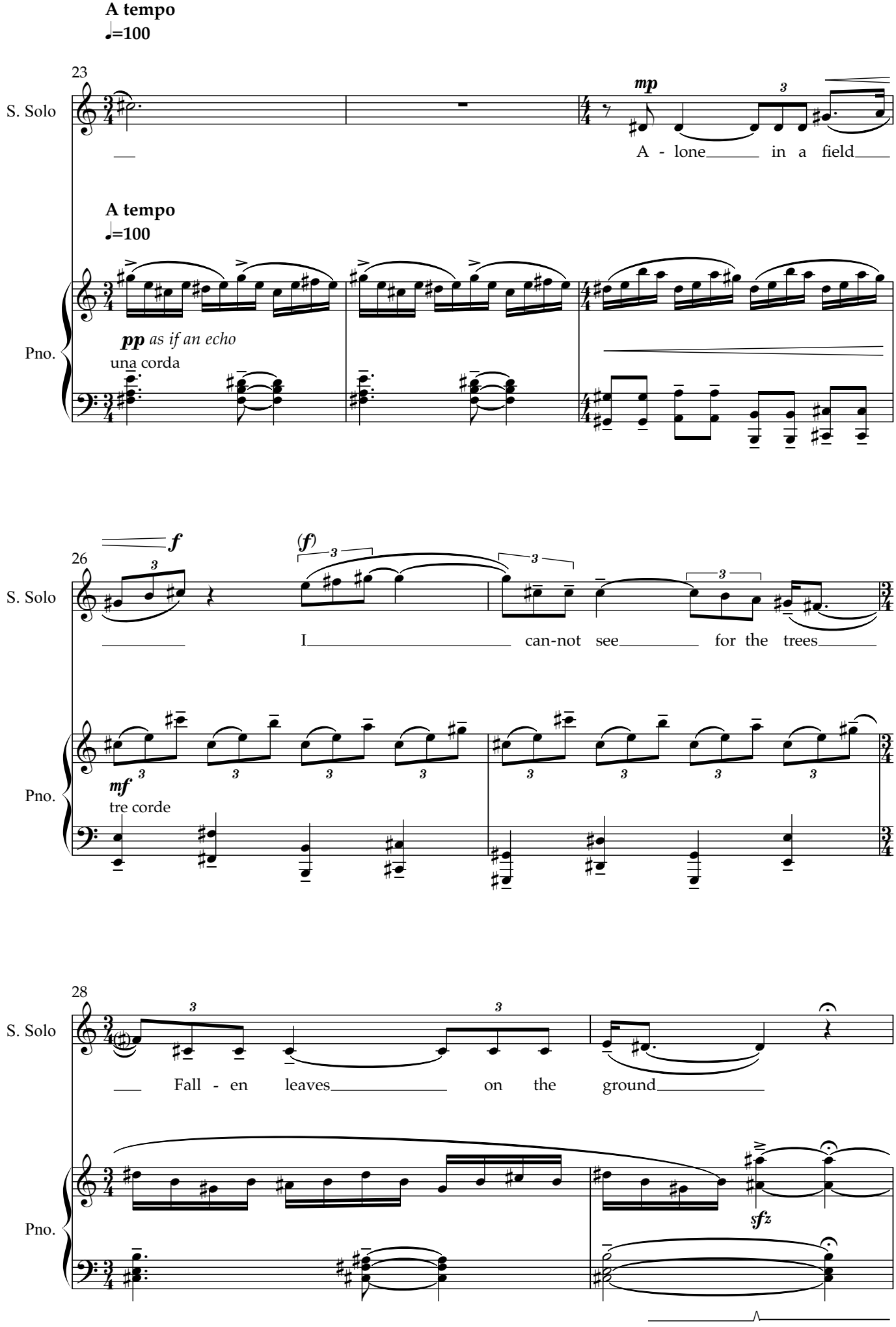

9
(f)
S. Solo
Wings sprout from the eyes of sleep
Pno.
12
subito p
S. Solo
Mem - or - y Mem - or - y Ar - riv - ing too ear - ly
Pno.
subito p
14
f
S. Solo
or too late
Pno.
mf
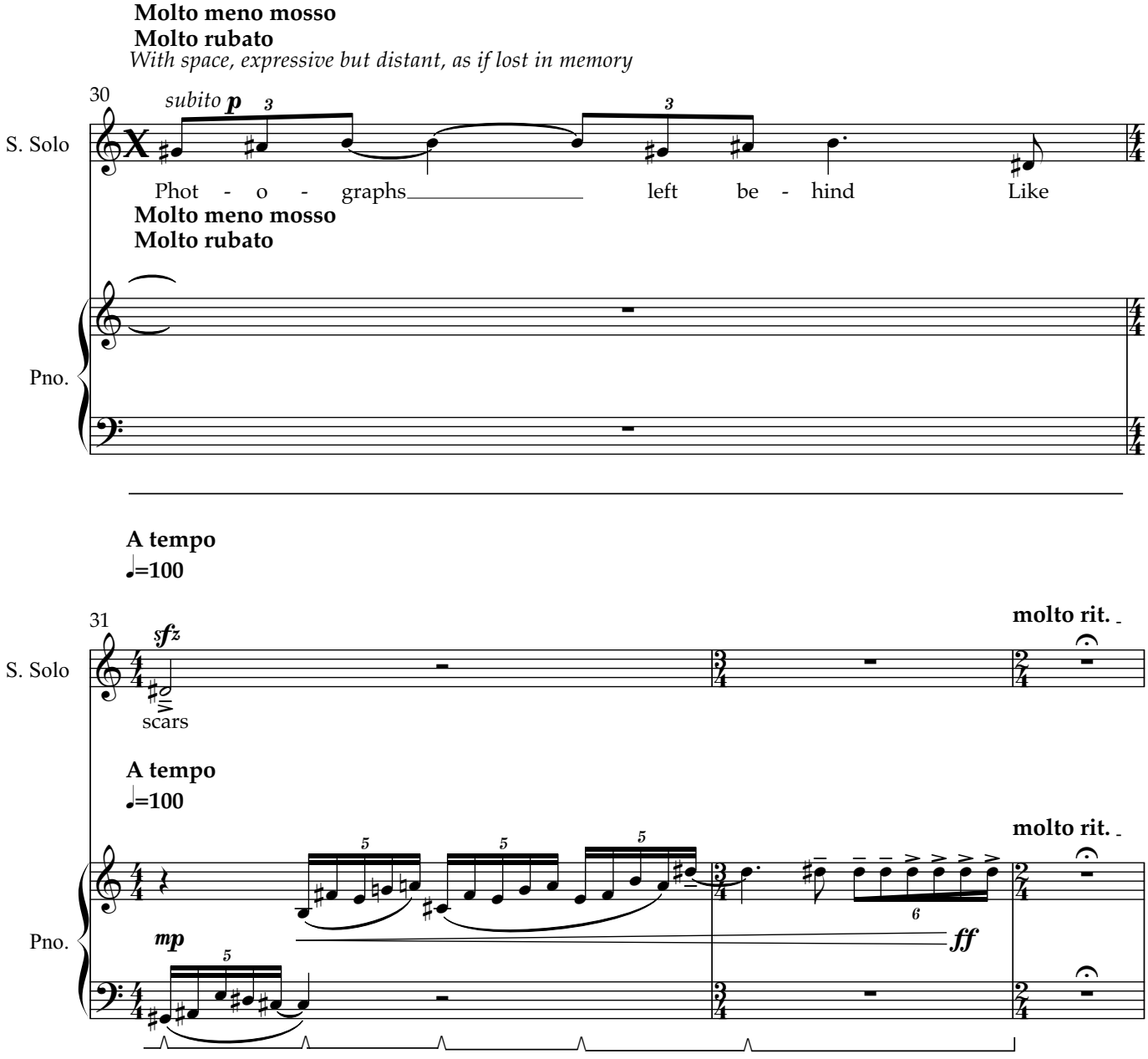


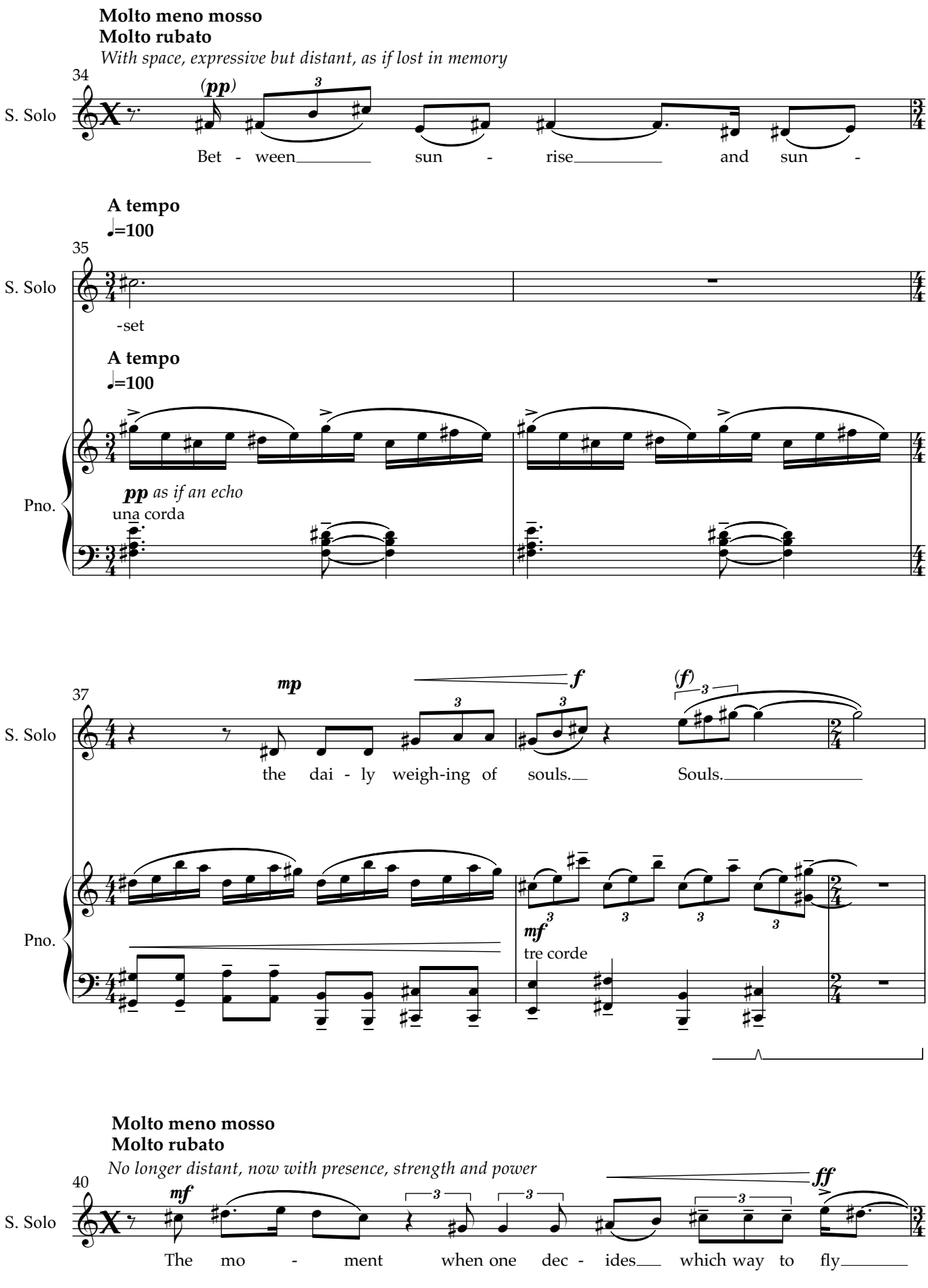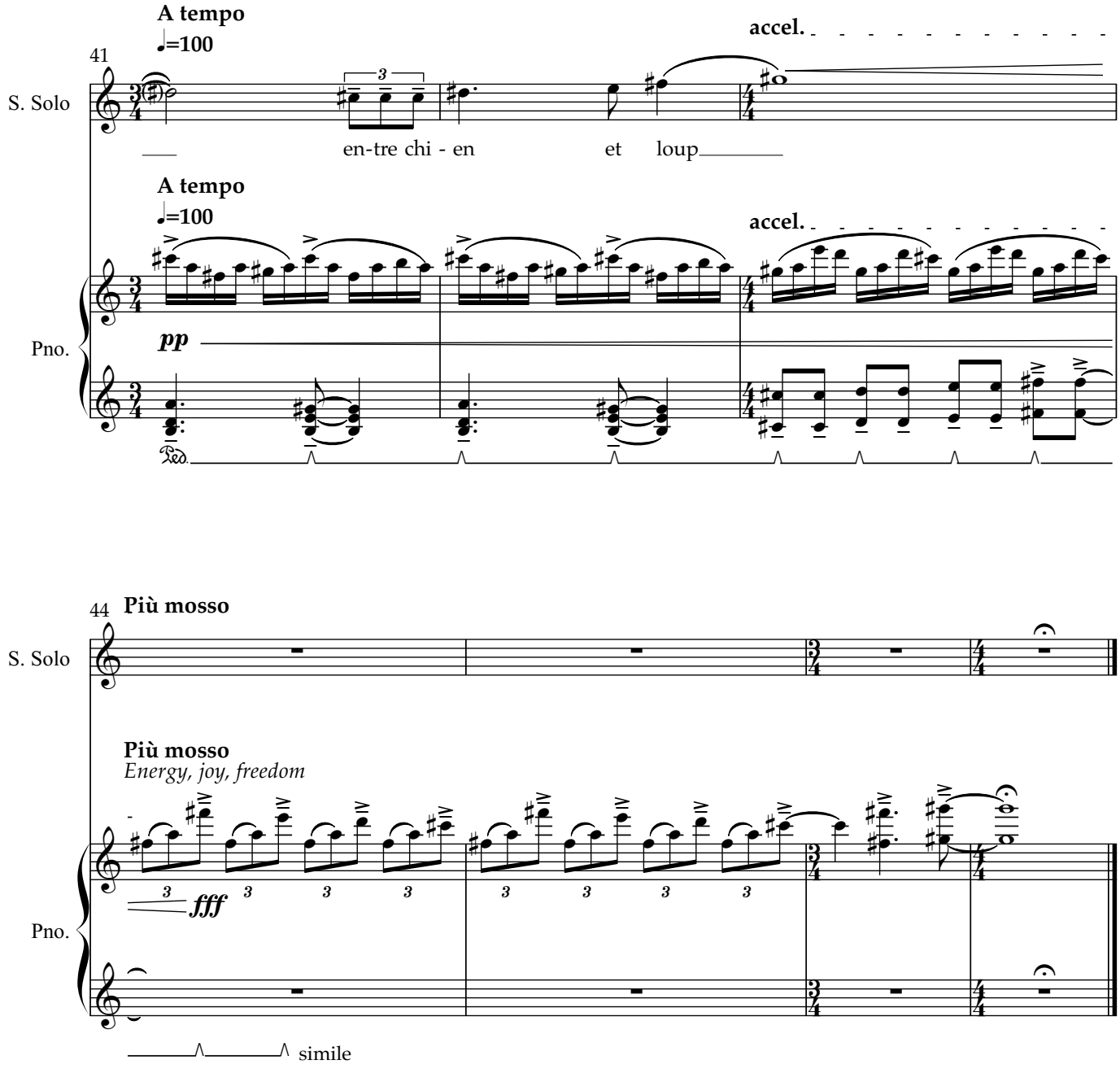


Molto meno mosso
Molto rubato
With space, expressive but distant, as if lost in memory




A tempo
♩=100
23
S. Solo
mp
A - lone in a field
A tempo
♩=100
Pno.
pp as if an echo
una corda
f
(f)
26
S. Solo
I can-not see for the trees
mf
tre corde
Pno.
28
S. Solo
Fall - en leaves on the ground
Pno.
sfz


Molto meno mosso
Molto rubato
With space, expressive but distant, as if lost in memory
30
subito p
S. Solo
Phot - o - graphs left be - hind Like
Molto meno mosso
Molto rubato
Pno.
A tempo
=100
31
molto rit.
sfz
S. Solo
scars
A tempo
=100
molto rit.
mp
ff
Pno.


Molto meno mosso
Molto rubato
With space, expressive but distant, as if lost in memory
34
S. Solo
(pp)
Bet - ween sun - rise and sun -
A tempo
♩=100
35
S. Solo
-set
A tempo
♩=100
Pno.
pp as if an echo
una corda
37
S. Solo
mp
f
(f)
the dai - ly weigh-ing of souls. Souls.
Pno.
mf
tre corde
Molto meno mosso
Molto rubato
No longer distant, now with presence, strength and power
40
S. Solo
mf
ff
The mo - ment when one dec - ides which way to fly
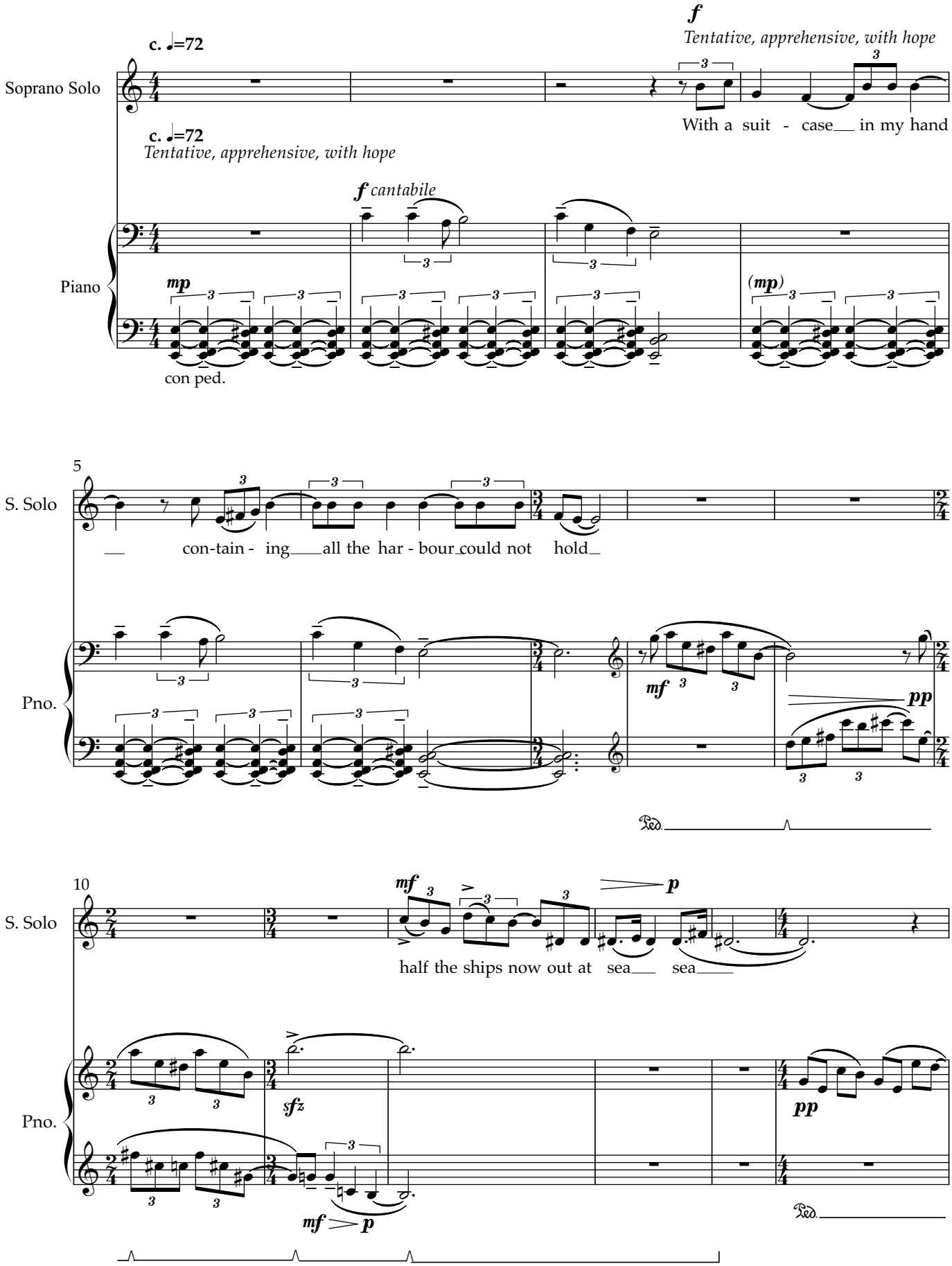

A tempo
♩=100
41
S. Solo
accel.
en-tre chi - en
et loup
A tempo
♩=100
accel.
Pno.
pp
Ped.

44
Più mosso
S. Solo
Più mosso
Energy, joy, freedom
fff
Pno.
simile
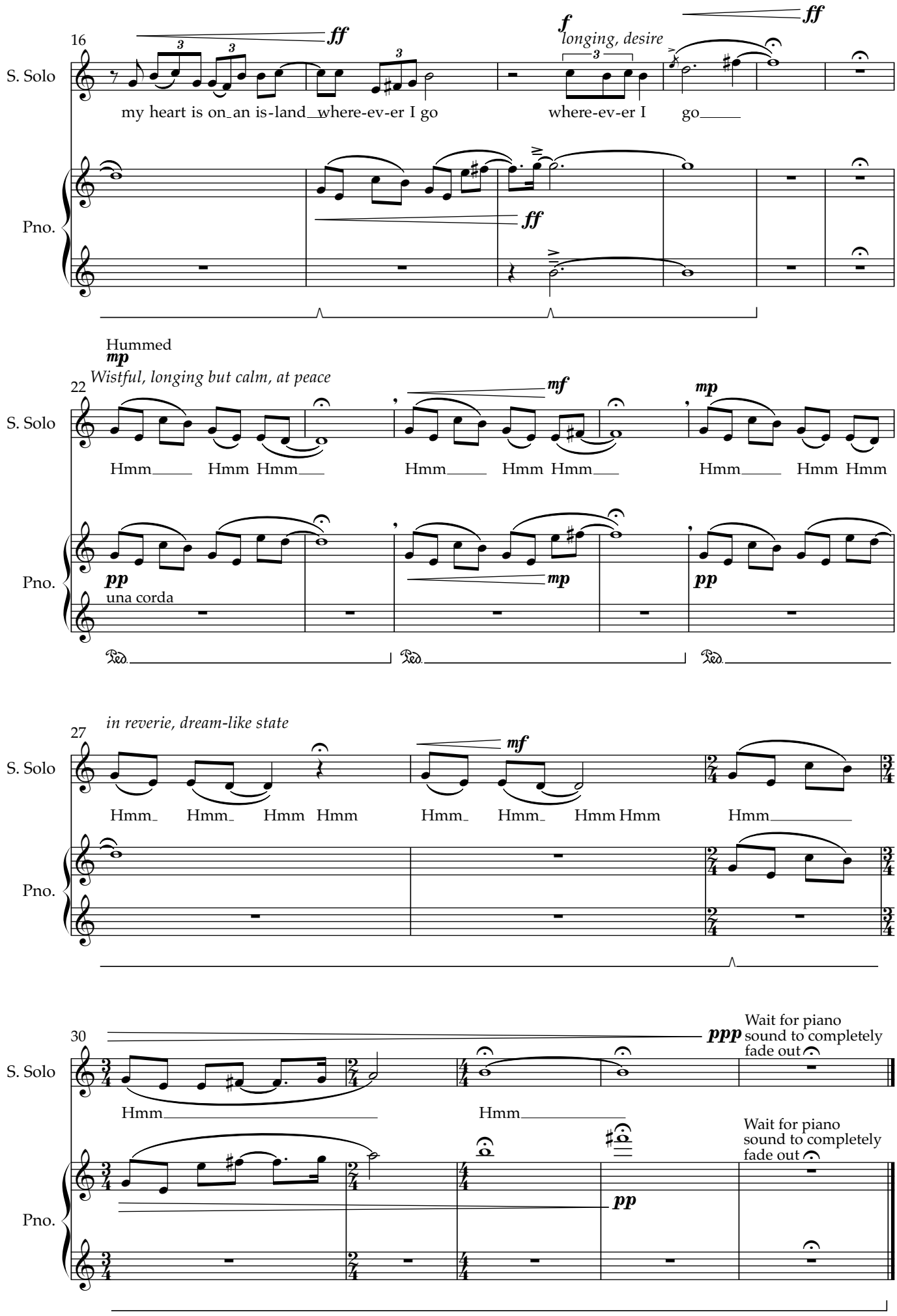
Epilogue
All the Harbour Could Not Hold

Words: John Perivolaris

Music: Electra Perivolaris



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16
S. Solo
Pno.
ff
f
longing, desire
ff
my heart is on_an is-land_where-ev-er I go
where-ev-er I go
ff
Hummed
mp
Wistful, longing but calm, at peace
22
S. Solo
Pno.
mf
mp
Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm
pp
una corda
mp
pp
in reverie, dream-like state
27
S. Solo
Pno.
mf
Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm
30
S. Solo
Pno.
ppp
Wait for piano sound to completely fade out
Hmm
Hmm
pp
Wait for piano sound to completely fade out