Frances White

Centre Bridge (dark river)

for string quintet and tape

Commissioned by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

Performance Notes

TIME

In this piece, the tape part is a kind of sonic space within which the instrument parts live. The temporal relationship between the tape and instruments is flexible, with no exact correspondence between events in the tape and events in the instruments. Thus, the sense of time should never be rigid (in general, aim for accuracy within a few seconds). Most of the piece is notated in 5/4: in these sections, durations are as expressed by the meter; however, there is no sense of a beat. The 3/4 sections have more of a rhythmic feel.

The 5/4 sections are set at a tempo of quarter = 60. This was done purely to facilitate the relationship between the instrument and tape parts (that is, two measures of 5/4 will equal about 10 seconds). Because of this relationship, the conductor (and the instrumentalists, if they wish) can use a stop watch to keep track in general of the time in the tape relative to the instrument parts. A click track is available for the conductor, if needed.

The two sections of 3/4 that occur near the end of the piece are set at tempos of quarter = 80 and quarter = 92. Here, the beats-to-seconds relationship disappears (the time is not notated, although a few parenthetical references to approximate time appear). The start and end times of these sections are shown, and the important thing is to reach the end at roughly the right time. Thus, the first section, starting at 9:00, should last about 25 seconds. The second section, starting at 10:00, should last about 50 seconds.

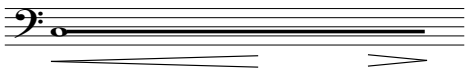
TAPE PART

Graphic placement of all electronic parts is approximate, and no attempt has been made to capture all of the details of the sound.

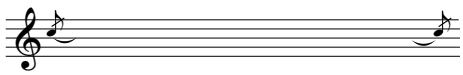
There are 5 kinds of events that take place in the tape part of this piece.

1. The sound of water.

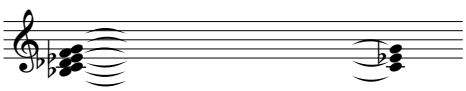
2. Low pitched "whooshing sounds", with strong crescendo/decrescendo profiles. These are notated as whole-notes, with lines extending out of them showing their approximate duration.
Example:



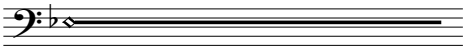
3. High, short, repeating chords and single notes. These have a very random rhythmic pattern, and no attempt has been made to indicate this pattern. Instead, the time that a given pitch or chord enters is shown, as a grace note with a tie extending from it. Also, the approximate last appearance of the pitch or chord is shown as a tie with the grace note(s) appended to it.
Examples:



4. Sustained chords that create a harmonic atmosphere. These are shown as note-heads with ties extending from them. When a given harmony fades out, the chord is shown at the end of a tie.
Examples:



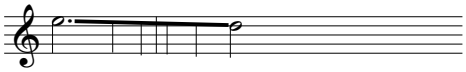
5. Electronically altered recorded string sounds. These are shown as diamond shaped note-heads with lines extending from them indicating their approximate duration.
Example:



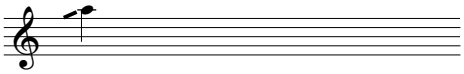
STRING PARTS

In the parts, the timing of the tape part is shown underneath the string part. The only tape events that are indicated in the parts are the pitched "whooshing" sounds (see no. 2, above), and the recorded string sounds (see no. 5, above).

This piece has many glissandi. These are notated as heavy slanting lines connecting the pitches in question. Where glissandi cover a duration greater than a dotted half note, the timing of the glissando is shown with headless stems. These stems are always of the duration of a quarter note.
Example:



In a very few instances, little slides up to notes occur. These are shown as very short slanting lines connecting to the note-heads. Here, the glissando starts on no particular pitch, but in a range of about a quarter-tone to a minor second below the pitch. The exact time of the arrival on the main pitch is inexact as well, and is left to the performer.
Example:



In the section that starts at rehearsal letter G, the flautando technique is used (a combination of bow placement and varying bow pressure). The dynamics are marked forte and mezzo-forte, but this should be understood to be within the limits imposed by the technique: that is, as forte or mezzo forte as possible. The sound here should be allowed to evolve and change. Aim for as many harmonics to appear as possible, letting different ones emerge and recede over the duration of these notes. The fundamentals should emerge as well.

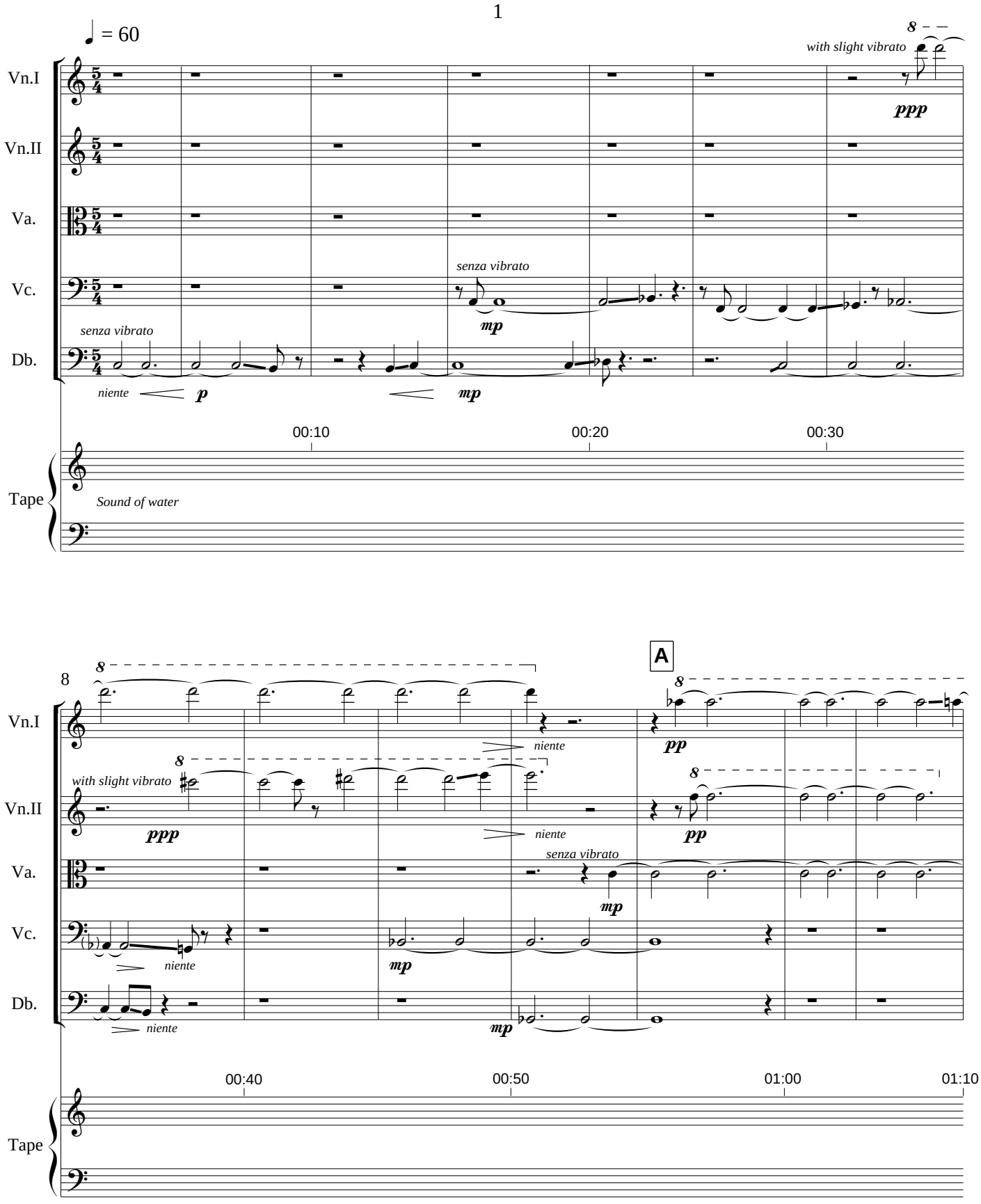
The bass player's D-flat is bowed close to the bridge. This fundamental should always sound, but allow as many harmonics to come out as possible.

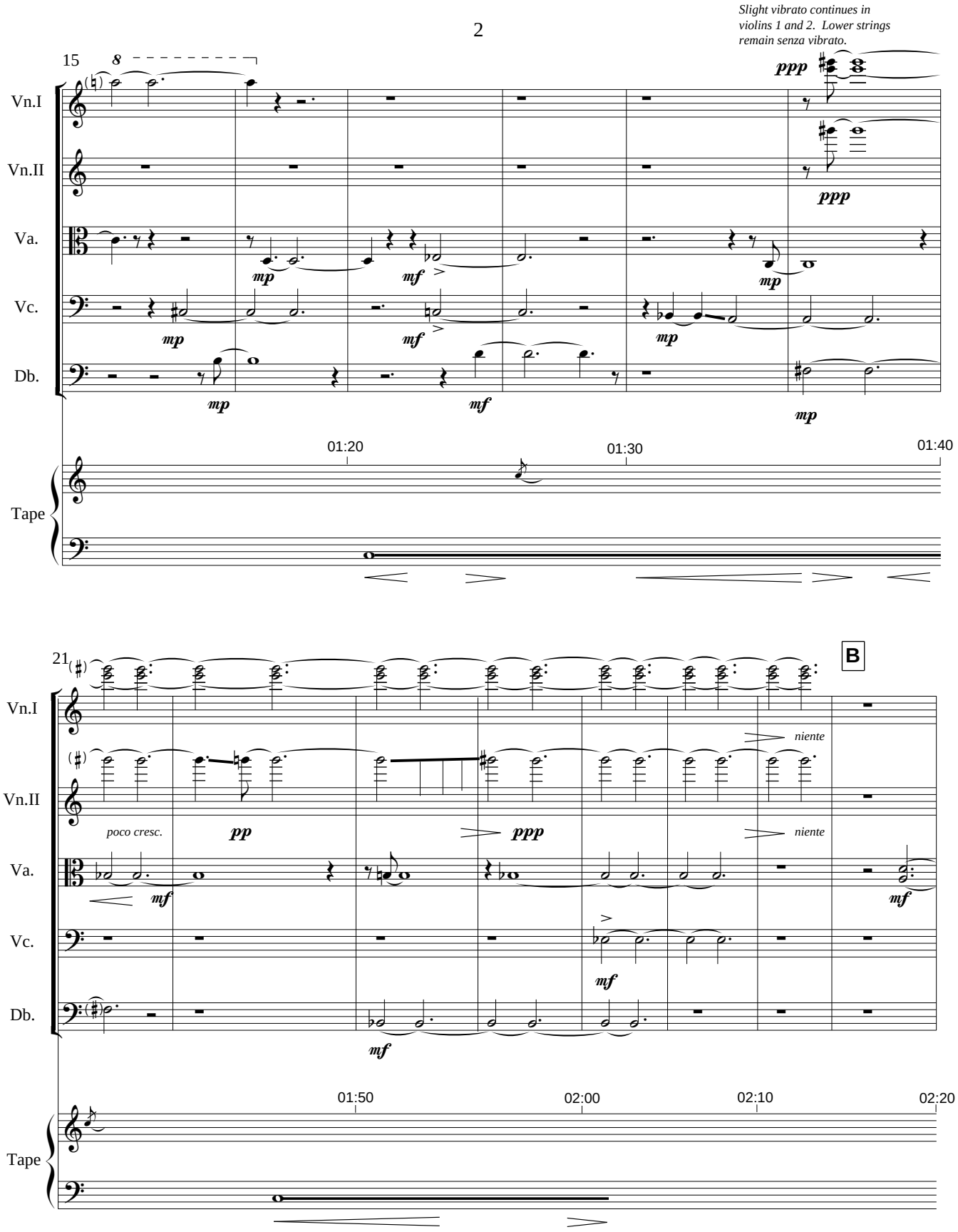
Mutes are used from rehearsal letter J to the end of the piece.

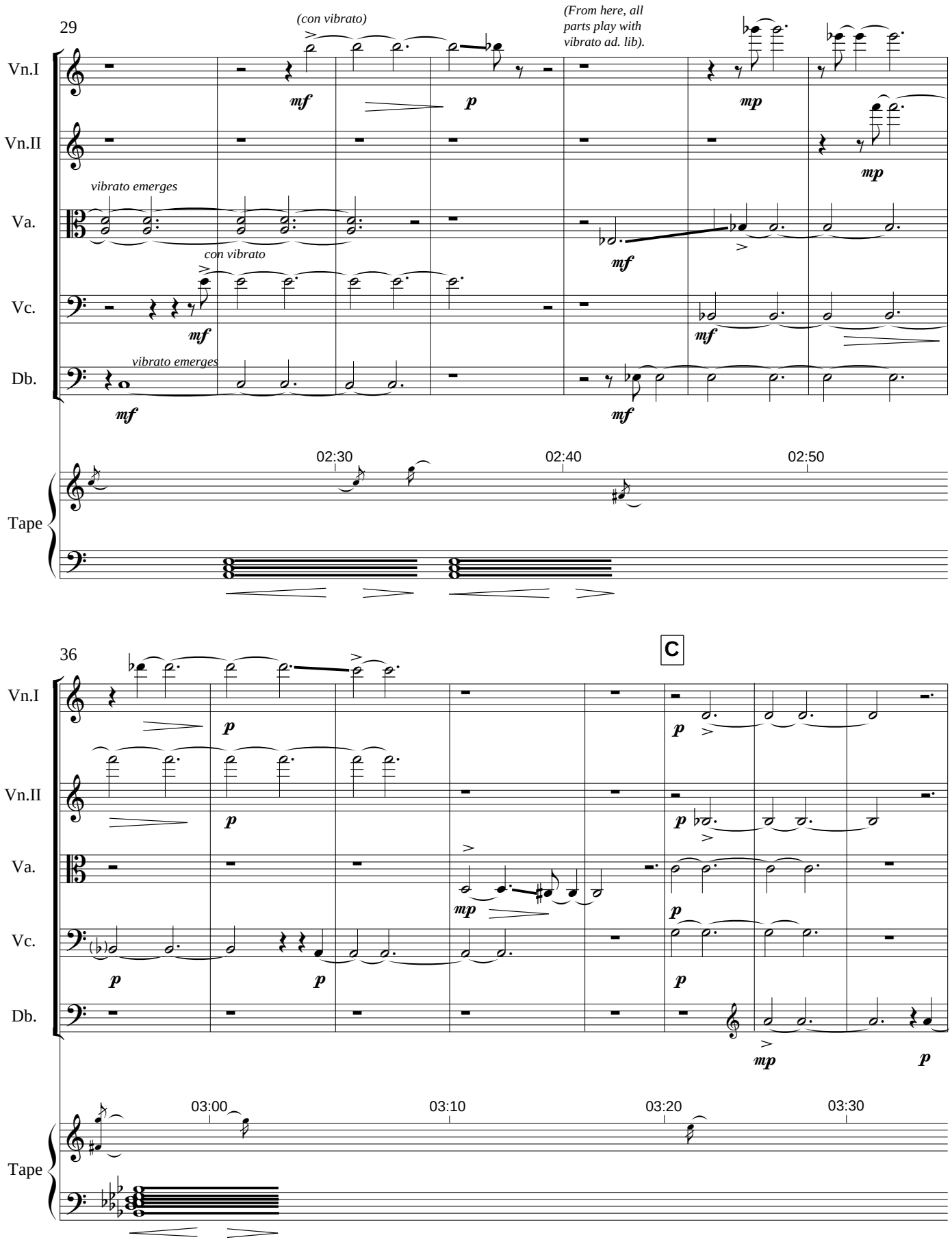
Accidentals remain in effect throughout each measure.

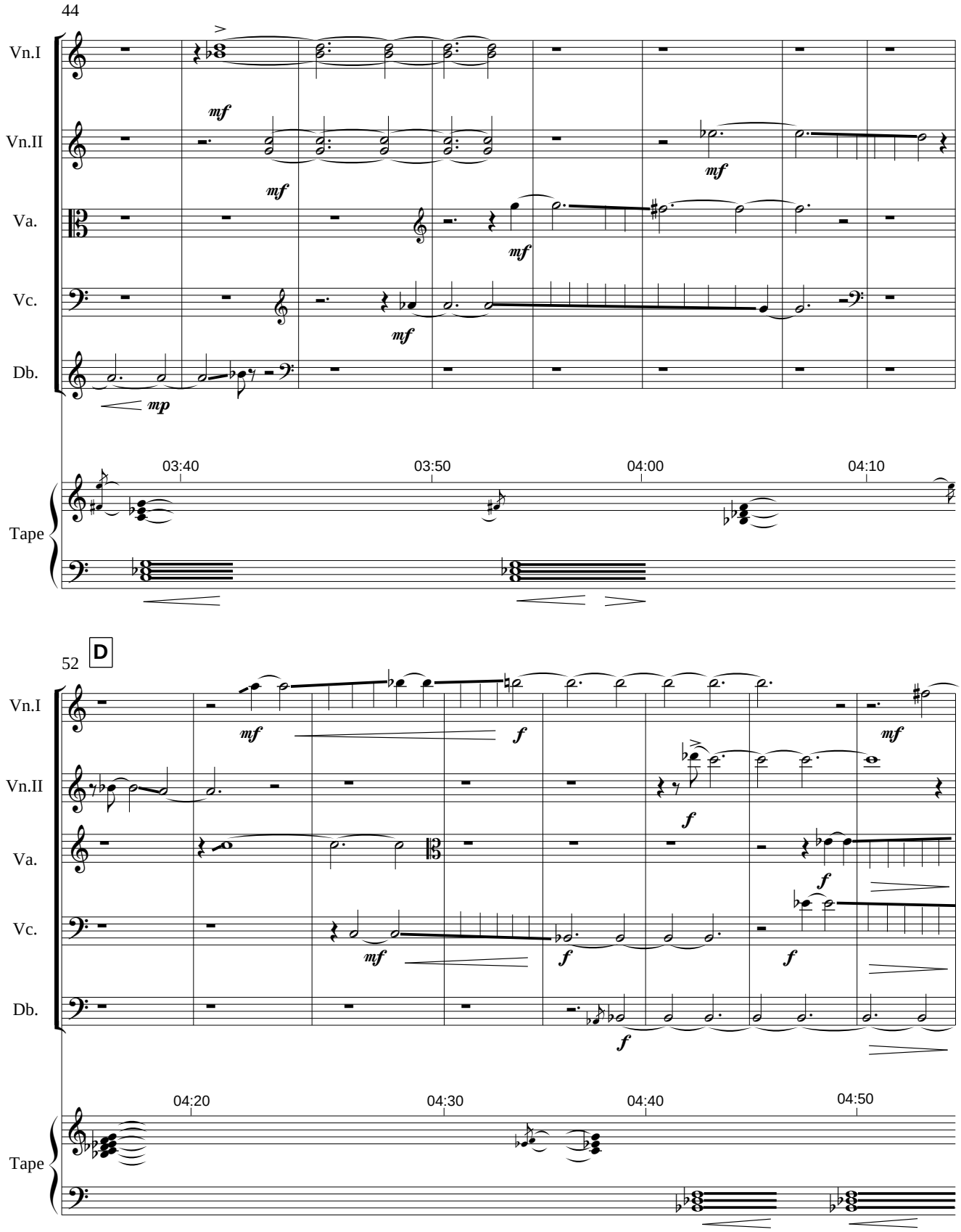
AMPLIFICATION

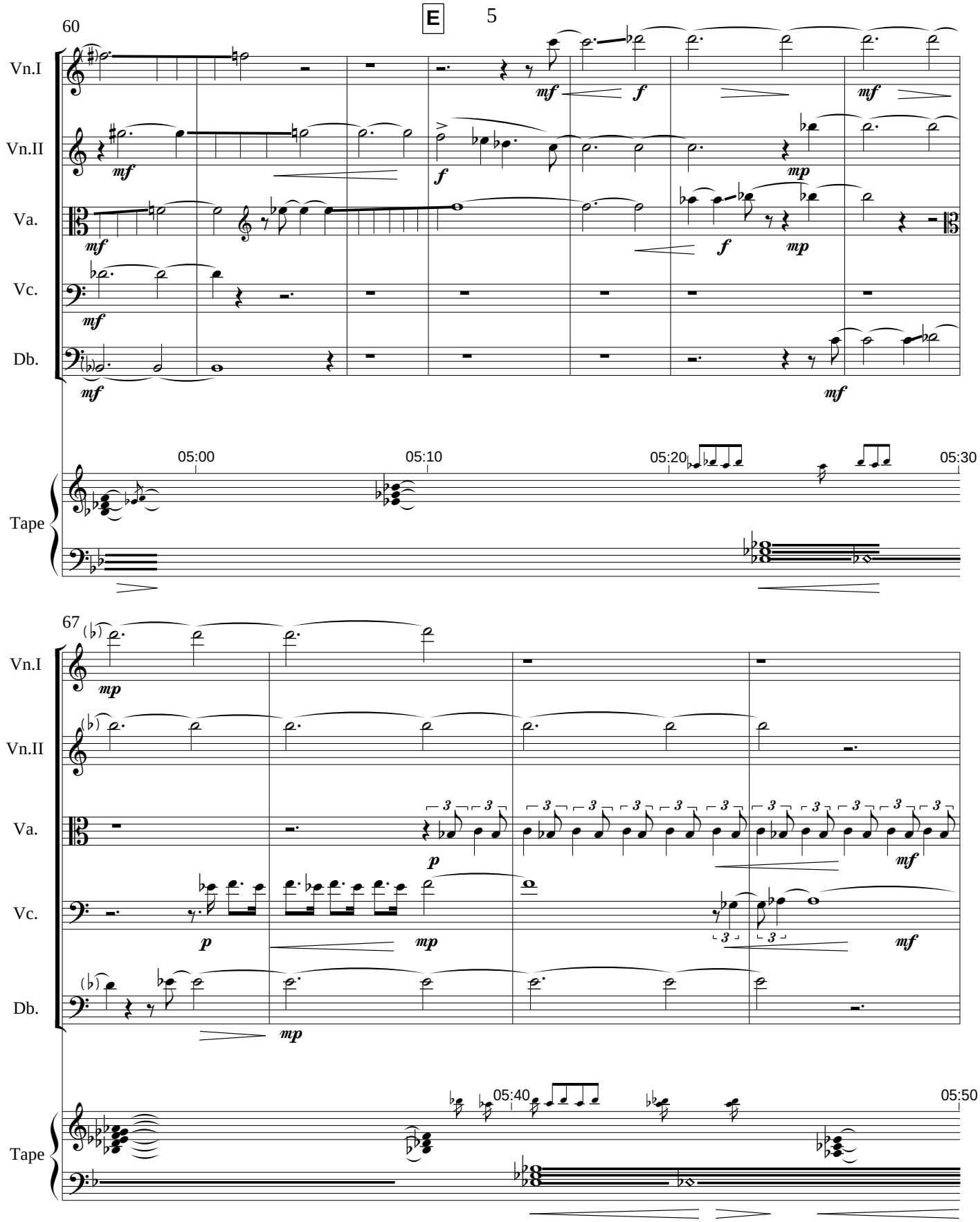
The instruments should be amplified and mixed with the tape playback, to achieve a good blend. The performers should be prepared to make adjustments in their dynamics as marked so that they are always audible and in balance with the tape part.

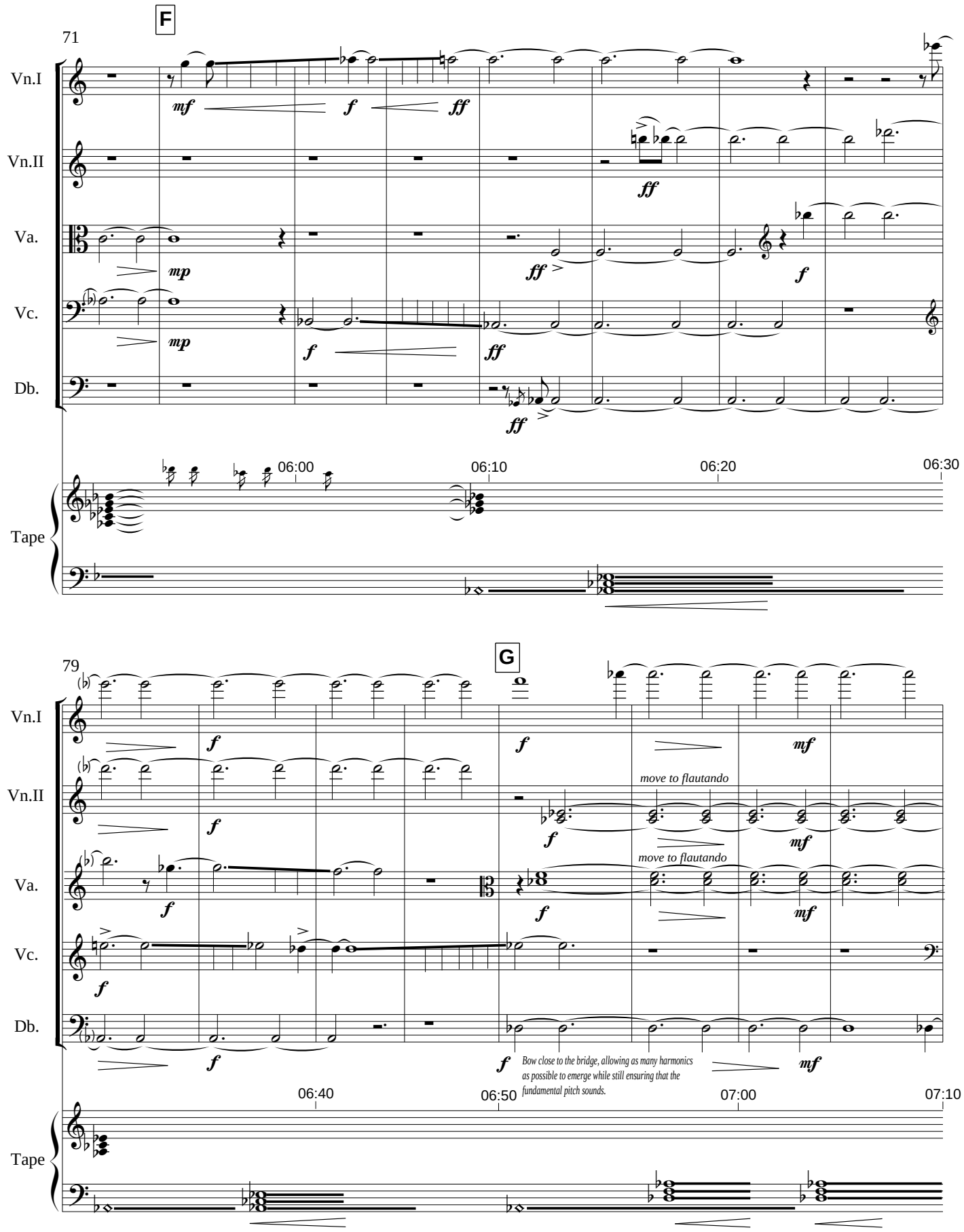

♩ = 60
Vn.I
Vn.II
Va.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
with slight vibrato
ppp
senza vibrato
mp
senza vibrato
niente
p
mp
00:10
00:20
00:30
Sound of water
8
A
with slight vibrato
ppp
niente
pp
senza vibrato
niente
00:40
00:50
01:00
01:10


Slight vibrato continues in violins 1 and 2. Lower strings remain senza vibrato.
15
8
Vn.I
Vn.II
Va.
Vc.
Db.
ppp
mp
mf
01:20
01:30
01:40
Tape
21
B
niente
poco cresc.
pp
01:50
02:00
02:10
02:20


29
(con vibrato)
(From here, all parts play with vibrato ad. lib).
Vn.I
Vn.II
Va.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
vibrato emerges
con vibrato
mf
p
mp
02:30
02:40
02:50
36
C
03:00
03:10
03:20
03:30


44
Vn.I
Vn.II
Va.
Vc.
Db.
mf
mp
03:40
03:50
04:00
04:10
Tape
52
D
f
04:20
04:30
04:40
04:50


E
60
Vn.I
Vn.II
Va.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
05:00
05:10
05:20
05:30
67
05:40
05:50


F
71
Vn.I
Vn.II
Va.
Vc.
Db.
mf
f
ff
mp
Tape
06:00
06:10
06:20
06:30
G
79
move to flautando
move to flautando
Bow close to the bridge, allowing as many harmonics as possible to emerge while still ensuring that the fundamental pitch sounds.
06:40
06:50
07:00
07:10

87

H

Vn.I

Vn.II

Va.

Vc.

Db.

Tape

ordinario

p

mp

ordinario

p

move to flautando

mf

07:20

07:30

07:40

93

Vn.I

Vn.II

Va.

Vc.

Db.

Tape

ordinario

mp

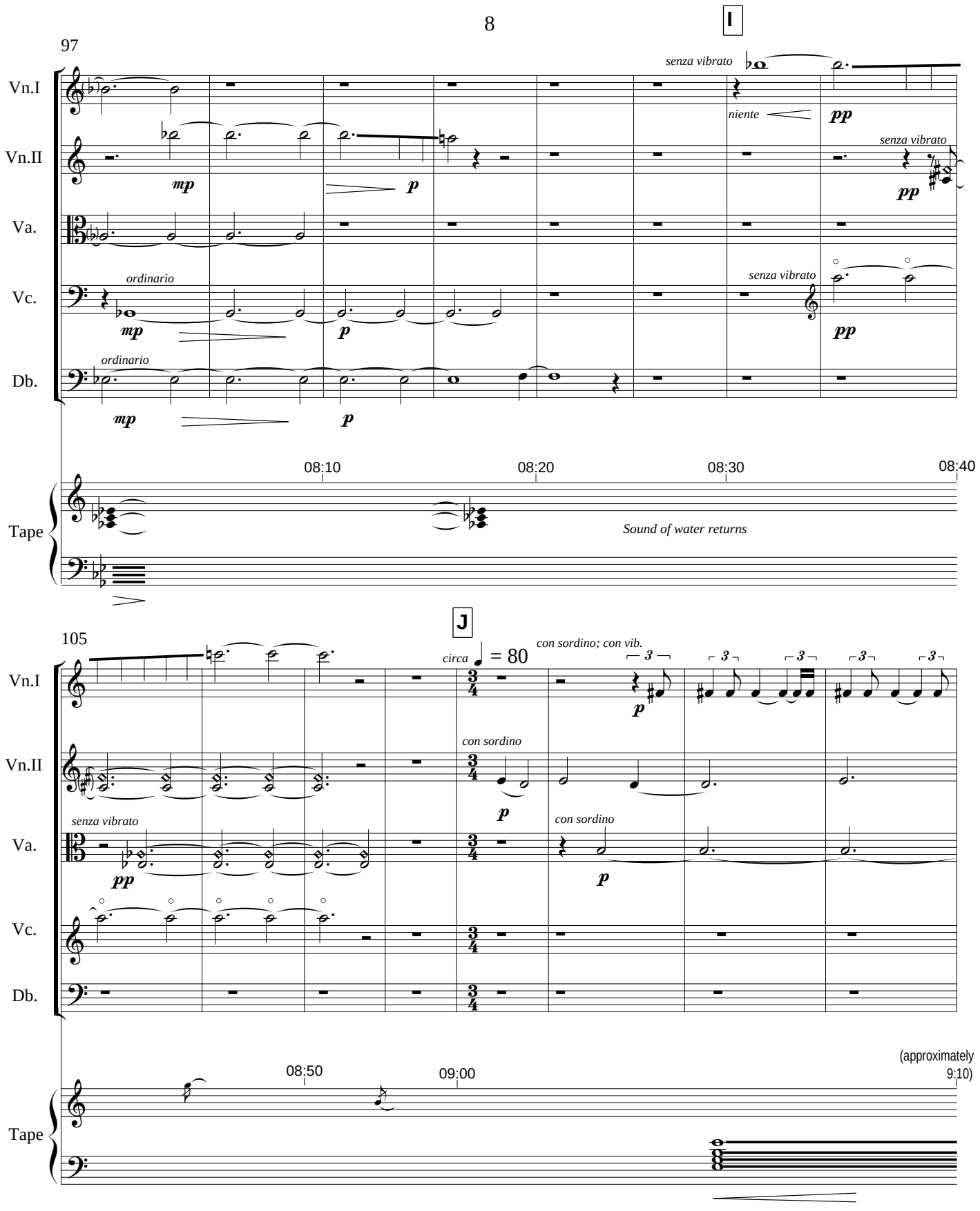
mp

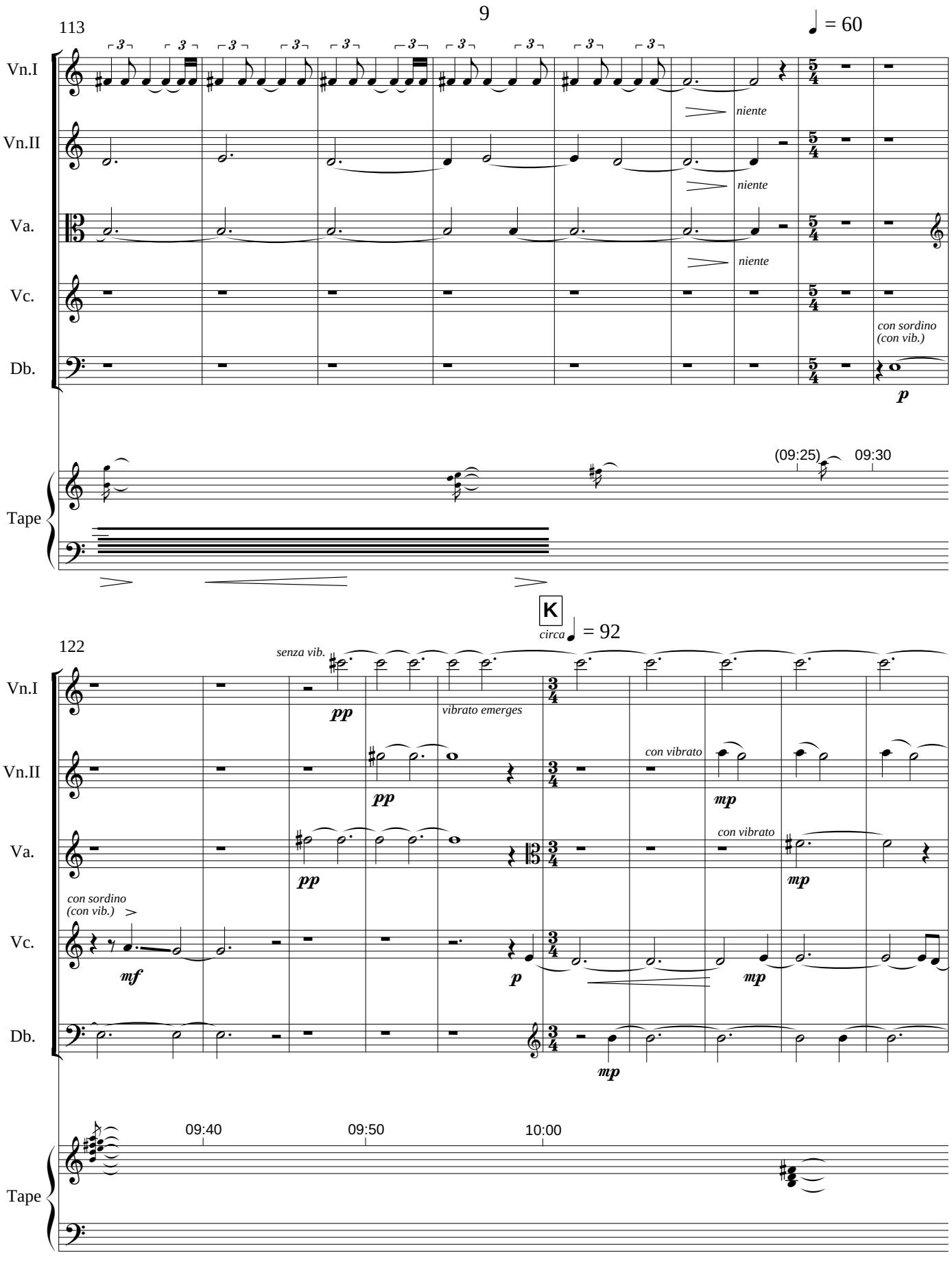
mp

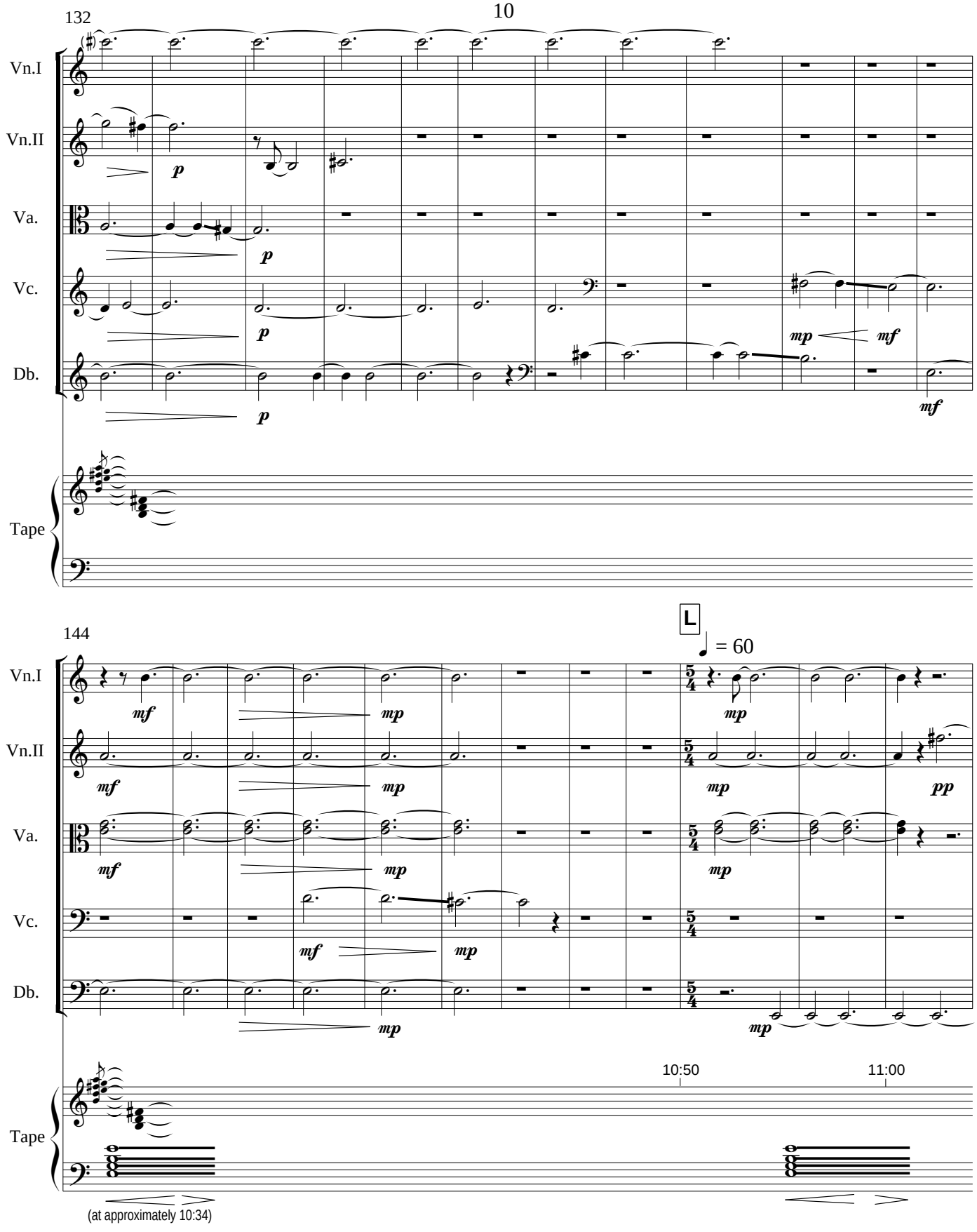
niente

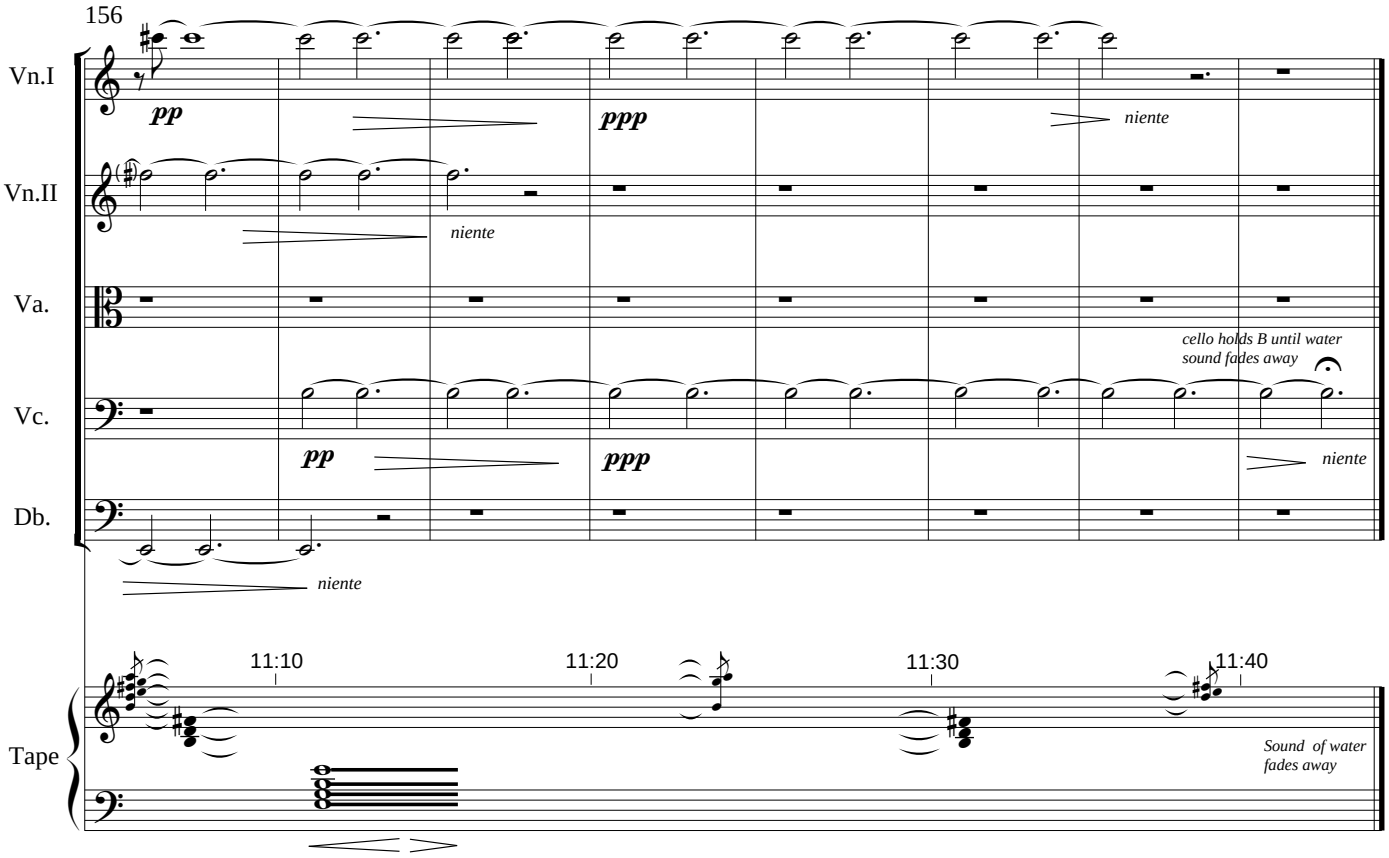
07:50

08:00


I
97
Vn.I
Vn.II
Va.
Vc.
Db.
senza vibrato
niente
pp
mp
p
ordinario
Tape
08:10
08:20
08:30
08:40
Sound of water returns
J
105
circa ♩ = 80
con sordino; con vib.
con sordino
08:50
09:00
(approximately 9:10)


113
♩ = 60
Vn.I
Vn.II
Va.
Vc.
Db.
niente
niente
niente
con sordino
(con vib.)
p
Tape
(09:25)
09:30
K
circa ♩ = 92
122
senza vib.
pp
vibrato emerges
con vibrato
con vibrato
con sordino
(con vib.)
mf
p
mp
09:40
09:50
10:00


132
Vn.I
Vn.II
Va.
Vc.
Db.
Tape
p
mp
mf
144
L
= 60
pp
10:50
11:00
(at approximately 10:34)


156
Vn.I
pp
ppp
niente
Vn.II
niente
Va.
cello holds B until water
sound fades away
Vc.
pp
ppp
niente
Db.
niente
11:10
11:20
11:30
11:40
Tape
Sound of water
fades away