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Potters Field

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Publication Date
2020

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Potters Field

Four movements for

String Quartet and

Soprano

2015

Potters Field

For string quartet and soprano

Movement I- Off the shores of an asylum

Movement II- Pine Box

Movement III- Hart Island

Movement IV- A Field for Strangers

The Story-

Potter's field or common grave is a term for a place for the burial of unknown or indigent people. The expression derives from the Bible, referring to a field used for the extraction of potter's clay, which was useless for agriculture but could be used as a burial site.

This piece focus's on New York's Potters Field called Hart Island. Hart Island is a small island in New York City at the western end of Long Island Sound. At various times during its history, Hart Island has had a workhouse, a hospital, prisons, a Civil War internment camp, a reformatory, a missile base and the largest tax-funded cemetery in the world.

Burials of unknowns were in single plots and identified adults and children were buried in mass graves. In 1913, adults and children under five were buried in separate mass graves. Unknowns are mostly adults. They are frequently disinterred when families are able to locate their relatives through photographs and fingerprints kept on file at the Office of the Medical Examiner. Adults are buried in trenches with three sections of 48 individuals to make disinterment easier. Children, mostly infants, are rarely disinterred and are buried in trenches of 1,000. One third of over 280,000 buried there are infants and stillborn babies.

The dead are buried in trenches. Babies are placed in coffins of various sizes, and are stacked five coffins high and usually twenty coffins across. Adults are placed in larger pine boxes placed according to size and are stacked three coffins high and two coffins across. The potter's field is also used to dispose of amputated body parts, which are placed in boxes labeled "limbs".

Those interred on Hart Island are not necessarily homeless or indigent, as hearsay has it, but people who could either not afford the expenses of private funerals or who were unclaimed by relatives who are frequently not notified within a two-week period.

Movement I- Off the Shores of an Asylum-

Imagine being placed in an internment camp? A large detention center created for political opponents, enemy aliens, people with mental illness, members of specific ethnic or religious groups, civilian inhabitants of a critical war-zone, or other groups of people, usually during a war.

And all you hear in the distance is a foghorn, waves crashing, fog rolling in.

Please note the double stops! Each one has purposefully has on open string, right next to the string being played, should make double stops fairly easy.

Anytime a c note is played do give it a bit of emphasis, as it's the pitch of the foghorn.

Movement II-Pine Box

For: percussive breathing, voice and cello

Place effects on vocals if possible, large spacey reverb and a 5.1 delay. When the middle c note is sung, use the syllable (bum) like a bell tone

Please note all string players to make a tapping sound like nails into a coffin, could be tapping any part of instrument, stand, floor etc. Please all choose different rhythms, not necessarily in time, but not distracting.

Also if played with no vocalist, the vocal part can be played with violin, and if your feeling adventurous, violin 2, and viola play same part in a round, starting a quarter note later, do decrease the volume as if a surround delay pedal and fading.

Percussive breathing is defined in this piece with (+) for in and (o) for out. No pitch required, although interesting use of the voice is encouraged. Use a mic if possible.

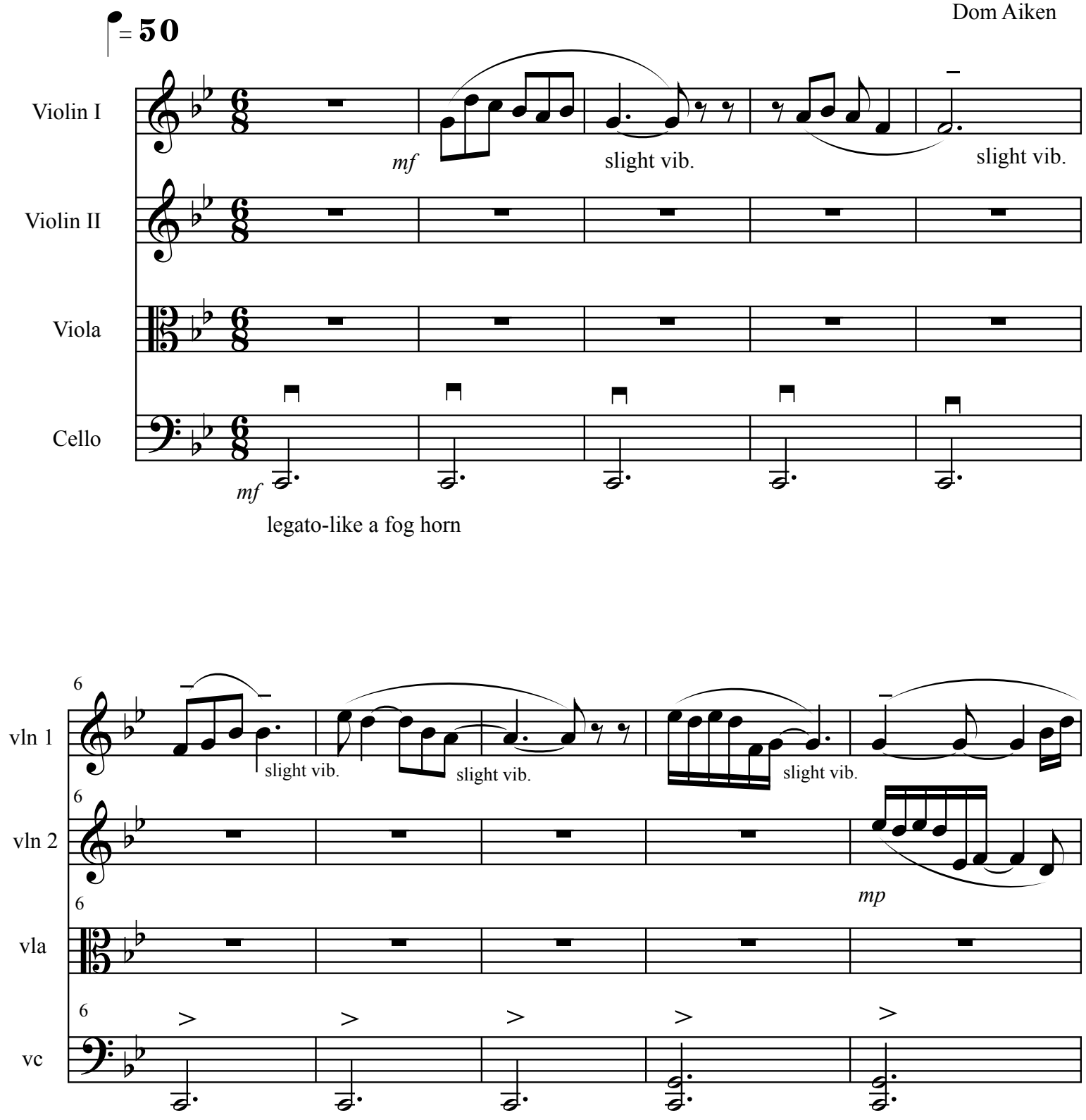
Movement III- Hart Island- no special instructions

Movement IV- A Field for Strangers- violin 1 or one of the violin 1's could be electric, and connected to a delay pedal, there are marked passages when to apply the effect. This effect may be excluded for performance reason

Video- A video is available to be shown behind the Quartet, live. This is optional

Potters Field
I.
Off the Shores of an Asylum

Composer
Dom Aiken



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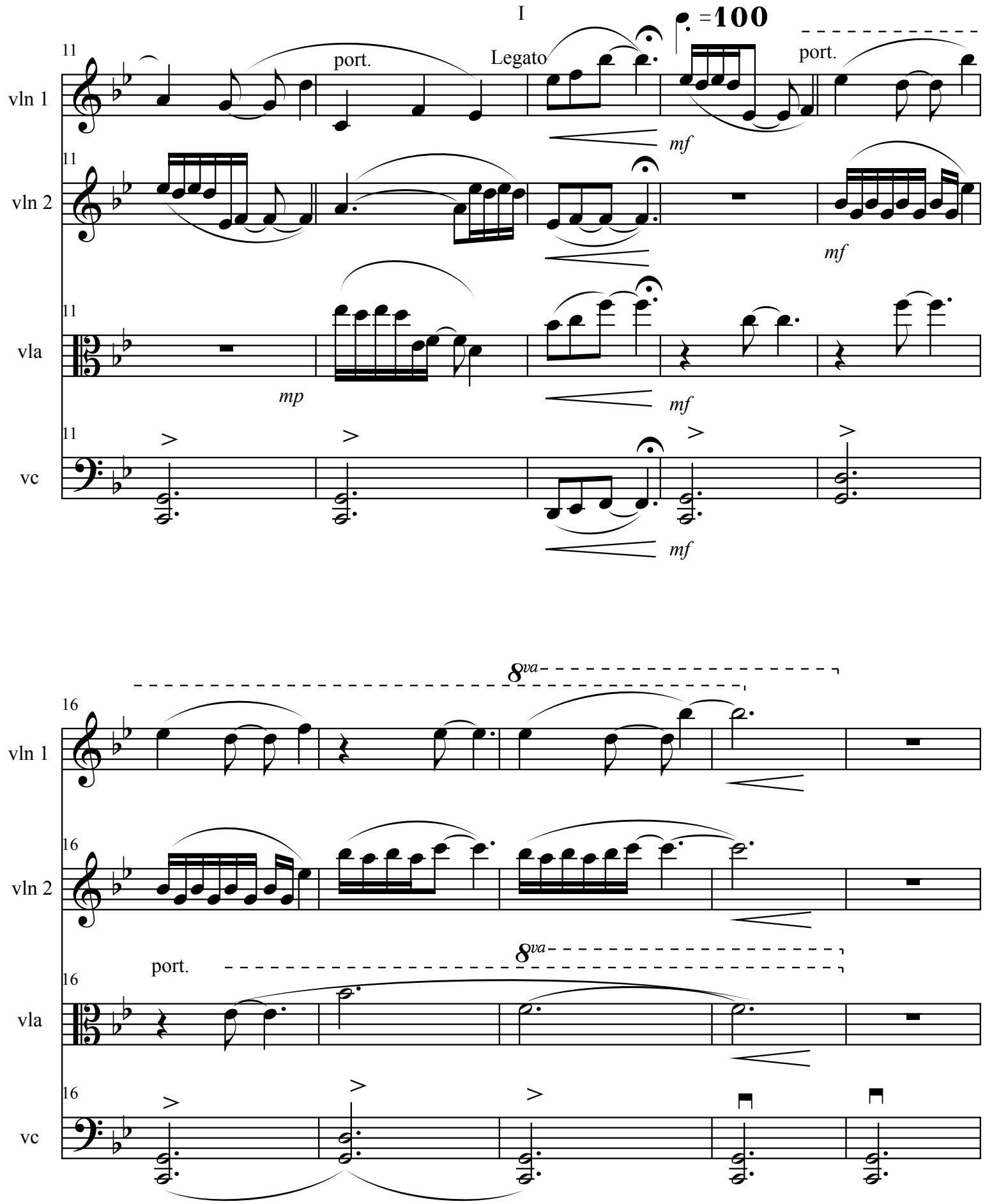
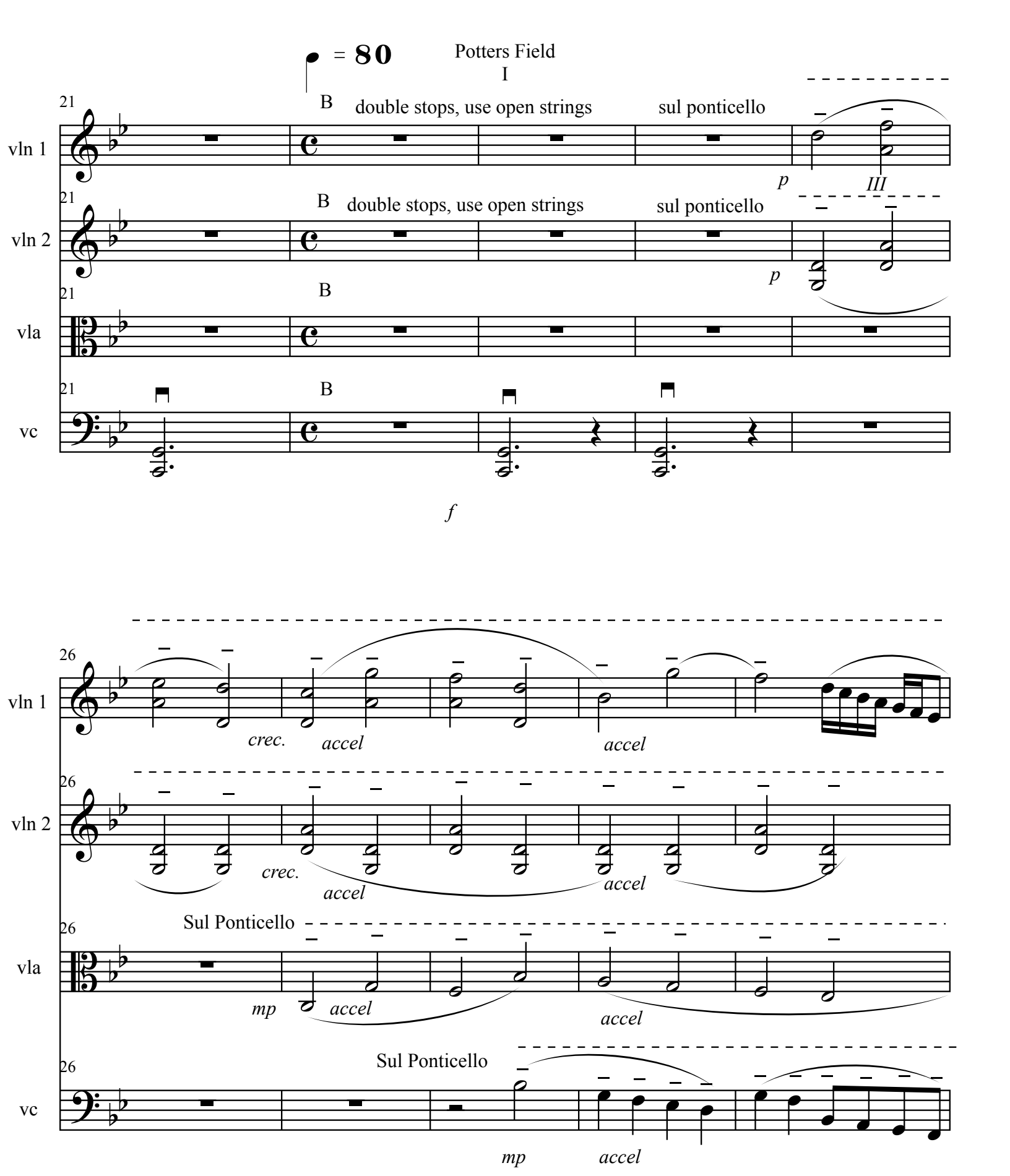
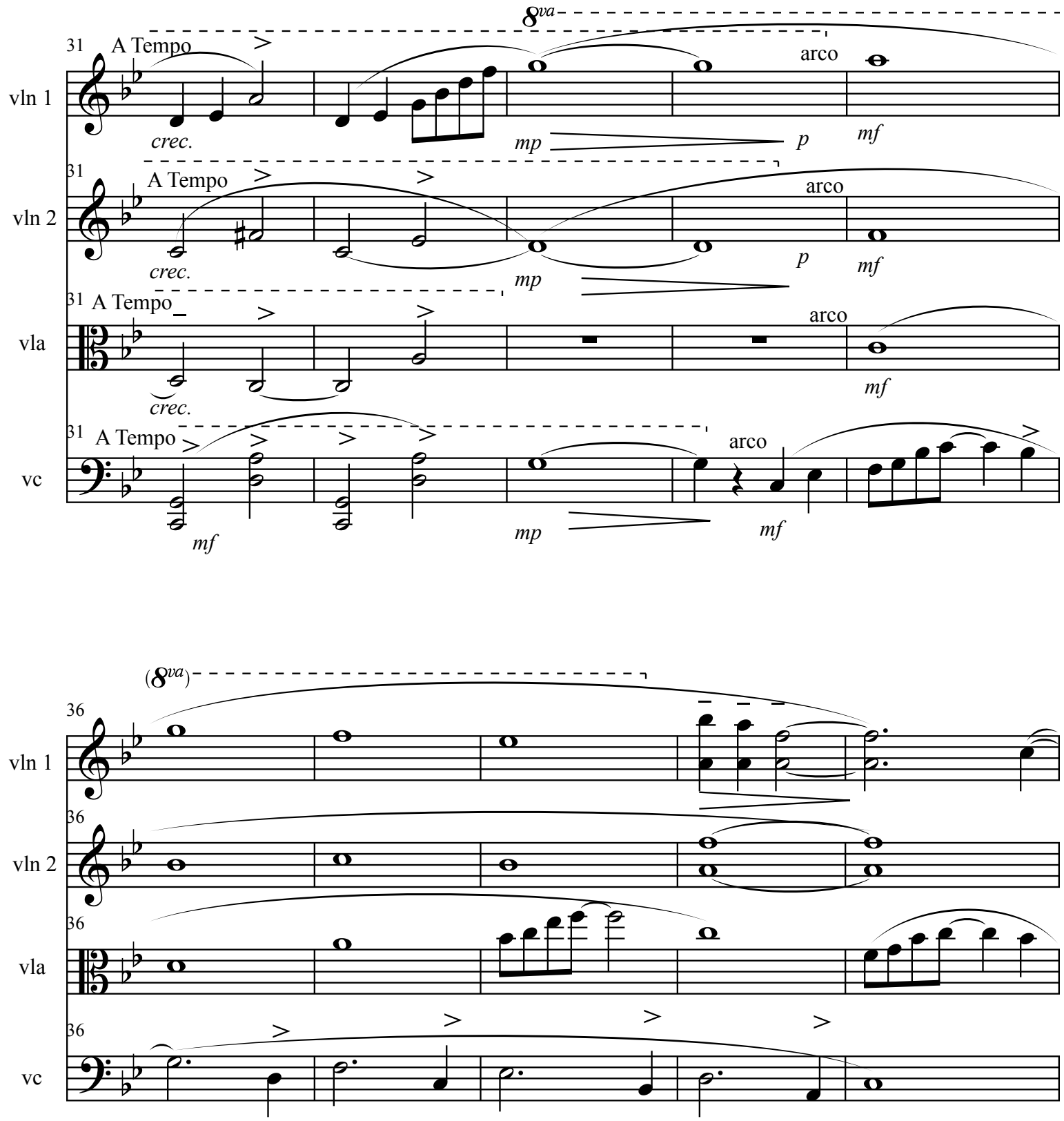
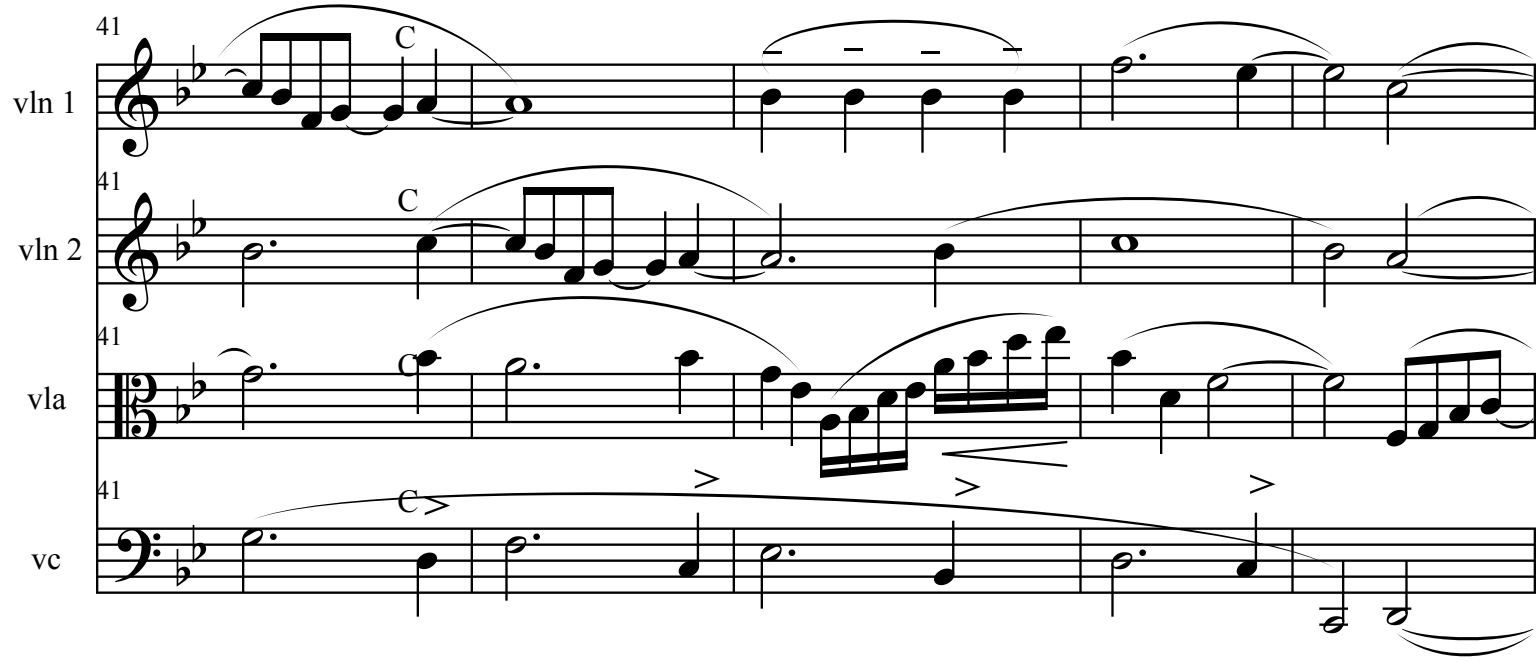
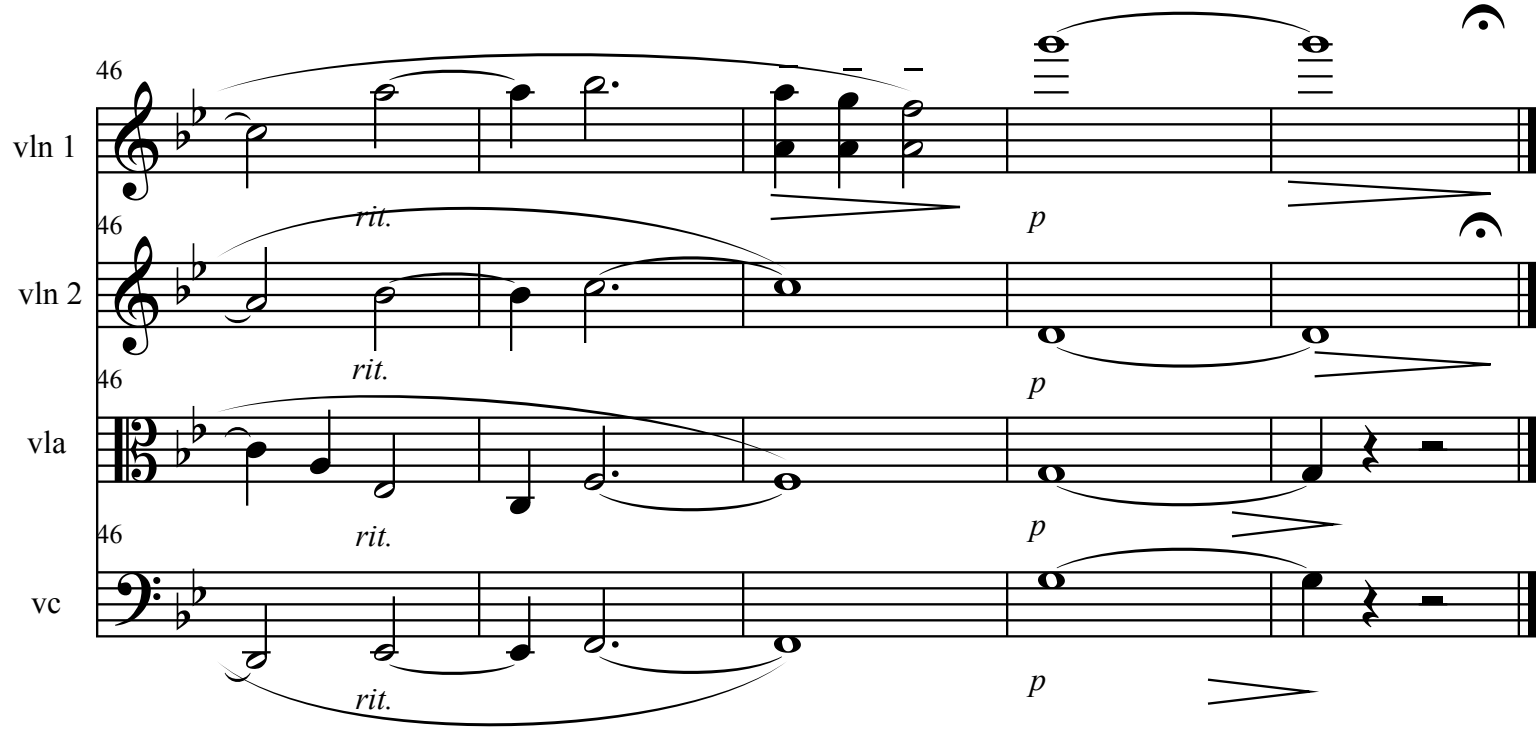
I


=100
11
vln 1
vln 2
vla
vc
port.
Legato
port.
mf
mf
mp
mf
mf
16
8va
8va
port.


= 80
Potters Field
I
21
B
double stops, use open strings
sul ponticello
vln 1
vln 2
vla
vc
p
III
f
26
crec.
accel
Sul Ponticello
mp


8va
31
A Tempo
vln 1
vln 2
vla
vc
crec.
mp
p
mf
arco
(8va)
36


41
C
vln 1
41
C
vln 2
41
C
vla
41
C
vc


46
vln 1
rit.
p
46
vln 2
rit.
p
46
vla
rit.
p
46
vc
rit.
p

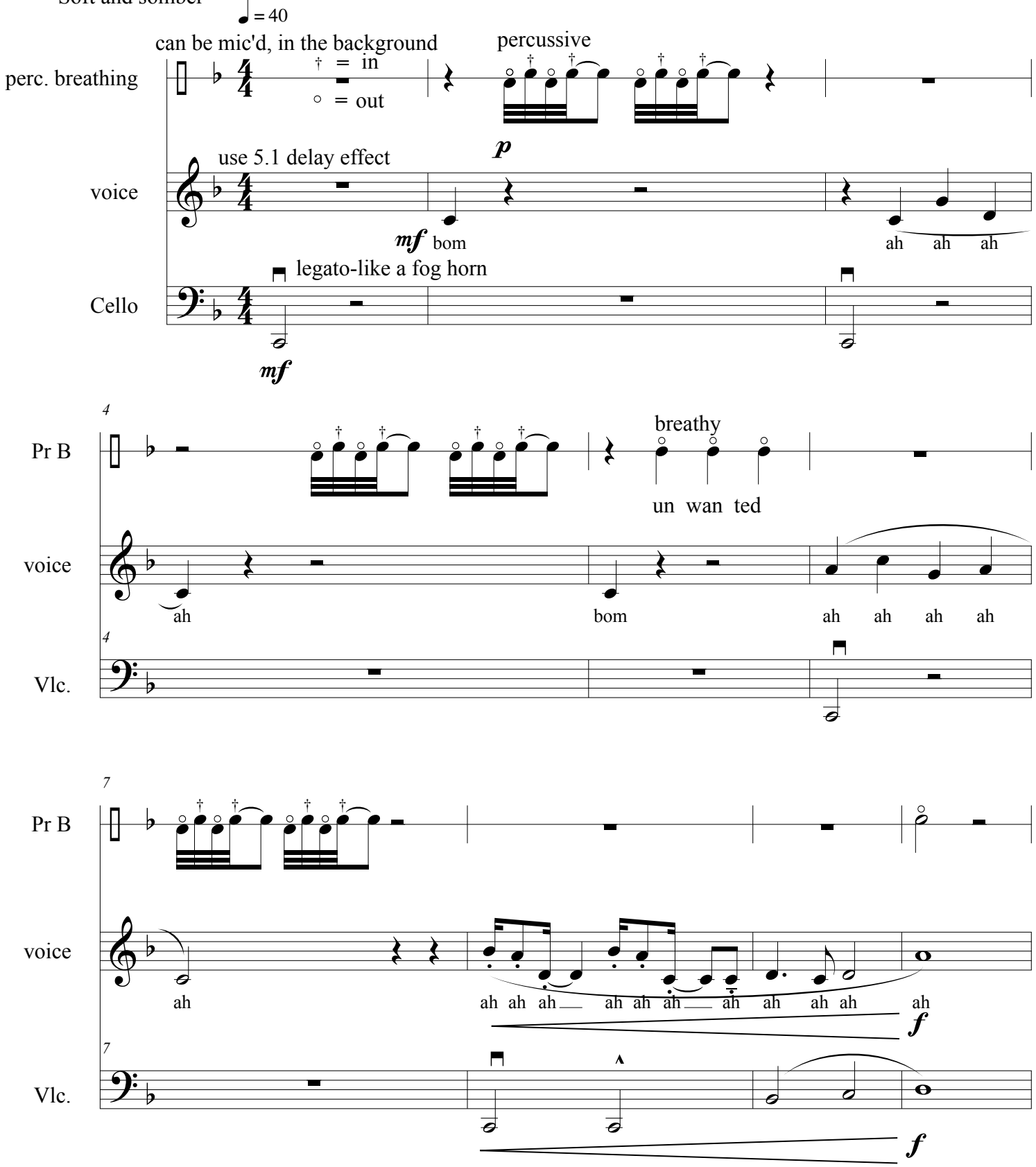
Potters Field: II

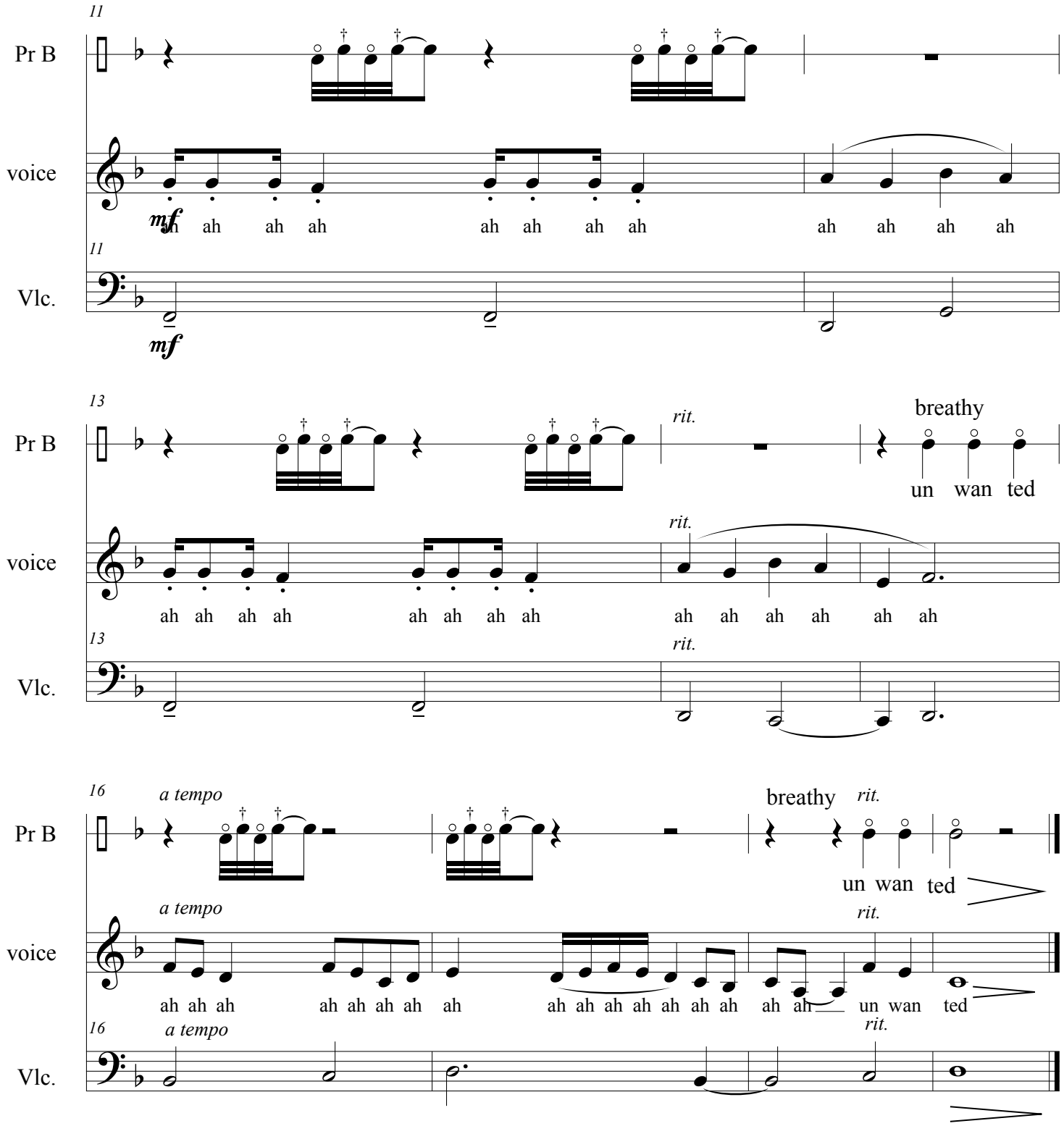
Score

Pine Box

Dom Aiken

Soft and somber



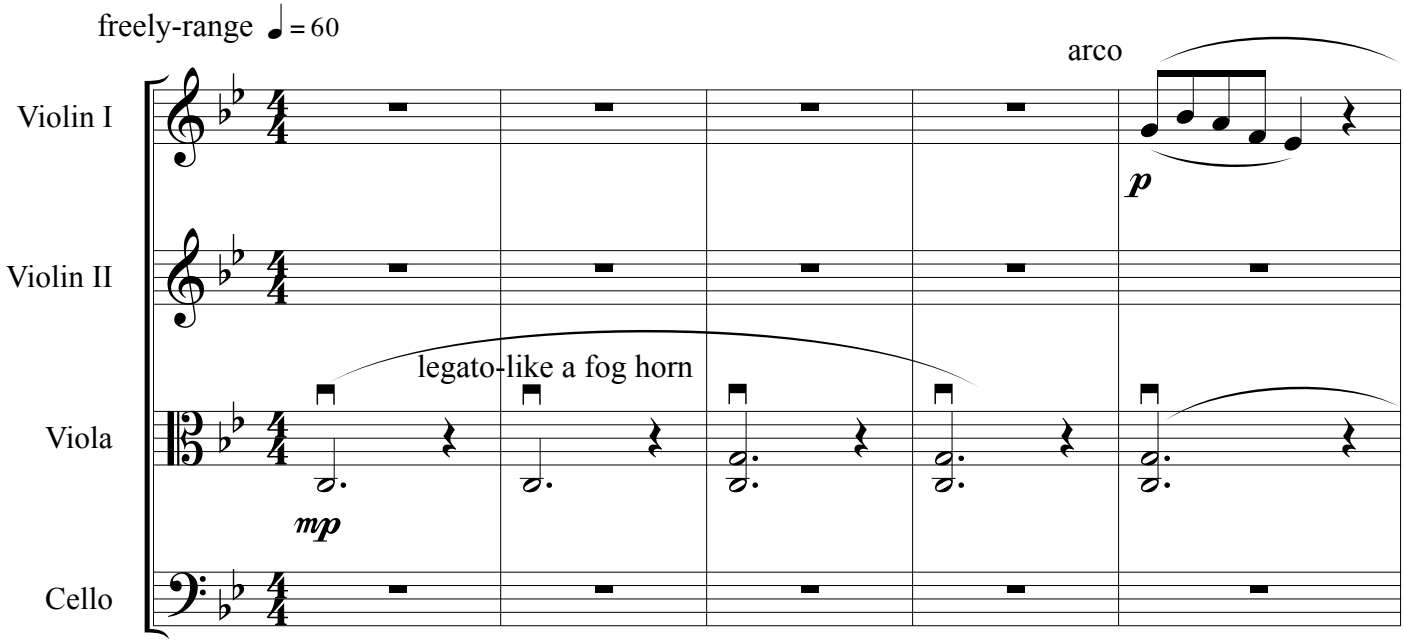

11
Pr B
voice
mf
ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah
11
Vlc.
mf
13
Pr B
rit.
breathy
un wan ted
voice
rit.
ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah
13
Vlc.
rit.
16
a tempo
Pr B
breathy
rit.
un wan ted
a tempo
voice
rit.
ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah un wan ted
16
a tempo
Vlc.
rit.

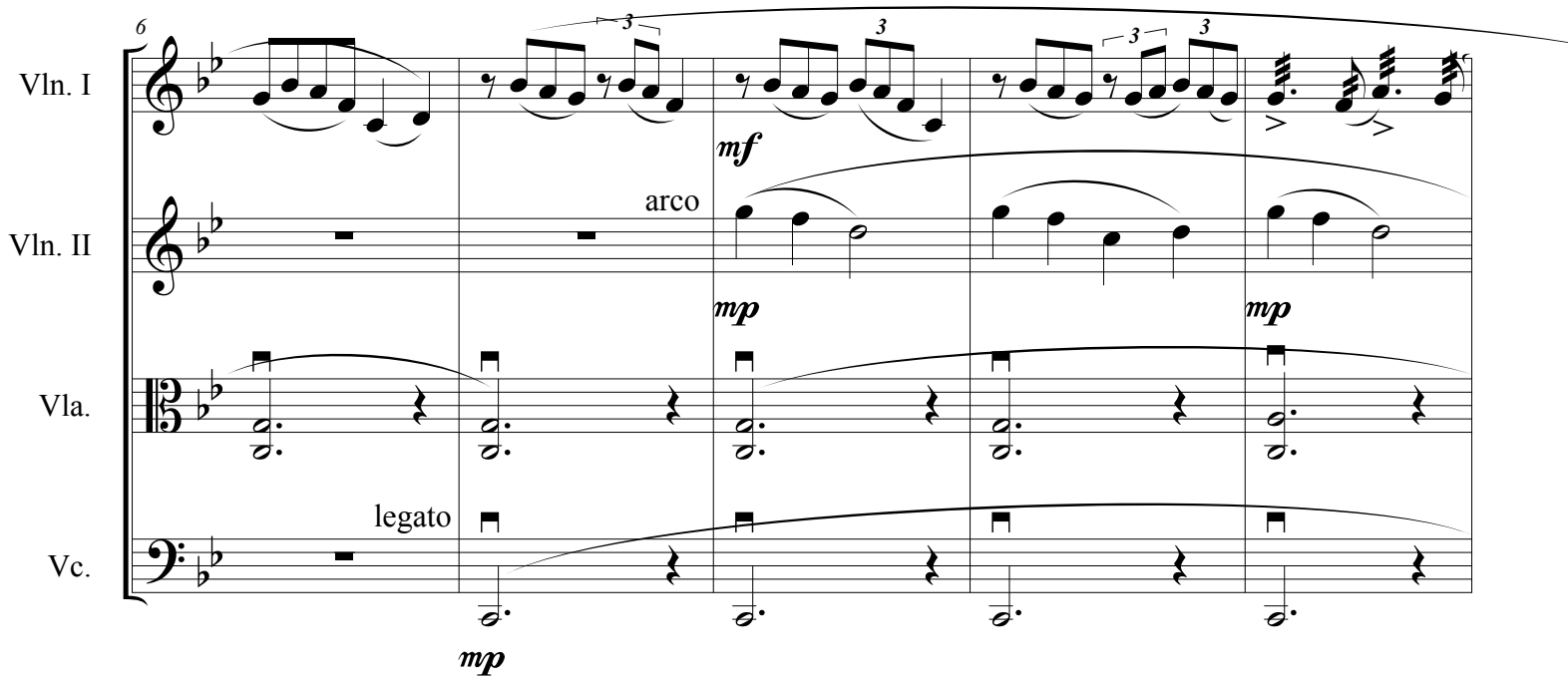
Score

Potters field

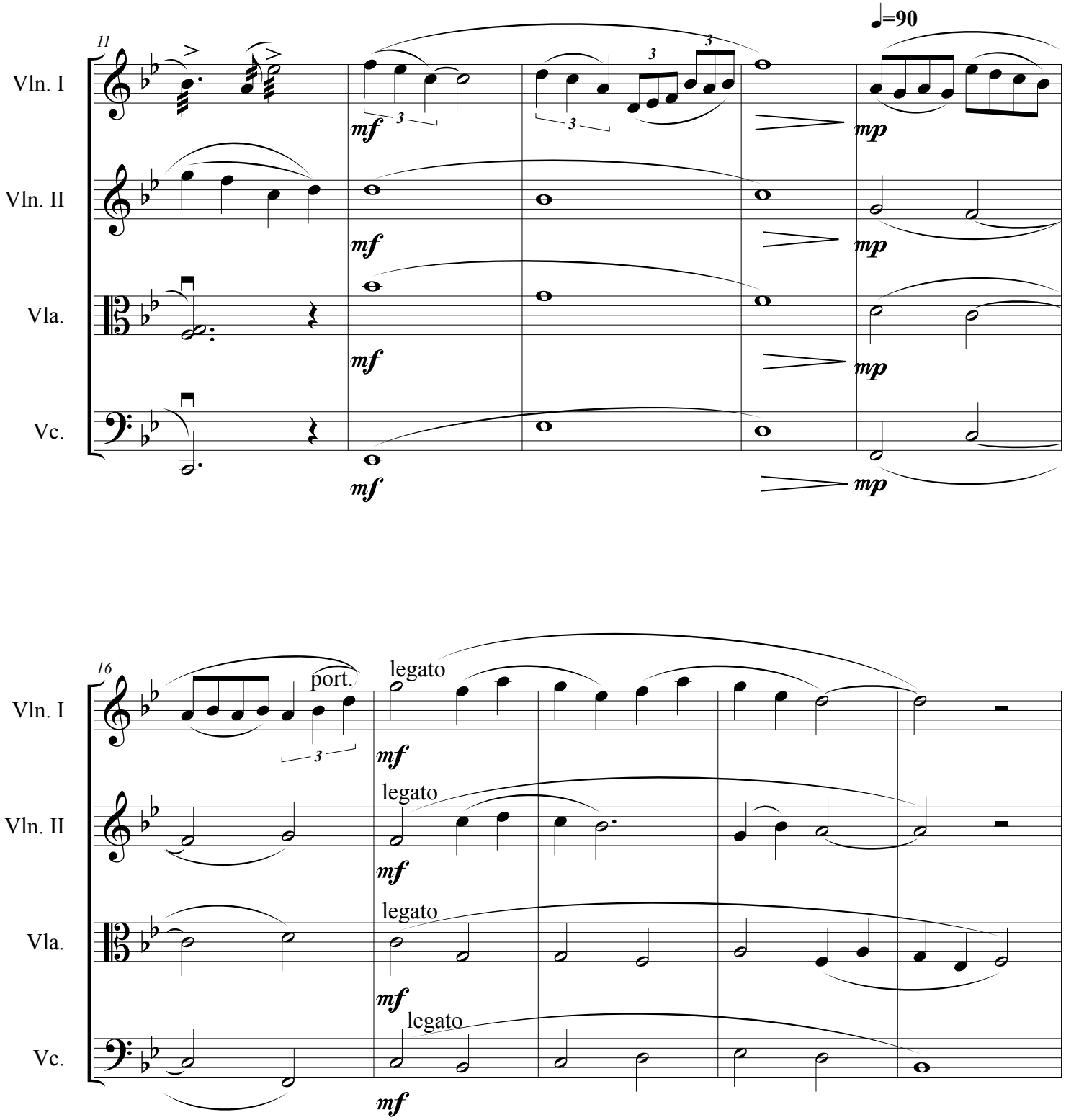
III Hart Island

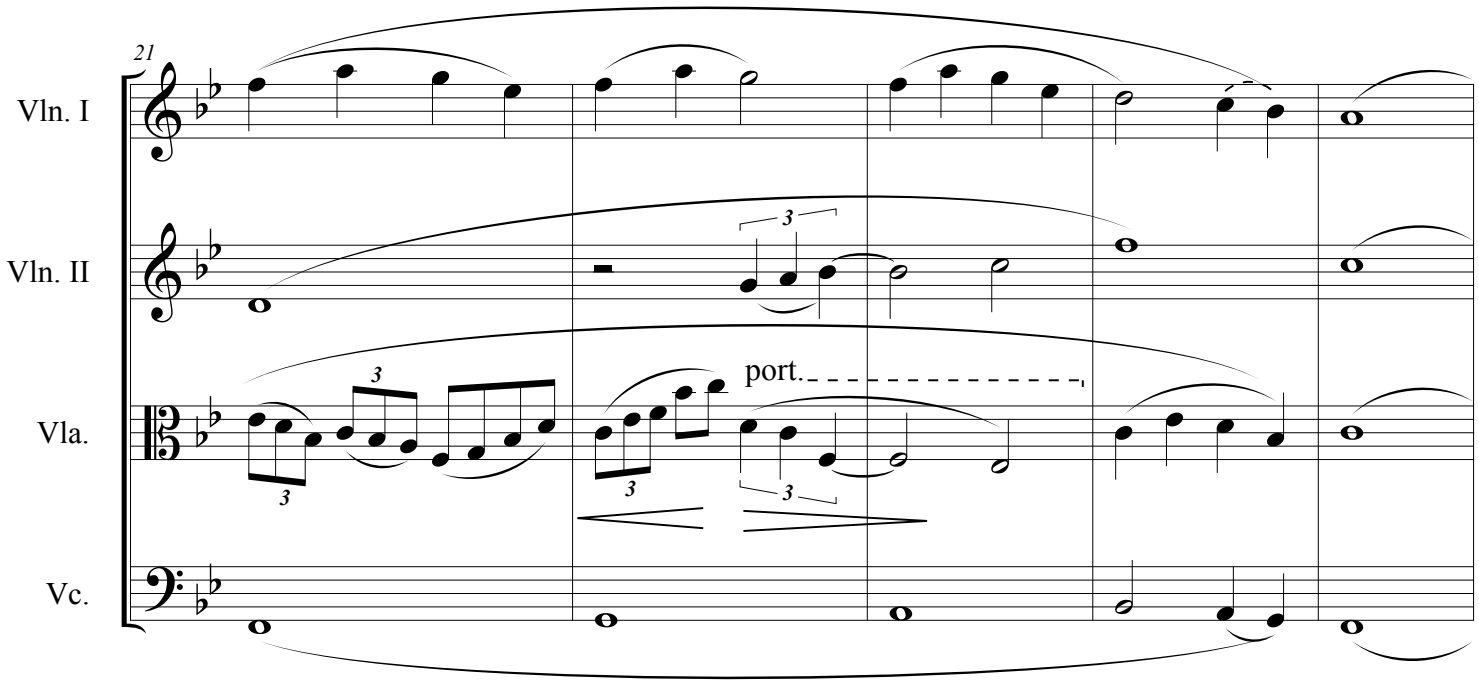
Dom Aiken

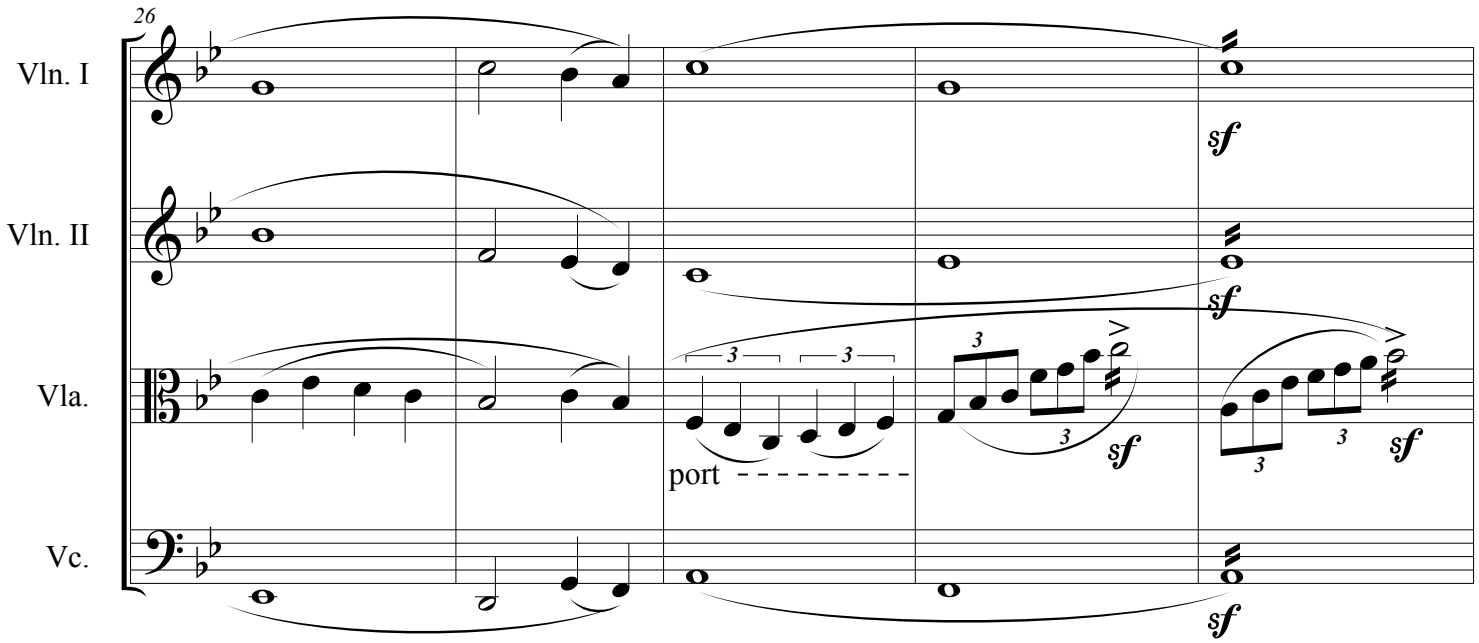


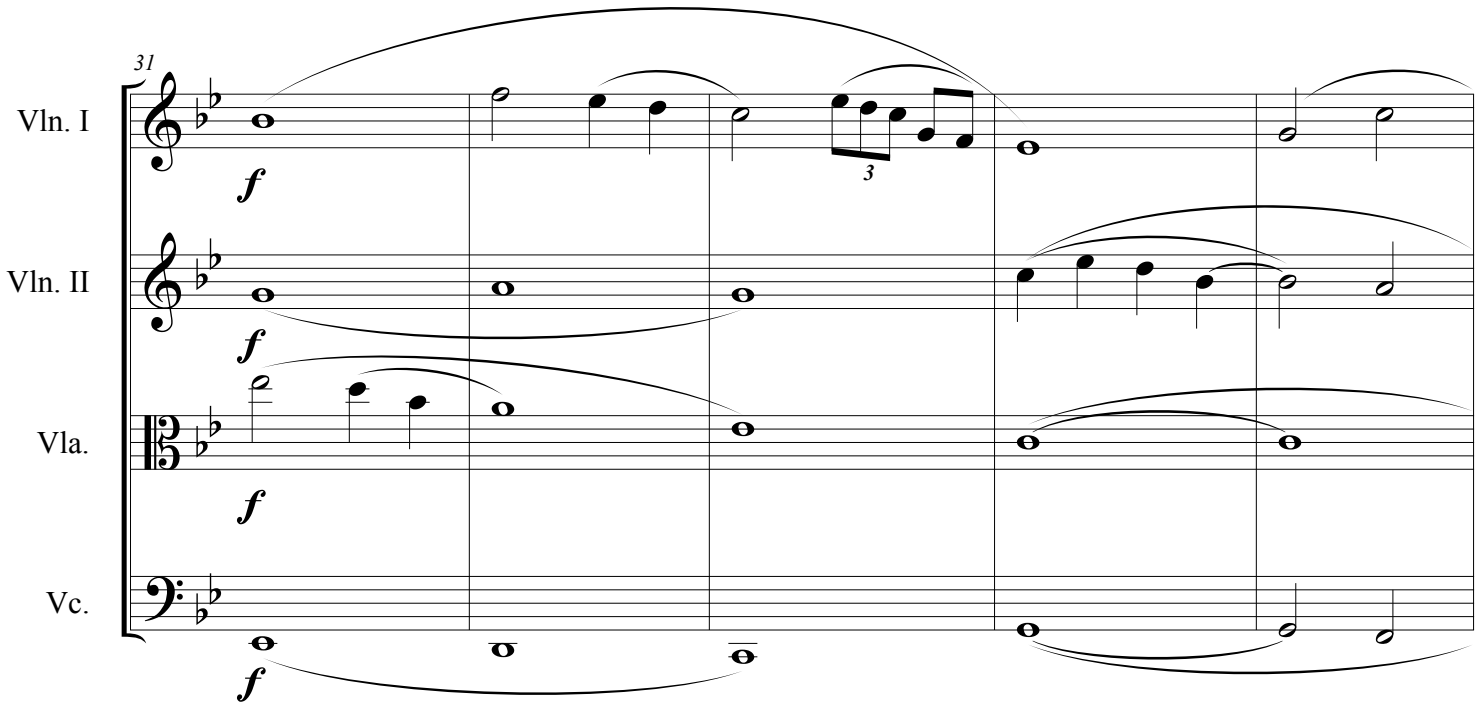


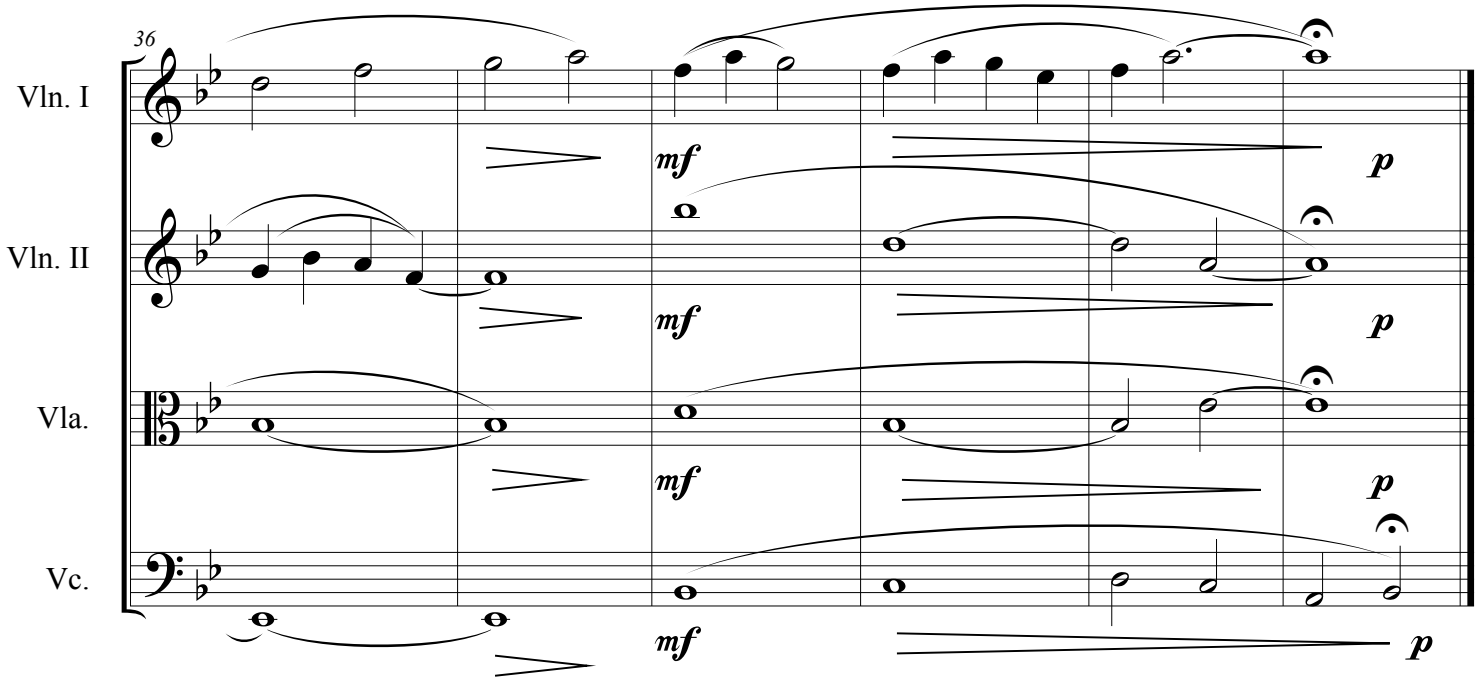
Potters field
III




21
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
port.


26
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
port
sf


31
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
f
3

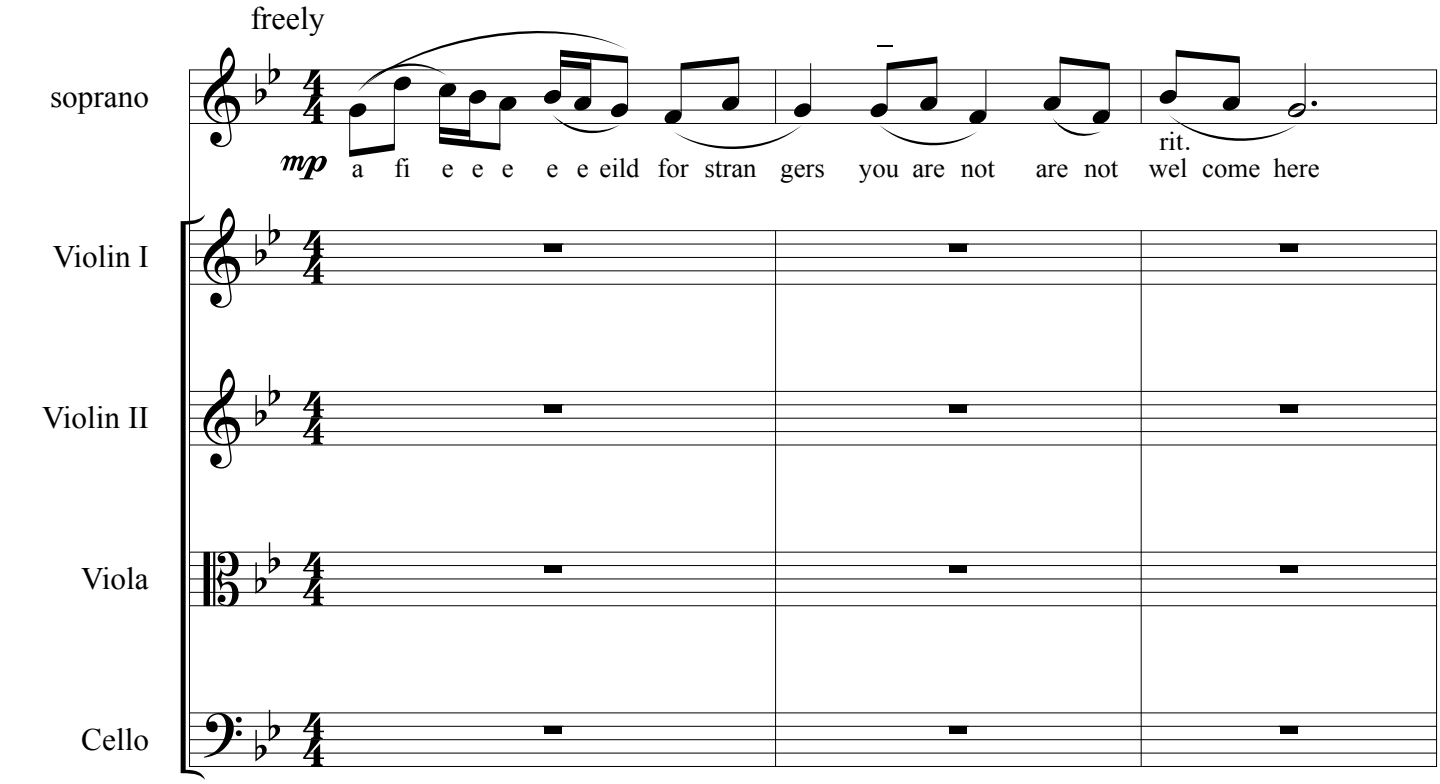

36
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
mf
p

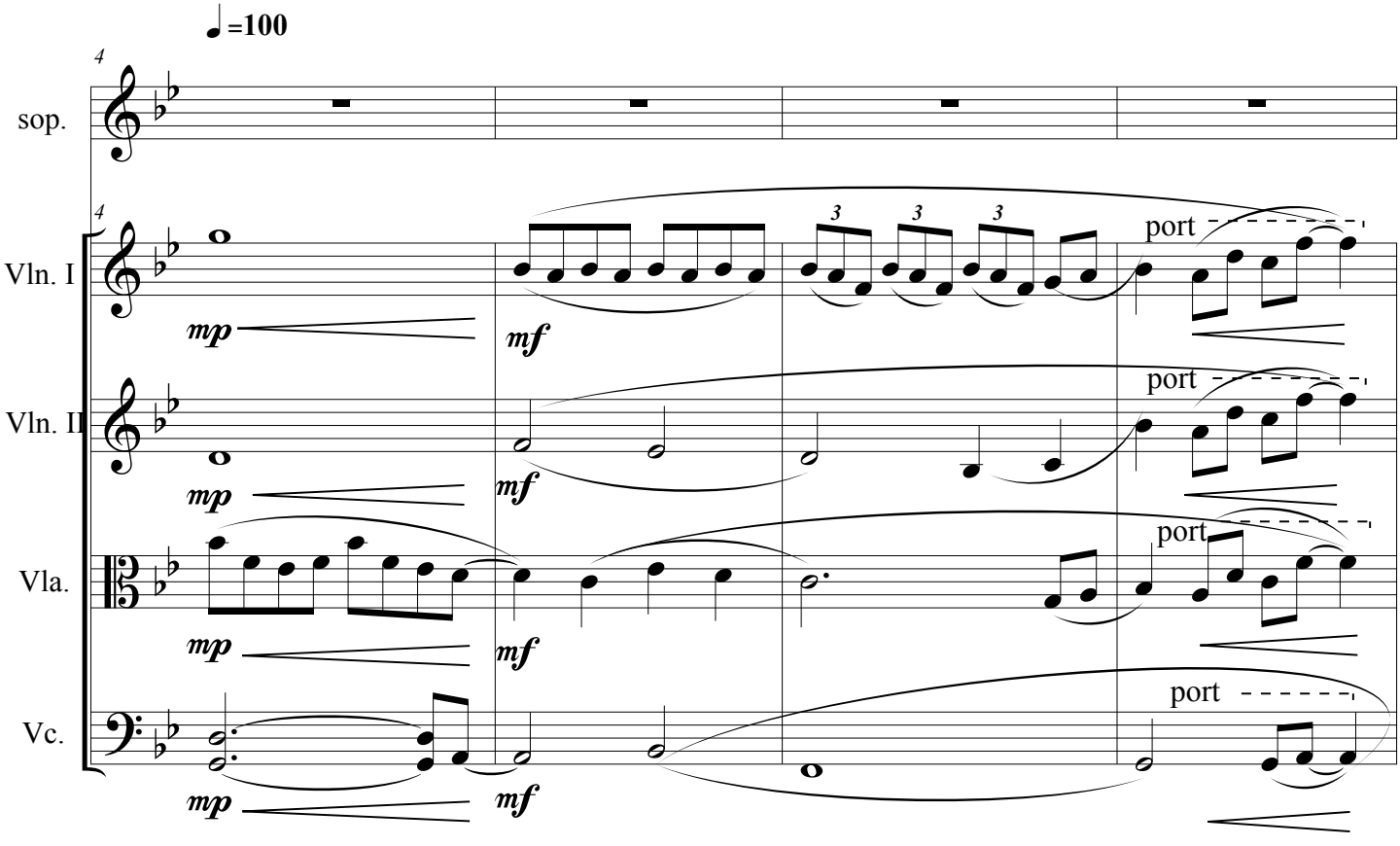
Score

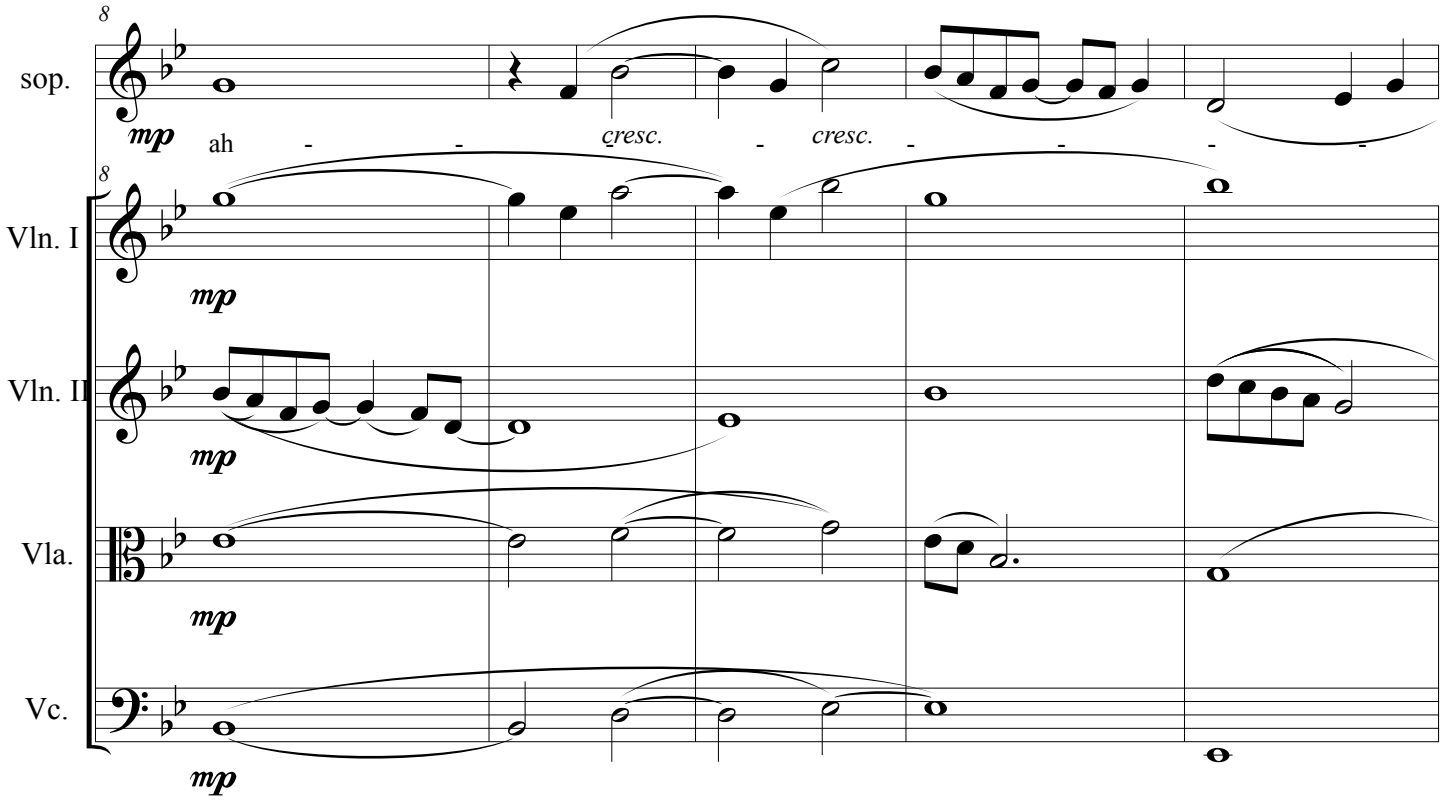
Potters Field

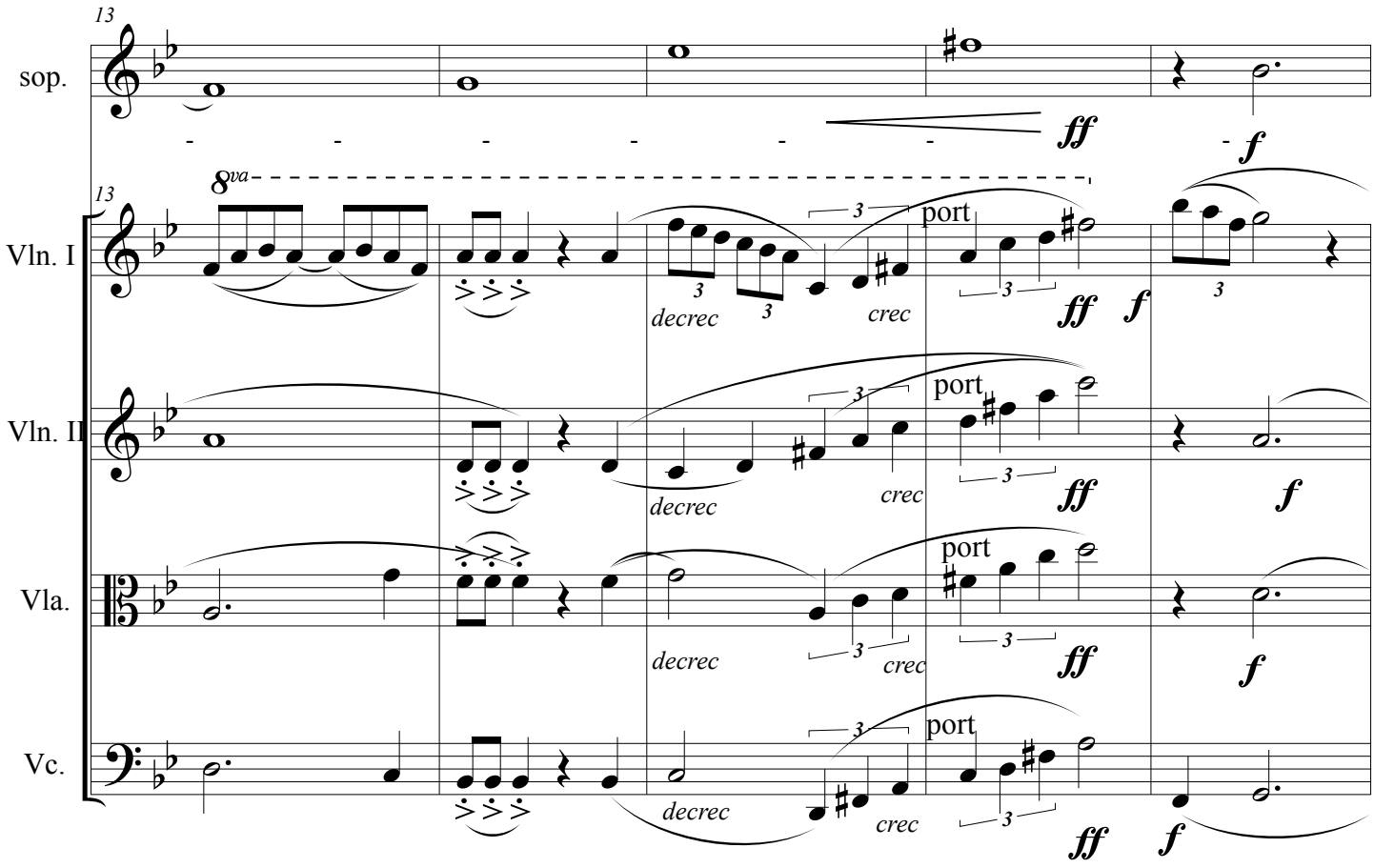
IV- A field for Strangers

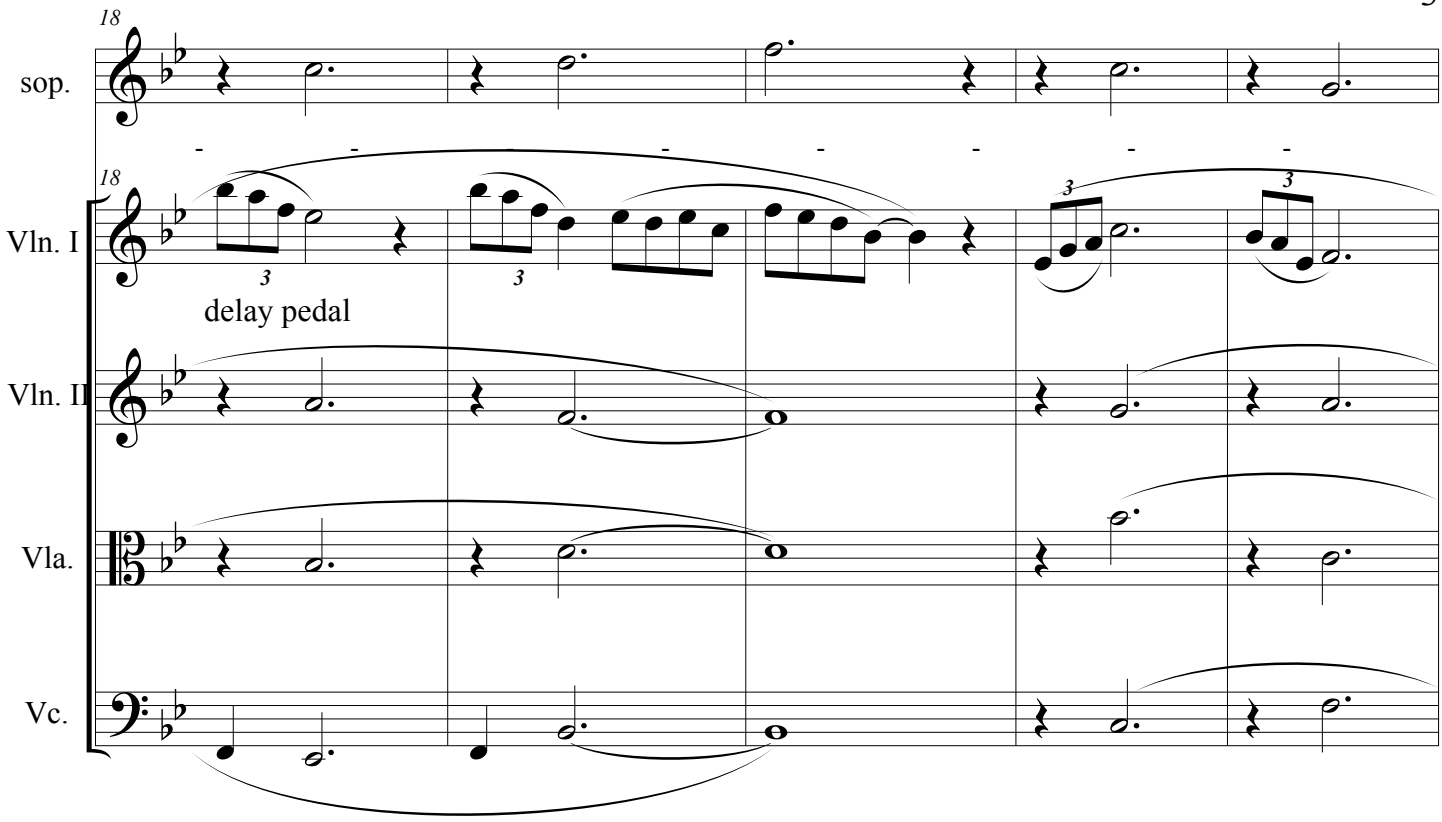
Dom Aiken

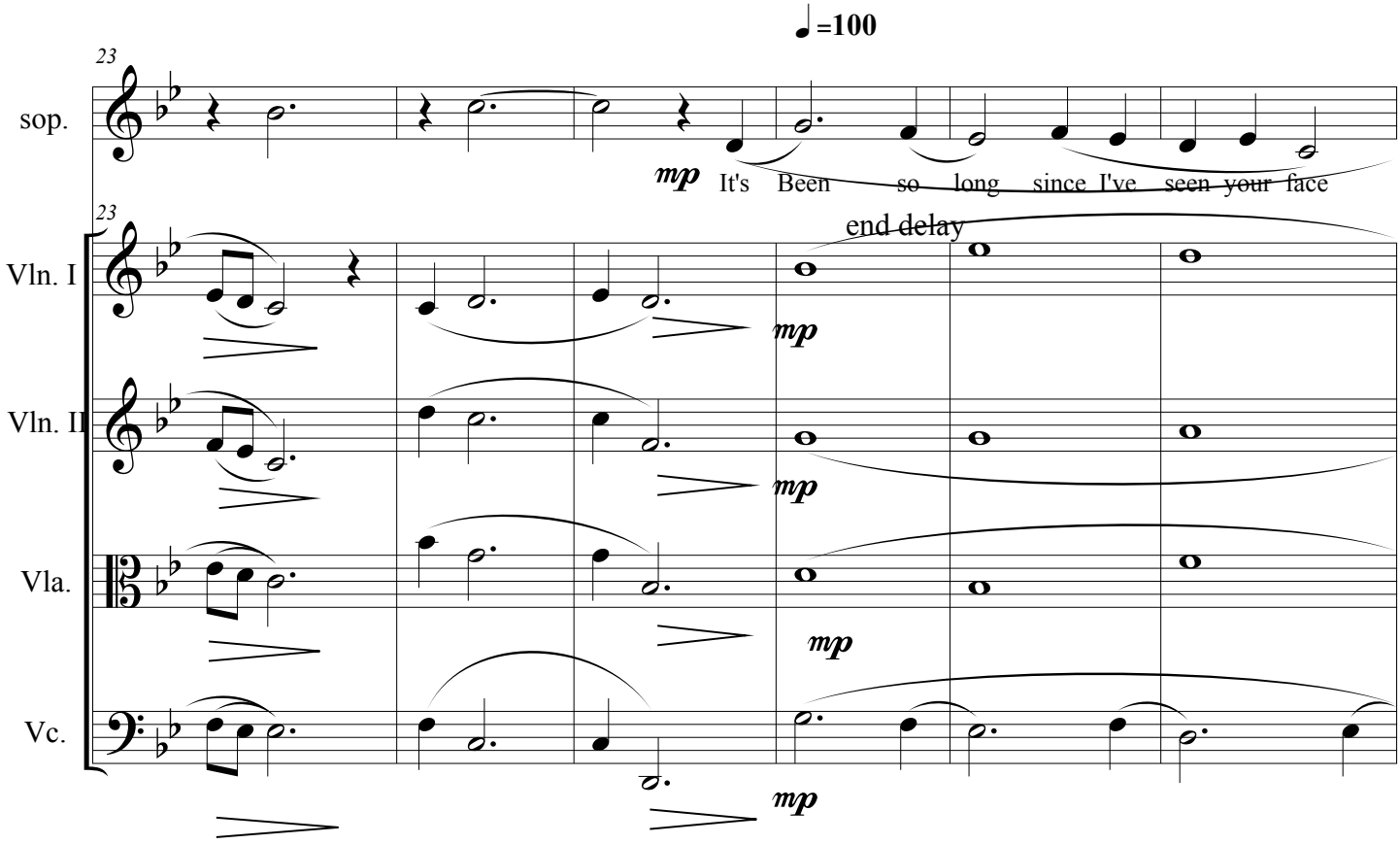




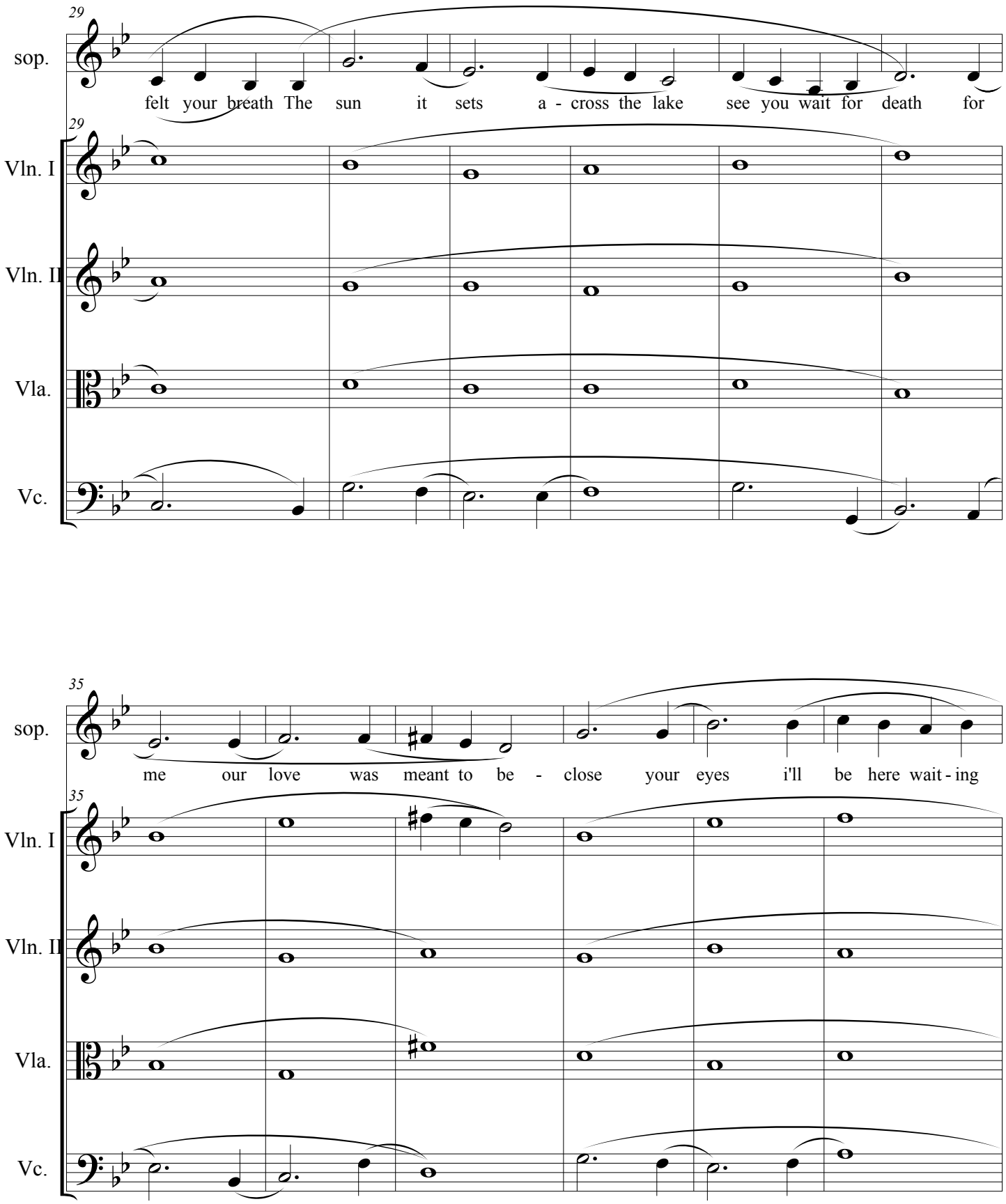

sop.
mp
ah
cresc.
cresc.
Vln. I
mp
Vln. II
mp
Vla.
mp
Vc.
mp

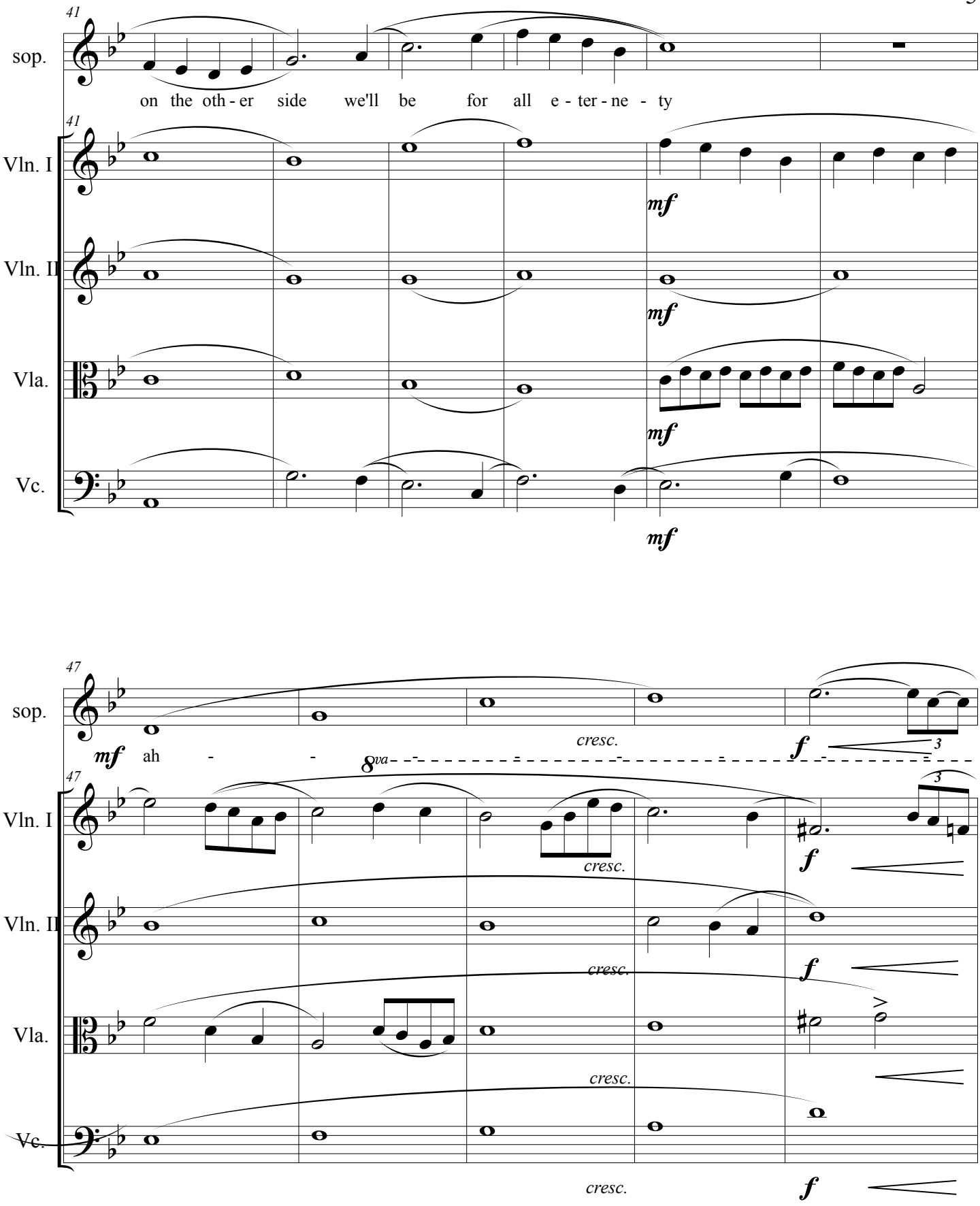

sop.
ff
f
8va
Vln. I
decrec
crec
port
ff
f
Vln. II
decrec
crec
port
ff
f
Vla.
decrec
crec
port
ff
f
Vc.
decrec
crec
port
ff
f

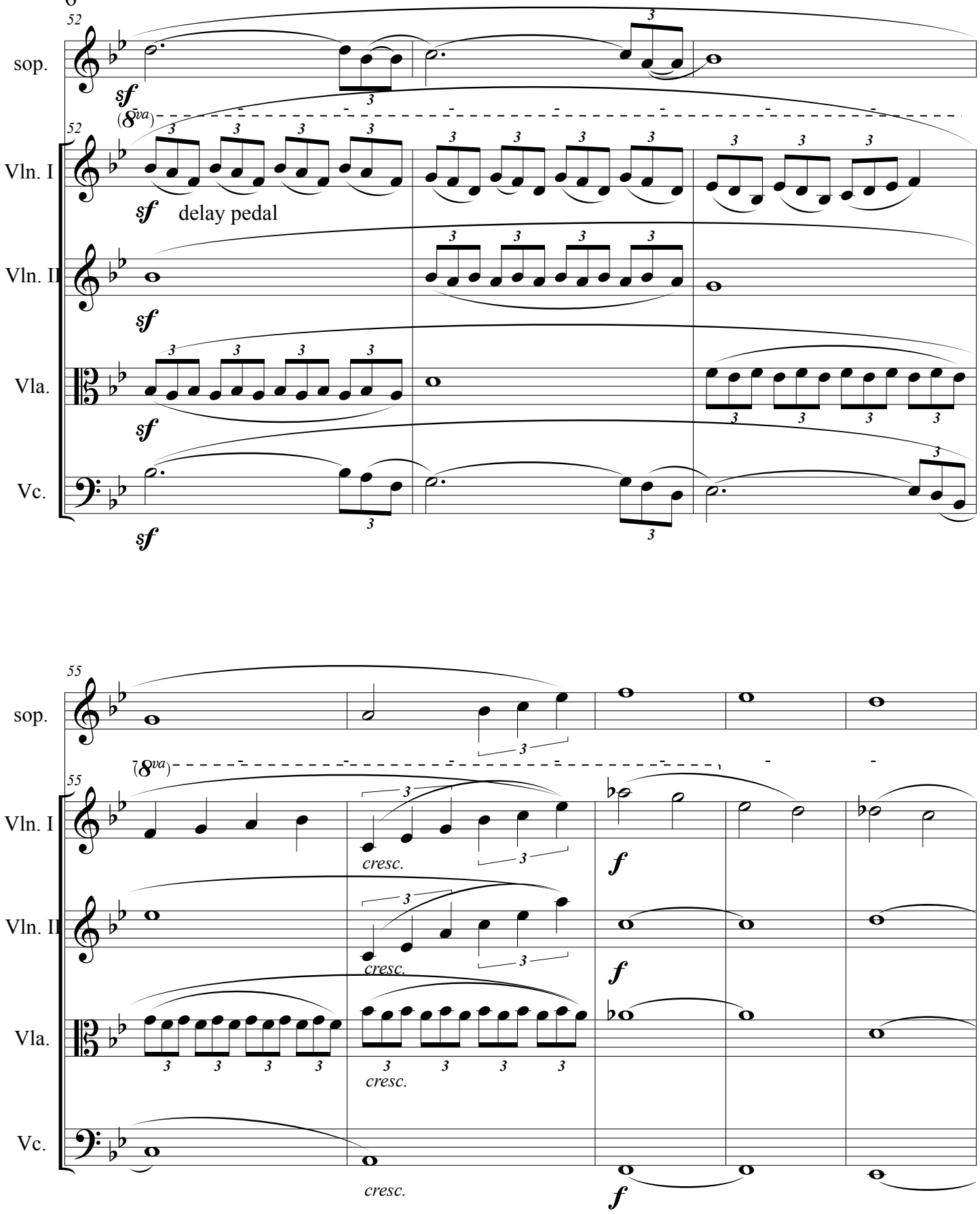

18
sop.
18
Vln. I
delay pedal
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

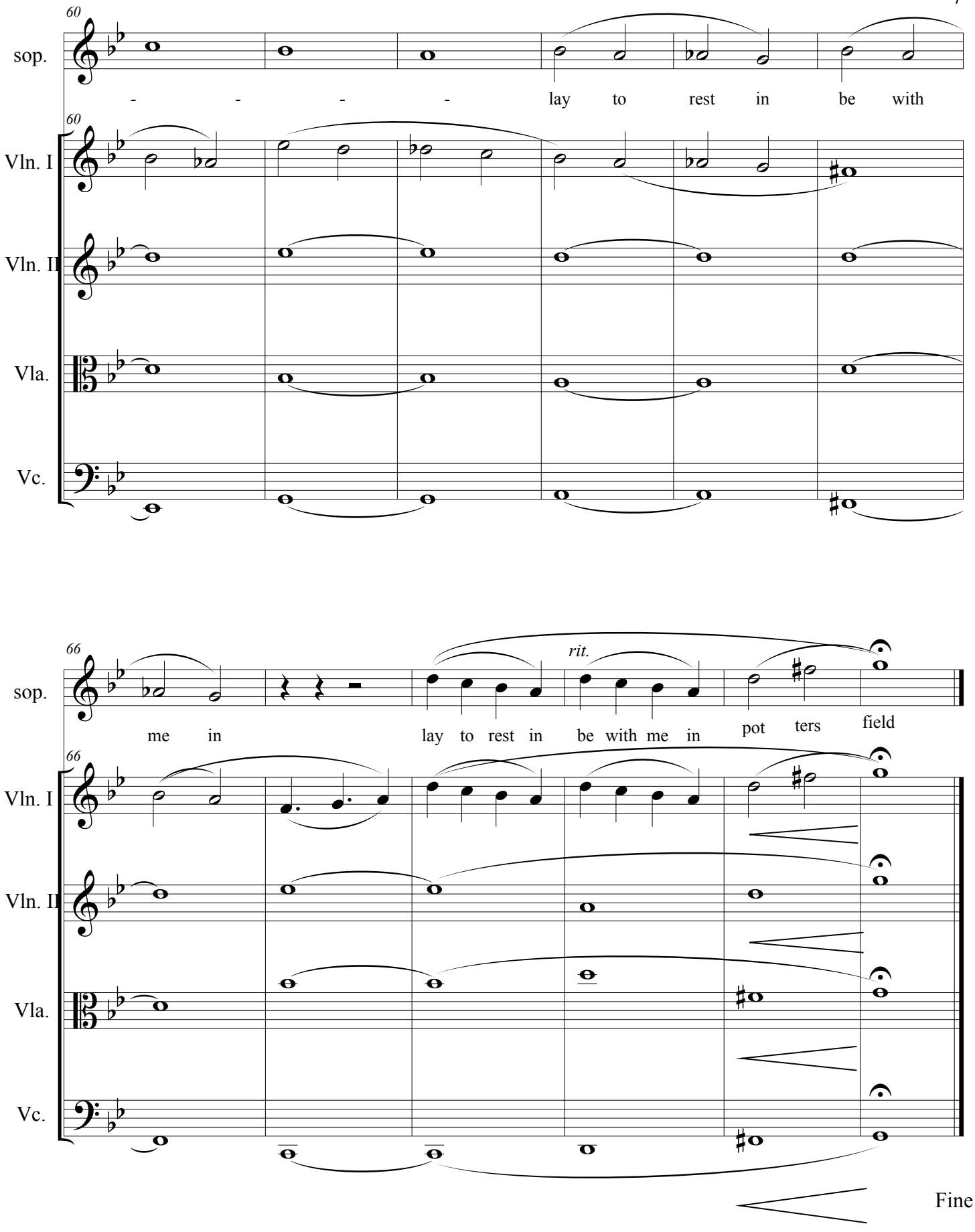

♩=100
23
sop.
mp
It's Been so long since I've seen your face
23
end delay
Vln. I
mp
Vln. II
mp
Vla.
mp
Vc.
mp

Potters Field IV




41
sop.
on the oth - er side we'll be for all e - ter - ne - ty
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
mf
47
ah - -
cresc.
f
8va
3


52
sop.
sf
(8va)
52
Vln. I
sf
delay pedal
Vln. II
sf
Vla.
sf
Vc.
sf
55
sop.
(8va)
55
Vln. I
cresc.
f
Vln. II
cresc.
f
Vla.
cresc.
Vc.
cresc.
f


60
sop.
- - - - lay to rest in be with
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
66
rit.
me in lay to rest in be with me in pot ters field
Fine