Han: Otherness and Syncretism

by

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HAN FOR STRING QUARTET	1

PROGRAM NOTES

The Korean term *han* originates from the Sinitic-language *hen* (恨) conveying pity and regret. This Chinese character amalgamates two different characters, one that denotes the mind and the other the state of limitation or stagnancy. This idea of impasse in one's mind is central to the concept of *han* in Korea, a feeling of unresolved anger, grief, and regret that has been prolonged and accumulated over time. It has been identified that *han*, like trauma, suffers from its delayed manifestation which results in its ambivalent, paradoxical, and transgenerational quality.[1]

In the first movement of my string quartet *Han*, the traditional Korean tune, *Saeya, Saeya, Parang Saeya* (Birds, Birds, Blue Birds) is used to describe the concept of *han*. The origin of this melody owes much to why I selected this tune to describe *han*. It is both a lullaby and an elegy. It was sung to commemorate Bong-jun Jeon, one of the leaders in *Donghak* Peasant Revolution (1894-95), an armed rebellion in Korea by aggravated peasants against the corrupt government. It was also sung by the widows of the Jeon's army as a lullaby for their babies. I found that these historical qualities of the original melody resemble the complexity of *han* that encompasses grief, regret, and hope. The original melody is stated at the beginning, and its fragments appear in different shapes and emotions, sometimes peaceful like a lullaby and other times explosive and pleading.

[1] Meera Lee, "*Sorrowful Feeling*: Han and *Its Haunting Legacies*," *Telos* 184 (2018): 106.

The second movement imitates the color and intensity of singing style of *pansori*, Korean musical storytelling performed by a singer and drummer. Written without barlines, this movement acts like a monologue or recitative after the slow developing yet dramatic first movement.

The third movement is inspired by *sanjo*, which is a Korean musical genre that features a solo instrument accompanied by *janggu* (a Korean hourglass drum). In *sanjo*, *chuimsae* (vocal signals) is used by the drummer to add to the musical excitement and to communicate with the audience as well as the soloist.

The title of the fourth movement, *Mu,* means not, nothing, or without. I named this movement as such because this movement does not have a recognizable melody, yet expresses itself through dynamics, texture, and register. Here I wanted to write about the aspect of *han* having to do with the repression of repulsive elements deep within our psyche, which when allowed to surface can incite a visceral feeling within oneself so strong as to induce a desire to purge as a consequence. My goal was to create music that captures the process of purging these emotions from one's being, and try to make something beautiful out of this. In the process of doing so, I hoped to challenge traditional aesthetics of what can be considered beautiful music and, as a consequence, beautiful emotions.

The final movement, *Maum,* means heart or mind in Korean. It calls for Amita Buddha, a cosmic energy called into presence through the syllables. Through repetitious calling, chanting, singing, and meditating, I try to reach the state of emptiness, awareness, and the resolution of *han*.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

In the first movement, glissandos should cover all notes in between which is to be distinguished from portamento.

The second movement is to be played from using the full score rather than parts. Accidentals carry over in a measure. In the second movement where there is no barline, accidentals carry over the entire movement.

In the third movement, x noteheads represent indefinite pitches when used in the parts for strings. In the *janggu* part, it refers to hitting the rim part of the *janggu* side. ▼ noteheads represent *chuimsae*, vocal signals to express excitement as well as use it as a way to communicate with the audience.

In the fifth movement, the rhythm of vibrato is sometimes notated to imitate melodic ornamentations. Other times, it is accompanied by a squiggly line above when it does not require a specific rhythm. The length of a squiggly line represents the approximate length of vibrato. Players may sing an octave higher or lower than what is written, depending on their singing register.

Following microtones were used: quarter sharp , three quarter sharp , quarter flat , and three quarter flat .

ABSTRACT

My dissertation, *Han: Otherness and Syncretism*, is a 26-minute video-dance and performance video of ***Han*** *for string quartet*, in collaboration with filmmaker Toko Shiiki, Converge String Quartet, dancer and choreographer Rie Kim and Jun Wakabayashi.

The work attempts to transform static notions of identity as fixed by appearance and language by suggesting multiple identities, cultural hybridity, and women's experiences in an intercultural context by merging visual and musical art and re-appropriating technological modes of presentation. The composition itself promotes a syncretic approach to these themes by drawing from diverse musical sources such as Korean, traditional, folk, American, and European music and representing marginalized female voices with the concept of *han*, a feeling of unresolved grief and resentment that has been accumulated over time.

The musical work is in five movements. The first movement is an exploration of the concept of *han* using a Korean folksong *Saeya, Saeya, Parang Saeya*, represented in the video by different imageries and movements in white color. The second movement emulates the sonority of *pansori* to express more explosive aspects of *han*. In contrast to the previous movement, the video utilizes the contrast created by juxtaposing red and black as well as faster and expressive dancing movements. The third movement *Sanjo* functions as a connecting movement between the first and second half of the piece, where musicians remove their half-masks and reveal their faces to introduce human-ness, which has been intentionally obscured in previous movements.

The fourth movement *Mu* tries to embody emotions flowing out of a confined space with its explosive musical language using dynamics, contour, texture, and timbre and with imageries that invoke raw and expressive qualities. The fifth movement is a meditation borrowing from the practice of chanting in Korean Buddhism with its repetitious melodies and the use of the *moktak* instrument.

Han

for string quartet
used a Korean tune called

I. *Saeya, Saeya, Parang Saeya*

Jungyoon Wie
(2016-19)

♩ = c. 80 **Like a lullaby, but distant and solemn**

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

con sord.
sul tasto
poco vibrato
freely

con sord.
sul tasto
senza vibrato
freely

A

senza vibrato

con sord.
sul tasto
senza vibrato

con sord.

B **Reminiscent**

con vib. ord. sul tasto

con vib. senza sord. ord.

con vib.

sul tasto ord.

23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

ord. l.v.

ord. l.v.

ord. l.v.

l.v.

32 33 34 35 36 37 38

C **Poco Agitato**

rit.

senza sord.

gliss.

sul A

sul D

senza sord.

39 40 41 42 43 44 45

D **Poignant**

♩ = c. 80

sul tasto

46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53

ord.

ord.

ord.

ord.

gliss.

espress.

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

54 **55** **56** **57** **58** **59** **60**

E Passionate

molto vib.
like crying

molto vib.
like crying
gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

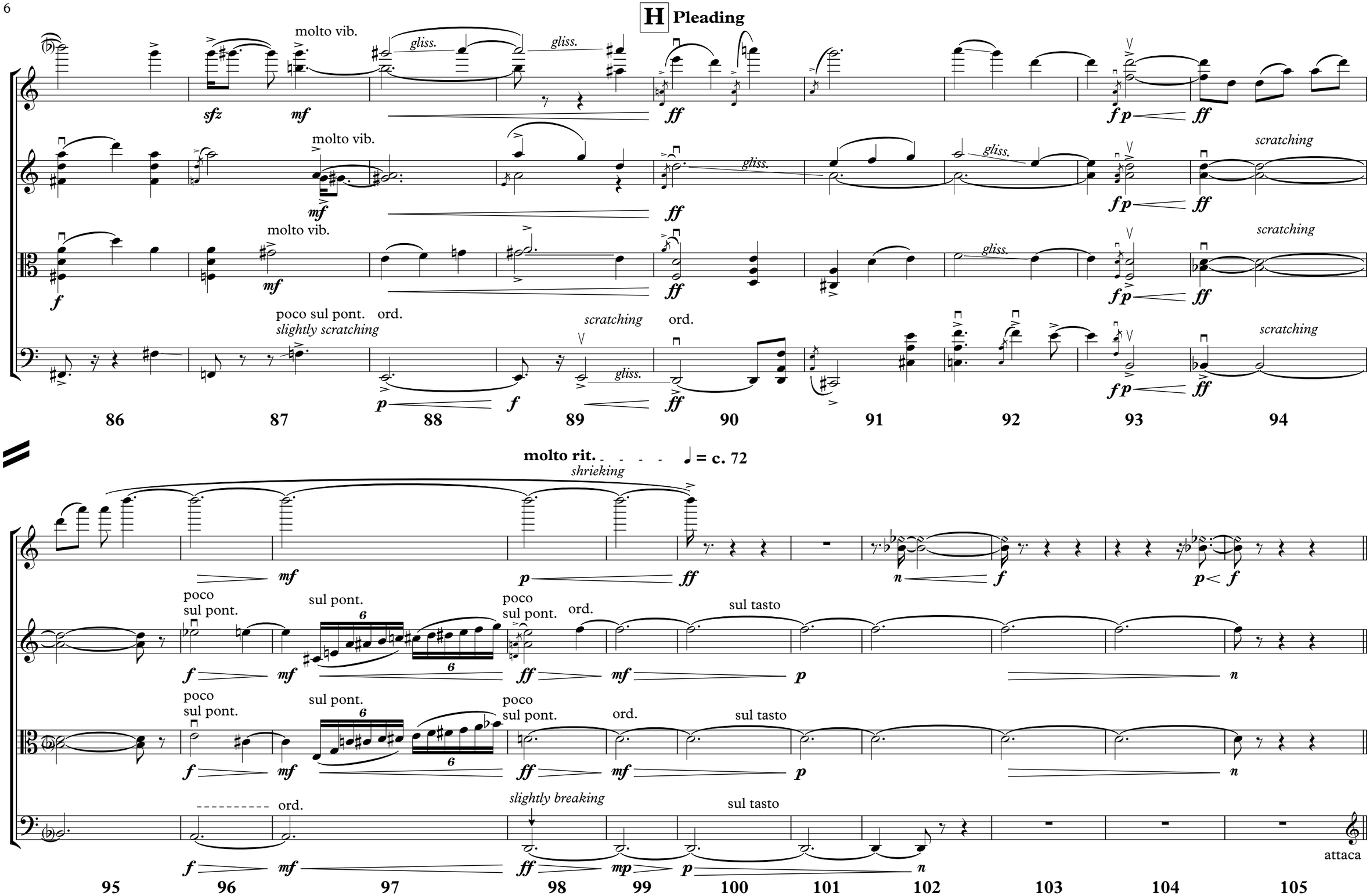
61 **62** **63** **64** **65** **66** **67** **68** **69**

F

70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77

G **Explosive**

78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85


H Pleading
molto vib.
gliss.
sfz
mf
ff
fp
scratching
f
poco sul pont.
slightly scratching
ord.
p
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
molto rit.
shrieking
♩ = c. 72
n
poco sul pont.
sul pont.
6
sul tasto
slightly breaking
mp
attaca
95
96
97
98
99
100
101
102
103
104
105

II. *Pansori*

♩ = c. 52 **Earnest, in a breaking yet assertive tone, in the style of Pansori**

sul G

sul D
molto sul tasto

sul tasto
IV

1/4
accel.

gliss.

emphatic
like *haegeum*

1/4 vib.

sul pont

molto sul tasto

rubato

gliss.

insistent

I A tempo

let pitch drop and scratch

accel.

Solo, sul G
passionate

rubato

sul pont

1/4 vib.

gliss.

ord.

let pitch drop and scratch

ord.

J

1/4 vib.

rubato

poco sul pont

ord.

1/4 vib.

1/4 vib.

short

gliss.

sul pont

K **Marcato**

sul A

sul D

port.

sul A

molto accel.

sul D

gliss.

sul A

poco sul pont.
1/4 vib.

A tempo

3s

sul pont

like a bird

3

3

1/4 vib.

f

3

3

3

repeat this figure 9 times,
accelerating each time

gliss.

vln. 1, cue down beat

accel.

gliss.

fp

ff

IV

ff

breaking
sul pont

1/4
tr

gliss.

p

f

sfz

ff

1/4 vib.

gliss.

gliss.

ppp

f

ff

L ♩ = c. 62

IV

breaking
sul pont

ord.
1/4 vib.

gliss.

ff *sfz*

breaking
ord.

sfz

1/4 vib.

gliss.

mf

f

sul pont

ord.

1/4
tr
gliss.
1/2 press

p *pp*

ord.
IV

f

3

sul pont
breaking

ff *sfz*

ord.

breaking

ff *sfz*

1/4 vib.

gliss.

f

1/4
tr

f

1/2 press

f

1/2 press

M ♩ = c. 52 **Marcato, poco sul pont**

accel. **A tempo**

To Jang-gu

ff

1/4 vib.

poco sul pont. ord.

3

fff *breaking, like a cry*

sfz

molto rubato
molto sul tasto

gliss.

ff *p*

III. *Sanjo*

♩ = ca. 76 **Improvisatory, expressive with molto vib.**

Jang-gu
RH (played with yeolchae, a flat, wooden stick)
let stick bounce
1.5"
x noteheads mean
play close to the rim
LH (played with a hand)
poco
sul pont.
ord.
ah!

106 107 108 109 110 111

sul D
N
poco
sul pont.
ord.
mm
ah
1/4

112 113 114 115 116 117 118

O

1/4

ah!

ah!

pizz.

pizz.

mm

con sord.

119 120 121 122 123 124 125

126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133

vln 1, cue down beat

arco

poco sul pont.

sul pont.

arco

sul pont.

poco
sul pont.

134

135

P

con sord.

ord.

ah!

pizz.

ord.

136

137

138

139

140

141

142

ord.
sul D
poco sul pont.

p *f* *f* *fp*

f

mm ah!

pizz.

senza sord.

fp *p*

143 144 145 146 147 148 149

senza sord. **More frantic**

f *fp* *p* *f*

1" after Jang-gu

p

0.5" after Jang-gu

enter after vln. 1

pp

with vla.

fp

arco
1" after Vc.

f

after vln. 1

p *f*

with Janggu

p

f

1.5" after Janggu

p *f*

after vla.

150 151 152

vln. 1, cue down beat

poco sul pont.

molto vib.

Q ♩ = ca. 82 Animated

pizz.

uh!

pizz.

153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160

start slower and
get faster

sim.

161 162 163 164 165 166 167

mf

mm

uh!

arco

f

gliss.

168 169 170 171 172 173

R **Tempo I** (♩ = ca. 76)

arco
ord. to sul pont.

p

ord.

f

fp

f

poco sul pont

p

vln. 1, cue down beat

ord.

fp

pp

change to gung-chae (round)

f

p

ord. to sul pont.

p

ord.

f

poco sul pont

sul pont

ord.

fp

arco
ord. to sul pont.

pp

f

ord.

p

174 175 176

vln. 1, cue down beat

poco sul pont

poco sul pont

poco sul pont

vc, cue down beat

177 178 179

poco sul pont

180 181 182 183

S **poco accel.**

sul A

ff

gliss.

uh!

f

ah!!

mm

ah!!

port.

f

pizz.

ff

port.

f

ff

184 185 186 187 188 189

f

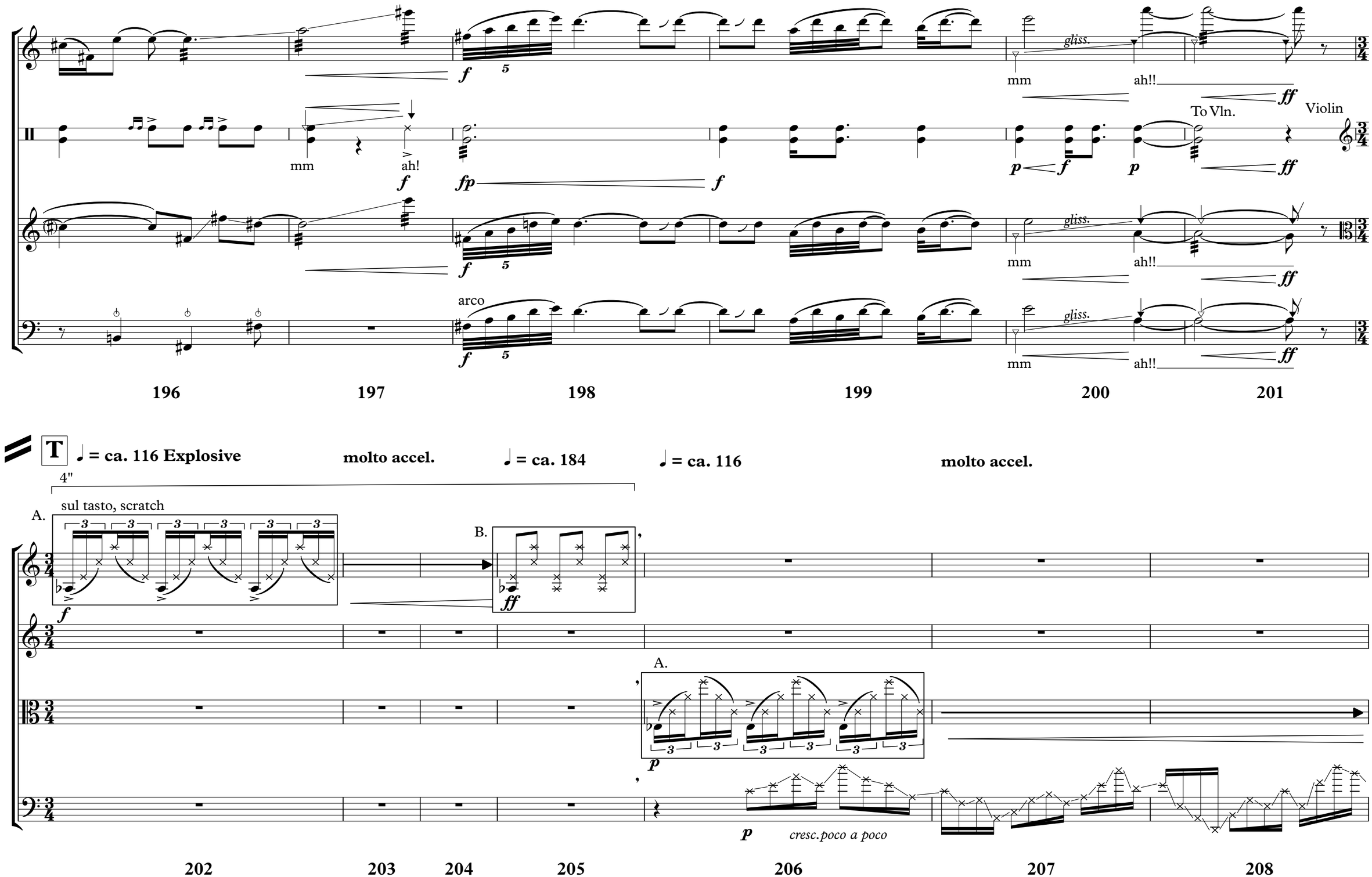
p

f

sul D

f

190 191 192 193 194 195


gliss.
mm
ah!!
To Vln.
Violin
mm
ah!
arco
196
197
198
199
200
201
T
♩ = ca. 116 Explosive
molto accel.
♩ = ca. 184
♩ = ca. 116
molto accel.
4"
sul tasto, scratch
A.
B.
A.
cresc. poco a poco
202
203
204
205
206
207
208

Play box A to B until rehearsal U
The length from A to B is reduced everytime it repeats
B may be varied to forshadow vln. 2

U do not coordinate

♩ = ca. 184

10" 8"

Play with these motives freely,
varing them each time to achieve
greater density to rehearsal U

f

B.

Play box A to B until rehearsal U
The length from A to B is reduced everytime it repeats
B may be varied to foreshadow vln. 2

ff

continue this until rehearsal U
getting louder and denser

209 210 211 212 213

coordinate
sudenly heavier

as fast as possible

molto scratch

hightest note possible 8"

fp *ff*

214 215 216 217

IV. *Mu*

♩ = ca. 100 Passionate and mournful

like a whale, 1/4 vib. whenever possible
all the shapes, pitches, and rhythms are approximate
consecutive 16th notes show density, not the actual rhythm

poco sul pont.
lingering between semitones
pitches below are approximate

II

I

no vib.
to semitone vib.

1/4 vib.

the shape below is approximate with free bowing
scratch poco a poco
sul C
3"

molto scratch

ord.

1/4 vib.

molto accel.

freely, as fast as possible

gliss.

ff

A tempo

pp

p

n

p

mf

p

accel.

A tempo, fiercely
scratch with douple stops

fff

1/4 vib.
single note
I

ff

double stop
IV

l.v.

V. *Maum*

♩ = ca. 63 Like chanting, singing, calm, unending

moktak

f *mp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *mf*

unwavering

f

port. vib. port. vib.

let bounce

p *mf* vib. *f* *f*

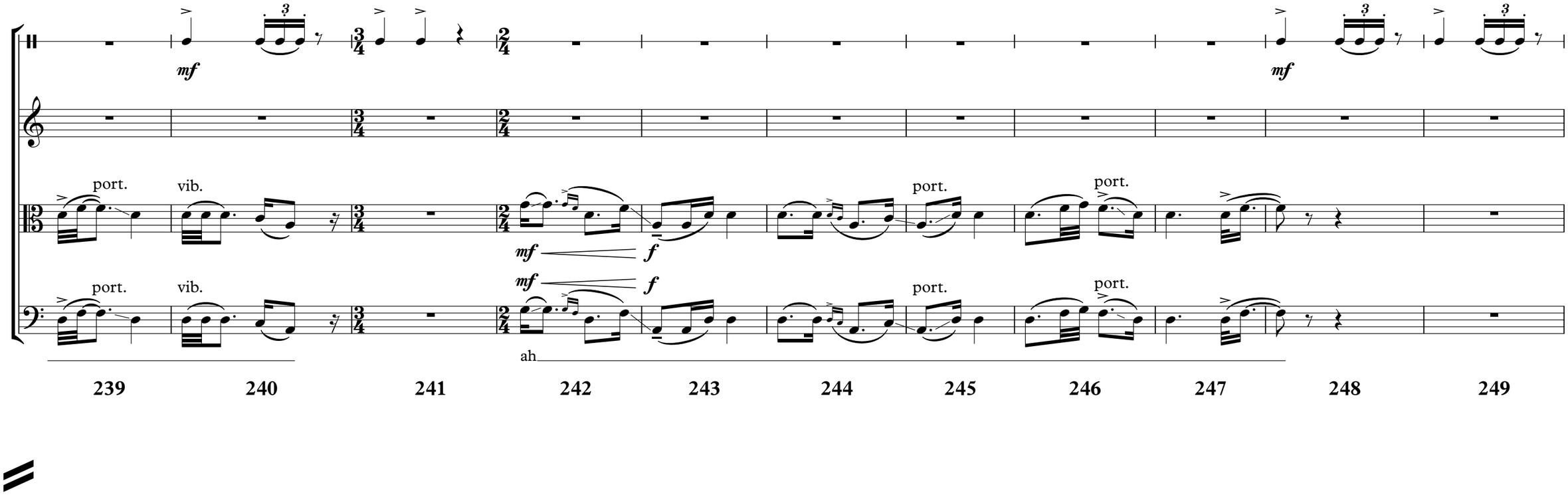
V

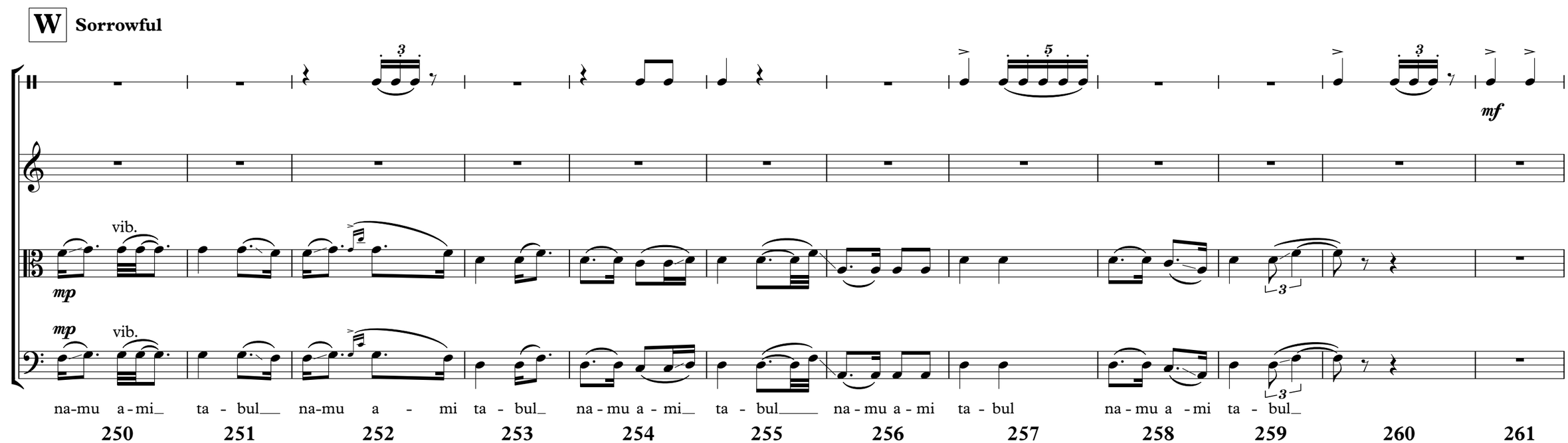
f

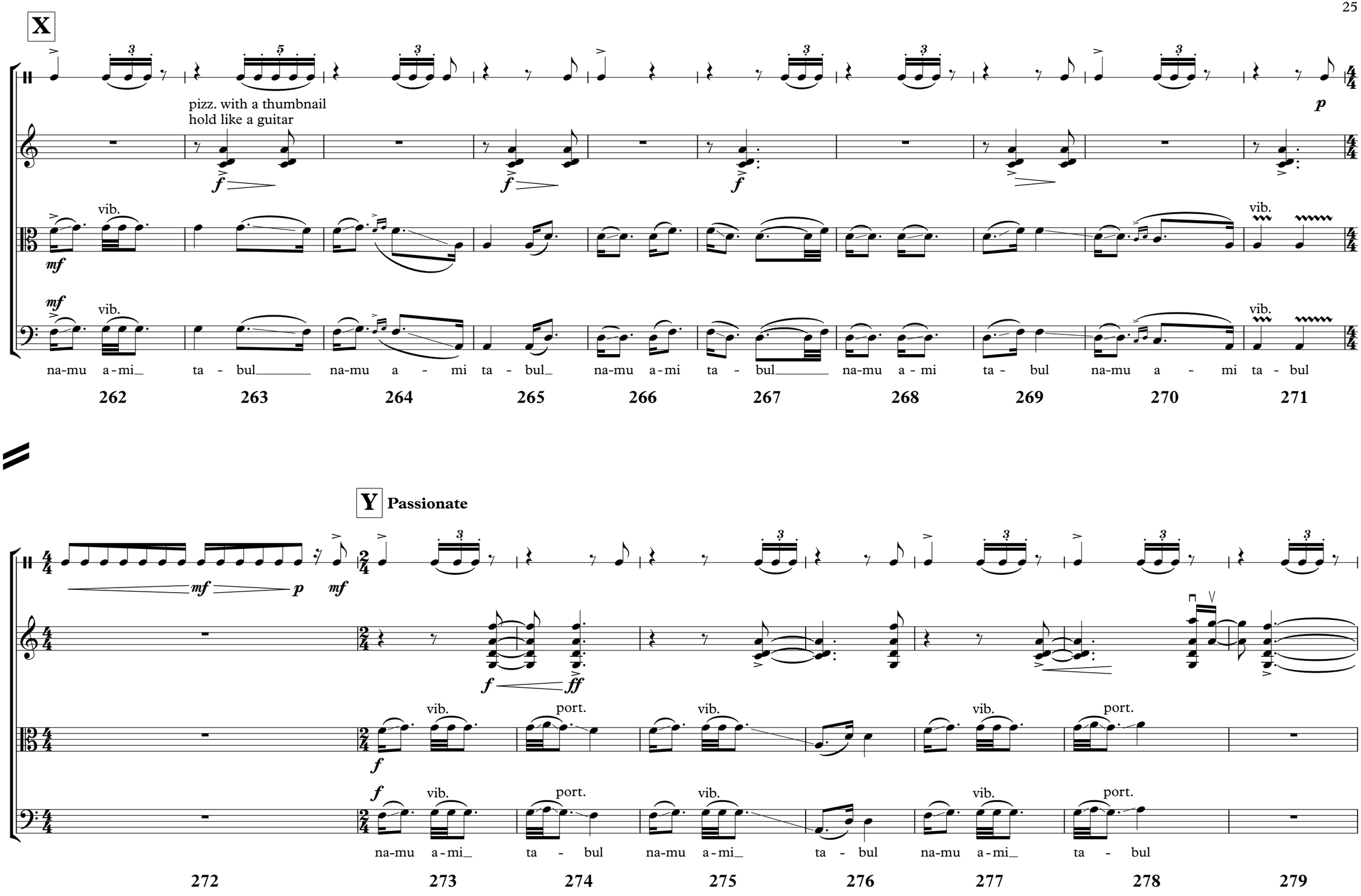
f Sing

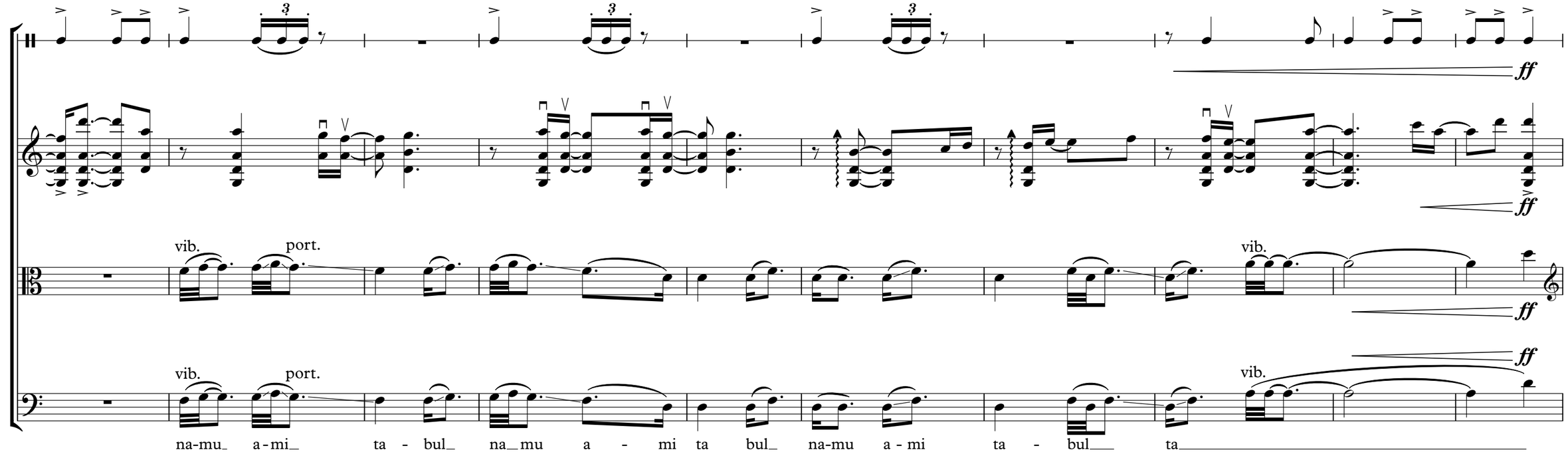
ah

218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238


mf
port.
vib.
mf
f
ah
239
240
241
242
243
244
245
246
247
248
249


W
Sorrowful
mf
vib.
mp
na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi ta - bul na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a-mi ta - bul
250
251
252
253
254
255
256
257
258
259
260
261


X
pizz. with a thumbnail
hold like a guitar
vib.
na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi ta - bul na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi ta - bul
262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271
Y Passionate
port.
na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a-mi ta - bul
272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279



280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289

Z **Joyful**

Sing vib. port.

na-mu a-mi_ ta - bul___ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul

f

Sing vib. port.

na-mu a-mi_ ta - bul___ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul

Play

ff

Sing vib. port.

na-mu a-mi_ ta - bul___ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul

Play vib. port.

ff

vib. port.

na-mu a-mi_ ta - bul___ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul__ na-mu a - mi ta - bul

Play pizz.

f

290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299

AA

vib. vib. vib.

na-mu a-mi_ ta - bul___ na-mu_ a - mi____ ta - bul_ na-mu_ a-mi ta - bul_ na - mu a - mi ta - bul___ na - mu a - mi

vib. vib. vib.

na-mu a-mi_ ta - bul___ na-mu_ a - mi____ ta - bul_ na-mu_ a-mi ta - bul_ na - mu a - mi ta - bul___ na - mu a - mi

like a whale, 1/4 vib. whenever possible
all the shapes, pitches, and rhythms are approximate

vib.

f *p* *f*

vib. vib. vib.

na-mu a-mi_ ta - bul___ na-mu_ a - mi____ ta - bul_ na-mu_ a-mi ta - bul_ na - mu a - mi ta - bul___ na - mu a - mi

con vib.

ff

300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308

BB **Meditative**

Sing

p

ta - bul

To Vln.

ah

p tenderly

ta - bul ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

mp

ma - um ma - um ma - um

sfz

p

ah

pp

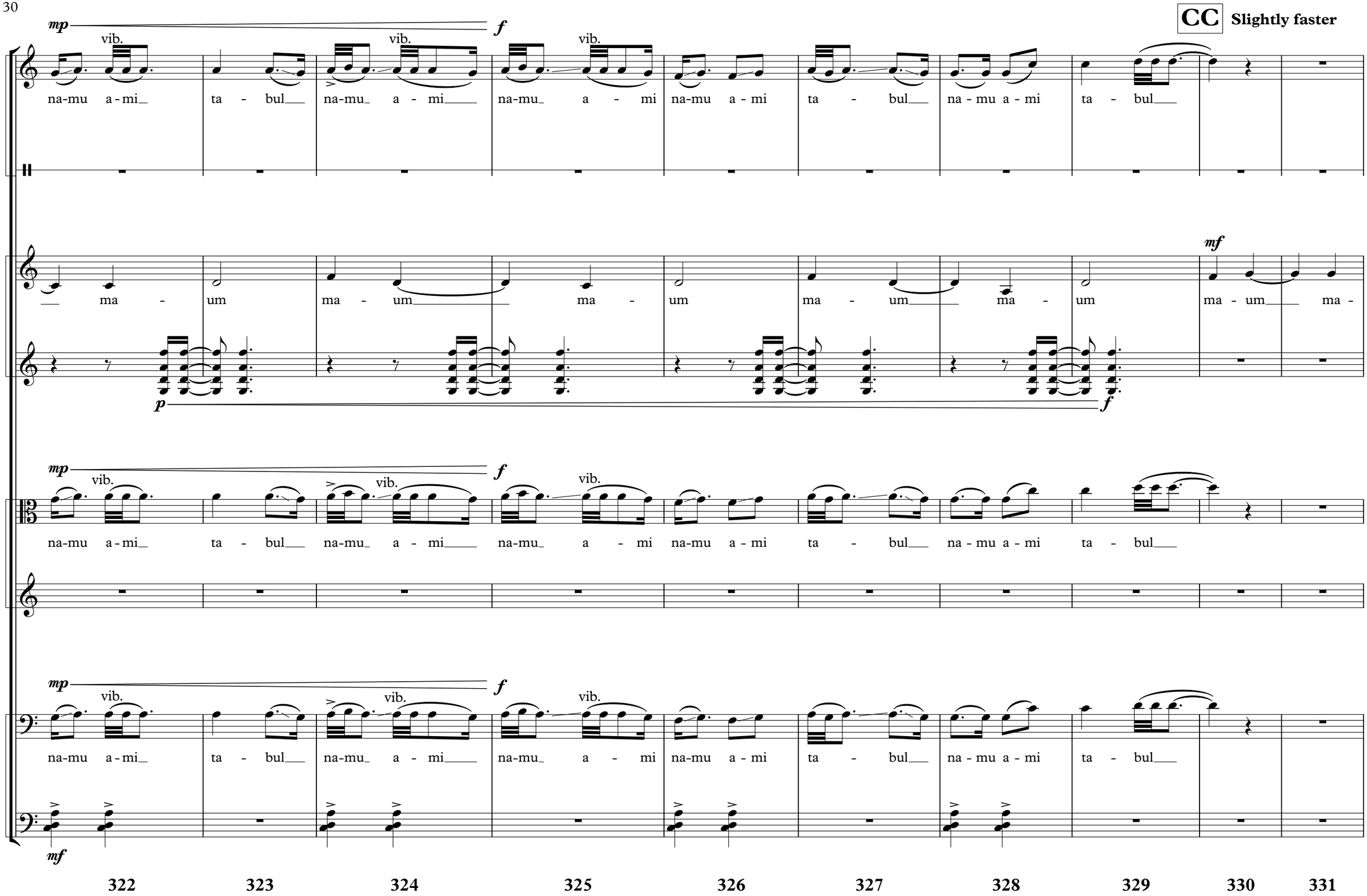
p

ah

ta - bul

sfz

309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321


CC Slightly faster
mp
f
vib.
na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi na-mu a - mi na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a-mi ta - bul
ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma -
mf
p
f
mp
f
vib.
na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi na-mu a - mi na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a-mi ta - bul
mp
f
vib.
na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi na-mu a - mi na-mu a-mi ta - bul na-mu a-mi ta - bul
mf
322
323
324
325
326
327
328
329
330
331

A tempo

p

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma -

um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma -

p vib.

na-mu a - mi ta - bul na - mu a - mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi ta - bul

332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

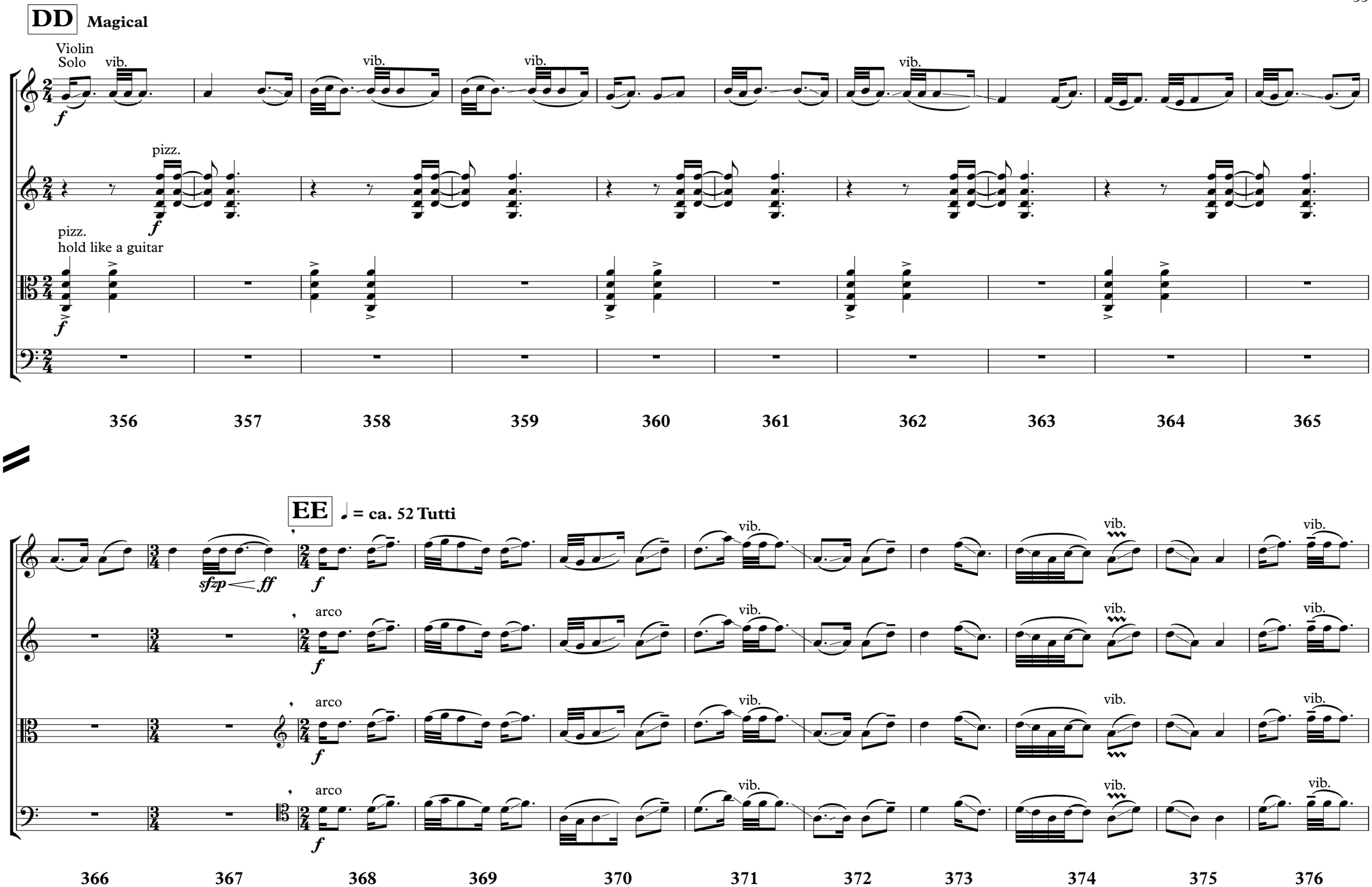
mp

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

vib. vib. *f* *espress.* vib. vib.

na mu a - mi ta - bul na - mu a - mi ta - bul na-mu a - mi ta - bul ah mm

343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355


DD
Magical
Violin
Solo
vib.
pizz.
pizz.
hold like a guitar
356
357
358
359
360
361
362
363
364
365
EE
♩ = ca. 52 Tutti
sfzp
ff
arco
366
367
368
369
370
371
372
373
374
375
376

FF

vib. ord. gliss. espress. sul tasto

377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388

389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399

rit.

GG **A tempo, serene**

p

put your instrument away
as you meditate

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

to moktak

moktak

mf

port.

gliss.

mp

f > *p*

p

put your instrument away
as you meditate

close your eyes

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

port.

gliss.

mp

f > *p*

port.

gliss.

mp

f > *p*

peaceful

p

p

put your instrument away
as you meditate

close your eyes

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411

close your eyes

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

n

mp

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424

ca. 40"

It starts to disappear into nothing

n

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

n

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um

p

put your instrument away
as you meditate

close your eyes

n

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma

n

ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma - um ma

425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436