NIDRA FOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

A THESIS IN
Music Composition

Presented to the faculty of the University
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree:

MASTER OF MUSIC

by
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B.A., Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2007

Kansas City, Missouri
2011

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NIDRA FOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Kelvin King Fung Ng, Candidate for the Master of Music Degree

University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2012

ABSTRACT

I believe in music as spiritual conveyor. My musical goal is to enhance this function. The current thesis is an attempt, of which the principle is to reach the spiritual through the corporeal, to resonate the mutual through the personal.

The yoga practice of sleep-like meditation (yoga nidra), as well as the situation of sleep in general, have been my interest. In yoga nidra, the practitioner's attention is focused successively on each part of their own body in an effort to achieve a state of wakeful sleep. In the current thesis, musical materials are derived from the sounds, gestalts or other mental representations of the bodily self during the situation of sleep, including interoception (sensual information about our physiological condition such as gravity, pain or 'qi'), proprioception (feedback information about our movements), somatic motor control (voluntary muscular movement), habituation (desenisitization of repeating stimuli) and attentional focus, in an attempt to come closer to the personal realm through self-identification via the function of 'mirror neurons'. These elements are however abstracted and deviated in their forms of presentation, and are situated in various contexts in relation to other elements,

serving to gear progressively toward the ritualistic goal of achieving a collective but qualitatively distinctive state of heightened private self-consciousness shared among audience.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the Conservatory of Music, have examined a thesis titled “Nidra for chamber orchestra” presented by Kelvin King Fung Ng, candidate for the Master of Music Degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

James Mobberley, DMA, Committee Chair
Conservatory of Music

Chen Yi, DMA
Conservatory of Music

Zhou Long, DMA
Conservatory of Music

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The current thesis is the cumulation of my study in the University of Missouri-Kansas City. My sincere thanks go to Dr. James Mobberley, for his prudent stimulations through posing acute questions as well as his unyielding support; to Dr. Chen Yi, for her resourcefulness and generosity in her invaluable teaching; to Dr. Zhou Long, for his insightful sharing of his understandings and masteries; to Dr. Paul Rudy, for his influential introduction of new concepts and perspectives. I would also like to thank Dr. Mukai Kohei, Dr. João Pedro Oliveira and Prof. John Psathas, whose remarkable teachings are still vivid and irreplaceable. Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my fellow schoolmates, including, but not limited to, Hu Xiao-ou, Zhou Xu, and Jacob Gotlib, whose support and advice have left a mark on my mind. All of the above have fortified my compositional understandings and are reflected in the current thesis.

Instrumentation

2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B♭
  2˚ also Bass clarinet in B♭
Bassoon
Contrabassoon

2 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in Bb
  with whispa mute and harmon mute
Trombone
Tuba

Percussion 1
  Suspended cymbal (as small as possible), Suspended cymbal (medium), Marimba, Timpani (29"), Tambourine
  mallets: 2 soft yarn mallets, 2 threaded wooden friction rods (to be brushed against the edges of percussion instruments; alternative: two small guiros with fine grooves), 2 wirebrushes
Percussion 2
  Suspended cymbal (as small as possible), Aluminum plate (placed on felt cloth, with half of the plate covered by the cloth, ossia: a metal music stand muted by musician's body leaning on the the edge), Snare drum, Slit drum, Small Tam-tam or Gong, Vibraphone
  mallet: 2 soft yarn mallets, 2 wirebrushes, bow
Percussion 3
  Small thin metal sheet (but thicker and stronger than tinfoil), Suspended cymbal (as small as possible), Suspended Cymbal (medium), Triangle, Medium Tam-tam
  mallets: 2 soft yarn mallets, 2 wirebrushes
Percussion 4
  Bass drum, Large Tam-tam, Suspended Cymbal (medium)
  mallets: 2 soft yarn mallets, 2 hard yarn mallets, 2 bass drum mallets, 2 wirebrushes
Harp
Piano

Violin I (at least 6 players)
Violin II (at least 6 players)
Viola (at least 4 players)
Violoncello (at least 3 players)
Contrabass (at least 4 players)

Duration

12 minutes

Performance Notes

In case the acoustic properties of the performance venue is less than ideal for the sounds to be heard, the orchestra could be electrically amplified.

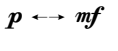
All instruments

On *solo* and *divisi*

- For clarity, part divisions are often written in separate staves.
- Whenever there is only one line of staff, it indicates *tutti*. However, there can also be more than one voice in a single staff,. In such case, divisions are indicated by squared annotations e.g. a 2 or 2˚,4˚.
- *altri* indicates the part to be played by remaining musicians, if there are any.

Volume indications

Dynamic markings in quotations marks (at toneless passages) indicate the intensity of the performance manner and not the resulting absolute volume of the action.



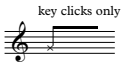
Dynamic markings joined by arrows. Freely alternate within the indicated range of dynamics, the way dynamic changes depends on individual context.

Articulations

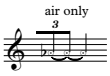
a swell in dynamics within the durational value

Performance Notes (continued)

Winds

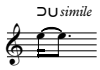


key clicks only, indicates quick finger depression on keys in order to get the targeted fingerings equivalent to the pitch notated. The number of keys depressed to get the resultant fingering is left to the performer, depending on context and convenience. The resultant sound would be key noise with pitch coloration.
For trombone: slide click indicates a gentle collision of the tuning slide with the body of the instrument.



air only, to be performed tonelessly, the notated pitch indicates the fingering as if in normal playing.
For flutes: Blow directly into the tube with narrow mouth opening.
For trumpets: Possibly without mouthpiece, but in any case without direct lip contact with the instrument. Keep the lips at a certain distance.
When performing without mouthpiece, the pitch colorations will not be identical with the pitch notated.

For flute



⊃ indicates embouchure hole turned in, lower pitch results

∪ indicates normal playing angle

aeolian — blow directly into the tube with narrow mouth opening, resulting in airy sounds with pitched coloration.

For trumpet

clack, performed by first sticking the tongue on the upper palate, then forcefully cause the tongue to fall down by sucking. With the embouchure in the instrument mouthpiece, the resultant is a clear, dry, staccato sound.

strike the mouthpiece with the flat of the hand.

For tuba

clack, performed by first sticking the tongue on the upper palate, then forcefully cause the tongue to fall down by sucking. With the embouchure in the instrument mouthpiece, the resultant is a clear, dry, staccato sound.

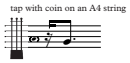
Percussion

drawing circular motions. A note with bracket implies one cycle within the bracket. A note or tied notes without bracket implies continuous circular motions.

Harp

p.d.l.t. — pres de la table (close to the soundboard).

Piano



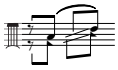
"String clef", indicates the relative physical position of the total effective length of the piano strings. Since it is relative, the distance indicated by the five-line staff for the lower piano strings would be broader than that for the shorter higher strings. Tap with a coin (preferrably quarter US coin, 20c Euro coin etc.) on one of the multiple strings of each pitch indicated by the small note in parentheses.

Note with a cross above, indicates a muted note. Before playing, press with finger on any position along the effective length of piano strings that would give a dry, muted resultant sound.

Strings

Behind bridge clef (for violins and violas), does not indicate pitches, but the vertical positions on the instrument, between the bridge and the tailpiece, where the actions are to be performed, including the bow and finger placement.

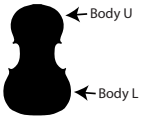
Behind bridge clef (for violoncello and contrabass).



Round noteheads, indicate the position of the bow (on string in this case).
Right triangle noteheads, indicate the position of the finger (pressed on string)

Neutral clef, indicates some actions are to be performed.
This includes:

arco: bowing
Body U: on upper body of the instrument
Body L: on lower body of the instrument
Brid.: on the side of bridge. Never bow on the slit, since real whistling tones can occur. The result should be a clear toneless bowing sound.



N.B. on bowing on instrument body: dynamic changes are achieved either by bowing pressure or bowing speed. Change in brightness along with change in volume should be the result.

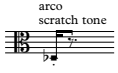
legno — col legno tratto

legno batt. — col legno battuto

arco batt. — with the hair of the bow vertically strike on the string, without any horizontal bowing.

flaut. — flautato, means minimal bow pressure, the intrinsic weight of the bow must eventually be counter-balanced. Extremely airy, impure, almost veiled tones should be the result.

tension screw batt. — tap with the flat end of the tension screw (at the end of the frog of the bow) on the string to produce a soft metallic ticking sound.



scratch tone with staccato, bowing with very high pressure, but drawing very little bow.

SCORE IN C

NIDRA

for chamber orchestra

Kelvin King Fung Ng

Adagio ♩ = 40

2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B♭
Bassoon
Contrabassoon
2 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in B♭
Trombone
Tuba
Percussion 1
Percussion 2
Percussion 3
Percussion 4
Harp
Piano
Violin I (>6)
Violin II (>6)
Viola (>4)
Violoncello (>3)
Contrabass (>4)

legno batt.
body L.
arco
legno flaut.
brid.
arco flaut.
divisi a 2
emphasize upward gliss. sound

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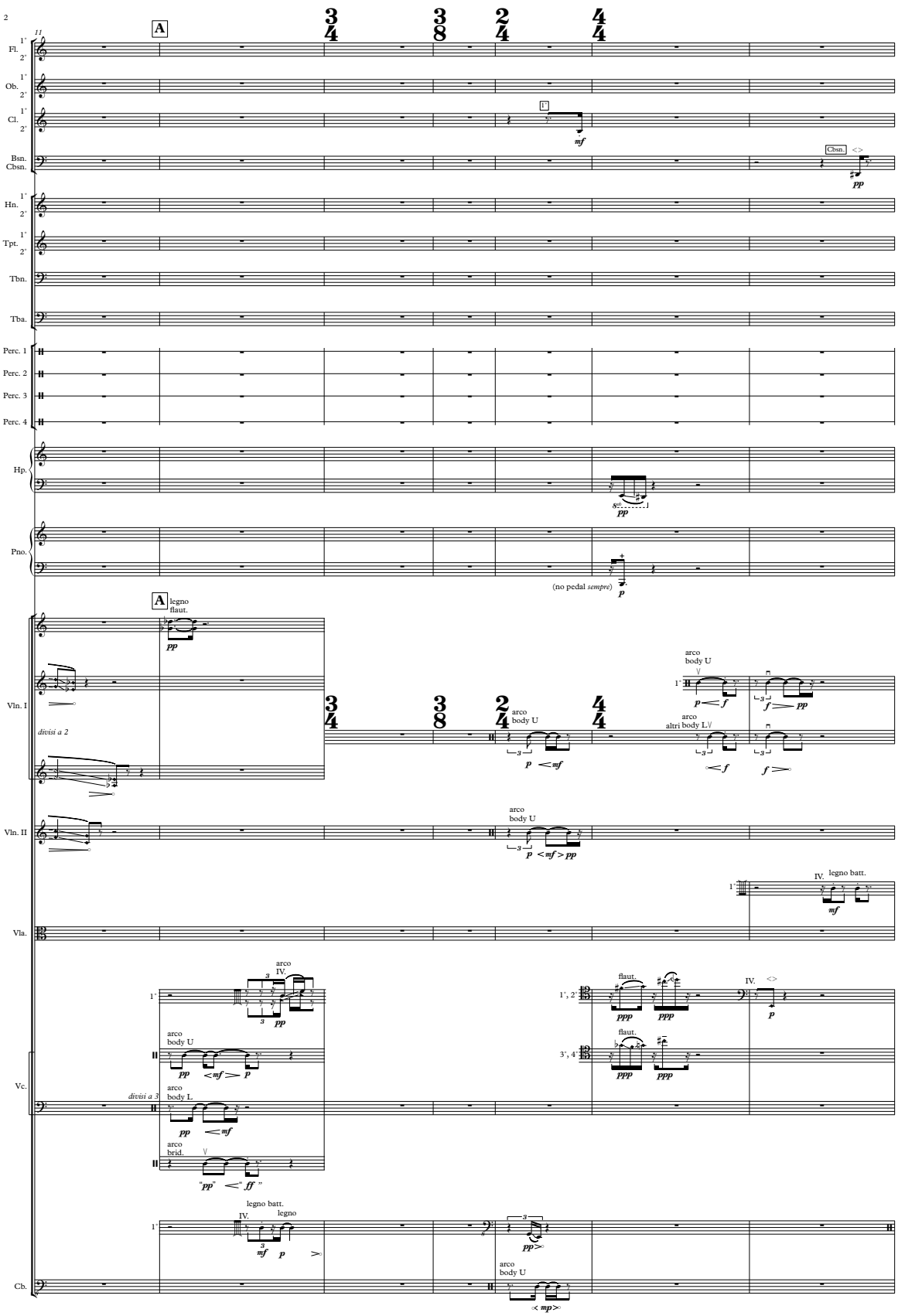
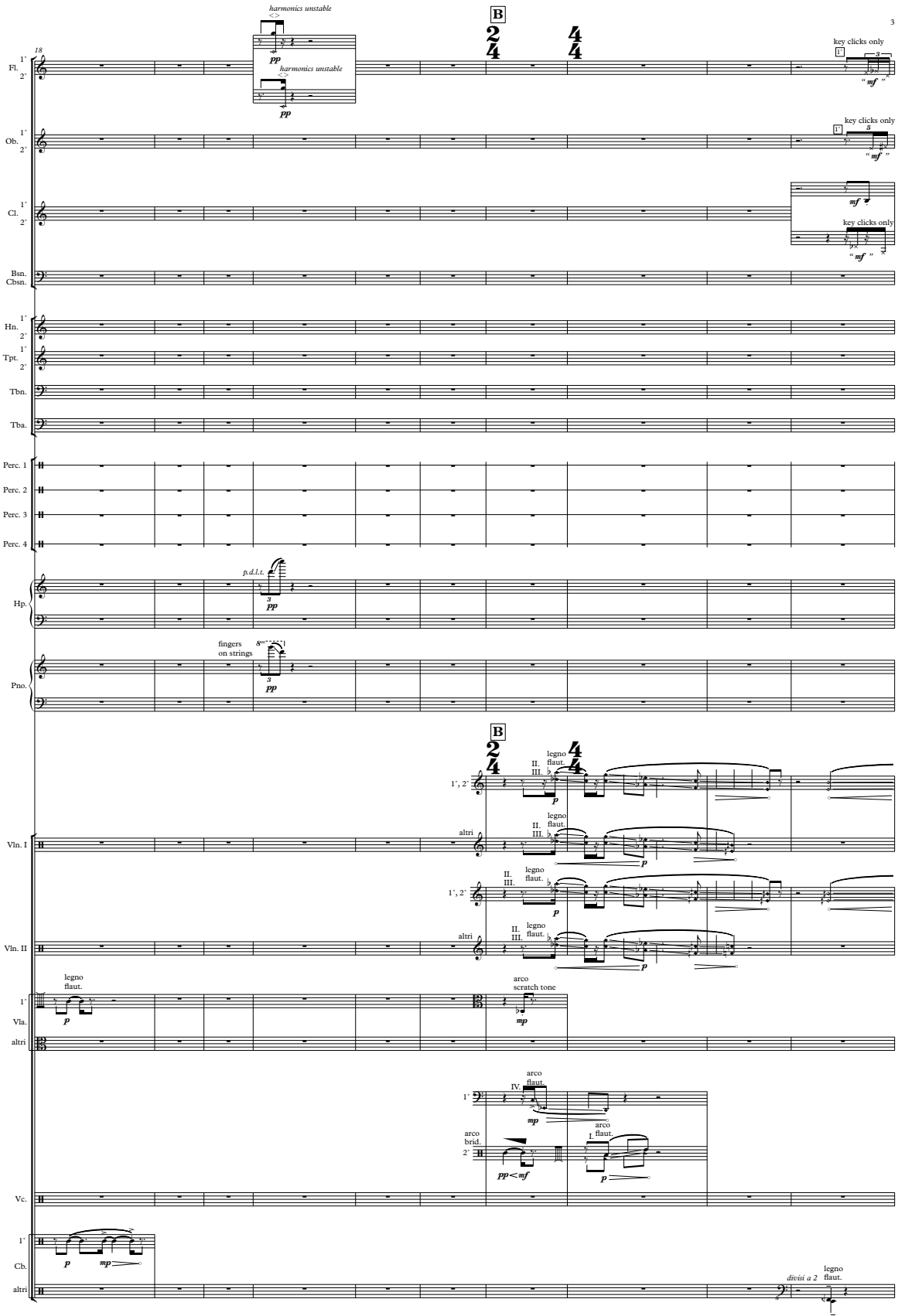
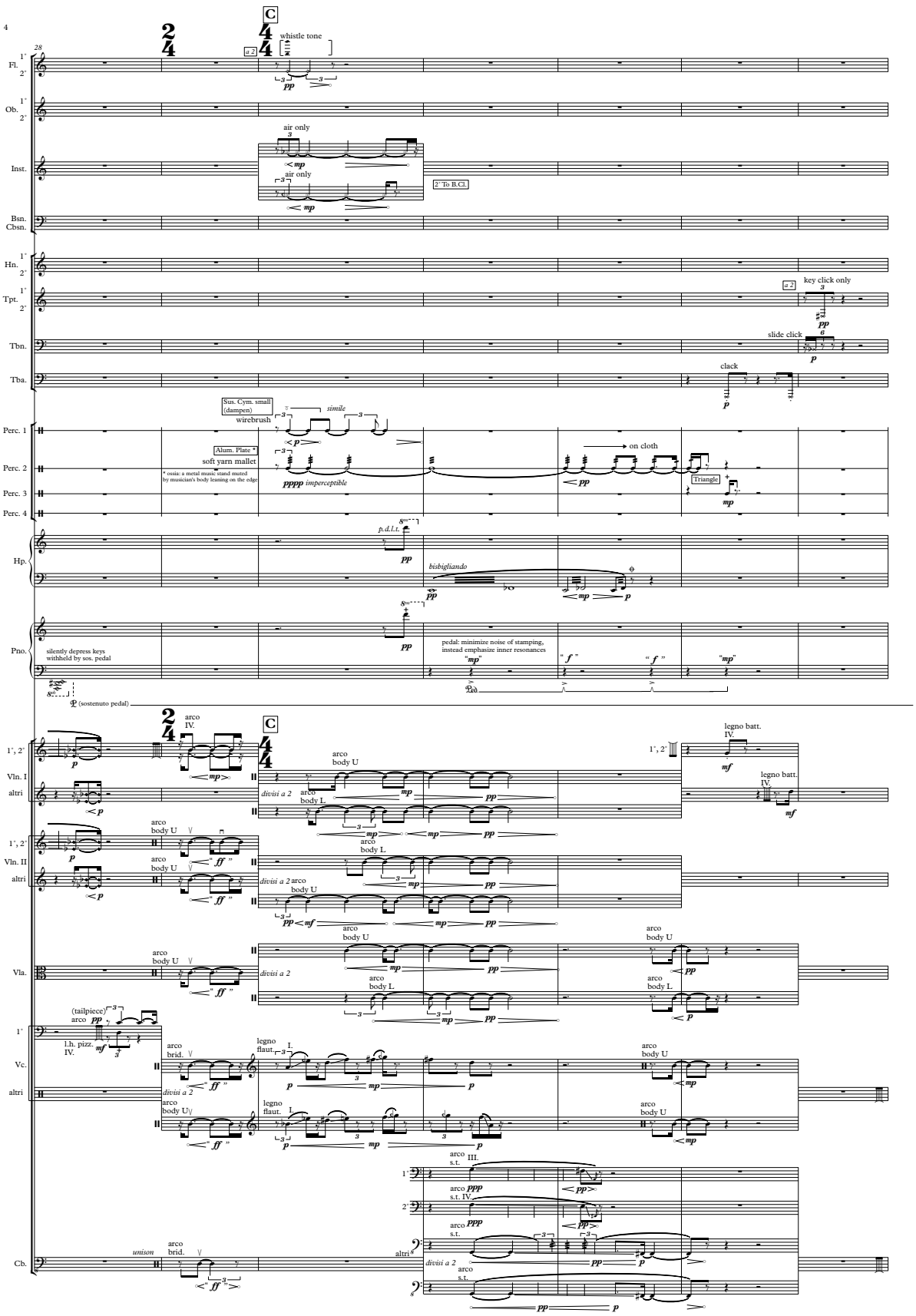
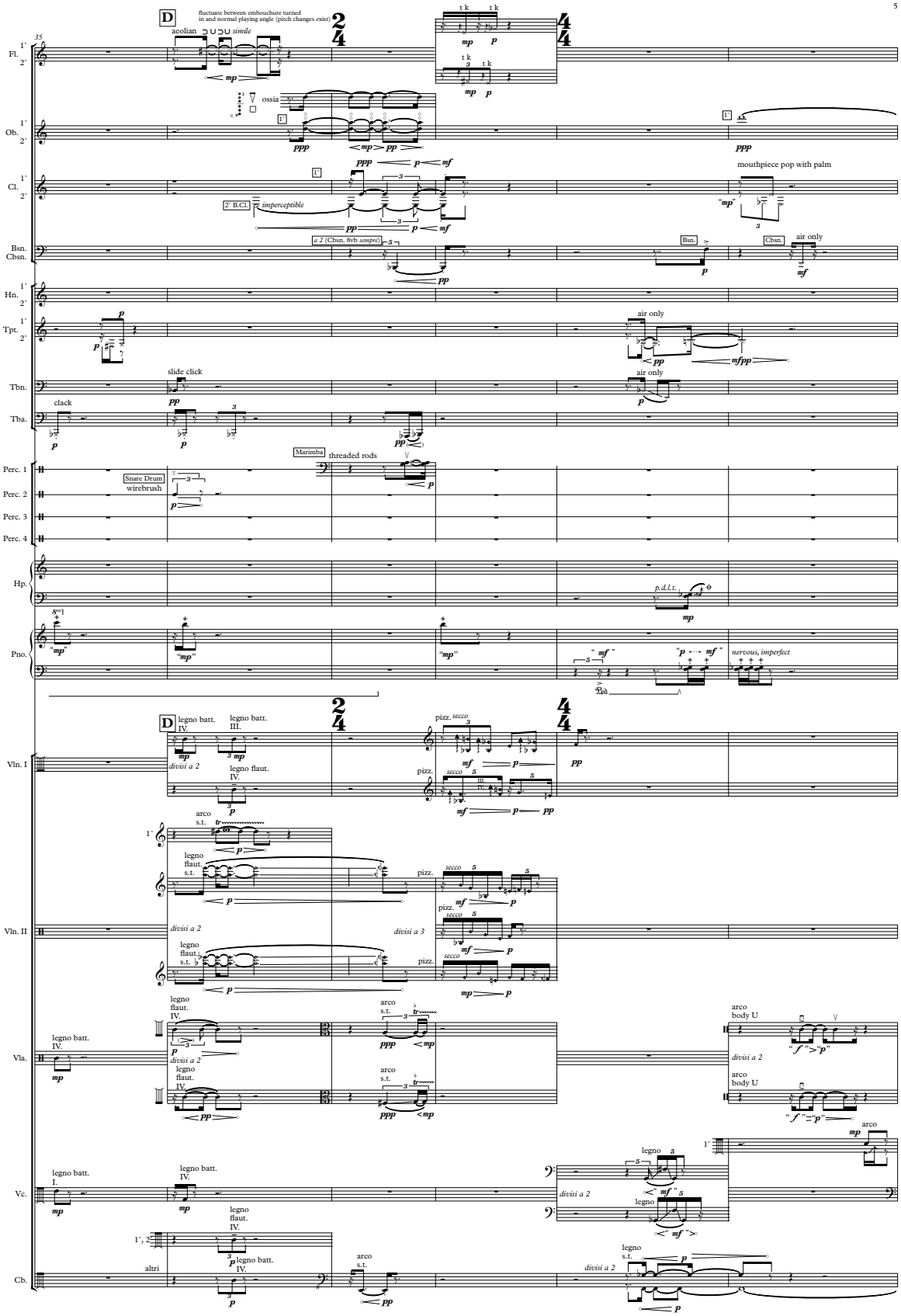
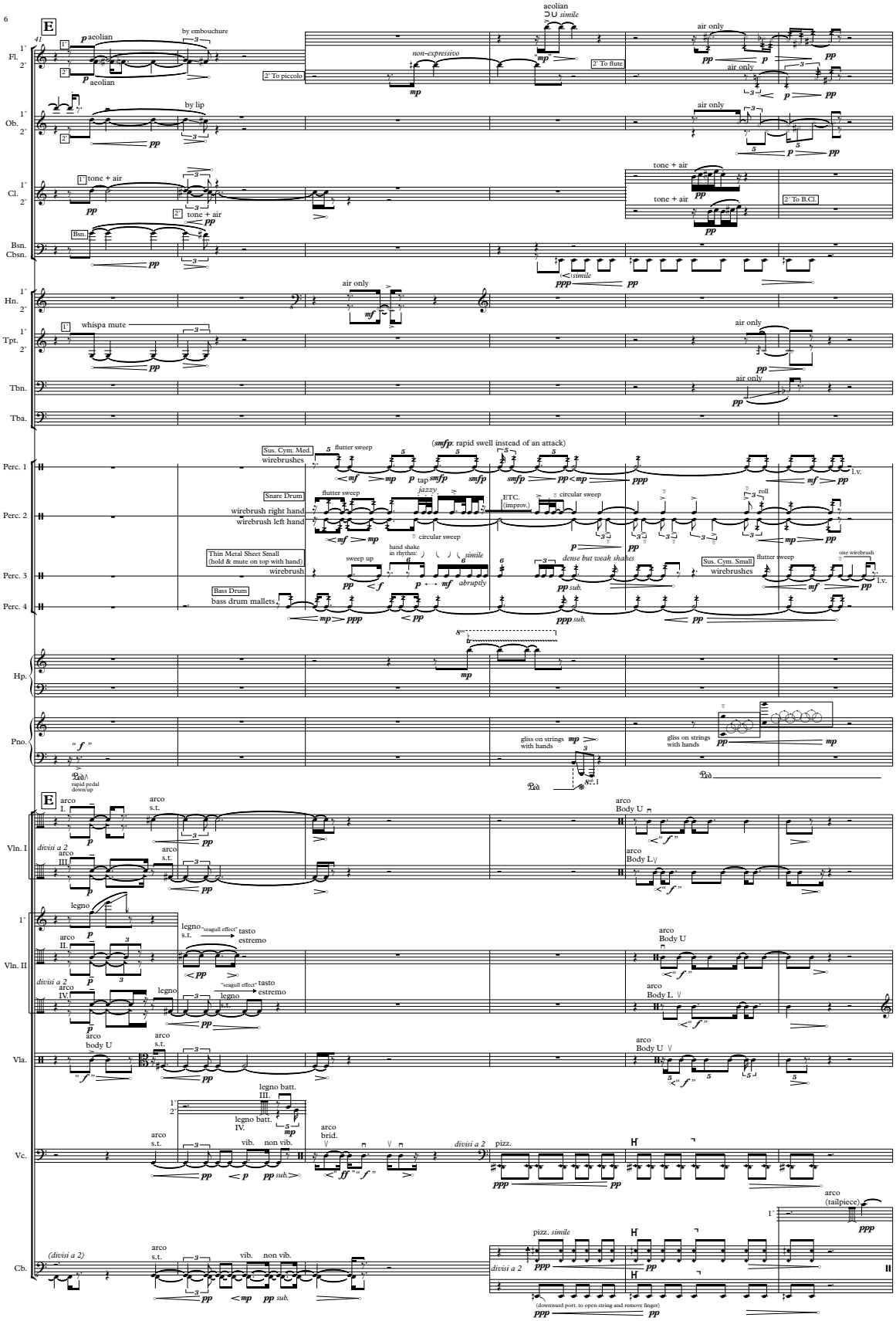
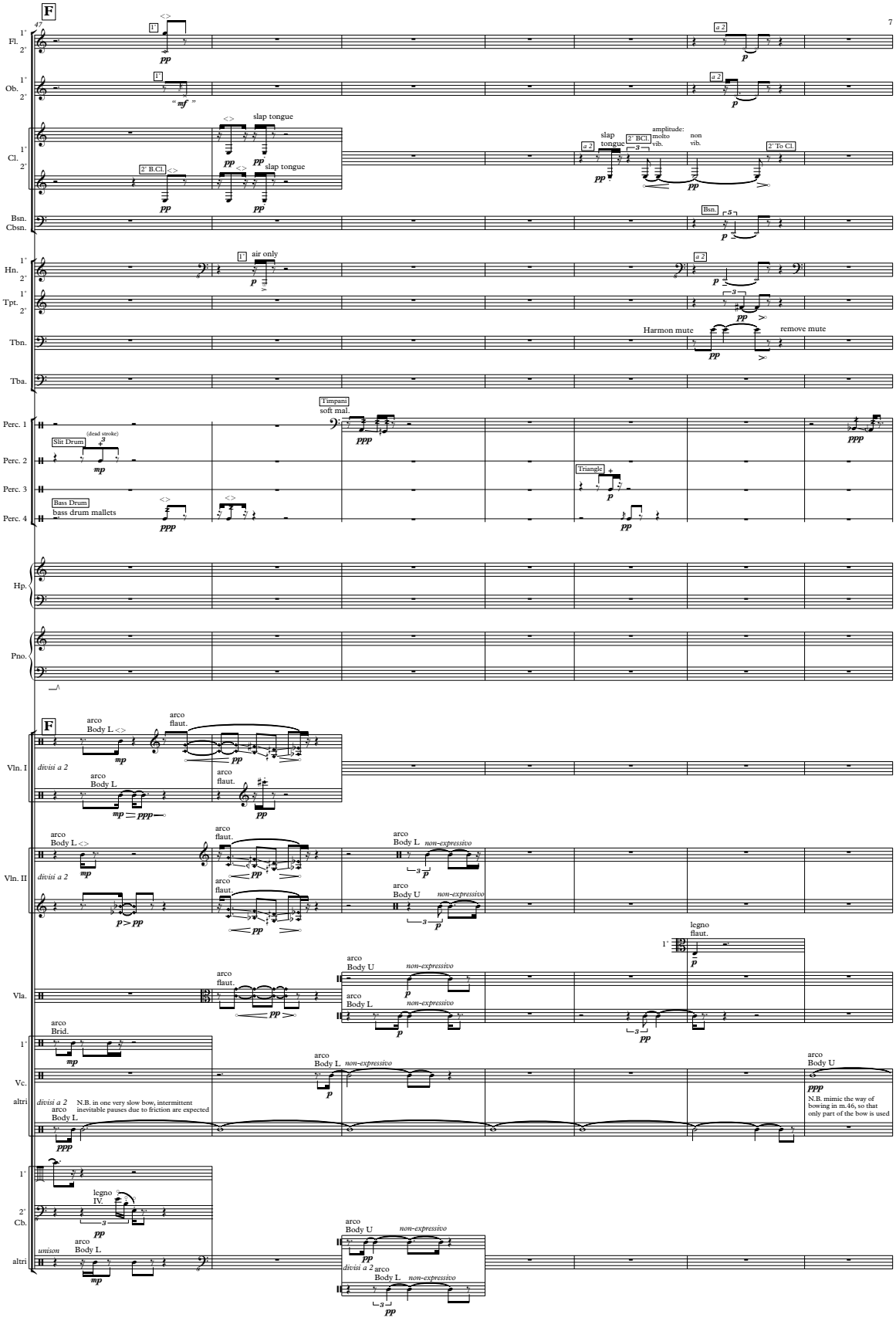

2
11
A
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Cbsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
(no pedal sempre)
Vln. I
divisi a 2
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
divisi a 3
Cb.
legno
flaut.
arco
body U
arco
altri body L
arco
IV.
arco
body L
arco
brid.
flaut.
legno batt.
legno

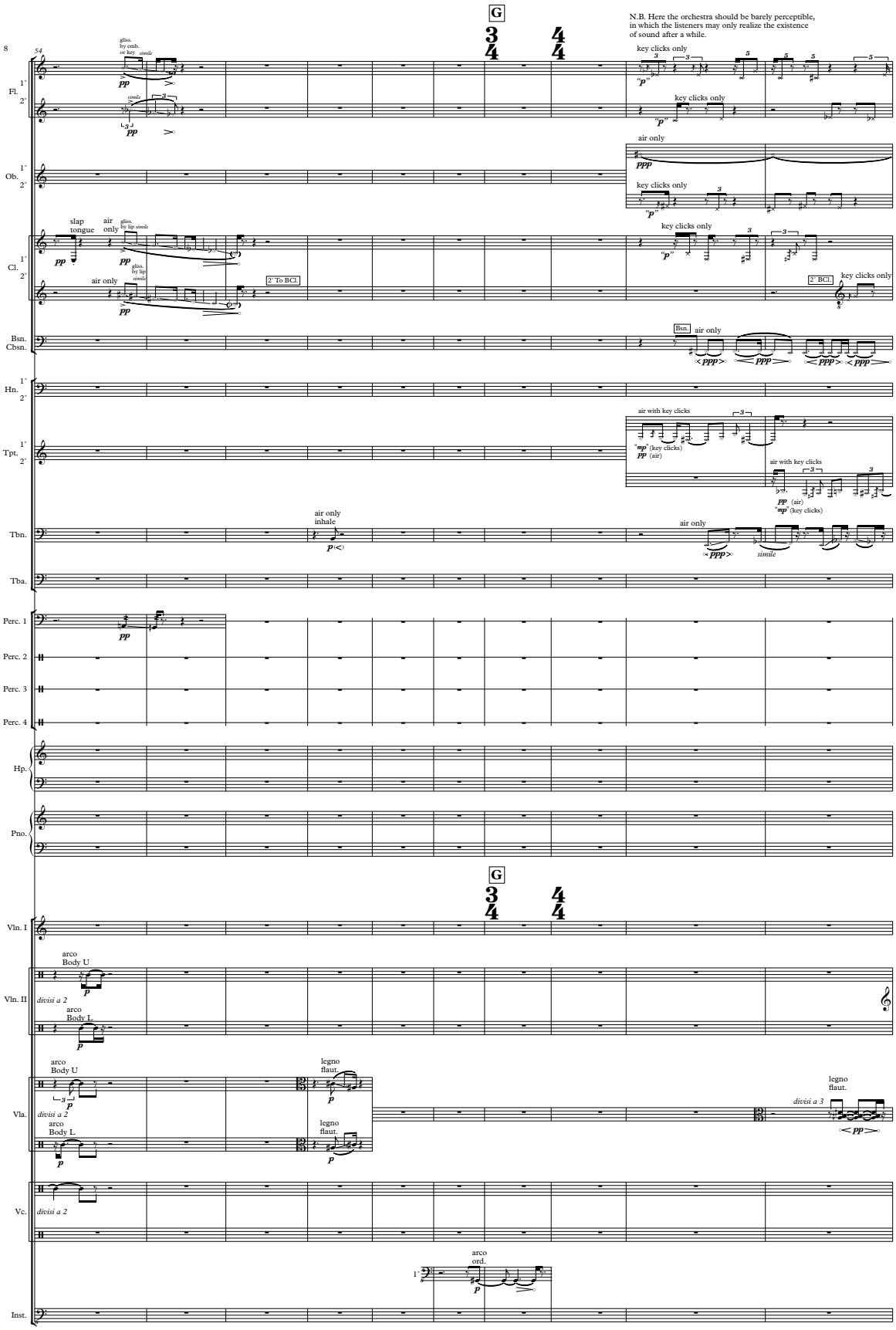

3
18
B
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Cbsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
altri
harmonics unstable
key clicks only
p.d.l.t.
fingers on strings
legno flaut.
arco scratch tone
arco flaut.
arco brid.
divisi a 2

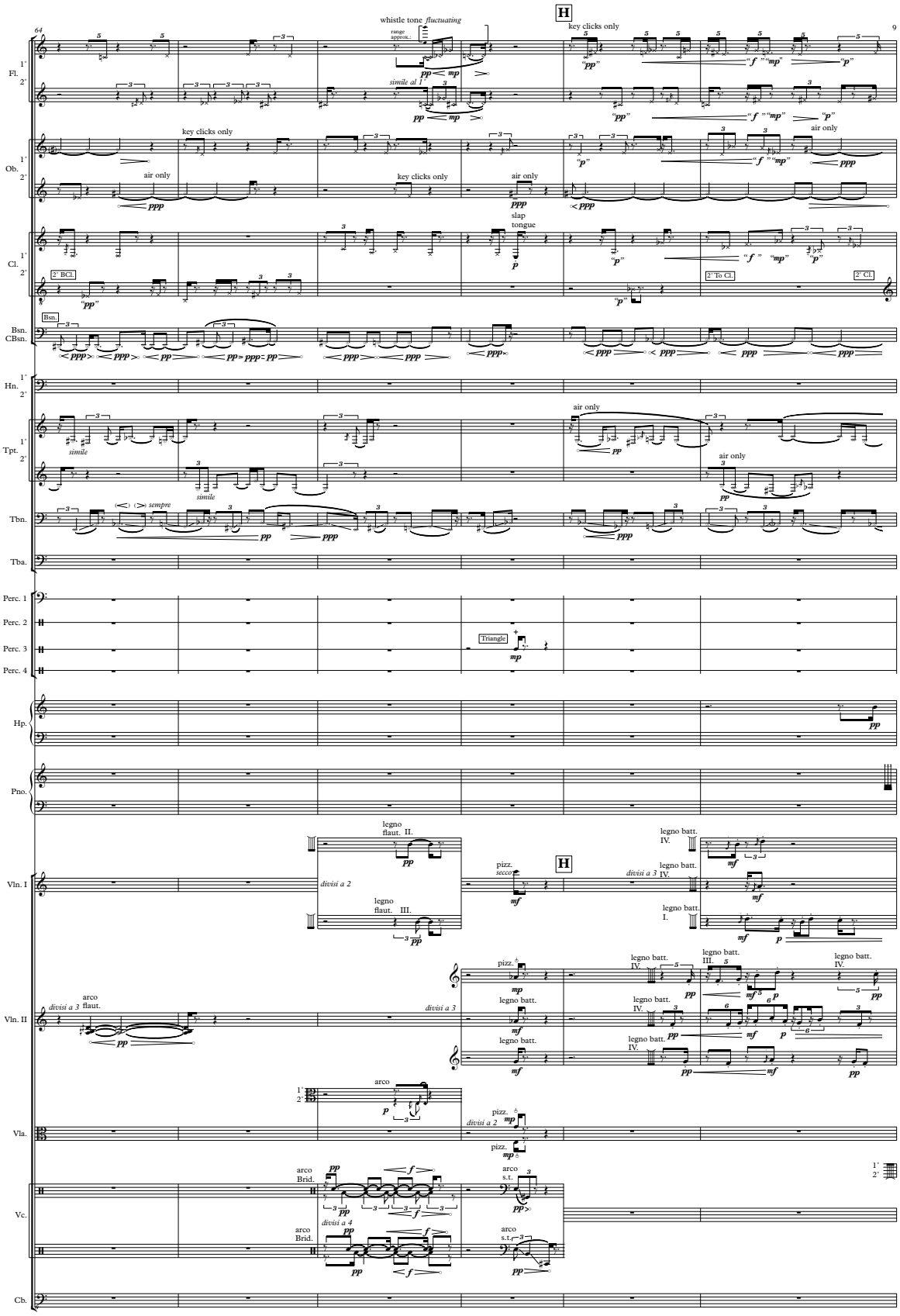

4
28
Fl.
Ob.
Inst.
Bsn.
Cbsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
altri
a 2
whistle tone
air only
2˚ To B.Cl.
key click only
slide click
clack
Sus. Cym. small (dampen)
wirebrush
simile
Alum. Plate *
soft yarn mallet
* ossia: a metal music stand muted by musician's body leaning on the edge
pppp imperceptible
on cloth
Triangle
p.d.l.t.
bisbigliando
silently depress keys withheld by sos. pedal
pedal: minimize noise of stamping, instead emphasize inner resonances
(sostenuto pedal)
arco
IV.
body U
body L
divisi a 2
legno batt.
(tailpiece)
l.h. pizz.
arco brid.
legno flaut.
arco s.t.
III.
IV.
unison


D
fluctuate between embouchure turned in and normal playing angle (pitch changes exist)
aeolian
simile
ossia
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Cbsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
2˙ B.Cl.
imperceptible
a 2 (Cbsn. 8vb sempre)
mouthpiece pop with palm
air only
slide click
clack
Marimba
threaded rods
Snare Drum
wirebrush
p.d.l.t.
nervous, imperfect
legno batt.
legno flaut.
pizz.
secco
arco
s.t.
divisi a 2
divisi a 3
arco
body U
altri

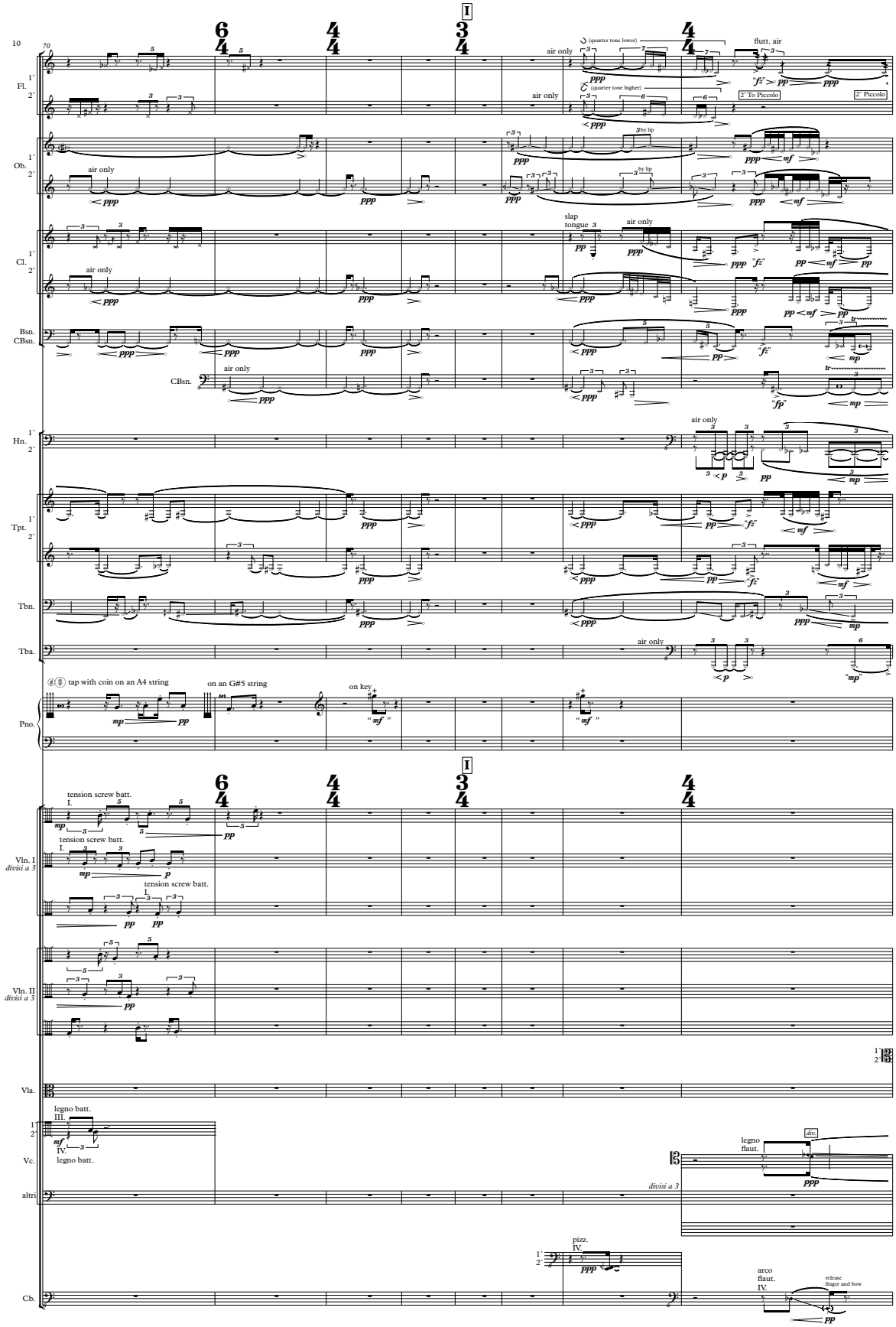

E
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Cbsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
aeolian
by embouchure
by lip
tone + air
whispa mute
air only
simile
non-expressivo
2° To piccolo
2° To flute
2° To B.Cl.
Sus. Cym. Med.
wirebrushes
flutter sweep
(smfp: rapid swell instead of an attack)
Snare Drum
wirebrush right hand
wirebrush left hand
jazzy
circular sweep
ETC. (improv.)
roll
Thin Metal Sheet Small (hold & mute on top with hand)
wirebrush
sweep up
hand shake in rhythm:
abruptly
dense but weak shakes
Sus. Cym. Small
one wirebrush
Bass Drum
bass drum mallets
gliss on strings with hands
rapid pedal down/up
arco
s.t.
Body U
Body L
divisi a 2
legno
"seagull effect"
tasto
estremo
body U
legno batt.
vib.
non vib.
arco brid.
pizz.
pizz. simile
(tailpiece)
(downward port. to open string and remove finger)

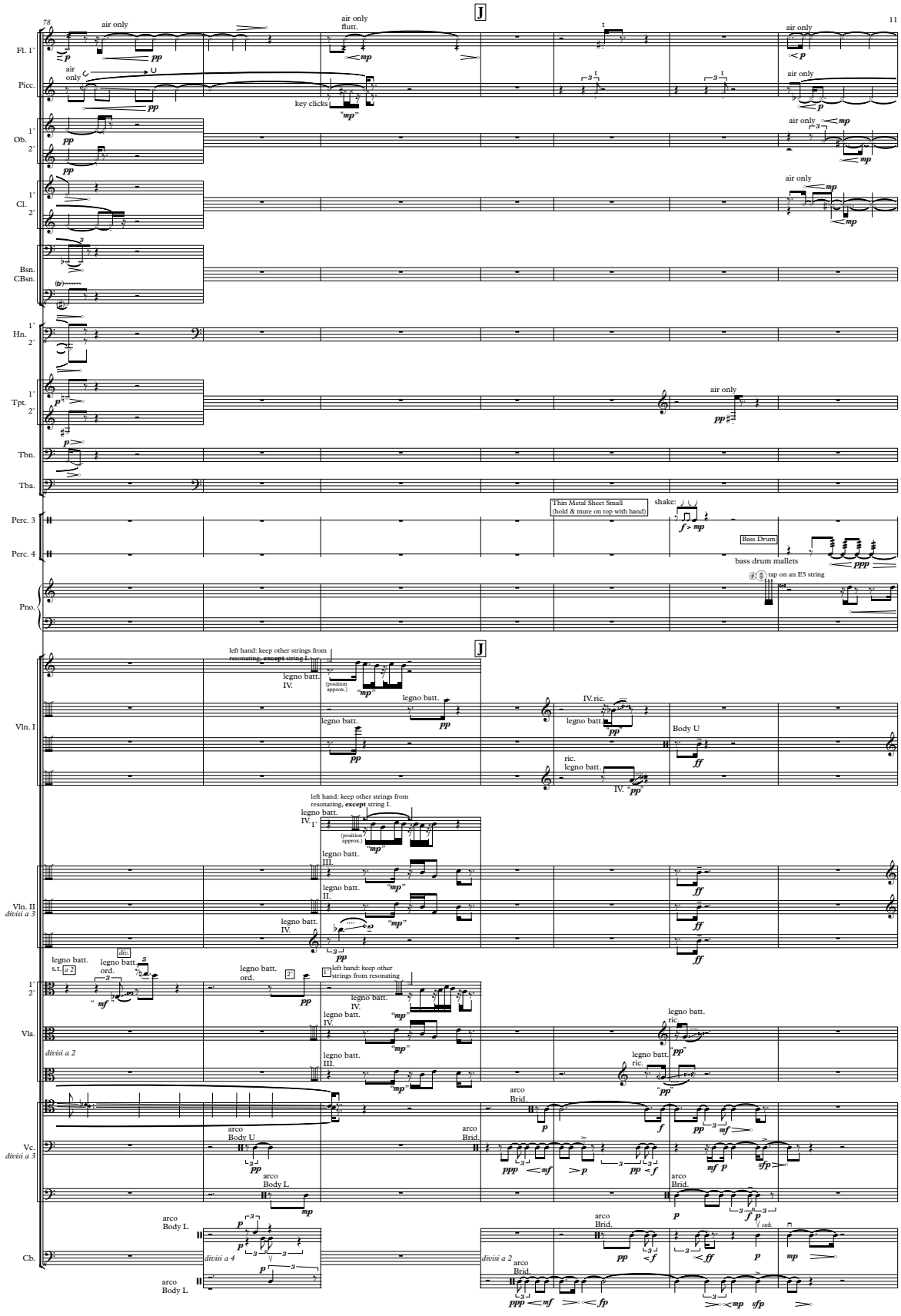

F
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Cbsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
altri
Cb.
altri
slap tongue
2° B.Cl.
amplitude: molto vib.
non vib.
2° To Cl.
Bsn.
air only
Harmon mute
remove mute
Timpani
soft mal.
Slit Drum
(dead stroke)
Triangle
Bass Drum
bass drum mallets
arco
Body L
flaut.
divisi a 2
non-expressivo
Body U
legno
flaut.
Brid.
N.B. in one very slow bow, intermittent inevitable pauses due to friction are expected
N.B. mimic the way of bowing in m.46, so that only part of the bow is used
legno
IV.
unison

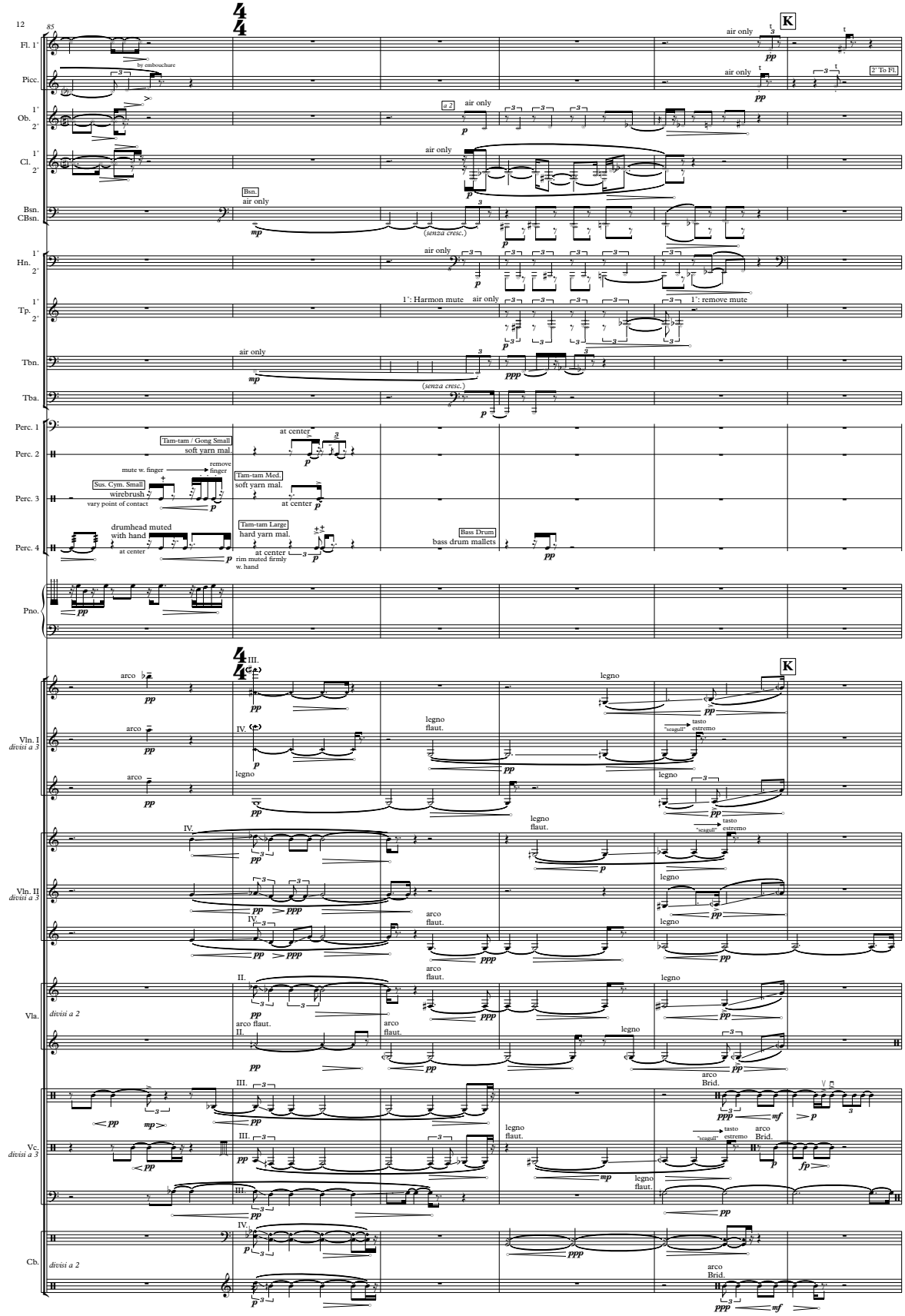

G
N.B. Here the orchestra should be barely perceptible, in which the listeners may only realize the existence of sound after a while.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Cbsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Inst.
key clicks only
air only
slap tongue
air only
2° To BCl.
2° BCl.
Bsn.
air with key clicks
air only inhale
arco Body U
arco Body L
divisi a 2
legno flaut.
arco ord.

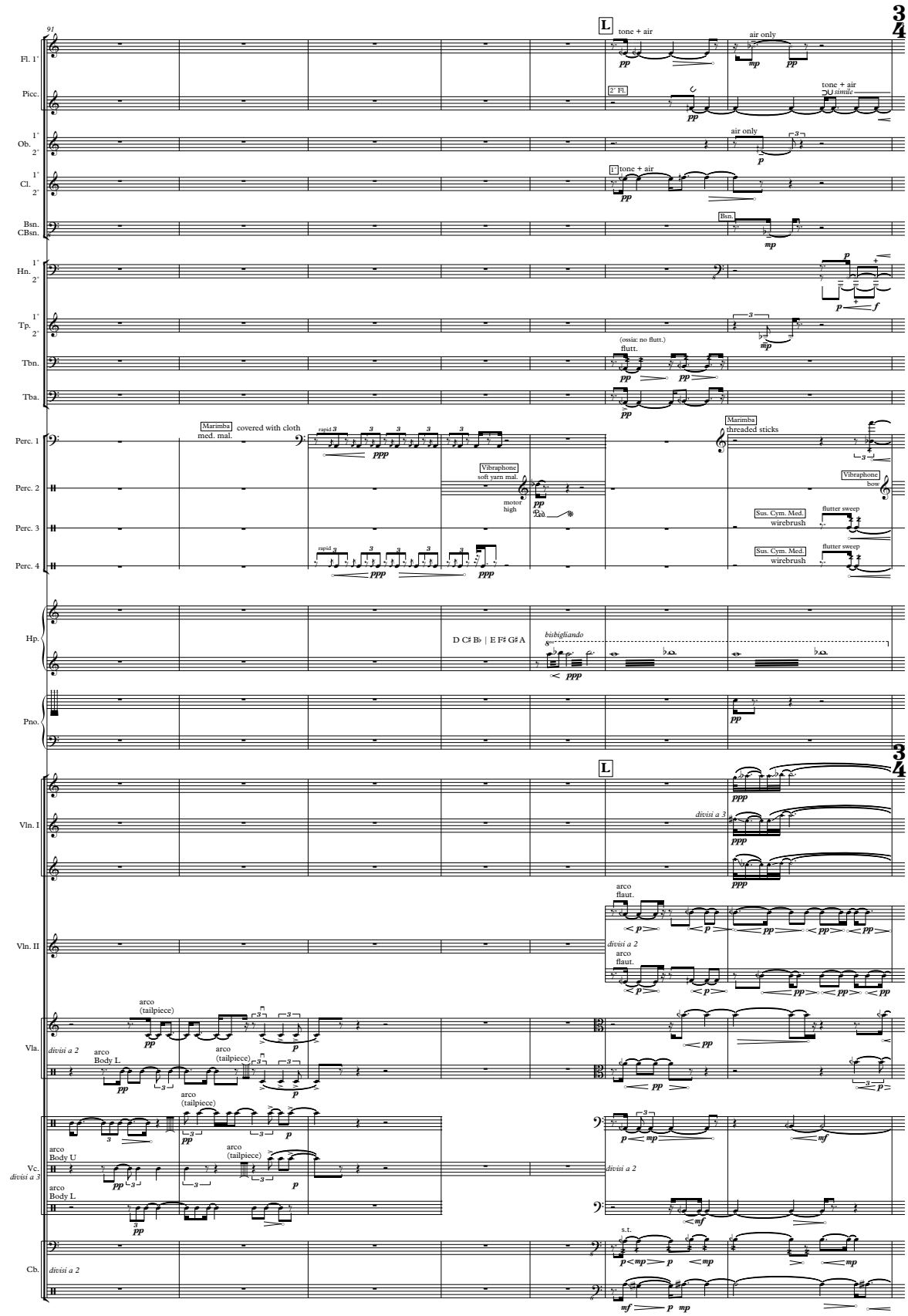


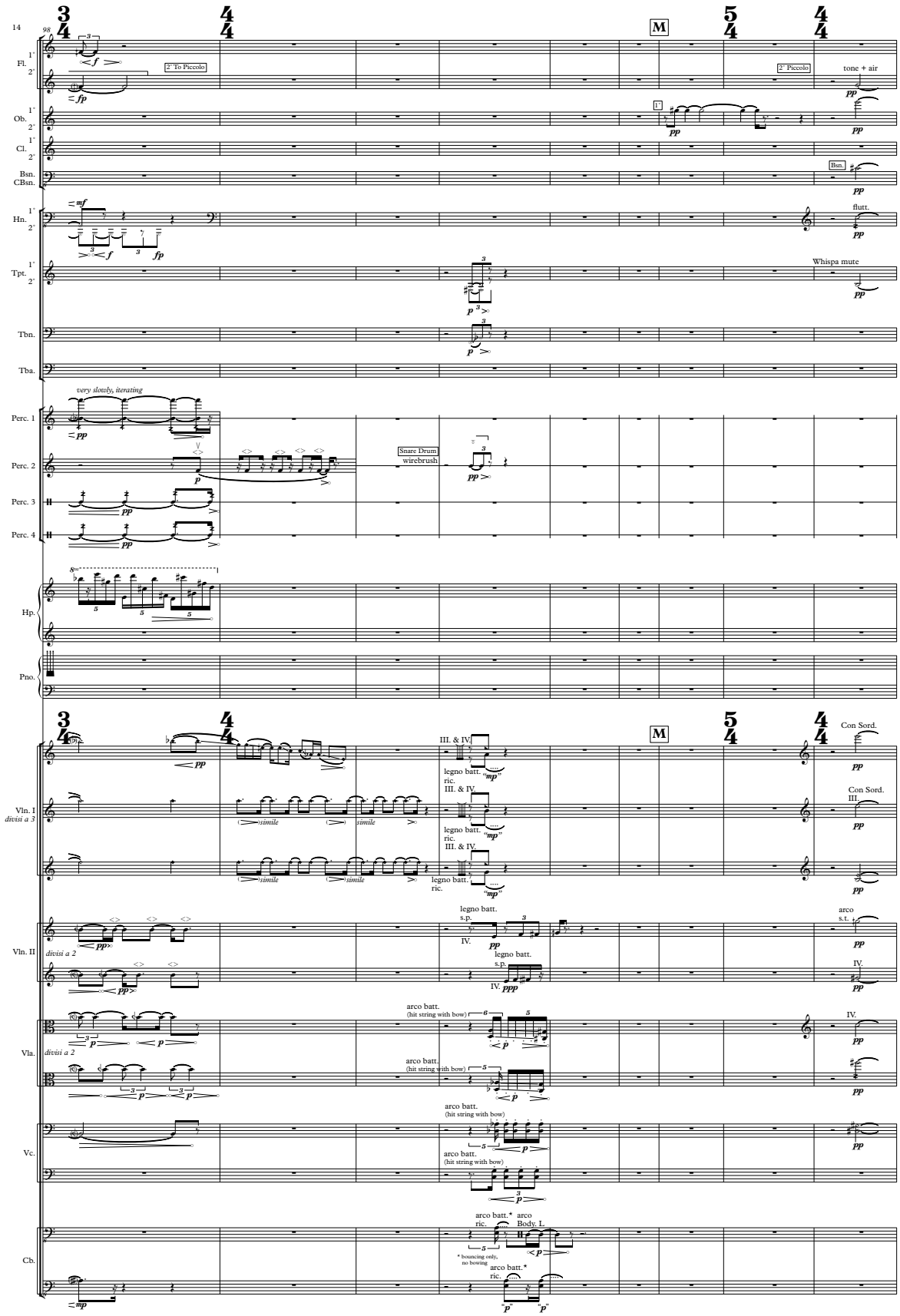
64
9
H
whistle tone fluctuating
range approx.:
key clicks only
simile al 1°
Fl.
Ob.
air only
Cl.
slap tongue
2° BCl.
2° To Cl.
2° Cl.
Bsn.
CBsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
simile
sempre
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Triangle
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
legno flaut. II.
legno flaut. III.
divisi a 2
pizz. secco
legno batt. IV.
legno batt. I.
divisi a 3
Vln. II
arco flaut.
arco
Vla.
pizz.
Vc.
arco Brid.
arco s.t.
divisi a 4
Cb.

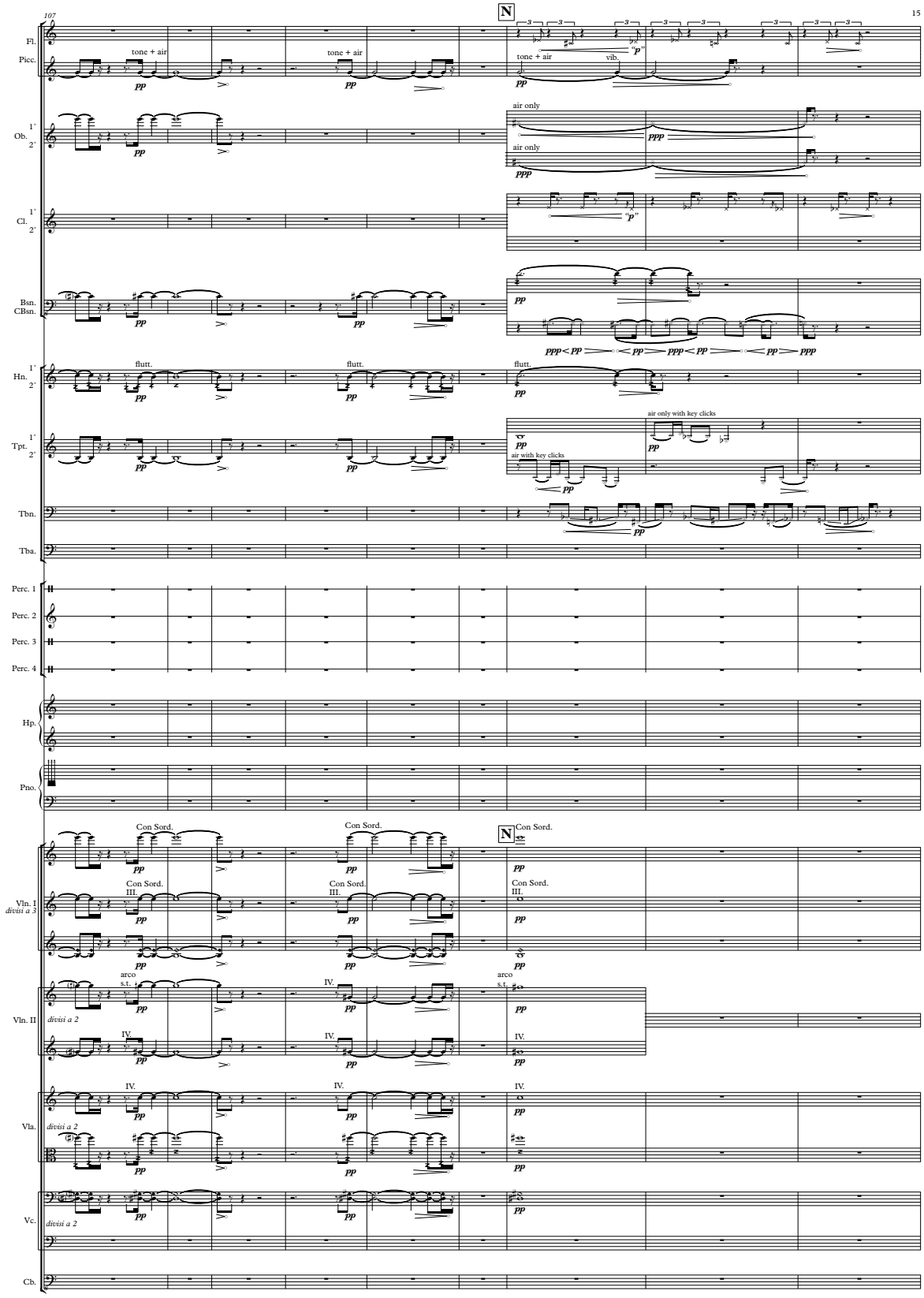

I
10
70
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
CBsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Pno.
Vln. I
divisi a 3
Vln. II
divisi a 3
Vla.
Vc.
altri
Cb.
air only
(quarter tone lower)
(quarter tone higher)
flutt. air
2° To Piccolo
2° Piccolo
by lip
slap tongue
tap with coin on an A4 string
on an G#5 string
on key
tension screw batt.
legno batt.
legno flaut.
div.
pizz.
arco flaut.
release finger and bow

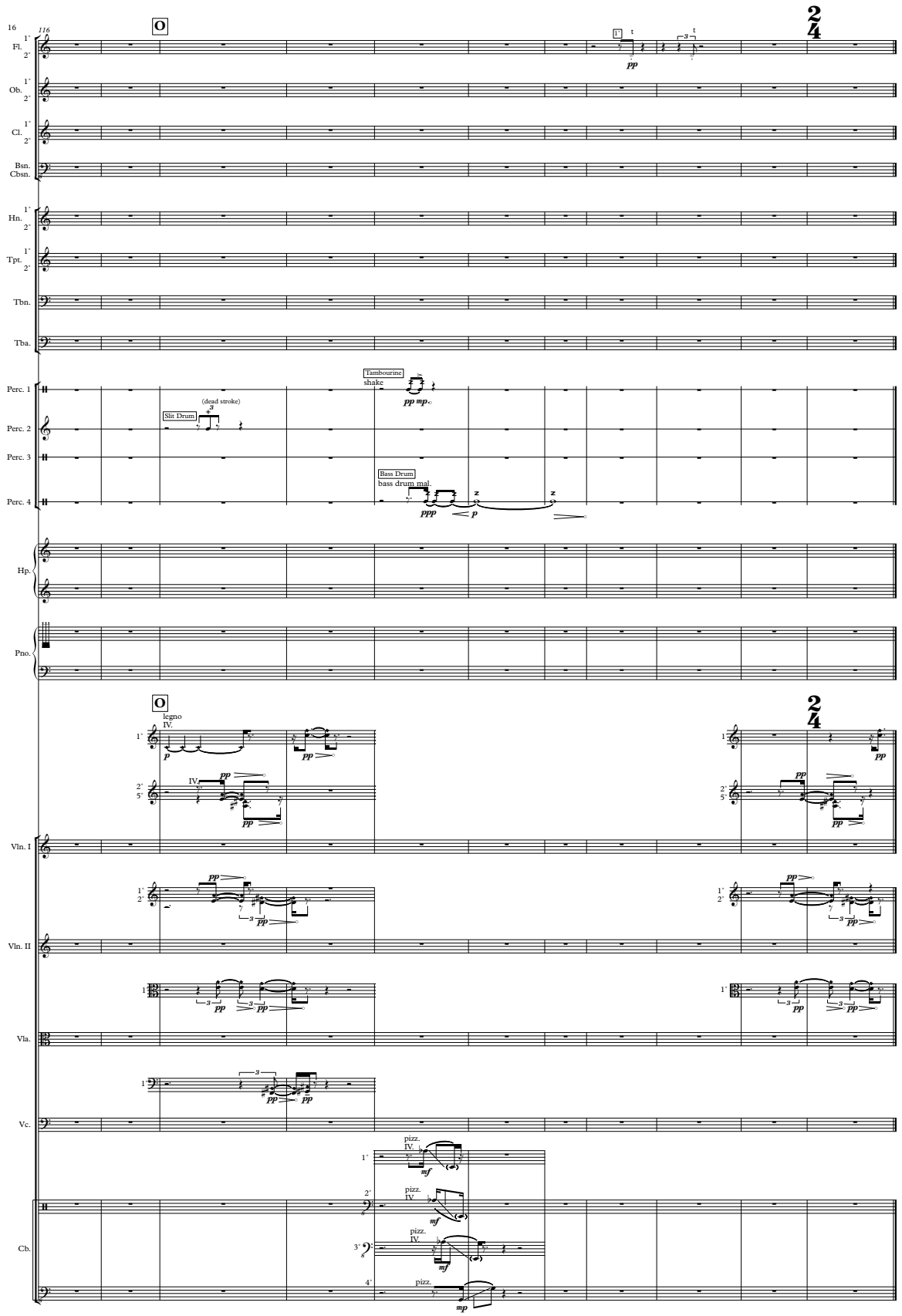

78
11
J
Fl. 1
Picc.
Ob. 1 2
Cl. 1 2
Bsn.
CBsn.
Hn. 1 2
Tpt. 1 2
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
divisi a 3
Vla.
divisi a 2
Vc.
divisi a 3
Cb.
divisi a 4
divisi a 2
air only
air only flutt.
key clicks
Thin Metal Sheet Small (hold & mute on top with hand)
shake:
Bass Drum
bass drum mallets
tap on an E5 string
left hand: keep other strings from resonating, except string I.
legno batt.
(position approx.)
IV.ric.
Body U
ric.
left hand: keep other strings from resonating, except string I.
left hand: keep other strings from resonating
s.t.
a 2
ord.
div.
arco
Body U
Body L
Brid.


12
Fl. 1
Picc.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
CBsn.
Hn.
Tp.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Pno.
Vln. I
divisi a 3
Vln. II
divisi a 3
Vla.
divisi a 2
Vc.
divisi a 3
Cb.
divisi a 2
by embouchure
2° To Fl.
a 2
air only
Bsn.
(senza cresc.)
1°: Harmon mute
1°: remove mute
Tam-tam / Gong Small
soft yarn mal.
mute w. finger
remove finger
Sus. Cym. Small
wirebrush
vary point of contact
Tam-tam Med.
soft yarn mal.
at center
drumhead muted
with hand
Tam-tam Large
hard yarn mal.
rim muted firmly
w. hand
Bass Drum
bass drum mallets
arco
legno
flaut.
tasto
"seagull"
estremo
arco
Brid.
K


91
L
3/4
Fl. 1
Picc.
Ob. 1 2
Cl. 1 2
Bsn. CBsn.
Hn. 1 2
Tp. 1 2
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
tone + air
air only
2° Fl.
simile
Bsn.
(ossia: no flutt.)
flutt.
Marimba
med. mal.
covered with cloth
rapid
Vibraphone
soft yarn mal.
motor high
Marimba
threaded sticks
Vibraphone
bow
Sus. Cym. Med.
wirebrush
flutter sweep
D C♯ B♭ | E F♯ G♯ A
bisbigliando
divisi a 3
divisi a 2
arco
flaut.
arco (tailpiece)
arco Body L
arco Body U
s.t.


14
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
CBsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
2° To Piccolo
2° Piccolo
tone + air
Bsn.
flutt.
Whispa mute
very slowly, iterating
Snare Drum
wirebrush
M
Con Sord.
legno batt.
ric.
arco
s.t.
arco batt.
(hit string with bow)
arco batt.*
Body. L
* bouncing only, no bowing
divisi a 3
divisi a 2


107
N
15
Fl.
Picc.
tone + air
tone + air
tone + air
vib.
"p"
pp
1˚
Ob.
2˚
air only
air only
ppp
1˚
Cl.
2˚
"p"
Bsn.
CBsn.
ppp < pp < pp < ppp < pp < pp < ppp
1˚
Hn.
2˚
flutt.
flutt.
flutt.
1˚
Tpt.
2˚
air only with key clicks
air with key clicks
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Hp.
Pno.
Con Sord.
Con Sord.
N
Con Sord.
Vln. I
divisi a 3
III.
Con Sord.
III.
Con Sord.
III.
arco
s.t.
IV.
arco
s.t.
Vln. II
divisi a 2
IV.
IV.
IV.
IV.
IV.
Vla.
divisi a 2
Vc.
divisi a 2
Cb.


16
116
O
2
4
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Cbsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tbn.
Tba.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Perc. 4
Tambourine
shake
Slit Drum
(dead stroke)
Bass Drum
bass drum mal.
Hp.
Pno.
O
legno
IV.
2
4
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
pizz.
IV.

VITA

Kelvin King Fung NG was born in Hong Kong and have studied music composition in the University of Missouri-Kansas City in the United States after music and psychology studies in the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Principal teachers include Chan Wing-wah, Chen Yi, Lo Hau-man, James Mobberley, João Pedro Oliveira, John Psathas, Paul Rudy and Zhou Long. He have also benefited from the studies at the Acanthes, Darmstädter Ferienkurse, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, and I'institut de recherche et coordination acoustique/musique, with composers Unsuk Chin, Brian Ferneyhough, Phillipe Hurel, Wolfgang Rihm, Oscar Strasnoy and Marco Stroppa, among others. Believing in music as spiritual conveyor, he is interested in both acoustic and electroacoustic music, with a particular focus on enhancing awareness of the psychological aspect. Works have been performed in various festivals and concerts in Hong Kong, France, South Korea and the United States by artists and ensembles including the Chinese Music Virtuosi, Giulio Francesconi, Hong Kong New Music Ensemble, IGNIS Ensemble, Karos Percussion Ensemble, William Lane and Vincent Leterme.