# Mel Zhang

## no name woman

for string quartet

Inspired by Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior (1976)
for The Knights Chamber Ensemble
art by Mel Zhang

*Duration* ~3:50min

*Instrumentation* 2 Violins, 1 Viola, 1 Cello

*Program Notes*

Inspired by Maxine Hong Kingston's book The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Amongst Ghosts (1976), a novel about Kingston's Chinese American childhood in California, "no name woman" interrogates similar themes of generational trauma and cultural displacement. Reflecting Kingston's post-modern, splintered narrative style, "no name woman" oscillates between clarity and chaos, emulating the inherited confusion of identity characteristic to immigrant diasporas. A motif persists across passages and sections. Even in the randomness that overtakes the final part of the score, the melody appears, veiled but still there—in groups defined by adaptation and transformation, is what remains a sign of the individual or the community? Is assimilation possible—or desirable at all? How do first, second, third generations of children find themselves in the dissonance? Is the confusion a product of our culture, or has the confusion become the culture itself?

*Performance Notes*

The glissando from m. 75-98 are mostly free in direction/pitch; unless specified by the text "[Normal] gliss to next note," the destination of the gliss is up to the performer. All that matters is that, after the gliss (duration specified by the amount of measures that the slide spans), the performer should play what is notated in the next measure. The effect should be: a familiar chord, then 1-3 measures (per what is notated by bar lines) of sliding nonsense, then another familiar chord.

In m. 97 and 101, the performer should gliss in any direction and slowly fade out. When the performer should start fading is also self-dictated. All that matters is that there's a gap of silence somewhere in the measures with rests.

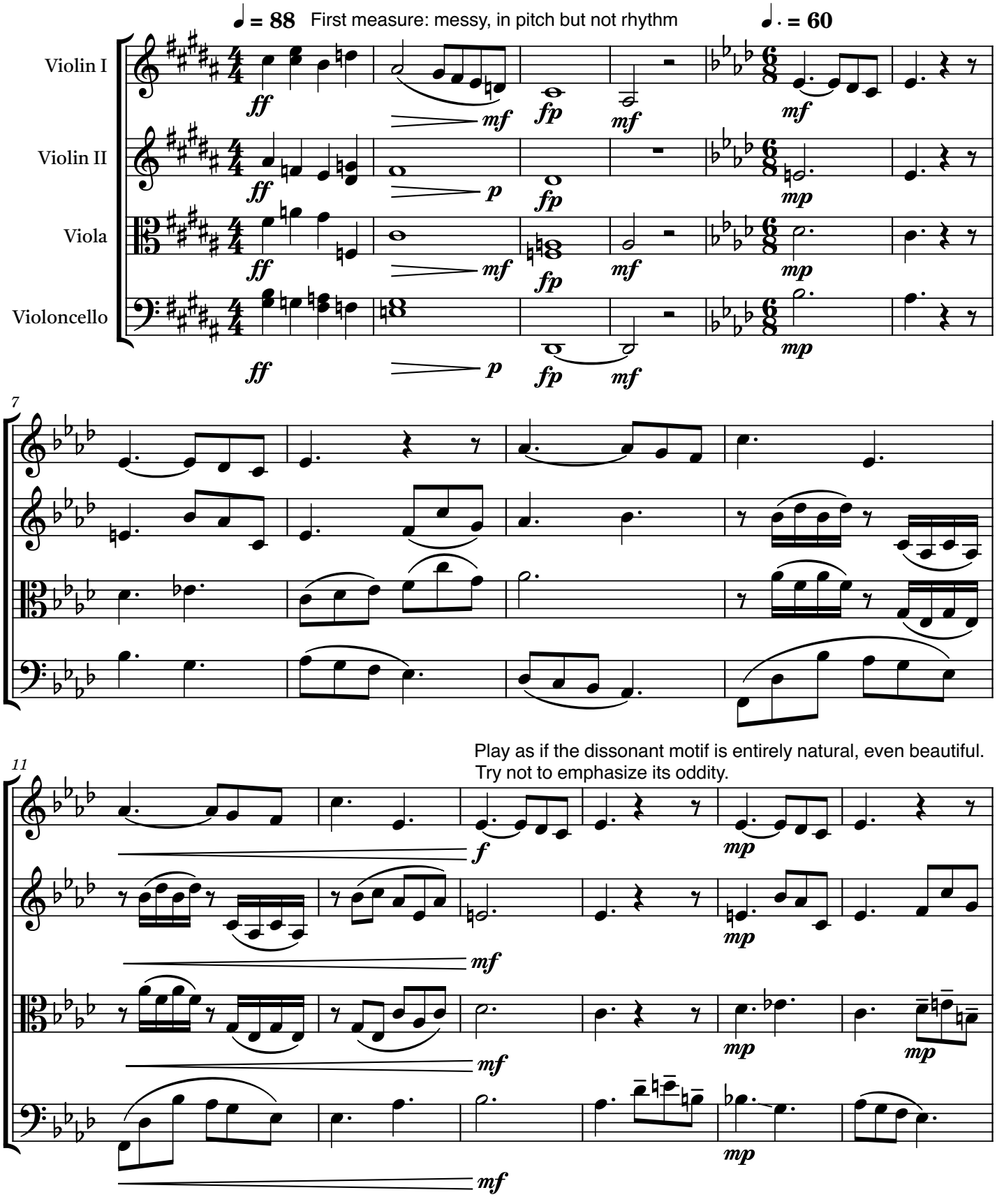
Written for *The Knights*: played by Colin Jacobsen (Violin I), Christina Courtin (Violin II), Mario Gotoh (Viola), Caitlin Sullivan (Cello) in 2025.

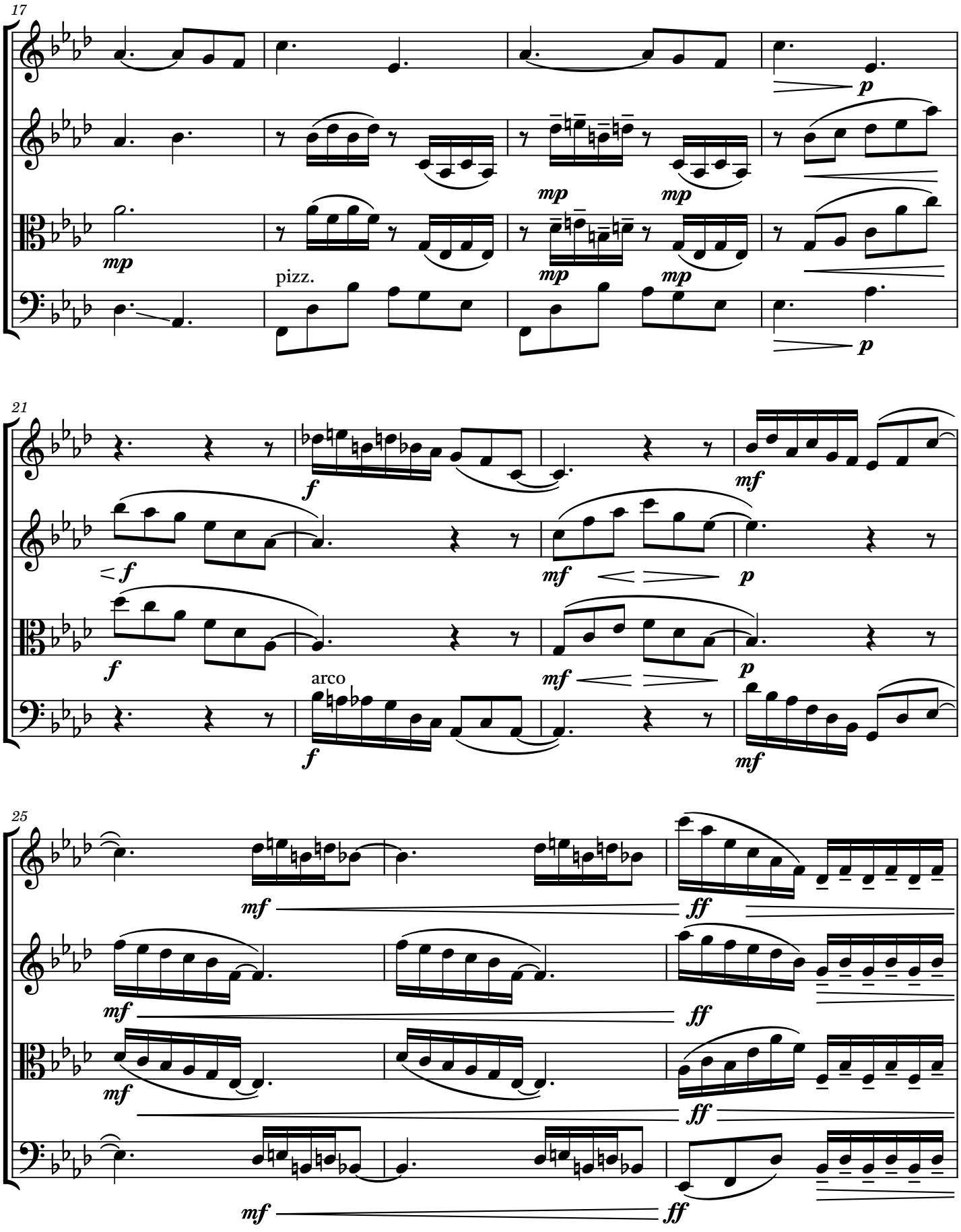
Link to recording: https://tinyurl.com/3wa9dhb6

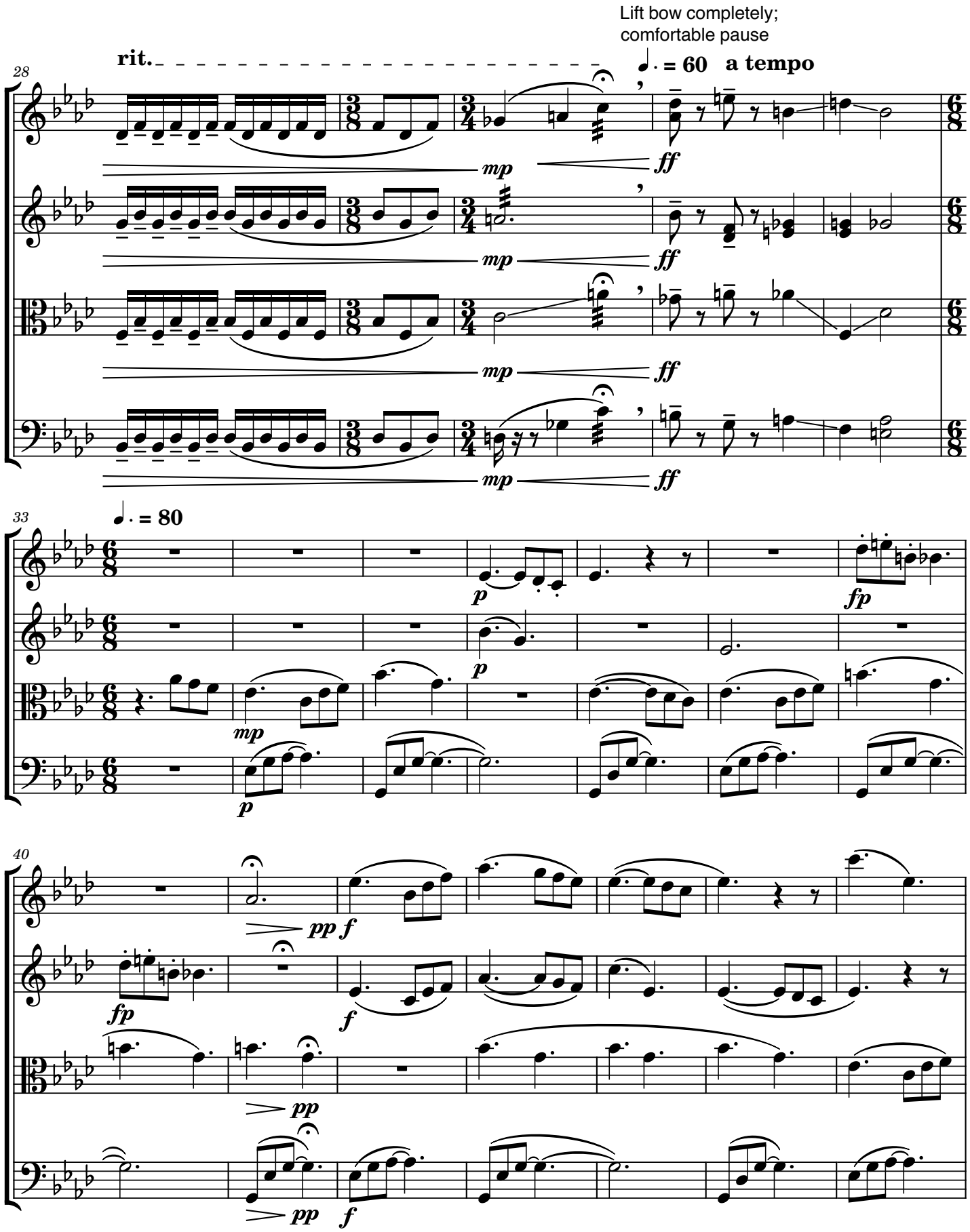
# no name woman

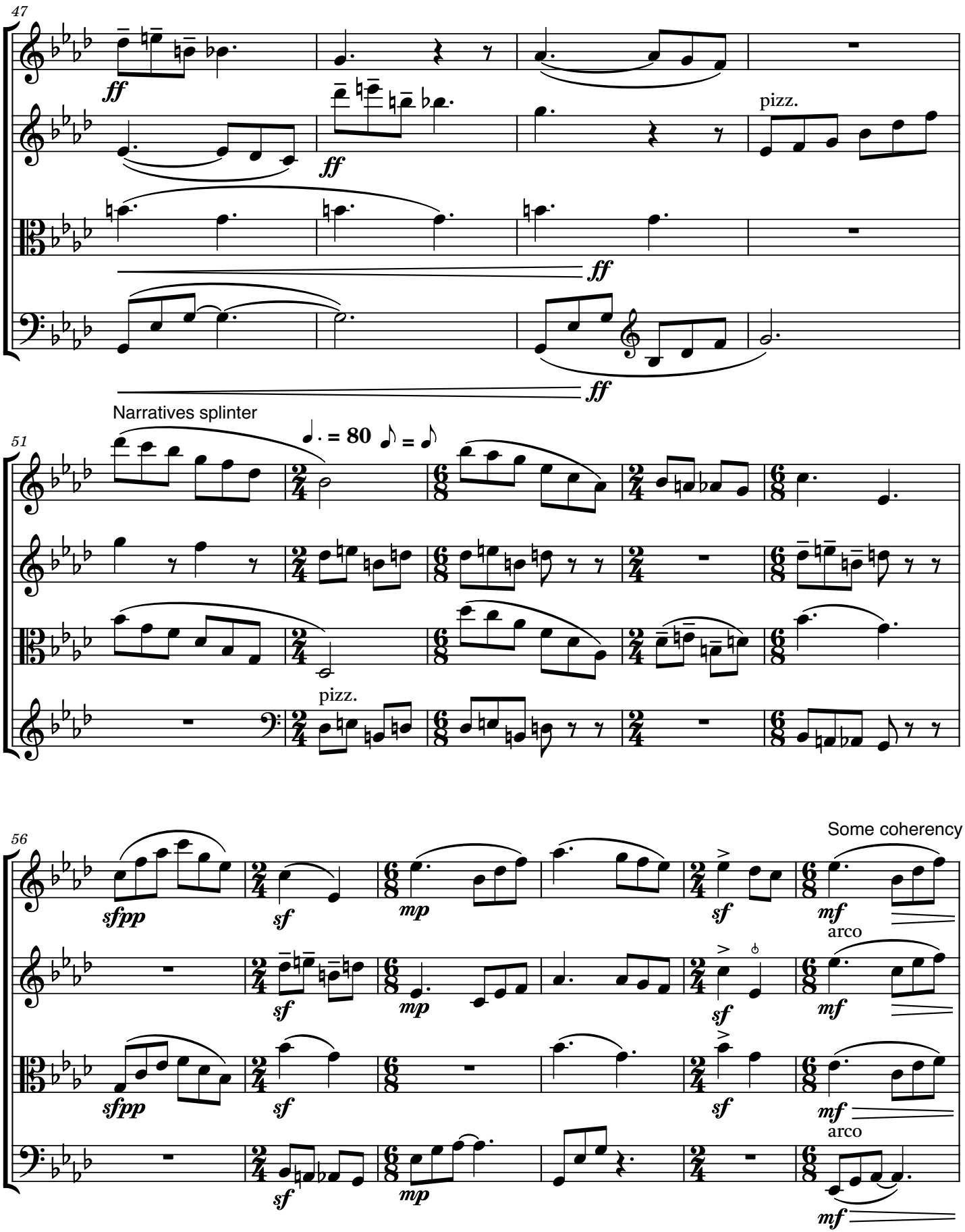
*for The Knights*

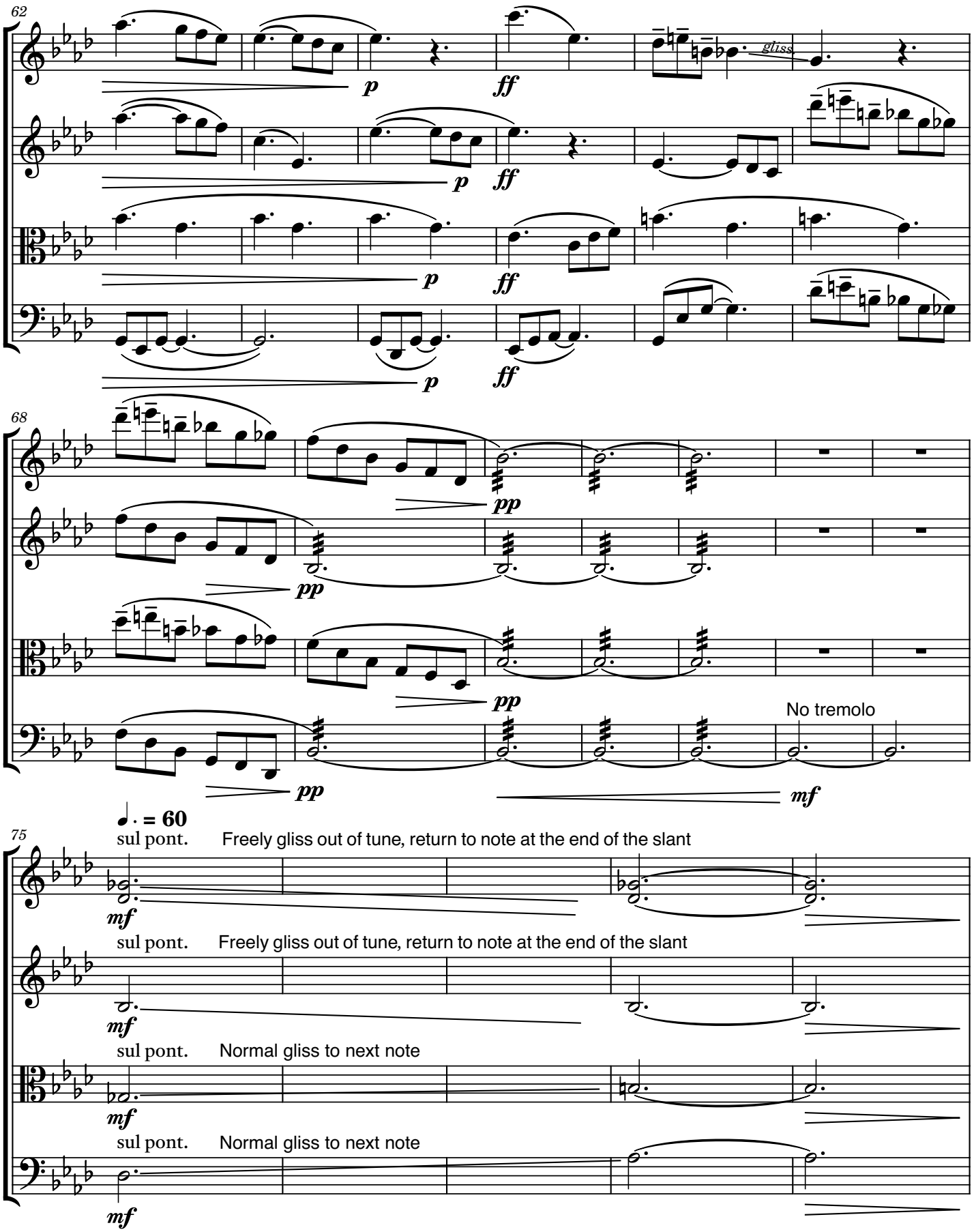
Mel Zhang

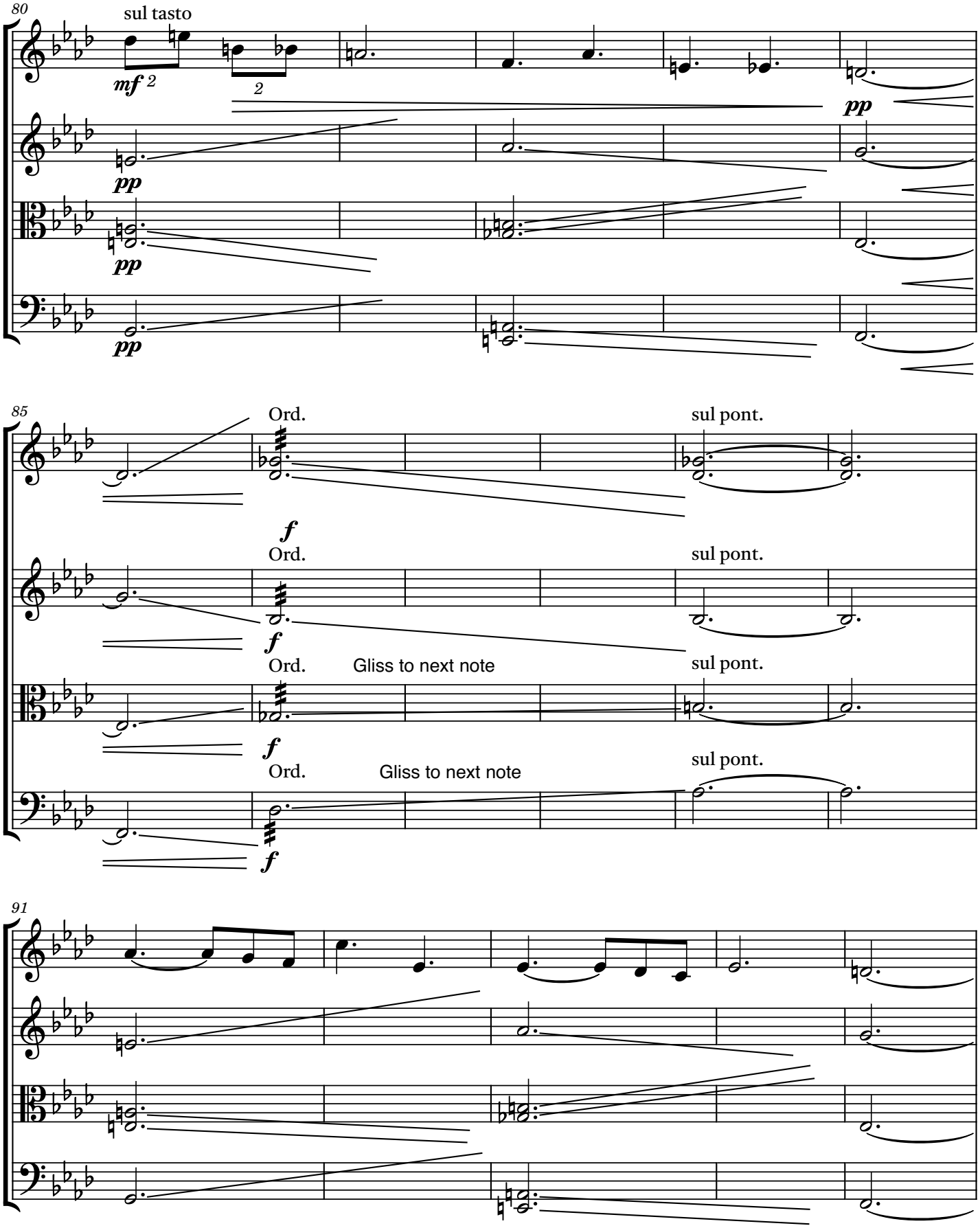


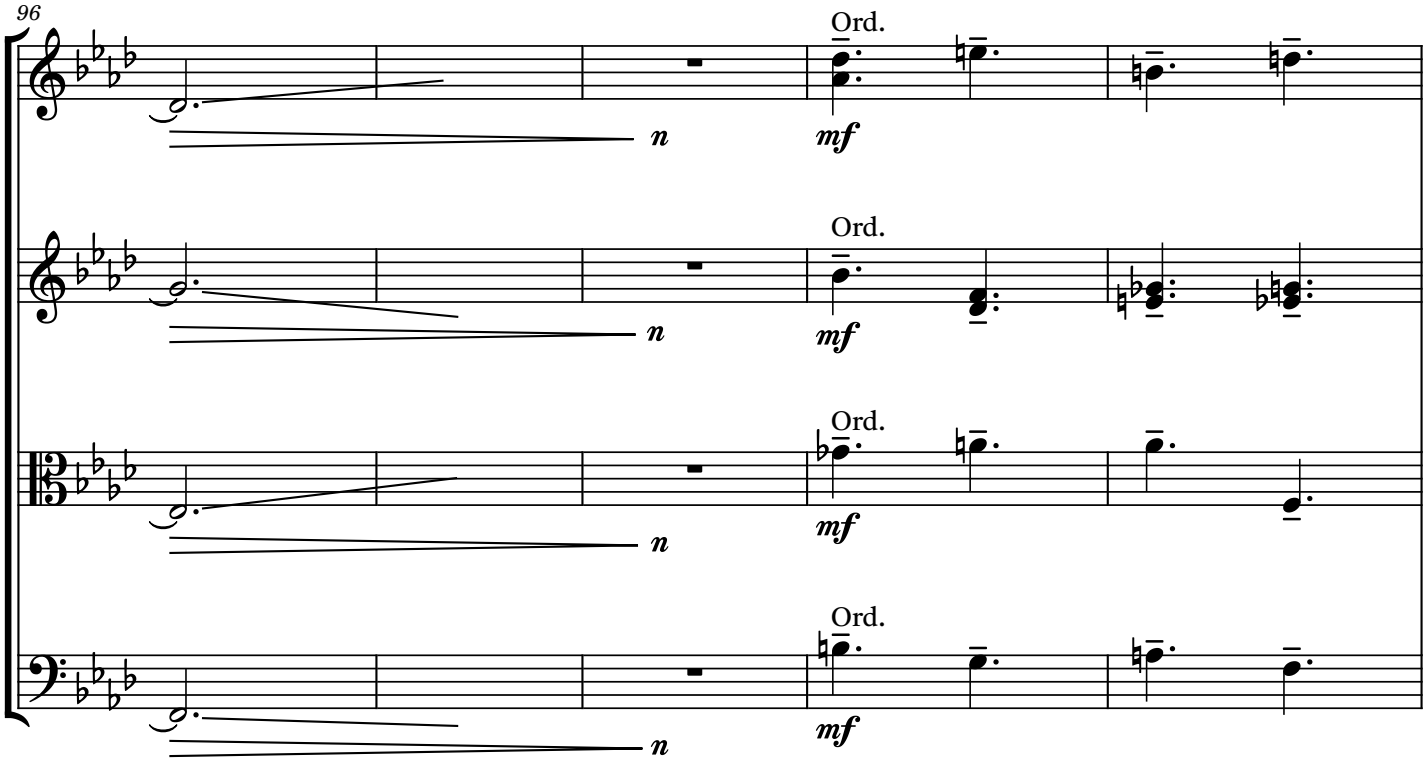

17
mp
mp
mp
mp
mp
pizz.
p
p
21
f
f
f
mf
mf
mf
p
p
arco
25
mf
mf
mf
mf
ff
ff
ff
ff

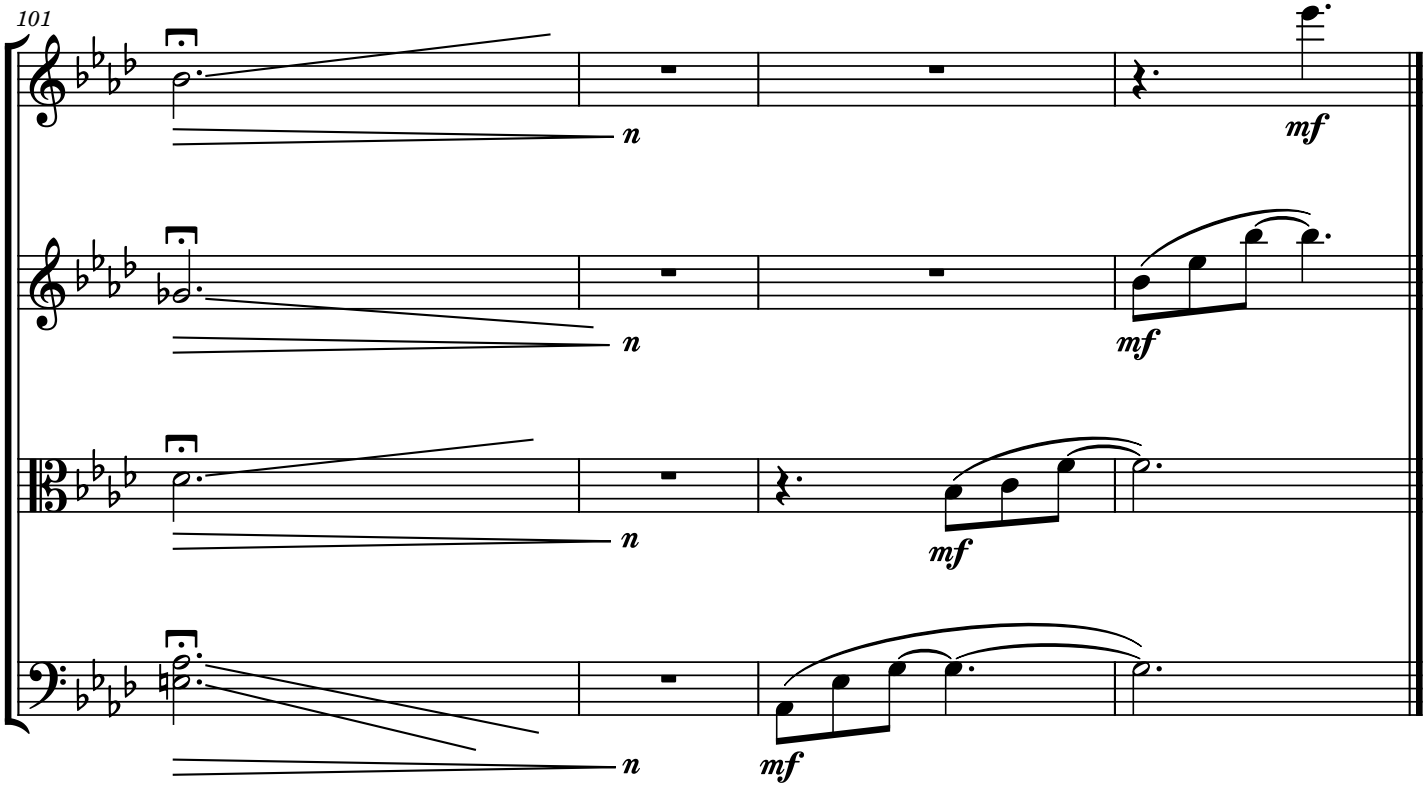

Lift bow completely;
comfortable pause
28
rit.
♩. = 60 a tempo
mp
ff
33
♩. = 80
p
fp
mp
40
pp
f


47
ff
ff
pizz.
ff
ff
Narratives splinter
51
♩. = 80 ♪ = ♪
pizz.
56
Some coherency
sfpp
sf
mp
sf
mf
arco
sf
mp
sf
mf
sfpp
sf
sf
mf
arco
sf
mp
mf


62
gliss
p
ff
68
pp
No tremolo
mf
♩. = 60
75
sul pont.
Freely gliss out of tune, return to note at the end of the slant
Normal gliss to next note


80
sul tasto
mf
2
2
pp
pp
pp
85
Ord.
sul pont.
f
Ord.
sul pont.
f
Ord.
Gliss to next note
sul pont.
f
Ord.
Gliss to next note
sul pont.
f
91


96
Ord.
n
mf
Ord.
n
mf
Ord.
n
mf
Ord.
n
mf


101
n
mf
n
mf
n
mf
n
mf