blank slate

Rosa Juritz

for string quartet (2020)

cisterns in memory
rivers in memory
pools in memory
always water in memory
wind in memory
whispering in memory

- Alejandra Pizarnik, Uncollected Poems (1962-1972)

Pizarnik's poem left a deep impression on me upon my first reading. Its simplistic, serene atmosphere projected delicate images of water and air clouded by memory into my head. Each miniature of 'blank slate' illustrates a line from this poem, attempting to depict its nature through a lens of fuzzy reminiscence.

'cisterns in memory' is inspired by the Basilica Cistern in Istanbul. Built in the 6th century during the reign of Byzantine emperor Justinian I, it is a 9800 square metre underground construction that was used to store and distil rainwater for the Great Palace of Constantinople. Despite its practical purpose, it has an almost church-like quality, and inside its walls it stores two Medusa heads, and a column engraved with hen's eyes, supposedly erected to memorialise the the lives of the slaves who died in the cistern's construction. This miniature is distant, with slightly warped, echoing, open intervals, illustrating the faint memory of an ancient structure.

'rivers in memory' is slightly more literal in its depiction. When examining river sounds, I was fascinated by the sound's sharpness. Rather than being fluid, the sound of a river is bitty and angular; water molecules crashing and clunking against each-other at high speeds. In this miniature I fuse the more literal river sound (pizzicato viola and cello) with the sound in our perceptions (the more free-flowing violins).

'pools in memory', simply put, uses a 'pool' of five notes. These are the only notes used in the miniature. The music does not progress, modify, or change itself in any way. It is still, unchanging, and without journey. It is simply a pool.

'always water in memory' creates a coalescence of the previous three miniatures and focusses on the depiction of 'memory'. Memory is deeply personal and created through our own perceptions of our experiences. It is not a constant: things get jumbled, our perception changes, there is little sense of time, and just as easily as they are created, memories are deleted. The miniature is disorganised and disorderly, and rather than specific details of water being played in perfect harmony, it attempts to remember the essence of what water is – much like how we remember our own experiences.

'wind in memory' and 'whispering in memory' both focus less on the innate musical material and more-so on creating a simplistic sound world to allow space for reflection; for memory.

Notation Key

S.T. Sul tasto
N Normal bow position
S.P. Sul ponticello

A rapid cascade with left-hand fingers barely touching the string, as playing if very fast-paced harmonics.

Use the left hand to stop notes on the fingerboard. Once note has been stopped, rapidly lift finger and let it ring slightly. This should be done sporadically, as if imitating singular droplets of water.

blank slate

cisterns in memory

Rosa Juritz

Very slow, spacious, and sustained. ♩ = 40

use subtle, slow vibrato when possible

Violin I

mp

use subtle, slow vibrato when possible, as if echoing violin I

S.T.

Violin II

p

use subtle, slow vibrato when possible as if echoing violin II

Viola

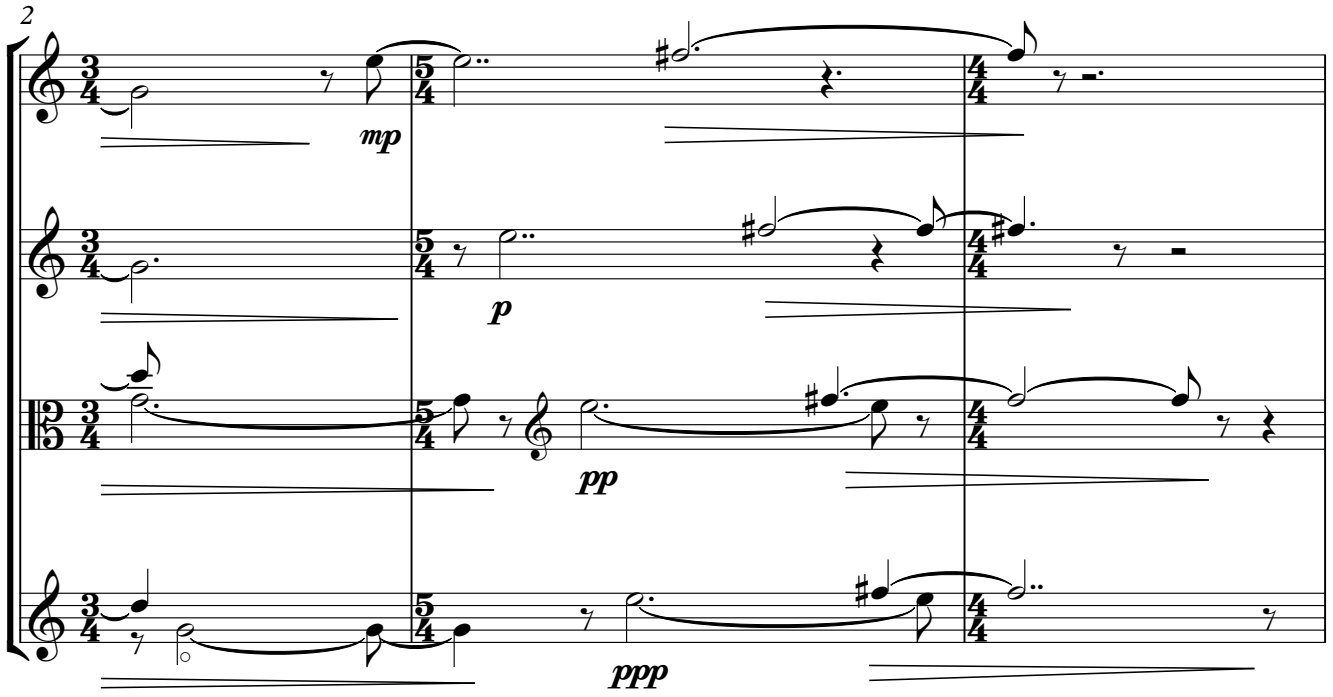
pp

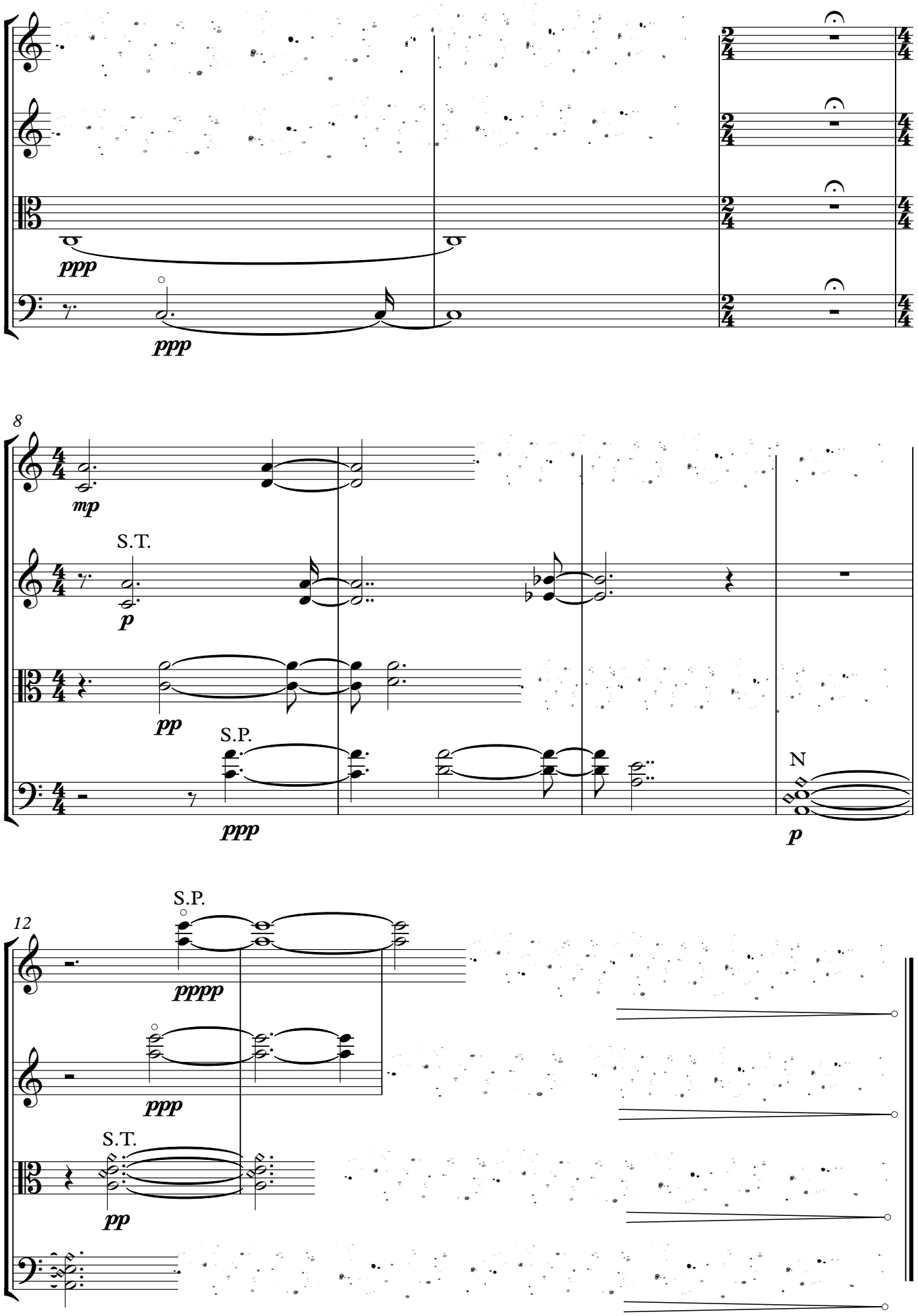
use subtle, slow vibrato when possible, as if echoing viola

S.P.

Violoncello

ppp




ppp
ppp
8
mp
S.T.
p
pp
S.P.
ppp
N
p
12
S.P.
pppp
ppp
S.T.
pp

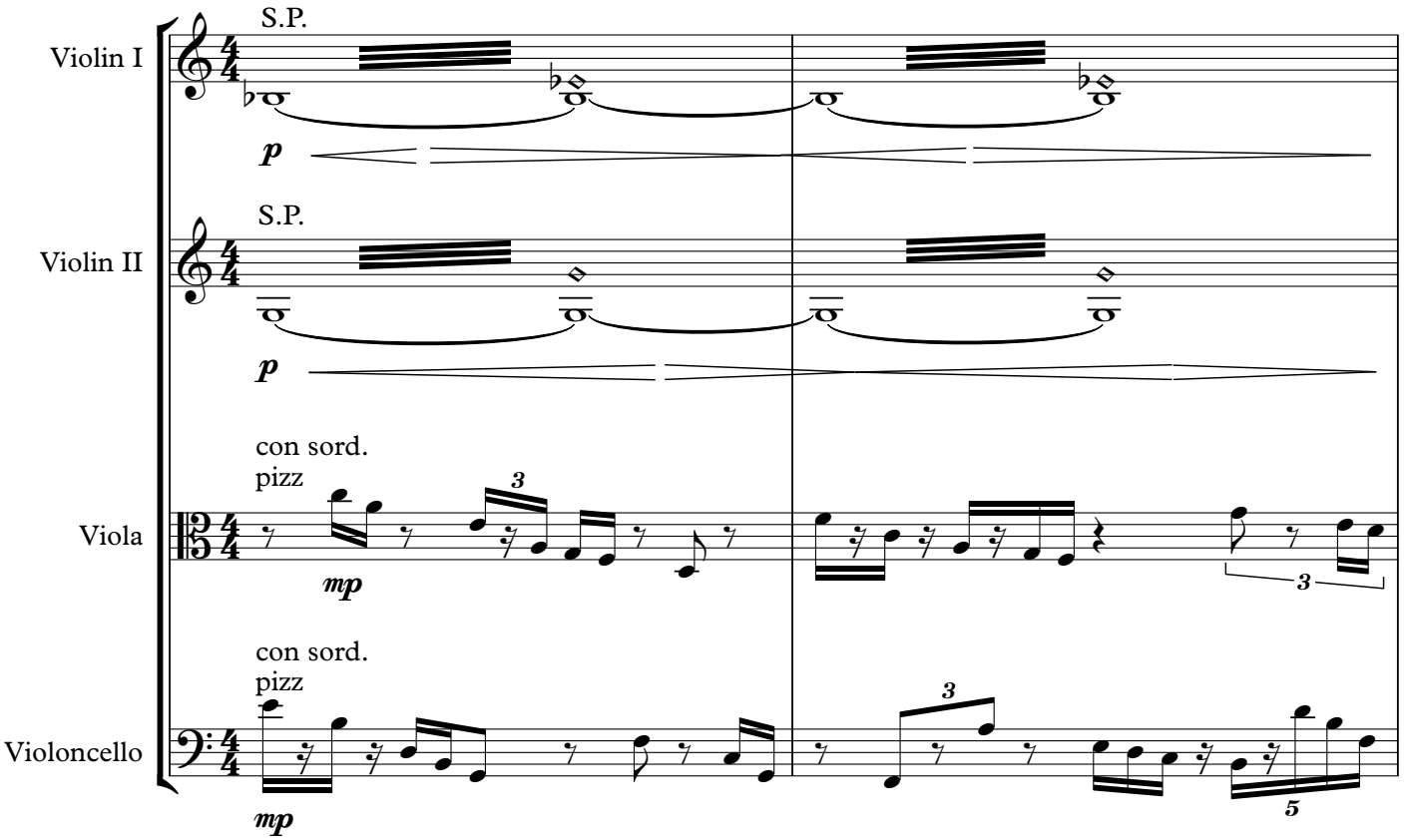
blank slate

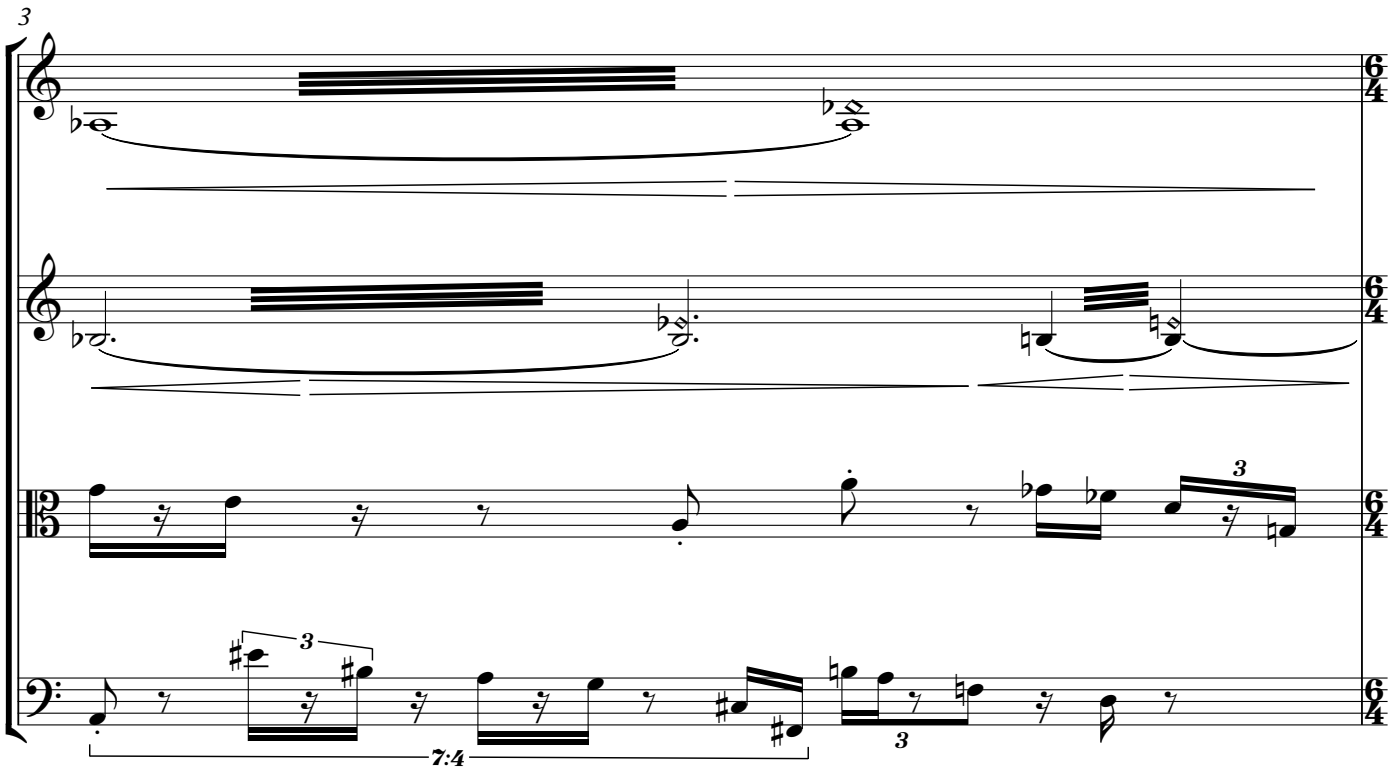
rivers in memory

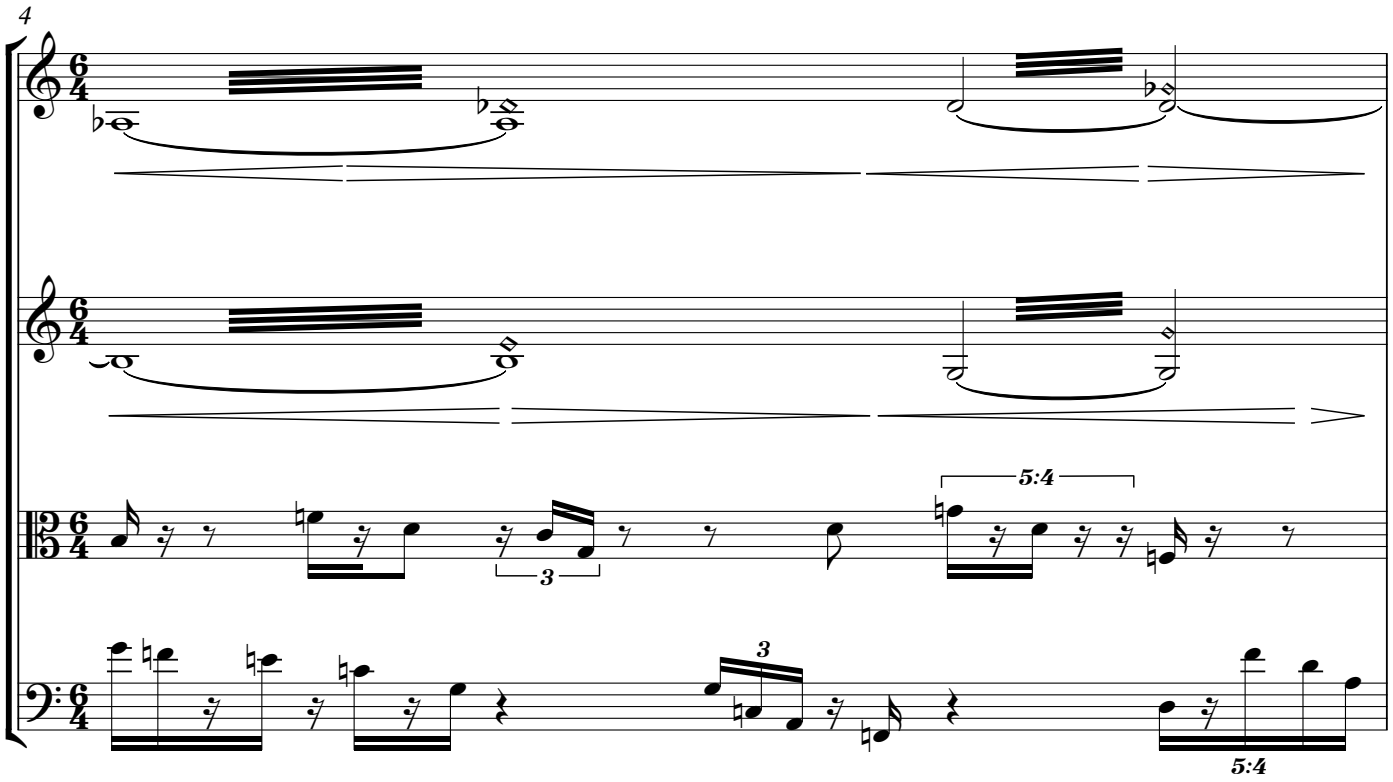
Rosa Juritz

Free flowing

♩ = 70



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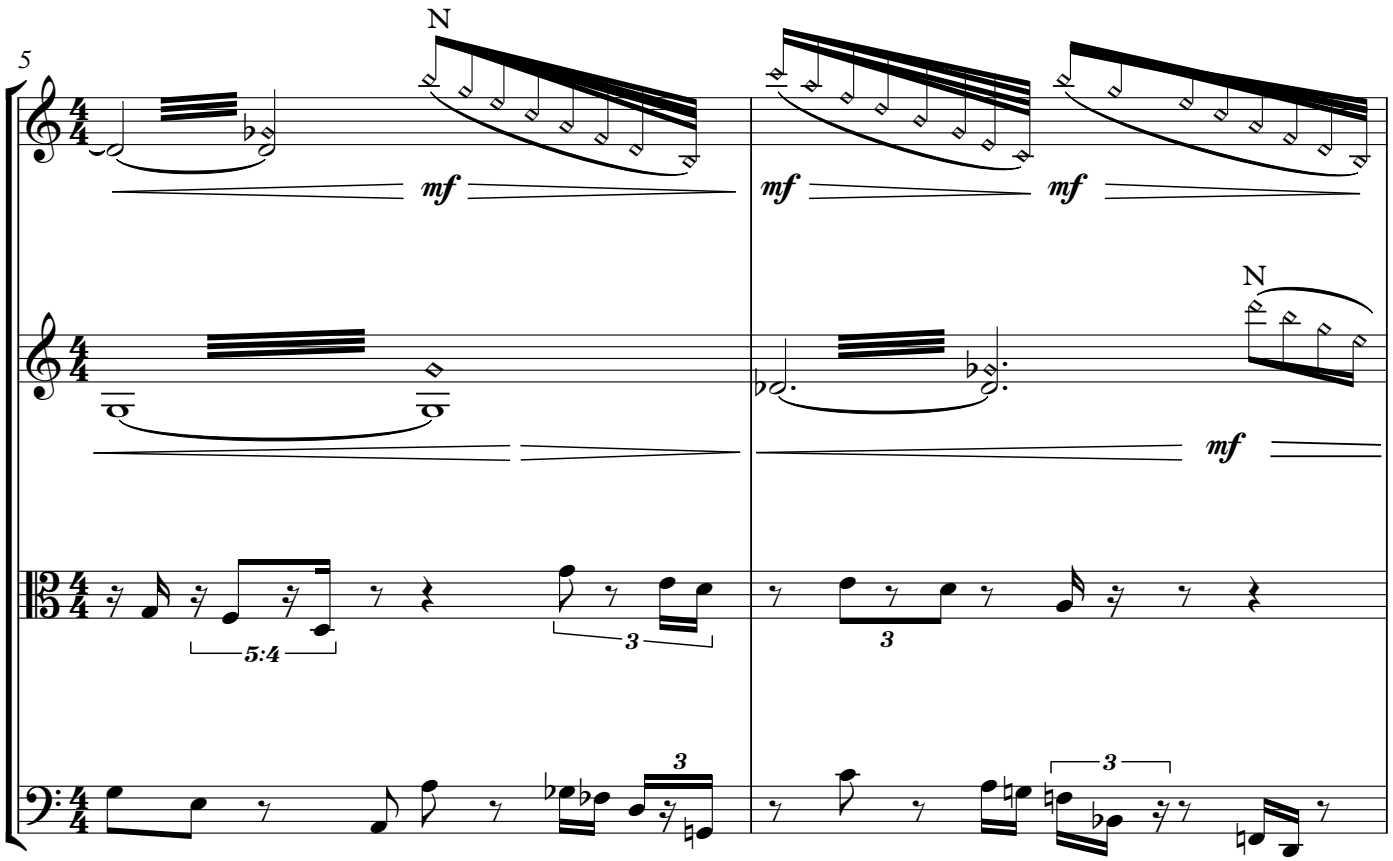
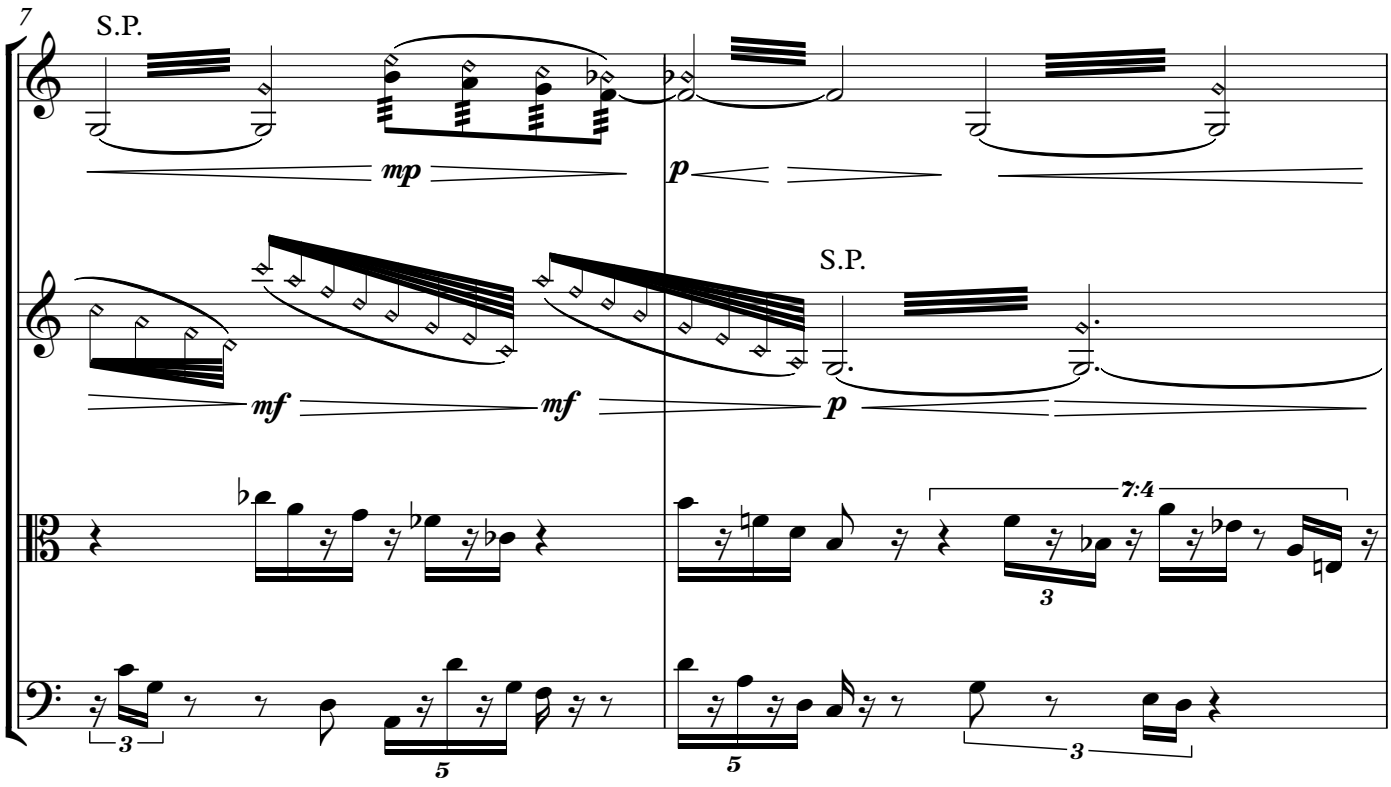
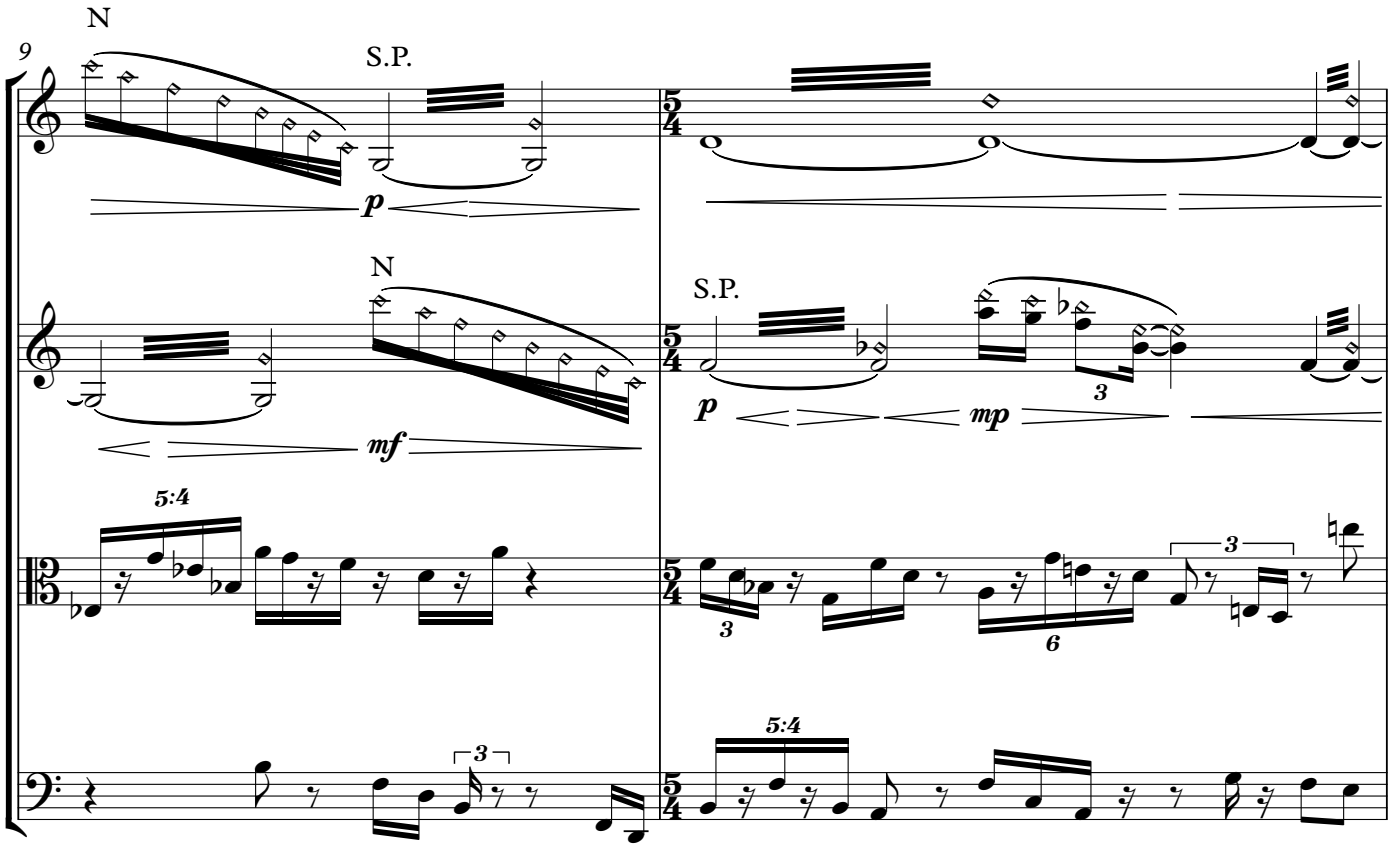
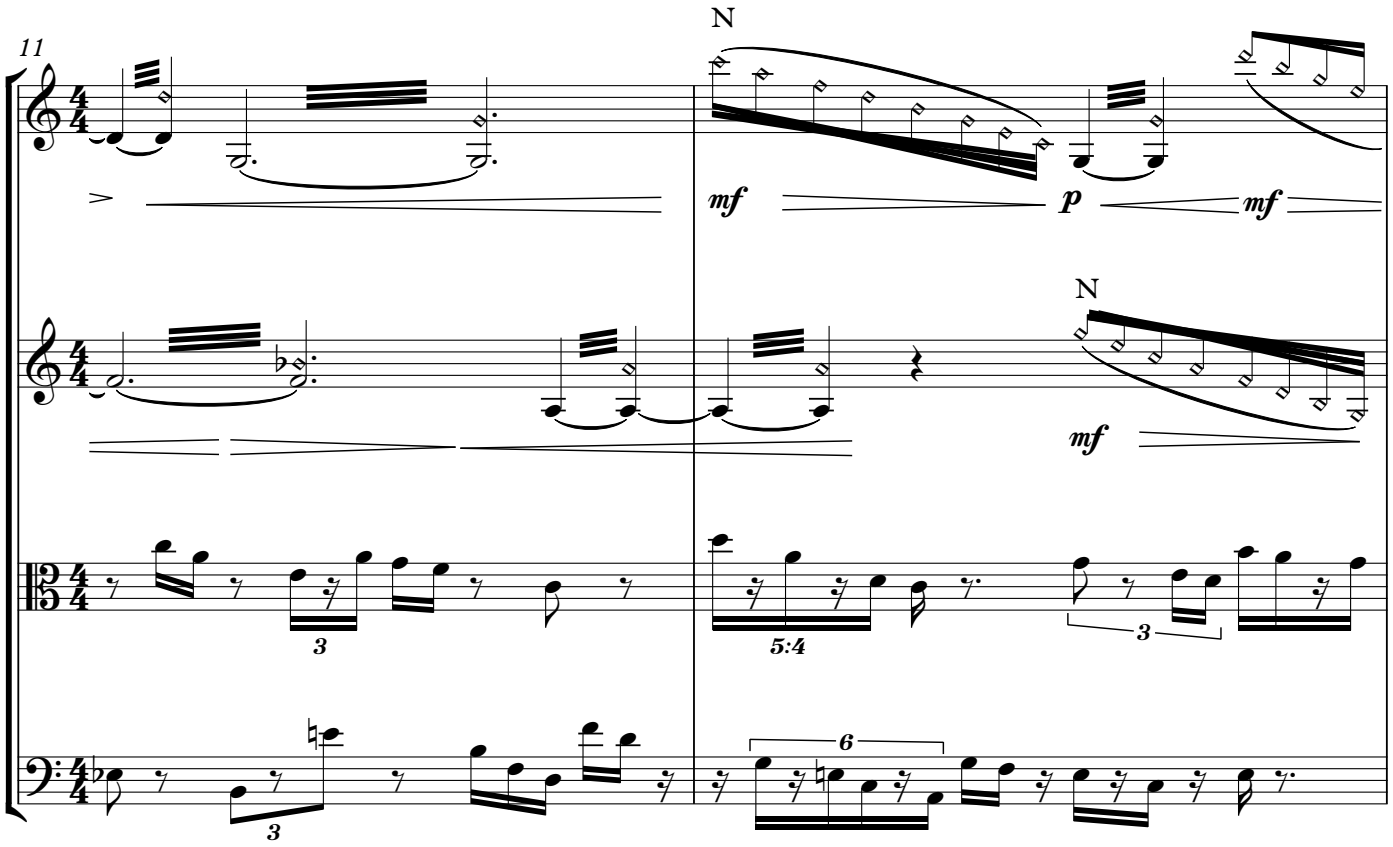
3
3
5:4


5
N
mf
mf
mf
N
mf
5:4
3
3
3
3


7
S.P.
mp
p
S.P.
mf
mf
p
7:4
3
3
5
5
3


9
N
S.P.
p
N
S.P.
mf
p
mp
3
5:4
3
6
3
5:4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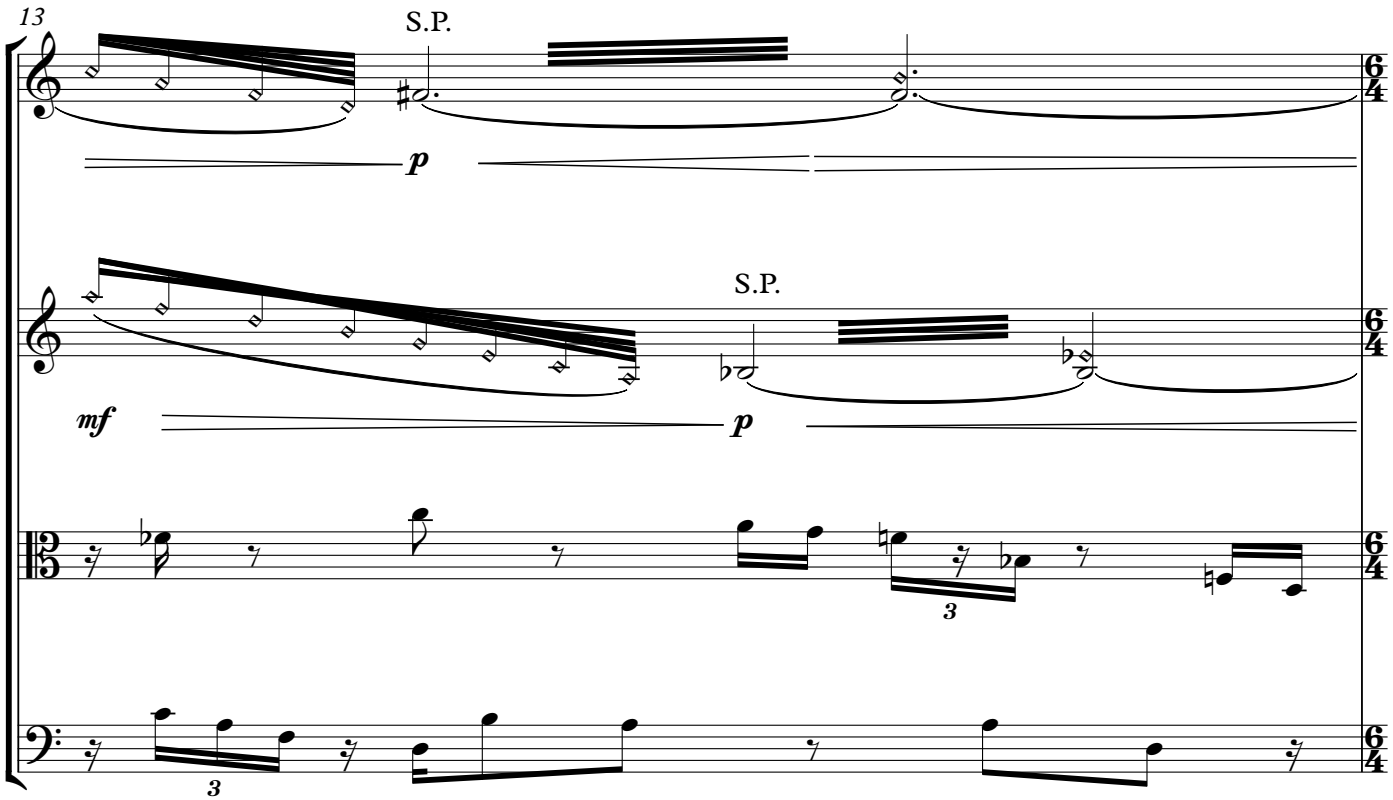
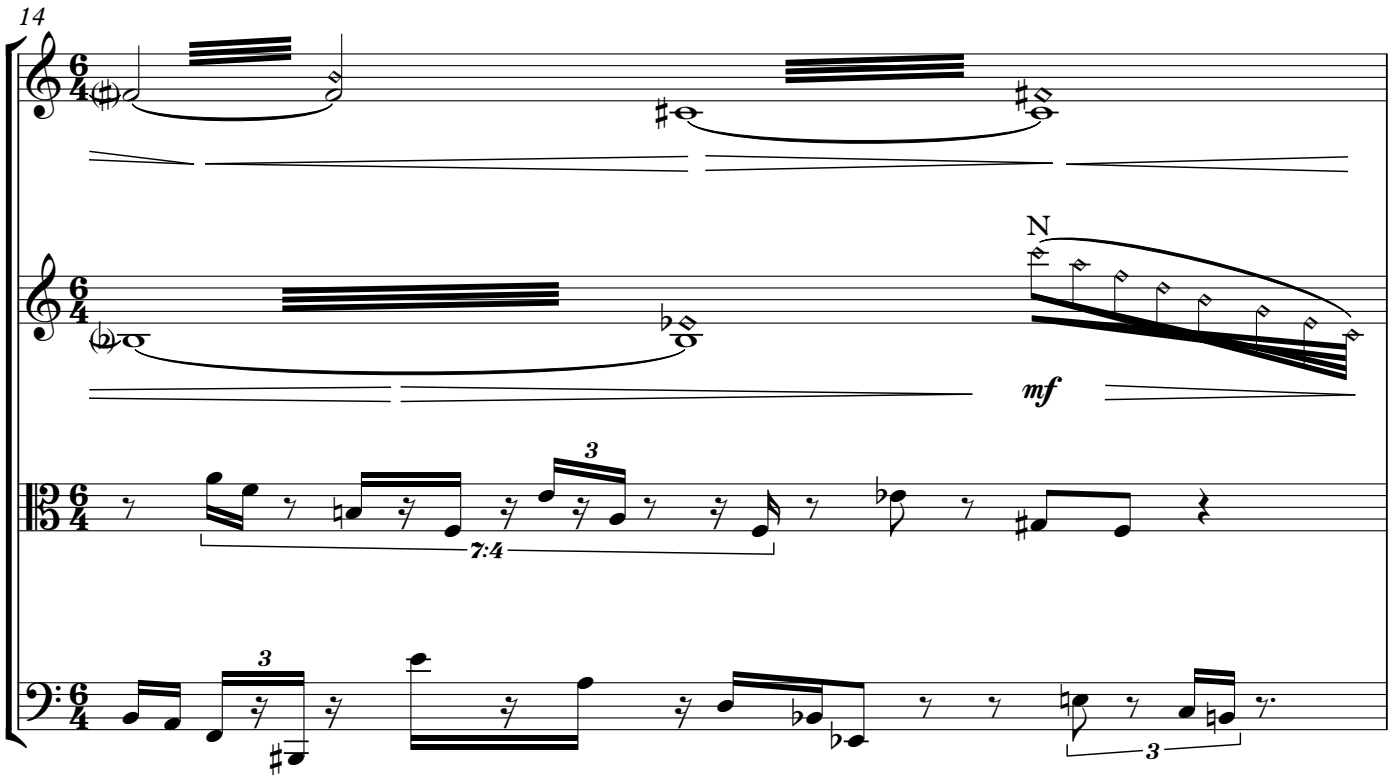
N
mf
p
mf
N
mf
3
5:4
3
6
3


13
S.P.
p
S.P.
mf
p
3
6/4
6/4
6/4
6/4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N
mf
3
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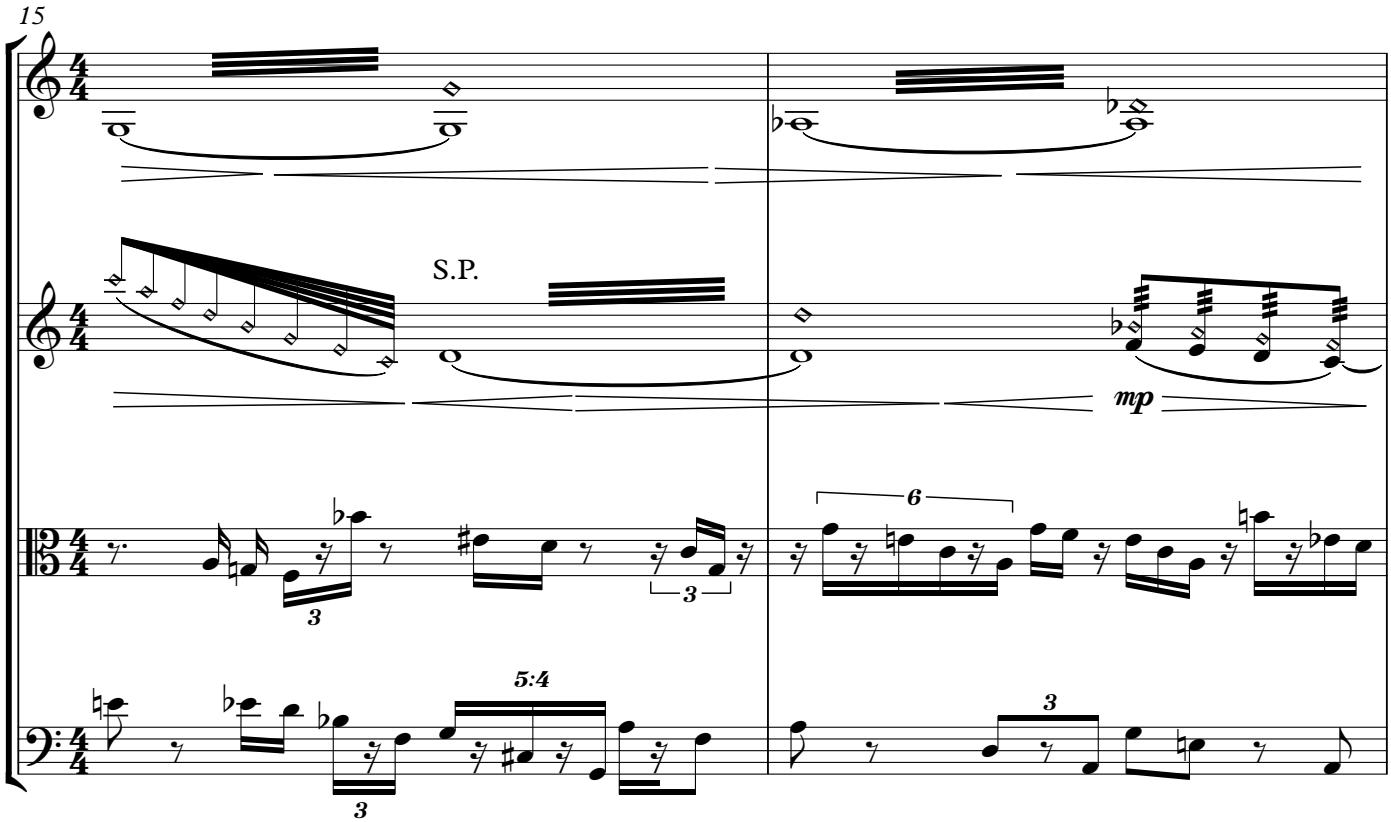
3
3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S.P.
mp
6
3
3
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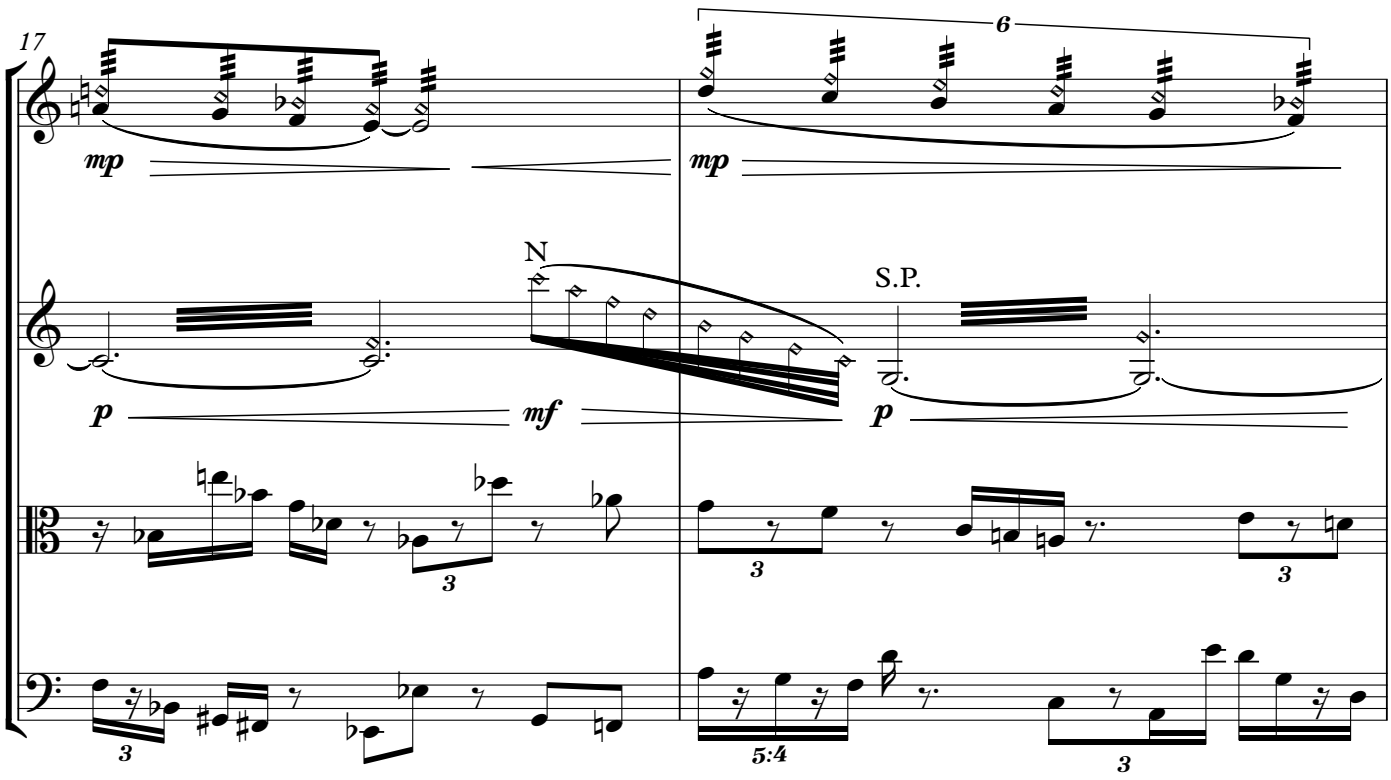
3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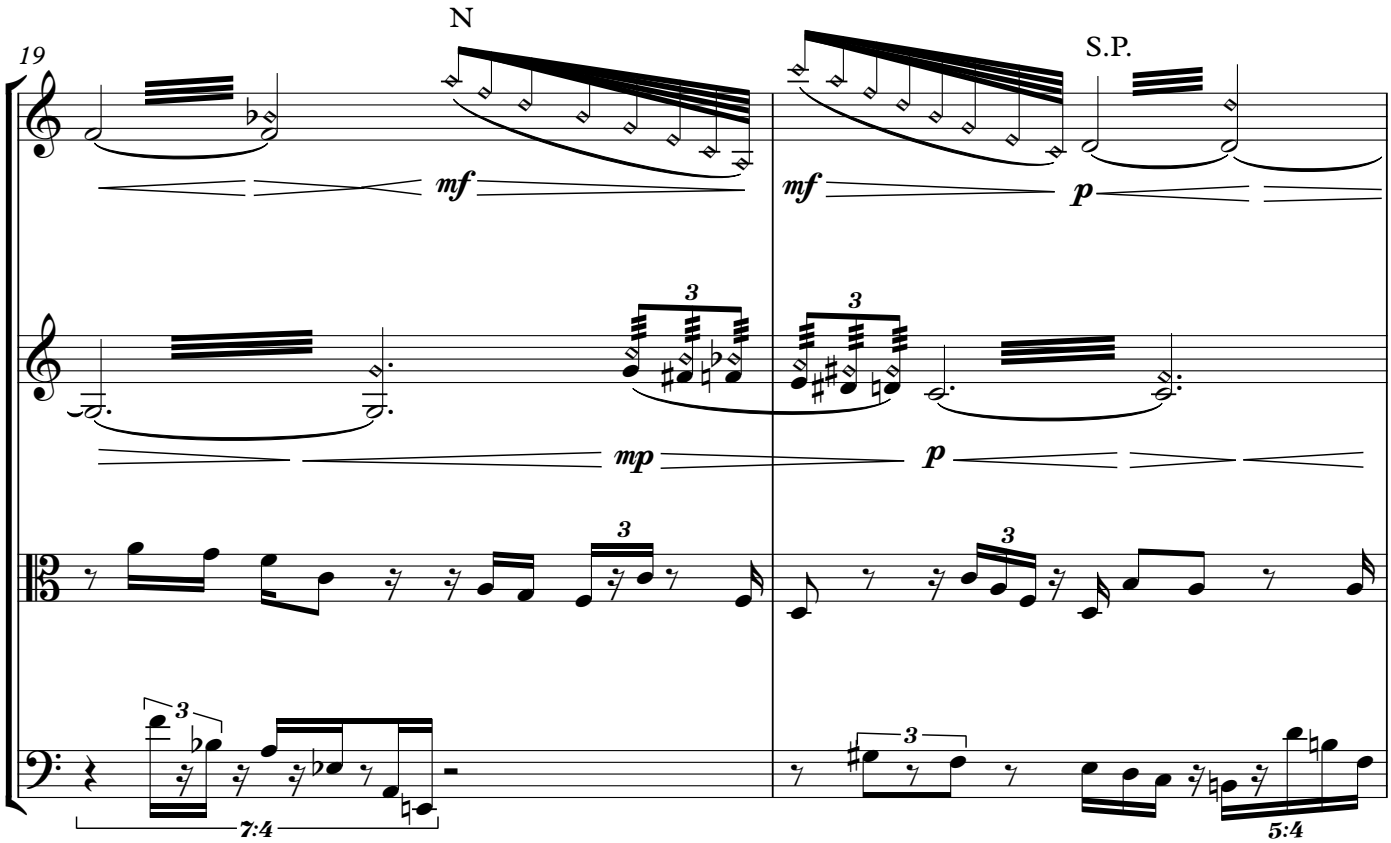
6
mp
mp
N
S.P.
p
mf
p
3
3
3
5:4
3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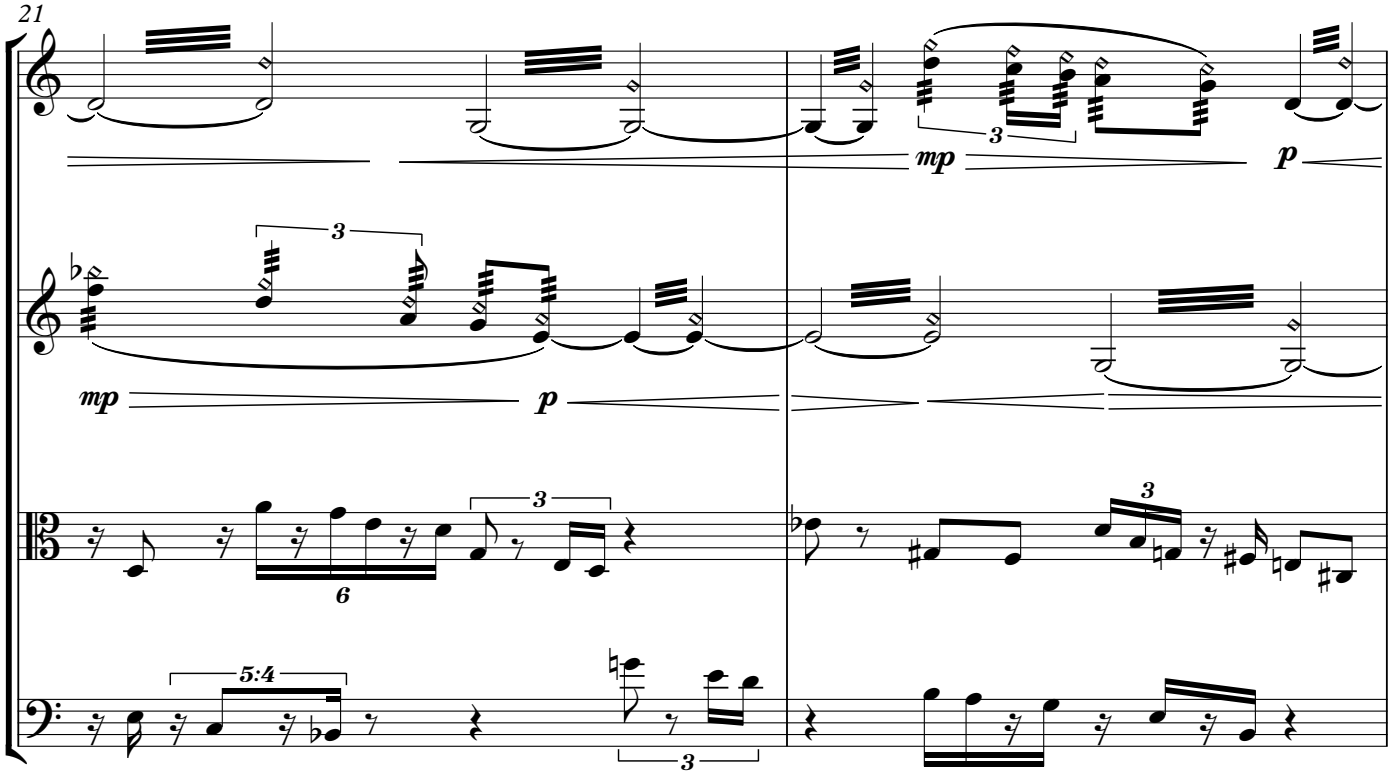
N
S.P.
mf
mf
p
3
3
mp
p
3
3
7:4
3
5:4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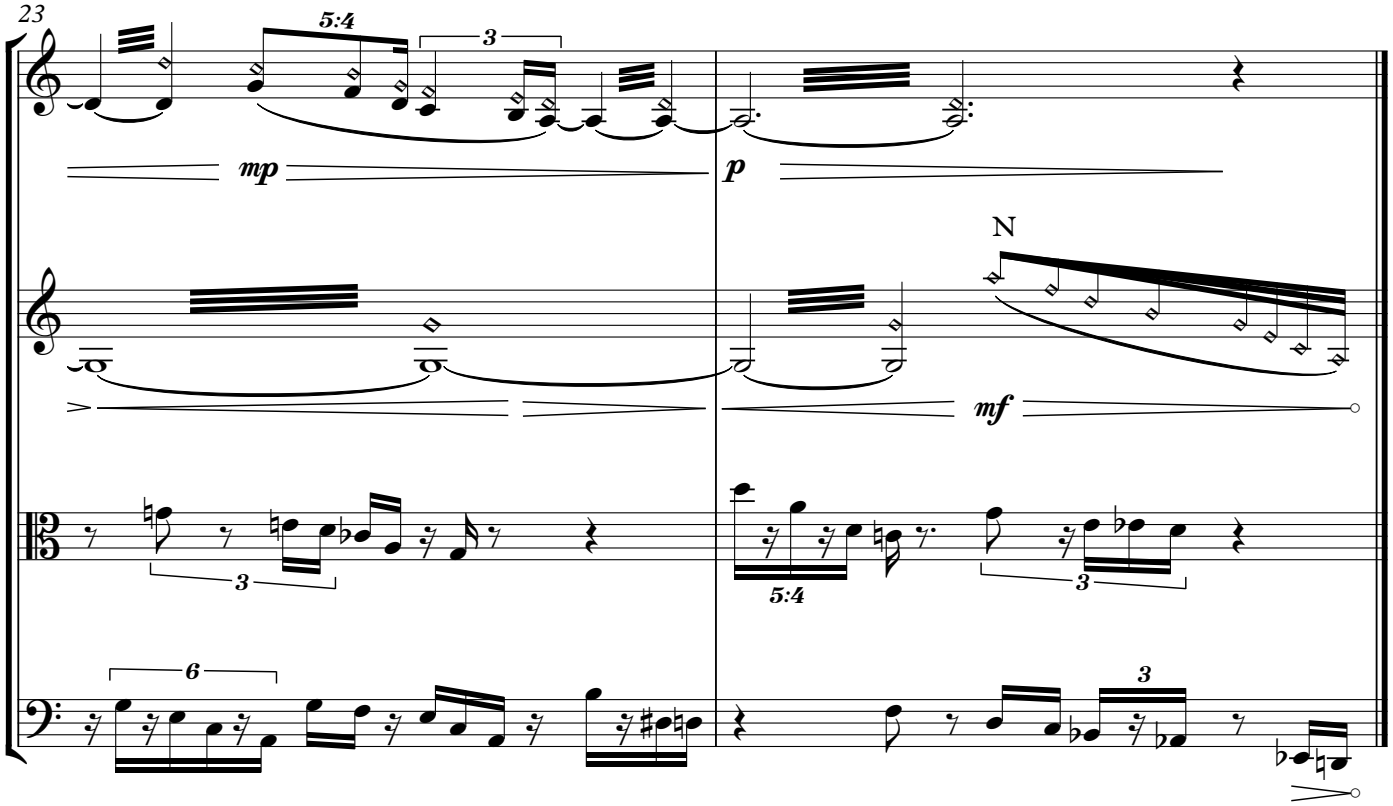
mp
p
mp
p
3
6
5:4
3
3
3


23
5:4
3
mp
p
N
mf
3
5:4
3
6
3

blank slate
pools in memory

Rosa Juritz

Still, peaceful ♩ = 45

Violin I

no vibrato. as still and sustained as possible.

pp

Violin II

no vibrato. as still and sustained as possible.

pp

Viola

no vibrato. as still and sustained as possible.
senza sord.

pp

Violoncello

no vibrato. as still and sustained as possible.
senza sord.

pp

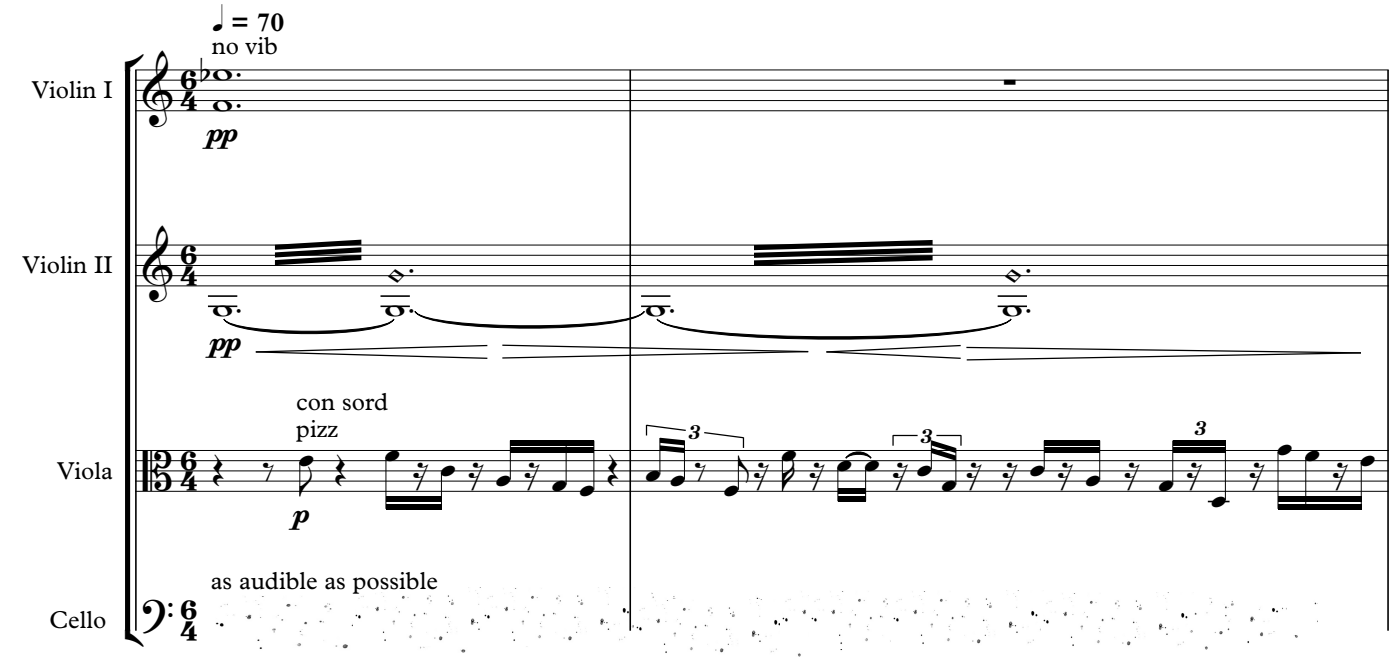
4

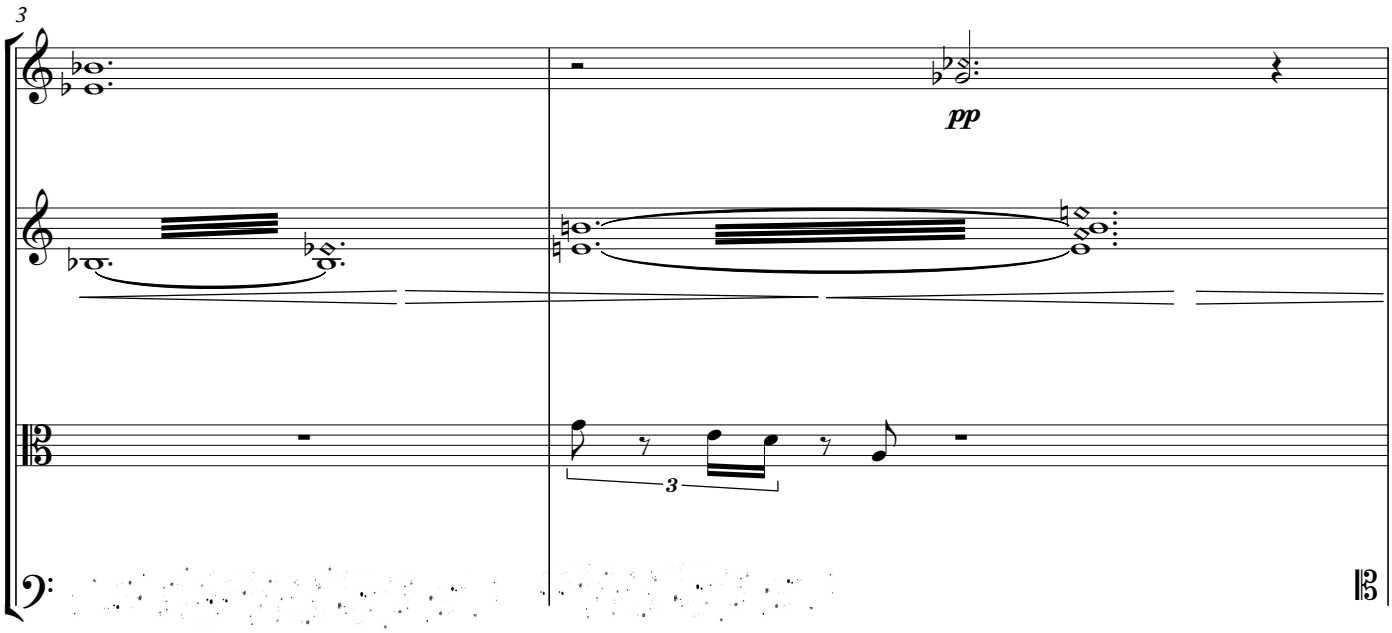
7

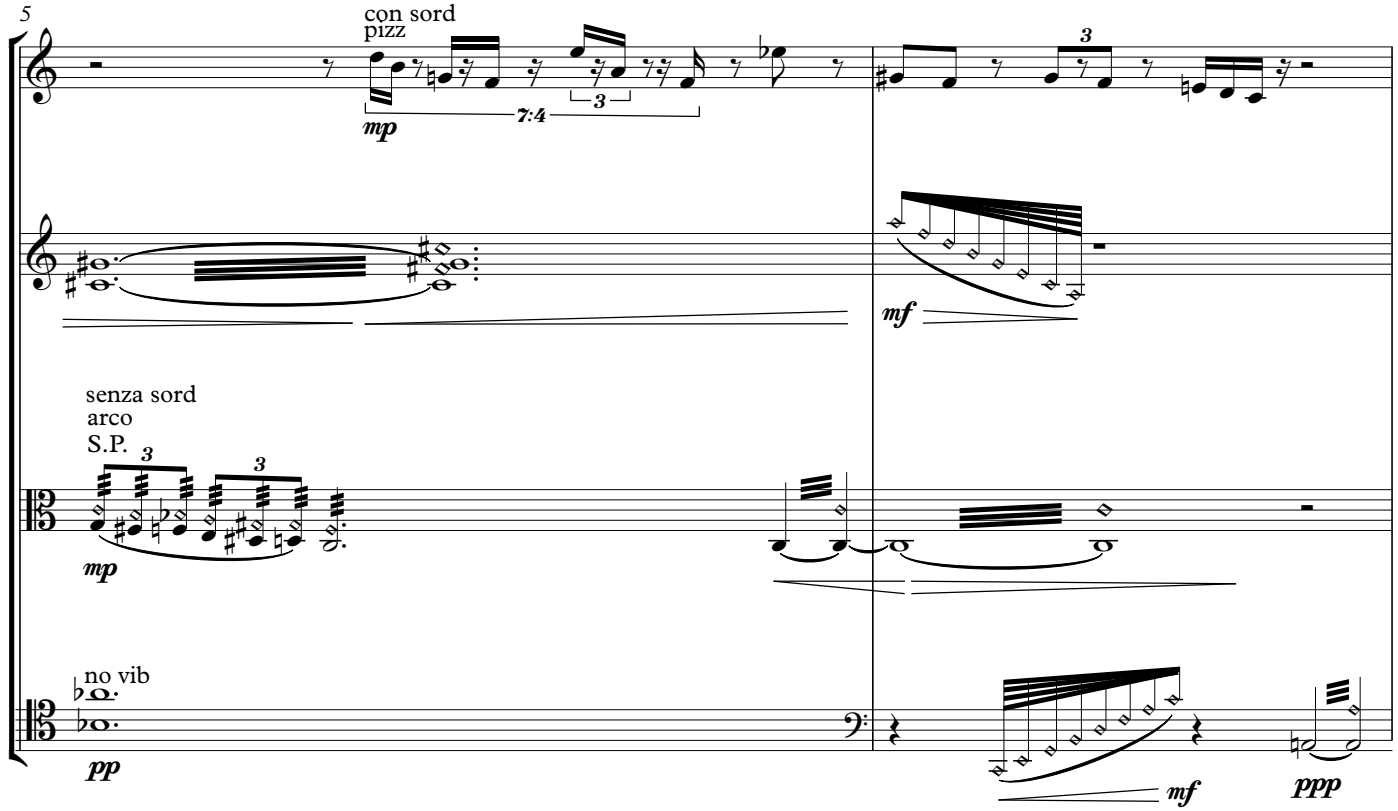
blank slate

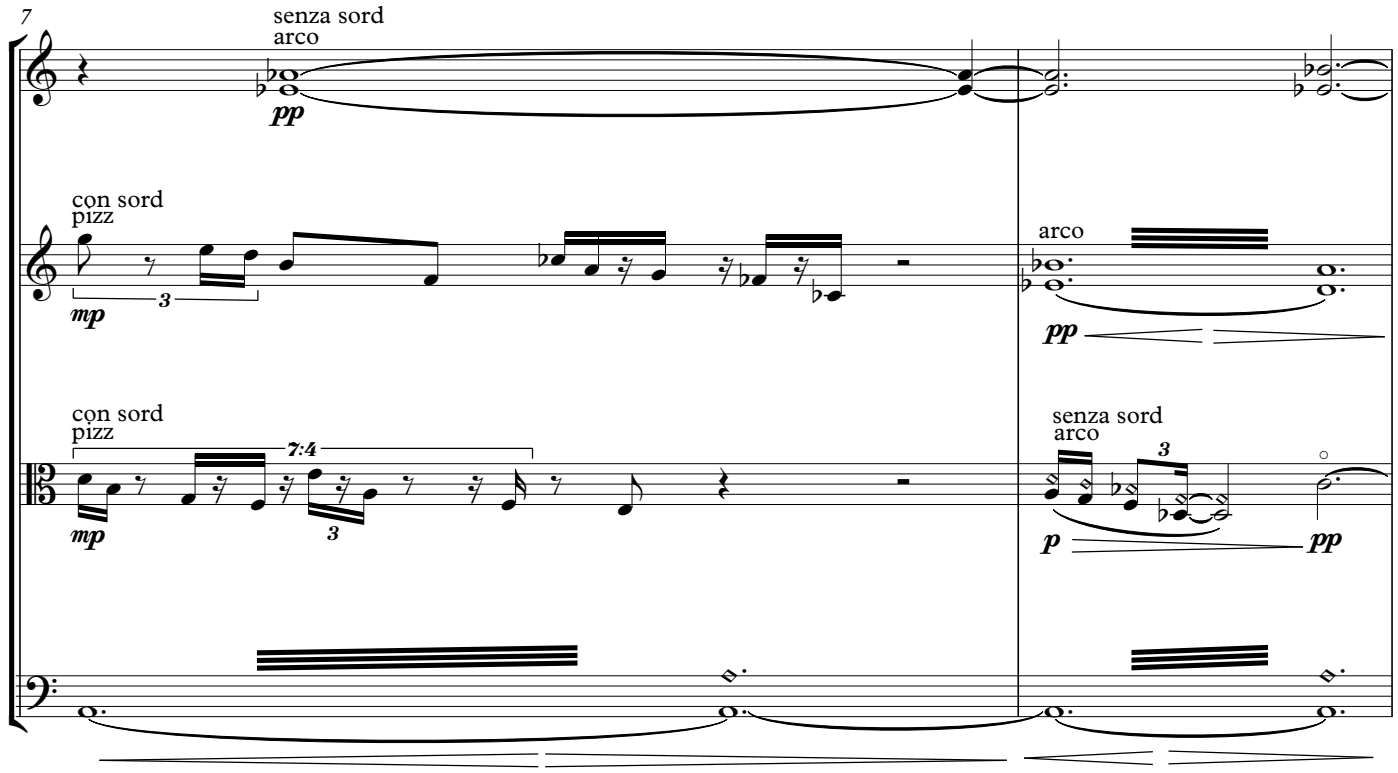
always water in memory

Rosa Juritz

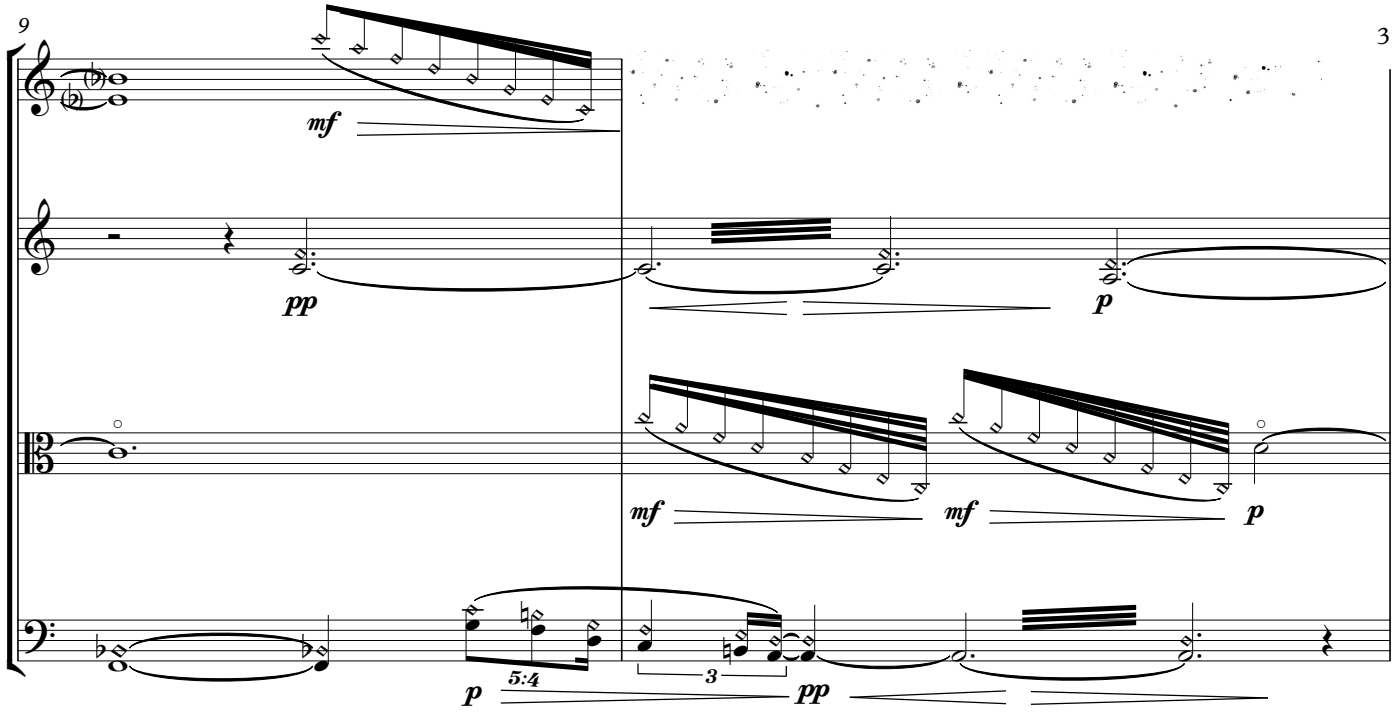


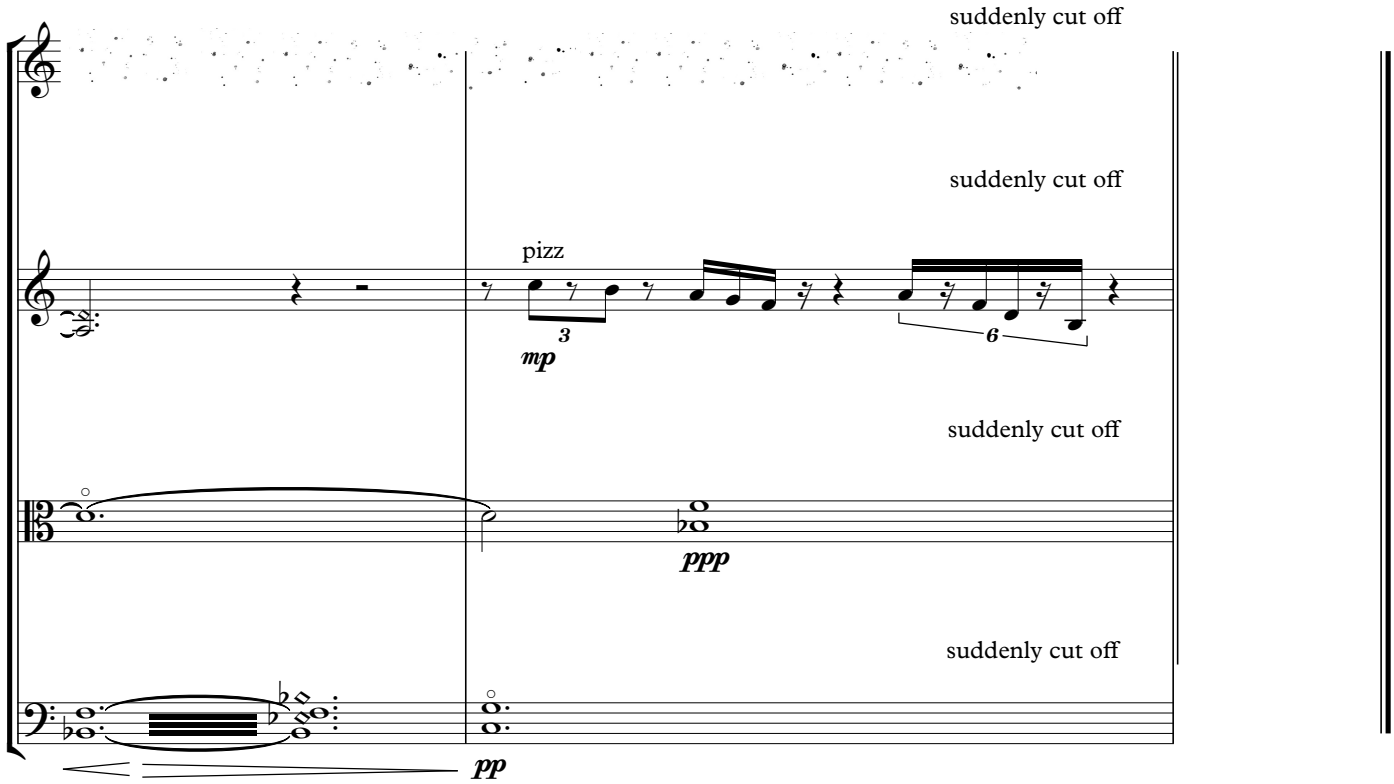



5
con sord
pizz
mp
7:4
3
mf
senza sord
arco
S.P.
mp
no vib
pp
mf
ppp


7
senza sord
arco
pp
con sord
pizz
mp
arco
pp
con sord
pizz
mp
7:4
senza sord
arco
p
pp

9


mf
pp
p
mf
mf
p
5:4
3
p
pp

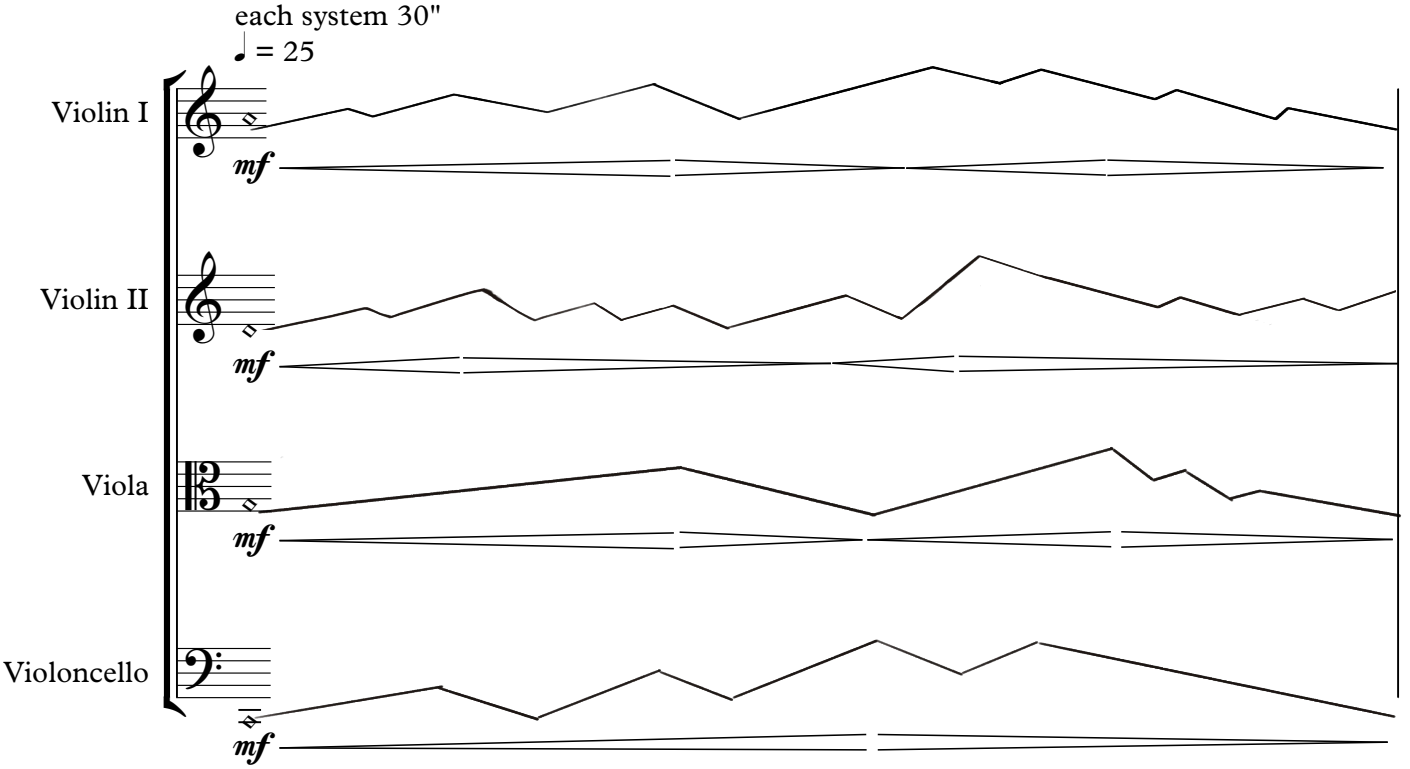

suddenly cut off
suddenly cut off
pizz
3
mp
6
suddenly cut off
ppp
suddenly cut off
pp

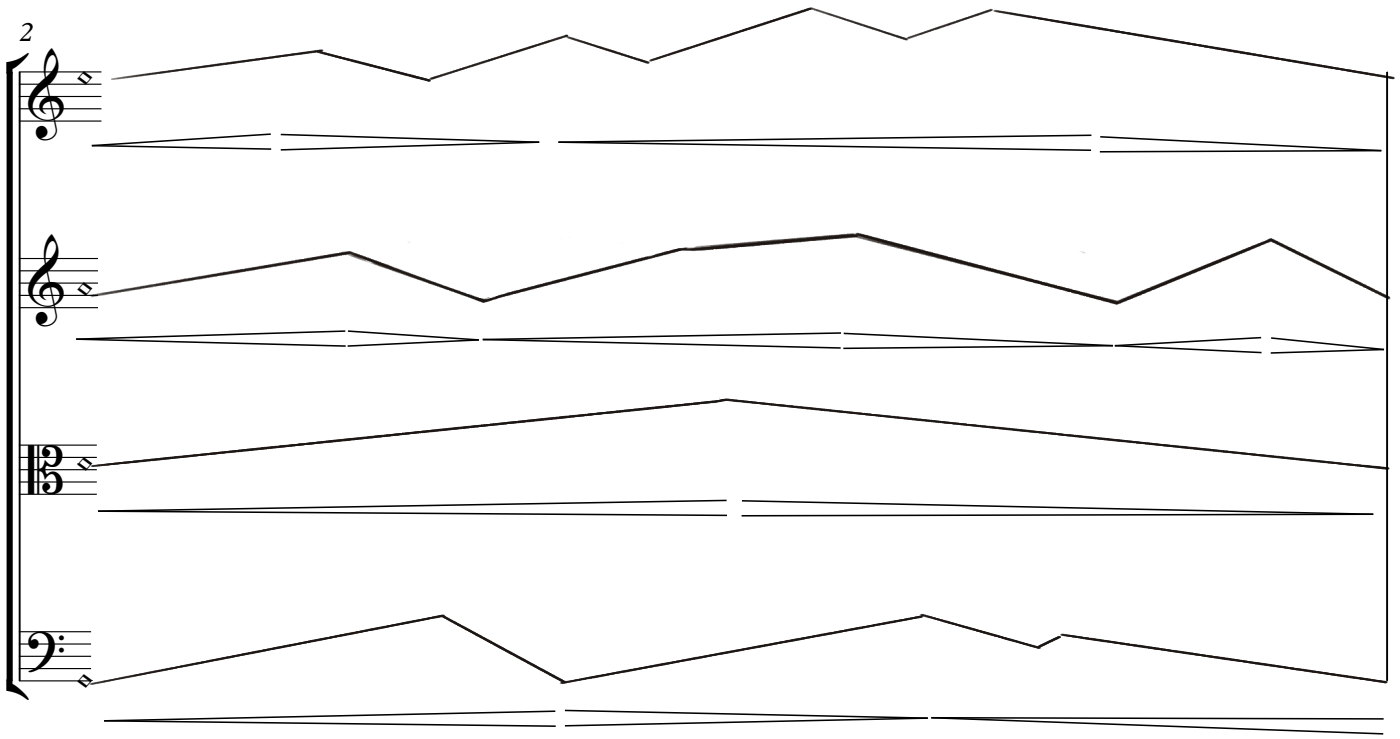
wind in memory

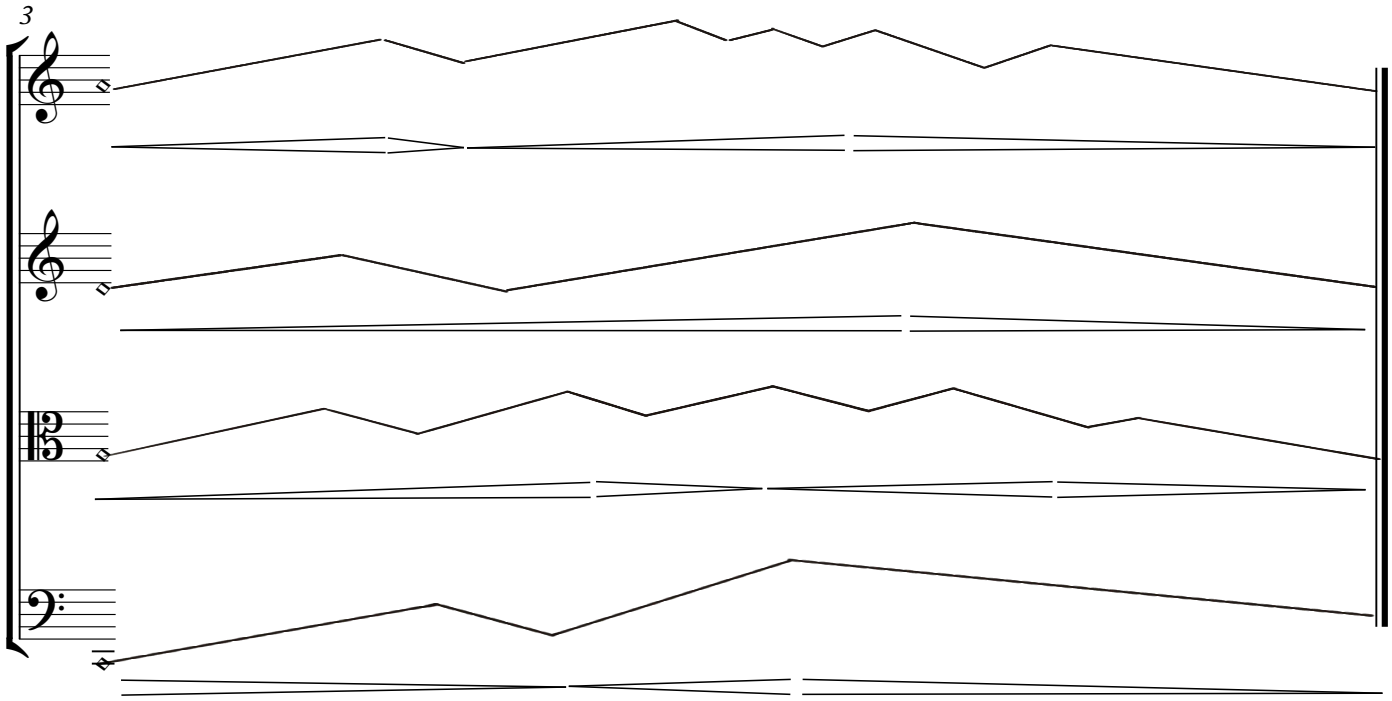
blank slate

Rosa Juritz

on the string stated at the beginning of each system,
move your left handed finger, with as light a touch as possible, up and down
the fingerboard of your instrument in accordance to the lines' direction.





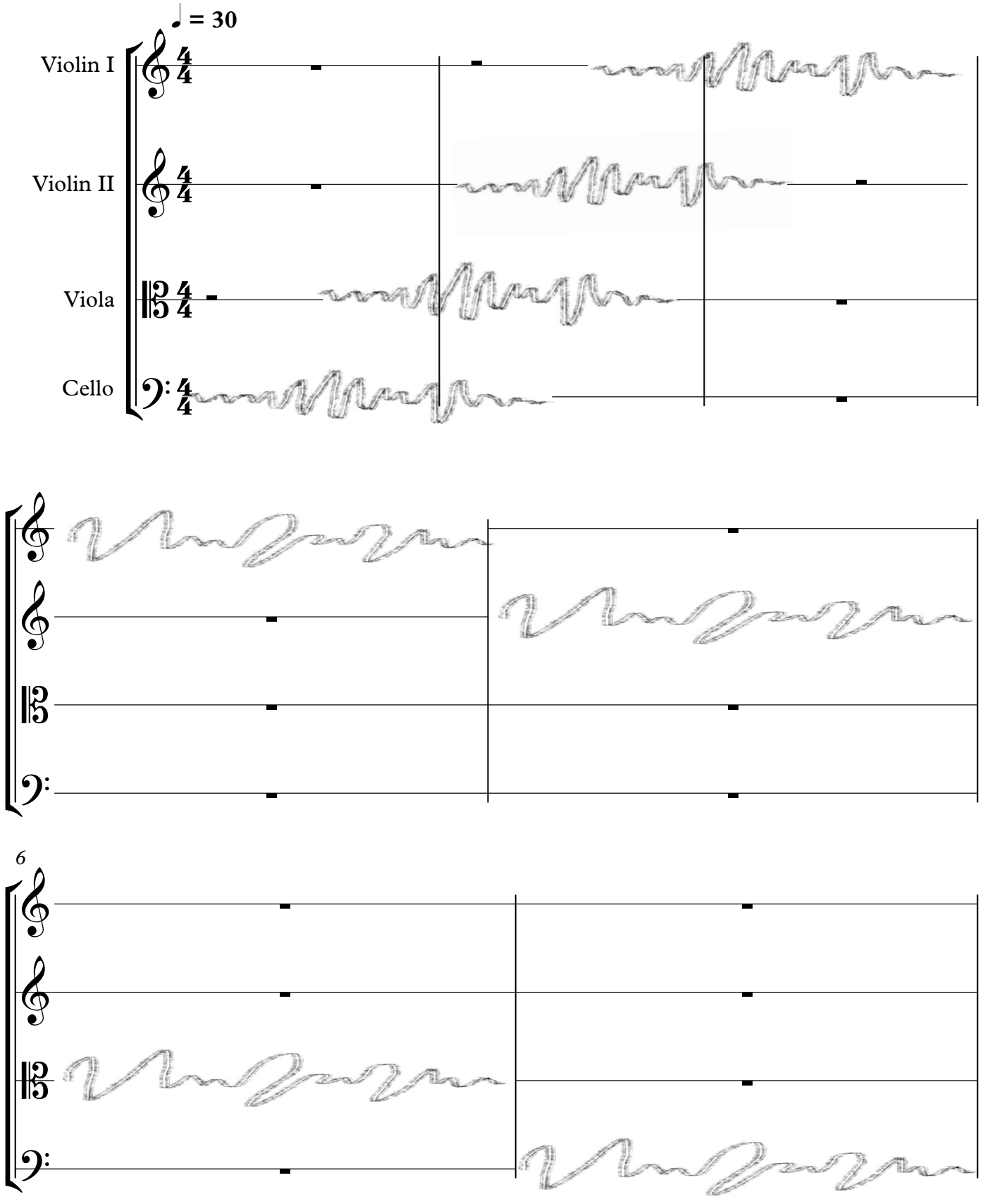

3

blank slate

whispering in memory

bow the body of your instrument followin the notated lines.
listen to your fellow players.
follow beats loosely. play based on feeling.
"whisper" what you have just heard on to the next player.

Rosa Juritz



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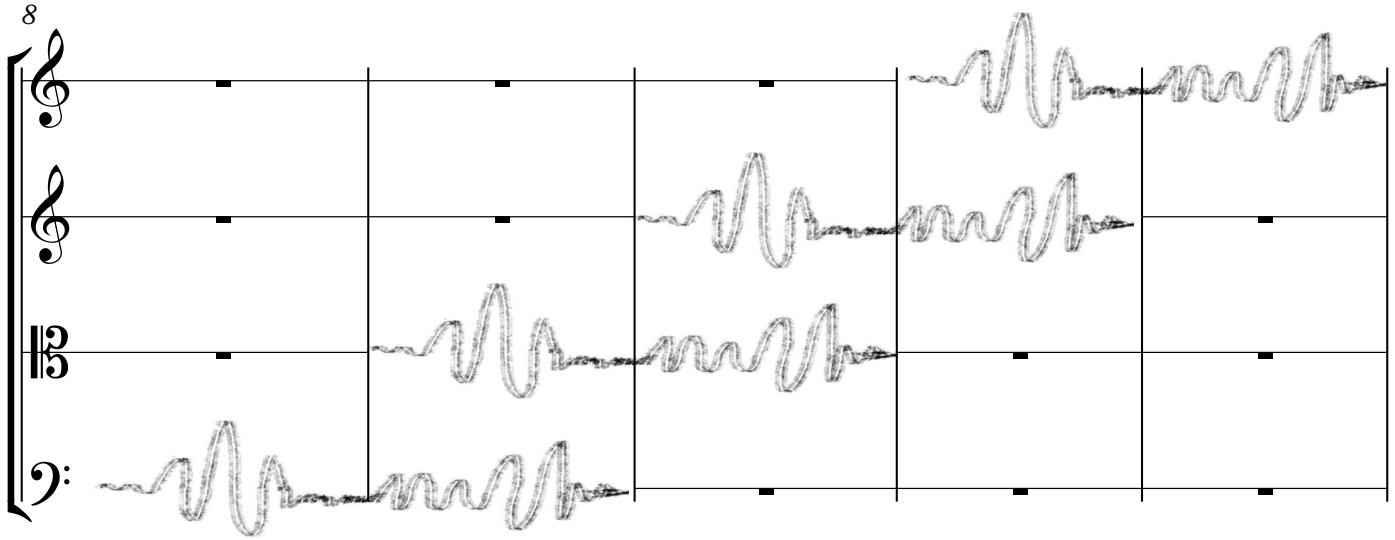

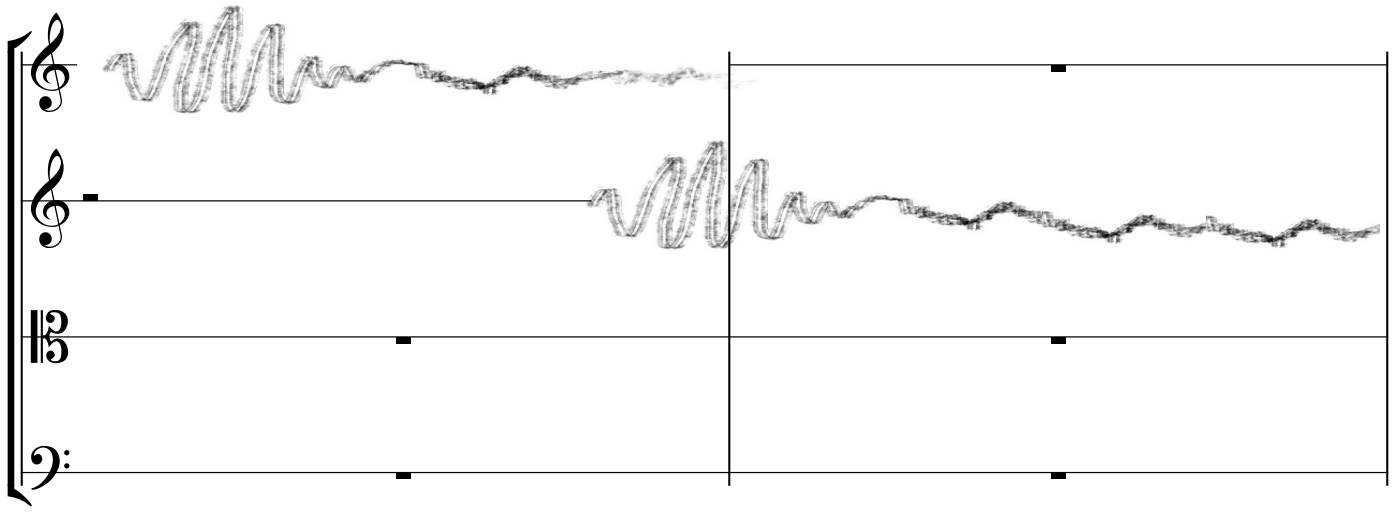
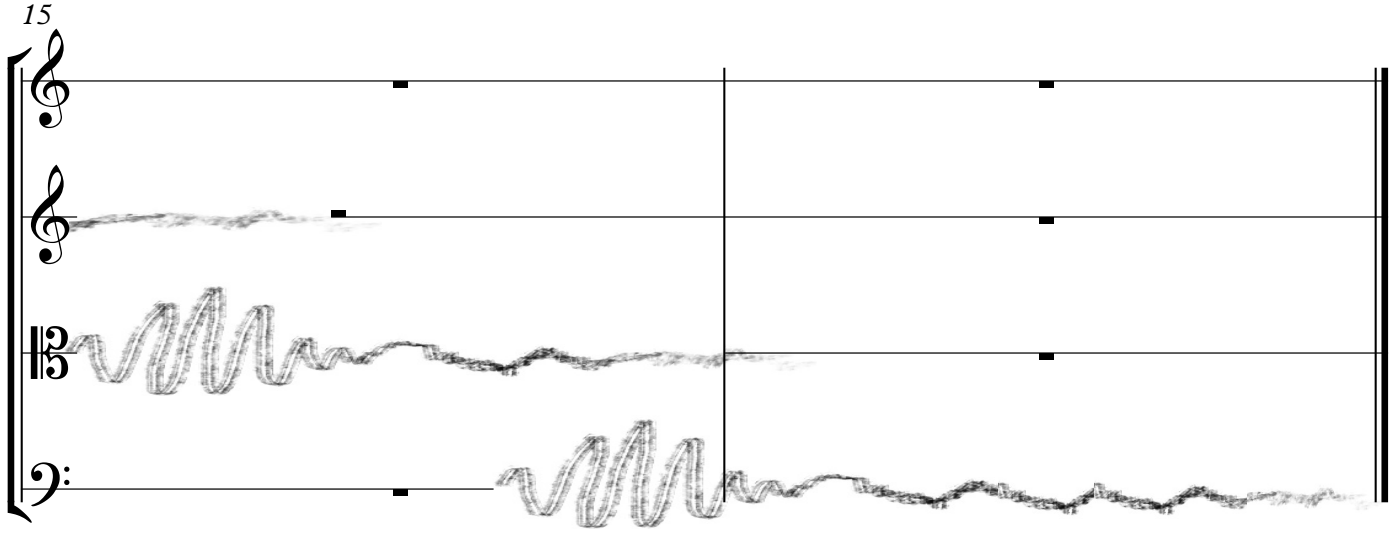
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