THE ONLY EVIDENCE

ERIC SHANFIELD

THE ONLY EVIDENCE

Eric Shanfield | ENS.2024.5 | 9.27.2007-7.28.2024 | 10’

poems by Jesse Ball

Tenor

3 Piccolos
Vibraphone
2 Pianos
String Orchestra

There should be an equal number of desks in each section so the strings may divide equally throughout. The first and second violins are seated opposite one another, and the pianos likewise placed stereophonically toward either side of the stage, with the vibraphone and piccolos near the center. The string complement should be fairly large: approx. 12.12.10.8.6 min., 16.14.12.10.8 max. Where sections (and half sections) divide into groups of three, do so evenly, with any extra players resting rather than doubling.

THE ONLY EVIDENCE

In part a palimpsest, *The Only Evidence*, setting poems by Jesse Ball—among my favorite living writers—began in 2007 with the first song, two small, equal ensembles hocketing chords under a slowly unfolding vocal line, with the occasional exotic trio of piccolos commenting high above a kind of Greek chorus in the sky. That song never quite worked—felt lonesome and attenuated on its own—so eventually accumulated a second a cappella setting of *From a Clearing*, intended as a bridge to a more energetic third song that never quite emerged. Although new versions of the first song were made in 2013 and 2017, it was only in 2024 when I added a string orchestra to the piccolos, vibraphone, and pianos, that the score took shape, and it was then I finally composed *A Speech*, concluding a compositional saga that took seventeen years to shape ten minutes of music.

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THE ONLY EVIDENCE

Poems by Jesse Ball from *March Book*

In Part

Sit quiet. Lie still.
Let walls stand, and windows break.
Let fires burn low.

Someone's set chairs in a circle.
Someone's wandering asleep in a cursed house.
And the joy that has its home

in the belly at the base of the soul,
let it come, let it go. Let trees be bowed
by weight, let streams race, and moss decay.

The trembling of furred limbs will not cease—
no one's word, however bold,
will banish this cold. And so, sit for no

portraits, stay for no relinquishings.
There was a moment when I was aware
of beings in the air above my head.

Have they left? Or do they loiter there,
attendant, faithful? Sit quiet,
and let the water be, let the false face

arrange itself or not, as marble basins
fill with rain, fill and empty,
empty of their own accord.

From a Clearing

I was set upon by three men.
I felled the first with a word,
the second with a blow.

Beyond them the pale city
Fortune beckoned.
But the third, oh, the third,
His face was hidden.

And in his hands he held
parchment twisted
like the bones of my throat.

A Speech

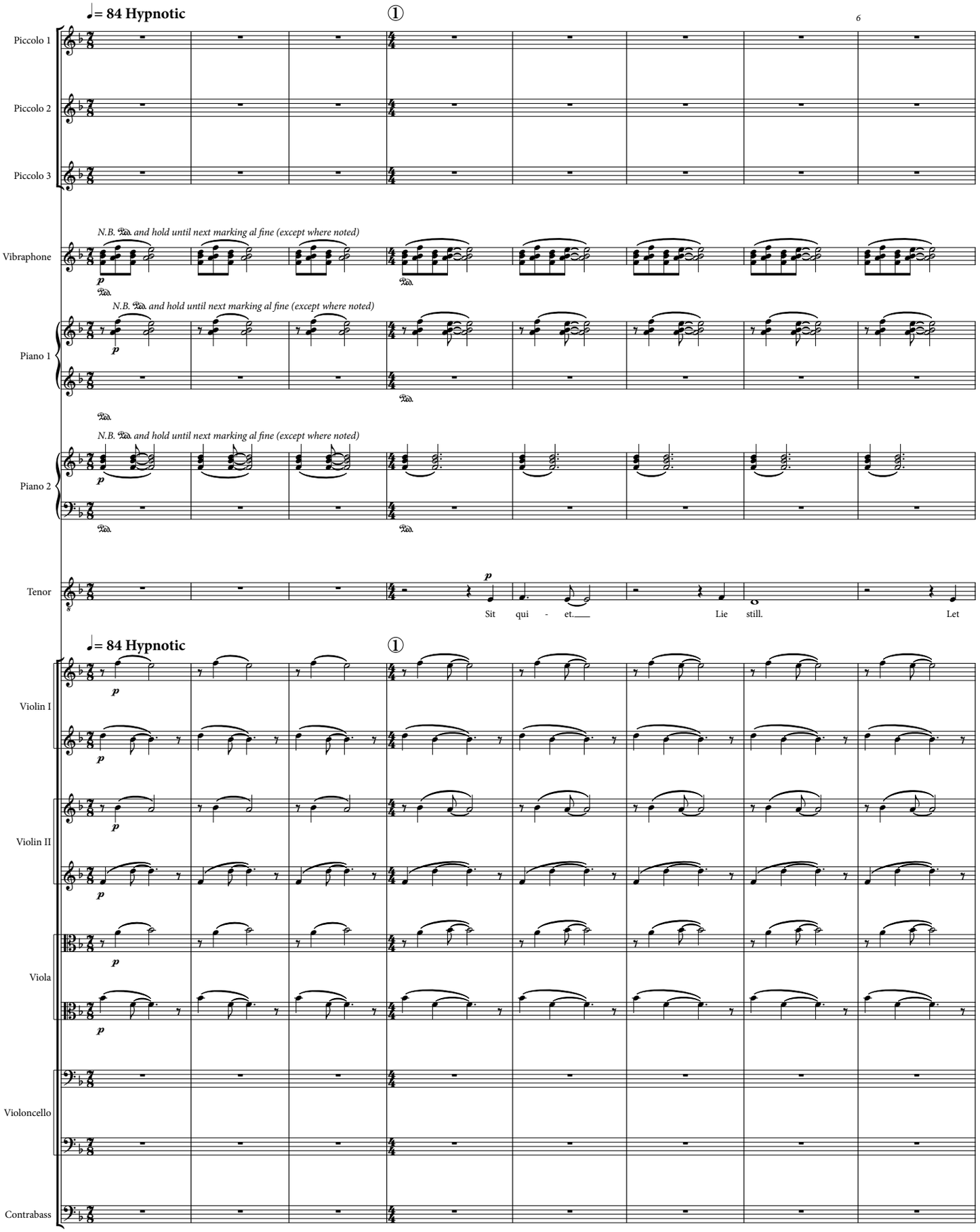
The failure of modernity, said the man in the black coat, is the failure of the machine to act morally. It never intended to. But we were deceived by its sober efficiency. We believed it would do both more and less than it ought to have done. Instead it has done less and more, and brough us to many horrible passes. I suppose we would have reached these awful heights ourselves in time. And yet we have come early, and the only books we know are the ones that we ourselves wrote. They will be no help to us, just as we ourselves can be no help to each other. If someone were to forgive me for the things I did in my youth, even that would be an affront. Those crimes are the only evidence that I have lived.

THE ONLY EVIDENCE

I. IN PART

Jesse Ball

Eric Shanfield



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② ③

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

Picc. 3

Vib.

Pno. 1

Pno. 2

Ten.

walls stand, and win - dows break. Let fi - res___ burn low. Some - one's_ set chairs in a cir - cle.

② ③

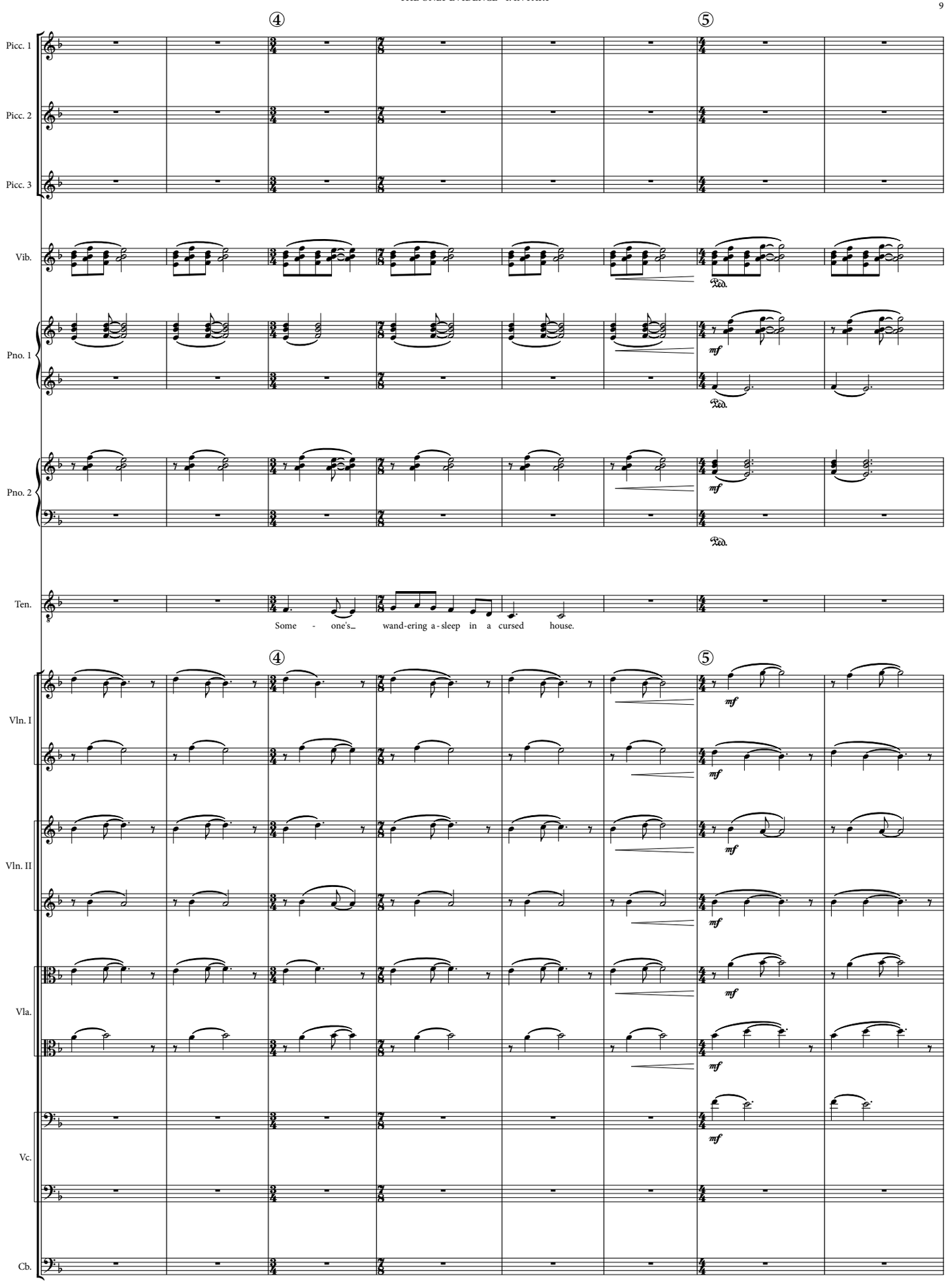
Vln. I

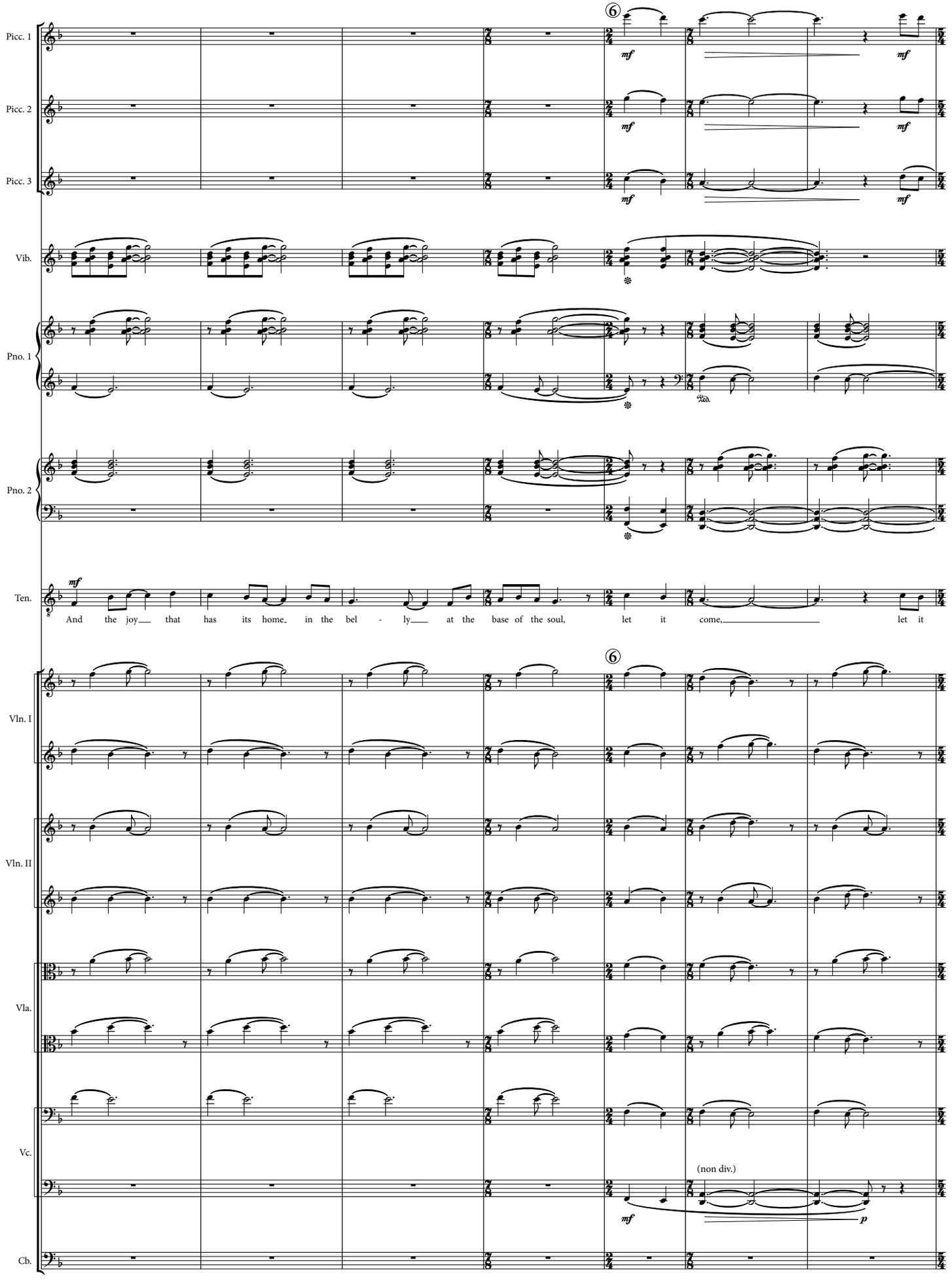
Vln. II

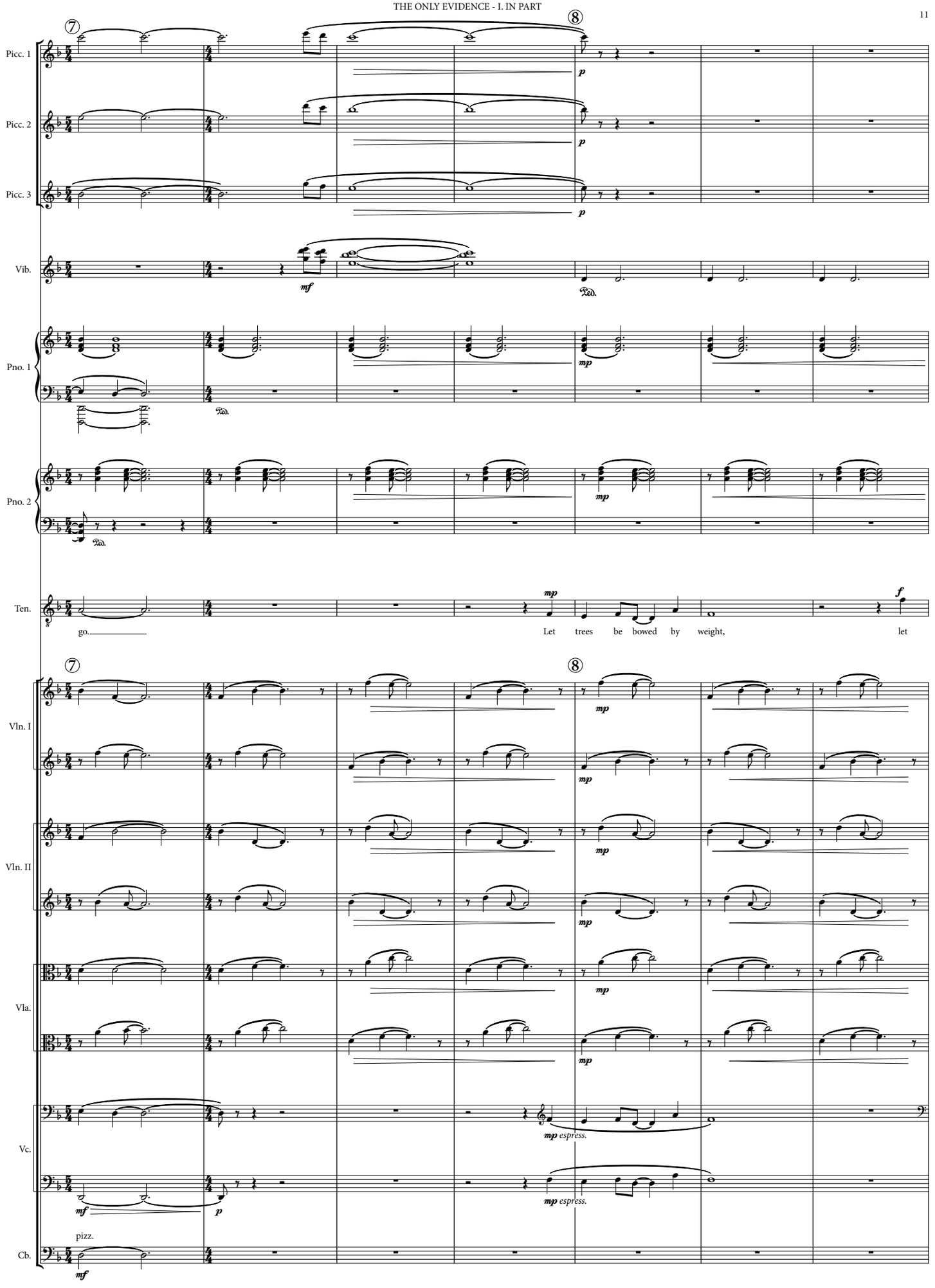
Vla.

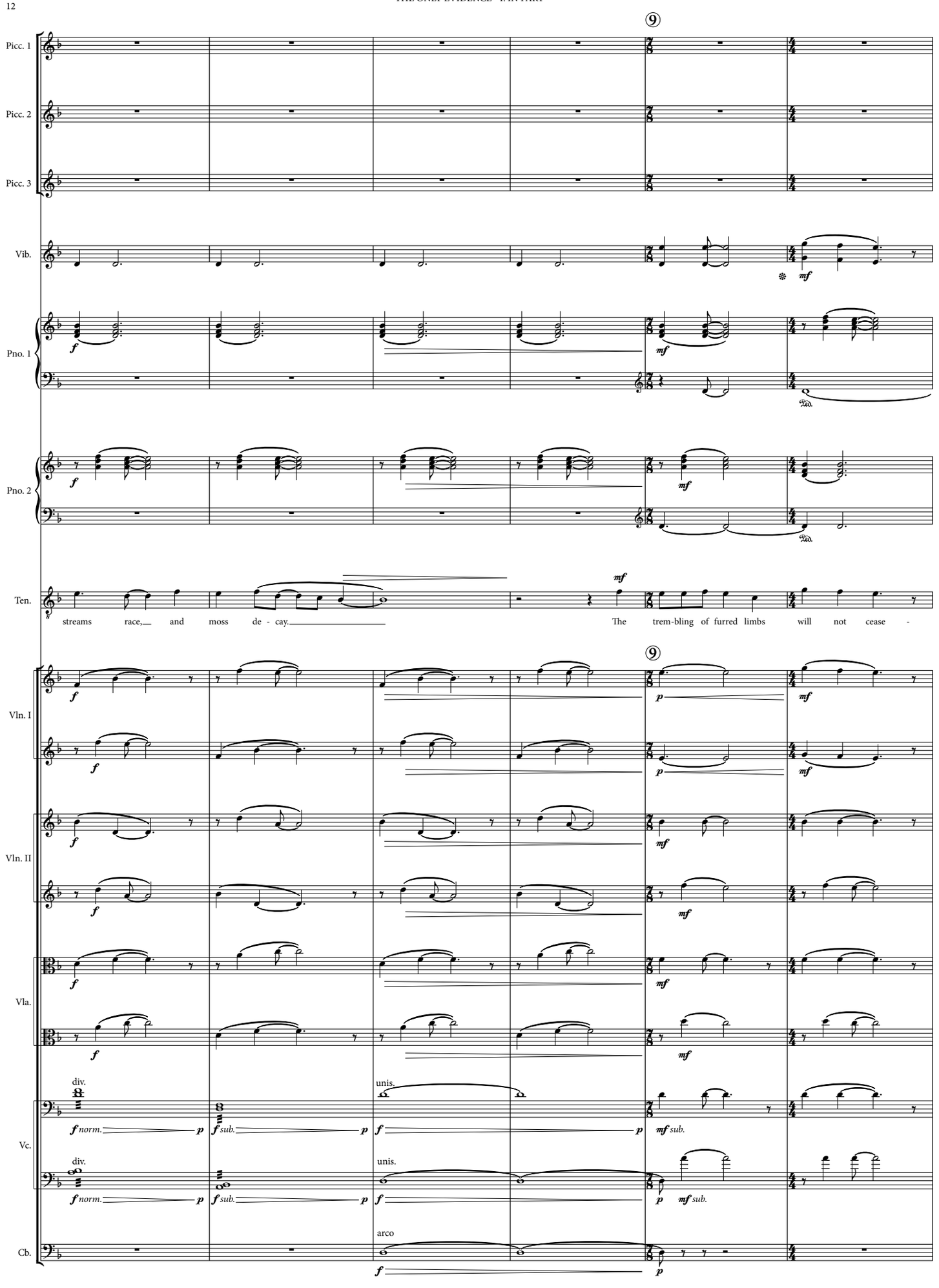
Vc.

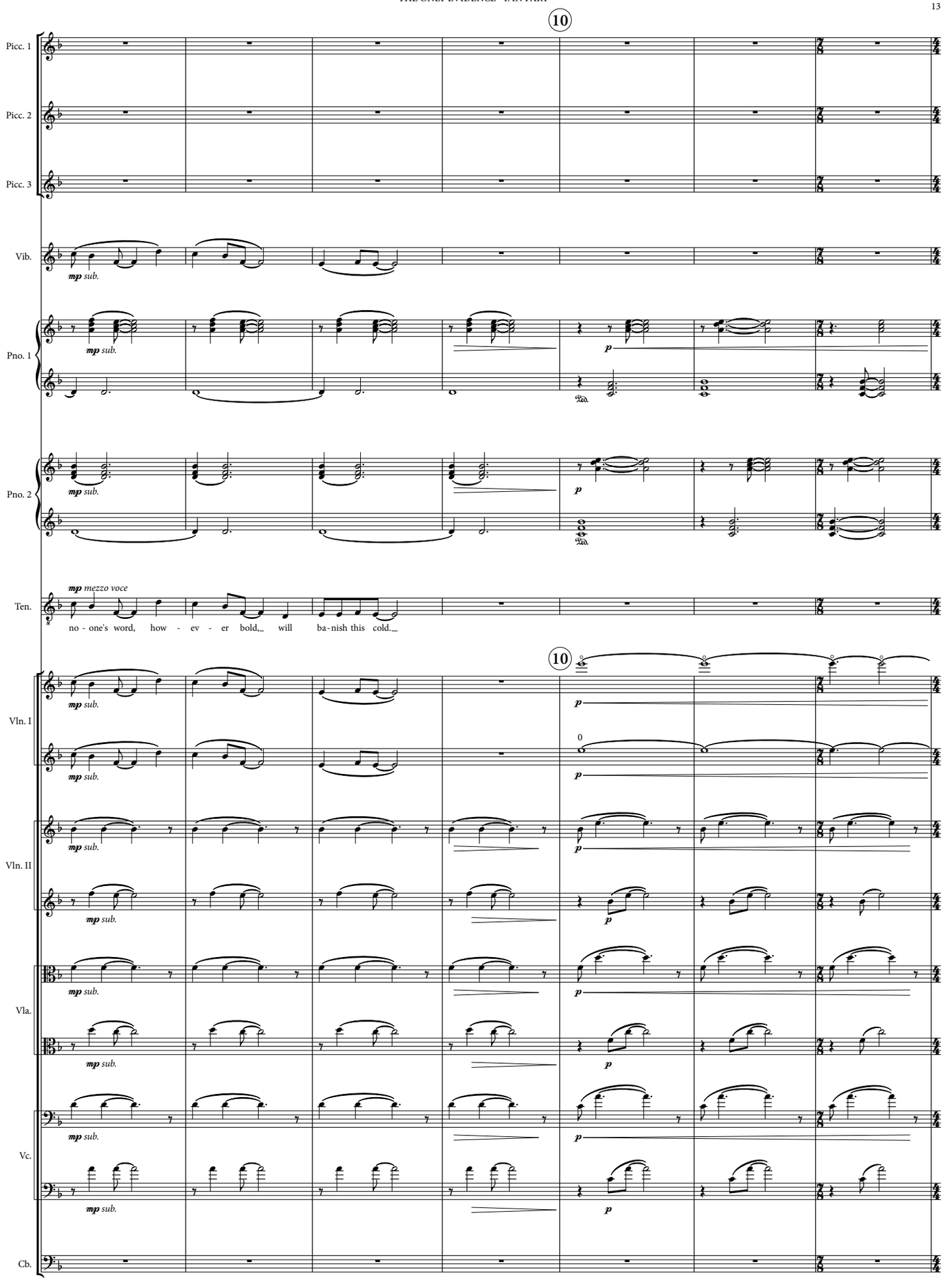
Cb.

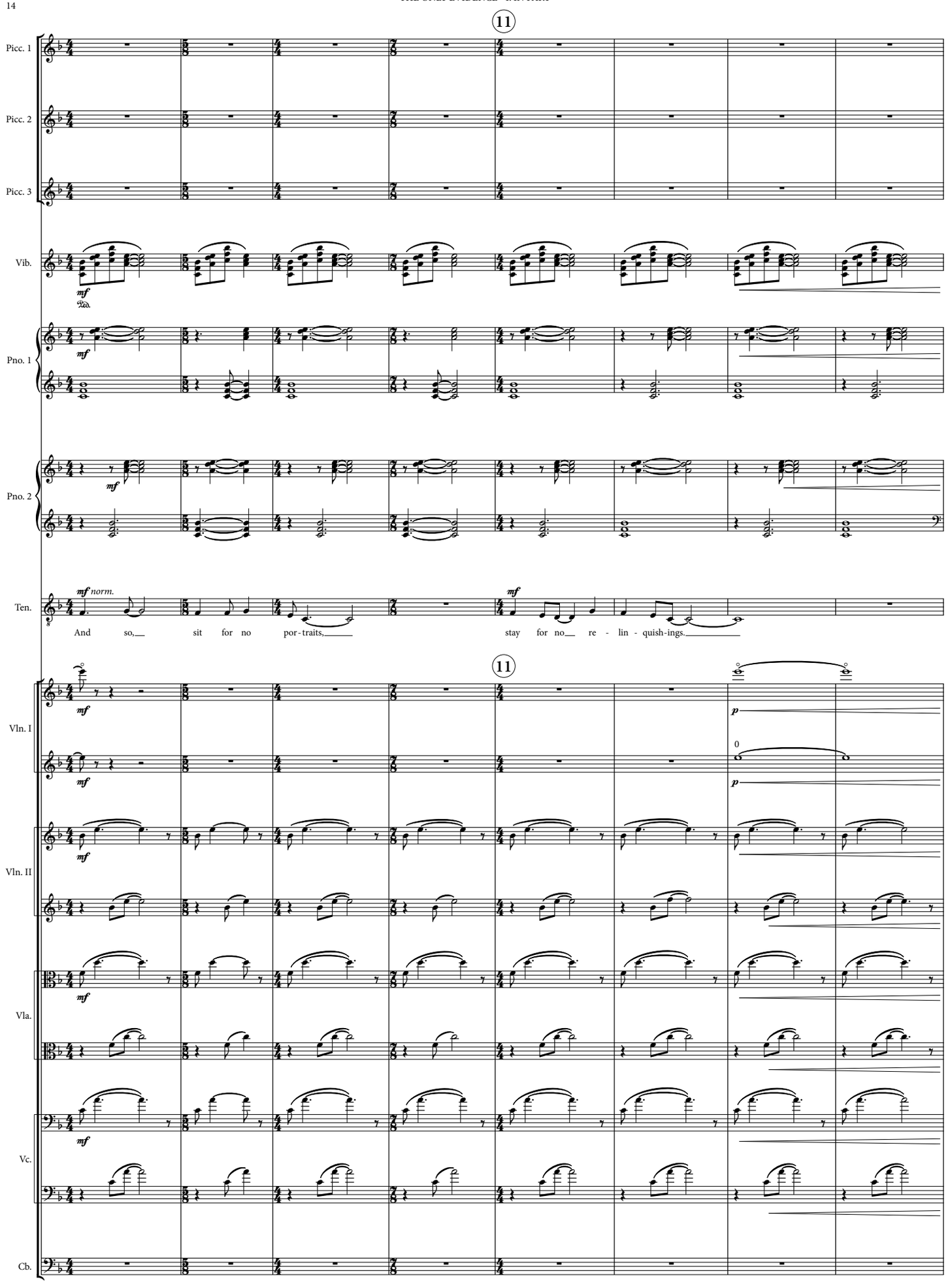

④
⑤
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
Some - one's... wand-ering a-sleep in a cursed house.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
mf
Ped.

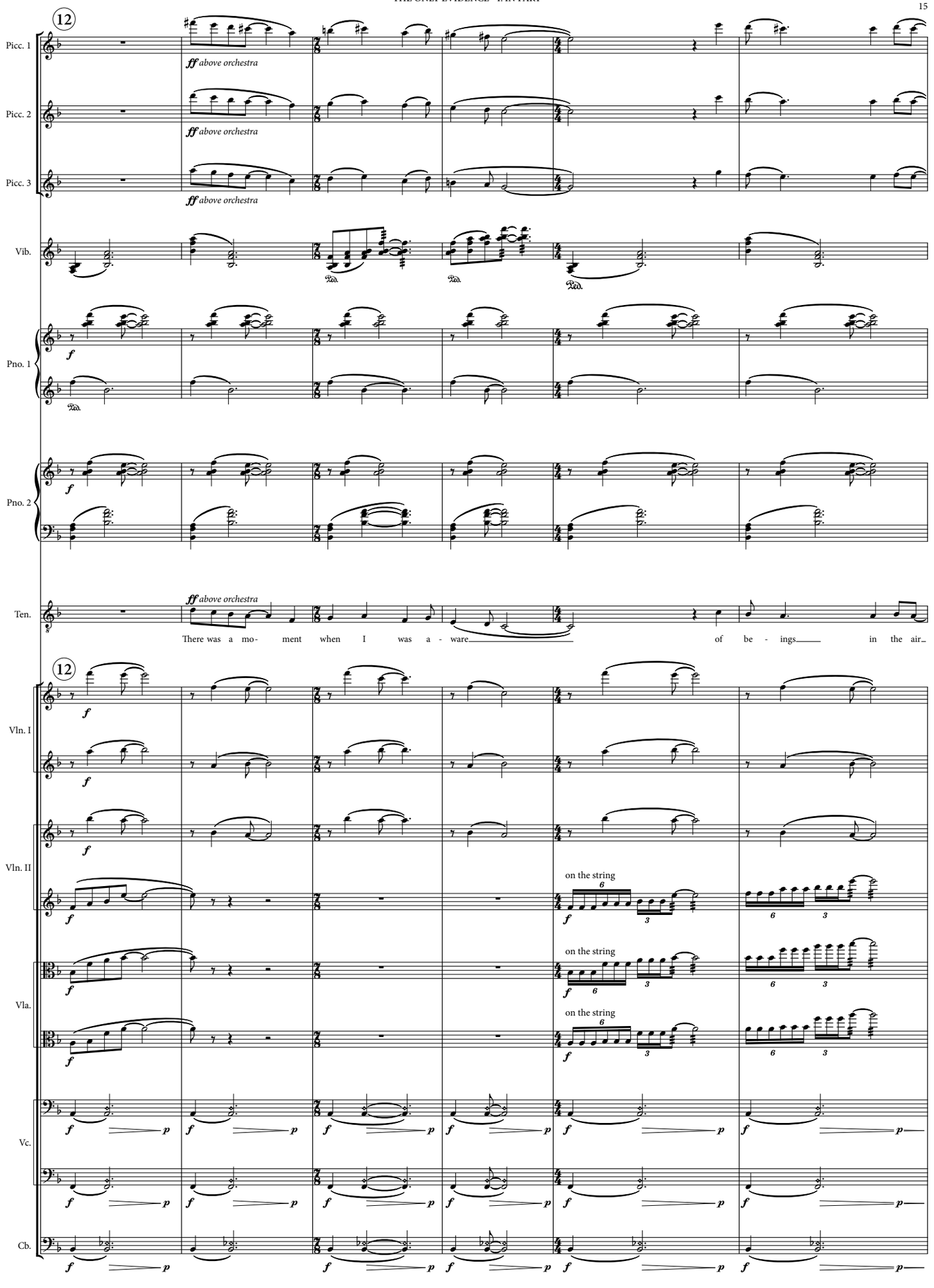

Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
6
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf
Ped.
And the joy that has its home in the bel - ly at the base of the soul, let it come, let it
6
(non div.)
mf
p

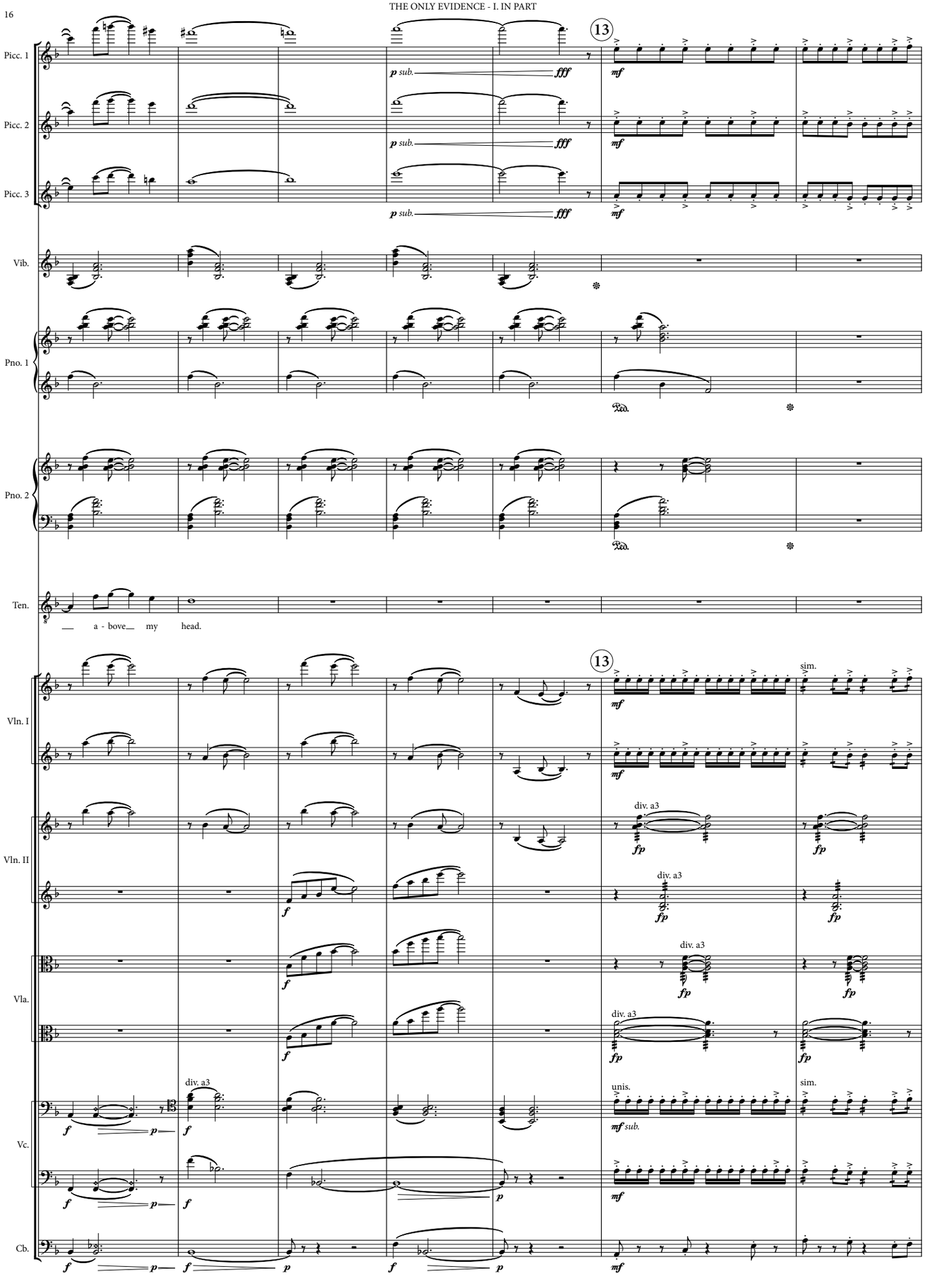

Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
⑦
⑧
p
mf
mp
f
Ped.
go.
Let trees be bowed by weight, let
mp espress.
pizz.

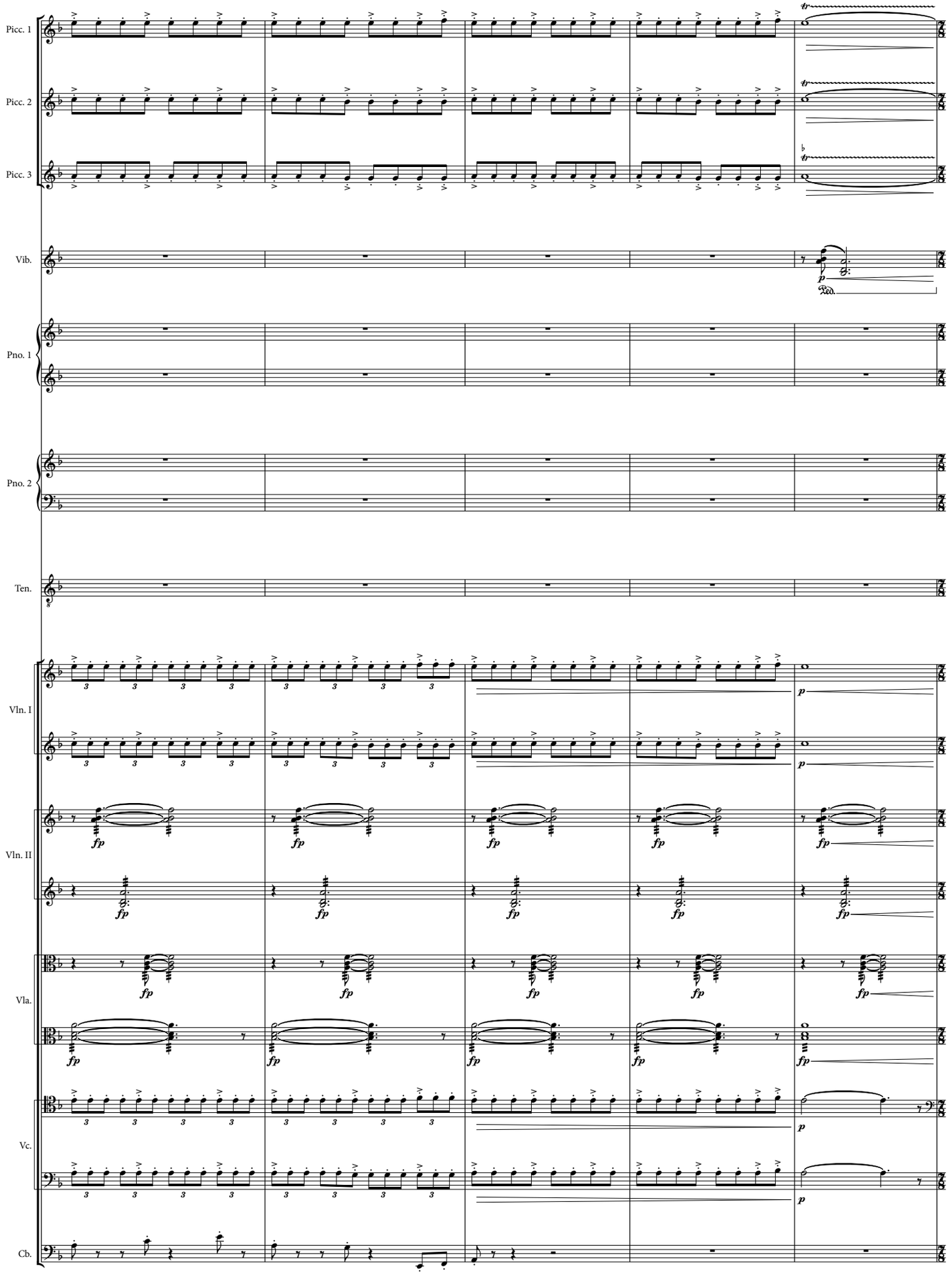

9
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
streams race, and moss de - cay.
The trem-bling of furred limbs will not cease -
9
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
div.
unis.
arco
norm.
sub.
sub.


10
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
mp sub.
Pno. 1
mp sub.
p
Pno. 2
mp sub.
p
Ten.
mp mezzo voce
no - one's word, how - ev - er bold,_ will ba - nish this cold._
10
Vln. I
mp sub.
p
0
Vln. II
mp sub.
p
Vla.
mp sub.
p
Vc.
mp sub.
p
Cb.


11
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
mf
Pno. 1
mf
Pno. 2
mf
Ten.
mf norm.
And so, sit for no por-traits, stay for no re - lin - quish-ings.
mf
11
Vln. I
mf
p
0
mf
p
Vln. II
mf
Vla.
mf
Vc.
mf
Cb.


12
Picc. 1
ff above orchestra
Picc. 2
ff above orchestra
Picc. 3
ff above orchestra
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
ff above orchestra
There was a mo- ment when I was a - ware of be - ings in the air
12
Vln. I
Vln. II
on the string
Vla.
on the string
on the string
Vc.
Cb.


13
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
a - bove my head.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
p sub.
fff
mf
div. a3
fp
unis.
sim.
mf sub.


Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

14

15

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

Picc. 3

Vib.

Pno. 1

Pno. 2

Ten.

Have they left? Or do they loi - ter there, at - ten - dant, faith - ful?

Vln. I

con sord.

Vln. II

unis.

(non trem.)

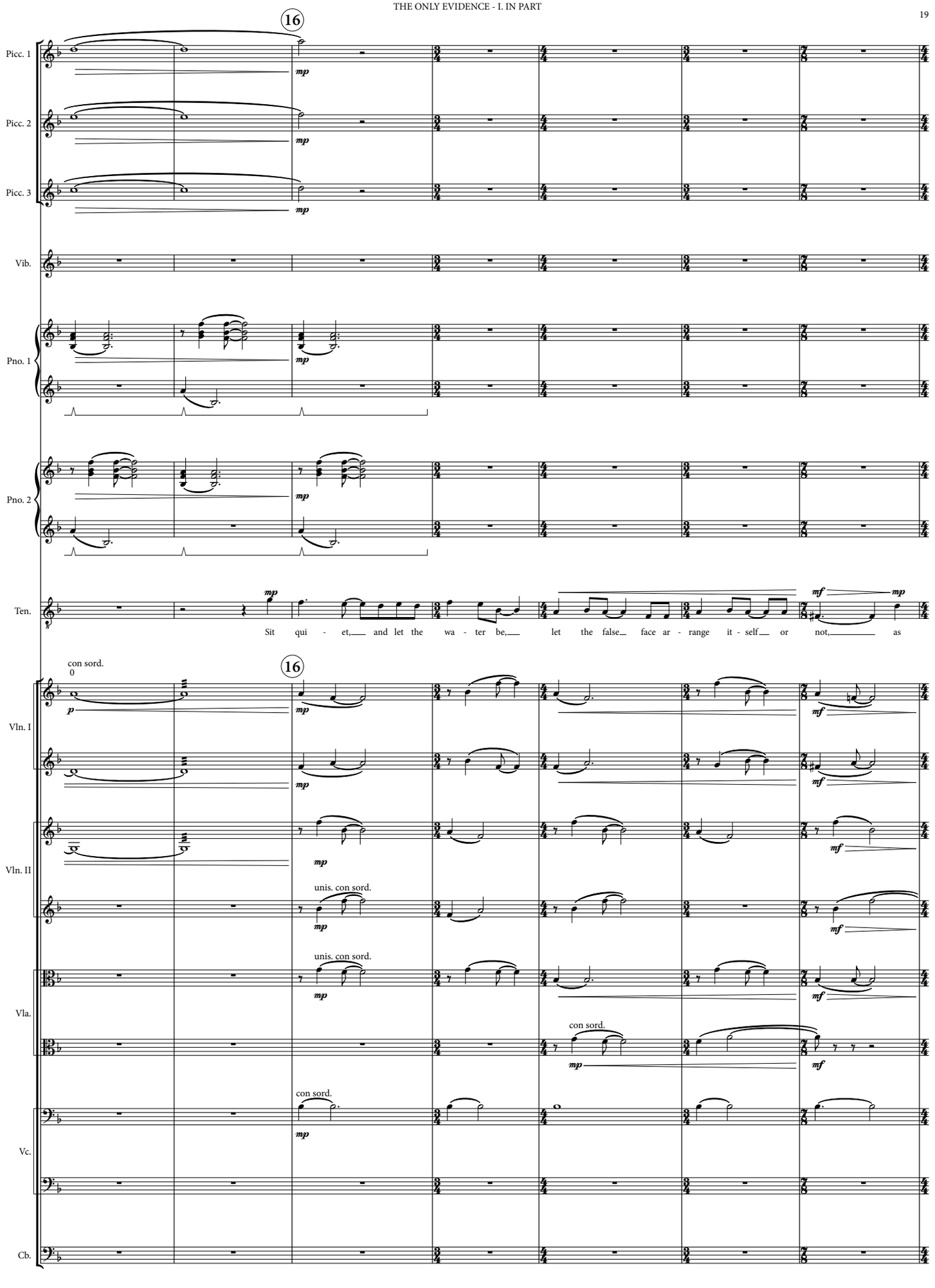
Vla.

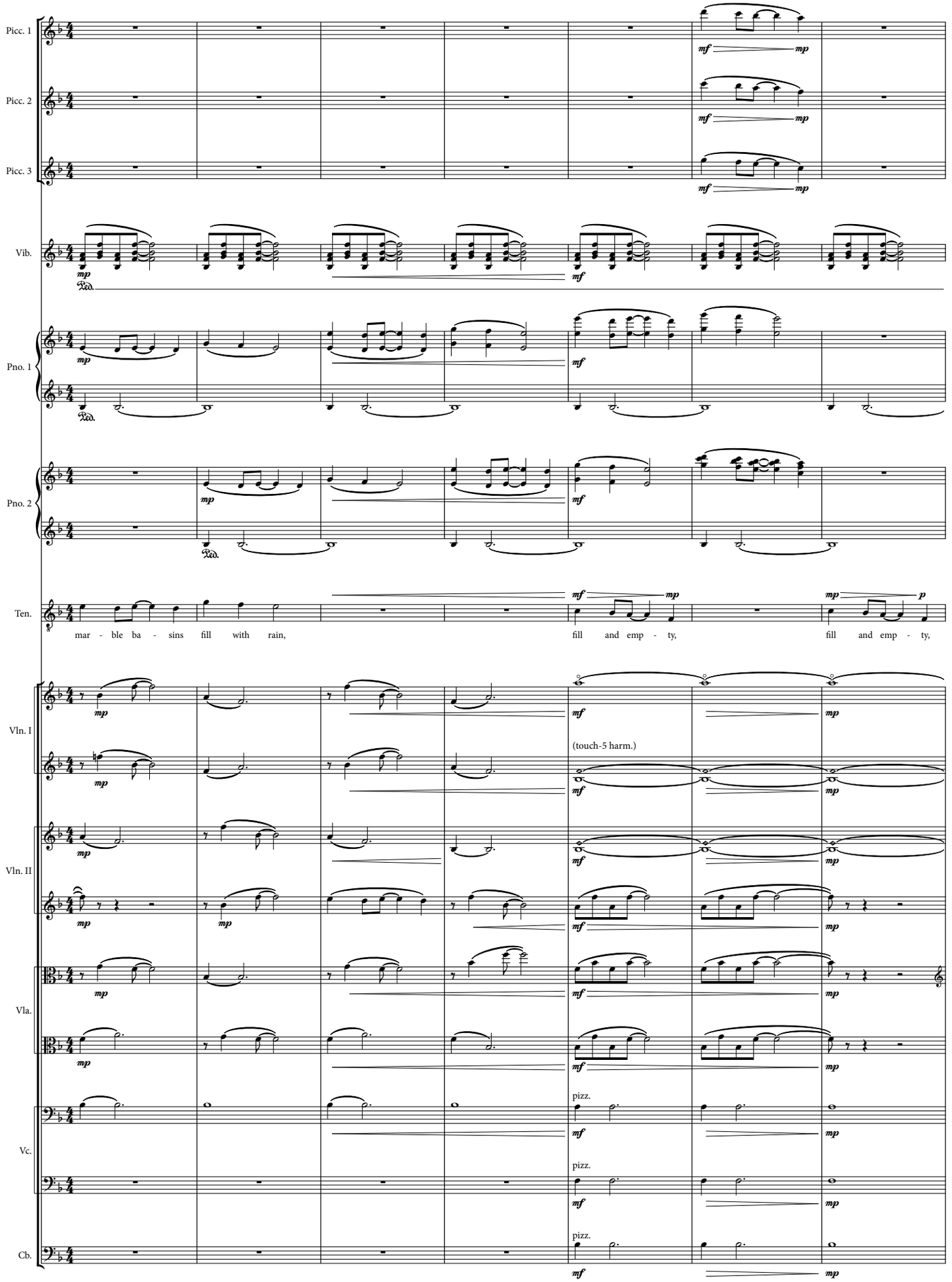
(non trem.)

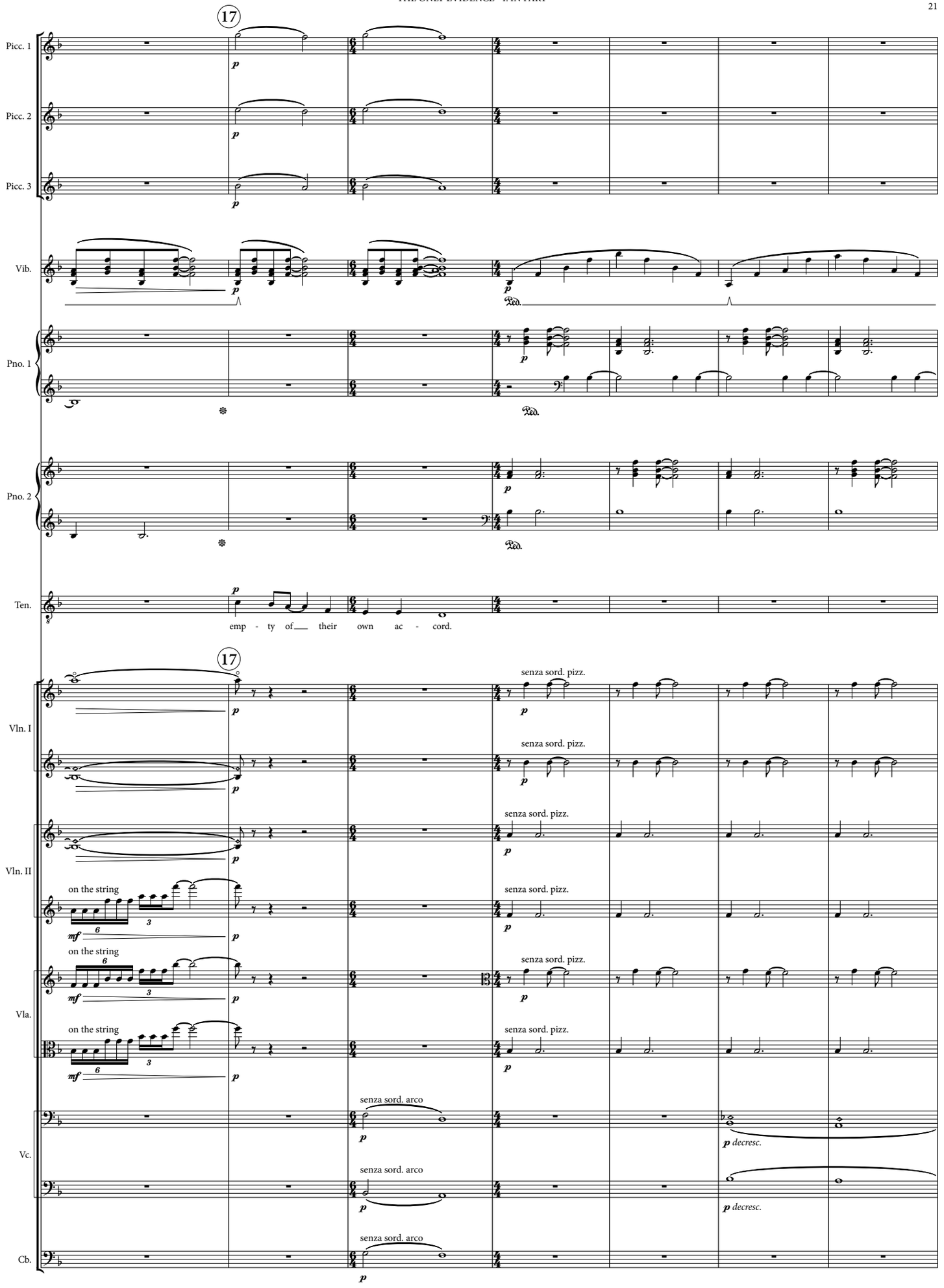
unis. sul pont.

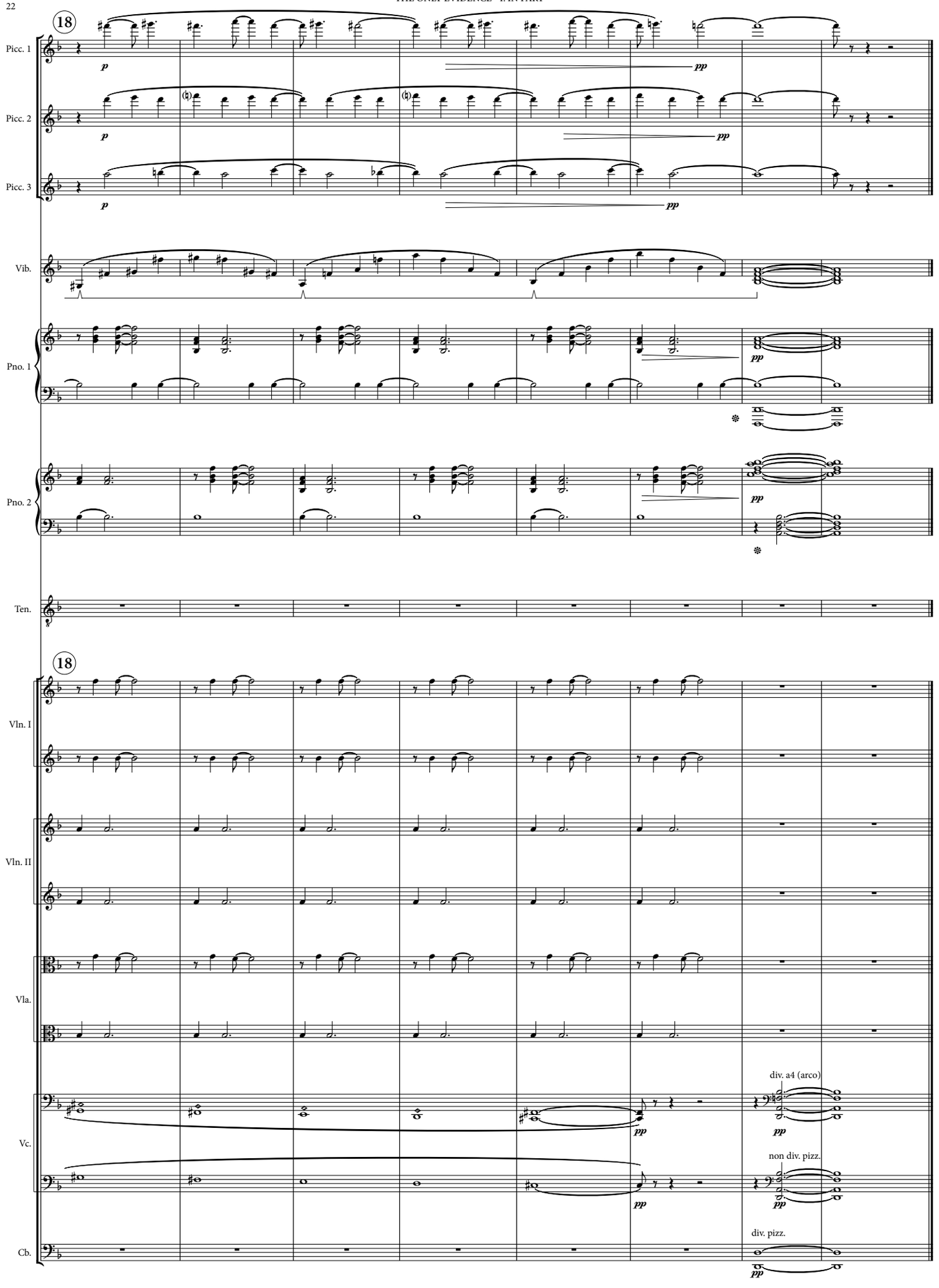
Vc.

Cb.


16
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
mp
mf
Sit qui - et, and let the wa - ter be, let the false face ar - range it - self or not, as
con sord.
0
p
unis. con sord.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.


Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
mar - ble ba - sins fill with rain,
fill and emp - ty,
fill and emp - ty,
Vln. I
(touch-5 harm.)
Vln. II
Vla.
pizz.
Vc.
pizz.
pizz.
Cb.


17
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
emp - ty of their own ac - cord.
17
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
senza sord. pizz.
on the string
senza sord. arco
decresc.

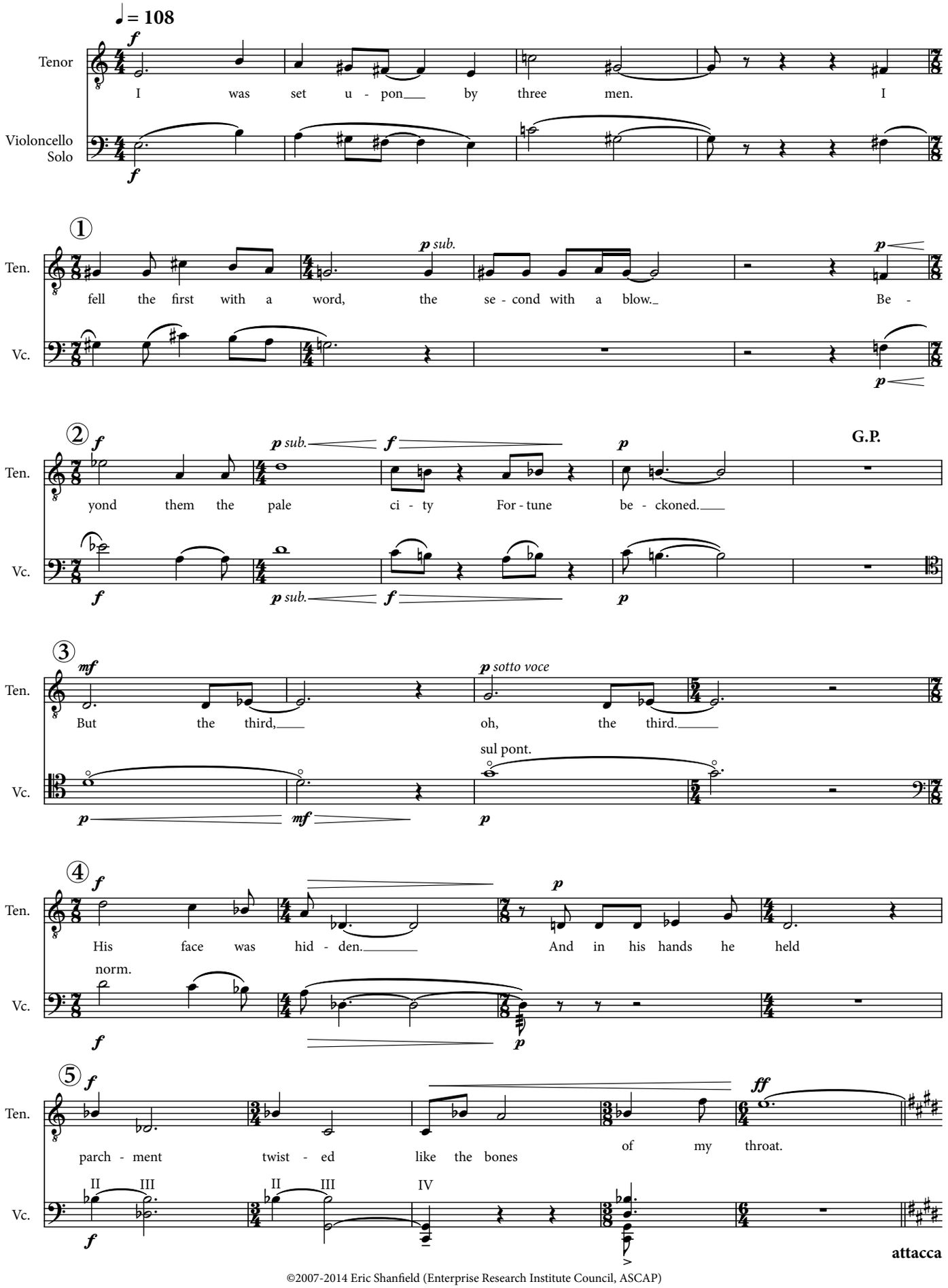

18
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
18
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
p
pp
div. a4 (arco)
non div. pizz.
div. pizz.

THE ONLY EVIDENCE

II. FROM A CLEARING

Jesse Ball

Eric Shanfield



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THE ONLY EVIDENCE

III. A SPEECH

Jesse Ball — Eric Shanfield

♩= 108 Mechanical

①

Piccolo 1
Piccolo 2
Piccolo 3
Vibraphone
Piano 1
Piano 2
Tenor
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabass

motor on, fast

damp

(throat.) The fail - ure of mo - dern - i - ty, said the

sim.

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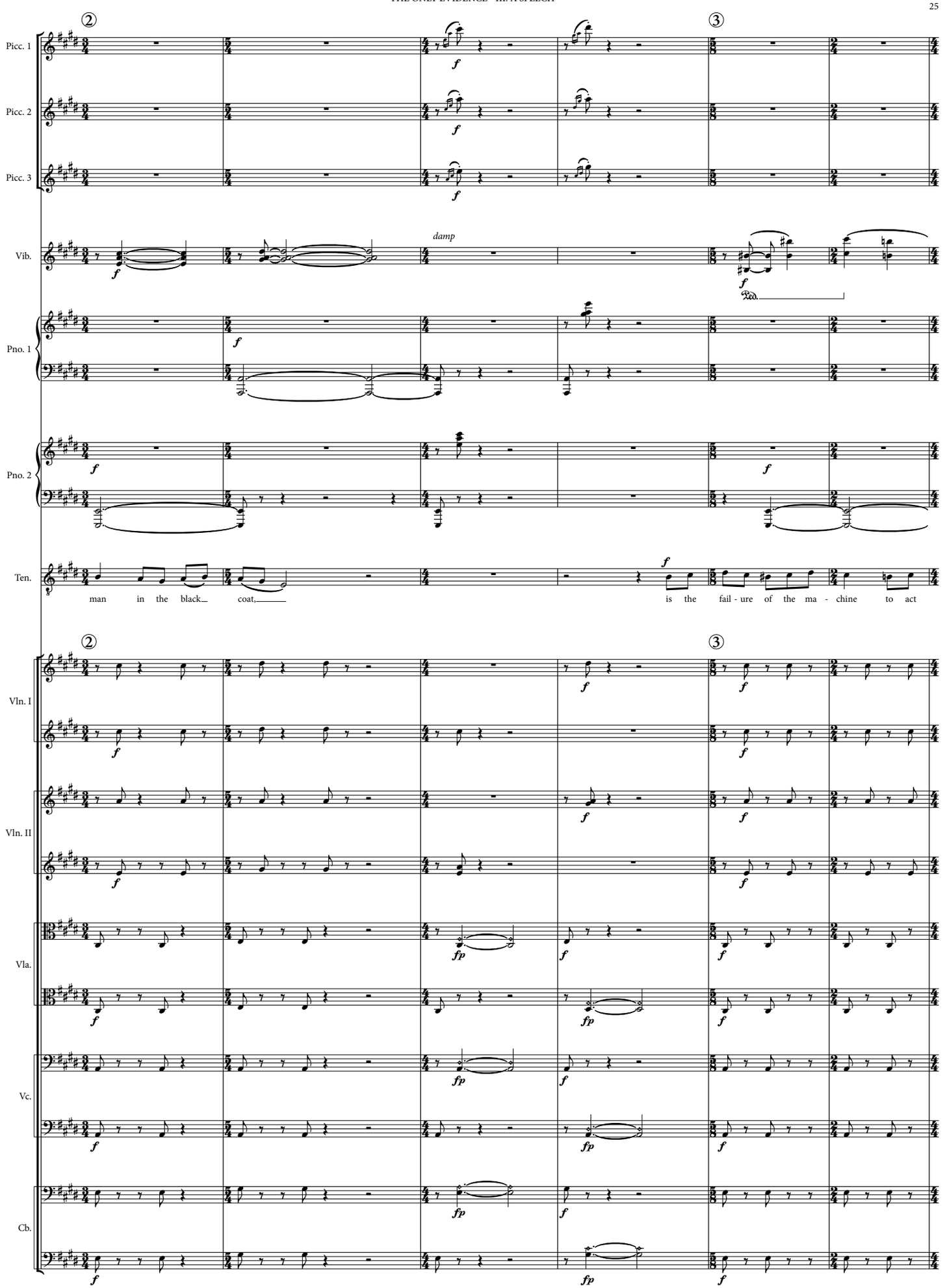
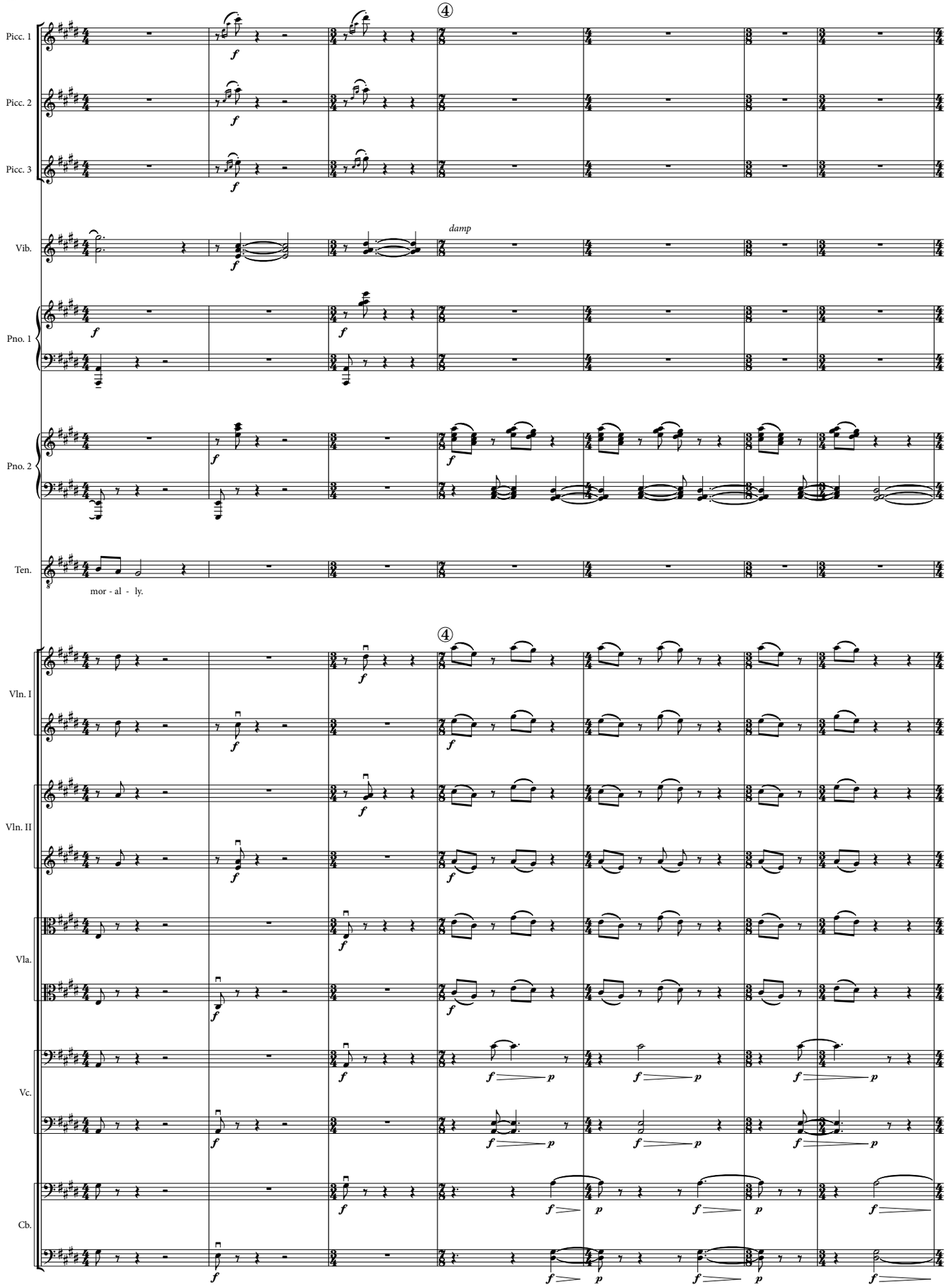
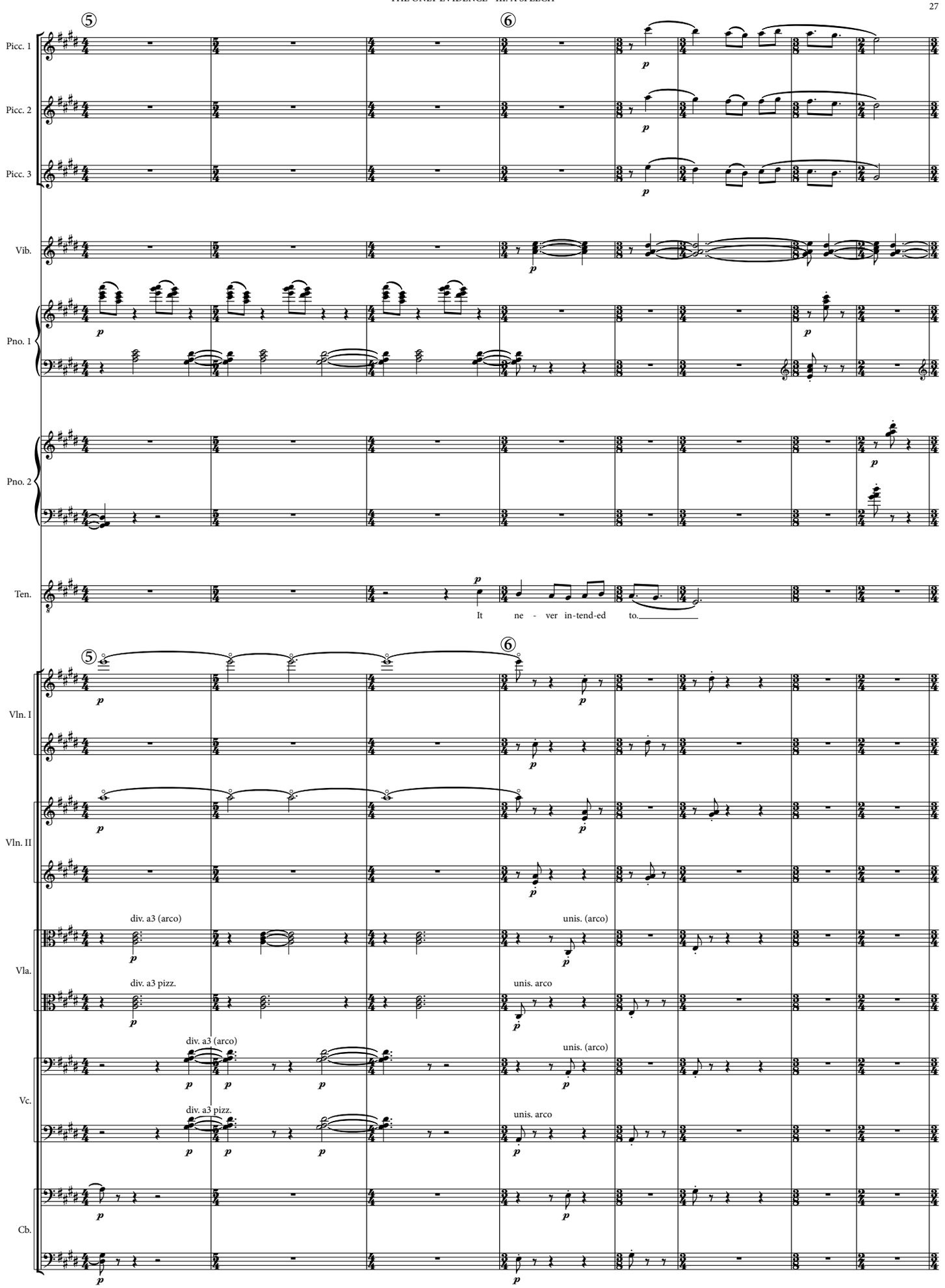
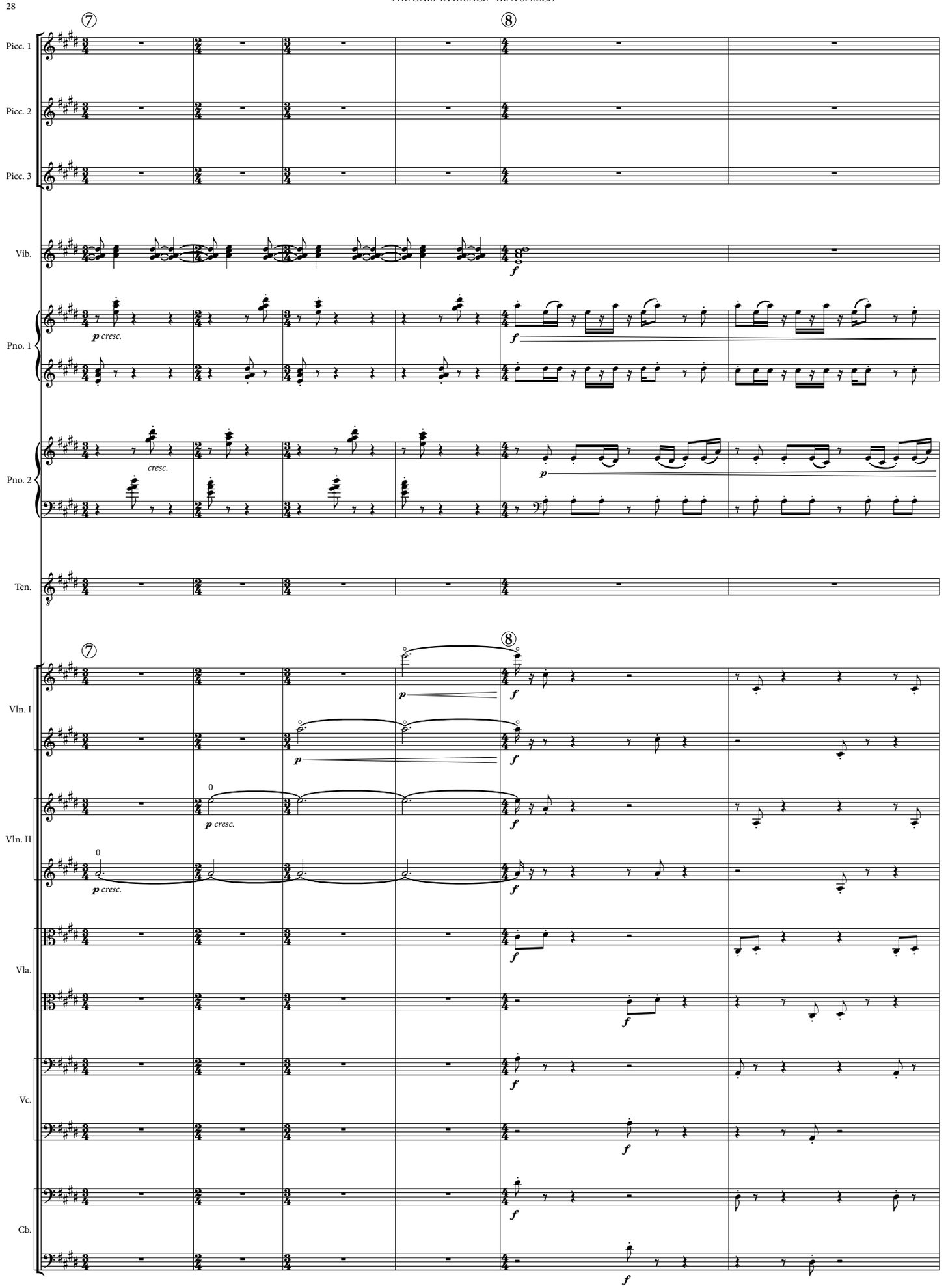
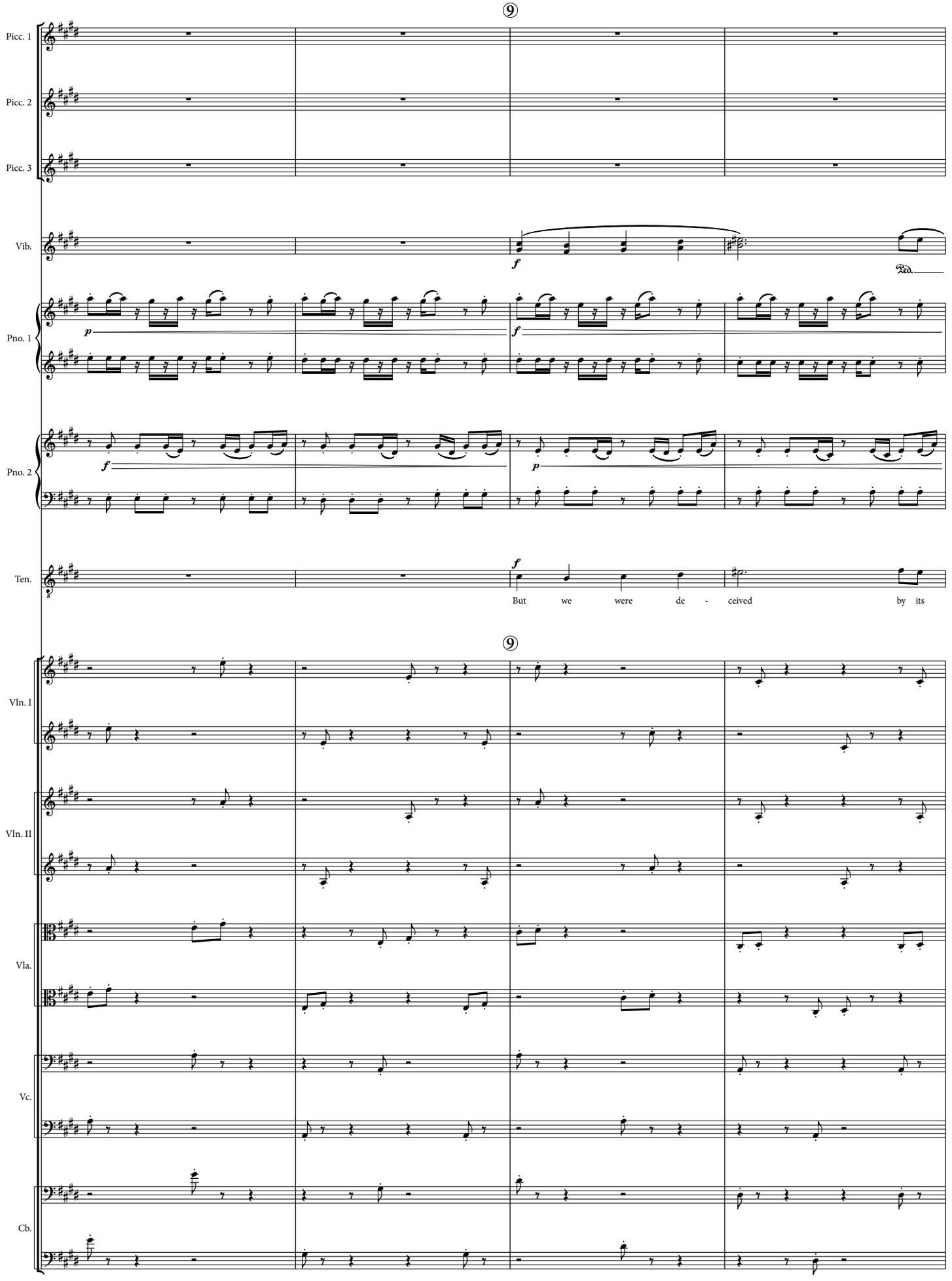

②
③
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
damp
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
man in the black coat,
is the fail - ure of the ma - chine to act
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.


④
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
damp
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
mor - al - ly.
④
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.


⑤
⑥
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
It ne - ver in-tend-ed to.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
div. a3 (arco)
div. a3 pizz.
unis. (arco)
unis. arco
Vc.
Cb.


⑦
⑧
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
p cresc.
cresc.
f
p
0


9
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
f
Ped.
Pno. 1
p
f
Pno. 2
f
p
Ten.
f
But we were de - ceived by its
9
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

10

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

Picc. 3

Vib.

f

Ped.

Pno. 1

p

f

Pno. 2

f

p

Ten.

so - ber ef - fi - cien - cy.

We be - lieved it would do both

10

Vln. I

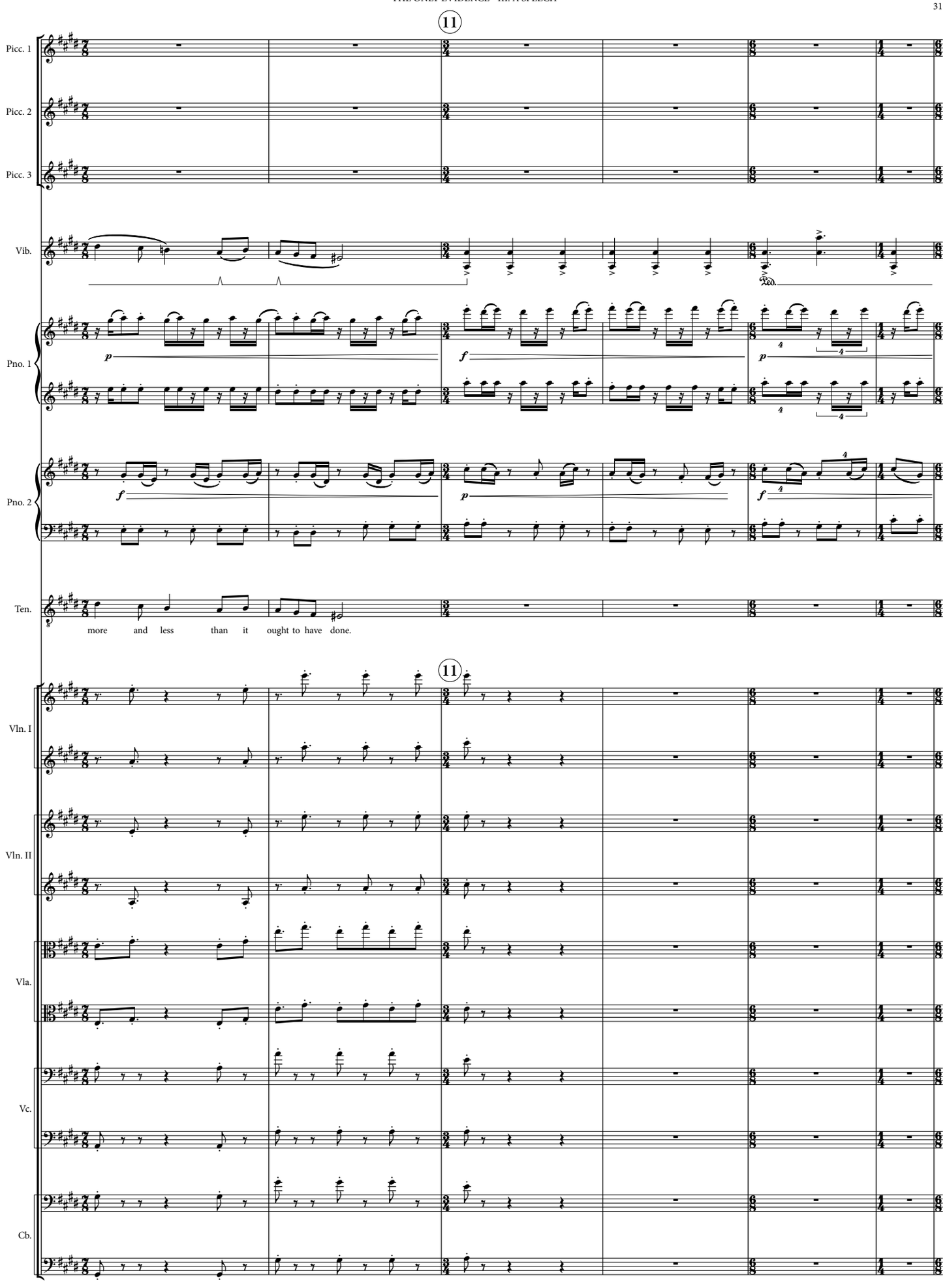
Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

8va if no extension


11
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
more and less than it ought to have done.
11
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

12

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

Picc. 3

Vib.

Pno. 1

Pno. 2

Ten.

In - stead it has done less and more, and brought us to ma - ny hor - ri - ble pass - es.

12

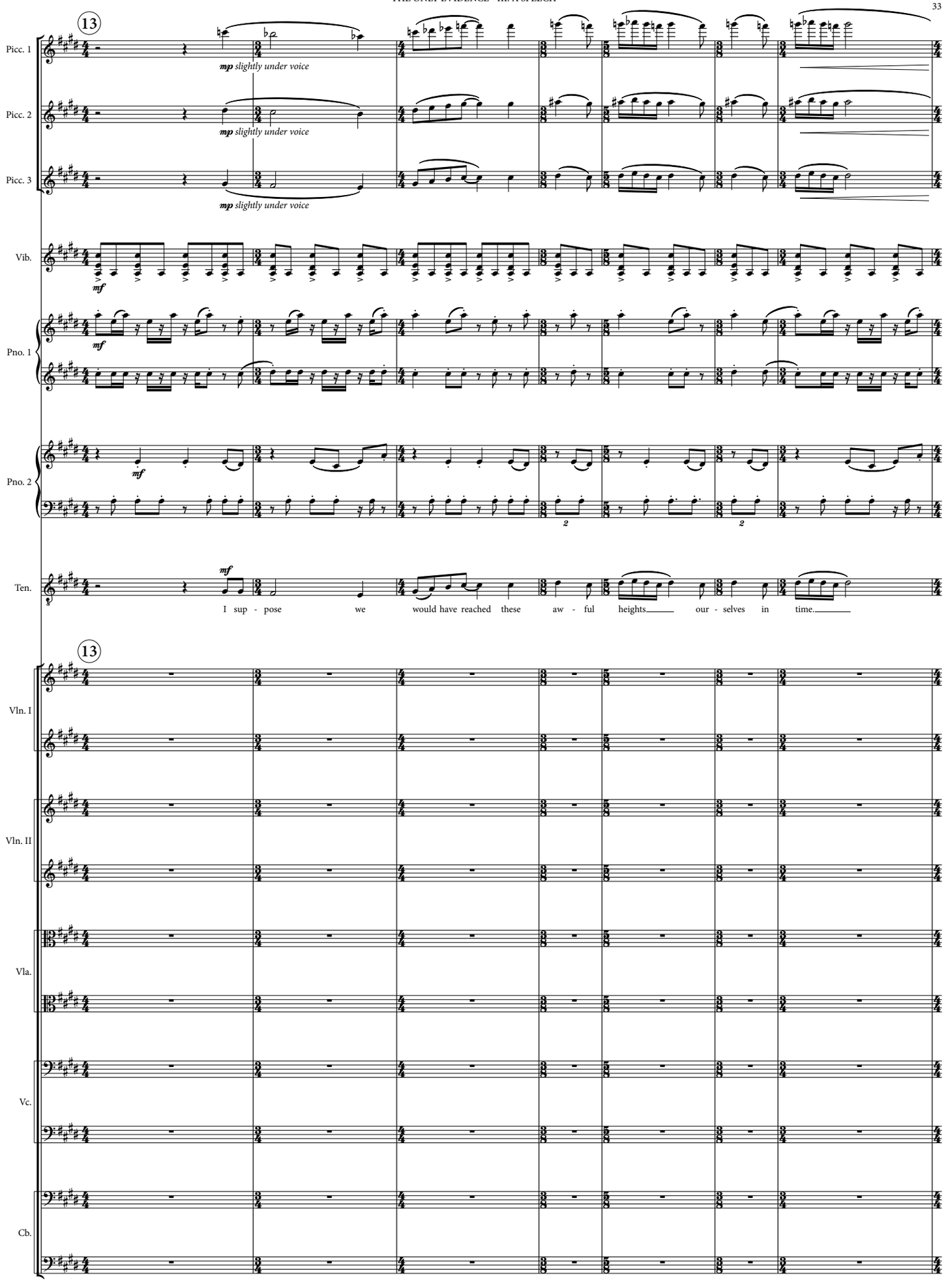
Vln. I

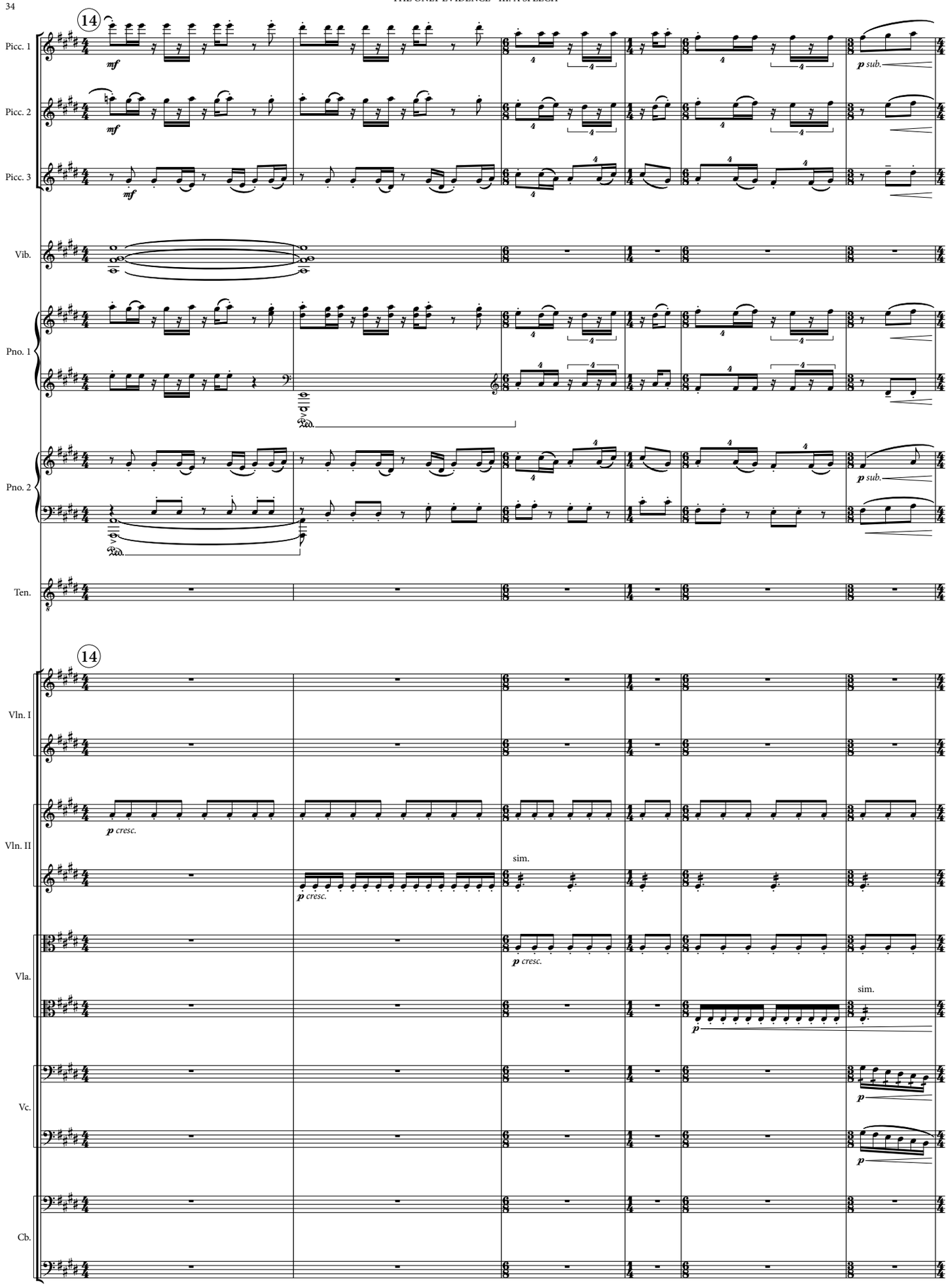
Vln. II

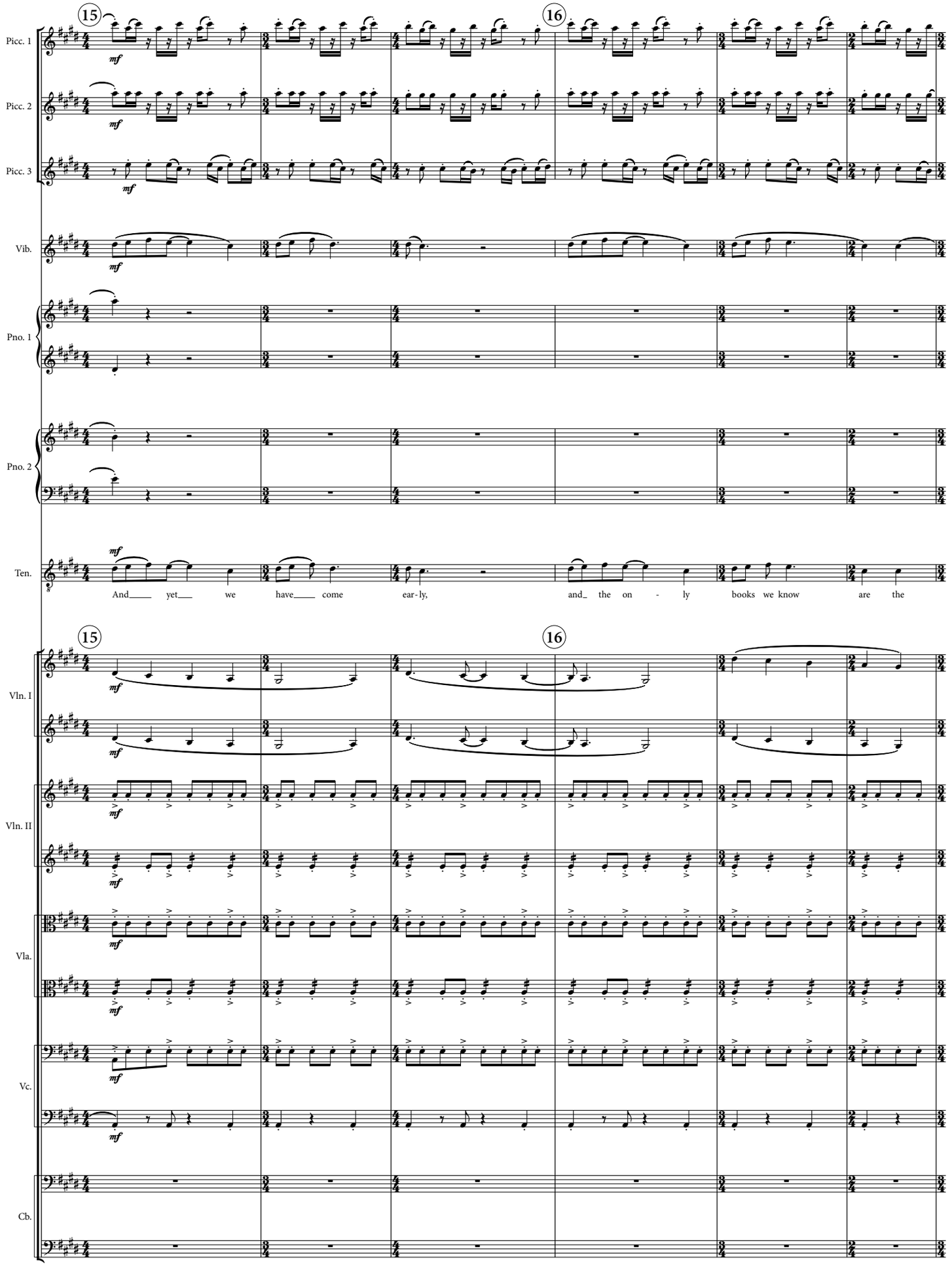
Vla.

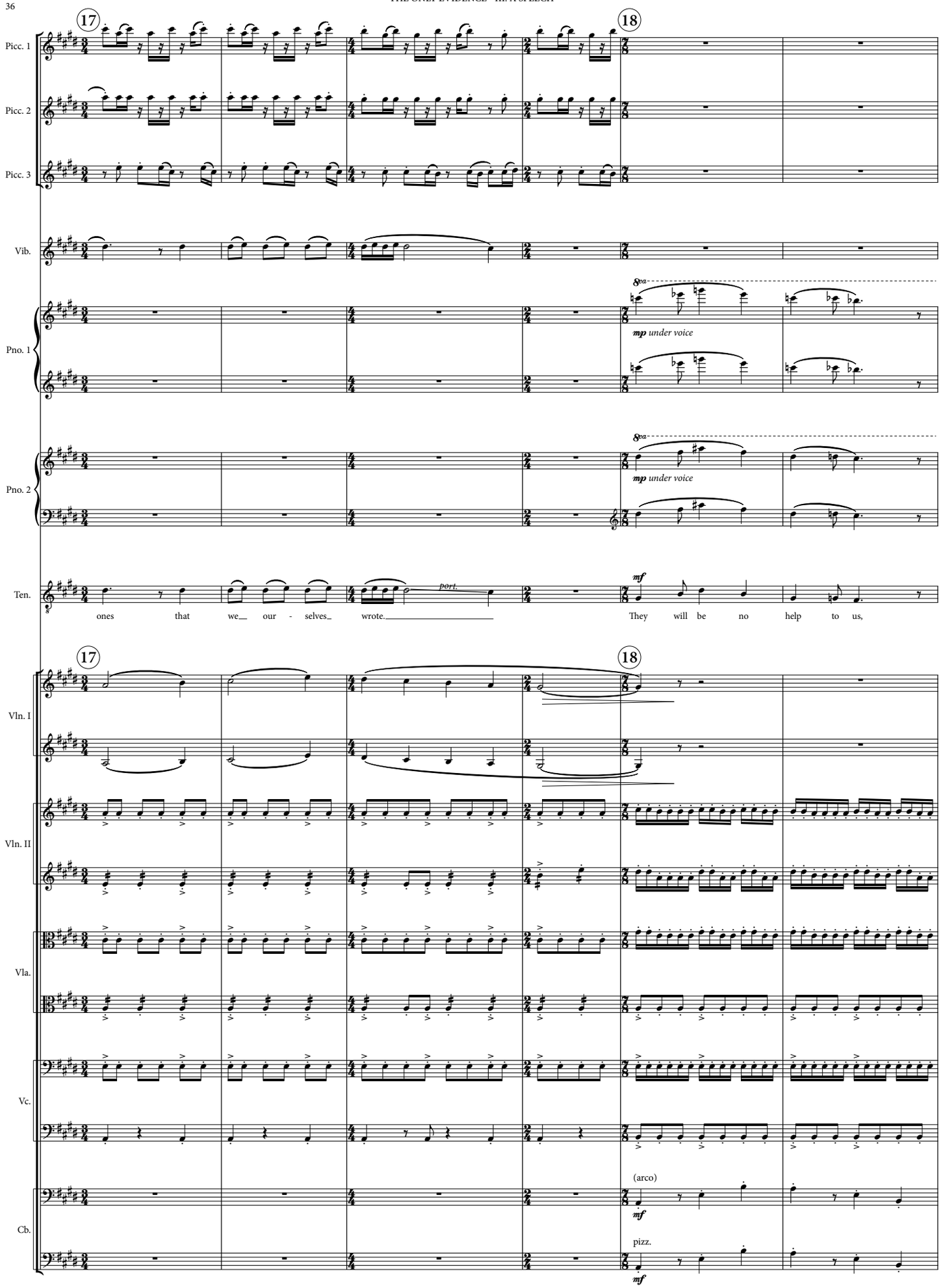
Vc.

Cb.


13
Picc. 1
mp slightly under voice
Picc. 2
mp slightly under voice
Picc. 3
mp slightly under voice
Vib.
mf
Pno. 1
mf
Pno. 2
mf
Ten.
mf
I sup - pose we would have reached these aw - ful heights our - selves in time.
13
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.


14
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
14
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
mf
p sub.
p cresc.
sim.
p


15
16
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
mf
And yet we have come ear-ly, and the on - ly books we know are the
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.


17
18
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
8va
mp under voice
Pno. 1
8va
mp under voice
Pno. 2
mf
port.
Ten.
ones that we our - selves wrote. They will be no help to us,
17
18
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
(arco)
mf
Cb.
pizz.
mf

19

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

Picc. 3

Vib.

Pno. 1

Pno. 2

Ten.

just as we our - selves can be no help to each other - er.

19

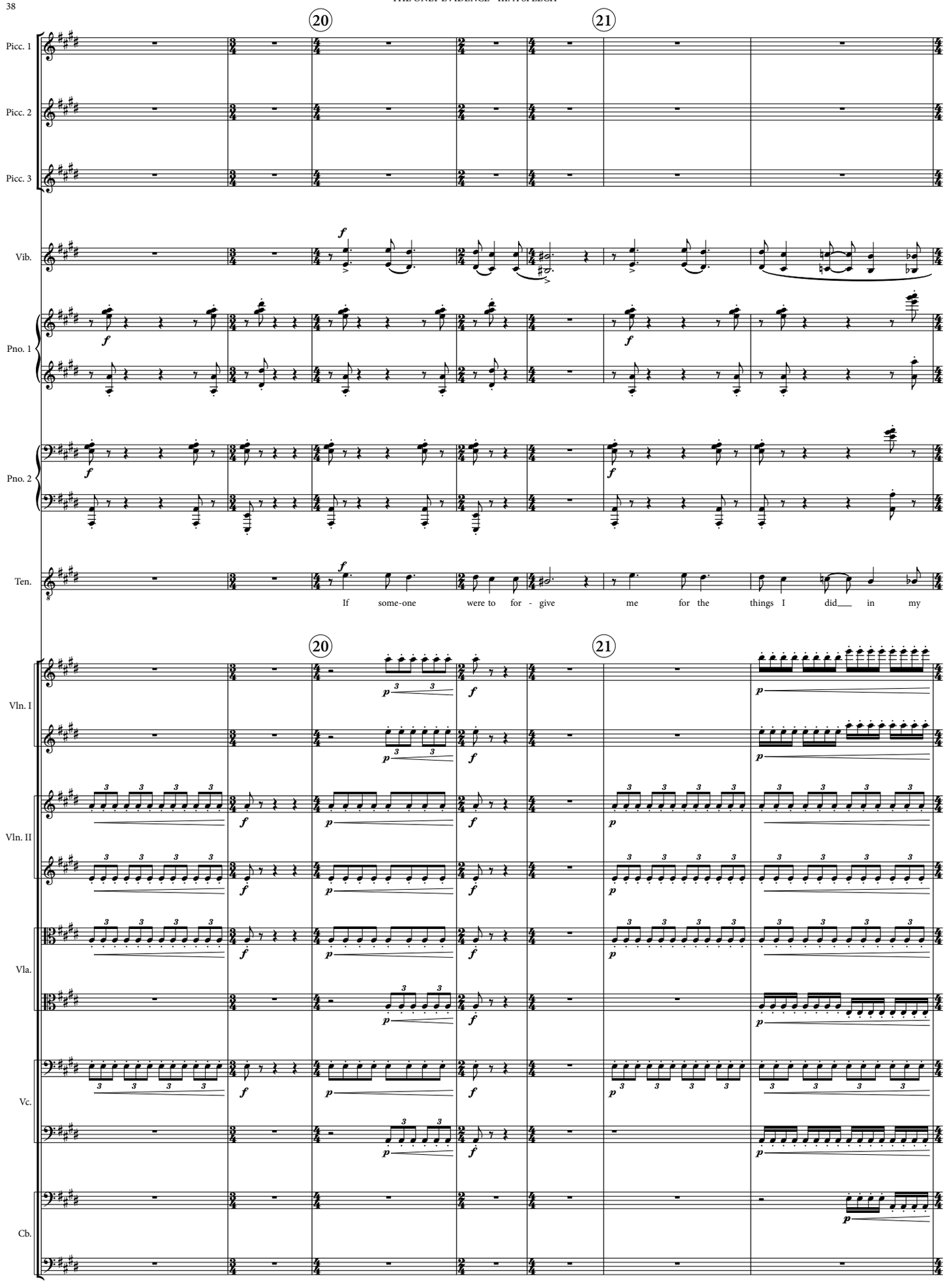
Vln. I

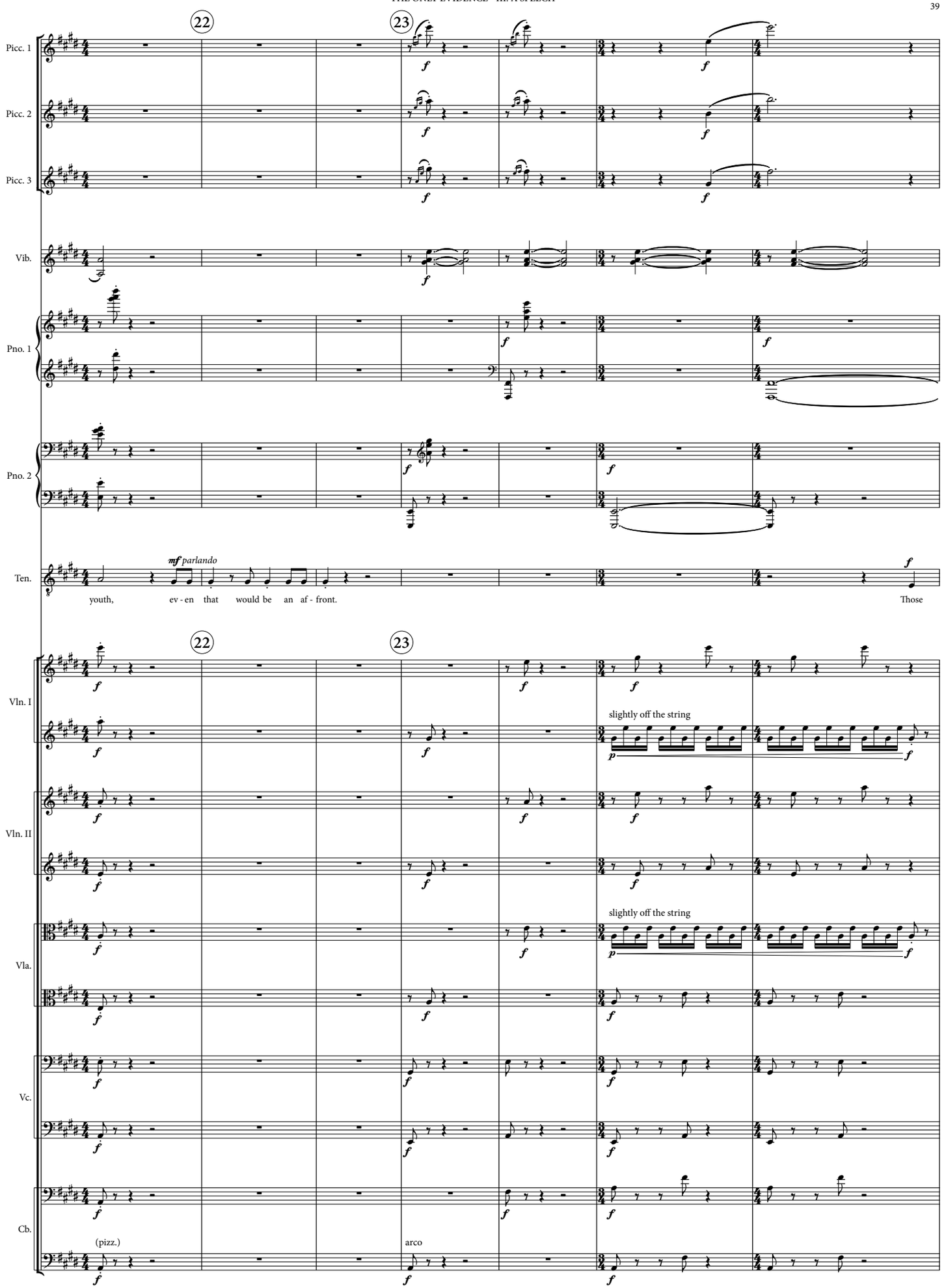
Vln. II

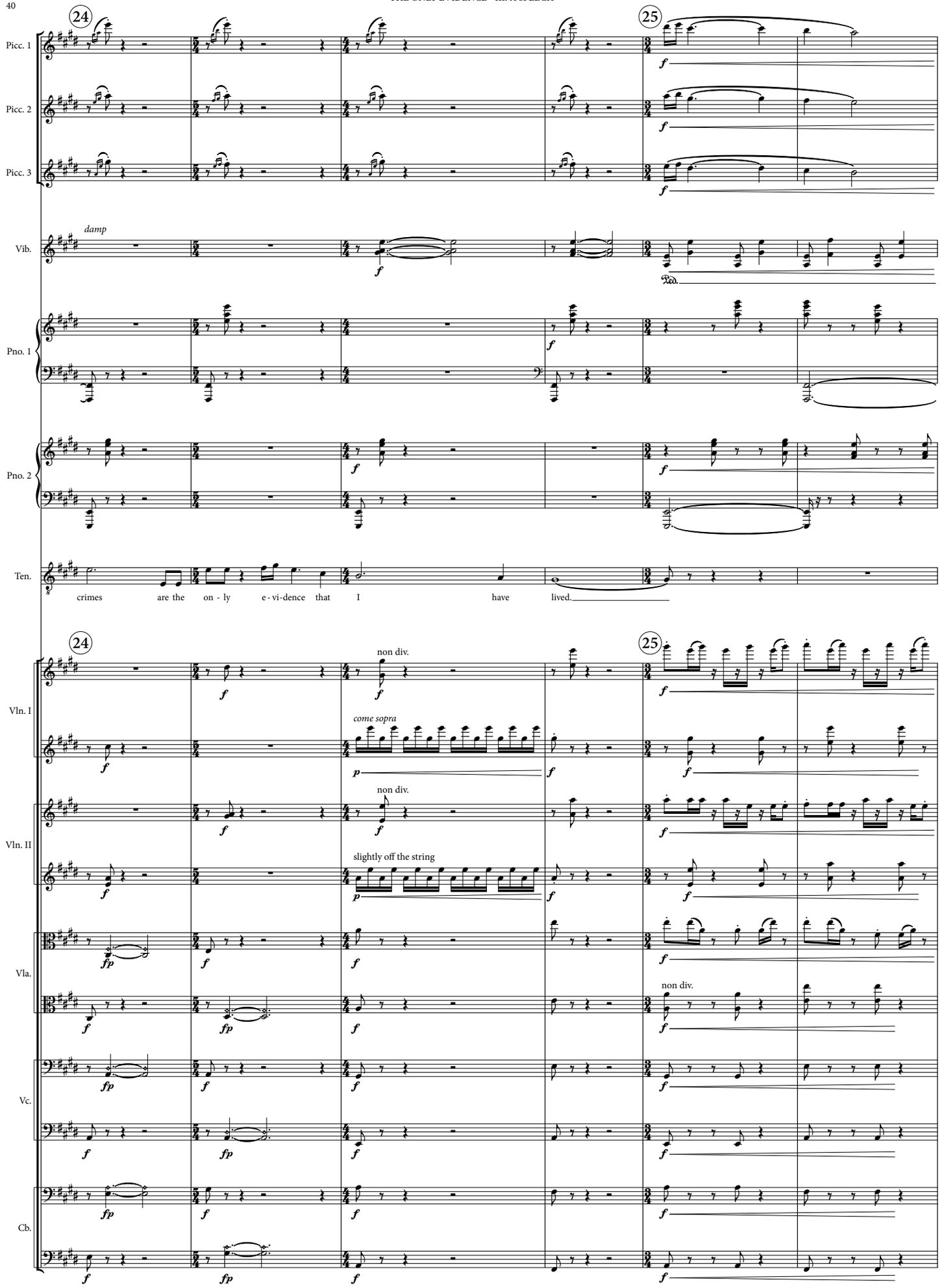
Vla.

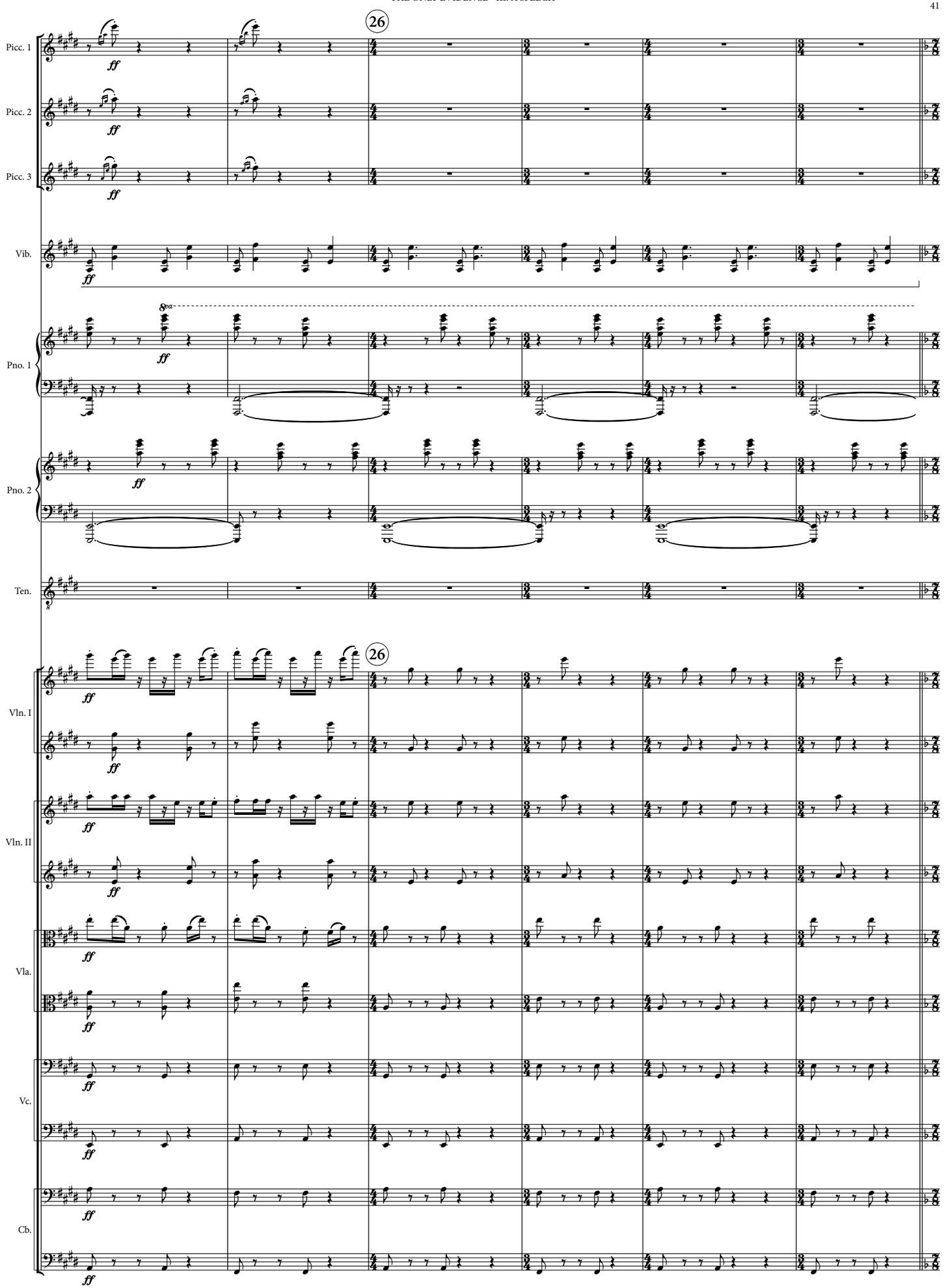
Vc.

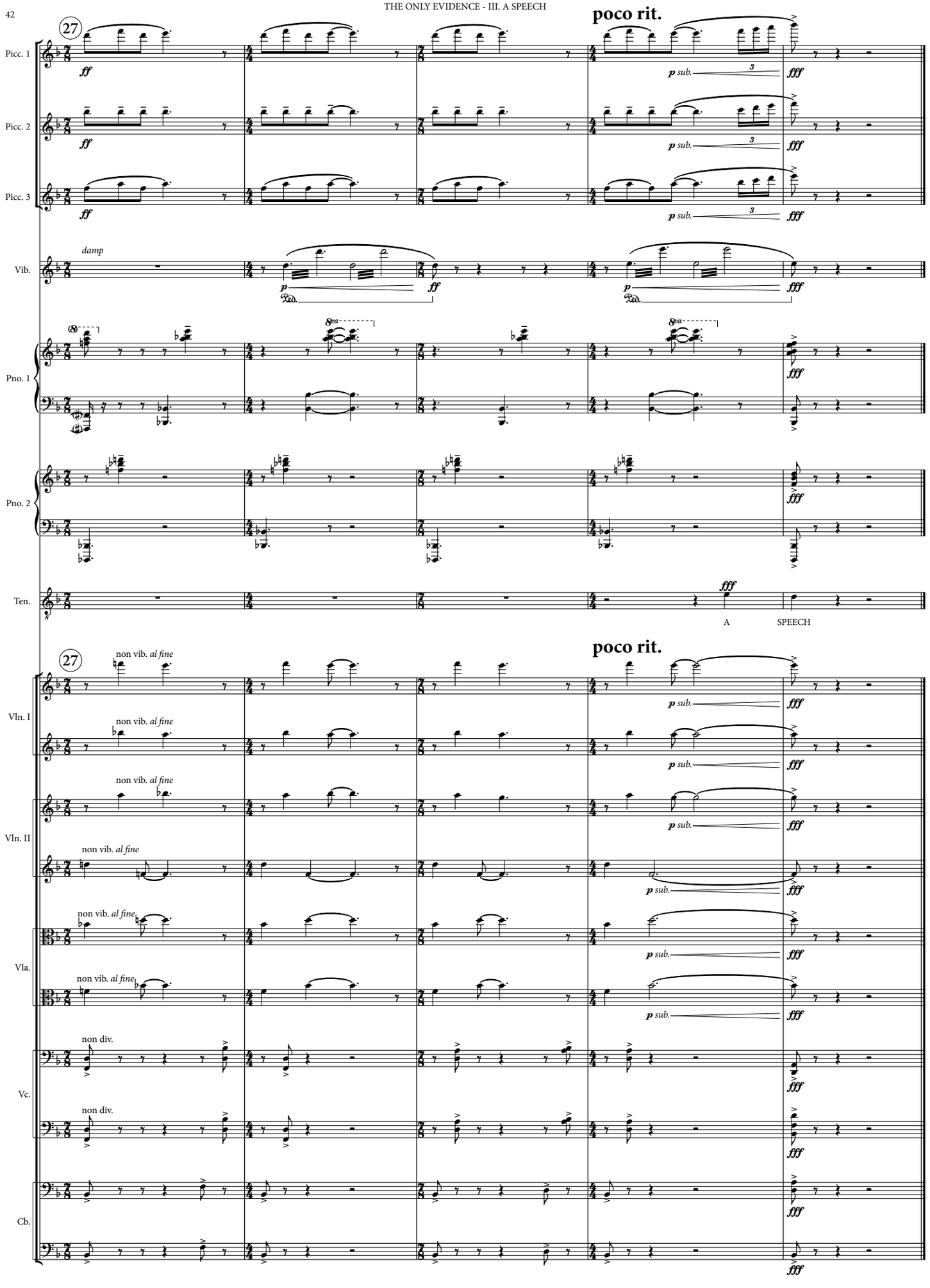
Cb.


20
21
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
If some-one were to for - give me for the things I did___ in my
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.


22
23
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
mf parlando
youth, ev - en that would be an af - front.
Those
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
slightly off the string
slightly off the string
(pizz.)
arco


24
25
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
damp
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
crimes are the on - ly e - vi-dence that I have lived.
non div.
come sopra
slightly off the string
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.


26
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
ff
8va


poco rit.
27
Picc. 1
Picc. 2
Picc. 3
Vib.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Ten.
A
SPEECH
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
non vib. al fine
non div.
damp