UC San Diego

UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Not Quite a Sunset: a hypertext opera

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9830g5pn

Author

Rowan, Kyle Edward

Publication Date

2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Not Quite a Sunset:

a hypertext opera

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

Kyle Edward Rowan

Committee in Charge:

Professor Katharina Rosenberger, Chair
Professor Anthony Burr
Professor Seth Lerer
Professor Lei Liang
Professor Susan Narucki

2016

Copyright

Kyle Edward Rowan, 2016

All rights reserved.

The dissertation of Kyle Edward Rowan is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page..... iii

Table of Contents..... iv

List of Examples..... v

Acknowledgements..... vi

Vita..... vii

Abstract of the Dissertation..... viii

I. Introduction..... 1
1.1 An Online Opera and Interactive Fiction..... 1
1.2 Story, Text, and Interaction..... 4
1.3 The Music of *Not Quite a Sunset*..... 9
1.4 Using the Voice..... 12

II: Score..... 14
1. Sunrise..... 15
2. Swells..... 22
3. Drones..... 24
4. Rotational Pulse..... 27
5. Alarm Clock..... 28
6. Sara at the Console..... 34
7. Sara & Ada in the Lab..... 35
8. Lounge..... 37
9. Wind and Sunflowers..... 43
10. Running..... 47
11. Tree..... 48
12. Lake..... 54
13. Mountain..... 59
14. Forest..... 65
15. Sara's Voice / Interludes..... 70

LIST OF EXAMPLES

Example 1: Editing a passage in Twine..... 3

Example 2: Passage 1.1 from *Not Quite a Sunset*..... 3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my advisor Katharina Rosenberger for her support, advice, and mentorship throughout my time at UC San Diego that has helped make me the composer and teacher I am today.

I would also like to thank the following musicians who so generously provided their time and talent in recording for this project: Jennifer Bewerse, cello; Kyle Adam Blair, piano; Madison Greenstone, clarinet; Andres Gutierrez-Martinez, engineer; Batya Macadam-Somer, violin; Michael Matsuno, flute; Kiyoe Wellington, double bass; and Kirsten Ashley Wiest, soprano. Without their help, *Not Quite a Sunset* could not have been realized.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Brooke for her love, support, and patience she has always shown, for her help and advice in reading and editing my work, and for always keeping me honest, grounded, and pushing myself toward something more. I look forward to starting the next part of our journey together.

VITA

2007	Bachelor of Music, University of Florida
2007-2009	Teaching Assistant, School of Music University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
2009	Master of Music, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
2010-2013	Teaching Assistant, Department of Music University of California, San Diego
2014-2016	Associate In Music, Department of Music University of California, San Diego
2016	Doctor of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Music Composition

Studies in Composition and Interactive Fiction
Professor Katharina Rosenberger

Studies in Japanese Traditional Music
Professor Lei Liang

Studies in Just Intonation and the Music of Ben Johnston
Professor Anthony Burr

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Not Quite a Sunset: a hypertext opera

by

Kyle Edward Rowan

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Katharina Rosenberger, Chair

Not Quite a Sunset is an online interactive opera inspired by contemporary hypertext fiction, especially the work developed using the programming environment Twine. The narrative follows Dr. Sara Reyes, a scientist leading a planetary survey mission on a space station in orbit around an extrasolar planet. Over time, she begins to experience dreams and visions that hint at a strange but

undeniably strong connection between herself and a mysterious Door on the planet's surface.

The work is presented primarily as prose that the listener navigates through hyperlinks within the text. Throughout the story, the listener is presented with key decision points where she must choose between several possible paths for Sara, the protagonist. The ramifications of these decisions are played out as the story and music unfold, often with consequences that are not immediately clear.

The music is composed primarily as textures and fragments in order to construct and represent a wide variety of immersive musical spaces as the listener explores and experiences the story; these shift between representations of physical spaces on the station to more personal reflections of Sara's emotional state. All of the audio tracks were created by mixing and layering the composed textures and fragments of the ensemble into different contexts. While the instrumental sextet is heard throughout, the voice is reserved solely for the dream sequences as a representation of Sara's subconscious.

I.
Introduction

1.1 An Online Opera and Interactive Fiction

The idea of writing an opera for the Internet is one that I have had for quite awhile, since before I came to UC San Diego. Initially this concept was related to my affinity for short-form opera - my operatic work had gone from a continuous thirty-minute opera with my *Robin and Marion* in 2006 to the fifteen-minute set of four operatic scenes with *The Eighth Daughter* in 2010. These short, self-contained scenes seemed like they held great promise for further exploration, and I initially considered creating an operatic web series, with short 5-minute webisodes that together encompass a larger opera.

However, as the idea developed, I became aware of the wider range of possibilities offered by interactive fiction (IF), and especially hypertext fiction. Hypertext fiction refers to any work of fiction in which the primary mode of navigating the text is through a series of hyperlinks. This is sometimes referred to classified as *choice IF*, because the reader is often presented with a choice among several distinct options, to distinguish it from *parser IF*, in which the reader interacts by entering commands into a text parser[1]. Because of the potential for listener interaction through hypertext, the concept transformed beyond a static online opera and became *hypertext* opera, an opera

---

[1] An example of choice IF is *Solarium*, by Alan Deniro, and can be found at the following URL:

http://www.ifarchive.org/if-archive/games/competition2013/web/solarium/solarium.html#1e

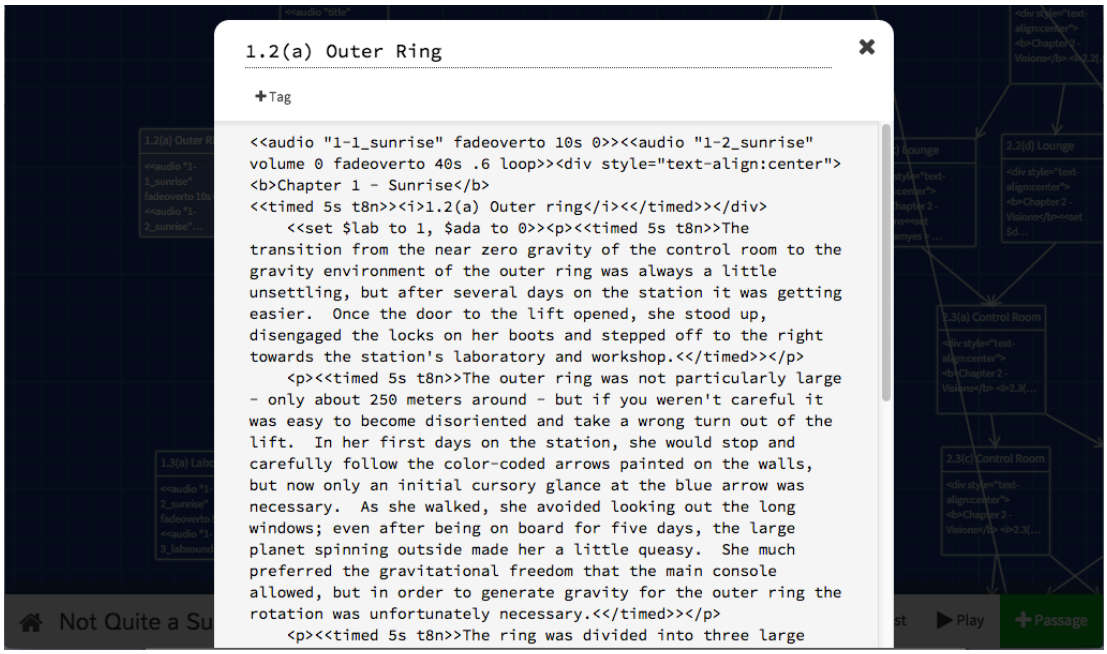
An example of parser IF is *Galatea,* by Emily Short, and can be found at the following URL:

http://pr-if.org/play/galatea/

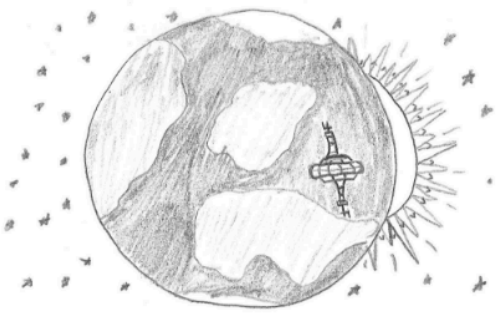
in which the listener takes on a more active role. This also shifted my concept of shrinking the opera away from simply the form to shrinking the audience - creating an interactive operatic experience intended for a single listener.

In interactive fiction, the changed role of the reader is communicated not by the use of technology alone but through the interface with which the reader approaches the text. This change in interface is what allows physical, print books to become interactive narratives; without the choices placed at the bottom of the pages of Choose Your Own Adventure books, or the division of Chris Ware's *Building Stories* into fourteen unordered documents, the reader would have an experience no different than an ordinary print book. The digital realm has the advantage over print in that the first expectation with digital media is interactivity. For example, when confronted with the interface for Alan Deniro's *Solarium*, the reader understands that the blue colored text that identifies a link will, when clicked, likely bring new text or lead to a new passage - at the very least, these colored words have the potential for interaction.

The interface for *Not Quite a Sunset* is programmed in Twine, an open-source programming environment created by Chris Klimas and designed specifically for the creation of hypertext stories. Twine uses a simple, nearly plain text syntax that is translated into HTML and Javascript, allowing for easy online distribution. Because of this integration of the basic languages of web development under the hood, there is a significant amount of customization possible, facilitated through the several built-in story formats that take the core language and apply additional formatting and functions, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. *Not Quite a Sunset* was written in the format



Example 1: Editing a passage in Twine



Chapter 1 - Sunrise

1.1 Control Room

As the light from the system's lone star breached the edge of the planet below, Sara pulled the visor on her headset over her eyes. More out of habit than necessity, really - the sophisticated shielding around the station blocked the solar radiation better than an atmosphere. The influx of natural sunlight triggered an automatic dimming of the lighting inside the control room, while the console itself still glowed a soft blue and red under her fingers.

Although the surface of the planet was dark, still shadowed from the glare of its sun, the bare outlines of continents were illuminated on her HUD. Small green circles in the planet's more temperate zones represented the many drones tasked with surveying the area for the first human settlement. As the automated reports were transmitted from the planet below, the console chirped proudly, slowly assembling a picture of the planet more complete than the orbital satellites alone could provide.

NEXT

Example 2: Passage 1.1 from *Not Quite a Sunset*

Sugarcube by Thomas Michael Edwards, which, although a bit more unwieldy in managing the different ways of setting up interactions and effects, is the only current format with native audio functions allowing for the complete control of sound playback.

The listener is presented with a very conventional web interface upon navigating to *Not Quite a Sunset* - black text on a white background with blue hyperlinks - making it simple and intuitive to navigate. The Sugarcube format includes navigation tools by default, allowing the reader to go back or forward to a previously seen passage, return to the beginning, and even save their spot in the text. However, because of the added complexity of audio playback dependent on time and the progression of the text, I have hidden these tools and replaced them with a table of contents at the beginning of the work and navigation links at the end of each chapter, allowing the listener a similar way to jump to any point in the story but avoiding missed, overlapping, or redundant playback commands.

1.2 Story, Text, and Interaction

Not Quite a Sunset is a science fiction opera involving the small crew of a space station. The story is told from the perspective of Dr. Sara Reyes, a scientist leading an advance survey mission in preparation for settling and terraforming a planet orbiting a red dwarf star; as the main protagonist, all listener decisions relate to Sara's actions. She is joined by the energetic young engineer Ada Lynden, a recent but close friend of Sara's, and Lieutenant Ryan Ackerley, the military liaison to the mission.

The text alternates between four main chapters set on the space station and dream-like interludes taking place in Sara's subconscious. The chapters are the main drivers of the action - it is only in these that the characters interact, and in these where the most significant decisions are made. Within the context of the story, these reflect "reality". The interludes begin as dreams or visions within Sara's subconscious, but eventually the images begin to merge into Sara's perception of reality on the station, obscuring the difference between what is real and what is not - she ultimately sees the station through the lens of her dreams. Neither Ada nor Lt. Ackerley appear directly in the interludes at all, though there is one moment in which their actions are translated into the language of the interludes in the third chapter.

Interactive fiction is traditionally written in the second person and present tense, the better to draw in the player or reader *as* the protagonist and to set a tone and atmosphere immediately different from most traditionally presented storytelling. In these cases the protagonist is also purposely left as a sort of blank canvas, usually with just enough information to let the player know how their character relates to the world, providing a strong invitation to role-play. However, because Sara is a specific, defined character rather than simply an avatar for the listener, I chose to write the four main chapters primarily in third person and past tense. The listener is thus asked to make decisions not as themselves within the fictional world, but as Sara. The interludes, being Sara's dreams and visions, demanded something different - in these I write in first person present tense, a more personal voice allowing greater immediacy, urgency, and suddenness as the dream-world appears and changes around her. As the dream-world and

reality begin to blend in Sara's perception, the voice begins to shift as well, with first person passages interrupting and appearing alongside the normal third person narration.

The first chapter, subtitled "Sunrise", primarily serves to introduce the world and its characters. The story opens with Sara at the control console of the station monitoring the many survey drones on the planet. After Lt. Ackerley appears to relieve her at the console, the listener is provided with the first decision point - where else in the station to go? This has a strictly exploratory function, allowing the listener to see more of the station - no choice the listener makes here has any effect on the ultimate progression of the story. A later choice - whether to respond to Ada's request to go down to the lab - also has no long-lasting effect, but helps to establish aspects of Sara's character in the way the listener responds.

The first interlude, "Sunflowers", sees Sara amid an endless field of the yellow flowers, but they behave mysteriously and unnaturally, keeping their distance from her no matter how hard she tries to run towards them. The choice within this section is whether to investigate a tree or lake that appears suddenly around her. The tree path is more comfortable; Sara approached the tree almost like a kid, grabbing and eating a fruit and climbing the tree. By contrast she is unsettled by the lake, seeing a reflection of herself she scarcely recognizes and walking on the water itself. The Door is introduced on both paths, appearing just as suddenly and just as unexplainable.

In the second chapter, "Visions", Sara deals with some minor ways the dream she had is beginning to affect how she sees the world around her. Some details shift depending on whether the listener chooses the tree or lake path in the previous interlude;

the lake path in particular opens up an encounter with the lieutenant not found in the tree path. She also begins to see things from the dream-world within the station that seem to be leading her down to the planet. There are two conversations with the other characters that are perhaps the most significant decision points to how the opera progresses: does Sara tell her crewmates about the dream, or about what she sees? The listener's response to these brief situations informs the relationships between Sara and her colleagues that will become more significant later. Finally, after a sudden loss of power and several drones stop responding, Sara loses consciousness in the laboratory, entering the dream-world a second time.

The second interlude, "River of Stars", is a similar environment to the previous interlude, but it is a larger navigable area than the confined space among the sunflowers of the previous interlude. The listener is once more provided with a choice of direction - should she follow a river up into the mountains or down into a forest in the valley? Again there is a difference in atmosphere between the two choices - the summit of the mountain is quick and disorienting, as she sees a sunflower, tumbles suddenly into the river when she tries to reach it, and is swept into the cosmos among the stars. The forest is more nostalgic, as the stars become fireflies that dance around her and stir up vague childhood memories. Both paths still lead to the door, and Sara feels closer to it, as if it is about to open.

The third chapter, "Merging", opens as Sara comes to. Lt. Ackerley fears a concussion and recommends rest. When she wakes up again, it is revealed that the Door that Sara has seen in her dreams has been found on the planet. Her vision is blurred by a

kind of haze, and the dream-world begins to infiltrate her own reality more dramatically - she sees sunflowers in the corridors and she shifts between the third person, perceiving the station as it is, and the first person, perceiving it as an underground tunnel within her dream-world. Decision points are again presented to the listener allowing for the opportunity to go talk to Ada or to simply walk through the corridors, eventually arriving in the docking bay and launching the shuttle for the planet. This is followed by the third interlude, "Twilight", which expresses the shuttle's entry into the planet's atmosphere and landing on the surface through the language of the interludes.

The final, currently incomplete chapter, "Opening", takes place on the planet's surface. Here is where all the previous choices finally come into play - the decisions made in the first two interludes determine some of the details of what Sara sees as she finds evidence of the intertwining of alien technology with the natural world previously undetected; the decisions of the previous chapters determine who is on the surface with her. Similar to the previous chapter, Sara feels guided by some force invisible to the others and hears a voice inaudible to the others; when she is on the planet alone, she is able to follow that sense without restriction. When she is accompanied by Ada, her friend goes along with her, trusting her, and providing additional observation and character development. With Lt. Ackerley there as well, he wants to follow the drone readings more strictly, leading Sara away from her instinctive path, creating the opportunity for conflict as Sara must choose how far to go along with the officer. All paths eventually lead to the mysterious Door, with different outcomes depending on who is with Sara, how

she got there, and how she responds to the voice only she hears. Ultimately she must choose whether to open the Door and whether to cross the threshold into the unknown.

1.3 The Music of *Not Quite a Sunset*

Writing music for a prose text is a very different experience than my typical work. Where a typical concert or staged work is experienced at the same rate by all in the audience, the same is not true for a text, as different people have very different rates of reading. In composing the music, I needed to develop strategies to address the variance between the reading rates for each individual listener. I immediately realized that I could not depend on significant synchronization between many specific moments in the text and moments in the music. This required developing material that can be looped, layered, and molded in a variety of ways, and assembling much of that material so that it could repeat indefinitely without the listener losing interest while they read to the end of the passage and take time to make a decision about how to proceed. When a section of music needed to be strongly associated with a particular text, playback is programmed to start shortly after the listener manually advances the text by clicking a link at the end of a passage (such as the entrance of the flute with a description of Sara's work at the console during passage 1.1), or having the text and music interrupt what came before on purpose (such as the interjection of Ada over the comm in two passages in the first chapter). Note that the interludes are the exception to this general rule; because the voice performs, much of the text, the appearance of the words on the screen is always timed carefully with the music.

The score can be divided into three separate sections. The first five numbers are primarily designed to generate textures and chords, forming the foundation for much of the back- and midground material throughout the piece. Of the three sections of "Sunrise", 1(a) uses a gradual increase in motion and shift from *flautando* to ordinary bowing in natural harmonics to create an atmosphere of increasing light; 1(b) and 1(c) use the pitch material of 1(a) as the basis for two additional sets of textures, the later much more percussive than the others. "Swells" provides long slow building and fading chords and was recorded with several different dynamic envelopes and tempos. "Swells" is a set of three slowly building and fading chords that were recorded with different dynamic envelopes and tempos. "Drones" represents the low hum of machinery on the station through low double bass notes held with slow oscillations; the other instruments emerge from the drone notes, almost as other levels of vibration within the hum. "Rotational Pulse" generates textures of repeated notes inspired by differences in gravity from the stations rotation. Each instrument's dynamic swell and tempo differs from the others. "Alarm Clock" contains two piano pieces, with 5(a) intended for the beginning of Chapter 2 and 5(b) used as the title music as well as in the encounter with the mysterious Door in Chapter 4. 5(c) is generates related textures, with the piano playing isolated repeated notes within a chord and the other instruments provide additional sustained resonance of those chords.

The next three numbers represent the dialog and relationship between Sara and Ada and are used as foreground material in their conversations, with the flute largely representing Sara and the bass clarinet Ada. "Sara at the Console" is used initially in the

opening scene to represent Sara working at the stations console. The figures were developed from recordings of my wife typing and entering records and translated into material for the flute in collaboration with Michael Matsuno. "Sara & Ada in the Lab" implies a dialog between the two characters as they work through data ; material from "Sara at the Console" is incorporated here as well. The flute solo in "Lounge" is used to represent Sara resting in the lounge during Chapter 1 and 2, and the duos with bass clarinet are used for conversation between Sara and Ada over the comm in Chapter 1 and in the lounge in Chapter 2.

The remaining numbers are used during the three interludes. As time is more carefully controlled through these as the text unfolds, these sections are more fully composed compared to the fragmented nature of the rest. The airy textures in "Wind and Sunflowers" are used for the opening of the first and second interludes as Sara begins to engage with the dream-world and try to work out what is going on. Though presented continuously in the score, they were recorded as seven separate fragments that can be layered and reorganize in different ways. "10. Running" consists of guided improvisations by Kyle Adam Blair to represent elements of the text describing Sara running towards the sunflowers in the first interlude. The extremely closed pitch set is used to represent Sara's inability to reach the sunflowers despite her hardest efforts. "11. Tree" incorporates knocking on the wood of the piano and bass with broad sustained textures emerging from the low B-flat; at the end, these slowly building chords are translated into melodic material in the clarinet. "12. Lake" is essentially a canon in the piano, but each of the two voices has a different number of notes; this incomplete canon

combined with the high dissonances is a reflection to Sara's discomfort to her own incomplete reflection in the lake. 12(b) is an extended version in the piano that allows the canon to continue for a longer period and is used as reference to the lake appear in the main chapter. "Forest" and "Mountain" both have rhythms more concrete than the previous Interlude passages with a stronger sense of meter and rhythm. They share similar chords and rhythms, but contrast strongly, especially in contour - as Sara moves up the mountain, the music is moving gradually (though not exclusively) higher; as Sara descends towards the valley's forest, the chords in the piano gradually descend.

1.4 Using the Voice

In the early stages of writing *Not Quite a Sunset*, my plan was to treat all three characters in a similar fashion. Dialog between each of the characters would be set to music, making the main chapters on the station more like traditional recitative and the dream-like interludes would be more like traditional arias. However, because every reader reads at a different rate, I ultimately concluded that to have the dialog performed would break the listener/reader's sense of immersion and would be detrimental to creating a convincing sense of a space to be explored. Without adjusting timing for each individual listener, a slower reader would have to jump ahead to catch up when the voice is heard; a faster reader would have to stop and wait or go back. Each chapter would thus require an elaborate choreography guiding each listener through the same temporal experience. However, by treating dialog no differently than the descriptive prose around it, each listener is free to read at their own rate and to take their time making decisions, maybe even stopping to listen to the music for a while before moving on.

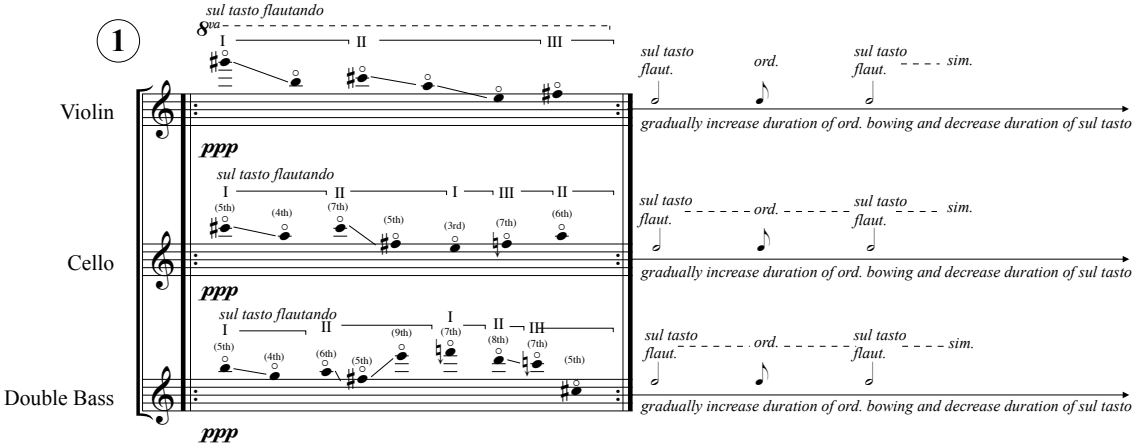
However, the interludes are drastic a break in style and in atmosphere from the main chapters. During the chapters, it is as if the listener-as-Sara is playing a game in a third person birds' eye perspective, making decisions and acting for their player-character but also being able to observe the world independently of the character's line of sight; the interludes are more like a first-person game, as description and observation are directly from Sara's perspective - the listener is in a sense seeing through Sara's eyes, so it makes sense to hear her observation in her voice. The appearance of Sara's voice in the interludes thus helps to set the interludes further apart sonically from the chapters on the station.

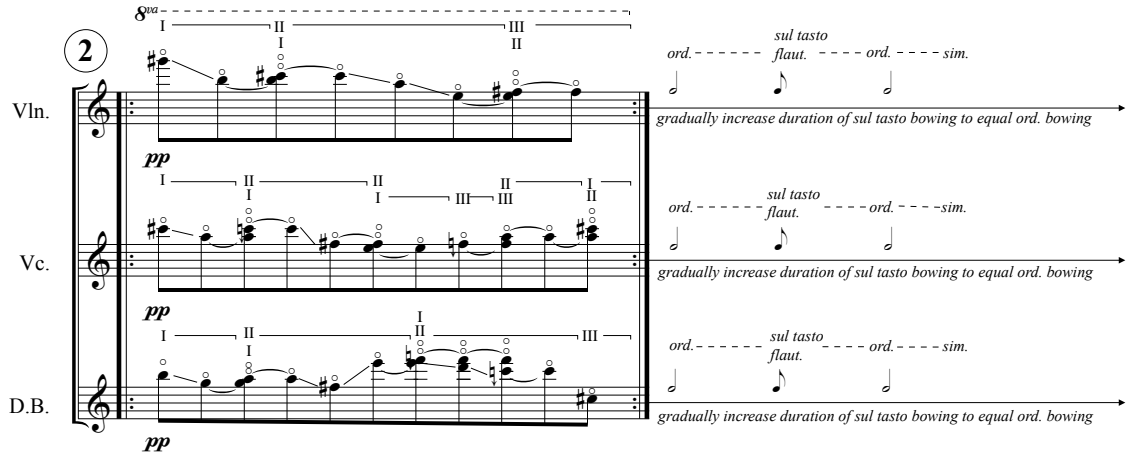
Because the interludes contain a large amount of text, only a subset is actually presented by the voice. Just enough text is selected so that the general meaning of the passage can be perceived solely through listening to the recorded voice, and the remaining text is read by the listener and provides additional details to fill out the scene. Over the course of the interludes, the setting moves from sung to spoken voice. Generally, Sara sings as she's describing what she sees and tries to come to terms with the world around her. As the interludes progress and she moves closer to the Door, Sara shifts to a spoken voice instead, performing a higher percentage of the total text; the third interlude, "Twilight", is entirely spoken. As the Door physically exists on the planet and is ultimately the bridge between the dreams and reality, as well as the source of the dreams themselves, it makes sense that the more stylized singing would transform into more "realistic" and natural speech as Sara approaches the Door.

II.
Score

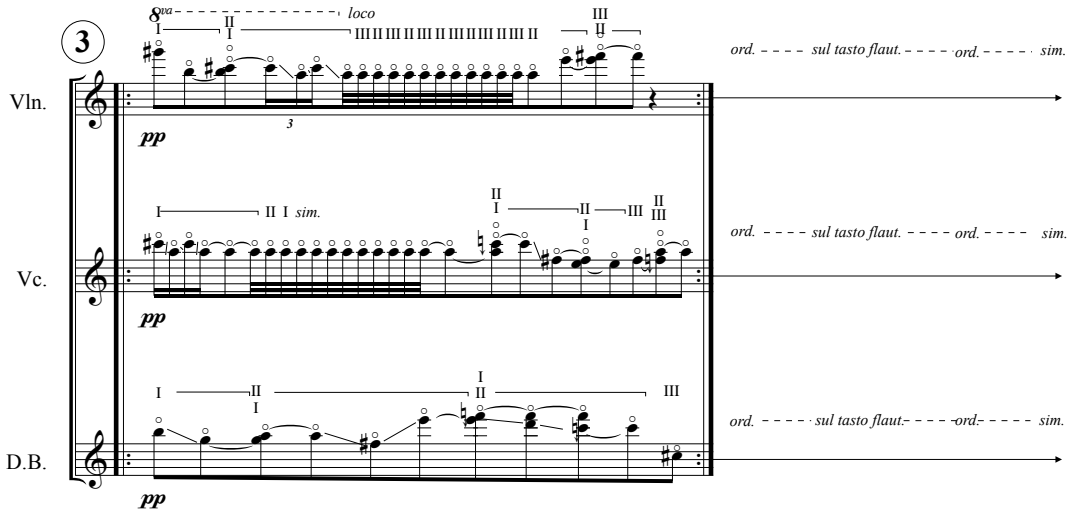
1(a). Sunrise

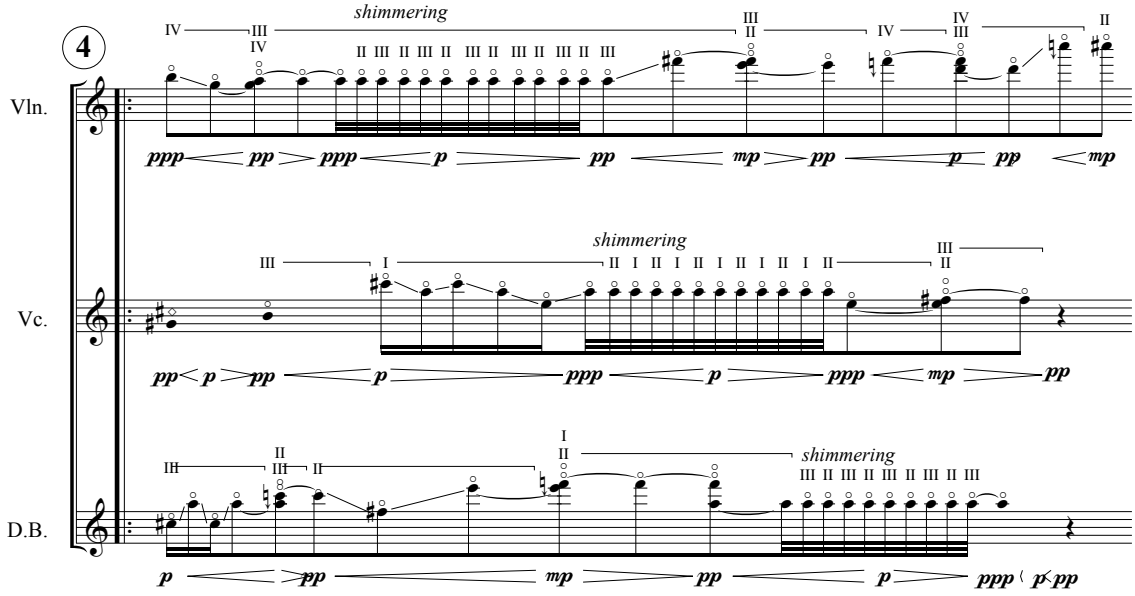
Vary durations between 0.5-3" per note - should not be regular. Do not synchronize with one another.



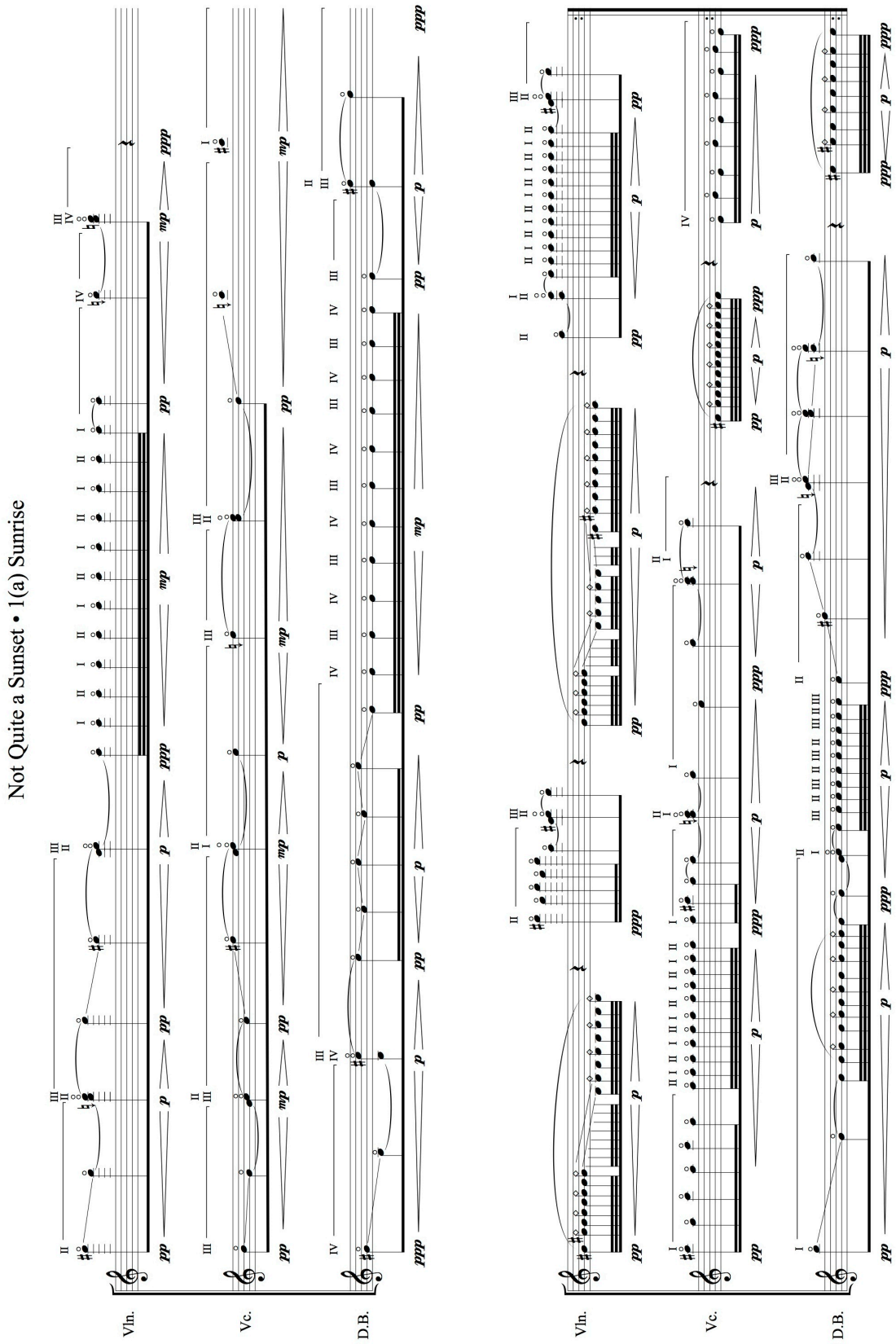


Not Quite a Sunset • 1(a). Sunrise





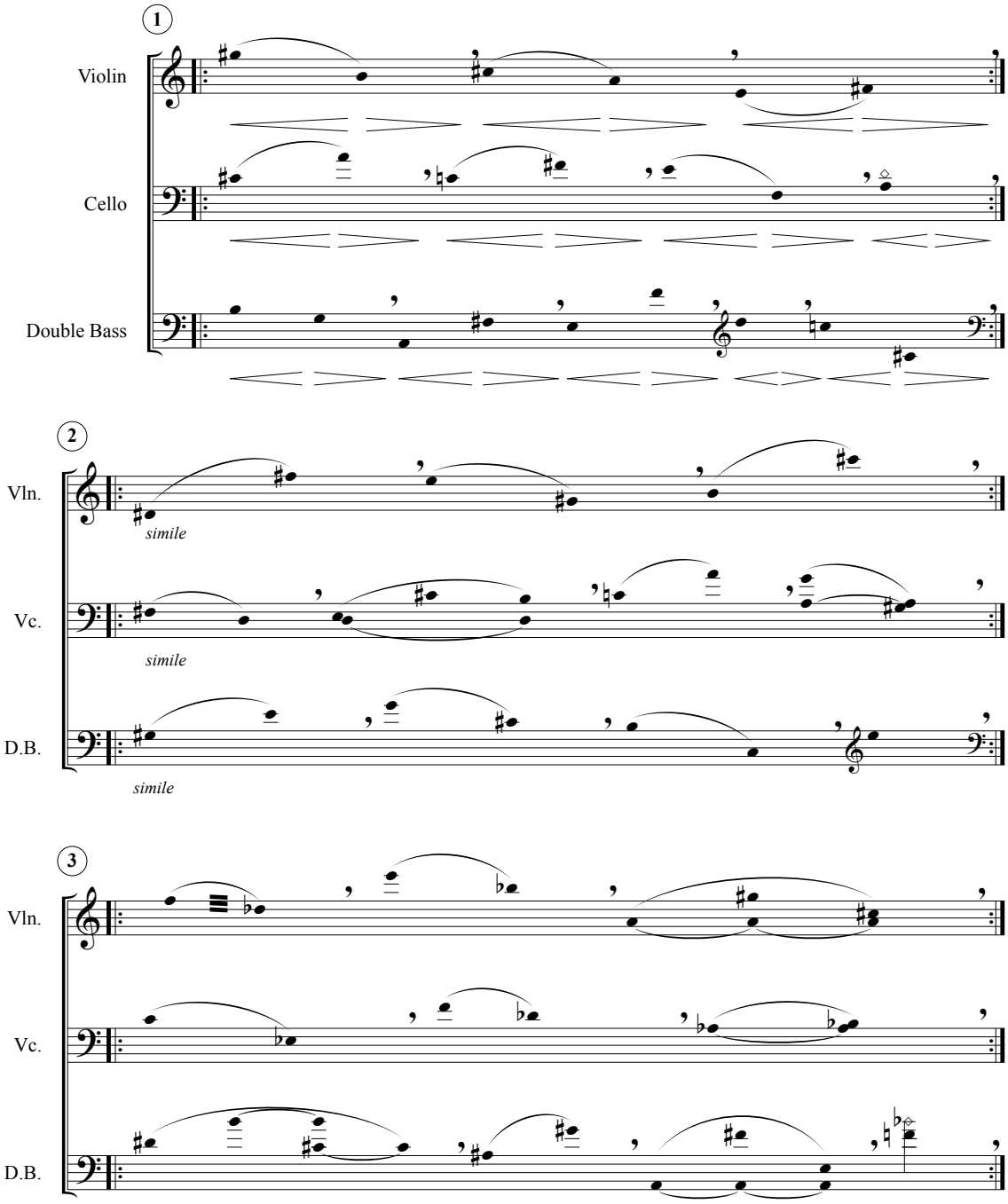
Not Quite a Sunset • 1(a) Sunrise



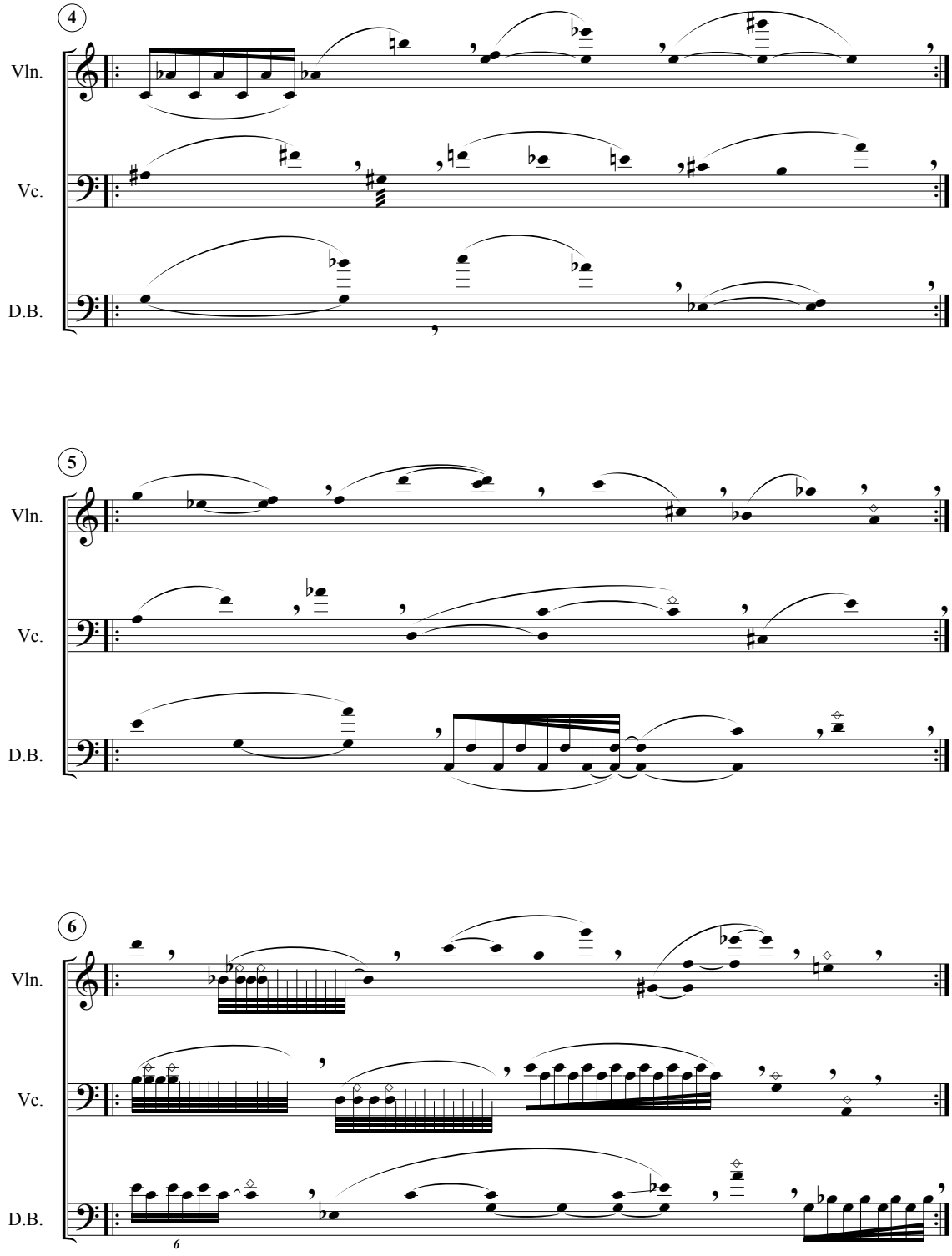
1(b). Sunrise

Version 2

For each repeat, play through the given figures in any order. You may also change octaves as desired on subsequent repeats.



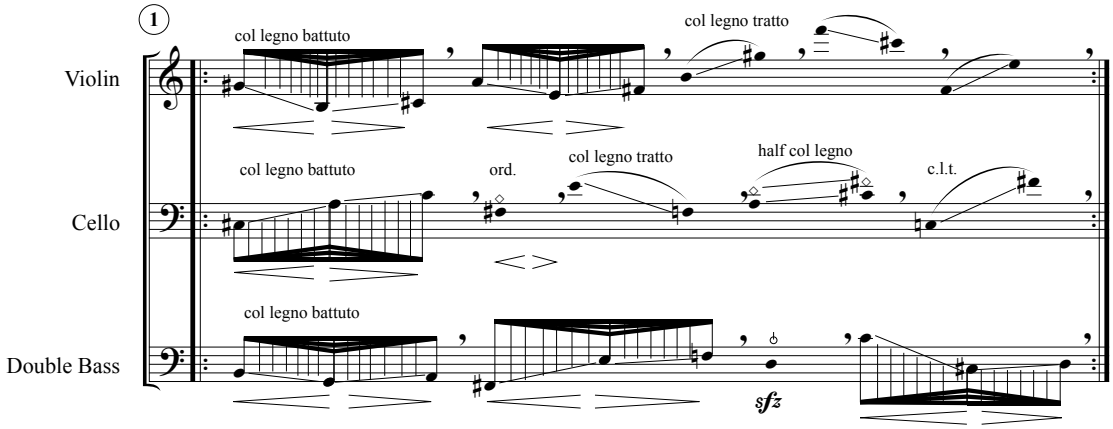
Not Quite a Sunset • 1(b). Sunrise

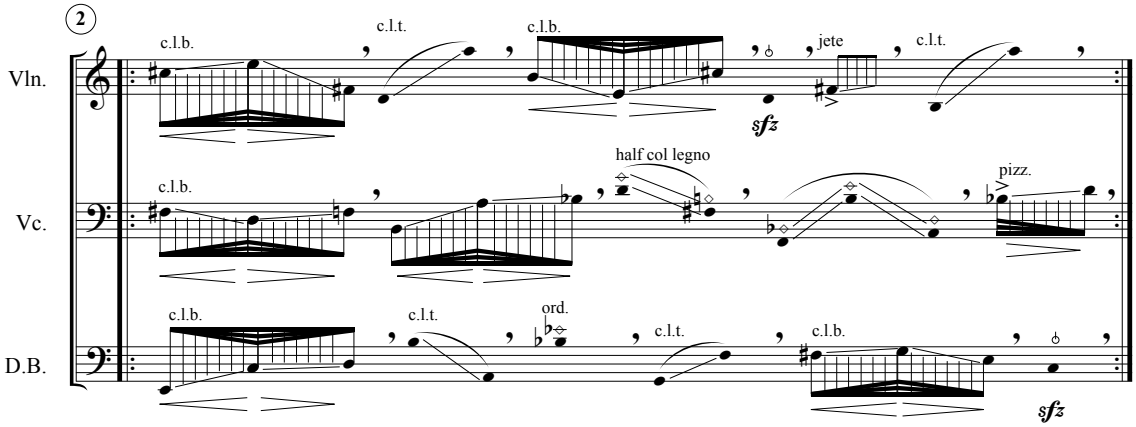


1(c). Sunrise

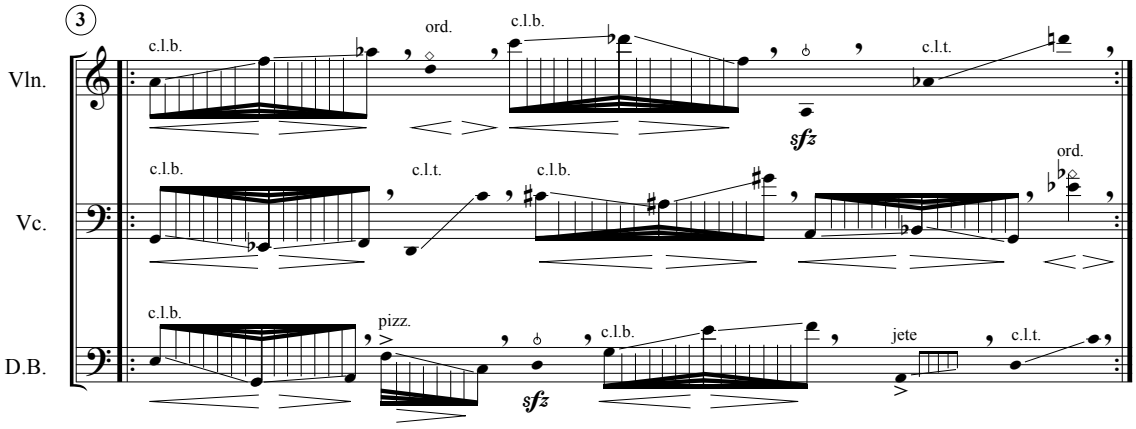
Version 3

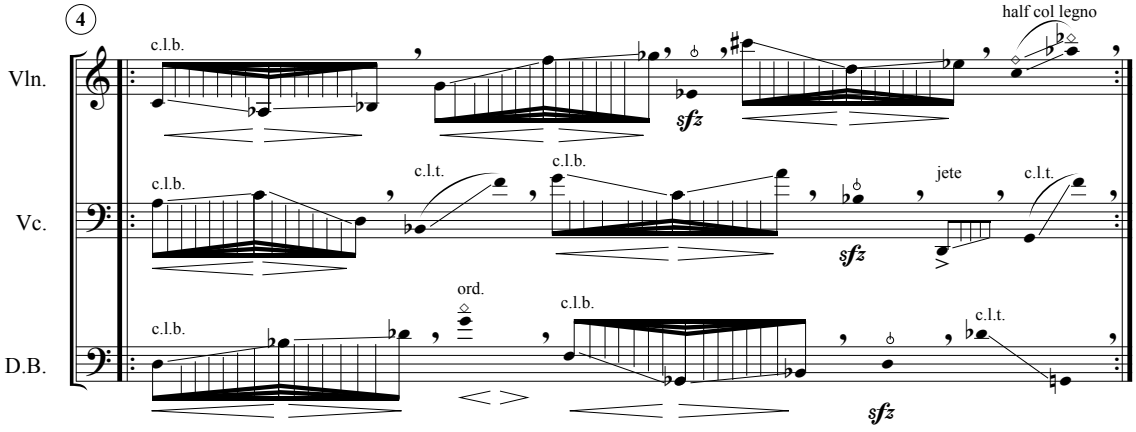
Do not synchronize with each other - stagger entrances. May play figures in any order.
On repeats, may change octave of any note as desired.



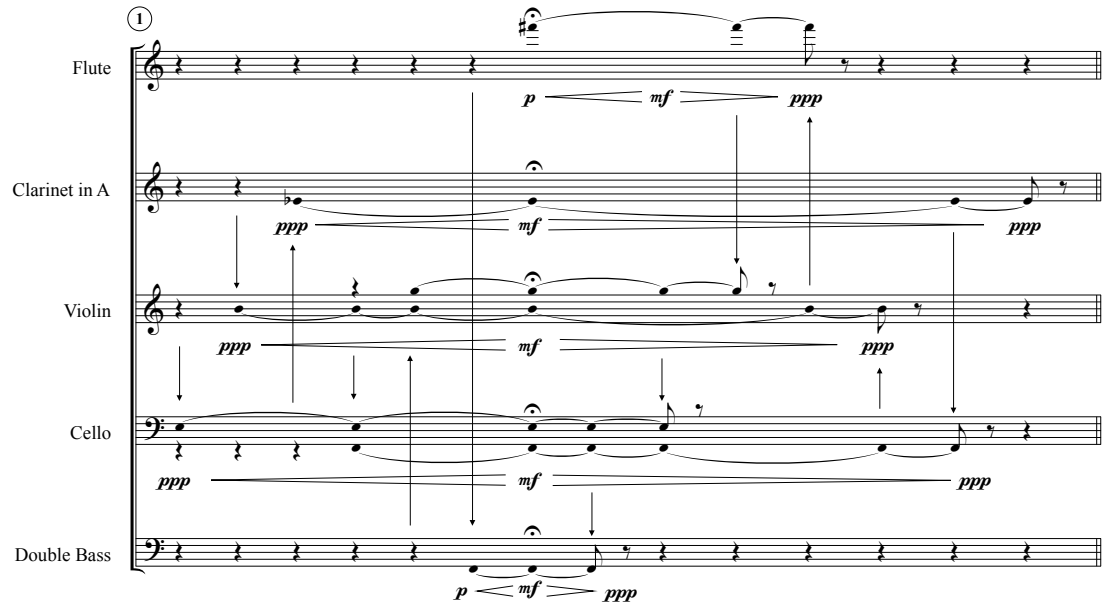


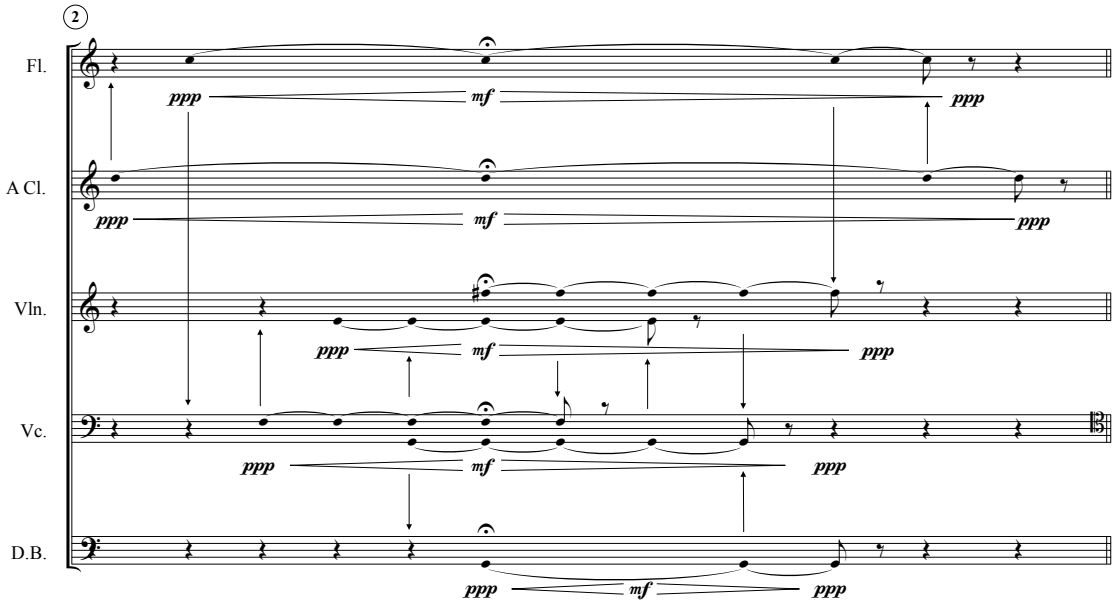
Not Quite a Sunset • 1(c). Sunrise



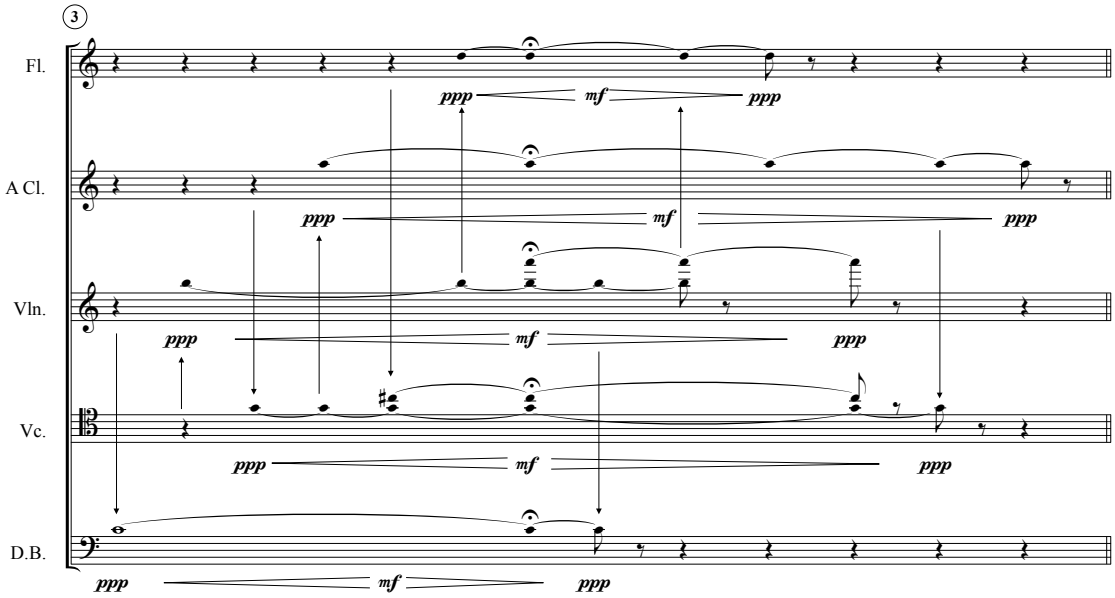


2. Swells

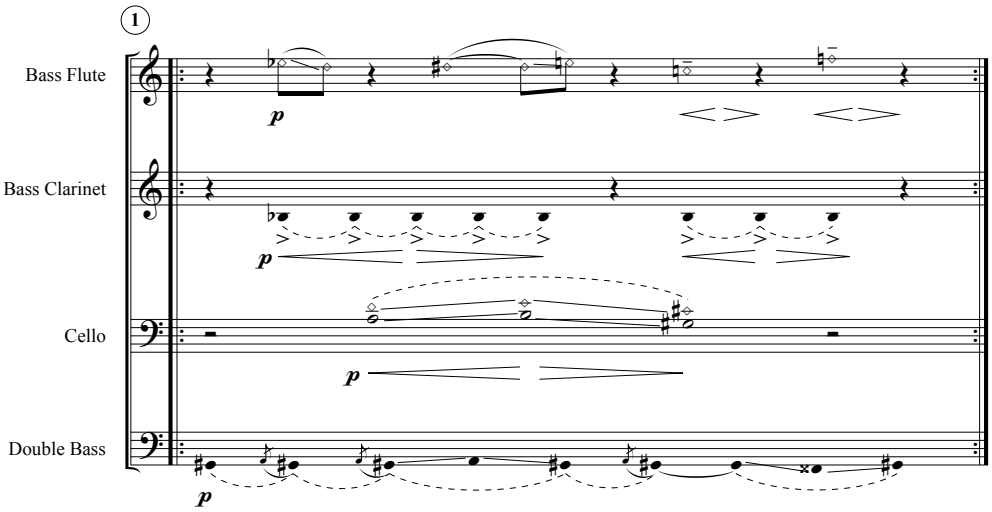

1
Flute
Clarinet in A
Violin
Cello
Double Bass
p mf ppp
ppp mf ppp
ppp mf ppp
ppp mf ppp
p mf ppp

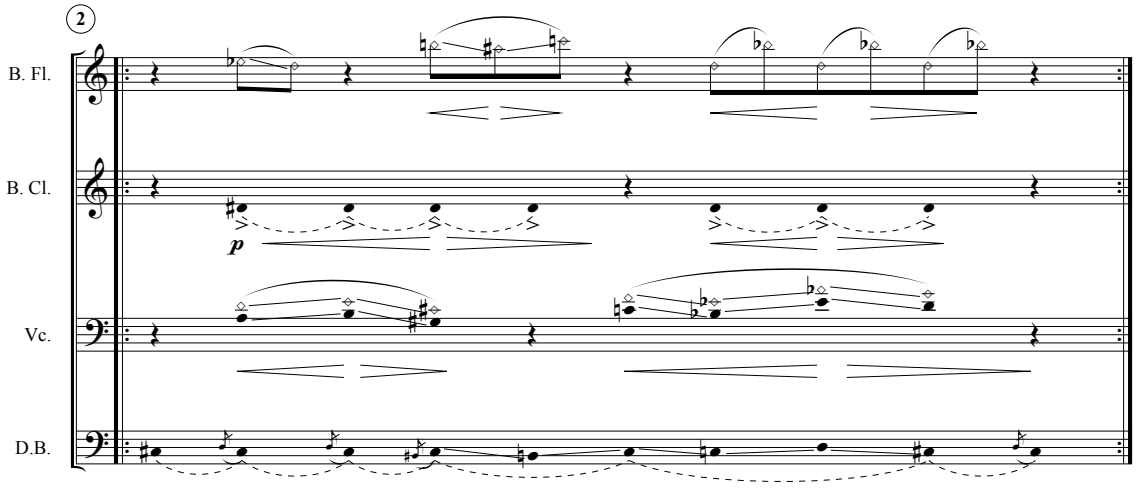

2
Fl.
A Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
D.B.
ppp mf ppp
ppp mf ppp
ppp mf ppp
ppp mf ppp
ppp mf ppp

Not Quite a Sunset • 2. Swells

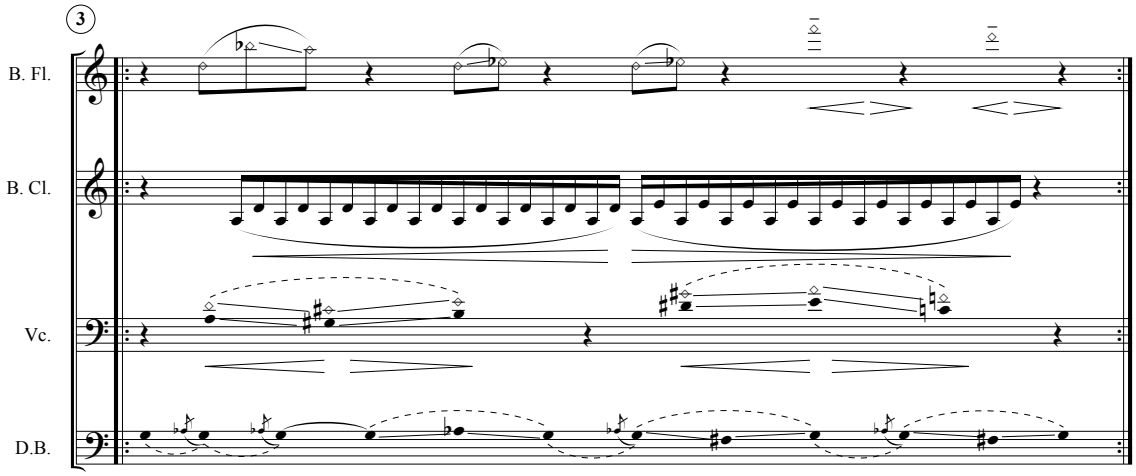


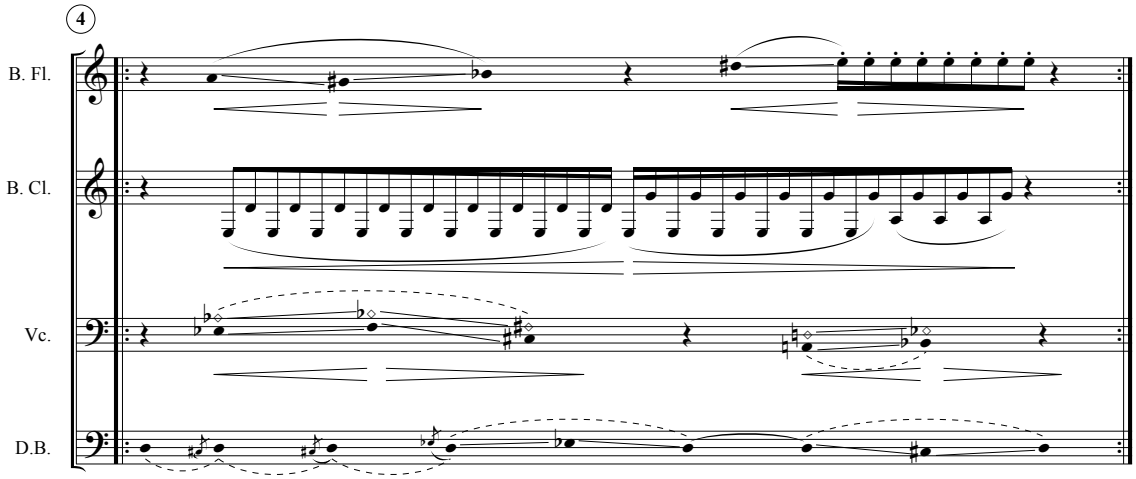
3. Drones


1
Bass Flute
Bass Clarinet
Cello
Double Bass
p

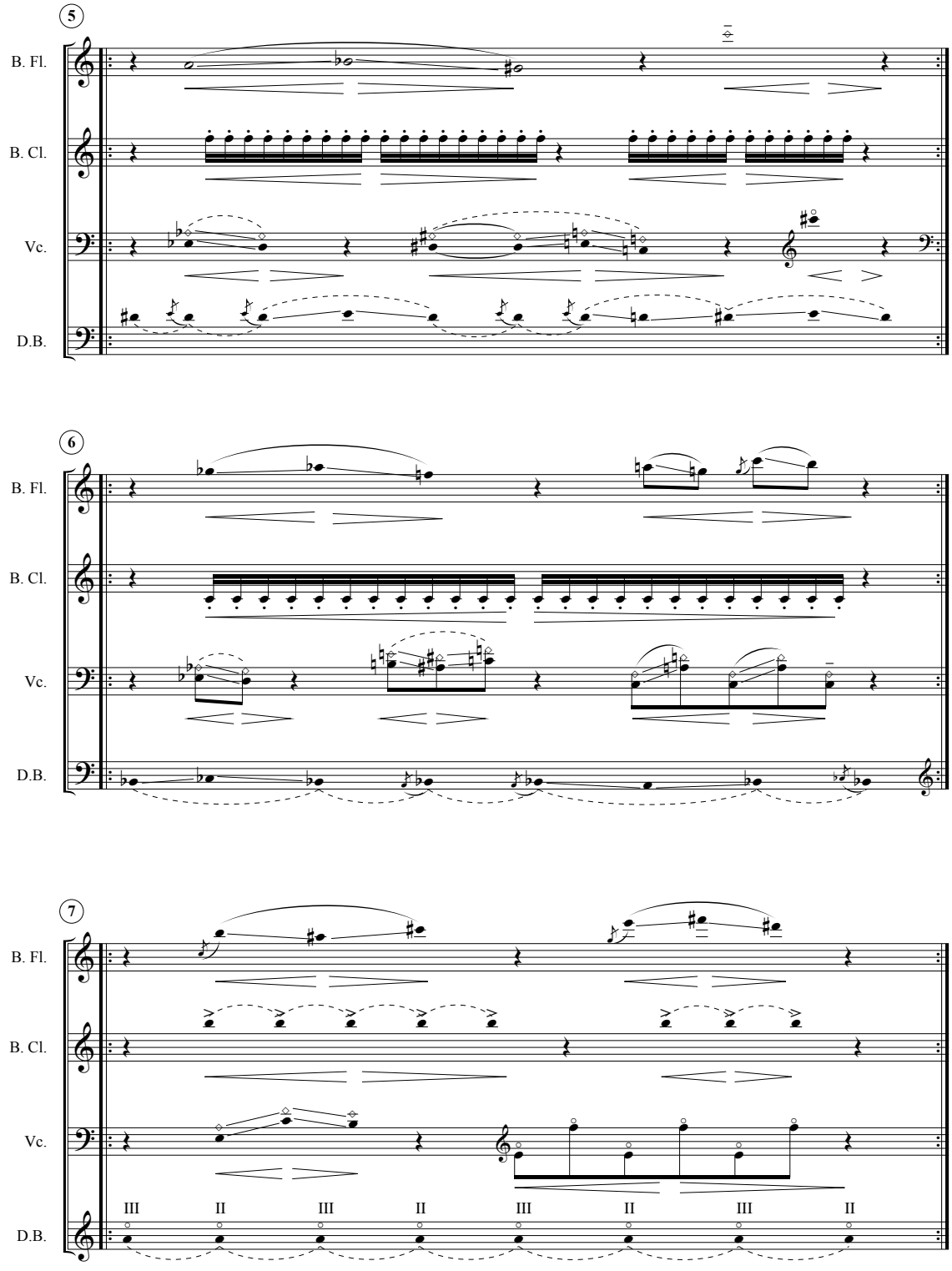

2
B. Fl.
B. Cl.
Vc.
D.B.
p

Not Quite a Sunset • 3. Drones





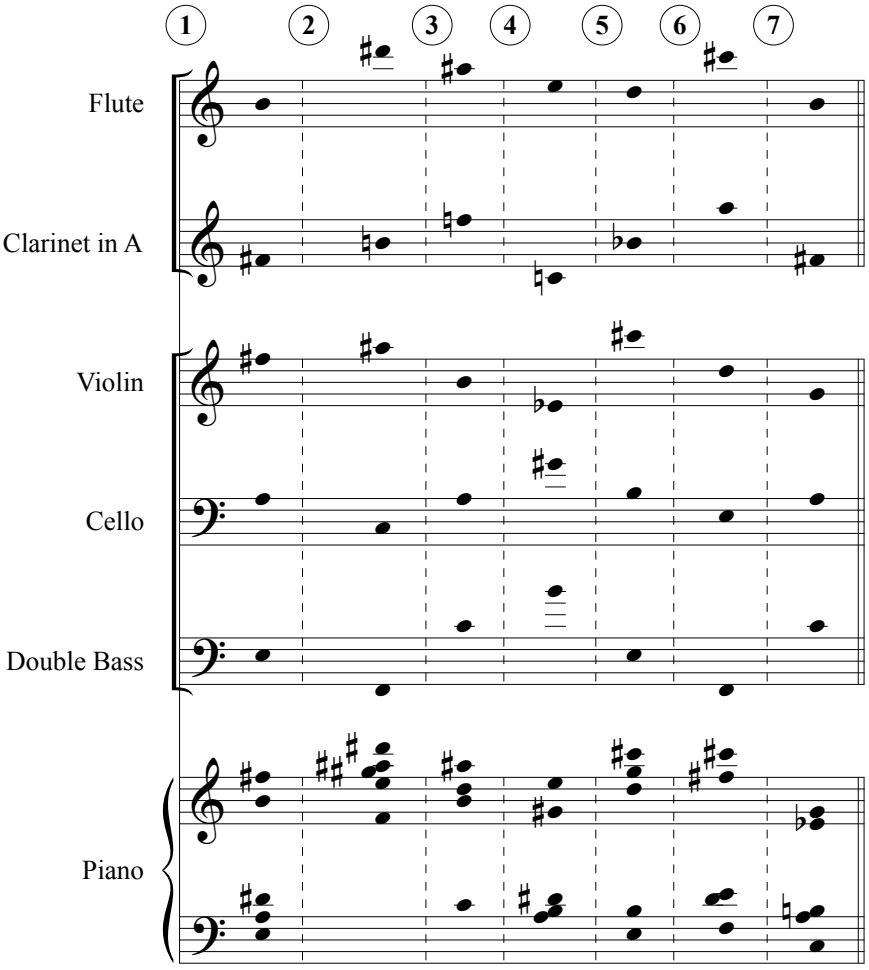
Not Quite a Sunset • 3. Drones



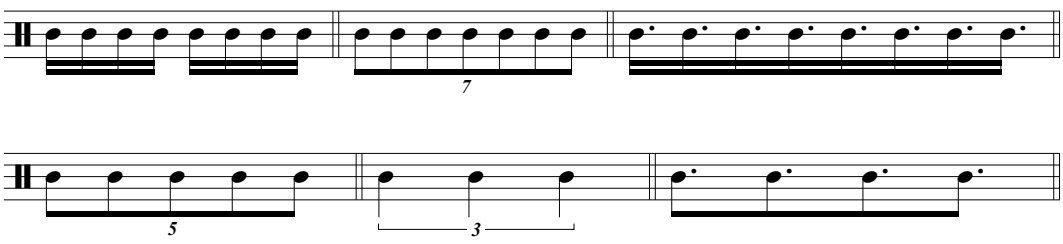
4. Rotational Pulse

Stagger entrances and exits. Repeat the given note, swelling from ppp to mp-mf-f and back
Version A: 16th note pulse Version B: Choose from the rhythms below.
Version C: Multiple notes per swell
Piano: Gradually add, then subtact, one note at a time through the swell.
Strings: For each note, choose arco or pizz.

Chords / Pitches

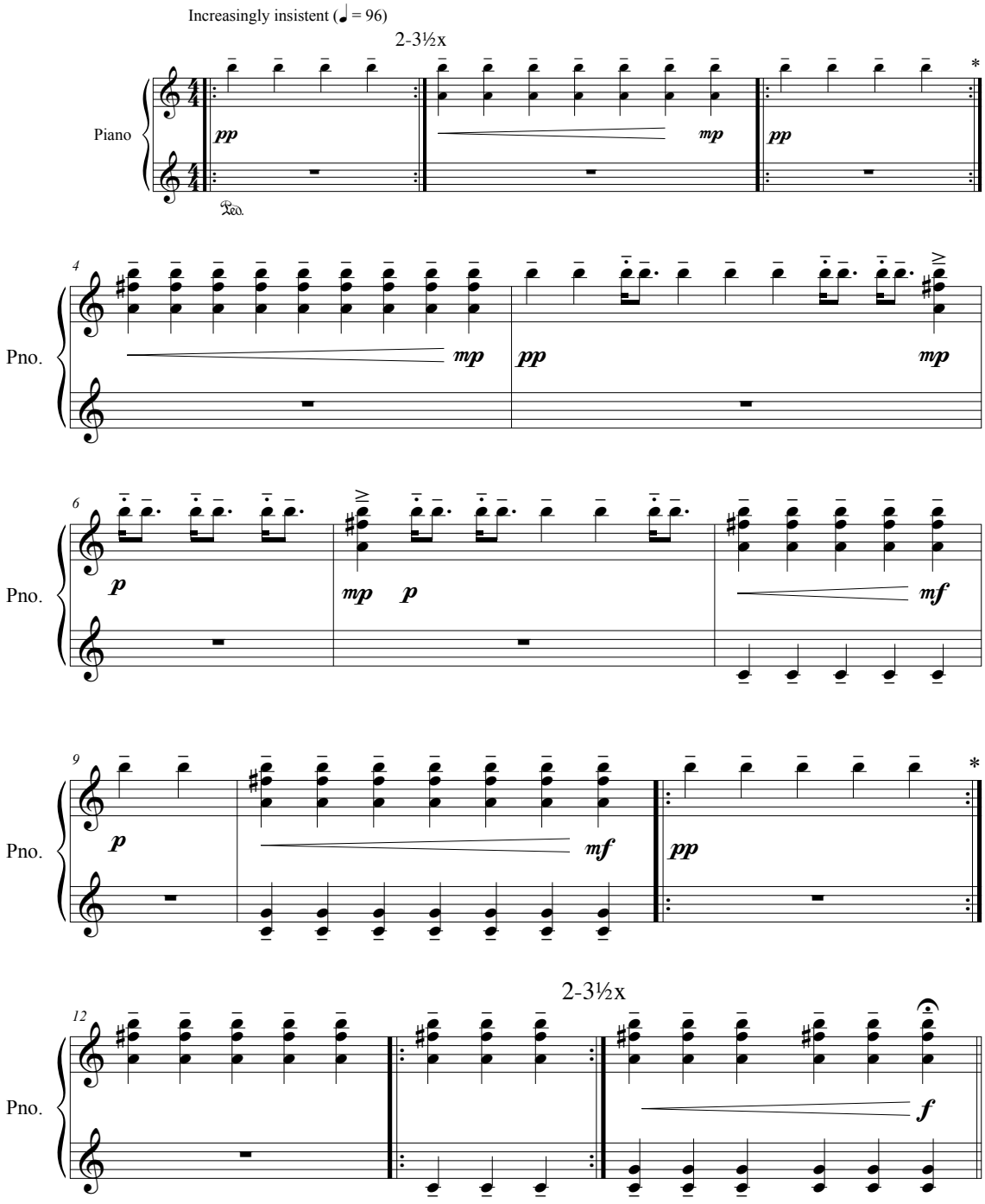


Rhythms



5(a). Alarm Clock

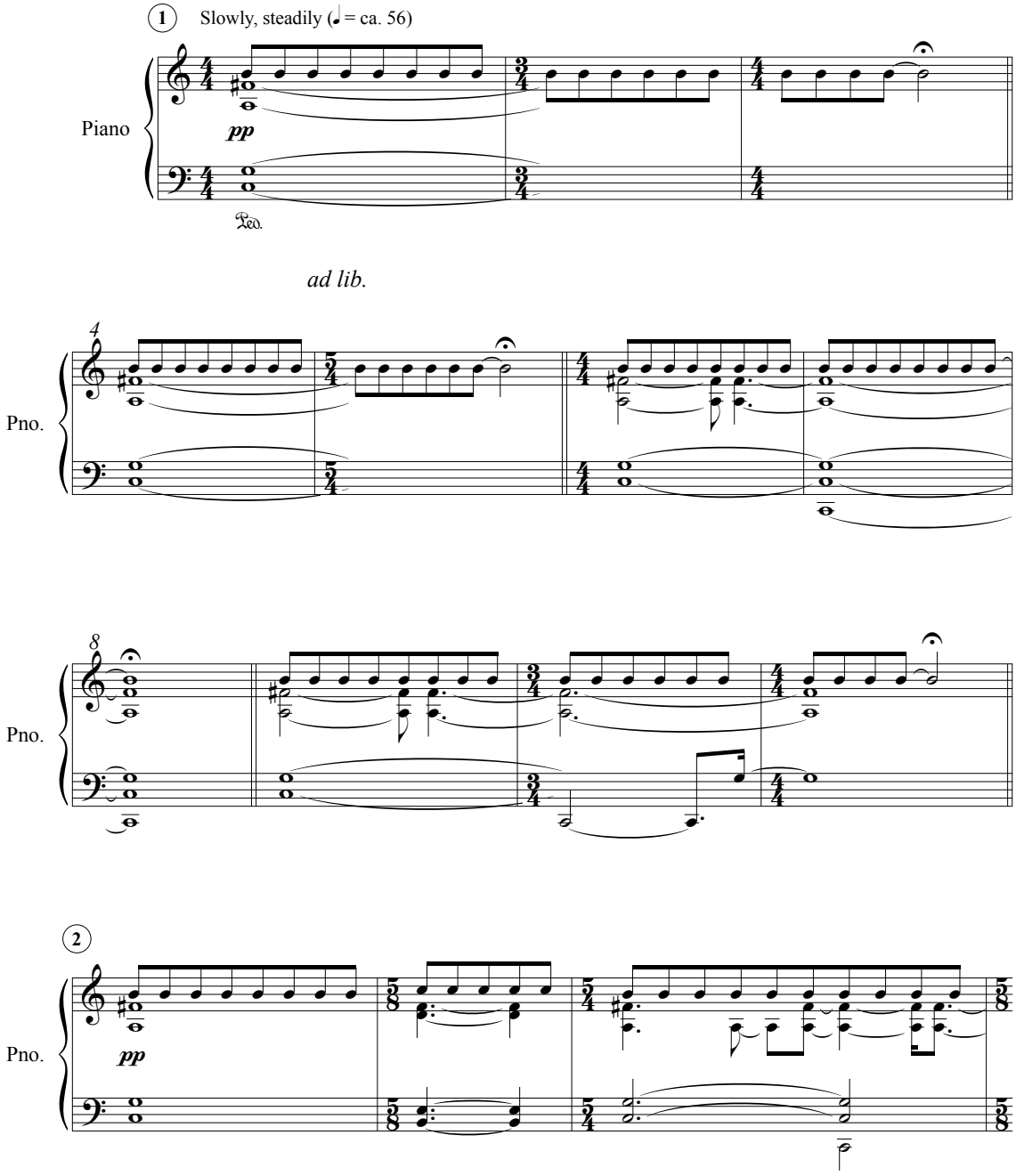
Introduction



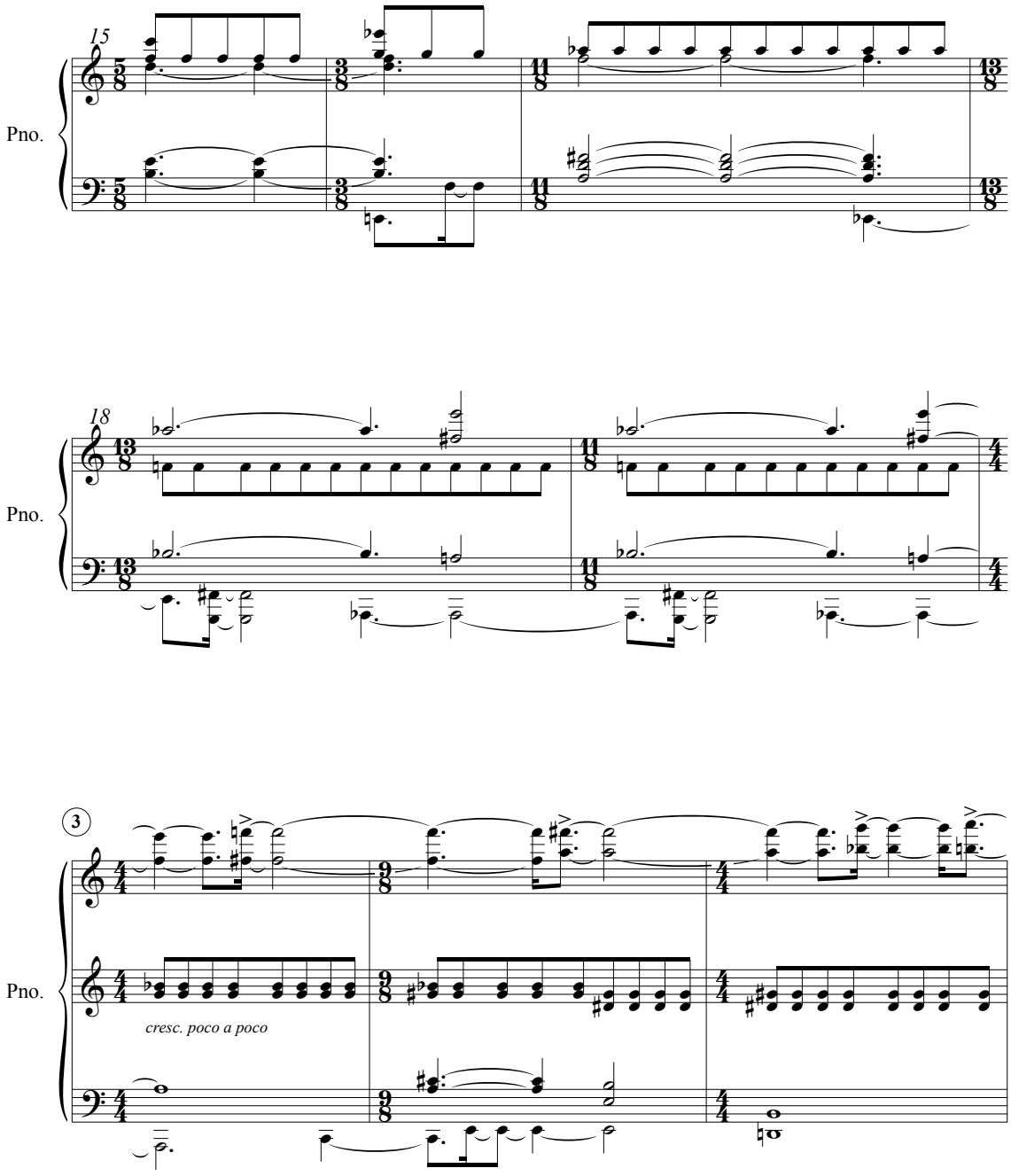
* repeat until resonance from previous crescendo is almost completely gone

5(b). Alarm Clock

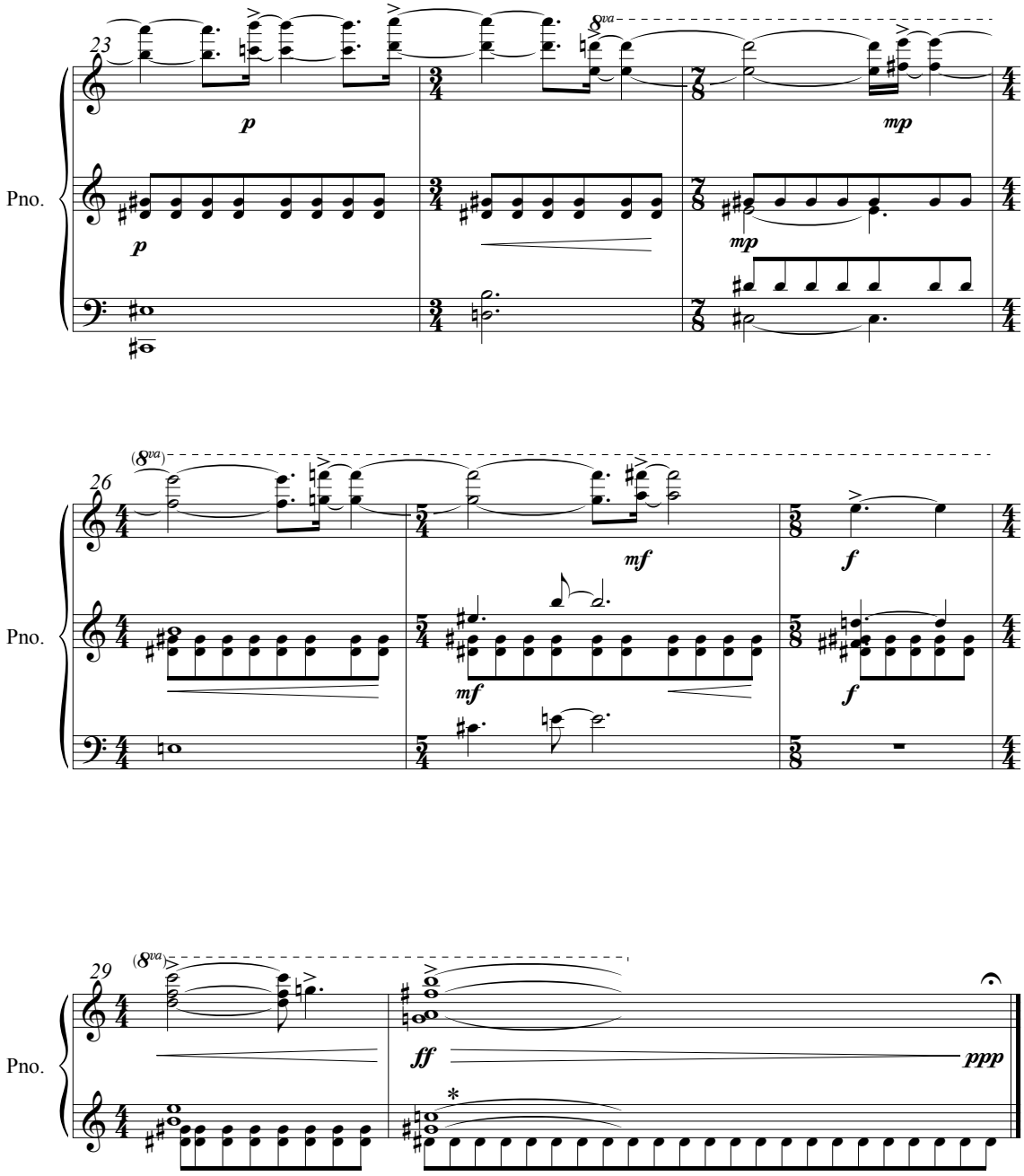
Extended



Not Quite a Sunset • 5(b). Alarm Clock



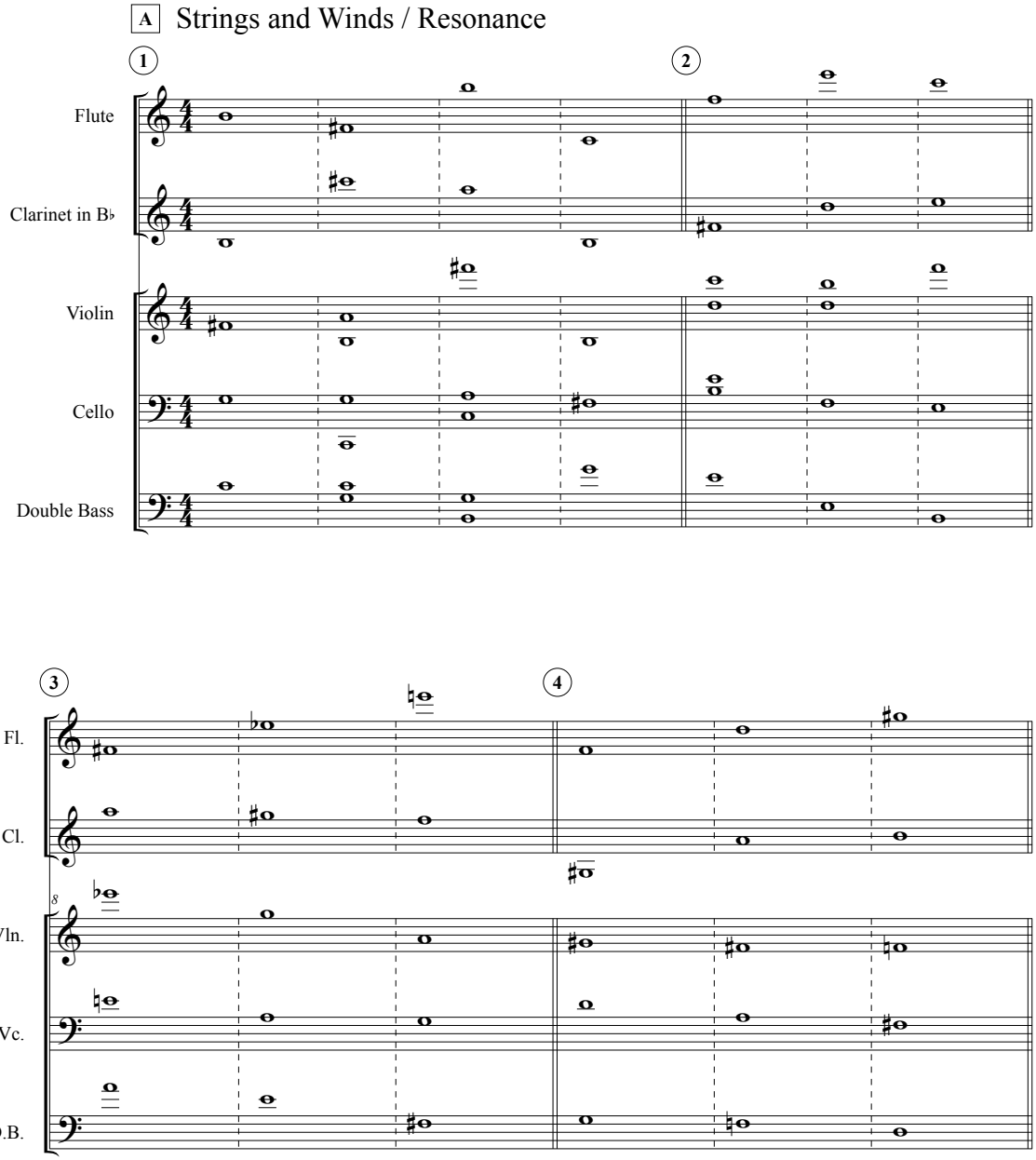
Not Quite a Sunset • 5(b). Alarm Clock



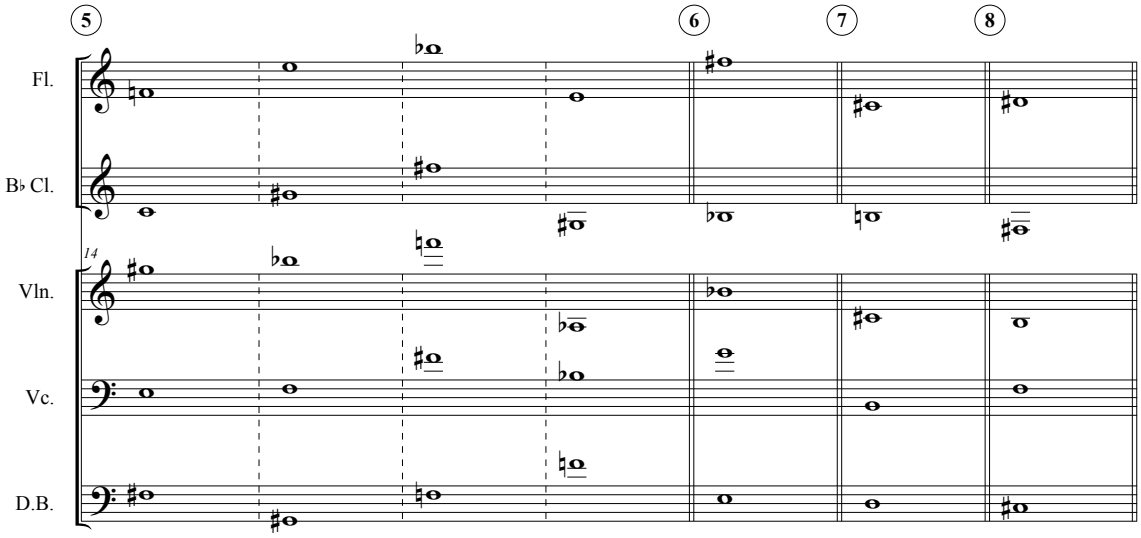
*as many repetitions as it takes to very, very slowly diminuendo to the point where it's difficult to produce any sound at all, then repeat a few more

5(c) Alarm Clock

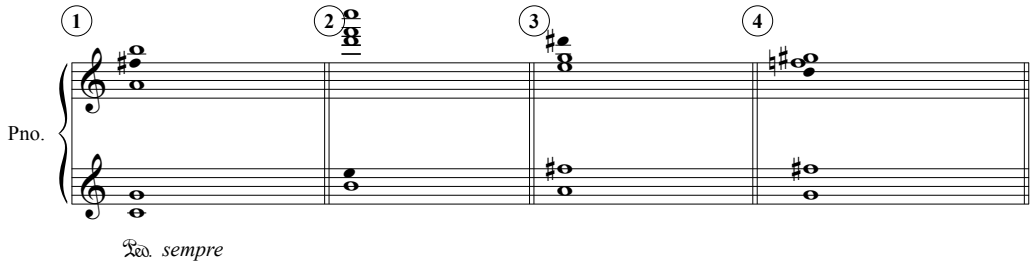
Chords

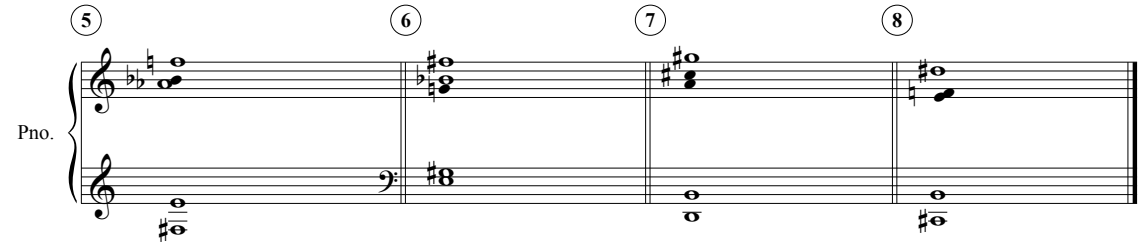


Not Quite a Sunset • 5(c) Alarm Clock



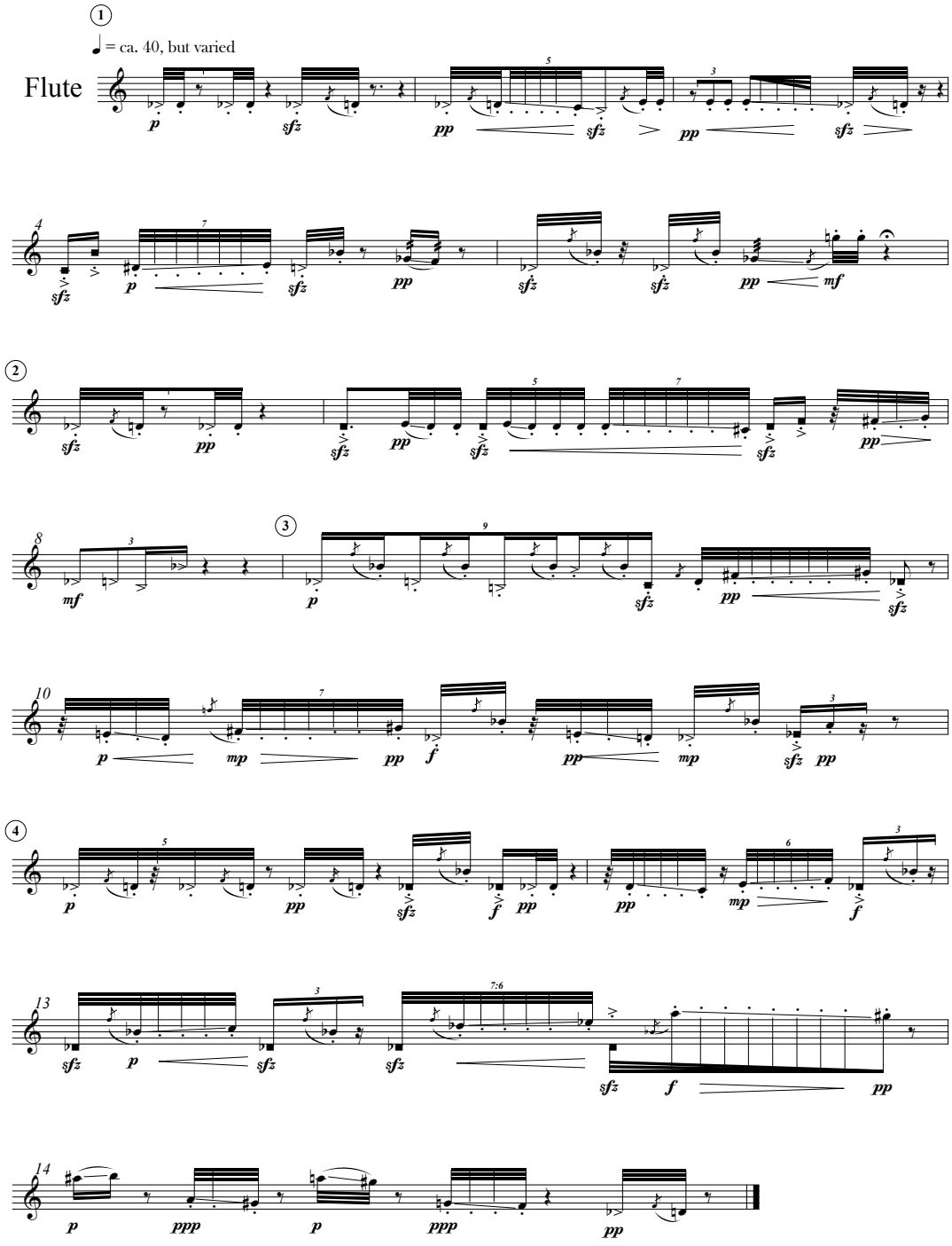
B Piano / Isolation



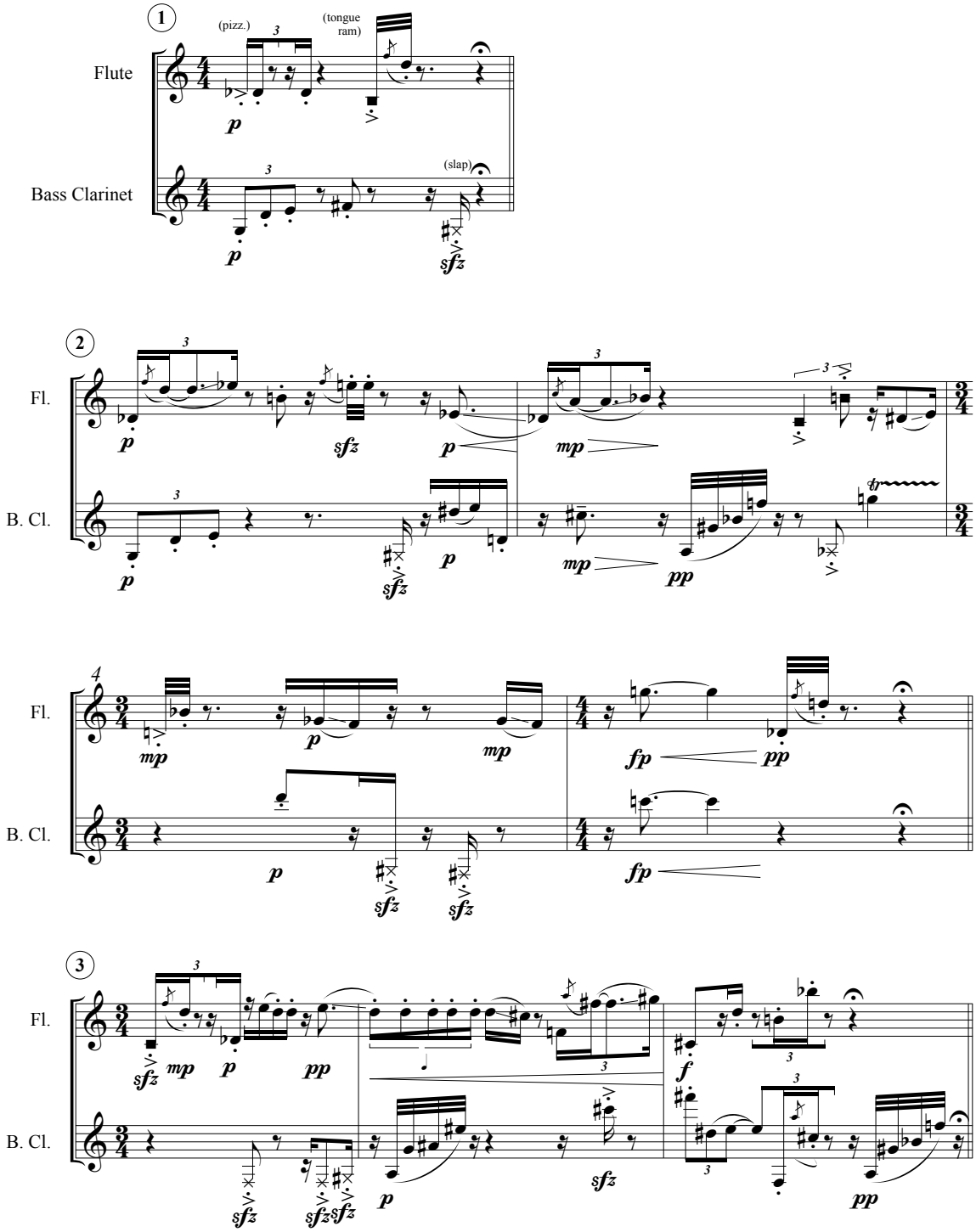


Piano: Play chord, repeating the note(s) with a solid notehead in the manner of 5(b) at least until the the chord fades away.

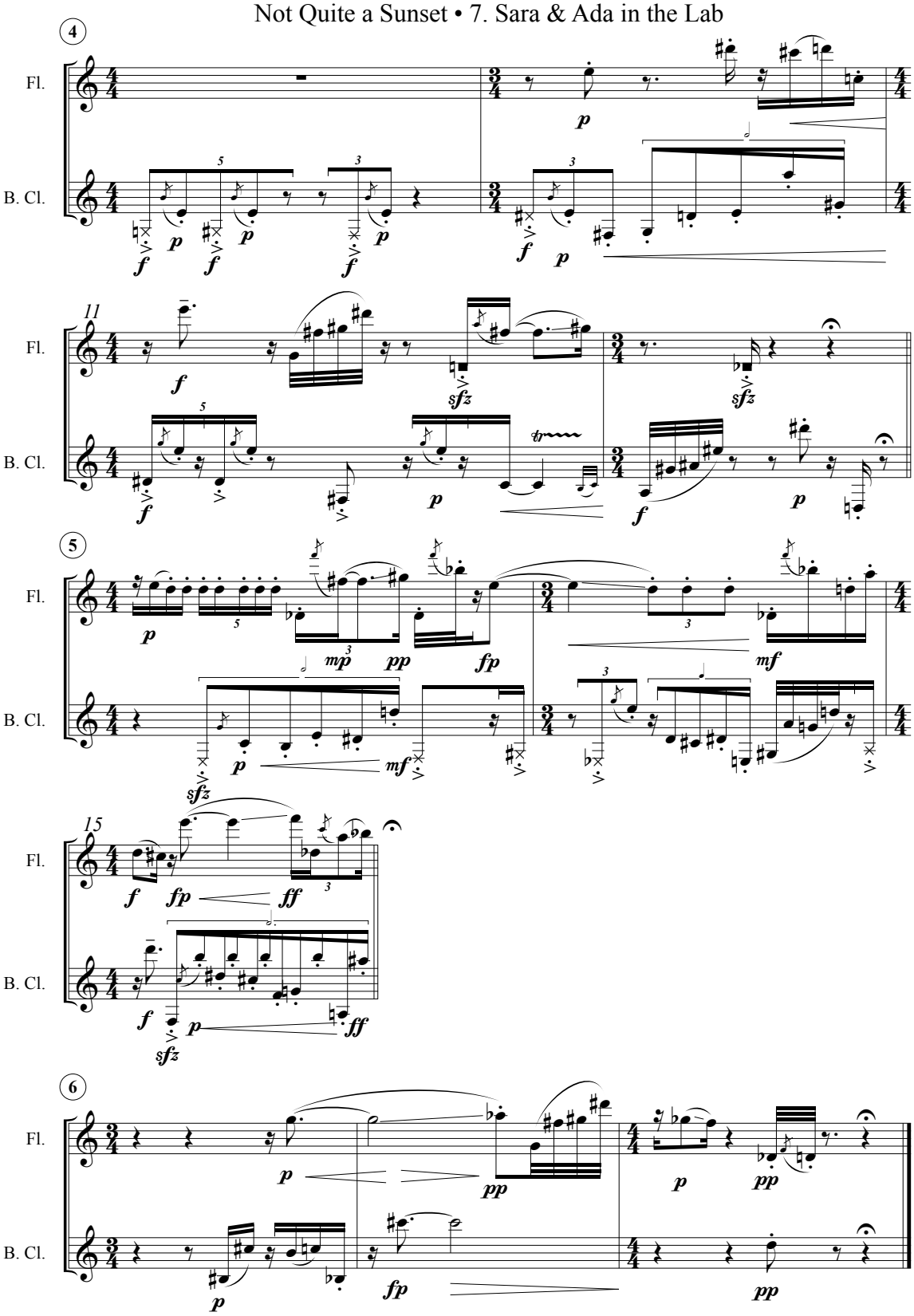
6. Sara at the Console



7. Sara & Ada in the lab

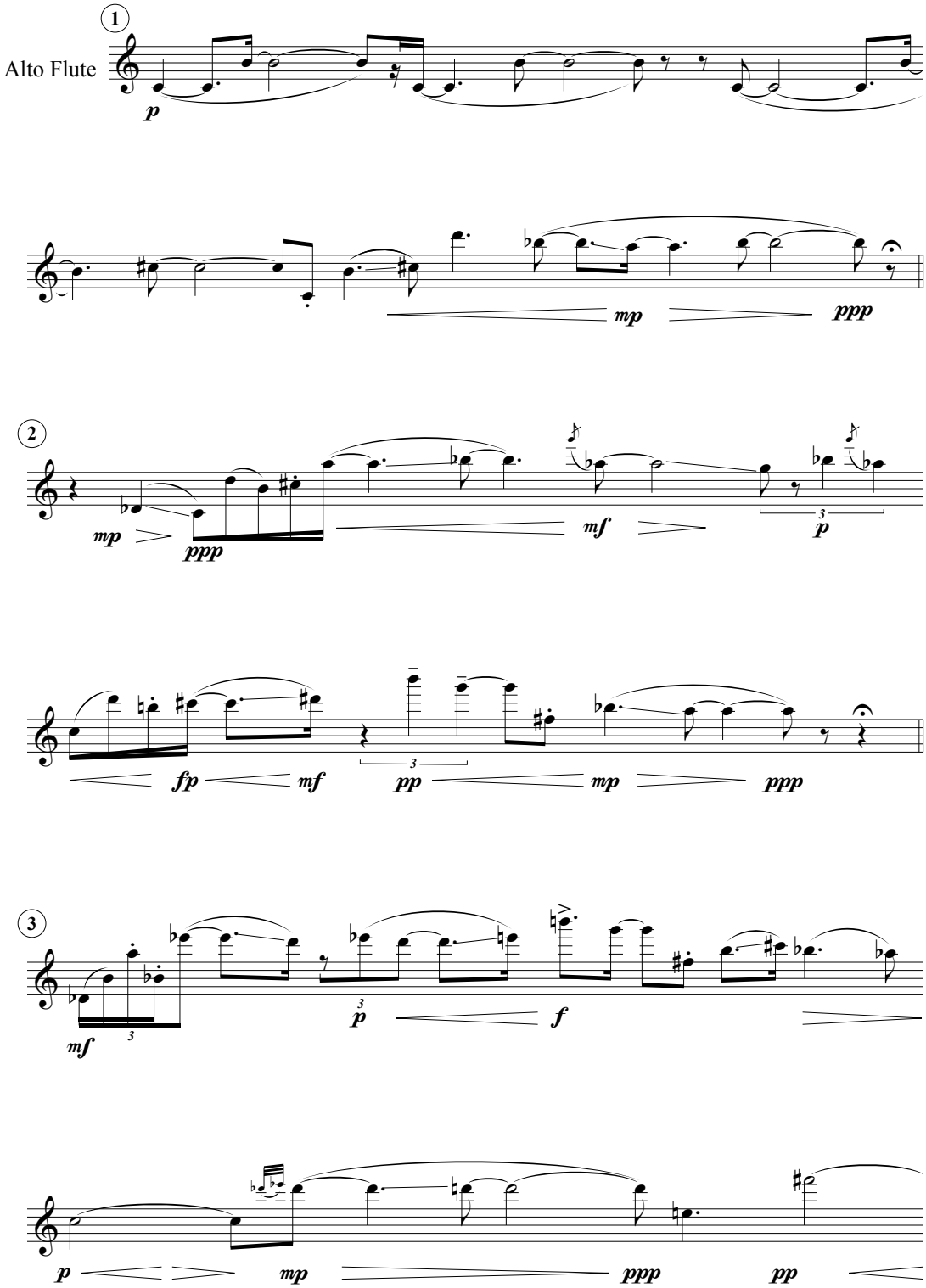


Not Quite a Sunset • 7. Sara & Ada in the Lab

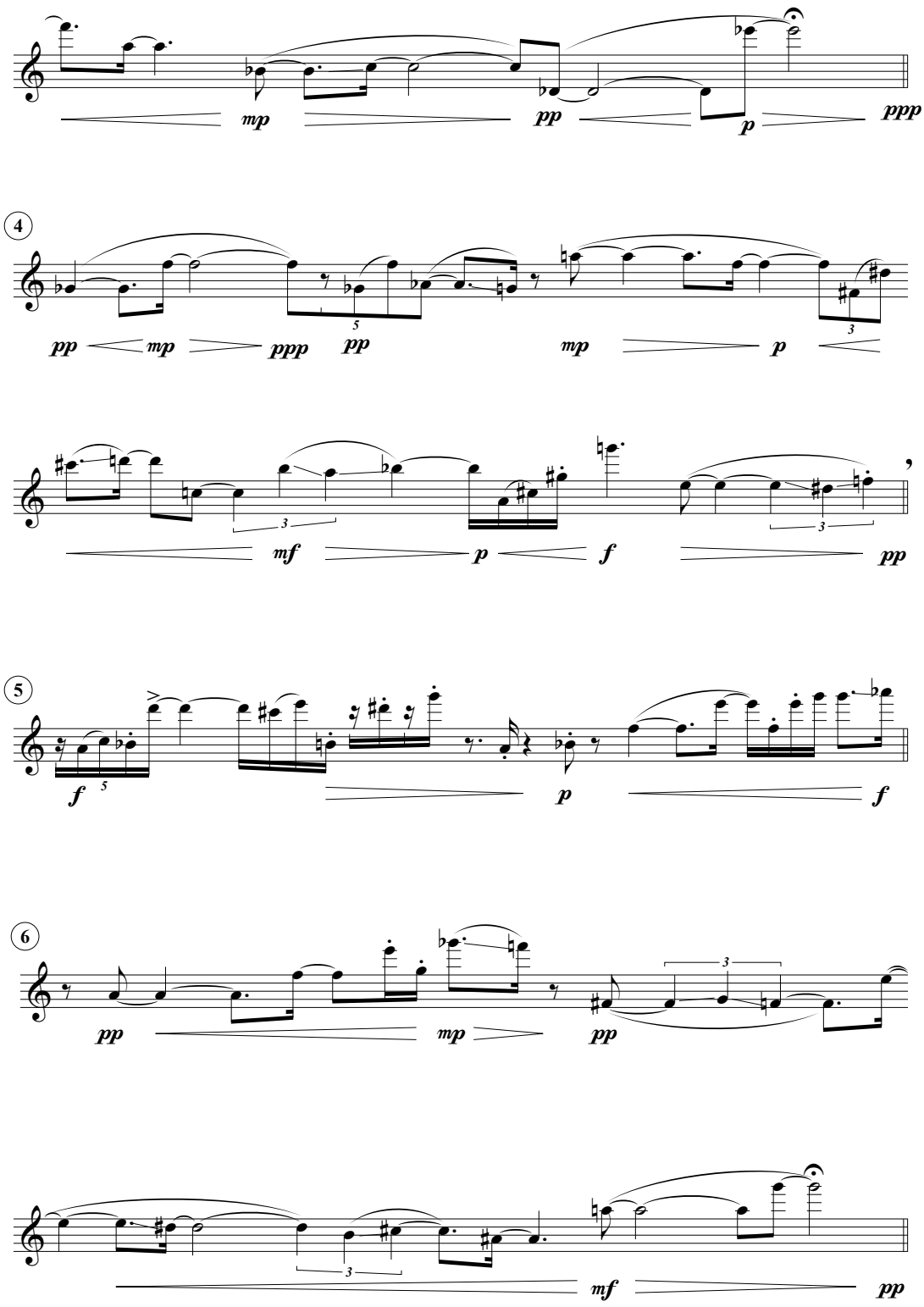


8. Lounge

A Chapter 1 - Sara,alone



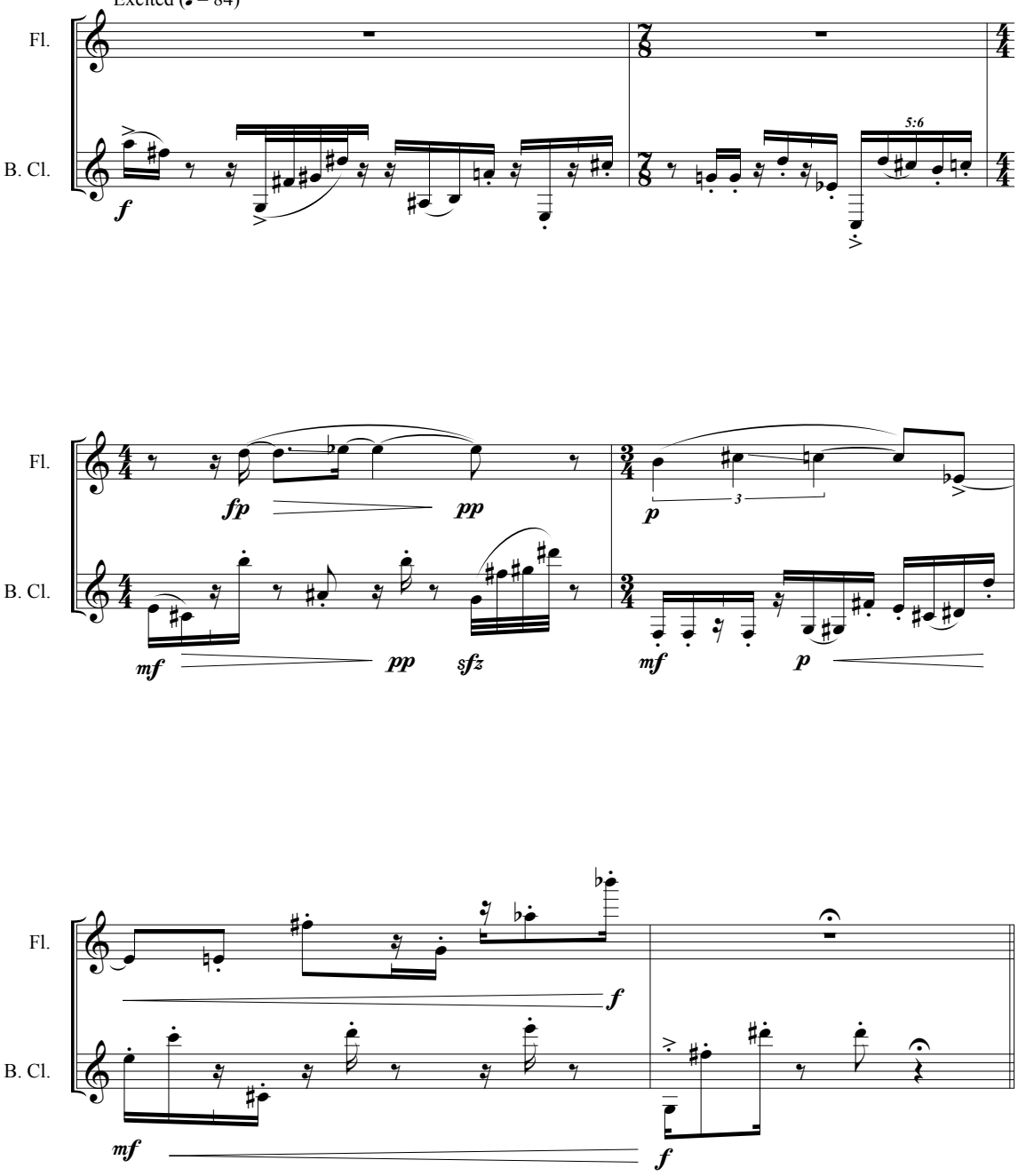
Not Quite a Sunset • 8. Lounge



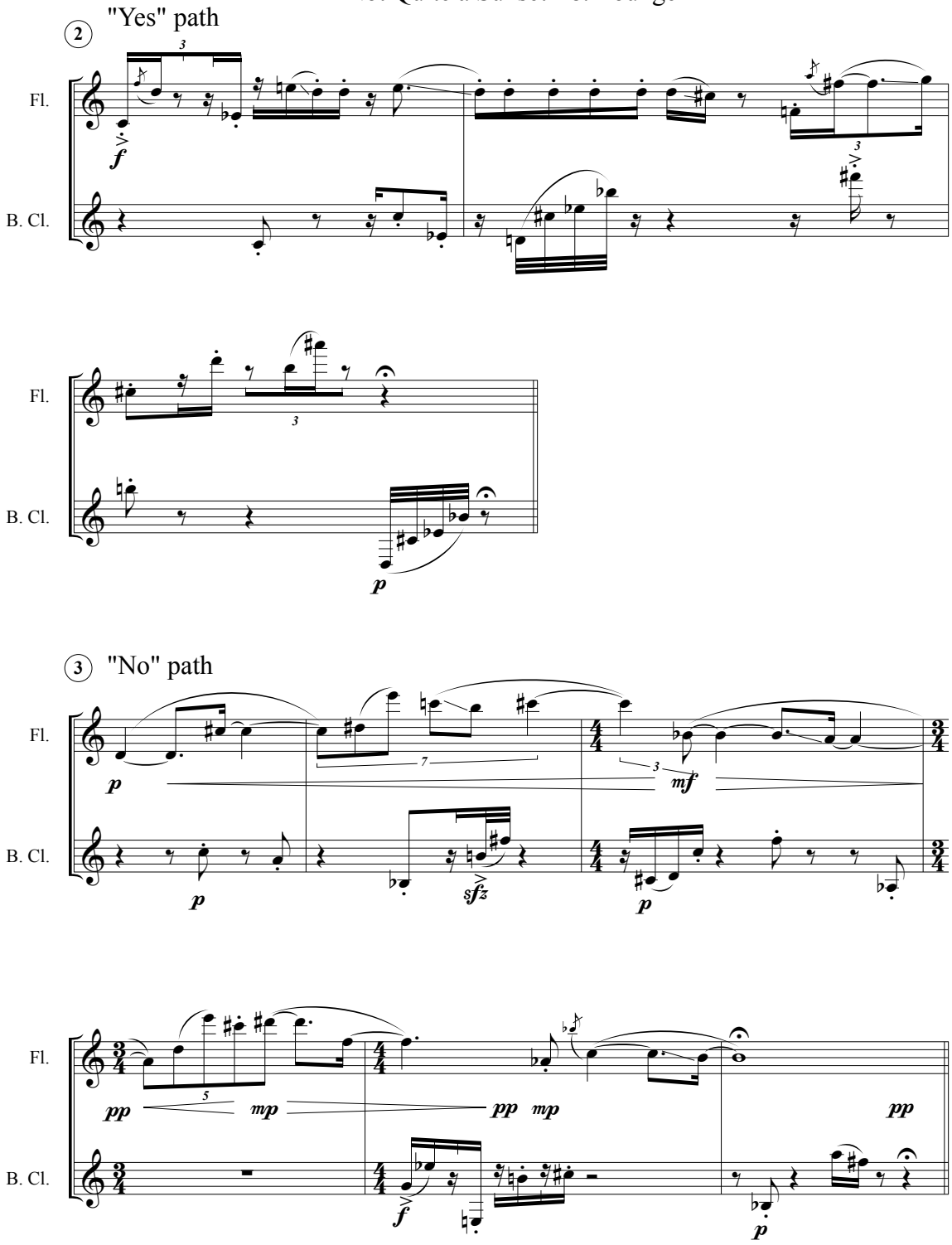
Not Quite a Sunset • 8. Lounge

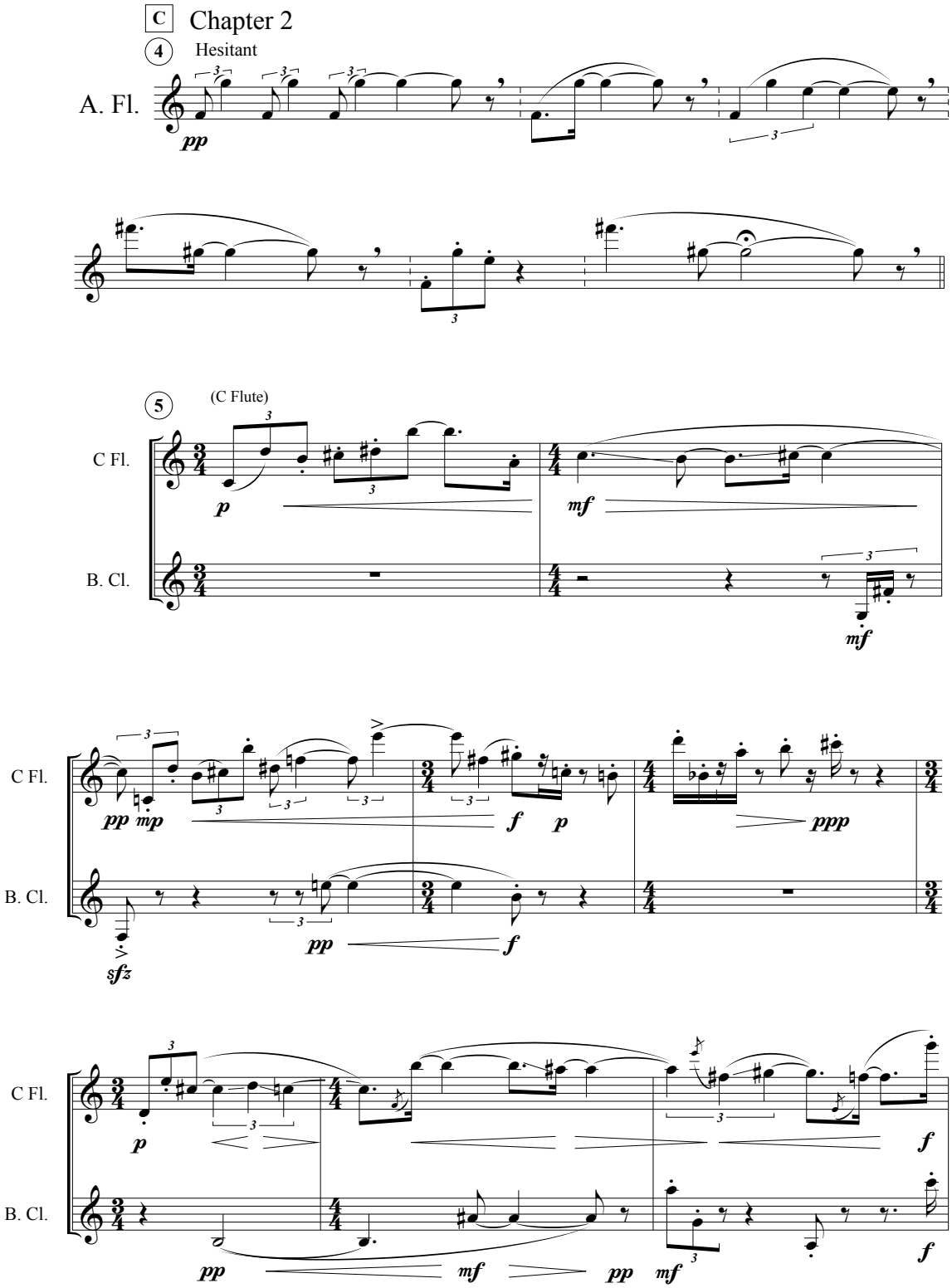
B Chapter 1 - Comm

1 (C Flute)
Excited (♩. = 84)

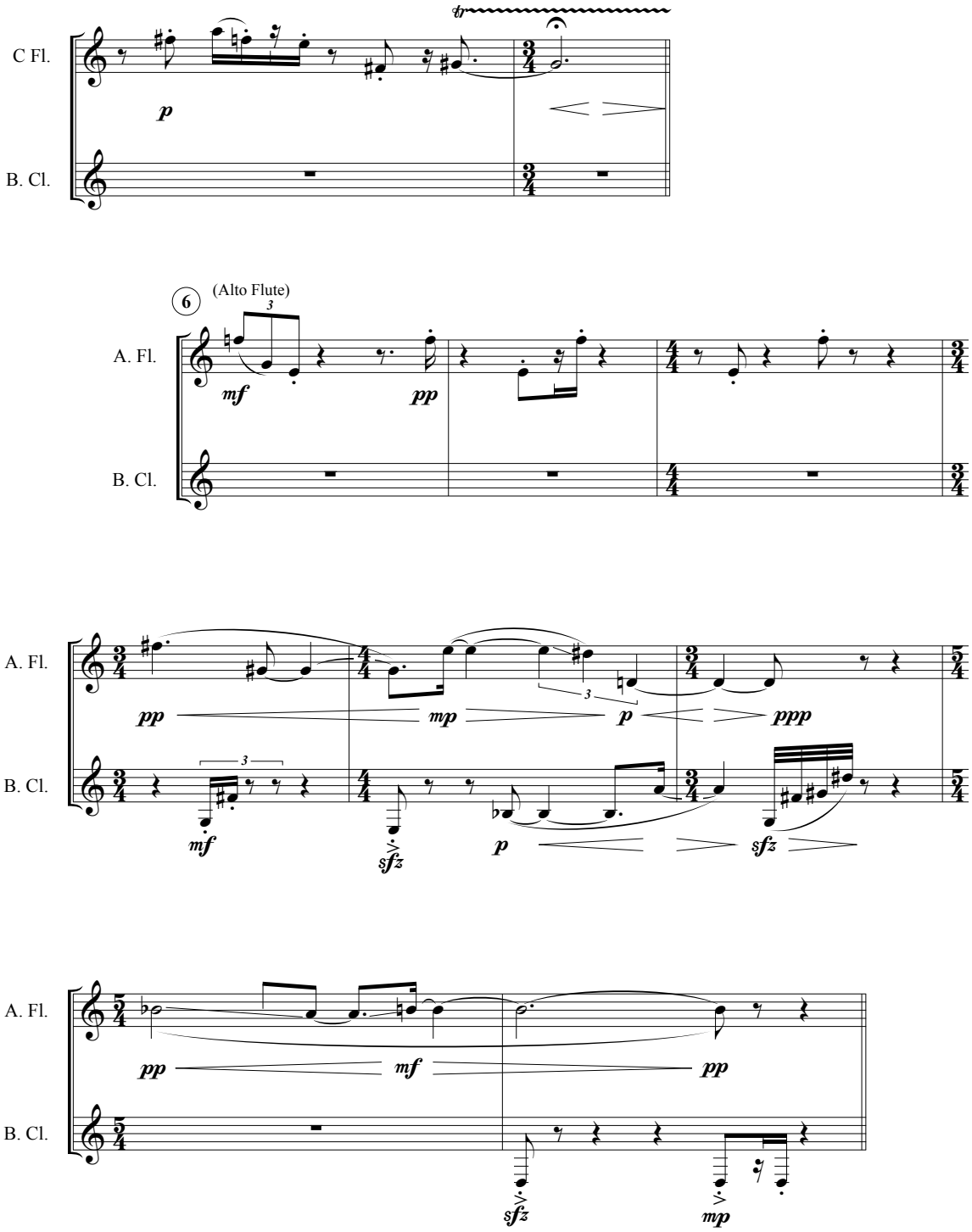


Not Quite a Sunset • 8. Lounge

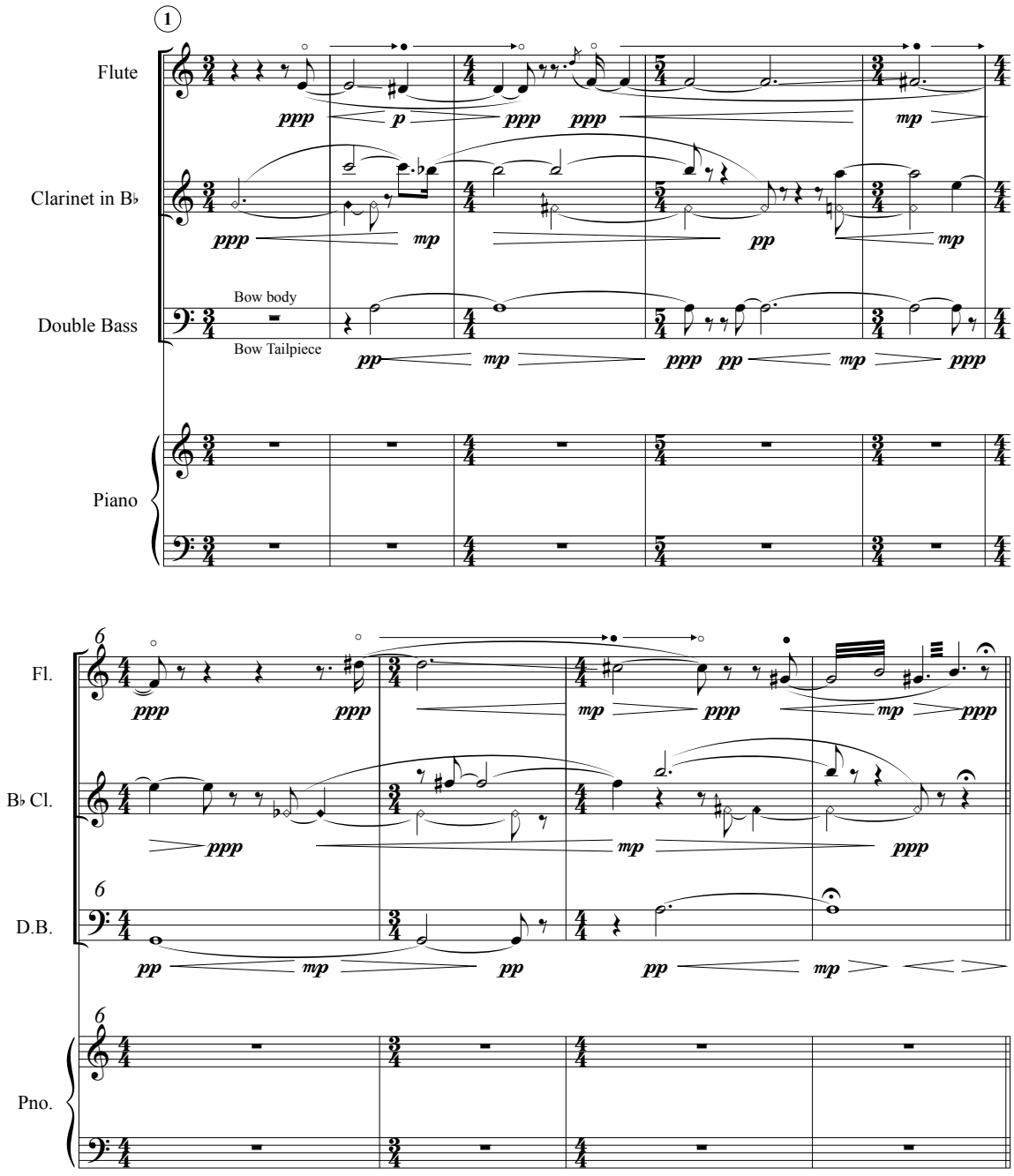



C
Chapter 2
4
Hesitant
A. Fl.
pp
5
(C Flute)
C Fl.
B. Cl.
p
mf
mf
C Fl.
B. Cl.
pp
mp
sfz
f
p
pp
f
ppp
C Fl.
B. Cl.
p
pp
mf
pp
mf
f
f

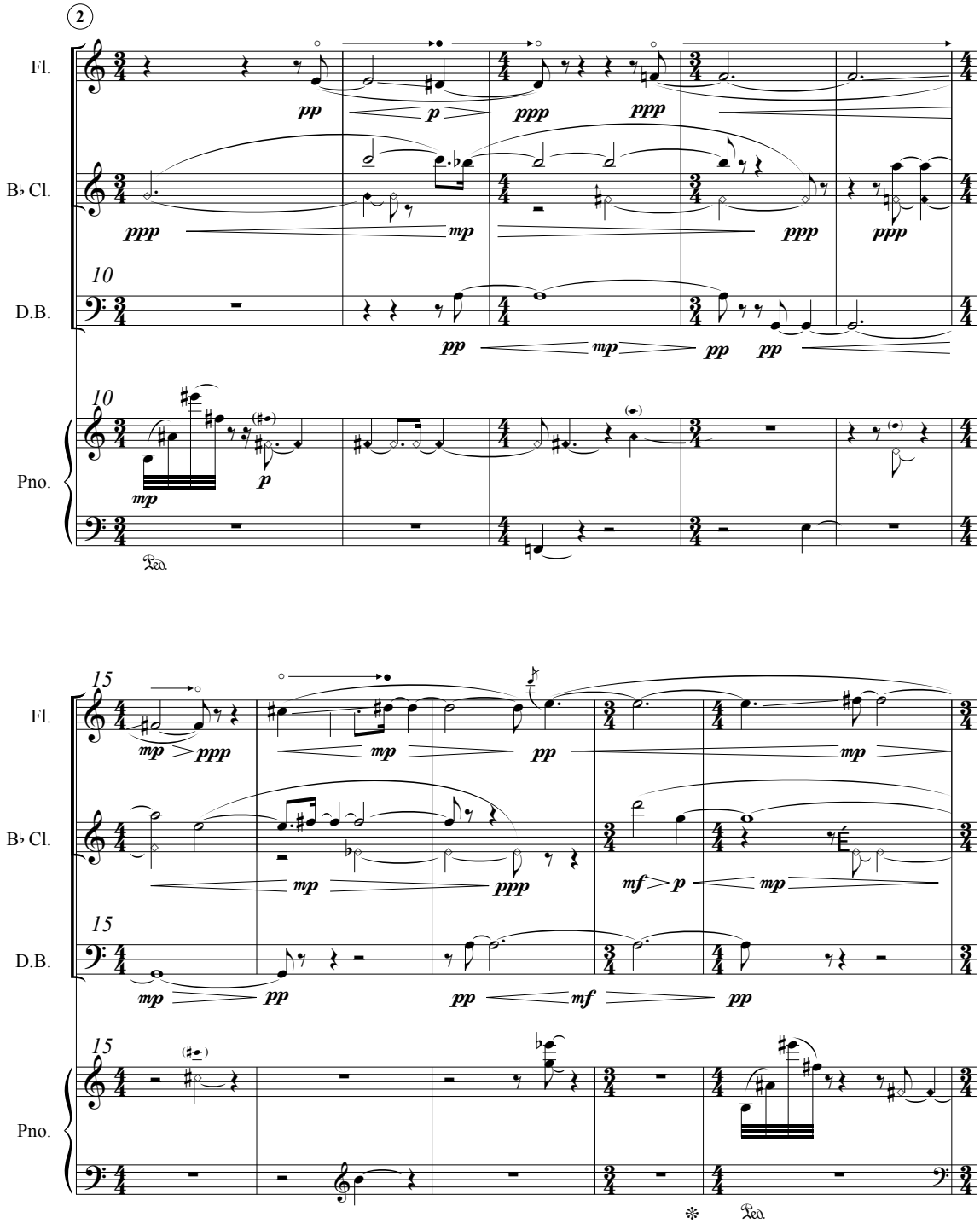
Not Quite a Sunset • 8. Lounge



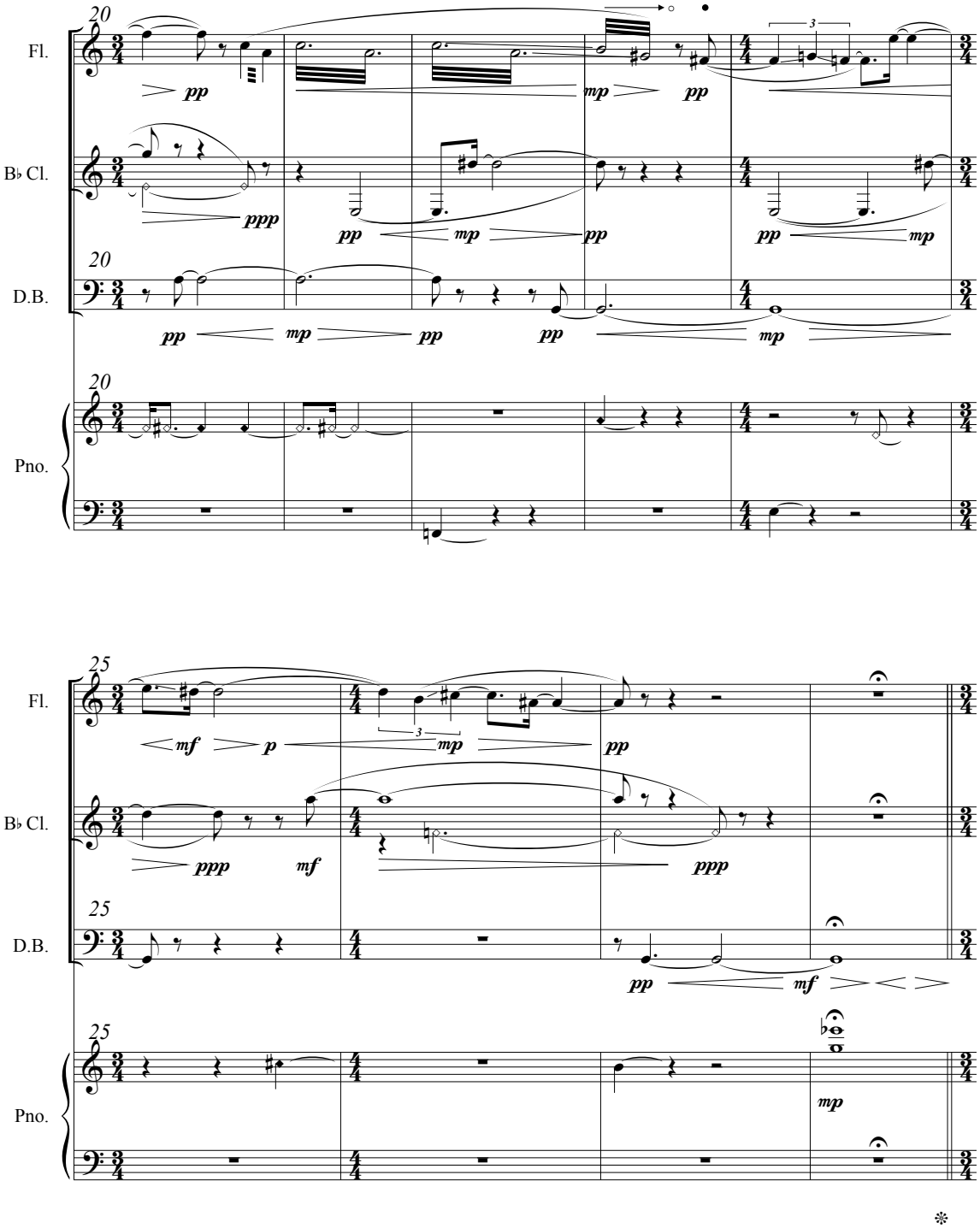
9. Wind and Sunflowers



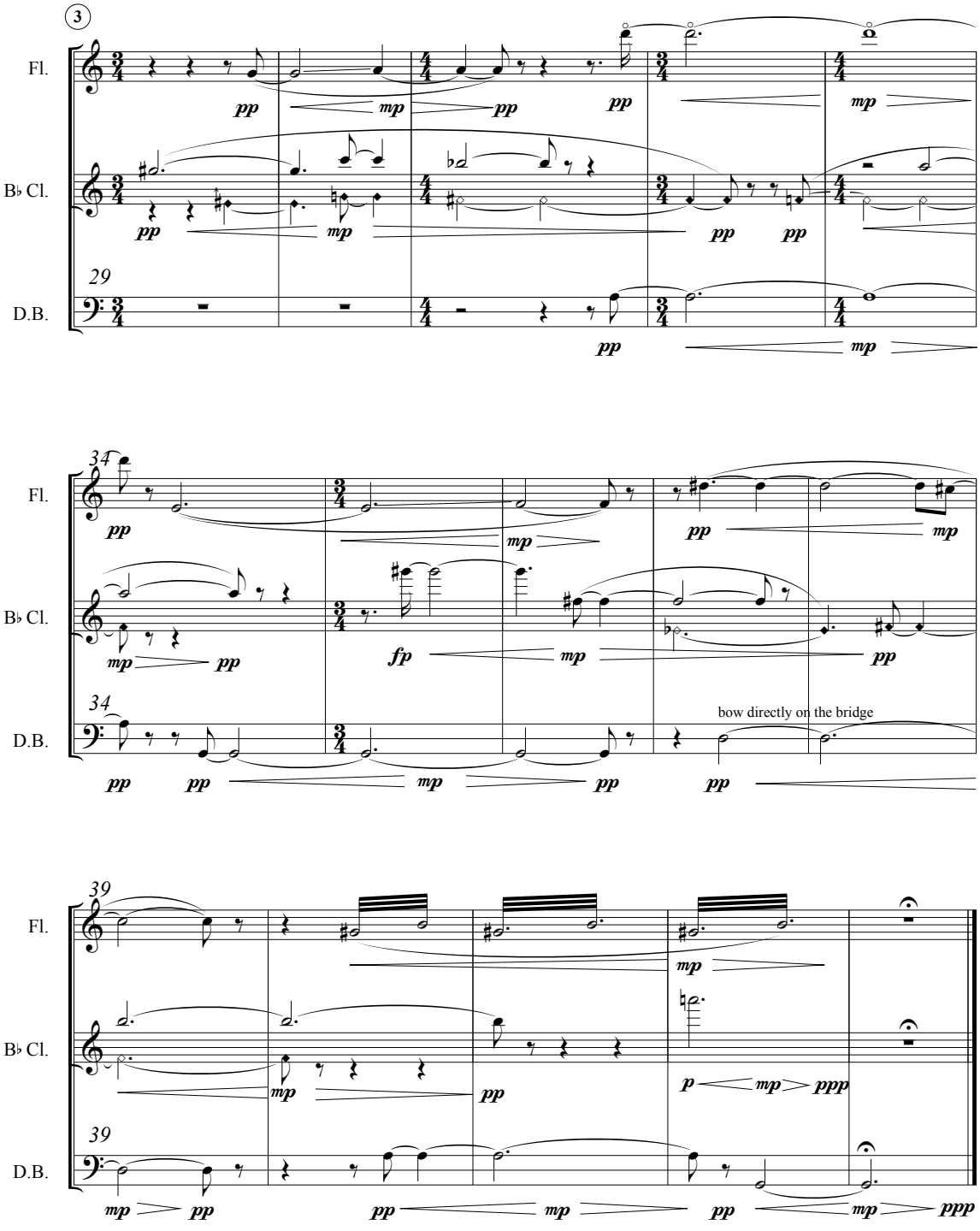
Not Quite a Sunset • 9. Wind and Sunflowers



Not Quite a Sunset • 9. Wind and Sunflowers



Not Quite a Sunset • 9. Wind and Sunflowers

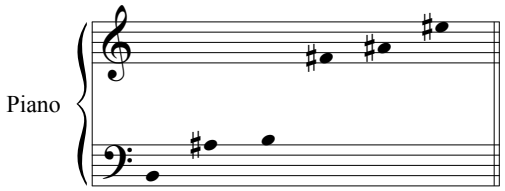


10. Running

From the text:
"I open my eyes and begin to run lightly towards the yellow flowers, though they never seem to get any closer. I push harder, breaking into a sprint. I shift directions, hoping to catch them off guard, but still I fail, and the flowers remain tantalizingly close but impossibly far.

I stop running, and put my hands on my knees to catch my breath, and wonder..."

Using the pitches below, improvise fragments to portray the above excerpt.



(1) ...begin to run lightly...

Short, slower
Hesitant
Keep within the
range above

(2) I push harder...

Slightly longer, slightly quicker
May adjust octave beyond range
above.

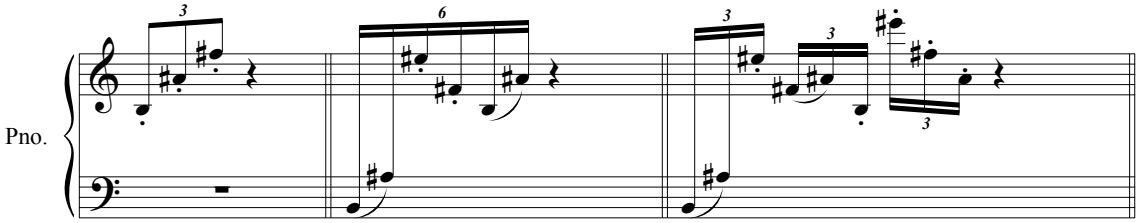
(3) I shift directions...but still I fail...

Much longer, somewhat frantic
May use different pitches but
start and end in this set

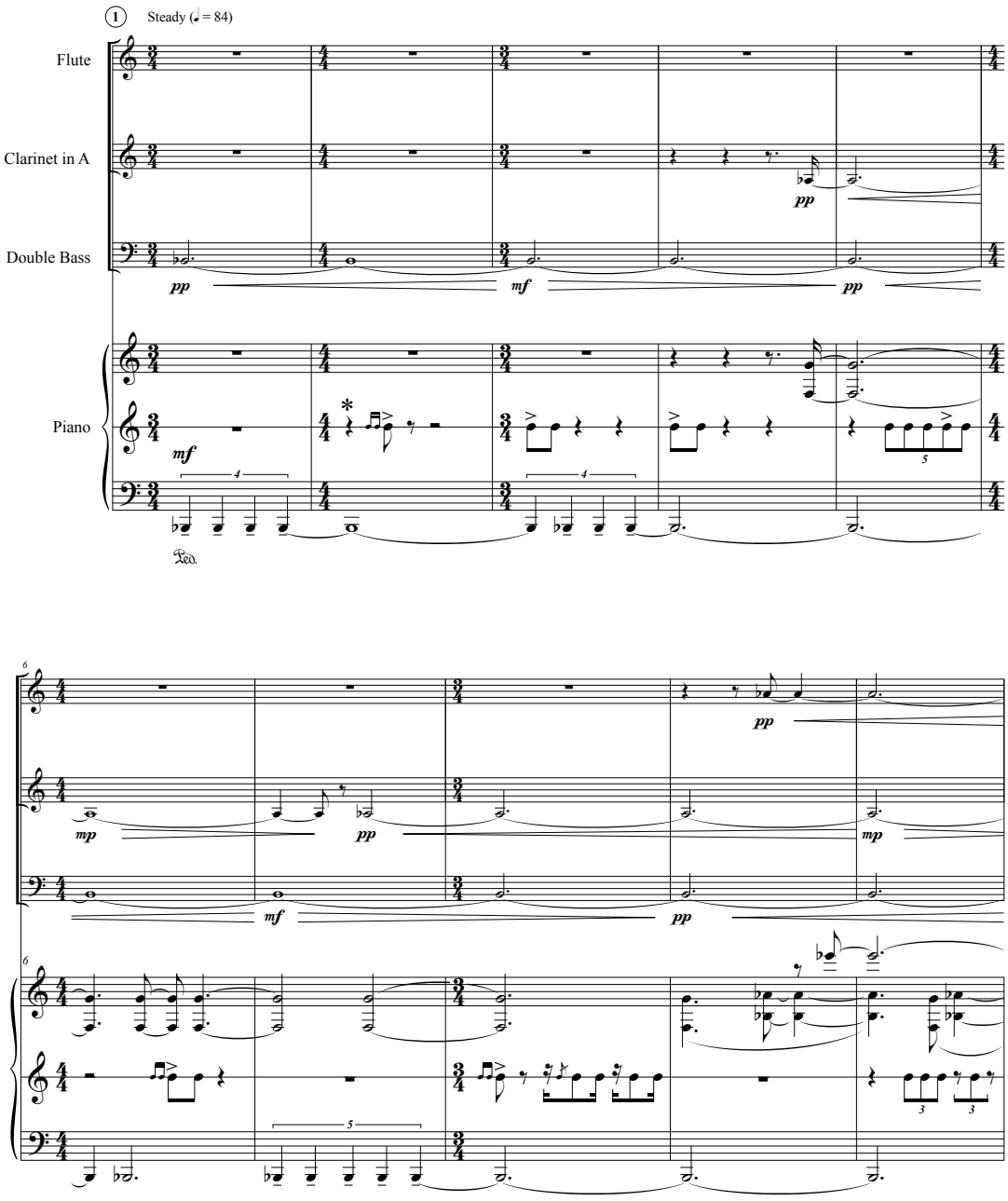
(4) ...catch my breath, and wonder...

Slower, calming, more pedal,
harmonic intervals

Example gestures:

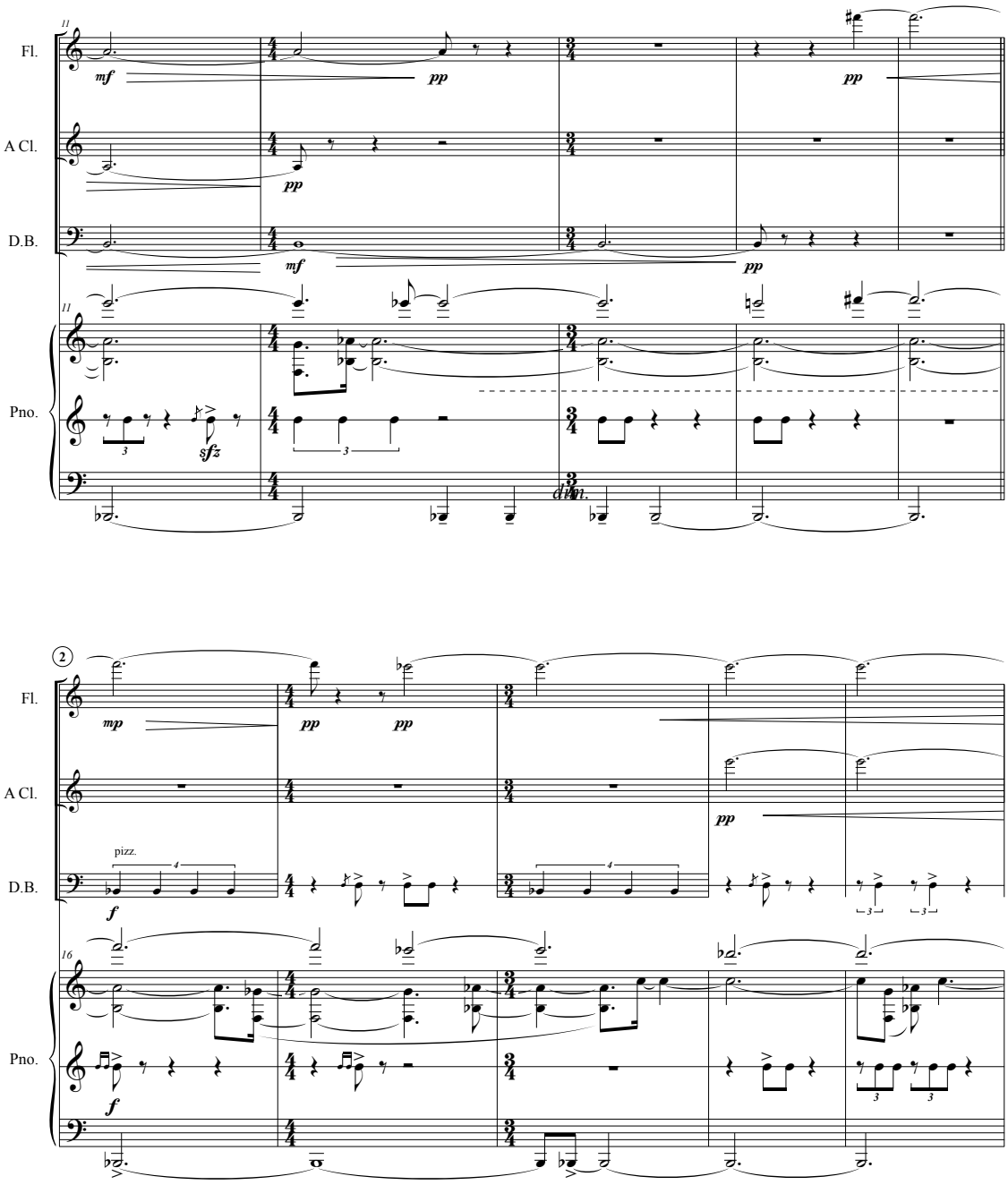


11. Tree

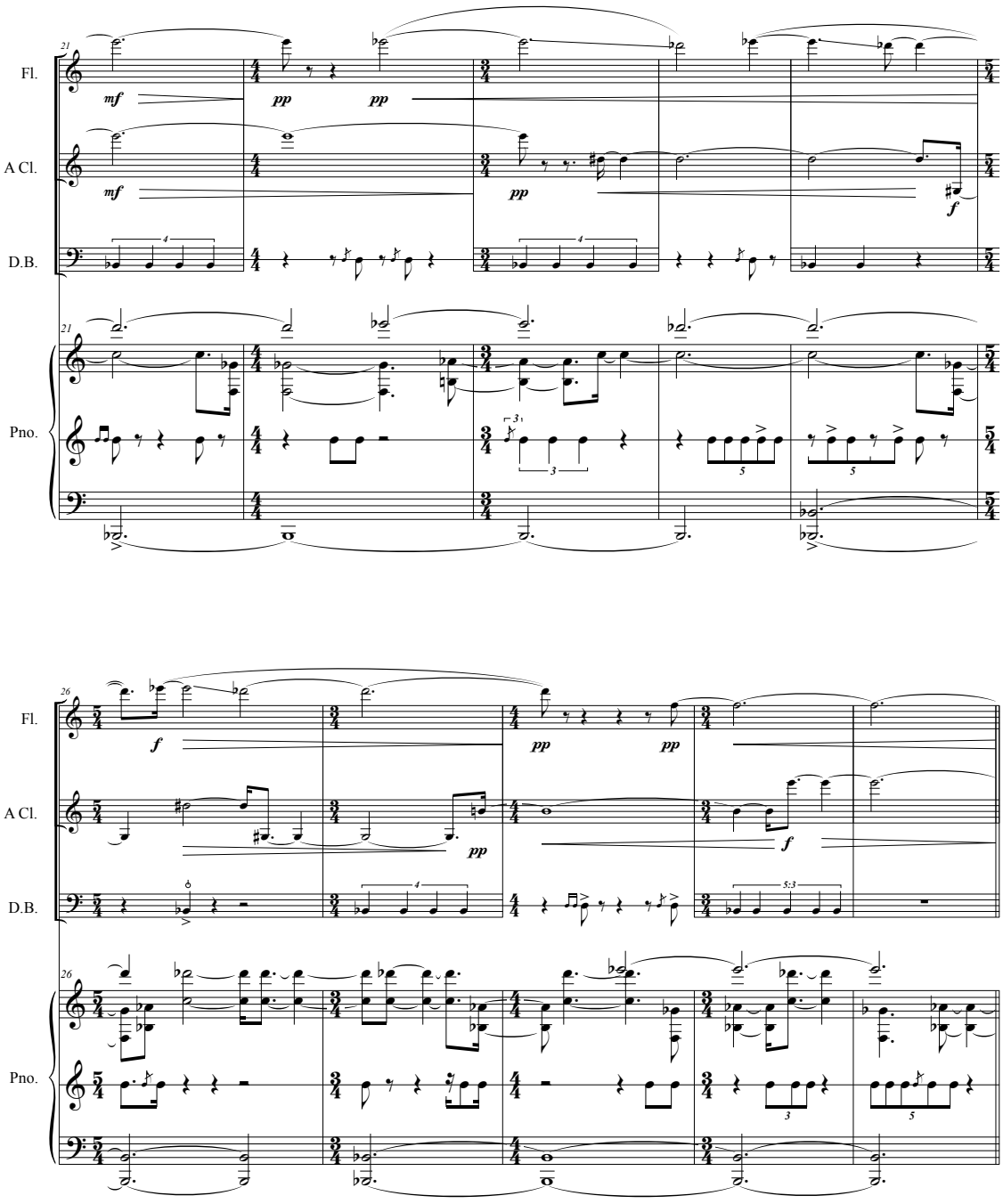


* piano: for center staff, hit the body of the piano with your hand. Find place(s) on the instrument that makes a good sound - it need not be the same place every time.

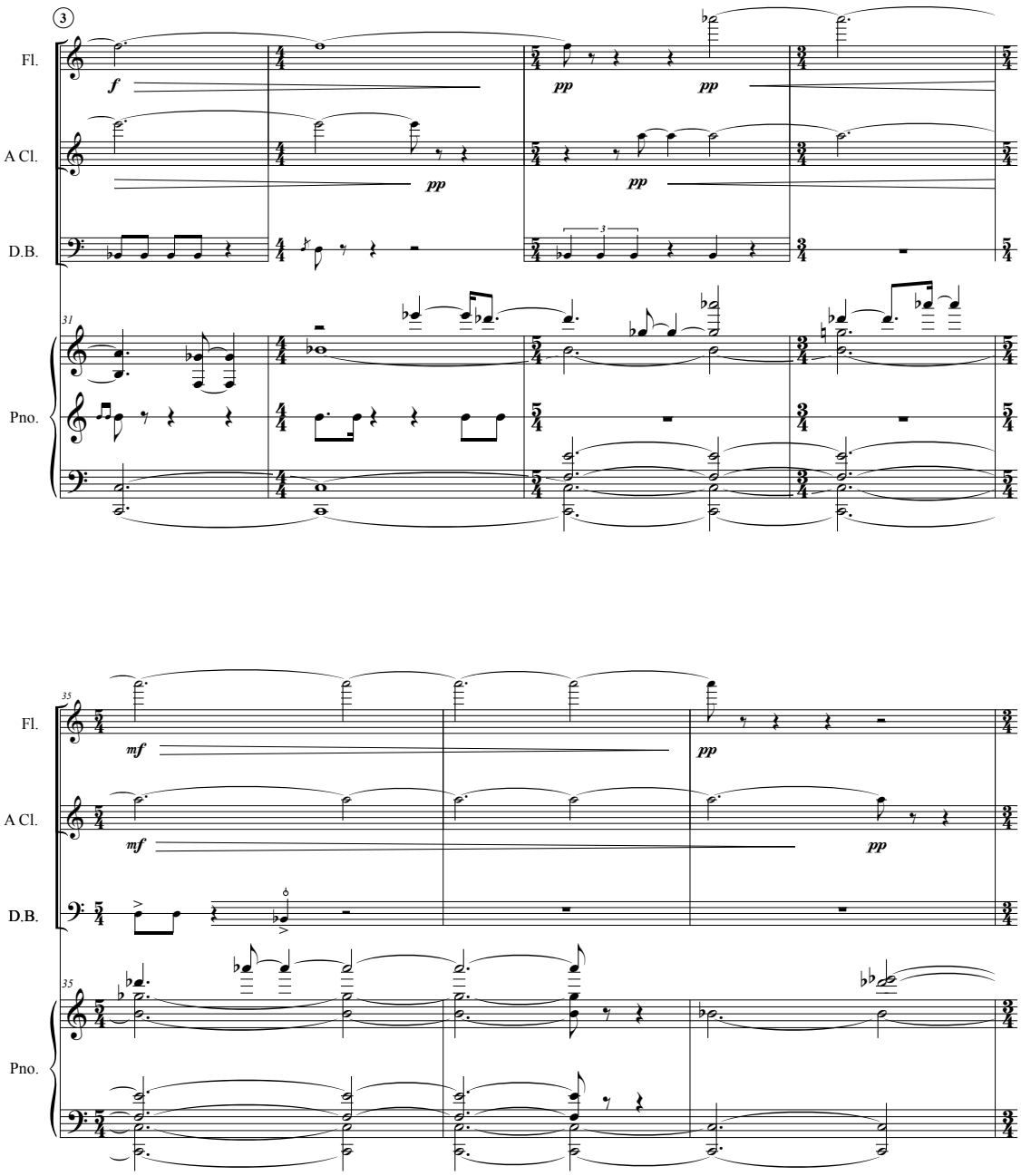
Not Quite a Sunset • 11. Tree



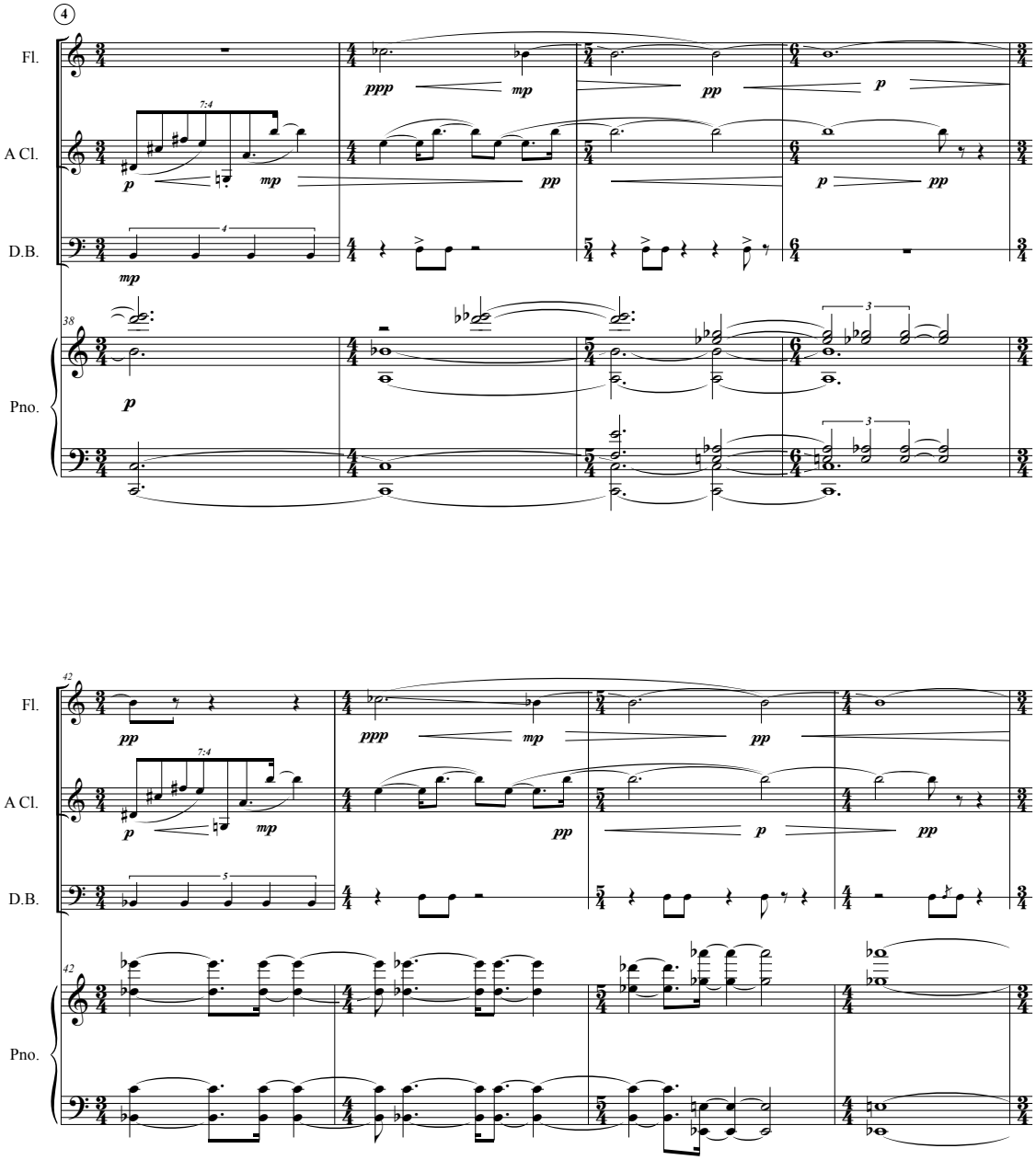
Not Quite a Sunset • 11. Tree



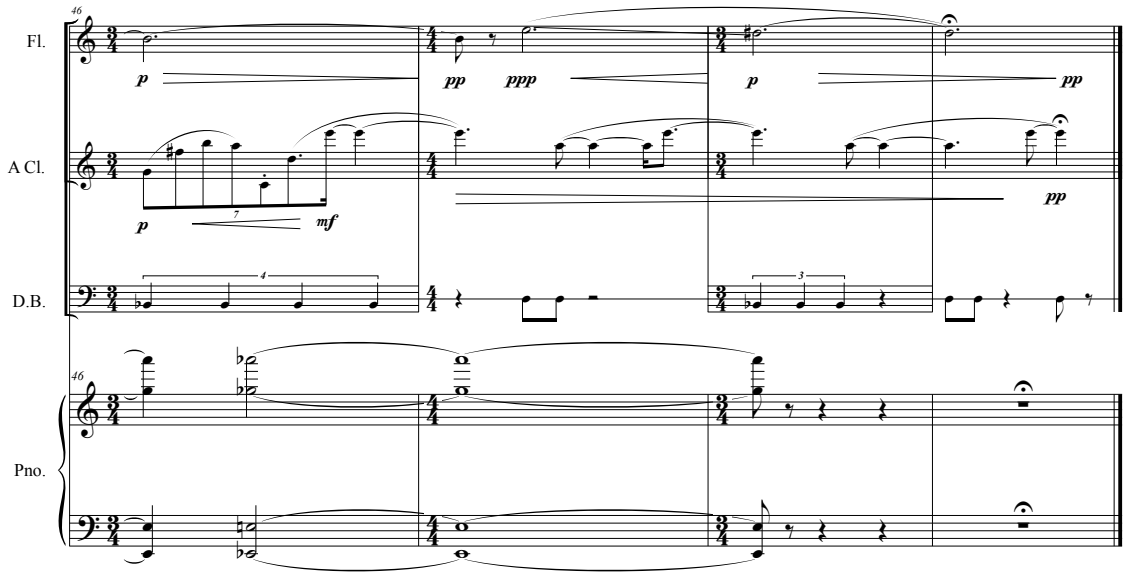
Not Quite a Sunset • 11. Tree



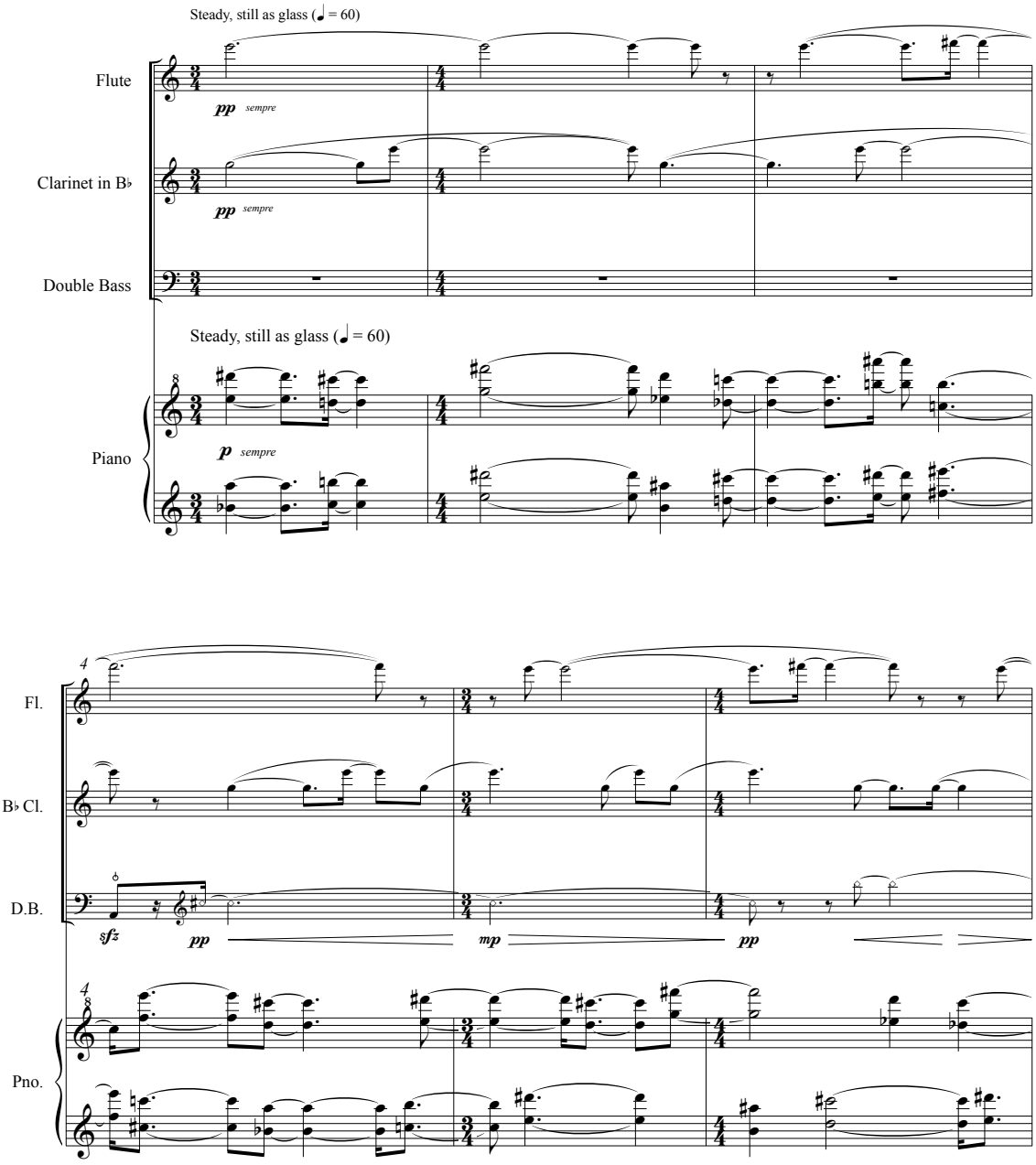
Not Quite a Sunset • 11. Tree



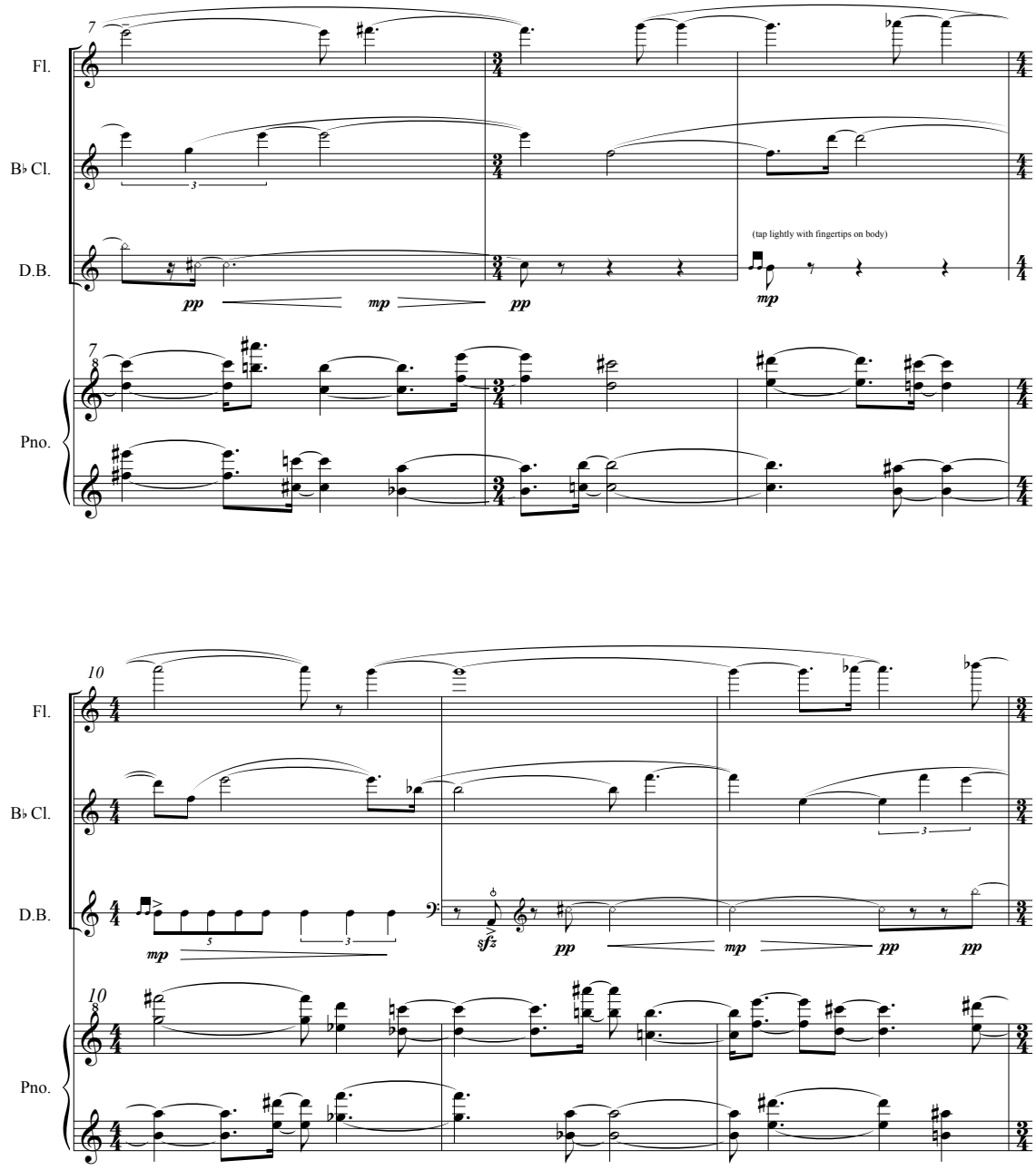
Not Quite a Sunset • 11. Tree



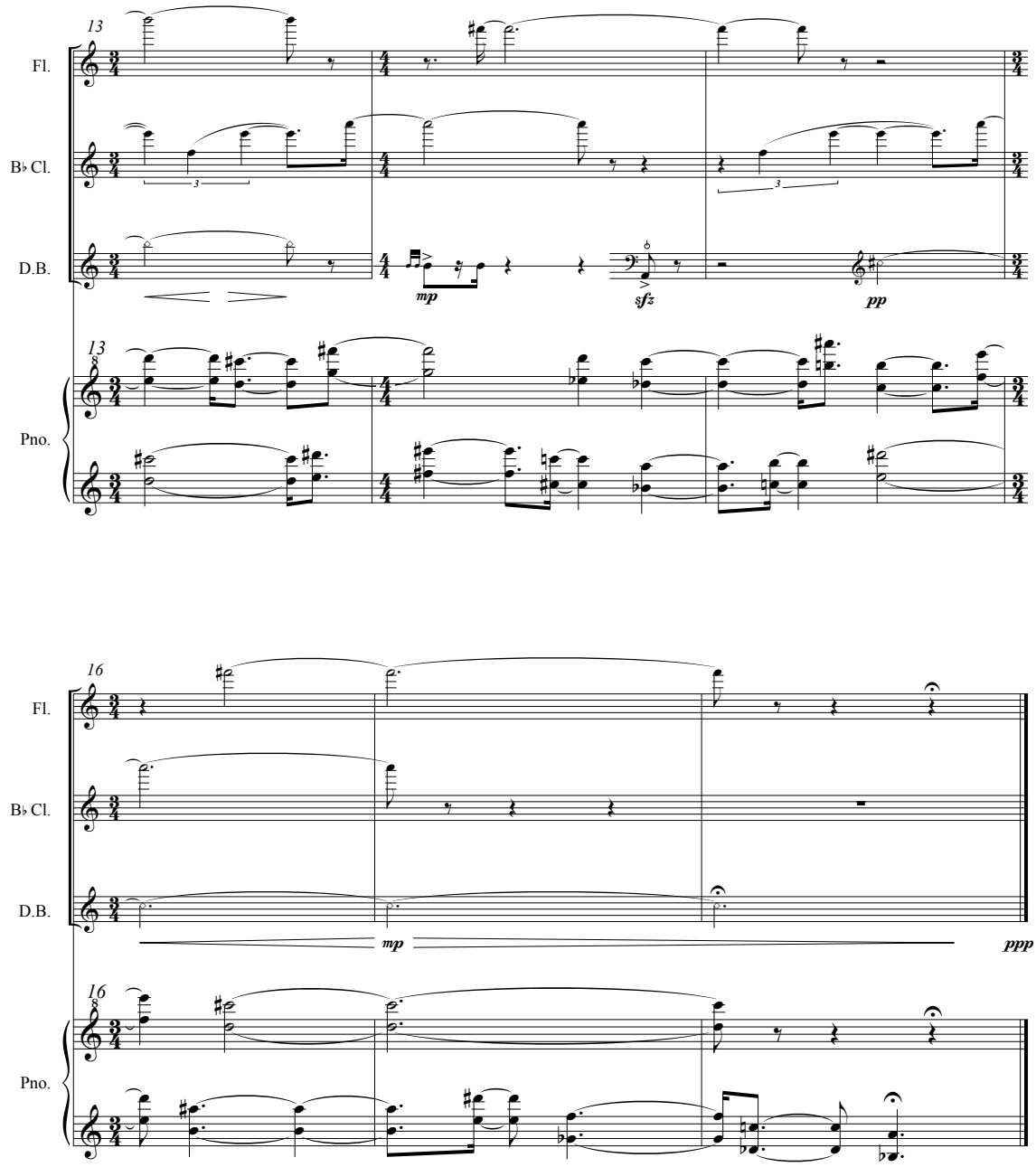
12(a). Lake


Steady, still as glass (♩ = 60)
Flute
pp sempre
Clarinet in B♭
pp sempre
Double Bass
Steady, still as glass (♩ = 60)
Piano
p sempre
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
D.B.
sfz
pp
mp
pp
Pno.

Not Quite a Sunset • 12(a). Lake

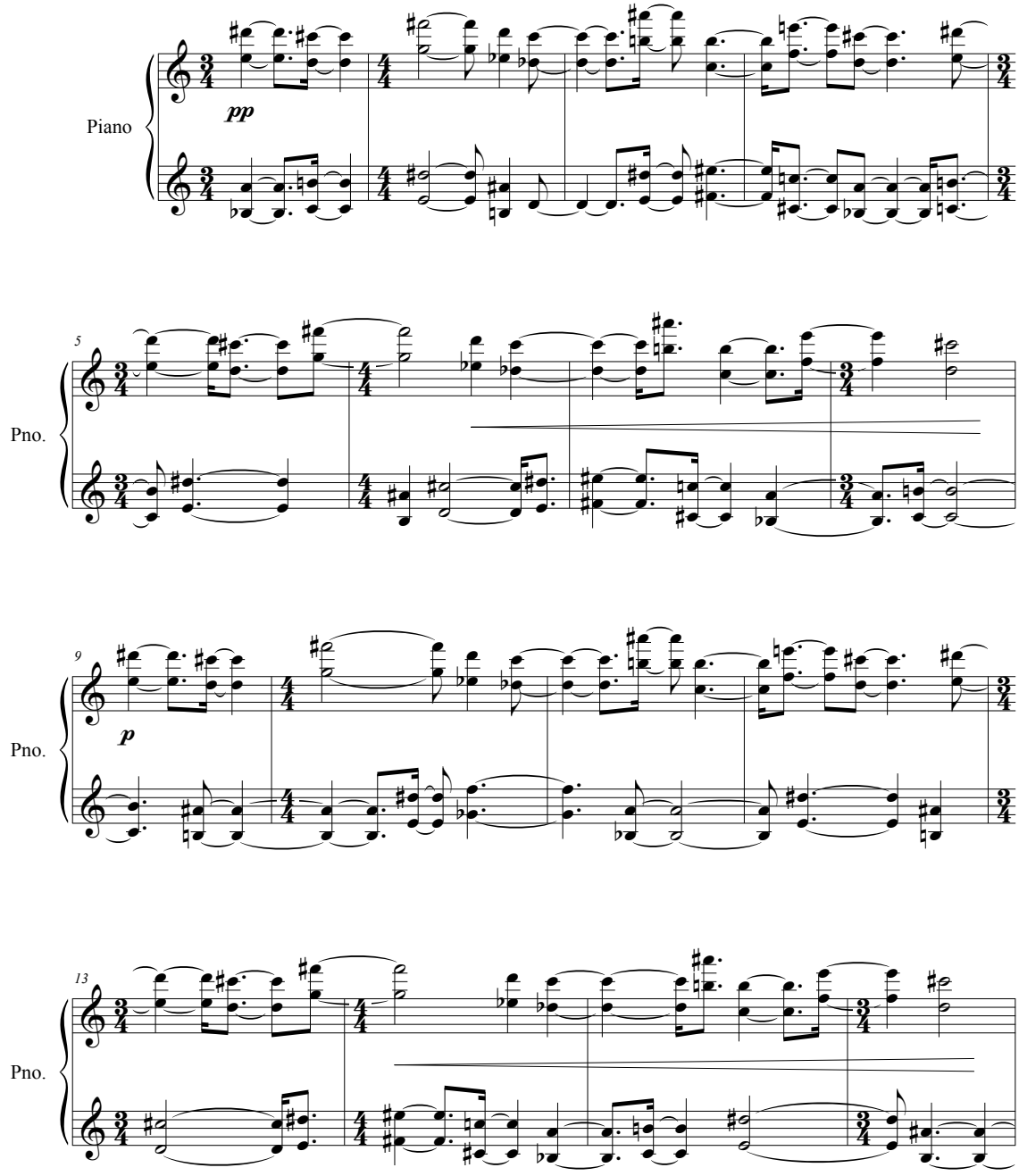


Not Quite a Sunset • 12(a). Lake

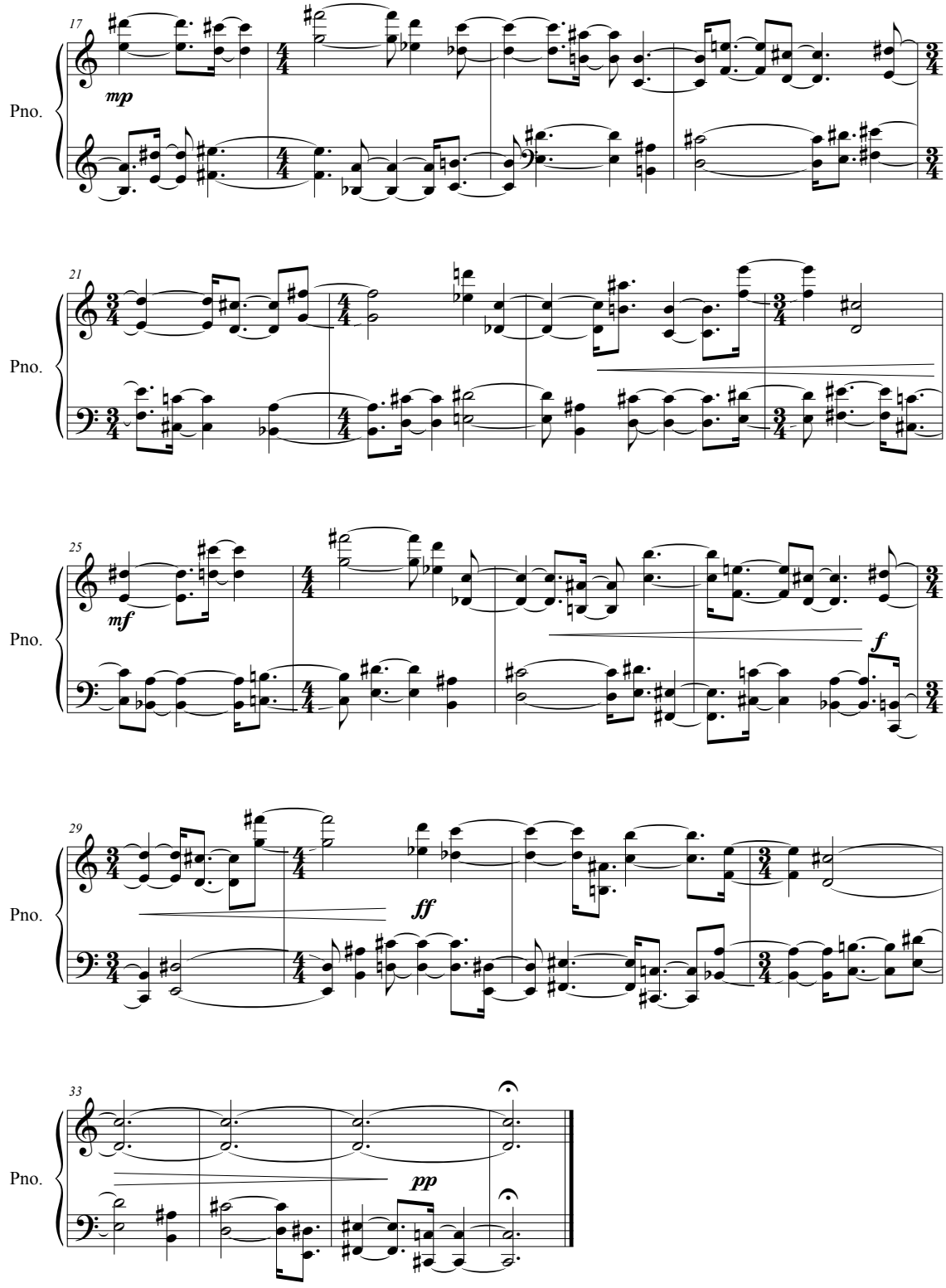


12(b). Lake

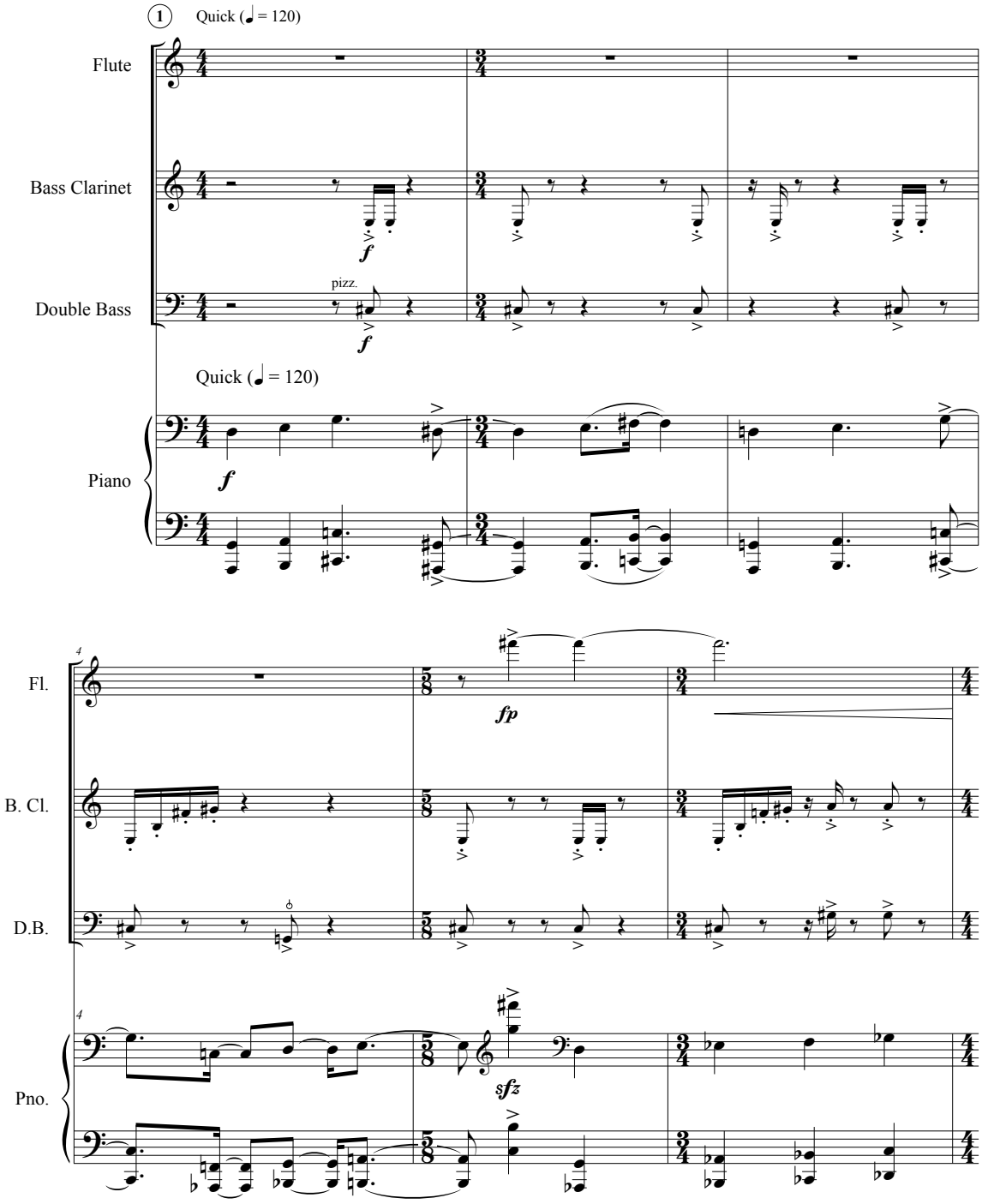
Extended



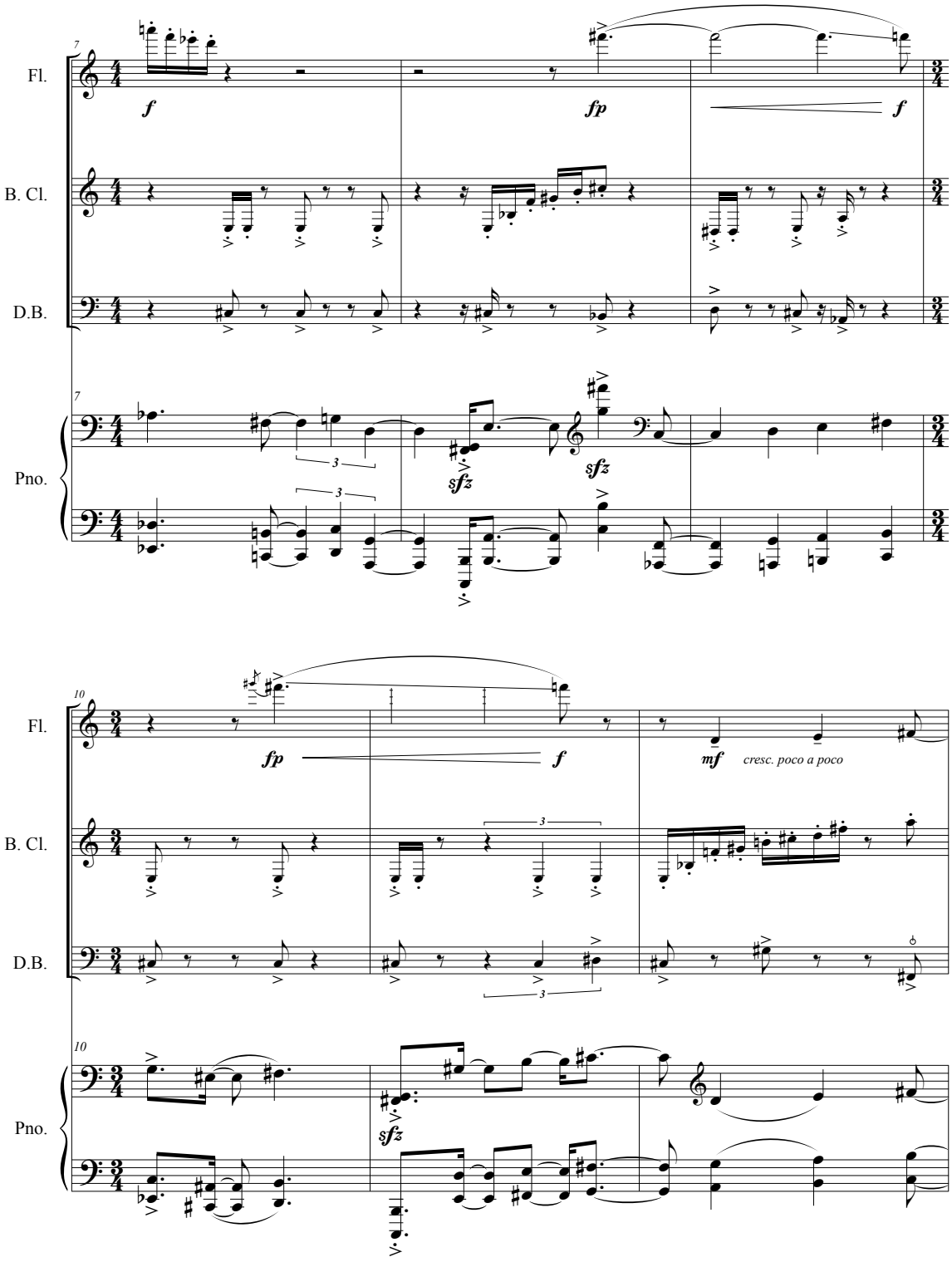
Not Quite a Sunset • 12(b). Lake



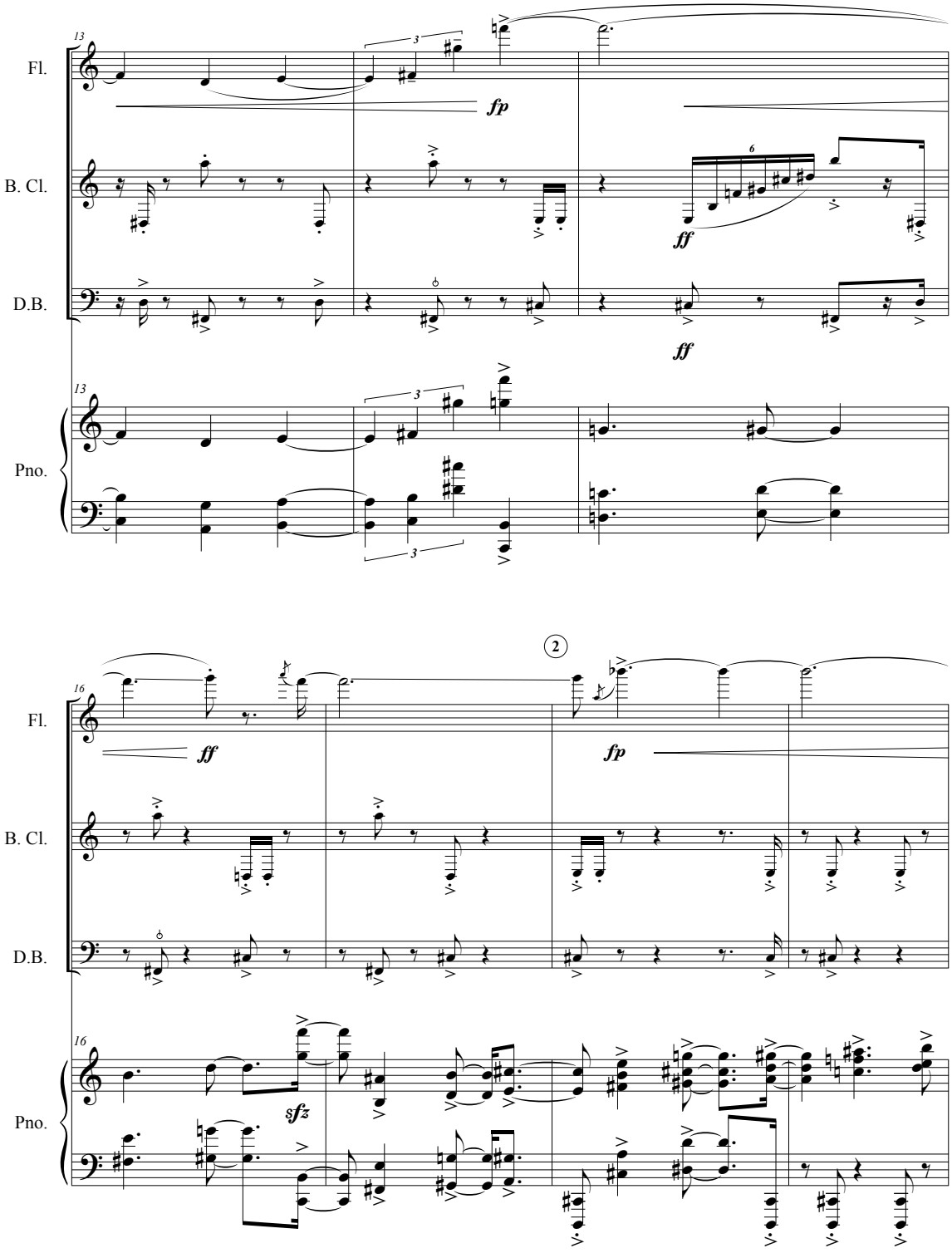
13. Mountain


1
Quick (♩ = 120)
Flute
Bass Clarinet
Double Bass
pizz.
f
Quick (♩ = 120)
Piano
Fl.
B. Cl.
D.B.
Pno.
fp
sfz

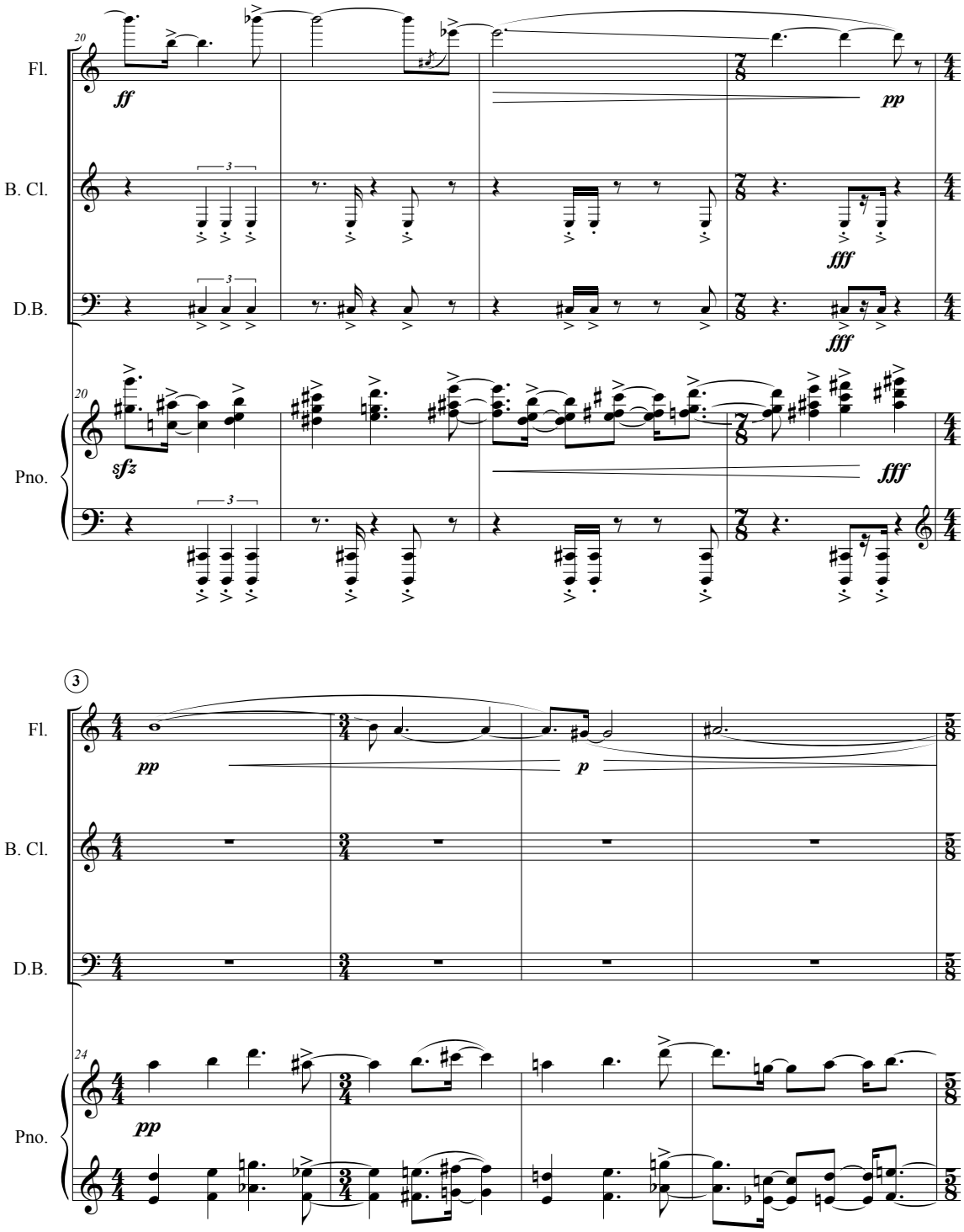
Not Quite a Sunset • 13. Mountain



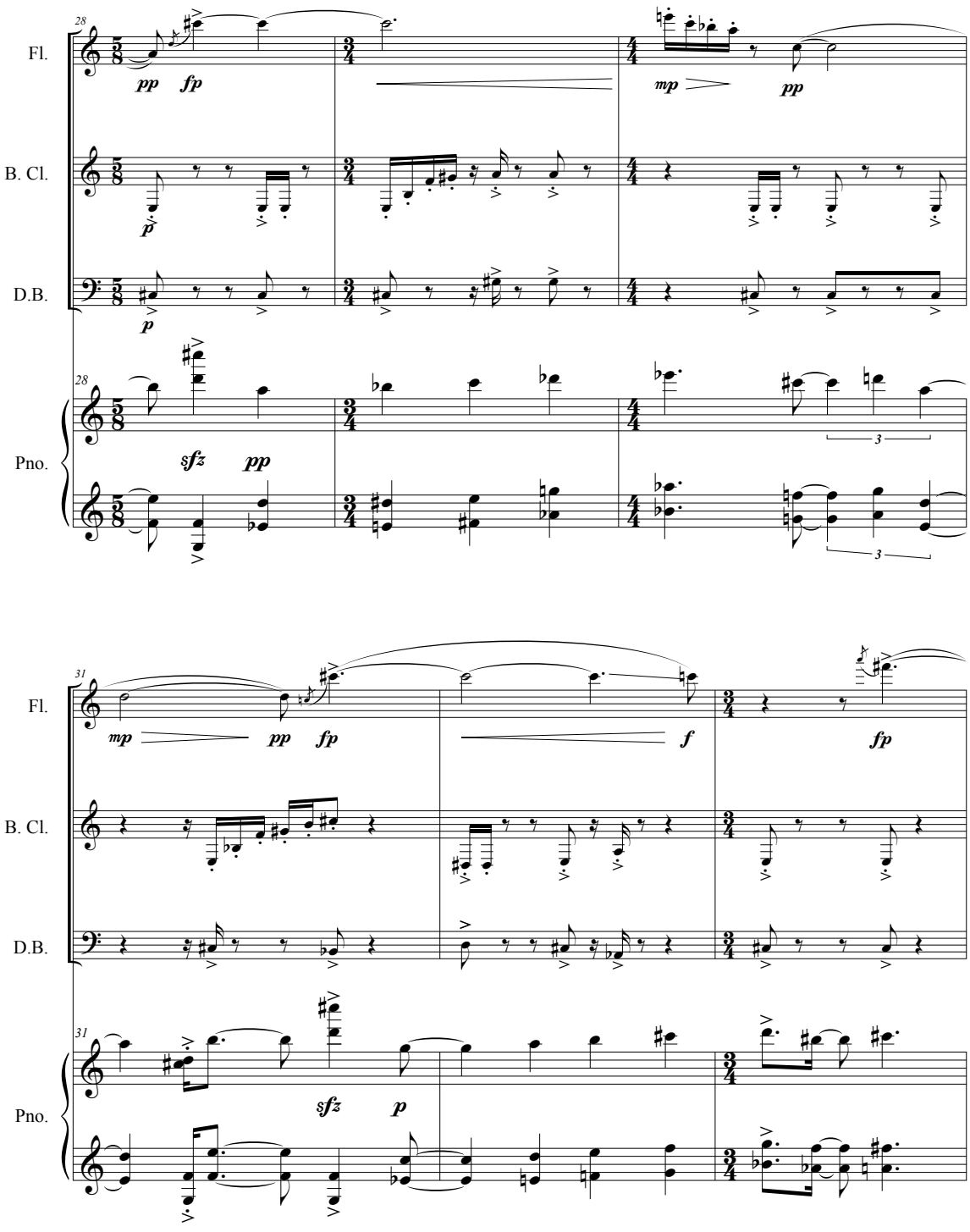
Not Quite a Sunset • 13. Mountain



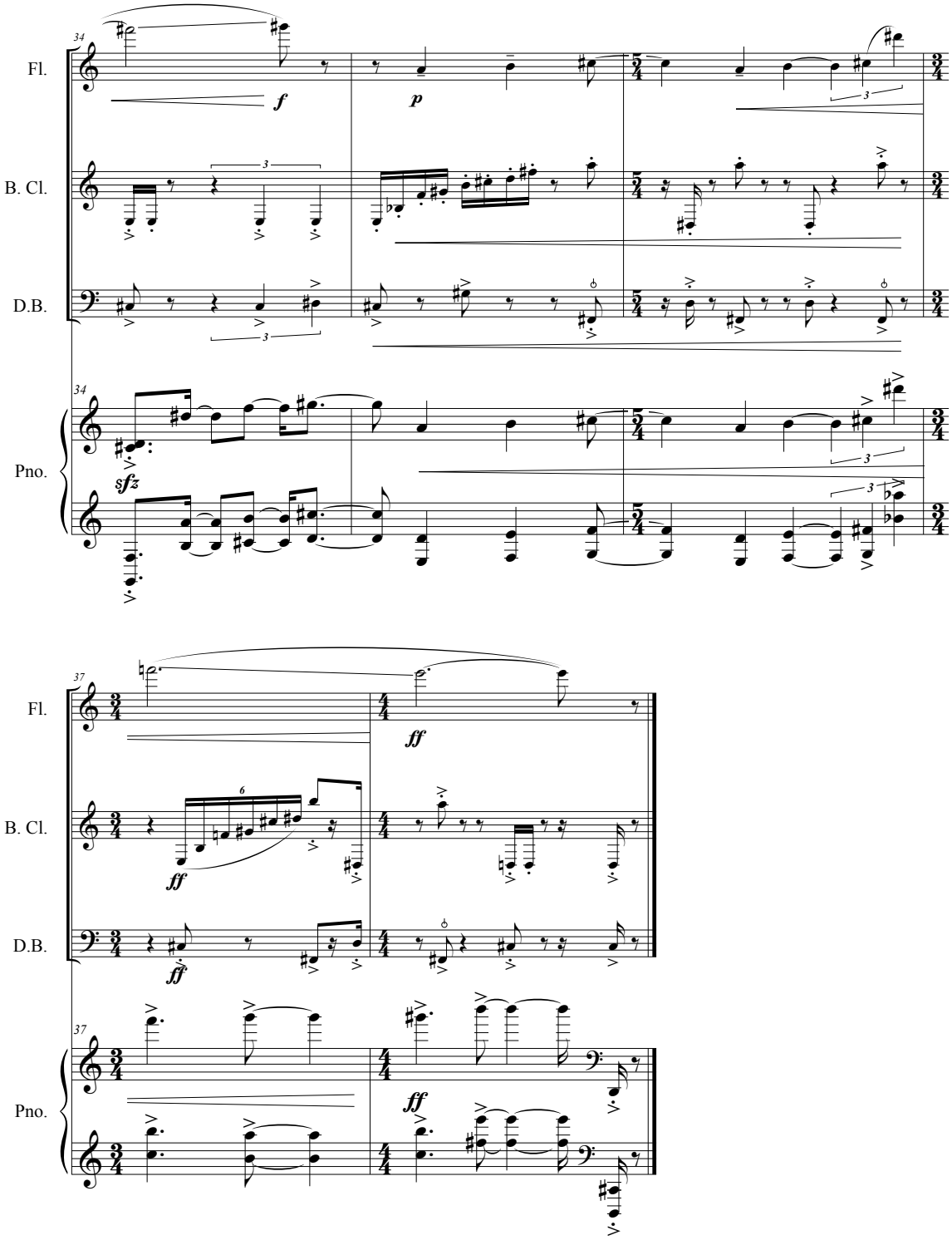
Not Quite a Sunset • 13. Mountain



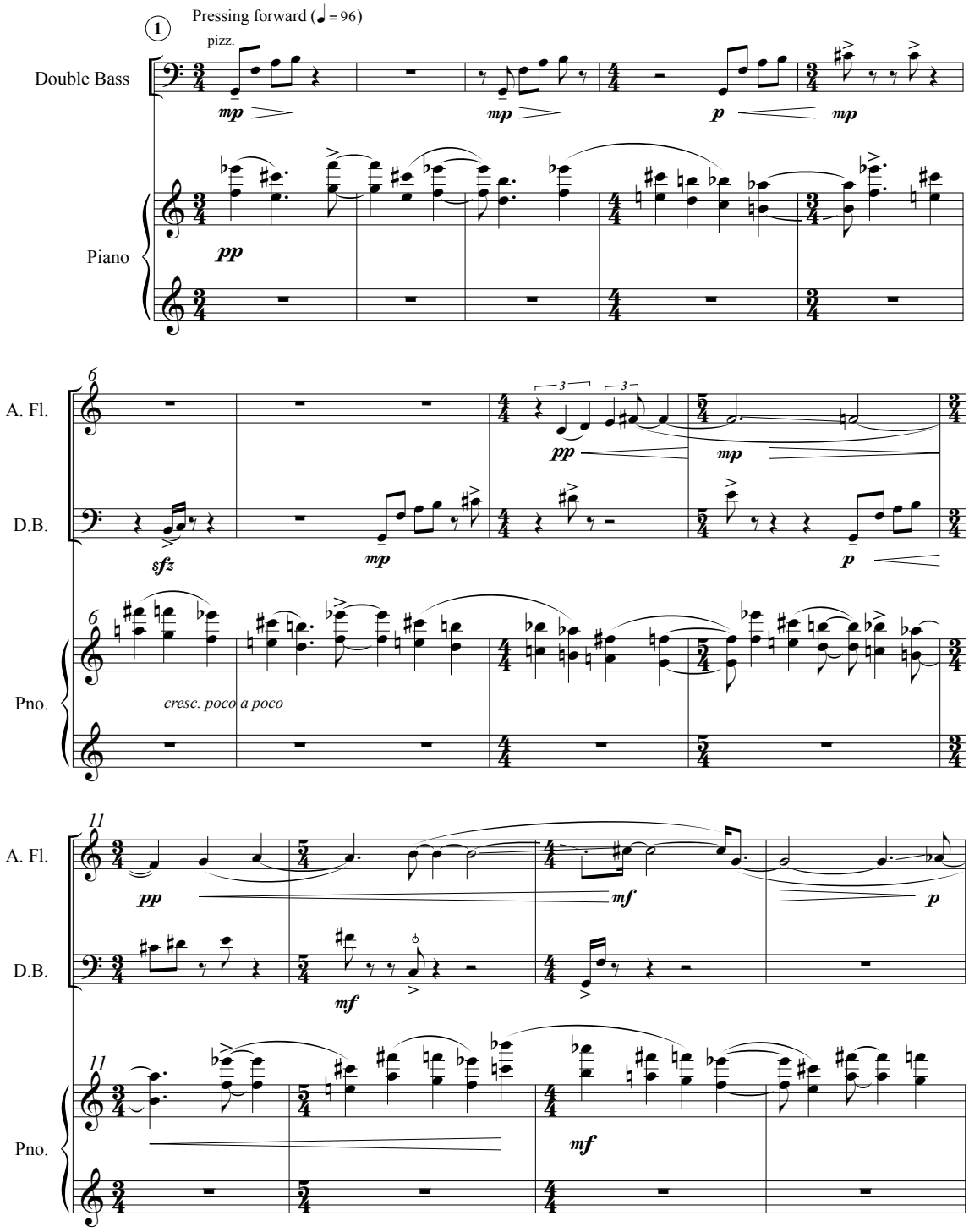
Not Quite a Sunset • 13. Mountain



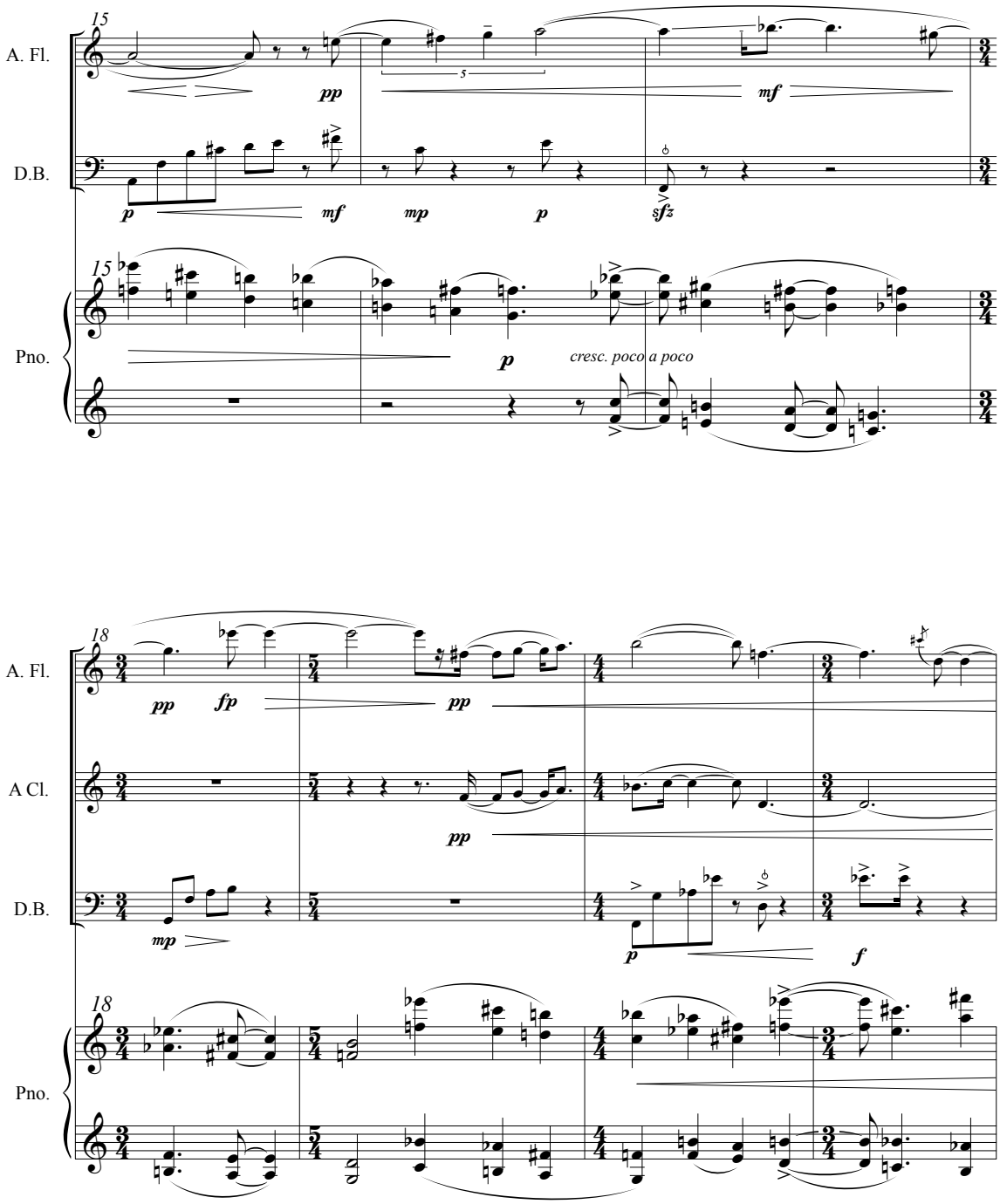
Not Quite a Sunset • 13. Mountain



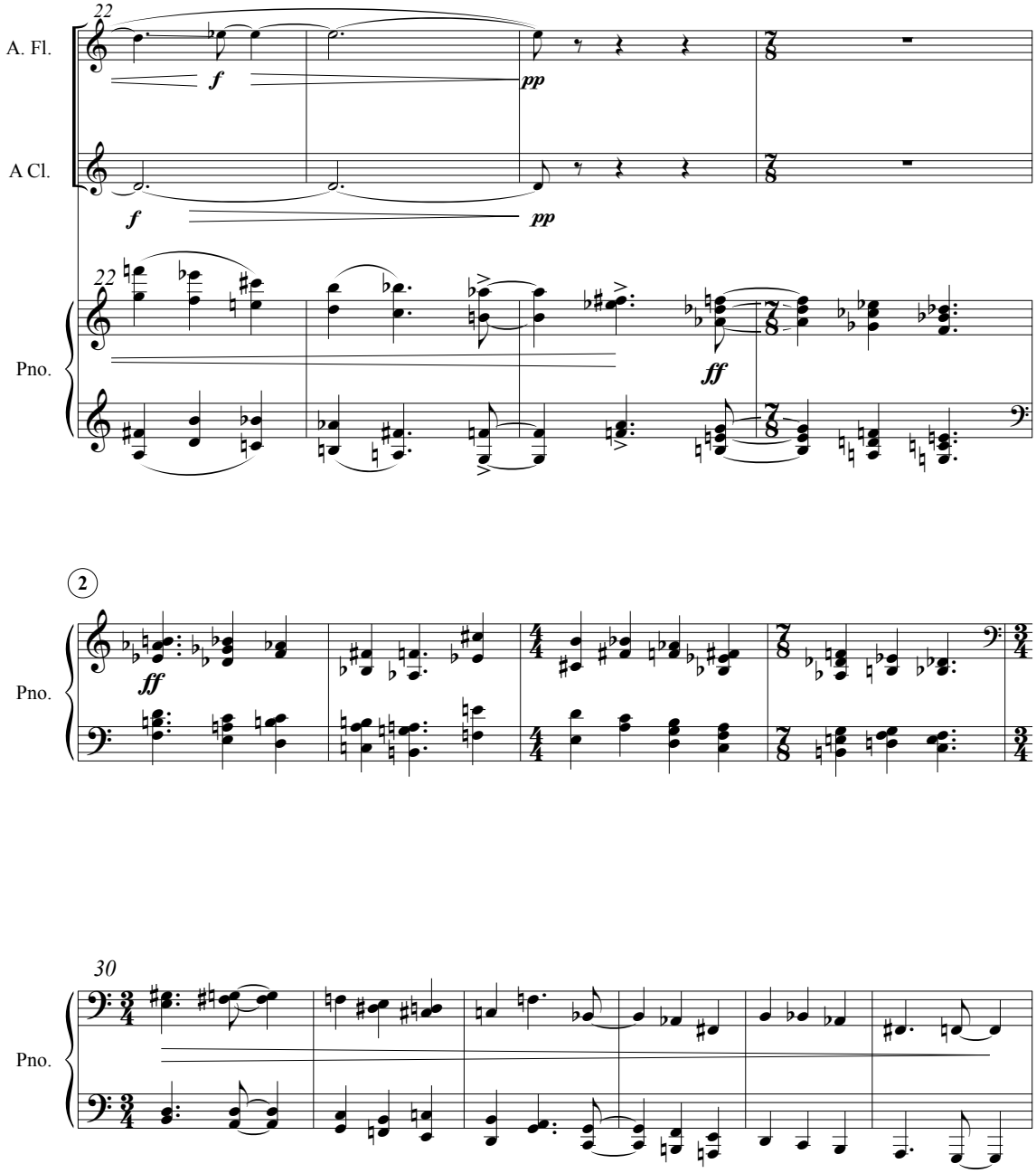
14. Forest


1
Pressing forward (♩ = 96)
pizz.
Double Bass
Piano
A. Fl.
D.B.
Pno.
cresc. poco a poco

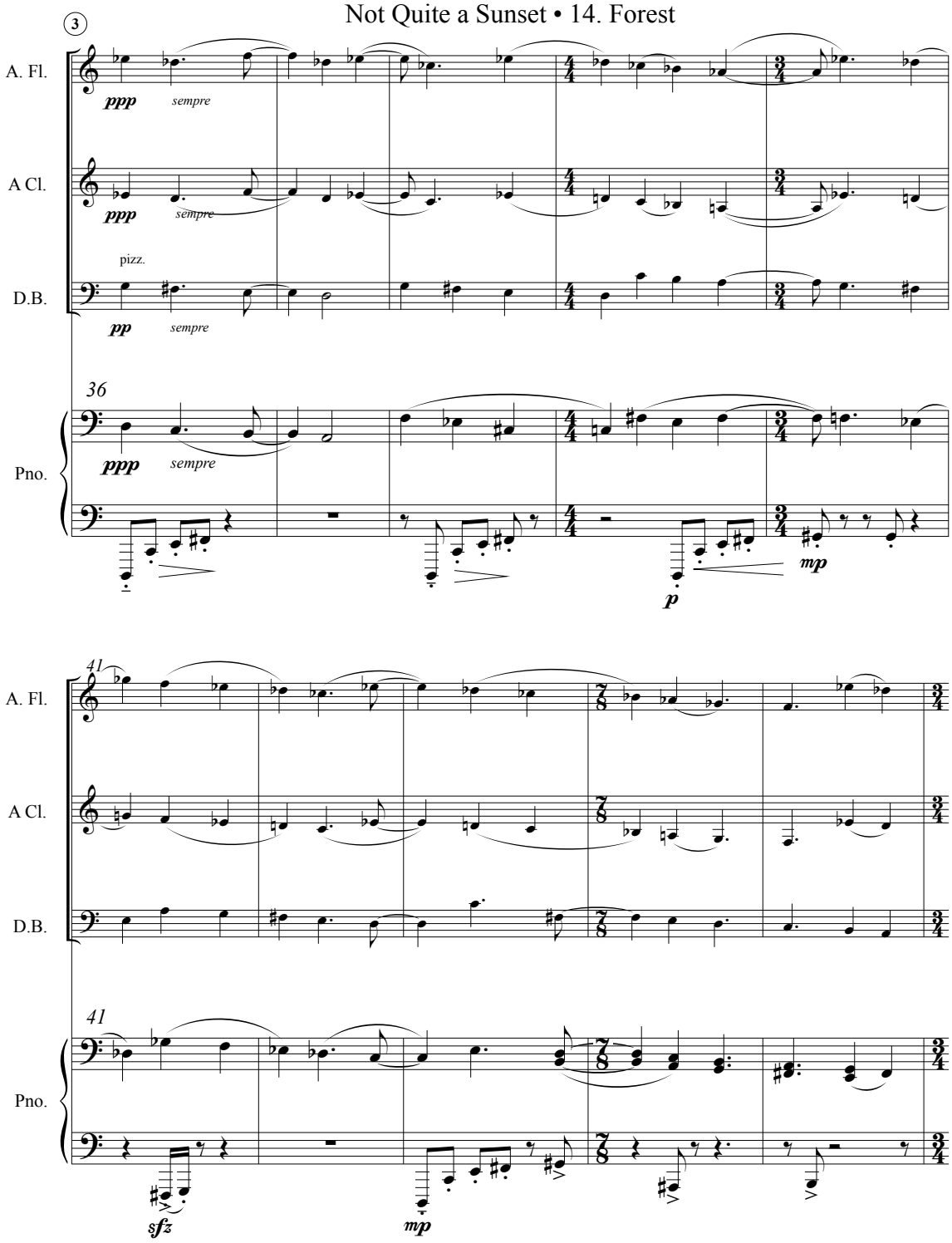
Not Quite a Sunset • 14. Forest



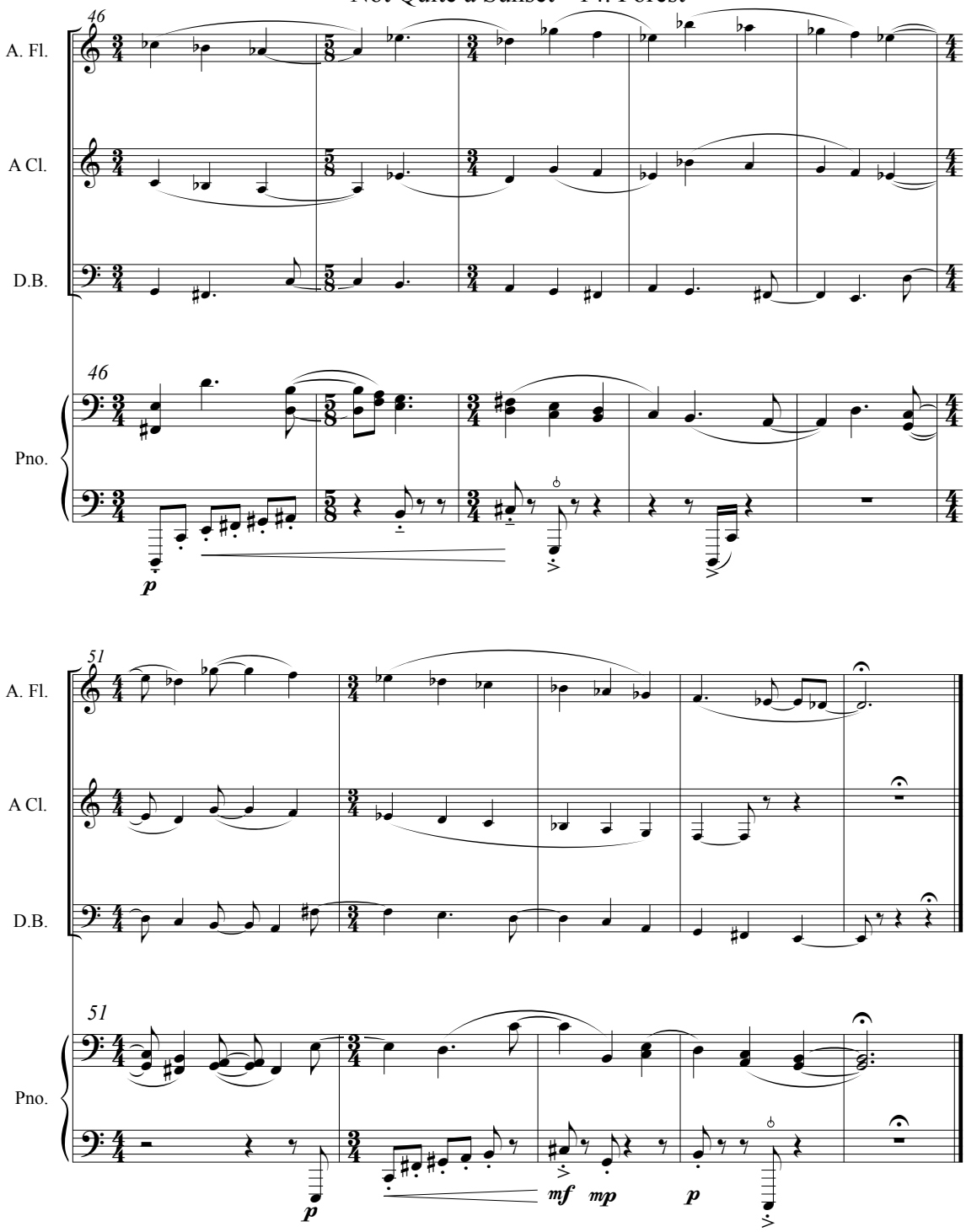
Not Quite a Sunset • 14. Forest



Not Quite a Sunset • 14. Forest



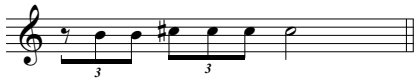
Not Quite a Sunset • 14. Forest



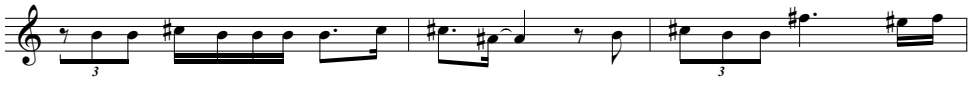
15. Sara's Voice / Interludes

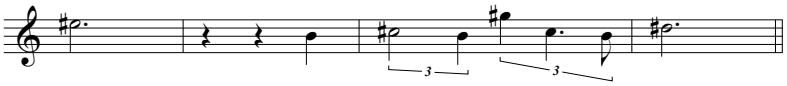
A Sunflowers

1

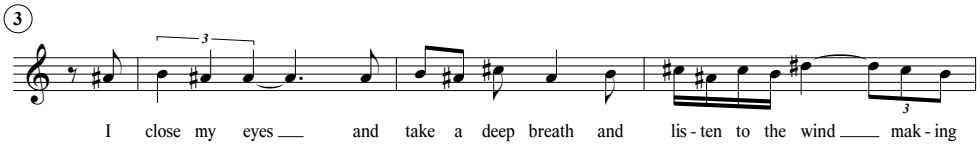


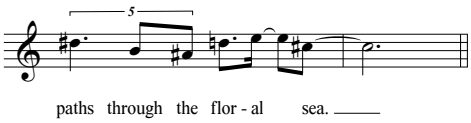
2





3



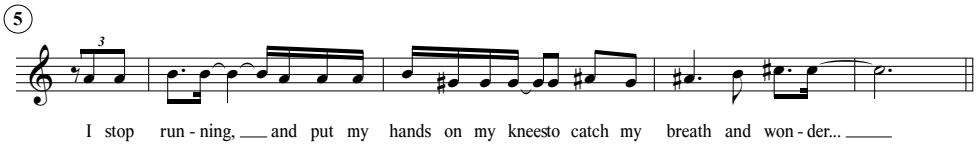


4 (spoken)

I open my eyes and run lightly towards the yellow flowers, though they never seem to get any closer.

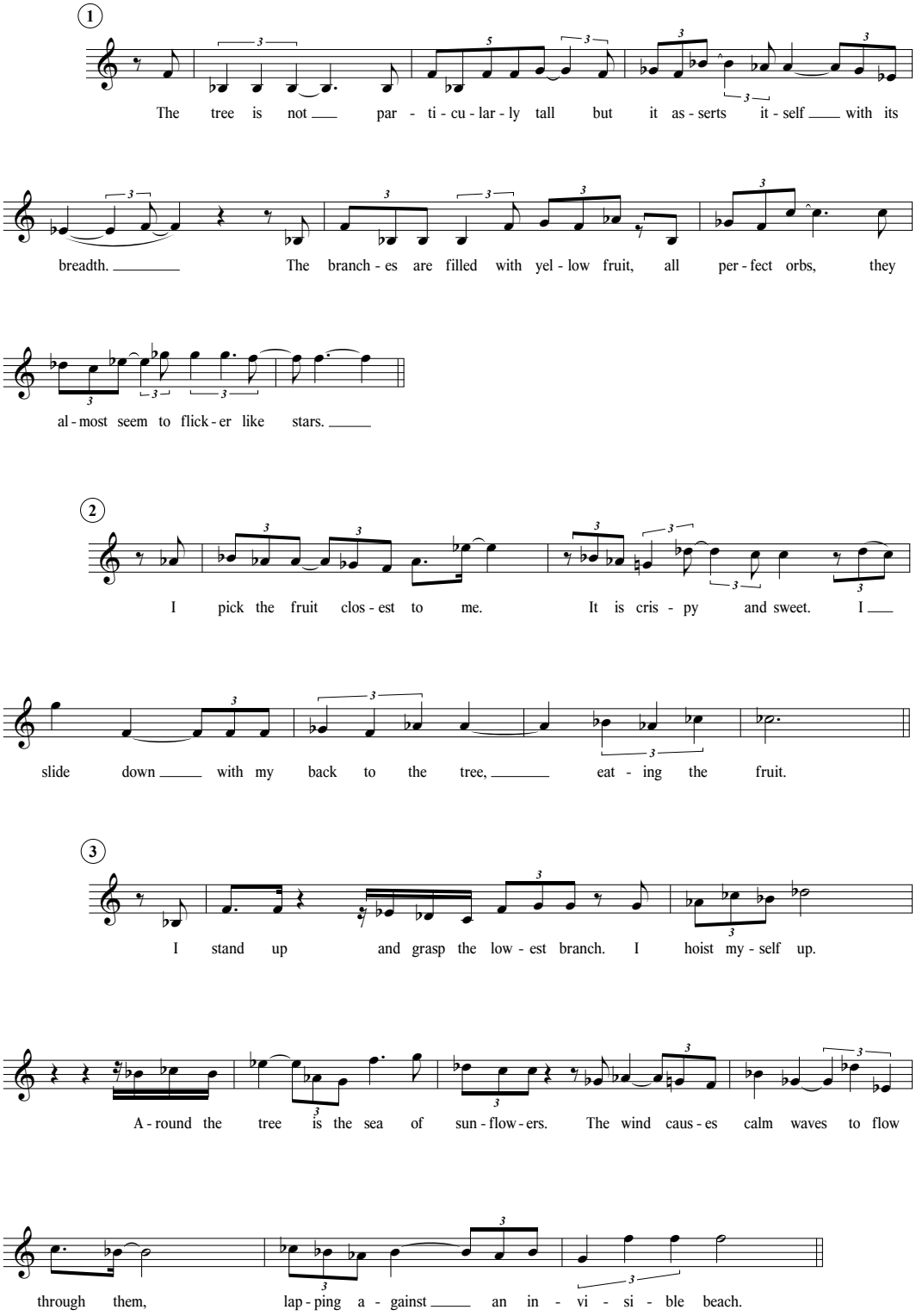
I push harder, breaking into a sprint. I shift directions, hoping to catch them off guard, but still I fail.

5



Not Quite a Sunset • 15. Sara's Voice / Interludes

B Tree



Not Quite a Sunset • 15. Sara's Voice / Interludes

④ (spoken)

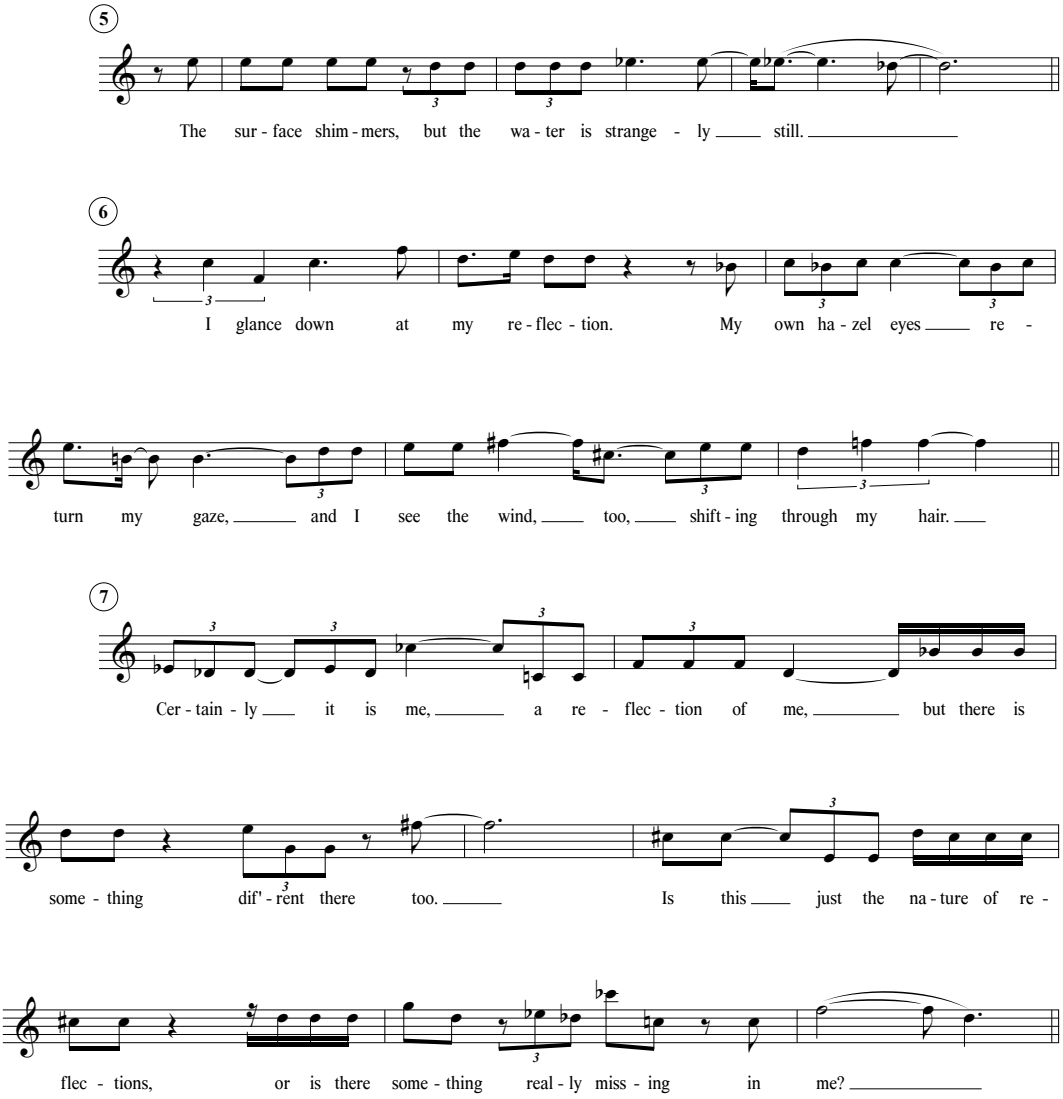
I see a glint of something metal in the distance. A closer look reveals a structure standing tall amid the sunflowers, and I wonder what it is. I wonder how to reach it. I feel a sudden desire, a need, to reach it.

Suddenly I am standing before it, now truly surrounded by sunflowers that have now allowed me among them, and the structure is as tall as the tree and made of unfamiliar metal and wood, silver with lines and curves of green engraved in it. The wind-blown flowers brush up against it lightly; from this side it seems to be nothing more than a freestanding wall. I walk around it, wondering how and why this wall was here in this strange field. From the other side of the wall it appears as an arch, with the silver and green replaced by a deep impenetrable black. Somehow I know that there is something beyond the black void, but I cannot see past the threshold.

It is a door I cannot open.

Not Quite a Sunset • 15. Sara's Voice / Interludes

C Lake



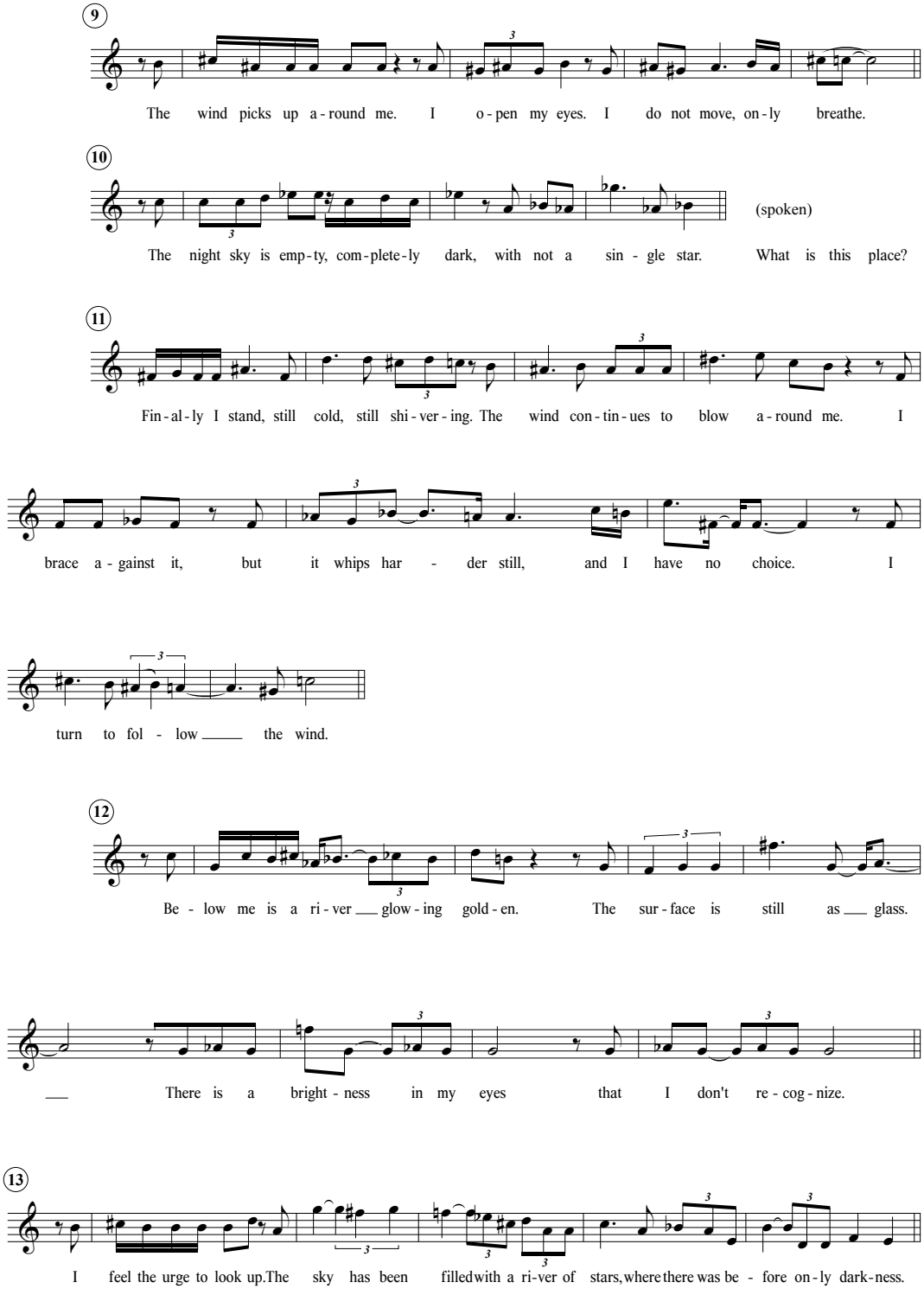
I stand carefully and begin to walk into the lake. Soon I am on the lake itself, the still water feeling like glass beneath my feet. Soon I am beside the structure, apparently an unfinished wall some five meters high. It appears to be made out of some combination of wood and metal, colored silver with thin lines and curves of green engraved into it.

I walk around it, wondering how and why this wall is here on this strange lake. From the other side t he wall appears more as an arch, with the silver and green replaced by a deep impenetrable black. Somehow I know that there is something beyond the black void, but I cannot see past the threshold.

It is a door I cannot open.

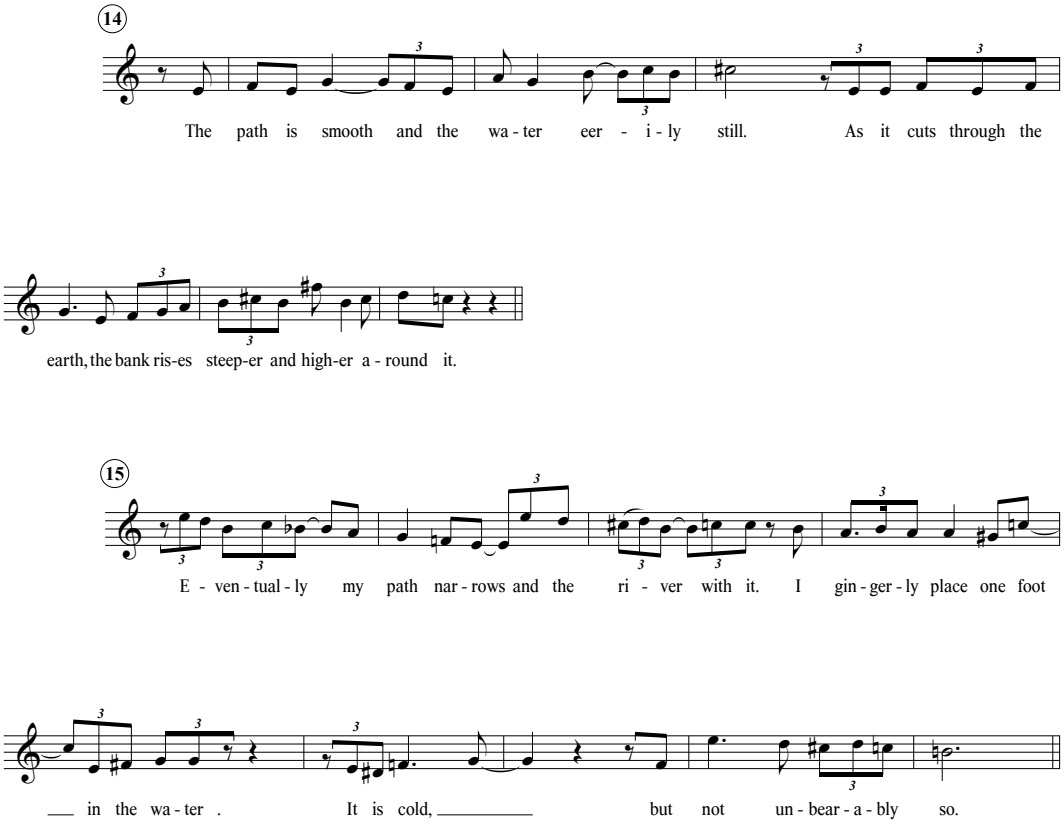
Not Quite a Sunset • 15. Sara's Voice / Interludes

D River of Stars



Not Quite a Sunset • 15. Sara's Voice / Interludes

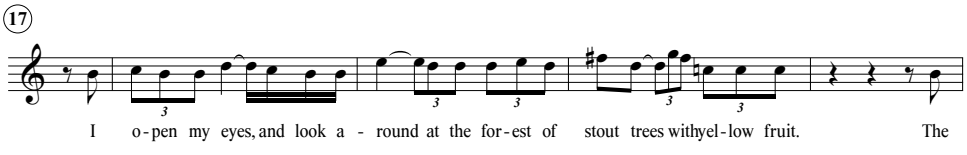
E Forest



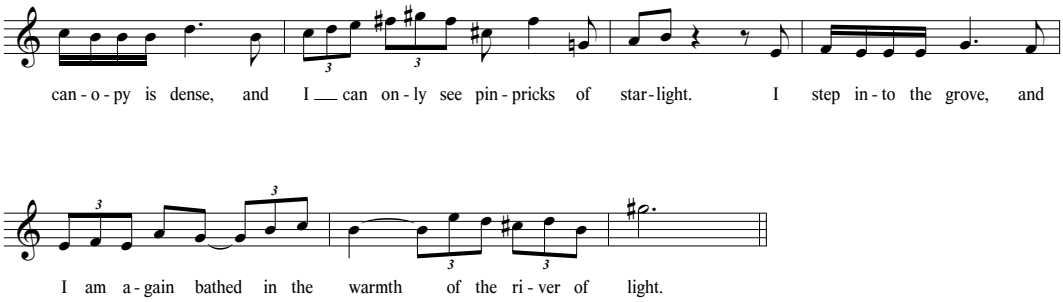
16 (spoken)

For miles I continue to follow the winding of the river, and I do not tire. I feel the energy of the millions of stars in the sky-river above me. It mirrors the ground-river's bends exactly, and its guidance comforts me.

After hours of walking in the center of the river, the bank begins to narrow more dramatically and closes above me. I can no longer see the path before me. I press on all the same. The riverbank narrows so much in the darkness that I am forced to turn and sidle along slowly for perhaps a quarter mile. I reach out to touch the wall of cool soil for balance, but instead of soft dirt the texture is rough - the bark of a tree.



Not Quite a Sunset • 15. Sara's Voice / Interludes



⑱ (spoken)

A flicker catches my eye; the sky is now dark, as the stars have surrounded me, and I watch them dance. Slowly I see that they are not stars, but fireflies with a star-like brilliance, and I smile, remembering those summer evenings of my childhood spent chasing them. I stand up and close my eyes again, breathing deeply, breathing it all in.

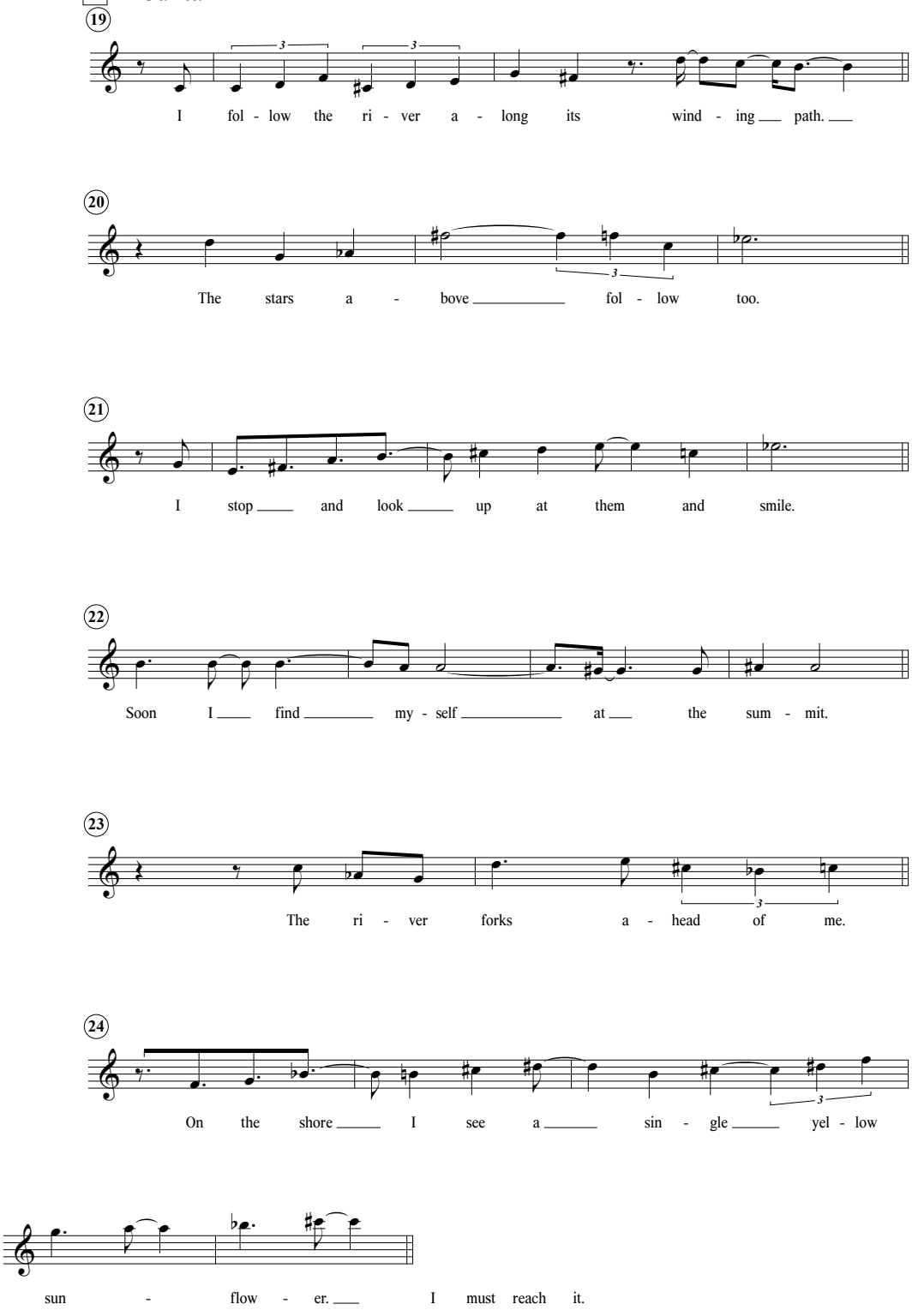
When I open my eyes again, I see one firefly a little bit brighter than the rest. I watch it silently, then feel the urge of my previous seven-year-old self - I read out carefully with both hands and cup them around the insect. It flutters softly against my palms, and I can see its glow through the back of my hands. The glow seems to brighten, and enters my hands, spreading up my arms. In shock, I release the firefly, but it is no longer there, and I see the others beginning to form ornate designs in front of me, shifting in color from soft gold to green.

I feel a brush along my thighs, and I jump, looking down and around at a field of sunflowers, extending again in every direction. I am no longer in the forest glen, and I can't see it in any direction. Before me stands once more the mysterious door, the shapes the fireflies made now embedded in the carvings. I walk slowly around it, taking again once more. It seems to have more life than before, like it wants to open, like it wants to show me what was on its other side, a side that was impossible - certainly once open it was no longer a door but an arch.

As I return to face the front of the door, the glow that had entered me seems to be reflected on the door and in one of the designs I can see a single bright point of light, a spark. It beckons me. I extend my left arm once more, to touch the spark.

Not Quite a Sunset • 15. Sara's Voice / Interludes

F Mountain



Not Quite a Sunset • 15. Sara's Voice / Interludes

㉕

I take off my shoes and walk barefoot to the edge of the water. I gingerly reach my leg out to touch the water's surface, somehow expecting it to hold my weight, but my foot breaks the plane and I tumble forward into the river. It is surprisingly deep, even for a river of its breadth, and I cannot reach the bottom.

The shore around me and mountain under me vanish before I can surface, and I am suddenly aware that I am no longer in the water but suspended in the air, or rather in a vacuum. Though I am wearing neither a suit nor an oxygen tank, I find I can breathe, or perhaps only that I no longer need to. I am surrounded by the swirl of stars; they rotate slowly around me. Though impossibly distant, I extend my arm towards one star, trying to touch it with the tip of my left index finger. A spark flies out as my finger makes contact, and I jerk back in surprise. The spark of a star begins to pulse, and the stars around me begin to move faster, all of them in front of me now, and they begin to form an ornate design. Their golden glow begins to shift to green as the shapes become more solid.

I feel a brush along my thighs, and I jump, looking down and around at a field of sunflowers, extending again in every direction. My feet are once again on solid ground. Before me stands once more the mysterious door, the stars now embedded in the carving. I walk slowly around it, taking it in once more. It seems to have more life than before, like it wants to open, like it wants to show me what is on its other side, a side that is impossible - certainly once it is opened it will no longer be a door but an arch.

As I return to face the front of the door, a glint catches my eye, and I can see the spark I spawned, and I stare at it, thinking.

I extend my arm once more, reaching to touch the spark.

G Twilight

The colors are bright, oranges and reds and yellows in infinite shades, buffeting the space around me in every direction. There is an enormous amount of energy in them, and yet I stand still and strong against their onslaught. They move around me, but they do not touch me, they can not touch me. They have no form. Despite their apparent vibration, they make no sound. They are endless.

I continue to move forward, propelled through the field of color though I do not walk. I close my eyes and take in the odd sensation, breathing deeply. The colors' vibration is oddly soothing, even with the uneasy soundlessness.

Gradually the field of color begins to change, parting in front of me, yielding to purples and blues and greys. My motion slows until I am still. Finally taking a step forward, I consider my surroundings. The valley around me is cloaked in twilit shadows of alien trees. I can feel the energy of the planet deeply, penetrating my bones, giving me support, and guiding me deeper into the valley. A path, untouched by the shadow, begins at my feet and leads down several miles. As I follow it with my eyes, I see a distant structure, and though it is far away I know instinctively it is the Door; it can be nothing else. For once its presence comforts me, and I smile.