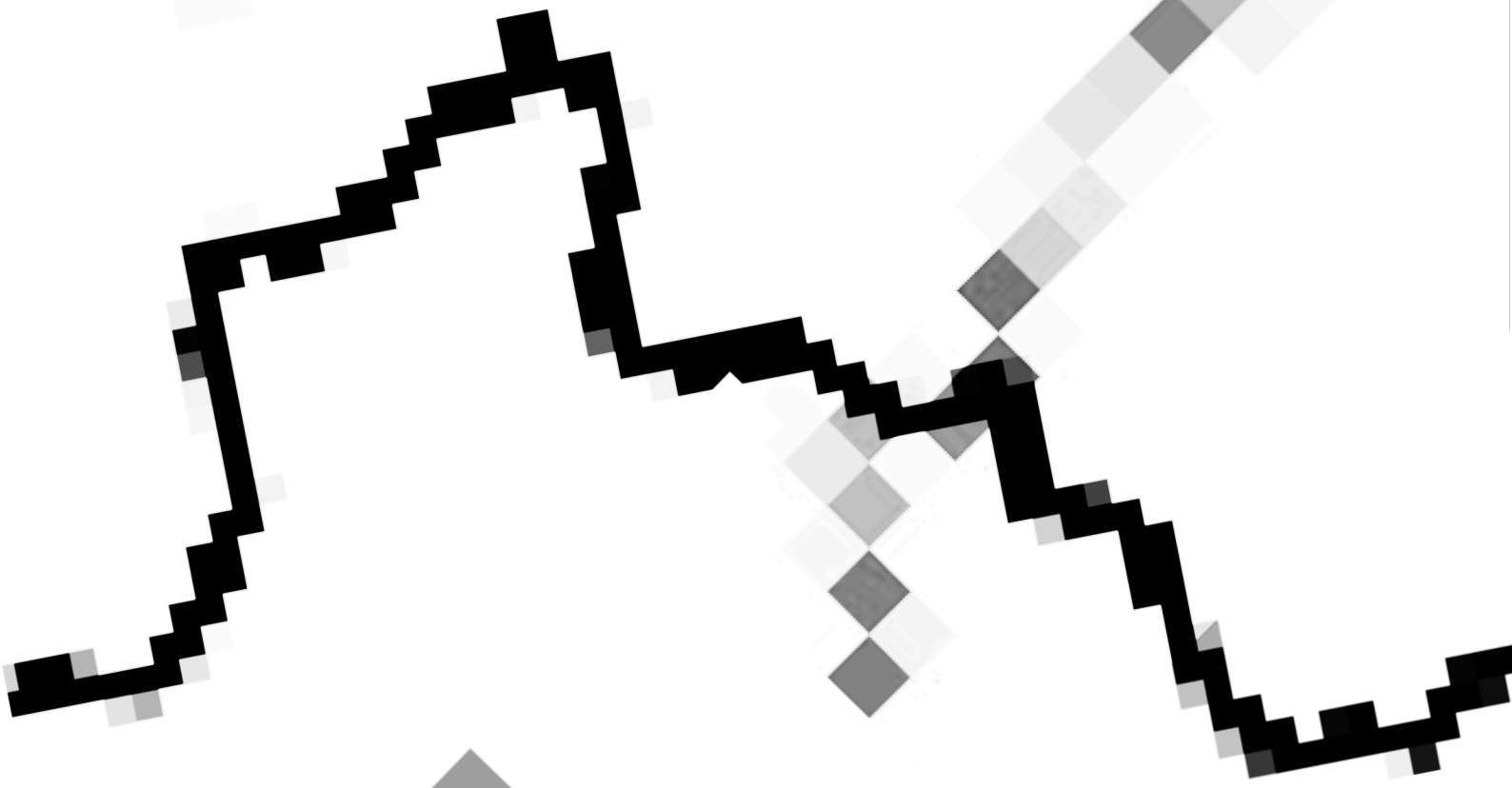
Thomas Metcalf

Pixelating the River

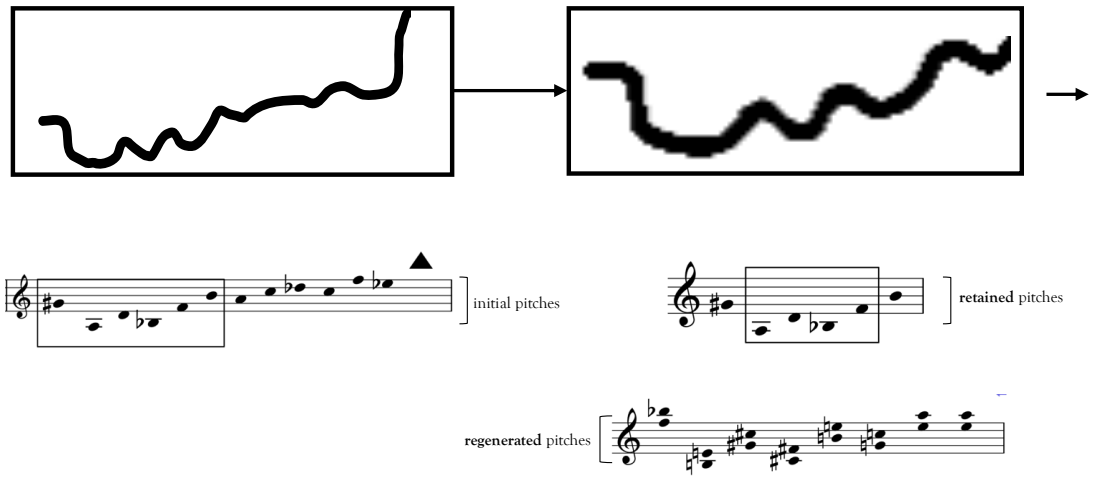
for string quartet

2020



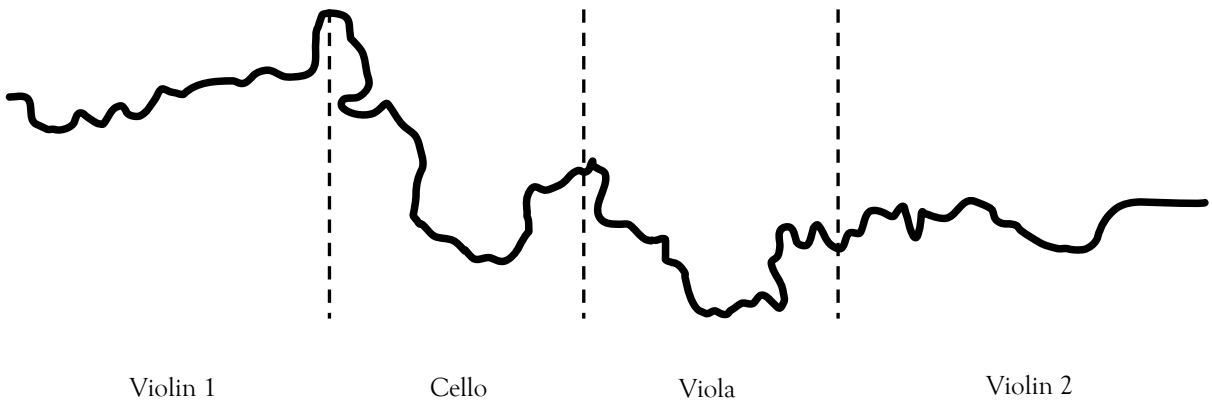
Composer's Note

This work is a continuation of my research concerning the process of pixelation in music. It explores how graphical inputs can organise pitch using two parameters: **retained** pitches (what remains of set derived from the original image) and **regenerated** pitches (generated using the new image; see below). The piece uses graphical insertions in the score, using portions of the river map to create glissandi, to be freely interpreted by the performer over the allotted time.



The music moves through the river, which is divided into four harmonic sections. Within each quarter, a process of pixelation via magnification occurs, which generates new derivations of the initial tone row. The initial row could be thought of as the 'surface' of the river, with each subsequent magnification going 'deeper', and thus less clear. These harmonic layers often exist simultaneously, and the 'retained' pitches (what is left of the original tone row after magnification) create a tension between these two representations on a local level. This tension can be manifested as a critique of natural and technological processes, forging an eco-critical interpretation of the work.

The process of composition was layered. From June to August, I wrote solo pieces for each of the quartet instruments, entitled *Vignettes of a Pixelated River*, which derive their material from each quarter of the river:



Complexes of material are shared across *Vignettes*, and these are used in the full quartet, informing textures and characterisation of instruments, e.g. the cello may have a more dominant role in 'quarter 2' material.

The quartet is played continuously, with no breaks in the structure. Whilst the graphical insertions act as transitions between different harmonic sections, it should not be thought of as different 'movements'; a river exists and flows in a unidirectional unbroken motion.

Performance Directions

 = highest possible pitch (indeterminate)

 = air noise; 'rauschen'

 = snap pizz.

–

This piece was commissioned for the Kreutzer Quartet, kindly funded by the Humanities Cultural Project Fund at the University of Oxford, and is dedicated to Kenneth Hesketh.

Duration: c. 28'

–

The river – I remember this like a picture – the river was the upper twist
of a written question mark.
I know now it takes many many years to write a river, a twist of water
asking a question.

– Carl Sandburg, *River Moons*, 1920

Dedicated to Kenneth Hesketh

Pixelating the River

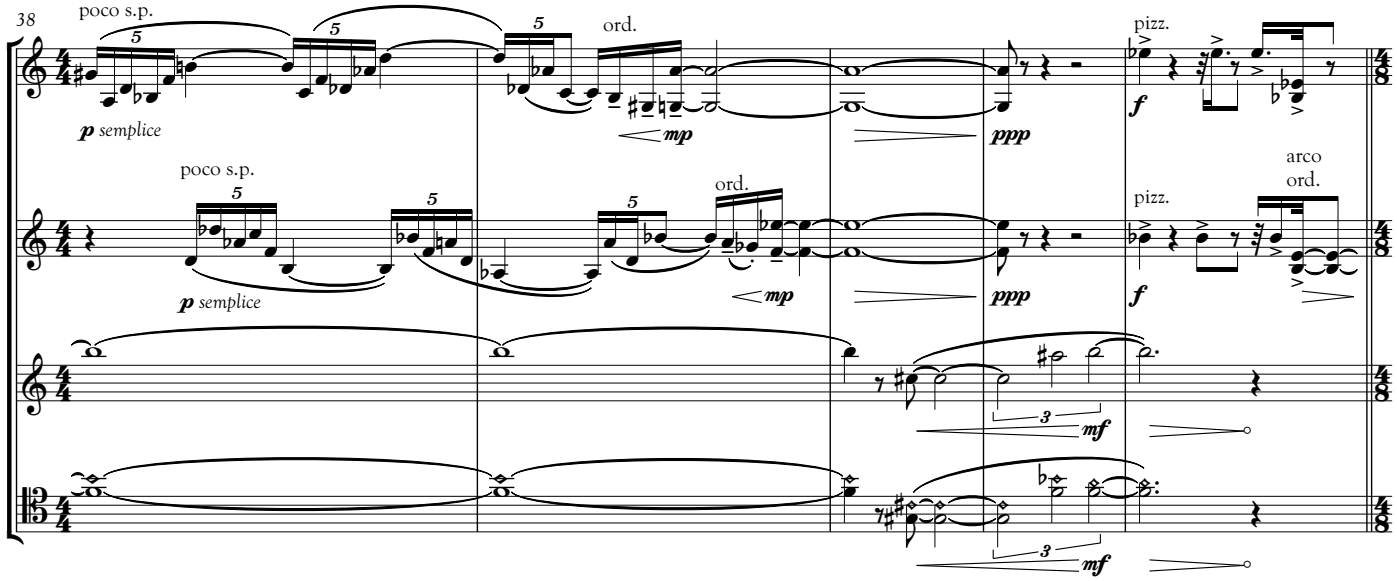
Thomas Metcalf (b. 1996)



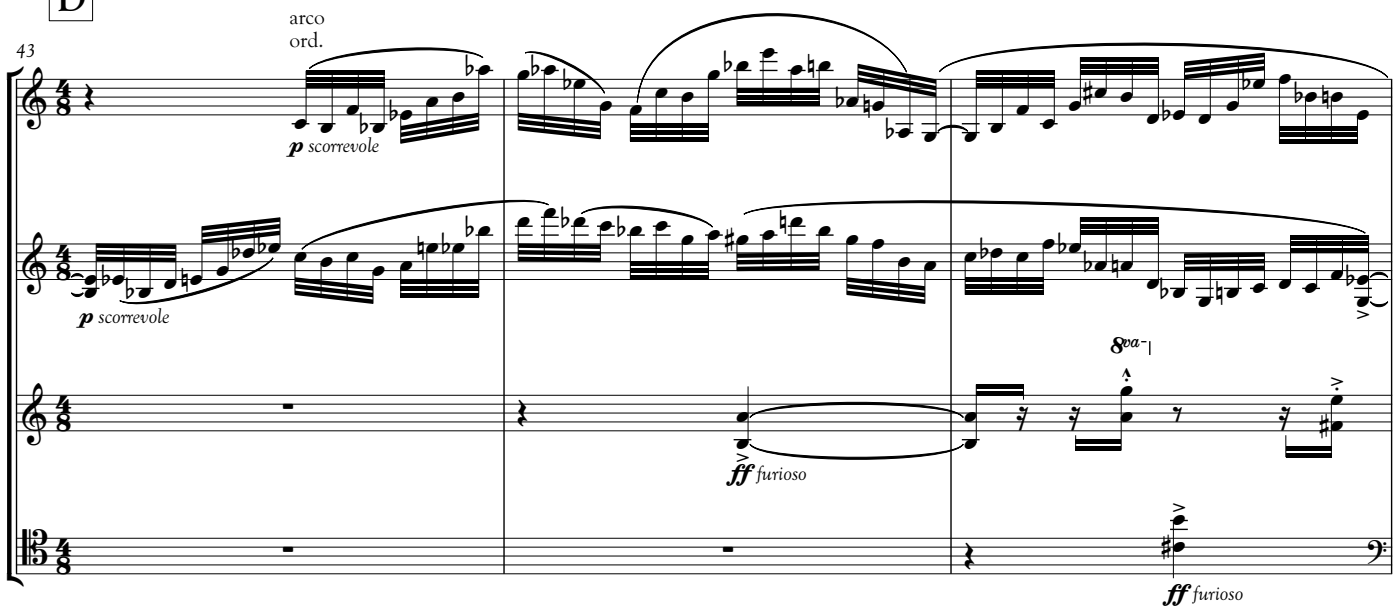
© 2020, Thomas Metcalf


Fluvial, l'istesso tempo (♩ = 52)
17
B
ppp luscious; cresc.
mf > pp
ppp
mp lamentoso
mf
24
ppp
mp cantabile
mf > p
mp timid
mf excitable
p
27
C
(no trill)
pizz.
arco
mf
mp
pp
mf sub.
ppp
sfz
agitato
fp
I
II
p agitato



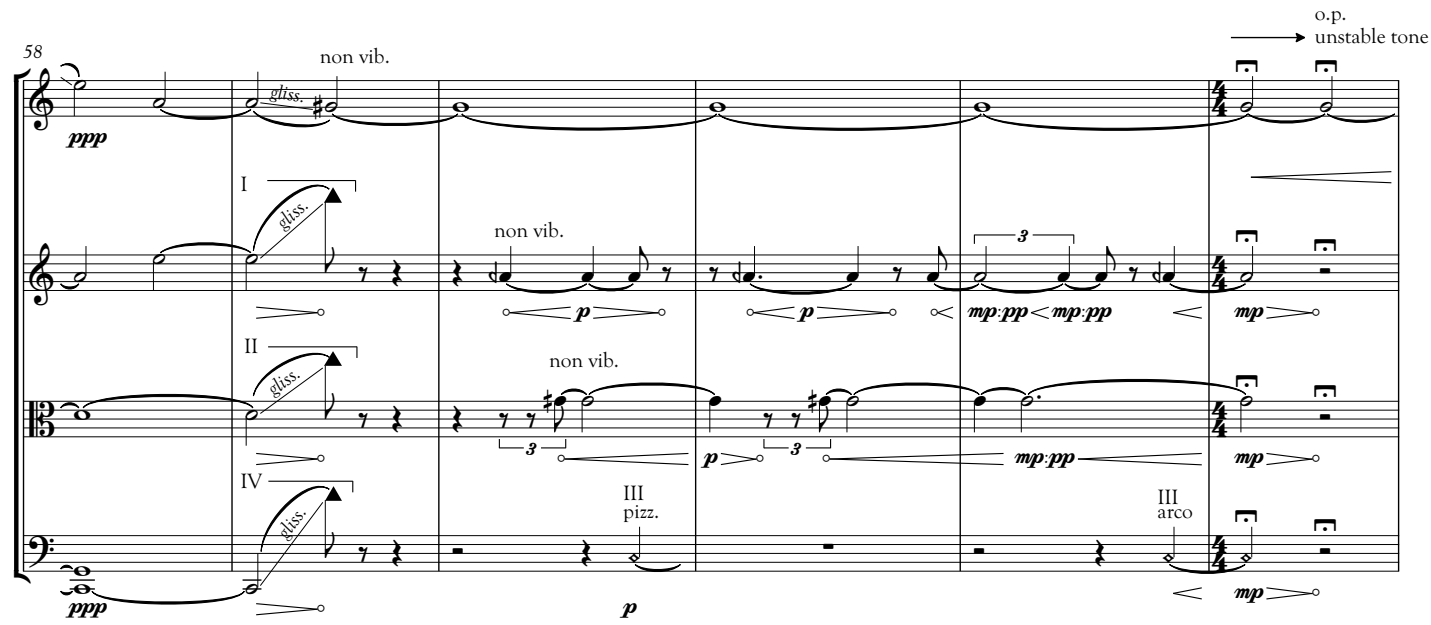


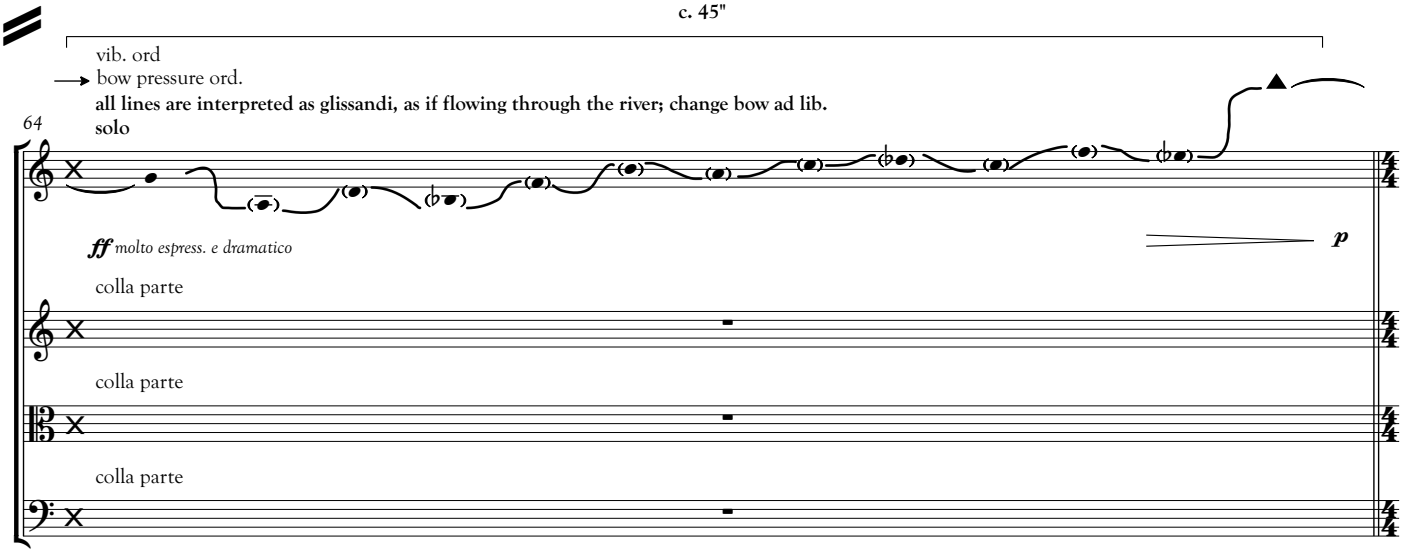
D L'istesso tempo; giusto (♪ = 104)




46
fp
fp
p
ff
p
ff
48
f
ff
f
ff
ff
pizz.
fp
ff
51
E
gliss.
f
p
p
mp
gliss.
p
arco
f scorrevole
pizz.
arco
f
scorrevole
sul pont.
ord.
6
mp

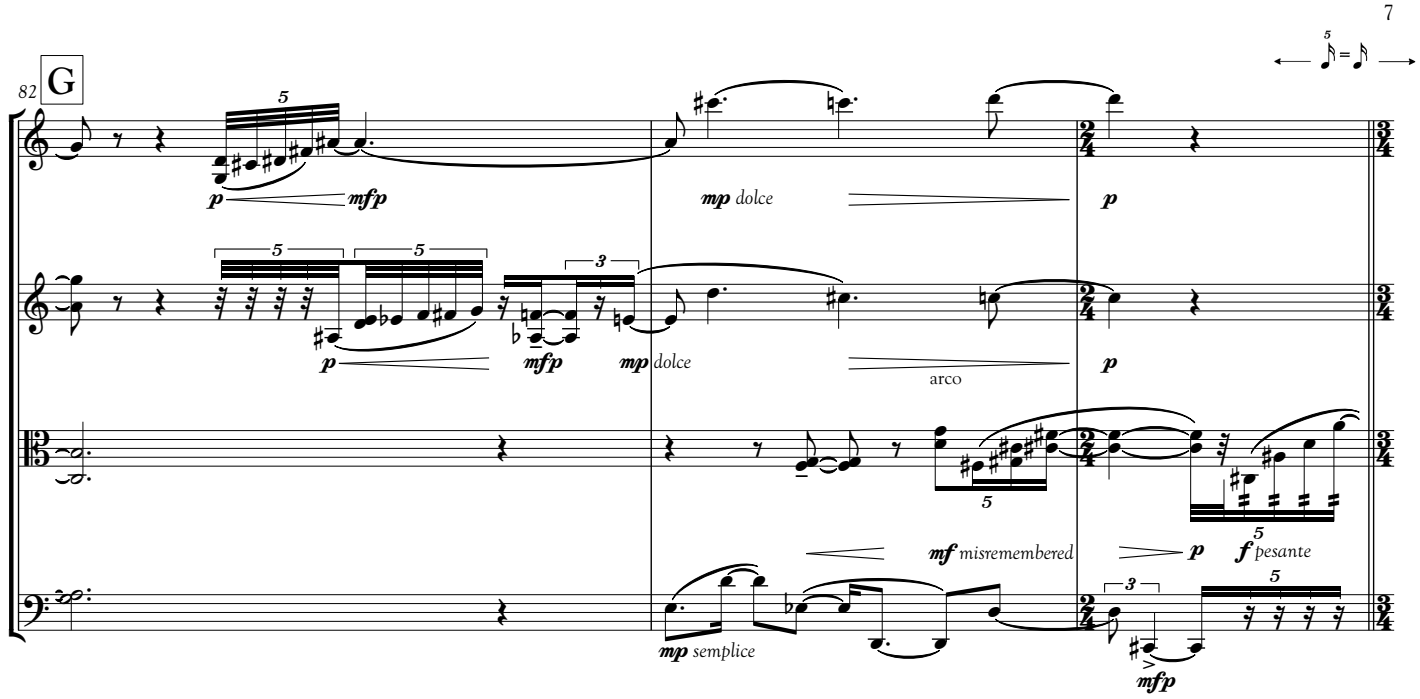

54
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
p
f
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
mp
p
f
ppp
sul pont.
ord.
mp
ff
fp
mf
ppp
sul pont.
ord.
p
f
fp
mf


o.p.
unstable tone
58
non vib.
ppp
gliss.
I
non vib.
p
mp:pp
mp
II
non vib.
gliss.
p
mp:pp
mp
IV
III
pizz.
III
arco
gliss.
ppp
p
mp

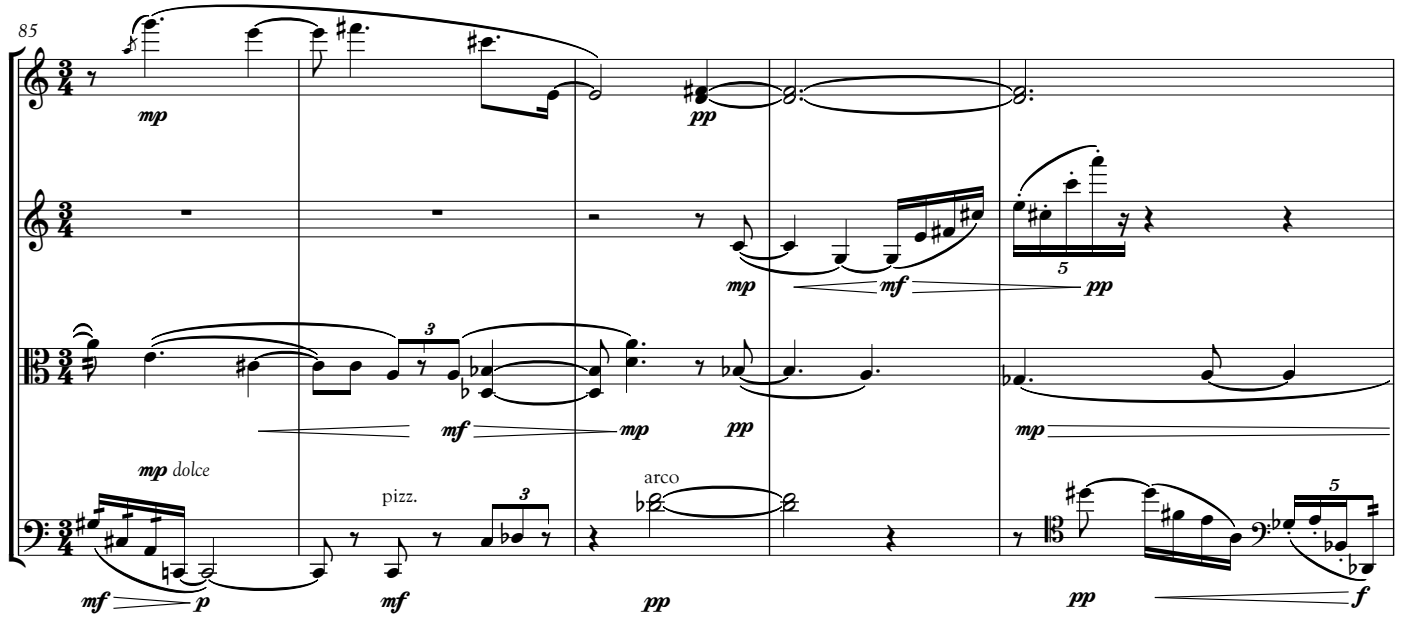

c. 45"
vib. ord
bow pressure ord.
all lines are interpreted as glissandi, as if flowing through the river; change bow ad lib.
solo
64
ff molto espress. e dramatico
p
colla parte
colla parte
colla parte

F Tempo giusto ♩ = 52





Flowing, steady (♩ = 65)

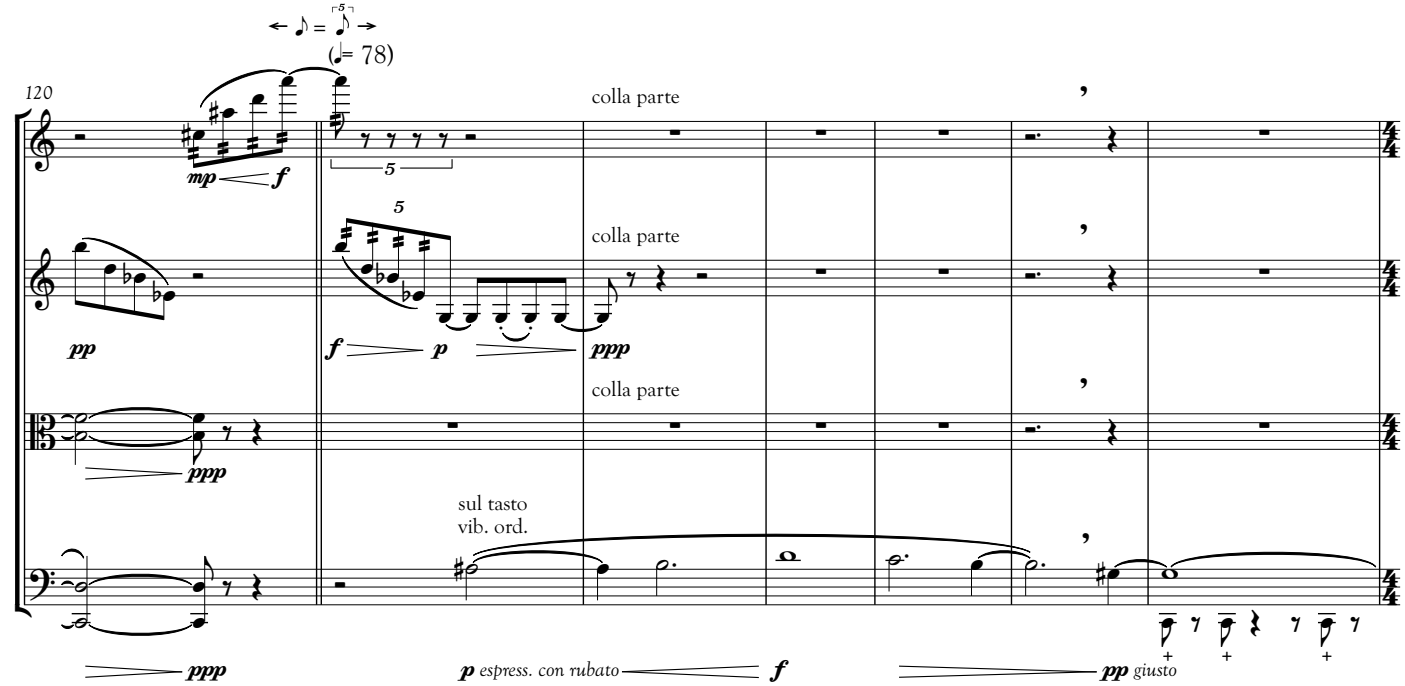





95
arco
sul pont.
sul pont.
ord.
ord.
97
I
non vib.
pp ethereal
ppp
mp frenzied
fp
fff
pesante
fff
pp semplice
102
pizz.
mp
pp
p pained
mfp
sul tasto
vib. ord.
sul pont.
gliss.
vib ord.


109
arco
p echo
fp
(♩= 97.5)
J
arco
p dolce
arco
mp espress.
p
mp
mf
p
ppp
pp

114
mfp
arco
semplice
p
pp
mp
ord.
mp:p
pp
mp sub.
p
p
p breathless
fp
mp
p
p


120
(♩= 78)
colla parte
mp
f
pp
f
p
ppp
colla parte
ppp
colla parte
sul tasto
vib. ord.
ppp
p espress. con rubato
f
pp giusto

127 K

arco
sul pont.

pizz.

mf semplice

131

arco
ord.

sul pont.

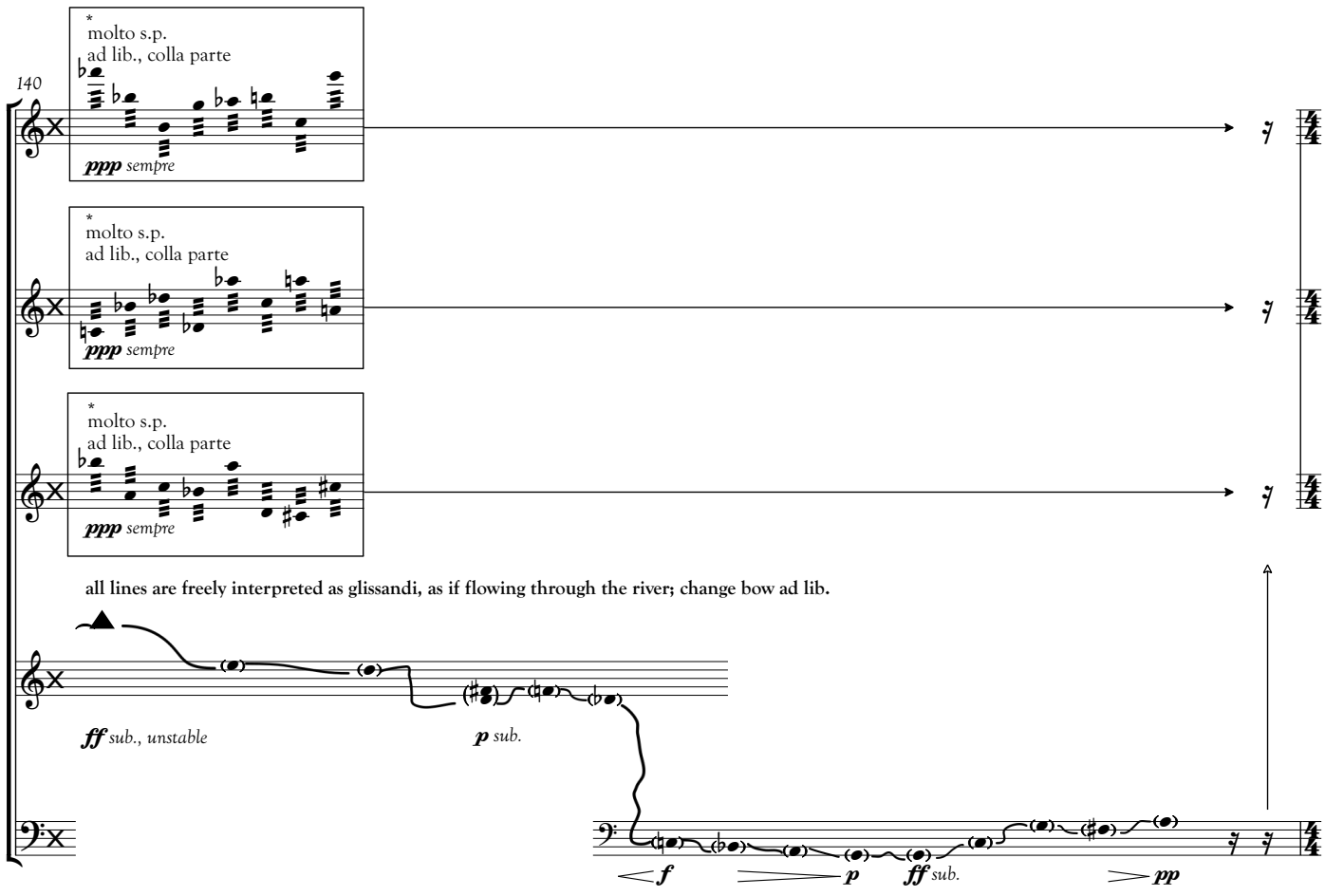
ord.

135 L

f molto cantabile, overbearing



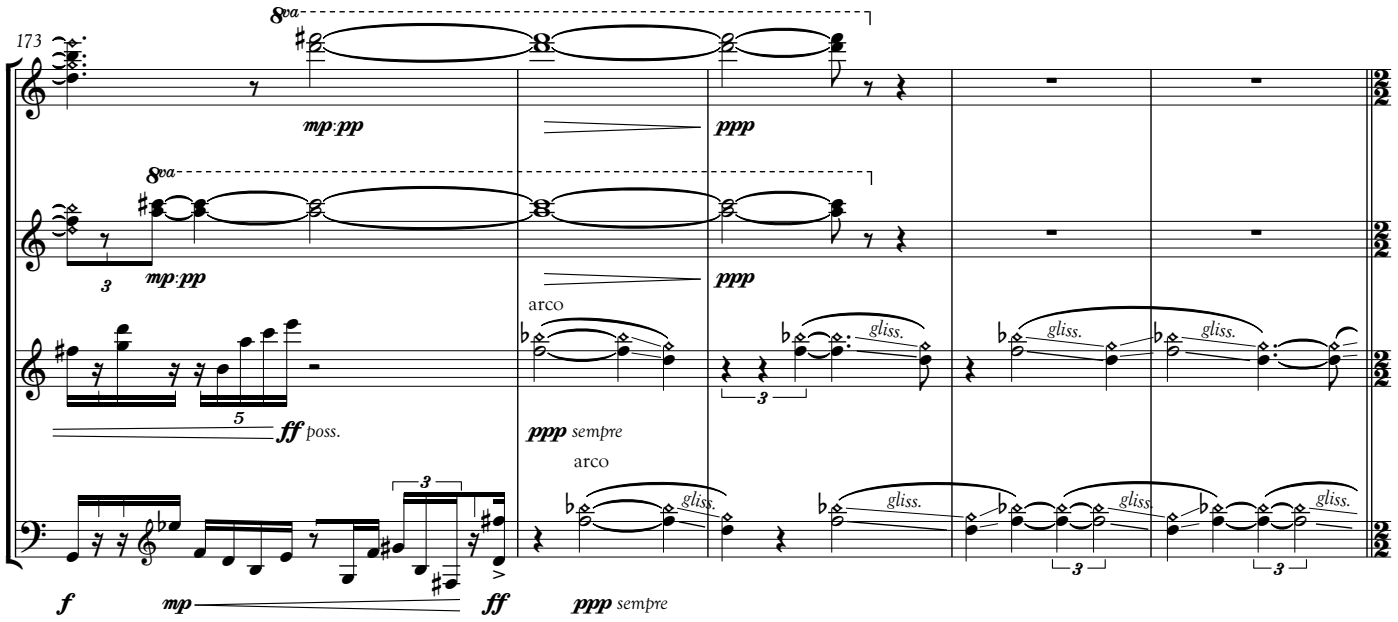
c. 45"

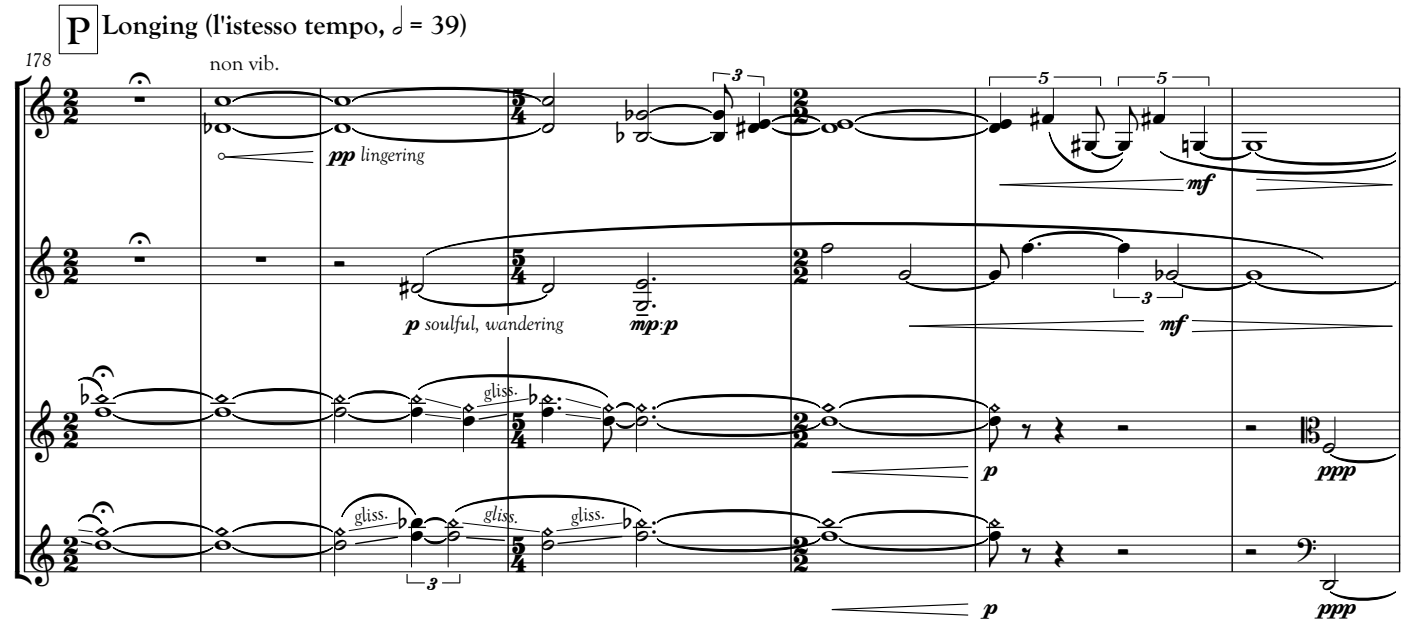


*at a comfortable speed; repeat pitches in any order


M
Uneasy ♩ = 78
141
sul pont.
pizz.
arco
non vib.
non vib.
I
145
ord.
pizz.
arco
151
gliss.
N
comodo
pizz.
arco
vib. ord.
grandioso


157
O
non vib.
III
IV
pizz.
gliss.
164
169
arco
agitato
meccanico


173
8va
mp:pp
ppp
arco
gliss.
ff poss.
ppp sempre
f
mp
ff
ppp sempre

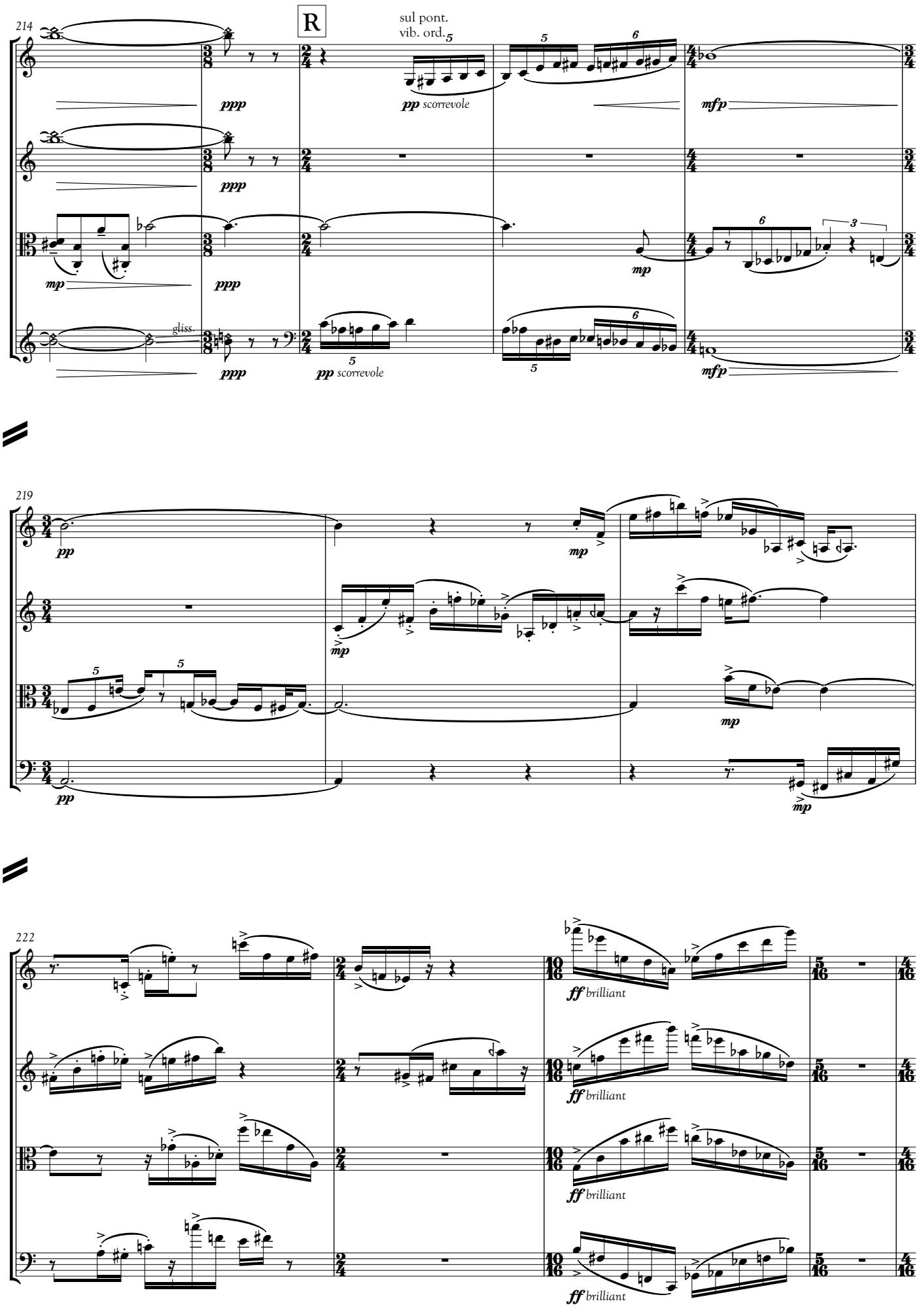

P Longing (l'istesso tempo, 𝅗𝅥 = 39)
178
non vib.
pp lingering
p soulful, wandering
mp:p
gliss.
mf
p
ppp


185
pp
ppp
non vib.
vib. ord.
p soulful, wandering
mfp
mp
mf
pp
f


193
Q
gliss.
mp
mf
ppp
pp lingering
mp confused
pizz.
arco
pp
mp
vib. ord.
mp confused
mfp
non vib.
ppp lingering
201
sluggish
f
207
pizz.
molto vib.
arco
molto vib. poss.
pp shrill
IV
sul pont.
light bow pressure;
unstable tone
ppp weak
ord.

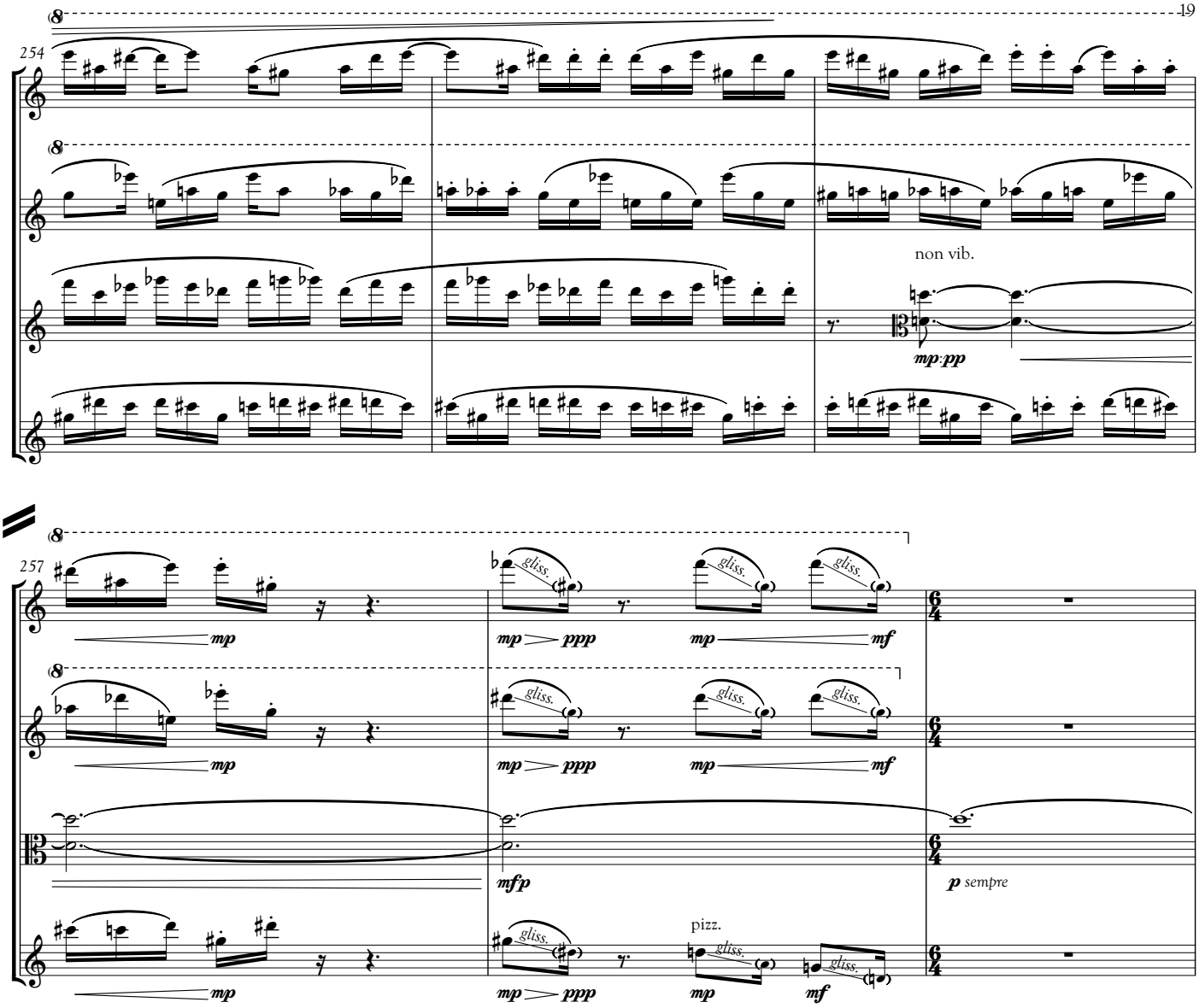
[♩ = 97.5, ♪ = 195]

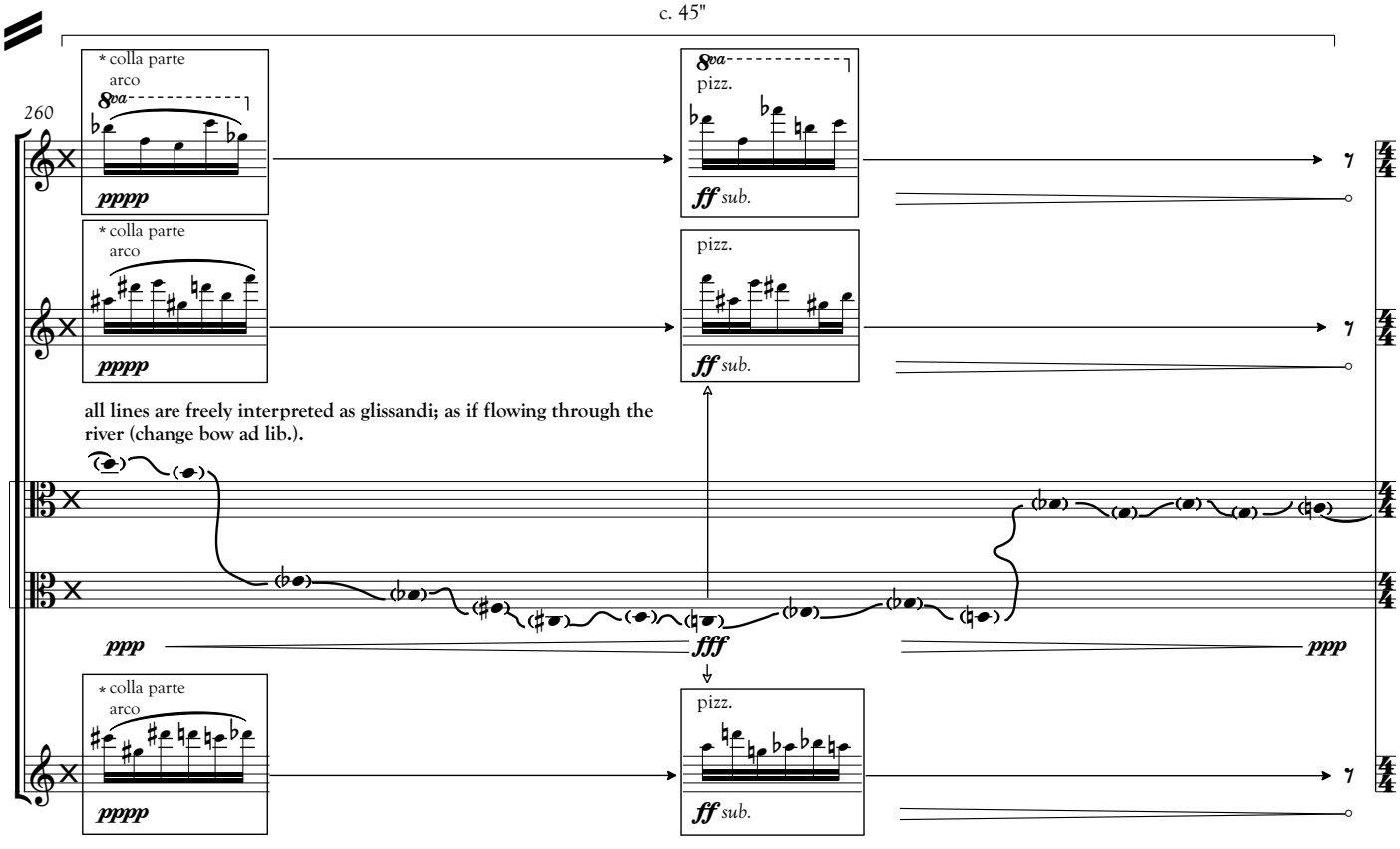
Strained ♩ = 97.5, ♪ = 195




226
S
colla parte
colla parte
ad lib.
colla parte
fff indulgent
232
sul pont.
vib. ord.
arco
ord.
237
[♪. = 130]
ricochet
fff tutta forza

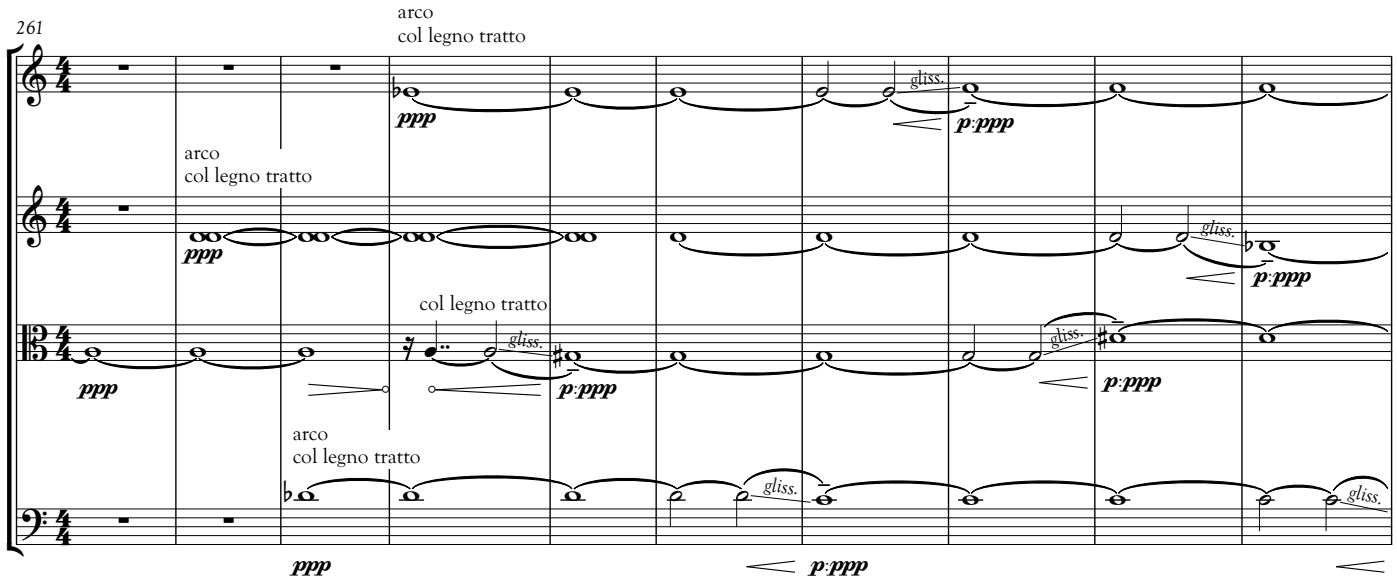

243
p echo
fff
T
247
pp
mf
ppp legatissimo
f p
8va
251

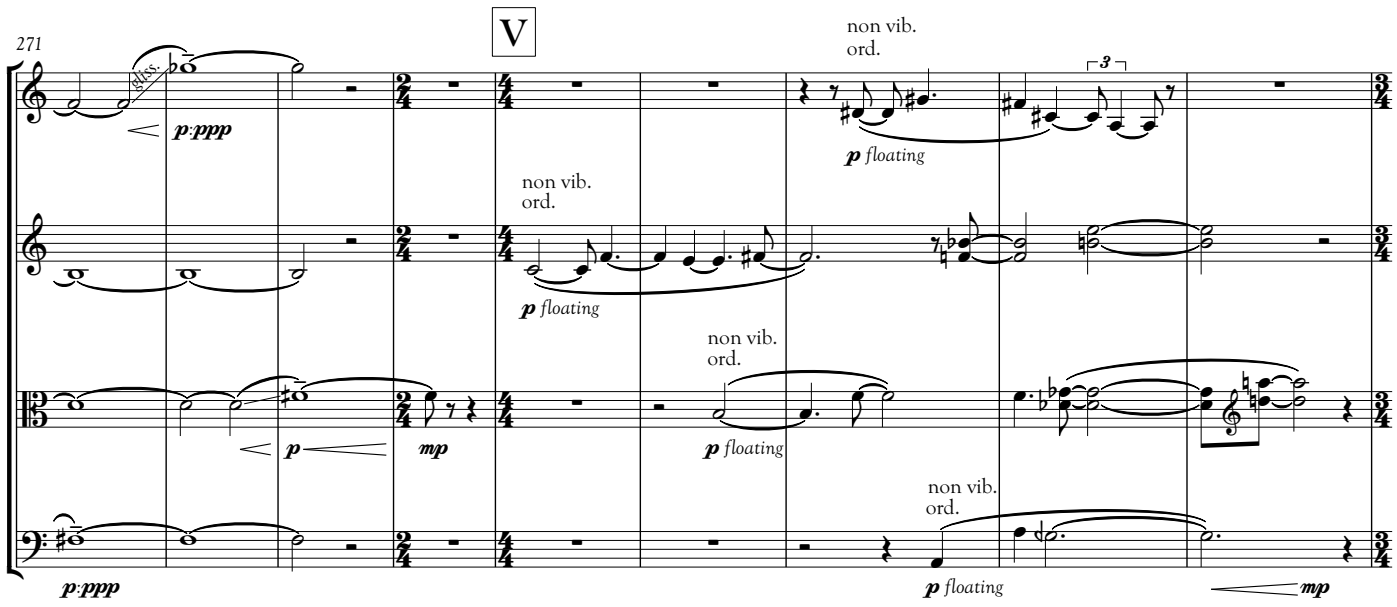

254
non vib.
mp pp
257
mp
mp ppp
mf
gliss.
mfp
p sempre
pizz.


c. 45"
260
* colla parte
arco
8va
pppp
pizz.
ff sub.
all lines are freely interpreted as glissandi; as if flowing through the river (change bow ad lib.).
ppp
fff
* as fast as possible; uncgrouped/unaccented

U

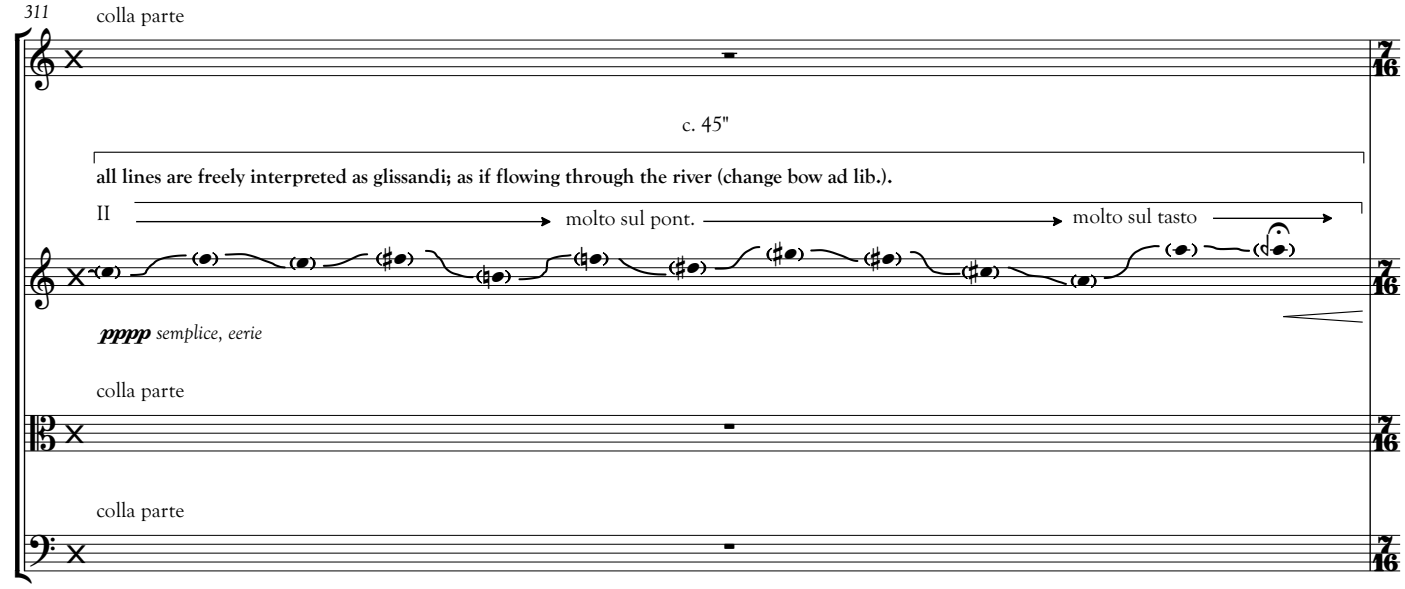
Languorous, dreamy ♩ = c. 49

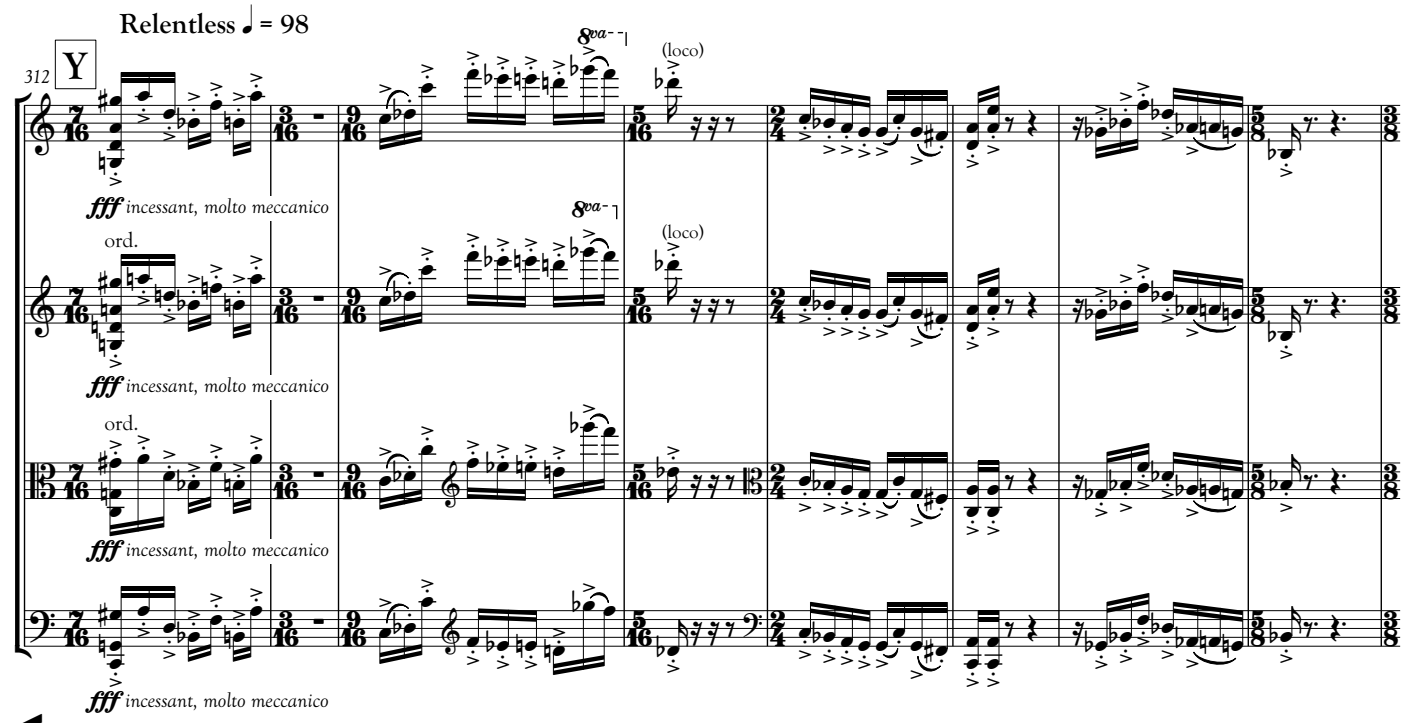







W
288
p
mf > p
p
vib. ord.
p
pizz.
p echo
mp poco agitato e espress.
X
294
light bow pressure;
unstable tone
ppp
p
ppp
sfz
p molto espress.
gliss.
ppp
sfz
vib. ord.
pp
mp
303
bow pressure ord.
non vib.
III
gliss.
mp
ppp
fff
non vib.
gliss.
o.p.
unstable tone
ppp
fff
II
gliss.
non vib.
gliss.
scratch tone; grinding
fff
arco
scratch tone; grinding
fff


311
colla parte
c. 45"
all lines are freely interpreted as glissandi; as if flowing through the river (change bow ad lib.).
II
molto sul pont.
molto sul tasto
pppp semplice, eerie
colla parte
colla parte


Relentless ♩ = 98
312
Y
8va
(loco)
fff incessant, molto meccanico
ord.
fff incessant, molto meccanico
ord.
fff incessant, molto meccanico
fff incessant, molto meccanico


320


328
Z
8va
(loco)
fp
fff
335
340

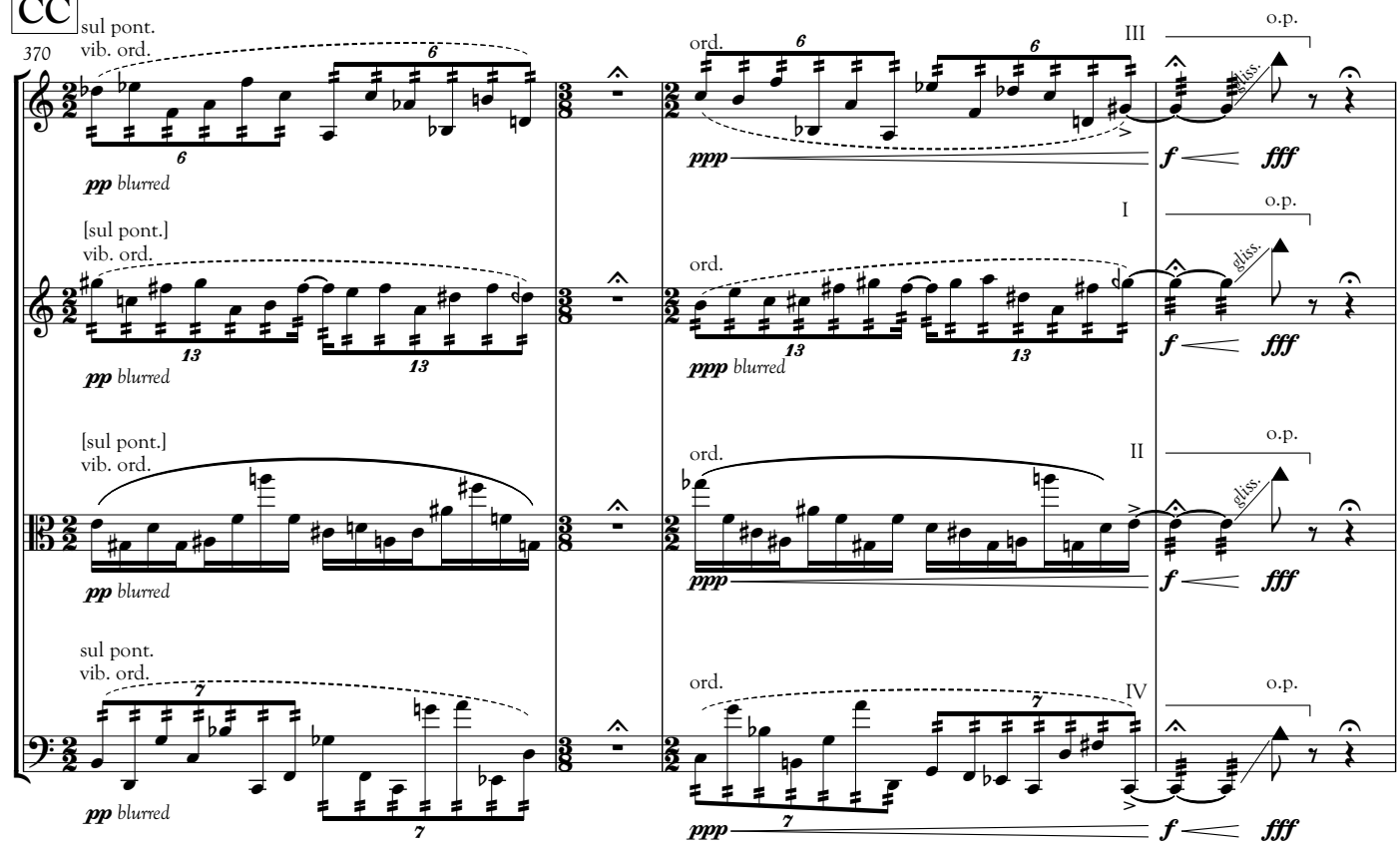
rit. - - - - - - - a tempo AA

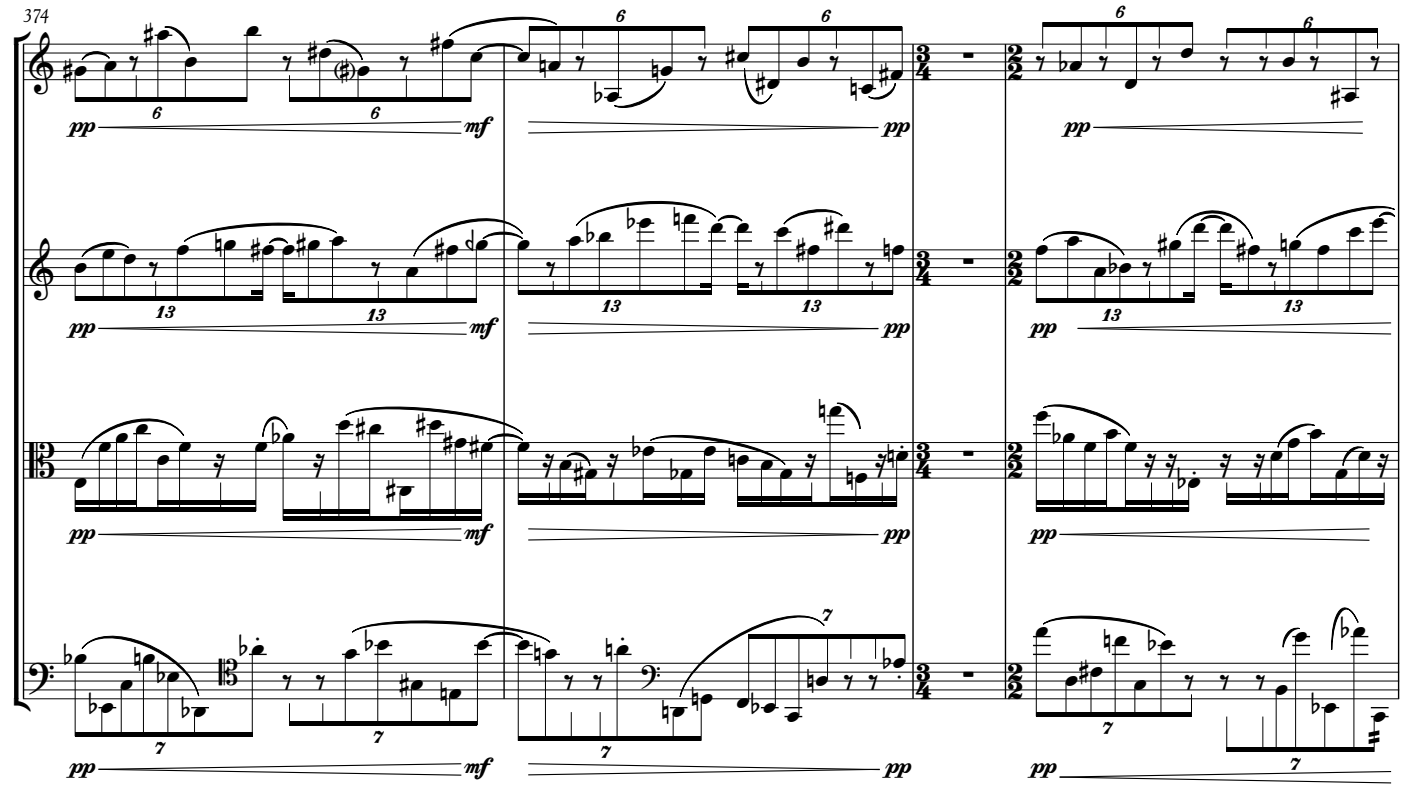



BB
362
non vib.
[2+2+3]
sul pont.
sul pont.
non vib.

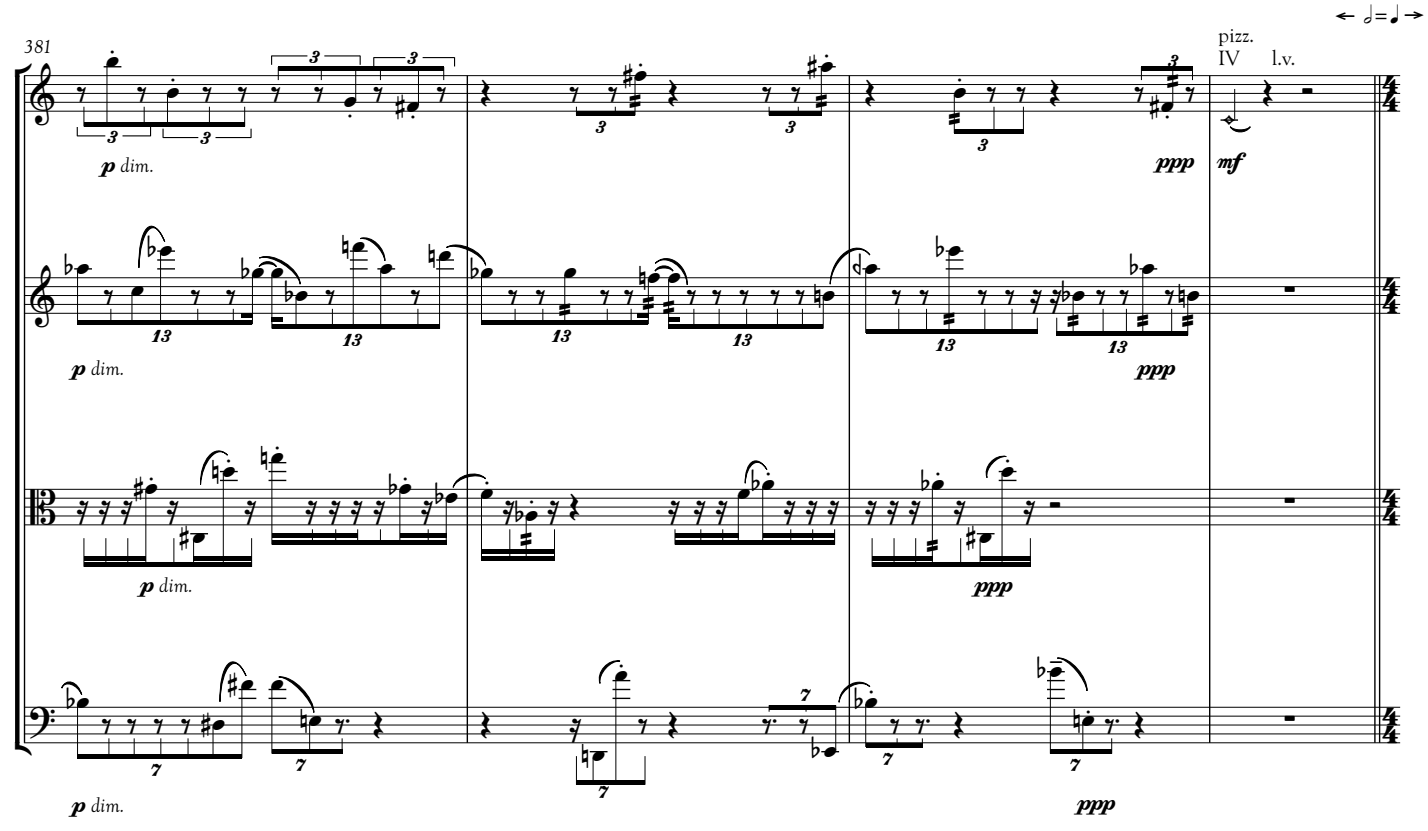

[3+3]
[3+2]
366
non vib.
non vib.

CC **Liberamente, disintegrating (l'istesso tempo)**






DD
378
mp
pp
fff
pp
fff
mp
pp
fff
pp
mp
pp
pp


381
p dim.
ppp
mf
pizz.
IV l.v.
p dim.
ppp
p dim.
ppp
p dim.
ppp

EE **Transcendent (♩ = c. 49)**

