ecliptic

for string quartet

Liam Elliot

ecliptic refers to the average path of the sun. Working on this piece in Banff, I was thinking of solstice, the changing lengths of day and night, winter, and warmth. The piece should feel intimate, but spacious, and like something between a song and a ritual.

Tempo

Tempo is approximate and flexible

Times (e.g. c. 30") indicate the approximate duration of an unmetred section

Harmonics

All harmonics are natural, played on the most recently indicated string

Use open strings and natural harmonics wherever possible

Balance the volume of open strings with harmonics

Allow harmonics to fade to or emerge from unpitched bow noise

Embrace the overtone and undertone detunings from equal temperament

Techniques

In bars 30 and 80, gliss. between different nodes of the same harmonic. When you find each node, let it sound, then press down to play a normal note at that position. After playing that note, raise your finger to return to a harmonic then continue glissing to the next node. The notes at each node will produce the undertone series of the harmonic.

Crossed noteheads unpitched by muting strings with left hand to produce only bow noise. When tied to a harmonic note, place bow and finger for the harmonic throughout the muted part in addition to other palm/fingers to mute the string. When you reach the harmonic note, release the muting palm/fingers to allow the harmonic to sound without changing bow or bowing technique.

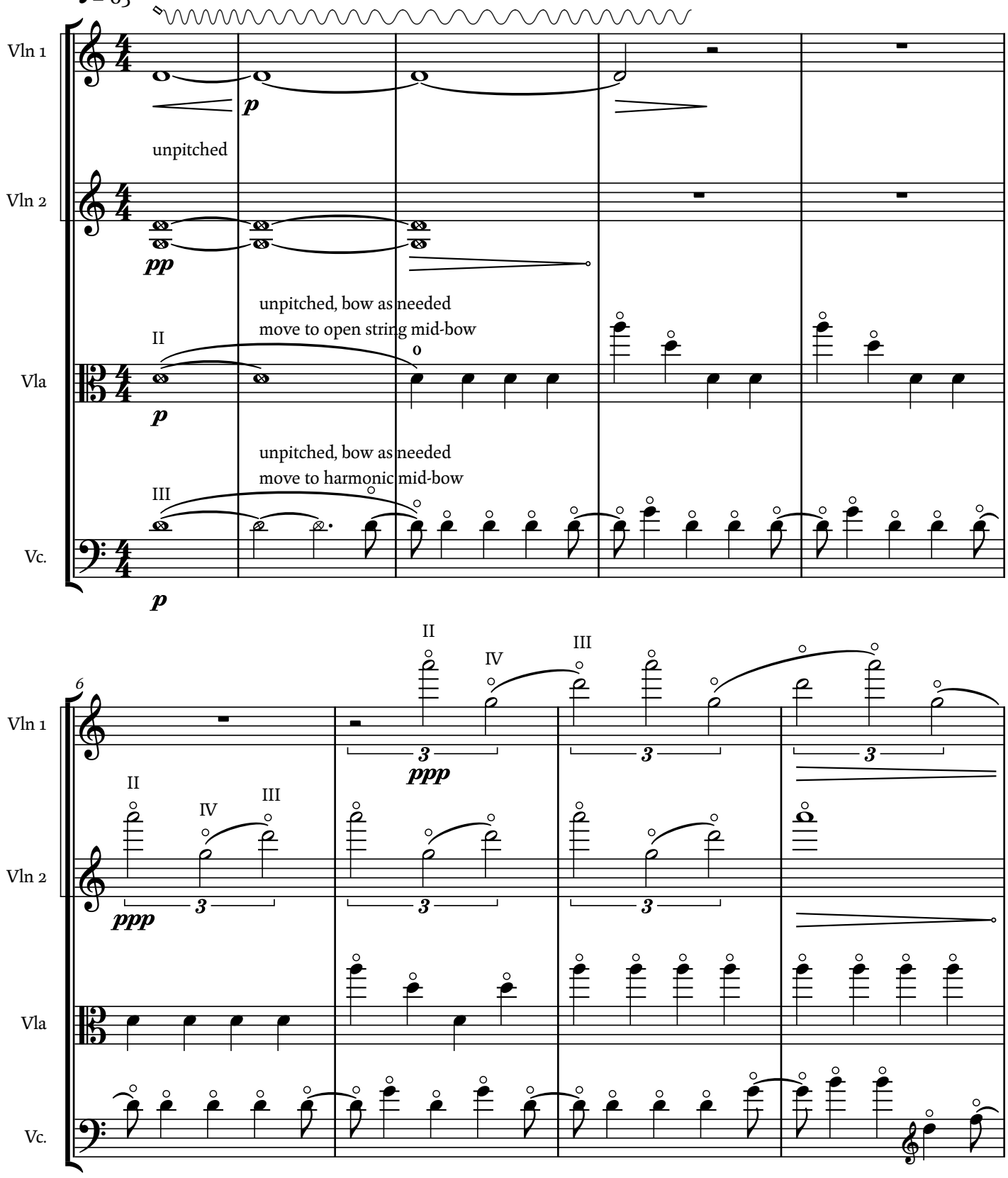
"seagull effect" refers to the cello effect from George Crumb's *Vox Balaenae*. It is accomplished by creating an octave artificial harmonic high on the string, then glissing down while keeping the hand position the same.

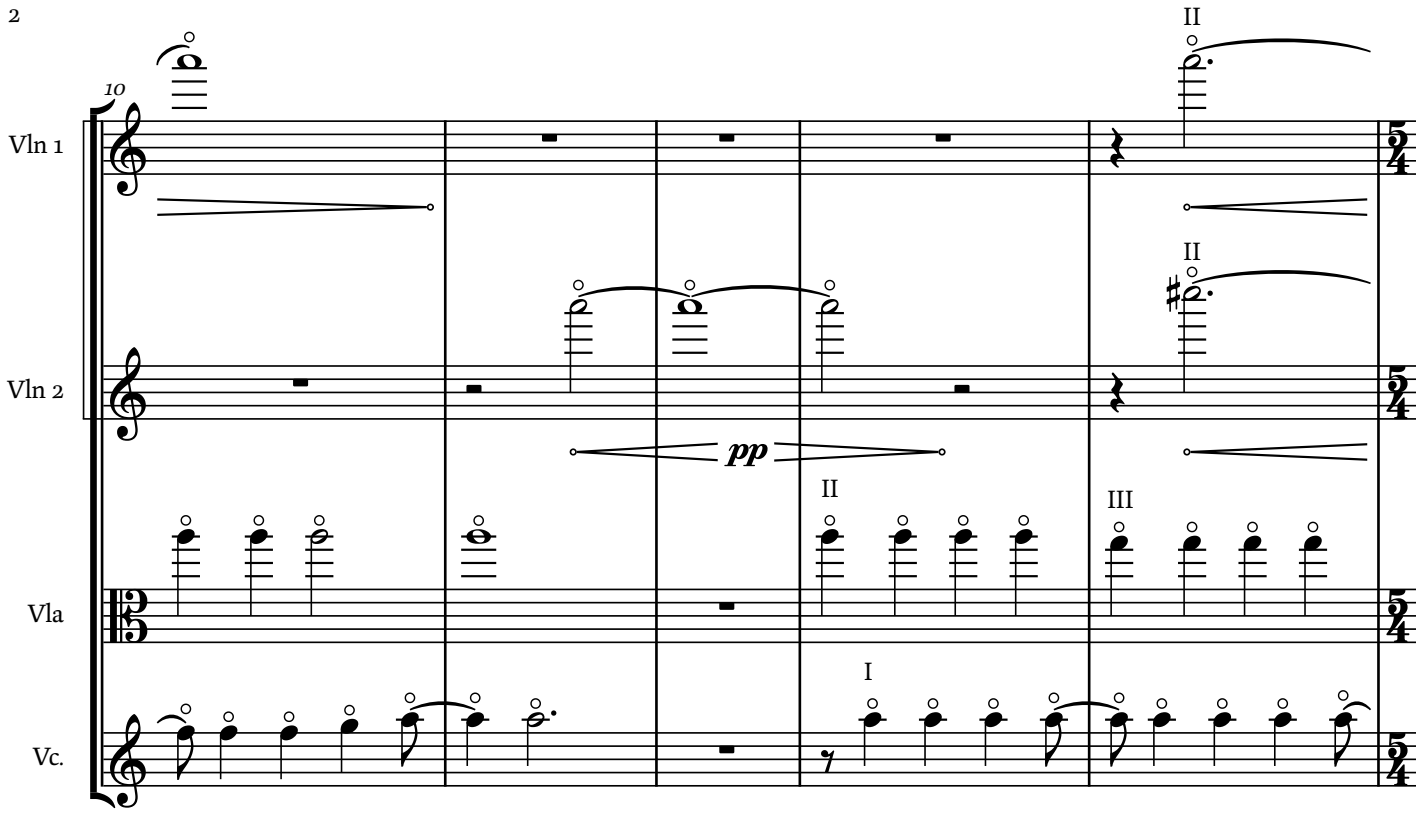
Rectangular noteheads over a small note indicate to place multiple fingers on the string and gliss. up without pressing down on the fingerboard. Avoid activating harmonics and create a semi-pitched, airy sound.

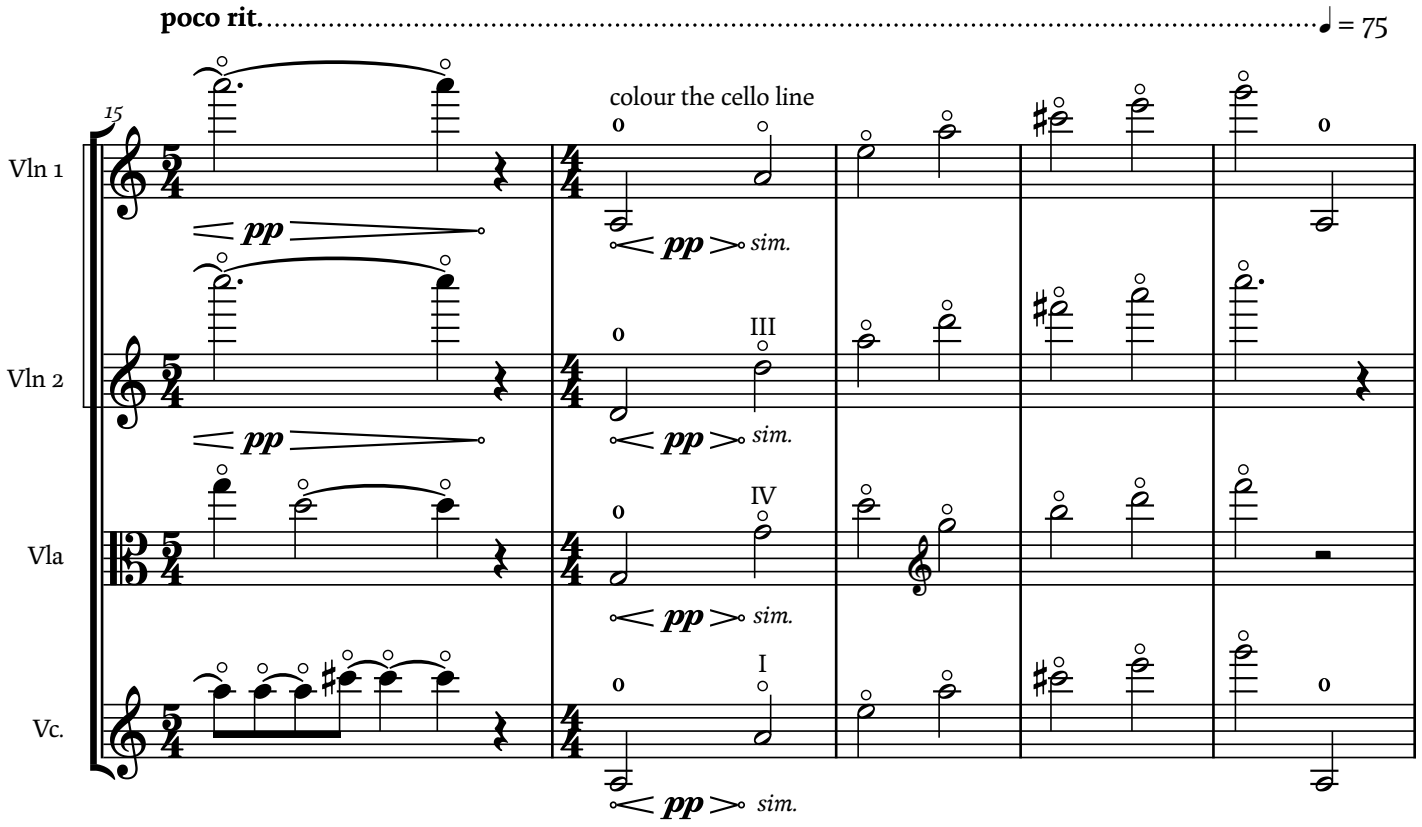
ecliptic

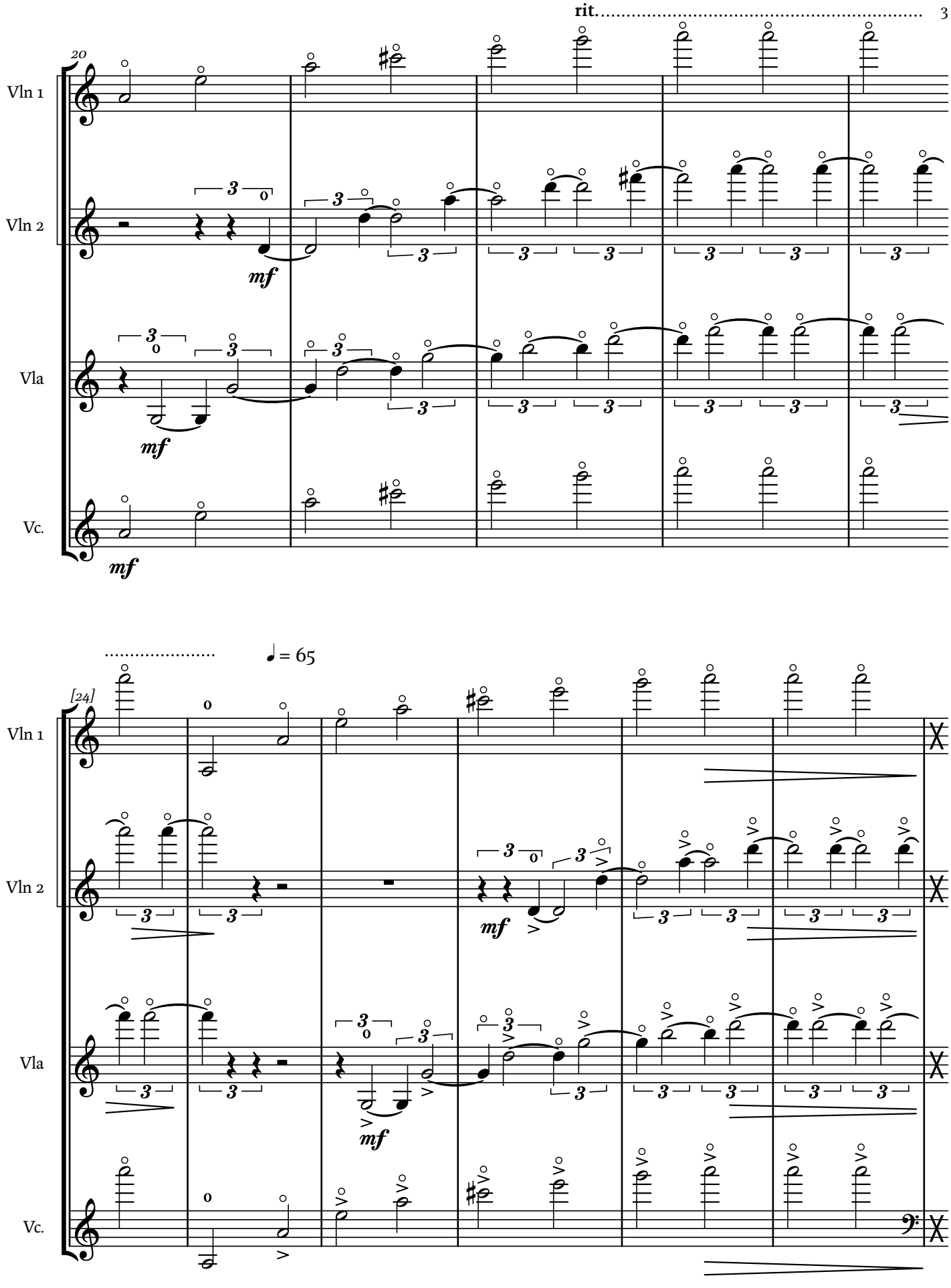
molto SP and slow bow
bring out different harmonics using
only the bow, and allow them to shift aleatorically

Liam Elliot

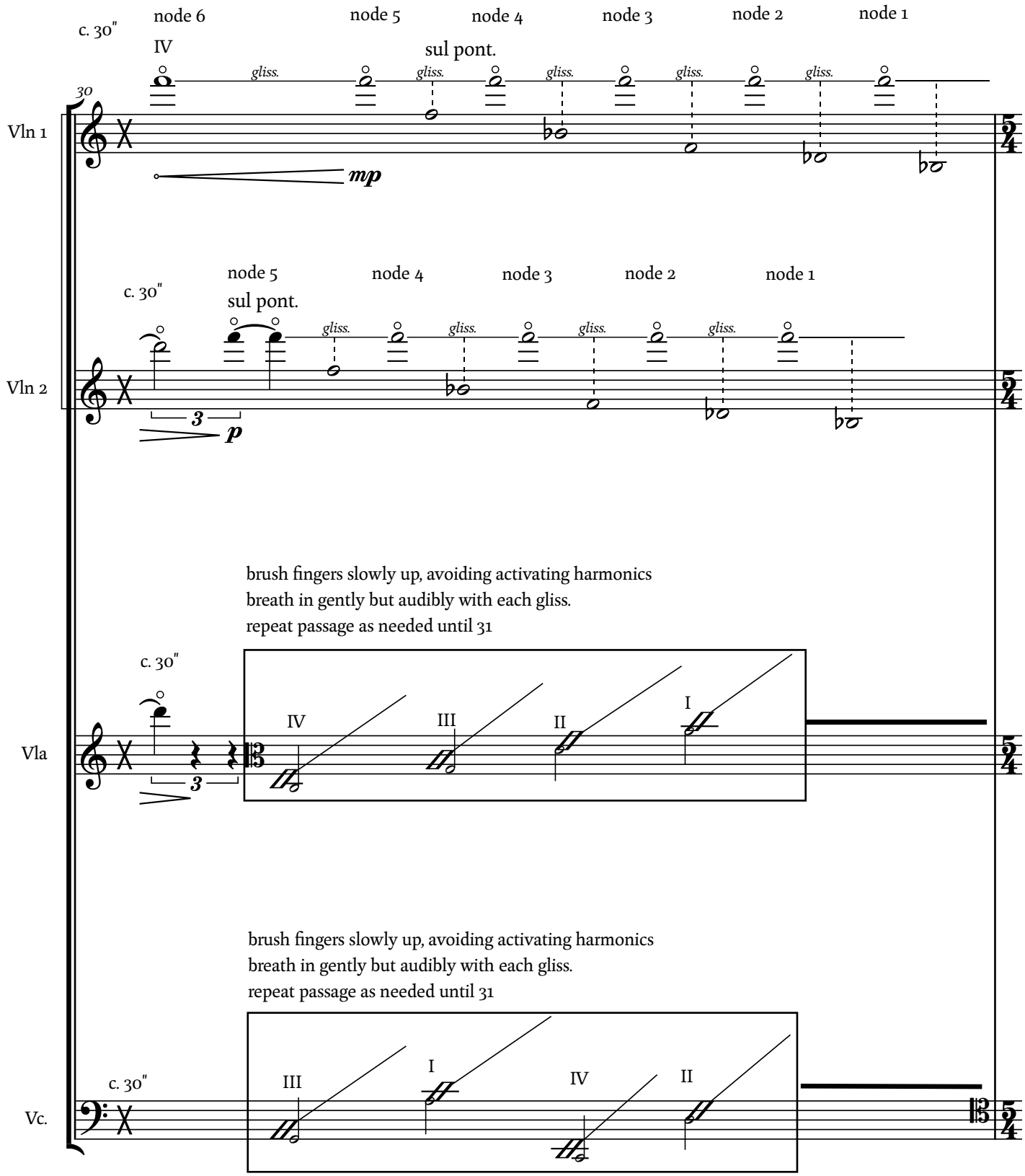


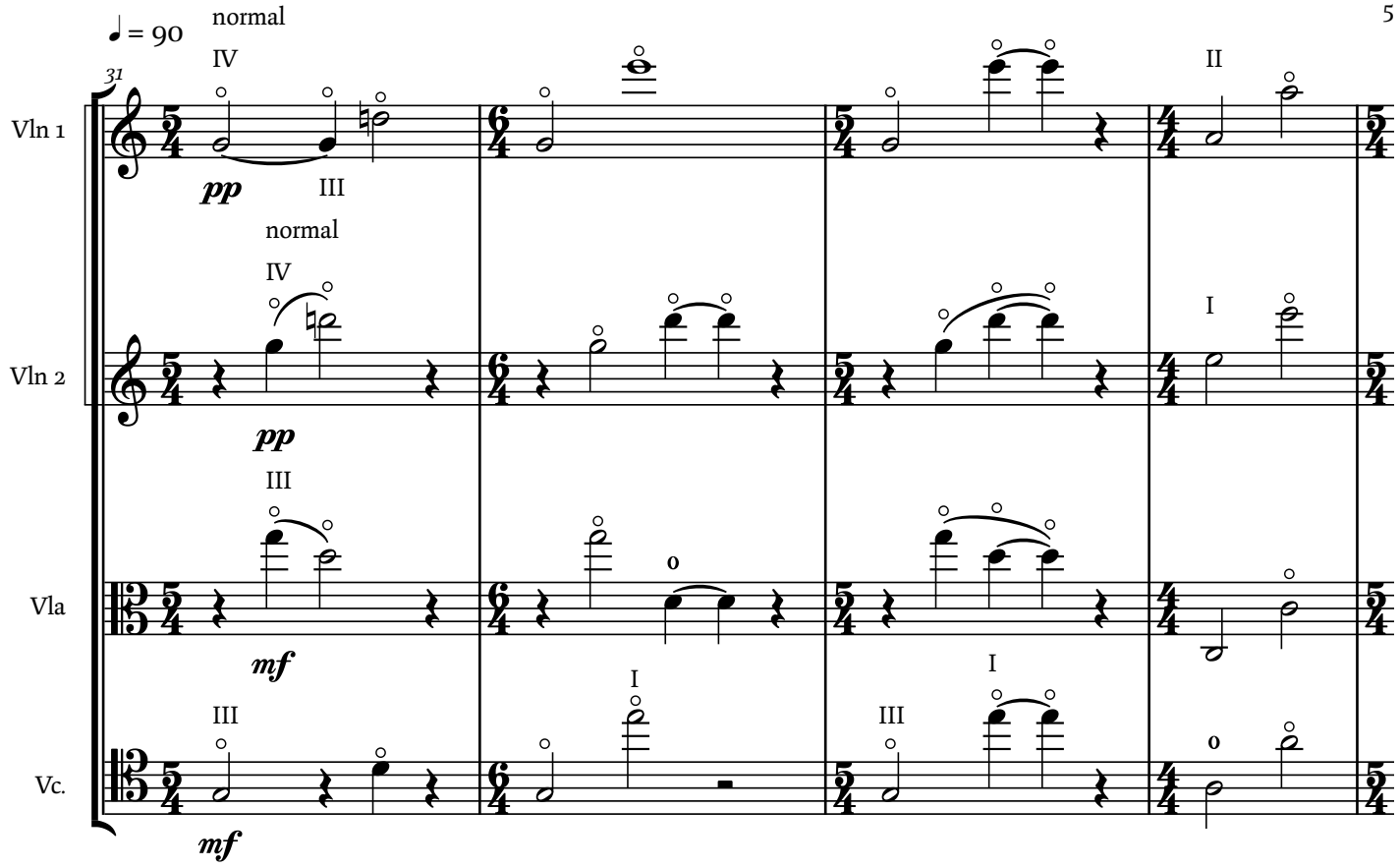

10
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
II
II
pp
II
III
I

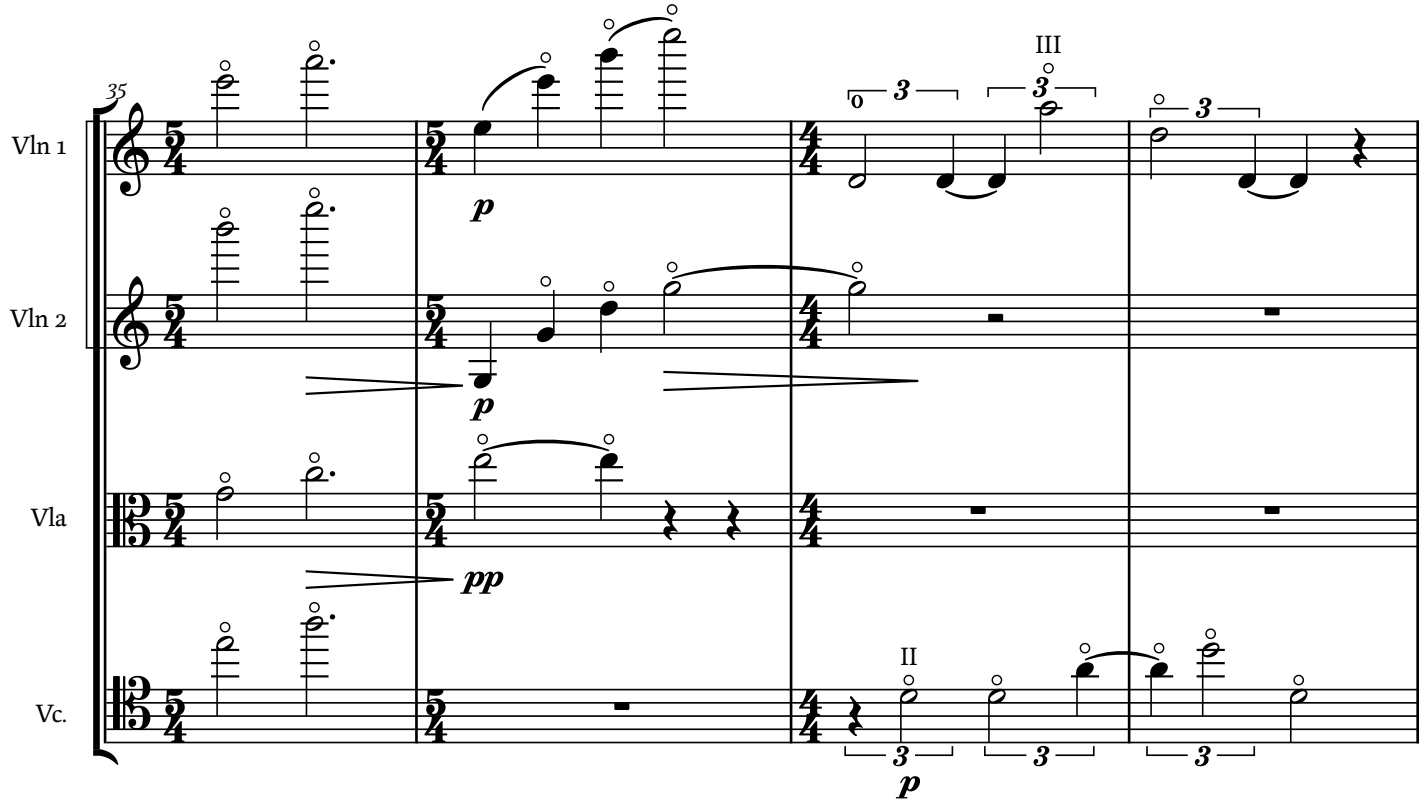

poco rit.
= 75
15
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
colour the cello line
pp
sim.
III
IV
I

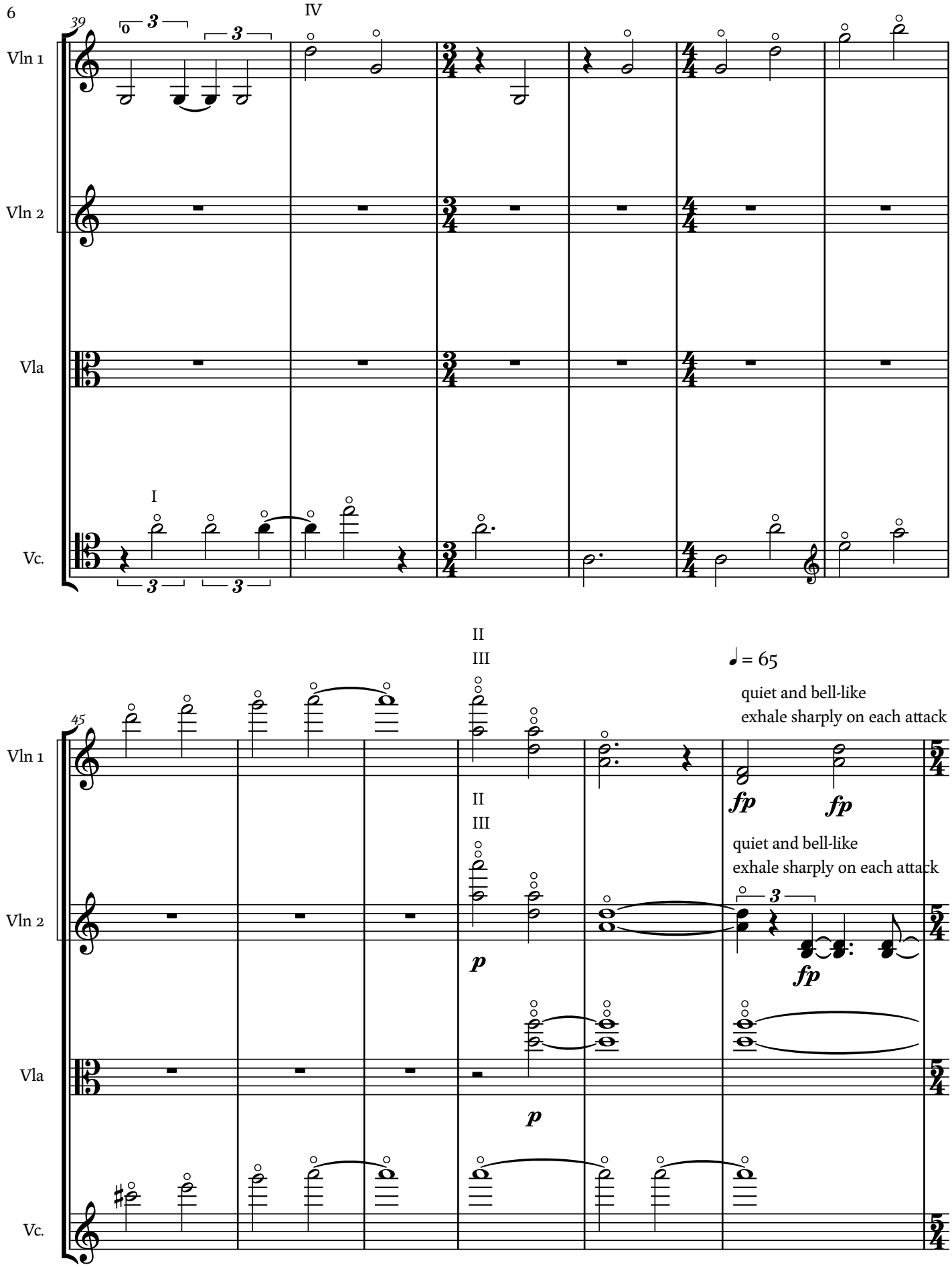

rit.
20
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
mf
[24]
♩ = 65

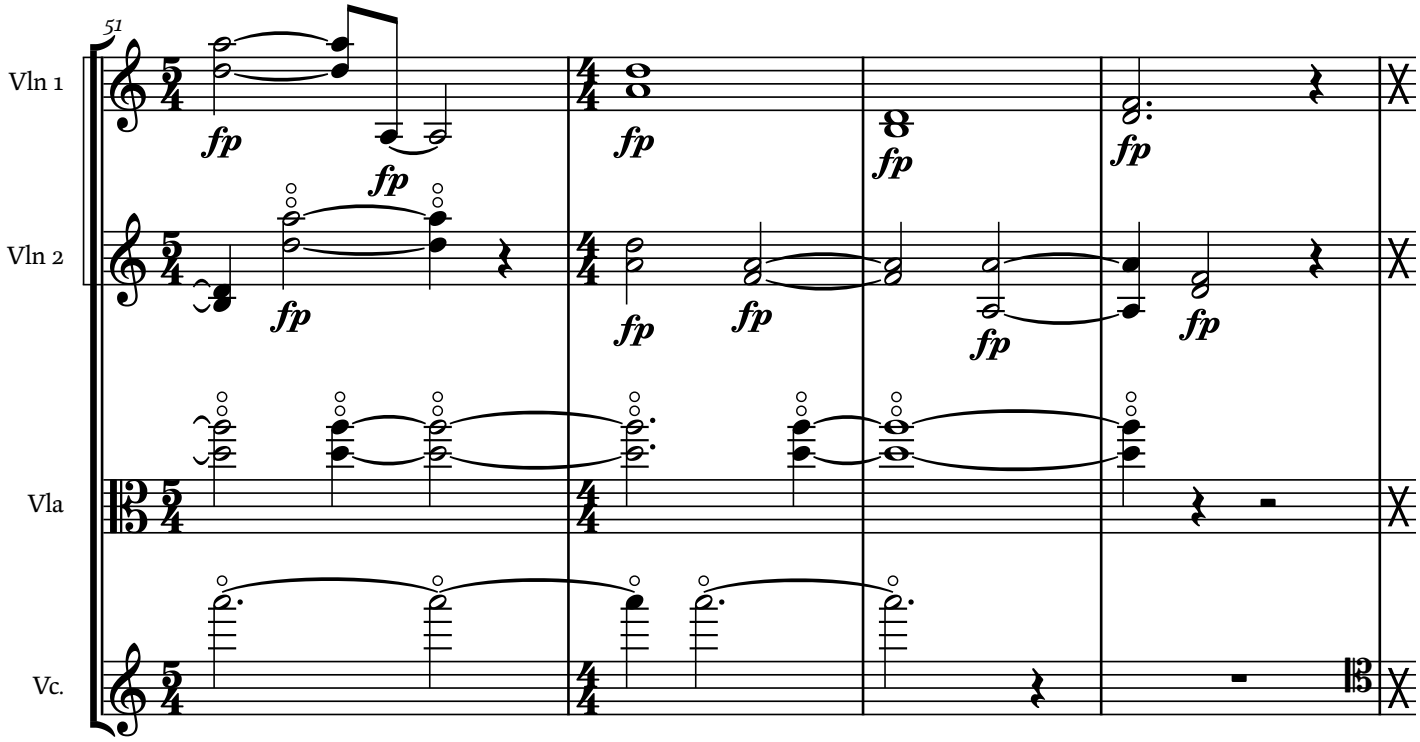
Slide between nodes of the inidcated harmonic, pressing down to play
a note normally after reaching each node. This will produce the undertone series
Do not sync with violin II

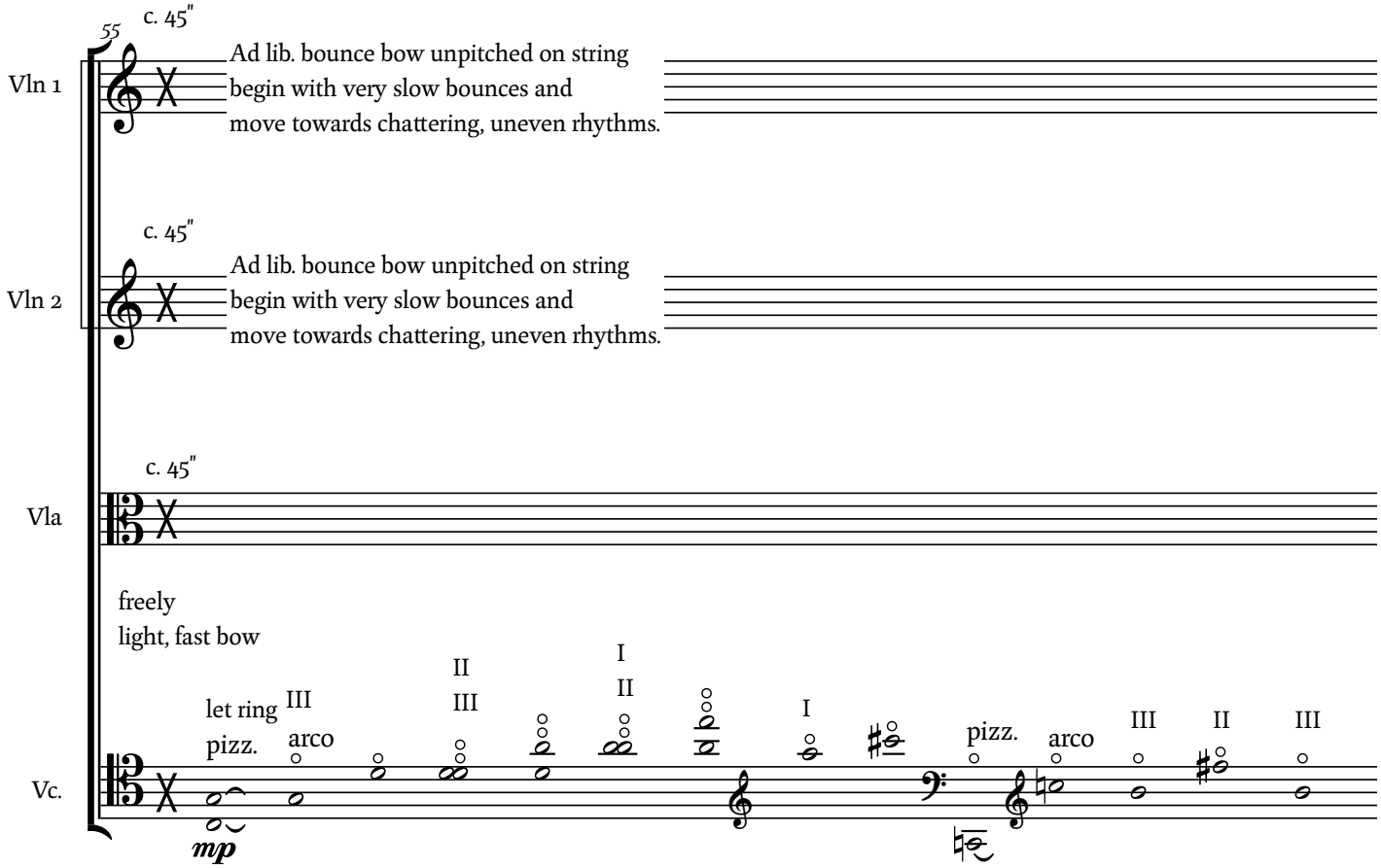


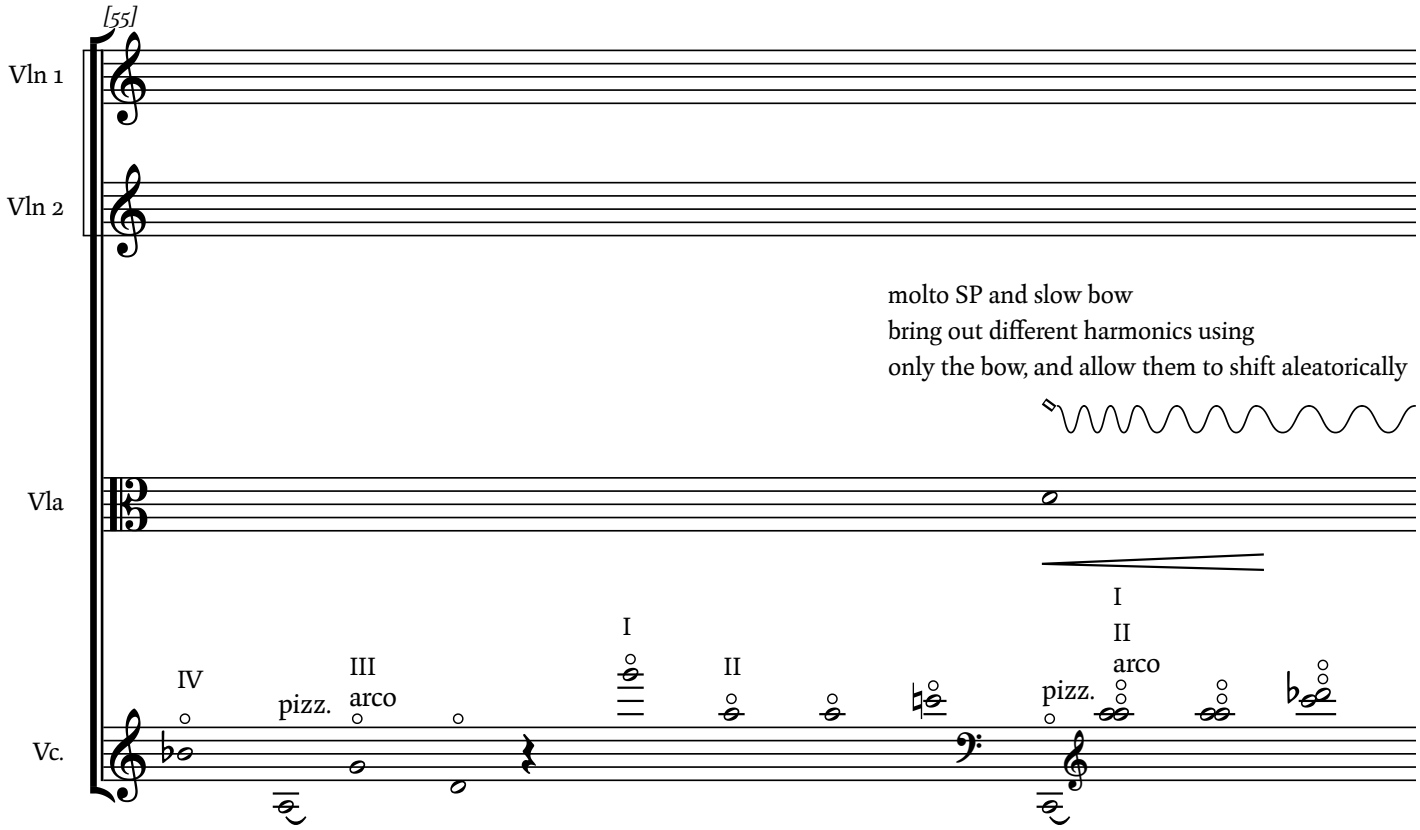

♩ = 90
normal
31
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
pp
mf
normal

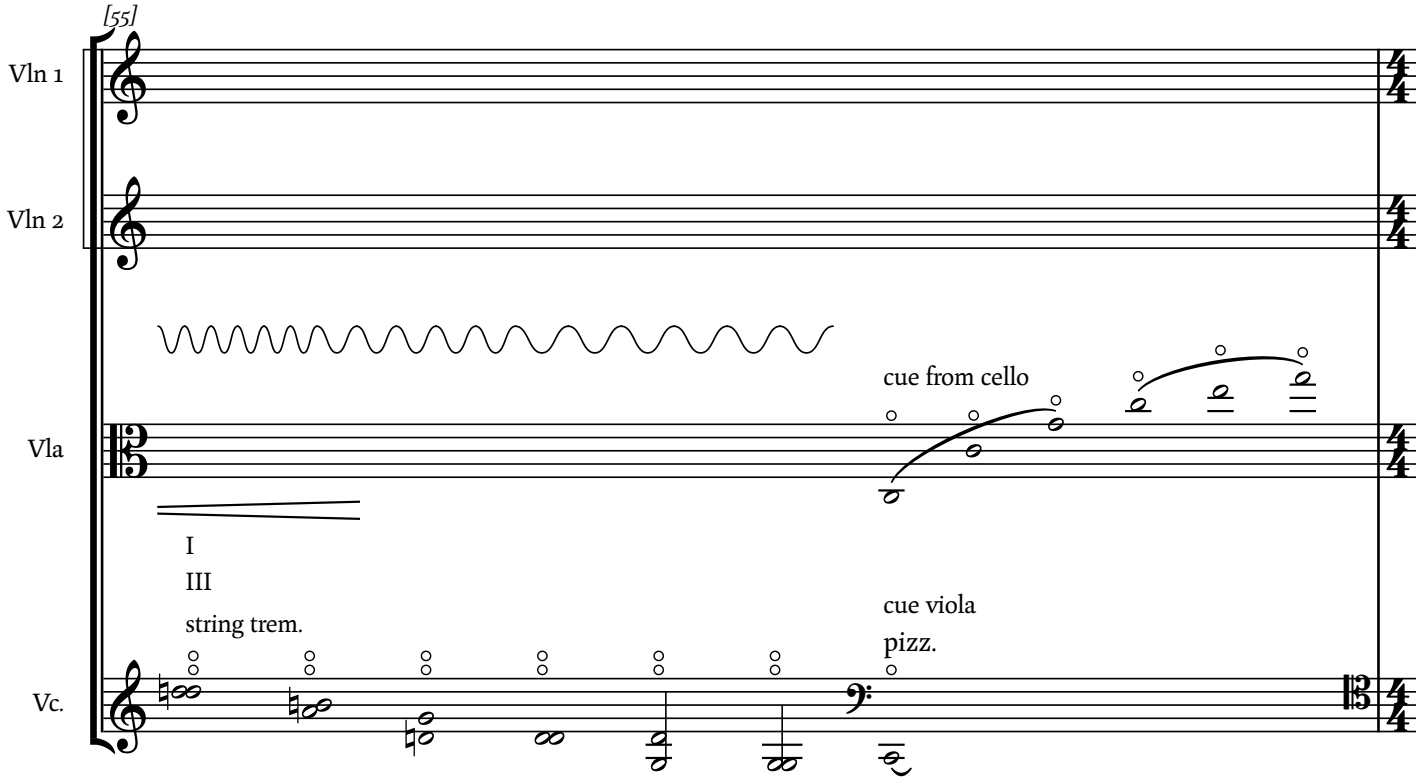

35
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
p
pp

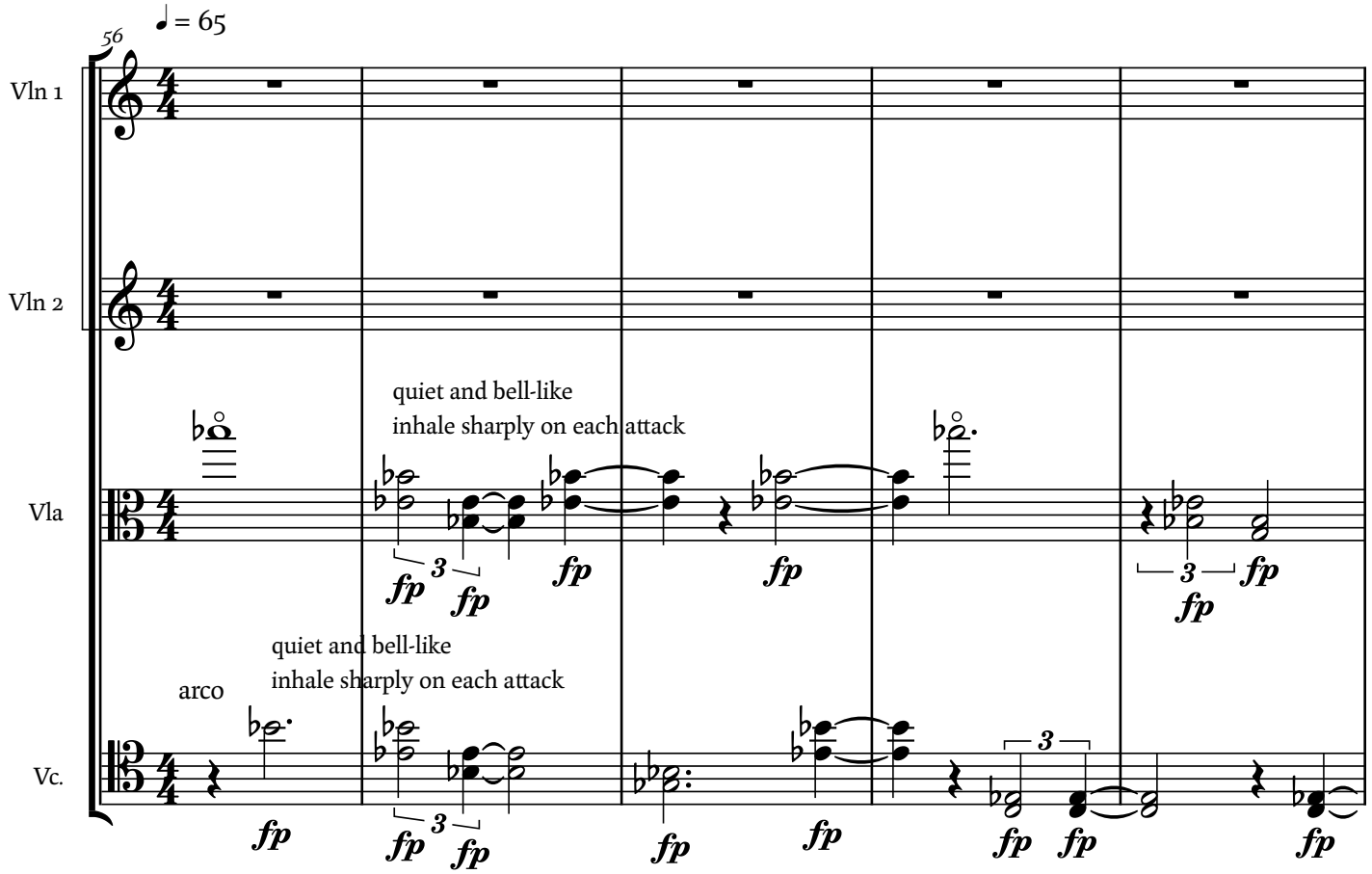

39
IV
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
I
Vc.
45
II
III
= 65
quiet and bell-like
exhale sharply on each attack
fp
fp
II
III
quiet and bell-like
exhale sharply on each attack
p
fp
p

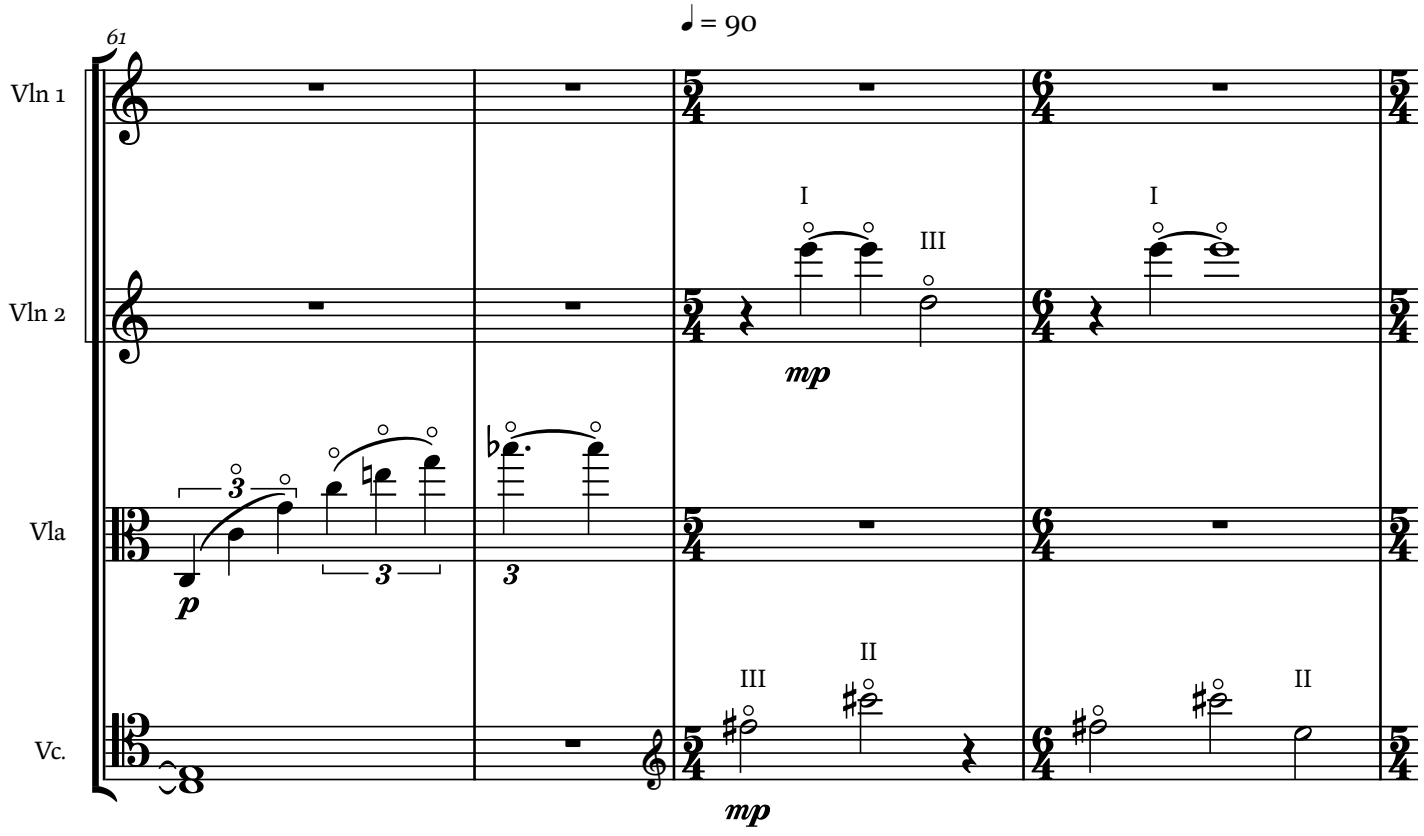

51
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
fp

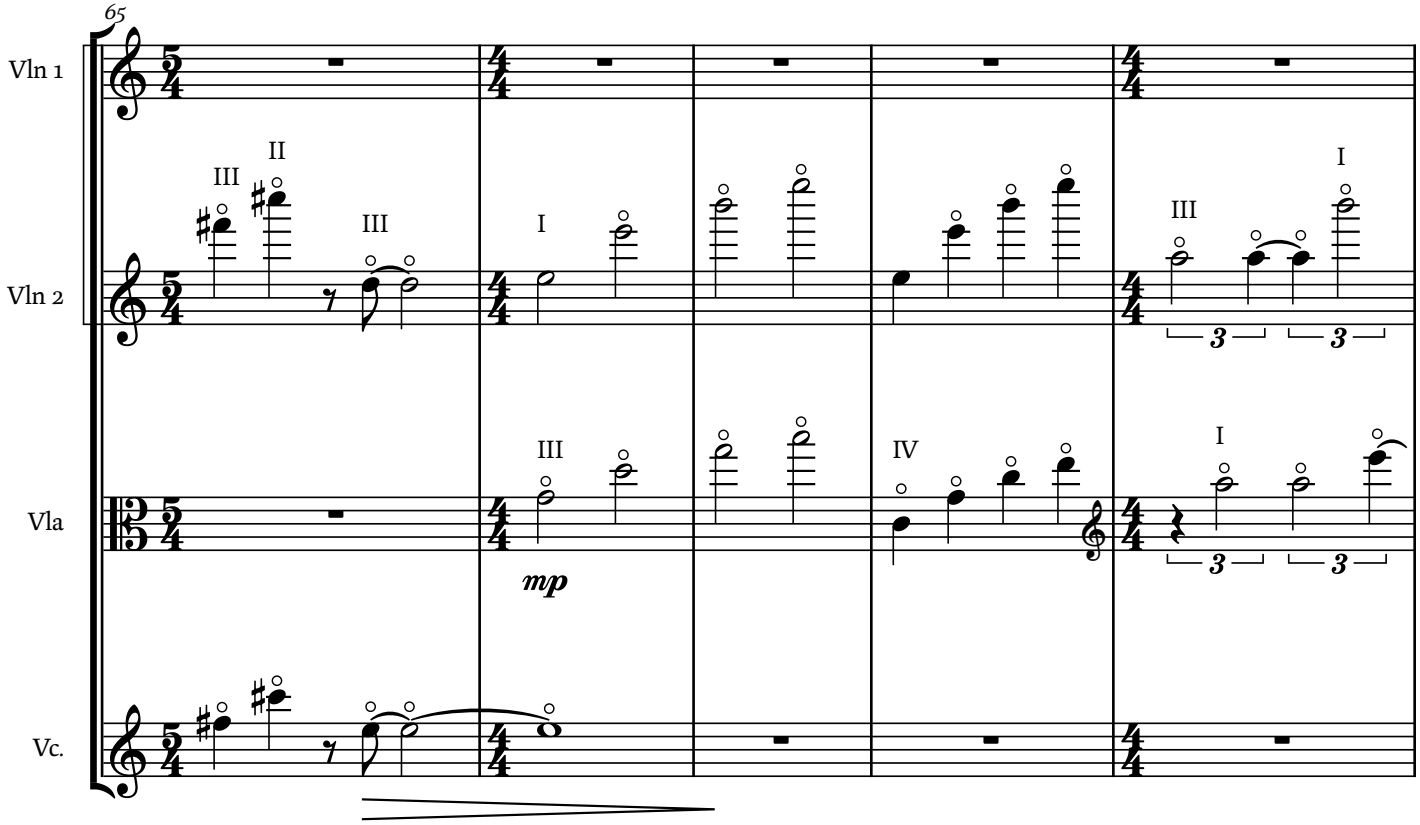

55
c. 45"
Vln 1
Ad lib. bounce bow unpitched on string
begin with very slow bounces and
move towards chattering, uneven rhythms.
c. 45"
Vln 2
Ad lib. bounce bow unpitched on string
begin with very slow bounces and
move towards chattering, uneven rhythms.
c. 45"
Vla
freely
light, fast bow
Vc.
let ring
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
mp

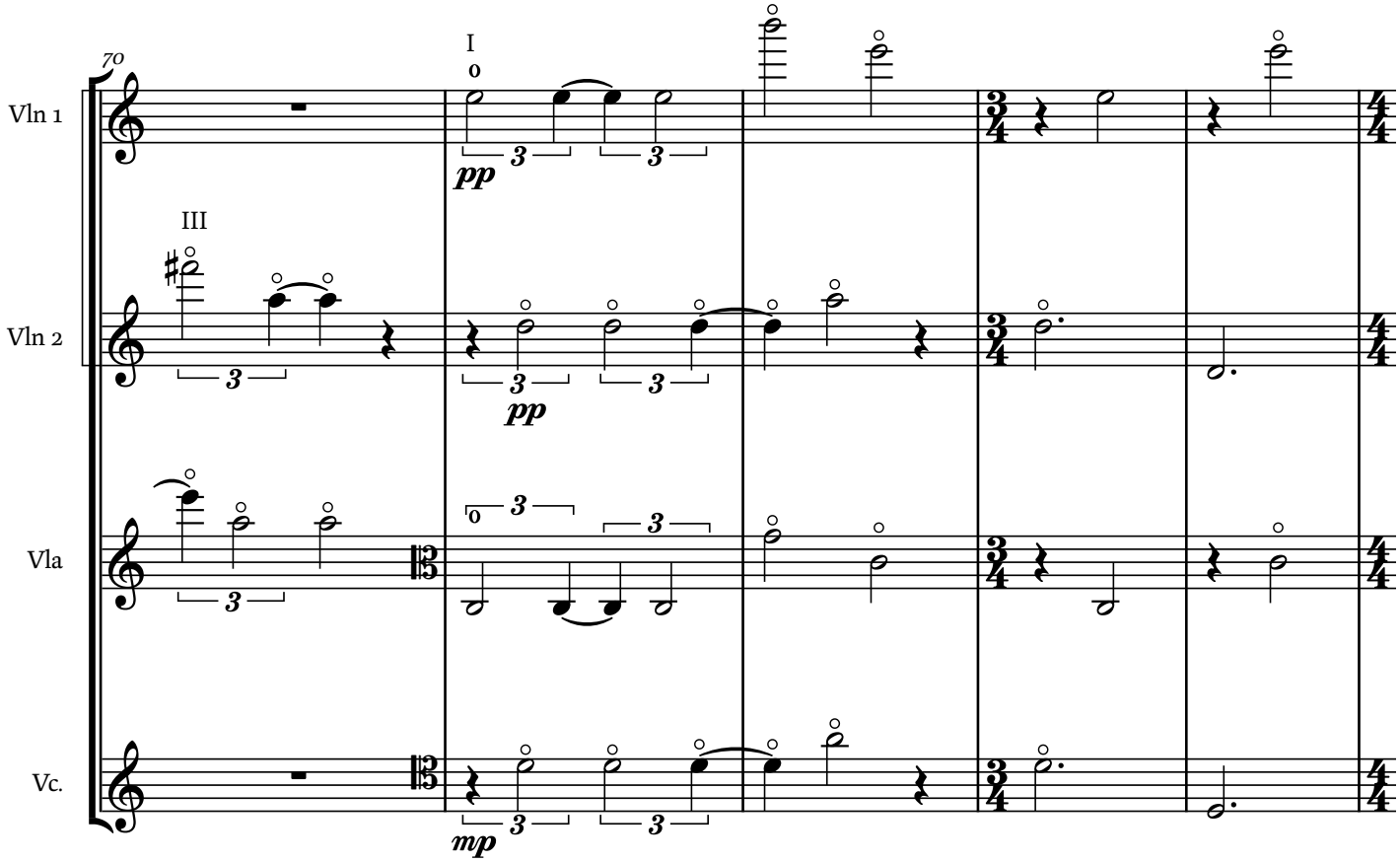

[55]
Vln 1
Vln 2
molto SP and slow bow
bring out different harmonics using
only the bow, and allow them to shift aleatorically
Vla
I
II
arco
I
IV
III
arco
pizz.
II
pizz.
Vc.

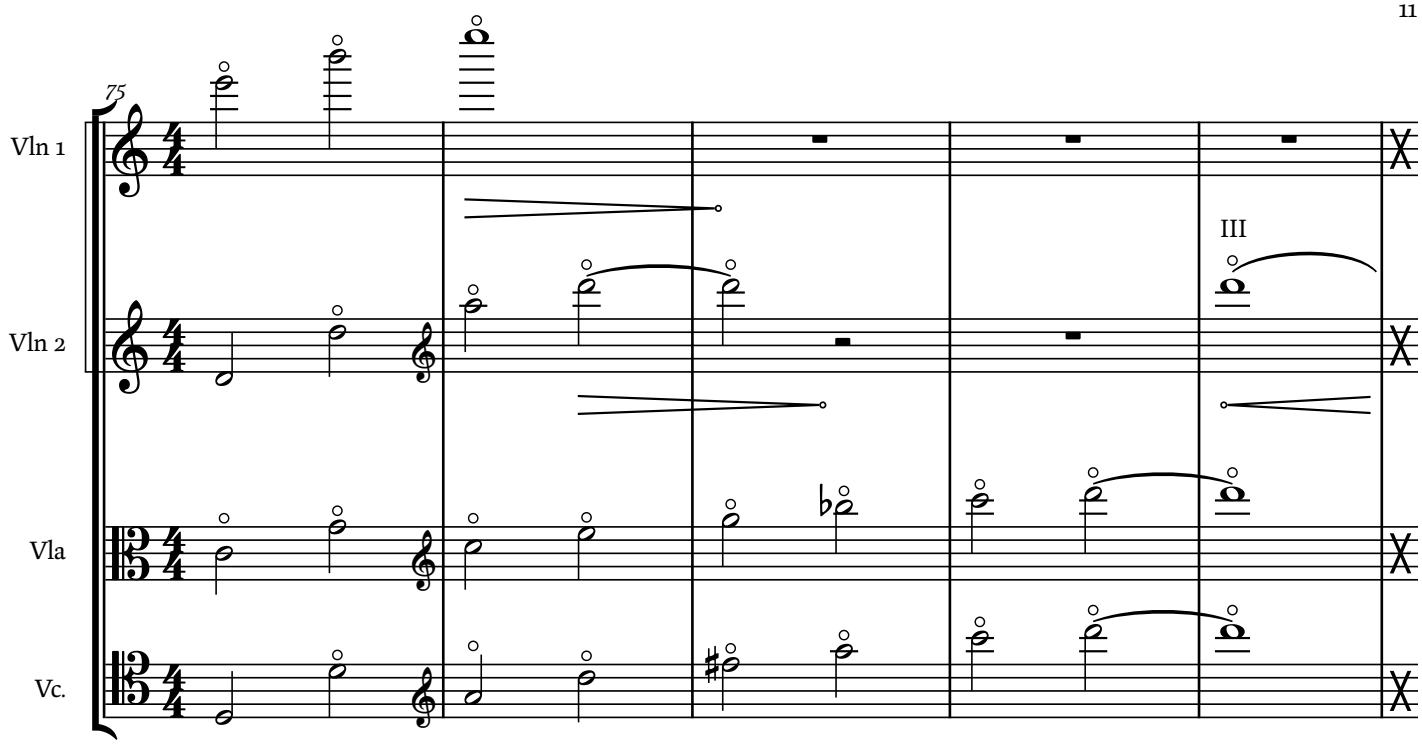

[55]
Vln 1
Vln 2
cue from cello
Vla
I
III
string trem.
cue viola
pizz.
Vc.

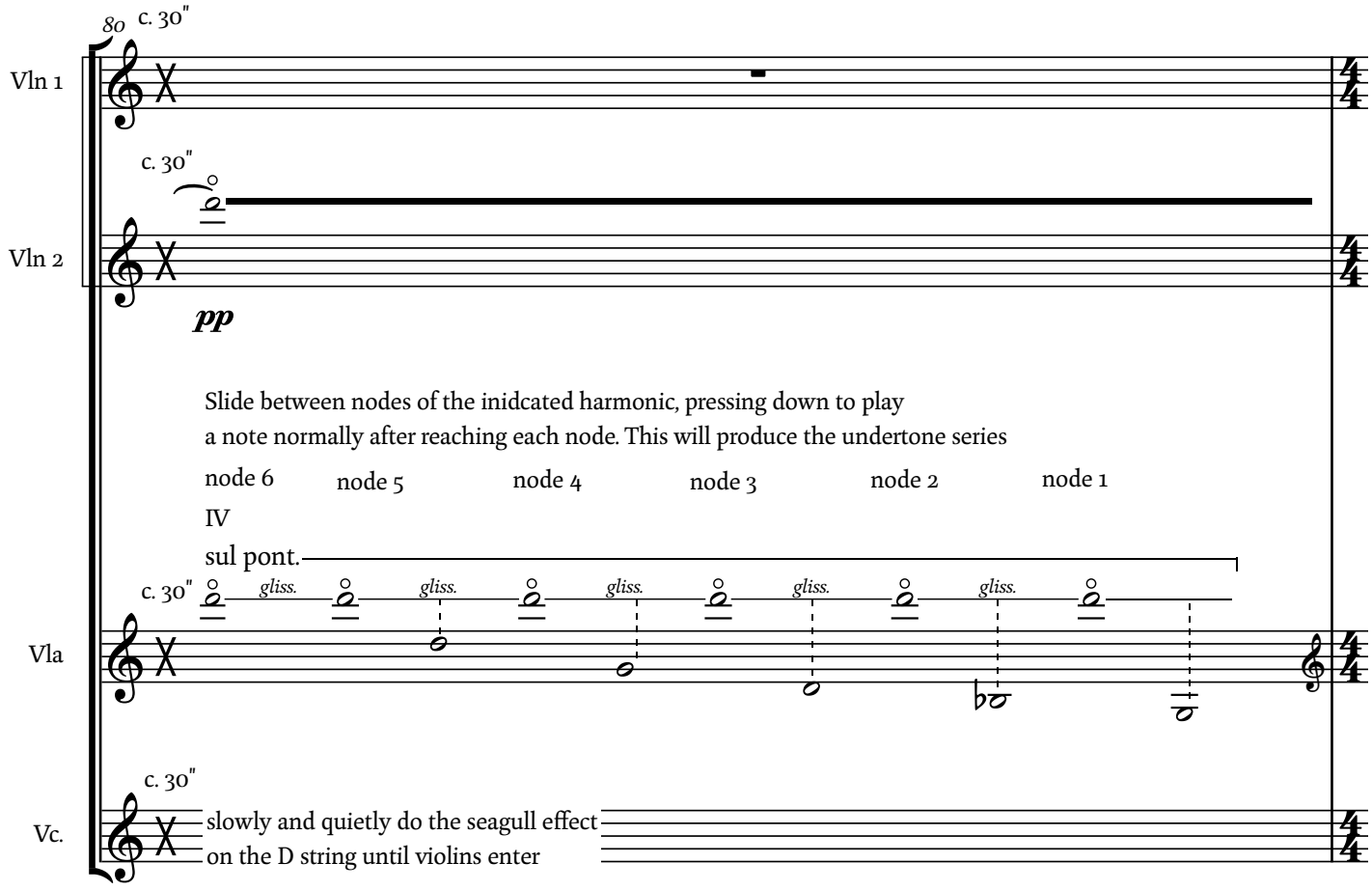

56
♩ = 65
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
quiet and bell-like
inhale sharply on each attack
arco
quiet and bell-like
inhale sharply on each attack
fp
3

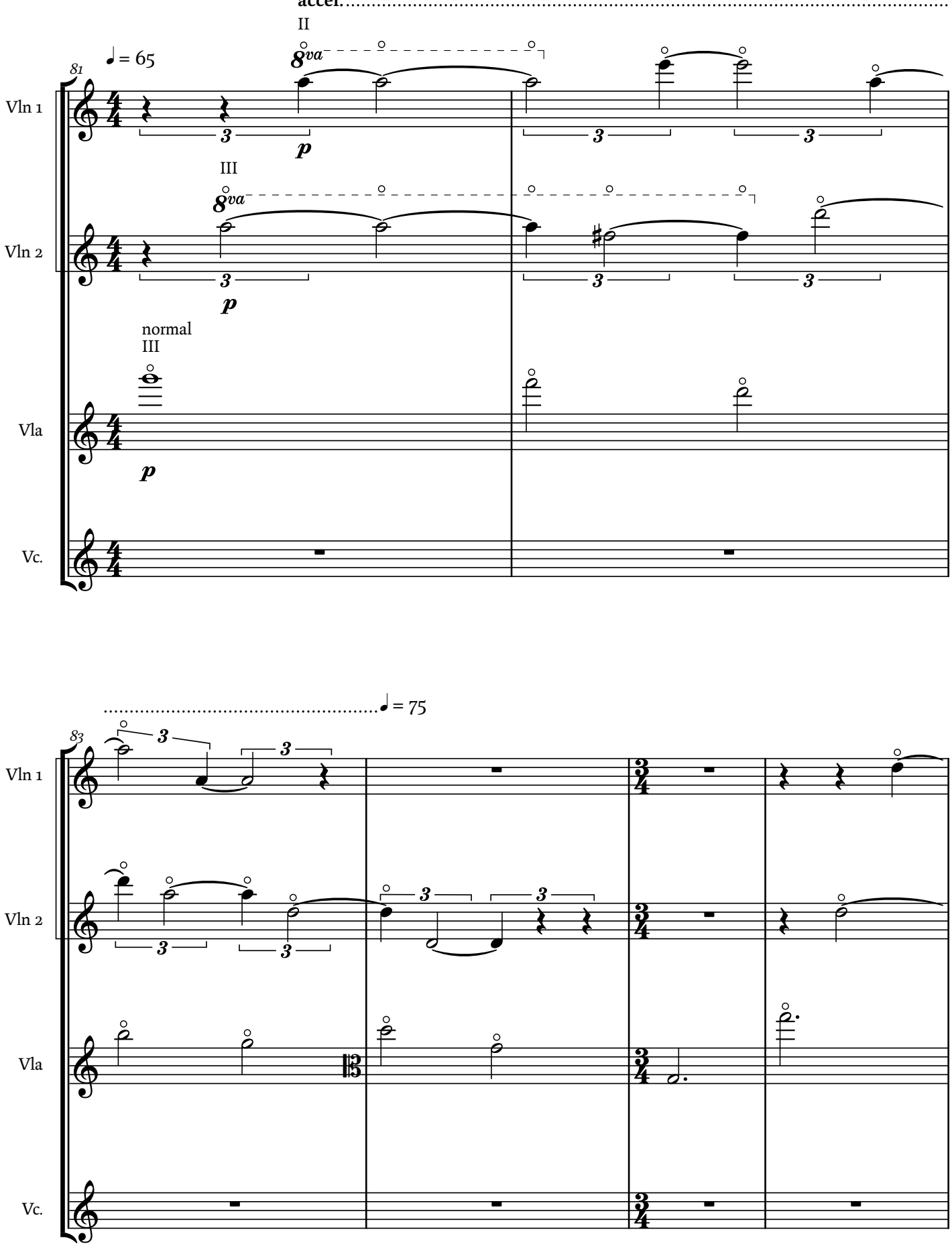

61
♩ = 90
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
I
III
II
mp
p
3

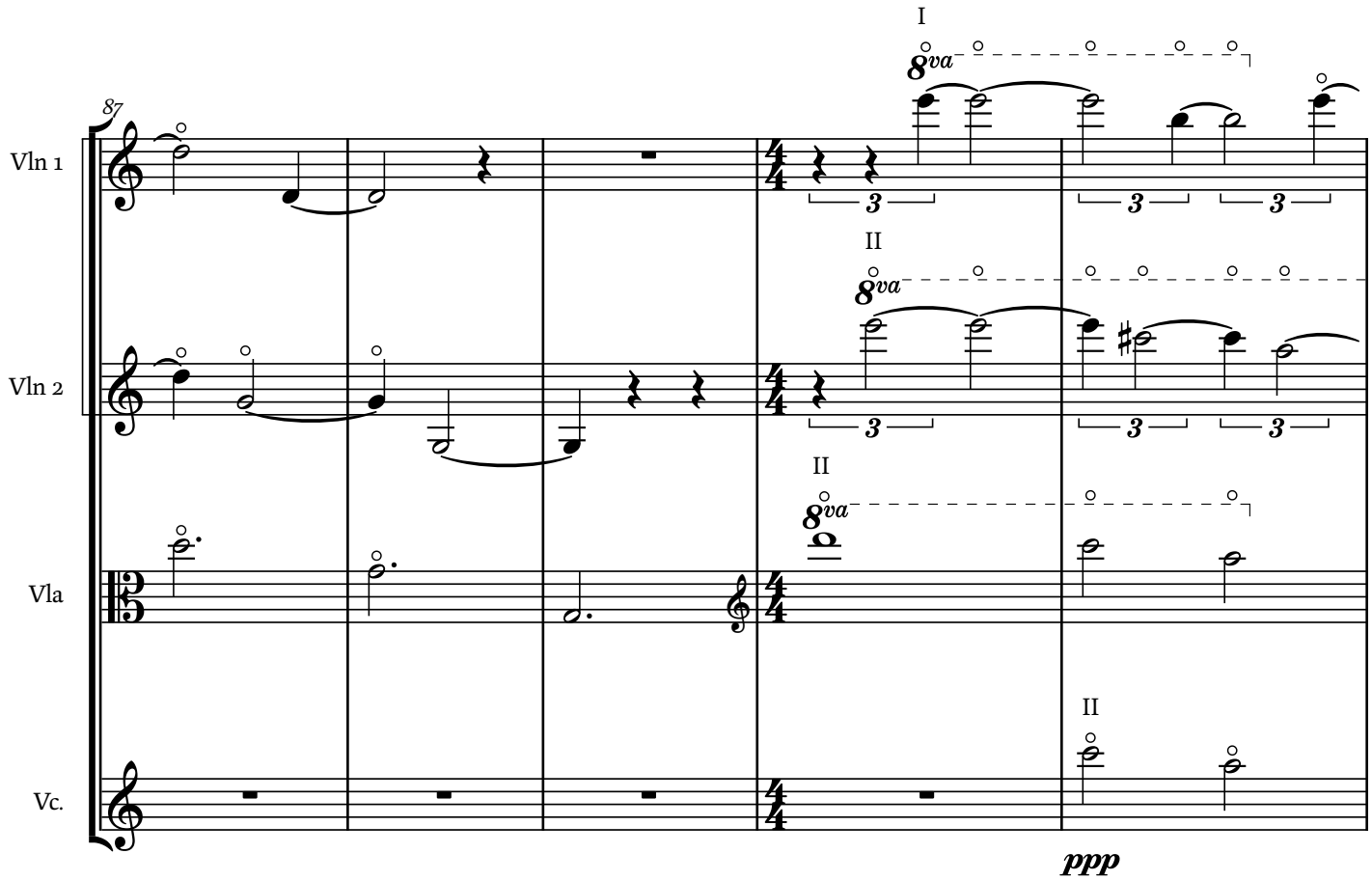

65
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
III
II
III
I
III
I
IV
I
mp

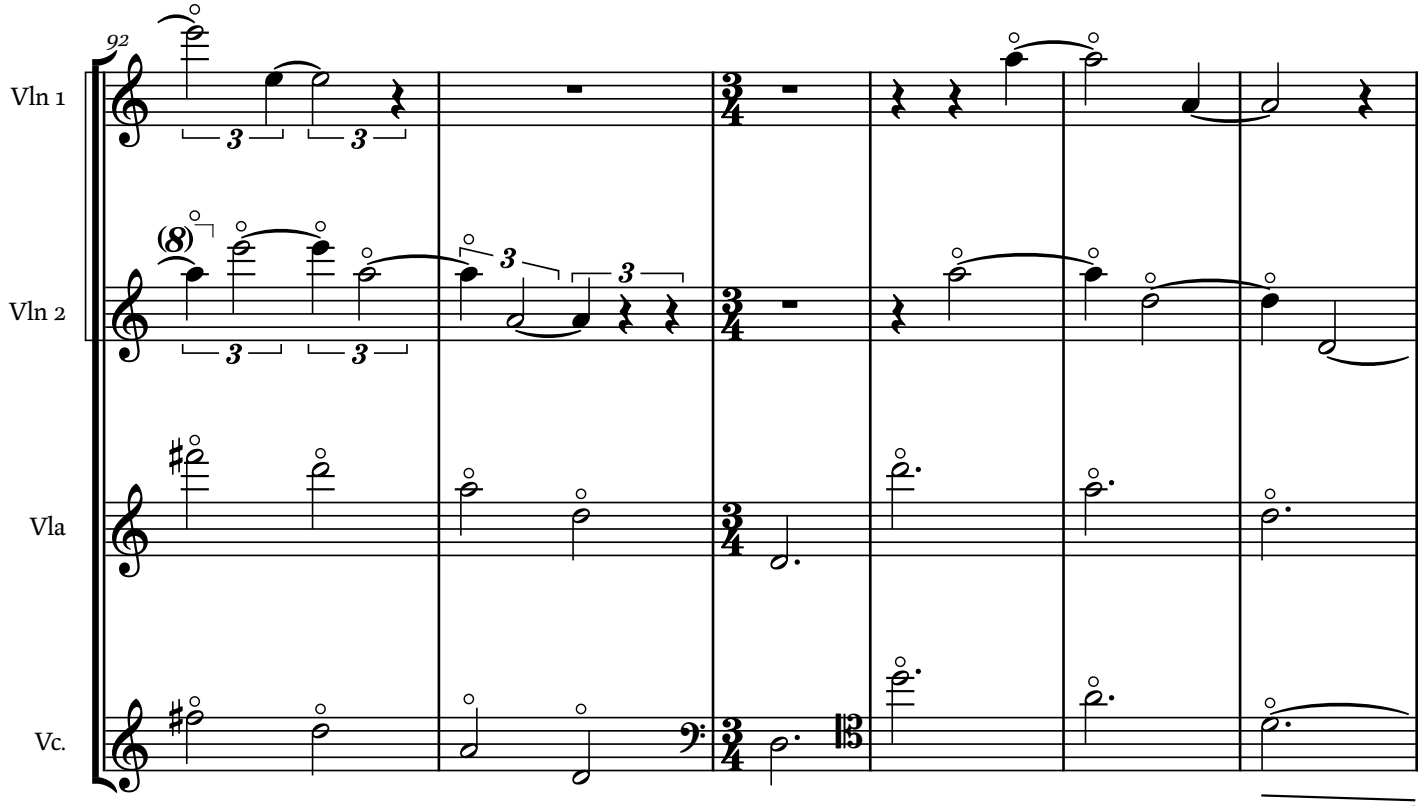

70
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
I
pp
III
pp
mp

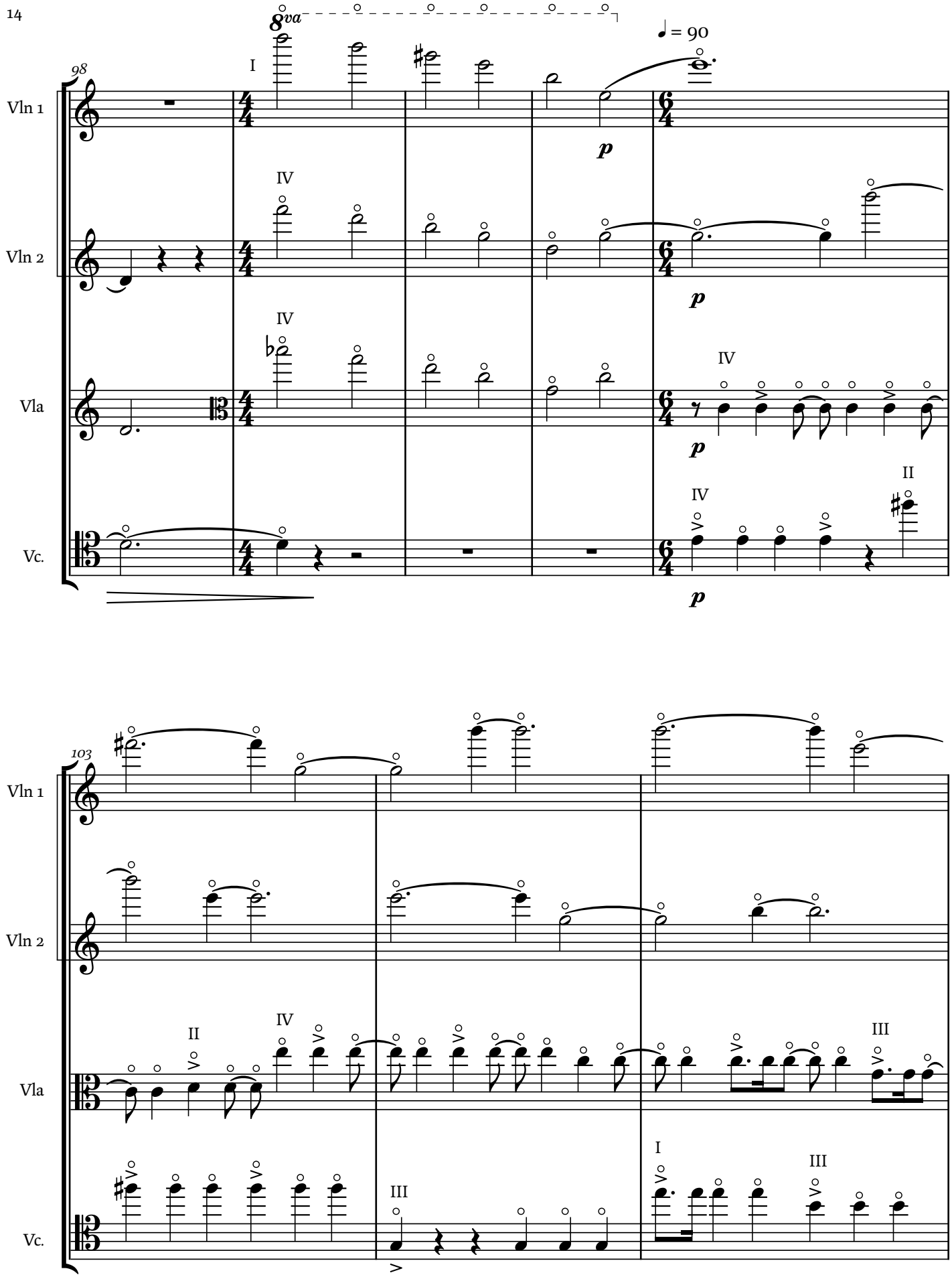

75
Vln 1
Vln 2
III
Vla
Vc.

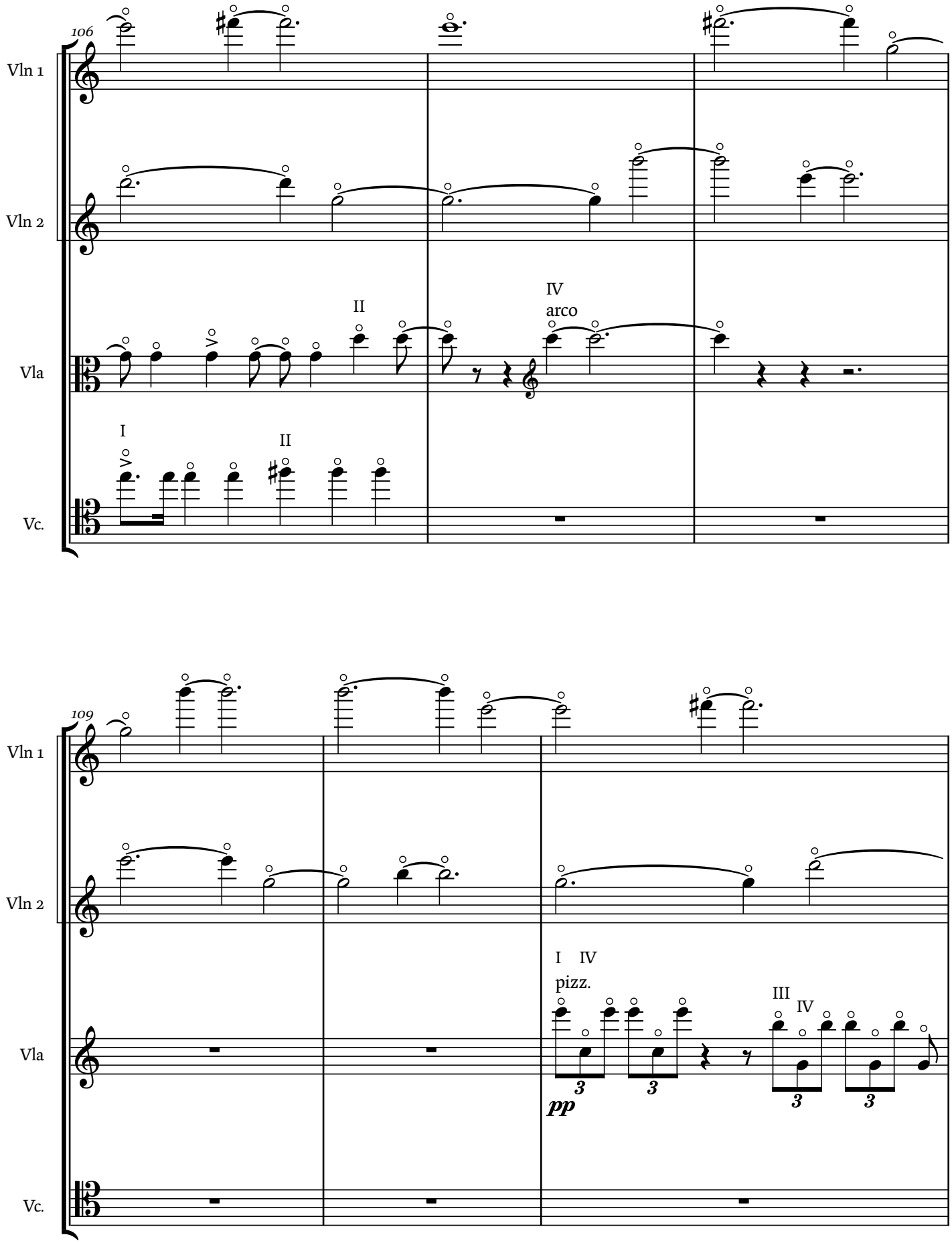

80
c. 30"
Vln 1
c. 30"
Vln 2
pp
Slide between nodes of the inidcated harmonic, pressing down to play
a note normally after reaching each node. This will produce the undertone series
node 6
node 5
node 4
node 3
node 2
node 1
IV
sul pont.
c. 30"
gliss.
Vla
c. 30"
Vc.
slowly and quietly do the seagull effect
on the D string until violins enter

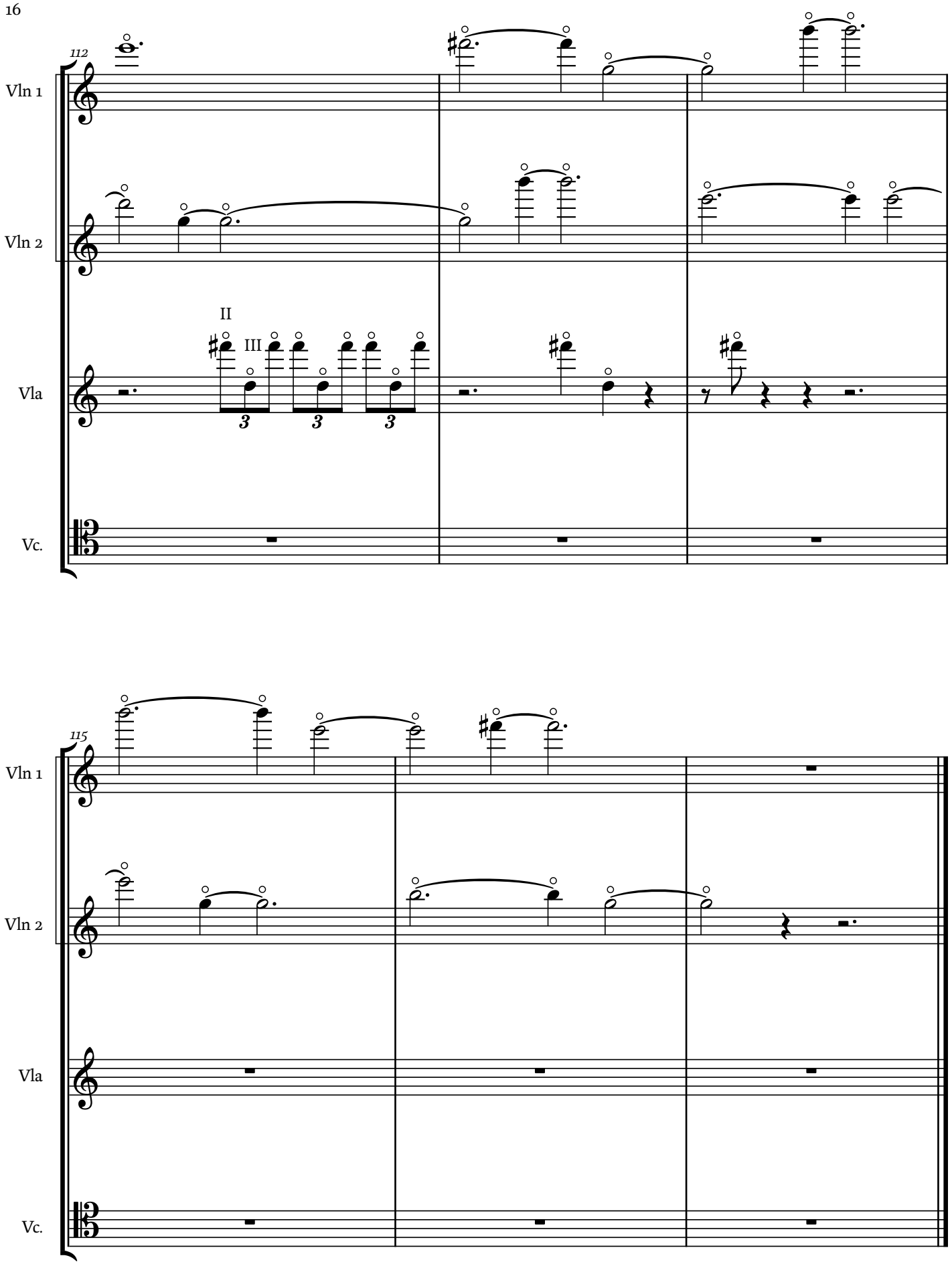

accel.
II
8va
♩ = 65
81
Vln 1
3
p
III
8va
Vln 2
3
p
normal
III
Vla
p
Vc.
♩ = 75
83
Vln 1
3
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.


87
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
I
8va
II
8va
II
8va
II
3
ppp


92
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
(8)
3


8va
♩ = 90
98
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
I
IV
p
II
III
103


106
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
II
IV
arco
I
II
109
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.
I IV
pizz.
III
IV
pp


112
Vln 1
Vln 2
II
III
Vla
3
3
3
Vc.

115
Vln 1
Vln 2
Vla
Vc.