Frank Stemper

STRING QUARTET NO. 4

I. **Adagio -** *espress. – meditativ und schön*
II. **Minuetto e trio**
III. **Andante** - *tranquillo*
IV. **Presto e Legato –** *Reflexion über ein Thema von F. Chopin*

dur. 25 mins.

PERFORMANCE 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 possible. Accidentals do hold through the bar but not through octaves. There are also many cautionary accidentals throughout to make the reading a bit easier.

In addition, this chromatic music is often within passages that are very rhythmic, doubling the difficulty. In the more rhythmic, fast, and awkward passages, the performer should treat the rhythmic vitality over exact pitches. If you find that altering a pitch or two will help you keep the rhythm flowing, zipping, and or dancing, that is preferred. I.E. In those passages exact rhythms are more important than exact pitches.

Throughout the piece, slurs are there to show phrasing and, indirectly the bowing. The performers are more skilled than I and should feel free to decide which exact bowings will result in the achieving the best result of my musical intention.

I often "over-notate" my music, adding to the notes, rhythms, dynamics, etc. detailed rhythmic notation that crosses the line into "how" the music should be performed. I do this to make my intentions as clear as possible, eg. written ritard. or accel. However, if the musicians feel they understand the musical intent of a particular passage, they should feel free to abandon the exact notation and perform the passage more naturally, as if they are inventing the music. In this regard, the musicians are the final composers, fine tuning the score to express the musical statement as clearly as possible.

DETAILS:

In movement I, mm. 21-24 and then mm. 40-43, a rather peculiar theme is stated. This statement is repeated later in the quartet, although slightly varied. It is peculiar, because it is without rhythmic pulse nor harmonic sense of any kind. I hear it as a few people discussing something or someone, perhaps complaining, bragging, or gossiping (beschweren, Prahlerei, or tratschen), but one cannot seem to make out the actual words. The short discussions are as abstract as any music.

MVT II, viola (28-30) — For this series of pizz. triple stops, the rhythm is more important than the exact pitches/chords. We should hear the attacks primarily, letting the triple stops fall where they may.

Throughout the piece, the performers often switch from a primary musical role (Haupstimme) to a secondary accompanimental role. Especially the section beginning at measure 19 in MVT III, this alternation happens quite a bit, as the 1st and 2nd violins trade the primary melody above a relaxed accompaniment. Each has a turn with the melody while the other joins the other instruments' accompaniment - and then continue alternating. It is a competition of one-ups-man-ship (Überlegenheitsstreben?) between them. Exaggerating this alternation will help its success. As this game continues, the two violins are challenged by the viola then the 'cello, building to the climax of the movement.

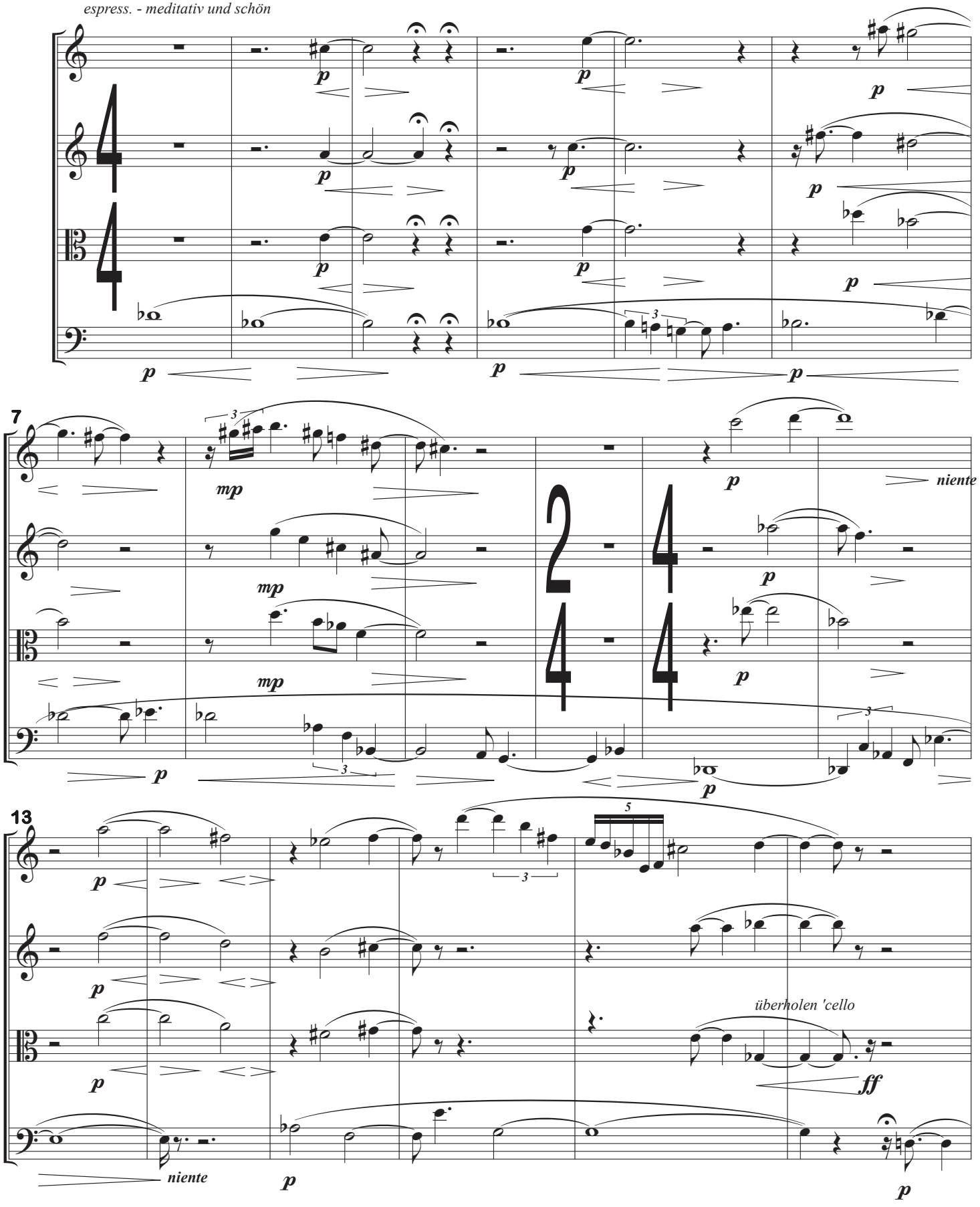
At the end of MVT IV, the final statement of violin 1 suddenly concludes the entire piece, with no dramatic ritard nor change of dynamic, etc. It should sound as if the quartet has just been turned off. Ideally, I think it would be good for the group to freeze their composure for several seconds – hence the empty 3.5 bars – before acknowledging to the audience that the piece has concluded.

String Quartet No. 4
I.

Frank Stemper (2026)

Adagio ♩ = 60

espress. - meditativ und schön



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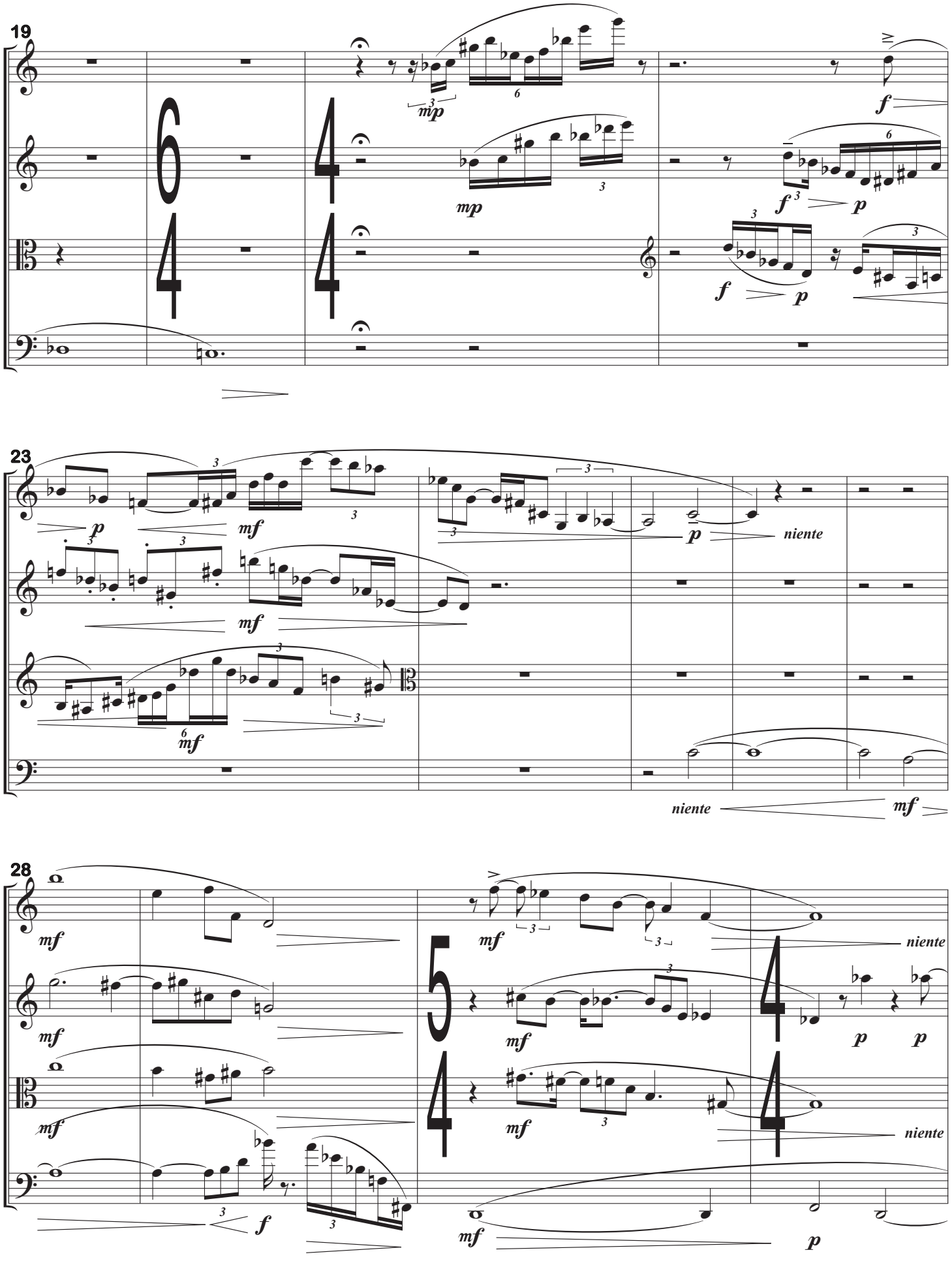
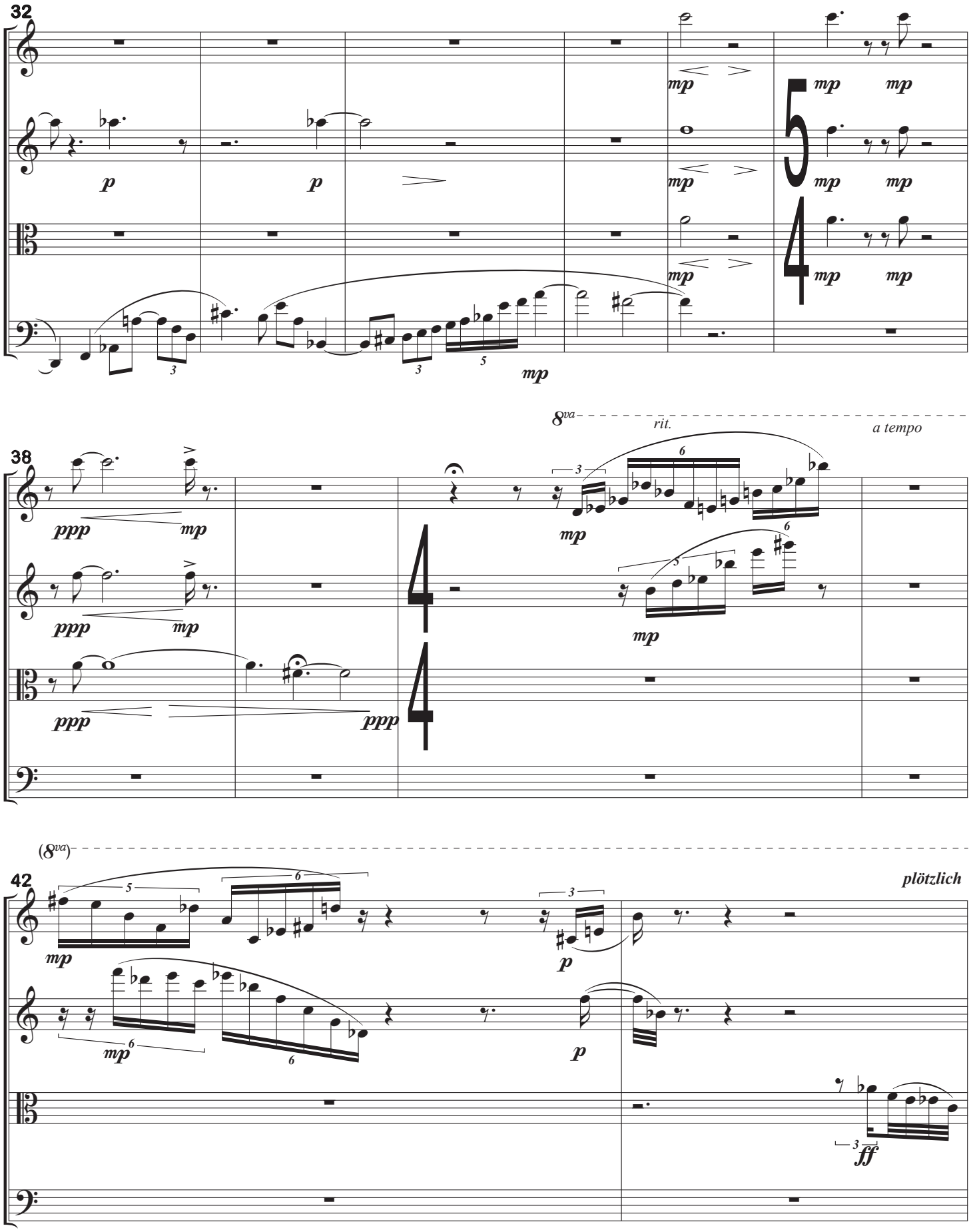
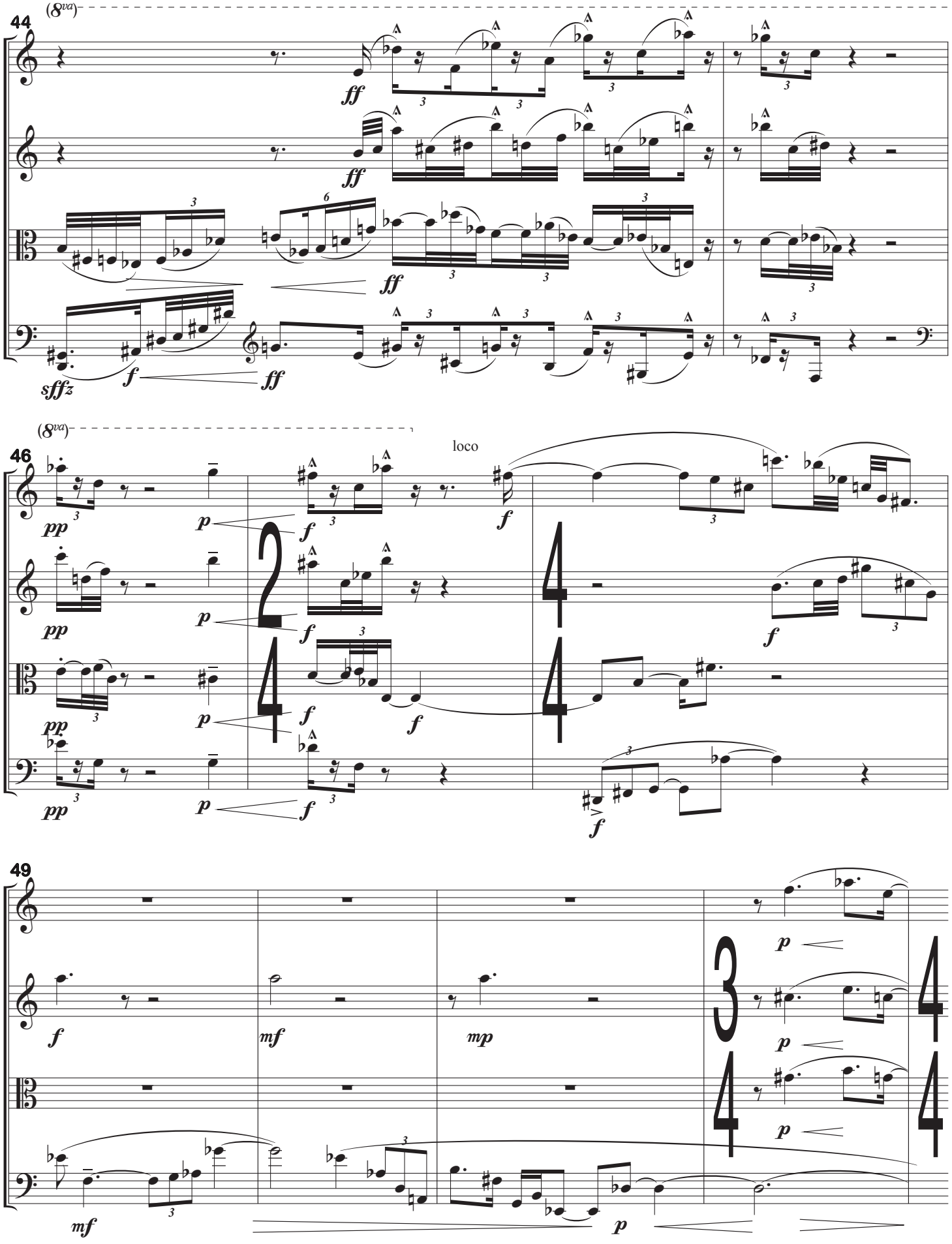
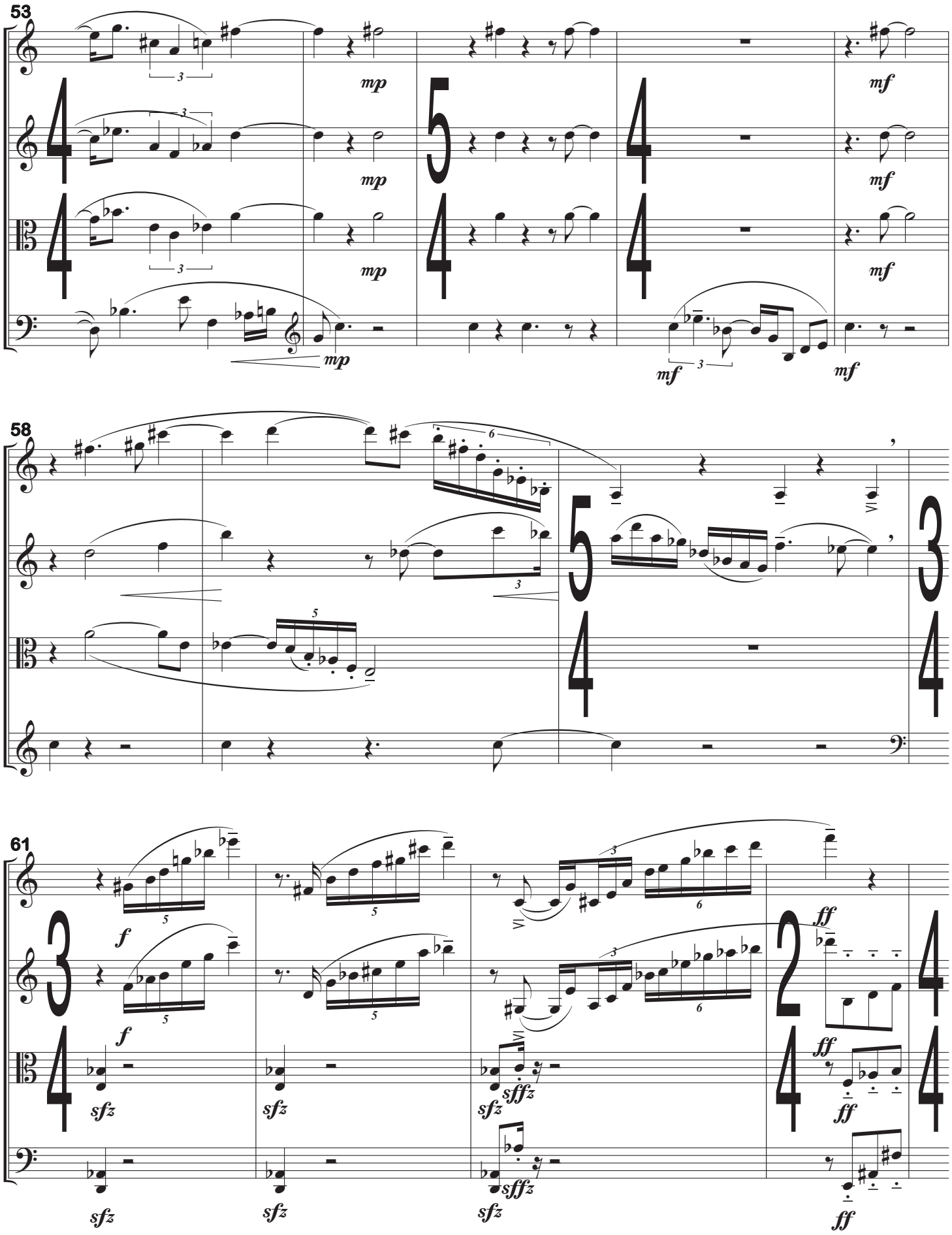
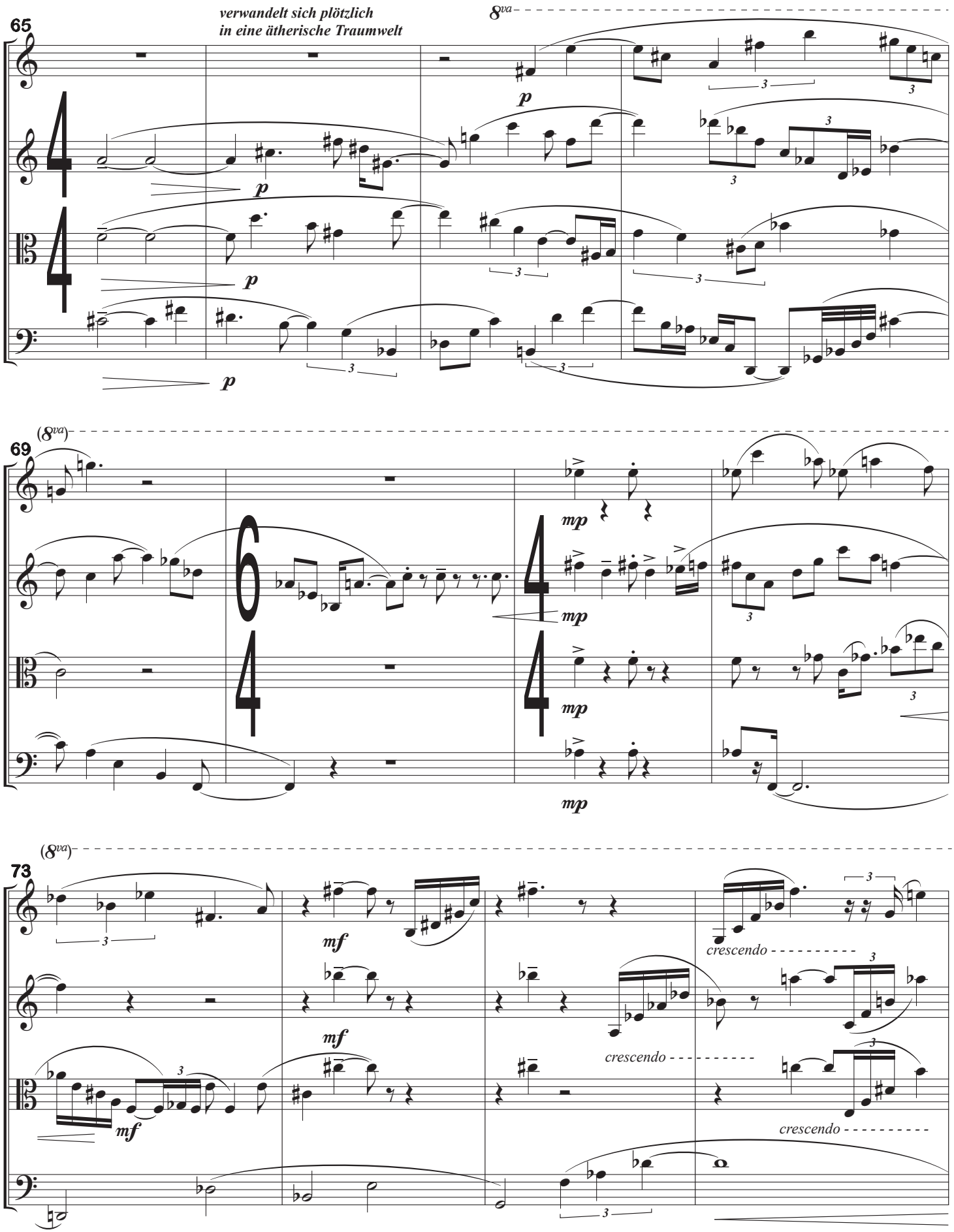
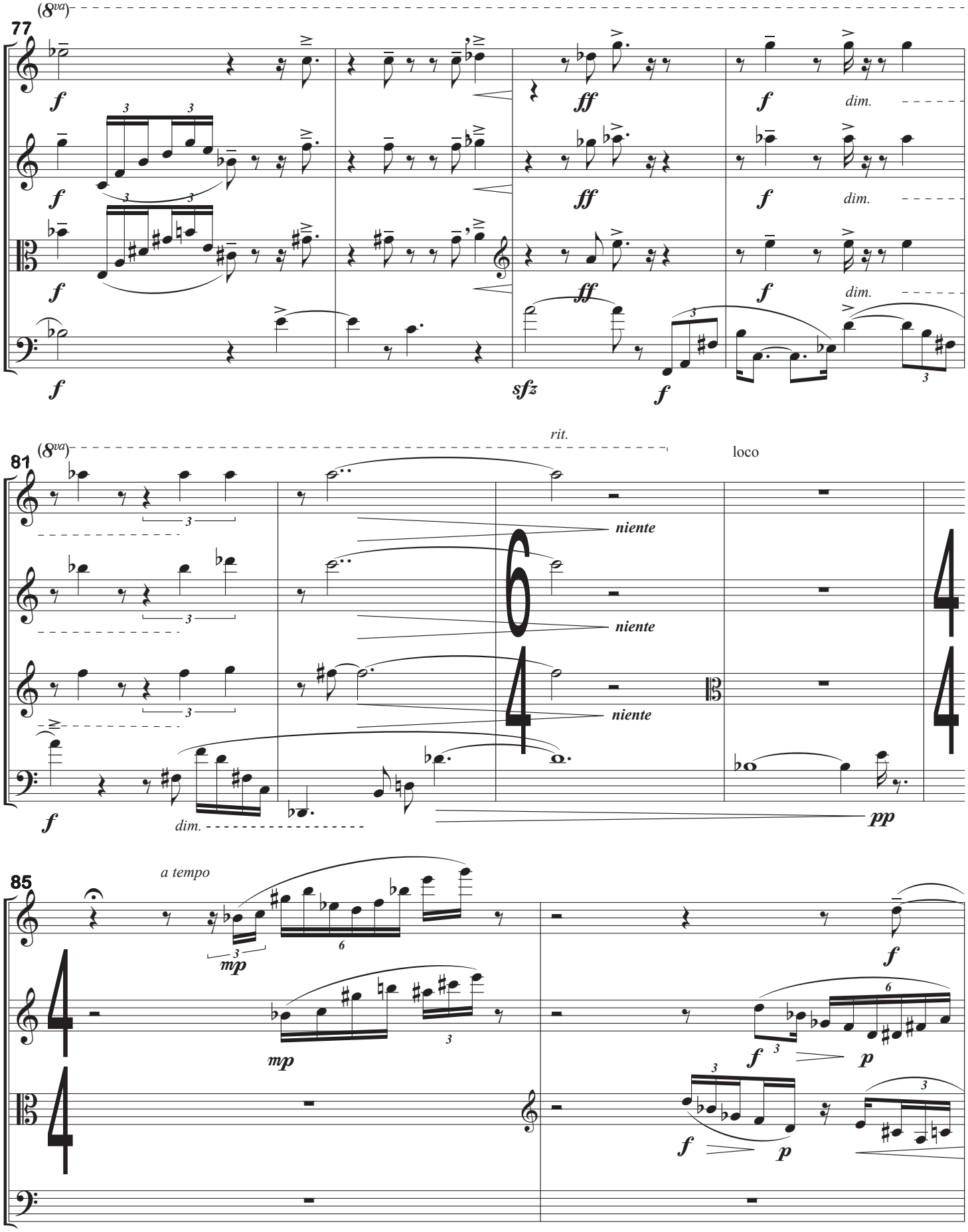

19
23
28
mp
mf
f
p
niente

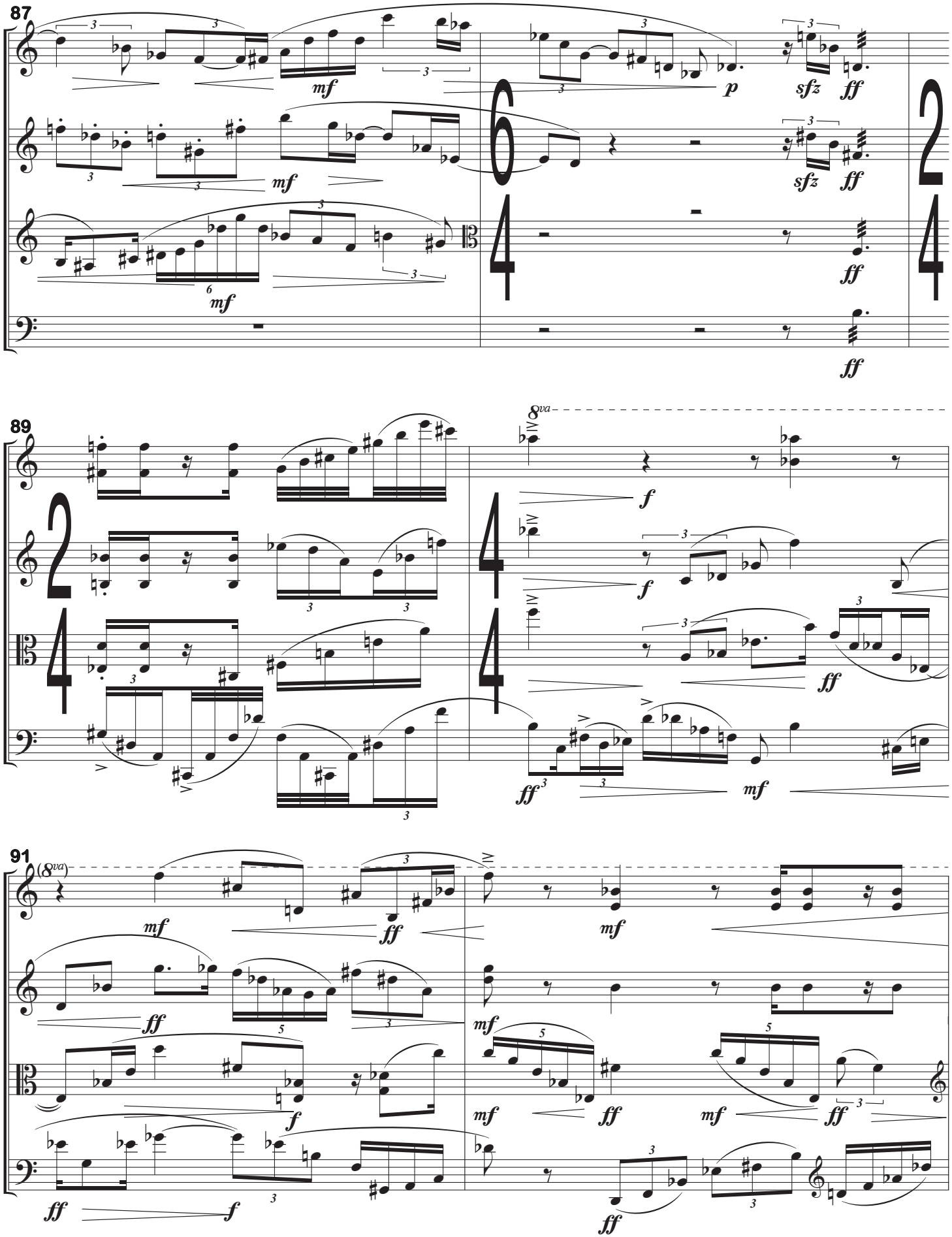

32
38
42
8va
rit.
a tempo
(8va)
plötzlich

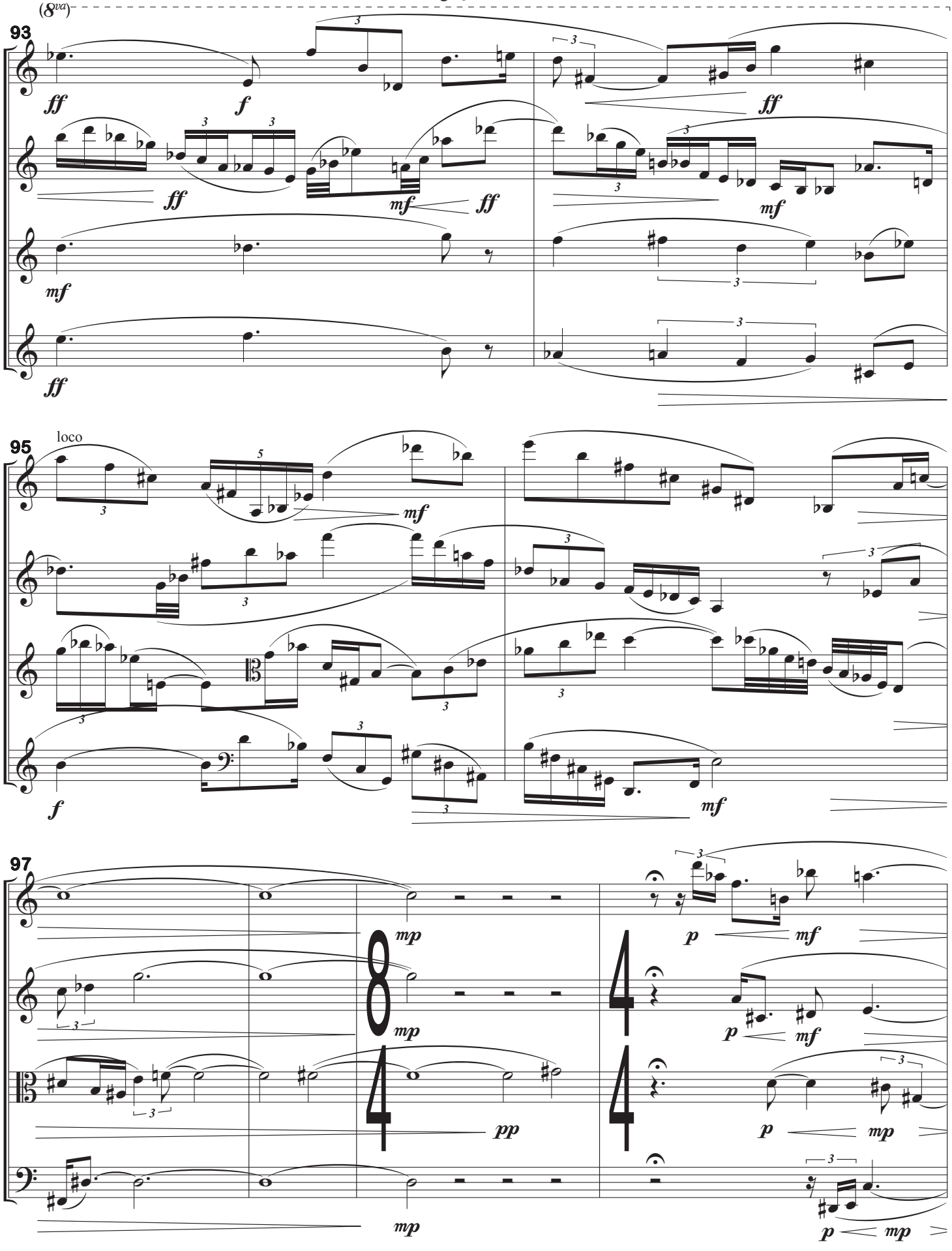

(8va)
44
ff
ff
ff
sffz
f
ff
(8va)
46
loco
pp
p
f
49
mf
mp
p

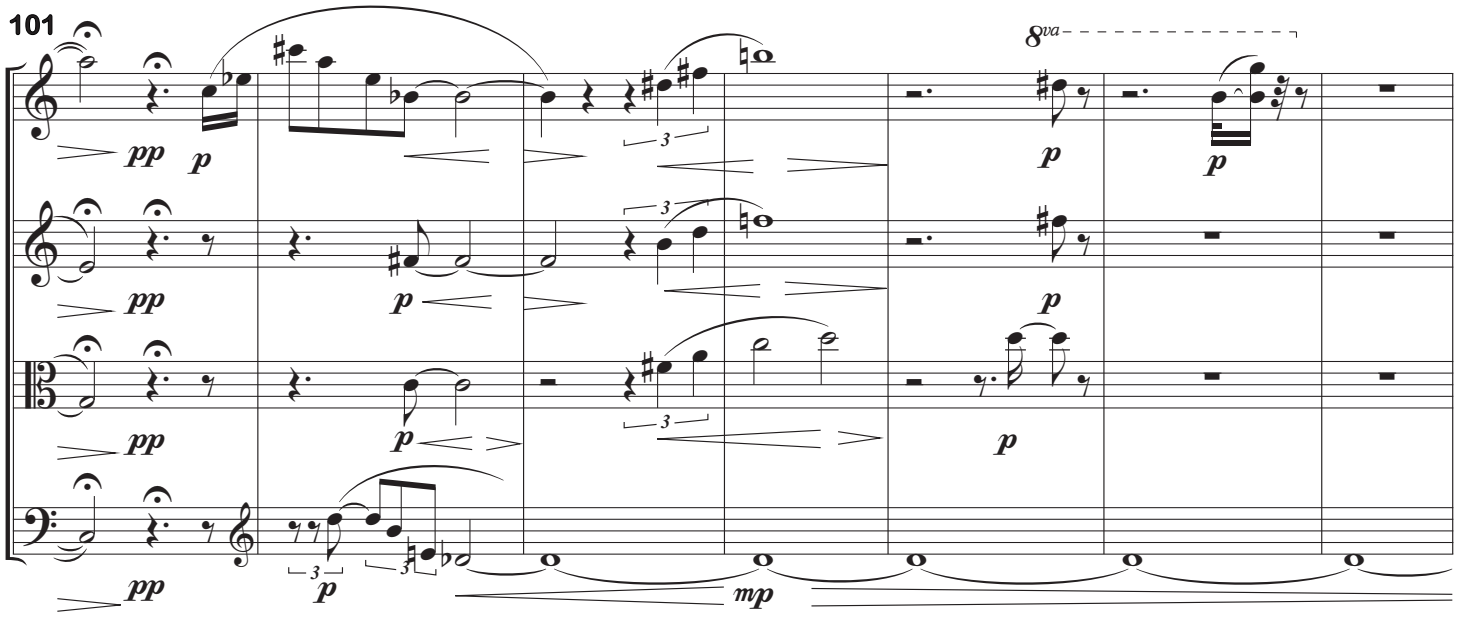

53
mp
mf
58
61
f
sfz
sffz
ff

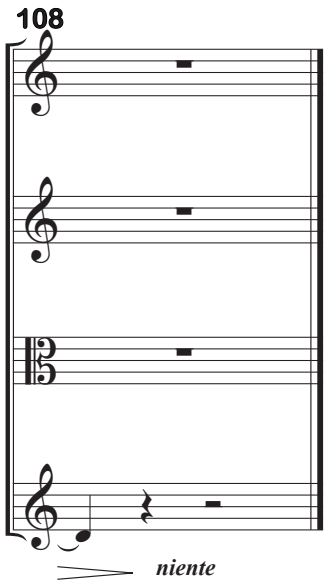

65
verwandelt sich plötzlich
in eine ätherische Traumwelt
8va
p
p
p
p
(8va)
69
mp
mp
mp
mp
(8va)
73
mf
mf
mf
crescendo
crescendo
crescendo


(8va)
77
f
ff
sfz
dim.
(8va)
81
rit.
niente
loco
pp
dim.
85
a tempo
mp
f
p


87
89
91
8va
(8va)


(8va)
93
ff
f
ff
ff
mf
ff
mf
mf
ff
95
loco
mf
f
mf
97
mp
mp
pp
mp
p
mf
p
mf
p
mp
p
mp

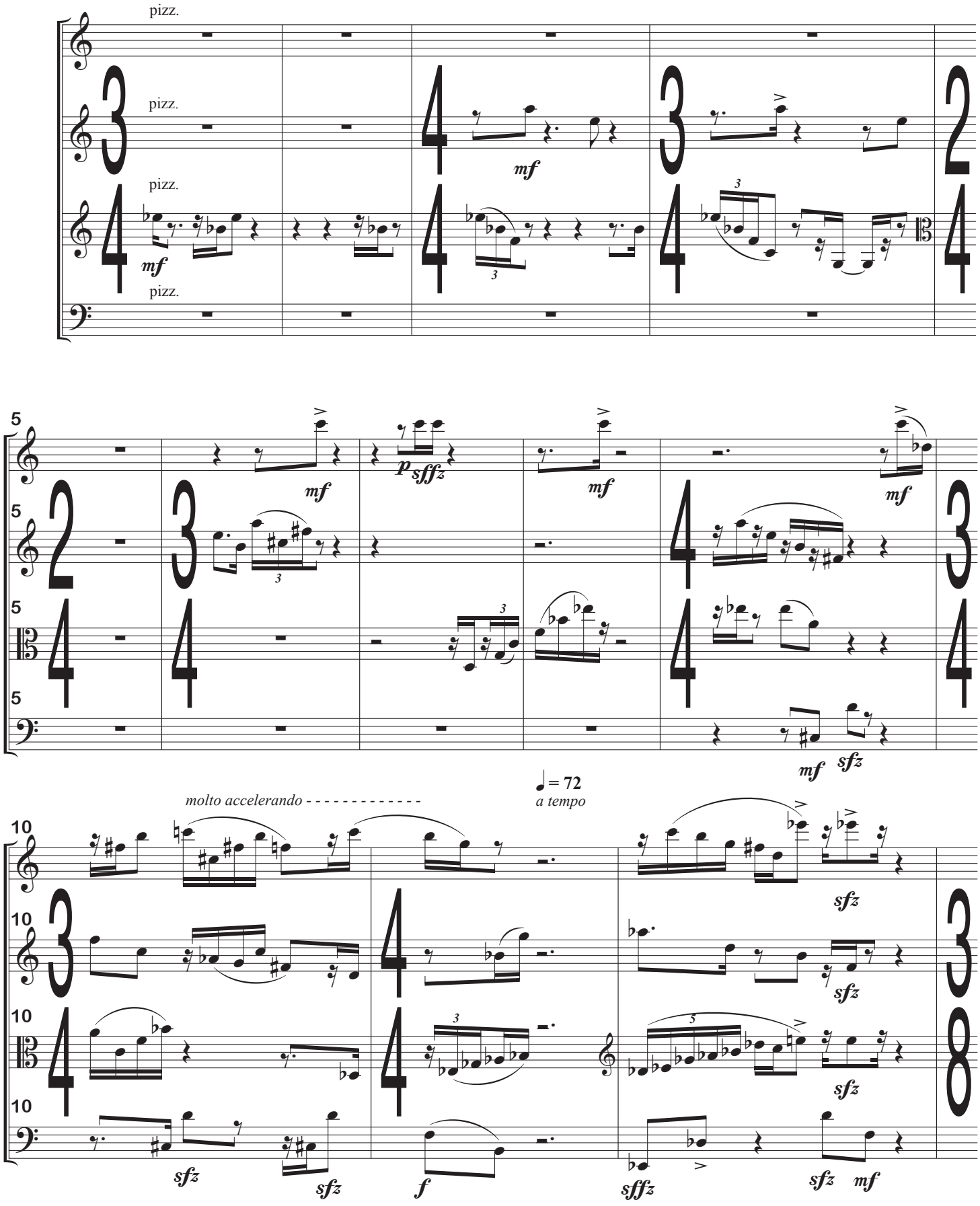

101
8va
pp
p
mp


108
niente

String Quartet No. 4
II.

Frank Stemper (2026)

Menuetto e trio ♩ = 72



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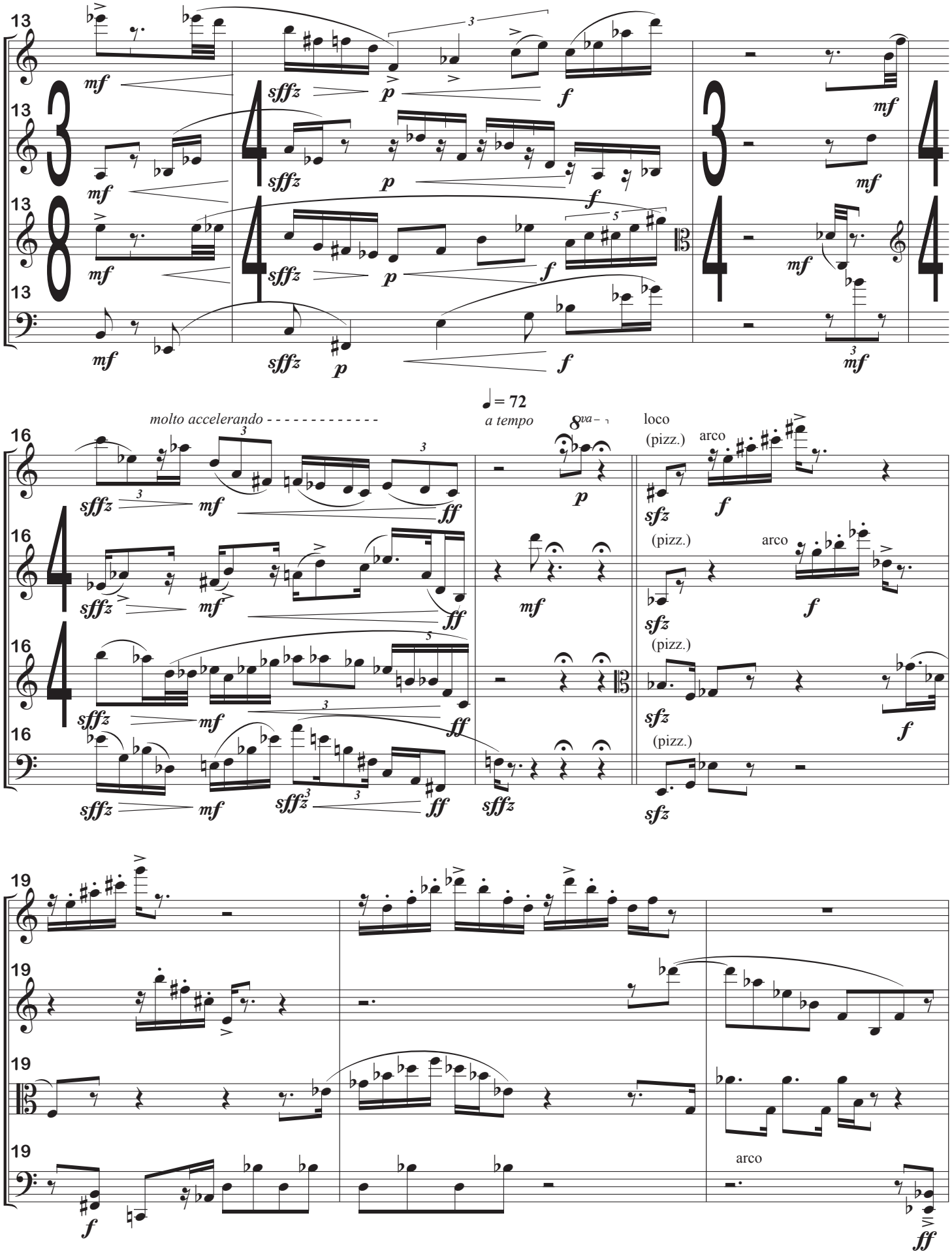
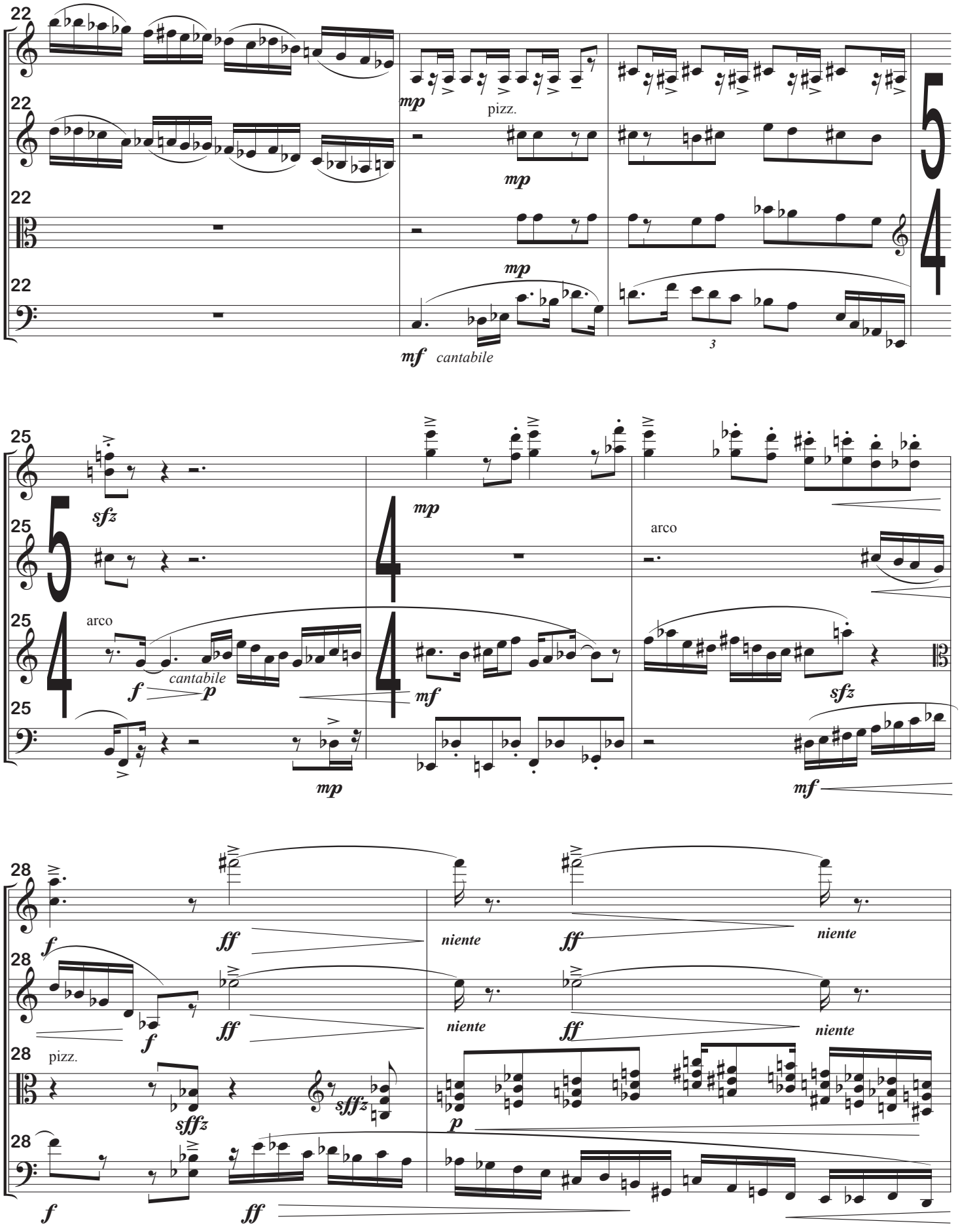
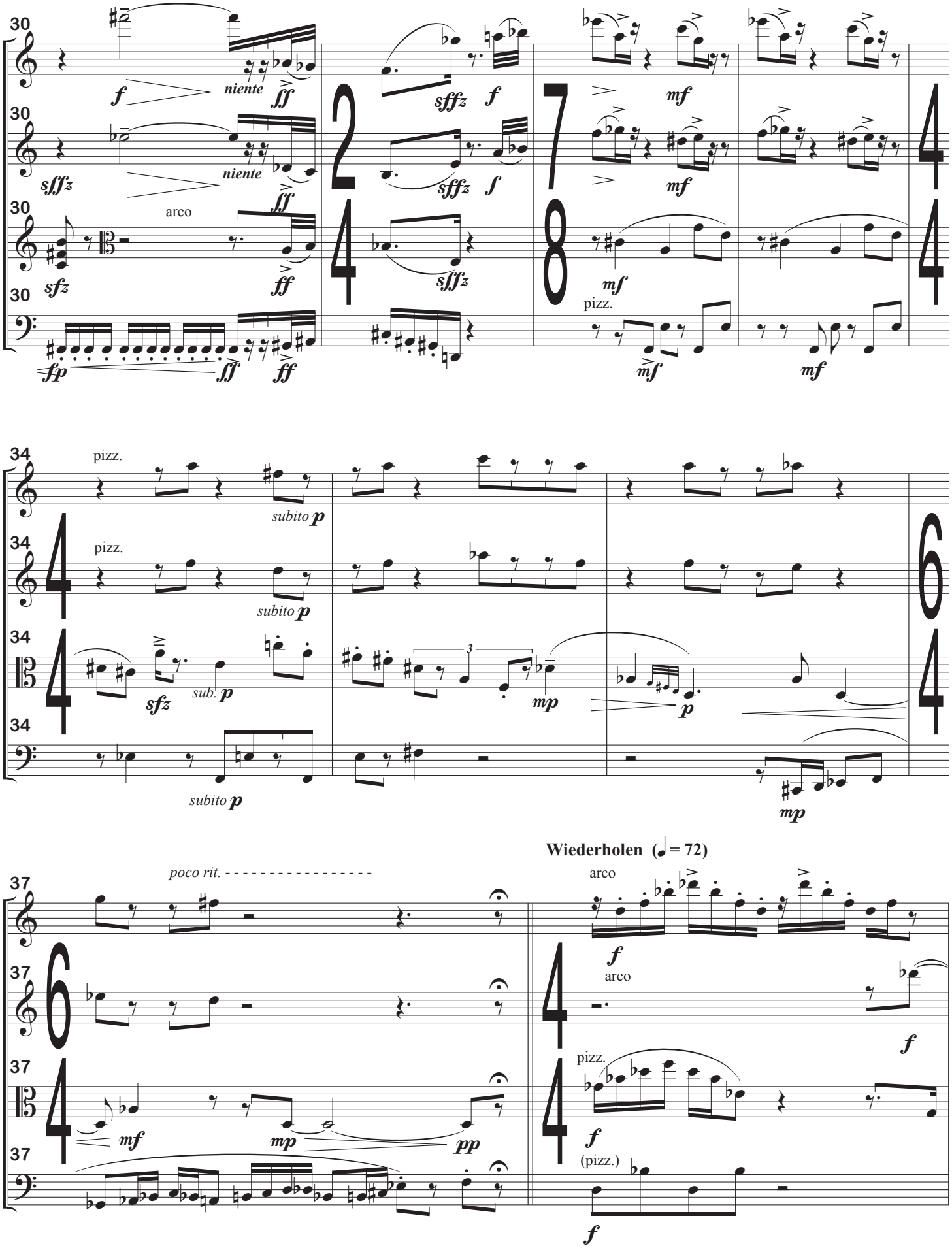
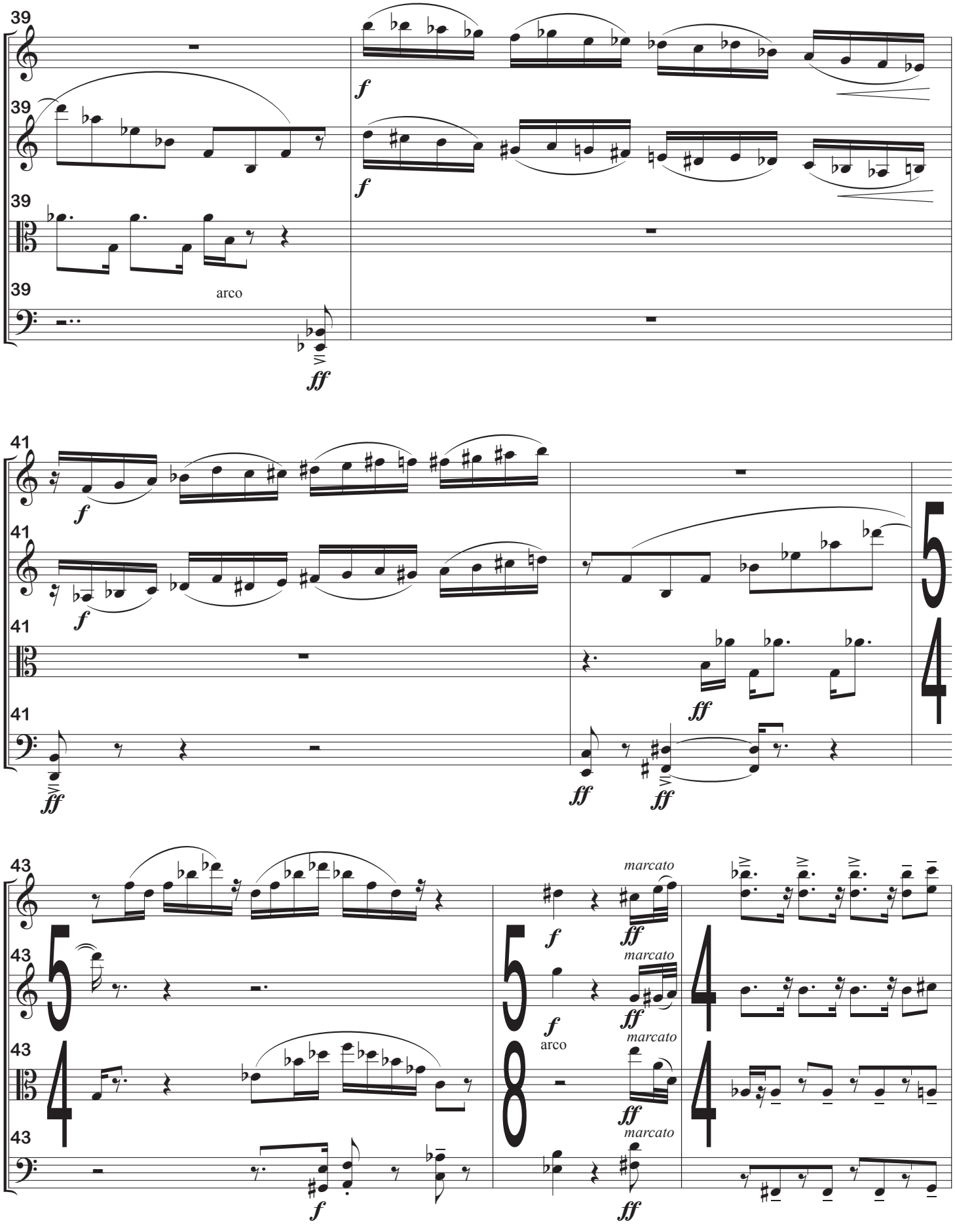
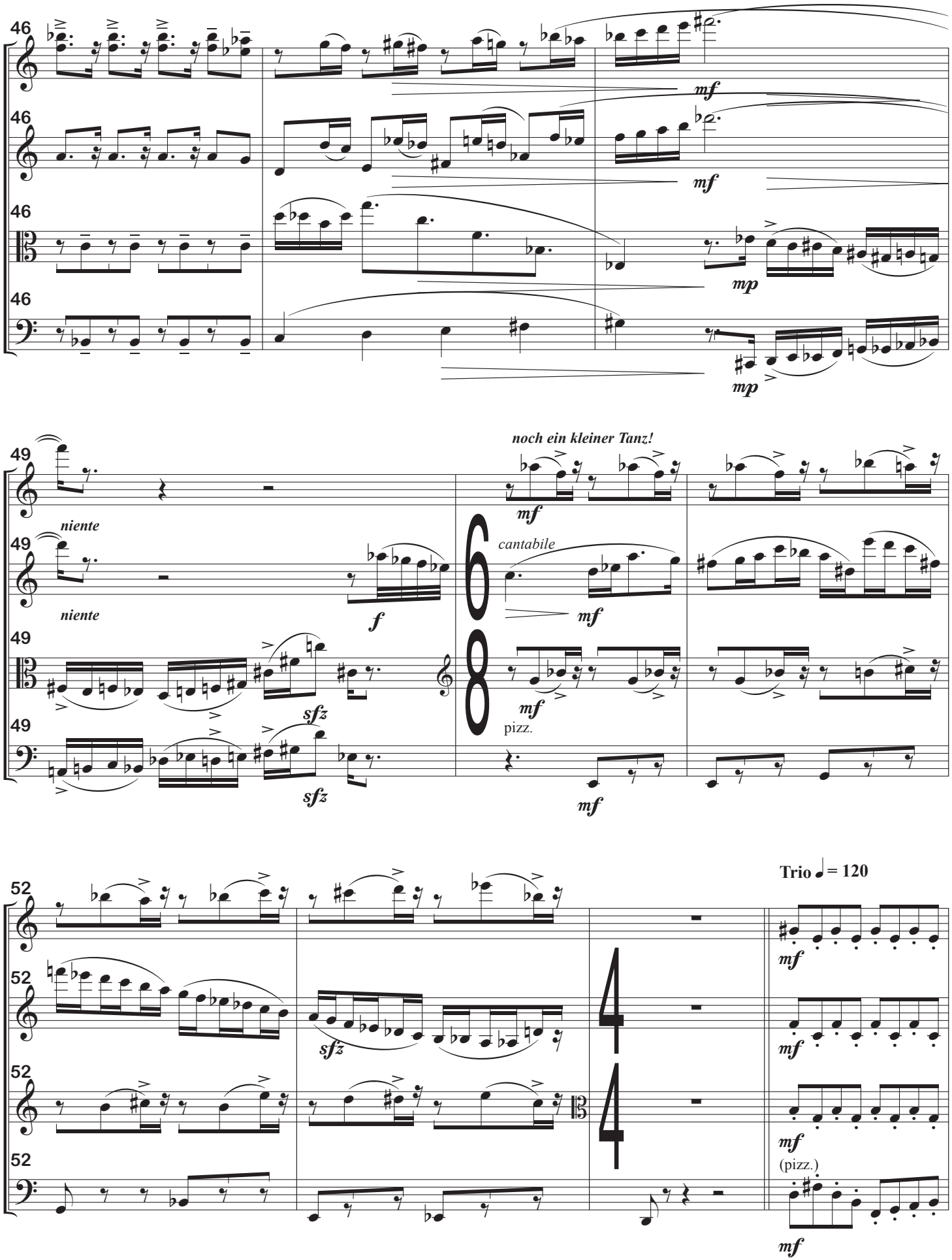
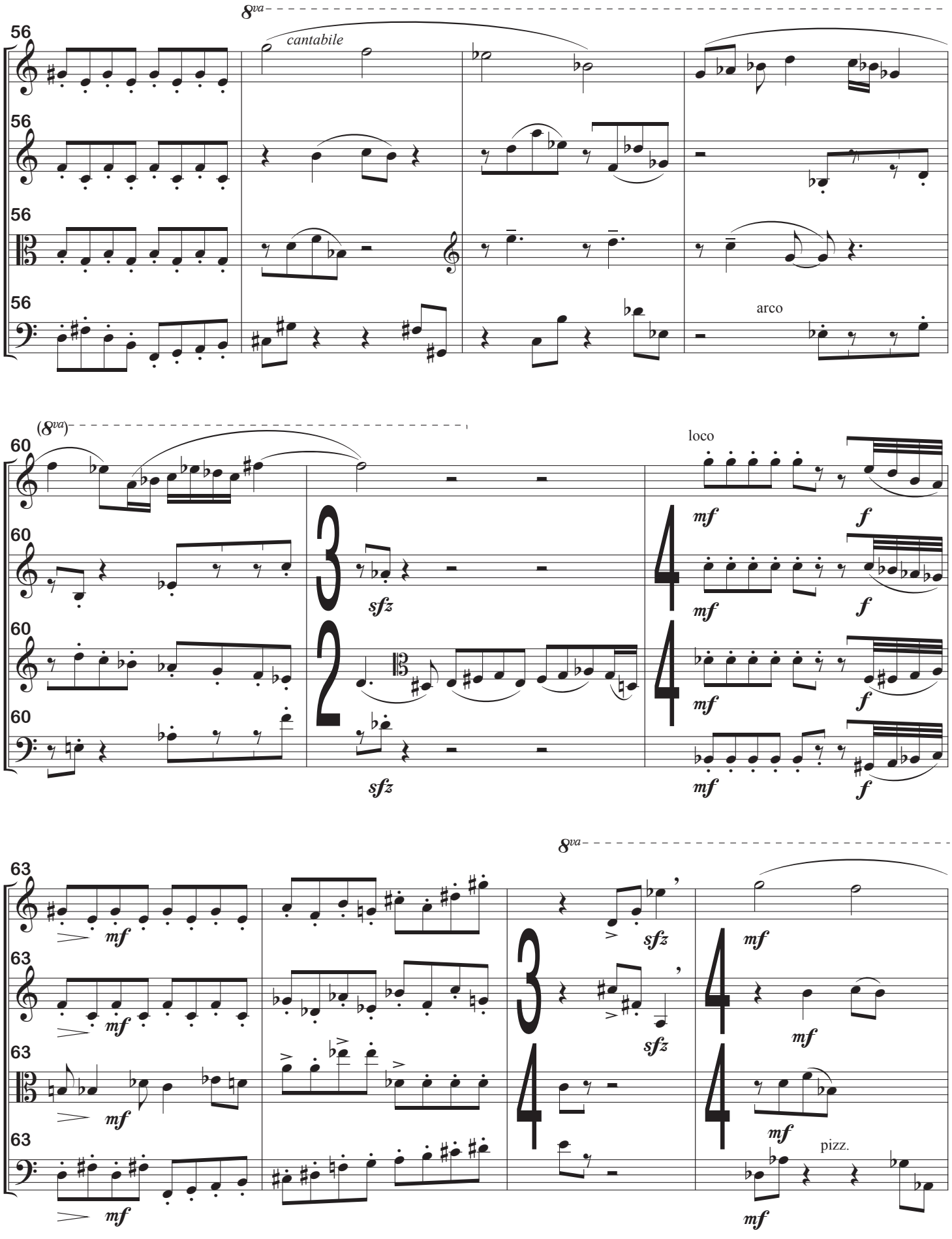

molto accelerando
♩= 72
a tempo
8va
loco
(pizz.)
arco
arco

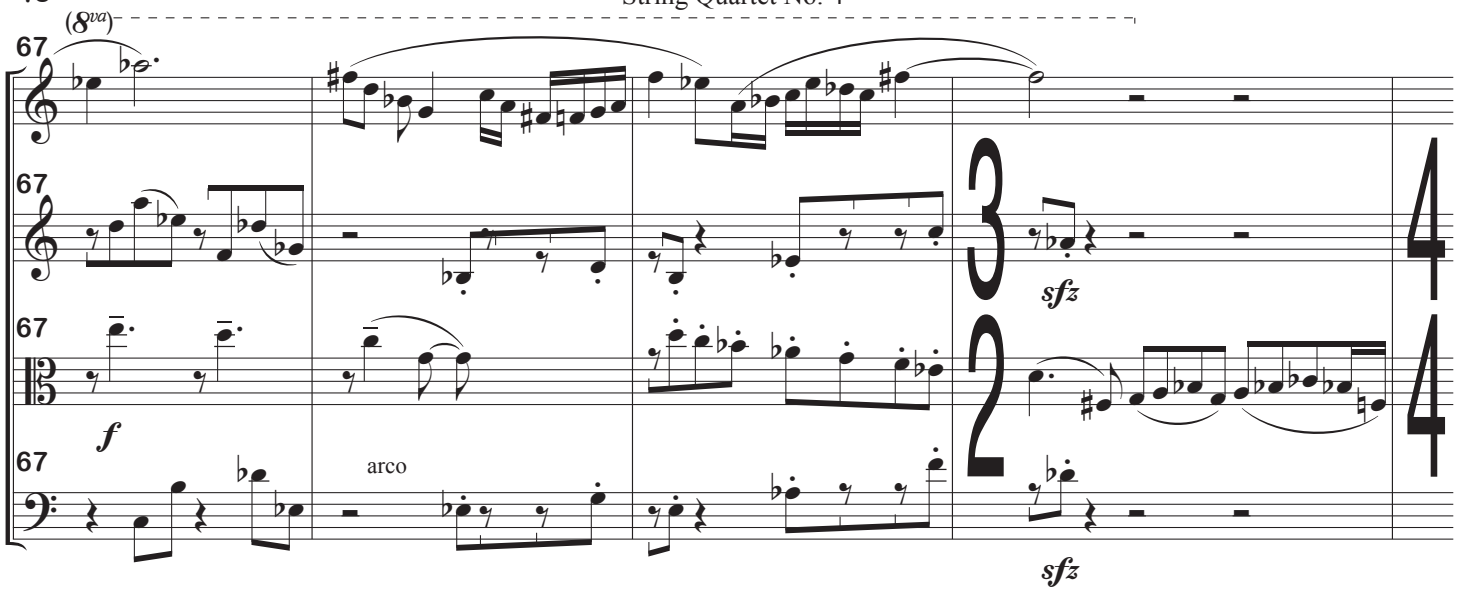

22
mp
pizz.
mp
mp
mf cantabile
3
25
sfz
mp
arco
arco
cantabile
f
p
mf
sfz
mp
mf
28
f
ff
niente
ff
niente
f
ff
niente
ff
niente
pizz.
sffz
sffz
p
f
ff


30
f
niente
ff
sffz
f
mf
sffz
niente
ff
sffz
f
mf
arco
sfz
ff
sffz
mf
pizz.
fp
ff
ff
mf
mf
34
pizz.
subito p
pizz.
subito p
sfz
sub. p
mp
p
subito p
mp
poco rit.
Wiederholen (♩ = 72)
arco
f
arco
f
mf
mp
pp
pizz.
f
(pizz.)
f


39
39
39
39
arco
f
f
ff
41
41
41
41
f
f
ff
ff
ff
43
43
43
43
marcato
marcato
marcato
marcato
f
f
arco
ff
ff
ff

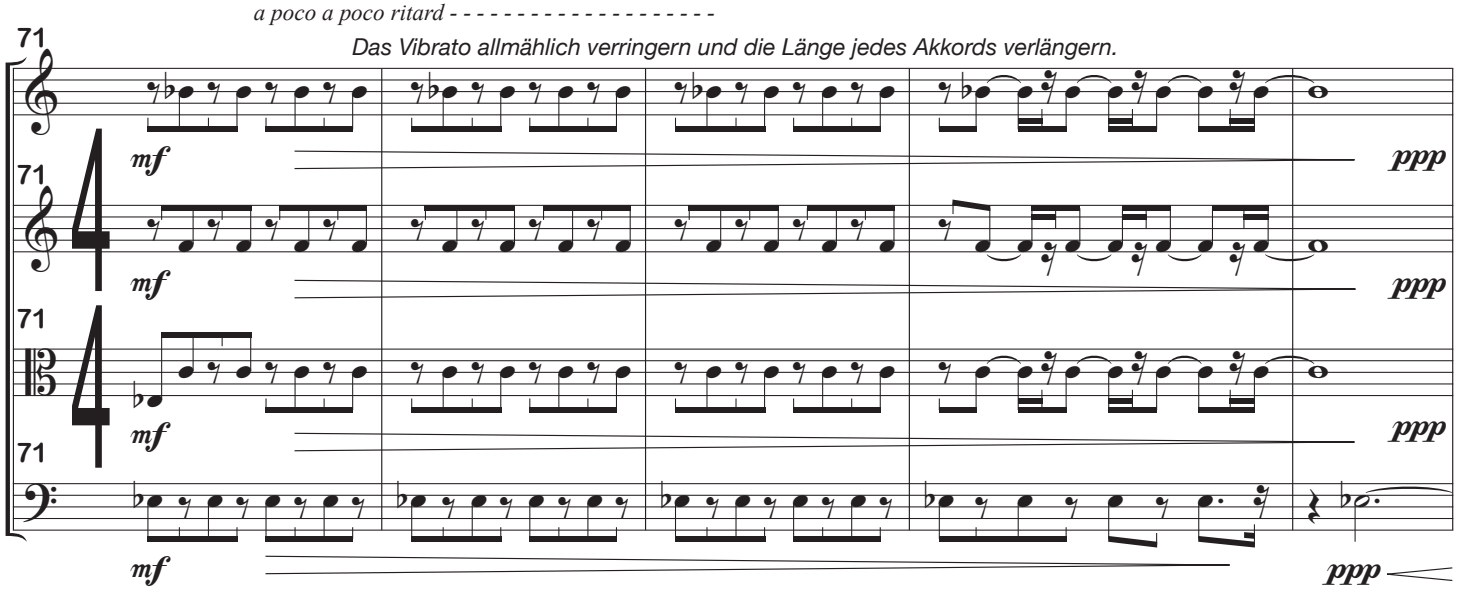

46
mf
mp
49
niente
f
sfz
noch ein kleiner Tanz!
cantabile
pizz.
52
Trio ♩ = 120
(pizz.)


56
8va
cantabile
arco
60
(8va)
loco
sfz
mf
f
63
pizz.



a poco a poco ritard - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

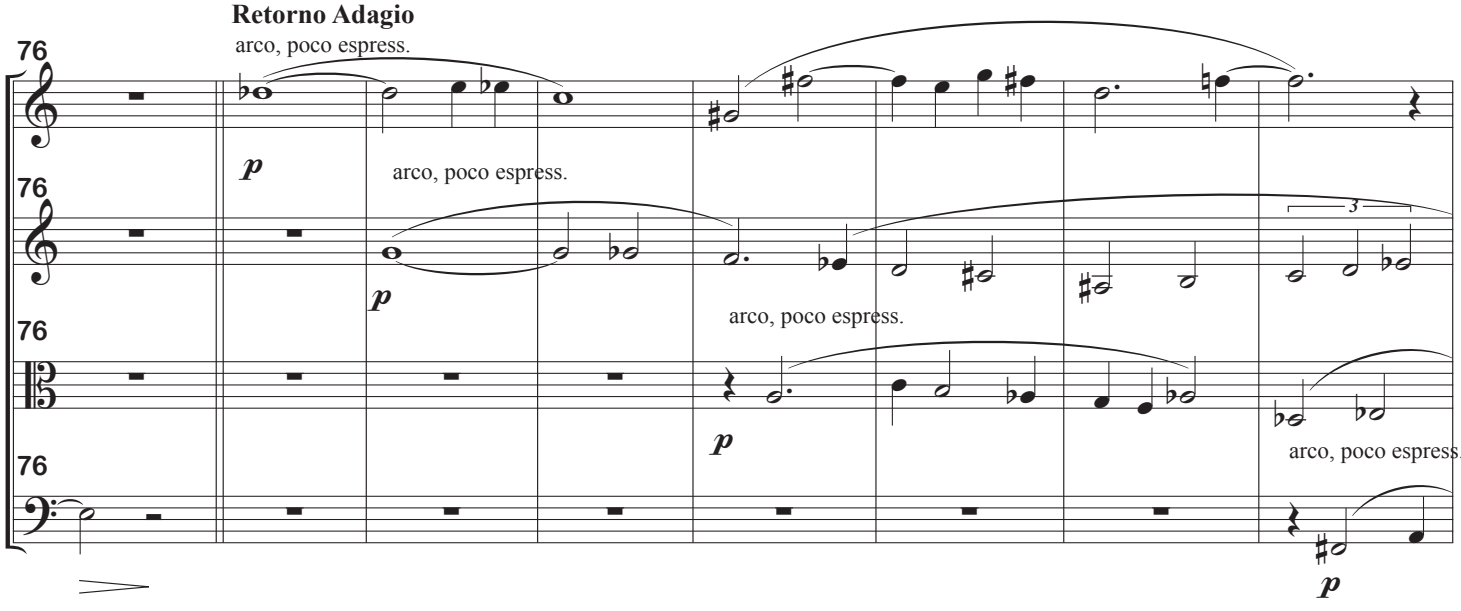
Das Vibrato allmählich verringern und die Länge jedes Akkords verlängern.

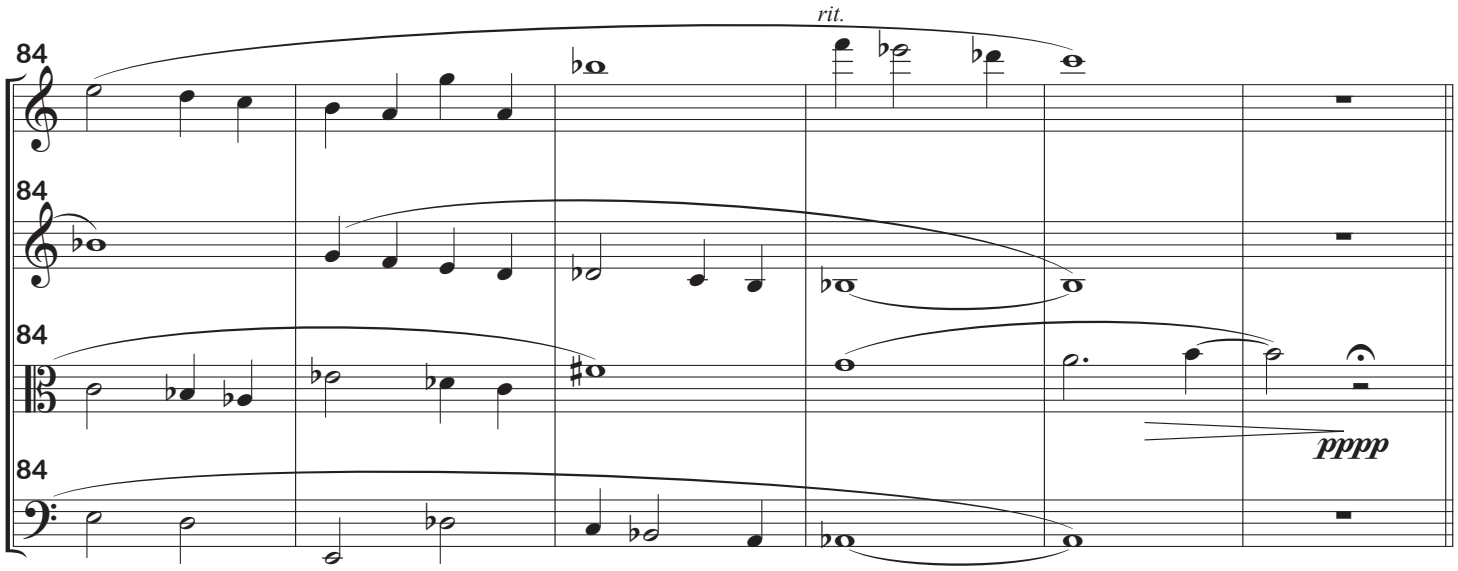


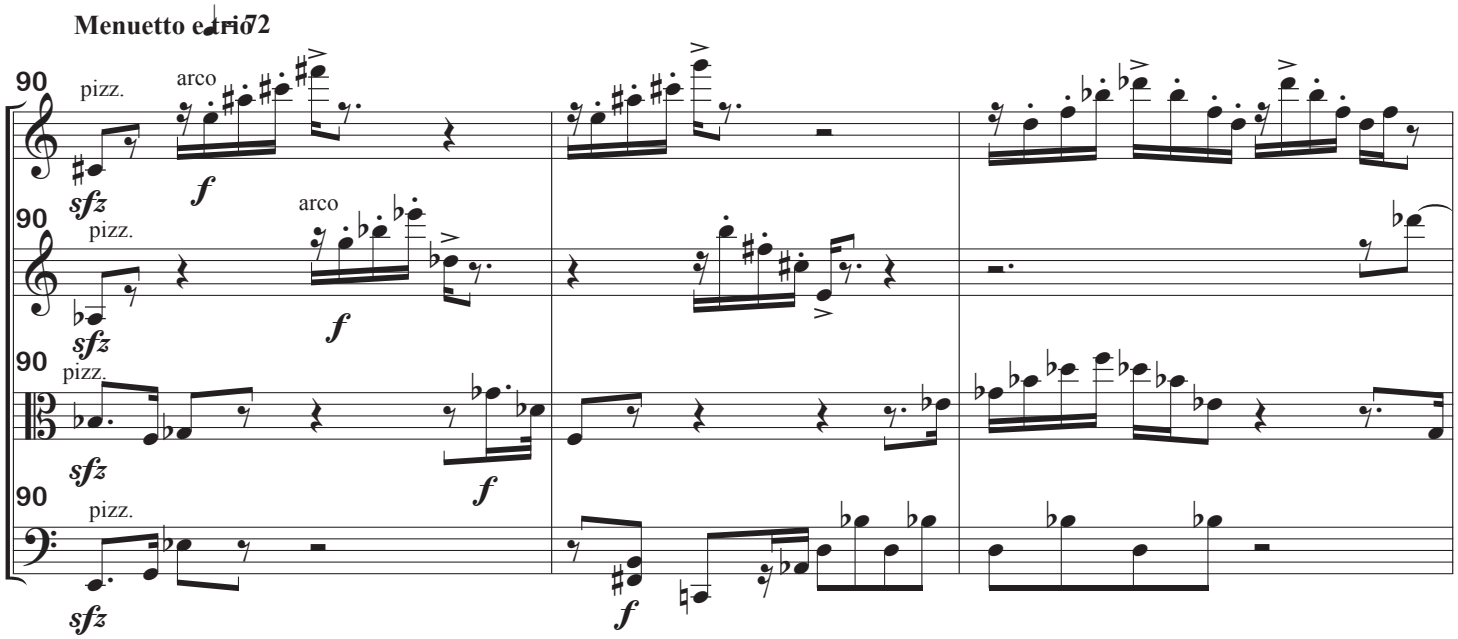
a tempo ♩ = 92

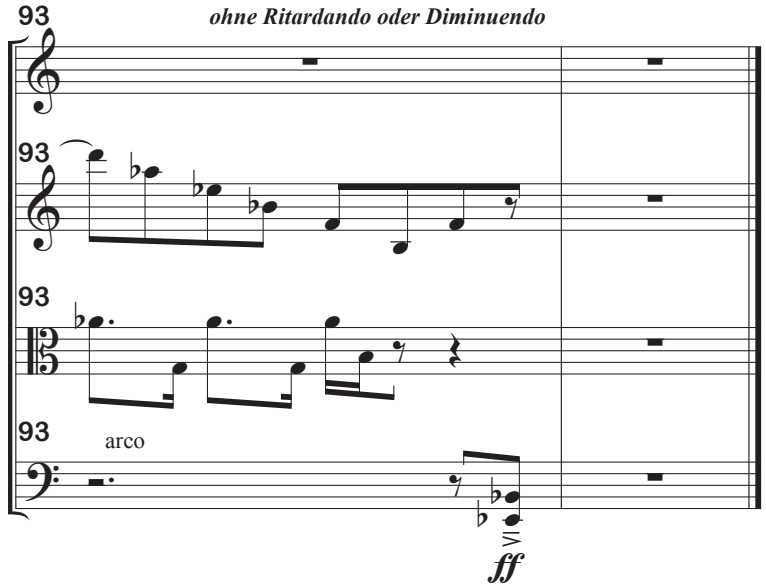
Retorno Adagio

arco, poco espress.




rit.
84
pppp

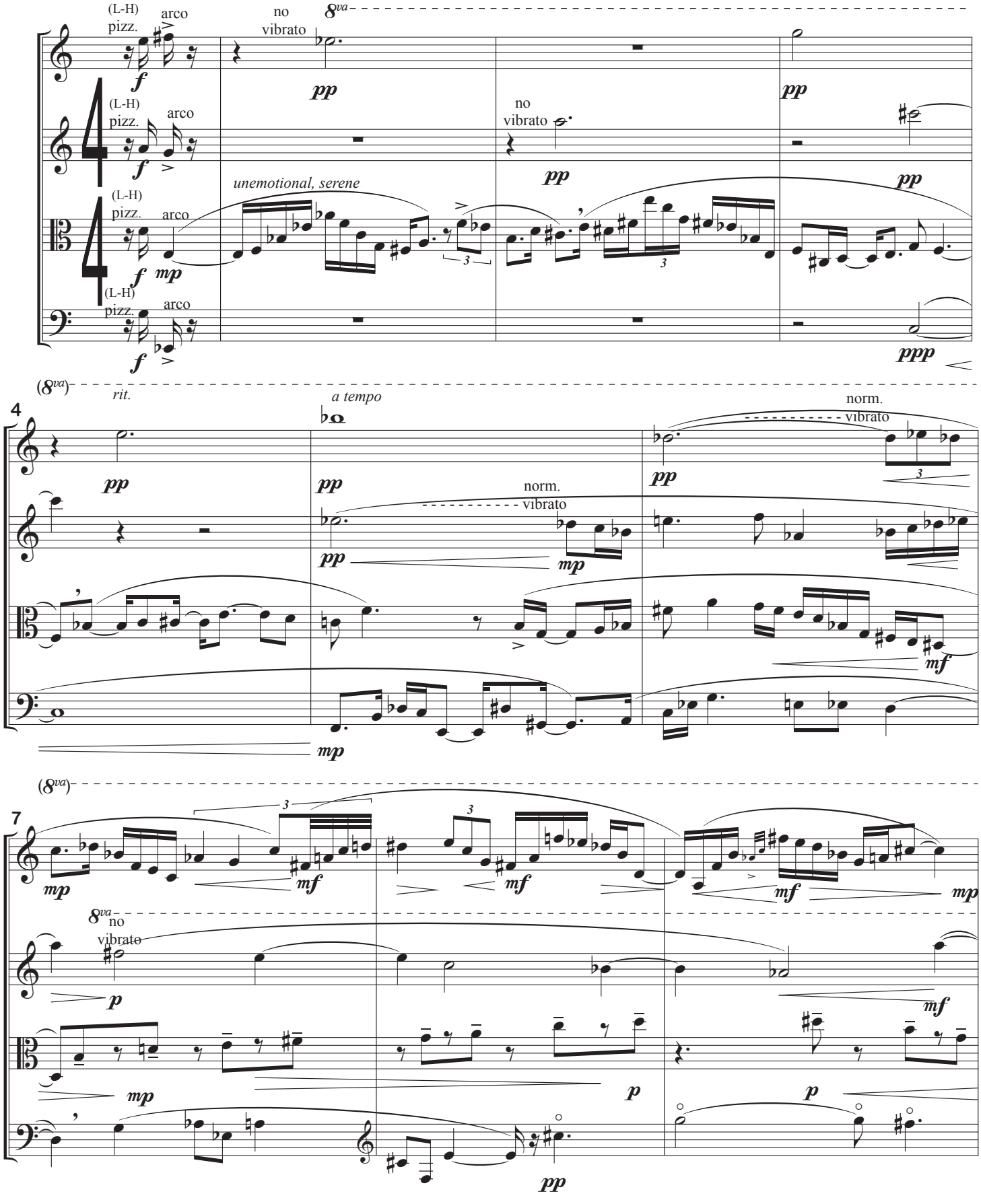

Menuetto e trio
72
90
pizz.
arco
sfz
f


ohne Ritardando oder Diminuendo
93
arco
ff

String Quartet No. 4
III.

Andante ♪ = 80 ***Tranquillo***

Frank Stemper (2026)



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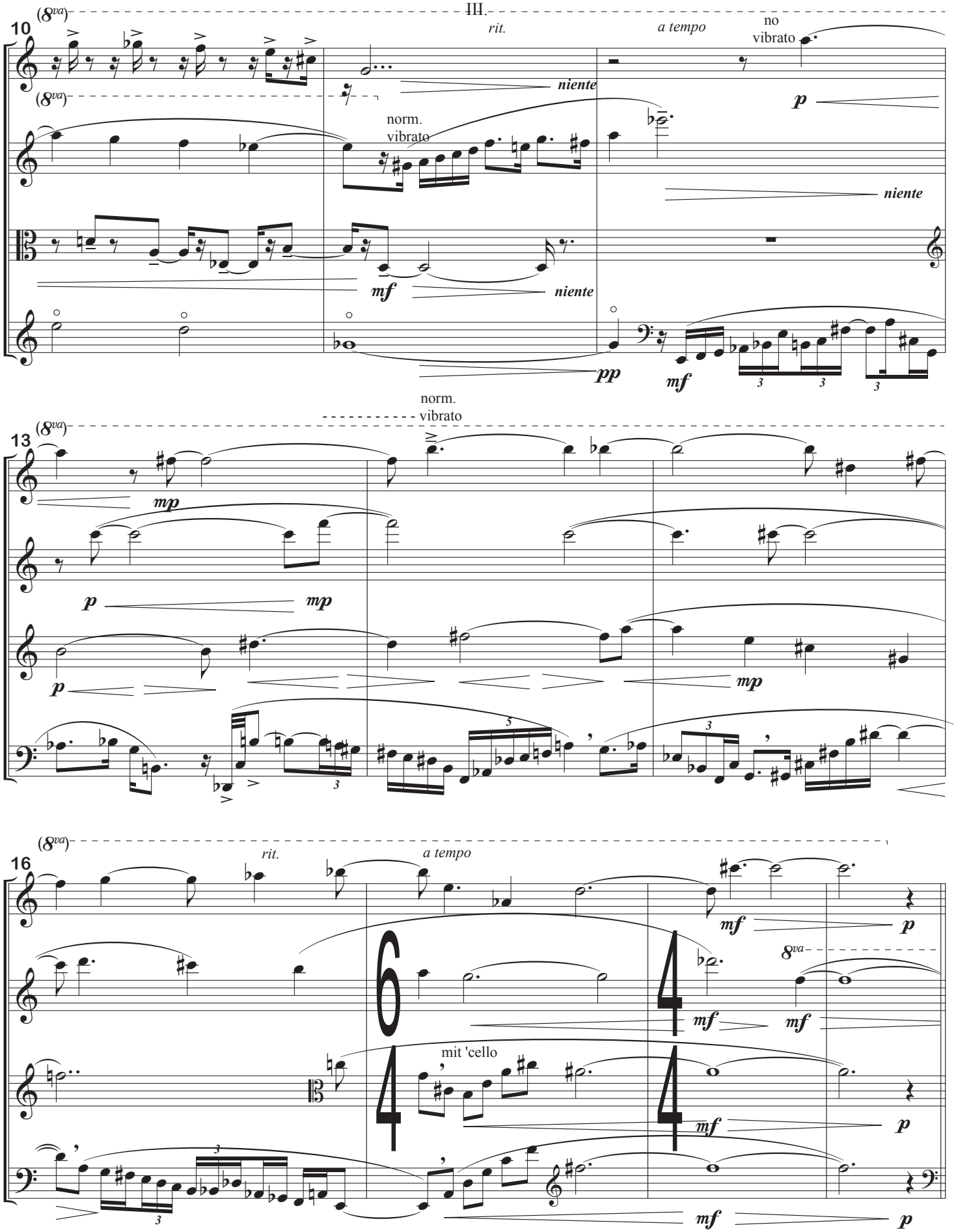
III.


10
(8va)
rit.
a tempo
no vibrato
niente
p
norm. vibrato
niente
mf
niente
pp
mf
13
(8va)
norm. vibrato
mp
p
mp
p
mp
16
(8va)
rit.
a tempo
mf
p
8va
mf
mf
mit 'cello
mf
p
mf
p

Serene ♪ = ♪

20

p

(8va)

mp *tentative - vorläufig*

p *tentative - vorläufig*

p *tentative - vorläufig*

reponding to violin 2

23

(8va)

mf

mf

loco

p *tentative - vorläufig*

molto ritard - - - - - -

25

a tempo

f

ff subito

f

ff subito

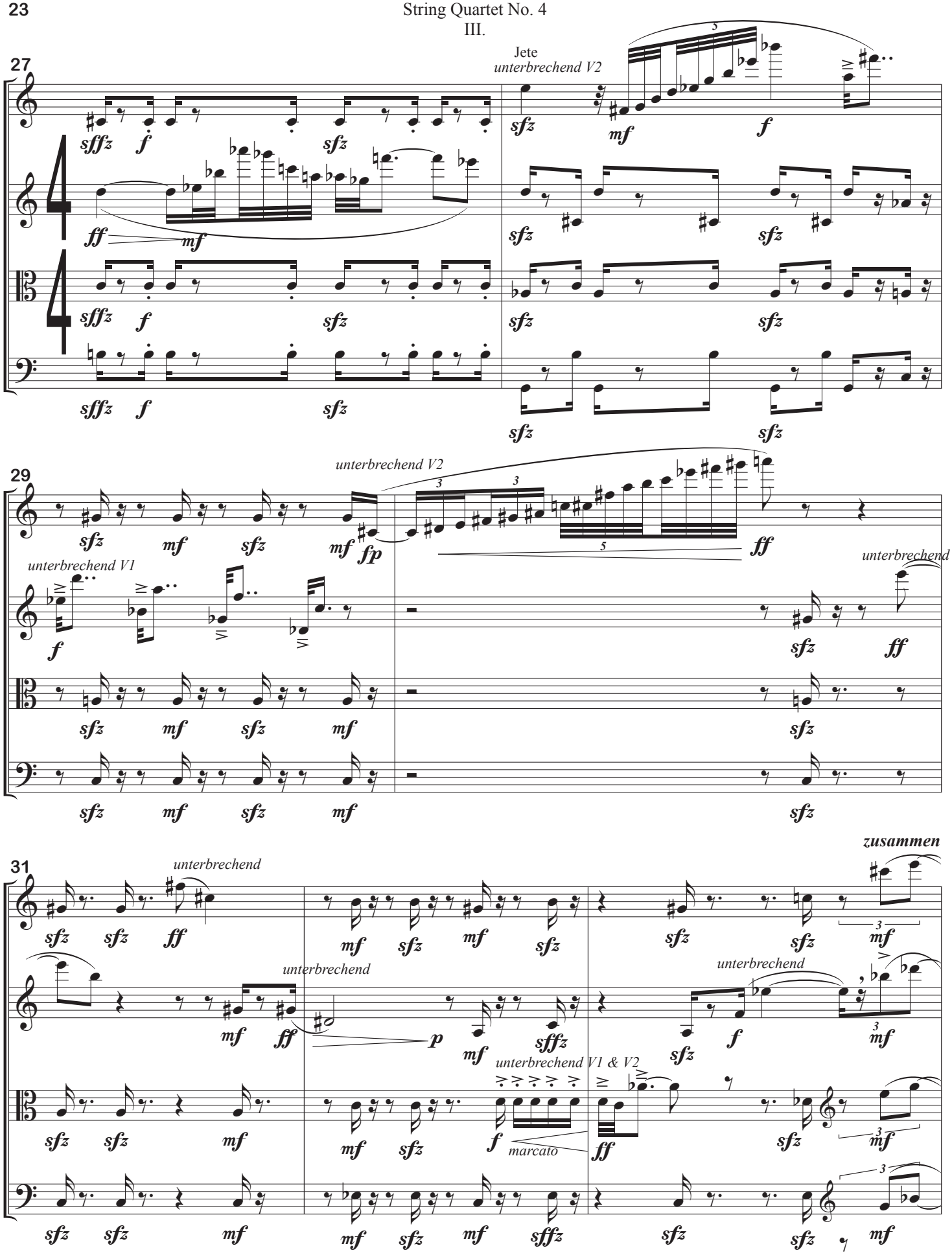
f

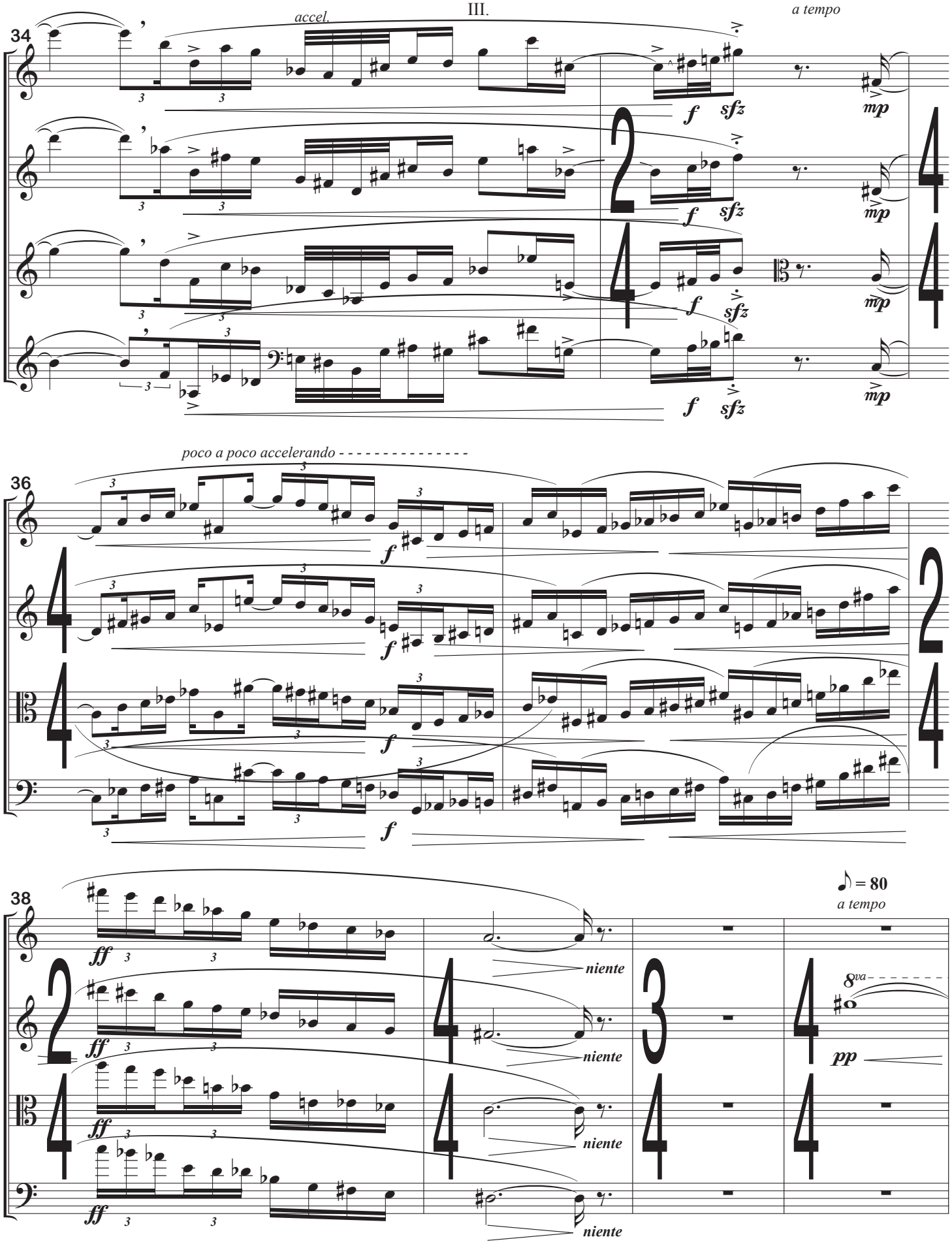
ff subito

f

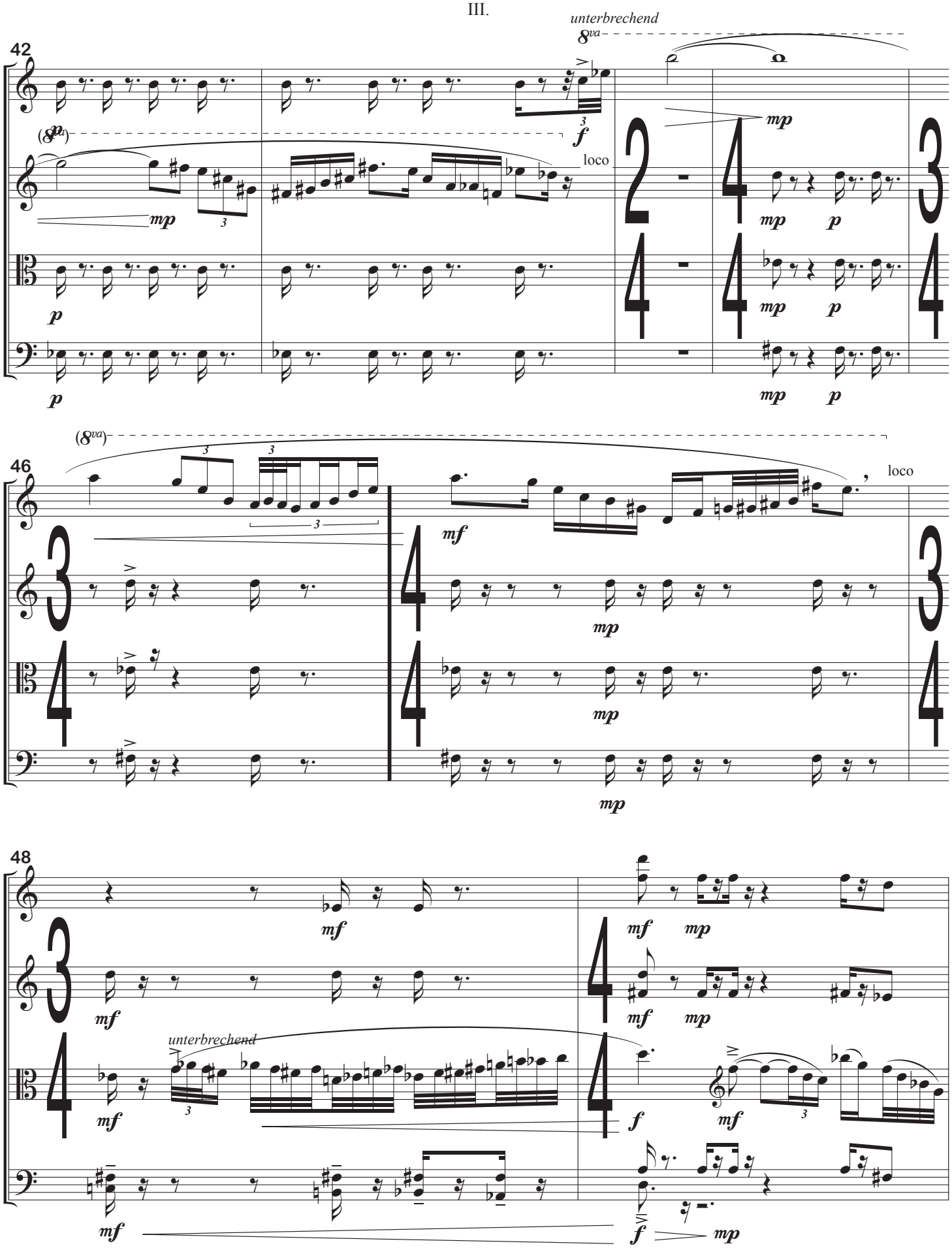
ff subito

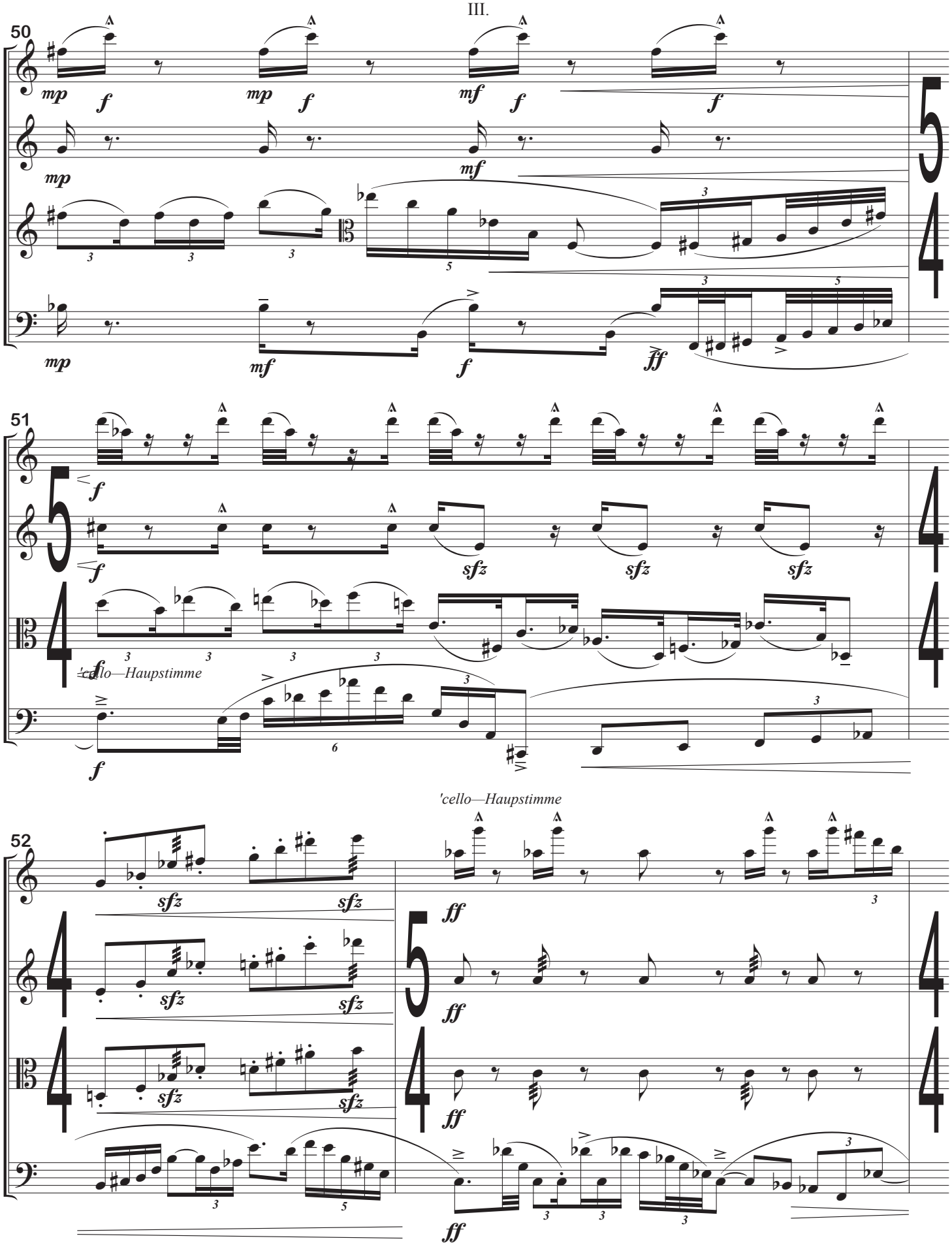
String Quartet No. 4
III.

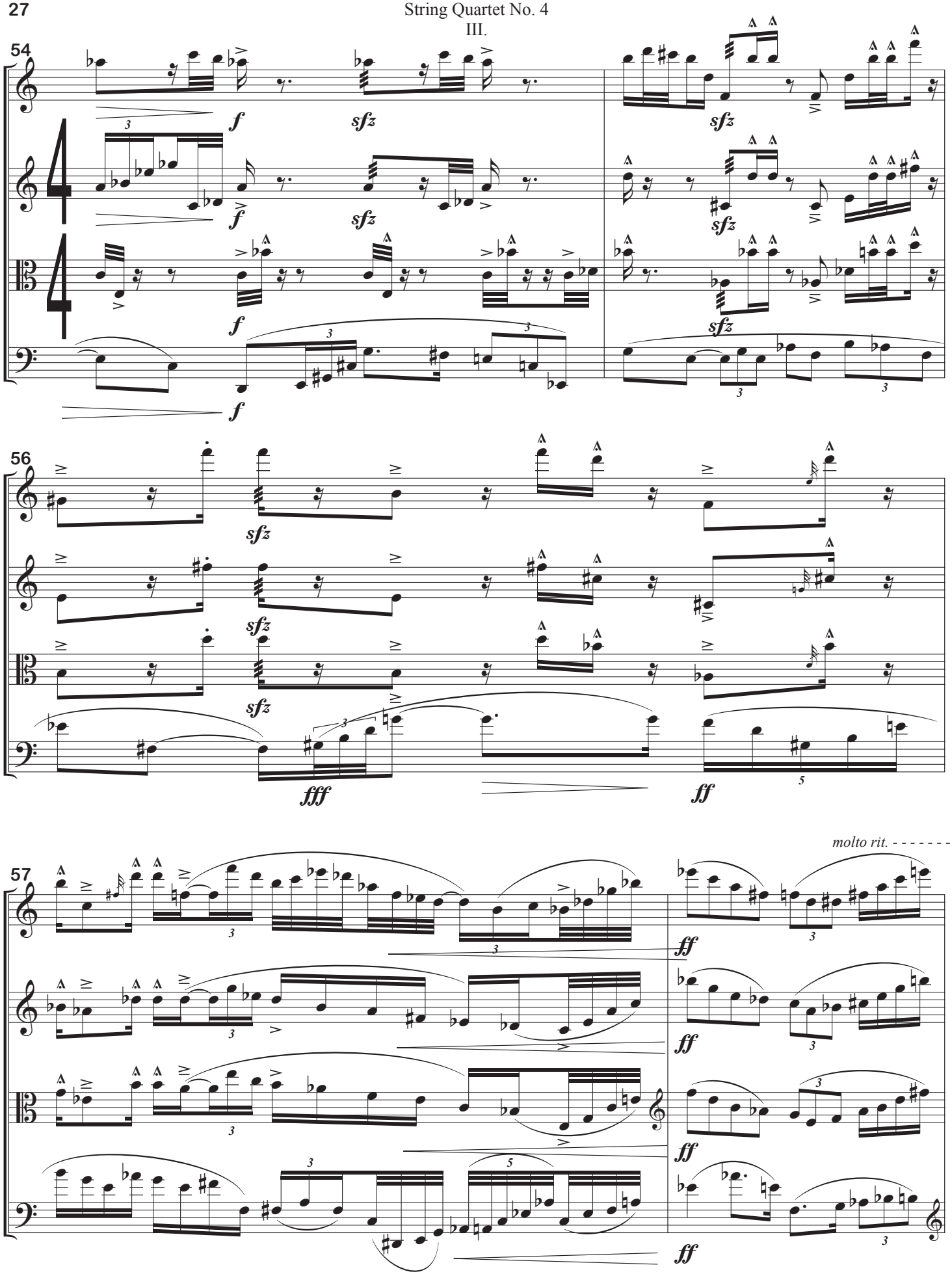


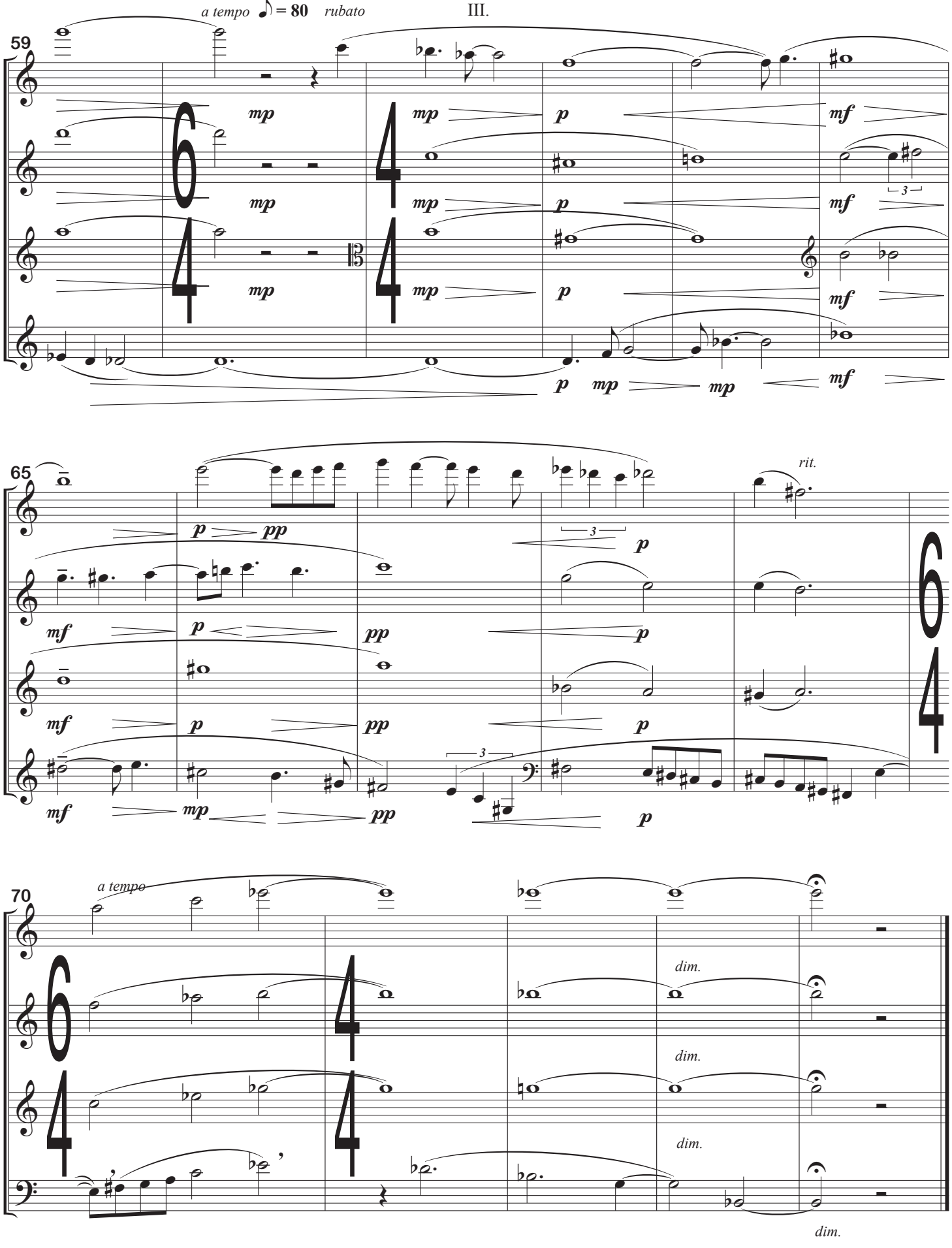

34
accel.
a tempo
f
sfz
mp
36
poco a poco accelerando - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
f
38
ff
niente
8va
pp
♪ = 80
a tempo

String Quartet No. 4
III.



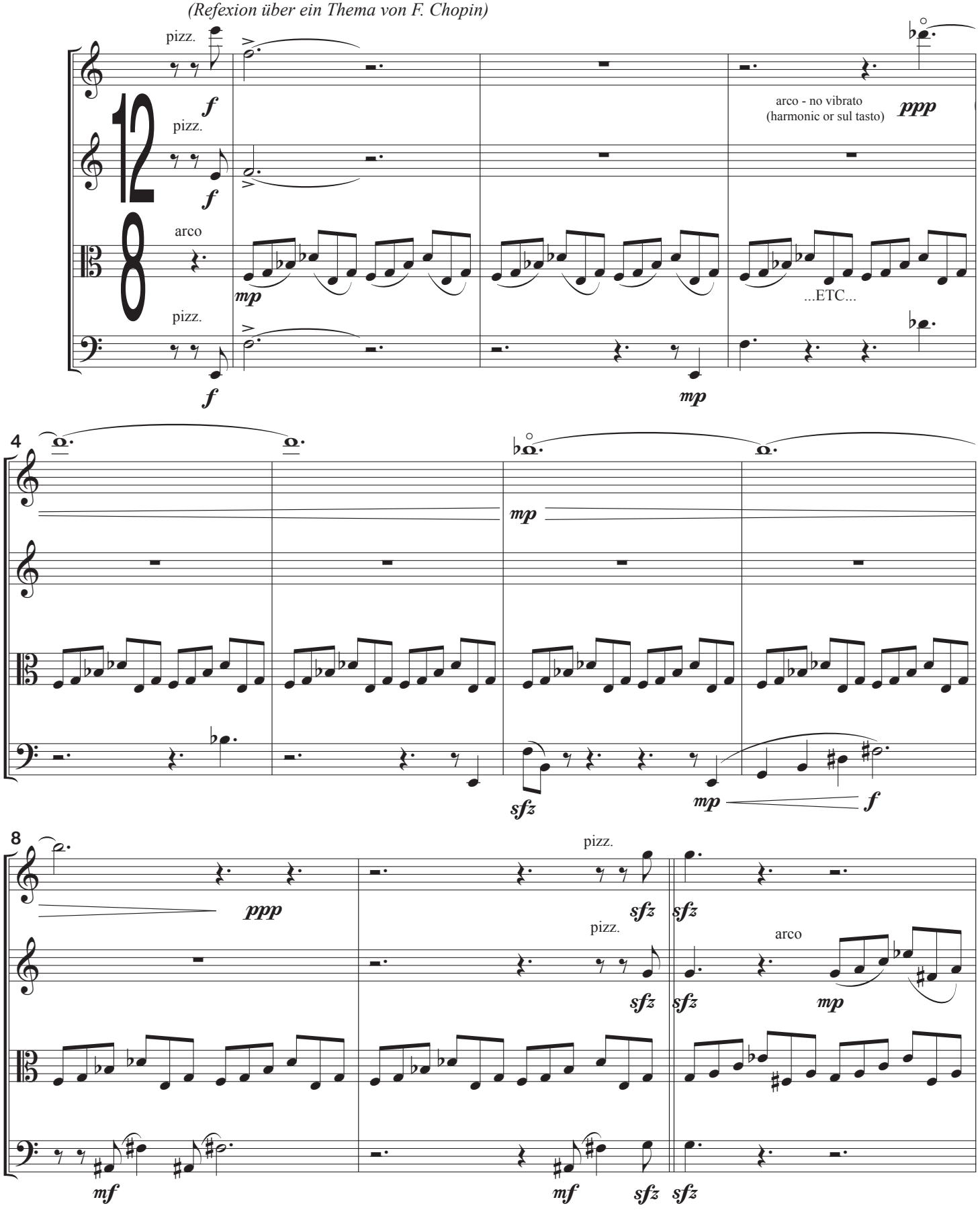

50
mp
f
mp
f
mf
f
f
mp
mf
mp
mf
f
ff
51
f
f
sfz
sfz
sfz
f
'cello—Haupstimme
f
'cello—Haupstimme
52
sfz
sfz
ff
sfz
sfz
ff
sfz
sfz
ff
ff


54
f
sfz
56
fff
ff
molto rit.
57


a tempo ♪ = 80 rubato
59
mp
p
mf
65
rit.
pp
70
a tempo
dim.

String Quartet No. 4
IV.

Frank Stemper (2026)



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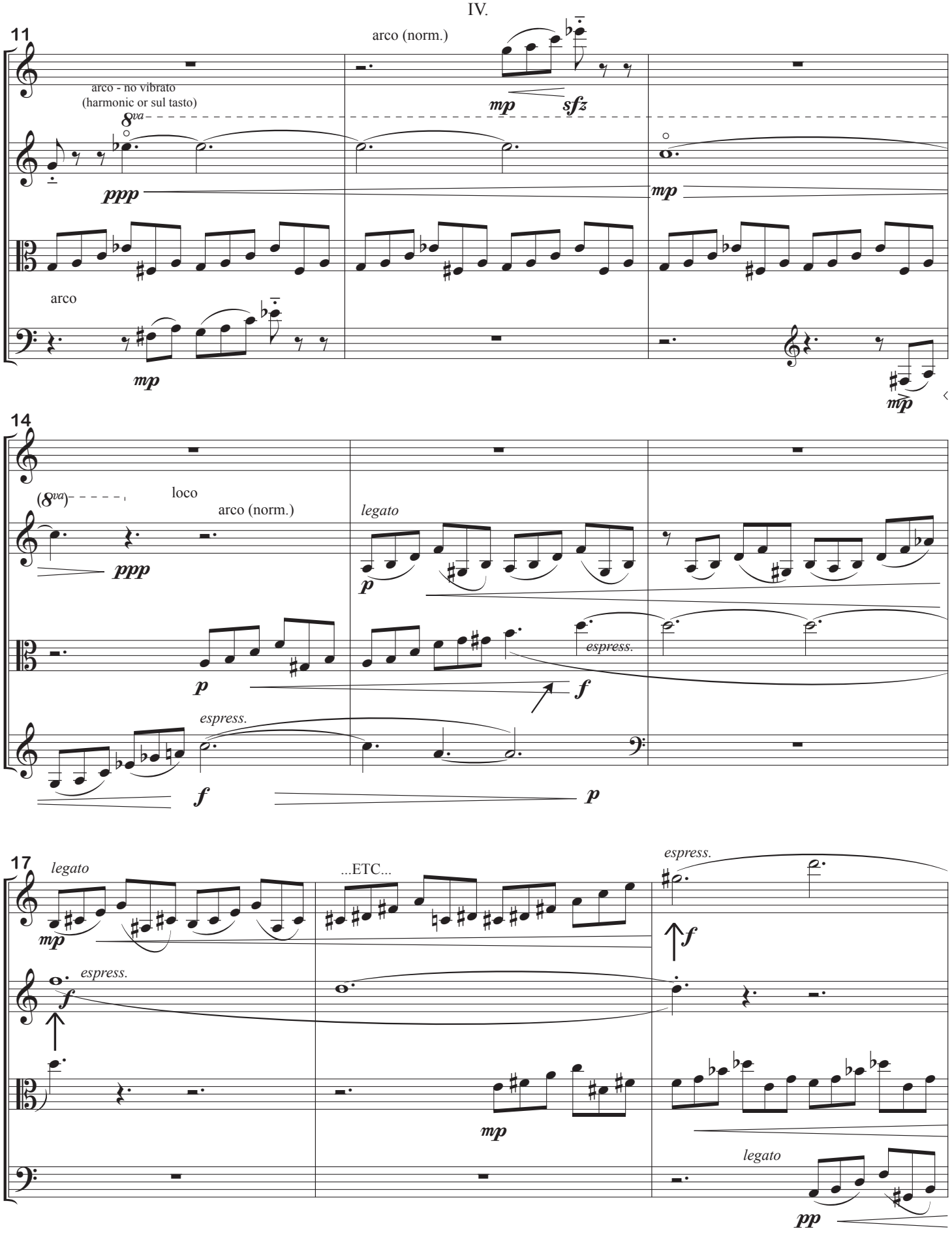
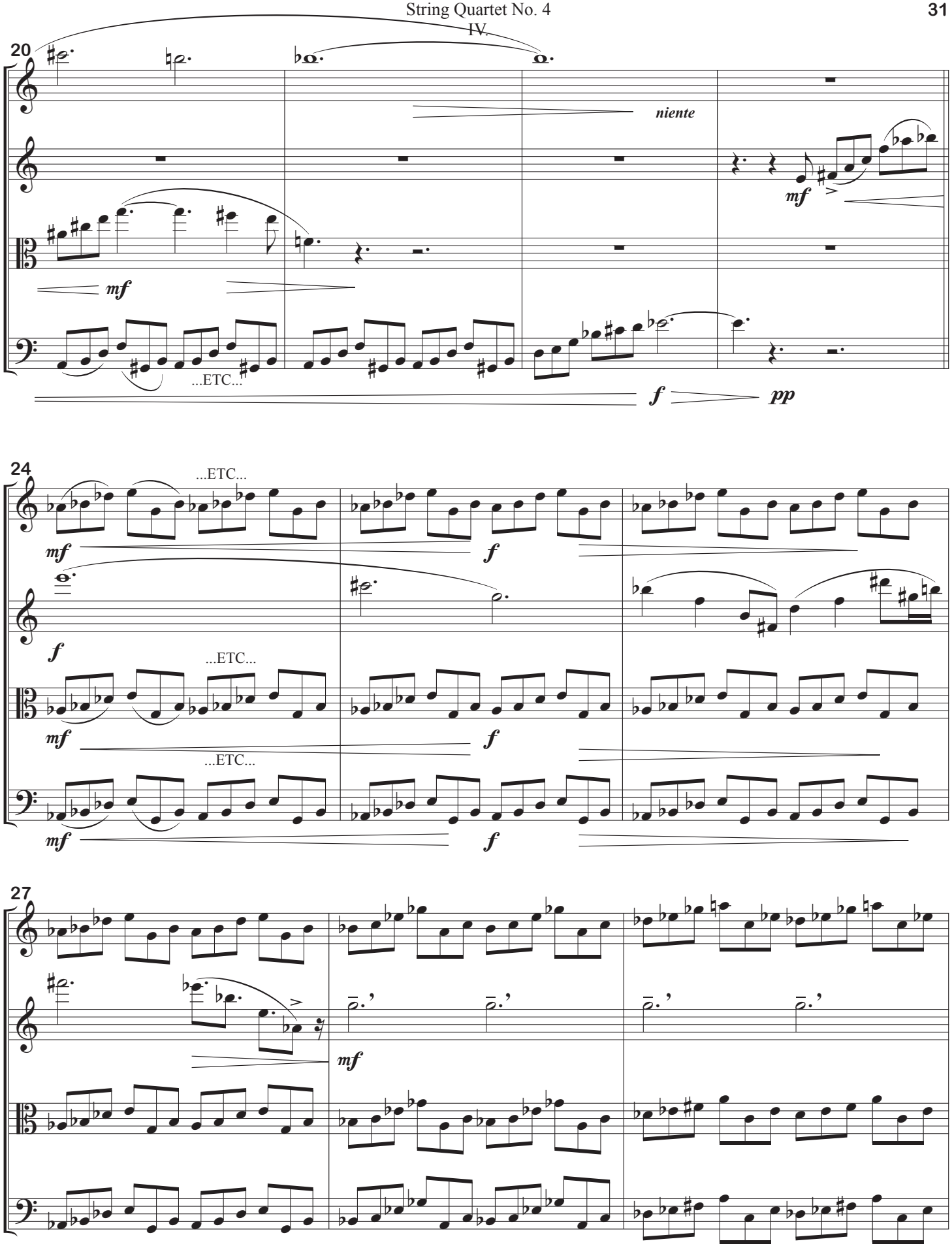
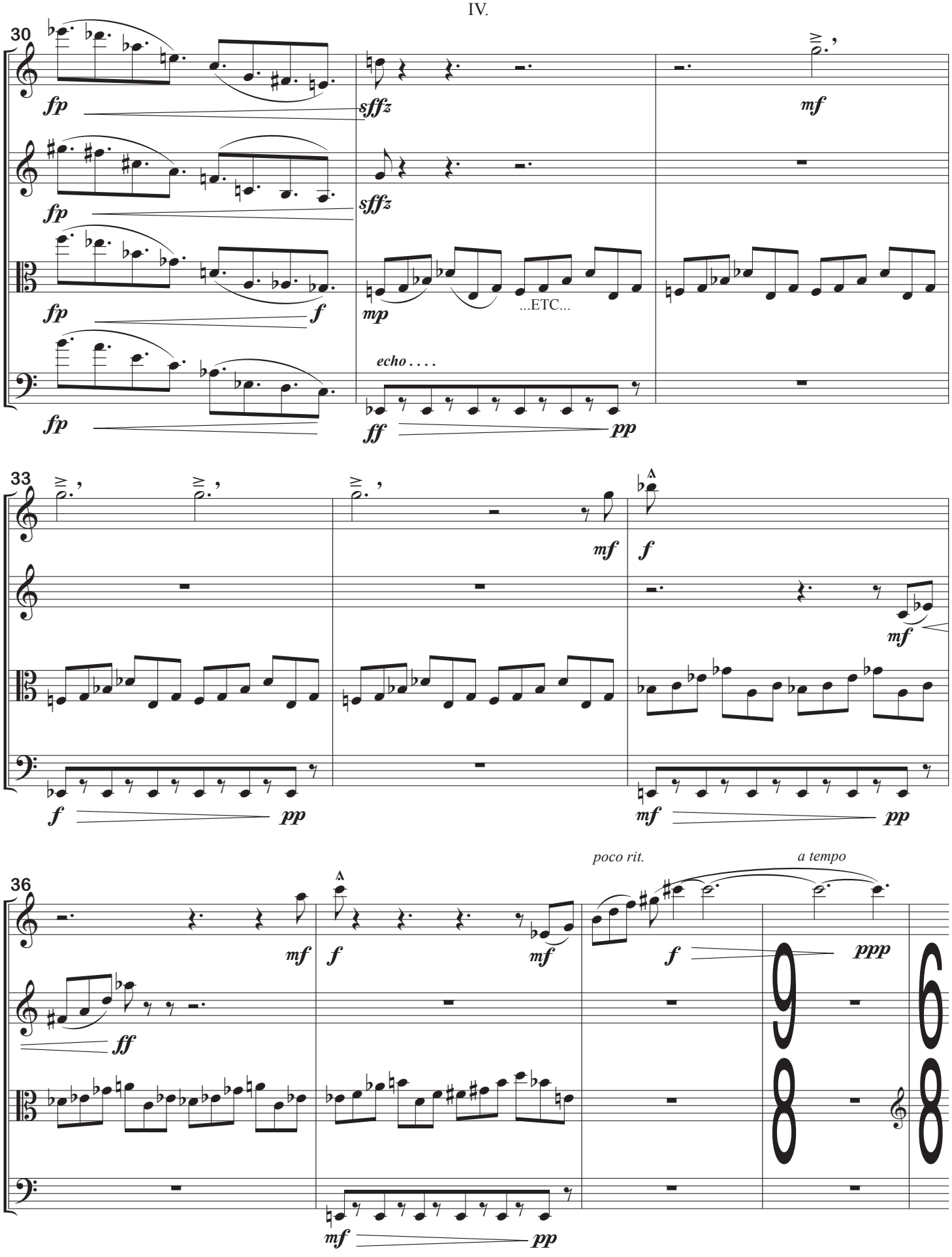
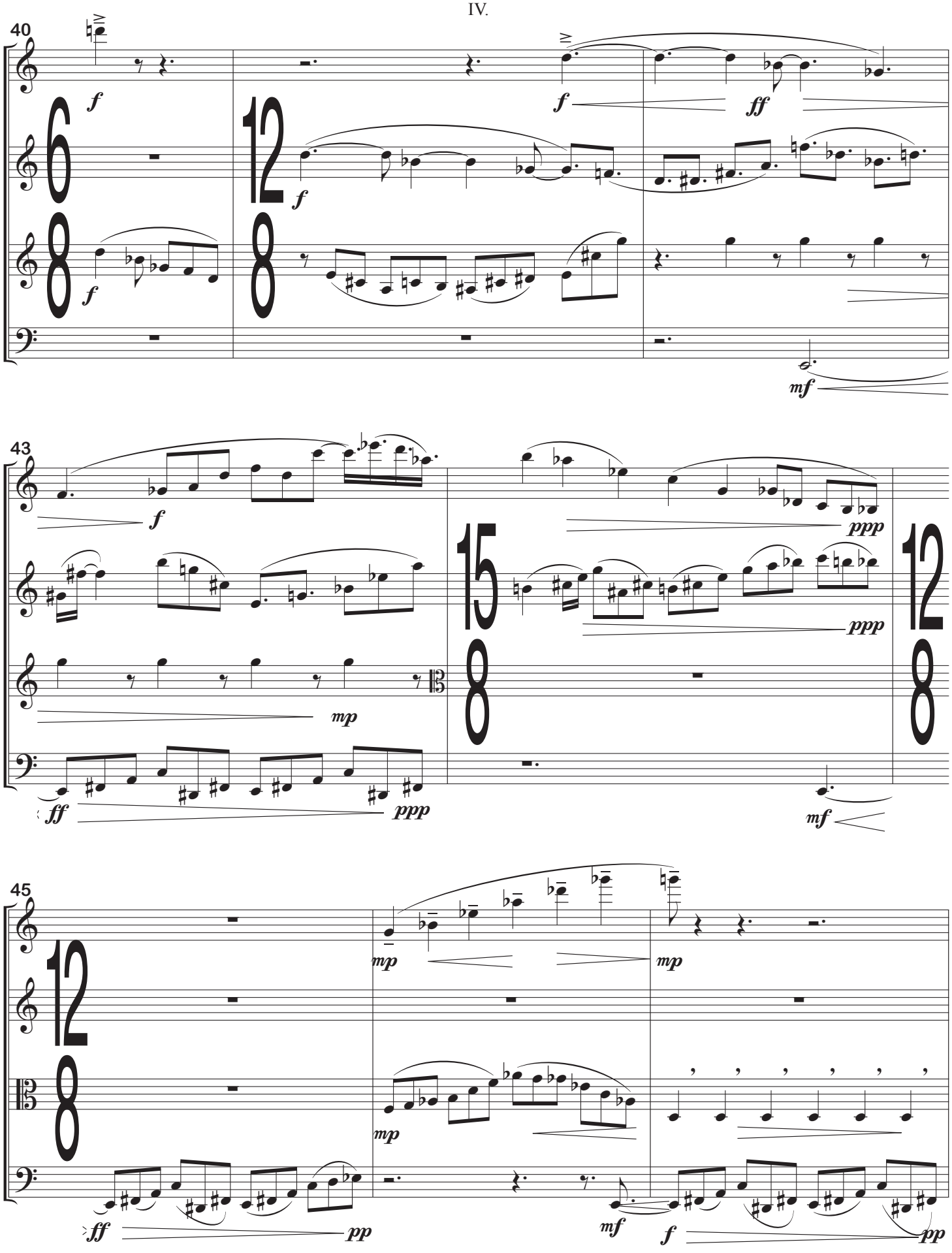
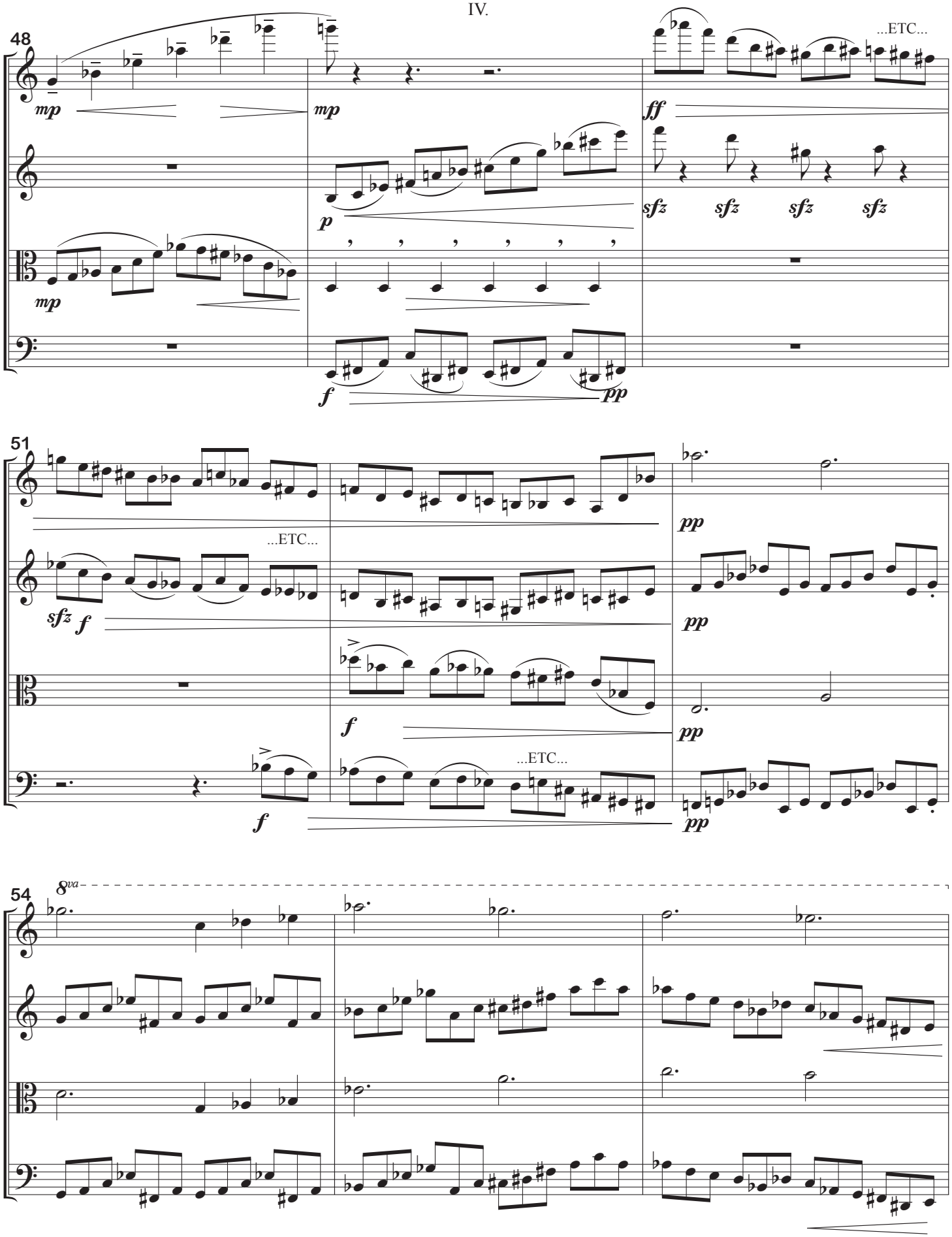
String Quartet No. 4
IV.

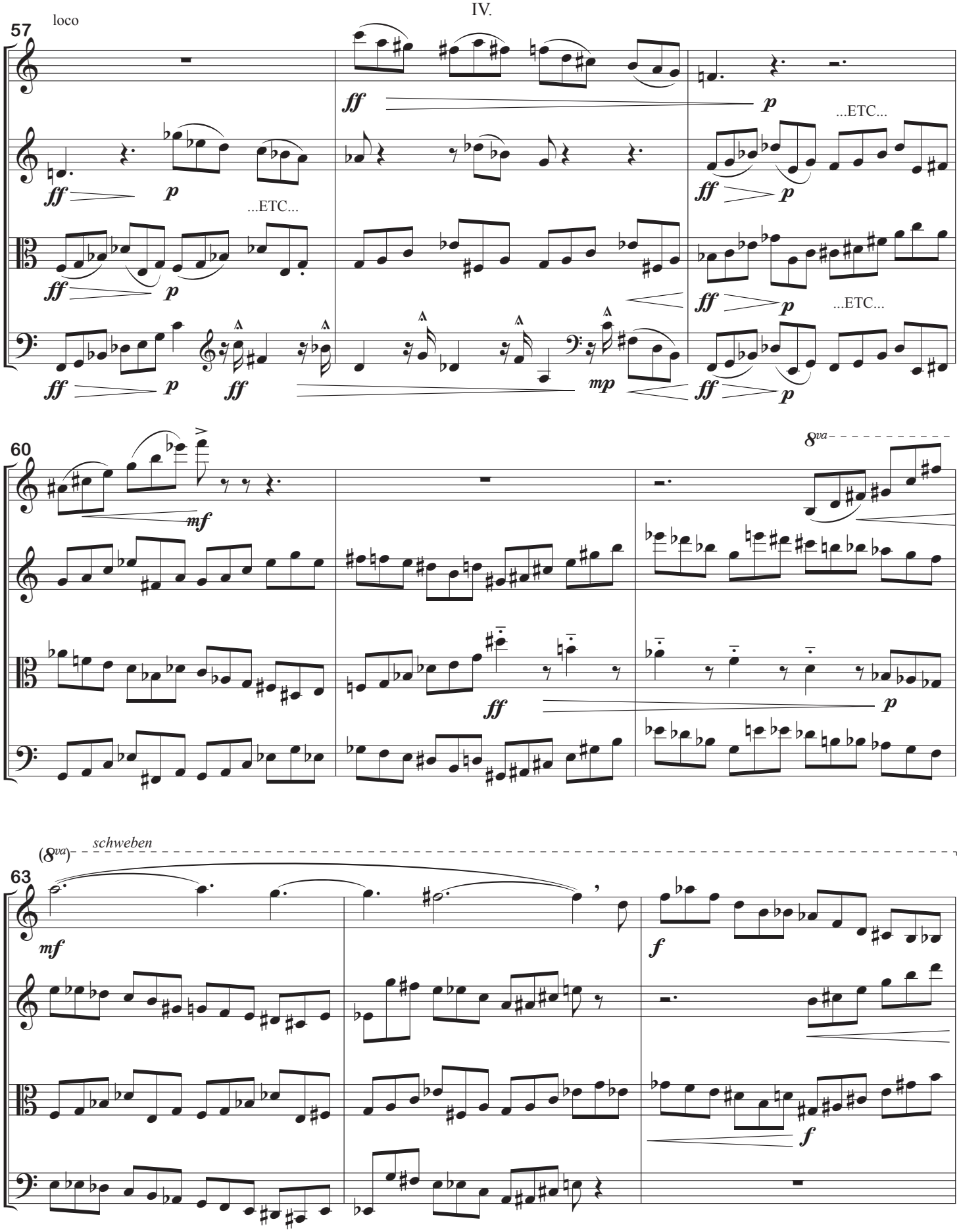


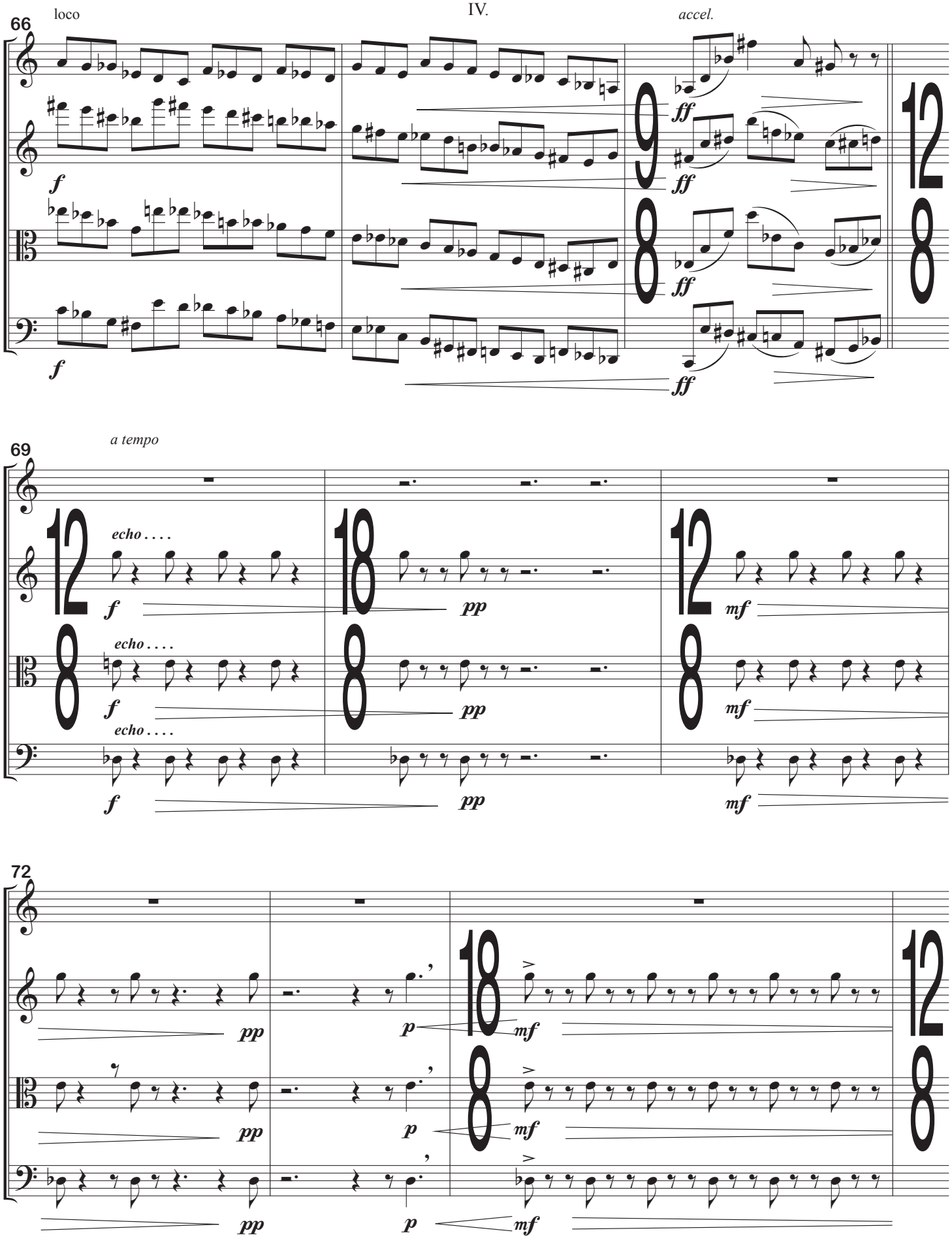

20
niente
mf
mf
...ETC...
f
pp
24
...ETC...
mf
f
f
...ETC...
mf
f
...ETC...
mf
f
27
mf

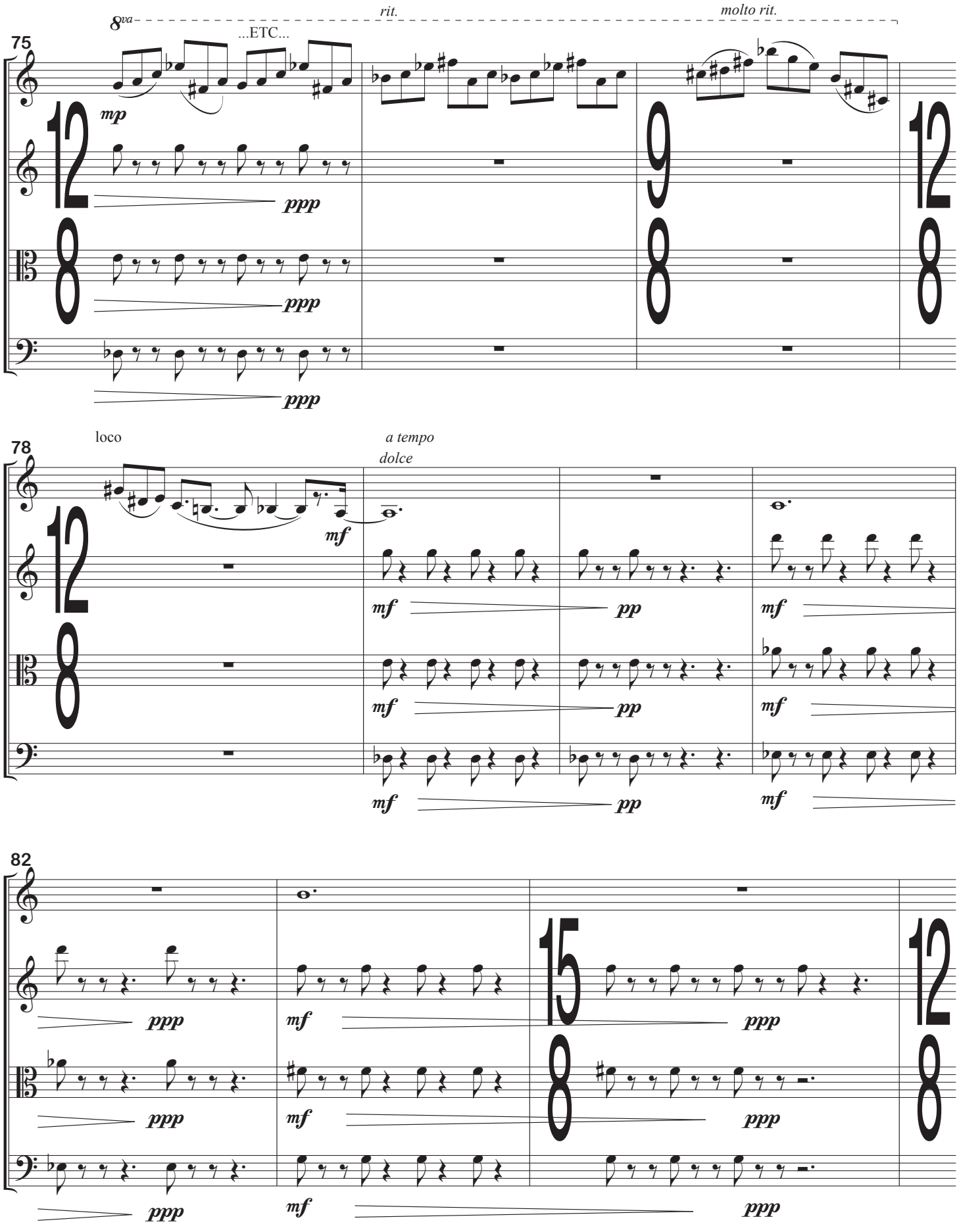

30
fp
sffz
mf
fp
sffz
fp
f
mp
...ETC...
echo . . . .
fp
ff
pp
33
mf
f
f
pp
mf
mf
pp
36
poco rit.
a tempo
mf
f
mf
f
ppp
ff
mf
pp


40
f
f
ff
f
mf
43
f
ppp
ppp
mp
ff
ppp
mf
45
mp
mp
mp
ff
pp
mf
f
pp

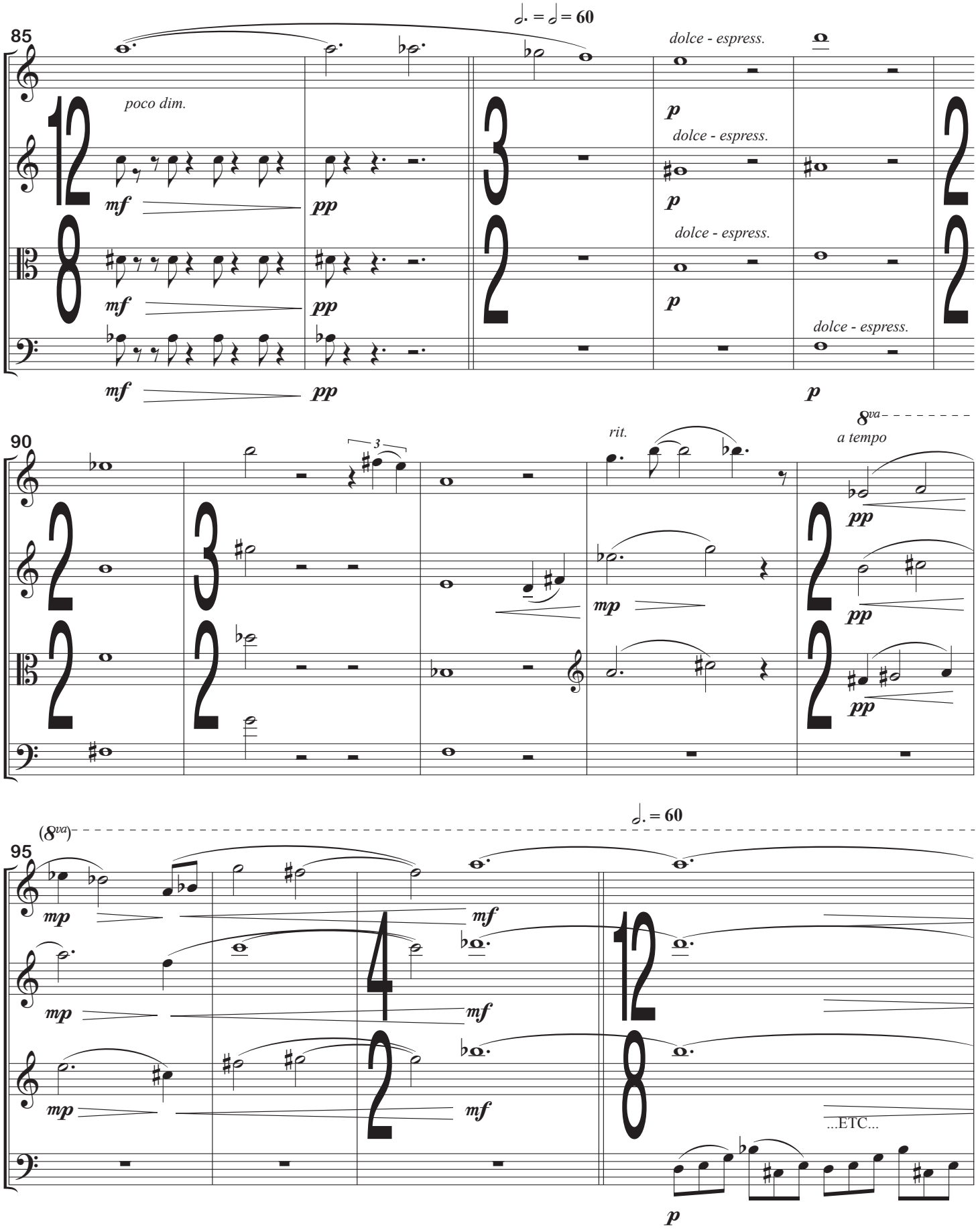

48
mp
mp
...ETC...
ff
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
p
mp
f
pp
51
...ETC...
sfz
f
pp
pp
f
pp
...ETC...
f
pp
54
8va

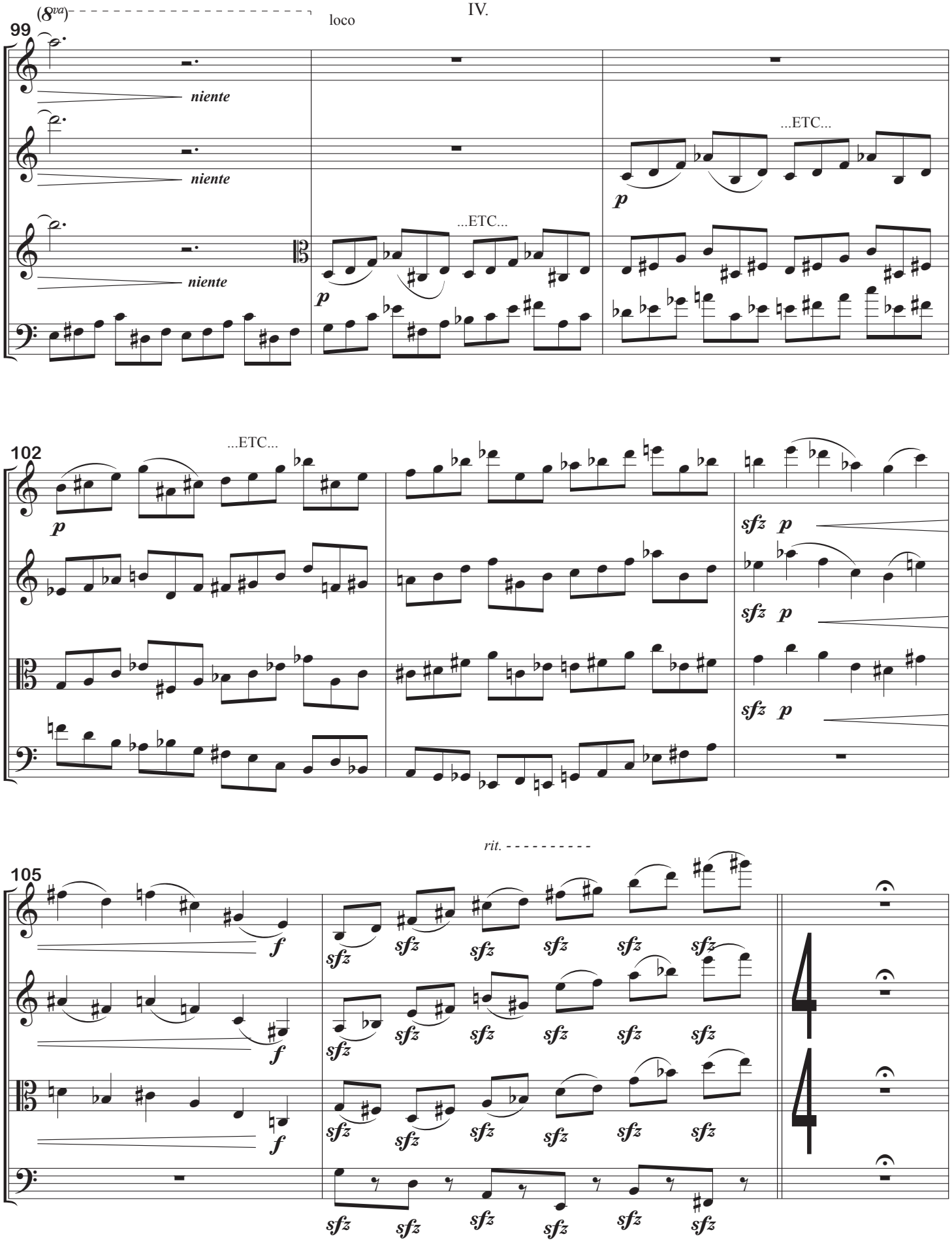

57
loco
ff
p
...ETC...
mp
60
mf
8va
63
(8va)
schweben
f


66
loco
accel.
f
ff
69
a tempo
echo . . . .
pp
mf
72
p

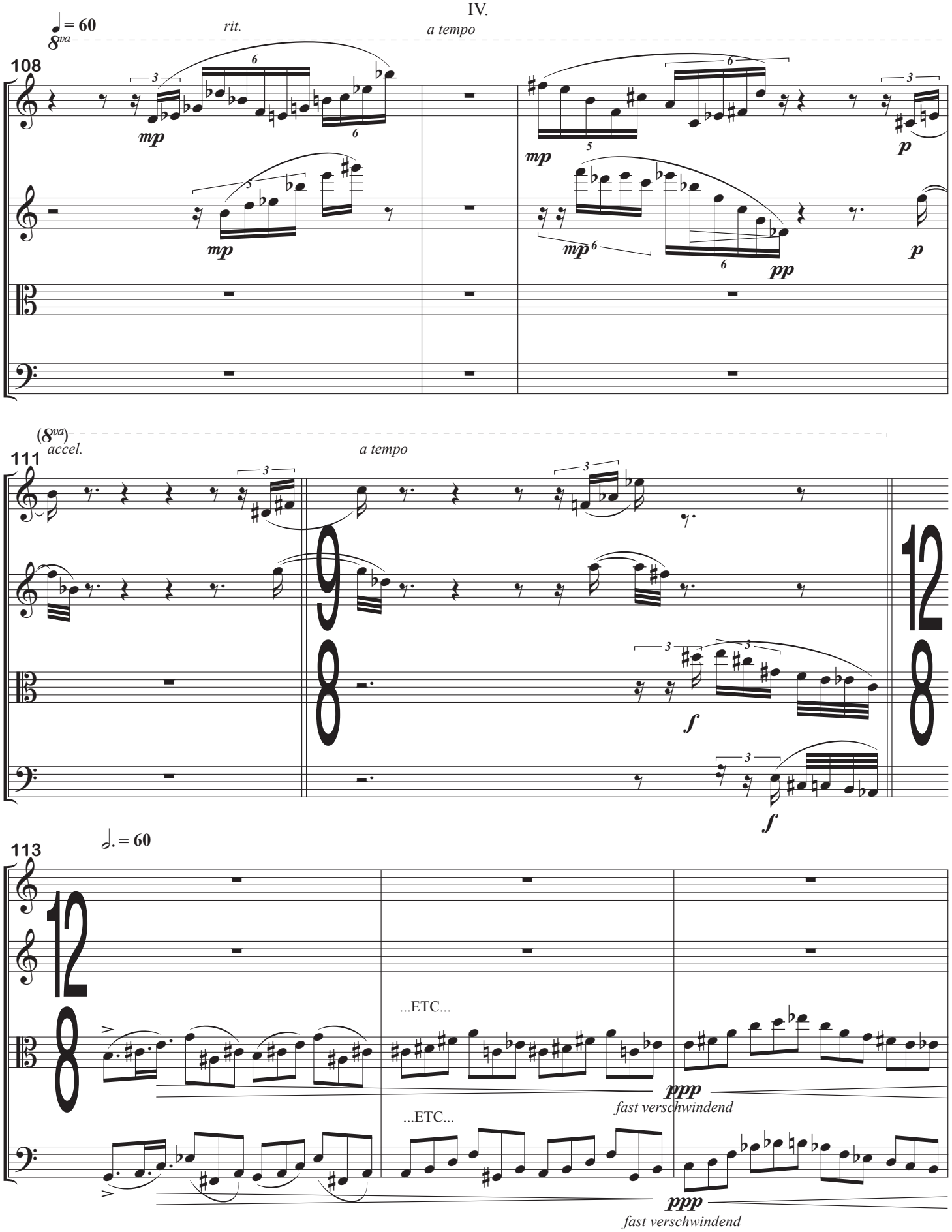

75
8va
...ETC...
rit.
molto rit.
mp
ppp
78
loco
a tempo
dolce
mf
pp
82
15

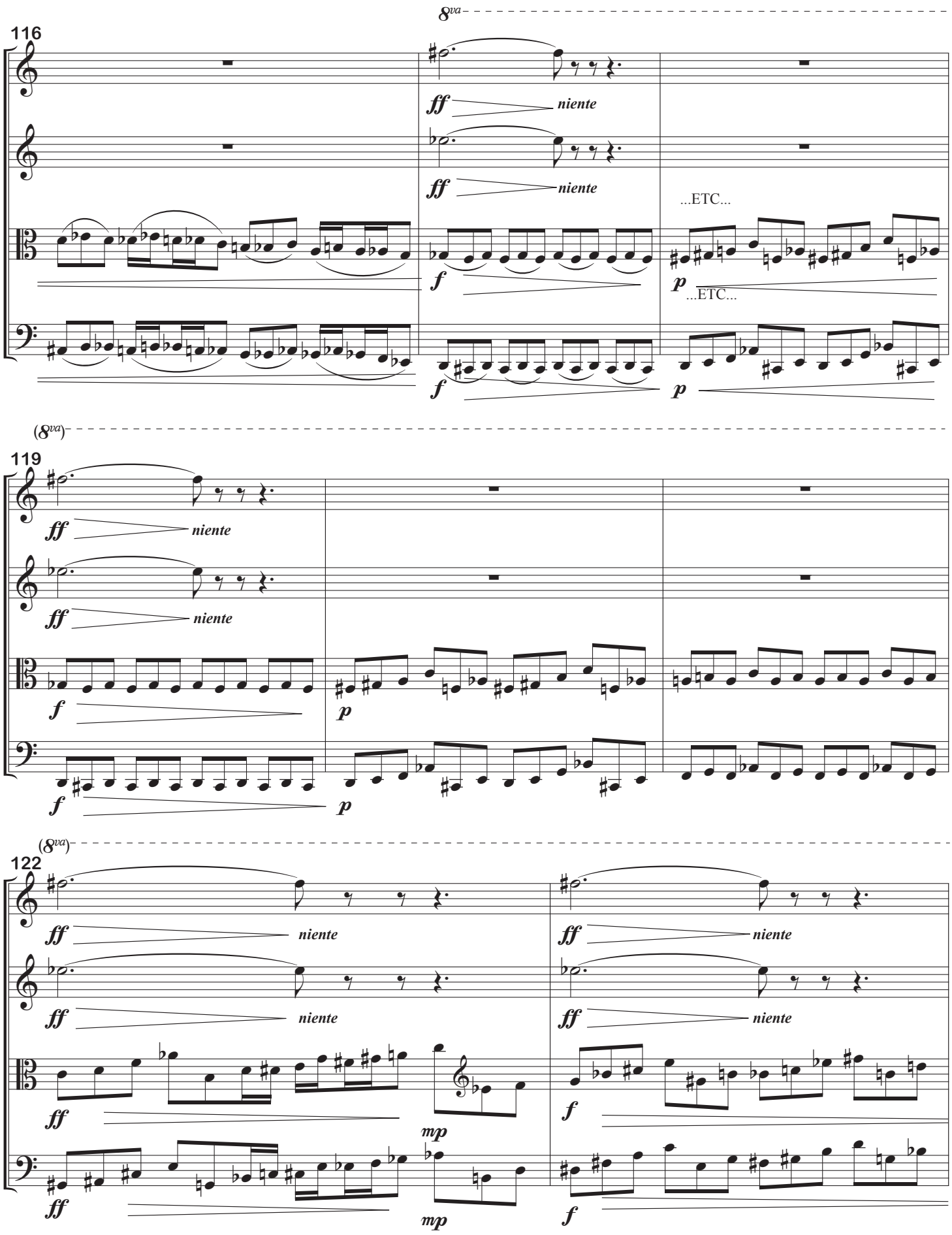
String Quartet No. 4
IV.



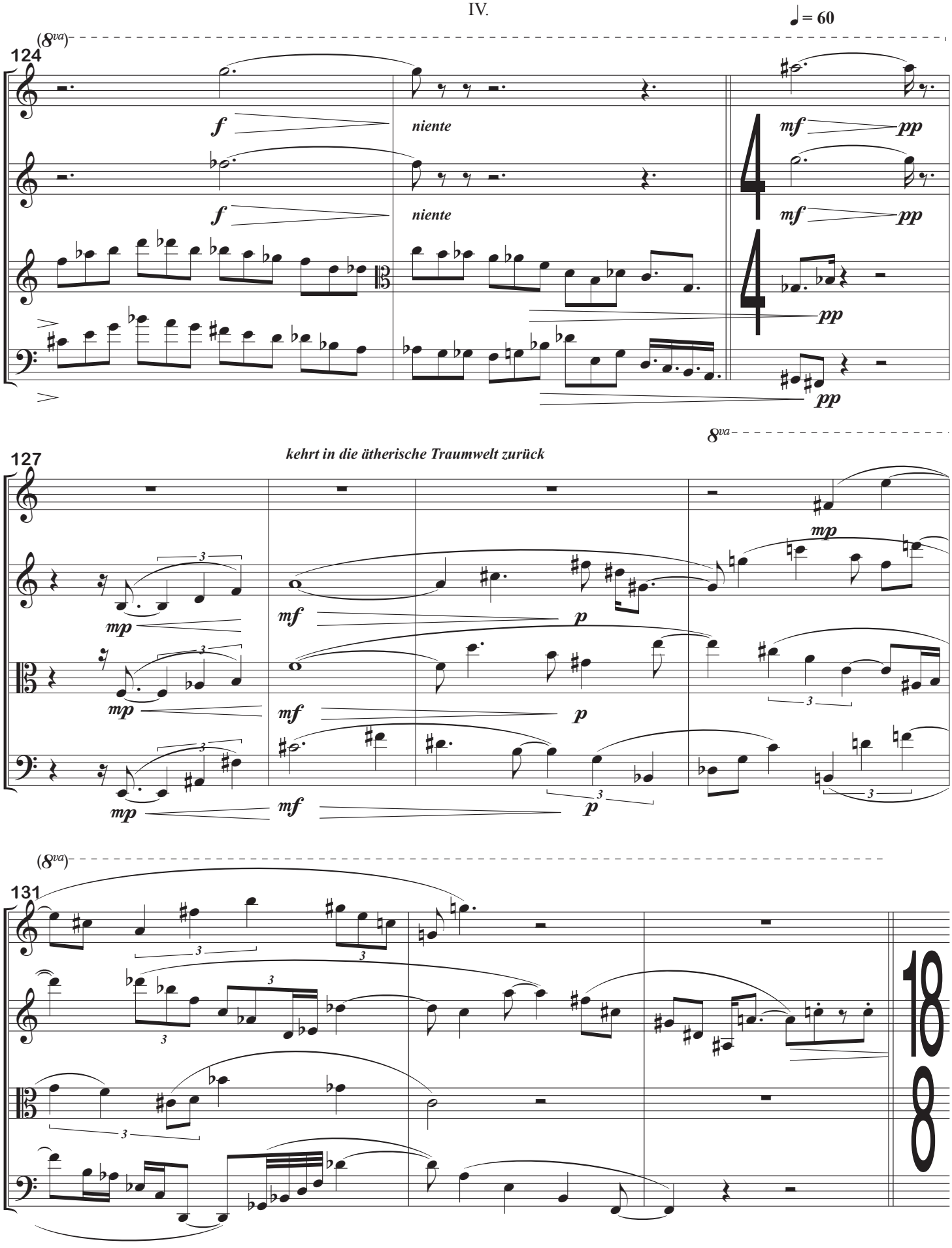

(8va)
loco
99
niente
niente
niente
...ETC...
...ETC...
p
p
102
...ETC...
p
sfz p
sfz p
sfz p
rit.
105
f
f
f
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz

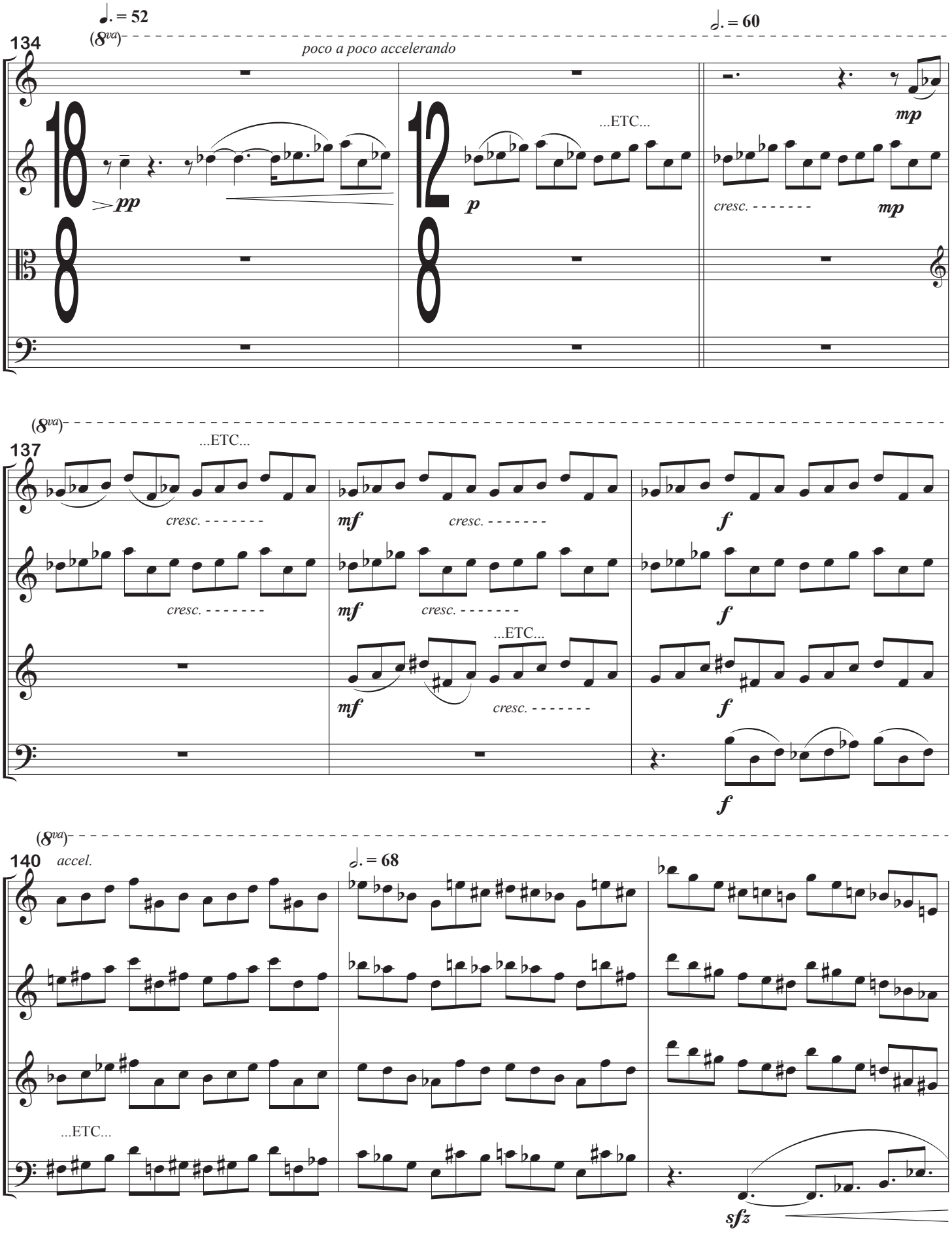
String Quartet No. 4
IV.

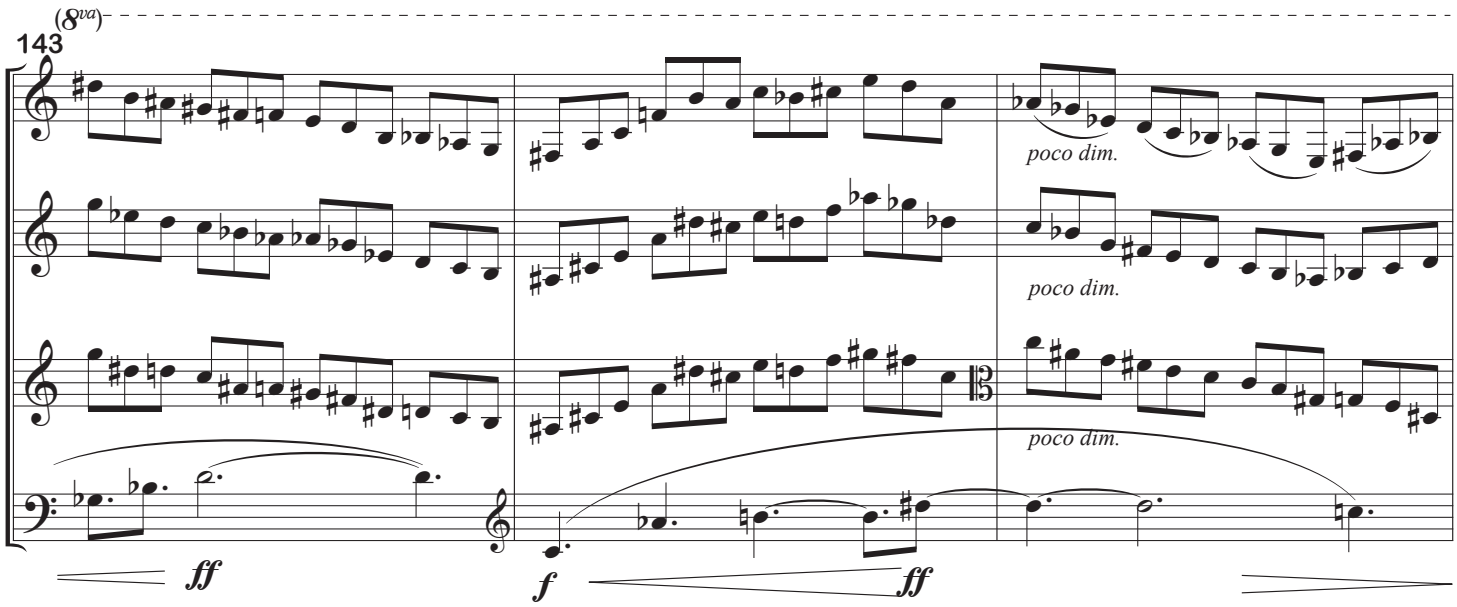



116
8va
ff
niente
ff
niente
...ETC...
f
p
...ETC...
f
p
(8va)
119
ff
niente
ff
niente
f
p
f
p
(8va)
122
ff
niente
ff
niente
ff
niente
ff
niente
mp
f
ff
mp
f

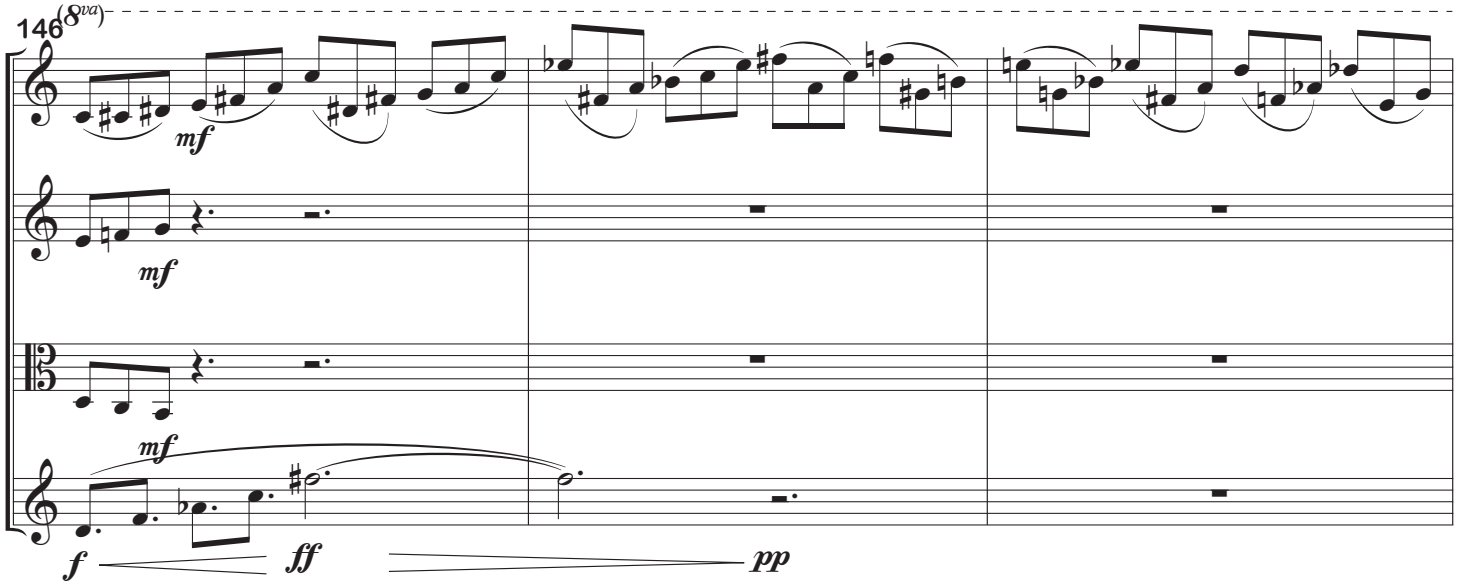
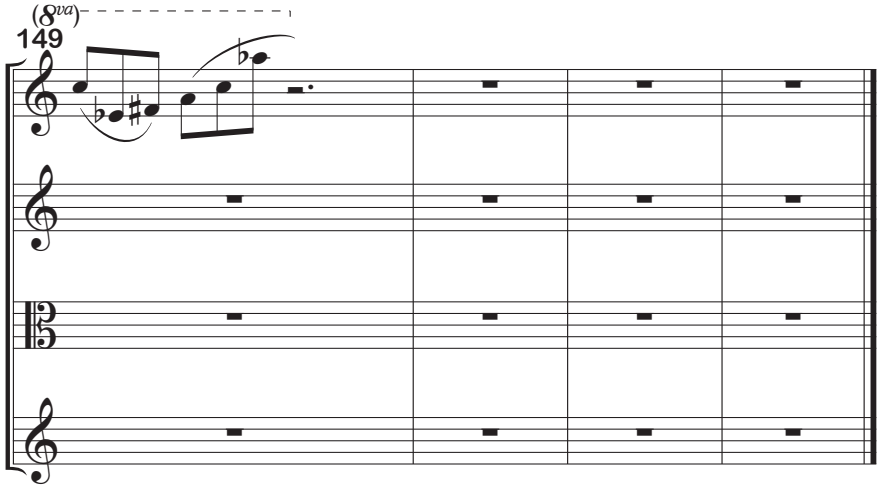
String Quartet No. 4
IV.




134
(8va)
♩. = 52
poco a poco accelerando
pp
...ETC...
p
♩. = 60
mp
cresc. - - - - - - -
mp
137
(8va)
...ETC...
cresc. - - - - - - -
mf
cresc. - - - - - - -
f
cresc. - - - - - - -
mf
cresc. - - - - - - -
f
...ETC...
mf
cresc. - - - - - - -
f
f
140
(8va)
accel.
♩. = 68
...ETC...
sfz



ohne Ritardando oder Diminuendo –



– die Musik hört einfach auf.