Steven Snowden

Bird Catching From Above

String Quartet

Bird Catching From Above

Commissioned for the Lydian String Quartet
at Brandeis University
by the Lydian String Quartet Commission Prize 2015
Generously funded by a gift from Anonymous Donors

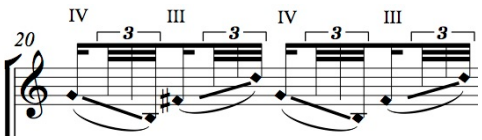
Approximate duration: 20 min.

Bird Catching From Above is the caption for an 1813 illustration by John Heaviside Clark. The drawing depicts a Scotsman dangling perilously from a long rope high above jagged seaside cliffs. With a large net in his hands and his kilt waving in the high winds, he dangles, poised to snatch one of hundreds of birds as they swoop into their nests on the cliff side.

Two years ago, I spotted a framed print of this illustration on the wall of a dilapidated country home in Westchester County, NY. Hanging amidst regal portraits and sprawling landscapes, the (somewhat comical) absurdity of the scenario depicted in this illustration initially caught my eye. The image stuck with me and, after a bit of research, I found that this was indeed a very real (and very dangerous) method of hunting. I began to consider the complexity of what the hunter could be thinking and feeling at that precarious moment and decided to base the four movements of this piece on four possible states of mind.

Performance Notes

Harmonic Gliss effect



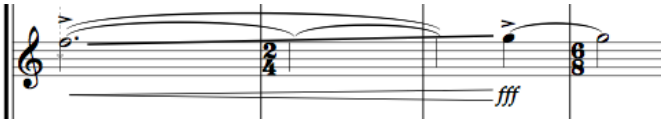
To execute this technique, Gradually slide your finger to and from the indicated harmonics. In doing this, you should hear the harmonics in between the departure and arrival point pop out as you pass by their respective nodal points. If the glissando is continuous and even, a rhythm similar to the one notated will hopefully result.

Other Glissandi

All Glissandi should be executed roughly over the entire duration of the first note to which they are attached.

In this example, begin bending the pitch downward at the beginning of the bar and take the entire duration of three eighths to arrive at the destination pitch.

In this example, begin bending the pitch upward at the beginning of the dotted half and take entire duration of six quarters to arrive at the destination pitch.



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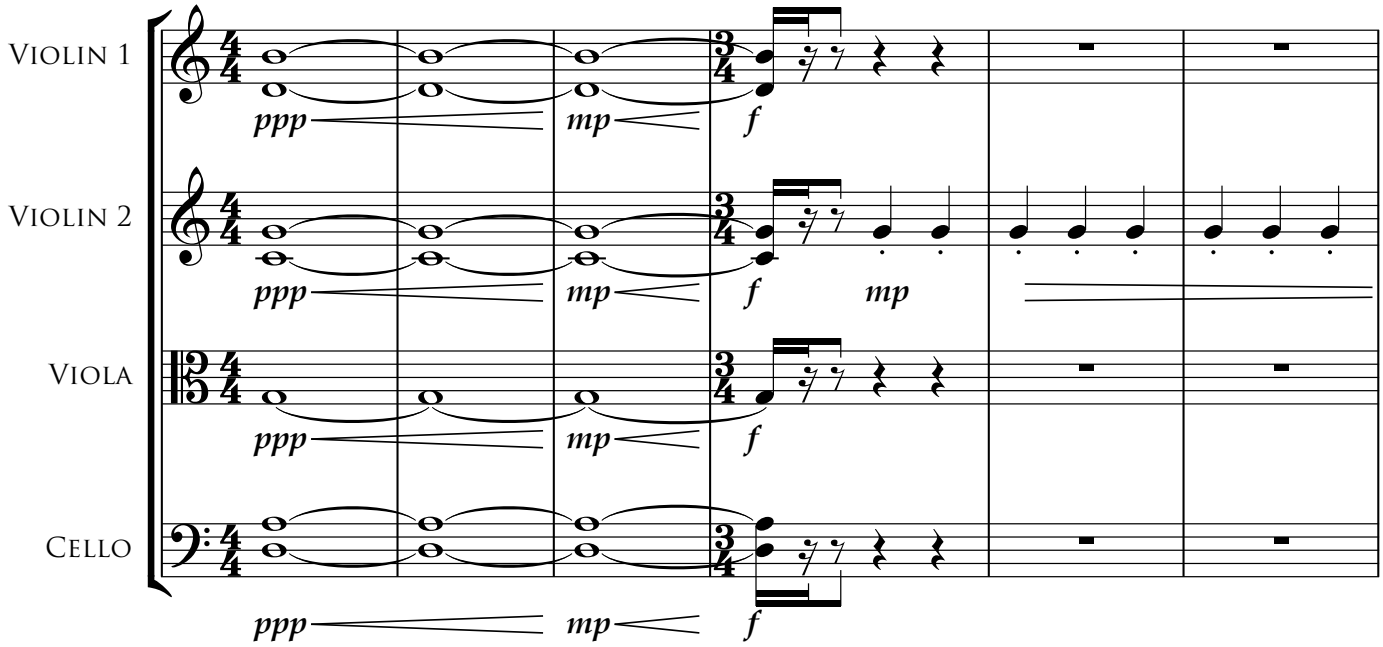
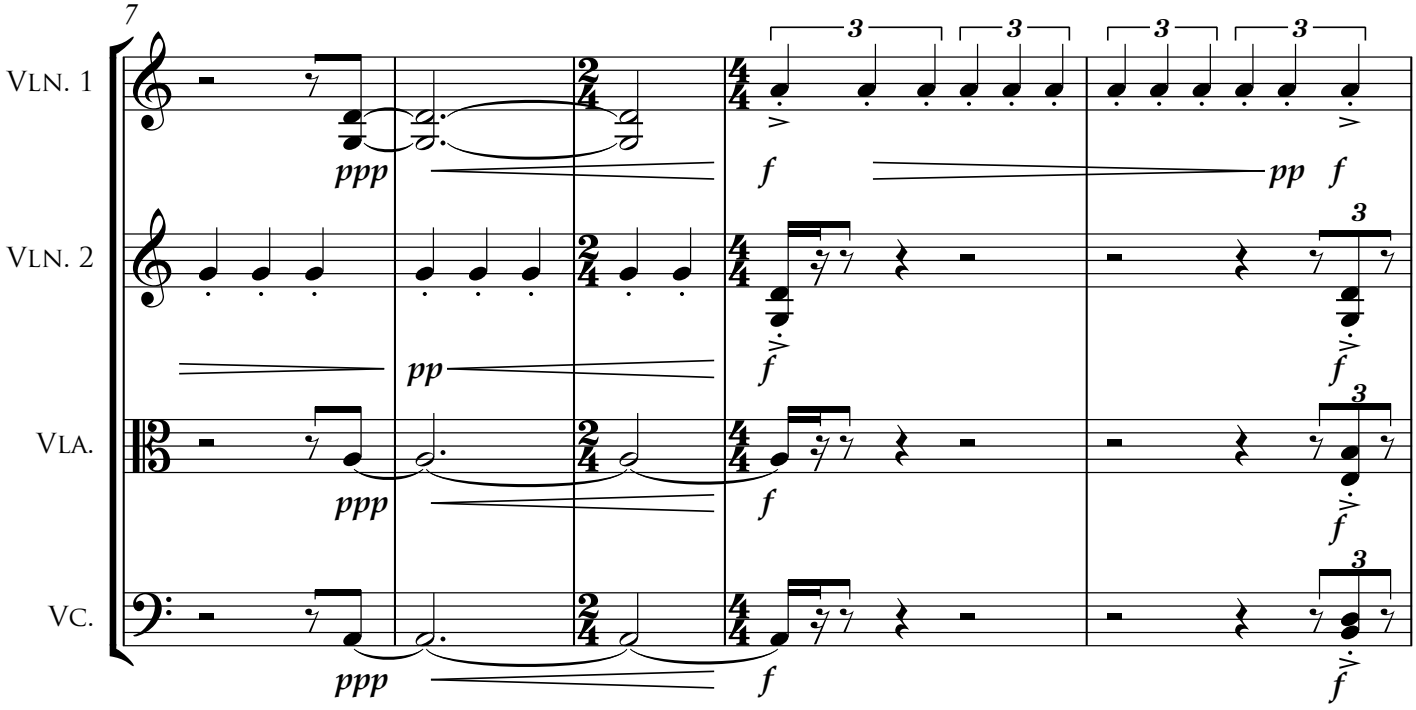
www.stevensnowden.com

Bird Catching From Above
I

Steven Snowden

Coming into focus ♩ = 126





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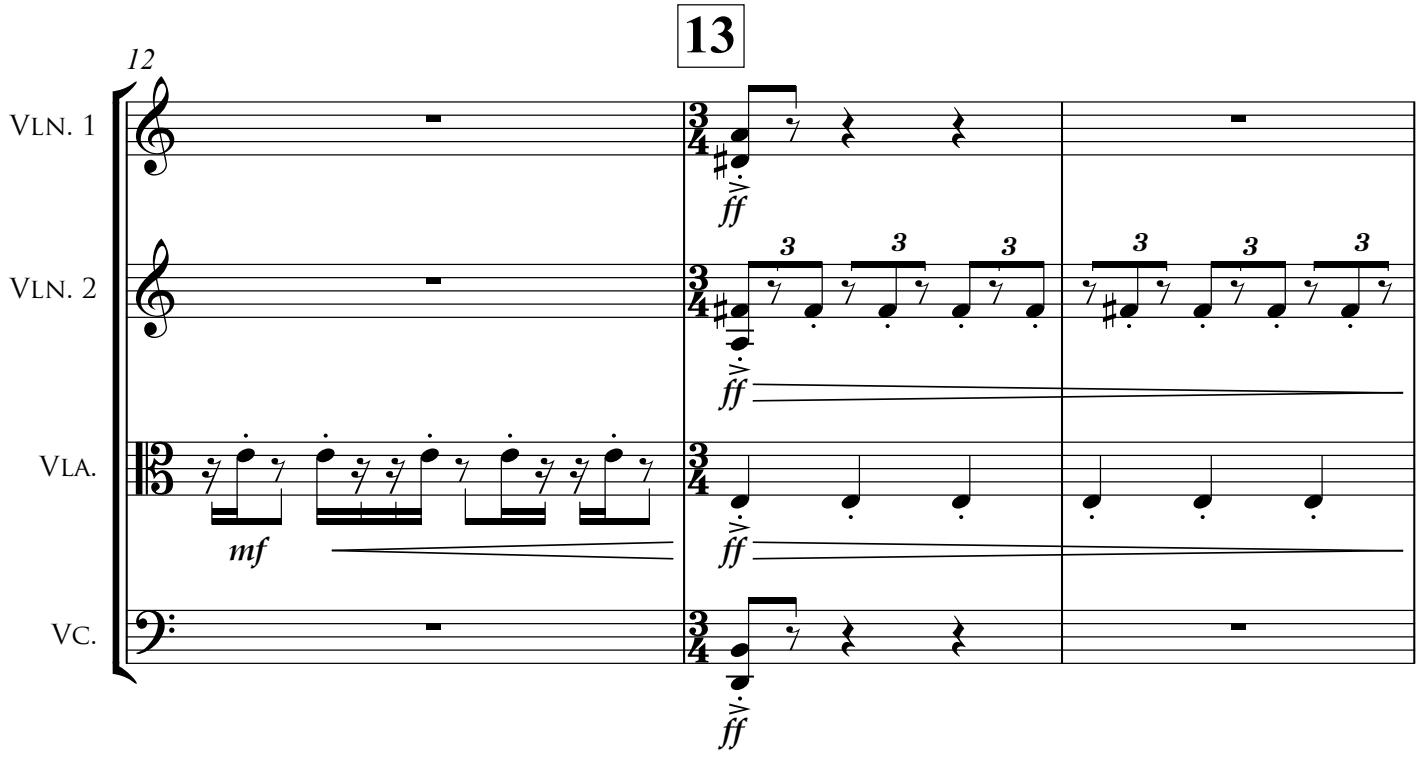
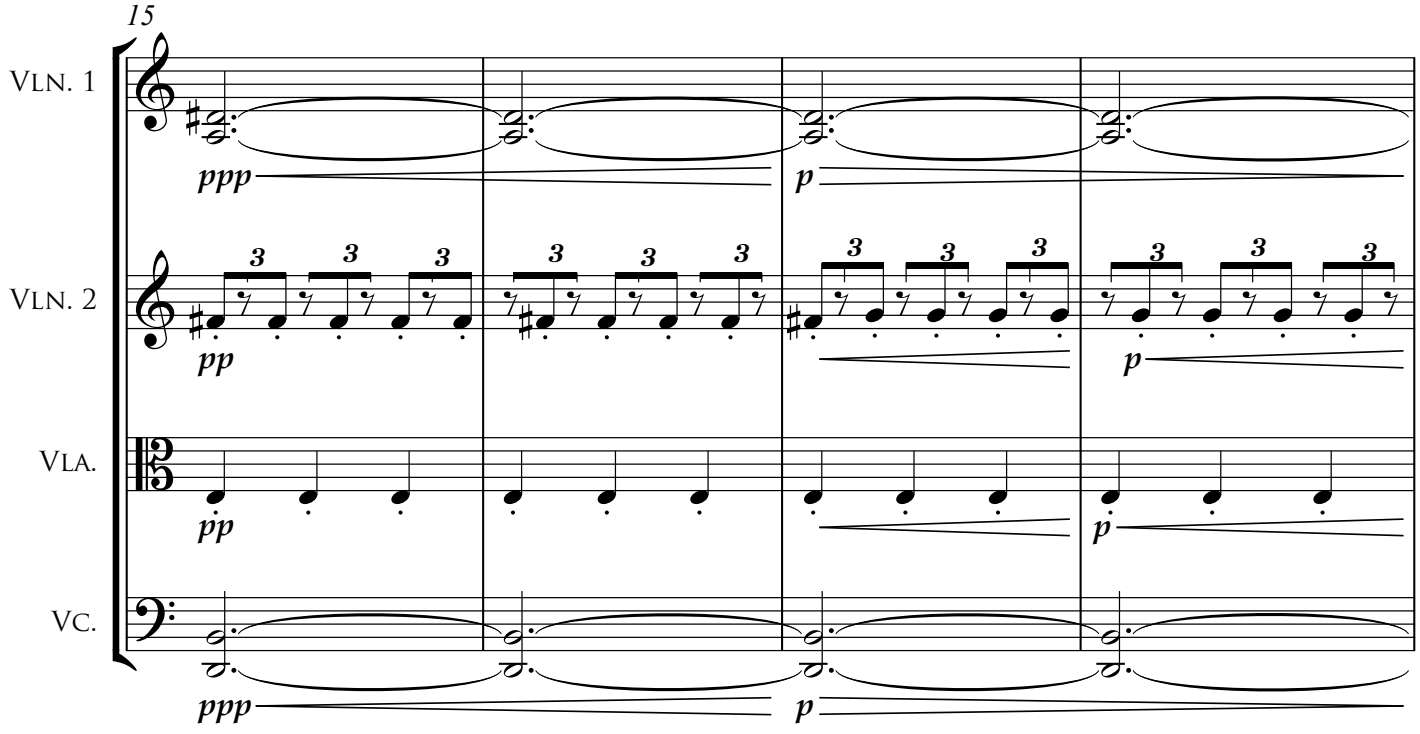
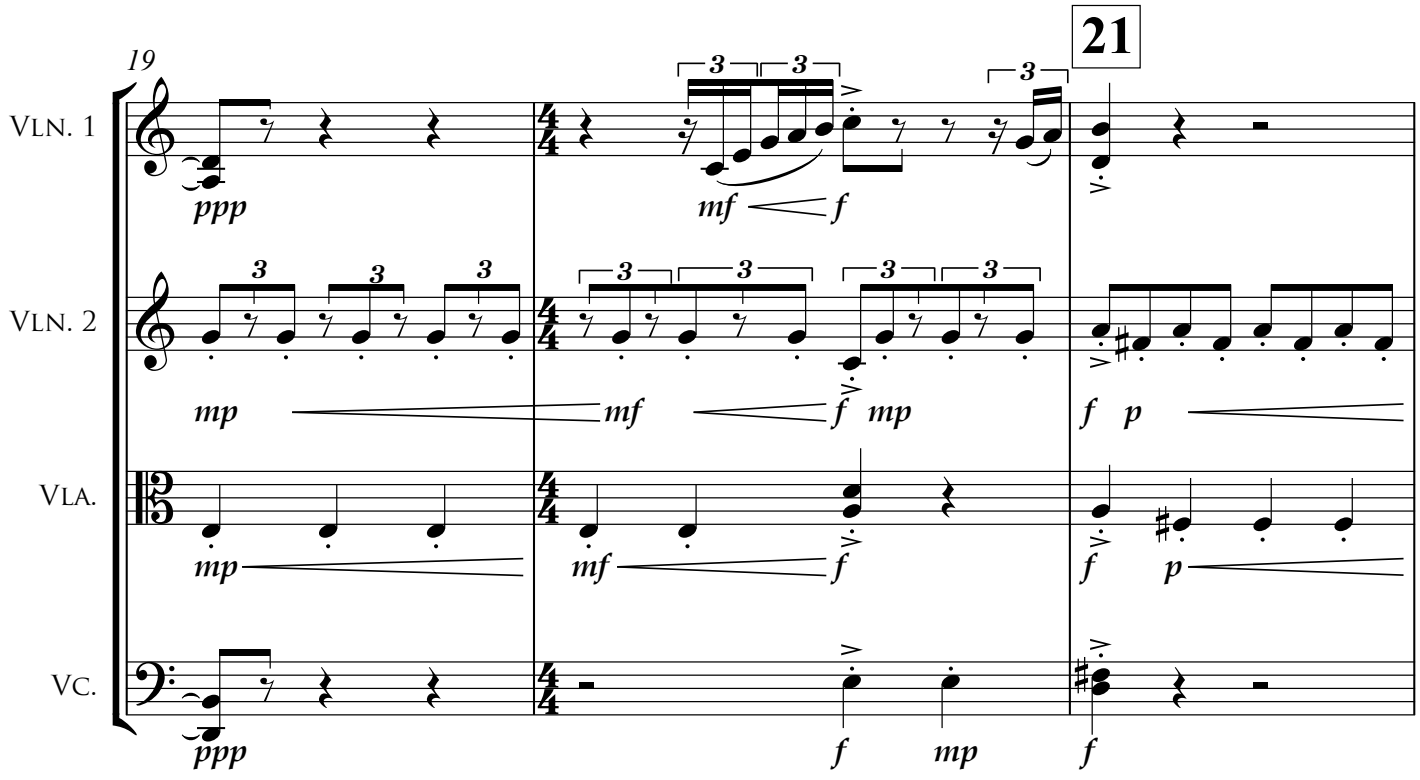
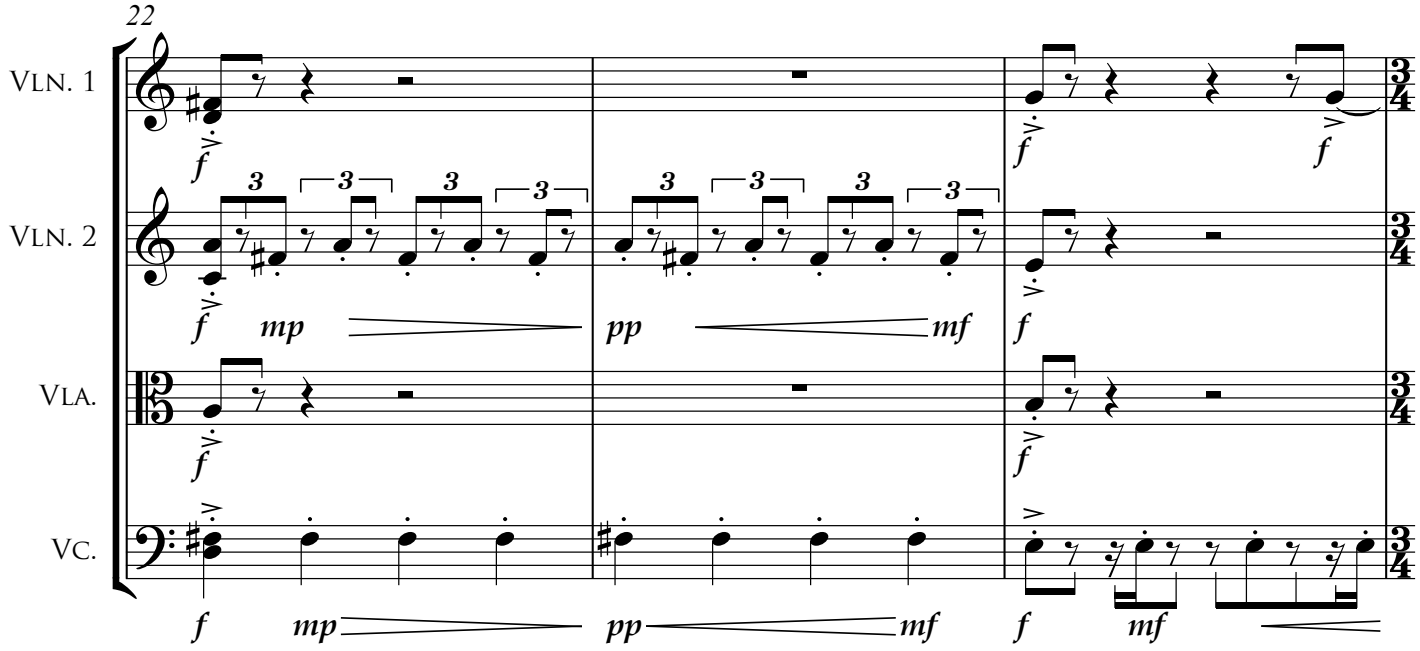
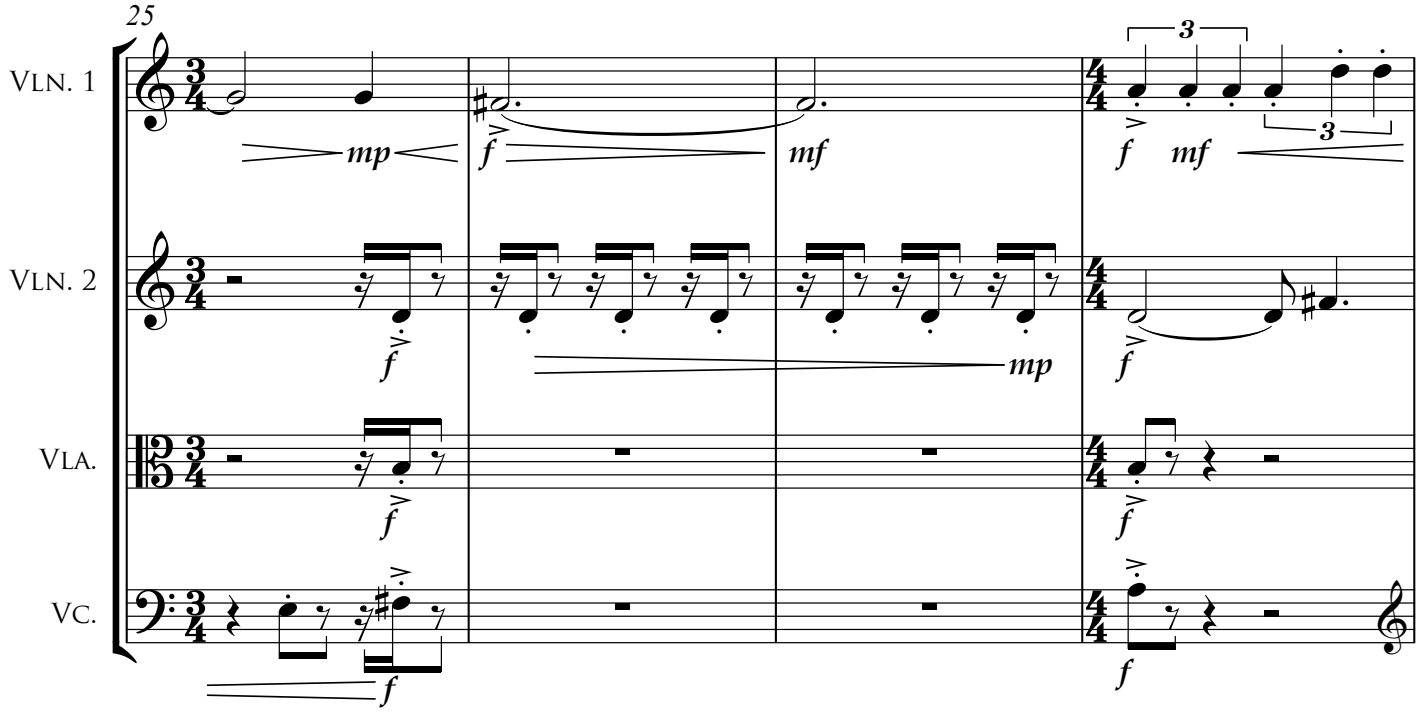
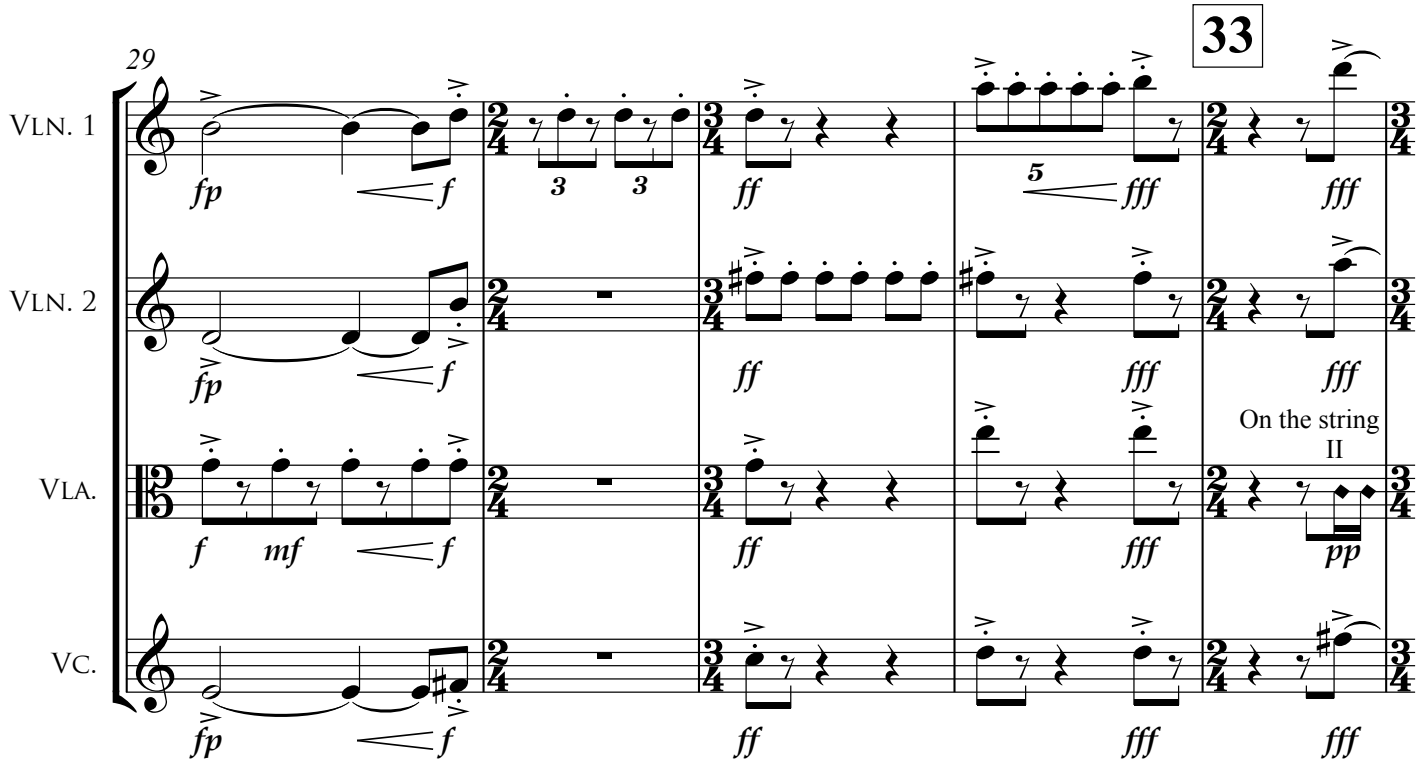

13
12
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ff
mf

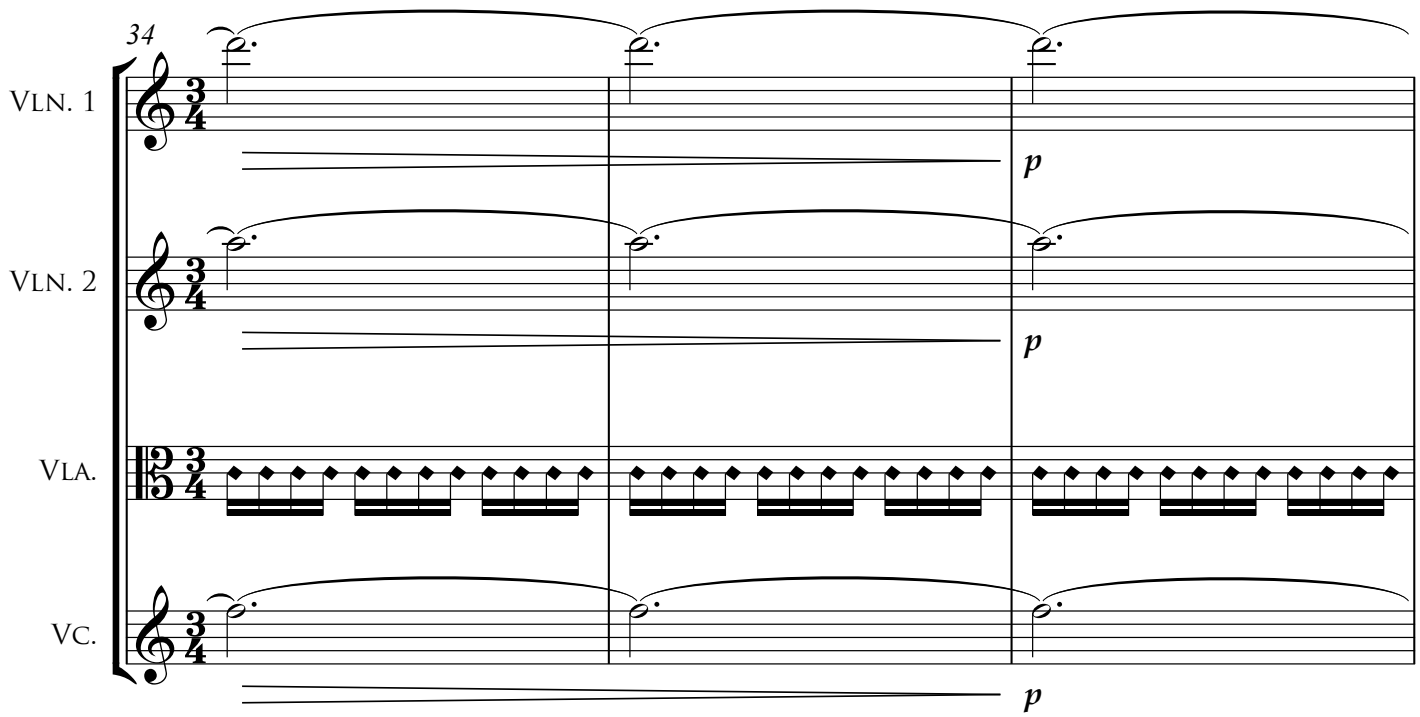

15
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ppp
pp
p

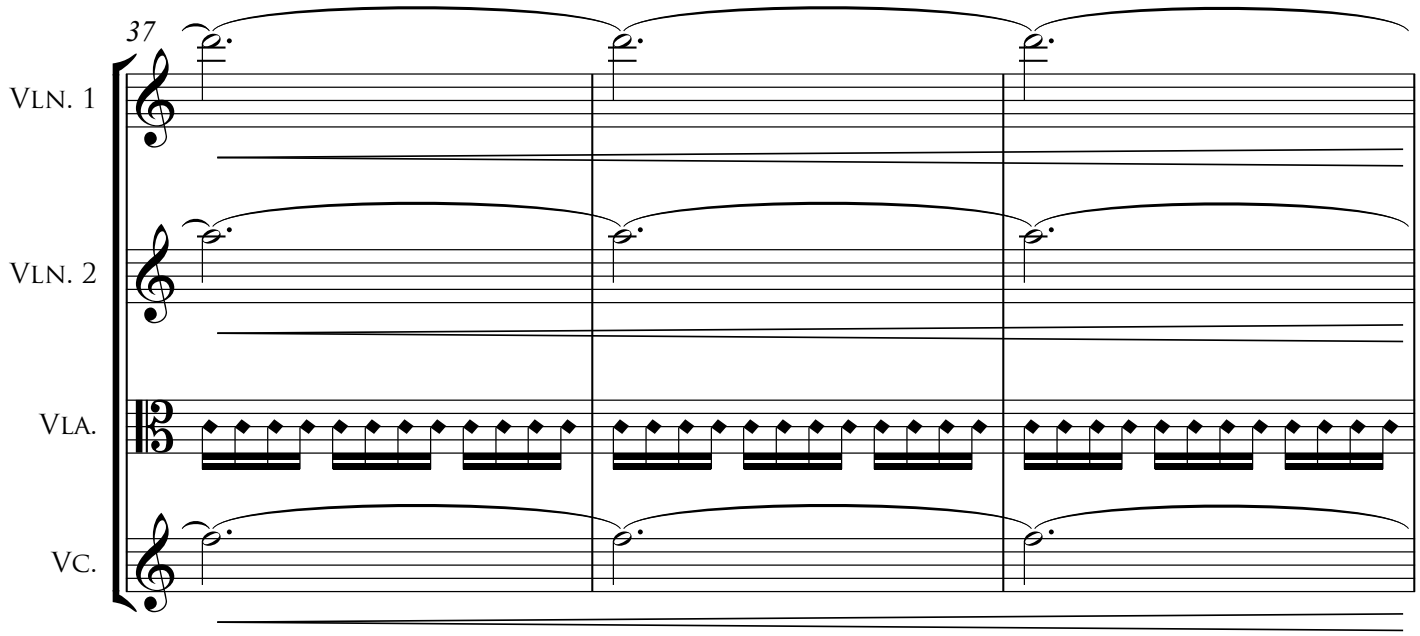

19
21
VLN. 1
VLN. 2
VLA.
VC.
ppp
mf
f
mp
p

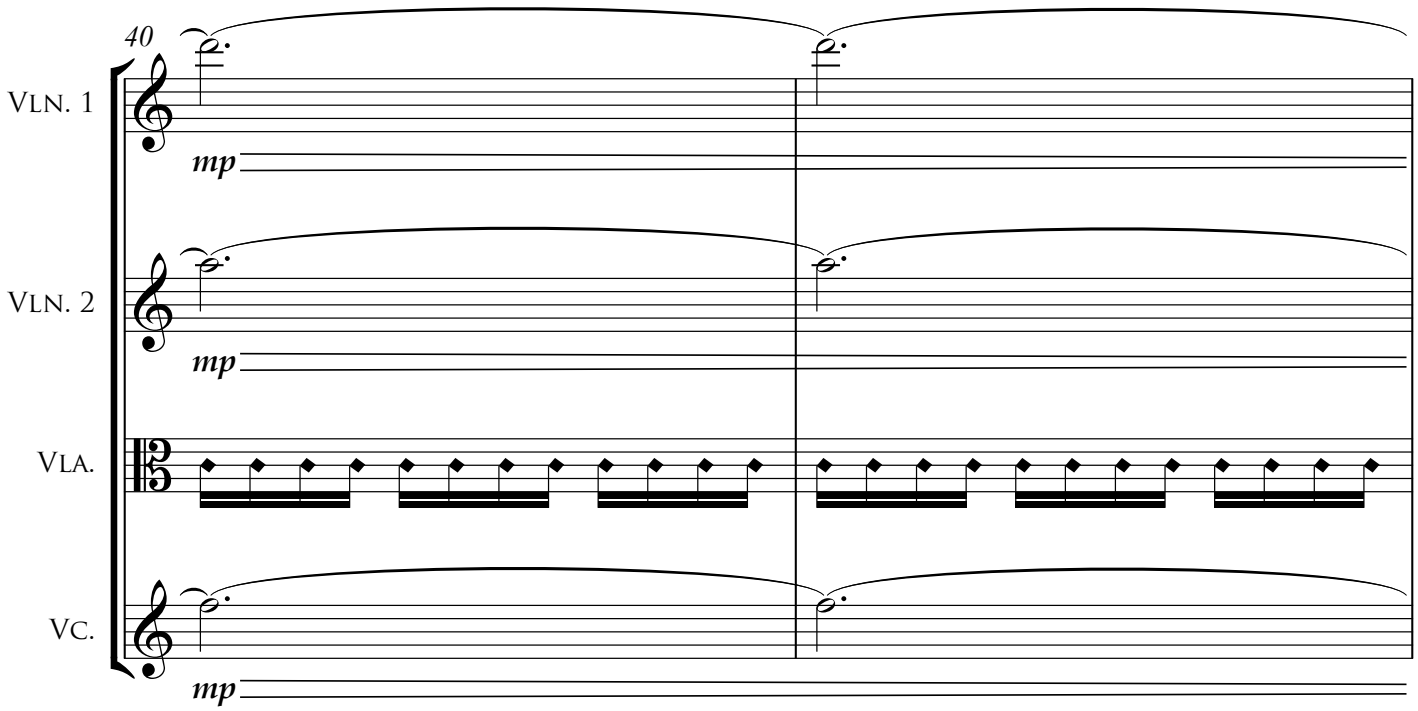

22
VLN. 1
VLN. 2
VLA.
VC.
f
mp
pp
mf

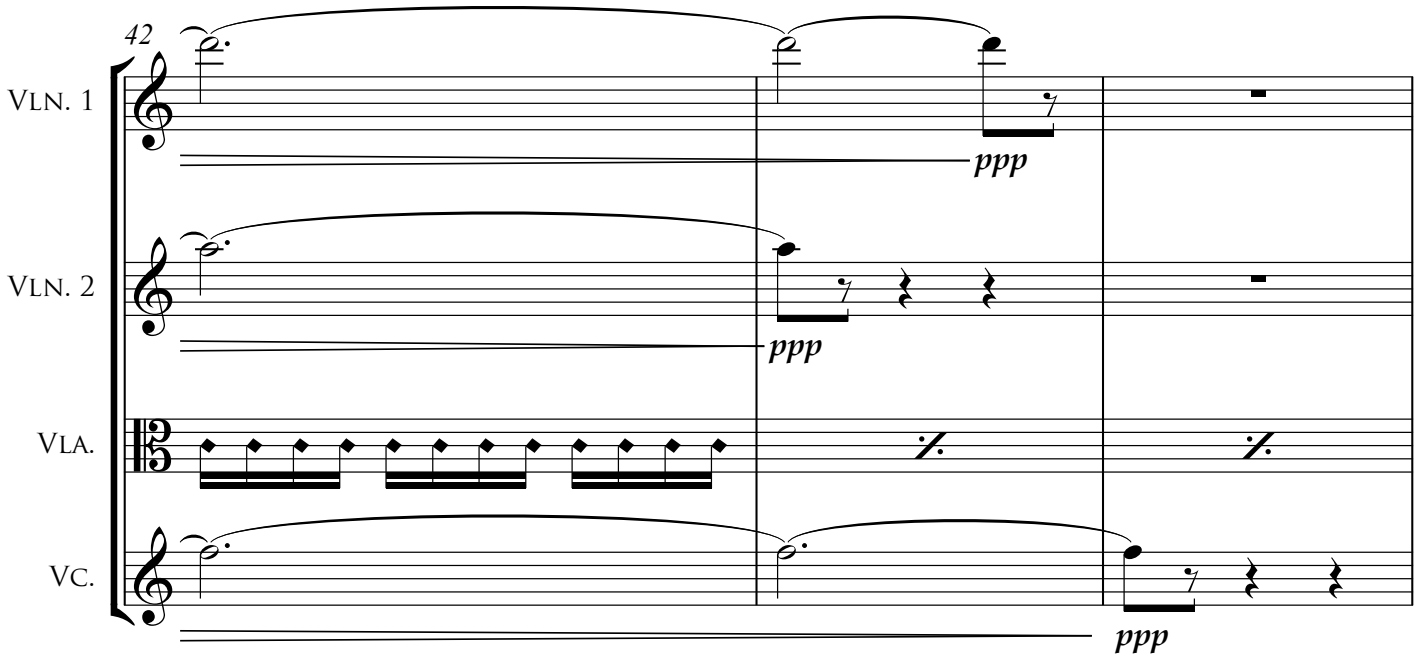

25
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mp
f
mf
3

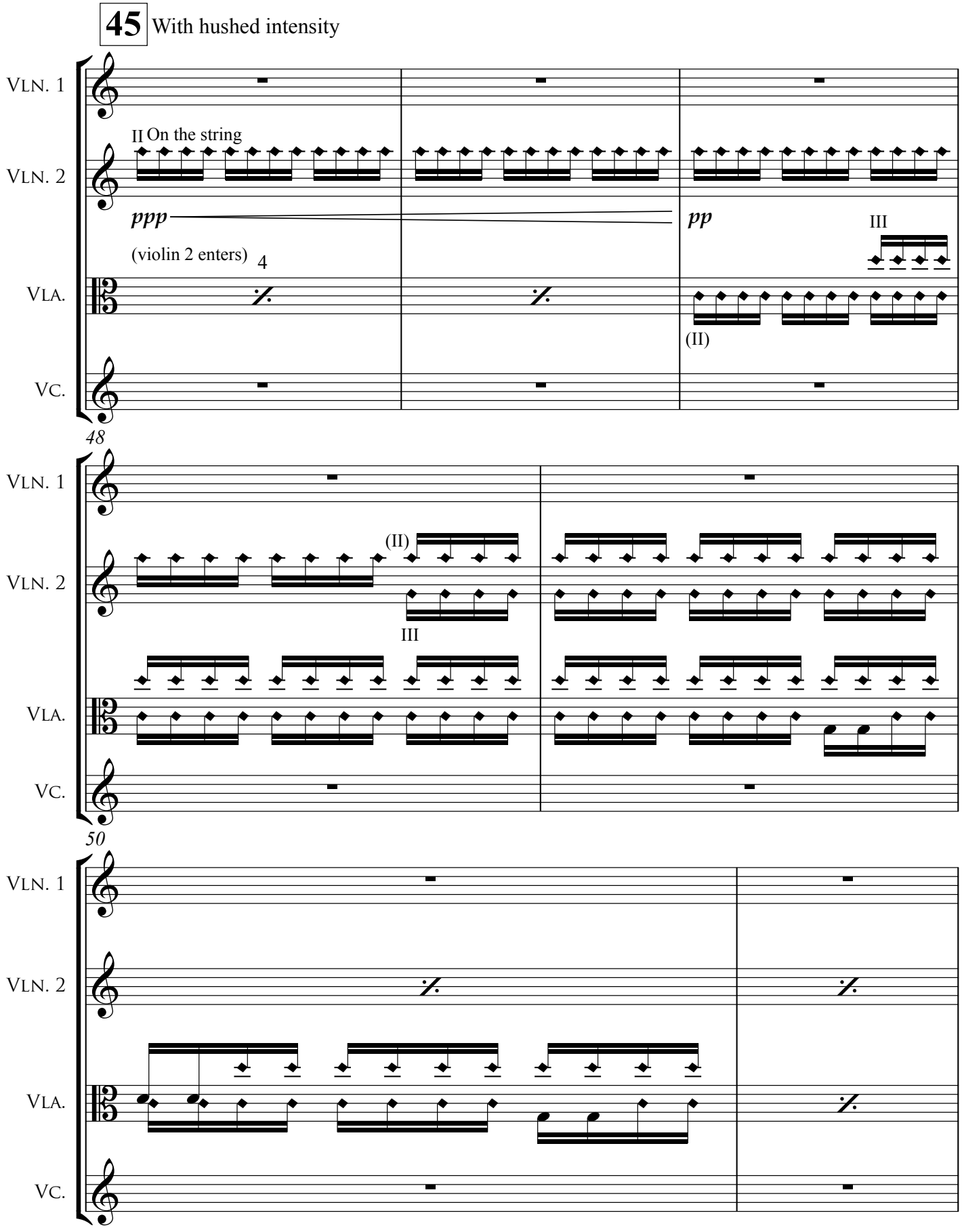

29
33
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
fp
f
mf
ff
fff
pp
5
3
On the string
II

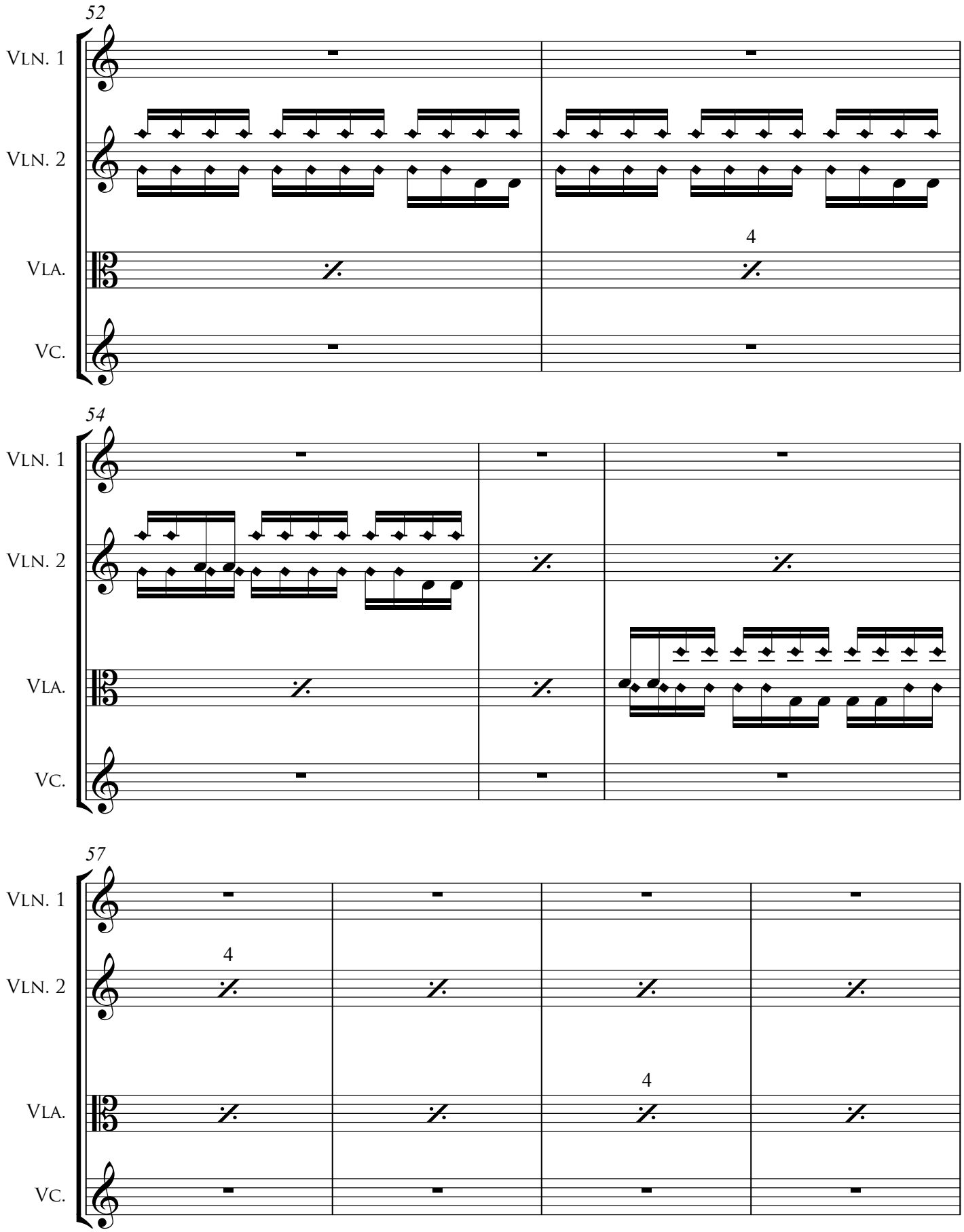

34
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
p
p


37
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

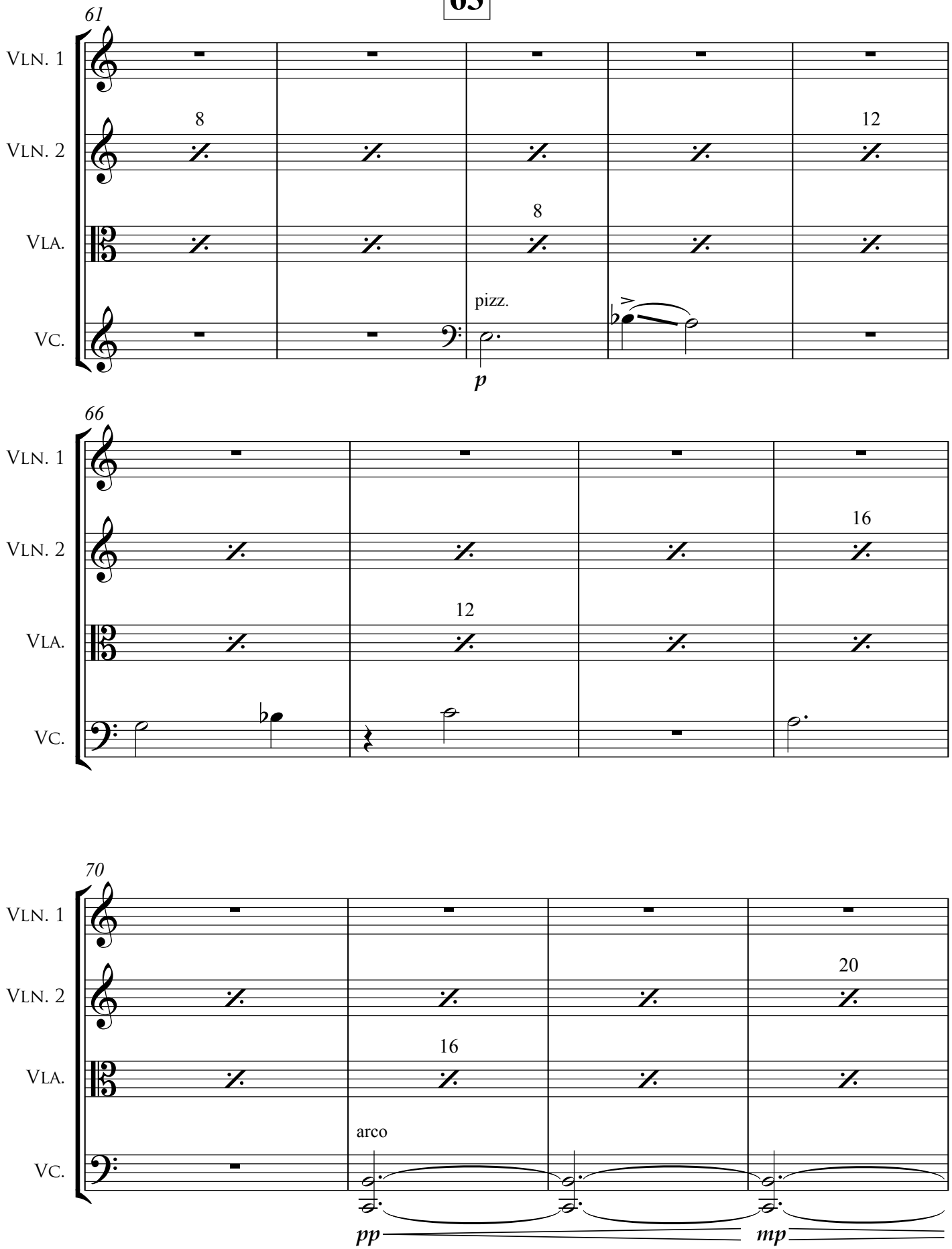

40
Vln. 1
mp
Vln. 2
mp
Vla.
Vc.
mp

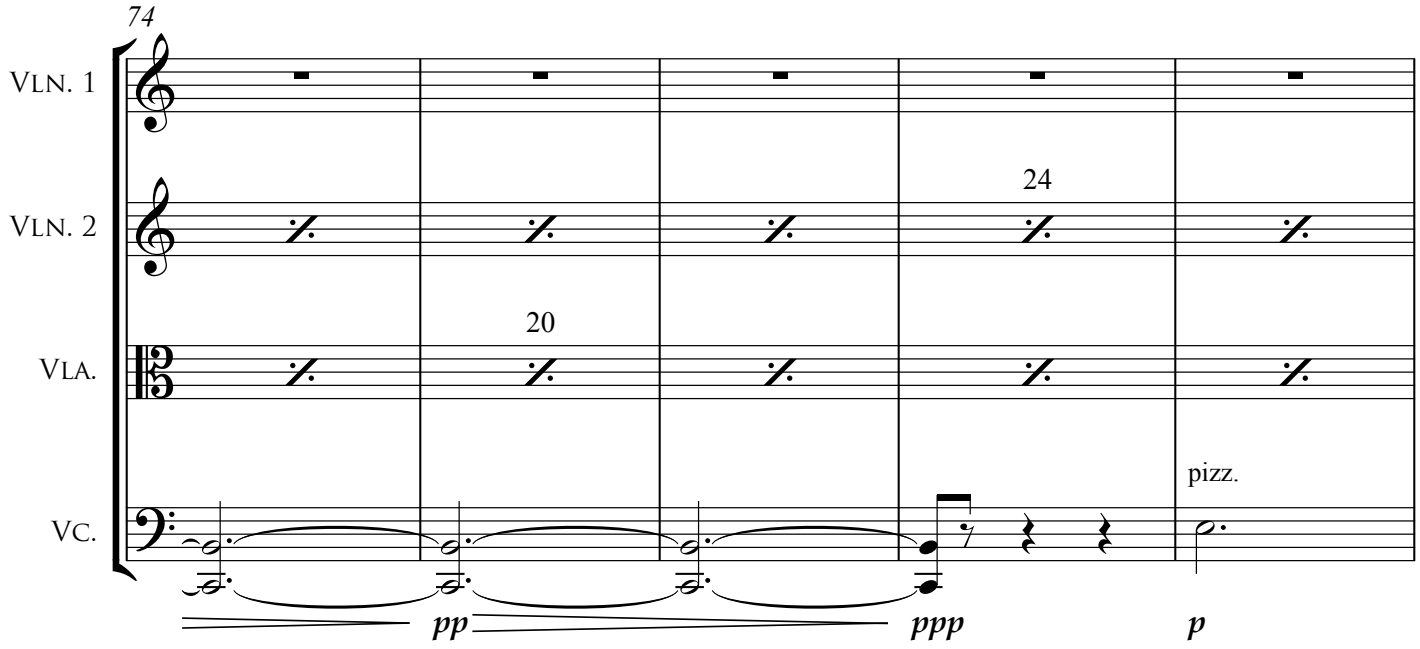

42
Vln. 1
ppp
Vln. 2
ppp
Vla.
Vc.
ppp

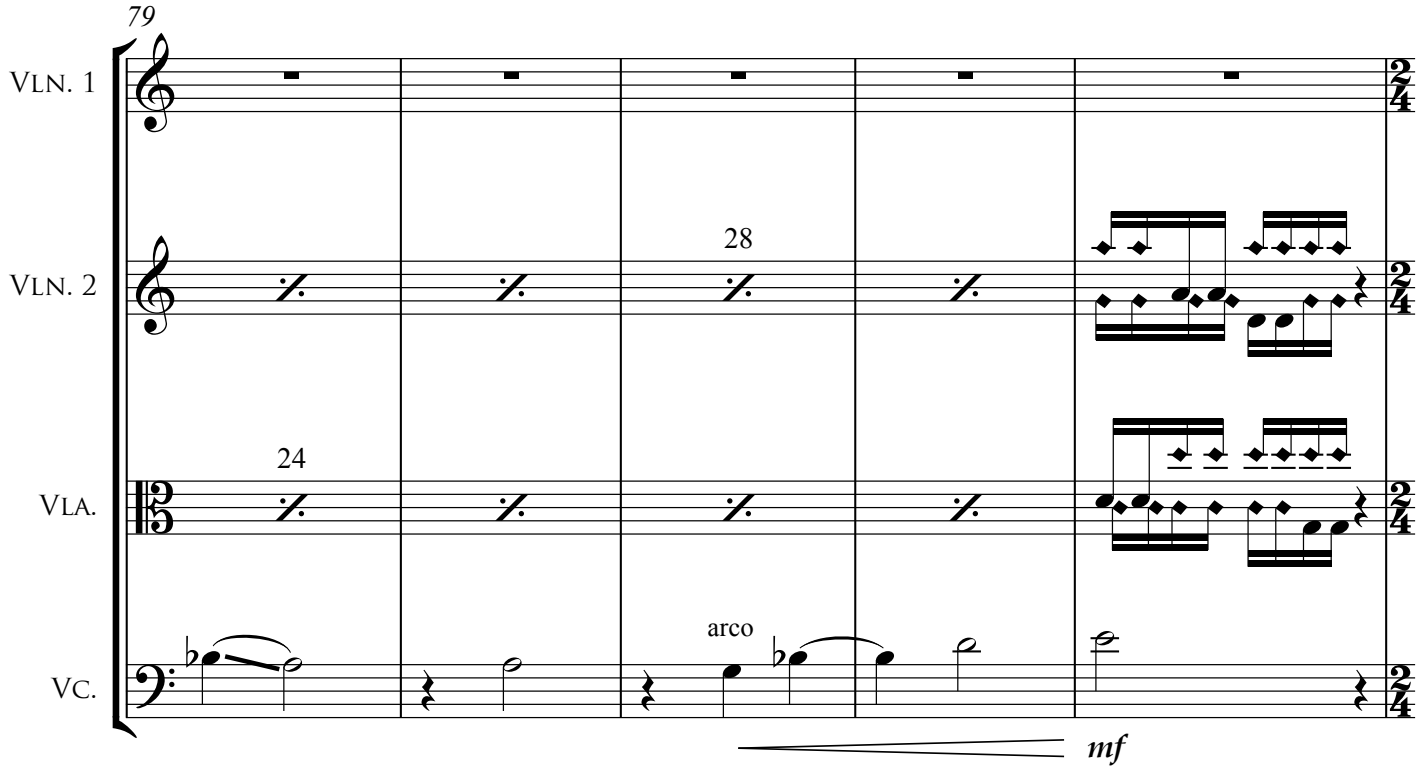

45 With hushed intensity
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
II On the string
ppp
(violin 2 enters)
4
pp
III
(II)
48
(II)
III
50


52
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
4
Vla.
Vc.
54
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
57
Vln. 1
4
Vln. 2
4
Vla.
Vc.

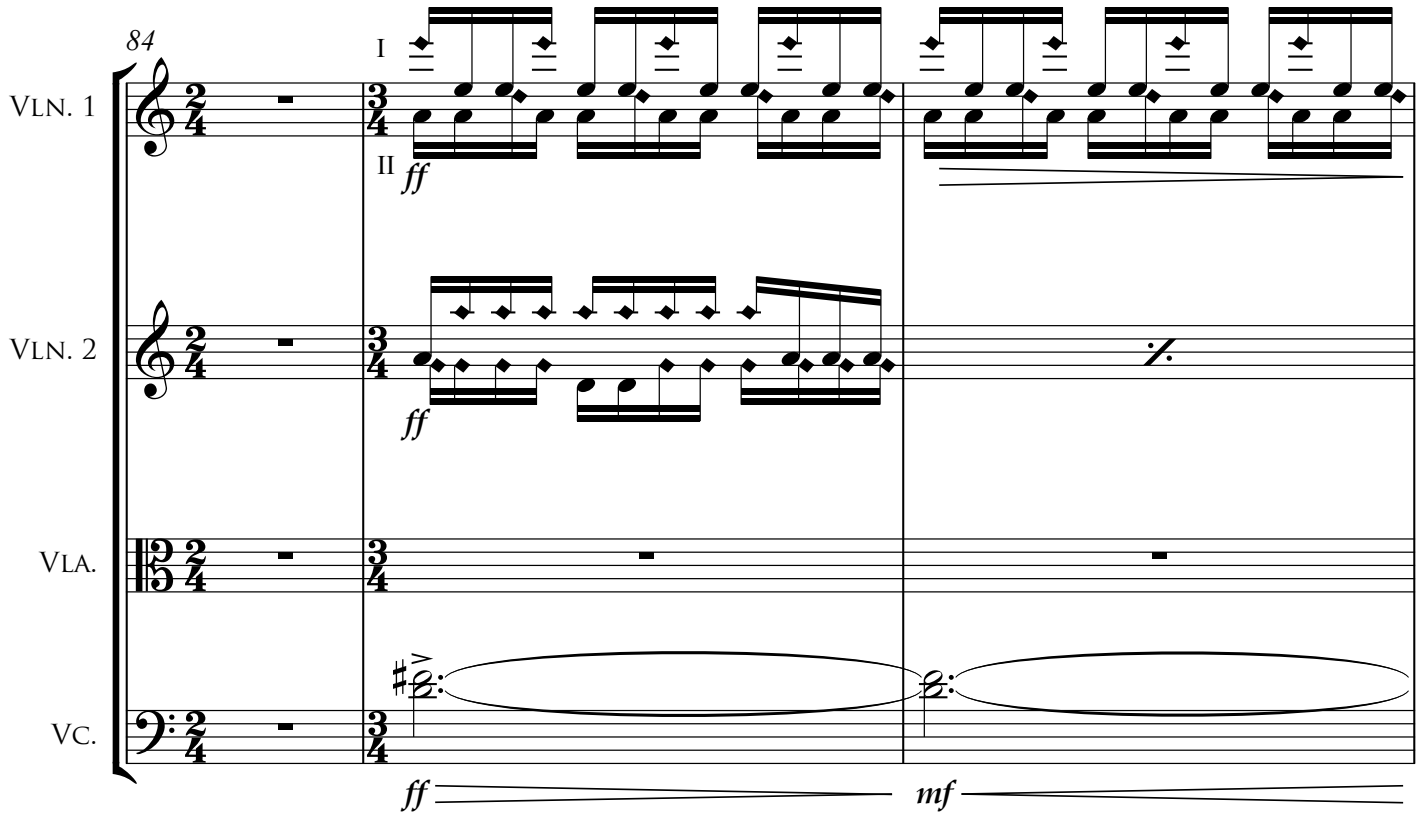
63

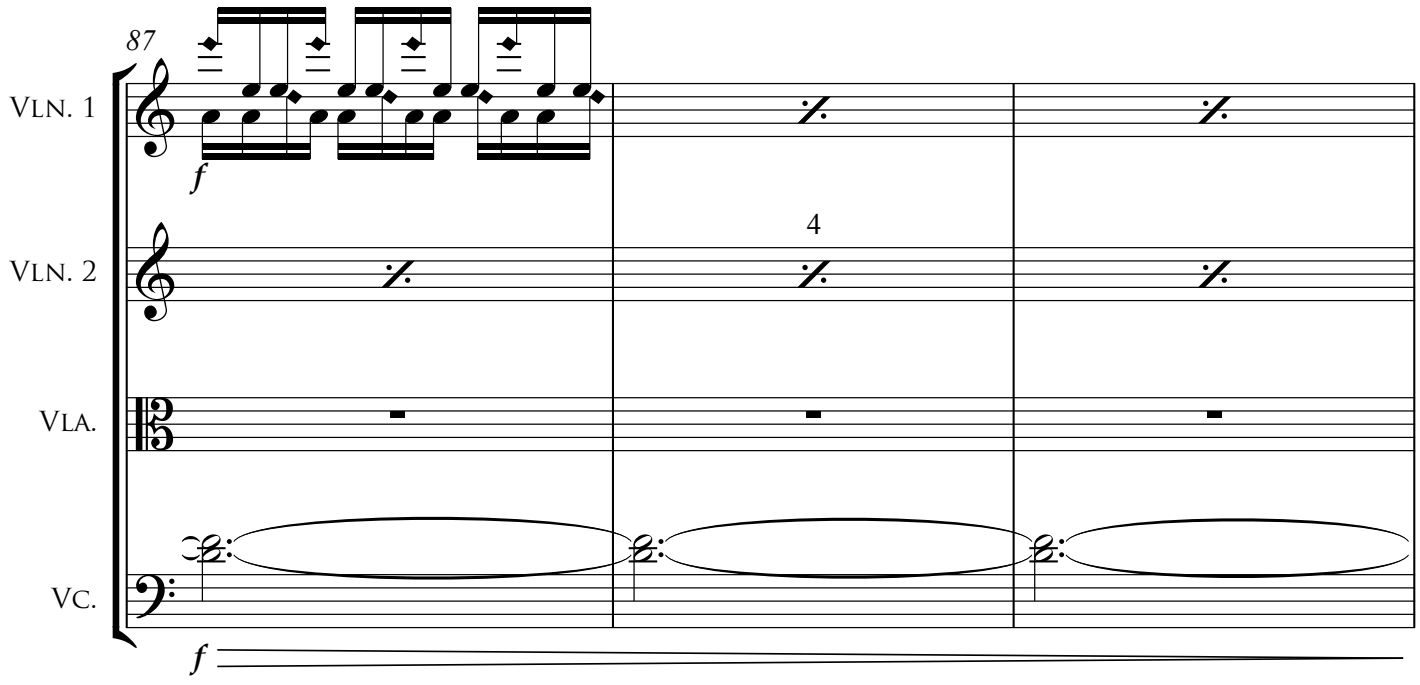

61
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
8
8
12
pizz.
p
66
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
12
16
70
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
16
20
arco
pp
mp

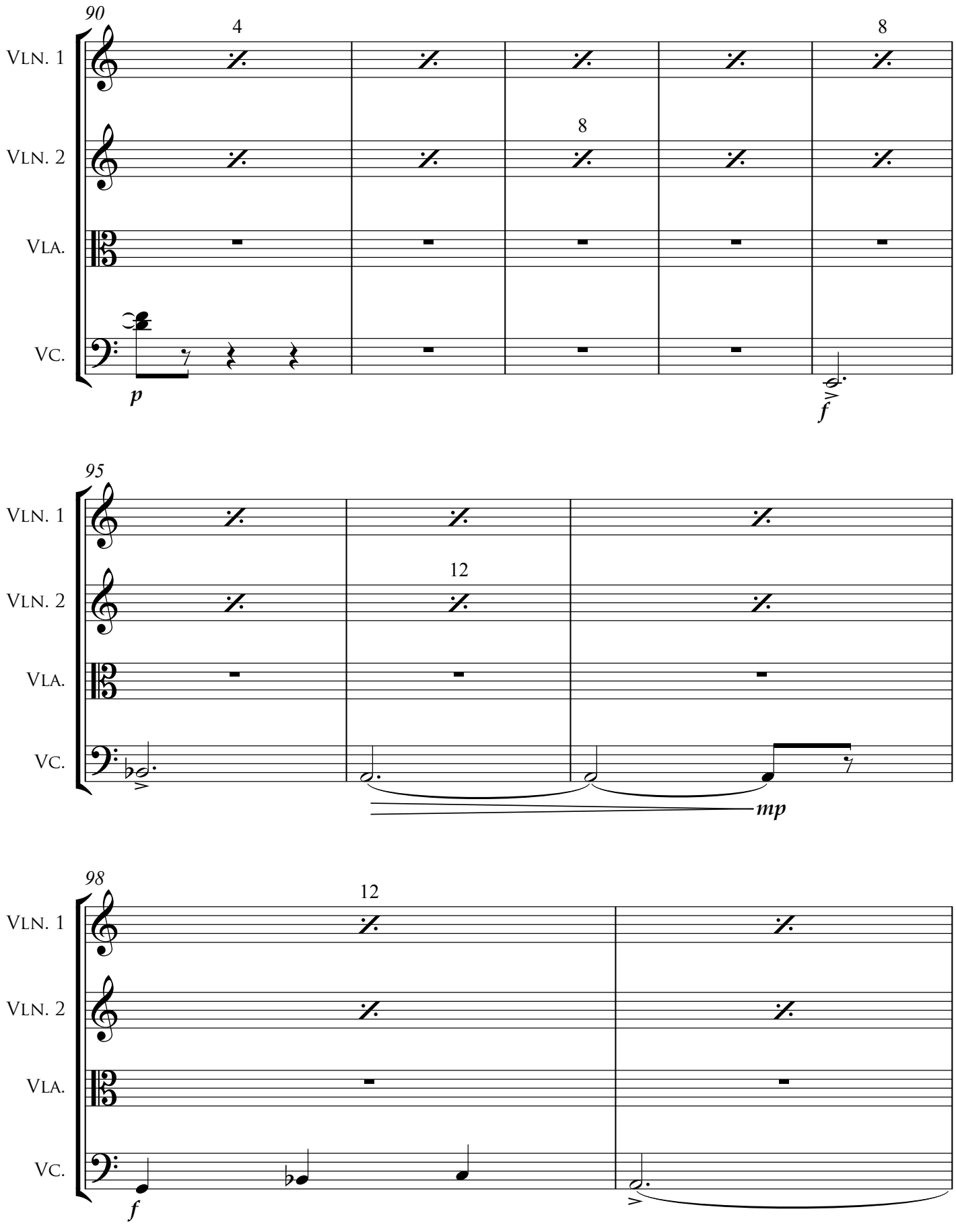

74
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
20
24
pizz.
pp
ppp
p

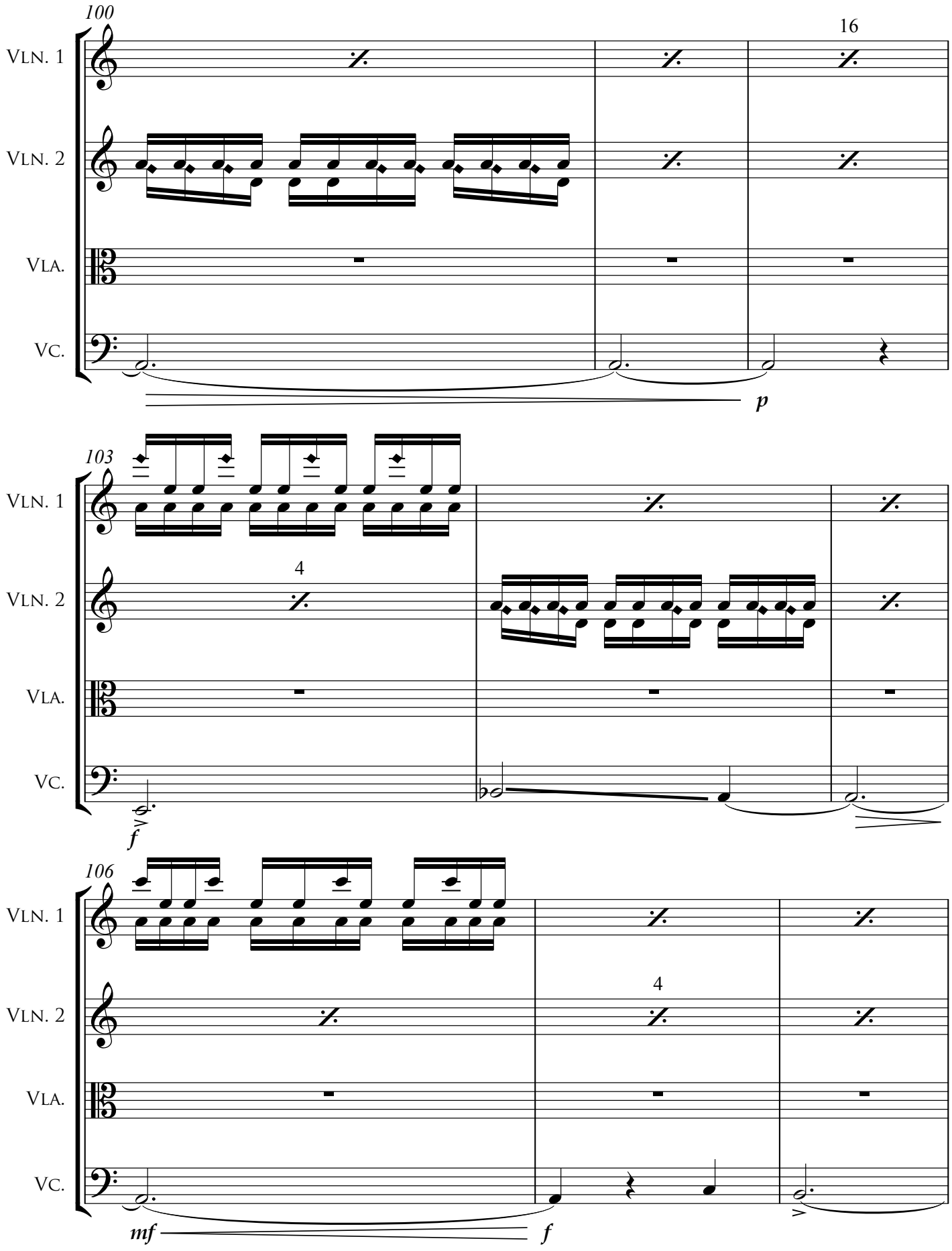

79
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
24
28
arco
mf

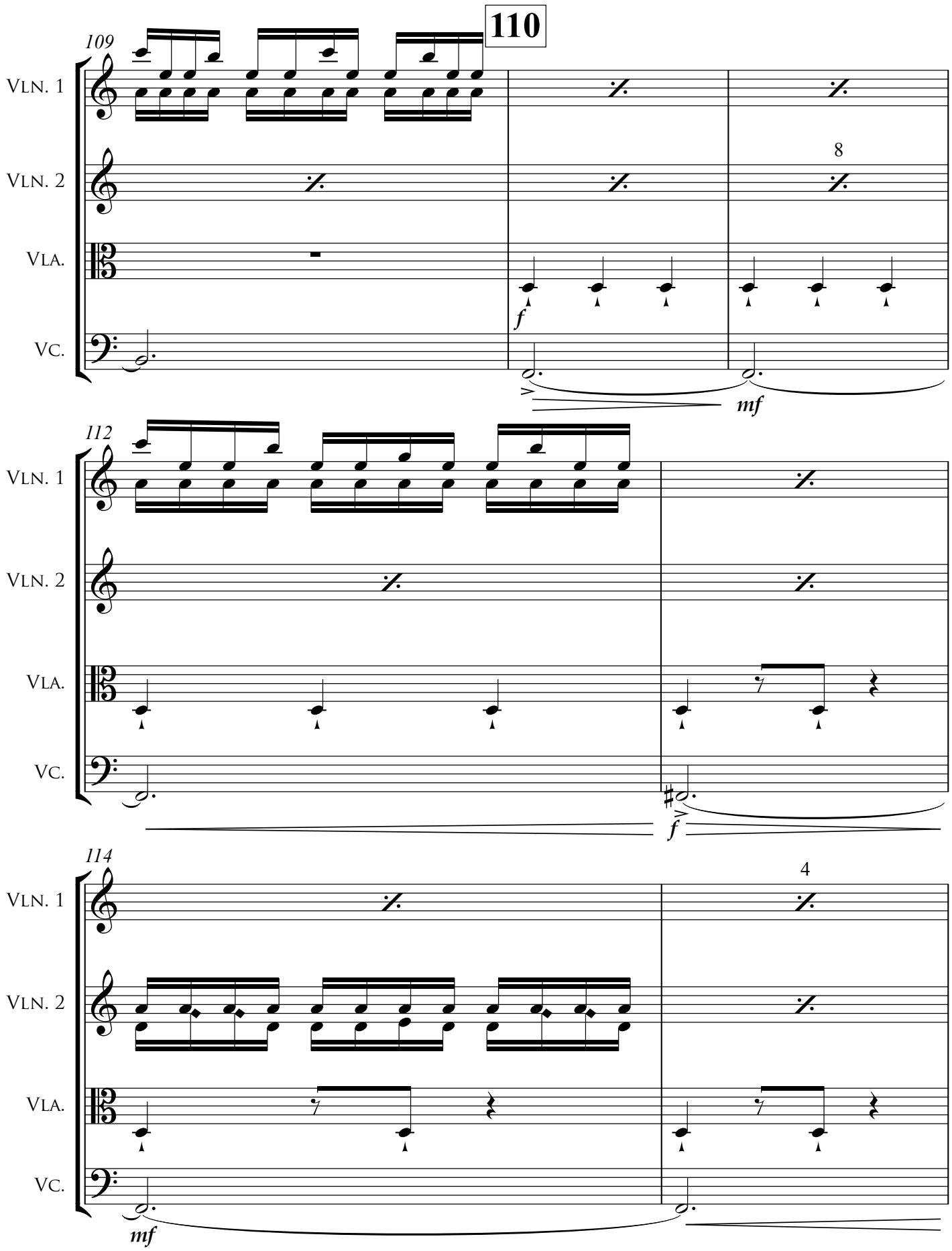
85 **Gleaming, but rough around the edges**

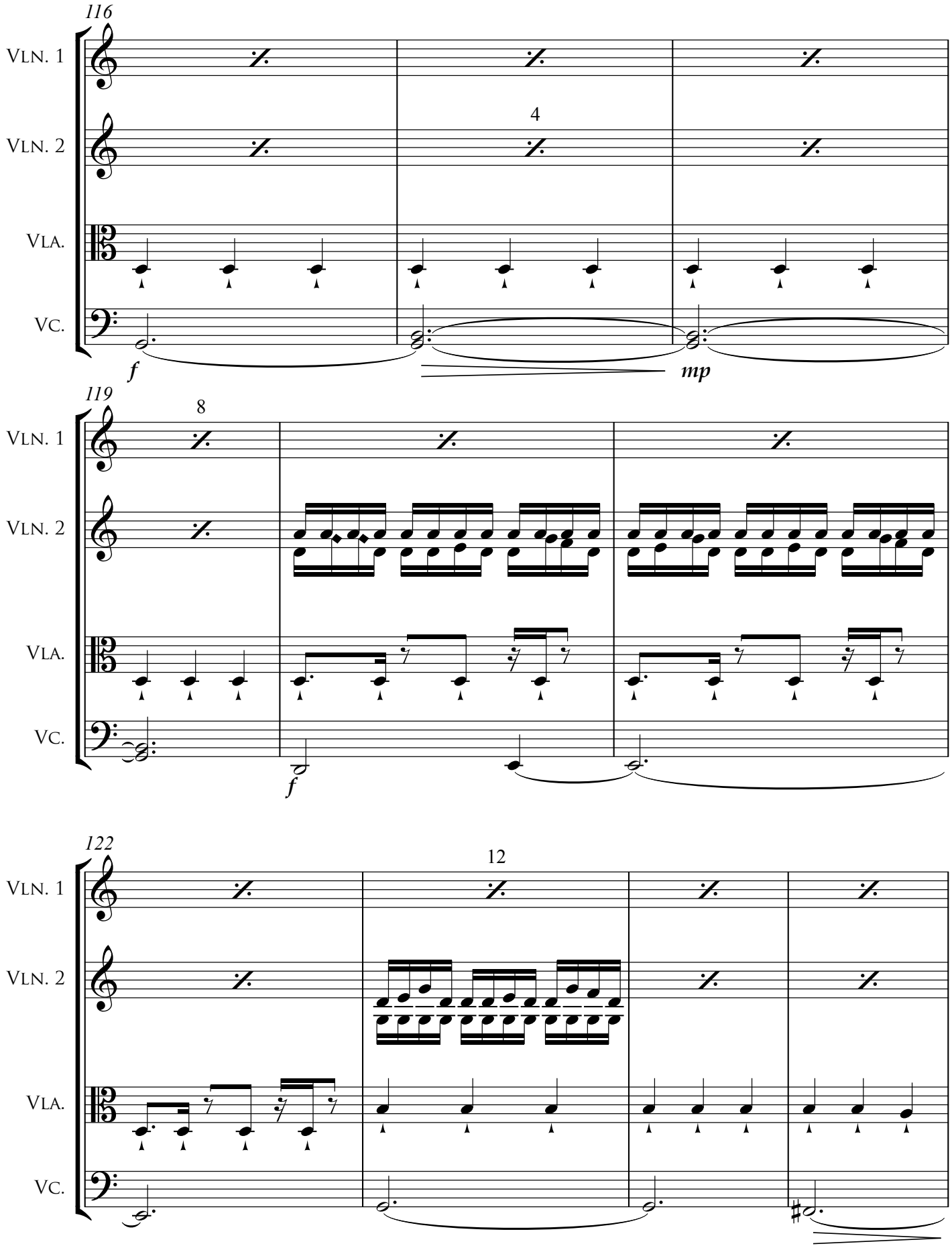


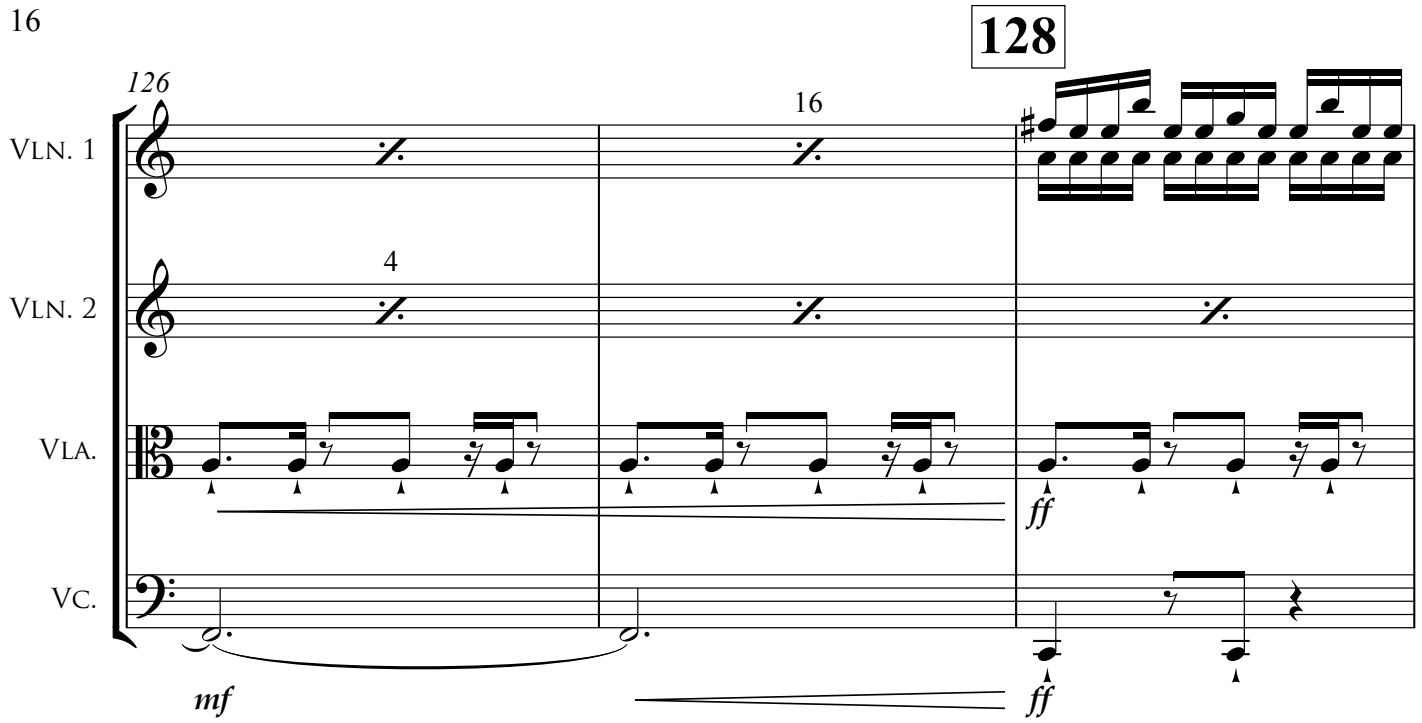


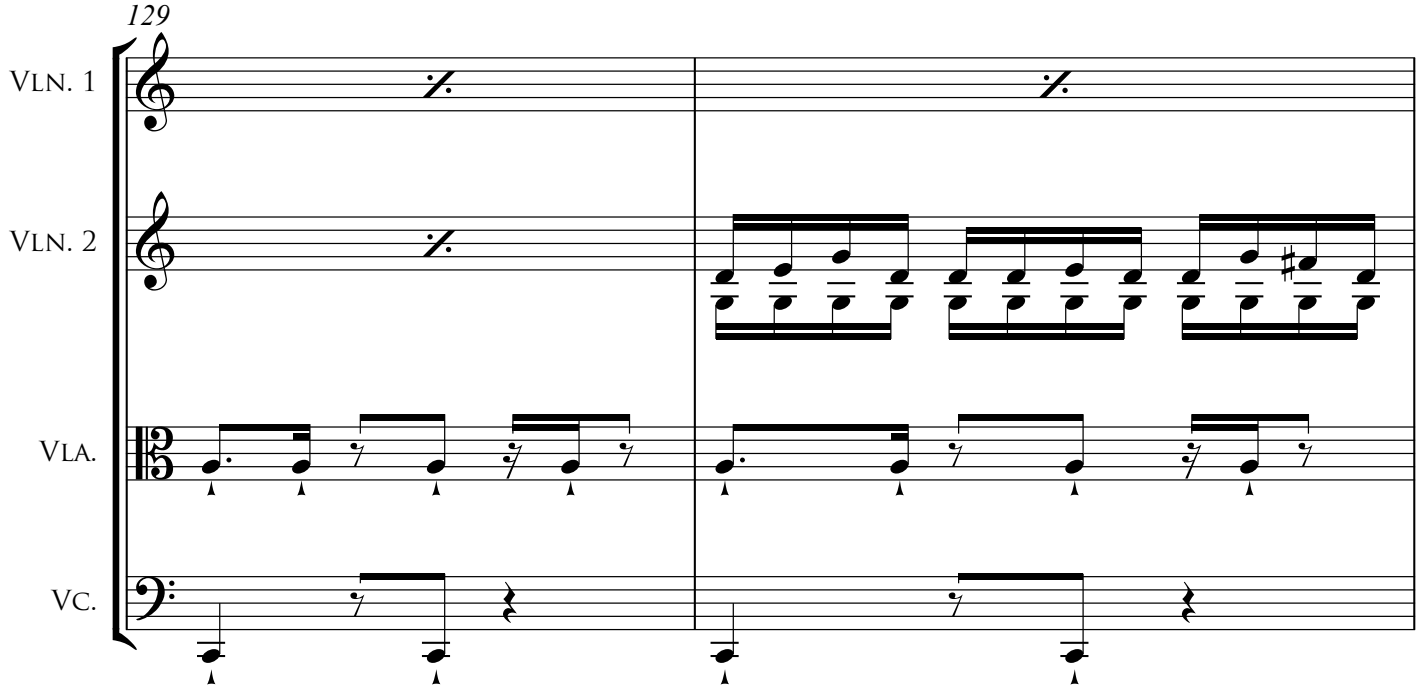

90
4
8
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
8
Vla.
Vc.
p
f
95
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
12
Vla.
Vc.
mp
98
12
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f

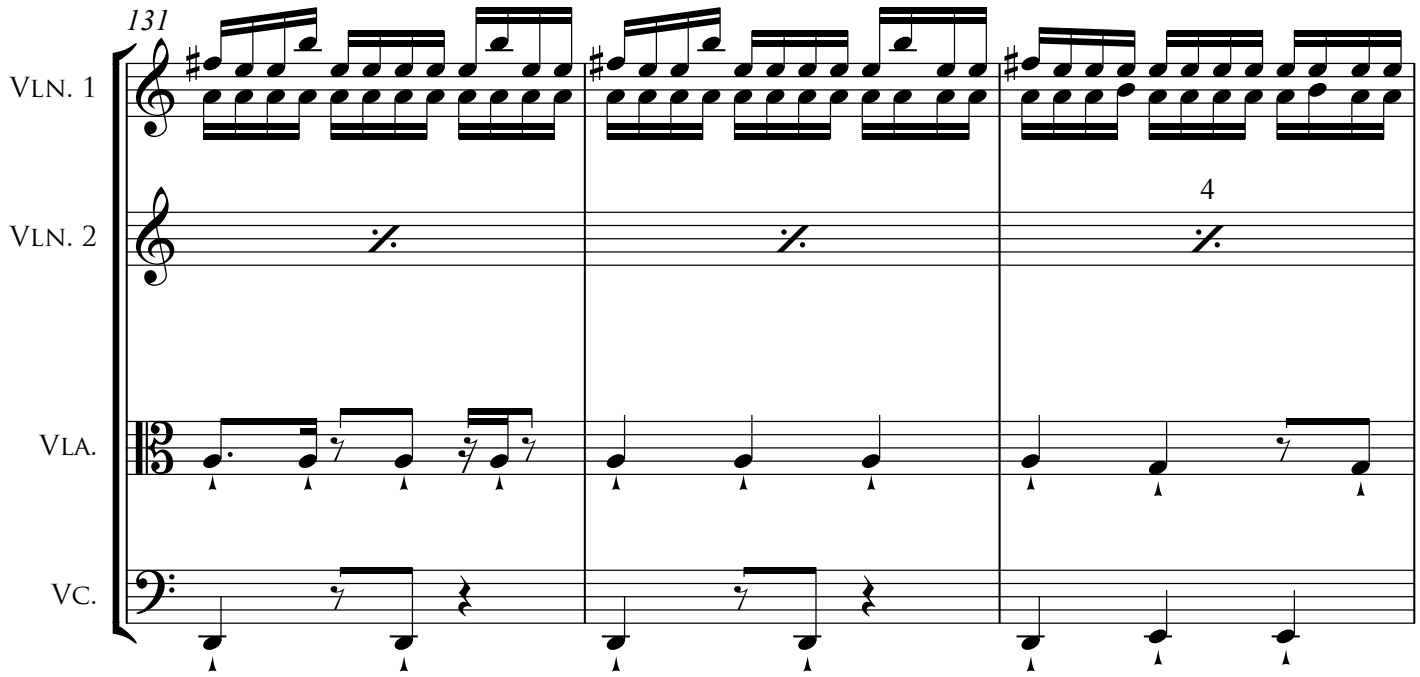

100
16
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
103
4
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f
106
4
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf
f

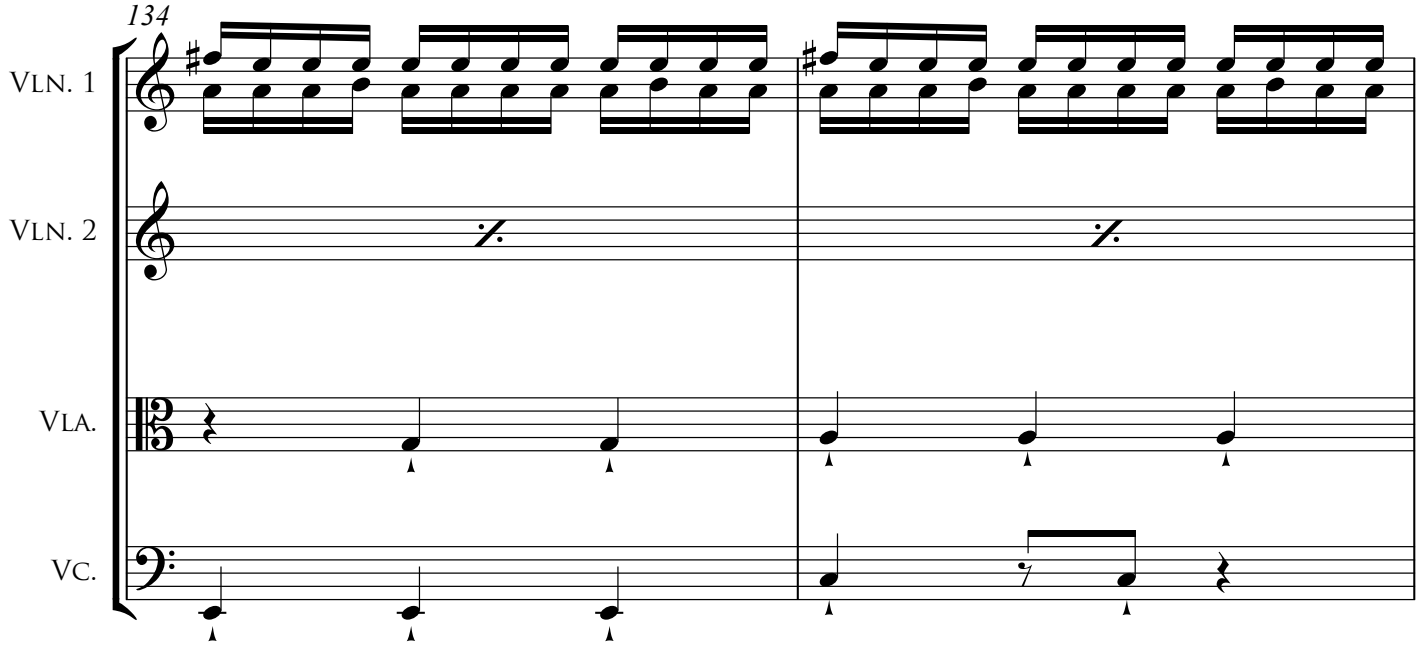

109
110
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
8
f
mf
112
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f
114
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
4
mf

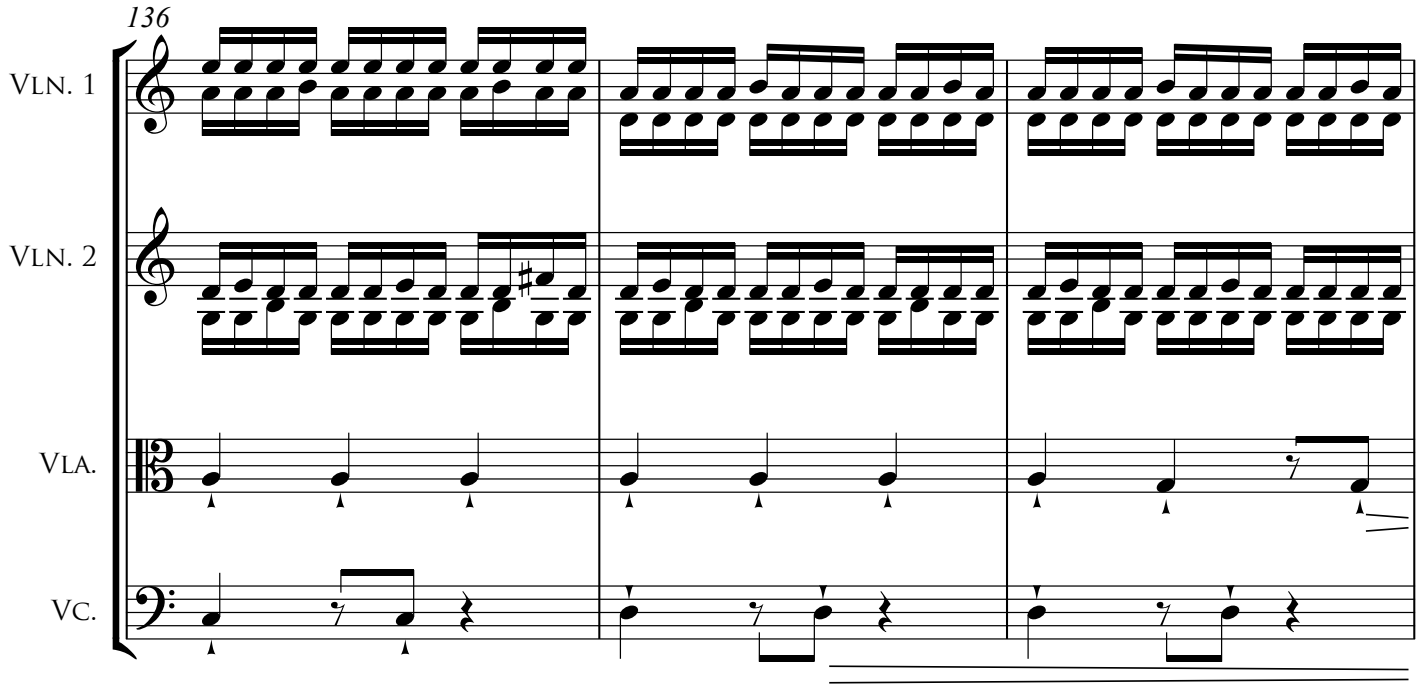

116
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
4
f
mp
119
8
f
122
12

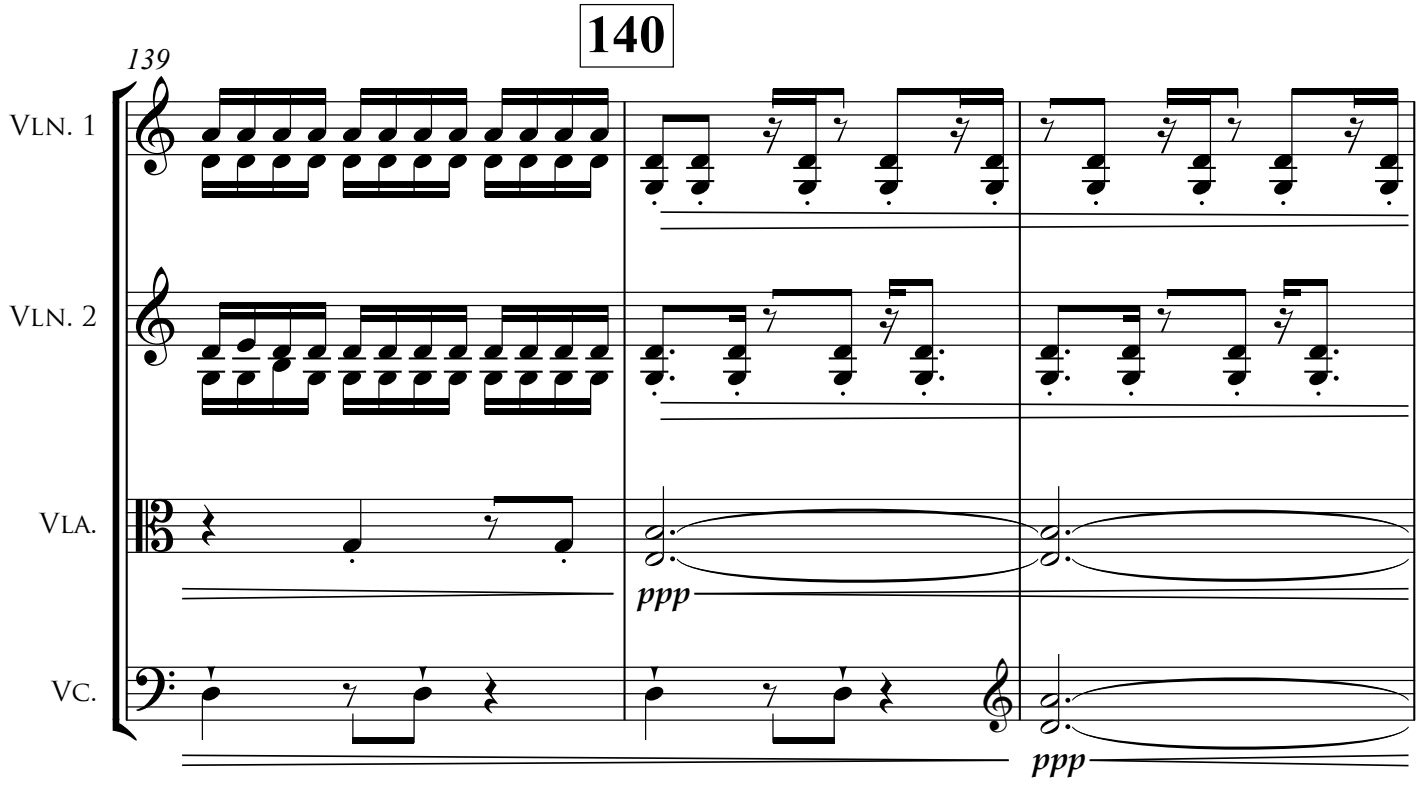

128
126
16
4
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf
ff
ff

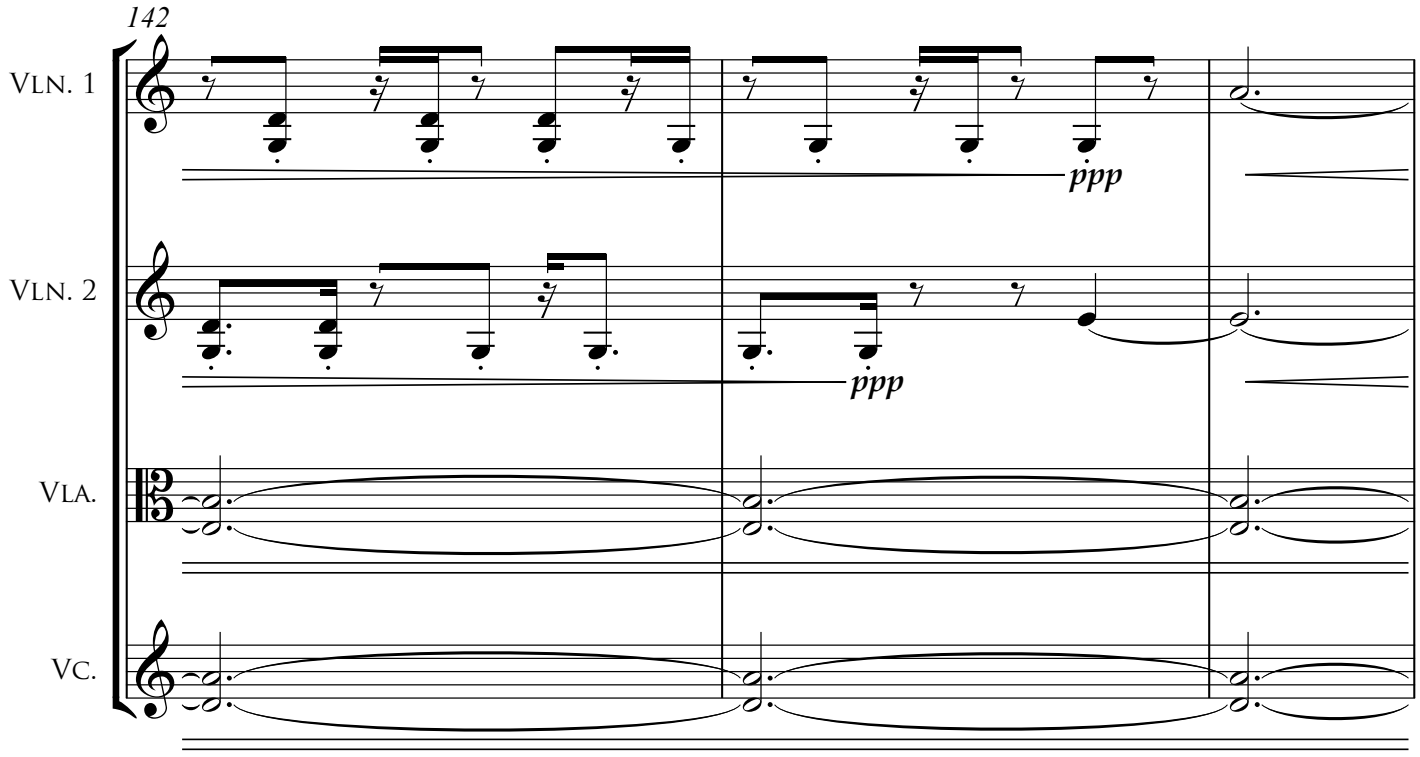

129
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

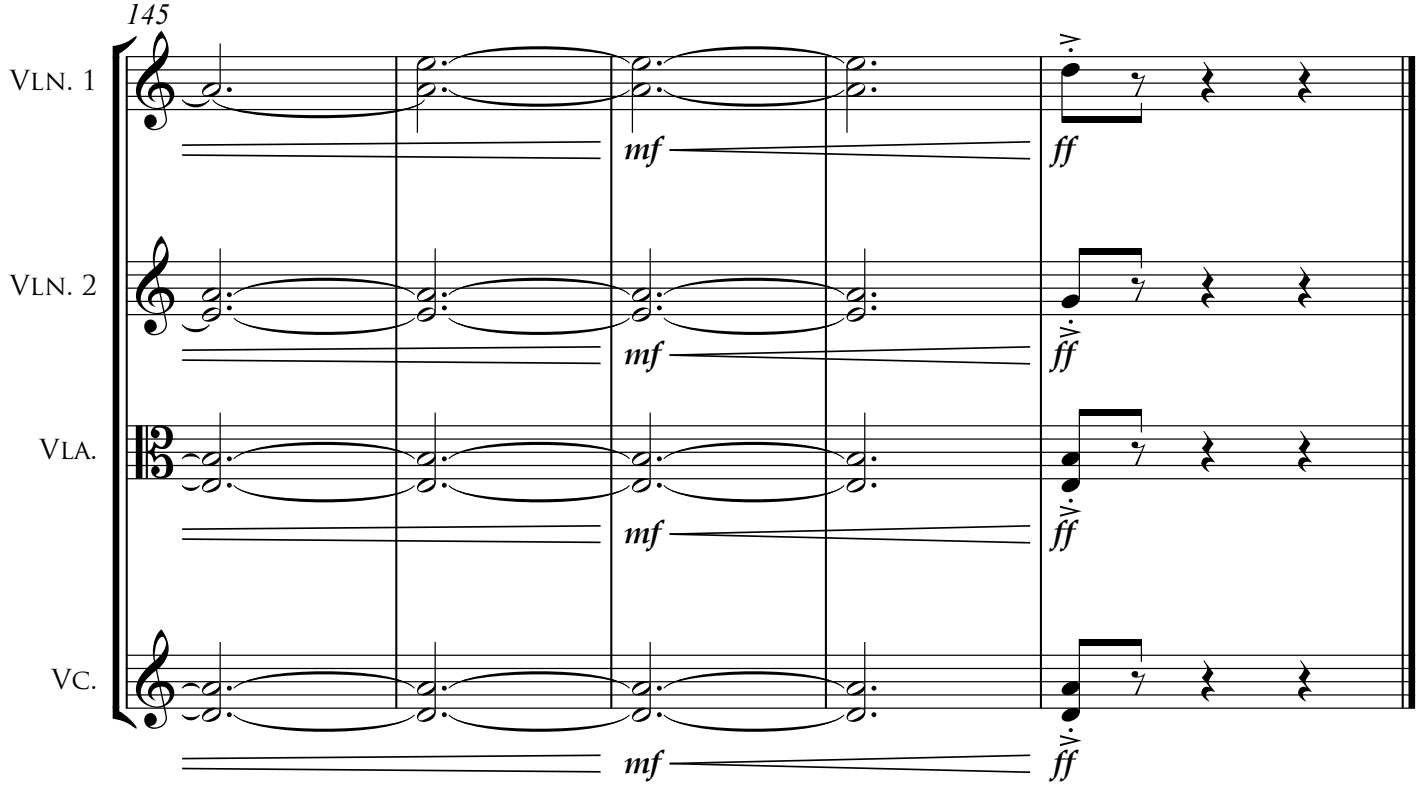

131
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
4
Vla.
Vc.


134
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.


136
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.


140
139
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ppp
ppp


142
Vln. 1
ppp
Vln. 2
ppp
Vla.
Vc.

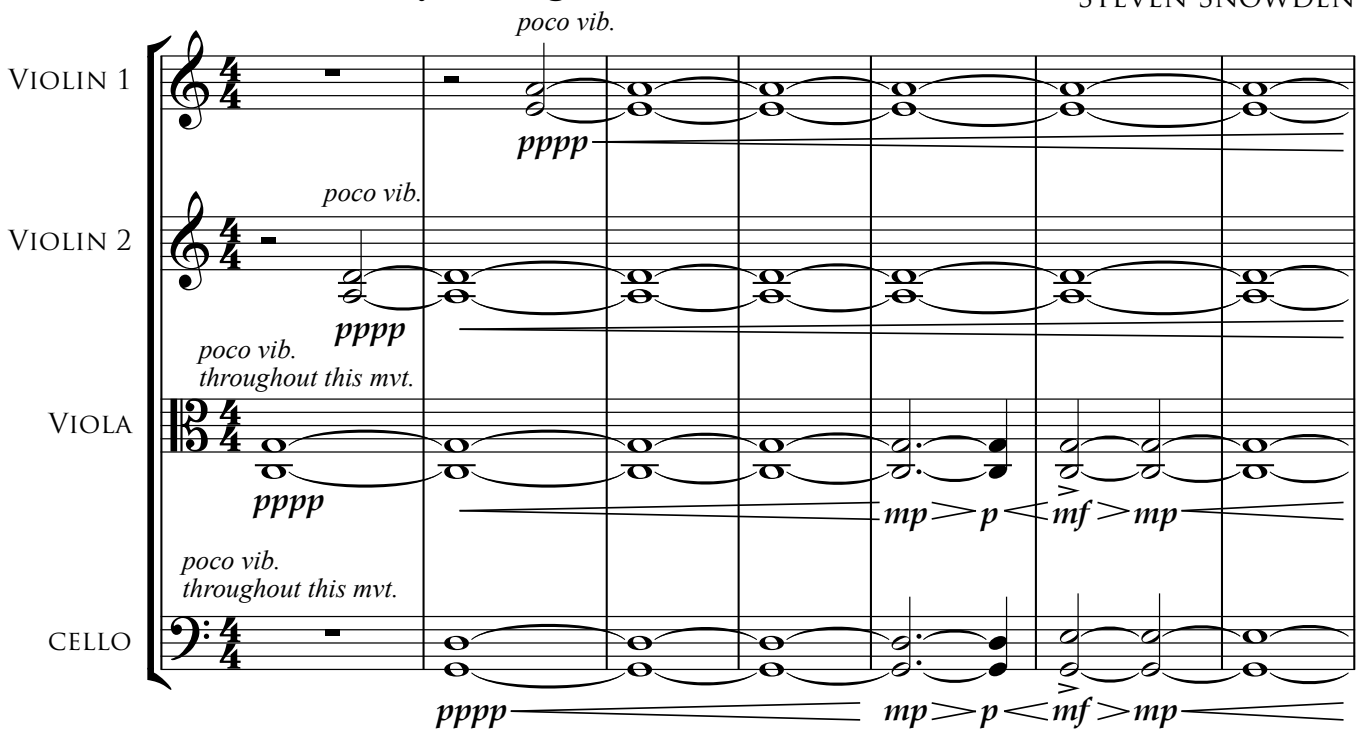

145
Vln. 1
mf
ff
Vln. 2
mf
ff
Vla.
mf
ff
Vc.
mf
ff

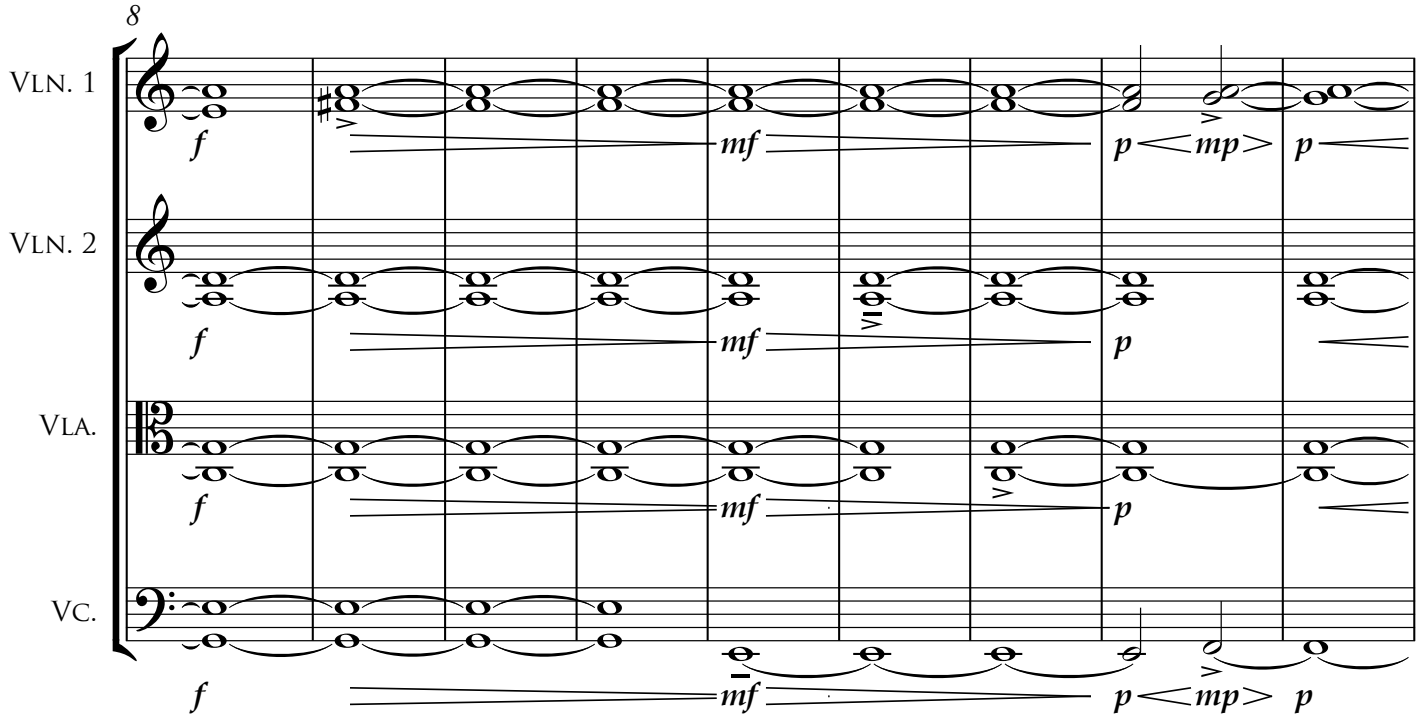
Bird Catching From Above

II

Like slowly shifting tides ♩ = 56

Steven Snowden





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19

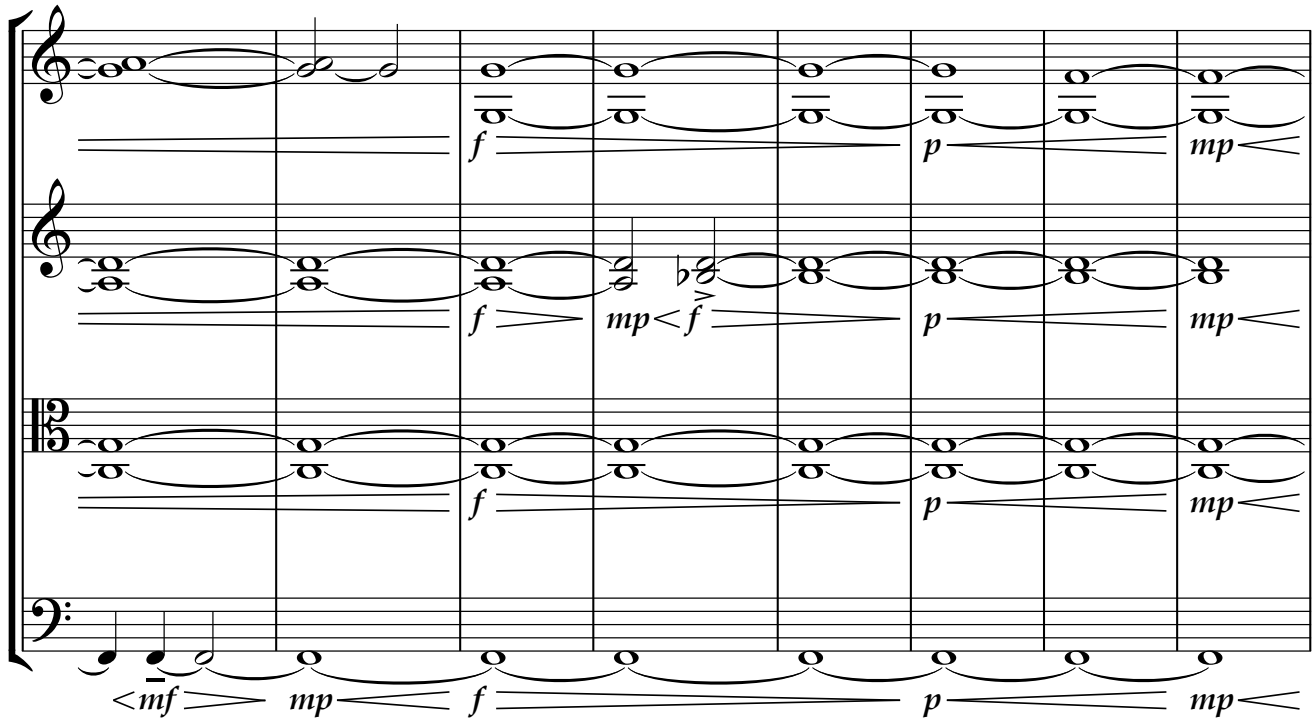
17

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.



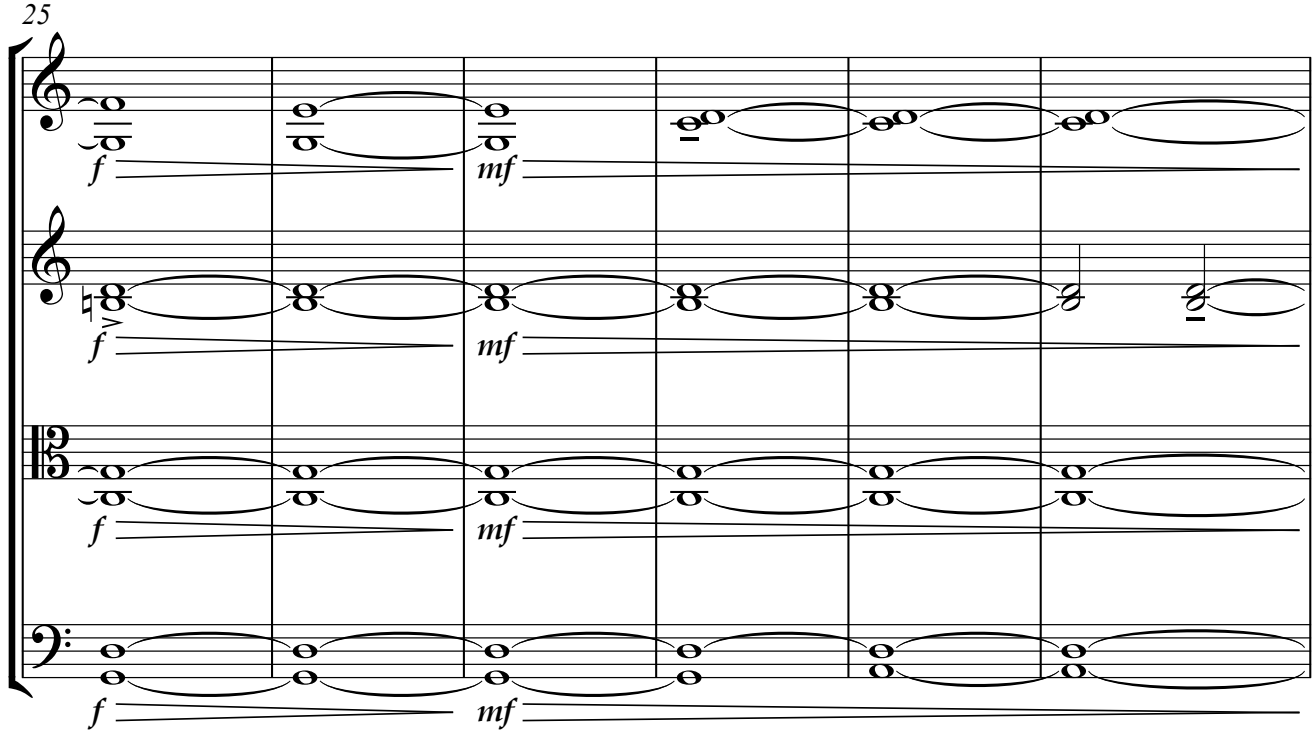
25

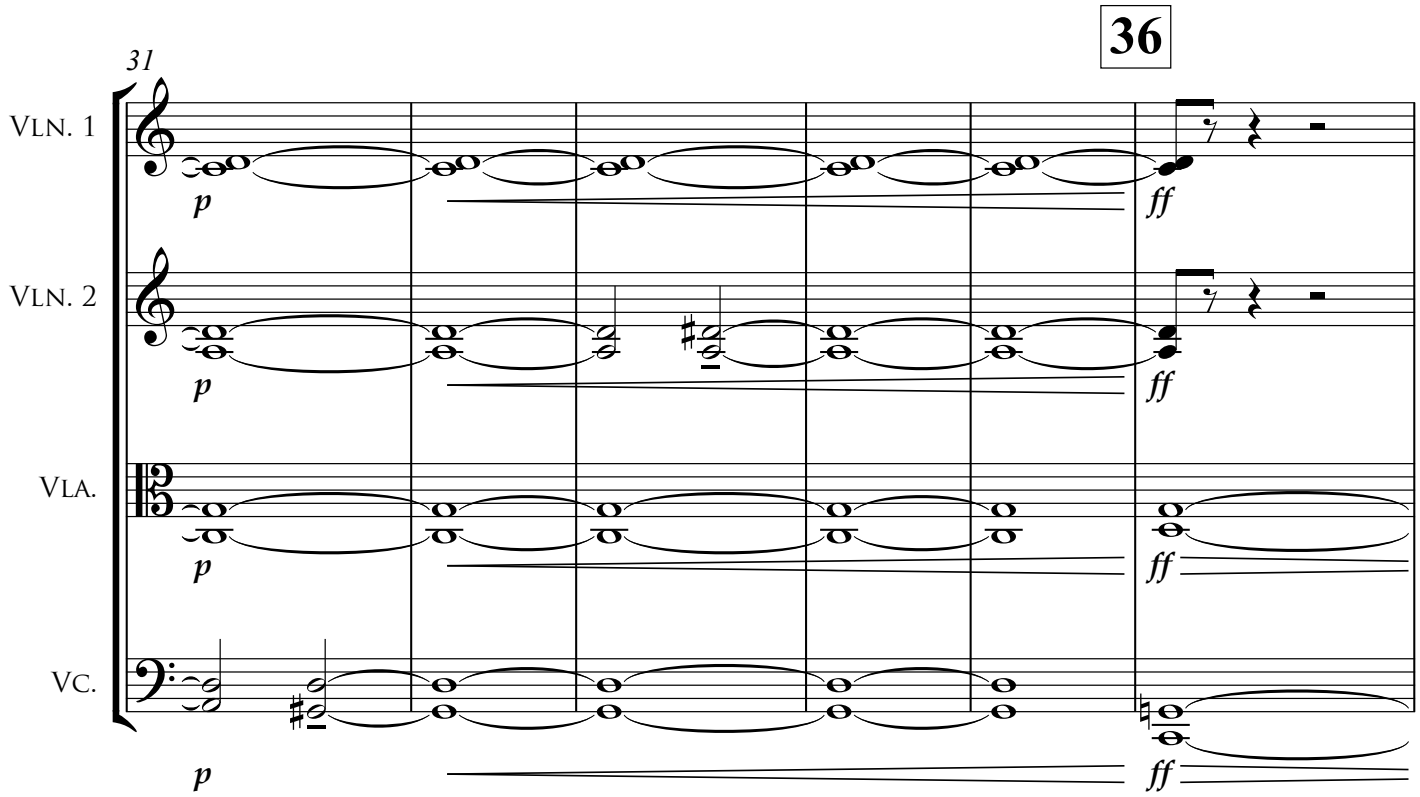
Vln. 1

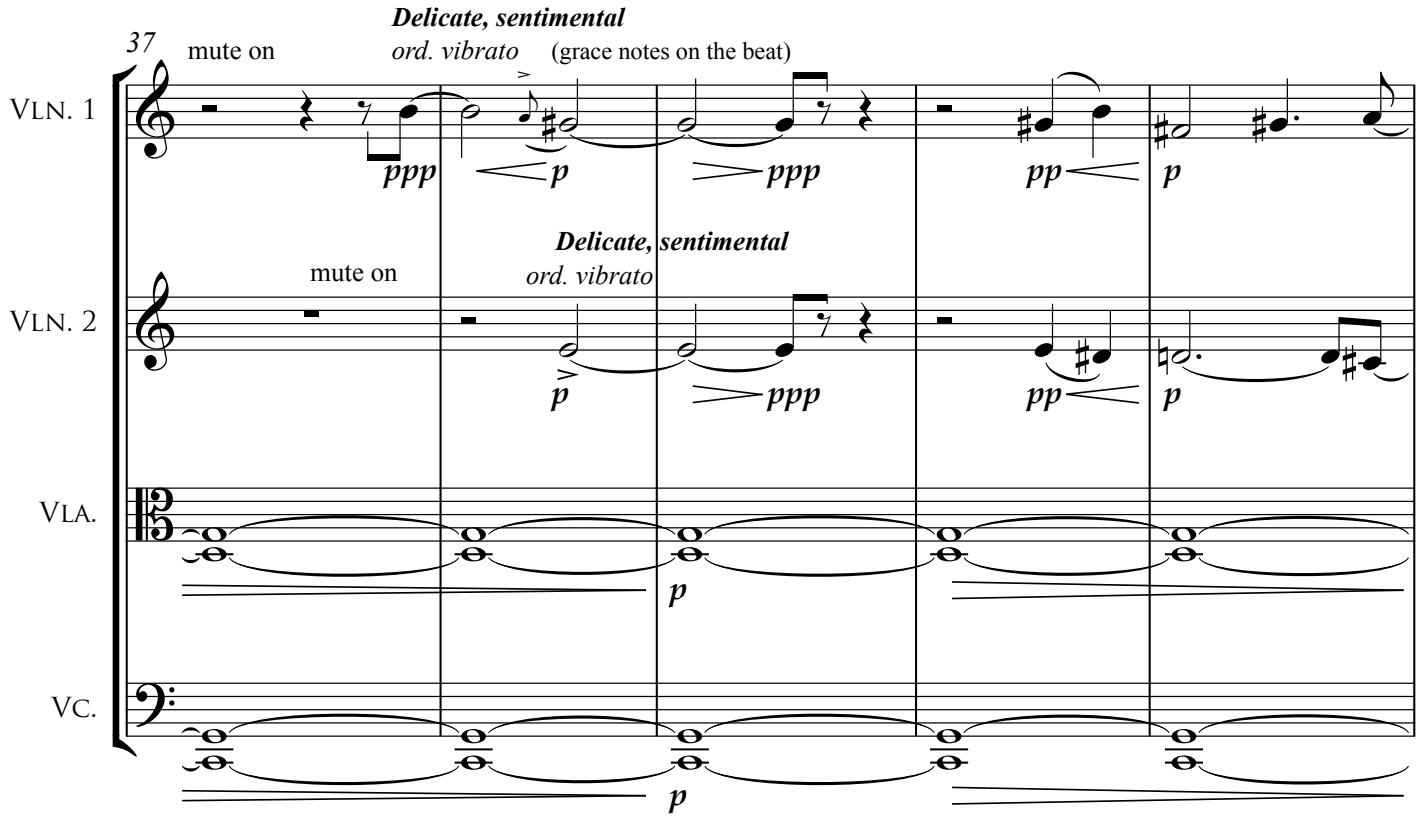
Vln. 2

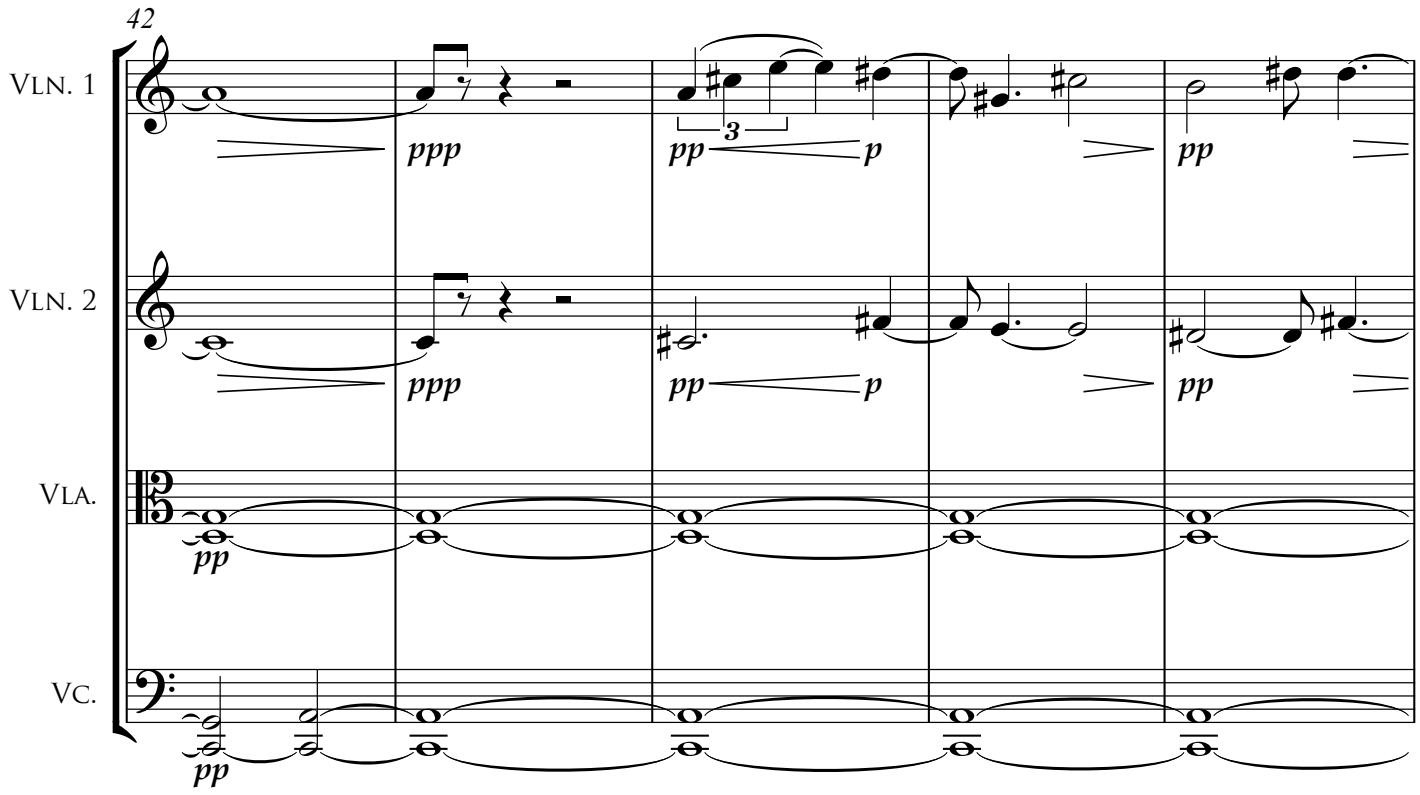
Vla.

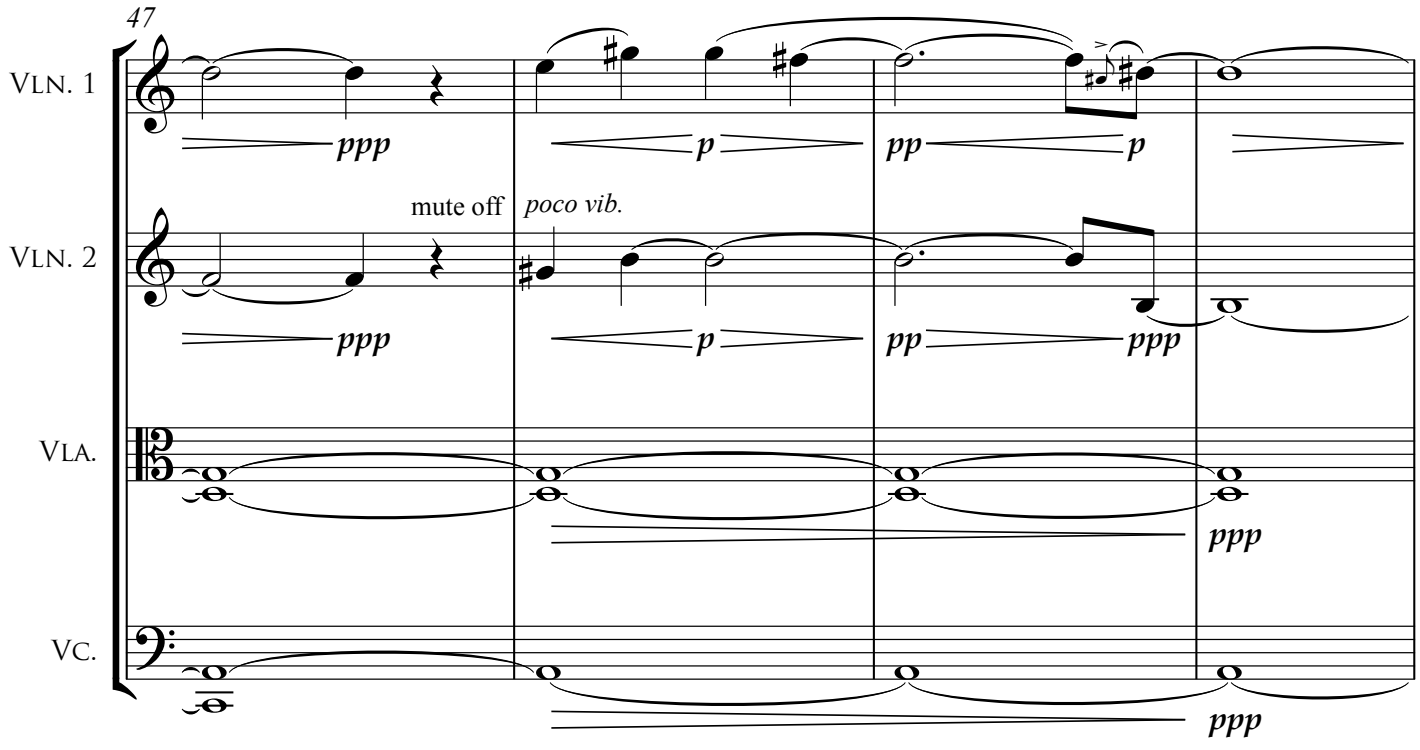
Vc.

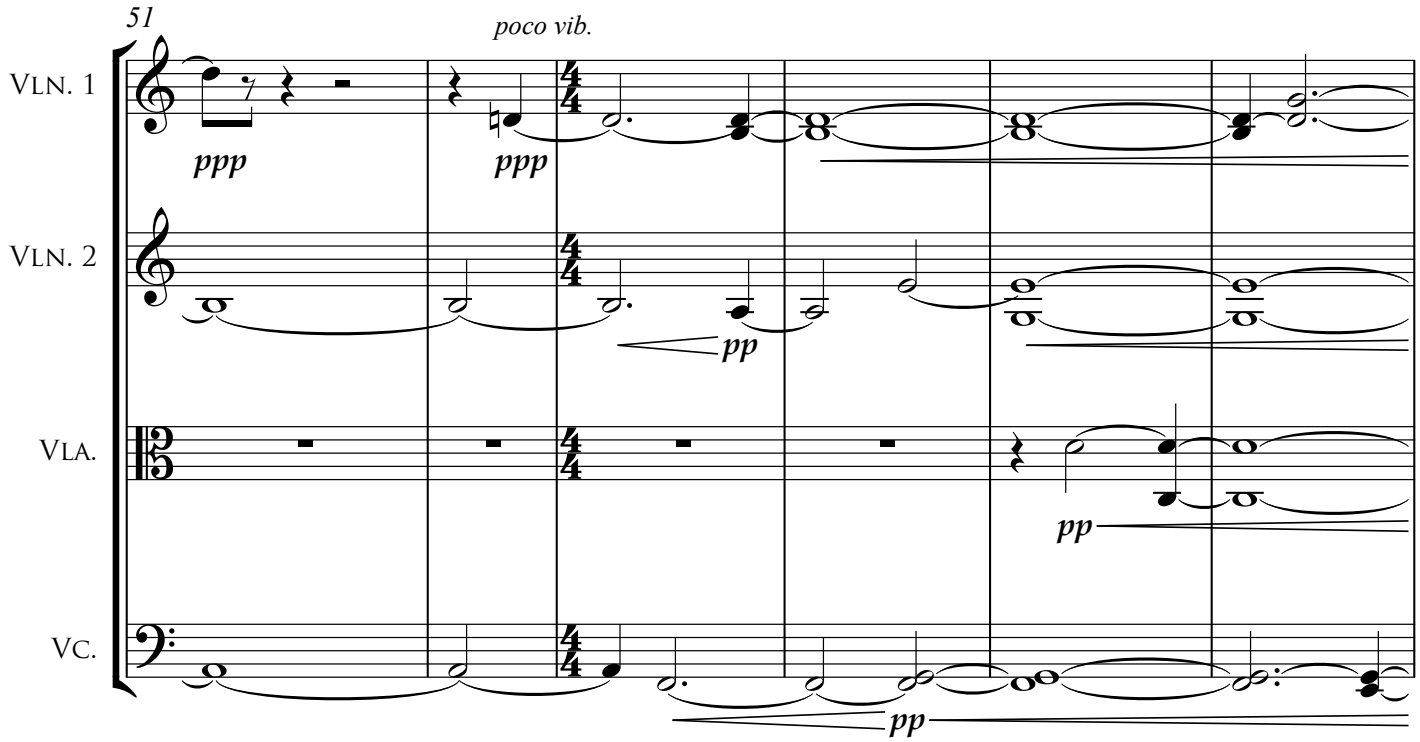


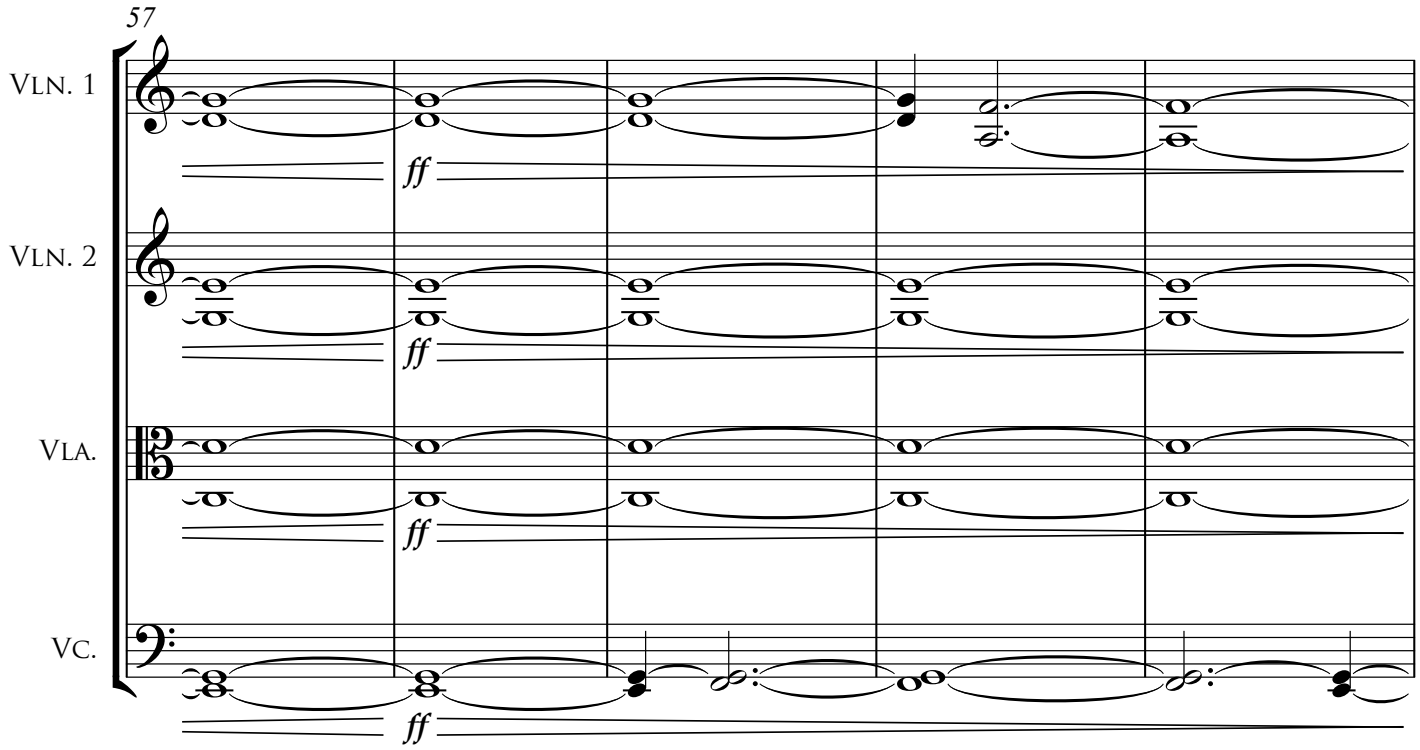

36
31
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
ff

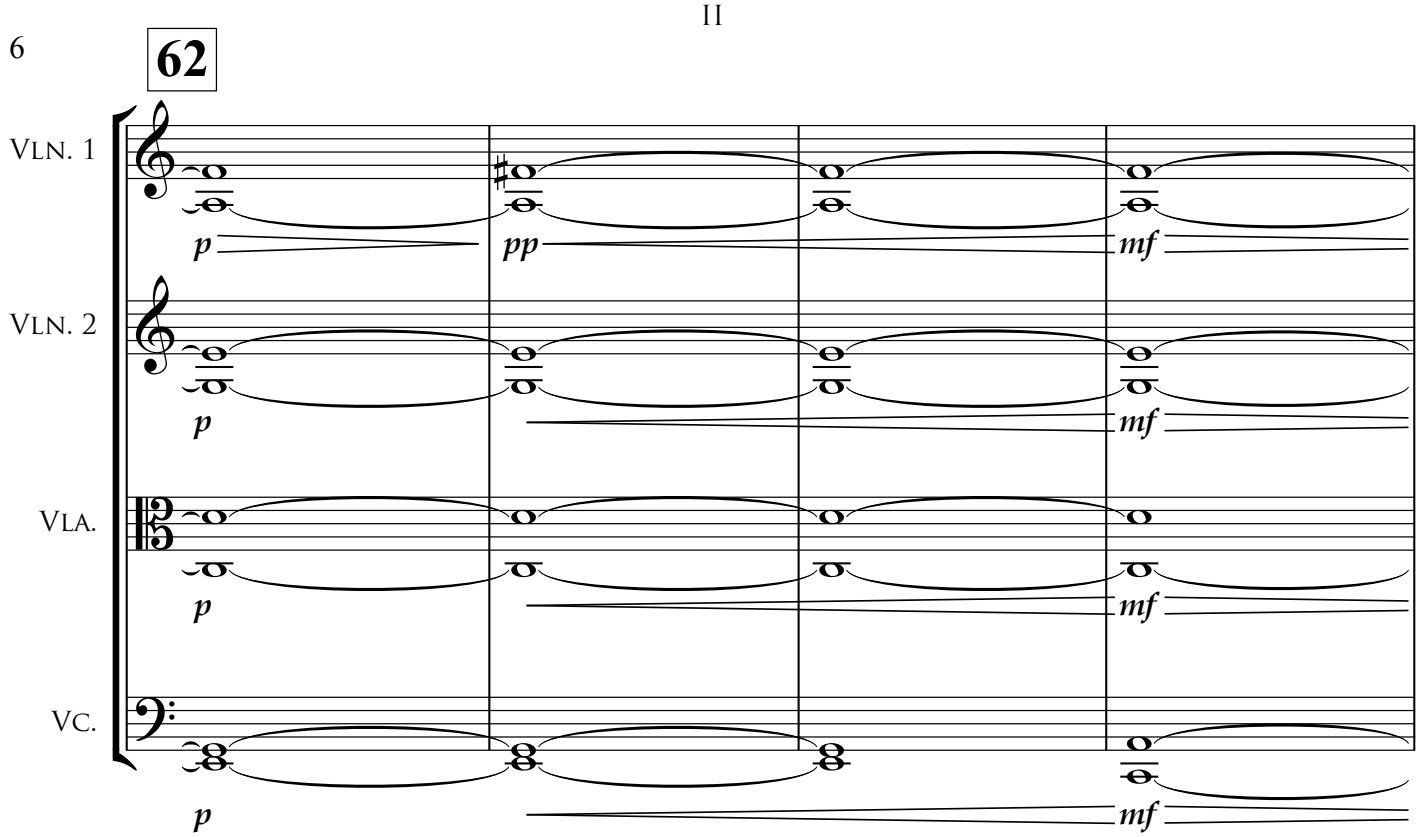

37
mute on
Delicate, sentimental
ord. vibrato
(grace notes on the beat)
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ppp
p
pp

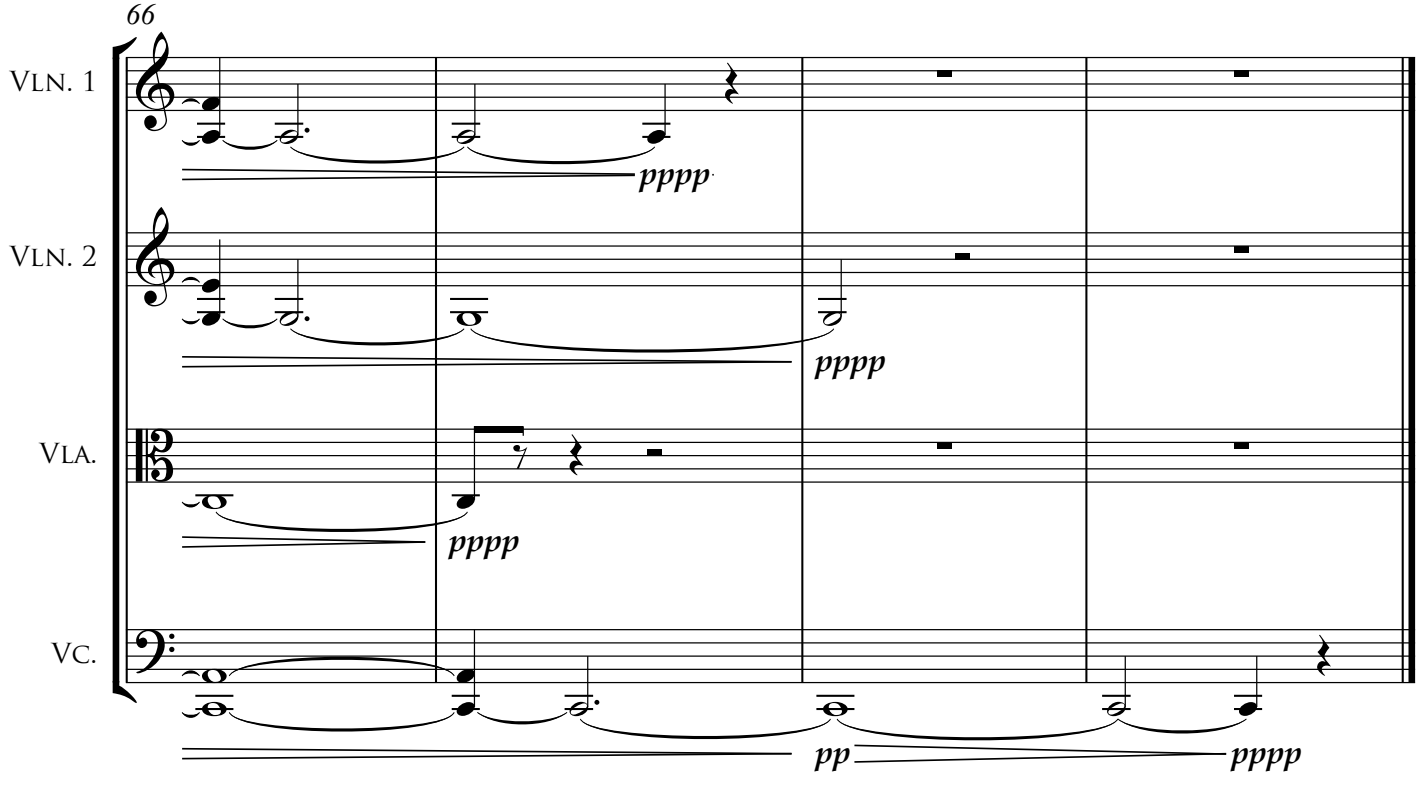

42
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ppp
pp
p
3


47
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mute off
poco vib.
ppp
p
pp


51
poco vib.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ppp
ppp
pp
pp
pp


57
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ff
ff
ff
ff

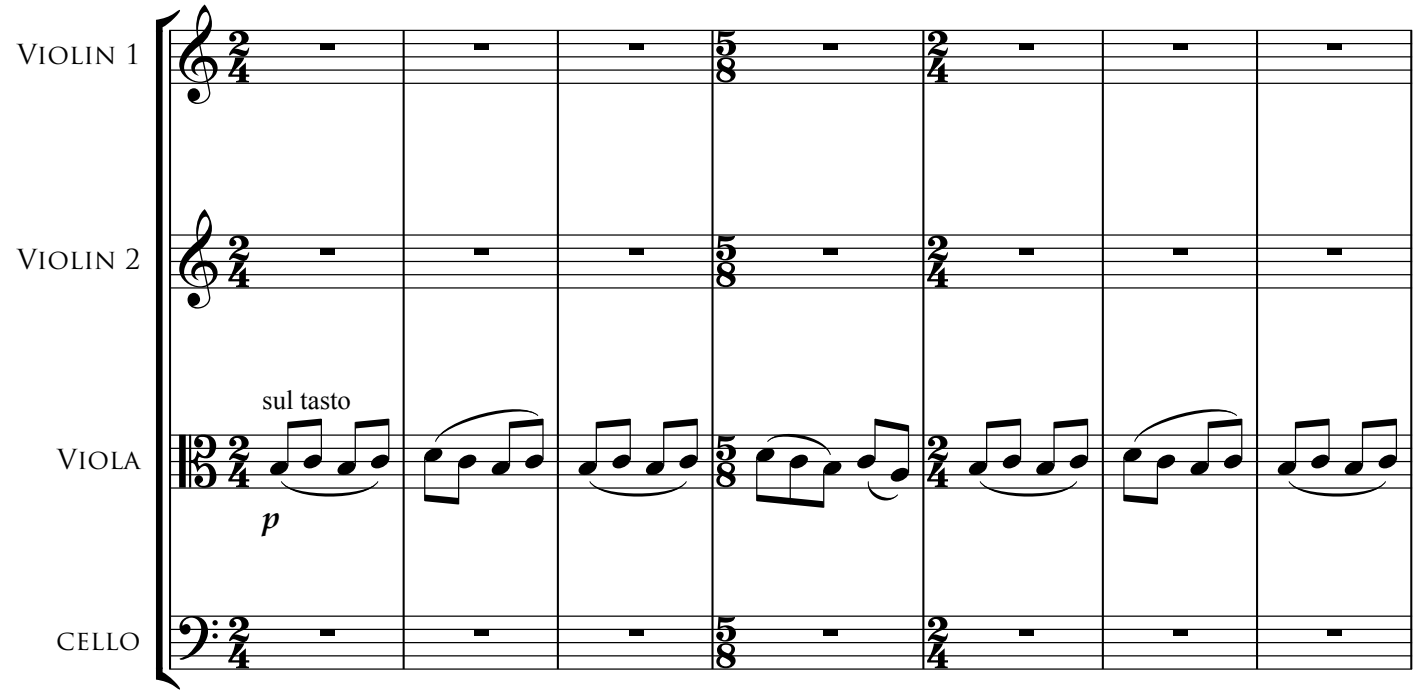

62
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
pp
mf

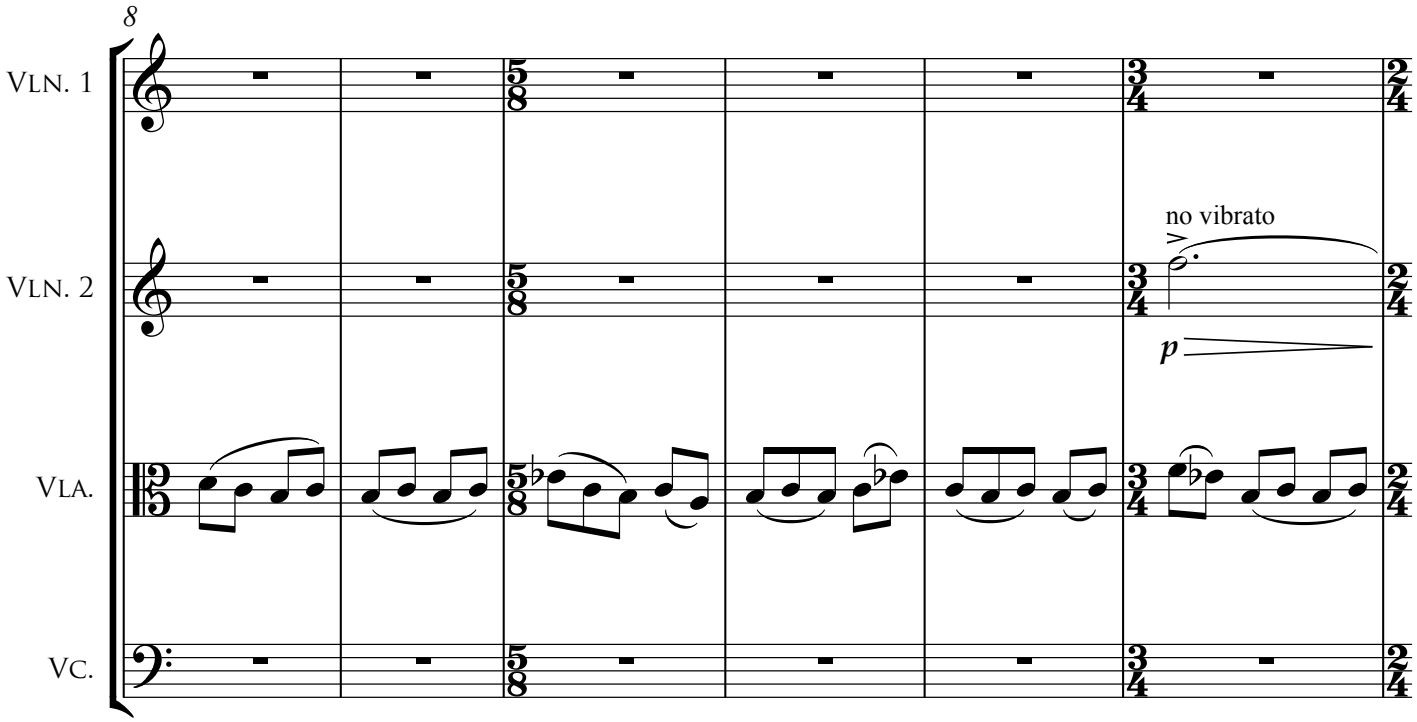

66
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
pppp
pp

Bird Catching From Above
III

Serpentine ♩ = 102

Steven Snowden





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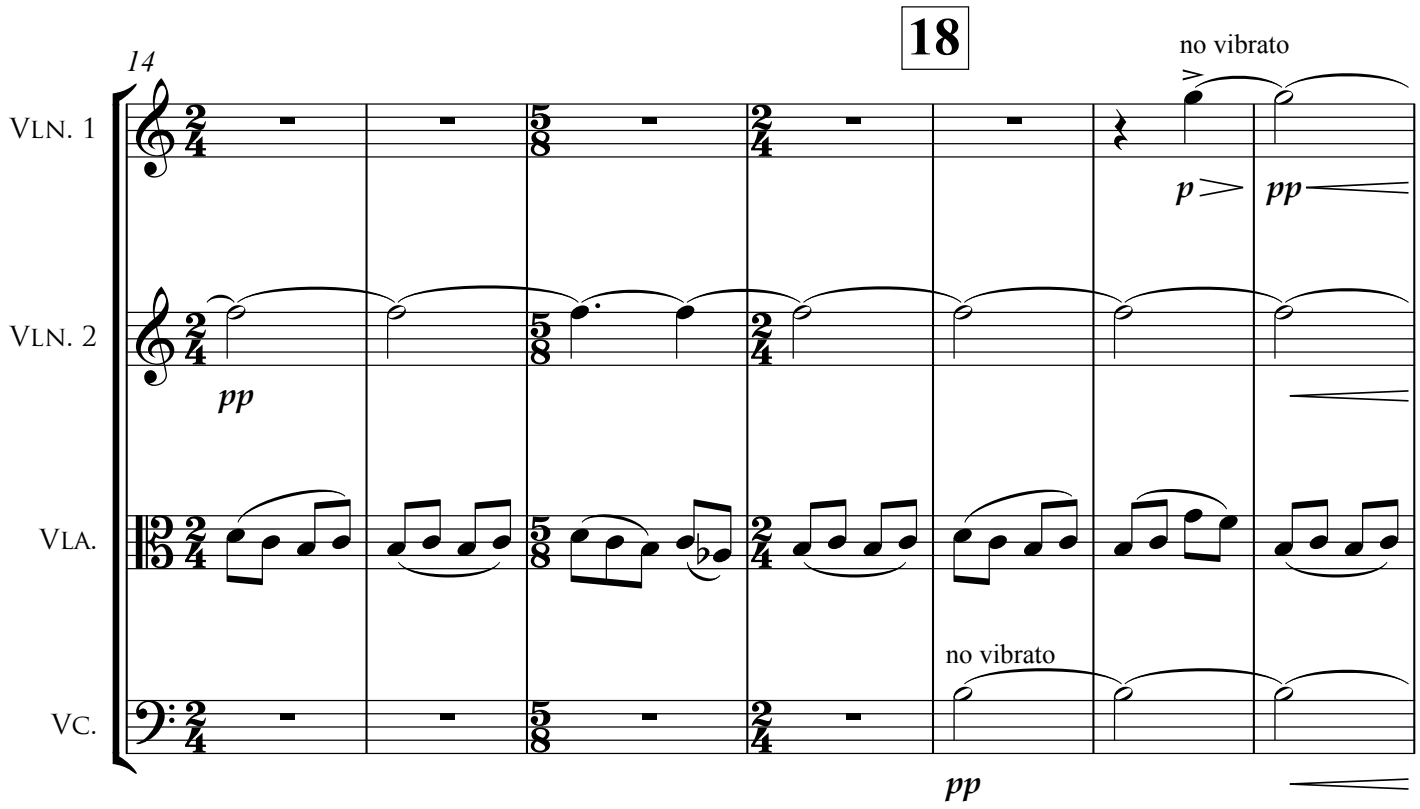
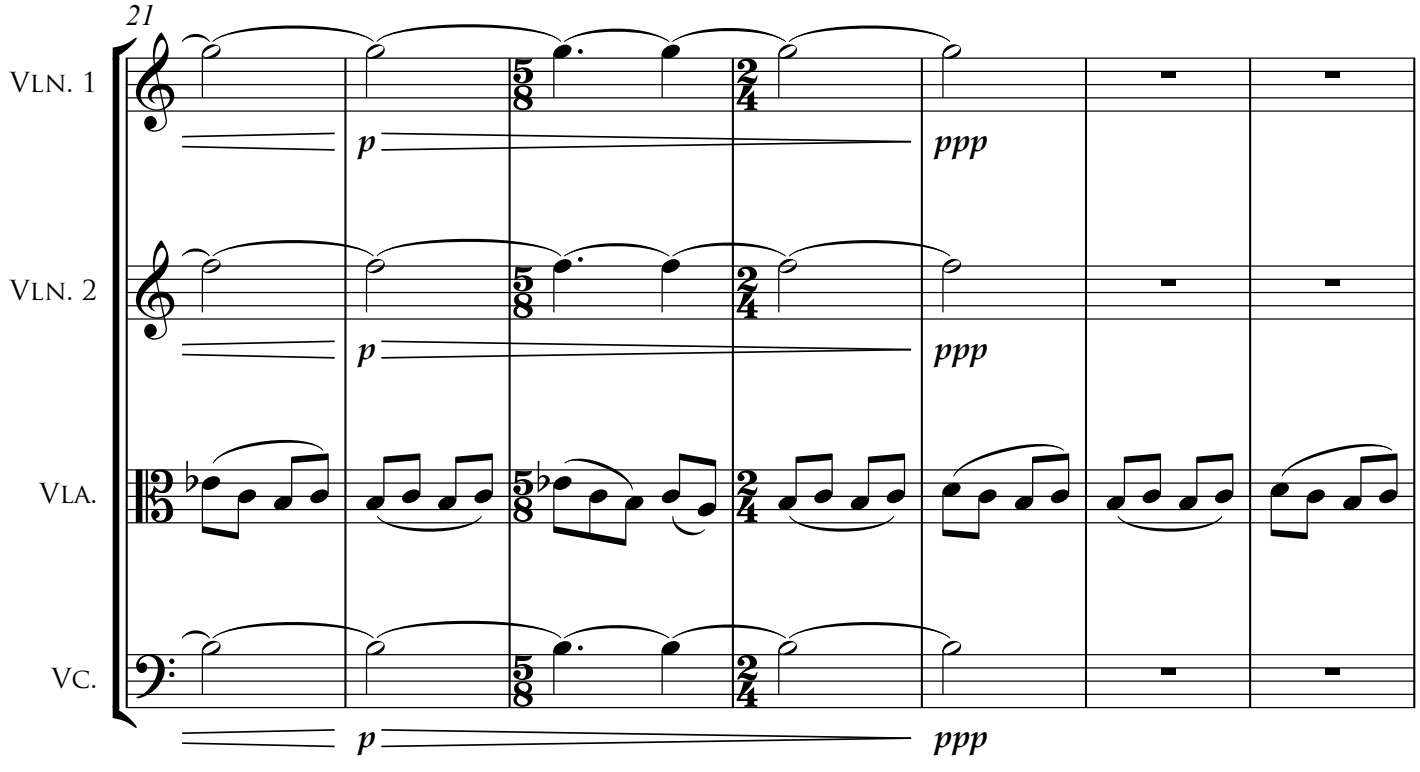
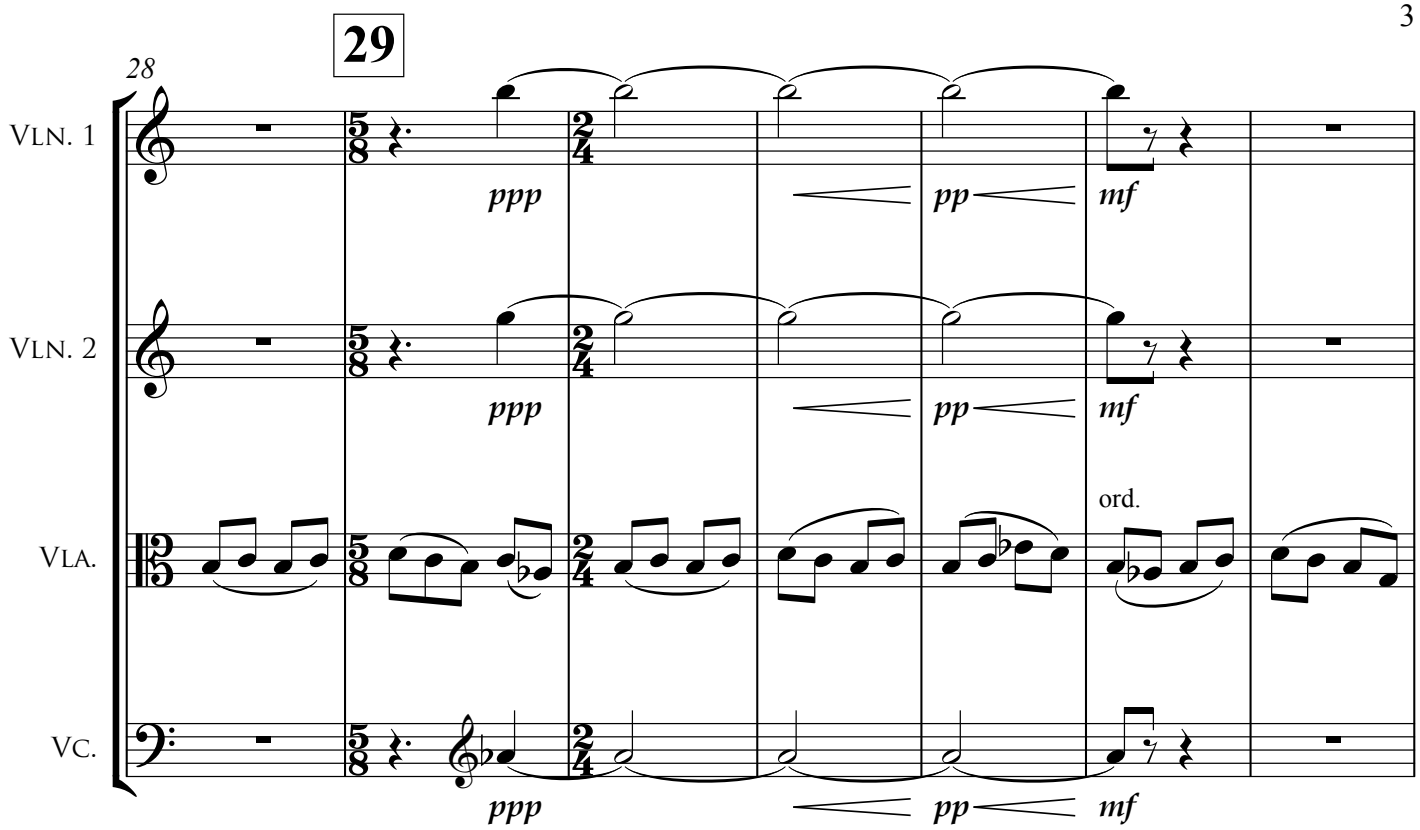
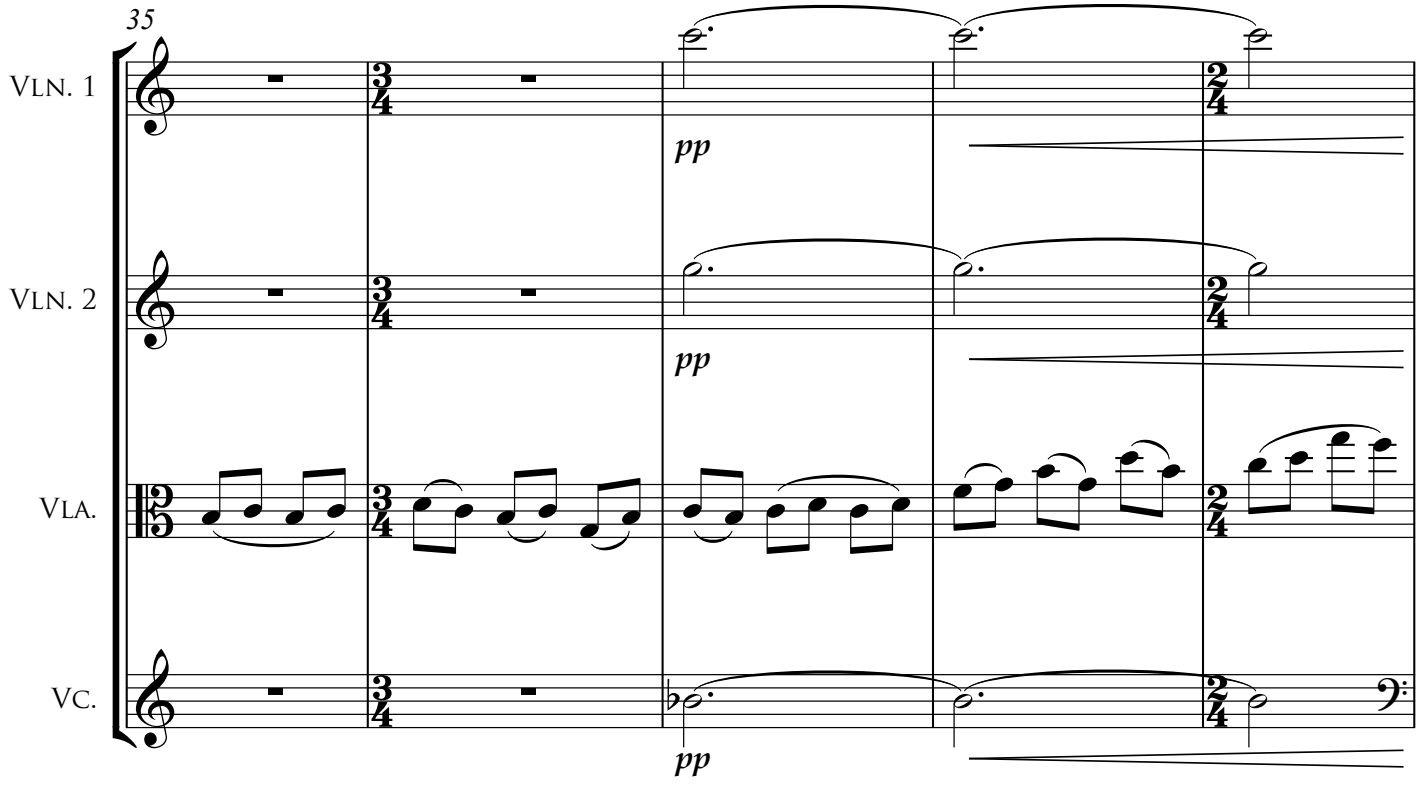
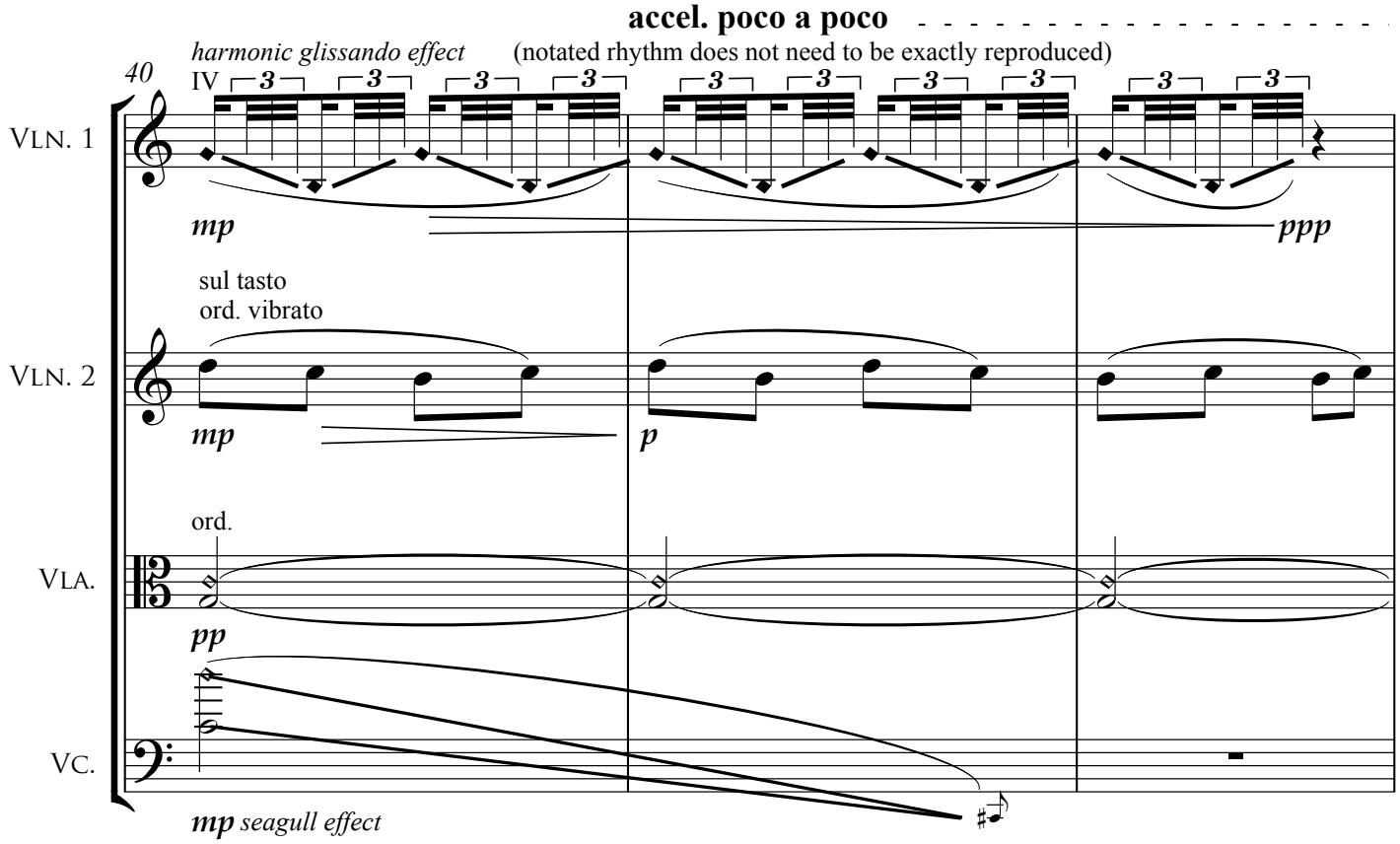
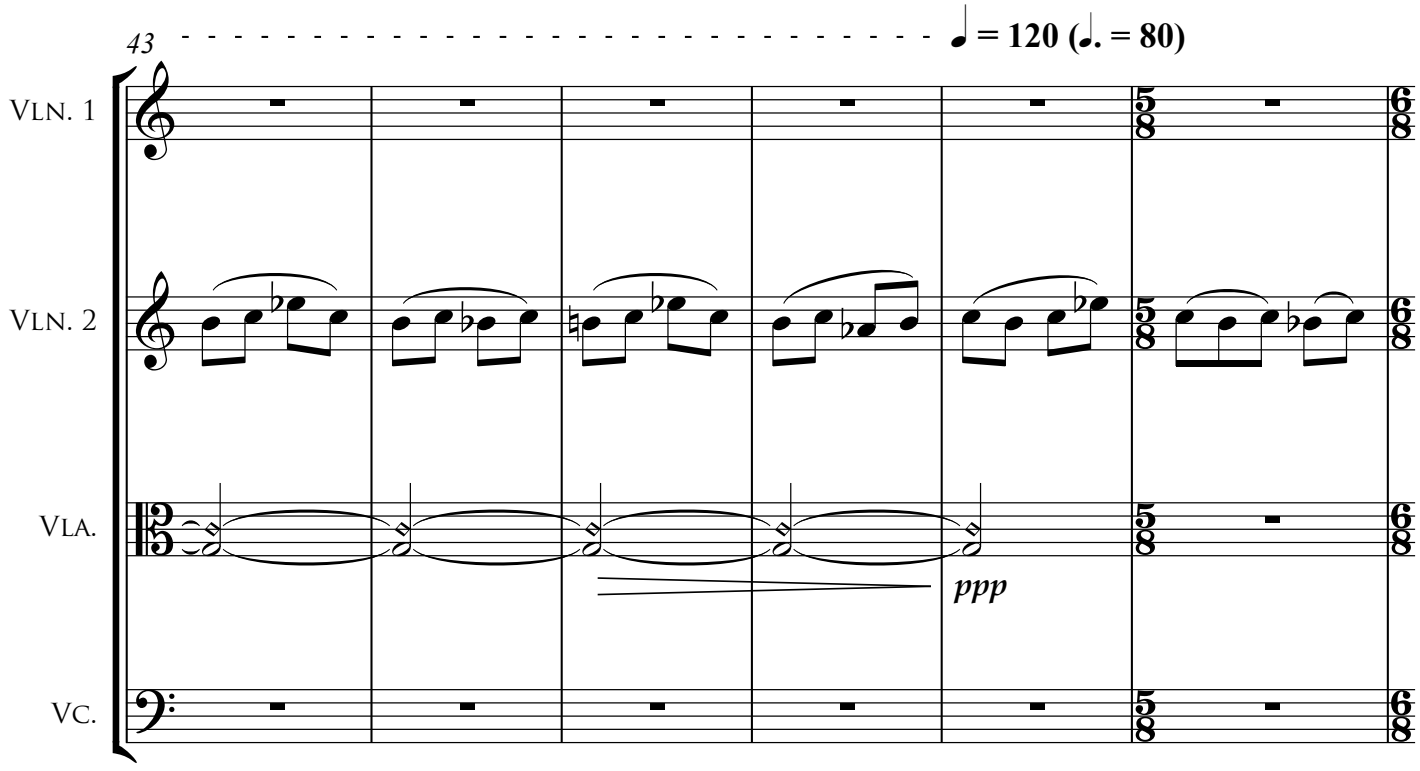

18
14
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
no vibrato
p
pp
pp
no vibrato
pp


21
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
ppp
p
ppp
p
ppp

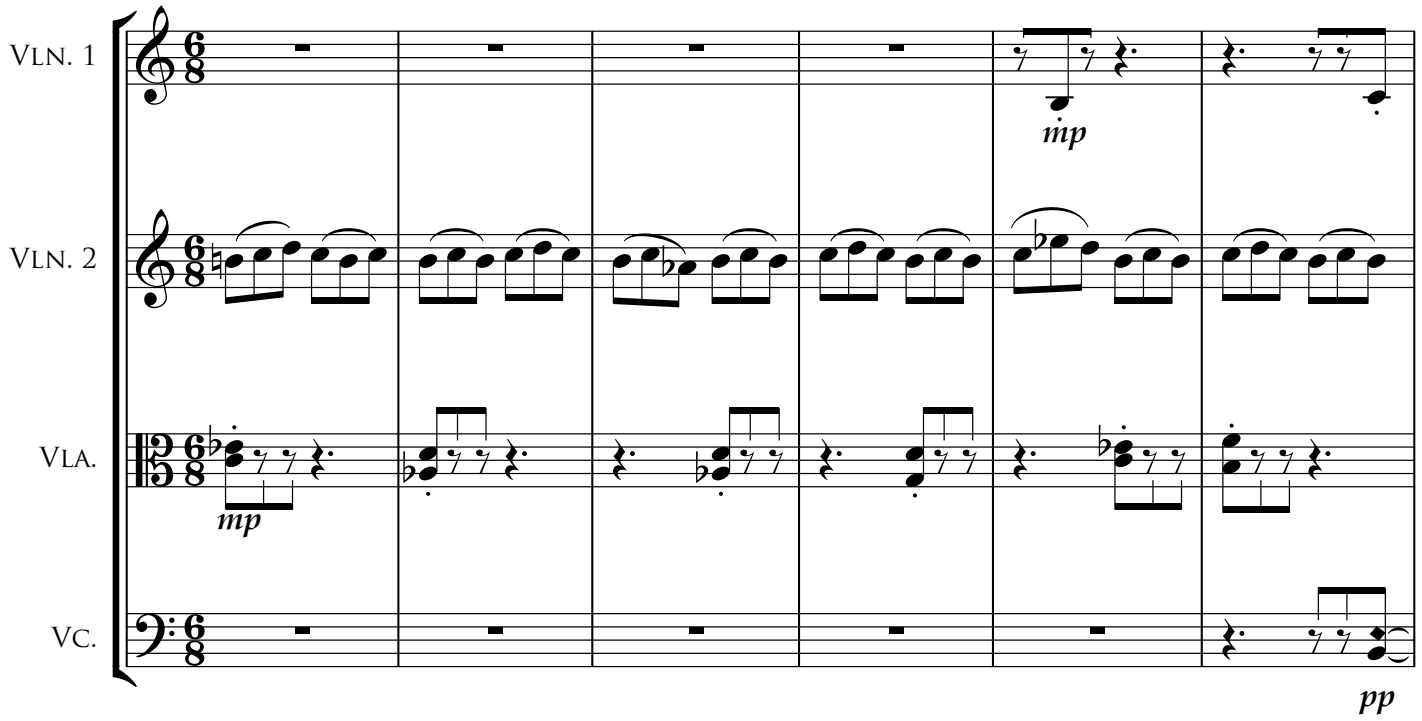

29
28
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ppp
pp
mf
ord.

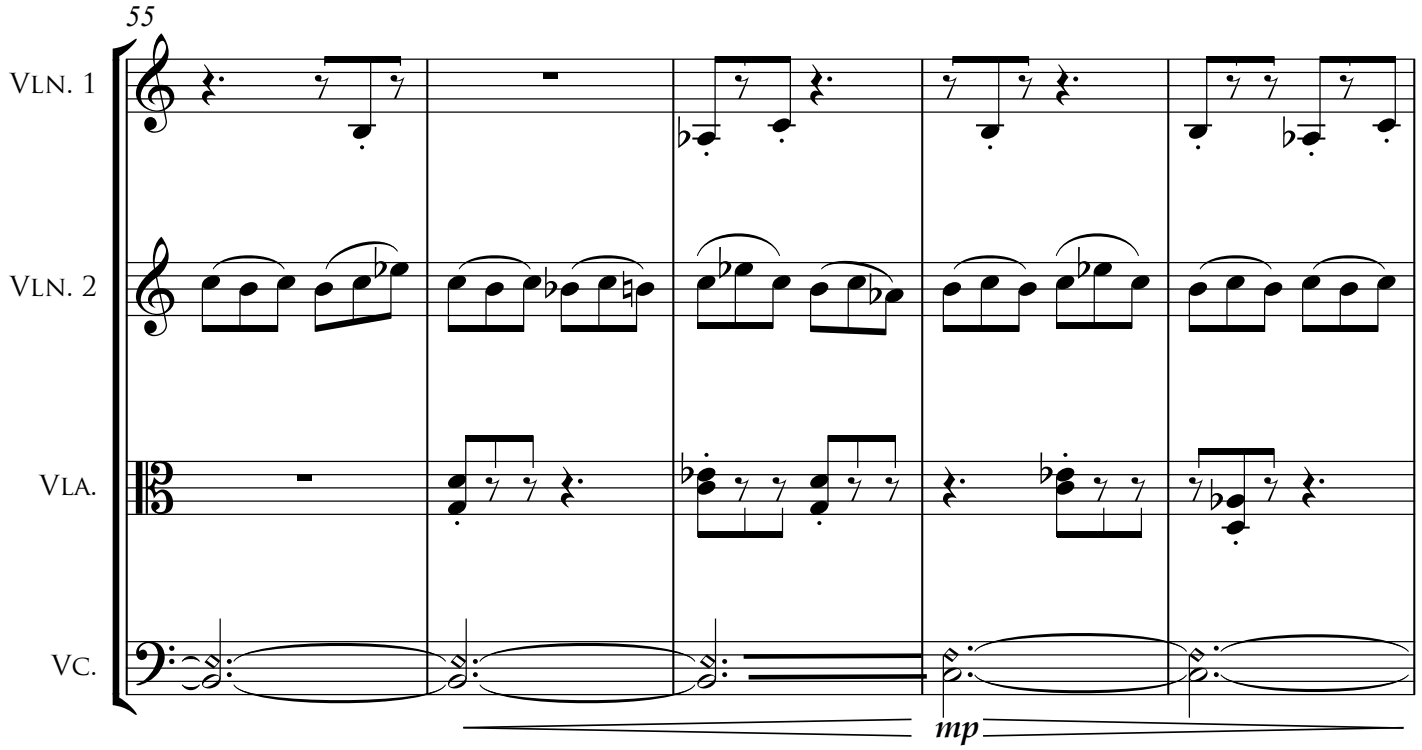

35
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
pp

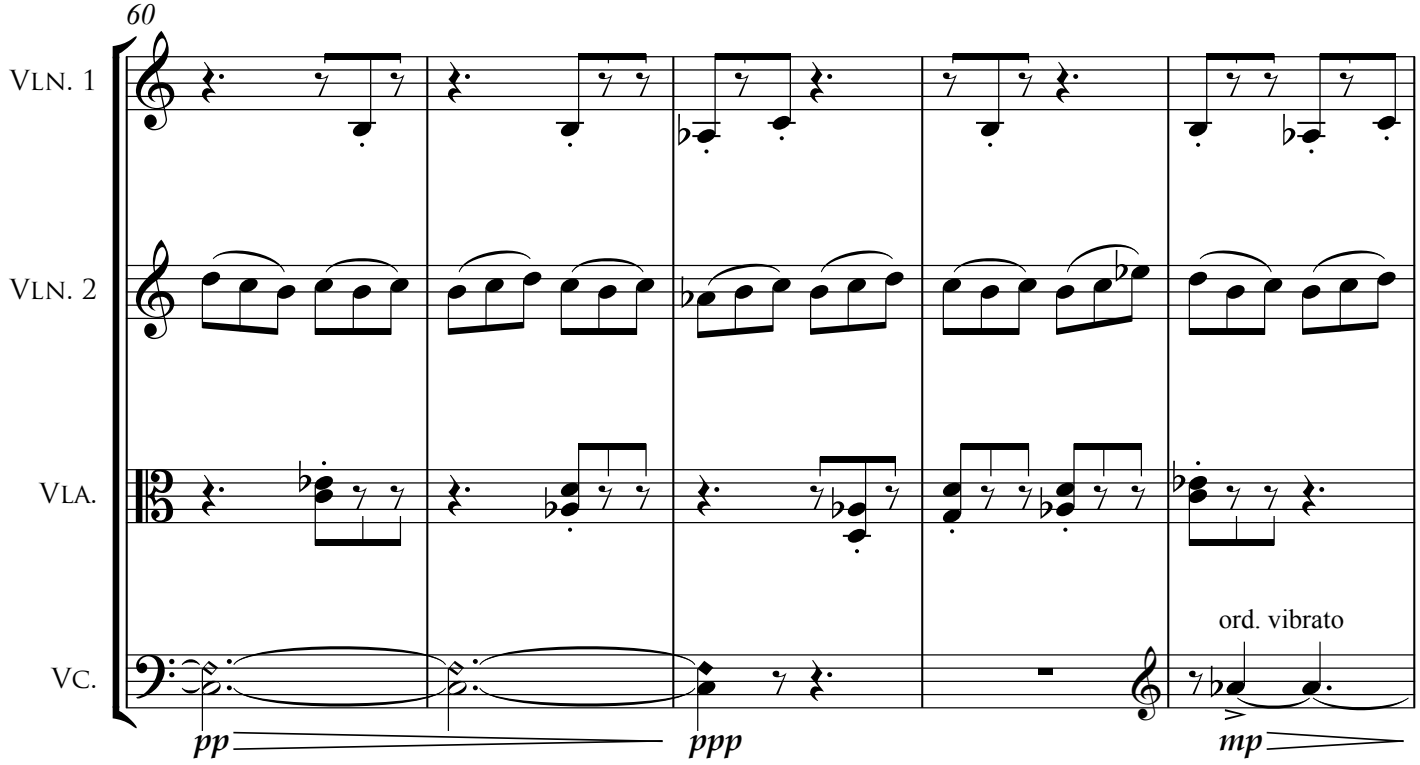

accel. poco a poco
harmonic glissando effect
(notated rhythm does not need to be exactly reproduced)
40
IV
Vln. 1
mp
ppp
sul tasto
ord. vibrato
Vln. 2
mp
p
ord.
Vla.
pp
Vc.
mp seagull effect

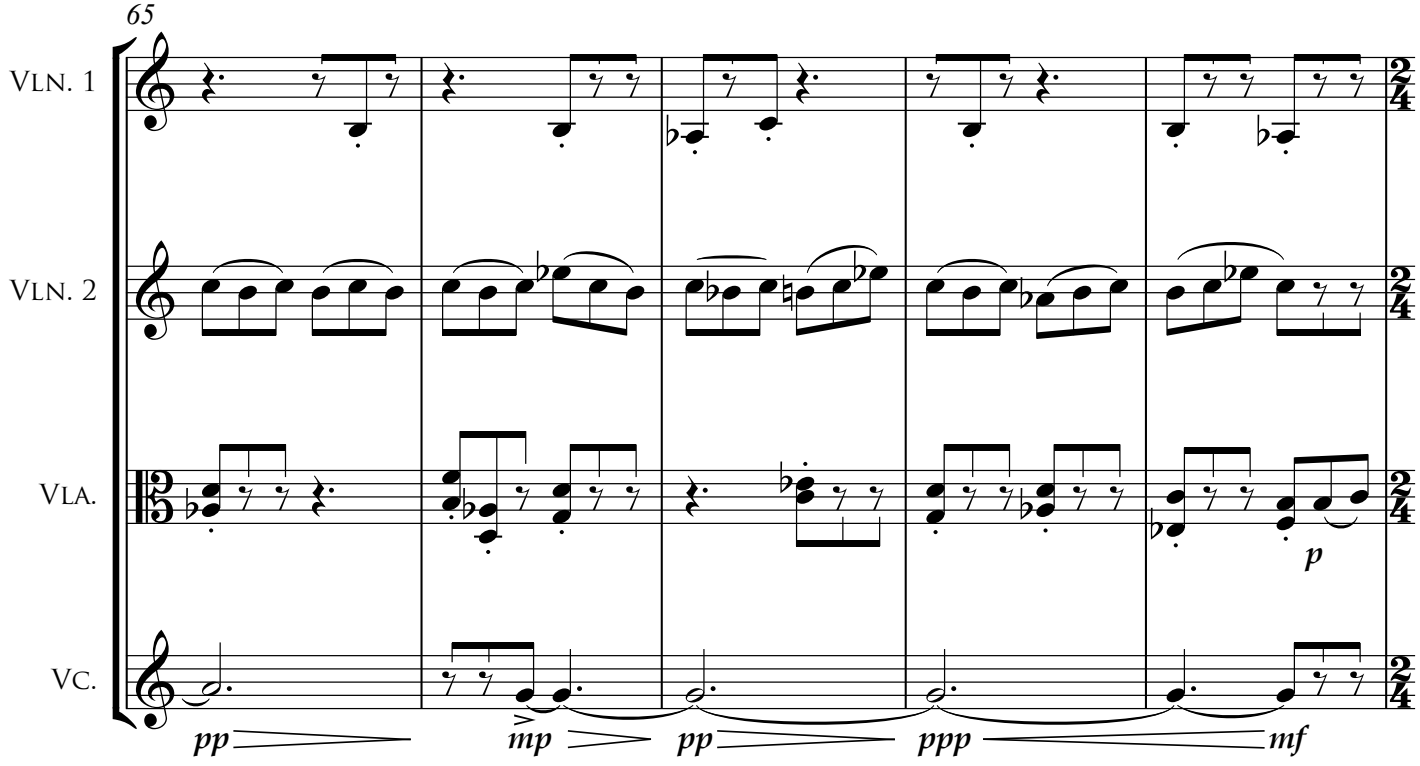

43
♩ = 120 (♩. = 80)
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
ppp
Vc.

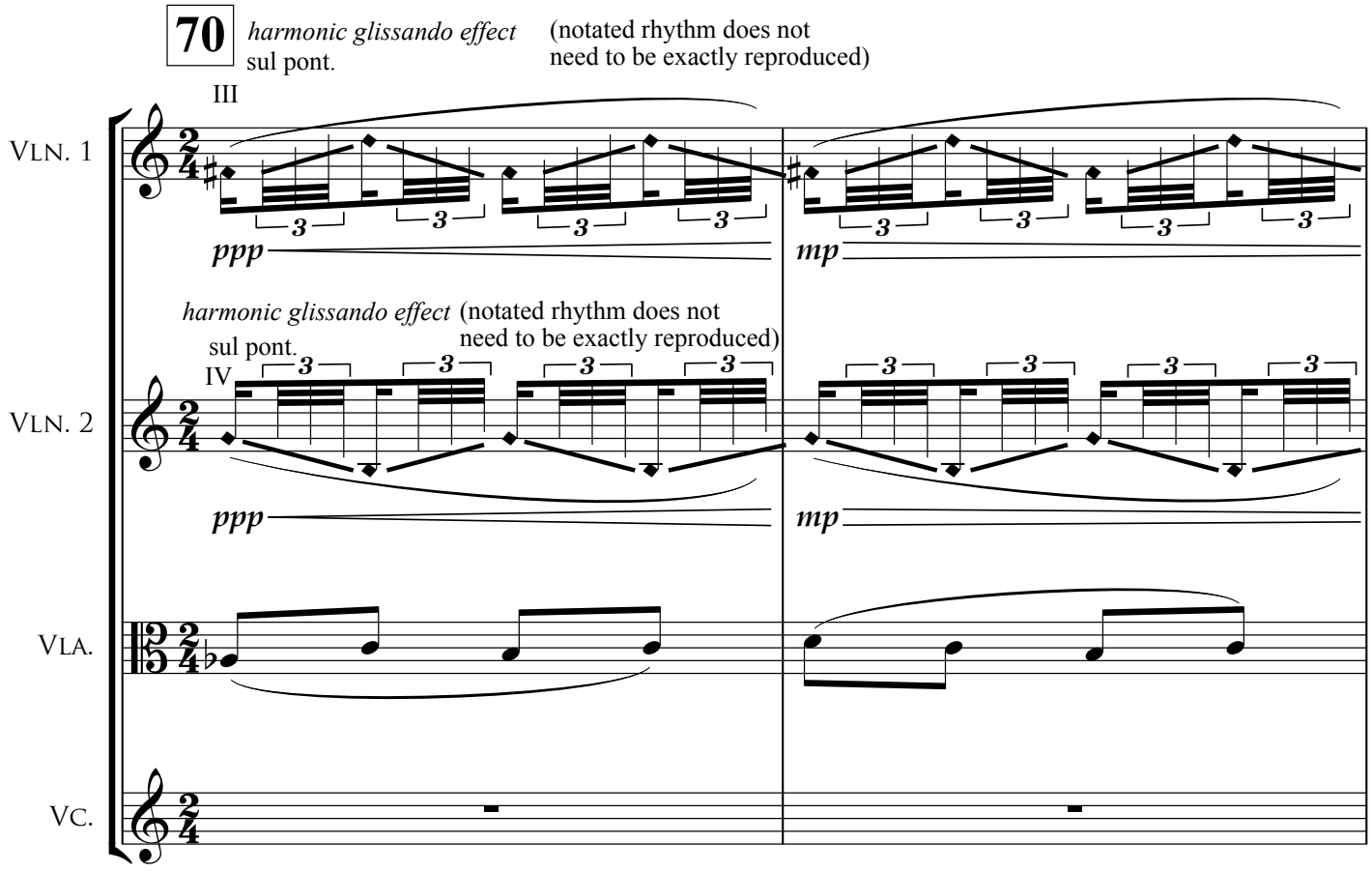
49 **With an undercurrent of aggression**

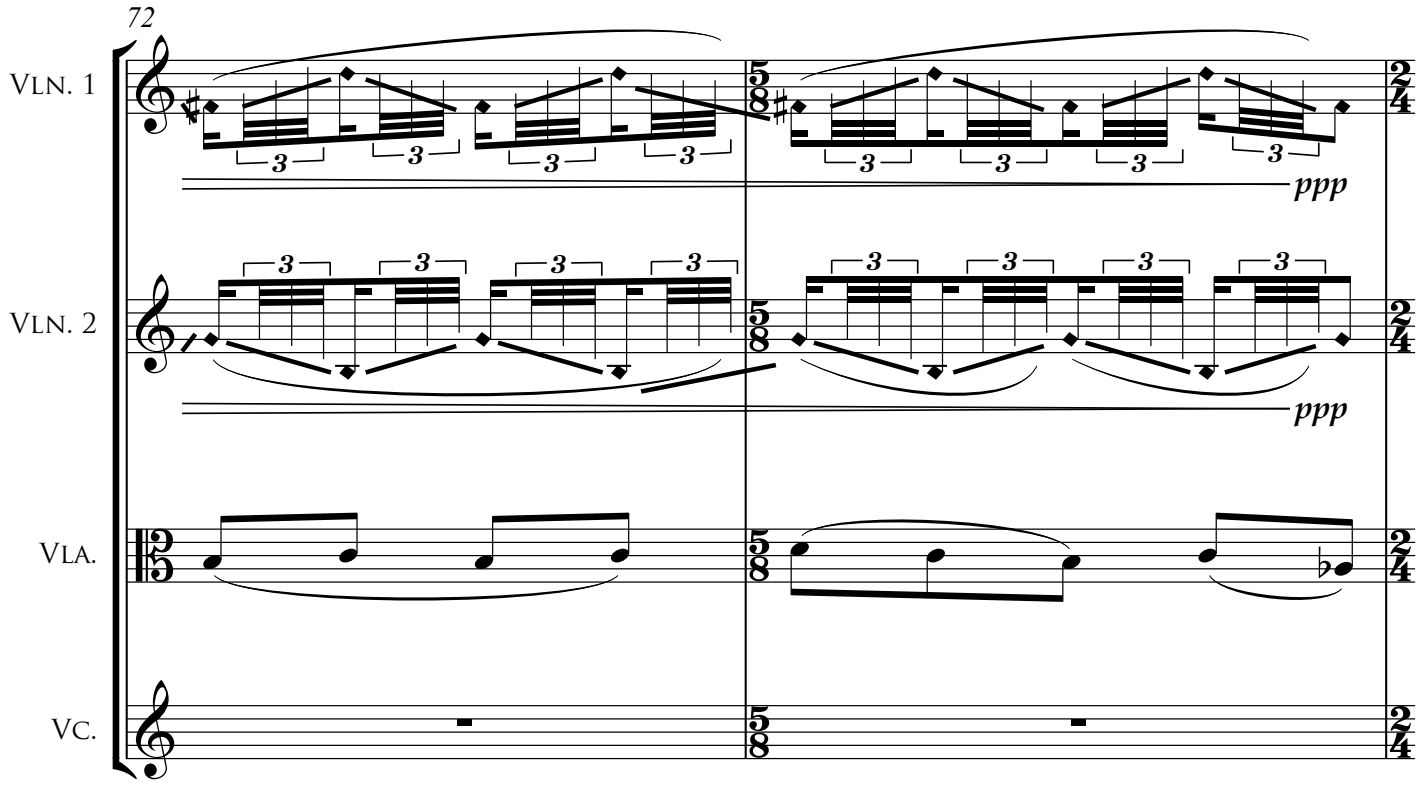


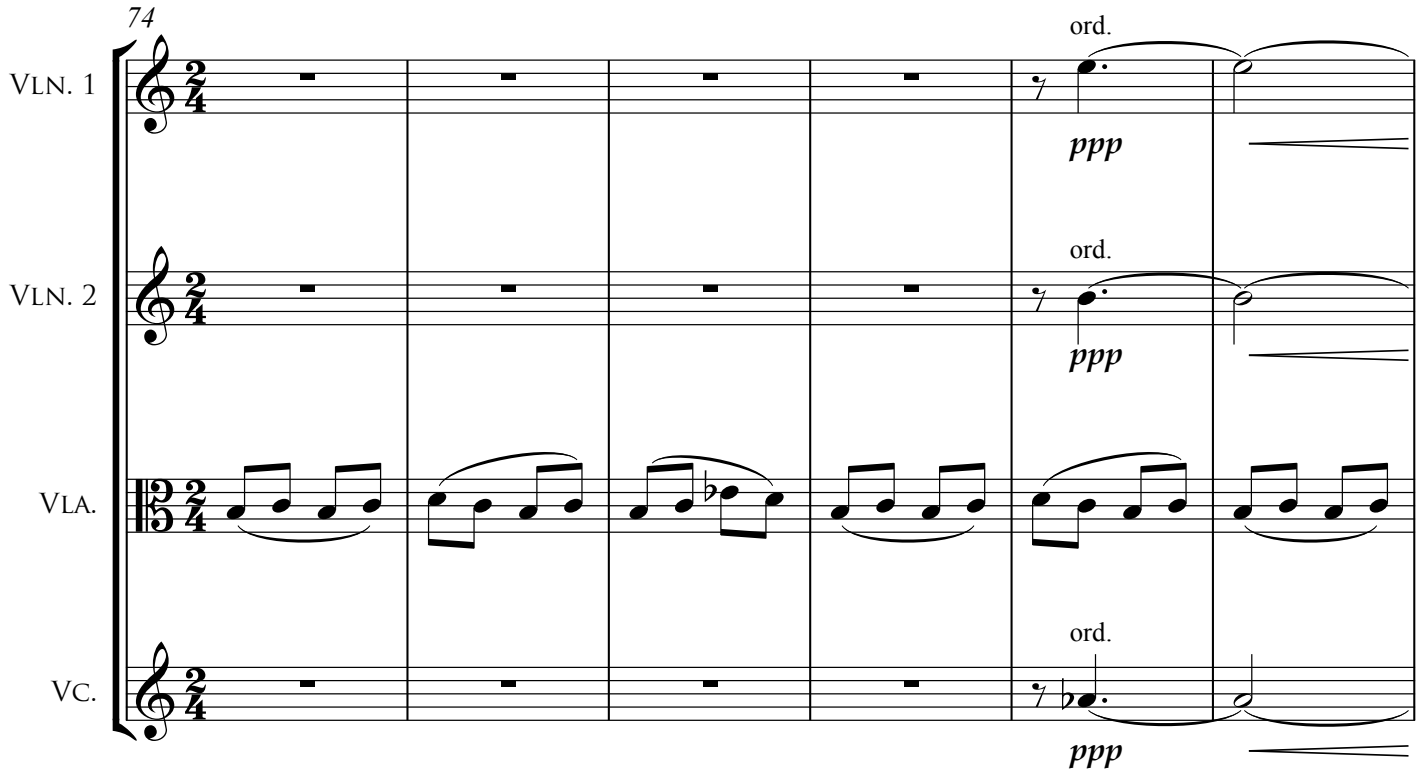


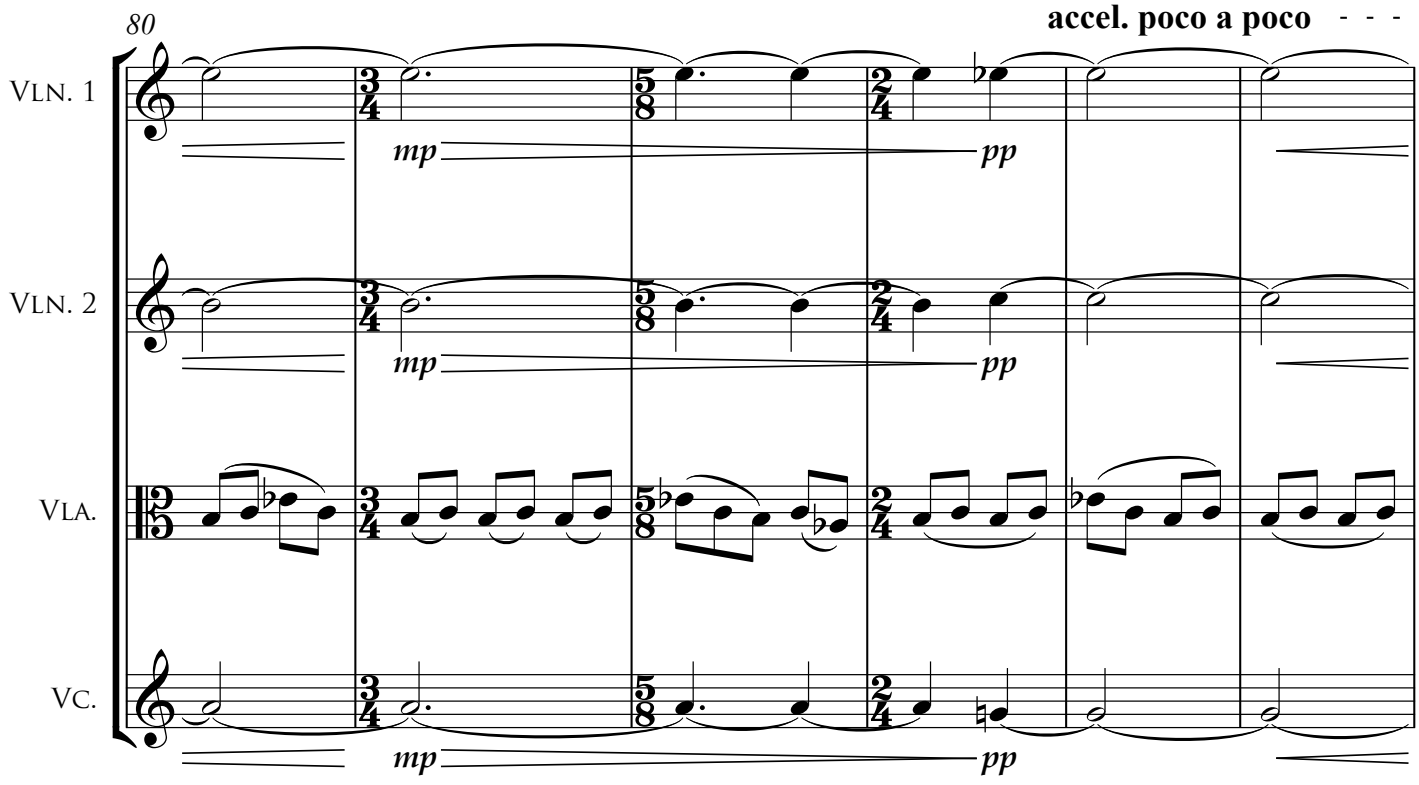

60
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ord. vibrato
pp
ppp
mp

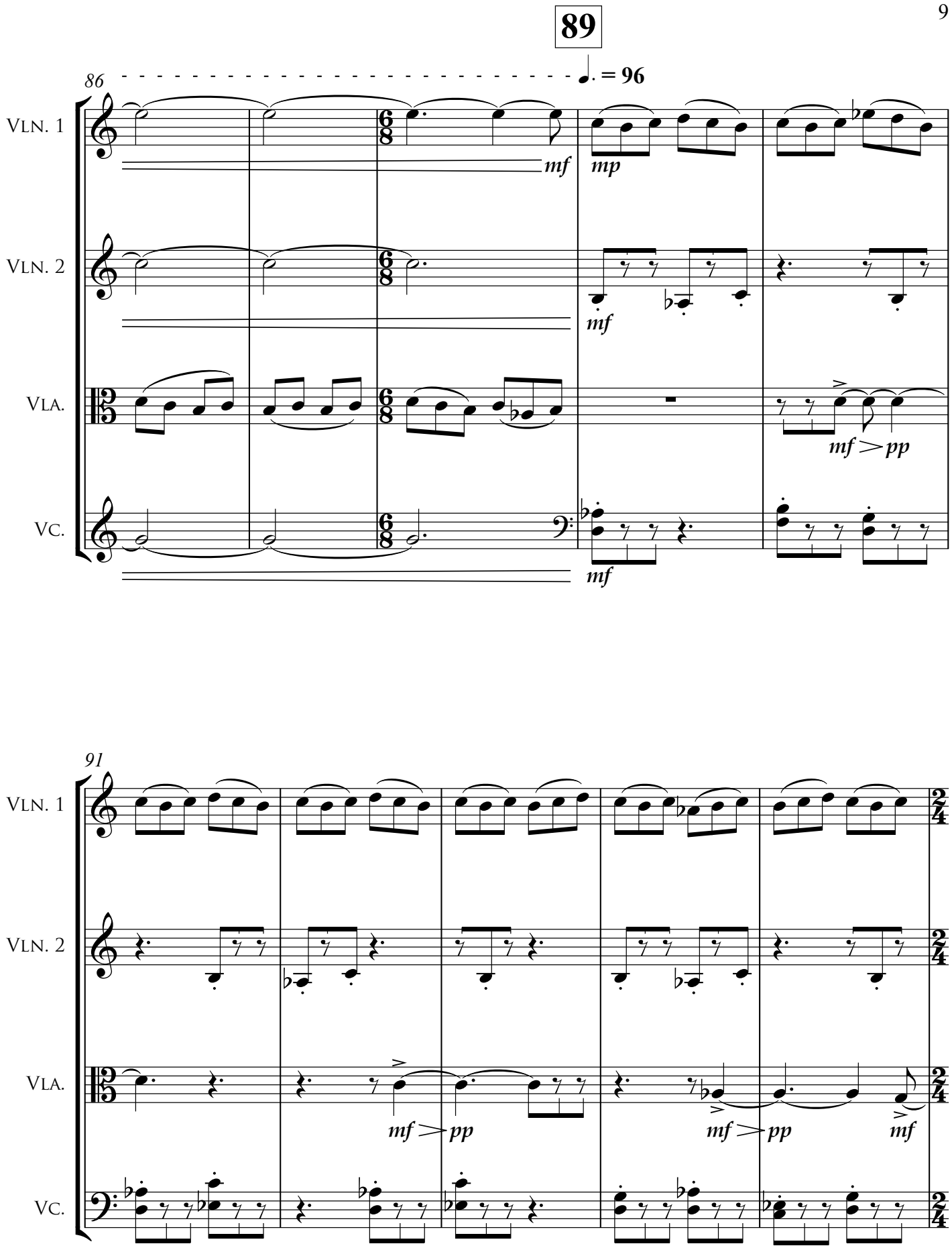

65
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
pp
mp
pp
ppp
mf

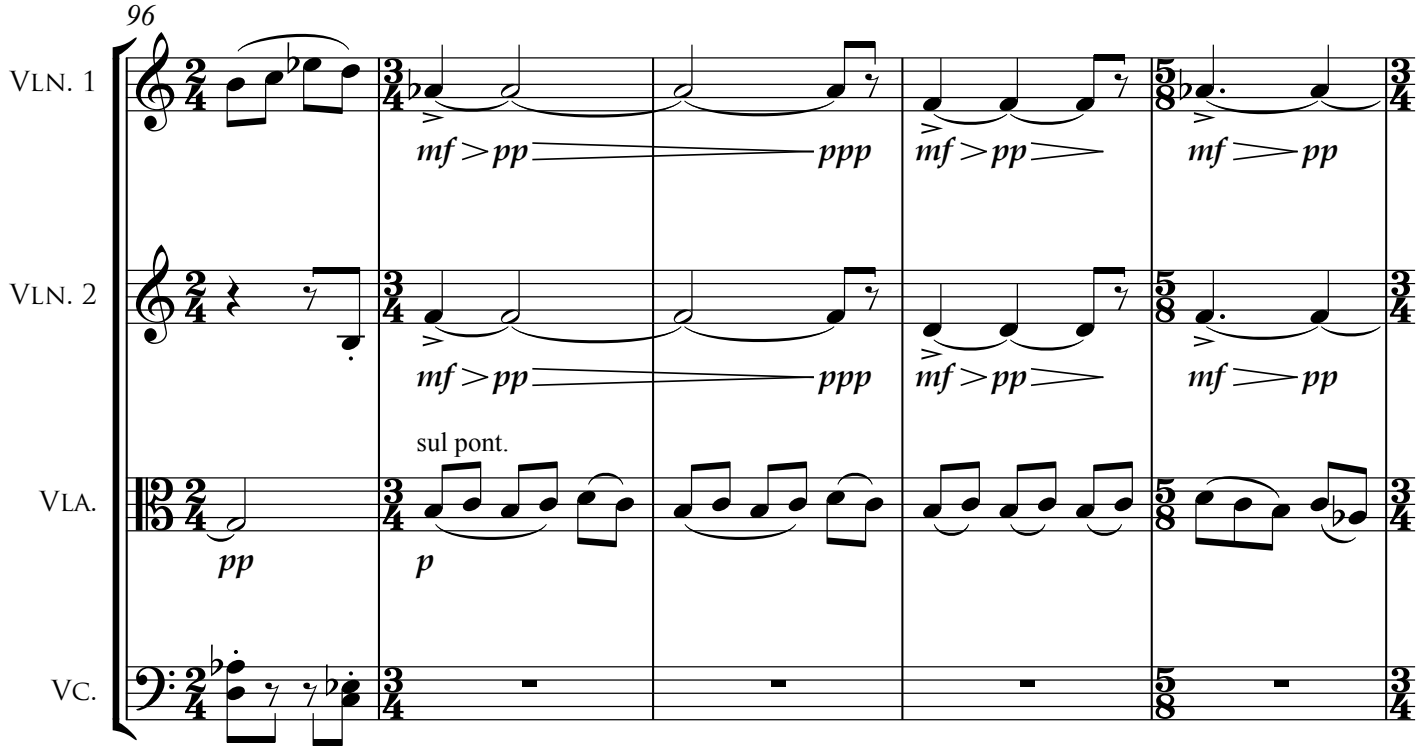

70
harmonic glissando effect
sul pont.
III
(notated rhythm does not
need to be exactly reproduced)
Vln. 1
ppp
mp
harmonic glissando effect
sul pont.
IV
(notated rhythm does not
need to be exactly reproduced)
Vln. 2
ppp
mp
Vla.
Vc.

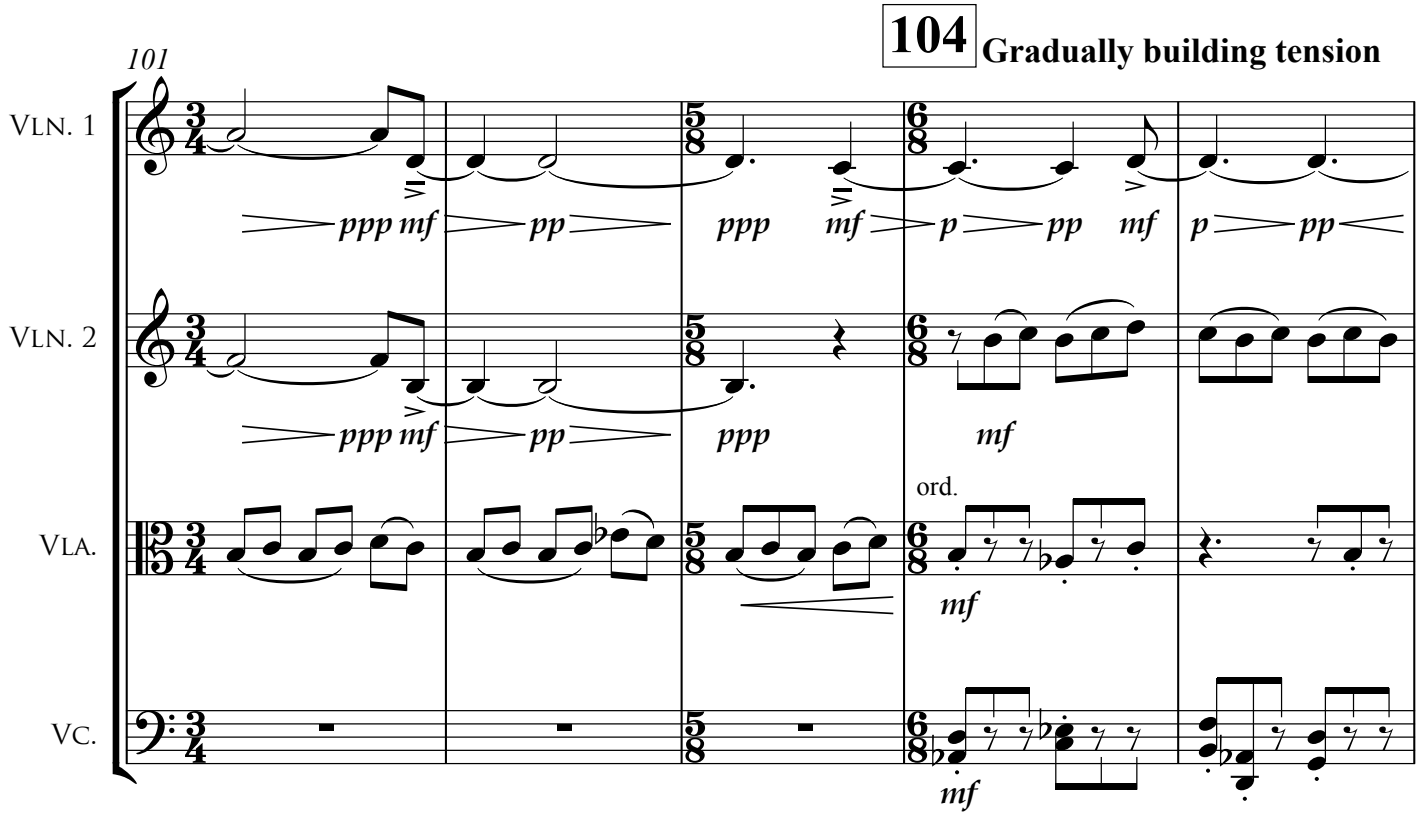

72
Vln. 1
ppp
Vln. 2
ppp
Vla.
Vc.

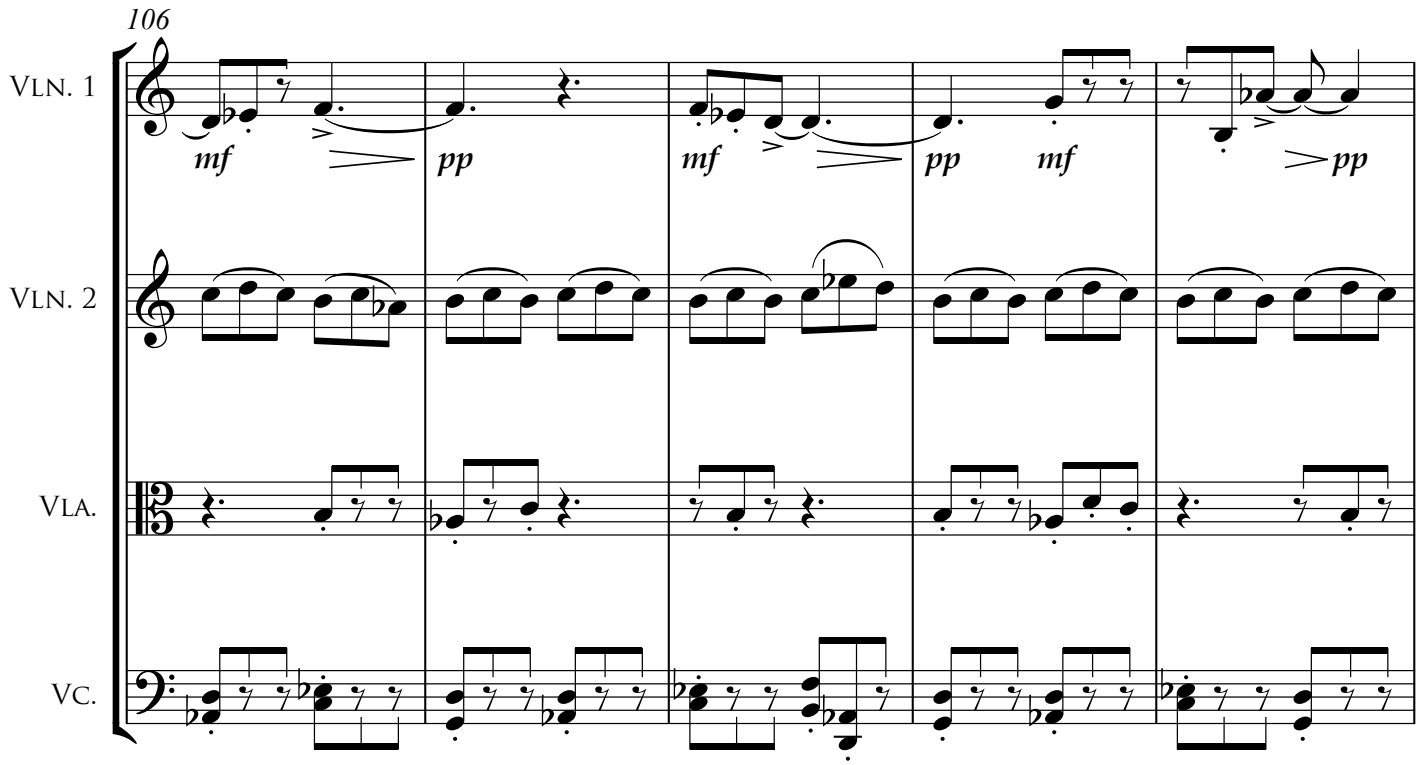

74
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ord.
ppp
ord.
ppp
ord.
ppp

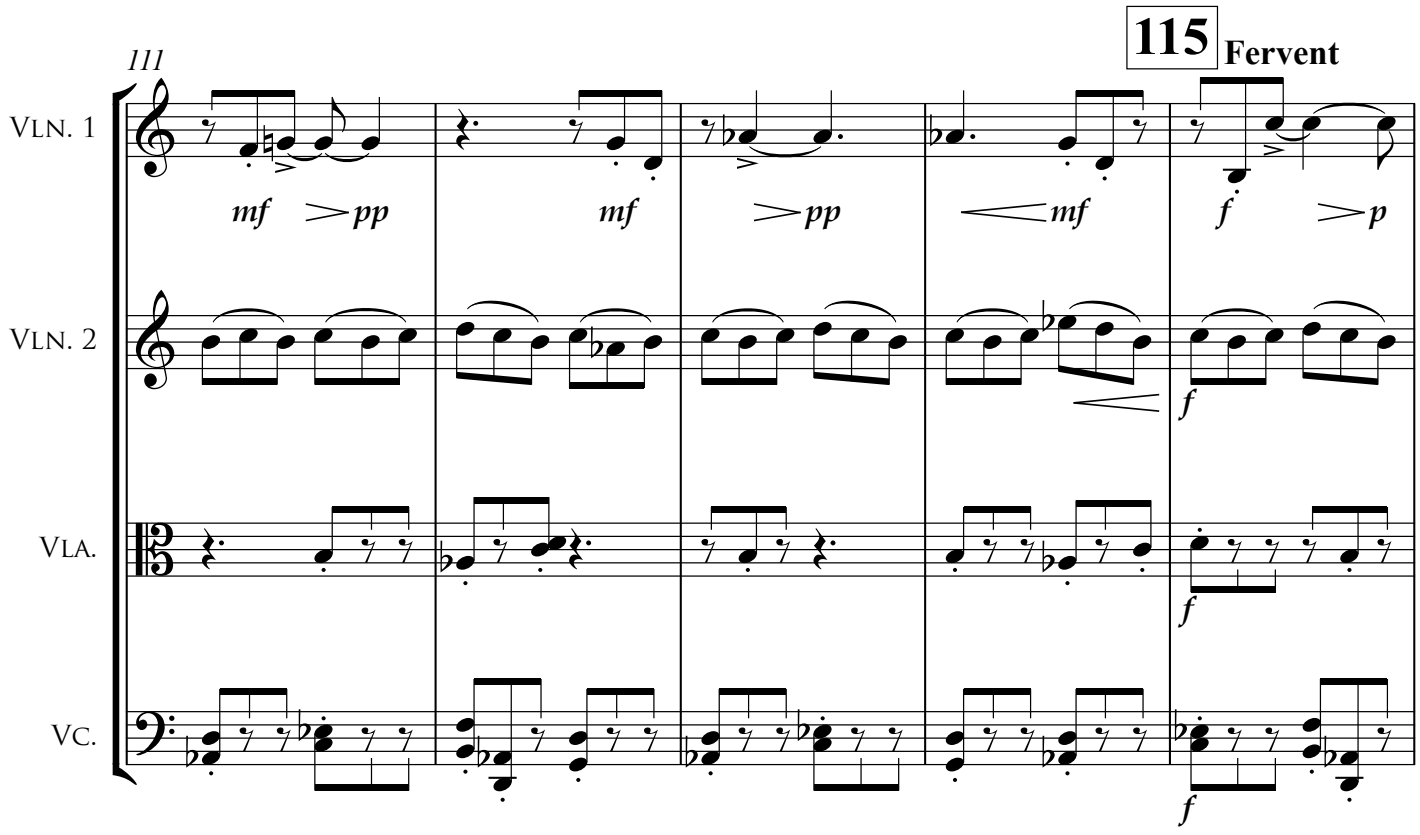

80
accel. poco a poco
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mp
pp
mp
pp
mp
pp

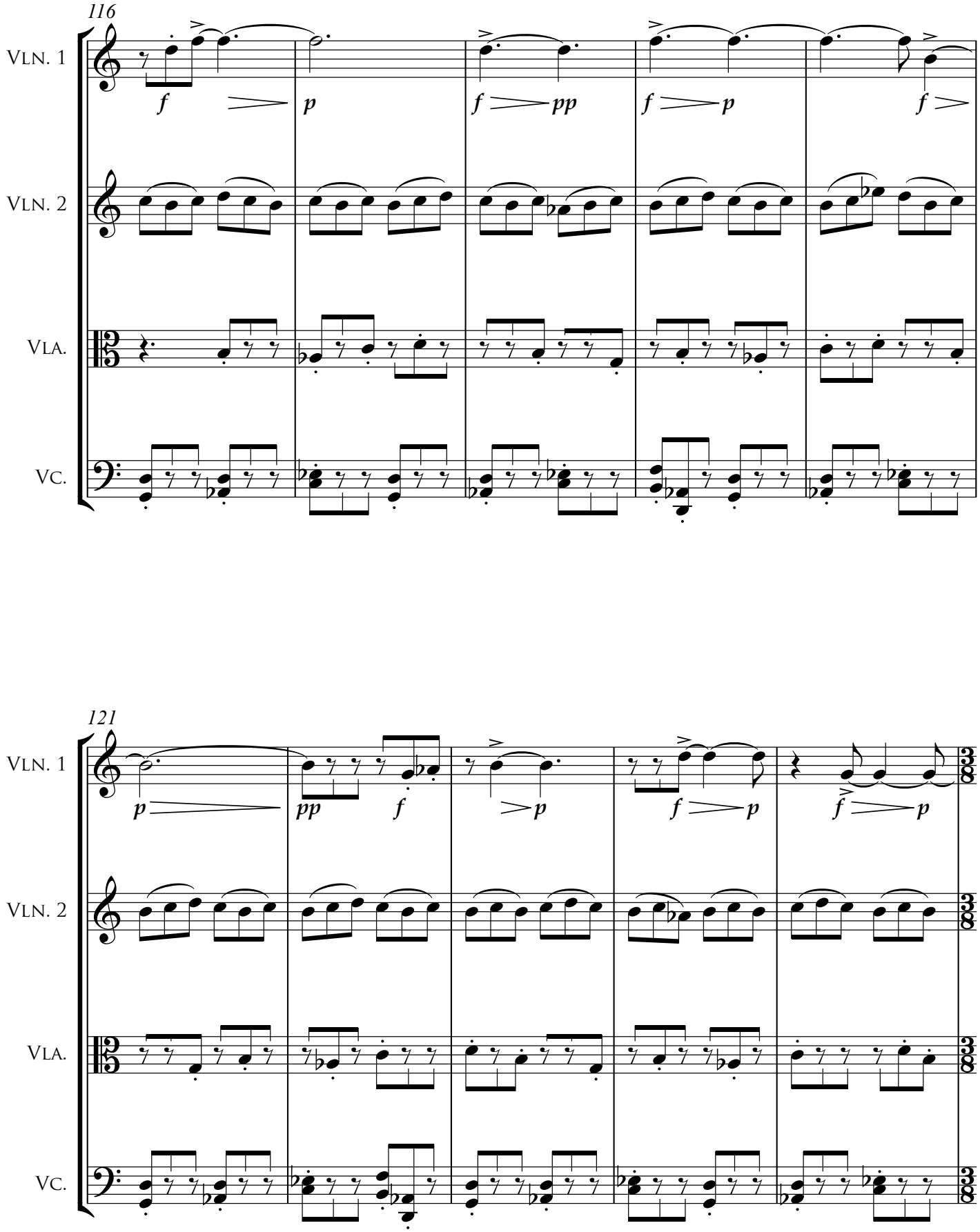

89
86
♩. = 96
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf
mp
mf
mf
mf > pp
91
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf > pp
mf > pp
mf

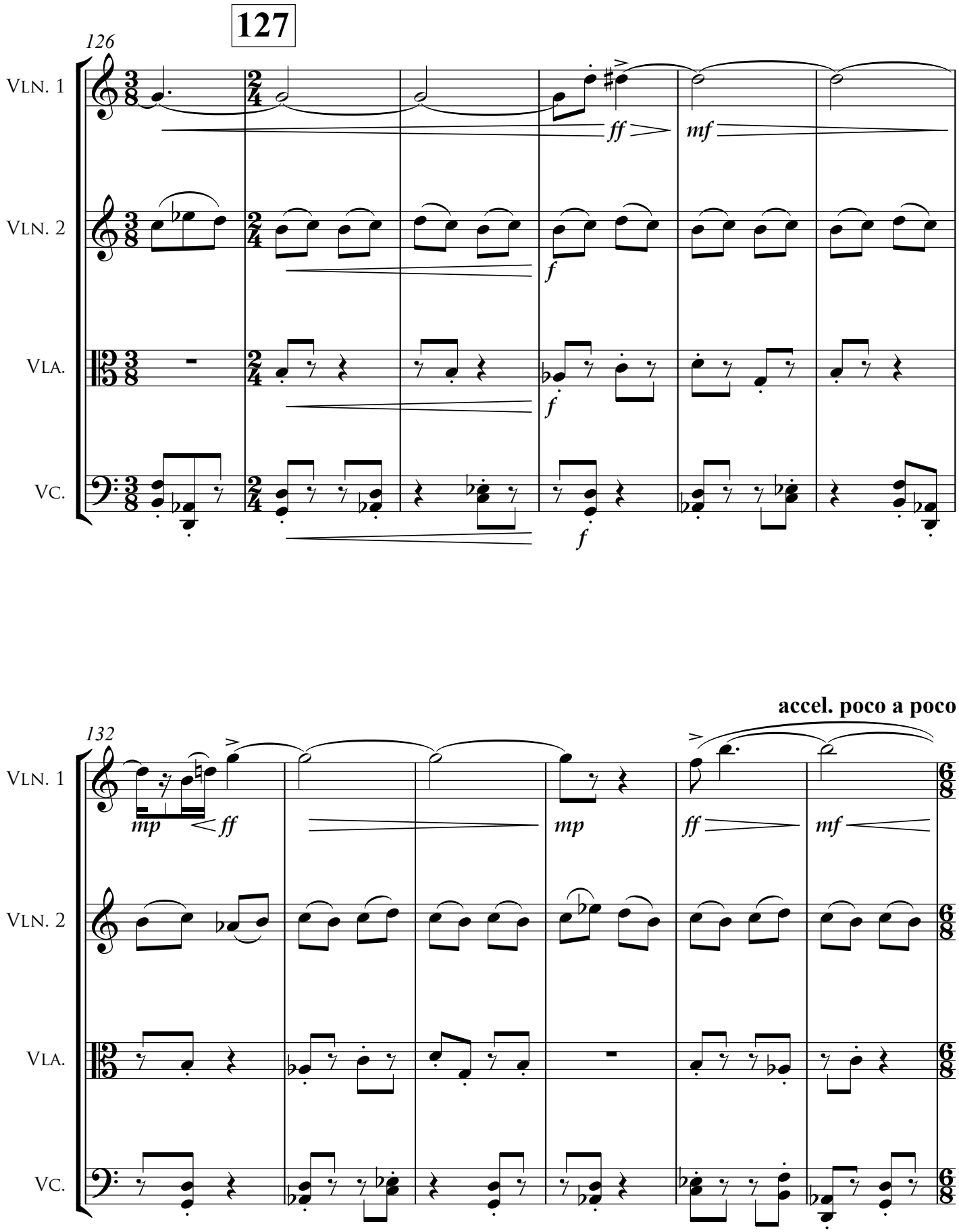

96
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf > pp
ppp
mf > pp
mf > pp
mf > pp
ppp
mf > pp
mf > pp
sul pont.
pp
p

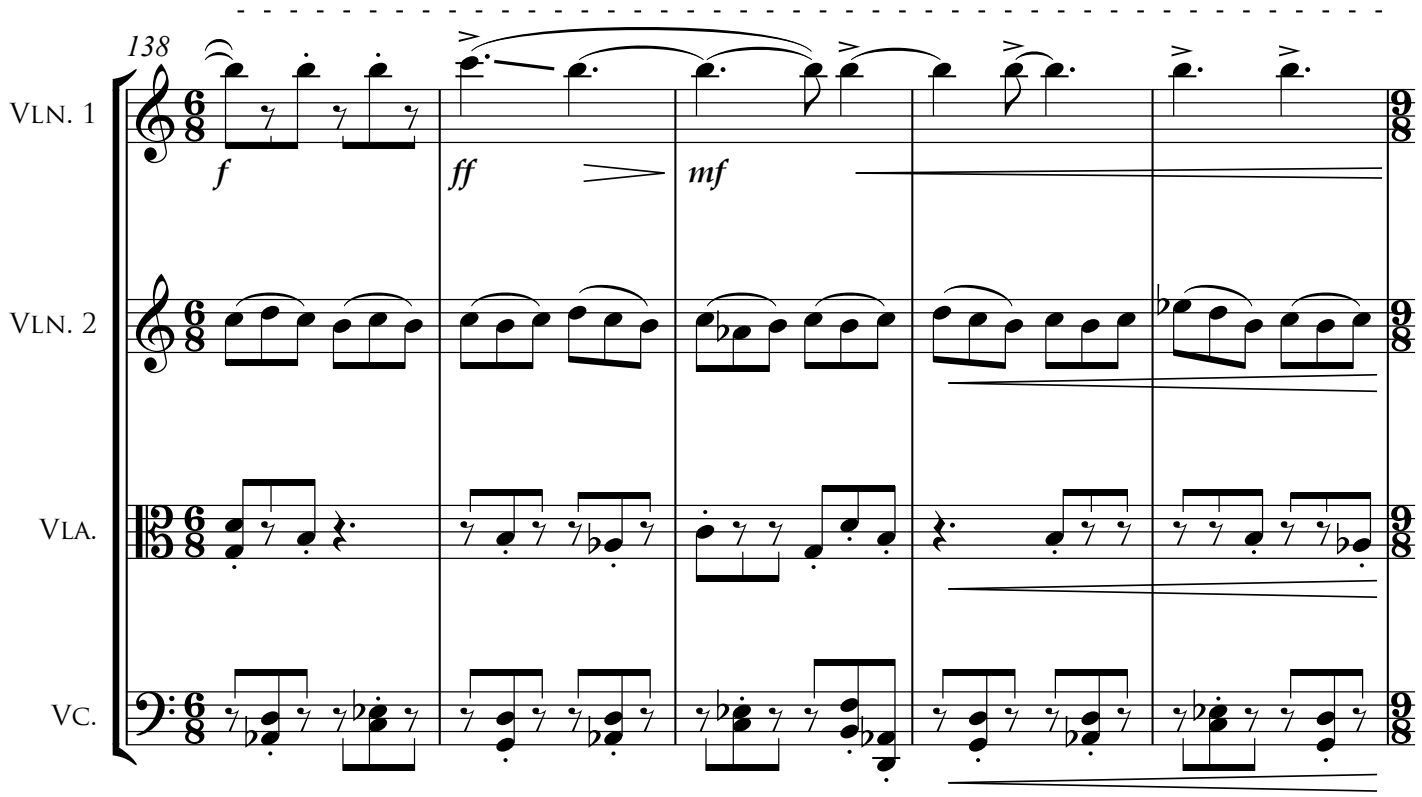

104 Gradually building tension
101
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ppp mf > pp
ppp
mf > p > pp
mf
p > pp
p > pp
ppp mf > pp
ppp
mf
ord.
mf
mf


106
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf
pp
mf
pp
mf
pp

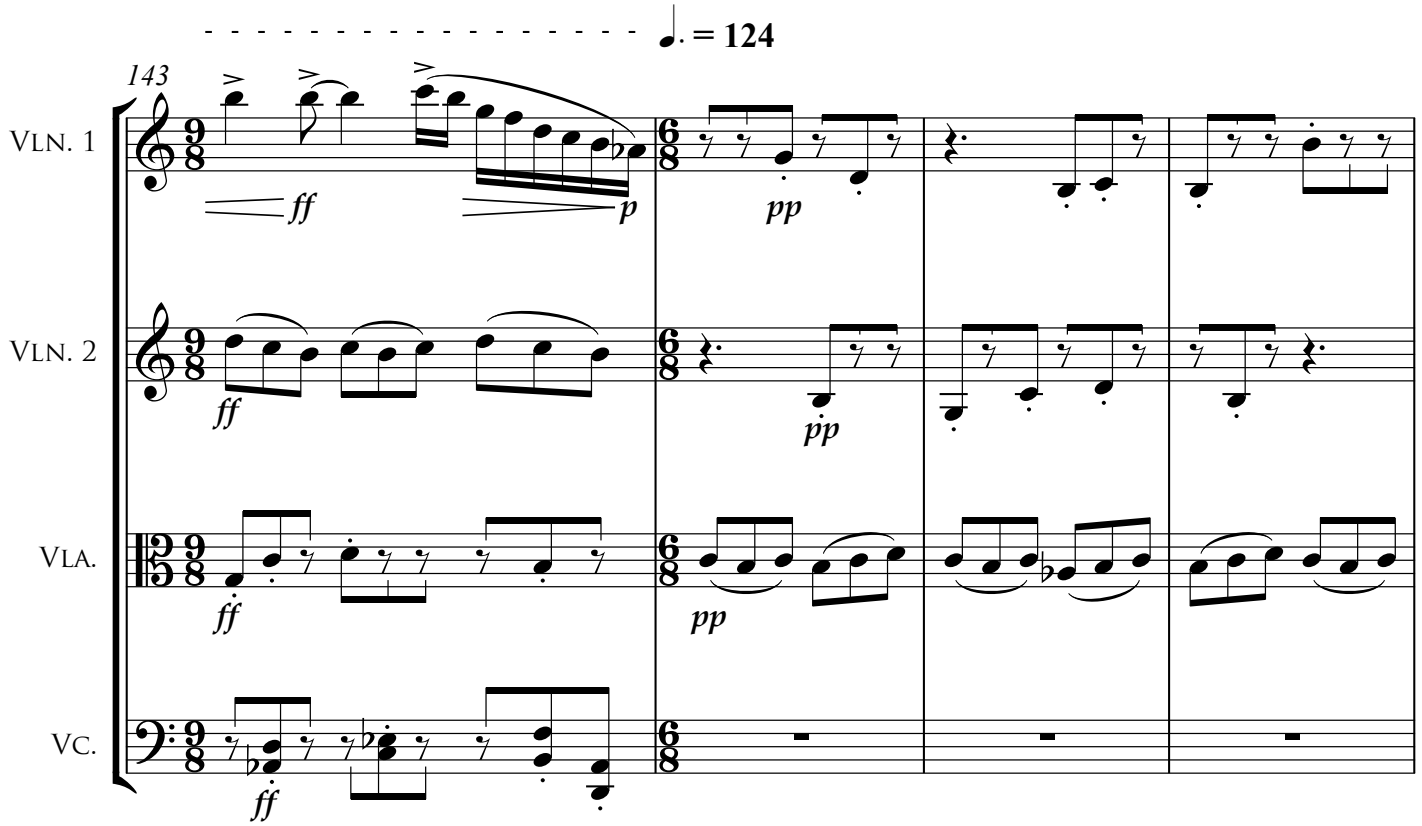

111
115
Fervent
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf
pp
mf
pp
mf
f
p
f
f
f

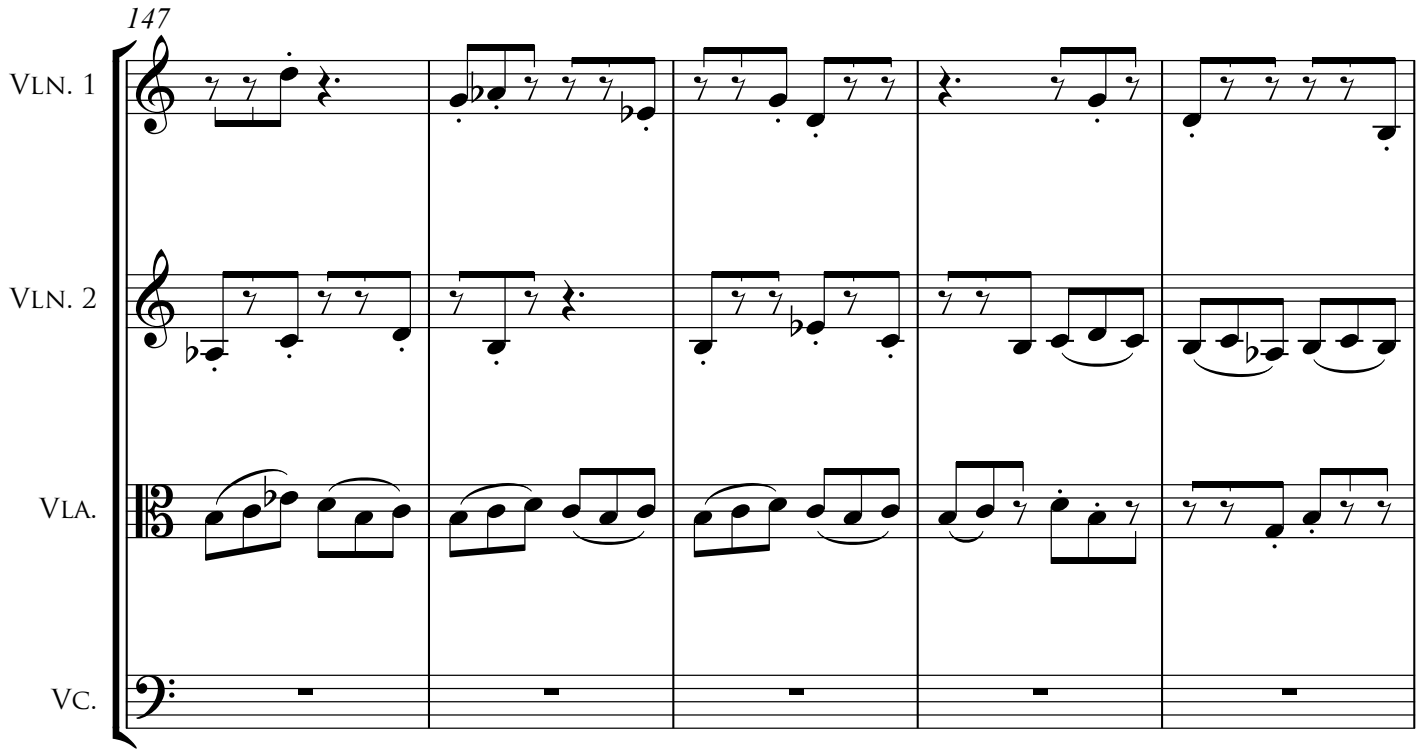

116
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f
p
f
pp
f
p
f
121
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
pp
f
p
f
p
f
p

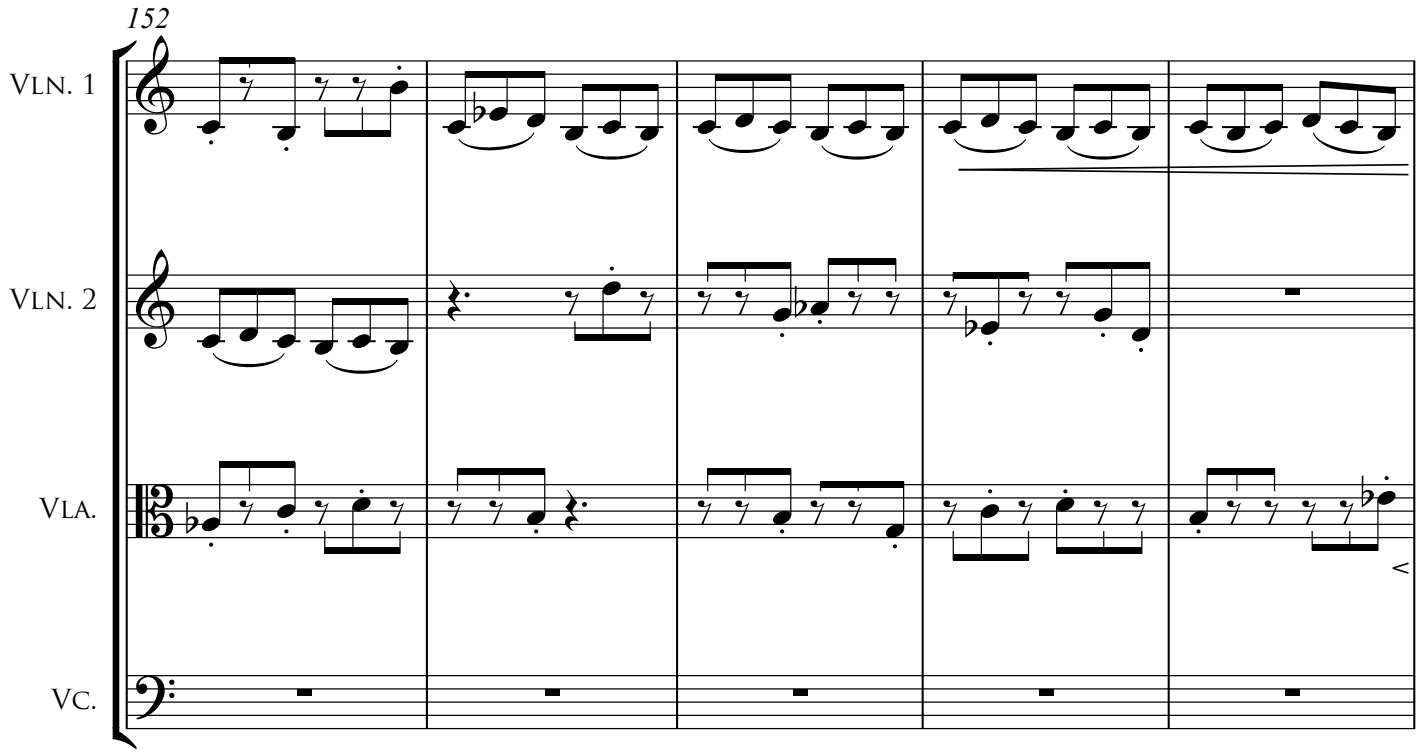

127
126
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ff
mf
f
f
f
accel. poco a poco
132
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mp
ff
mp
ff
mf

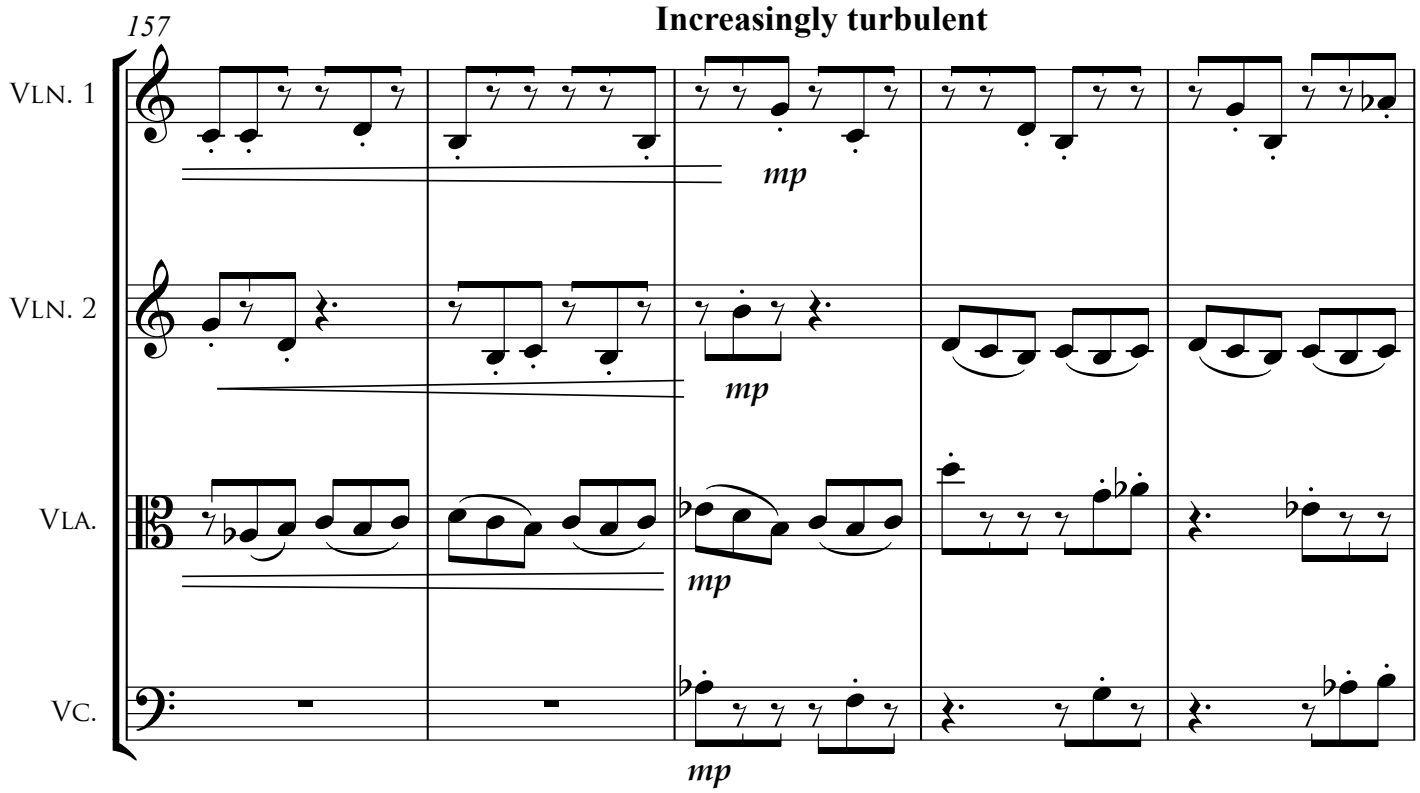


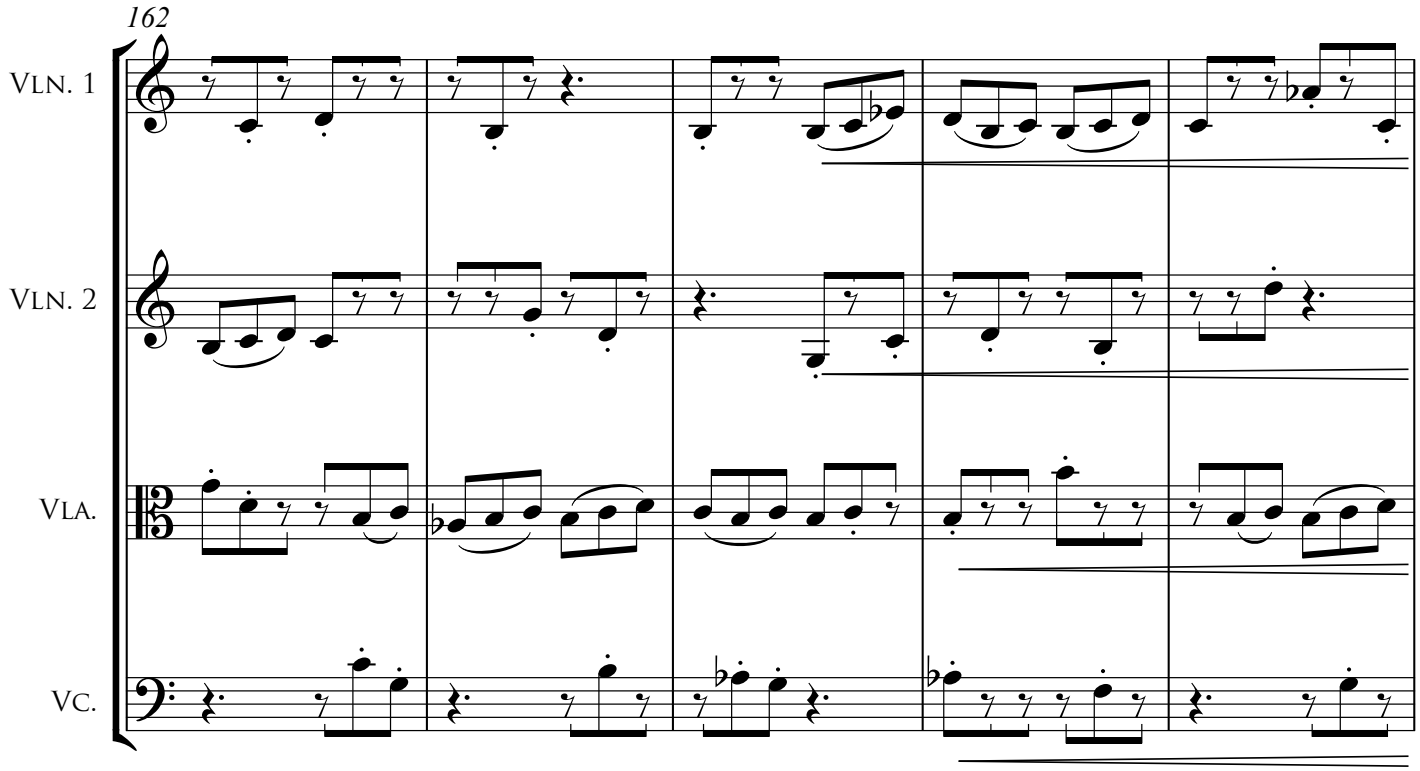
144

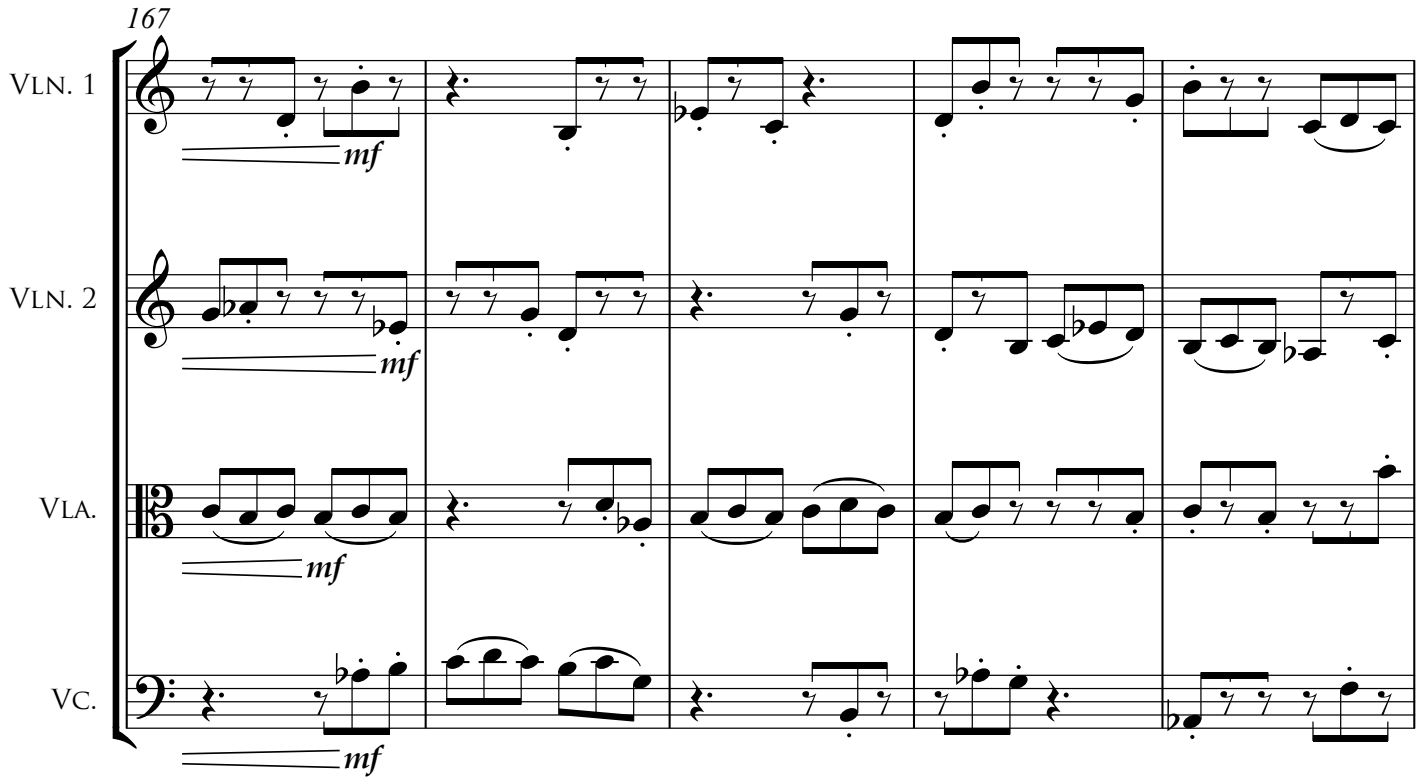


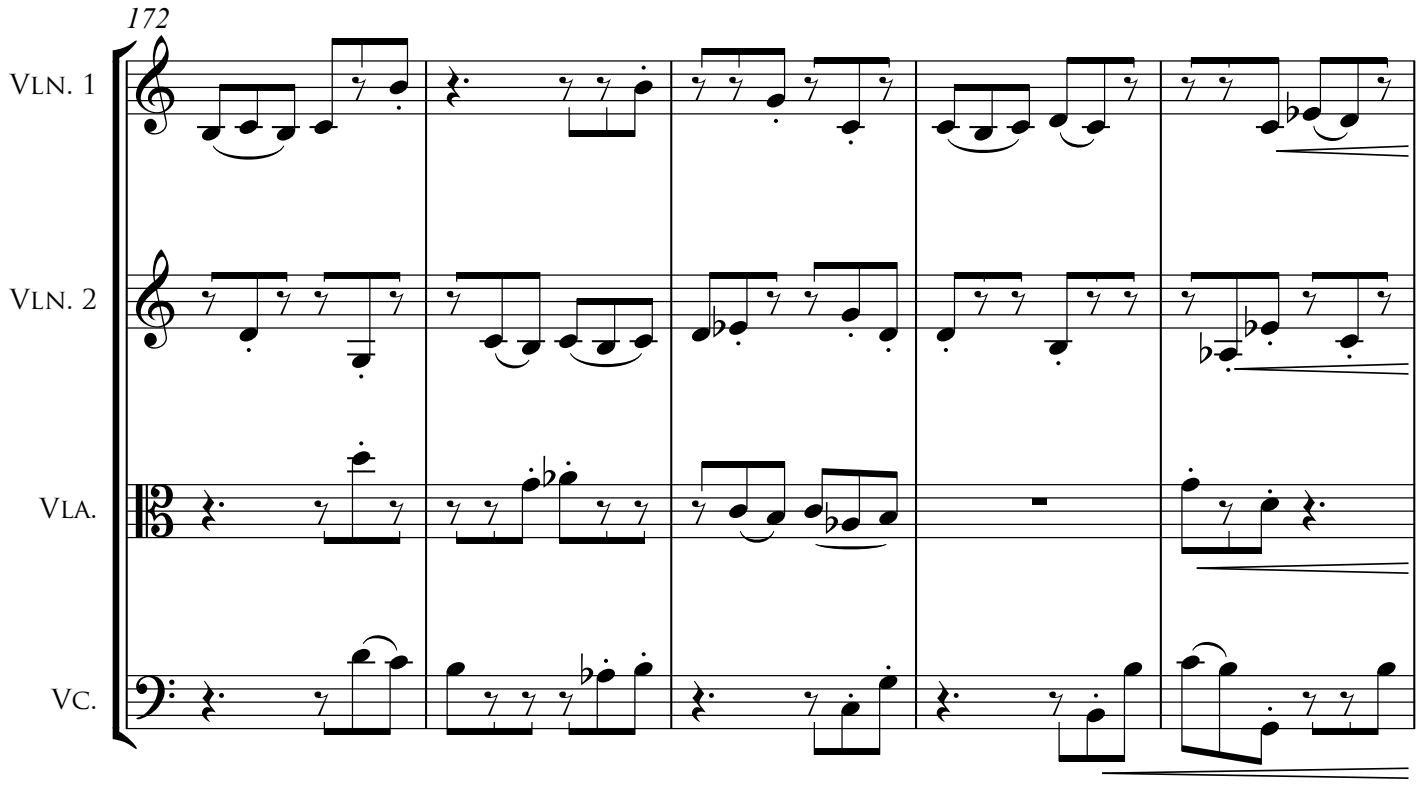

147
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

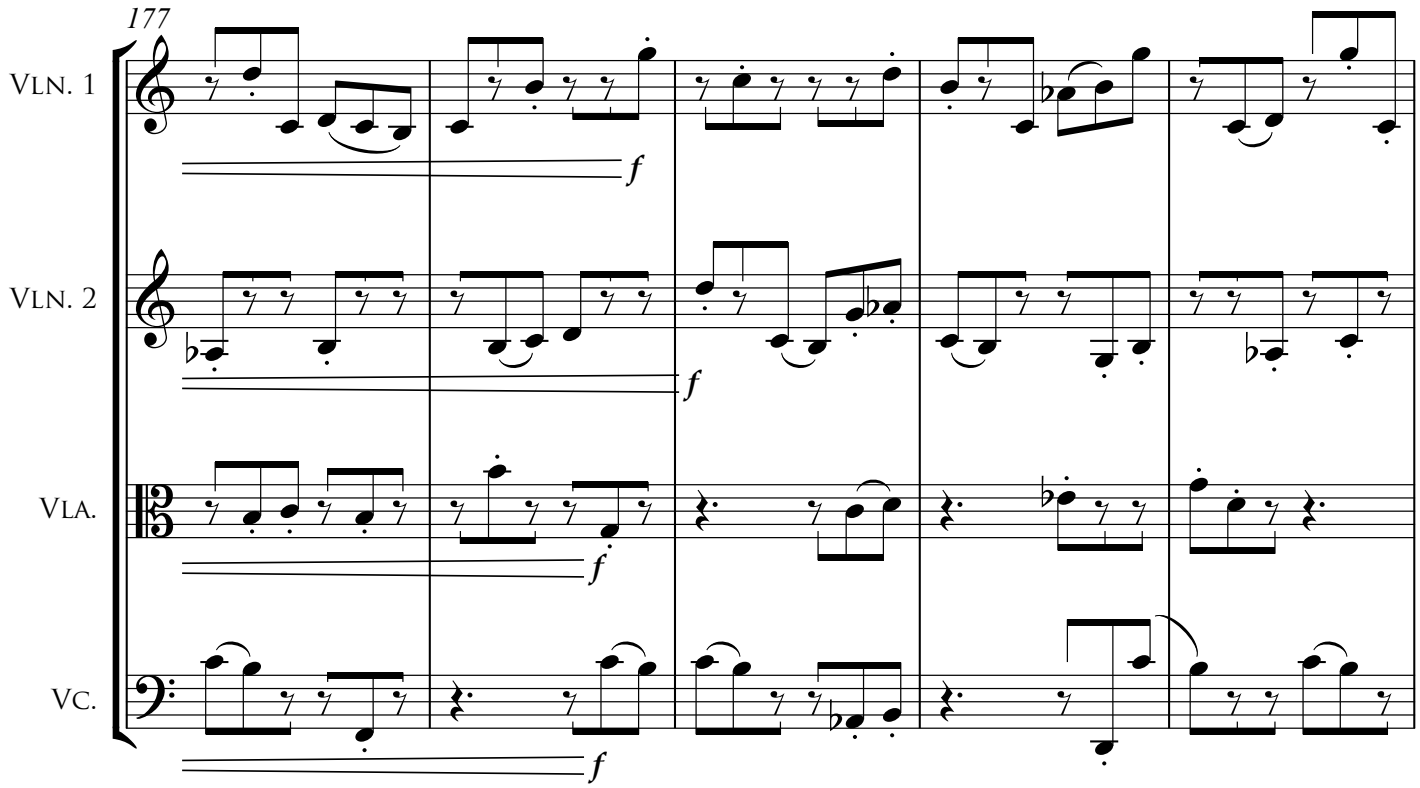

152
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

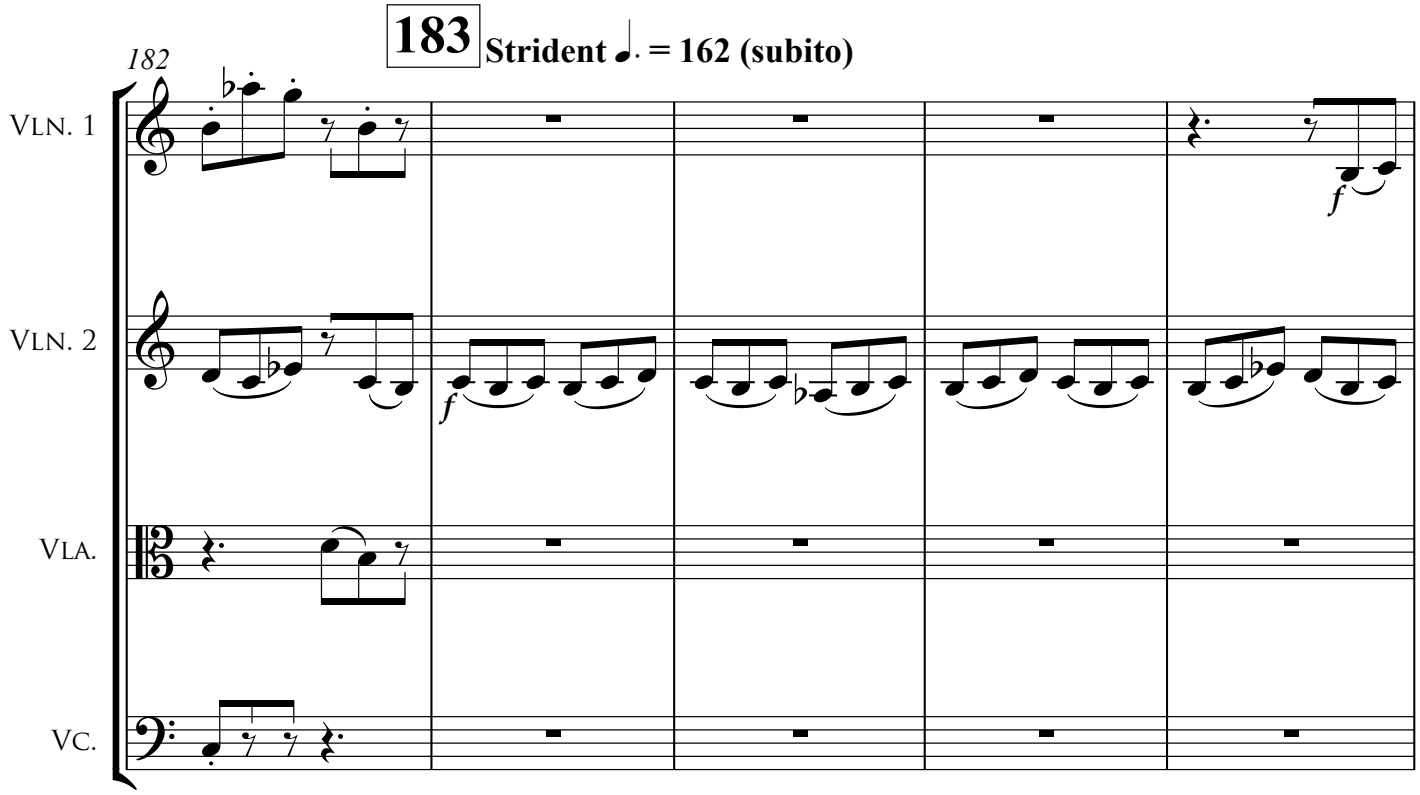

157
Increasingly turbulent
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mp
mp
mp
mp

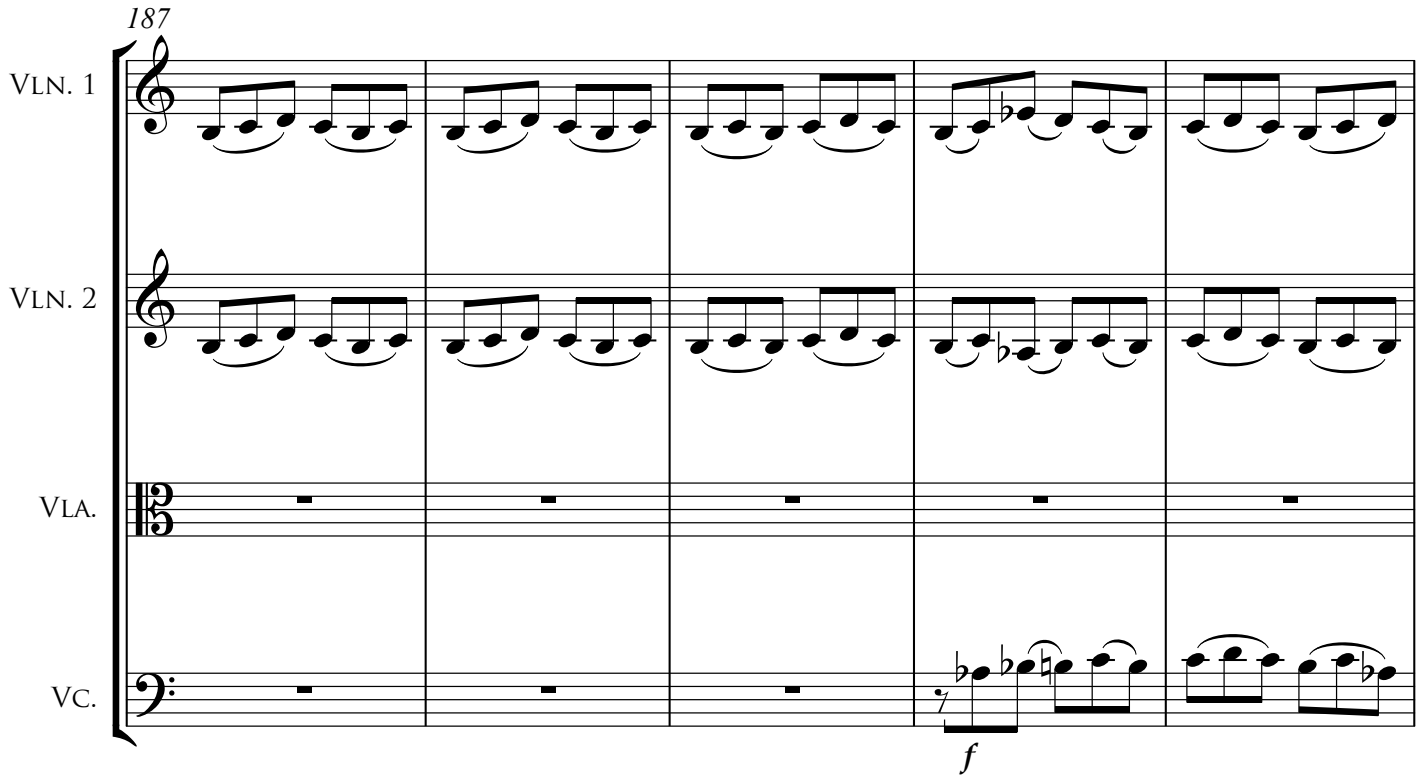

162
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

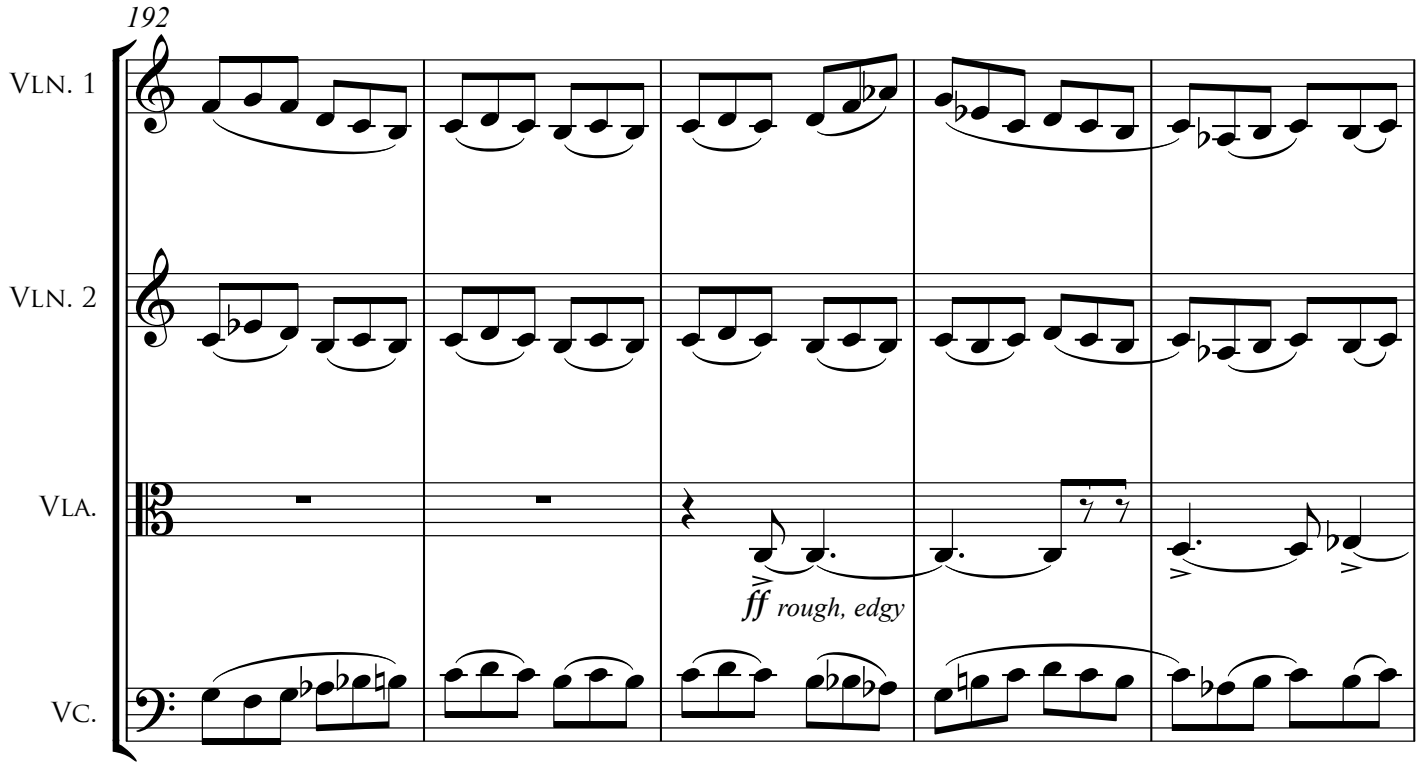

167
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf
mf
mf
mf

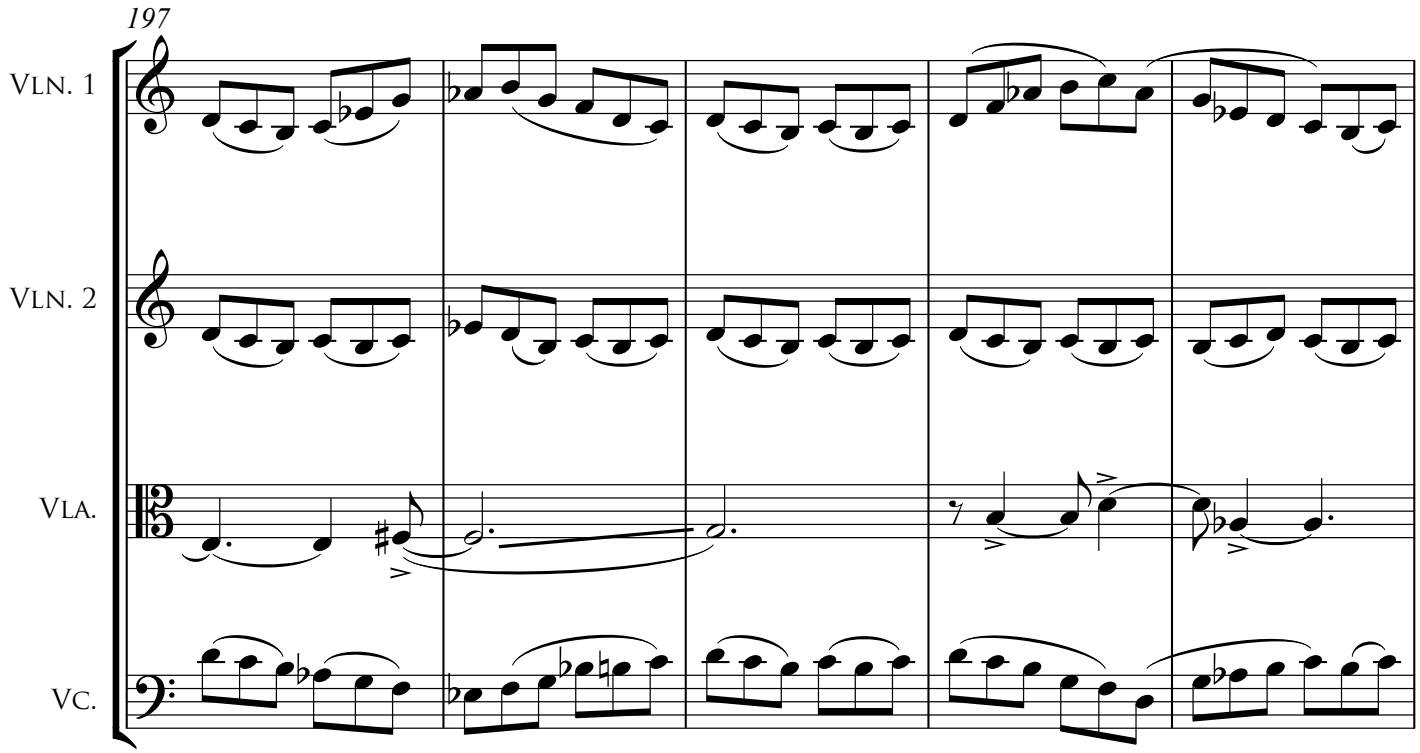

172
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

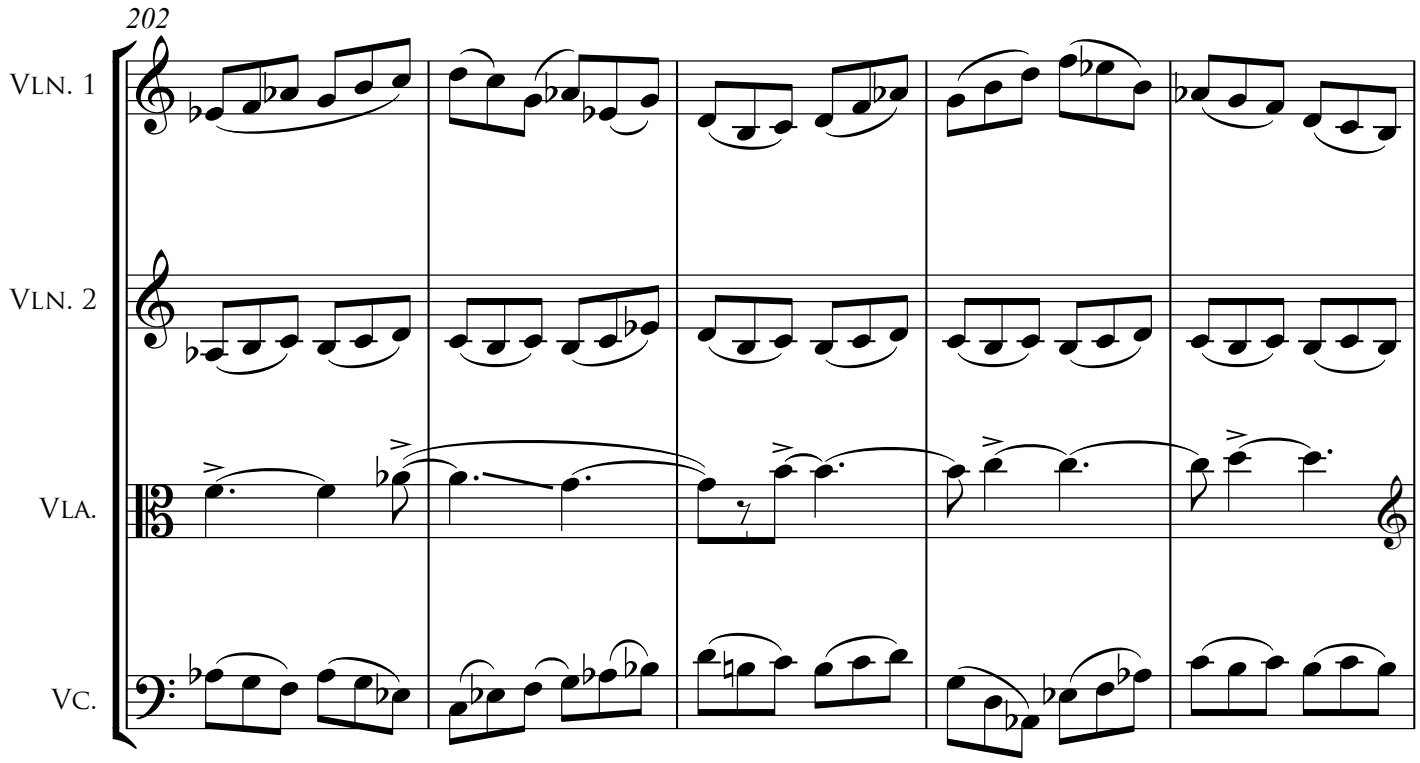

177
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f

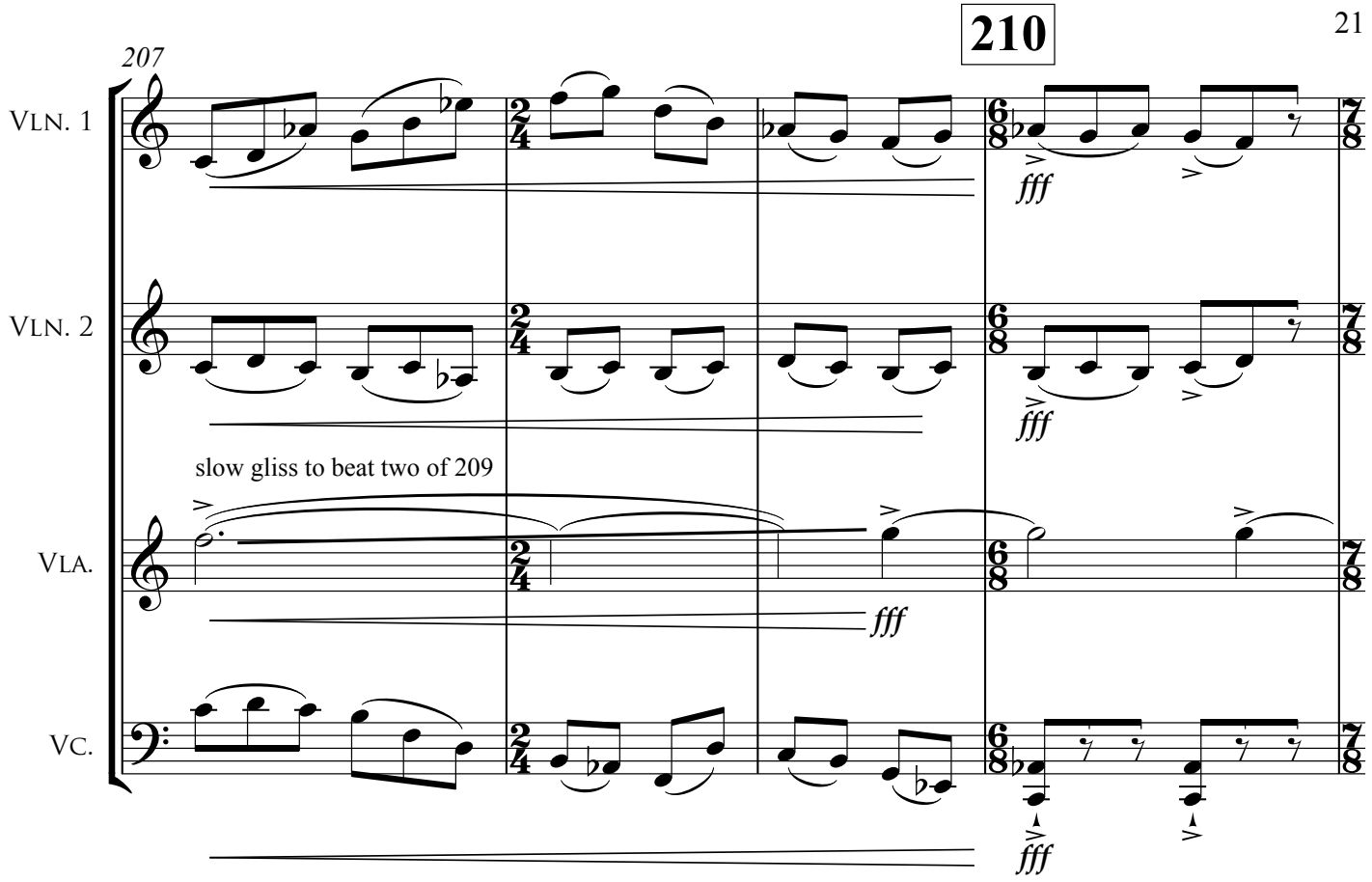

183
Strident ♩. = 162 (subito)
182
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f

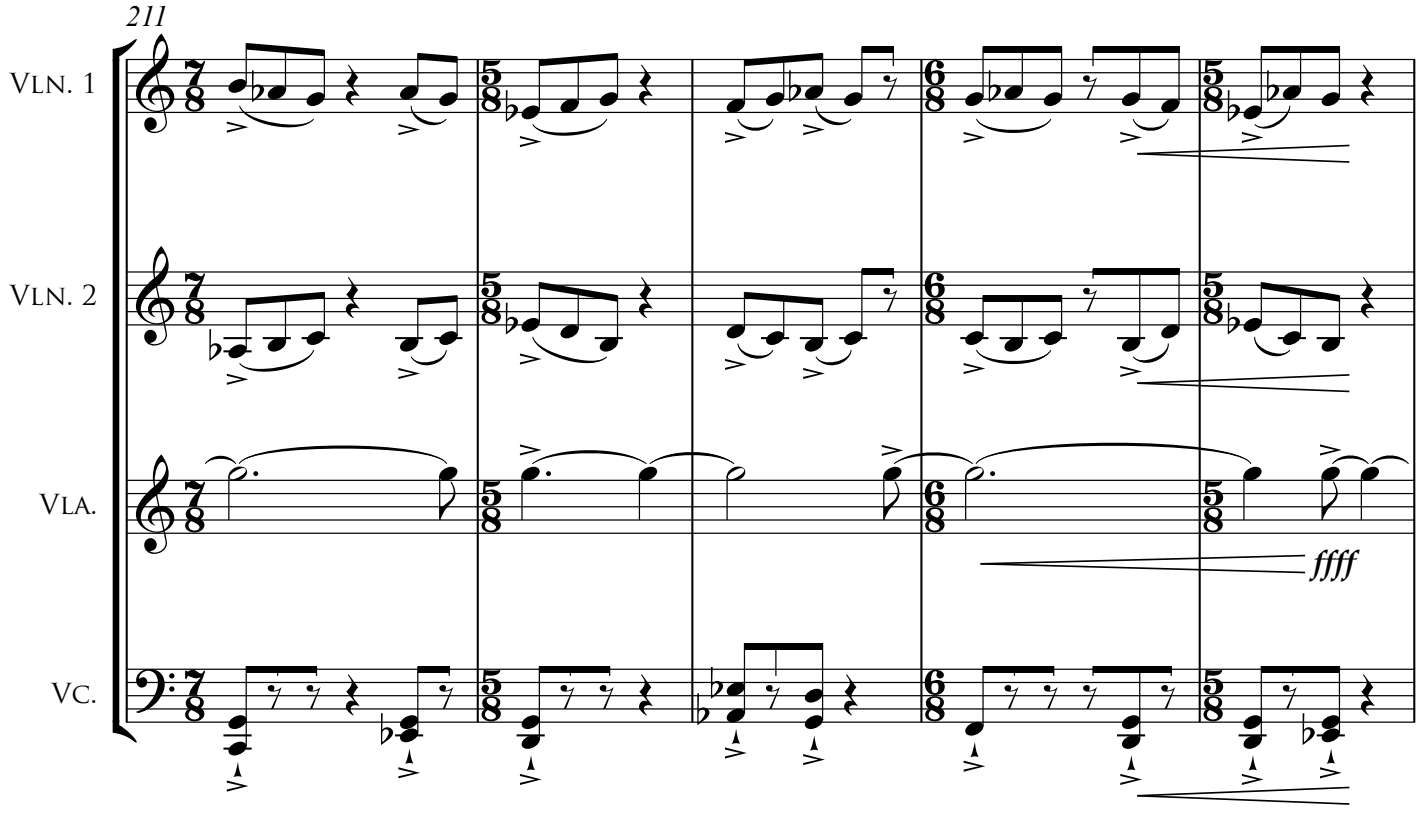

187
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f

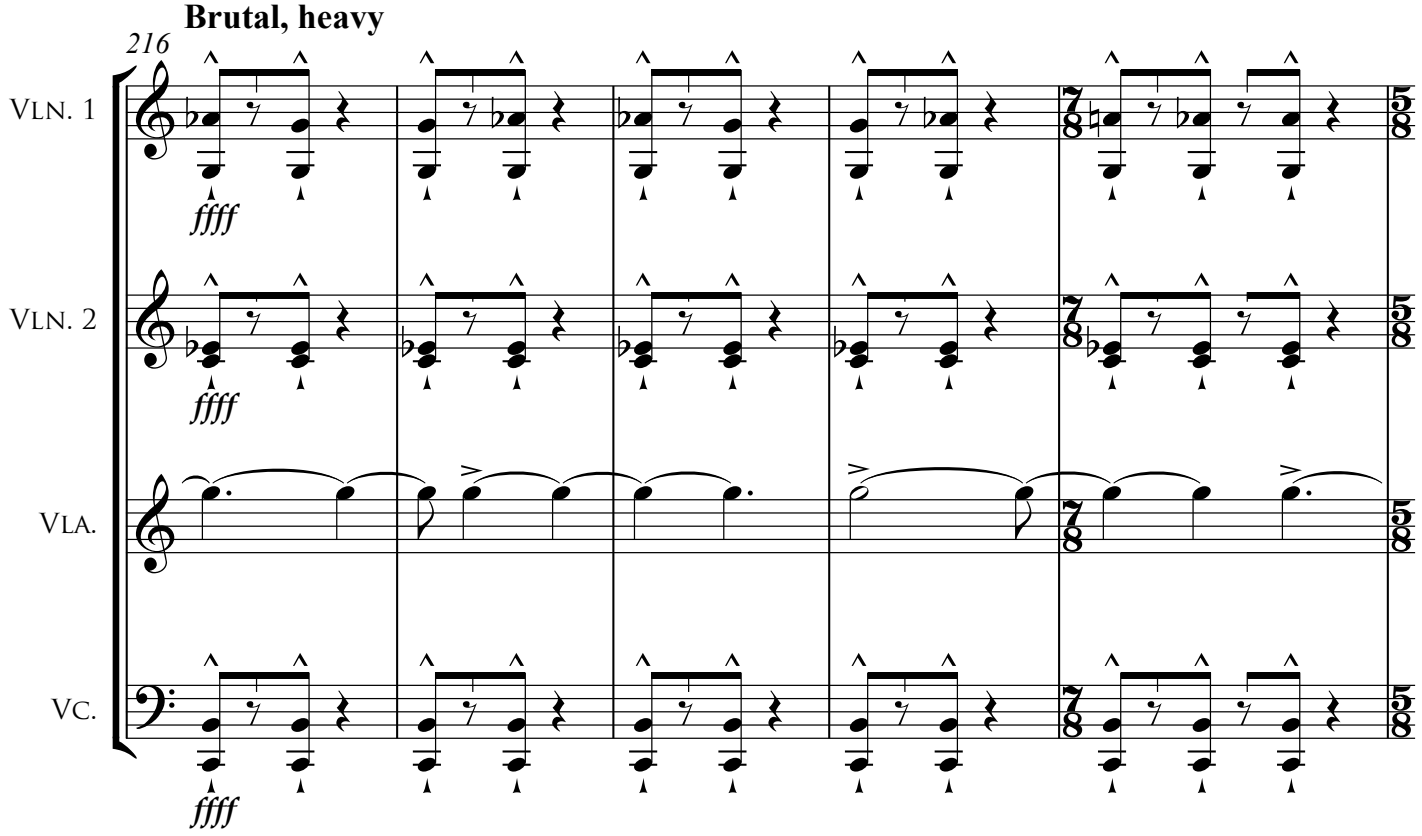

192
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ff rough, edgy

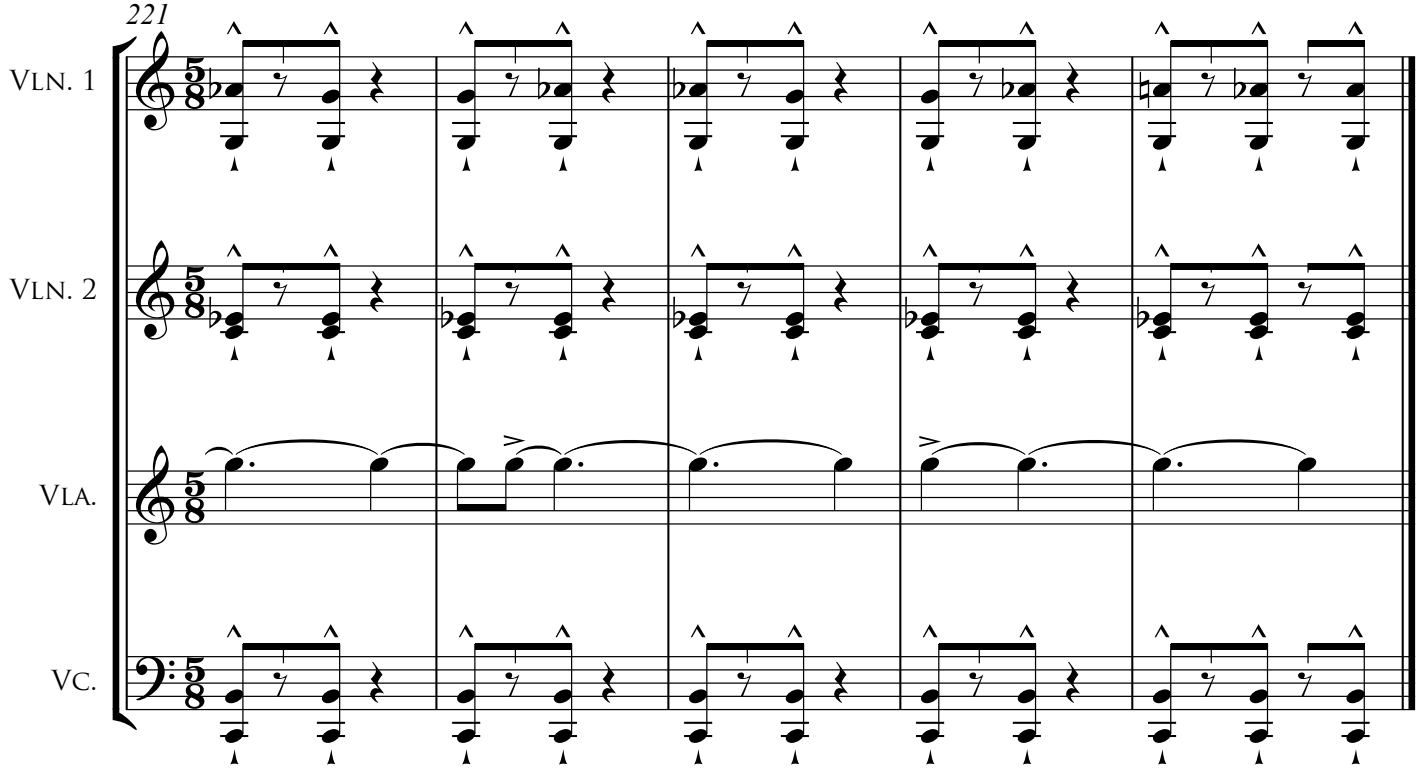

197
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.


202
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.


210
207
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
slow gliss to beat two of 209
Vla.
Vc.
fff


211
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ffff

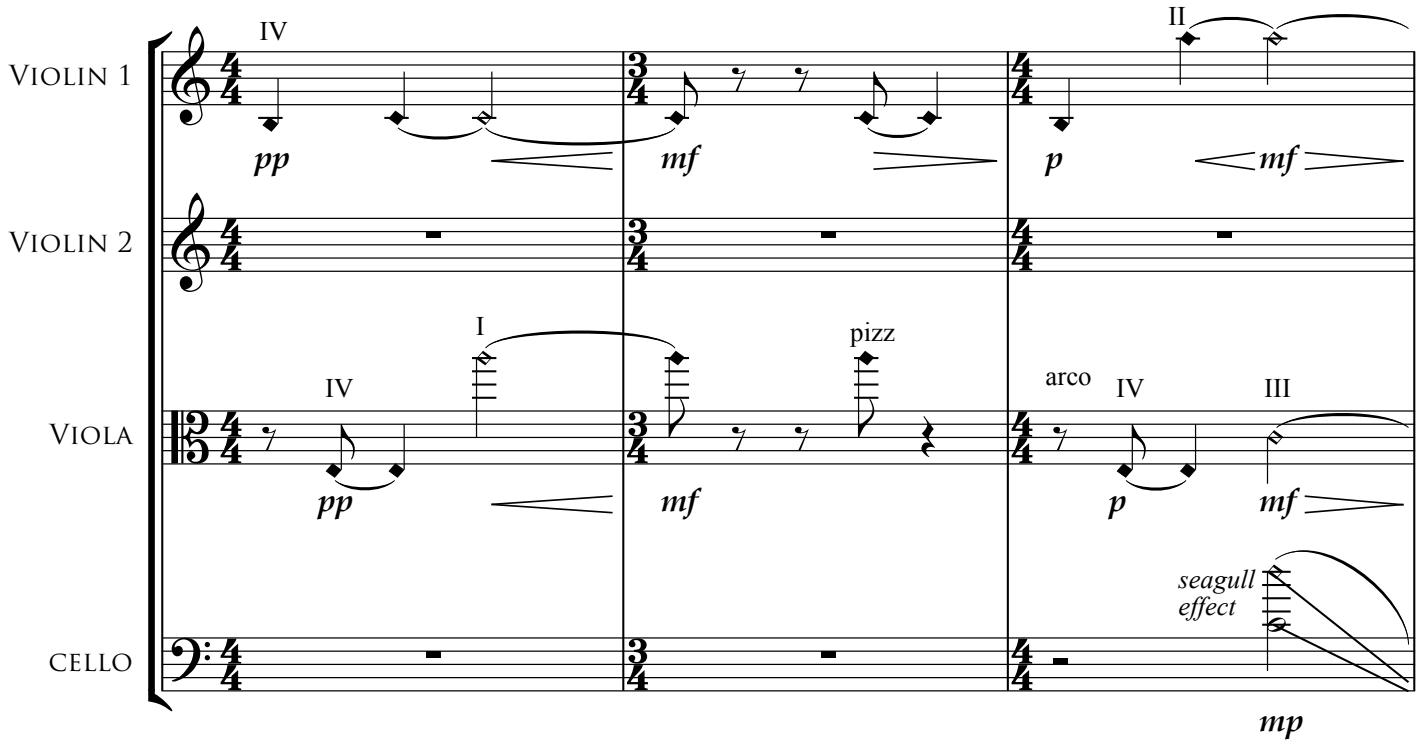

Brutal, heavy
216
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ffff
ffff
ffff

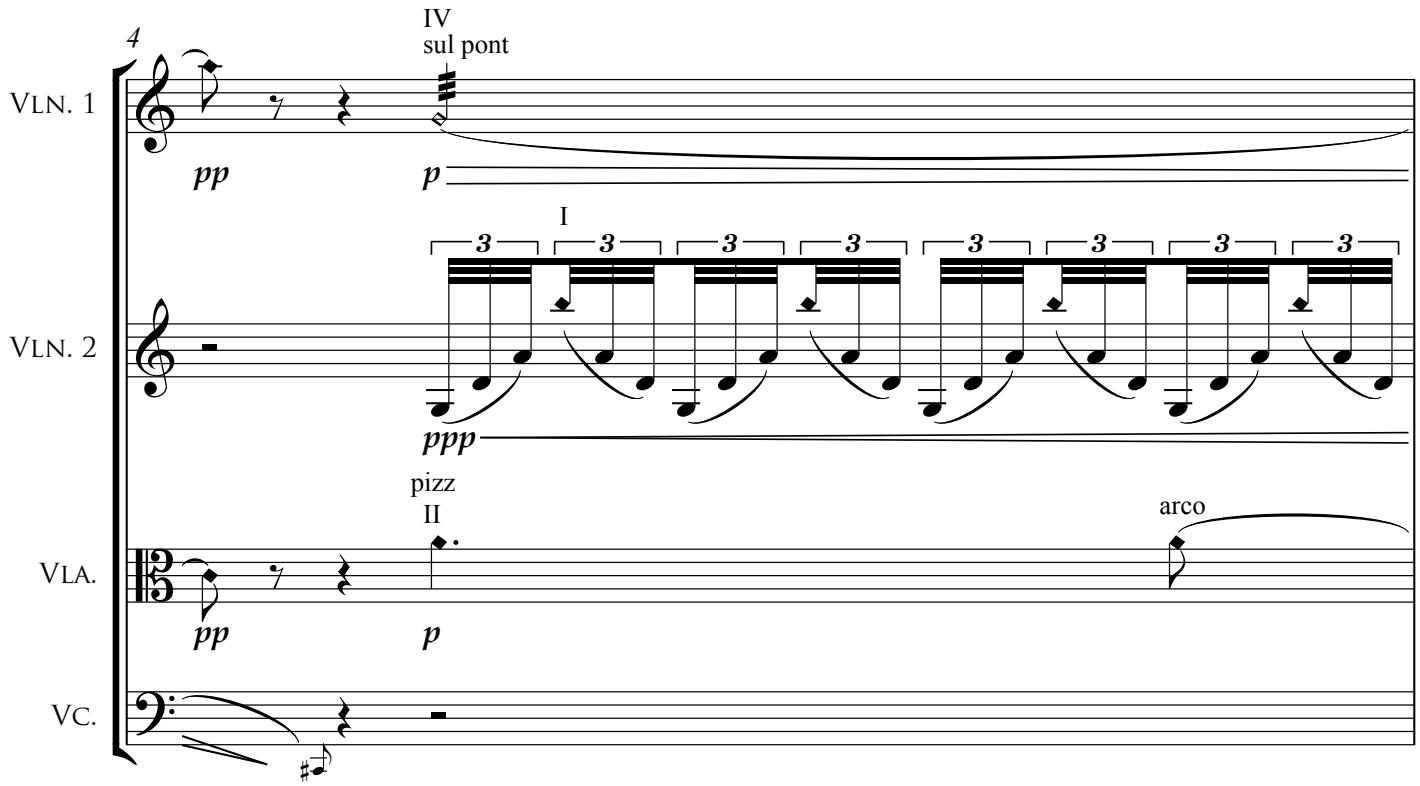

221
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

Bird Catching From Above
IV

Translucent, Gossamer ♩ = 62

Steven Snowden





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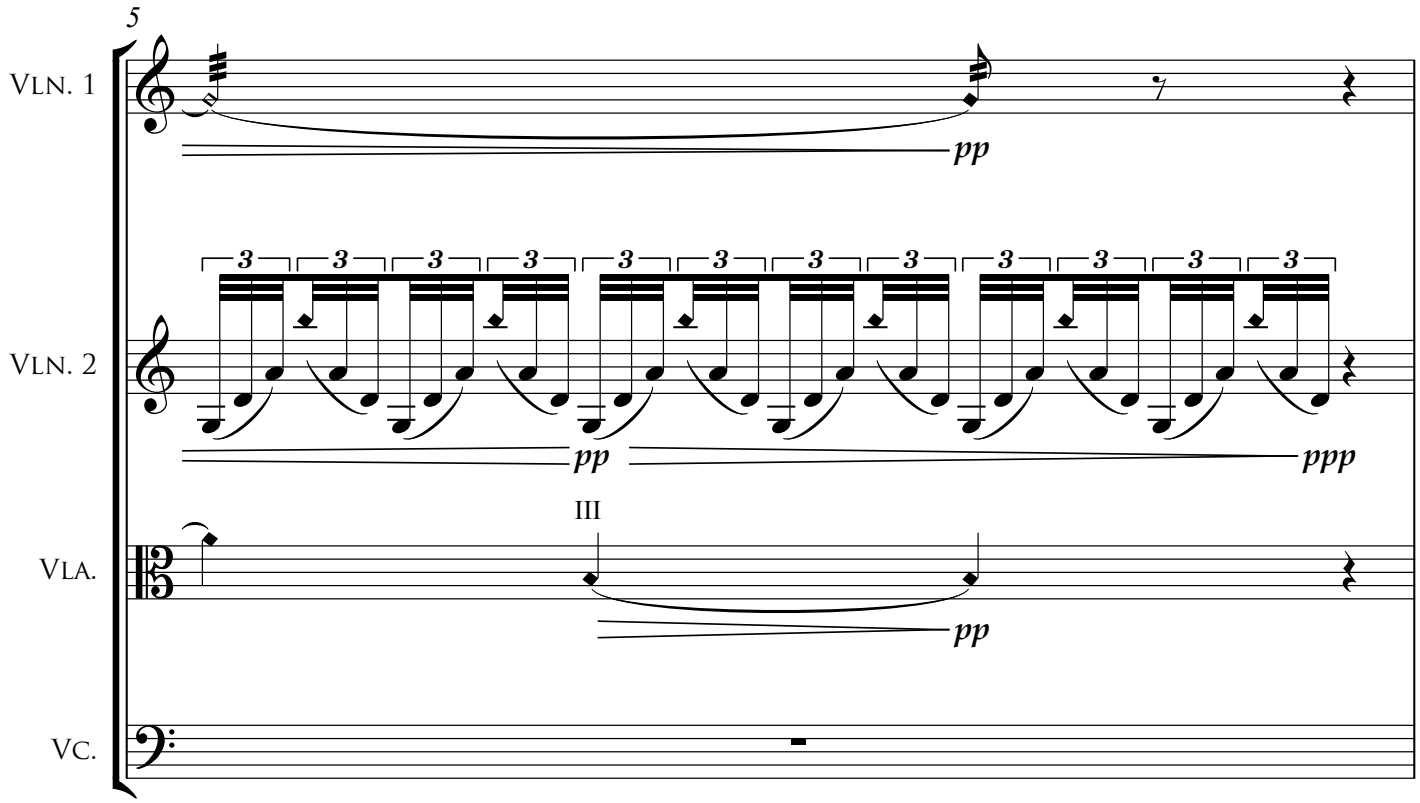
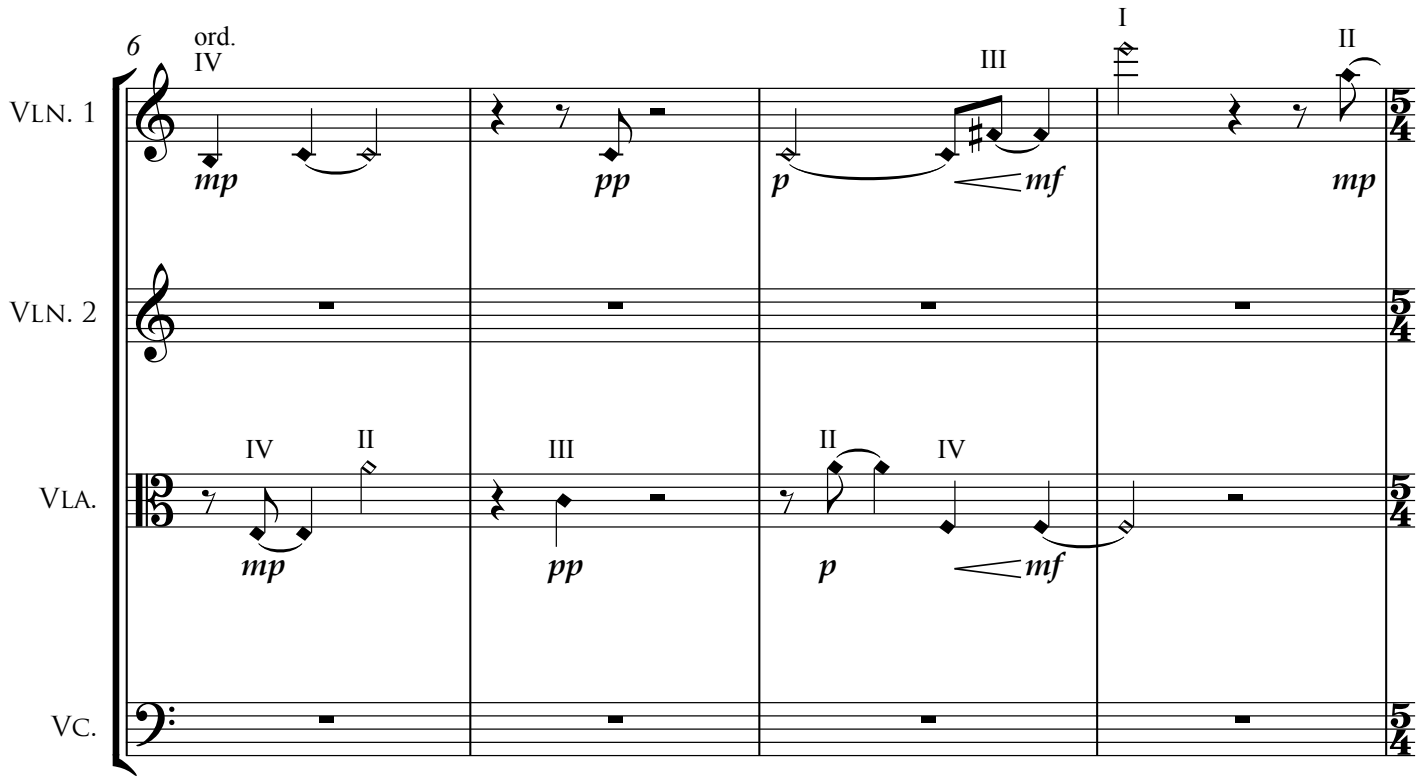
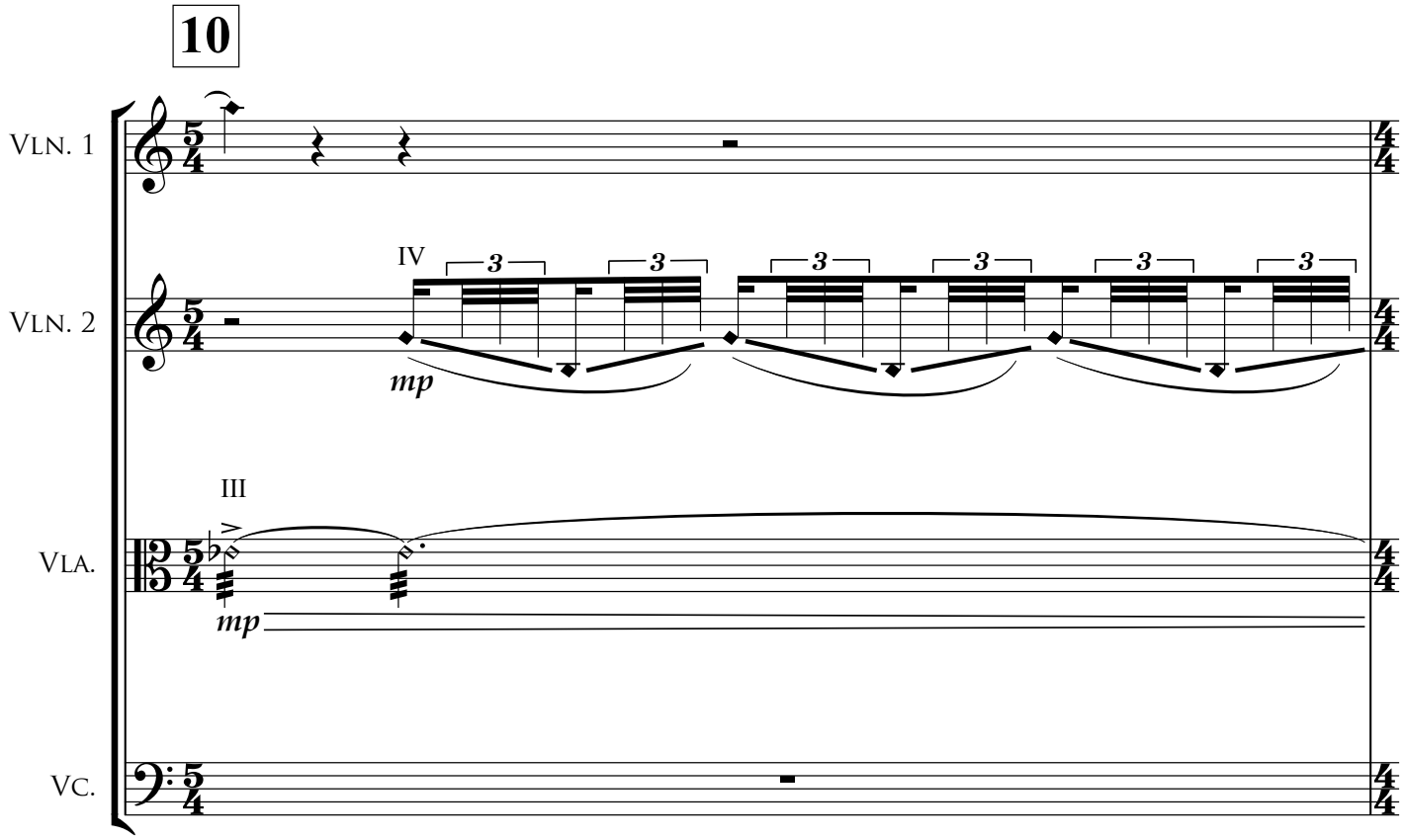
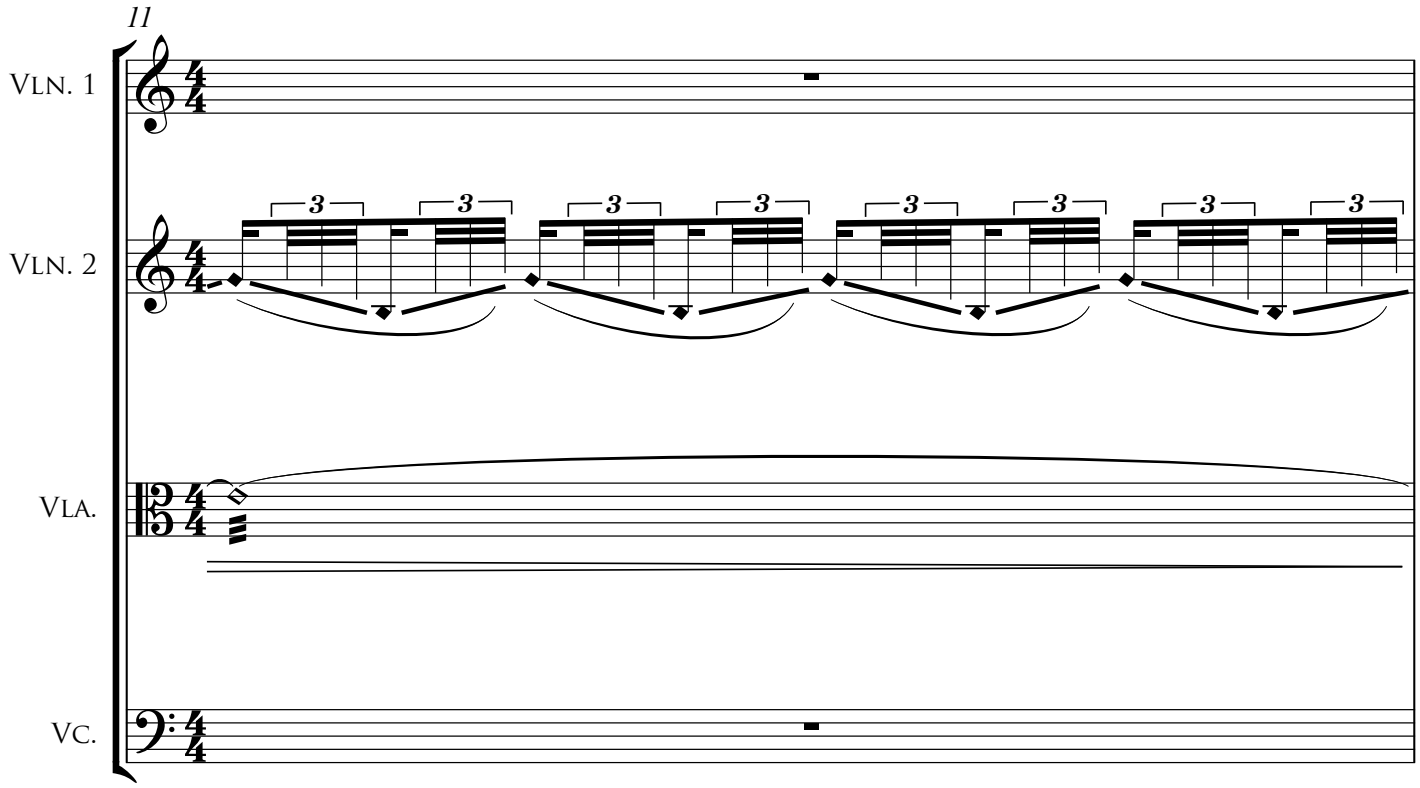
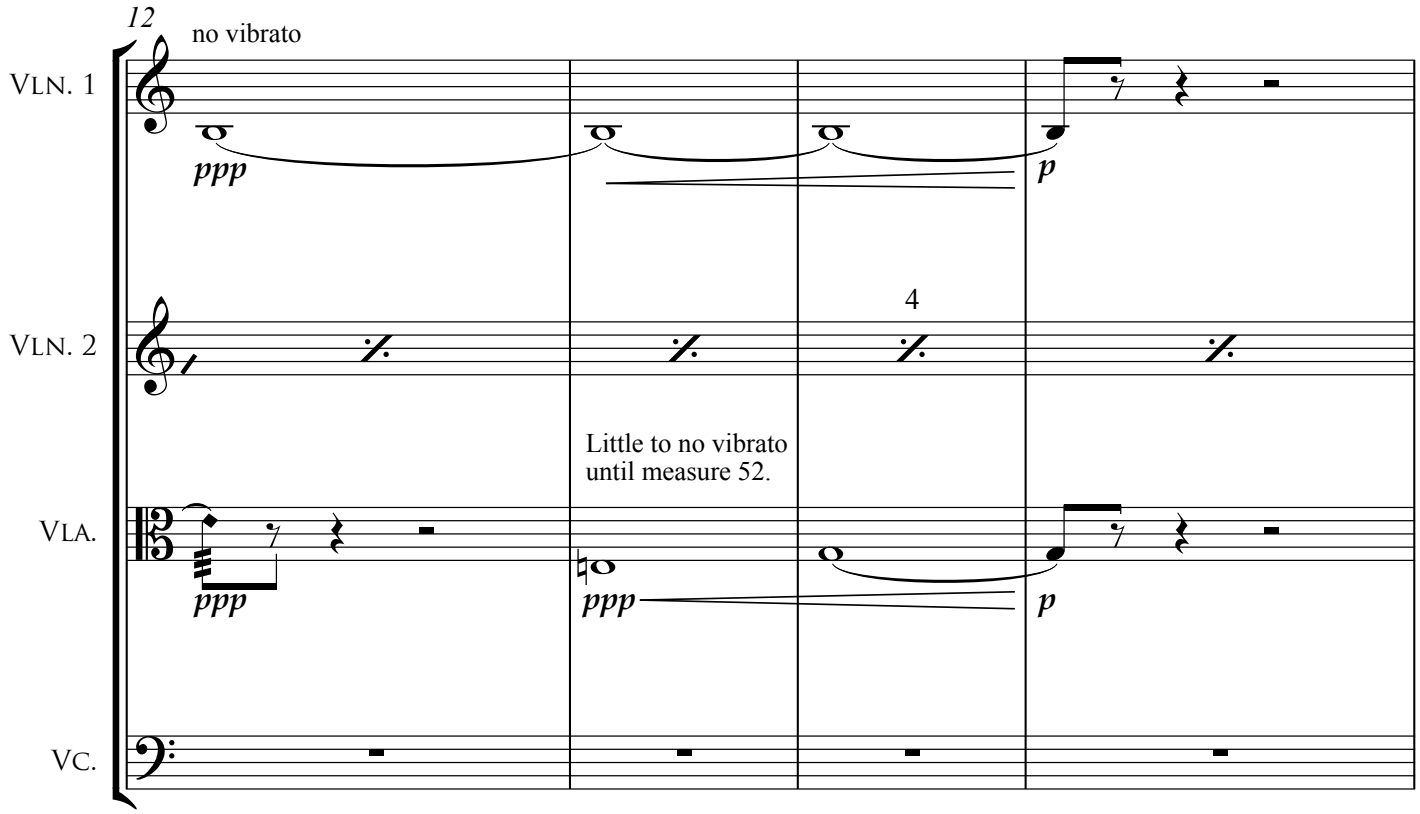
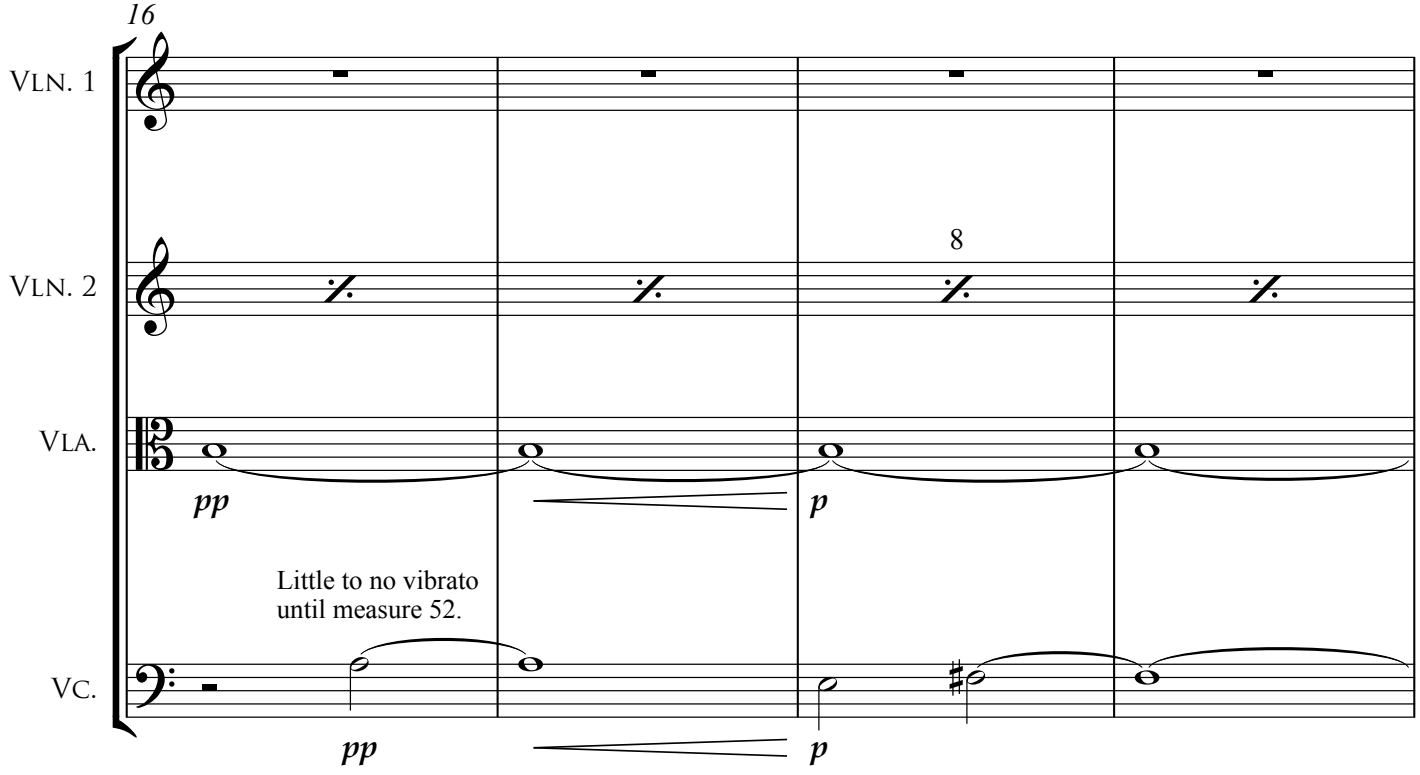

5
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
pp
ppp
III

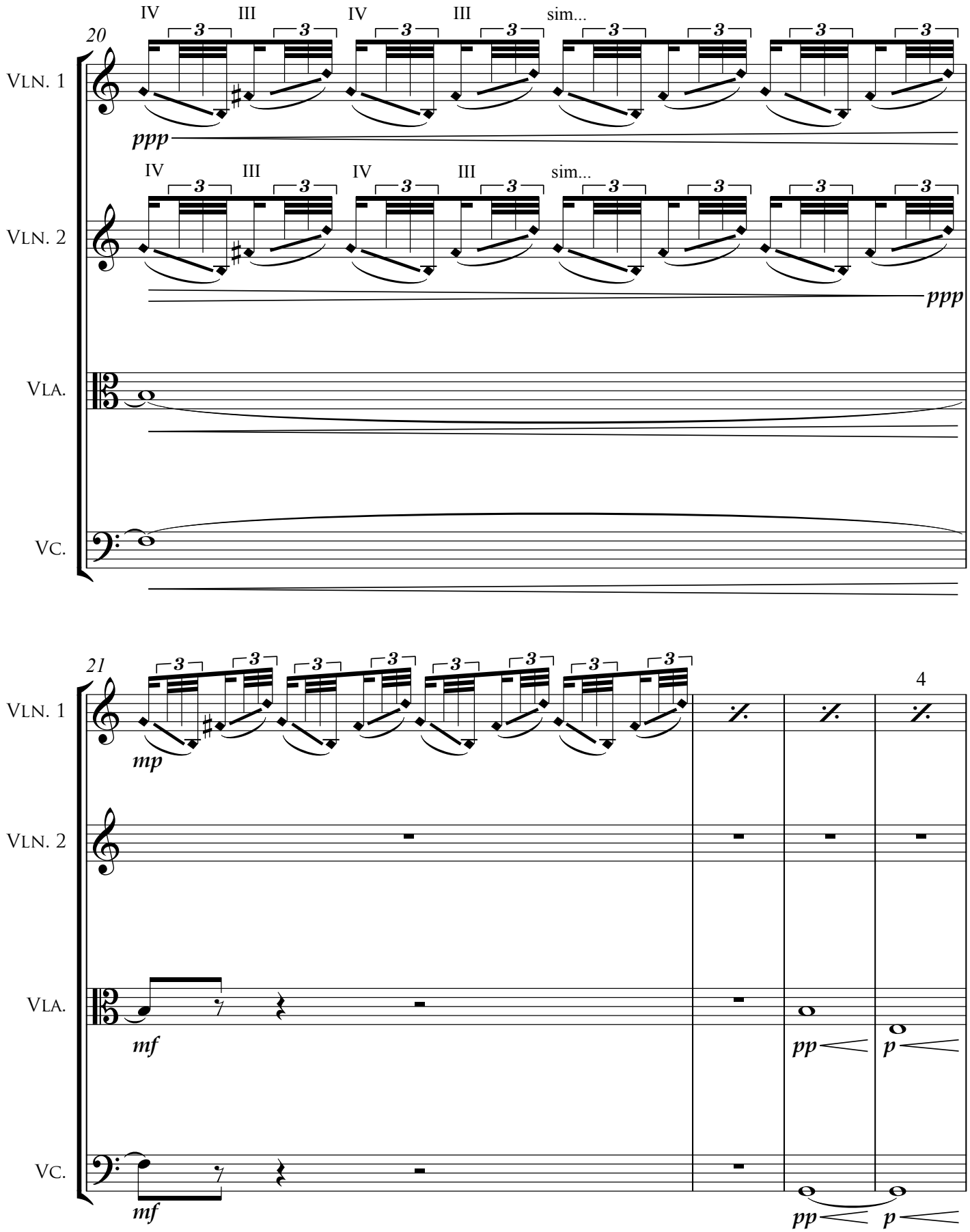

6
ord.
IV
III
I
II
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mp
pp
p
mf

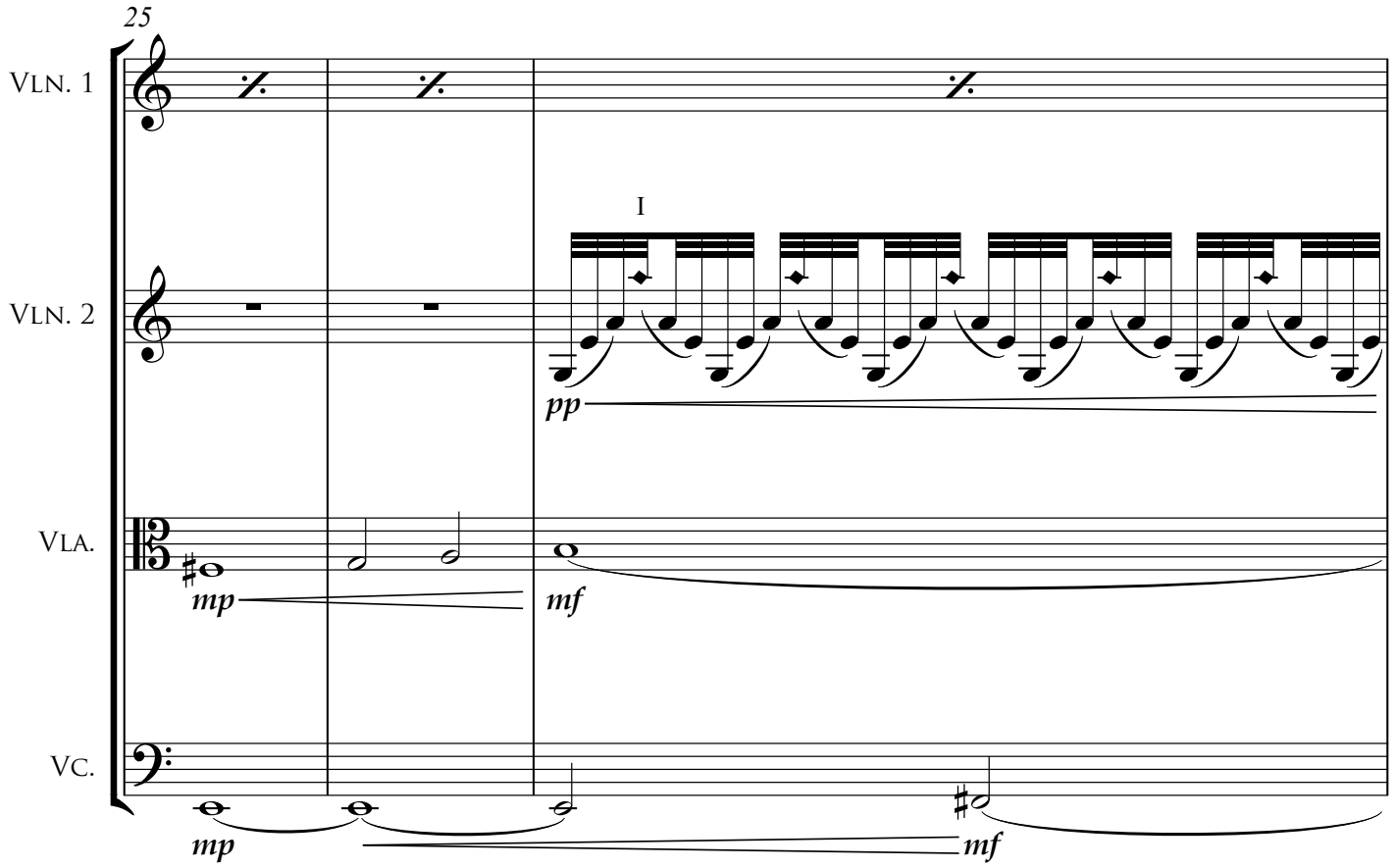

10
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
IV
mp
Vla.
III
mp
Vc.

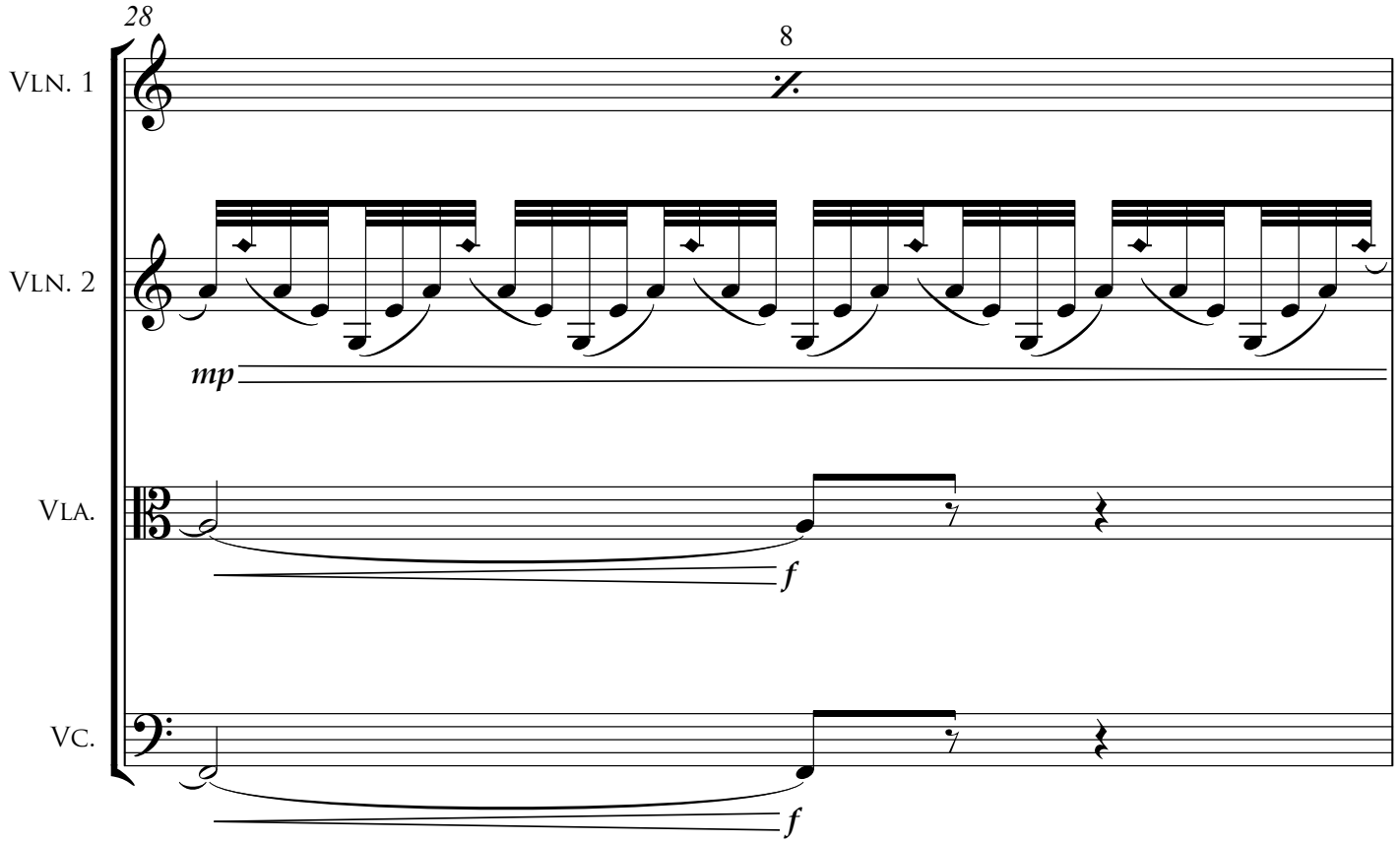

11
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

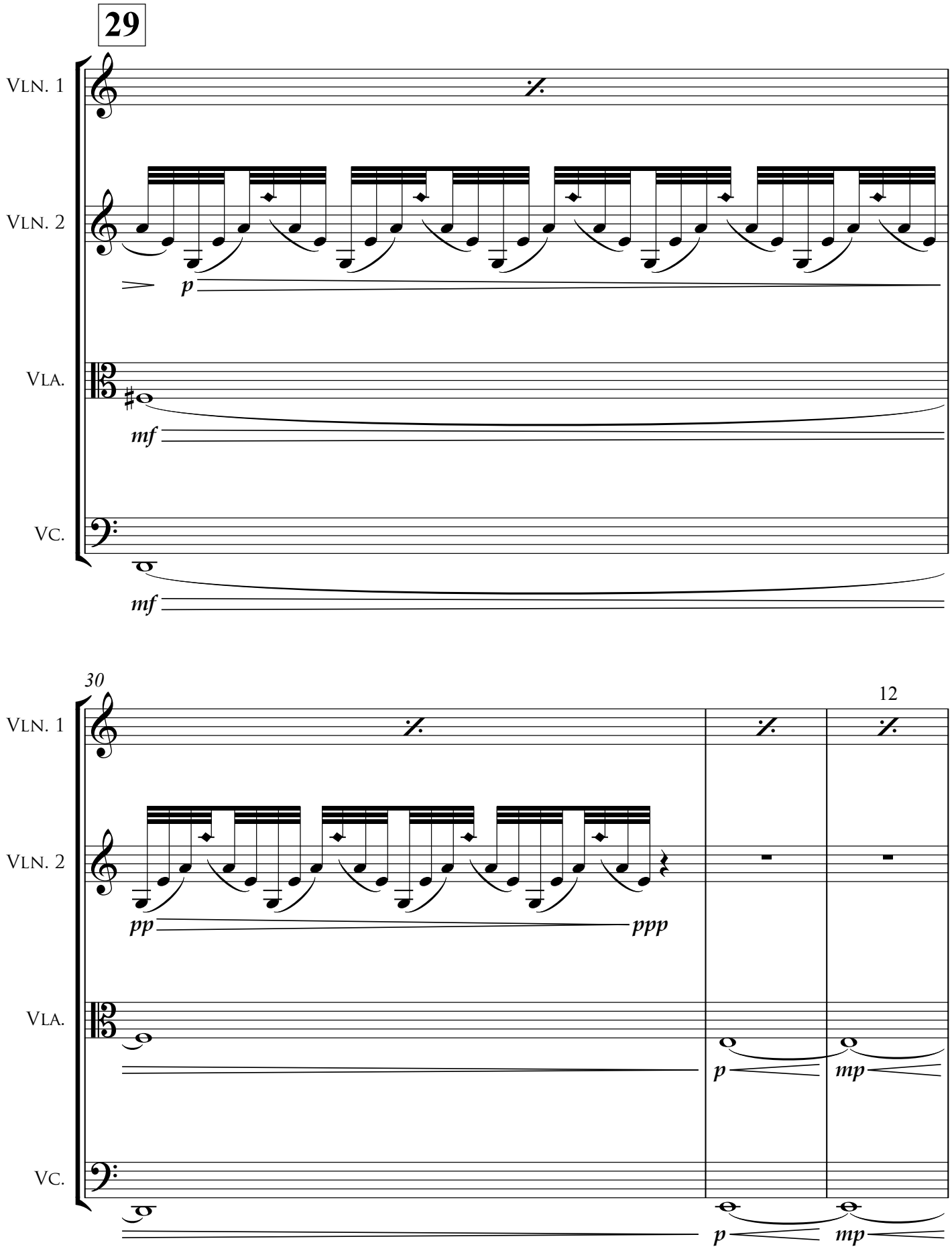

12
no vibrato
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ppp
p
4
Little to no vibrato
until measure 52.

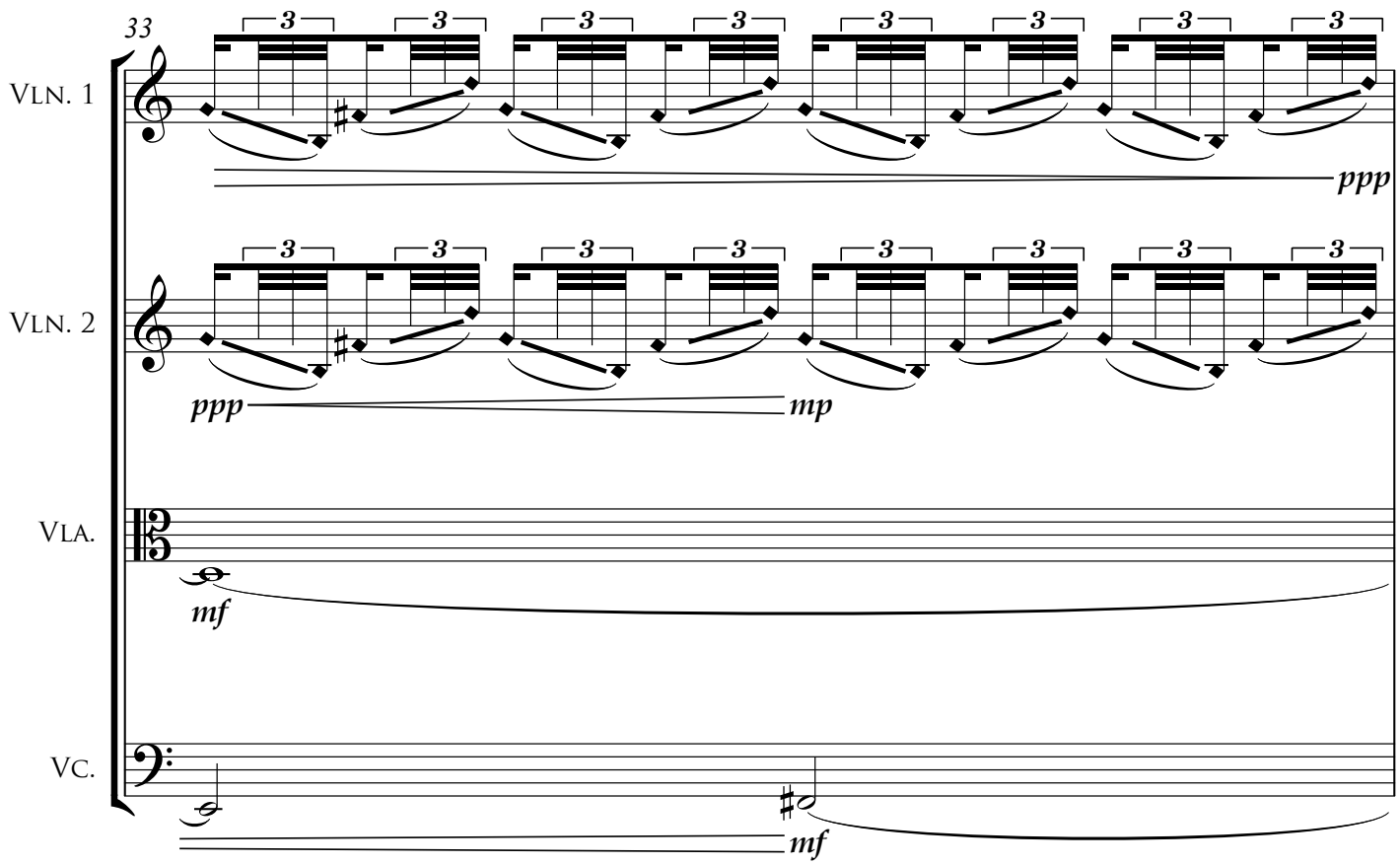

16
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
8
pp
p
Little to no vibrato
until measure 52.

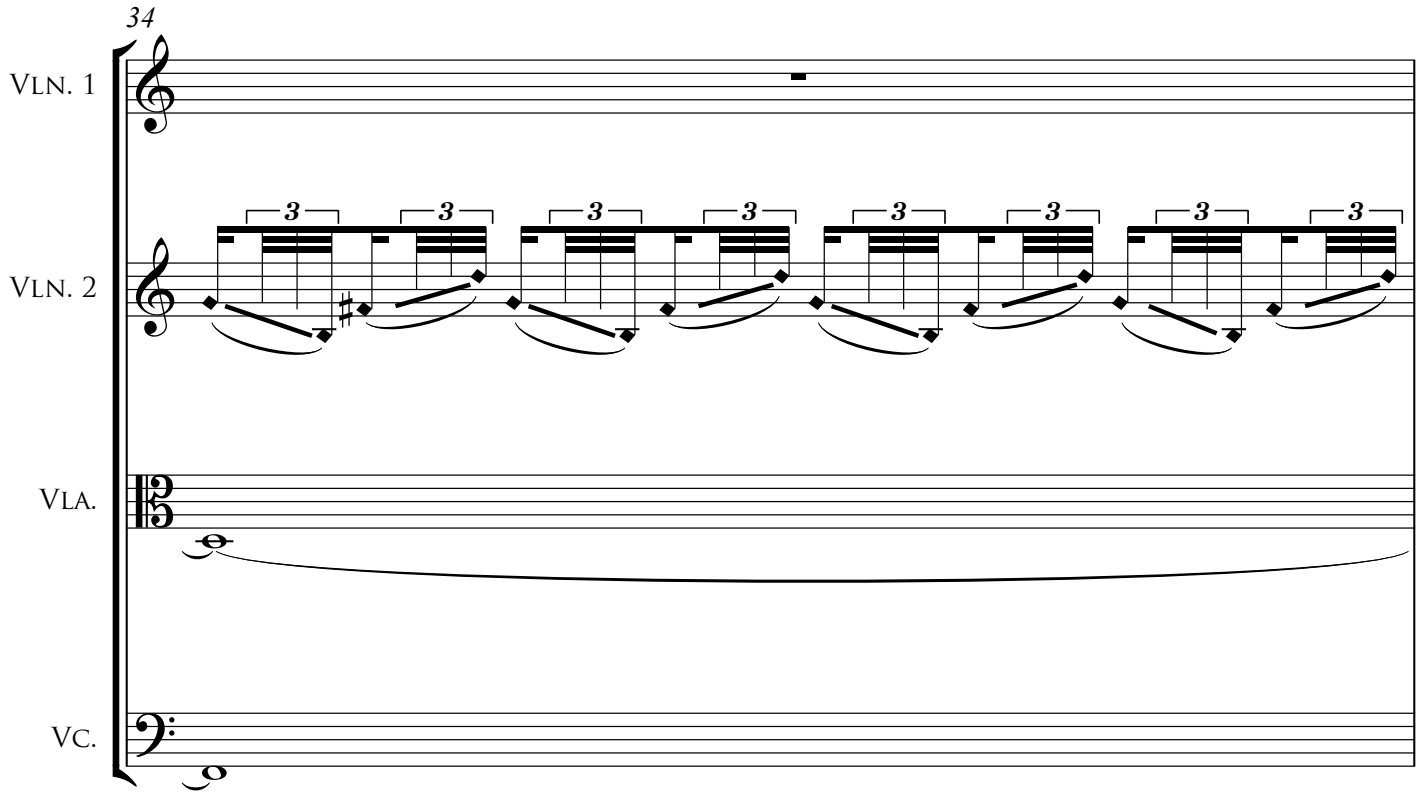

20
IV
III
IV
III
sim...
Vln. 1
ppp
Vln. 2
ppp
Vla.
Vc.
21
4
mp
mf
pp
p

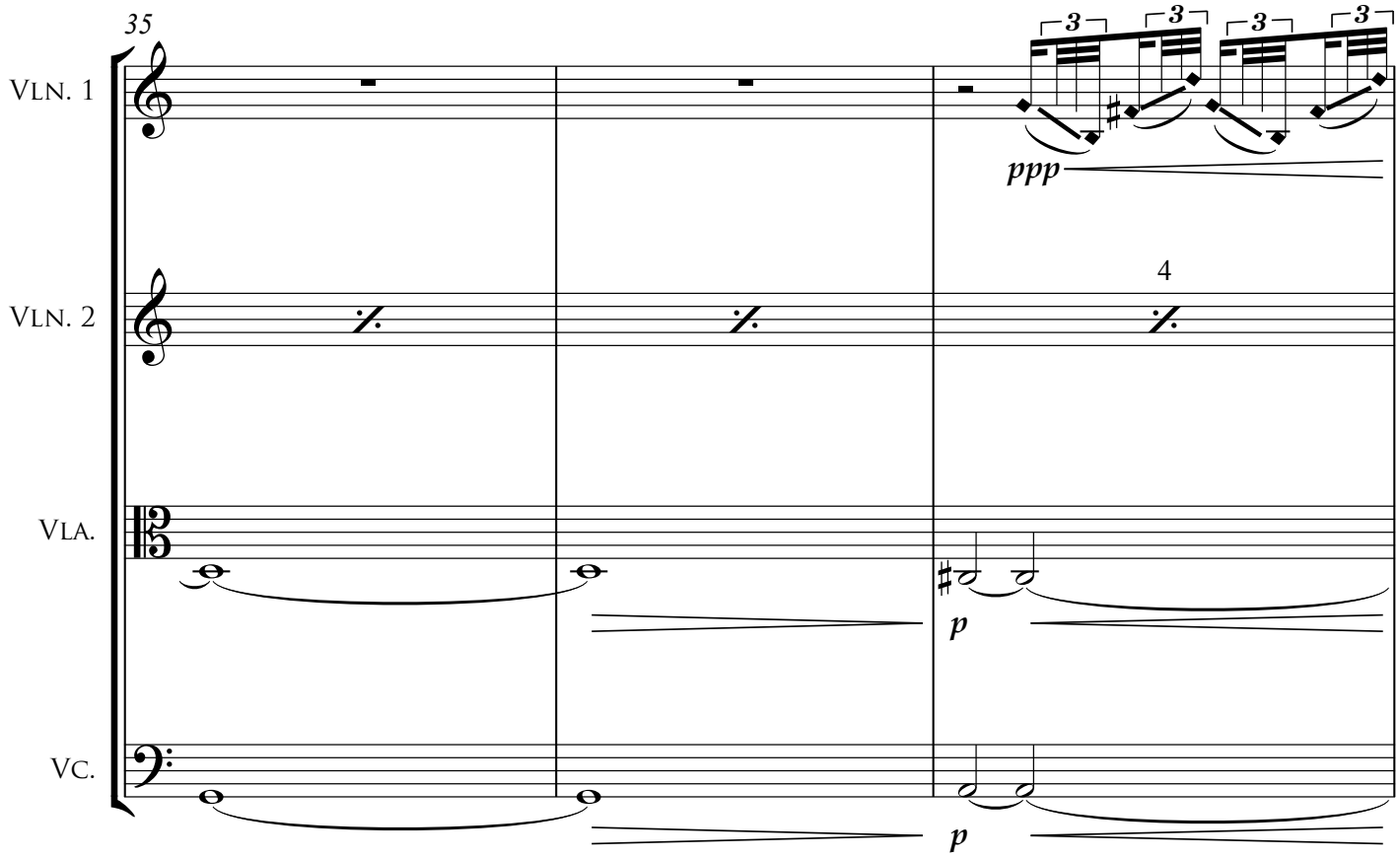

25
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
I
pp
mp
mf
mp
mf

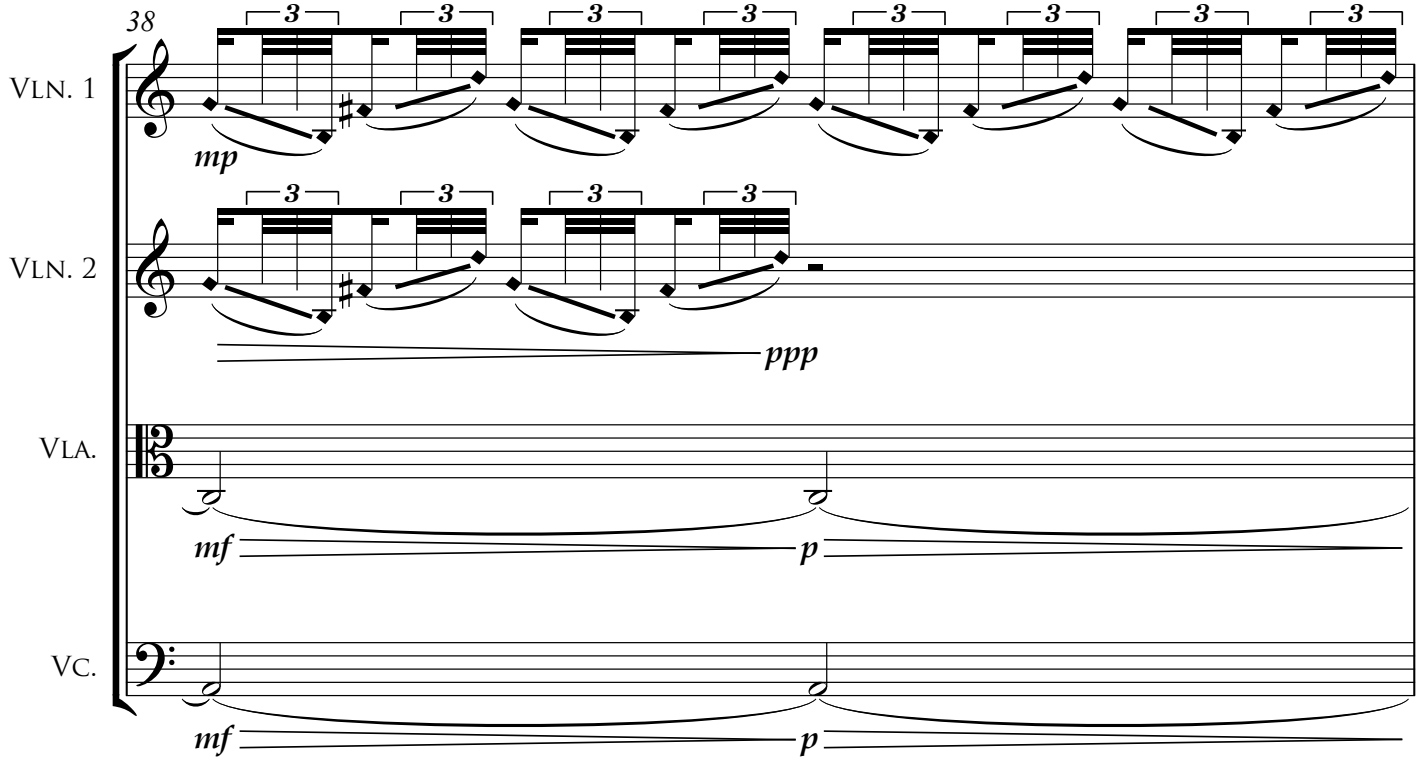

28
8
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mp
f
f

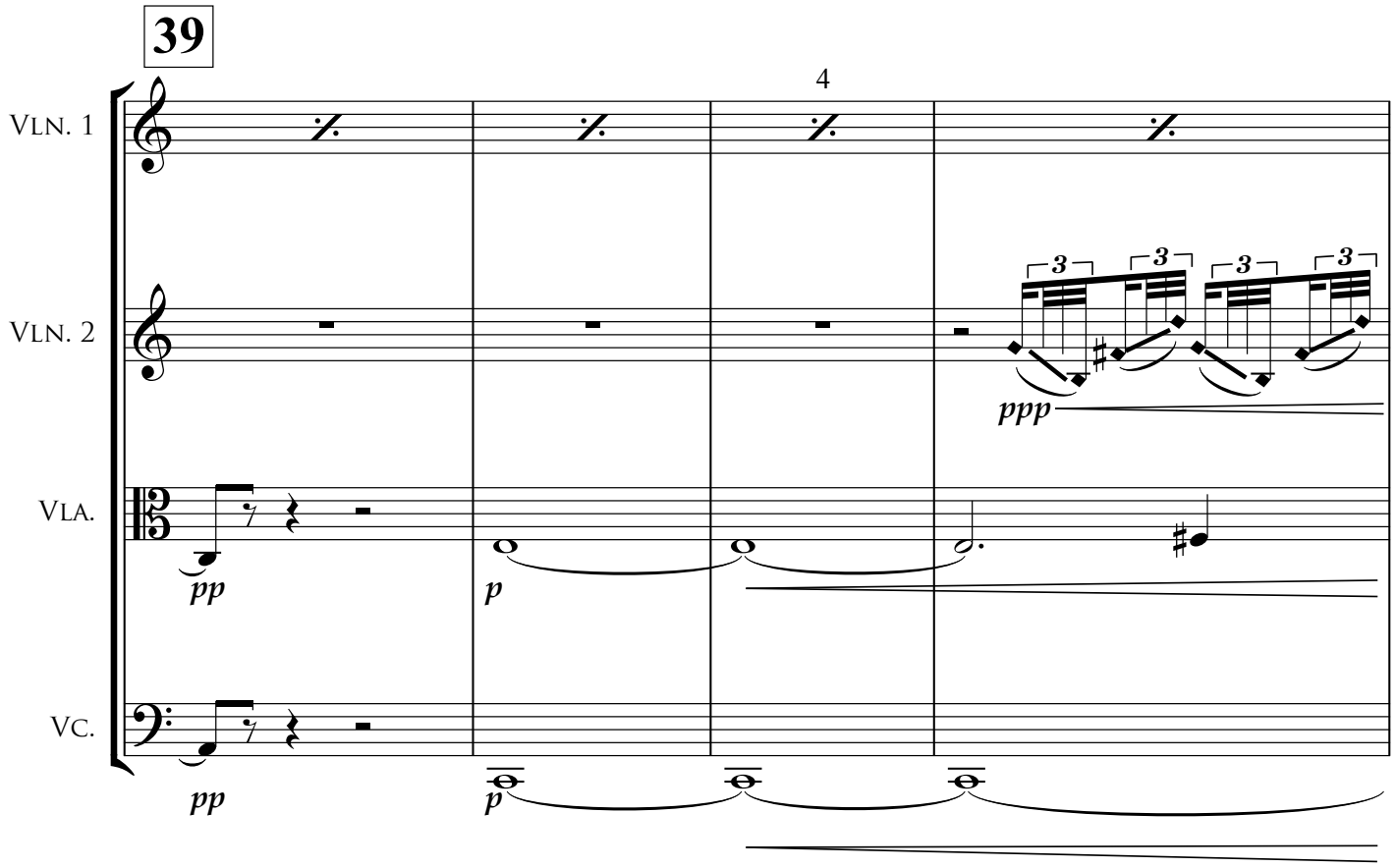

29
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
mf
mf
30
12
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
pp
ppp
p
mp
p
mp

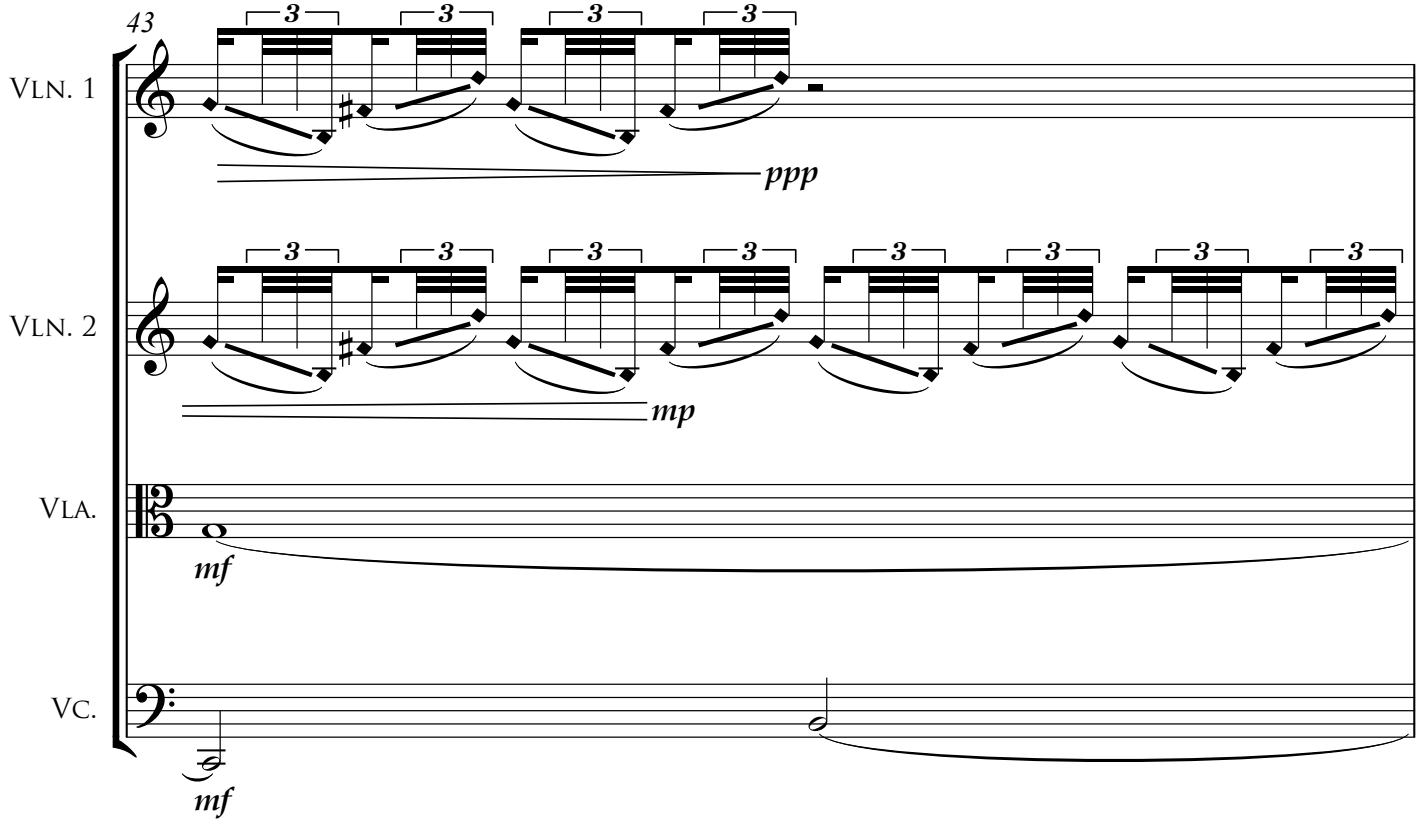

33
Vln. 1
ppp
Vln. 2
ppp
mp
Vla.
mf
Vc.
mf

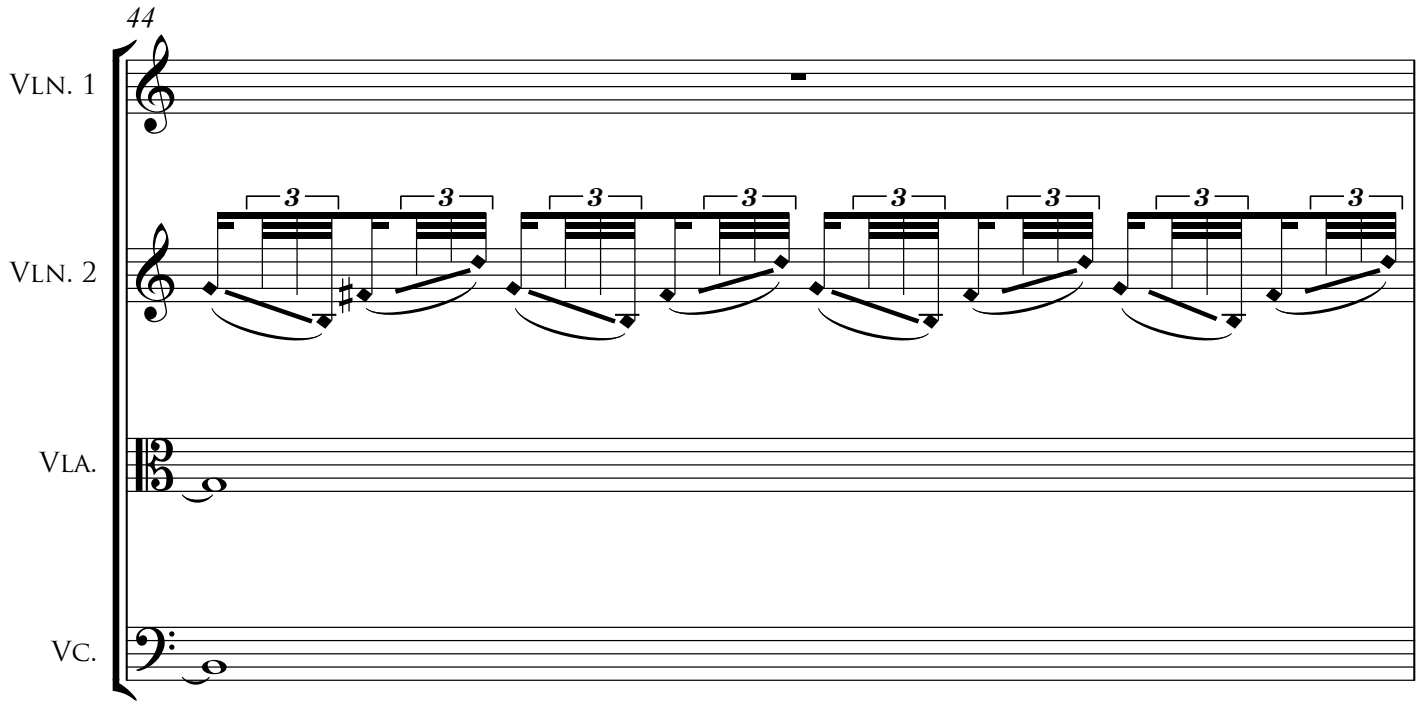

34
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

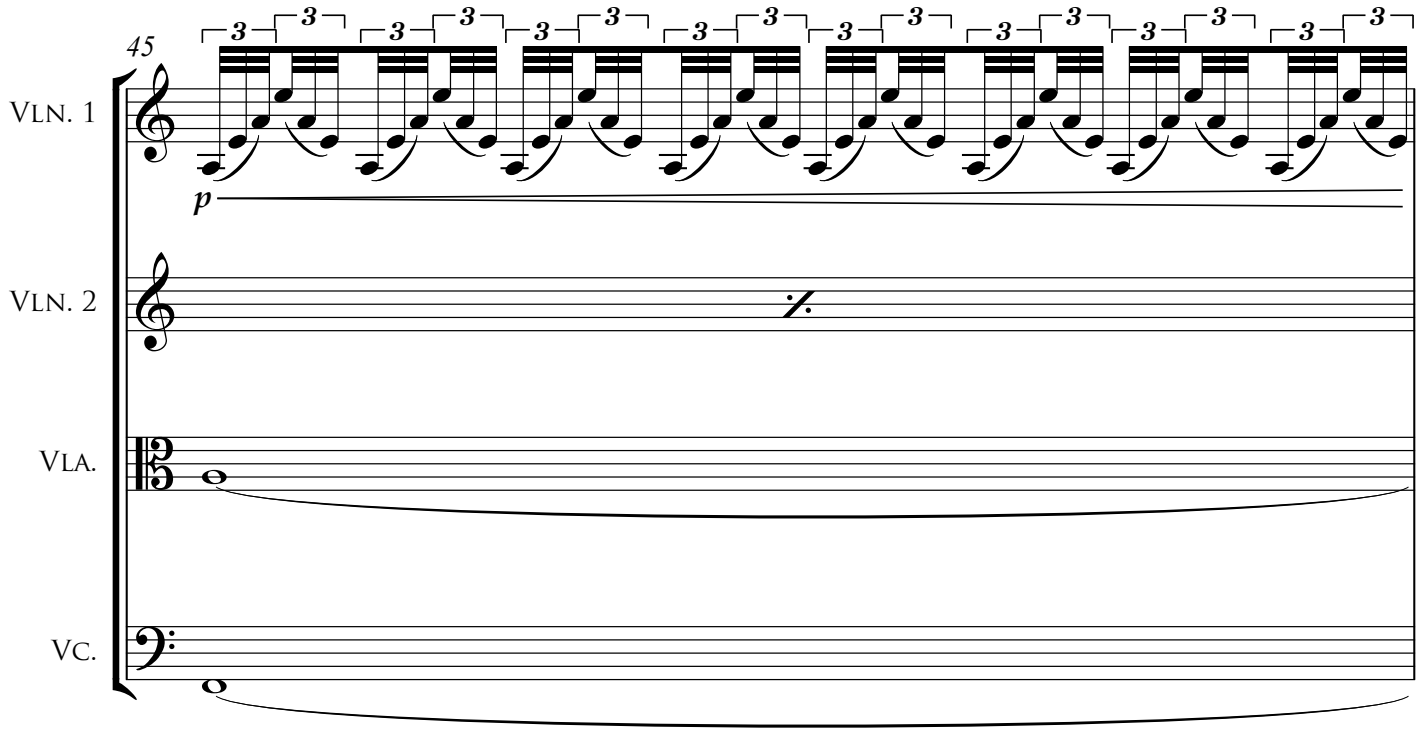

35
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
3
ppp
4
p
p

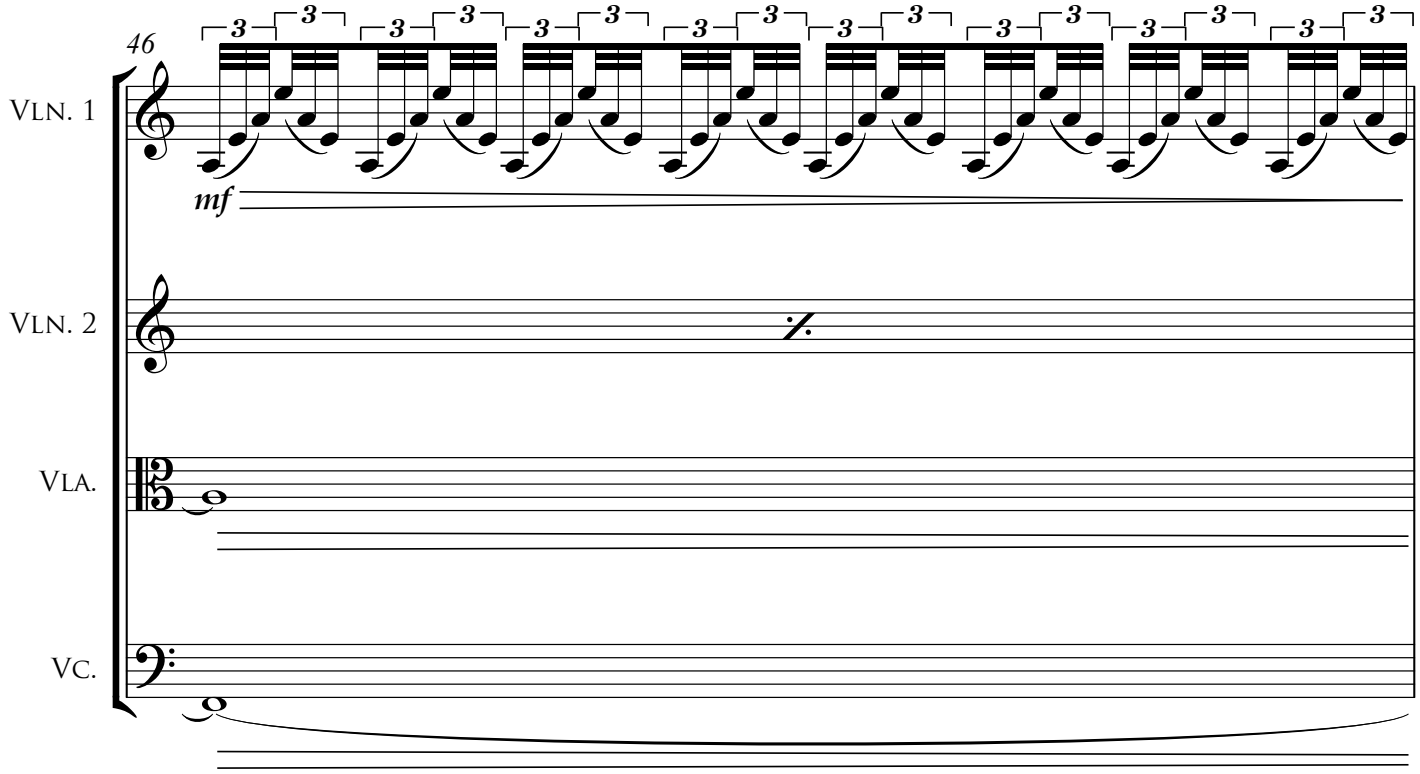

38
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
3
mp
ppp
mf
p
mf
p

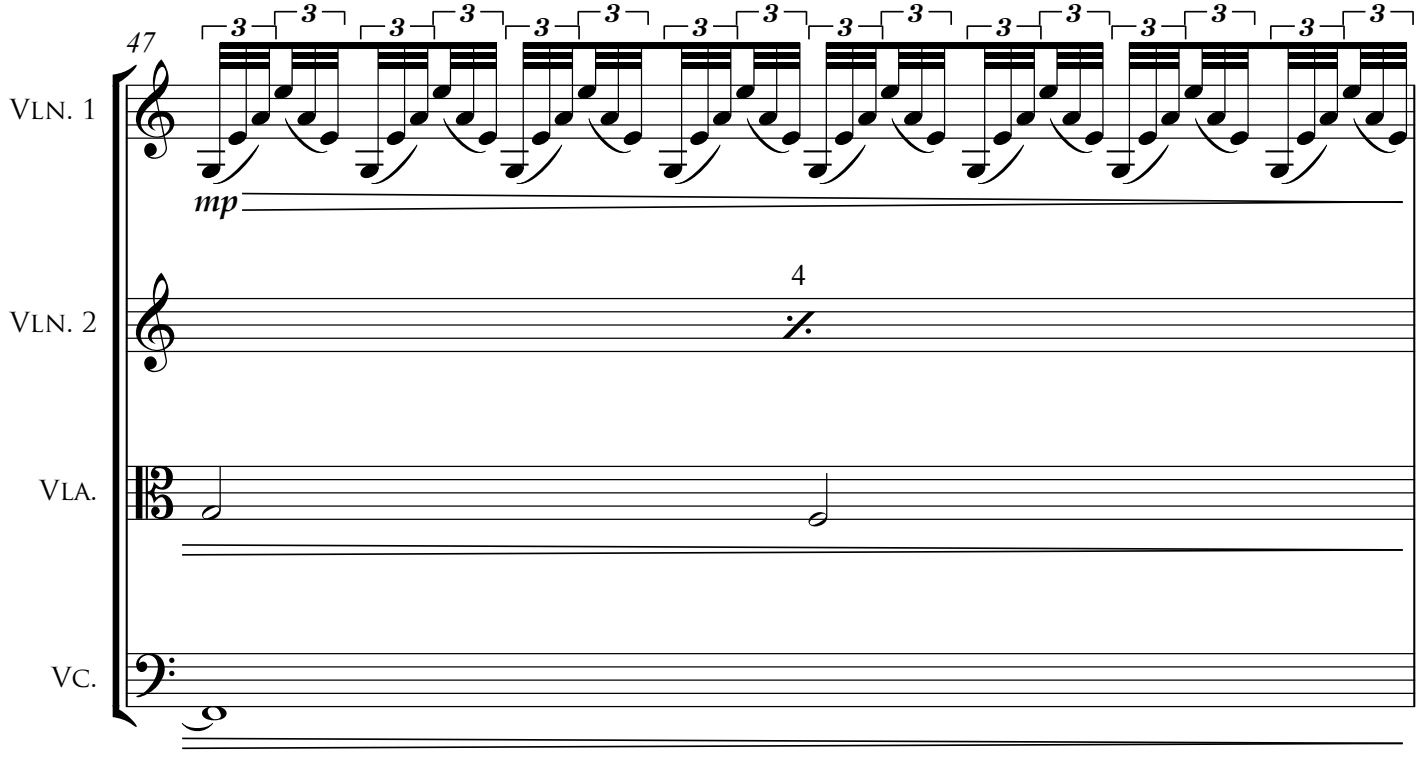

39
4
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
3
ppp
pp
p
pp
p

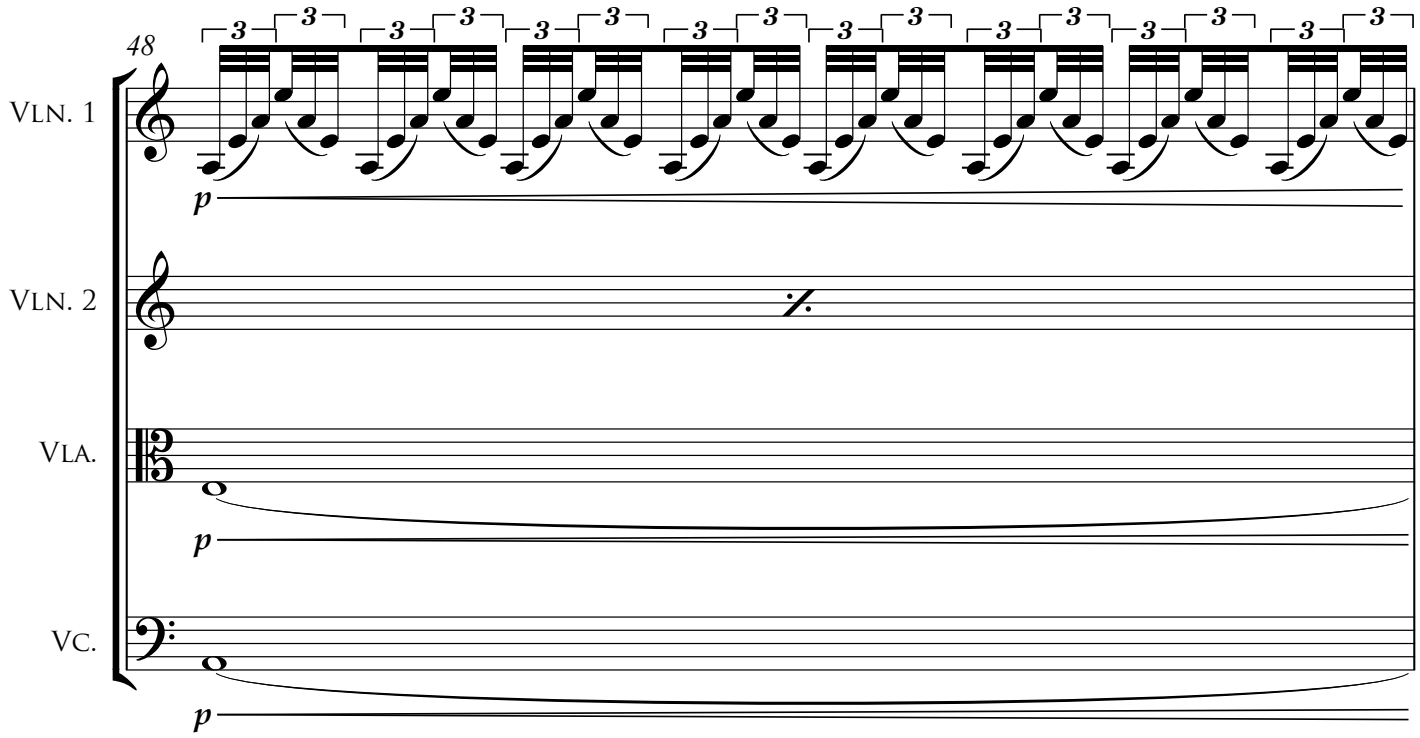

43
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
3
ppp
mp
mf
mf

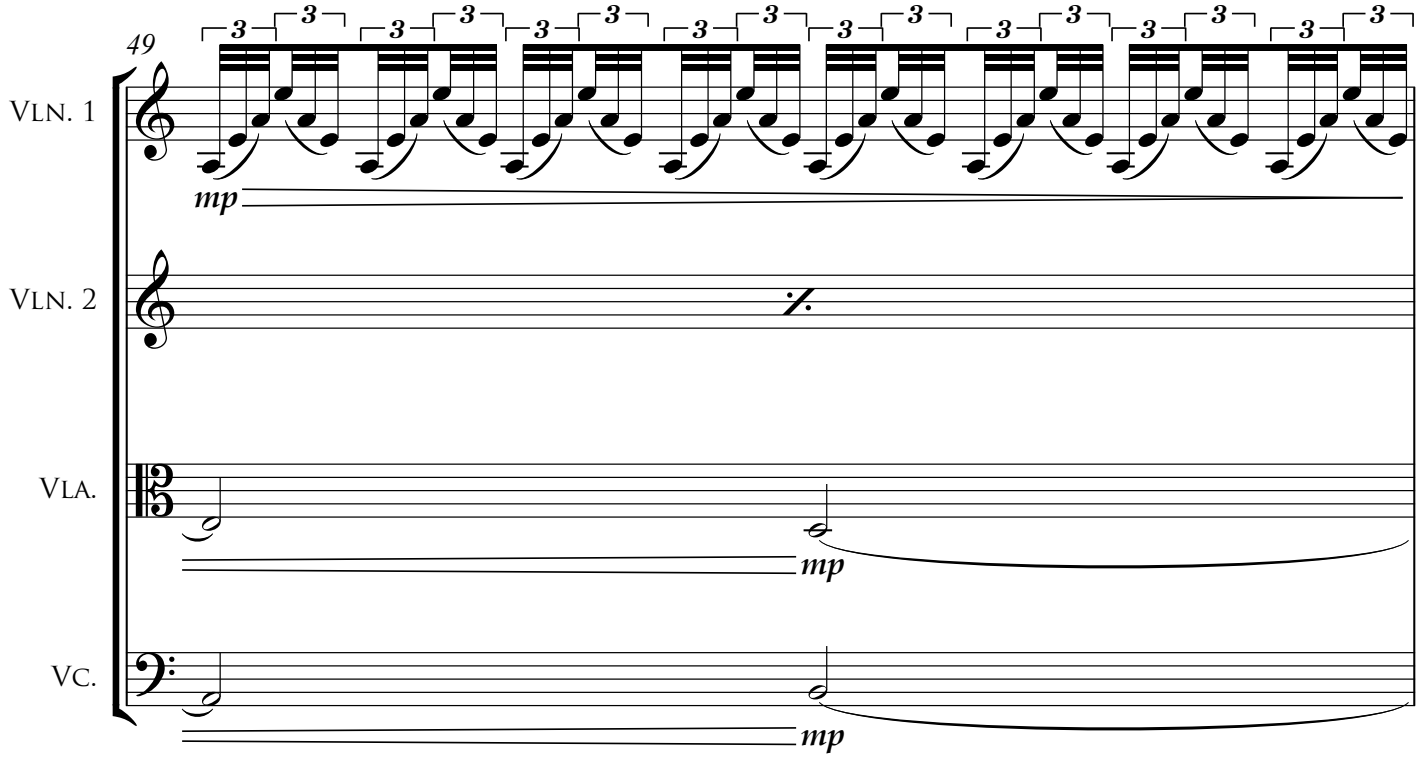

44
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

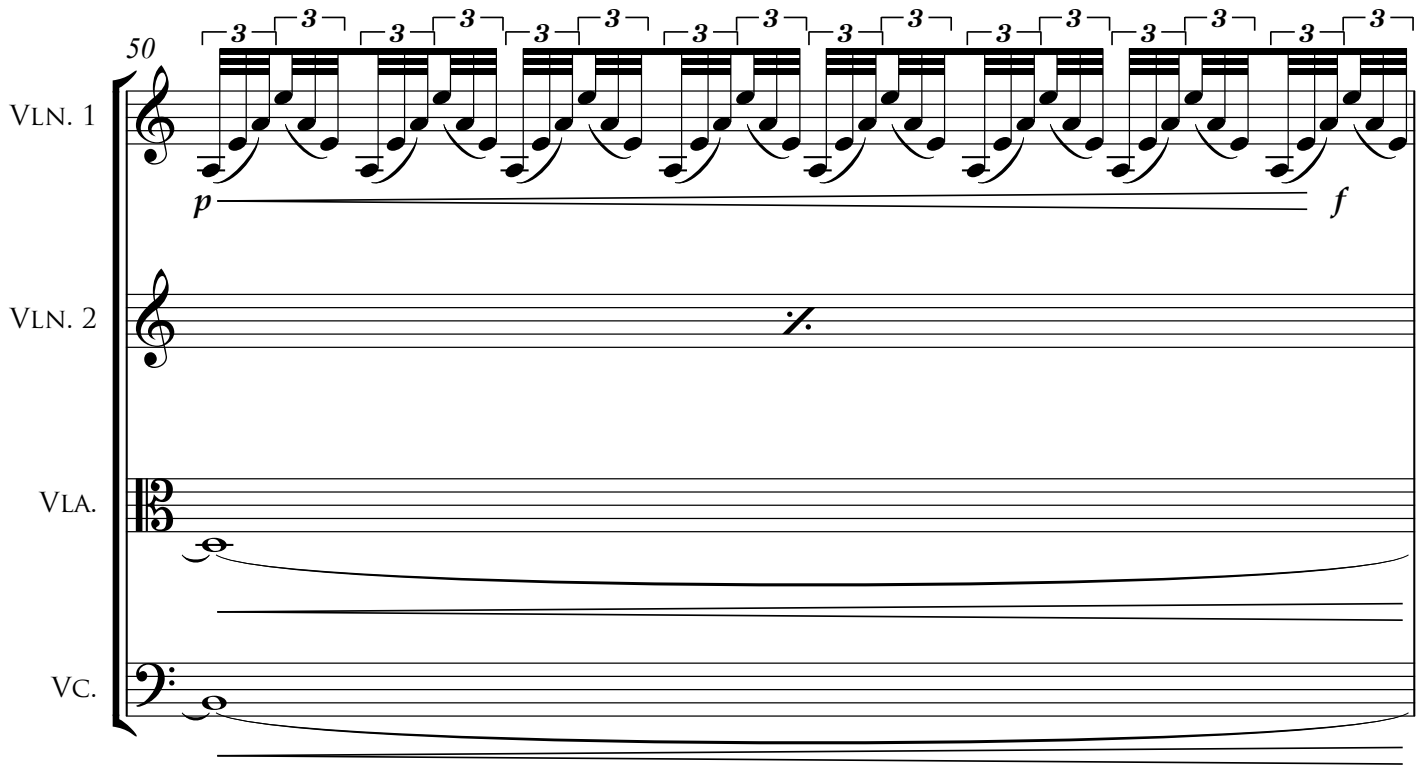

45
Vln. 1
p
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

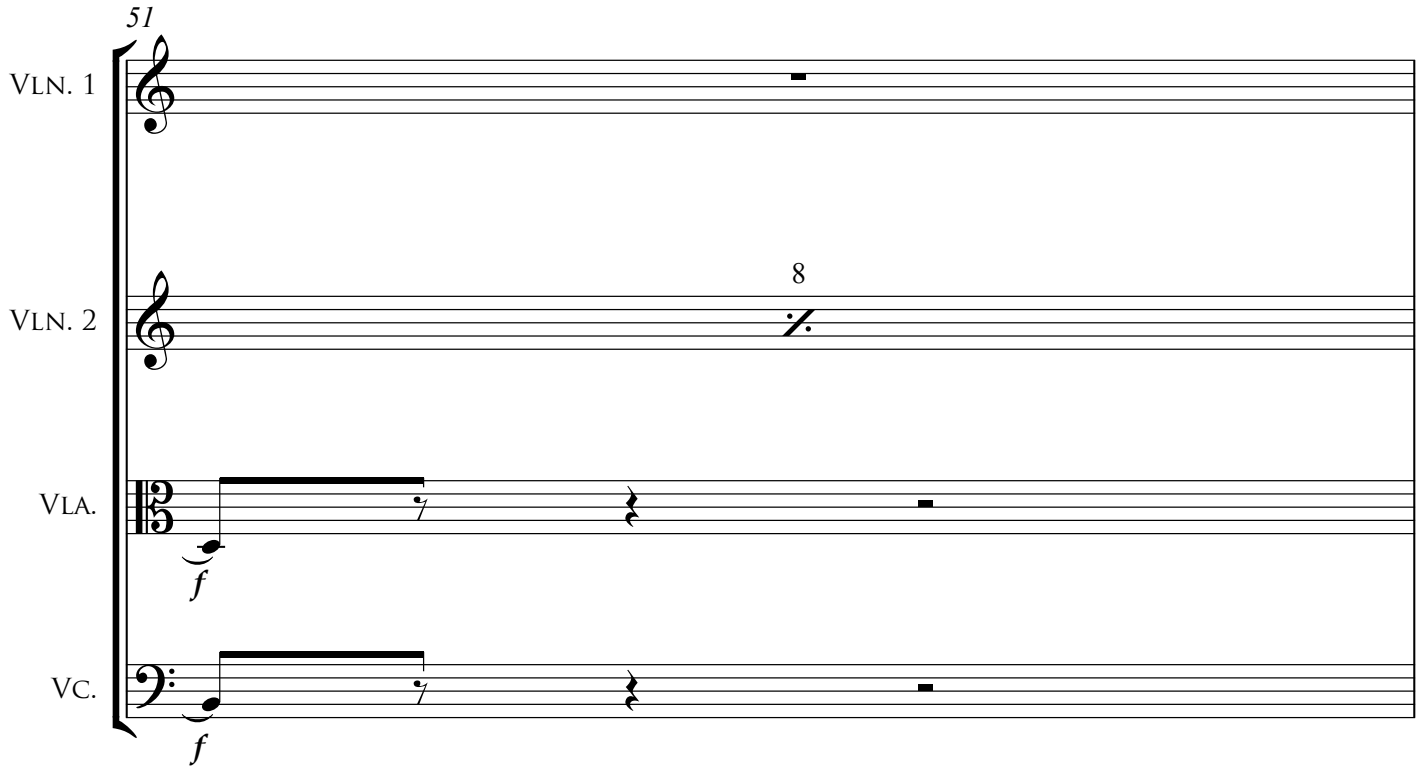

46
Vln. 1
mf
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

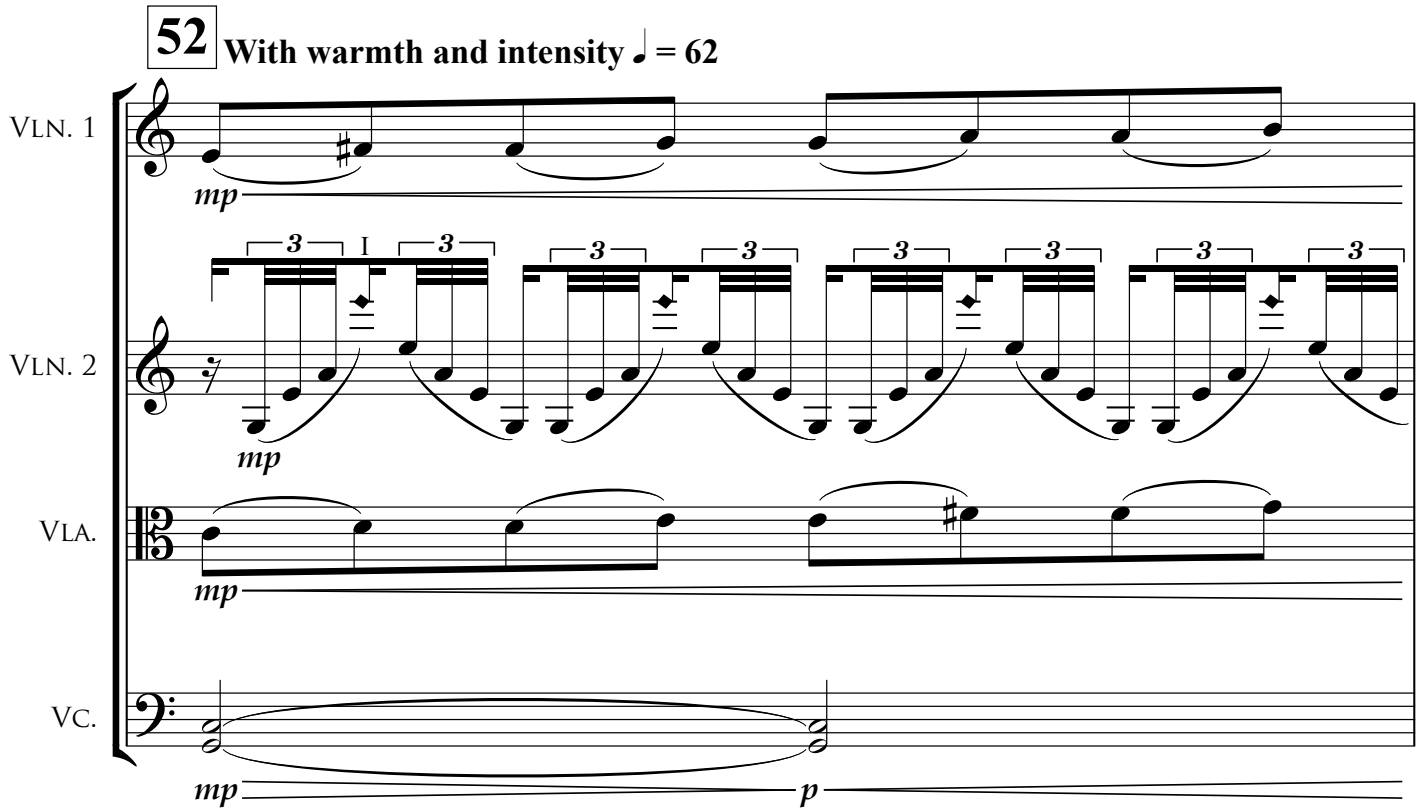

47
Vln. 1
mp
4
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

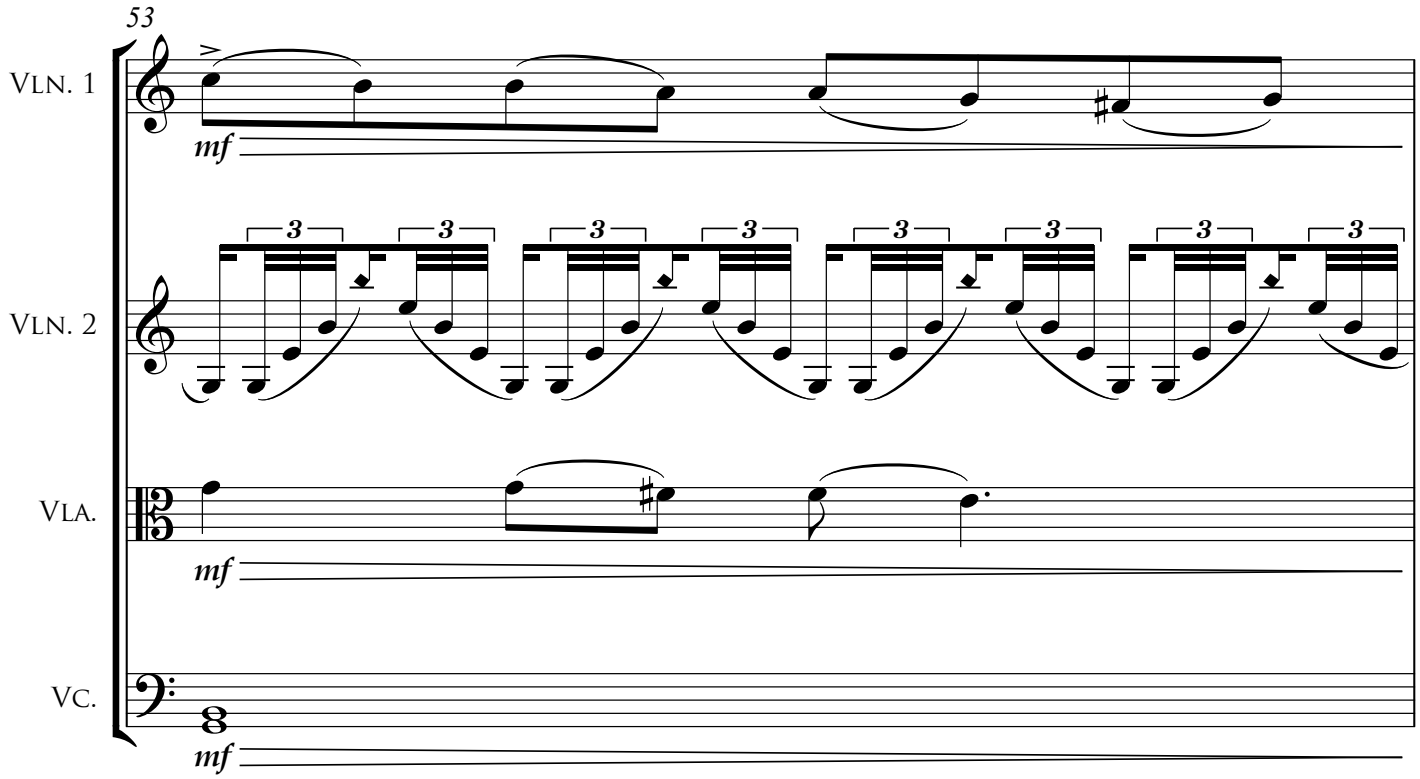

48
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
p
p

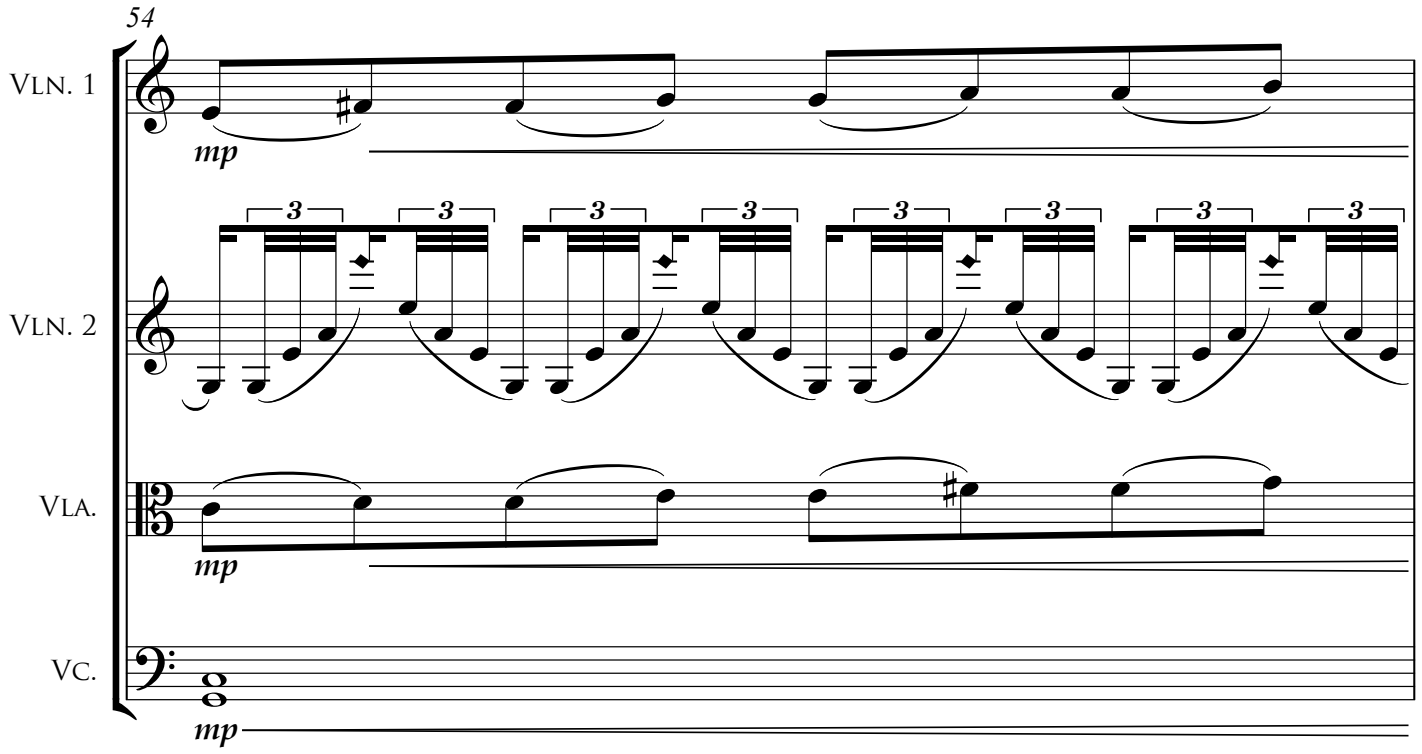

49
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mp
mp
mp

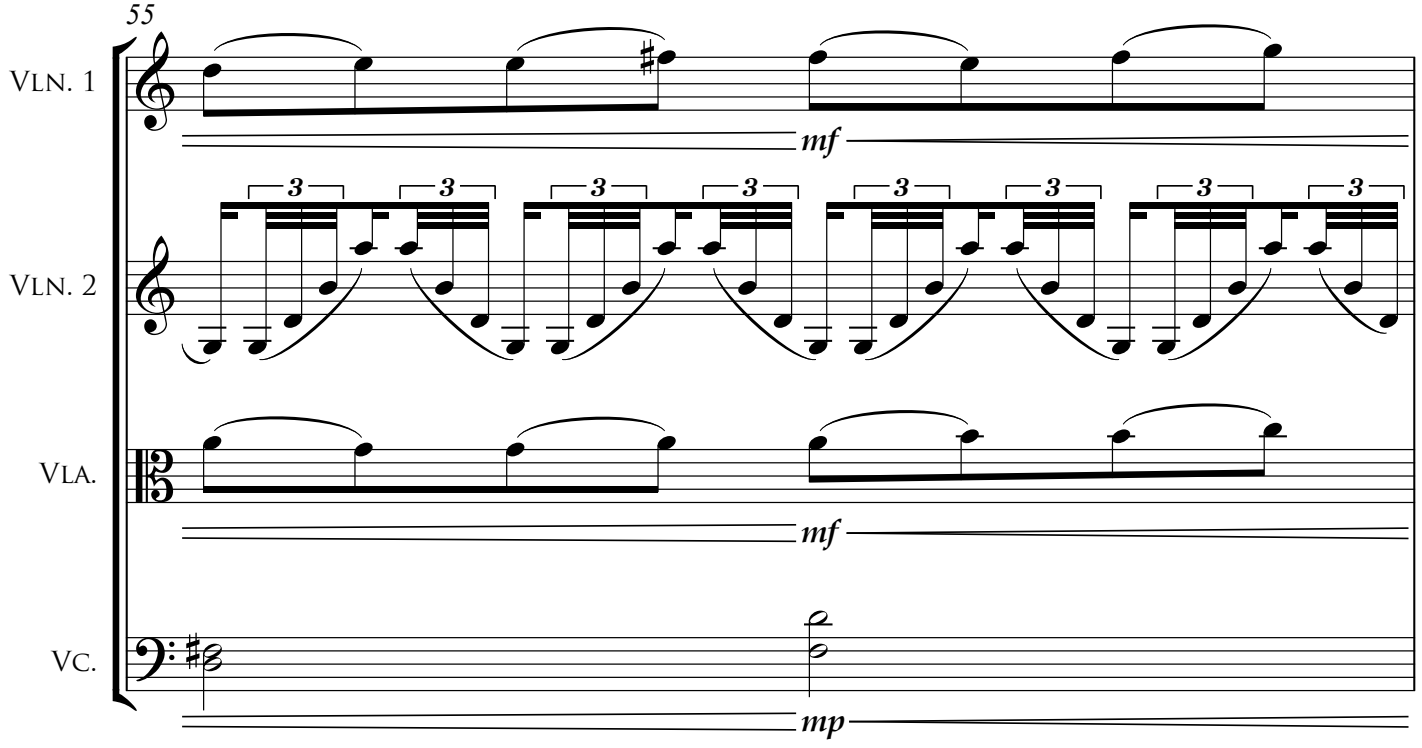

50
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
f

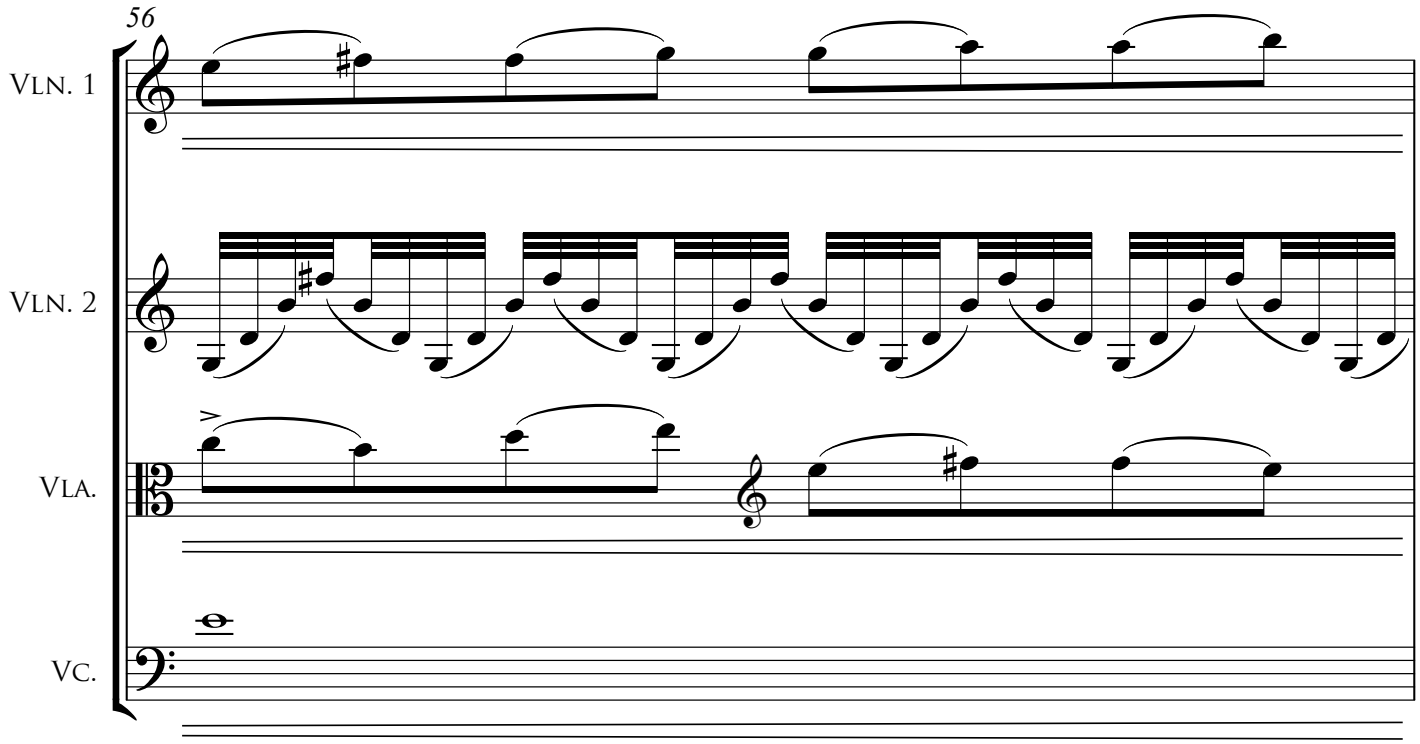

51
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
8
f
f

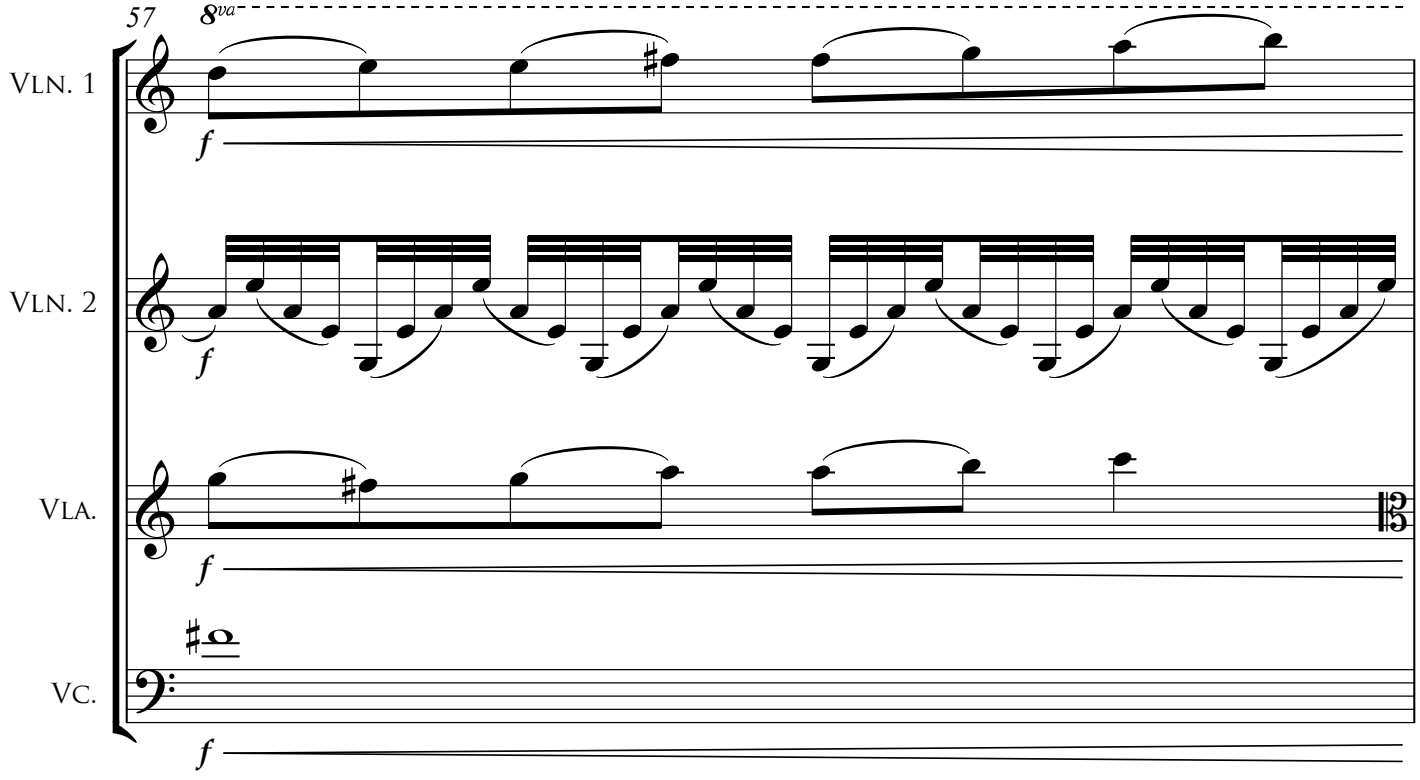

52
With warmth and intensity ♩ = 62
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mp
mp
mp
mp
p


53
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf
mf
mf

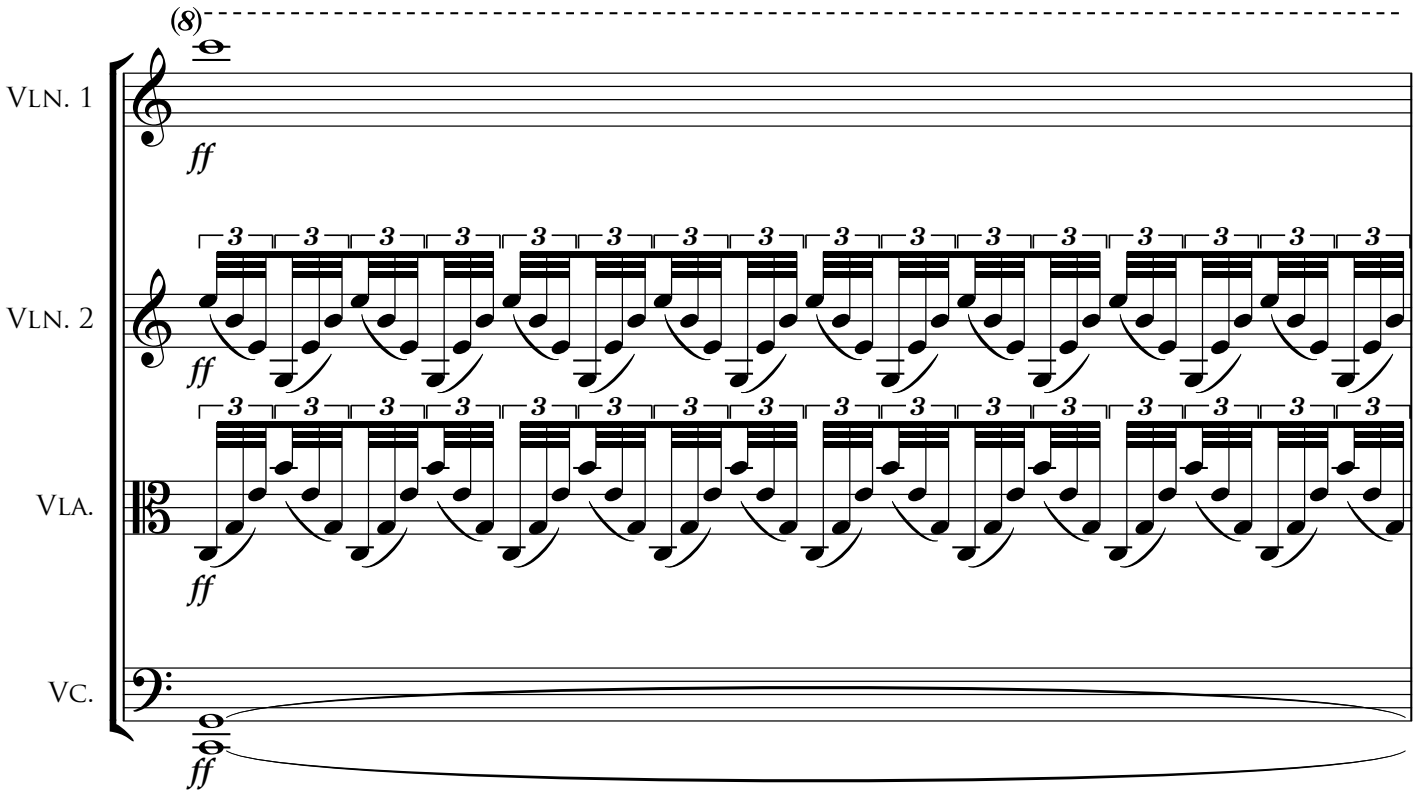

54
Vln. 1
mp
Vln. 2
Vla.
mp
Vc.
mp

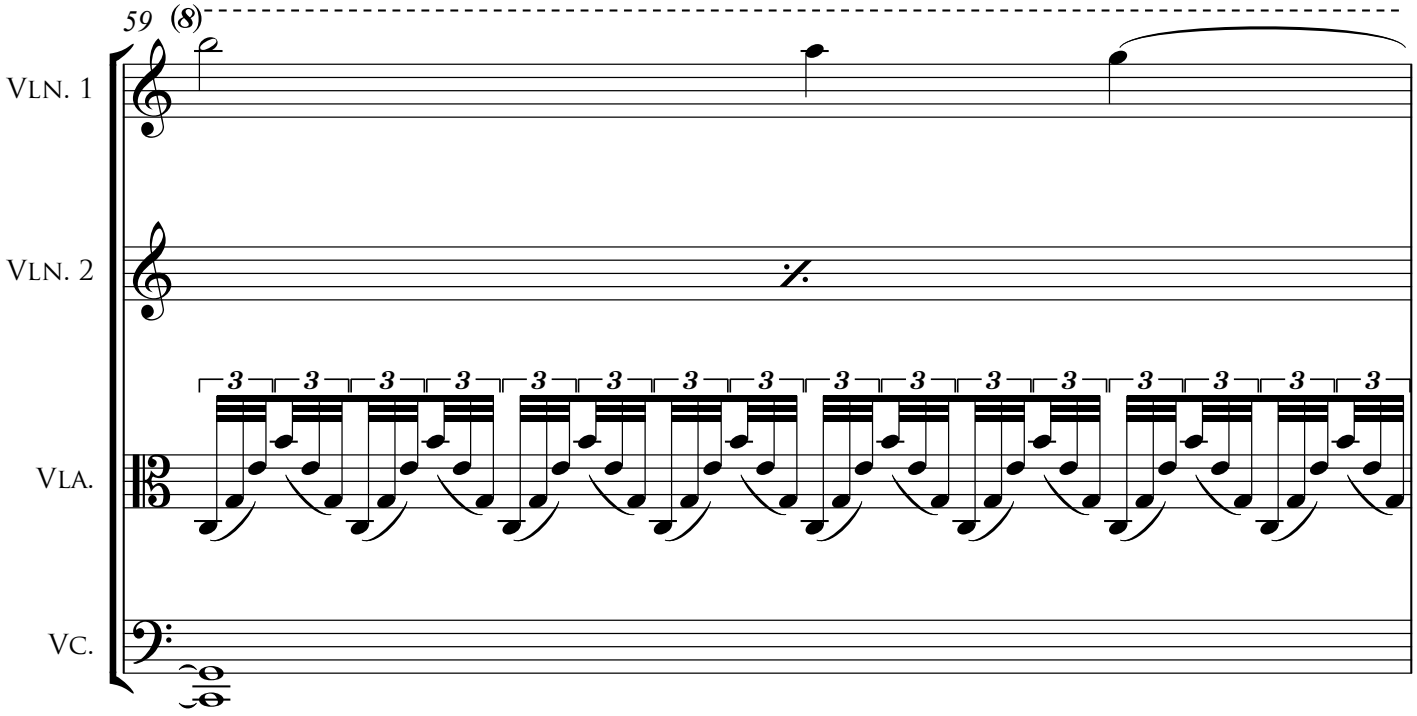

55
Vln. 1
mf
Vln. 2
Vla.
mf
Vc.
mp

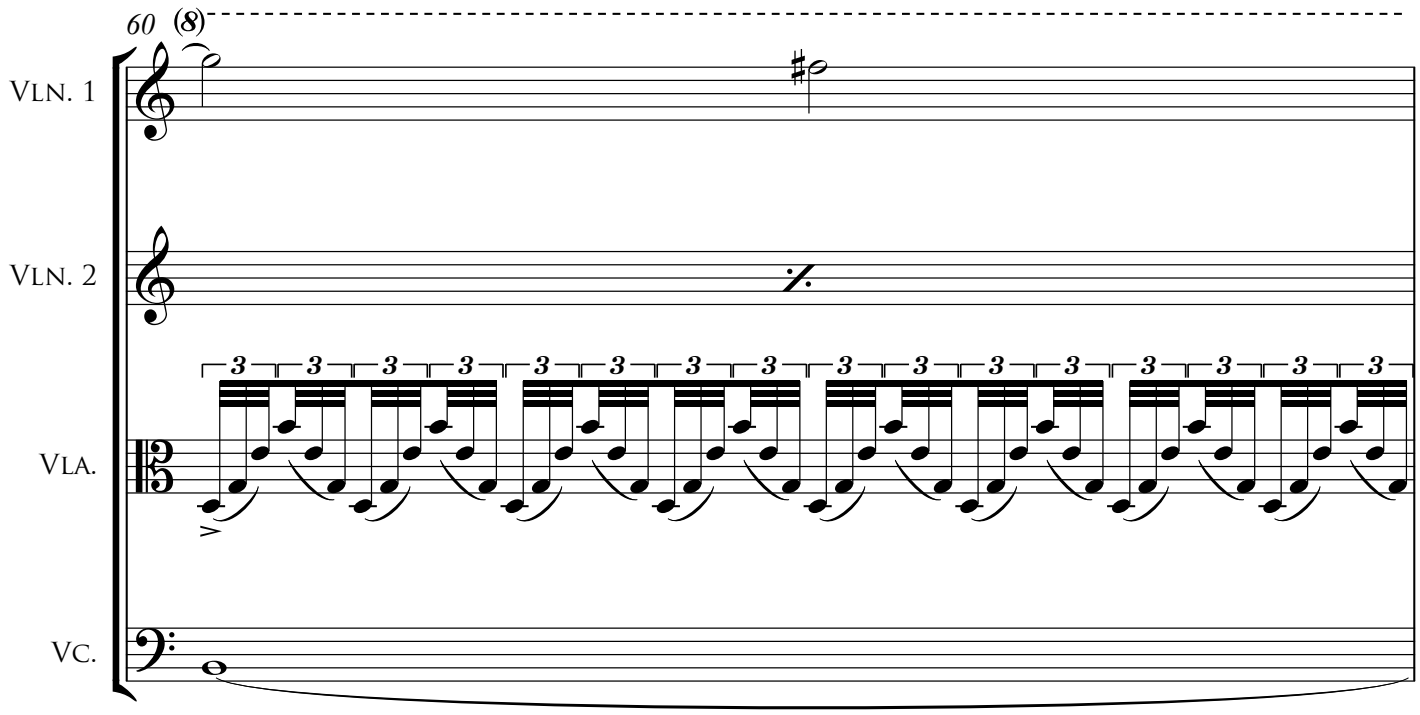

56
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

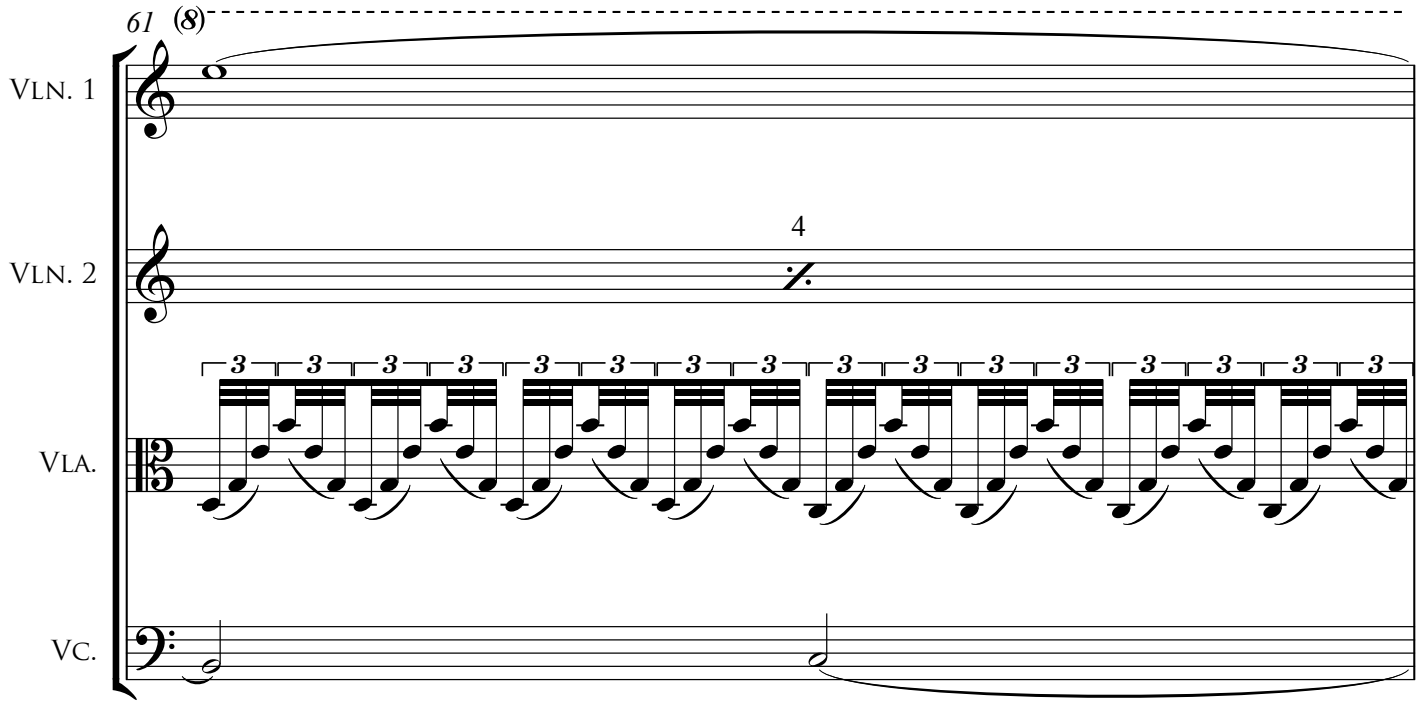

57
8va
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f

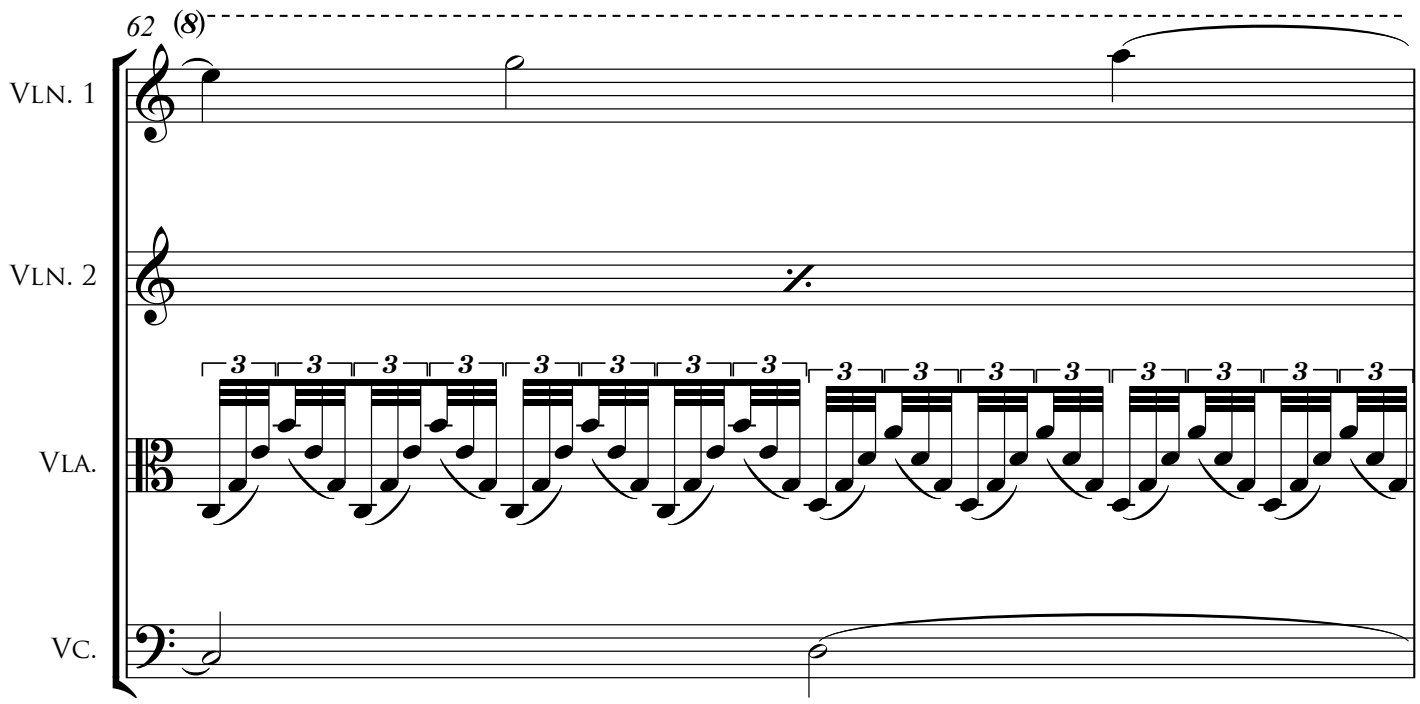
58 **Soaring, boiling over**

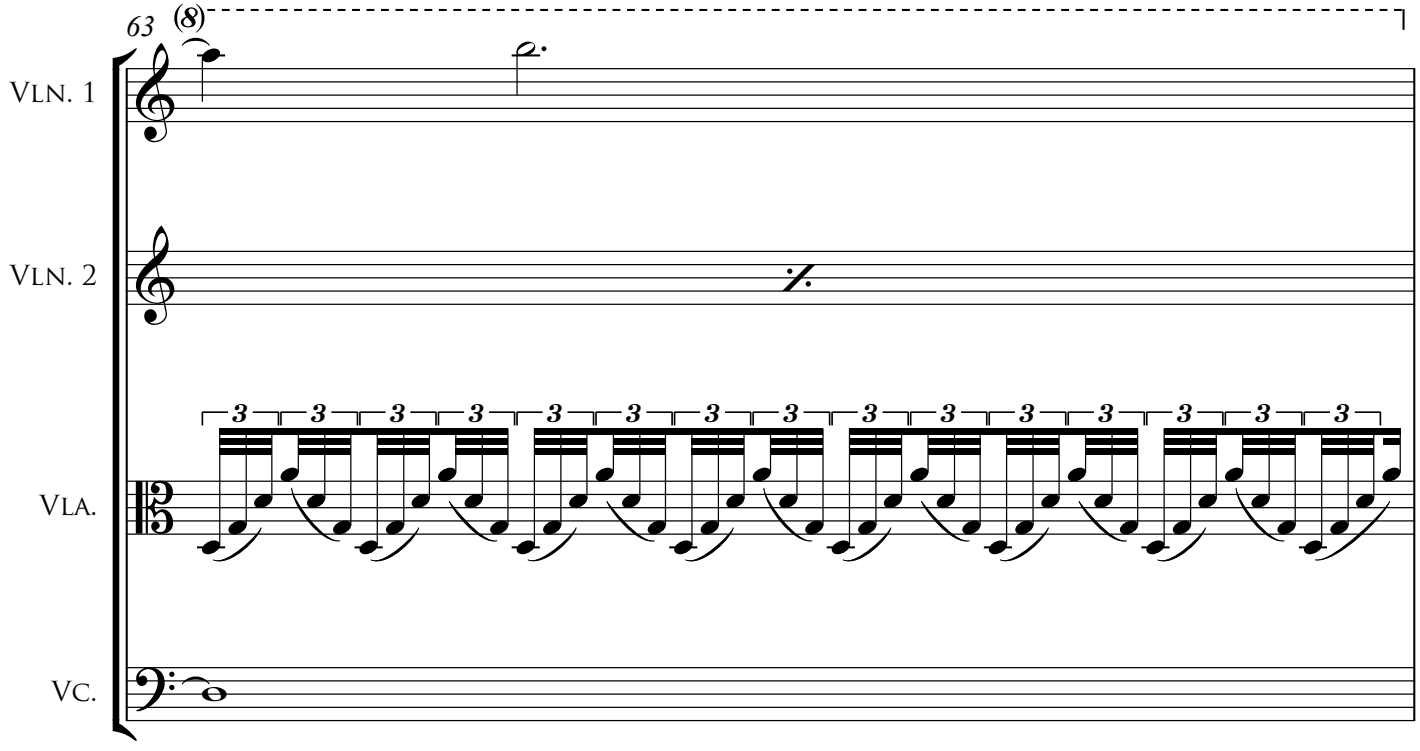


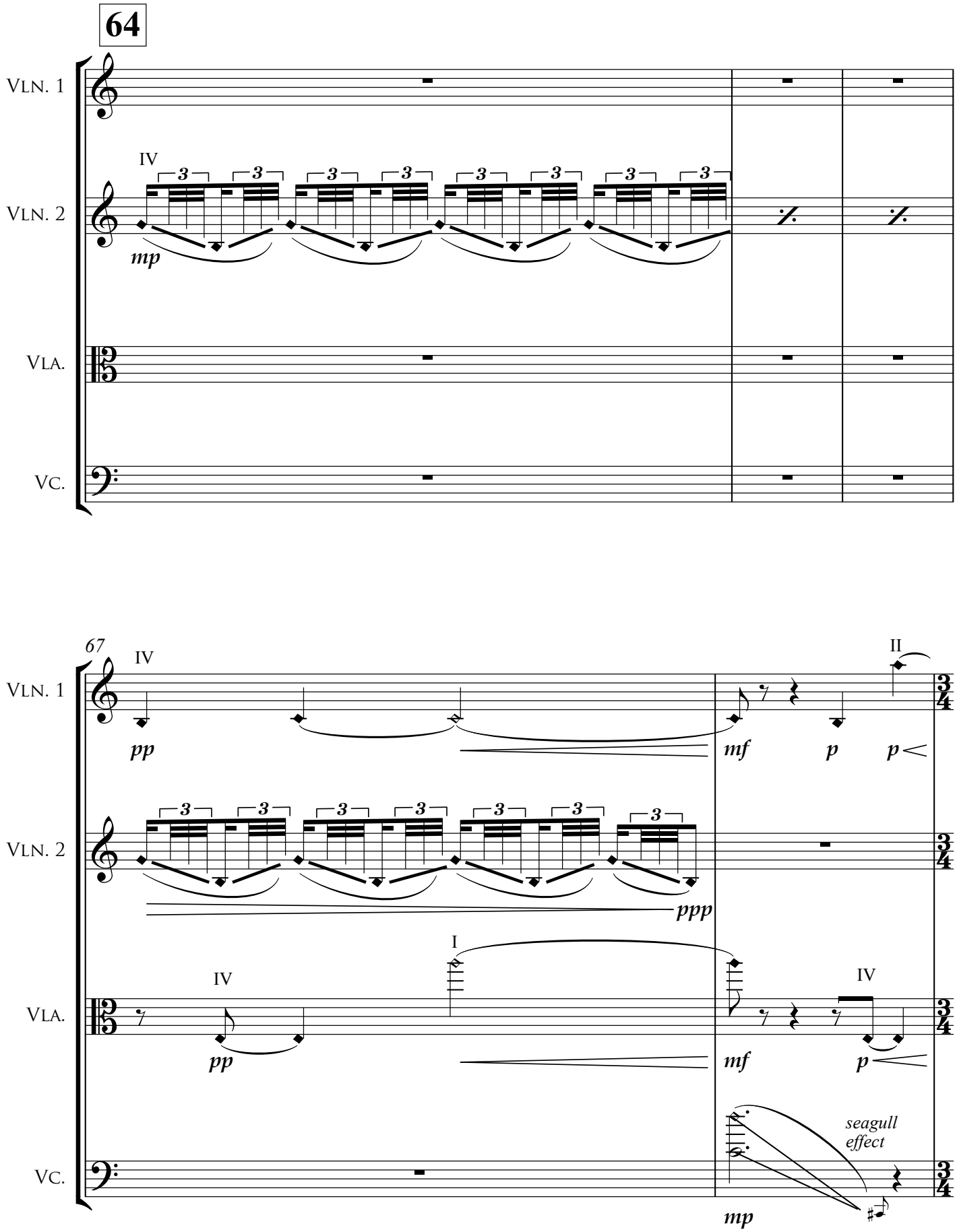


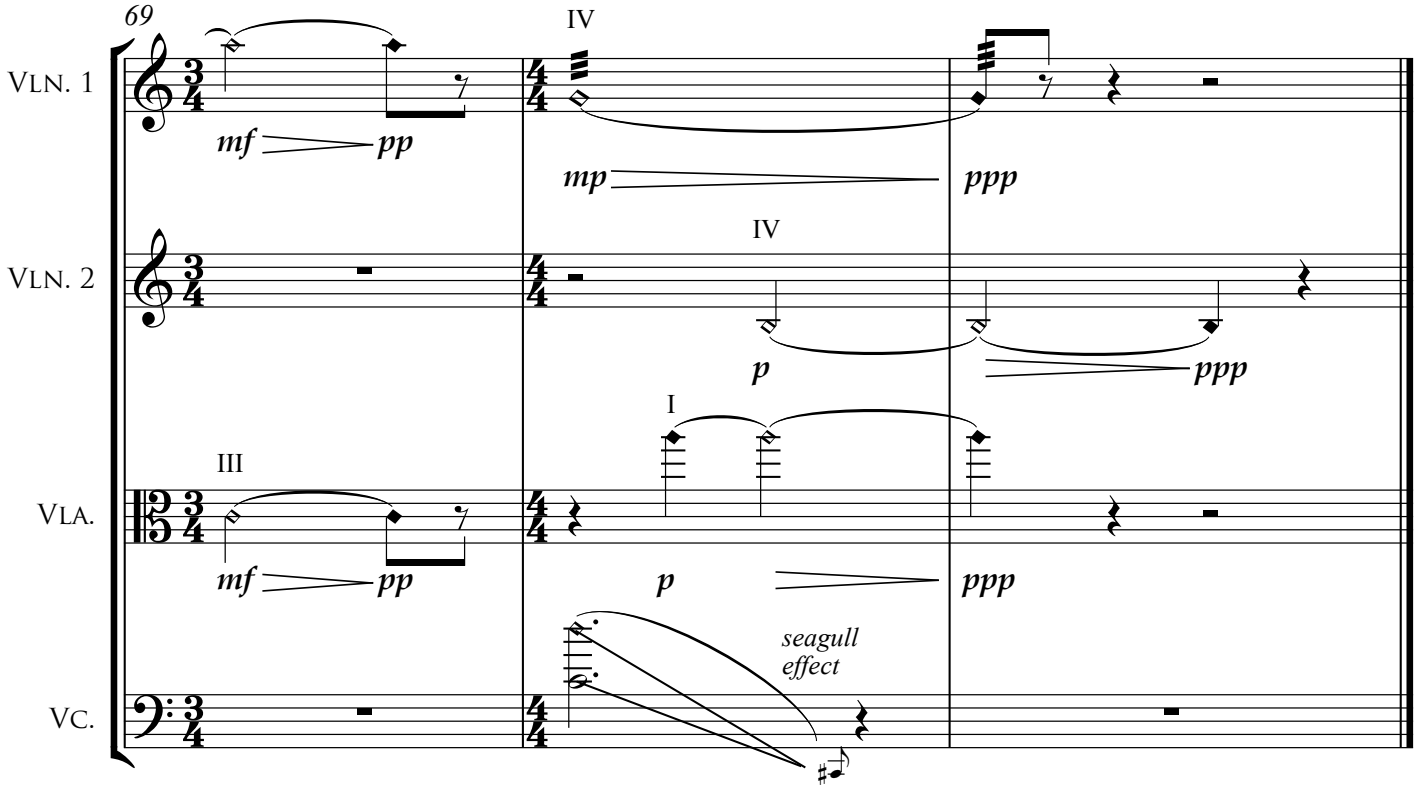

60
(8)
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.


61
(8)
Vln. 1
4
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.


62
(8)
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.


63
(8)
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.


64
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
IV
mp
67
pp
mf
p
ppp
I
II
seagull effect


69
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
IV
mf
pp
mp
ppp
IV
p
ppp
I
III
mf
pp
p
ppp
seagull
effect