Bombs of Beirut

For String Quartet,
Prerecorded Backing Track,
and Live Processing

2014

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Mary KOUYOUMDJIAN

Commissioned for the
Kronos Quartet

Lebanon, once the refuge where my grandparents and great-grandparents sought safety from the Armenian Genocide, became the dangerous home my parents and brother were forced to abandon during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). We often read stories and see images in the news about violent events in the Middle East, but we very rarely get to hear the perspective of an individual who lived through them. Inspired by loved ones who grew up during the Lebanese Civil War, it is my hope that *Bombs of Beirut* provides a sonic picture of what day-to-day life is like in a turbulent Middle East — not filtered through the news and media, but through the real words of real people.

The prerecorded backing track includes interviews with family and friends who shared their various experiences living in a time of war; it also presents sound documentation of bombings and attacks on civilians tape-recorded on an apartment balcony between 1976-1978.

• • •

[In connected movements]

i. Before the War
ii. The War
iii. After the War

• • •

Special thanks to the Kronos Quartet for making this piece a reality,
to loved ones for sharing their lives and stories, and
to Hagop T. Bazerkanian for sharing his home recordings of the Lebanese Civil War

Dedicated to my family

• • •

Mary Kouyoumdjian's *Bombs of Beirut* was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet as part of *Kronos: Under 30 Project / #5* by Hancher at the University of Iowa, Syracuse University, the Board of Directors of the Kronos Performing Arts Association, and individual backers of the *Kronos: Under 30 Project / #5* Kickstarter campaign. Additional support was provided by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Sally and Don Lucas Artists Residency Program at Montalvo Arts Center.

Performance Notes

Electronics: There is a stereo *backing track* that is to be played to the audience and separate click track that is to be lined to each of the performer's headphones (44.1khz). Both tracks share the same starting point. In the click, a bell rings at each rehearsal letter, with a roll one measure before. Time codes have been provided for both rehearsal letters and the two measures preceding each letter for assistance in rehearsals. In performance, the backing track should be mixed slightly under, but almost equal to, the ensemble. *Live processing* notes and time codes are specified on the bottom of the score. Each instrumentalist should be individually mic'ed in a manner that complements processing possibilities. In general, one should approach mixing this piece cinematically, rather than classically, allowing the sound effects and ensemble to overwhelm the audience where specified.

Ensemble: Play like folk instrumentalists, grittily and digging in. Everyone does not need to play perfectly in tune or in time with each other. Be physical and be emotional. This piece is for a city that lost almost everything to war.

Duration: 22'30"

Bombs of Beirut

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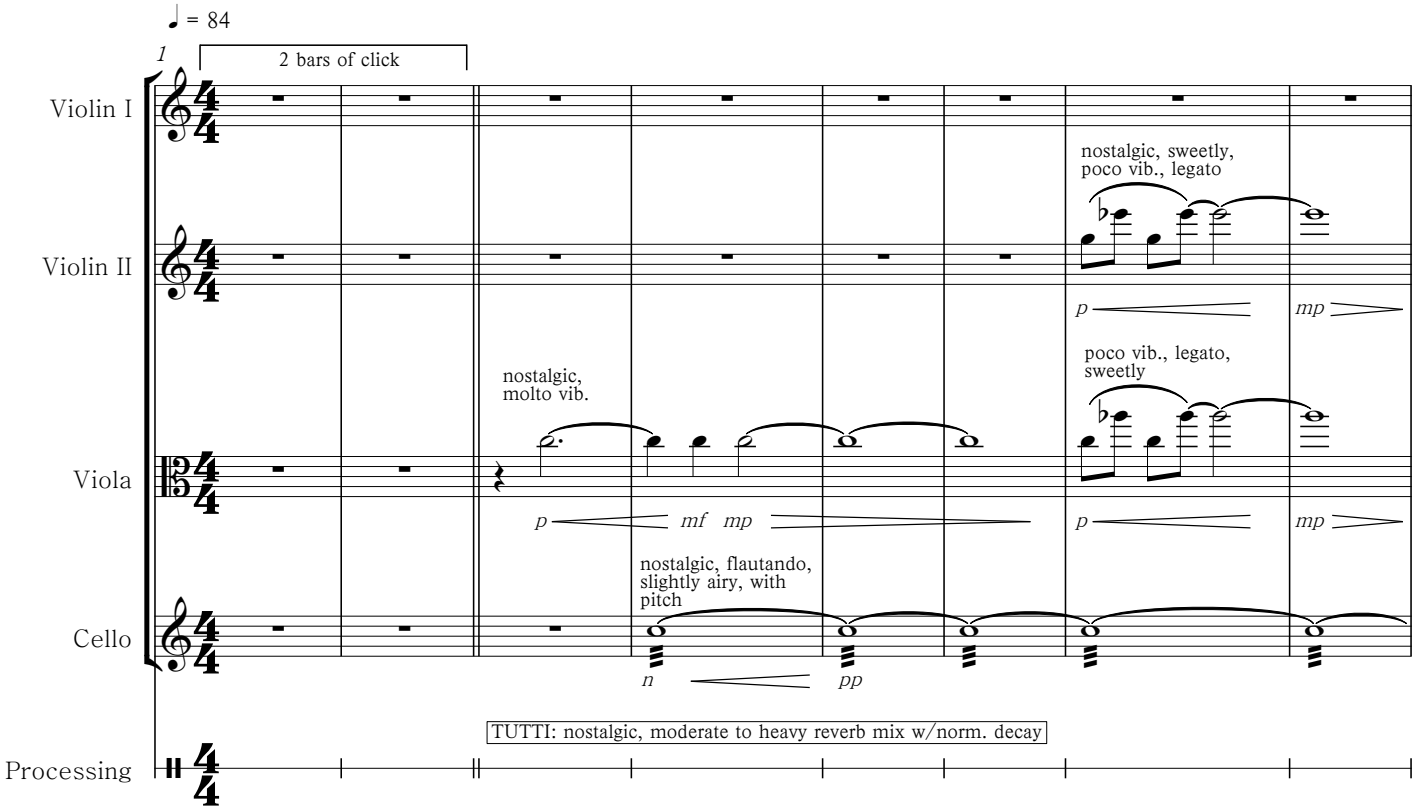
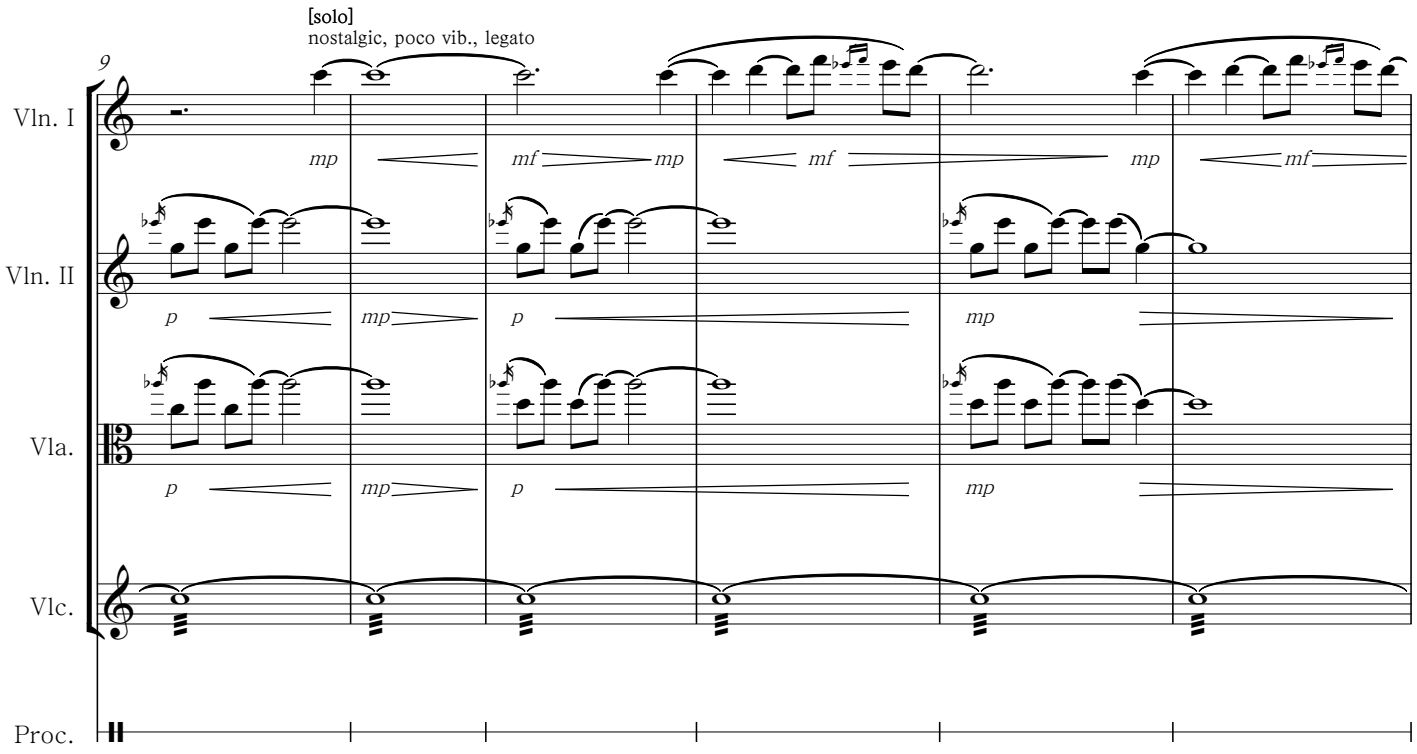
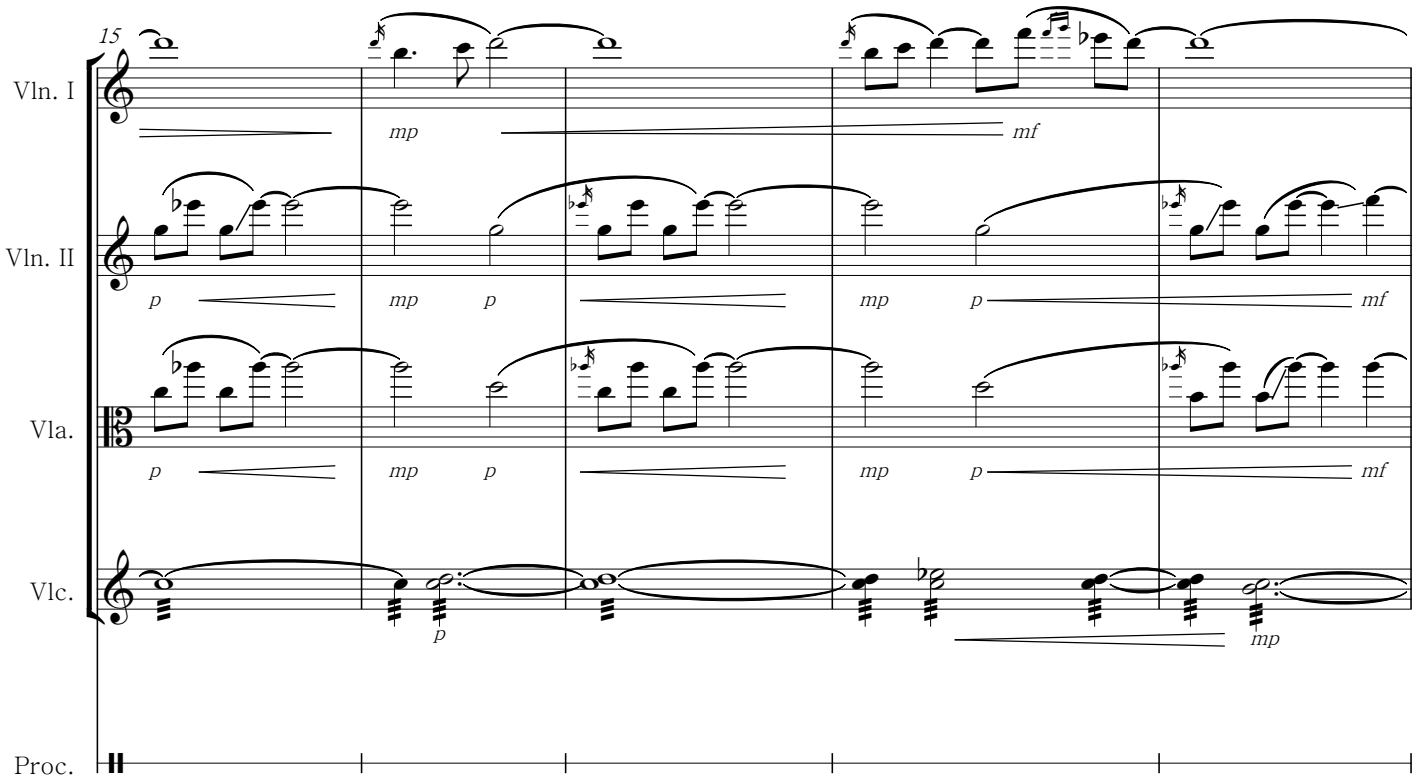
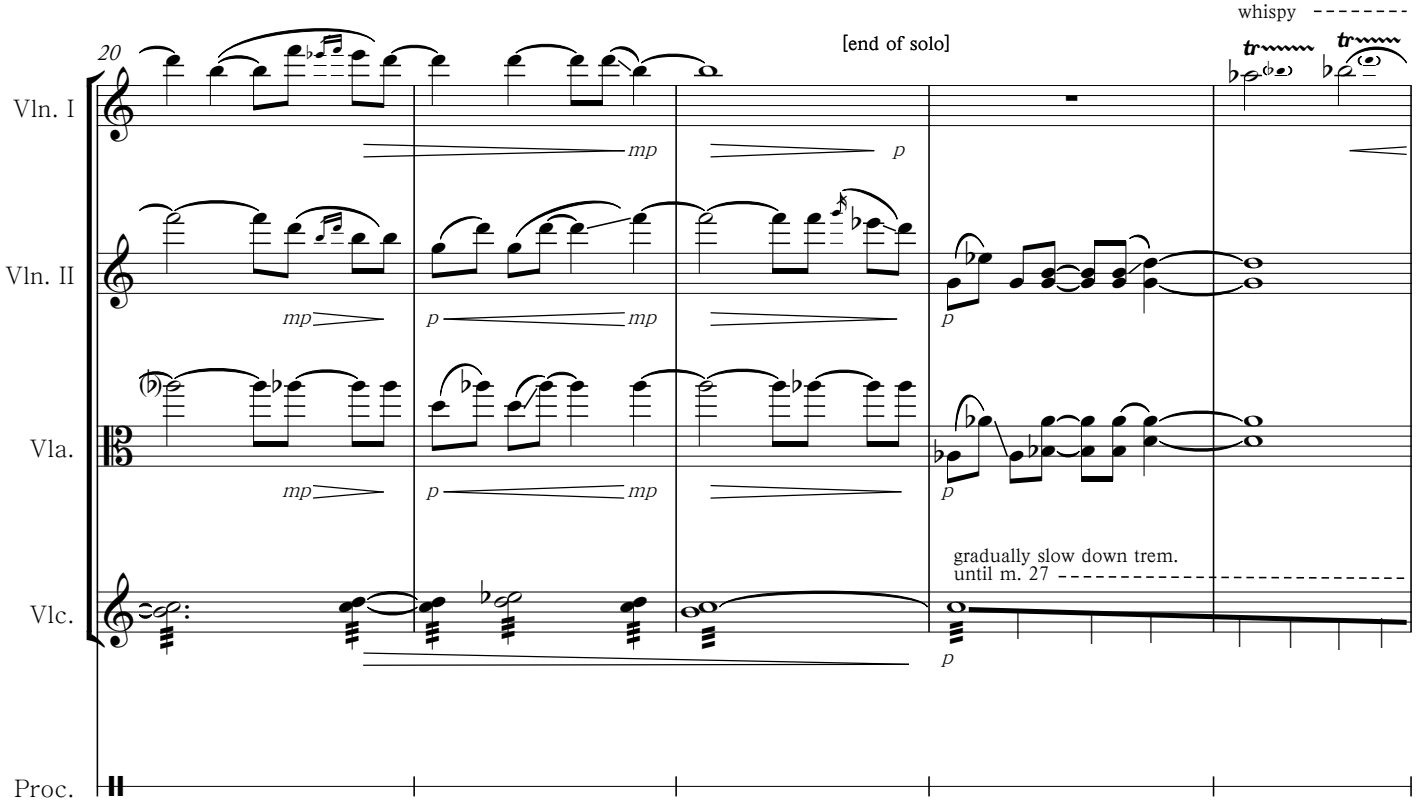
Mary KOUYOUMDJIAN
2014

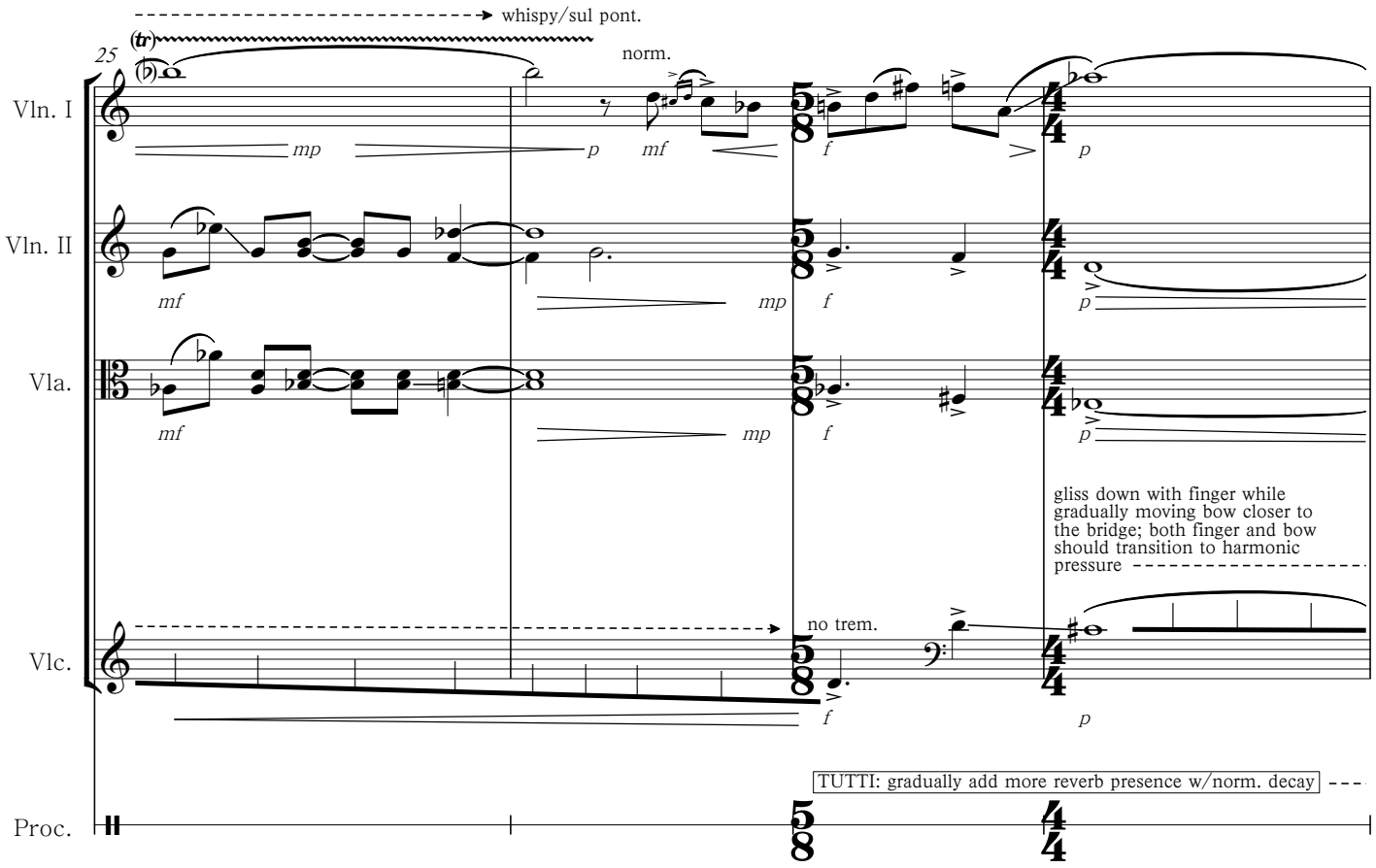
i. Before the War

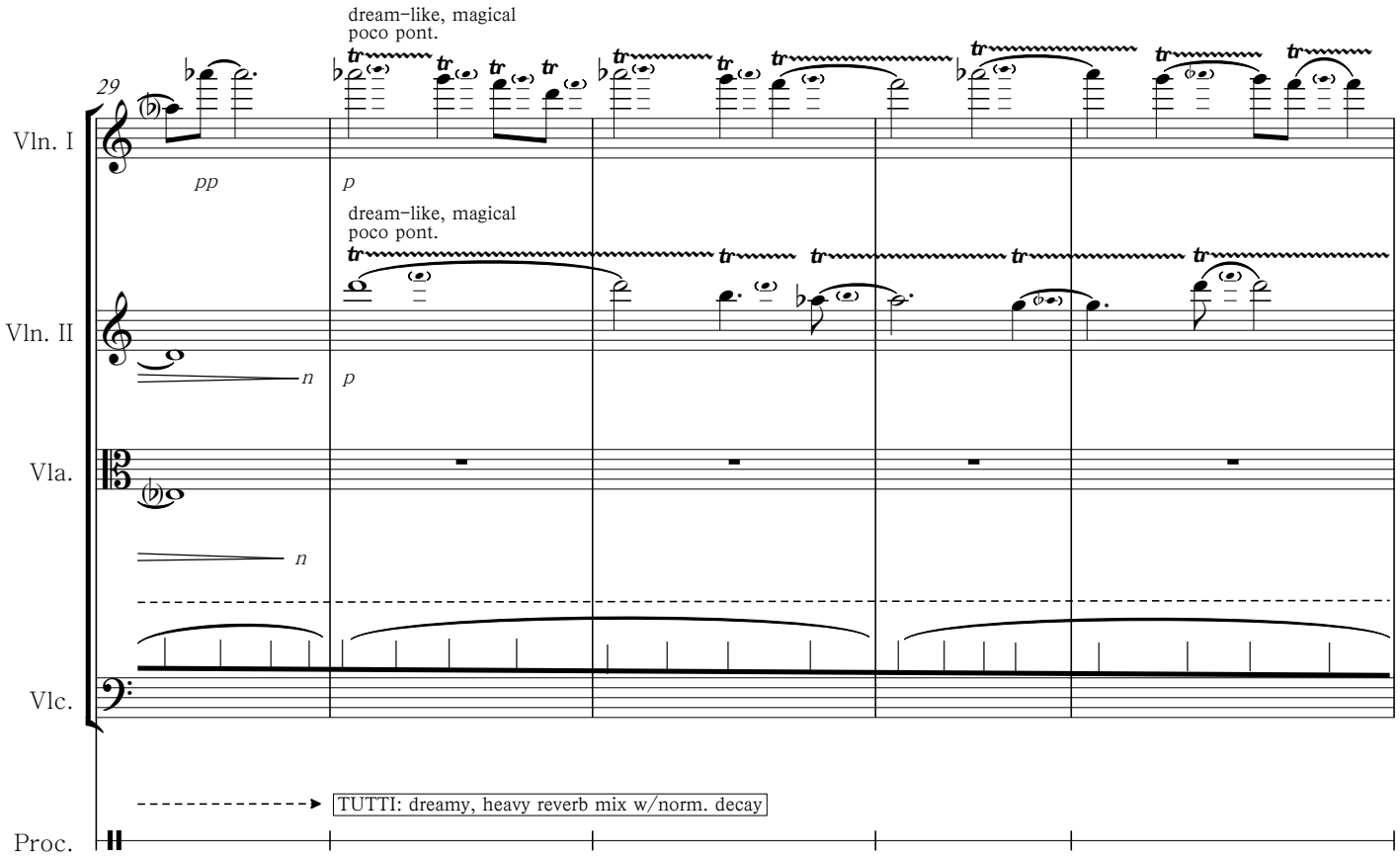


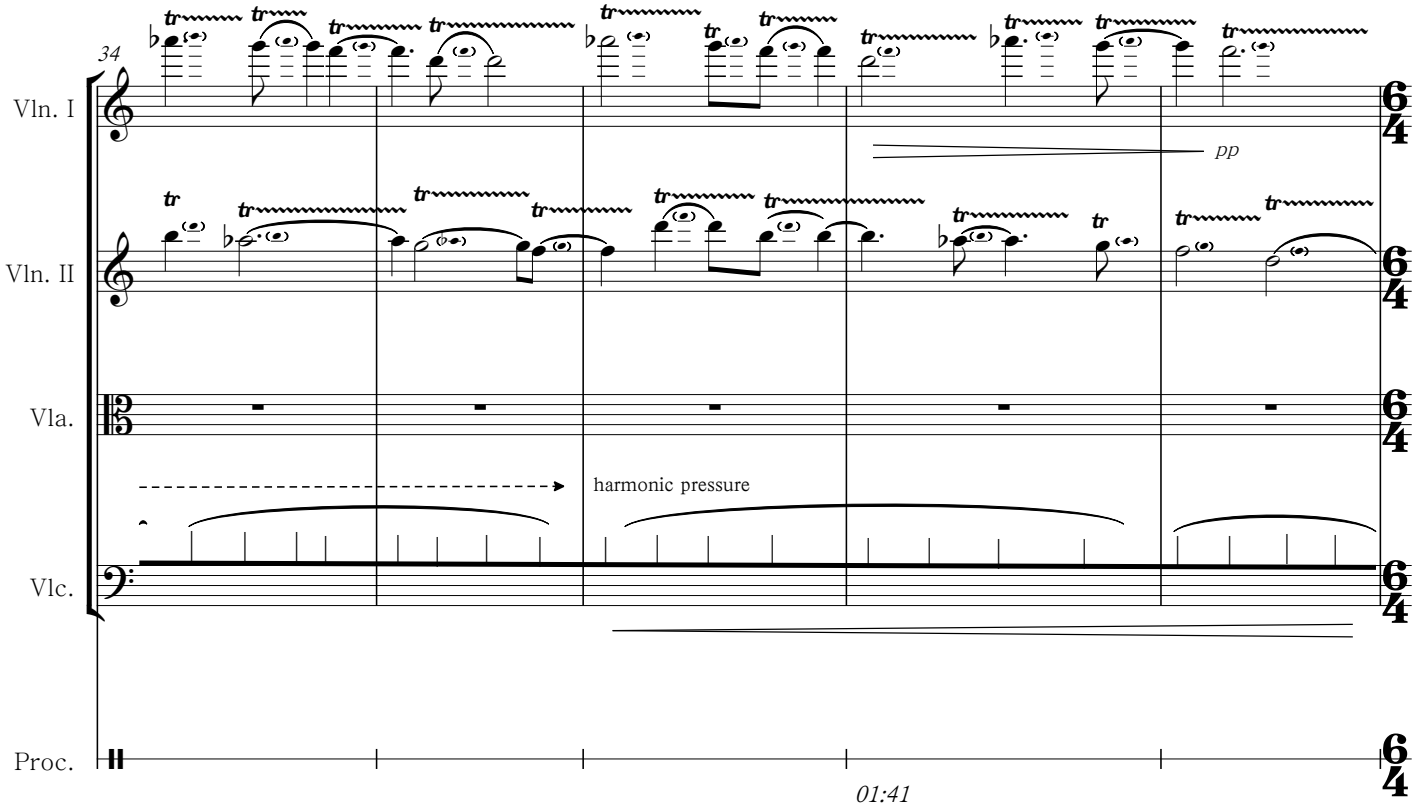


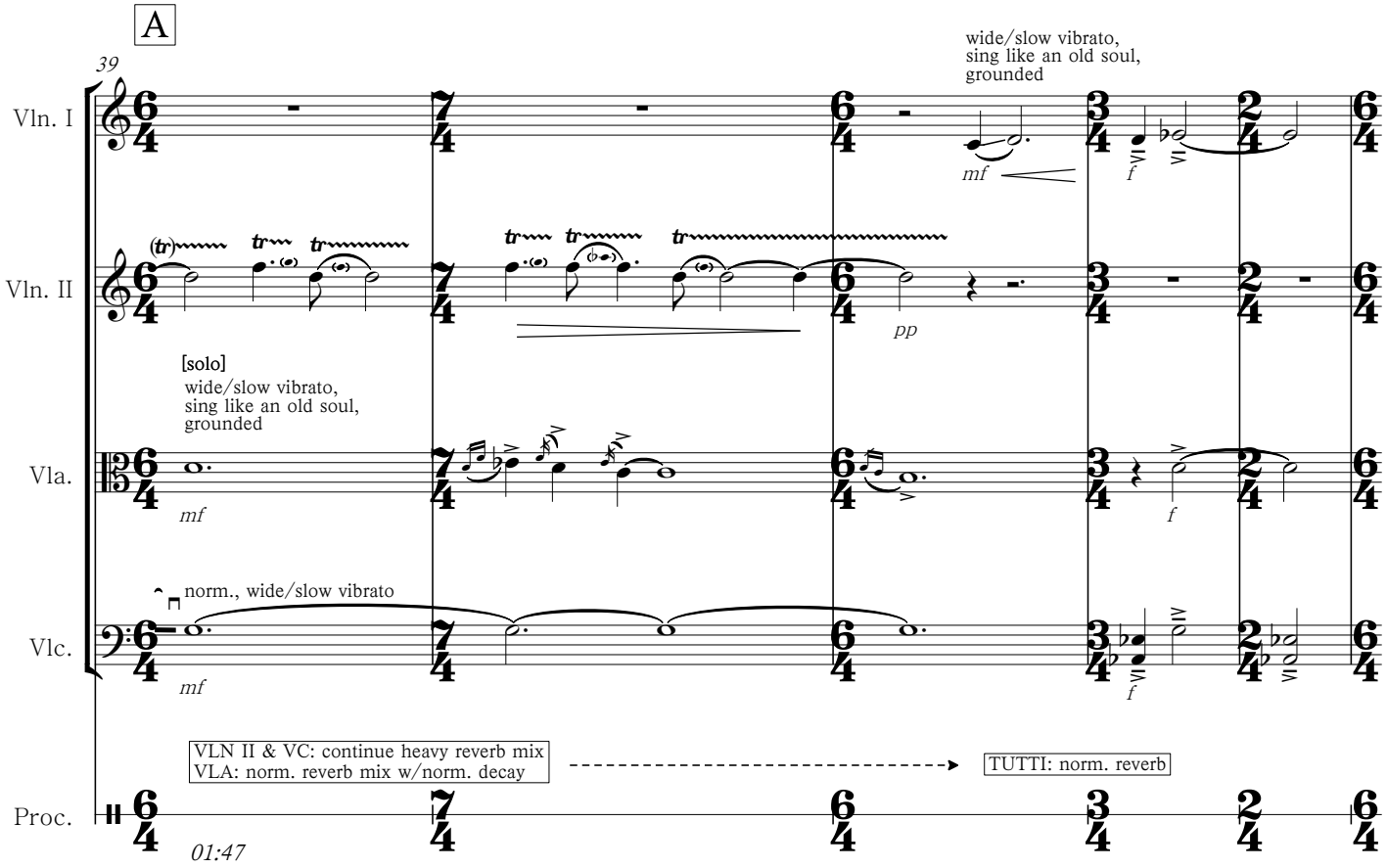

15
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mp
mf
p
mp
p
mp
p
mf
p
mp
p
mp
p
mf
p
mp

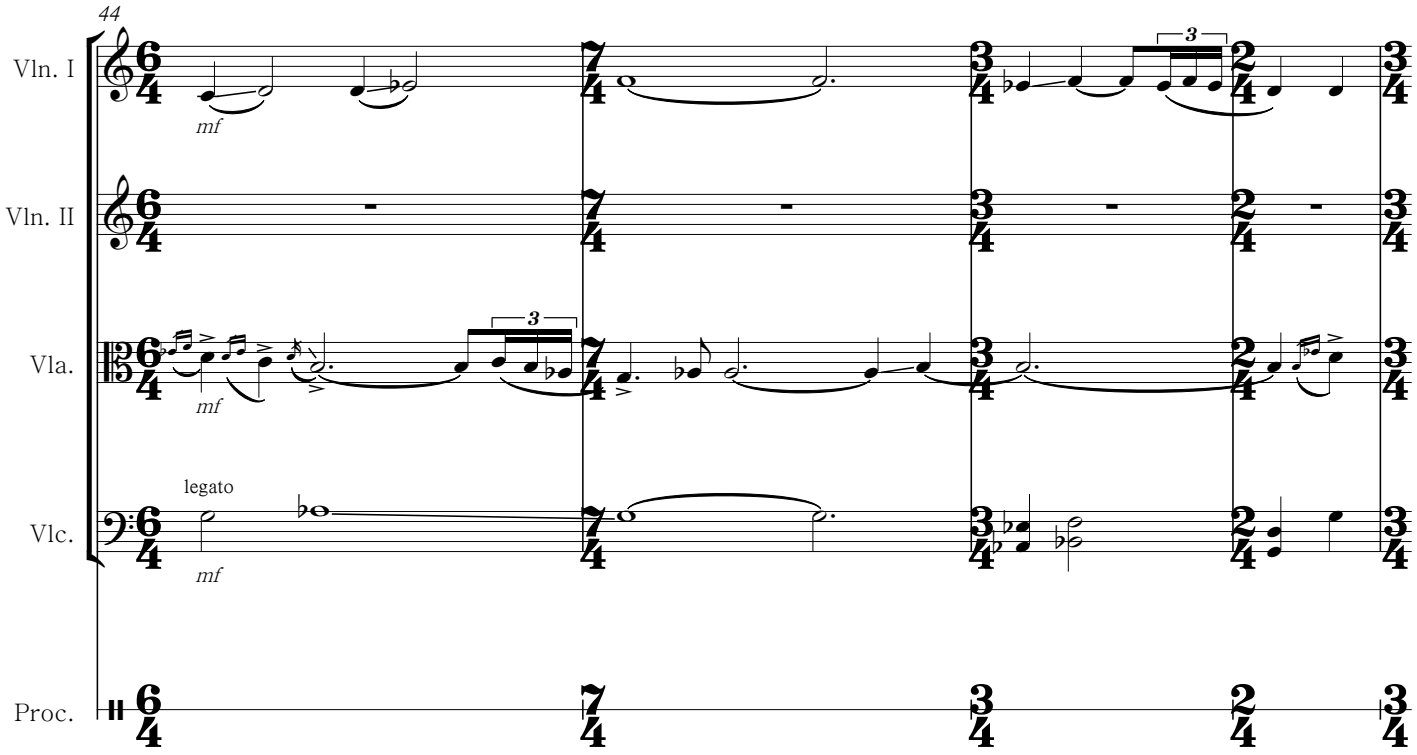

20
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
[end of solo]
whispy
tr
tr
mp
p
mp
p
mp
p
mp
p
mp
p
mp
p
gradually slow down trem.
until m. 27

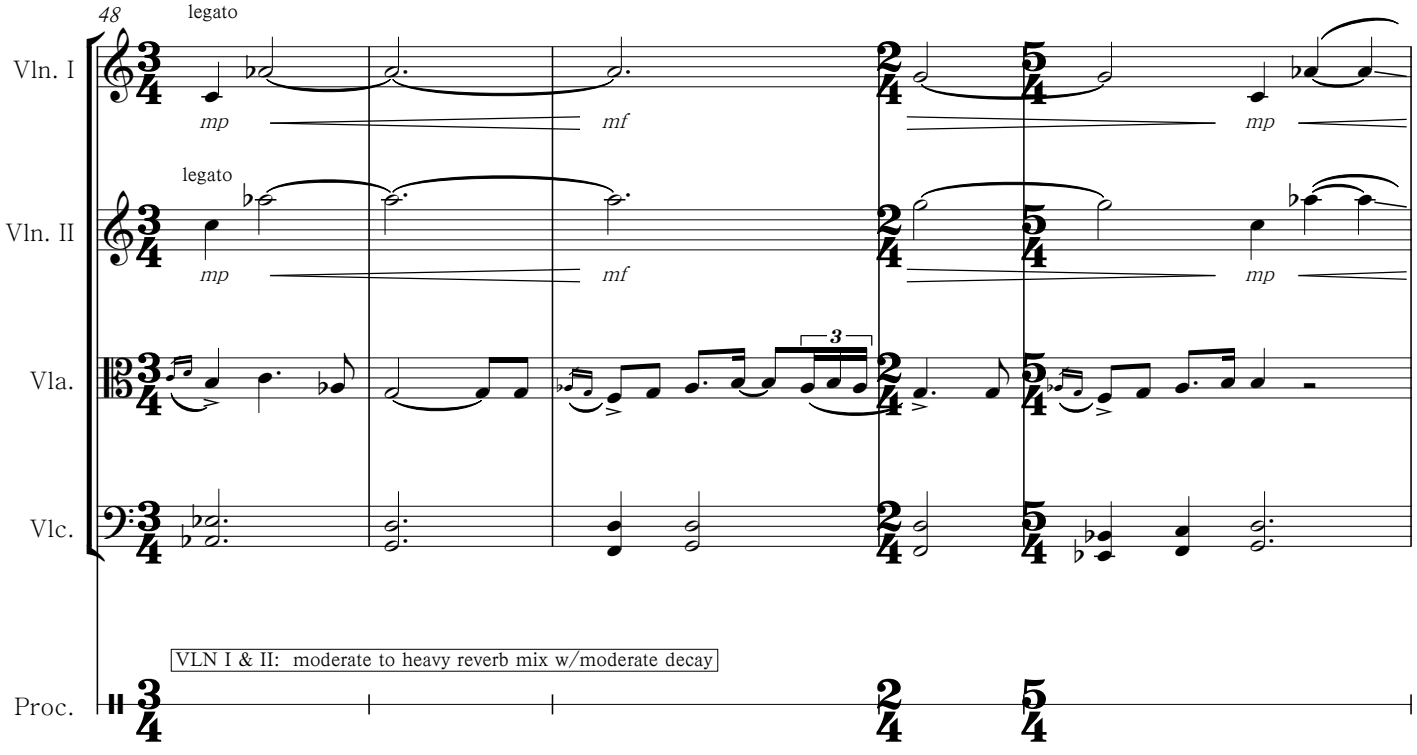

whispy/sul pont.
25
norm.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
gliss down with finger while gradually moving bow closer to the bridge; both finger and bow should transition to harmonic pressure
no trem.
Vlc.
TUTTI: gradually add more reverb presence w/norm. decay
Proc.

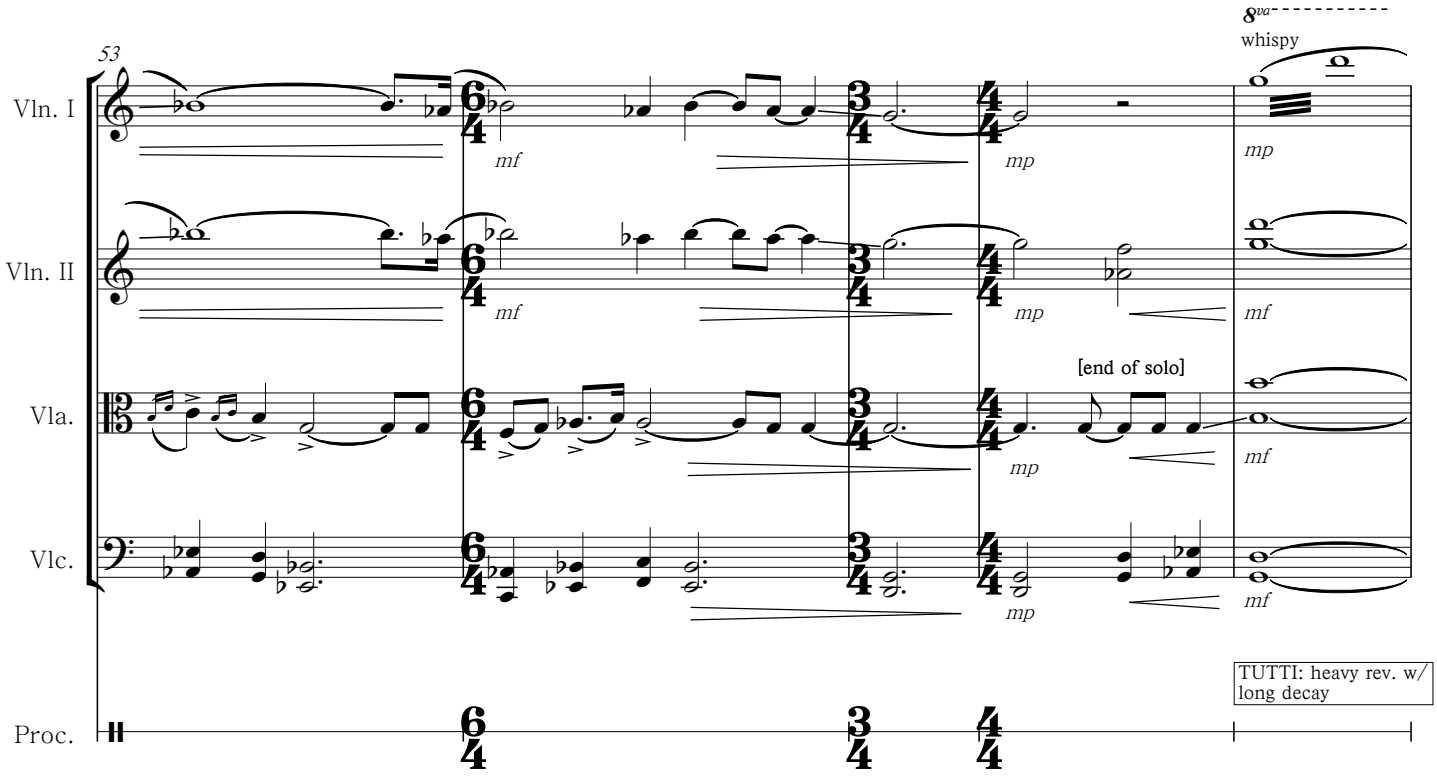

dream-like, magical
poco pont.
29
Vln. I
dream-like, magical
poco pont.
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
TUTTI: dreamy, heavy reverb mix w/norm. decay
Proc.

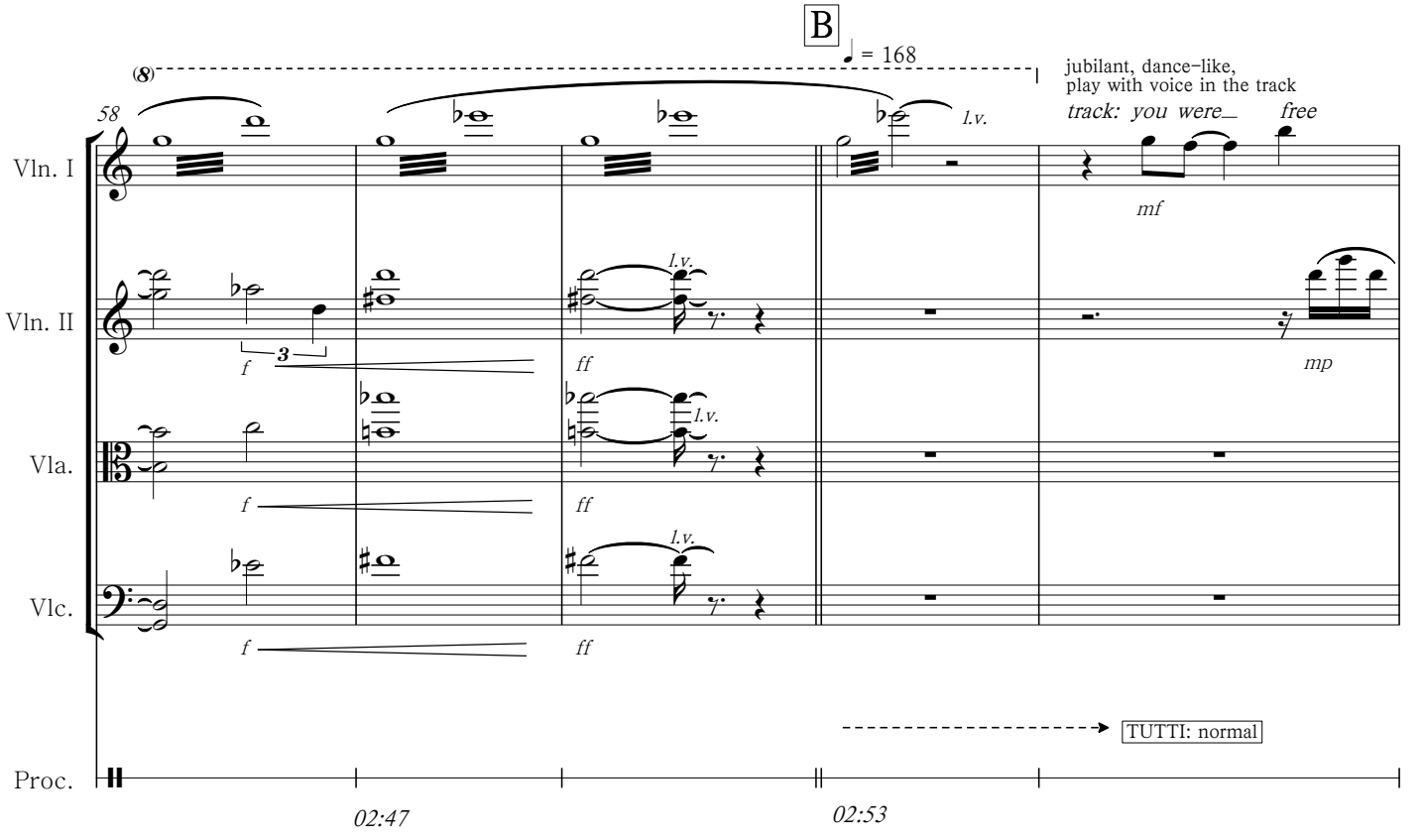

34
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
pp
harmonic pressure
01:41

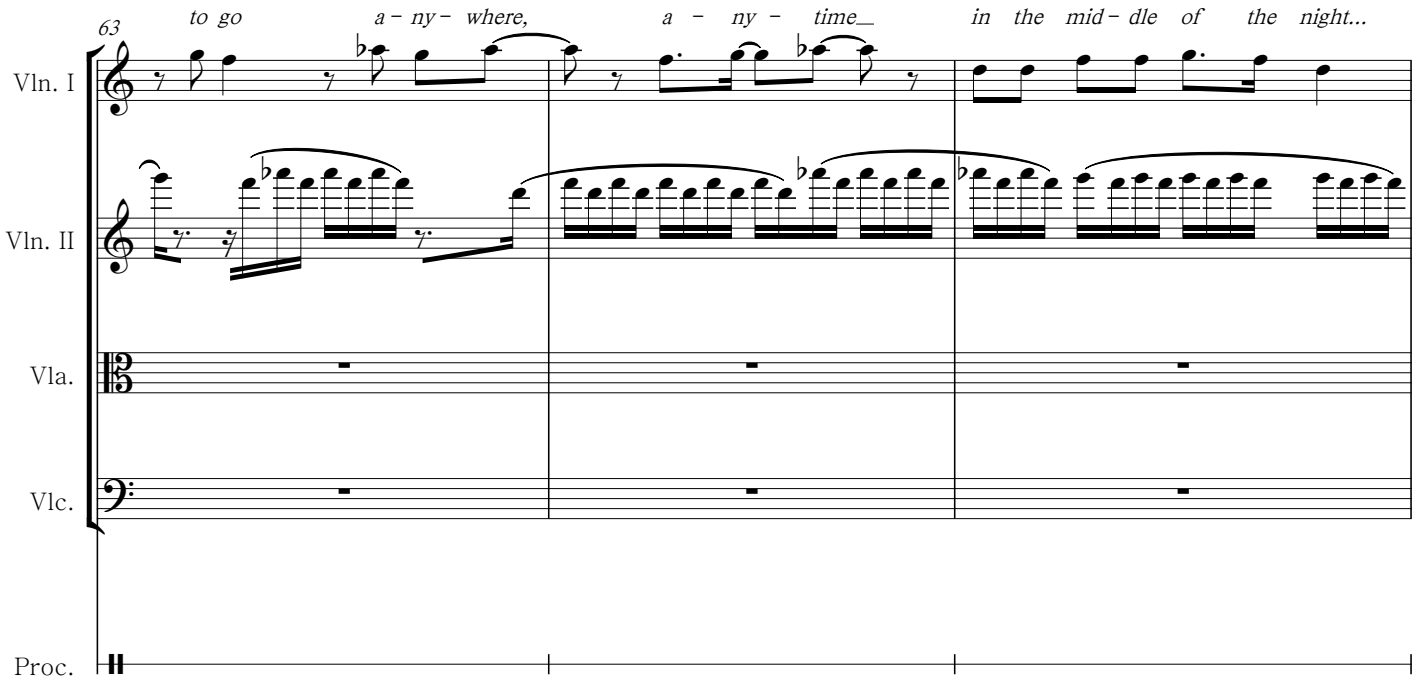

A
39
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
wide/slow vibrato,
sing like an old soul,
grounded
mf
f
pp
[solo]
wide/slow vibrato,
sing like an old soul,
grounded
norm., wide/slow vibrato
VLN II & VC: continue heavy reverb mix
VLA: norm. reverb mix w/norm. decay
TUTTI: norm. reverb
01:47

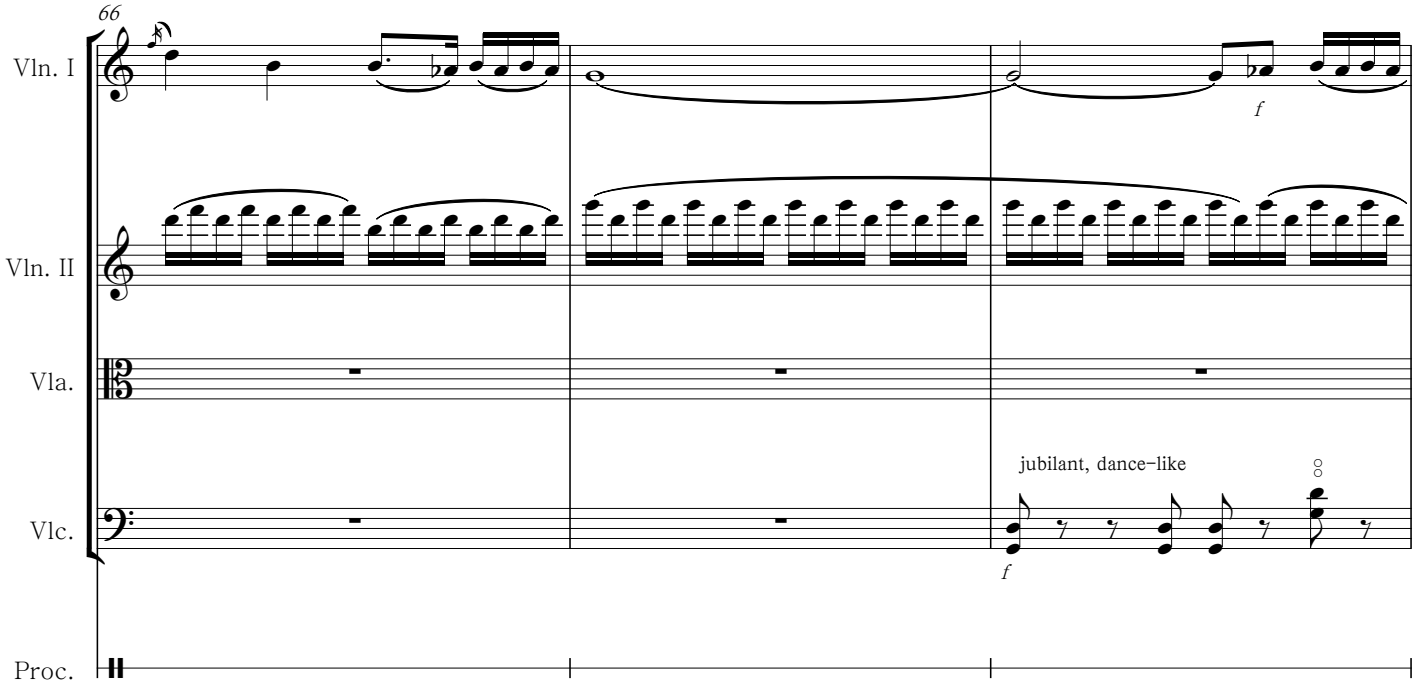

44
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mf
legato
3

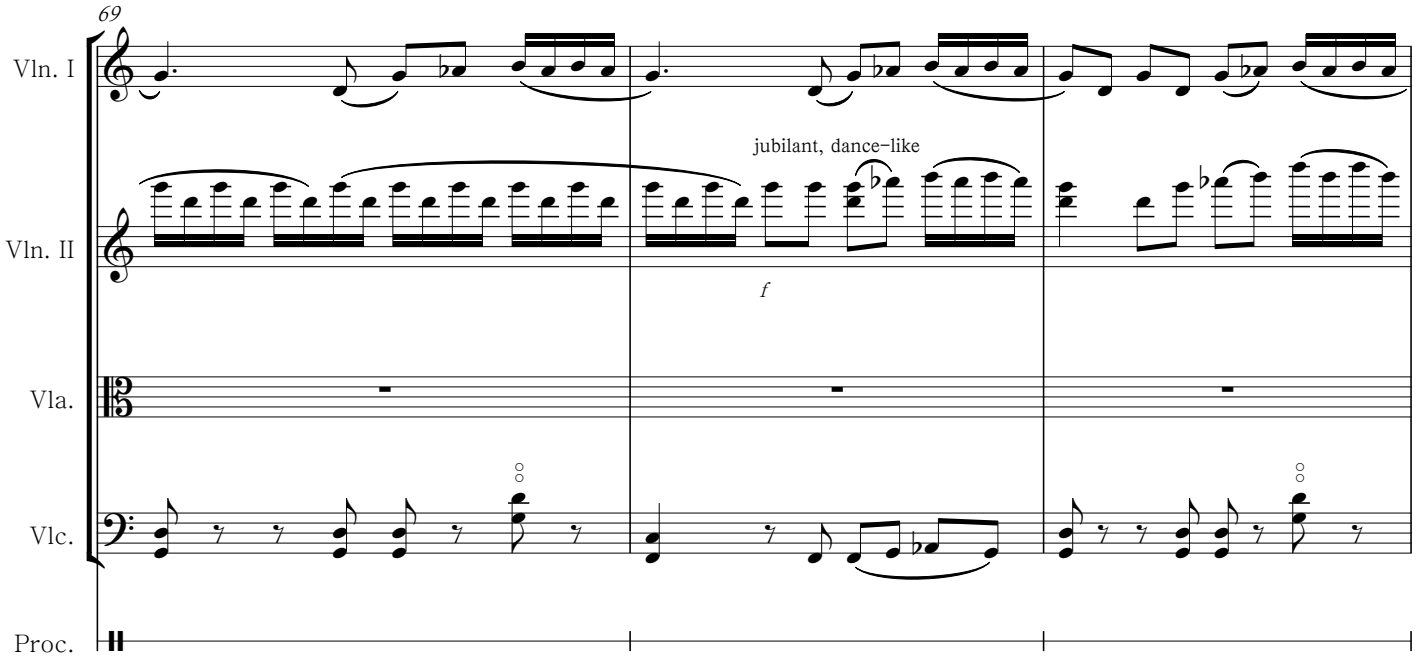

48
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
legato
mp
mf
3
VLN I & II: moderate to heavy reverb mix w/moderate decay

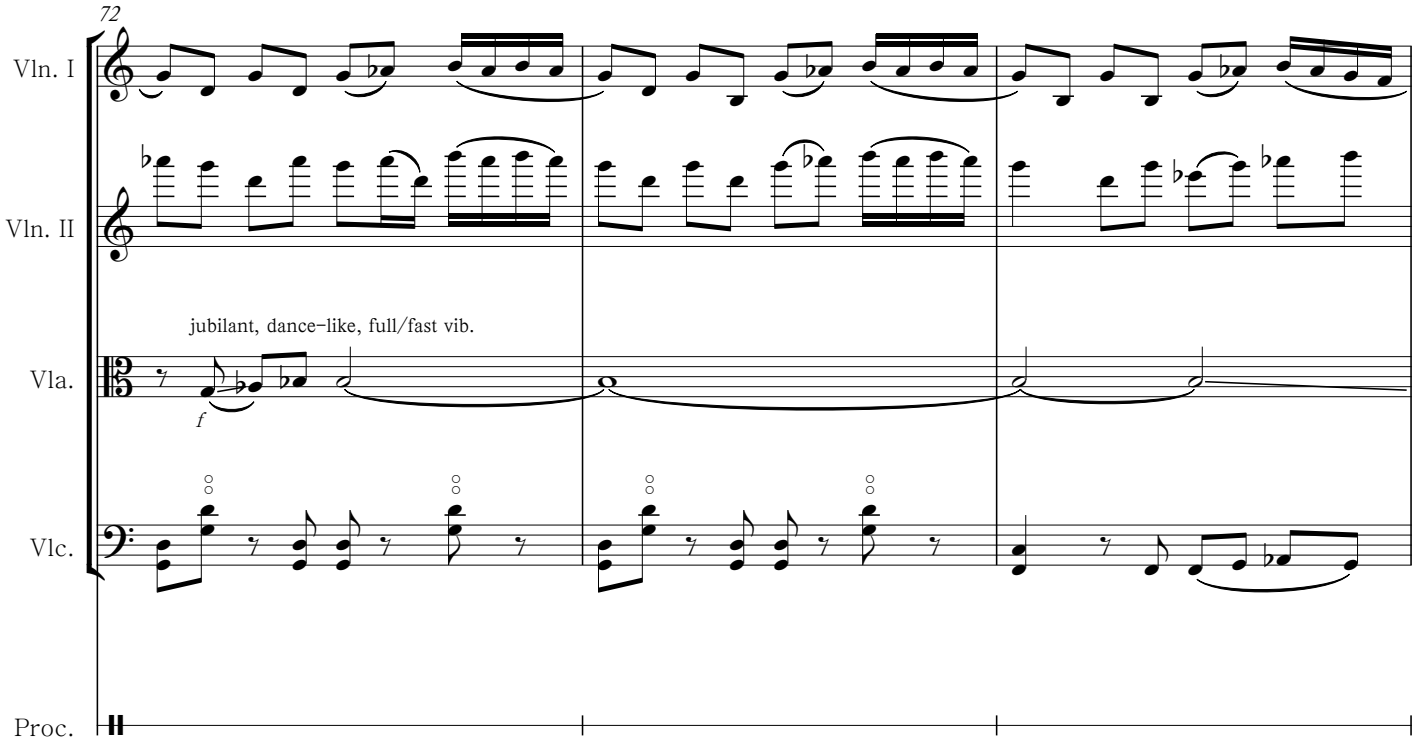

53
8va
whispy
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mf
mp
[end of solo]
TUTTI: heavy rev. w/ long decay

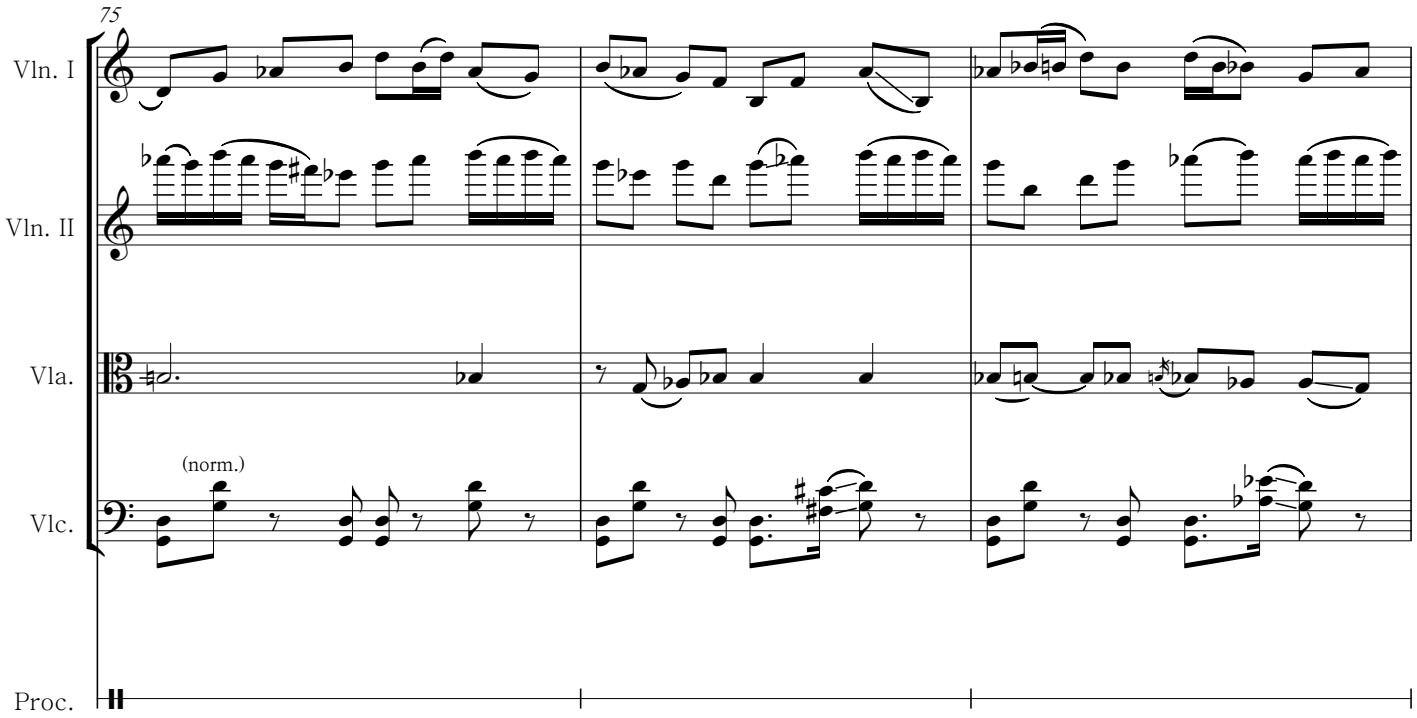

B
♩ = 168
58
(8)
jubilant, dance-like, play with voice in the track
track: you were free
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
l.v.
f
ff
mf
mp
TUTTI: normal
02:47
02:53

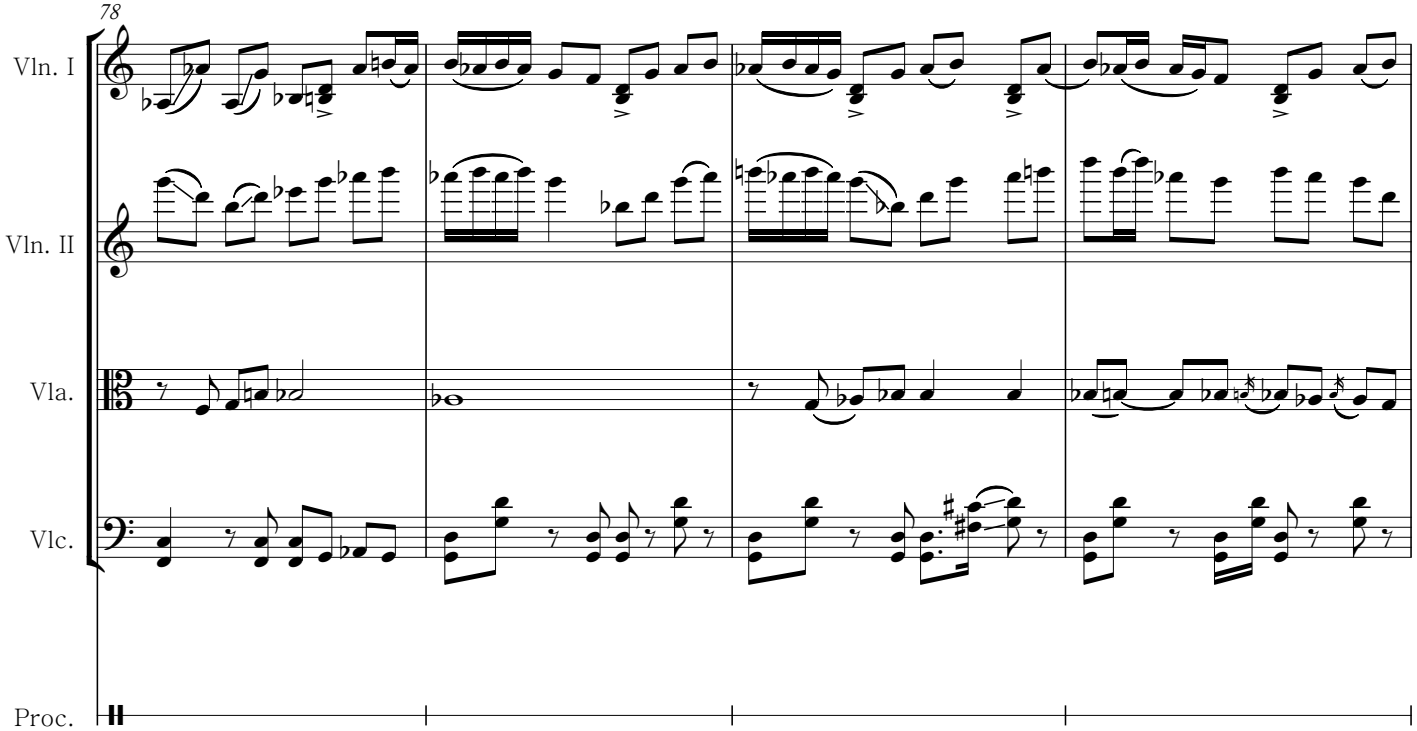

63
to go a - ny - where, a - ny - time in the mid - dle of the night...
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

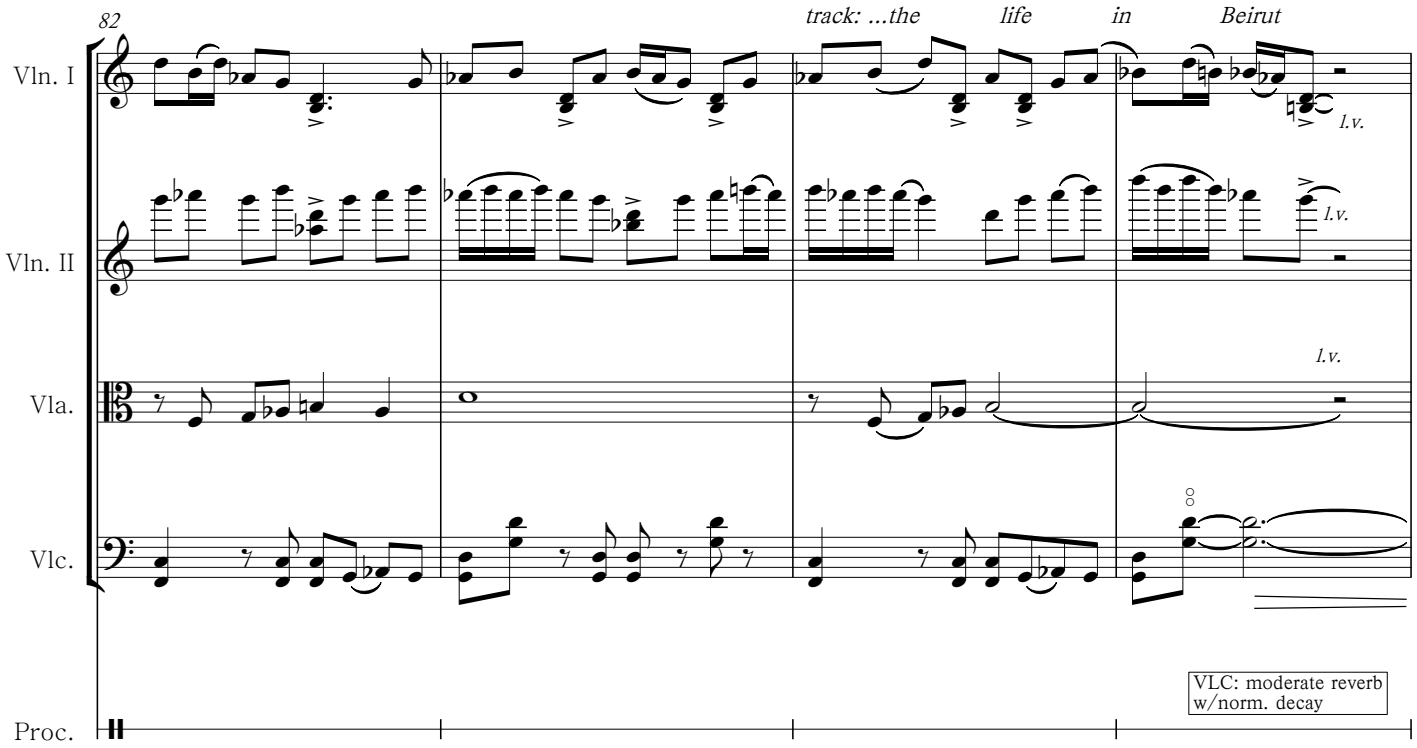

66
f
jubilant, dance-like
f
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

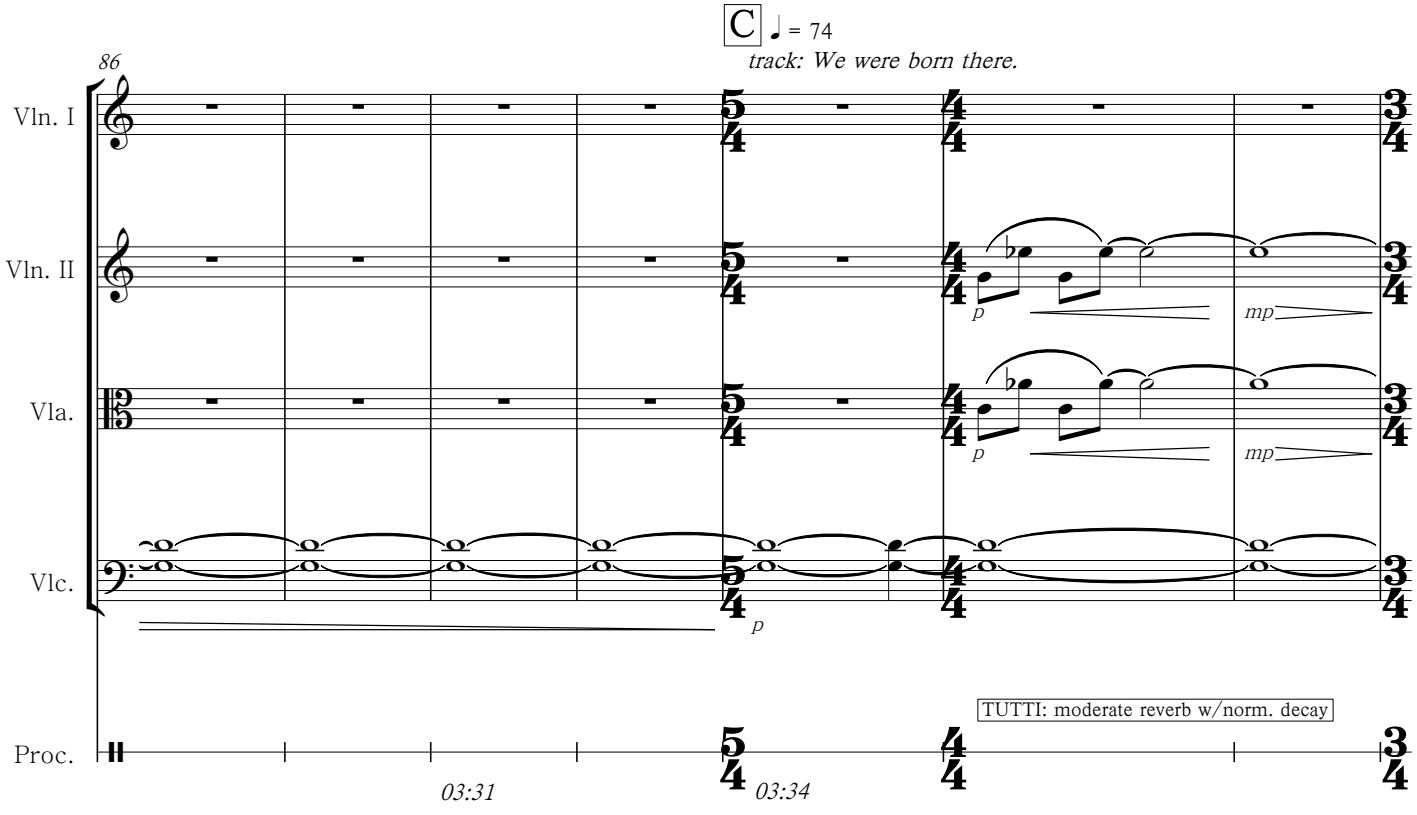

69
Vln. I
Vln. II
jubilant, dance-like
f
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

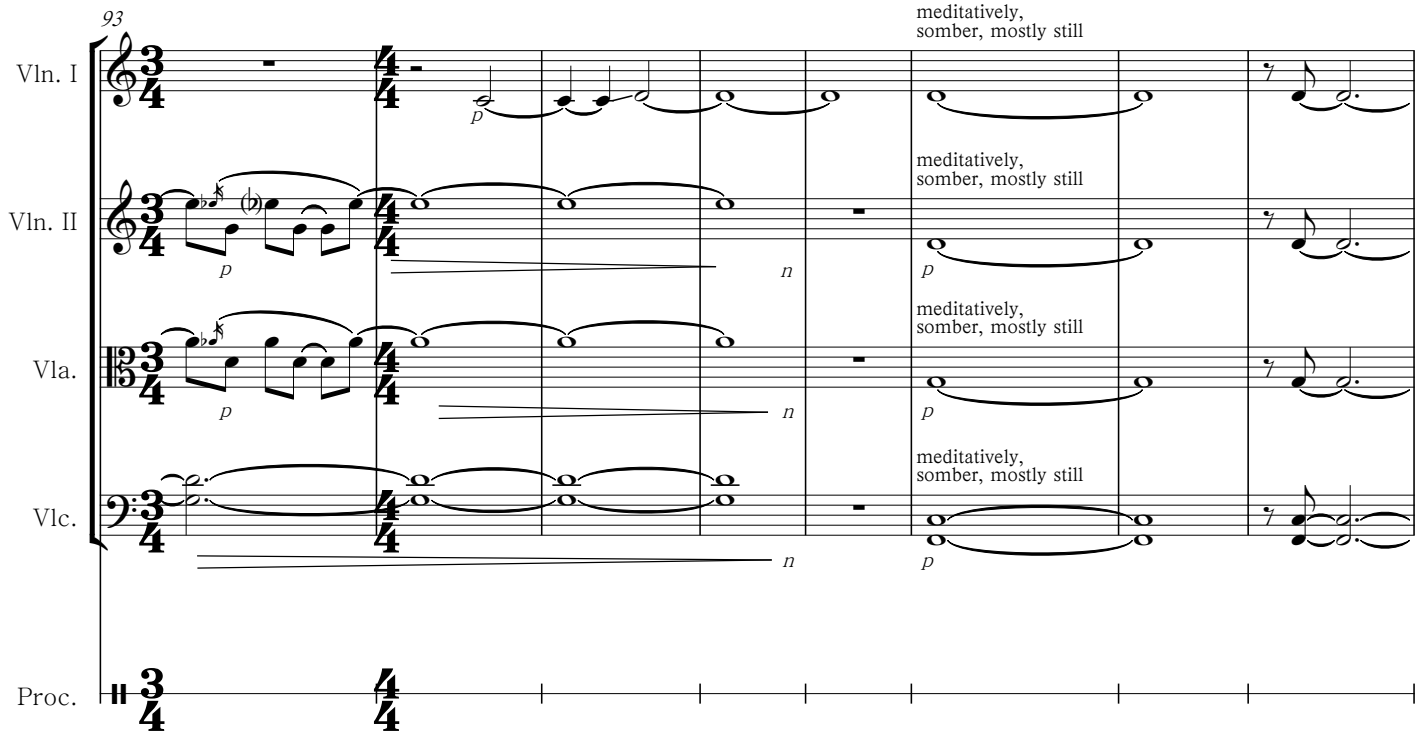

72
Vln. I
Vln. II
jubilant, dance-like, full/fast vib.
f
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.


75
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
(norm.)
Vlc.
Proc.

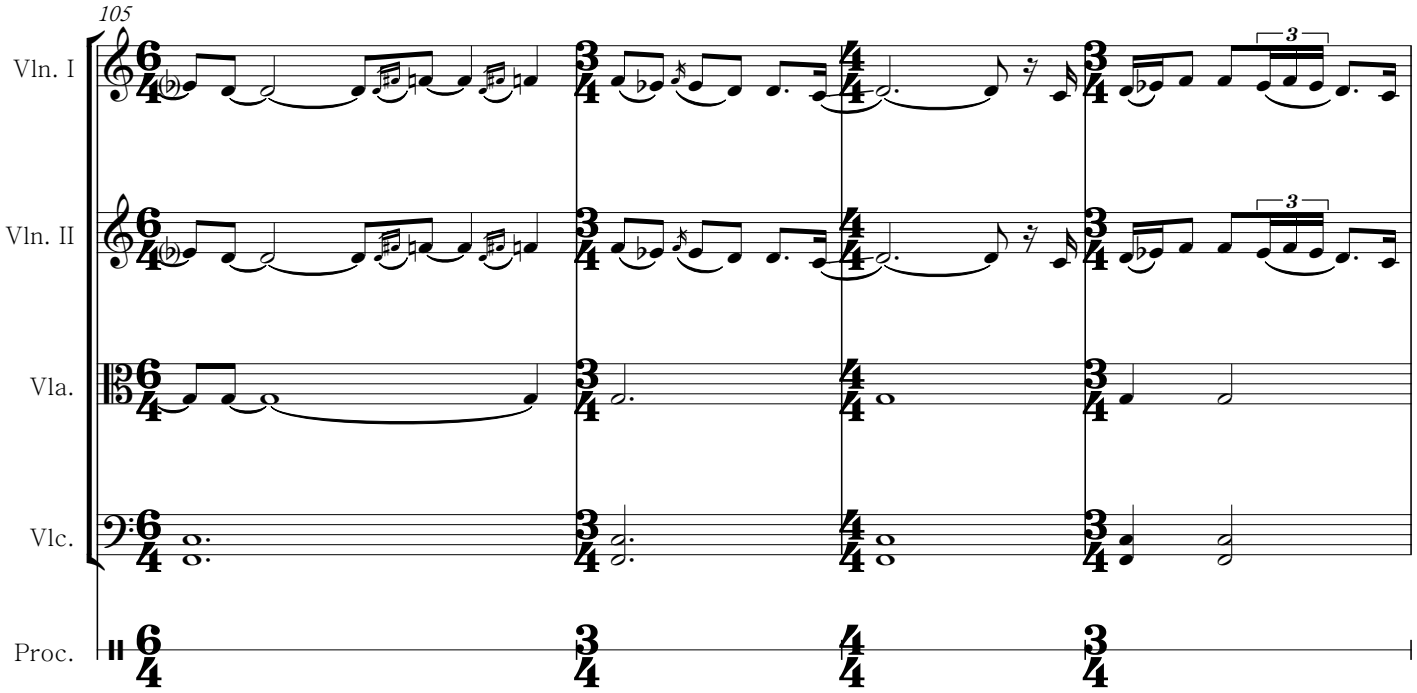

78
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

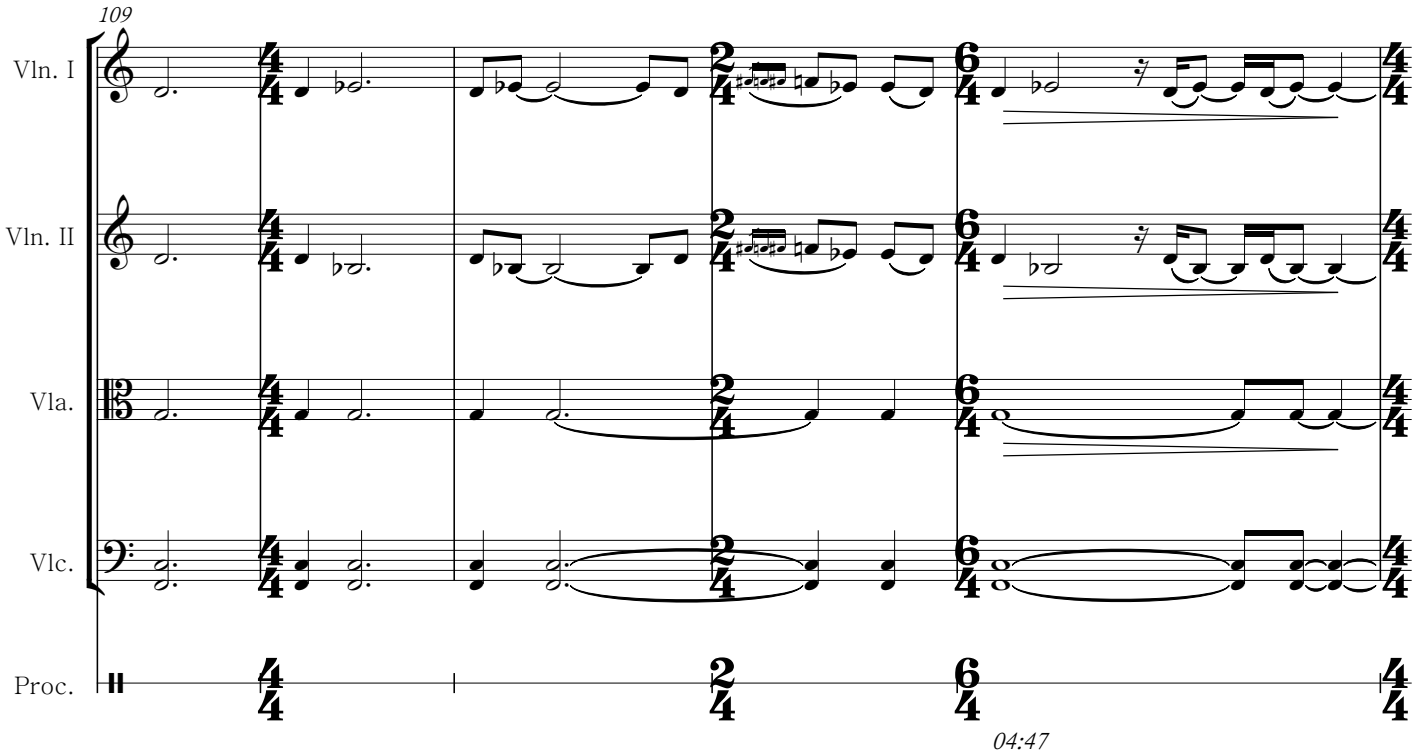

82
track: ...the life in Beirut
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
l.v.
l.v.
l.v.
Proc.
VLC: moderate reverb w/norm. decay

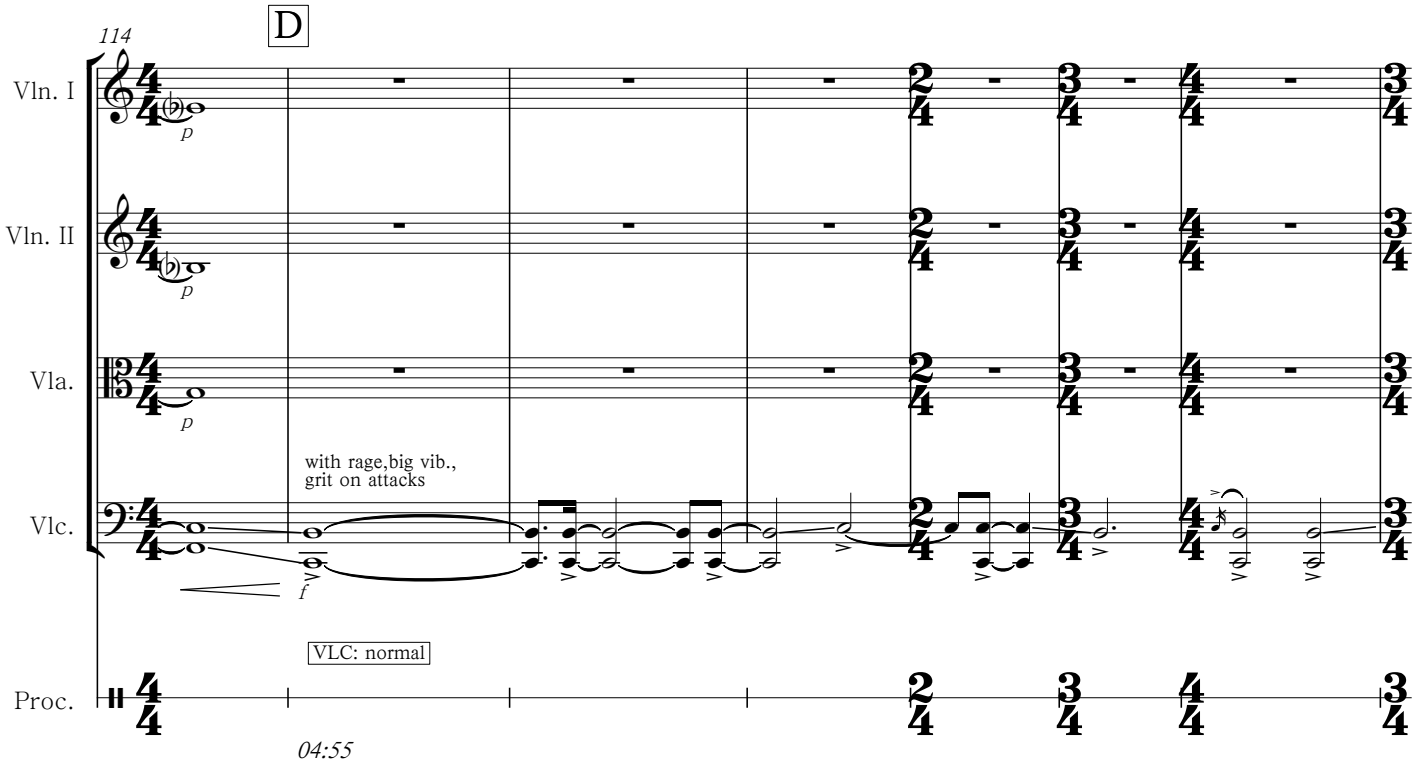

C
♩ = 74
track: We were born there.
86
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
p
mp
p
mp
p
Proc.
TUTTI: moderate reverb w/norm. decay
03:31
03:34

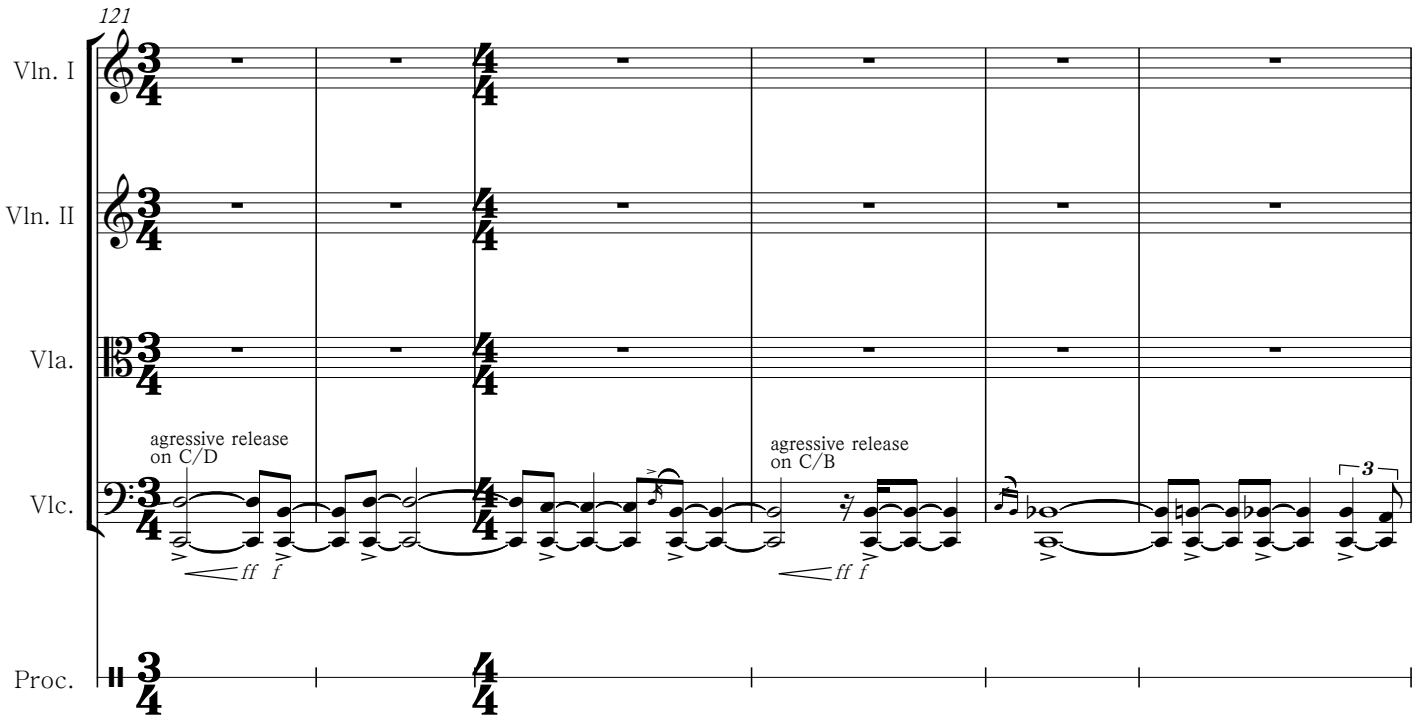

93
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
meditatively,
somber, mostly still
p
n

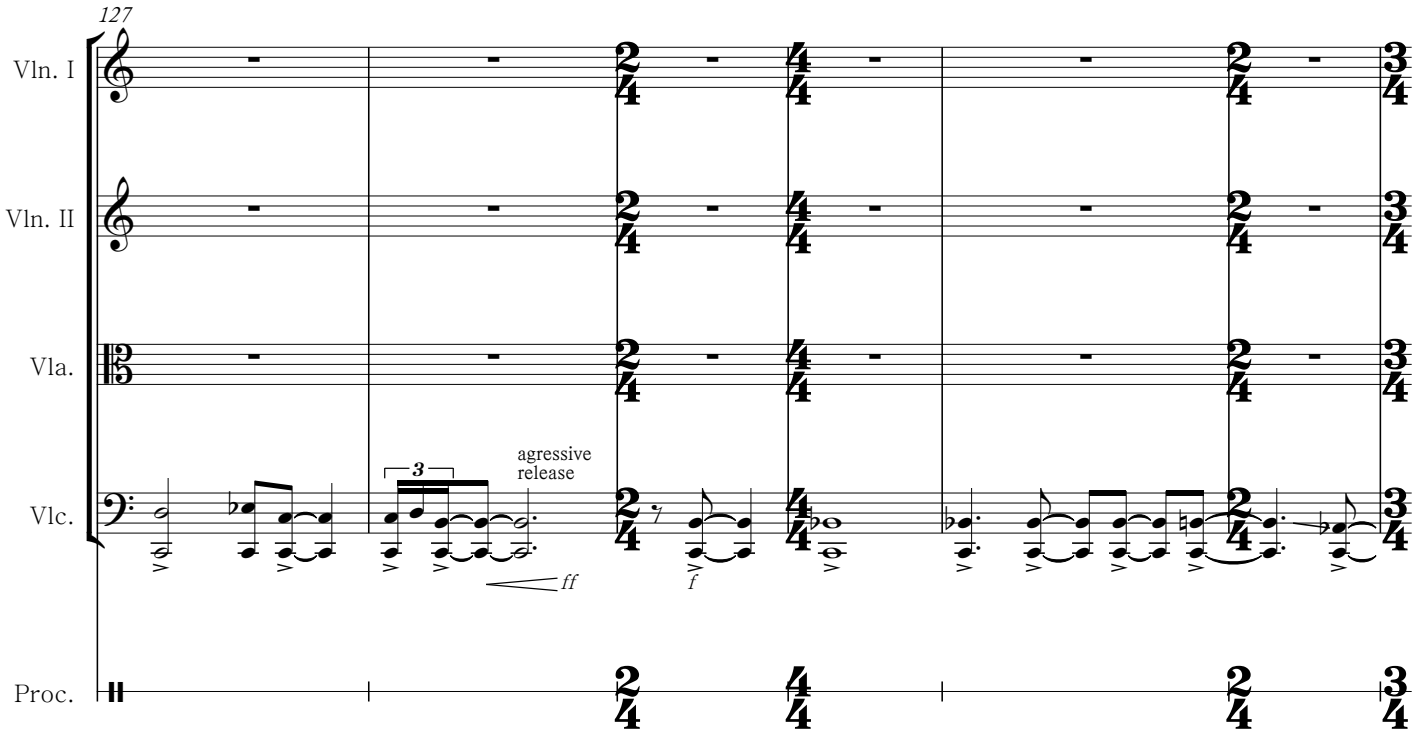
101
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mp


105
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
3
3

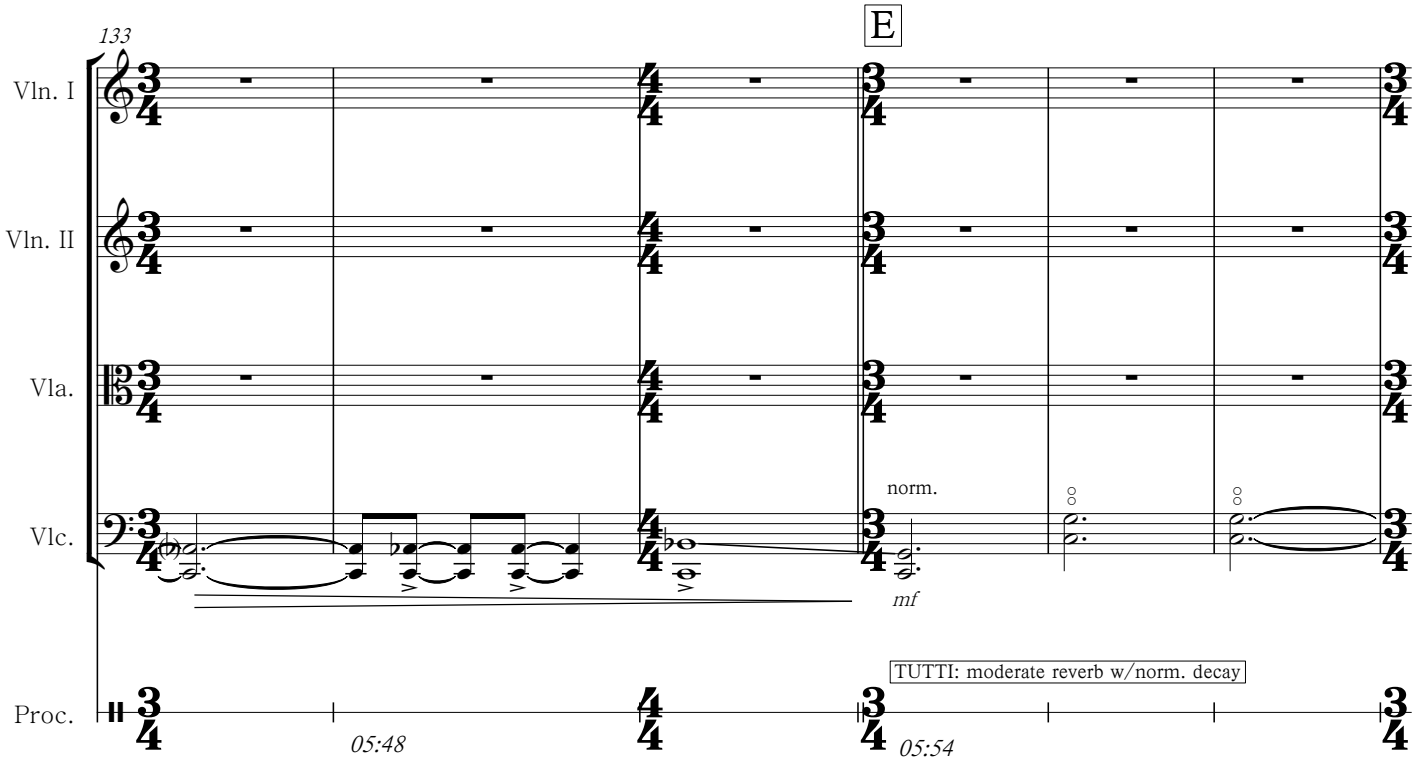

109
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
04:47

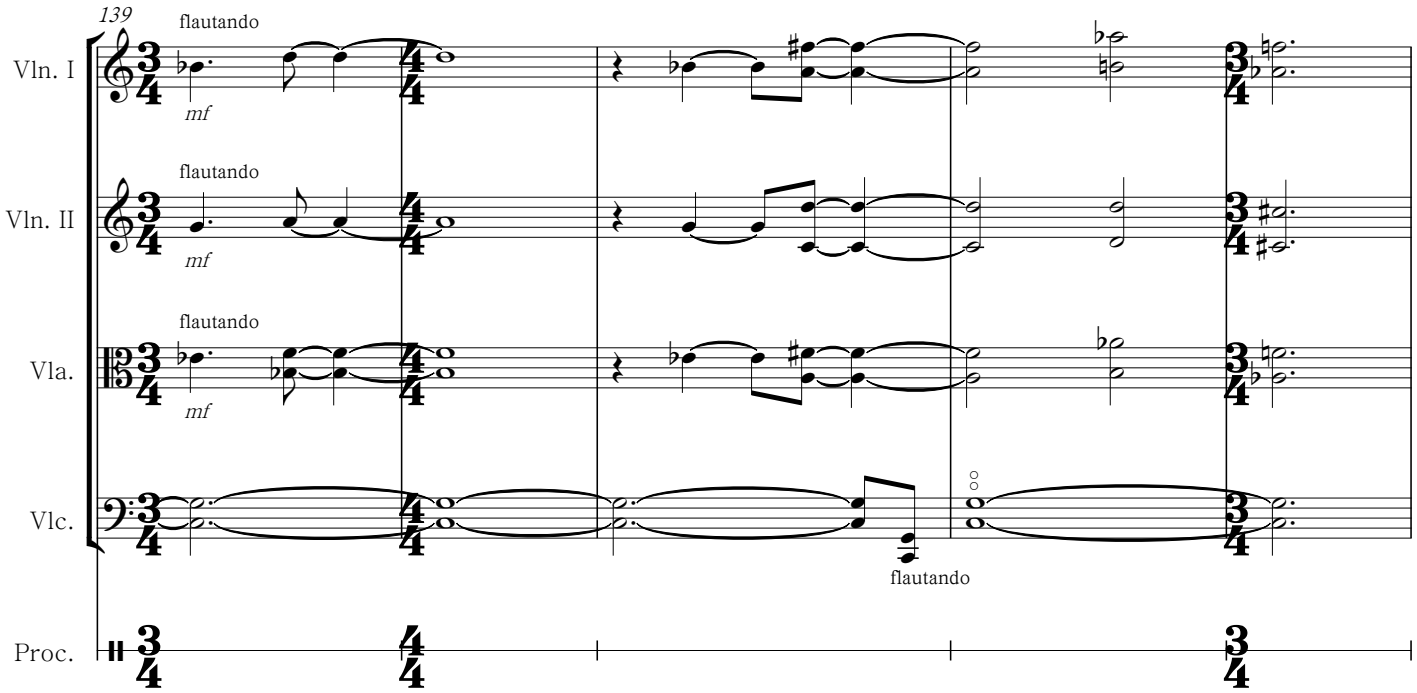

114
D
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
p
with rage,big vib.,
grit on attacks
f
VLC: normal
04:55

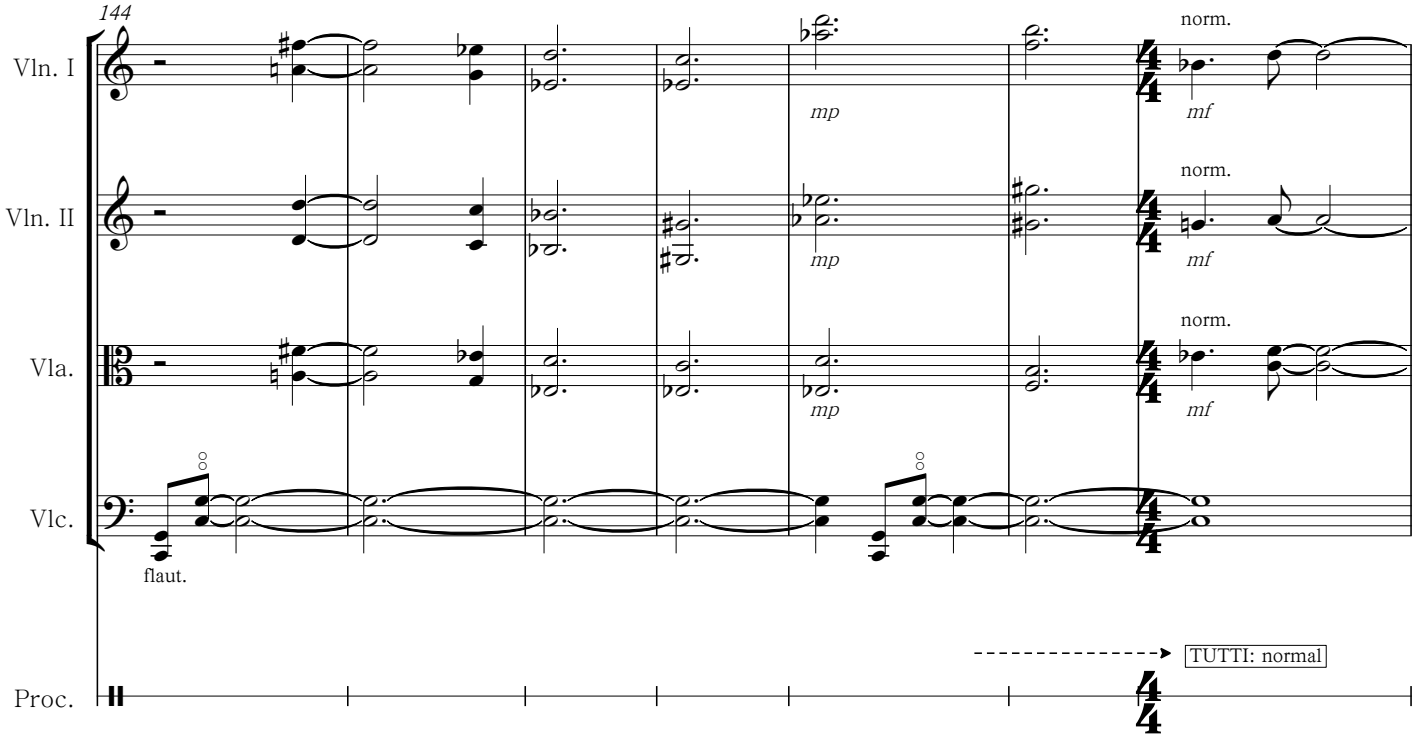

121
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
agressive release
on C/D
ff f
agressive release
on C/B
ff f
3

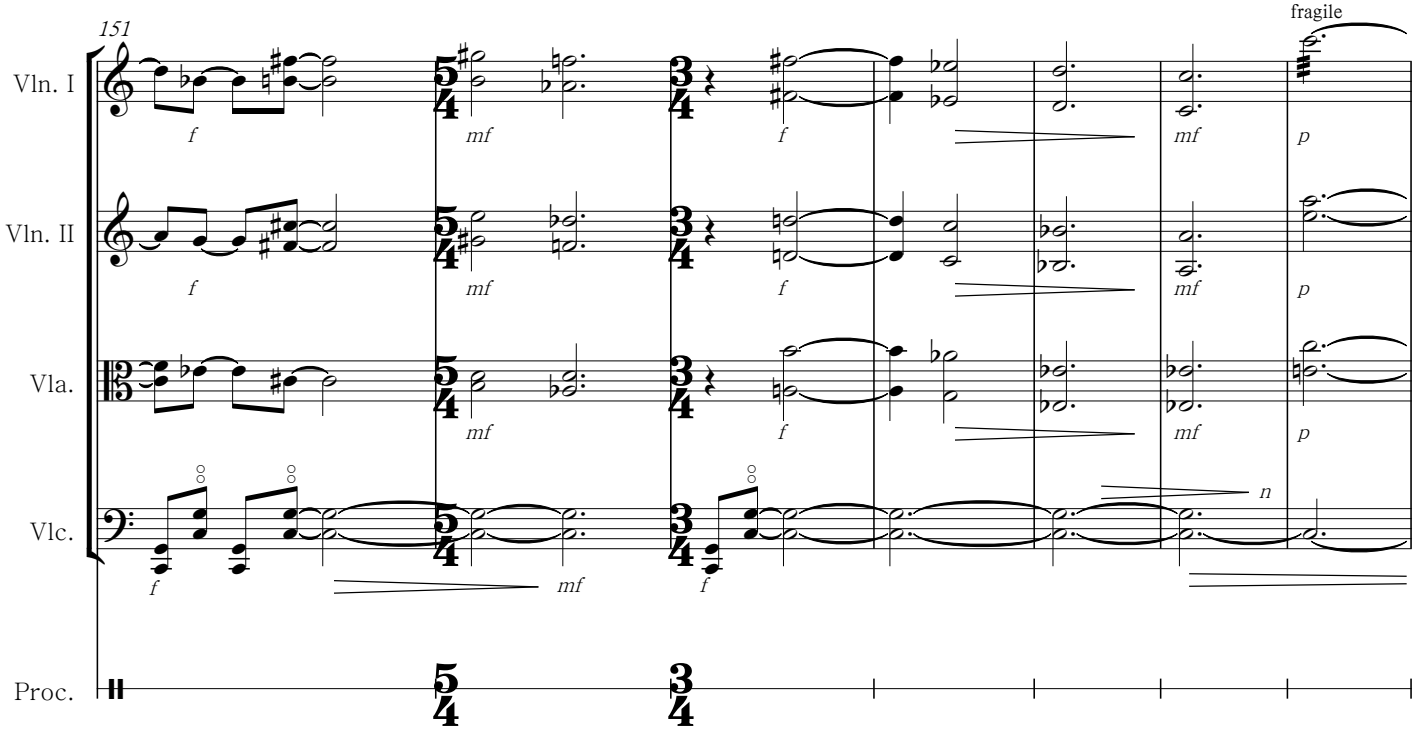

127
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
3
agressive release
ff
f

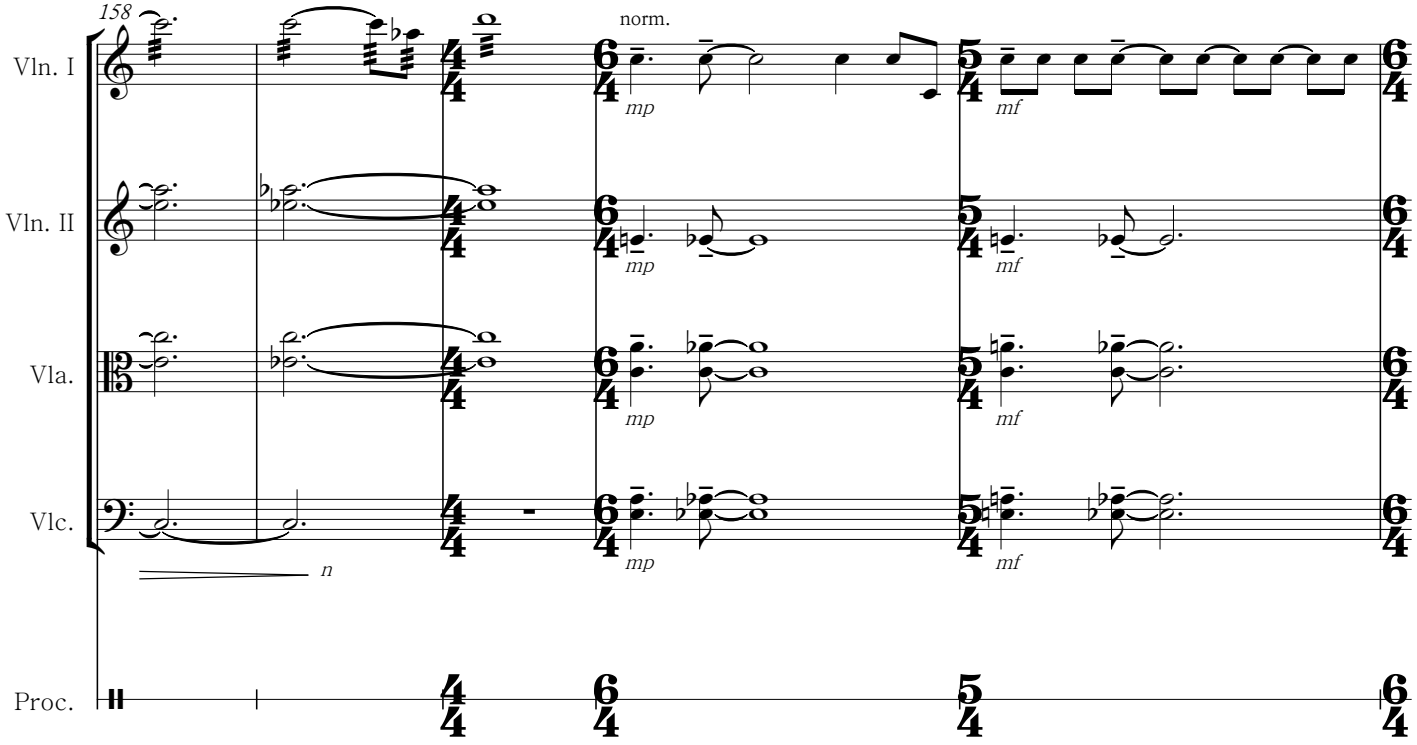
ii. The War

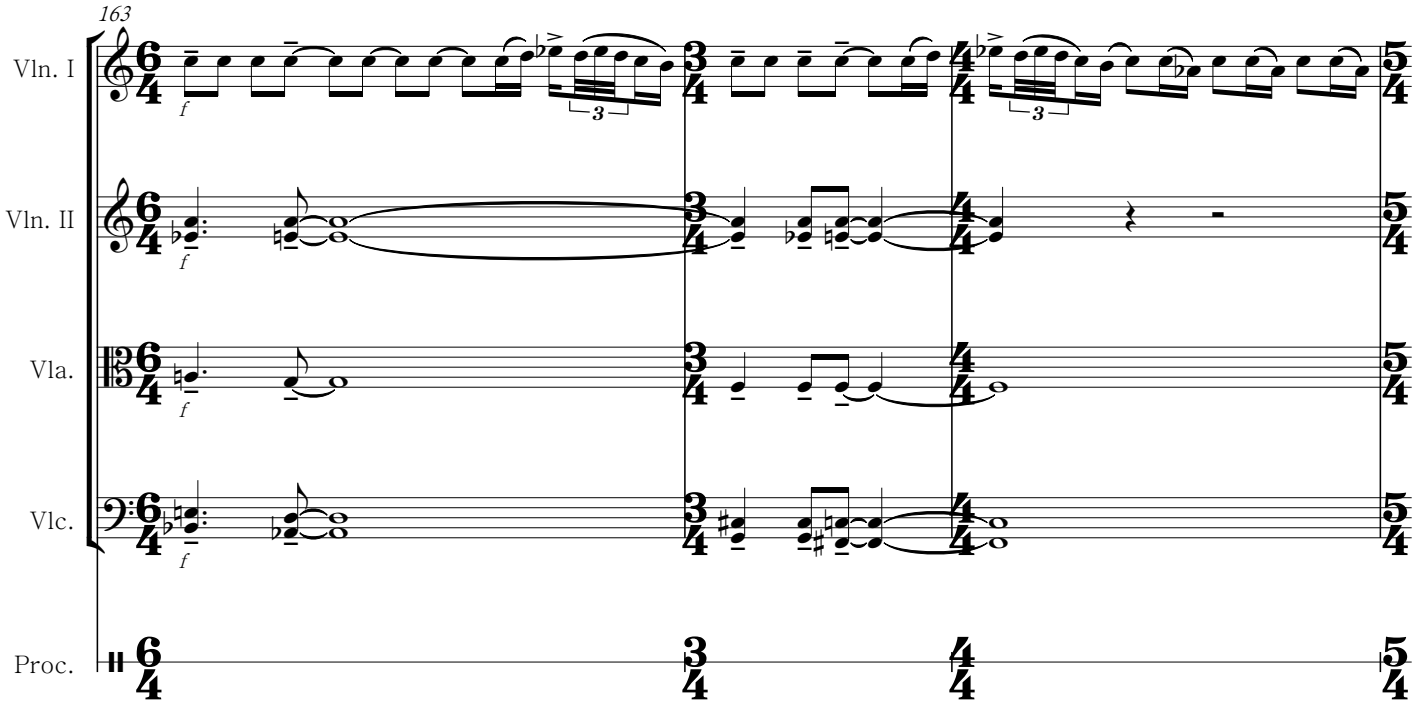

133
E
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
norm.
mf
TUTTI: moderate reverb w/norm. decay
05:48
05:54

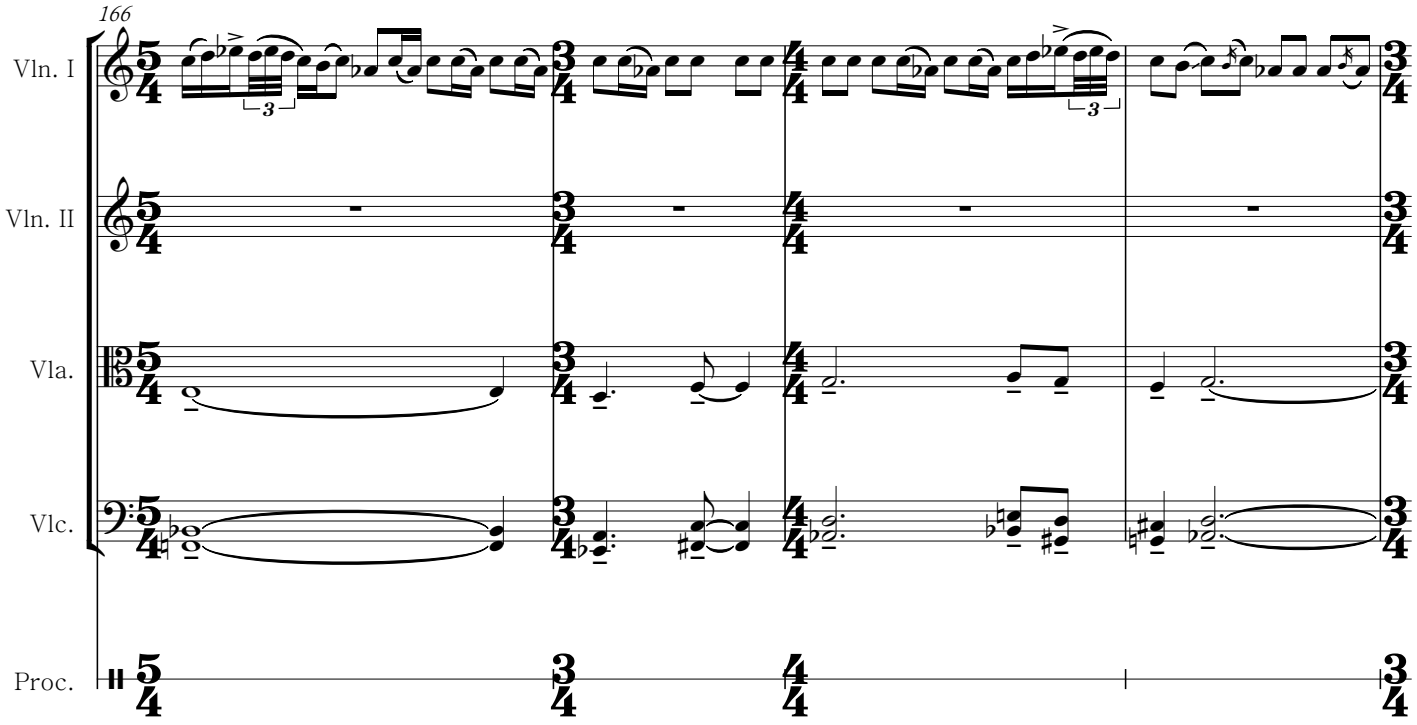

139
Vln. I
flautando
mf
Vln. II
flautando
mf
Vla.
flautando
mf
Vlc.
flautando
Proc.

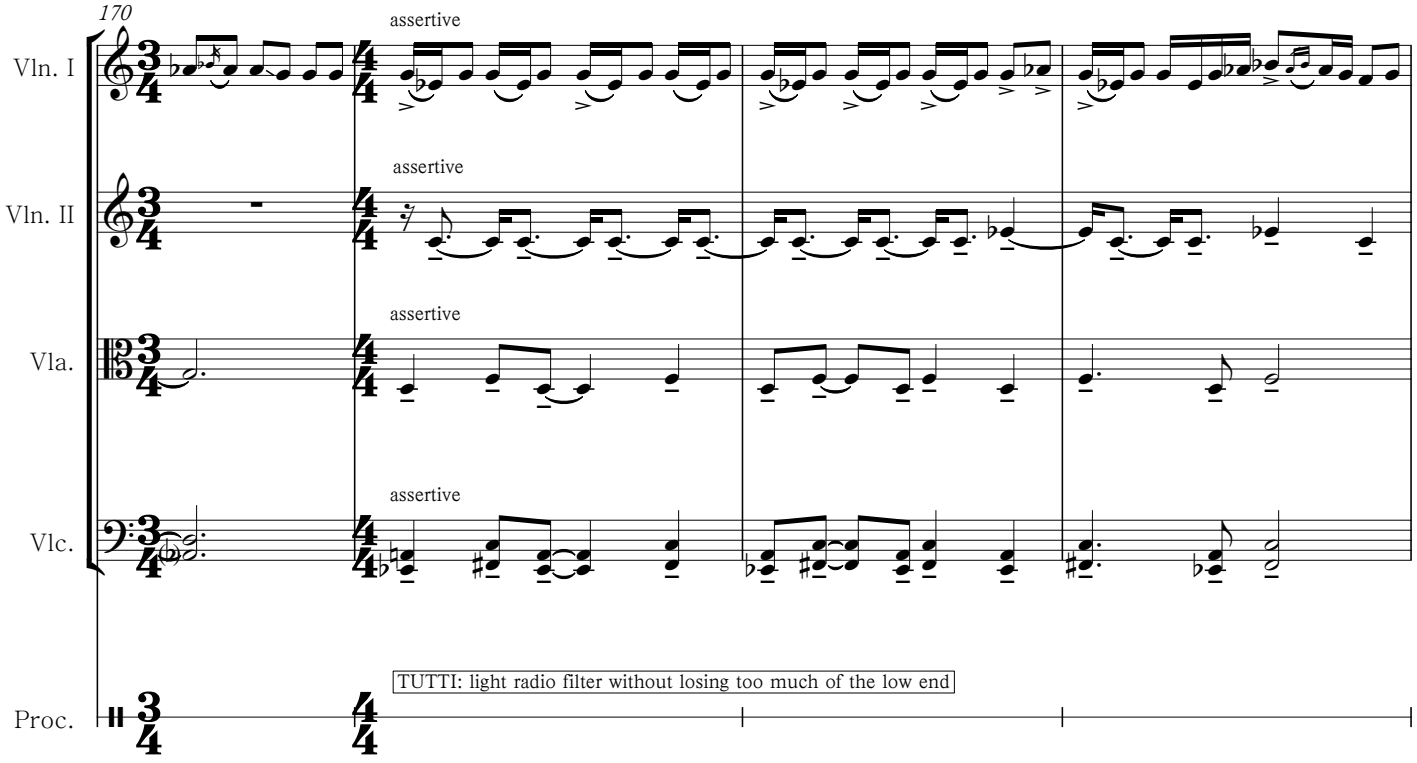

144
Vln. I
mp
norm.
mf
Vln. II
mp
norm.
mf
Vla.
mp
norm.
mf
Vlc.
flaut.
Proc.
TUTTI: normal

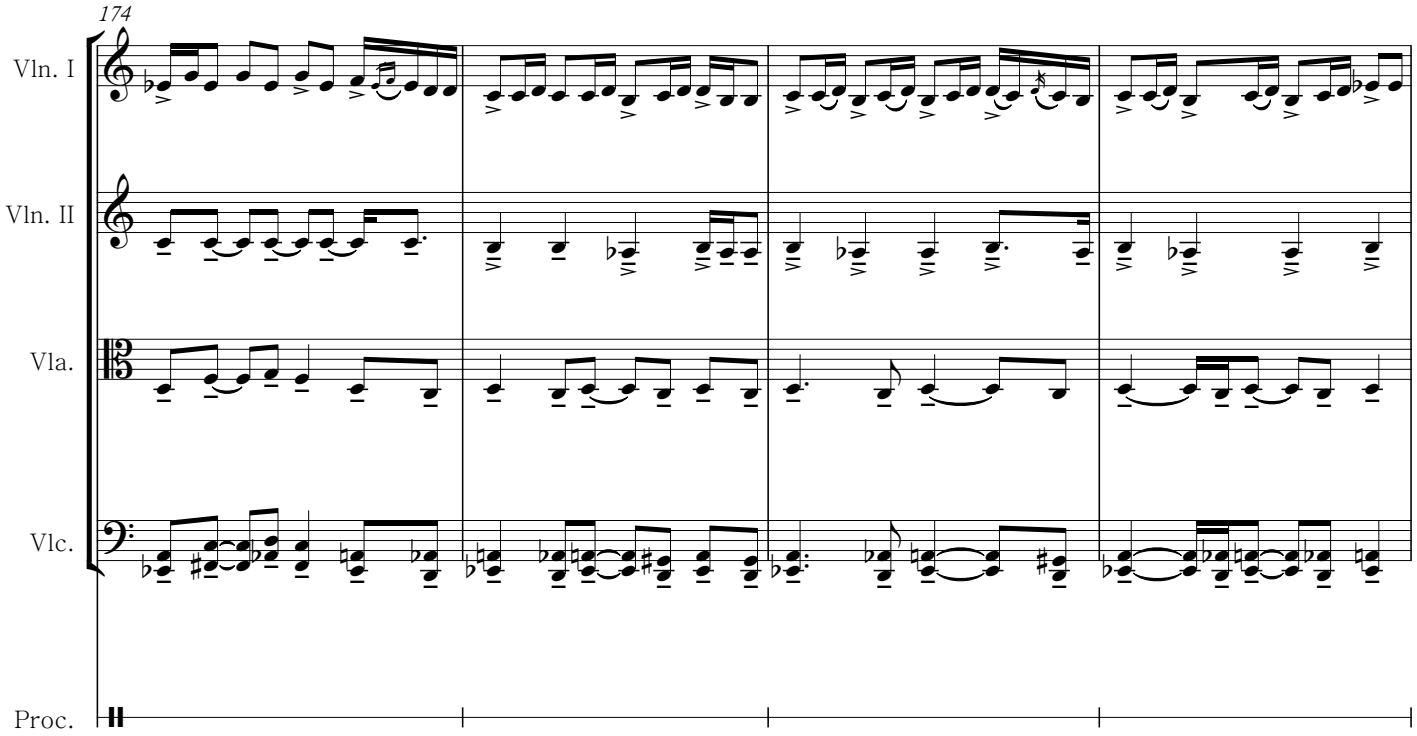

151
fragile
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
f
mf
p
n

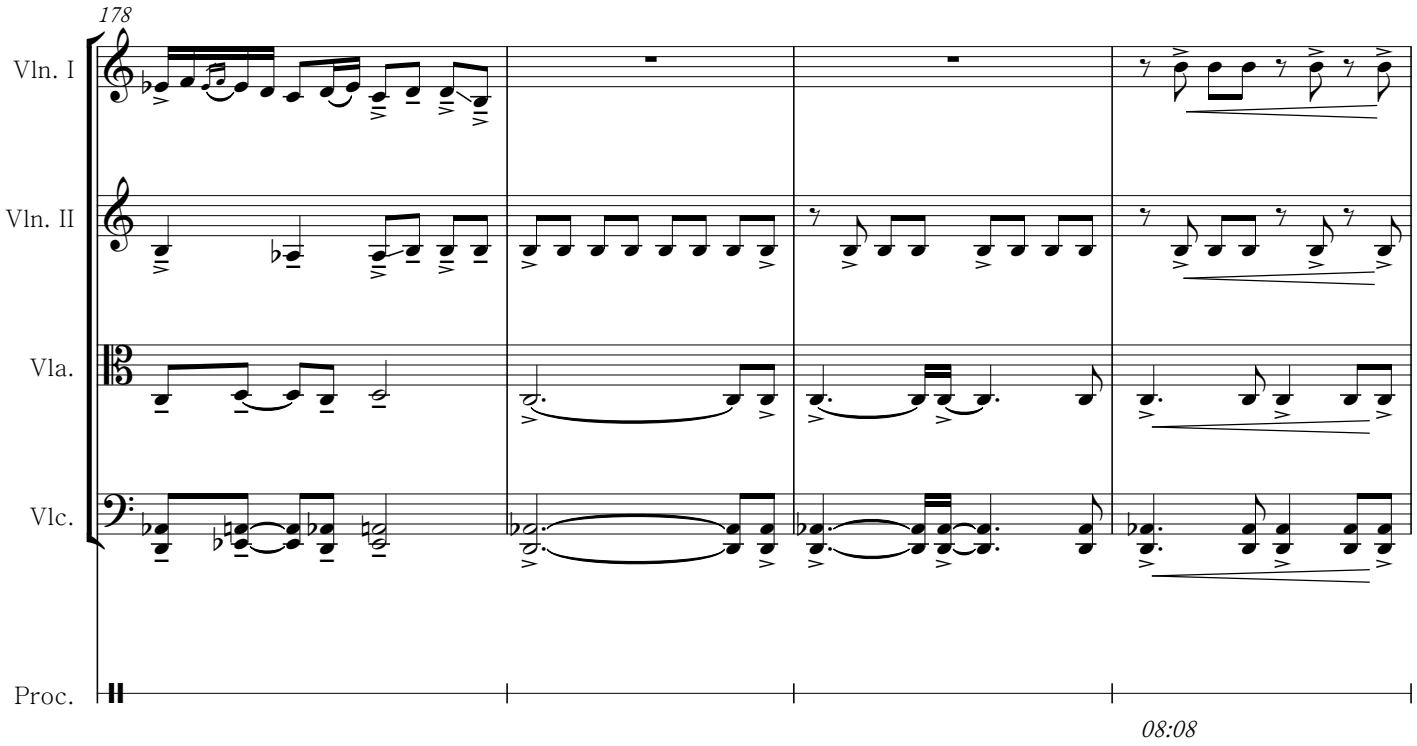

158
norm.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mp
mf
n

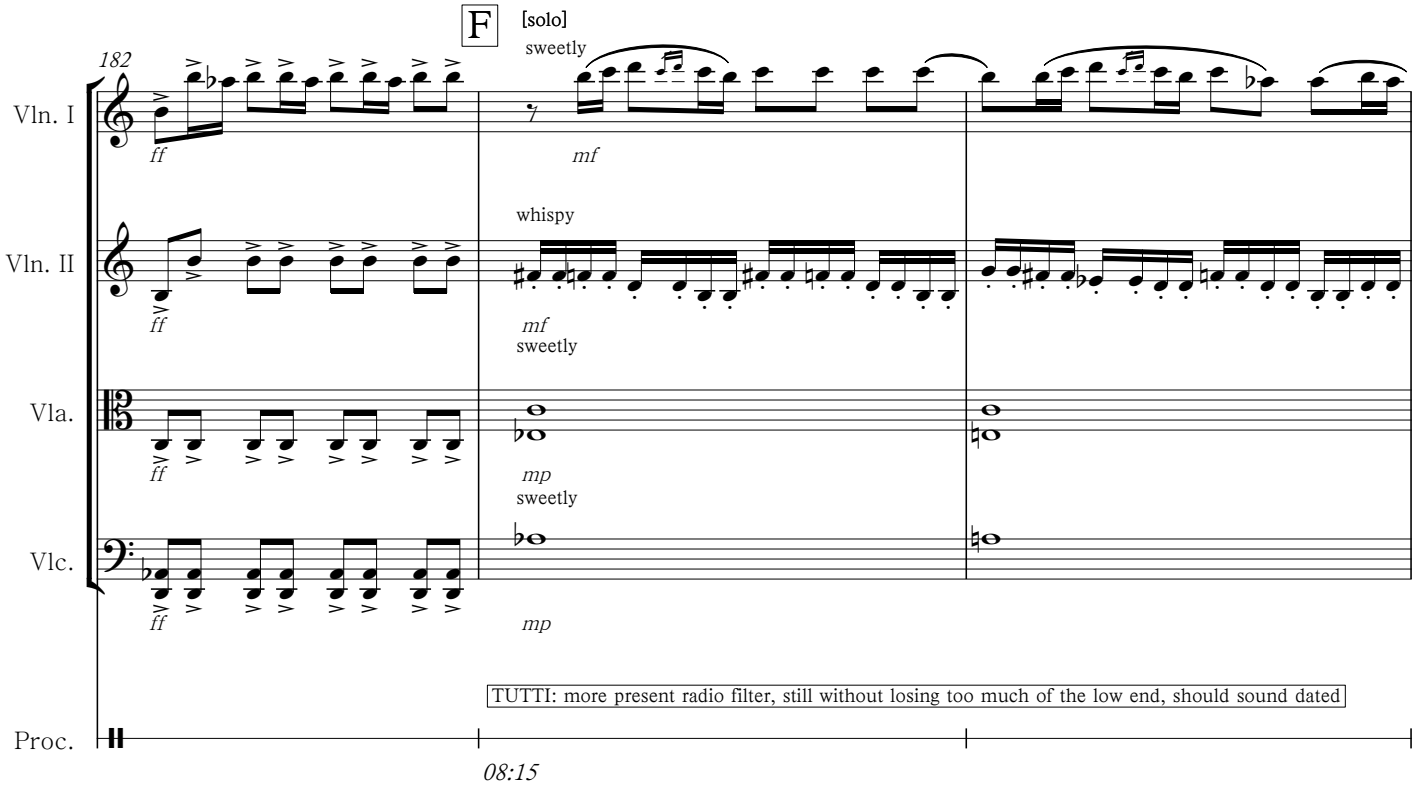

163
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

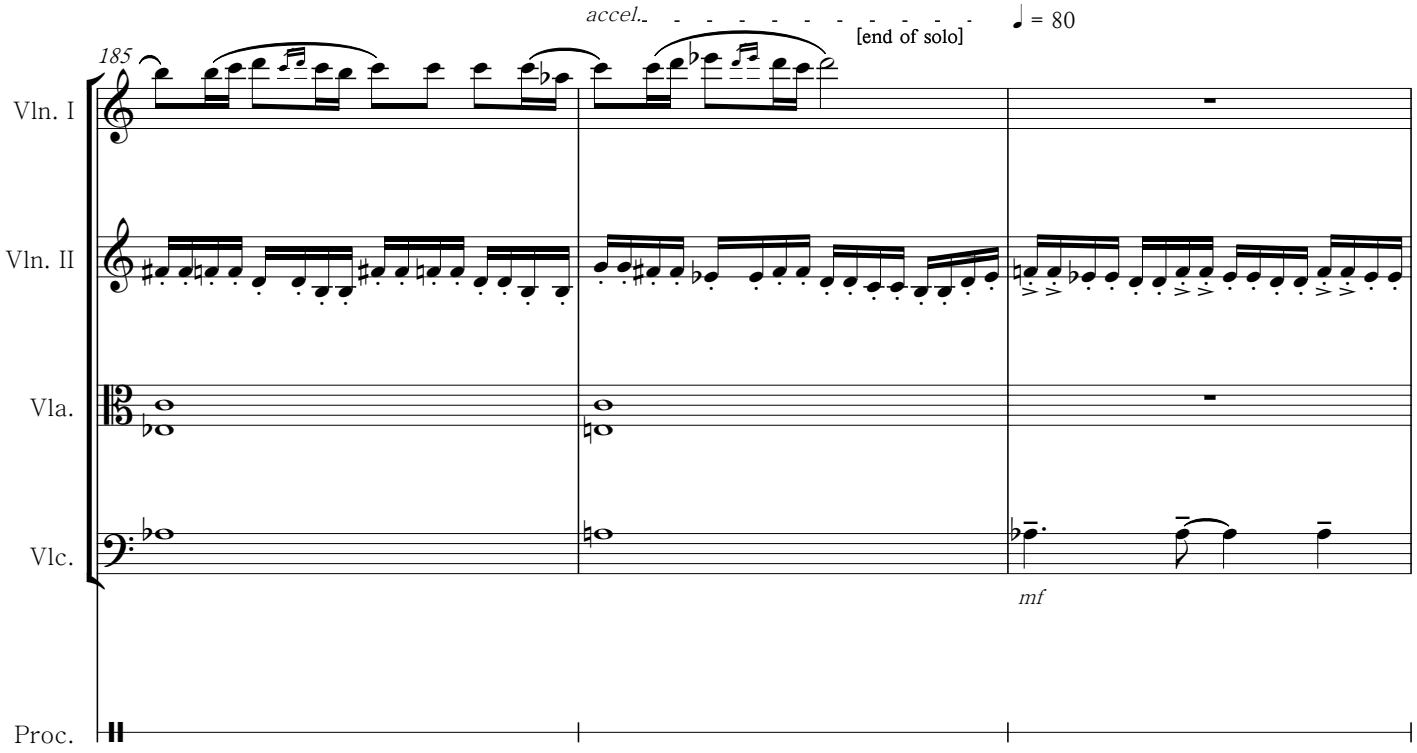

166
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

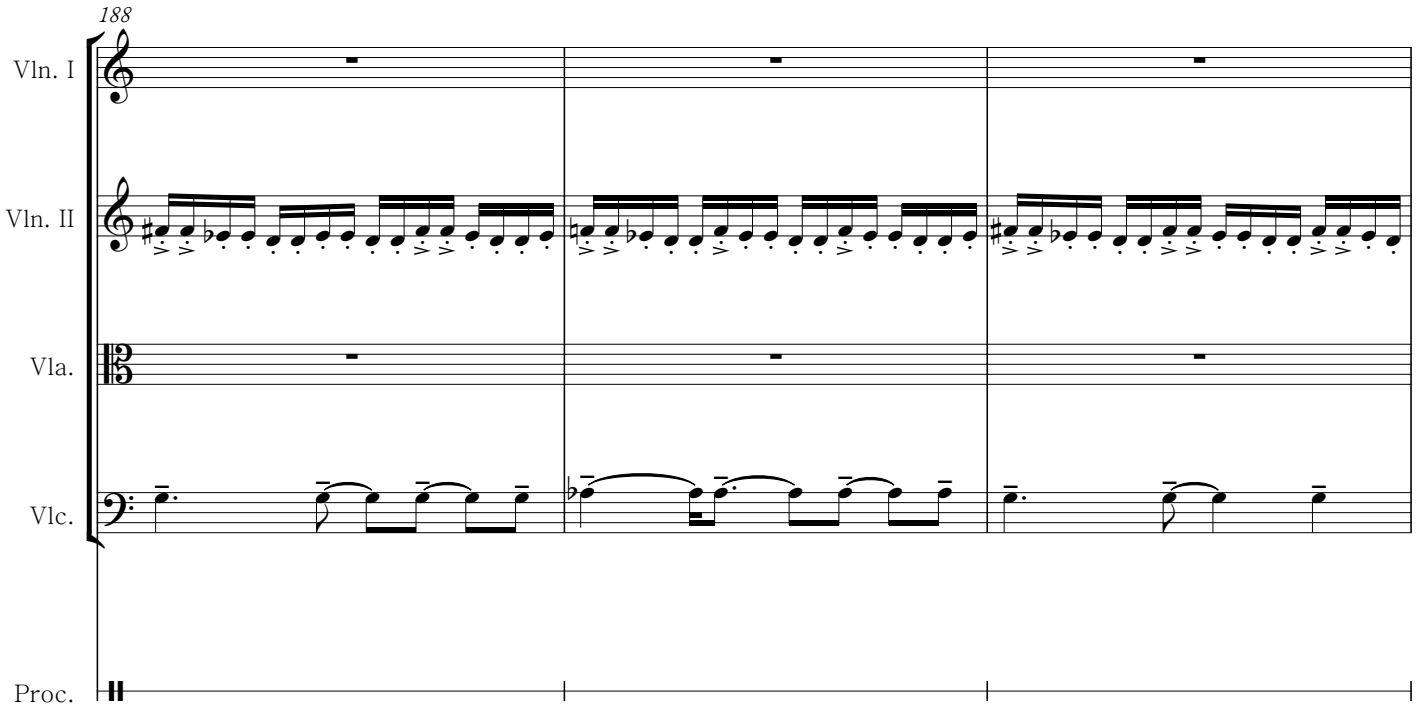

170
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
assertive
assertive
assertive
assertive
TUTTI: light radio filter without losing too much of the low end

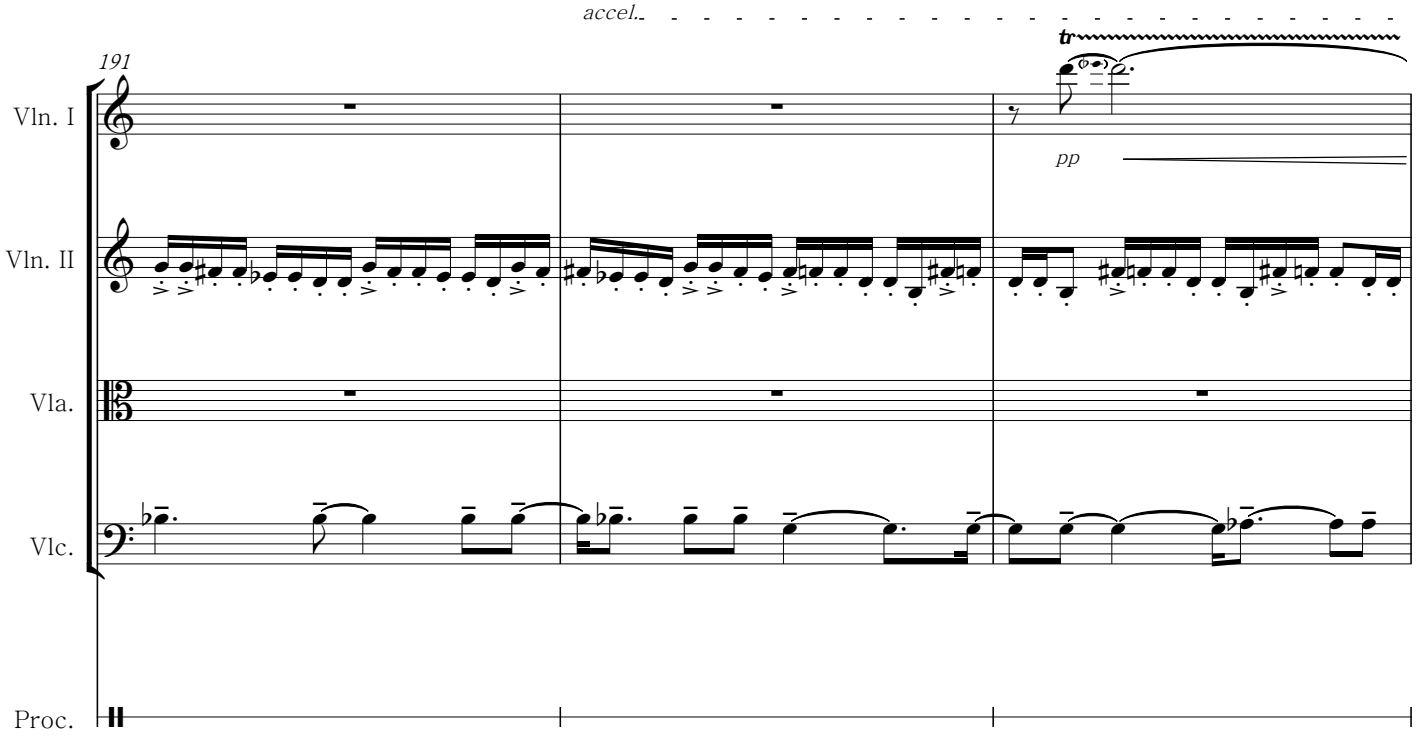

174
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

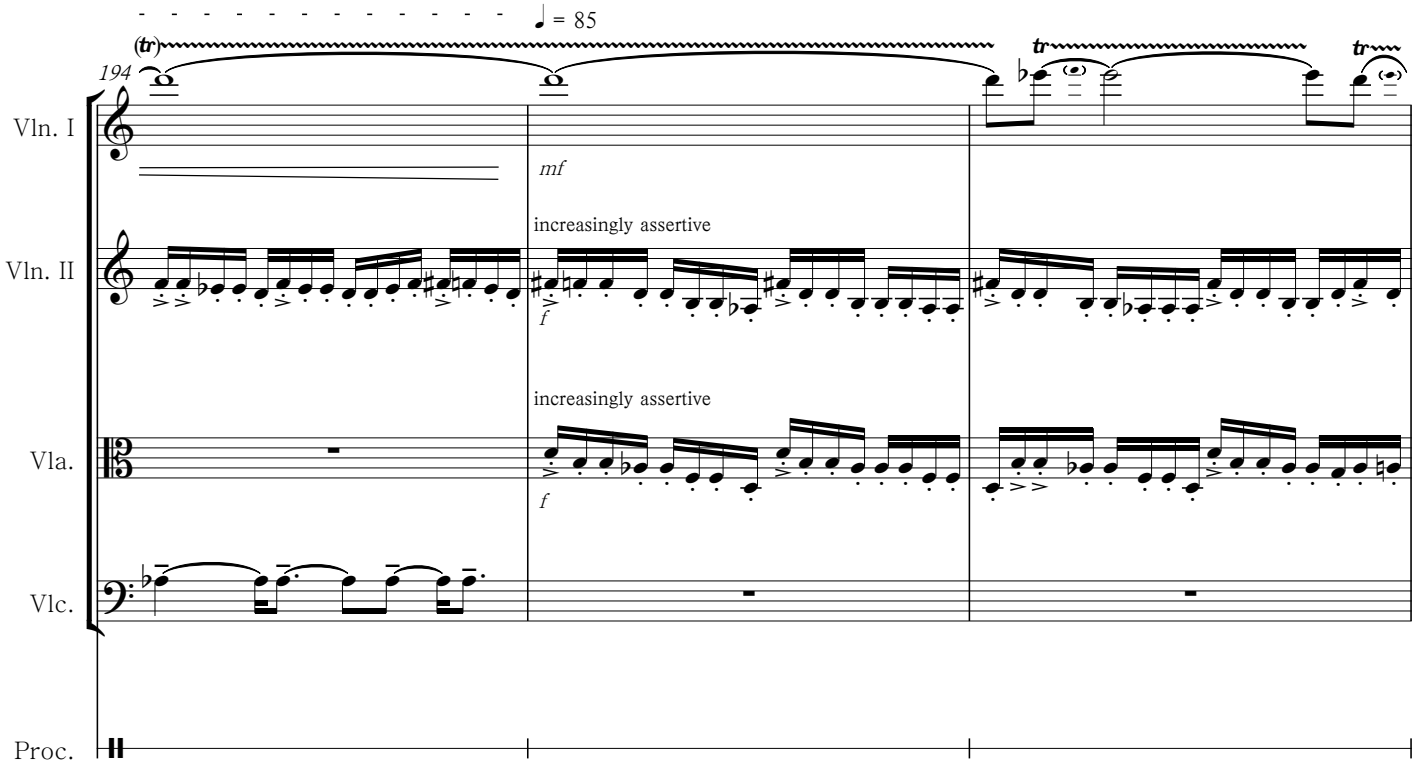

178
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
08:08

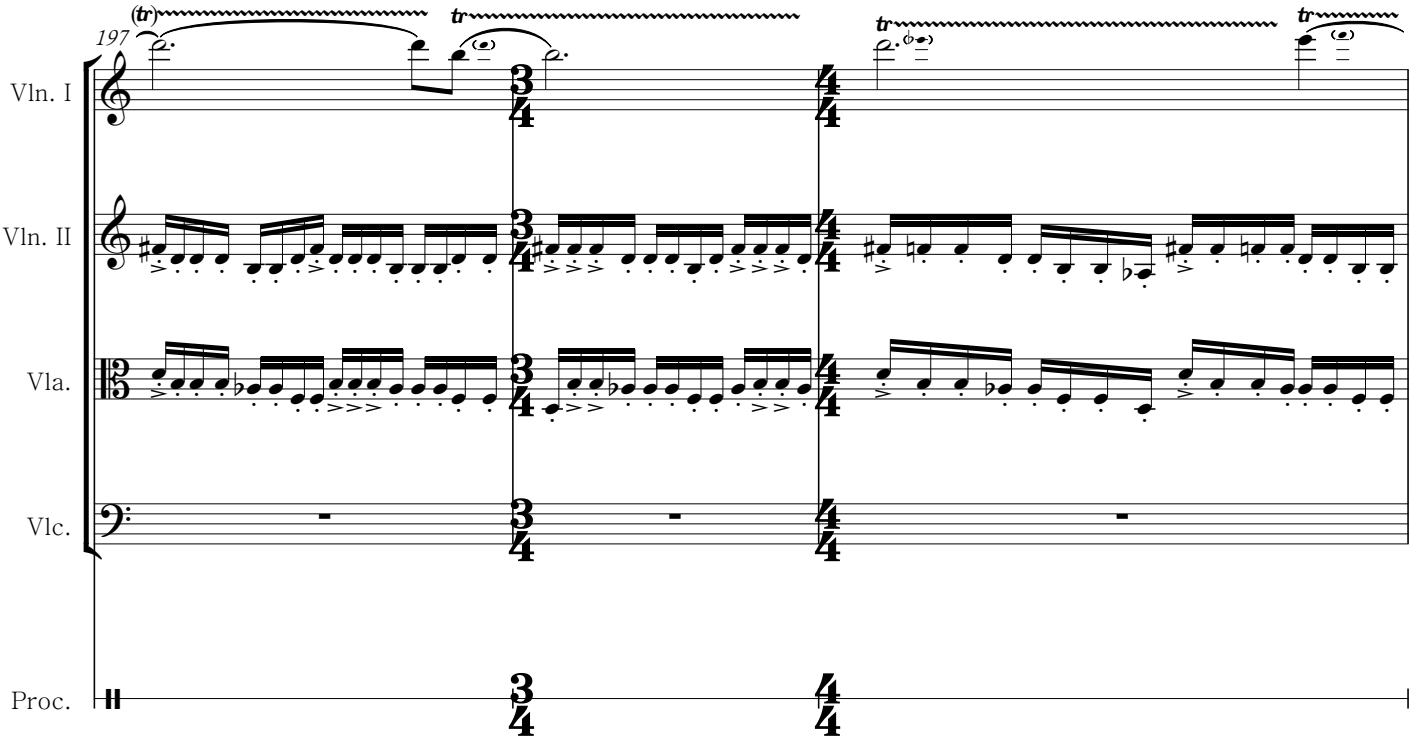

F
[solo]
sweetly
182
Vln. I
ff
mf
whispy
Vln. II
ff
mf
sweetly
Vla.
ff
mp
sweetly
Vlc.
ff
mp
TUTTI: more present radio filter, still without losing too much of the low end, should sound dated
Proc.
08:15

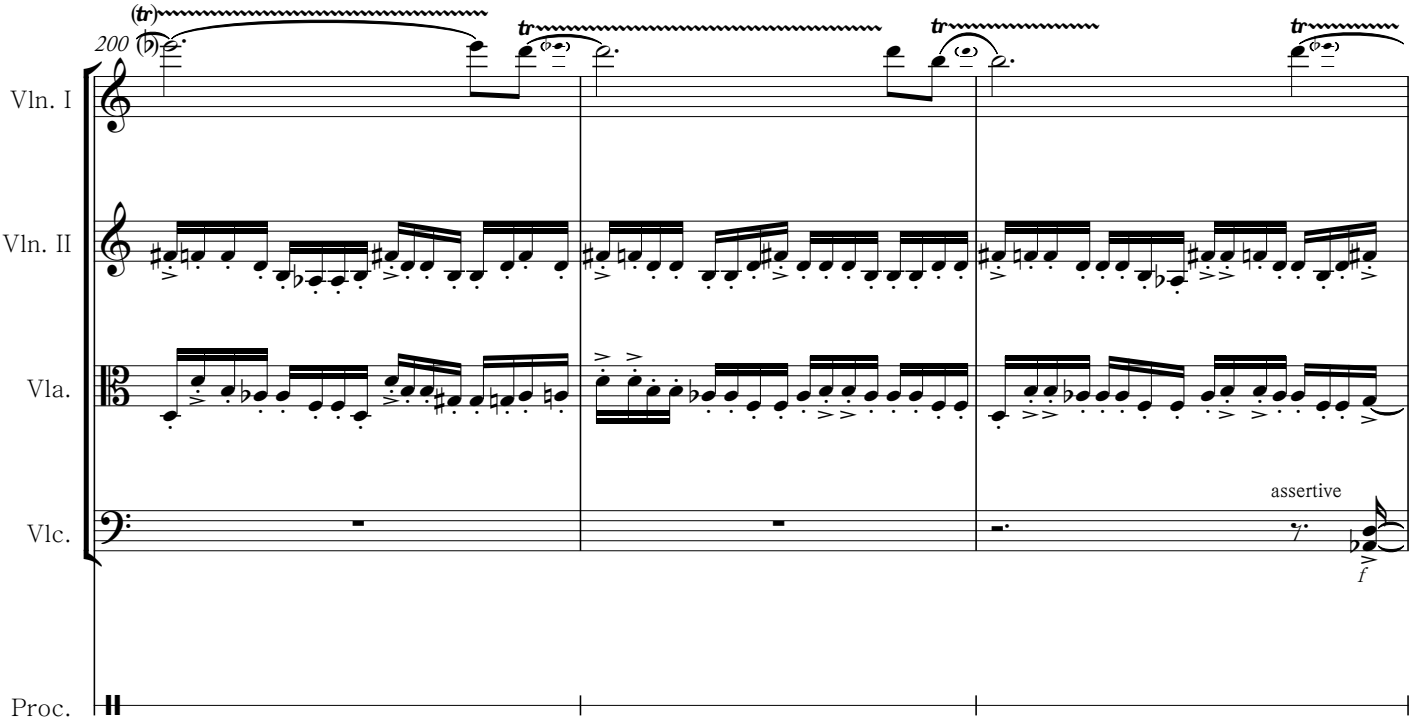

accel.
[end of solo]
♩ = 80
185
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
mf
Proc.

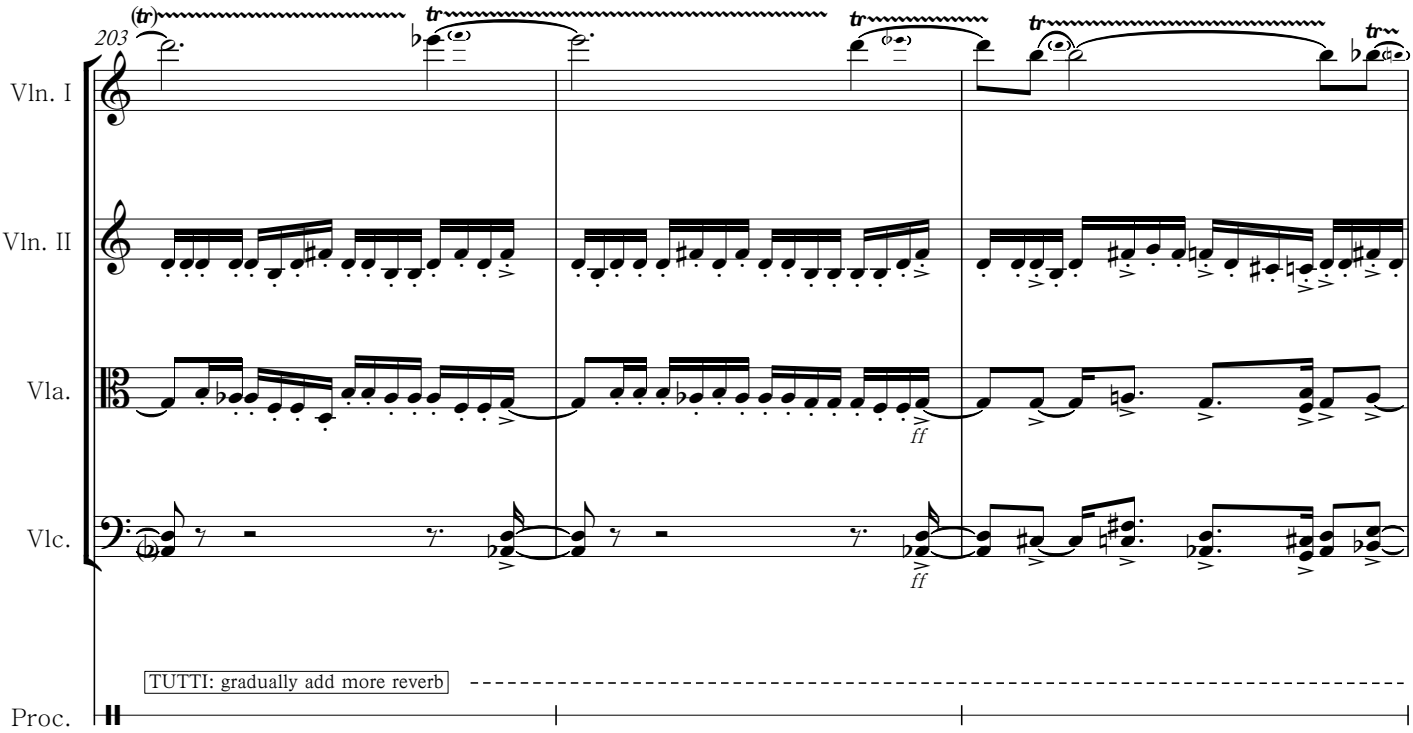

188
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

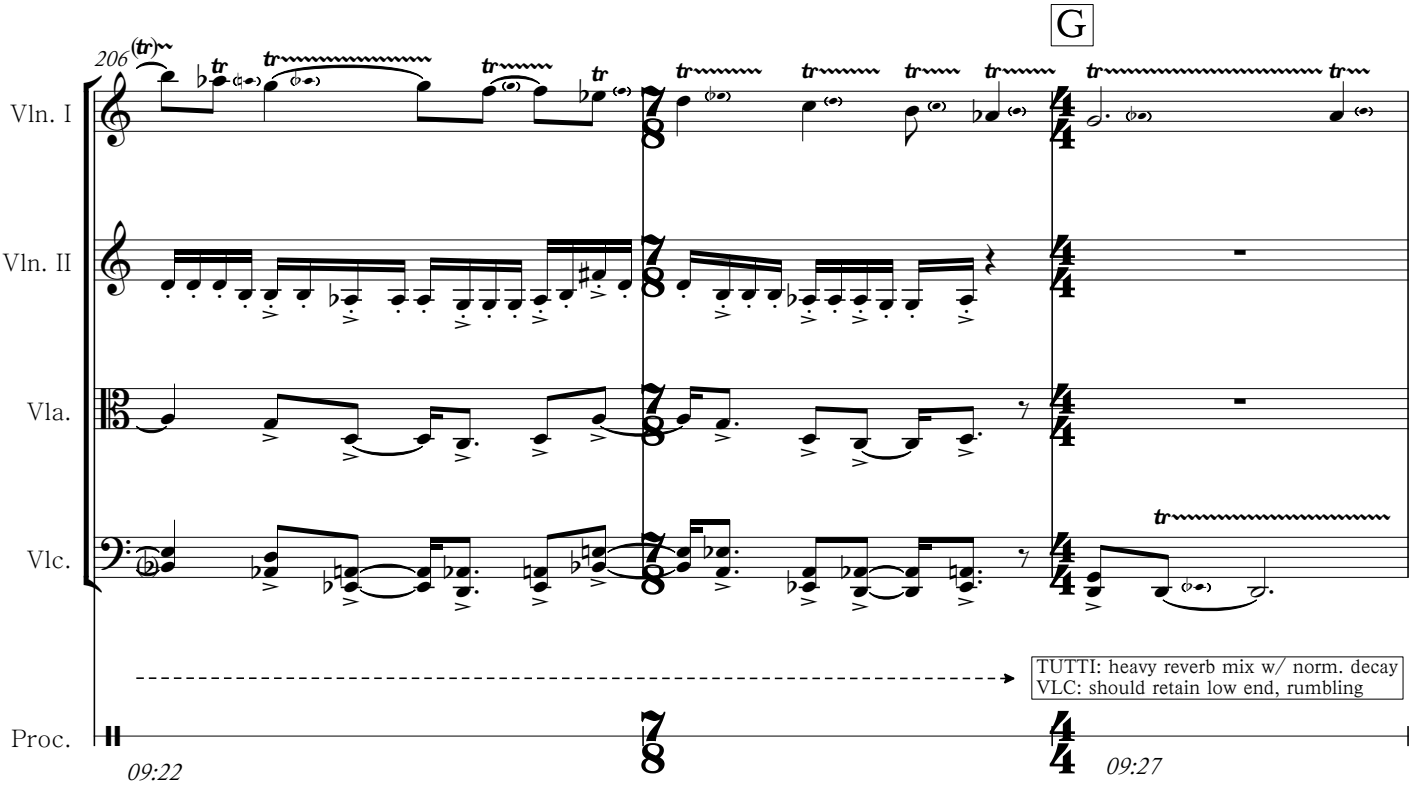

accel.
191
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr
pp

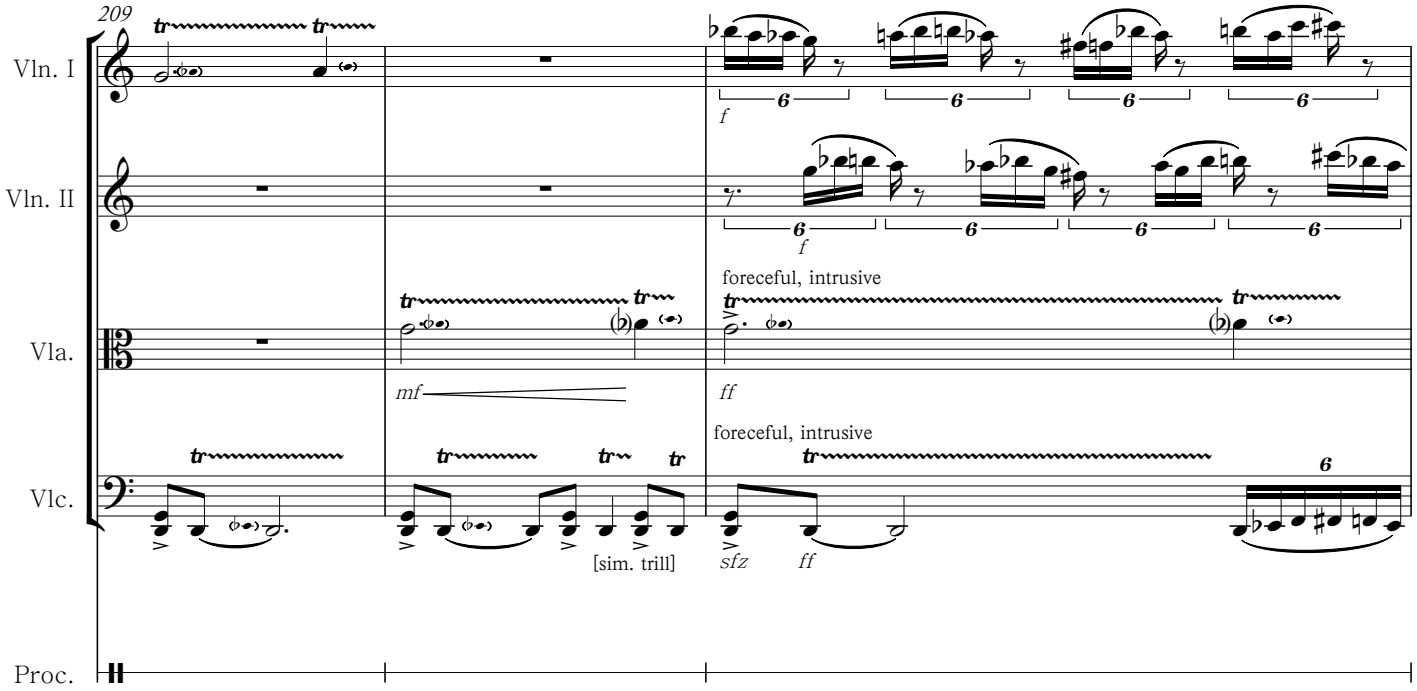

♩ = 85
194
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
(tr)
tr
tr
mf
increasingly assertive
f
increasingly assertive
f

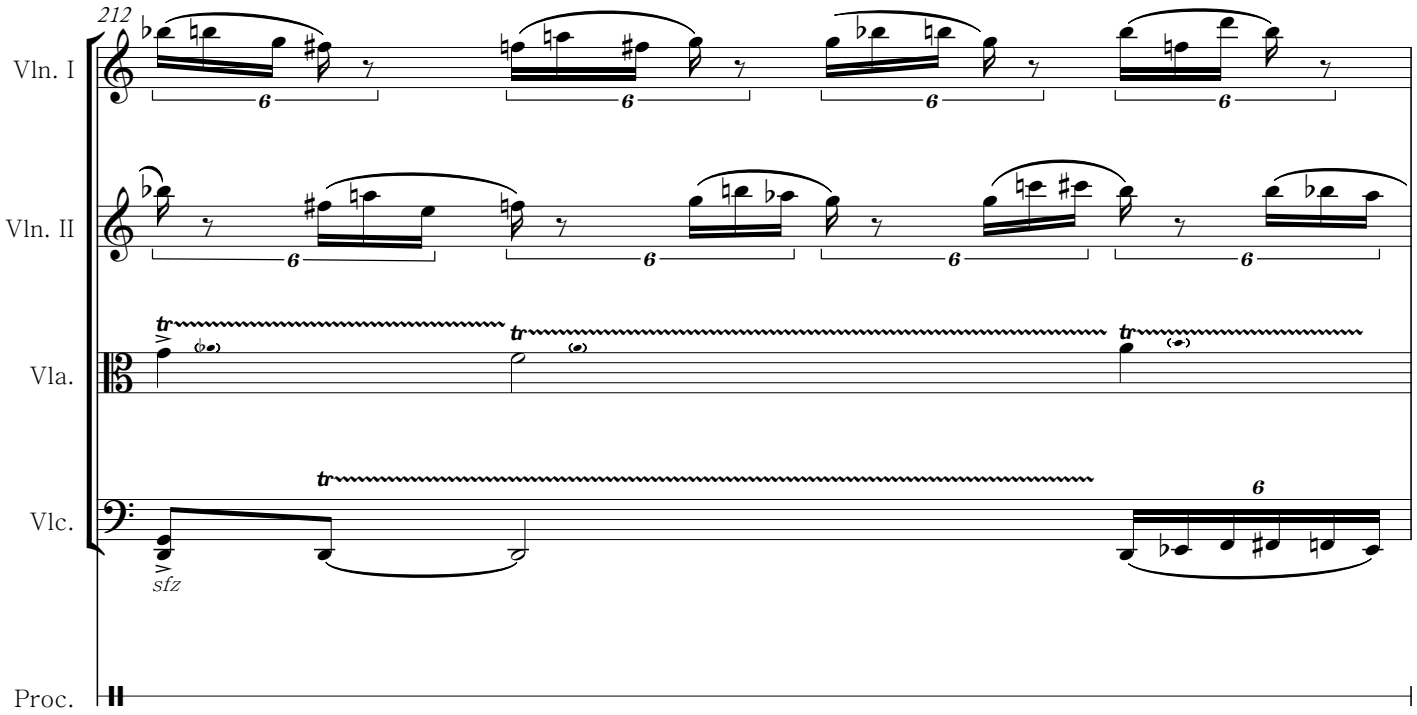

197
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

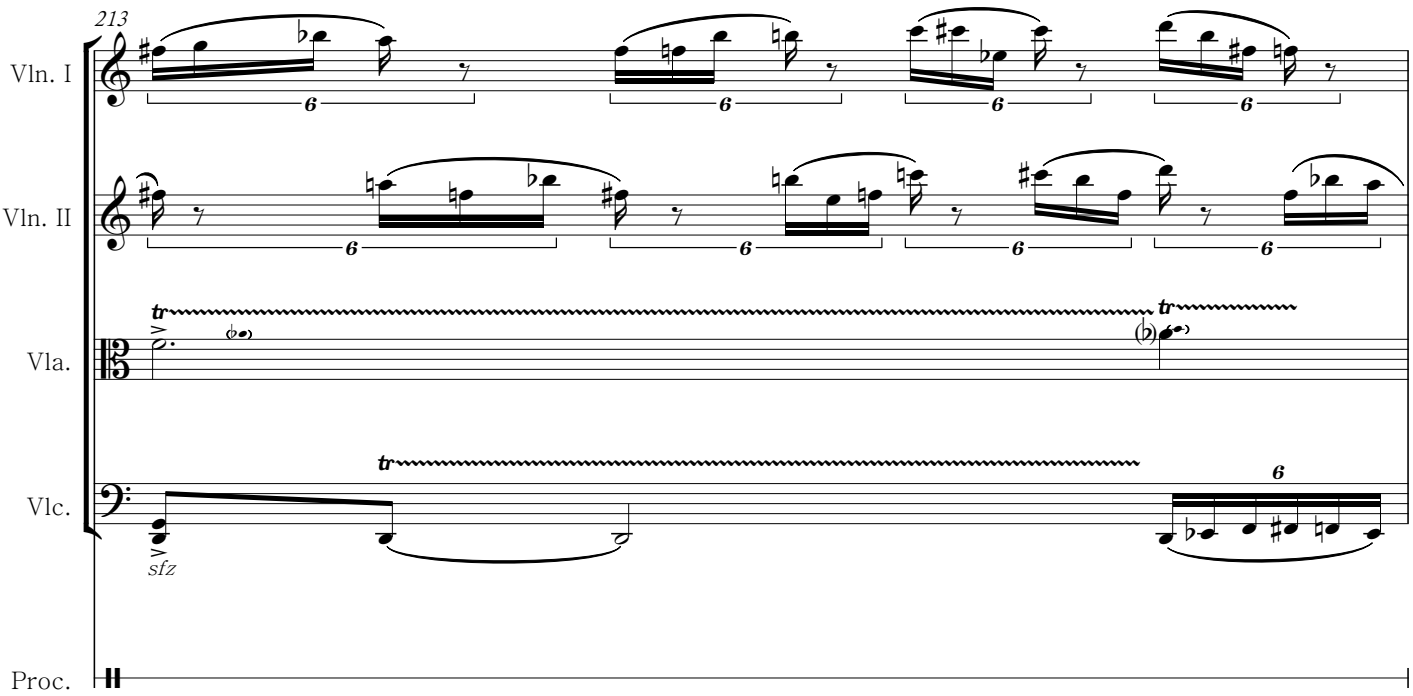

200
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
assertive
f

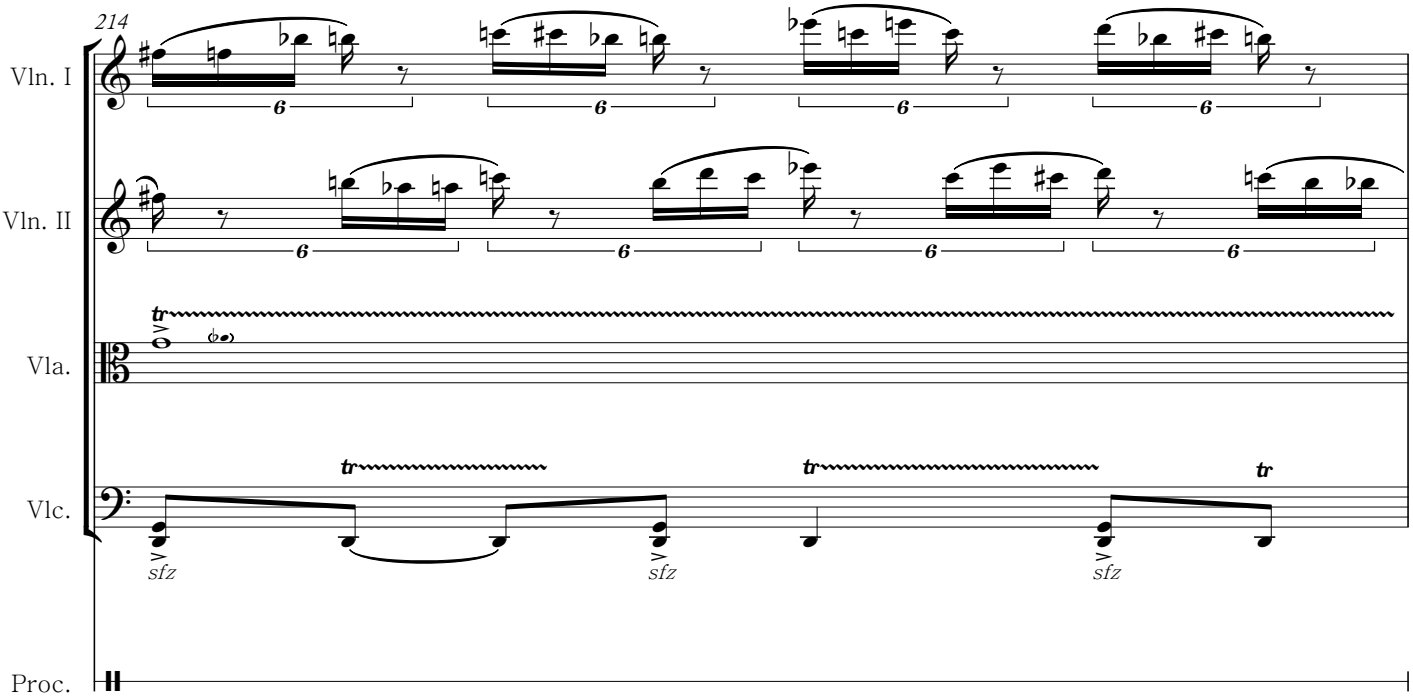

203
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
ff
ff
TUTTI: gradually add more reverb
Proc.

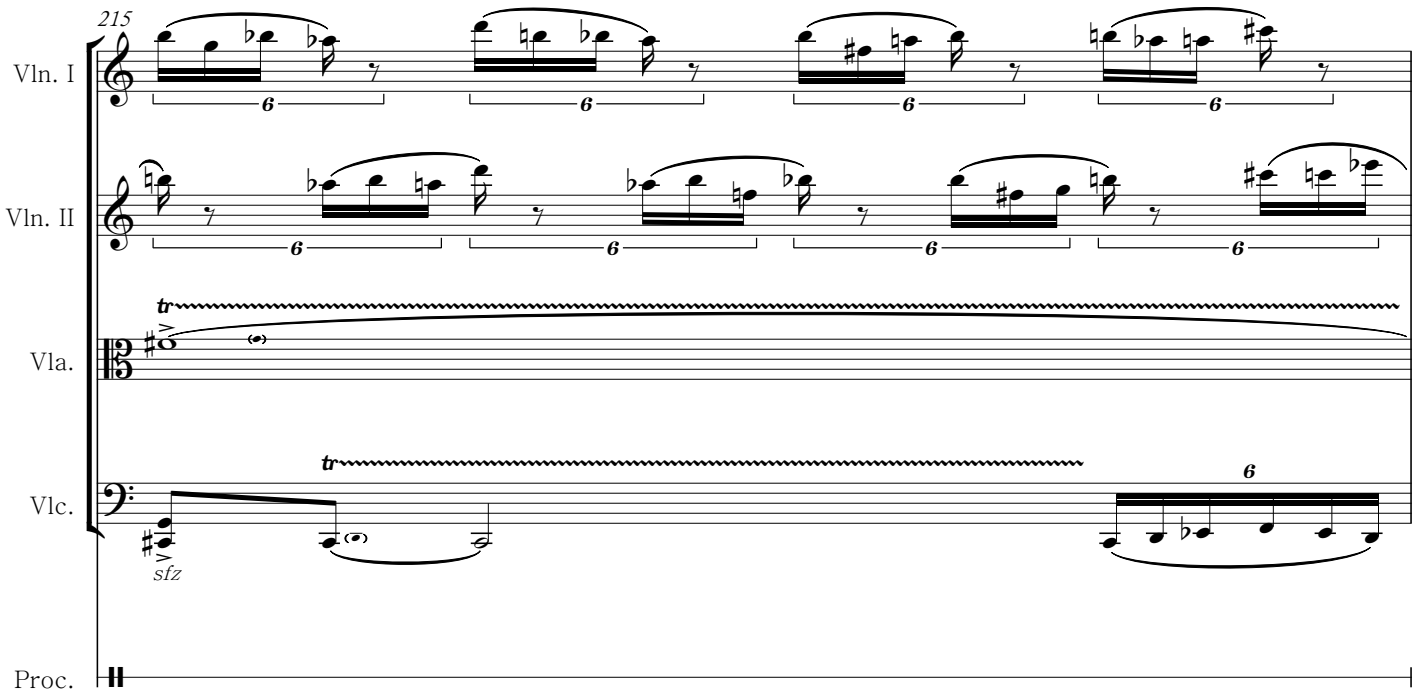

G
206
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
TUTTI: heavy reverb mix w/ norm. decay
VLC: should retain low end, rumbling
Proc.
09:22
09:27

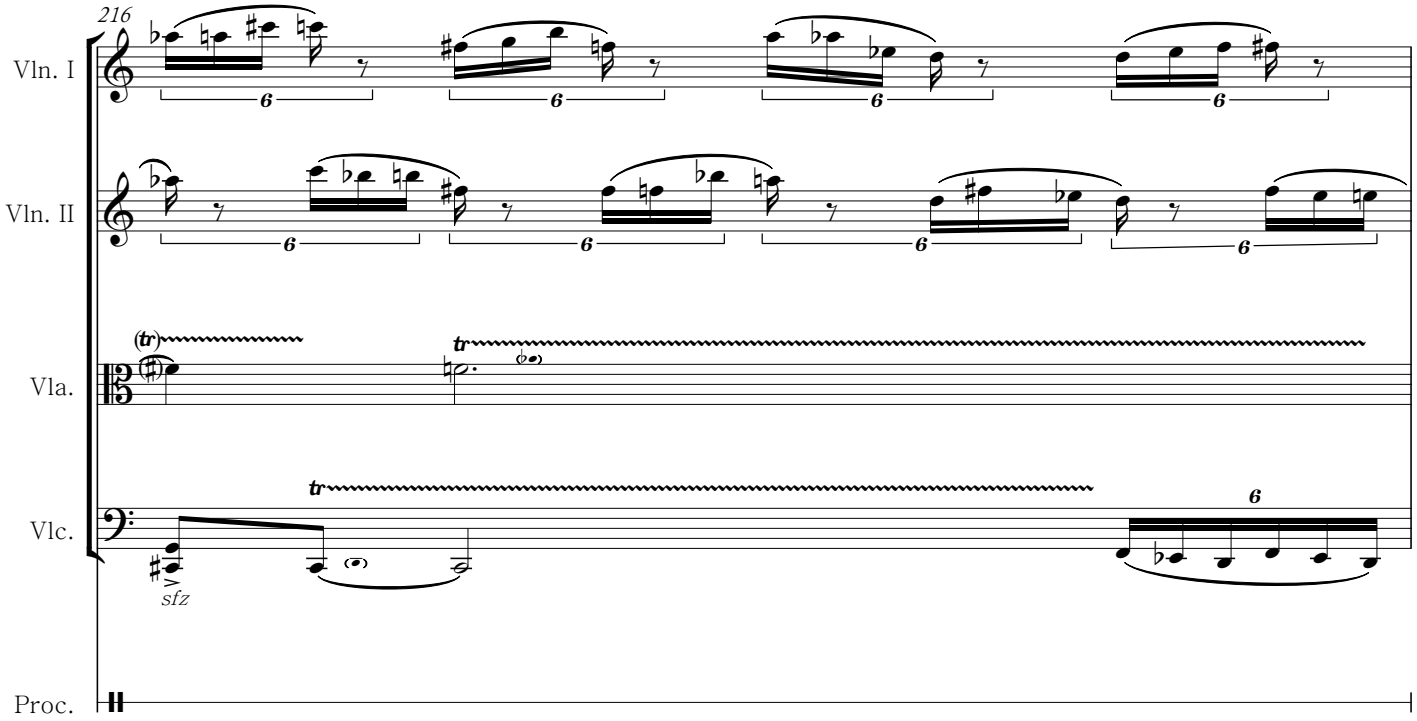

209
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
f
f
foreceful, intrusive
mf
ff
foreceful, intrusive
[sim. trill]
sfz
ff

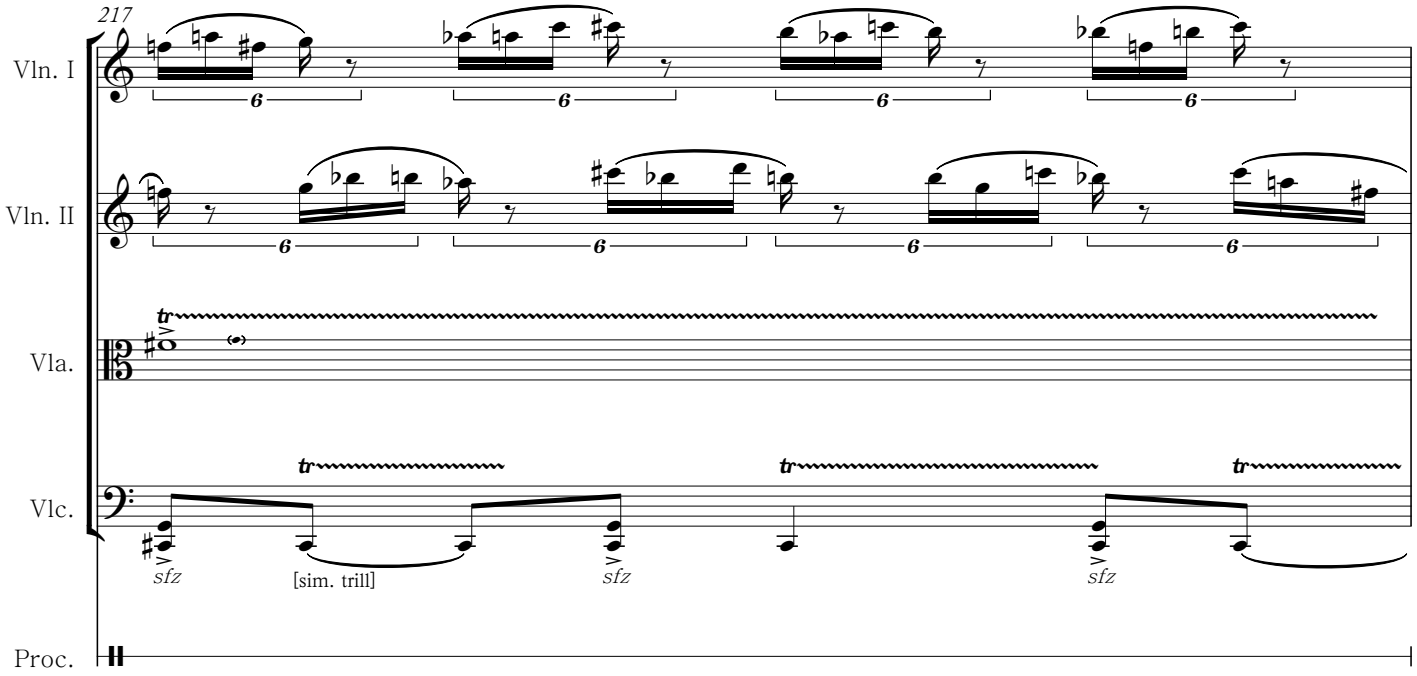

212
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sfz

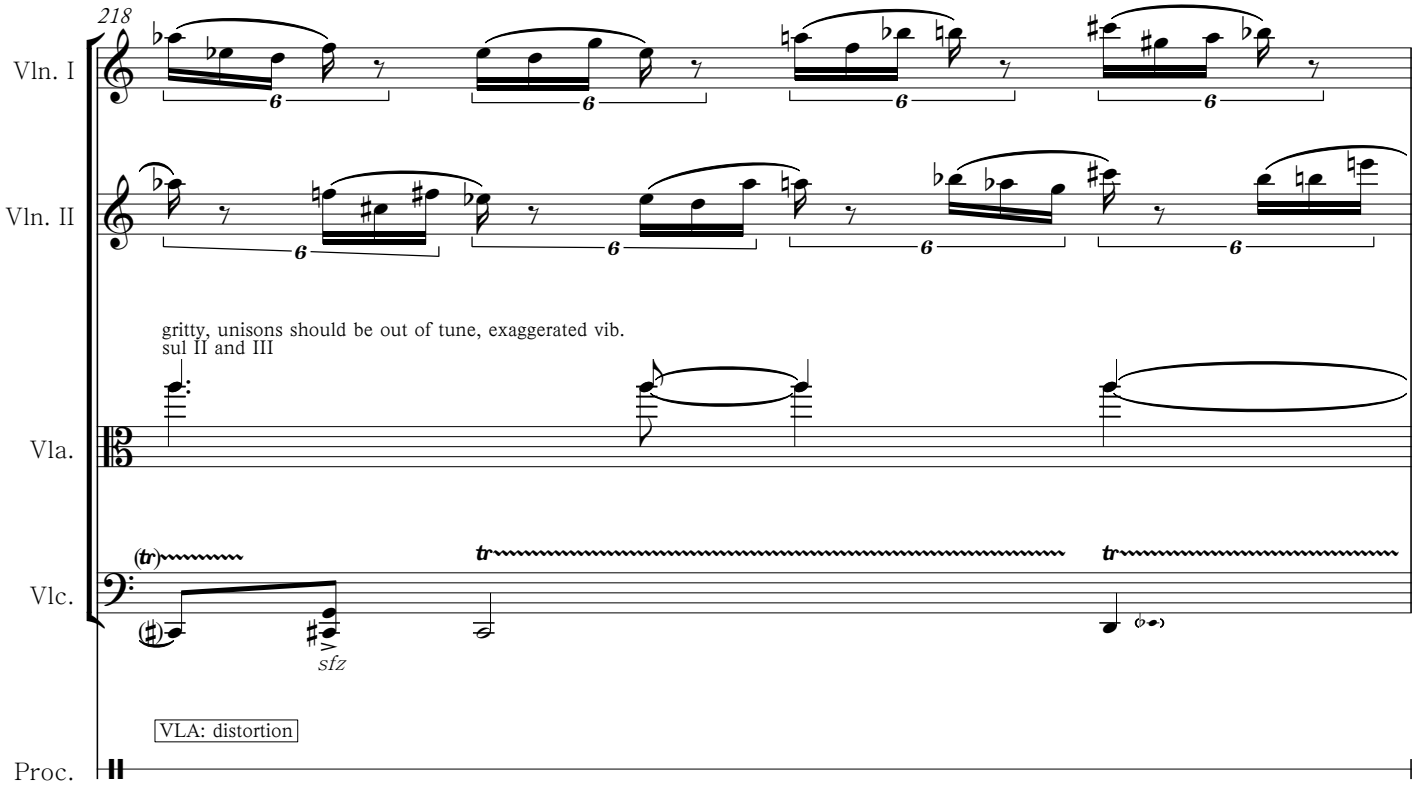

213
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr
sfz
6

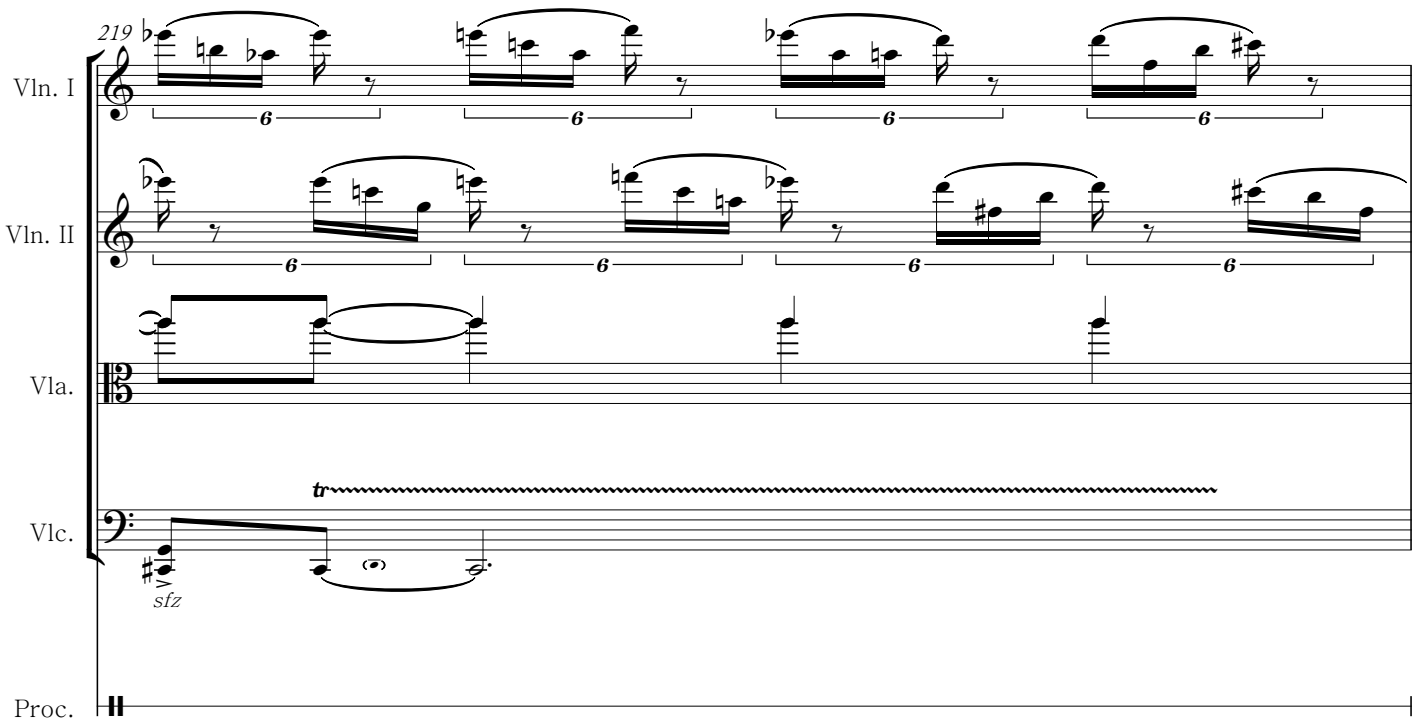

214
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr
sfz
6

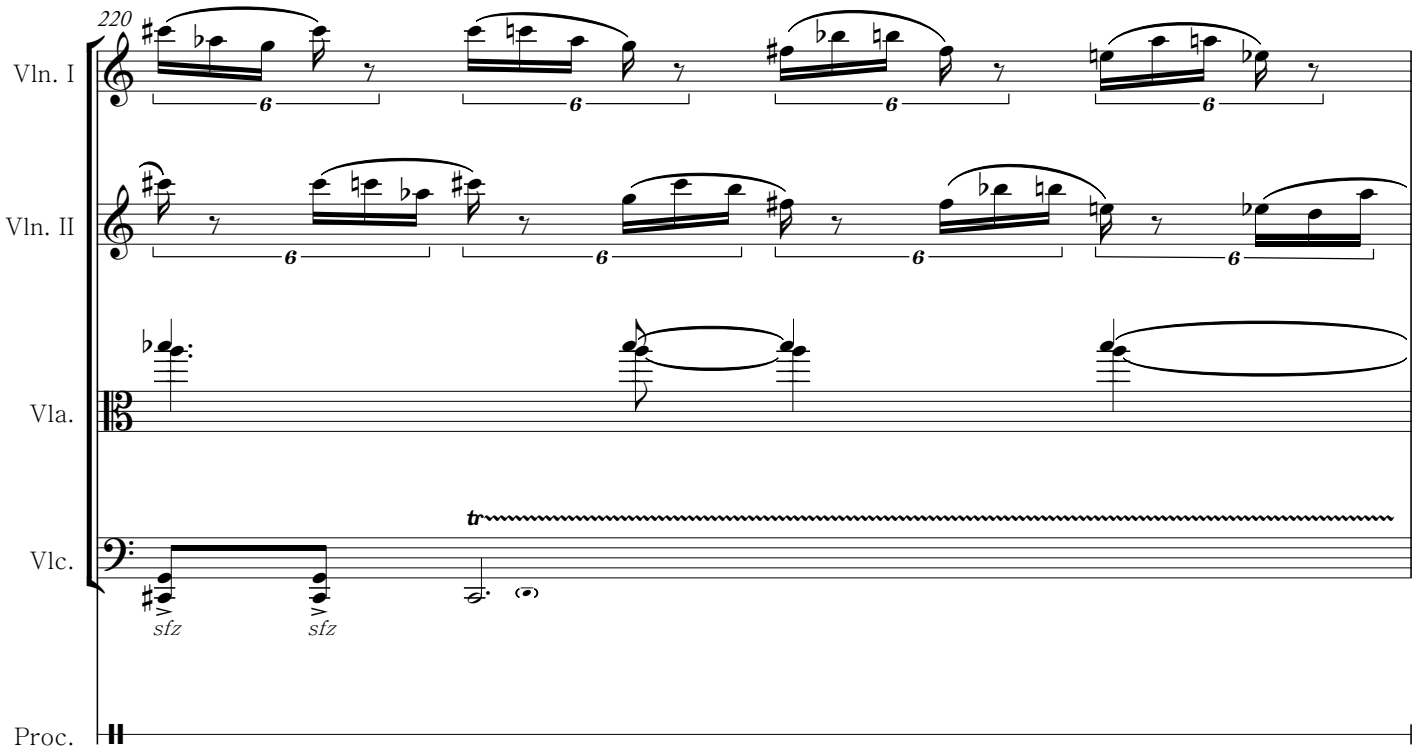

215
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr
sfz
6

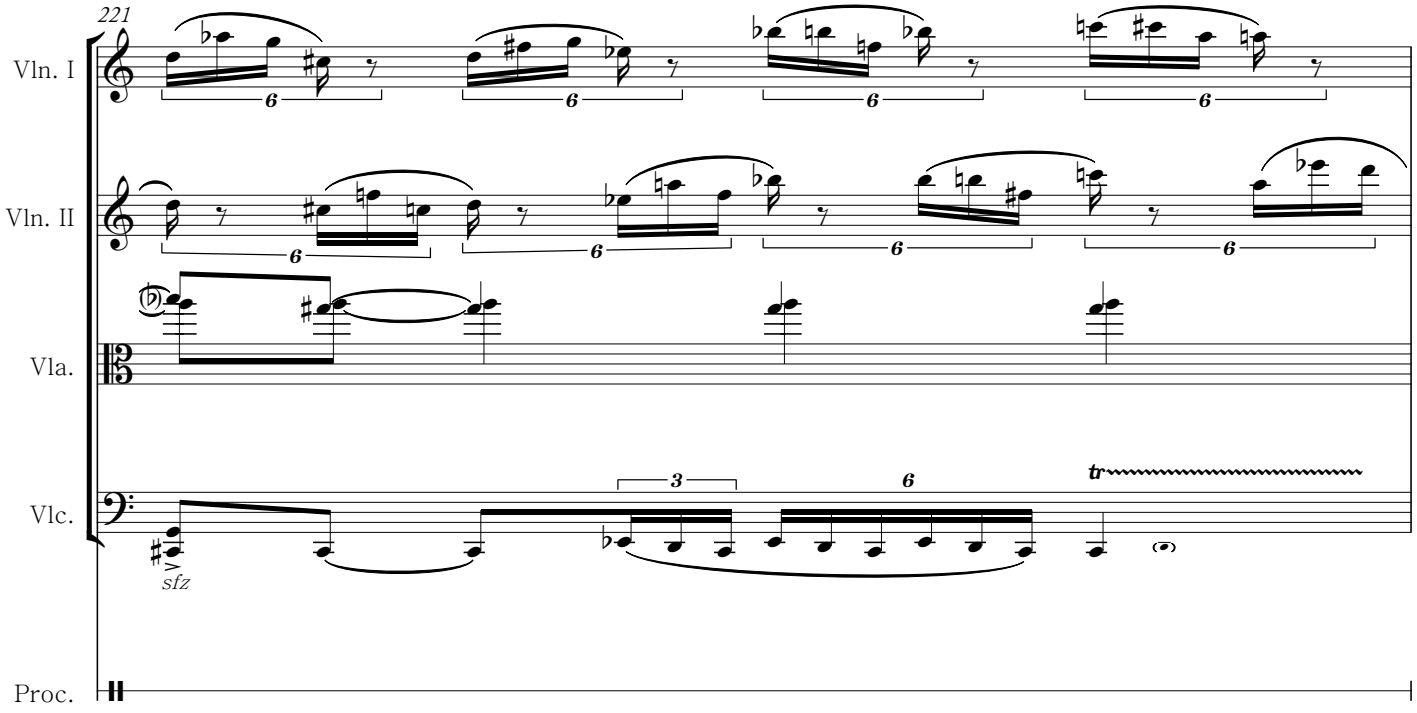

216
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
(tr)
tr
sfz
6

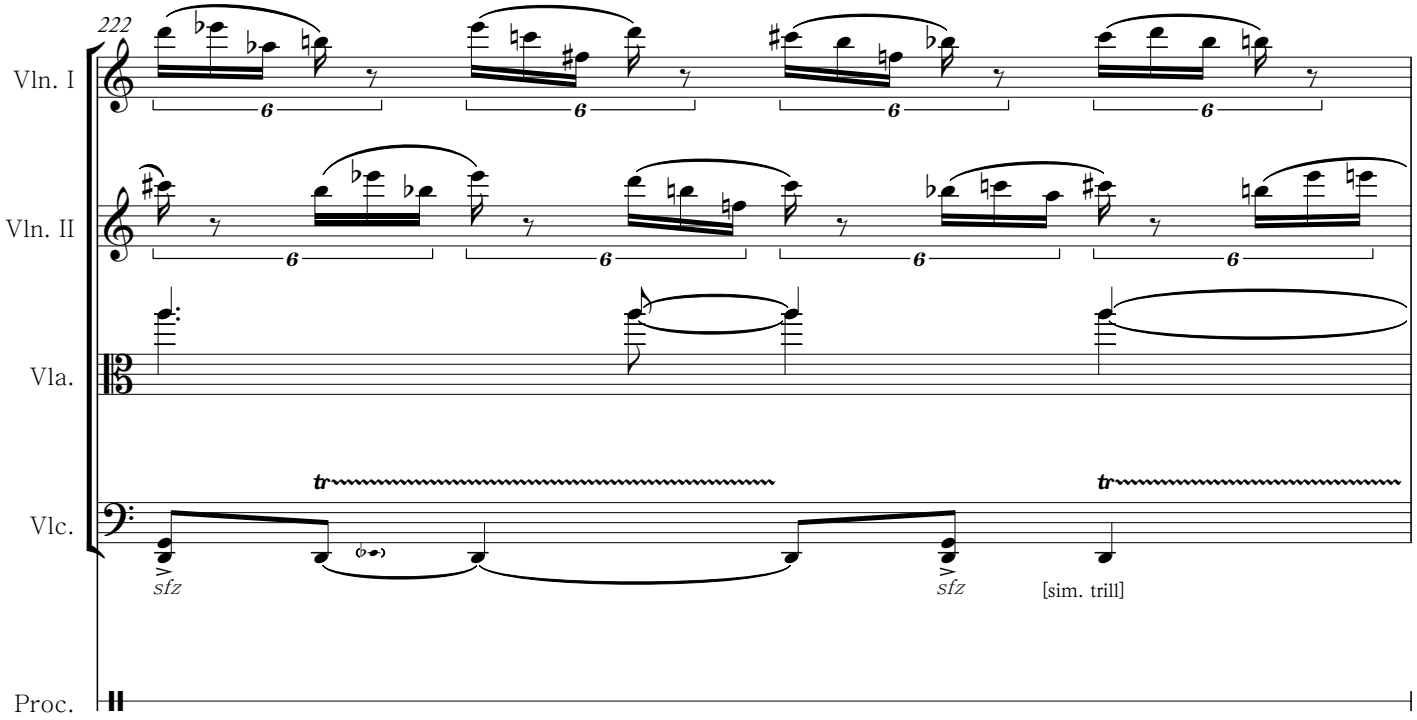

217
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sfz
[sim. trill]
sfz
sfz

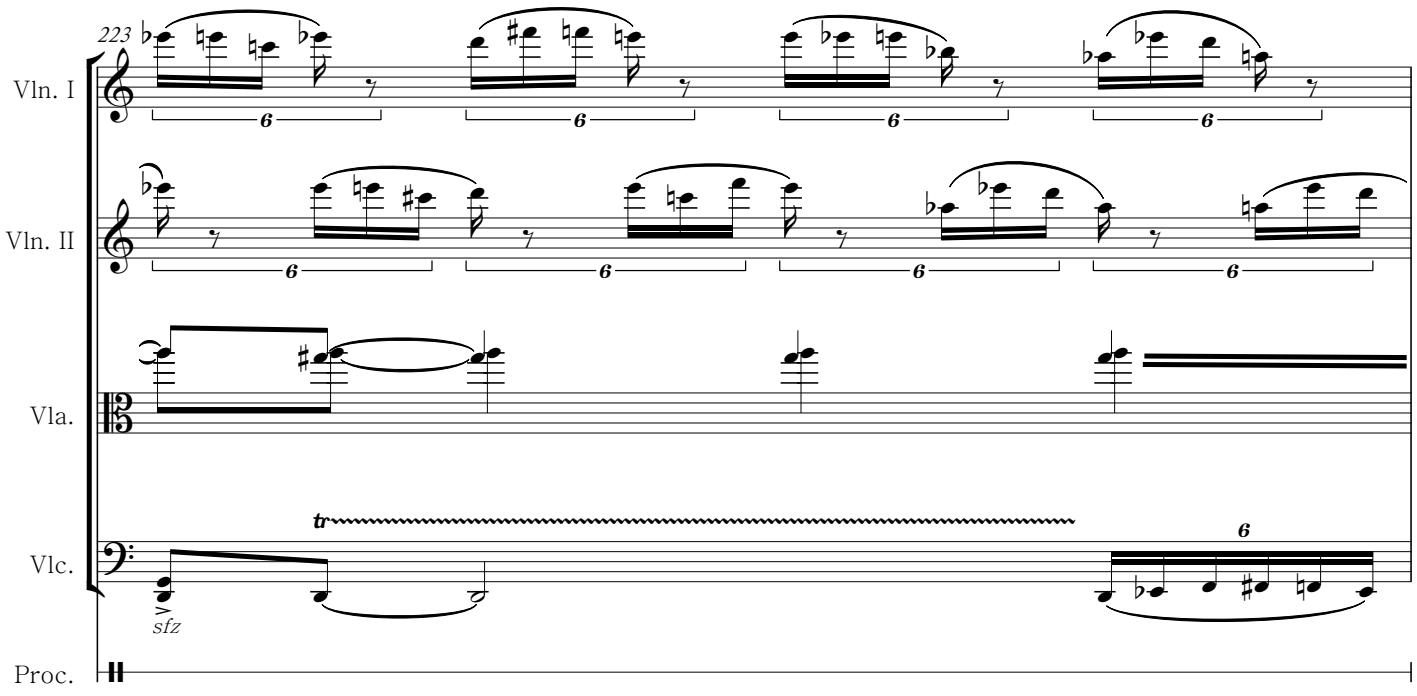

218
Vln. I
Vln. II
gritty, unisons should be out of tune, exaggerated vib.
sul II and III
Vla.
Vlc.
sfz
VLA: distortion
Proc.


219
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr
sfz

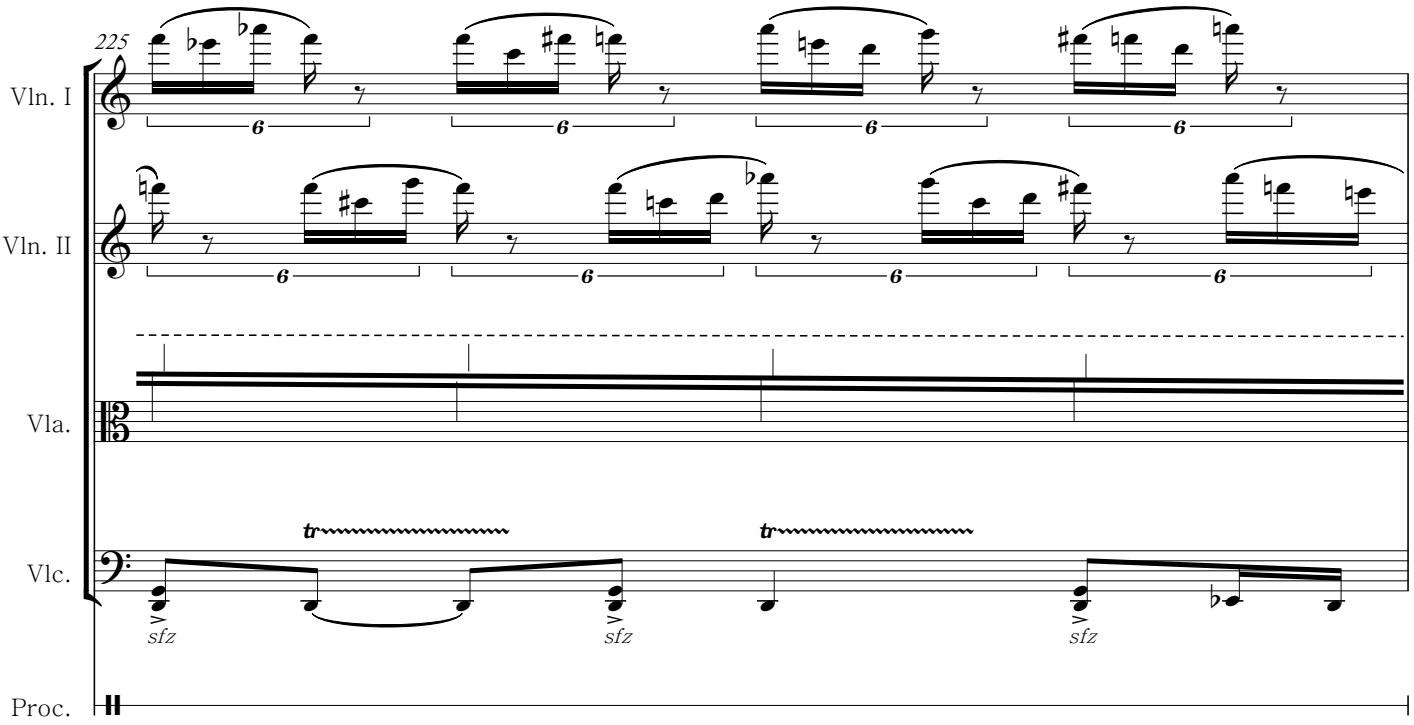

220
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr
sfz
sfz

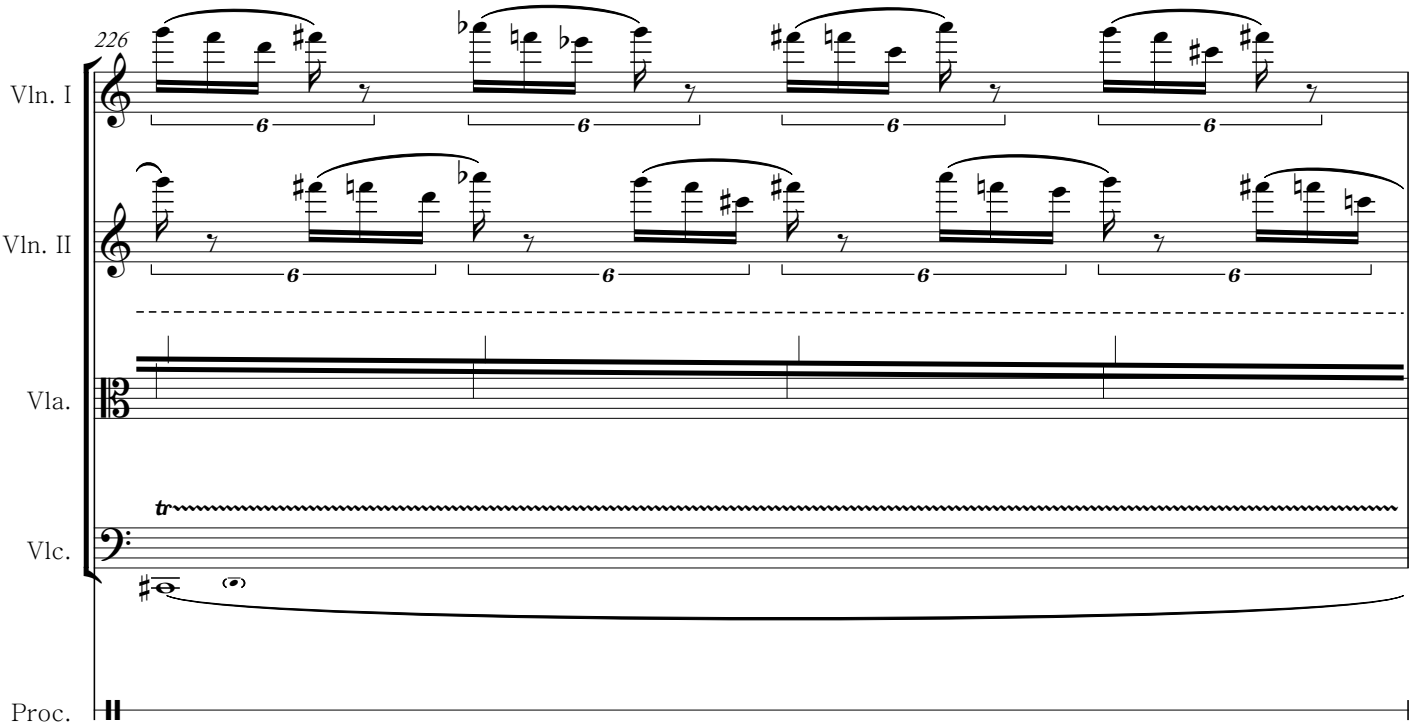

221
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sfz

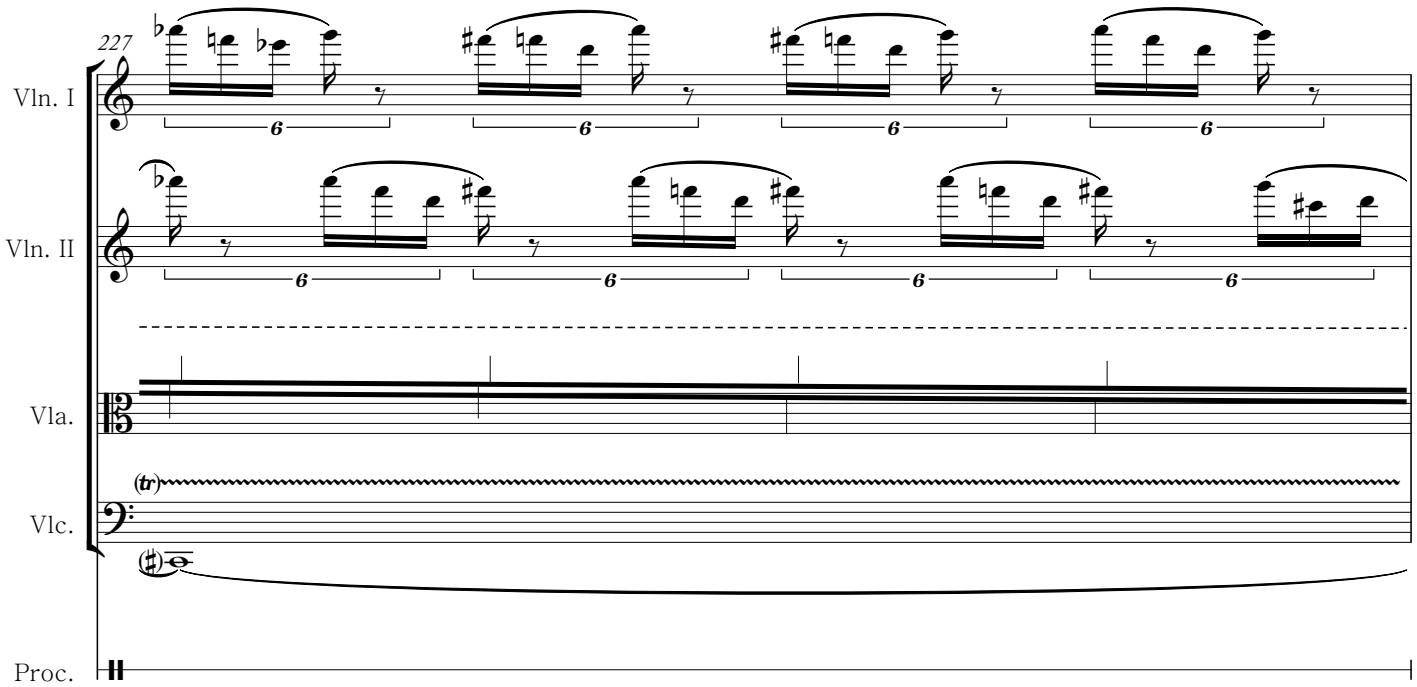

222
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sfz
sfz
[sim. trill]

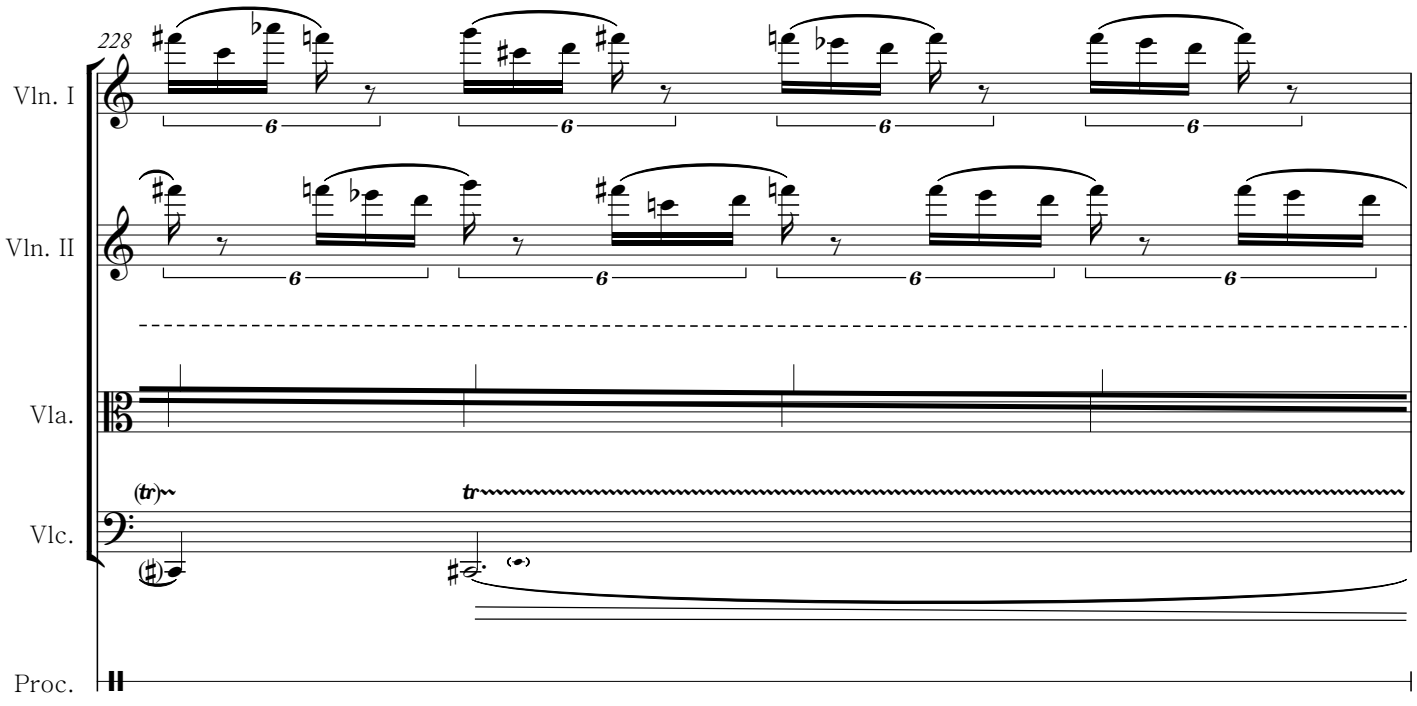

223
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr
sfz

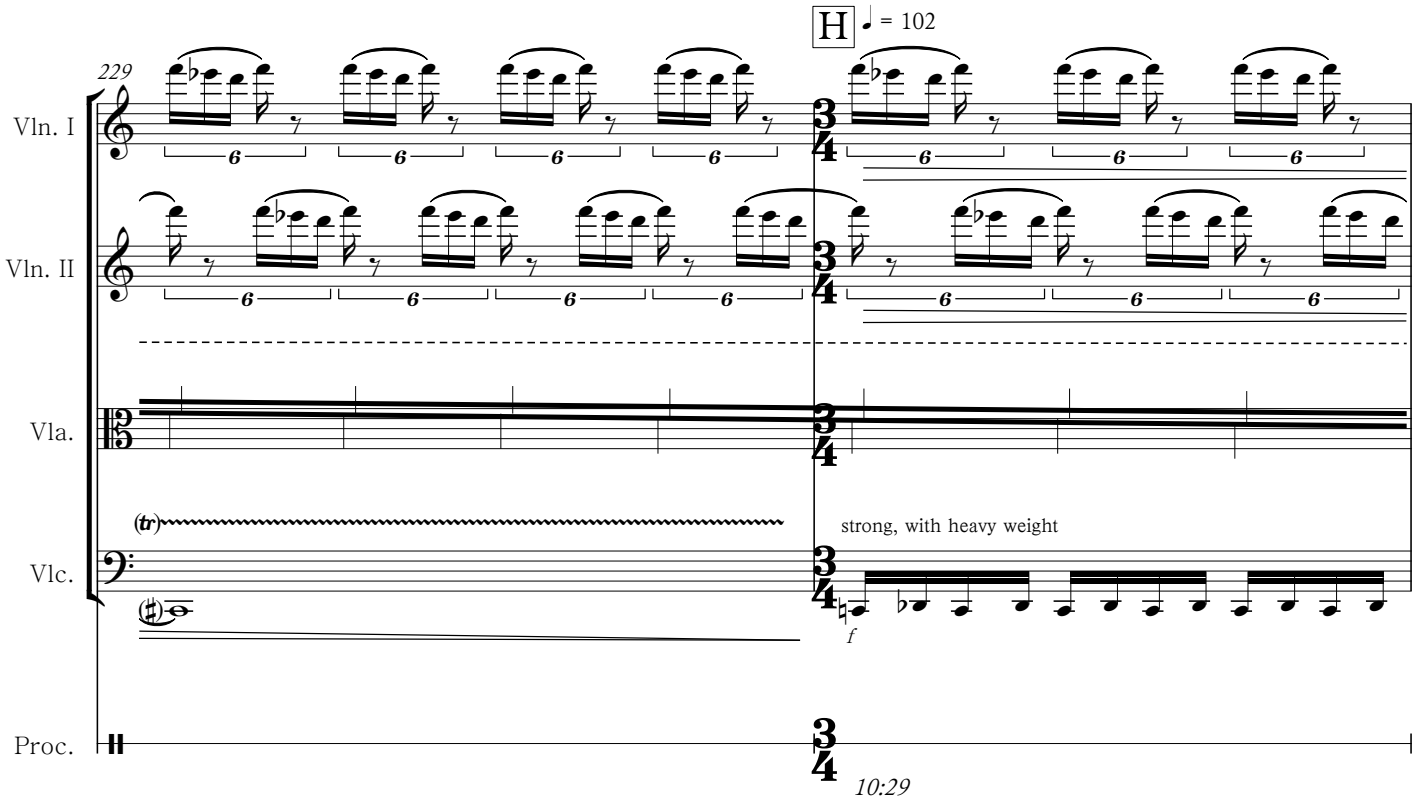
224
Vln. I
Vln. II
while glissing downward, gradually speed up bowing from quarter notes to a fast tremolo
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr
sfz

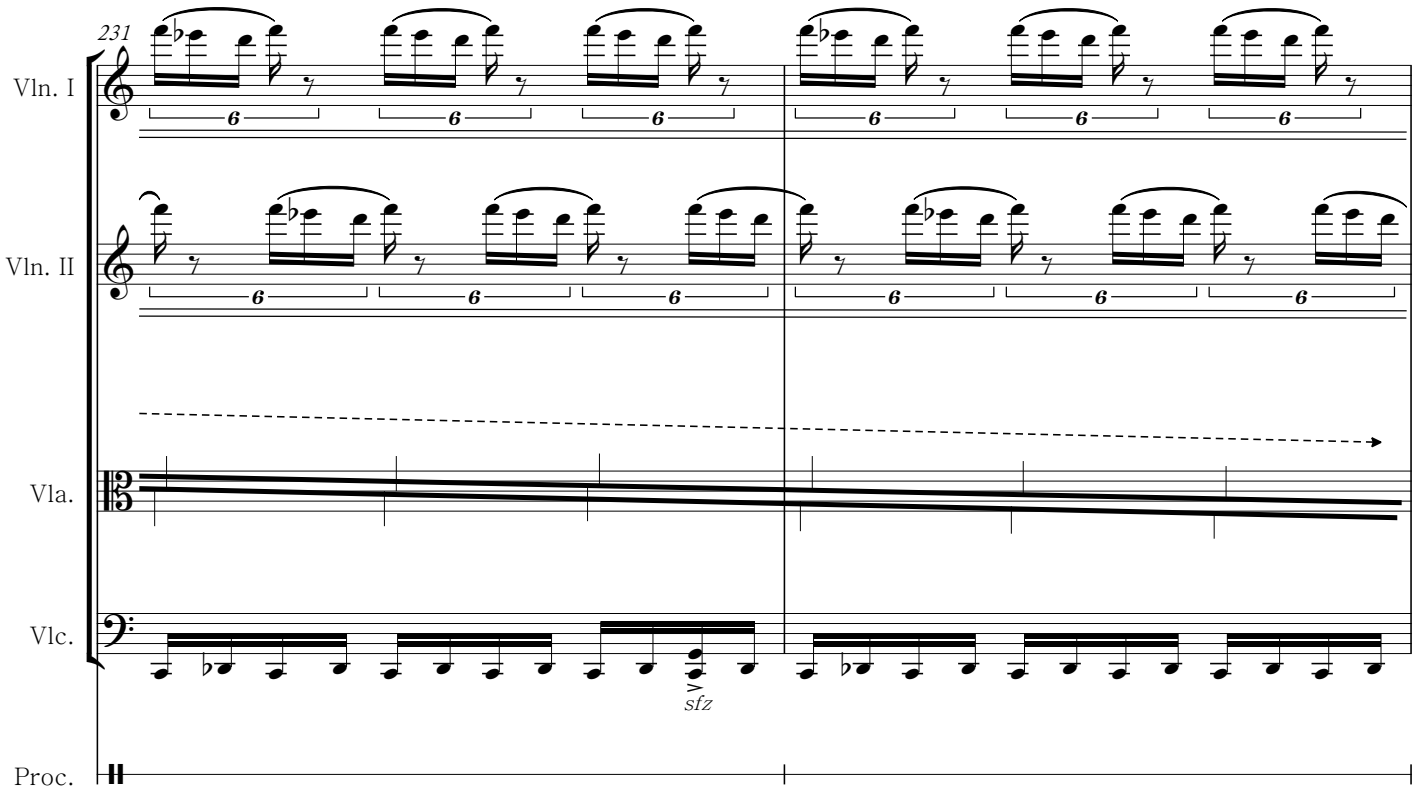

225
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr
tr
sfz
sfz
sfz

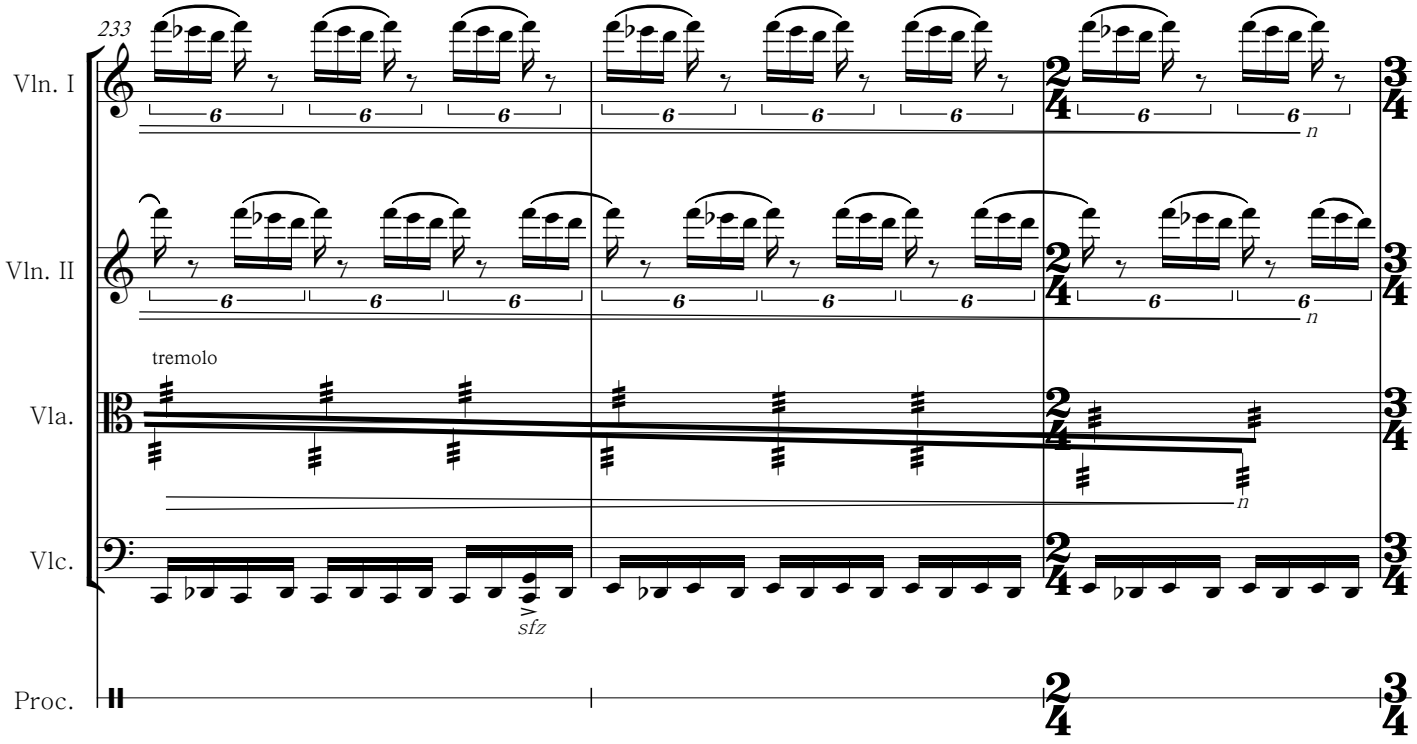

226
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
tr

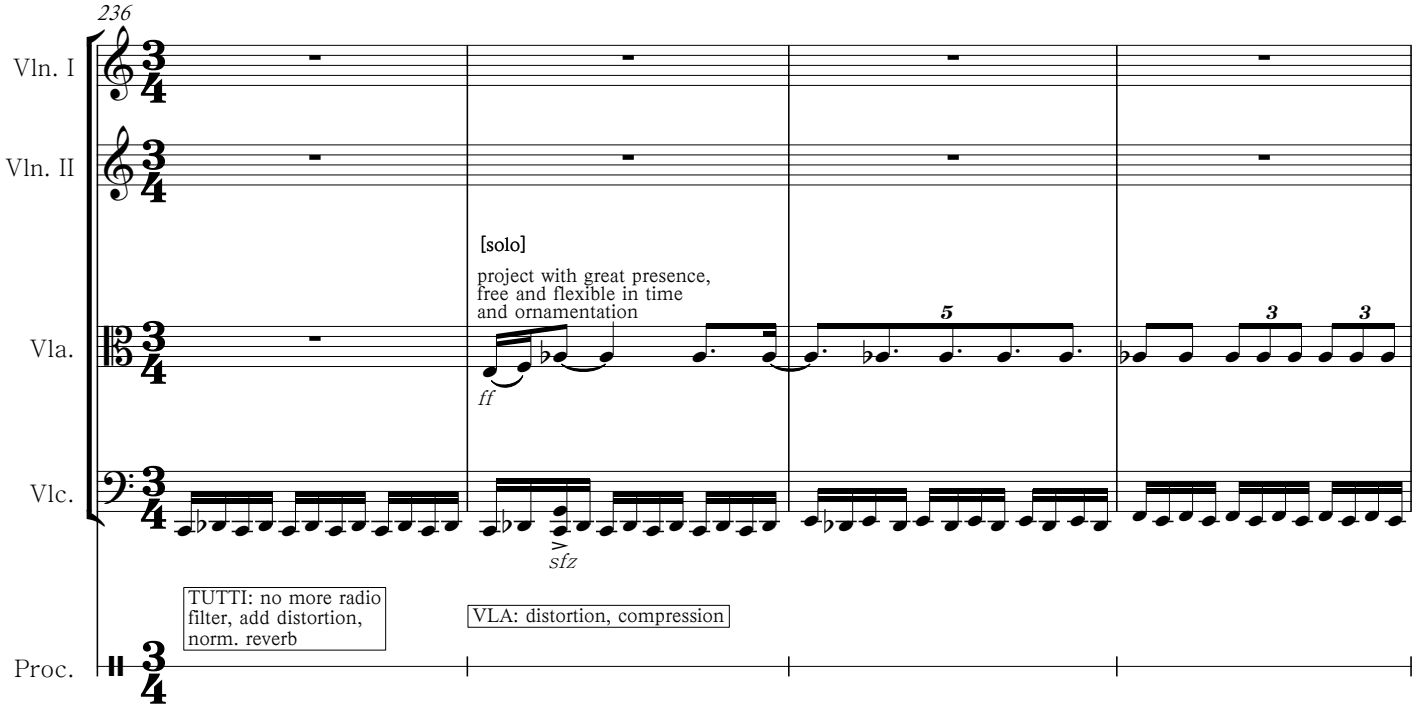

227
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
(tr)

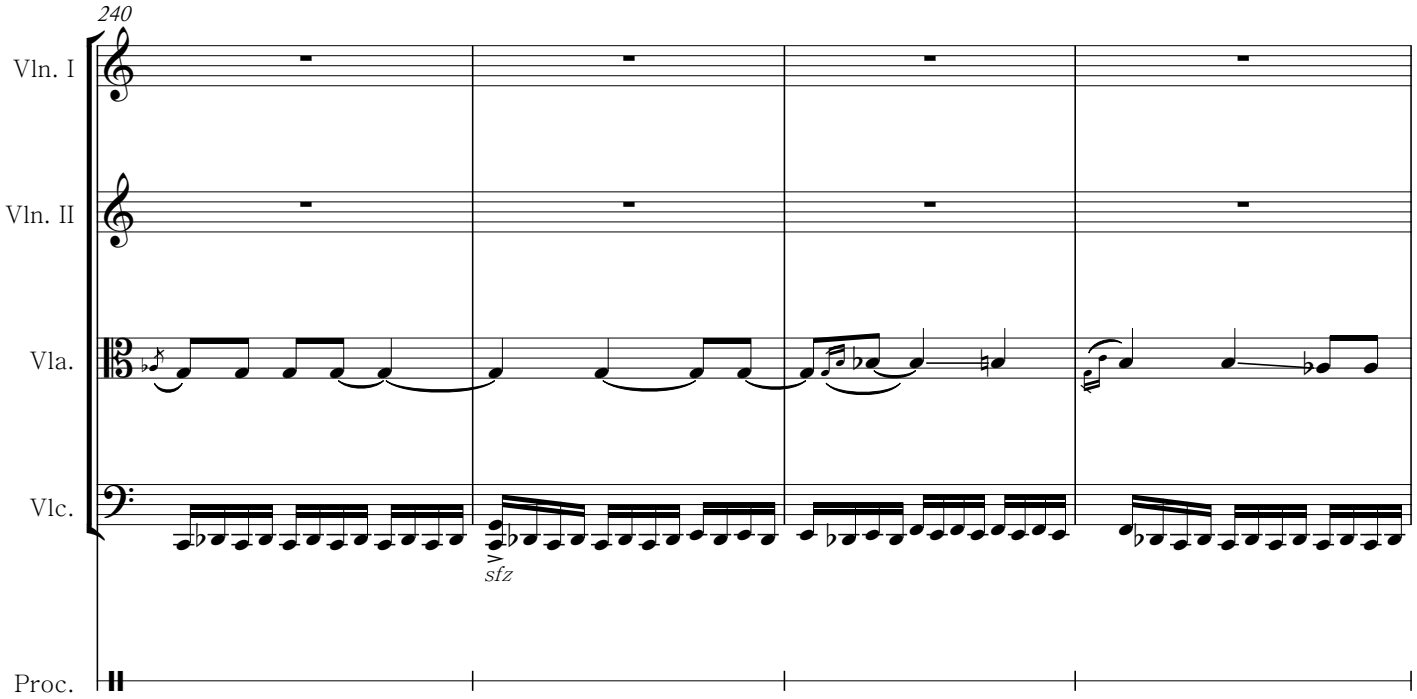

228
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
(tr)
tr
10:24

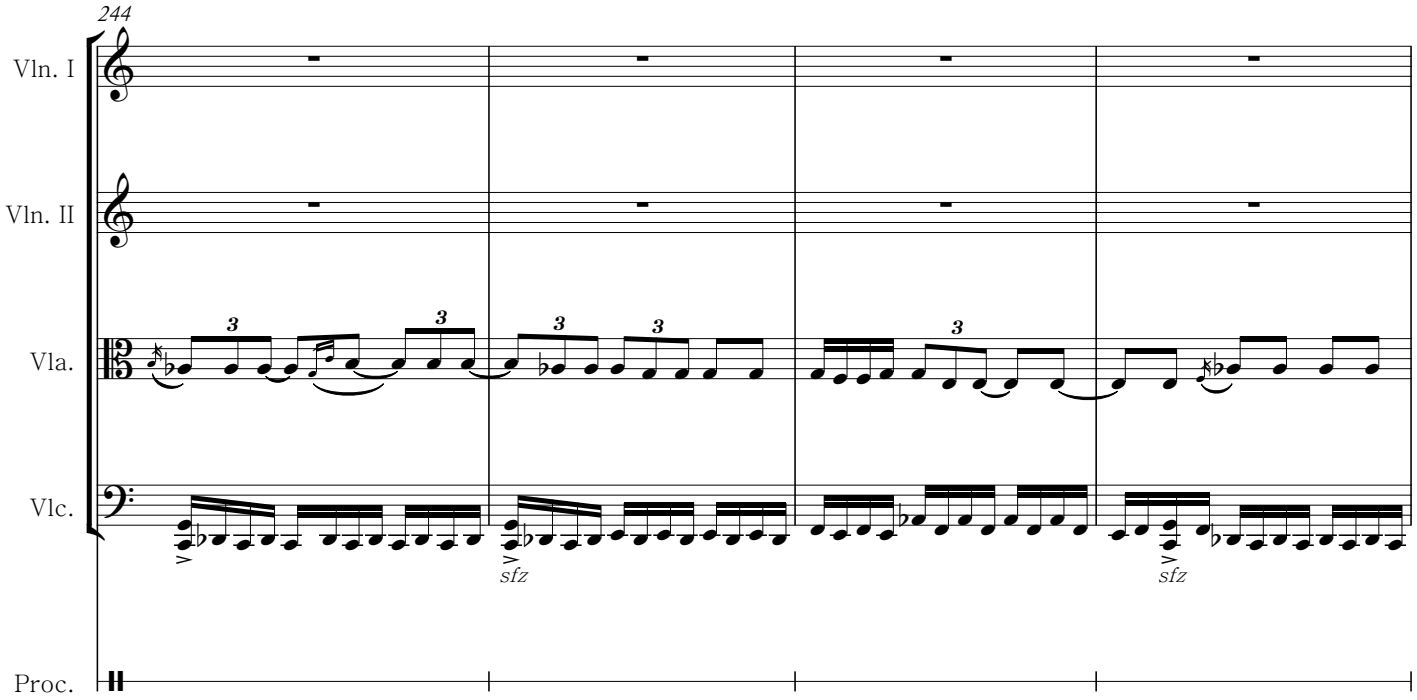

H
♩ = 102
229
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
(tr)
strong, with heavy weight
f
10:29

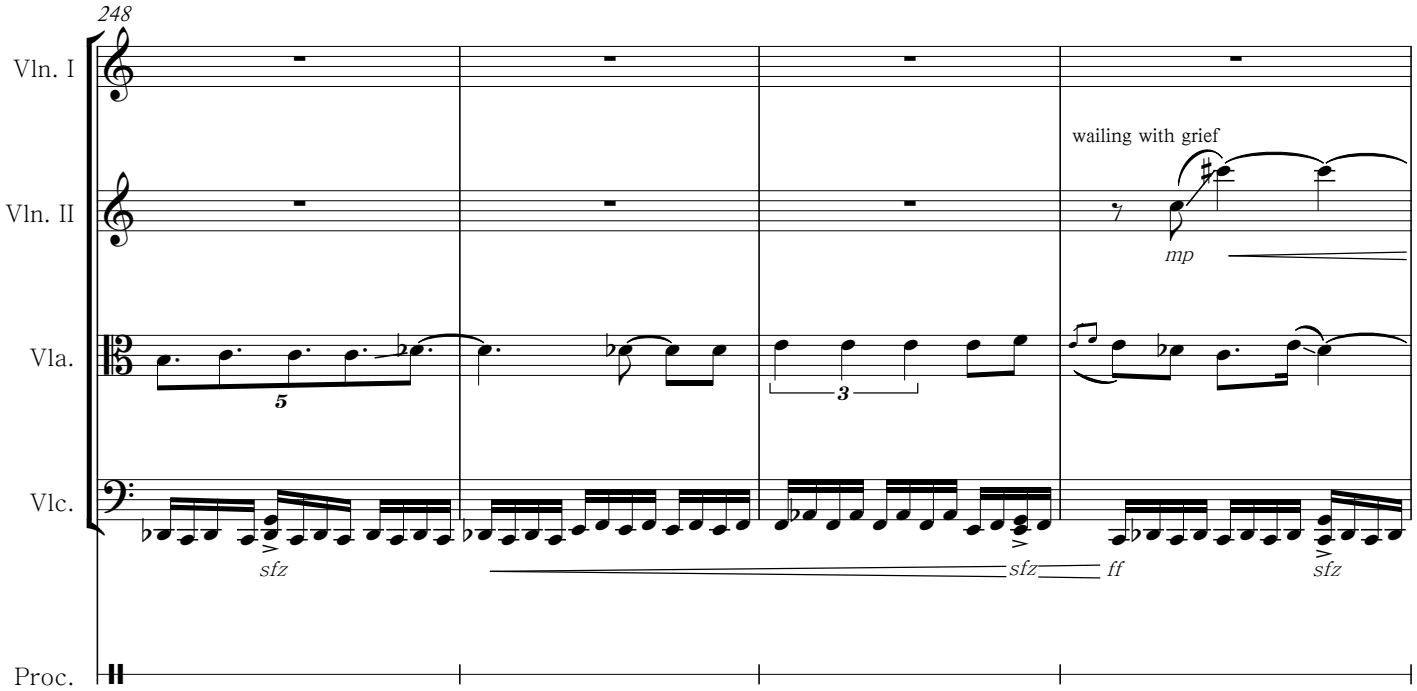

231
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sfz

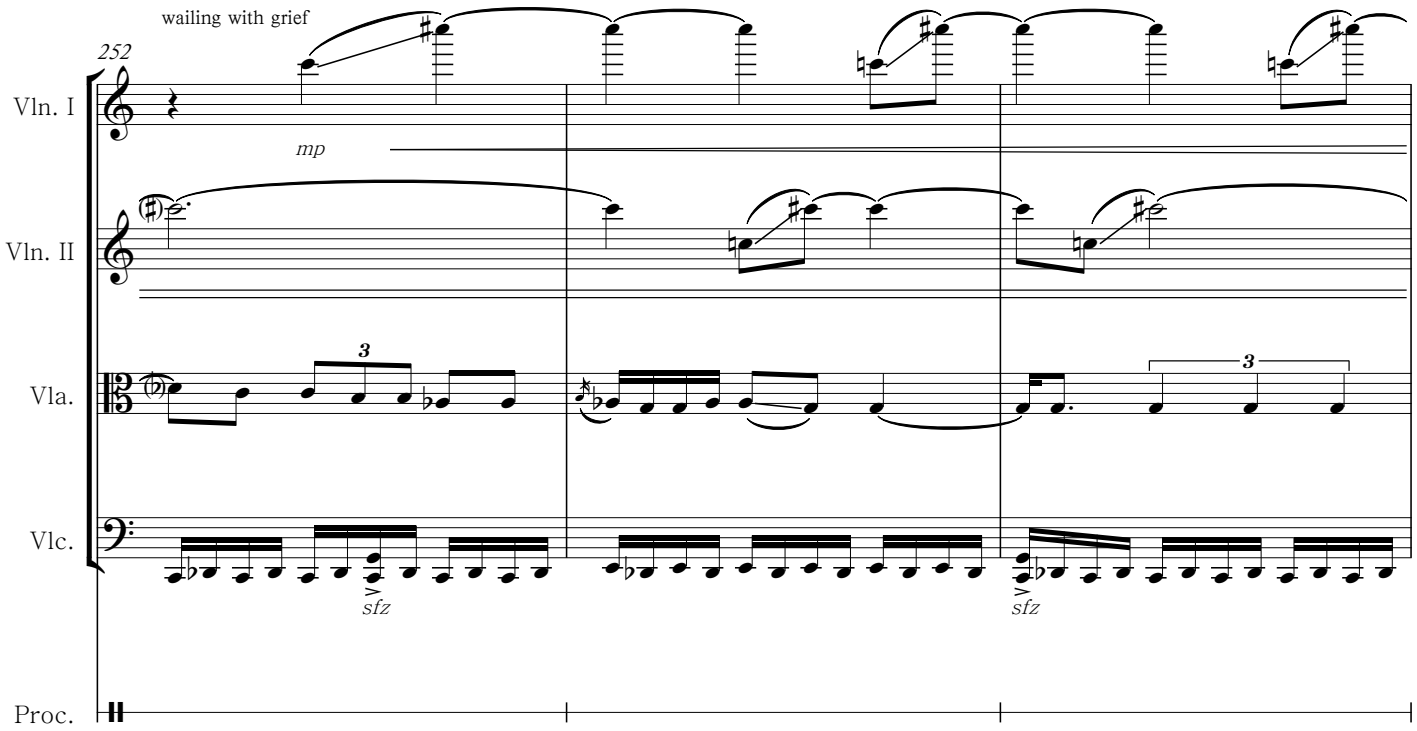

233
Vln. I
Vln. II
tremolo
Vla.
Vlc.
sfz
Proc.

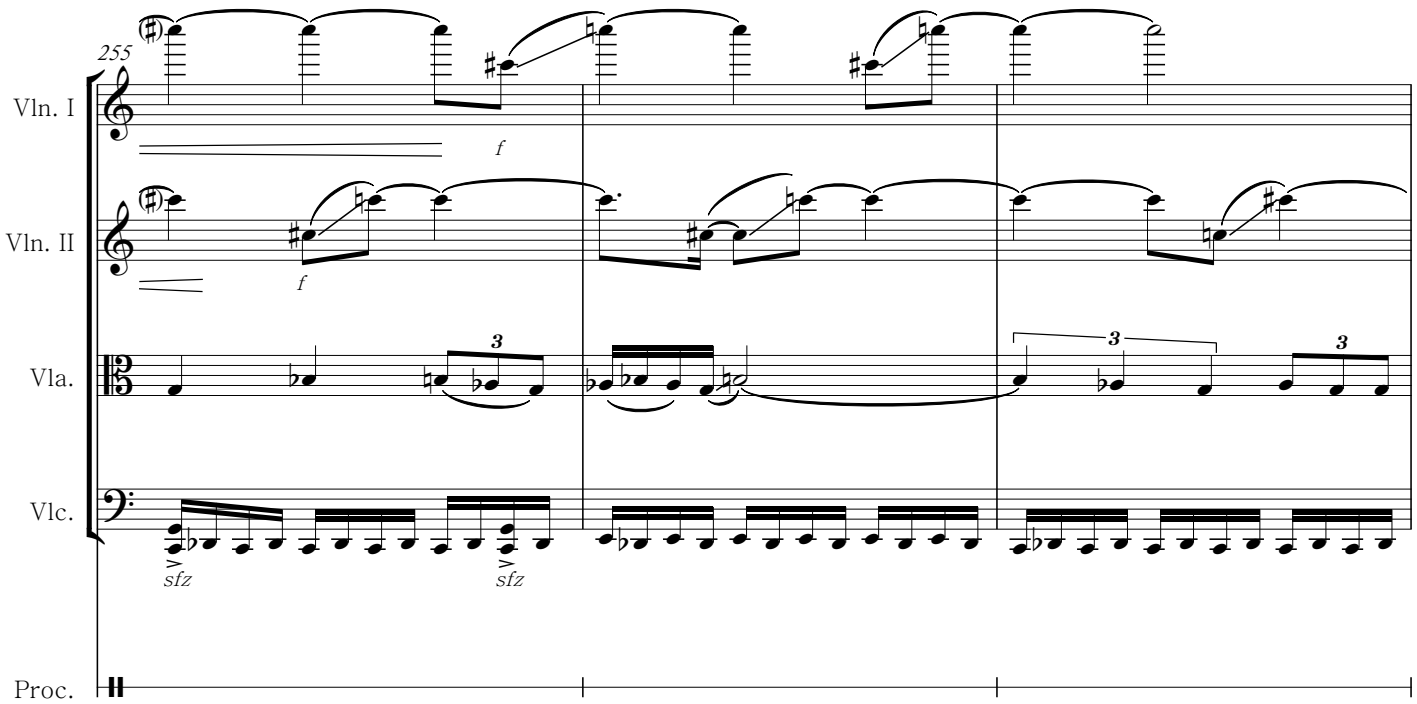

236
Vln. I
Vln. II
[solo]
project with great presence,
free and flexible in time
and ornamentation
Vla.
ff
Vlc.
sfz
TUTTI: no more radio
filter, add distortion,
norm. reverb
VLA: distortion, compression
Proc.

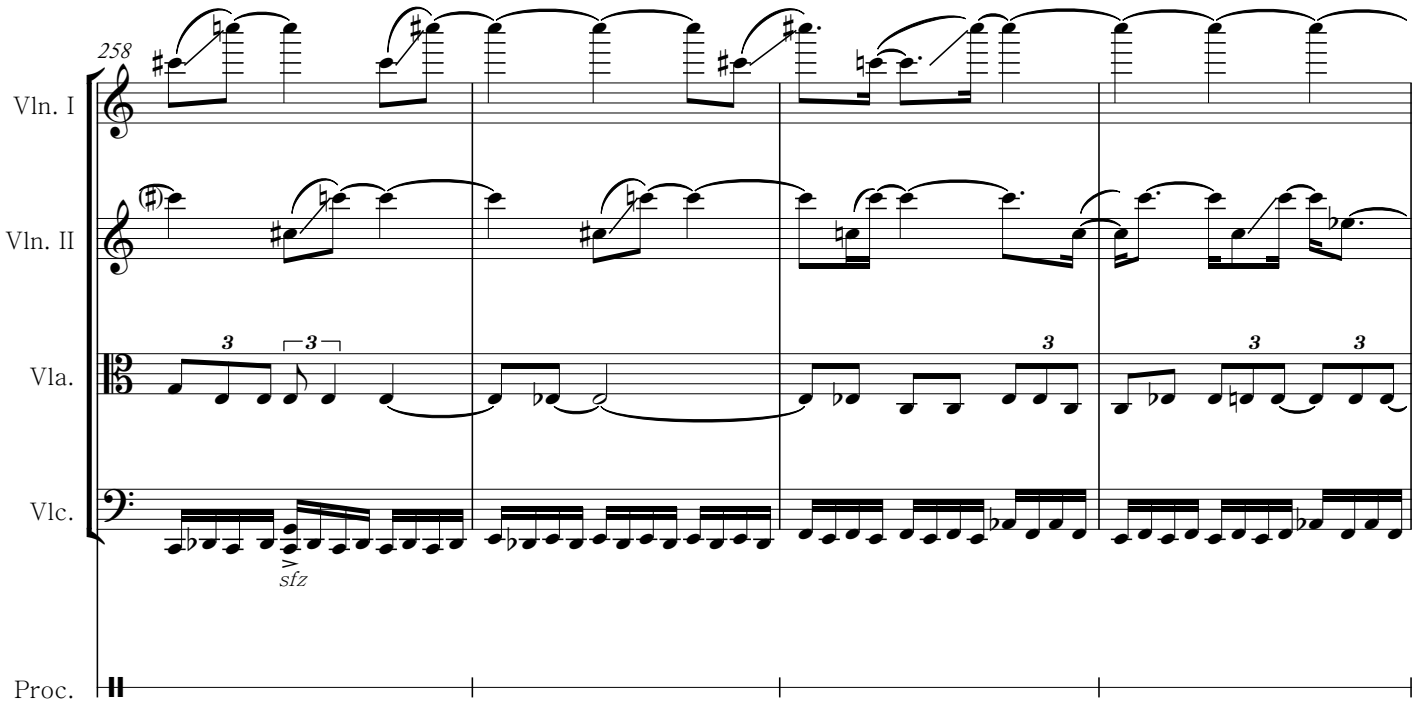

240
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
sfz
Proc.

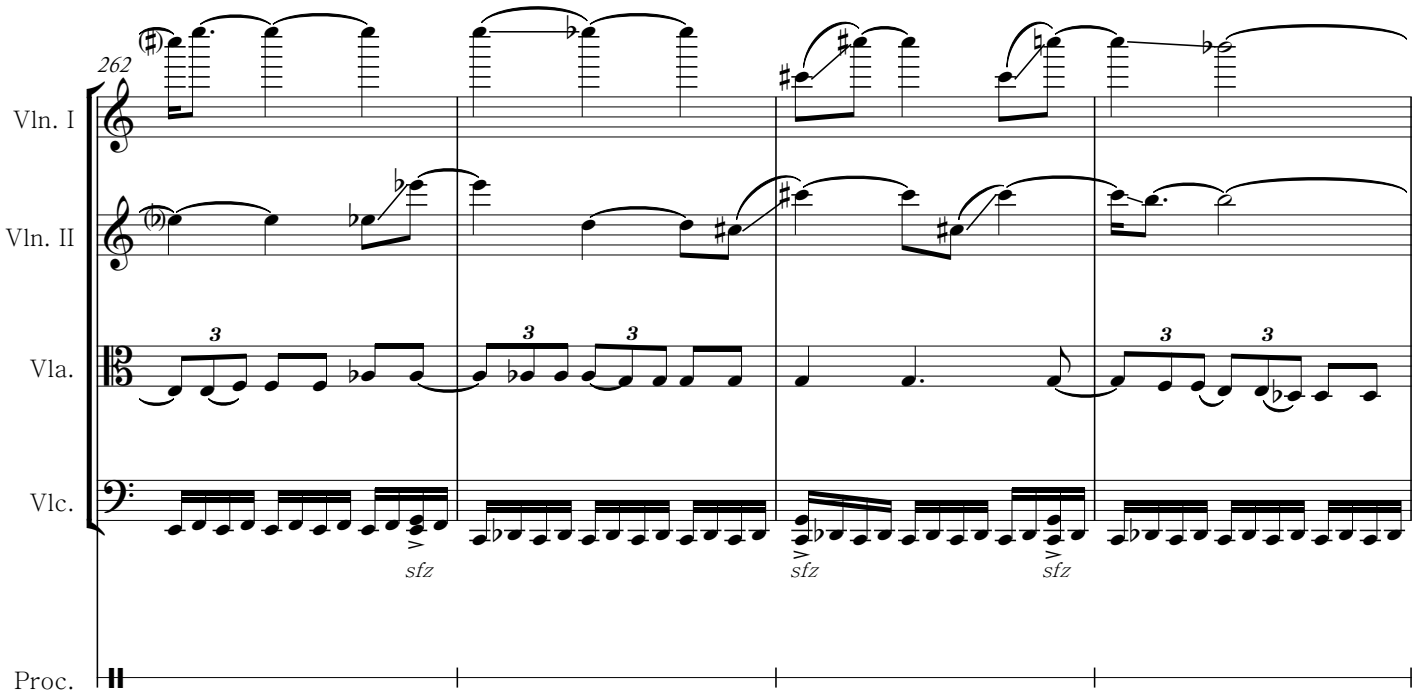

244
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
sfz
sfz
Proc.

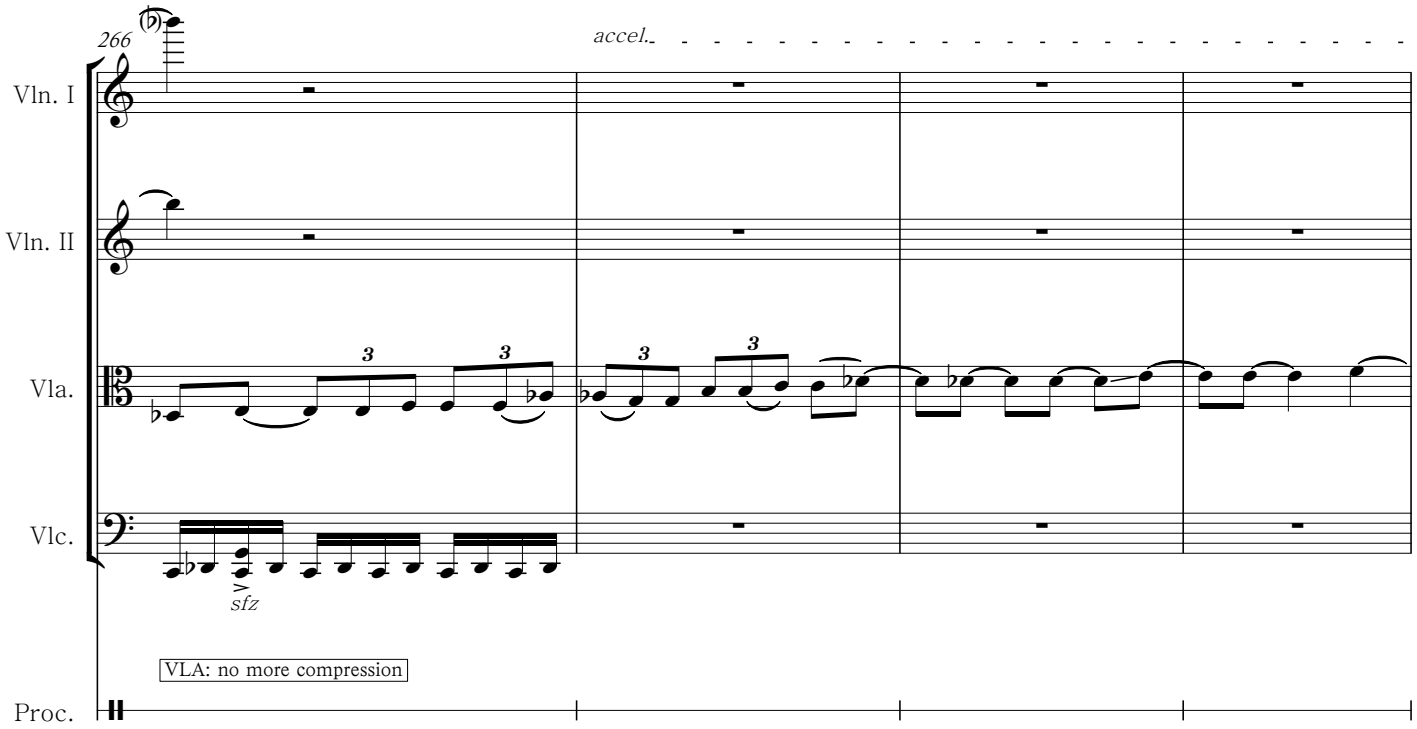

248
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
wailing with grief
mp
5
3
sfz
sfz
ff
sfz

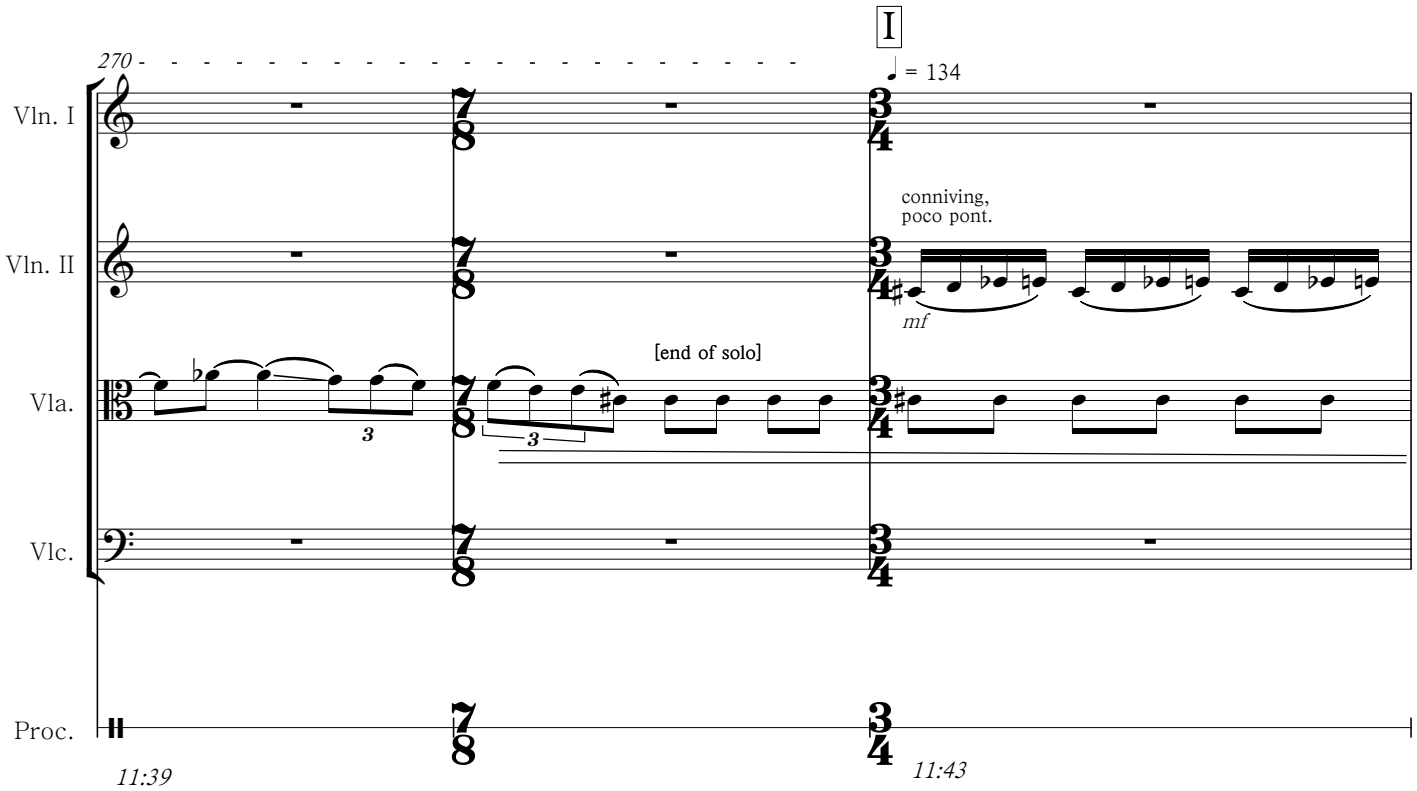

wailing with grief
252
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mp
3
3
sfz
sfz

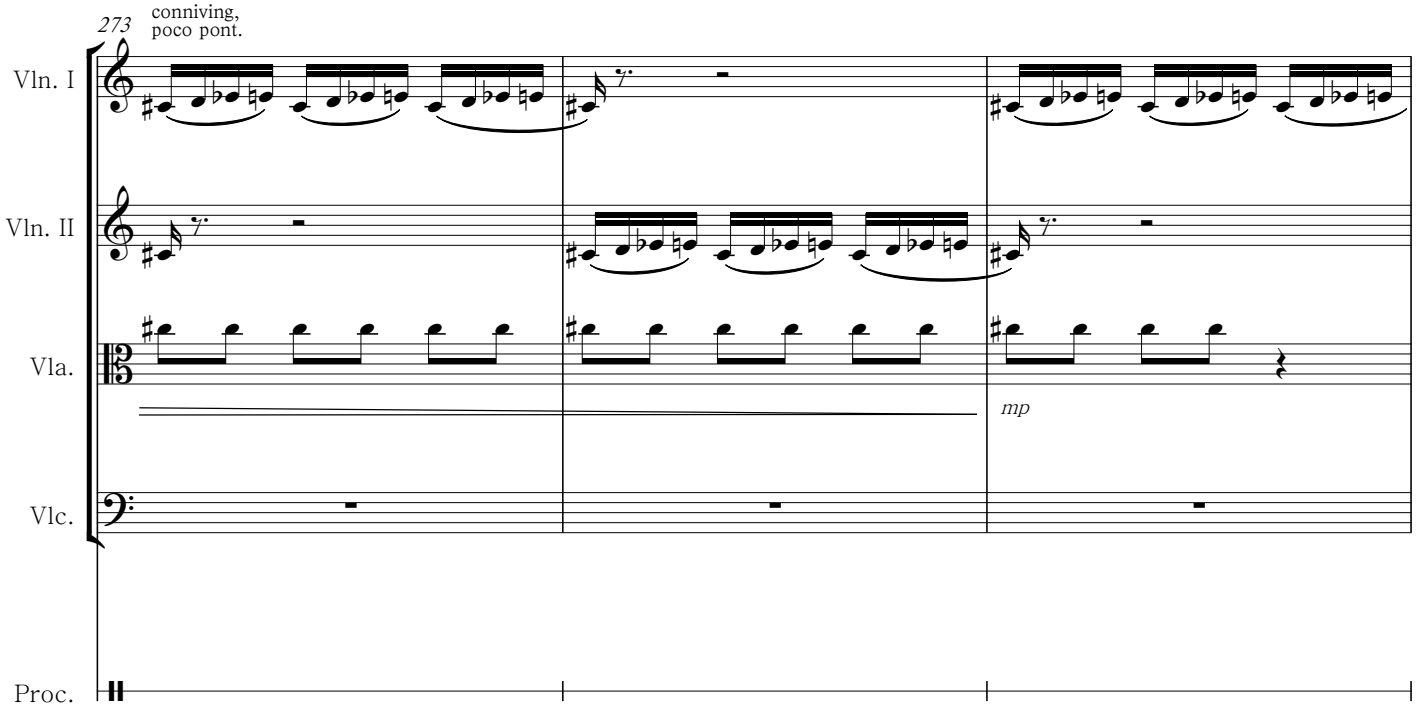

255
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
f
f
3
3
3
sfz
sfz

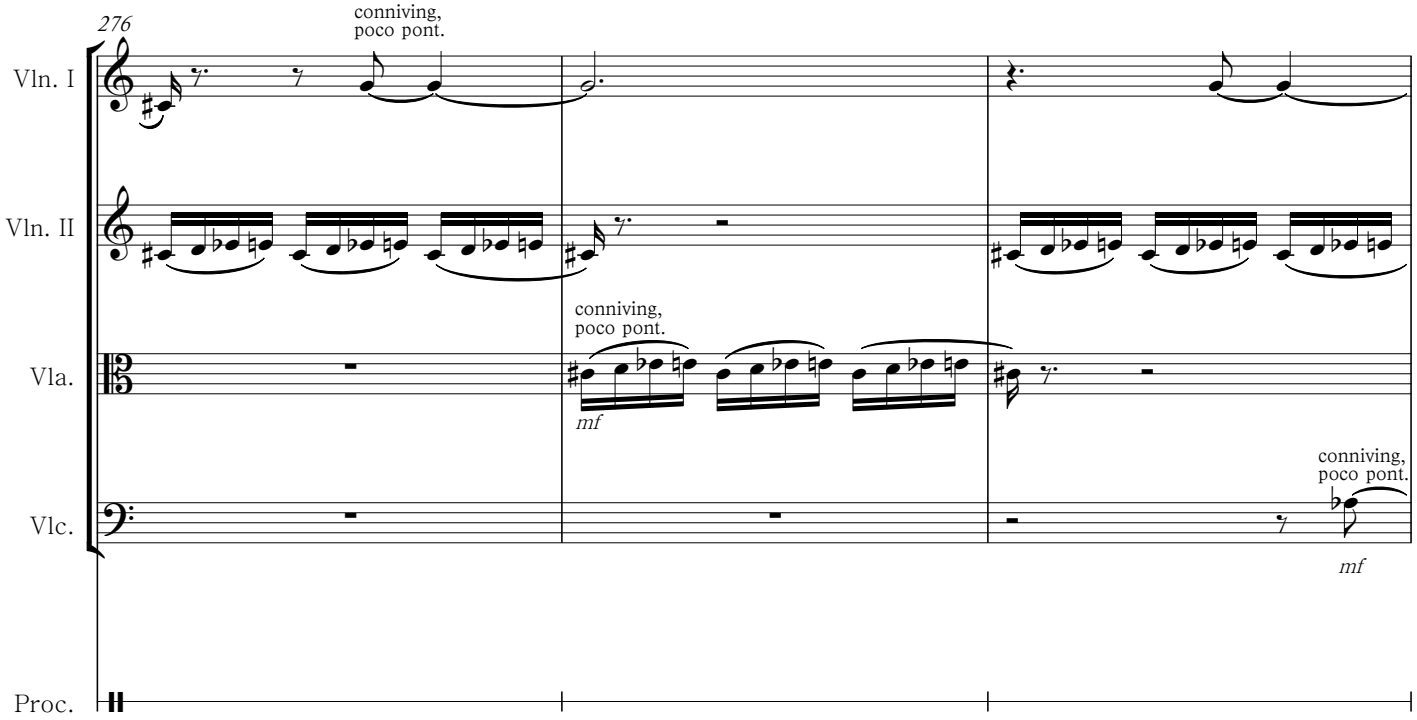

258
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
3
3
3
3
3
sfz

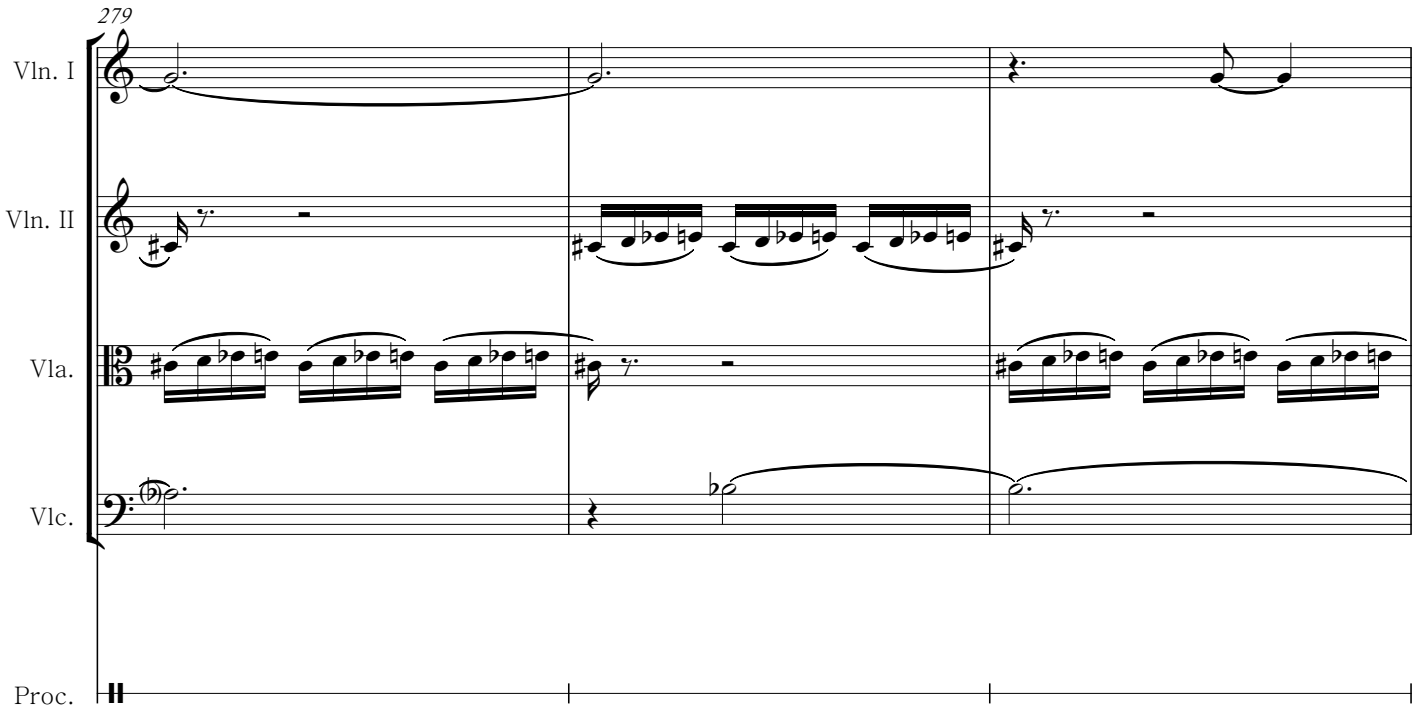

262
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sfz
sfz
sfz

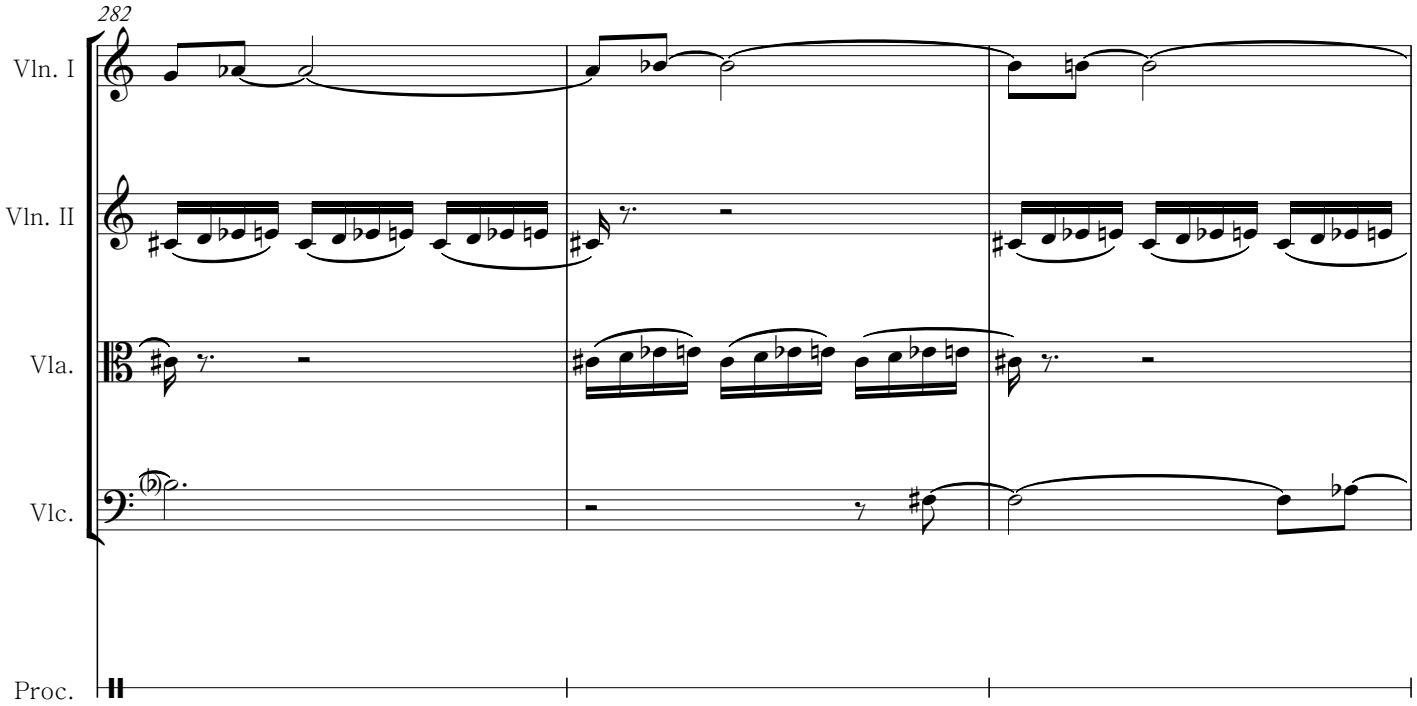

266
accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sfz
VLA: no more compression

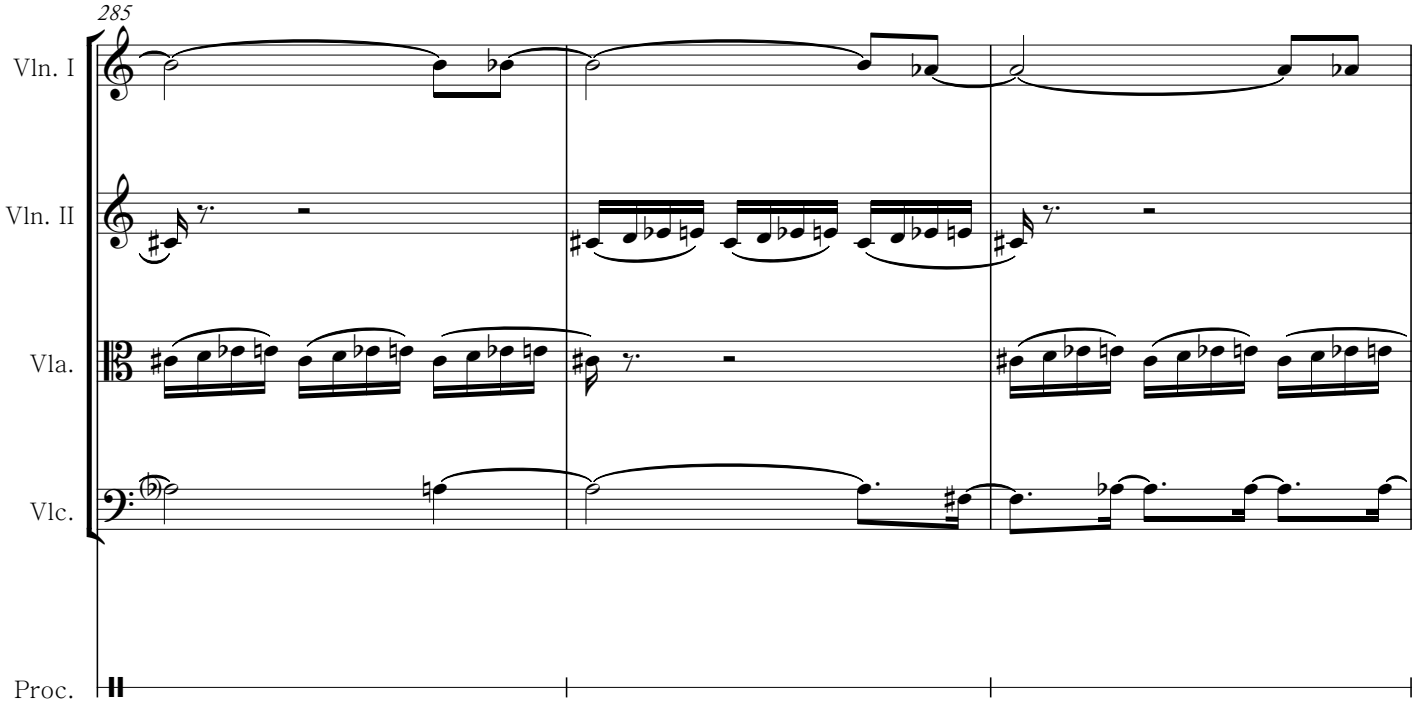

I
270
♩ = 134
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
conniving,
poco pont.
mf
[end of solo]
3
3
11:39
11:43

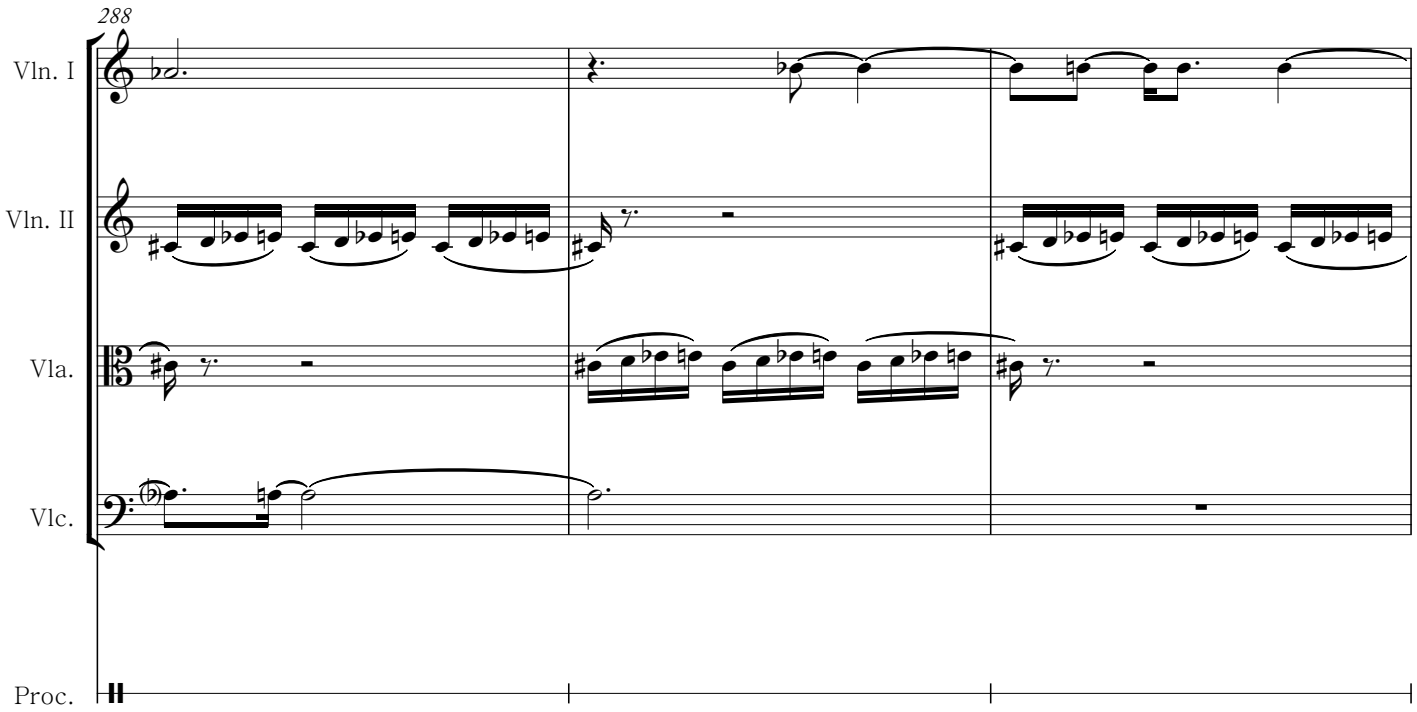

273
conniving,
poco pont.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mp

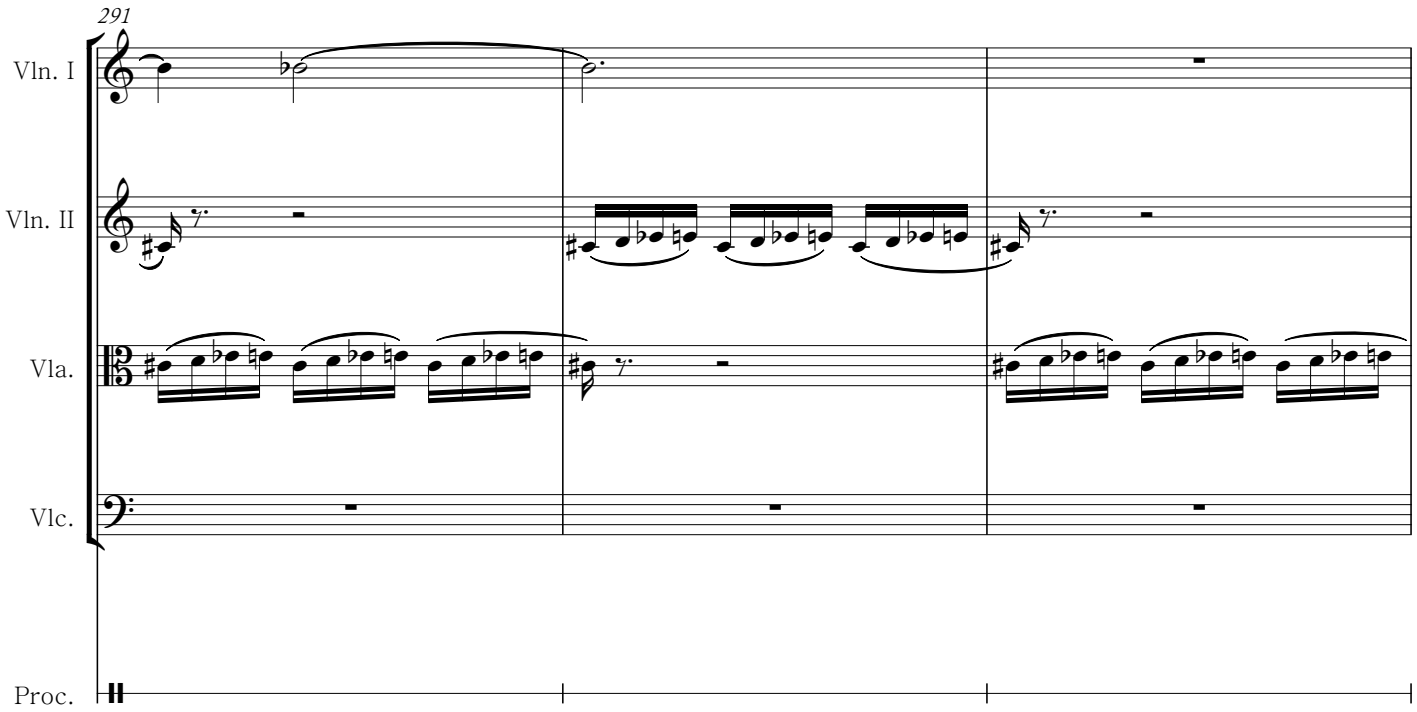

276
conniving,
poco pont.
Vln. I
Vln. II
conniving,
poco pont.
mf
Vla.
conniving,
poco pont.
mf
Vlc.
Proc.

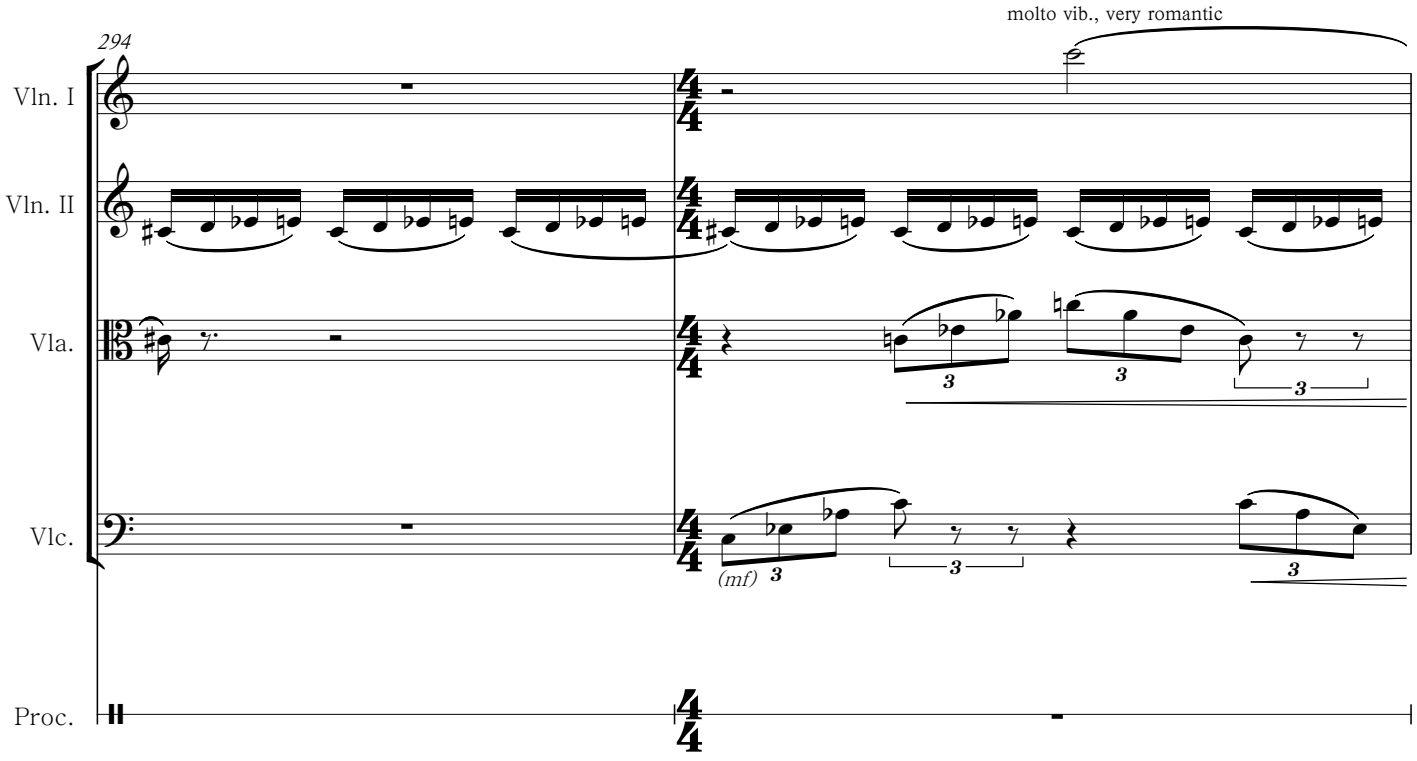

279
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

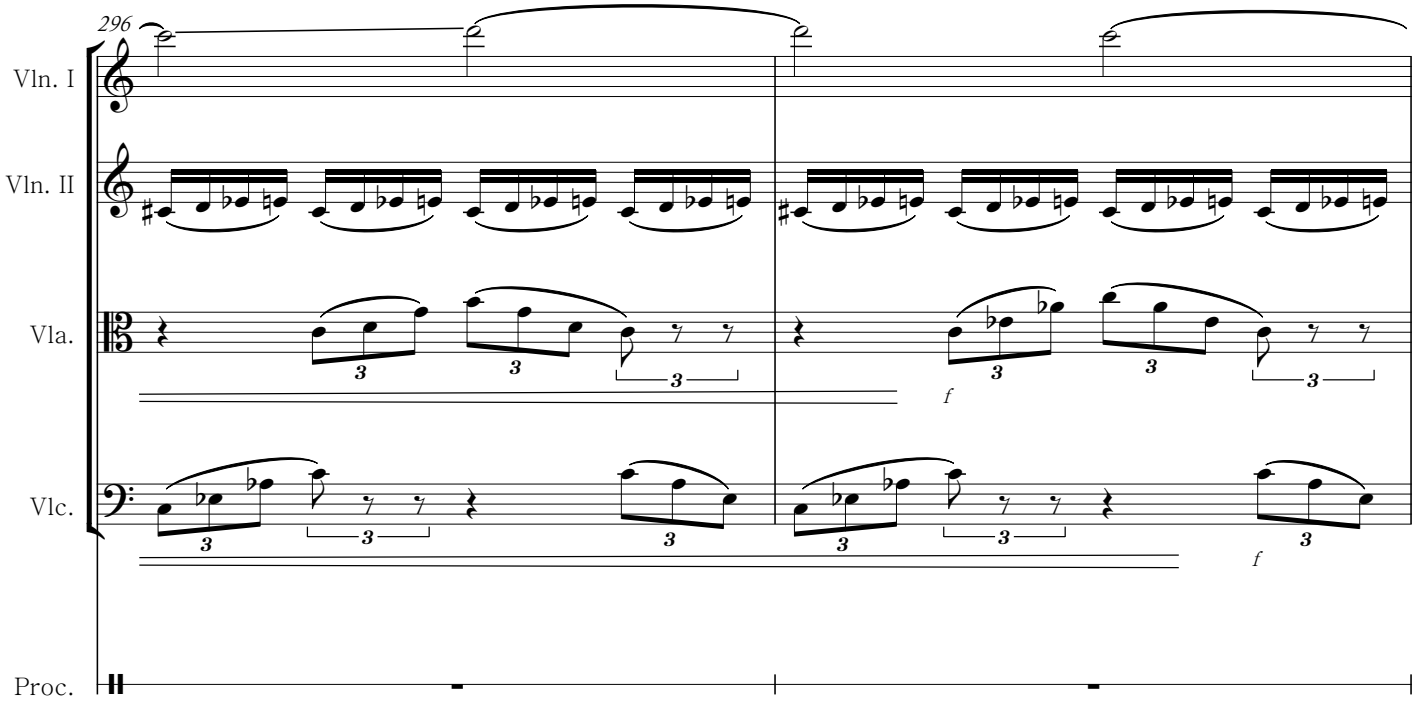

282
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

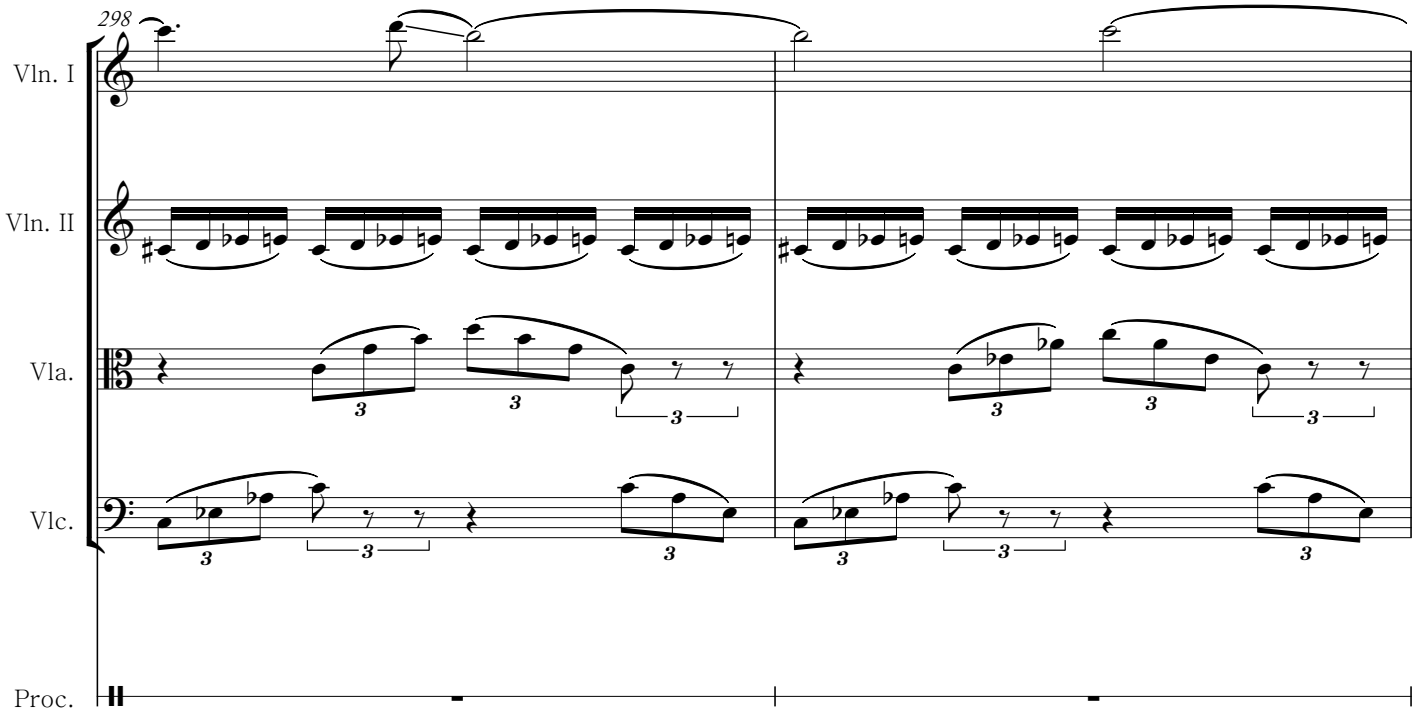

285
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

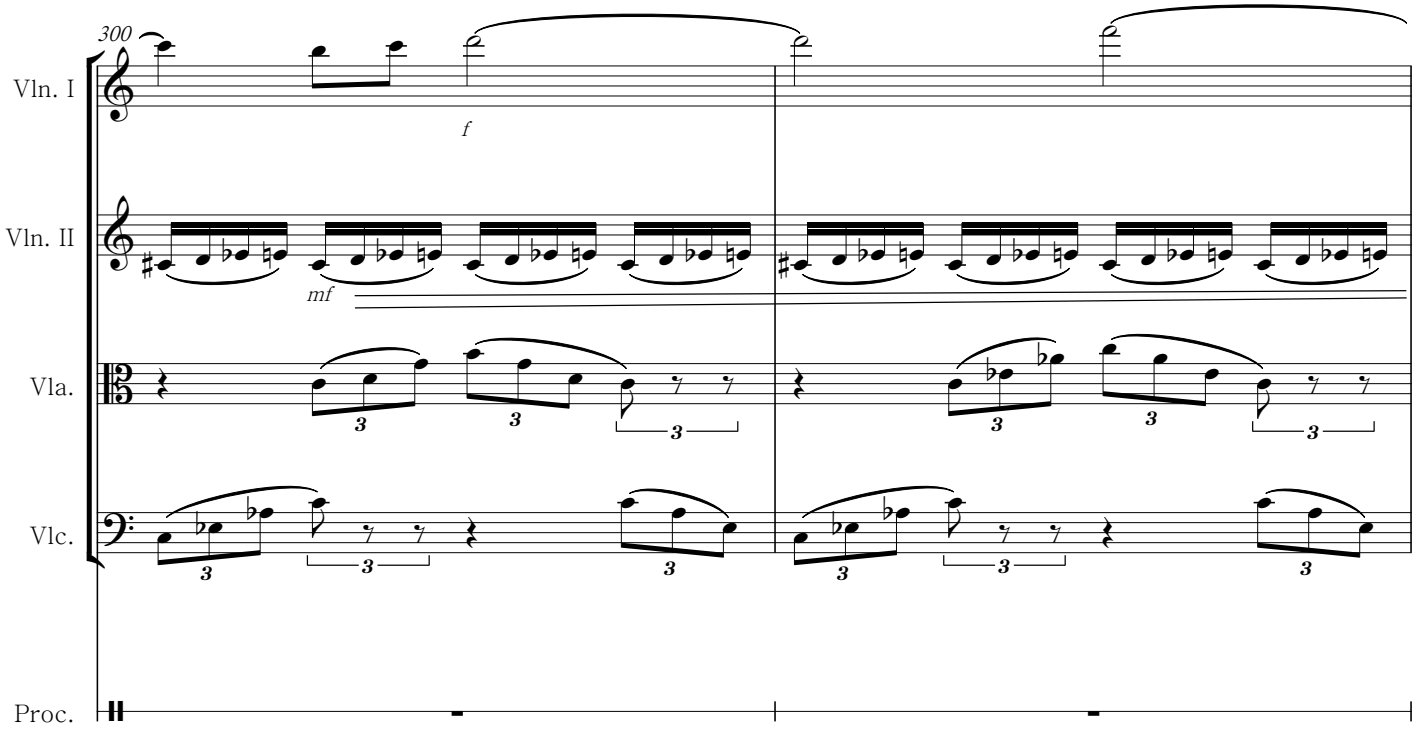

288
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

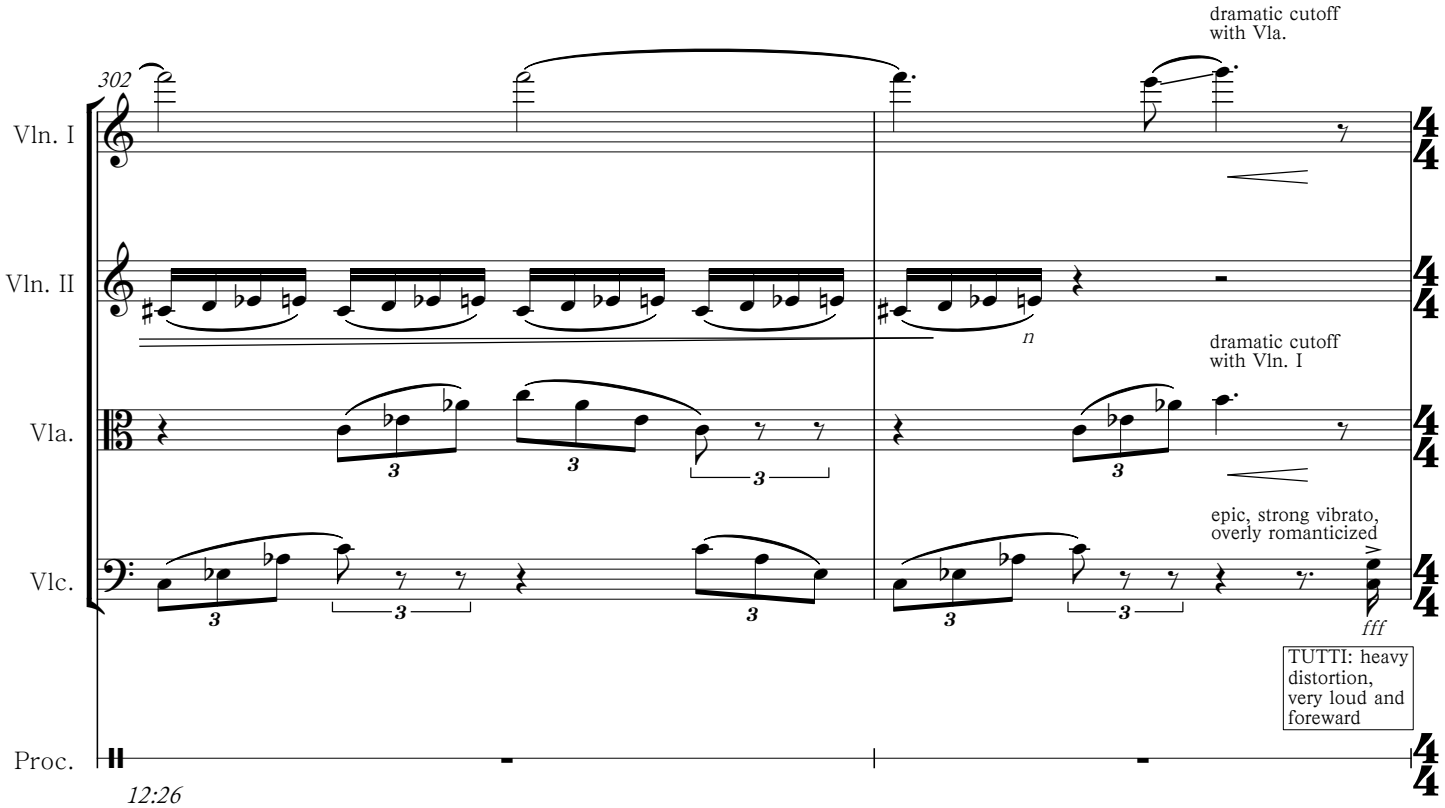

291
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

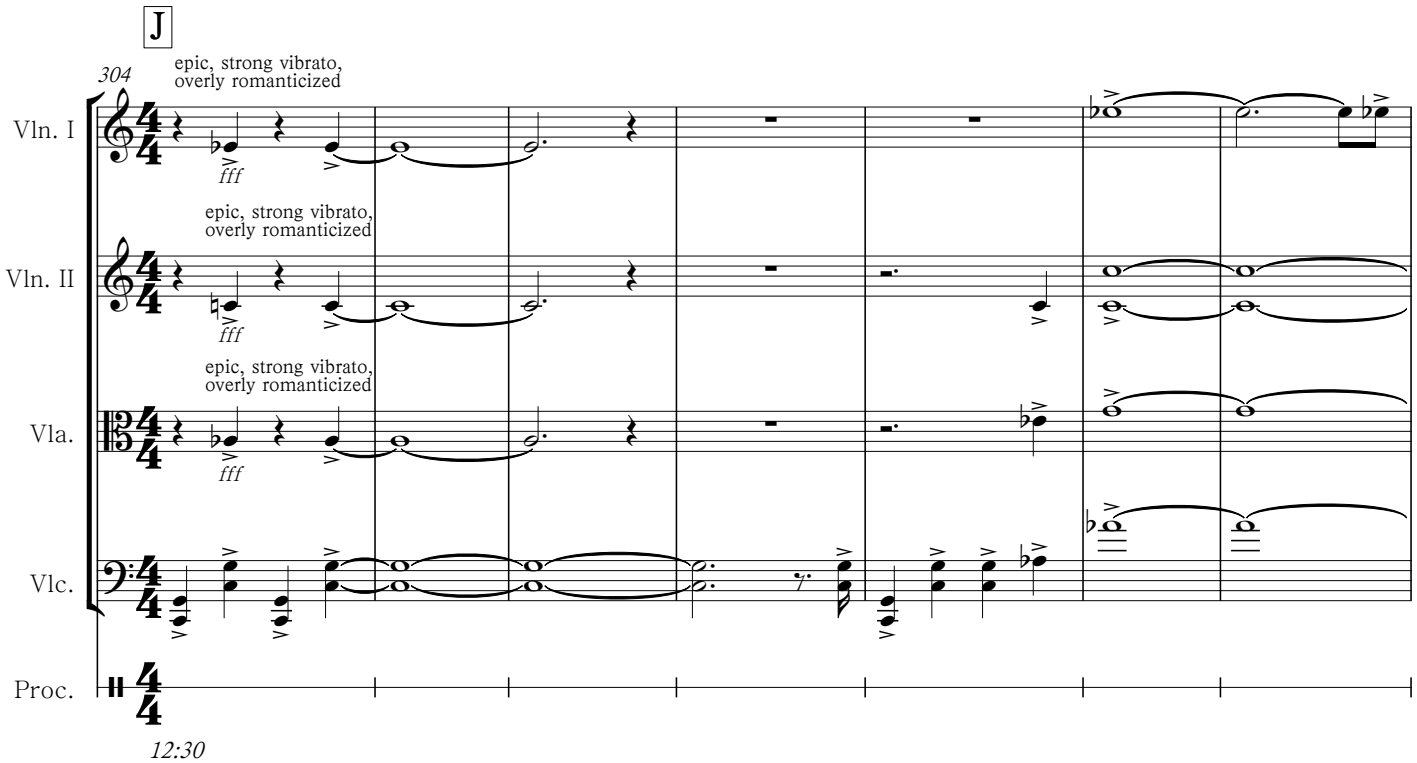

molto vib., very romantic
294
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
(mf)
Proc.

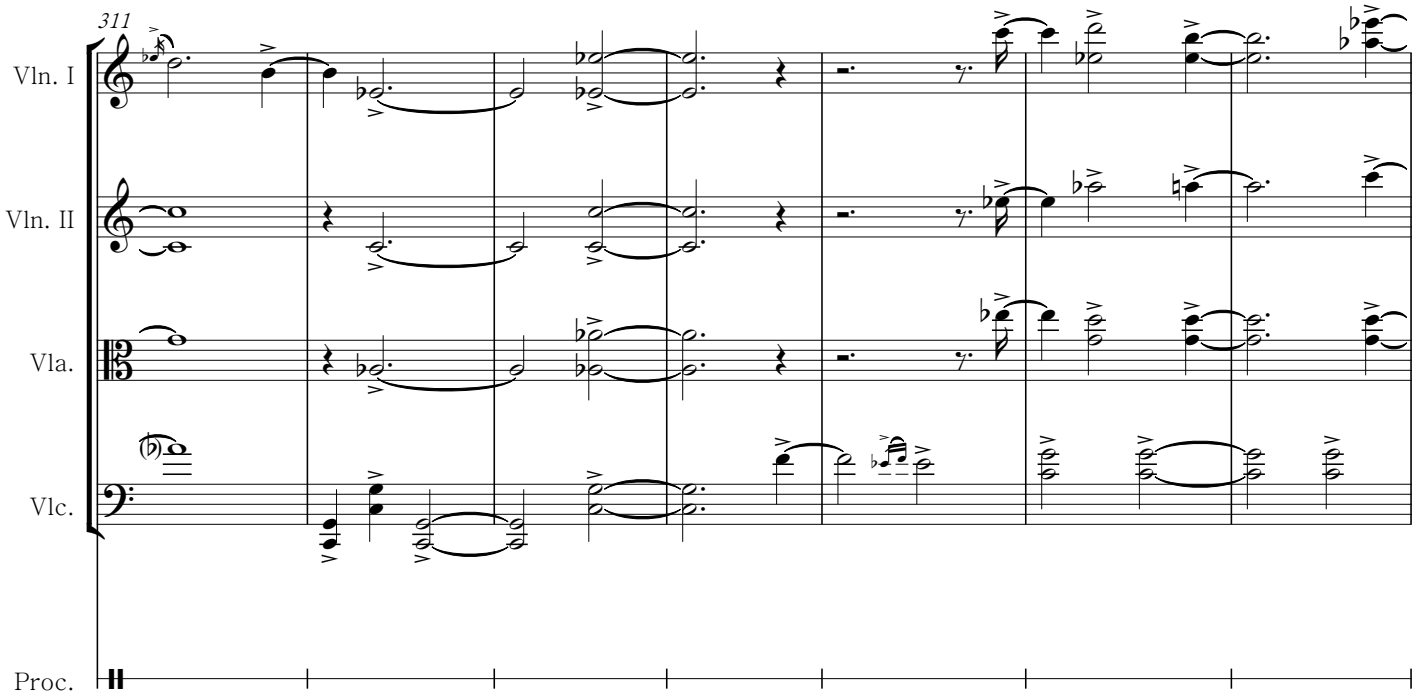

296
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
f
f
Proc.

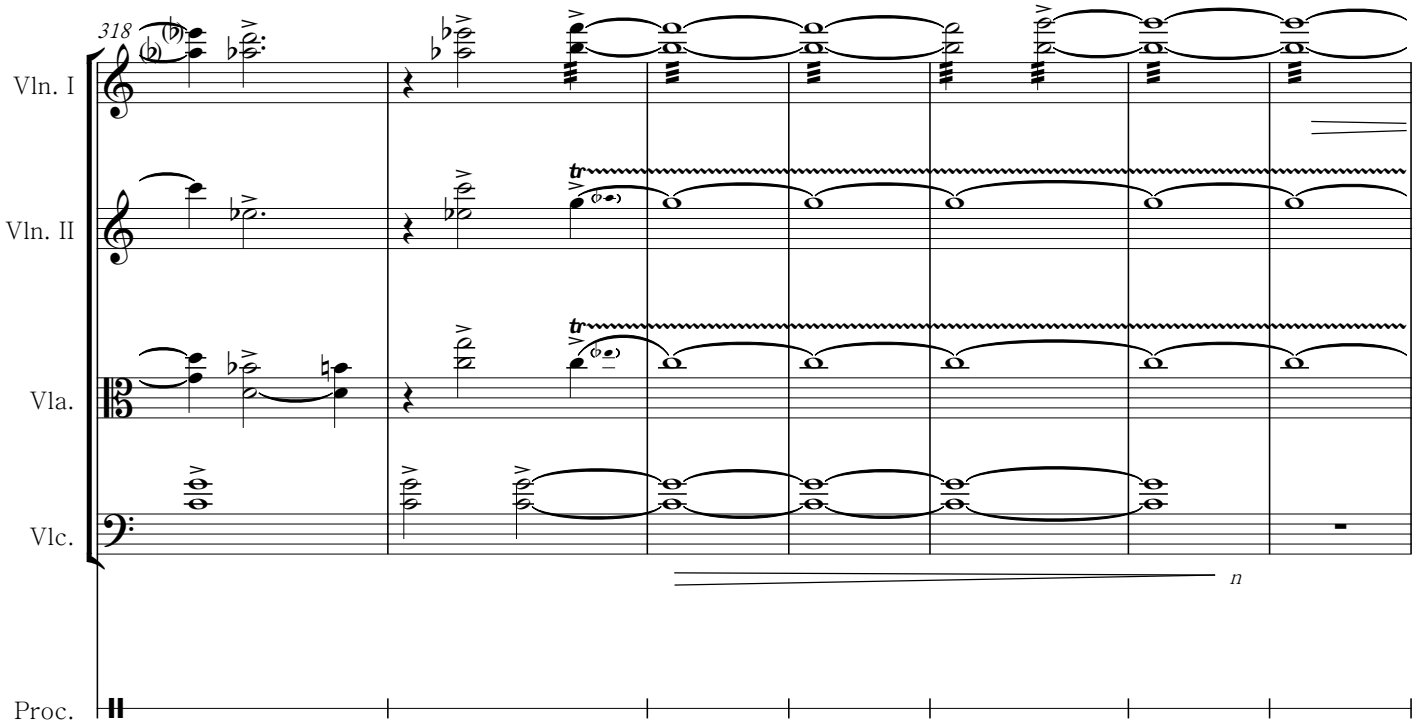

298
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

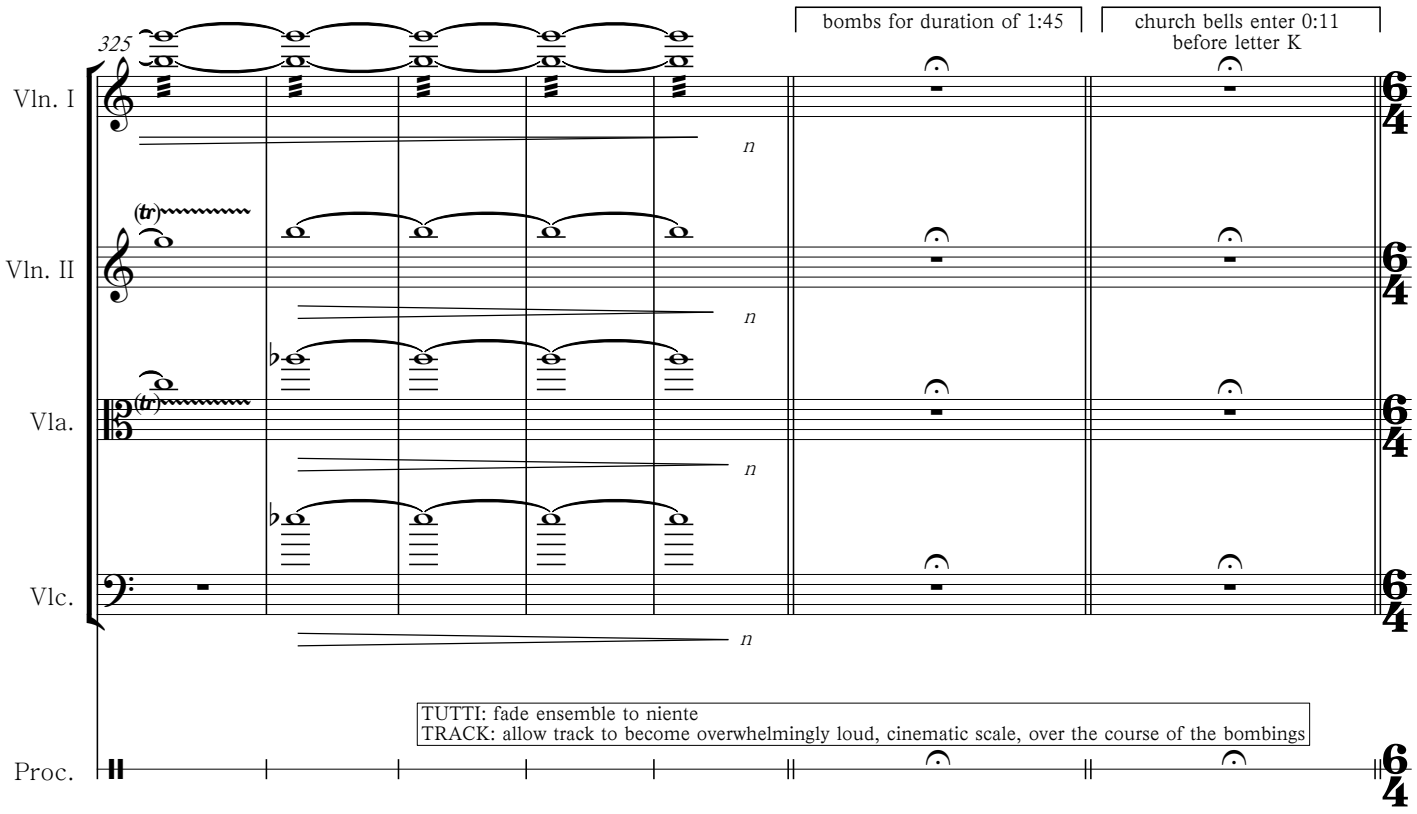

300
Vln. I
f
Vln. II
mf
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

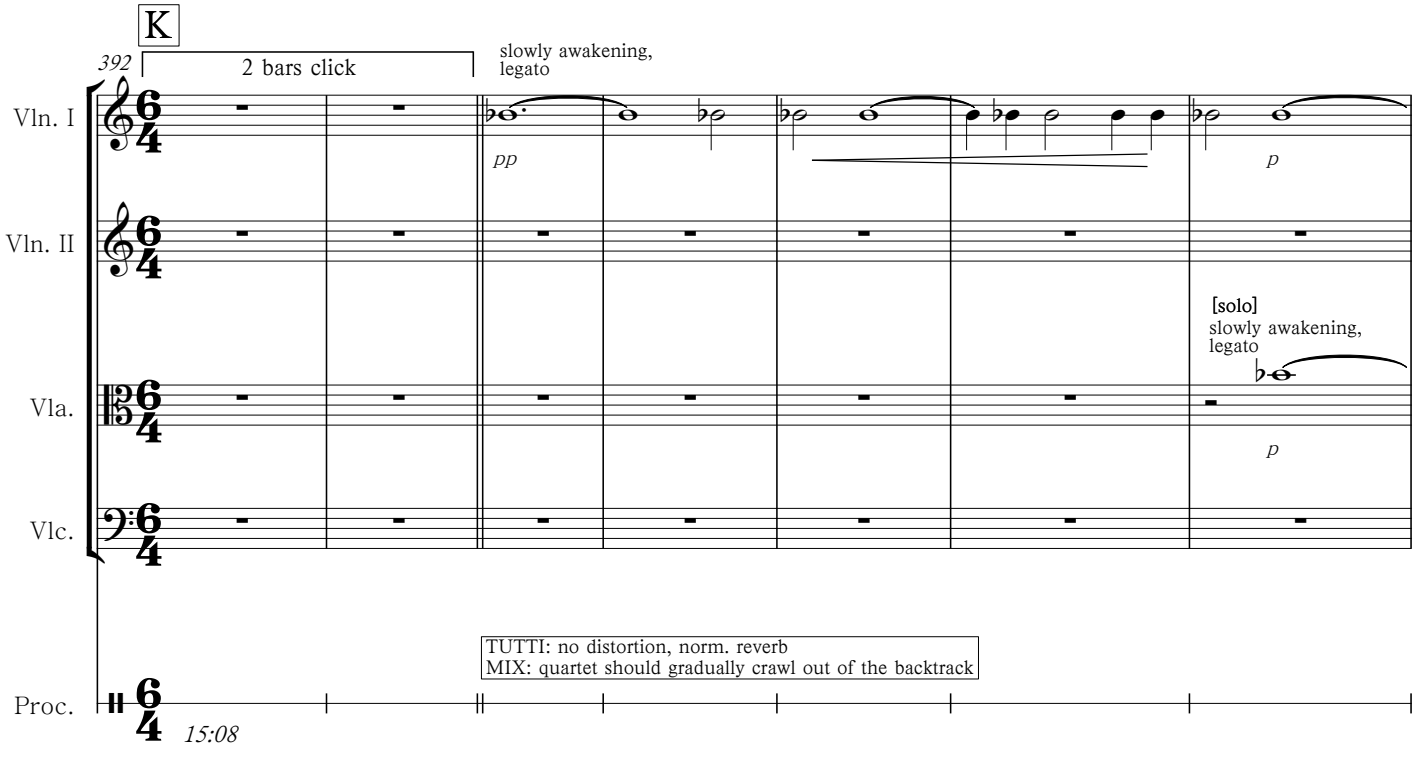

302
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
dramatic cutoff
with Vla.
dramatic cutoff
with Vln. I
epic, strong vibrato,
overly romanticized
fff
TUTTI: heavy
distortion,
very loud and
foreward
12:26

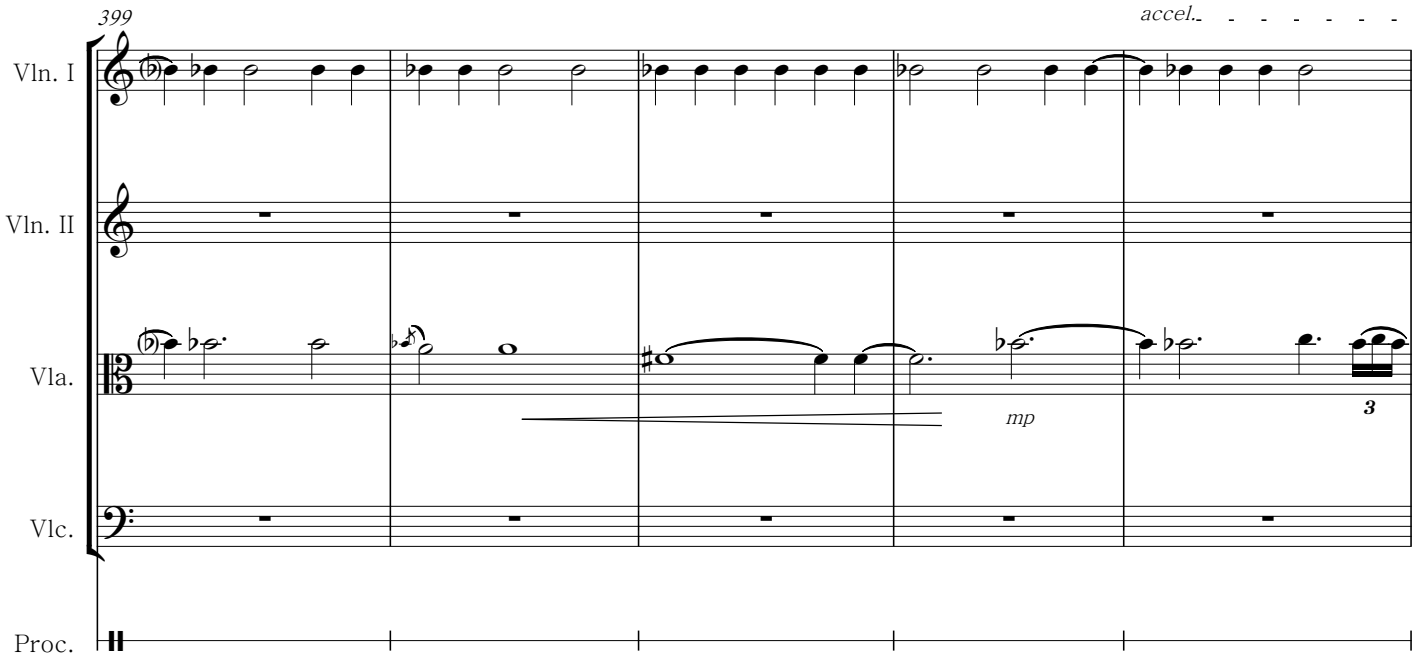

J
304
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
epic, strong vibrato,
overly romanticized
fff
12:30

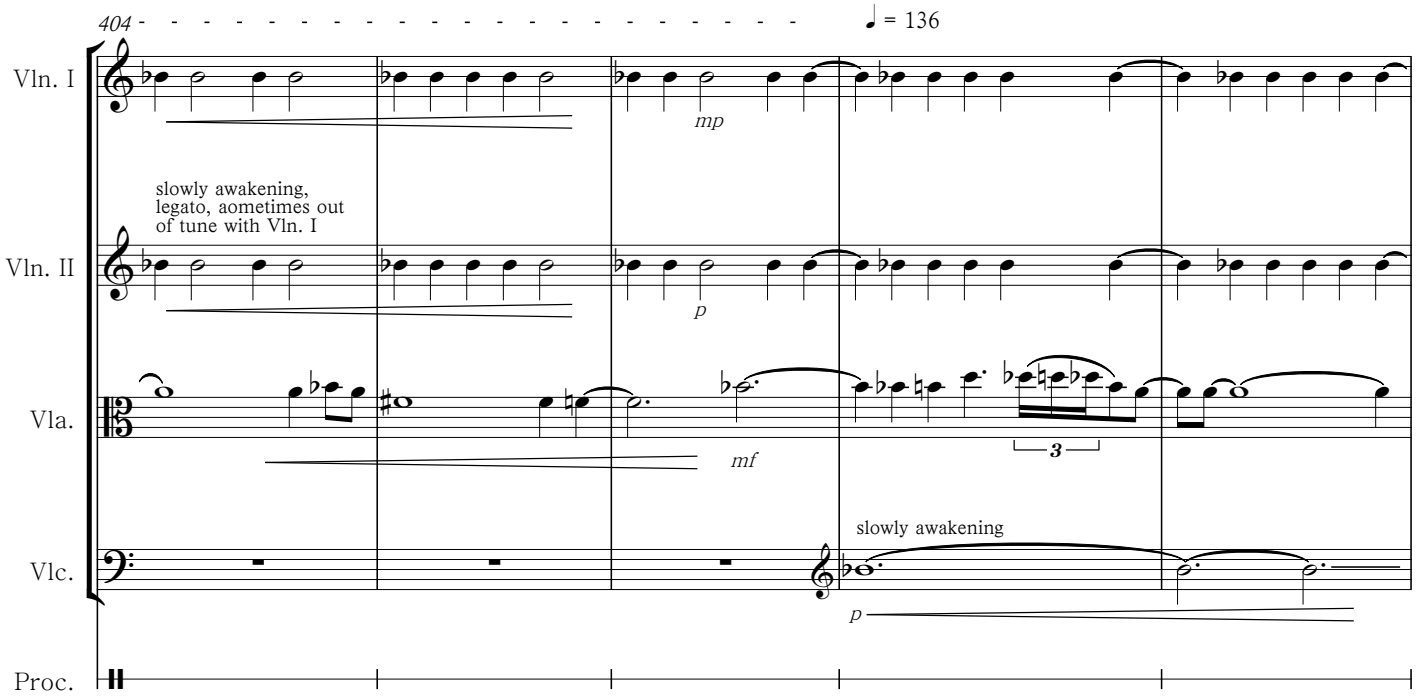

311
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

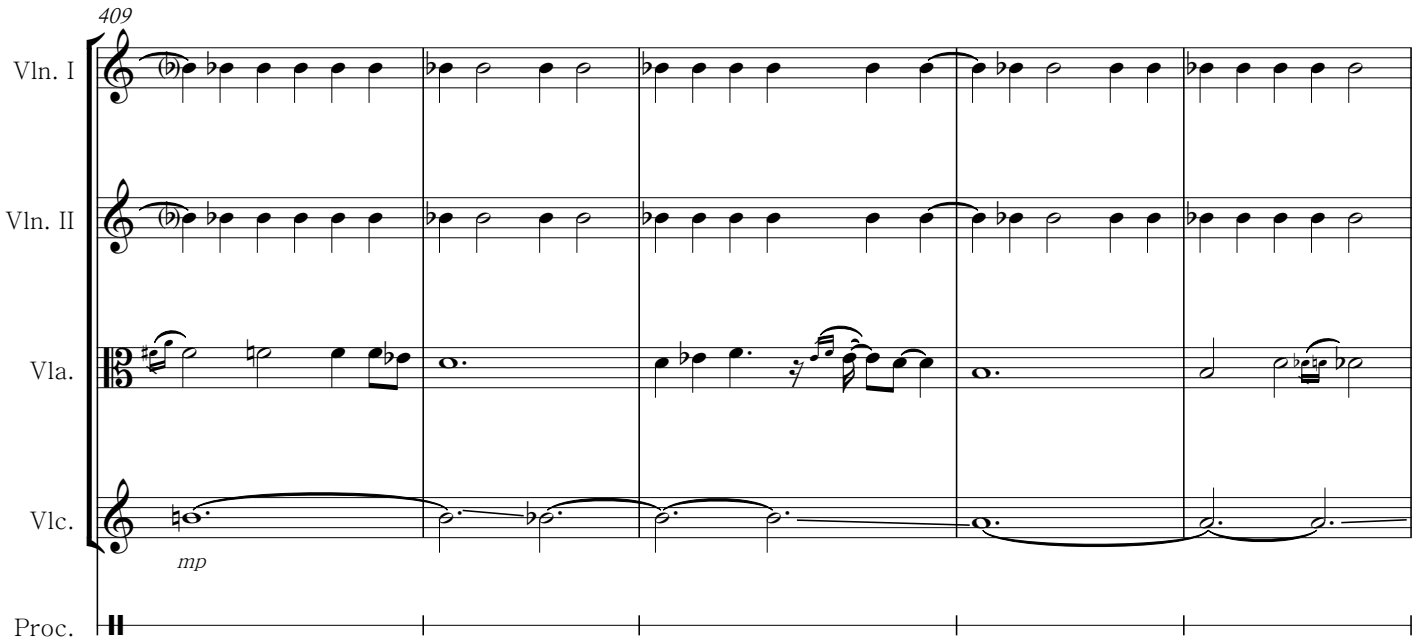

318
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
n

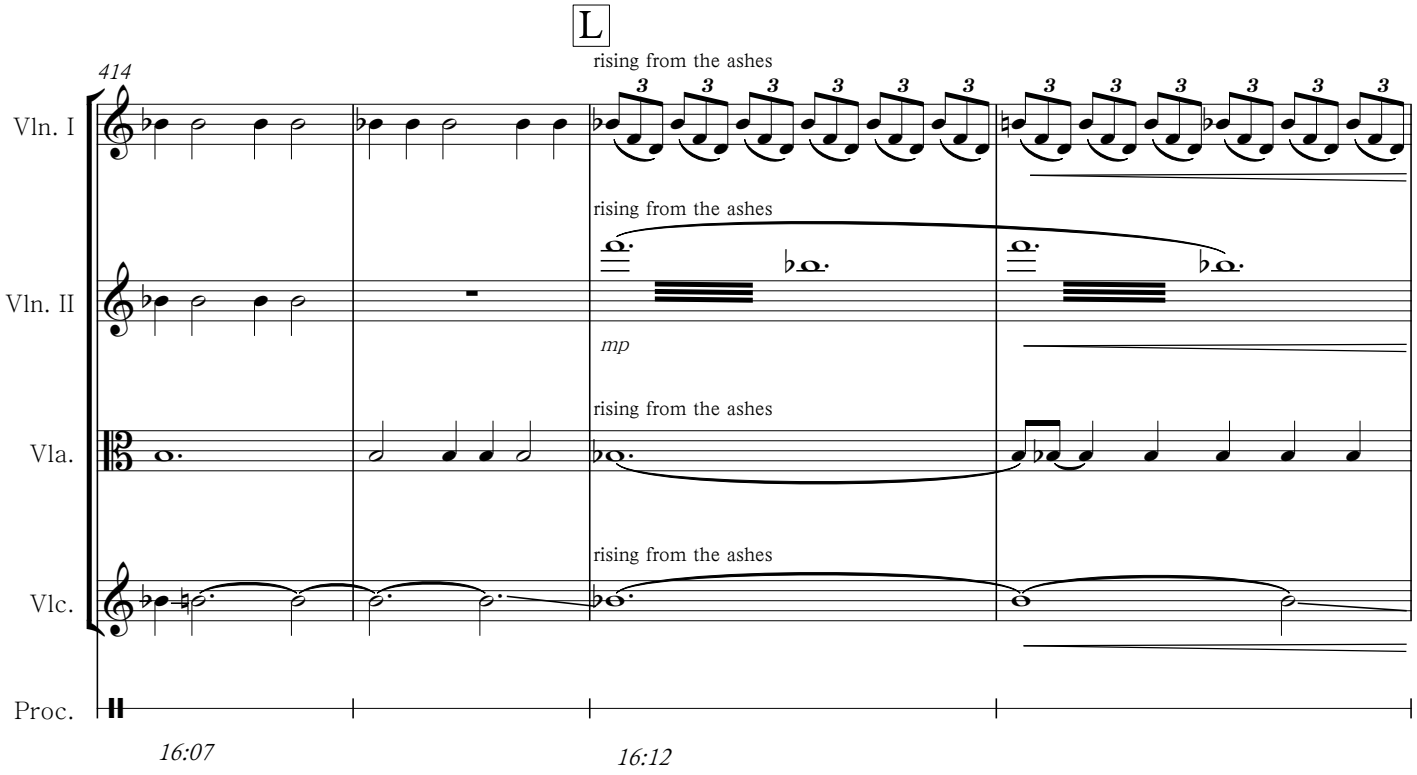

325
bombs for duration of 1:45
church bells enter 0:11
before letter K
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
n
(tr)
TUTTI: fade ensemble to niente
TRACK: allow track to become overwhelmingly loud, cinematic scale, over the course of the bombings

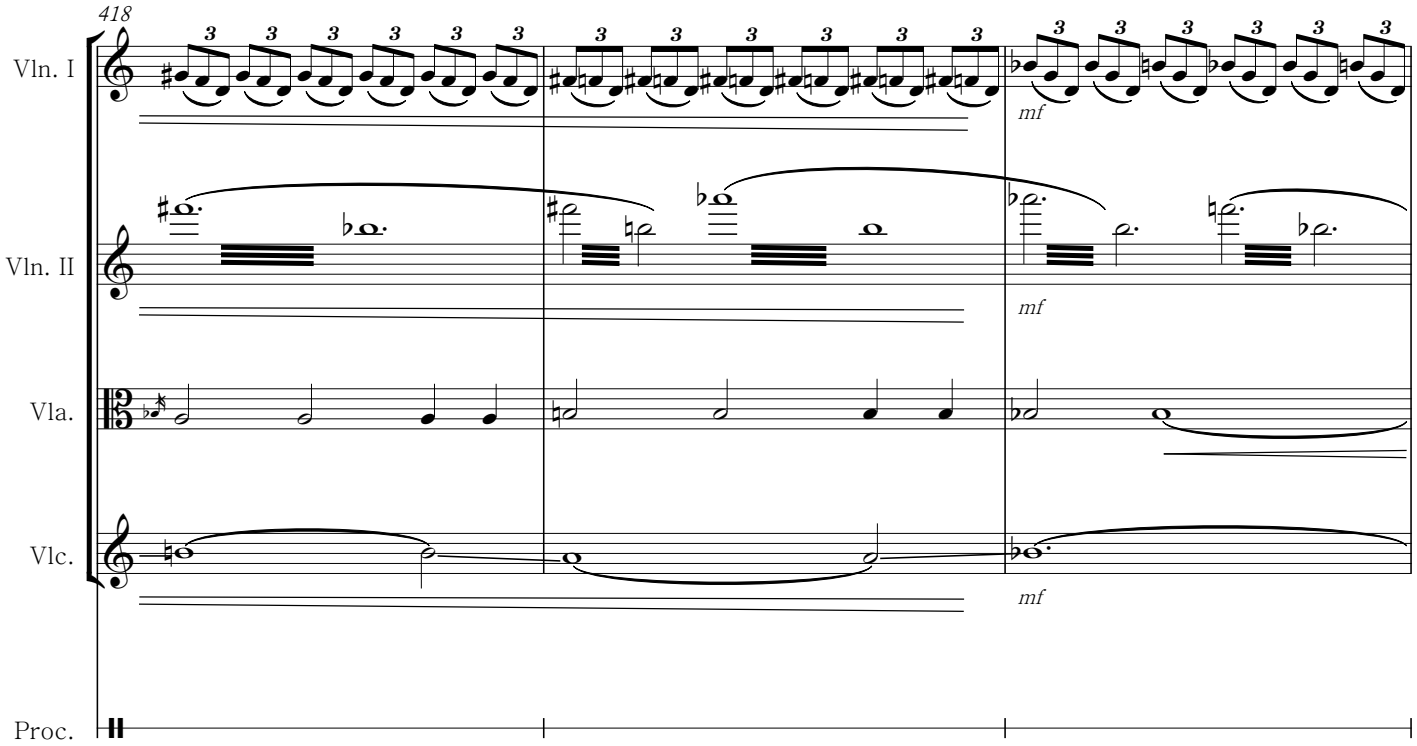

K
392
2 bars click
slowly awakening,
legato
pp
p
[solo]
slowly awakening,
legato
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
TUTTI: no distortion, norm. reverb
MIX: quartet should gradually crawl out of the backtrack
15:08

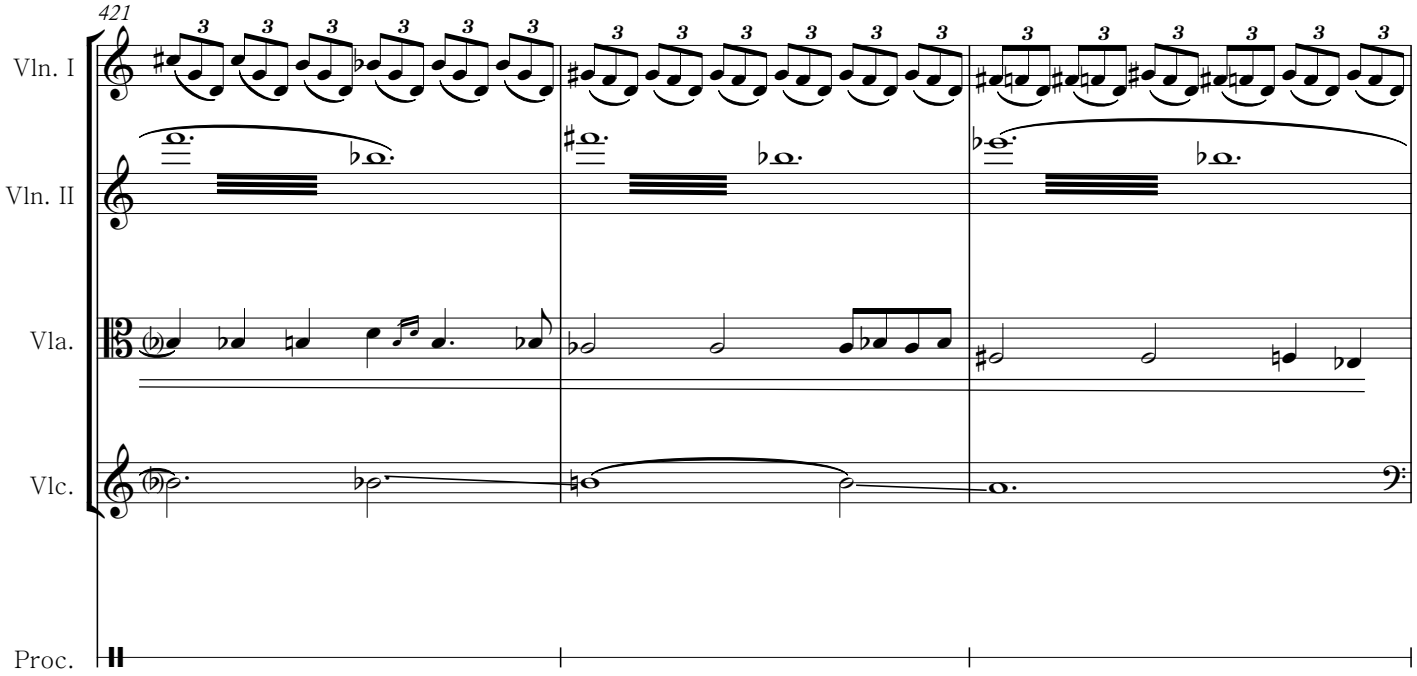

399
accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mp
3

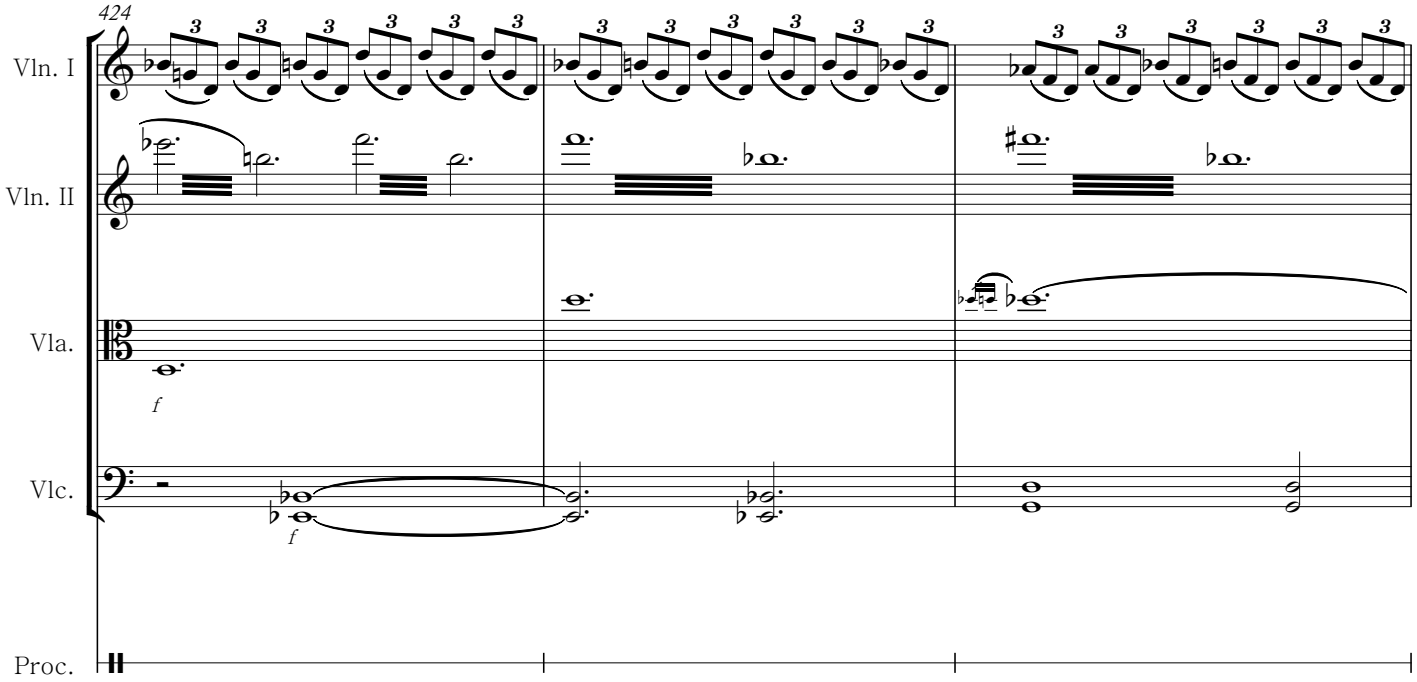

404
♩ = 136
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mp
slowly awakening,
legato, aometimes out
of tune with Vln. I
p
mf
3
slowly awakening
p

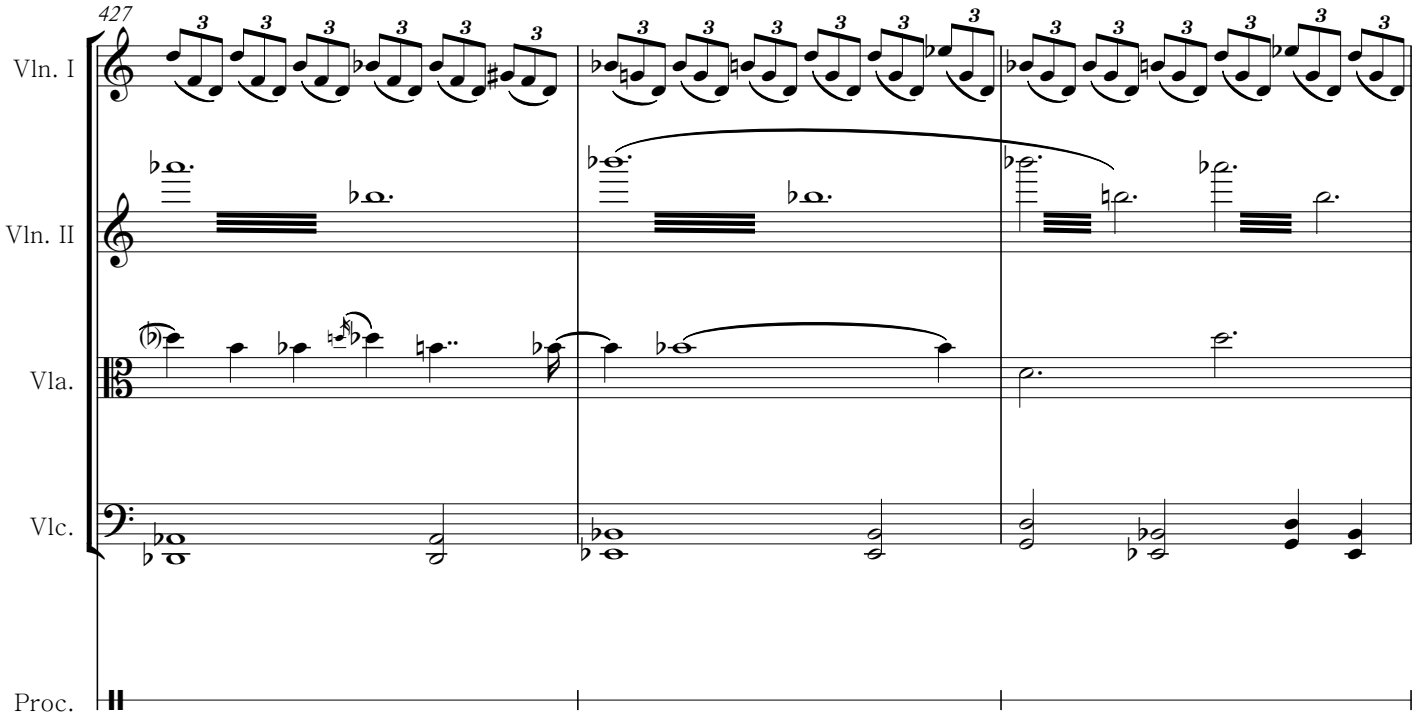

409
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
mp
Proc.

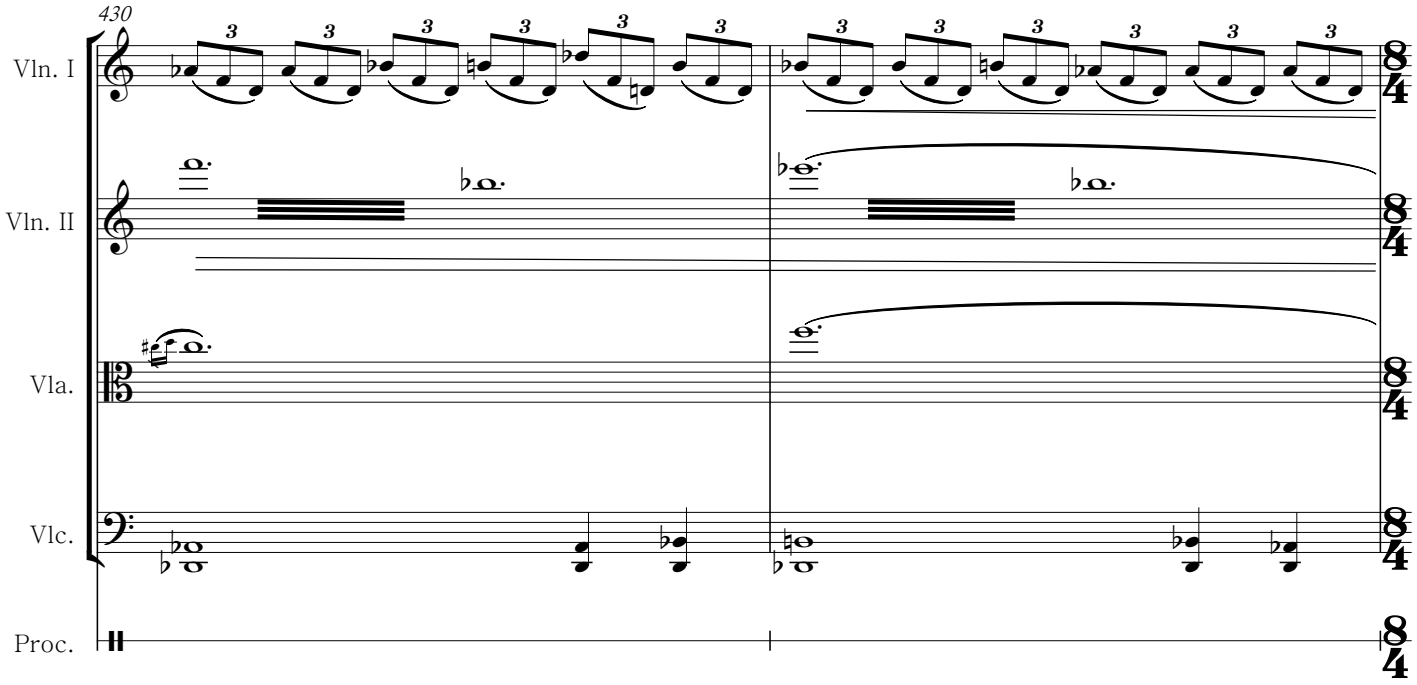

L
414
Vln. I
rising from the ashes
Vln. II
rising from the ashes
mp
Vla.
rising from the ashes
Vlc.
rising from the ashes
Proc.
16:07
16:12

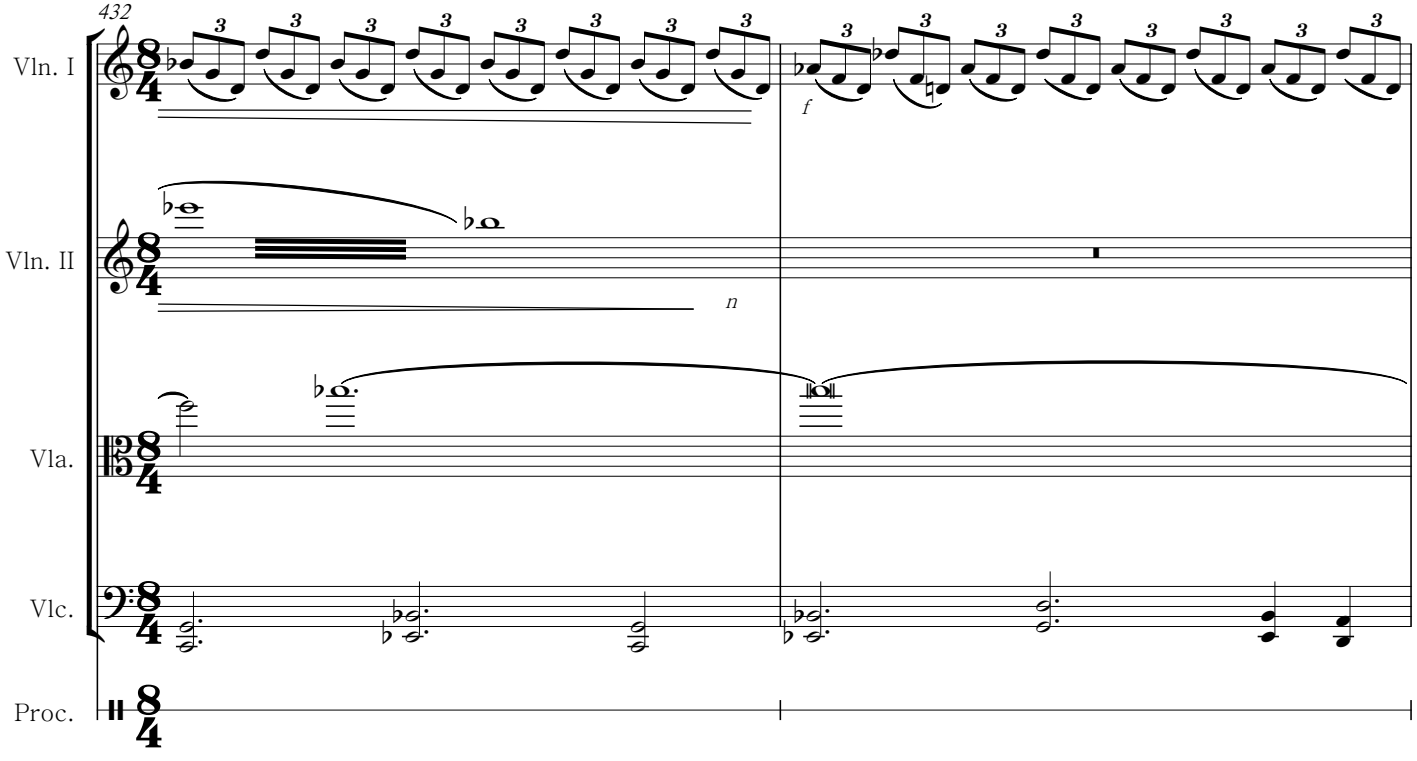

418
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mf
mf
mf

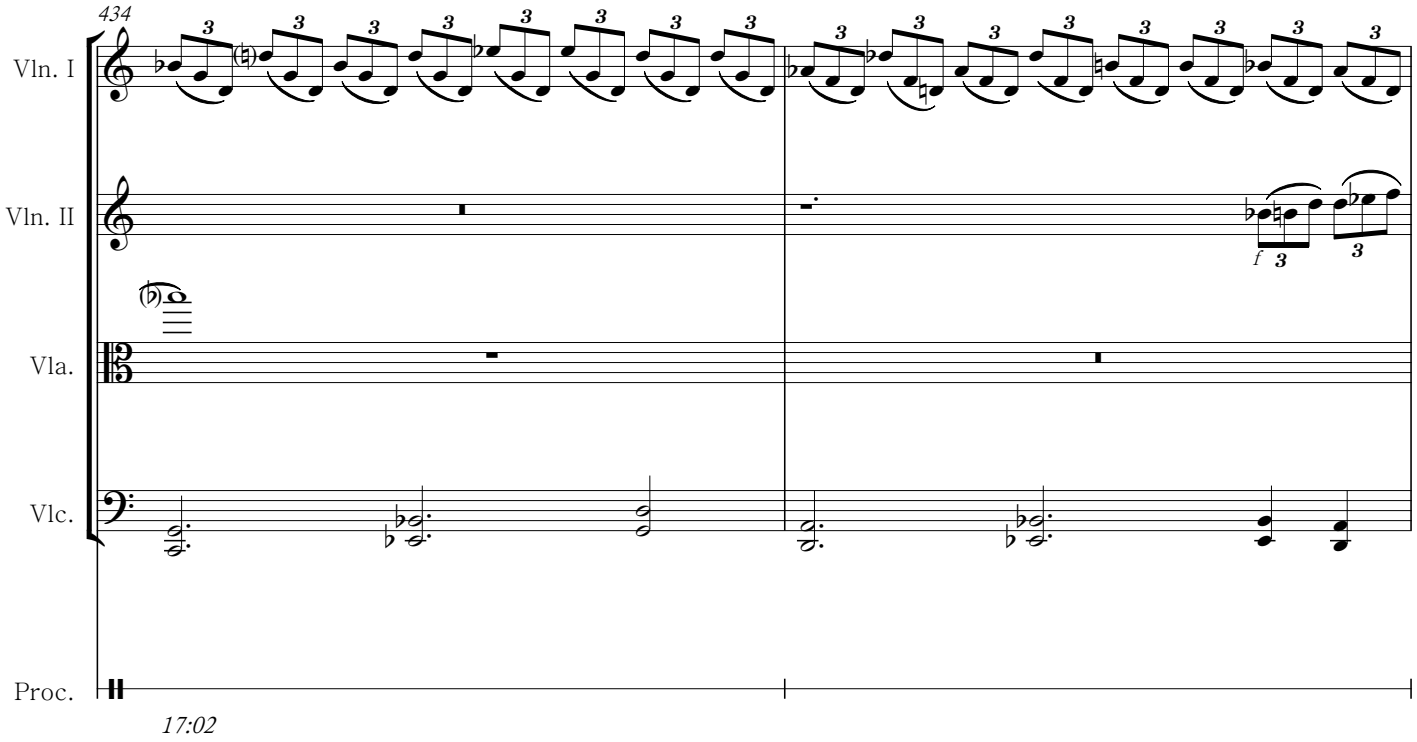

421
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

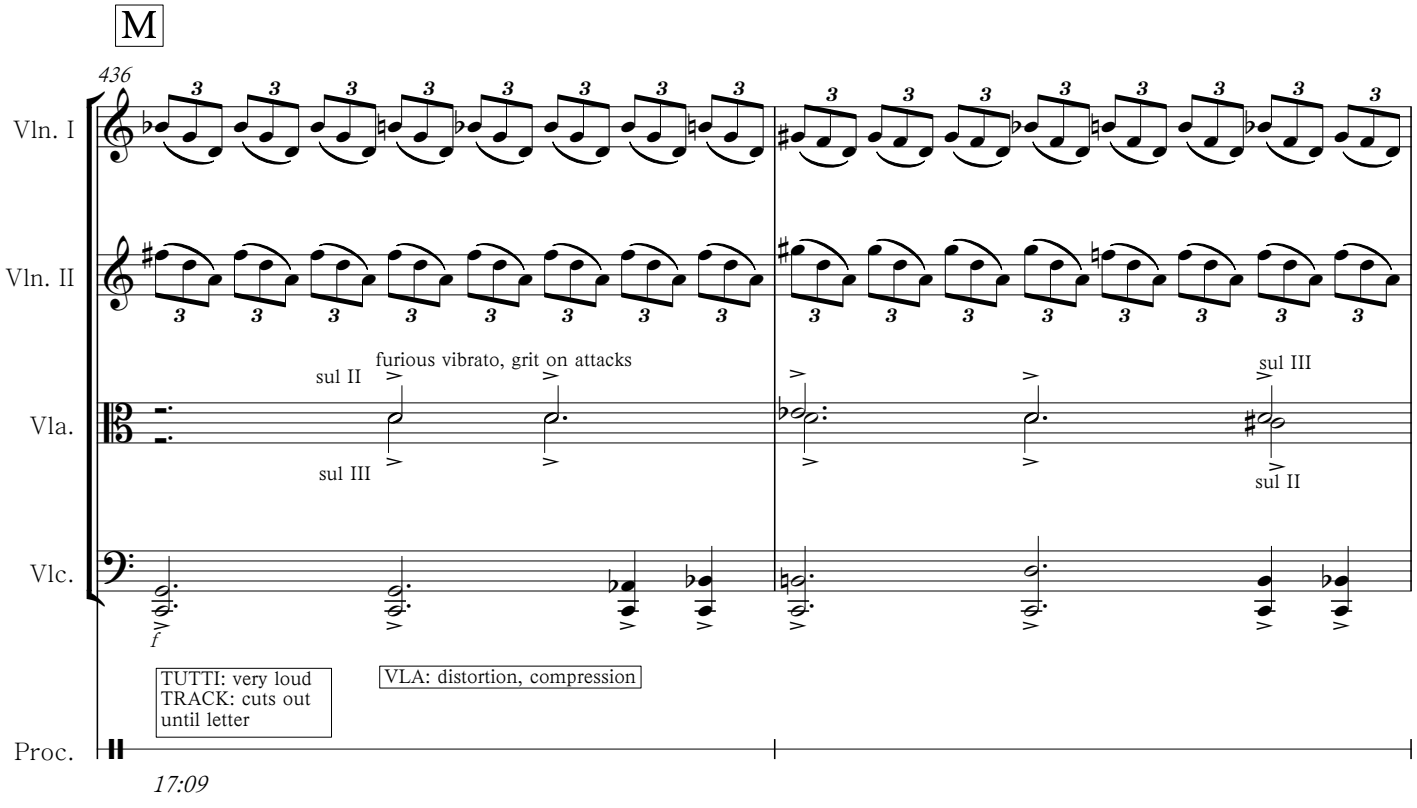

424
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
f
f

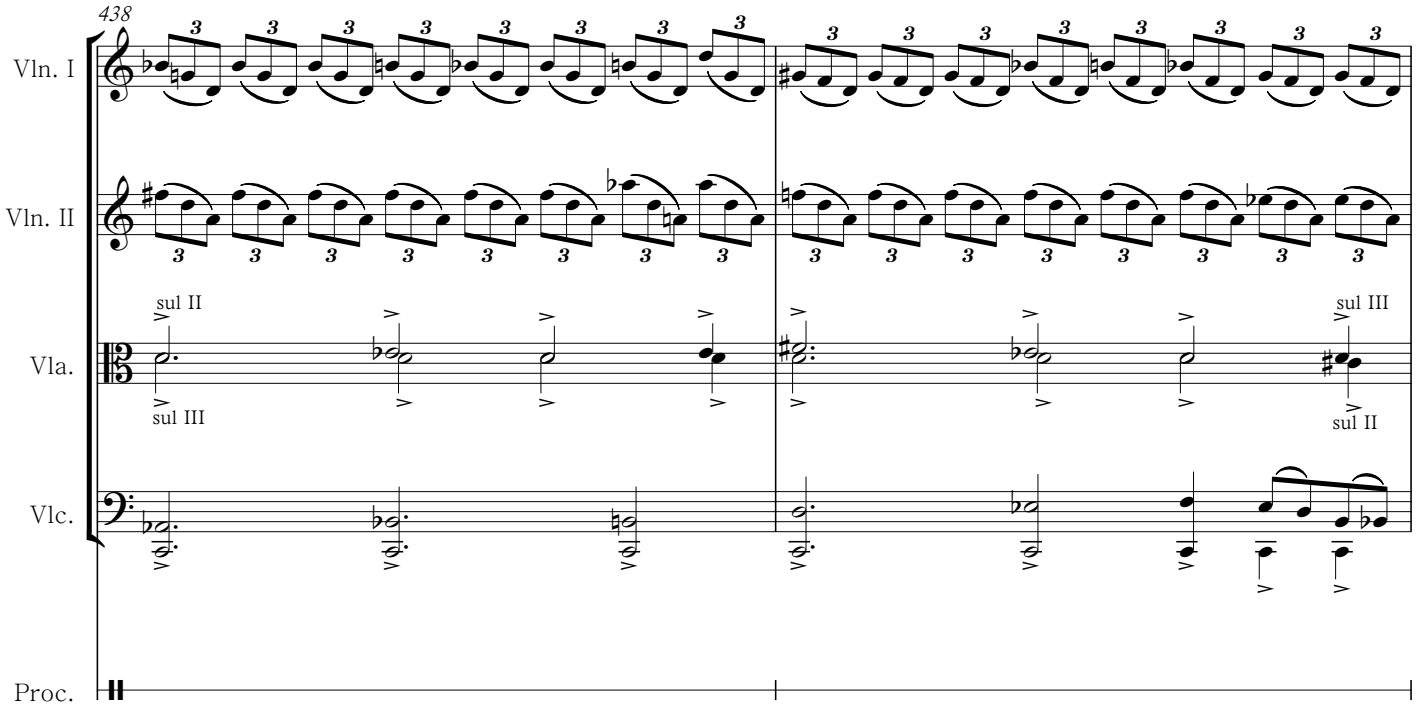

427
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

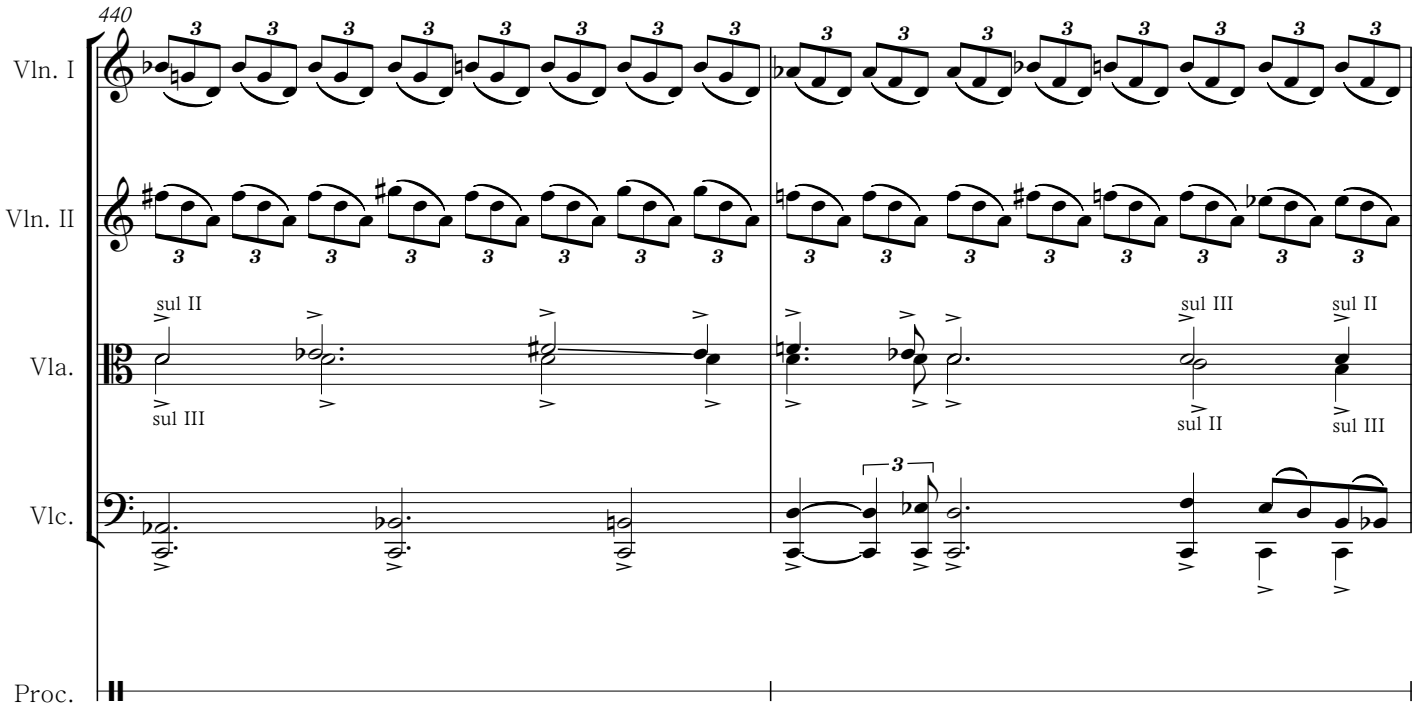

430
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

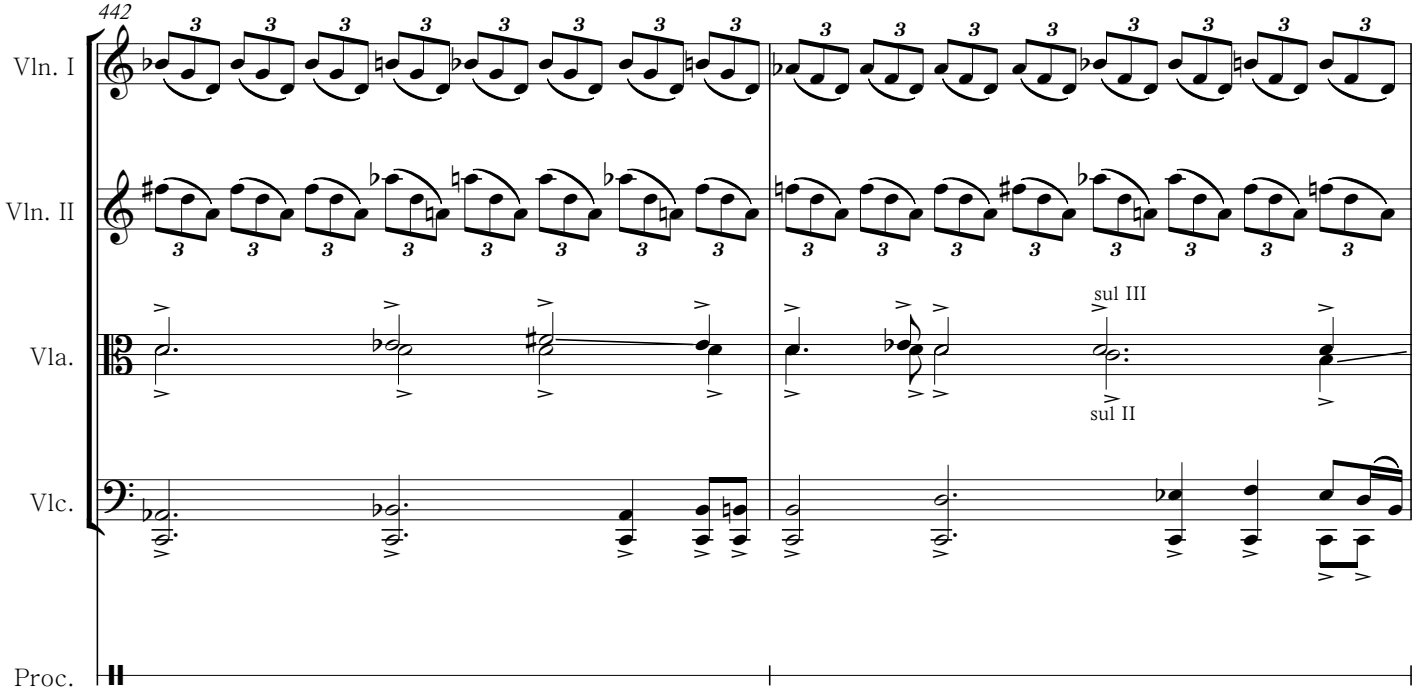

432
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
f
n

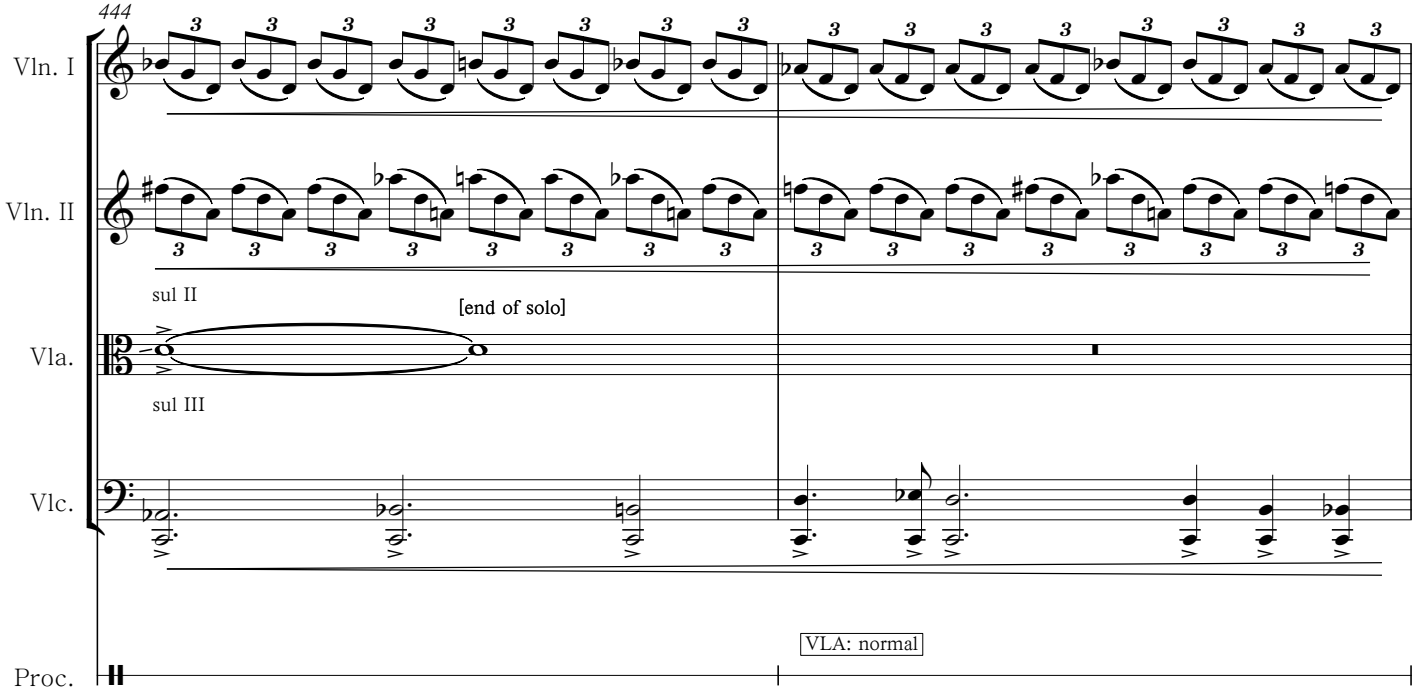

434
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
f
17:02

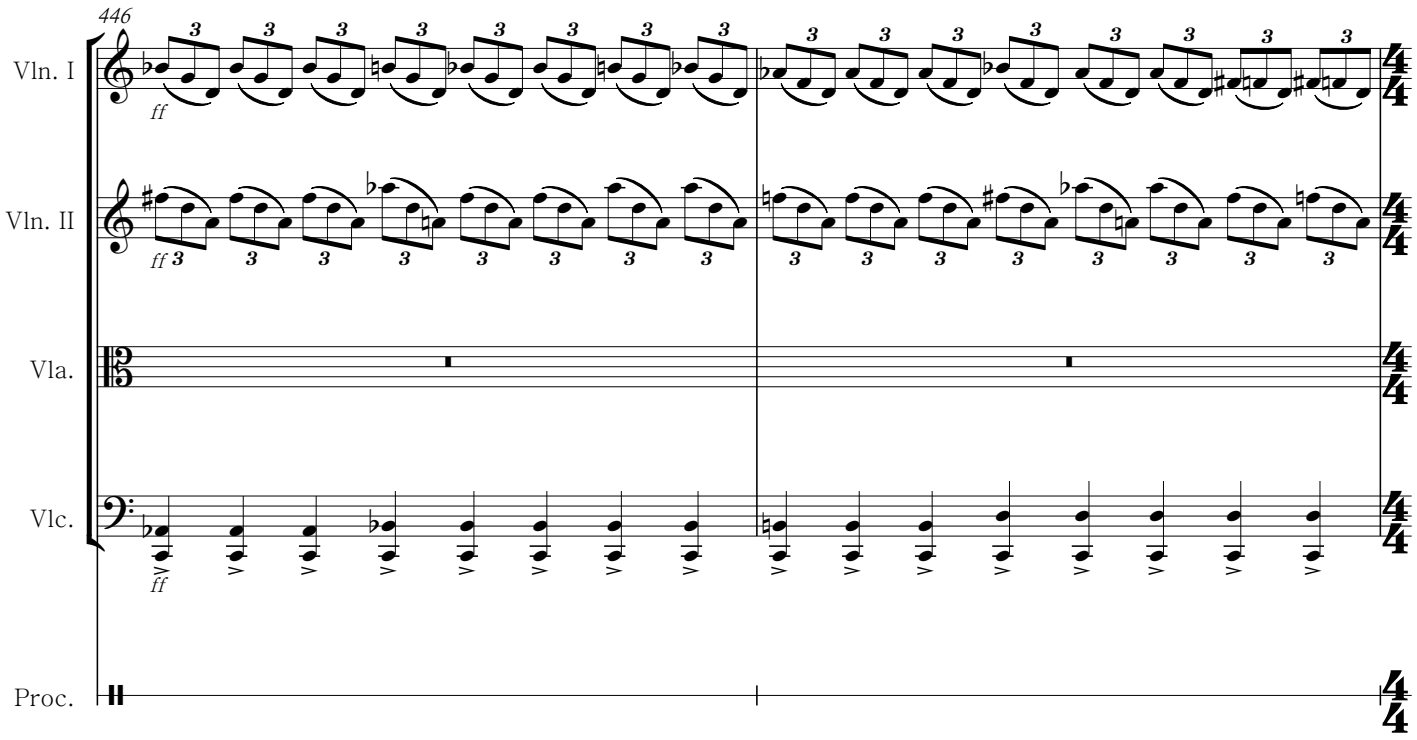

M
436
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sul II
furious vibrato, grit on attacks
sul III
sul III
sul II
f
TUTTI: very loud
TRACK: cuts out
until letter
VLA: distortion, compression
17:09

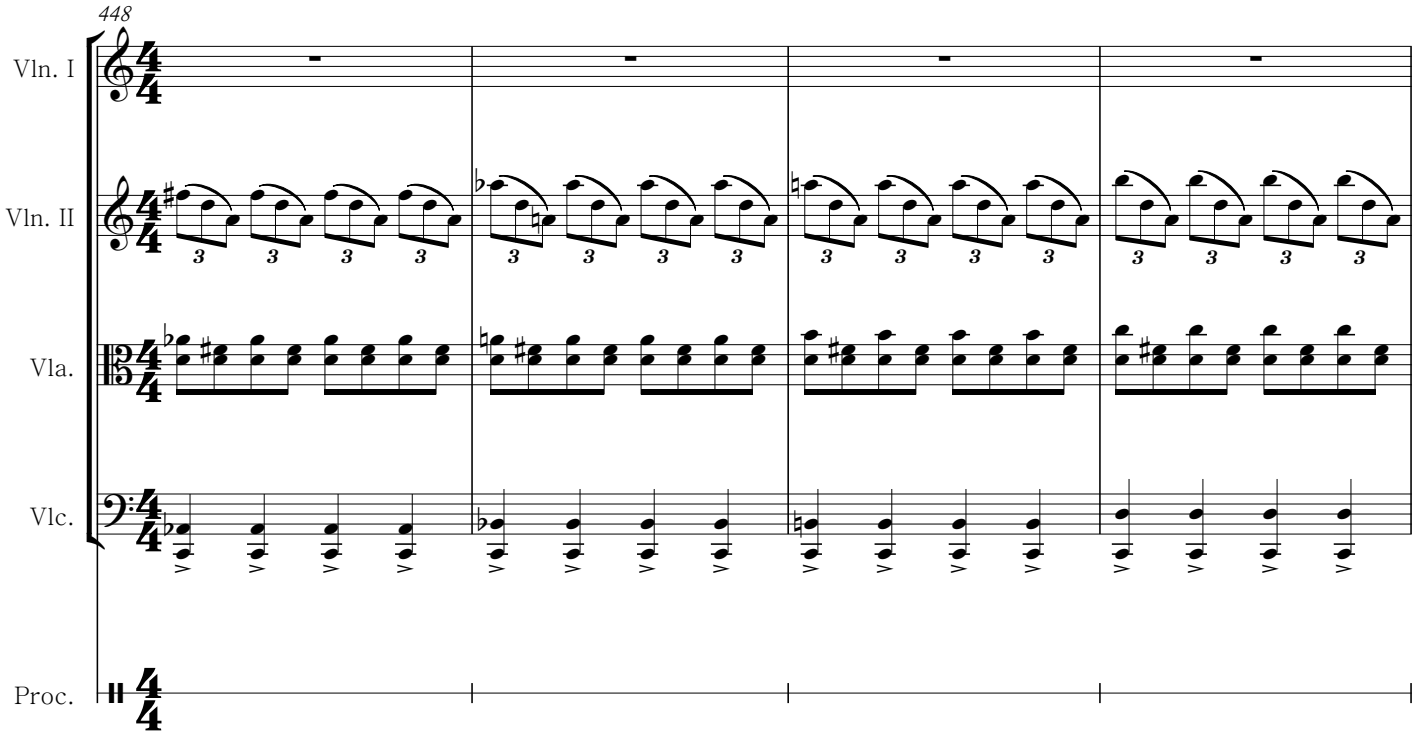

438
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sul II
sul III
sul III
sul II

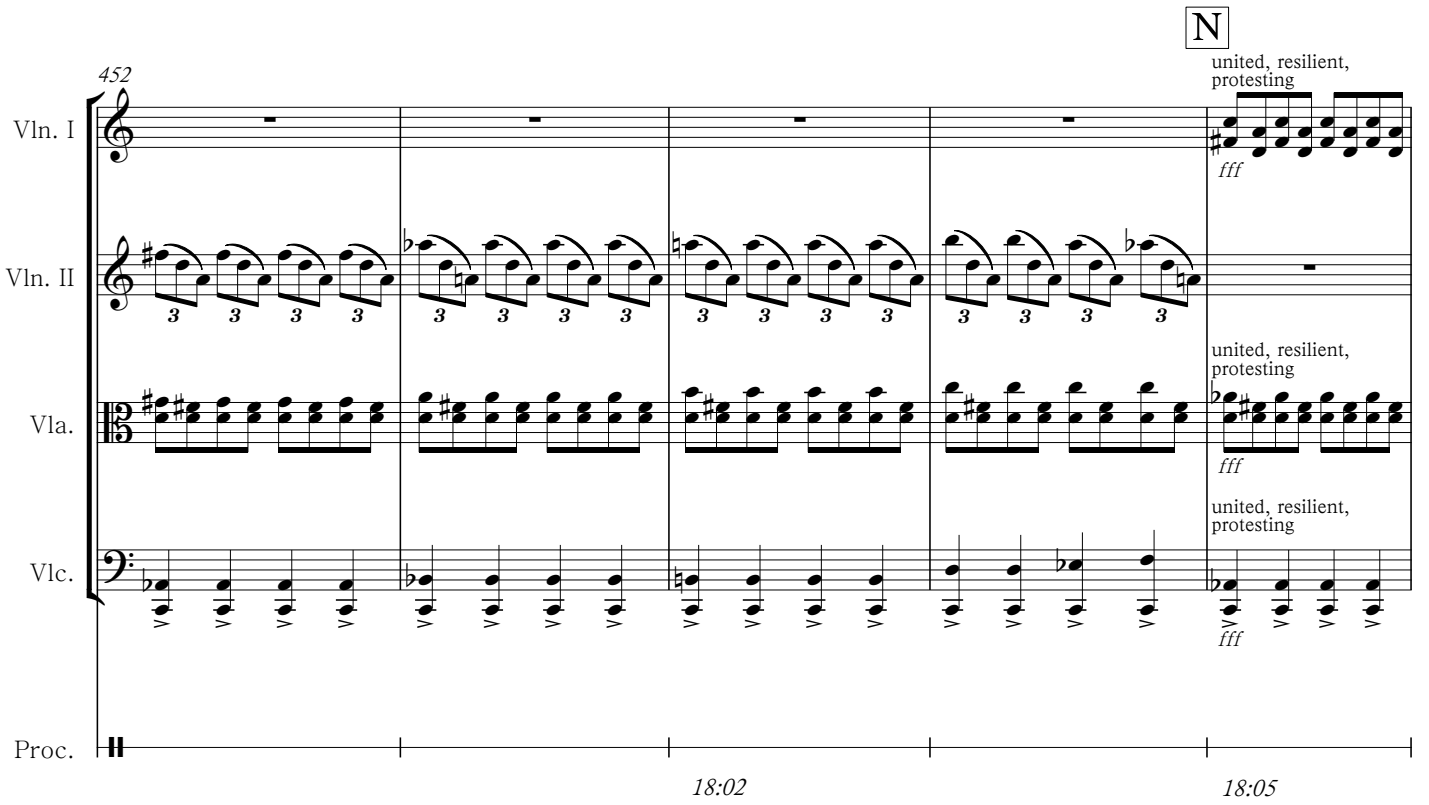

440
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
sul II
sul III
sul III
sul II
sul II
sul III

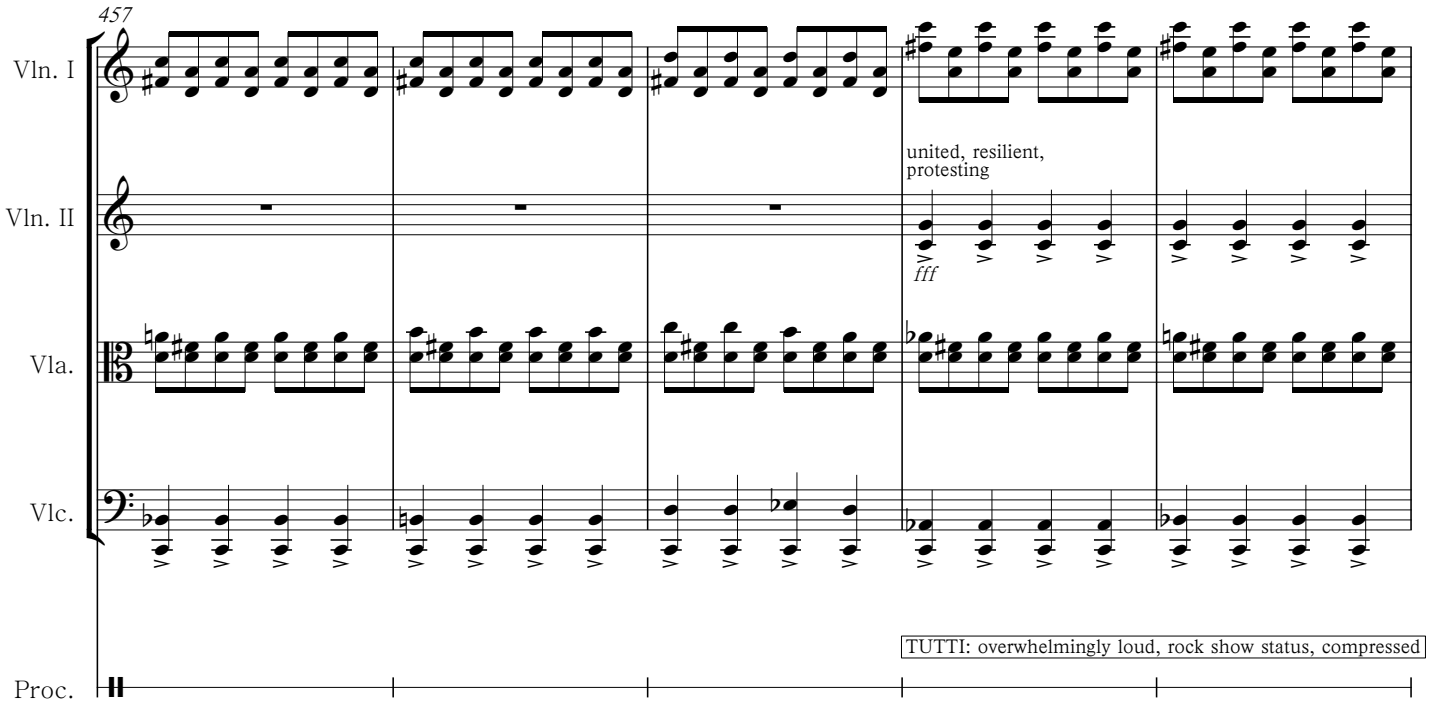

442
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
sul III
sul II
Vlc.
Proc.

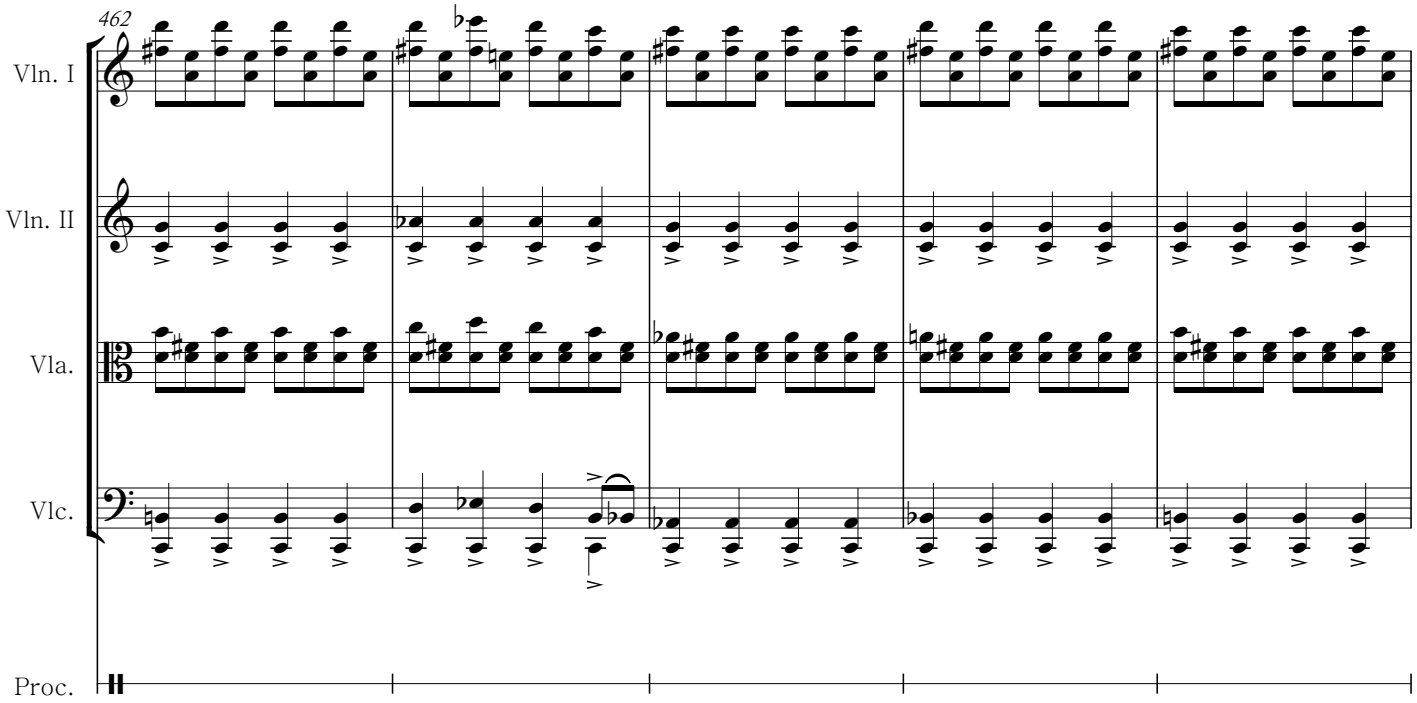

444
Vln. I
Vln. II
sul II
[end of solo]
Vla.
sul III
Vlc.
VLA: normal
Proc.

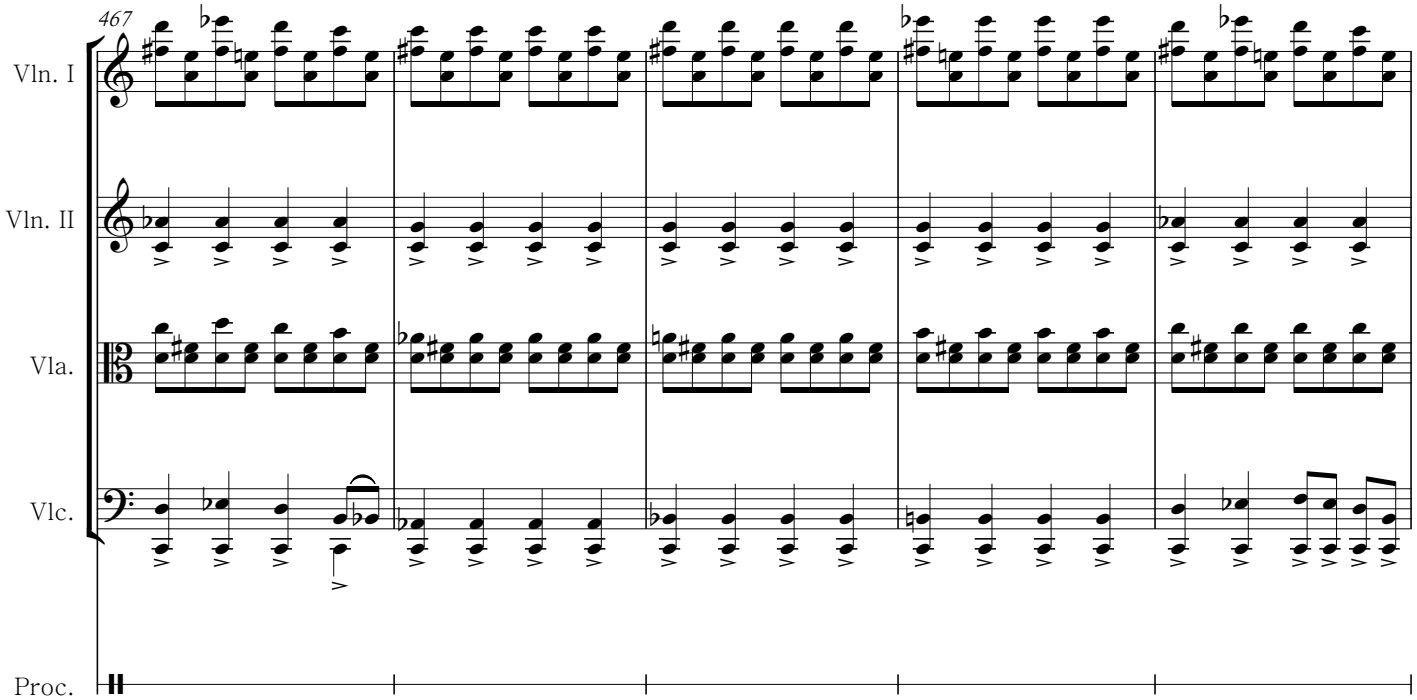

446
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
ff

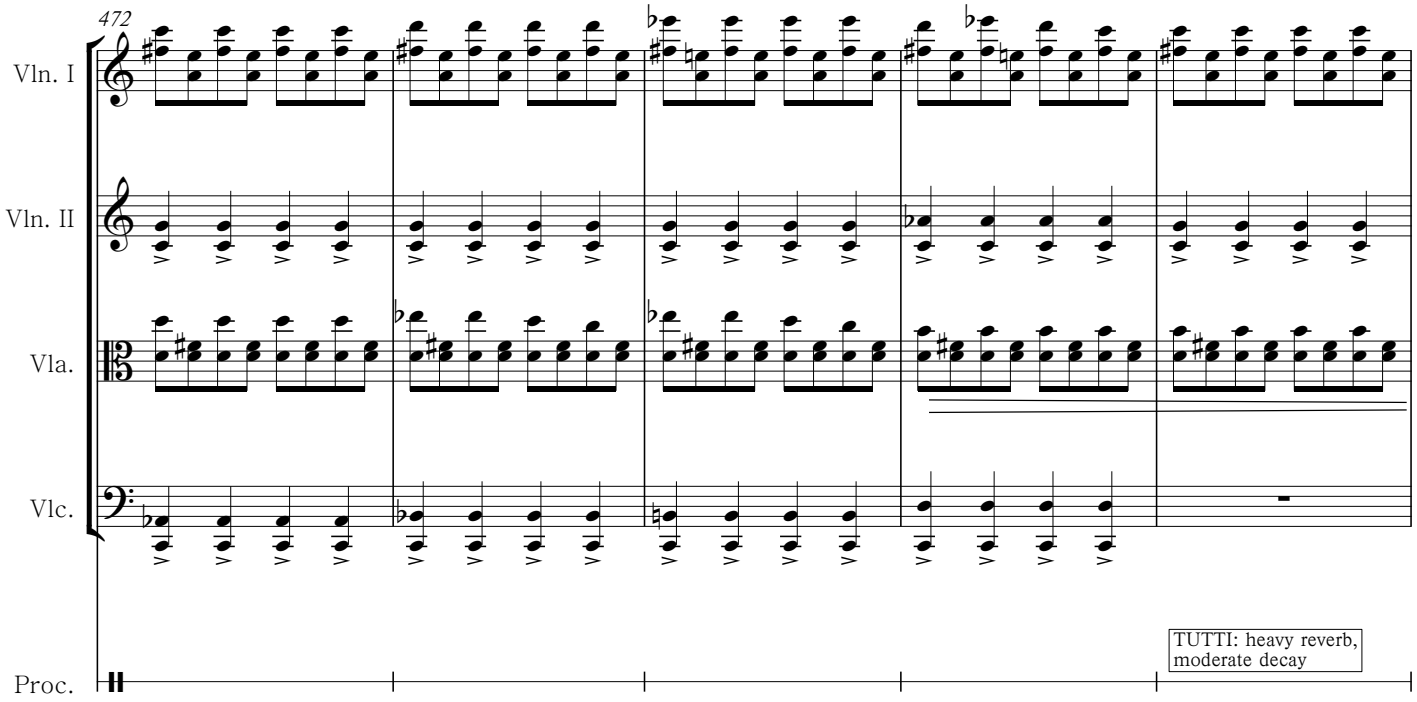

448
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

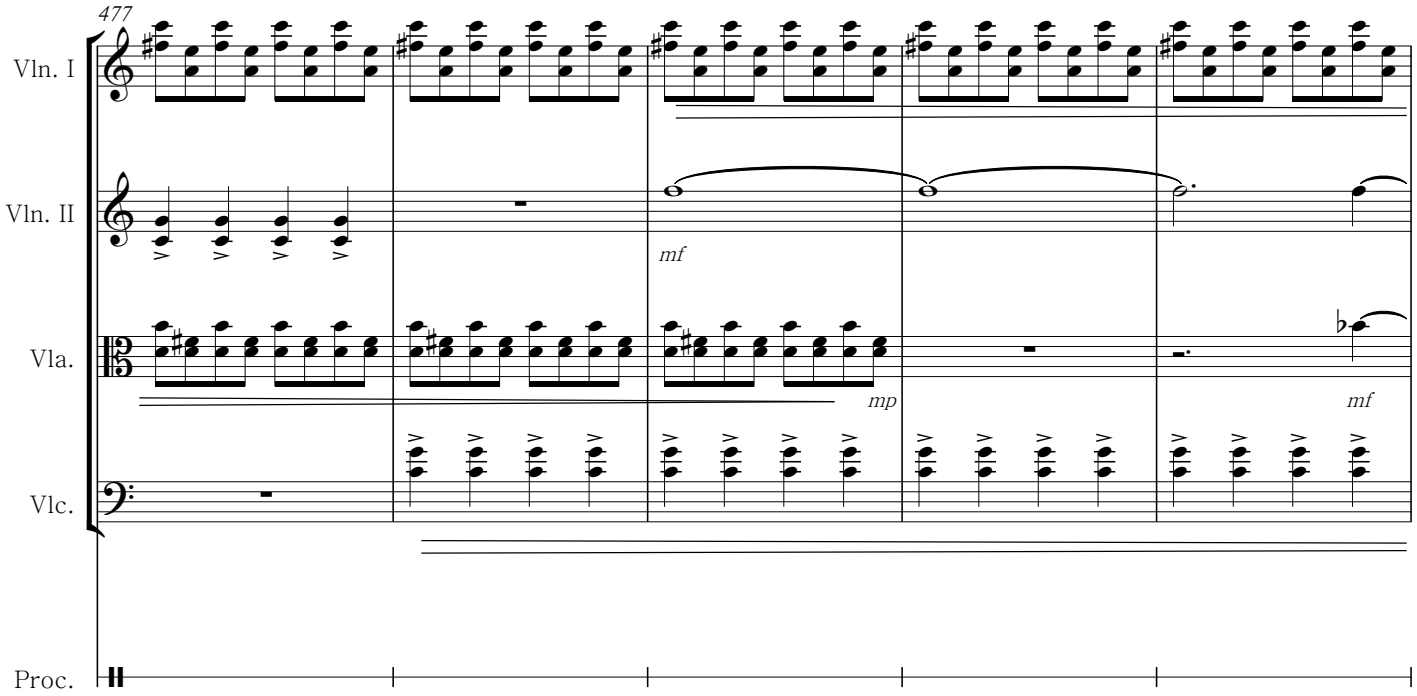

N
452
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
united, resilient, protesting
fff
united, resilient, protesting
fff
united, resilient, protesting
fff
18:02
18:05

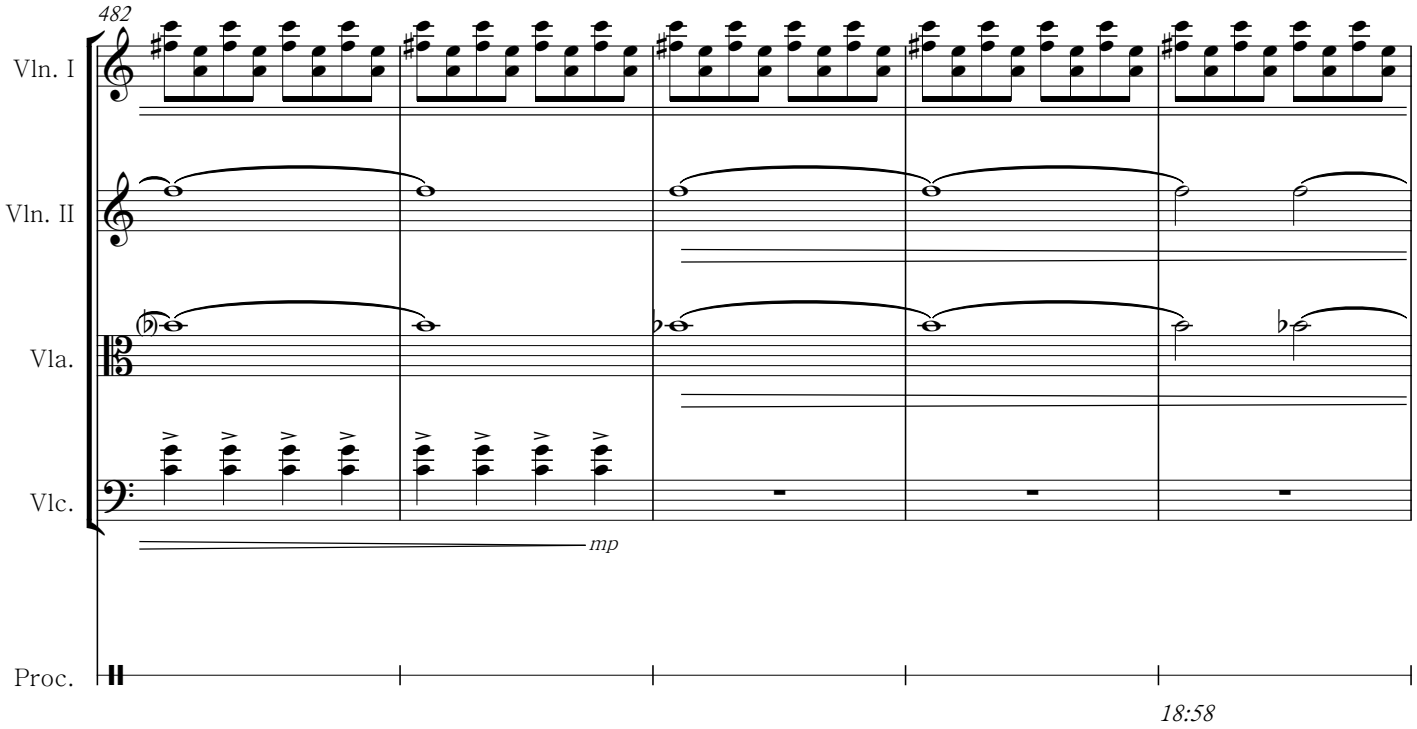

457
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
united, resilient, protesting
fff
TUTTI: overwhelmingly loud, rock show status, compressed


462
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

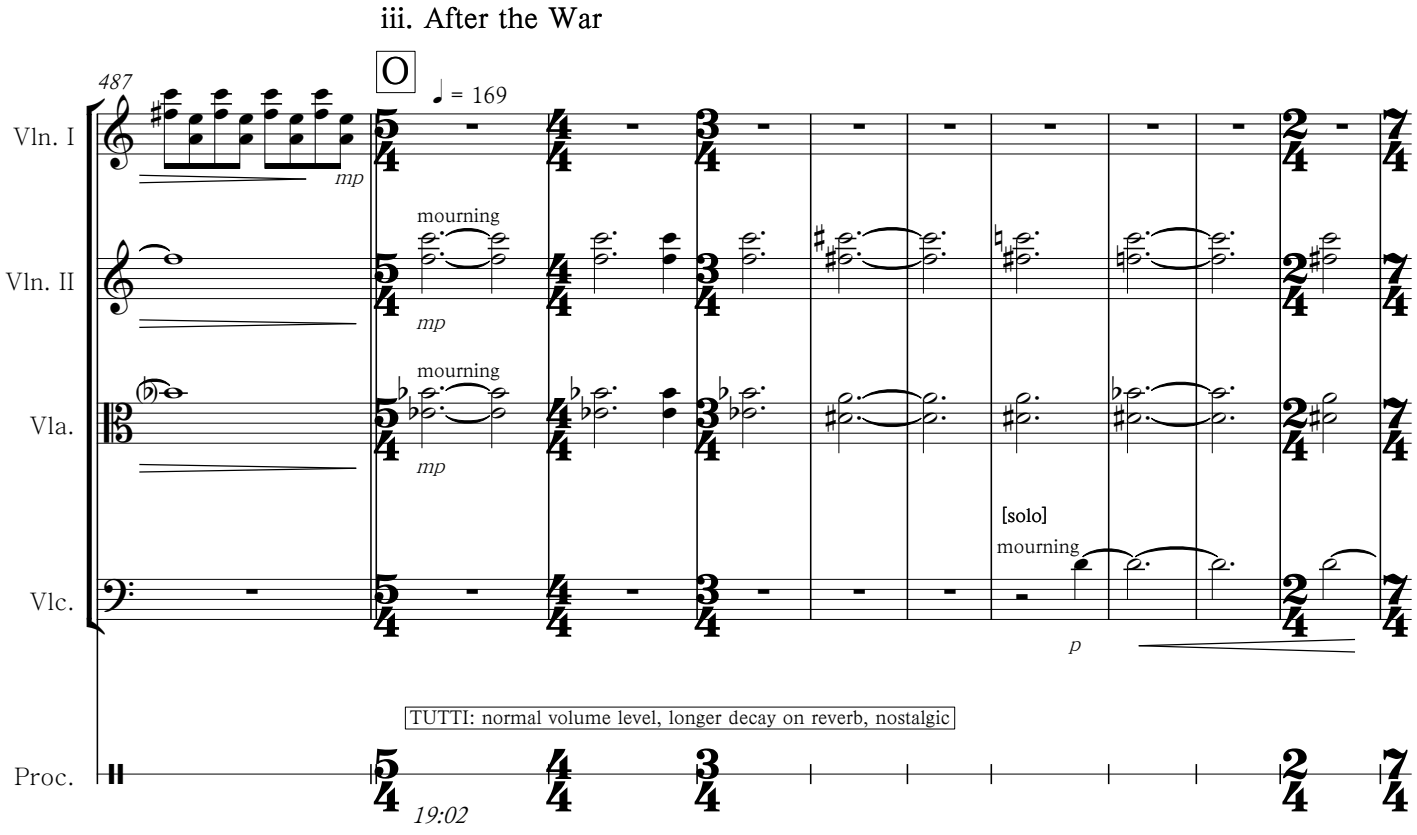

467
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.

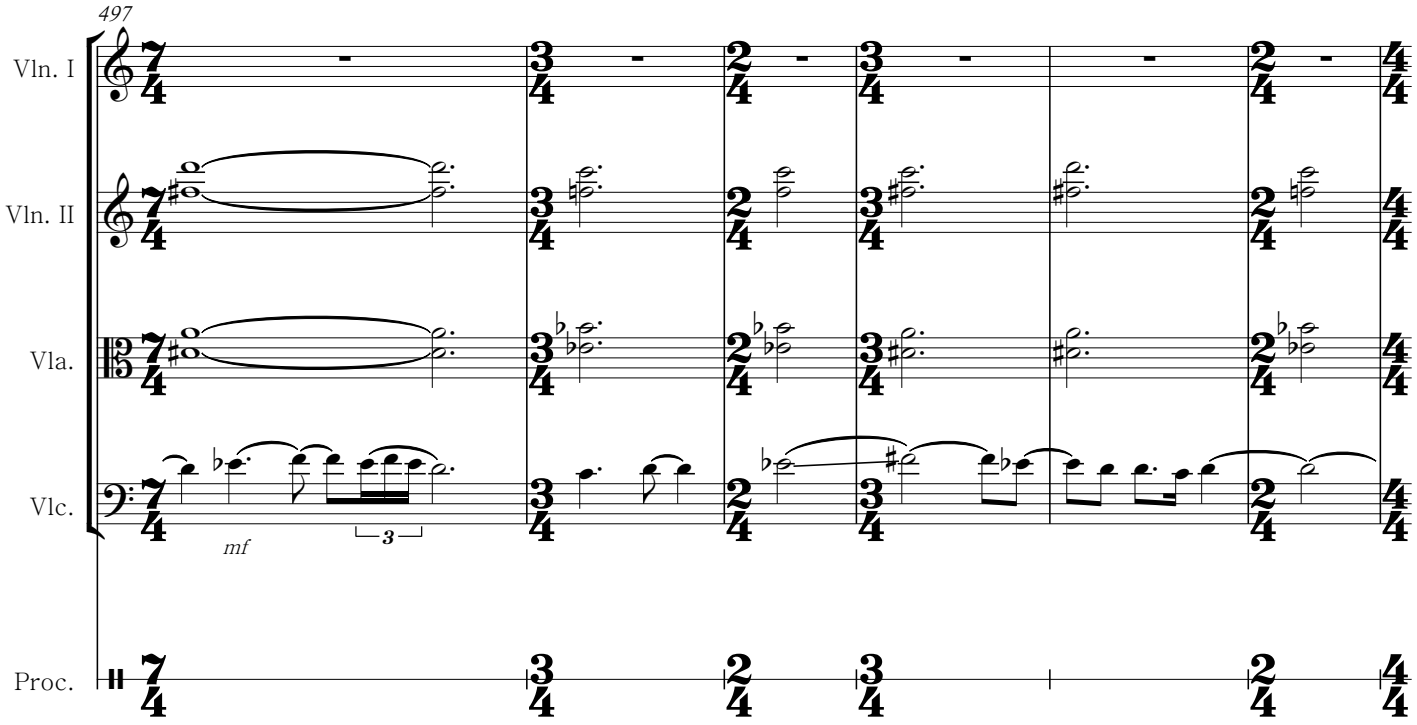

472
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
TUTTI: heavy reverb, moderate decay

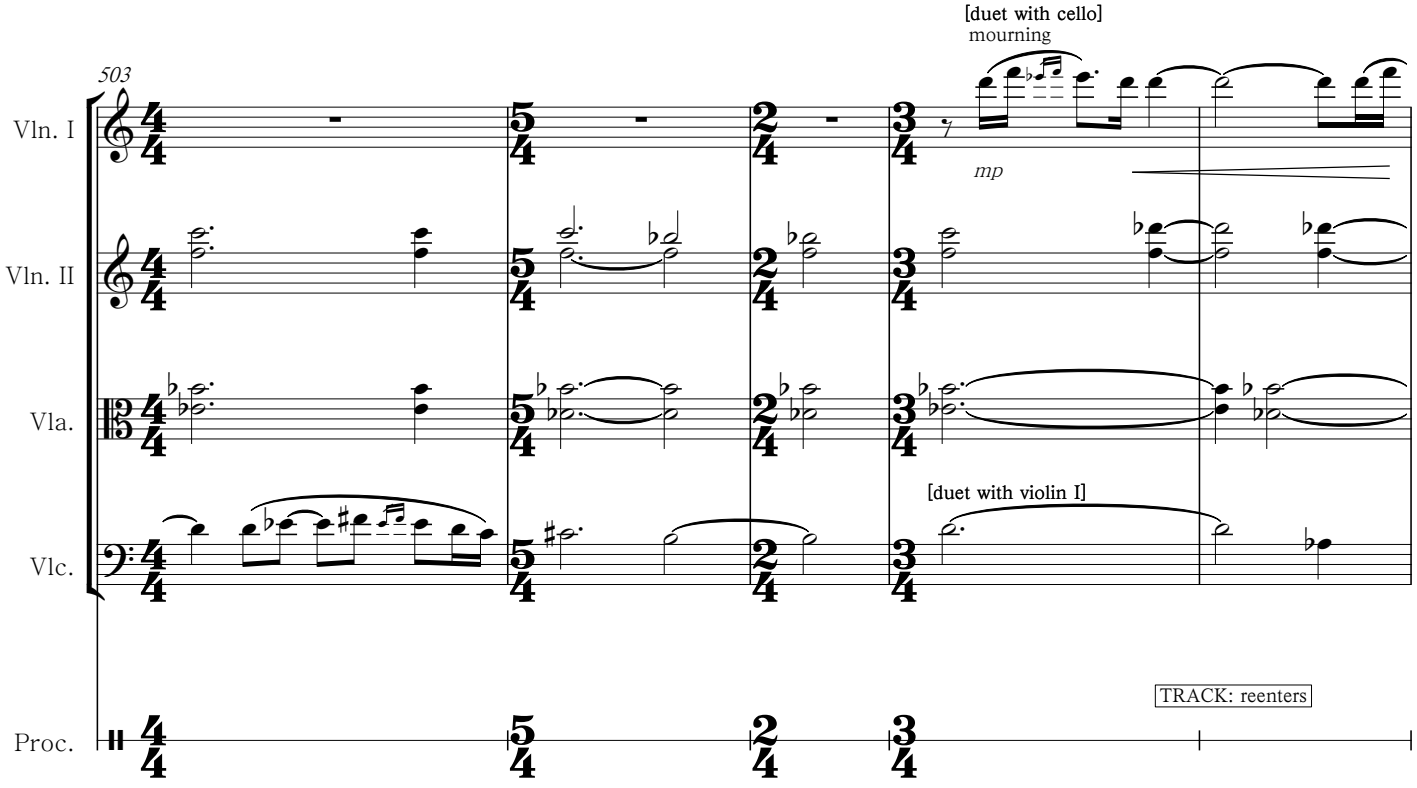

477
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mf
mp
mf

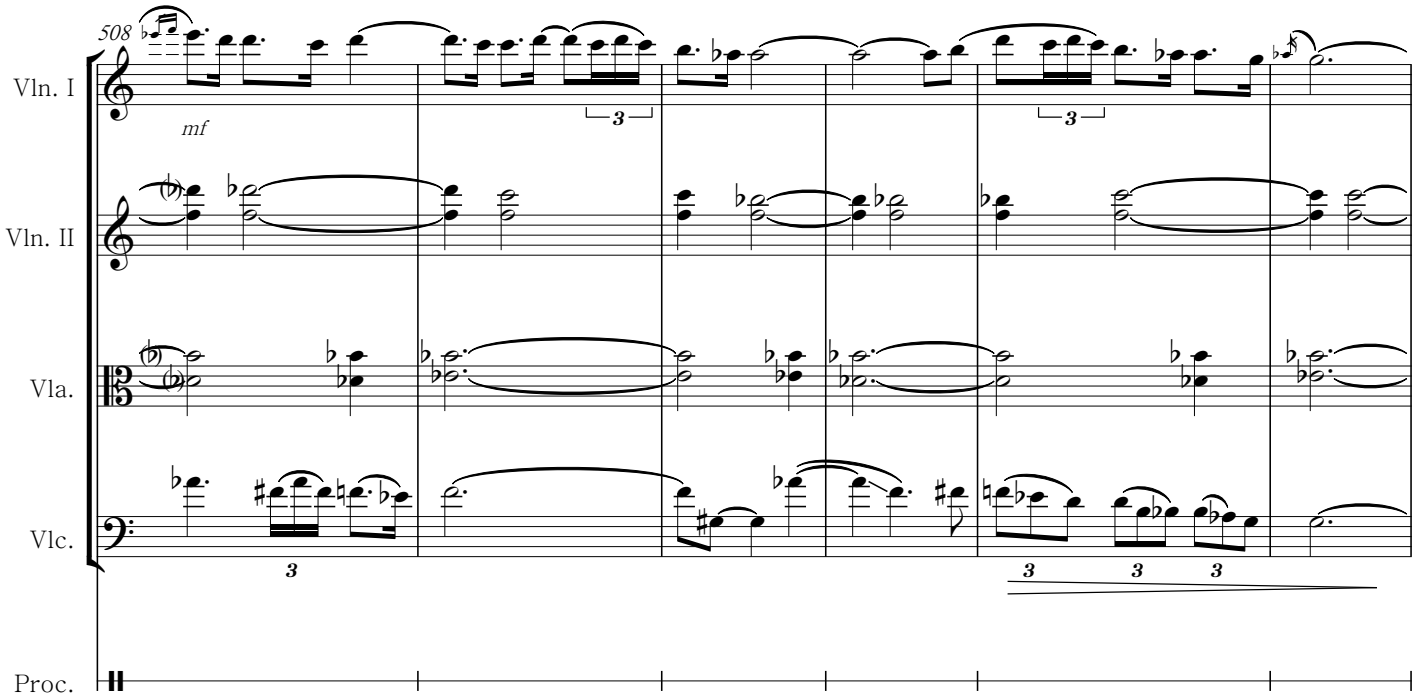


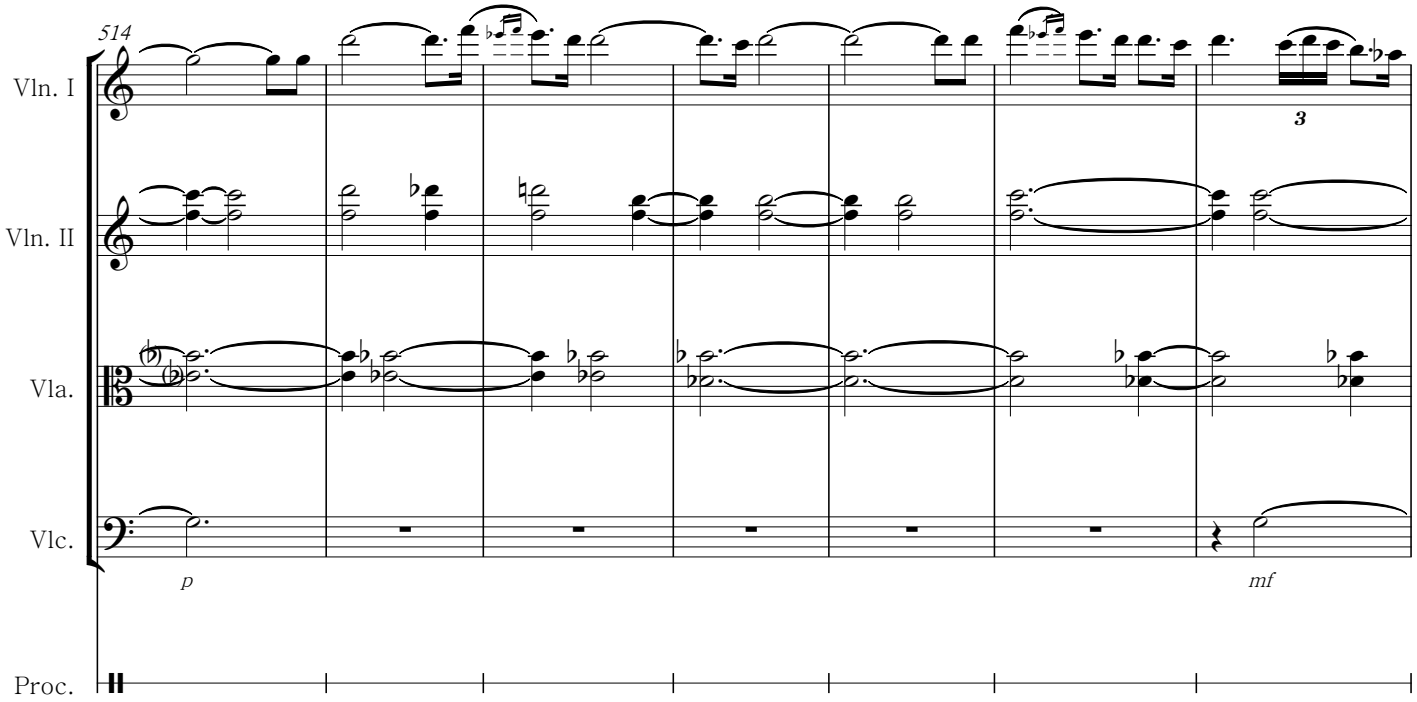
iii. After the War

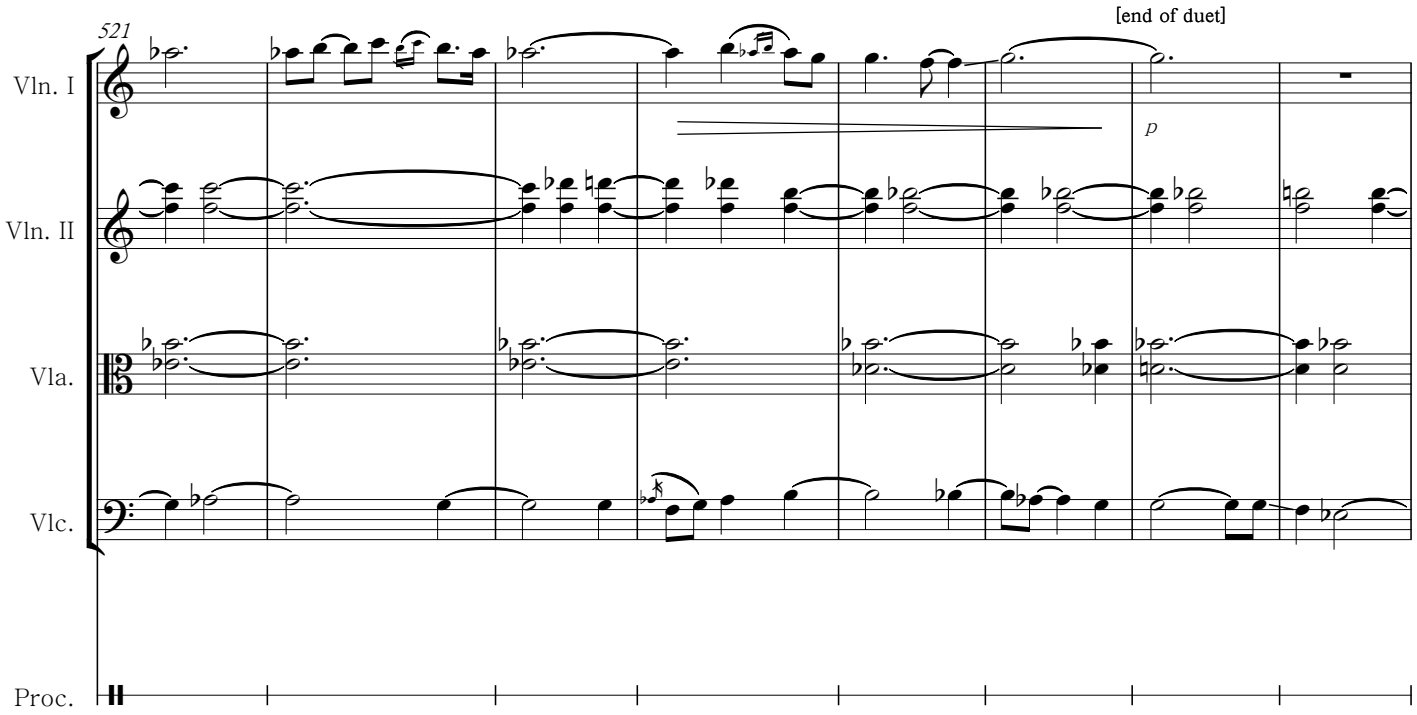


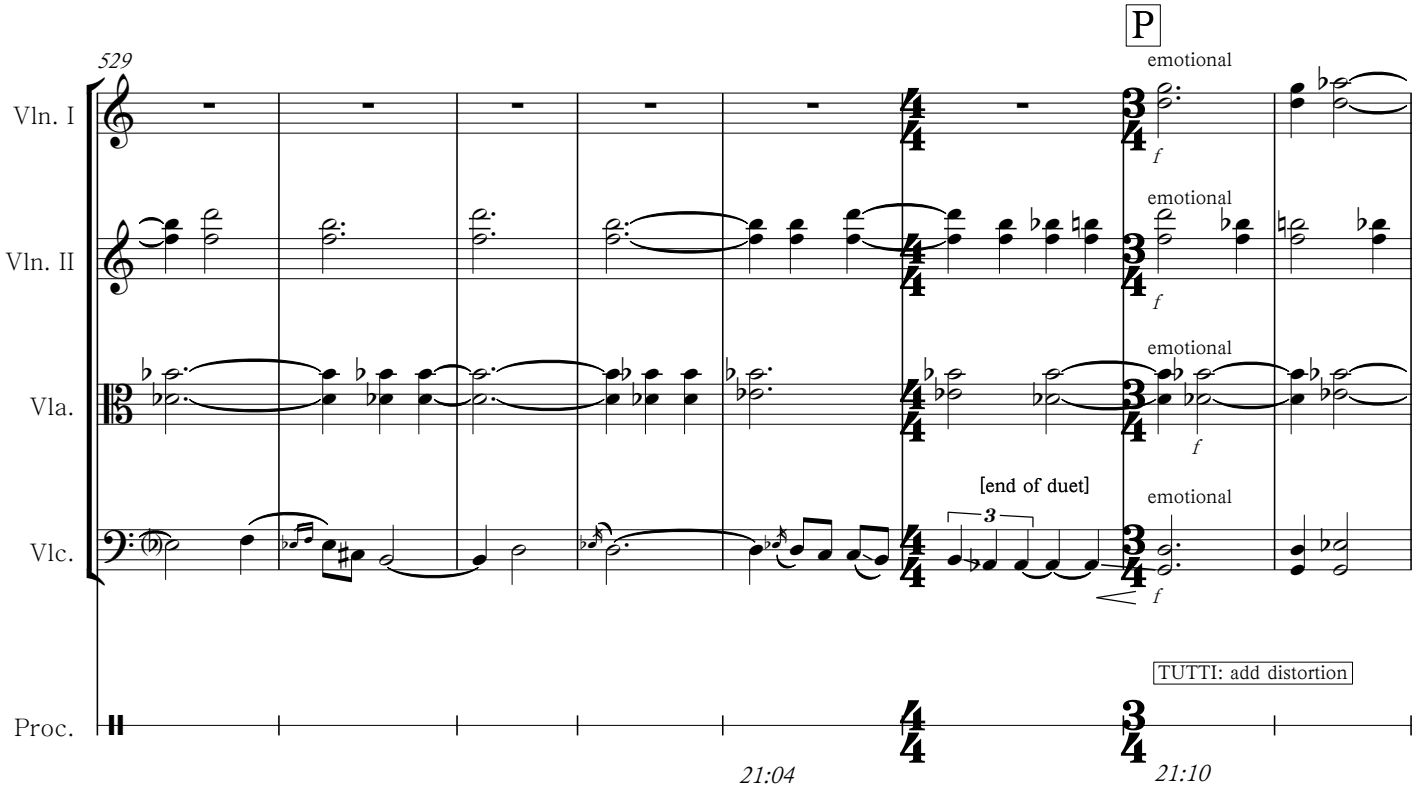

497
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mf
3

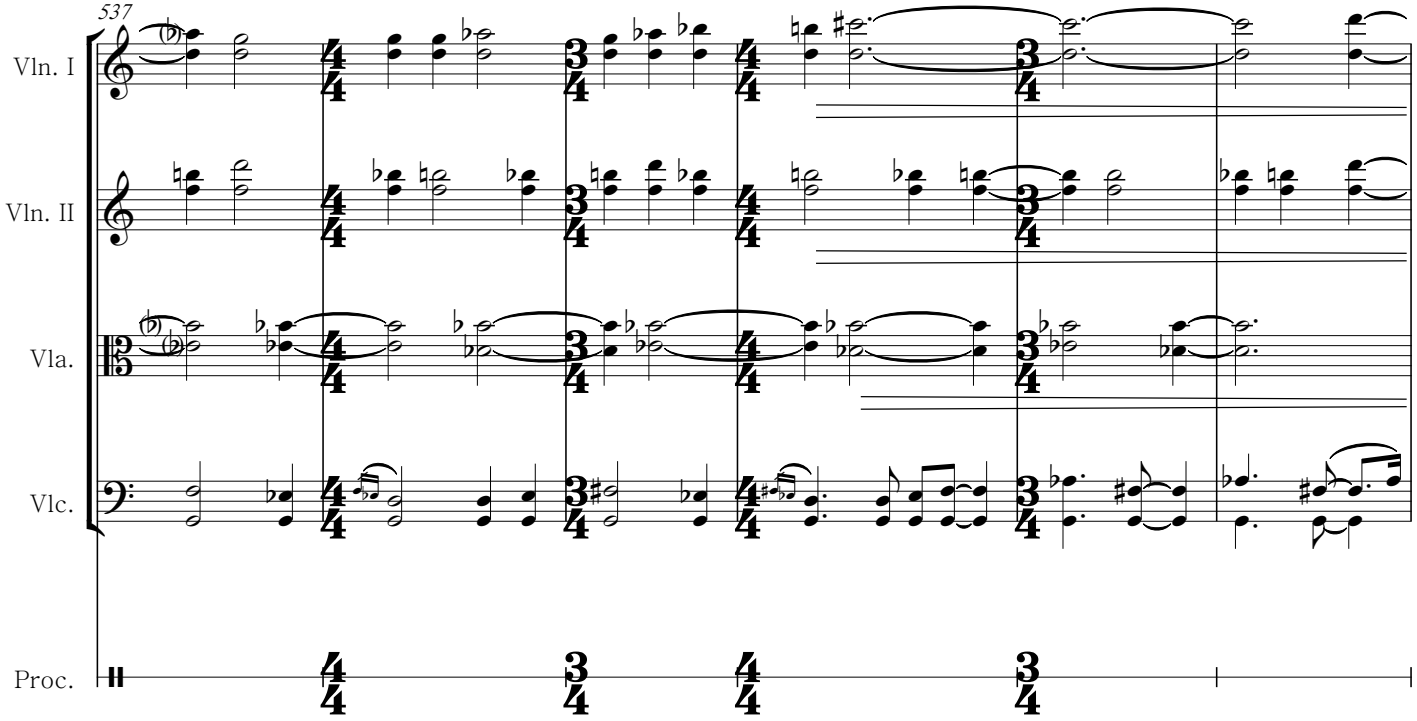

503
[duet with cello]
mourning
mp
[duet with violin I]
TRACK: reenters
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.


508
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
mf
3
3
3
3
3
3


514
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
3
p
mf


521
[end of duet]
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
p


529
P
emotional
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.
f
[end of duet]
3
TUTTI: add distortion
21:04
21:10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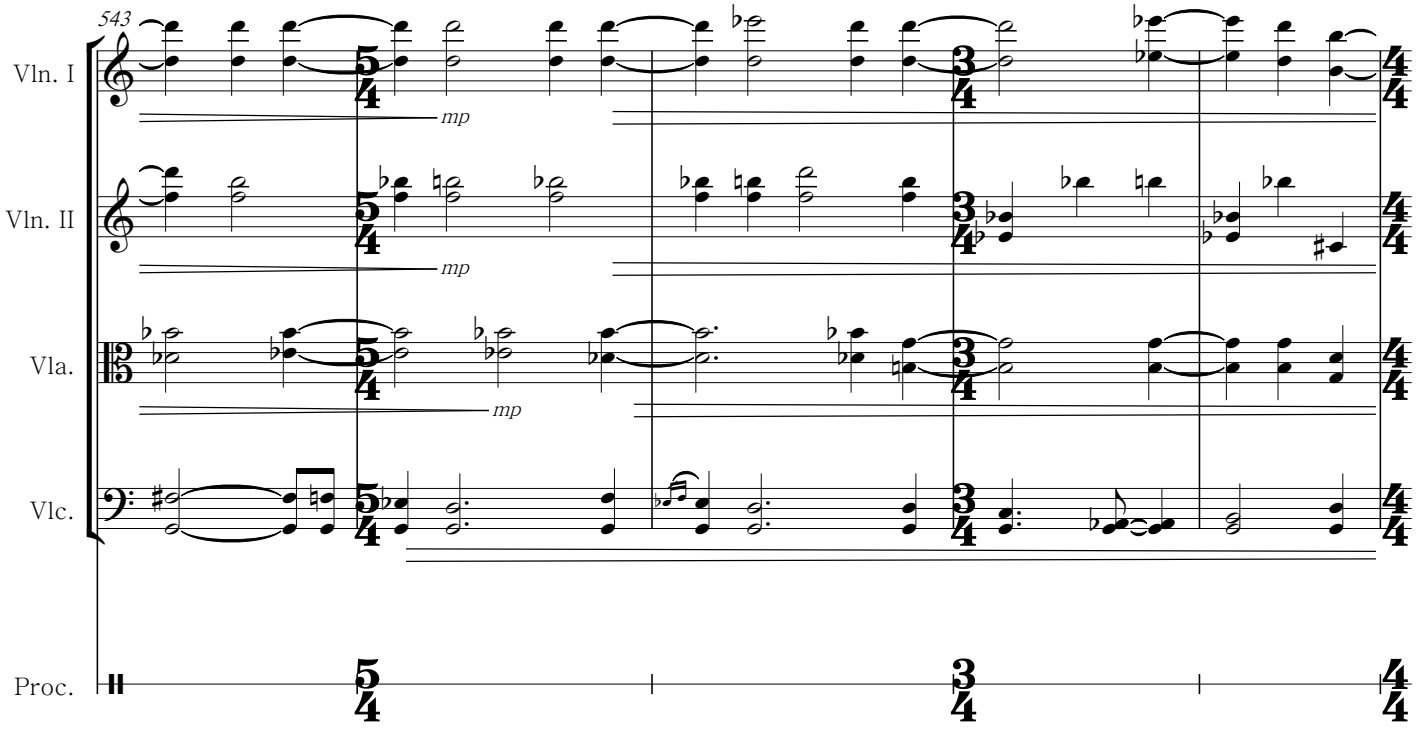
Vln. II
Vla.
Vlc.
Proc.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Vln. II
Vla.
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Proc.
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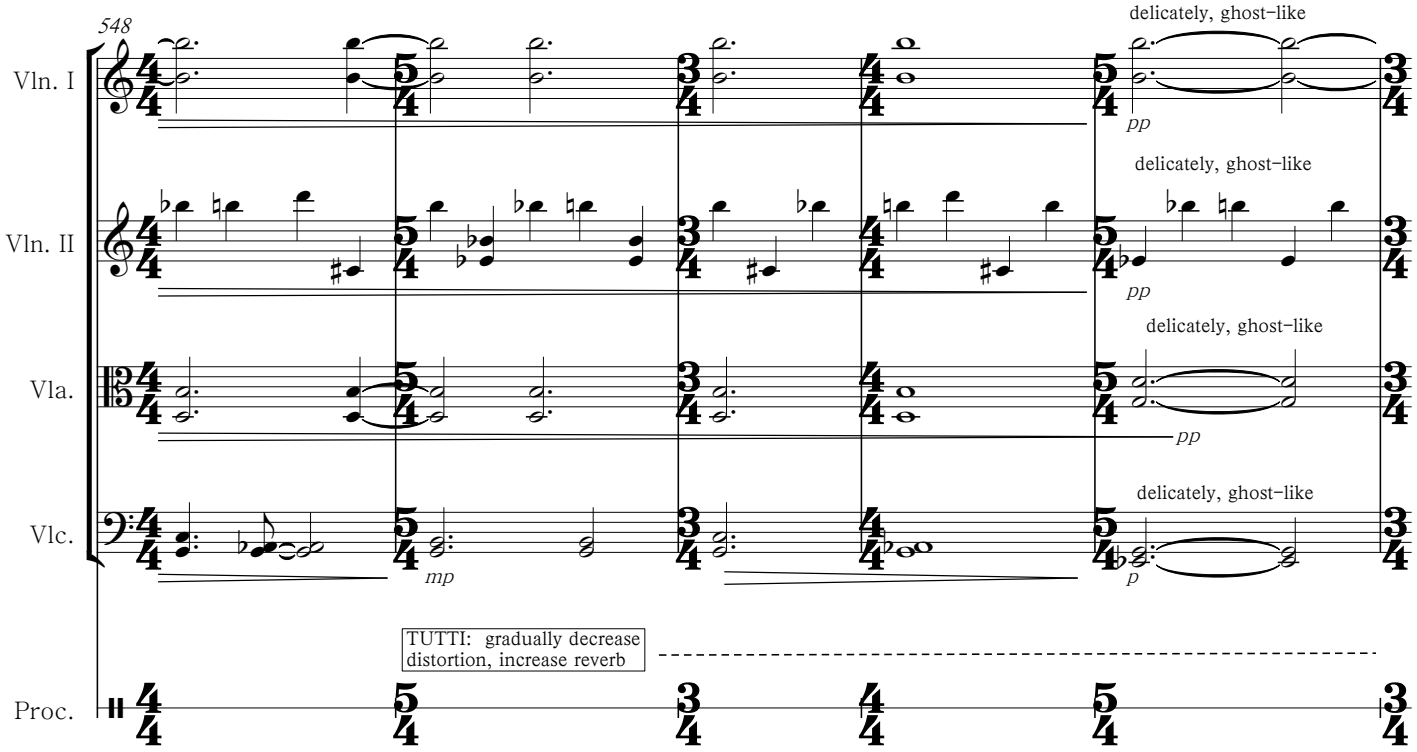
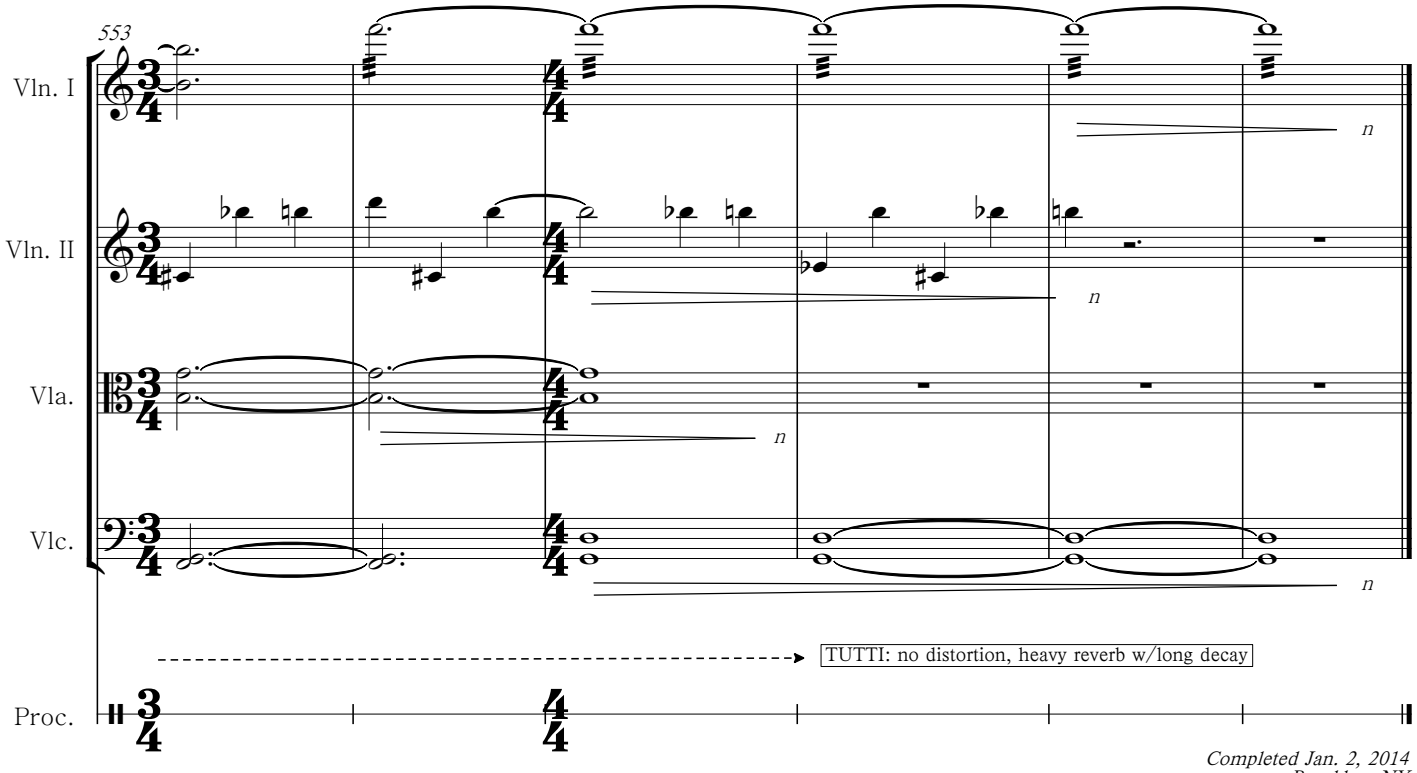
mp
mp





Completed Jan. 2, 2014
Brooklyn, NY