ENCHANTED DAYS FOR CHAMBER ENSEMBLE:
SOME CONSIDERATIONS AND ANALYSIS

by

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Abstract: *enchanted days*, for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion represents the largest and stylistically most advanced composition of mine to date. The piece centers on the fulfillment and denial of perfect consonances (the octave and unison), in such a way that the various instrument pairings and doublings develop dramatic characters, and eventually create their own “rules” that describe the context for the uses of consonance and dissonance. These rules—centered around the three concepts of unity, unexpectedness, and drama—create transformations of the two large categories of material, which can be roughly described as triadic harmonies with “wrong notes” added, contrasted with tone clusters relating to Major and minor seconds. A sense of humor enters the piece as part of these transformations; however, by the end, not only have the roles of various instruments changed, they have been compromised almost to reversal—a compromise that is somber and resigned. This reversal applies not only to the instrumental “characters”, but to the relationship between D and C#, the crucial notes of the work.

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I would also like to thank James Ogburn and Matt Gillespie, friends who have been there for me unfailingly throughout these last two years; also Roger Zahab and the Ion Sound Project for their excellent premiere of this work, April 23rd 2007.

Most of all, I want to thank my husband Jonathan, without whose love and support this would not have been possible.

1.0 INTRODUCTION: ABOUT NAMES

It was not until I had completely finished composing this piece for Pierrot-plus-percussion ensemble that I came upon a name for it that I felt was satisfactory. In the end I decided to entitle this work *enchanted days*, which is a phrase taken from Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* I like the word "enchanted" in the sense of something being captured in "chant" or song, a slightly more literal meaning than is usual. I feel as though this piece were about the passage of time, or about the sort of thought patterns that fill our daily lives—wandering, various, often disjoint, yet adhering to patterns and returning to variations on the same topics. While our daily lives are hardly "enchanted" in the typical sense, it often seems to me as though they do feature a certain amount of hesitation, disconnection and unreality—an effect I tried, on some level, to capture in this piece.

I must confess that the composition of this work was highly intuitive. In most ways, this is the most abstract piece of music I have composed. There were no stated extramusical sources of ideas, nor extramusical purposes to composing this piece. It was not inspired by any object, text, or even a specific psychological concept. This aspiration towards "pure music" writing was entirely according to my stated goal for this year: to compose a single-movement piece of some length that was stylistically and logically coherent without depending on any non-musical source of form, style or function.

My reasons for desiring this compositional approach stemmed largely from my feelings about the work I had composed for the Boston Modern Orchestra Project the previous year. That piece, *In The Desert,* was originally intended to be a vocal setting of a Stephen Crane poem, for tenor voice with clarinet, viola, and piano. As time passed the piece was adapted for the BMOP ensemble, with the cello replacing the vocal part. Following that, the piece underwent further changes as it became unnecessary to adhere strictly to a vocal line or setting of the text. Pointillistic textures, lyrical melodies that were vocal in quality but did not correspond to any specific words from the original poem, and the elaboration of some sections where the original vocal line was broken up among different instruments all changed the nature of the piece from my original intentions.

While there were many things I liked (and still like) about that particular work, some things about the final product left me unsatisfied. The composition of *In The Desert* was progressive, meaning I composed one section after another, but not systematic—I had no particular plans for developing specific ideas from section to section, with the result that the piece is very much a series of more or less separate sections, some of which are more stylistically related than others. Also, the opening sections of *Desert* were composed as the setting of a song, with the cello part a quite literal transfer of the vocal line. Following sections (particularly in the middle) that were added later did not follow any vocal line literally, and consequently have a very different feel in pacing and dramatic sensibility. This creates a feeling of disconnect between the "poetic" and "non-poetic" parts; overall, the piece lacks any sense of unified logic or rules of expression.

It was largely these issues that I sought to address in the composition of *Enchanted Days*. Furthermore, it was my goal to compose for the full Pierrot-plus-percussion ensemble, which was actually a larger ensemble than I had ever composed for. Therefore, in most ways the composing of this piece was a stretch for me in that it entailed a larger-scale project than my previous works, and also in stretching myself in thinking about musical structure and style. Much of my compositional focus was intended to address this challenge of creating a longer, unified piece; in beginning it, I searched for universal ideas that would serve to mold and inform the entire piece. I summarize the two qualities I wanted to achieve for this piece as *unity* or *coherence*, meaning that the piece would make sense as a single aesthetic statement, taken as a whole; and *unexpectedness* – ensuring that the piece would not become predictable, as though dependent upon a predetermined narrative. Towards the goal of writing this piece, I began by considering what I wanted to communicate about the relationship between musical time, rhythm, pitch, timbre and register. Needless to say, such broad ideas ended up being considered, interpreted, reinterpreted and condensed into many specific musical idioms and ideas before I had generated a sufficient amount of musical material. Deriving specific forms for the piece from my two broad qualities proved to be the most difficult aspect of composition; as I worked, it seemed that another broad category to consider was *drama*, or how to select musical material from the two broad categories that would create an aesthetically satisfactory work.

1.1 UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

One thing to consider from the outset is whether this is a piece primarily based on "concepts" or "rules," or whether there is a difference between the two. In other words, having composed this piece I now look back and wonder to what extent its creation was actually directly influenced by any large, unifying ideas I may have had about musical relationships; or, to what degree my compositional choices were merely expressions of tendencies in my non-reflective musical language. Or, perhaps there is no sharply drawn border between the two; perhaps any broad ideas I had about what this piece should have been emerged subconsciously in my intuitive composing of it.

In any case, I prefer to discuss the piece in terms of larger goals and concepts – my musical strategy, so to speak – and then examine how those concepts came to be expressed in actual musical rules and tendencies – the "tactics" of composing *Enchanted Days*.

1.1.1. Unison/Doubling as Overarching Concept

From the outset my goal was to compose something that was unified not only stylistically, but in terms of underlying goals. In order to do this, I thought about this piece in terms of creating connections between pitch, register and timbre. One thing that I felt might be a unifying idea was the concept of perfect unison, or doubling at the octave, and its links between all of these musical parameters. Consequently the octave or unison is an idea that guided the entire creation of the piece, including harmonic language, choices in instrumentation and voicing, even rhythmic selections.

Stemming from this, and guiding the creation and use of materials, was the idea of contrast between perfect consonance (the unison, or in most cases the octave) and deliberate defiance of that consonance. Forward motion and drama throughout the piece is created by suggesting and then denying the octave, which occurs in various ways throughout the piece. As patterns of either using or deliberately contradicting the unison/octave emerge, it leads to an establishment of "rules" that indicate where the octave or unison doublings are appropriate. However, it is important to consider that these "rules" can be broken at any time; they are only rules in the sense that they establish meaning for different contexts.

2.0 FORMAL STRUCTURE

2.1 LARGE SECTIONS

A sensible way to mentally divide this piece is into three large or primary sections, which is in fact how I mentally divided it during the composition process, largely because the central section was composed first, with the introductory and concluding material generating out from this source.

The first section (m. 1 – 41) introduces the materials that will return throughout the piece, primarily the consonant triads that occur within the strings, piano and clarinet; but it also introduces the dissenting voices that deliberately defy those triads. This serves to create the setup for the entire piece: triadic harmony contrasted with contrapuntal dissonance.

The second section (m. 42 – 73) features contrapuntal interplay between the piano and vibraphone at its heart, which is some of the first material I composed for this piece. Other instruments enter and provide diversionary commentary, which builds up (with many interruptions and hesitations) to an abortive attempt to reestablish the triadic harmonies as the dominant idea before returning to counterpoint leading into the final section.

The final and largest section (m. 74 – 121) is the most diverse in its contents, as it not only reflects upon previous themes and ideas, but presents one final violently contrasting idea in the form of a fast, driving section that often features all voices playing doubling pitches in octaves. The final afterthought is the unavoidable return of the triadic material, yet not without some transformations following the turmoil preceding it.

2.1.2. Form Within the Large Sections

Between these three sections, the first section is the shortest and most unified in its material. As the piece progresses, the boundaries between sections and ideas become more and more blurred and indistinct. Although both external and internal relations vary from one large section to the other, all three sections use the same form to varying degrees: a large main sub-section of related material (or related material followed by contrasting material), with a shorter coda or transitional sub-section immediately following it.

In the first section, for example, everything through m. 28 is heard as a complete thought; each phrase is reflective of the others, if not directly connected. In m. 28, we are suddenly aware of a new idea, in the unison clarinet and vibes, taking us away from the previous statement (which was never satisfactorily concluded, despite the attempt in m. 22 to give a strong climactic moment). This sudden reduction to a single line doubled in clarinet and vibe has already been established as a cue that an old idea is ending and a new one is beginning. The opening note suggested this idea as a flag marking beginnings, and the reappearance of the clarinet/vibe doubling in m. 13 tells us definitively one of the first rules of the piece: the clarinet and vibe doubling marks not only beginnings, but places where new beginnings cut off the old ideas.

The second section uses the same main-section/coda-transition form, yet the contrast establishing boundaries between the two sections is different from that of the first section. The surprising contrast here happens *within* the main section, when the static triads return as an interruption (m. 57) of the already hesitating and frequently interrupted lines between piano and vibraphone. Despite the fact that stopping and starting of ideas has been established as status quo, expectation is defied in m. 57 as the contrapuntal lines do not abruptly return, as they did in previous phrases (m. 45 and 51) but are replaced by the triadic harmony, only to return gradually throughout mm. 57 – 65 in an increasingly volatile manner. The sustained vibraphone note in m. 56 – 57 signals to the listener that this is not merely another pause, but the mark of a new idea. Even so, the "new idea" (or rather the return of the old triadic idea) never breaks free of the main theme of the second section, but comes crashing down in m. 65, giving in to yet another pause.

After all this, the counterpoint returns, but this time with the flute and piano as the primary actors. Although one might expect this to be a full return to the main contrapuntal theme, the fact that flute has taken over should hint to us that things are not the same as before. The energy generated by the piano and vibe combination has been lost, and the high E sustained by flute and vibe in m. 68 is a clear signal that the contrapuntal idea has just about worn itself out at this point. This is not a return to the main action of the section, but the reinterpretation of that action as a transition to the final large section of the piece.

The final section exploits the main section/coda form to the greatest advantage. Much more than the previous sections, the main part of this section is a continuous stream of events, without much of the pauses that characterize the first two sections (the second in particular). The one exception to this may be m. 79 – 80, where cello and piano refer back to the opening triadic material, while flute and vibraphone sustain a high G – another "signal" that something new is about to occur. However, this time the transition is much more seamless; once the gradual building up of motion begins, it does not stop again until m. 102, where the halt and restart of motion is so abrupt as to be almost comical. A series of false restarts leaves the listener wondering what is coming next, or whether we have actually reached the end, until the final coda section in m. 111.

This results in a formal pattern:

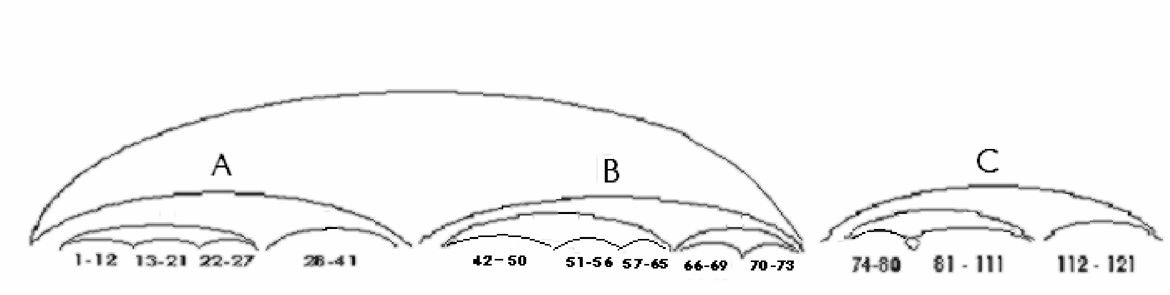

Figure 1. Motivic and sectional patterns within the piece.

A closer look at the large sections reveals another pattern of structure within the sections. It can be loosely construed as a tendency to see two or more similar phrases or subsections followed by a more or less contrasting idea. Of the first three phrases in section A, the first two begin with a gradual build-up in volume and harmony as sustained notes are added to a growing texture. The third phrase, however, in m. 22 (rehearsal B) surprises the listener by immediately presenting the loudest volume in the piece thus far, plus a sudden thickening of texture upon a widely-spaced D Major chord. (It is also interesting to note that the first three phrases of the piece respectively begin with the chords F Major, F# Major/minor and D Major; a significant point discussed at greater length later in this paper.)

The second large section (called "B") is less well-defined in phrase structure (a tendency that continues throughout the piece) but still employs the concept of two similar phrases followed by a change, taking into account the occasional pauses that interrupt the phrases. A short introductory phrase is checked by a brief pause; a longer phrase ends with a more substantial one. We then hear another similar phrase, but this time a sustained note in the vibraphone fills the subsequent gap—once again, serving as a signal that new material is about to supersede the old. This leads directly into m. 57, the reappearance of the triadic theme, now combined with a restricted version of the piano/vibraphone counterpoint.

On a large scale, the first two sections of the piece are complimentary and share some degree of material, followed by the final section which for the most part differs quite radically in style from the previous material. This is not quite an AAB or double-iteration/contrast pattern, but it does reflect something of that nature which occurs on many levels of the piece (and will be discussed again later in considering dramatic function).

3.0 PITCH RELATIONS AND FUNCTIONS

3.1. PITCH SIGNIFICANCE IN THE LARGE SECTIONS

The first large section of the piece is largely defined by the F – D – F# triads that dominate it, and one can consider all pitches within this opening section in relation to the triadic cycle, as either participating or deliberately defying the progression. Such choices about whether to conform to the main triads or enact a “wrong note,” or even to avoid doing either, begin to define the roles of the instruments throughout the rest of the piece, as well as beginning to create an orientation towards certain pitches as being more conclusive than others. The “rule,” as previously stated, was that pitches doubled at the unison or octave placed at the end of phrases (particularly sustained pitches, such as the notes held by clarinet and vibraphone) were significant markers of the beginnings of new ideas; a valid further inference from this rule might be that doubled notes, even within a phrase, generally mark important pitch selections. In m. 16 we find the violin and cello repeating a sustained A natural in octaves, which continues (with some pitch variation) through m. 22, where the cello resolves the sustained A by dropping to a conclusive-sounding D.

This large climactic moment confirms that D is the central pitch of the cycle, despite its apparent equality. However, it is the role of A in this context that is interesting; the long sustain is clearly anticipatory, although perhaps not in the cadential way one might expect. Previous to m. 16, the second phrase opens with an F# Major triad (m. 13) that is quickly juxtaposed with an F# minor triad in the piano (m. 15). This establishes the conflict between A and A#; the repeated and then sustained notes leading from m. 16 to m. 22 are a dialogue not so much about returning to D as a central pitch, but about finding a “compromise” between the three triads and their variants. In m. 22 the D Major is selected because it holds the most links to the other chords through F# and A. However, it is the A that is emphasized by doubling and voicing, being placed in the high-doubling violin.

The second large section does not have such clearly defined pitch roles. Such is the nature of the section, which capitalizes on ambiguity by exploiting the denial of the octave and doublings. D and C# continue to be frequently-occurring pitches, leading into the return of the triadic material in m. 57. A few pitches are notably placed at the end of the section; a high E, sustained in the flute and vibraphone, serves as a signal that the second large section is drawing to a close. Also, the C# and A that open the final large section (in m. 74) combined with this E suggest that we have shifted to a new “central” triad, no longer D Major but A major.

The final section, deliberately designed to contrast wildly with the previous two, has rapidly changing pitches throughout much of it; rather than being dominated by any particular collection of pitches, the section moves rapidly through a large number of patterns and collections.

3.2. OCTAVE DENIAL AND THE TRIADS

One motive that establishes a rule for the use of octaves is the triadic harmonies that appear in various forms throughout the piece. The original three triads that appear in mm. 2 – 9 are F, D and F# Major triads. The first thing we hear is the sustained D in clarinet and vibraphone, which leads directly into an F Major triad in the strings. However, over the main sonority is a sustained C# harmonic in the cello, sounding an octave and a minor ninth above the middle C in the vibraphone and clarinet. This “wrong note” deliberately defies the triadic harmony by contradicting the doubling of the fifth of the triad we might expect to hear; it does so in a distant register, however, and in a distinct timbre that sets the note apart while simultaneously putting it in direct opposition with the fifth of the triad. This “wrong note” reappears in the D Major triad that follows, this time as D# (a minor ninth above the root) and then as a G above an F# major chord. From this opening statement, we can extract the following rule: the triadic harmonies will always be juxtaposed with a contrasting “wrong note” a half-step away from one of the original notes in the triad.[1]

The selection of these triads and the application of the “rule” of the added note not only allow for a conflict coming from the denial of the octave, but create connections between the three triads and their permutations. For example, F# superimposed on an F chord creates an anticipatory link to the F# Major chord. Similarly, an A# above a D chord creates a link to F#

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[1] The “wrong note” displayed as such (particularly in a separate register intended to stand out) is confined almost exclusively to the root and fifth of the triads. Half-tone substitutions do occur with the third of the chord, but their function is texturally different, as they typically occur in the same register as the rest of the triad, with the purpose of creating a contradiction of quality within the chord as a whole—between Major and minor or Major and augmented. Examples of this include m. 15, where A natural in the piano and A# in the violin occur in the same octave, creating a contradictory F# Major/f# minor chord; also m. 29, where the same thing happens between A in flute and Bb in clarinet. In fact, the F# chord is usually presented more ambiguously in terms of quality than the other two “primary” triads. (Something similar happens in m. 61 – 63, where the presence of both F and F# (Gb) create conflict between an F# Major and Bb minor triads, although this is in fact a conflict between the root of one chord and the fifth of the other--again, a flexible interpretation of the roles of the parts of the triads).

Major; however, an A natural (which can appear when F# minor substitutes for F# Major) links back to D Major.

Besides notes shared between chords (including “wrong notes”) connections can be made between half-steps. For example, in m. 58 – 59 the violin moves from F# to F, while the F# reappears in the piano’s ostinato pattern two octaves above the original F#. Here the link is from D to F Major triads in the main harmony; meanwhile, the F# becomes the “wrong note” when it appears in the higher range of the piano, giving it the registral and timbral distance from the triad similar to the opening idea, where the “wrong note” was C# against C natural, set apart by appearing as the high cello harmonic.

A graphic representation gives some idea of the connections used in this piece created by the rule of shared notes and “wrong notes” that contradict what would be straightforward doublings of Major and minor triads. Connections between pitches shared in various triads, as well as pitches a half-step apart, are shown as a continuous cycle that allows movement from one pitch to another in either direction. Notes in parentheses are “substitutes” that create non-Major triads that occasionally appear. Also, links to G Major and A Major triads appear, but are not as directly incorporated into the ring of tonal links because they tend to appear as “dead ends” within the cycle; their appearance within the piece typically represents the ending of a process or idea, or else serve as interruptions rather than part of the cycle. G in particular is a disruptive note; where it appears in m. 23, for example, it serves to deliberately contrast with the F# in the D Major chord, taking the edge off of the piece’s first real climactic moment.

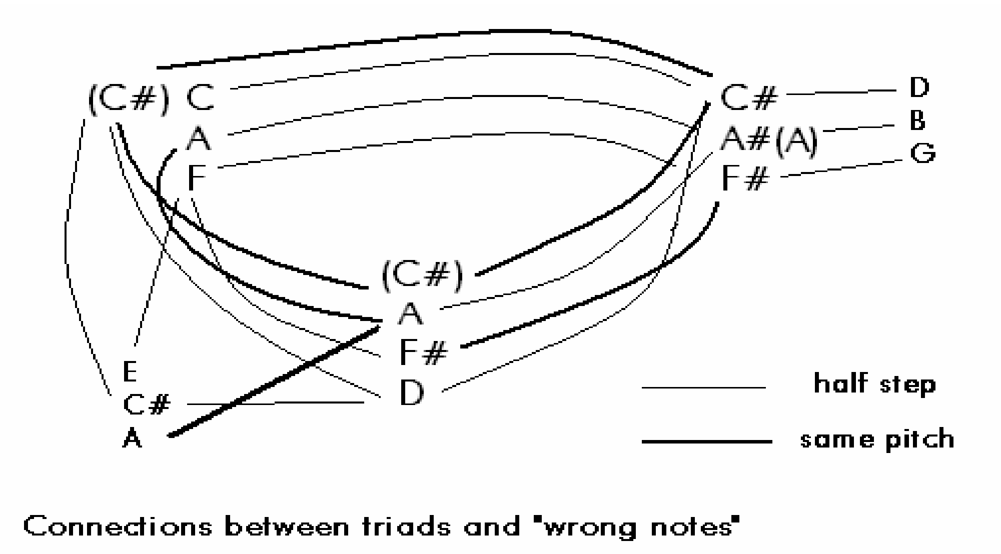

Figure 2. The “cycle” of pitch connections.

3.3. CONTRAPUNTAL CONFLICTS

The motivic triads are certainly not the only musical material that exploits the concept of denying the octave in *enchanted days*. Frequently there appear moments where two voices will conflict directly with each other, often in a more contrapuntal context rather than as components in a unified harmony. The second large section of the piece is dominated by these ideas; here, consonance serves as a checkpoint but seldom (if ever) as a resting place, as the note-against-note conflict is almost continuous, broken up by abrupt pauses rather than harmonic resolutions.

Preceding the second large section, we see a few examples of direct voice-against-voice conflict between members of instrument pairs. In m. 19-21, we find the clash between A in the flute and Bb in the clarinet, doubled and compounded by A# and C# in the violin, by both A and Bb in the piano, A# in cello and F# in piano and vibraphone. The primary conflict comes from the sustained flute and clarinet; in m. 20 they interweave rhythmically while moving restlessly up and down between B natural and Bb. In m. 21 the flute and clarinet resolve their differences and unite on Bb; however, violin and cello have meanwhile unified on A natural, creating a new conflicting duality between woodwinds and strings. This strong conflict drives us to an important climactic point immediately following it.

Within the second large section (B), the main pairing is piano and vibraphone. In the opening phrase, the piano plays the main melody with response from the vibraphone; however, the roles of leader and follower will switch back and forth throughout the section. As the subsequent phrases progress, two “rules” relating to the octave become apparent—one, that doubling by the clarinet appears to reinforce significant pitches, and two—that the two main voices themselves often move towards unisons or octaves, occasionally managing to briefly touch but never achieving a stable resting point.

Measures 45 – 50, the second phrase in section B, display both of these rules in operation. The vibraphone restates the opening theme from the beginning of the section, with clarinet doubling at the unison for emphasis (as well as an increased tempo). The clarinet only continues its note-for-note doubling for a few beats; on the third beat of m. 45 it settles on a high Gb, rather than continue to emphasize the rest of the vibraphone line. This draws our attention to the piano’s high B, then upwards to the high point of the phrase, where the high D in the piano conflicts directly with Eb in the vibraphone.

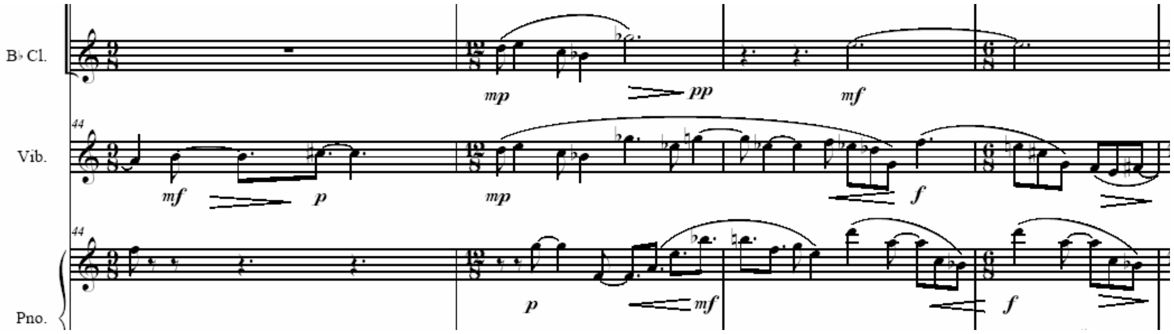

Figure 3. mm. 44 – 47.

Here is an important spot where one might expect a momentary octave doubling or consonant interval, yet instead there is a high degree of dissonance (especially with the clarinet sustaining an E natural, creating another semi-tone relationship). In fact, this is the high point of the phrase; soon afterwards both voices plunge downward (the piano repeating this gesture for emphasis) to briefly unite at an actual momentary pause—the unison F at the beginning of m. 48.

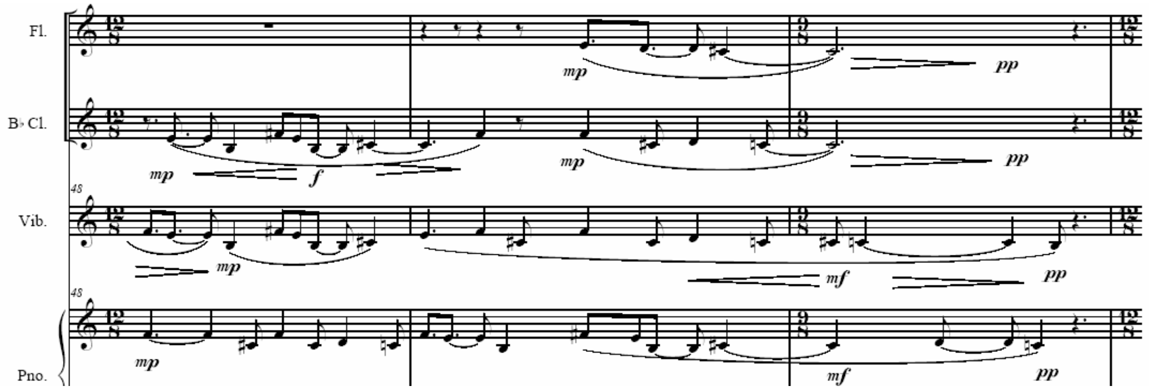

Figure 4. mm. 48 - 50

Once again, the clarinet joins the vibraphone at the unison for emphasis. However, the clarinet joins on the E following the F; the F itself, which the vibraphone plays only briefly before moving on, is not doubled by the clarinet. The briefness of the whole unison moment tells us that it was not the resting place one might expect, but was merely a temporary check as the voices continue lower to cluster around C# and C natural. In m. 50, it feels as though there is a chance for all the voices (including flute, which joined in m. 49) to unite on a single pitch. This never happens. Instead, we end up with another opposition between flute/piano on a C# and clarinet/vibraphone on C natural. Even this amount of unity cannot be sustained, as the vibraphone ultimately sinks to a B natural, breaking its unison with the clarinet.[2]

After another phrase, the large B section eventually reintroduces the triadic motive from the opening of the piece in m. 57, this time in the order D—F—F# Major. Overlaying the strings and clarinet is an ostinato pattern in the piano and vibraphone that evokes the contrapuntal motion of the B section to this point, but harmonically follows the rules of the triads. However, the piano and vibraphone are not about to surrender their autonomy completely at this point, having established it throughout the B section thus far. In m. 57, the piano and vibraphone play a collective set of D, D#, F and F# (D and F in vibraphone, D# and F# in piano); the piano follows the rule of the "wrong note" in having a pitch a half-step above the root of the chord, placed in a distant register and timbre. The vibraphone follows the less-used rule of having an alternate third (F rather than F#), presenting us with the option of a D minor chord in place of D Major. This is the first time that we hear the D triad as a conflicted D Major/minor, and the presence of two non-triadic tones is also new. As this section progresses, the patterns of the piano and vibraphone become more and more disjointed, returning to a texture similar to that of the previous B section phrases. Instead of resolving the indecisive restlessness of the contrapuntal conflict between piano and vibraphone, the triads are caught up in the vagaries and eventually lead to a chord in m. 64 that could be described as either G with F# and A added, or as the D Major triad with G and B—something reminiscent of the climactic moment at m. 22 in the opening section of the piece, the moment where the triads attempted—and failed—to resolve to a stable D Major chord. (There also the G was present – a "disruptive" pitch in the cycle.)

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[2] It is also interesting to note that pairing flute/piano against clarinet/vibraphone introduces flute and piano as a pairing complimentary to that of the ubiquitous clarinet/vibraphone. This becomes more significant in the ending phrase of the large B section, where flute and piano are the main movers with the vibraphone as a secondary doubler of pitches.

Another interesting moment is m. 79 and 80, where D#, F# and A# all create a “new” triad that reflects the uses of the triads from earlier sections, if only for a moment. At the same time the pitch of difference is a high sustained G in flute and vibraphone, signaling that new material—at a substantially higher speed—is about to appear. Both D# and G are notes peripheral to the original cycle of triads, suggesting that the significance of the main pitches from before (particularly D and A) has diminished to allow the new rhythmically driven section room to develop.

4.0. DRAMATIC FUNCTIONS AND CHARACTERIZATIONS

4.1. HUMOR

An important factor in this piece, as well as in most of the music I compose, is the presence of some amount of humorousness. I have often wondered what makes situations or events funny and why. Denial of expectations, certainly, is a significant element of humor; yet it is hard to predict an exact reaction from one’s audience when deliberately exposing them to the unexpected. To more closely control their reaction, therefore, the audience must not only be surprised, but must *anticipate* being surprised; they must know a punchline is coming and therefore be mentally preparing themselves to react accordingly (laughter, groaning, phone calls to lawyers etc.) while at the same time not actually *predicting* what is happening next. This pattern of anticipation is closely tied with the large concept of *coherence* that I held in mind while composing this piece; and of course the “punchline” aspect relates to the concept of *unexpectedness*—the drama of the piece.

4.2. THE RULE OF THREE: AAB OCCURRENCES

One of the oldest formats for humor through creation of anticipation and denial of expectation is the AAB pattern: a single idea is offered twice and then deliberately crossed. Examples of this include knock-knock jokes:

1. Knock knock.
   Who's there?
2. Centipede.
   Centipede who?

Tag: Centipede on the Christmas tree.

Limericks, likewise, employ the conflict between anticipation—fulfilling the rhyme scheme—and the presentation of the unexpected:

Rhyme 1: *A music professor named Rice*
Thought that confusion was nice.
Rhyme 2: *When asked what was best*
To study for the test,
Tag: *He replied, "The book will suffice."*

Although my intention is not necessarily to make the listener laugh or groan, in *enchanted days* one does frequently find musical expectations created and thwarted with patterns of ideas in AAB form. A phrase, motive or other event happens twice, in close enough succession to create an association; then the listener's expectation is deliberately defied by some subsequent occurrence.

The opening statement in the cello is one example; here we find a pattern of the cello playing in the same register as the violin, followed by a harmonic a minor ninth above that note.

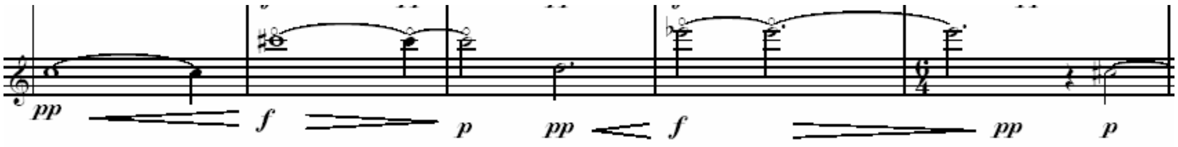

Figure 5. mm. 2 – 6.

This proceeds through the first four and a half measures; but then our expectations are contradicted by the end of the phrase in m. 7, where the cello drops to a low F# over two octaves below where it has just finished playing.

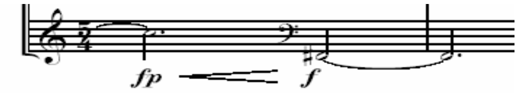

Figure 6. mm. 7 – 8.

On a larger scale, this AAB form can be found in the opening section of the first large section. Here the purpose is to create a dramatic moment at the beginning of the third phrase. The first two phrases both begin with a single sustained note that builds to a peak as more voices join it (see m. 7 and m. 15) followed by a gradual decrescendo that ends the phrase and leads into the next one. The third phrase, the "B"of our set, differs in two notable ways: first, if m. 22 is considered to be the start of our third phrase, then it immediately begins with the climax, and expends the rest of its energy in a long decrescendo, elaborated and commented upon by the flute and violin.[3] Therefore "B" surprises the listener with its dramatic shape; however, the second and more shocking element of difference is the sudden change in register. While the beginning of the third phrase in m. 22 still uses the triadic material, it brings in a new register and timbre having a high double-stopped A in the violin (a notable doubling, as nowhere else in the piece does the violin double itself at the octave):

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[3] One could consider the second and third phrases of this opening section to be elided; but even in this case there is a break in the pattern of discrete phrase beginning-and-endings which has already been established by the use of clarinet/vibraphone in unison as a signal of the beginning of a new phrase.

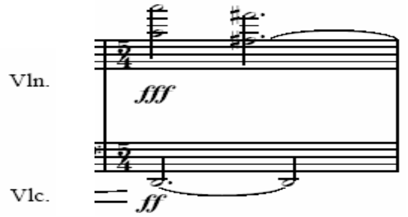


Figure 7. m. 22.

Combined with the sudden presence of G added to the D Major chord, m. 22 is a notable “twist” following our AAB dramatic pattern. This result is not particularly “humorous” (unless you associate “Grandiose” with humor—it is a funny word) but it does exemplify the dramatic function of subtly defying expectation.

While the second large section is a bit more ambiguous in phrase structure, it does still establish expectations through repetition, and then denies them by presenting a contrasting idea. In this case, the main pattern established is the start-and-stop nature of the contrapuntal lines; a small pause in m. 44 is followed by a larger pause in m. 50, making us expect a break shortly thereafter. In m. 56 there is another sort of pause, but this time the pattern is broken by the sustained vibraphone note—which serves two dramatic functions, as it signals the return of the triadic material.

It would be quite believable to say that the piece as a whole is based on this dramatic pattern. While the first two large sections could hardly be considered iterations of the same idea, they do tend to share more thematic similarities than either does with the third section. The sudden shift to complete unison and octave doublings around m. 90, the rhythmic homophony and rapid increase in tempo are all not only new, but selected to deliberately contradict the qualities of static triadic harmony and contrapuntal ambiguity. The final section drives all the instruments forcibly, with no room for ambiguity in pitch or rhythm—until the sheer energy of the section is broken by the one motivic element that remains from before: the abrupt pause, which brings us to a screeching halt in m. 102. A few attempts to restart follow, but are unsuccessful and slightly ridiculous, as the driving elements of snare drum and low cello have been removed. In fact, one could consider this gradual and jerky series of false endings leading into the final coda section as a sort of parody of the stop-and-start nature from earlier sections (particularly the vibraphone and piano duet) which maybe took themselves a little too seriously.

4.3. CHARACTERS, RESOLUTION AND RESIGNATION

In some ways, it might be more useful to think of the various voices in this piece as characters, interacting within a rather abstract story. The "rules" of motivic manifestations of ideas of unity, conflict etc., considered in this light are not so much prescriptive guidelines as manifestations of the dramatic nature of the characters.

Some personalities are quite observable, such as the violin whenever it gives utterance to its nervous, chromatic interjections, particularly in the second large section. It might be a little too easy to anthropomorphize such a characterization; for instance, to describe the violin as neurotic, dependent on the other instruments (particularly cello) to keep it calm by providing a context such as the triadic motif. I think this is a little extreme; this sort of personality ascription runs the risk of reading a little too much into the piece, not to mention antagonizing the violinist who performs your piece (who will hardly thank you for characterizing their instrument as neurotic). However, a more useful statement would be simply that the violin receives most of its identity from the group; where it does appear on its own, its material tends to be commentary on the activities of the other instruments. Occasionally these interruptive commentaries of the violin will increase in prominence, but never to the point of becoming a dominant theme. The closest we come to seeing such agitated activity come to dominate is during the very end of the main part of the third large section (C), m. 97 – 110; yet even this violent activity seems more regulated and far less spontaneous than the earlier cries of the violin.

Using this description, one could look at the interactions between the violin and other instruments in a section such as large section B and explain the dramatic action. Why, for example, do the violin interjections suddenly increase and coalesce into one long, frantic ascending statement in mm. 54 – 56? One could view it as an emphasizing of the violin’s independent identity before the ponderous return of the static triads in m. 57; or, perhaps the violin’s outburst is a reaction to the unresting dominance of the piano and vibraphone lines, anticipating relief at the return of the major triads. Both characterizations are valid descriptions of why this section of the piece functions as it does. Extrapolating further, we can consider our “cast of characters” in terms of how they interact with each other on a regular basis. Some notable characterizations might include:

- the clarinet as “compromiser” between the two extremes of static triads and dissonant counterpoint. The only instrument that holds a central role in both of the first two sections, the clarinet achieves this by doubling strings, in the case of the triads, or vibraphone in the large B section. Later in the piece, this ability to double and be flexible in its roles allows the clarinet to provide much of the momentum during the last large section.
- The strings as a typical pairing, although not in the almost parasitic nature of the clarinet and vibraphone. While violin and cello each have their own idioms, they tend to match

each other in level and nature of activity; for instance, the beginning of the more rigid theme that eventually forcibly "unify" all the instruments during the last section. It is the cello that begins it (m. 82); not surprisingly, the violin is the first one to fall into perfect step with the cello (m. 84). However, the violin does manage to have a separate role, as it expresses itself in short outbursts throughout the middle section and on into the uprising of the fast unison material.

4.3.1. Narrative Functions

The framework of personality and action-based relationships is only one way of considering this piece, and it is limited by my desire to avoid excess extramusical associations. Despite this, the concept of musical characters helps to associate recurring motives with narrative reasons for their existence; or, in other words, it helps unite elements of musical coherence with elements of musical drama.

If we were to consider a particular motive or idea—such as the interactions between D and C# throughout the piece—a dramatic viewpoint offers an explanation beyond that of mere pattern assertion. D and C#, one might say, appear in a variety of combinations throughout the piece. At the end of large section B into the opening of the final section (mm. 66 – 74) the flute and piano descend a long series of pitches, with the piano finally concluding on D. The flute, however, pauses on E and then continues on through the unison D to C natural, hesitates, then finally concludes its line on a C#. This can hardly be anything less than a significant gesture, considering that D is perhaps the most often used note in this piece, appearing in most moments of gestural significance.

Analyses of the connections between D, F and F# triads have already revealed that C# and D are connected by the half-step rule; and their frequent juxtaposition (see mm. 15, 39-41, 42, 50, 55, 98 etc.) typifies the denial of the octave as minor second or major seventh. Consider, also, that we begin the piece with a long sustained D in clarinet and vibraphone, and end the piece with a long C# in flute and clarinet. Having seen the clarinet paired with the vibraphone and strings time and time again, we have already characterized it as a doubling instrument that gives significance to that which it doubles. More curiously, the flute has been very much the independent voice throughout the piece until now: entering with flowing dissonant lines in the first section; abstaining from participation in full-textured sections such as 57 – 65; providing a detached after-the-fact commentary that ends each large section after the important climactic points have already passed. The fact that at the very end we find it united in perfect unison with the clarinet, the most universal of instruments, suggests that a major change in the relationship between D and C# has taken place. Not only that, but the role of the flute has changed from the distant, satirical character to a dominant participant in the conclusion. If we look back, we can pinpoint the shift in relationship at the end of the second section—the flute's descent to C# paired with the piano.

We see even more clearly how characters have been compromised if we look all the way back to the opening section. The F chord immediately following the opening D in clarinet and vibraphone features a "wrong note" cello harmonic (C#) high above the other voices. At the end of the piece the roles are reversed: the cello plays the lowest note—D, root of the opening chord; while the flute and clarinet play the "wrong note" (still C#). So the following reverses have happened:

- Cello, instead of being the high unstable added voice, is now the lowest voice and root of the chord.

- Clarinet, instead of reinforcing a characteristic D low in its register, now doubles the flute on a high C#. Also, the doubling with the vibraphone has been completely abandoned in favor of a new pairing with the flute; or, perhaps the flute has been co-opted by the clarinet to replace the vibraphone, which was lost in the shuffle of the previous section.
- The "wrong note" is now a major seventh above the note it conflicts with, rather than a minor ninth. We find ourselves on the other side of the root, so to speak – with the result being a more stable ending chord, one entirely composed of pitches that have been considered significant and central throughout the piece.

To me, all these reverses indicate one final rule for the piece: the various characters and relationships between instruments are altered whenever the texture of the piece becomes dense, particularly after the crucial turning point of mm. 57 – 65 and, to conclude the piece, after the turmoil of mm. 87 – 111. At these points the roles of the voices become combined, overlapping, conflicted and blurred, and from these intense interactions new ideas emerge. Perhaps in the end the drama must always resolve with ambiguities and compromises. This, too, seems to be an underlying theme of the piece.

5.0. TITLES I REJECTED AND OTHER CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

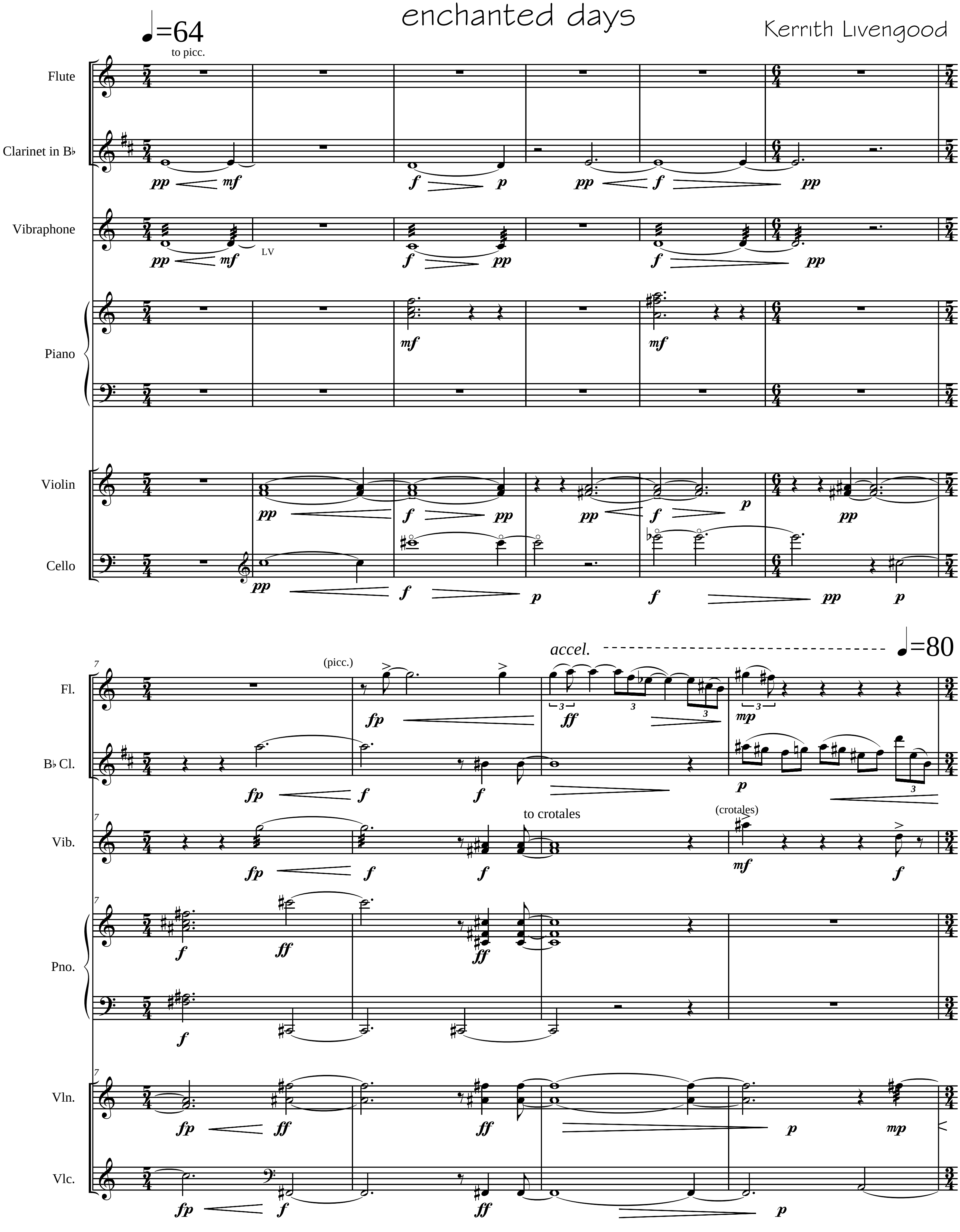
I have never been particularly good at naming things; other people I know have knacks for naming pets, cars, computers, and compositions, but I personally always find naming things a difficult task. Several other possibilities for titles came to mind before I settled on *Enchanted Days*, including *Ineffable Outcomes, Murray Ave to Forward,* and the ever-descriptive *Piece for*

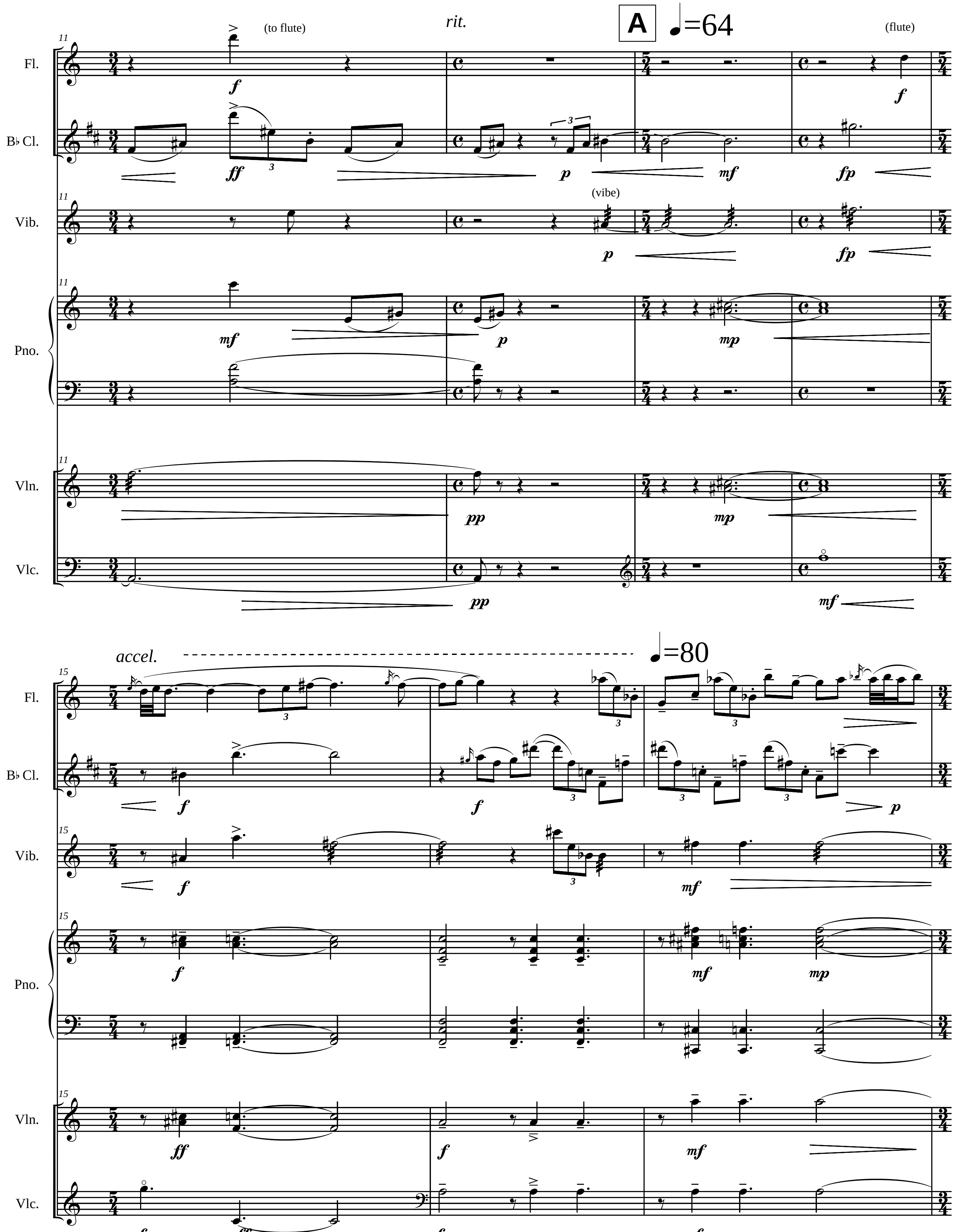
Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Piano and Percussion. I think that (at least with the first two titles) I had some sense of one aspect of the piece I wished to capture: the sense of a process, journey or narrative interrupted by pauses and diversions. Yet at the same time I have always had trouble putting into words what exactly I thought this piece was "about," if about anything at all.

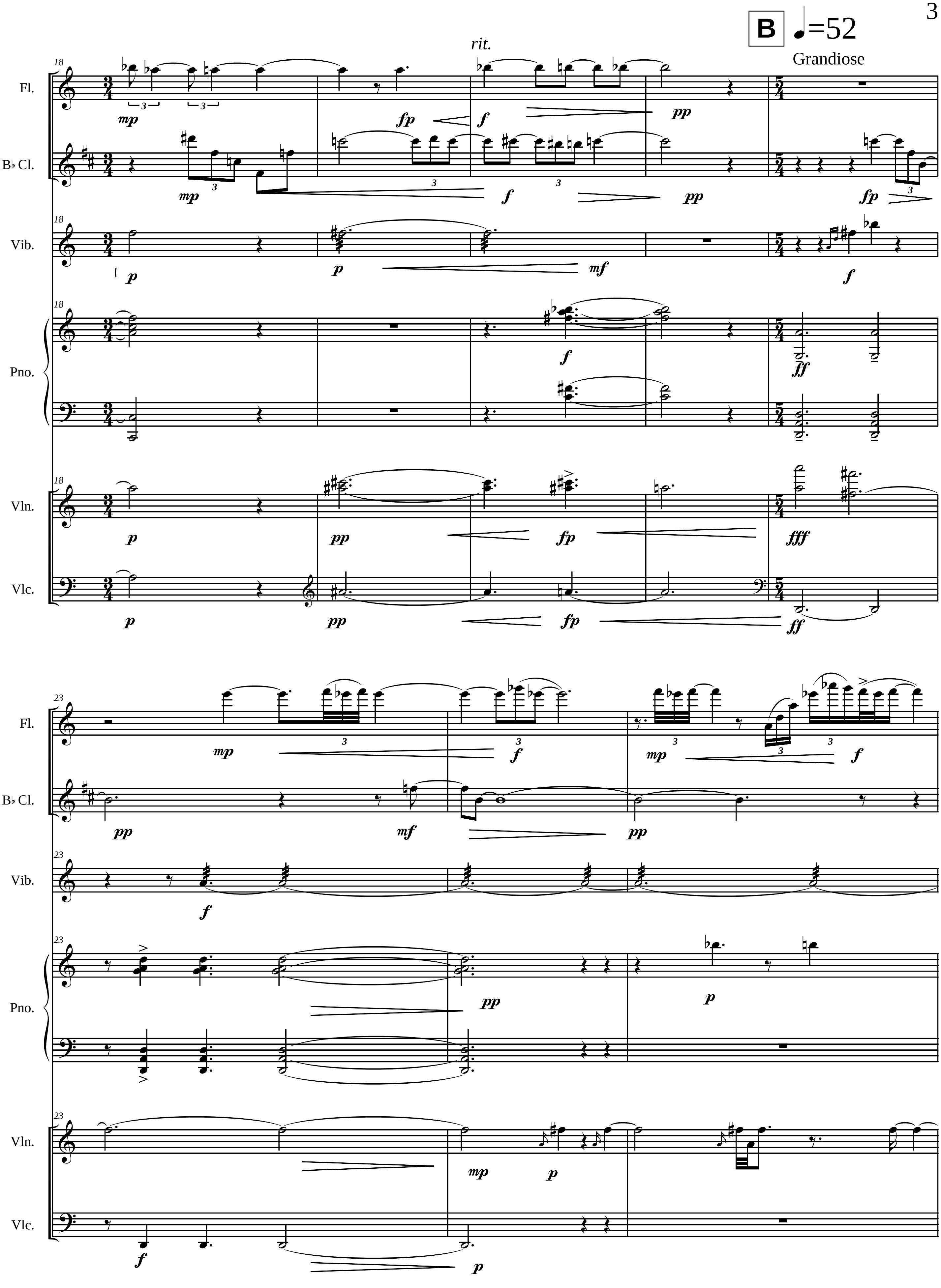
Is there an overall meaning to this piece? In the two musicology seminars I have taken here at Pitt, much of the discussion has centered on whether or not music-in-itself has any meaning—whether, in fact, music is a language. Since my goals in composing this piece included avoiding extra-musical sources of inspiration, I am also hesitant to now look back and say that there is any definite story or subject or even specific emotional content. Yet the fact that I can explain my compositional choices not only in terms of pitch relations, but as elements creating narrative and musical character, reminds me that it may well be impossible for any human composer to avoid extramusical associations; and, whether or not I intended for there to be extramusical sources guiding the creation of this piece, there will probably be elements that have emotional meaning for both myself and the listener, inseparable from the musical functions of the piece.

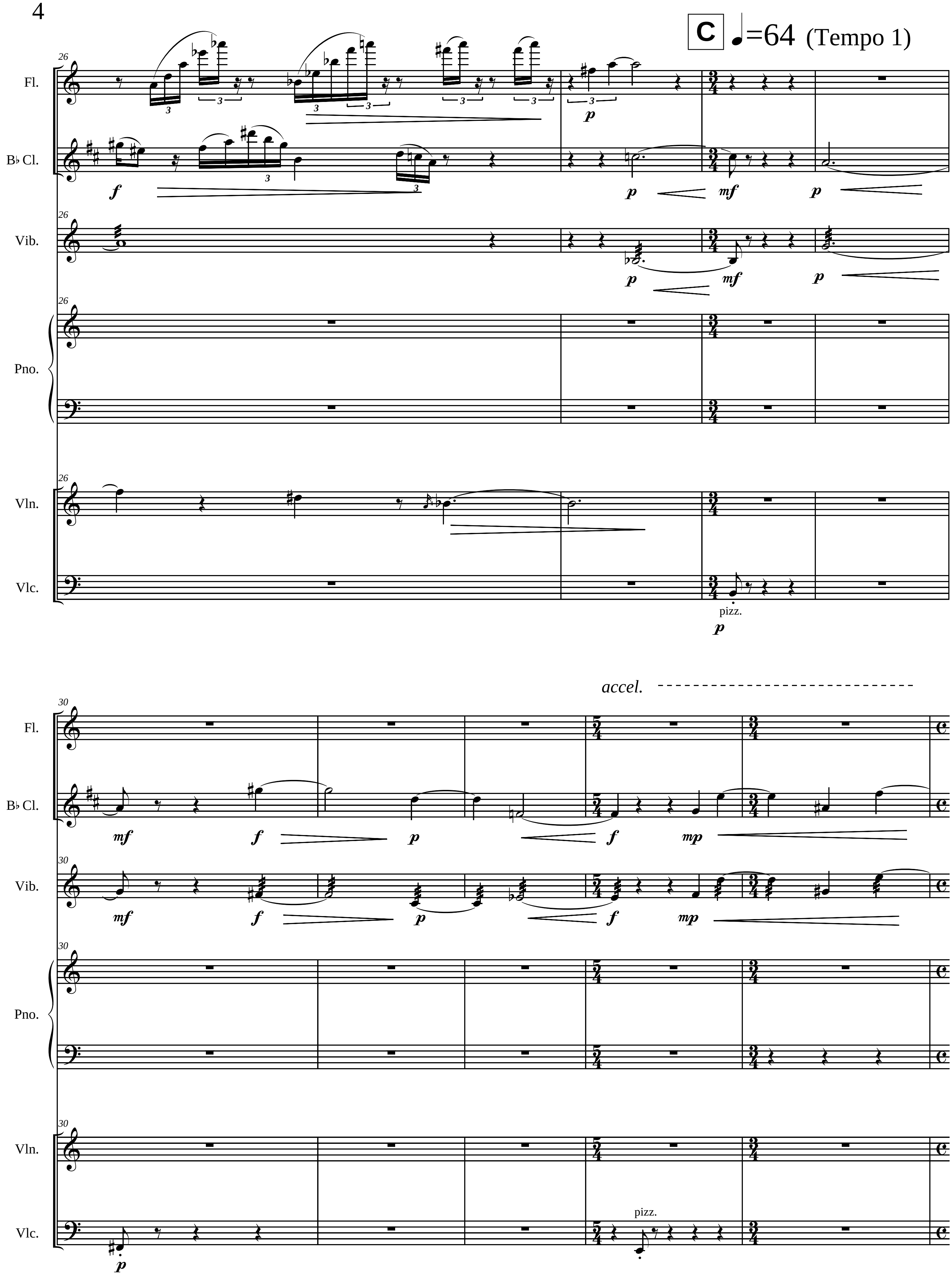
enchanted days

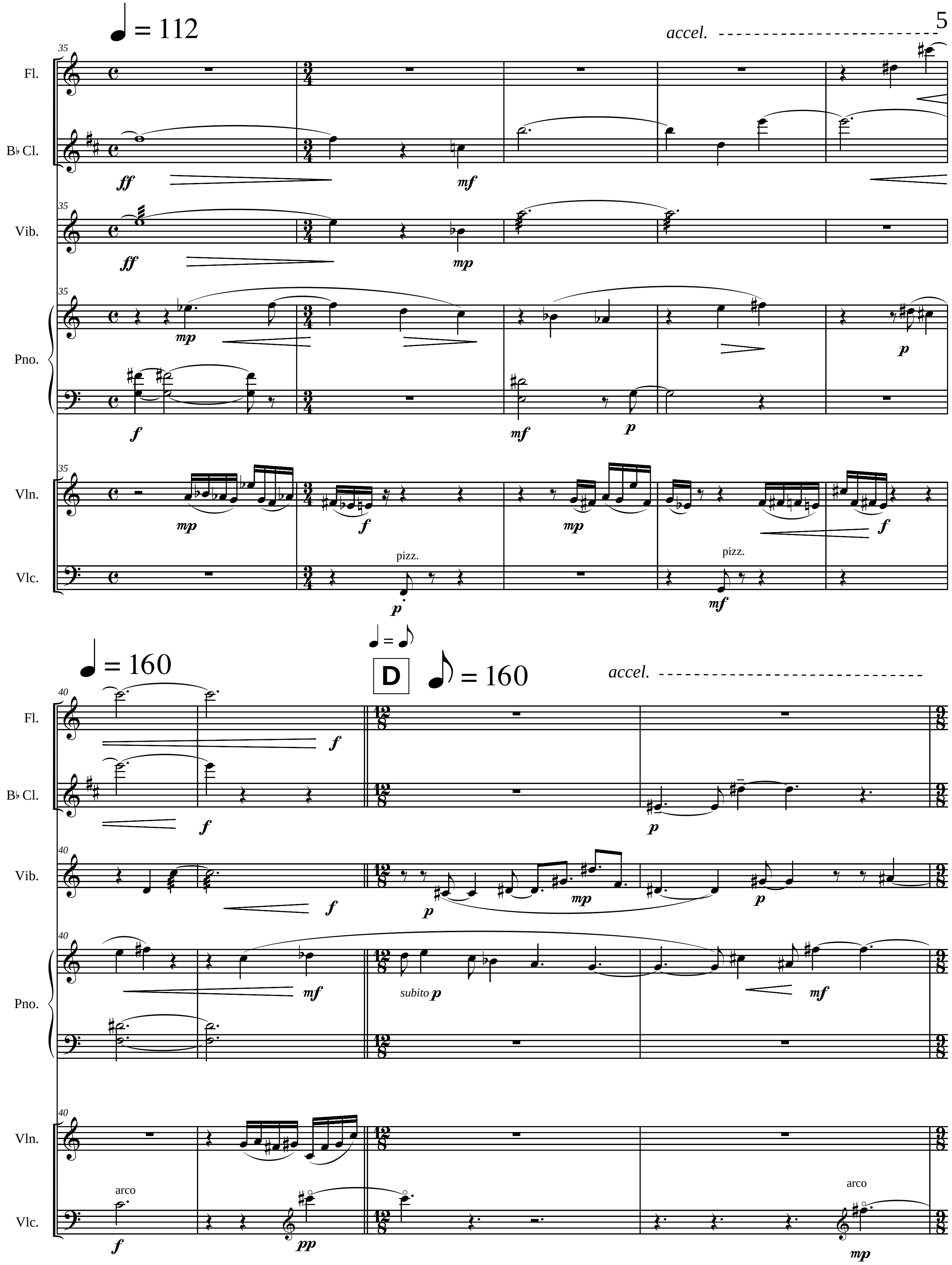
Kerrith Livengood

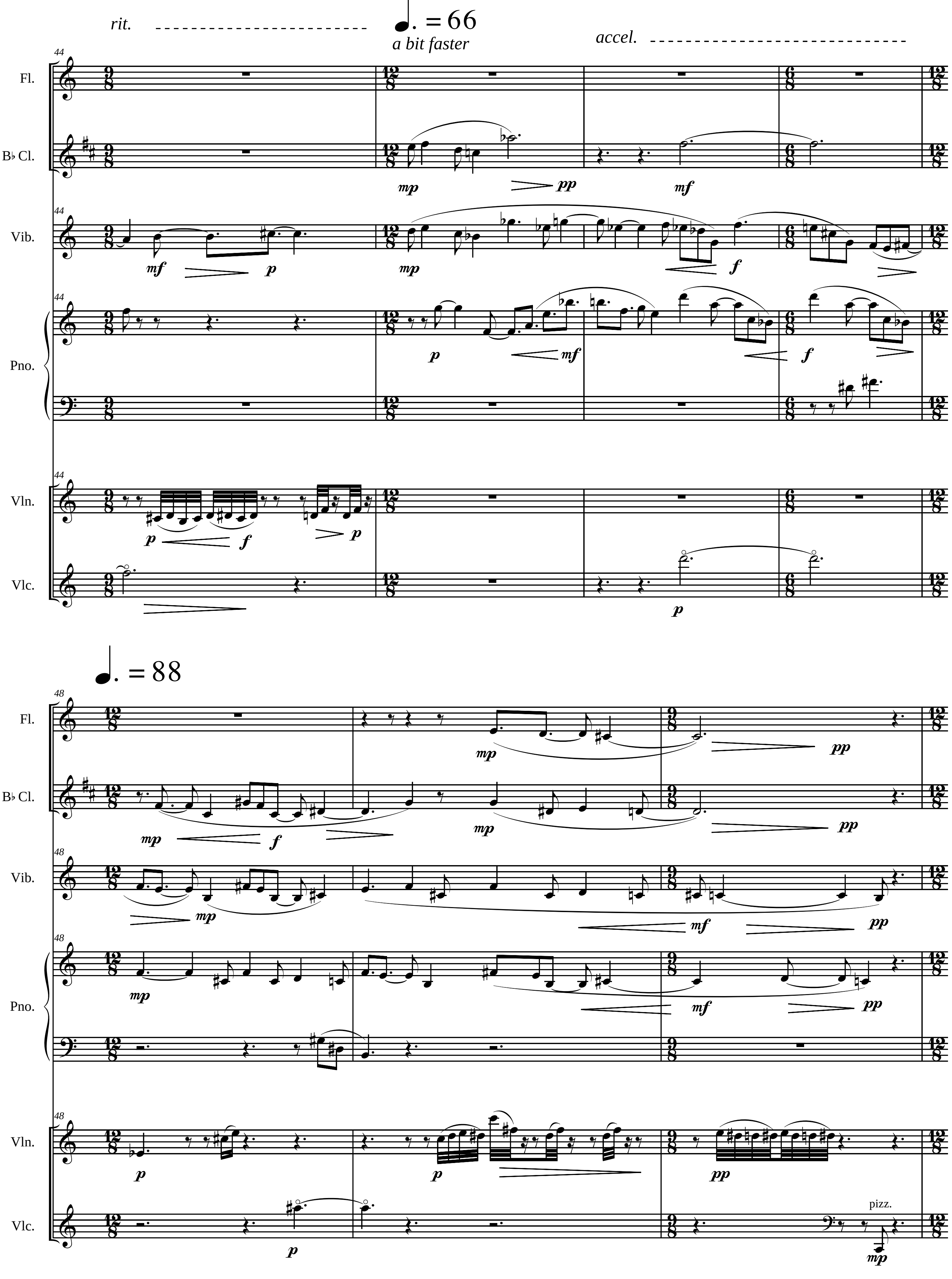

♩=64
to picc.
Flute
Clarinet in B♭
Vibraphone
LV
Piano
Violin
Cello
pp
mf
f
p
7
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
(picc.)
accel.
♩=80
to crotales
(crotales)
fp
ff
mp
3

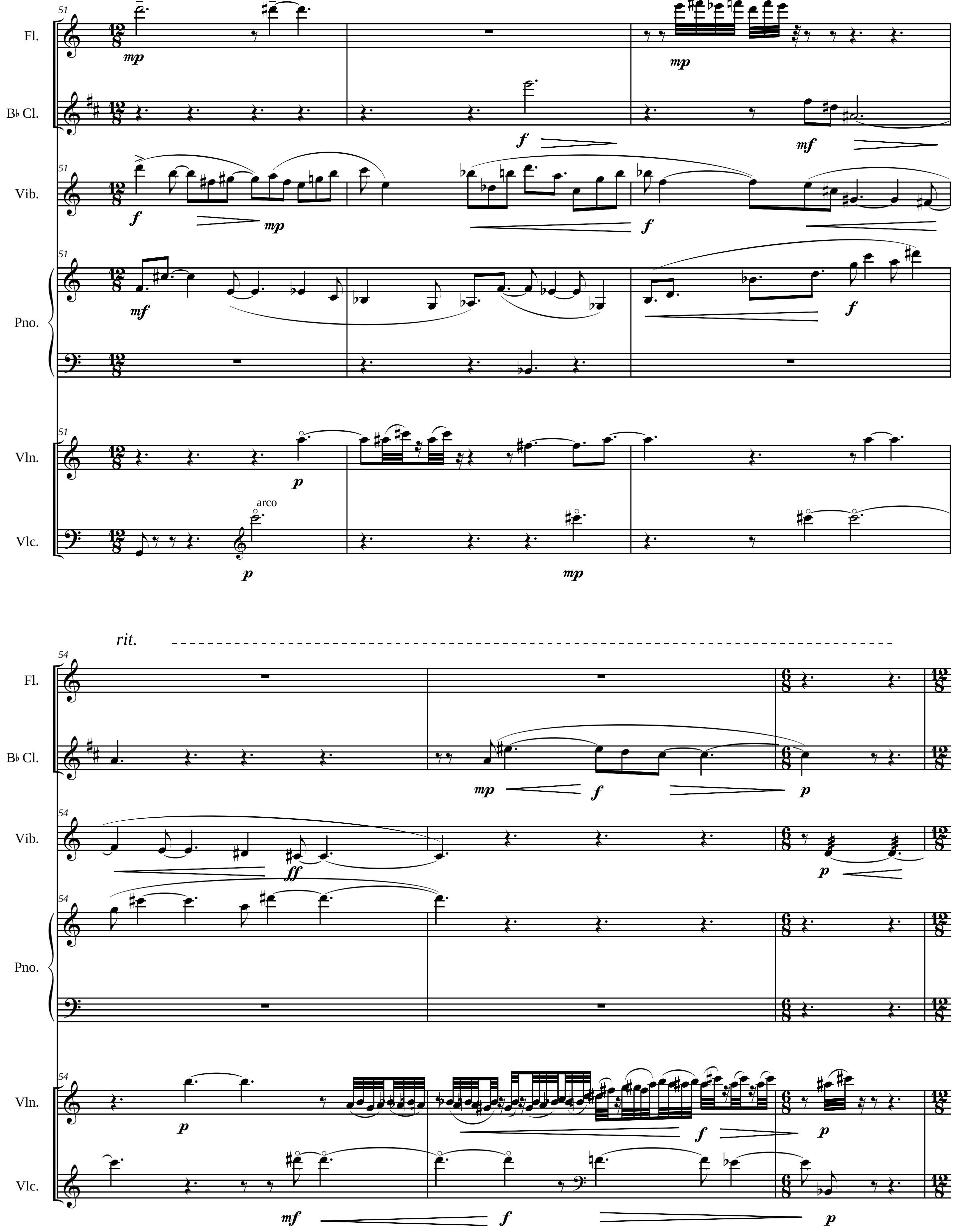

rit.
A
♩=64
(to flute)
(flute)
(vibe)
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
11
15
accel.
♩=80
f
ff
p
mf
fp
mp
pp
3

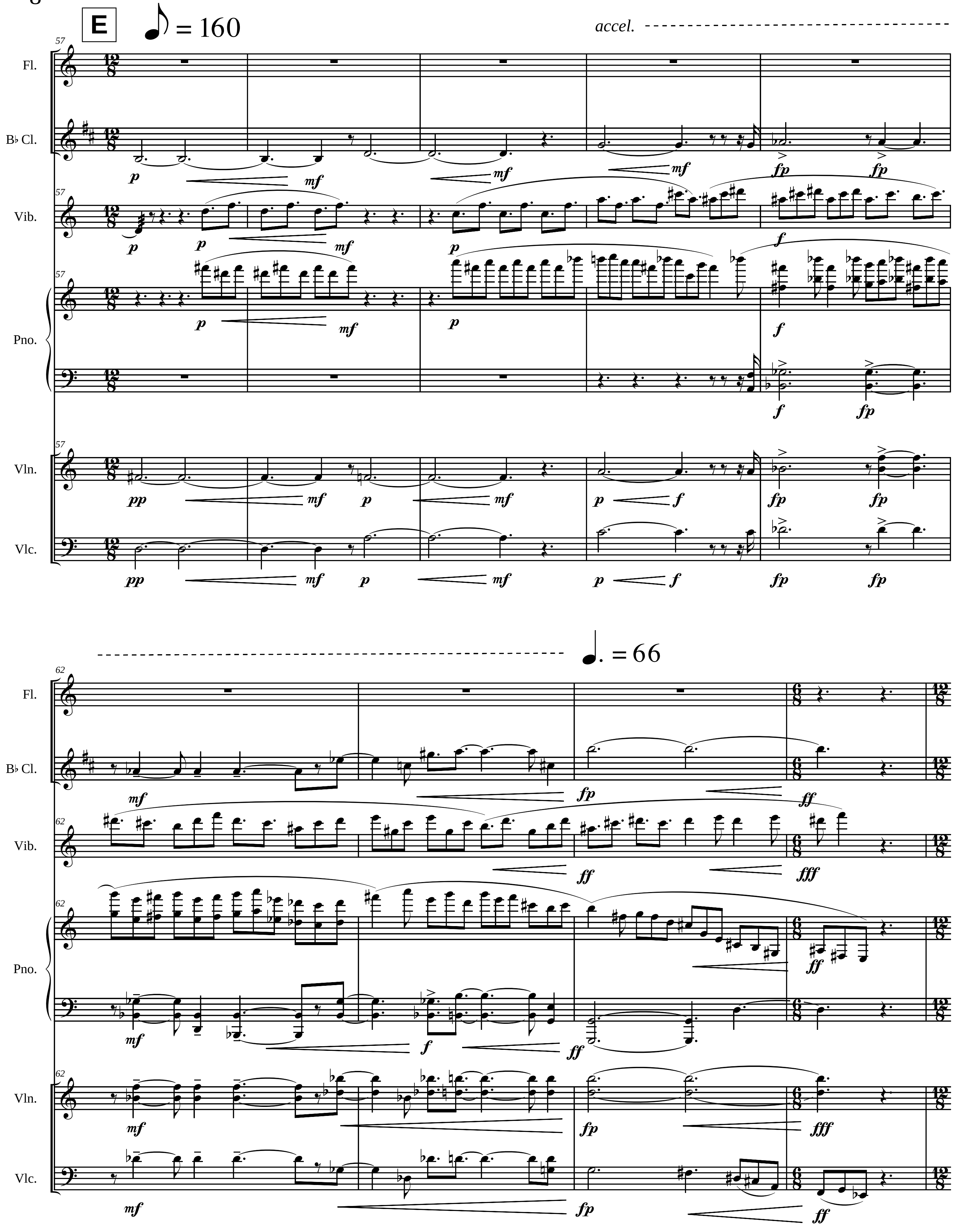

B
♩=52
Grandiose
rit.
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
18
23
mp
fp
f
pp
p
mf
fff
ff

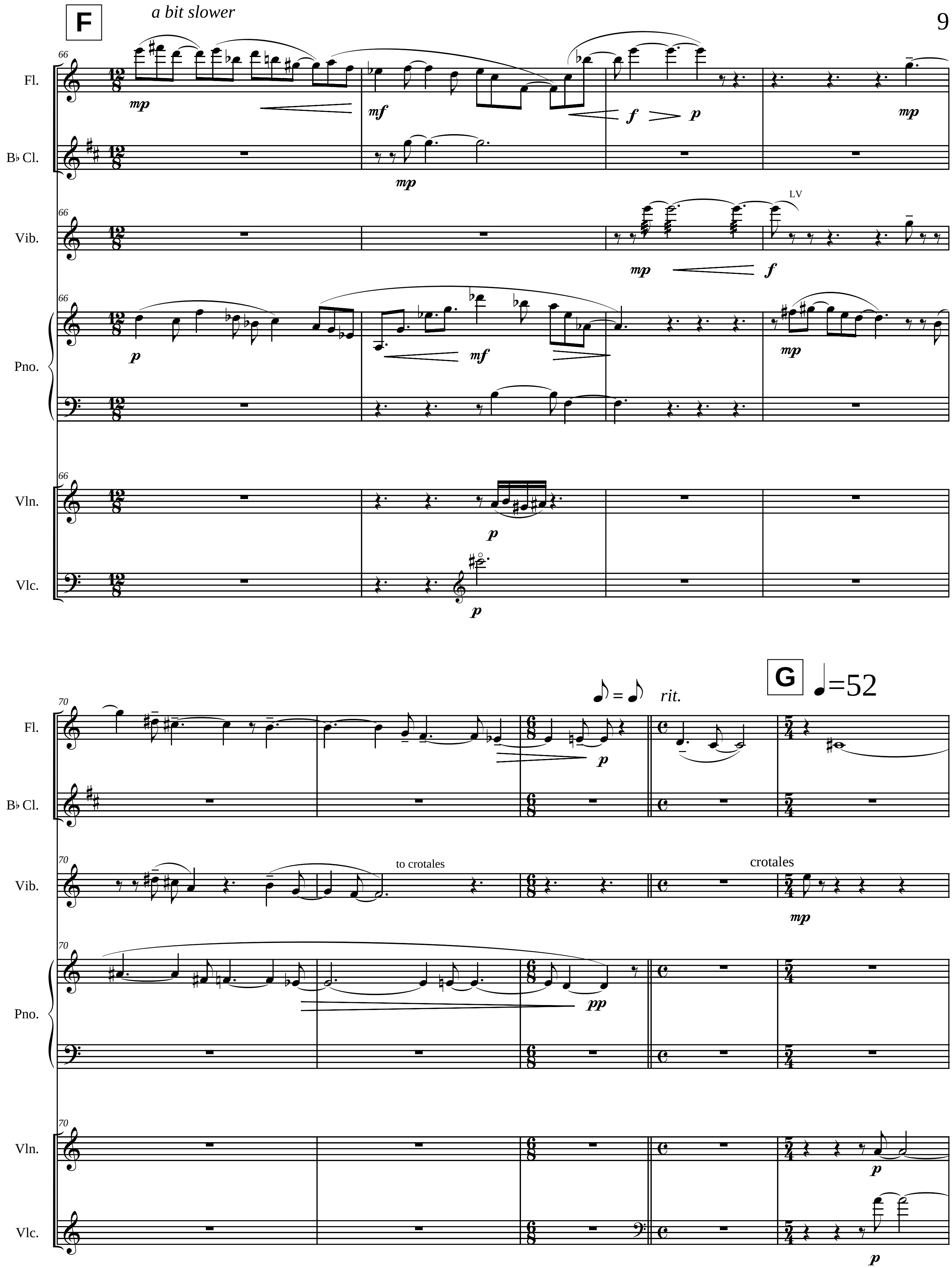

C
♩=64 (Tempo 1)
26
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
3
f
p
mf
pizz.
30
accel.
mp

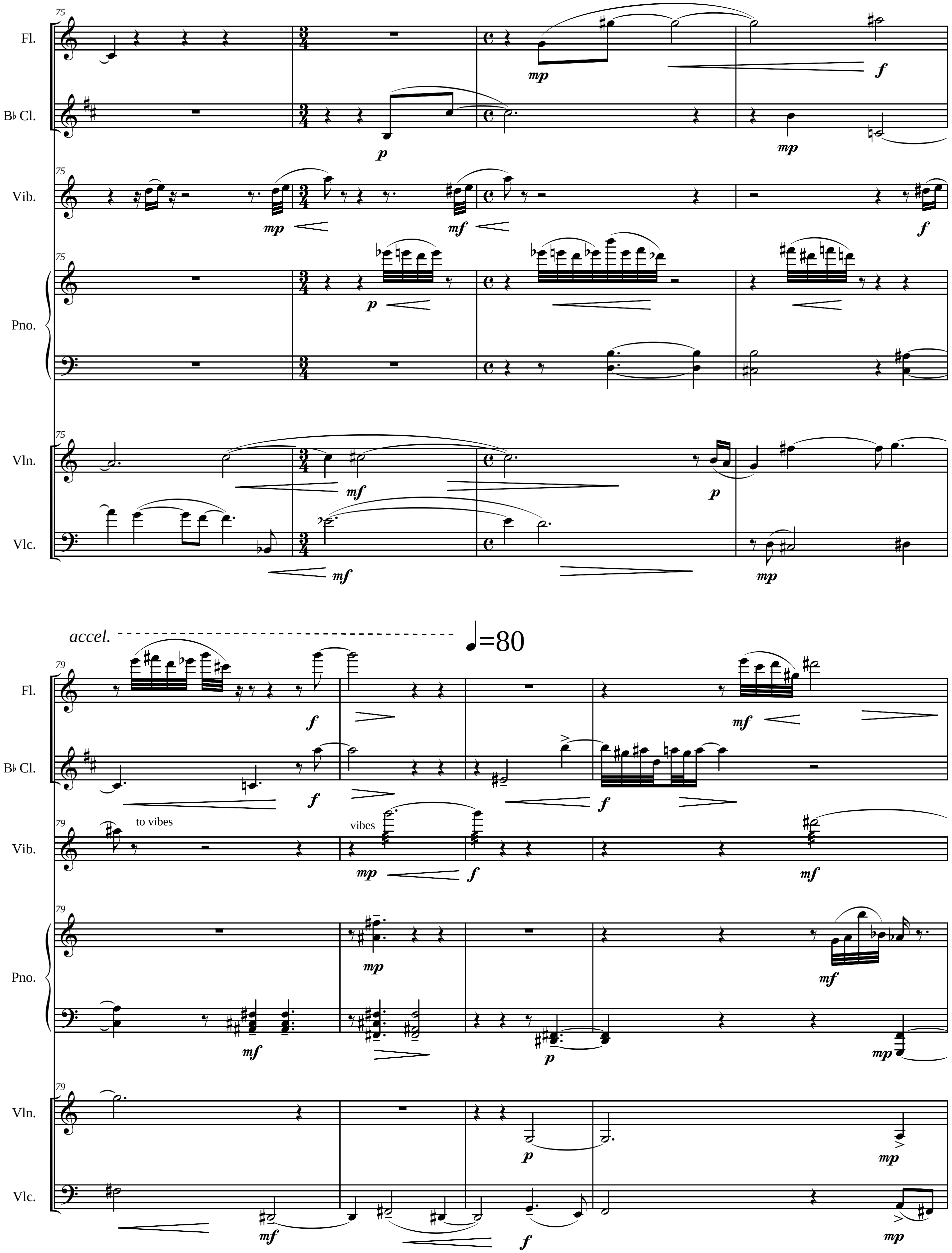

♩ = 112
accel.
35
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
ff
mf
mp
f
p
pizz.
♩ = 160
♩ = ♪
D
♪ = 160
accel.
40
arco
subito p
pp

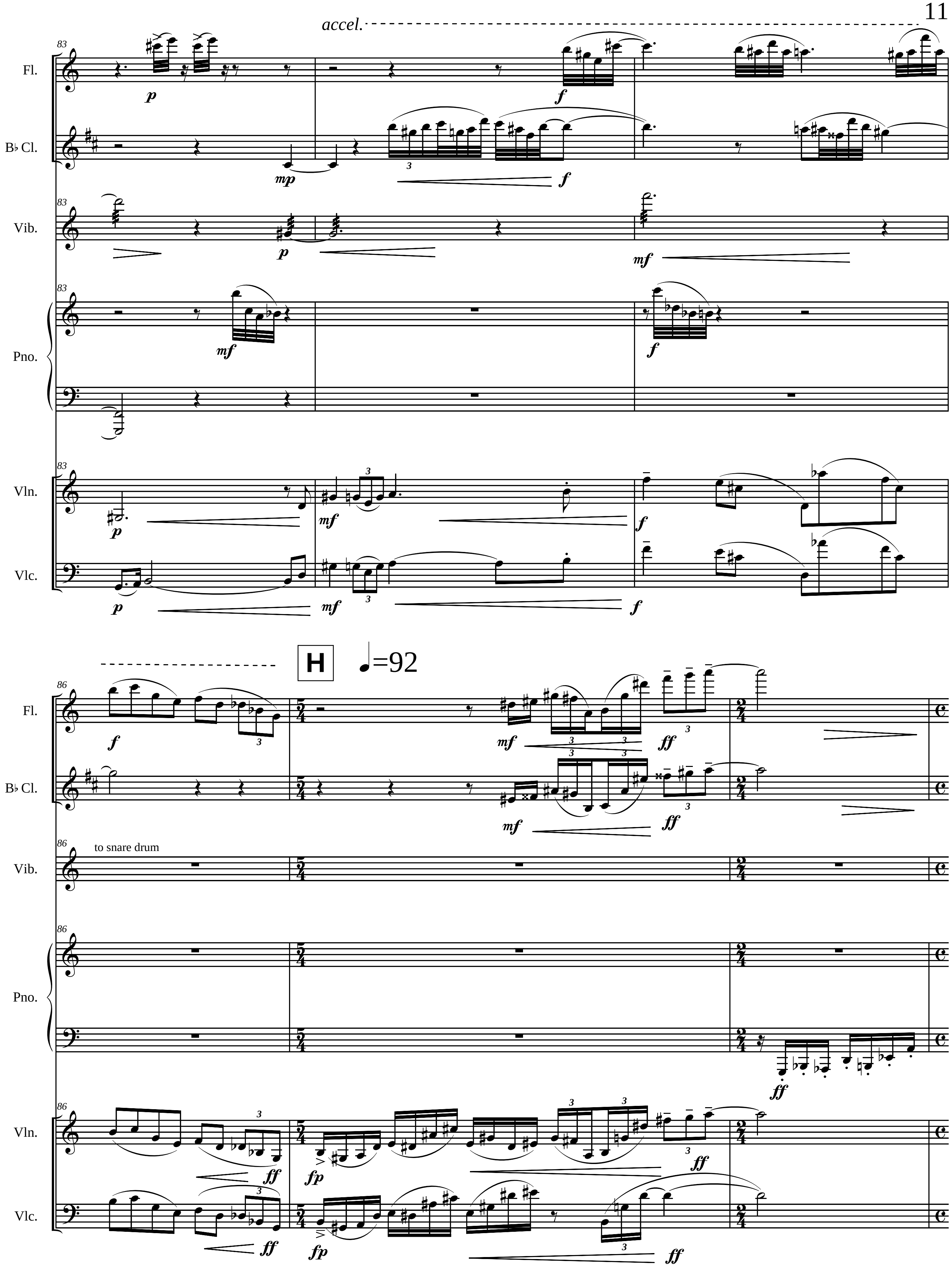

rit.
♩. = 66
a bit faster
accel.
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
44
mf
p
mp
pp
f
♩. = 88
48
pizz.

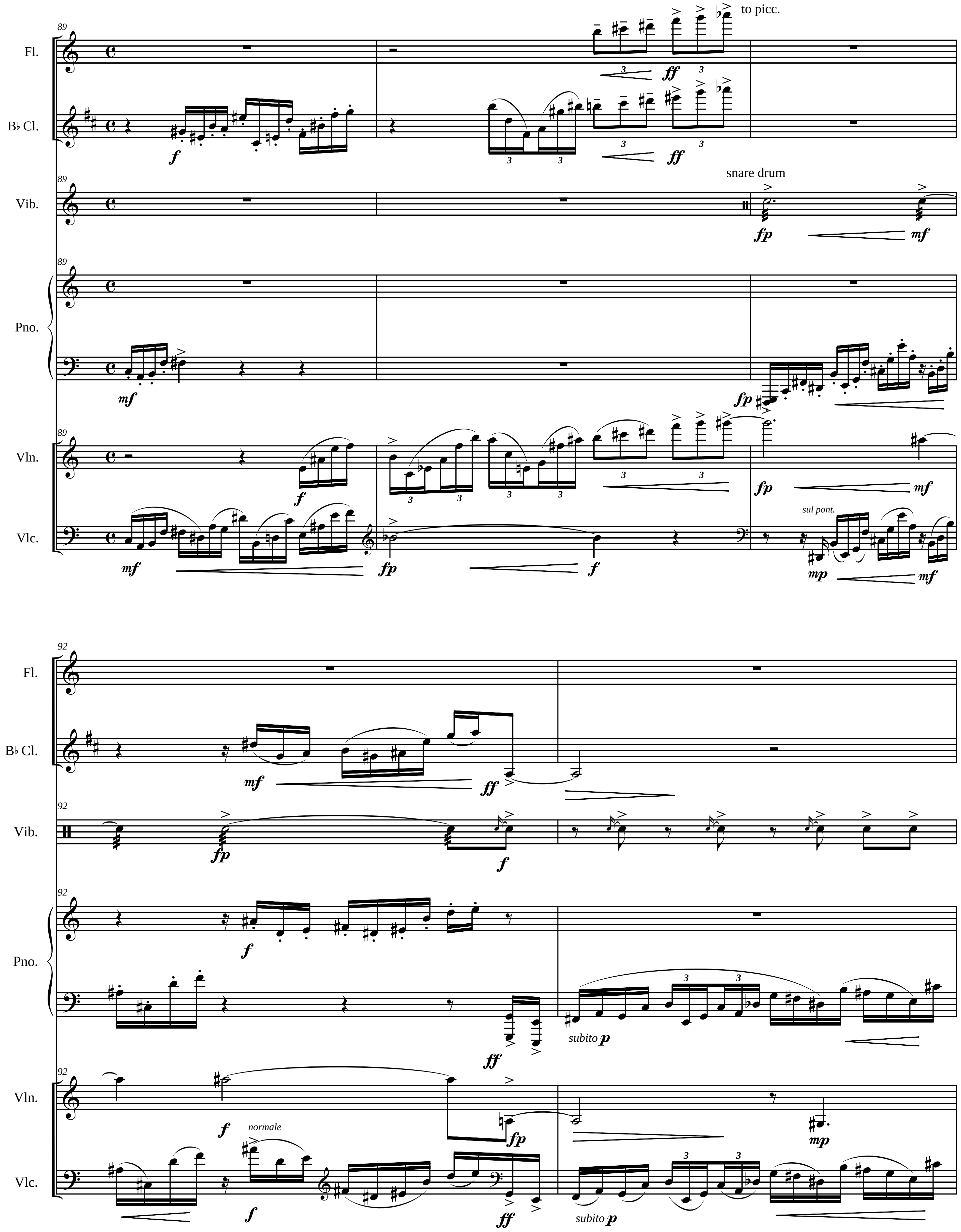

51
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
mp
f
mf
arco
p
rit.
54
ff

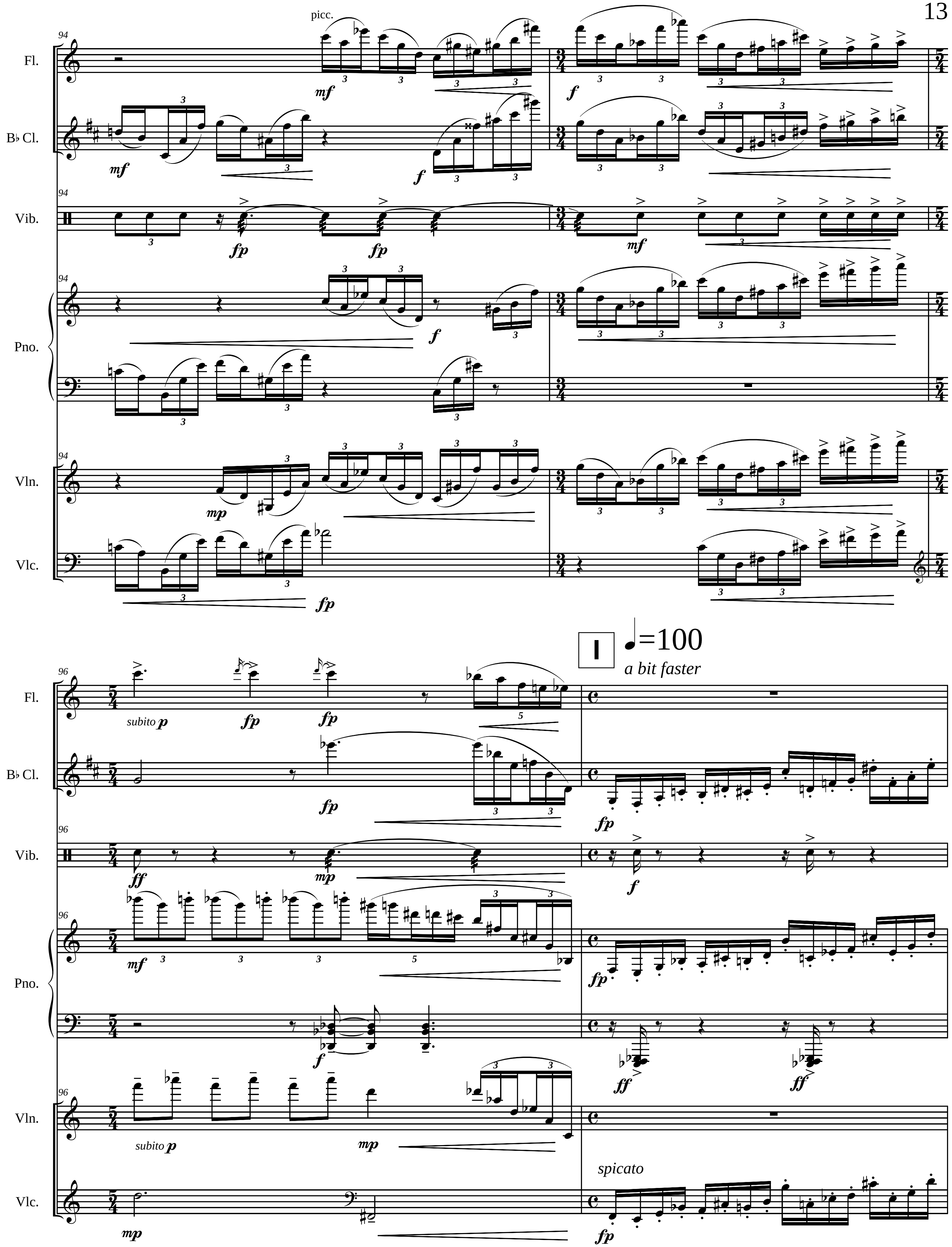

E
♪ = 160
accel.
57
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
p
mf
fp
f
pp
♩. = 66
62
ff
fff

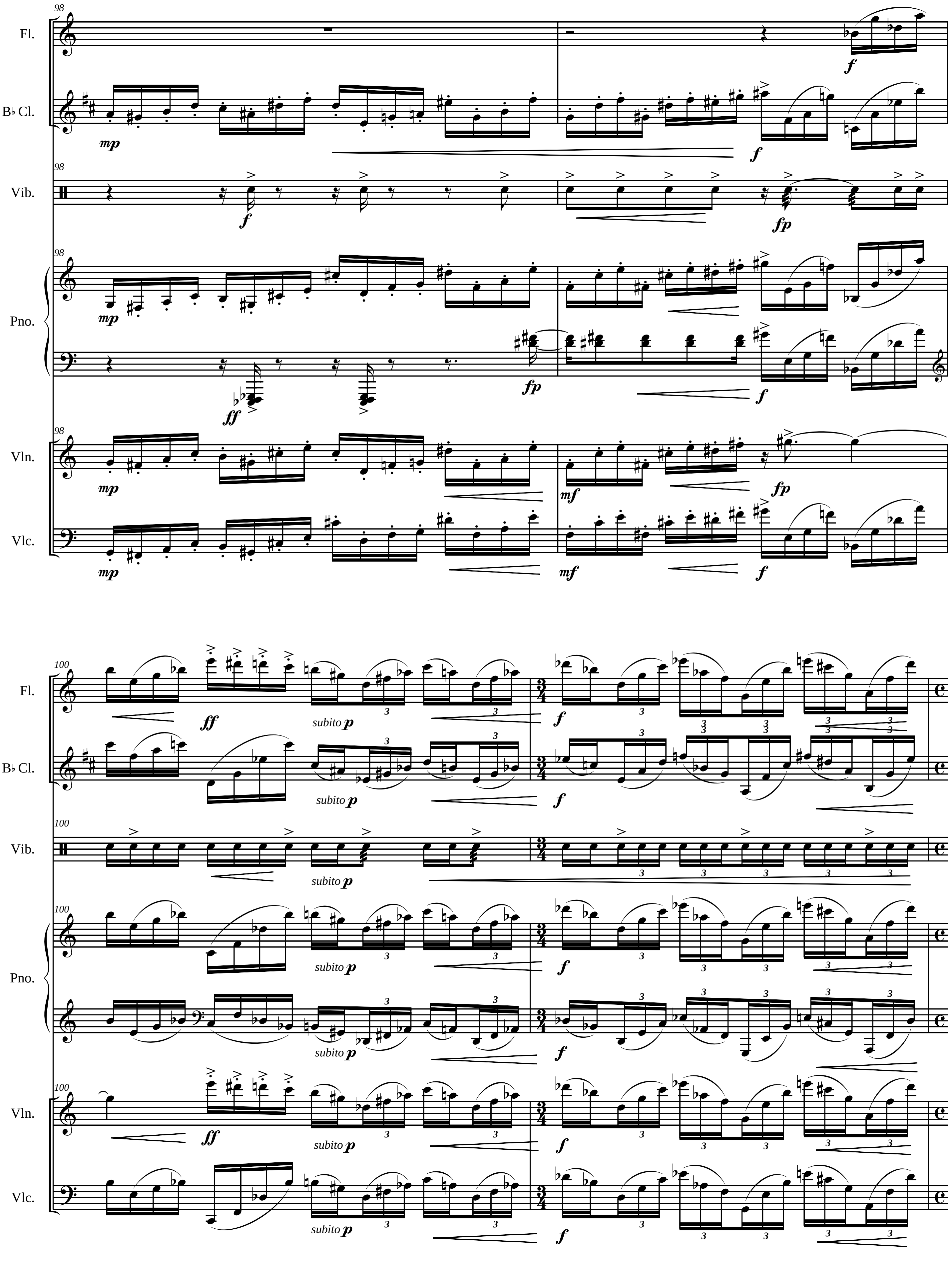

F
a bit slower
66
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
mp
mf
f
p
LV
70
♪ = ♪
rit.
G
♩=52
to crotales
crotales
pp

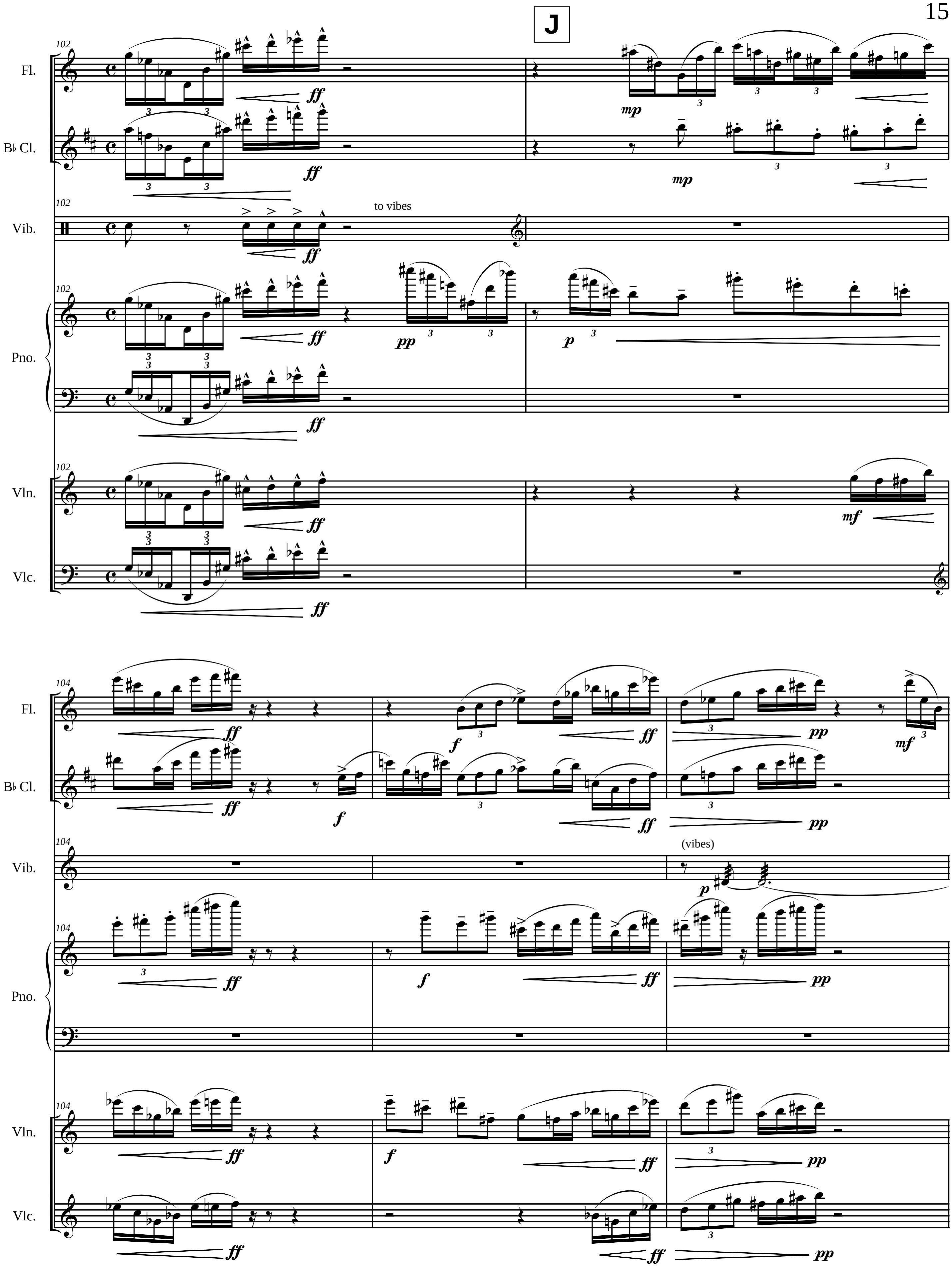

75
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
mp
f
p
mf
79
accel.
♩=80
to vibes
vibes

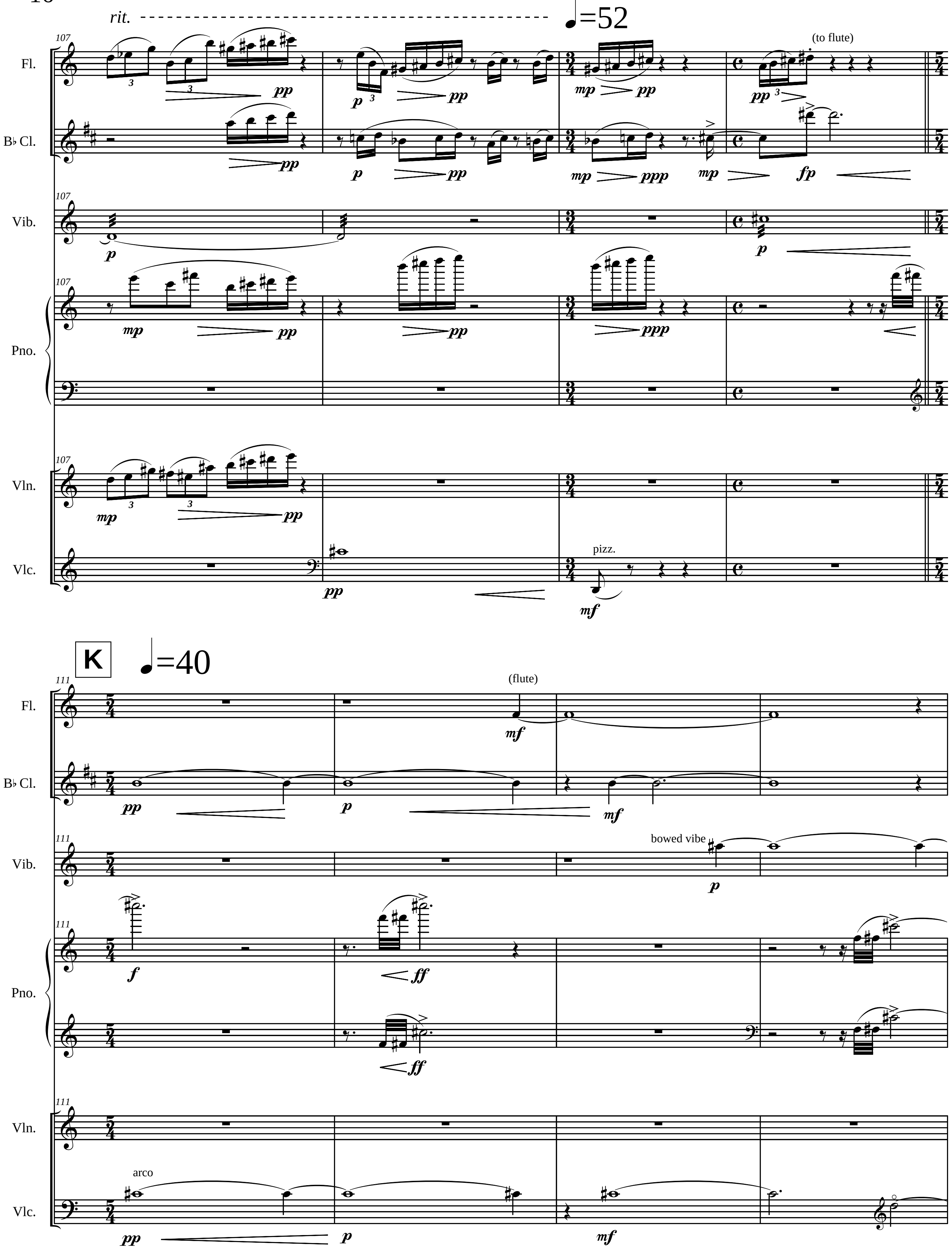

accel.
83
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
p
mp
f
mf
3
86
H
♩=92
to snare drum
ff
fp

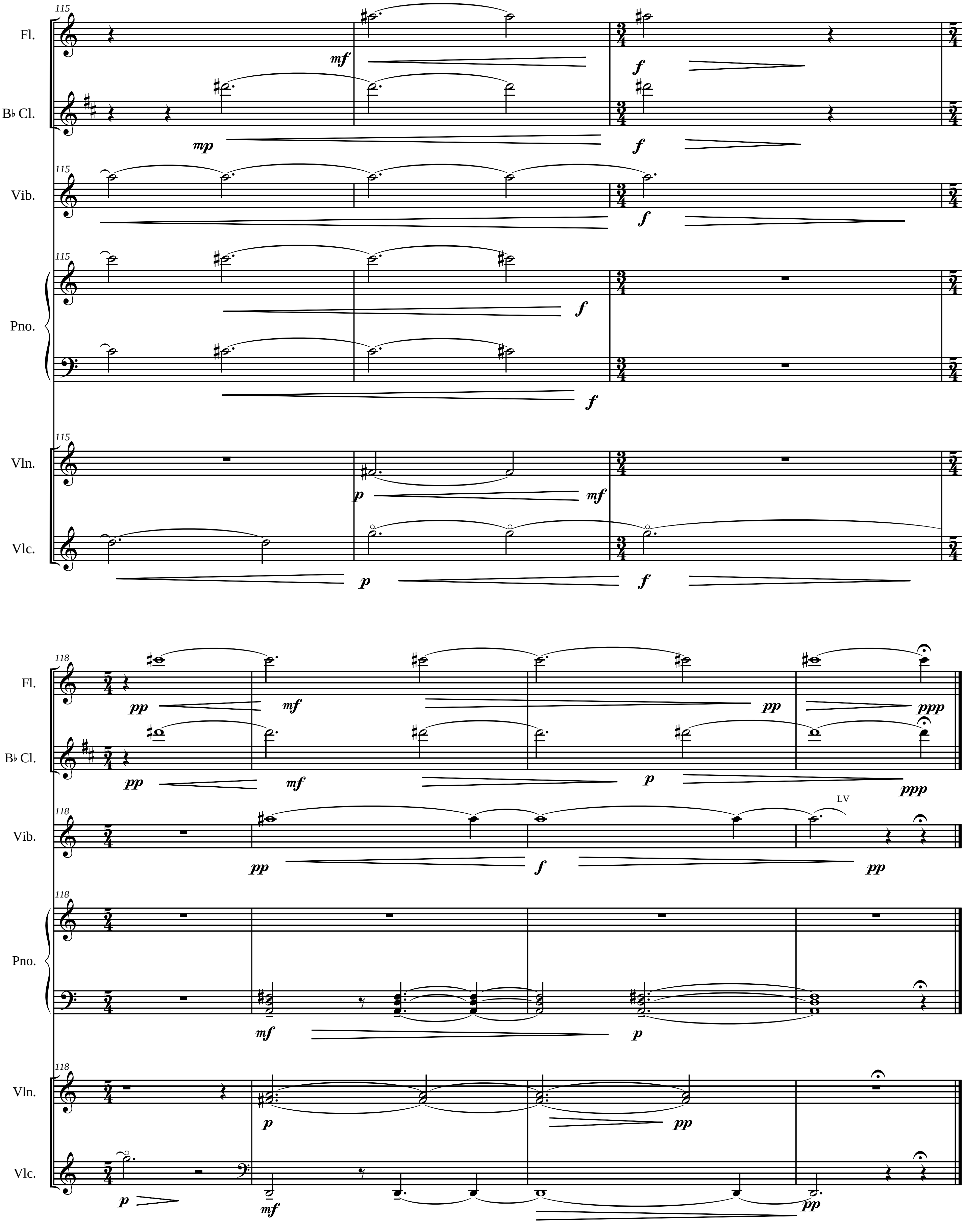

89
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
to picc.
ff
f
snare drum
fp
mf
mp
sul pont.
92
normale
subito p


94
Fl.
picc.
mf
f
B♭ Cl.
mf
f
Vib.
fp
fp
mf
Pno.
f
Vln.
mp
Vlc.
fp
96
I
♩=100
a bit faster
subito p
fp
fp
ff
mp
f
mf
fp
ff
ff
subito p
mp
spicato
mp
fp


98
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
mp
f
ff
fp
mf
100
ff
subito p
3
3/4


J
102
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
to vibes
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
ff
mp
pp
p
mf
3
104
f
(vibes)


rit.
♩=52
107
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
(to flute)
pizz.
mp
pp
p
ppp
fp
mf
K
♩=40
111
(flute)
bowed vibe
arco
f
ff



115
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vlc.
mf
f
mp
p
118
pp
ppp
LV