RED DESERT

EUGENE BIRMAN

AUGUST 2011

RED DESERT

commission by Ansambel U

"Three or four night-stars; the scattered brush, parched earth and sand, the black sea-sky, hovering blanket: the land is broken up by zigzags, where the water has seeped through into the ground, and left salt crystals on those infinitesimal ledges. And the rest, the rest is dead like old tree stumps and blunt lead, stretching over to the horizon which is burned by the sun each morning like a ticking clock. This is the red desert, which the waves do not reach, on which the storm does not tread. It is where my dreams are, where I have come to-"

INSTRUMENTATION: piccolo/flute, clarinet, percussion (Chinese cymbal, Vibraphone), piano, violin, and violoncello.

DURATION approx 8 '

notes, 18 July 2011

The last few weeks have been difficult. The idea is so strong and yet there is no metamorphosis into the music. The notes resist direction, and direction is the only thing here to hang on to. I fear I have written something quite minimalist, but this was the only way. This is the truth to the idea.

The desert is a foreign thing to many people; at least, I think it seems so on the surface. Those things we associate with desert – sand, heat – are just nothing compared to what a desert can be, what it perhaps is, even. The desert is not a place but an idea: only once the realization is made, can something become "desert". And for me, what it has become for me, this realization, is simply one of thirst. Dry parched throat, mortality, healed by water...

When you travel through a real, physical desert, as I have many times, these sensations are primary: distance, linearity, destination. This piece is "structured" on those sensations and narrated by the thirst I mentioned before.

The only indeterminate aspect is the arrival, for it is always in question and experienced differently, in physical and emotional terms, of course. In this case, the arrival is a surprise: I am loathe to call it a "salvation" of sorts, in terms of the material, but it is a momentary glance away from inevitability. For to cross the desert: by itself, this idea, is one of beating the odds.

E. A. Birman (b. 1987)

red desert

Devoto ♩ ~ 56 - 63

change breath ad libitum *solo vento*

Piccolo

Clarinet in B♭

change breath ad libitum

sung or hummed on unis. with played pitch

0 *pppp*

Percussion

CHINESE CYMBAL
quiet, almost inaudible tremolo

0 *pppp*

Piano

8va *ppp* *pppp*

3

Violin

con sord. change bow freely, almost shakily
Sul D

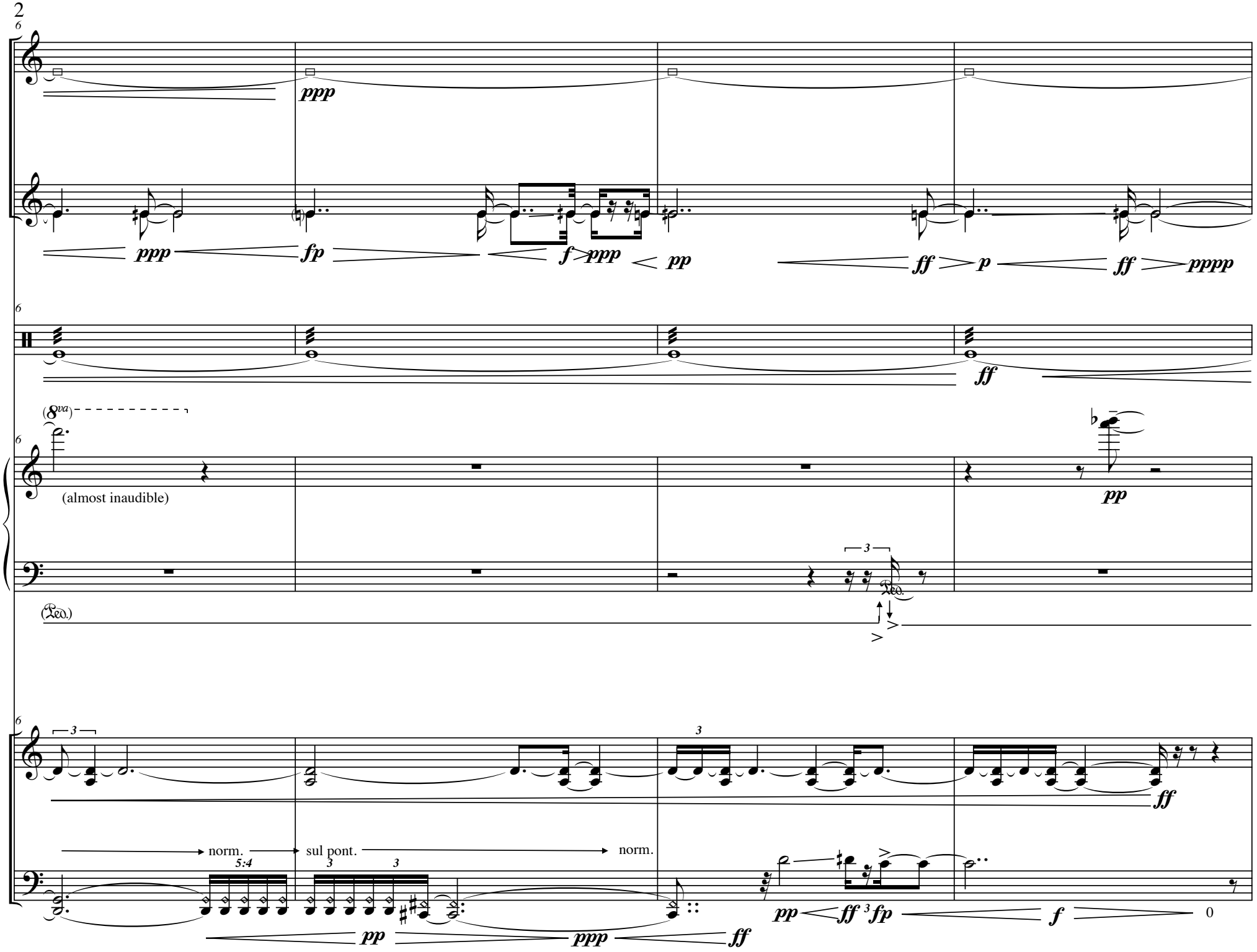
0 *pppp* *sost.*

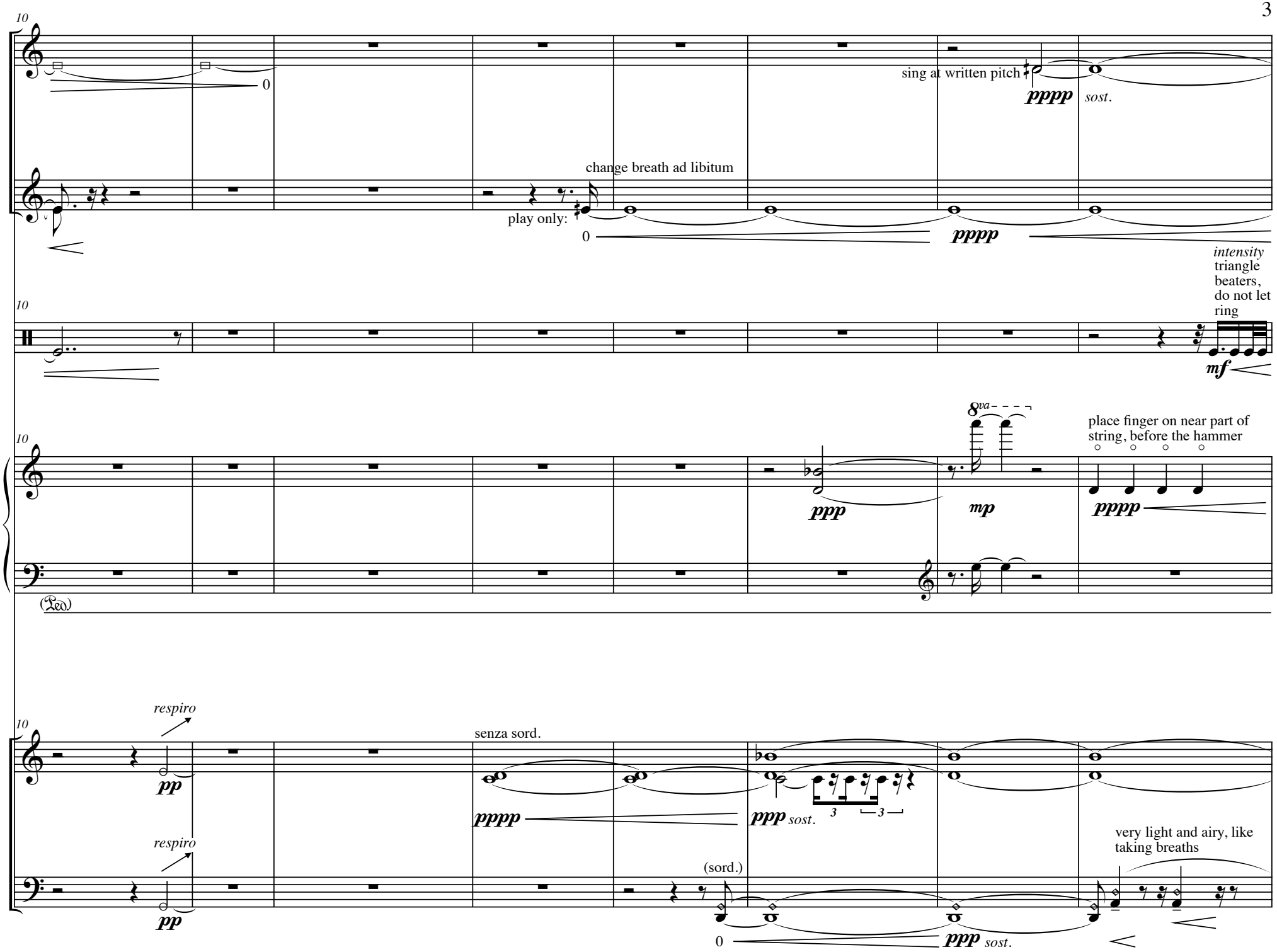
3 3 3

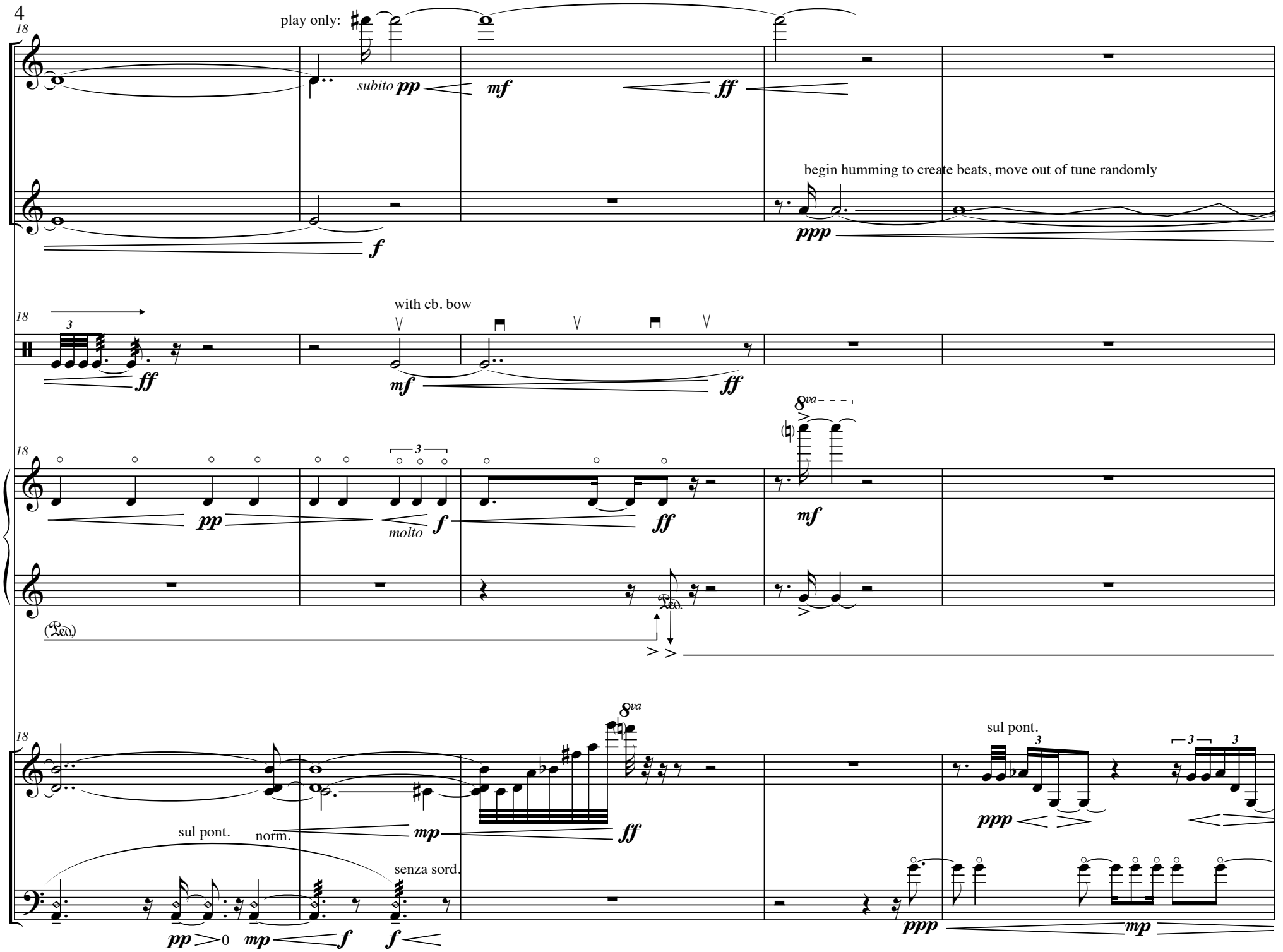
Violoncello

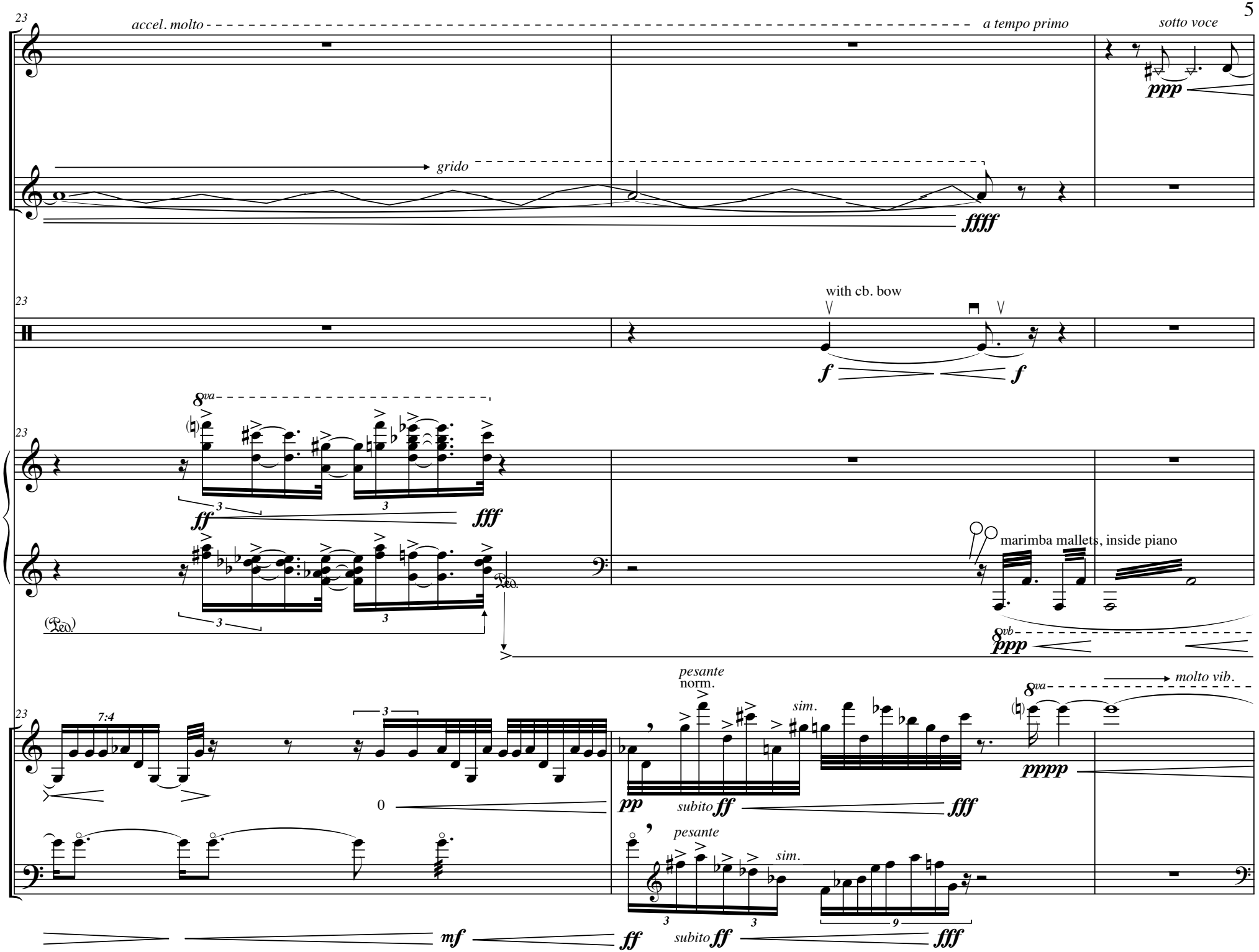
con sord. molto sul pont.

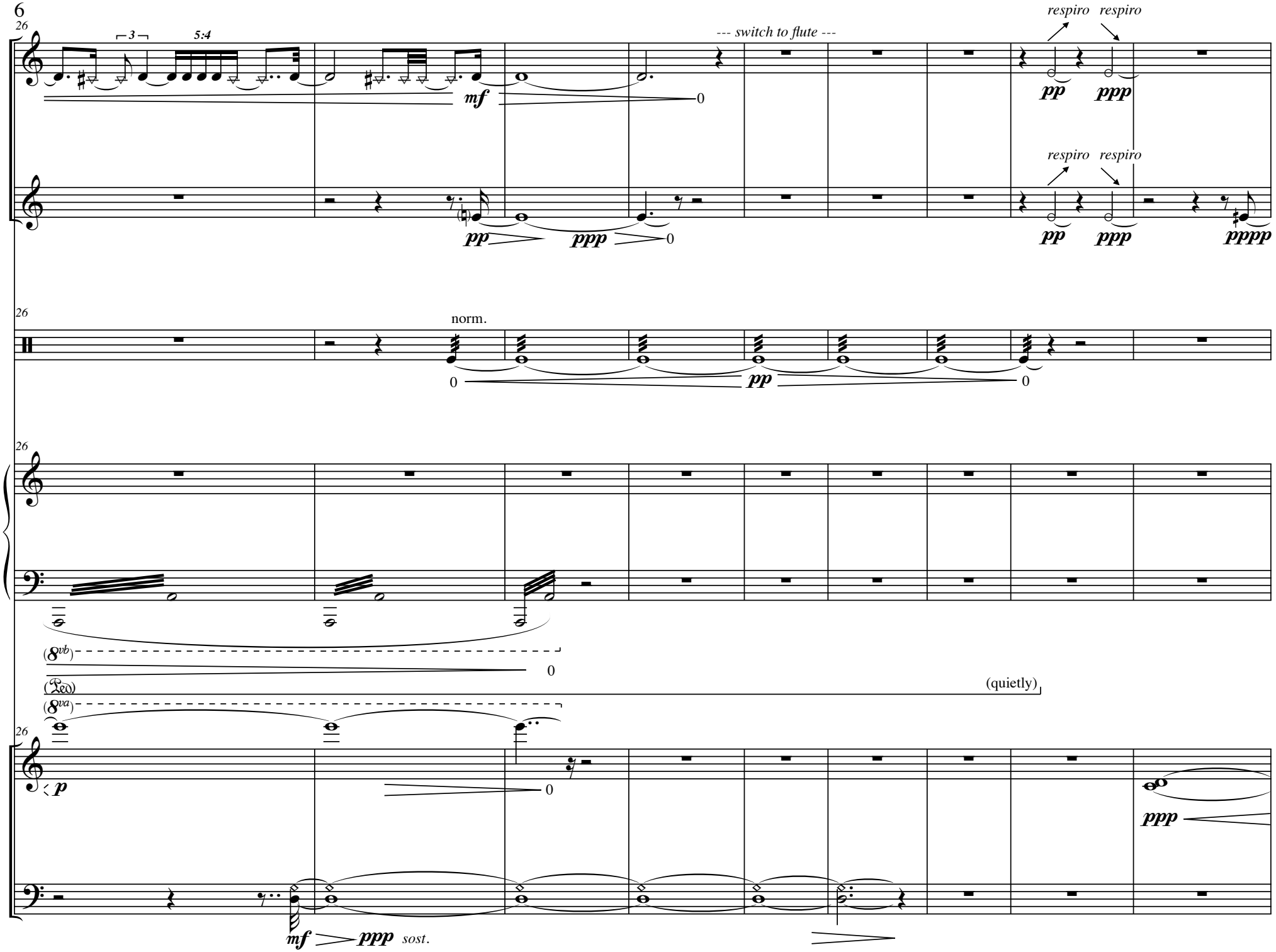
sffz *ppp* *pppp* 0 *subito* *pppp*

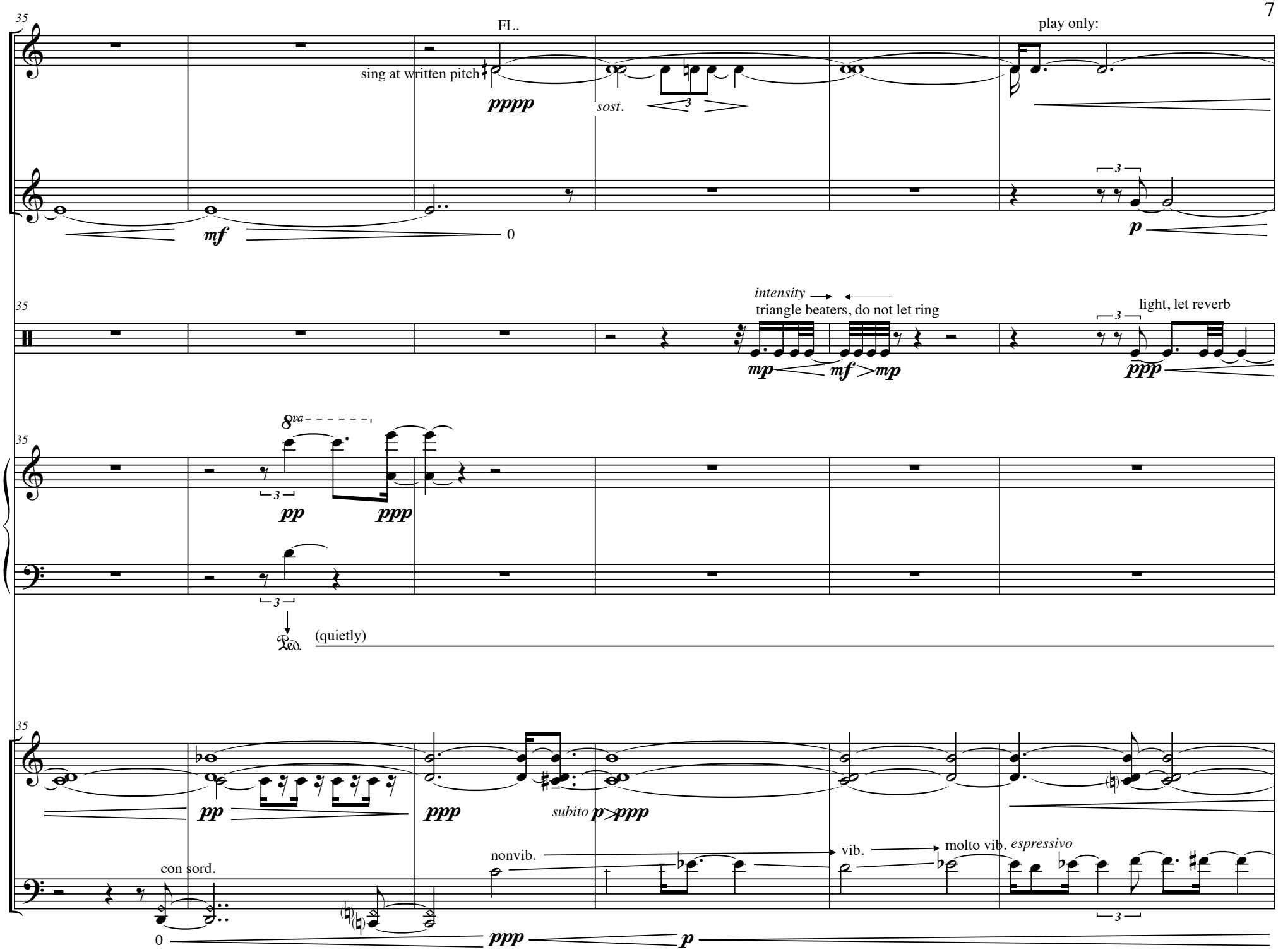

Pic.
B♭ Cl.
Perc.
Pno.
Vln.
Vc.
ppp
fp
f
ppp
pp
ff
p
ff
pppp
ff
(8va)
(almost inaudible)
pp
(Ped.)
norm.
sul pont.
norm.
5:4
pp
ppp
ff
pp
ff
fp
f
0

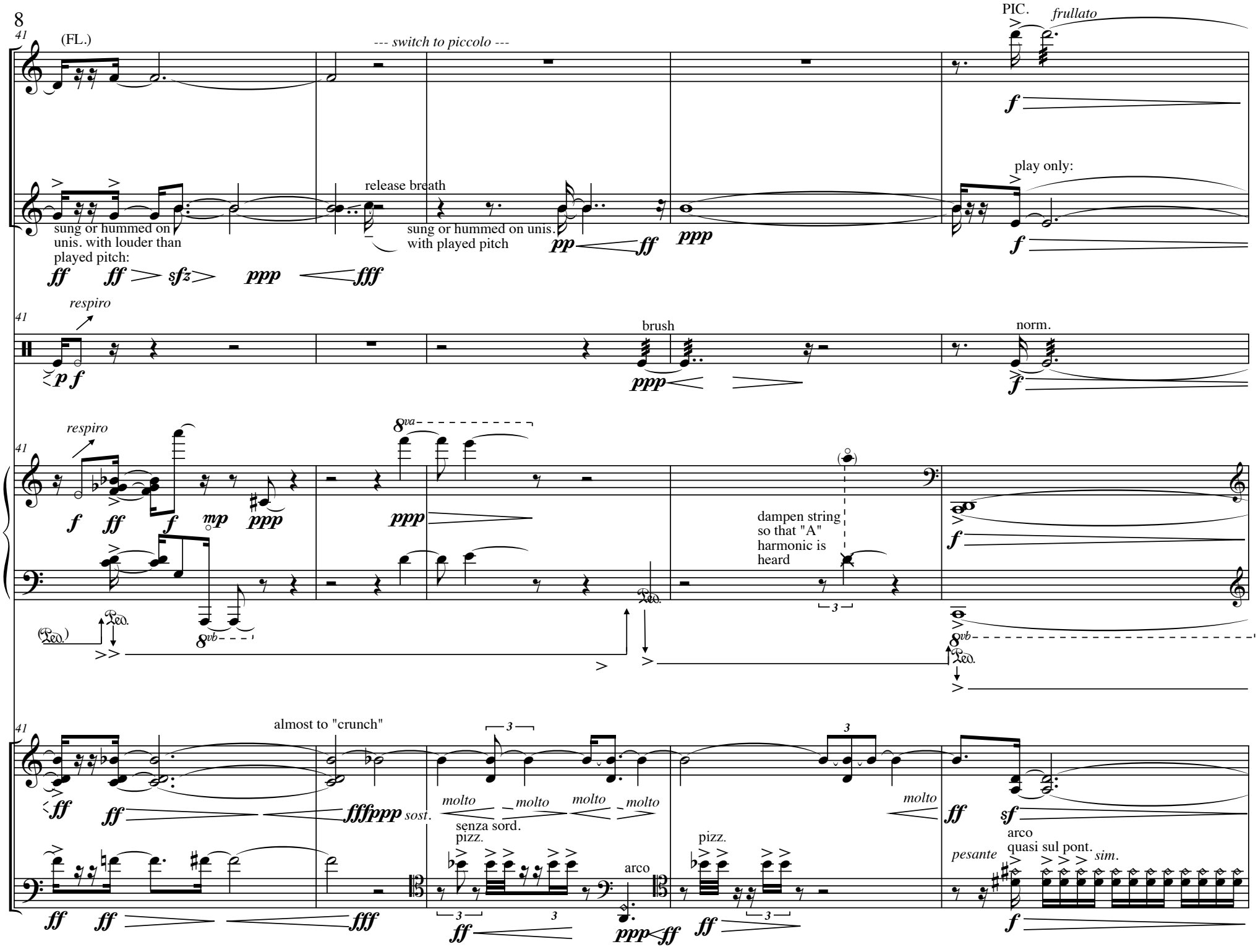

10
Pic.
0
sing at written pitch
pppp
sost.
B♭ Cl.
change breath ad libitum
play only:
0
pppp
intensity
triangle
beaters,
do not let
ring
10
Perc.
mf
10
Pno.
8va
ppp
mp
place finger on near part of
string, before the hammer
pppp
(Ped)
10
Vln.
respiro
pp
senza sord.
pppp
ppp sost.
3
3
respiro
Vc.
pp
(sord.)
very light and airy, like
taking breaths
0
ppp sost.

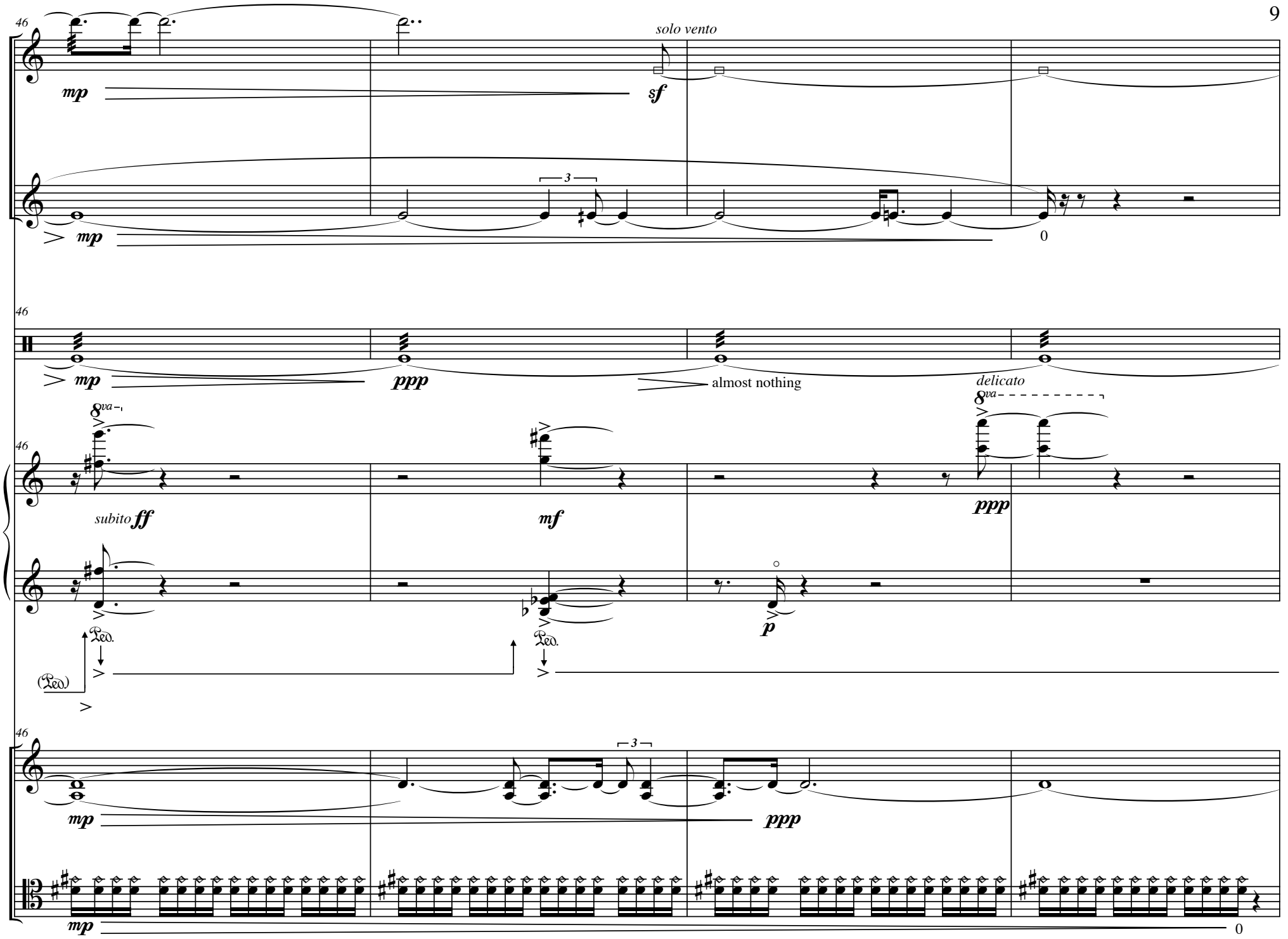

18
Pic.
play only:
subito pp
mf
ff
B♭ Cl.
f
begin humming to create beats, move out of tune randomly
ppp
18
Perc.
3
ff
with cb. bow
mf
ff
18
Pno.
3
pp
molto
f
ff
8va
(♭)
mf
(Ped.)
Ped.
18
Vln.
8va
mp
ff
sul pont.
3
3
3
ppp
sul pont.
norm.
senza sord.
Vc.
pp
0
mp
f
f
ppp
mp

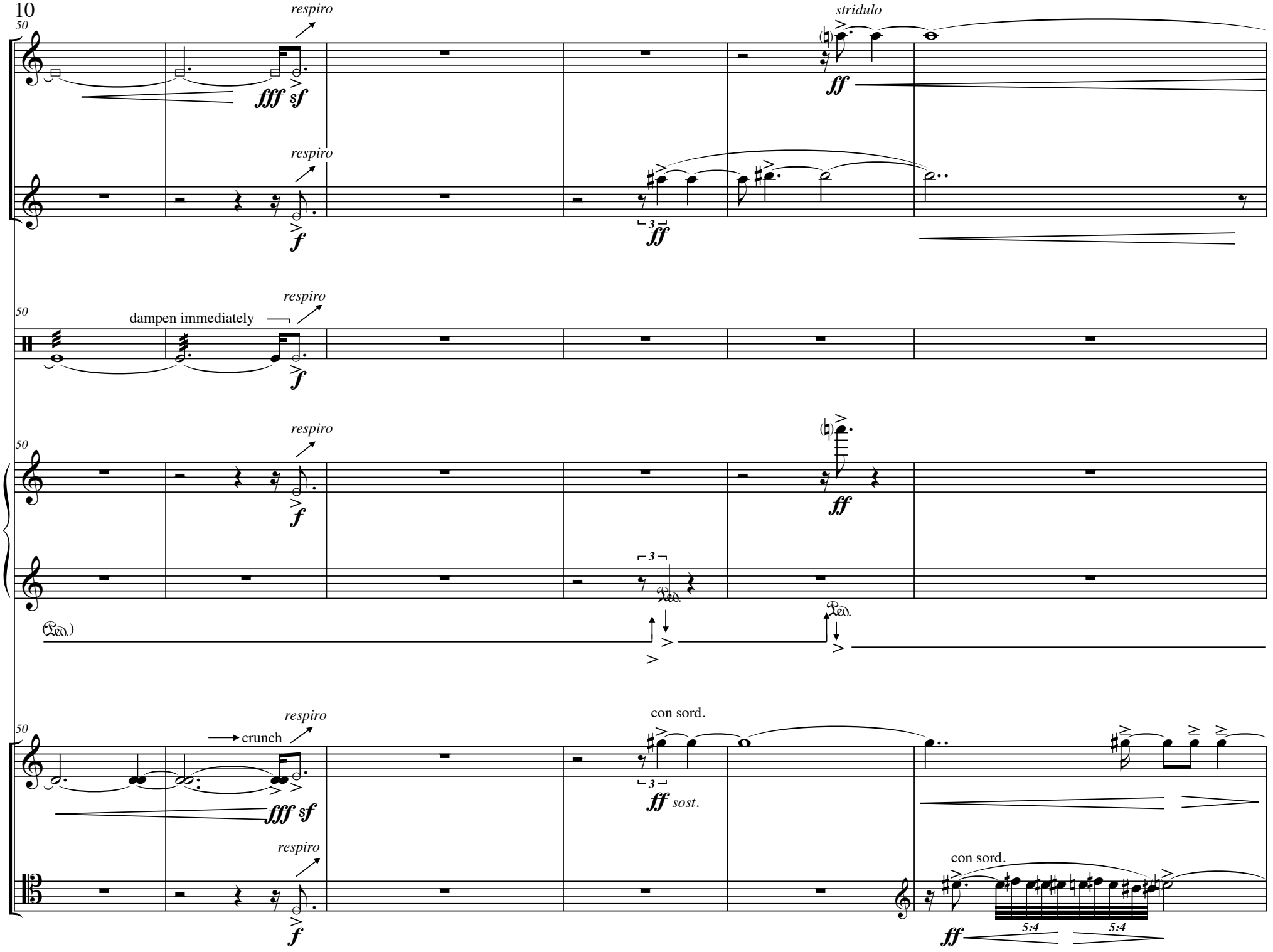

23
accel. molto
a tempo primo
sotto voce
Pic.
ppp
B♭ Cl.
grido
fffff
23
with cb. bow
Perc.
f
f
23
8va
Pno.
ff
fff
marimba mallets, inside piano
8vb
ppp
23
7:4
Vln.
pesante
norm.
sim.
8va
molto vib.
pppp
pp
subito ff
fff
Vc.
pesante
sim.
mf
ff
subito ff
fff

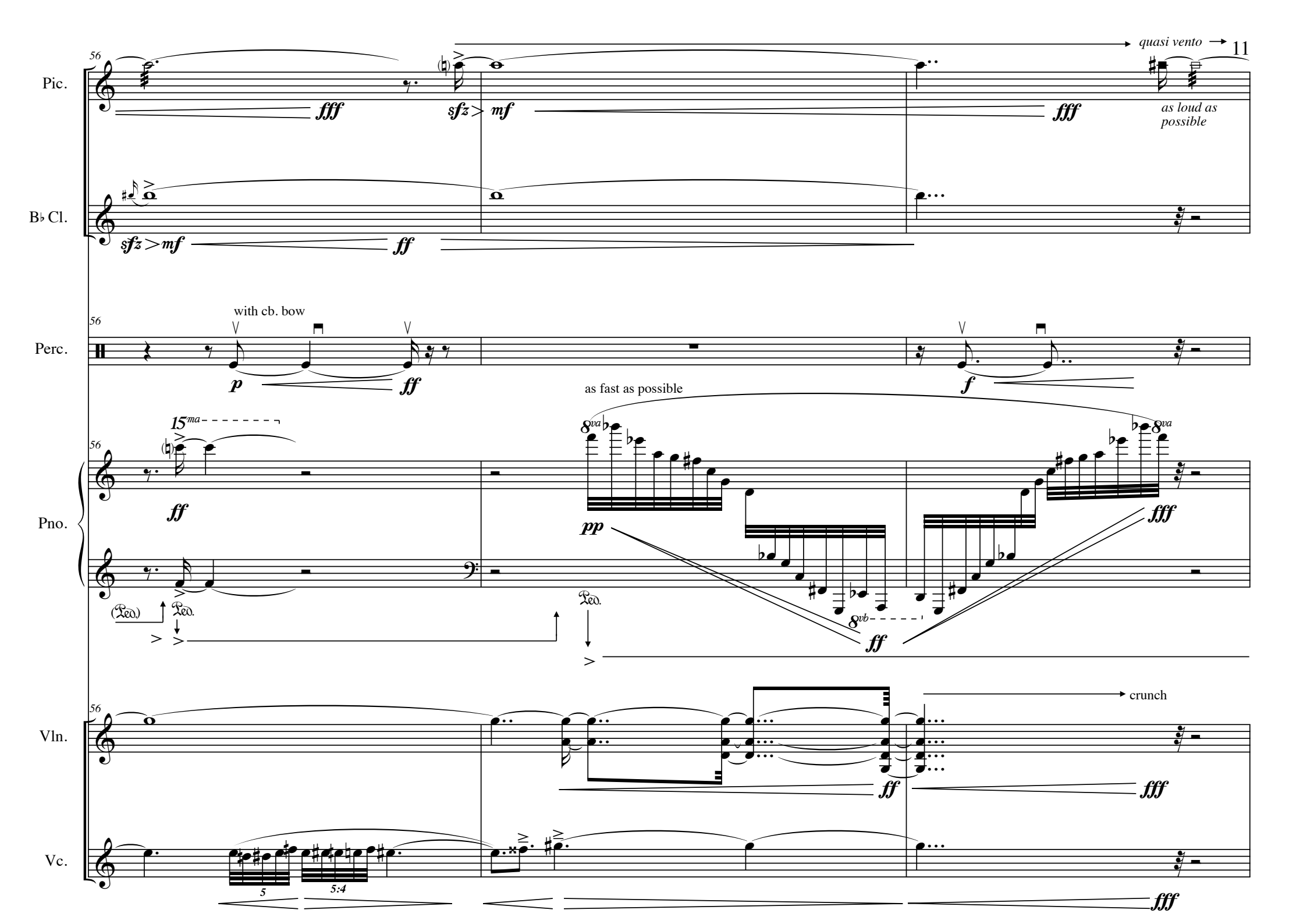

26
Pic.
3
5:4
mf
0
--- switch to flute ---
respiro
respiro
pp
ppp
B♭ Cl.
pp
ppp
0
respiro
respiro
pp
ppp
pppp
26
Perc.
norm.
0
pp
0
26
Pno.
(8vb)
0
(Ped)
(quietly)
(8va)
26
Vln.
p
0
ppp
Vc.
mf
ppp
sost.

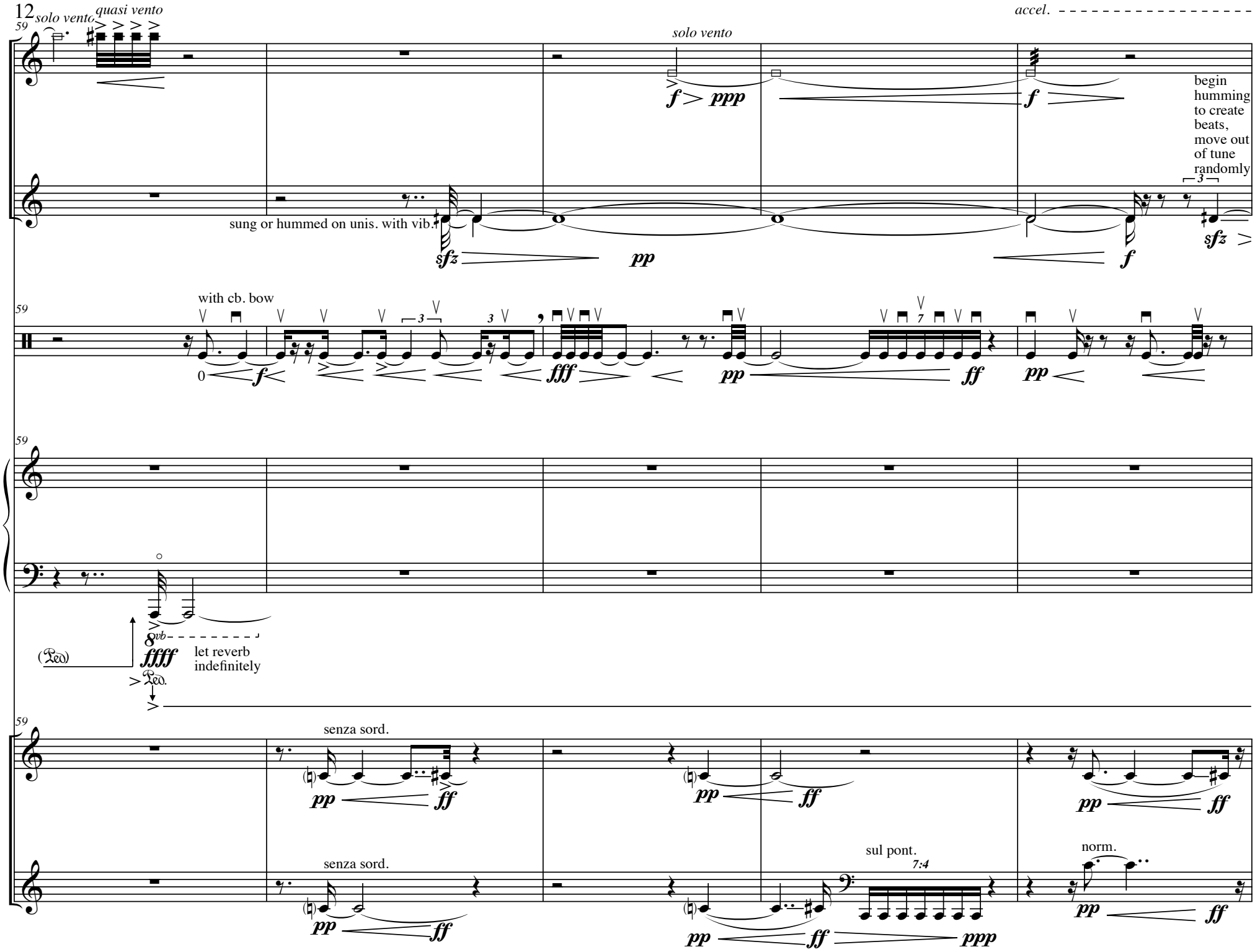

35
Pic.
FL.
play only:
sing at written pitch
pppp
sost.
3
B♭ Cl.
mf
0
p
35
Perc.
intensity
triangle beaters, do not let ring
light, let reverb
mp
mf
mp
ppp
35
Pno.
8va
3
pp
ppp
Ped.
(quietly)
35
Vln.
pp
ppp
subito p
ppp
nonvib.
vib.
molto vib.
espressivo
con sord.
Vc.
0
ppp
p


41
(FL.)
--- switch to piccolo ---
PIC.
frullato
Pic.
f
play only:
release breath
B♭ Cl.
sung or hummed on unis. with louder than played pitch:
ff ff sfz ppp fff
sung or hummed on unis. with played pitch
pp ff ppp
f
respiro
41
brush
norm.
Perc.
p f
ppp
f
respiro
41
8va
Pno.
f ff f mp ppp
ppp
dampen string so that "A" harmonic is heard
3
f
(Ped.)
Ped.
8vb
Ped.
8vb
Ped.
41
almost to "crunch"
3
3
Vln.
ff
ff
fffppp sost.
molto molto molto molto
senza sord.
pizz.
molto
ff
sf
arco
quasi sul pont.
pesante
sim.
Vc.
ff ff
fff
3 3
ff
arco
ppp ff
pizz.
ff
3
f


Pic.
B♭ Cl.
Perc.
Pno.
Vln.
Vc.
46
mp
sf
solo vento
3
0
ppp
almost nothing
delicato
8va
subito ff
mf
p
Ped.
(Ped)


50
Pic.
respiro
fff sf
stridulo
ff
B♭ Cl.
respiro
f
3
ff
50
Perc.
dampen immediately
respiro
f
50
Pno.
respiro
f
ff
3
Ped.
Ped.)
Ped.
50
Vln.
respiro
crunch
fff sf
con sord.
3
ff sost.
Vc.
respiro
f
con sord.
ff
5:4
5:4


quasi vento
56
Pic.
fff
sfz
mf
fff
as loud as possible
B♭ Cl.
sfz
mf
ff
with cb. bow
Perc.
p
ff
f
as fast as possible
15ma
8va
Pno.
ff
pp
8vb
fff
(Ped.)
Ped.
Vln.
crunch
ff
fff
Vc.
5
5:4
fff


solo vento
quasi vento
accel.
Pic.
solo vento
begin humming to create beats, move out of tune randomly
B♭ Cl.
sung or hummed on unis. with vib.
Perc.
with cb. bow
Pno.
let reverb indefinitely
Vln.
senza sord.
Vc.
senza sord.
sul pont.
norm.

(accel.) **Incoerente** ♩ ~ 60 - 72

64

Pic. — *solo vento* — *sfz* — *tanto vento* — *fff*

B♭ Cl. — *ppp* — *grido* — *ff*

64

Perc. — *f* — *ff* — *fff*

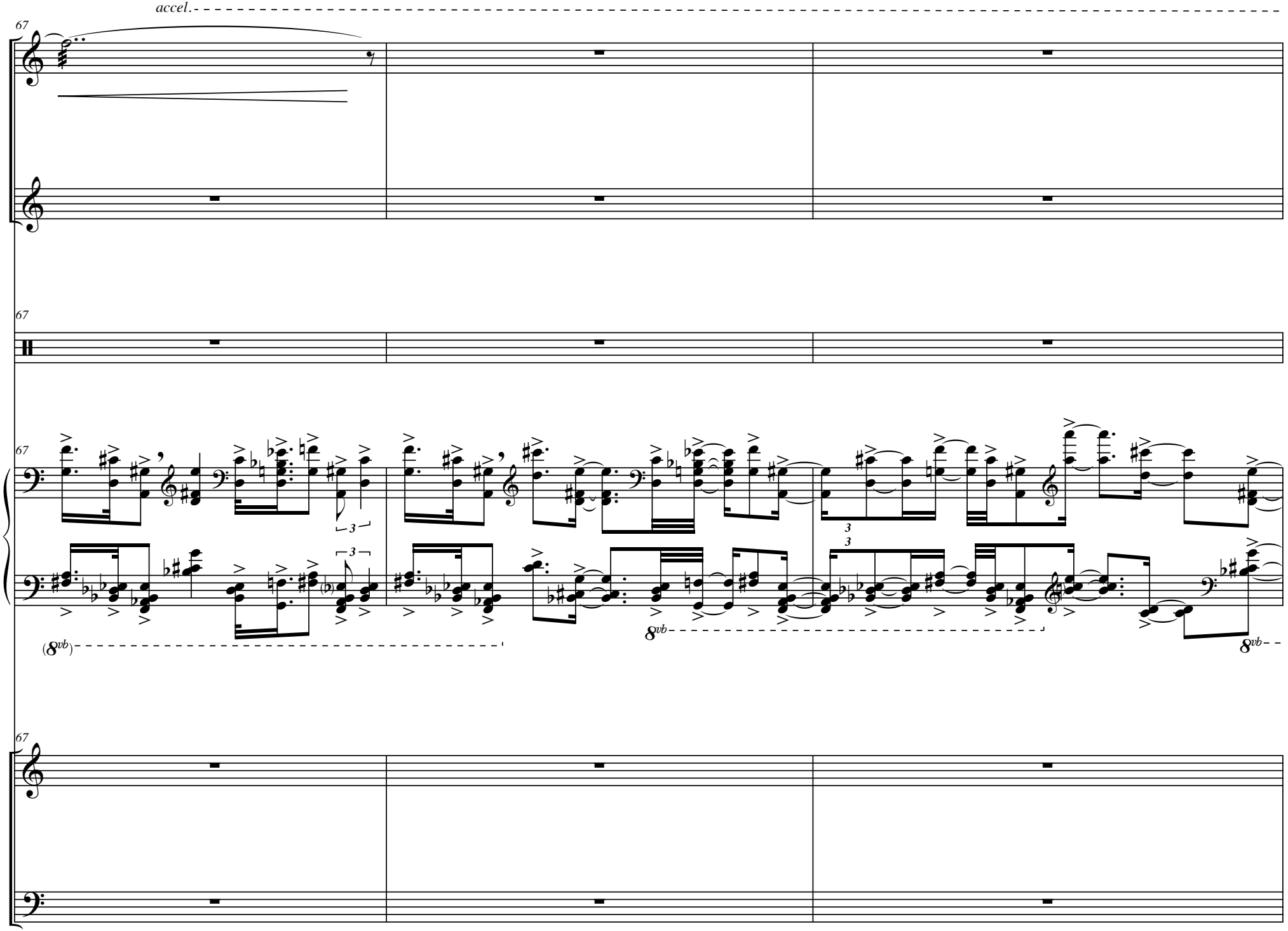
64

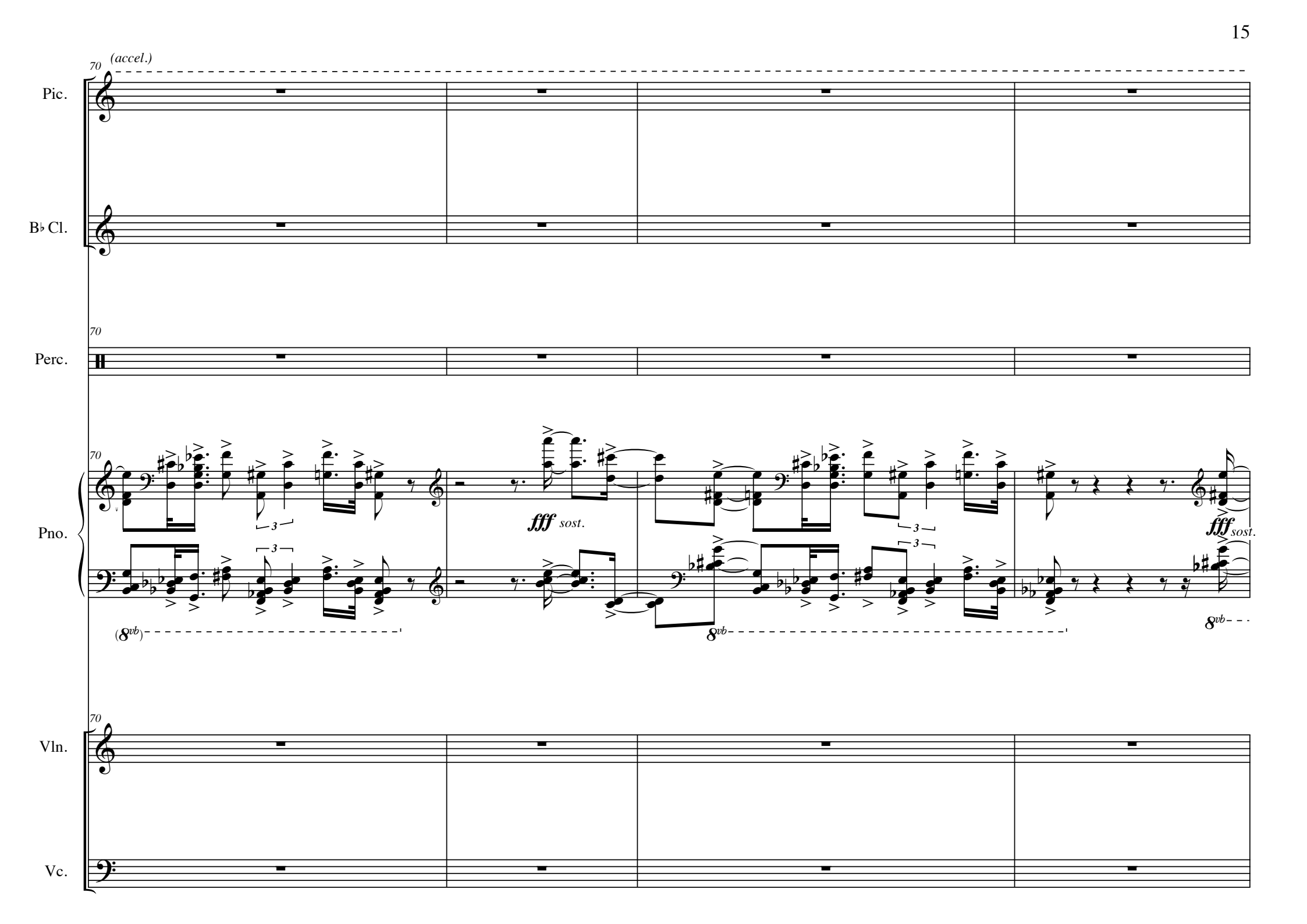
Pno. — at the tip of the string (inside) — *mf* — *ff sost.* — (Ped.) — ad lib., with loud accents each time Pedal is used

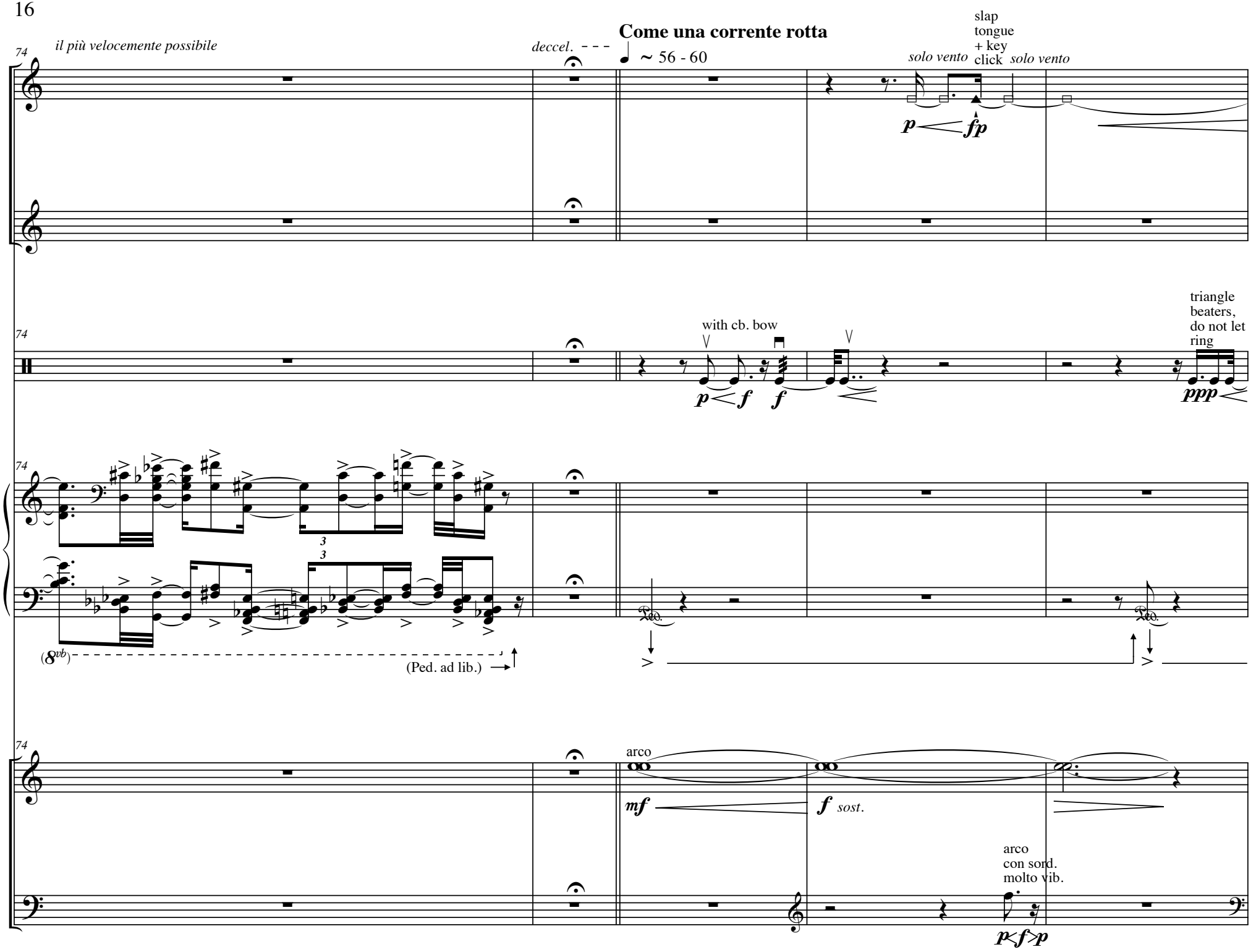
64

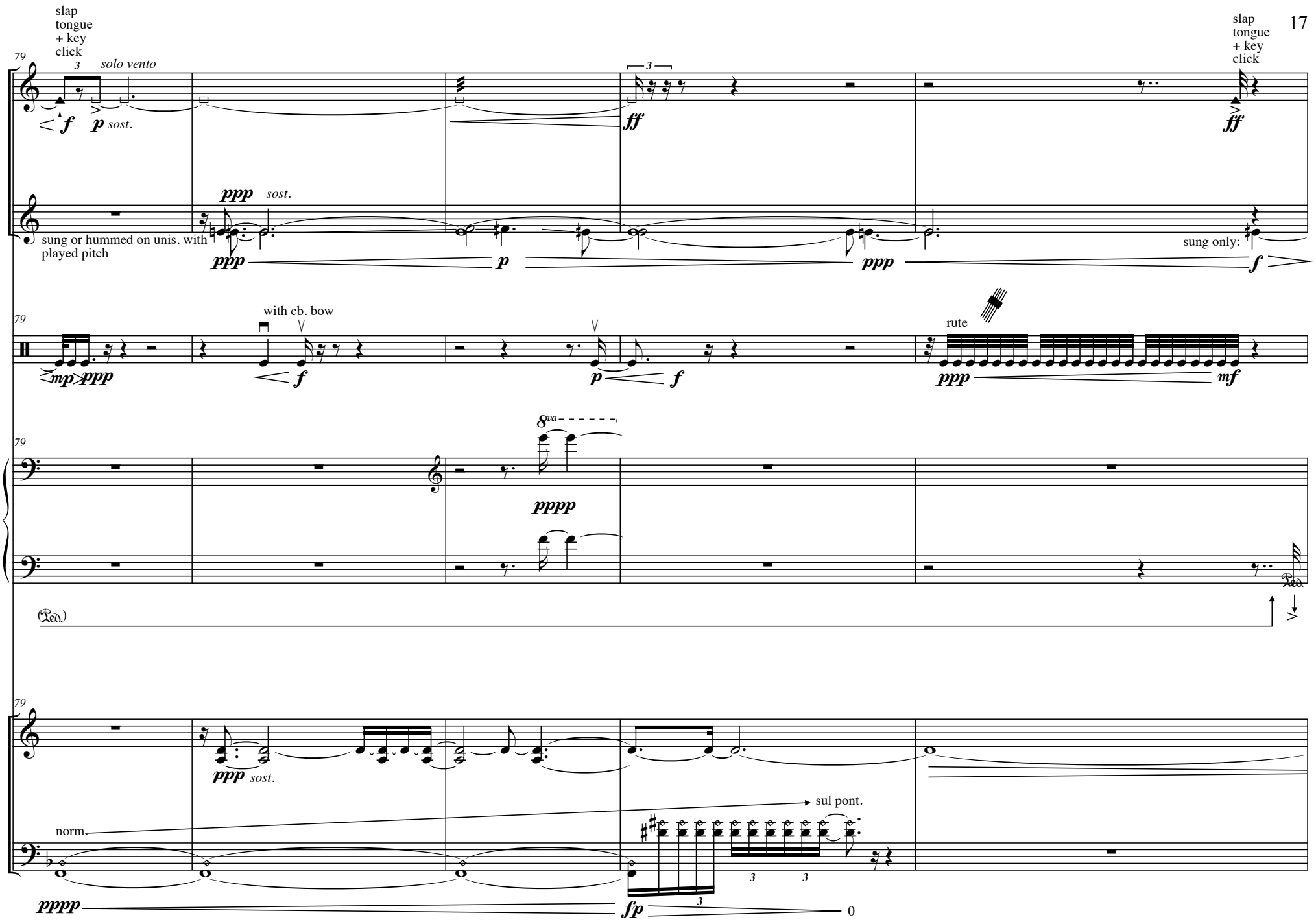
Vln. — sul pont. — 7:4 — 5:4 — *pp* *ff* *pp*

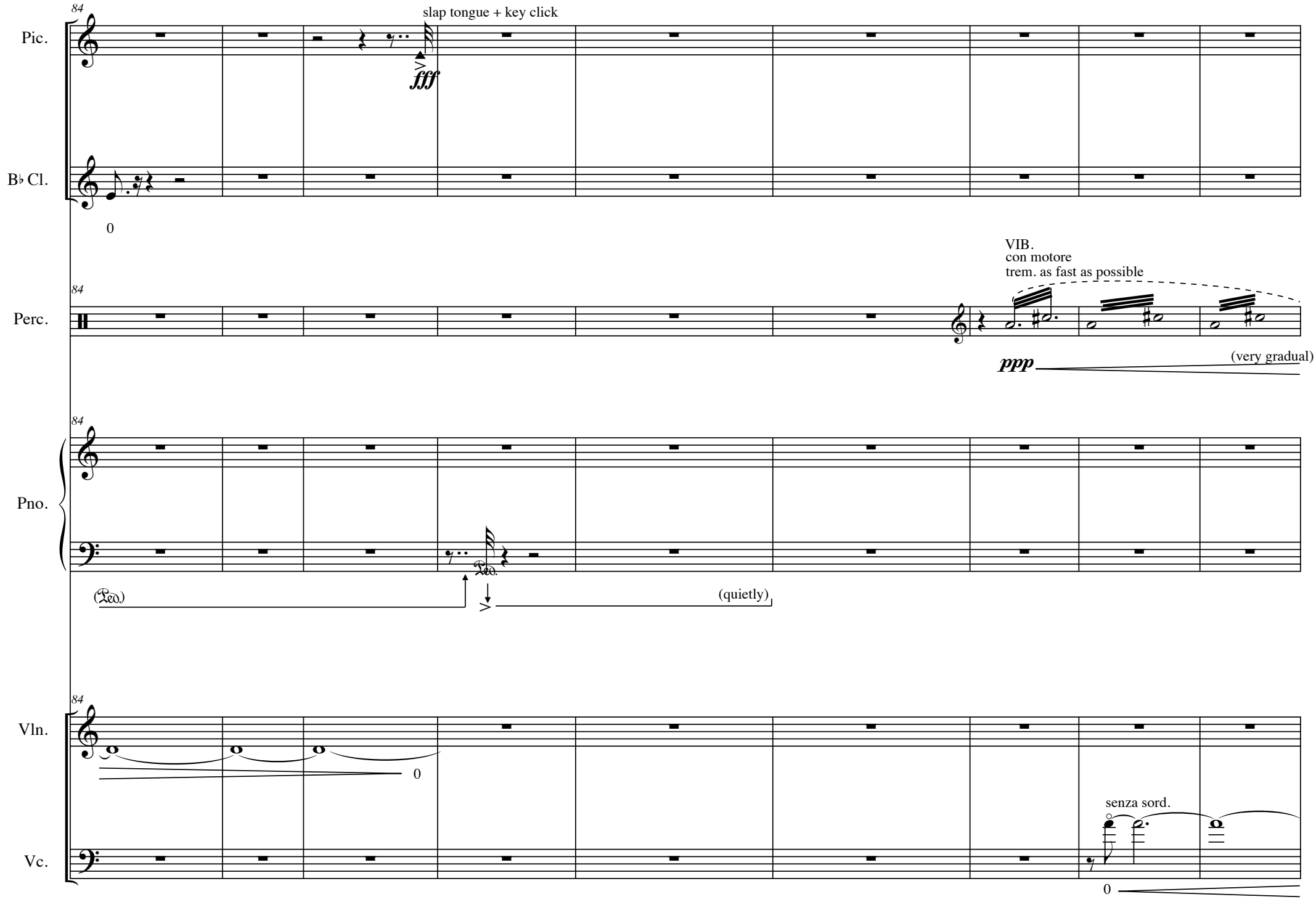
Vc. — sul pont. — pizz. — *pp* *ff* *pp* — *ff*

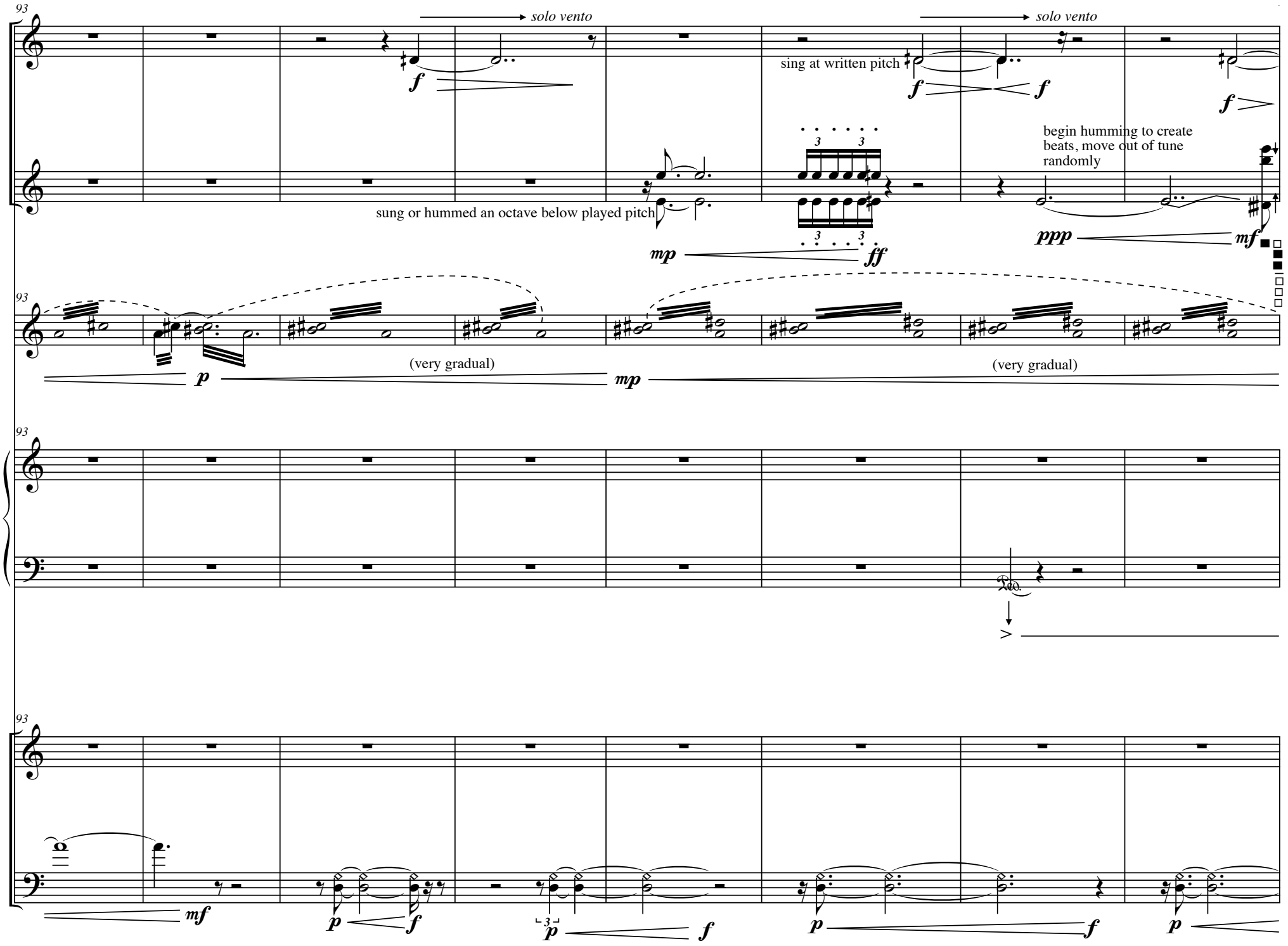

accel.
67
Pic.
B♭ Cl.
67
Perc.
67
Pno.
(8vb)
8vb
8vb
67
Vln.
Vc.

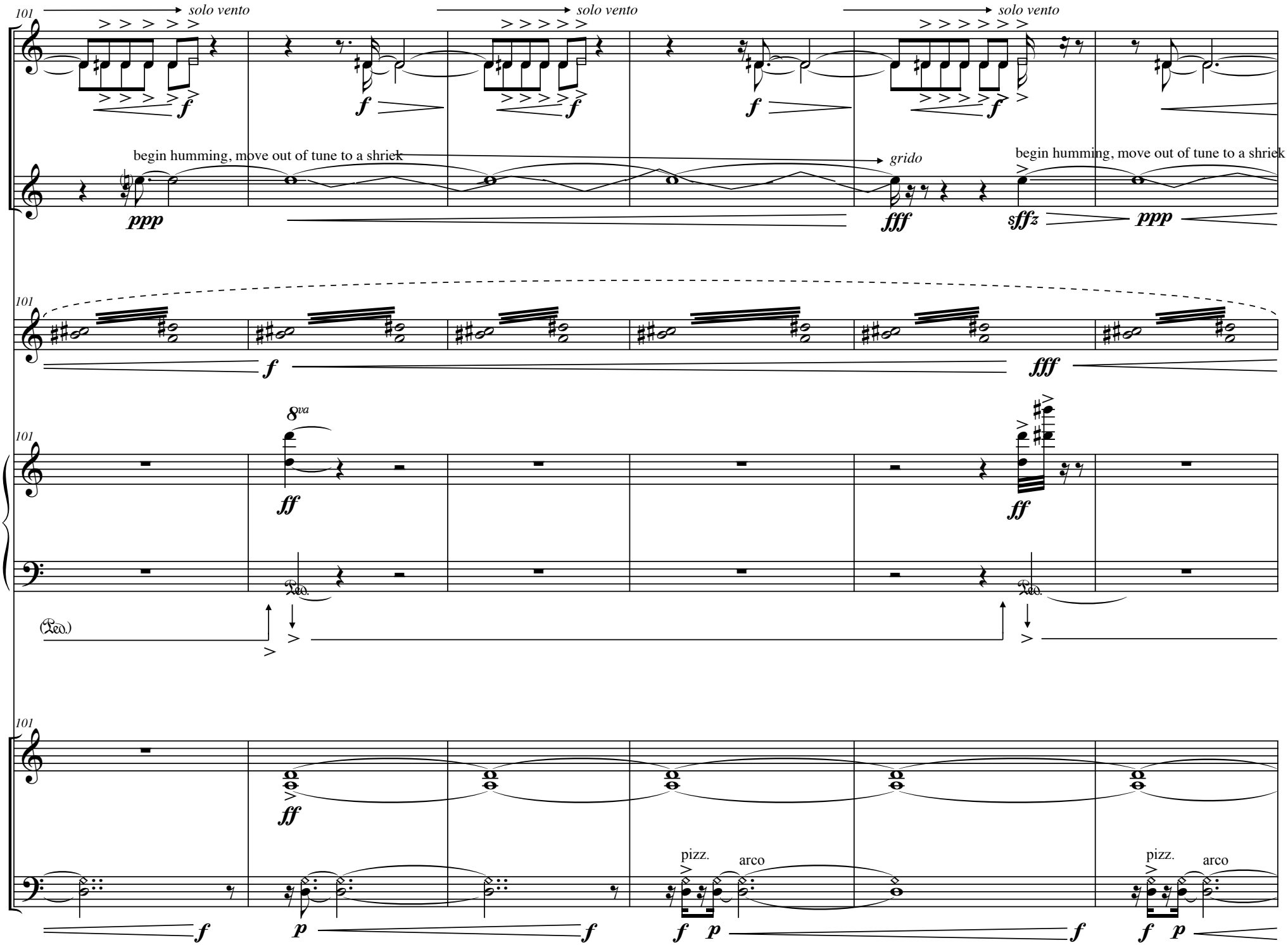

70
(accel.)
Pic.
B♭ Cl.
70
Perc.
70
Pno.
fff sost.
fff sost.
(8vb)
8vb
8vb
70
Vln.
Vc.

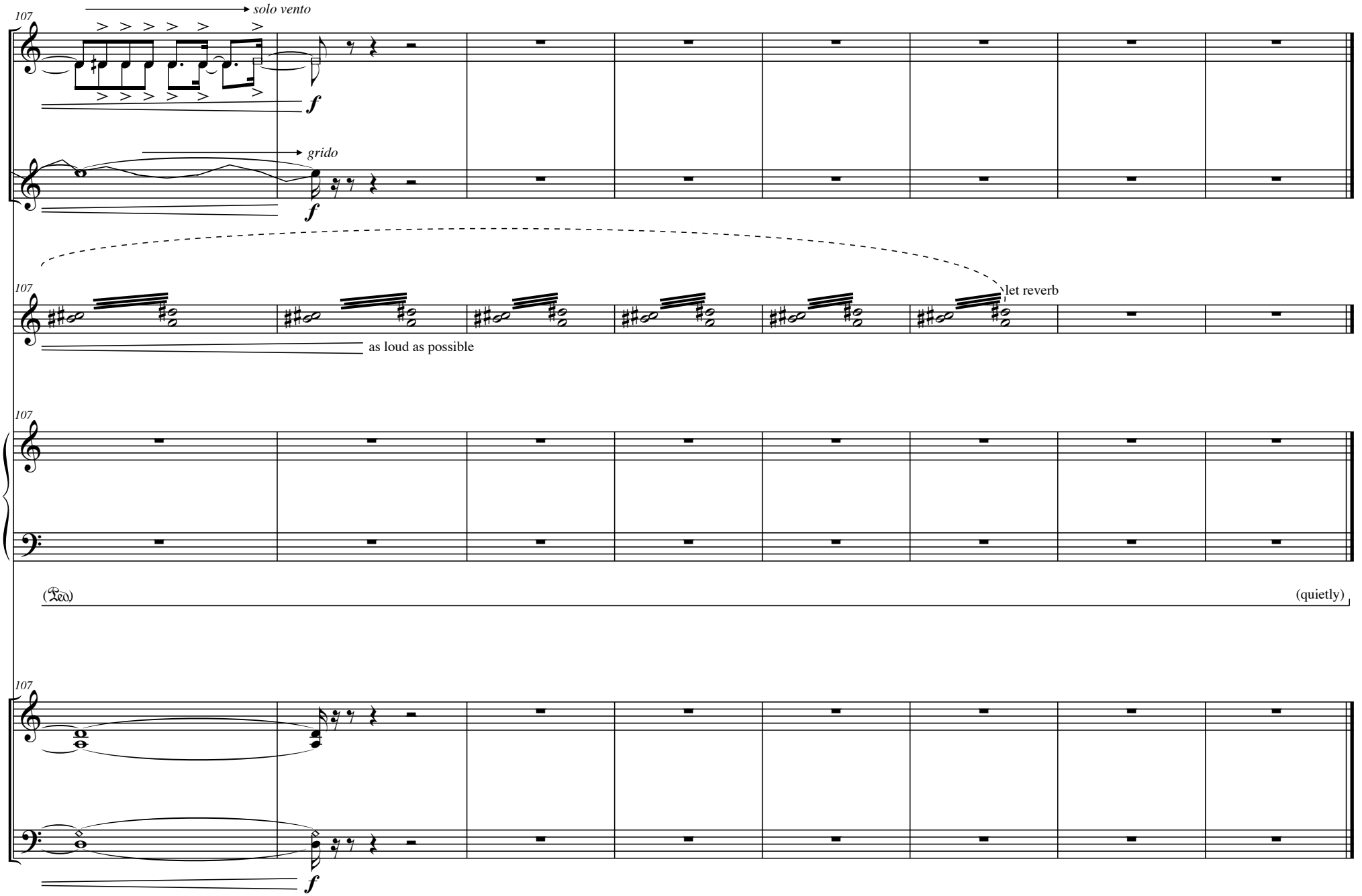

Pic.
B♭ Cl.
Perc.
Pno.
Vln.
Vc.
74
il più velocemente possibile
deccel.
Come una corrente rotta
~ 56 - 60
slap
tongue
+ key
click
solo vento
solo vento
p
fp
with cb. bow
p
f
f
triangle
beaters,
do not let
ring
ppp
(8vb)
(Ped. ad lib.)
arco
mf
f sost.
arco
con sord.
molto vib.
p<f>p


79
Pic.
slap tongue + key click
3
solo vento
f
p sost.
ff
slap tongue + key click
ff
B♭ Cl.
ppp sost.
sung or hummed on unis. with played pitch
ppp
p
ppp
sung only:
f
79
Perc.
with cb. bow
mp ppp
f
p
f
rute
ppp
mf
79
Pno.
8va
pppp
Ped.
Ped.
79
Vln.
ppp sost.
norm.
sul pont.
Vc.
pppp
fp
0


84
Pic.
slap tongue + key click
fff
B♭ Cl.
0
VIB.
con motore
trem. as fast as possible
84
Perc.
ppp
(very gradual)
84
Pno.
(Ped.)
Ped.
(quietly)
84
Vln.
0
senza sord.
Vc.
0


93
Pic.
solo vento
f
sing at written pitch
f
f
solo vento
f
B♭ Cl.
sung or hummed an octave below played pitch
3
3
3
3
mp
ff
begin humming to create beats, move out of tune randomly
ppp
mf
93
Perc.
p
(very gradual)
mp
(very gradual)
93
Pno.
93
Vln.
Vc.
mf
p
f
p
f
p
f
p


101
Pic.
solo vento
solo vento
solo vento
f
B♭ Cl.
begin humming, move out of tune to a shriek
grido
begin humming, move out of tune to a shriek
ppp
fff
sfffz
ppp
Perc.
f
fff
Pno.
8va
ff
ff
Ped.
(Ped.)
Vln.
ff
Vc.
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
f
p
f
f
p
f
f
p


107
Pic.
solo vento
f
B♭ Cl.
grido
f
107
Perc.
let reverb
as loud as possible
107
Pno.
(Ped)
(quietly)
107
Vln.
Vc.
f