

Luis F. Laya

"ELEMENTS" Little String Quartet

I. Earth
II. Wind
III. Water
IV. Fire

(2019)

String Quartet

- Violin I
- Violin II
- Viola
- Violoncello

Approximate Length: 11'45" ca.

Level of Instrumental Difficulty: **Level A** (*Intermediate*)

"Work composed for the Composition Competition Piero Farulli, Music is a Gift to Share, third edition 2019"

Motivations and Didactic Goals

As a composer and music instructor, I have been witnessing what seems a reality in the music curriculum in general. There's a gap in the instruction among the common practice, music between XVII and XIX centuries circa, and the music that begins to arise from the early XX century. That "new music", not so new now, gradually was changing paradigms that open the gate to a universe of expanding possibilities in the music composition ground. That common practice, in fact, doesn't disappear at all, by the contrary, it begins a merging process almost at the same time modern resources were appearing; old and new practices made fusion, and provide today's composers with an immense - wide spectrum of sonorities. That gap I mentioned can be seen in almost all areas of music instruction, and chamber music repertoire is not the exception. 20th and 21st-century repertoire are usually treated as advanced and left it for the final years of practice in many conservatories and music faculties. In the string quartets repertoire, which concerns us directly at this time, we can observe this kind of breach in between the study of classic-romantics masterworks as Beethoven and Schubert among many others, and those works of their homonyms Ravel, Shostakovich, Bartók, Schöenberg and Lutoslawski, only for name those that come to my mind. I think is needed new works that cover the technique, structural, timbral and harmonic breaches at a level that allow young interpreters at the early stages of their instruction to begin to feel more comfortable with modern works.

This is exactly the spot where I believe that "ELEMENTS", the work that I present to you now, can contribute to the progressive filling of that gap. This string quartet, as the neo-classical work it is, combines the structure of classic-romantic four movements standard, with expanded tonal harmony, articulations, bowing techniques, and timbral resources more usually encountered in 20th-century works. In fact, "ELEMENTS" allows the young player to, for example, understand the sonata form in a much shorter work than in Beethoven's with sonorities commonly find in more modern works and even cinematic music as well.

In the same vein, the four movements, each one named as one of the natural elements in western-culture, were structured in the traditional way: I. "Earth", is sonata form developed with an expanded tonal plan inspired in Bartók's systems; II. "Wind", a simple ABA lied with a barely static approach; III. "Water", is the *scherzo*, with its traditional trio section; and last but not least, IV. "Fire" is developed in the Rondo form with its own expansions of the tonal plan.

Continuing with the didactic subject, in each movement, there are technical difficulties carefully treated to be taken as appropriate challenges for the intermediate level interpreters, without becoming threats to their development process. Playing techniques as *pizzicato quasi chitarra*, both natural and artificial harmonics, and multiple stops are presented in a context that permits achievement without raising too much the psychoanalyst's bill! As a matter of fact, the *pizzicati quasi chitarra* that begins the first movement are made using open strings only doing it far more easy to play in combination with the subsequent section.

The first movement is also presented as a musical journey through different textures; rhythm changes, using of Latin American rhythms, and even a *Fugato* in the development. All of this to help in the growth of the young player knowledge.

The second movement, on the other hand, is simpler in its approach as it is a study of harmonics playing. There are natural and artificial harmonics, as well as harmonics *glissando* throughout this movement that creates a minimalistic-static background for the expressive melodies. I was thinking of including this movement in the piece because, in my experience, harmonics playing techniques are frequently underdeveloped by young players.

The third movement, the traditional *scherzo*, is taken from the second without continuity solution and was wrote in a similar way to a baroque-suite dance. It was thought to serve as a practice of the *leggiere* bowing techniques for the style, but in a different harmonic context in wich, frequent changes of harmonic areas could present a challenge.

Last but not least the fourth movement, which was structured as a Rondo form, present various didactic challenges to the players. Among them the use of Bartók (slap) *pizzicato* and the recurrent fast repeated bow. This last serves as an emotional motor since it causes the sensation of very high difficulty, but as the pitch changes are not so fast it is not really so hard to play. In section B, we have the repeated bow but in a soft-*espressivo* context that adds a new dimension to the resource. In the end, C section presents a new variation of the main theme from the first movement, this time presented as a "Joropo", a very fast traditional musical form from Venezuela. And at the end of the Coda, we return to the harmonics remembering the second movement sonorities.

"I am the Earth
I am the Earth that receives the seed.
I am the kiss and the uterus,
I am the Earth and all the fruits.
I am the one who feeds and the one who is fed(...)"

"ELEMENTS"

I. Earth

Rolando Toro (1924 - 2010)

Luis F. Laya
(2019)

Violin I $\frac{3}{4}$ Allegro ♩ = 160

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

pizz. quasi chitarra
↑↓ sempre

mf

5

f ben marcato

Vln. I $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ 10 $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

sfz *p* *f* *sfz*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 1-10) is in 3/4 time with a tempo of Allegro (♩ = 160). It features Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. Violin I and II play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Viola and Violoncello play a similar pattern. Dynamics range from piano (p) to mezzo-forte (mf). Performance instructions include 'pizz. quasi chitarra' (pizzicato quasi chitarra) and '↑↓ sempre' (always up-bow/down-bow). A circled '5' indicates the end of the first system. The second system (measures 11-18) features Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The time signature changes to 4/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 3/4. Dynamics range from piano (p) to fortissimo (f) and sforzando (sfz). Performance instructions include 'ben marcato' (well marked) and '↑' (accents). A circled '10' indicates the end of the second system. The year '2019' is printed at the bottom center.

3/4 arco
p *leggiero* arco
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
p
mf
mf
p
fp
mf
p
fp
f *ben marcato*
p
mf

20
4/4 3/4 2/4 6/8 = 3/4
f
p
fp
f
p
fp
p
fp
p
fp
p
fp

al pont. 30

Vln. I *f* *pp* *p*

Vln. II *f* *pp* *mf*

Vla. *f* *mp* *p*

Vc. *f* *p* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *mf* *mp*

40 nat. 45 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

Vln. I *f* *ff*

Vln. II *mp* *f*

Vla. *mp* *f*

Vc. *f* *arco* *pizz.* *f* *mf*

4/4

50

Vln. I *mf dolce* *p* *mf* *f*

Vln. II *mf dolce* *p* *mp* *f*

Vla. *mp* arco *mf* *f*

Vc. *mp* *mf* *p* *mf* *f*

55

60

Vln. I *mf* *p* *mf*

Vln. II *mf* arco *p* *f con intensità*

Vla. *mp* *mf* *f con intensità*

Vc. *mp* *mp* *mf*

65

Vln. I *f con intensità*

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

70

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *pizz.* *mp*

Vla.

Vc.

pp *mf* *fpp* *f* *pp* *f* *fp*

al pont. *nat.* *al pont.*

arco *pizz.* *al pont.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *al pont.*

75 $\frac{3}{4}$ nat. 80 85

Vln. I *pp subito ff* *f*

Vln. II *pp subito ff* *f* al pont.

Vla. *pp subito ff* *f* al pont.

Vc. *pp subito ff* *f*

90 95

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Musical score for measures 100-105. The score is for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). Measure 100 is circled. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 at the end of measure 105. Dynamics include *ff*, *p*, *mf*, and *f*. There are various articulations such as accents and slurs.

Musical score for measures 110-115. The score is for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). Measure 110 is circled. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 at the start of measure 110, and back to 3/4 at the end of measure 115. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, *f*, *mf*, and *mp*. The Cello part in measure 115 is marked *pizz. (quasi chitarra)*.

Musical score for measures 115-120. The score is for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 at measure 116 and back to 3/4 at measure 118. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The dynamics are marked as *f*, *mf*, and *f*. The Viola part includes the instruction *f ben marcato*.

Musical score for measures 125-130. The score is for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The time signature is 3/4. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The dynamics are marked as *f ben marcato*, *pp*, and *p*. The Viola part includes the instruction *f*. The Violoncello part includes the instruction *arco*.

135 140

Vln. I *p* *mp*

Vln. II *mp* *mf*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *p* *mp*

145 150

Vln. I *mf* *f*

Vln. II *f*

Vla. *mf* *f*

Vc. *mf*

Musical score for measures 155-160. The score is arranged in four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. Measure 155 is circled. Dynamics include *f*, *ff*, and *ff ben marcato*. There are accents (^) and slurs over various notes. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Musical score for measures 165-170. The score is arranged in four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. Measure 165 is circled. Measure 170 is circled. Dynamics include *ff*, *fff ben marcato*, and *fff*. There are accents (^) and slurs over various notes. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Time signatures change to 4/4 and 3/4.

175

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p *pp* *mf* *mp*

pizz.

p *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

pizz.

p *mf* *p*

pizz.

p *mf* *mp*

180

185

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf *p* *mf* *mp* *mf* *p*

pizz.

arco

190 195

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

rall. 4/4 arco 200 A tempo 3/2 4/4

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf *p* *mp dolce* *mf* *mf dolce*

mf *mp dolce* *mf* *p*

mf *p dolce (arco)* *mf* *mf dolce*

mf *p* *mp dolce* *mf* *p*

205

210

Musical score for measures 205-210. The score is arranged in four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Measure 205 features a half note G4 in Vln. I, a quarter note G4 in Vln. II, a half note G3 in Vla., and a quarter note G2 in Vc. Measures 206-209 show a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in Vln. II and Vc., with Vln. I playing a melodic line. Measure 210 features a half note G4 in Vln. I, a quarter note G4 in Vln. II, a half note G3 in Vla., and a quarter note G2 in Vc. Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, *mf*, and *f*.

215

Musical score for measures 215-220. The score is arranged in four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Measure 215 features a half note G4 in Vln. I, a quarter note G4 in Vln. II, a half note G3 in Vla., and a quarter note G2 in Vc. Measures 216-220 show a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in Vln. II and Vc., with Vln. I playing a melodic line. Measure 220 features a half note G4 in Vln. I, a quarter note G4 in Vln. II, a half note G3 in Vla., and a quarter note G2 in Vc. Dynamics include *mf*, *pp*, and *mp*.

220

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *p* *mp*

Vc. *mp* *pizz.* *arco* *f*

225

Vln. I *mf* *mp* *p* *pp* *ppp*

Vln. II *mf* *mp* *p* *pp* *ppp*

Vla. *mf* *p* *mp* *pp*

Vc. *mf* *mp* *p* *pp* *pizz.* *arco*

molto rall.

230

Andante, ♩. = 84
molto accel.

235

Vivace, ♩. = 136

240

Vln. I *pp* *mf* *f*

Vln. II *pp* *mp* *mf* *f*

Vla. *pp* *mp* *f* *ff*

Vc. *pp* *mp* *f*

245

Vln. I *ff* *fff*

Vln. II *ff* *fff*

Vla. *fff*

Vc. *ff* *fff*

250

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p subito

fff

p subito

fff

p subito

fff

p subito

fff

4/4

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a string quartet, specifically measures 250 through 254. The score is written for four parts: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The time signature is 4/4. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first measure (250) is marked with a circled '250' and an accent (^) over the first note. The second measure (251) also has an accent (^) over the first note. The third measure (252) has an accent (^) over the first note. The fourth measure (253) has an accent (^) over the first note. The fifth measure (254) has an accent (^) over the first note. The dynamic marking *p subito* appears at the beginning of the fifth measure for all four parts. The dynamic marking *fff* appears at the beginning of the sixth measure for all four parts. The score ends with a double bar line at the end of the sixth measure. The time signature 4/4 is located at the top right of the page.

"I am the light wind that sustains the music;
 I'm breathing
 I am the wind sculptor of mountains.
 I am the hurricane that is born from the eye of chaos.
 I am the dream and the fantasy;
 I am the Angel.
 I am the breath of life."

Rolando Toro (1924 - 2010)

II. Wind

255 $\frac{4}{4}$ Adagio, ♩ = 78

Vln. I

con sord.
 sul tasto (quasi flautando)
pp molto espress.
ppp

Vln. II

con sord.
ppp

Vla.

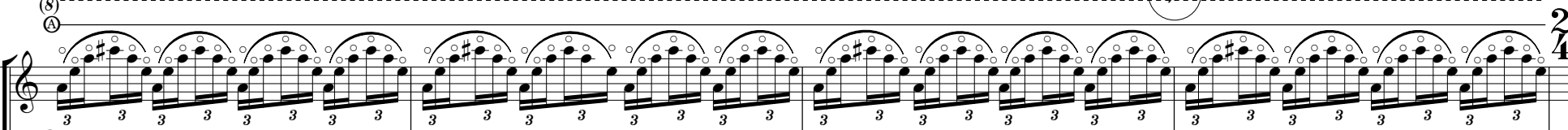
con sord.
 (arm. gliss)
ppp


Vc.


con sord.
 pizz. arco senza vibr.
ppp

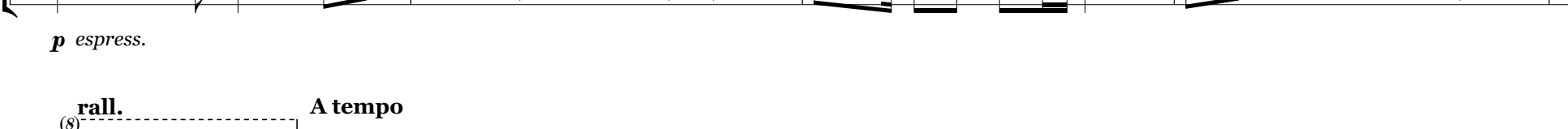
Musical score for measures 260-265. The score is for four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. Measure 260 is circled. Vln. I starts with a **pp** dynamic and a slur, then changes to **ppp**. Vln. II plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Vla. plays a complex texture with triplets, starting with **ppp** and *pizz. arco senza vibr.* and later adding *sul tasto*. Vc. plays a low register accompaniment with **ppp** dynamics.

Musical score for measures 265-270. The score is for four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. Measure 265 is circled. Vln. I continues with **ppp** dynamics and includes a section marked *8va* with a dashed line. Vln. II continues with its rhythmic pattern. Vla. continues with triplets, including *pizz. arco senza vibr.* and *pp* dynamics. Vc. continues with its accompaniment, including *senza sord.* and *pp* dynamics.

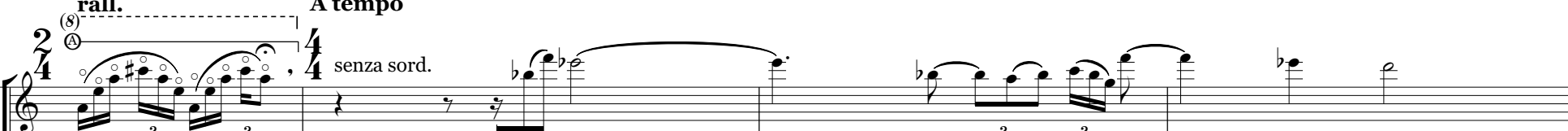
Vln. I 

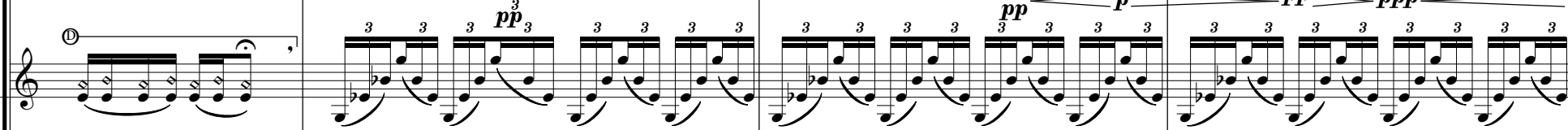
Vln. II 


Vla. 


Vc. 

p espress.

Vln. I 

Vln. II 

Vla. 

Vc. 

rall. *A tempo*
senza sord.
senza sord. sul tasto
pp *pp* *p* *pp* *ppp*
mp molto espress. *ppp* *mp*
pp

275

Vln. I *p* *ppp* *p* *mf*

Vln. II *ppp* *p* *mp*

Vla. *mp* *pp* *mp* *mf*

Vc. *ppp* *p* *mp*

Vln. I *f intensamente* *p* *molto rall.* *A tempo* *ppp* *pp*

Vln. II *f* *f* *ppp* *pp*

Vla. *f intensamente* *p* *pp* *p*

Vc. *f* *ppp* *pp* *p*

Attacca III subito

"I am the Water
I am thirst
I am the water of purification
And the fertilizing water.
I am the solvent spirit.
I am the woman and the tears;
I am freedom that flows.
I am the sea without shorelines."

III. Water

Rolando Toro (1924 - 2010)

The musical score is written for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The piece is in 3/8 time and begins with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 285 and ends at measure 295. The second system starts at measure 290 and ends at measure 295. Dynamic markings include *f*, *mf*, *f subito*, *p*, and *mp*. Performance instructions include *senza sord.* and *(spicc.)*. The score features various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.

300

nat.

Vln. I *p*

Vln. II *p* *mp* *mf* *p*

Vla. *p* *mp* *mf* *p*

Vc. *p* *mp* *mf* *p*

305

rall.

A tempo

310

rall.

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *mp* *mf* *f* *pizz.*

Vla. *mp* *mf* *f* *mf*

Vc. *mp* *mf* *f* *mf*

Trio**Meno mosso** (♩ = 44)

315

Vln. I *pp*

Vln. II *arco sul tasto*
mp dolce

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

mf dolce

p

pp

p

mp dolce

pp

mf

pp

320

325

Vln. I *mf espress.*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mp*

rall.

f

mf

ppp

ppp

pizz.

pp

ppp

ppp

A tempo sul pont.

330

Tempo primo (♩. = 52)
(spicc.)

335

Musical score for measures 330-335. The score is for four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'Tempo primo' with a quarter note equal to 52 beats per minute, and the articulation is 'spicc.'. Measure 330 features a piano (*p*) pizzicato (*pizz.*) in the cello and a piano (*p*) arco in the violins. Measure 331 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 332 is marked mezzo-forte (*mf*). Measure 333 is marked forte subito (*f subito*). Measure 334 is also marked forte subito (*f subito*). Measure 335 continues the forte subito (*f subito*) dynamic.

340

Musical score for measures 340-345. The score is for four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Measure 340 is marked piano (*p*). Measure 341 is marked mezzo-piano (*mp*). Measure 342 is marked piano (*p*). Measure 343 is marked mezzo-piano (*mp*). Measure 344 is marked mezzo-forte (*mf*). Measure 345 is marked mezzo-forte (*mf*). Measure 346 is marked mezzo-forte (*mf*). Measure 347 is marked mezzo-forte (*mf*). Measure 348 is marked mezzo-forte (*mf*).

345

350

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f *p* *f* *p* *pp* *p*

f *p* *f* *p* *pp* *p*

f *p* *f* *p* *pp* *p*

f *p* *f* *p* *pp* *p*

355

molto rall.
pizz. arco

5
4

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf *f* *ff* *f* *p* *ppp*

mf *f* *ff* *f* *p* *ppp*

mf *f* *ff* *mf* *p* *pp* *ppp*

mf *f* *ff* *mf* *p* *pp* *ppp*

mf *f* *ff* *mf* *p* *pp* *ppp*

mf *f* *ff* *mf* *p* *pp* *ppp*

"I am the Fire
 I am the fire that adheres.
 I am the hug and the bonfires;
 I am passion, love, and desire.
 I am the blood and the sun god;
 I am the light and the heat that is born in the gaze.
 I am feverish tongues that rise up.
 I am the burning"

IV. Fire

Rolando Toro (1924 - 2010)

Prestissimo, ♩ = 180

Violin I (Vln. I): *f* (pizz.) (arco) *f* *mf* *f*

Violin II (Vln. II): *f* (pizz.) (arco) *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

Viola (Vla.): *f marcato* (pizz.) arco (arco) *ff*

Violoncello (Vc.): *f marcato* arco (pizz.) (arco)

Measure numbers: 360, 365

30

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *f*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *ff*

4/4 5/4 (2+3) 4/4

370

rall.

Vln. I *pp* sul tasto

Vln. II *pp* sul tasto

Vla. *mp dolce* sul tasto

Vc. *mp dolce* sul tasto

4/4 3/2 4/4 3/2 4/4

375

380

rall.

385

4/4 *A tempo*

Vln. I *mp espress.*

Vln. II *mp espress.*

Vla. *p*

Vc. *p*

mf

f

mf

f

mp

f

mp

f

395

5/4 (2+3)

Vln. I *p*

Vln. II *p*

Vla. *p*

Vc. *p*

f

ff

f

ff

f

ff

ff

ff

400

Vln. I 405
 Vln. II poco rit.
 Vla. 4/4 accel.
 Vc. 6/8

Vln. I 410
 Vln. II 415
 Vla. Più mosso, ♩ = 204 (♩. = 136)
 Vc.

420

425

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f marcato

mf

ff

ff

arco

fp

f

arco

ffp

ff

f

ff

430

435

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

mf

f

ff

p

mf

f

ff

p

mf

f

ff

p

mf

f

ff

34

440

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

fff

fff

pizz. quasi chitarra
↑
sempre

pizz. quasi chitarra
↑
sempre

fff

fff

445

molto rall.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pp

p

arco

arco

pp

arm. gliss.

pp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

Adagio

450