Echoic Memories

I. *Preface* II. *Jumbled Photographs* III. *Epilogue*

For Piano, Violoncello and Electronics

A. Keegan-Bole

24.01.14

Programme Note:

Echoic Memories
I – Preface (1')
II - Jumbled Photographs (6')
III – Epilogue (1')

This piece contemplates musical memory. Ideas for the piece were originally sparked by a concert of duets given by György and Márta Kurtág whose intimate performance hinted at a relationship experienced in and through music – where musical memories are inextricably bound up with a life spent together. 'Echoic memory' is the cognitive process of sounds/music triggering specific memories. Usually these memories are not an accurate narrative but sensorial snapshots loaded with emotion (and often nostalgia). In a nod to instances of my own echoic memories tiny snippets of music by Bach, Britten, Kurtág and Webern forms the basis for a good portion of the musical material.

The piece opens with a miniature – a one-minute series of piano chords and a cello line that exist as a brief, complete piece. Focusing on thick textures and stark rhythms the language is dark, only softening as the minute comes to an end. The main central section of this piece begins with a wash of sound, unfocussed and harsh – searching for a pitch or theme to cling to. Once the cellist gets hold of a full sound the music flits through snippets of material (as though flicking through jumbled photographs), some fragments are repeated, some discarded, whilst others are interrupted as fragments of the opening are found. The second half of the movement settles into a repeated rhythm with the cello holding a consistent pitch as the piano and electronics work through iterations of a remembered theme.
The piece closes with the cello playing a slightly altered version of its opening material.

AKB

Performer Notes:

Piano:

- Where not explicitly stated use pedal as appropriate
- Grace notes occur before the beat

Cello:

- An example of the sound at the start of the 2nd movement (live cello sound plus the electronic manipulation) is provided with this score

Notes Regarding Technical Implementation

The part for electronics uses live signal from the cellist (mono input) and piano (stereo input) as well as short fragments of a single pre-recorded tape track. Processes used include harmonising the live input by means of real-time transposition, granulating the live input (taking fragments of the live sound (grains) and subjecting these to various processes) and holding or freezing a moment of the live input.

Operator should be positioned in a good listening position with clear eye-line to the on-stage performers.

Microphone placement:

Piano:

In developing this piece, two omni-directional microphones (DPA 4061) were positioned as described below. The aim is to take a detailed, accurate sound from the instrument that has a slight bias toward the upper register. The position outlined may be inappropriate depending on the specific piano used (for example if the steelwork inside the piano is obtrusive) but aim to position the microphones around the pitches D3 and E5. Generally the best sound is found 2-3 inches away from the striking point of the hammers.

Cello:

In developing this piece, different microphones were used depending on the acoustic of the room, with less sensitive equipment being used the more reverberant the space. The very best results were found using an Earthworks QTC-1 but due to the omni-directional polar pattern and sensitive diaphragm, feedback in reverberant environments was an issue. Good results in most conditions were found using an AKG C-414 (cardioid). The aim is to take a detailed, accurate sound from the instrument, not to intrude on the player's technique and position in sympathy with the speaker (see 'speaker placement' below) to avoid feedback. Generally the best sound is found close to the instrument pointing toward the bridge roughly level with the bottom of the f-hole (i.e. slightly below the bridge). Position the mic on the left hand side of the player to cause minimal distraction. Ensure the microphone is far enough away from the cello to avoid contact during performance.

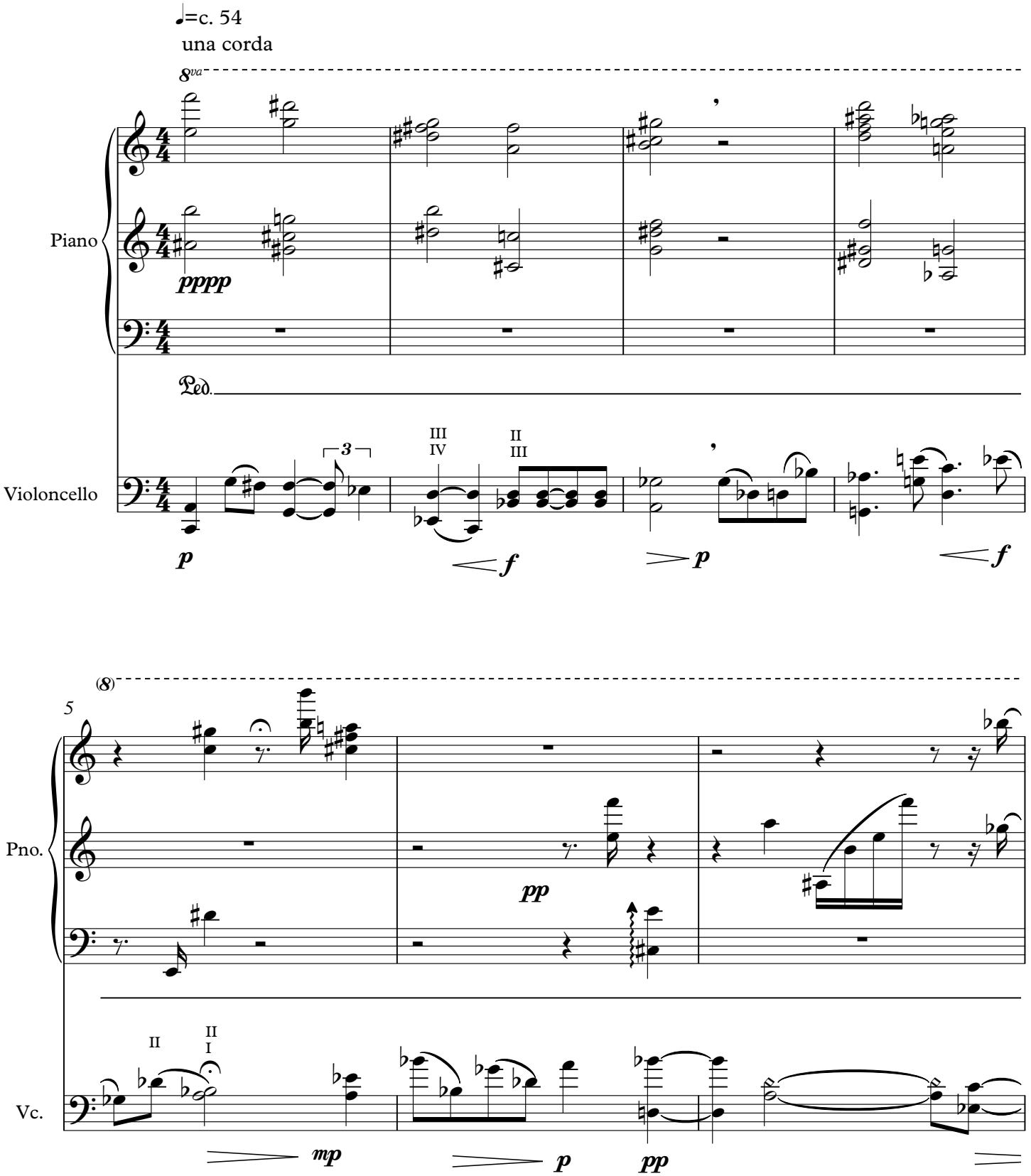
Speaker Placement:

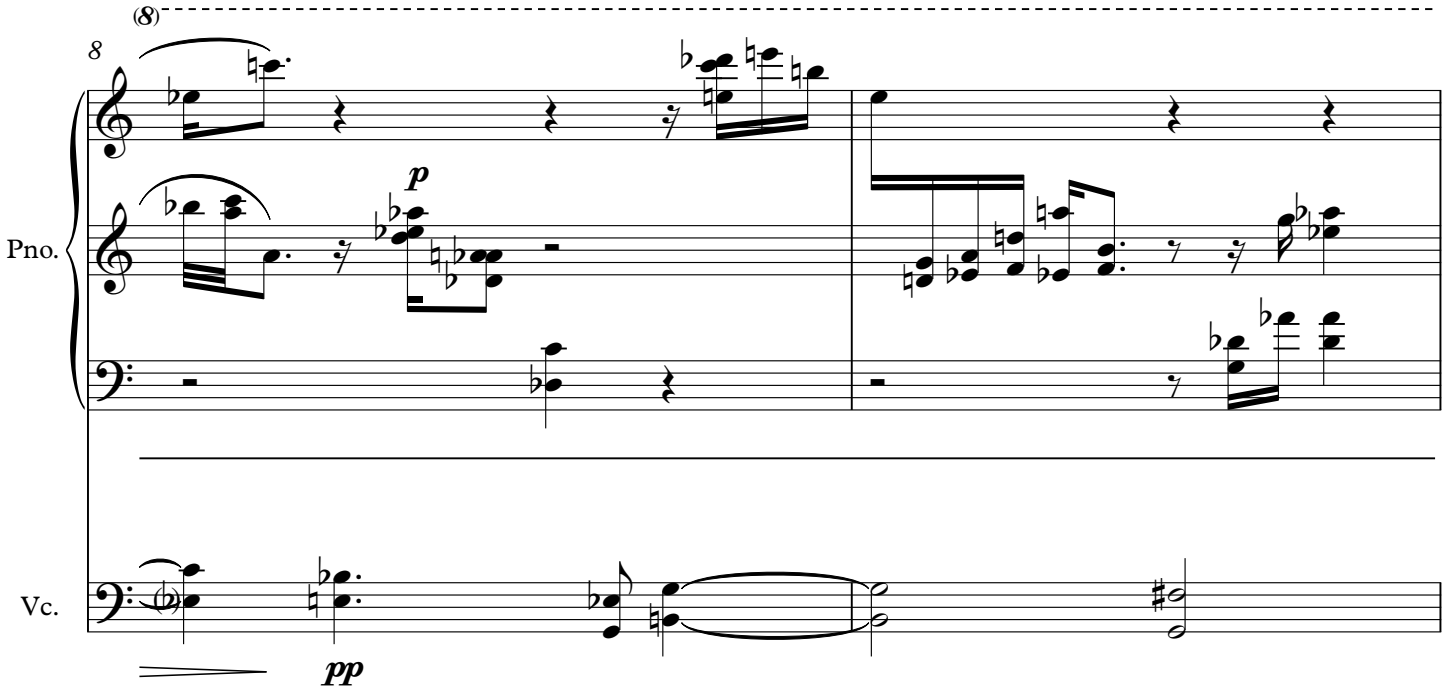
There are two full-range speakers placed around the piano, these are referred to as ‘stereo speakers’ in the score. There is one full-range speaker placed with the cellist, this is referred to as ‘mono speaker’ in the score. They should be positioned roughly as in the diagrams below. The object is, as far as possible, to make the sound emanate from the instrument with which the speakers are placed but to avoid feedback into the microphones. The following represents the best position found whilst developing the piece.

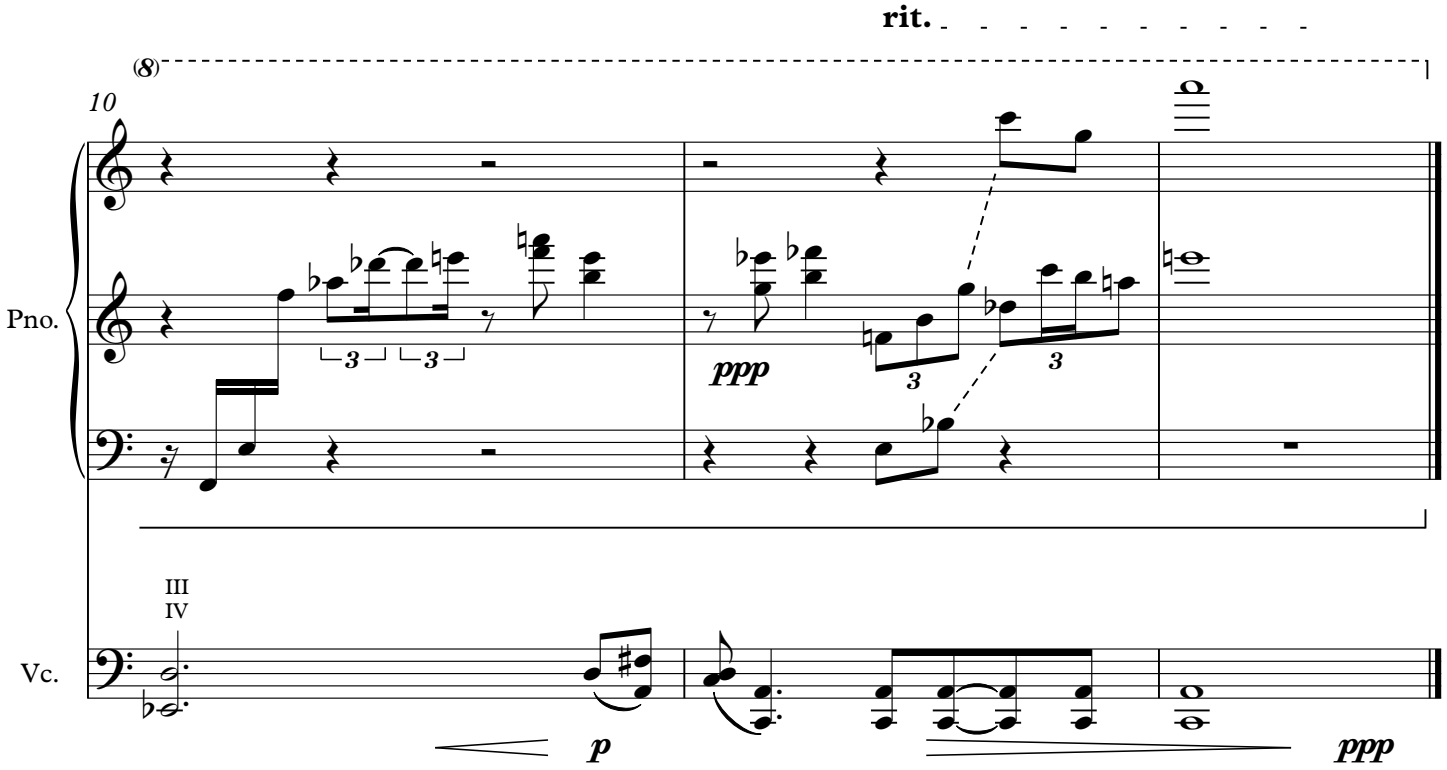
Echoic Memories

A. Keegan-Bole

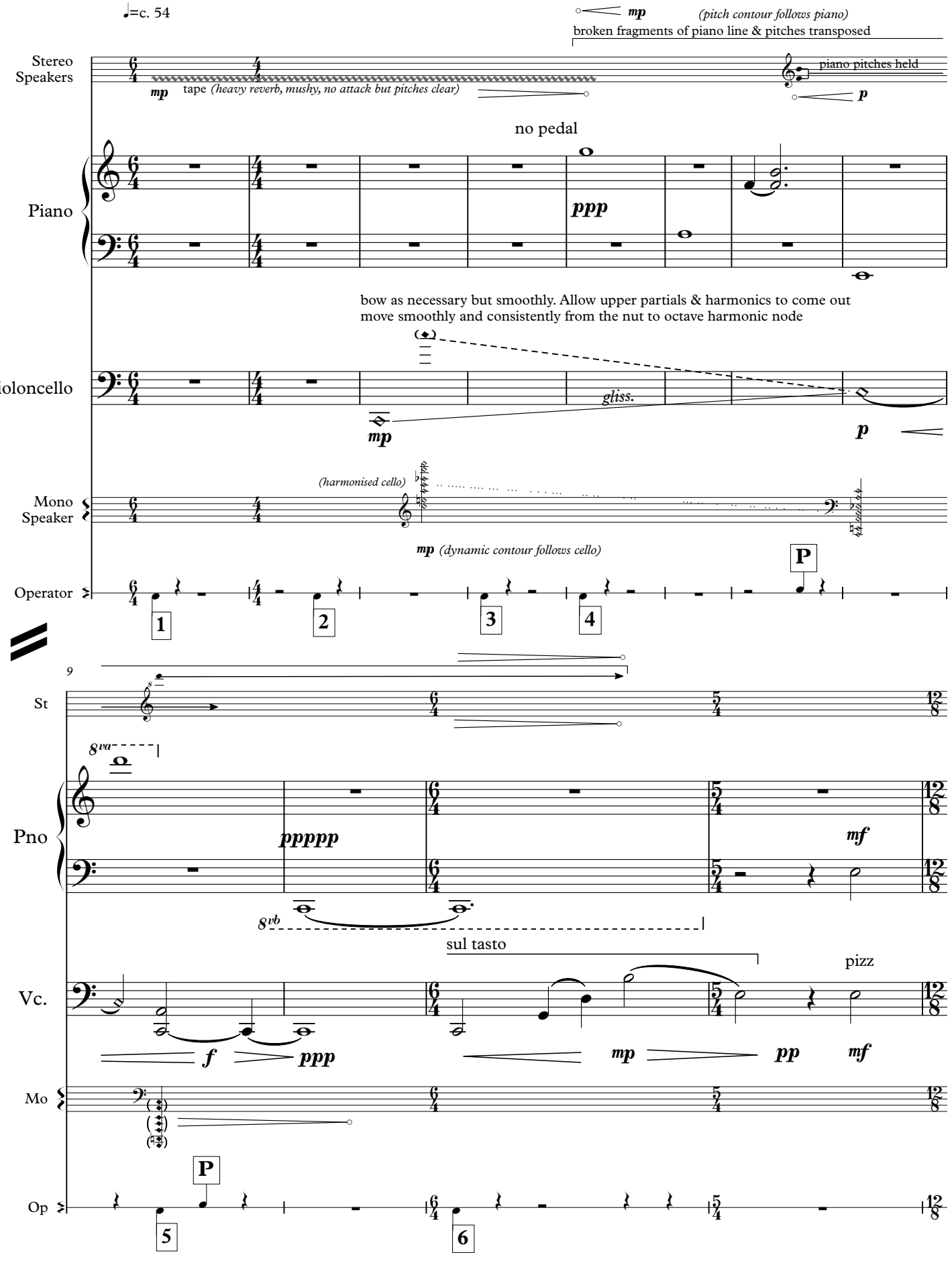
I. Preface

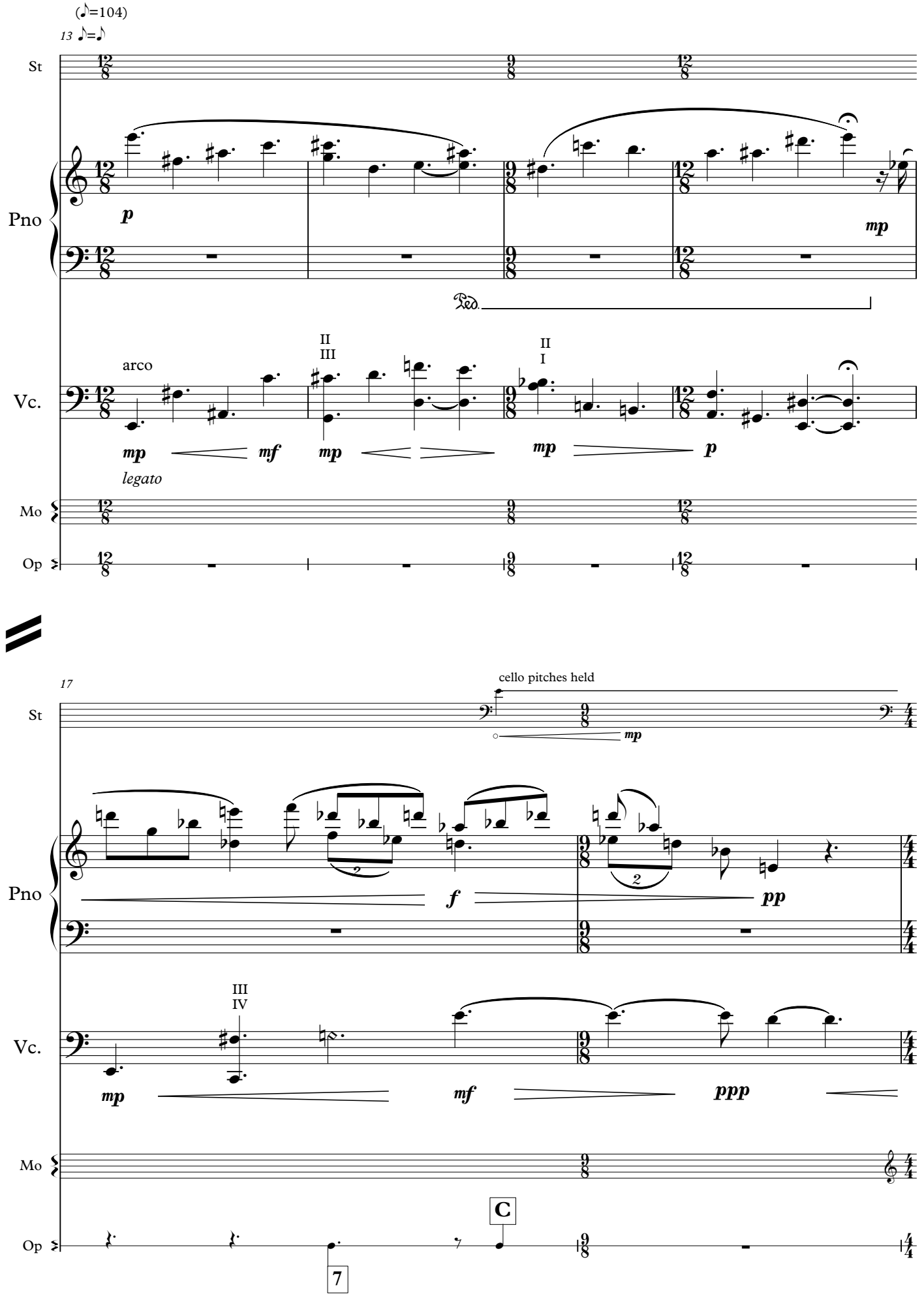


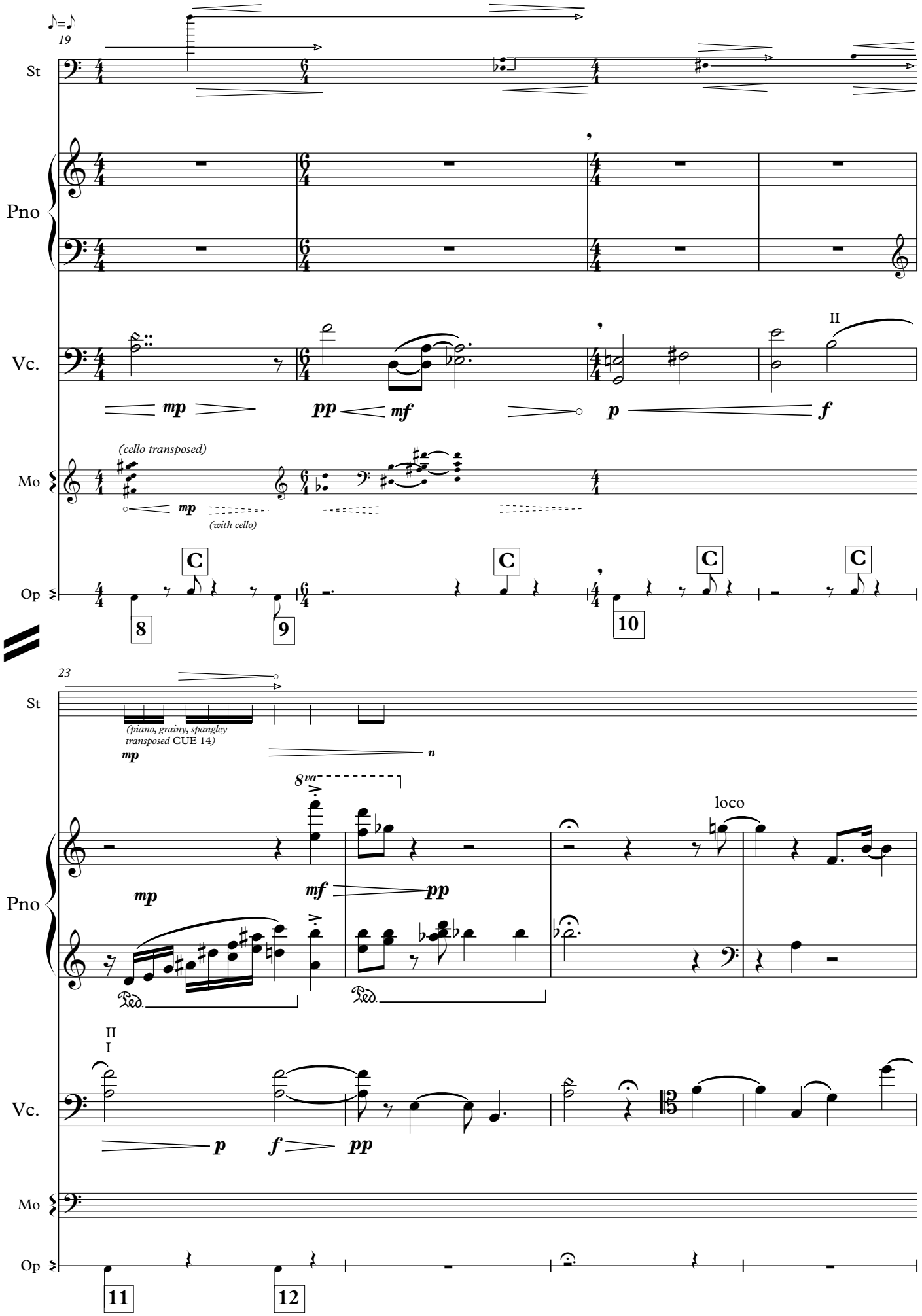

(8)
8
Pno.
p
Vc.
pp

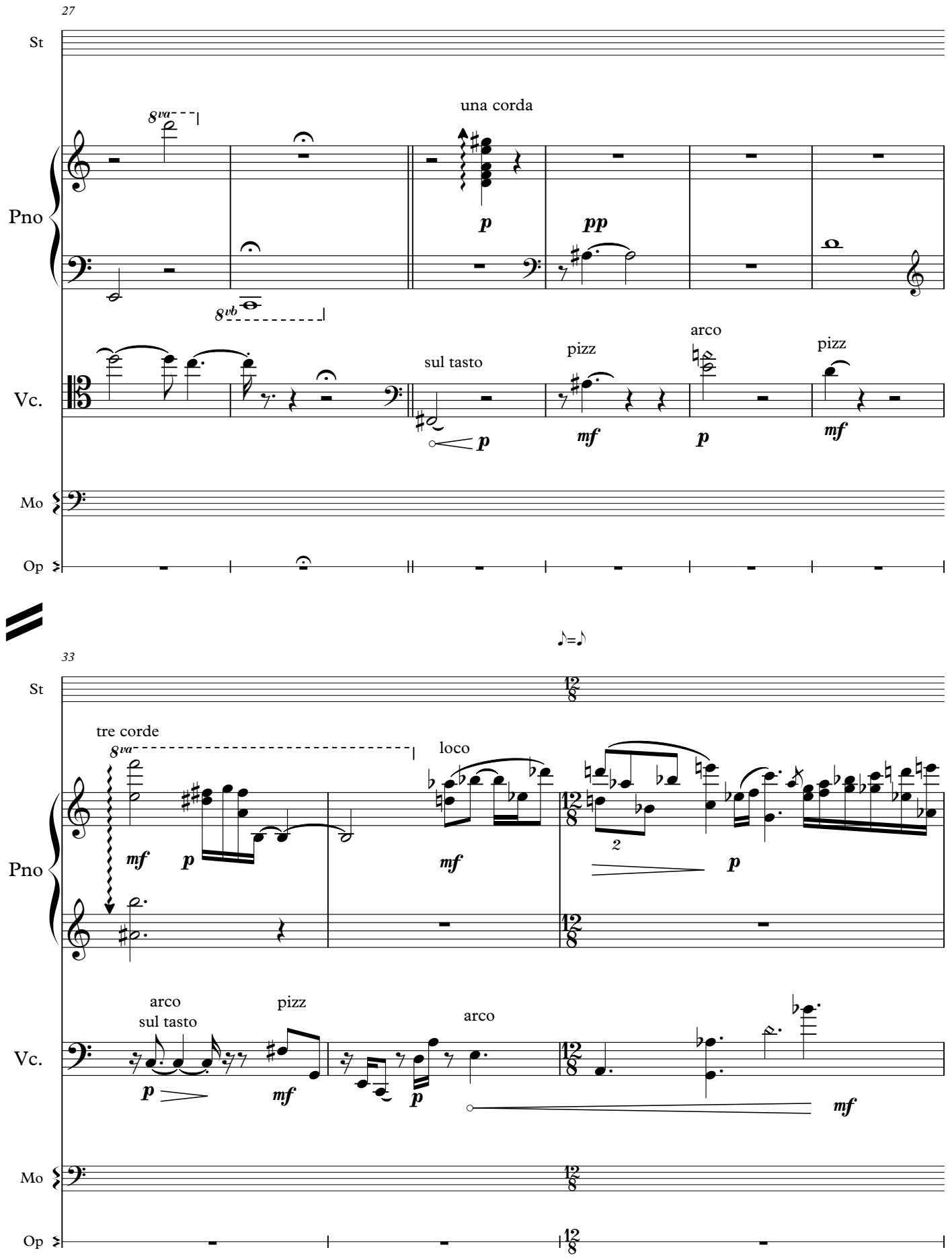

rit.
(8)
10
Pno.
3
3
ppp
3
III
IV
Vc.
p
ppp

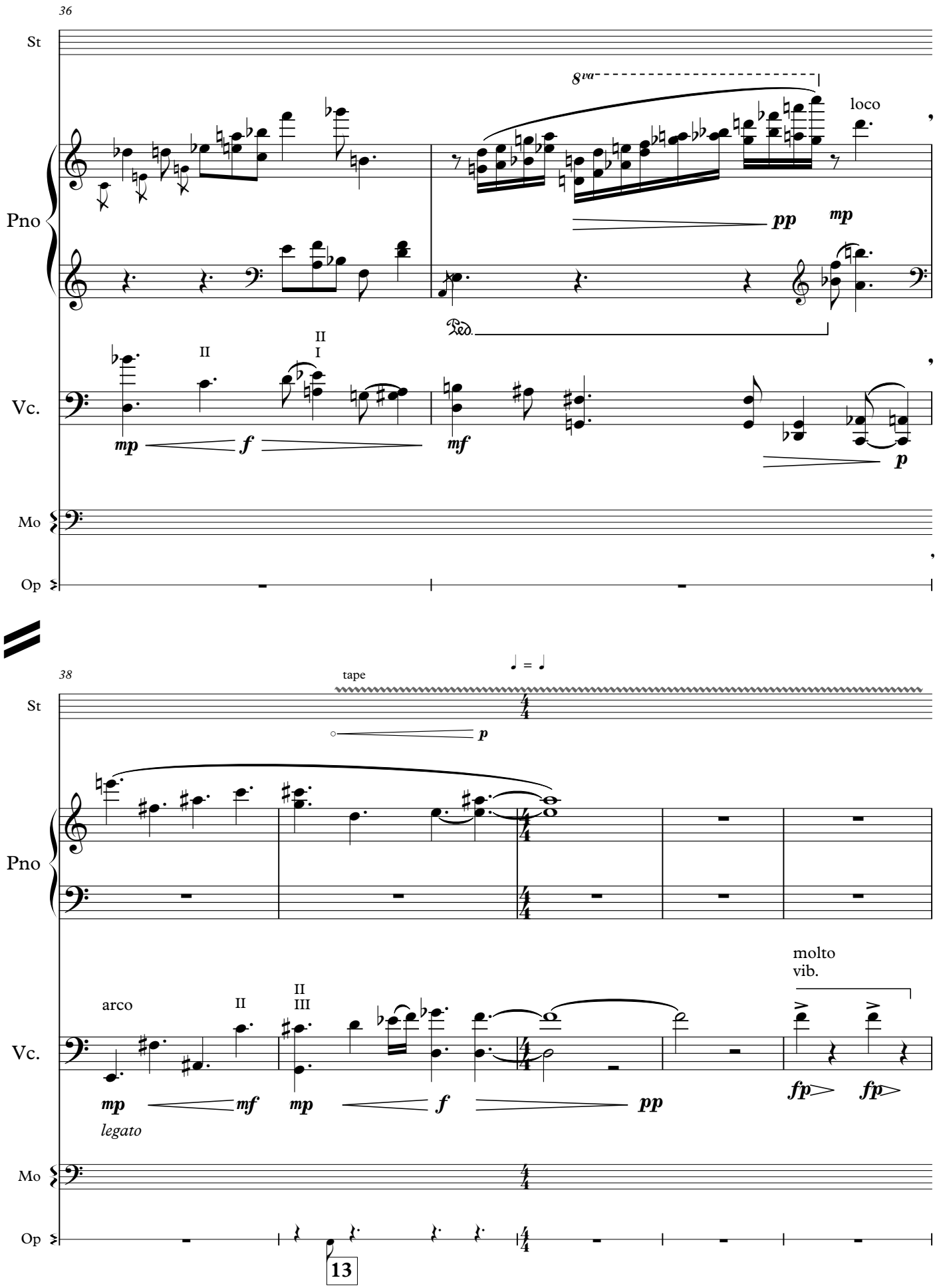
Jumbled Photographs

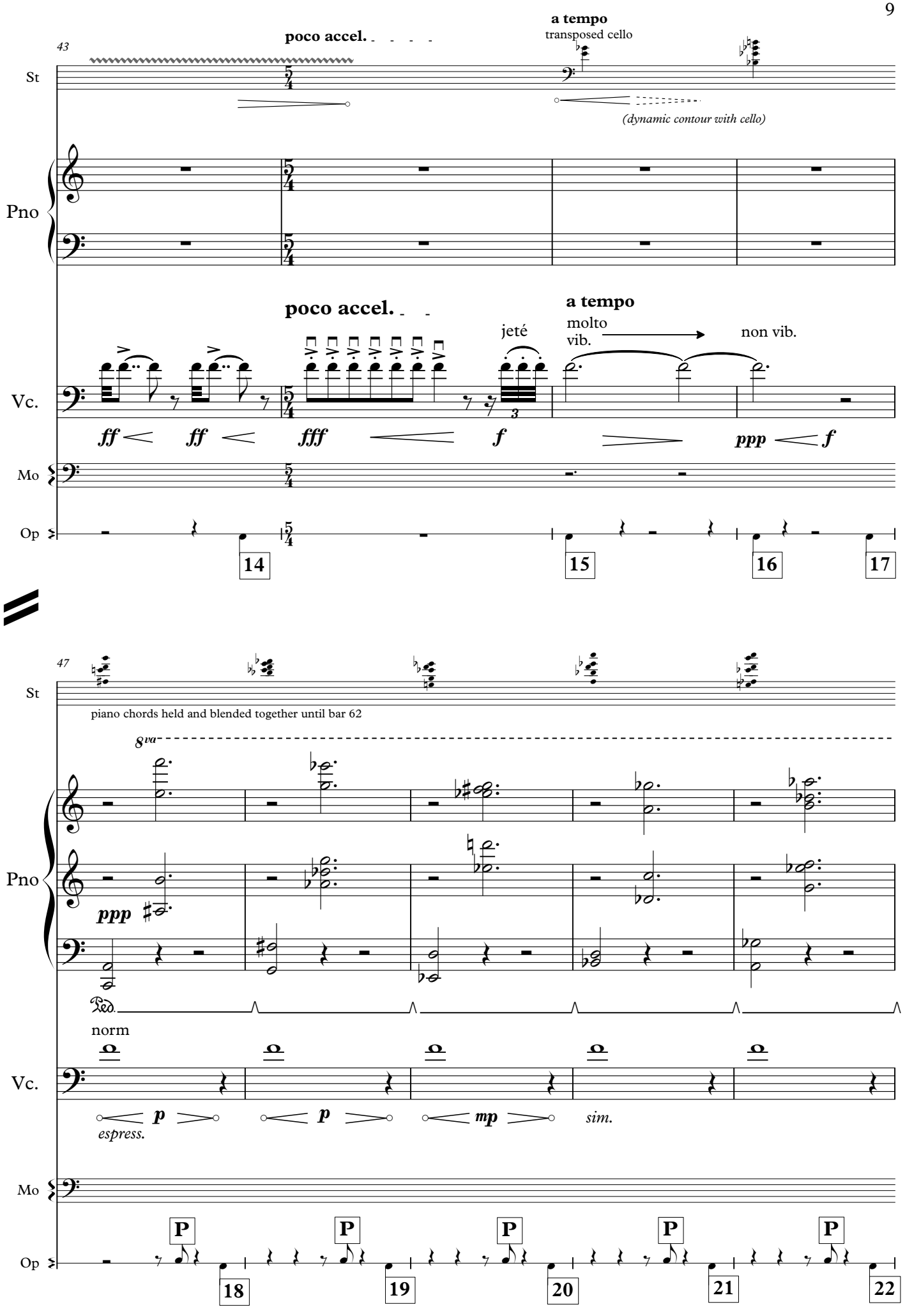


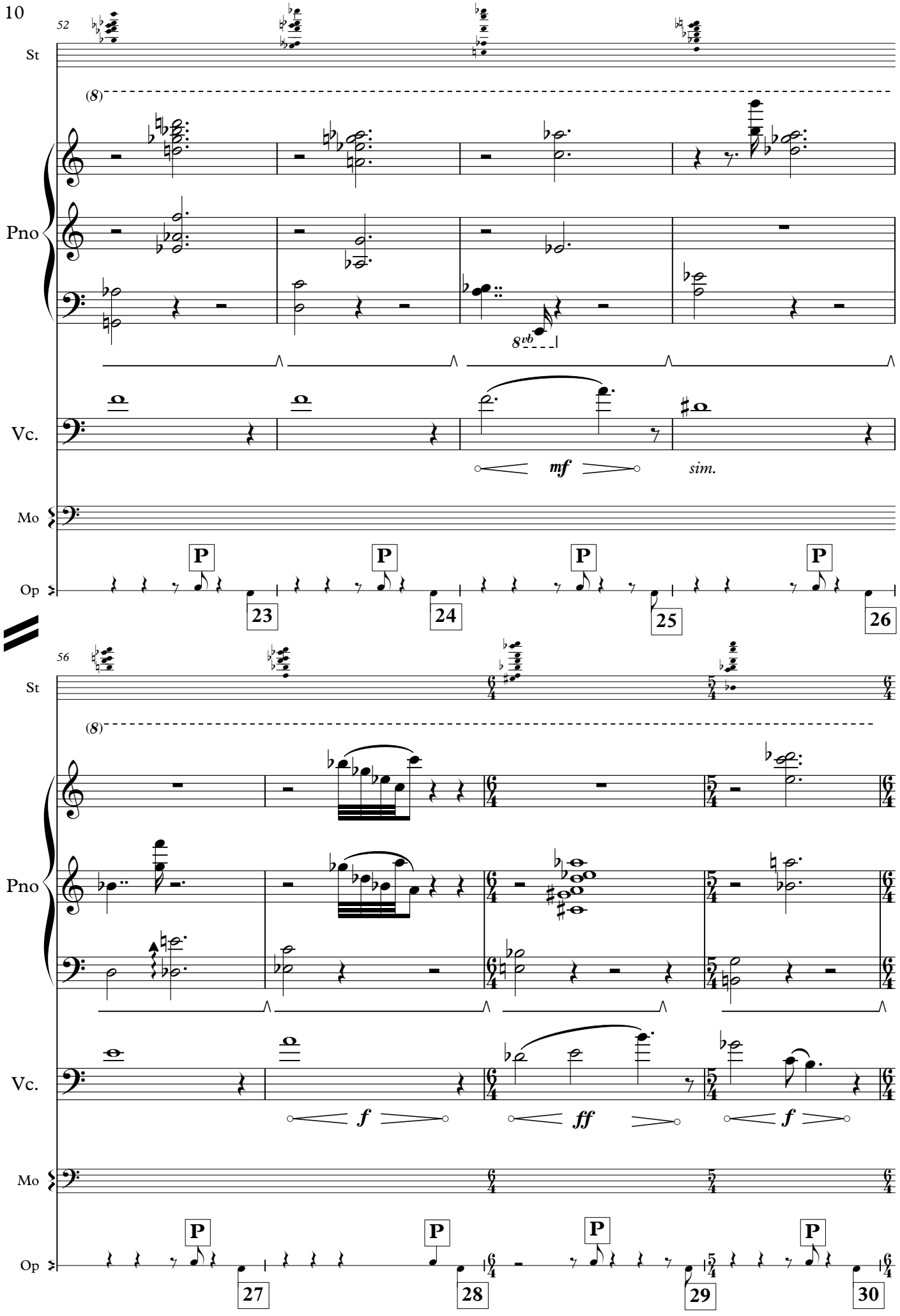

(♪=104)
13 ♪=♪
St
Pno
p
mp
Ped.
arco
II
III
II
I
Vc.
mp
mf
mp
mp
p
legato
Mo
Op
17
cello pitches held
St
mp
Pno
f
pp
III
IV
Vc.
mp
mf
ppp
Mo
C
Op
7

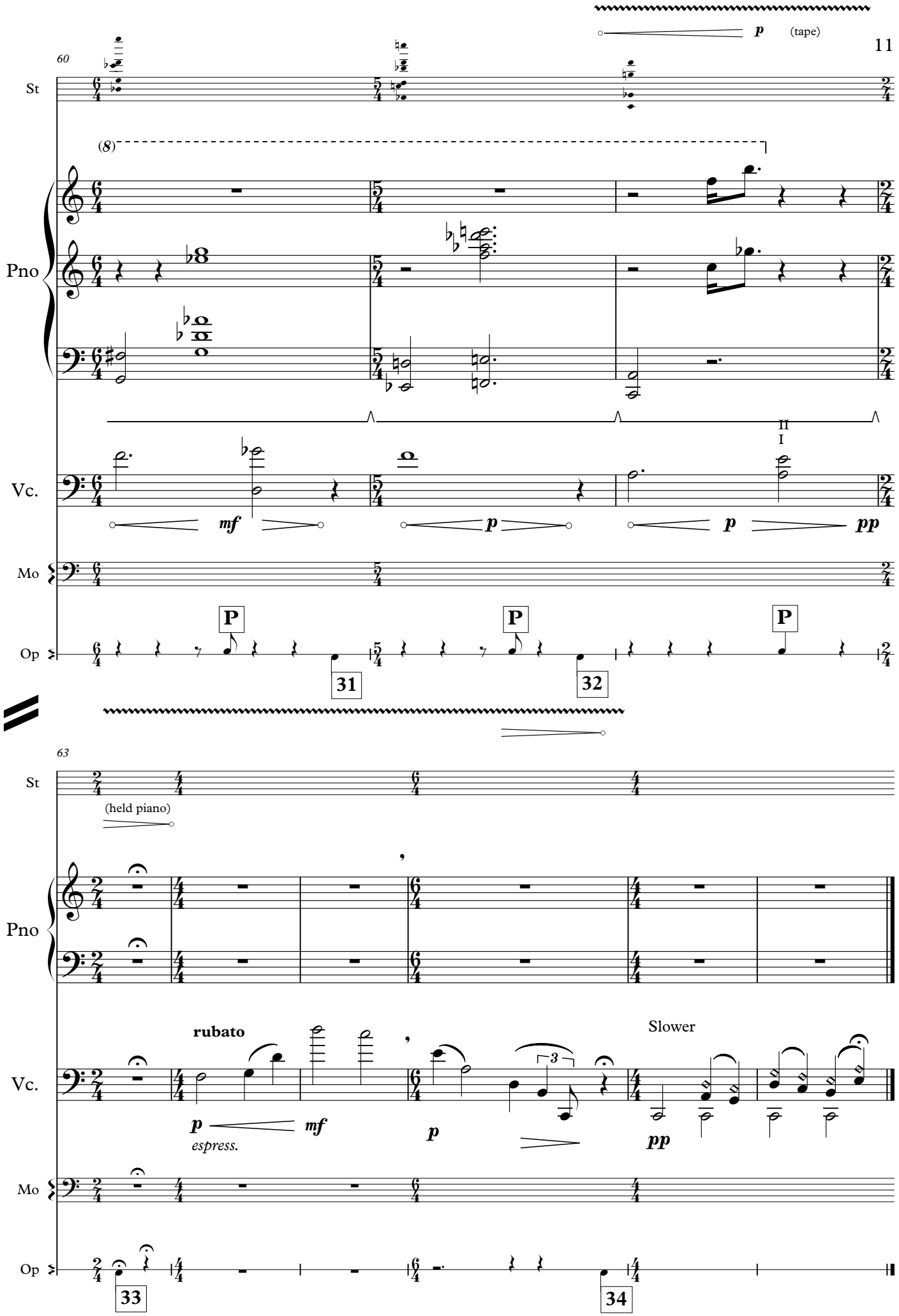

19
St
Pno
Vc.
Mo
Op
mp
pp
mf
p
f
II
(cello transposed)
mp
(with cello)
C
8
9
10
23
(piano, grainy, spangley transposed CUE 14)
mp
n
8va
loco
Ped.
II
I
11
12


27
St
Pno
Vc.
Mo
Op
8va
8vb
una corda
p
pp
sul tasto
pizz
arco
pizz
p
mf
p
mf
33
♪=♪
tre corde
8va
loco
mf
p
mf
2
p
arco
sul tasto
pizz
arco
p
mf
p
mf

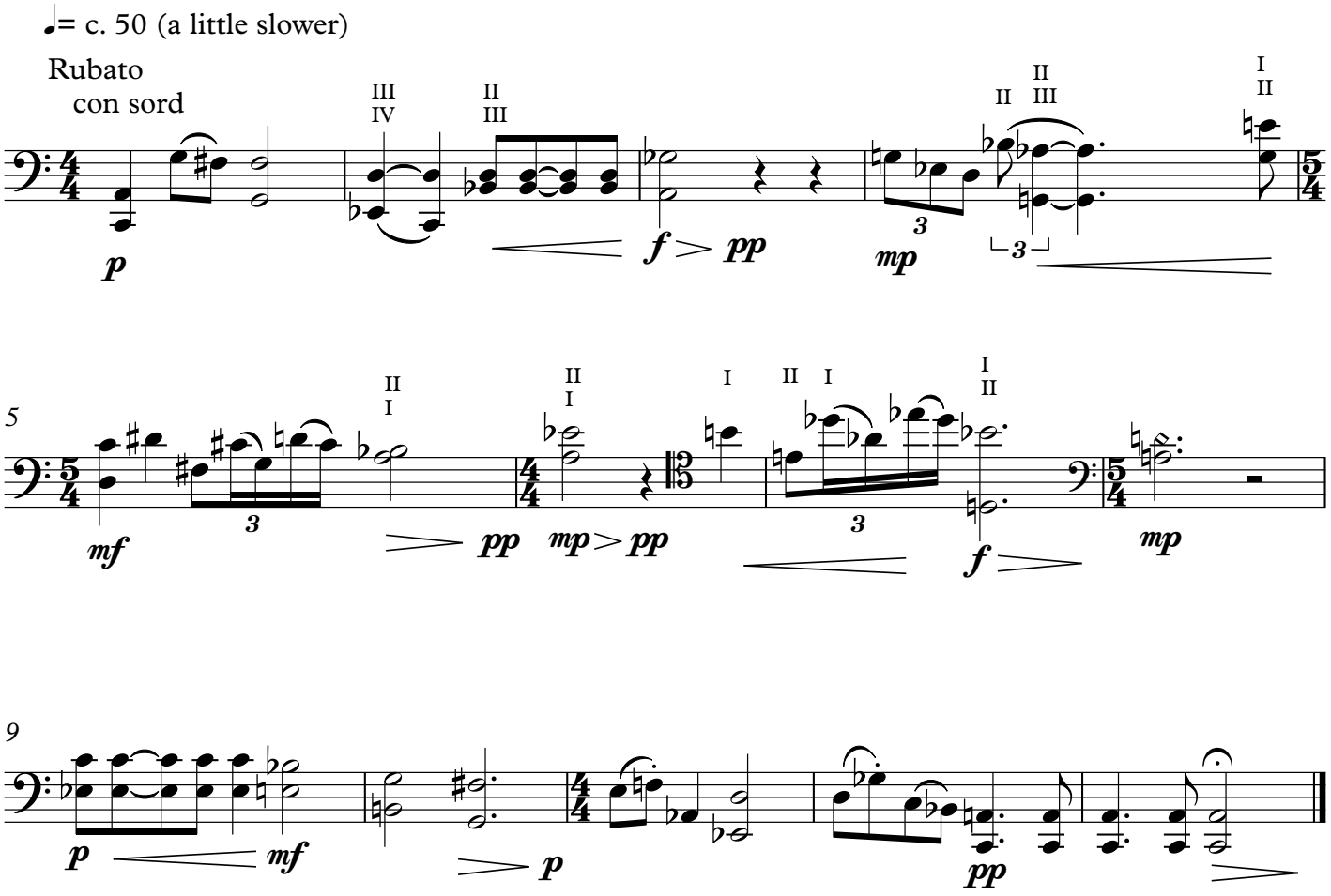

36
St
8va
loco
pp
mp
Pno
Ped.
II
II
I
Vc.
mp
f
mf
p
Mo
Op
38
tape
♩ = ♩
St
p
Pno
molto
vib.
arco
II
II
III
Vc.
mp
mf
mp
f
pp
fp
fp
legato
Mo
Op
13


43
St
poco accel.
a tempo
transposed cello
(dynamic contour with cello)
Pno
Vc.
poco accel.
a tempo
molto vib.
jeté
non vib.
ff
ff
fff
f
ppp
f
Mo
Op
14
15
16
17
47
St
piano chords held and blended together until bar 62
8va
Pno
ppp
Ped.
norm
Vc.
p
espress.
p
mp
sim.
Mo
Op
P
P
P
P
P
18
19
20
21
22


52
St
(8)
Pno
8vb
Vc.
mf
sim.
Mo
Op
P
23
24
25
26
56
St
(8)
Pno
Vc.
f
ff
f
Mo
Op
P
27
28
29
30


p (tape)
60
St
(8)
Pno
Vc.
mf
p
p
pp
II
I
Mo
Op
P
P
P
31
32
63
St
(held piano)
Pno
rubato
Slower
Vc.
p
mf
espress.
p
3
pp
Mo
Op
33
34

Epilogue


♩= c. 50 (a little slower)
Rubato
con sord
p
f
pp
mp
mf
pp
mp
pp
f
mp
p
mf
p
pp