Frances White

Winter Aconites

for b-flat clarinet, vibraphone,
electric guitar, piano, cello, bass,
and tape

Comissioned by the ASCAP Foundation
and the Bang On A Can Festival

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This piece consists of long, quiet, sustained tones (the instrument parts) placed within a particular sonic ambience or "landscape" (the tape part). The effect should be of the tape sounds "coming out of" the instrument sounds -- or, conversely, of the players listening deeply and then trying to hear their places in the landscape. The combination of tape and live sounds should have an overall quality of quiet intensity, necessity, and wholeness. In order to achieve this, the performers should devote most of their practice time to listening to the tape part. By doing this, each player can develop a sense of the pacing of the piece and of his or her part within the musical whole. It is vital to the spirit of the work that the performers follow an intuitive, musical sense of time and should absolutely avoid any feeling of a mechanical, strictly-measured clock-time.

Tape playback

Because the tape sounds should "come from" the instrument sounds, the level of the tape should be very soft -- at its softest parts, almost inaudible. The instruments are generally quite soft, too, but they should always be more present than the tape sounds. In concert, all the instruments should be amplified very slightly and mixed with the tape playback. This is purely for the purpose of blending the instrumental and tape sounds: the instruments should never sound "amplified".

Notes on the score

Each system represents a duration of 30 seconds. The elapsed time in minutes and seconds (as measured from the start of the tape) is given at the start of each system.

Tape
Only the approximate pitches and attack points of the most prominent sounds of the tape are notated. This notation is meant to serve as a guide for the players—a mnemonic—rather than as a full representation of the contents of the tape. The passage starting at 10:30 (page 11) is particularly dense. No attempt has been made to notate this part, since the players will probably want to find their own cues.

Instruments
Notes are shown as whole notes with horizontal lines extending from them giving their durations. Crosses mark cutoffs. The placement of the notes in time—both entrances and cutoffs—is approximate (accurate to within a few seconds). All notes should emerge and recede gradually, with no abrupt attack or cutoff. Entrances given in the score show where to start producing sound; cutoffs indicate the time by which sound has ceased.

In the score, all instruments are written at sounding pitch, including the clarinet, guitar, and bass (the parts are transposed).

Notes on the parts

B-flat Clarinet
The clarinet should always enter with no attack, and should be played with a completely pure sound (no vibrato) throughout.

Vibraphone
All vibraphone notes are bowed. The motor is OFF throughout. Bowing should be very slow, and bow changes should be as imperceptible as possible. Aim for as sustained a sound as possible. Use the pedal at all times.

Electric guitar
The guitarist will need a reverb unit and, optionally, a volume pedal. The treble tone control of the electric guitar should be turned down—aim for a dark sound. All notes should be passed through the reverb unit. The reverb time should be set rather long, and the output should be mostly reverberated signal. The intent is for the sound to be softened and smoothed by the reverb, but never "echo-y".

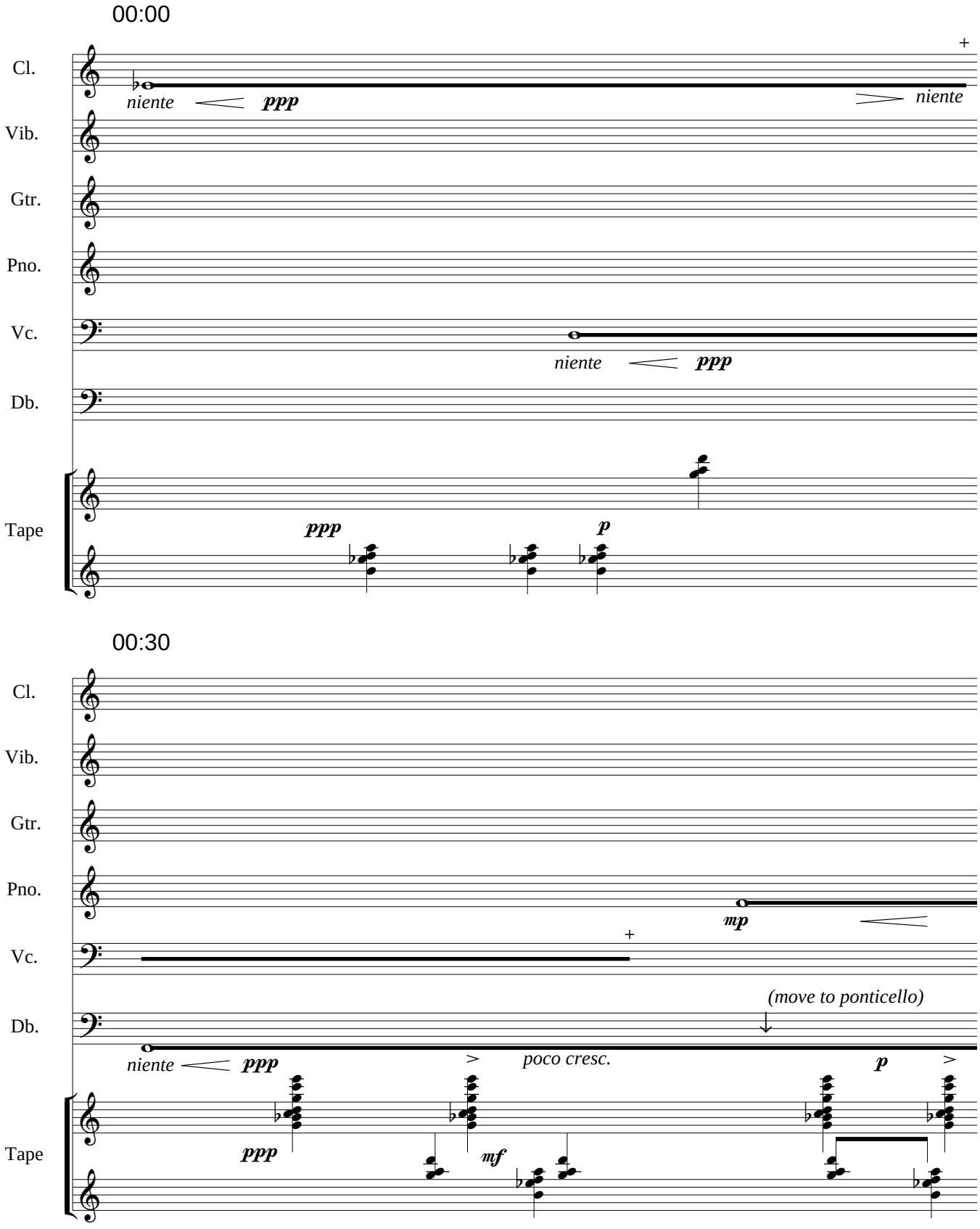
All guitar notes should be played as tremolos. The tremolos should be plucked with the fingers, with as soft, consistent, and sustained a sound as possible. At the same time, the character of each note should be intense—although quiet and soft, always focused and with sustained energy. The speed of the tremolos (fast) should be kept even. Avoid any attacks. The sound to aim for is like the sustained lines of flamenco-style tremolos. Where a note is marked to fade in or out to *niente*, use the volume pedal if necessary.

Piano
The piano part consists of four notes to be bowed inside the piano. To create the bows, use bundles of about 6 or 7 strands of cello bow-hair tied together at both ends. Use a lot of rosin on each bow to get a good degree of "grip" on the strings. Make a bow for each of the 4 notes, and thread them before the performance. After each note has been played, its bow can be moved out of the way of the others. To bow the piano, use a slow, relaxed, fairly even motion. Use enough pressure to allow harmonics to sing, but avoid creating a strident or tense sound. The dynamic of the bowed piano should be watched carefully—it should be full, but never overpowering. The pedal should be held throughout each note until the sound dies away.

Strings
The strings play without vibrato throughout. Bowing should be slow, and bow changes should be as imperceptible as possible. Where there are changes from *ordinario* to *sul ponticello*, allow the timbre change to happen gradually, beginning at the point marked in the part with an arrow.

In memory of John Cage

Winter Aconites Frances White



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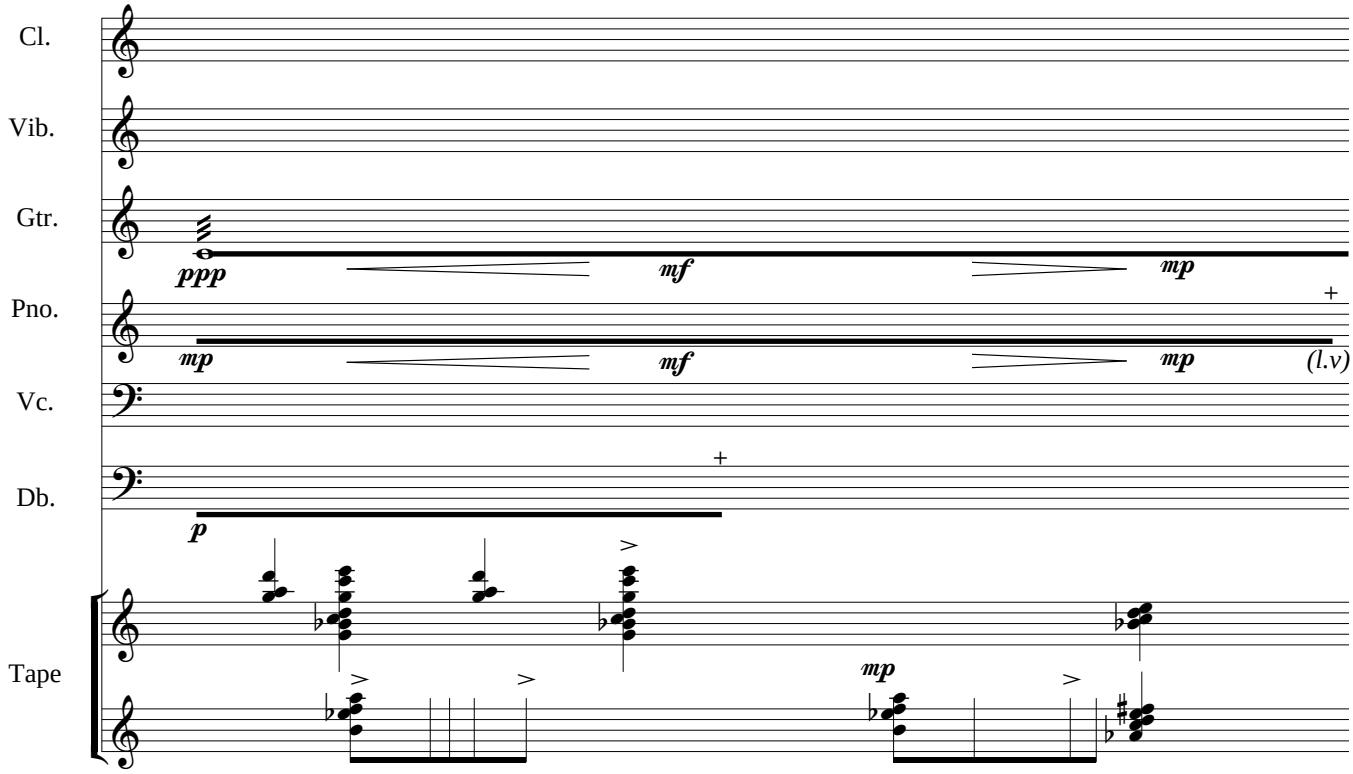
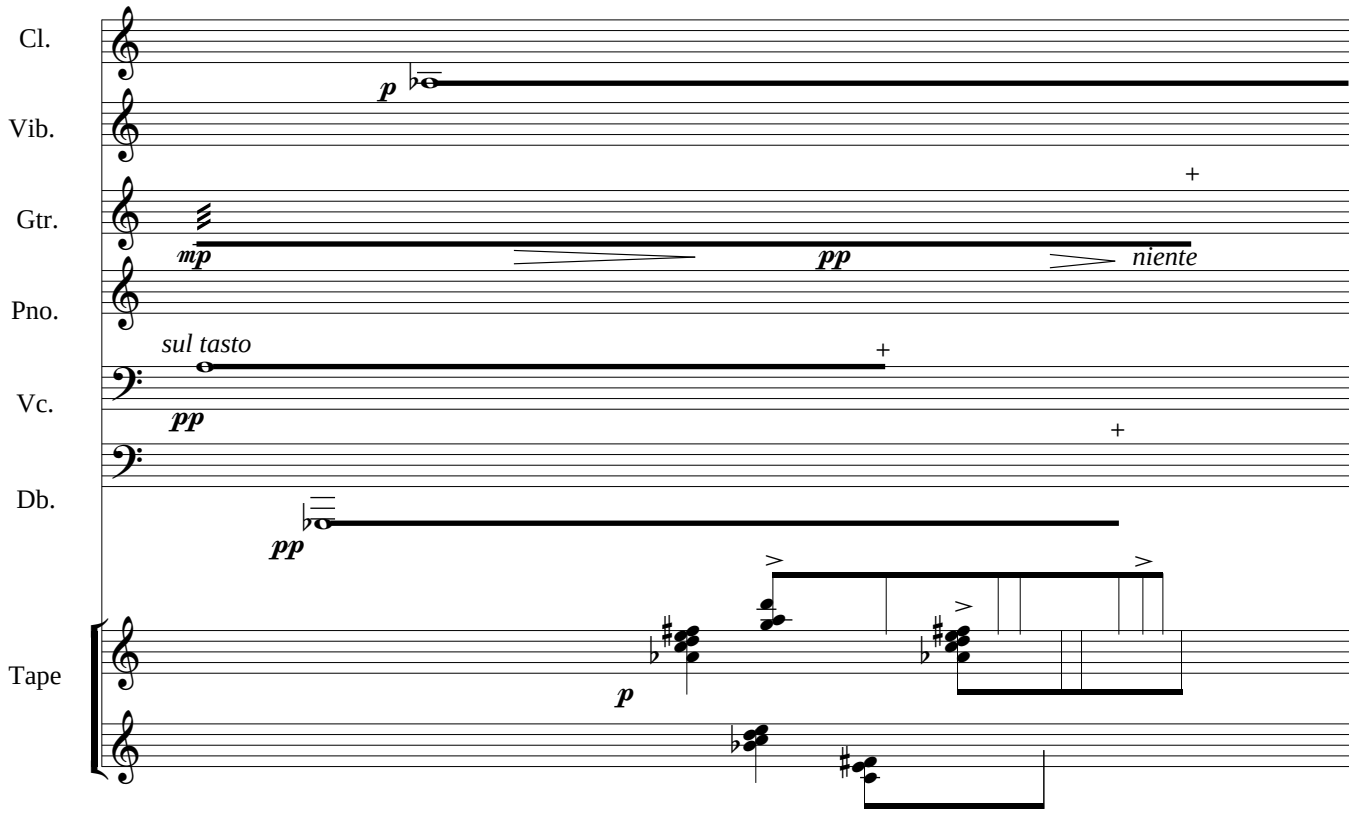
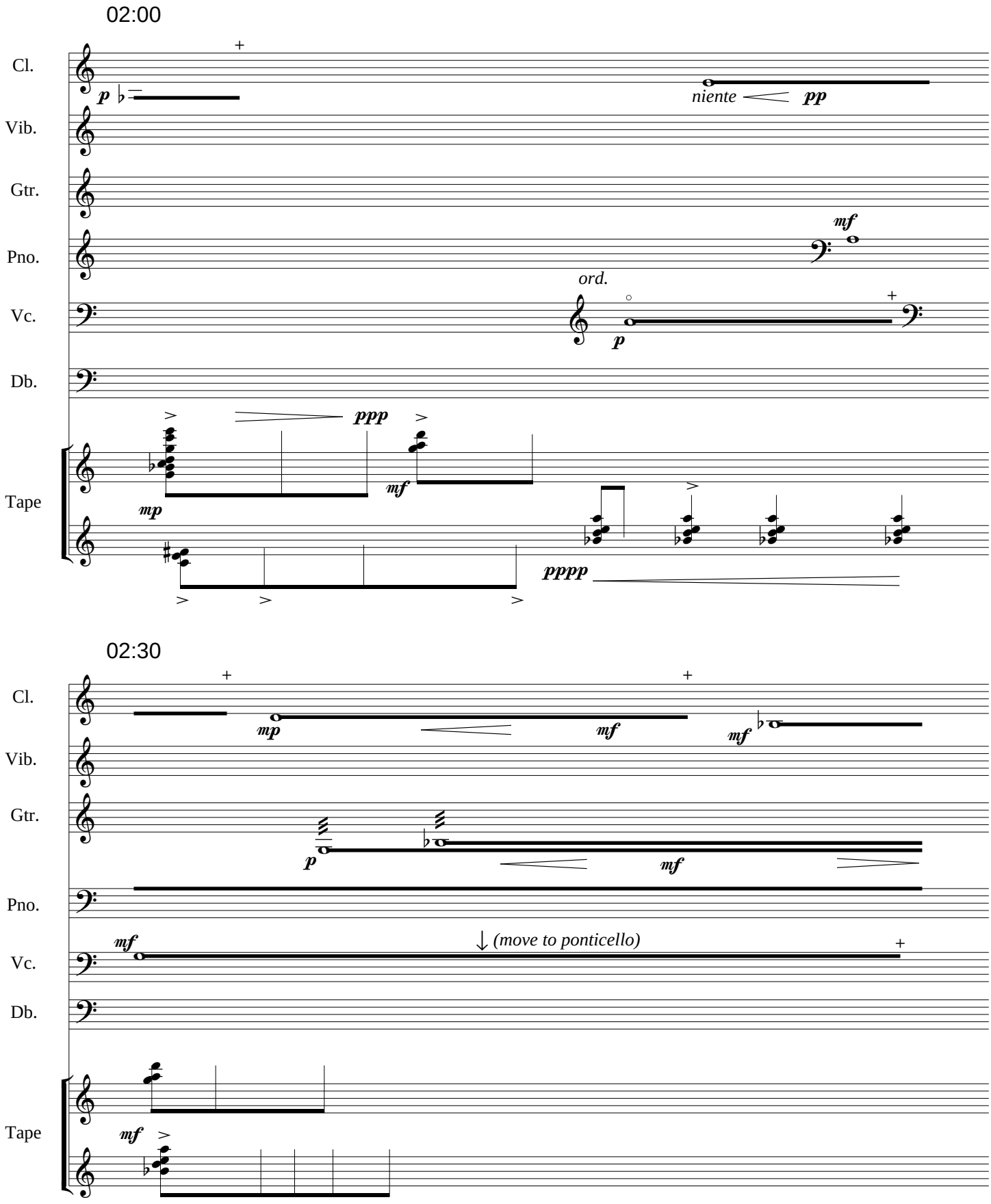
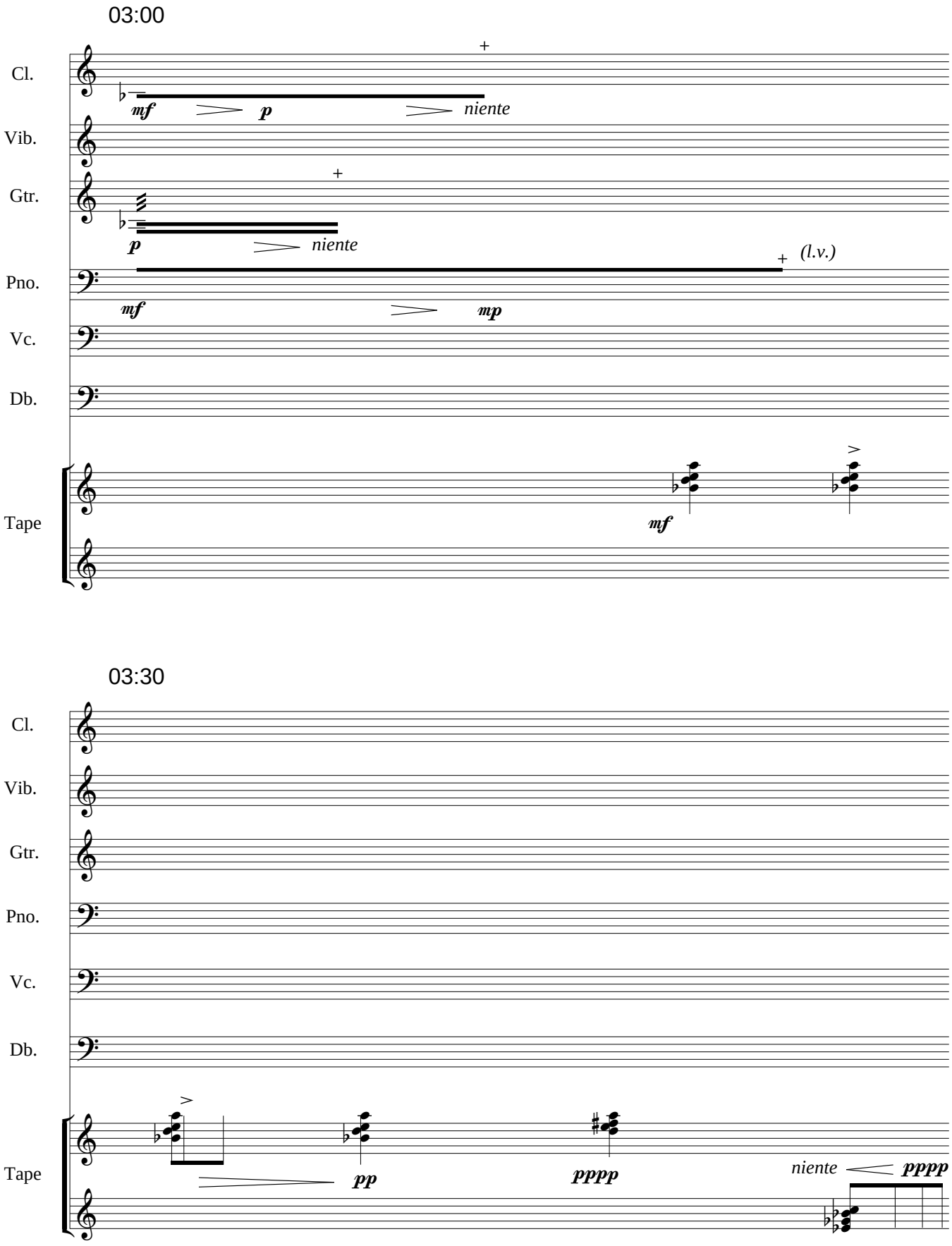
01:00

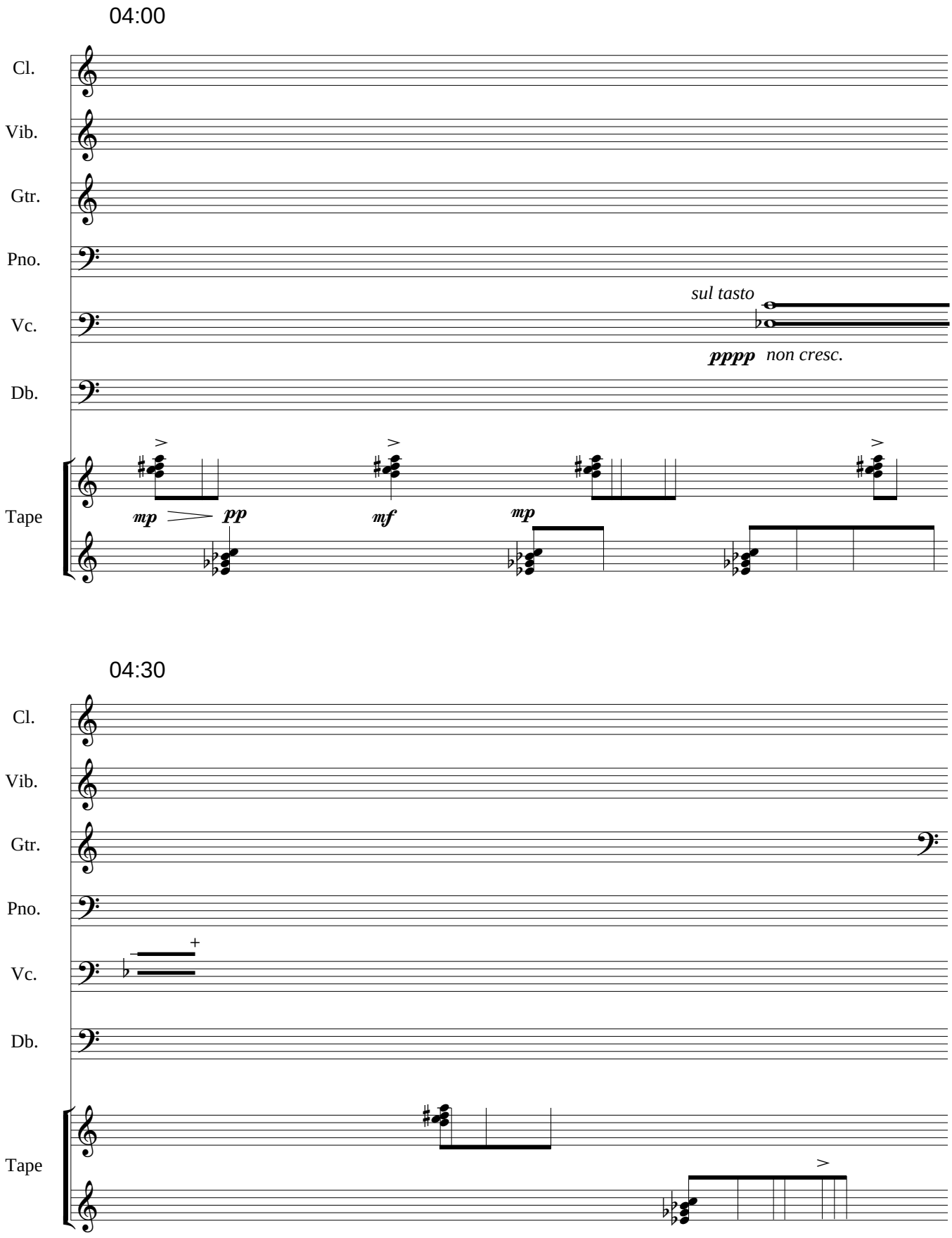

Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
ppp
mf
mp
mp
mf
mp
(l.v)
p
mp

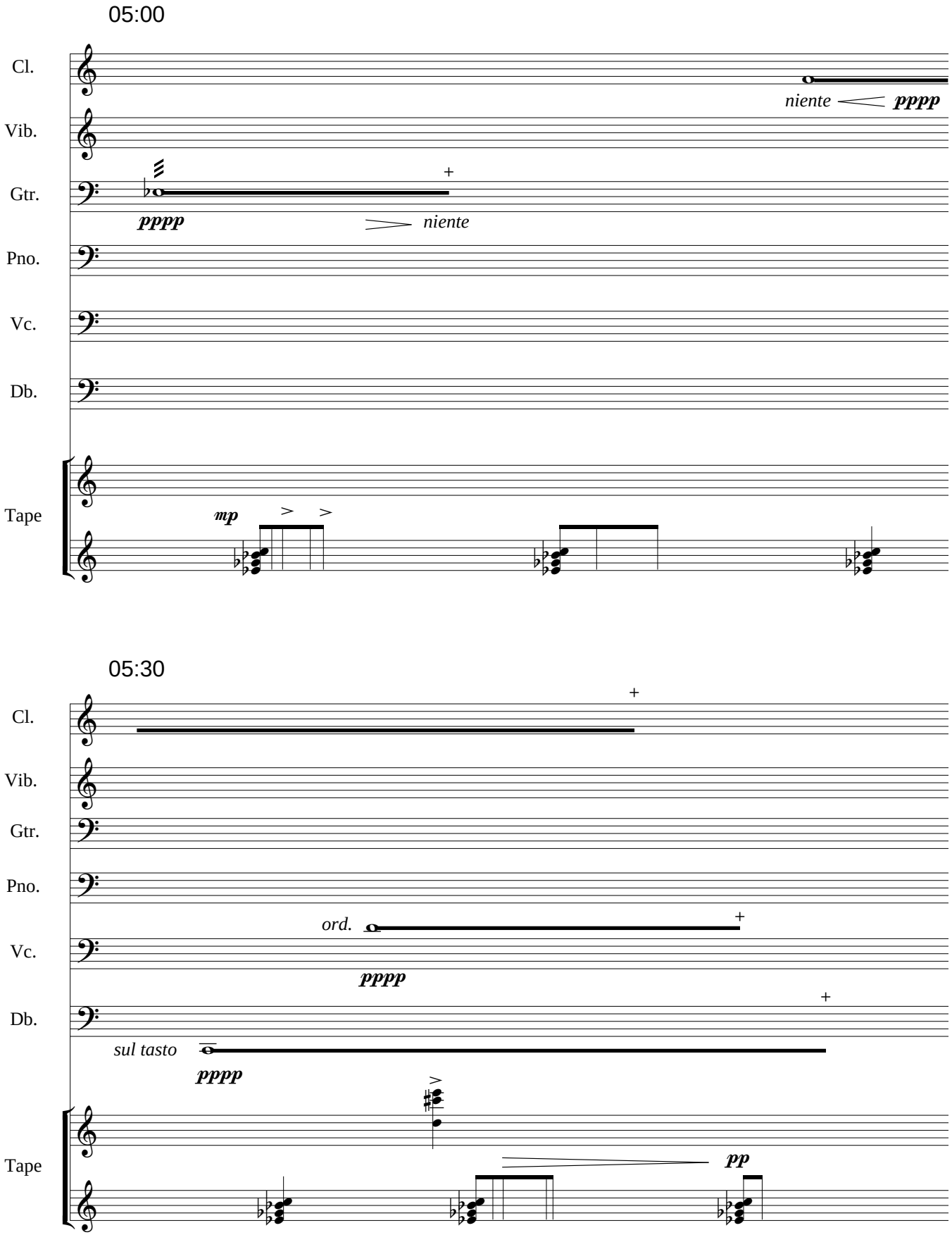
01:30

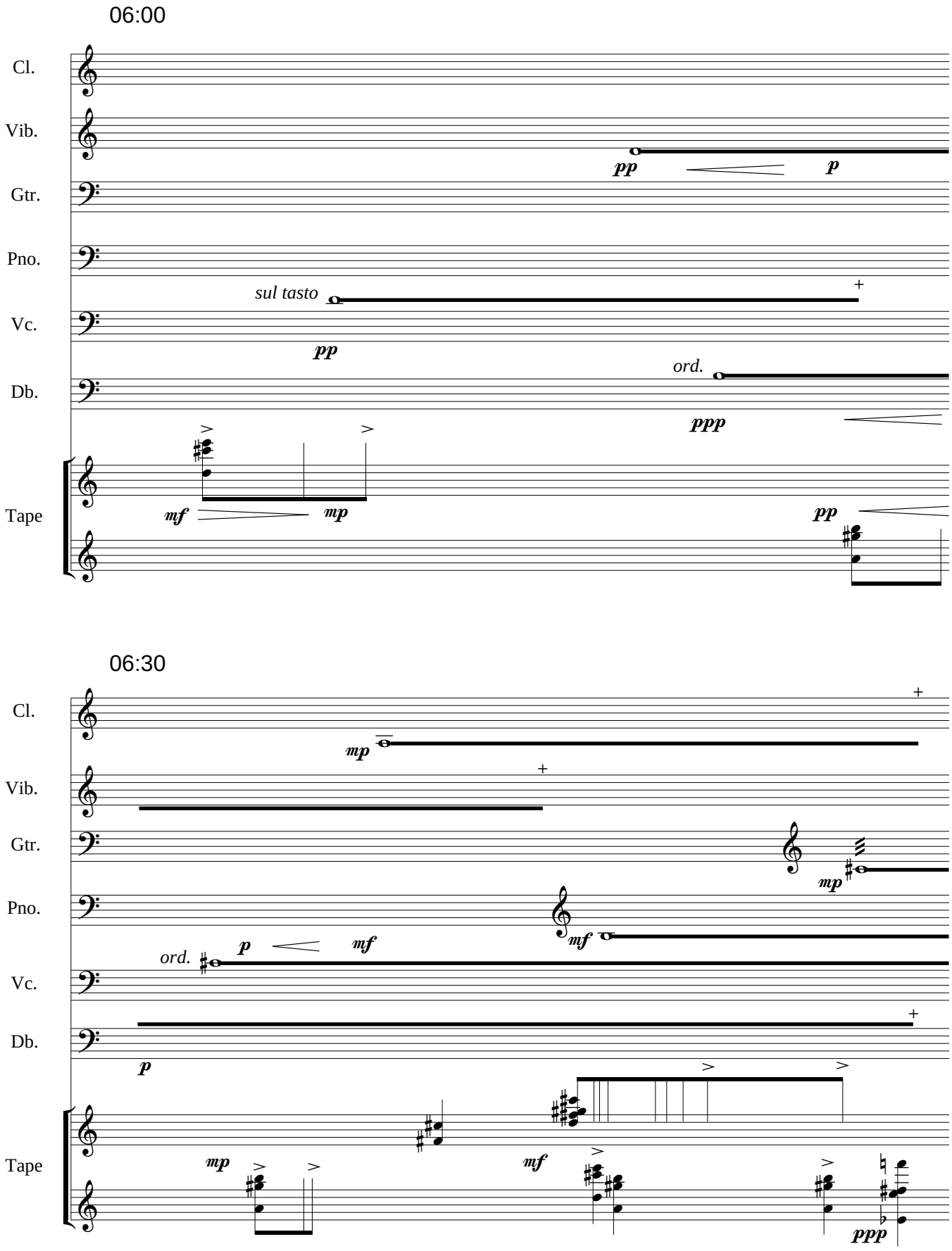

Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
p
mp
pp
niente
sul tasto
pp
pp
p


02:00
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
p
niente
pp
mf
ord.
p
ppp
mf
mp
pppp
02:30
mp
mf
mf
p
mf
mf
↓ (move to ponticello)
mf

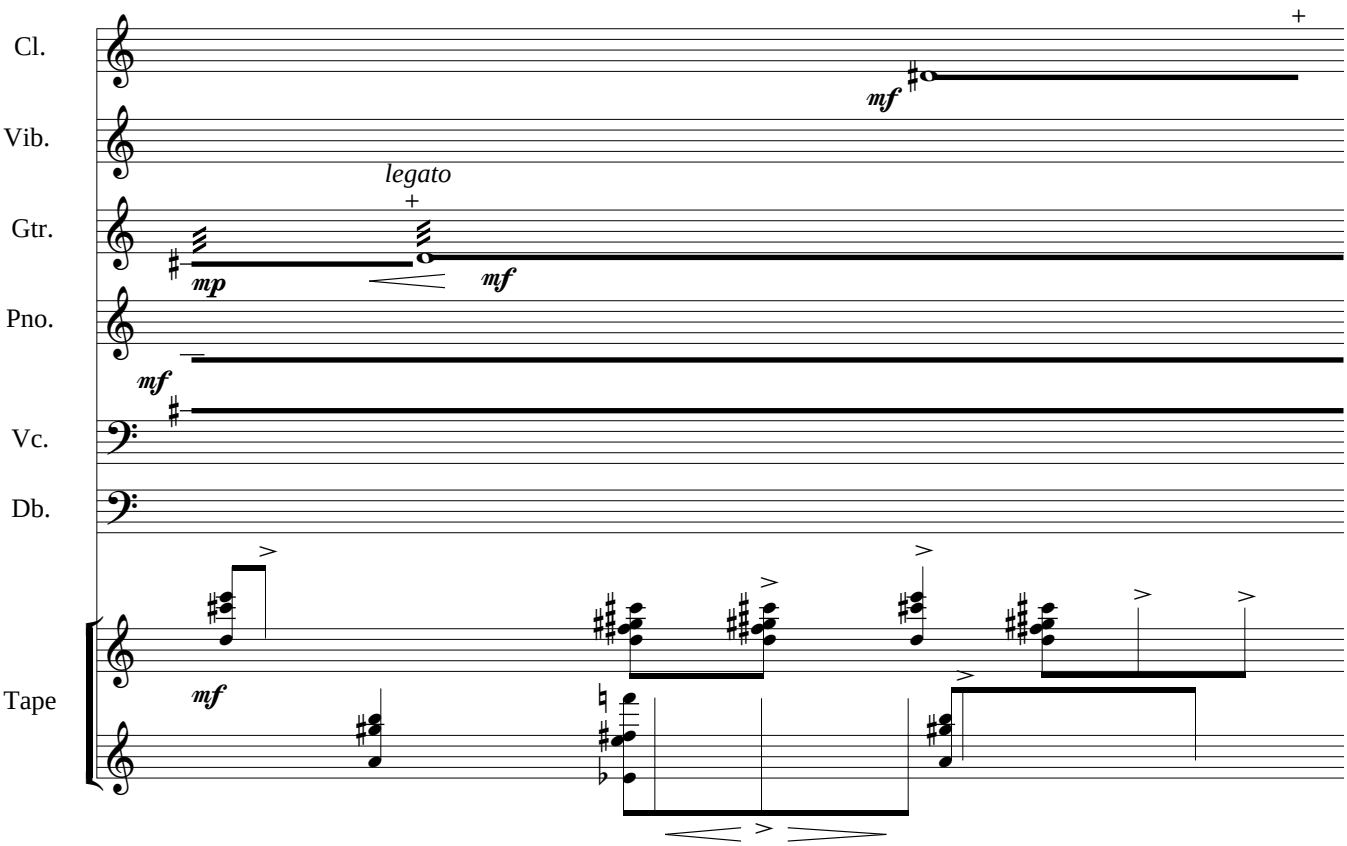

03:00
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
mf
p
niente
p
niente
mf
mp
(l.v.)
mf
03:30
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
pp
pppp
niente
pppp


04:00
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
sul tasto
pppp non cresc.
mp
pp
mf
mp
04:30
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape

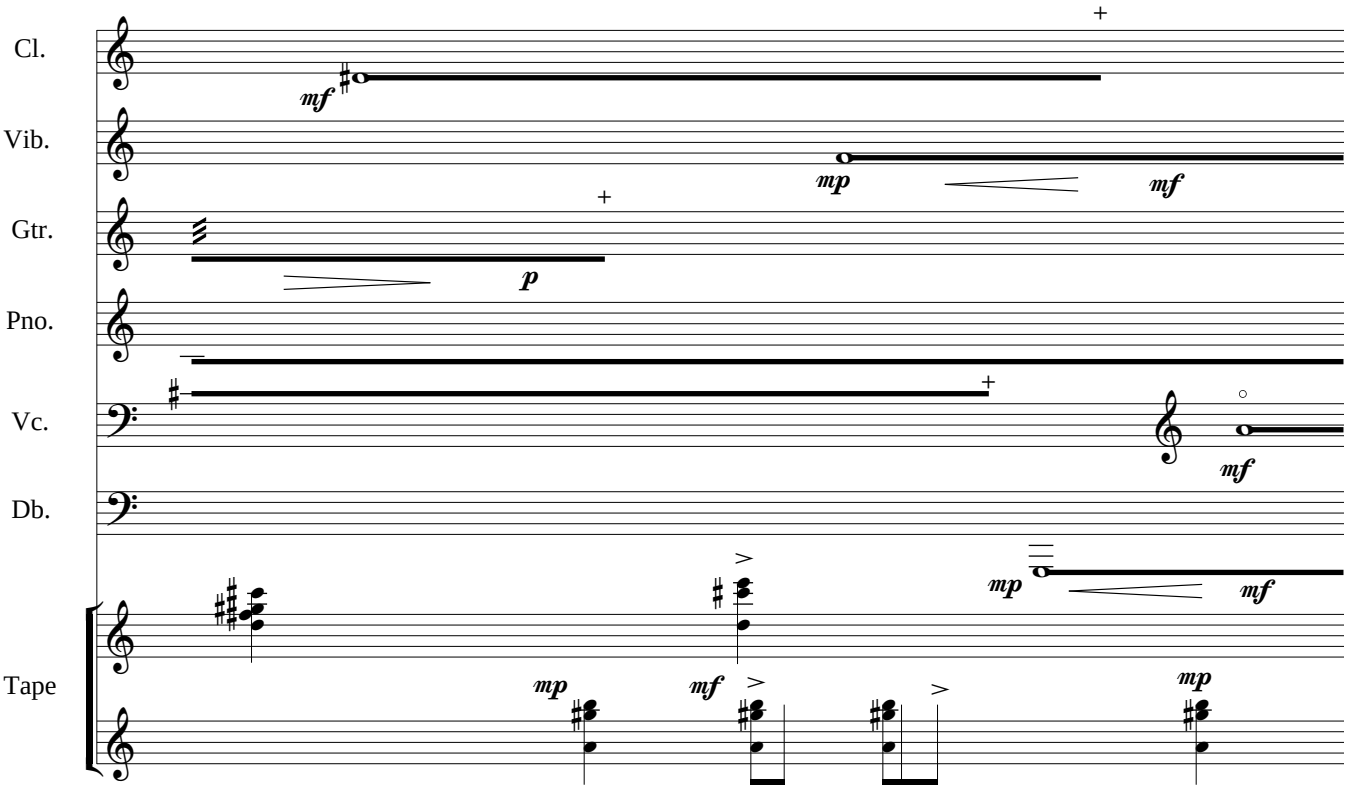

05:00
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
niente
pppp
pppp
niente
mp
05:30
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
ord.
pppp
sul tasto
pppp
pp

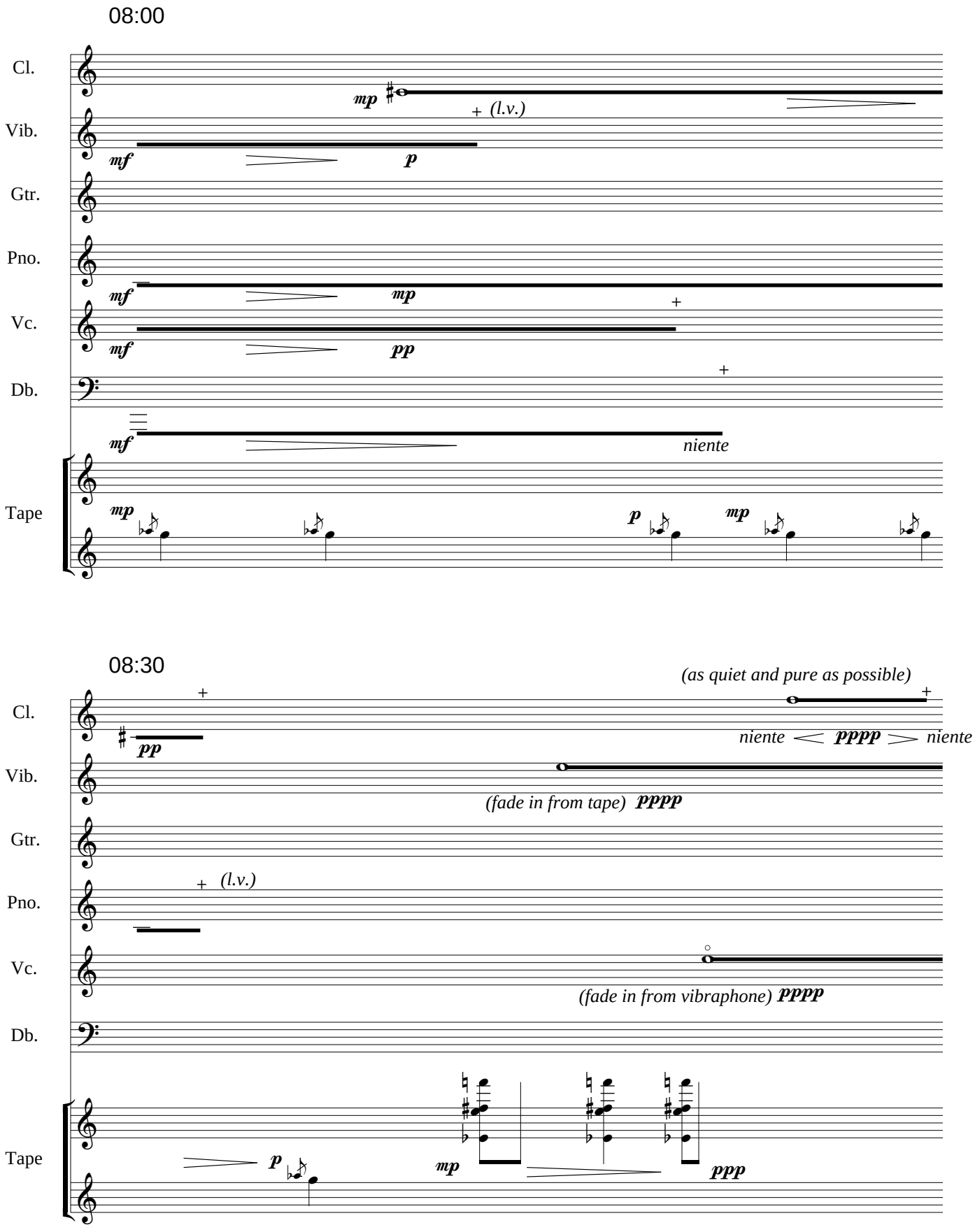

06:00
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
pp
p
sul tasto
pp
ord.
ppp
mf
mp
pp
06:30
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
mp
mp
p
mf
mf
ord.
p
mp
mf
ppp

07:00

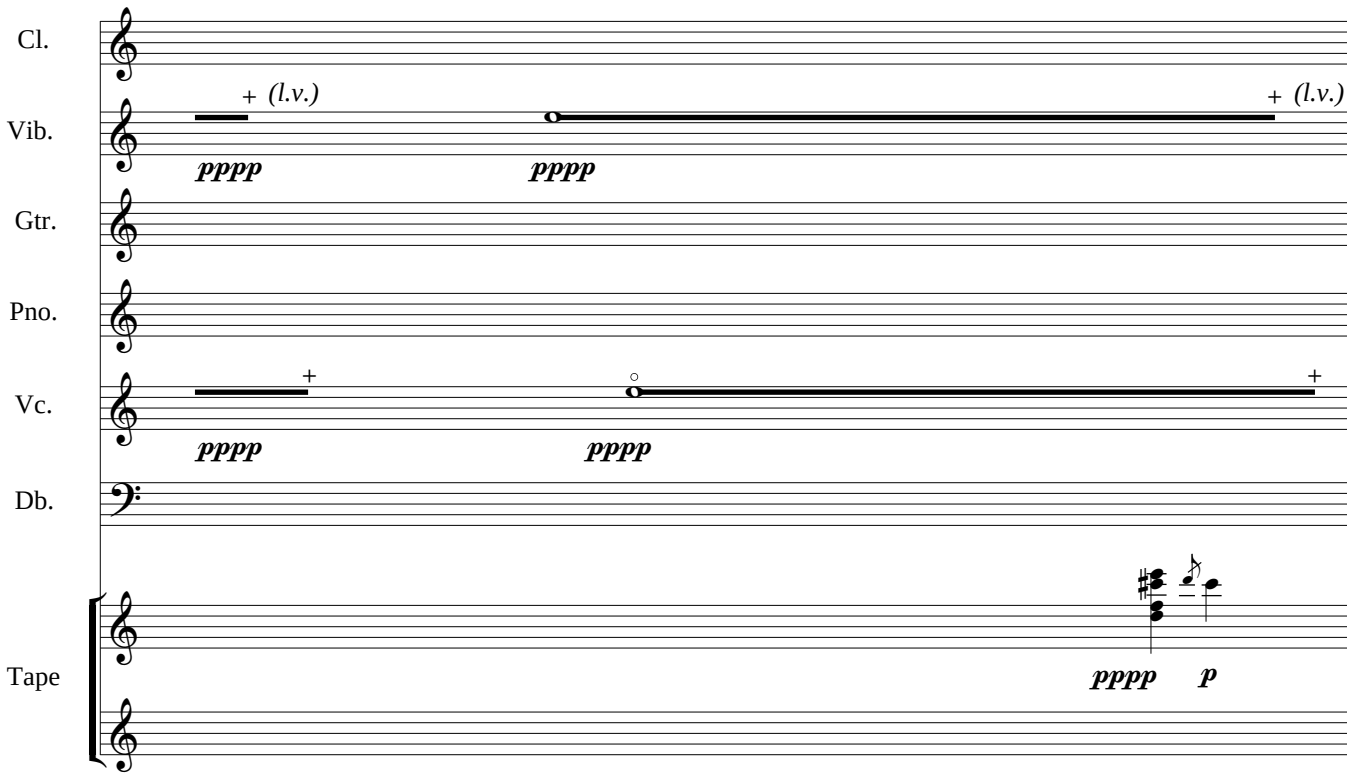

Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
legato
mf
mp
mf
mf
mf

07:30

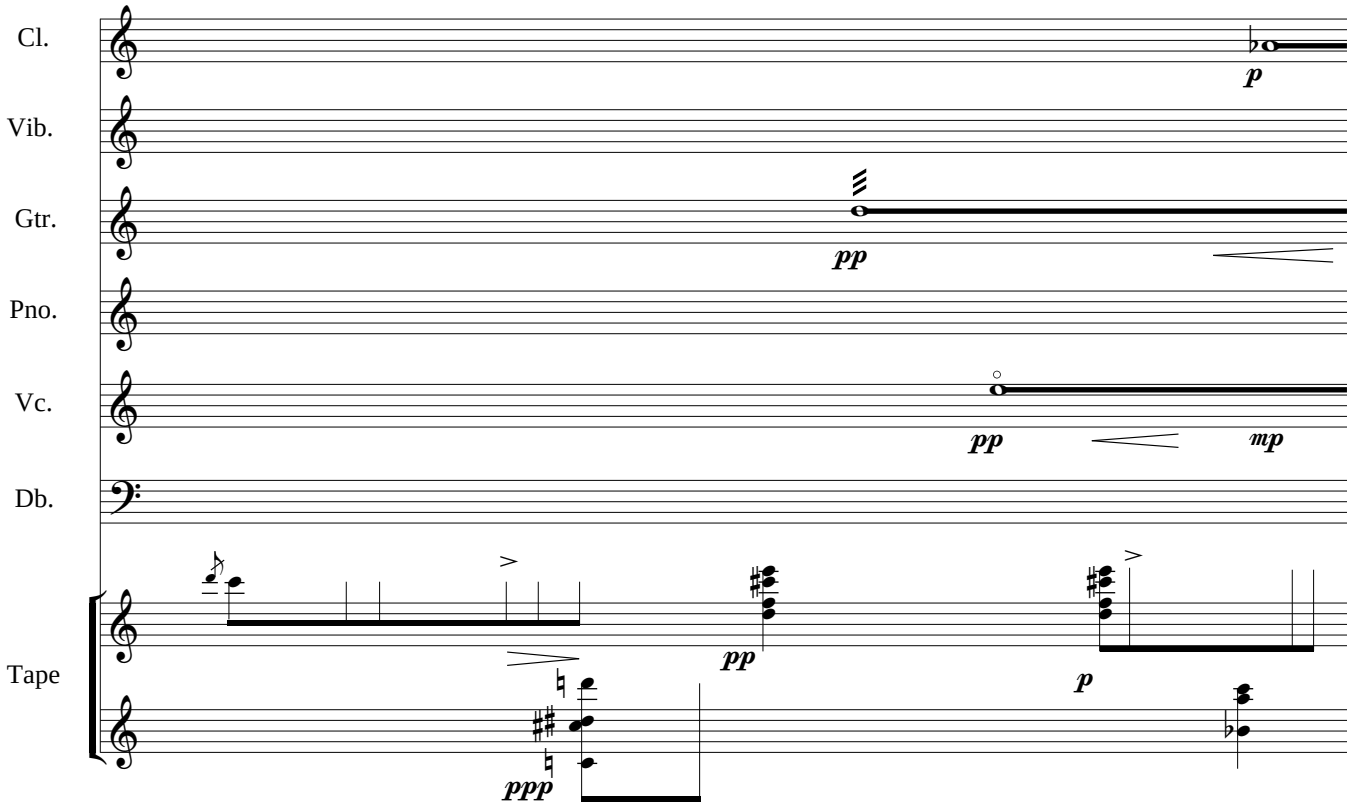

Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
mf
mp
mf
p
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp

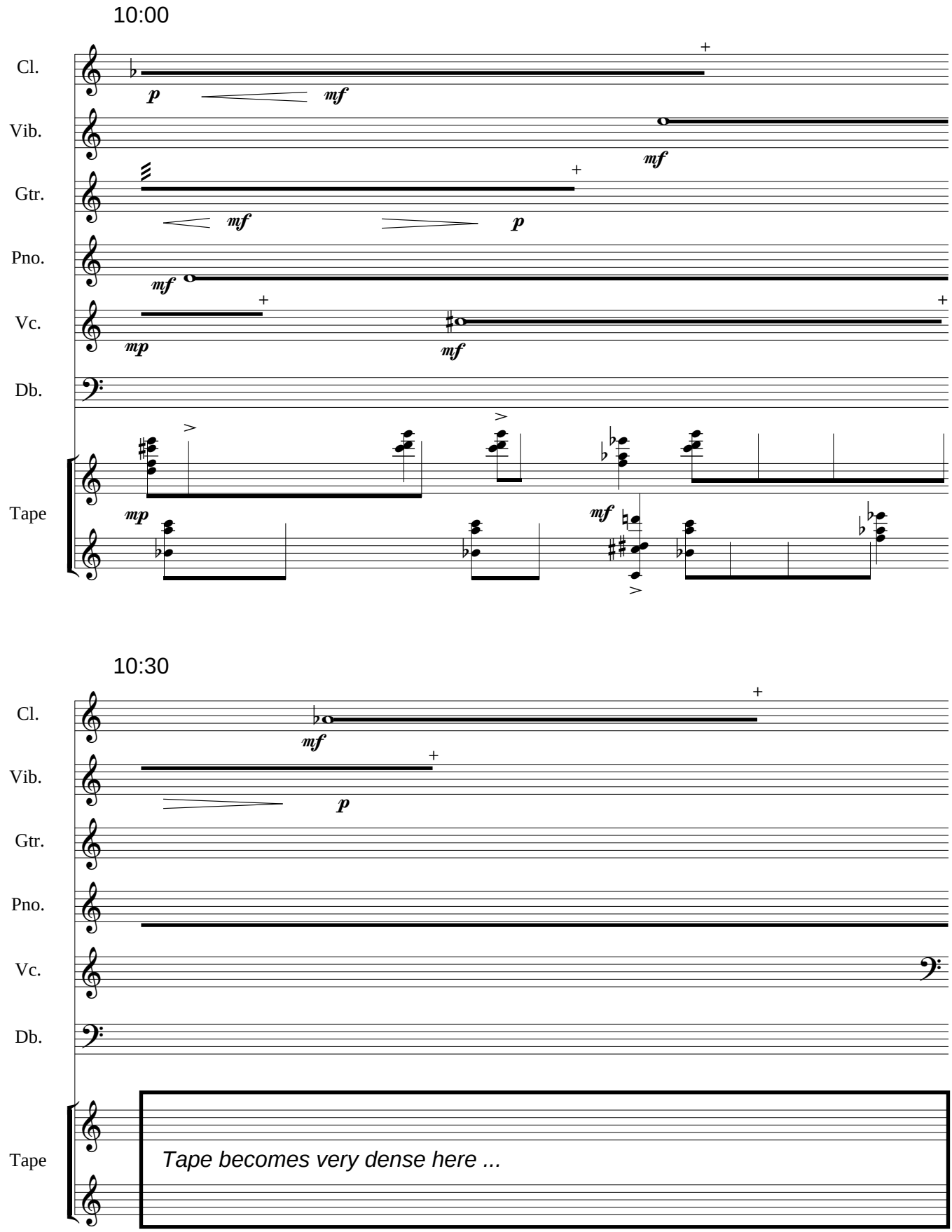

08:00
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
mp
+ (l.v.)
mf
p
mf
mp
mf
pp
+
+
mf
niente
mp
p
mp
08:30
(as quiet and pure as possible)
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
+
pp
niente
pppp
niente
(fade in from tape) pppp
+ (l.v.)
(fade in from vibraphone) pppp
p
mp
ppp

09:00

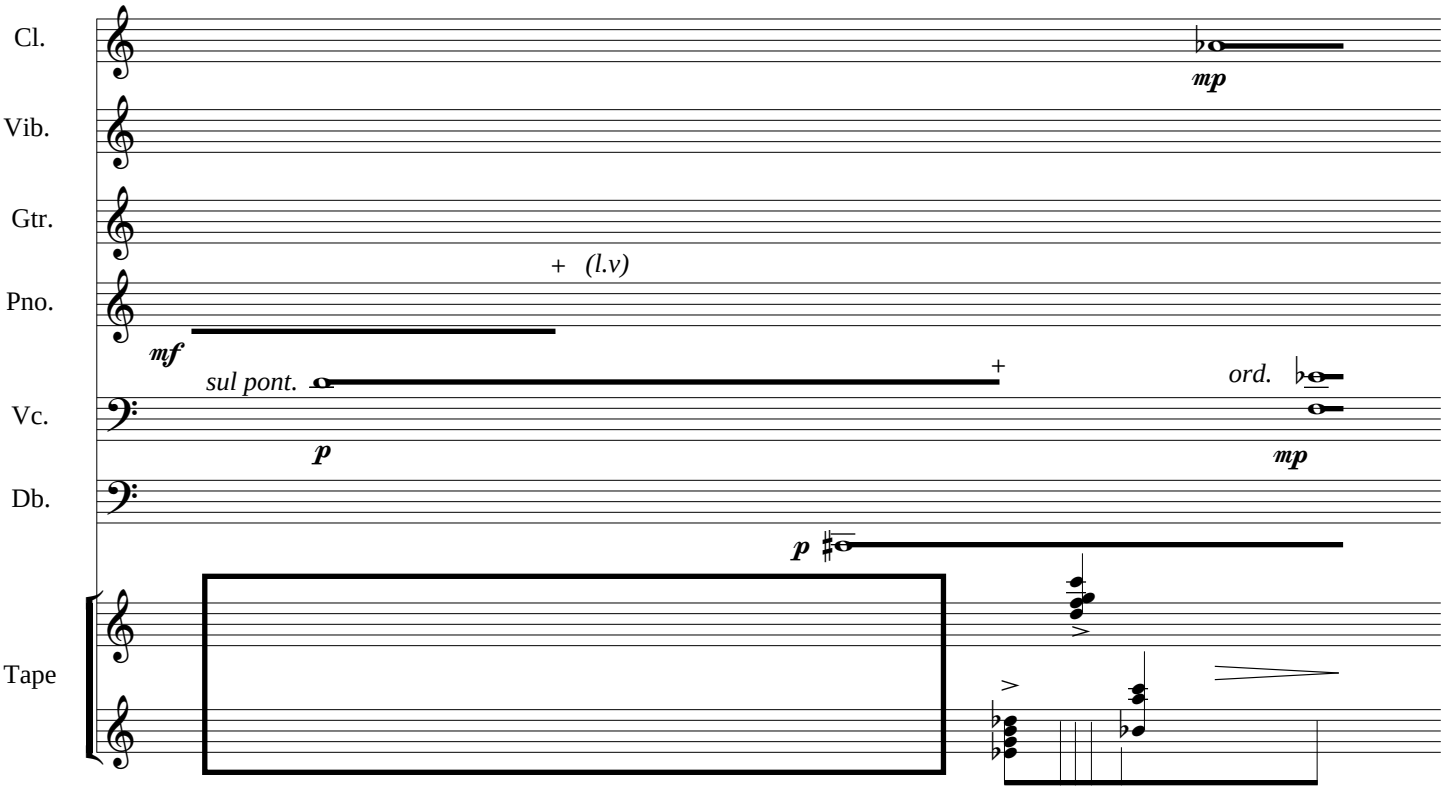

Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
+ (l.v.)
+ (l.v.)
pppp
pppp
pppp
pppp
pppp
p

09:30

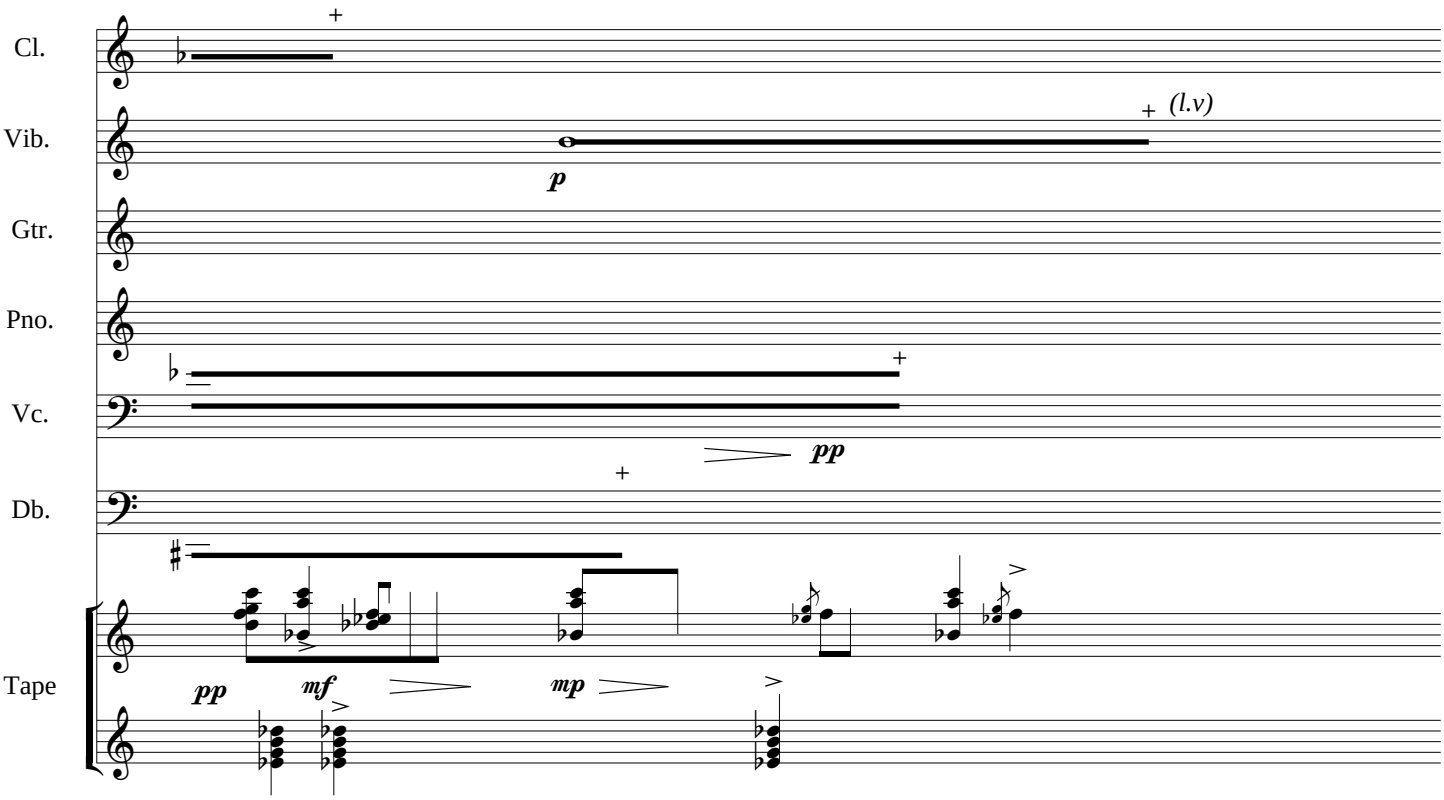

Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
p
pp
pp
mp
pp
p
ppp

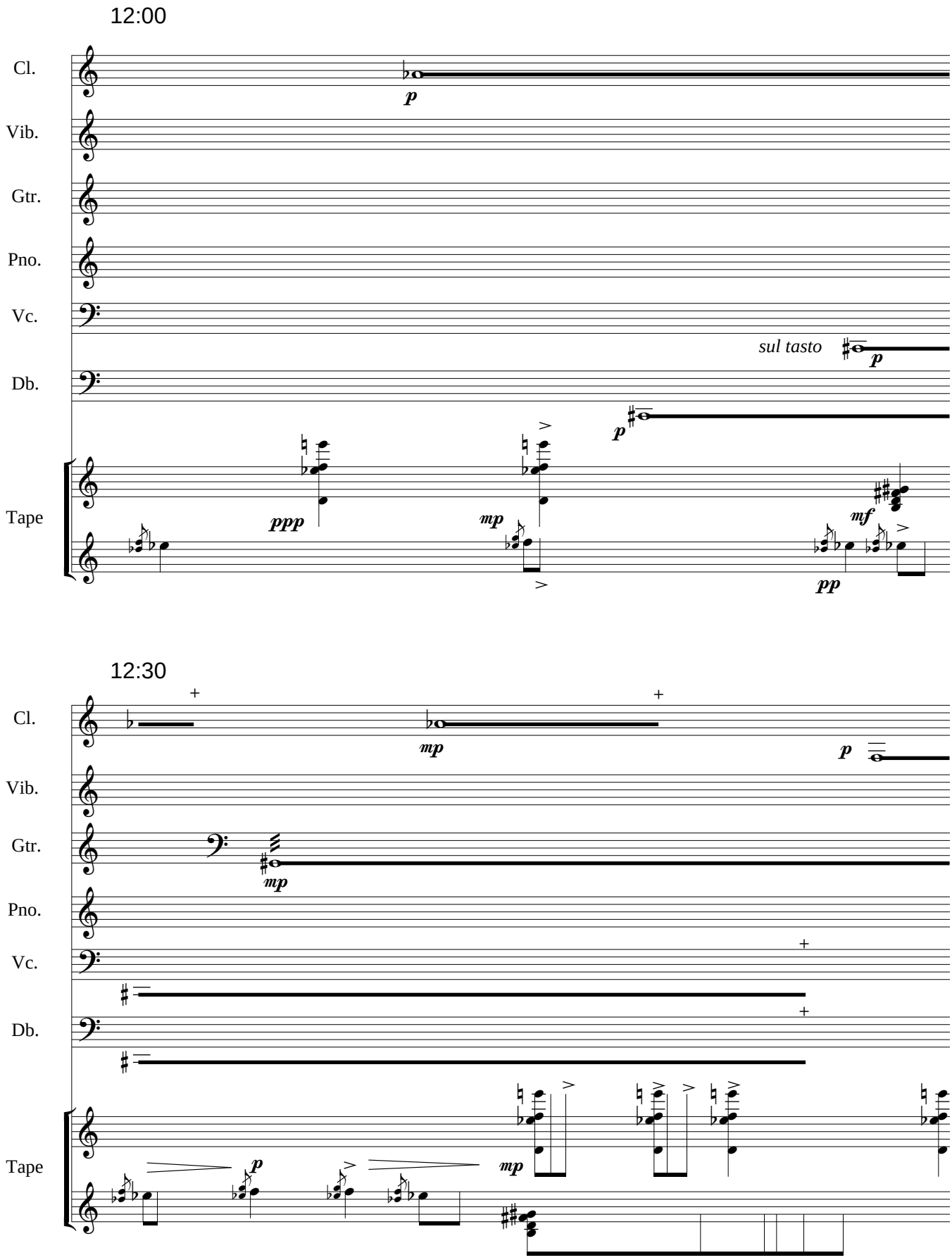

10:00
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
p
mf
mp
10:30
Tape becomes very dense here ...

11:00

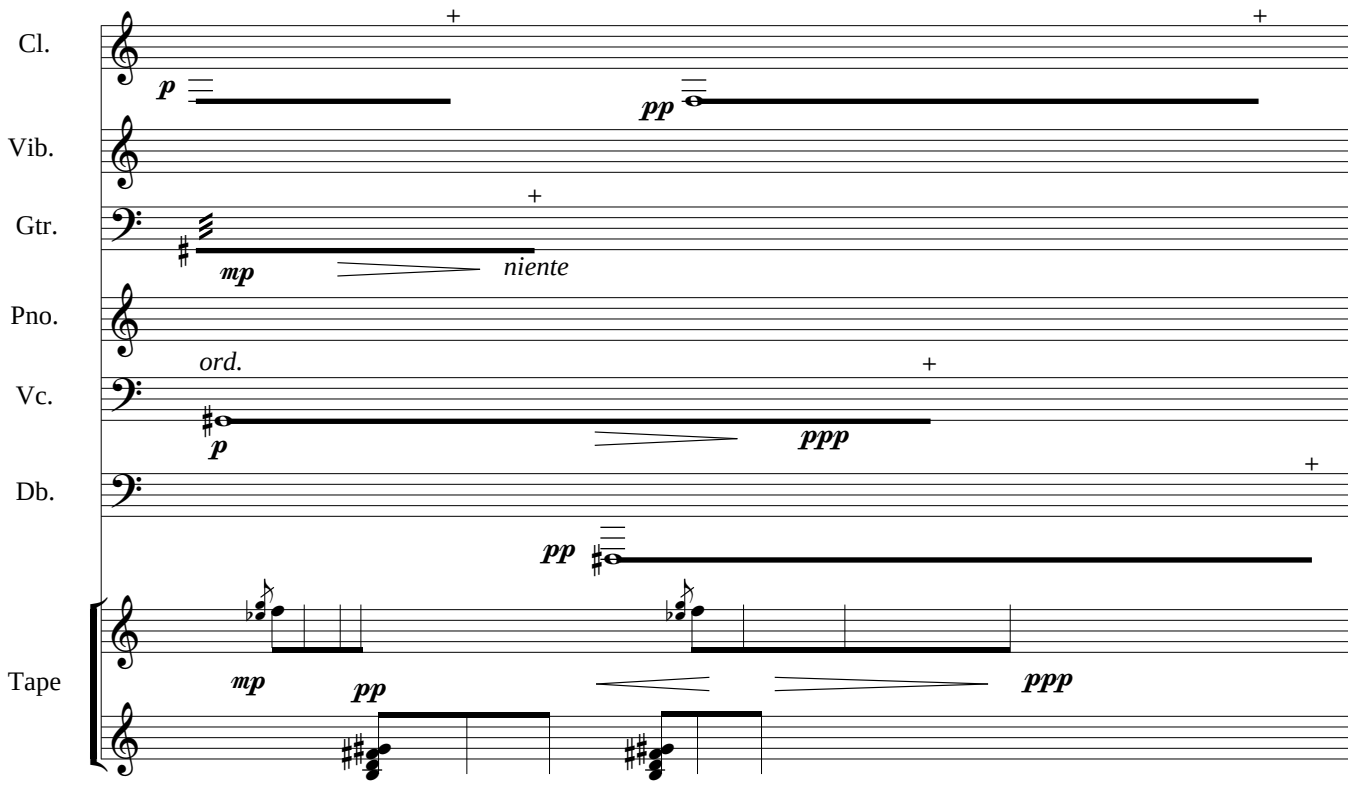

Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
mp
(l.v)
mf
sul pont.
p
ord.
mp
p

11:30

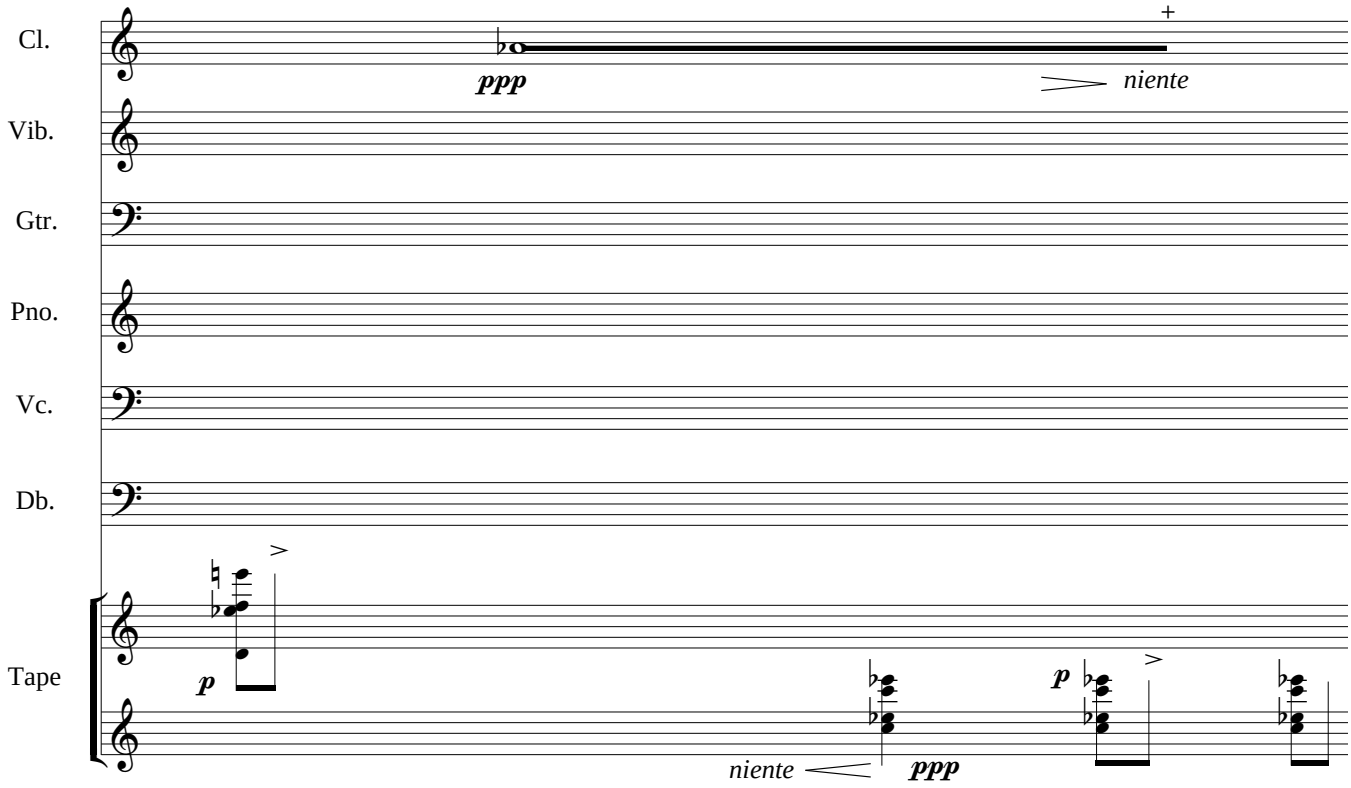

Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
(l.v)
p
pp
pp
mf
mp

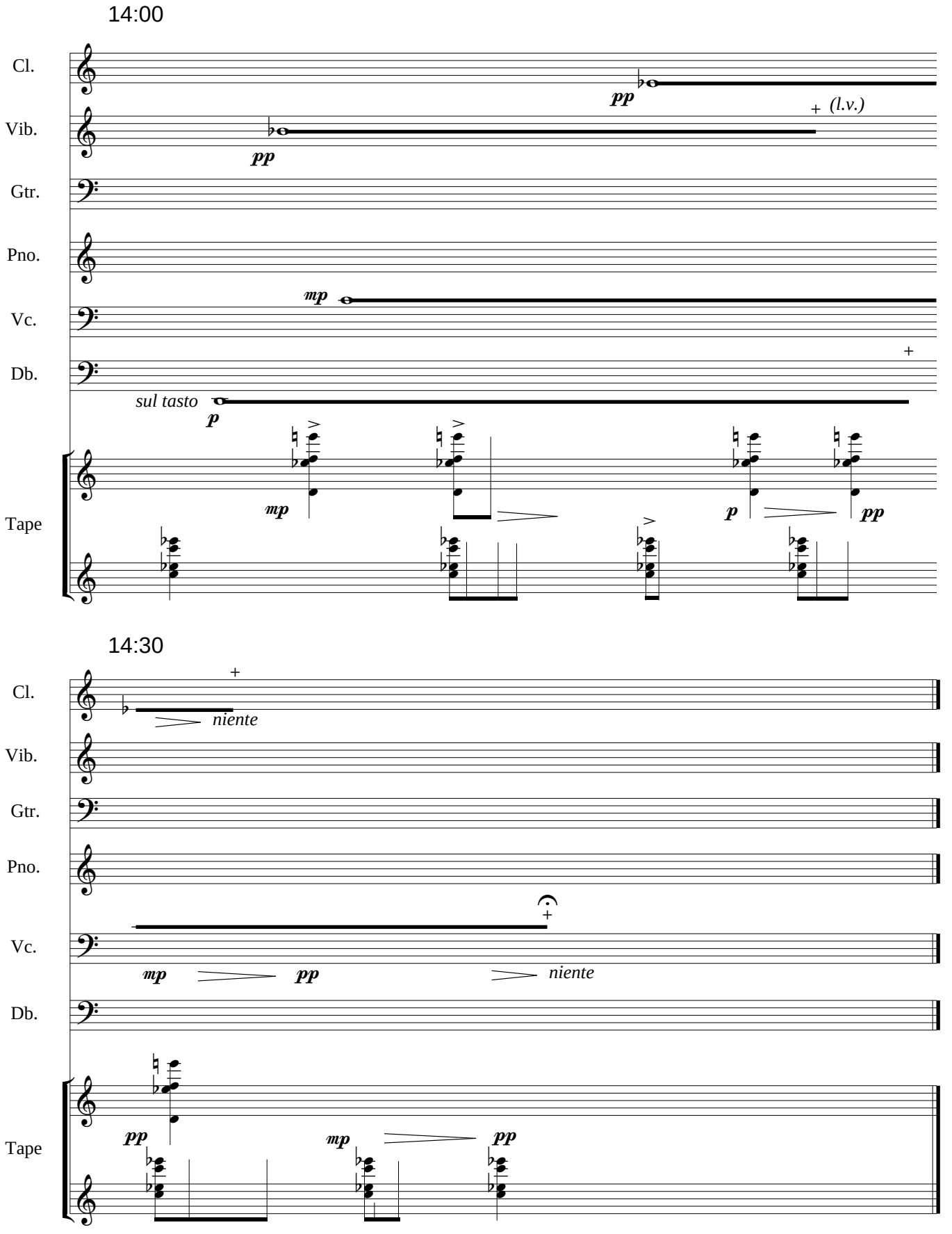

12:00
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
p
sul tasto
p
p
ppp
mp
mf
pp
12:30
Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
mp
p
mp
p
mp

13:00


Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
p
pp
mp
niente
ord.
ppp
mp
pp
ppp

13:30


Cl.
Vib.
Gtr.
Pno.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
ppp
niente
p
niente
ppp
p



Princeton, 26 March1993