Desperate Messages

for Baritone, Piano and Cello

Tom Baker
(1999)

Frog Peak Music

Desperate Message #1 (History)

When the jets crowd close to the house tops,
and the thunder of their passing shakes
the droplets from the leaves of the chestnut tree,
and they fall in dull groups, punctuating the dust,
and when there is time to consider the cool, gray sky,
to wake to its many hues and its sway,
its hovering, fluorescent mood that seems right,
in the way the past is right, or unalterable-
then see how the days are full of false modesty,
how they fall neatly one on top the other,
the shadow coming full circle around the tree,
and see how they vanish and then add up to you,
in a chair, in an empty room, in a house...

Desperate Message #2 (Interlude)

Desperate Message #3 (The end of the world)
Not the end of the world,
but a mouthful of salt water
sends you shuttling against the slope.
against the difficult pull of the surf.
Not the buried wish, rocketed forth, at last,
but seven sleek mackerel,
together in a flash before your eyes,
leap from their pursuer.
No private end, no melodrama
by cartridge or clip, the fine smell of bluing,
the slip of the knot that stops the neck-
none of that. Against the coast line, that roar
is the oceans steady method,
hammering the pinnacles with a vengeance
that knows nothing is ever finished,
neither erosion, nor hope
nor the endless harvest of speech.

Desperate Message #4 (Desire)

Their hands have found in each other
the impossibility of bodies.
They gather what they can.
Here, and here, in the tangled turn,
in the soft, suede taper of the neck,
in desire, they are wise
to the body's overflowing reticence:
nothing is ever enough is the joke
that keeps giving itself to us,
the air calm, the trees lime-colored,
the hands, like tourists without visas,
cameras without film, busily, purposefully,
taking picture after picture after picture.

Desperate Messages

Commissioned by and dedicated to Will Dean IV

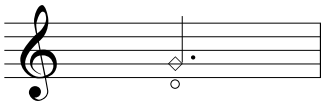
Special Thanks to Mark and Toni Radonich

Music by Tom Baker
Poetry by Mark Svenvold

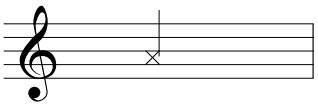
Performance Notes:

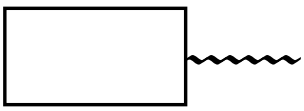
All accidentals last throughout the measure.
AFAP = As fast as possible.

Natural harmonics sound as written:



Pitches are approximate.





Musical figures in boxes are to be repeated unitl a rest or a new box.

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the droplets from the leaves of the chestnut tree,
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to wake to its many hues and its sway,
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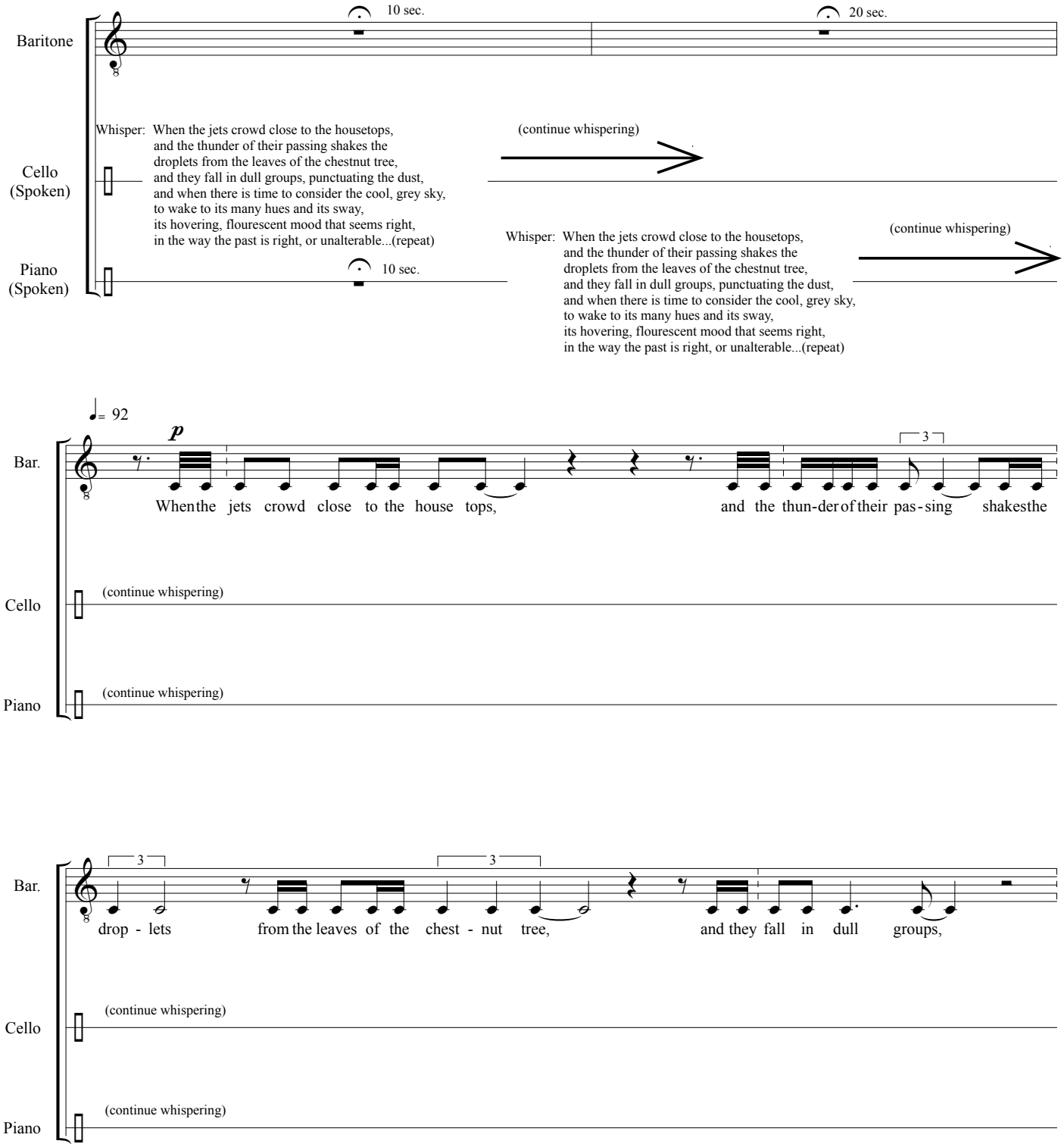
Desperate Message No. 1
(History)



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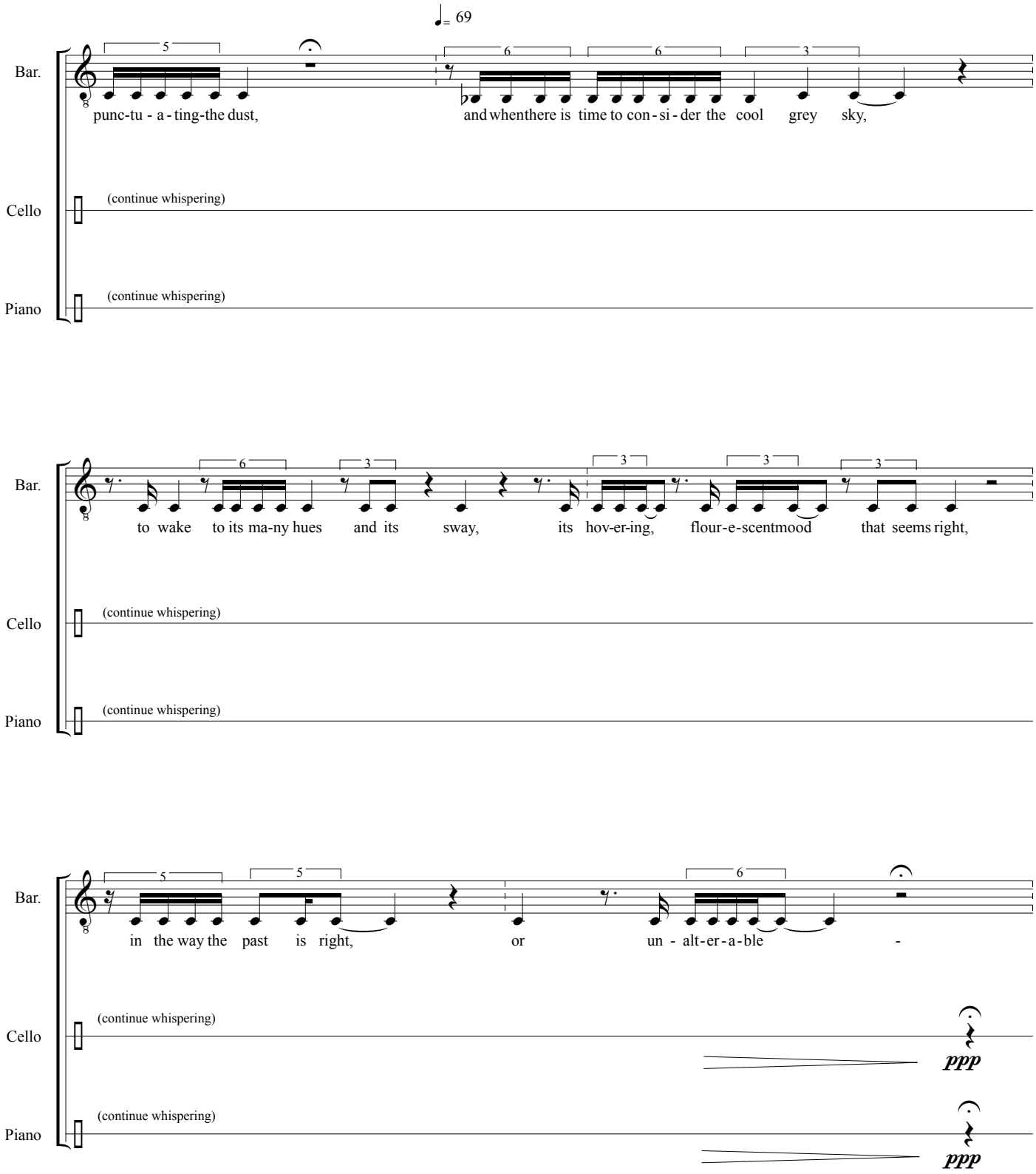
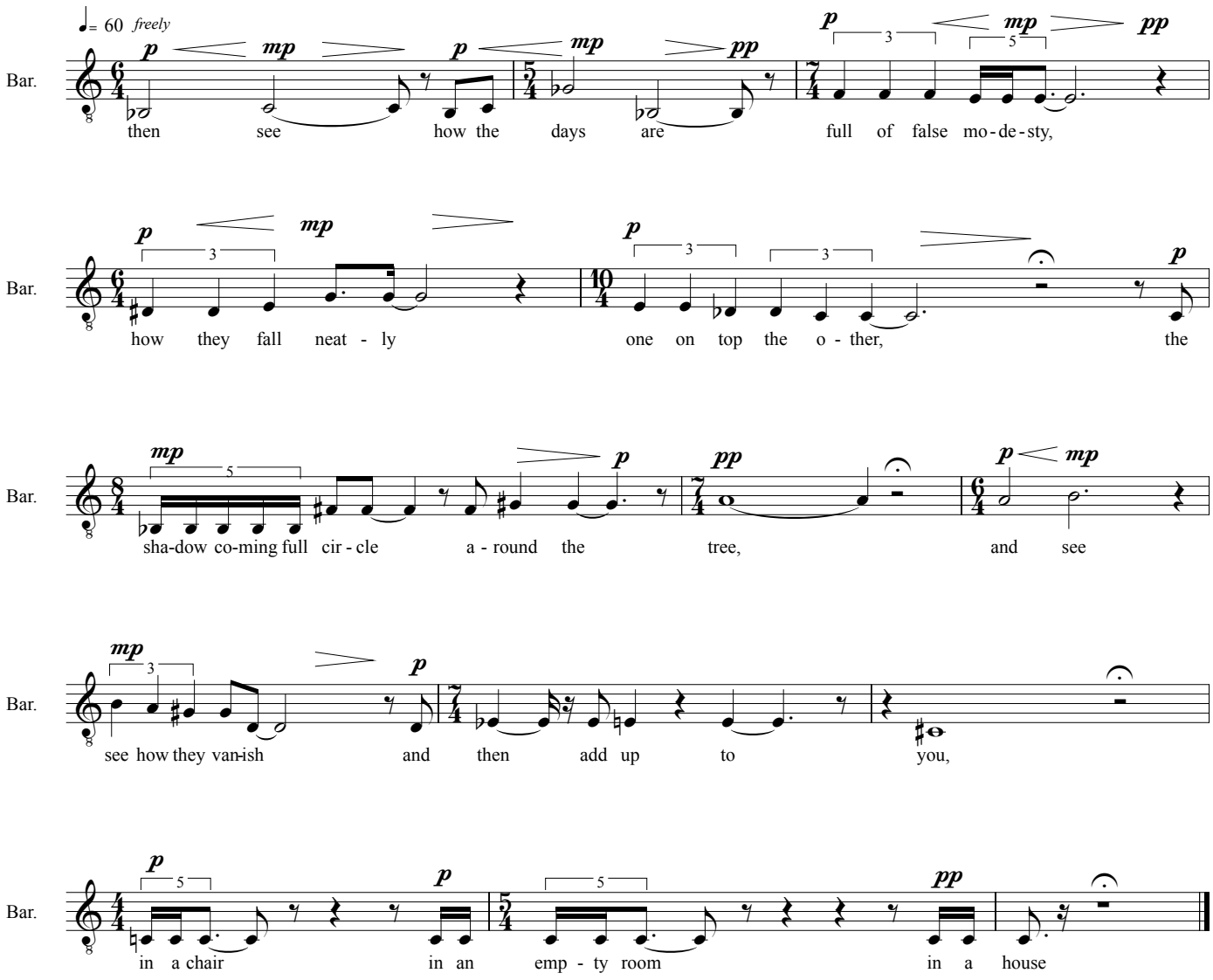
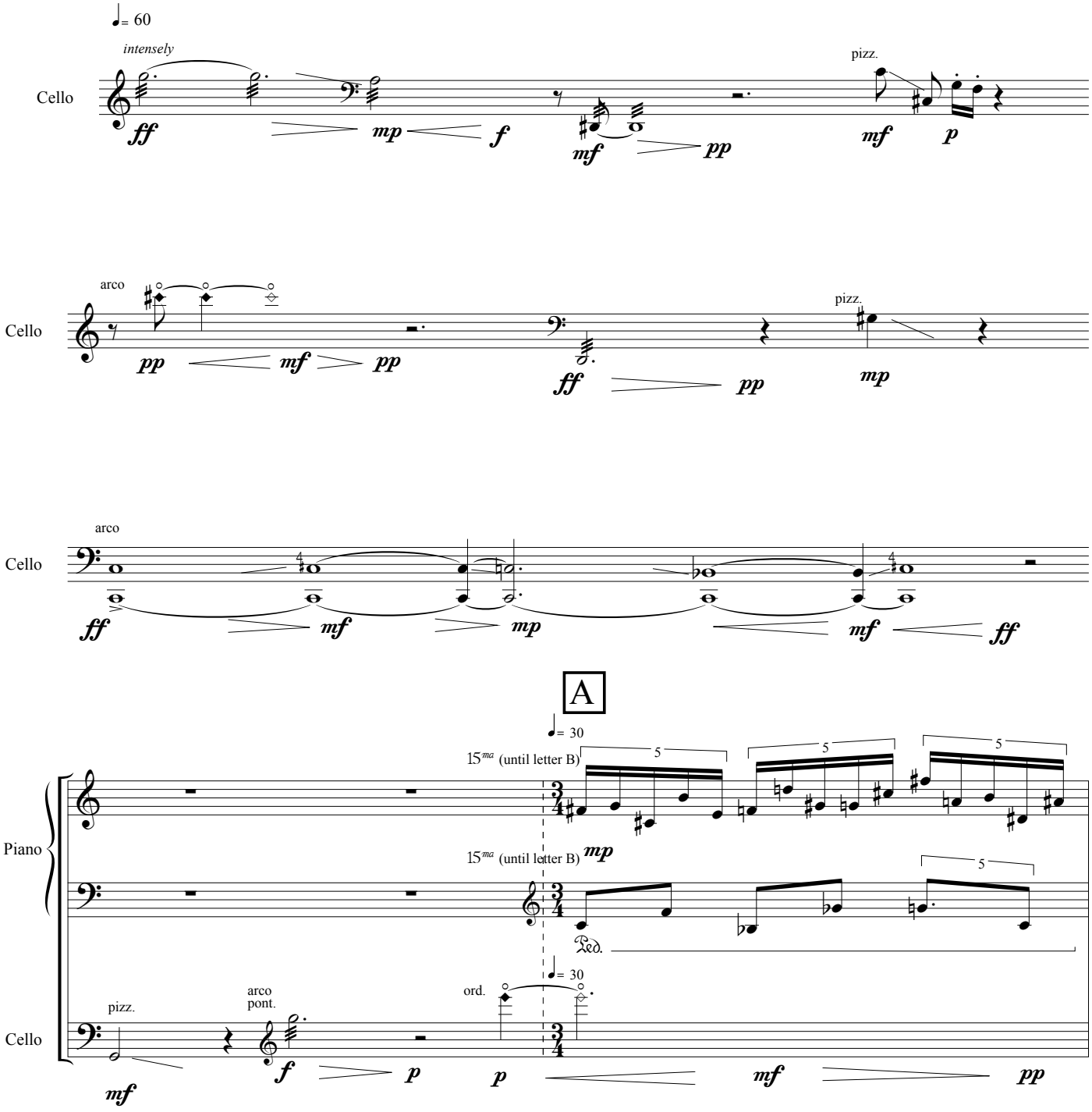
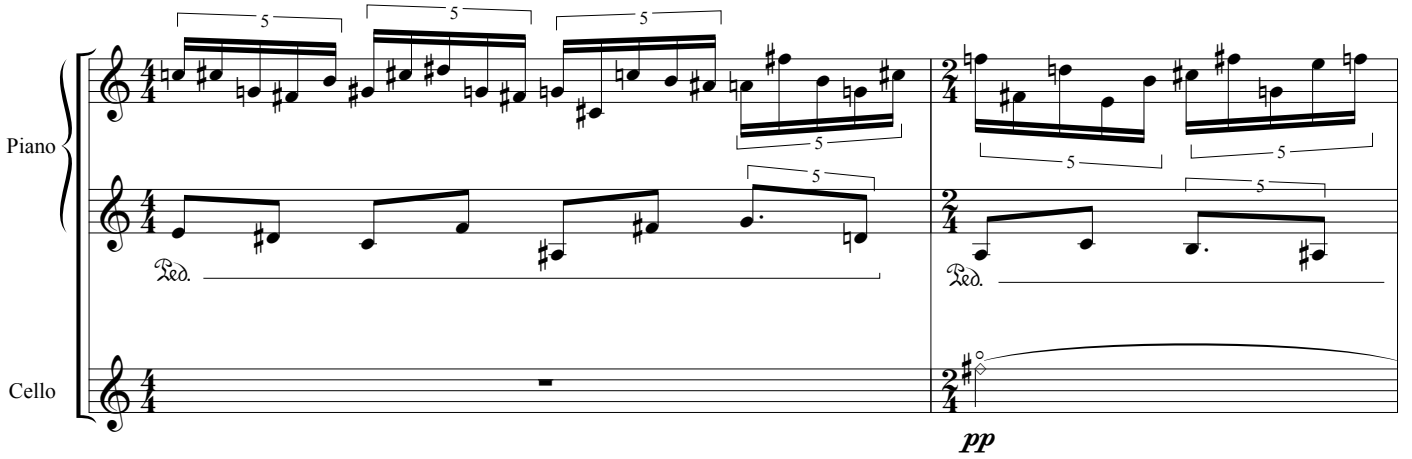
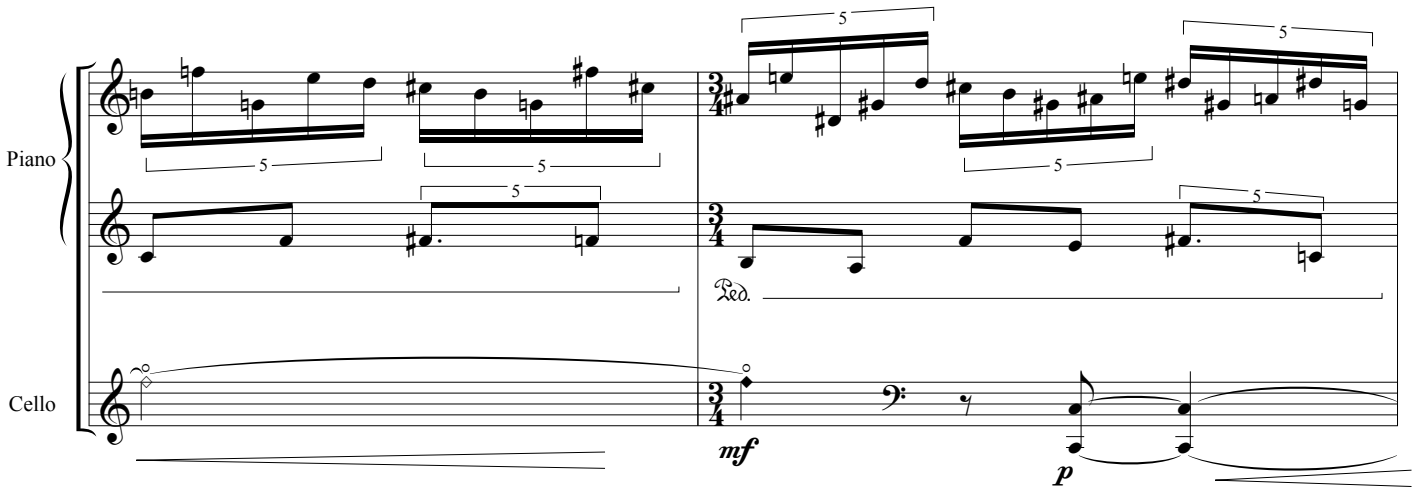

♩= 69
Bar.
punc-tu - a - ting-the dust,
and whenthere is time to con - si - der the cool grey sky,
Cello
(continue whispering)
Piano
(continue whispering)
Bar.
to wake to its ma-ny hues and its sway, its hov-er-ing, flour-e-scentmood that seems right,
Cello
(continue whispering)
Piano
(continue whispering)
Bar.
in the way the past is right, or un - alt-er-a-ble -
Cello
(continue whispering)
ppp
Piano
(continue whispering)
ppp

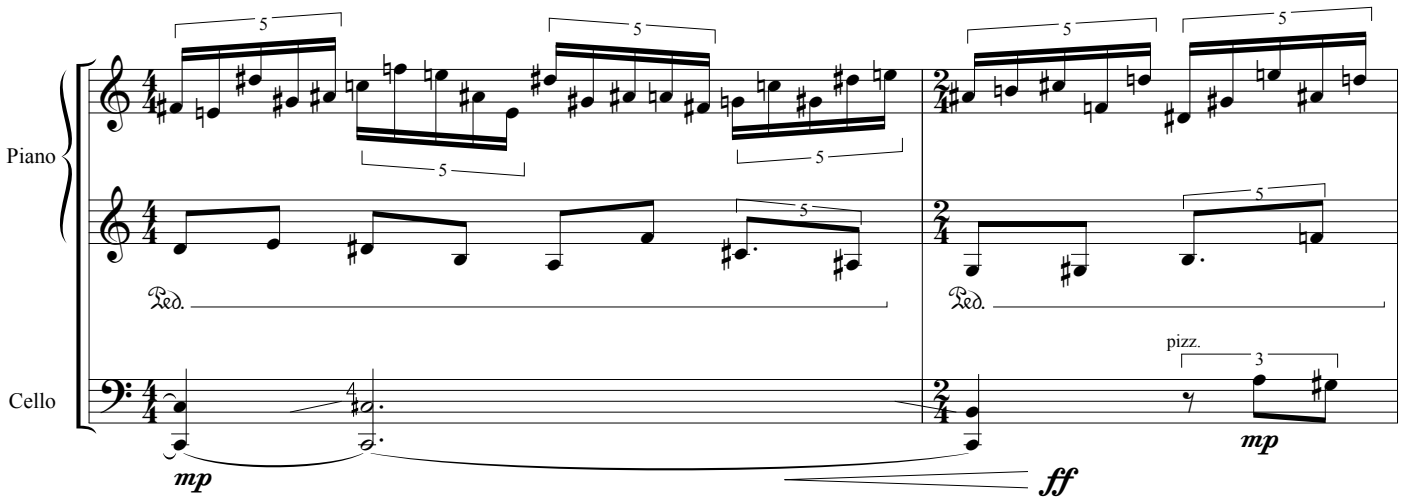

♩= 60 freely
Bar.
then see how the days are full of false mo-de-sty,
how they fall neat - ly one on top the o - ther, the
sha-dow co-ming full cir - cle a - round the tree, and see
see how they van-ish and then add up to you,
in a chair in an emp - ty room in a house

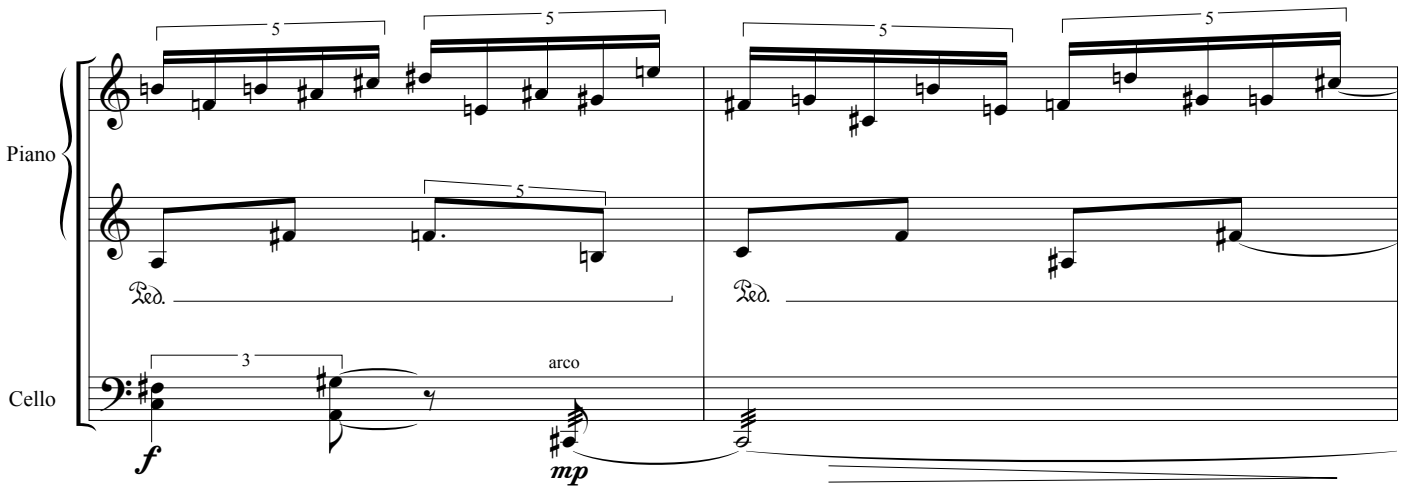
Desperate Message No. 2
(Interlude)



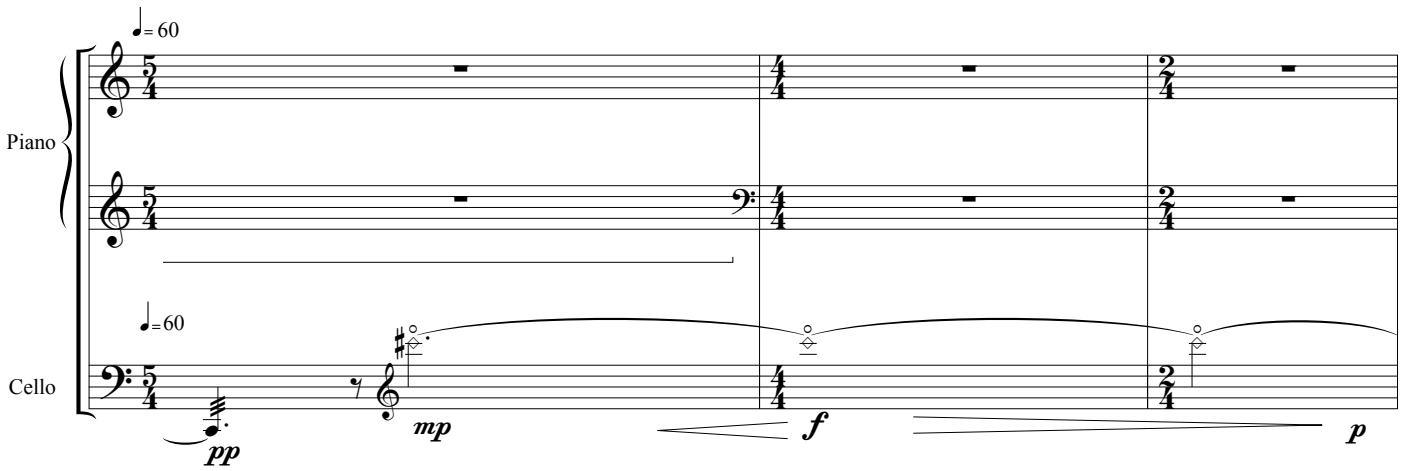

Piano
Cello
Ped.
pp

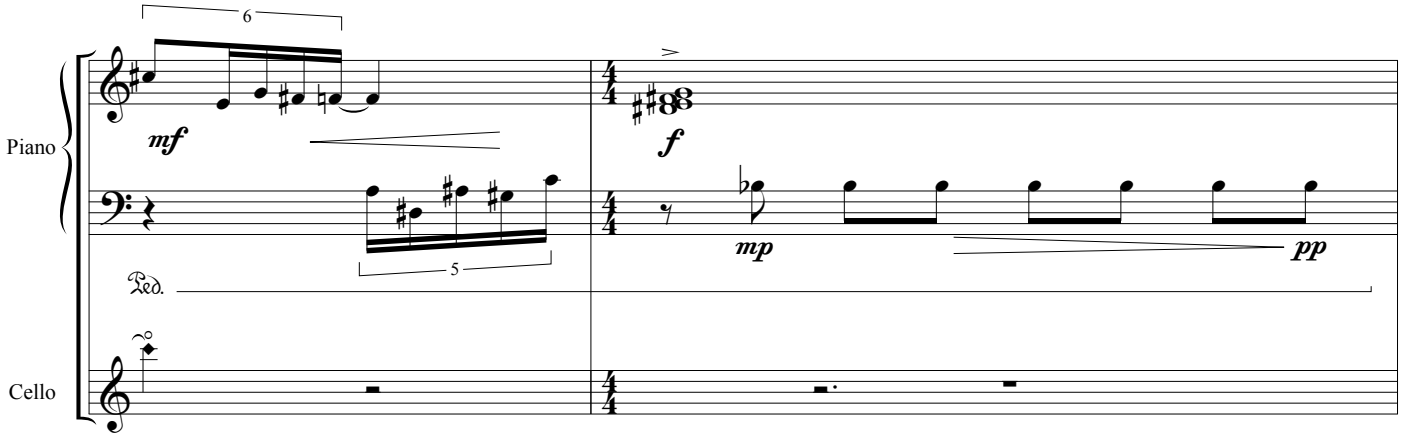

Piano
Cello
Ped.
mf
p

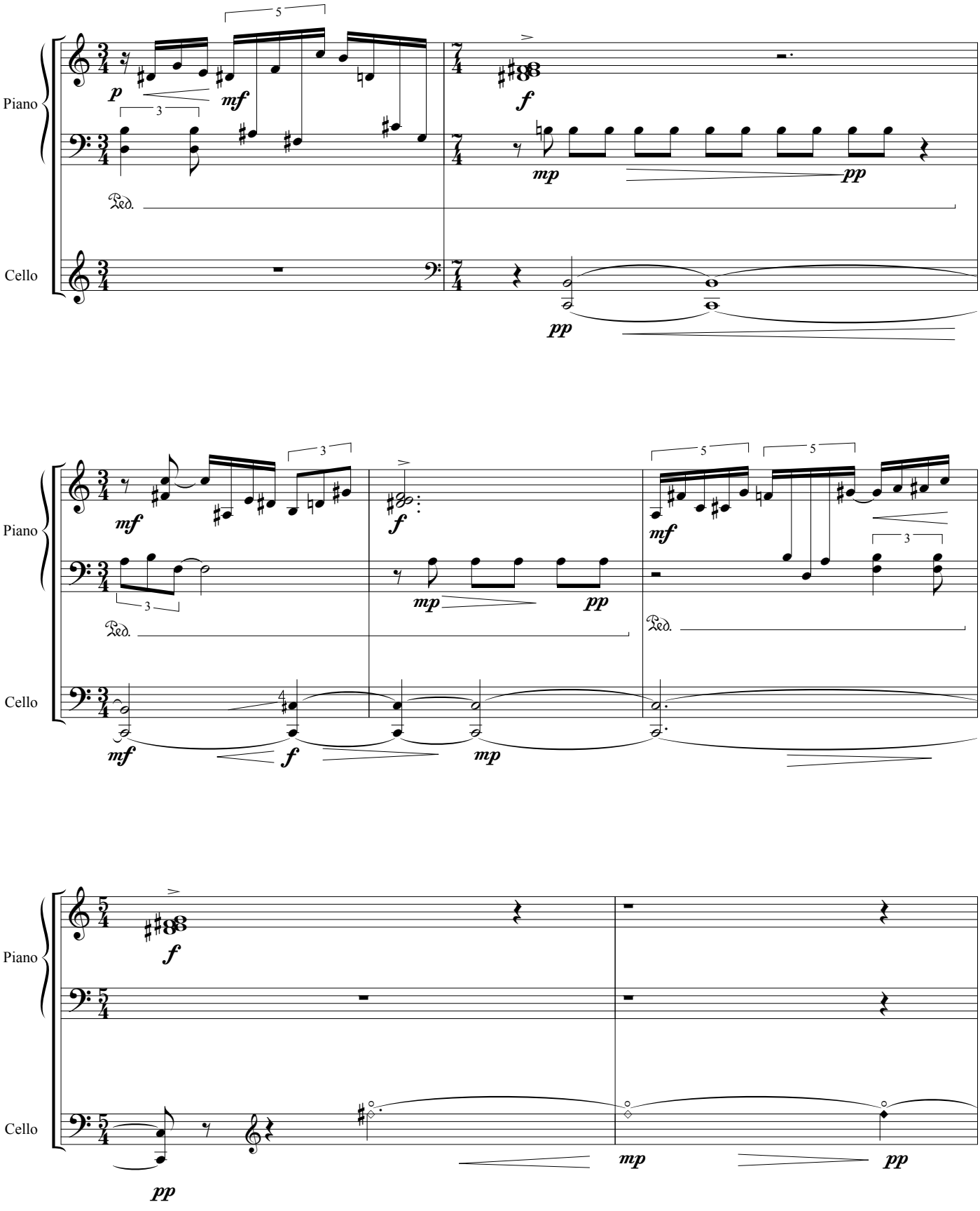

Piano
Cello
Ped.
mp
pizz.
mp
ff

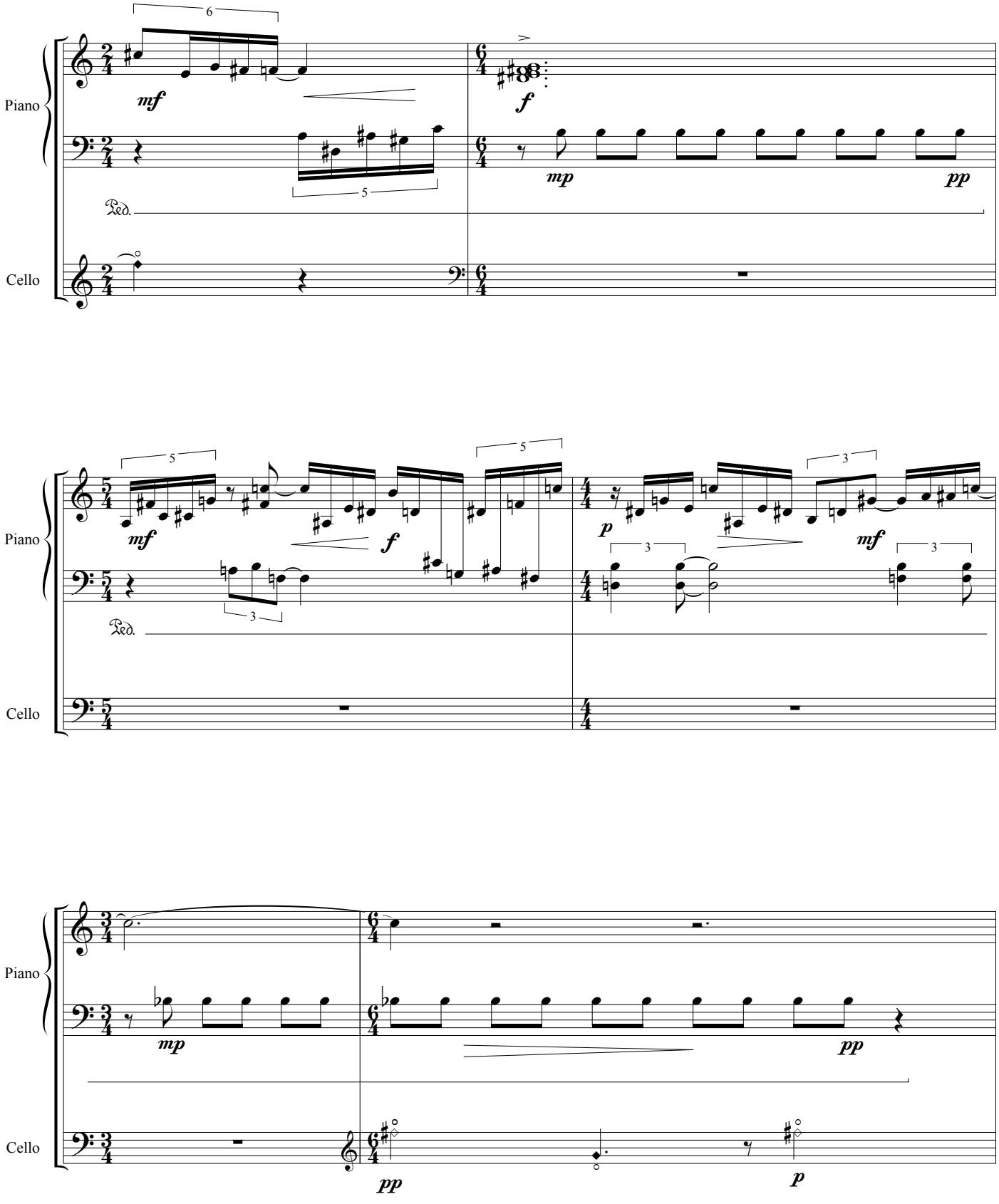

Piano
Cello
5
5
5
5
5
Ped.
Ped.
3
arco
f
mp

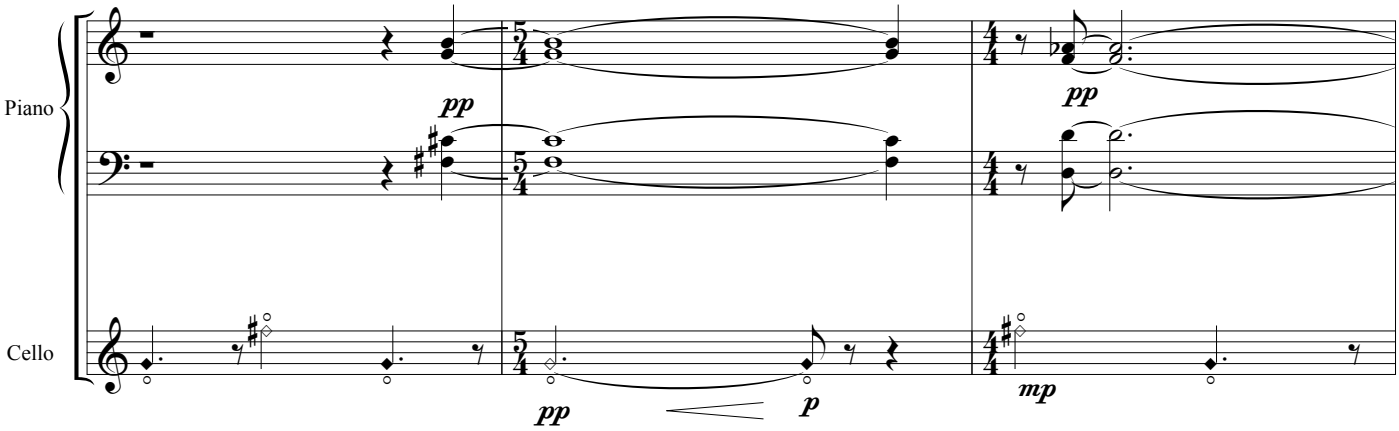
B (end 15ma)

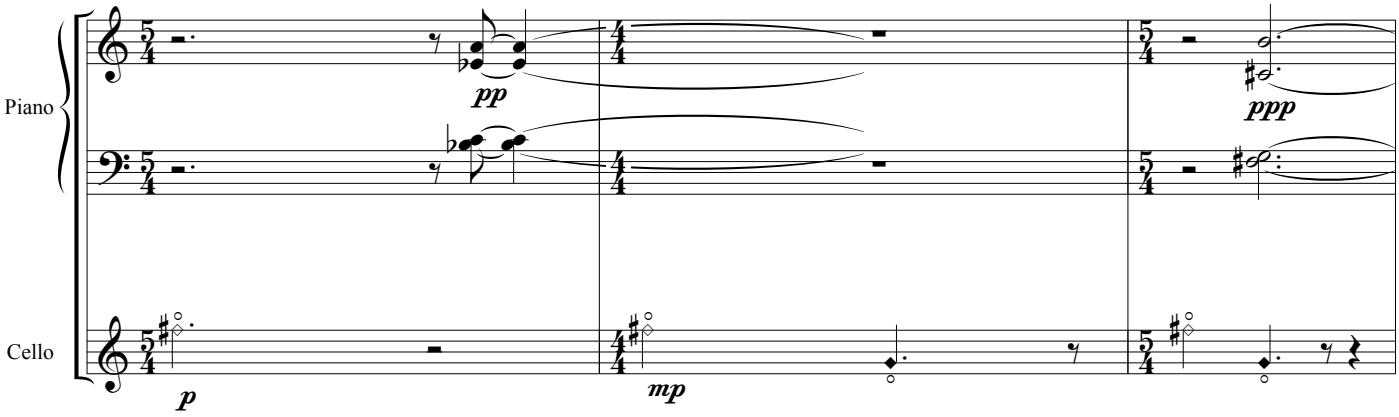

Piano
Cello
= 60
= 60
pp
mp
f
p

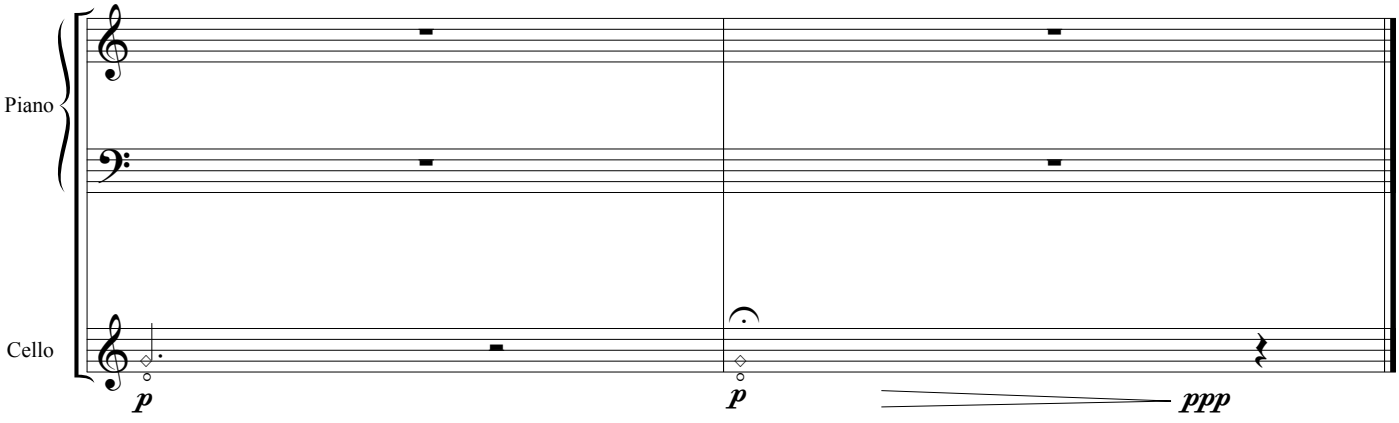

Piano
Cello
6
mf
5
f
mp
pp
Ped.


Piano
Cello
Ped.
p
mf
f
mp
pp
mf
f
mp
pp
mf
Ped.
f
pp
mp
pp

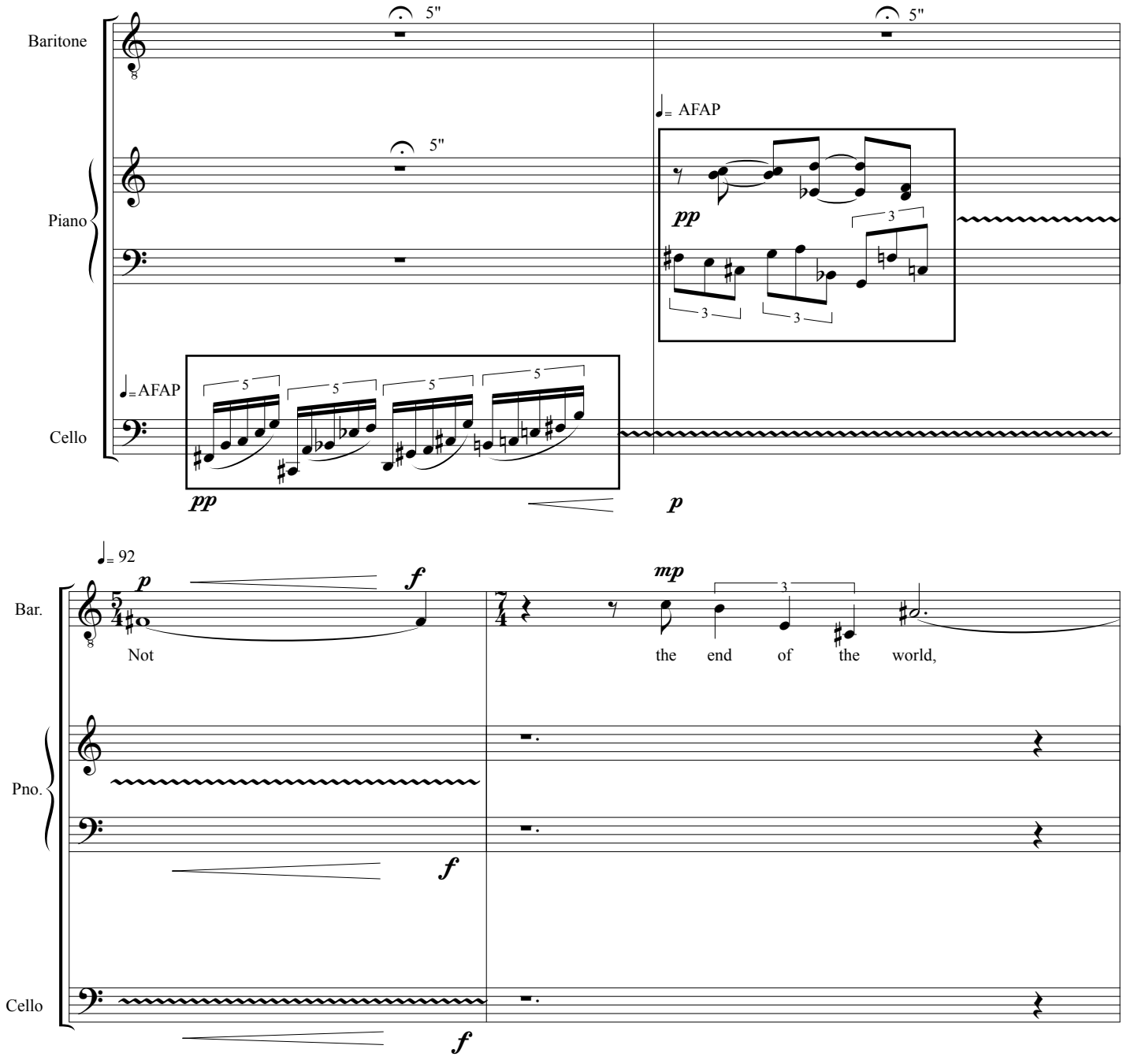

Piano
Cello
mf
f
mp
pp
Ped.
p

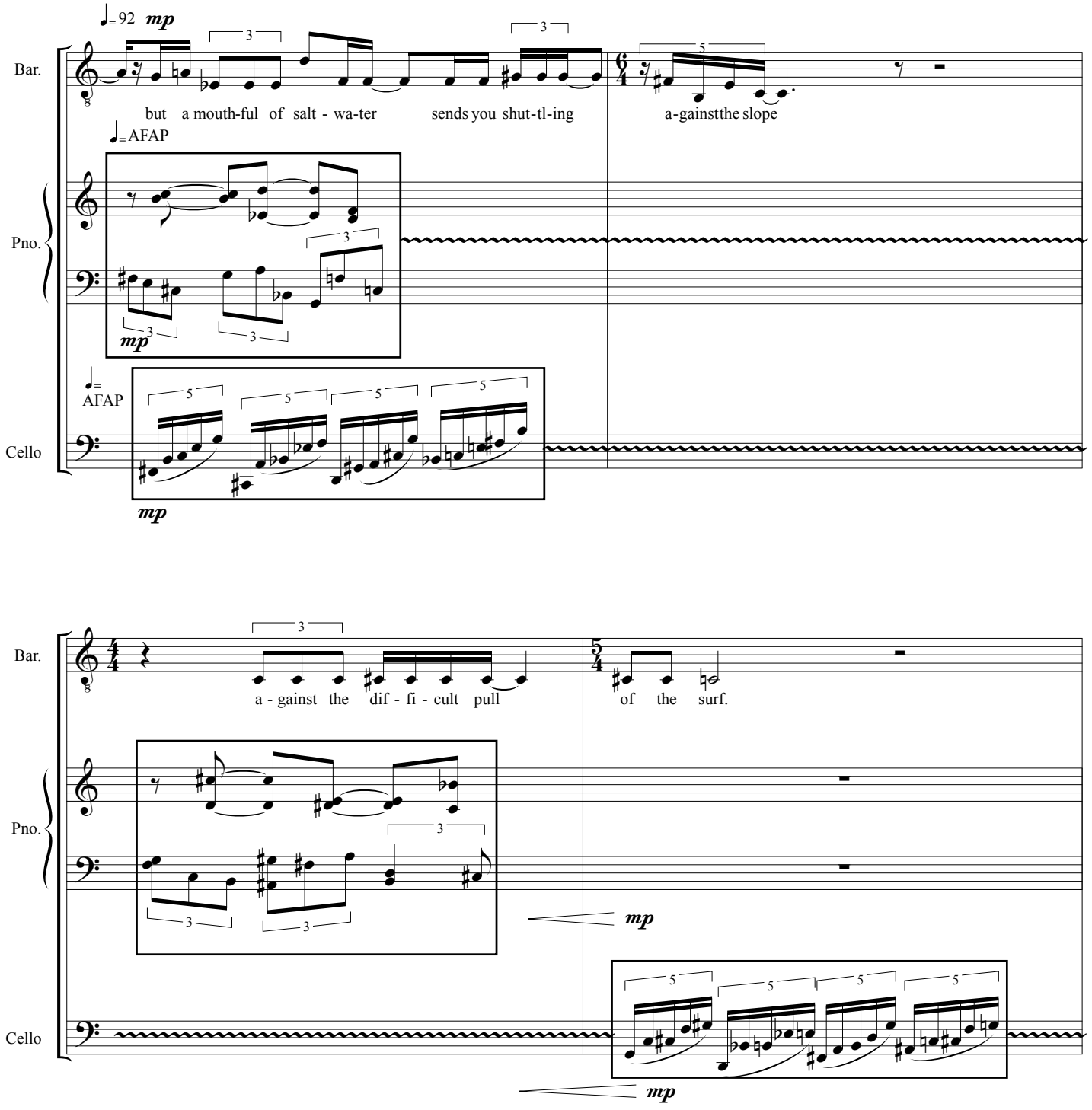

Piano
Cello
pp
pp
pp
p
mp

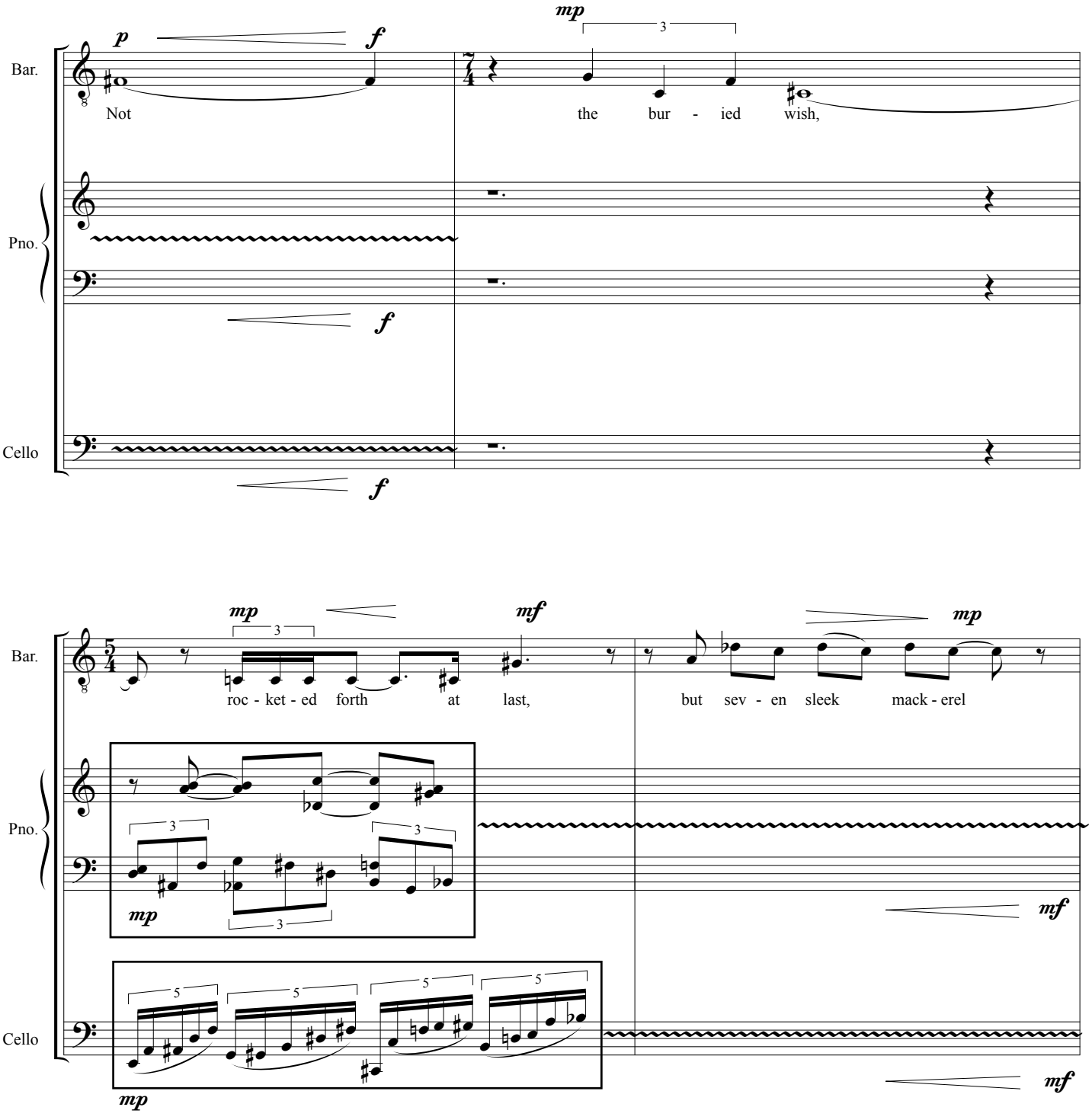

Piano
Cello
pp
ppp
p
mp

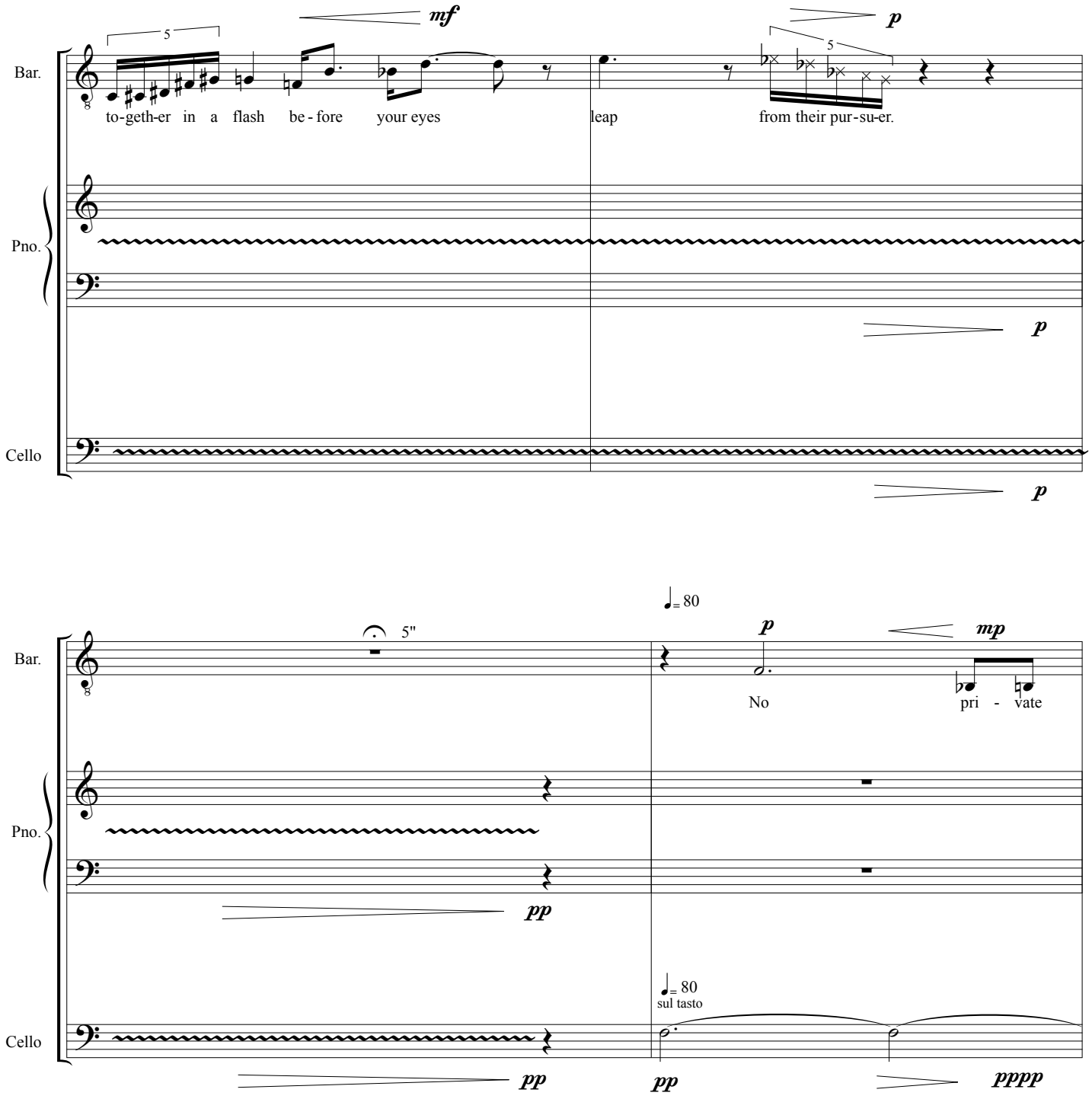

Piano
Cello
p
p
ppp

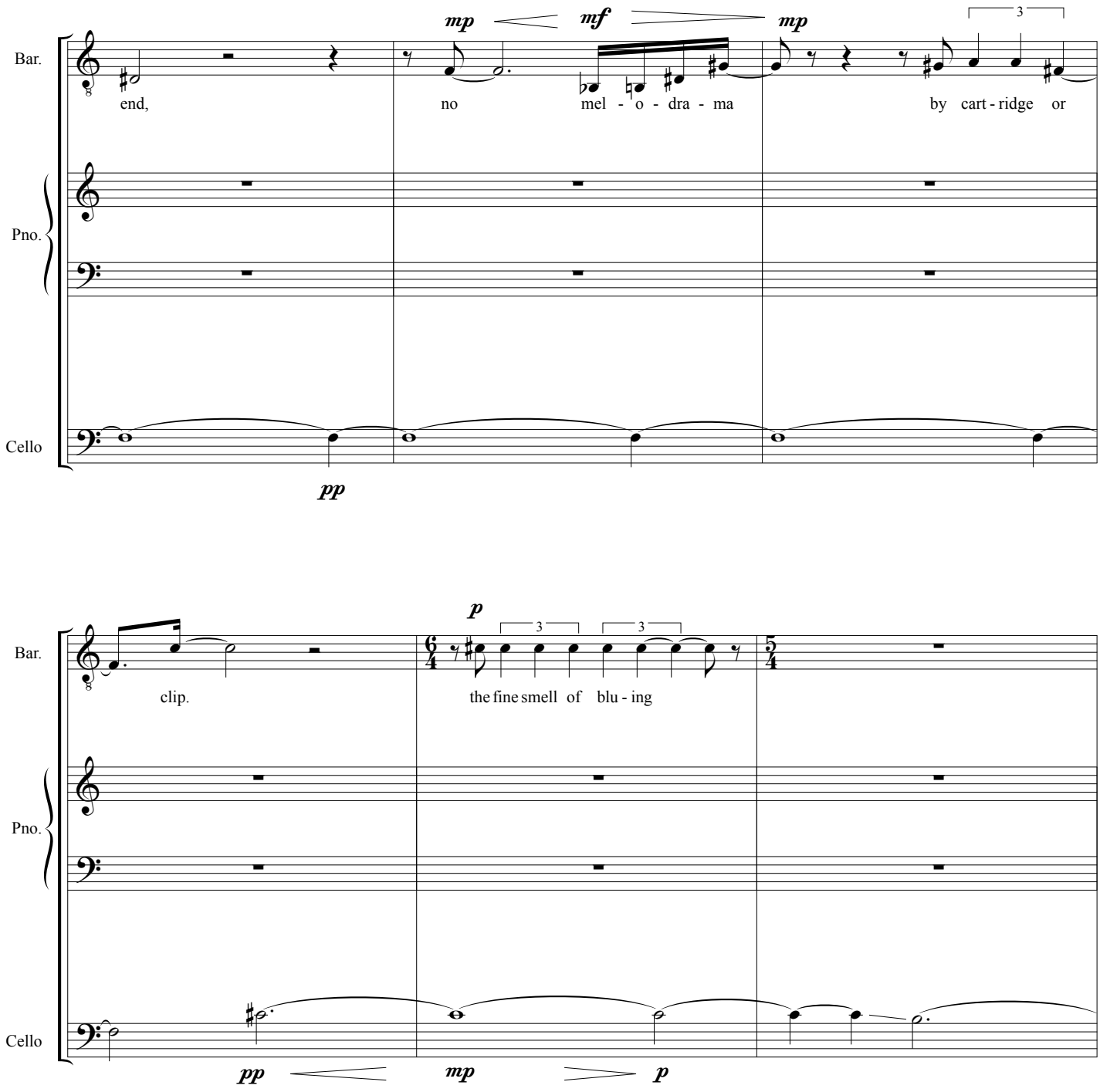
Desperate Message No. 3
(Not the end of the world)

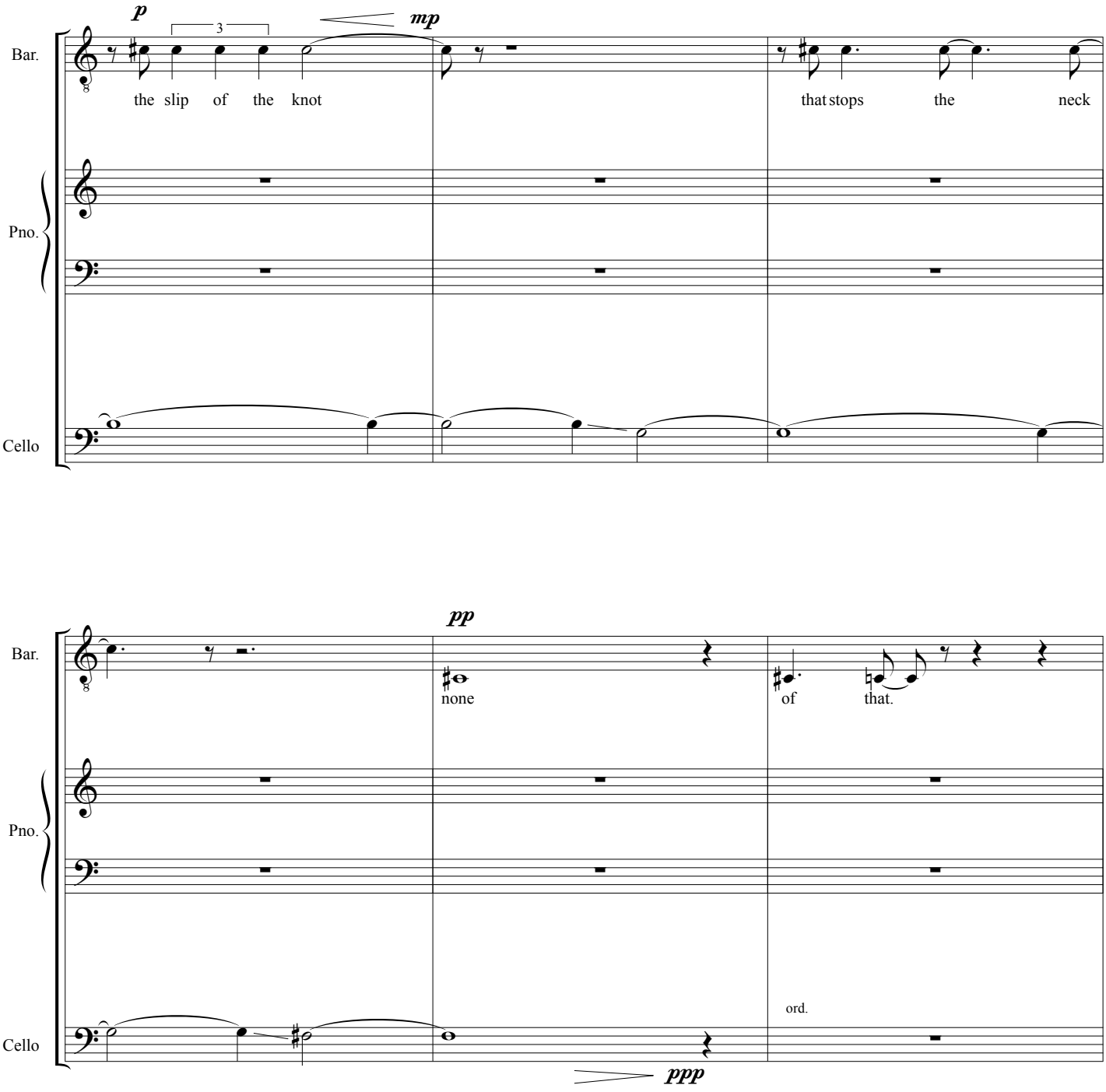


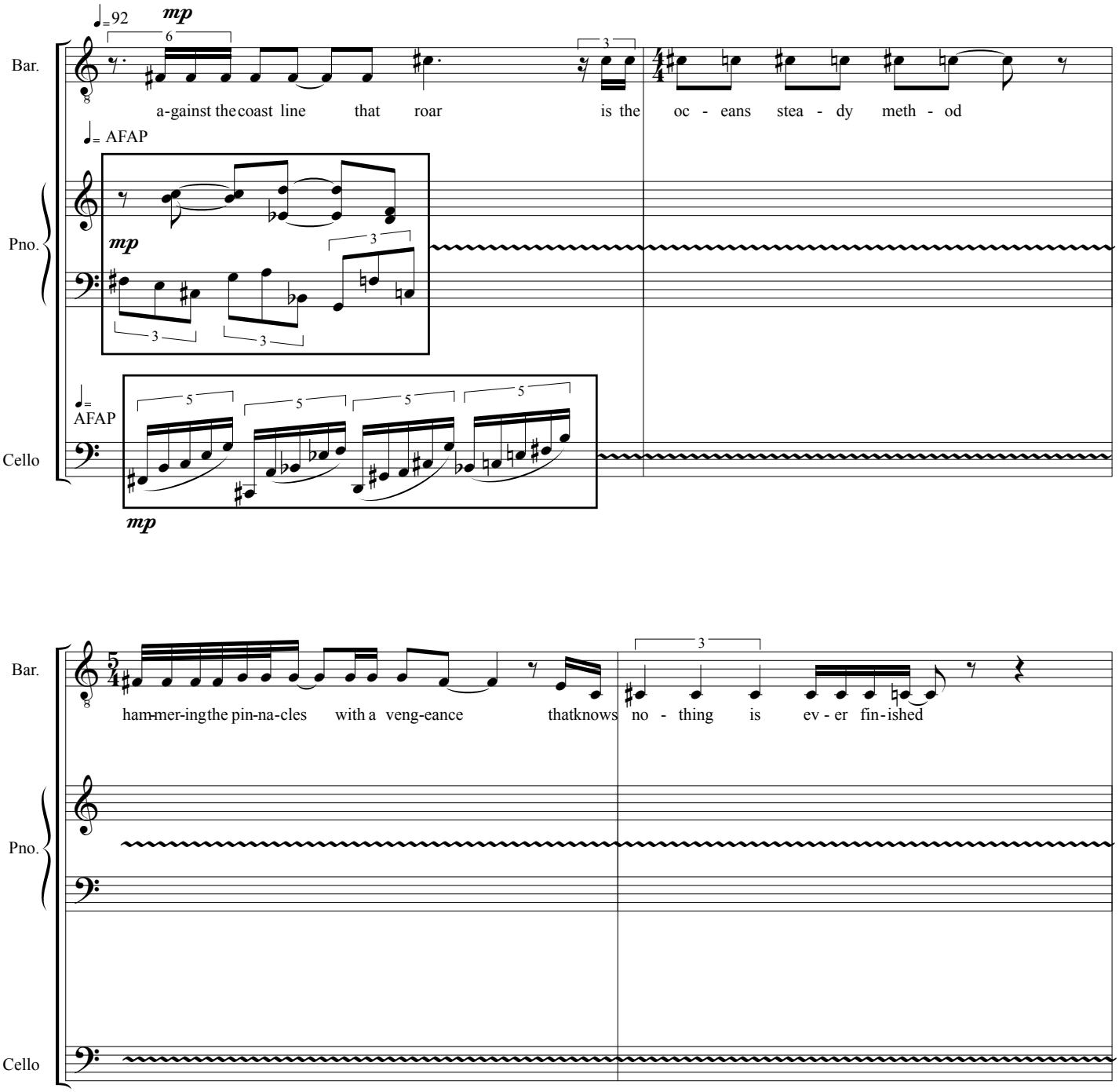

♩= 92 mp
Bar.
but a mouth-ful of salt - wa-ter sends you shut-tl-ing a-gainstthe slope
♩= AFAP
Pno.
mp
♩= AFAP
Cello
mp
a - gainst the dif - fi - cult pull of the surf.
Bar.
Pno.
mp
Cello
mp

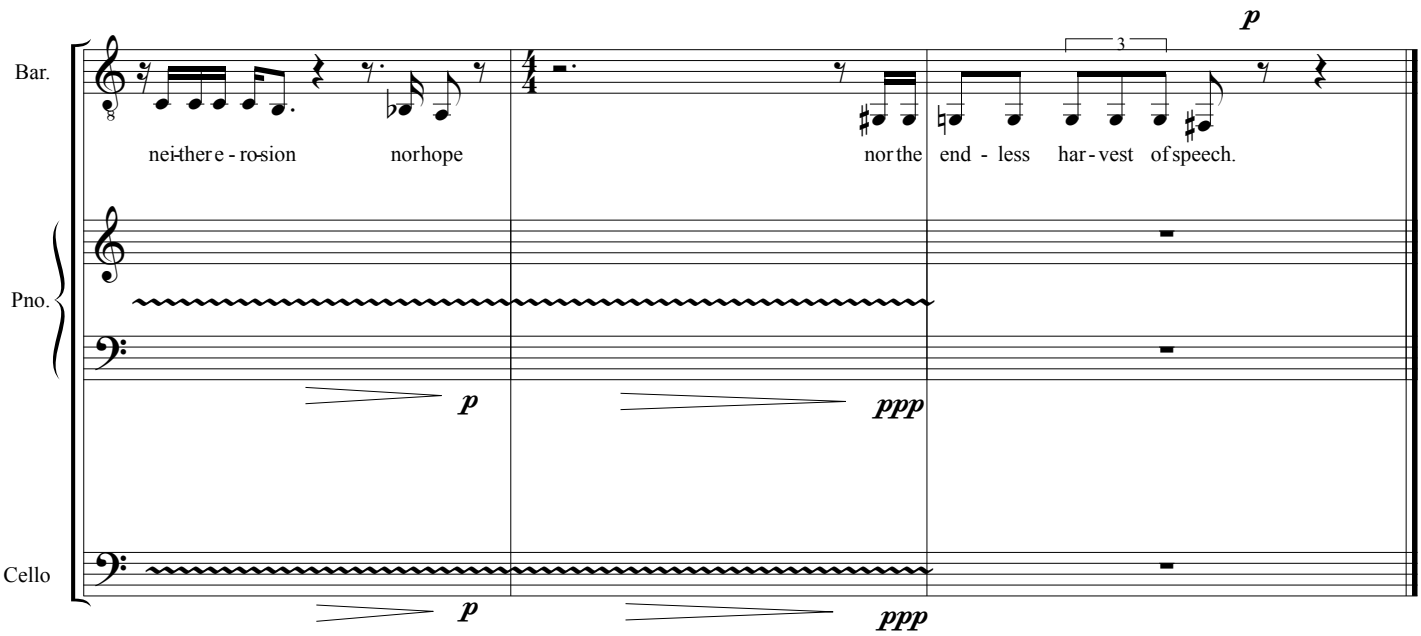

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
p
f
mp
3
Not the bur - ied wish,
mp
mf
roc - ket - ed forth at last,
but sev - en sleek mack - erel
5


Bar.
Pno.
Cello
mf
p
5
to-geth-er in a flash be - fore your eyes
leap
from their pur-su-er.
p
p
5"
= 80
p
mp
No
pri - vate
pp
pp
= 80
sul tasto
pp
pppp

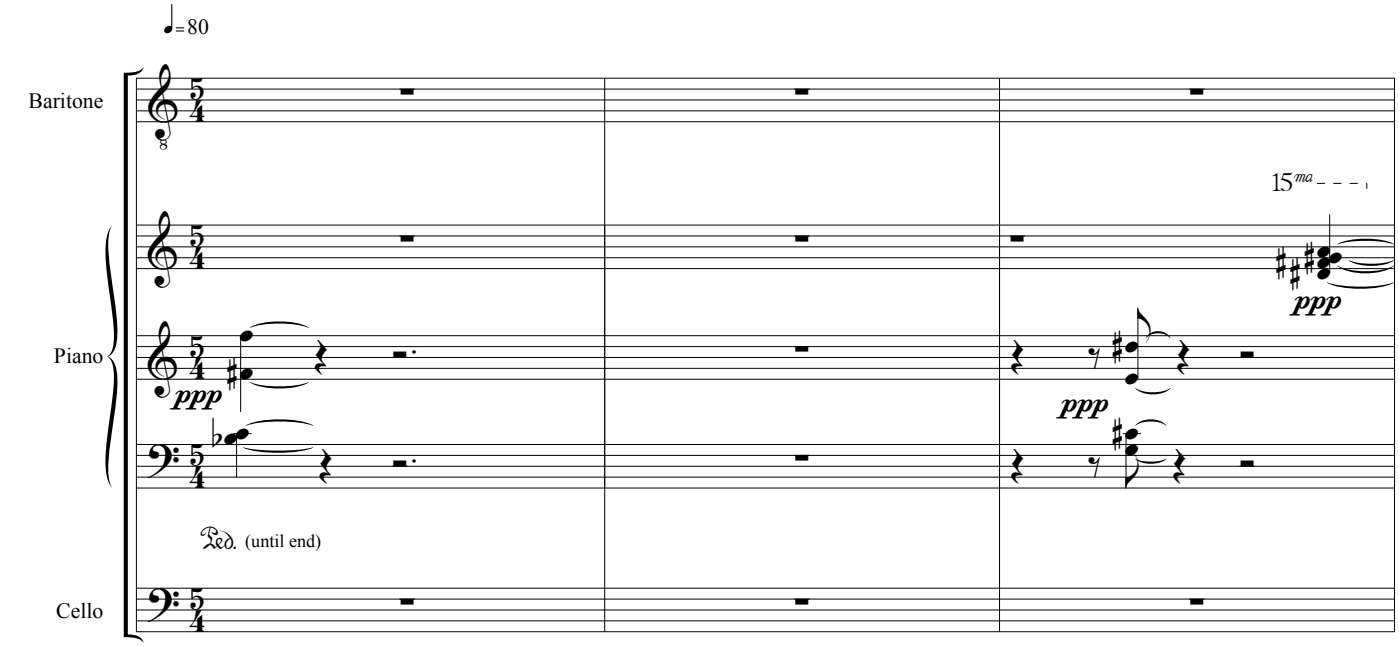

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
mp
mf
mp
3
end,
no
mel - o - dra - ma
by cart - ridge or
pp
p
3
3
clip.
the fine smell of blu - ing
pp
mp
p

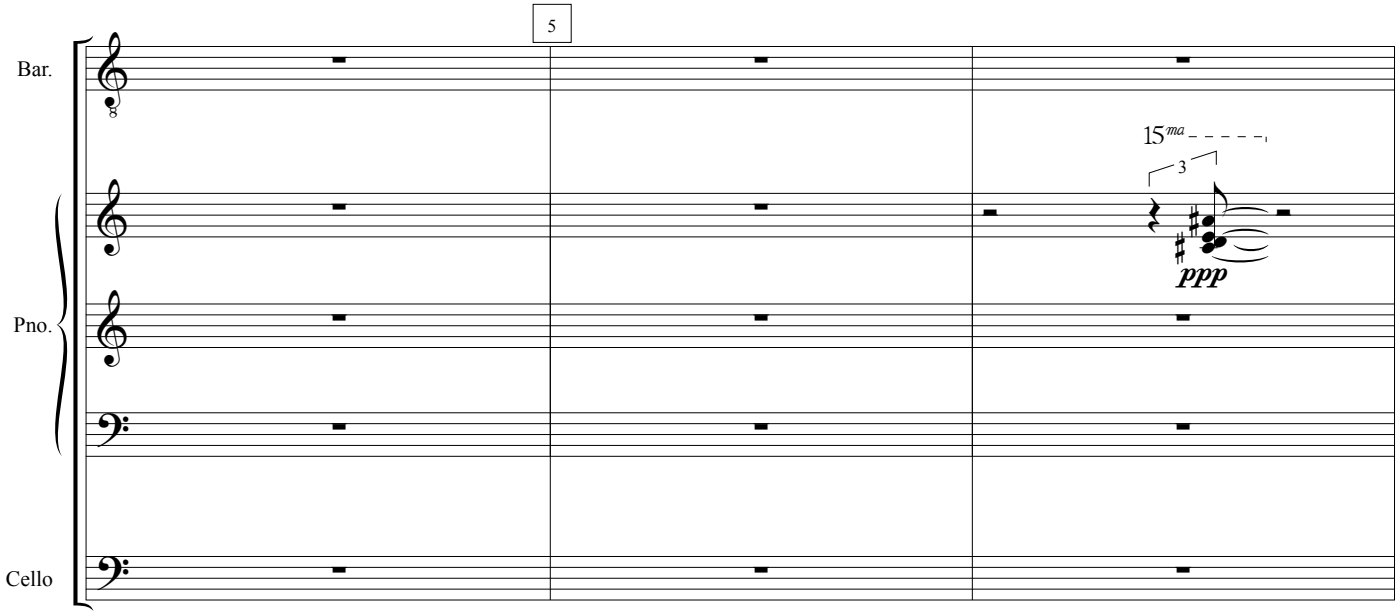

p
3
mp
Bar.
the slip of the knot
that stops the neck
Pno.
Cello
pp
none
of that.
ord.
ppp

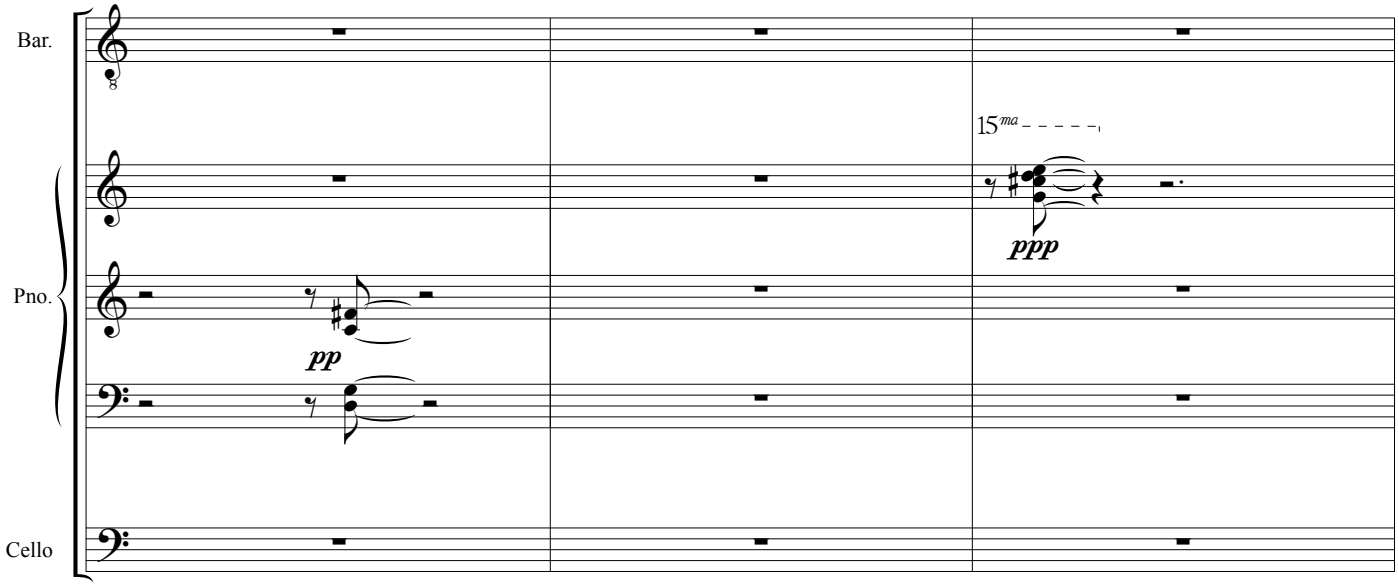

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
♩= 92
mp
a-gainst the coast line that roar is the oc - eans stea - dy meth - od
♩= AFAP
mp
♩= AFAP
mp
ham-mer-ing the pin-na-cles with a veng-eance that knows no - thing is ev - er fin - ished

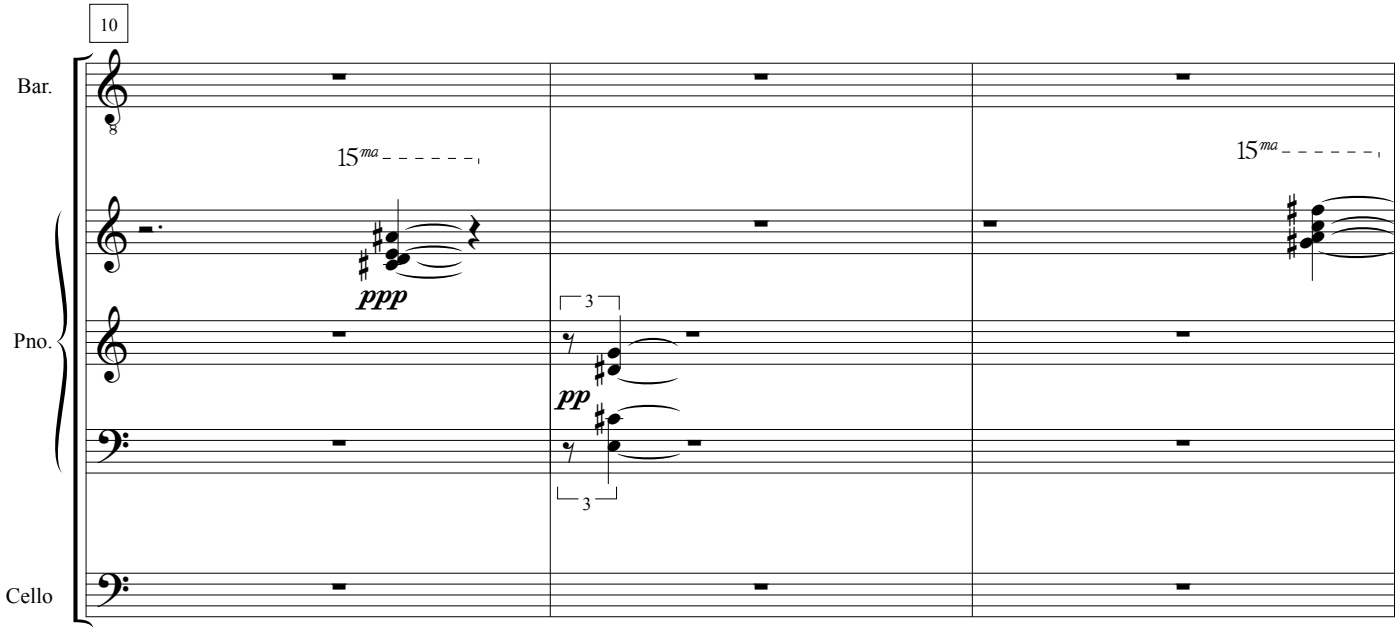

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
nei-ther e - ro-sion
nor hope
nor the
end - less
har - vest
of speech.
3
p
p
ppp
p
ppp

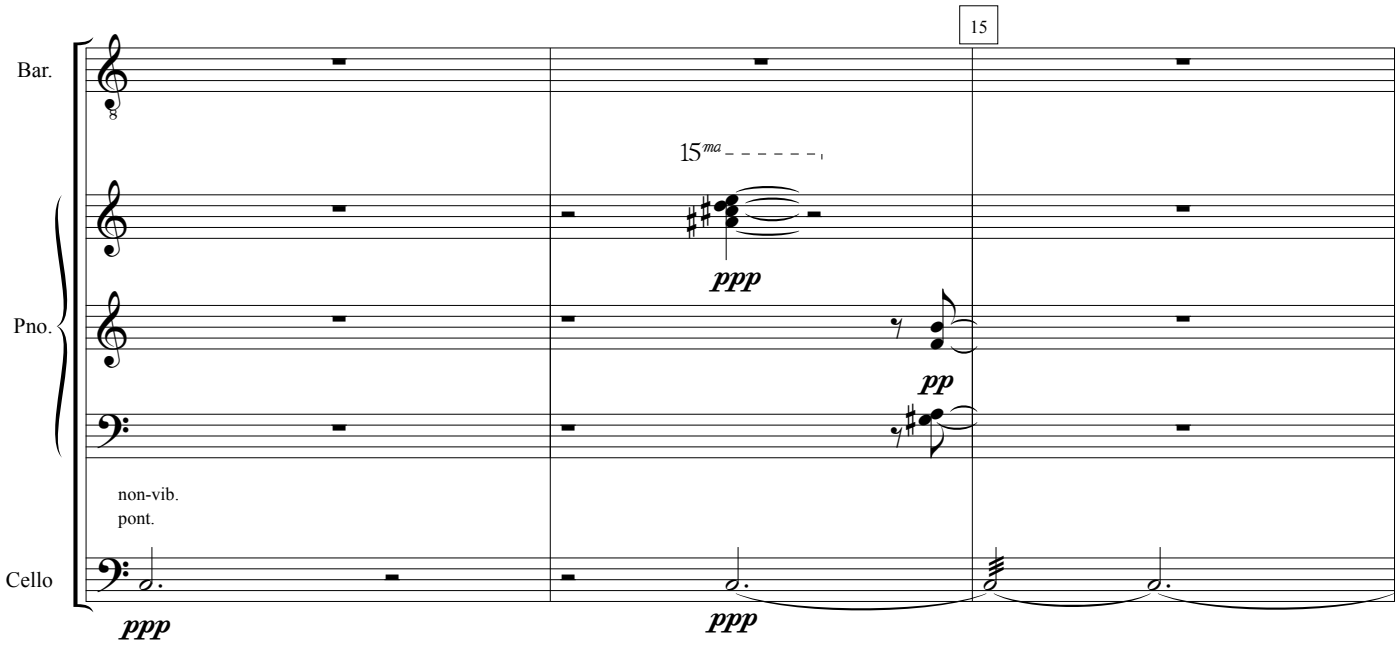
Desperate Message No. 4
(Desire)

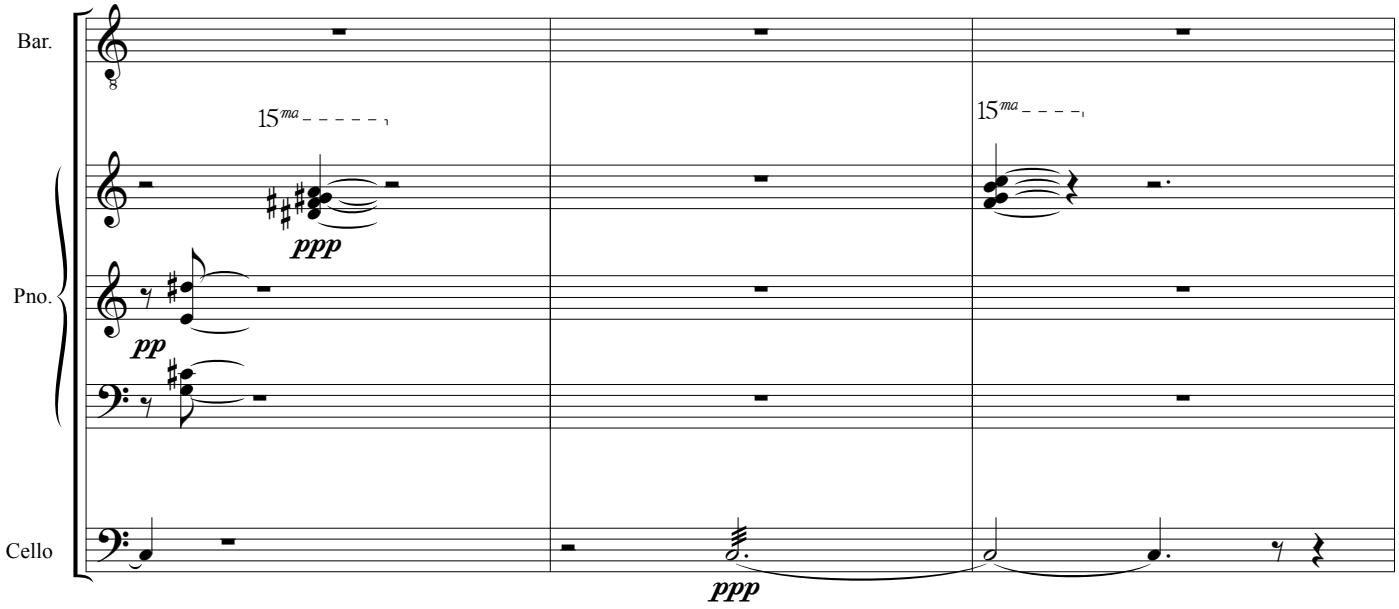


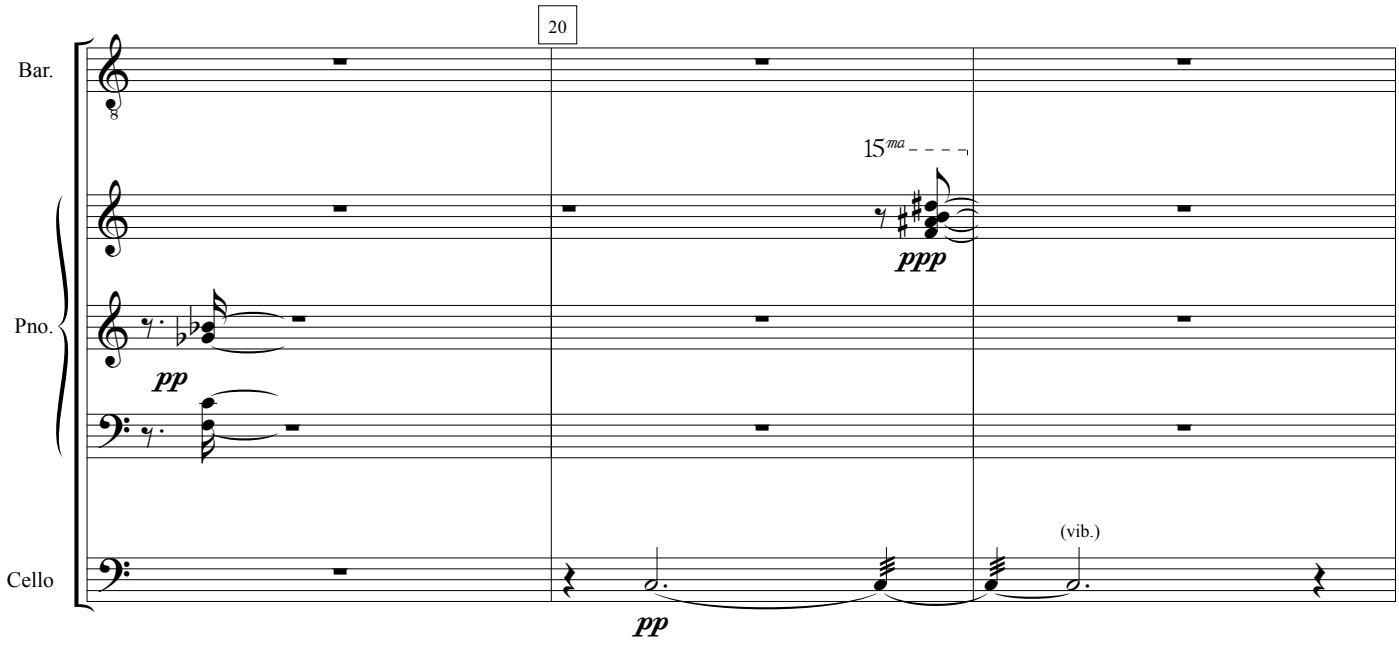


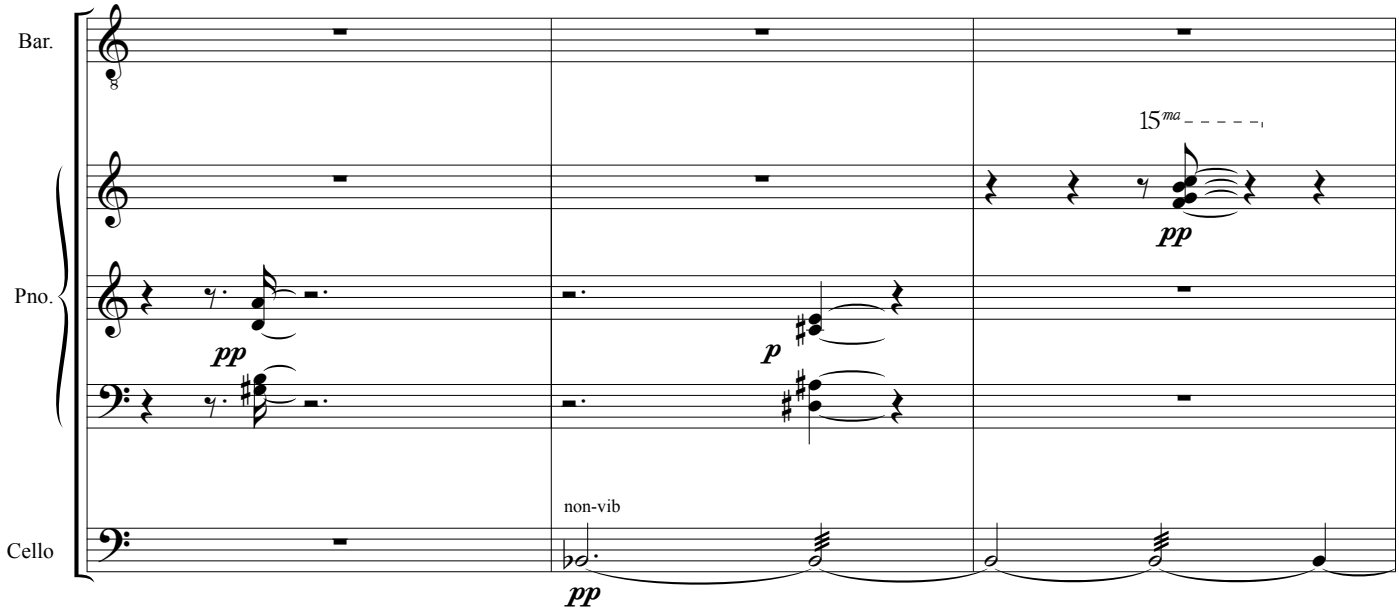

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
15ma
ppp
pp

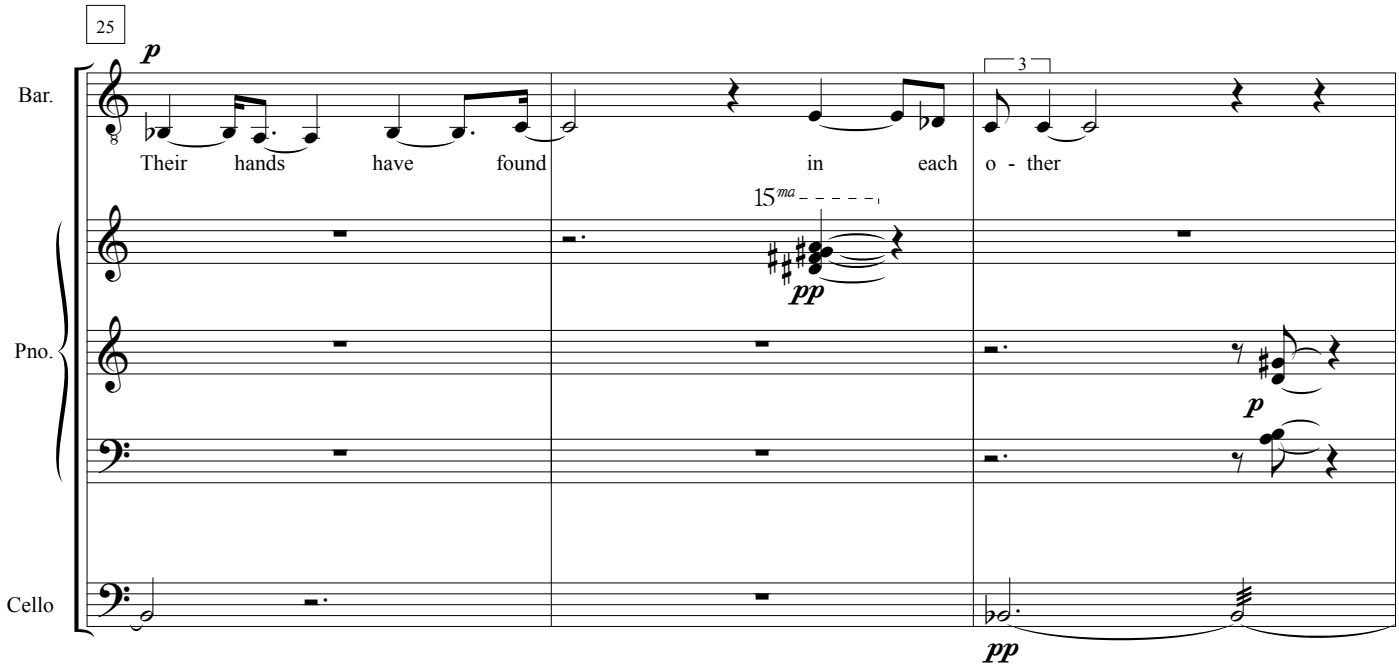

10
Bar.
Pno.
Cello
15ma
ppp
3
pp
3
15ma

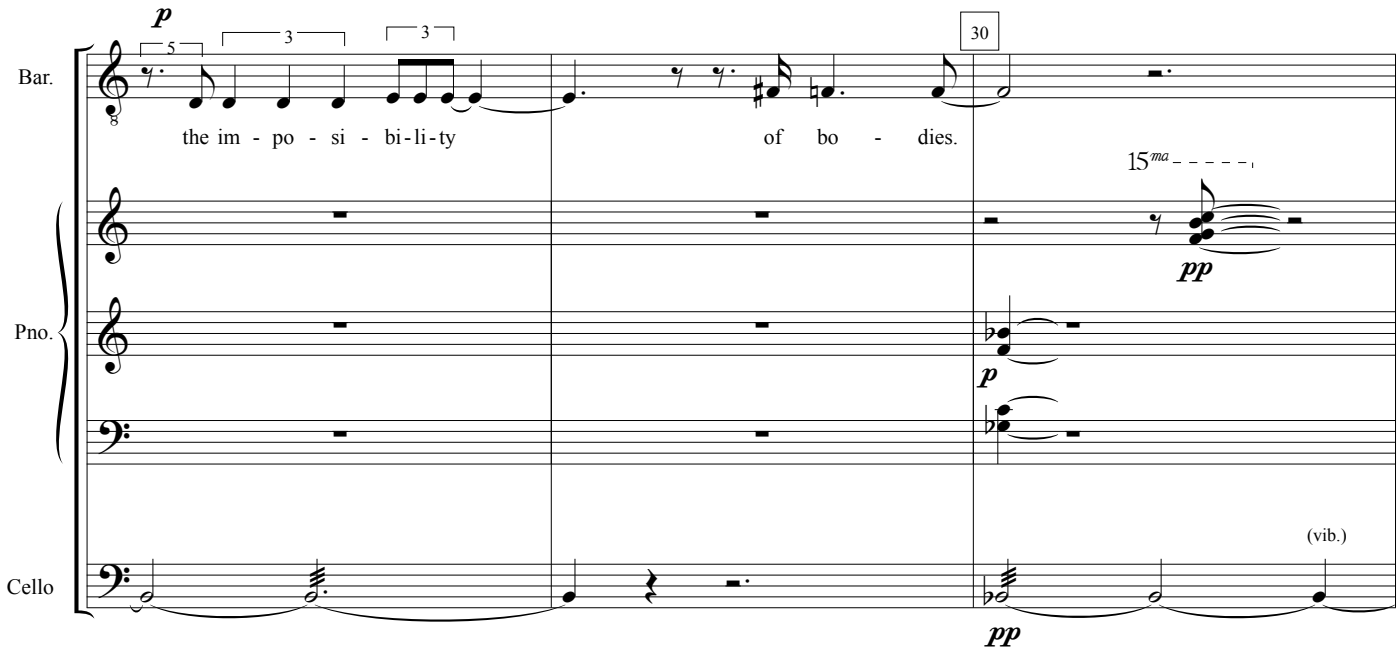

15
Bar.
Pno.
Cello
15ma
ppp
pp
non-vib.
pont.
ppp
ppp

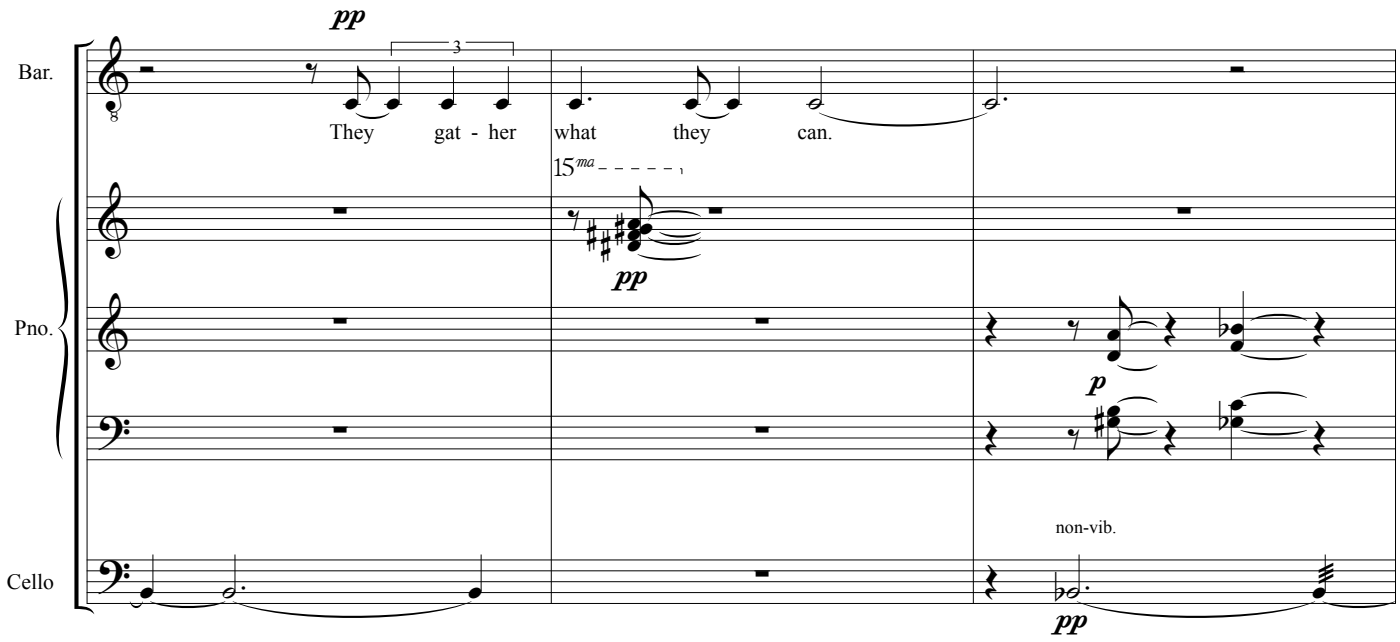

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
15ma
ppp
pp
15ma
ppp

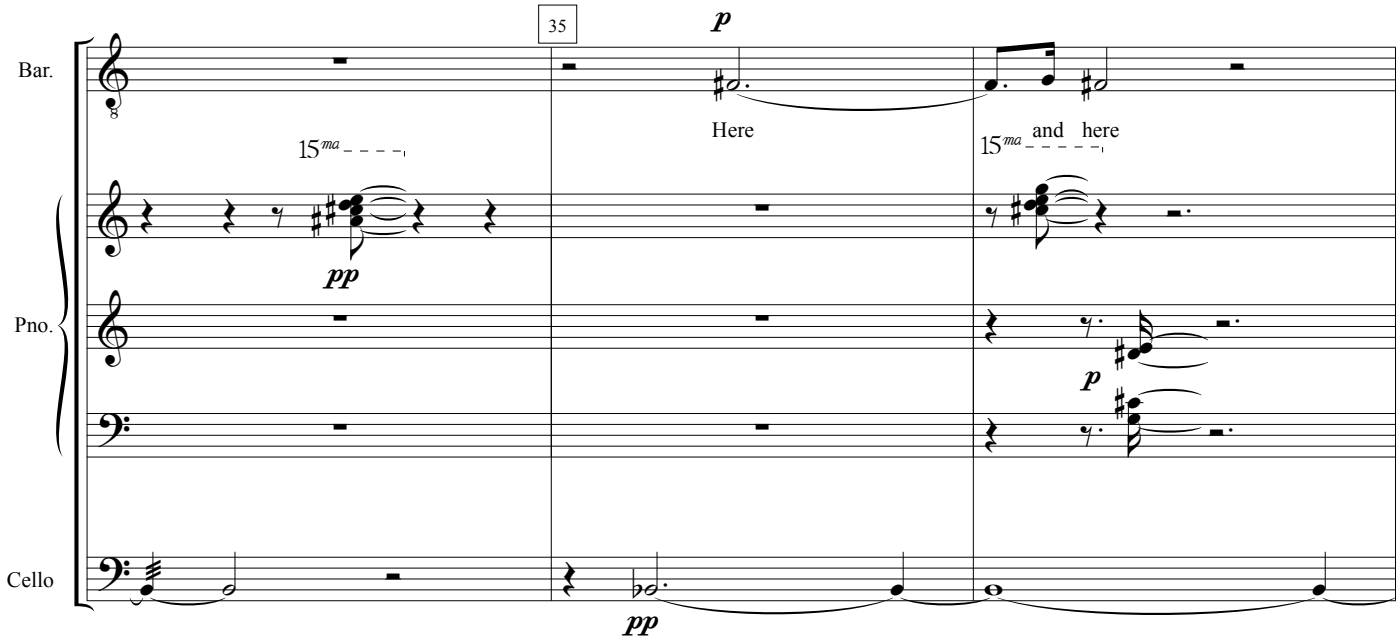

20
Bar.
Pno.
Cello
15ma
ppp
pp
(vib.)
pp

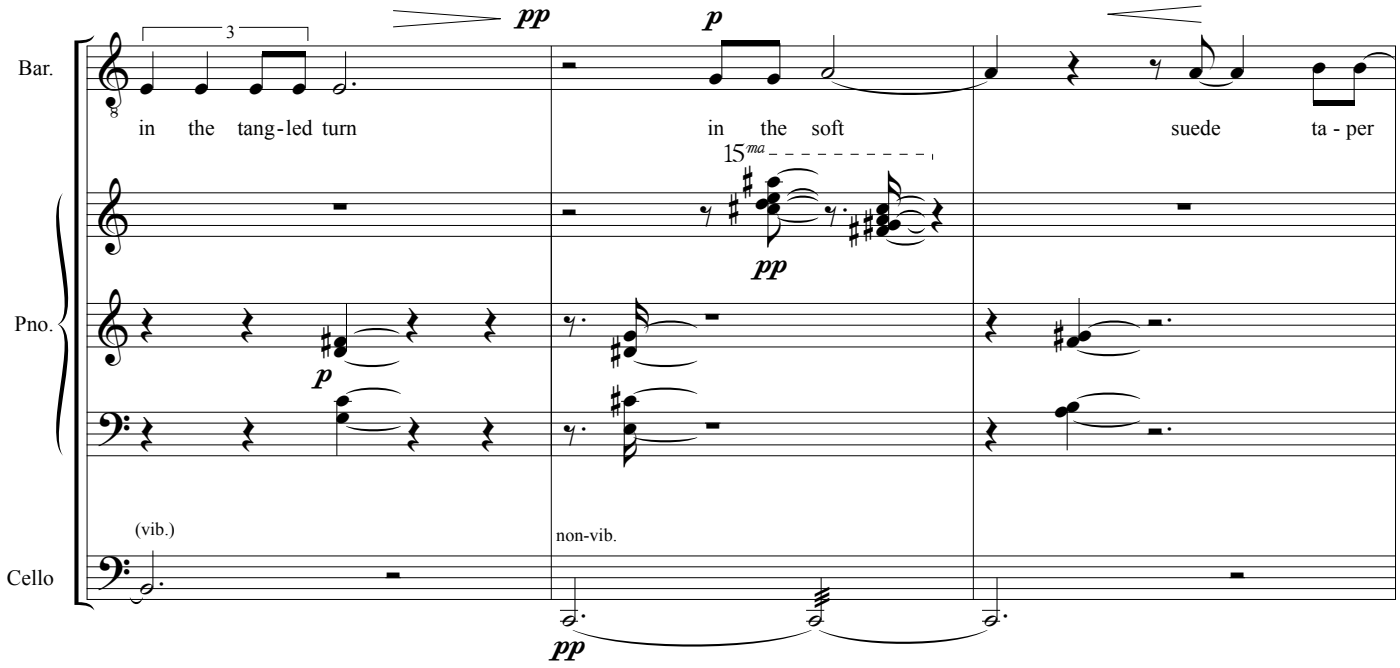

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
15ma
pp
pp
p
non-vib
pp

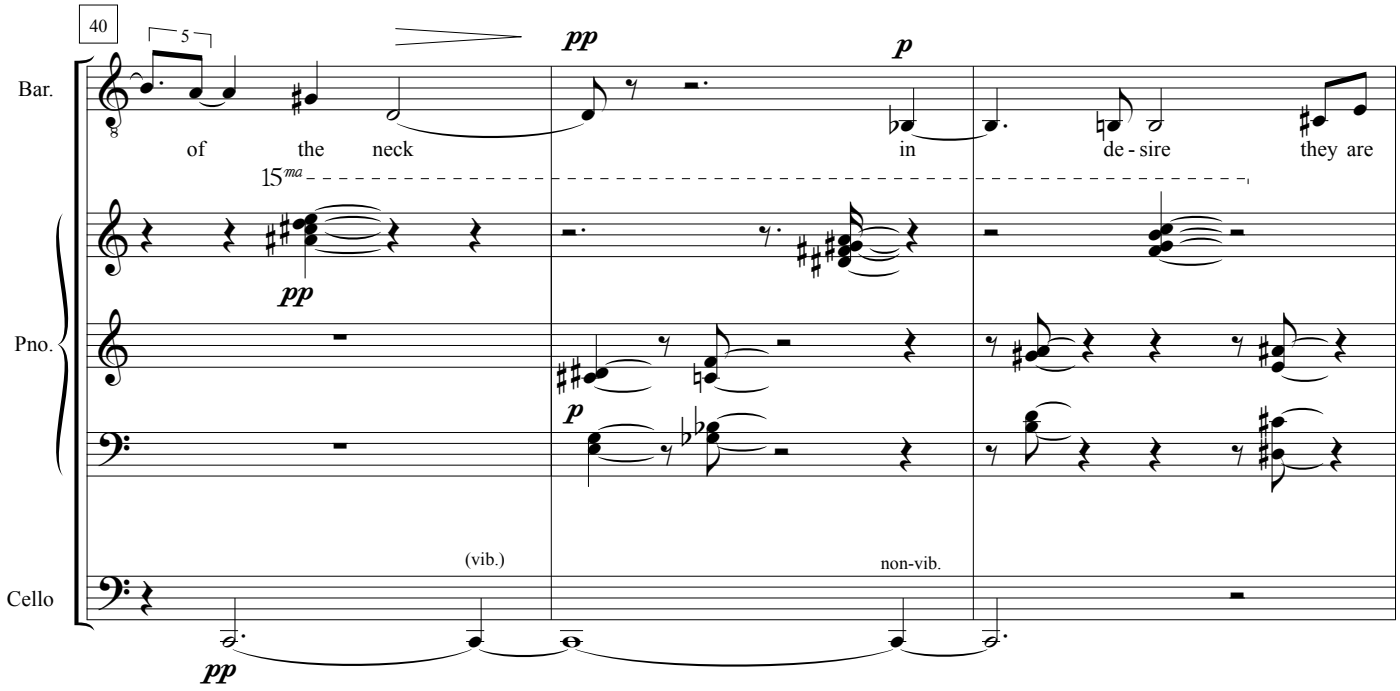

25
Bar.
Pno.
Cello
p
Their hands have found in each o - ther
3
15ma
pp
p
pp

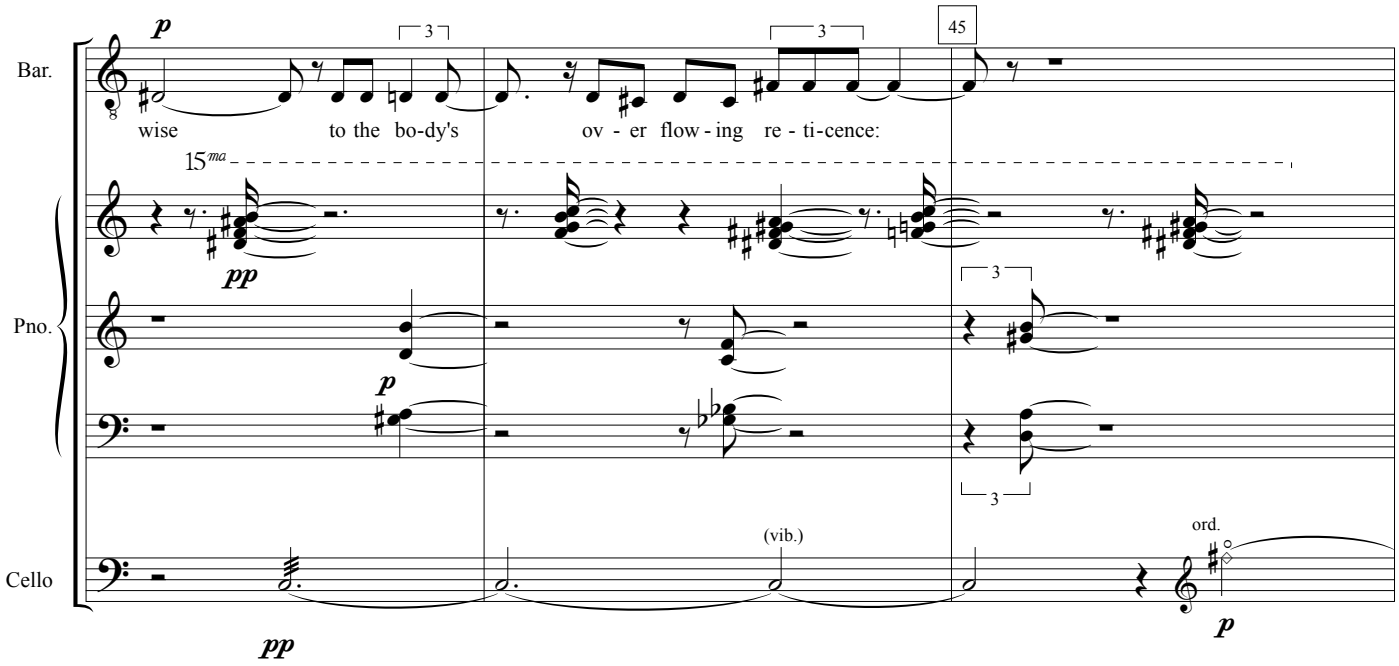

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
p
5
3
3
the im - po - si - bi-li-ty of bo - dies.
30
15ma
pp
p
(vib.)
pp

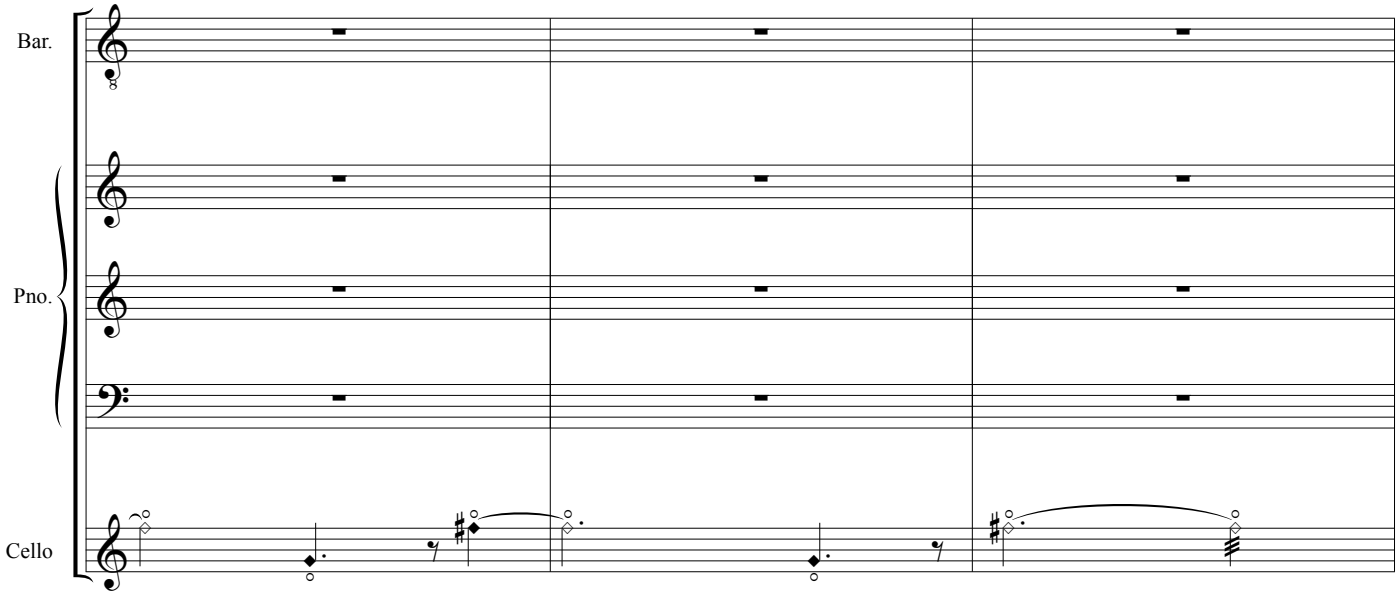

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
pp
3
They gat - her what they can.
15ma
pp
p
non-vib.
pp

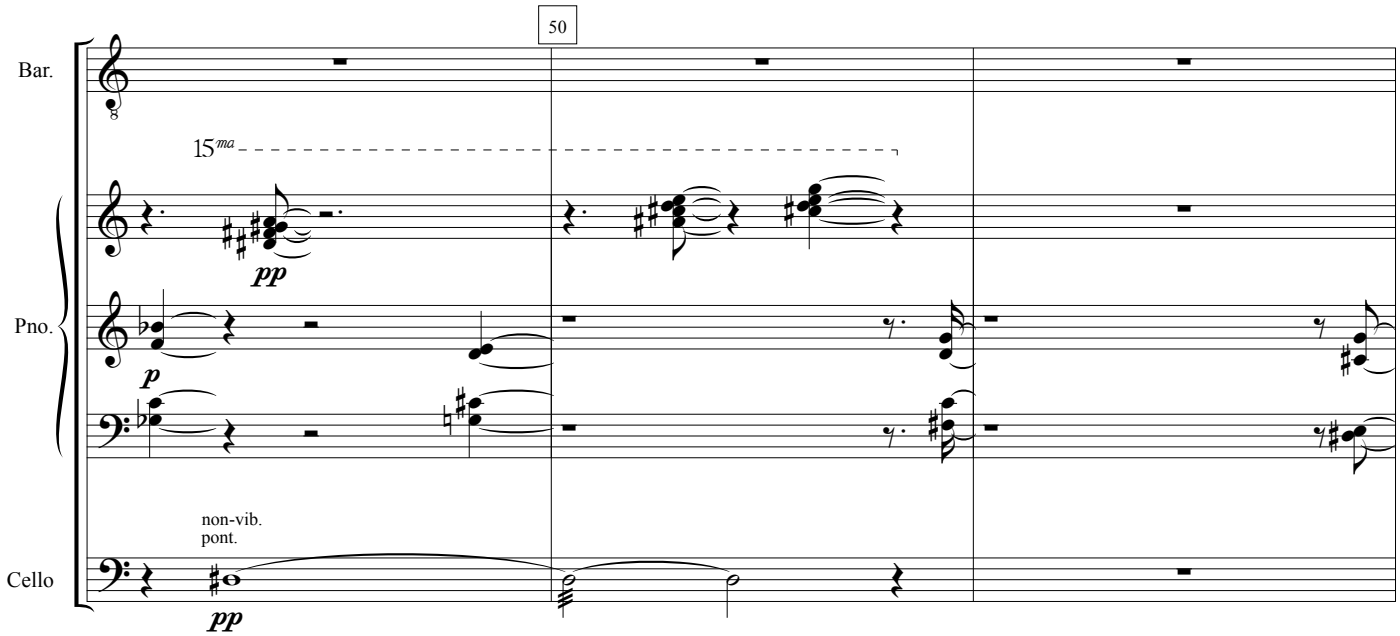

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
35
p
Here
15ma
and here
15ma
pp
p
pp

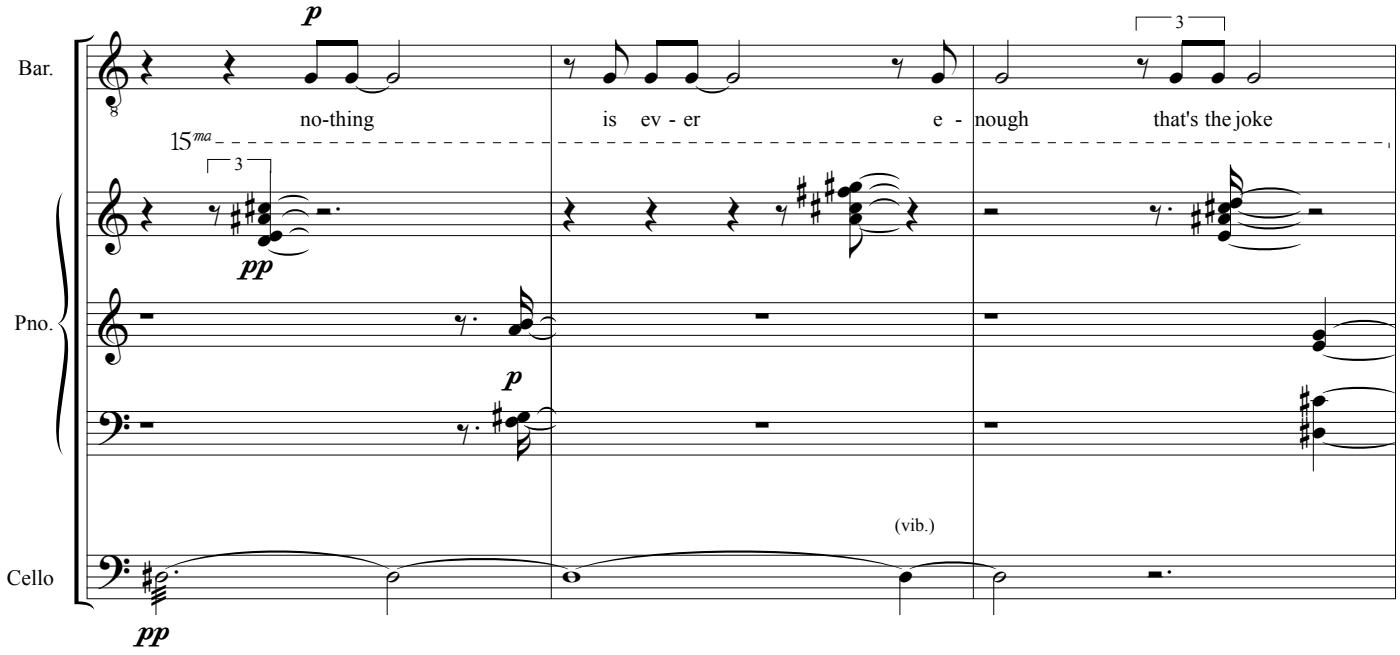

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
3
pp
p
in the tang-led turn
in the soft
suede ta - per
15ma
pp
p
(vib.)
non-vib.
pp

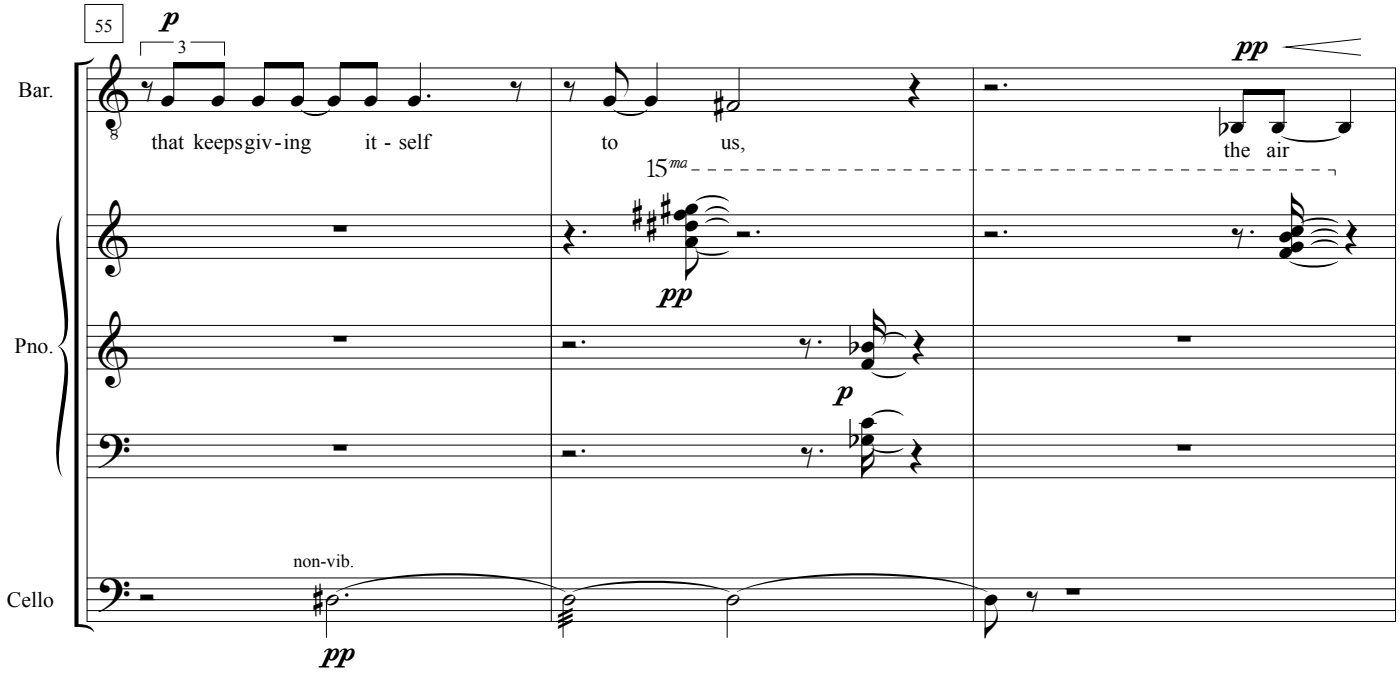

40
Bar.
Pno.
Cello
5
pp
p
of the neck
in
de - sire
they are
15ma
pp
p
(vib.)
non-vib.
pp

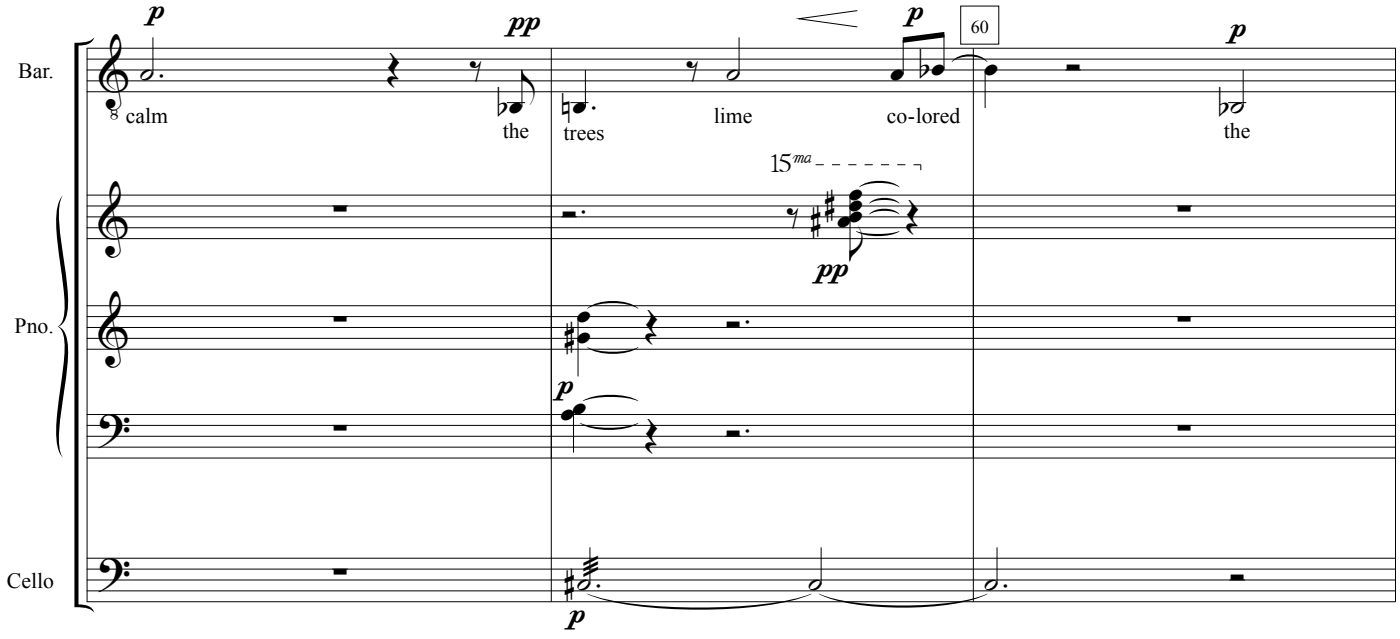

Bar.
Pno.
Cello
45
wise to the bo-dy's ov - er flow - ing re - ti-cence:
15ma
(vib.)
ord.

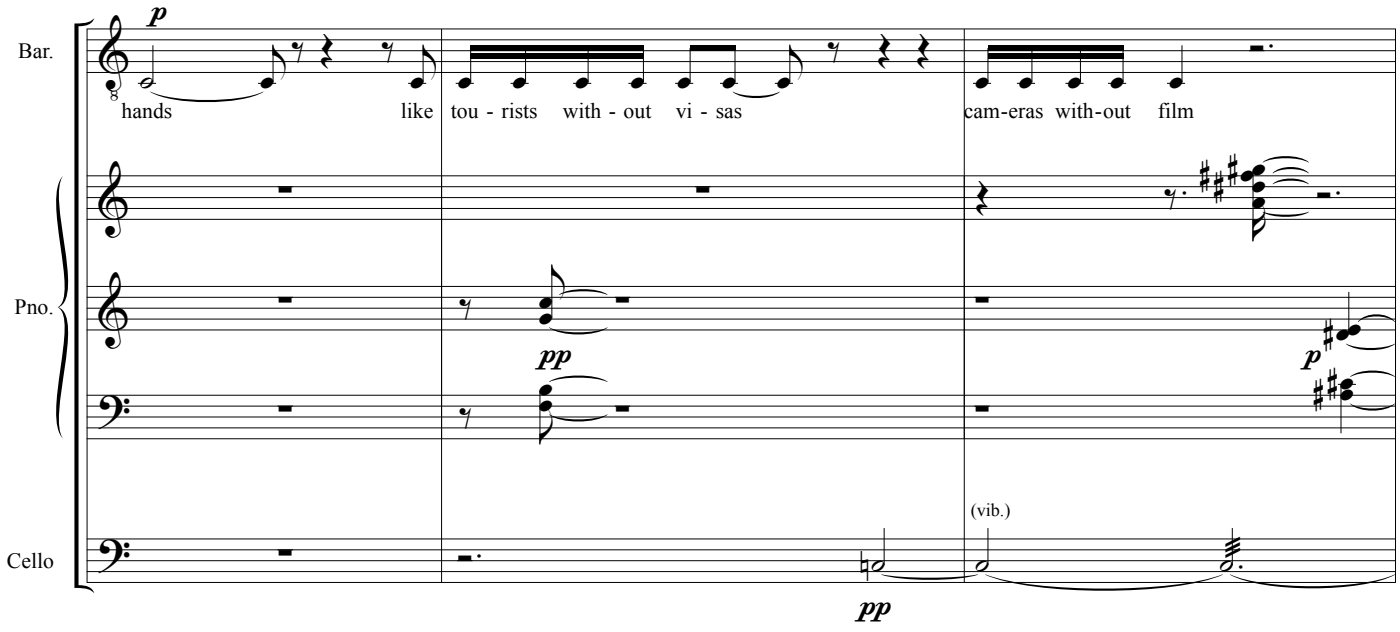

Bar.
Pno.
Cello

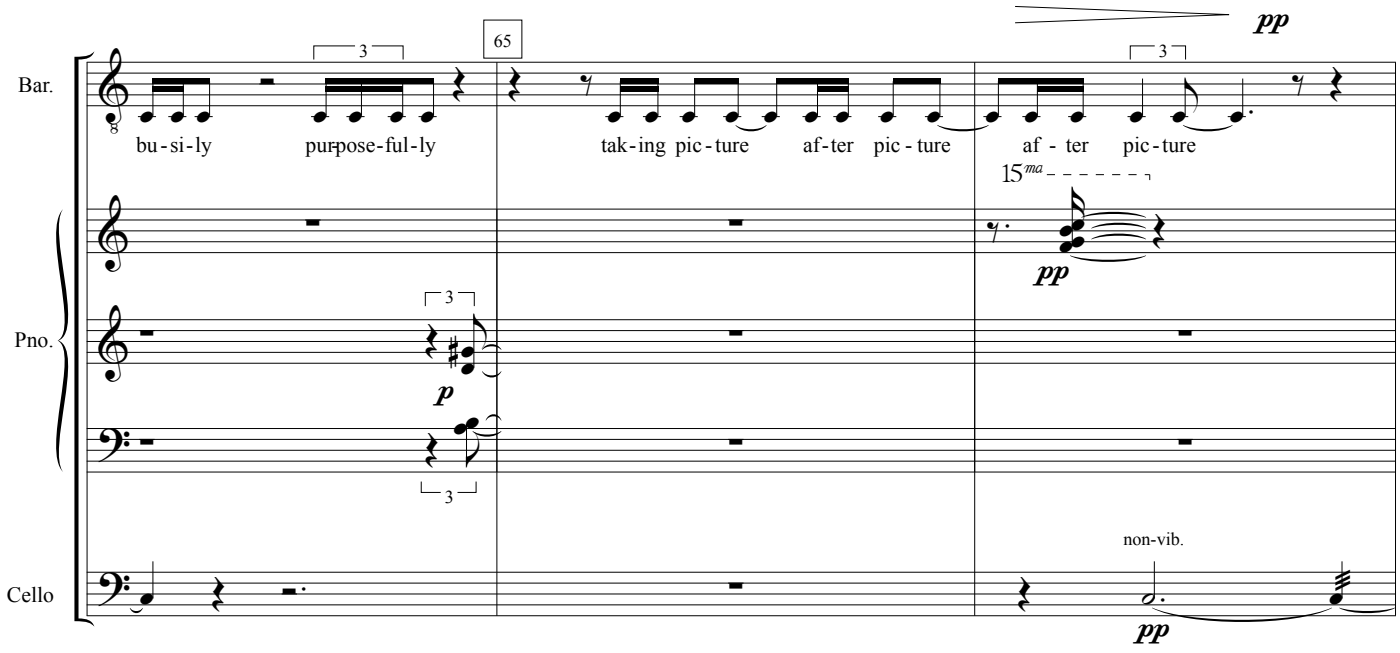

50
Bar.
15ma
pp
Pno.
p
non-vib.
pont.
Cello
pp

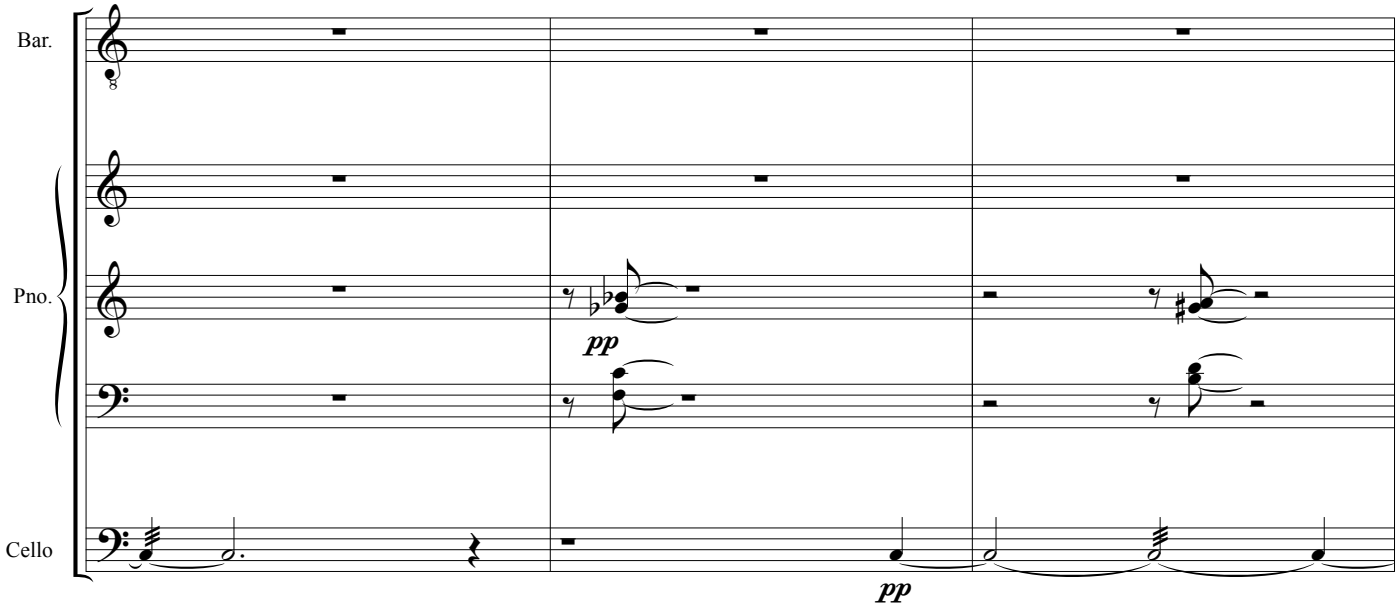

p
Bar.
no-thing
is ev - er
e - nough
3
that's the joke
15ma
3
pp
Pno.
p
(vib.)
Cello
pp

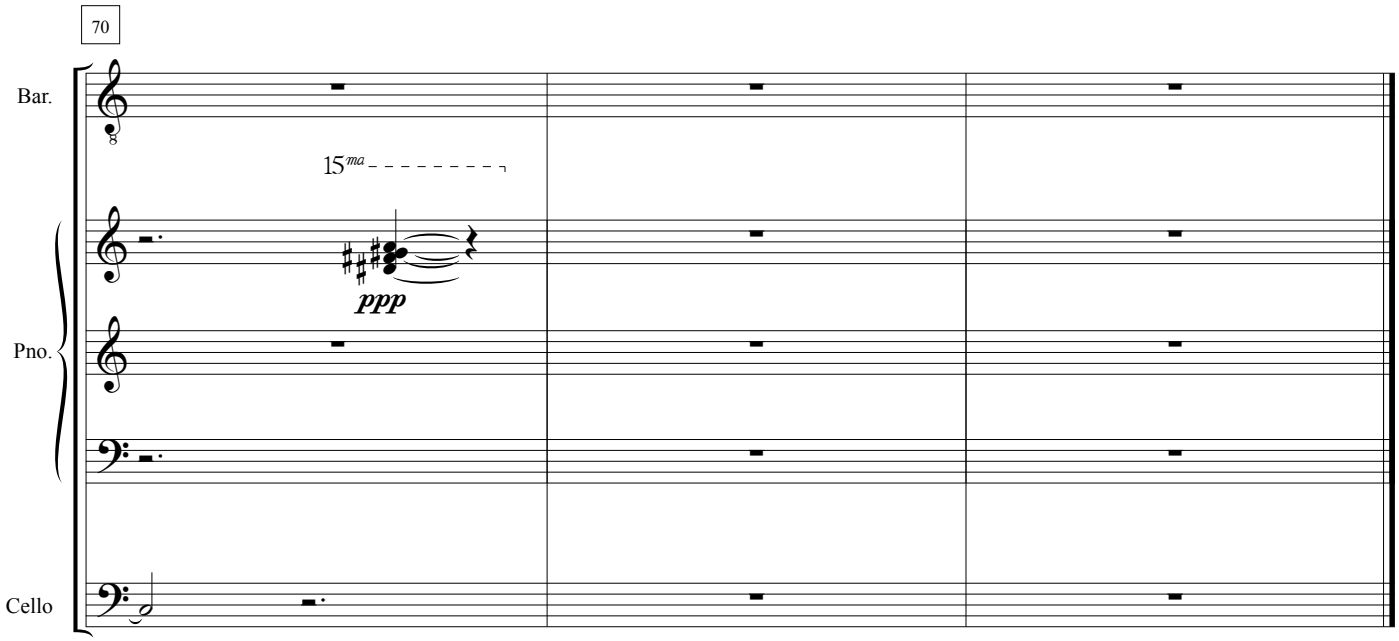

55
p
3
Bar.
that keepsgiv-ing it - self to us,
pp
the air
15ma
pp
Pno.
p
non-vib.
Cello
pp


p
pp
p
60
p
Bar.
calm
the
trees
lime
co-lored
the
15ma
pp
Pno.
p
Cello
p


Bar.
Pno.
Cello
p
hands like tou - rists with - out vi - sas
cam-eras with-out film
pp
p
(vib.)
pp


Bar.
Pno.
Cello
65
pp
3
bu-si-ly pur-pose-ful-ly
tak-ing pic-ture af-ter pic-ture
af - ter pic-ture
15ma
pp
p
non-vib.
pp


Bar.
Pno.
Cello
pp
pp


70
Bar.
15ma
ppp
Pno.
Cello