quiddities

for string quartet

alexa
letourneau

full score

quiddities

for string quartet

(violin, viola, cello, bass)

7’45”

May 2020

quiddities is a piece that explores the ways musicians can interact in the modern age, particularly during the social distancing of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. Unable to collaborate in person, the players utilize technology differently in every movement, allowing for connectedness and collaboration in multiple ways. The piece as a whole focuses on the revision and reiteration of four distinct themes, representing the four individual performers, while every movement embodies a different state of emotion that I personally experienced throughout my time in quarantine, 51 days without seeing another living thing: frustration, fear, grief, and loneliness. Despite these emotions, however, the essence, or quiddity, of the piece is larger than that; while each movement is individually despairing, when put together, they display the hope that can be found in others, even when these interactions are revised and technologized.

Each movement requires a different approach to technology:

I. **Level Zero**: All four players record their parts separately; these tracks are then edited together

II. **Reaction and Response**: Players call the coordinator on one group call. Synchronization is achieved through listening and responding. Lag isn’t taken into account, as meter isn’t the goal

III. **The Virtual Orchestra**: Players call the coordinator on multiple group calls using different platforms. Players should attempt to maintain a stable sense of meter while being aware of the other players. NOTE: because of different lag times, it is best if players mute all but one call

IV. **Isolation**: Players call each other on different platforms, creating a chain rather than a group. Players should attempt to synchronize with the lowest voice playing at any given time

Slashed noteheads indicate an approximate pitch.

Throughout passages of extended tied notes, bow freely

A circled tip on a hairpin indicates to or from niente

+ is an indication for left hand pizzicato; when in parentheses, left or right hand may be used, depending on the preference of the player

n.v. indicates non vibrato, and vibrato ad lib. marks a return to normal, expressive vibrato as added by the player

◯ indicates snap pizzicato

This commission was made possible by the Steven R. Gerber Trust.

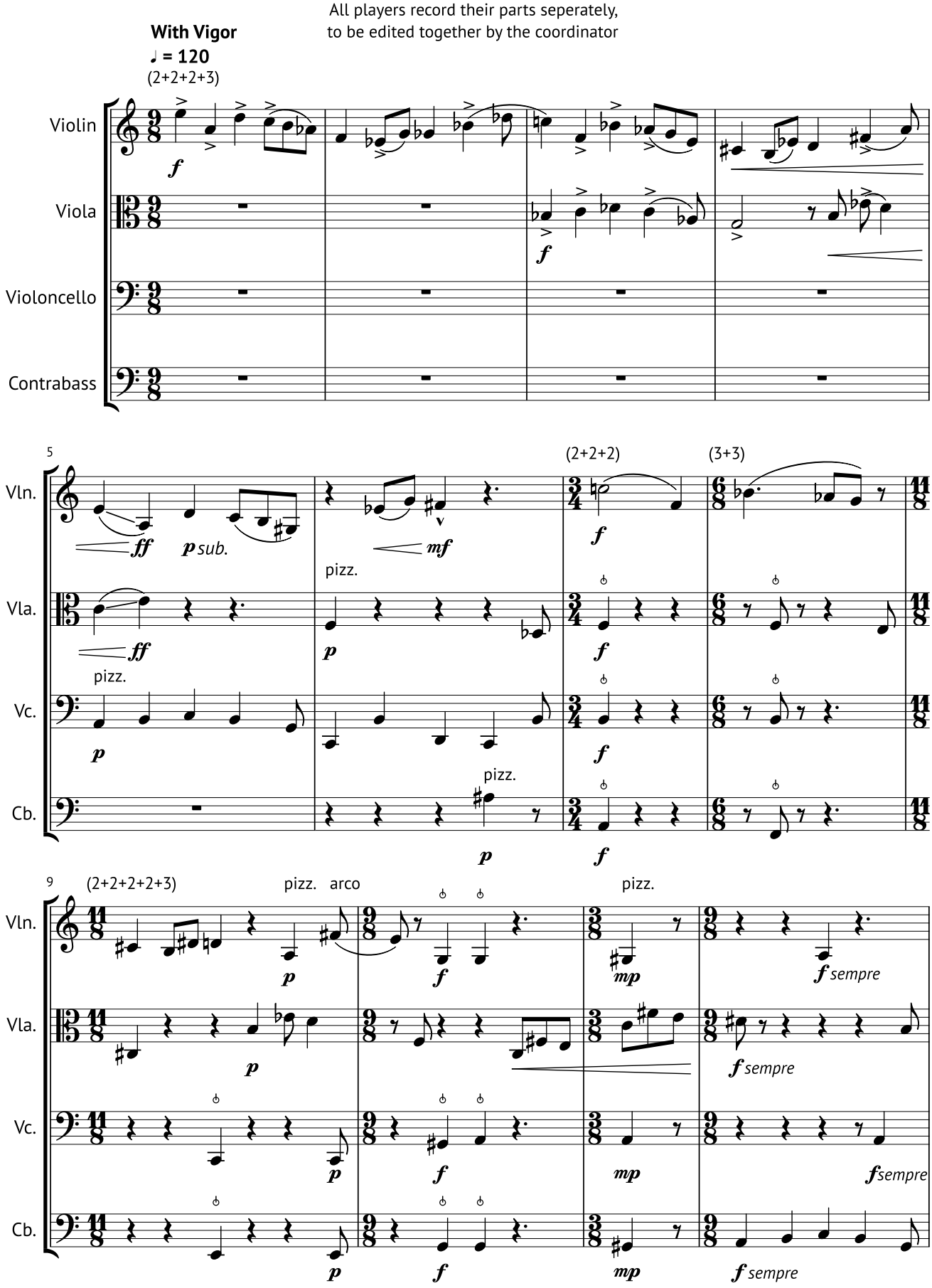
quiddities

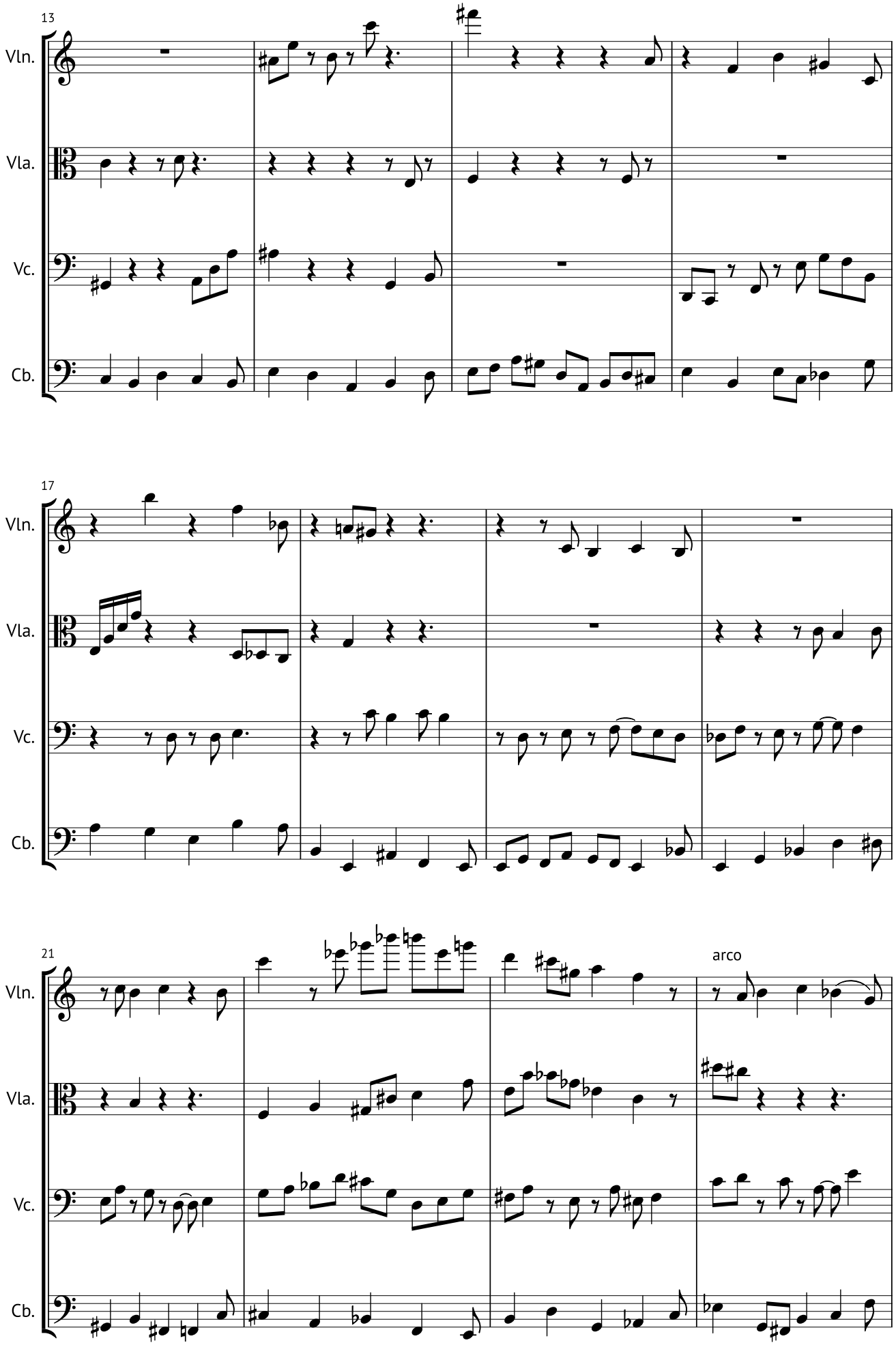
For String Quartet

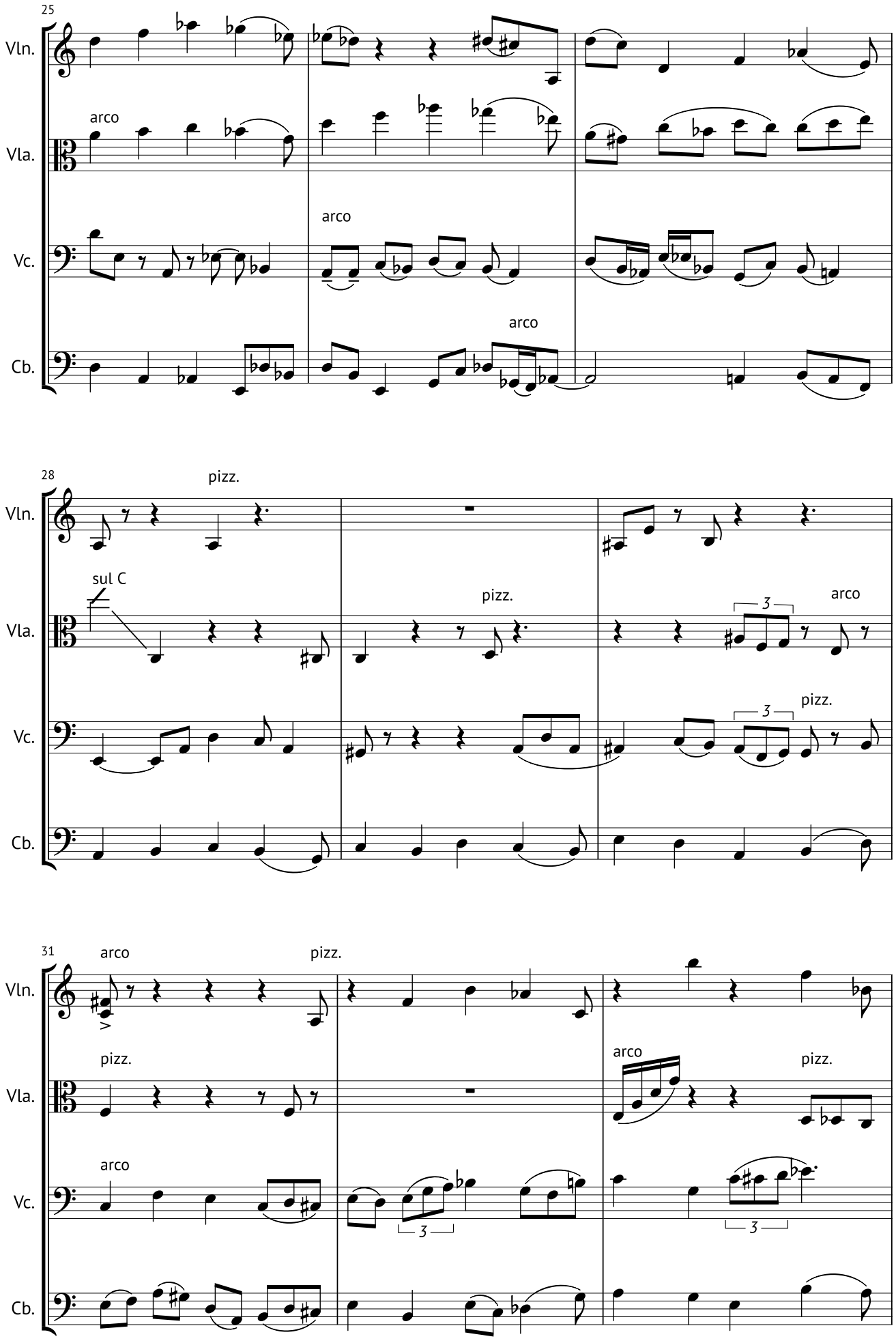
Alexa Letourneau

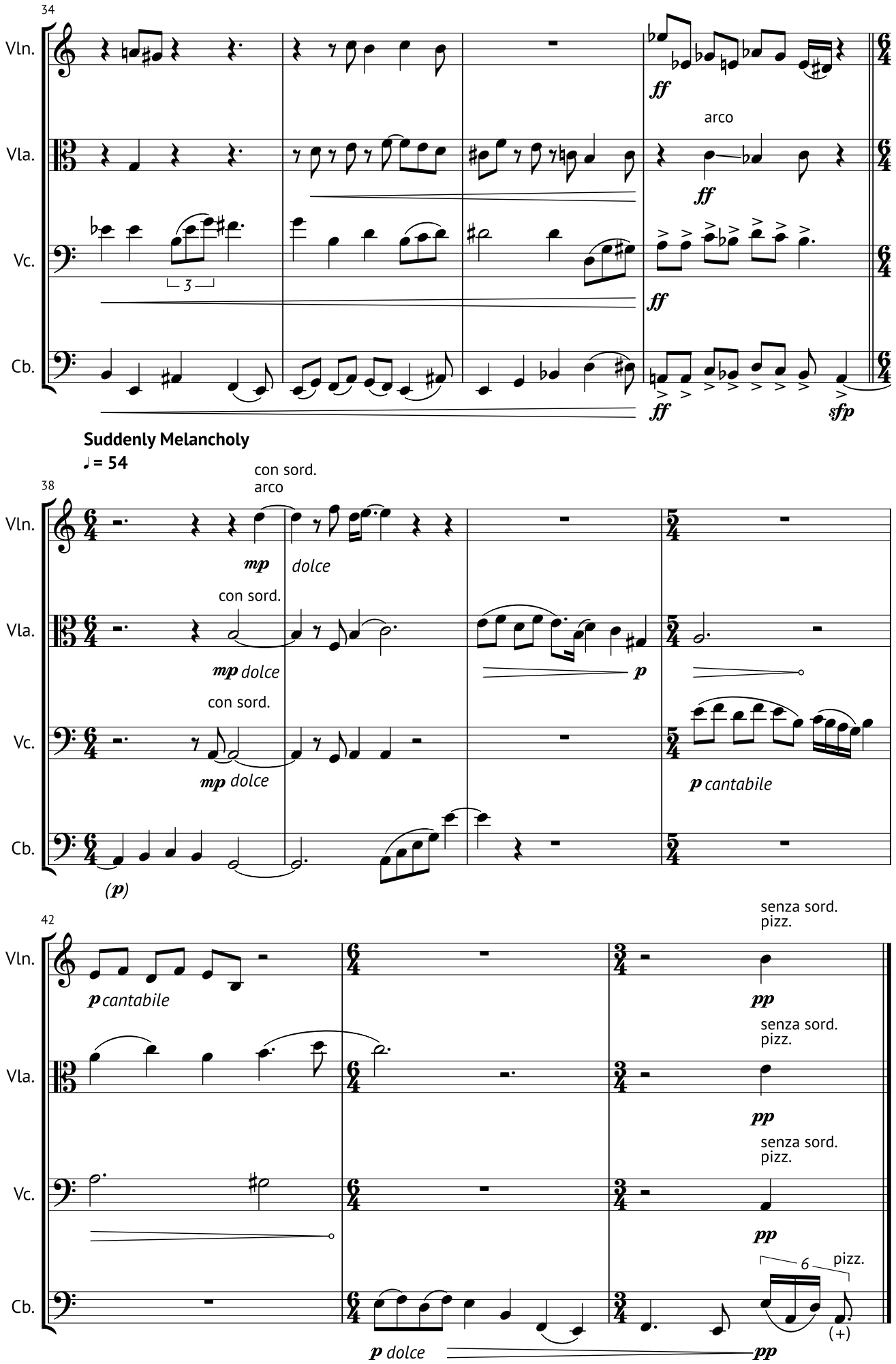
I. Level Zero

All players record their parts seperately,
to be edited together by the coordinator



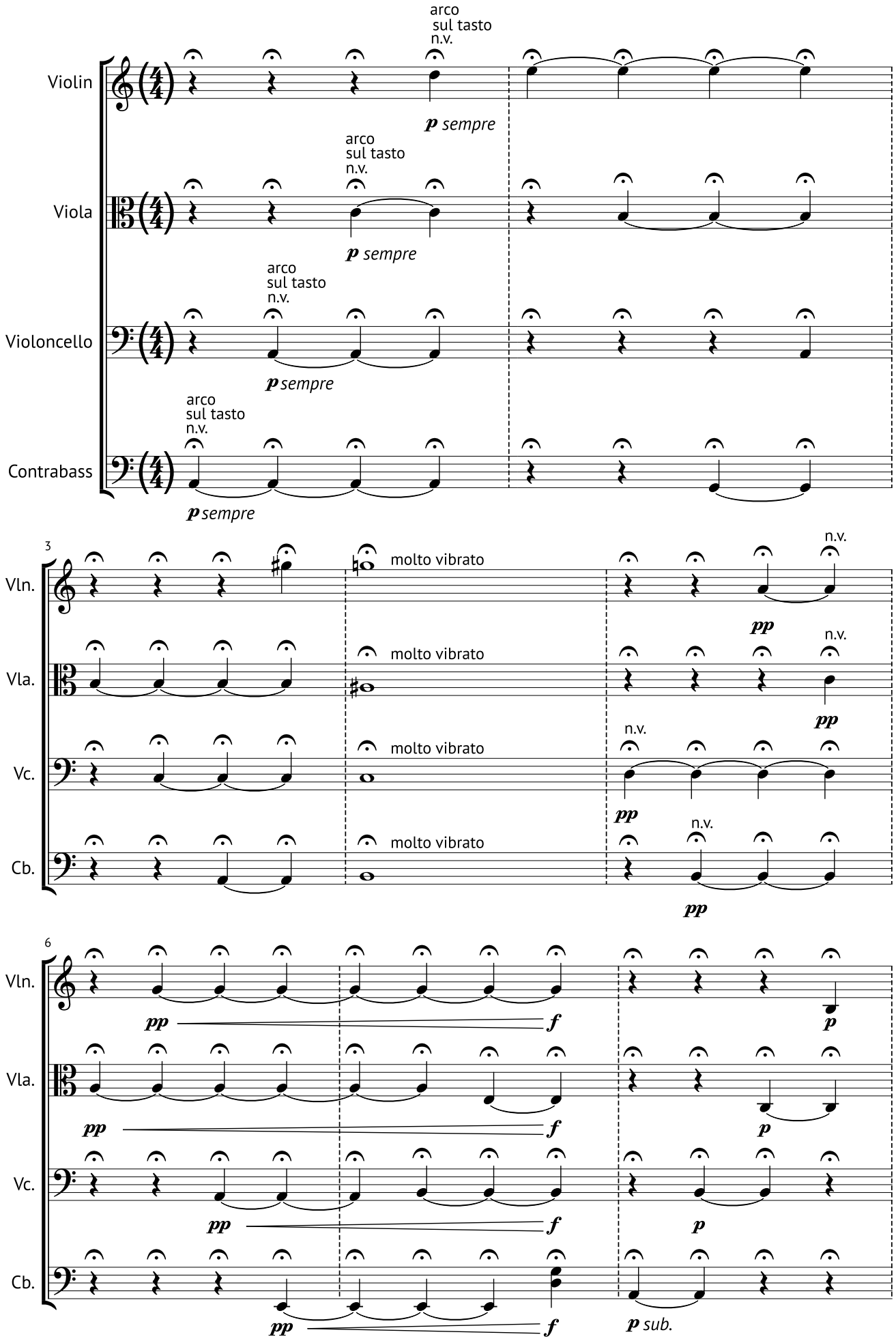

13
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
17
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
21
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
arco

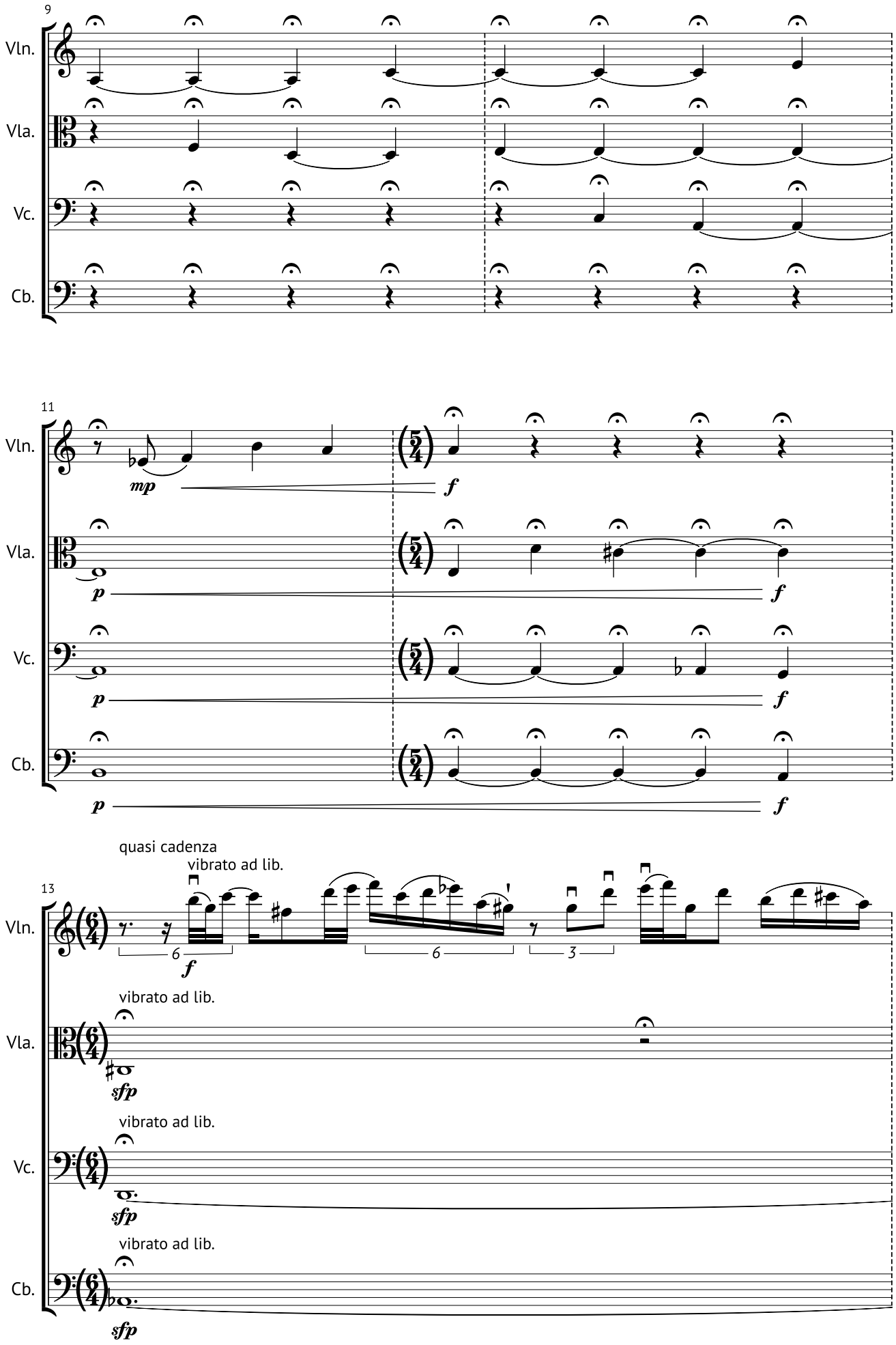

25
Vln.
Vla.
arco
Vc.
arco
Cb.
arco
28
Vln.
pizz.
Vla.
sul C
pizz.
arco
3
Vc.
3
pizz.
Cb.
31
Vln.
arco
pizz.
Vla.
pizz.
arco
pizz.
Vc.
arco
3
3
Cb.

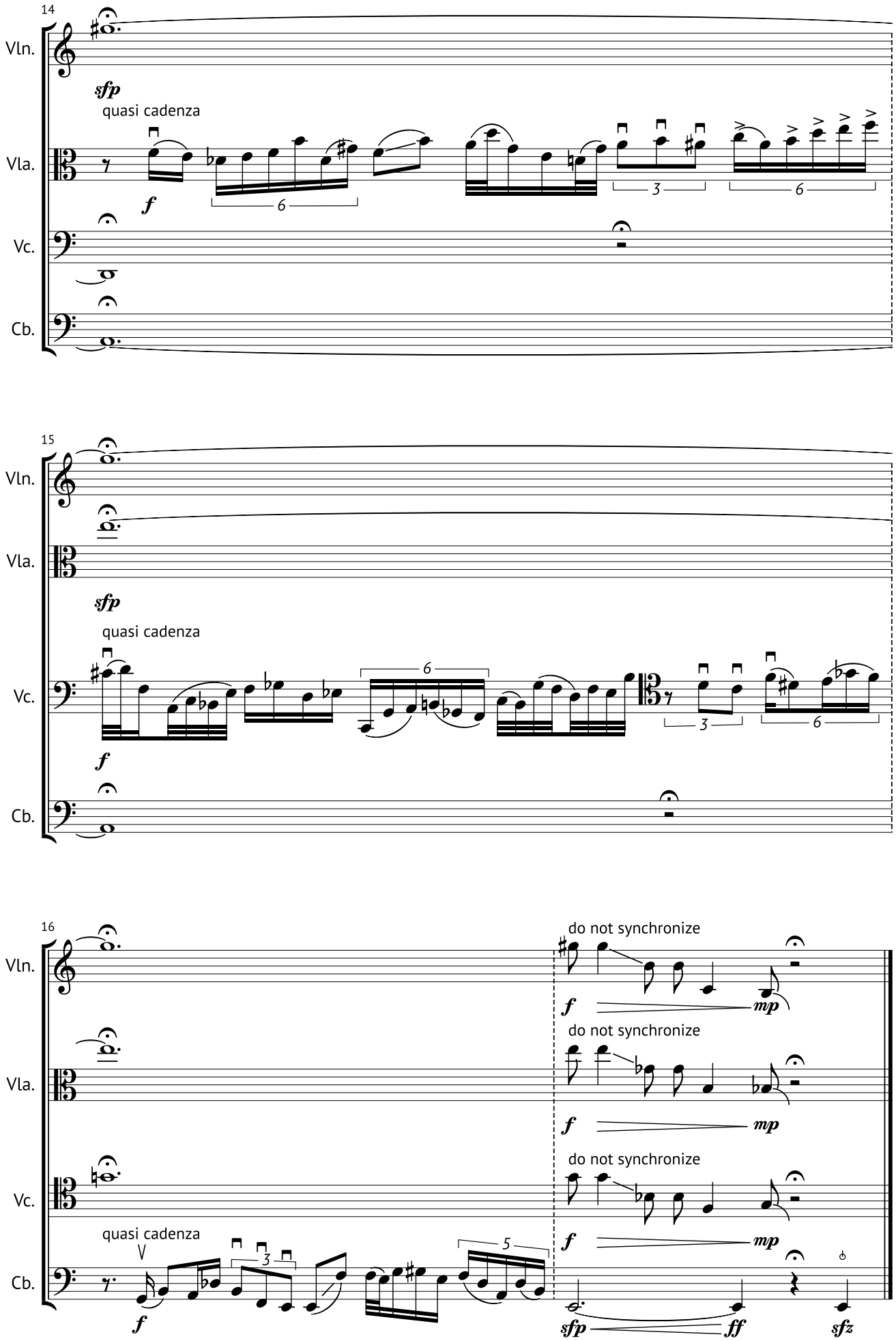

34
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
ff
arco
3
sfp
Suddenly Melancholy
♩ = 54
38
con sord.
arco
mp
dolce
mp dolce
p
p cantabile
(p)
42
senza sord.
pizz.
pp
6
pizz.
(+)
p dolce

II. Reaction and Response

All players call the coordinator on one platform (Google Hangouts suggested)

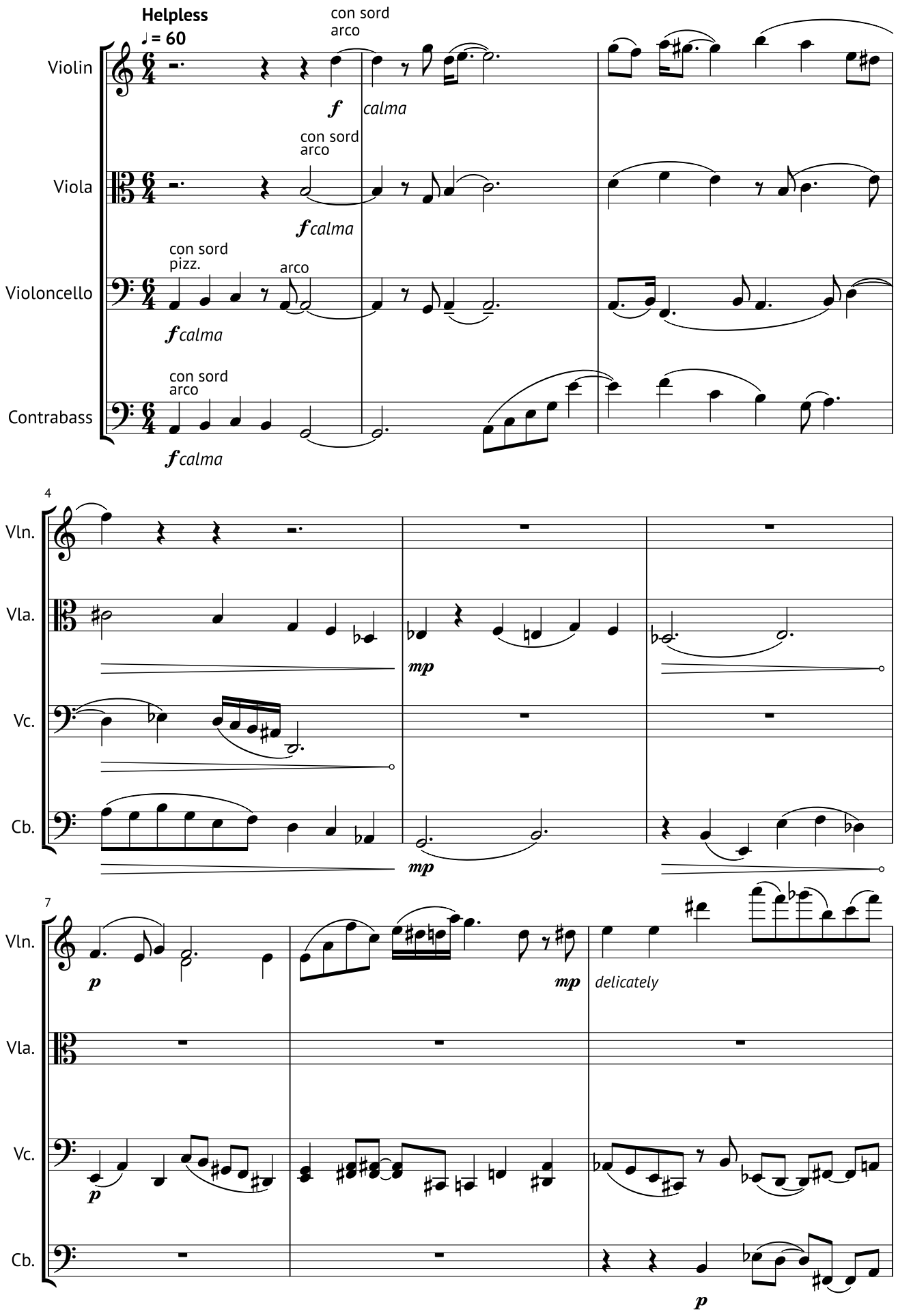


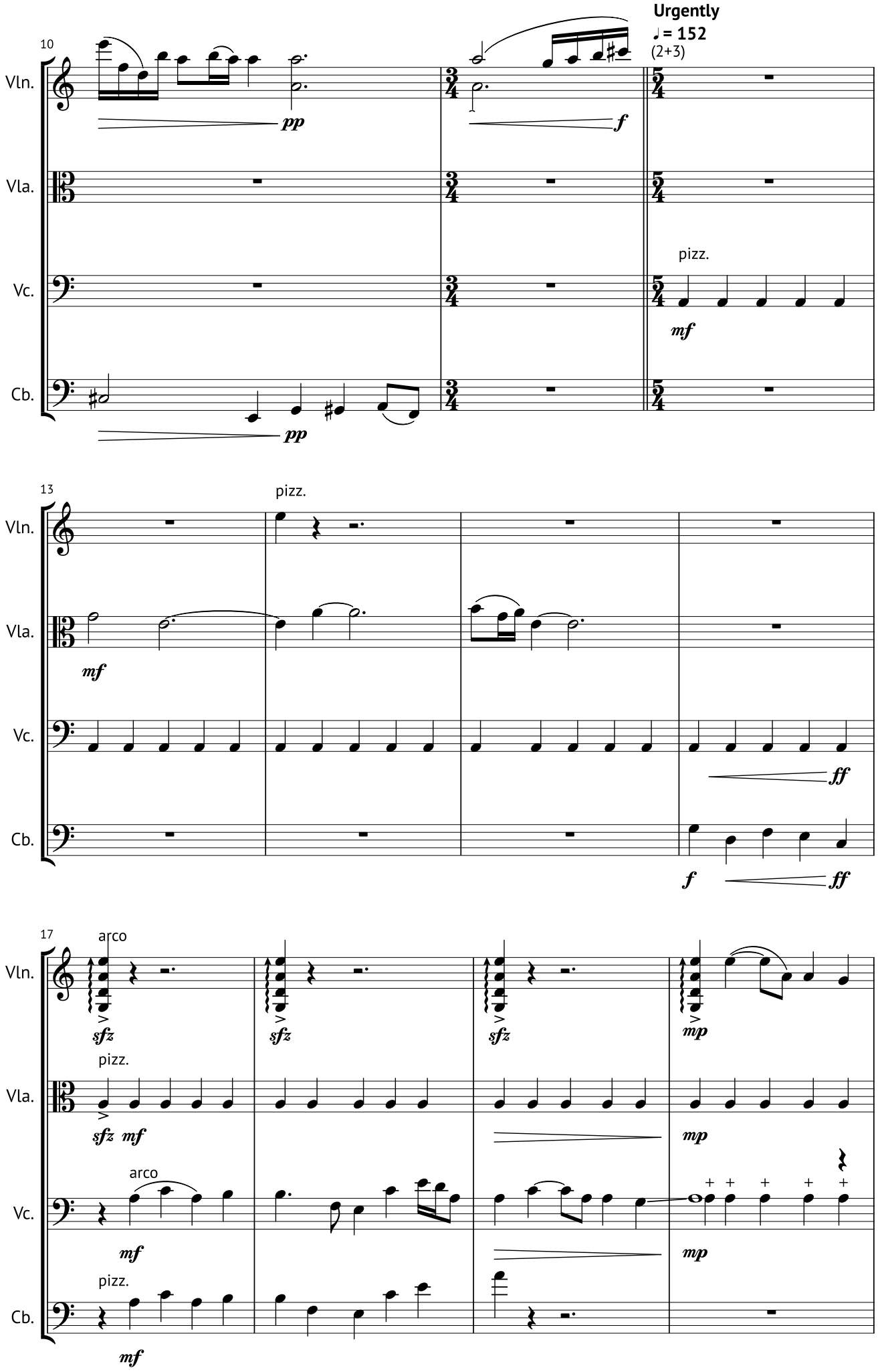

9
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
11
mp
f
p
f
p
f
p
f
13
quasi cadenza
vibrato ad lib.
f
6
6
3
vibrato ad lib.
sfp
vibrato ad lib.
sfp
vibrato ad lib.
sfp

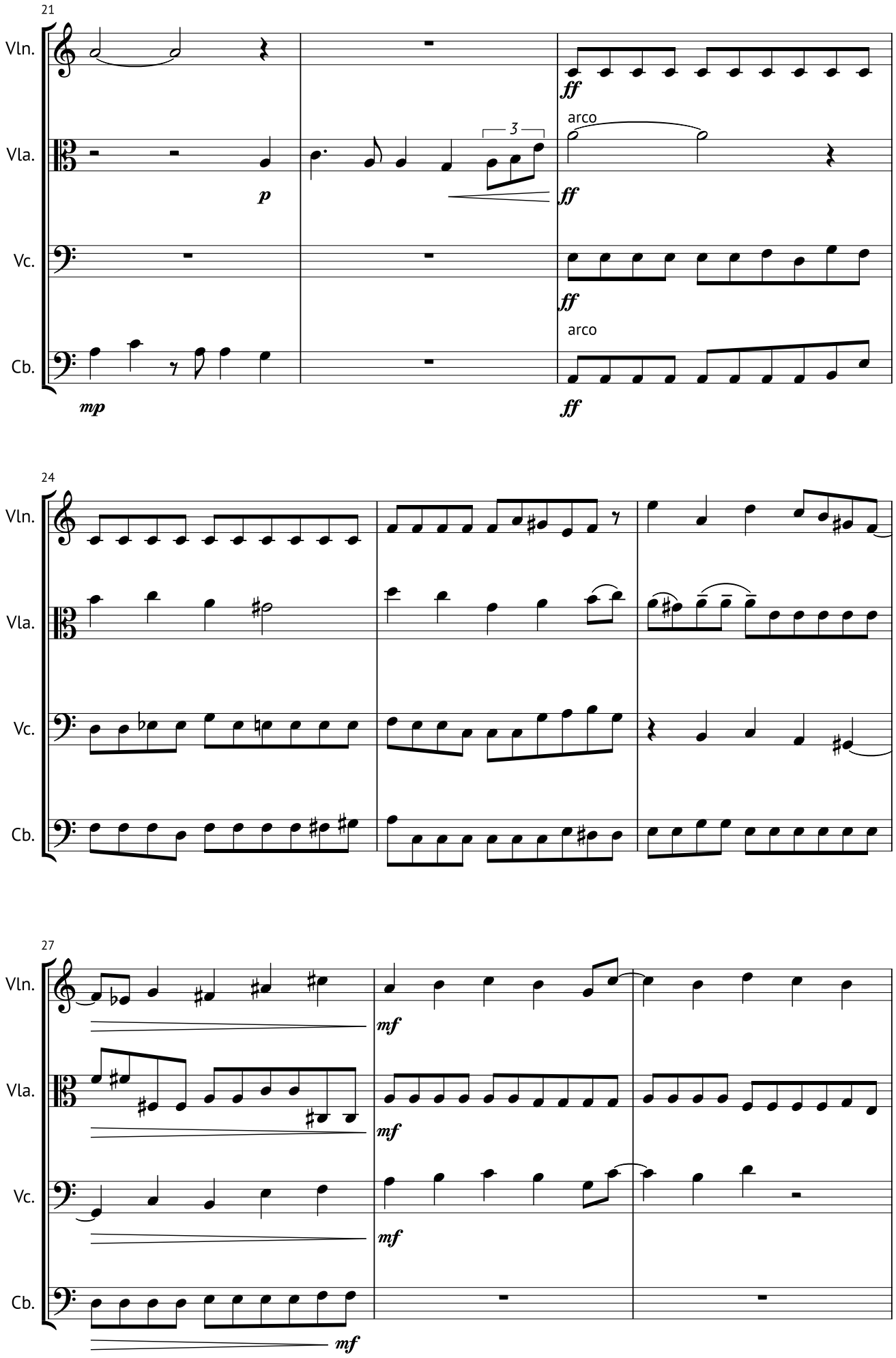

14
Vln.
sfp
quasi cadenza
Vla.
f
6
3
6
Vc.
Cb.
15
Vln.
Vla.
sfp
quasi cadenza
Vc.
6
3
6
f
Cb.
16
Vln.
do not synchronize
f
mp
Vla.
do not synchronize
f
mp
Vc.
do not synchronize
f
mp
quasi cadenza
3
5
Cb.
f
sfp
ff
sfz

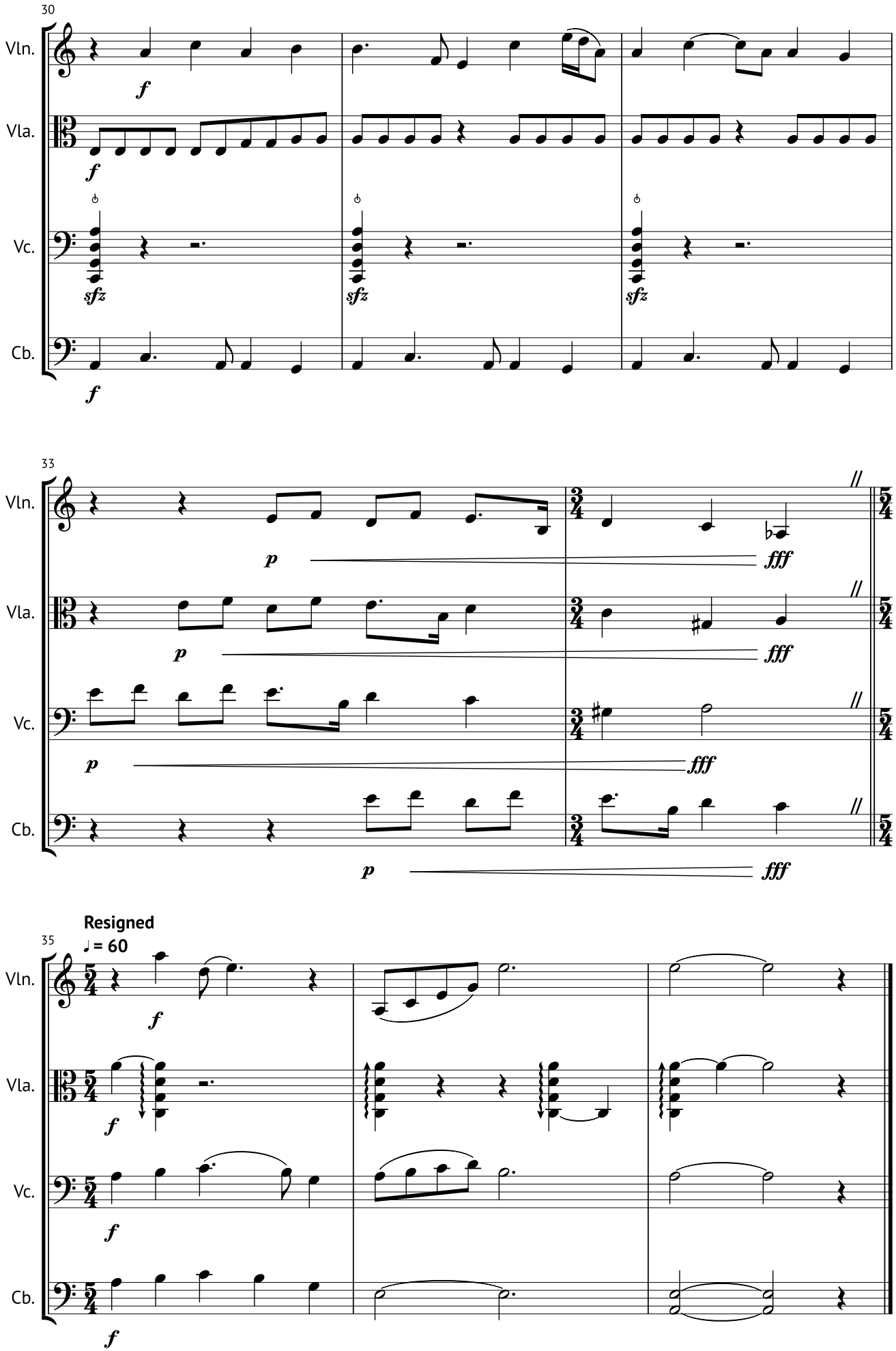
III. The Virtual Orchestra

All players call the coordinator on a minimum of three platforms (Google Hangouts, Zoom, and Snapchat suggested)



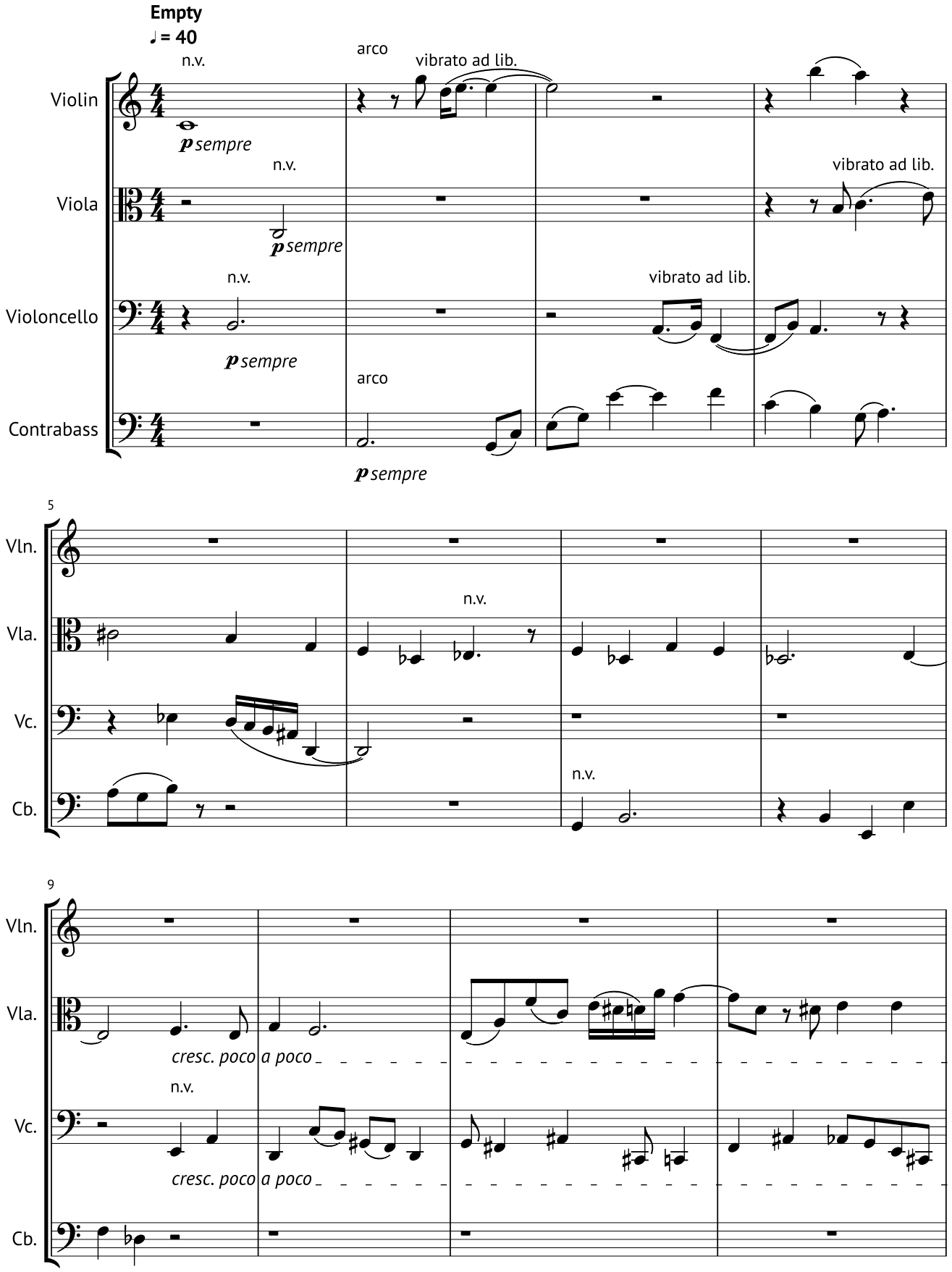

Urgently
♩= 152
(2+3)
10
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
pp
f
pizz.
mf
13
pizz.
mf
ff
f
17
arco
sfz
mp
pizz.
sfz mf
arco
mf
pizz.

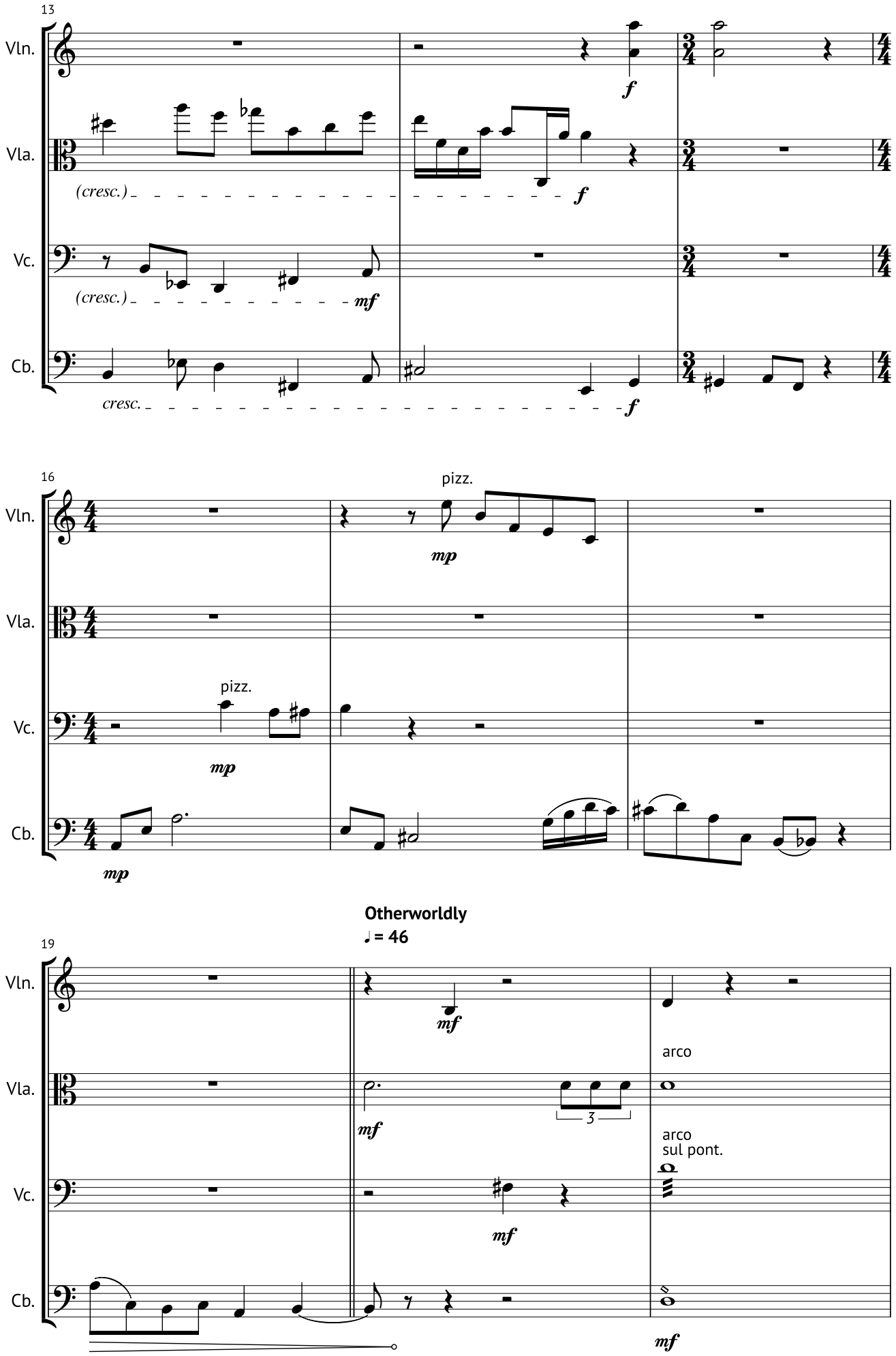

21
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
ff
arco
3
p
mp
24
27
mf

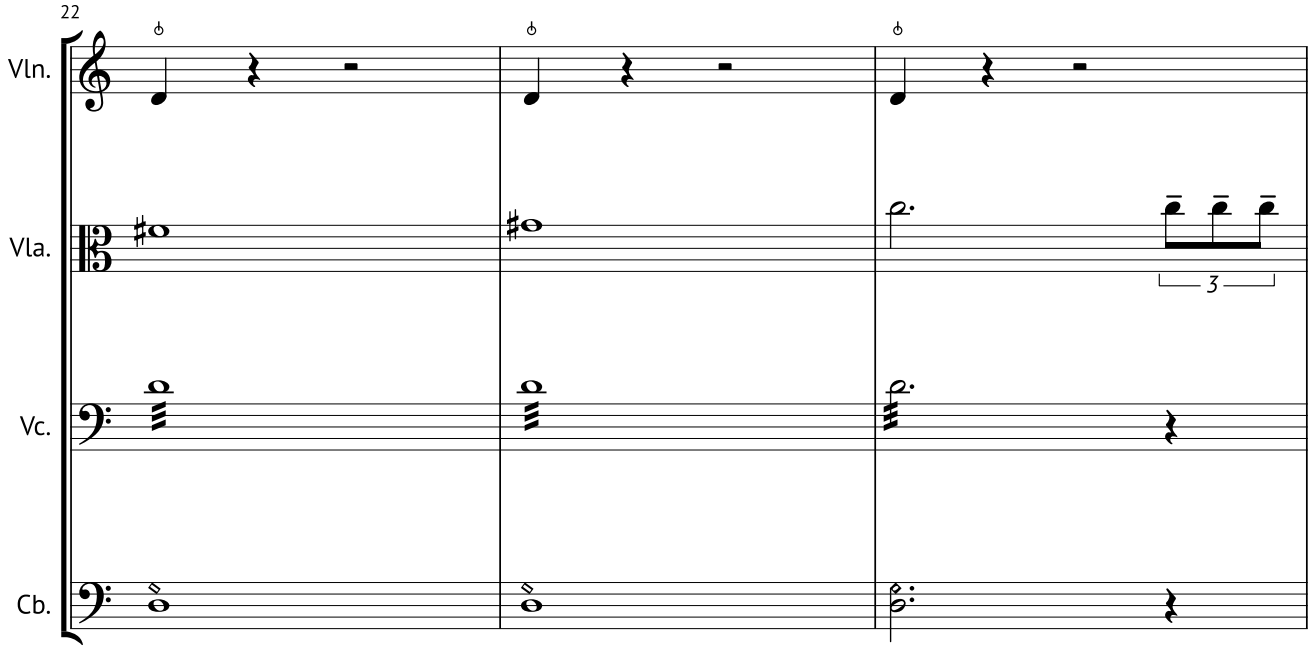

30
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
f
sfz
33
p
fff
Resigned
♩ = 60
35

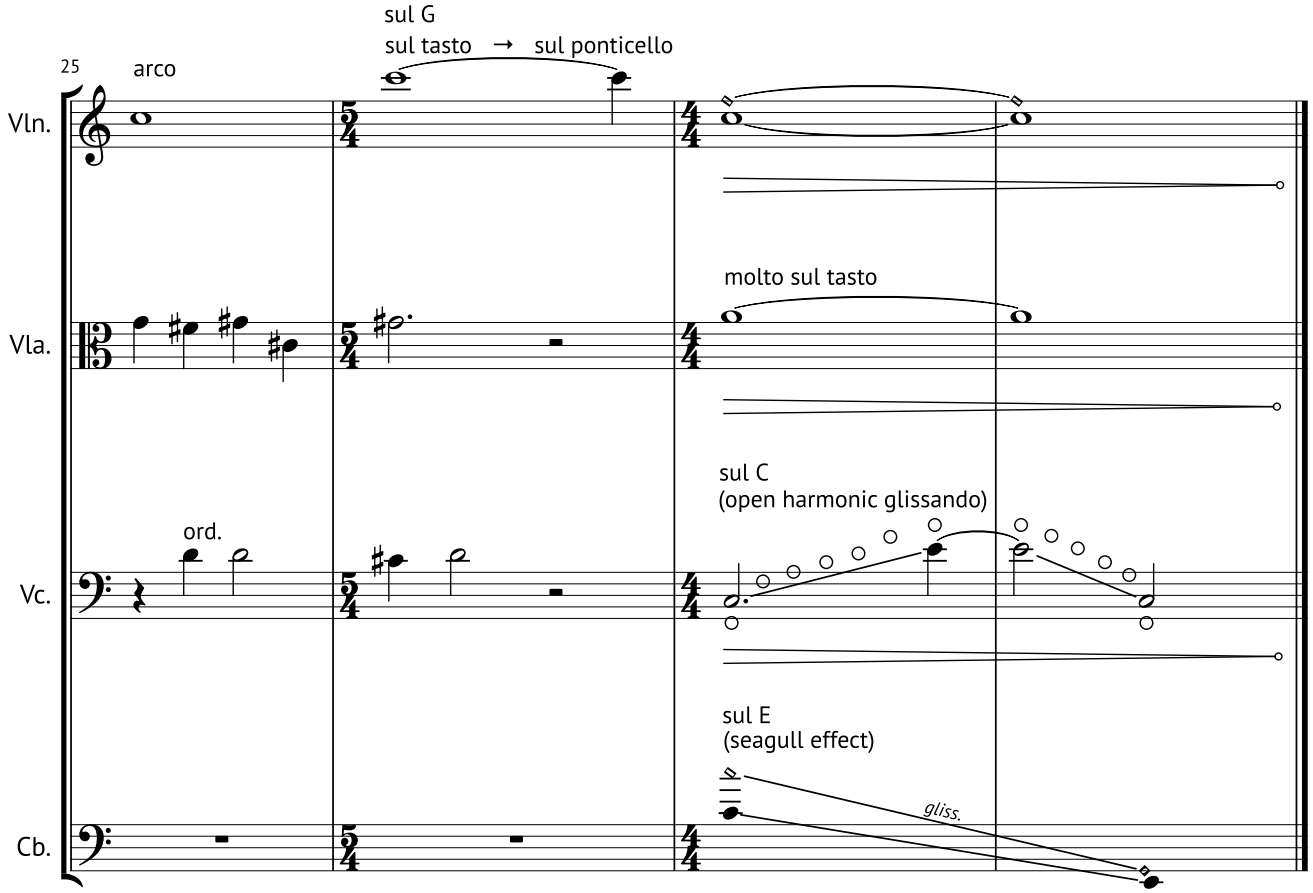
IV. Isolation

Bassist calls viola (FaceBook Messenger suggested.) Viola calls cello (Skype suggested.) Cello calls violin (Zoom suggested.) Violin calls coordinator. (Google Hangouts suggested.) This creates a filtering effect, in which the violin is the least distorted, followed by cello, viola, and bass, which is most distorted. The effect is enhanced if each of the three upper string players is able to use two devices in close proximity to each other for their two calls, e.g. a Skype call on a phone and zoom on a laptop.




13
Vln.
Vla.
(cresc.)
Vc.
(cresc.)
Cb.
cresc.
16
pizz.
Vln.
Vla.
pizz.
Vc.
Cb.
Otherworldly
♩ = 46
19
Vln.
Vla.
arco
Vc.
arco
sul pont.
Cb.


22
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
3


25
arco
sul G
sul tasto → sul ponticello
Vln.
molto sul tasto
Vla.
sul C
(open harmonic glissando)
ord.
Vc.
sul E
(seagull effect)
gliss.
Cb.

Parts

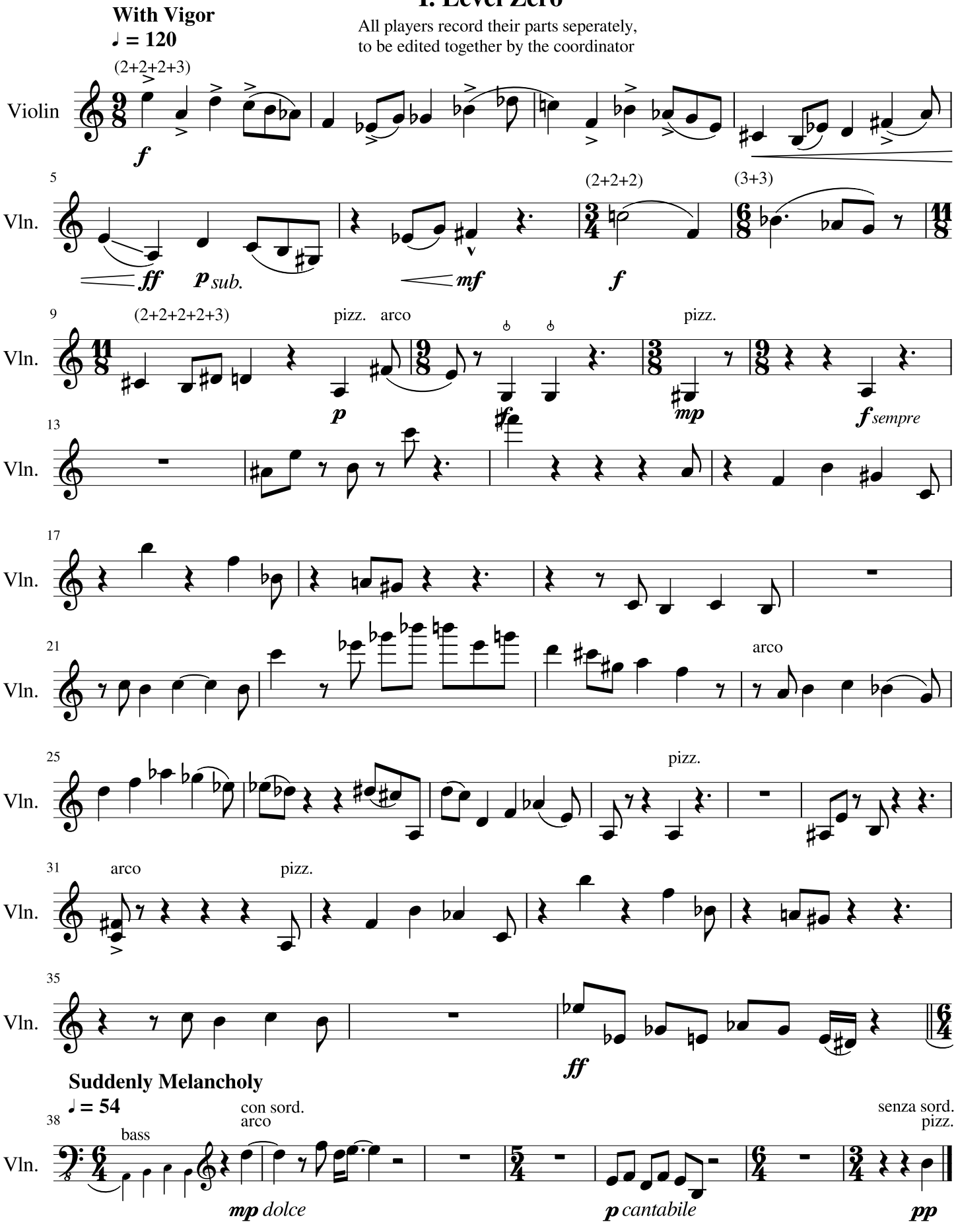
This commission was made possible by the Steven R. Gerber Trust.

Quiddities

For String Quartet

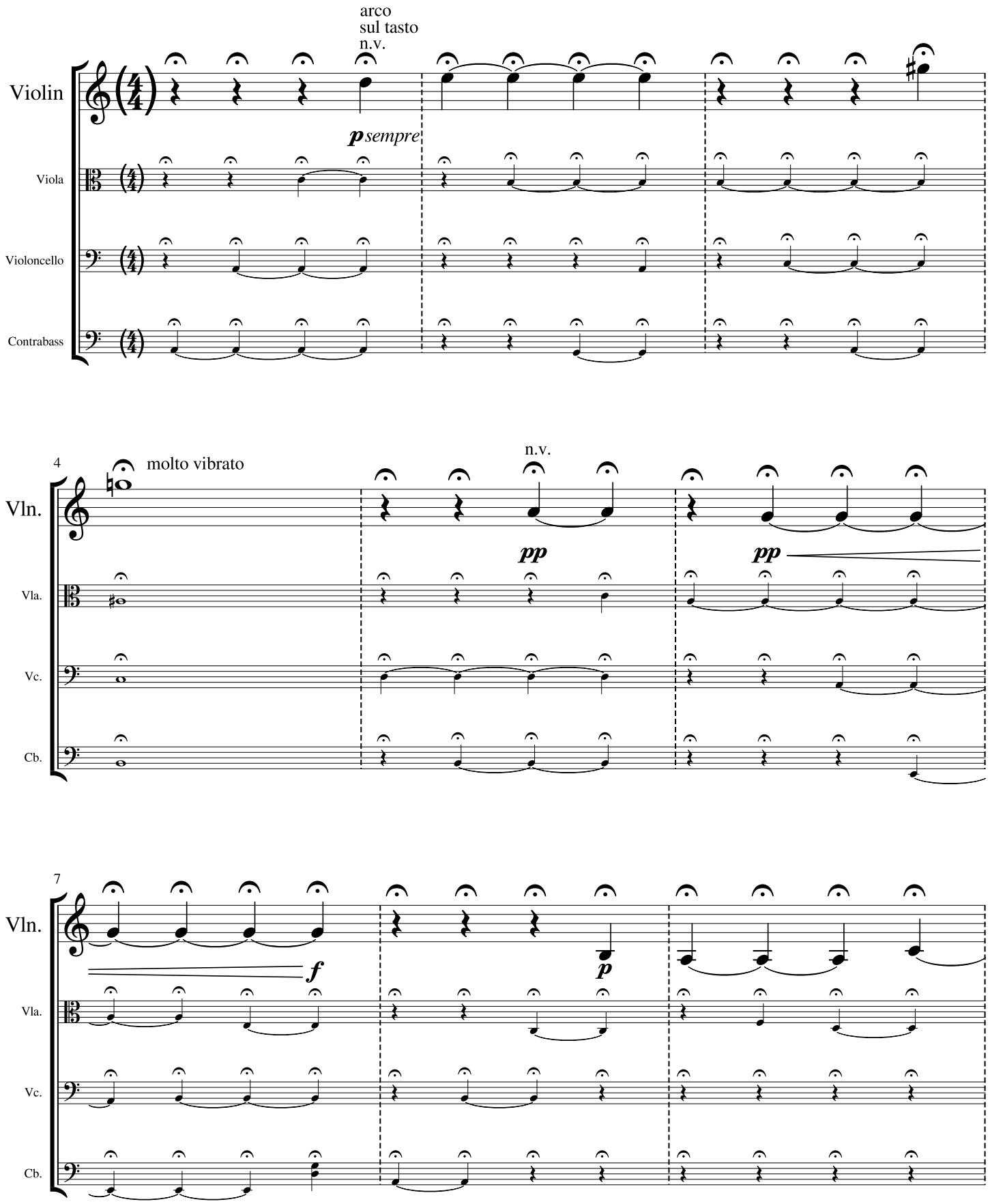
I. Level Zero

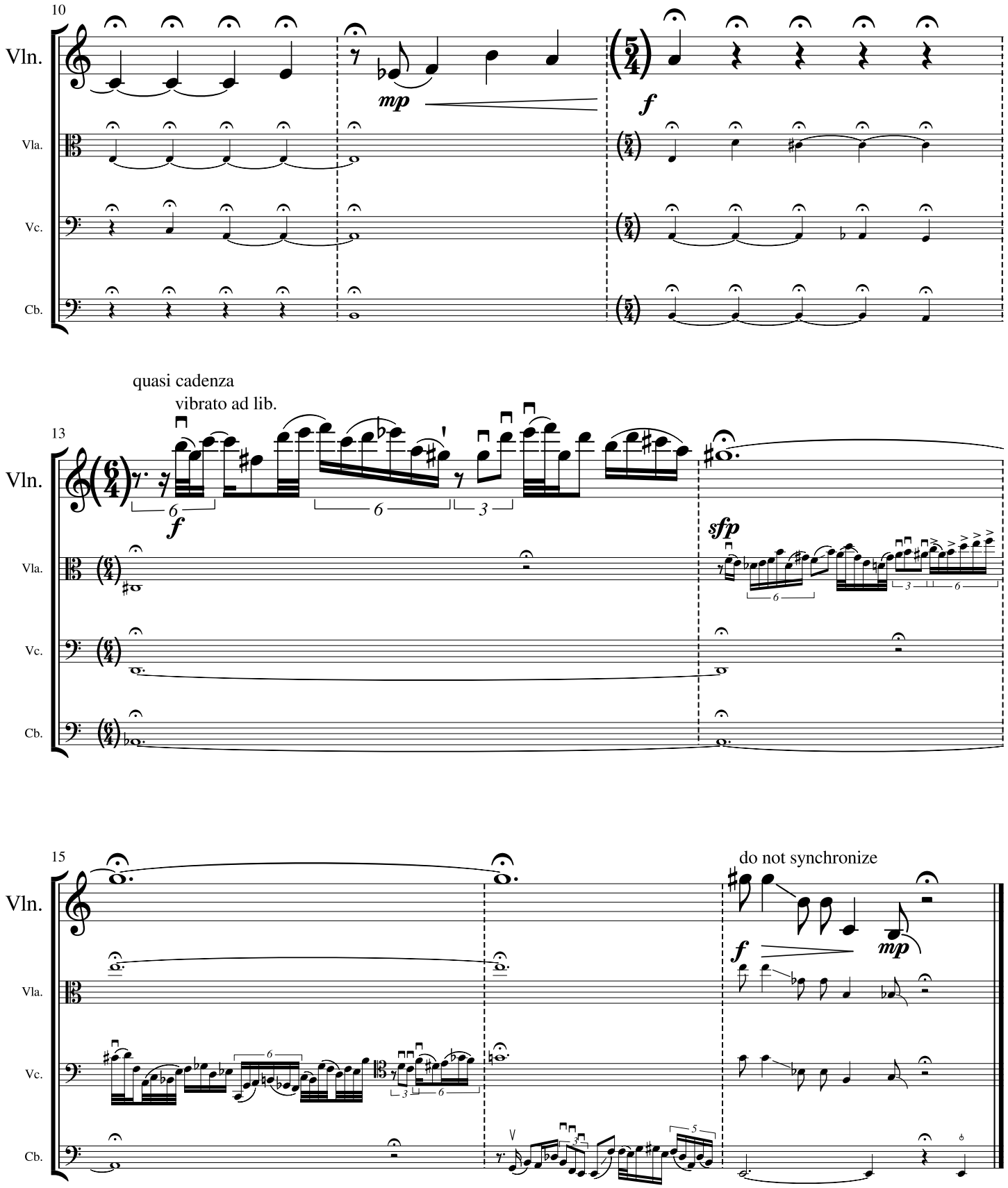
All players record their parts seperately,
to be edited together by the coordinator



II. Reaction and Response

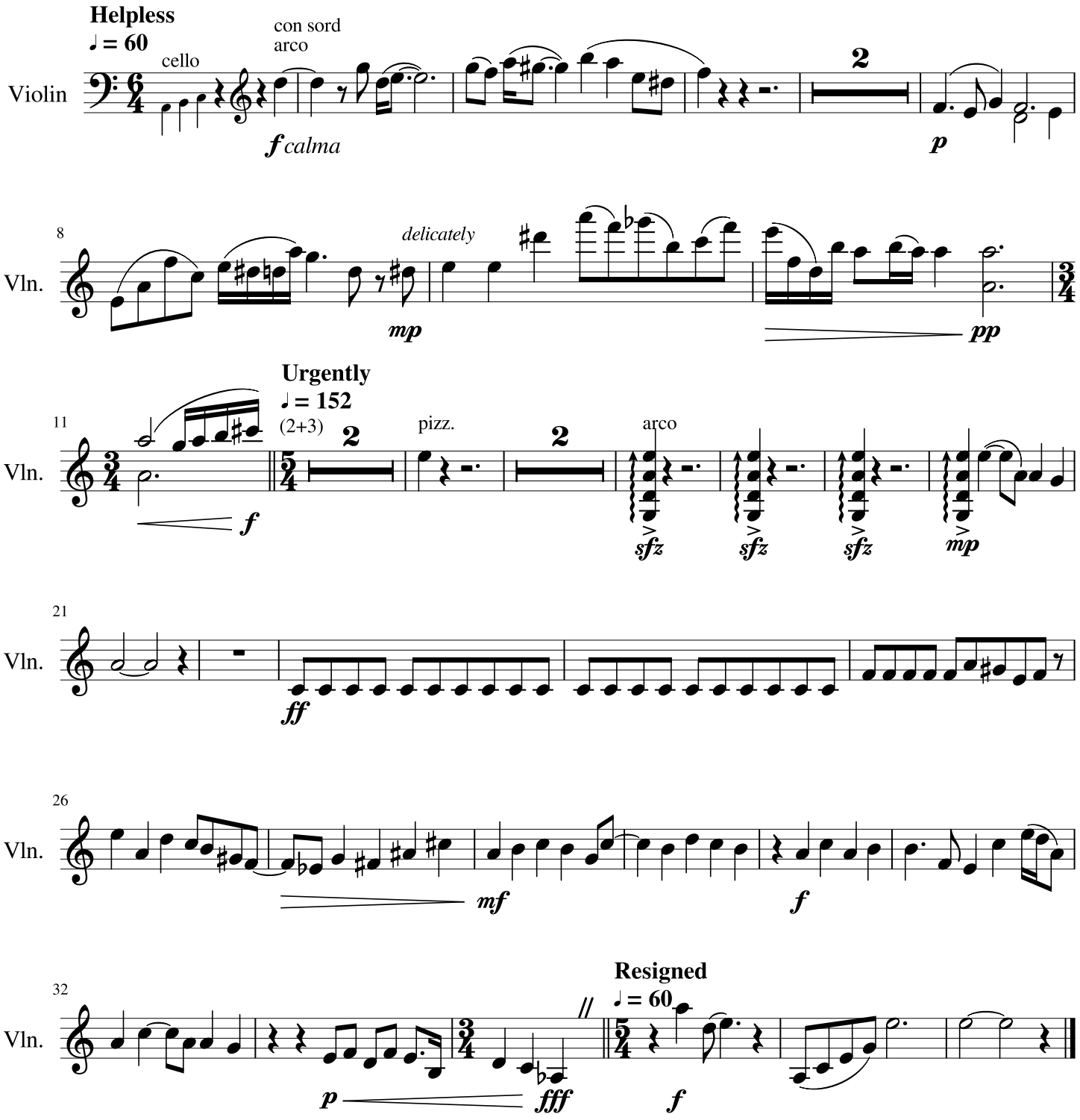
All players call the coordinator on one platform (Google Hangouts suggested)




10
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
mp
f
quasi cadenza
vibrato ad lib.
13
sfp
15
do not synchronize

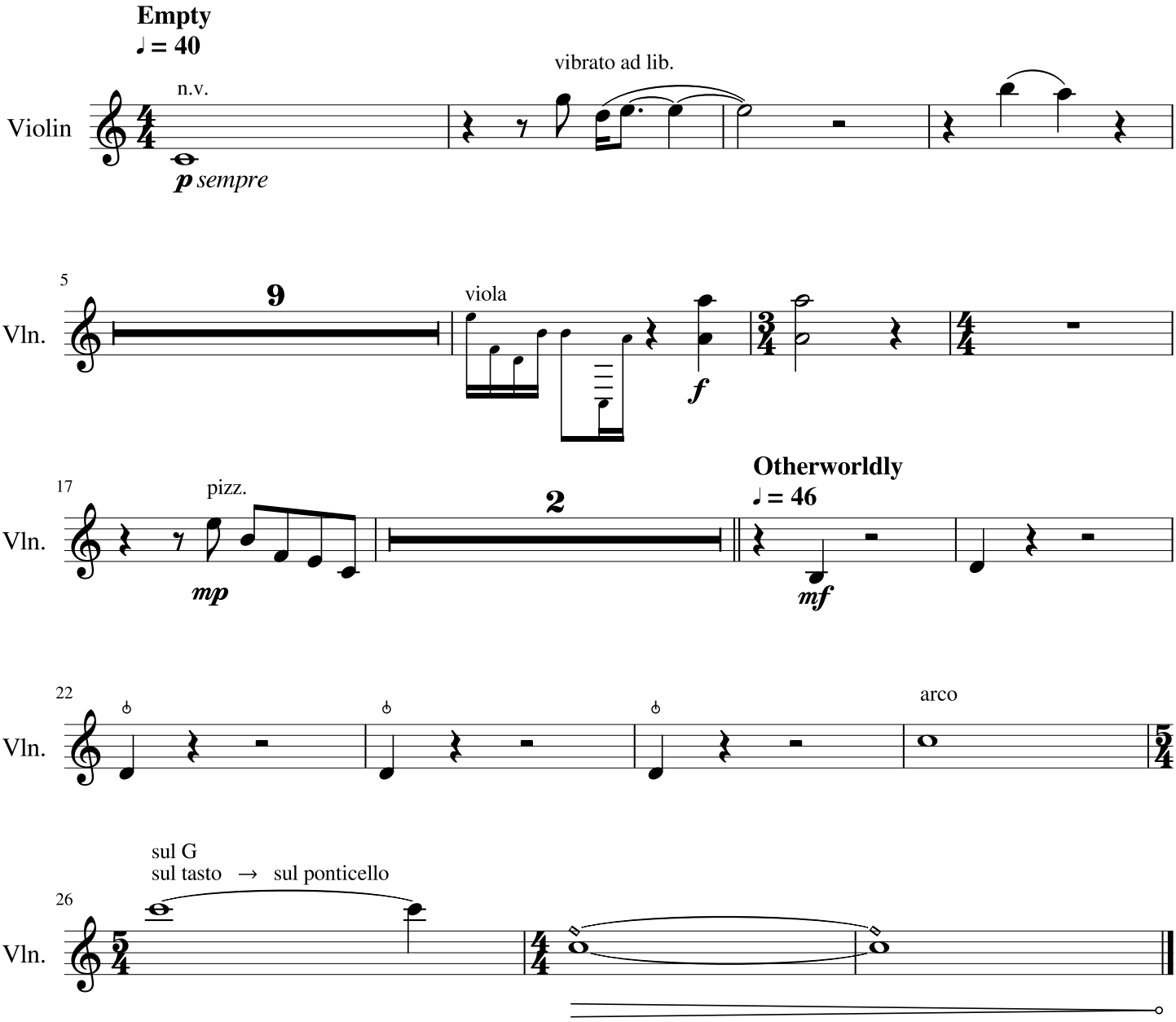
III. The Virtual Orchestra

All players call the coordinator on a minimum of three platforms (Google Hangouts, Zoom, and Snapchat suggested)



IV. Isolation

Bassist calls viola (FaceBook Messenger suggested.) Viola calls cello (Skype suggested.) Cello calls violin (Zoom suggested.) Violin calls coordinator. (Google Hangouts suggested.) This creates a filtering effect, in which the violin is the least distorted, followed by cello, viola, and bass, which is most distorted. The effect is enhanced if each of the three upper string players is able to use two devices in close proximity to each other for their two calls, e.g. a Skype call on a phone and zoom on a laptop.



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Viola

Quiddities

For String Quartet

Alexa Letourneau

I. Level Zero

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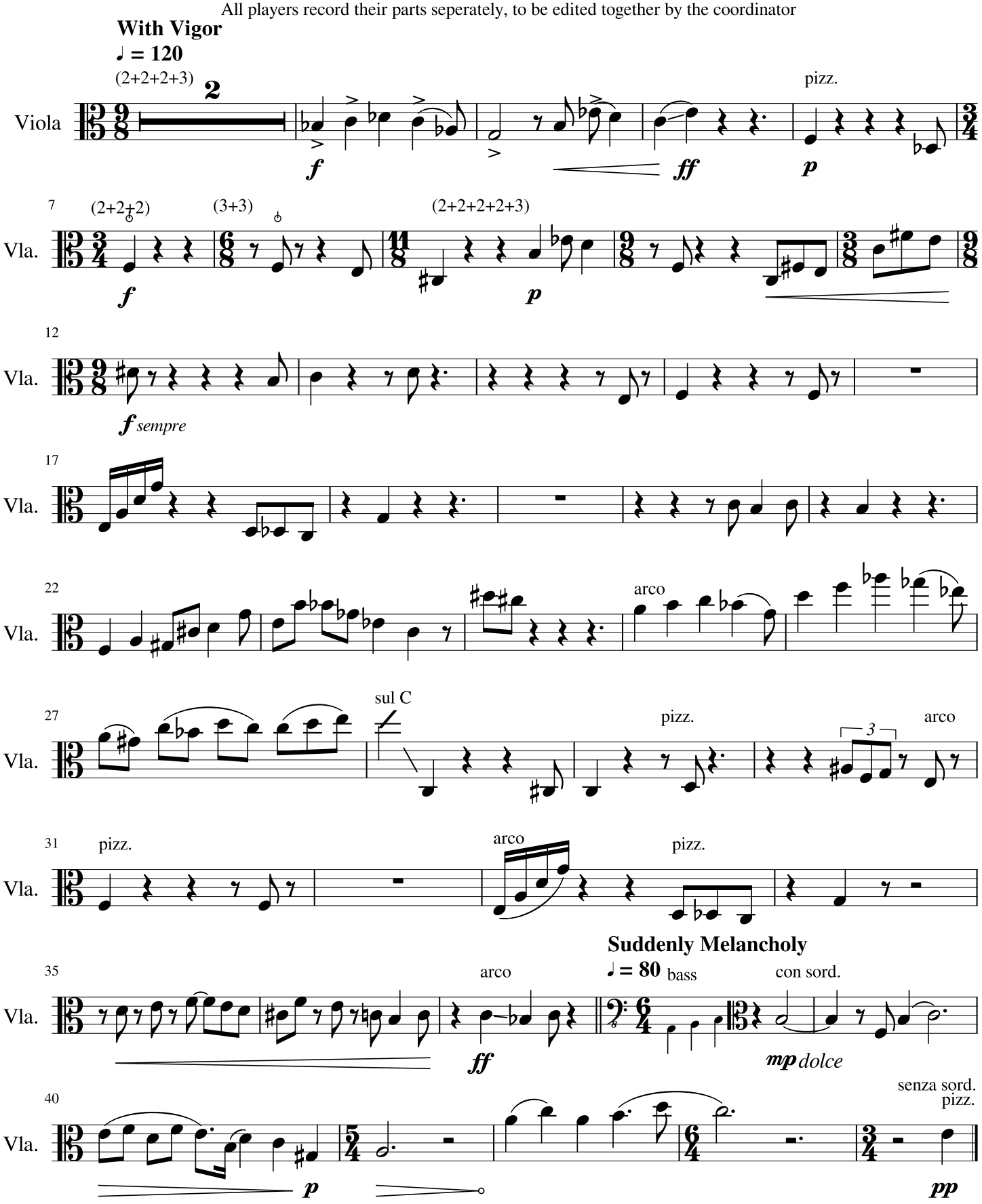
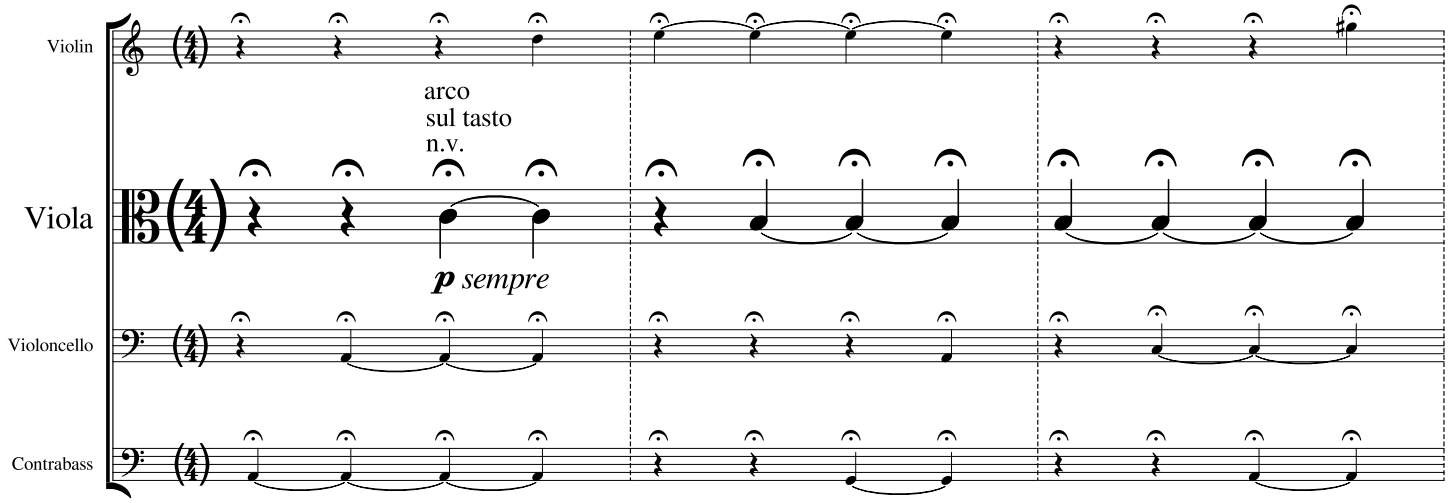
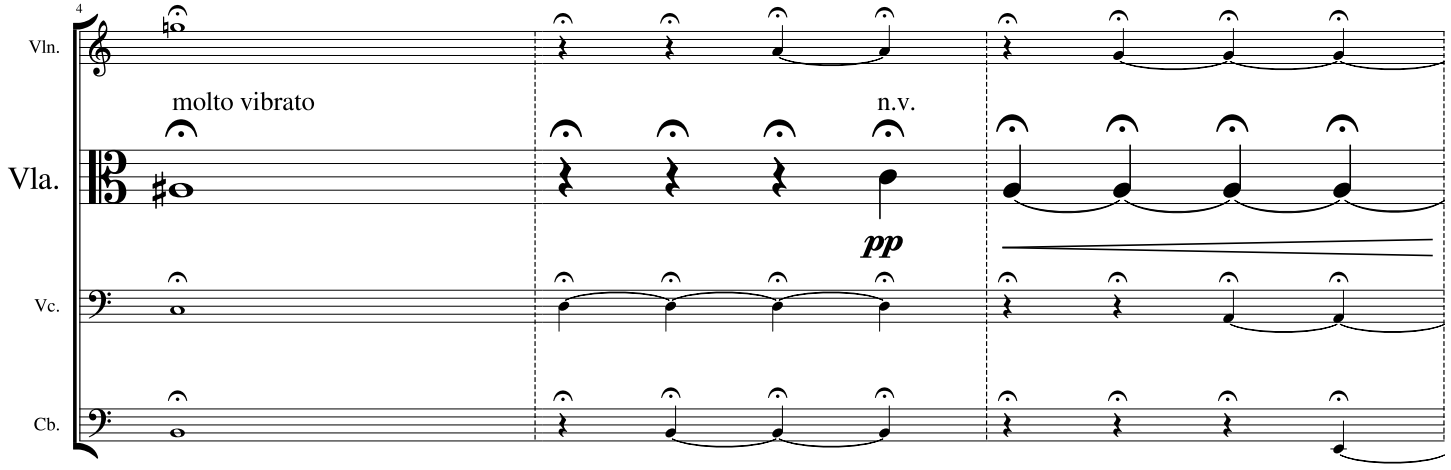
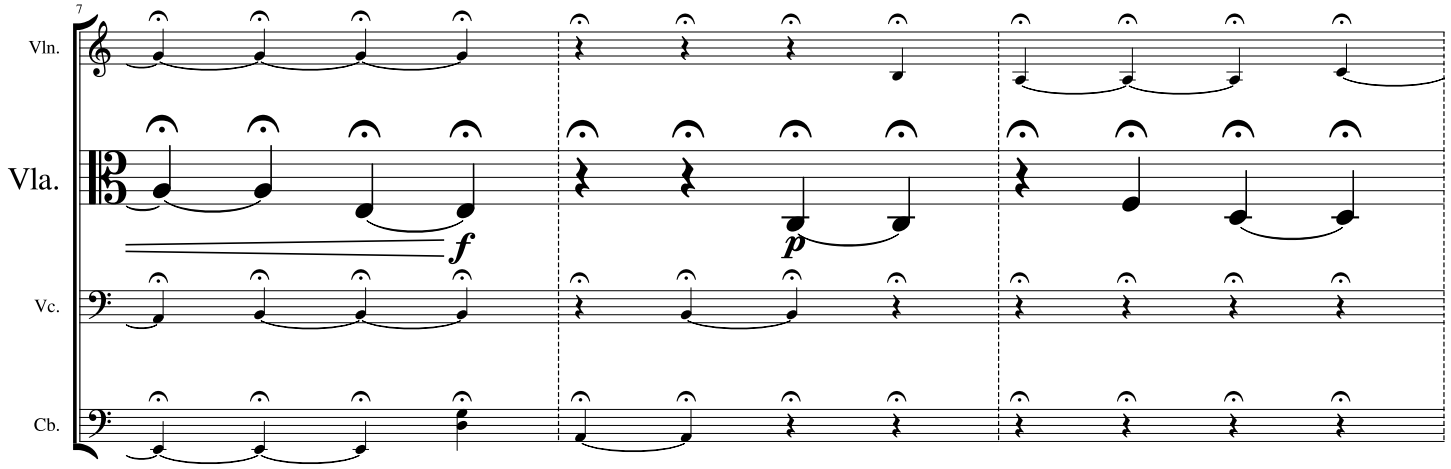


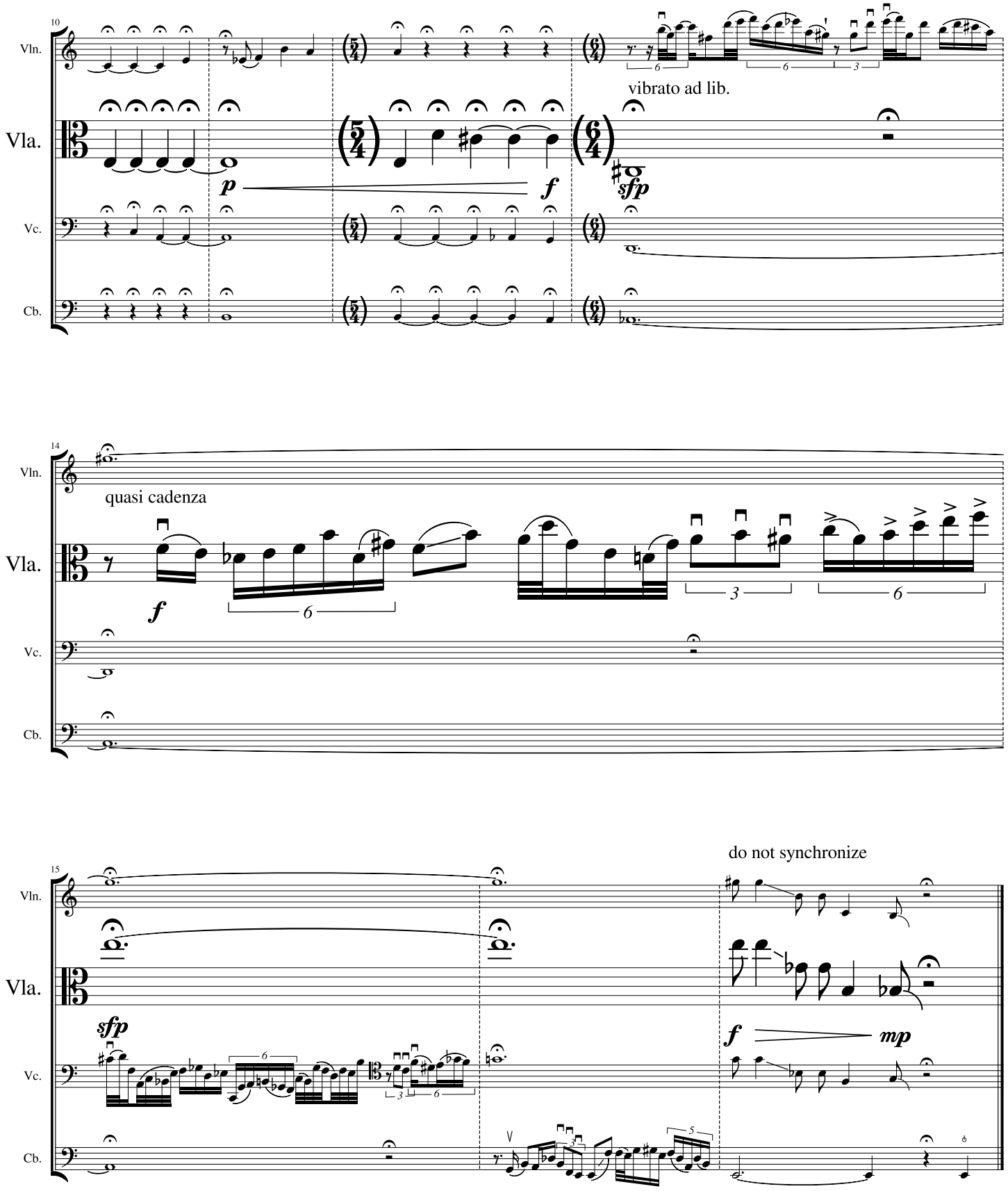
II. Reaction and Response

All players call the coordinator on one platform (Google Hangouts suggested)



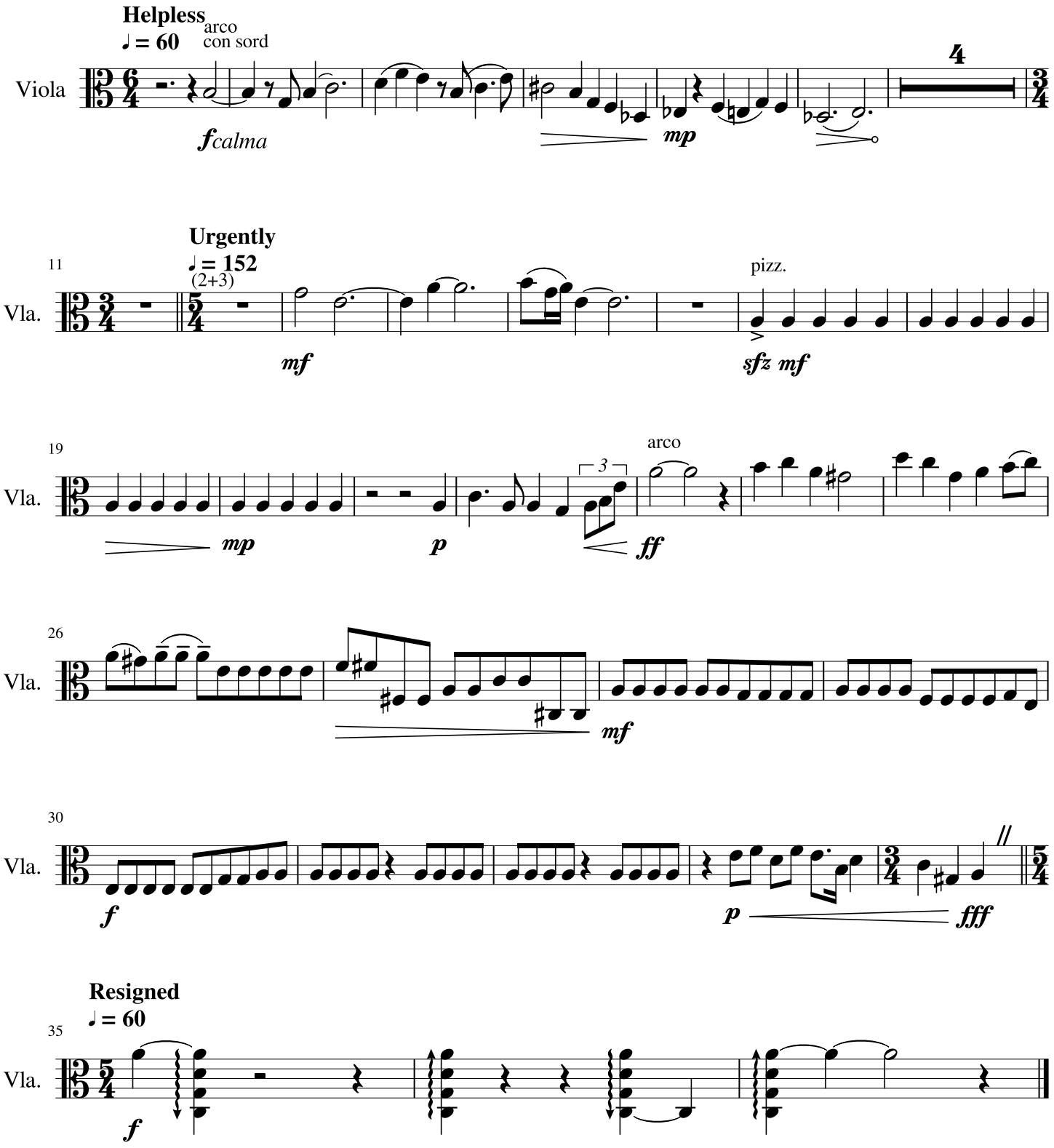





10
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
vibrato ad lib.
p
f
sfp
14
quasi cadenza
f
15
do not synchronize
sfp
f
mp

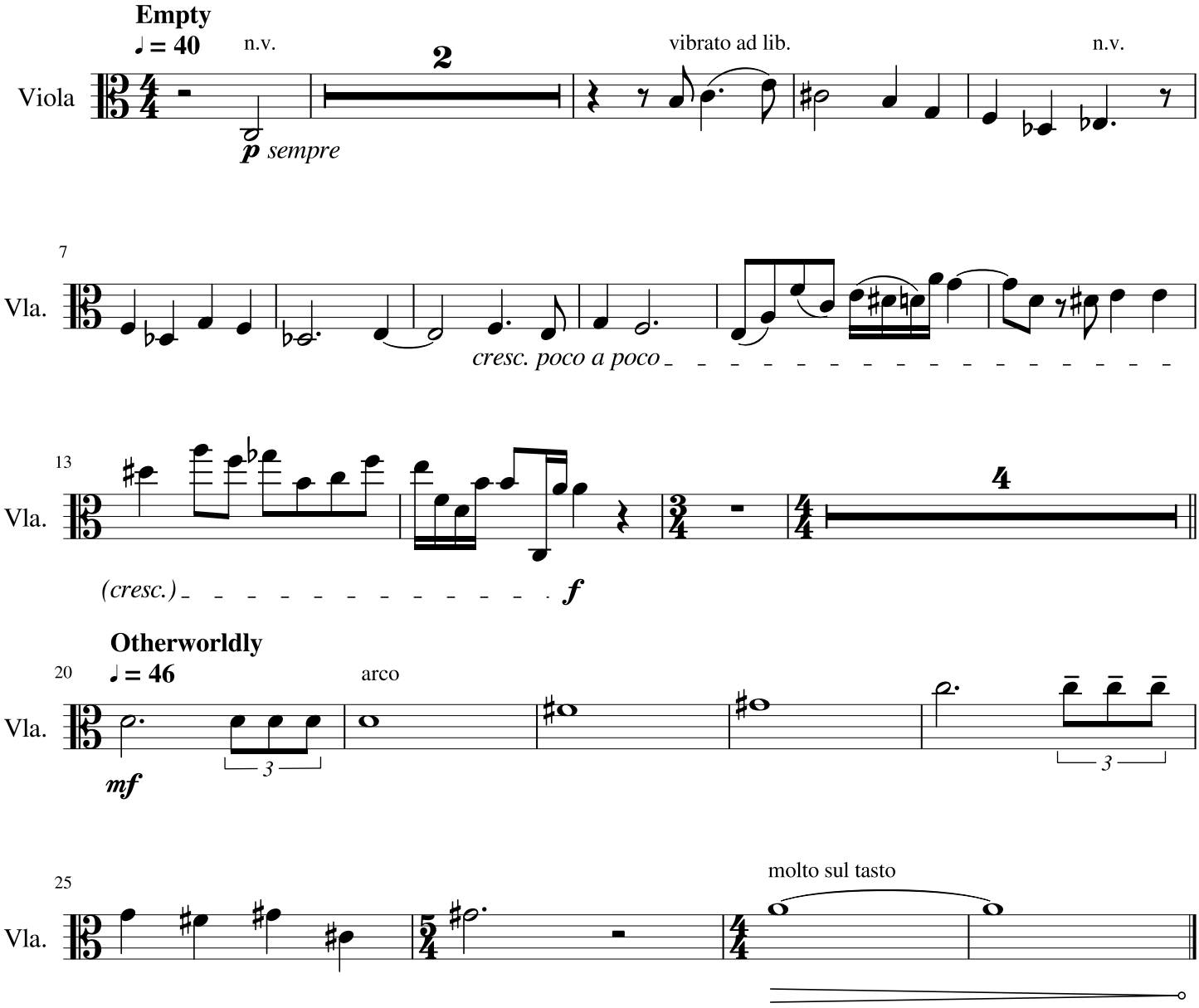
III. The Virtual Orchestra

All players call the coordinator on a minimum of three platforms (Google Hangouts, Zoom, and Snapchat suggested)



IV. Isolation

Bassist calls viola (FaceBook Messenger suggested.) Viola calls cello (Skype suggested.) Cello calls violin (Zoom suggested.) Violin calls coordinator. (Google Hangouts suggested.) This creates a filtering effect, in which the violin is the least distorted, followed by cello, viola, and bass, which is most distorted. The effect is enhanced if each of the three upper string players is able to use two devices in close proximity to each other for their two calls, e.g. a Skype call on a phone and zoom on a laptop.



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Cello

Quiddities

For String Quartet

Alexa Letourneau

I. Level Zero

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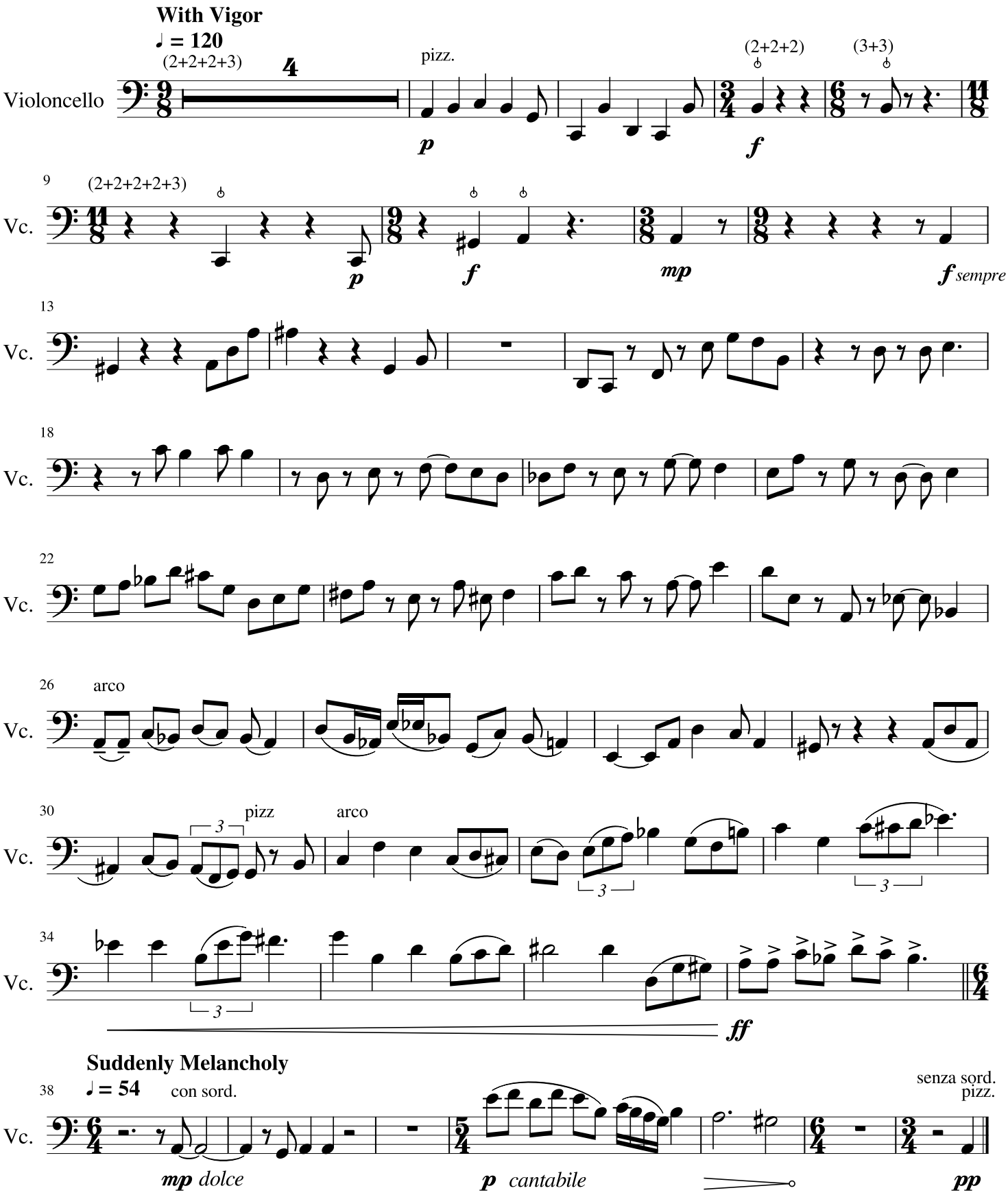
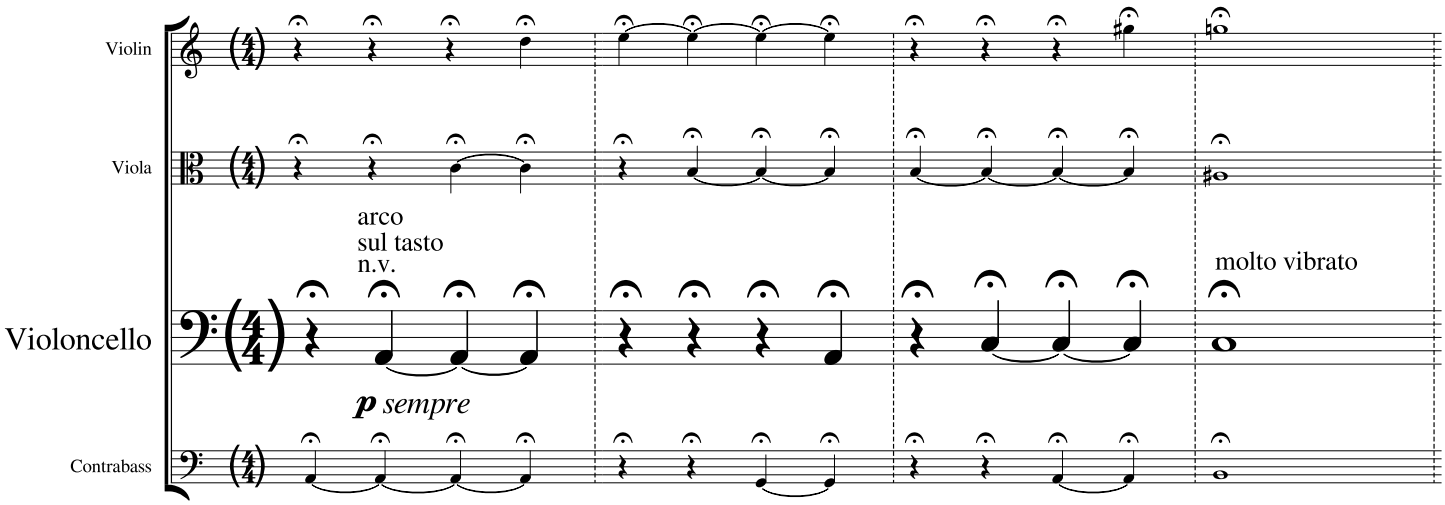
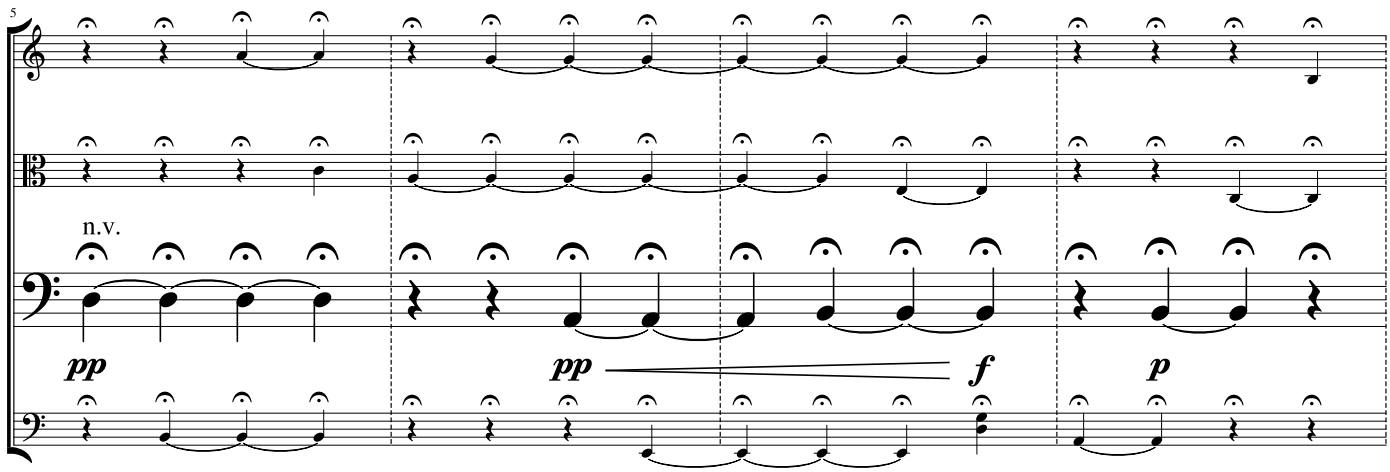
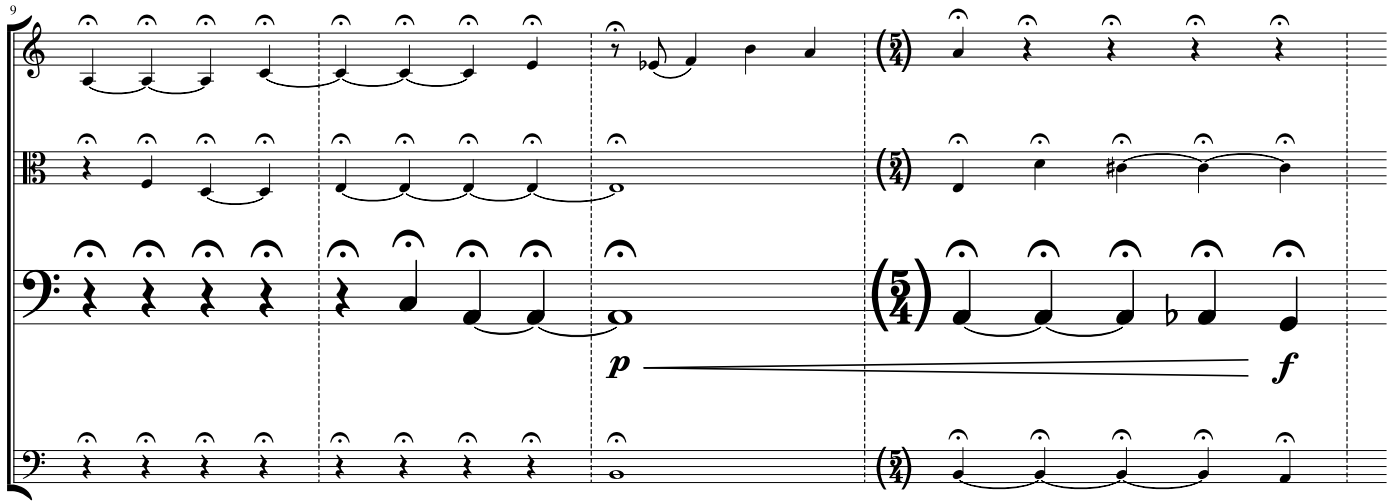


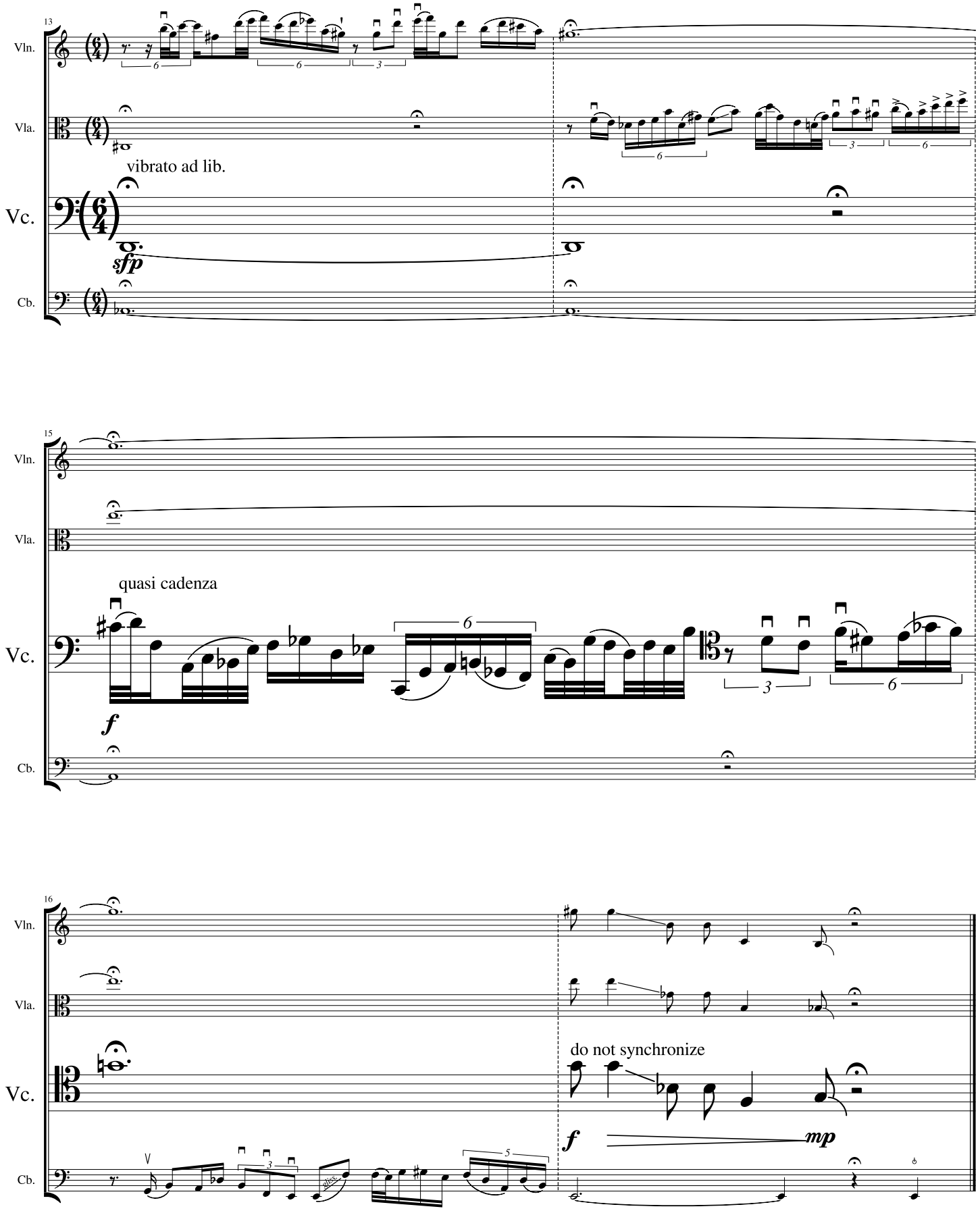
II. Reaction and Response

All players call the coordinator on one platform (Google Hangouts suggested)



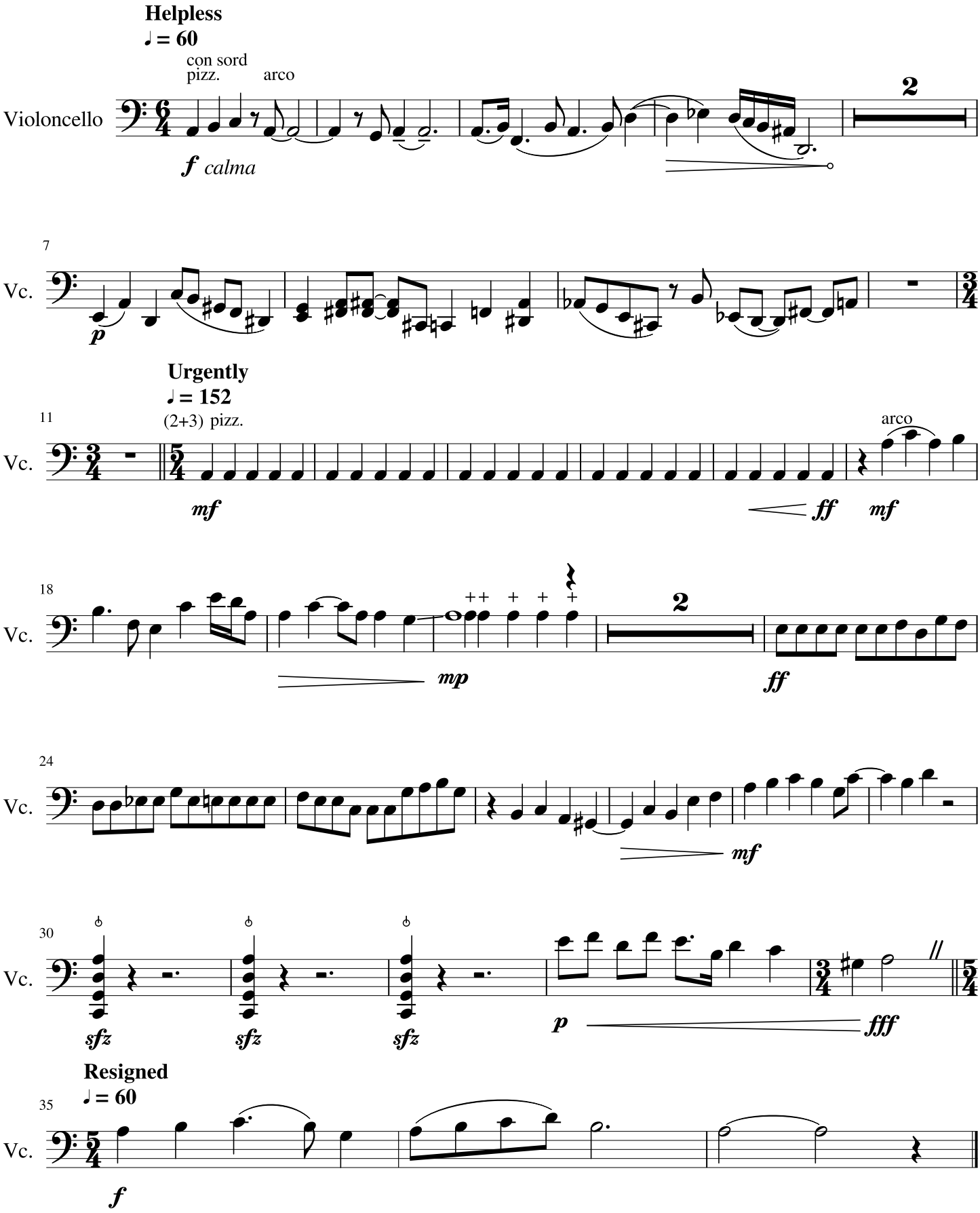





13
Vln.
Vla.
vibrato ad lib.
Vc.
sfp
Cb.
15
Vln.
Vla.
quasi cadenza
Vc.
f
Cb.
16
Vln.
Vla.
do not synchronize
Vc.
f
mp
Cb.

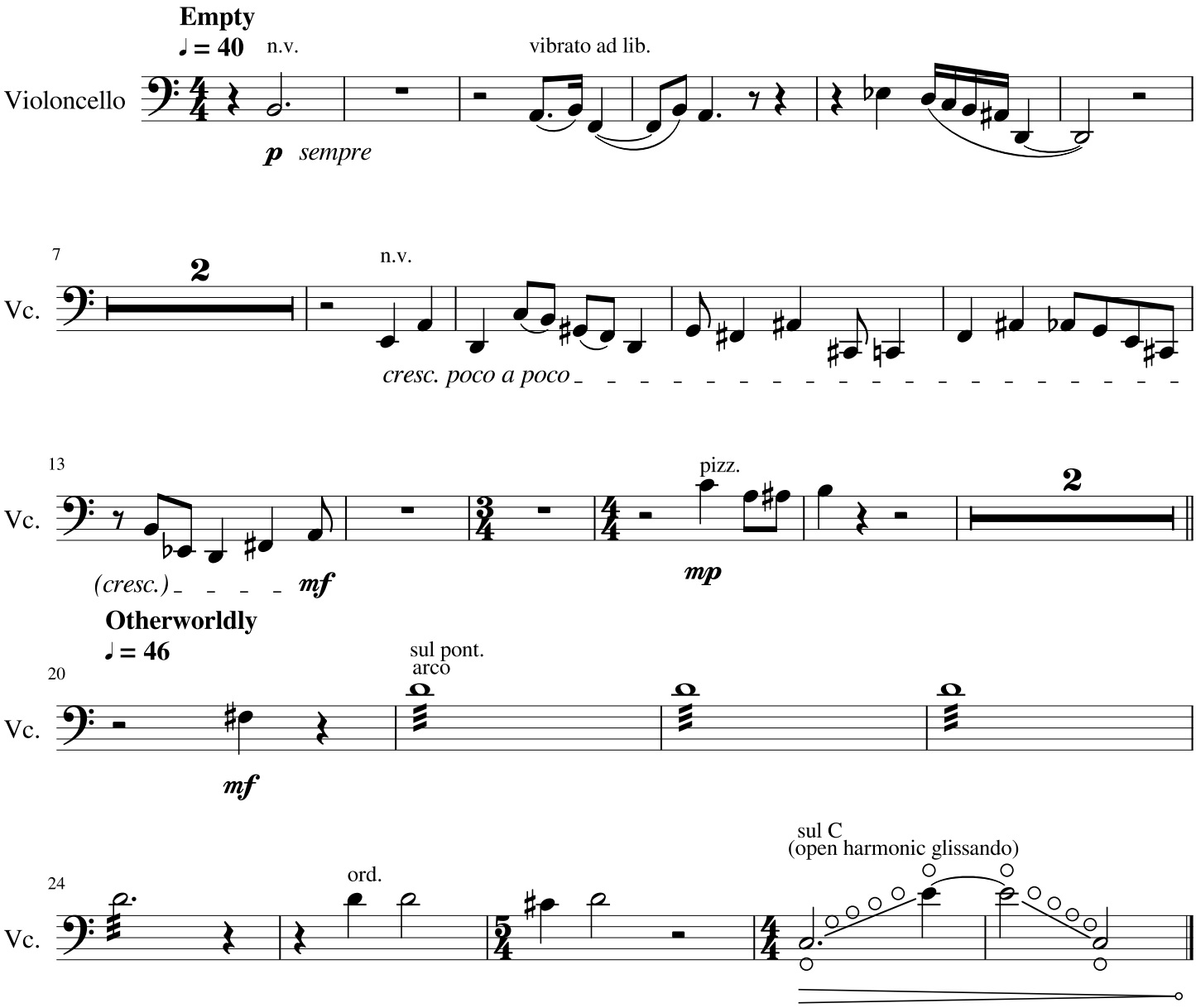
III. The Virtual Orchestra

All players call the coordinator on a minimum of three platforms (Google Hangouts, Zoom, and Snapchat suggested)



IV. Isolation

Bassist calls viola (FaceBook Messenger suggested.) Viola calls cello (Skype suggested.) Cello calls violin (Zoom suggested.) Violin calls coordinator. (Google Hangouts suggested.) This creates a filtering effect, in which the violin is the least distorted, followed by cello, viola, and bass, which is most distorted. The effect is enhanced if each of the three upper string players is able to use two devices in close proximity to each other for their two calls, e.g. a Skype call on a phone and zoom on a laptop.



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Bass

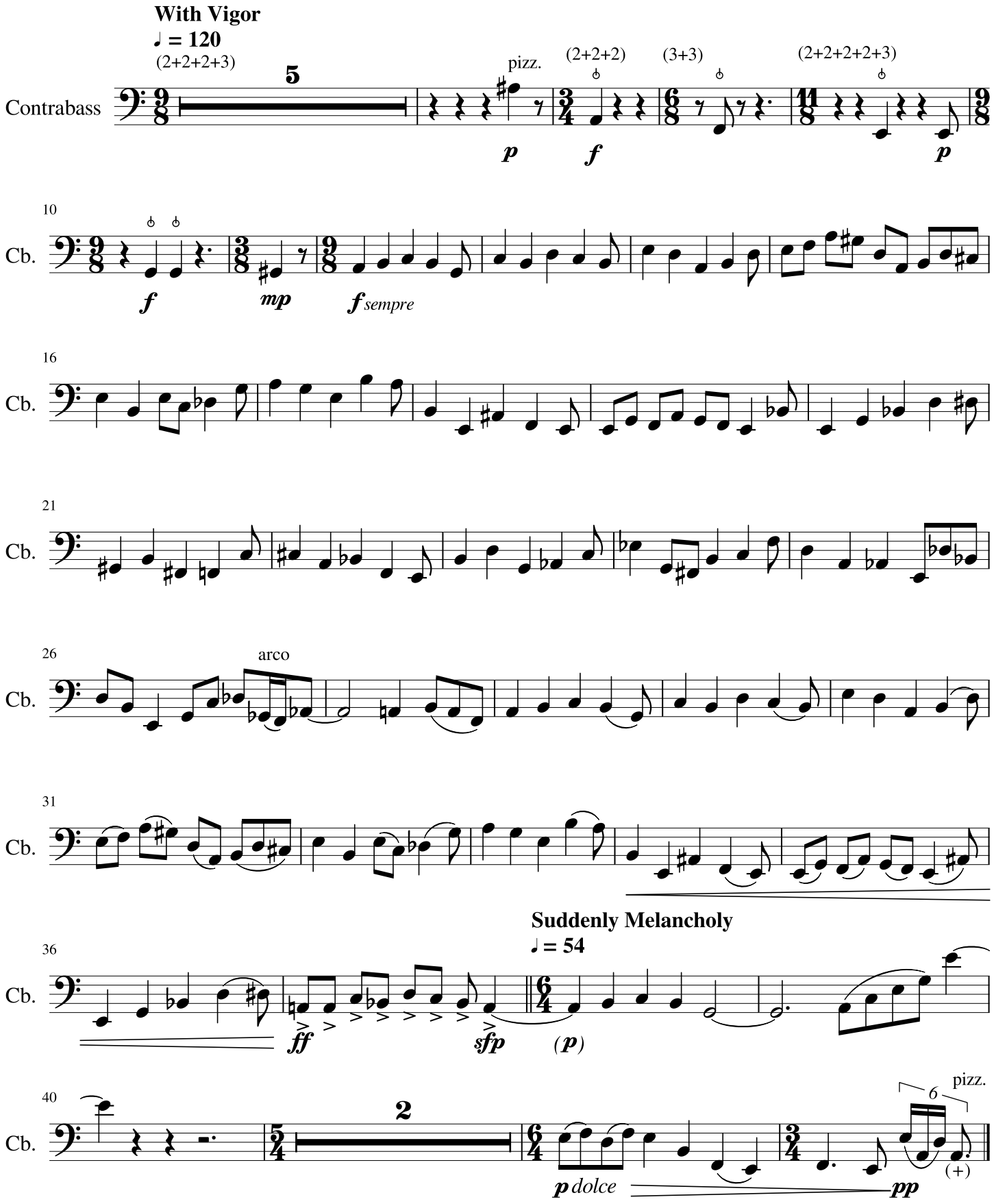
Quiddities

For String Quartet

Alexa Letourneau

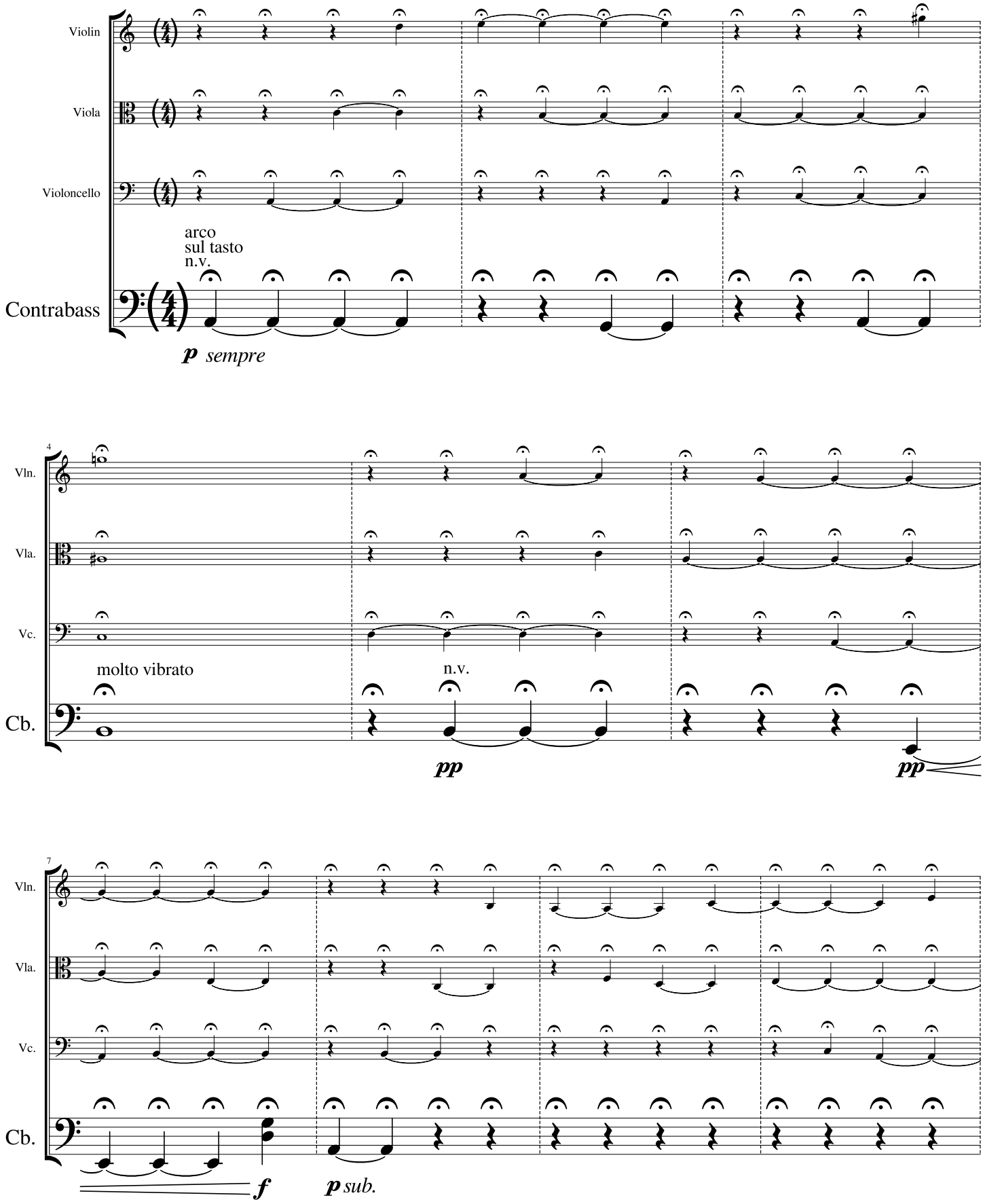
I. Level Zero

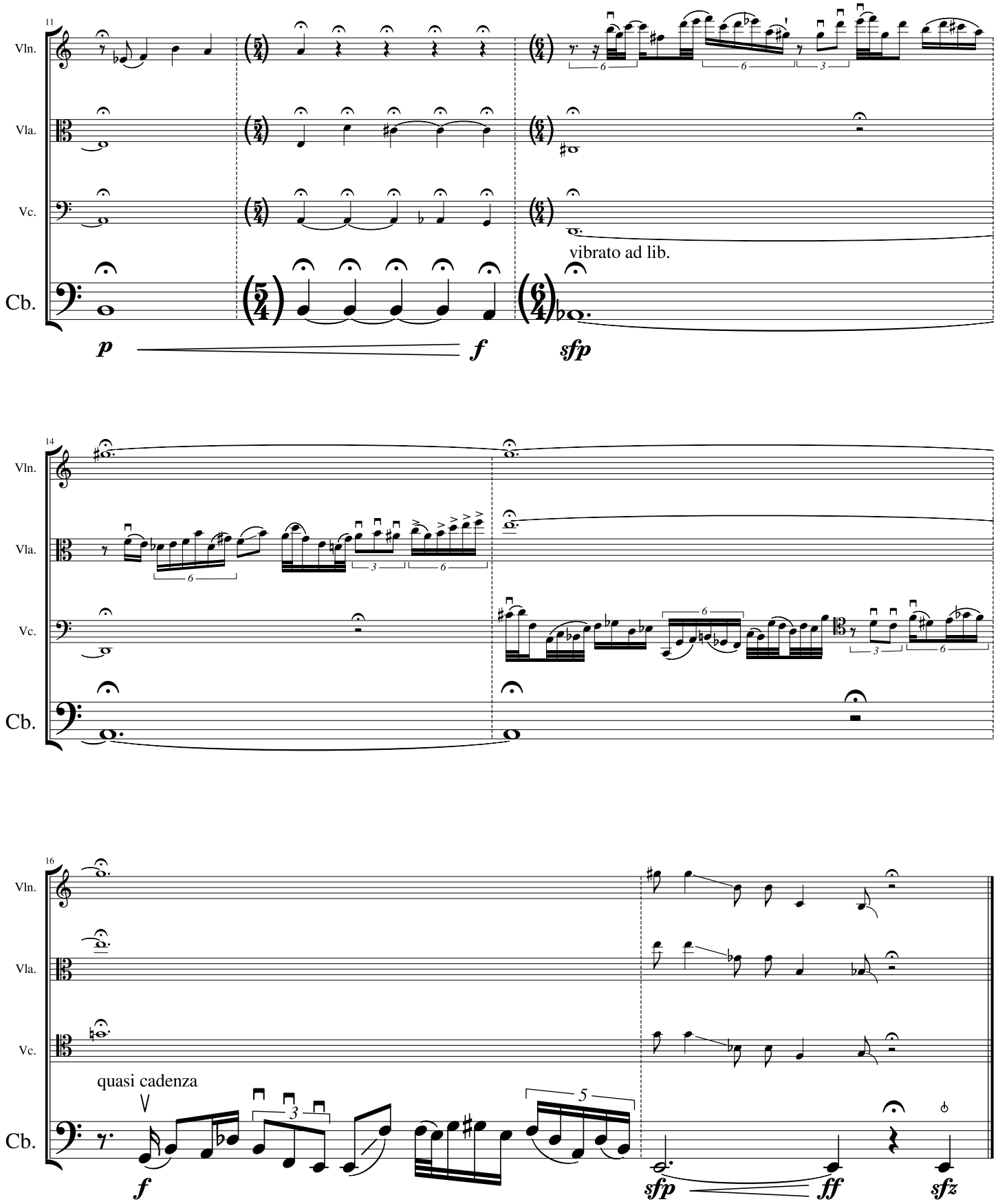
All players record their parts seperately, to be edited together by the coordinator



II. Reaction and Response

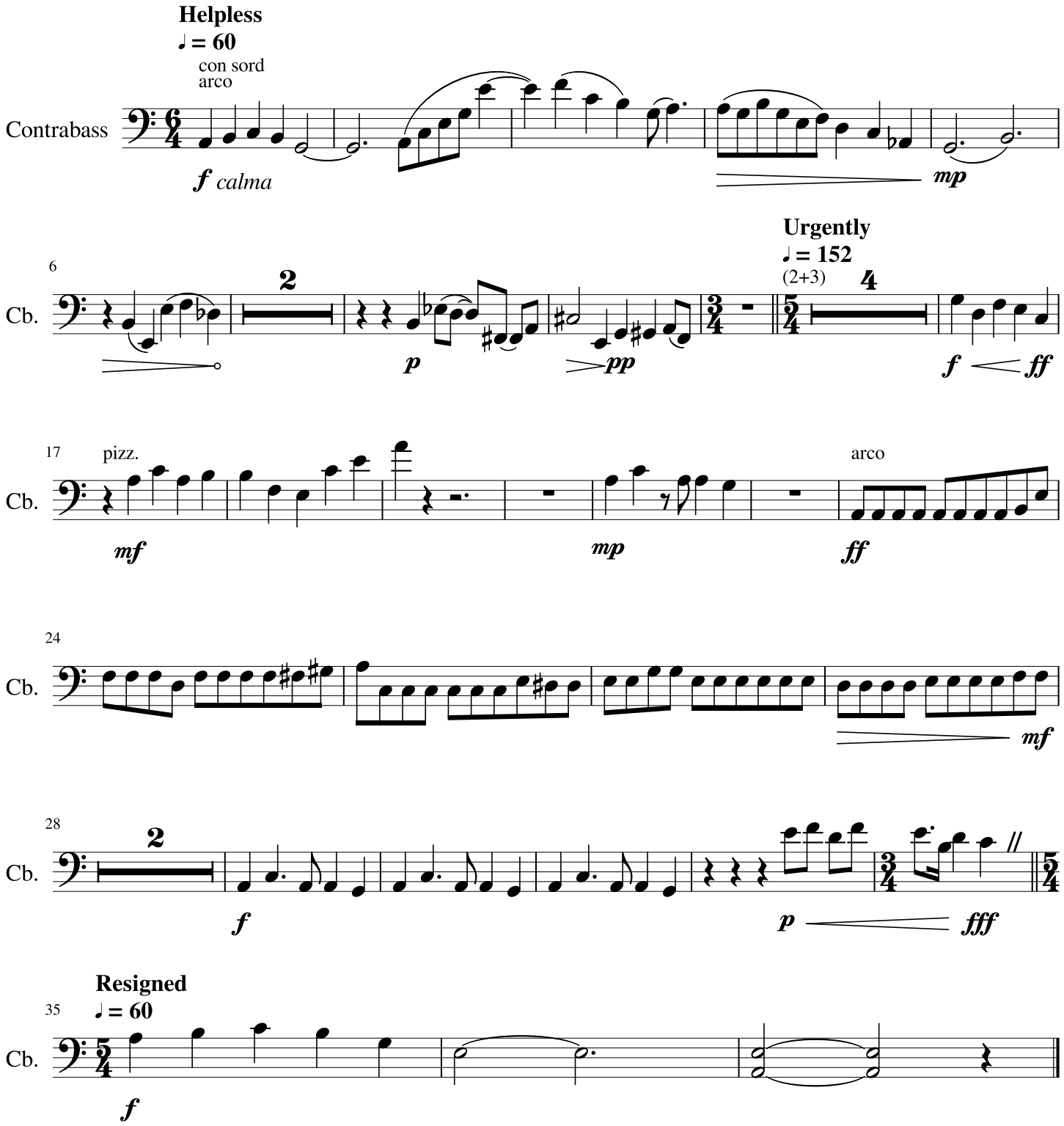
All players call the coordinator on one platform (Google Hangouts suggested)

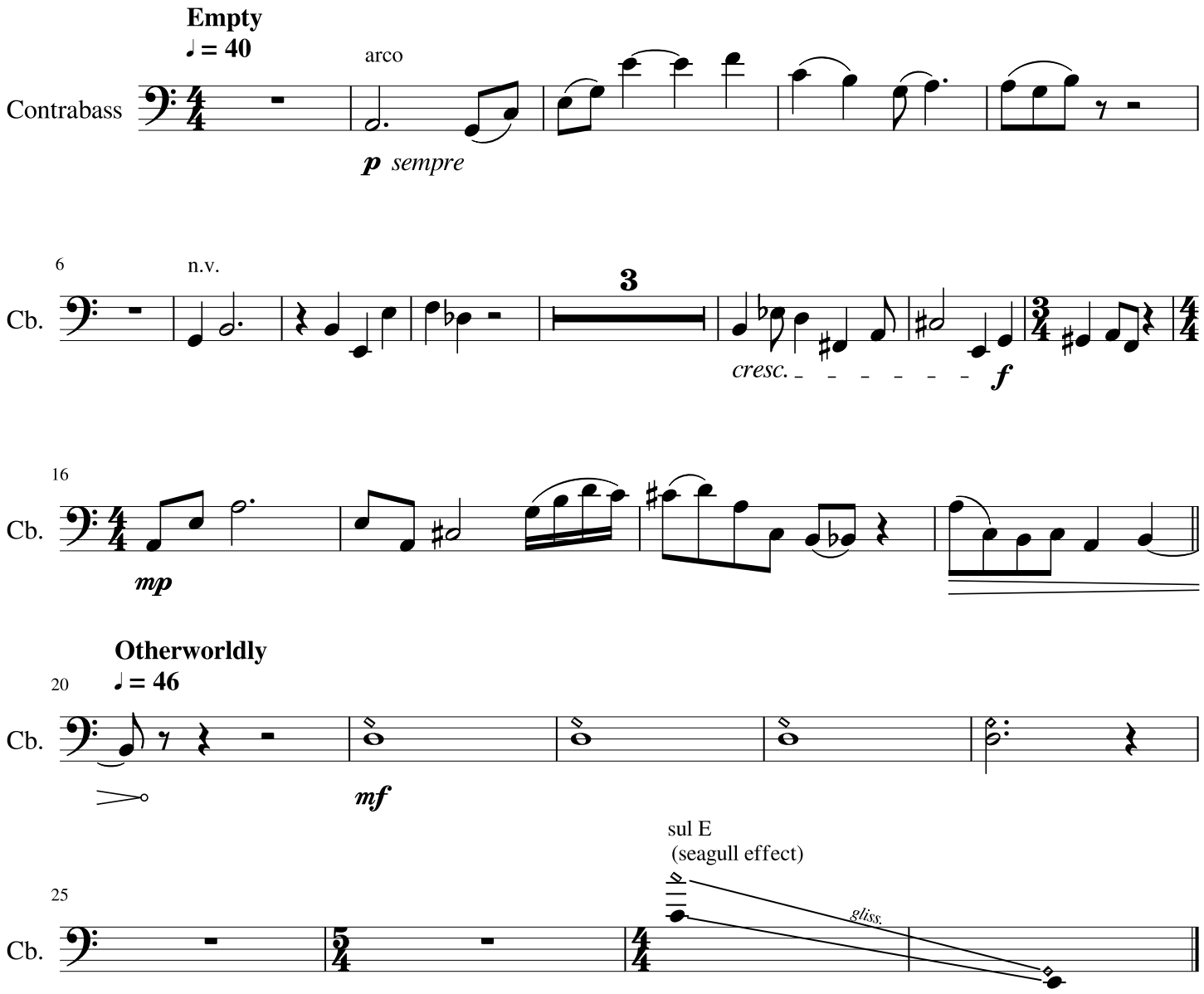



11
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
vibrato ad lib.
p
f
sfp
14
16
quasi cadenza
f
sfp
ff
sfz

III. The Virtual Orchestra

All players call the coordinator on a minimum of three platforms (Google Hangouts, Zoom, and Snapchat suggested)



IV. Isolation

Bassist calls viola (FaceBook Messenger suggested.) Viola calls cello (Skype suggested.) Cello calls violin (Zoom suggested.) Violin calls coordinator. (Google Hangouts suggested.) This creates a filtering effect, in which the violin is the least distorted, followed by cello, viola, and bass, which is most distorted. The effect is enhanced if each of the three upper string players is able to use two devices in close proximity to each other for their two calls, e.g. a Skype call on a phone and zoom on a laptop.