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Ithaka

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Justin Merritt

ITHAKA

for violin, clarinet, cello & piano

justinmerrittmusic.com

Ithaka

As you set out for Ithaka
hope the voyage is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope the voyage is a long one.
May there be many a summer morning when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbors seen for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you are old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,

not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

-C. P. Cavafy translated by Edmund Keeley & Philip Sherrard

C. P. Cavafy, "The City" from C.P. Cavafy: Collected Poems. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Translation Copyright © 1975, 1992 by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Reproduced with permission of Princeton University Press.

Notes on the Program

According to the Poetry Foundation, "C.P. Cavafy (1863-1933) is widely considered the most distinguished Greek poet of the twentieth century," yet for most of his life he was an obscure clerk at the Ministry of Public Works in Alexandria, Egypt, specializing in irrigation. Many of his writings reveal his love for ancient history. In an essay, E.M. Forster admired Cavafy's renderings of ancient Greece and called the poet's perspective "intensely subject: scenery, cities and legends all re-emerge in terms of the mind."

Cavafy's poem *Ithaka*, the inspiration for this music, is clearly born of his fascination with ancient cultures. The central reference for the poem is of course Homer's Odyssey, which tells the story of Odysseus' ten-year journey home to Ithaca after the battle of Troy. The poem's narrator tells the traveler that what really matters is not the

destination, but the journey, which must be experienced and enjoyed thoroughly, with the intellect and all the senses fully engaged: this is life's true reward.

The musical work *Ithaka*, scored for a chamber ensemble, begins with a bittersweet, nostalgic introduction that gives way to the recitation of the first stanza. This stanza is about the hero's struggle and victory over creatures such as the "Laistrygonians and Cyclops, angry Poseidon" that stand between him and home. Here the violinist takes the role of hero in a wild, high-speed cadenza. Cavafy reminds us that most of life's greatest problems are self-created, and most of life's battles are internal.

The second stanza begins to unspool the central message of the poem: enjoy the journey; don't expect the destination to make you happy. Soak in every drop of pleasure, experience every exotic location as a fresh adventure, and never stop learning. I set this stanza as an ancient, Mediterranean inspired dance. From a slow and sensual beginning, it builds gradually to an ecstatic frenzy.

I set the final stanza as a song of remembrance for a life fully lived—by one who has seized every opportunity offered and met every challenge with an open heart and a courageous spirit. Recognizing the wealth of experiences life has given us, and emerging unbowed from its struggles, we will reach our final destination knowing that we have lived each moment to the utmost.

-notes by the composer

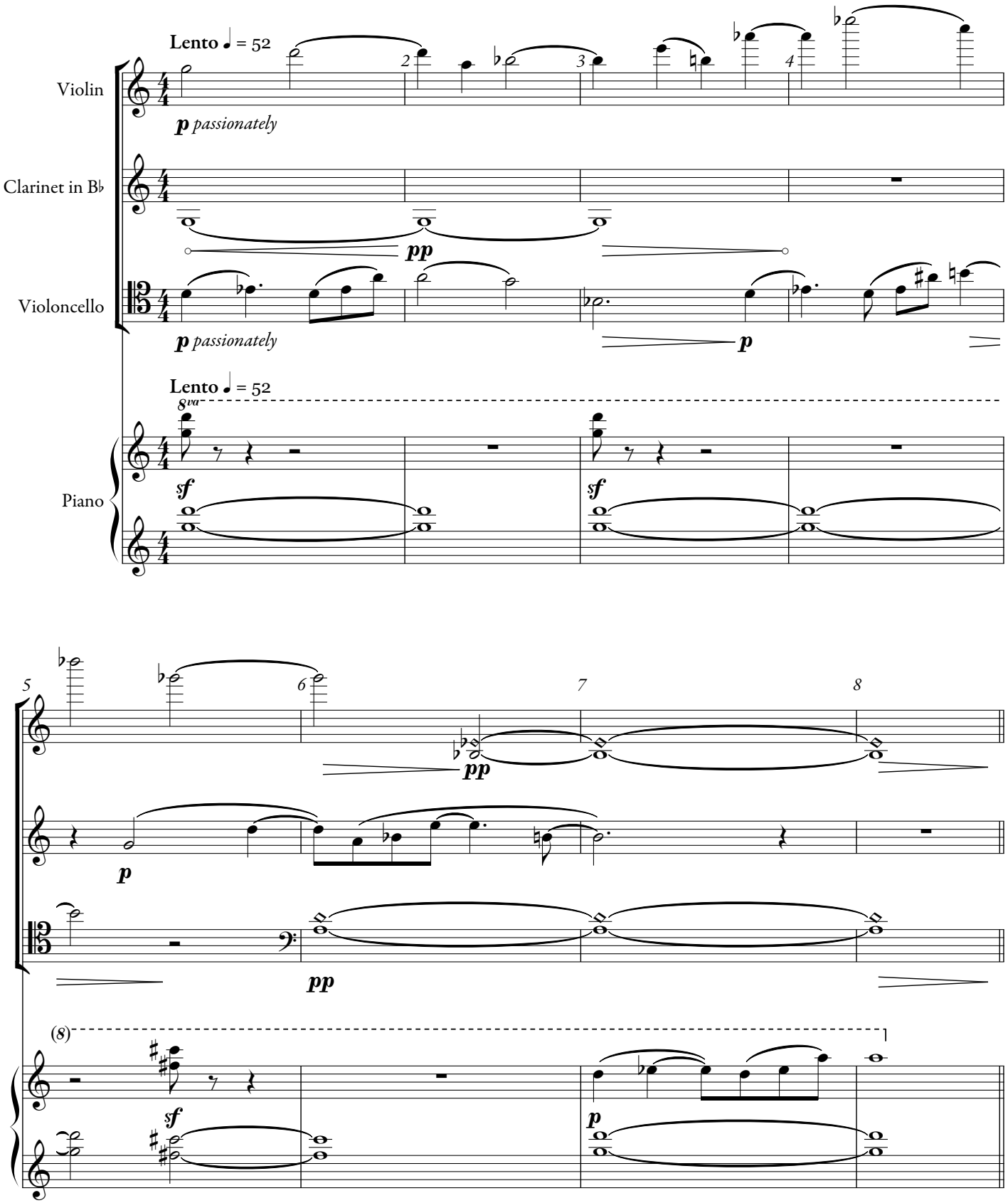
Score in C
Dur: c. 16'

commissioned by theMichael Steinberg and Jorja Fleezanis Fund

Ithaka

for violin, clarinet, cello, piano, & narrator

Justin Merritt



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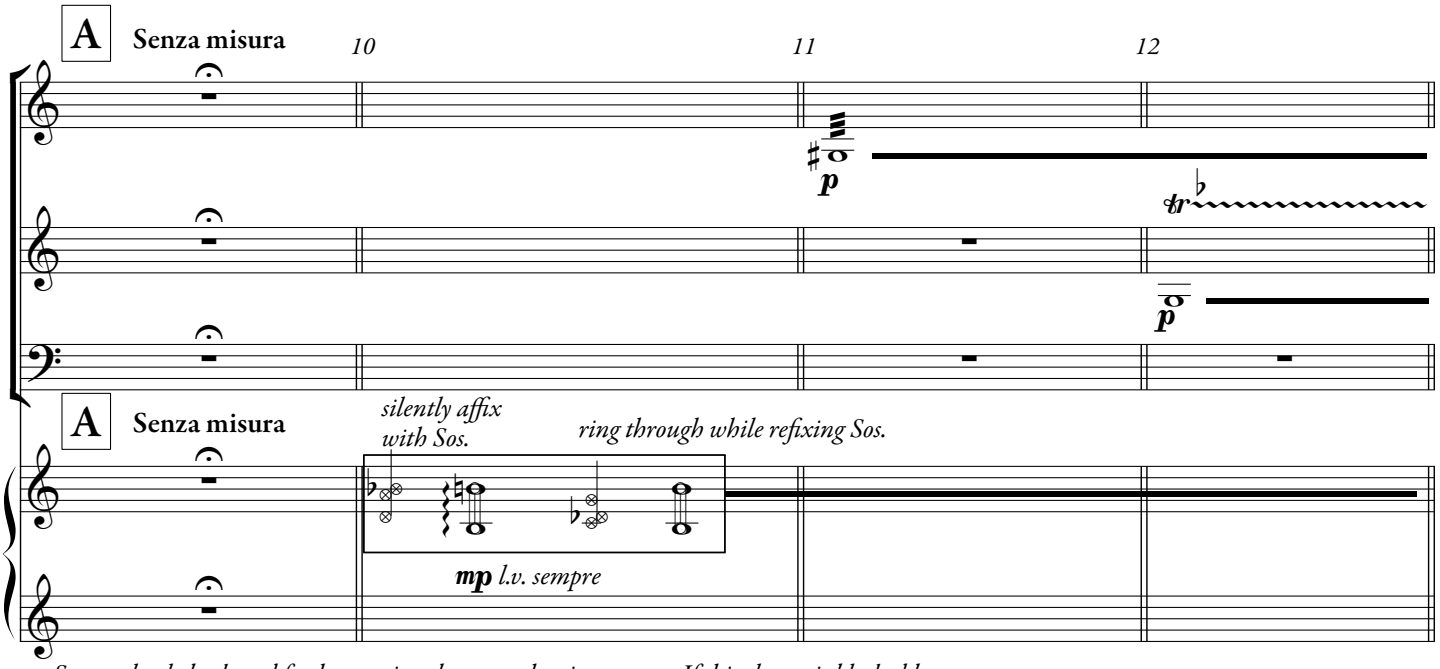
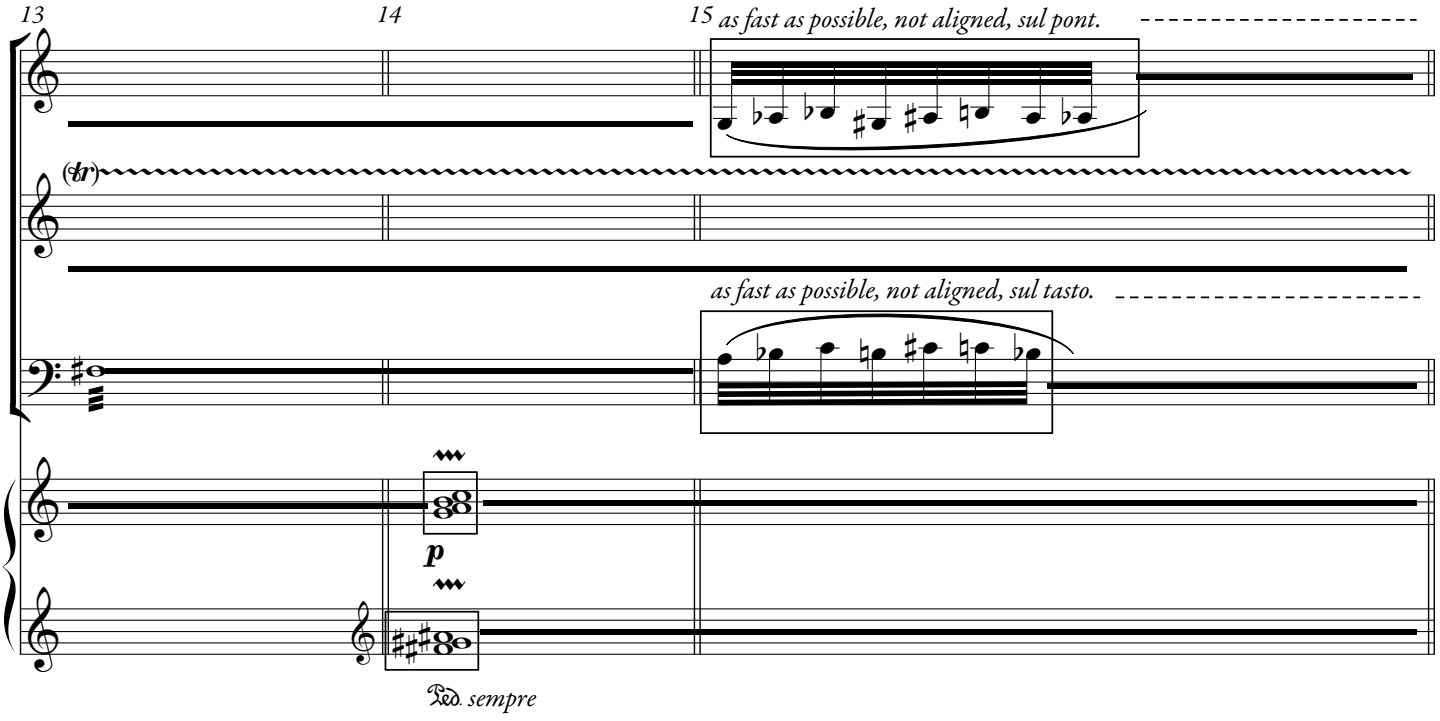
[Speaker:] As you set out for Ithaka
hope the voyage is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.

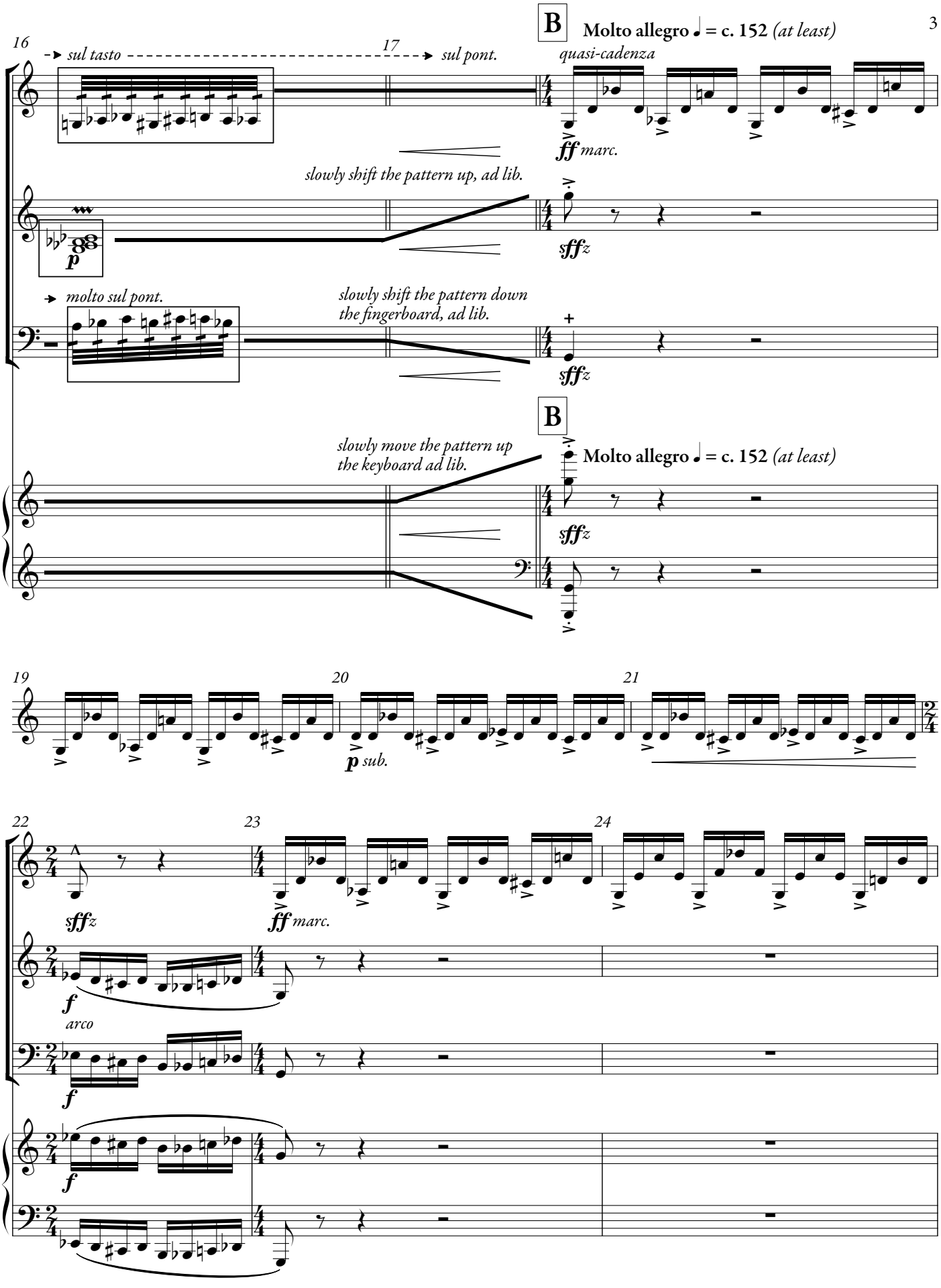


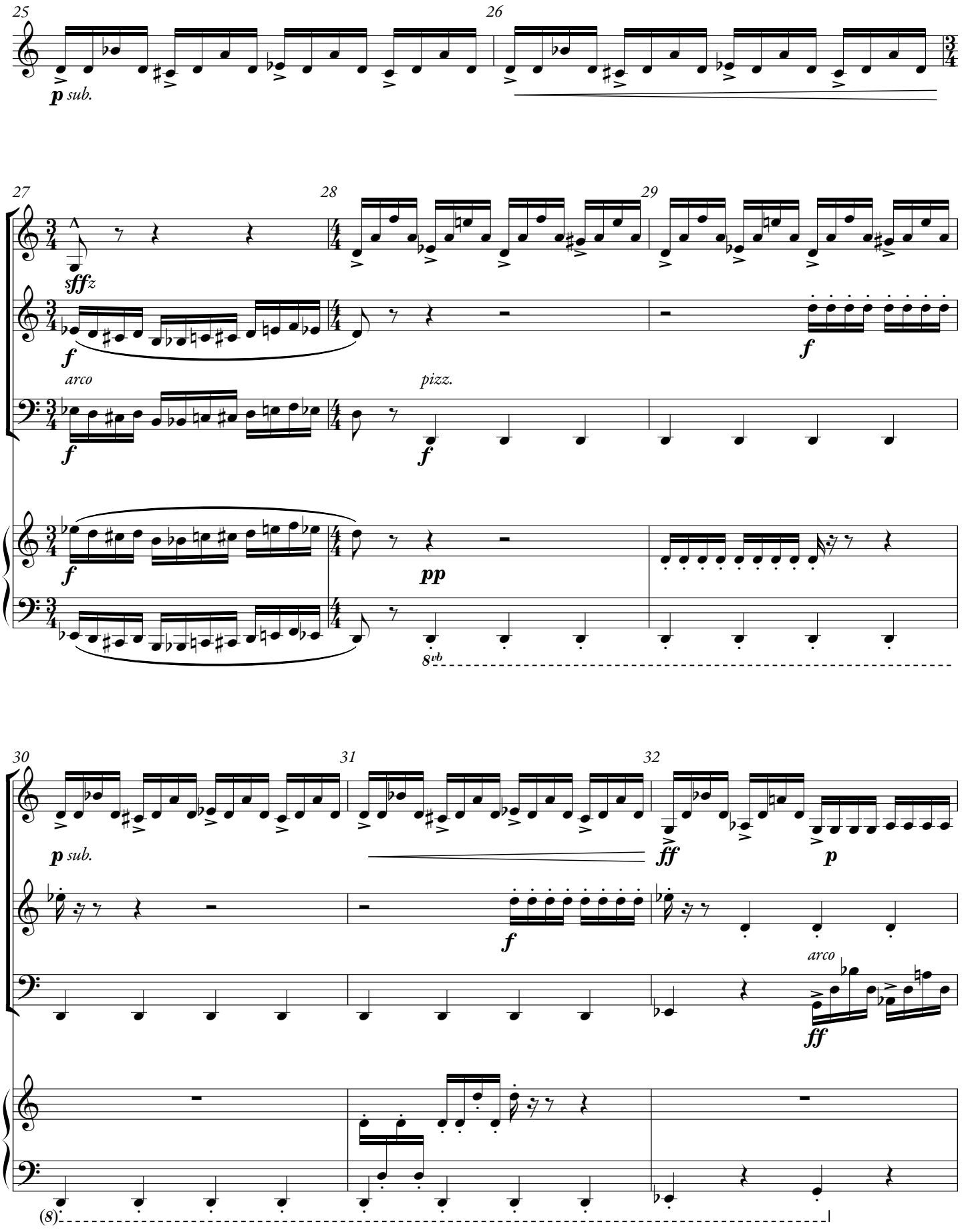
Strum slowly back and forth on strings between the given range. If this cluster is blocked by a crossbar on the make of piano being used, use the same three pitches with a different voicing.

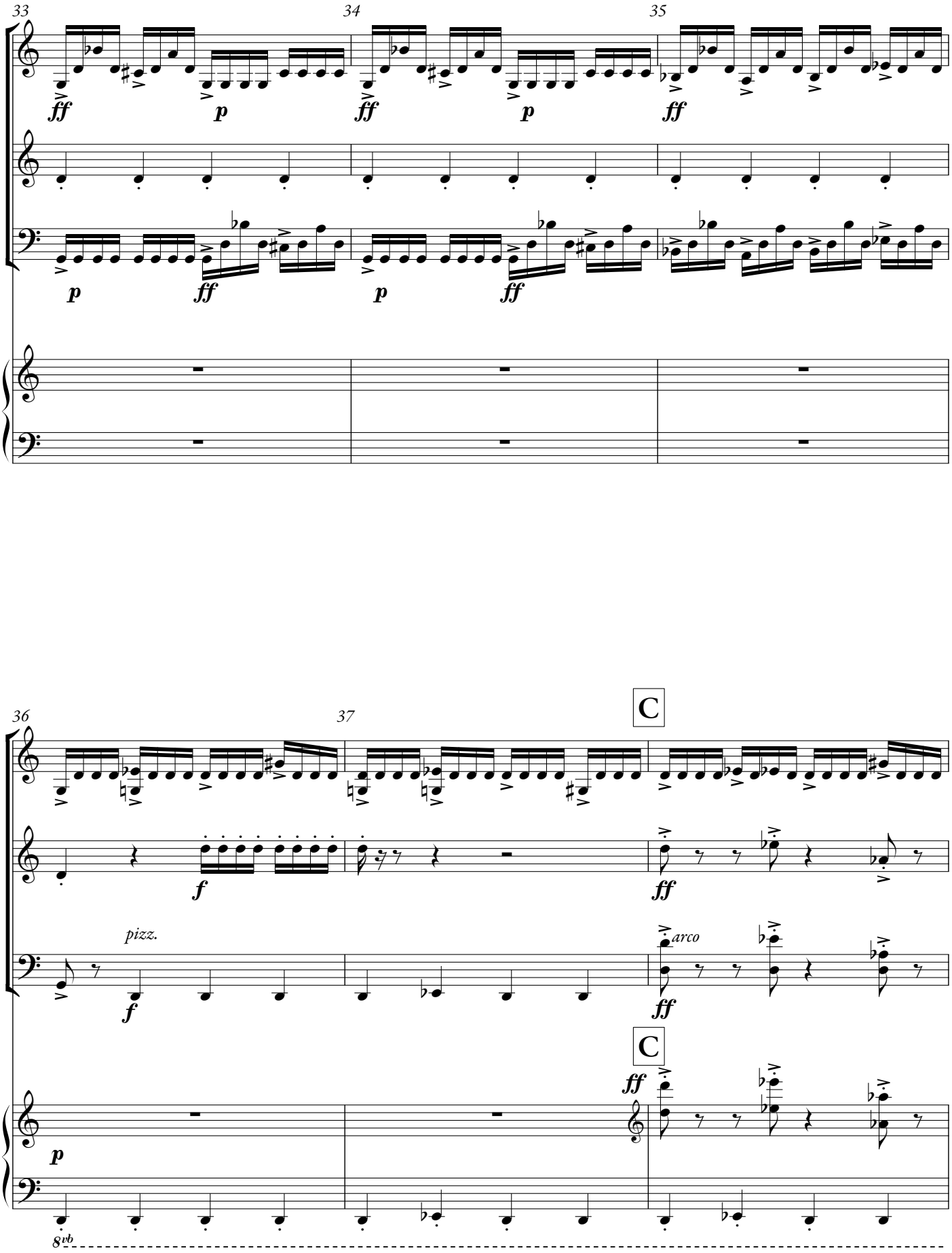
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

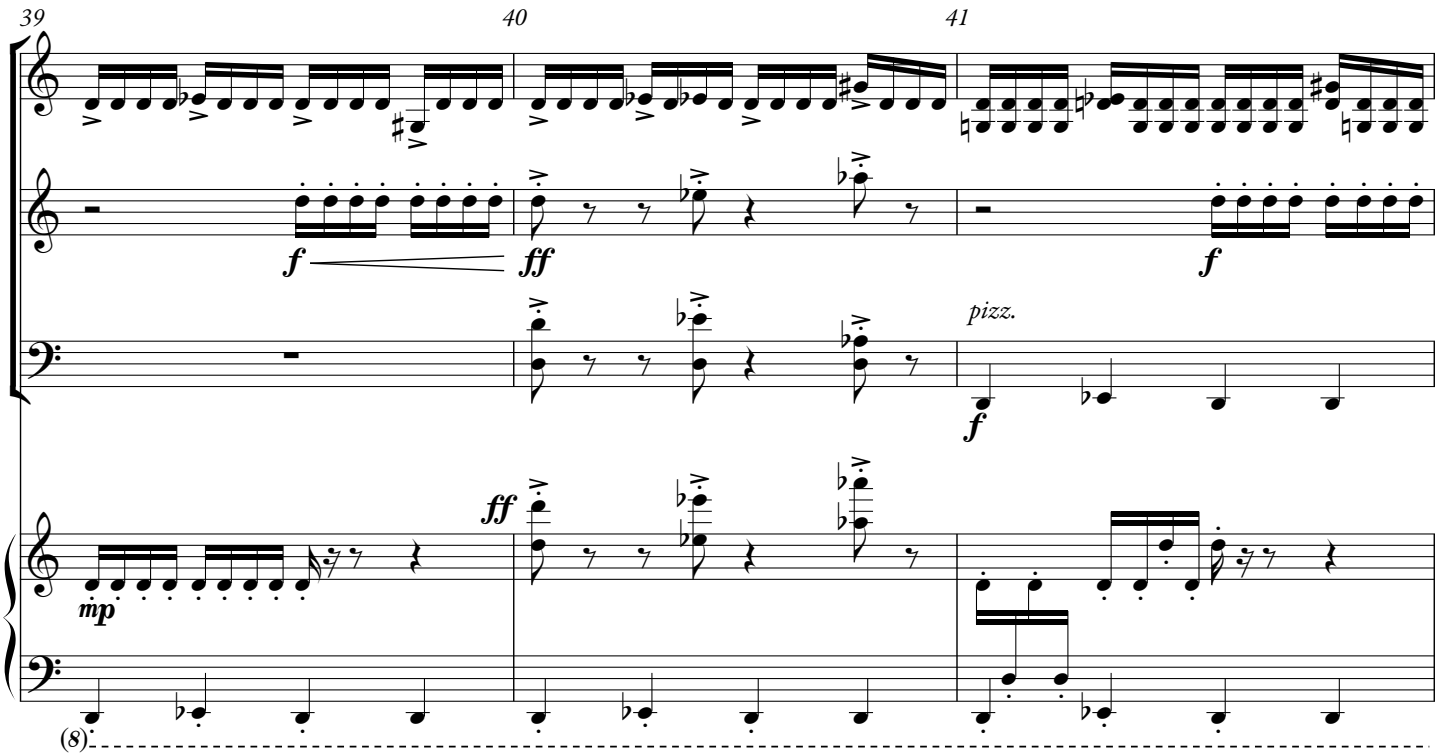


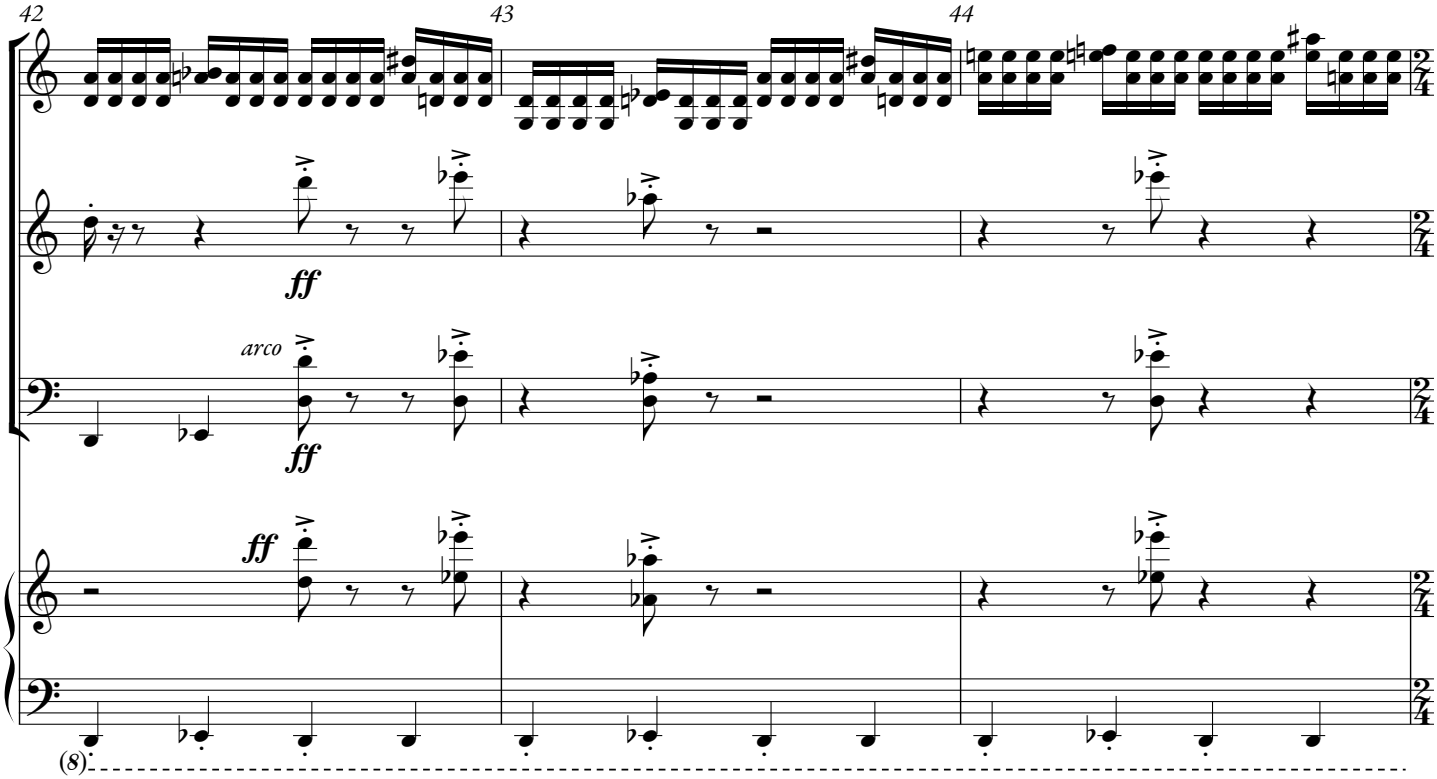
play very fast, constantly varying patterns within and including the indicated pitches

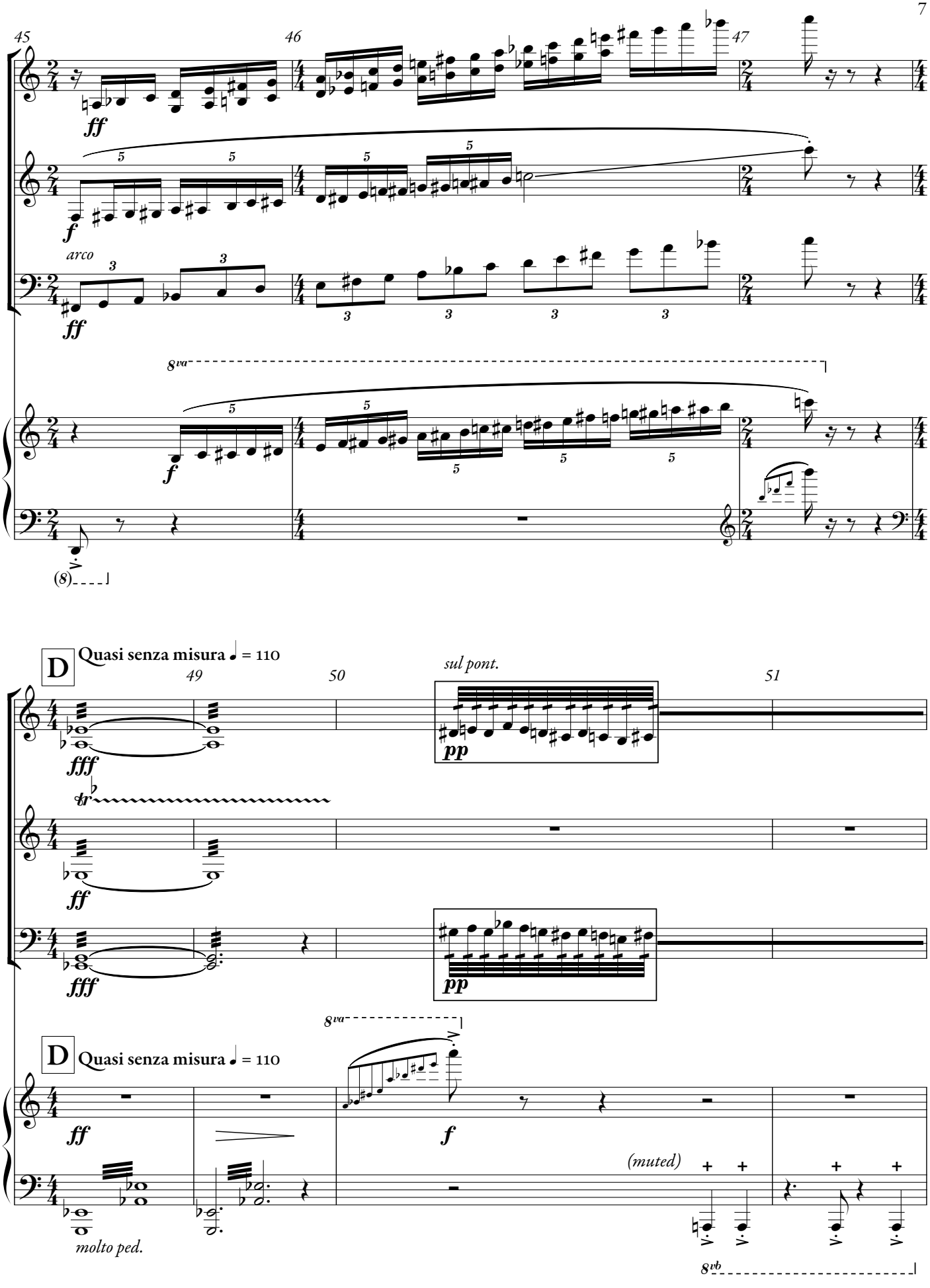

16
sul tasto
17
sul pont.
B
Molto allegro ♩ = c. 152 (at least)
quasi-cadenza
ff marc.
slowly shift the pattern up, ad lib.
sffz
molto sul pont.
slowly shift the pattern down the fingerboard, ad lib.
slowly move the pattern up the keyboard ad lib.
19
20
21
p sub.
22
23
24
f
arco

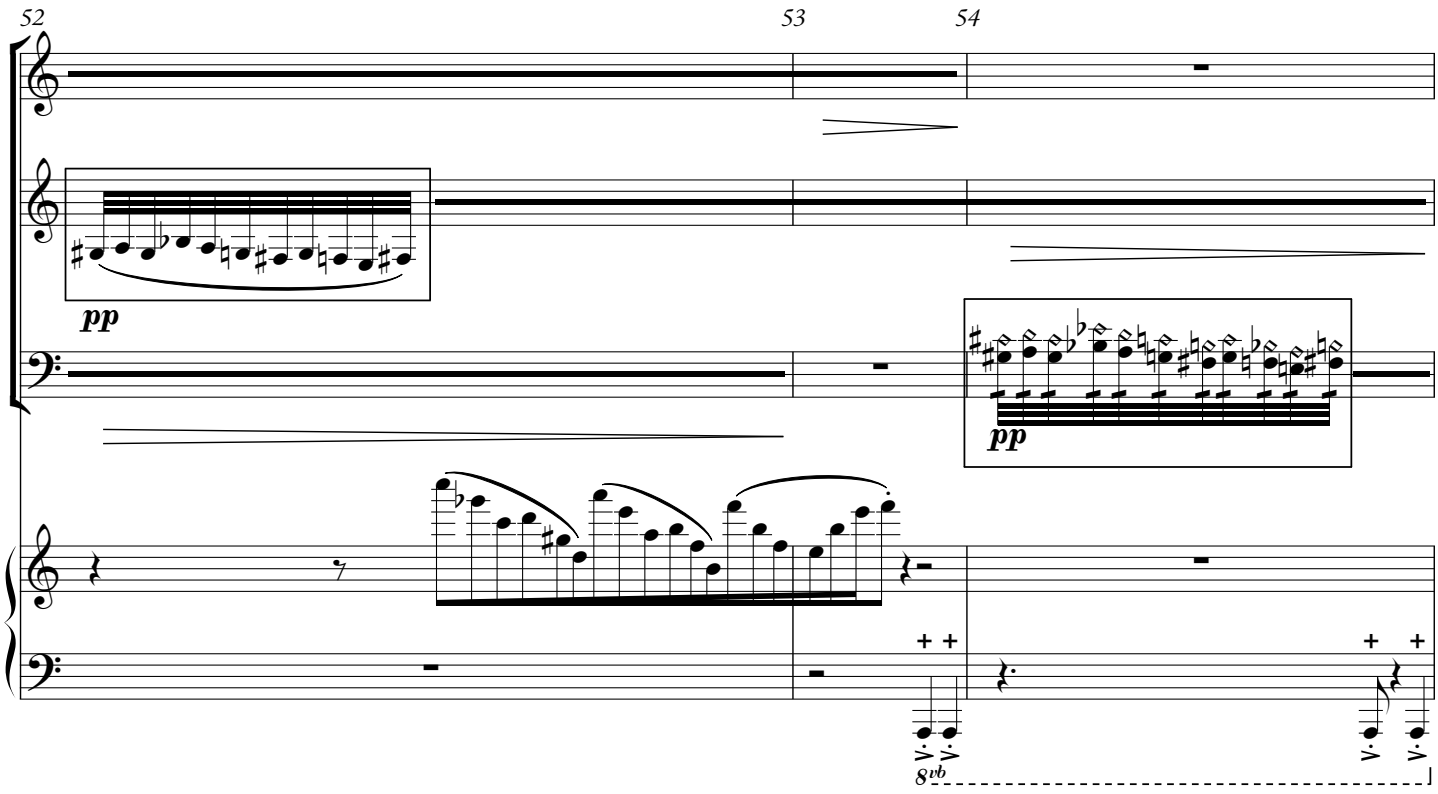

25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
p sub.
sffz
f
arco
pizz.
pp
8vb
ff
(8)

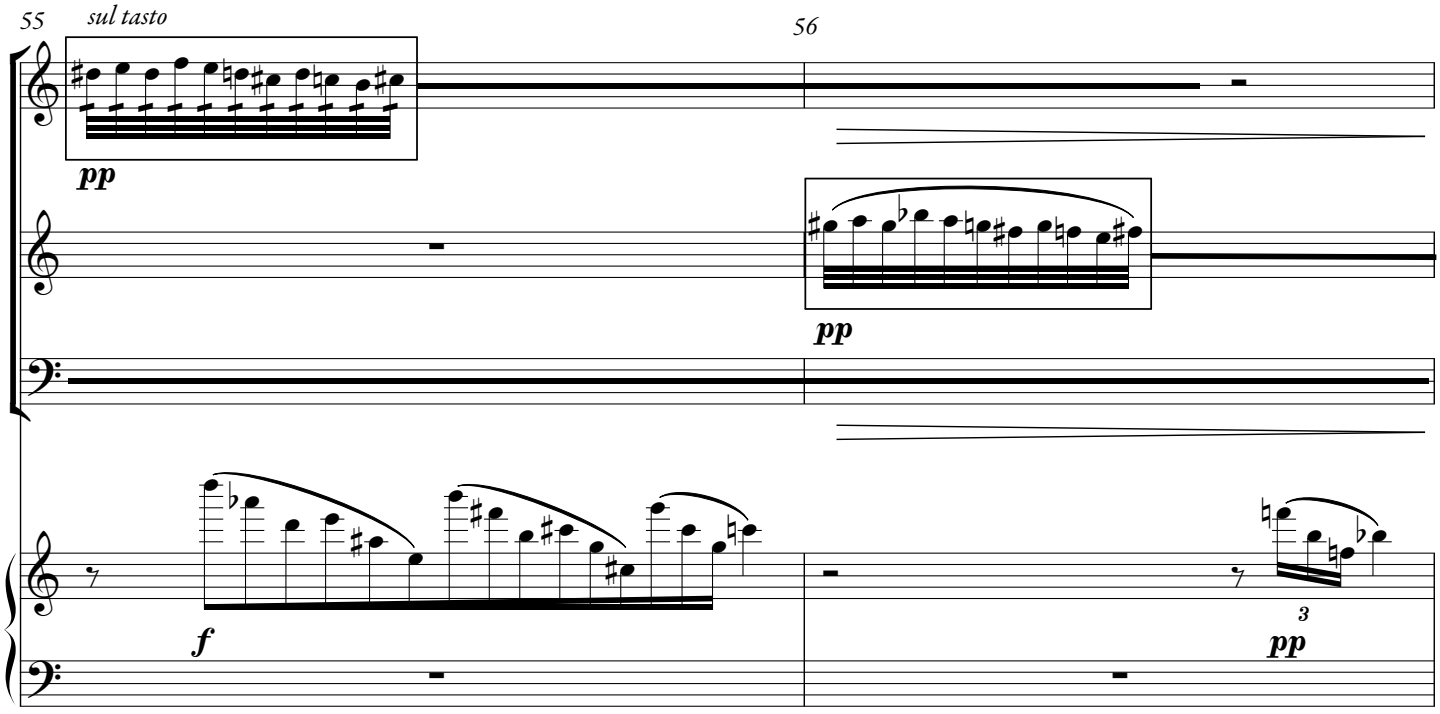

33
34
35
ff
p
ff
p
ff
p
ff
p
ff
36
37
C
f
ff
pizz.
arco
f
ff
C
ff
p
8vb

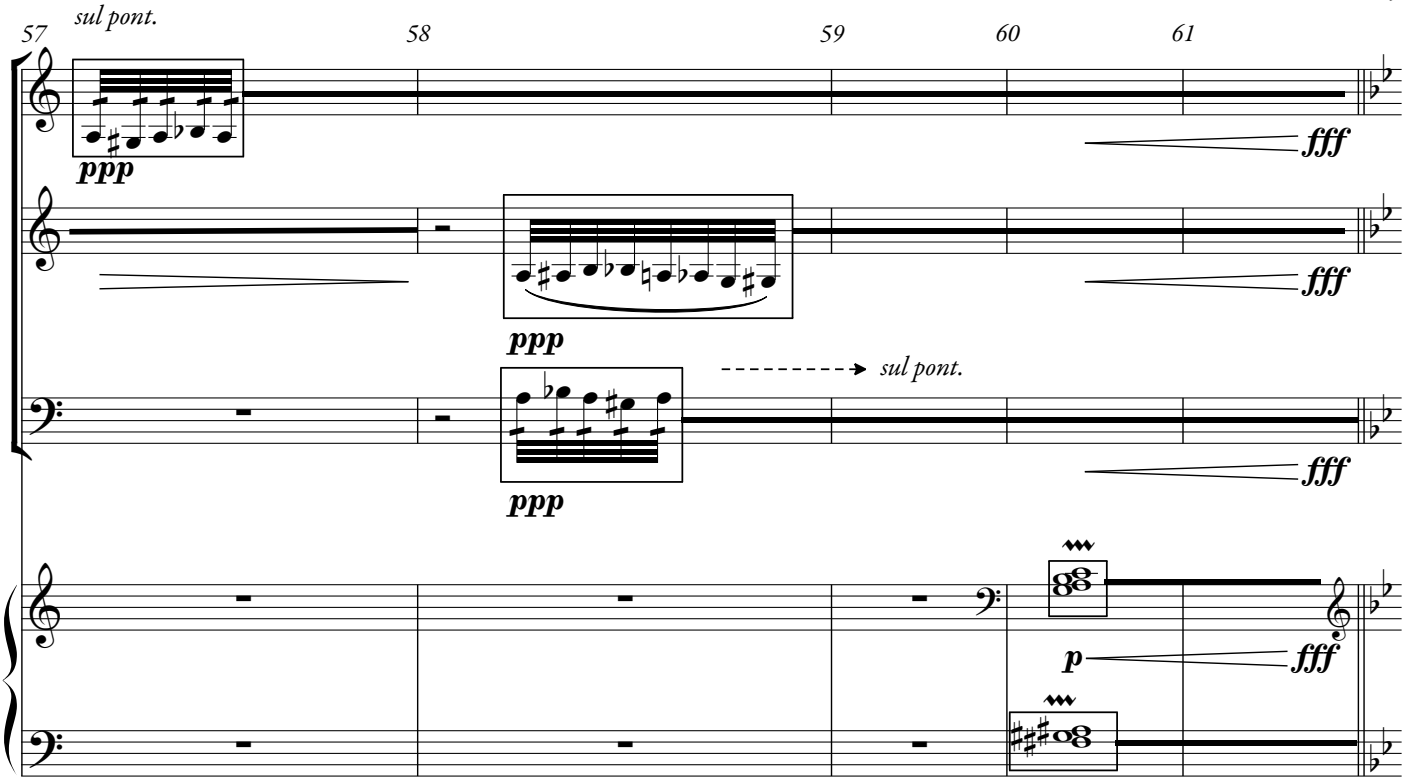

39
40
41
f
ff
f
pizz.
f
ff
mp
(8)

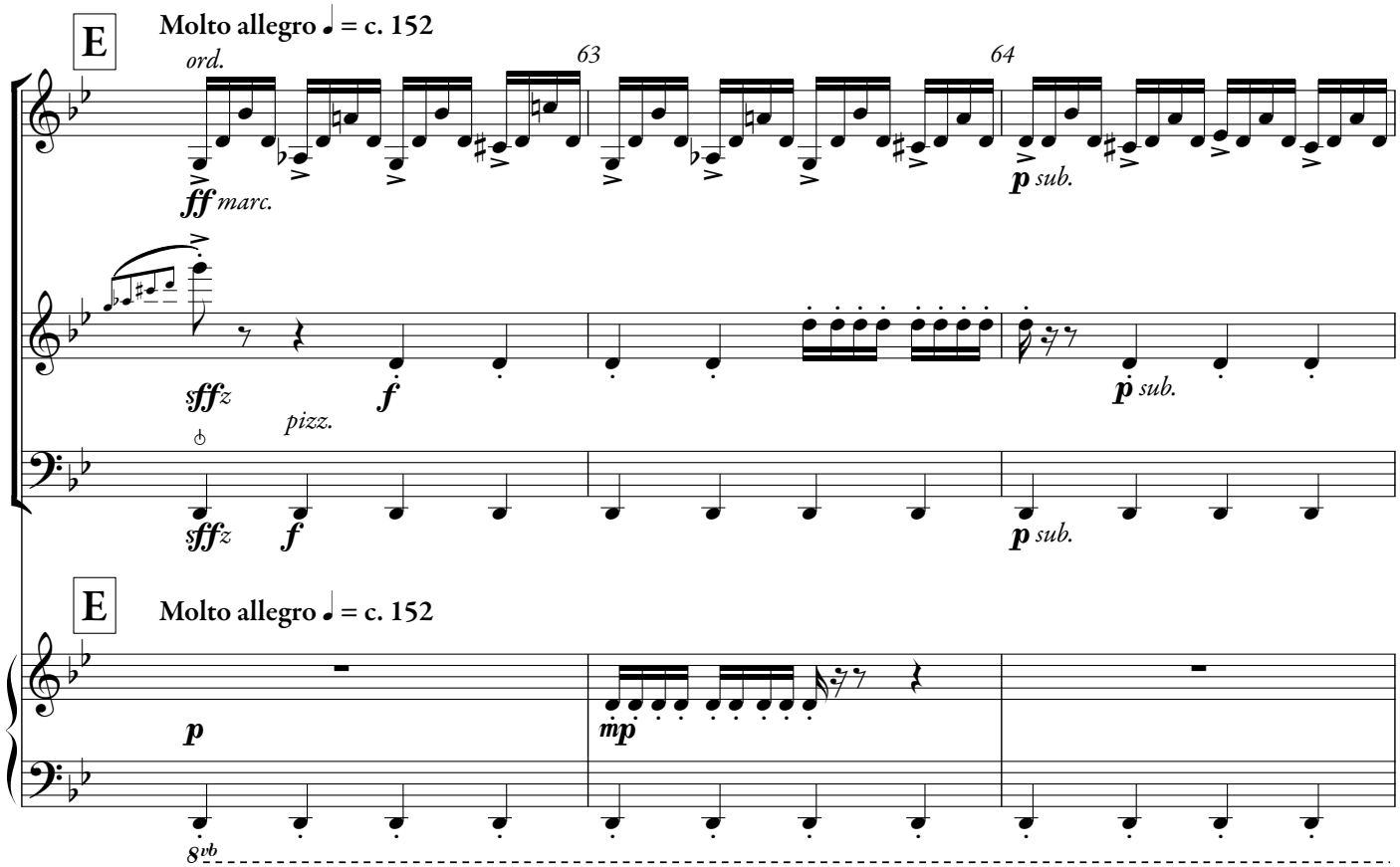

42
43
44
ff
arco
ff
ff
(8)

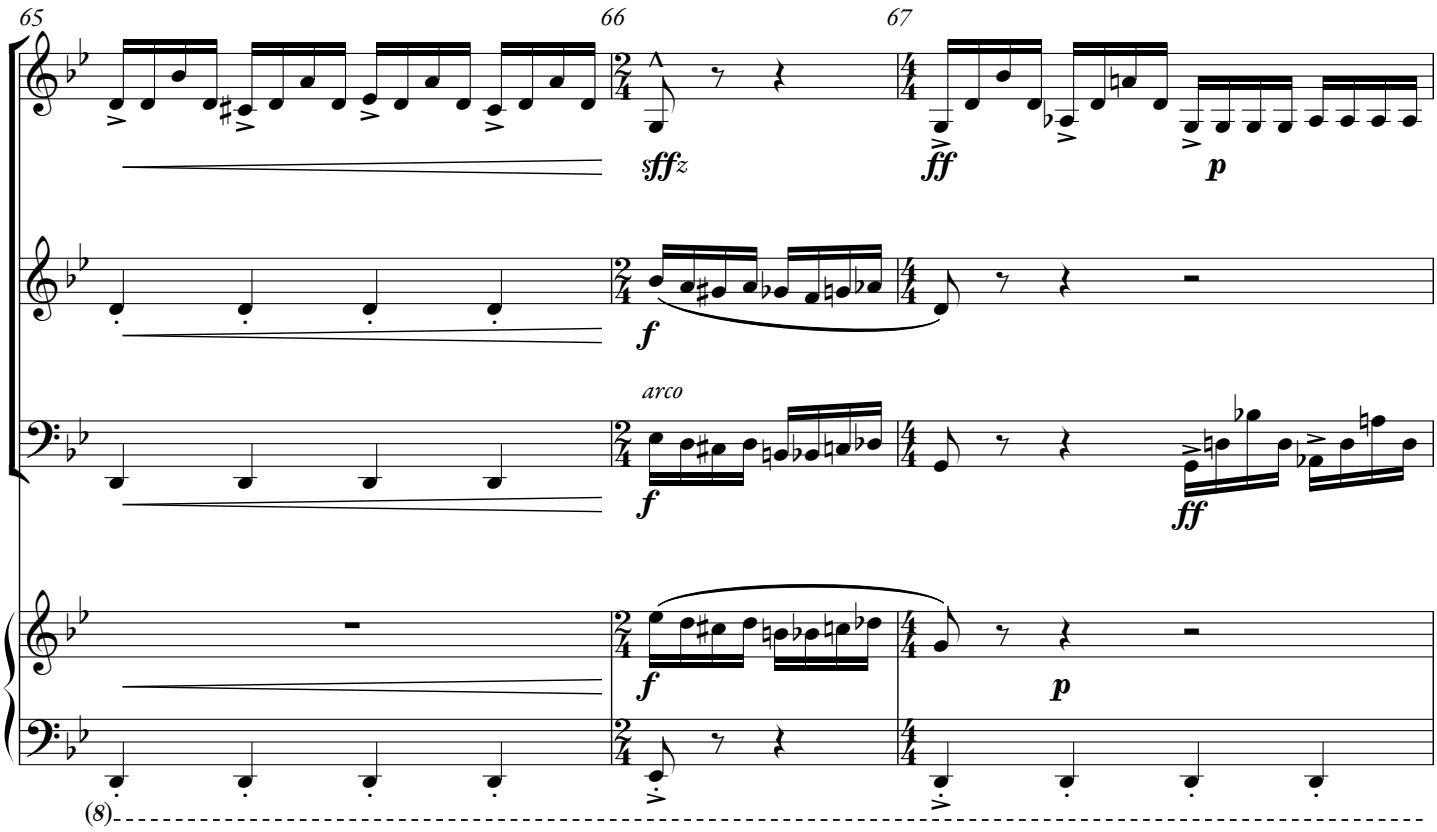

45
46
47
ff
f
arco
ff
8va
f
(8)
D
Quasi senza misura ♩ = 110
49
50
sul pont.
51
fff
pp
tr
ff
fff
pp
D
Quasi senza misura ♩ = 110
8va
ff
f
(muted)
molto ped.
8vb

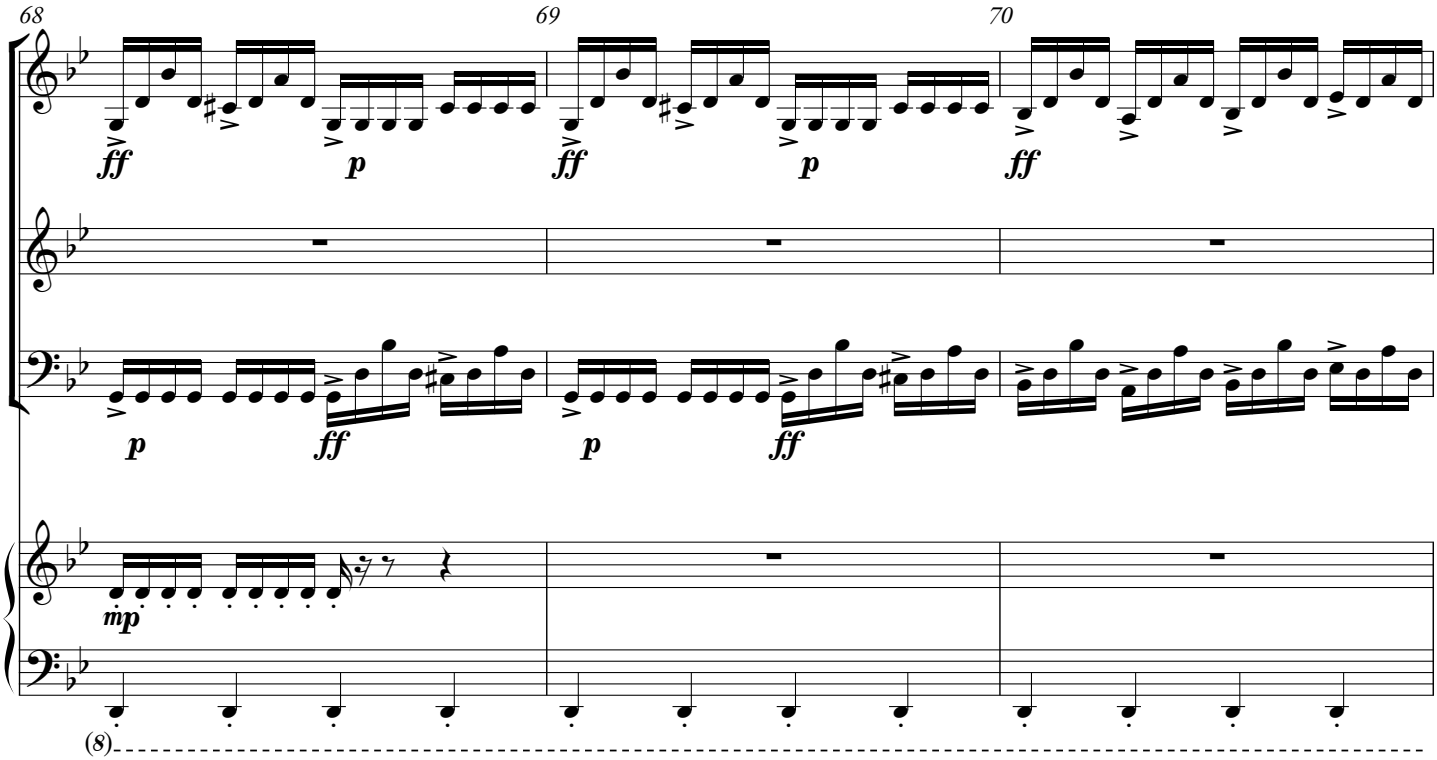

52
53
54
pp
pp
8vb

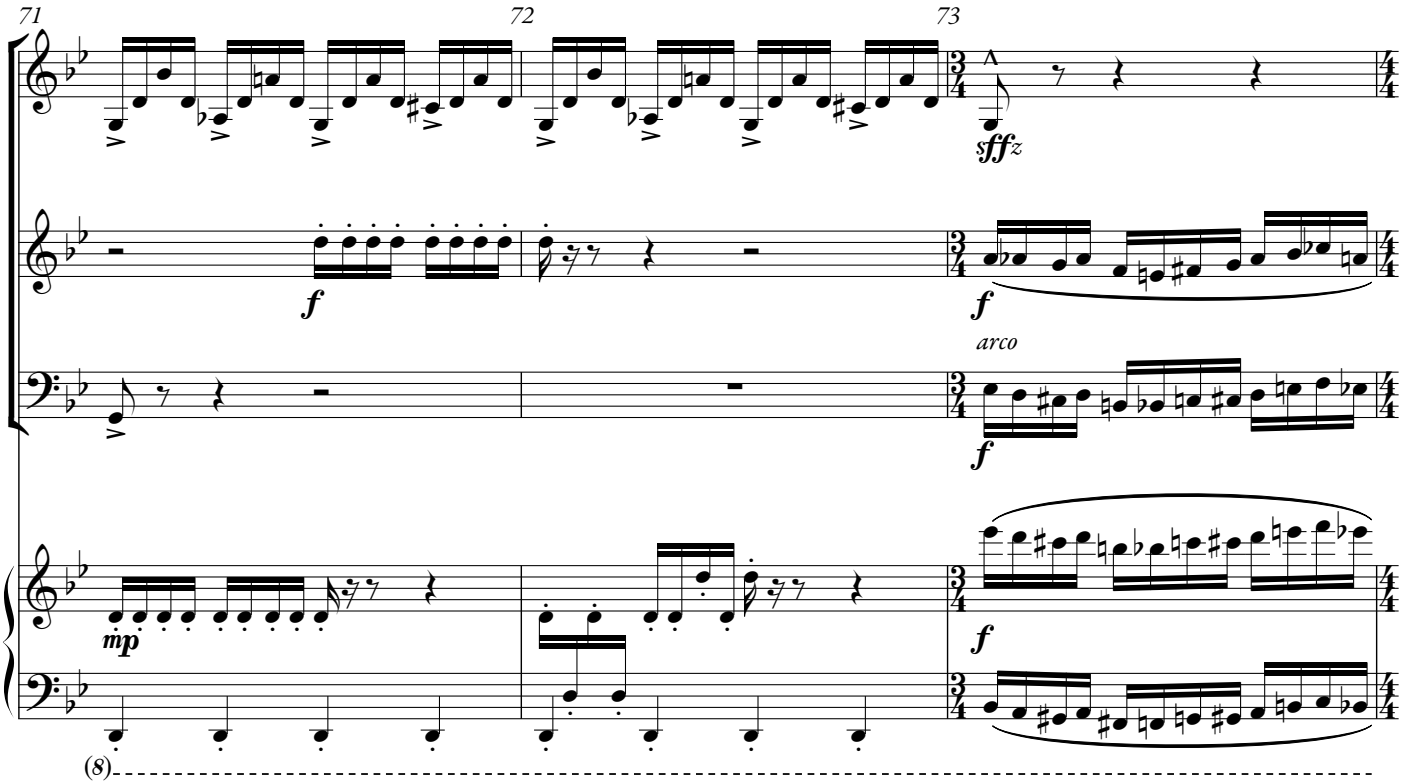

55
sul tasto
56
pp
pp
f
3
pp

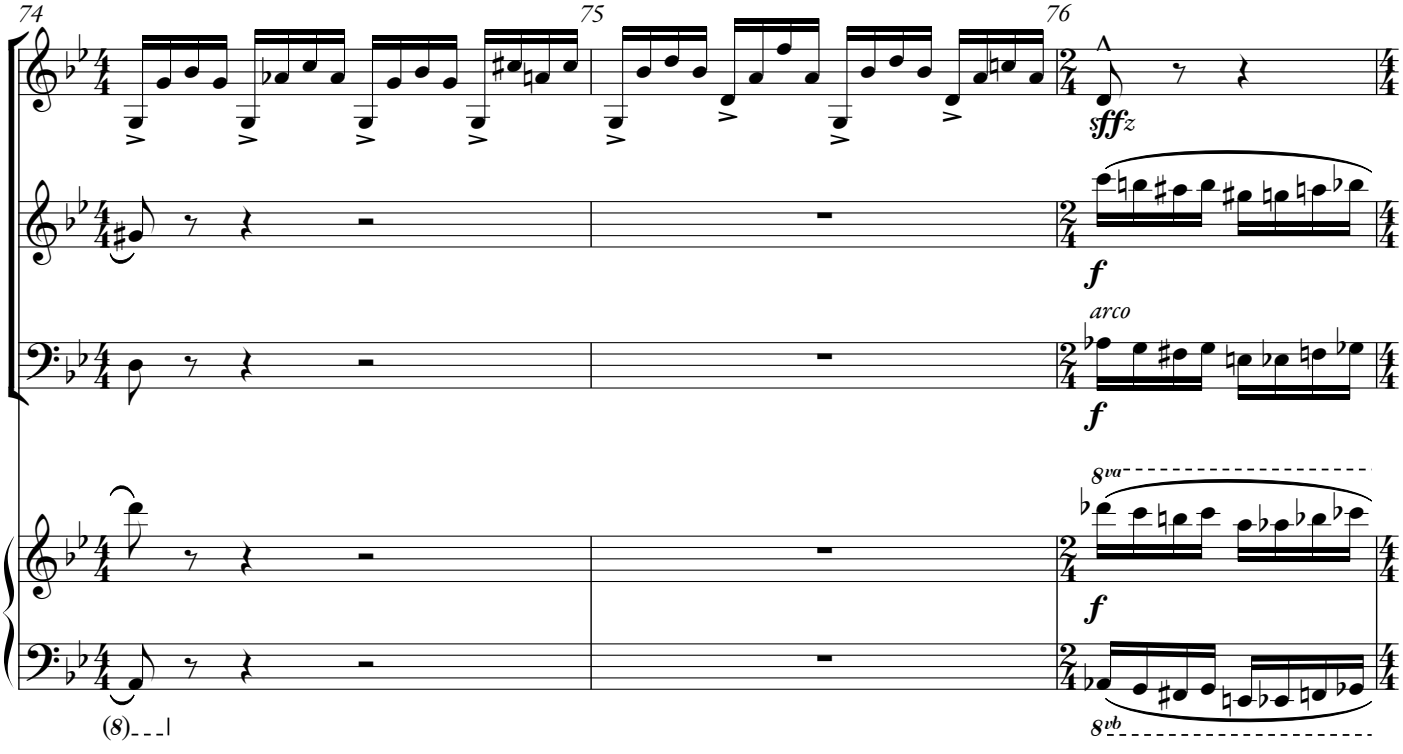

57
sul pont.
58
59
60
61
ppp
fff
ppp
fff
ppp
sul pont.
fff
p
fff

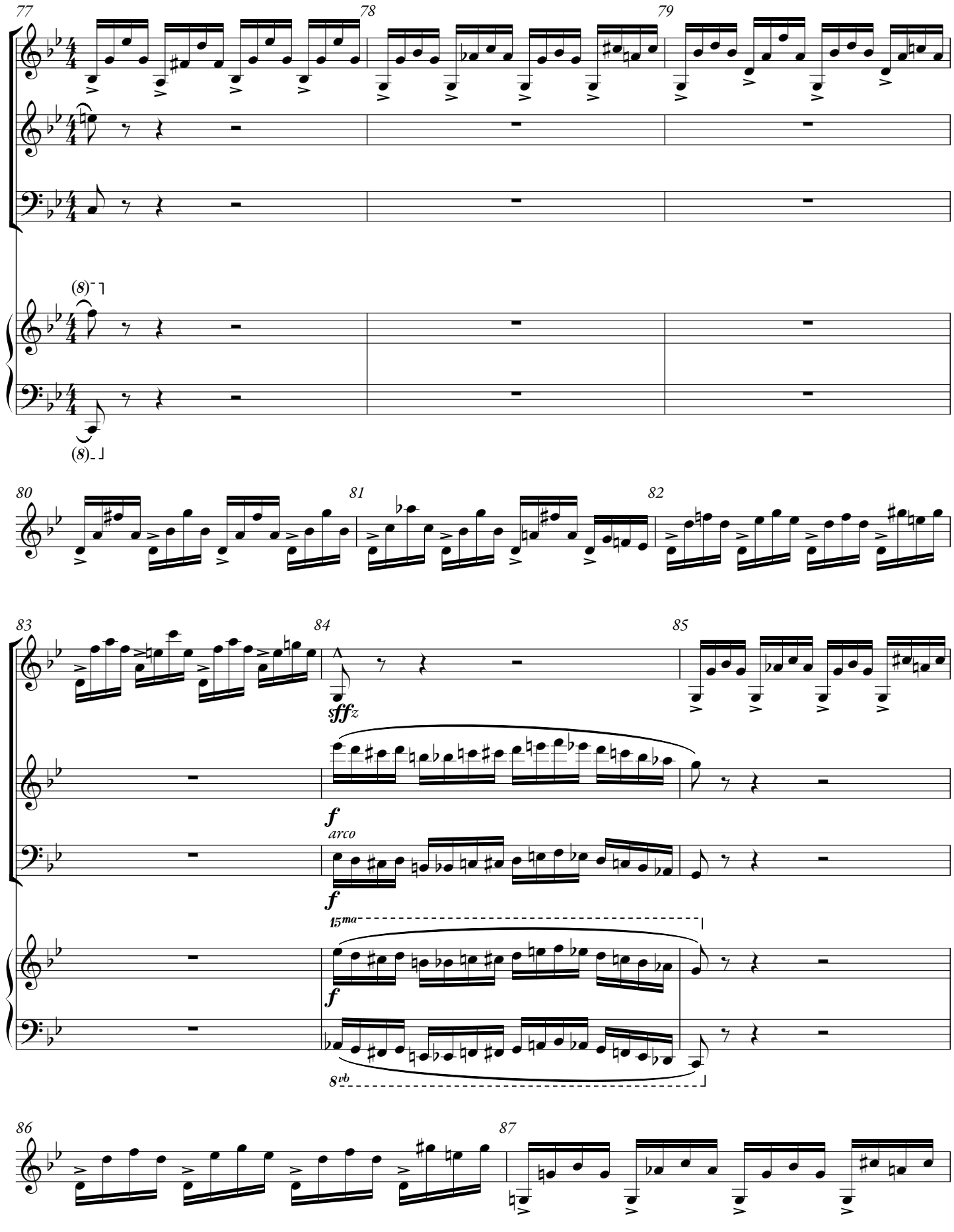

E
Molto allegro ♩ = c. 152
ord.
63
64
ff marc.
p sub.
sfffz
f
pizz.
p sub.
sfffz
f
p sub.
E
Molto allegro ♩ = c. 152
p
mp
8vb

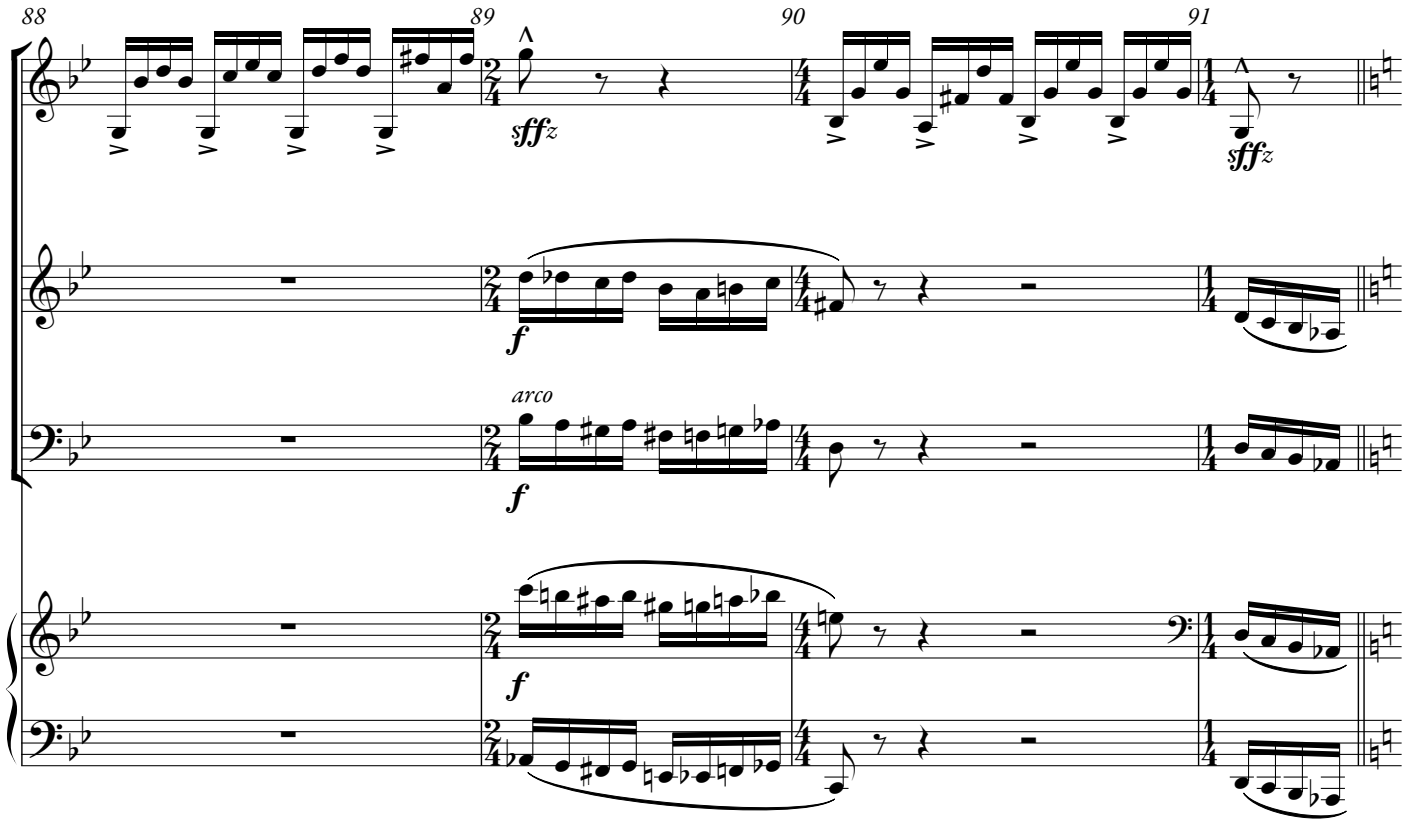

65
66
67
sffz
ff
p
f
arco
f
ff
f
p
(8)

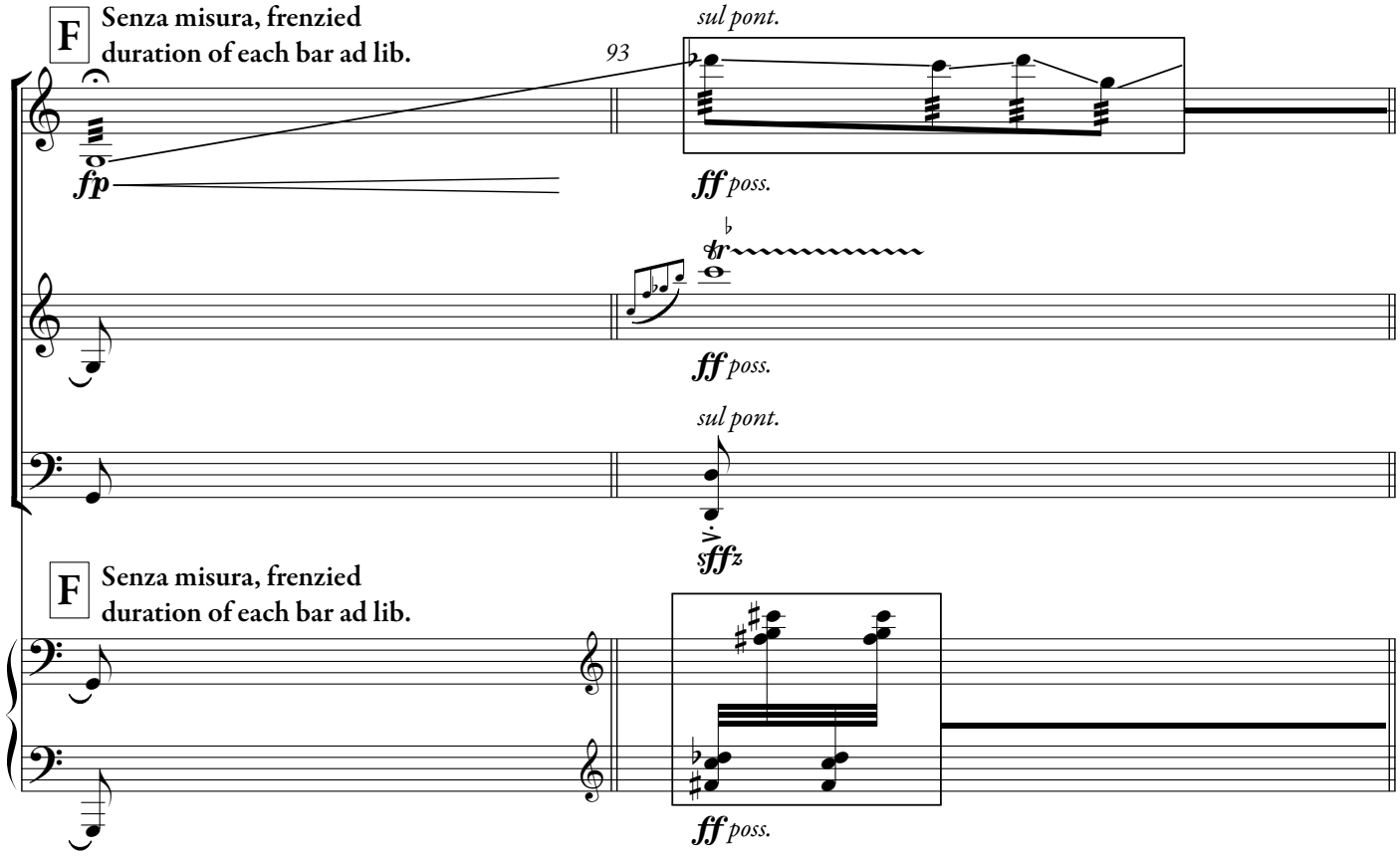

68
69
70
ff
p
ff
p
ff
p
ff
p
ff
mp
(8)

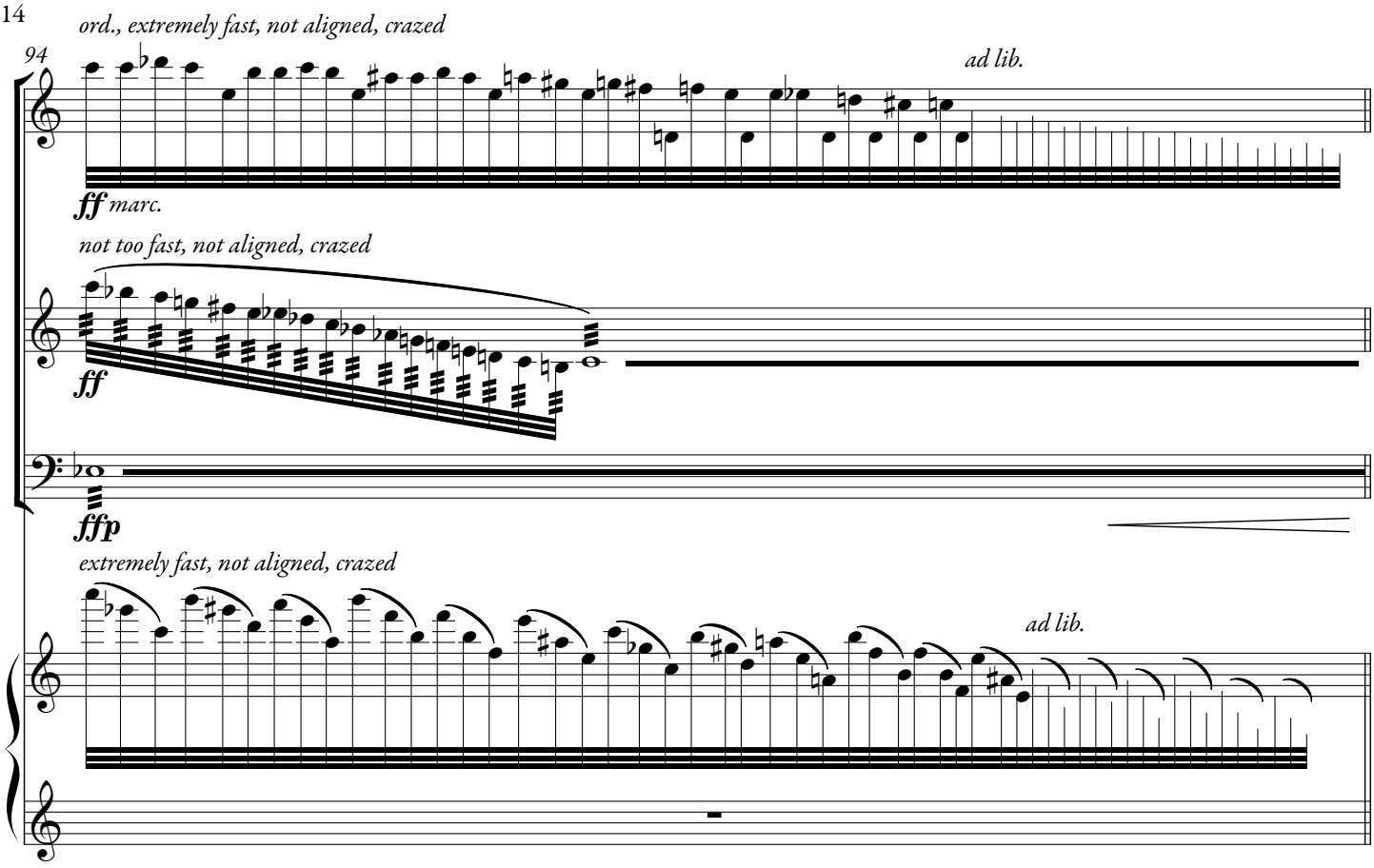

71
72
73
sffz
f
f
arco
f
mp
f
(8)

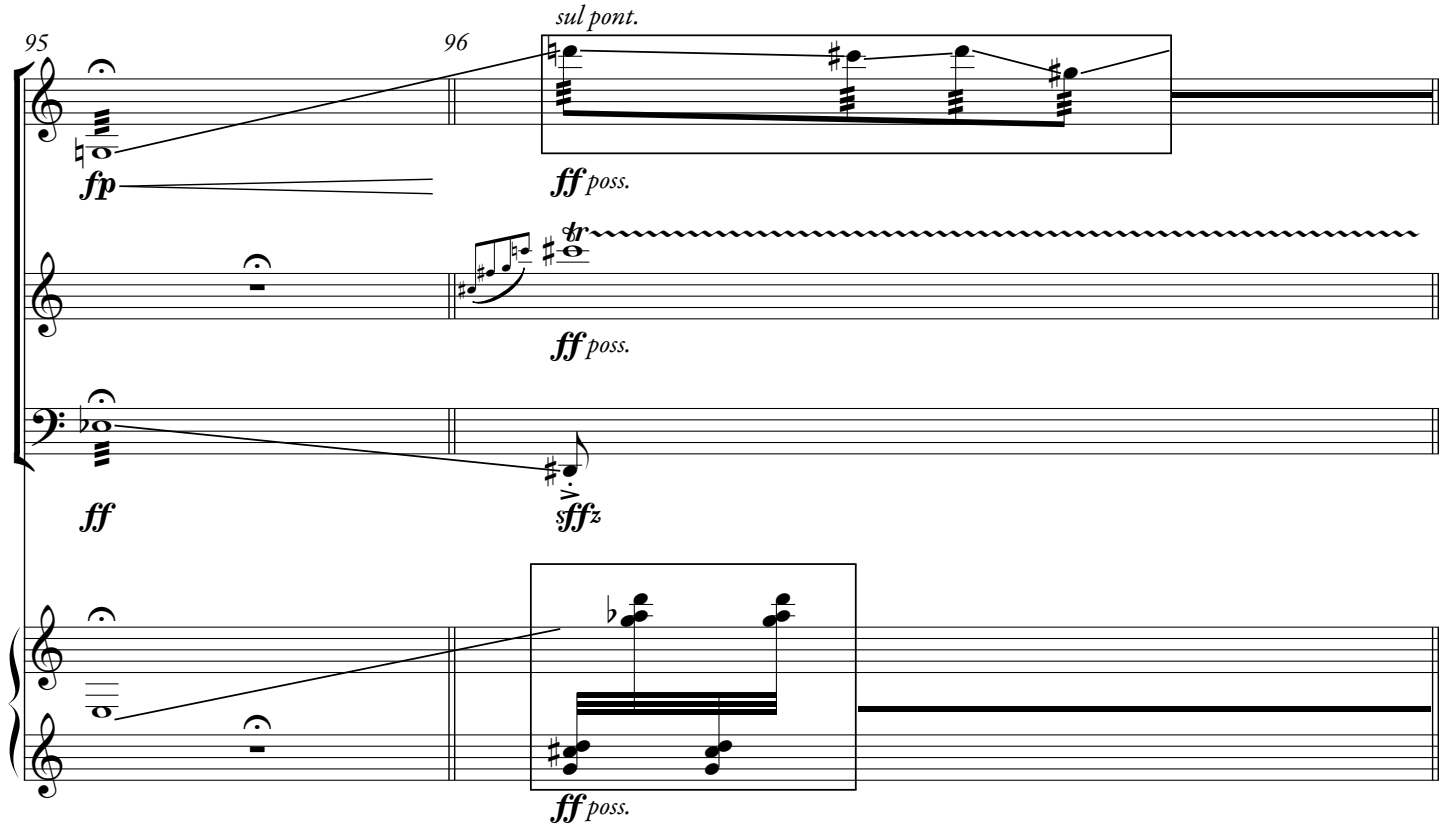

74
75
76
sffz
f
f
arco
f
8va
f
(8)
8vb

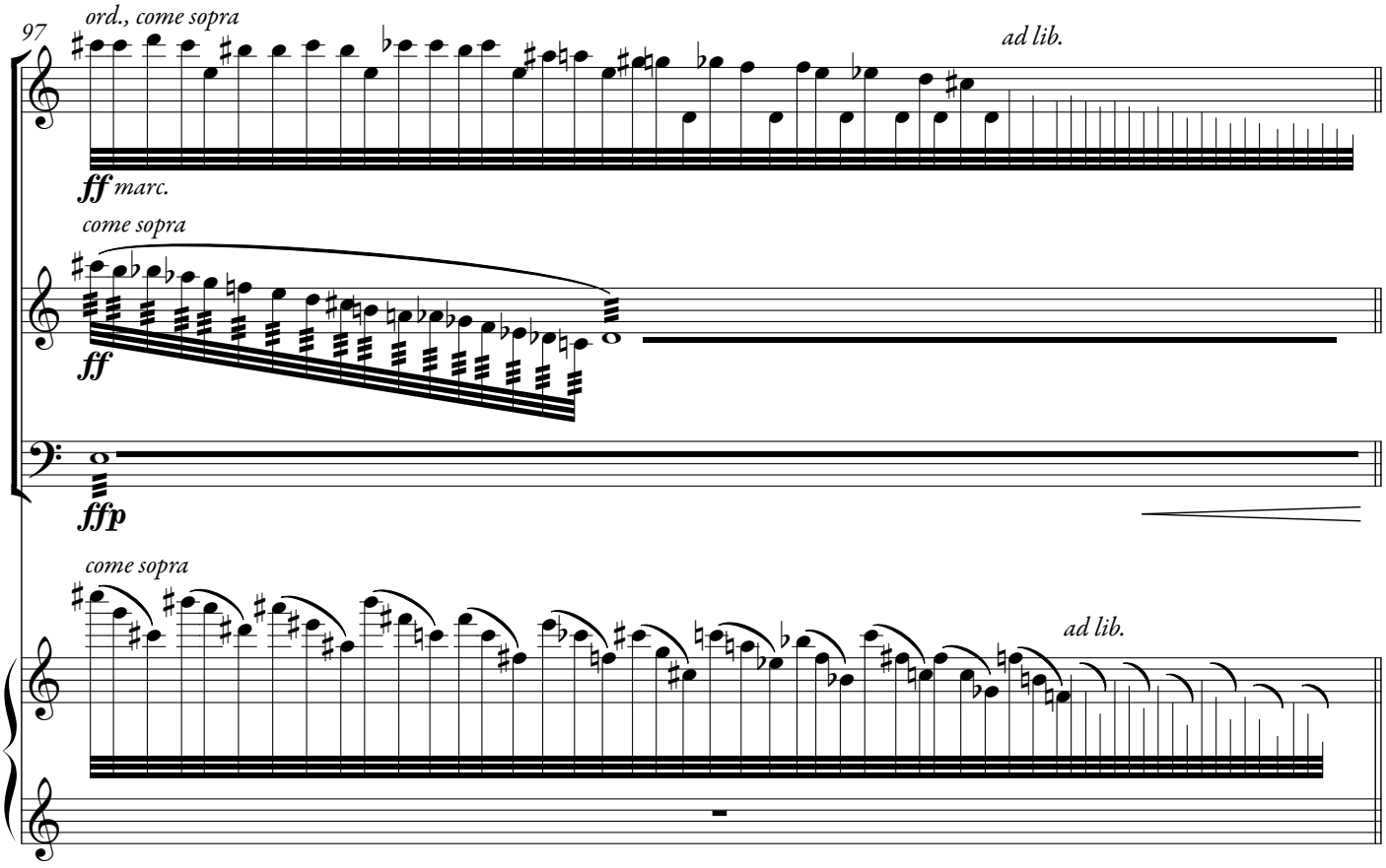

77
78
79
(8)
(8)
80
81
82
83
84
85
sffz
f
arco
f
15ma
f
8vb
86
87

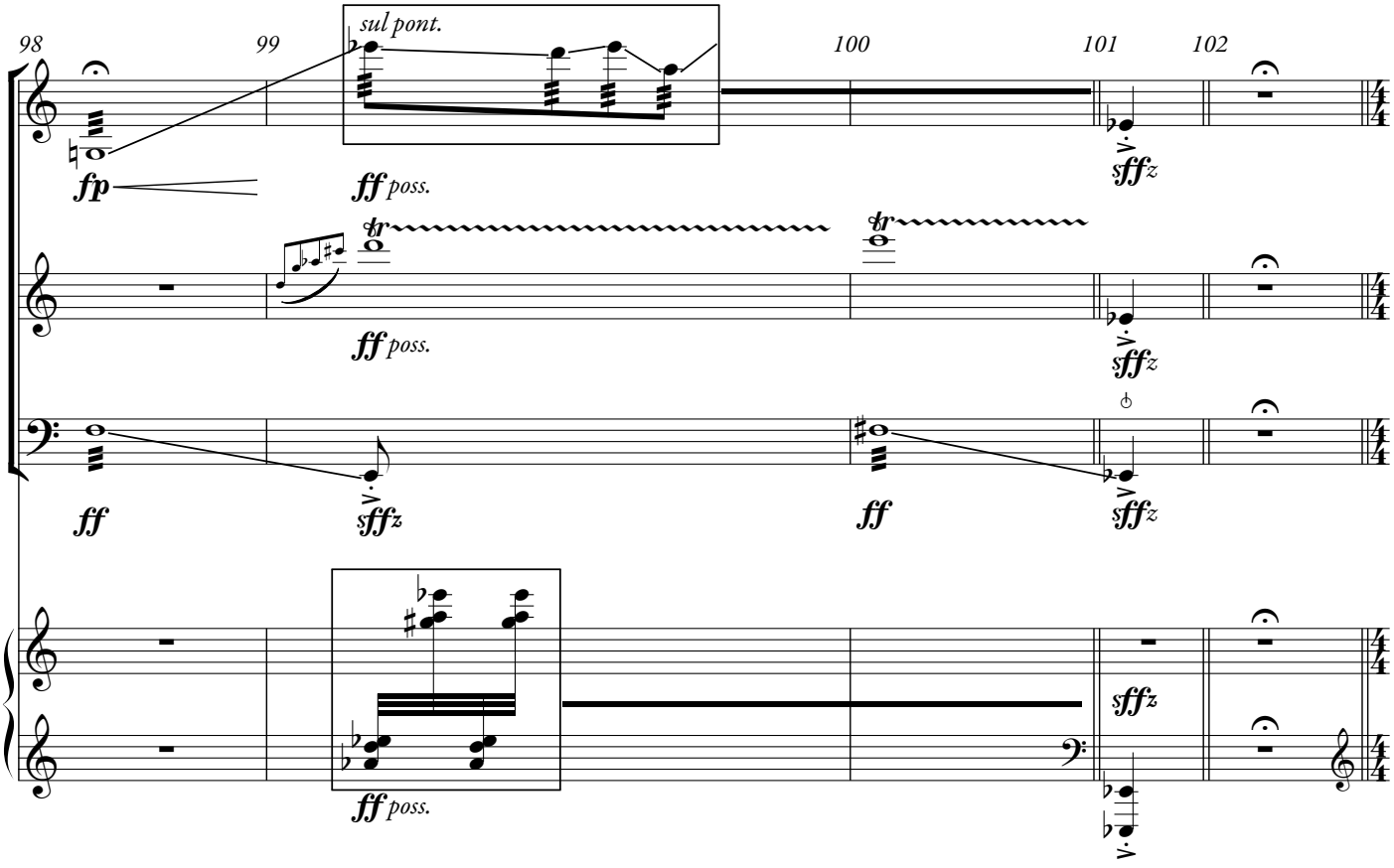

88
89
90
91
sffz
f
arco
f
f
sffz


F
Senza misura, frenzied
duration of each bar ad lib.
93
sul pont.
fp
ff poss.
tr
ff poss.
sul pont.
sffz
F
Senza misura, frenzied
duration of each bar ad lib.
ff poss.

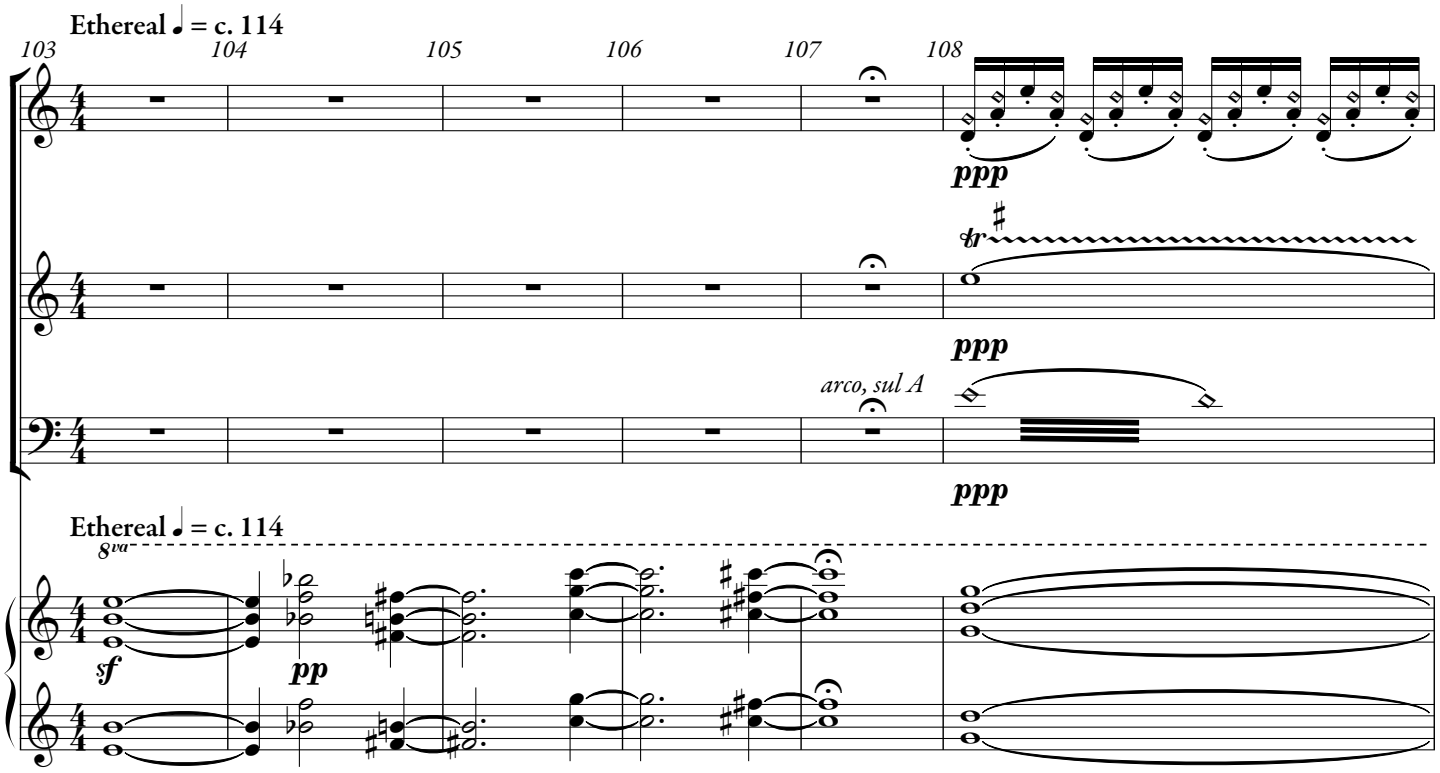

ord., extremely fast, not aligned, crazed
94
ad lib.
ff marc.
not too fast, not aligned, crazed
ff
ffp
extremely fast, not aligned, crazed
ad lib.


95
96
sul pont.
fp
ff poss.
tr
ff poss.
ff
sfffz
ff poss.

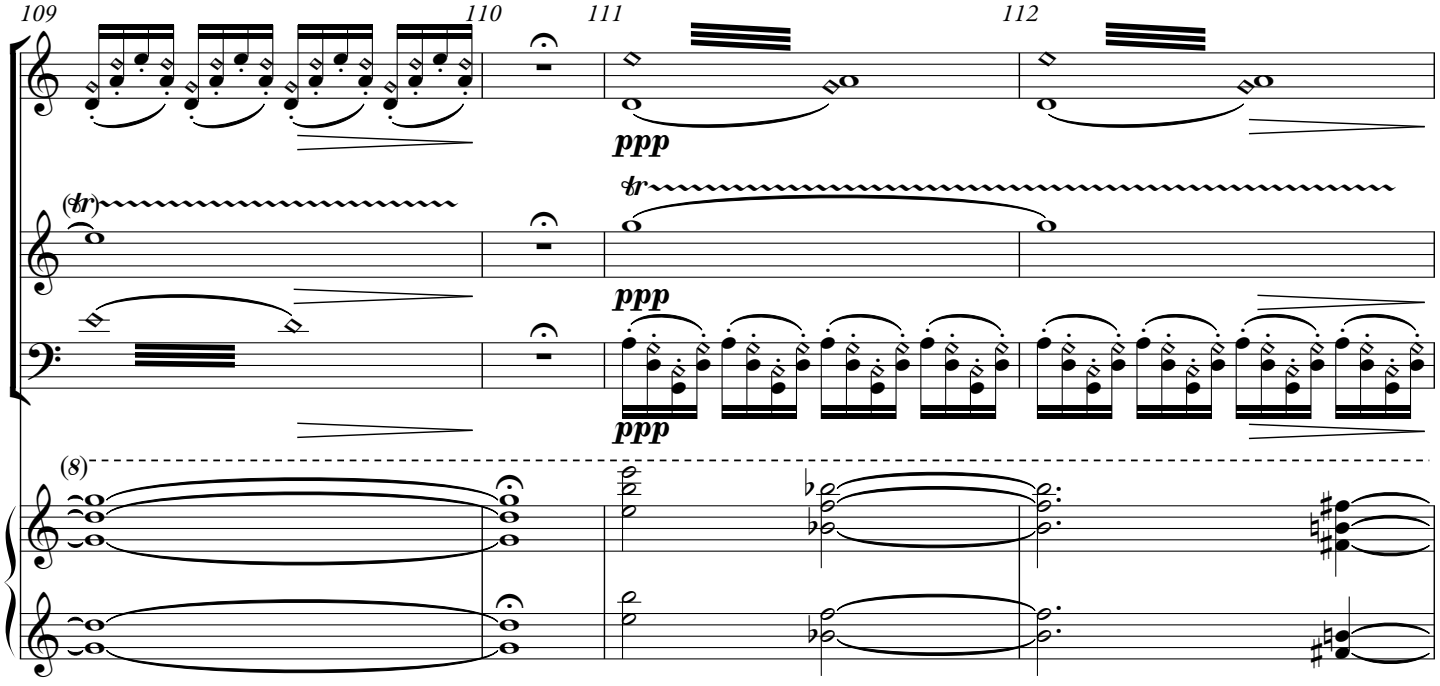

97
ord., come sopra
ad lib.
ff marc.
come sopra
ff
ffp
come sopra
ad lib.


98
99
sul pont.
100
101
102
fp
ff poss.
sffz
ff
ff poss.
sffz
ff
sffz
ff
sffz
sffz
ff poss.
sffz

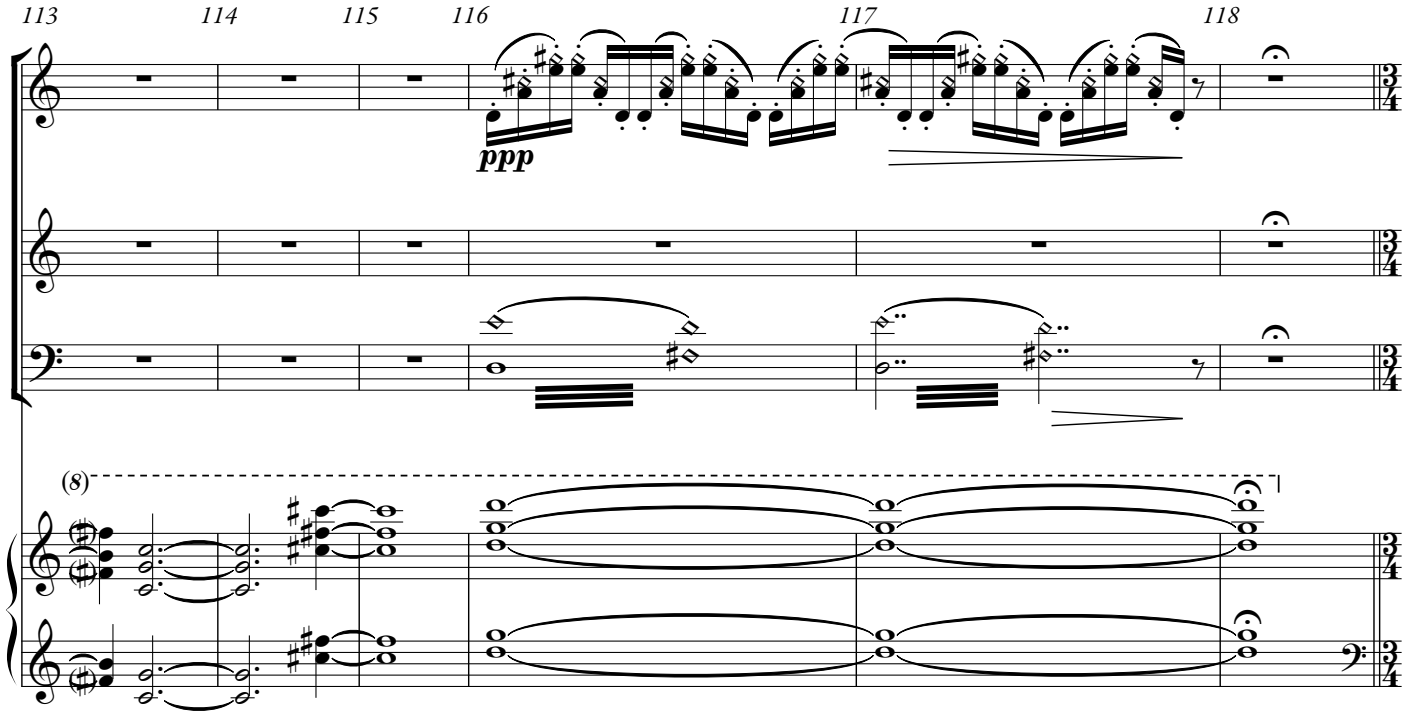
Hope the voyage is a long one.
May there be many a summer morning when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbors seen for the first time;

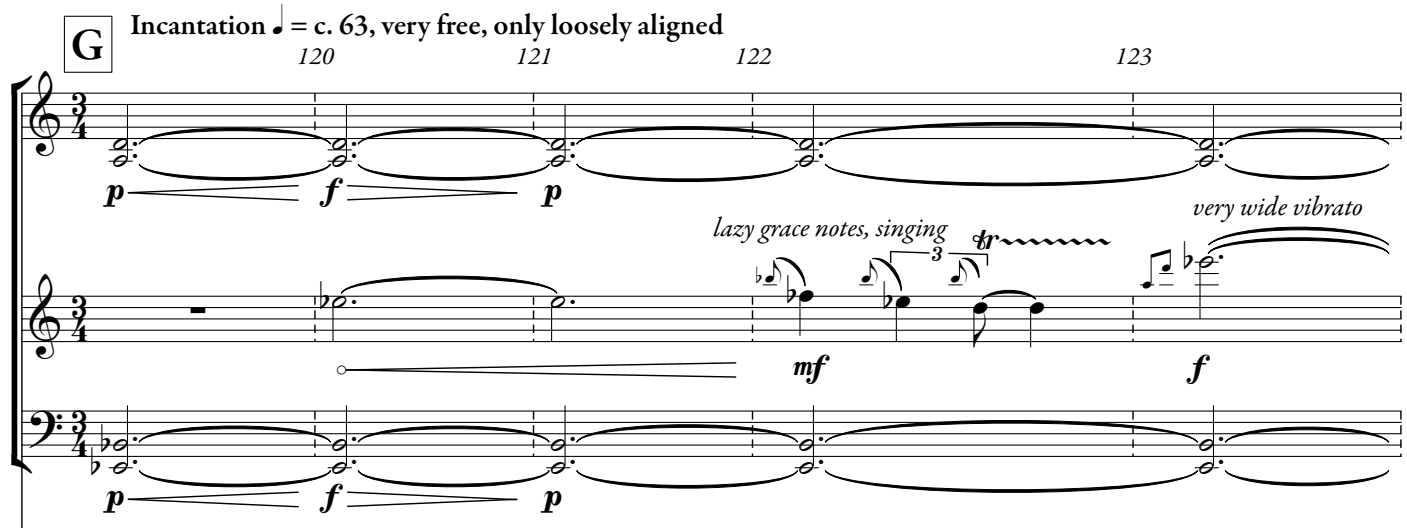


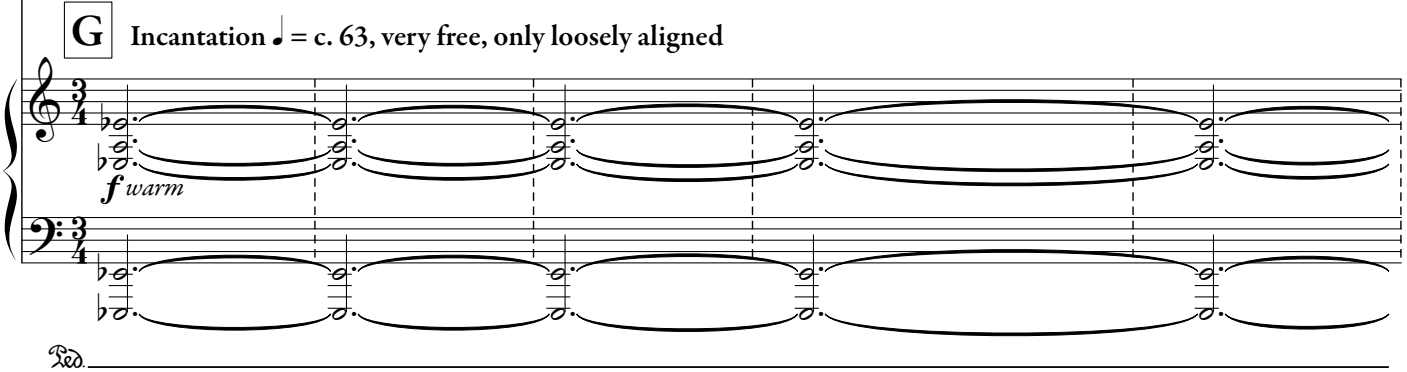
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—

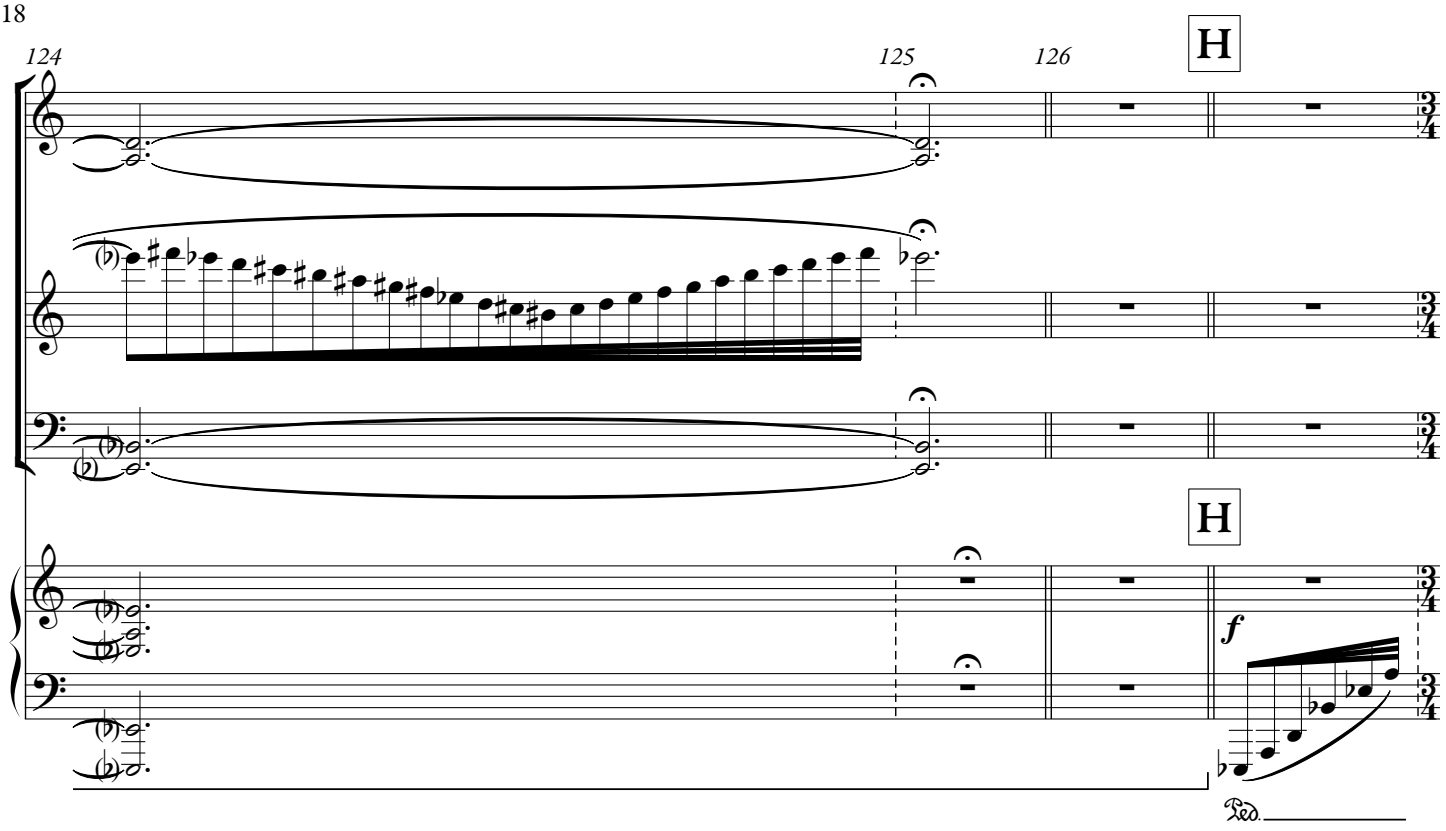


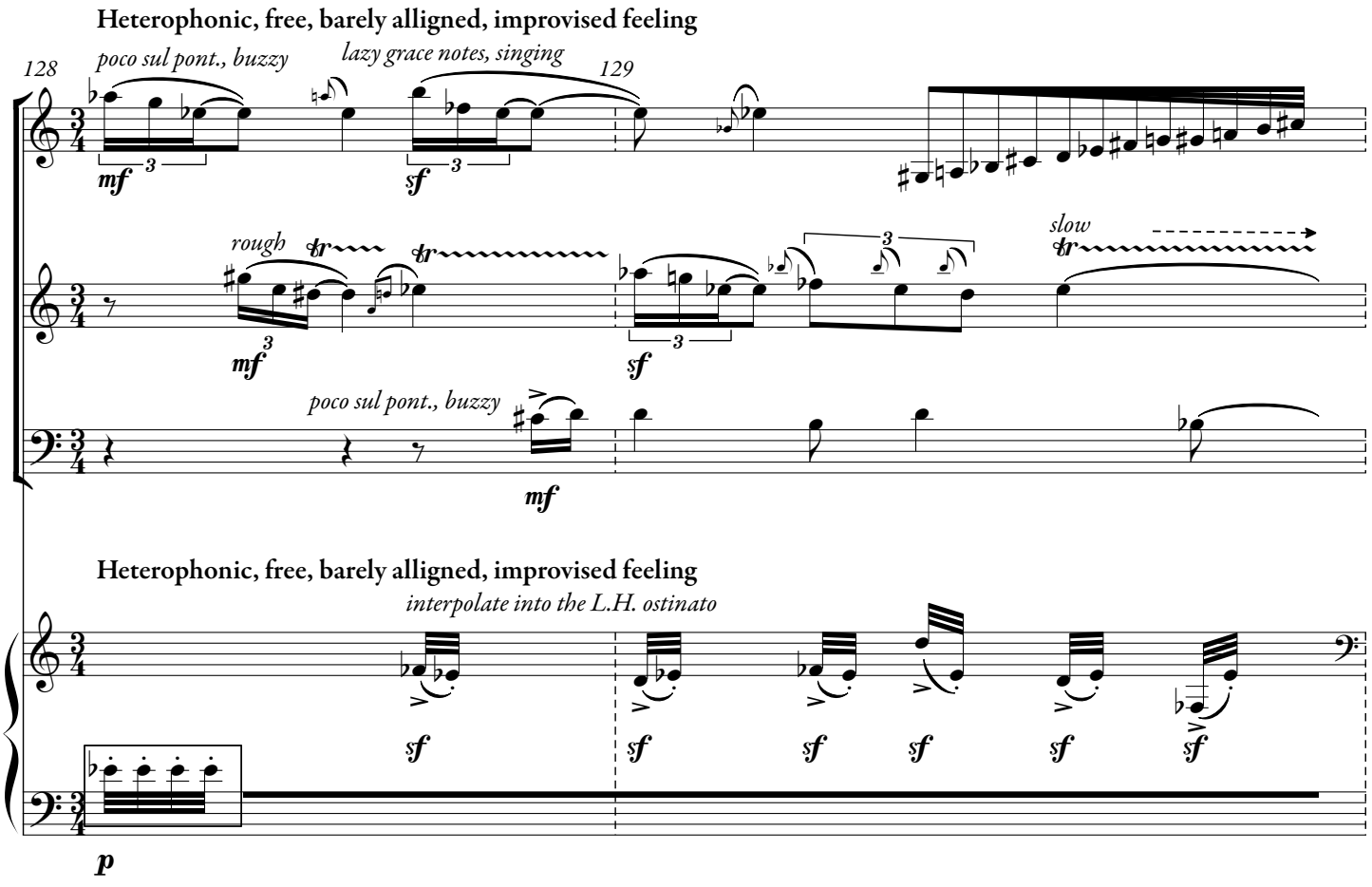
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.

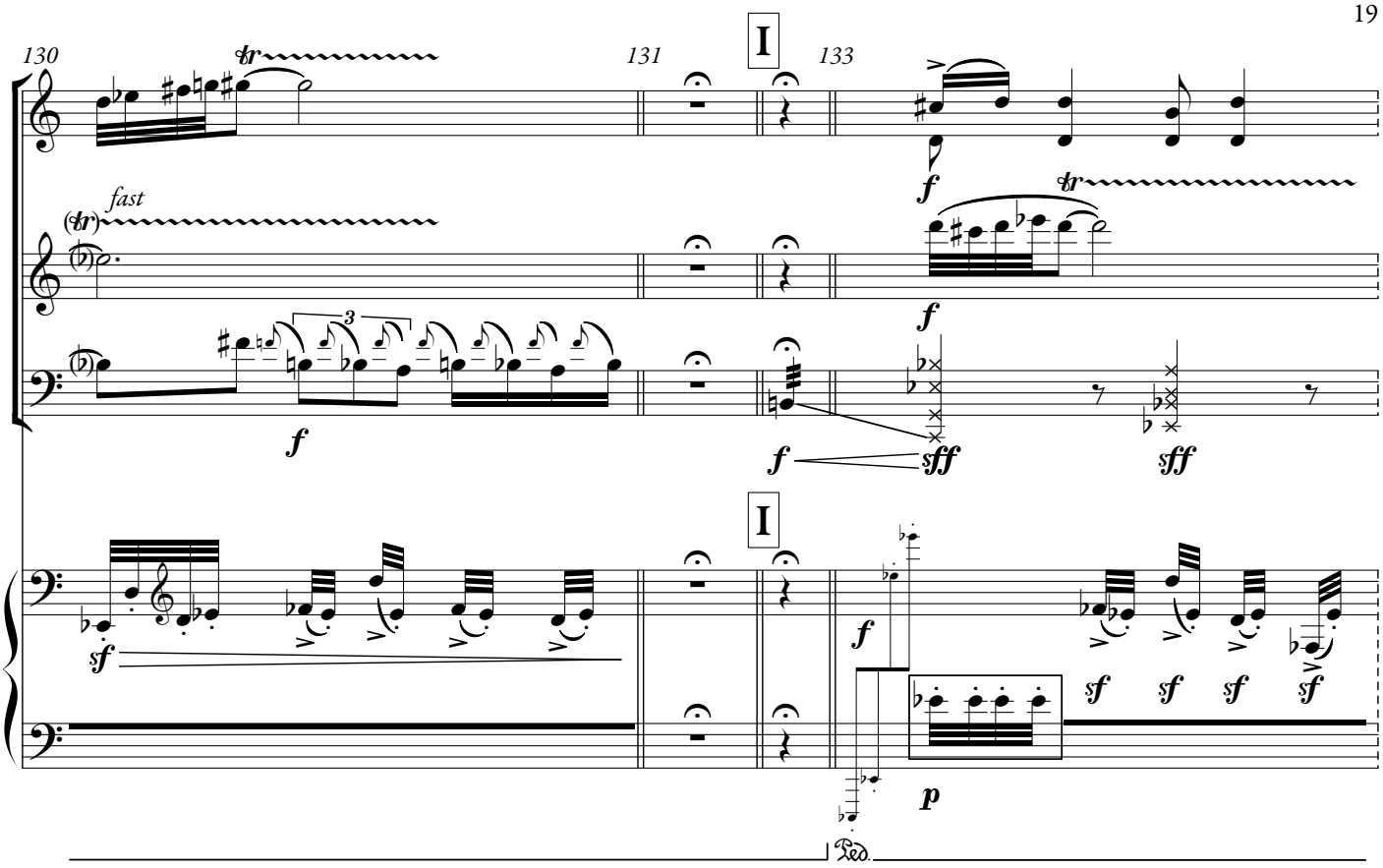


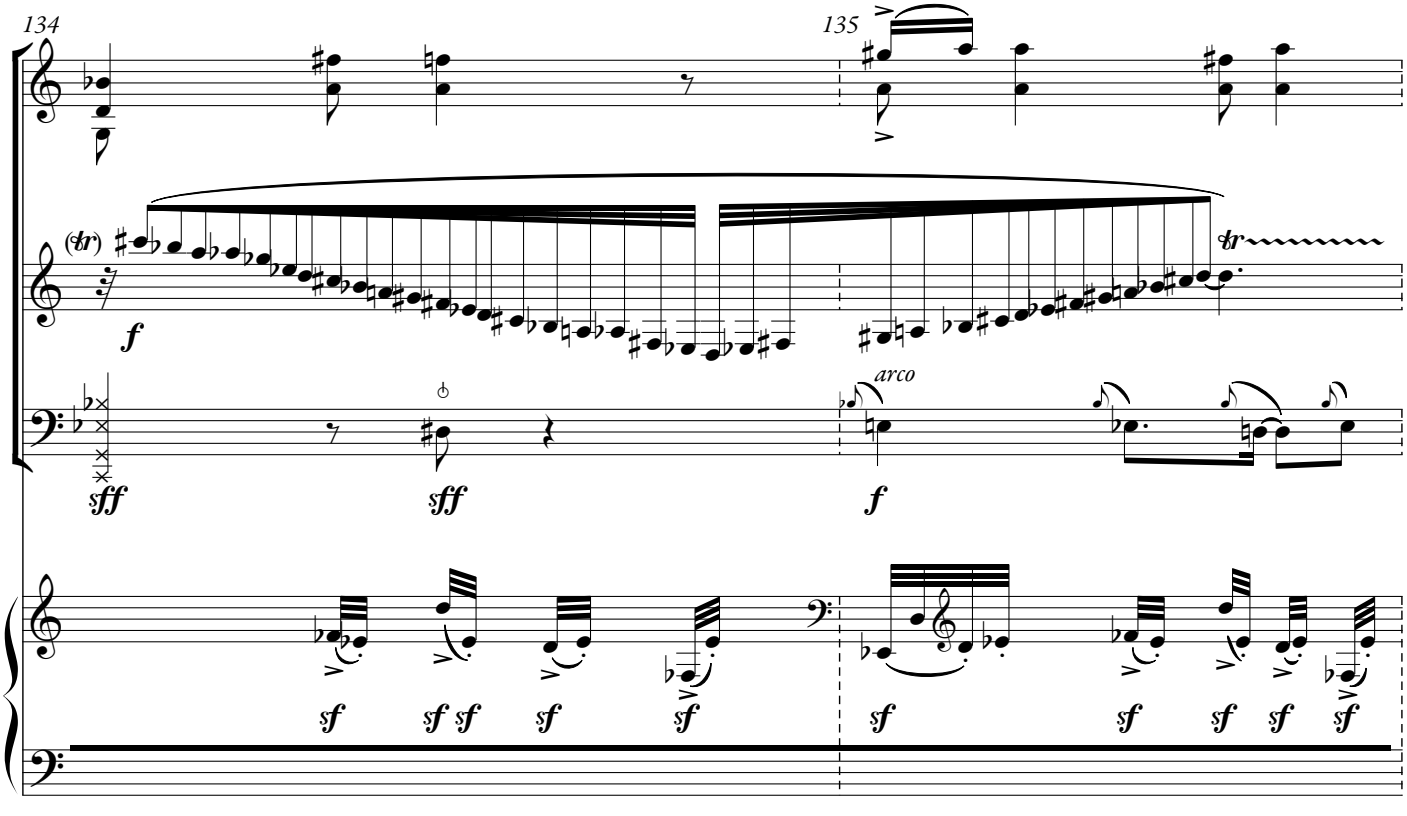


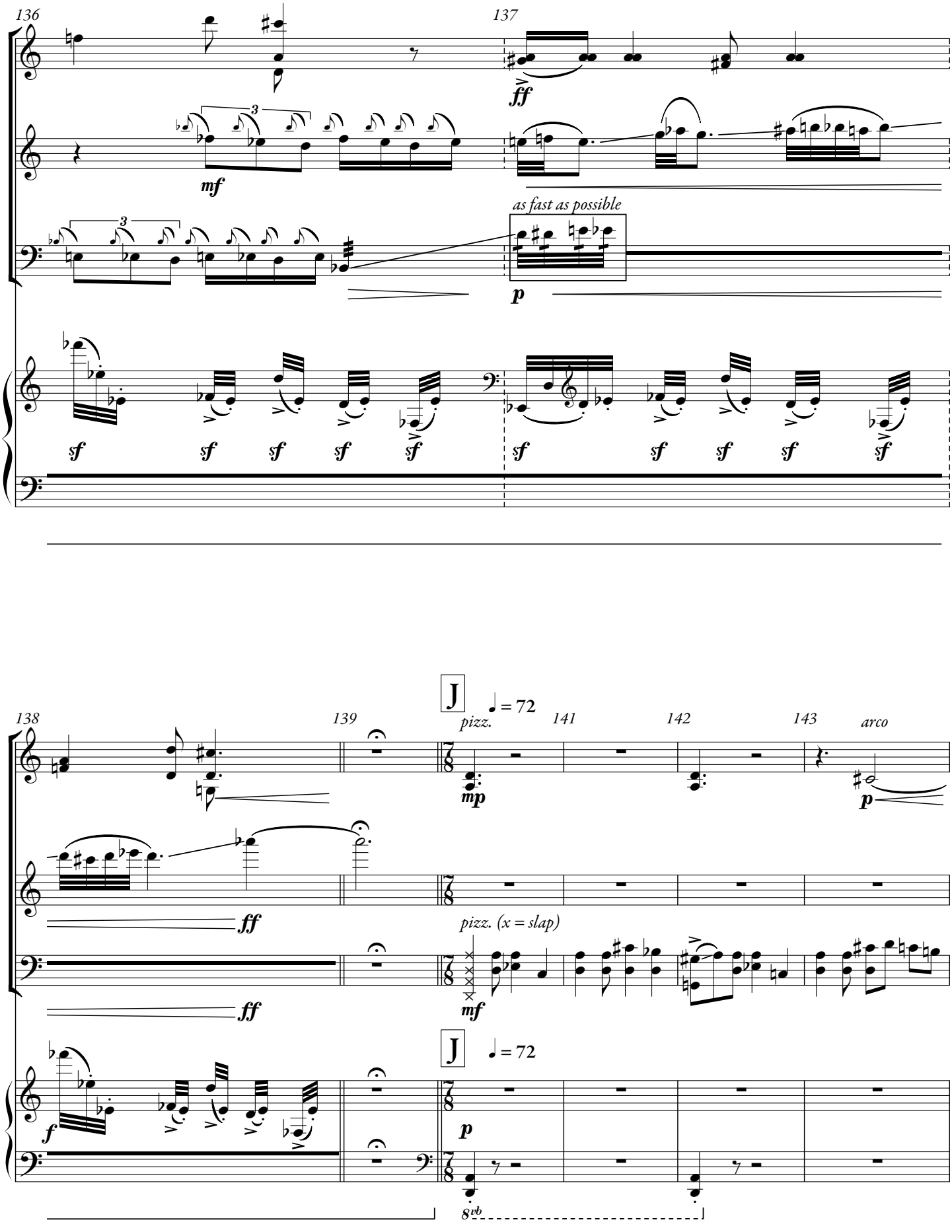


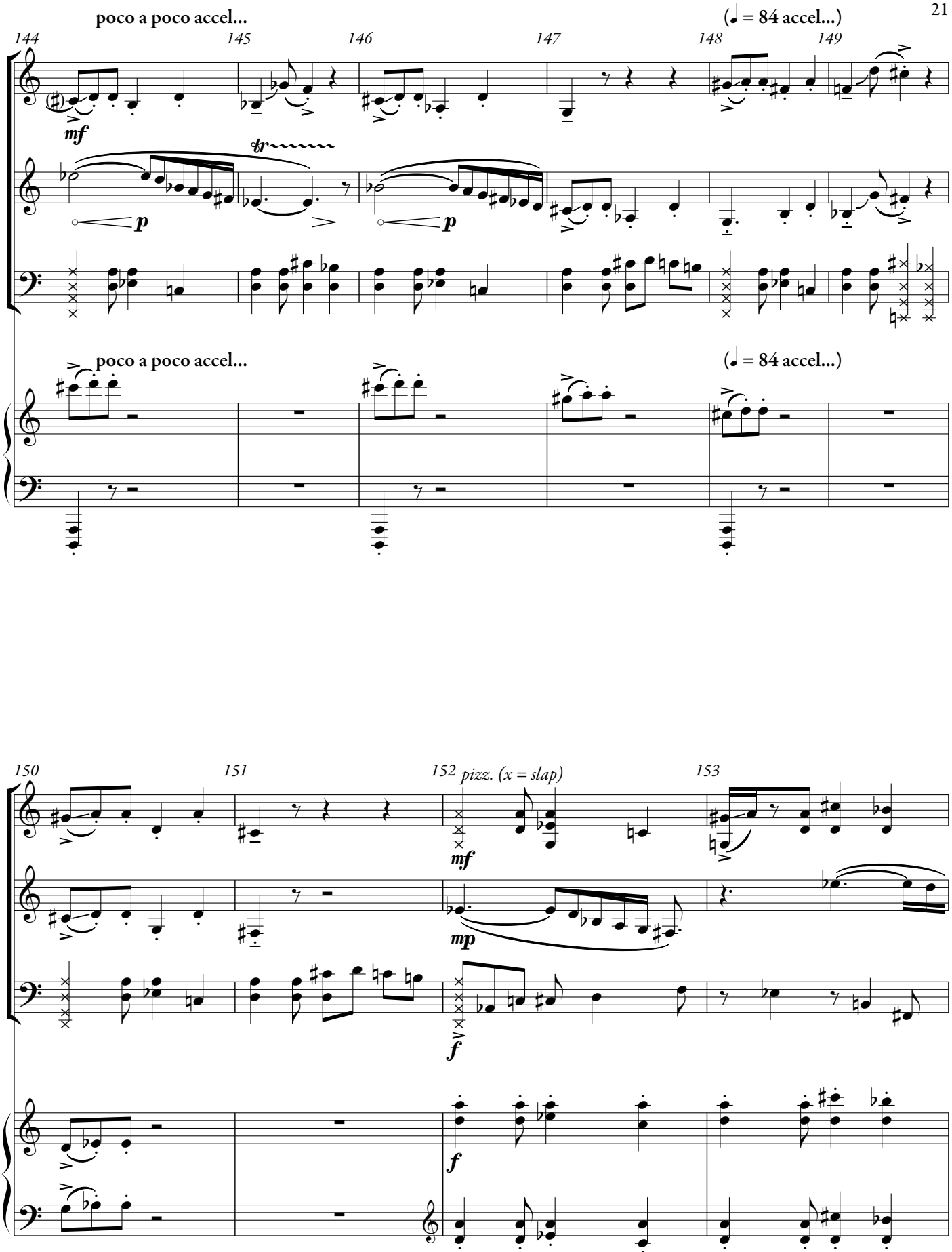

124
125
126
H
H
f
Ped.

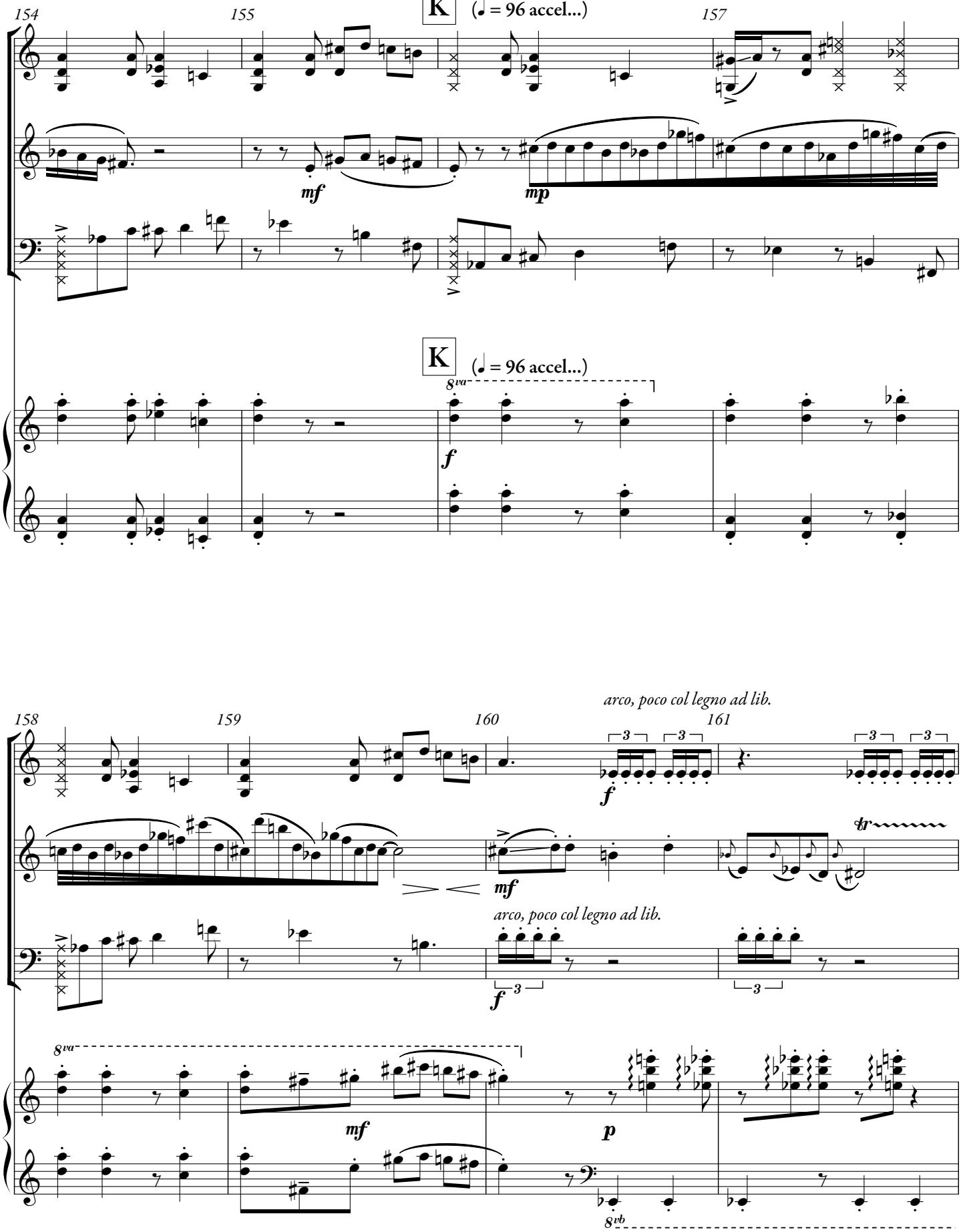

Heterophonic, free, barely alligned, improvised feeling
128
poco sul pont., buzzy
lazy grace notes, singing
129
mf
sf
rough
slow
mf
sf
poco sul pont., buzzy
mf
Heterophonic, free, barely alligned, improvised feeling
interpolate into the L.H. ostinato
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
p

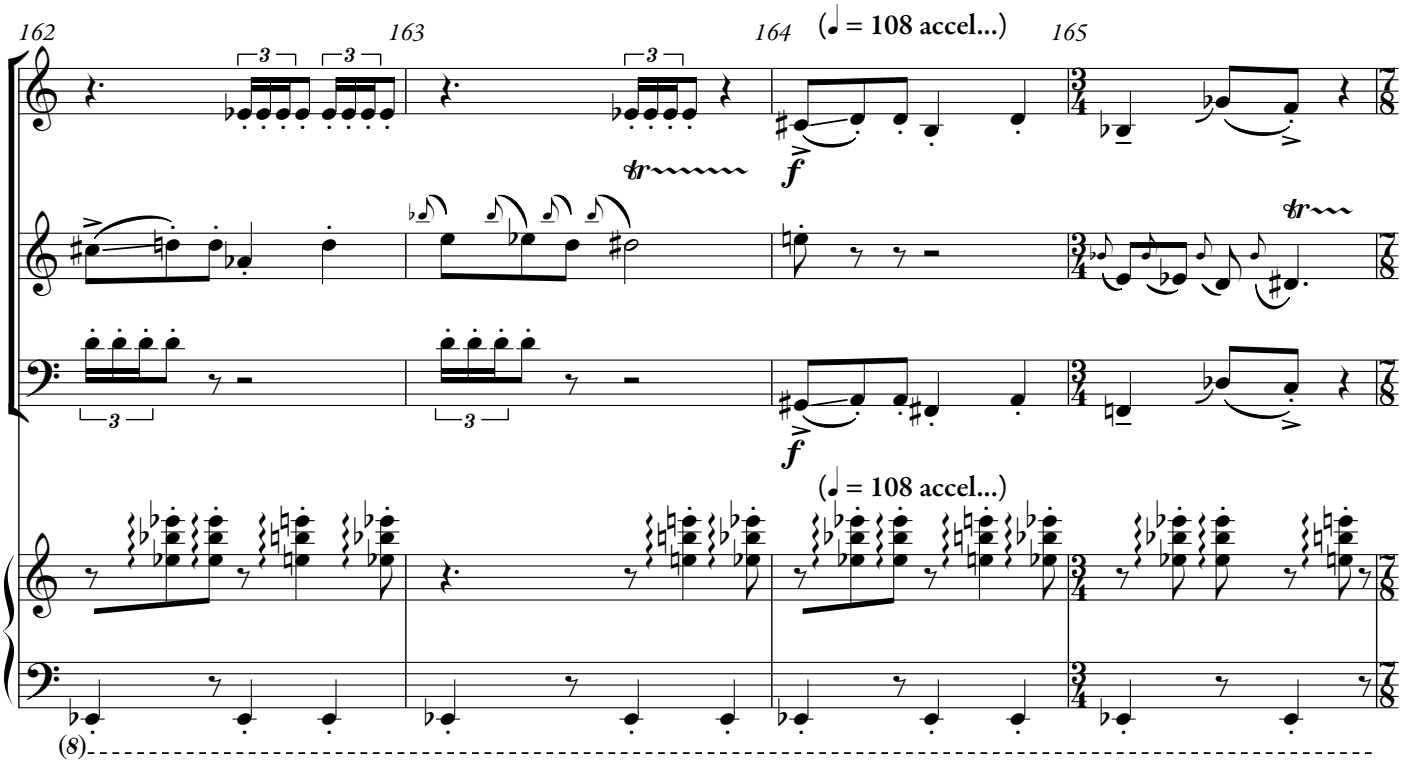

130
131
I
133
fast
f
sff
sf
p
Ped.

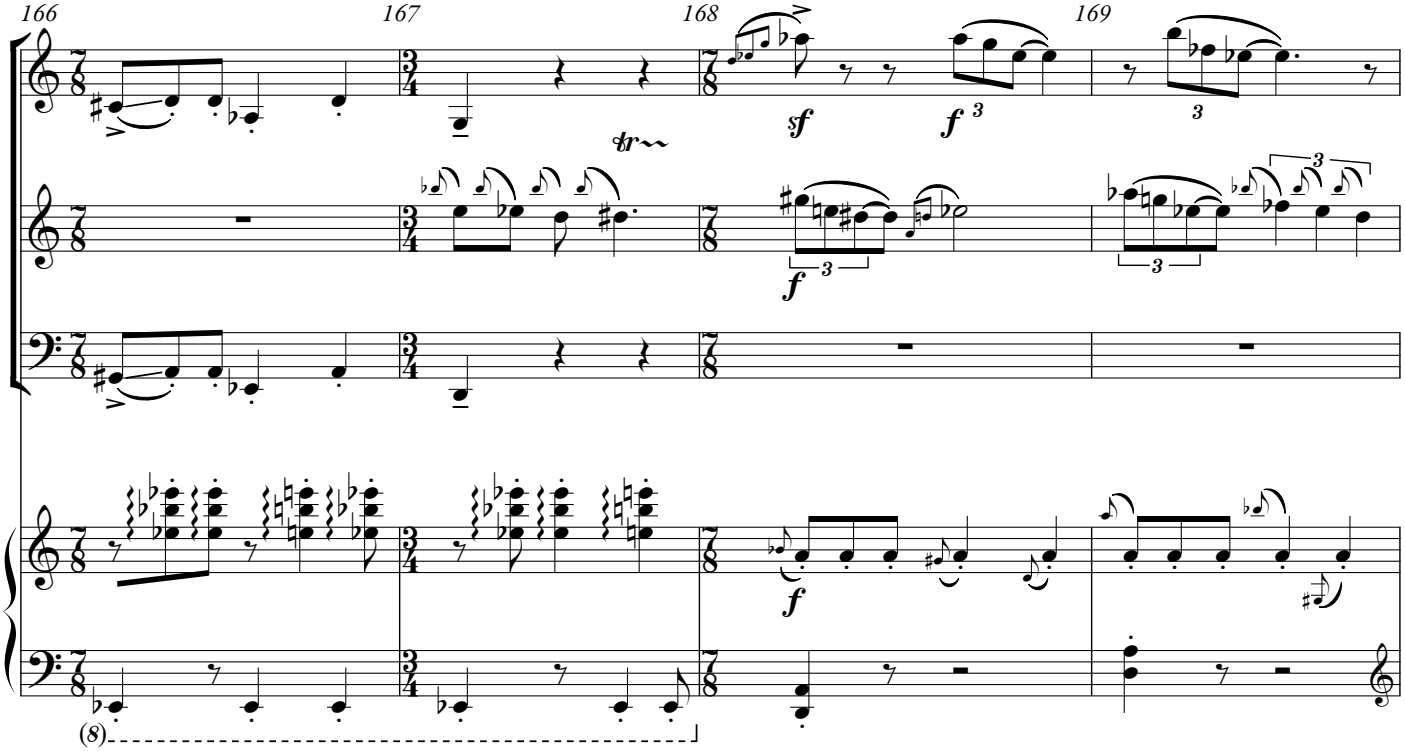

134
135
f
sff
arco
sf

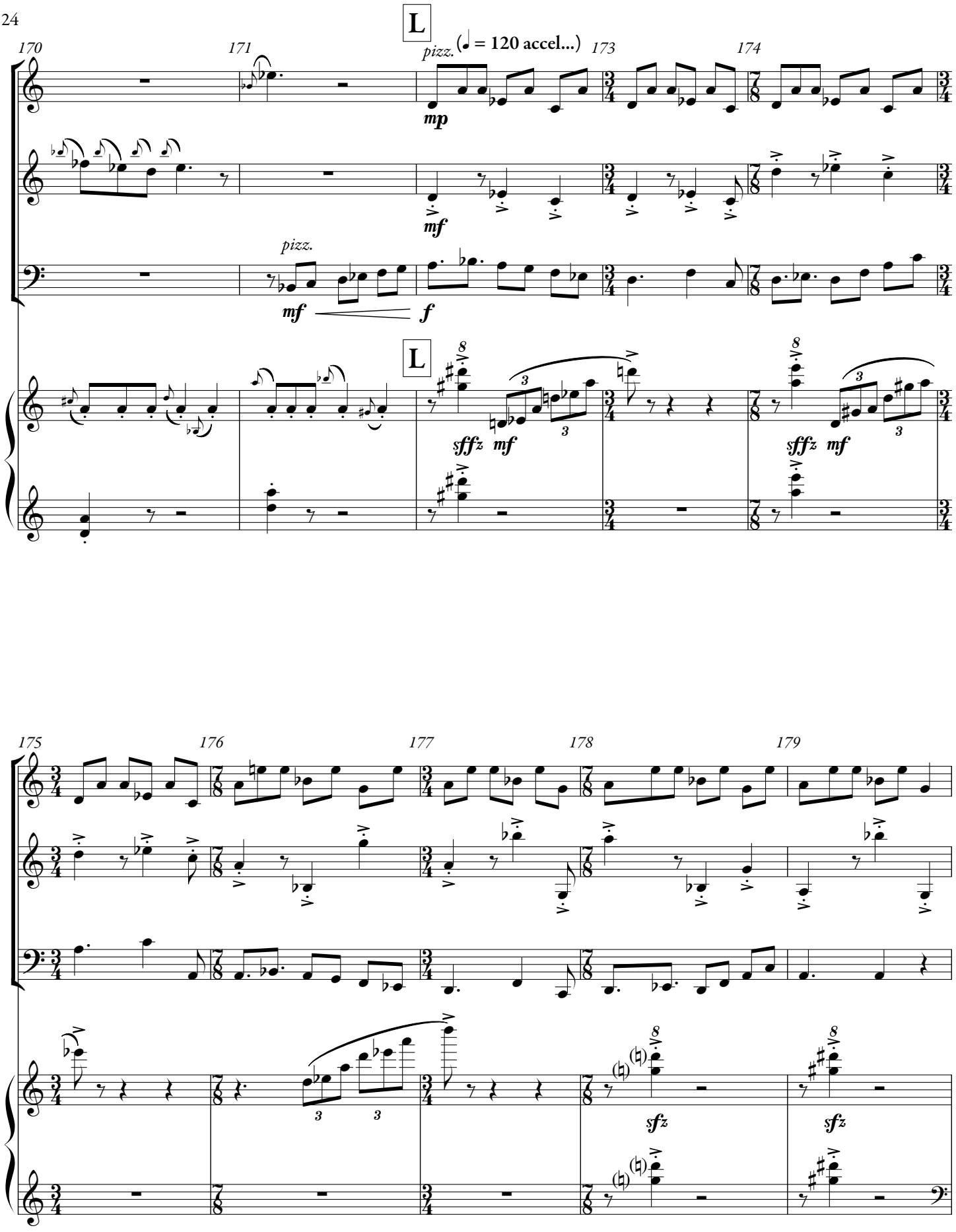

136
137
ff
mf
3
as fast as possible
p
sf
J = 72
138
139
pizz.
141
142
143
arco
mp
ff
pizz. (x = slap)
mf
f
8vb

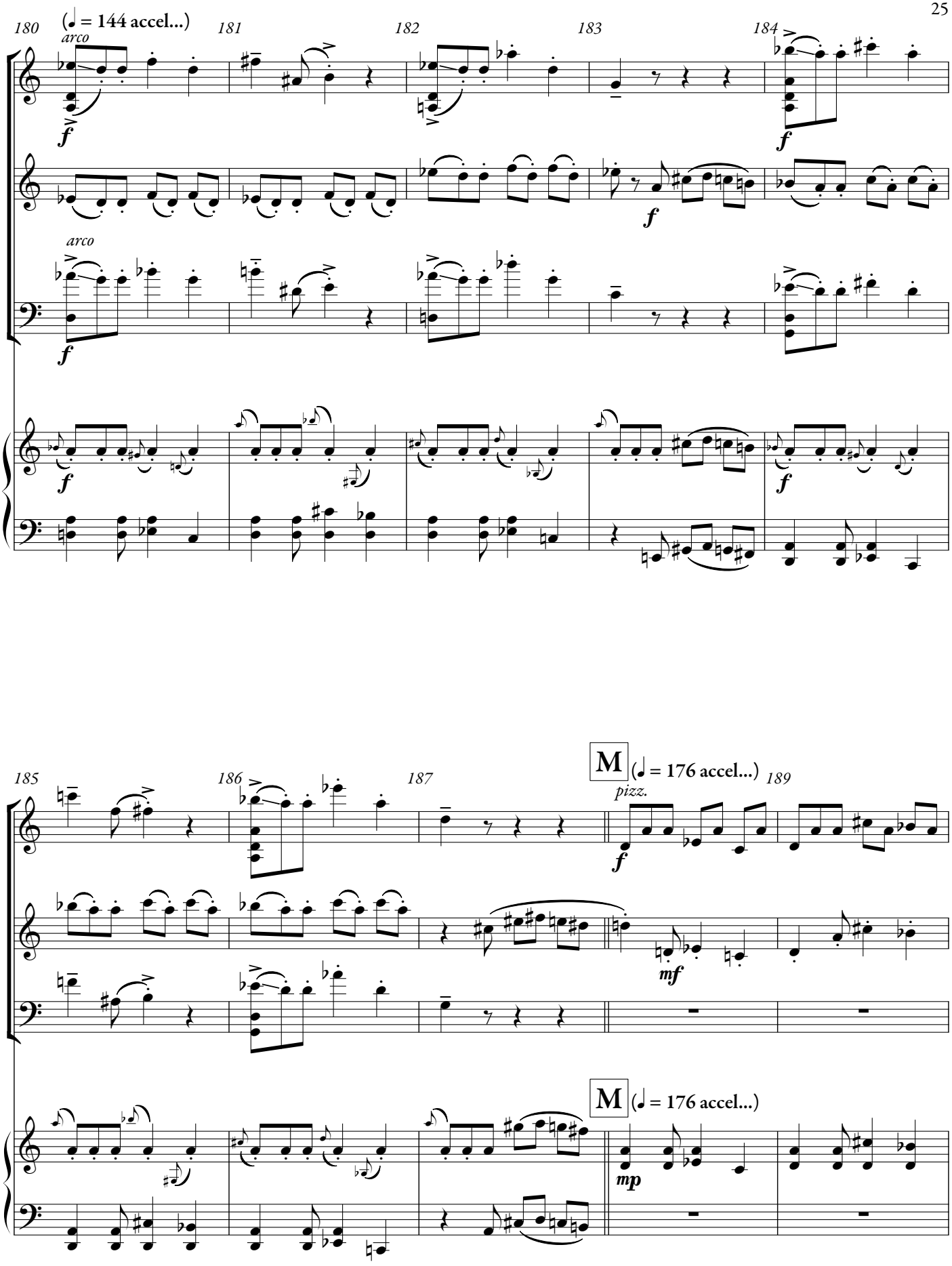

poco a poco accel...
(♩ = 84 accel...)
144
145
146
147
148
149
mf
tr
p
p
poco a poco accel...
(♩ = 84 accel...)
150
151
152
pizz. (x = slap)
153
mf
mp
f
f

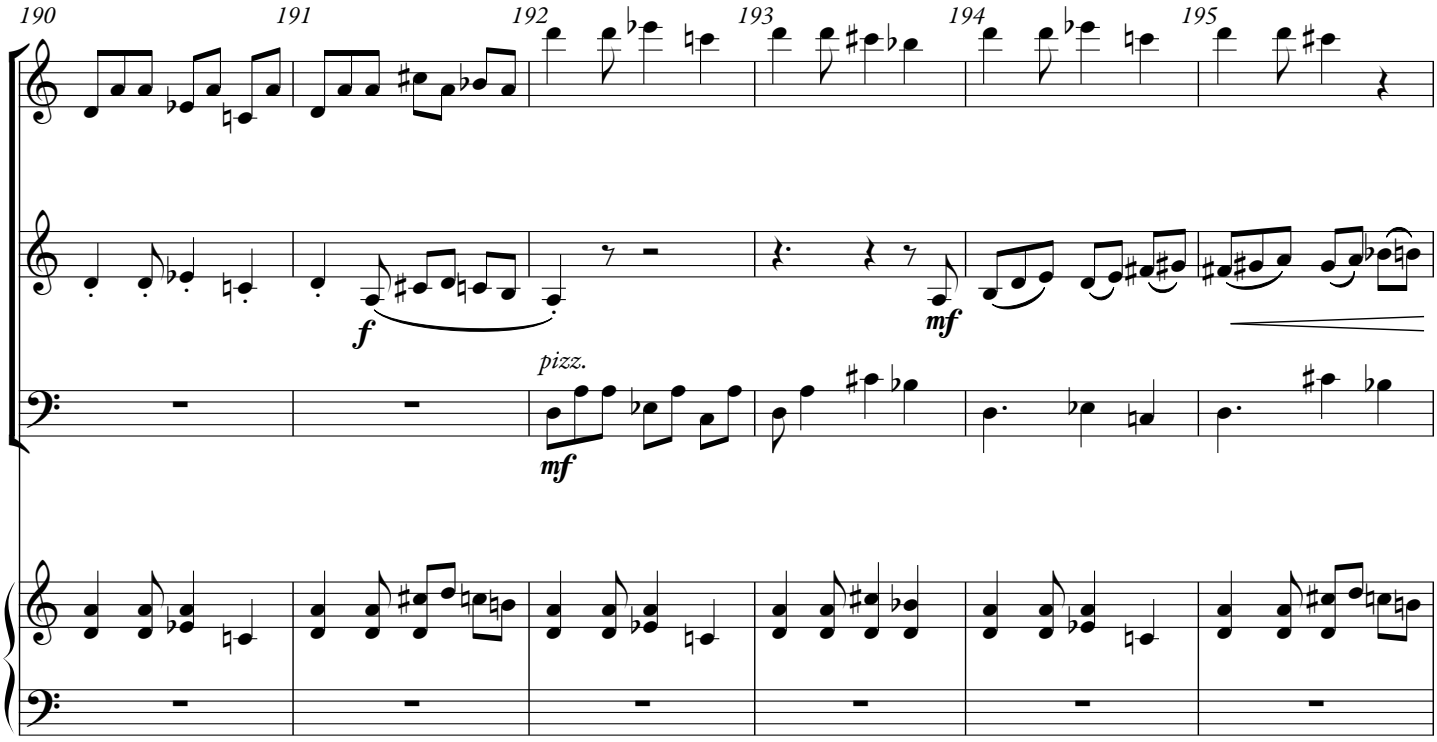

154
155
K
(♩ = 96 accel...)
157
mf
mp
K
(♩ = 96 accel...)
8va
f
158
159
160
161
arco, poco col legno ad lib.
f
mf
tr
arco, poco col legno ad lib.
f
3
8va
mf
p
8vb

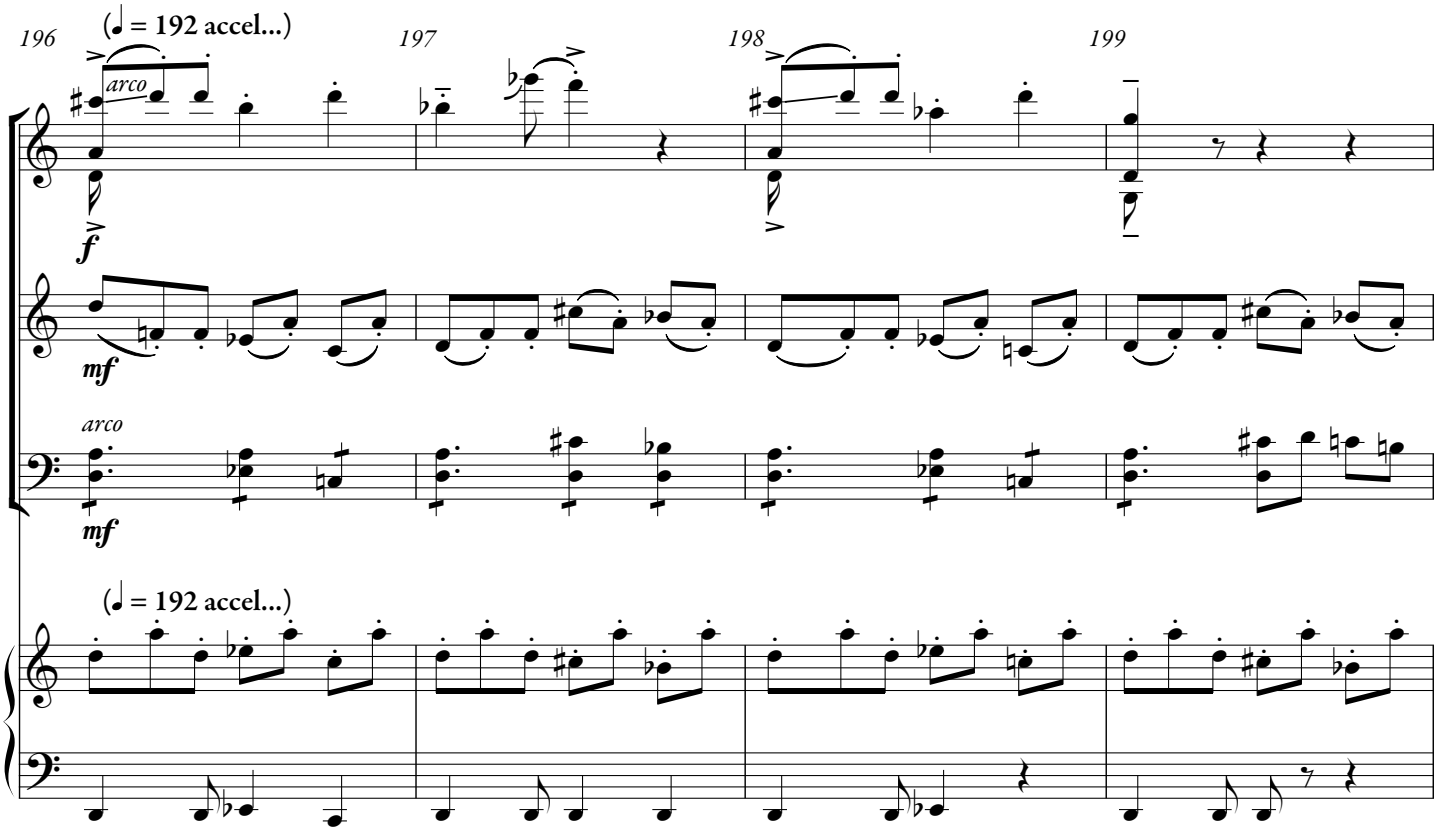

162
163
164
(♩ = 108 accel...)
165
(♩ = 108 accel...)
(8)

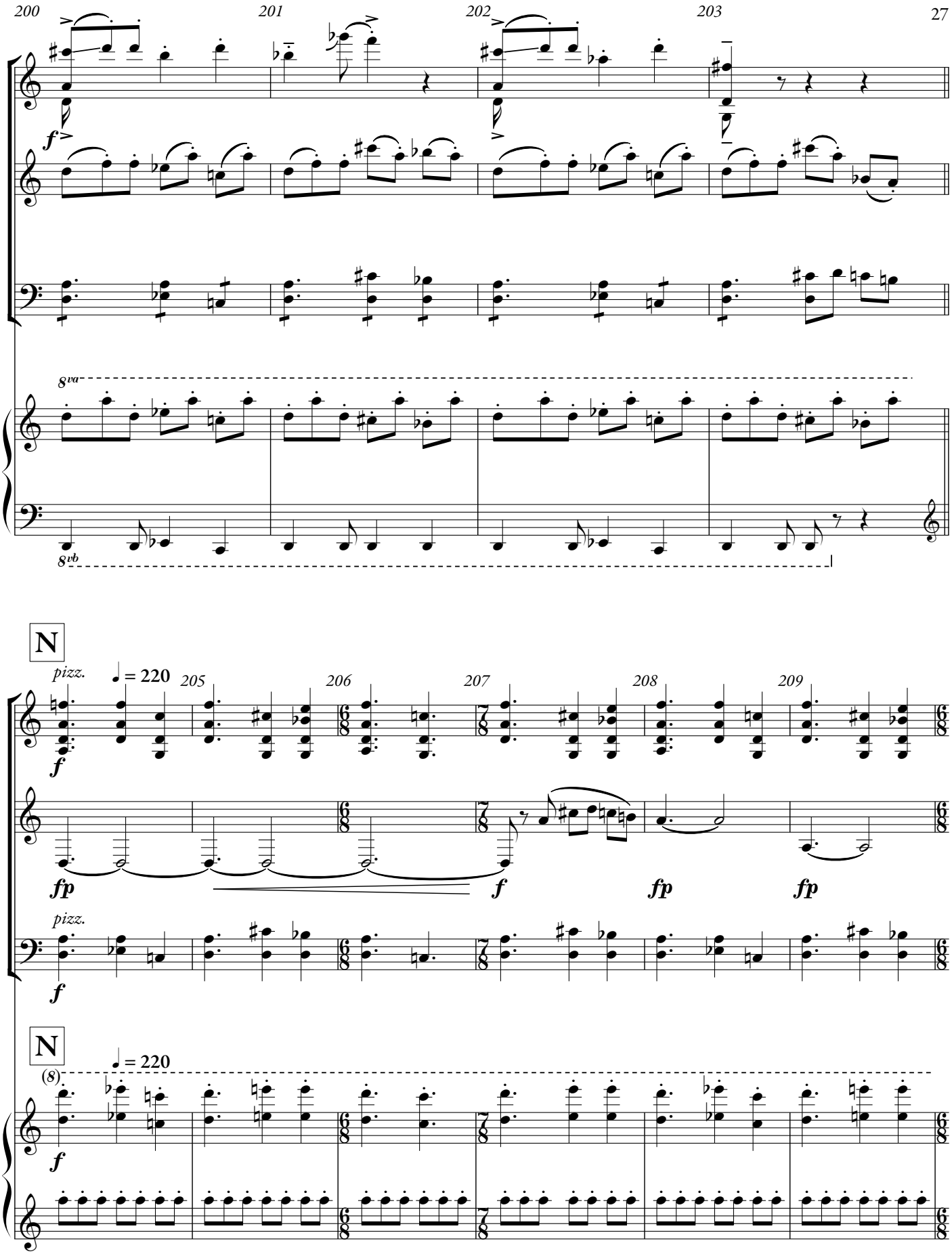

166
167
168
169
(8)

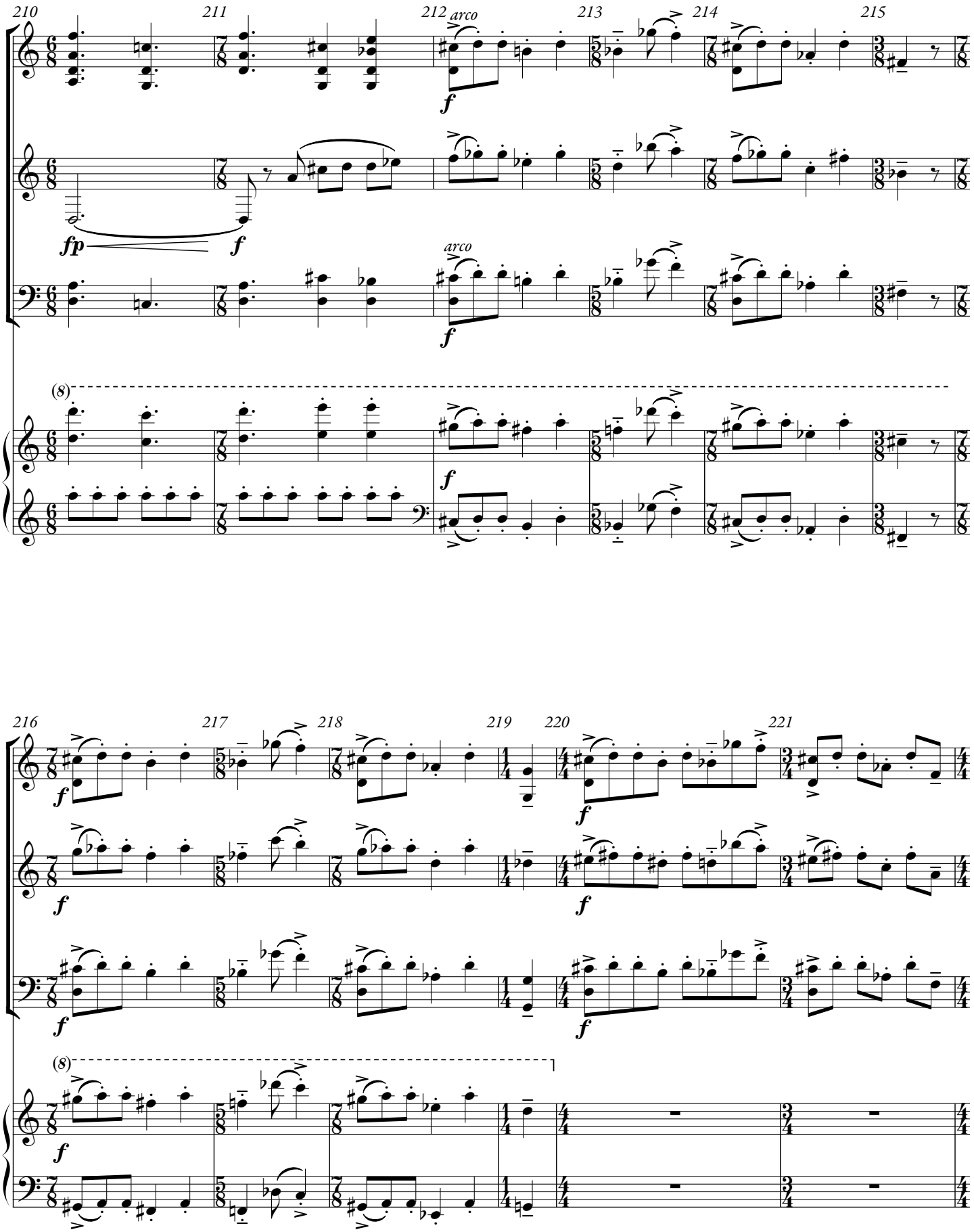

L
170
171
pizz.
(♩ = 120 accel...)
173
174
mp
mf
pizz.
mf
f
L
sffz
mf
sffz
mf
175
176
177
178
179
sfz
sfz

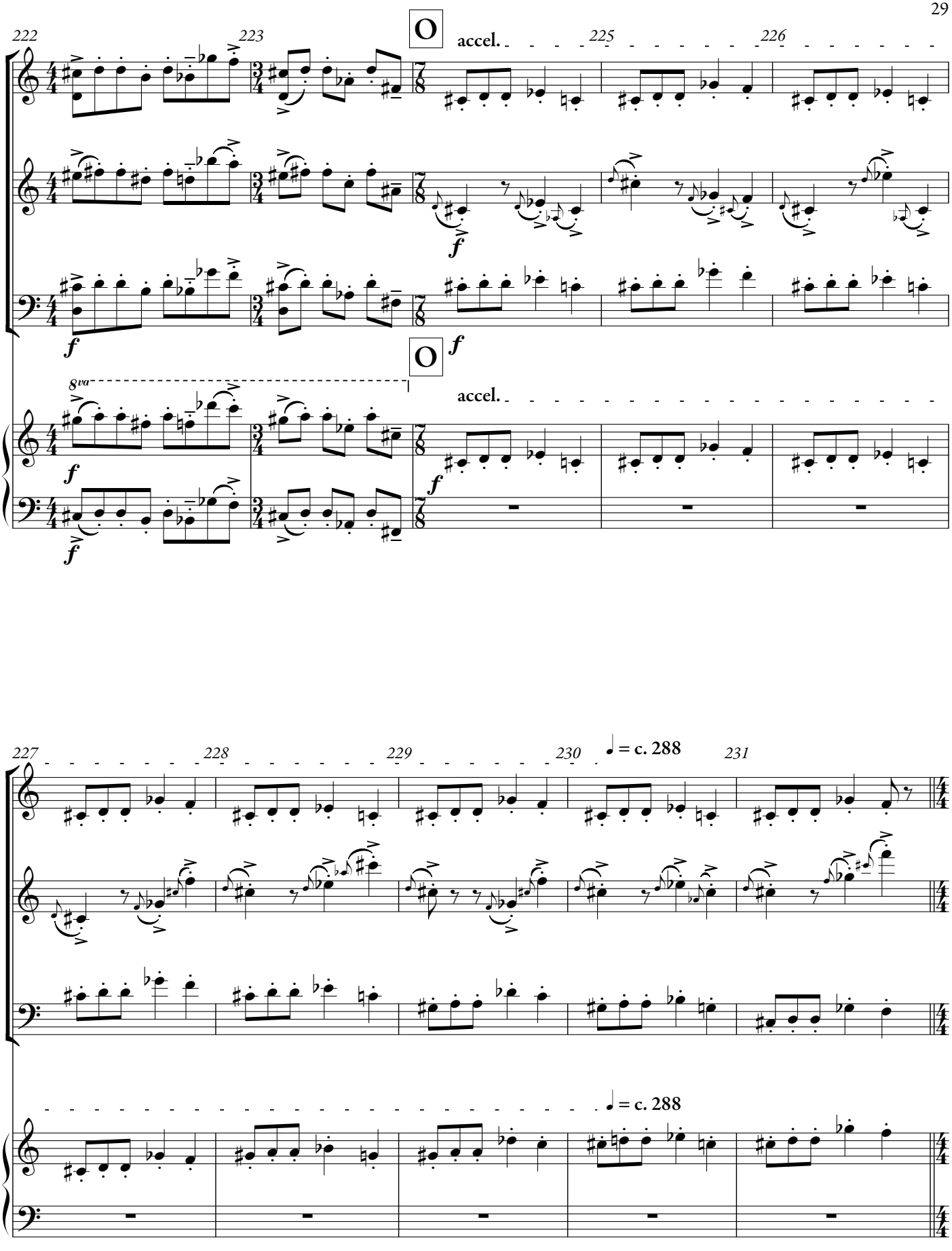

180
(♩ = 144 accel...)
arco
181
182
183
184
185
186
187
M
(♩ = 176 accel...)
pizz.
189
M
(♩ = 176 accel...)

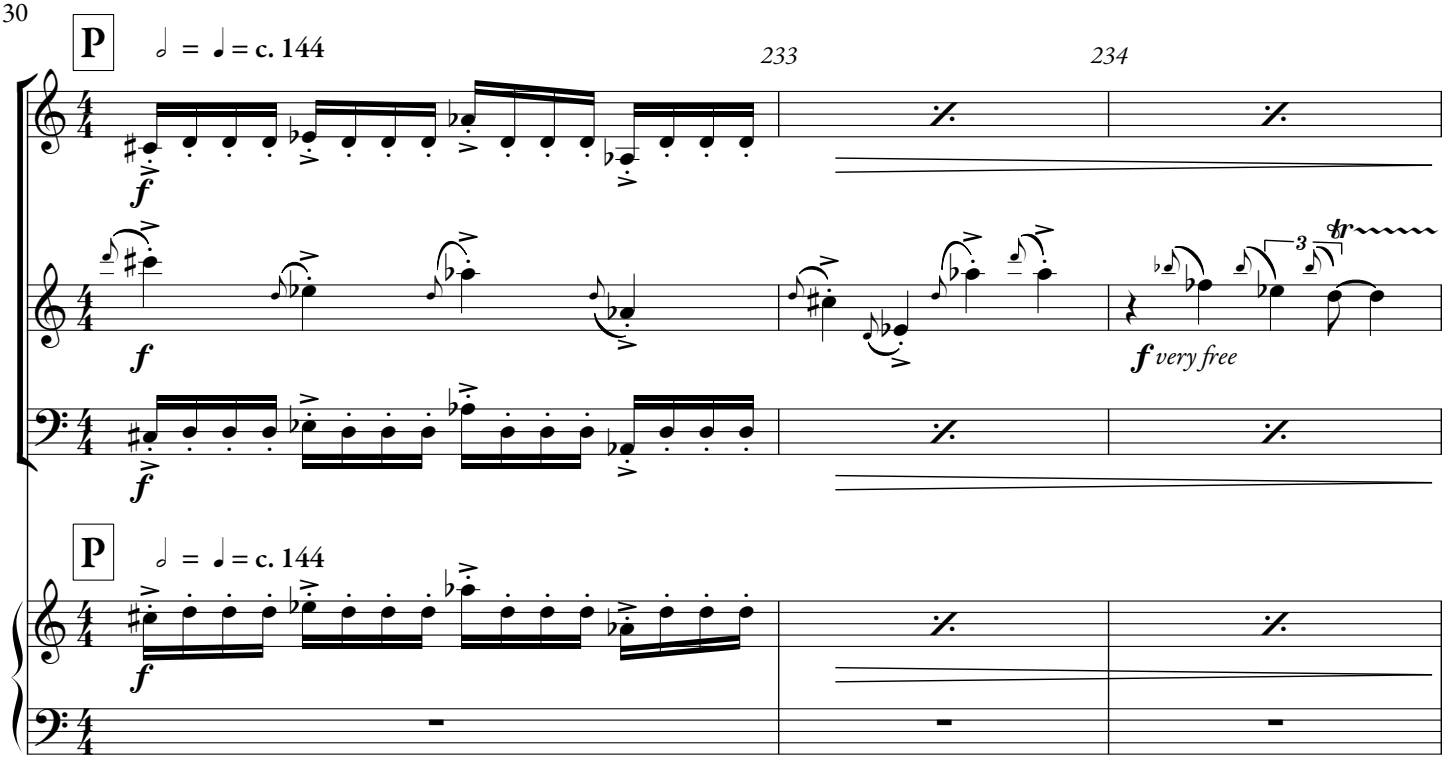

190
191
192
193
194
195
f
mf
pizz.
mf

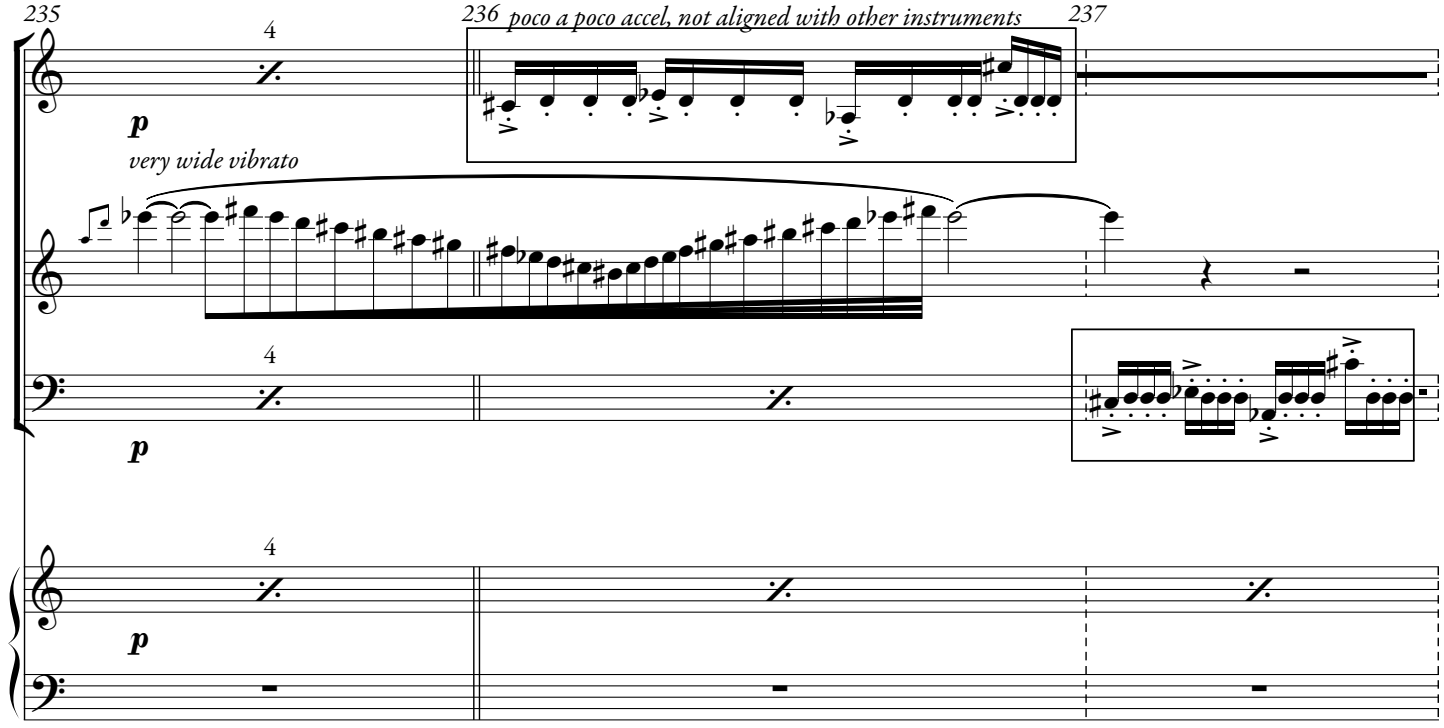

196
(♩ = 192 accel...)
arco
197
198
199
f
mf
arco
mf
(♩ = 192 accel...)

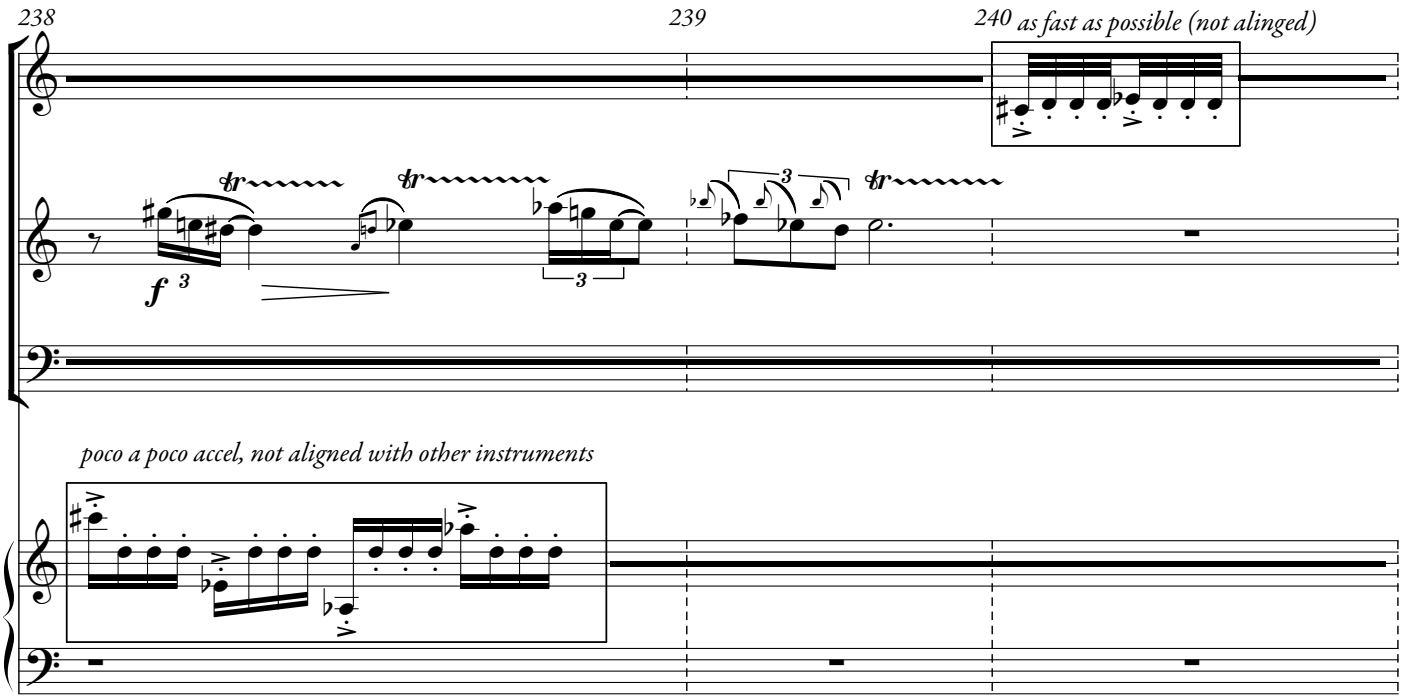

200
201
202
203
f
8va
8vb
N
pizz.
♩ = 220
205
206
207
208
209
fp
f
fp
fp
pizz.
f
N
♩ = 220
(8)
f

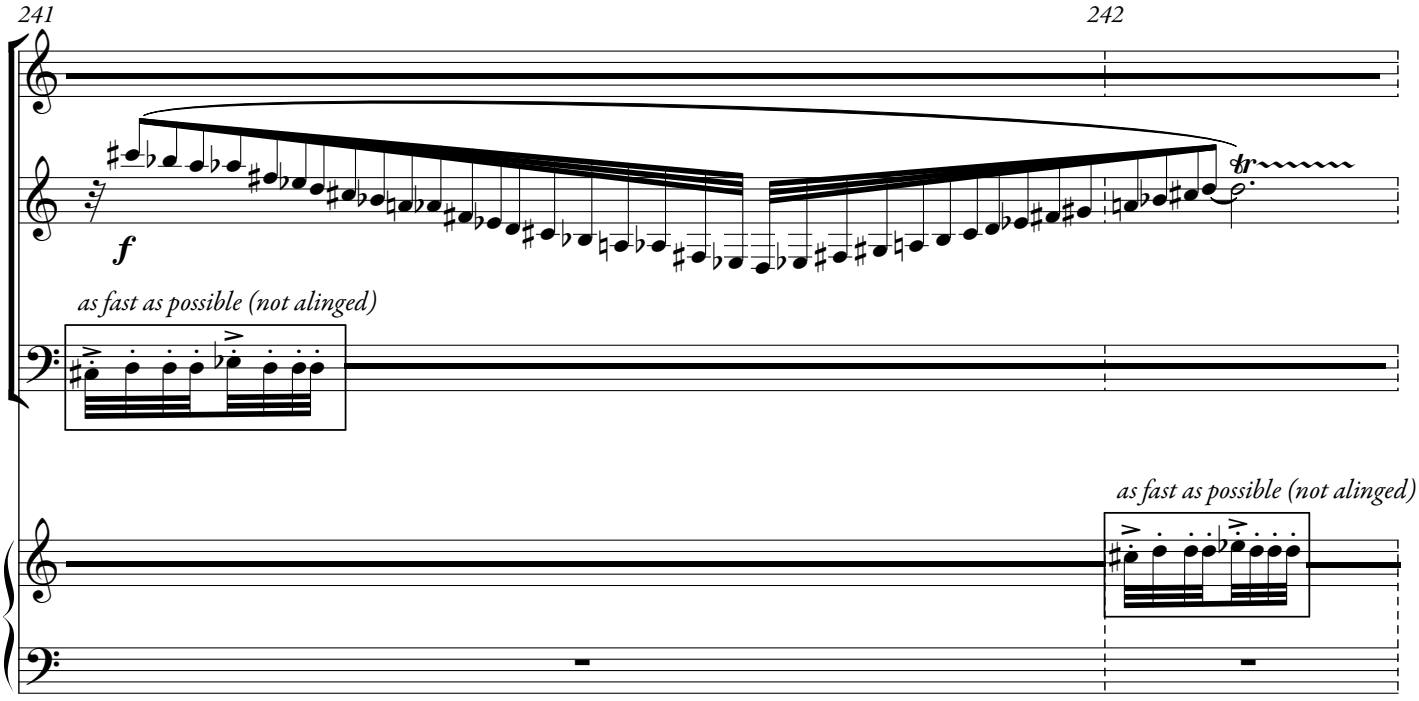

210
211
212
arco
213
214
215
fp
f
arco
(8)
216
217
218
219
220
221
(8)

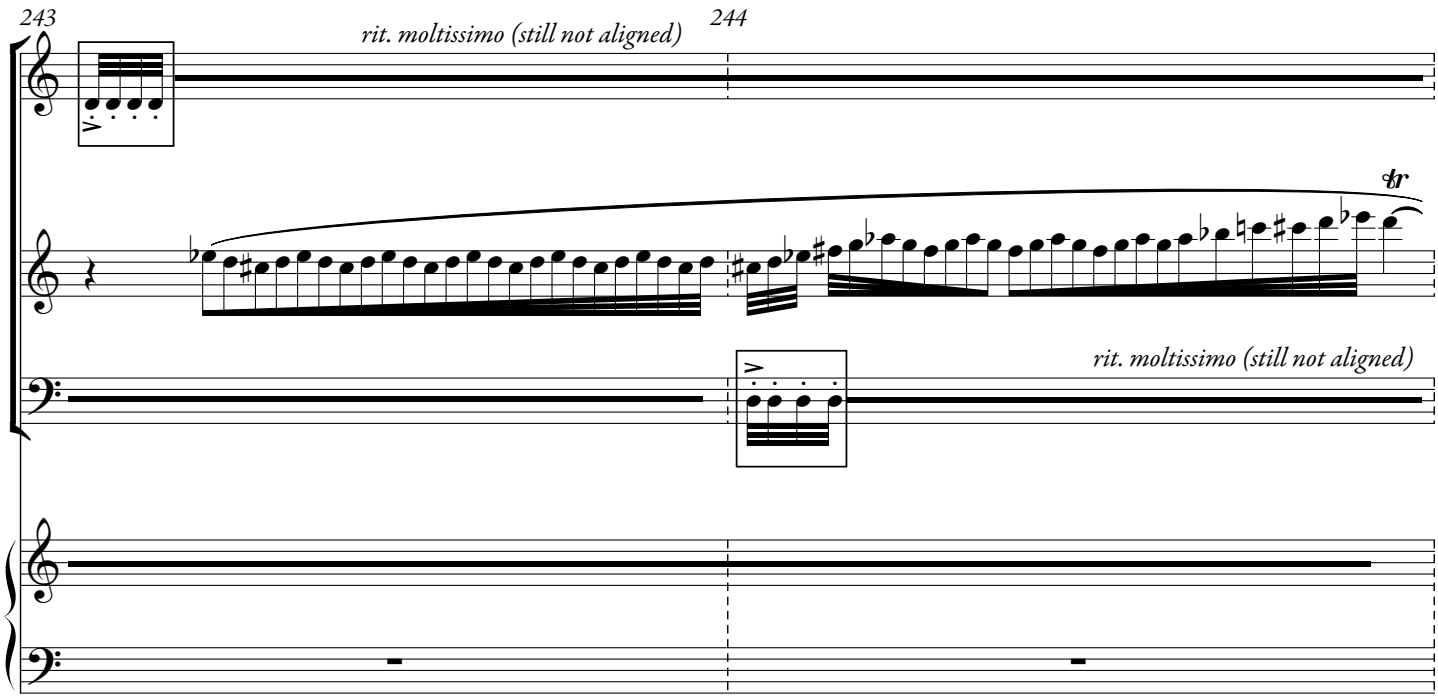

222
223
O
accel.
225
226
f
O
f
8va
accel.
227
228
229
230
♩ = c. 288
231
♩ = c. 288

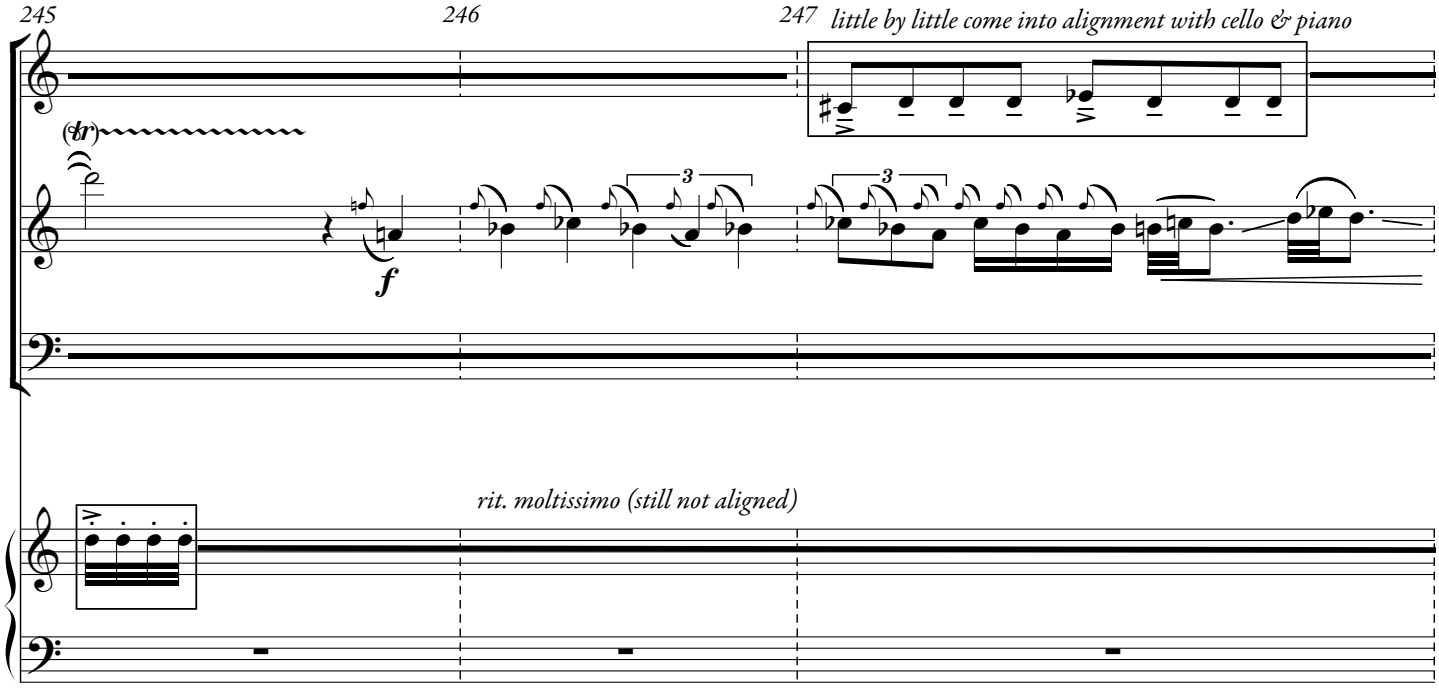

P
= = c. 144
233
234
f
f
f very free
tr
3
P
= = c. 144
f

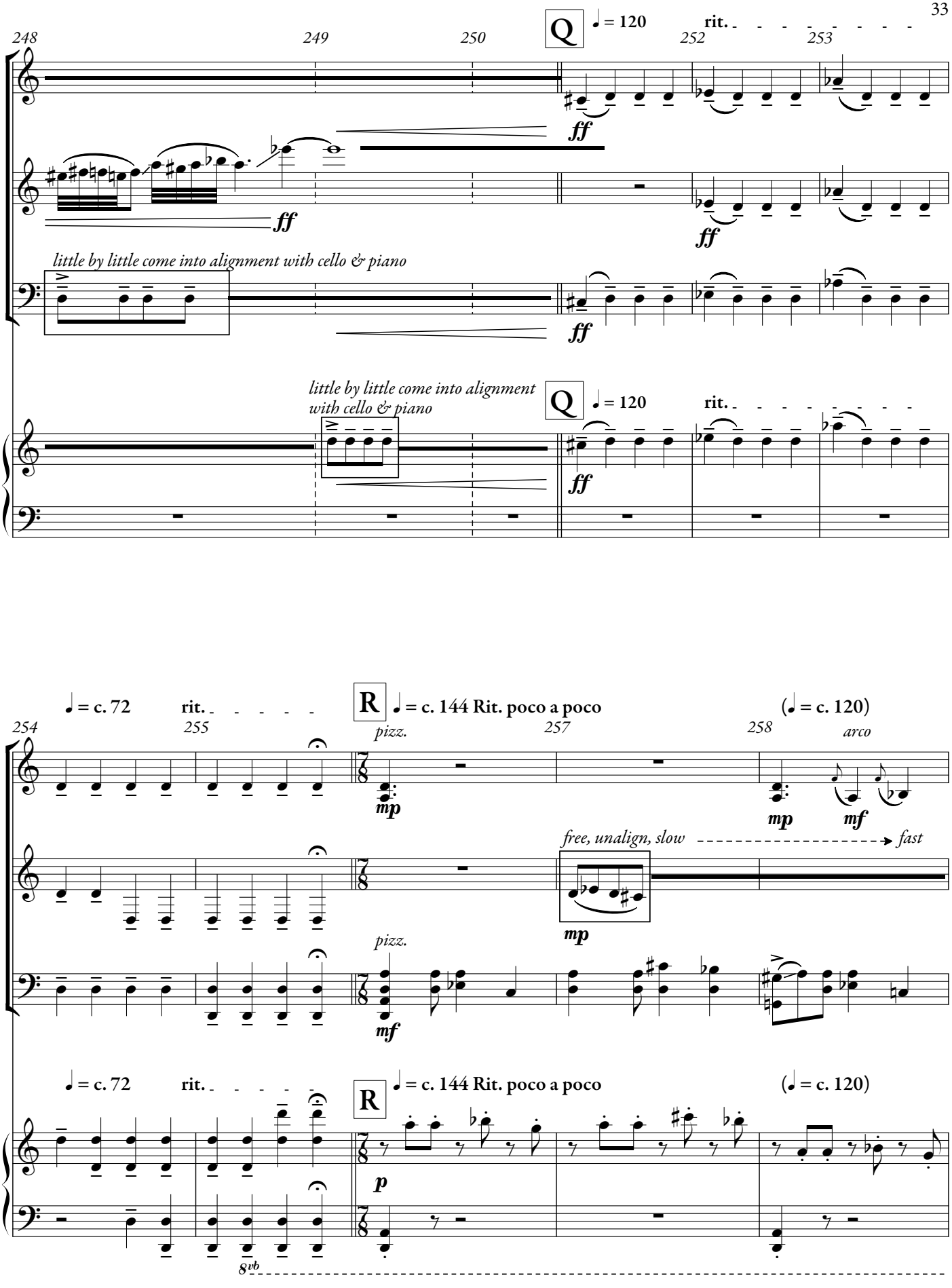

235
236 poco a poco accel, not aligned with other instruments
237
4
p
very wide vibrato
4
p
4
p

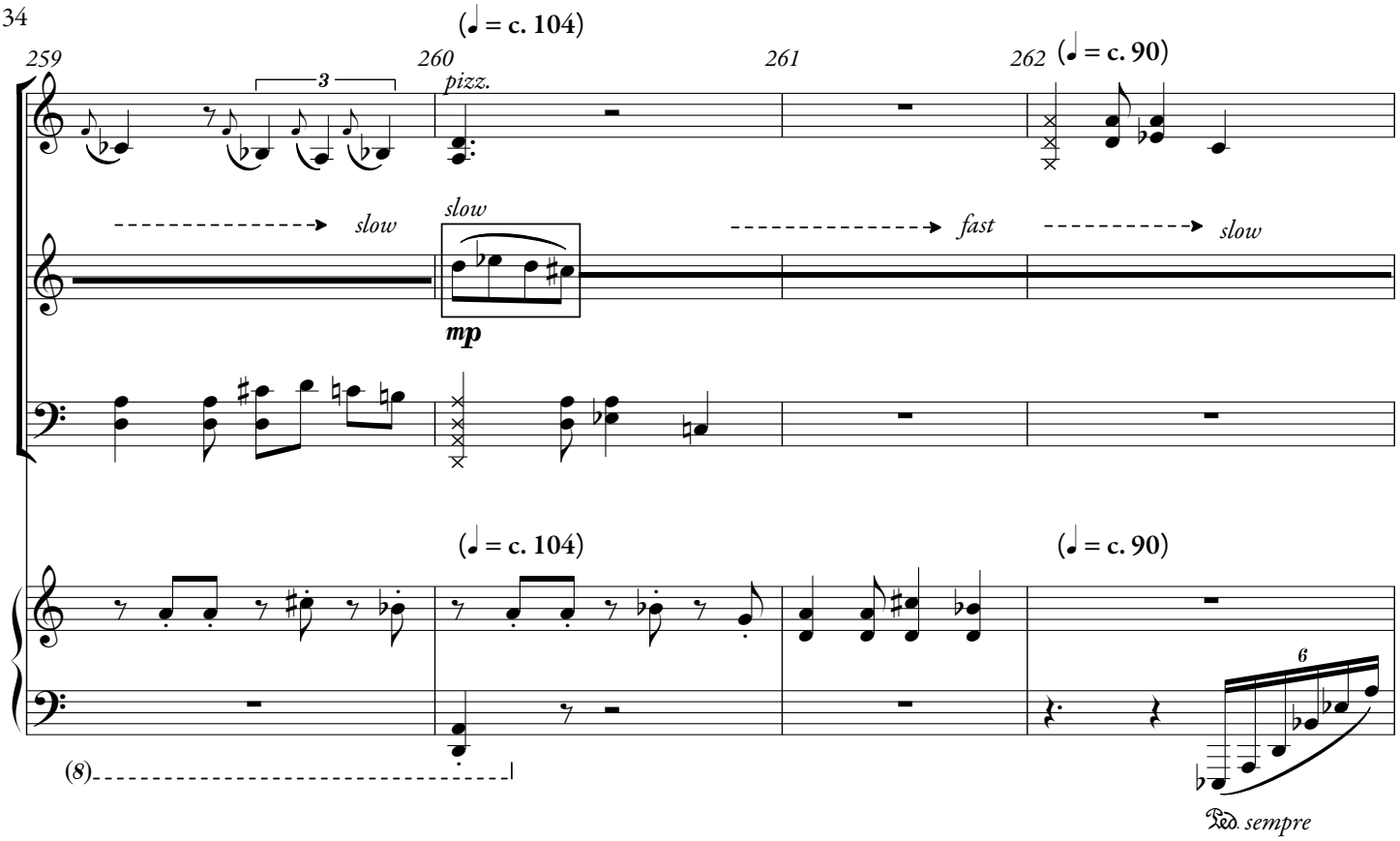

238
239
240 as fast as possible (not alinged)
f
poco a poco accel, not aligned with other instruments

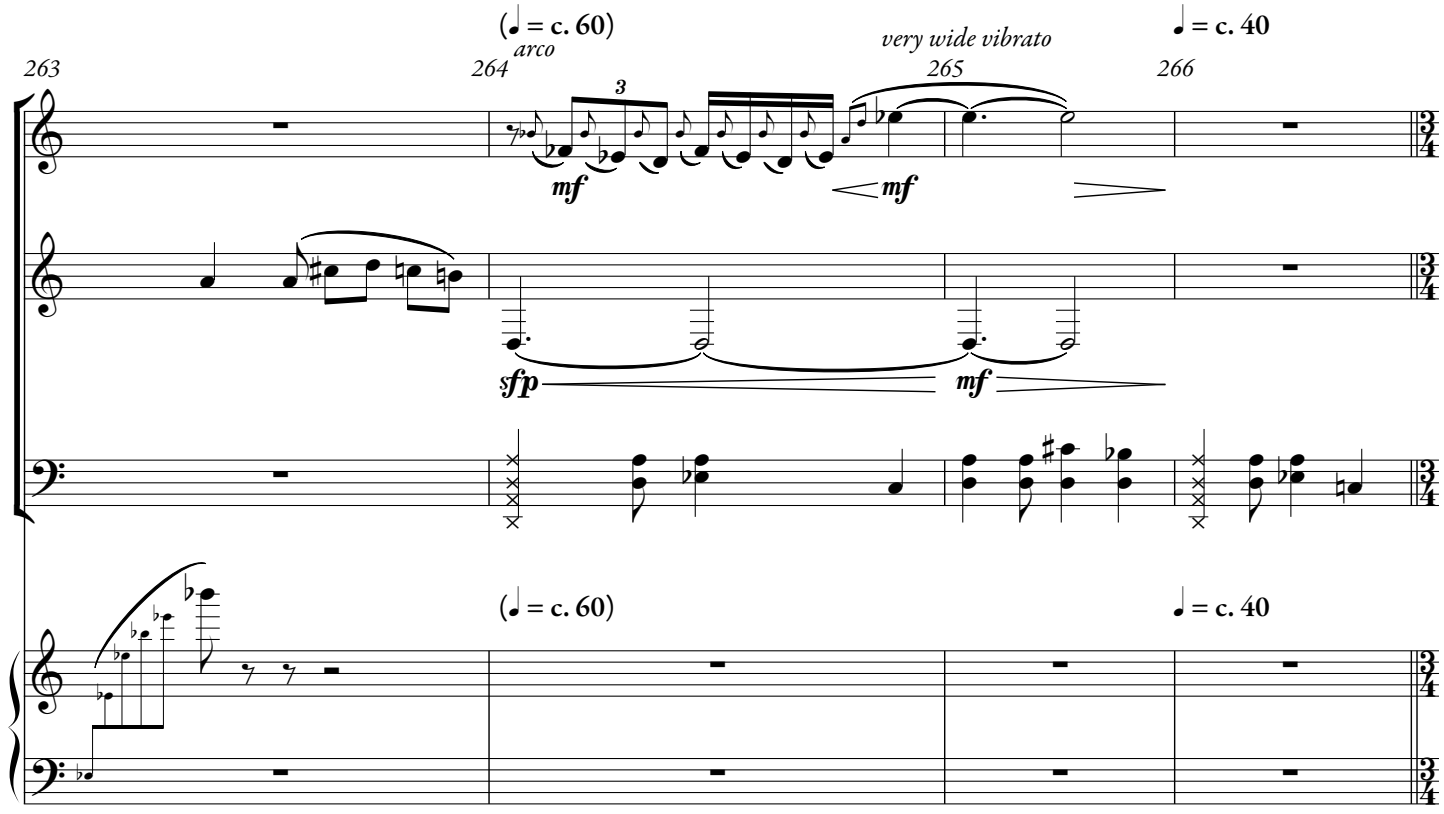

241
242
f
as fast as possible (not alinged)
as fast as possible (not alinged)

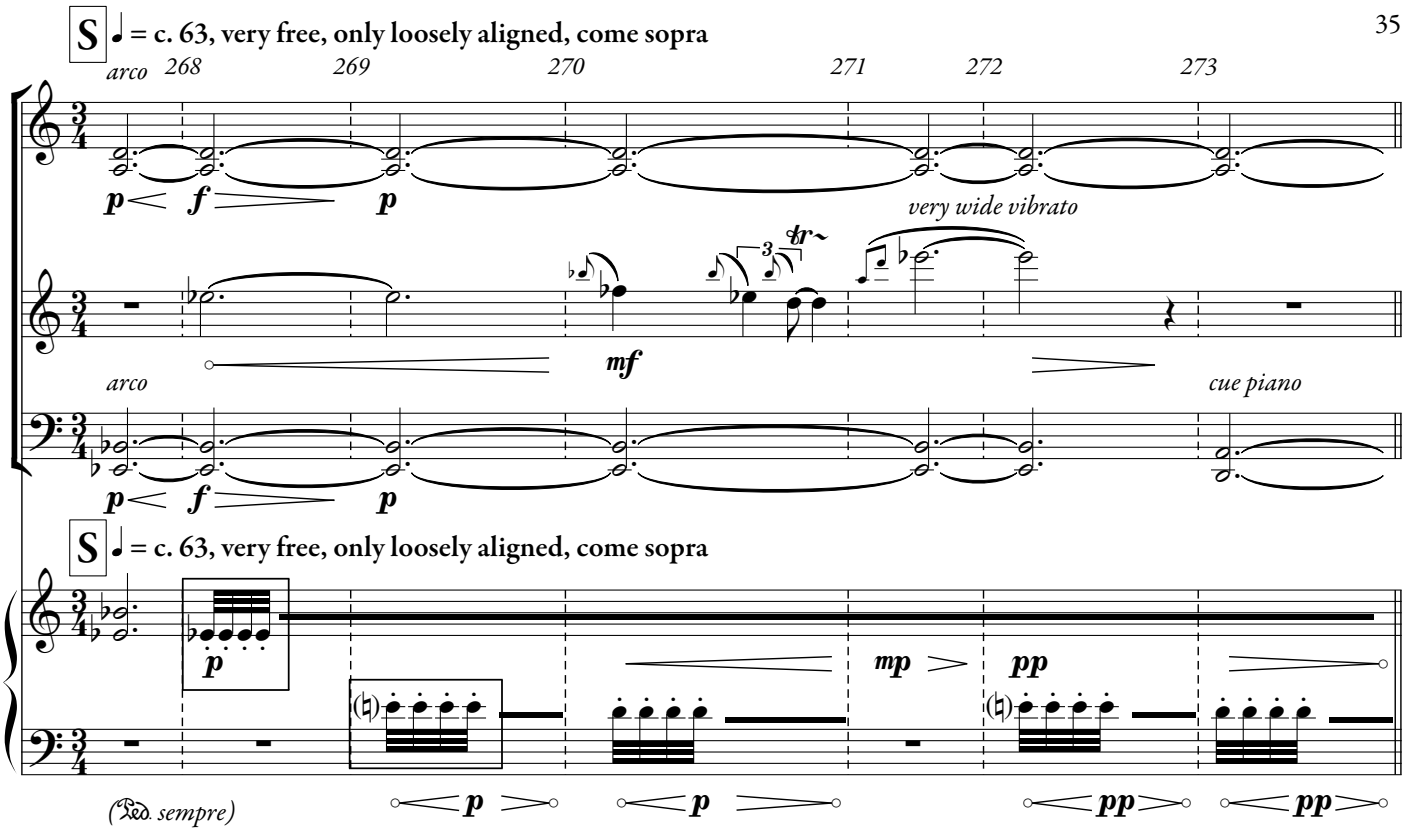

243
rit. moltissimo (still not aligned)
244
tr
rit. moltissimo (still not aligned)


245
246
247
little by little come into alignment with cello & piano
(tr)
f
3
3
rit. moltissimo (still not aligned)


248
249
250
Q
♩ = 120
rit.
252
253
ff
ff
little by little come into alignment with cello & piano
ff
little by little come into alignment
with cello & piano
Q
♩ = 120
rit.
ff
♩ = c. 72
rit.
R
♩ = c. 144 Rit. poco a poco
(♩ = c. 120)
254
255
pizz.
257
258
arco
mp
mp
mf
free, unalign, slow
fast
mp
pizz.
mf
♩ = c. 72
rit.
R
♩ = c. 144 Rit. poco a poco
(♩ = c. 120)
p
8vb

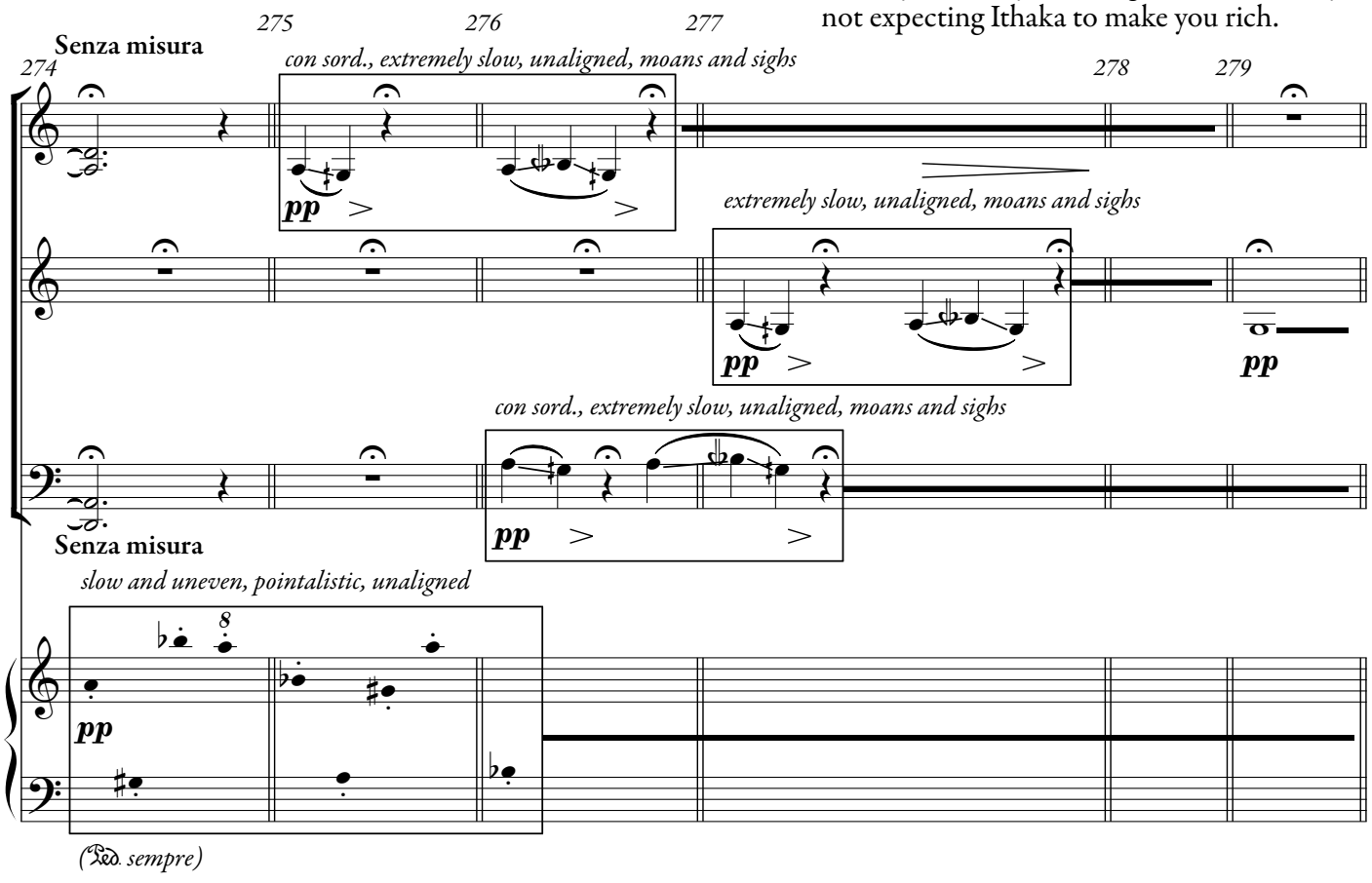

(♩ = c. 104)
259
260
pizz.
261
262
(♩ = c. 90)
slow
slow
fast
slow
mp
(♩ = c. 104)
(♩ = c. 90)
(8)
6
Ped. sempre

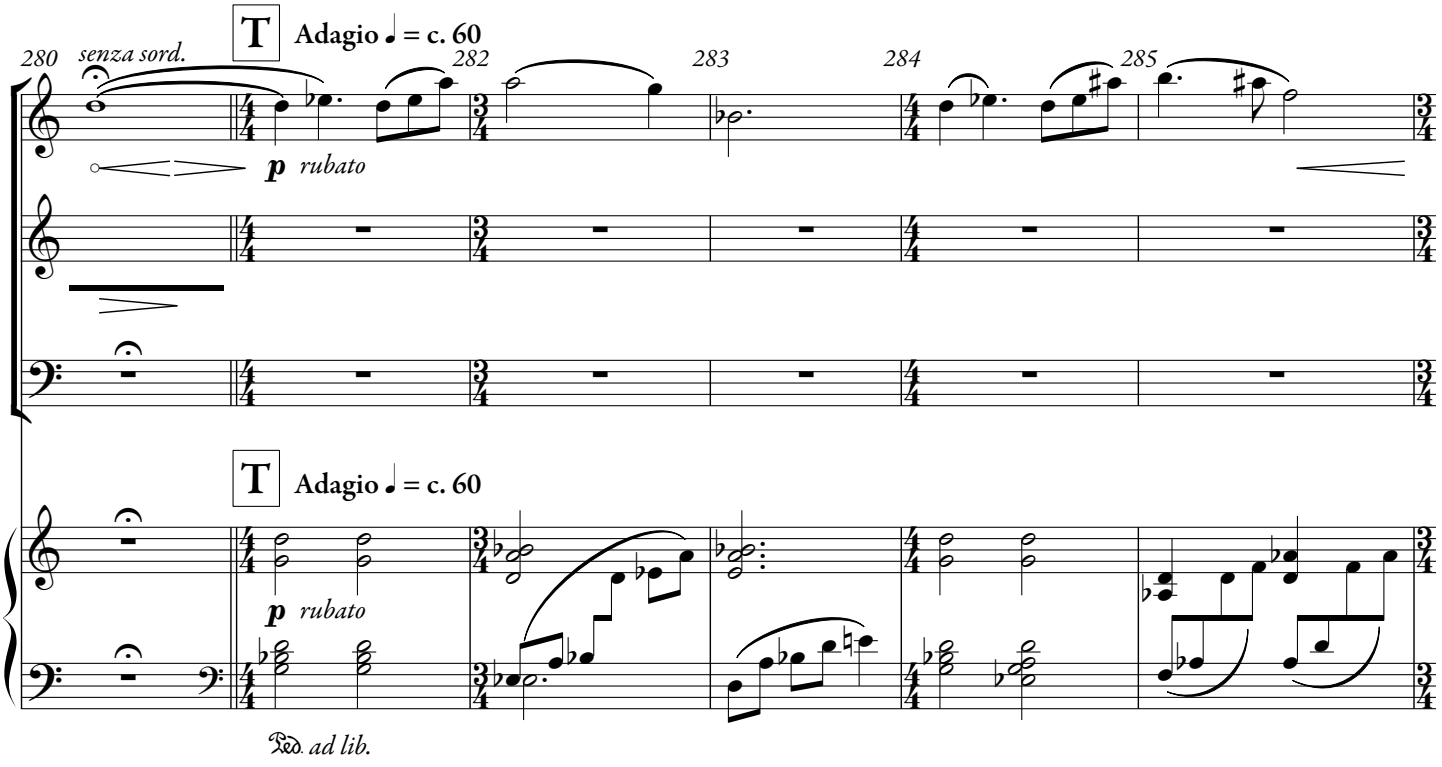

(♩ = c. 60)
arco
263
264
265
266
very wide vibrato
♩ = c. 40
mf
mf
sfp
mf
(♩ = c. 60)
♩ = c. 40

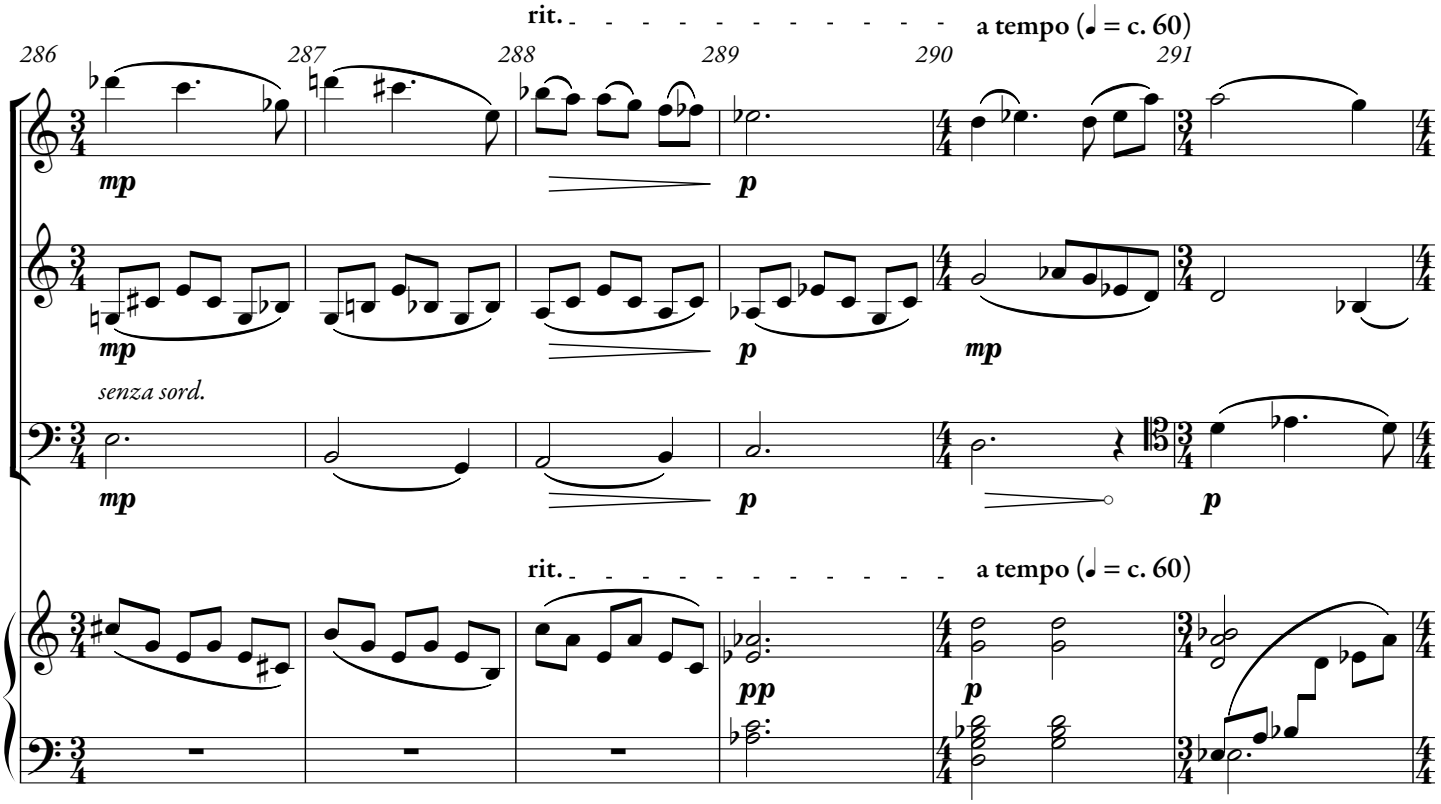


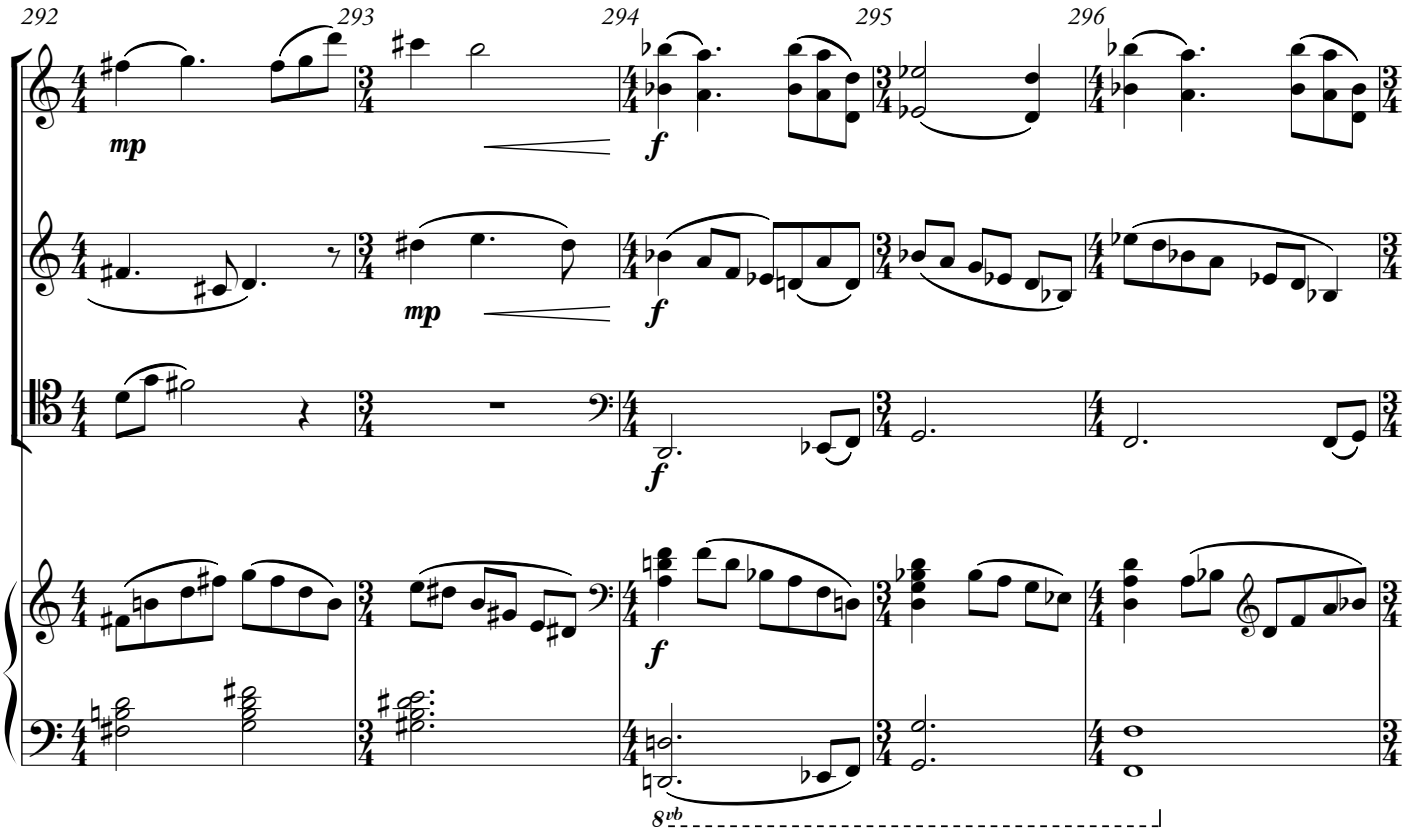
Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey at all.

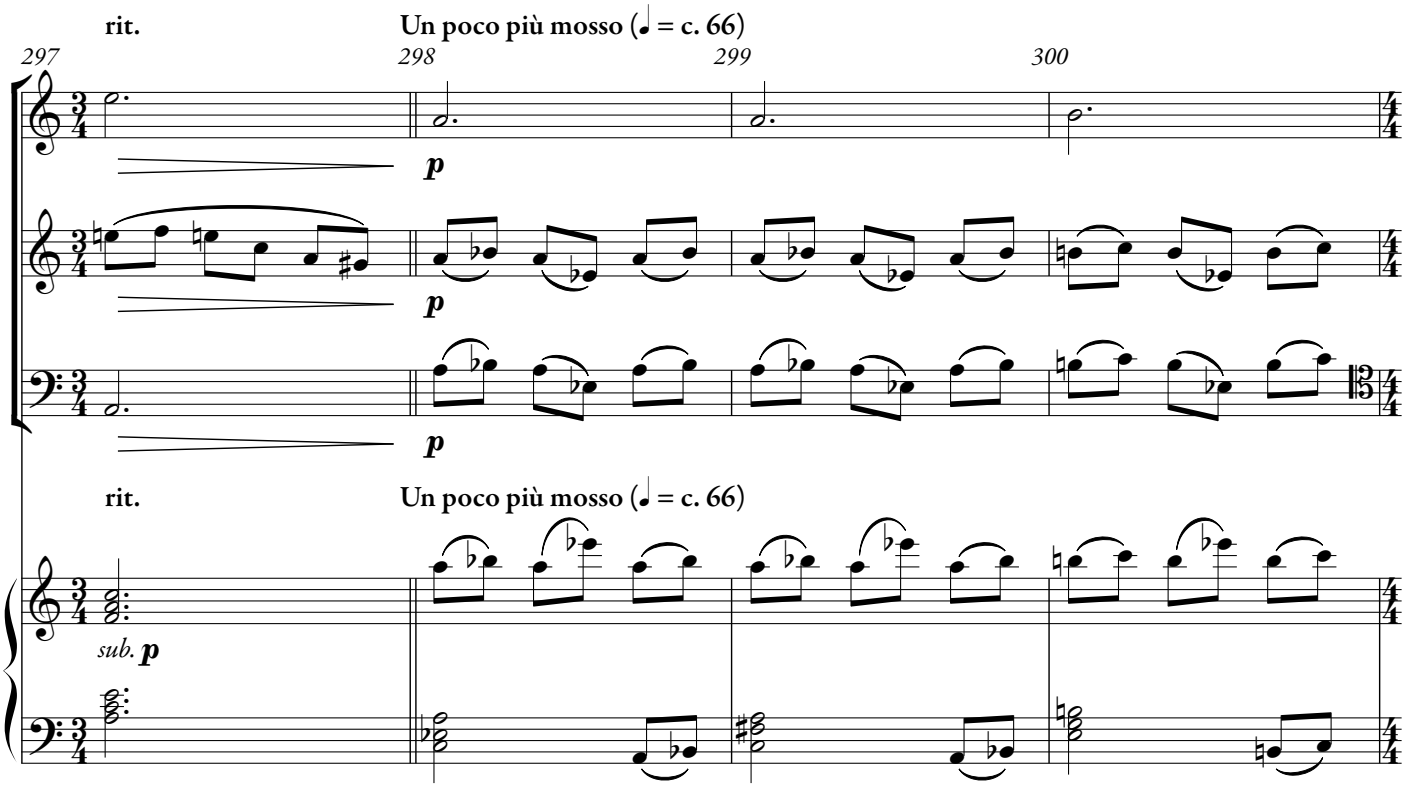
Better if it lasts for years,
so you are old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

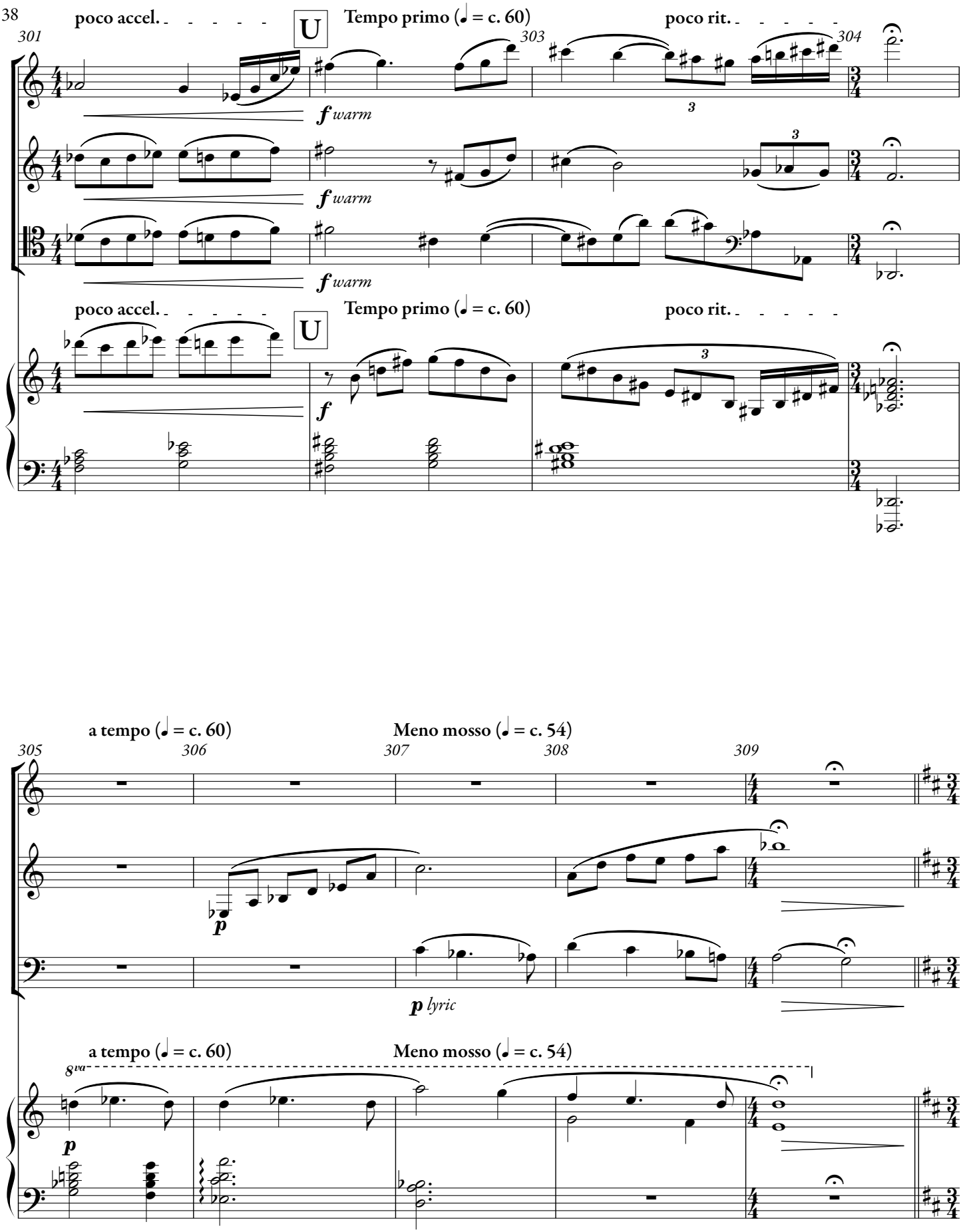



T
Adagio ♩ = c. 60
280
senza sord.
282
283
284
285
p rubato
T
Adagio ♩ = c. 60
p rubato
Ped. ad lib.

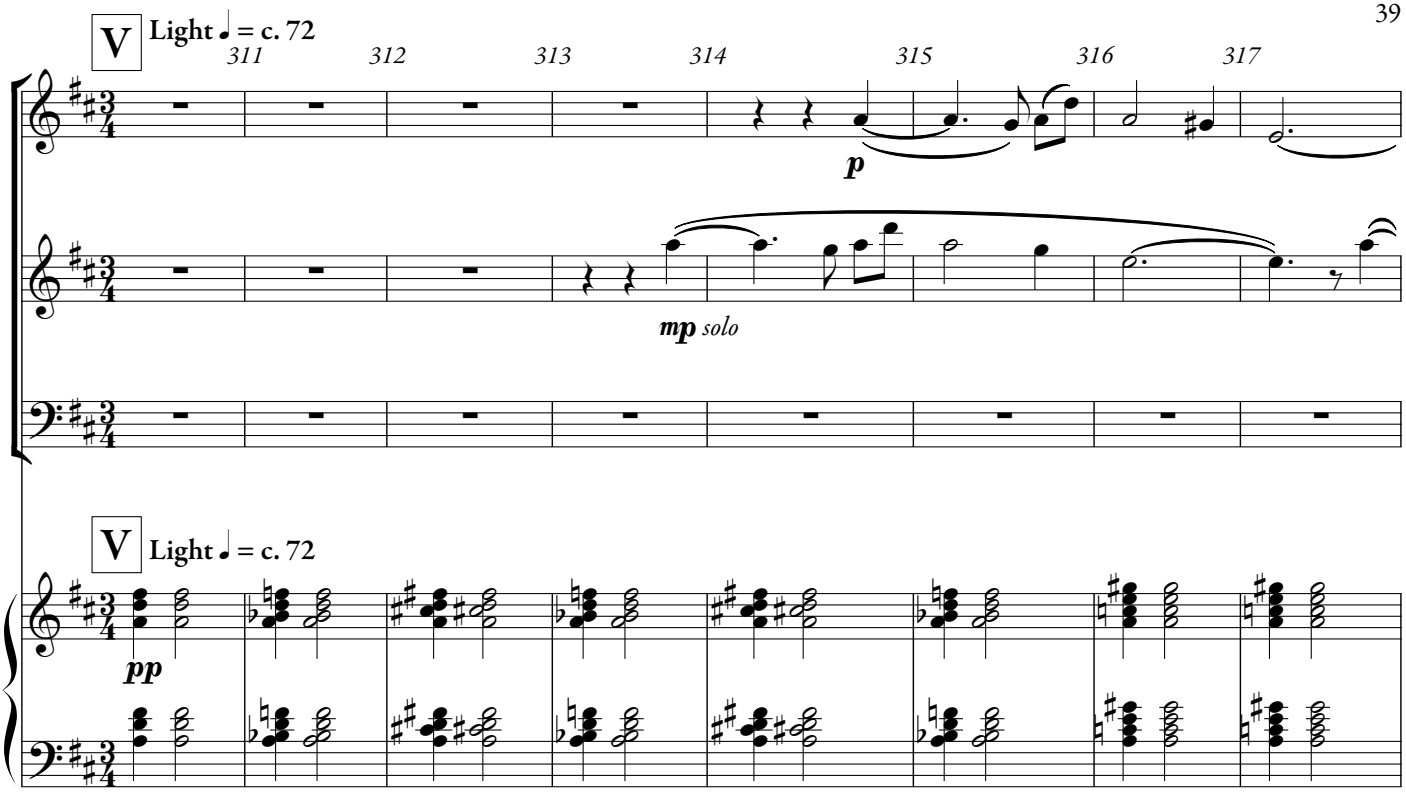

rit.
a tempo (♩ = c. 60)
286
287
288
289
290
291
mp
p
mp
p
mp
senza sord.
mp
p
p
rit.
a tempo (♩ = c. 60)
pp
p

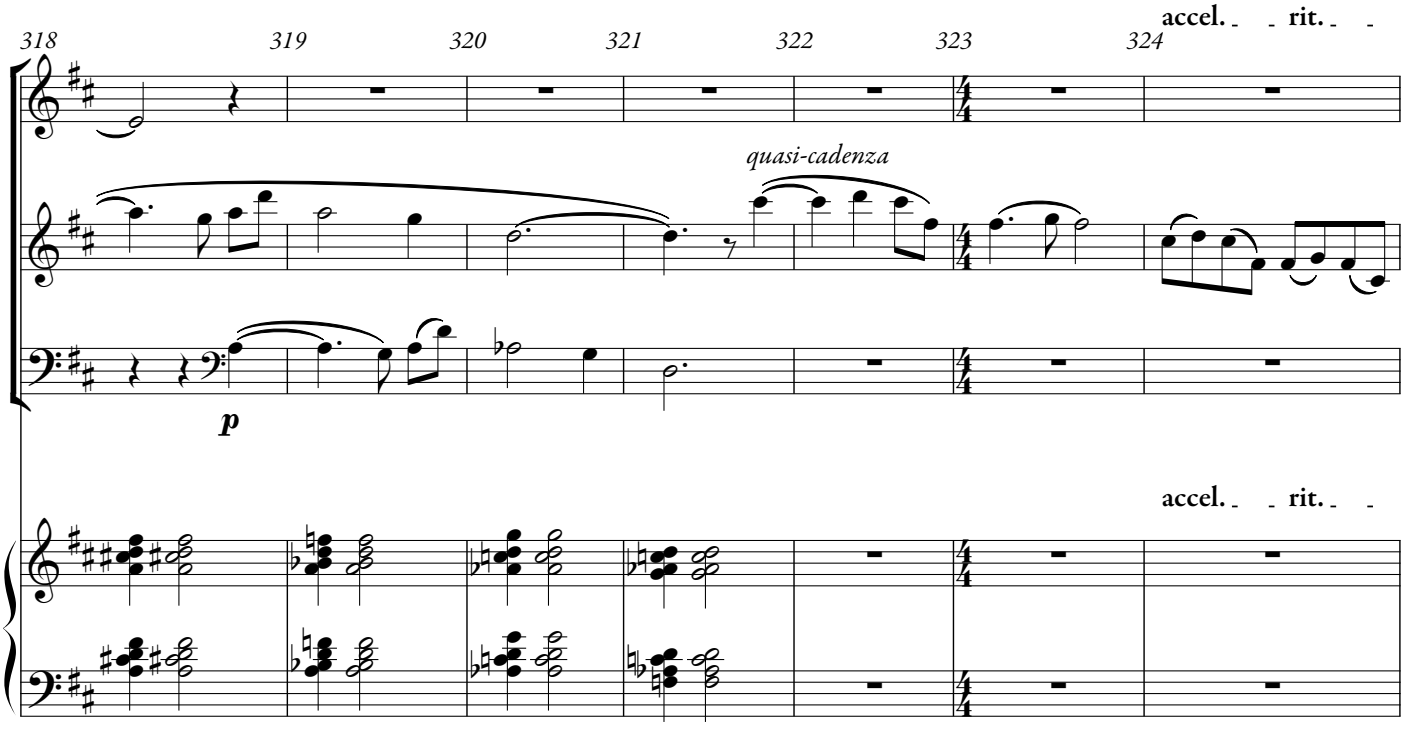

292
293
294
295
296
mp
mp
f
f
f
f
8vb

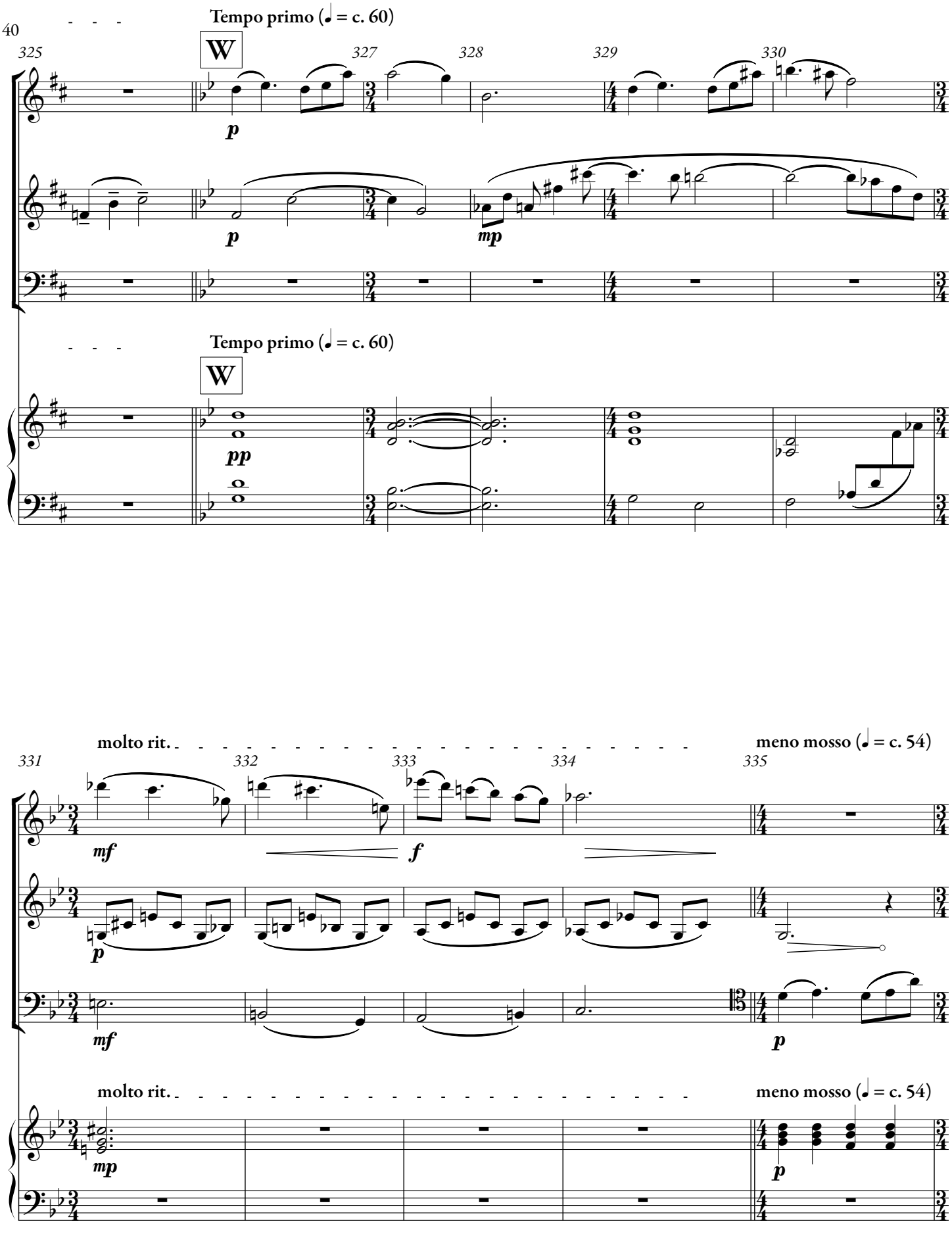

rit.
Un poco più mosso (♩ = c. 66)
297
298
299
300
p
p
p
rit.
Un poco più mosso (♩ = c. 66)
sub. p

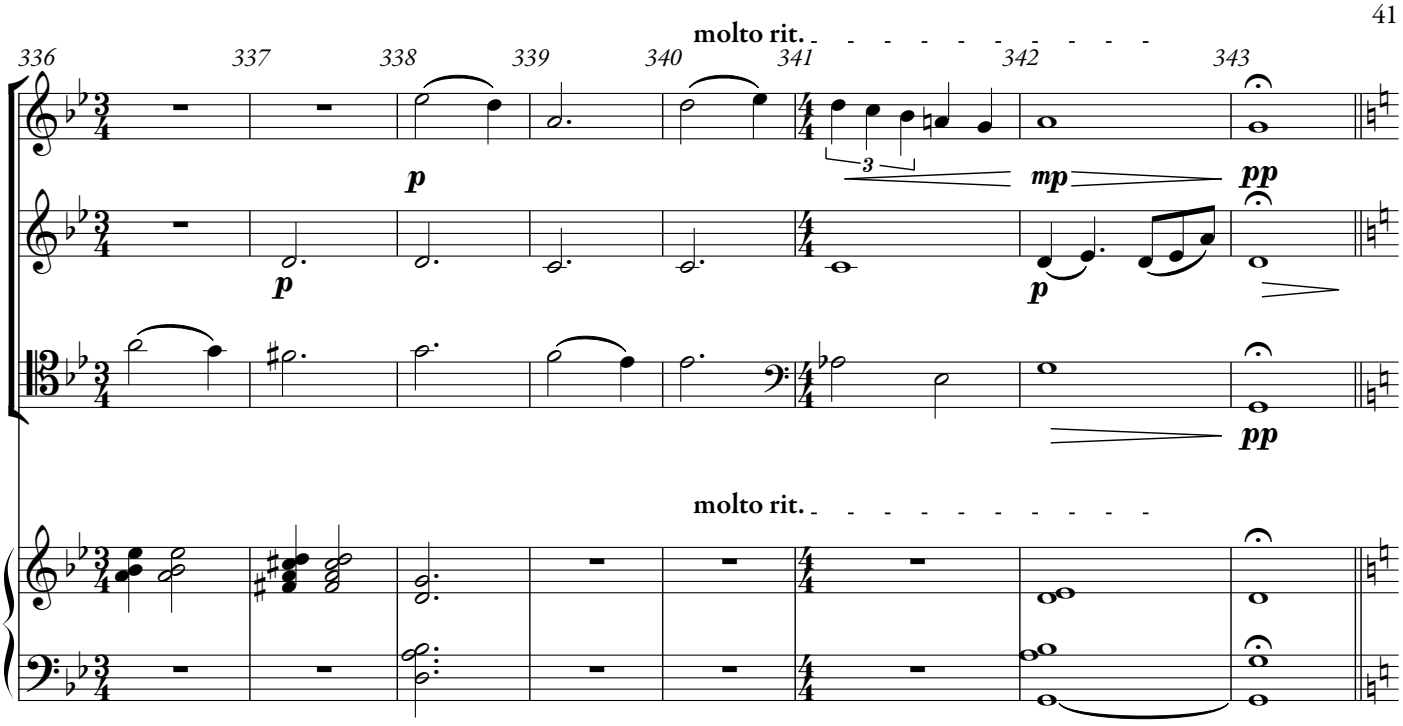

poco accel.
U
Tempo primo (♩ = c. 60)
poco rit.
301
303
304
f warm
f warm
f warm
poco accel.
U
Tempo primo (♩ = c. 60)
poco rit.
f
3
3
3

a tempo (♩ = c. 60)
Meno mosso (♩ = c. 54)
305
306
307
308
309
p
p lyric
a tempo (♩ = c. 60)
Meno mosso (♩ = c. 54)
8va
p


V
Light ♩ = c. 72
311
312
313
314
315
316
317
p
mp solo
V
Light ♩ = c. 72
pp

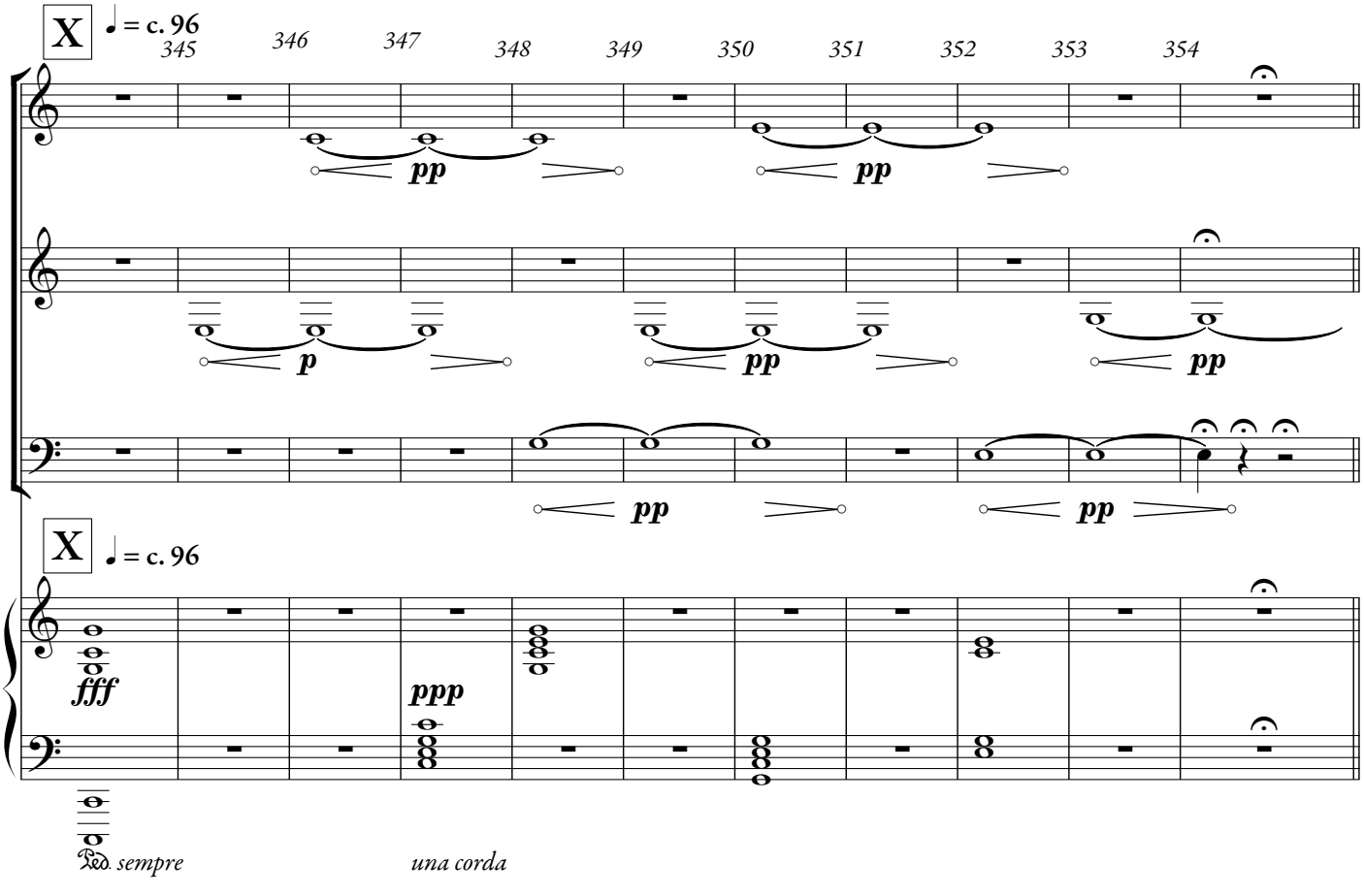

318
319
320
321
322
323
324
accel. rit.
quasi-cadenza
p
accel. rit.

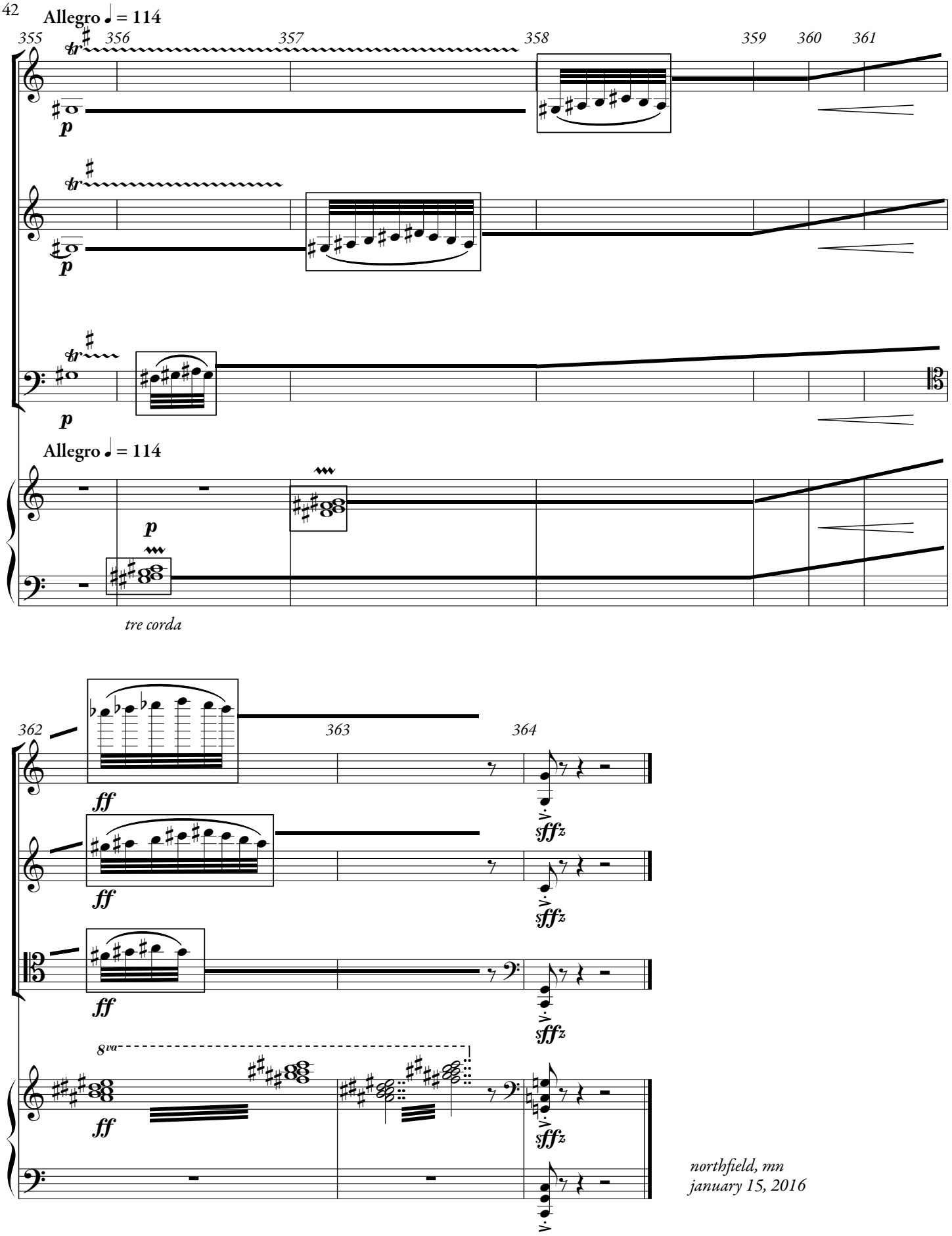

Tempo primo (♩ = c. 60)
W
325
327
328
329
330
p
p
mp
Tempo primo (♩ = c. 60)
W
pp
molto rit.
meno mosso (♩ = c. 54)
331
332
333
334
335
mf
f
p
mf
p
molto rit.
meno mosso (♩ = c. 54)
mp
p



Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.





northfield, mn
january 15, 2016