2025

EX NIHILO

for Tenor Saxophone, Electric Guitar, Accordion, Tape

Felipe de Almeida Ribeiro

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

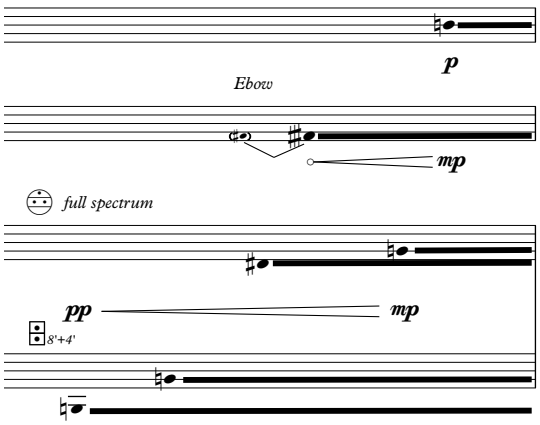
EX NIHILO was written for the Vértixe Sonora Ensemble, for tenor saxophone, electric guitar, accordion, and tape. Its title, a Latin expression meaning "from nothing," reflects the work's sound world: long, evolving textures, subtle pulsations, and harmonies that hover in stillness. The piece explores immersive sonic spaces where minimal gestures give rise to resonant, unfolding layers.

This an **Action Score**: the notation serves as a starting point to be explored creatively and actively by the performers. Many of the *smorzati*, *tremoli*, and dynamic fluctuations are written in simple rhythmic patterns, as these nuances depend on the acoustics and response of each instrument. That being said, I invite you—as performers—to interact with the materials so that the piece may truly emerge through your interpretation.

Balance: Tenor saxophone, electric guitar, and accordion differ greatly in timbre and projection. Balance may be challenging. For example, a low-pitched saxophone at piano may naturally dominate an amplified guitar or accordion. Performers should always listen and adjust. All dynamic markings indicate relative equality.

Mobile Sound (or suono mobile): continuously evolving in pitch, timbre, and/or dynamics; the sound should feel fluid, never static.

At **rehearsal mark #8, a spatial score** is used for durations. You should encage with the idea of "listen carefully and for a prolonged time".

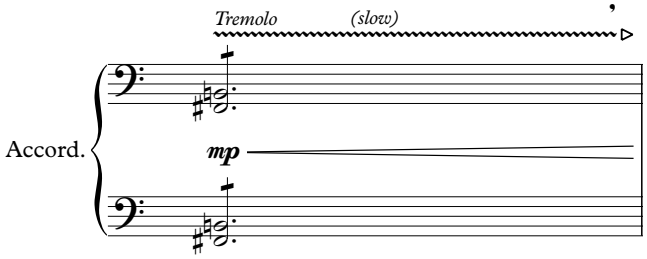


Fermata: short (⩓) and long (𝄐).

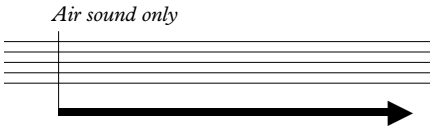
Microtone (descending): 𝄲𝄳𝄫𝄬𝄭 and (ascending): 𝄮𝄯𝄰𝄱𝄲

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCORDION

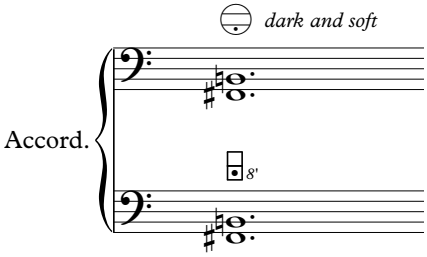
Tremolo: The tremolo effect is written with a wavy line, showing the duration of the effect. Once the line is ended, back to ordinario playing. Sometimes written with expression indications such as "gentle", "slow" etc.



Air sound:breath-like tone. No pitch.

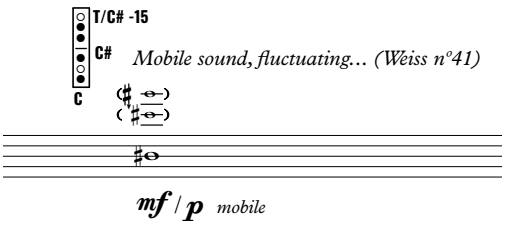


Register changes are based on "The Techniques of Accordion Playing" by Bettina Buchmann (Bärenreiter).



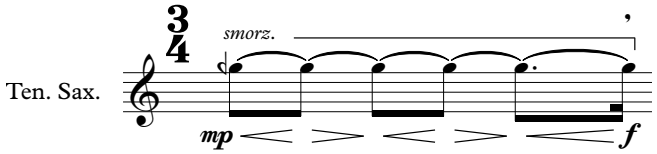
INSTRUCTIONS FOR SAXOPHONE

Multiphonics: In this piece I use the multiphonics charts from "The Techniques of Saxophone Playing" by Marcus Weiss (Bärenreiter).



Slap tongue: a percussive technique where the tongue sharply strikes the reed to produce a short, popping sound. Notated with "X" notehead.

Smorzato: although rhythm is notated, it is meant to sound as a continous sound, with slight articulations. Smorzato are always irregular, so feel free to improvise with the given rhythm.



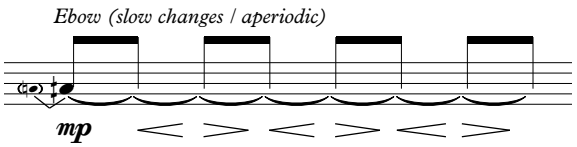
Bisbligliando: is a technique that produces a trembling, fluctuating sound by rapidly alternating between two fingerings for the same or nearly the same pitch.It creates a shimmering or wavering timbre rather than a clear pitch change.

Frullato (or flutter tongue): is a technique where the player rolls the tip of the tongue (like trilling an "r") or the back of the throat while blowing. It produces a rough, vibrating sound, adding intensity or texture to the tone.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELECTRIC GUITAR

Electric Guitar: any type. **Amplifier:** any type may be used, with slight saturation (tube/valve amps are preferable) while maintaining a generally clean sound. Use reverb only as needed to blend with the hall and the trio's natural acoustics and resonance.

Ebow: a handheld electronic device that uses a magnetic field to vibrate the guitar string continuously, producing a sustained, bow-like tone. It allows smooth dynamic shaping and infinite sustain without the use of a plectrum. Ebow fluctuations may be combined with volume pedal control.

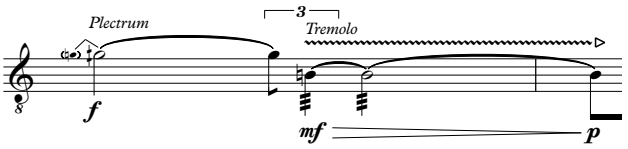


Ferrous: a magnetic sustainer for electric guitar, designed by Landscape. It transforms the strings into a feedback instrument, allowing continuous tones and rich harmonic resonance. Ideal for exploring sustained textures and subtle timbral shifts.

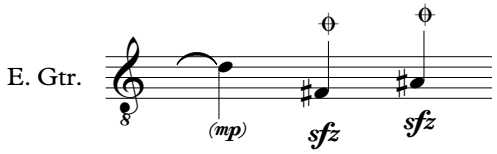
Volume pedal: there is no specific notation for this effect, as it is already implied within the notated dynamics. For instance, a *dal niente* crescendo may be achieved with the use of the volume pedal. Certain ebow dynamic fluctuations, however, could be produced solely by the ebow itself, not necessarily in combination with the volume pedal.

Plectrum is indicated when *ordinario* electric guitar playing is required. It may also be played with fingers, at the performer's discretion.

Tremolo pedal: if possible, use one with *tap tempo* or another way to adjust the rate during performance. The tremolo effect is indicated by a wavy line, showing its duration. When the line ends, return to *ordinario* playing. Traditional tremolo markings indicate the intended rate, but the actual speed should be chosen by the performer in dialogue with the trio's overall sonority.



Palm Mute ⊖: a guitar technique where the side of the picking hand lightly rests on the strings near the bridge, producing a dampened, percussive sound.



Bend: a guitar technique where a string is pushed or pulled to raise its pitch. Pre-bend is the starting note for bending, but not to be heard; it is notated in parenthesis.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELECTRONICS

If performing **without electronics**, ignore the corresponding markings in the score and play attacca between sections.

If performing **with electronics**, ensure a balanced relationship between the tape, the trio, and the venue's acoustics – the tape should never overpower the ensemble. It is recommended to have a dedicated electronic musician operate the part, as two tasks are required: triggering specific files at designated moments and controlling the overall intensity. The performer may use a mixing desk or faders to achieve greater control over sound diffusion. Small loudspeakers are preferred and should be placed close to the trio to achieve a more natural blend between acoustic and electronic sounds.

A Max patch is available if needed:

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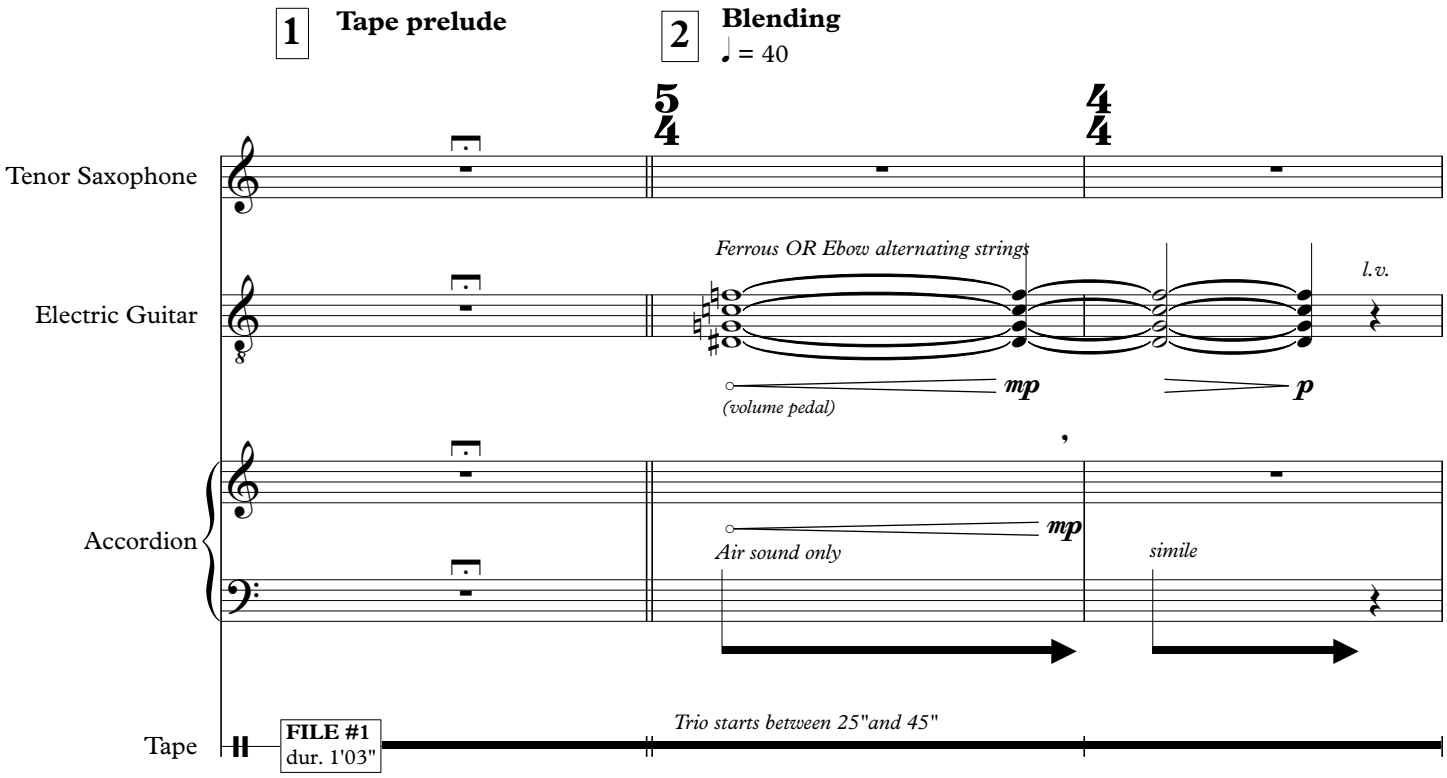
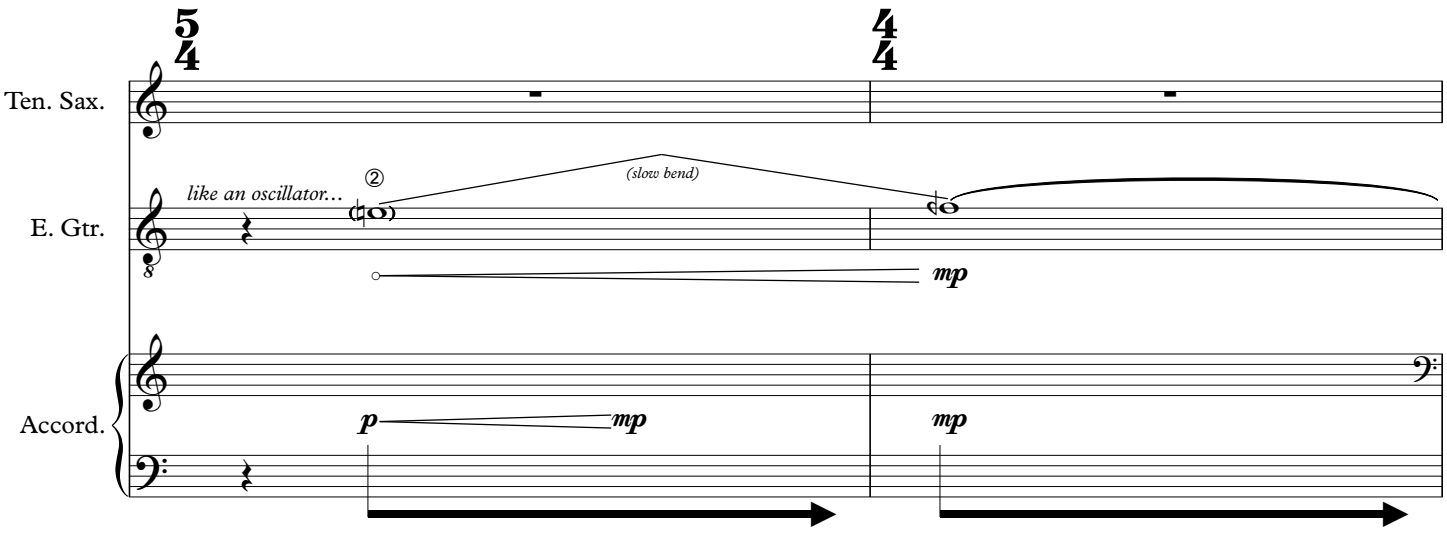
written for Vértixe Sonora ensemble

DE ALMEIDA RIBEIRO





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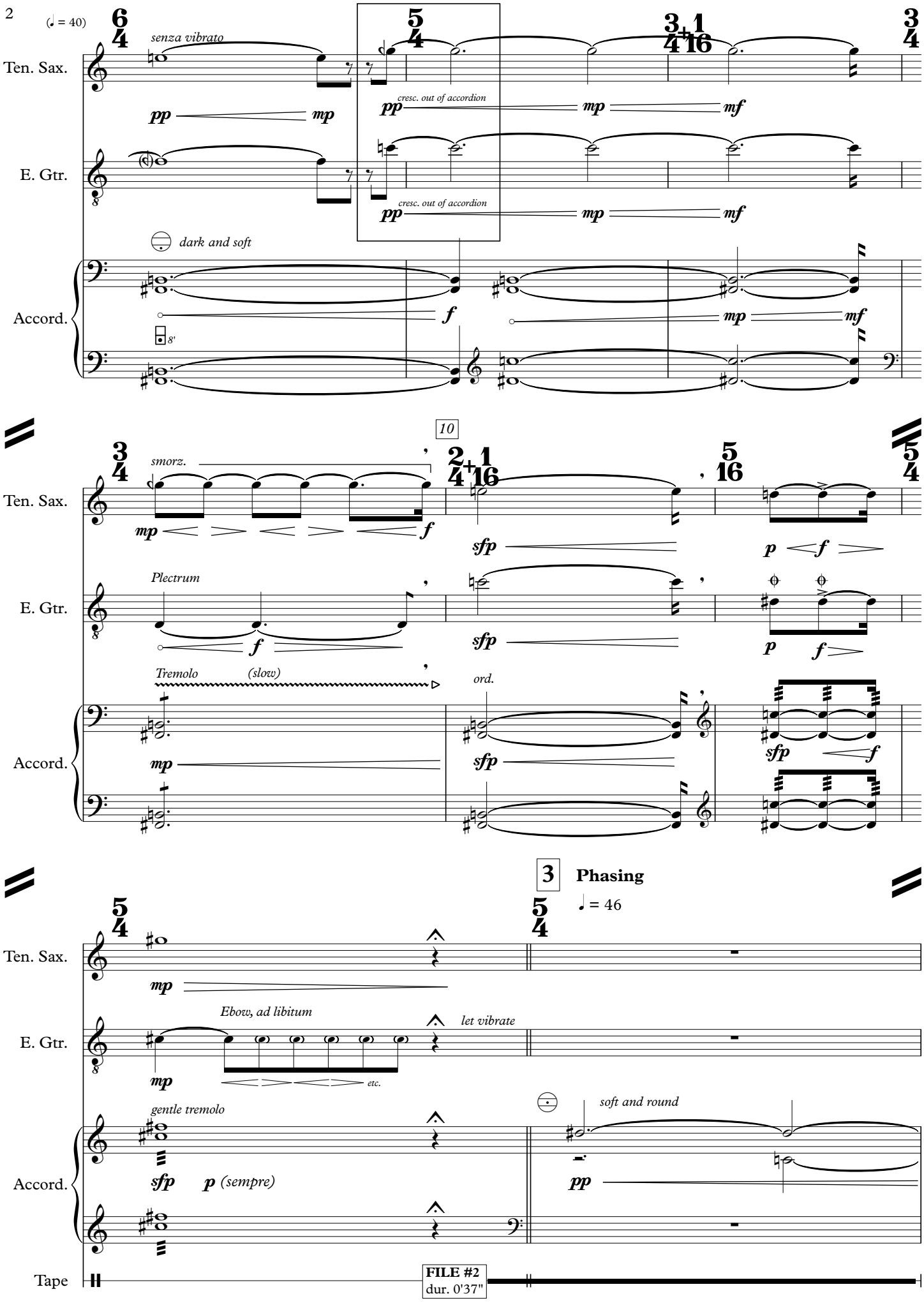
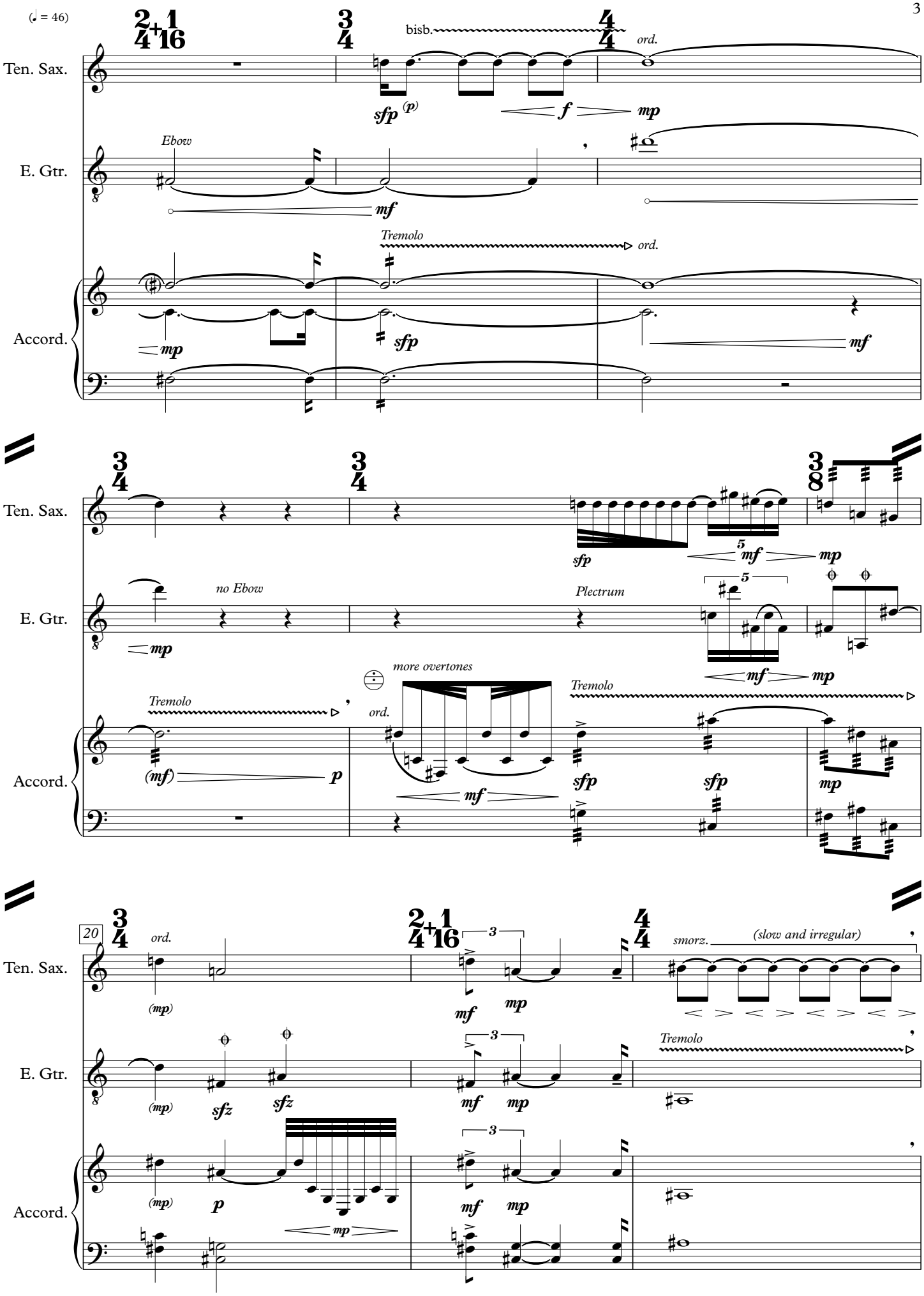
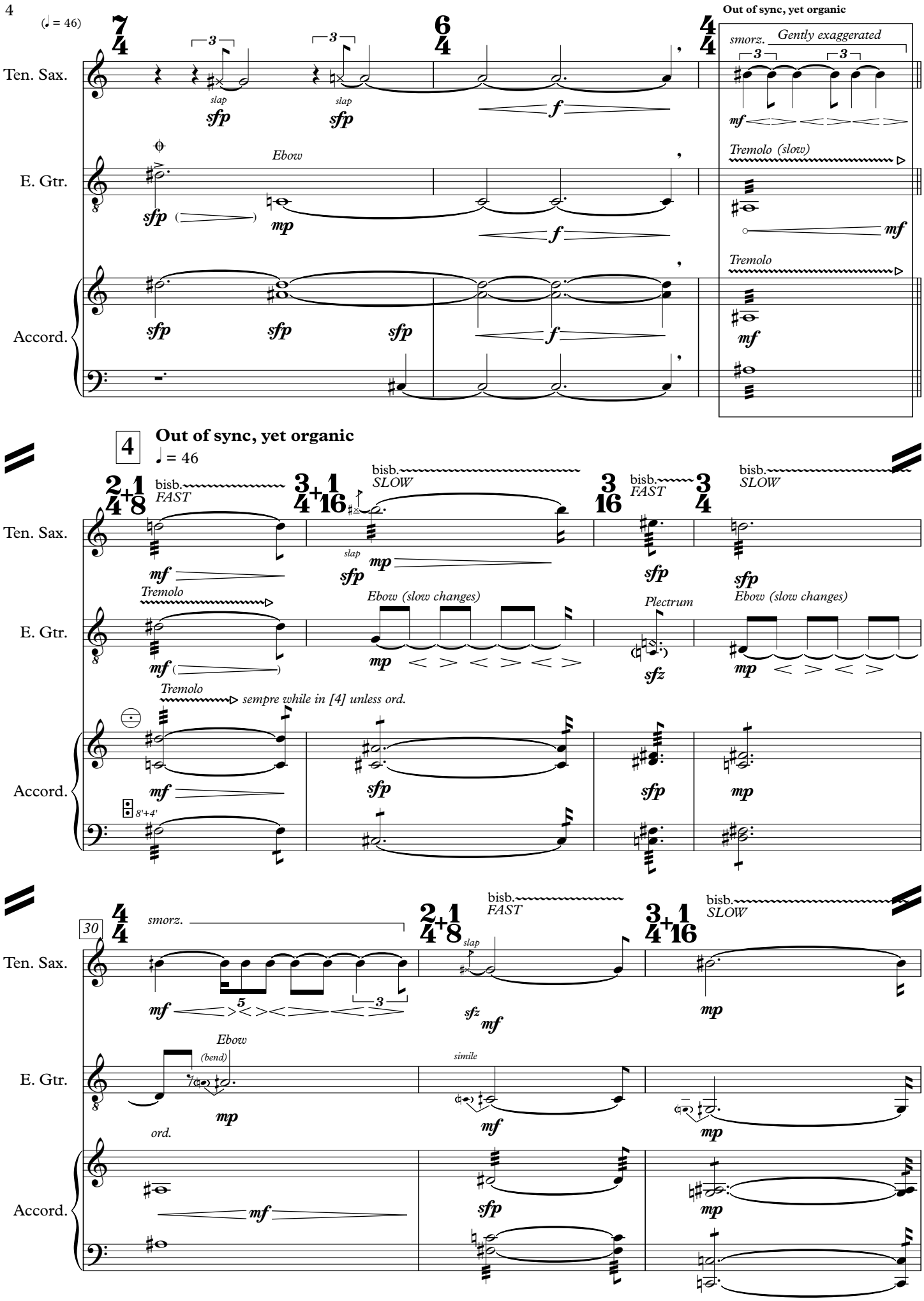
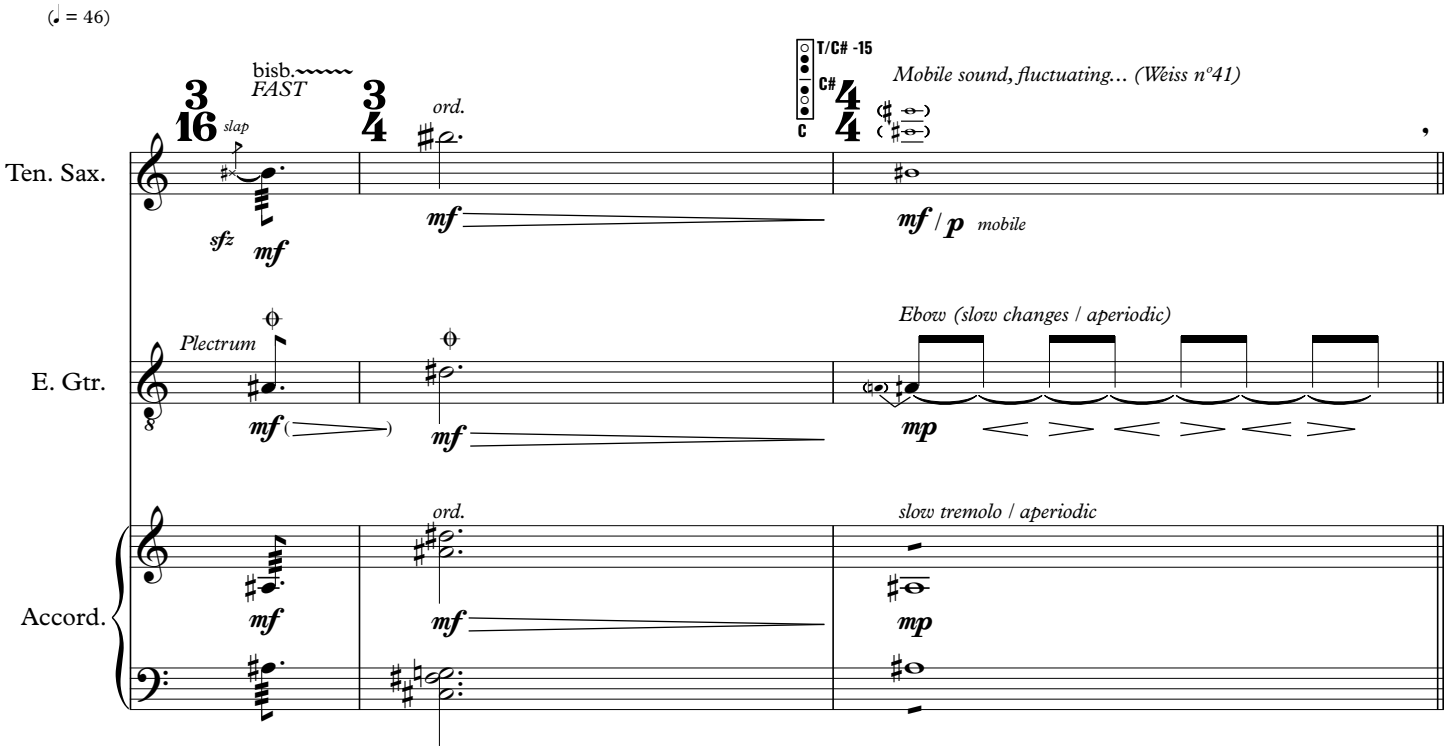
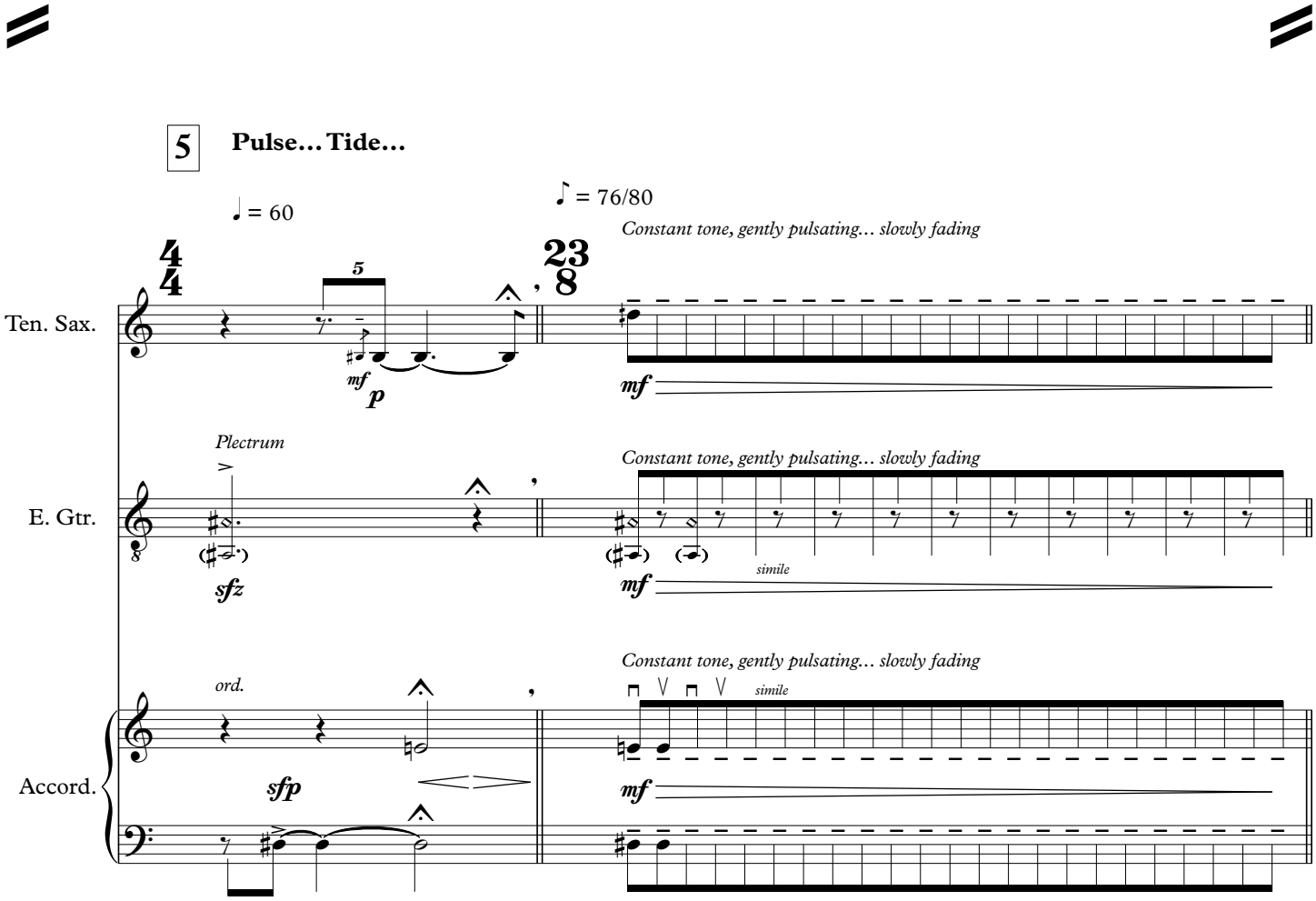
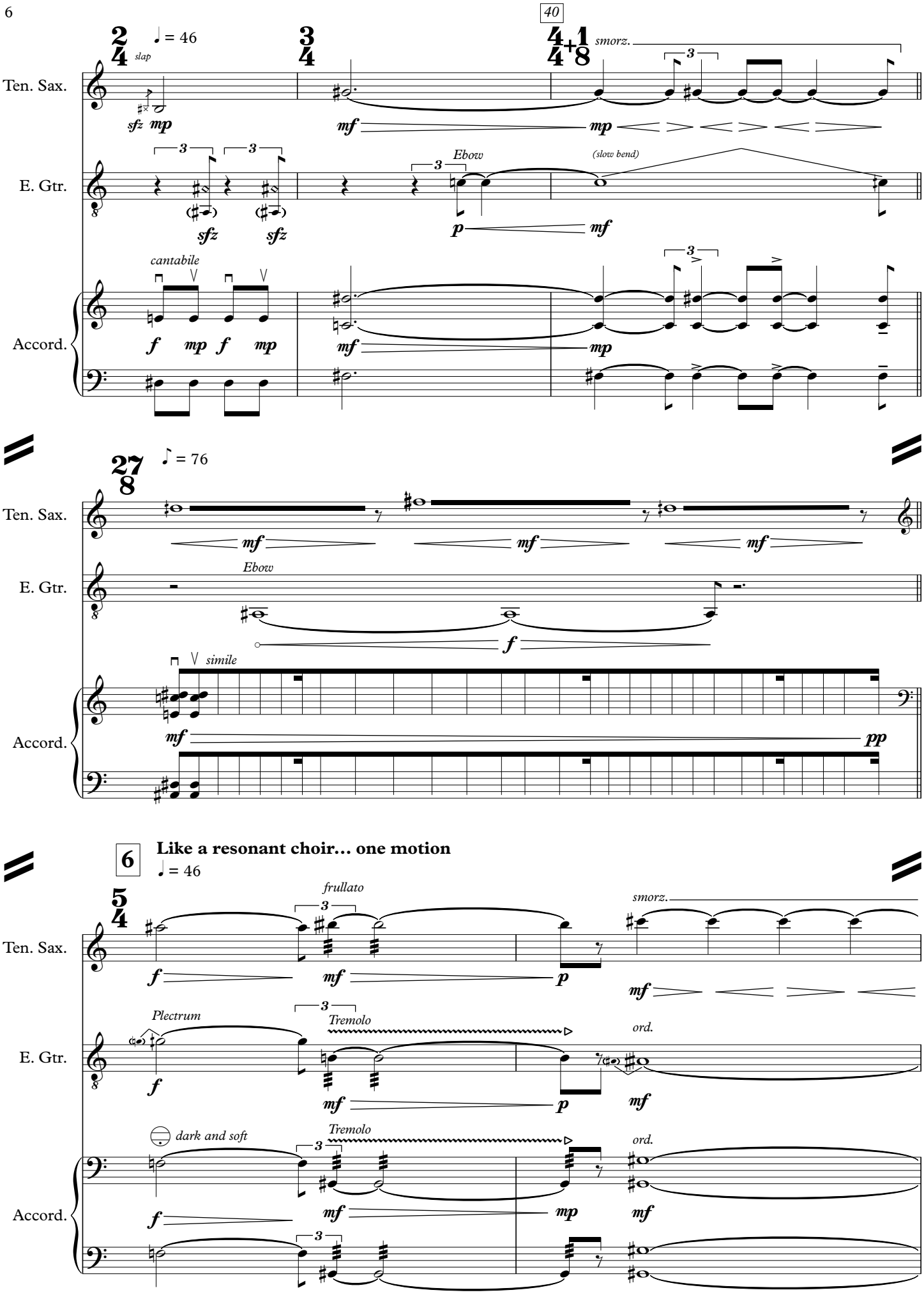

(♩ = 40)
Ten. Sax.
senza vibrato
pp
mp
cresc. out of accordion
pp
mp
mf
E. Gtr.
cresc. out of accordion
pp
mp
mf
dark and soft
Accord.
f
mp
mf
8'
10
smorz.
mp
f
sfp
p
f
Plectrum
f
sfp
p
f
Tremolo
(slow)
ord.
mp
sfp
sfp
f
3
Phasing
♩ = 46
mp
Ebow, ad libitum
let vibrate
mp
etc.
gentle tremolo
soft and round
sfp
p (sempre)
pp
Tape
FILE #2
dur. 0'37"

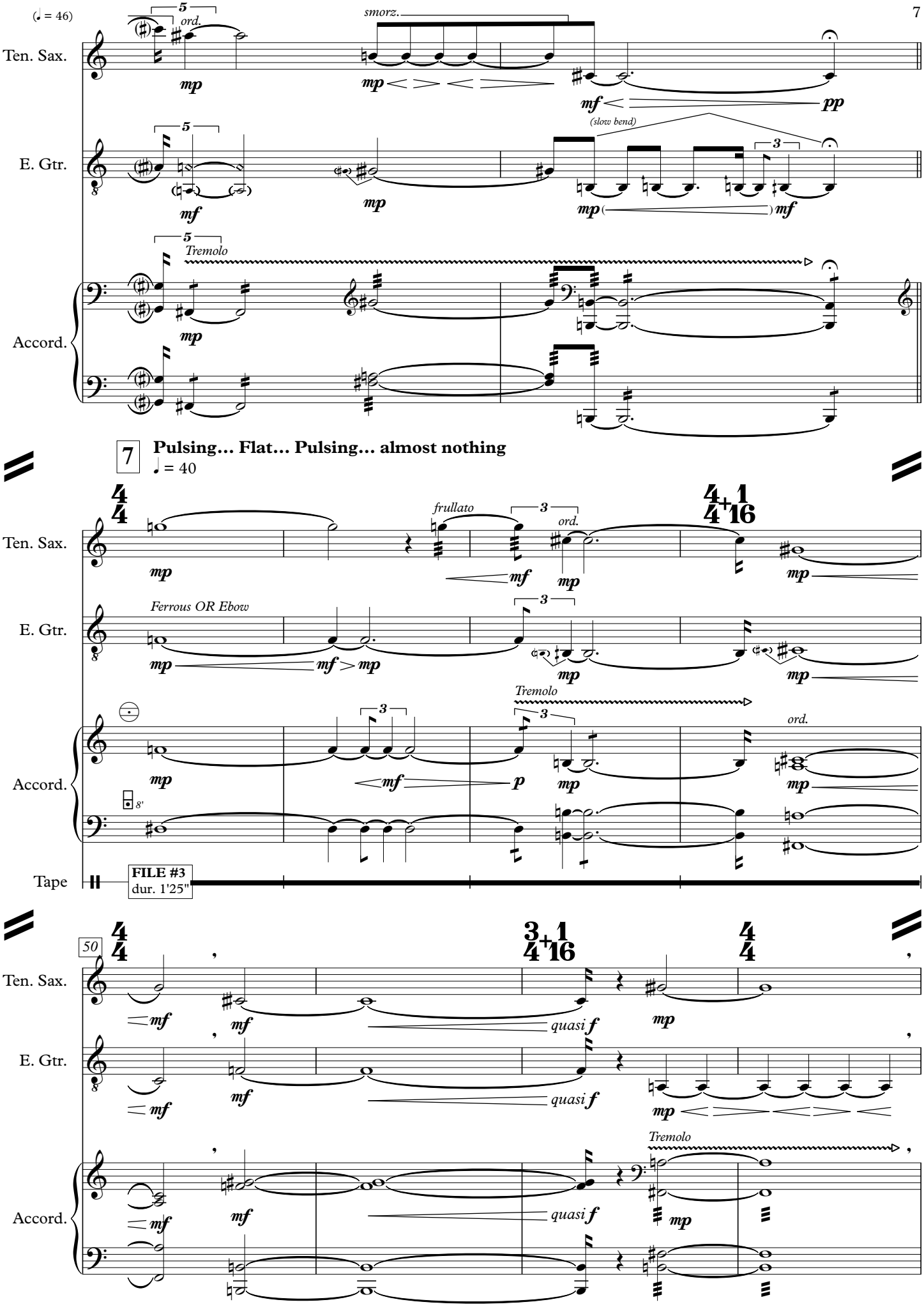

(♩ = 46)
Ten. Sax.
E. Gtr.
Accord.
bisb.
ord.
Ebow
Tremolo
no Ebow
Plectrum
more overtones
smorz.
(slow and irregular)
20

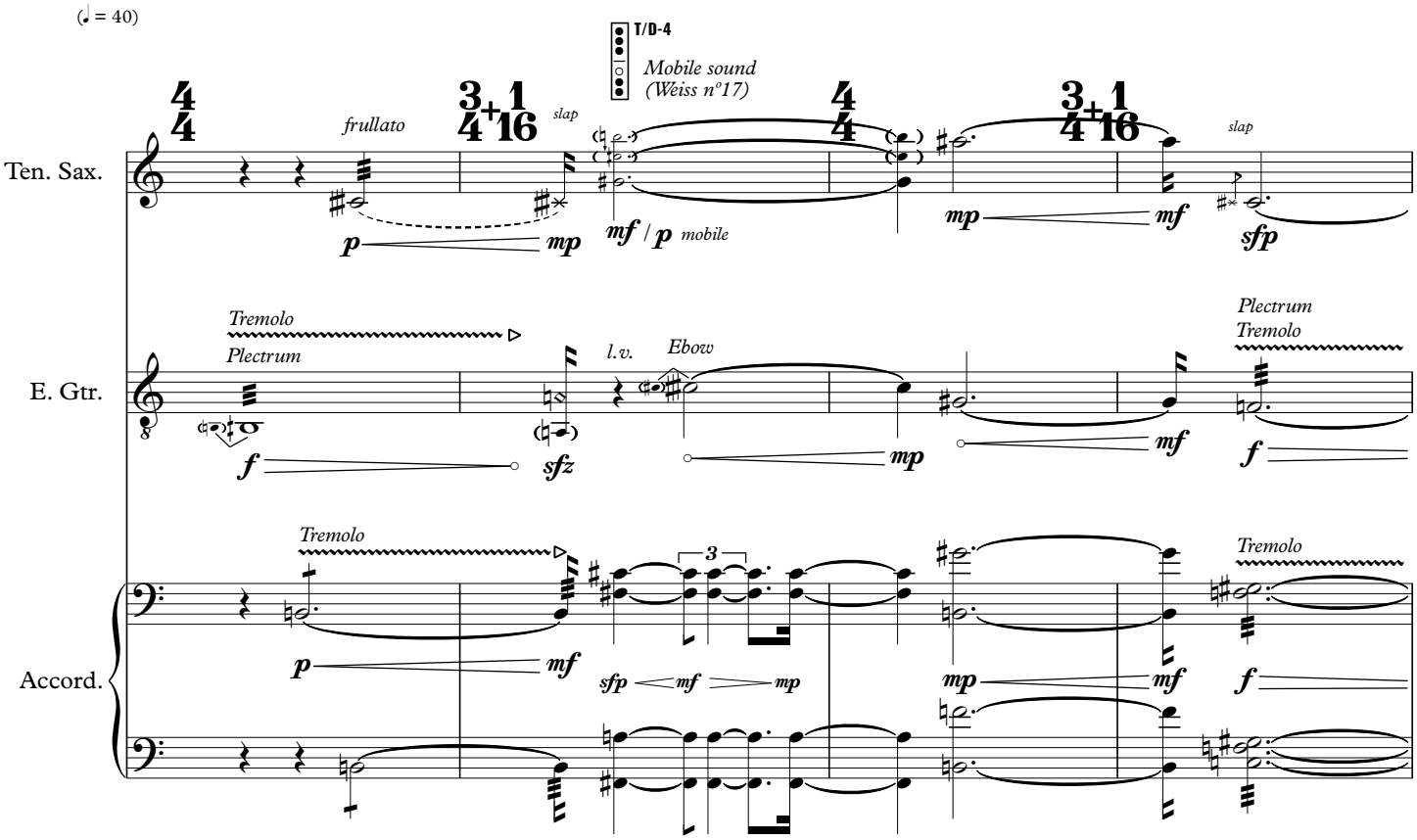

(♩ = 46)
Out of sync, yet organic
Ten. Sax.
E. Gtr.
Accord.
smorz.
Gently exaggerated
Ebow
Tremolo (slow)
Tremolo
4
Out of sync, yet organic
♩ = 46
bisb.
FAST
SLOW
slap
Tremolo
Ebow (slow changes)
Plectrum
sempre while in [4] unless ord.
8'+4'
30
(bend)
simile
ord.

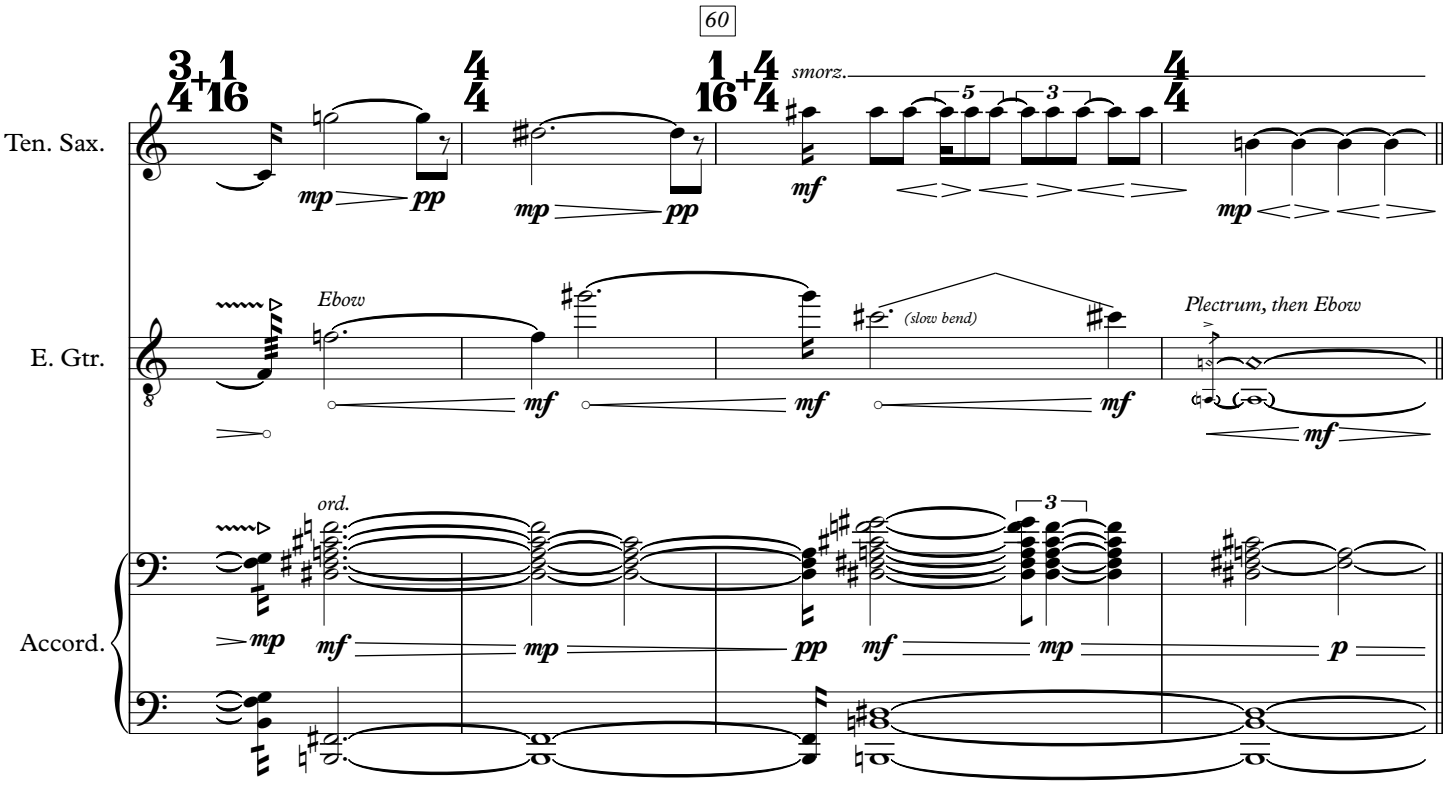
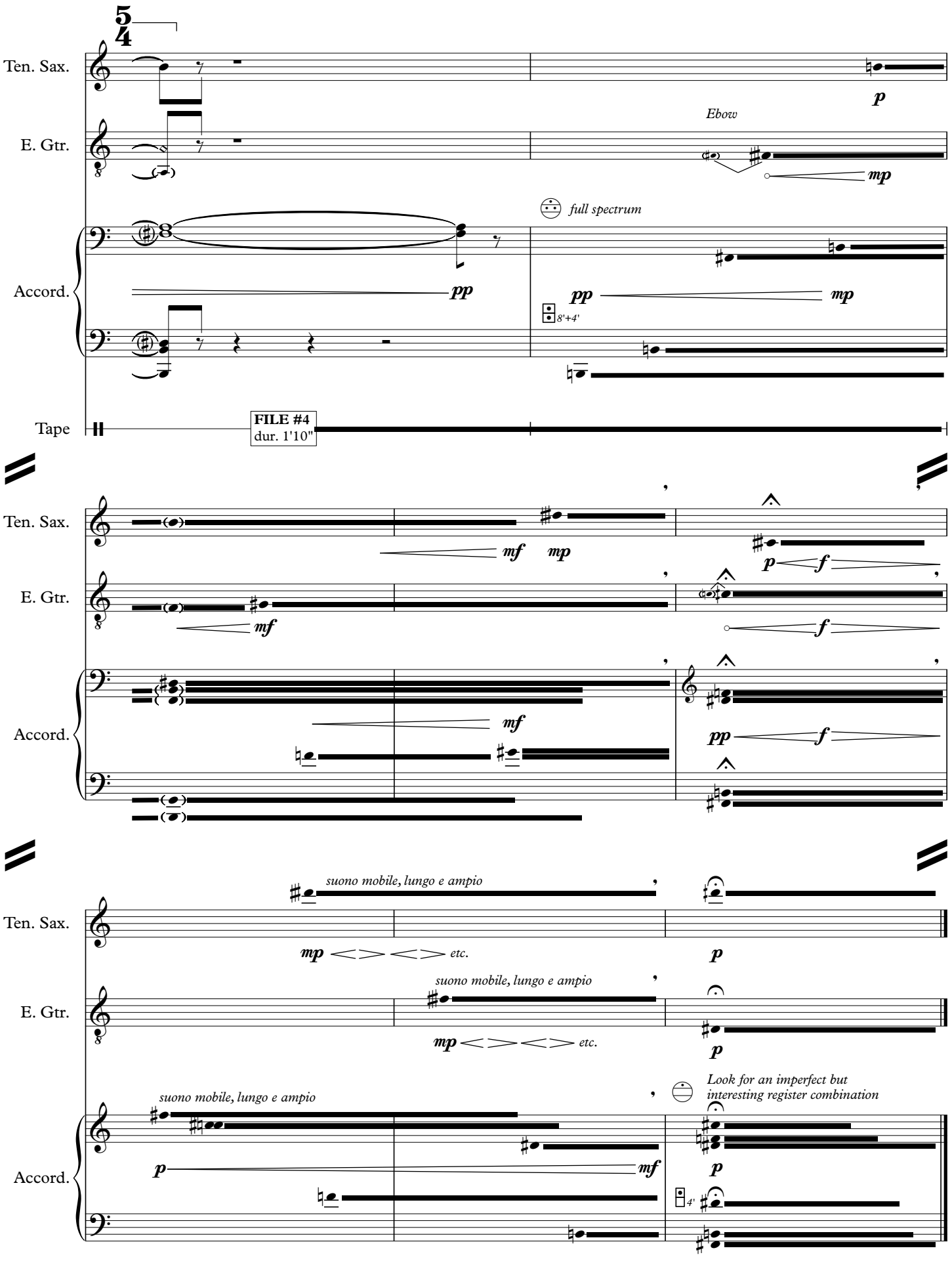

(♩ = 46)
bisb.
FAST
slap
ord.
T/C# -15
C#
Mobile sound, fluctuating... (Weiss nº41)
Ten. Sax.
sfz
mf
mf / p
mobile
Plectrum
Ebow (slow changes / aperiodic)
E. Gtr.
mp
ord.
slow tremolo / aperiodic
Accord.


5
Pulse... Tide...
♩ = 60
♪ = 76/80
Constant tone, gently pulsating... slowly fading
Ten. Sax.
Plectrum
E. Gtr.
simile
ord.
sfp
Accord.


40
2/4 ♩ = 46
slap
3/4
4/4+1/8
smorz.
Ten. Sax.
sfz mp
mf
mp
E. Gtr.
Ebow
(slow bend)
sfz sfz
p
mf
Accord.
cantabile
f mp f mp
mf
mp
27/8 ♪ = 76
Ten. Sax.
mf mf mf
E. Gtr.
Ebow
f
simile
Accord.
mf
pp
6
Like a resonant choir… one motion
♩ = 46
5/4
frullato
smorz.
Ten. Sax.
f
mf
p
mf
Plectrum
Tremolo
ord.
E. Gtr.
f
mf
p
mf
dark and soft
Tremolo
ord.
Accord.
f
mf
mp
mf


(♩ = 46)
Ten. Sax.
E. Gtr.
Accord.
ord.
smorz.
(slow bend)
Tremolo
7
Pulsing… Flat… Pulsing… almost nothing
♩ = 40
frullato
Ferrous OR Ebow
Tape
FILE #3
dur. 1'25"
50
quasi f


(♩ = 40)
T/D-4
Mobile sound
(Weiss n°17)
Ten. Sax.
frullato
slap
mf / p mobile
slap
E. Gtr.
Tremolo
Plectrum
l.v.
Ebow
Plectrum
Tremolo
Accord.
Tremolo
sfp mf mp
Tremolo


60
Ten. Sax.
smorz.
E. Gtr.
Ebow
(slow bend)
Plectrum, then Ebow
Accord.
ord.

8 **Listen carefully and for a prolonged time … ad libitum**
♩ = 40