Steven Snowden

Take This Hammer

String Quartet

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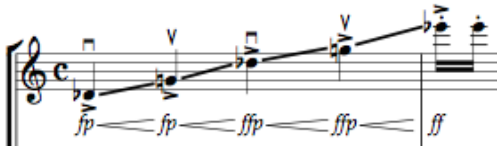
Program Notes

This piece was inspired by work songs from the Louisiana Sate Penitentiary at Angola recorded by John and Alan Lomax in the 1930's.

Performance Notes

Glissandi:

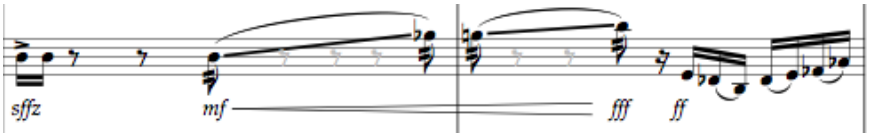
Glissandi are indicated with a dark black line. The slide from one pitch to the next should be executed evenly over the entire duration of the first note. Rather than a melodic embellishment, glissandi in this piece should be treated more as an effect.

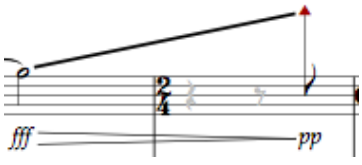


In this example, each glissando should evenly traverse a tritone through each beat of the bar except for beat four, where it will traverse a sixth.

In many cases, glissandi cross bar lines or take place over more complex rhythmic values. When this occurs, simple rhythmic values serve as departure and arrival points.

In this example, the glissando begins on the *and* of beat two and arrives on the *and* of beat four. The next glissando begins on the downbeat of the next measure and arrives on the *and* of beat two.

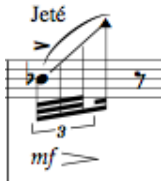




A triangle note head at the arrival point of a glissando simply indicates that the pitch should slide up as high as possible. In this example, the glissando begins on a G on beat three and rises as high as possible over the course of the next three and a half beats. This should produce a kind of "rapidly evaporating" effect.

Jeté with glissandi:

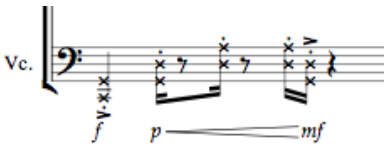
The use of Jeté technique in tandem with a glissando is utilized as a kind of jangling percussive effect in this piece. While the rhythmic placement of the beginning of this gesture is of primary importance, the rhythmic accuracy or number of successive bow bounces does not have to adhere strictly to the rhythm that is notated.



Scratch tones:

Scratch tones are used as a percussive effect in this piece and should contain little to no discernible pitch. In order to facilitate this, the left hand should lightly mute all strings over the fingerboard when this technique is used.

From measure 21 to 33 scratch tones are to be played behind the bridge. X note heads indicate which strings should be bowed. In this example, the C and G strings are bowed on beat one, the G and D strings on beat two, and the D and A strings on the last 16th of beat two.



From measure 34 to 39, scratch tones do not have to be played behind the bridge. Bowing can take place wherever is most comfortable for the player as long as the resulting sound contains little to no discernible pitch.

If you have any questions about performance techniques or any other aspects of the piece, feel free to email, text or call me any time.

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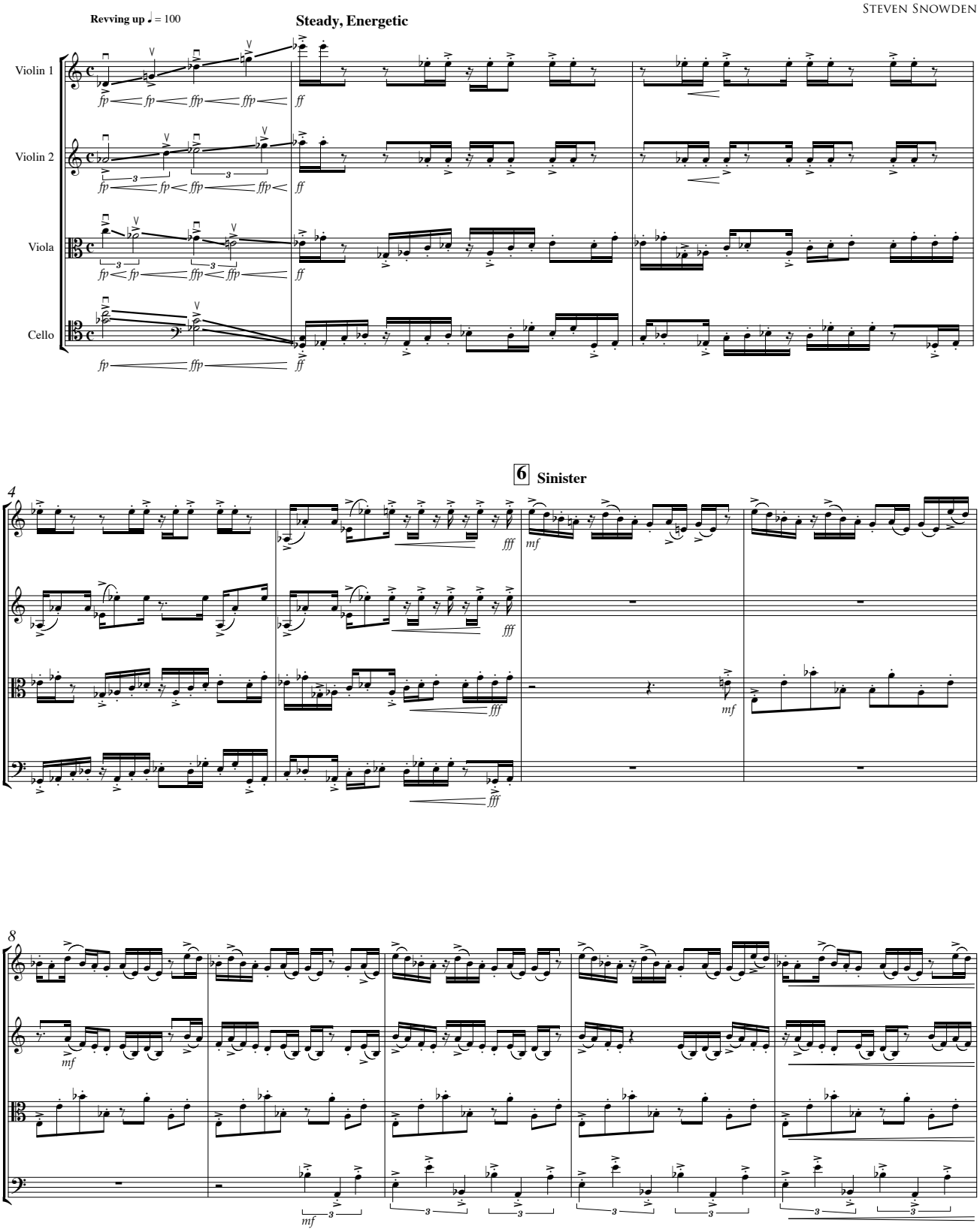
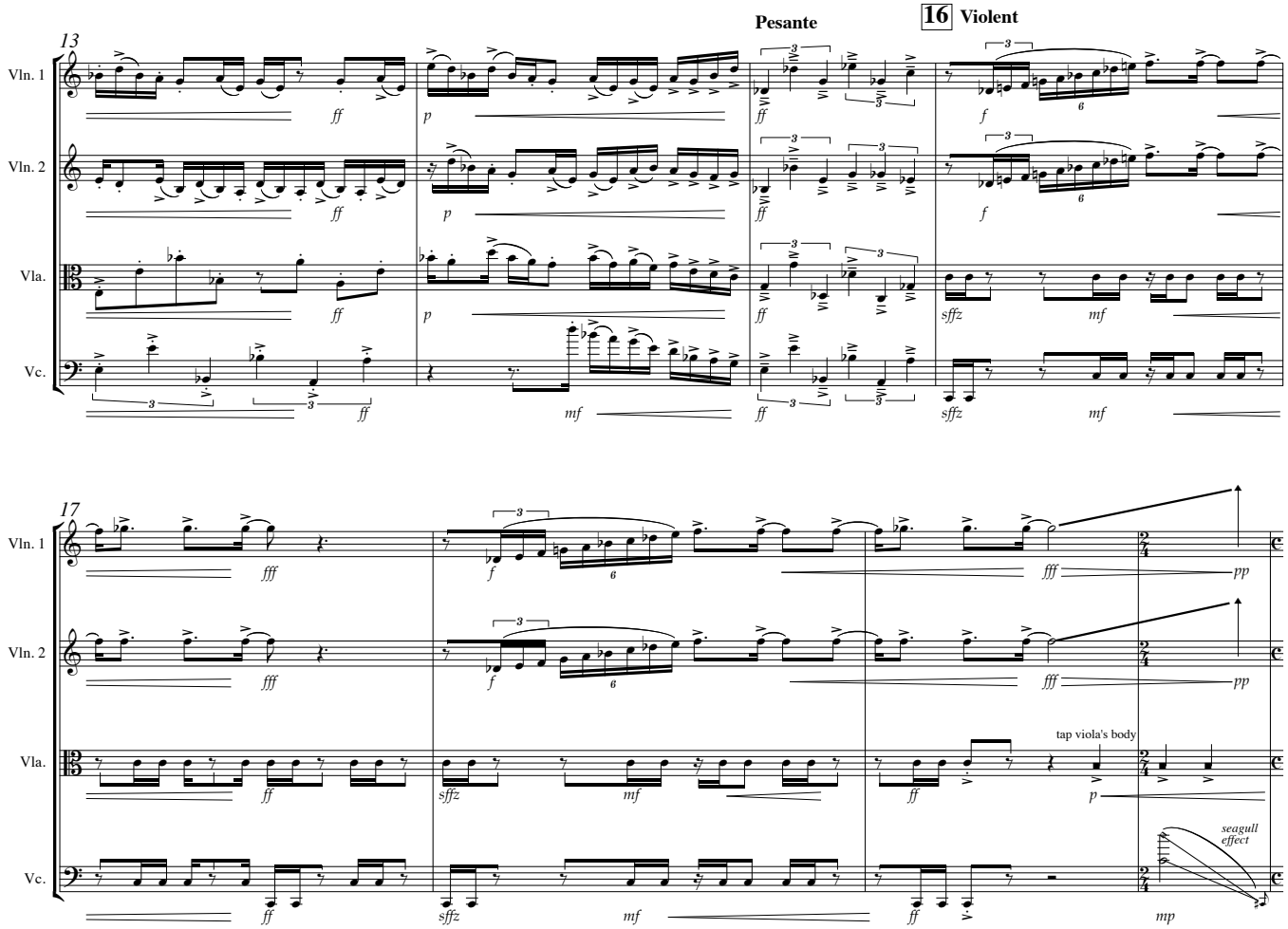
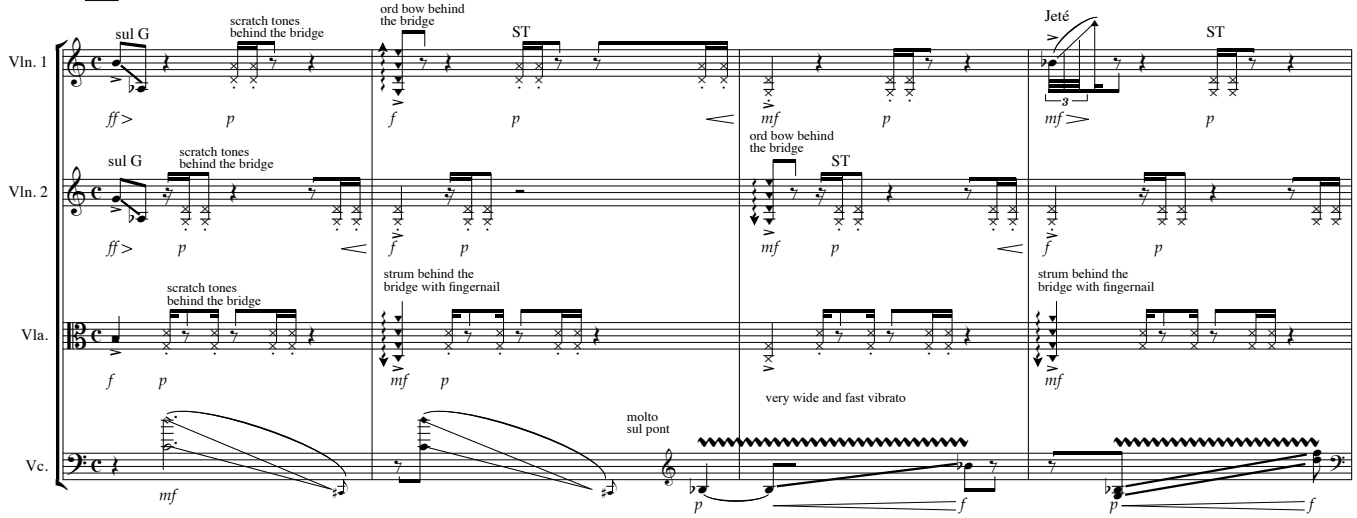
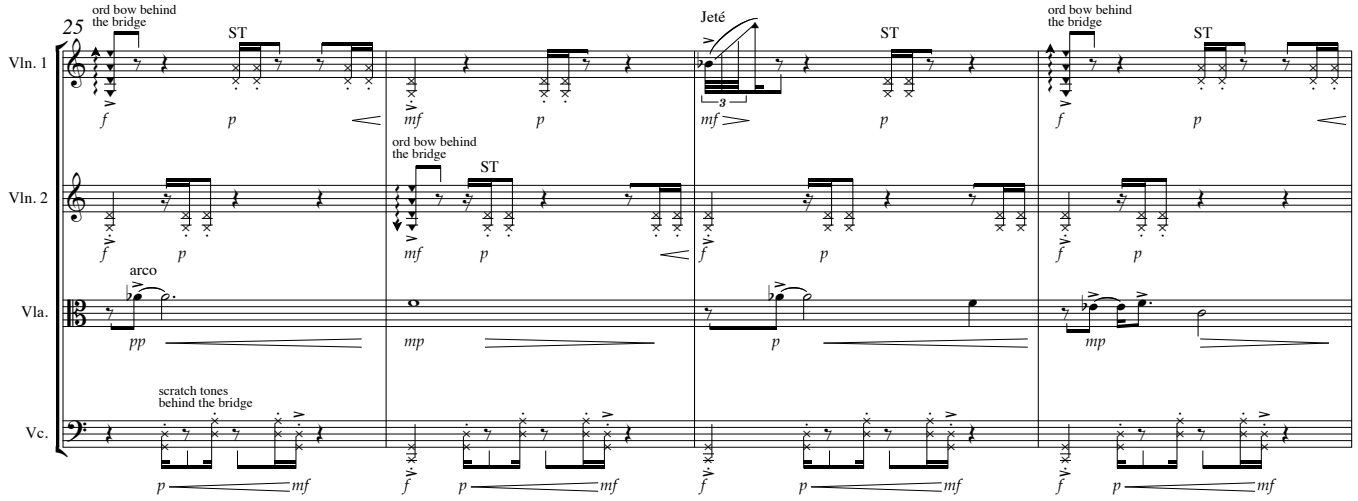
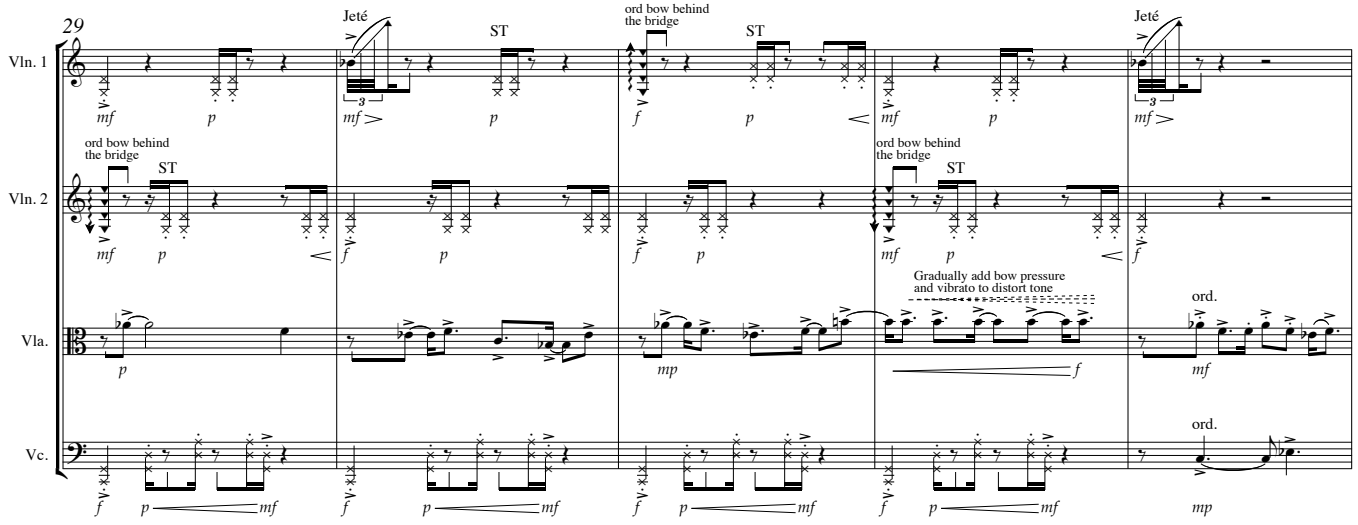
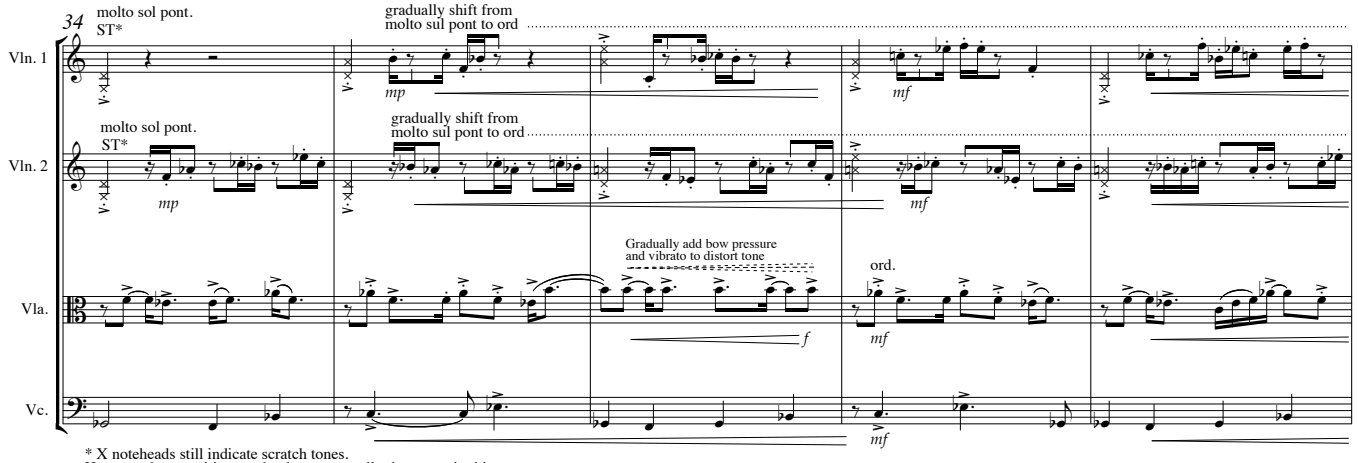



13
Pesante
16 Violent
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
17
tap viola's body
seagull effect

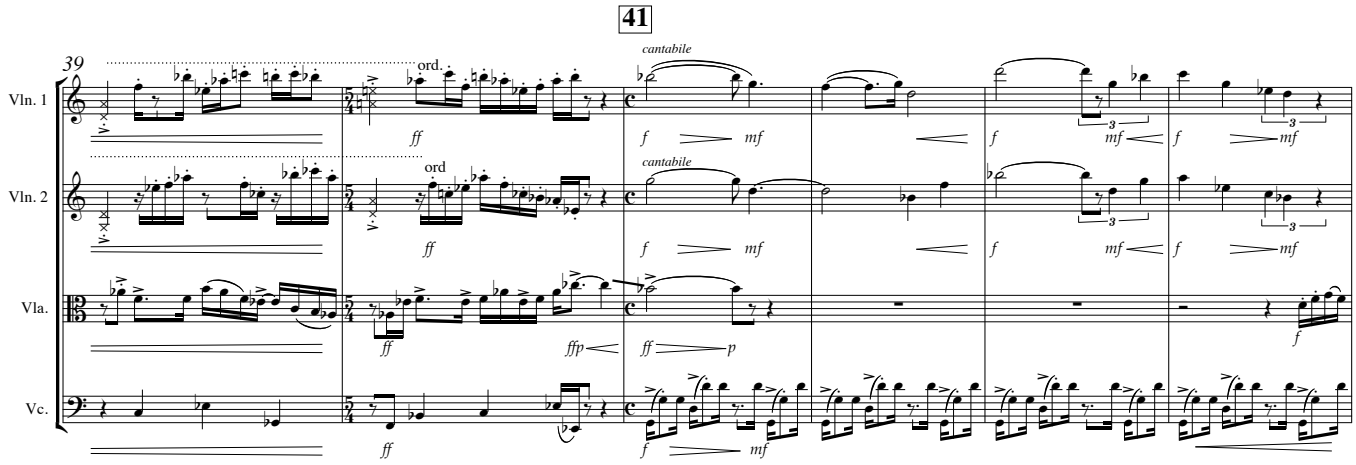

21 A quirky groove
sul G
scratch tones behind the bridge
ord bow behind the bridge
ST
Jeté
strum behind the bridge with fingernail
molto sul pont
very wide and fast vibrato
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.

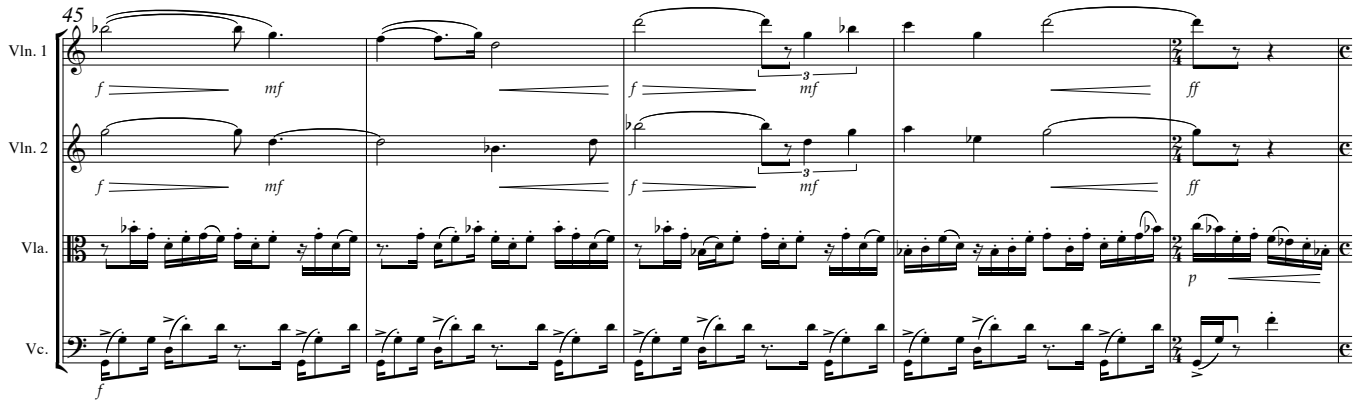


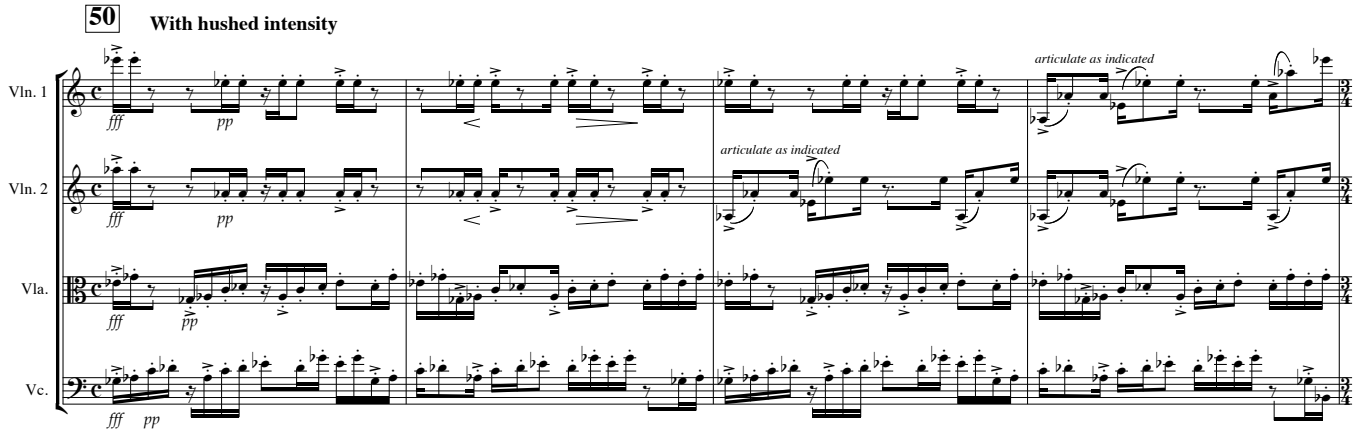


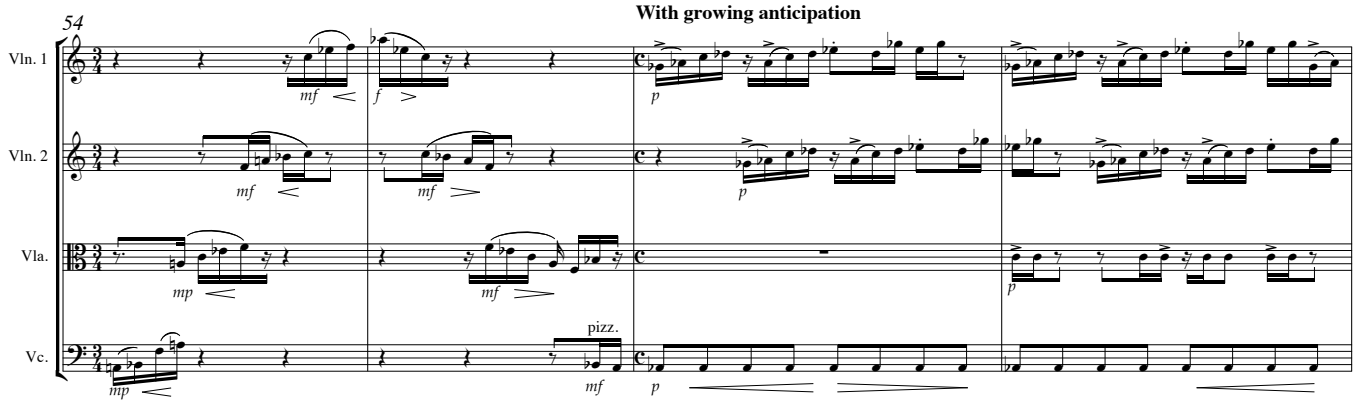


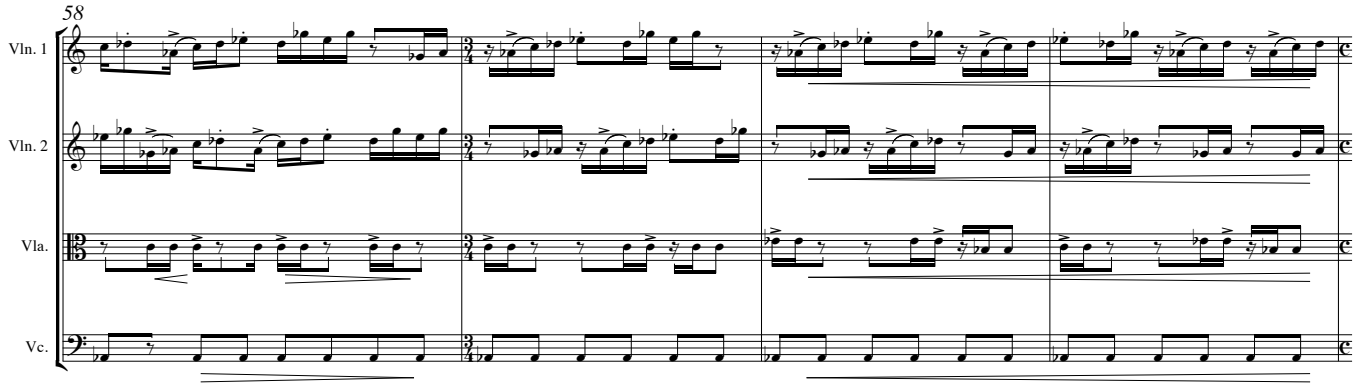
* X noteheads still indicate scratch tones.
However, bow position can be the same as all other notes in this passage.

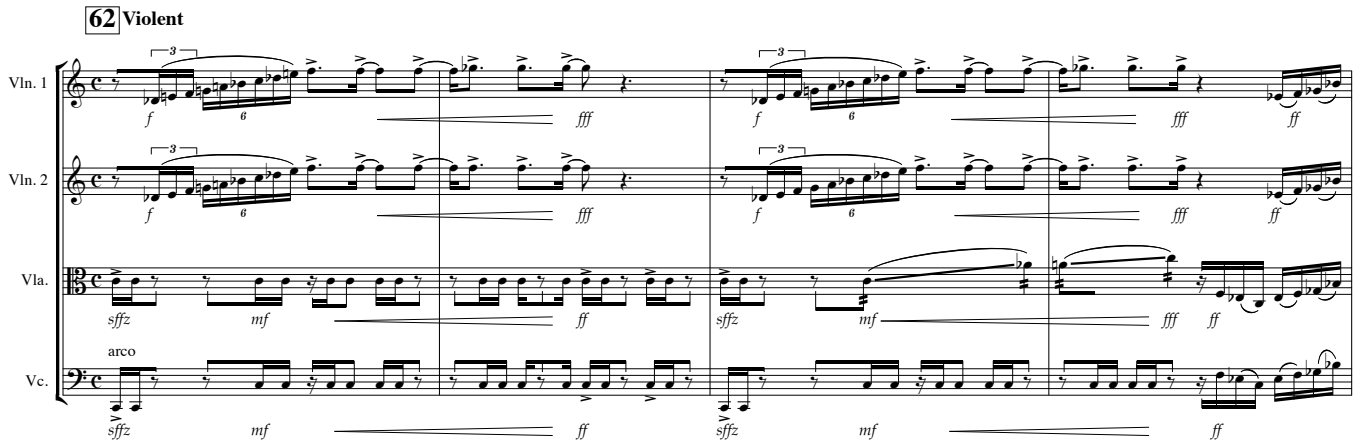

41
39
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
ord.
ord
cantabile
cantabile
ff
f
mf
ffp
p

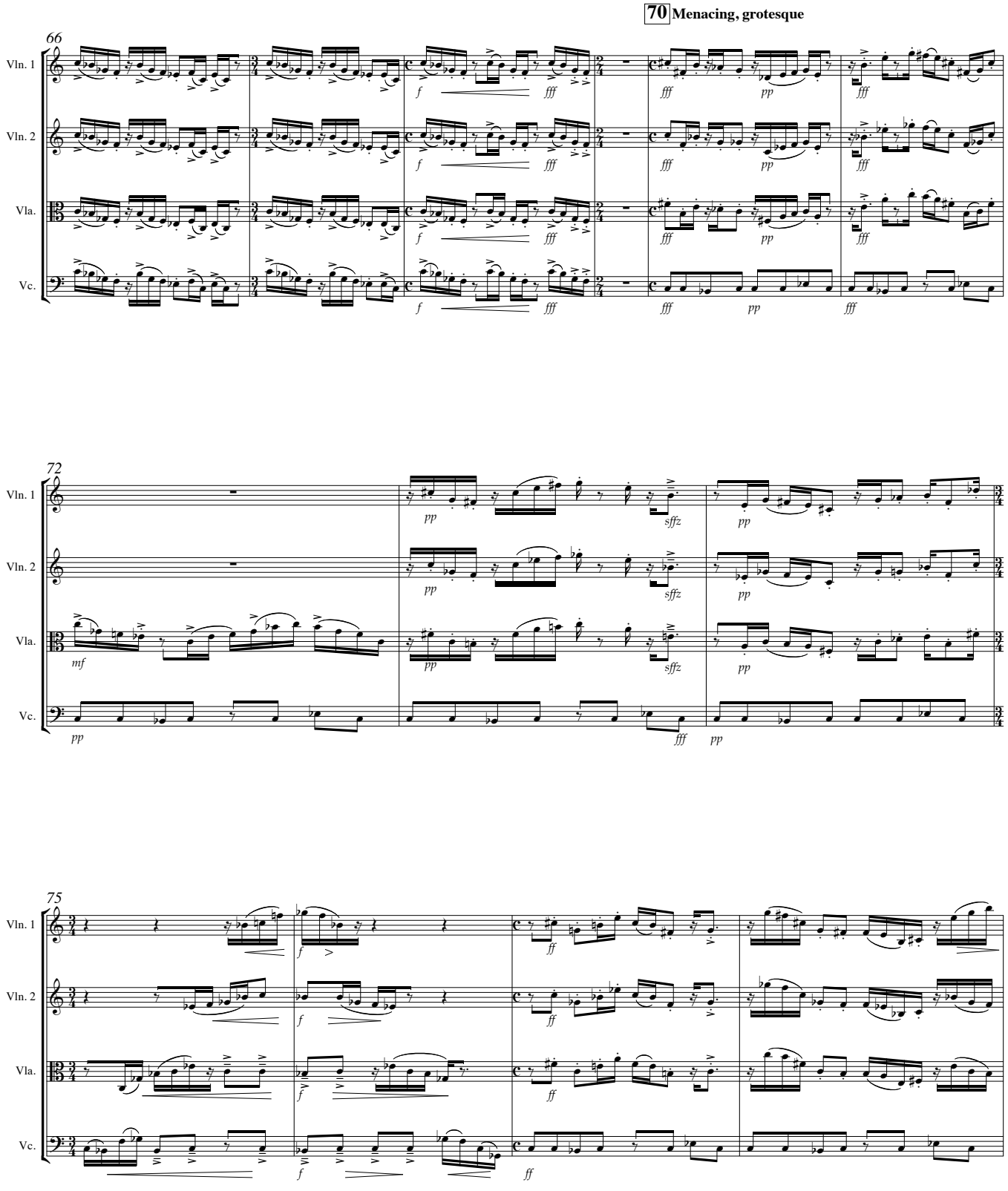

45
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f
mf
p
ff

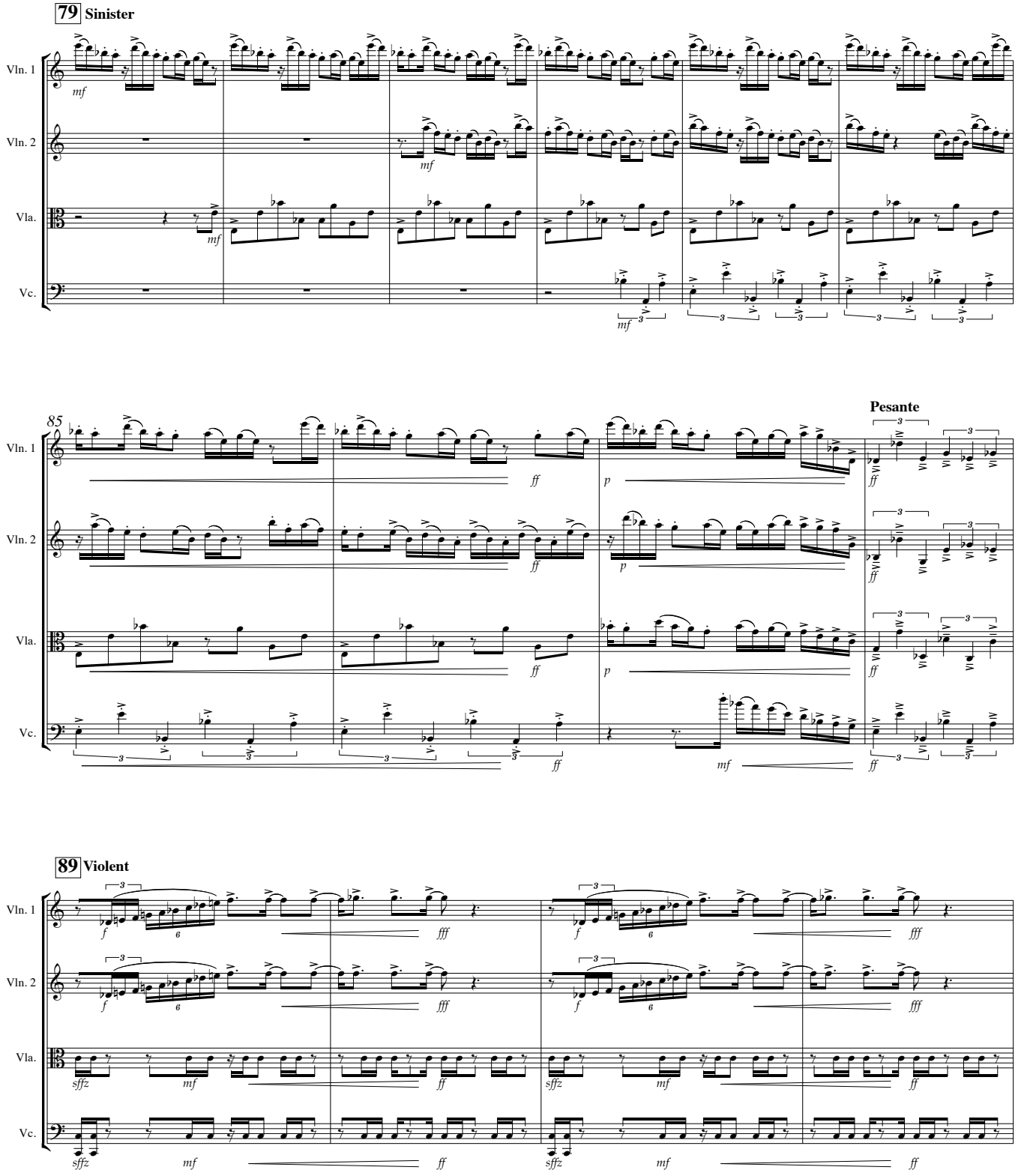

50
With hushed intensity
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
articulate as indicated
articulate as indicated
fff
pp

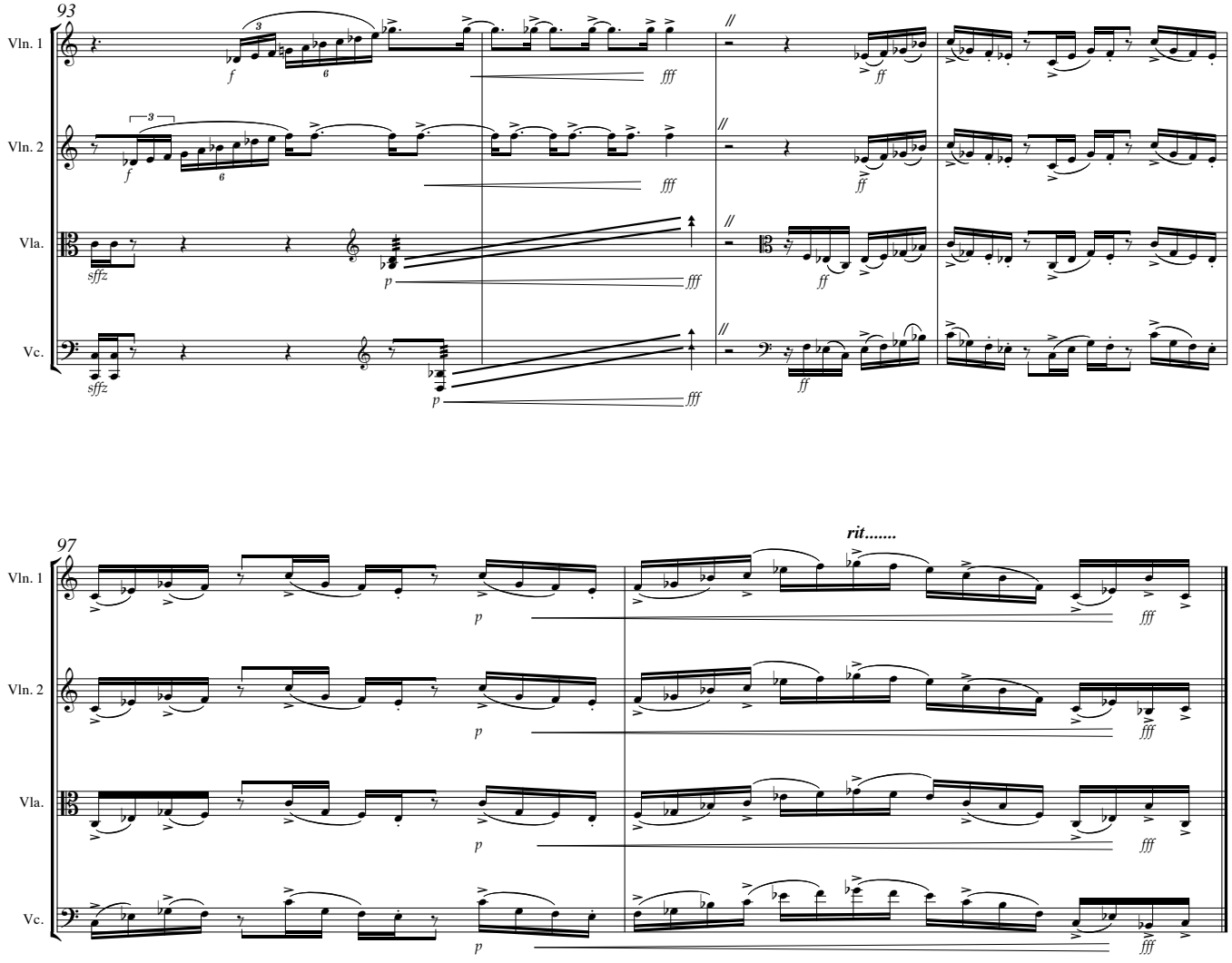

54
With growing anticipation
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
pizz.


58
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.


62 Violent
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
arco


70 Menacing, grotesque
66
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
72
75


79 Sinister
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
mf
85
Pesante
ff
p
mf
89 Violent
f
fff
sffz


93
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
f
sffz
p
fff
ff
97
rit.....