what on earth

for solo viola and computer

Brad Decker

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2023

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Duration: 7:17

what on earth *(2023)* reflects on the dichotomies and juxtapositions of daily life, in light of recent world events and societal shifts. Is the earth a peaceful place to be? Is humanity and nature meant to coexist? Do we know what is real and unreal? The viola soloist performs a variety of musical fragments that depict opposing human attributes - passionate, aggressive, resolute. The computer responds with digital manipulation of the viola, at times making the beautiful distorted, and vice versa. While the soloist is existing in a very real and tactile environment, the computer reminds us of the ghastly and swirling presence of the unreal.

Technical Note: All computer sounds are generated by the performer, whose viola will have a pickup or microphone that is sent to a laptop and computer program - a Max patch/ application. The large boxed numbers refer to the cues within the patch, which can be triggered by foot controller from stage, or by a technician (or the composer) from the computer at mix position. Since this is not necessarily driven by a fixed timeline, the performer has some flexibility in regard to fermati and other notation elements. Many of these moments, while notated, suggest a feeling of improvisation. Therefore, some deviation from the letter of the notation is at times encouraged.

About the composer: Brad Decker is a composer, educator, and performer of contemporary concert music, whose works often incorporate electronic, electroacoustic, or interactive media. His recent works explore the interaction of acoustic instruments and electronics to create immersive composite textures. His instrumental works combine virtuosic flourishes, polyrhythmic interplay, and extended techniques. Electronic elements include adventures in analog synthesis, interactive computer processing and sampling, multichannel diffusion, and fixed-media accompaniments. Multimedia projects range from traditional film soundtracks to live-performed improvisations with video. As a double bassist, he regularly performs his own compositions and improvisations that incorporate computer interactivity. His teachers include Peter Hestermann, Kenneth Jacobs, Erik Lund, Heinrich Taube, Steven Taylor, and Scott Wyatt. He has attended masterclasses and lessons with composers Agostino DiScipio, Stefano Gervasoni, Lee Hyla, and Tristan Murail. He is currently Assistant Professor of Composition and Music Technology at Eastern Illinois University. His music is distributed through his website www.braddecker.org.

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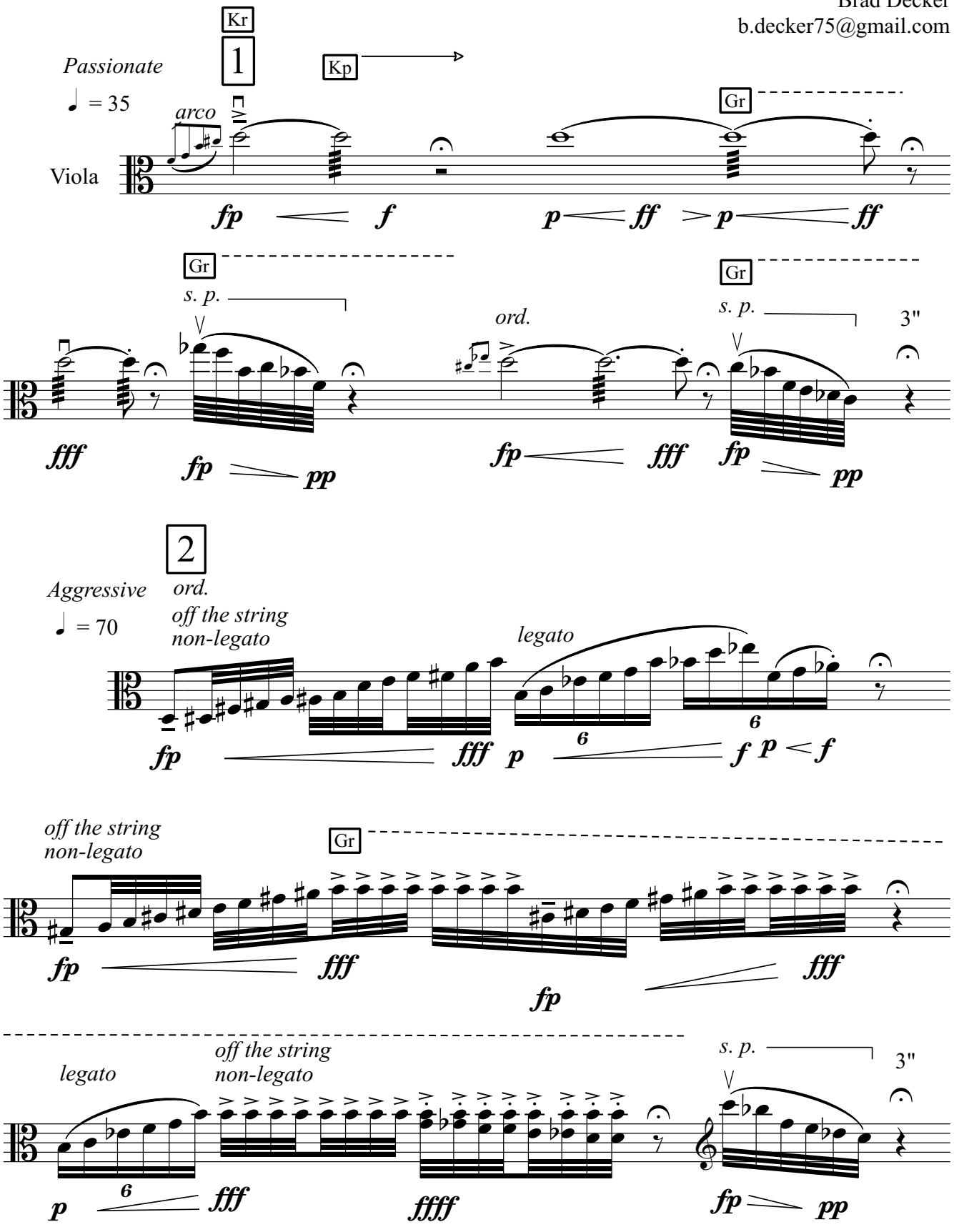

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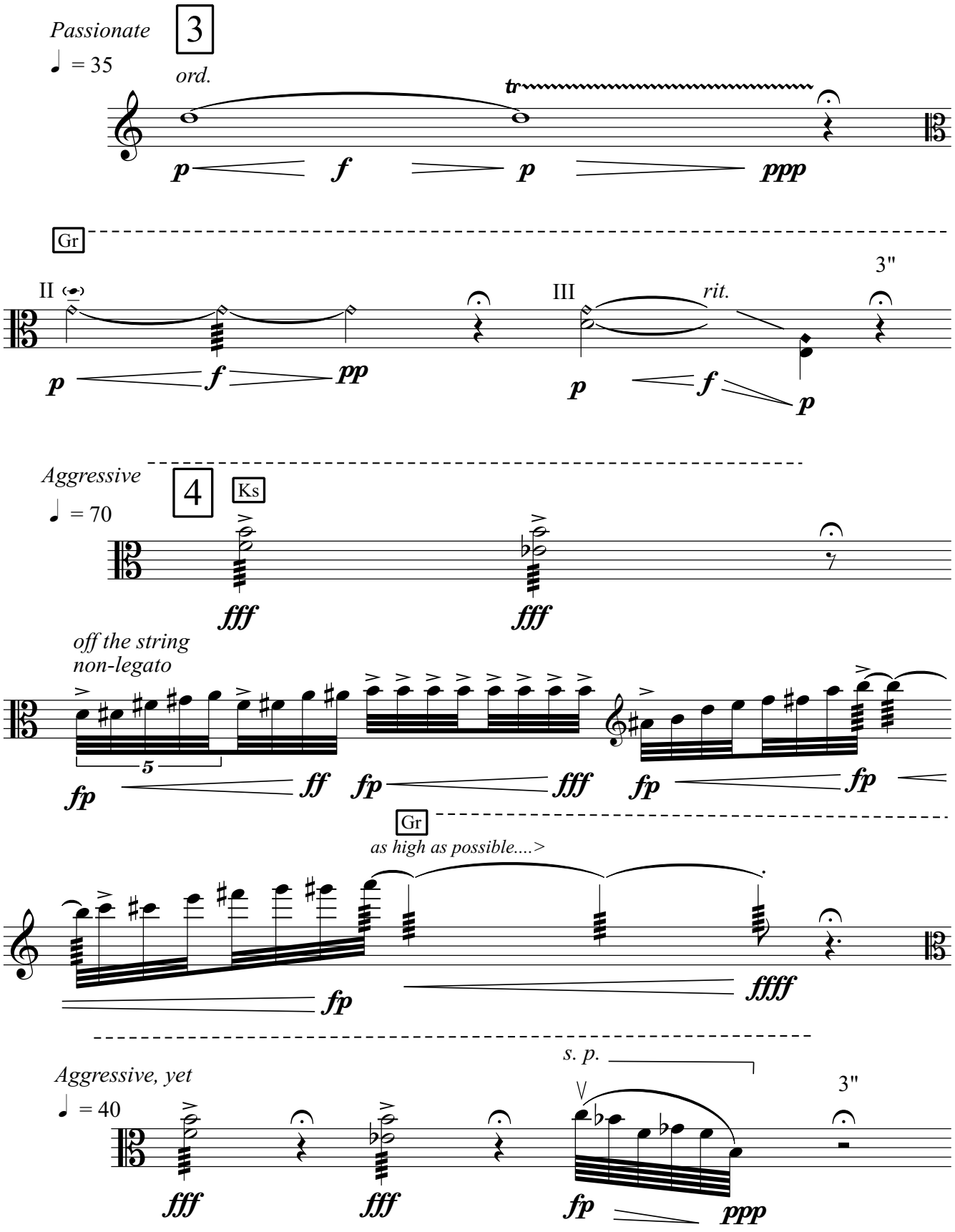
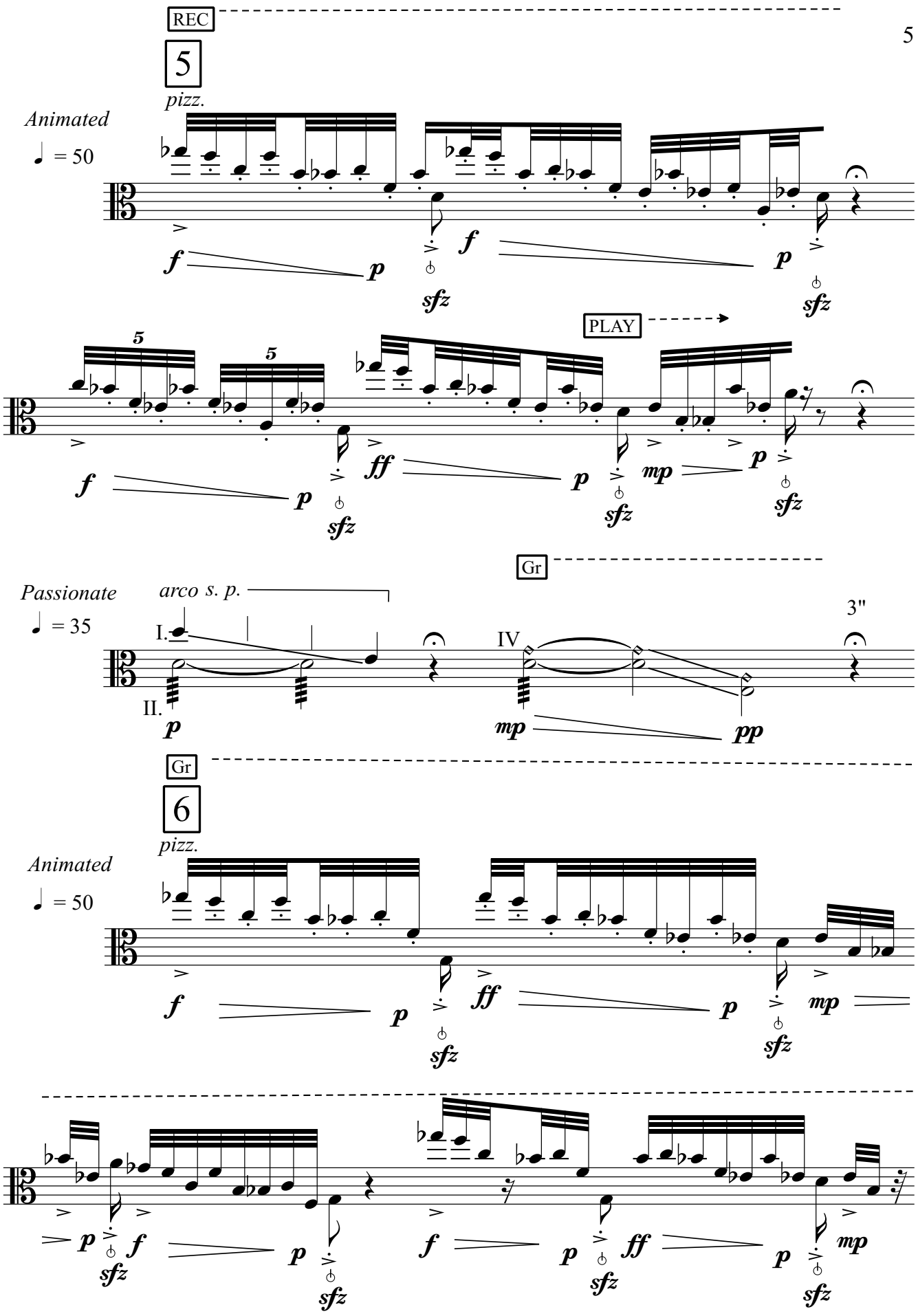
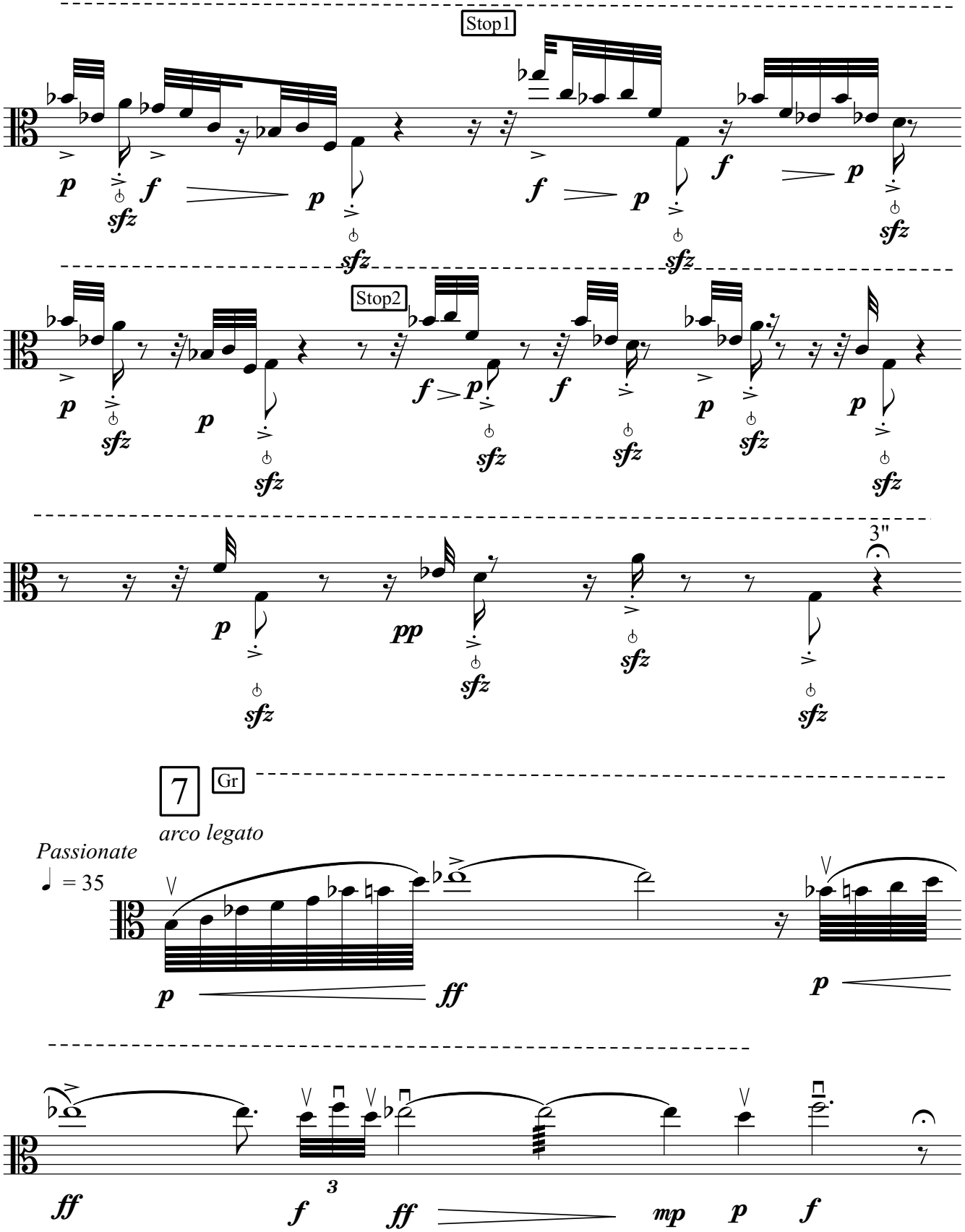
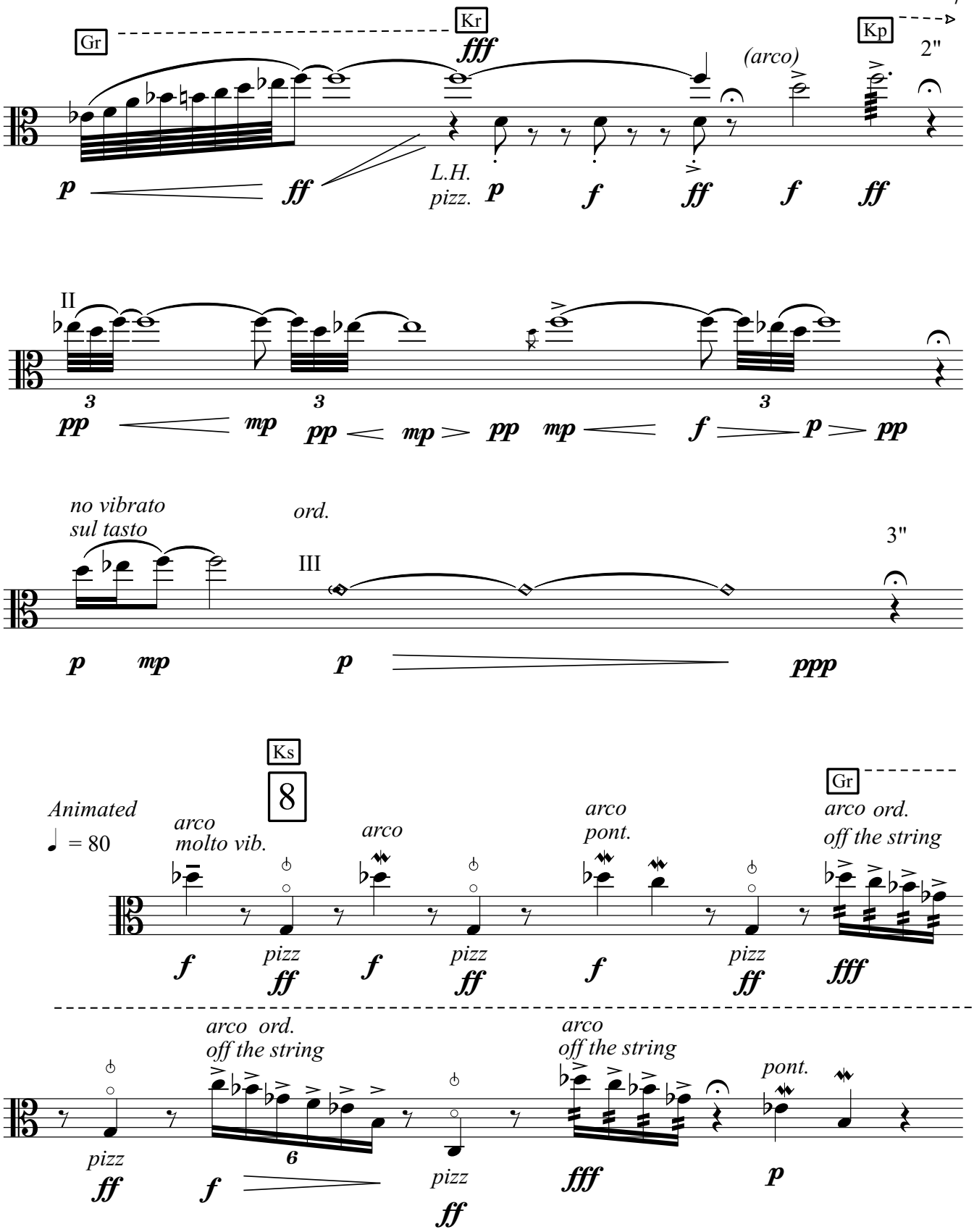
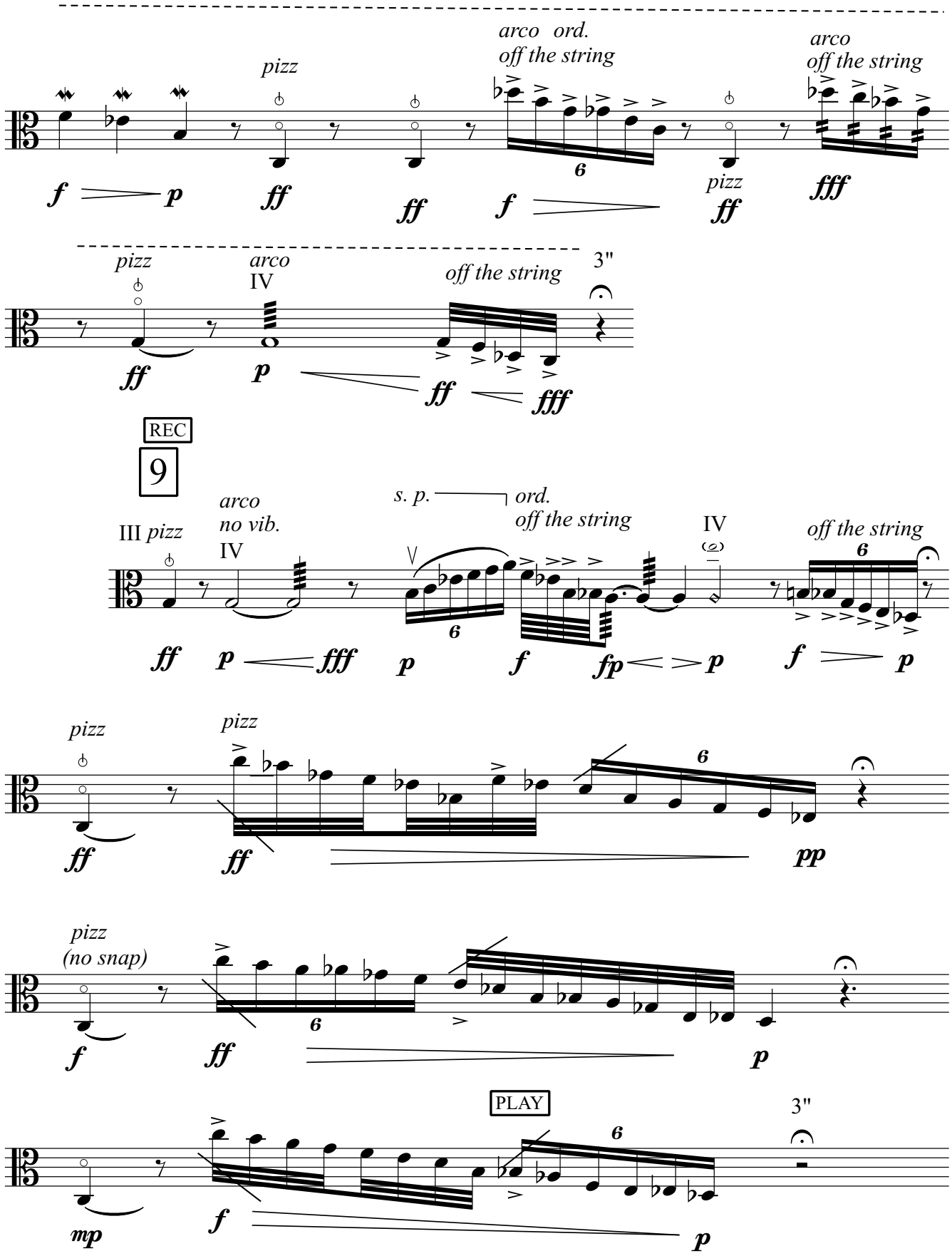
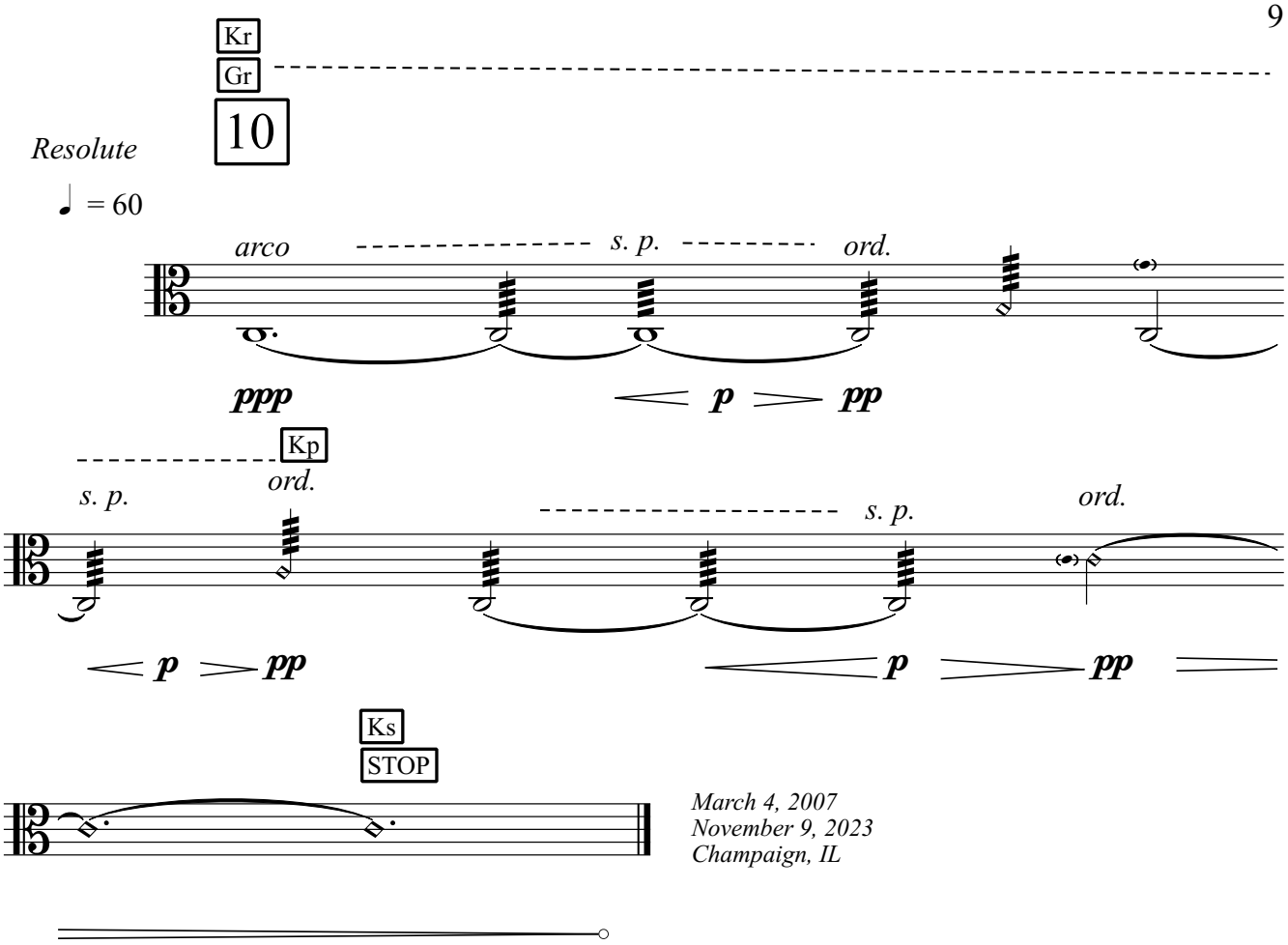

Passionate
3
= 35
ord.
tr
p
f
p
ppp
Gr
II
III
rit.
3"
p
f
pp
p
f
p
Aggressive
4
Ks
= 70
fff
fff
off the string
non-legato
5
fp
ff
fp
fff
fp
fp
Gr
as high as possible....>
fp
ffff
s. p.
Aggressive, yet
= 40
3"
fff
fff
fp
ppp


REC
5
pizz.
Animated
= 50
PLAY
Gr
Passionate
arco s. p.
= 35
I.
II.
IV
3"
Gr
6
pizz.
Animated
= 50


Stop1
Stop2
3"
7
Gr
arco legato
Passionate
♩ = 35


Gr
Kr
fff
Kp
2"
(arco)
p
ff
L.H.
pizz.
p
f
ff
f
ff
II
3
3
3
pp
mp
pp
mp
pp
mp
f
p
pp
no vibrato
sul tasto
ord.
III
3"
p
mp
p
ppp
Ks
8
Animated
♩ = 80
arco
molto vib.
arco
arco
pont.
Gr
arco ord.
off the string
f
pizz
ff
f
pizz
ff
f
pizz
ff
fff
arco ord.
off the string
arco
off the string
pont.
pizz
ff
f
6
pizz
ff
fff
p


pizz
arco ord.
off the string
arco
off the string
pizz
arco
IV
off the string
3"
REC
9
III pizz
arco
no vib.
IV
s. p.
ord.
off the string
IV
off the string
pizz
pizz
pizz
(no snap)
PLAY
3"



March 4, 2007
November 9, 2023
Champaign, IL