Frank Stemper

STRING QUARTET NO. 2

for

The Anchorage Chamber Music Festival

NOTES:

This is very chromatic music. I attempted to make the lines as easy to read as I could, trying to avoid awkward intervals as much as was possible. Accidentals do hold through the bar but not through octaves. However, there are many cautionary accidentals throughout to make the reading a bit easier.

All pizzicatos and staccatos are the same duration – short – regardless of their written duration, unless otherwise stated.

A principal theme of this piece is the use of running sextuplets that begin semi-canonically in the four parts. They often start with a heavy/accented beginning that quickly diminishes to a quiet haze. The secondary beaming of these sextuplets shows how to subdivide – i.e. 2 sets of 3. or 3 sets of 2, or 1 set of 6. Although these passages are thematically important to the narrative, they also often serve as a hazy accompaniment to additional gestures and tunes – as a kind of hyper *Alberti Bass*. And there are often accents that should overtly stick out of the running texture. Although the exact pitches of these sextuplets are certainly harmonically important and chosen with care, they are also a challenge to read. Thus, in order to keep the rhythmic fluidity, the performers are urged, when necessary, to error the exact pitches in favor of the continuous, smooth rhythmic hysteria of these passages, that is, exact pitches are less important than a flowing, rhythmic texture.

This "Rhythm First" should also be the rule during the two pizzicato movements. I have been told that the speed of some of the pizzicato gestures may be difficult. However, keeping the tempo of these sometimes-awkward pizzicato statements is more important than pitch precision. I would prefer keeping up the tempo at the expense of precise pitches — and even skipping, or perhaps ghosting a pitch here or there, in order to keep the flow intact.
—— Example:
m. 13, 'cello: if this upbeat line causes a problem, especially the last four 32nd notes, it is perfectly fine, in fact desired on my part, to improvise a way play the 2-beat line as long as the G hits precisely on the downbeat of m. 14. This includes leaving out a pitch or two, or altering the exact pitches and/or rhythm to make this anacrusis to downbeat work. I don't feel that this would be sloppy playing. It is in fact a version of the heterophony that drives much of this piece. (See the note on Movement III below)

Note: I am also concerned about the abundant use of pizzicato in this piece, and the wear and tear it could take on the performers' plucking fingers. Any way you would like to avoid this – if it is a problem, is fine with me. Using all your fingers, using a pic, holding your instrument in different way, etc.

Nienté, abbreviated to "*n*" means no sound. Used at the beginning of a pitch followed by a crescendo, we should hear no attack, then sneaking in the sound and swell it. The opposite is also used – the sound should gradually disappear.

In movement II:
the triplet figures, often syncopated, are merely correctly written "Swing." Players should have fun with that jazzy reference.
Some of the pizzicato passages are challenging to play up to tempo. Feel free to amend the score, using hammer-on slurs, alternating double-fingered pizz, or even leaving out notes that cause problems with the fluidity of the rhythm.

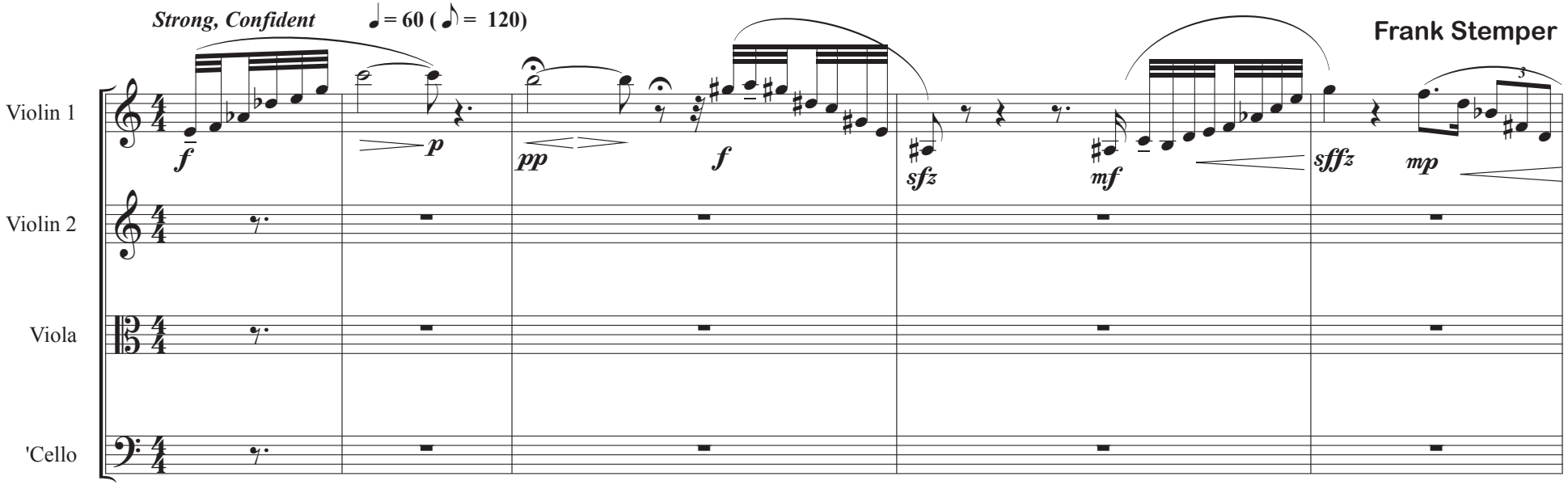
In movement III:
This movement exploits heterophony – the fourth musical texture that utilizes a mixture of monophony and polyphony: i.e. similar lines, rather than exactly matching lines, are performed not quite in unison, rhythmically askew, each being a variation of the other – *times 4 players*. I've taken this idea a bit farther, with contrasting phrase beginnings and endings not occurring together, etc. This idea actually occurs throughout the entire 2nd Quartet, but it is most at work in movement III. (The imprecise playing I am suggesting movement II is related to this heterophonic texture as well.)
Although movement III gets more and more quiet, the dynamics should be somewhat undulating throughout, i.e. players should feel free to *subtly* add espressivo, swelling into their lines, bringing it out slightly, then pulling back slightly. Some of this is written into each part.

Dedicated to the Pierce Family in honor of their matriarch,
Alice Obery Pierce

I

Strong, Confident ♩= 60 (♪ = 120)

Frank Stemper



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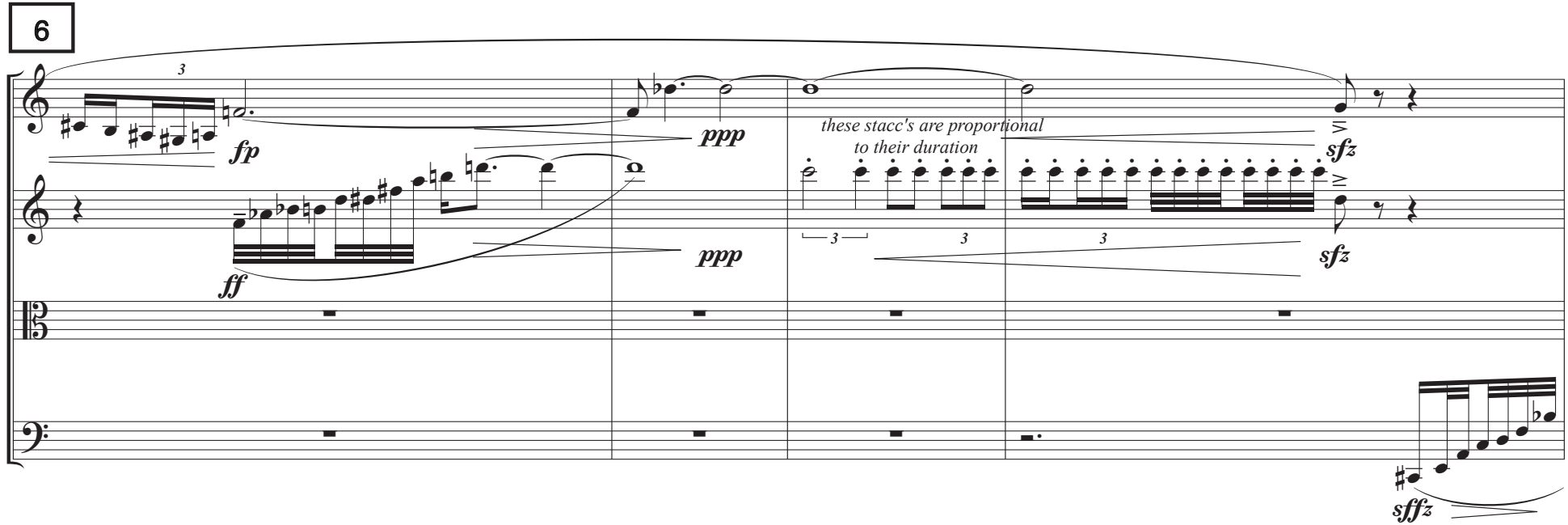

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10

marcato - - - allegro

mfp *sfz*

sffz *mfp* *sfz*

sffz *p* *ff*

p *sffz*

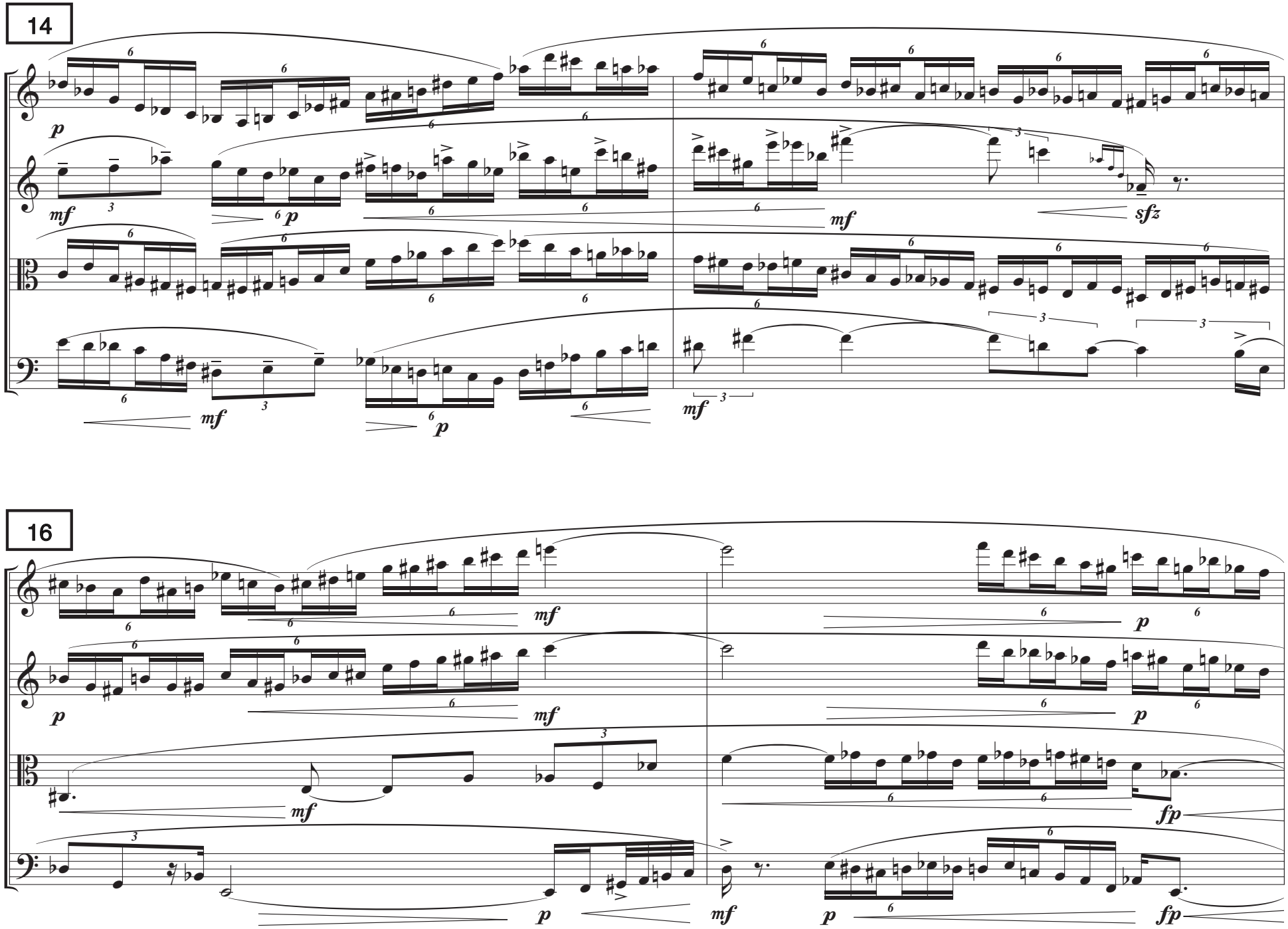
12

f *p*

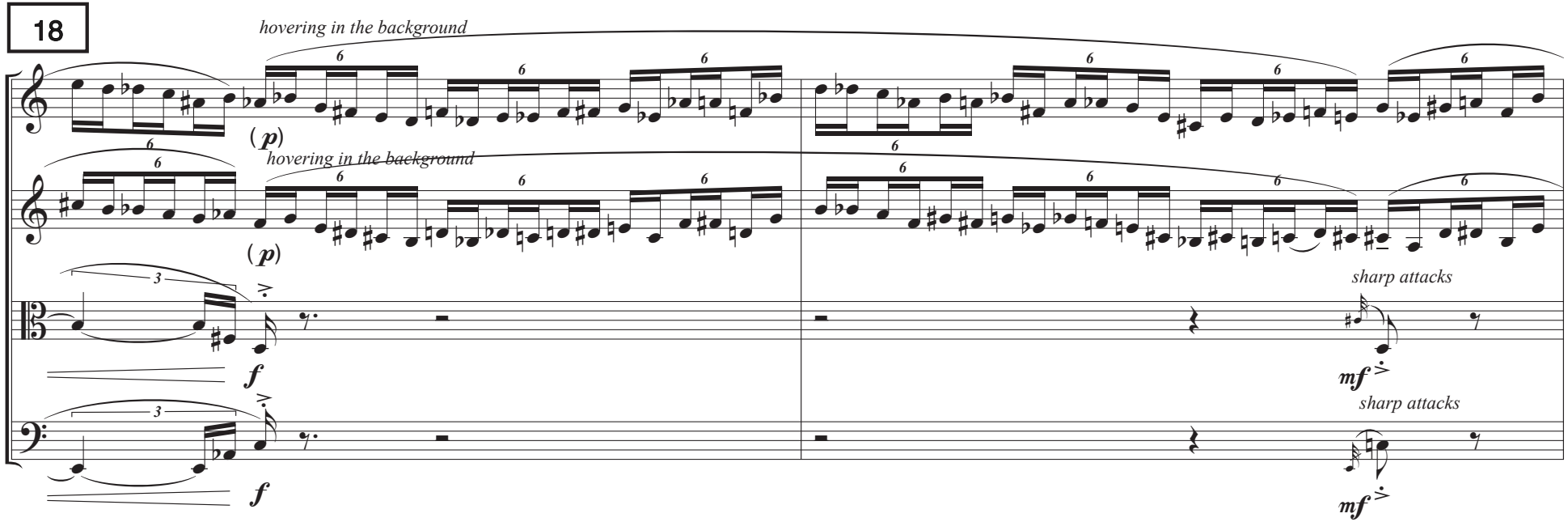
sfz *p* *mf*

sffz *p*

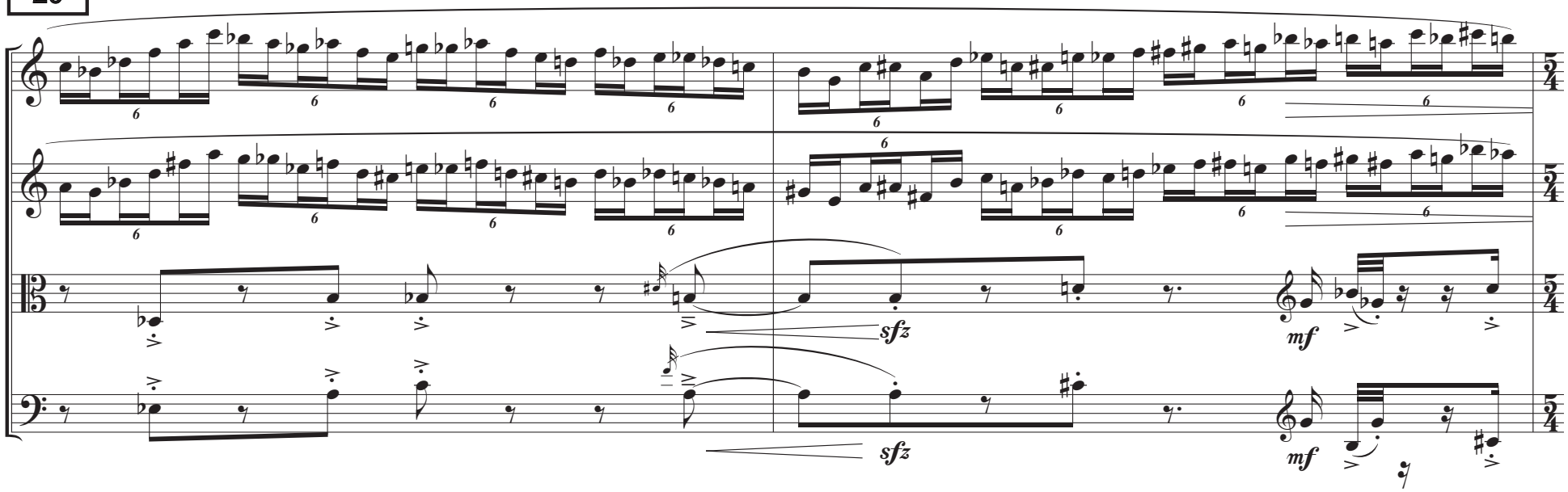
p


14
16

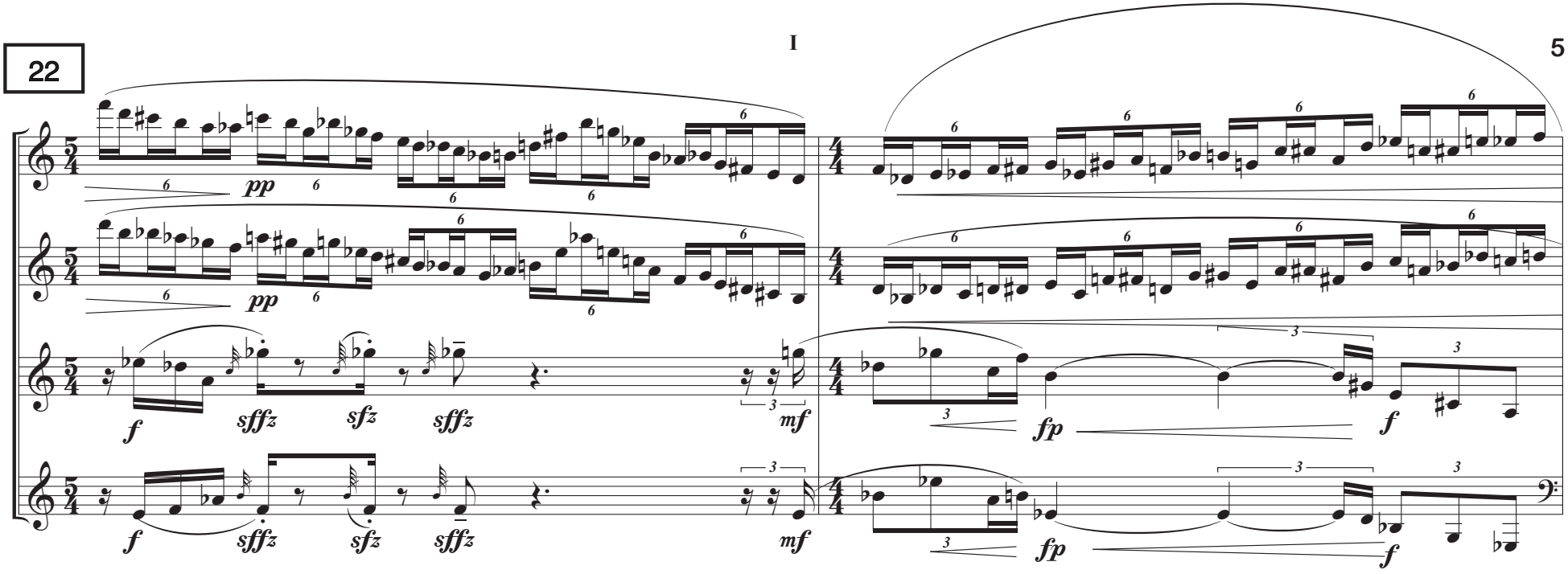
18


hovering in the background
(p)
hovering in the background
(p)
sharp attacks
f
mf
sharp attacks
f
mf

20


sfz
mf
sfz
mf

22



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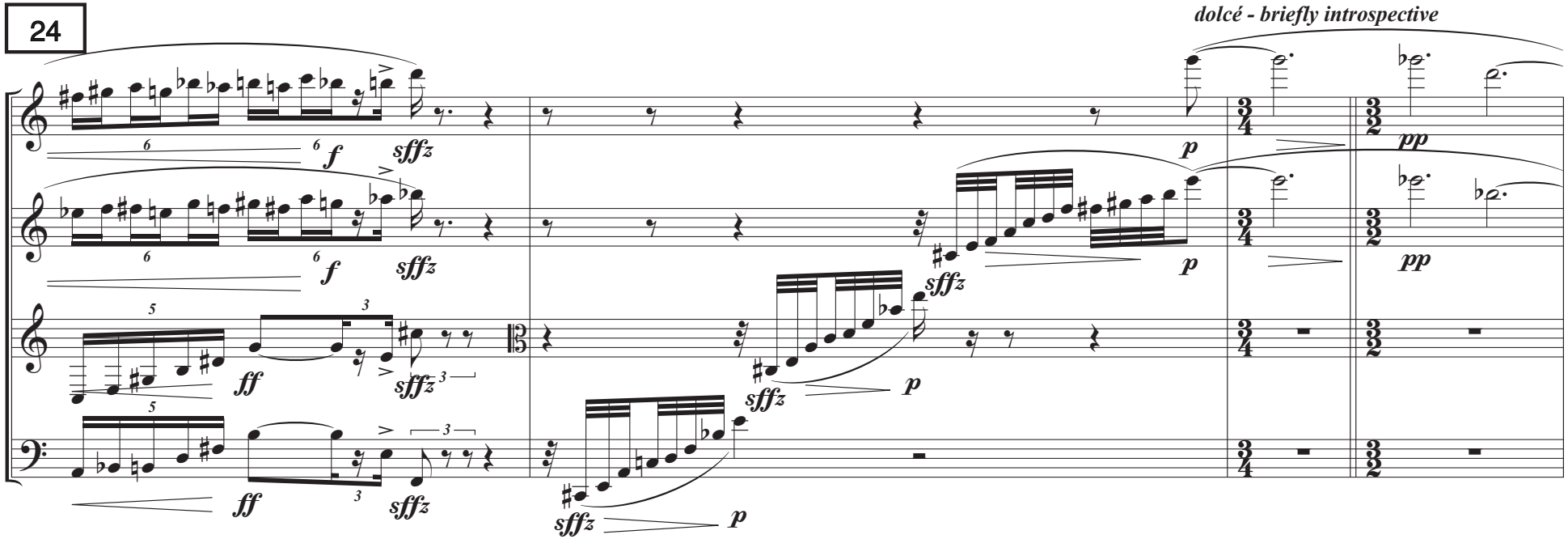
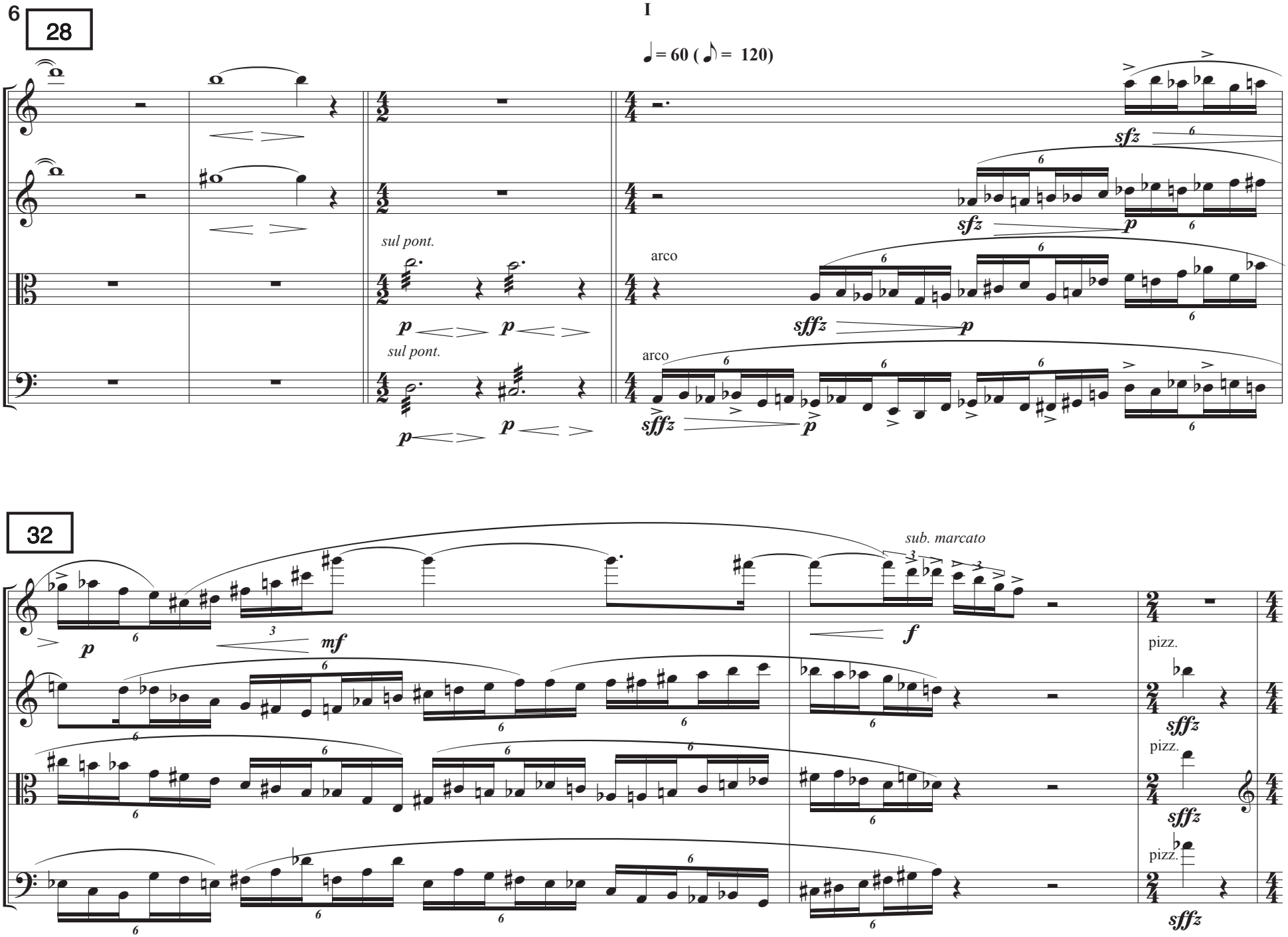
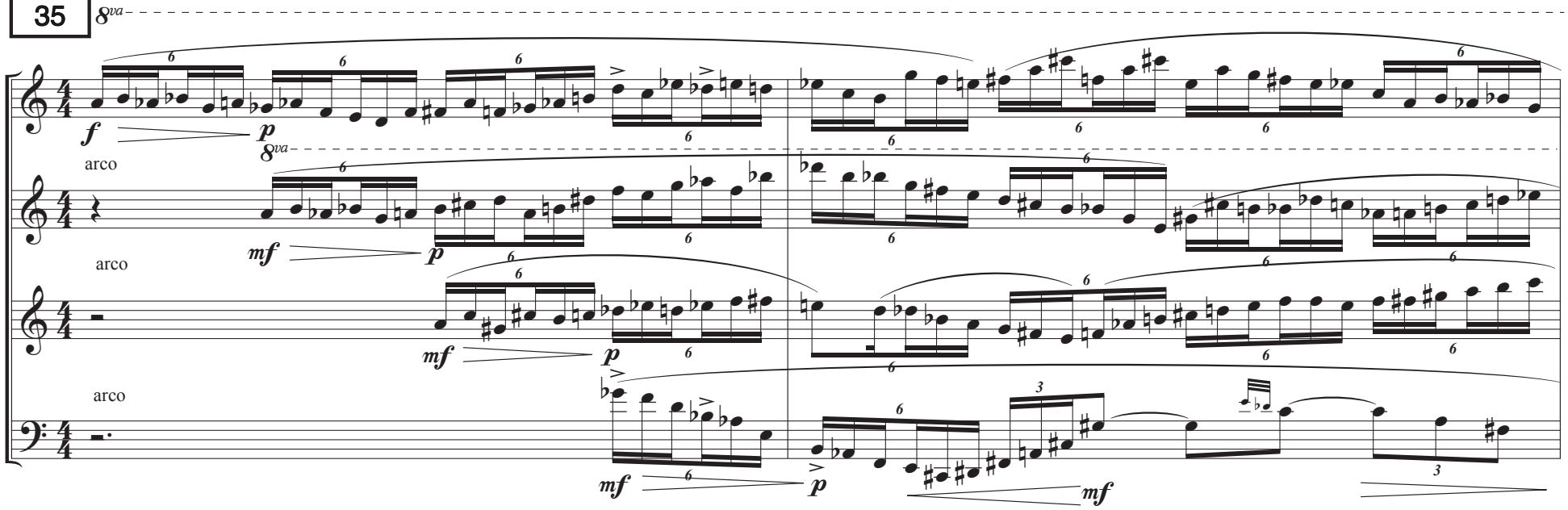



28
I
♩= 60 (♪= 120)
sul pont.
arco
sul pont.
arco
32
sub. marcato
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.

35



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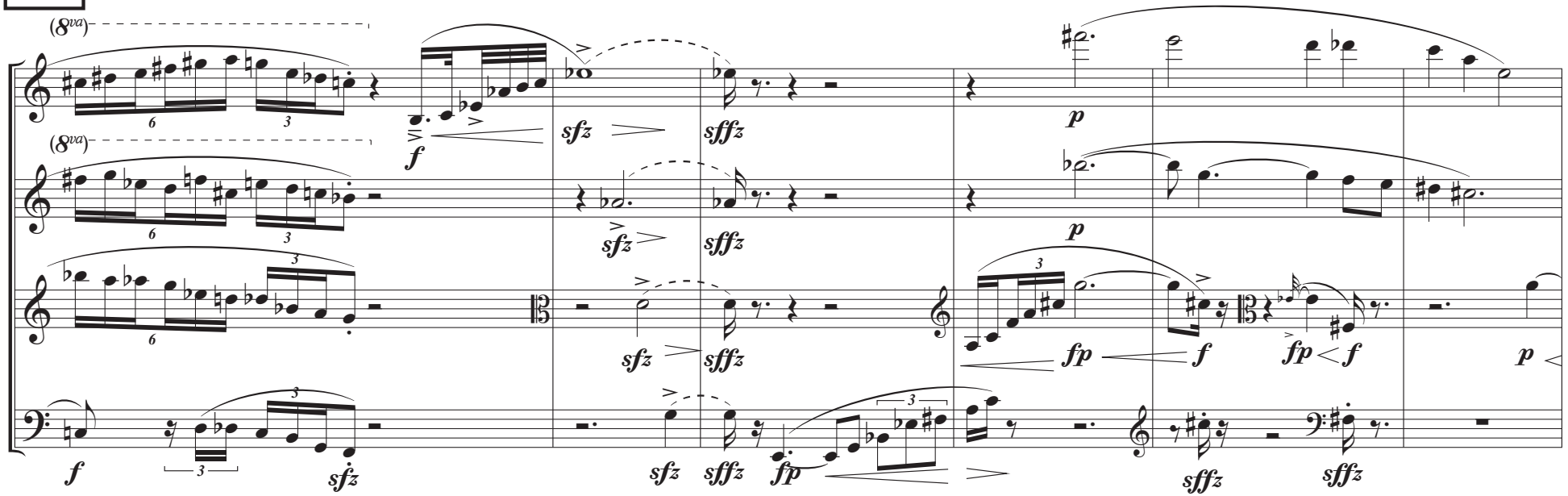


43

rit. - - - - -

p *mf*

48

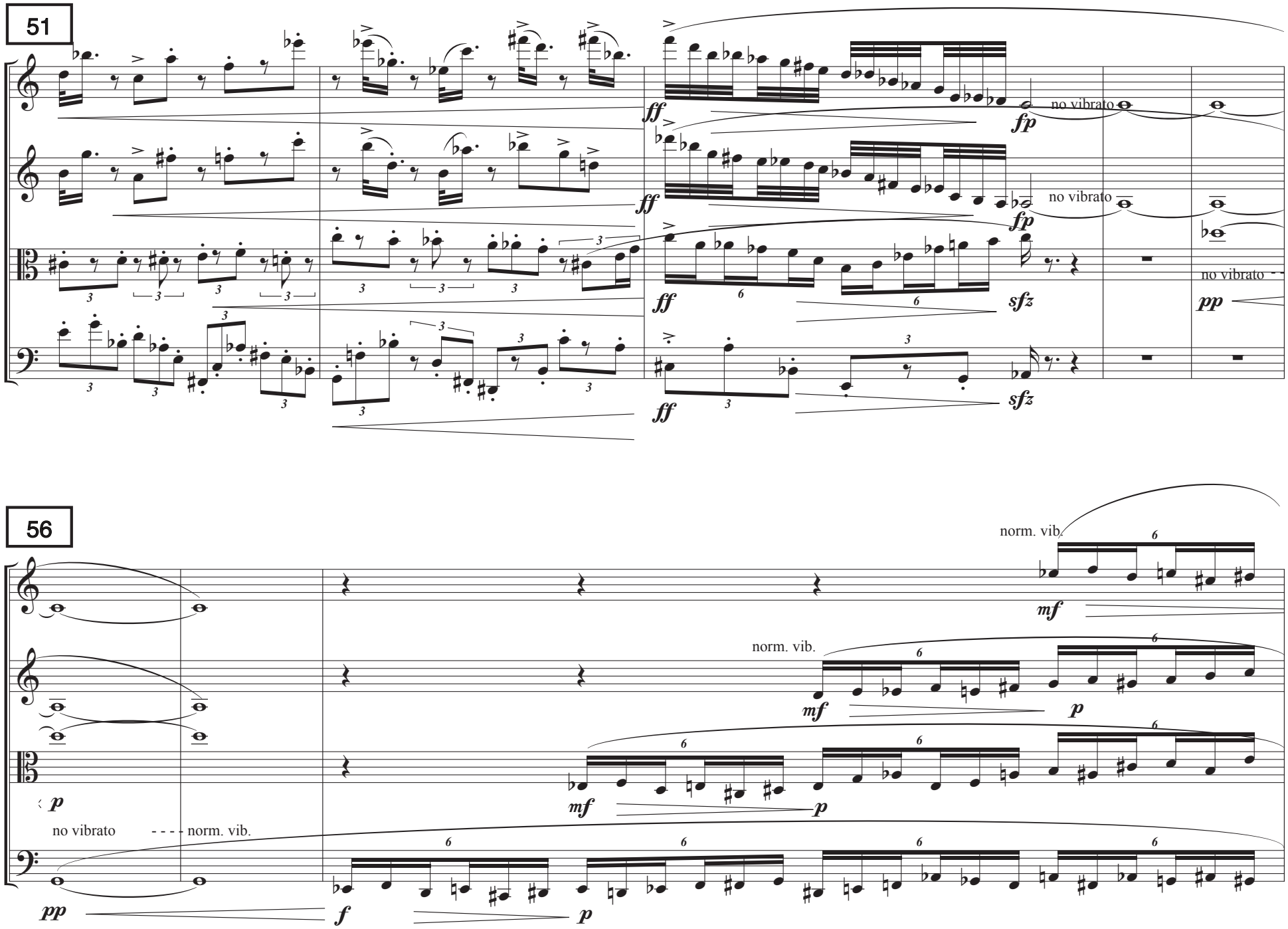
a tempo

sub. ***f*** ***p*** ***mf***

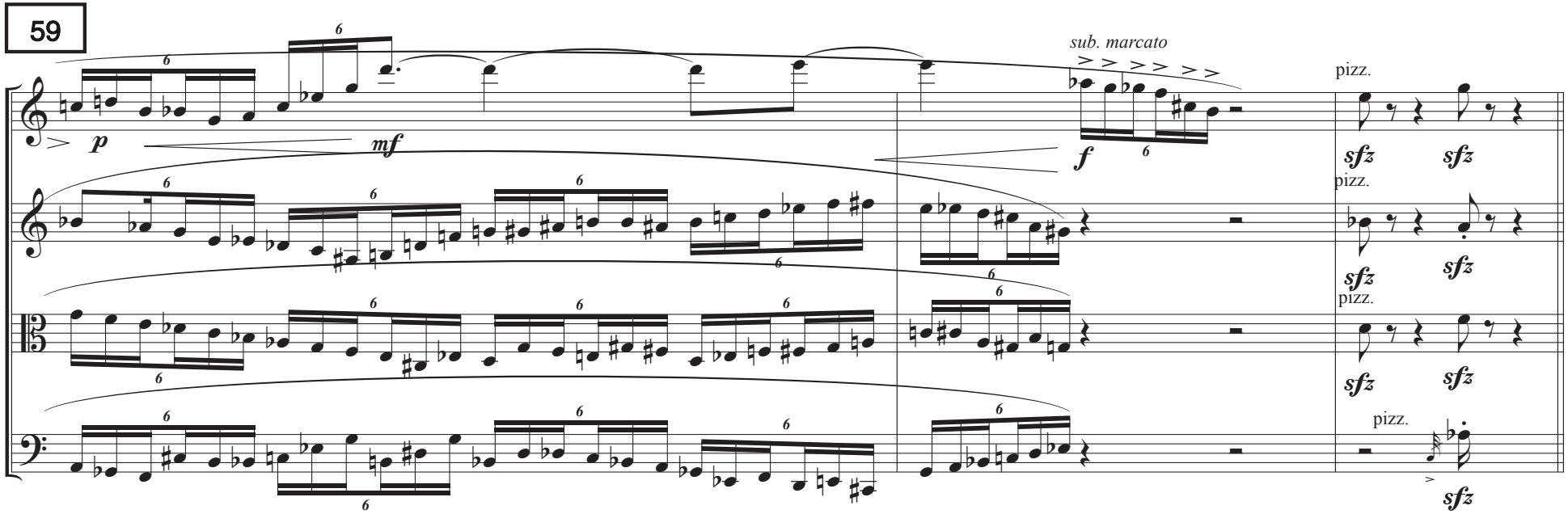
sfz ***mp*** *sub.* ***f*** ***p*** ***mf***

sfz ***mp*** ***mf***

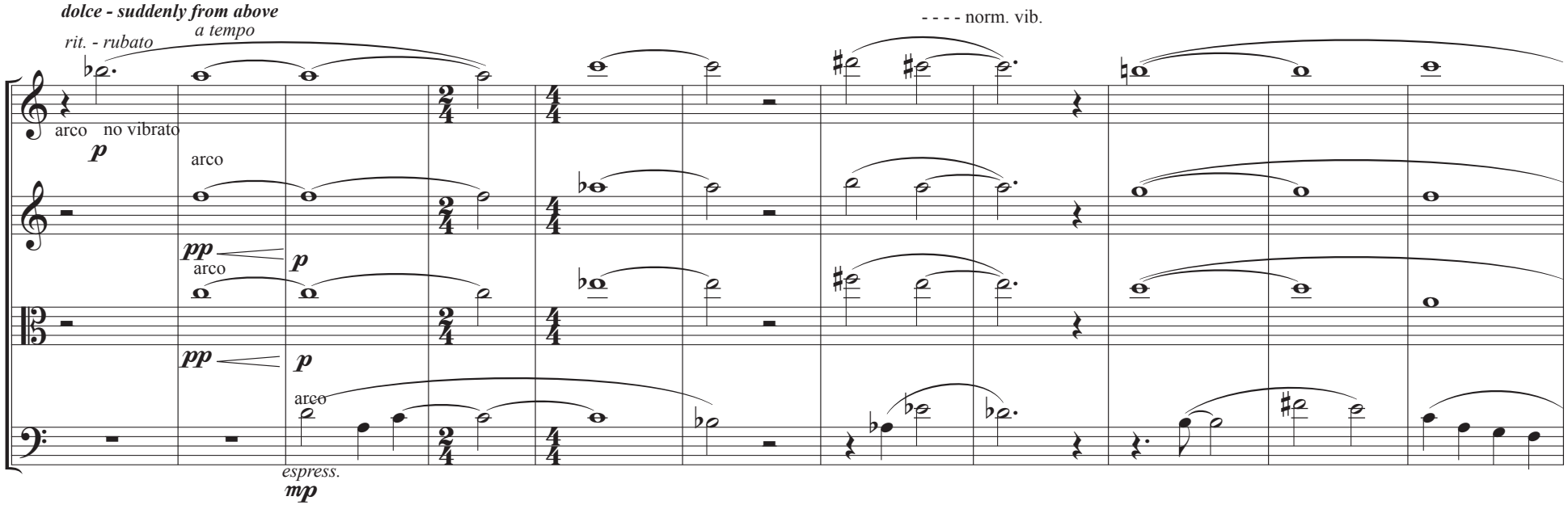
sfz ***mp***


51
ff
fp
no vibrato
sfz
pp
56
norm. vib.
mf
p
no vibrato - - - - norm. vib.
pp
f

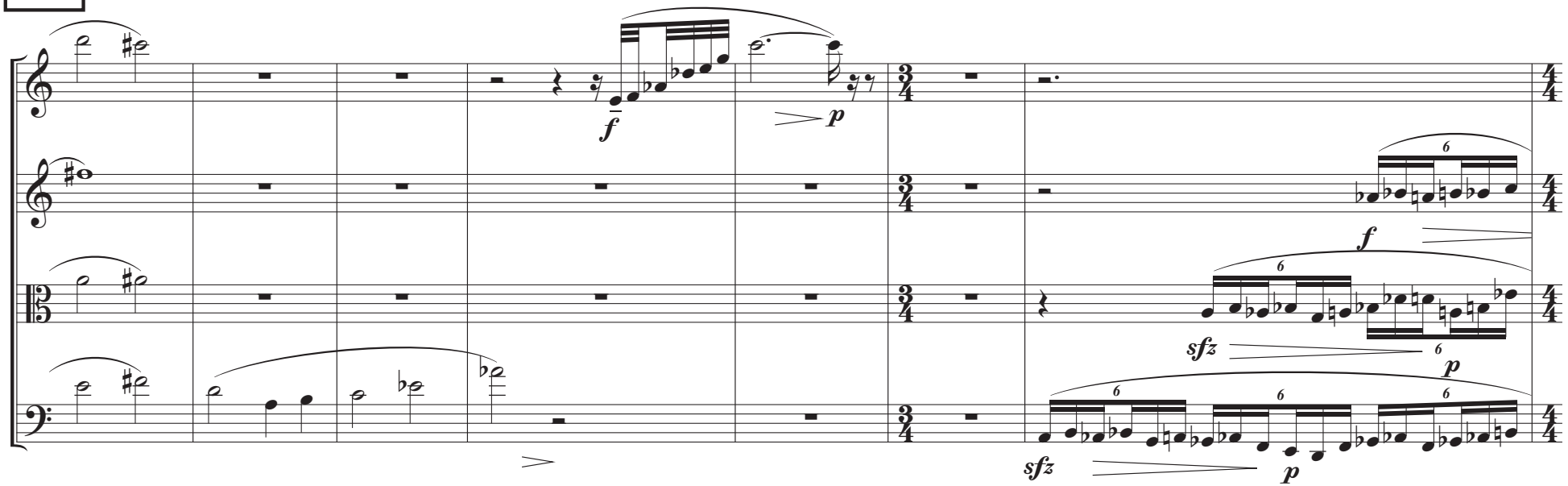
59


sub. marcato
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.

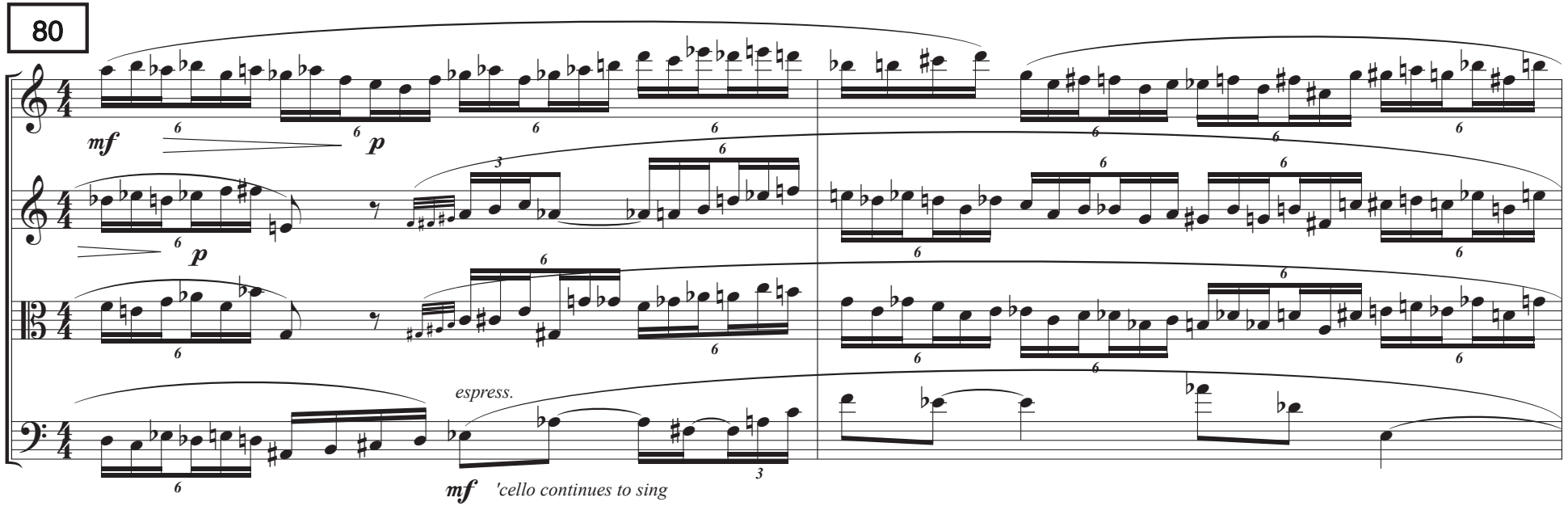
62

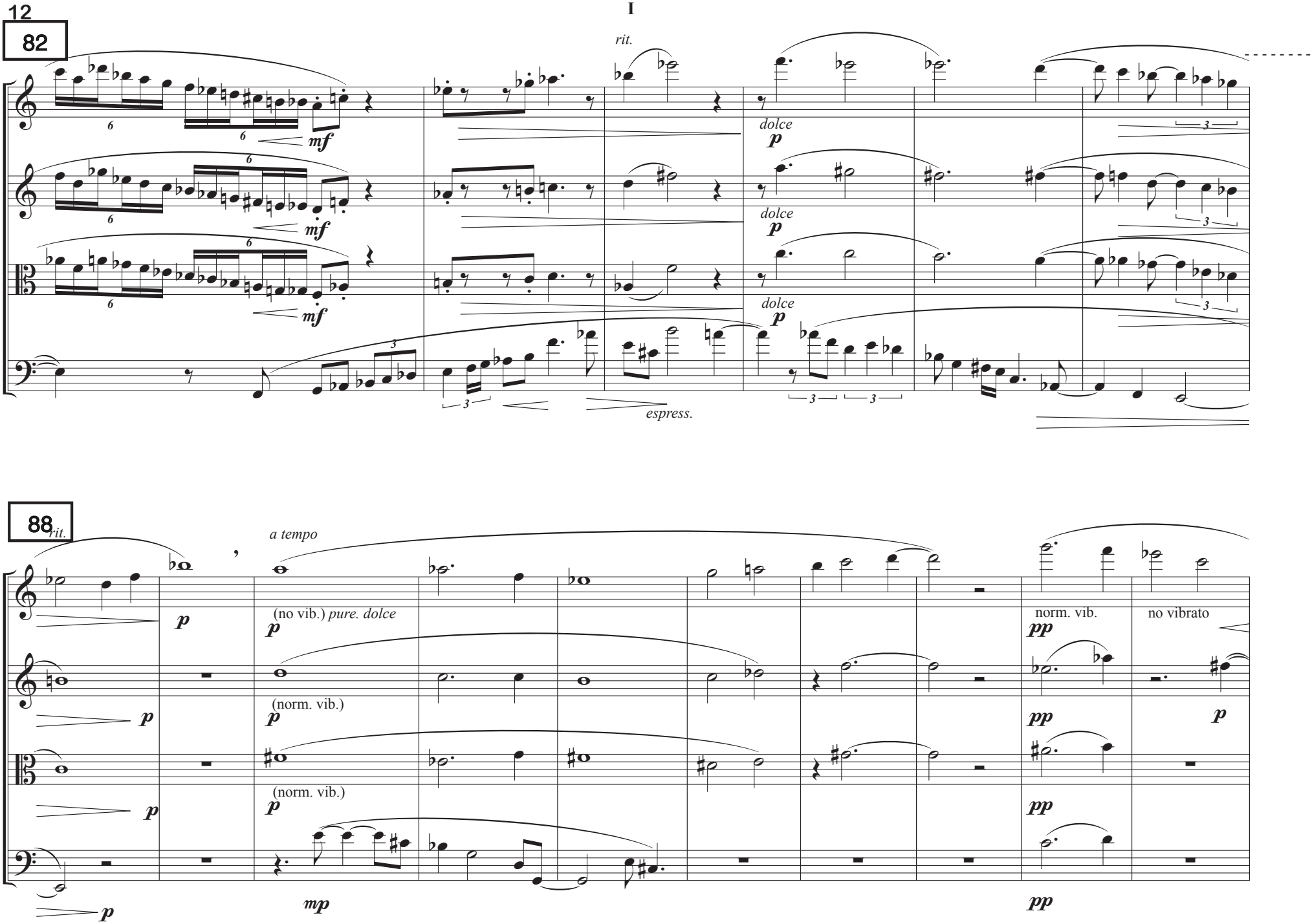

dolce - suddenly from above
rit. - rubato
a tempo
- - - - norm. vib.
arco no vibrato
arco
arco
arco
espress.

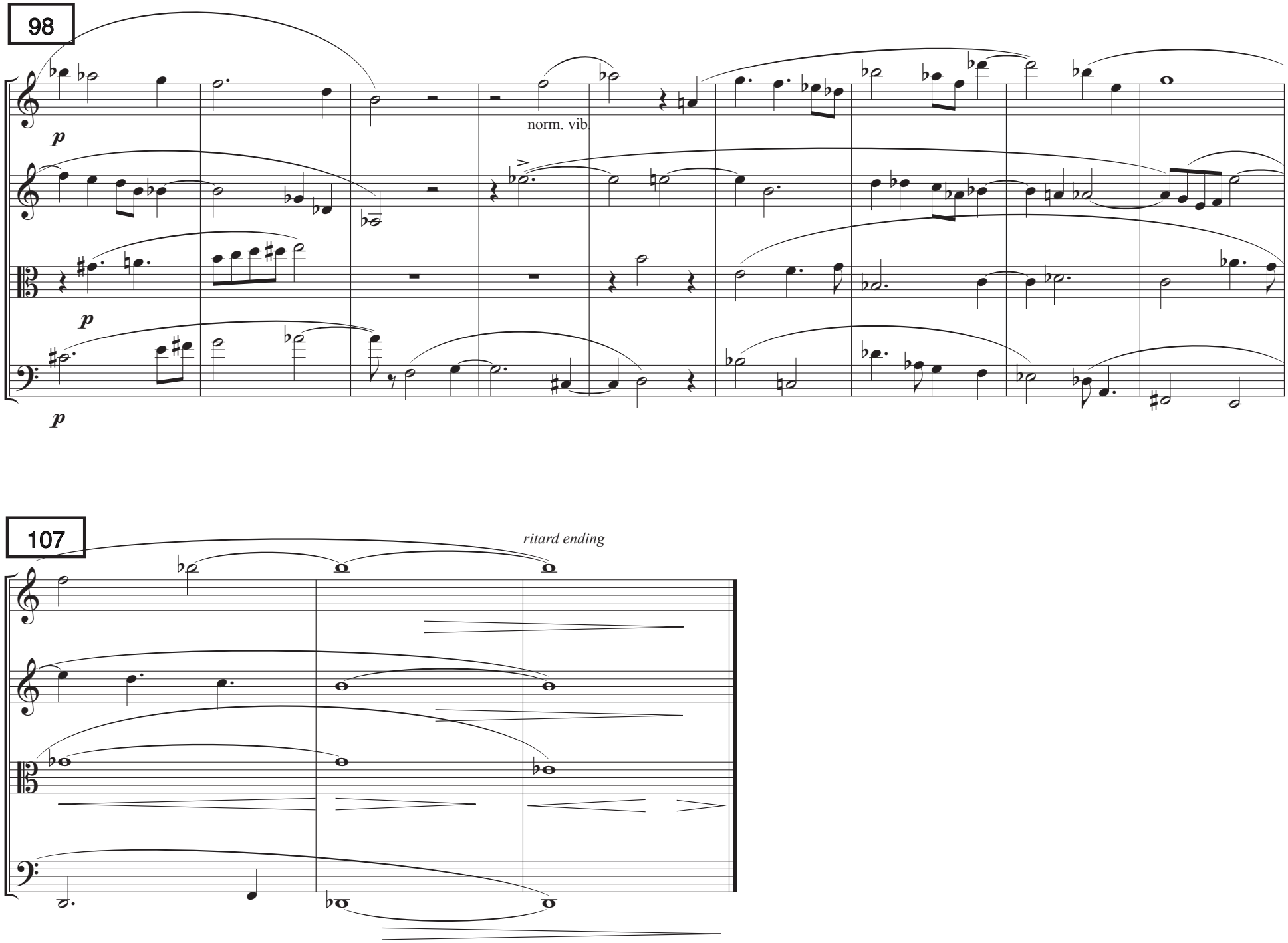
73



80




I
82
rit.
dolce
p
mf
espress.
88
rit.
a tempo
(no vib.) pure. dolce
(norm. vib.)
norm. vib.
no vibrato
pp
mp


98
p
norm. vib.
p
p
107
ritard ending

II

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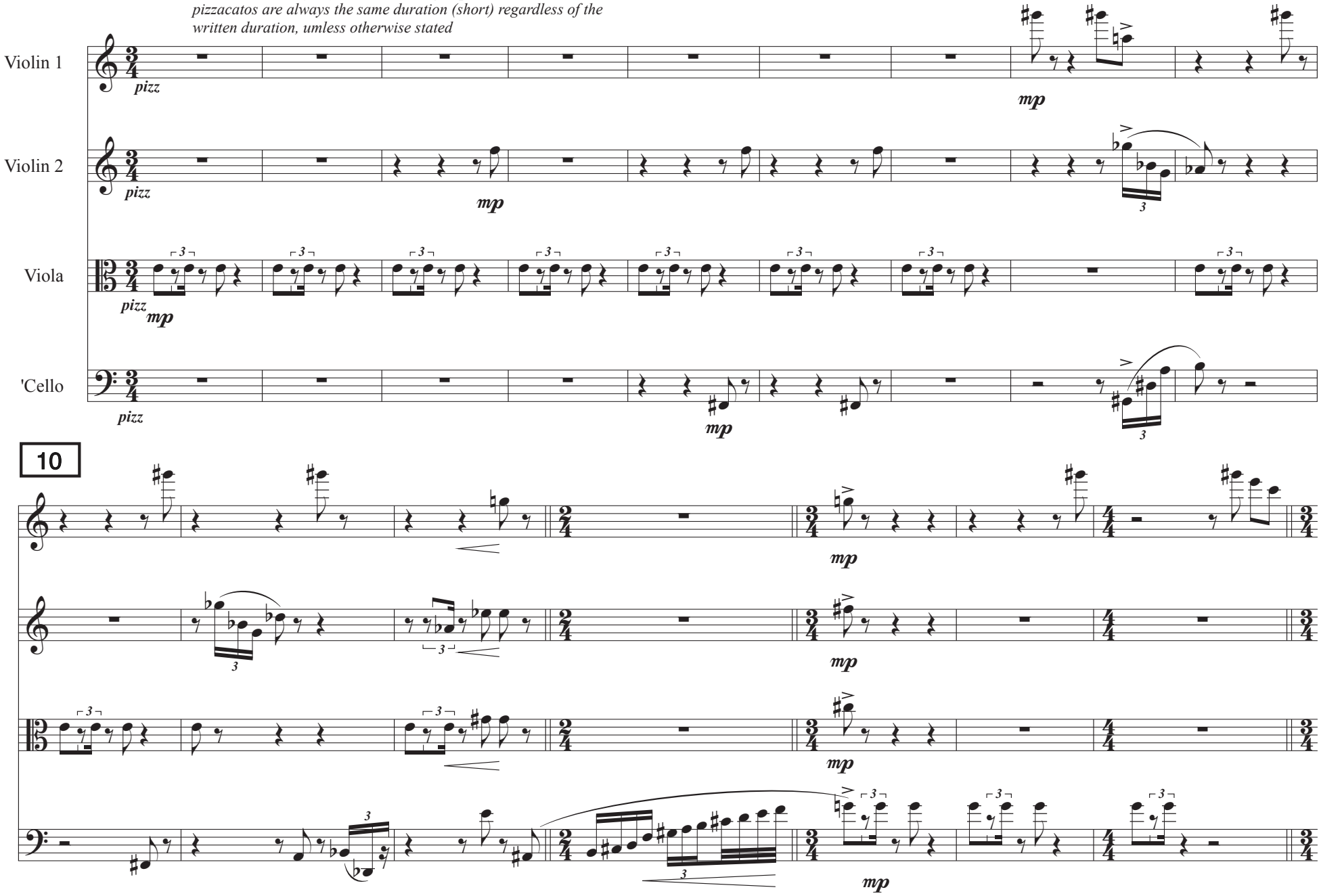
♩= 67 ***Minuet Pizzacato - jazzy, written "swing," quiet & delicate with accents***

pizzacatos are always the same duration (short) regardless of the written duration, umless otherwise stated



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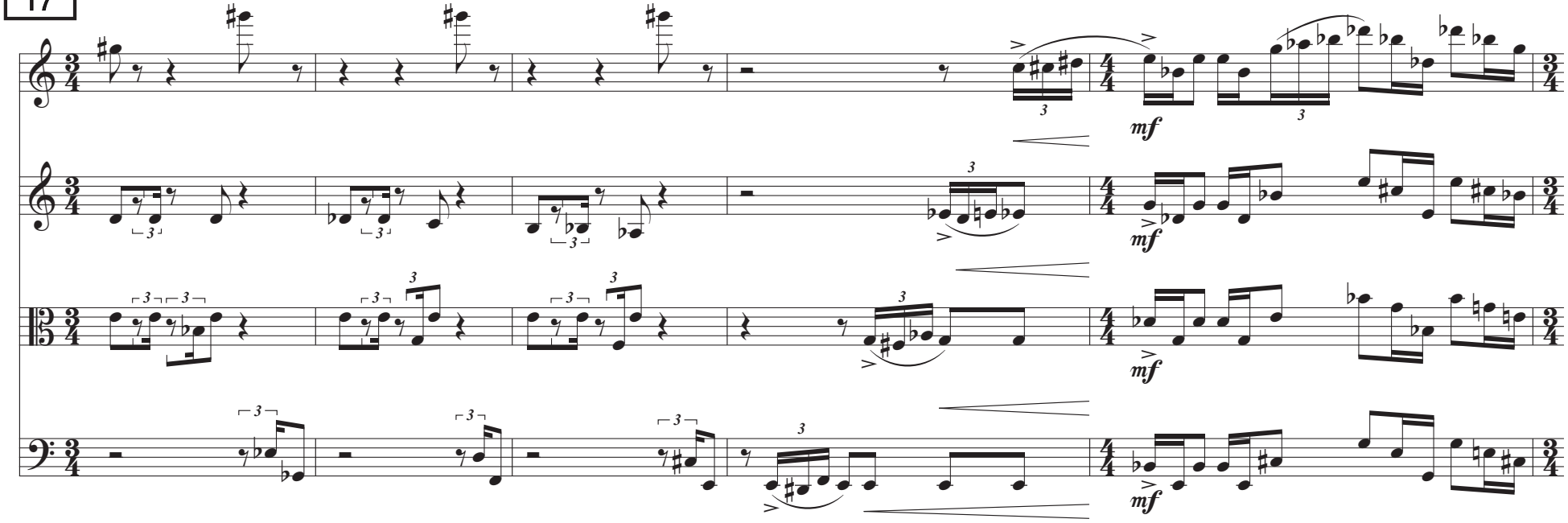
17



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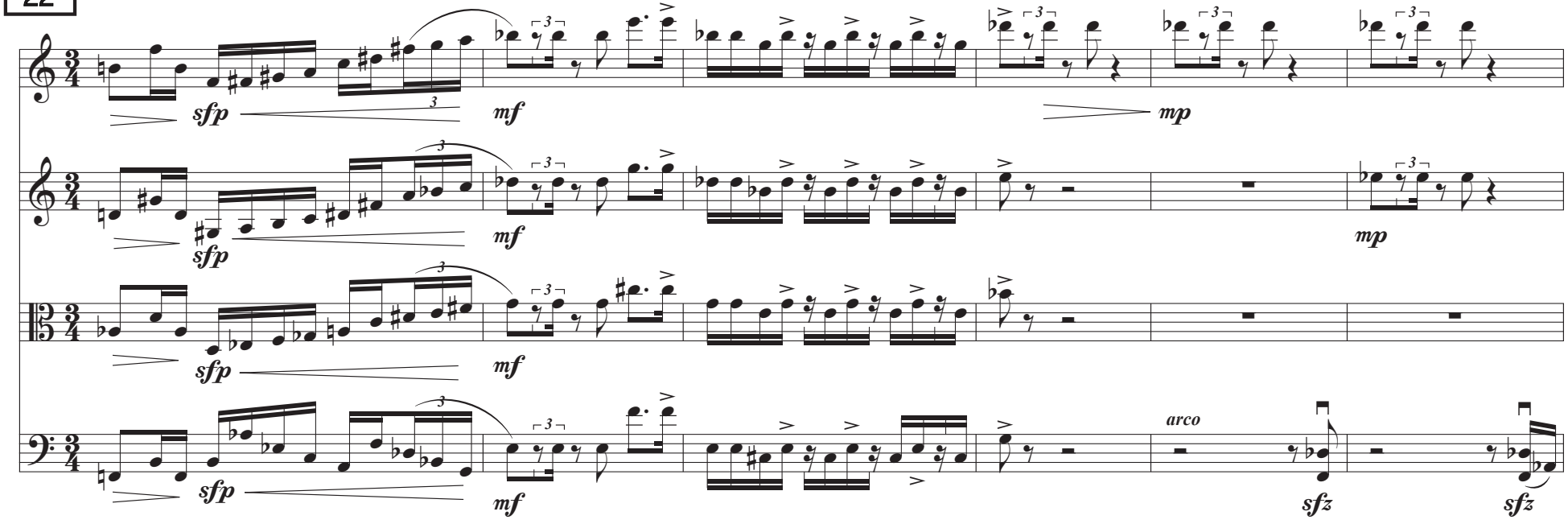
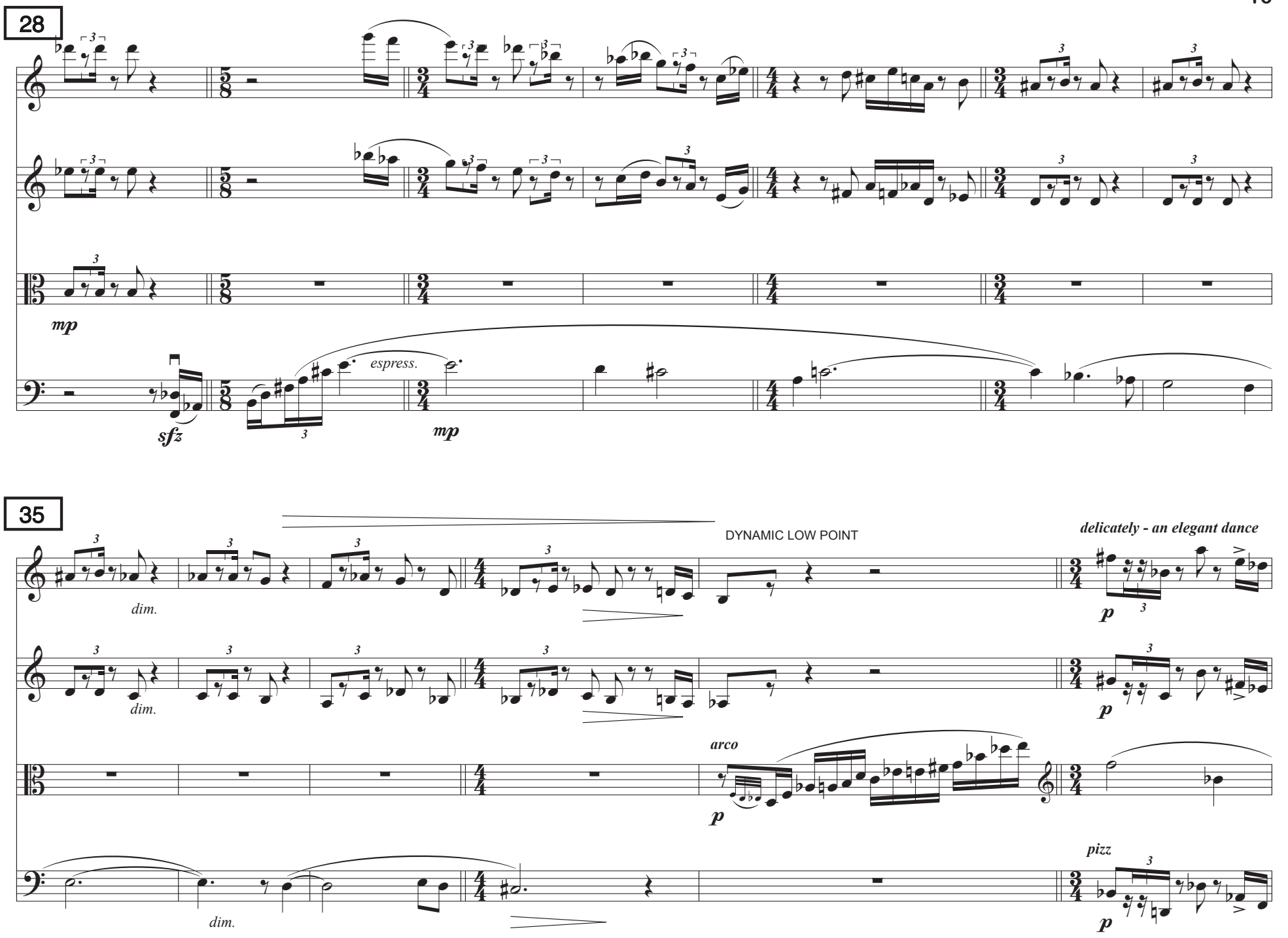
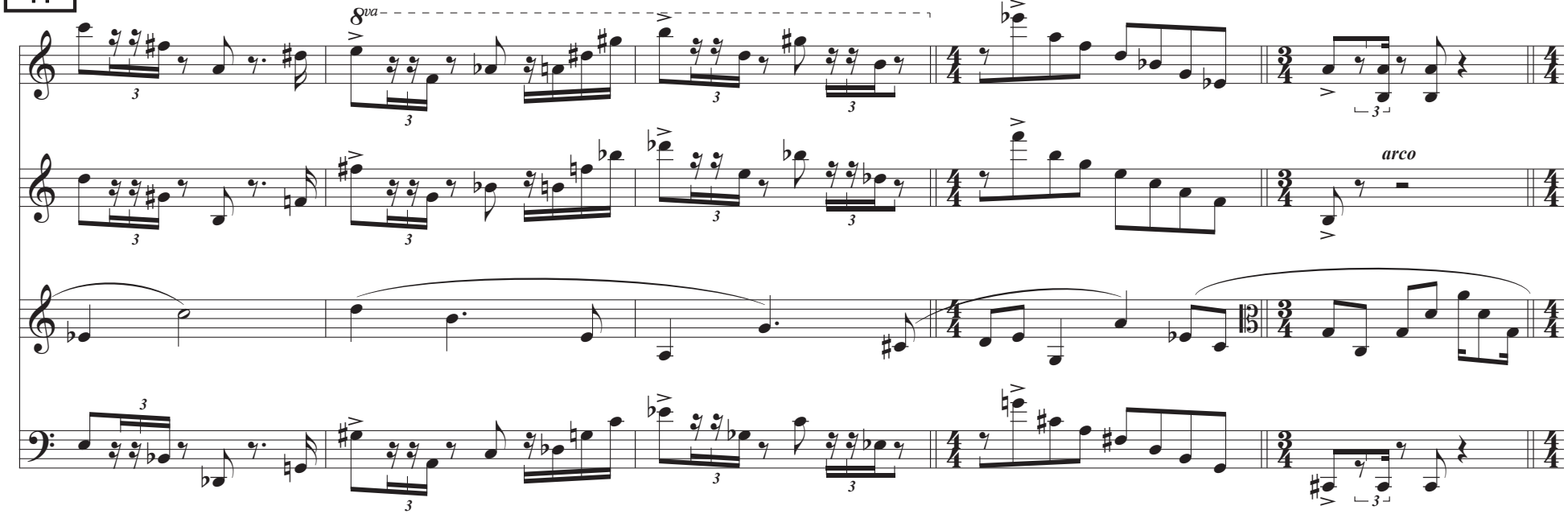
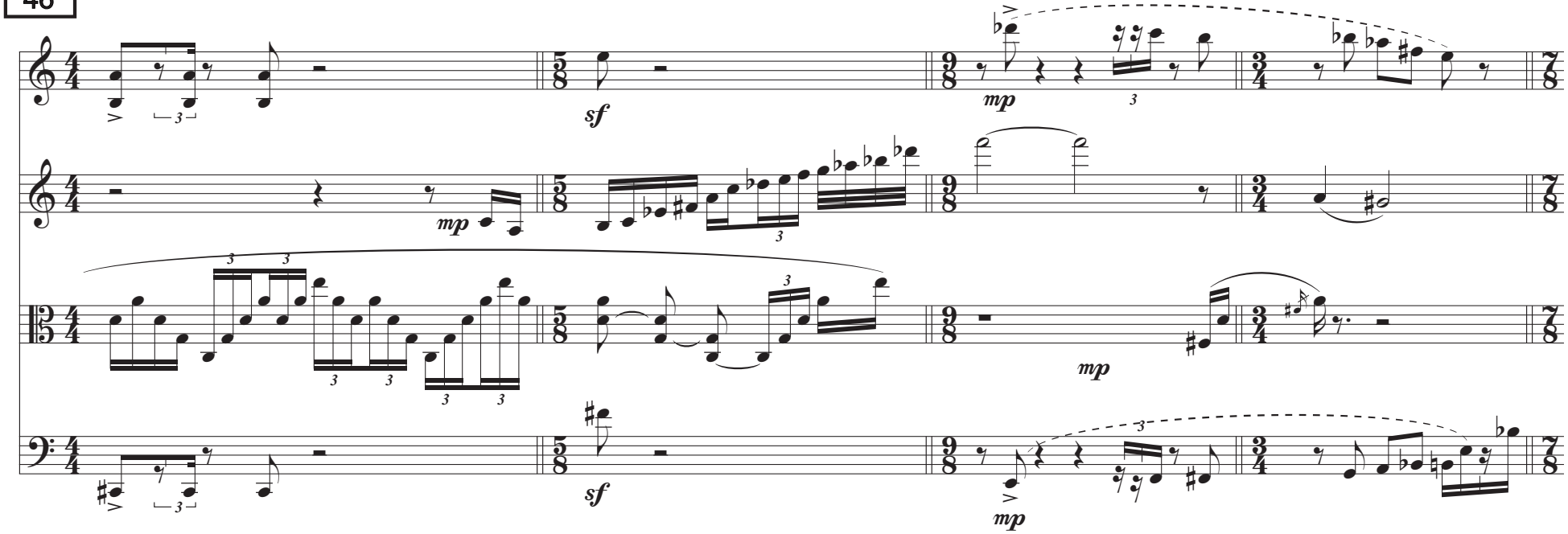


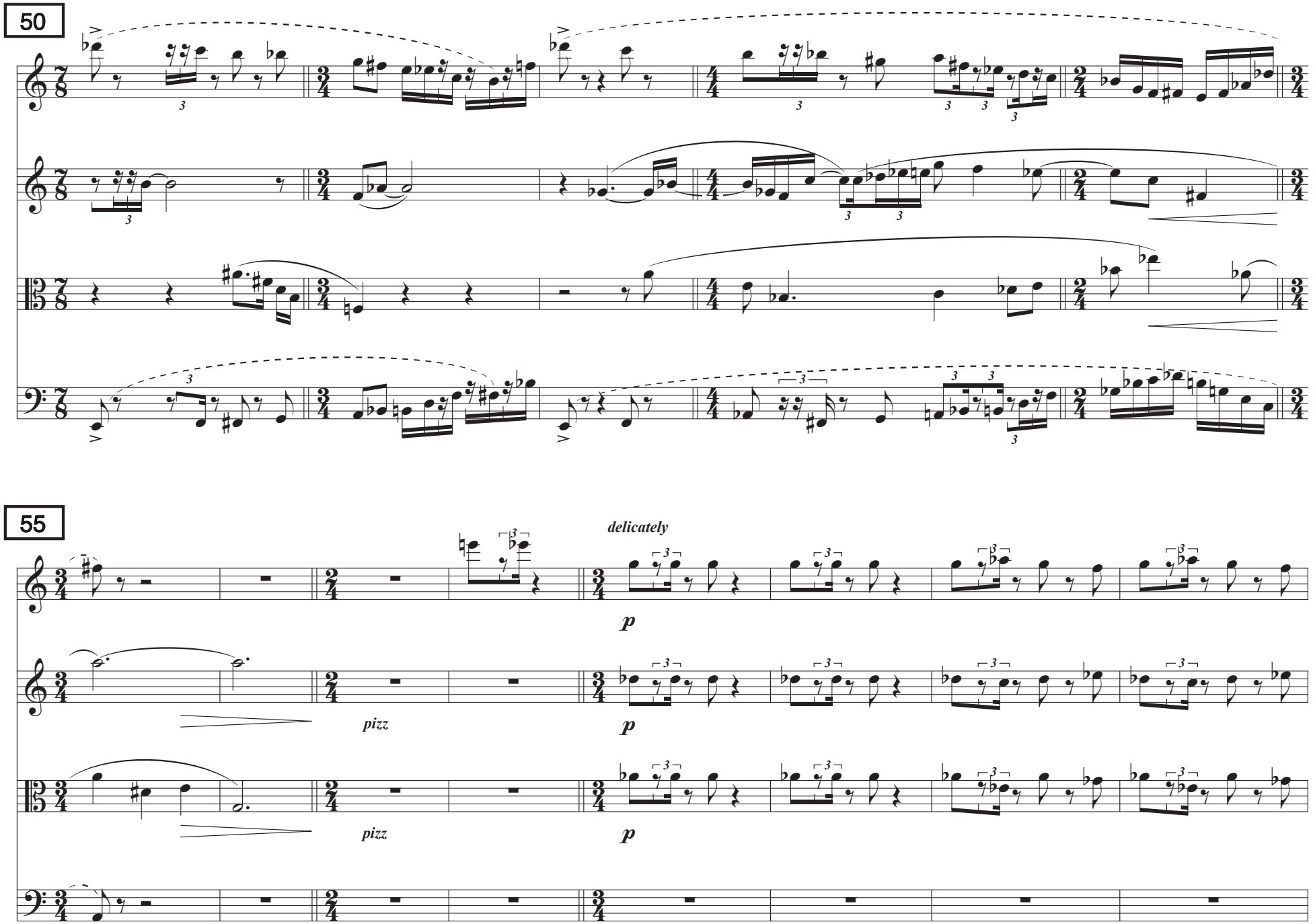

28
mp
sfz
espress.
mp
35
dim.
dim.
dim.
DYNAMIC LOW POINT
arco
p
delicately - an elegant dance
p
p
pizz
p

41

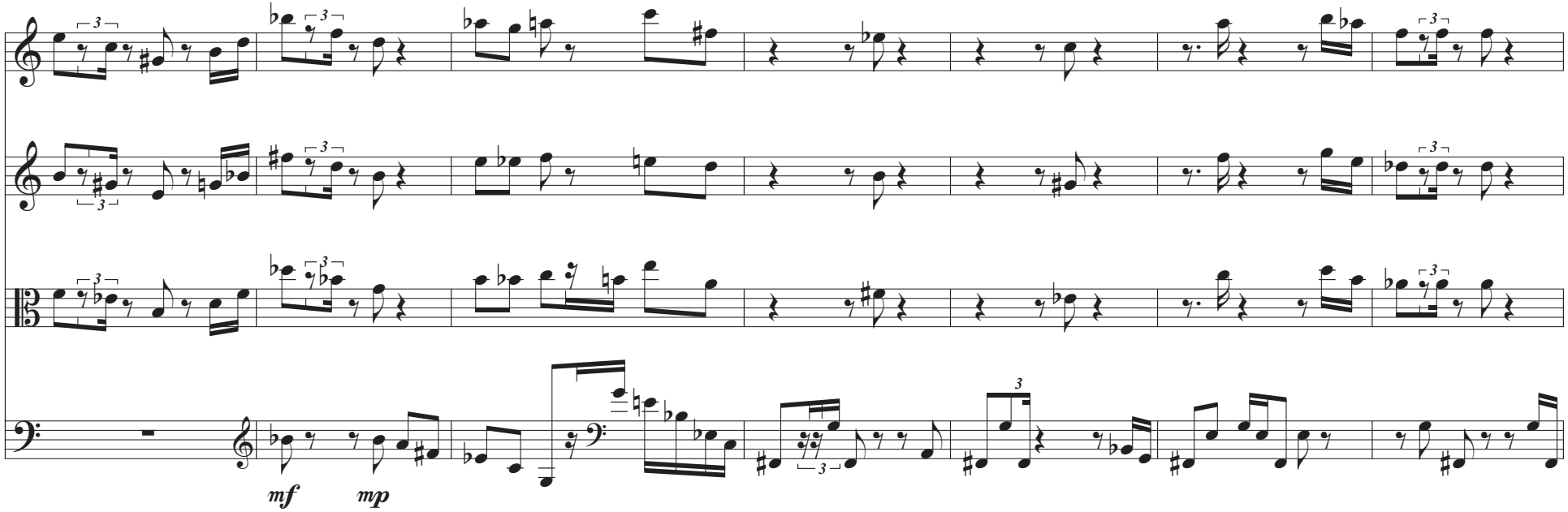


46




50
55
delicately
p
pizz
p
pizz
p

63



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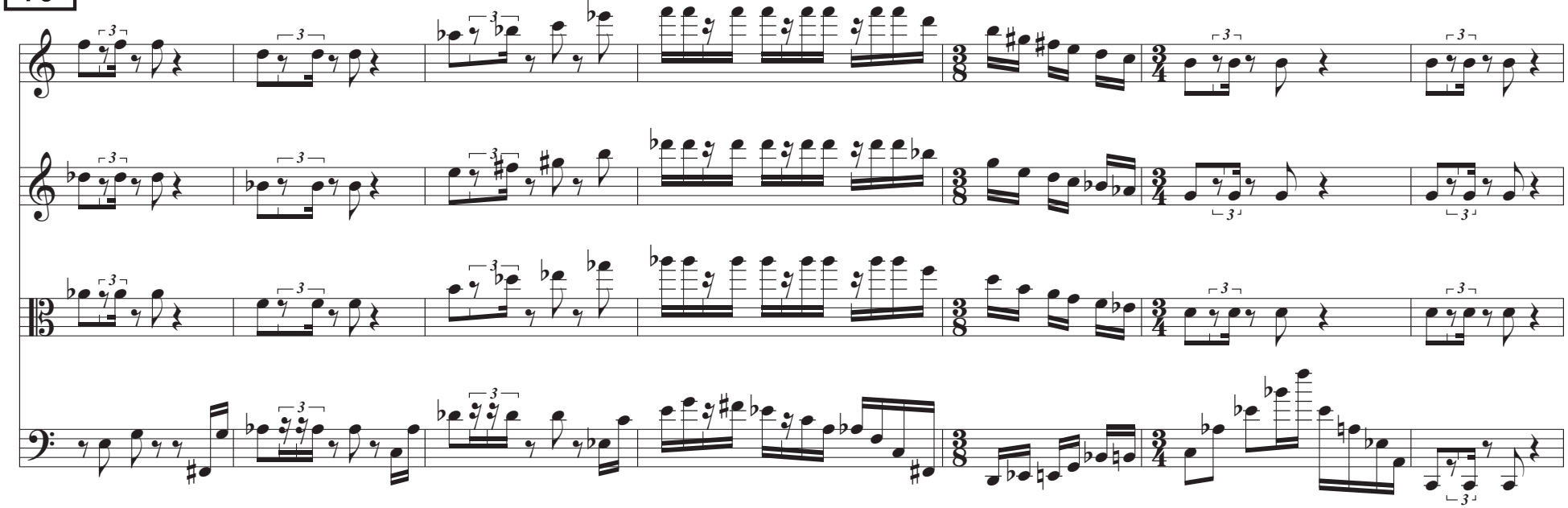

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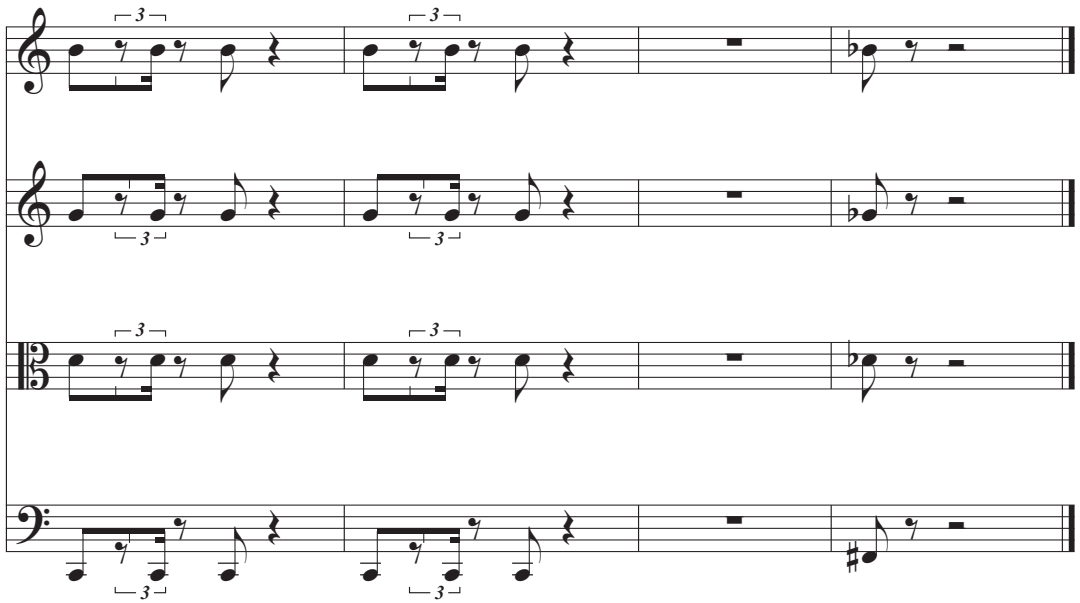

Adagio ♩ = 55 (♪ = 110)

espressivo — pensive, serious

III

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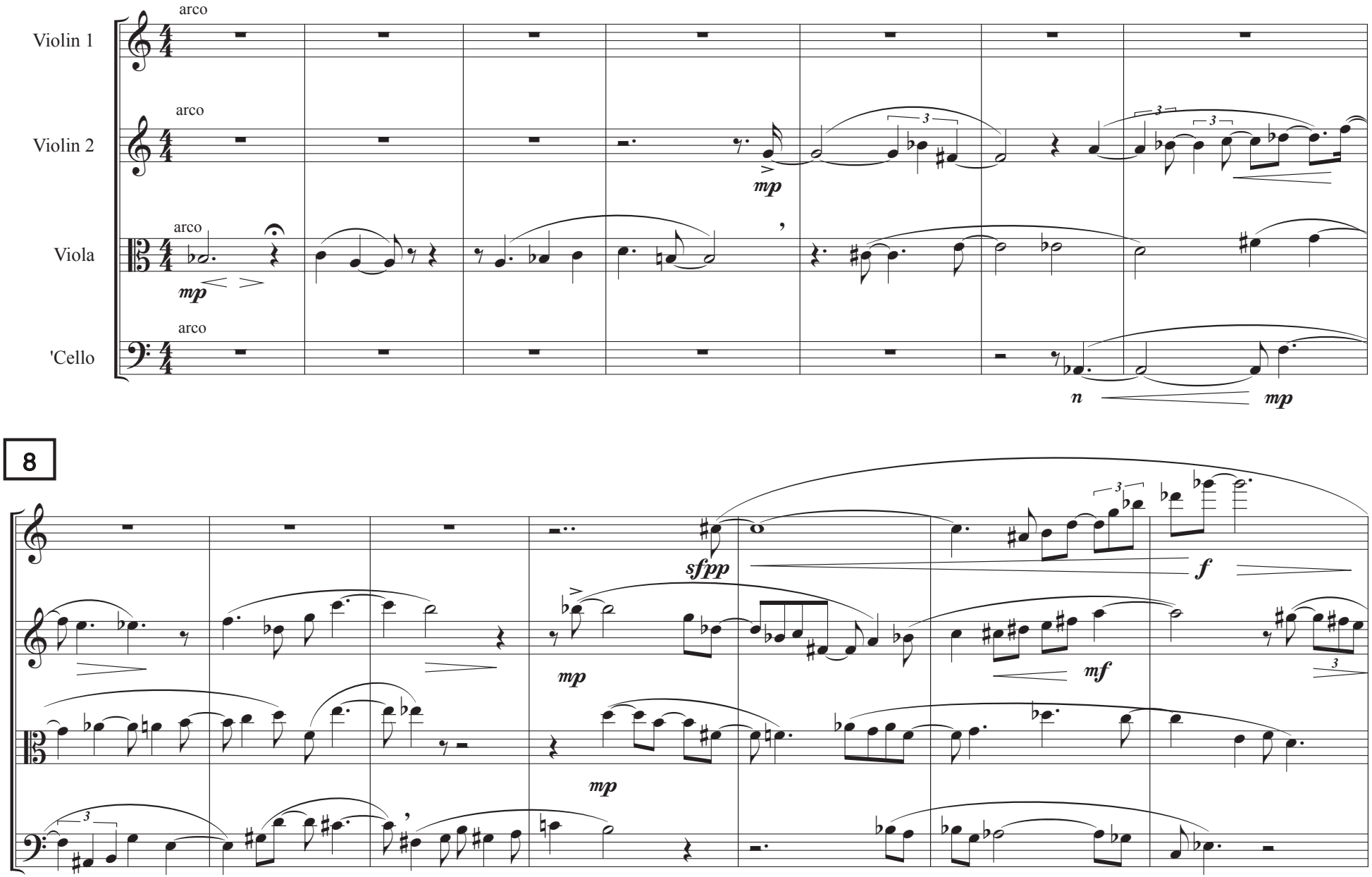

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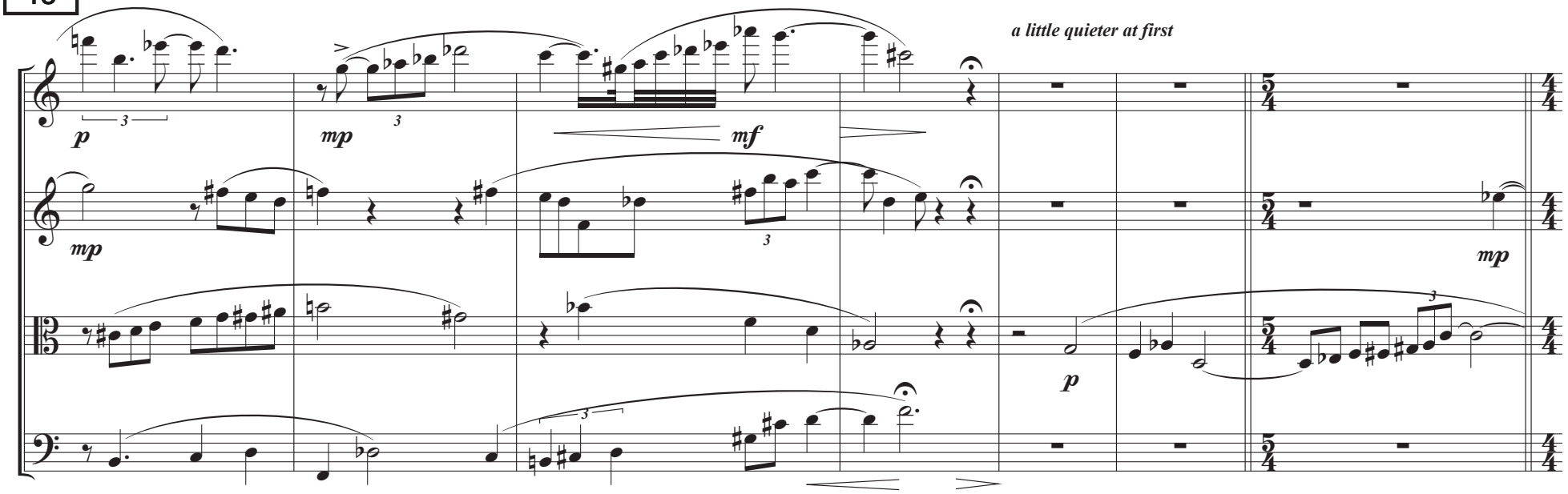
15

a little quieter at first



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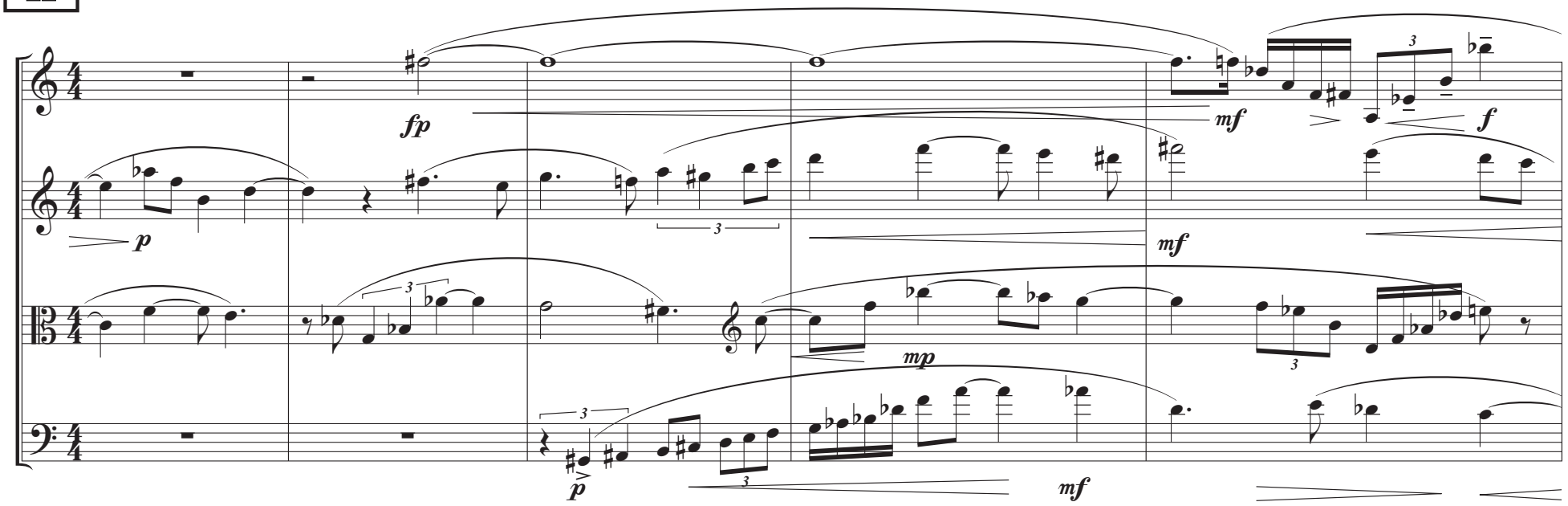
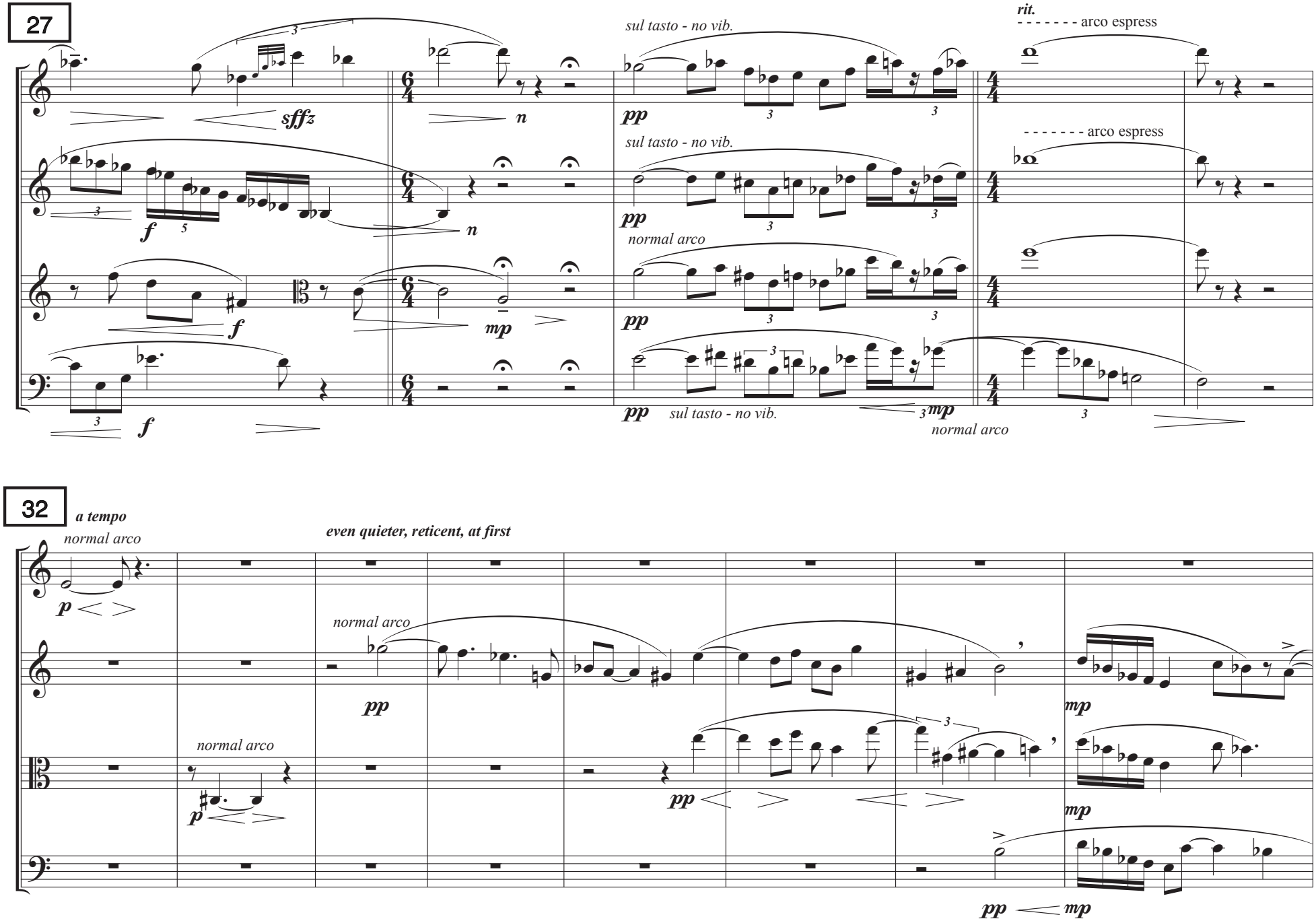
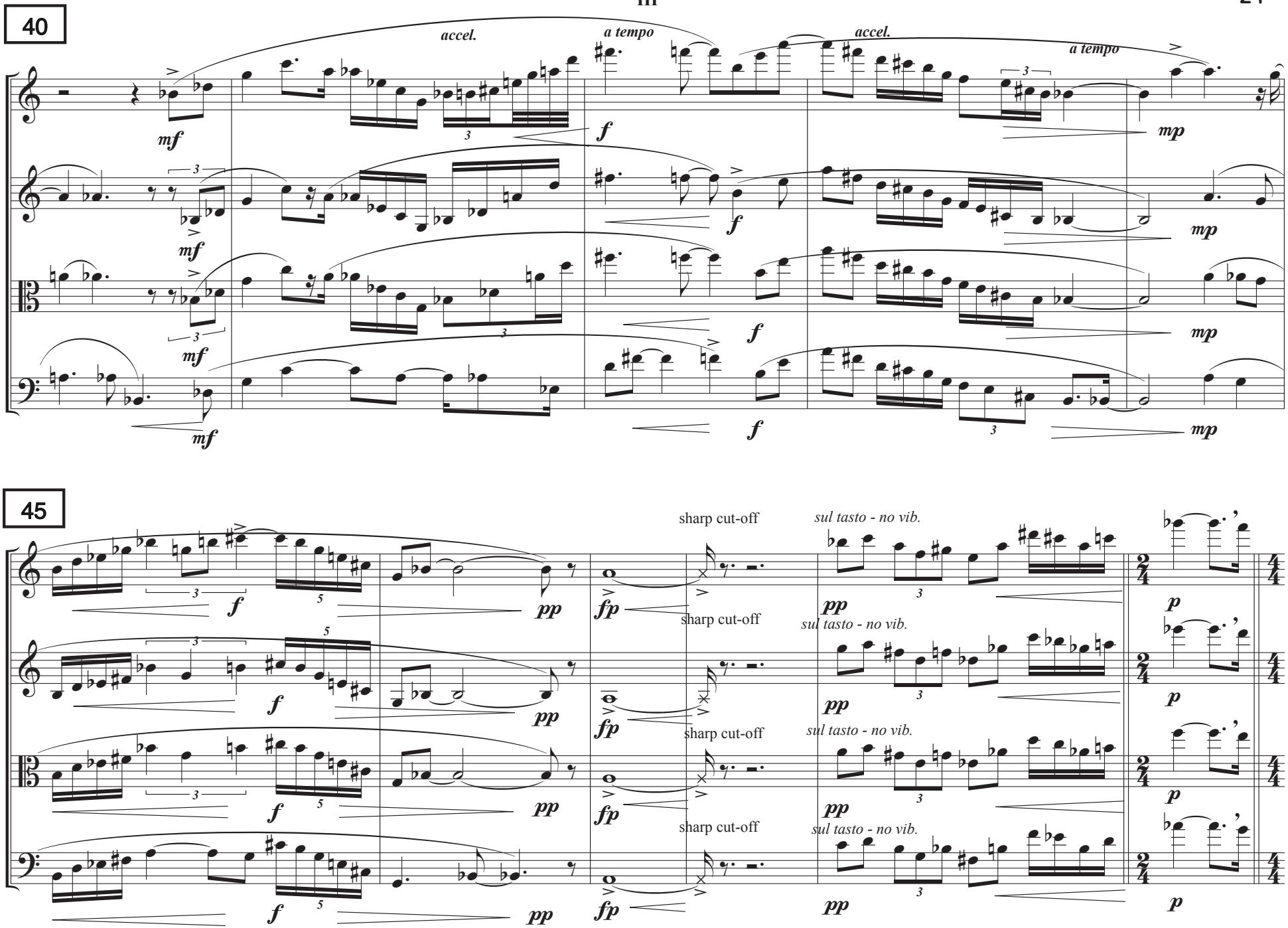


III


27
sffz
n
f
mp
sul tasto - no vib.
pp
normal arco
rit.
arco espress
32
a tempo
normal arco
p
even quieter, reticent, at first
mp

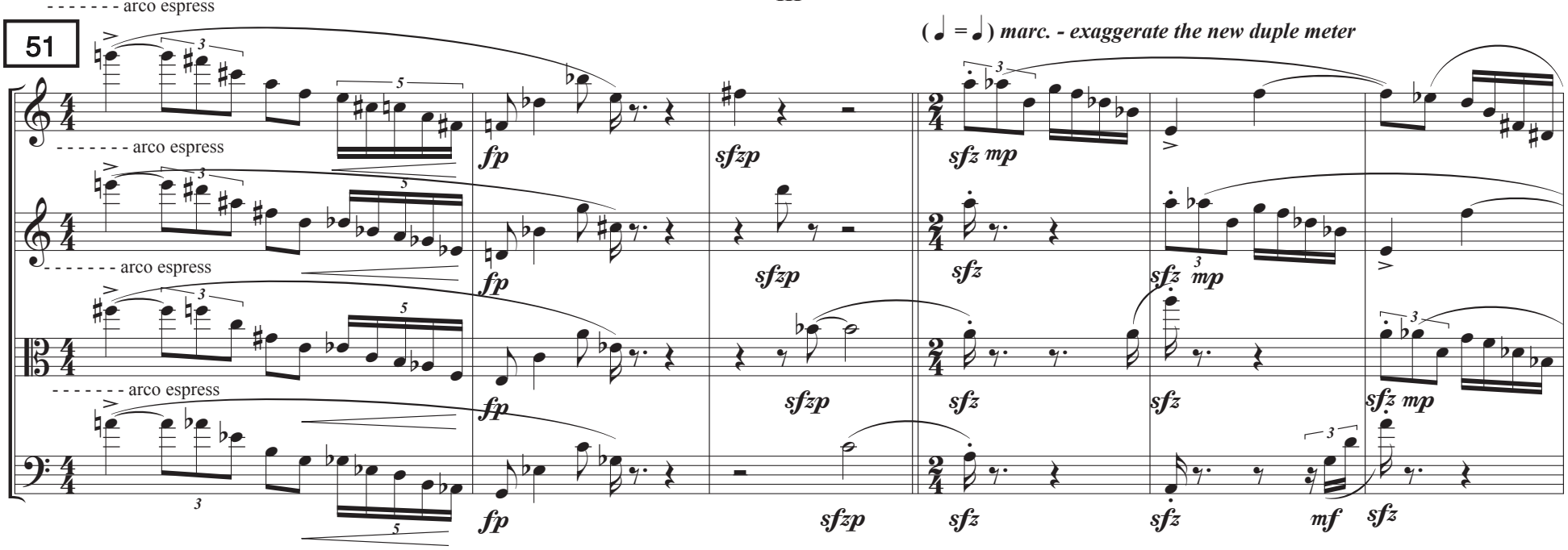

40
accel.
a tempo
accel.
a tempo
45
sharp cut-off
sul tasto - no vib.

III

51

- - - - - - - arco espress

(♩ = ♩) *marc. - exaggerate the new duple meter*



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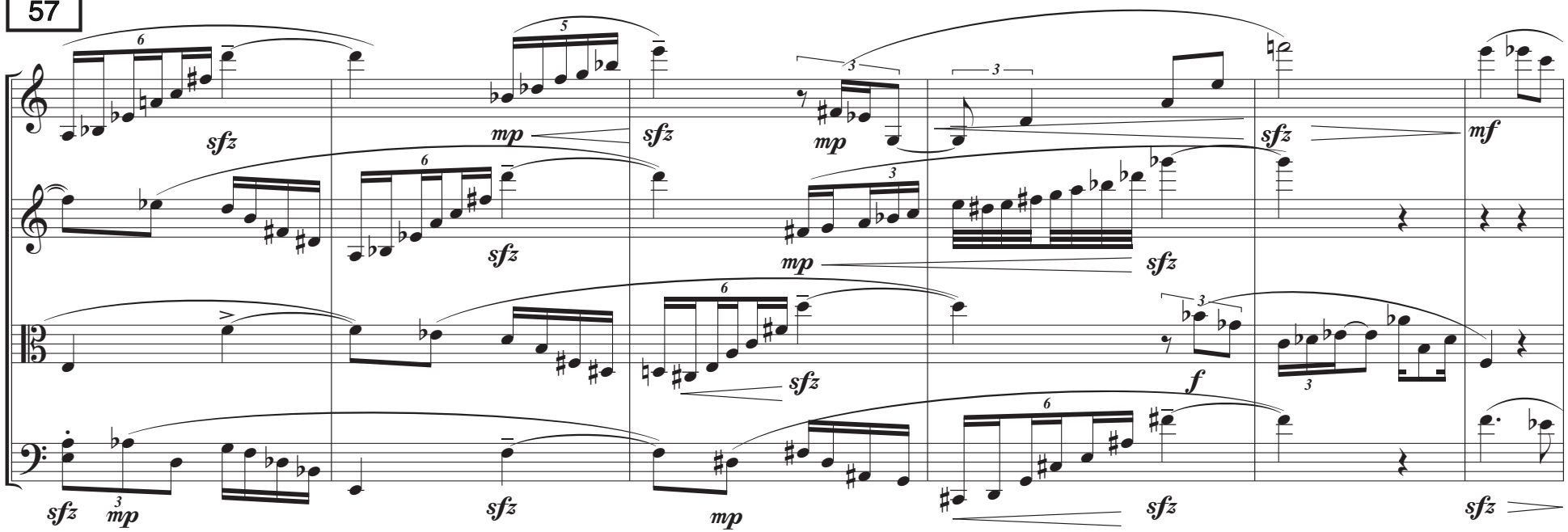
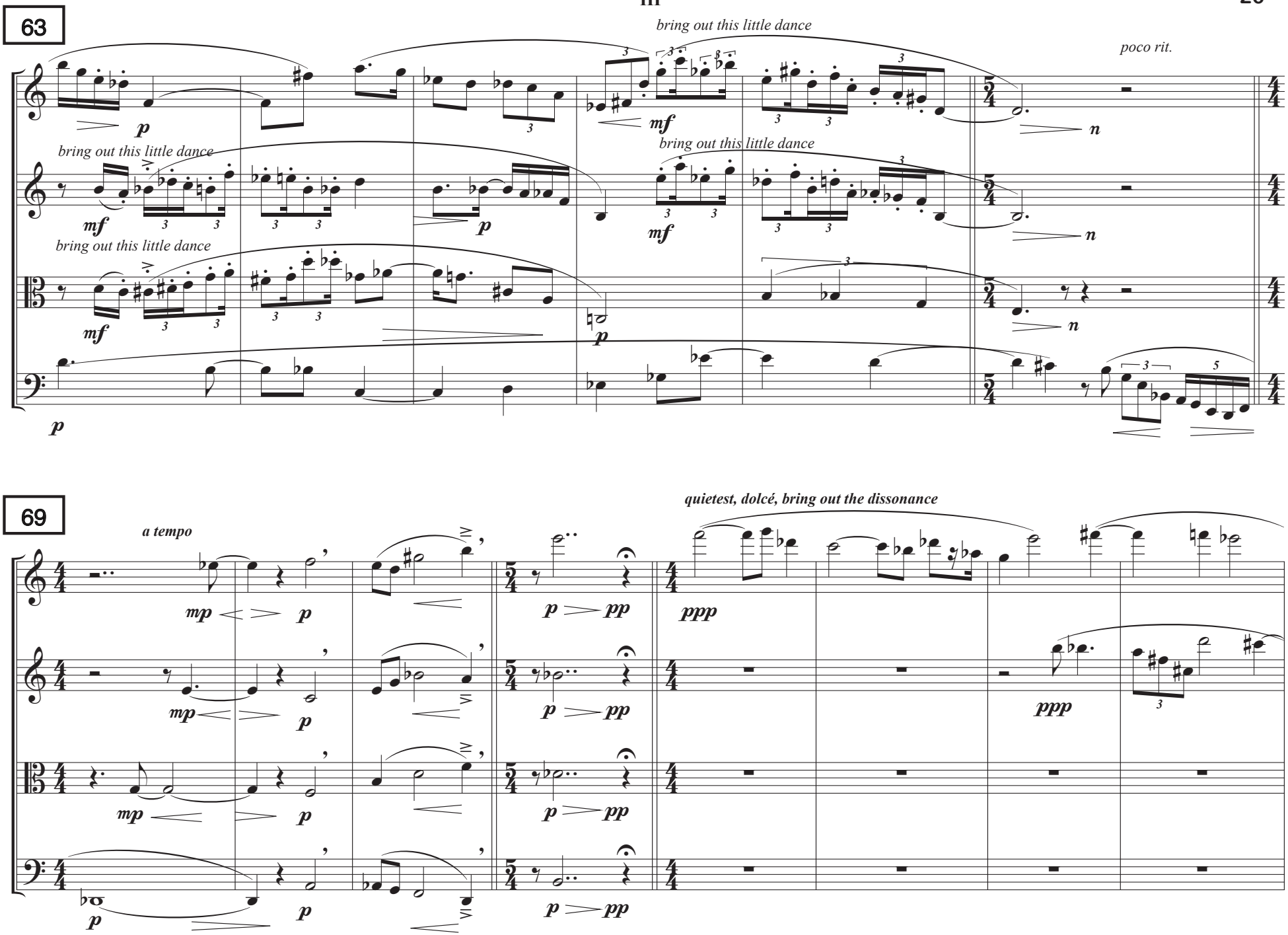
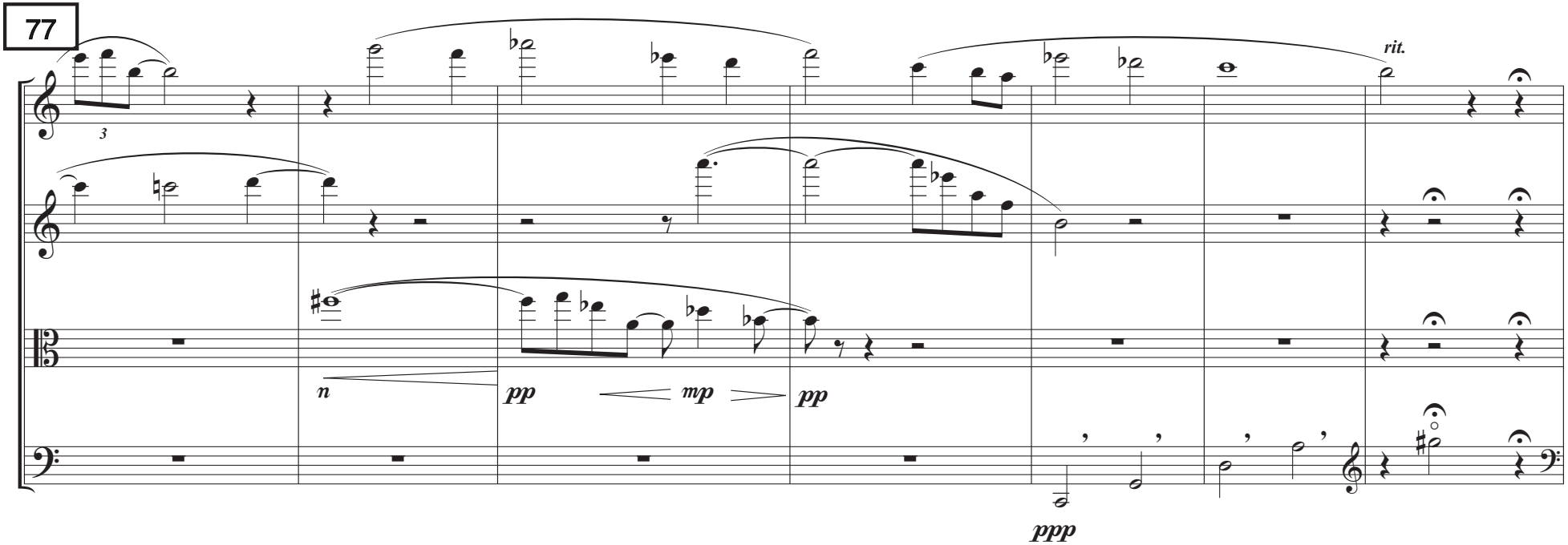



63
bring out this little dance
poco rit.
bring out this little dance
bring out this little dance
bring out this little dance
69
a tempo
quietest, dolcé, bring out the dissonance

III

77



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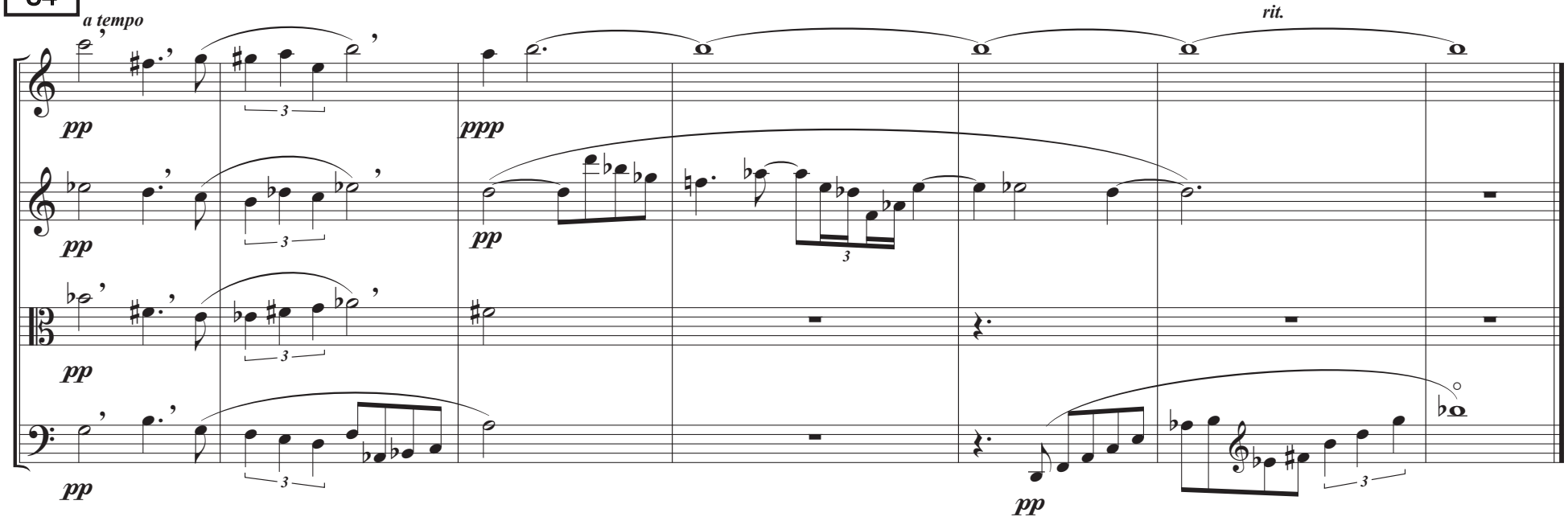

IV

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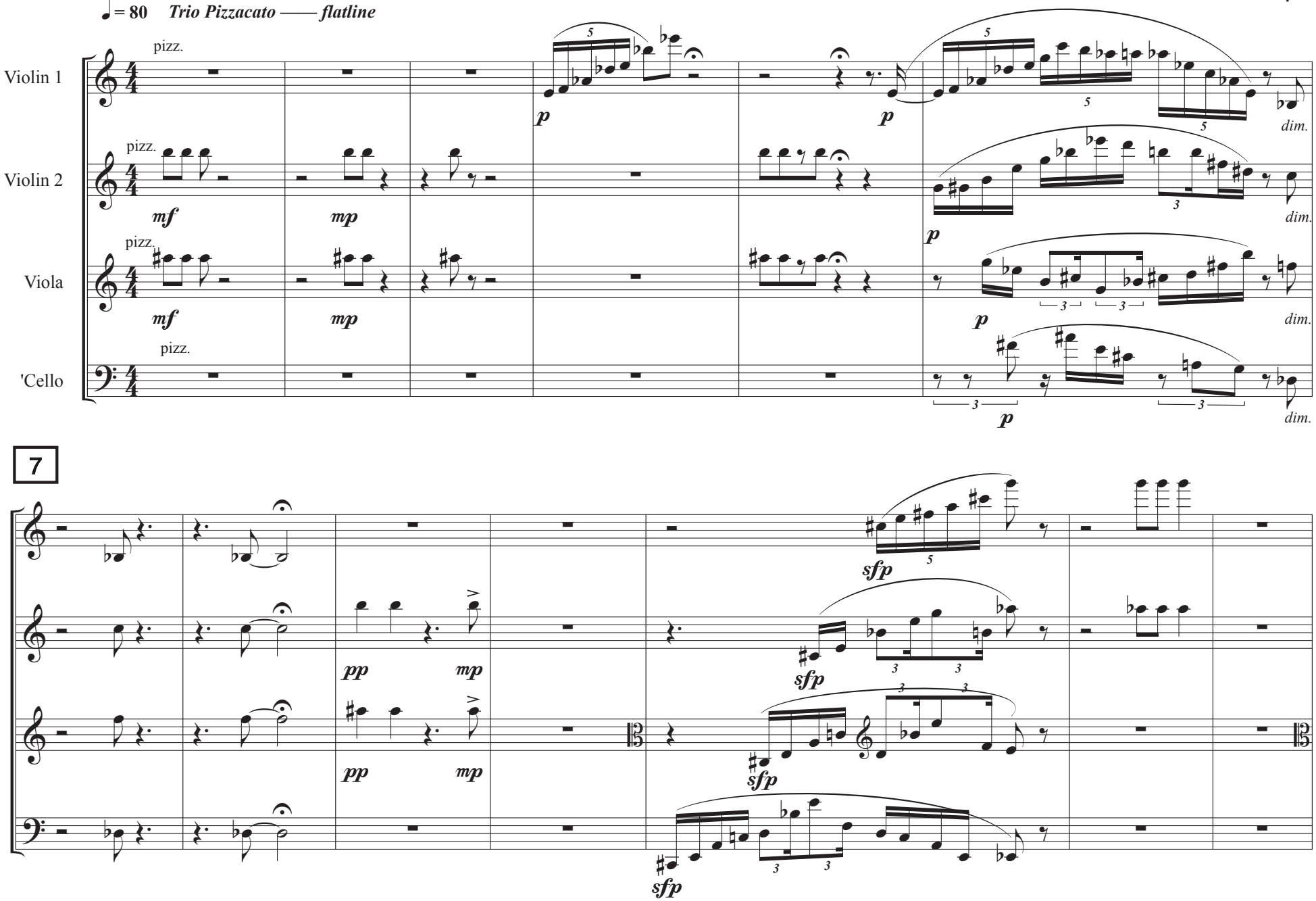

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IV

14

poco rit.

a tempo

18

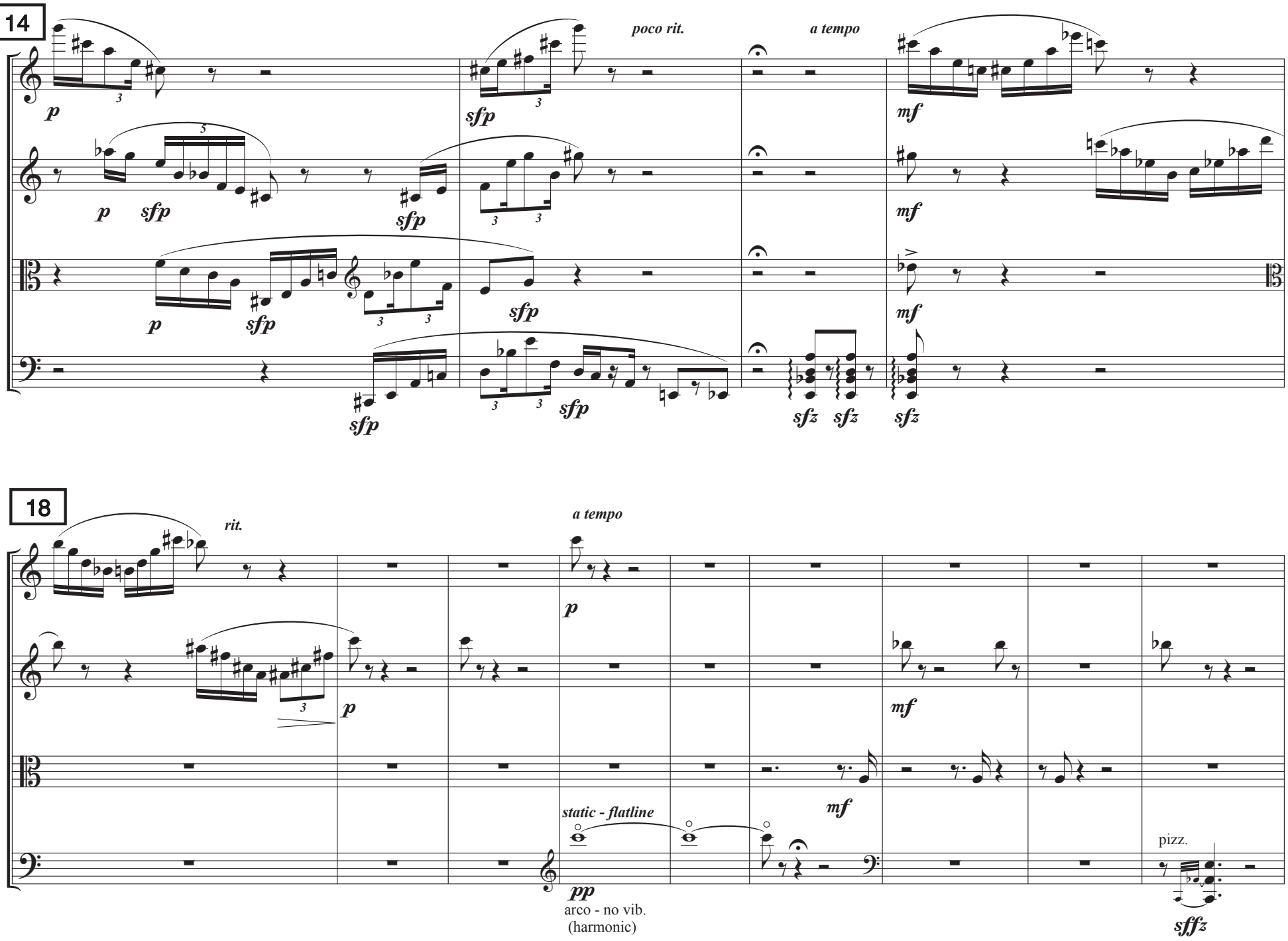
rit.

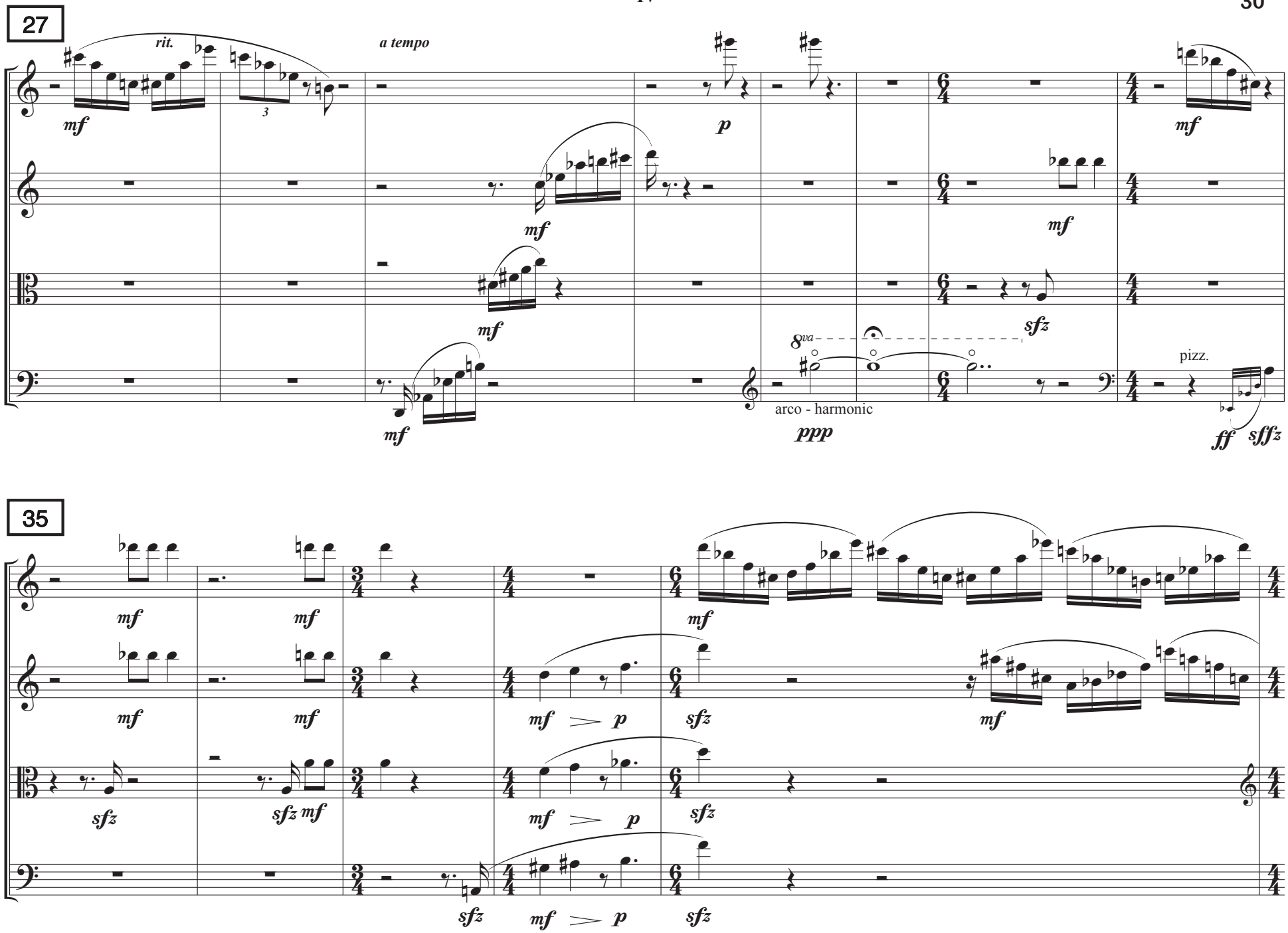
a tempo

static - flatline

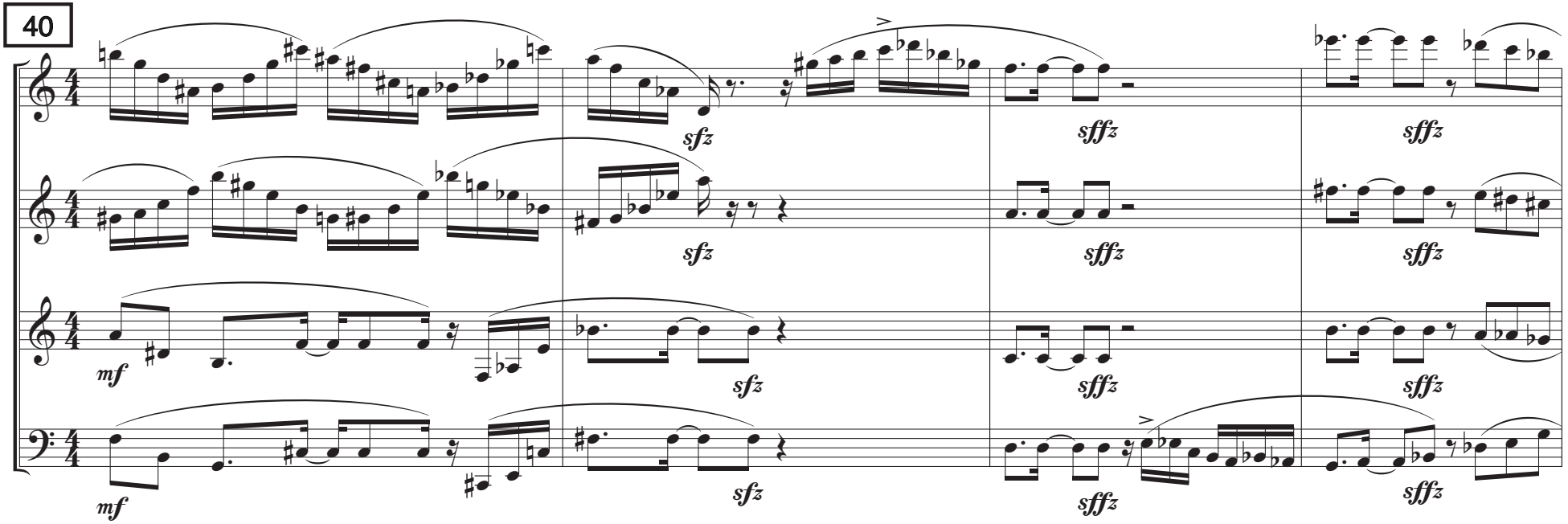
arco - no vib.
(harmonic)

pizz.

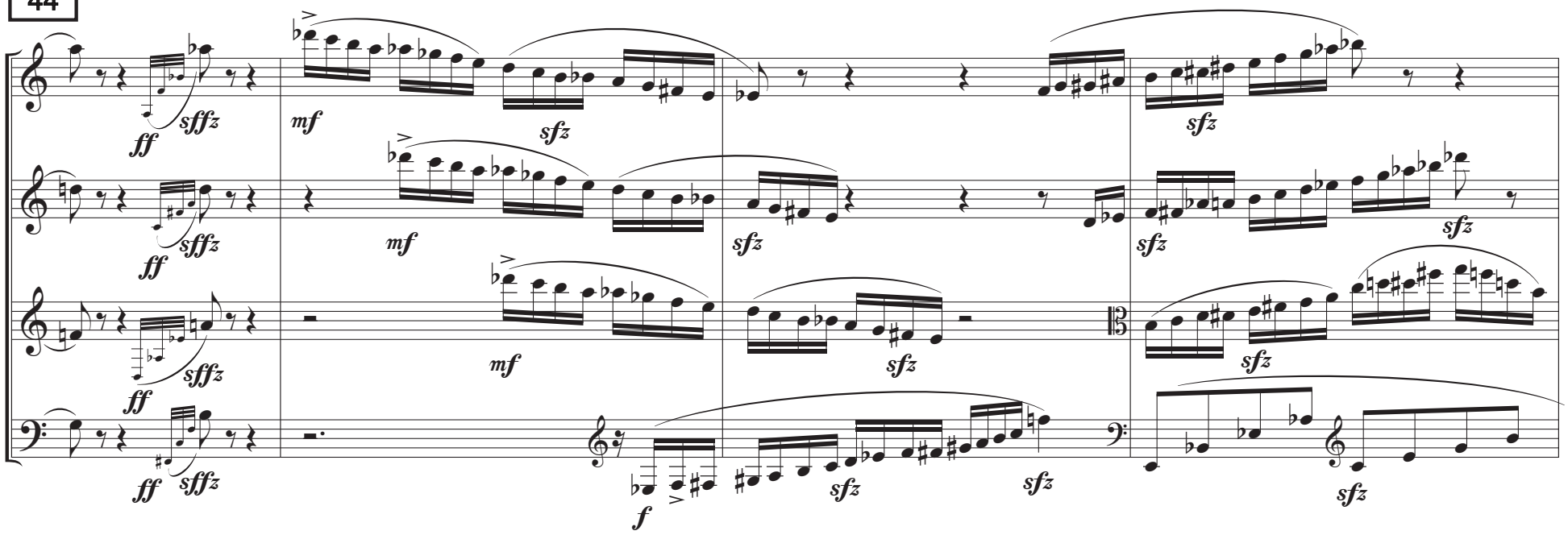


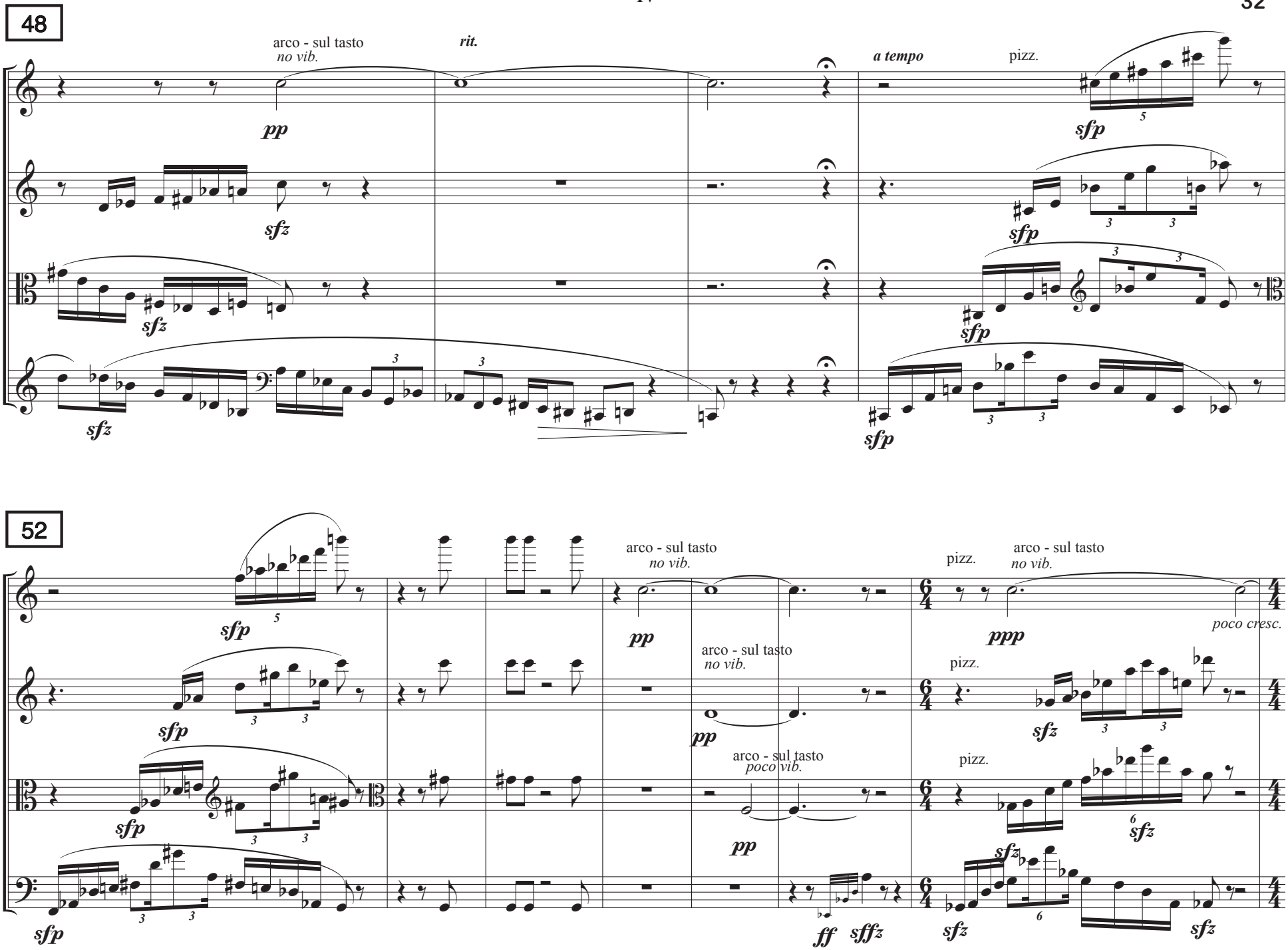

27
rit.
a tempo
mf
p
sfz
8va
arco - harmonic
ppp
pizz.
ff
sffz
35
mf
p
sfz

40



44




48
arco - sul tasto
no vib.
rit.
a tempo
pizz.
pp
sfz
sfp
52
arco - sul tasto
no vib.
pizz.
arco - sul tasto
no vib.
poco cresc.
ppp
arco - sul tasto
no vib.
pizz.
arco - sul tasto
poco vib.
pizz.
ff
sffz

IV

59

♩ = 60

normal vib.

rit.

molto rit.

a tempo
no vib.

Attacca

arco - sul tasto
no vib.

dim.

mf

3

p

ppp

ppp

poco cresc.

dim.

pp

ppp

arco - sul tasto
no vib.

ppp

poco cresc.

dim.

pp

ppp

arco - sul tasto
no vib.

ppp

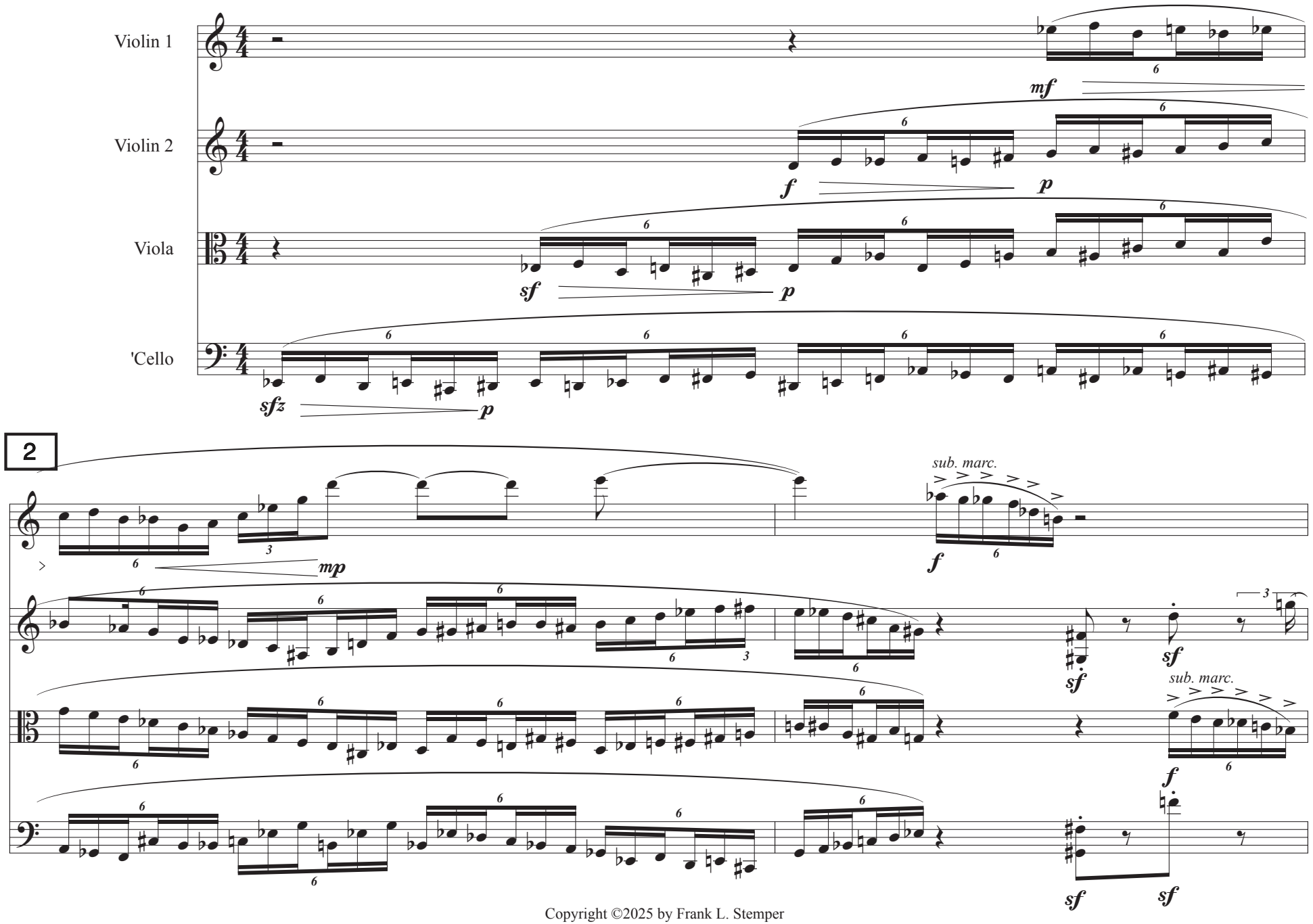
mf

pppp

V

Frank Stemper

Attacca: marcato - - - allegro **Tempo primo (♩= 60)**



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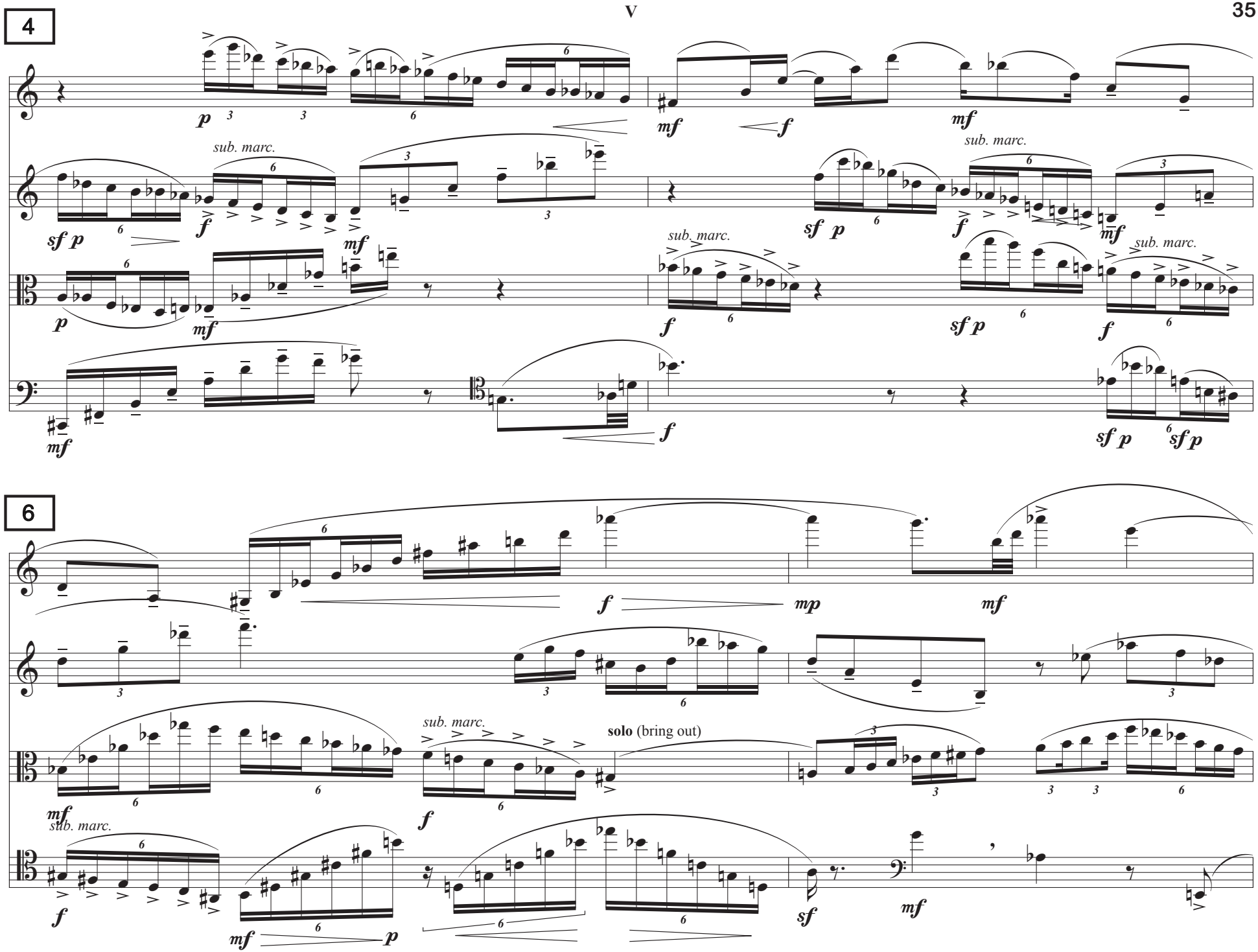

4
sub. marc.
sub. marc.
sub. marc.
sub. marc.
6
sub. marc.
solo (bring out)
sub. marc.

8

p

p

p

sfz

sfz

sfz

mp

sfz

mp

11

mp

mp

f

sub. marc.
(portato)

sub. marc.
(portato)

mf

sf

sf

(F)

f

13

(G)

16

rit.

a tempo

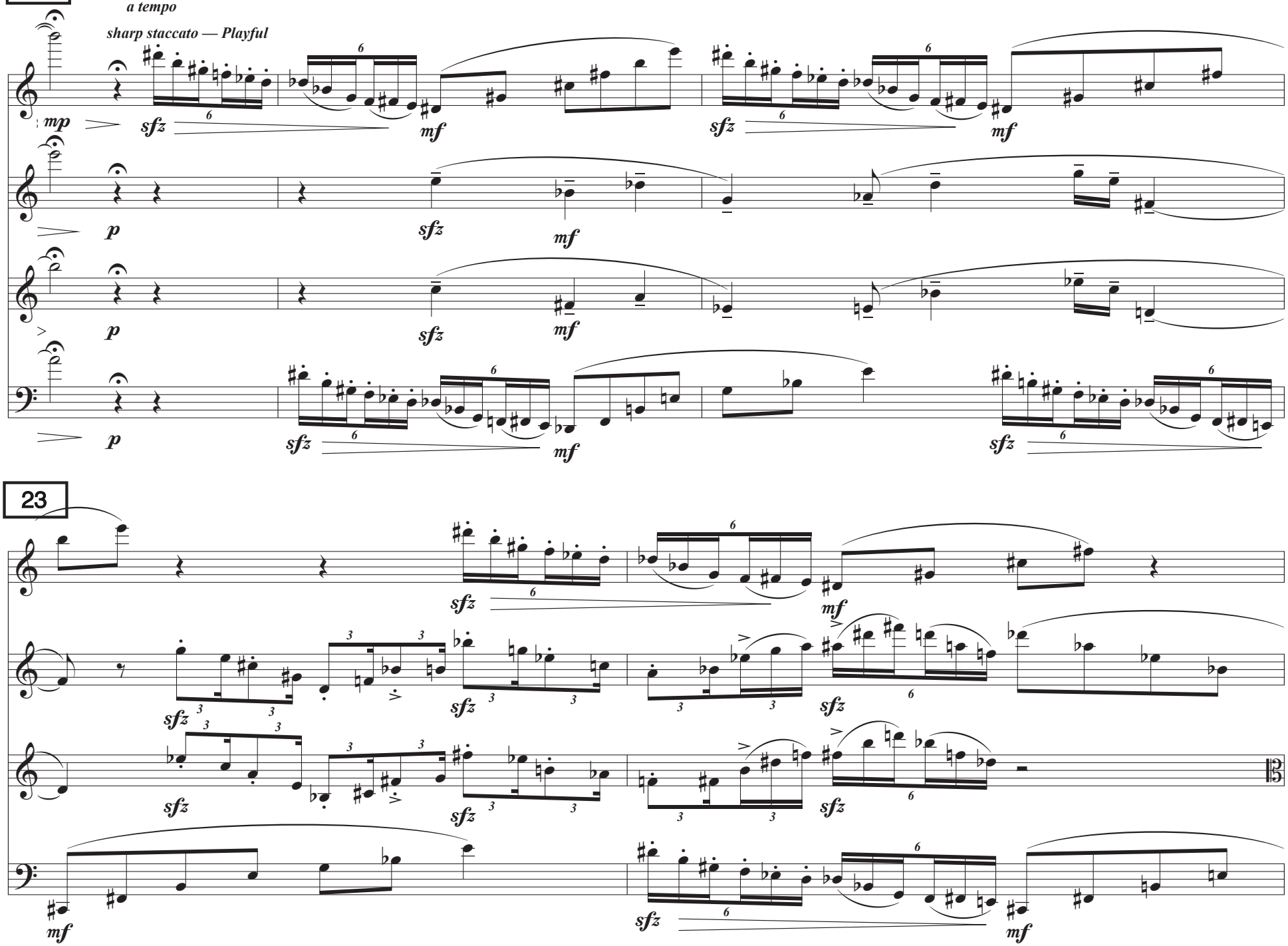
rit.

20

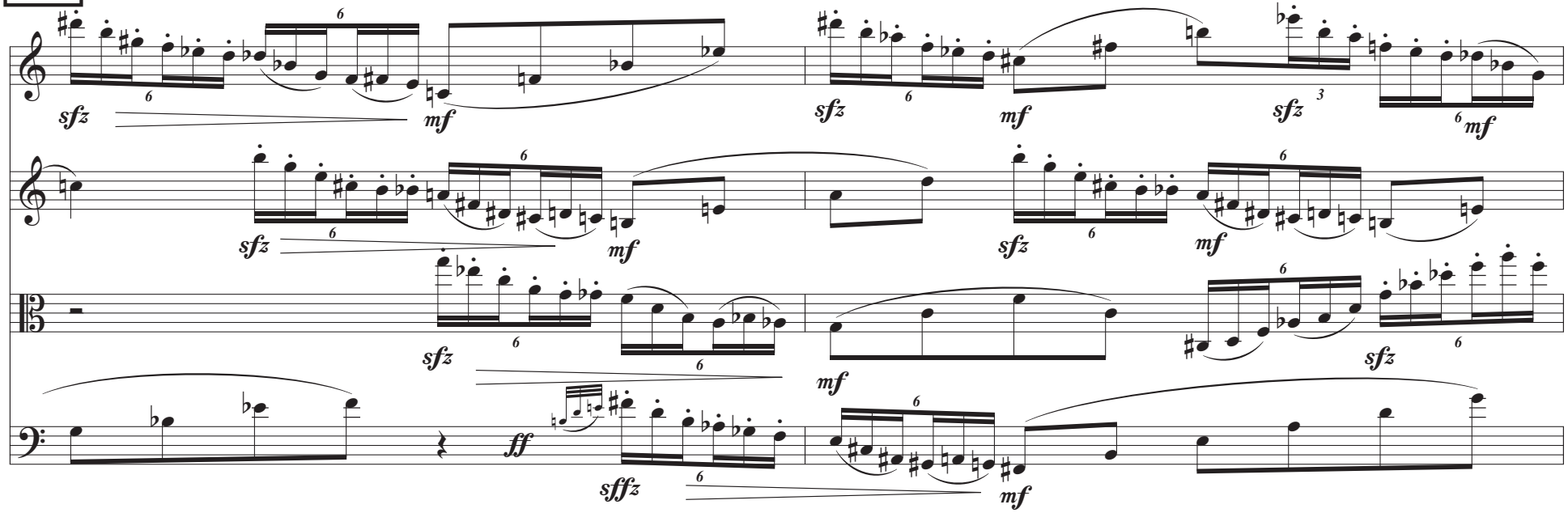
a tempo

sharp staccato — Playful

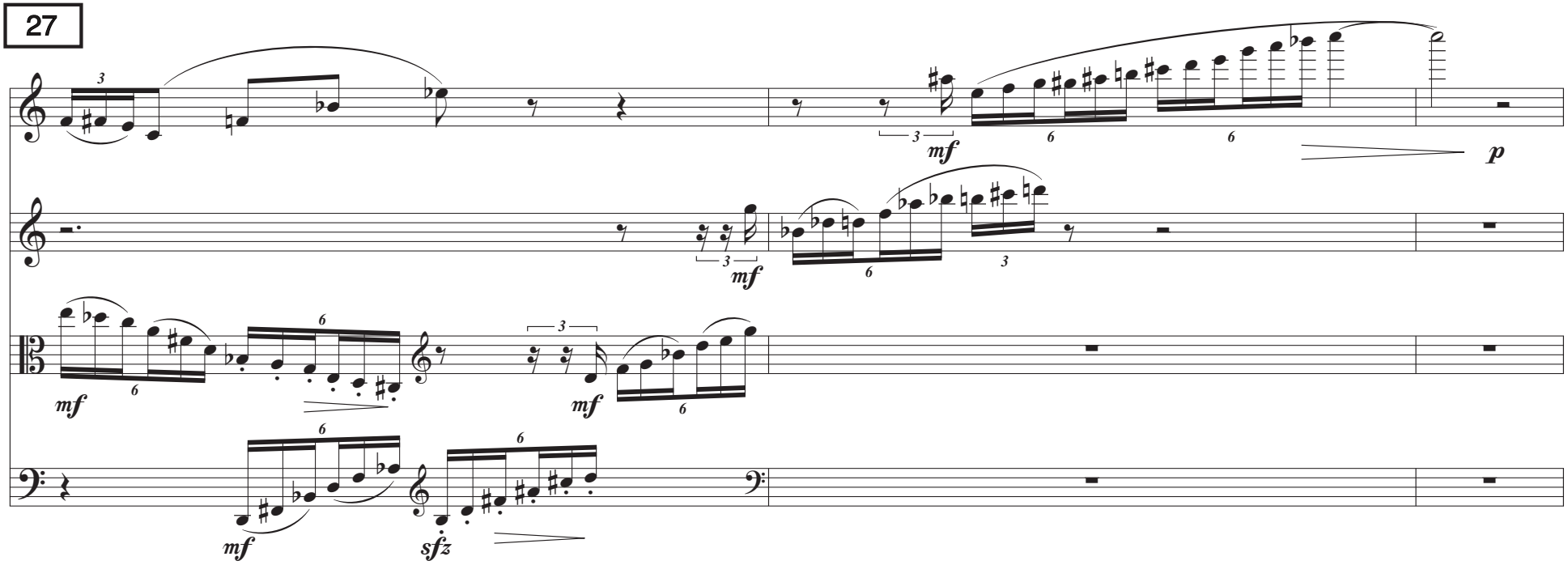
23



25


sfz
mf
sfz
mf
sfz
mf
sfz
mf
sfz
mf
sfz
mf
sfz
ff
sffz
mf

27


mf
p
mf
mf
mf
mf
sfz

30

poco rit.

p mf mf

p mf mf

p 3 mf

p mf

35

Quiet - Serene - Beautiful

a tempo

no vibrato

normal vib.

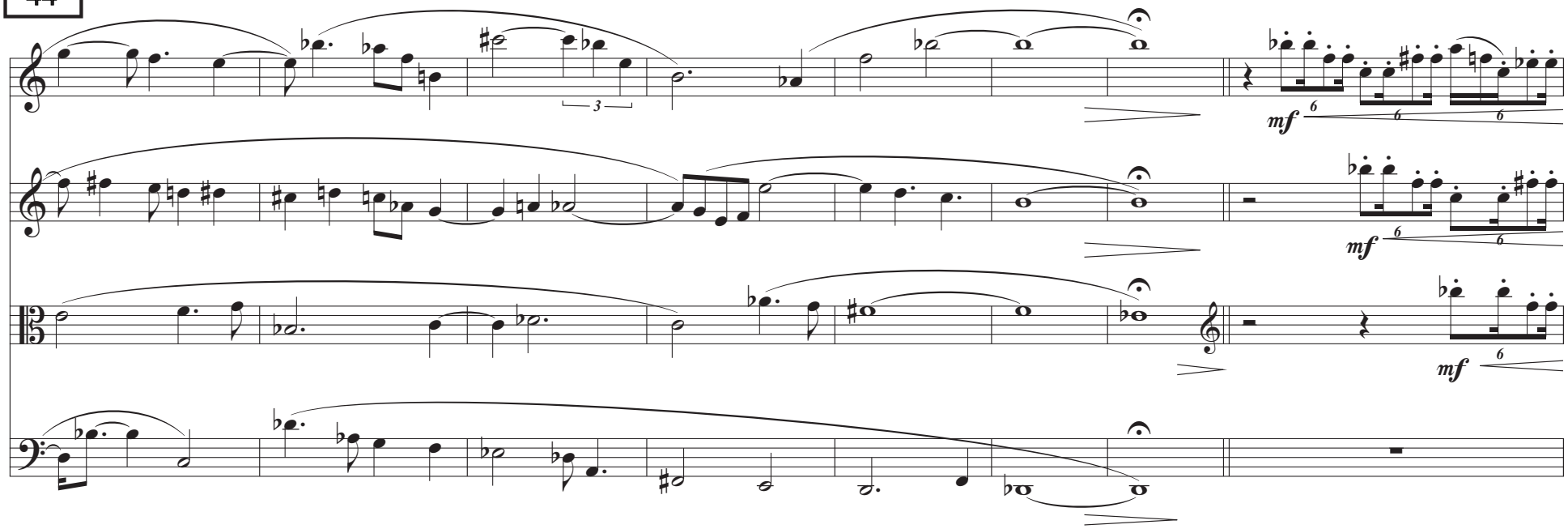
p

pp p

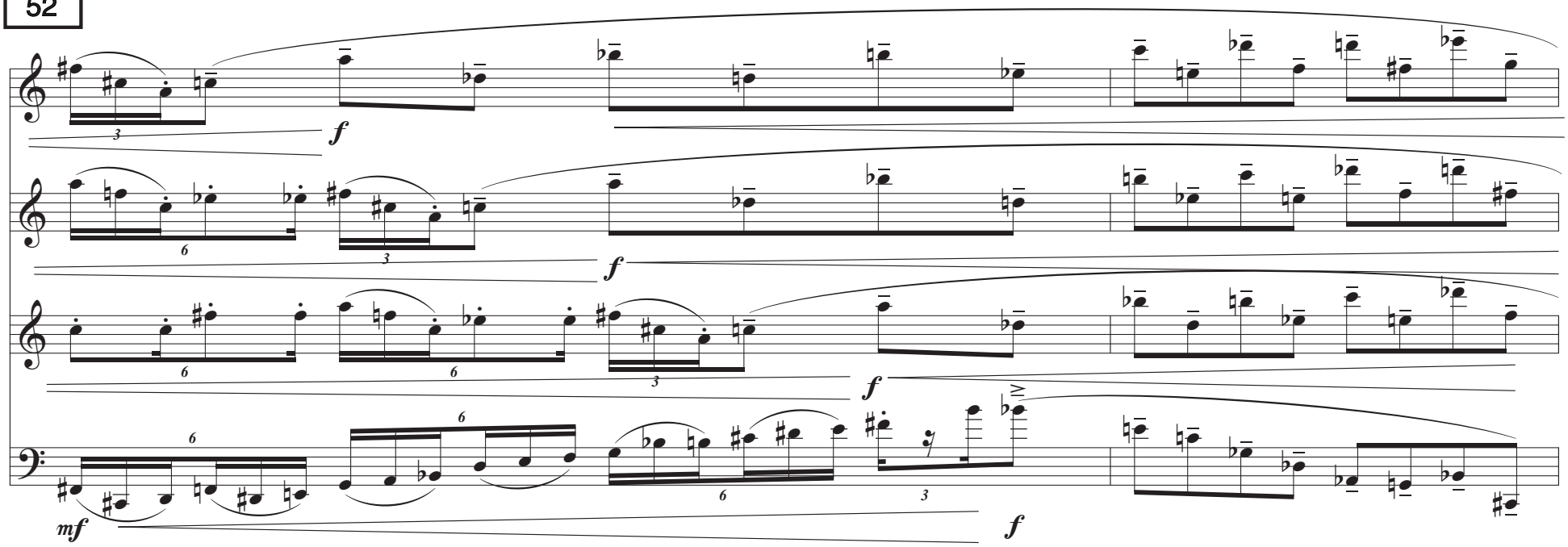
pp p

pp p

44

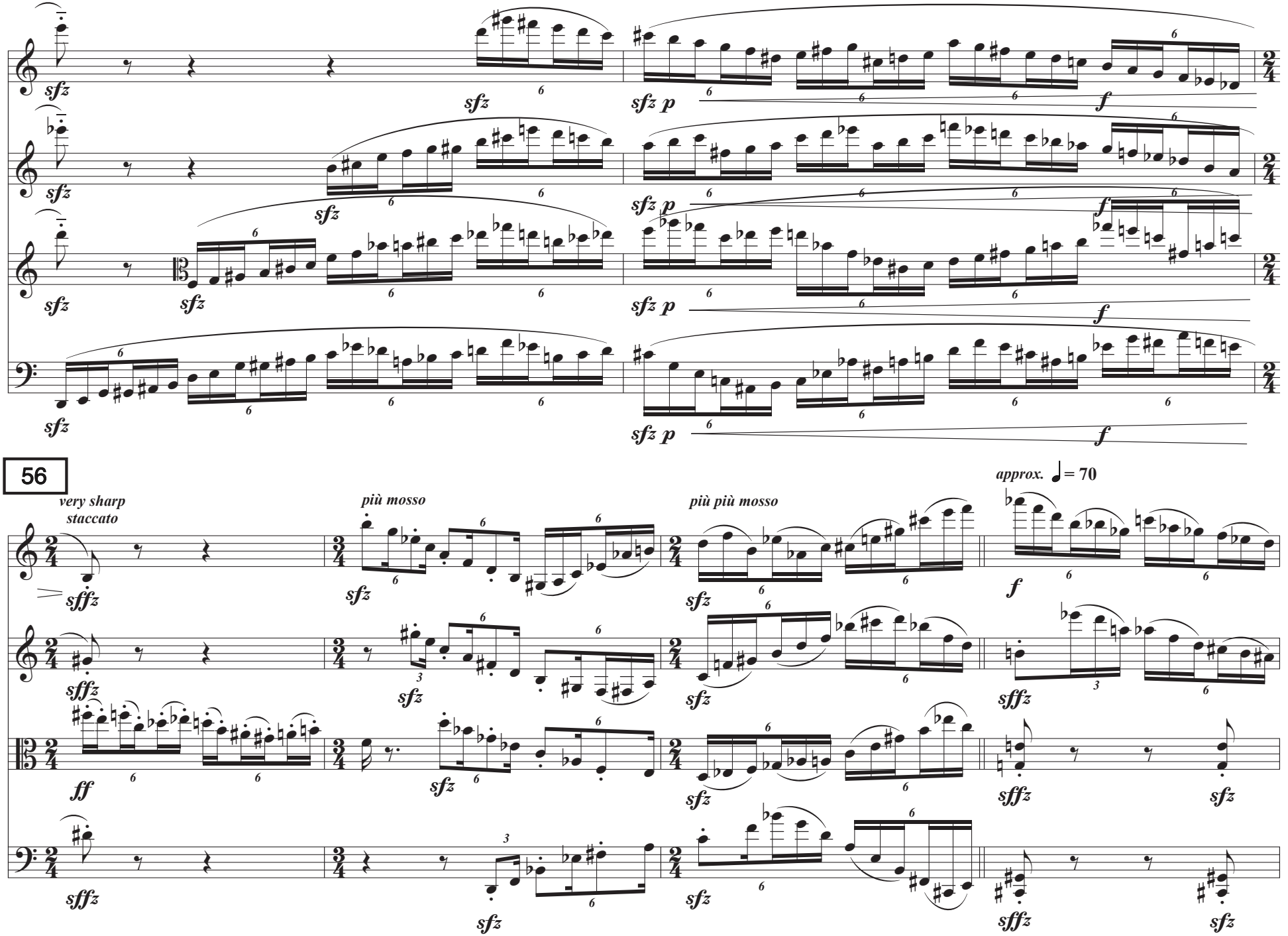


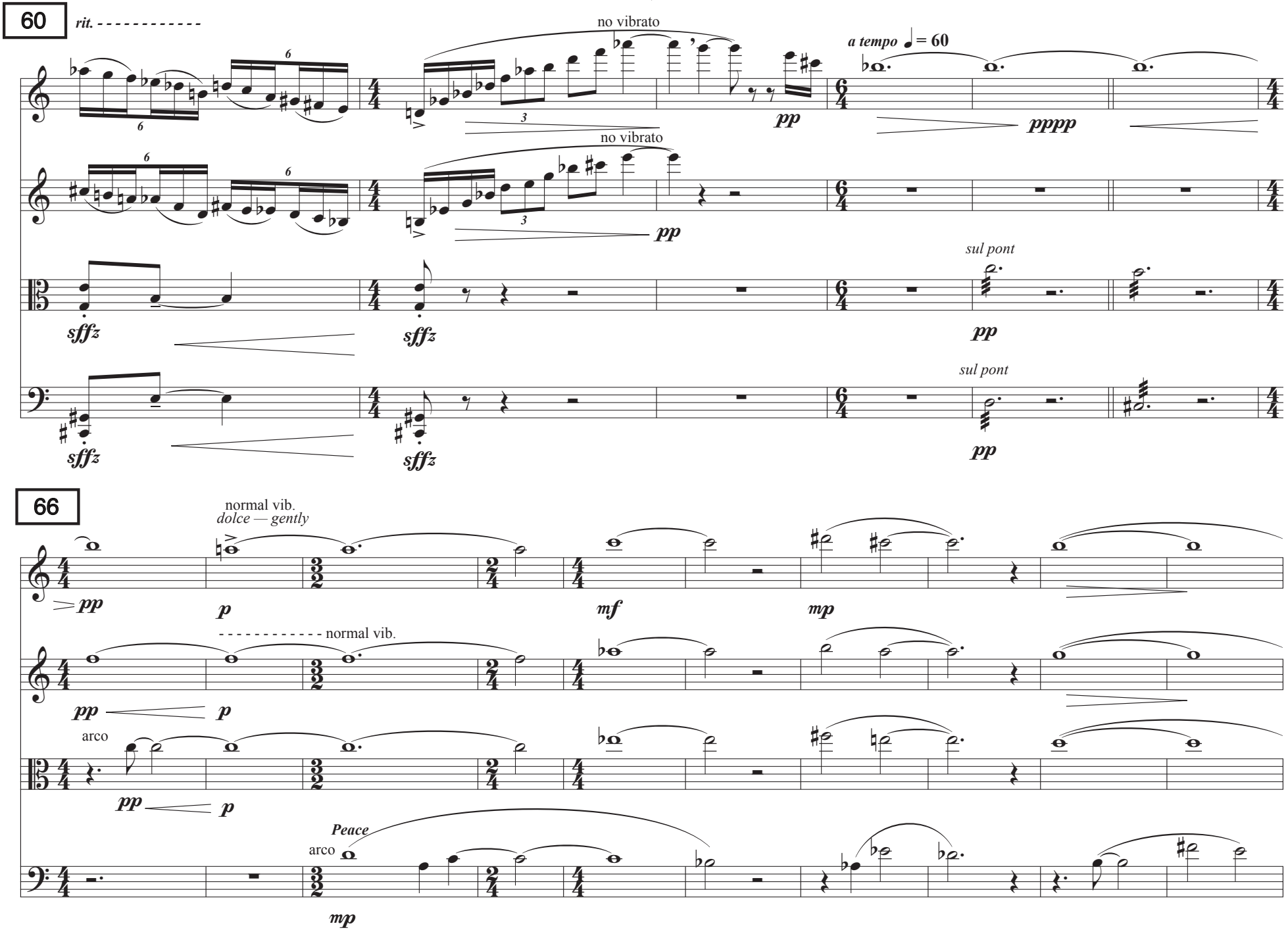
52

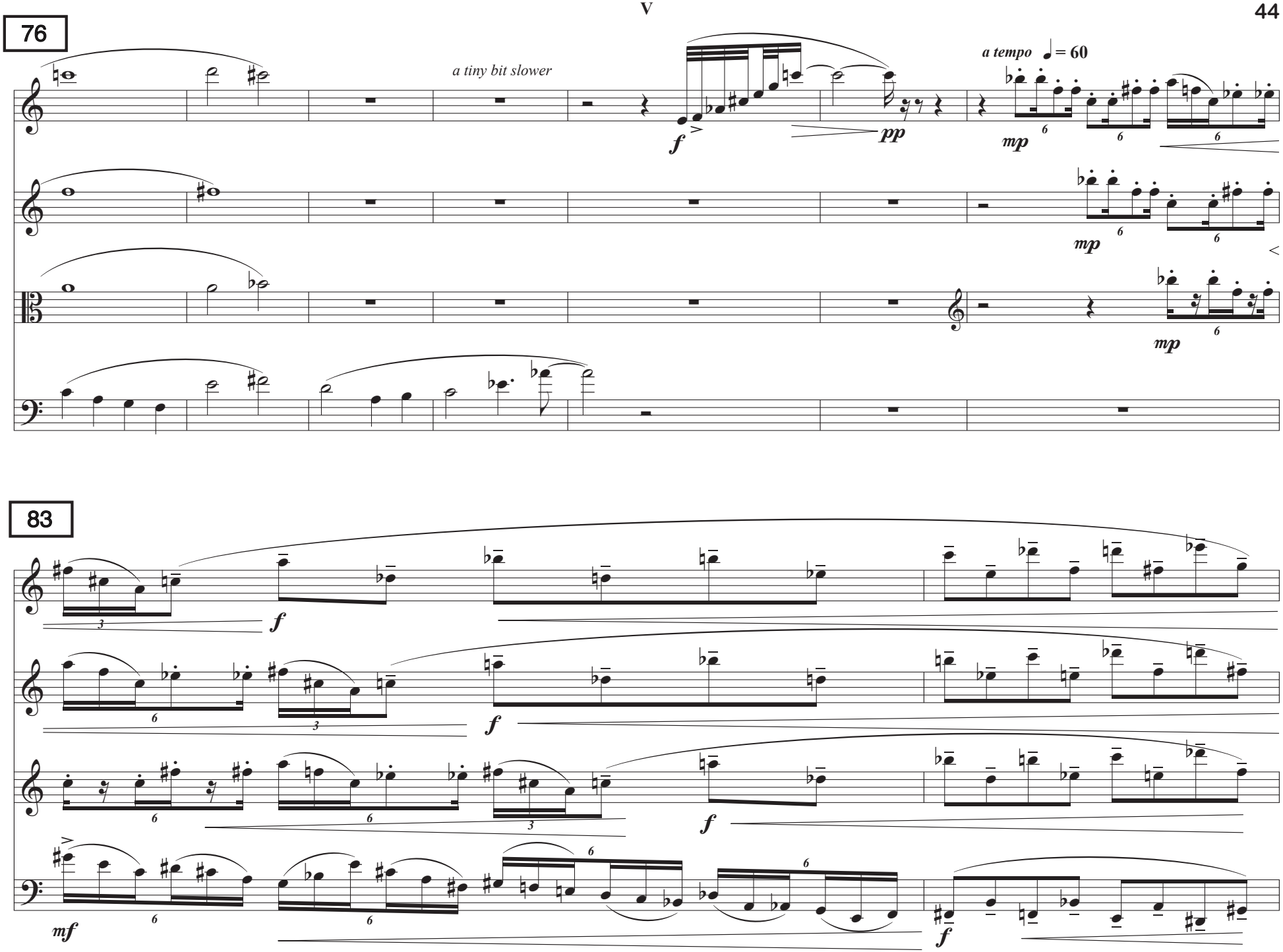


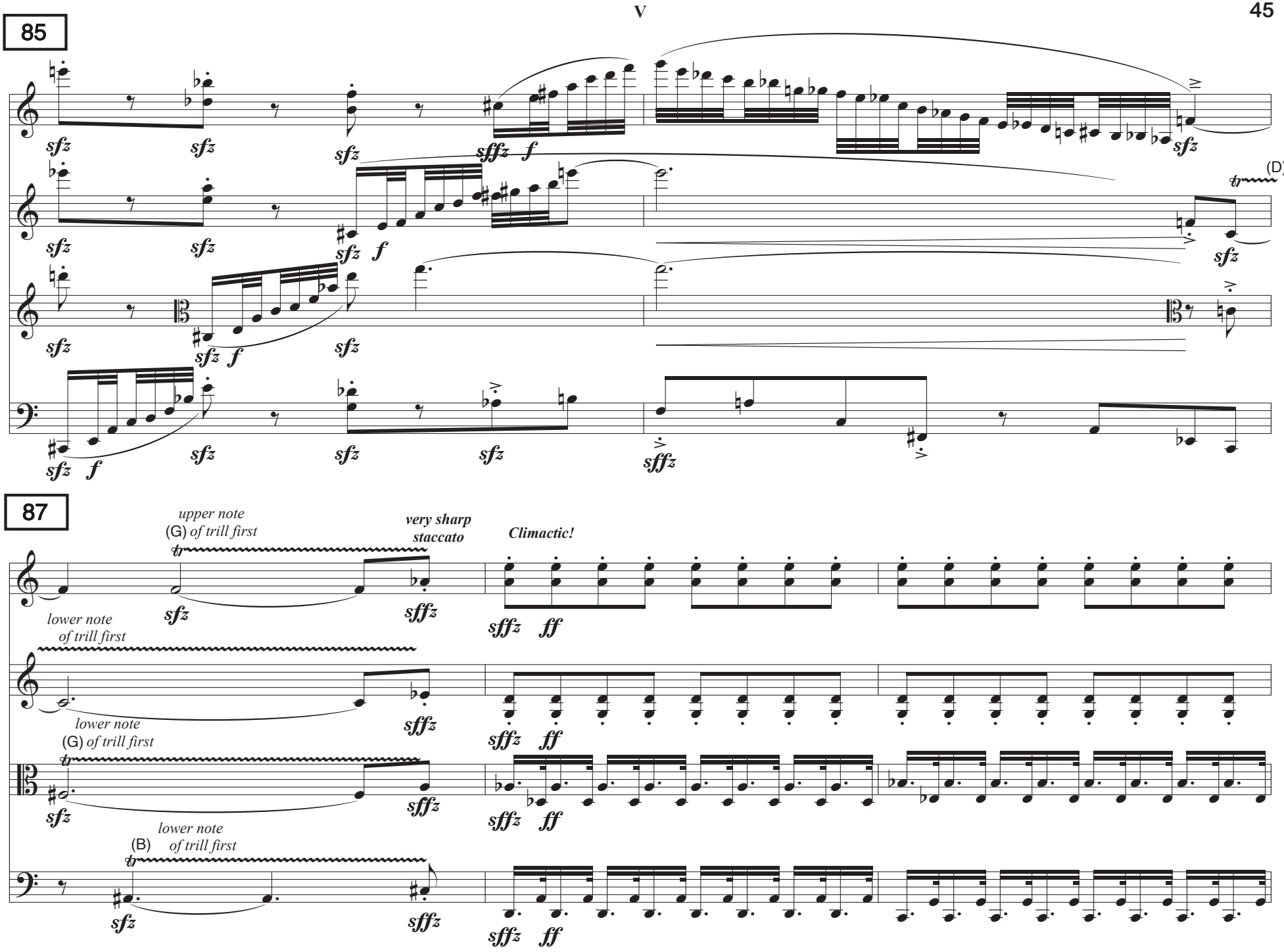
54

56

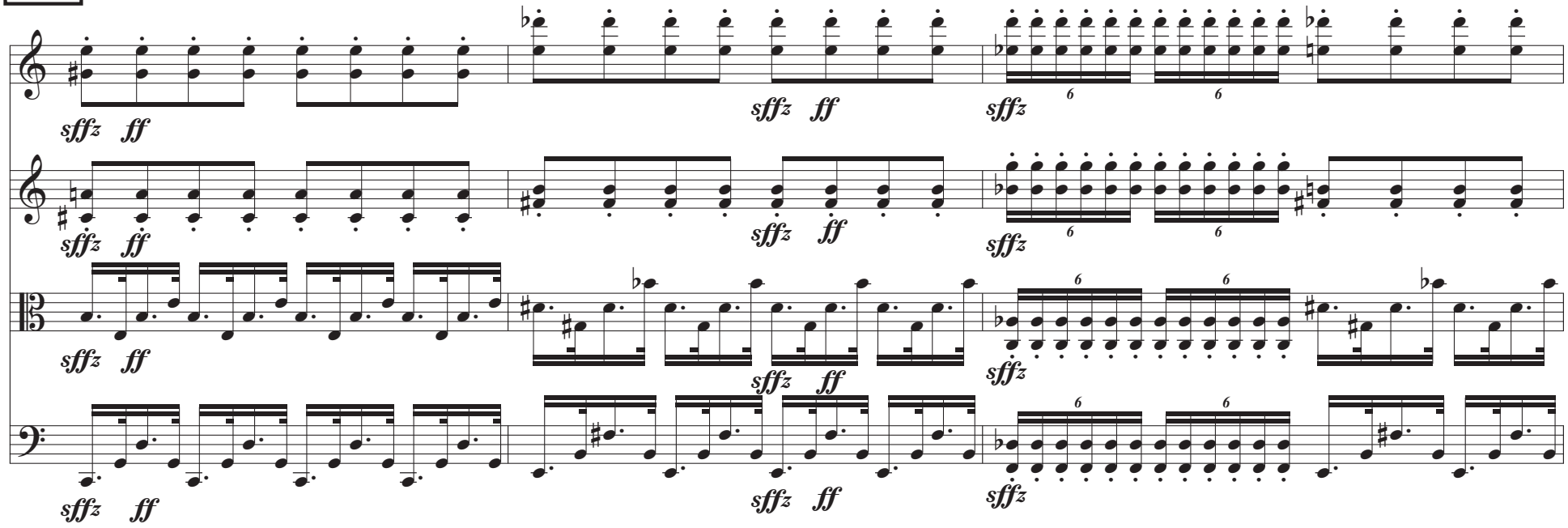



60
rit.
no vibrato
a tempo ♩= 60
pppp
sul pont
66
normal vib.
dolce — gently
normal vib.
arco
Peace

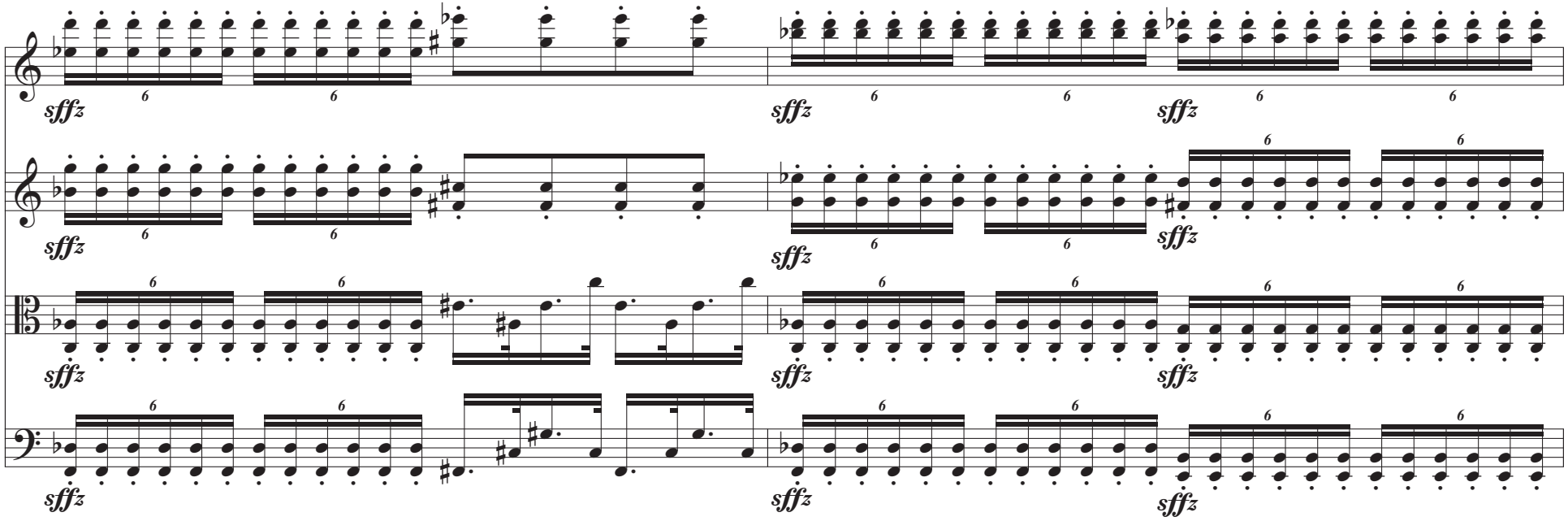

76
a tiny bit slower
f
pp
a tempo ♩= 60
mp
mp
mp
83
f
f
f
mf
f

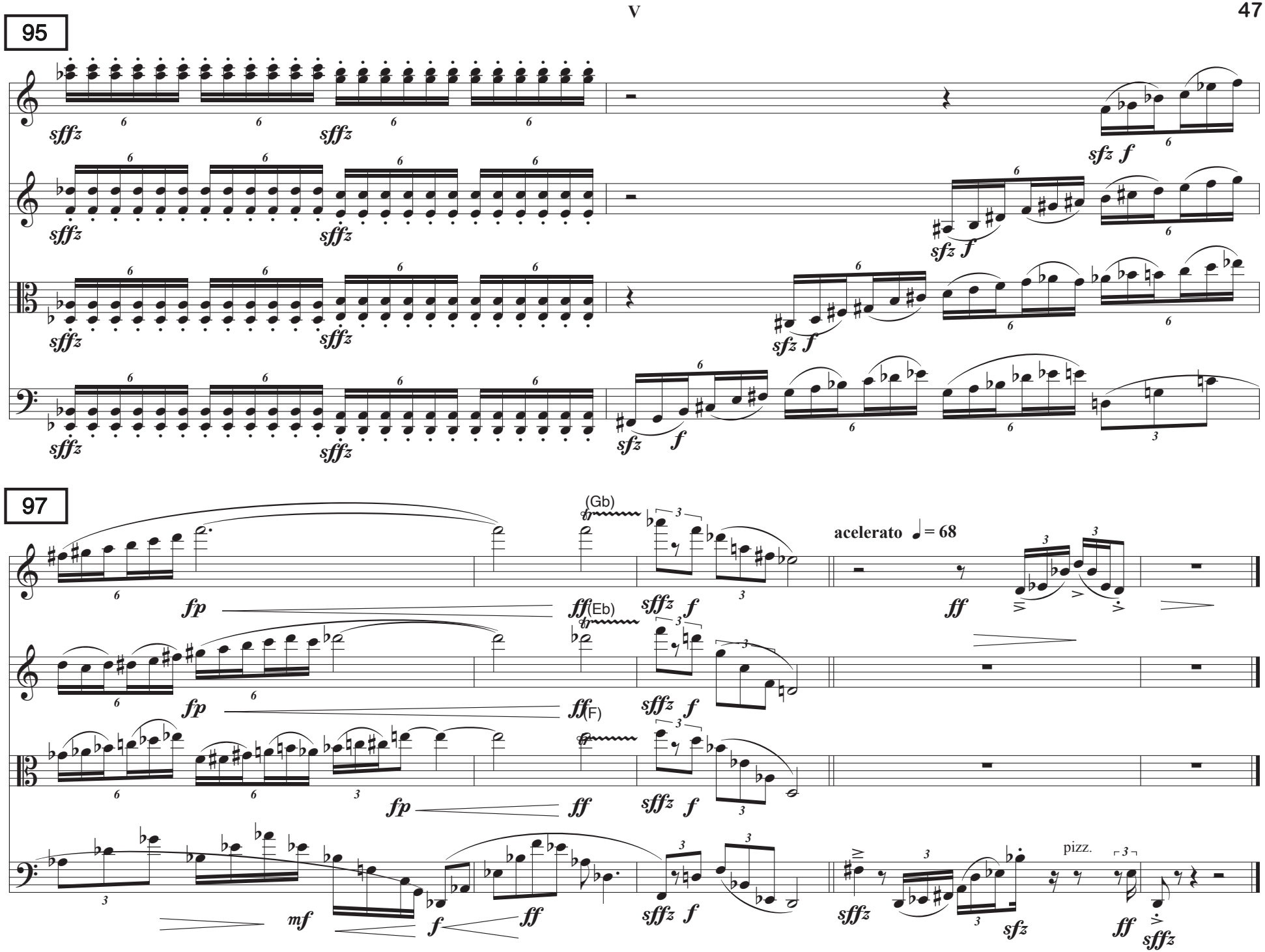

85
87
(D)
upper note
(G) of trill first
very sharp
staccato
Climactic!
lower note
of trill first
lower note
(G) of trill first
lower note
(B) of trill first

90



93




95
sffz
sfz f
97
(Gb)
fp
ff(Eb)
sffz f
acelerato ♩= 68
ff
ff(F)
mf
f
pizz.