Brian Questa

# **beethoven, as found in a tiny corner (or, variations on a bagatelle)** (2023)

for ensemble

(full score)

# Instrument List

Flute (with Piccolo)
Oboe
Clarinet in Bb

Trumpet
Trombone

Violin
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

## About the Piece

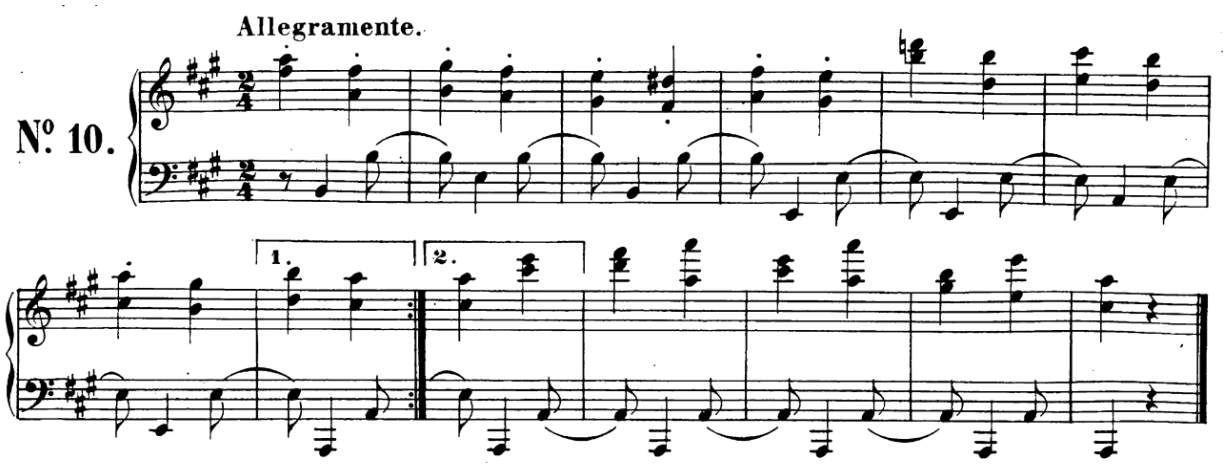
“You can sing sweet
and get the song sung
but to get to the third dimension
you have to sing it
rough, hurt the tune a little. Put
enough strength to it
that the notes slip. Then
something else happens. The song
gets large.”

- “What Cathal Said,” poem by Tess Gallagher

Technically speaking, the Bagatelle Op. 119 No. 10 is Beethoven´s shortest composition: it takes about 19 seconds to perform. Ever since my teacher Wolfgang Rihm jokingly said it was Beethoven’s conceptual work, and knowing I was fascinated by appropriation, he told me I *must* do something with it - I have found an unending source of information in these 20 measures of music. I currently have several compositions based on this work: Für Wolfgang Rihm No. 1 (for piano), After Beethoven’s Shortest Bagatelle (for ensemble), Marionette (for orchestra), and Appropriation (for string quartet).

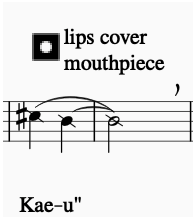
My variations here indeed “sing the song rough,” as the above poem suggestions. I hope my variation work sits on the fence between critically engagement and romanticizing the past. Where is the line? On the other hand, by quoting the original, I hope to see the act of composition with new eyes: to what extent do all composers “copy” Beethoven? To what extent does an original composition, without quotation, fall even faster into convention than one which bravely copies?

In the current composition, *Beethoven as found in a tiny corner,* I added more original composition than appropriation normally allows, hence the subtitle: variations. Drawing clues from the original work and abstracting some of the processes (*high vs low, stepwise-vs-leap, right hand vs left hand, etc.*), I created musical moments which explore these ideas (to which I added: *noise vs pitch*) and freely make reference to the original.

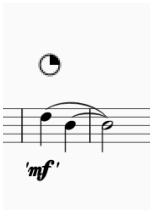


# Techniques

**Flute:**

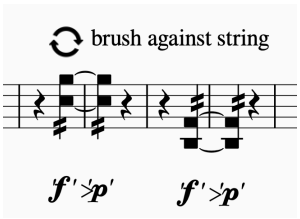



Blow Air through mouthpiece while completely covering it.
Place fingers on indicated pitch.
Shape the mouth in the form of the indicated syllables: “Kae”
and try to mimic the pitch content in the quality of the noisy air
in a type of “filtered noise”



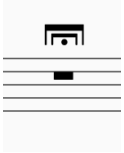

Play notes with the sound containing 3/4 air to pitch ratio.

**Strings:**




Brush bow horizontally against open strings (back and forth) in order to create a noisy texture.
Dynamics also indicate a relative speed of the movement.

**Ensemble:**



Variations separated by a grand pause of approx. 2 - 4 seconds. Length up to conductors discretion.

# beethoven, as found in a tiny corner

(or, variations on a bagatelle)

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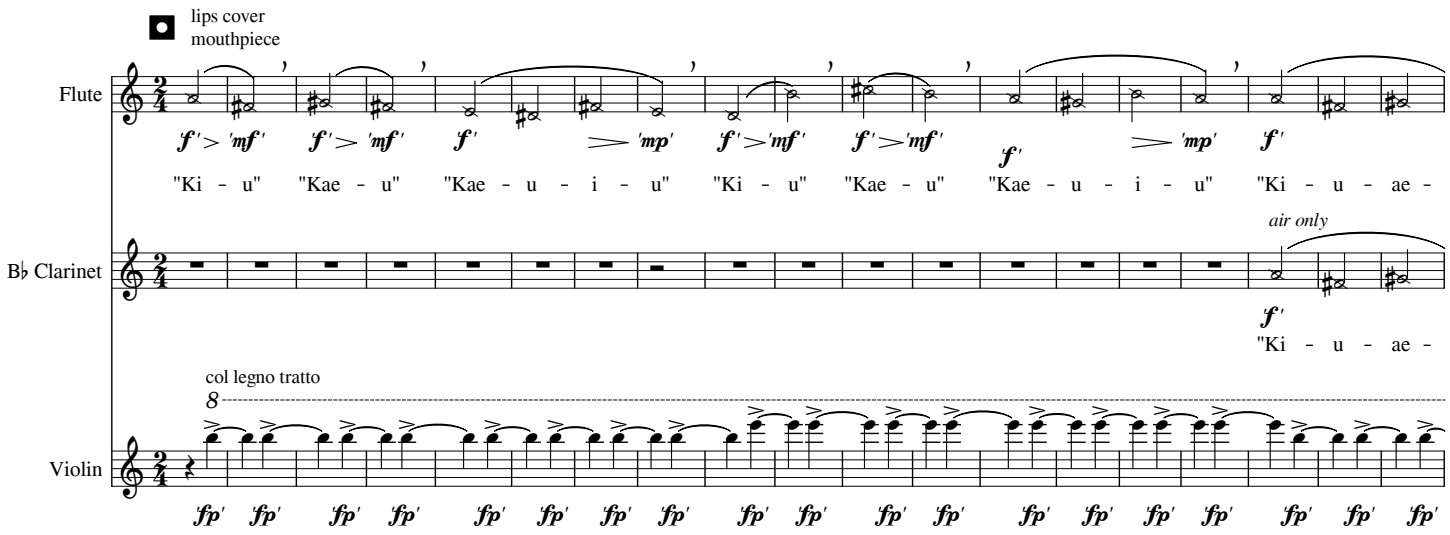
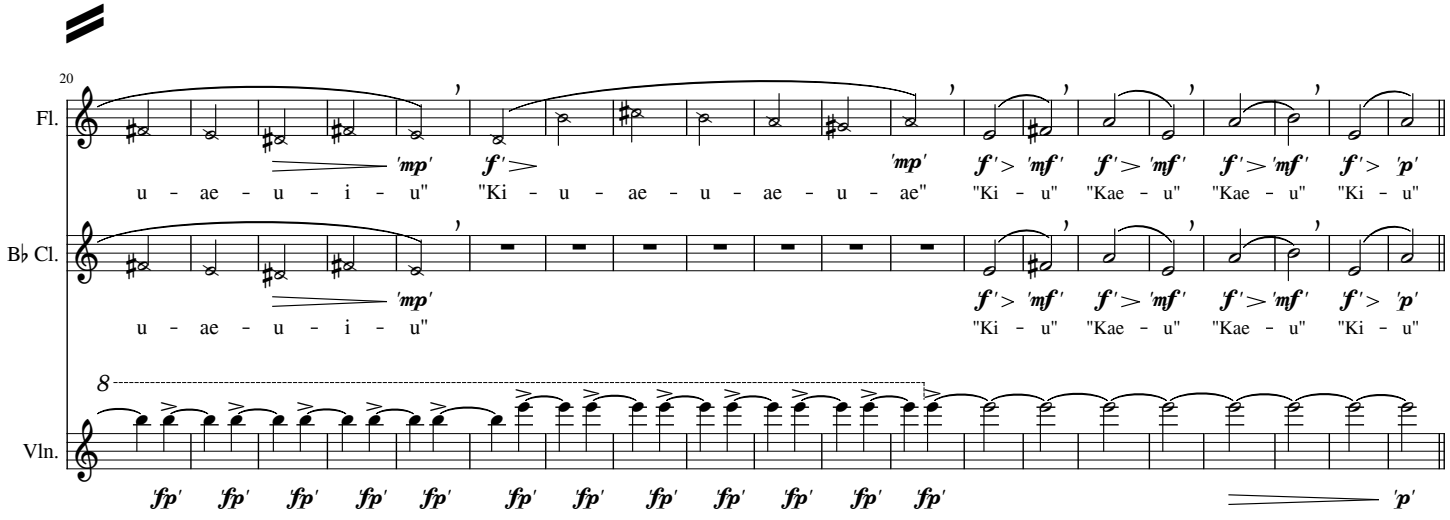
## Var. 1

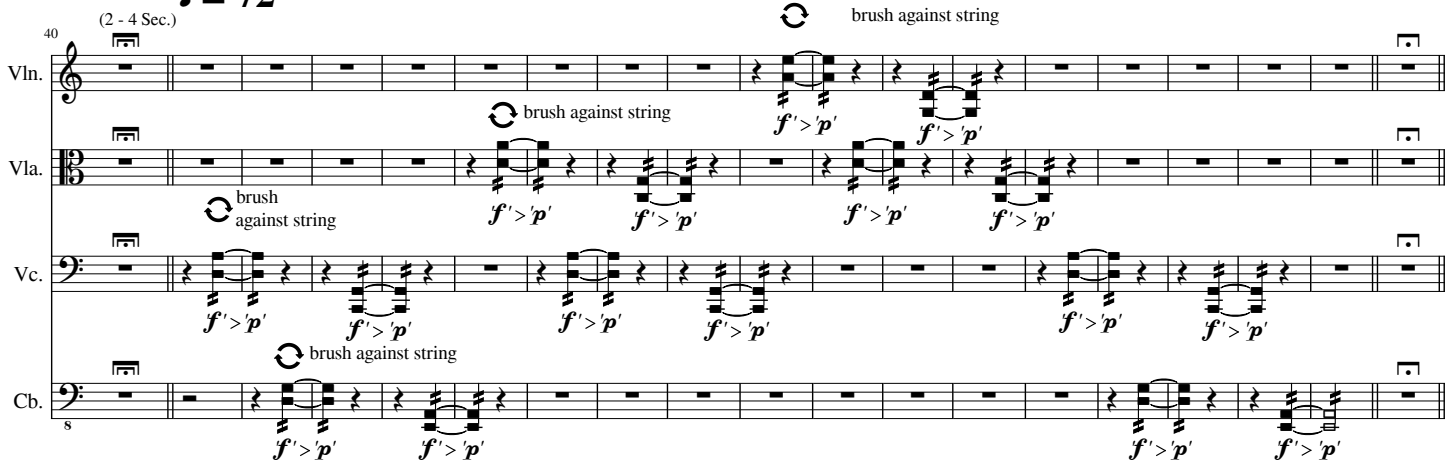
♩ = 120

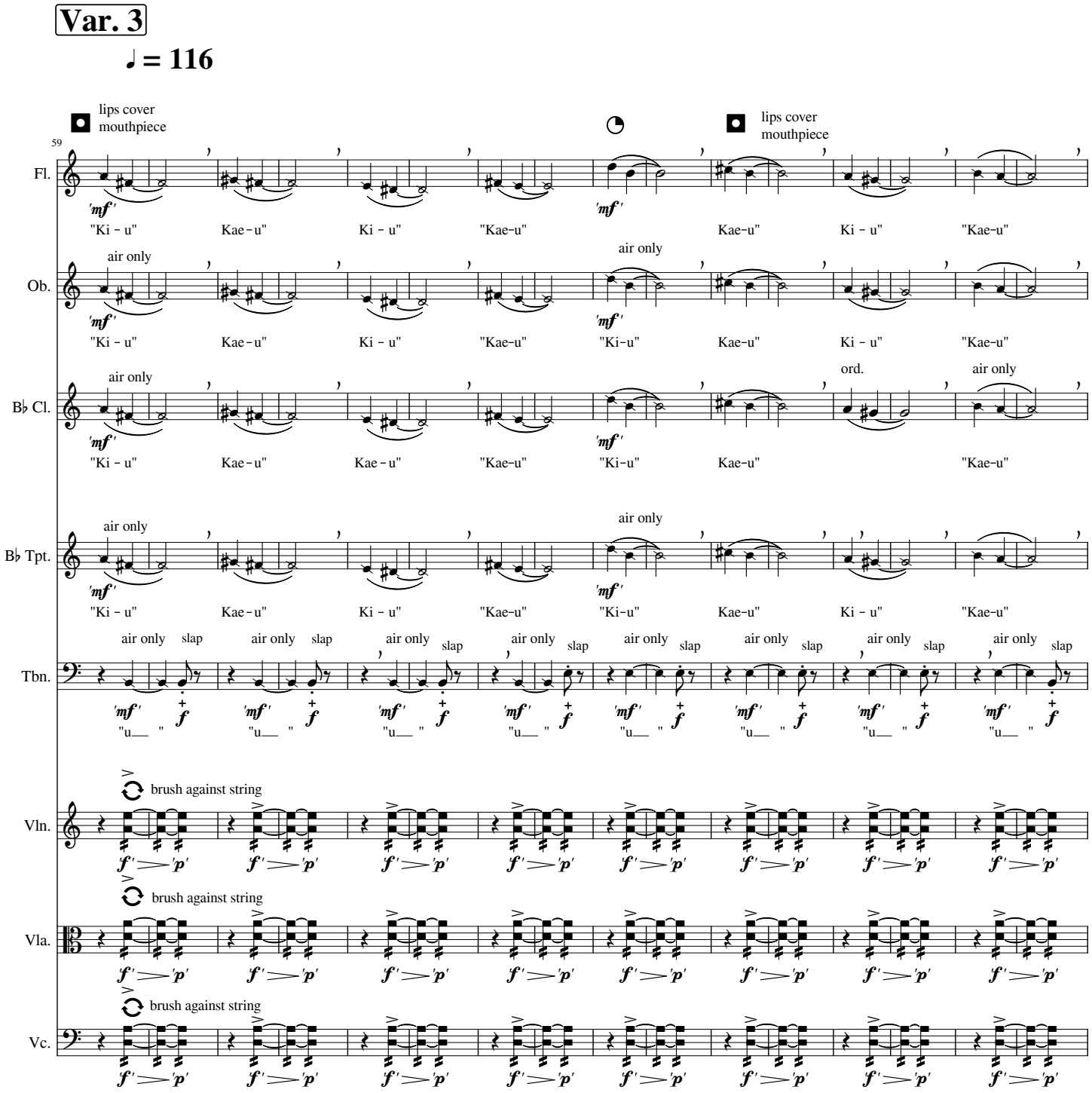


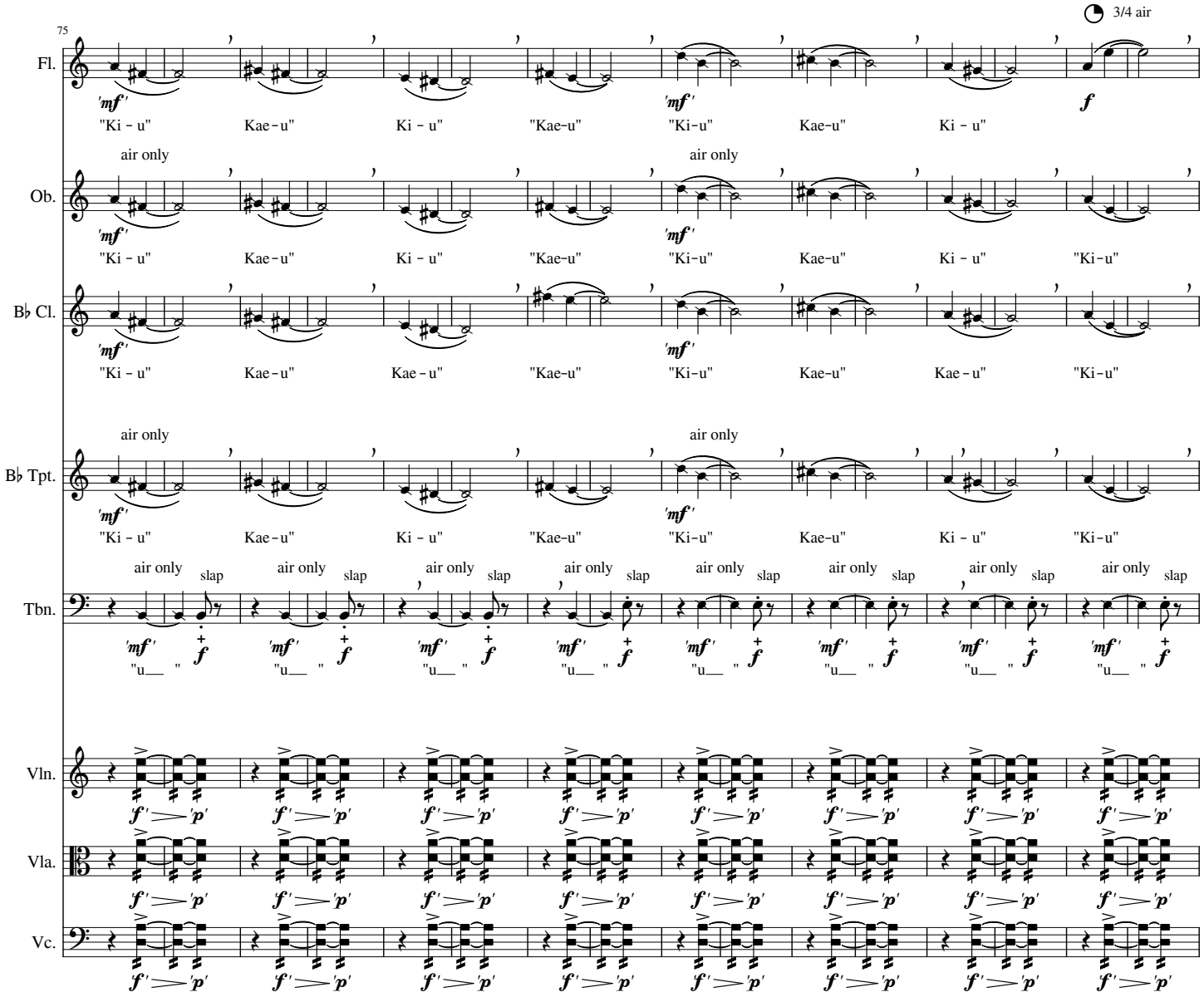



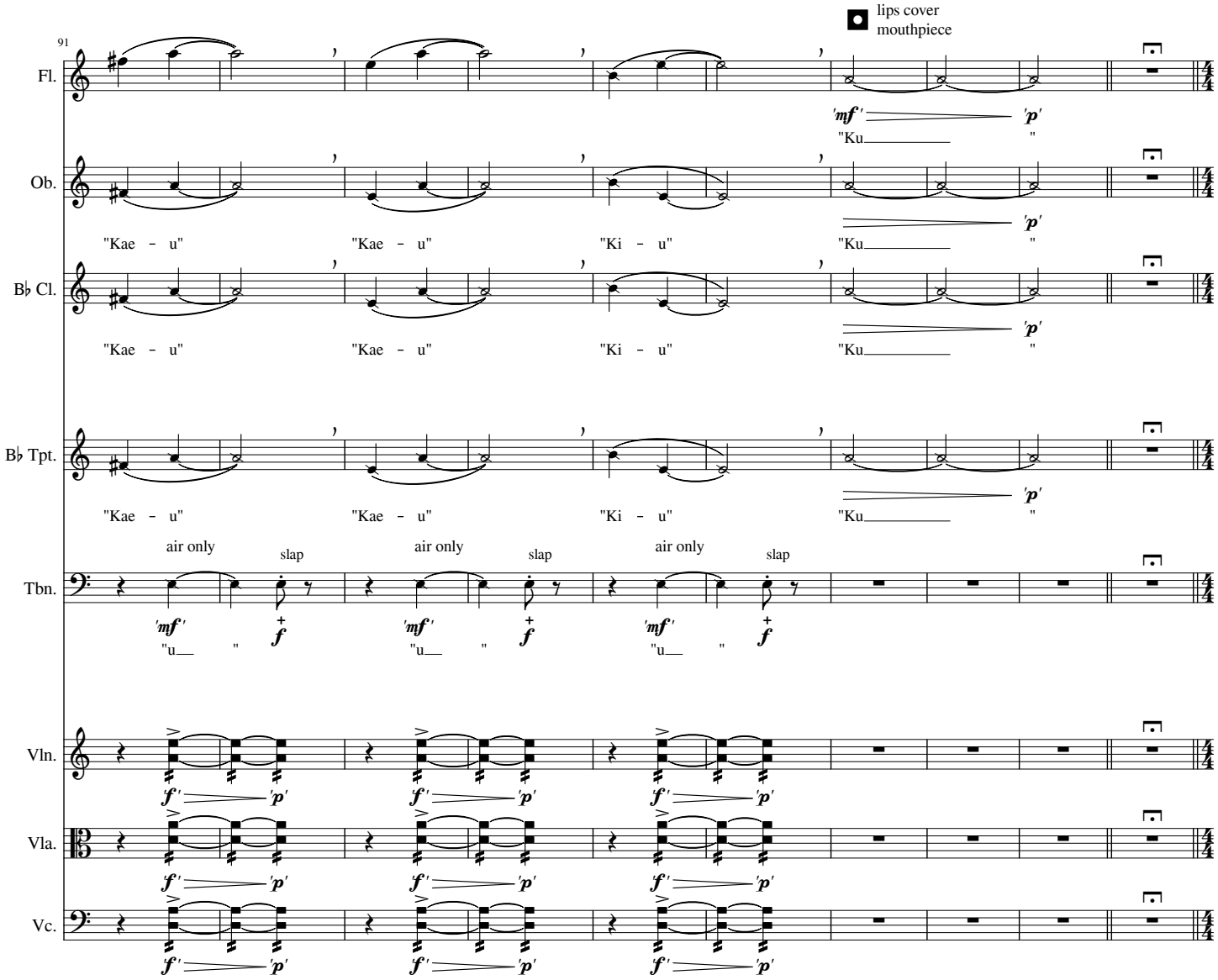

## Var. 2

♩ = 72



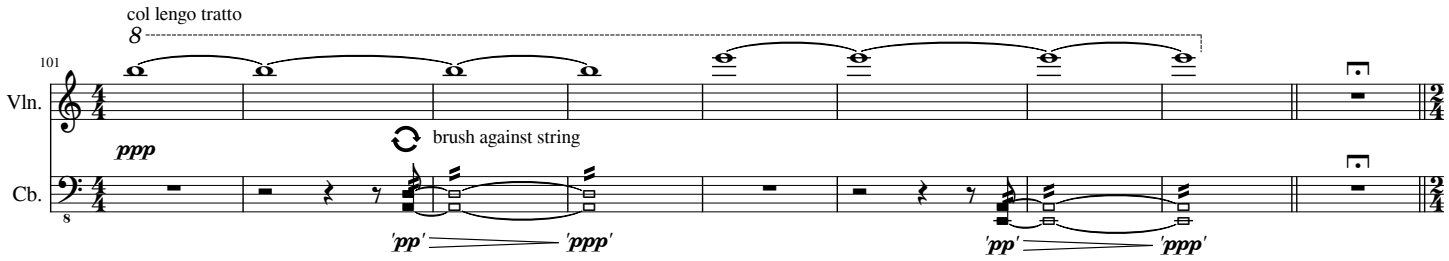

Var. 3
♩ = 116
lips cover mouthpiece
lips cover mouthpiece
59
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
air only
ord.
slap
brush against string
"Ki - u" Kae - u" Ki - u" "Kae-u" Kae-u" Ki - u" "Kae-u"
"Ki-u"
"u__ "


3/4 air
75
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
air only
slap
"Ki - u" Kae-u" Ki - u" "Kae-u" "Ki-u" Kae-u" Ki - u"
"Ki - u" Kae-u" Ki - u" "Kae-u" "Ki-u" Kae-u" Ki - u" "Ki-u"
"Ki - u" Kae-u" Kae - u" "Kae-u" "Ki-u" Kae-u" Kae - u" "Ki-u"
"u__ "


lips cover
mouthpiece
91
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
"Kae - u"
"Ki - u"
"Ku"
air only
slap

**Var. 4**

♩ = 60

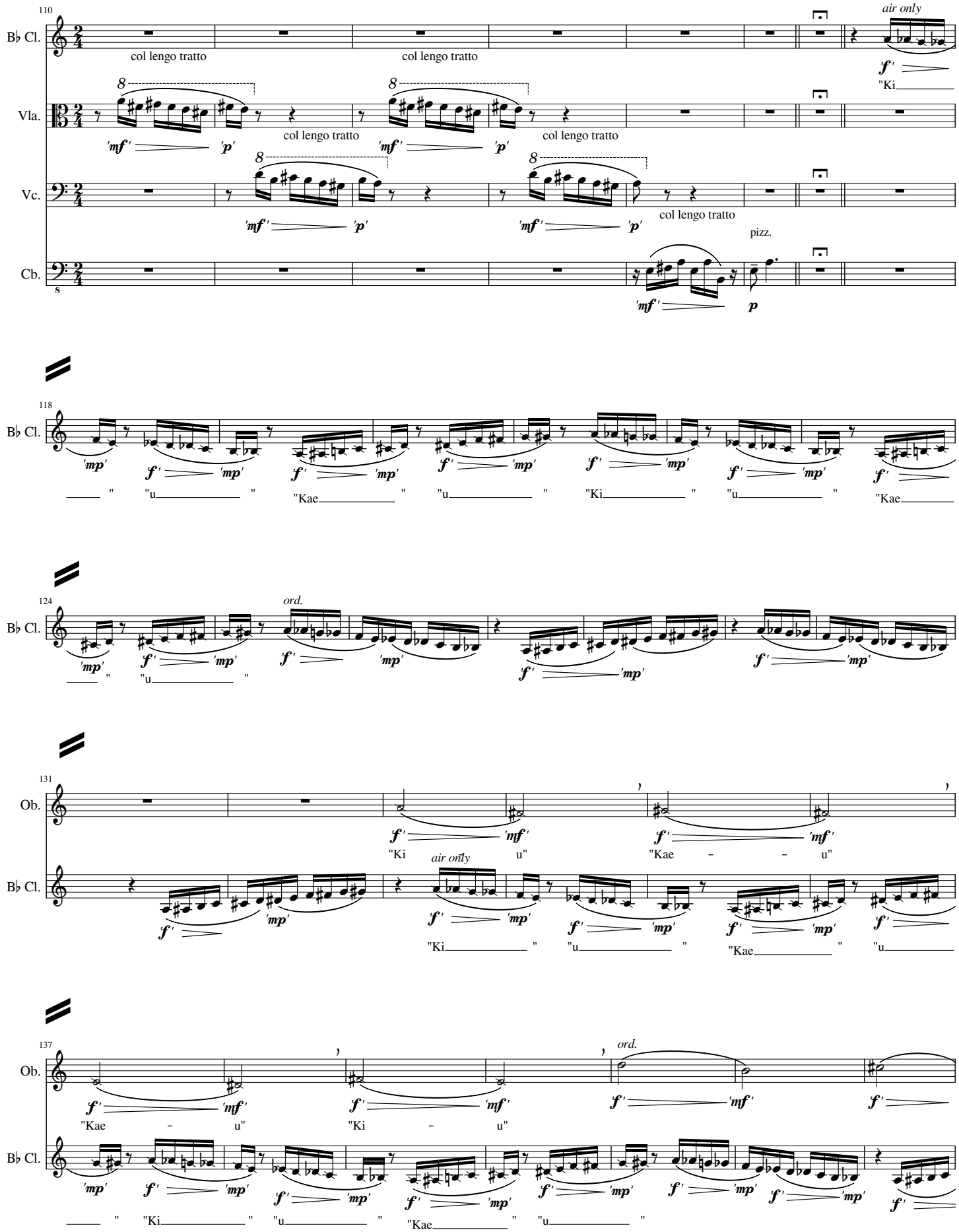

col lengo tratto
8
101
Vln.
Cb.
ppp
brush against string

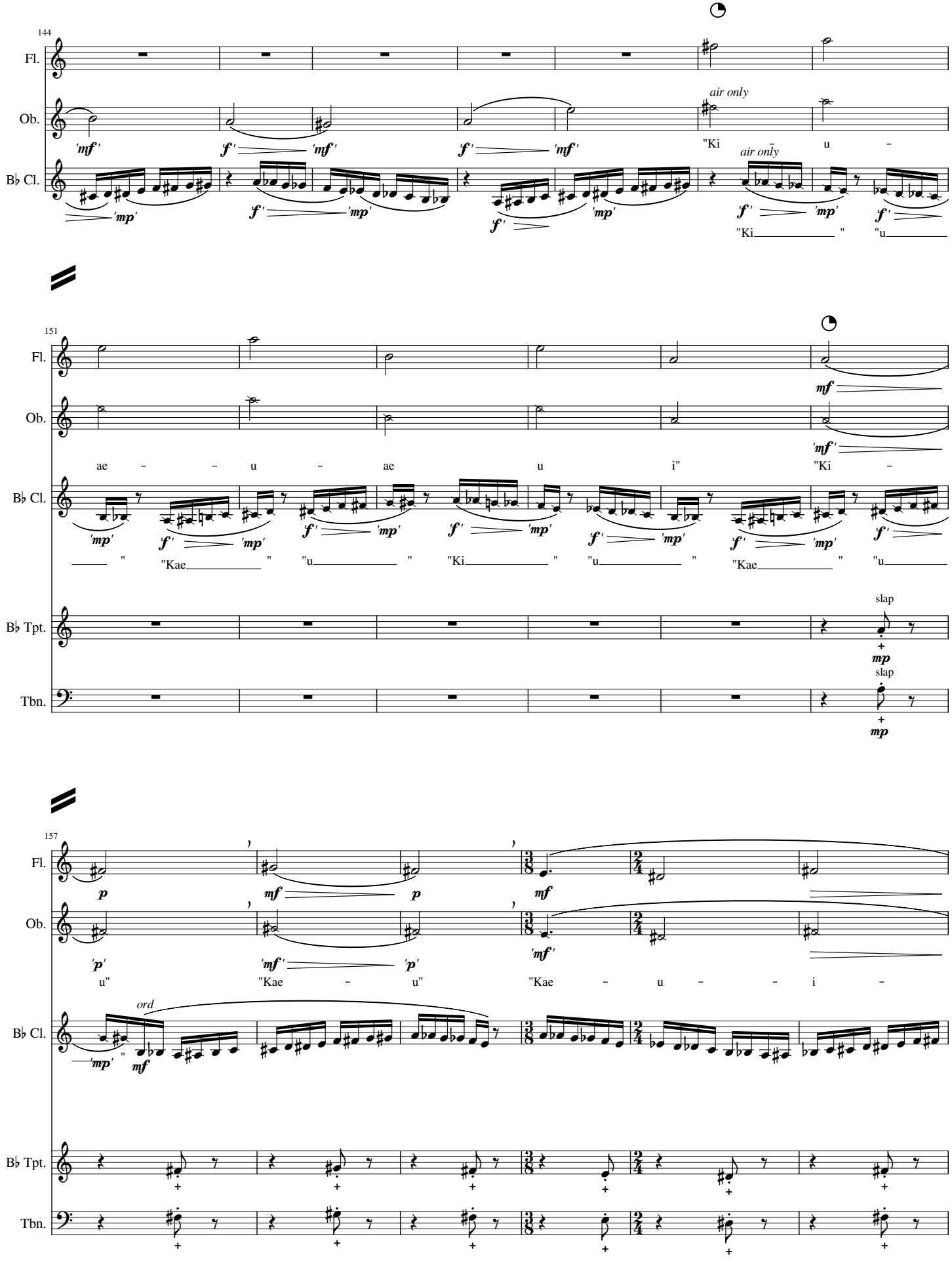
**Var. 5**

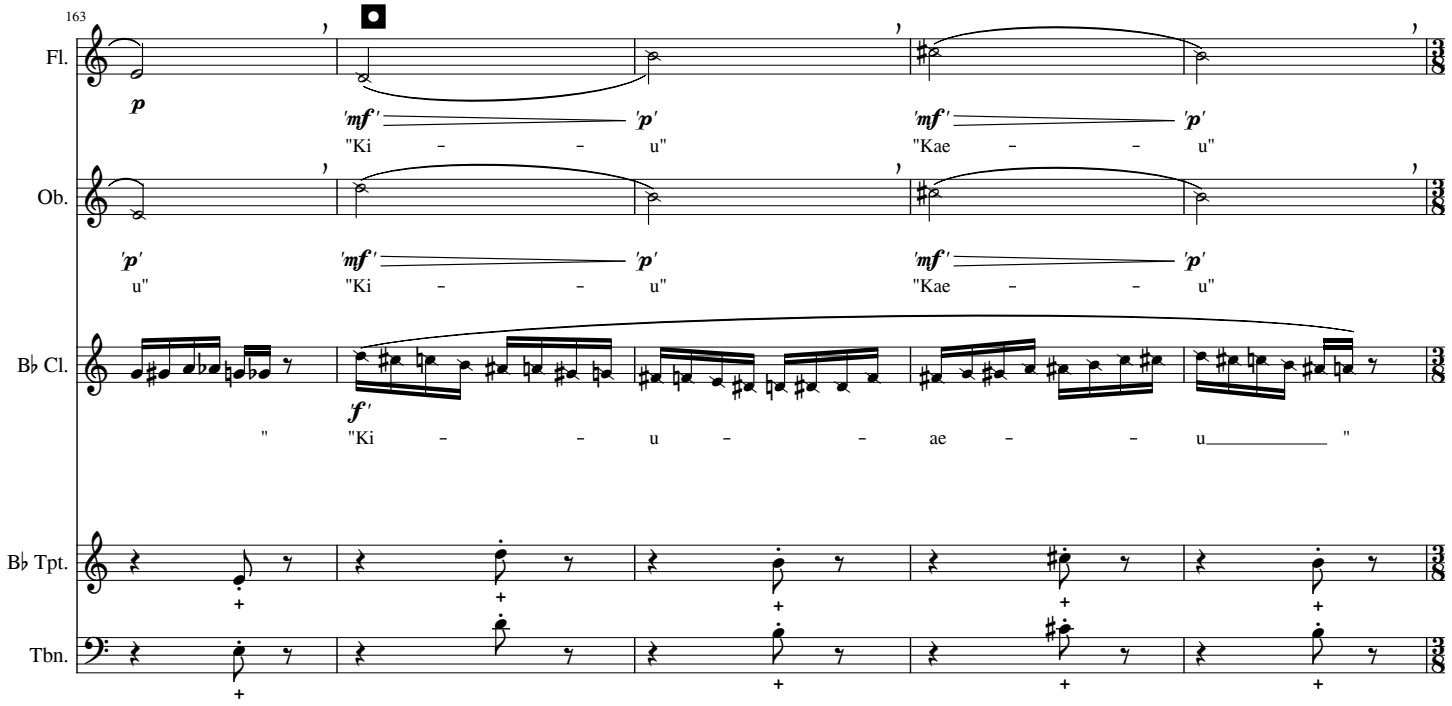
♩ = 96

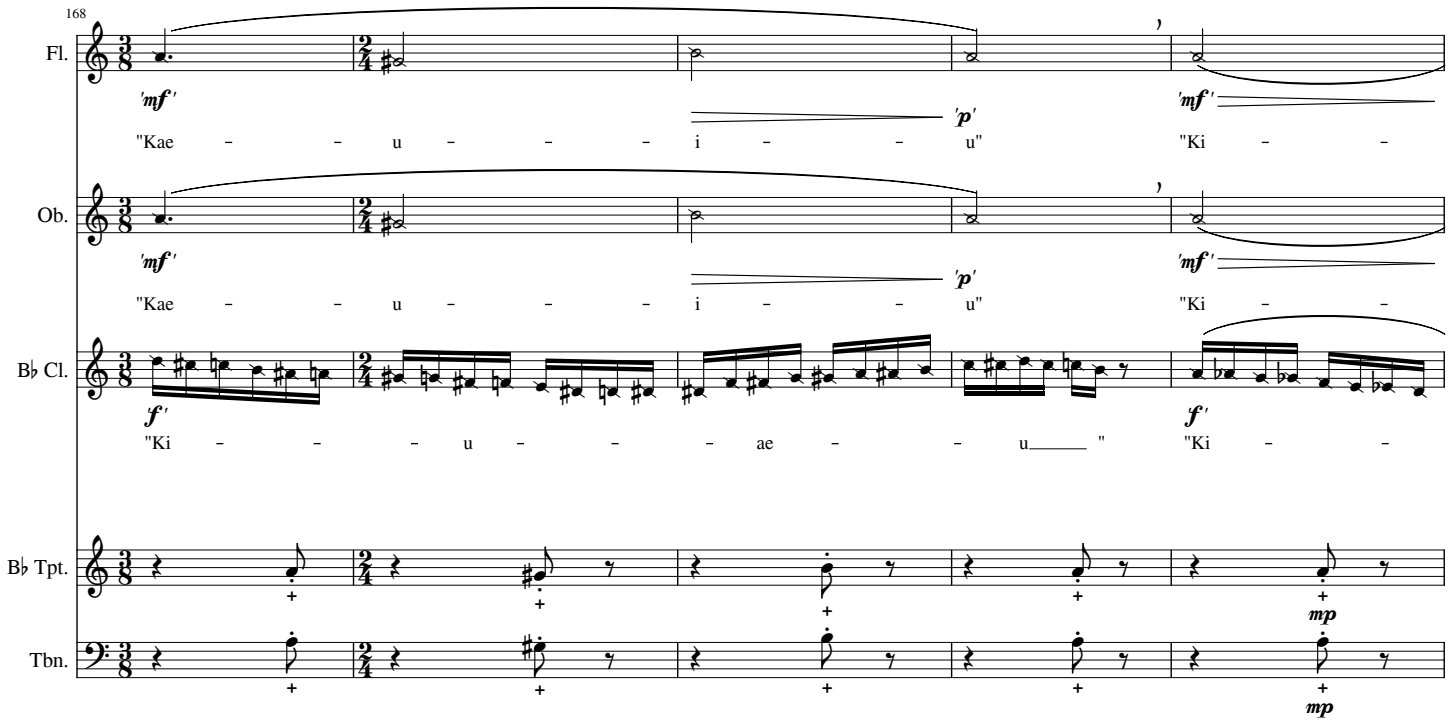
**Var. 6**

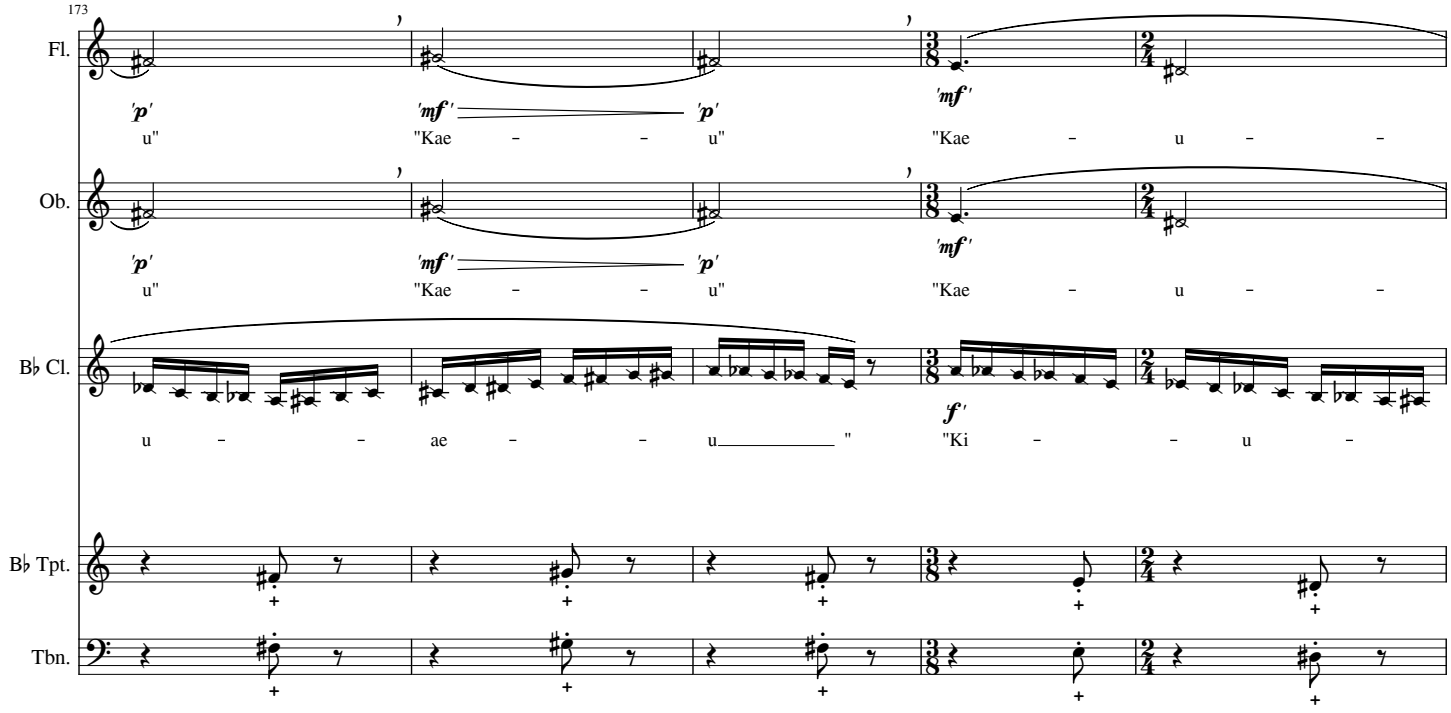
♩ = 120

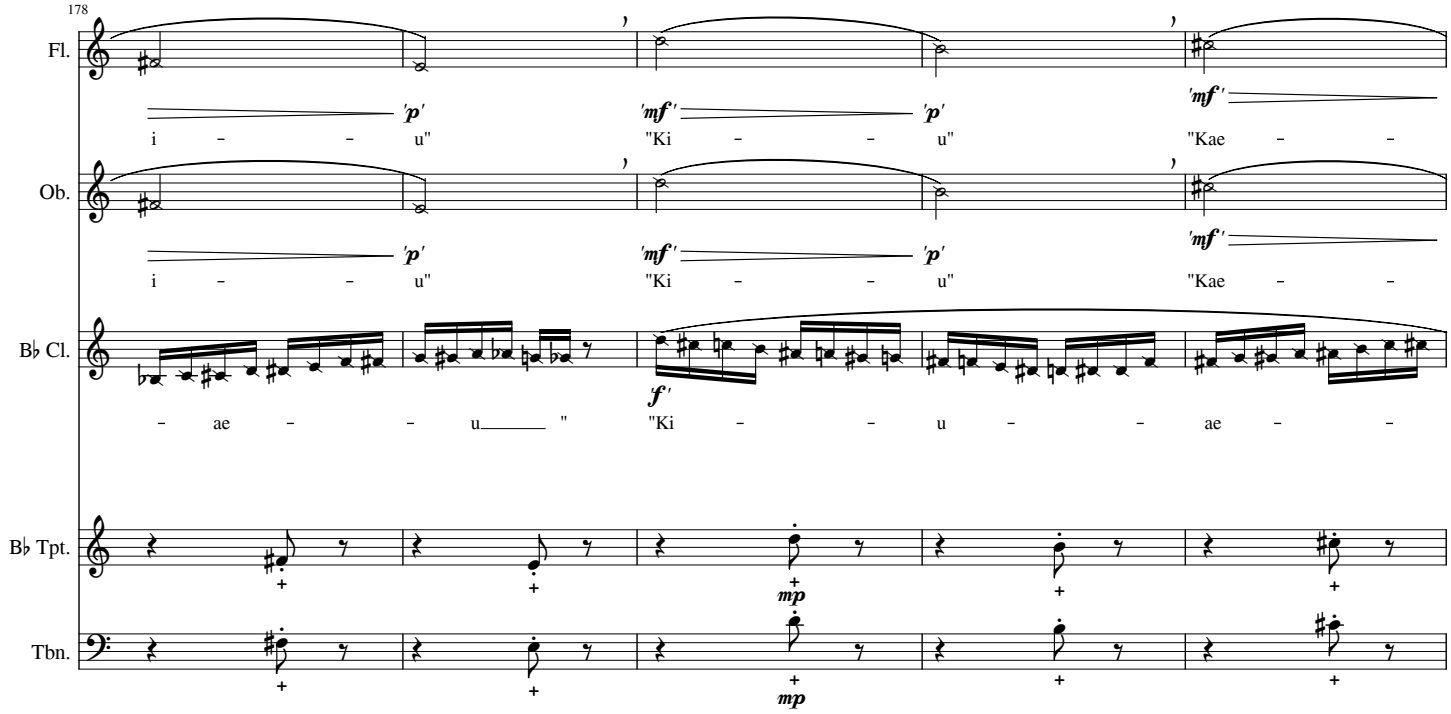


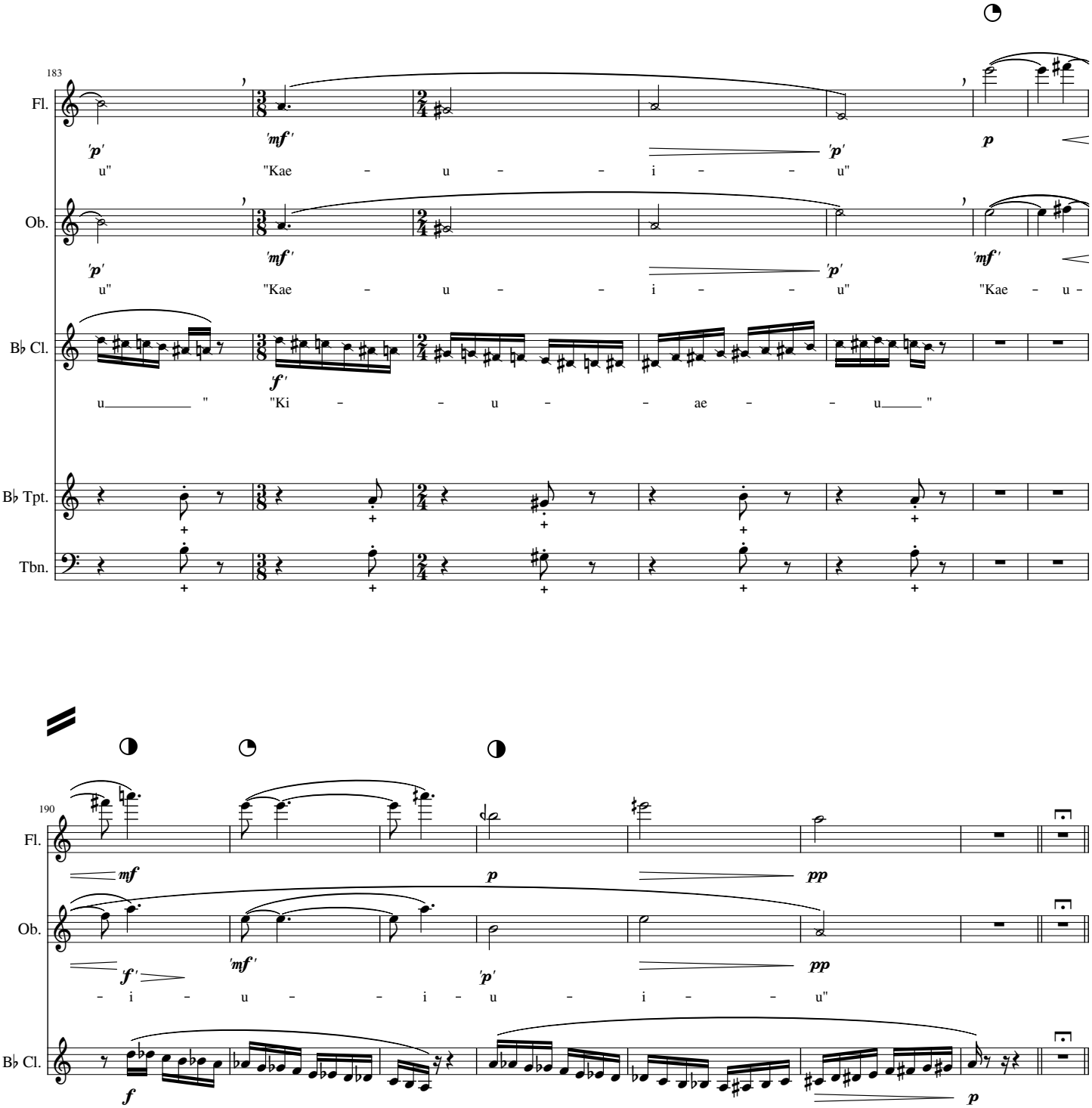

144
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
air only
"Ki u –
air only
"Ki_____ " "u_____
151
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
ae – – u – ae u i" "Ki –
"Kae_____ " "u_____ " "Ki_____ " "u_____ " "Kae_____ " "u_____
slap
slap
157
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
u" "Kae – u" "Kae – u – – i –
ord


163
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
p
'mf' "Ki – – u" 'p' 'mf' "Kae – – u" 'p'
'p' u" 'mf' "Ki – – u" 'p' 'mf' "Kae – – u" 'p'
'f' " "Ki – – u – – ae – – u_____ "


168
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
'mf' "Kae – – u – – – i – – u" 'p' 'mf' "Ki – –
'mf' "Kae – – u – – – i – – u" 'p' 'mf' "Ki – –
'f' "Ki – – – u – – – ae – – u_____ " 'f' "Ki – –
mp
mp

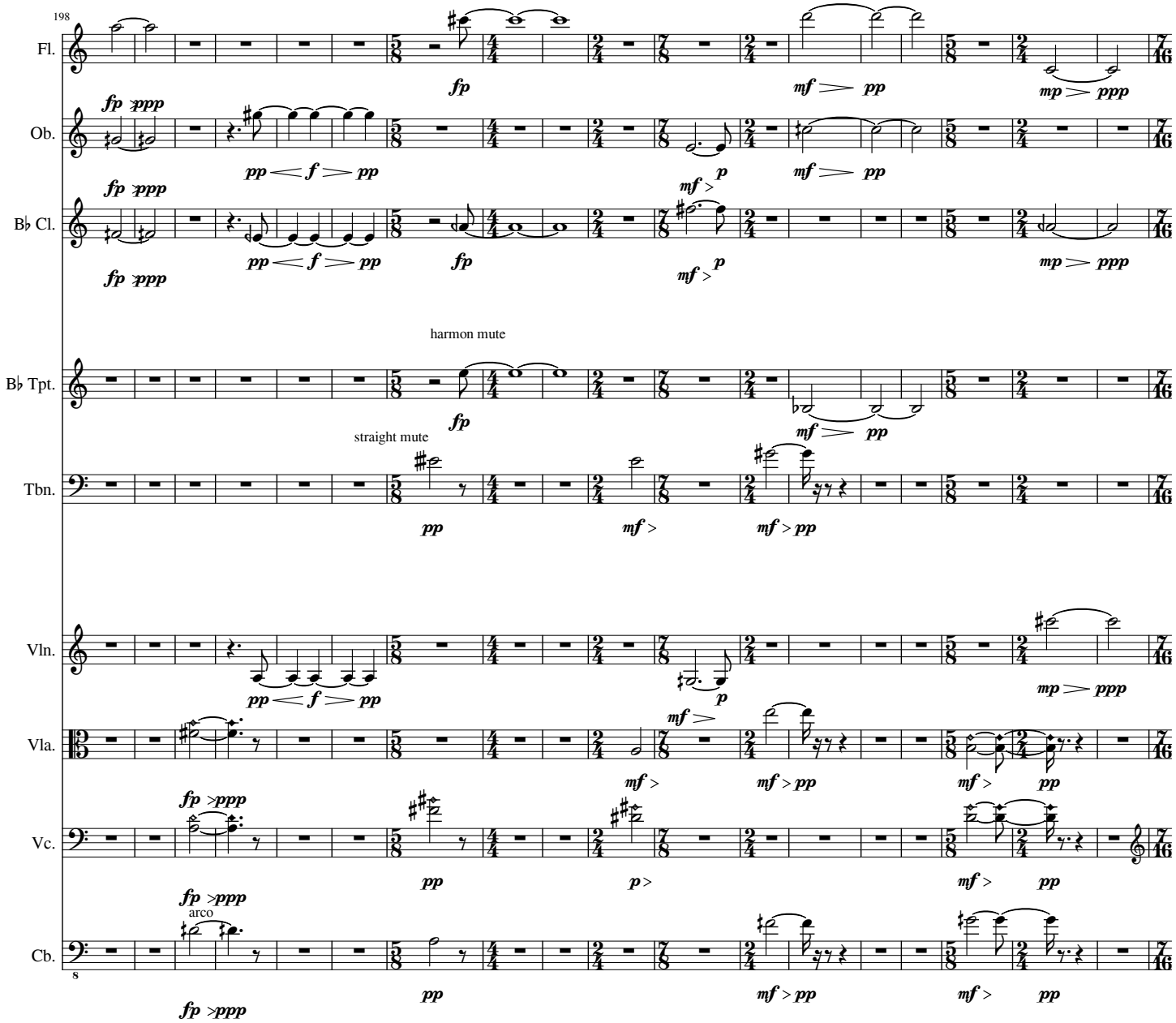

173
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
'p'
'mf'
'p'
'mf'
'f'
u"
"Kae – – u"
"Kae – u – –
u – – ae – – u_____ "
"Ki – – u –

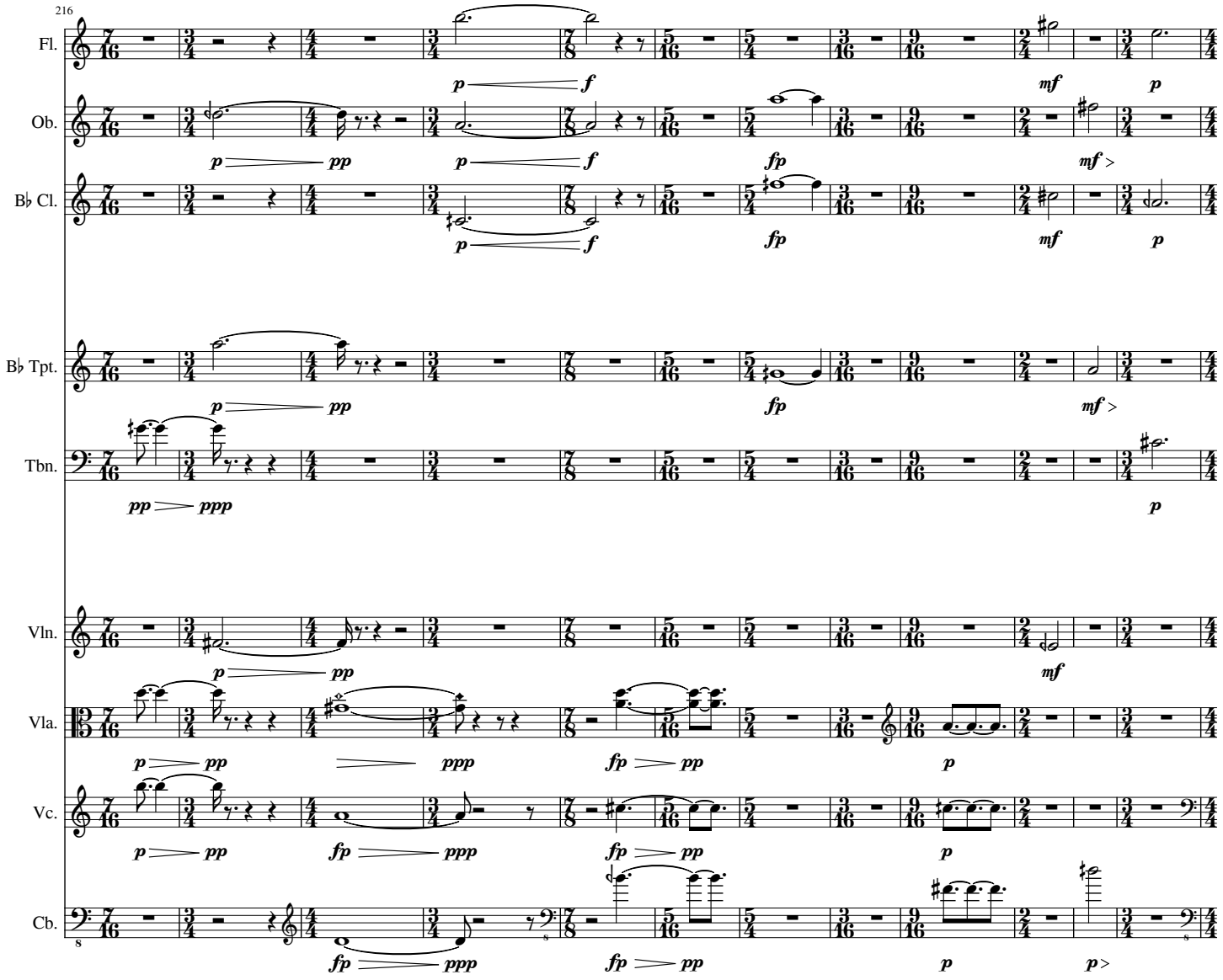

178
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
'p'
'mf'
'p'
'mf'
'f'
'mp'
'mp'
i – – u"
"Ki – – u"
"Kae – –
– ae – – u_____ "
"Ki – – u – – ae – –


183
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
u" "Kae - u - - i - - u"
u" "Kae - u - - i - - u" "Kae - u -
u " "Ki - - u - - ae - - u "
190
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
- i - u - - i - u - i - - u"

## Var. 7

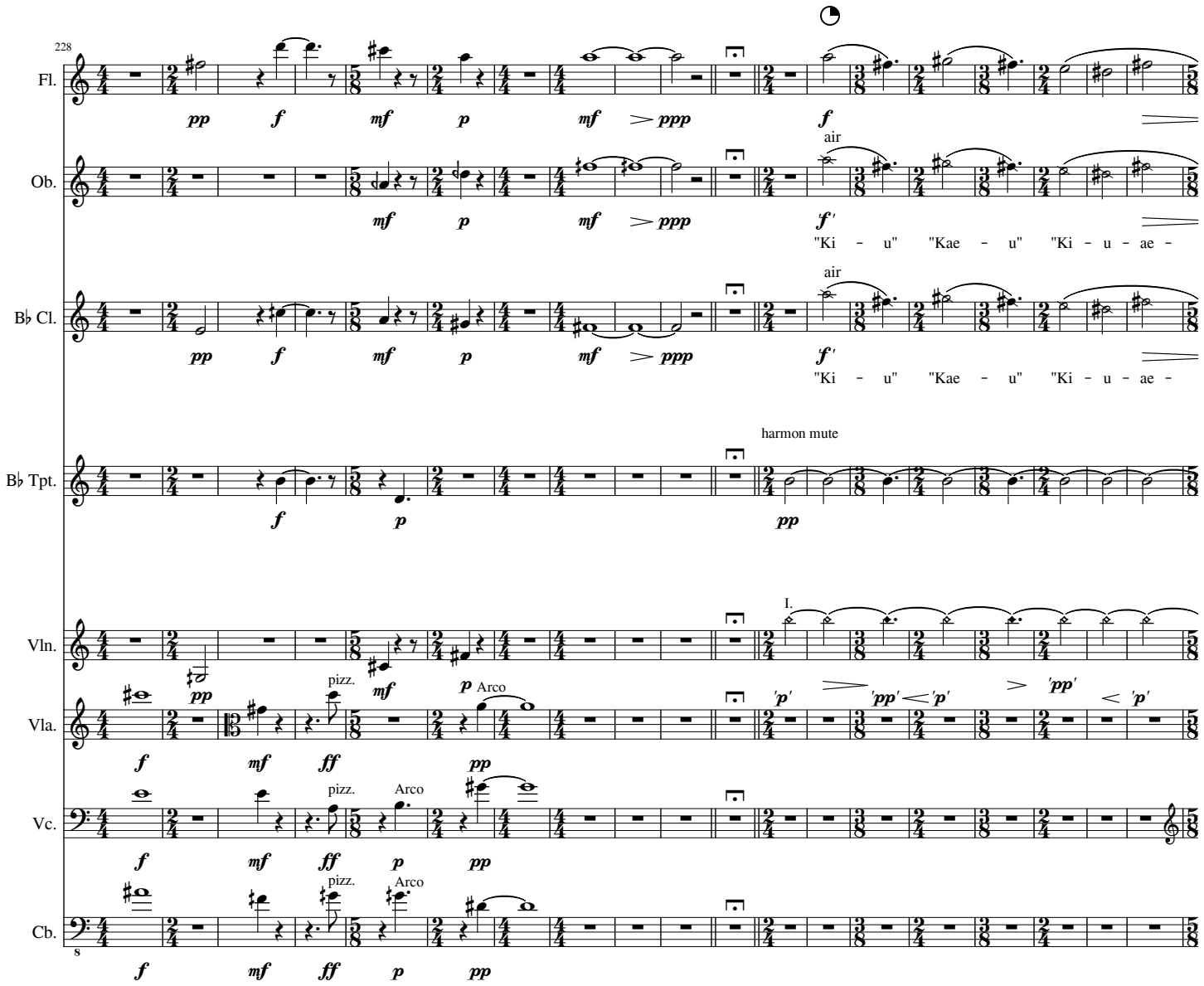
♩ = 80

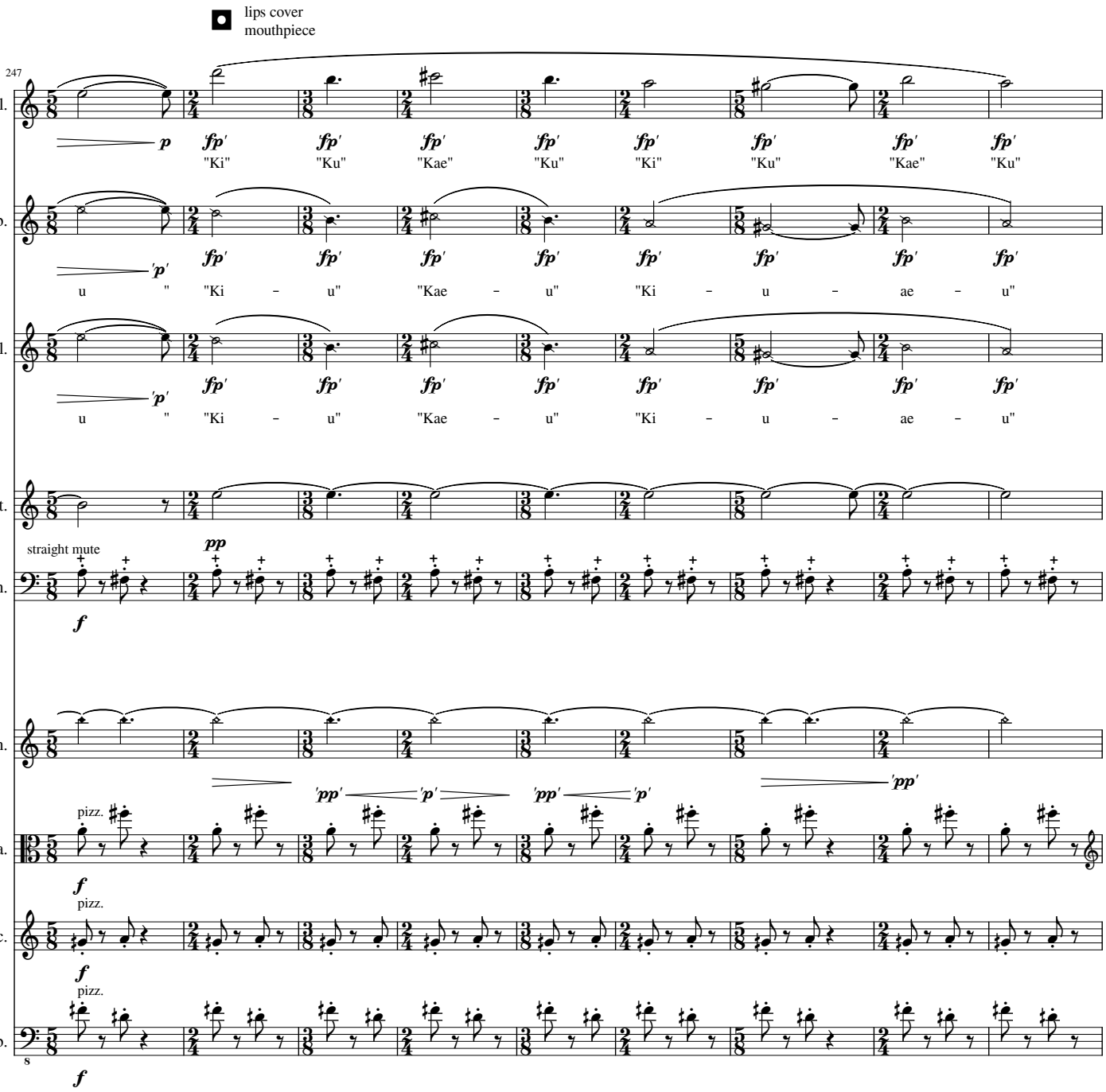

198
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
harmon mute
Tbn.
straight mute
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
arco
8

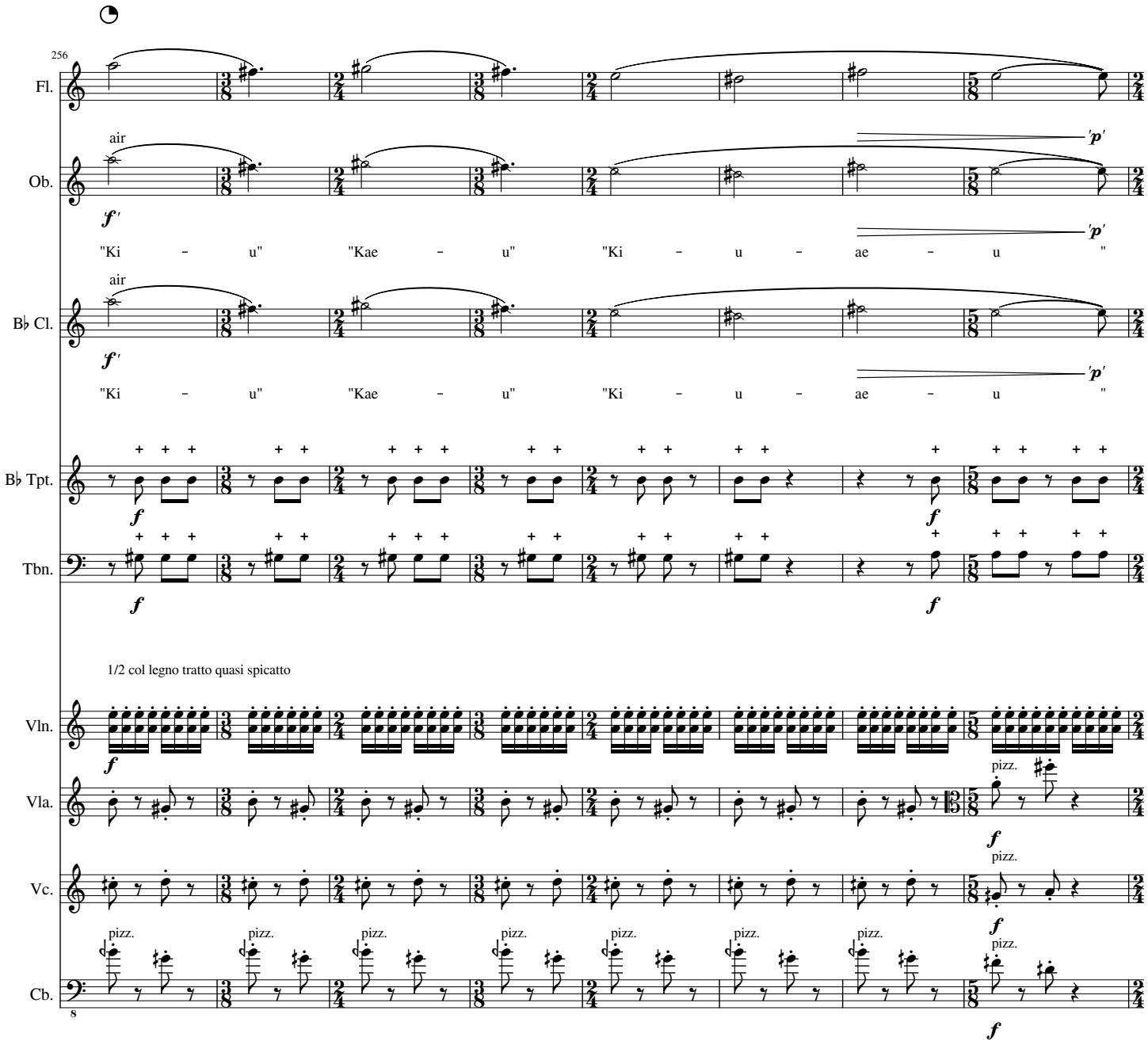

216
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

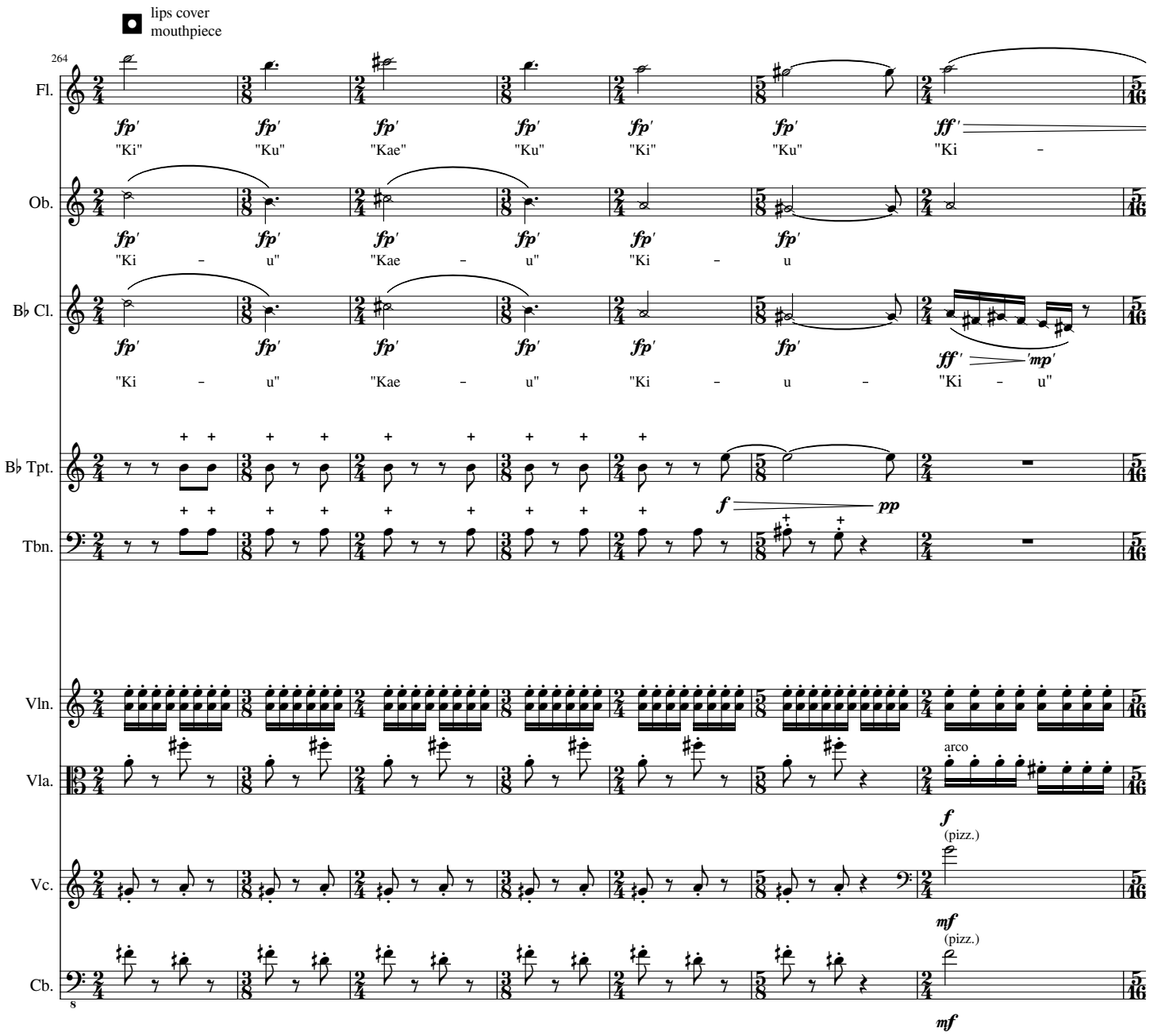
# Var. 8

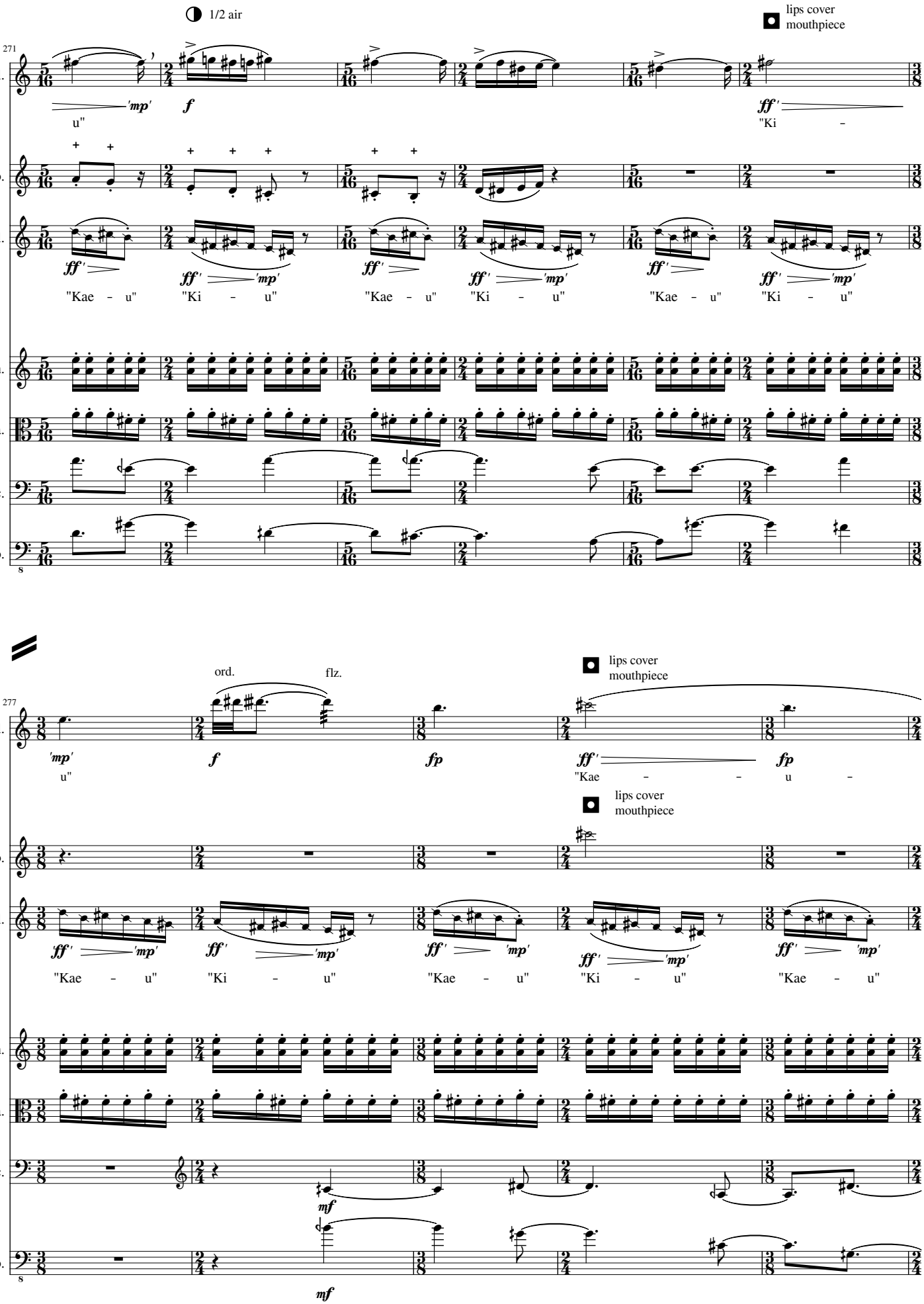
♩ = 116

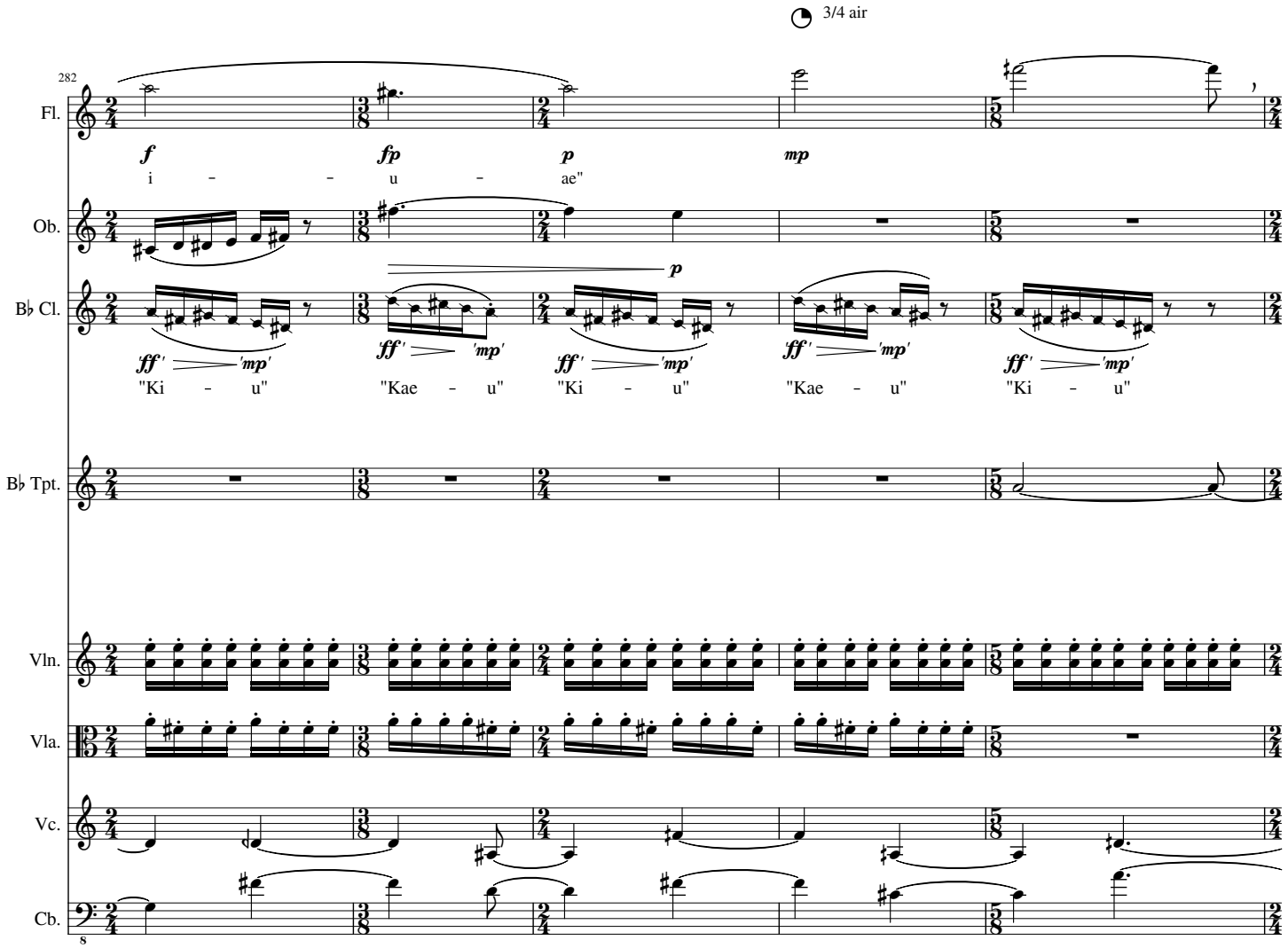

228
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
air
"Ki - u" "Kae - u" "Ki - u - ae -
harmon mute
I.
pizz.
Arco

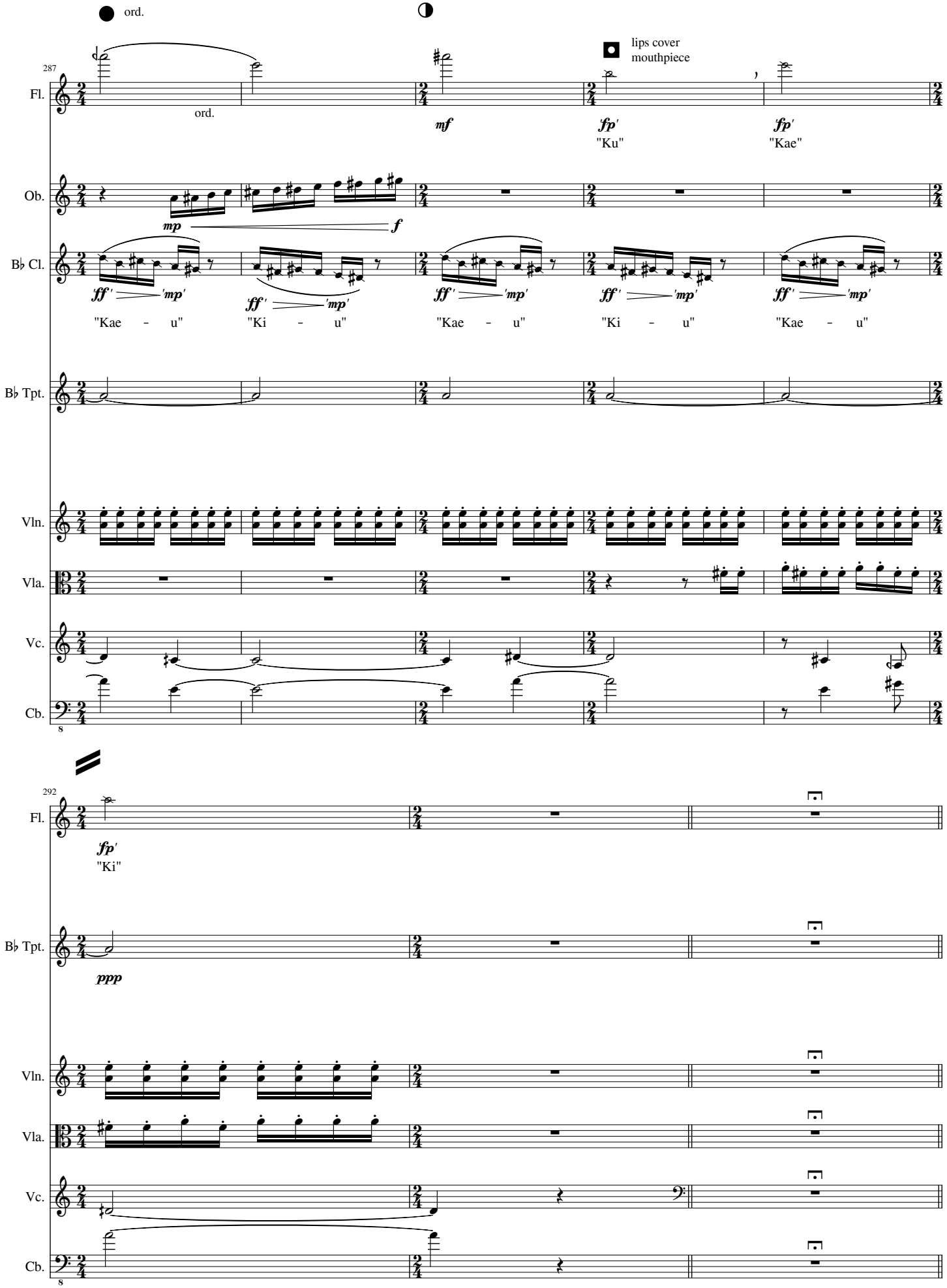

lips cover
mouthpiece
247
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
straight mute
Tbn.
Vln.
Vla.
pizz.
Vc.
pizz.
Cb.
pizz.
8
"Ki" "Ku" "Kae" "Ku" "Ki" "Ku" "Kae" "Ku"
u " "Ki – u" "Kae – u" "Ki – u – ae – u"
u " "Ki – u" "Kae – u" "Ki – u – ae – u"


256
Fl.
Ob.
air
"Ki – u" "Kae – u" "Ki – u – ae – u"
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
1/2 col legno tratto quasi spicatto
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
pizz.


lips cover
mouthpiece
264
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
"Ki" "Ku" "Kae" "Ku" "Ki" "Ku" "Ki -
"Ki - u" "Kae - u" "Ki - u
"Ki - u" "Kae - u" "Ki - u - "Ki - u"
arco
(pizz.)
(pizz.)

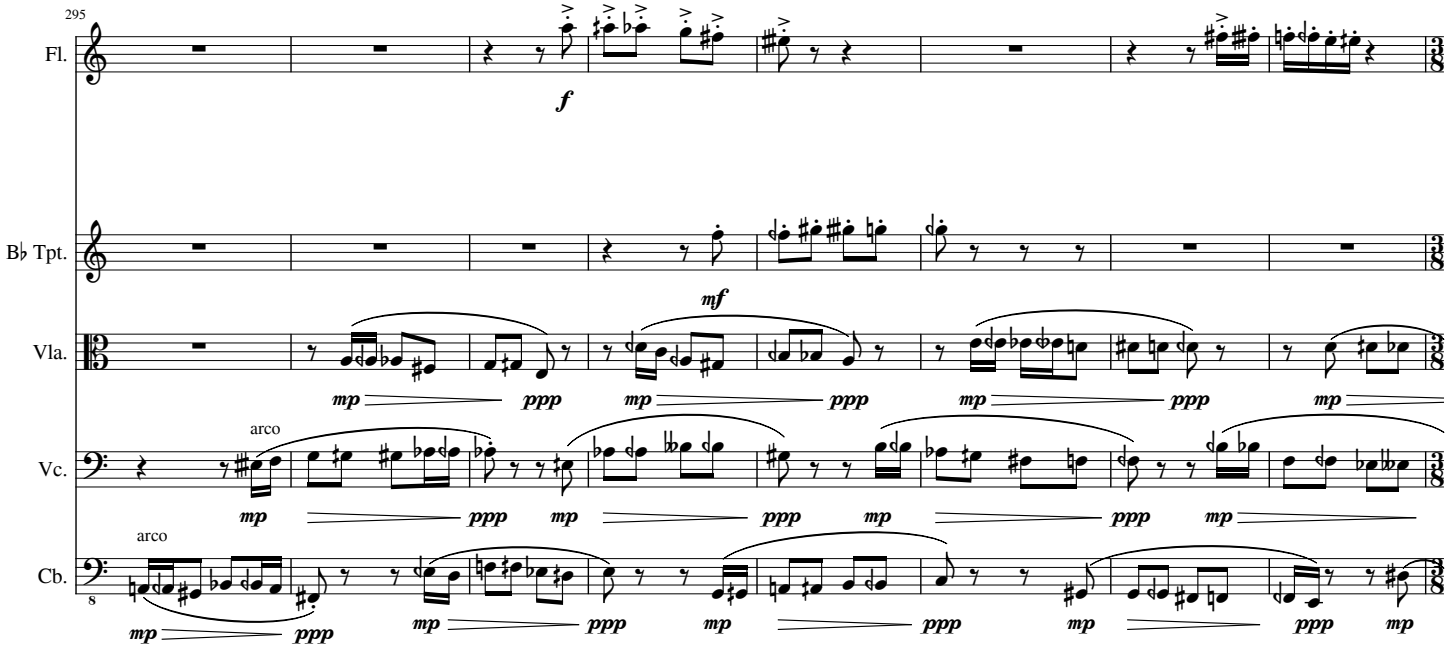

1/2 air
lips cover mouthpiece
271
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
'mp'
u"
f
ff'
"Ki -
"Kae - u"
"Ki - u"
ord.
flz.
277
fp
"Kae - - u -

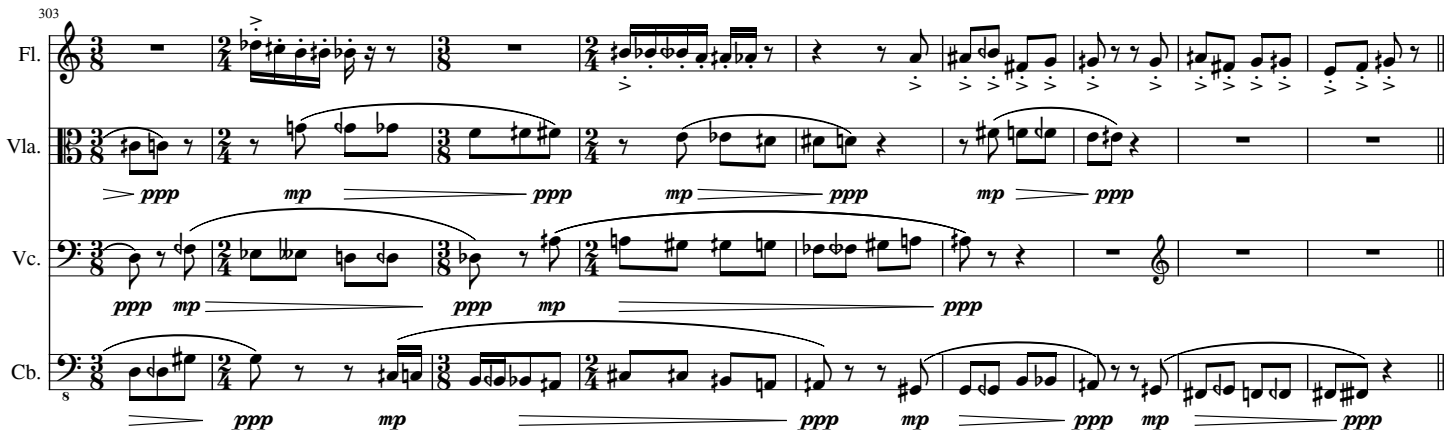

3/4 air
282
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
f
fp
p
mp
i - - u - ae"
ff' mp'
"Ki - u"
"Kae - u"
"Ki - u"
"Kae - u"
"Ki - u"


ord.
lips cover mouthpiece
287
Fl.
ord.
mf
fp
"Ku"
fp
"Kae"
Ob.
mp
f
B♭ Cl.
ff mp
"Kae - u"
"Ki - u"
"Kae - u"
"Ki - u"
"Kae - u"
B♭ Tpt.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
292
Fl.
fp
"Ki"
B♭ Tpt.
ppp
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

## Var. 9

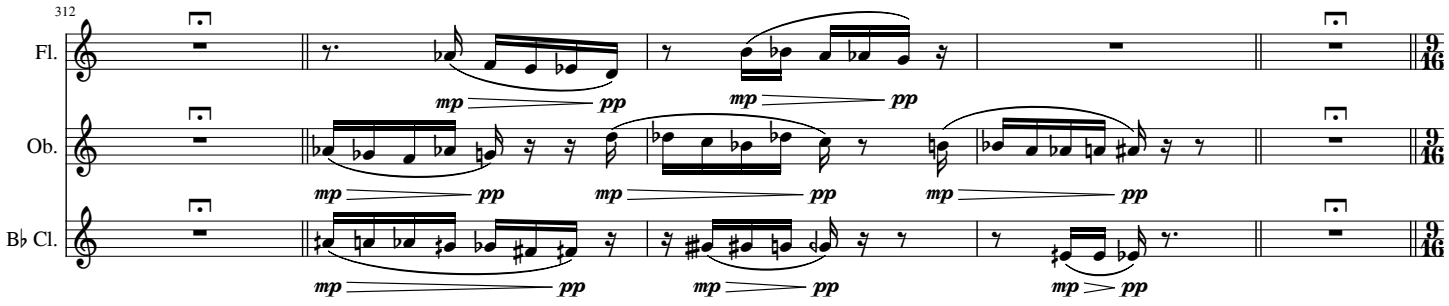
♩ = 132




## Var. 10

♩ = 116



## Var. 11

♩ = 92

Piccolo:

317

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

B♭ Tpt.

Vln.

sul tasto
non vib.

Vla.

col lengo tratto

Vc.

col lengo tratto

330

Fl.

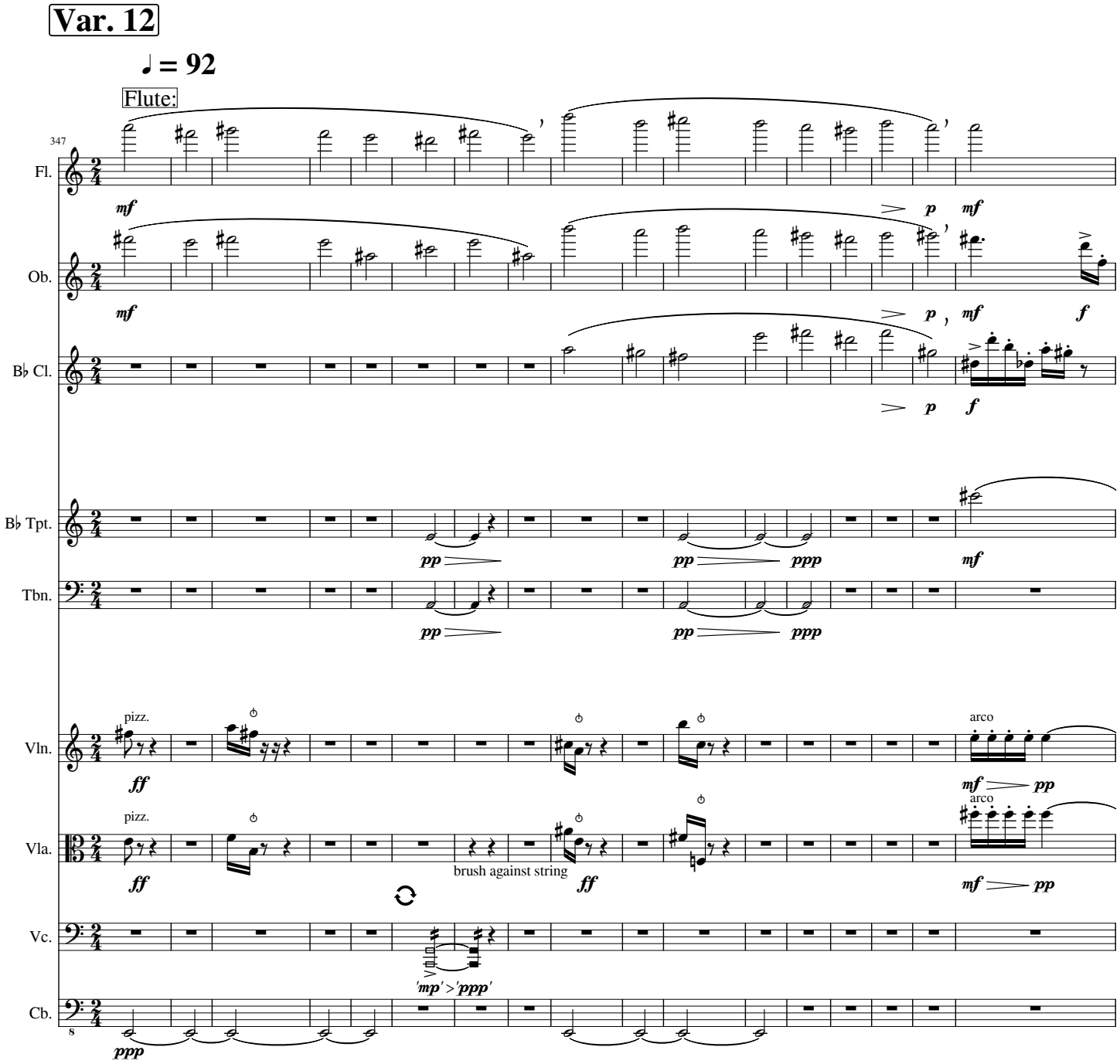
Ob.

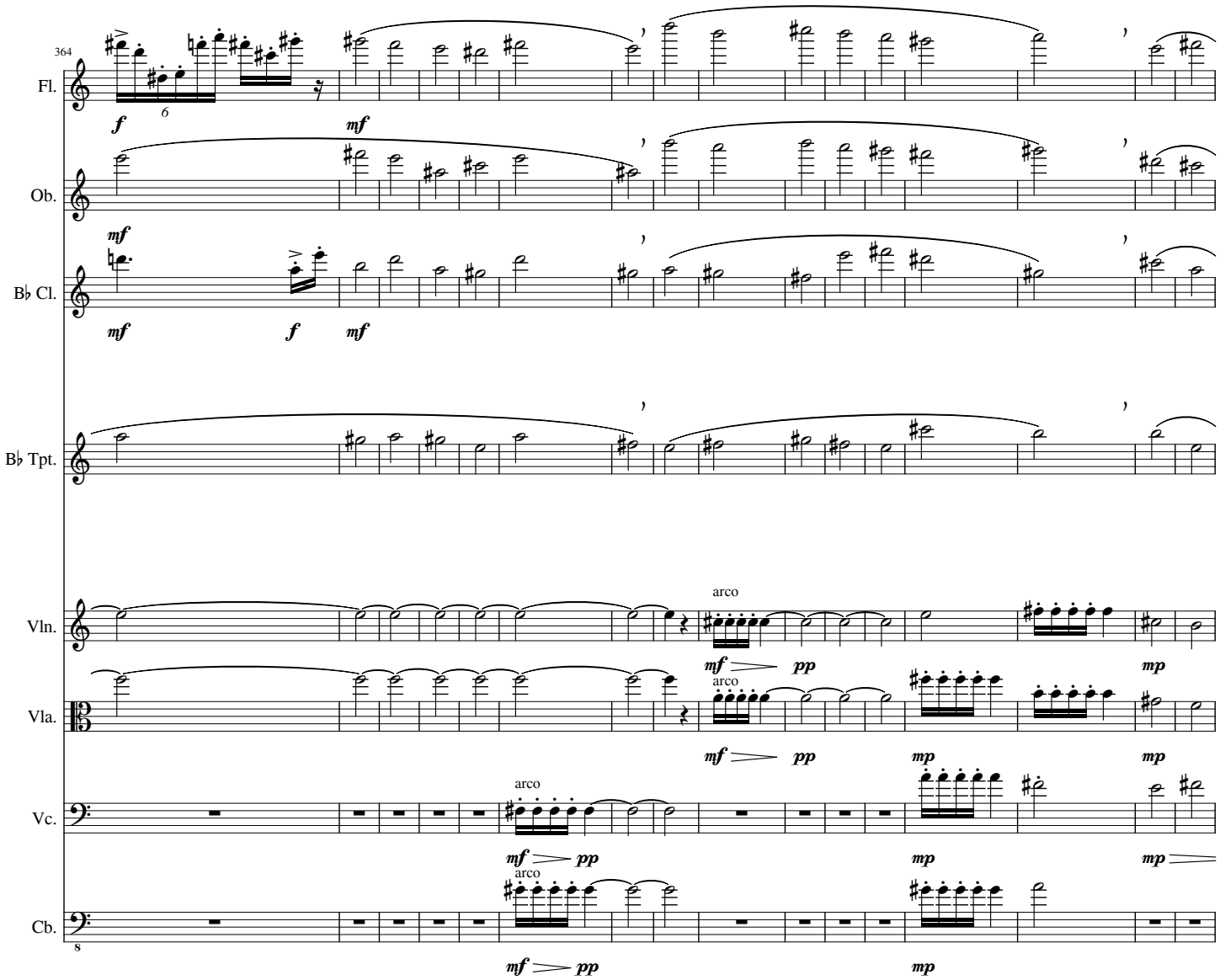
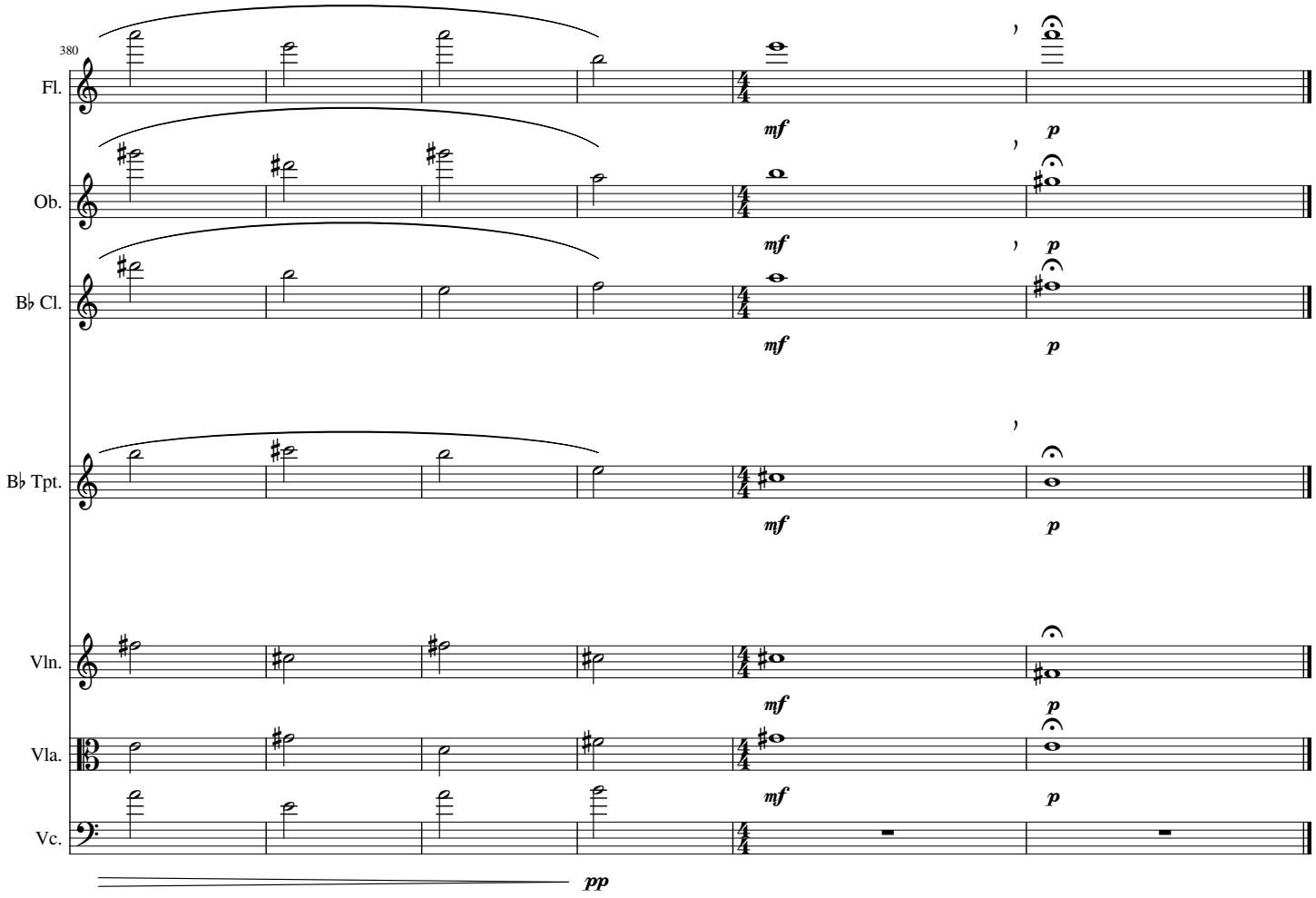
B♭ Cl.

B♭ Tpt.

Vla.

Vc.


Var. 12
♩ = 92
Flute:
347
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
pizz.
arco
brush against string


364
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
B♭ Tpt.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
arco
arco
arco
arco

**rit.**