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Isola

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Isola

for flute/a.fl and piano
2019

Dur c. 10'30”

John McLachlan

The piece has three movements running attacca.

They are:

I: Isola	*(flute+piano)*
II: Chiuso per restauri	*(alto flute+piano)*
III: First	*(flute+piano)*

Isola has two very different sections, which will make the listener feel that maybe there are four movements.

There are 3 poems which informed this piece, but they are not *in* the piece.

Isola refers to Oscar Wilde's poem *Requiescat*, which, it was recently realised, is about his sister Isola Wilde, who died tragically at the age of ten from a fever (probably meningitis). Wilde, 12 at the time, seemed to blame himself for her death and stood over her grave in Edgeworthstown for prolonged periods as a boy. I found the idea of Wilde's inner torment utterly transfixing. The music perhaps gives the atmosphere of their joyful play together followed by her absence.

The second poem is Macdara Woods' *Sons Are Older At The Speed Of Light*, a superb reflection on his father and the process of ageing, and specifically the idea of repair and restoration of the body to delay the inevitable. As he tours the earthquake-raveaged town of Nocera Umbra in 2014 he sees the sign *chiuso per restauri* everywhere: closed for repairs.

The third poem is Leland Bardwell's *First* in which a young girl takes her dying pet to a shed, 'hold death aside, like the curtain in a theatre'. It is also about memory and how the greatest memories are laid down in youth. 'But how can one forget what was one's first. First anything, first love, first loss, first kiss'. The music here only reflects on happy memories.

PERFORMER note

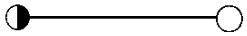
It should be possible to have no real breaks between the sections and the movements. Try to establish a mood of detachment and absence in Isola Section 2 (pp 8-9). You can add to the material if necessary by improvising further to extend a system to its duration. The pitches are fixed unless stated otherwise. A list of special notations and techniques follows.

Special notations / techniques

Flute

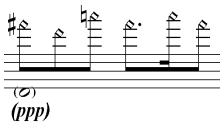
1. Tongue pizzicato:

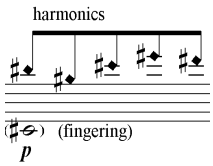
2. Half air sound: full air (white noise): normal tone: example:

2a. Changing from half air to very breathy (never lose sense of pitch completely): 

3. fluttertongue under this symbol: 4. Key click: 5. hollow tone (pure but empty):

6. singing while playing: lower note sung, upper note played: 7. shaped pitch bend:

8. Whistle tones with the fingered note in brackets below. Actual pitches are ad lib: 

9. Harmonics, also free in pitch, with fingered note: 

10. Indeterminate silences between events; (a) long: and (b) shorter:

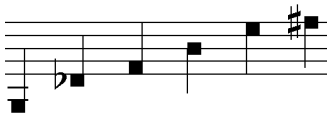
11. In the last movement this can mean stamp or tap a foot:

Piano

Equipment: blu-tac, plectrum, bank card(s), wool/string, a pencil with eraser attached

Note that before the piece begins all the muted notes are prepared and the other equipment is nearby on a chair or table. Then before the last 2 movements all the blu-tac and objects must be away from the piano and the desk restored without interrupting the attacca quilaity of the flow of the piece.

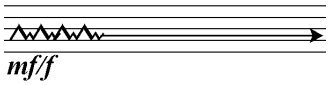
1. Muted tones (blu-tac is placed on strings near nut or bridge):

--The full set to prepare in this way are: 

2. knocking on the wood of the piano anywhere:

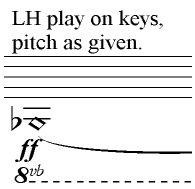
3. Inside the piano, rapidly scrape low wound strings with plectrum or plastic card (pitch is ad lib):

4. Using a bank card, rub along unwound strings to roduce an erratic squeal:

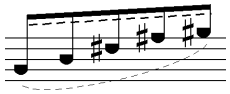


5. Indeterminate silences between events; (a) long: and (b) shorter:

6. Pitch fixed, play with LH the given pitch on the keys, while RH inside piano produces a rich harmonic near the dampers. This RH position must be prepared in advance and marked on string with blu-tac or a loop of wool/string:

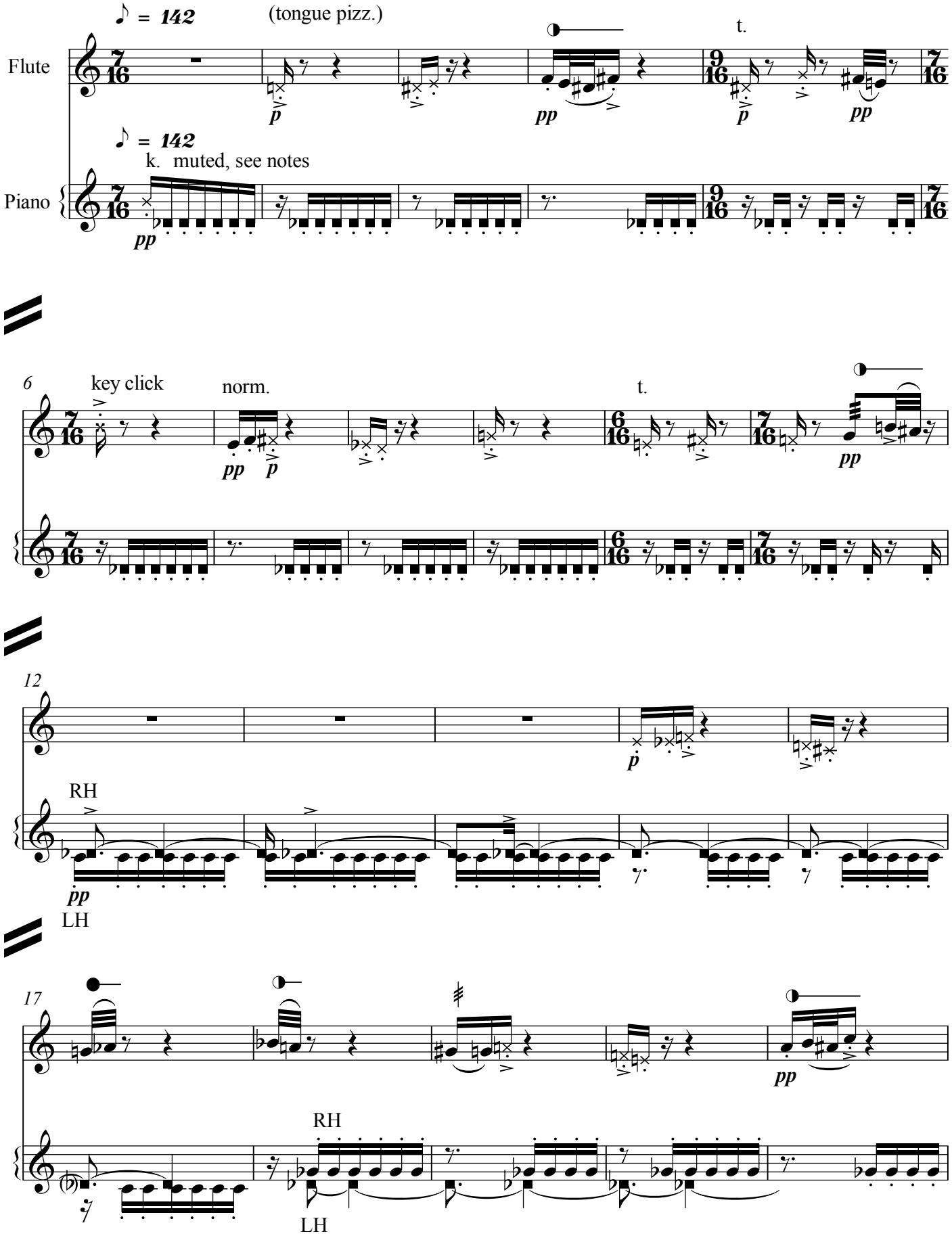


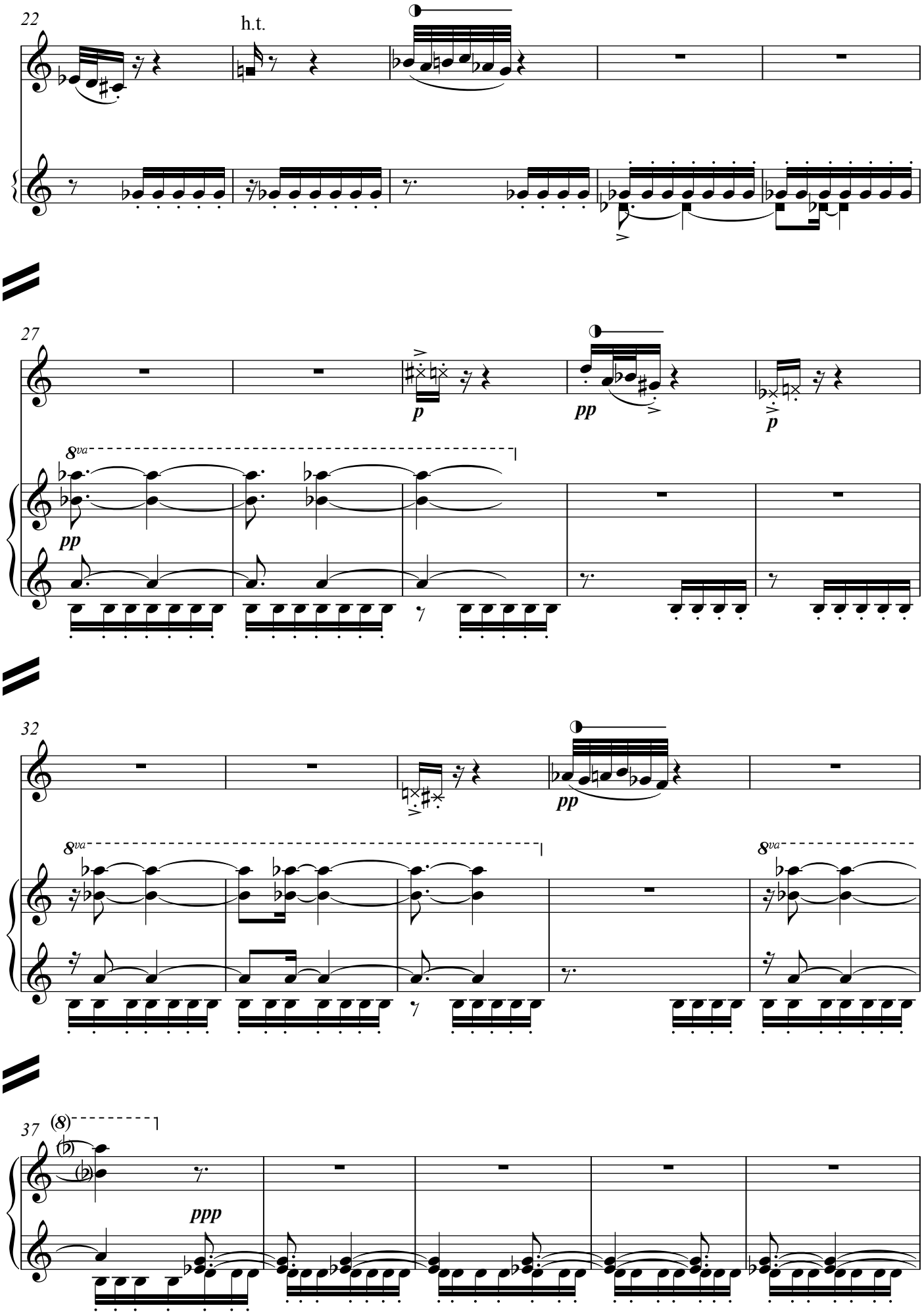
7. With a pencil that has an eraser attached (of same diameter as pencil—not any other kind), bounce along the unwound mid range strings to produce a random soft arpeggio:

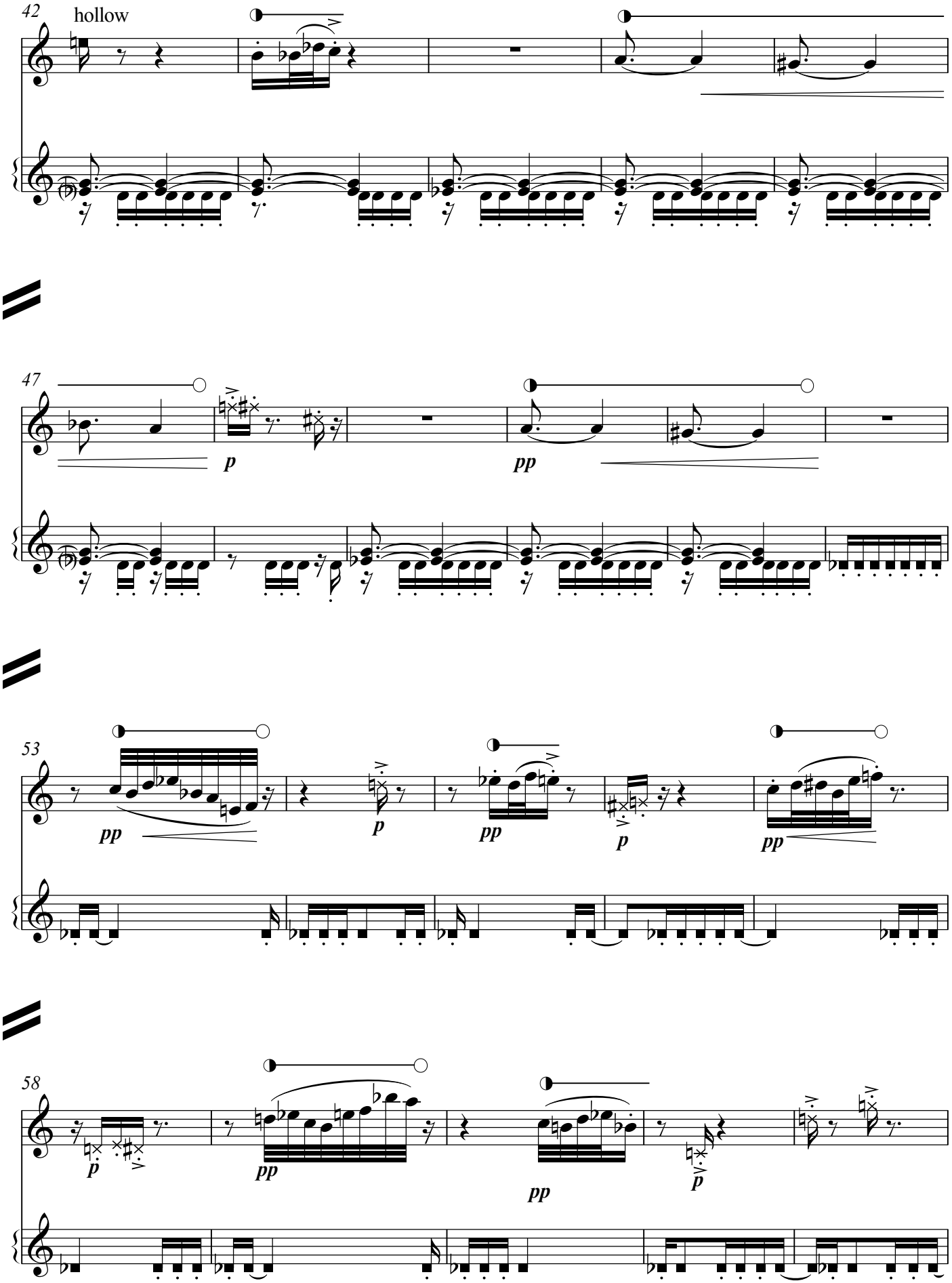


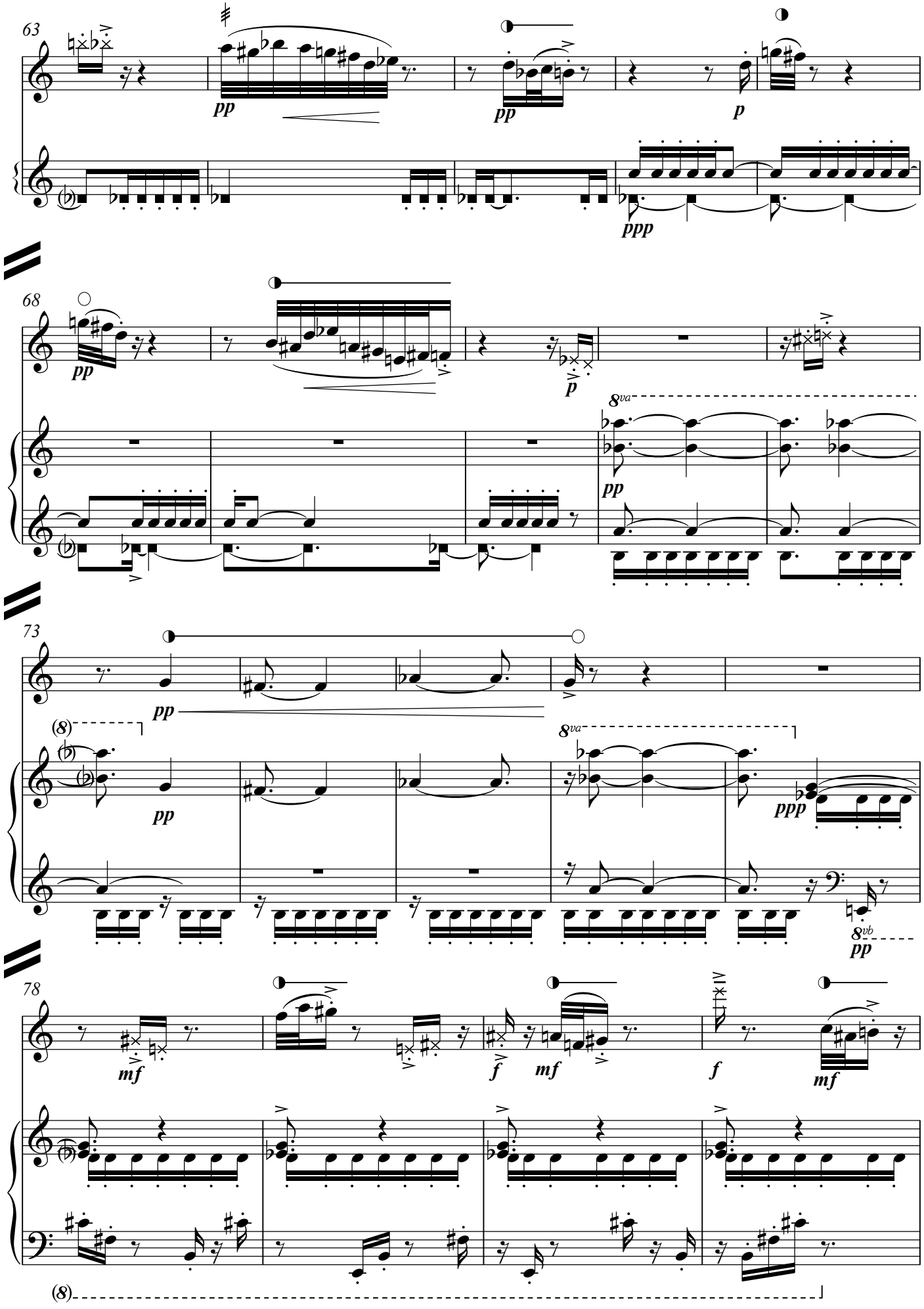
I: Isola

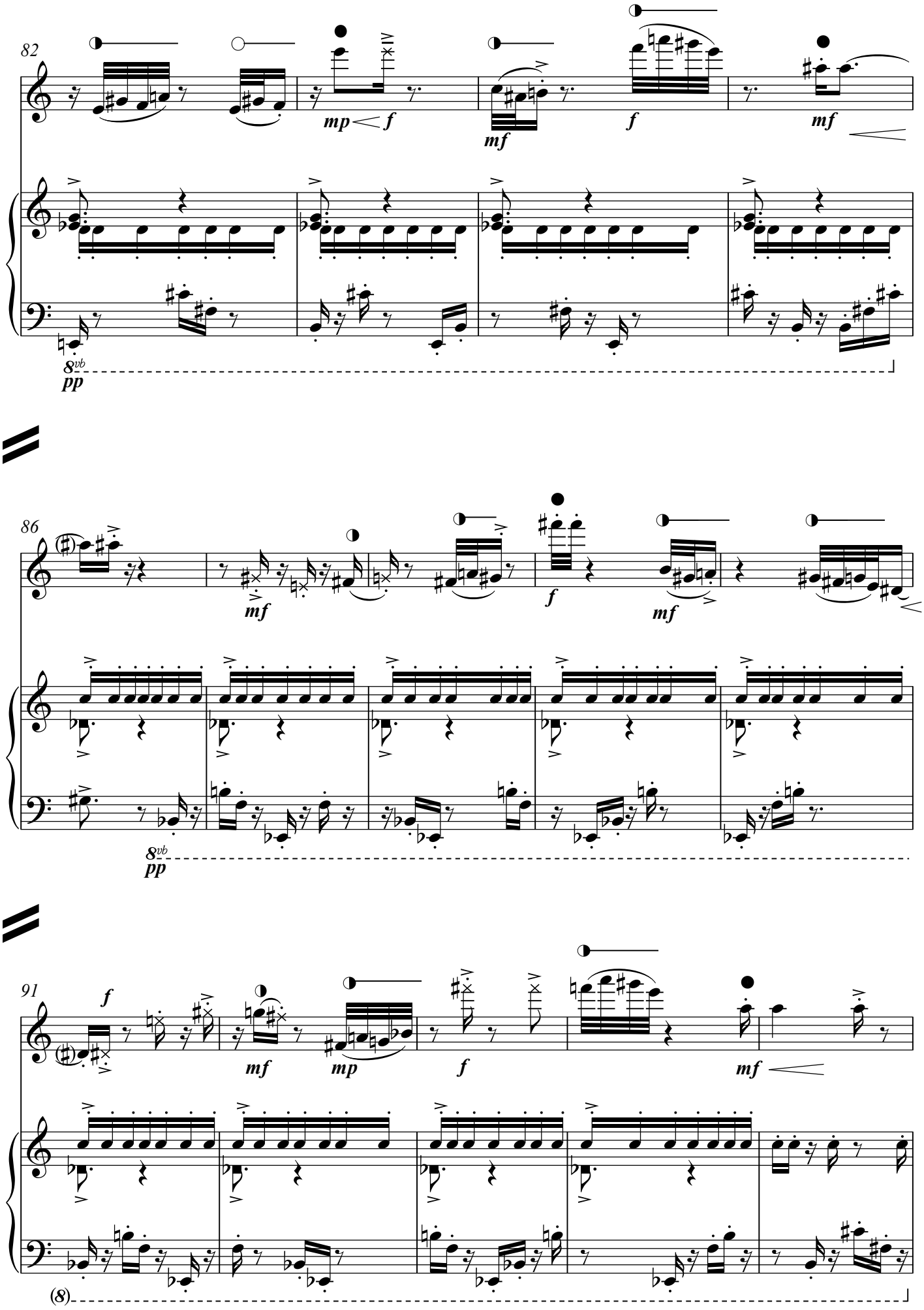
John McLachlan

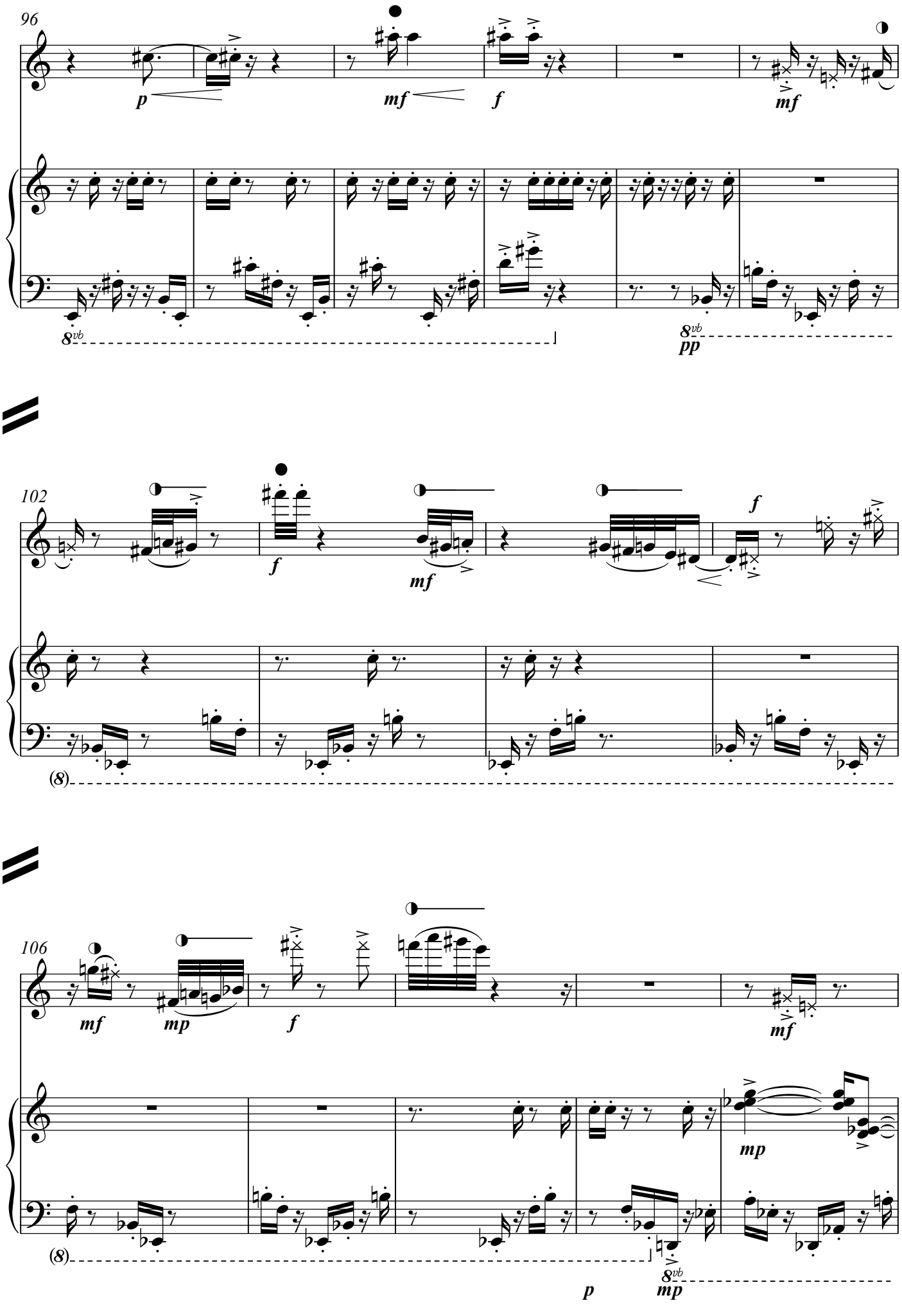


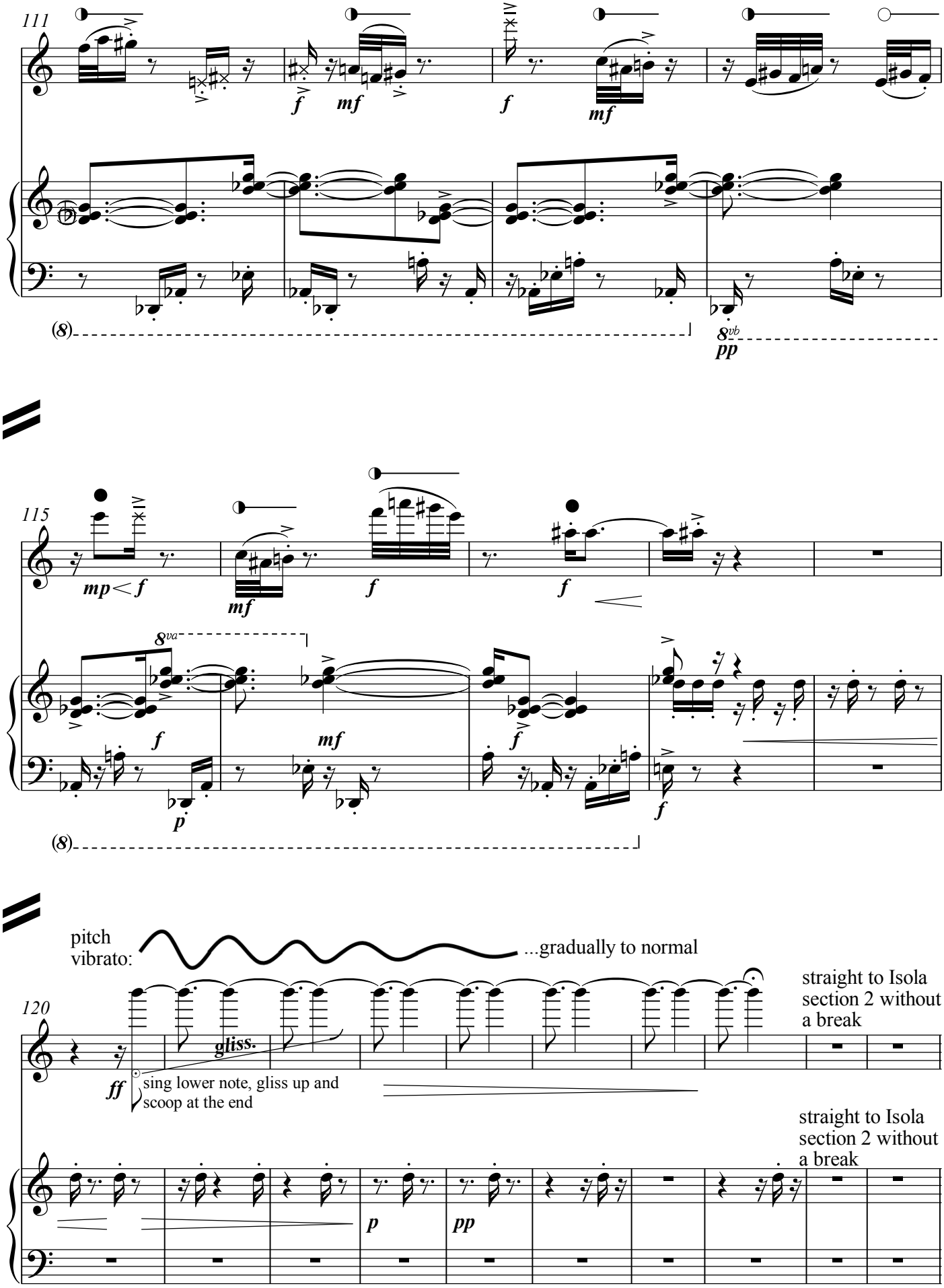

22
h.t.
27
p
pp
p
8va
pp
32
pp
8va
8va
37
(8)
ppp


42
hollow
47
p
pp
53
pp
p
pp
p
pp
58
p
pp
pp
p

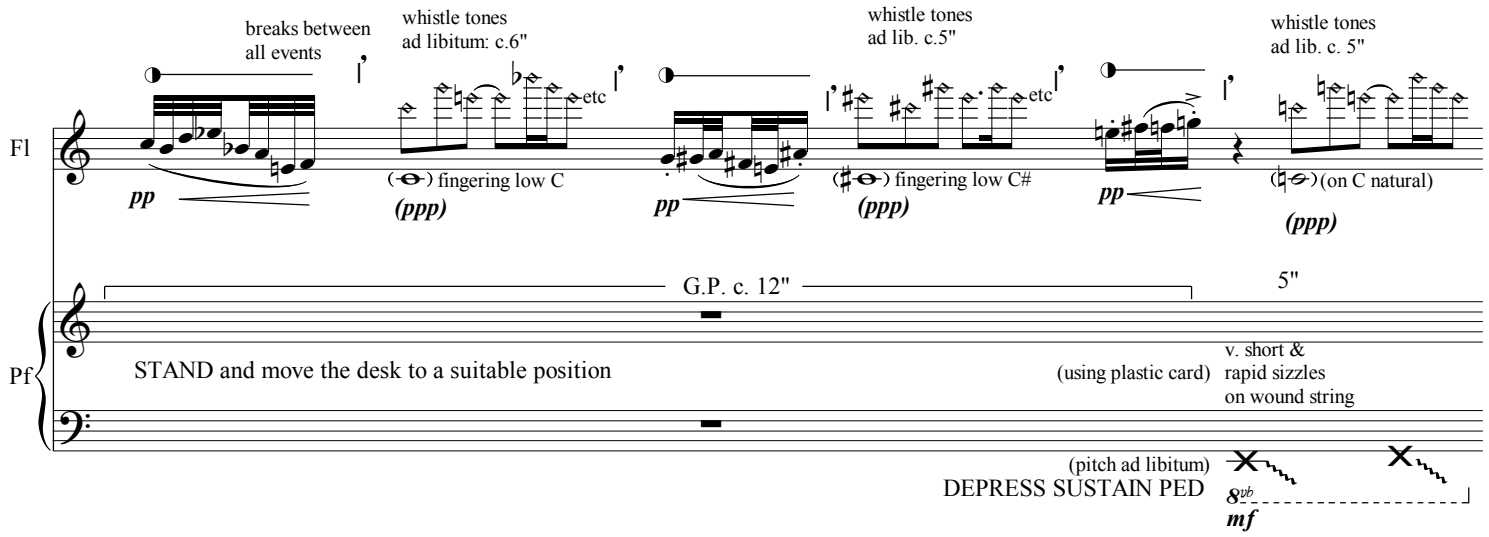

63
pp
pp
p
ppp
68
pp
p
8va
pp
73
pp
(8)
pp
8va
ppp
8vb
pp
78
mf
f
mf
f
mf
(8)


82
mp
f
mf
f
mf
8vb
pp
86
mf
f
mf
8vb
pp
91
f
mf
mp
f
mf
(8)

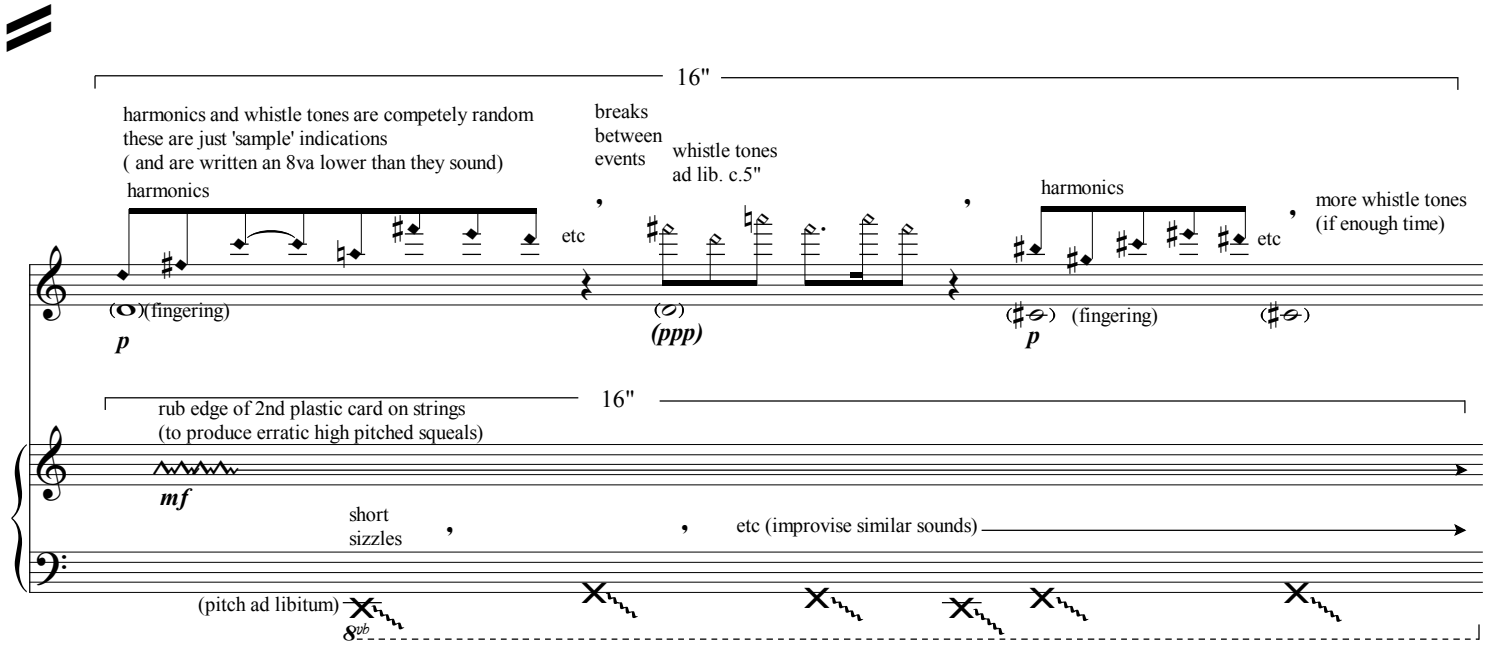

96
p
mf
f
mf
8vb
8vb
pp
102
f
f
mf
(8)
106
mf
mp
f
mf
mp
(8)
p
8vb
mp

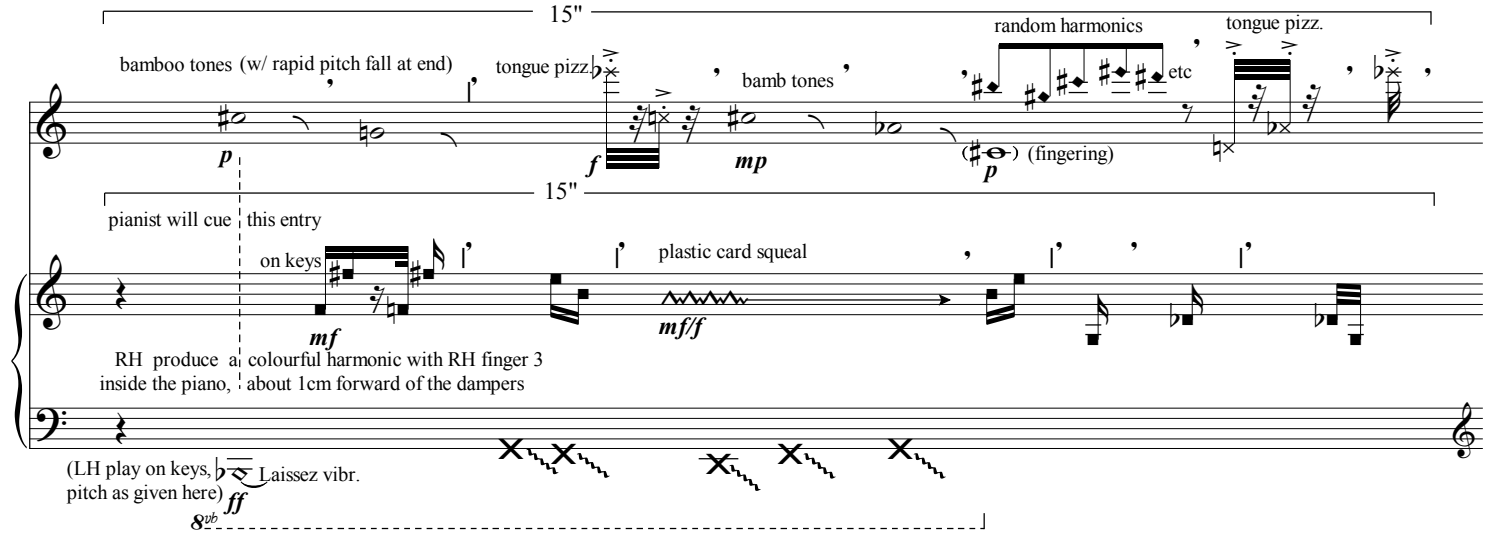

111
f
mf
f
mf
(8)
8vb
pp
115
mp < f
mf
f
f
8va
f
mf
f
p
f
(8)
120
pitch vibrato:
...gradually to normal
straight to Isola section 2 without a break
gliss.
ff
sing lower note, gliss up and scoop at the end
straight to Isola section 2 without a break
p
pp

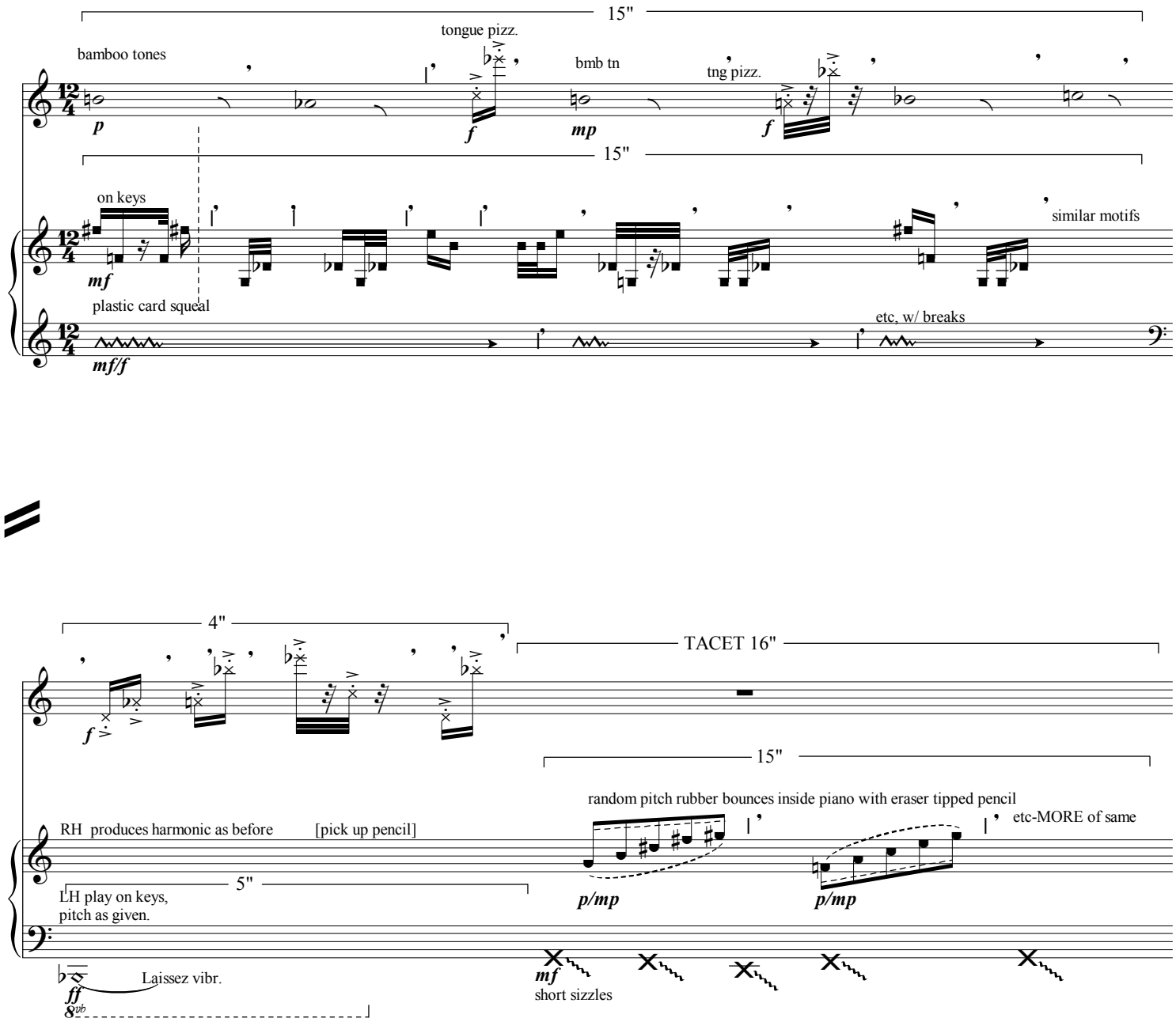
ISOLA section 2: free in time except demisemiquavers match previous passages



EACH SYSTEM may need you to add more material than it contains, simply extend the given ideas as improv for each system
TONGUE PIZZ and bamboo tones are to be played at given pitches. But HARMONICS and whistle tones are free in pitch.



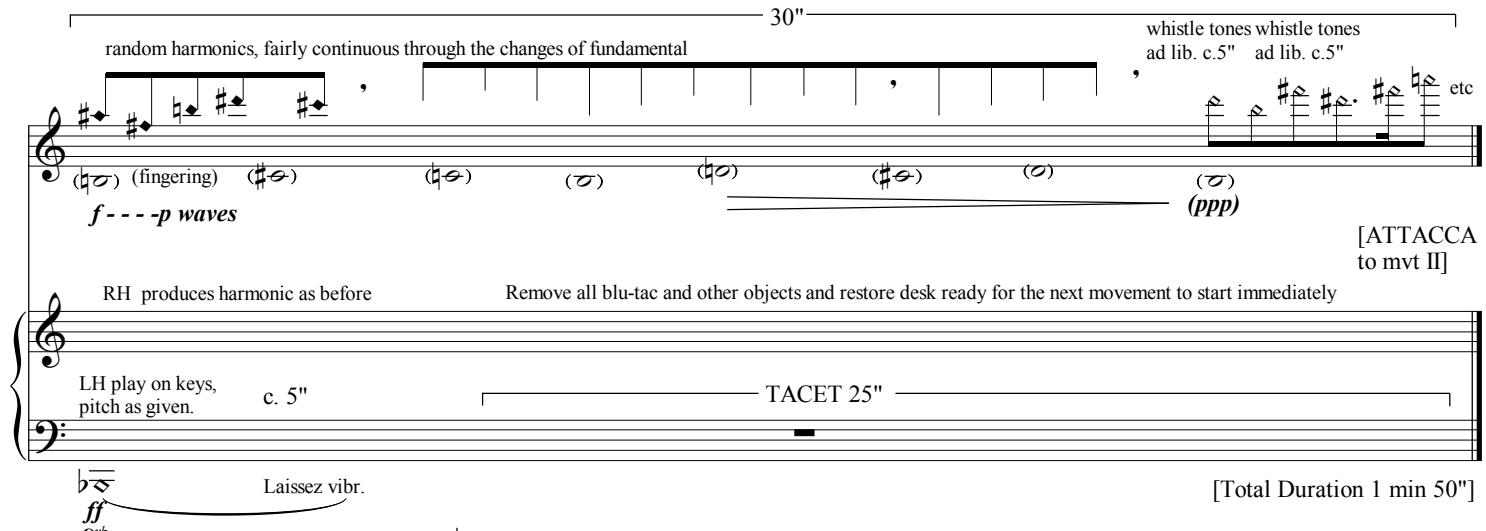




ATTACCA
to mvt II

[Total Duration 1 min 50"]

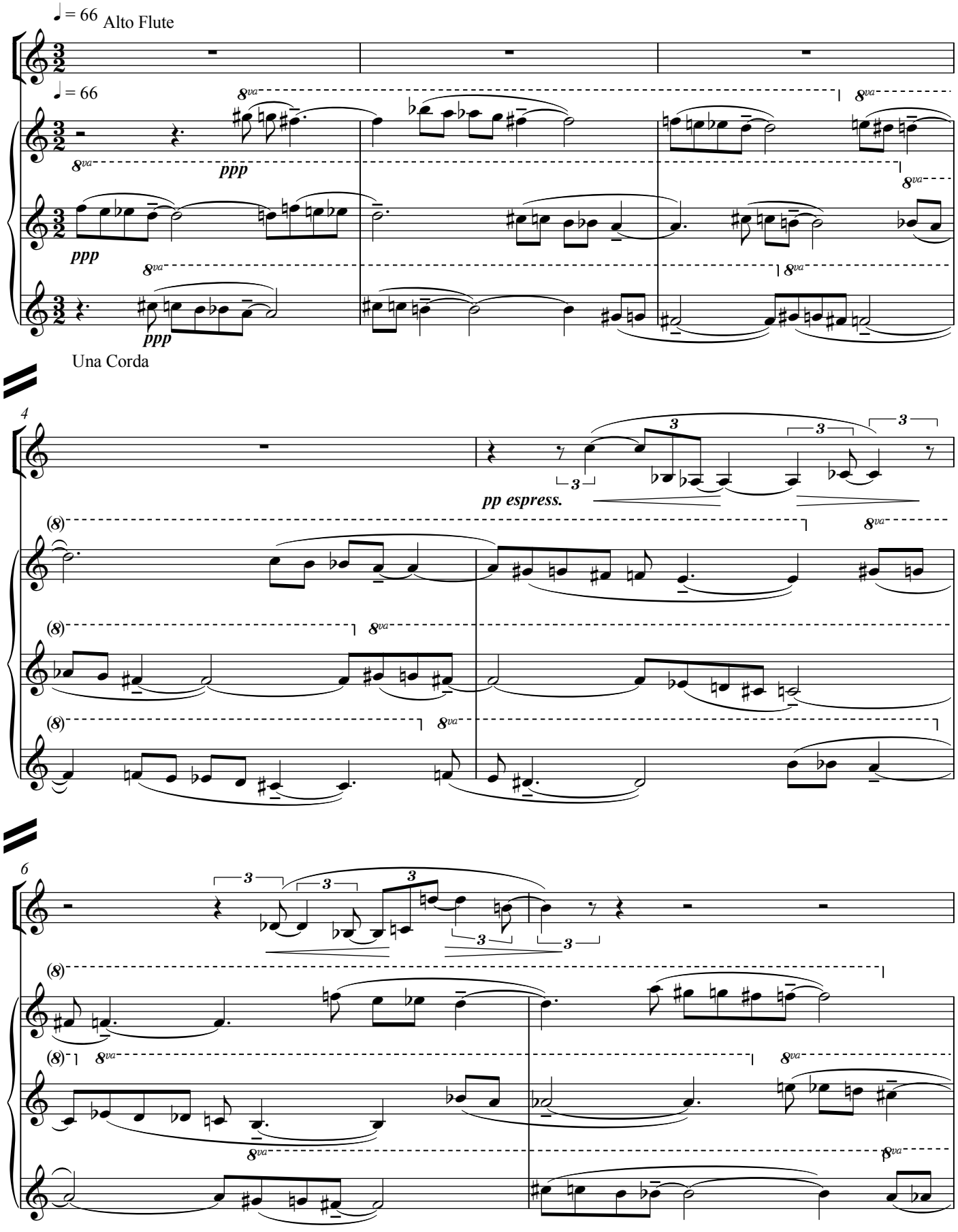
VERY INTENSE MOOD and speed - - - - -to - - - - →gradually less intense - - - - - - - - - - - - until - - - - - - - - →CALM - - - - and- - - DYING AWAY

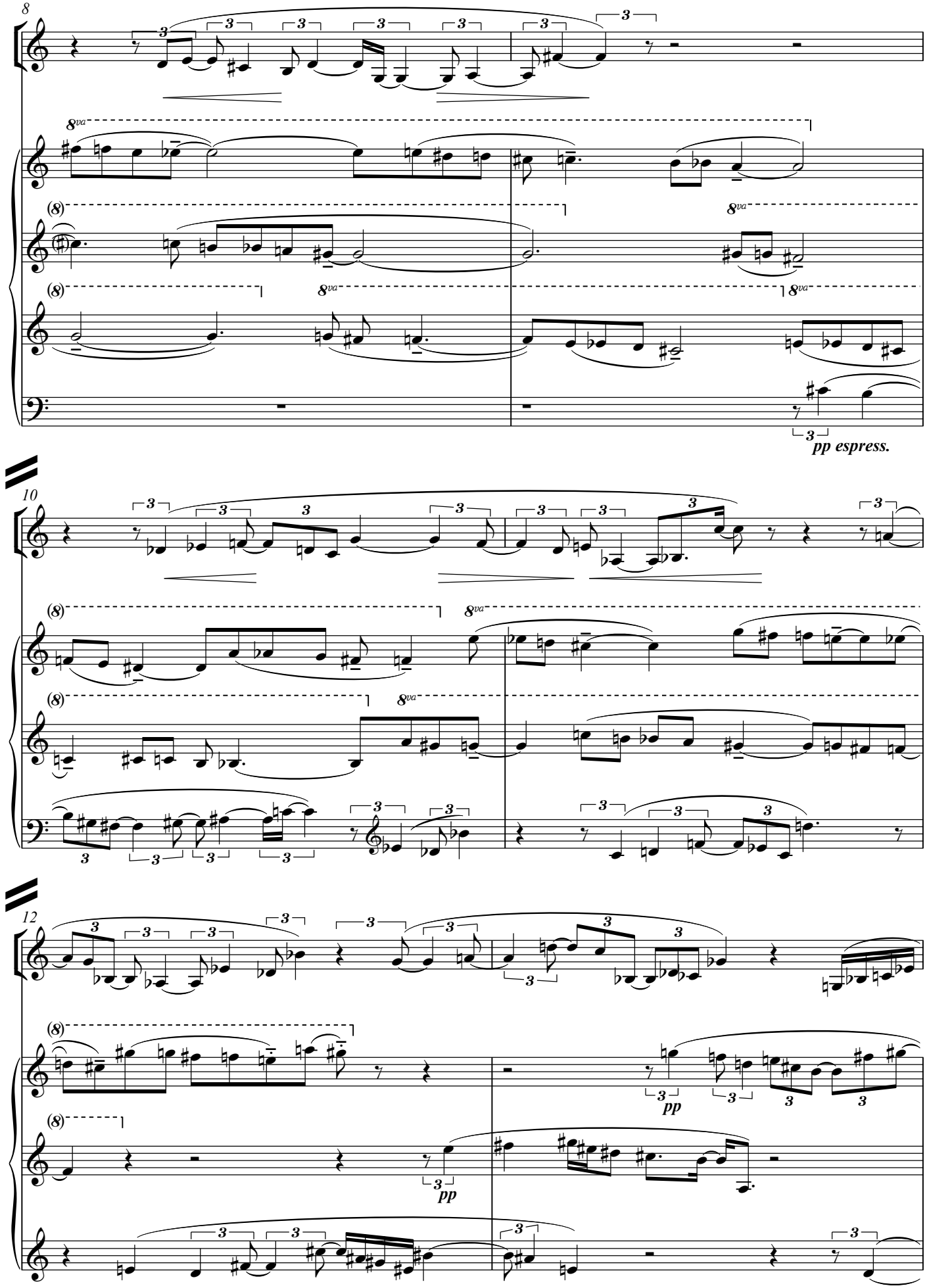


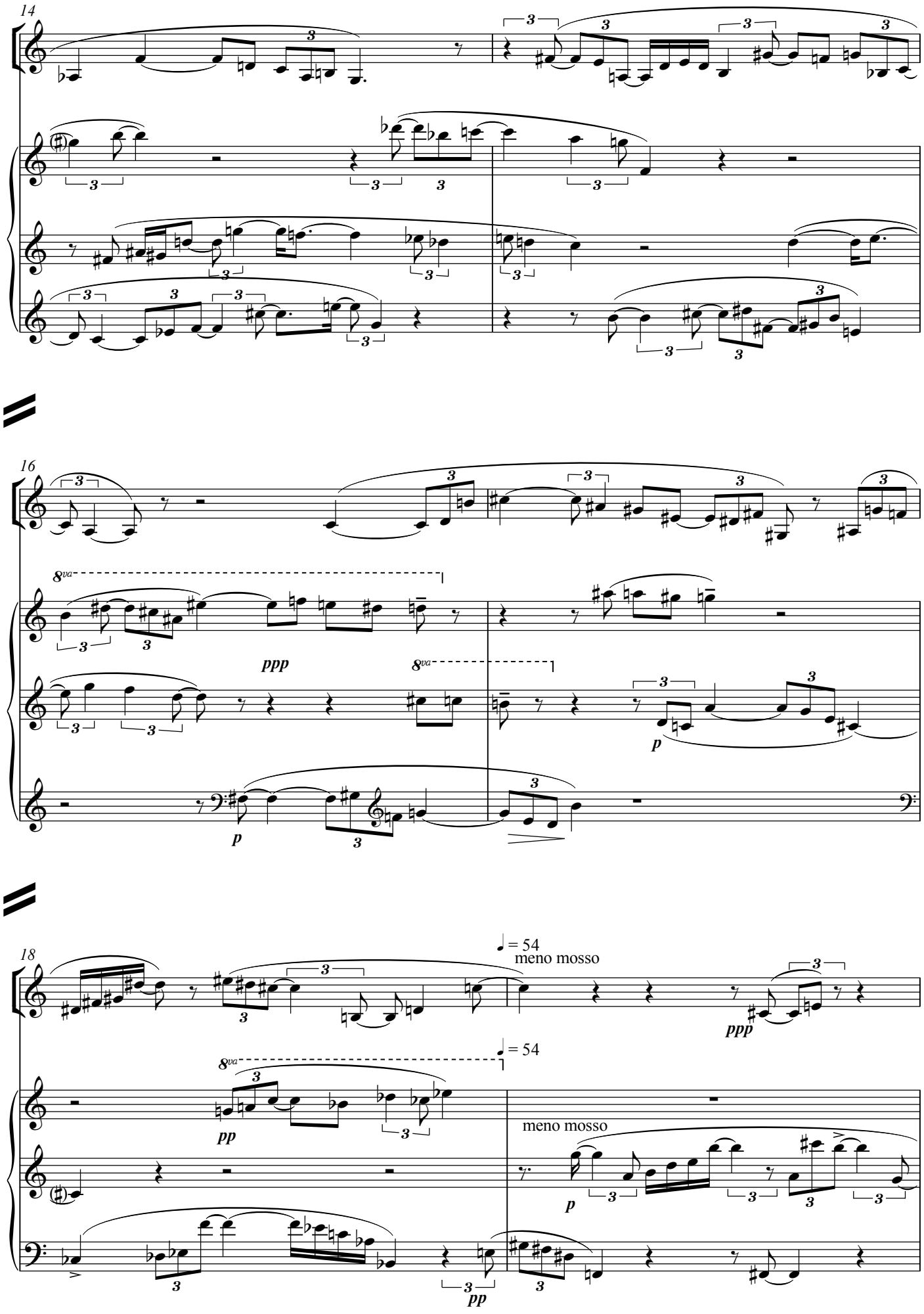
[Total Duration 1 min 50"]

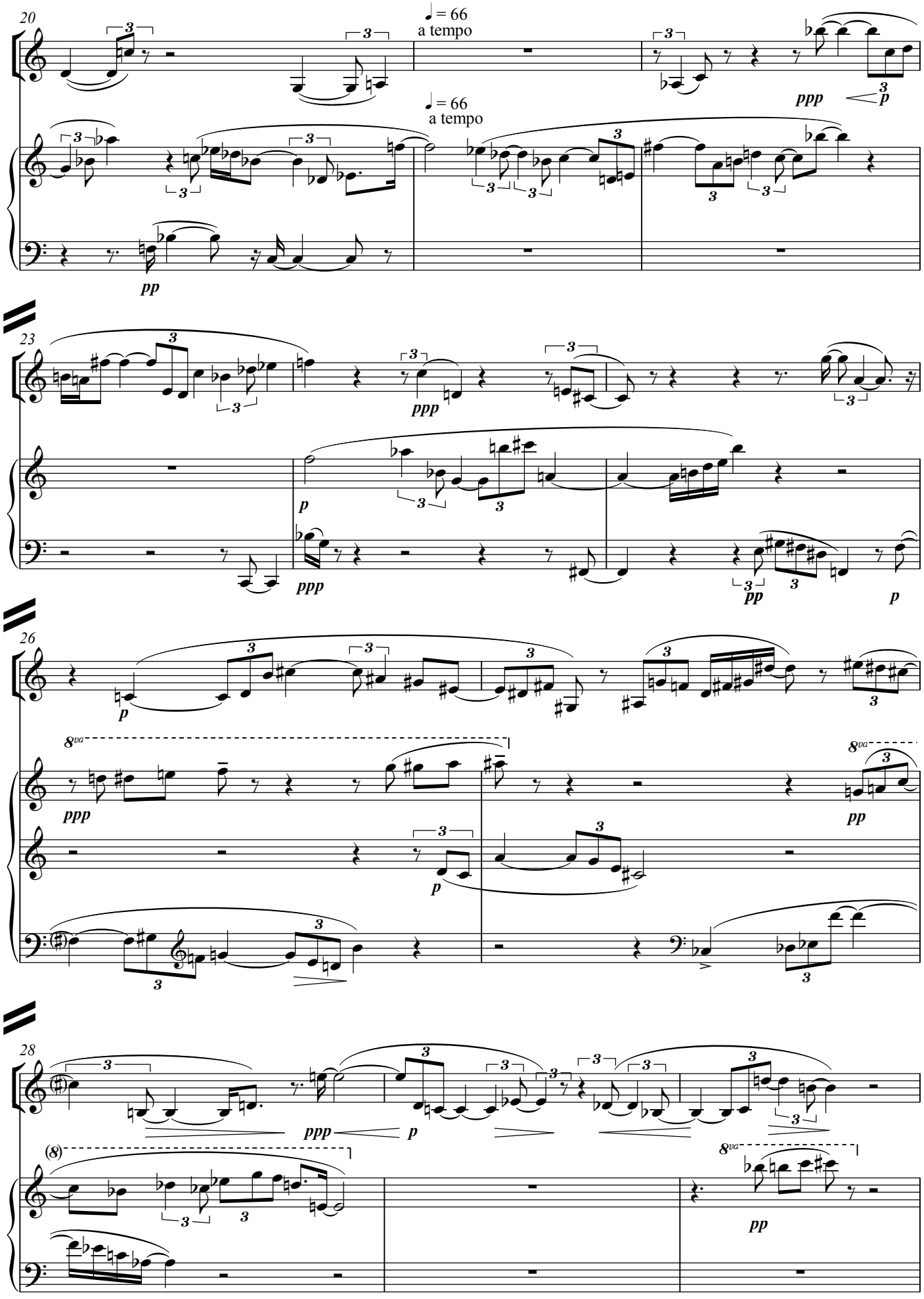
II Chiuso per restauri

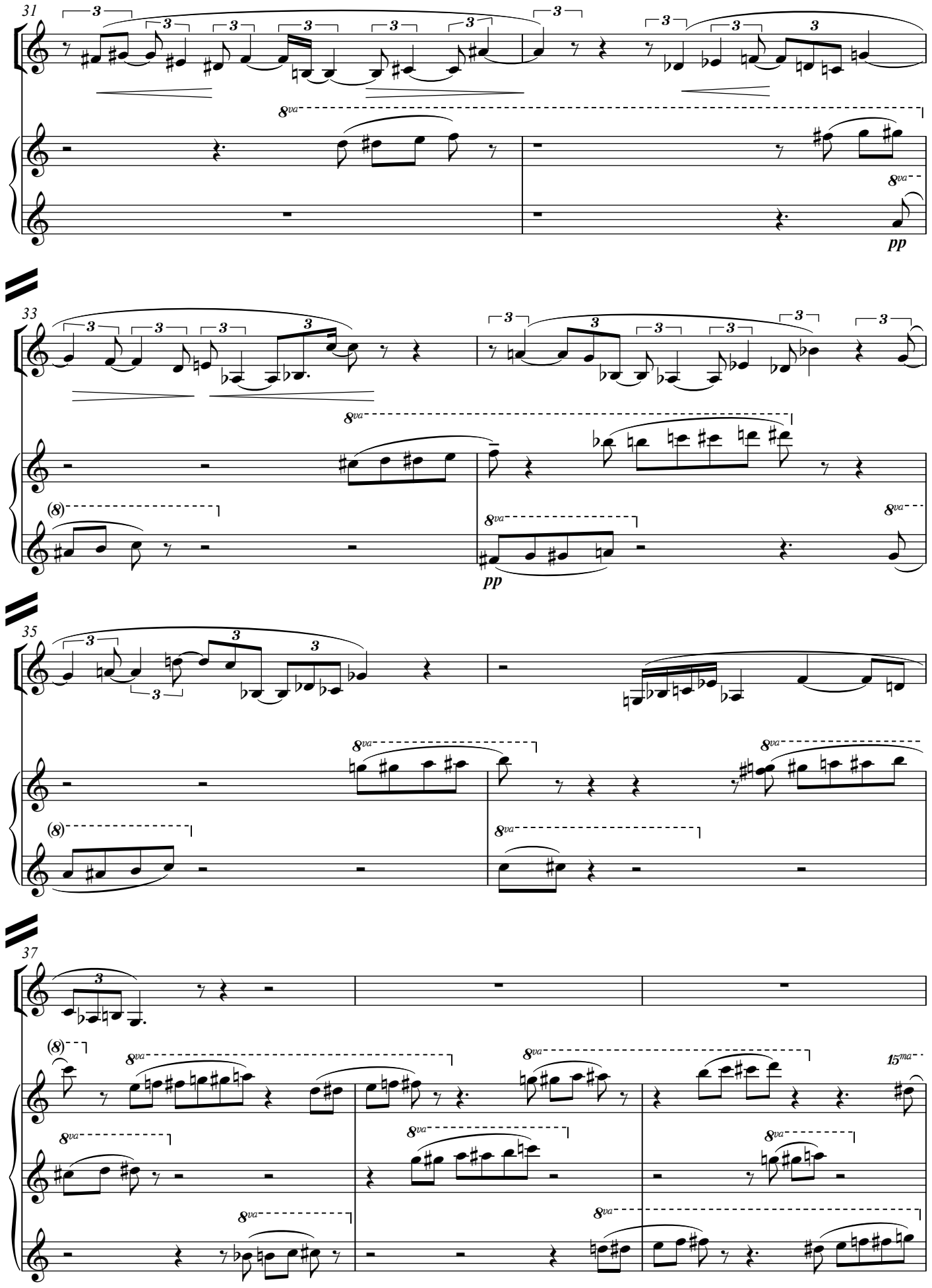
John McLachlan

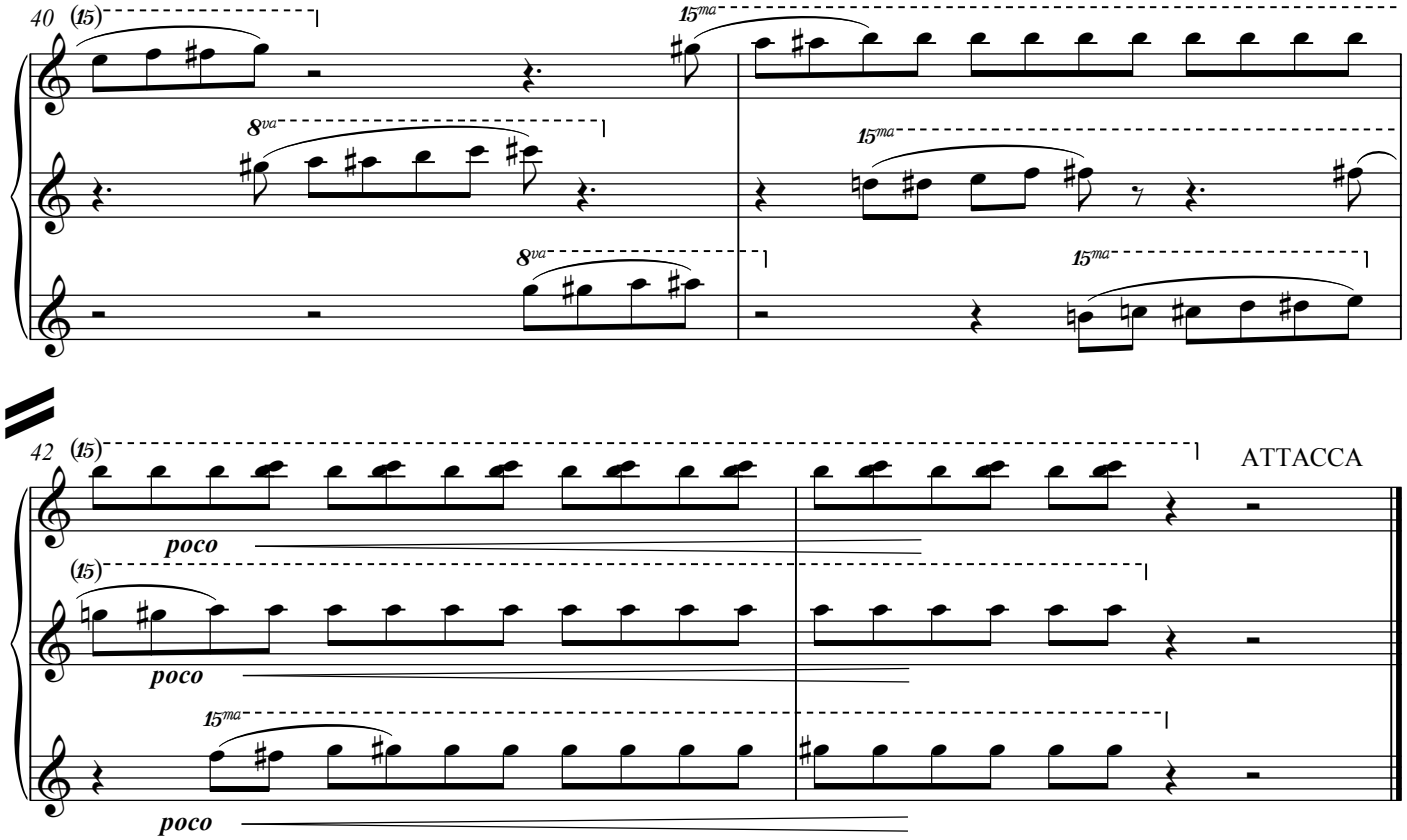



8
8va
(8)
pp espress.
10
12
pp
pp


14
16
8va
ppp
p
18
♩ = 54
meno mosso
pp


20
♩ = 66
a tempo
ppp
p
pp
23
ppp
p
ppp
pp
p
26
p
ppp
8va
p
8va
pp
28
ppp
p
(8)
8va
pp

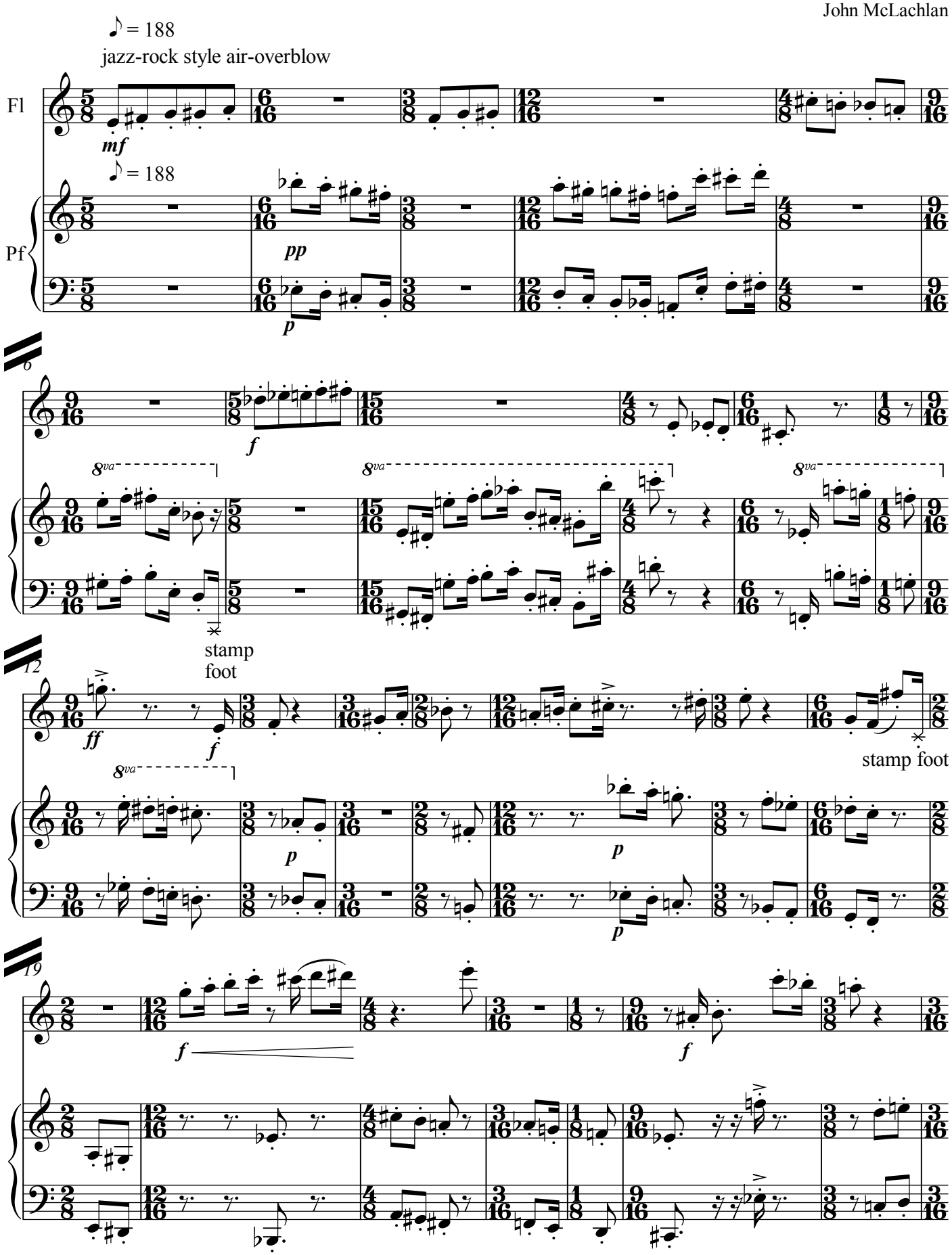

31
8va
pp
33
8va
(8)
8va
pp
35
8va
(8)
8va
37
(8)
8va
8va
15ma
8va
8va
8va
8va

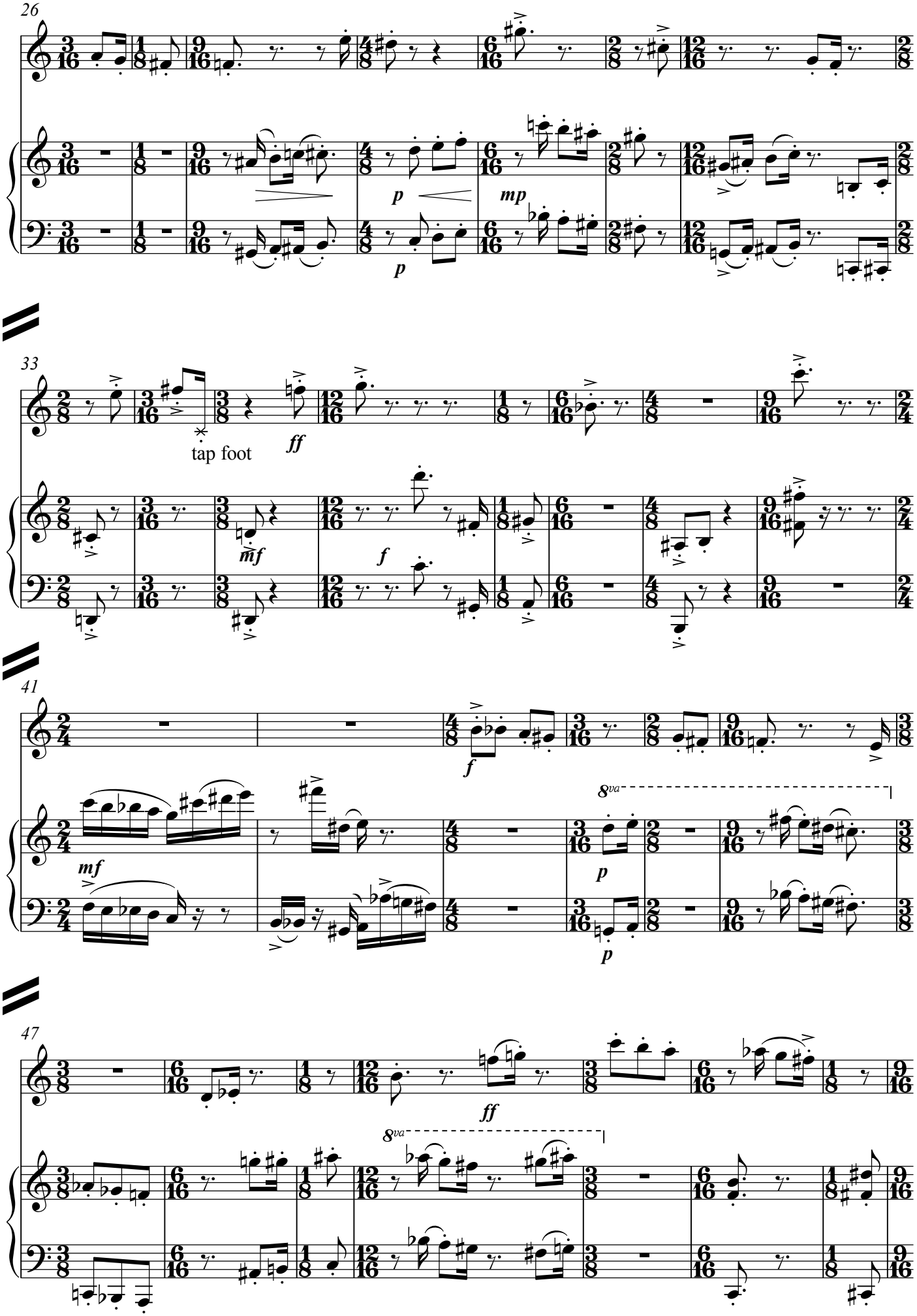

40
(15)
15ma
8va
15ma
8va
15ma

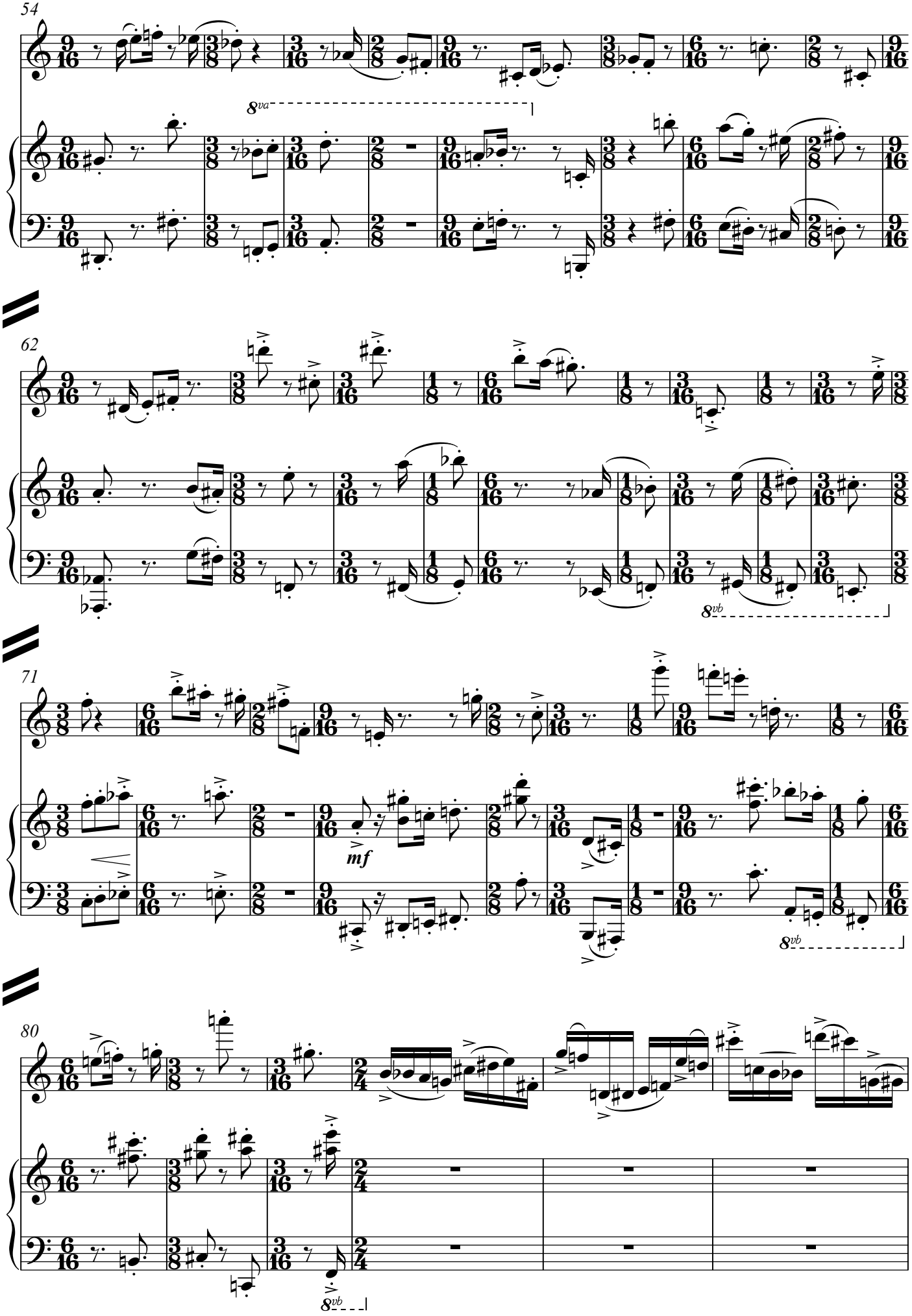
42
(15)
ATTACCA
poco
(15)
poco
15ma
poco

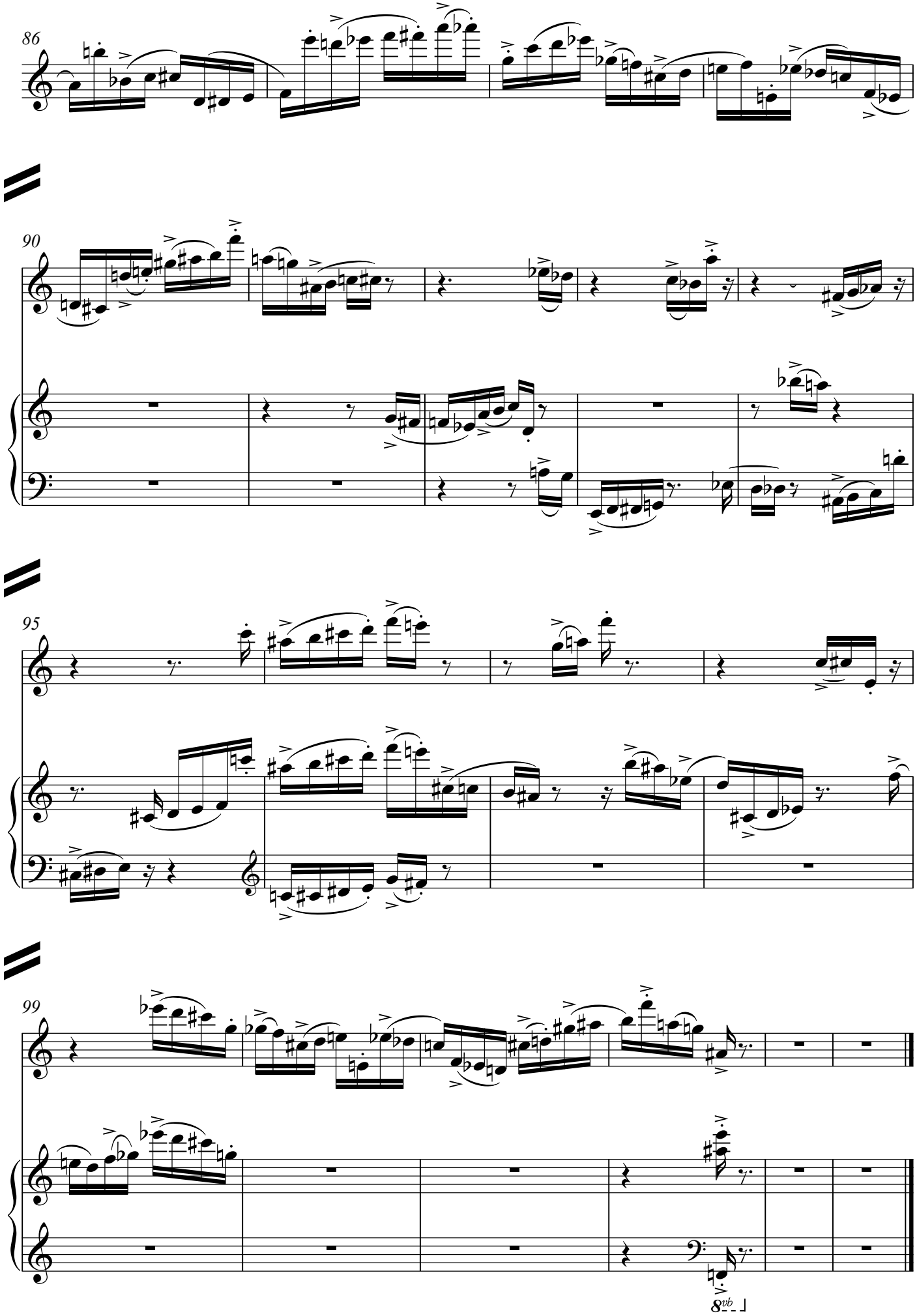
III First

John McLachlan




26
p
mp
p
33
tap foot
ff
mf
f
41
f
mf
8va
p
p
47
ff
8va


54
8va
62
8vb
71
mf
8vb
80
8vb


86
90
95
99
8vb

Requiescat (1881)

Oscar Wilde

Tread lightly, she is near
Under the snow,
Speak gently, she can hear
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair
Tarnished with rust,
She that was young and fair
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,
She hardly knew
She was a woman, so
Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,
Lie on her breast,
I vex my heart alone,
She is at rest.

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear
Lyre or sonnet,
All my life's buried here,
Heap earth upon it.

First

Leland Bardwell

A dog should die outside, the others said,
but I had taken her
scrunched up in my arms,
hidden her in the shed.

We lay together in a shroud of hay
holding death aside
like the curtain in a theatre.
But then it came: the blood.
It spurted from her mouth,
spurted on the flagstones
like a string of beads.

What follows obliterates,
with each new loss,
that accident of grief.
But how can one forget what was one's
first. First anything, first love,
first loss, first kiss.
Macdara Woods

Sons Are Older At The Speed Of Light

I.
My father did not finish things
Such things as rows
Or playing parts And breakdowns
Retiring early Died too soon
His final words to me — A
Half a question Half unasked
At no point answered Comes there
Any answer ever? Do you…
Do you remember…When…and there
It stops unfinished in my head
Do you remember when we… Lost
The points of contact maybe
Or lost the faith Or lost our nerve
Lost certainty along the way
As is the way of things And now
That I am gathering speed
The train tracks meeting in the distance
Far behind The fearsome nameless
City rearing up in front where I know
No one and none know me
But where we all get off
It is too late to even think of asking questions
And of whom? The young Eastern
European with the tea-urn
Has passed up and down the corridor
Three times has disappeared
And gone for good
As has the man who checks the tickets
And the district nurse who is
The only one that anyone could trust
Out of the whole shebang and calaboose
Or – to use my mother's phrase –
The Slaughterhouse
This travelling slaughterhouse on wheels
We call a life
                But not an unconsidered one
Out of the four last things
This one remains Impervious to fashion
Time or doubt: the flame it flickers
And goes out
The bird across the banquet hall
No more than that
                And yet we
Mostly stand our ground because
It is expected
And what I am trying to understand
Even now at this late hour
Is your unhappiness and thus my own
Beyond the dopamine deficiency
And those endorphins
Creatures of the vasty deep
Who do not come when they are conjured

II.
Yesterday I climbed lungs heaving
Up the earthquake damaged street
                Nocera Umbra
Much *chiuso per restauri*
And simple minimal so beautiful
So free of traffic free of noise
Mid-Wednesday afternoon
One self-conscious policeman
Checking doors so tightly shut

Not even dust could penetrate
And near the top
Two men are laying cobble stones
In sand tapping them square
Into the roots of time
In shadow
In the lovely buttered honey light
Of mid-September
This constant need
For rehabilitation Spells in John Of God's
Cataracts removed
Appendices
Colonoscopies and cardiograms
Or how in 1991 in Moscow
So many Metro escalators stopped
Seized-up steep egress from the underworld
Sotto Restauro everywhere Ремонт
Remont we climbed up from
The marble bowels and chandeliers
Of Kruschev's dream made real
But lacking maintenance
The way we do not finish things is
Where entropy comes in is Auden's
Sinister cracked tea cup
And the Watcher in the shadows
Who coughs when you
would kiss
Or coughing labour upwards
On a stick and artificial hip
To the Civic Tower and campanile
La Campanaccia at the top
Built nine hundred years ago
And standing straight full weight
Erect proclaiming *Eccomi*
For I am here and have been here for all to see
And have been seen
As I too am here
And have been seen been part of this
Small space today between the Tower
And the Cathedral
All *chiuso per restauri* Have seen
The maintenance and putting things
In place Knowing that they must
And will go wrong again
And be put almost right again
Poor transients —
Until the Heracliten lease runs out

III.
And one day indeed the words ran out
And we with nothing left to say
Consulted over menus
Read bits of news repeated saws
To get us through the silence — you
Didn't know
And I had yet to learn
That few words A simple few
Could be enough could tell it all:
A tendency to stagger to the left
And sometimes teeter backwards
Which could explain
My dreadful fall in Fiumicino
Too much saliva
Varied tremors Hands and chin:
And sometimes fingers clawed
In sudden spasm
Do I go on
Into the realms of dysgraphia
Staccato speech Shoulders stooped
A slowing of the gait?
I prefer
To watch the dancers in the village square
The ballo in piazza
Sunburnt mirth Provencal song
That so caught Keats' fancy
Out of reach
And I have had a longer run than that
And not yet reached Astopovo:
Still travelling
To places all unseen
Invisible to those with open eyes
It needs a certain antic 20 20 vision
To housepaint in the dark
As we have done And plastered walls
Without a light in Fontainebleau
Not cowboys then or now
Just battling with addictions
Drink and pills
And work At labouring And selling
Two hours of life to buy a third
The hell with that bum deal
I said And I have now grown old And someone
Cooked the books
Along the way
The way we knew they would – So
Who owes what to whom is moot
Irrelevant We last from day to day
No more than that That's it Enough
For now
The diagnosis works Of course it does:
Who ever died a winter yet?

September 19th 2014
—Macdara Woods