The Witness

from

Disappearances

duration ca. 7:00

music by Christopher Coleman
poem by Mary Ann Coleman

The Witness

Blood bruises my veins as I breathe
this difficult element,
A shell thin air curved around the world.
My dresser gives back the simple wood
surfacing gently from the dark.
Dogwoods roll and boil
in a generous breeze my open window captures.
I turn to you, clothed in my smooth skin,
and feel my breathing tighten;
witness your face that will last in a pattern
meshed in my brain when this furniture has fallen
toward ruin.
-- *Mary Ann Coleman*

Program note
The Witness is the central movement of a five song cycle based on poetry by my mother, Mary Ann Coleman. The poetry is all intensely personal. The outer songs, *Thoughts in a Jewelry Store* and *Descent*, are about family and heritage; the second and fourth, *After Seeing Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Focal Point*, concern my grandmother's mental illness, and, in the context of the other songs, provide a sense of foreboding for my mother and I. But this central song is a simple love poem from my mother to my father and it provides an oasis of calm in the midst of the surrounding trauma.

Instrumentation:
Mezzo-soprano
Bb Clarinet
Violin
Cello
Piano*
Percussion (1 player): bass drum, marimba, vibraphone**, 3 suspended cymbals**, tam-tam**, chime (D), water chime (F)***

Performance notes
* If possible, the piano is to be muted as noted in the score. The mute should be a windshield wiper ("squeegee") with a 14 inch rubber blade and a metal handle (as can be purchased at most hardware stores). The mute is to be placed on the strings as closely as possible to the keyboard. The page turner should be responsible for placing and removing the mute where indicated in the score, and from m. 67-75 the page turner should press down on the mute, applying heavy pressure and creating a more significant muted effect than elsewhere.
** If *The Witness* is performed independently from the rest of the song cycle, it may be necessary to reduce the percussion, in which case the vibraphone part can be played on the marimba, and the three suspended cymbals and tam-tam played on only a single, large suspended cymbal.
*** The water chime effect is made by lowering the chime tube into a tub of water, thereby lowering the pitch.
The sizzle effect in m. 47 is created by holding the triangle beater vertically and loosely and striking the side of the edge of the cymbal so that beater and cymbal are perpendicular with one another; the beater will rattle against the cymbal. In m. 66, the beater should be held similarly and stuck against the middle of the cymbal; if held loosely it will rattle in a similar manner.

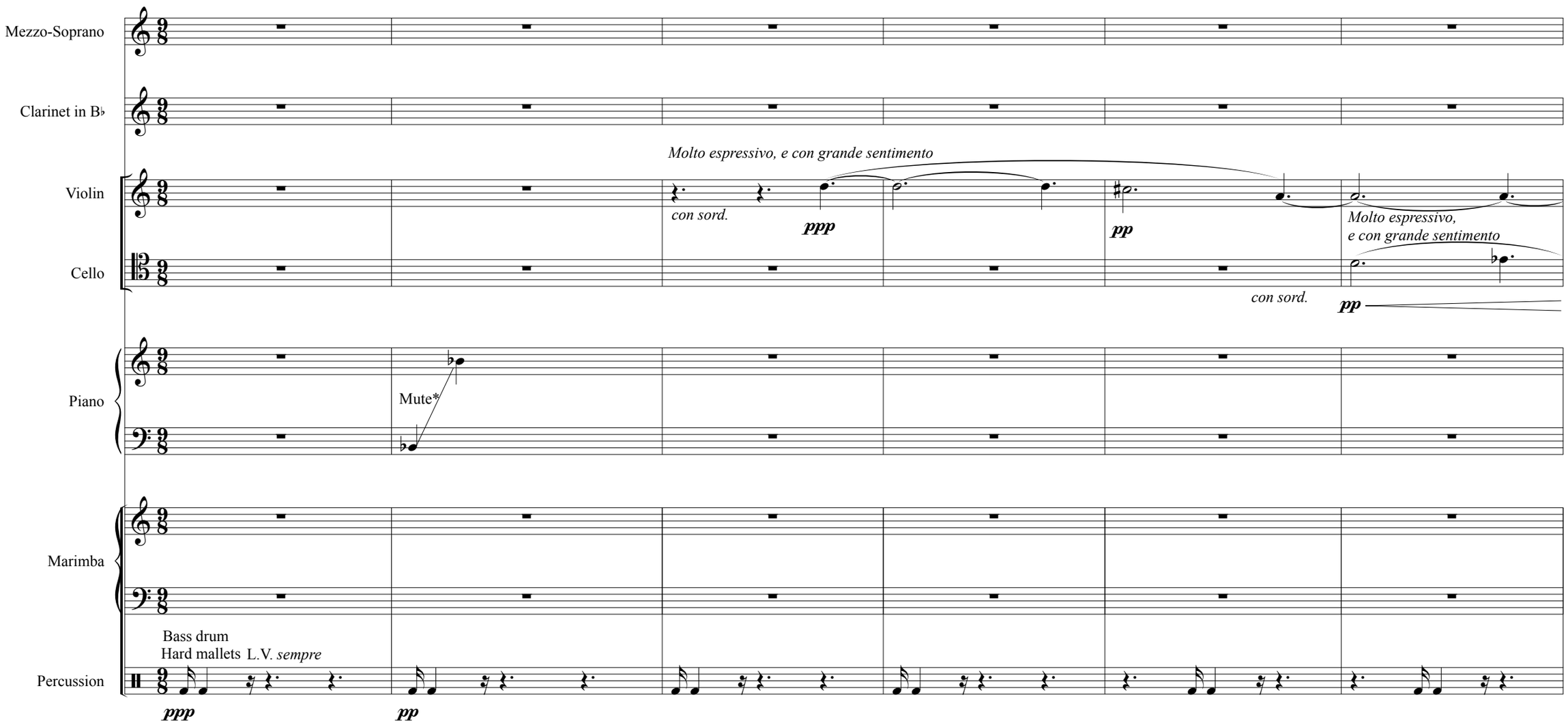
Score in C

The Witness

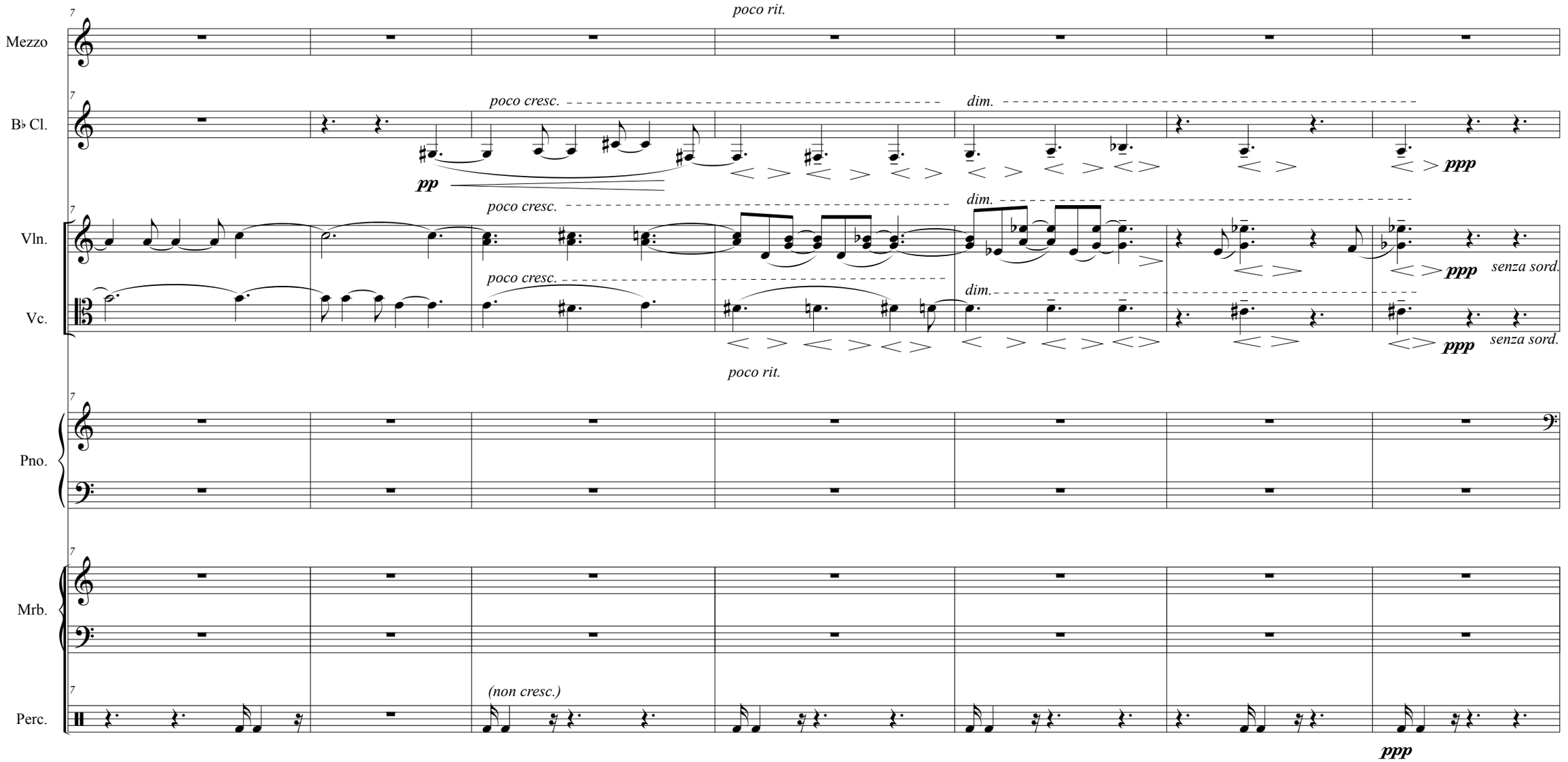
from Disappearances

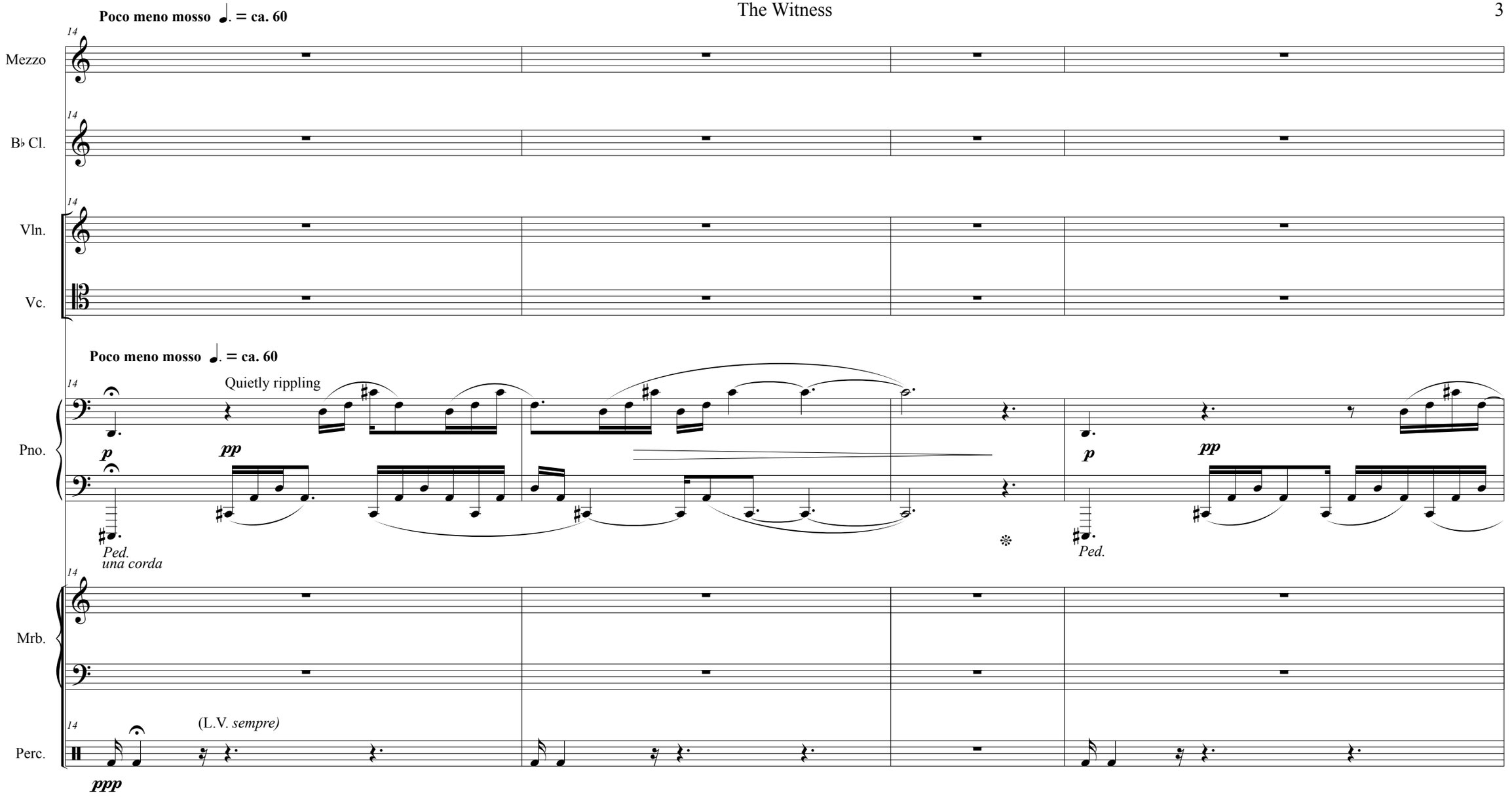
Christopher Coleman
Poem by Mary Ann Coleman

Adagio, ma sempre rubato ♩. = ca. 66

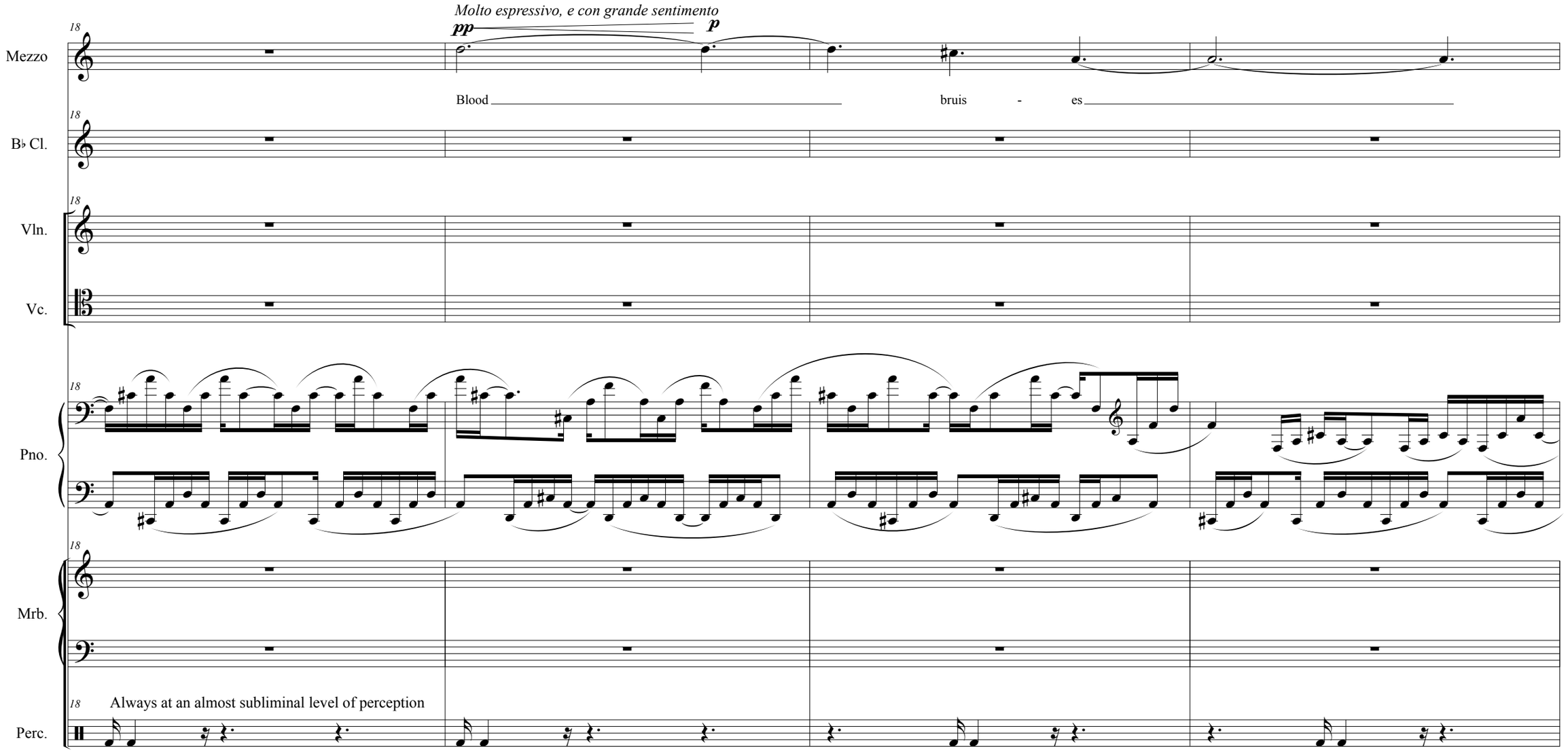


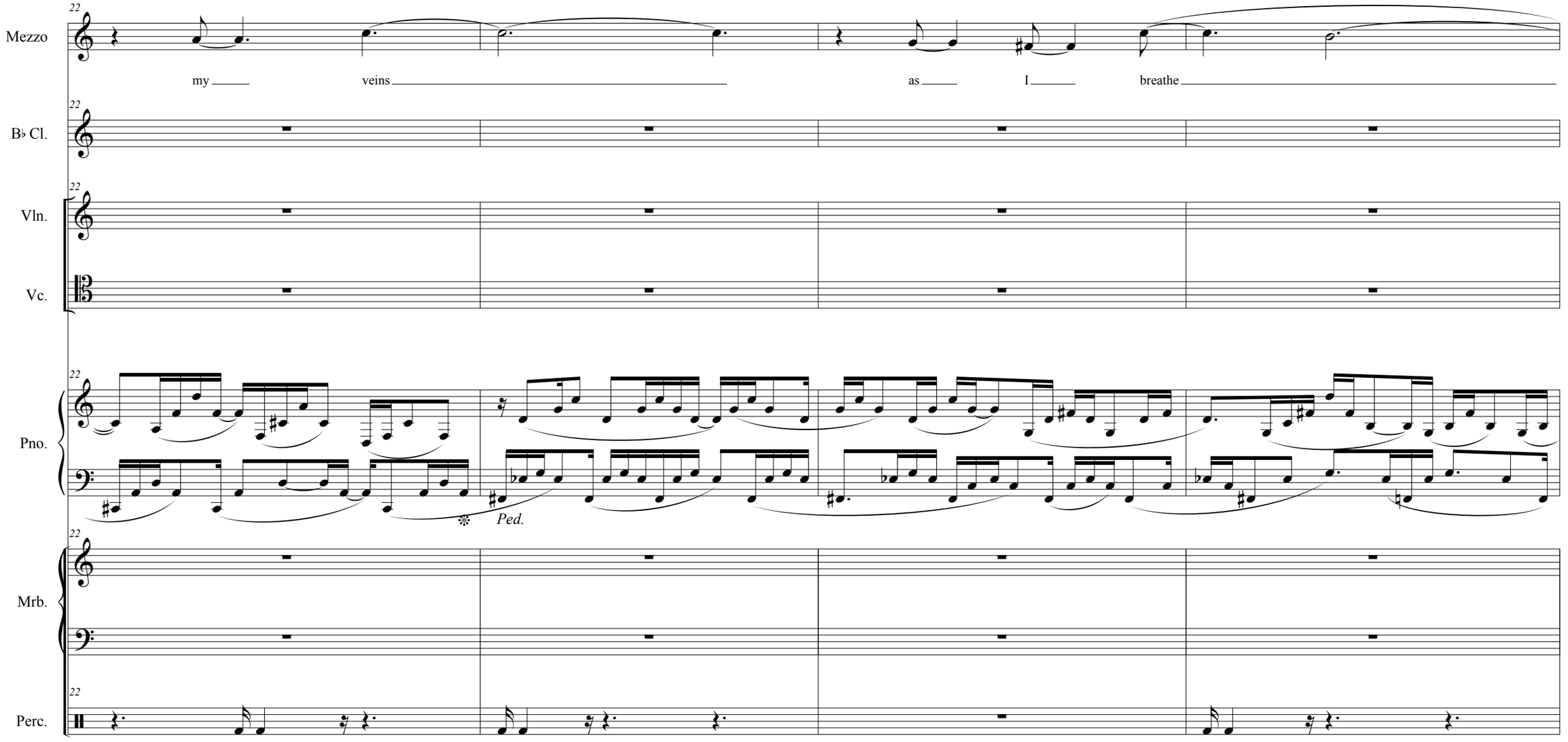
* See performance instructions


poco rit.
Mezzo
B♭ Cl.
poco cresc.
dim.
pp
ppp
Vln.
Vc.
senza sord.
Pno.
Mrb.
Perc.
(non cresc.)

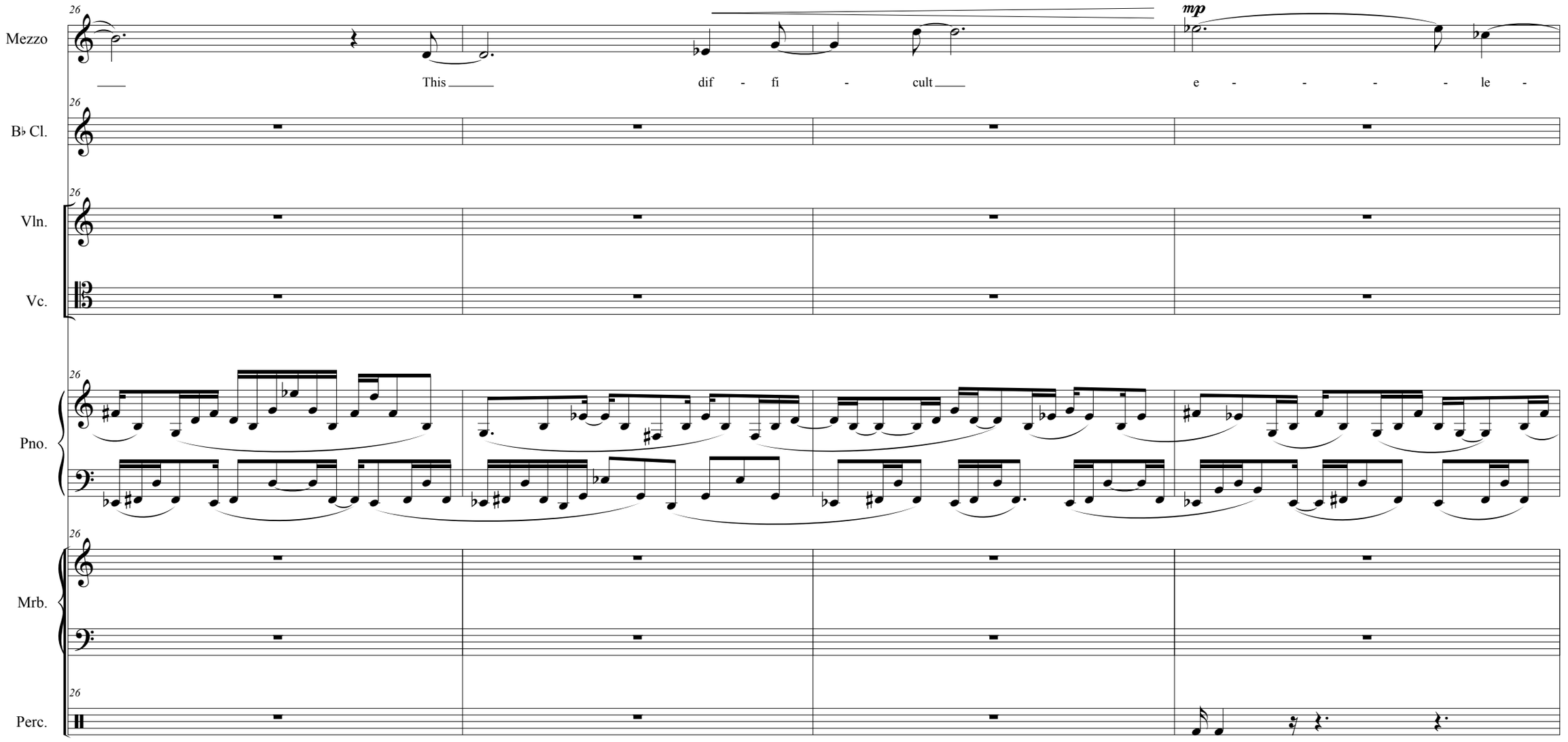


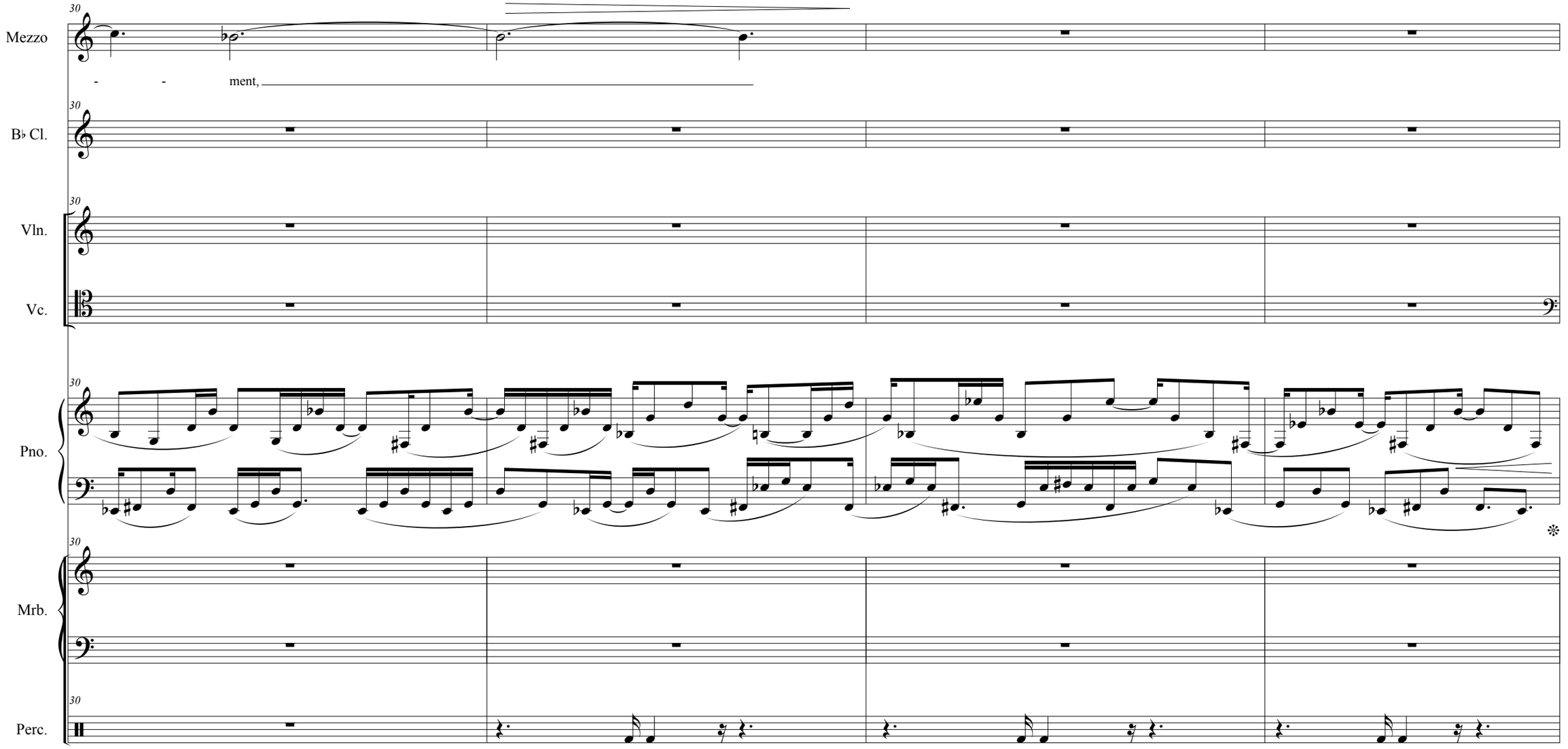
At this point both the sustain pedal and the *una corda* pedal are depressed. The notation for release of the sustain pedal is as usual, *.
The notation for release of the *una corda* pedal is *tre corda*.


Molto espressivo, e con grande sentimento
pp
p
Mezzo
Blood
bruis - es
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Mrb.
Always at an almost subliminal level of perception
Perc.

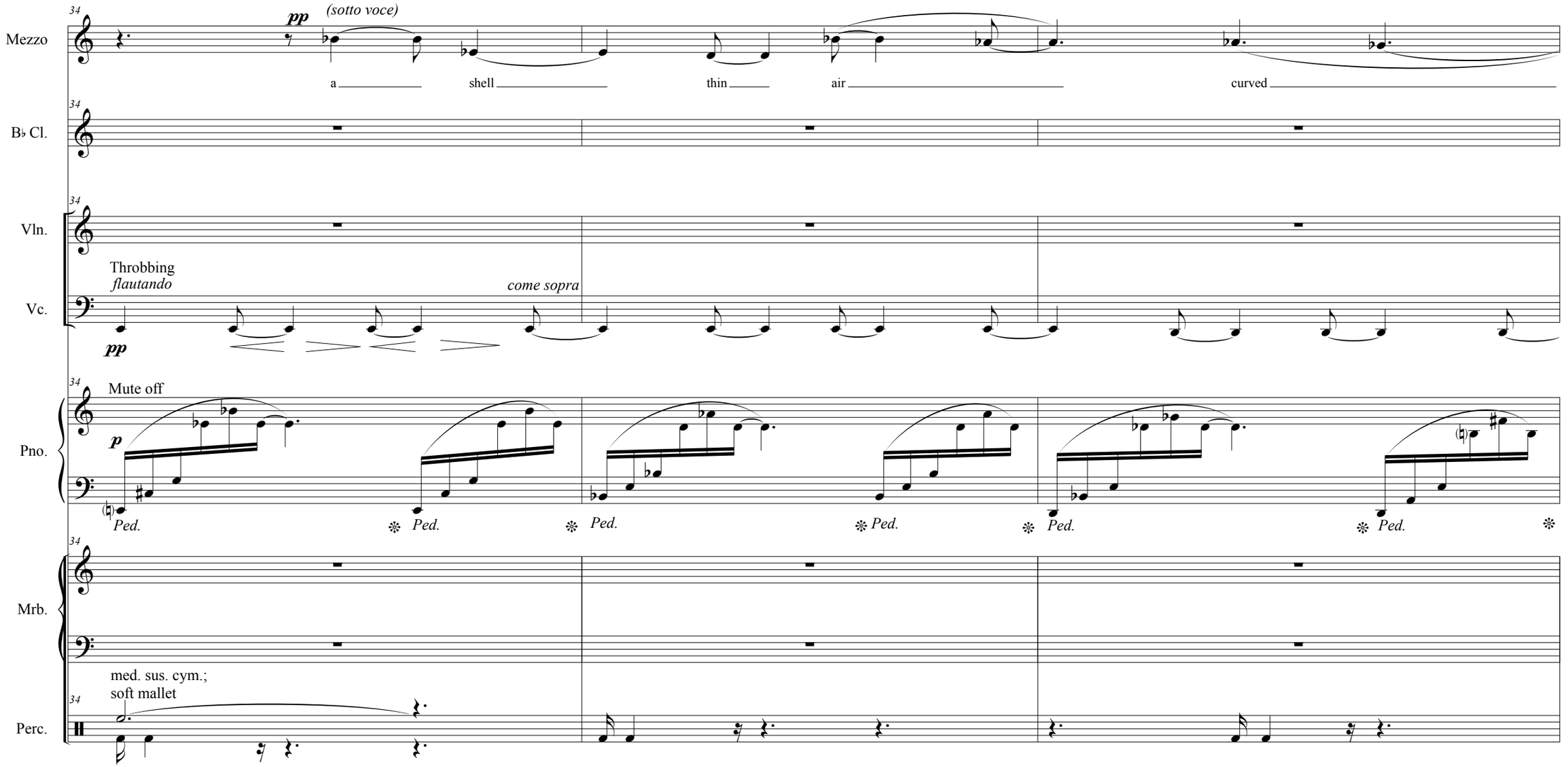

22
Mezzo
my veins as I breathe
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Ped.
Mrb.
Perc.

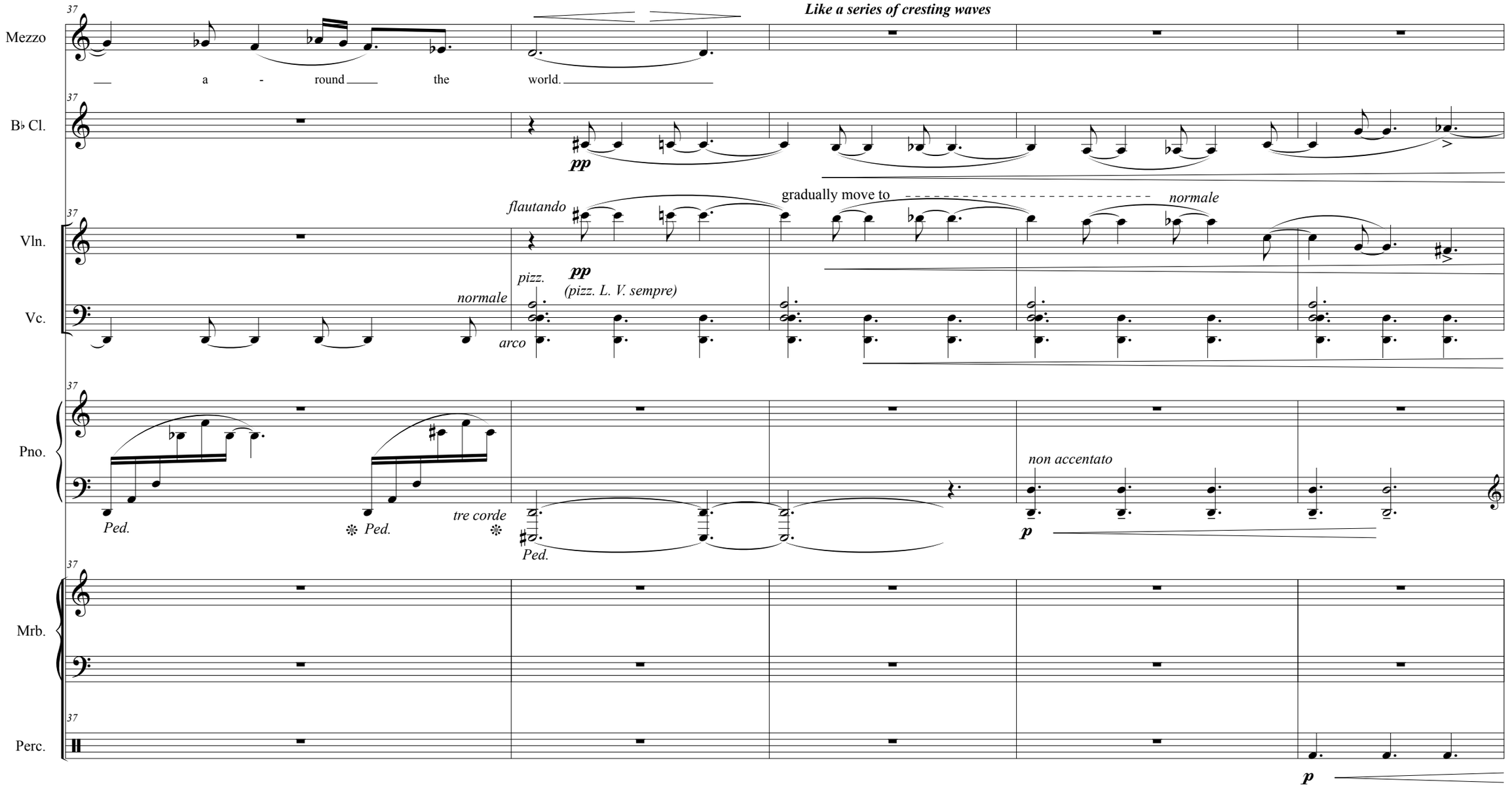
The Witness

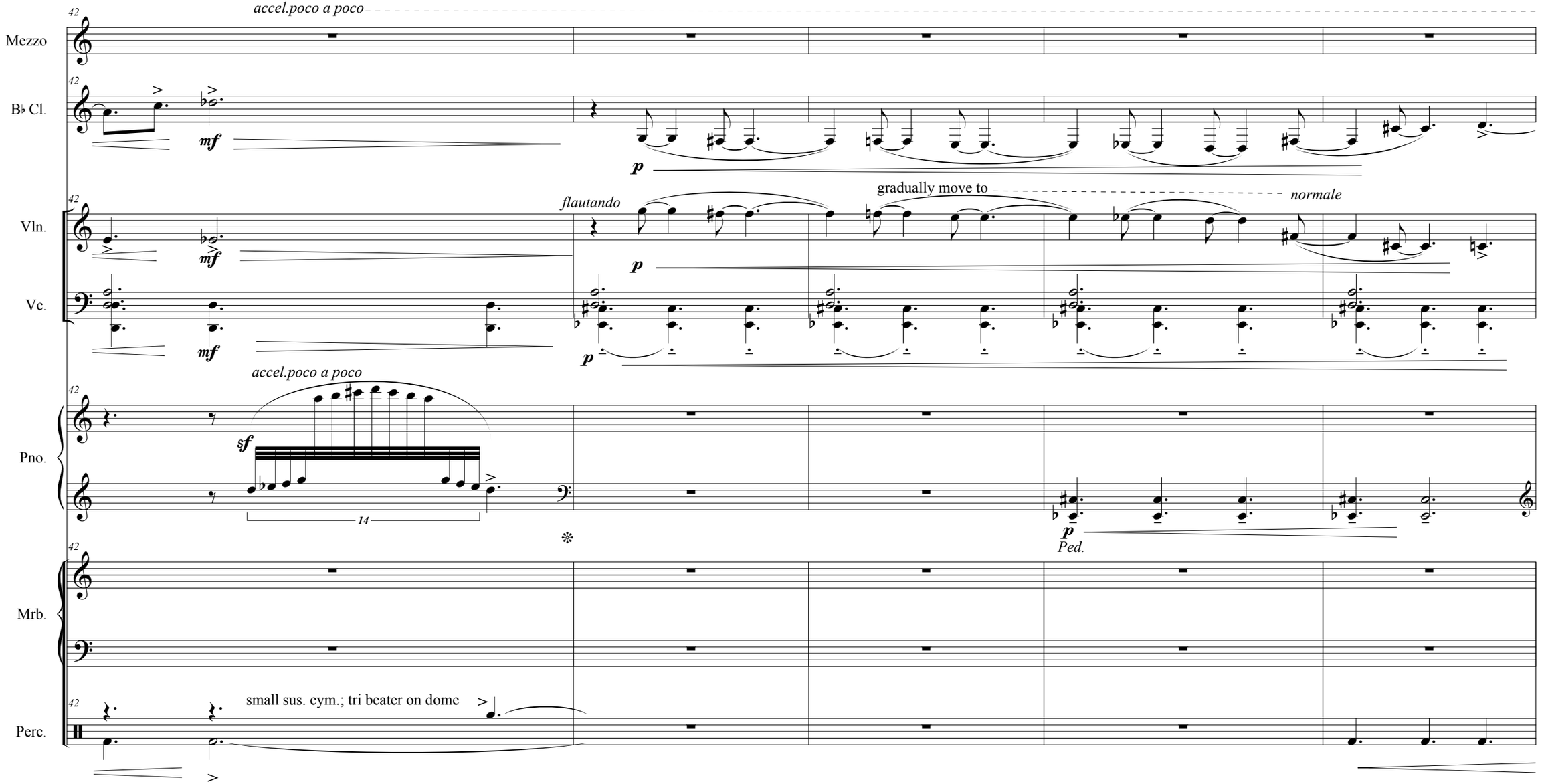


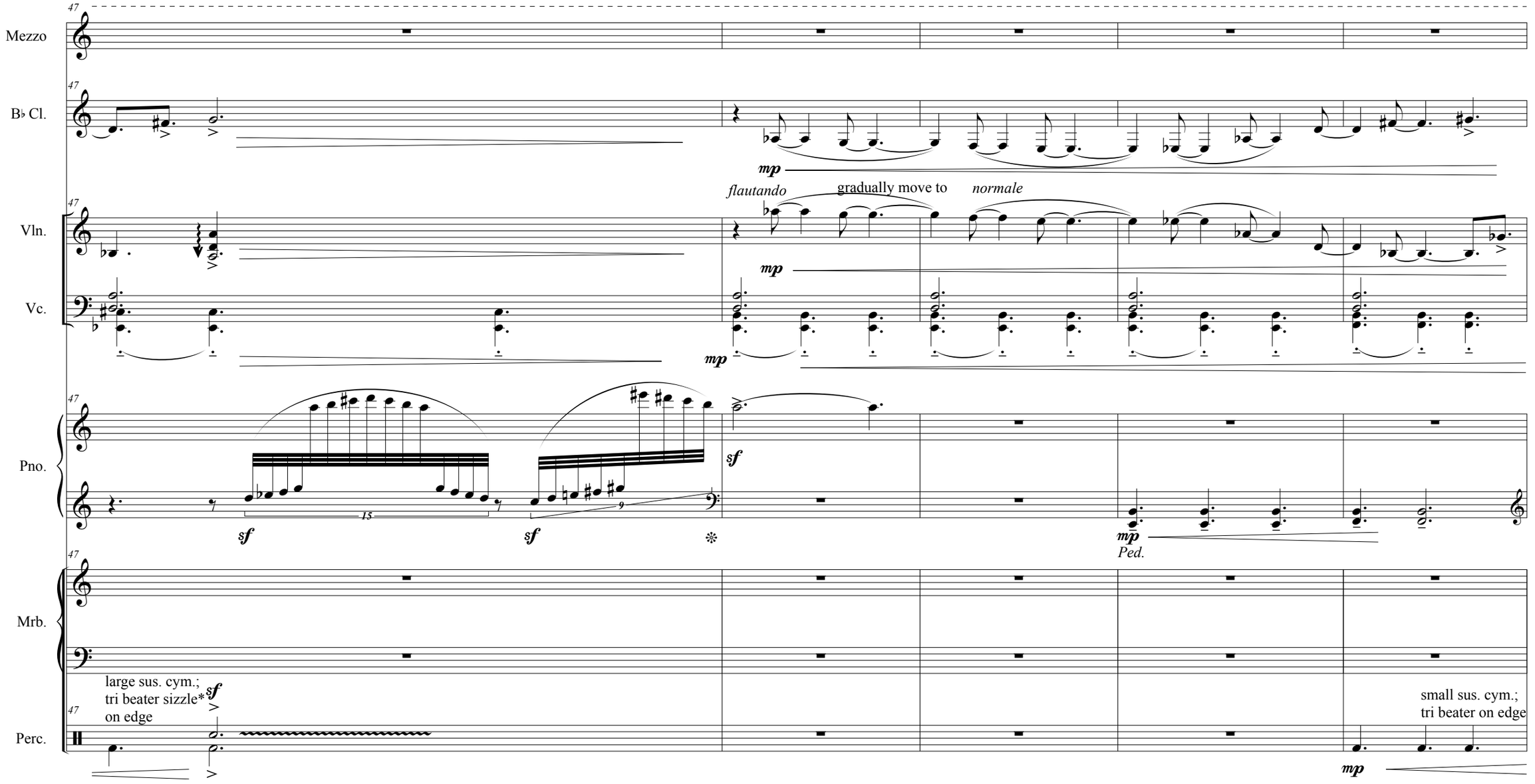

30
Mezzo
- - ment,
30
B♭ Cl.
30
Vln.
Vc.
30
Pno.
30
Mrb.
30
Perc.

The Witness

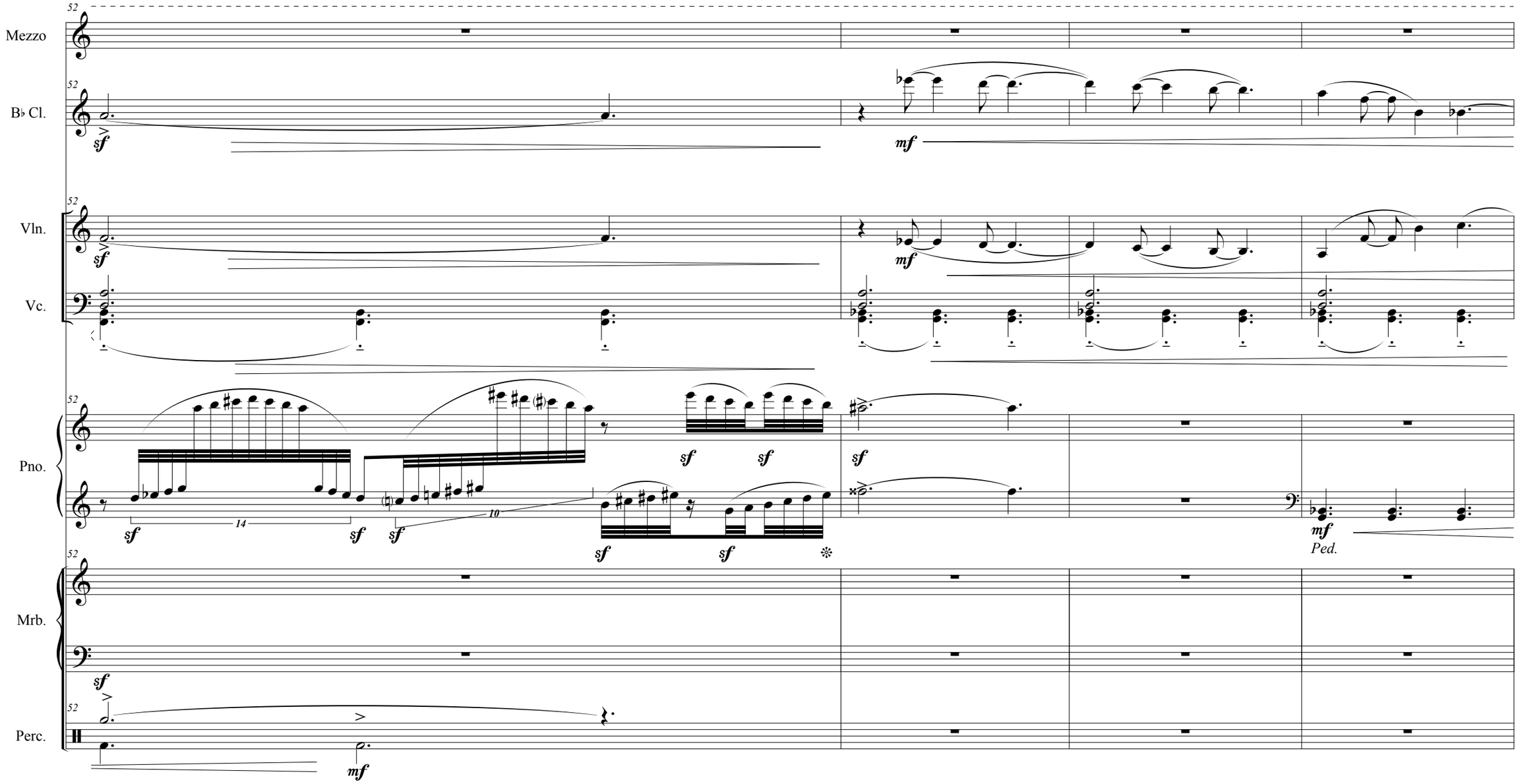

Mezzo
pp
(sotto voce)
a
shell
thin
air
curved
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Throbbing
flautando
Vc.
come sopra
pp
Pno.
Mute off
p
Ped.
Mrb.
med. sus. cym.;
soft mallet
Perc.

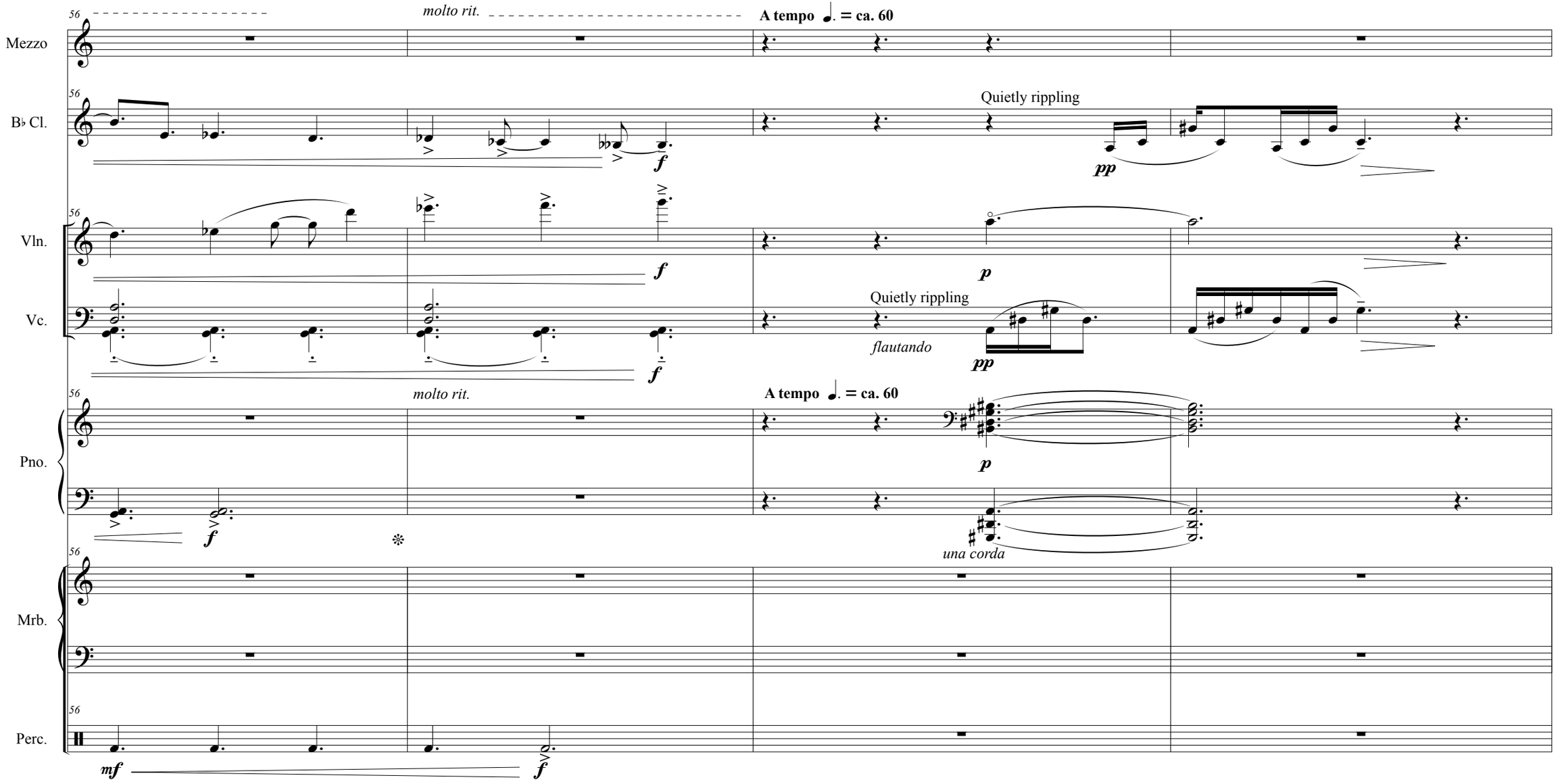

Like a series of cresting waves
Mezzo
a - round the world.
B♭ Cl.
pp
Vln.
flautando
gradually move to
normale
Vc.
normale
pizz.
pp
(pizz. L. V. sempre)
arco
Pno.
Ped.
Ped.
tre corde
Ped.
non accentato
p
Mrb.
Perc.
p

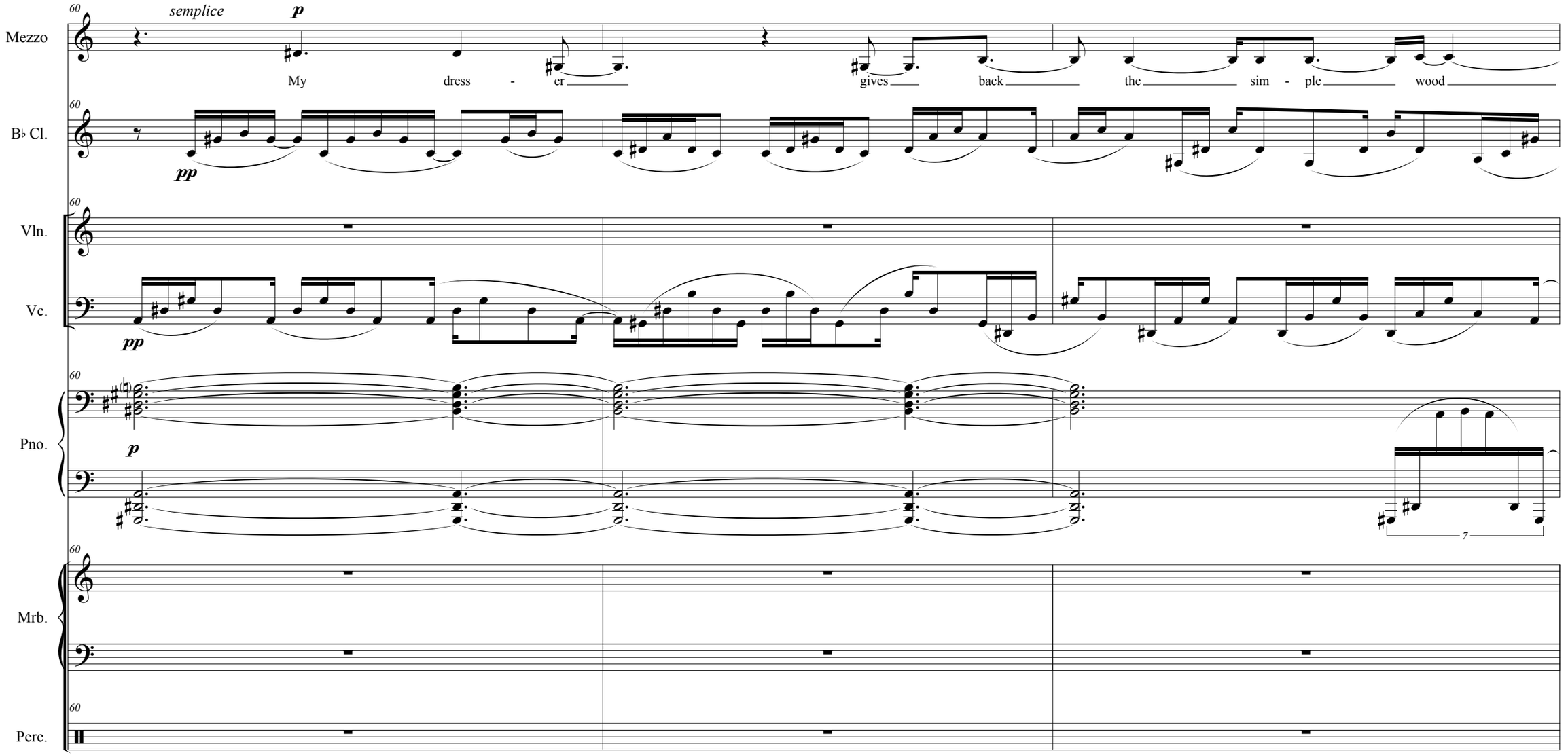

42
accel.poco a poco
Mezzo
B♭ Cl.
mf
p
Vln.
flautando
gradually move to
normale
Vc.
Pno.
sf
14
Ped.
Mrb.
Perc.
small sus. cym.; tri beater on dome

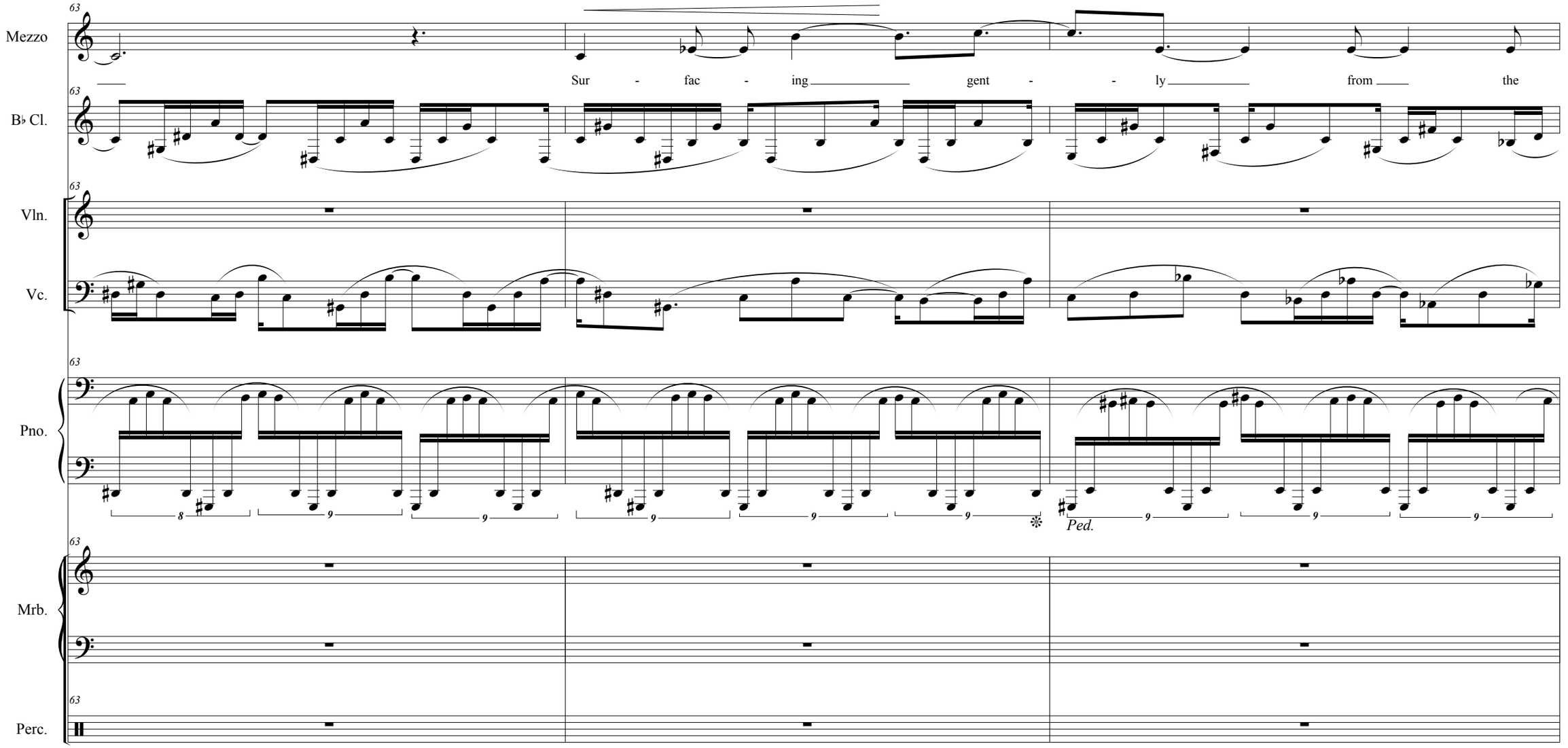


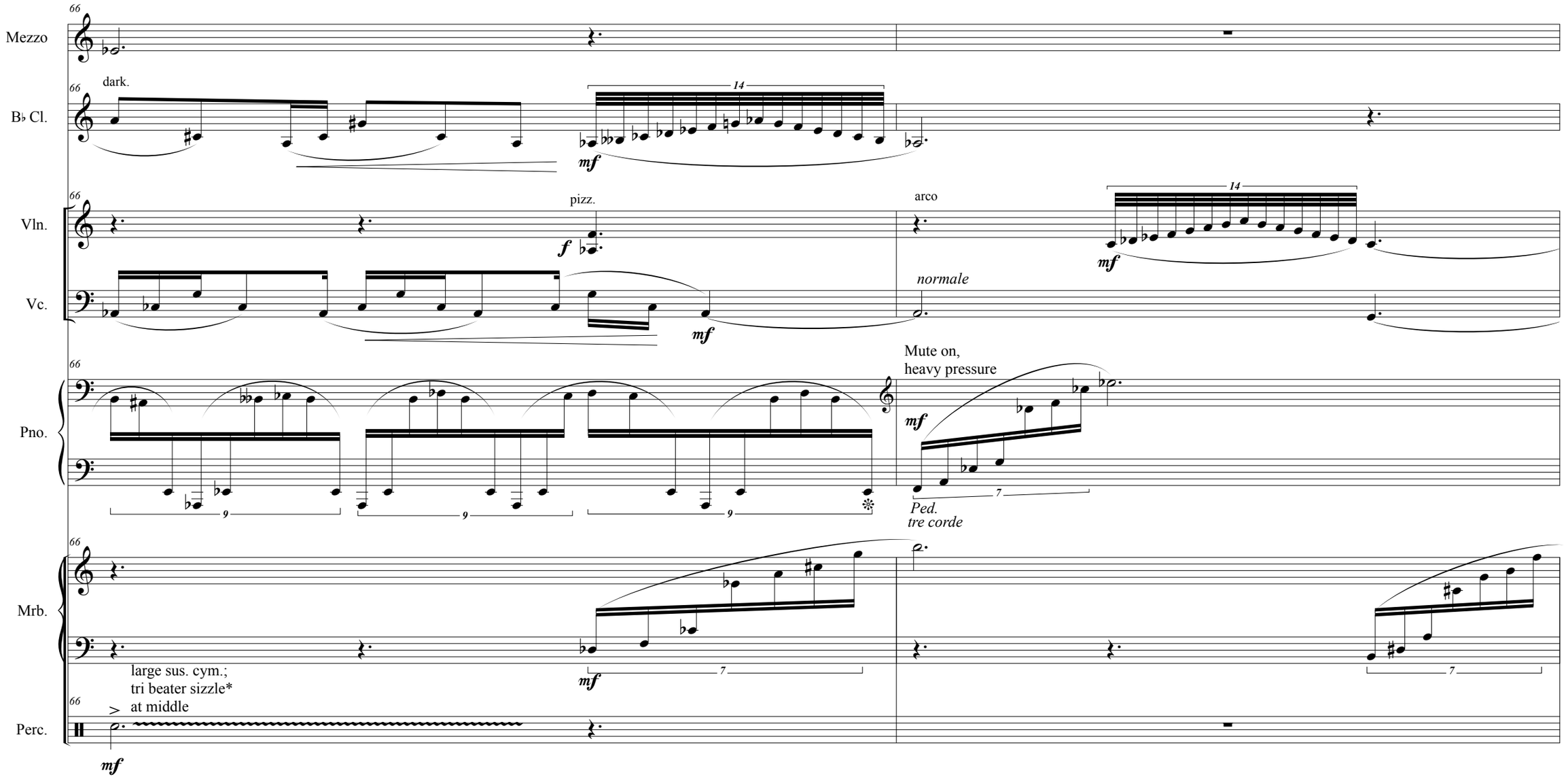
* see performance notes

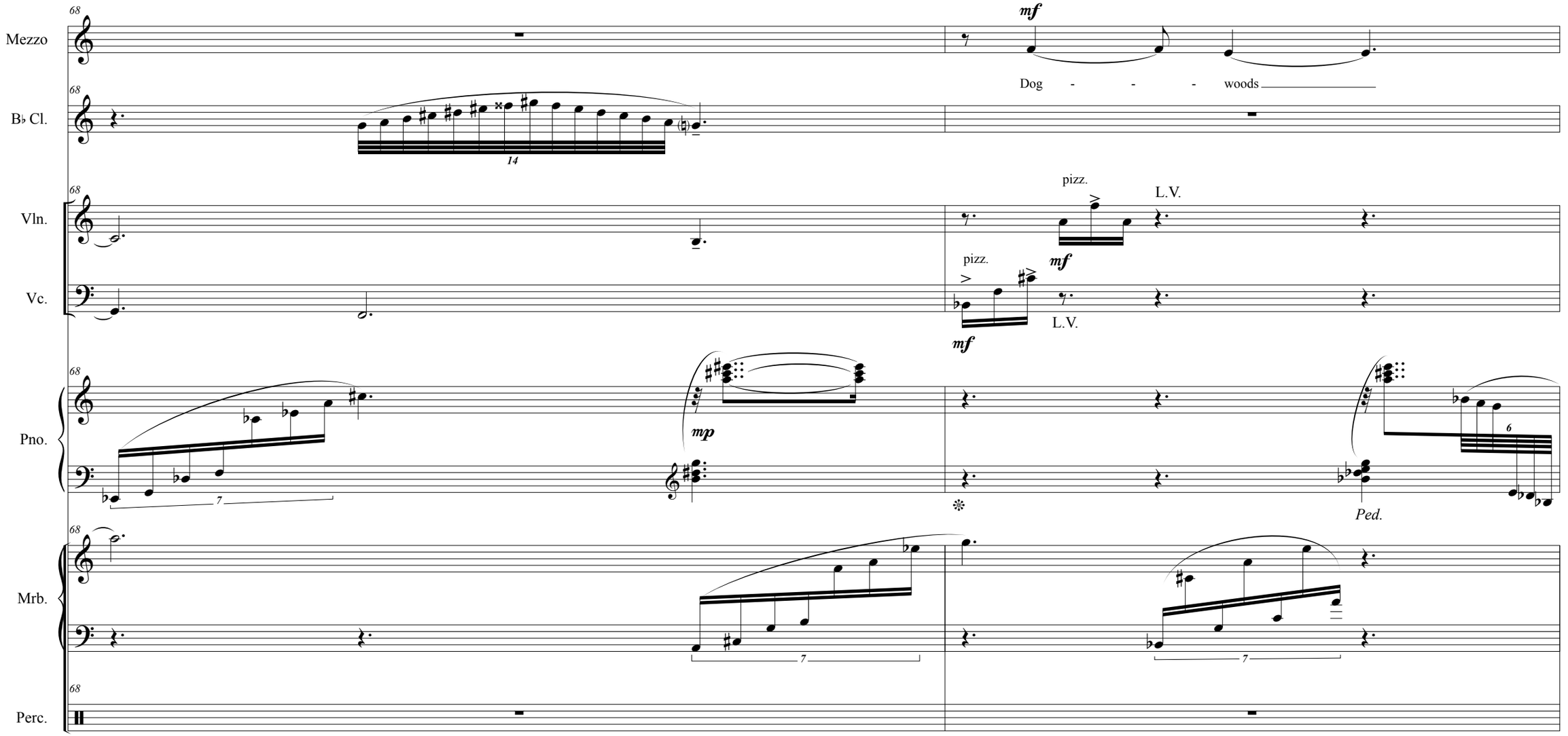

Mezzo
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Mrb.
Perc.
52
sf
mf
14
10
Ped.

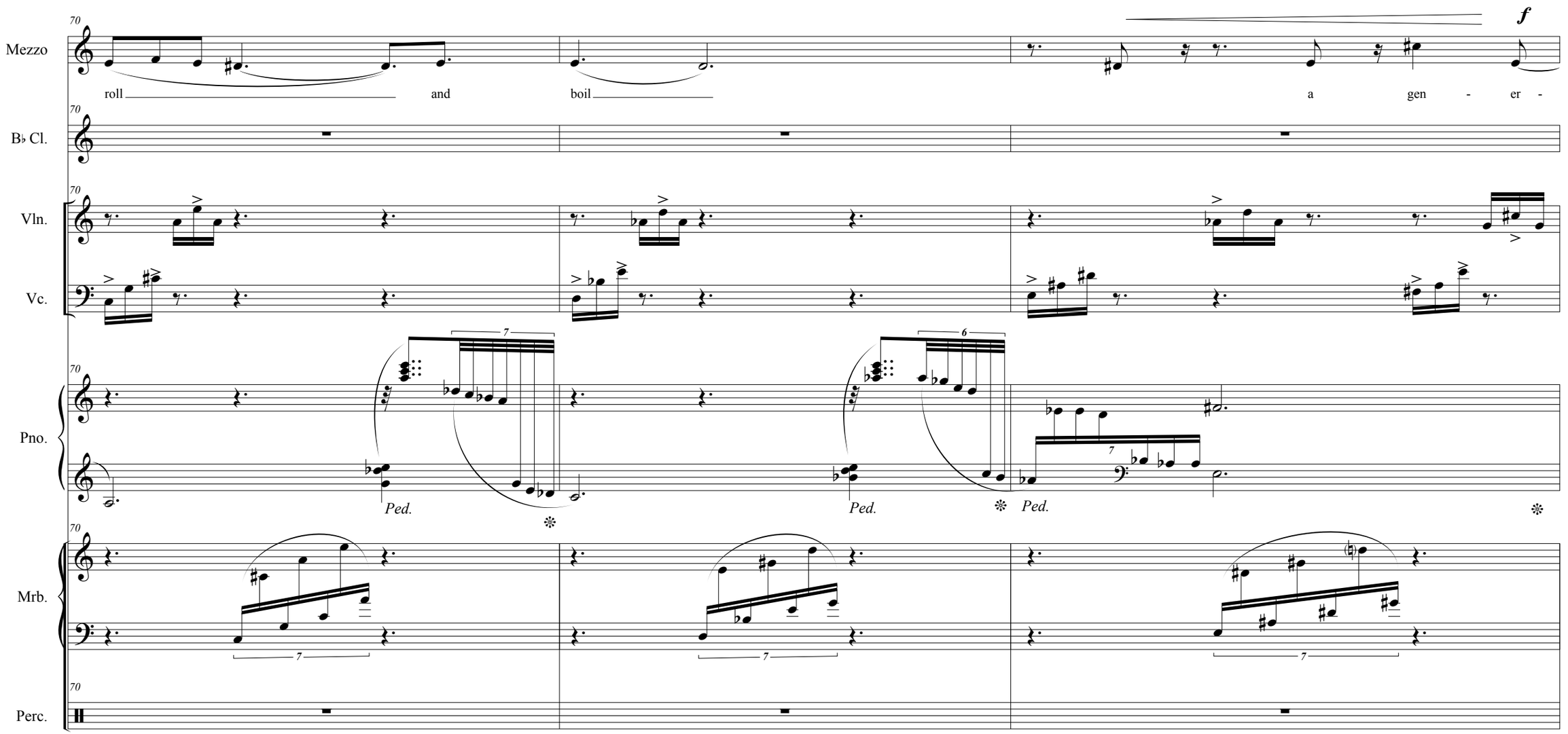

56
molto rit.
A tempo ♩. = ca. 60
Mezzo
B♭ Cl.
Quietly rippling
pp
f
Vln.
p
Vc.
Quietly rippling
flautando
pp
molto rit.
A tempo ♩. = ca. 60
Pno.
p
una corda
Mrb.
Perc.
mf
f

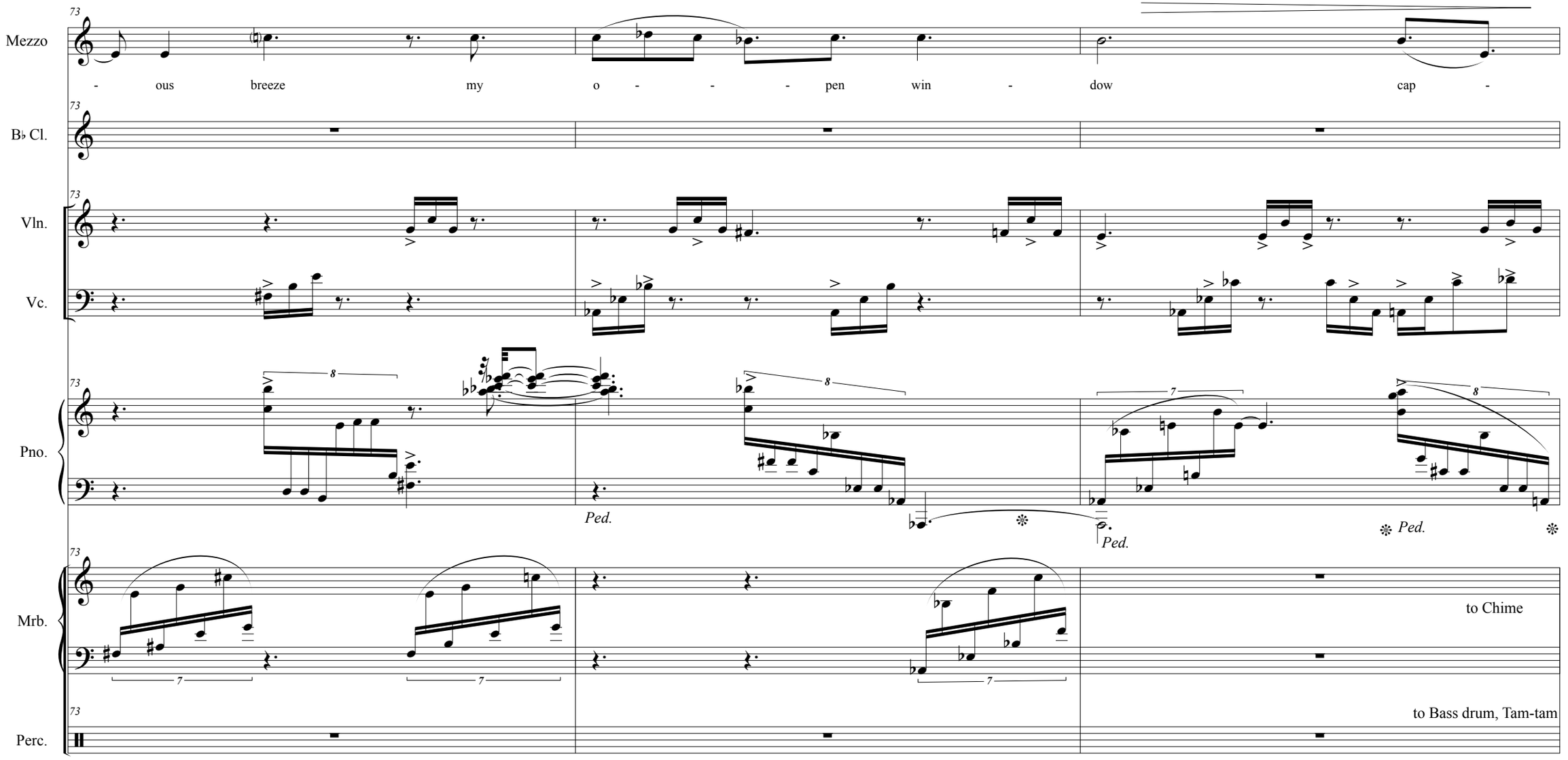

60
semplice
p
Mezzo
My dress - er gives back the sim - ple wood
B♭ Cl.
pp
Vln.
Vc.
pp
Pno.
p
7
Mrb.
Perc.

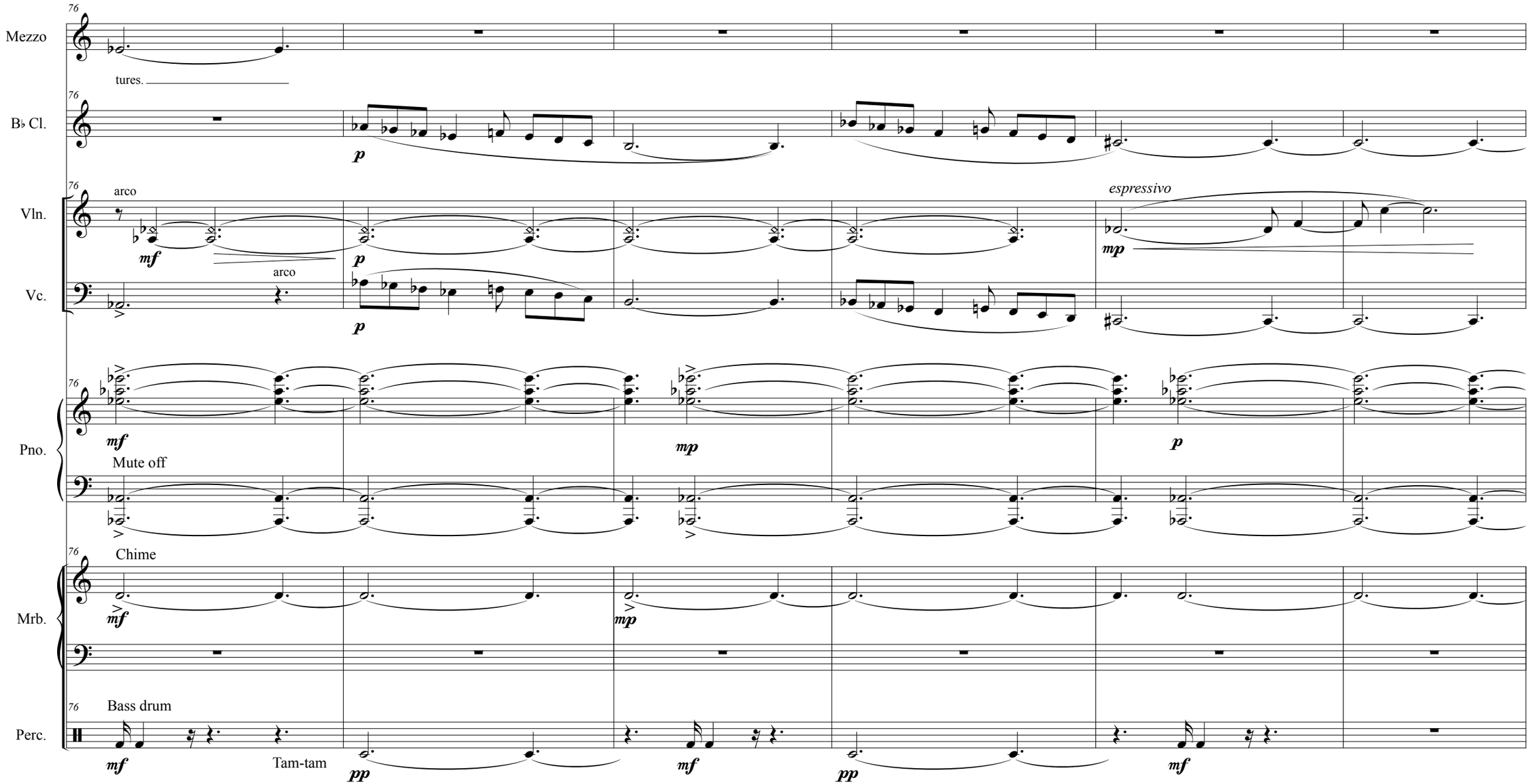

63
Mezzo
Sur - fac - ing gent - - ly from the
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Ped.
Mrb.
Perc.

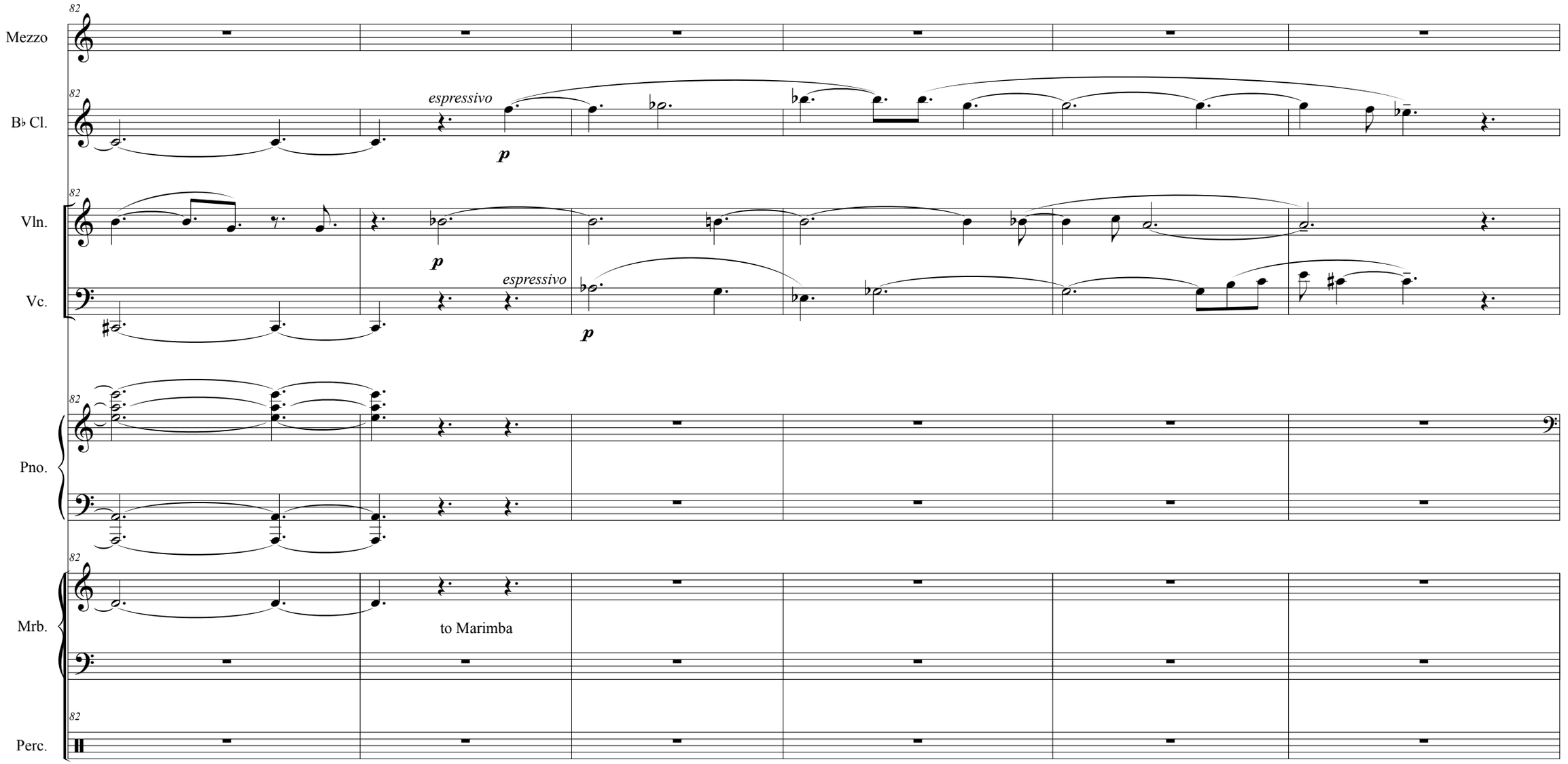

Mezzo
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Mrb.
Perc.
66
dark.
14
mf
pizz.
f
mf
arco
14
mf
normale
Mute on,
heavy pressure
mf
7
Ped.
tre corde
9
9
9
large sus. cym.;
tri beater sizzle*
at middle
mf
mf
7
7

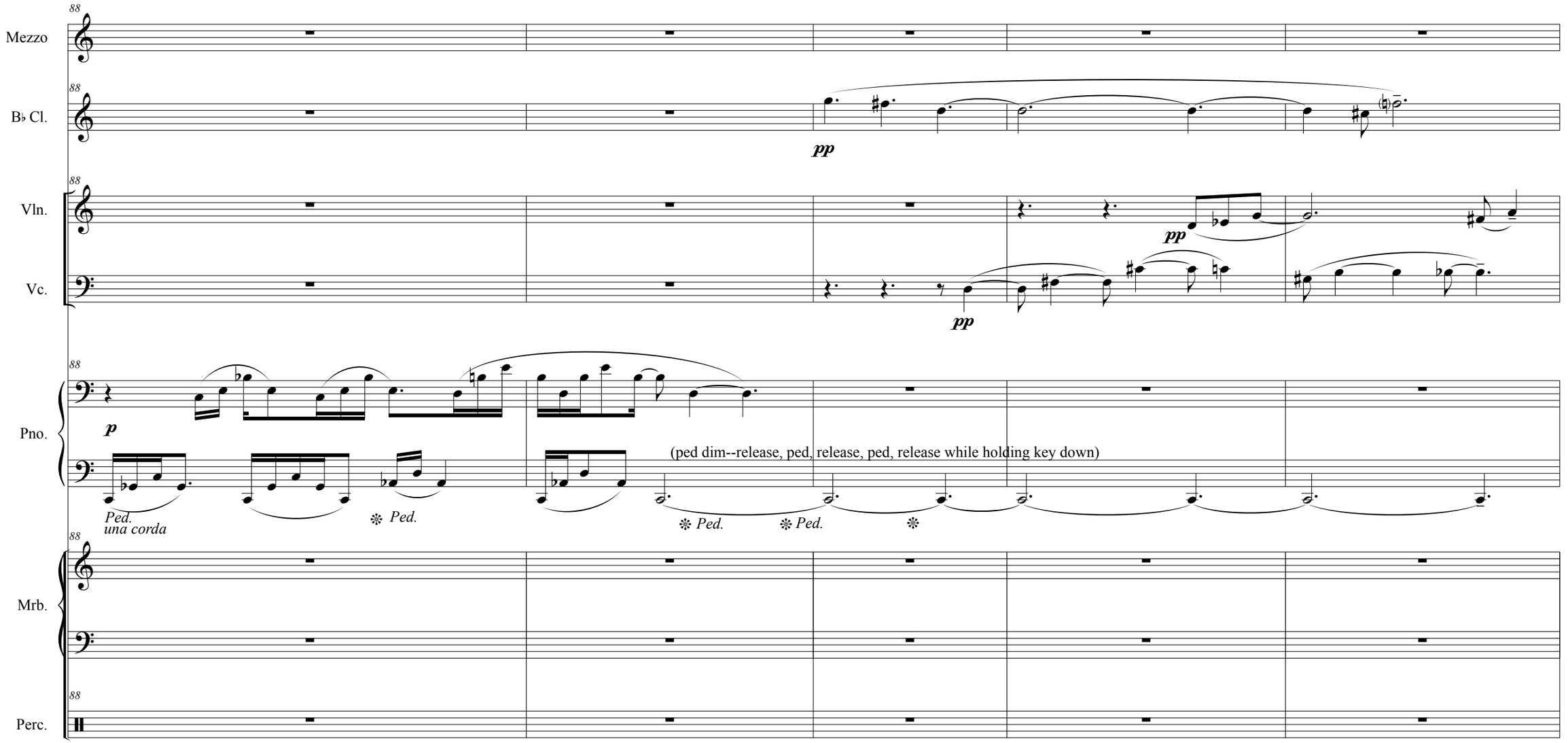

Mezzo
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Mrb.
Perc.
68
mf
Dog - - - woods
14
pizz.
L.V.
mf
pizz.
mf
L.V.
mp
7
6
Ped.
7
7

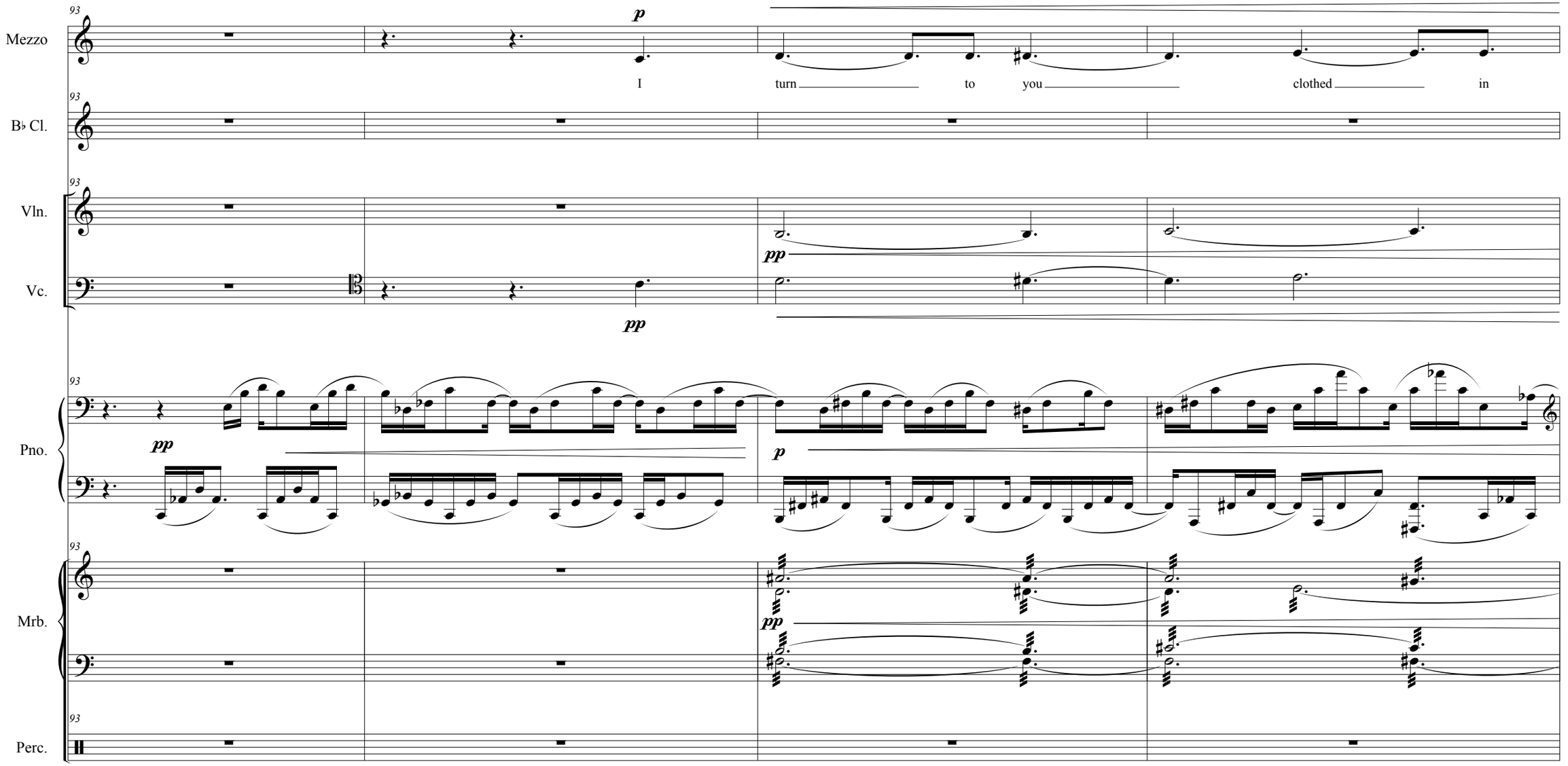

Mezzo
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Mrb.
Perc.
70
roll and boil
a gen - er -
f
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

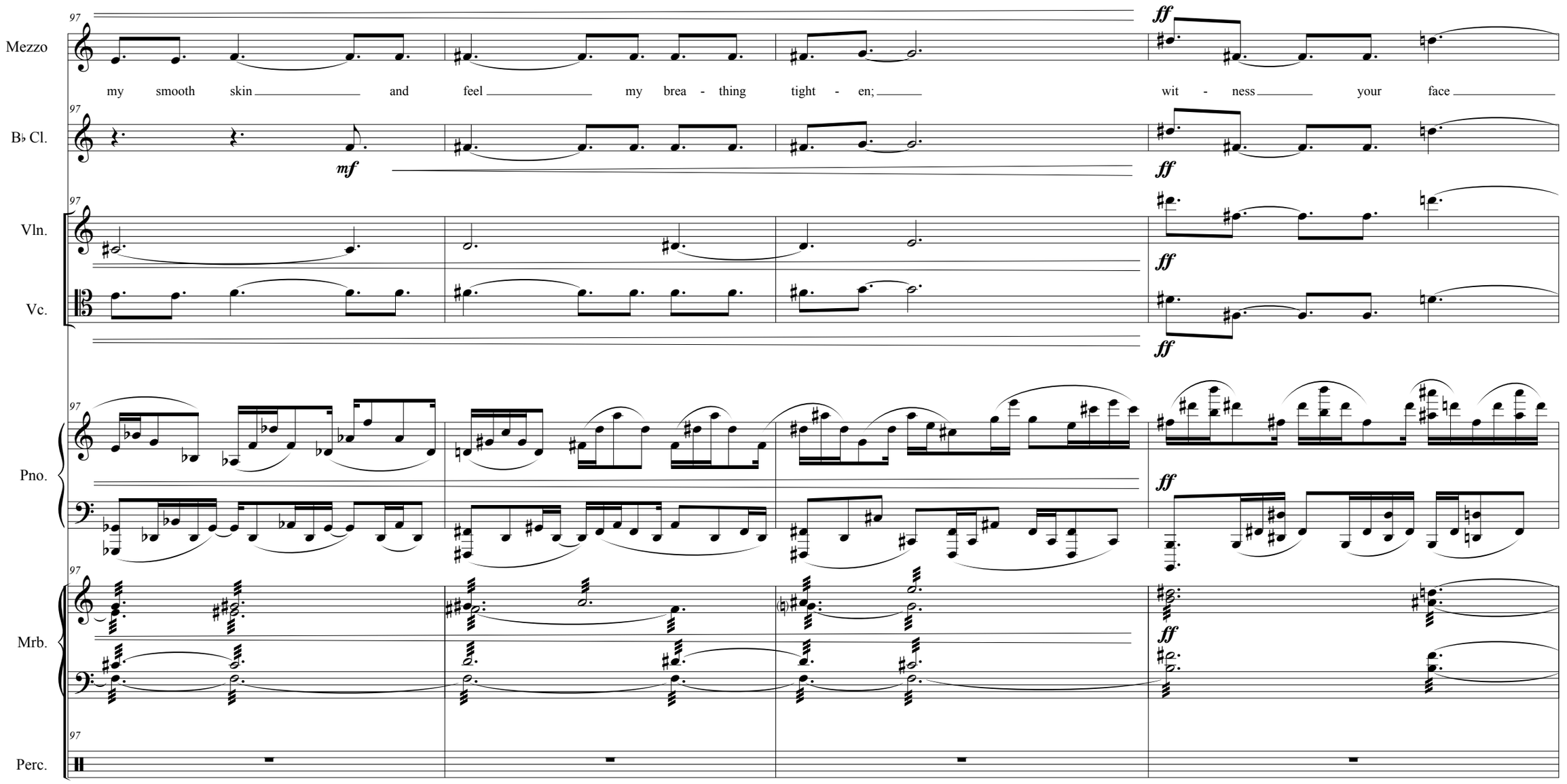

73
Mezzo
- ous breeze my o - - - pen win - dow cap -
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Mrb.
to Chime
Perc.
to Bass drum, Tam-tam

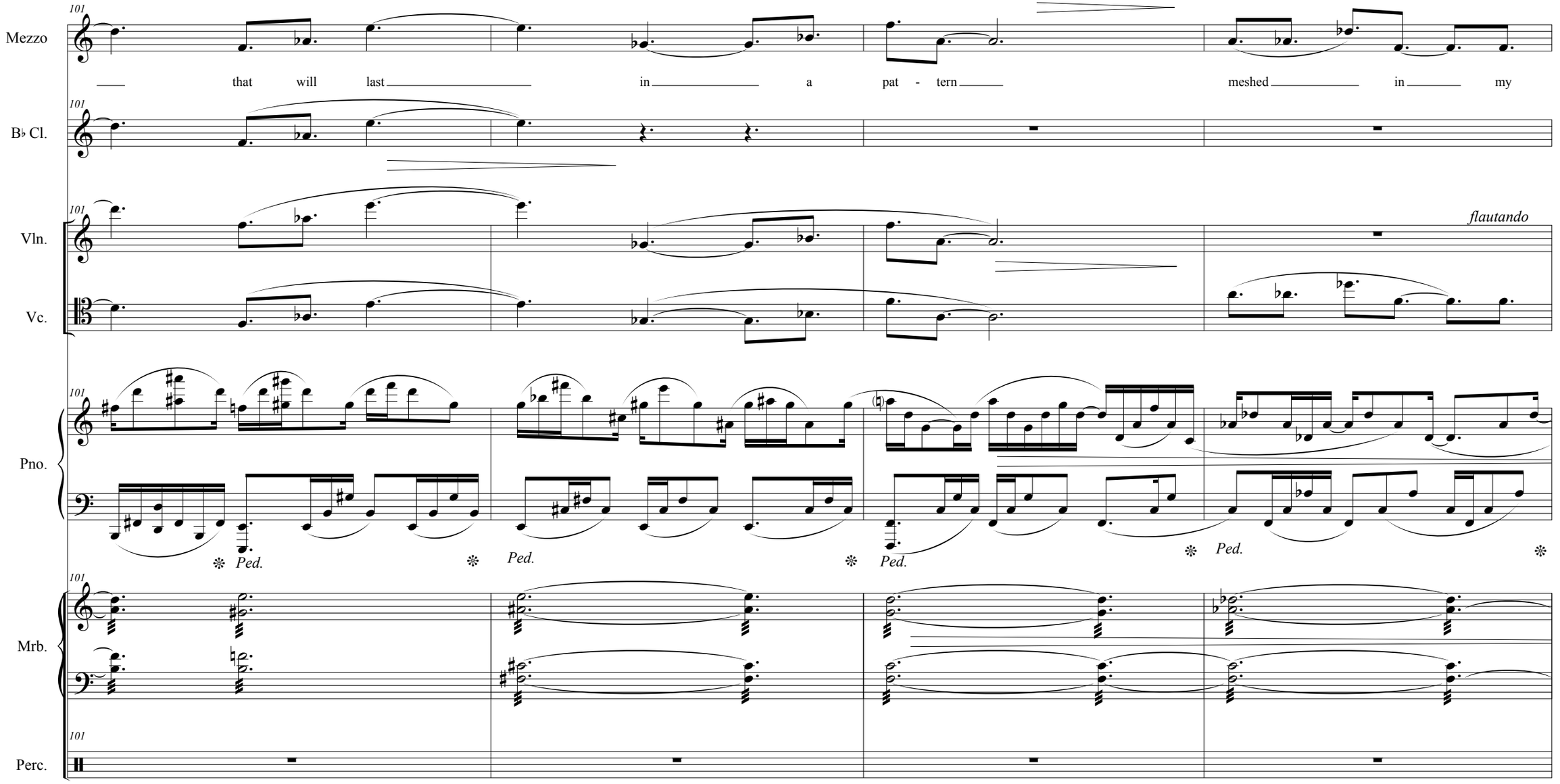

76
Mezzo
tures.
B♭ Cl.
p
Vln.
arco
mf
p
espressivo
mp
Vc.
arco
p
Pno.
mf
mp
p
Mute off
Mrb.
Chime
mf
mp
Perc.
Bass drum
mf
Tam-tam
pp
mf
pp
mf

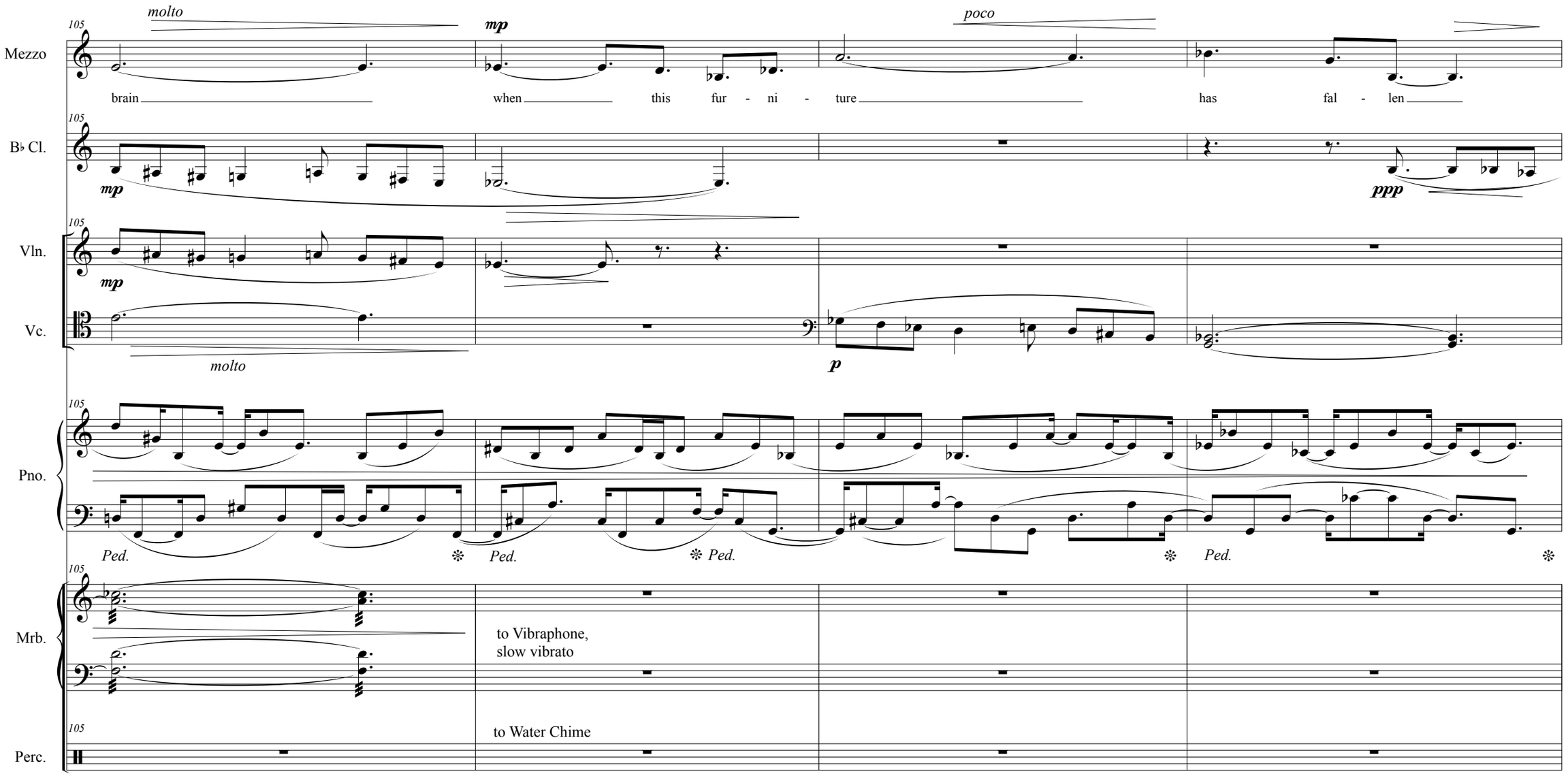

82
Mezzo
82
B♭ Cl.
espressivo
p
82
Vln.
p
Vc.
espressivo
p
82
Pno.
82
Mrb.
to Marimba
82
Perc.

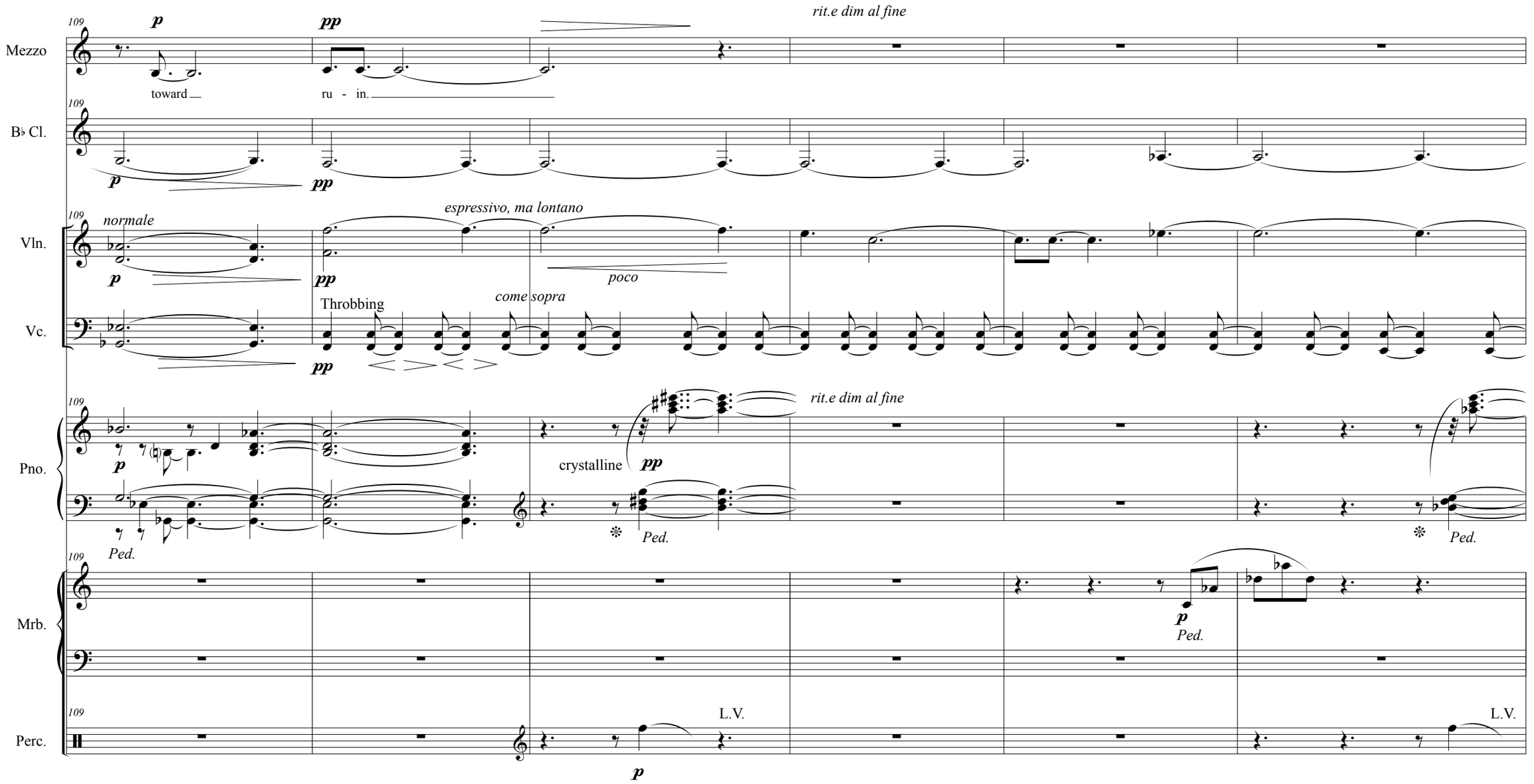

Mezzo
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Mrb.
Perc.
88
pp
pp
pp
p
(ped dim--release, ped, release, ped, release while holding key down)
Ped.
una corda
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

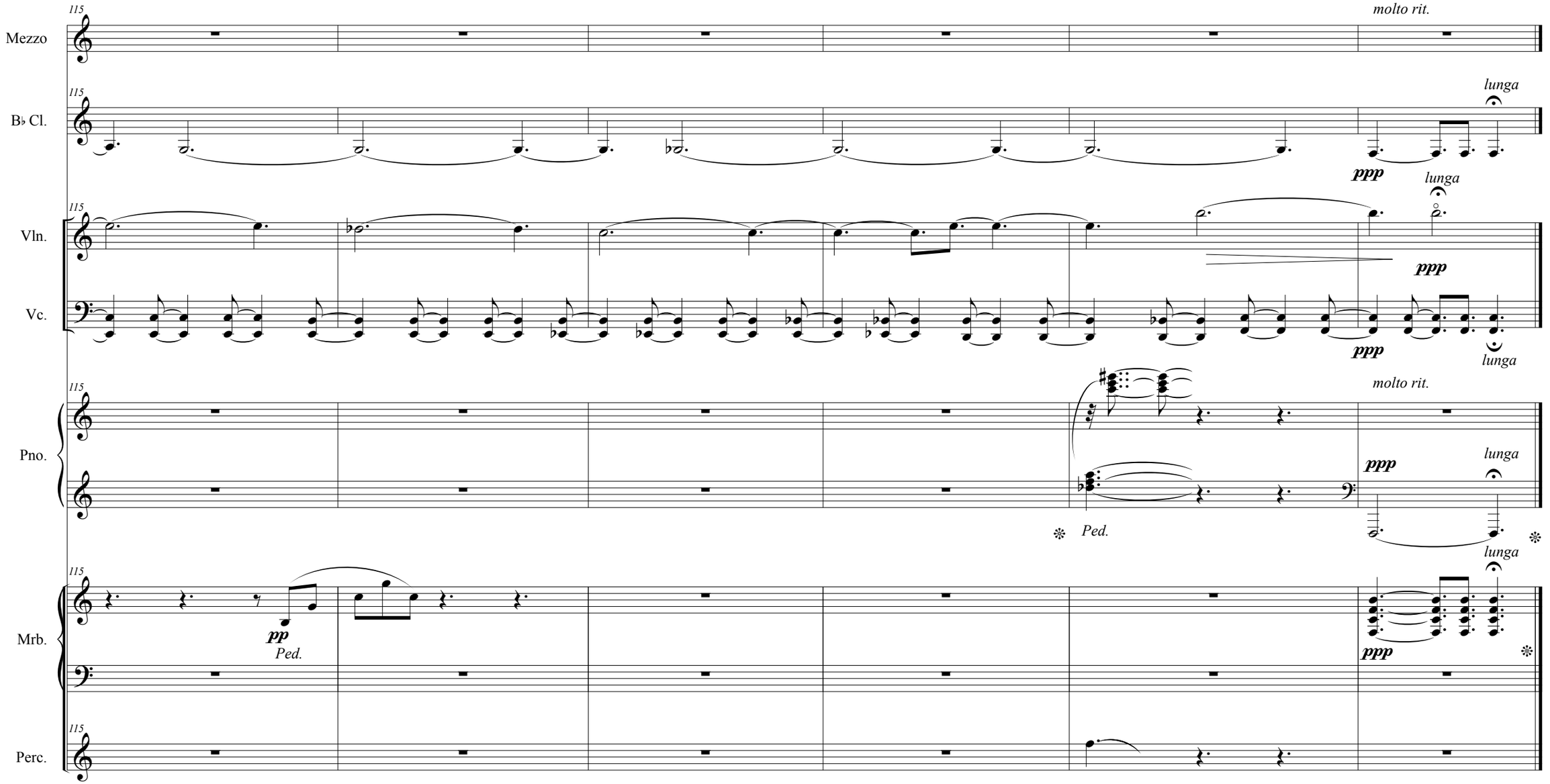

93
Mezzo
p
I
turn
to
you
clothed
in
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
pp
Vc.
pp
Pno.
pp
p
Mrb.
pp
Perc.


97
Mezzo
my smooth skin and feel my brea - thing tight - en;
wit - ness your face
ff
B♭ Cl.
mf
ff
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Mrb.
Perc.


101
Mezzo
that will last in a pat - tern meshed in my
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
flautando
Vc.
Pno.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Mrb.
Perc.


105
molto
mp
poco
Mezzo
brain
when
this
fur - ni - ture
has
fal - len
B♭ Cl.
mp
ppp
Vln.
mp
Vc.
molto
p
Pno.
Ped.
Mrb.
to Vibraphone,
slow vibrato
Perc.
to Water Chime


Mezzo
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
Mrb.
Perc.
109
p
pp
toward
ru - in.
rit.e dim al fine
normale
espressivo, ma lontano
poco
Throbbing
come sopra
crystalline
Ped.
L.V.


115
Mezzo
molto rit.
115
B♭ Cl.
lunga
ppp
lunga
115
Vln.
ppp
Vc.
ppp
lunga
115
Pno.
molto rit.
ppp
lunga
Ped.
115
Mrb.
pp
Ped.
lunga
ppp
115
Perc.