SAM NICHOLS

Refuge

for string quartet

2009

program note

When I started to work on this piece, the only thing I knew was that I really didn't want to write a fugue (that was settled right from the start: no fugue). The Left Coast Chamber Ensemble had asked me to write a companion piece to Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge,* and although I was very excited to begin work on this project, I also felt a bit hesitant to follow in Beethoven's footsteps. (Not to mention the footsteps of some other fugue-makers, such as Bach, or Bartòk.) So, I started to follow my nose down a slightly different path. While *Refuge* does imitate some of the quirkier aspects of the *Grosse Fuge* (I'm always especially fascinated by the first measures of that piece: the dramatic changes of mood and tempo, the subtle connections between contrasting ideas), my piece isn't built up contrapuntally. In fact, large parts of the piece don't have much traditional counterpoint at all. Instead, there's often a sort of blurred, out-of-focus unison line that's been twisted and tweaked. The four instruments are sometimes playing the same tune, but are ornamenting it differently, or are playing it in slightly different note values. This results in a rough sort of do-it-yourself canon—anything but strict—where the lines are sometimes piled up very closely, and at other times are separated from each other quite dramatically. *Refuge* is dedicated to the wonderful musicians of the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble.

misc. notes

s.p. = sul ponticello

The square noteheads in mm. 94ff. show the approximate pitch. These pizzicato quadruple stops should be strummed quickly, and with light left hand pressure, making a short, crisp percussive sound.

A capital "S" through a beam indicates scratch-tone: play with heavy bow pressure.

The pitches in the harmonic glissandi are notated freely; individual pitches shouldn't be stressed.

In mm. 204ff., the pitches of the left hand tremolando/harmonic scrubbing can be played in any order, and not necessarily the order I've notated.

In mm. 208ff., the harmonic scrubbing is combined with slow glissandi. The left hand continues to play whatever harmonics the second, third, and fourth fingers can manage to reach, as the glissando continues.

contact/more info

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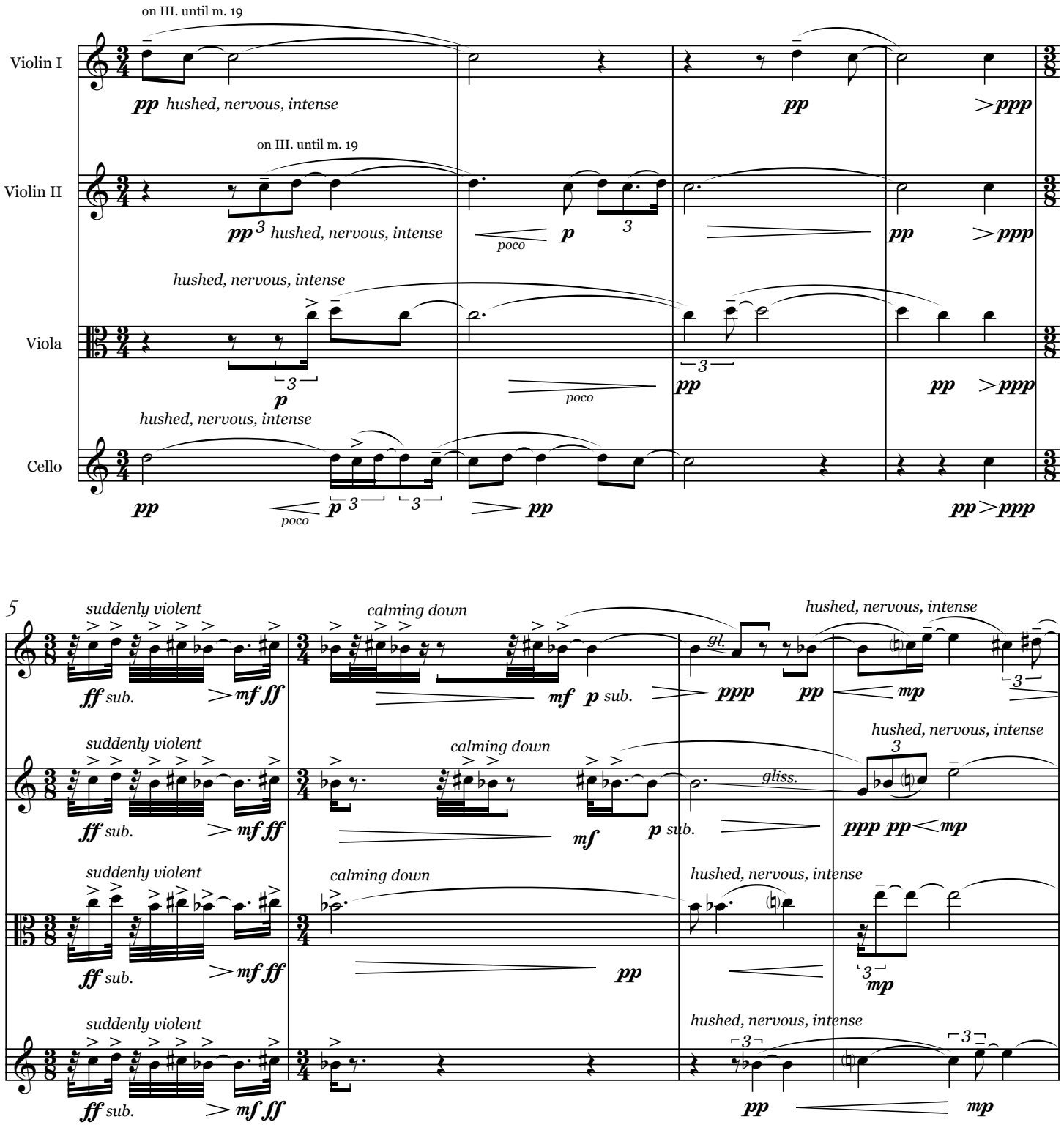
to the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble

Refuge

for string quartet

Sam Nichols
2009

♩ = ca. 88



printed at 11:38 AM on 1/12/11

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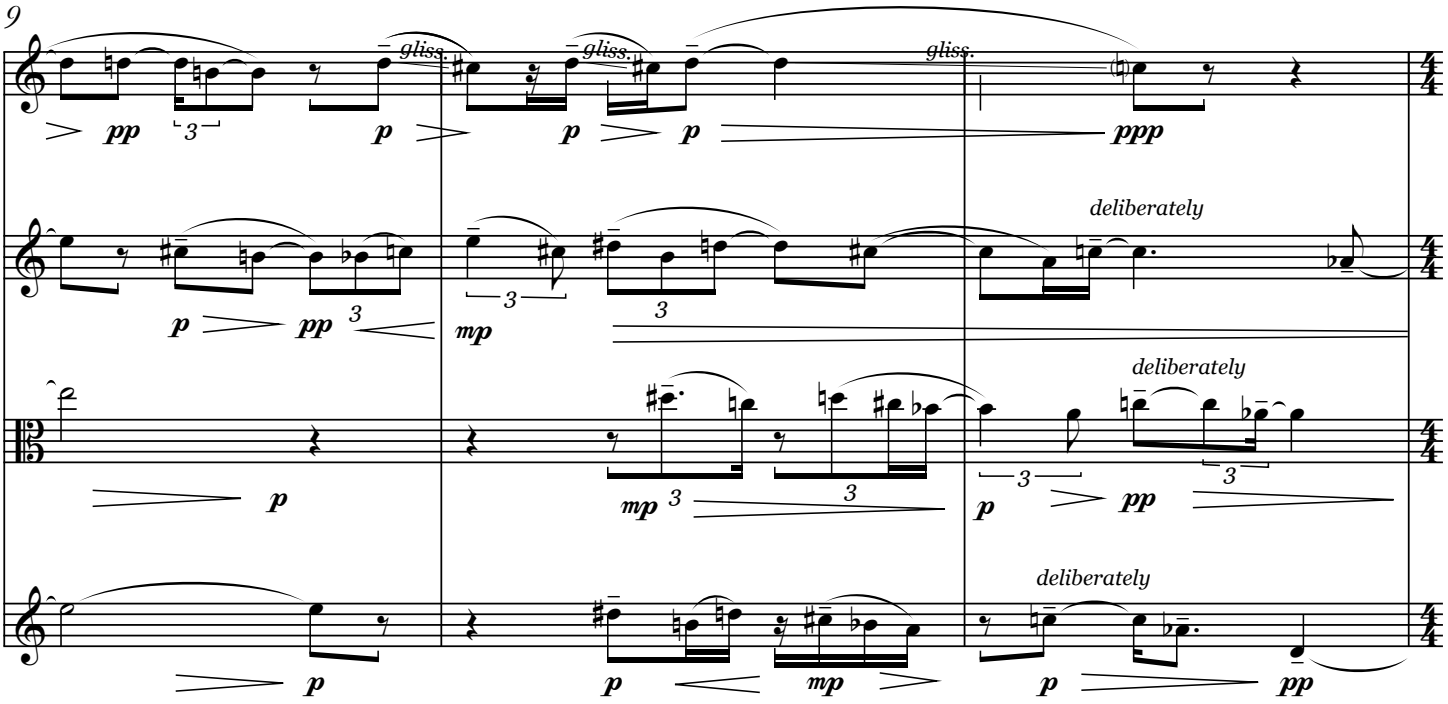
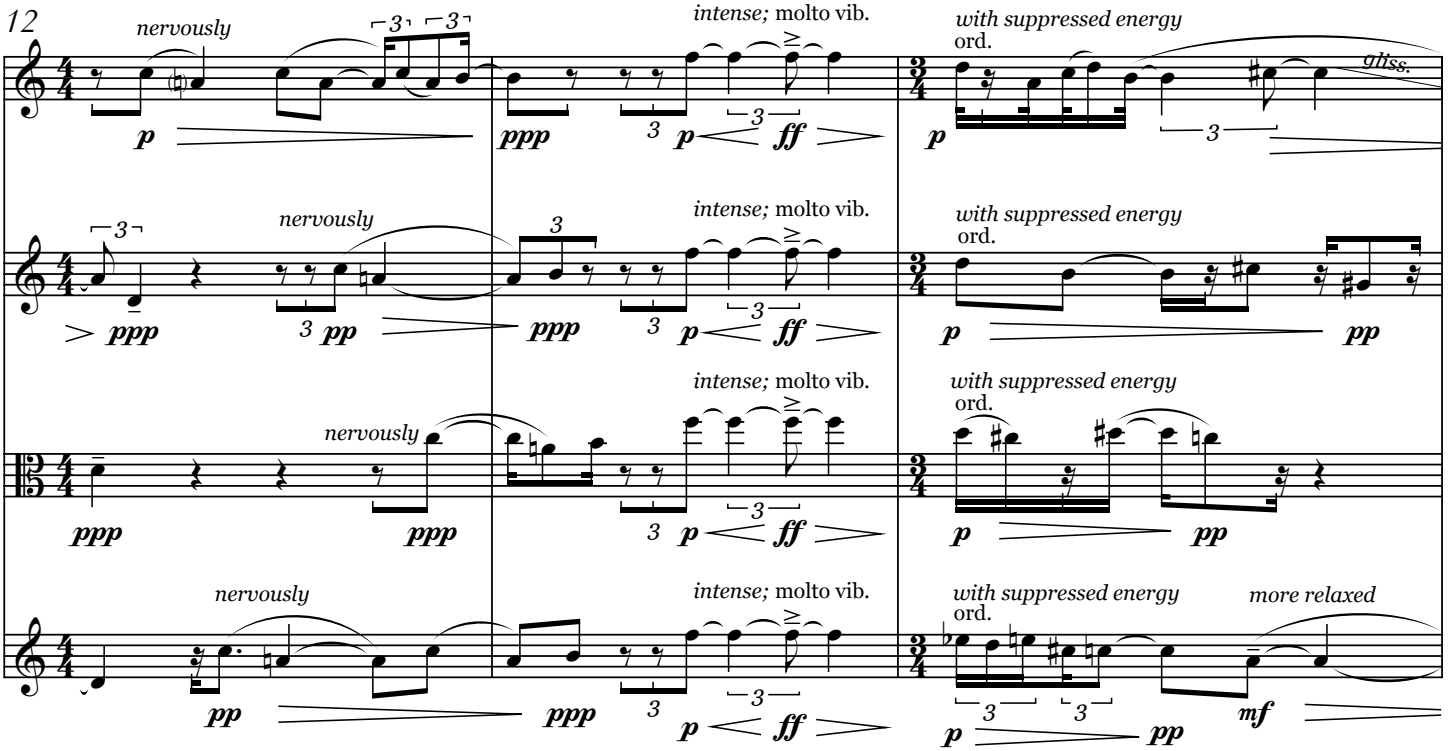
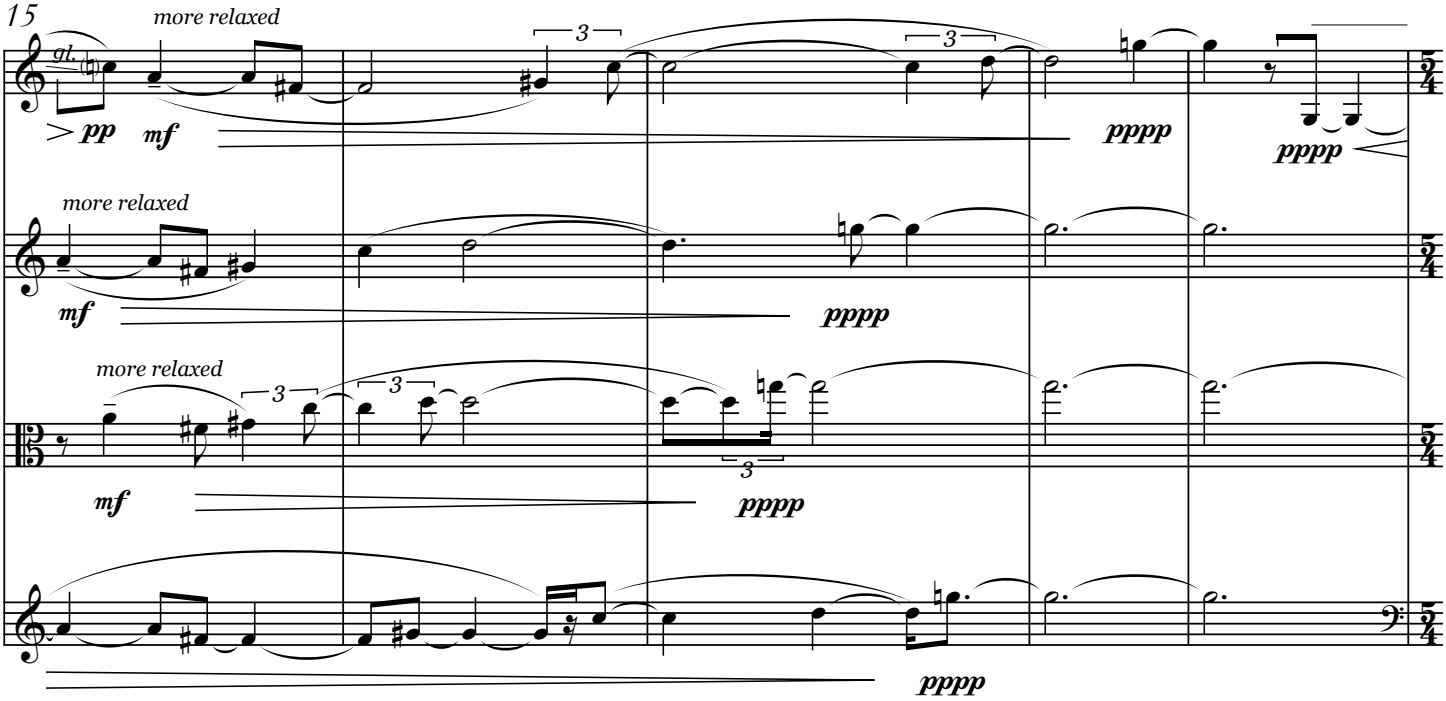
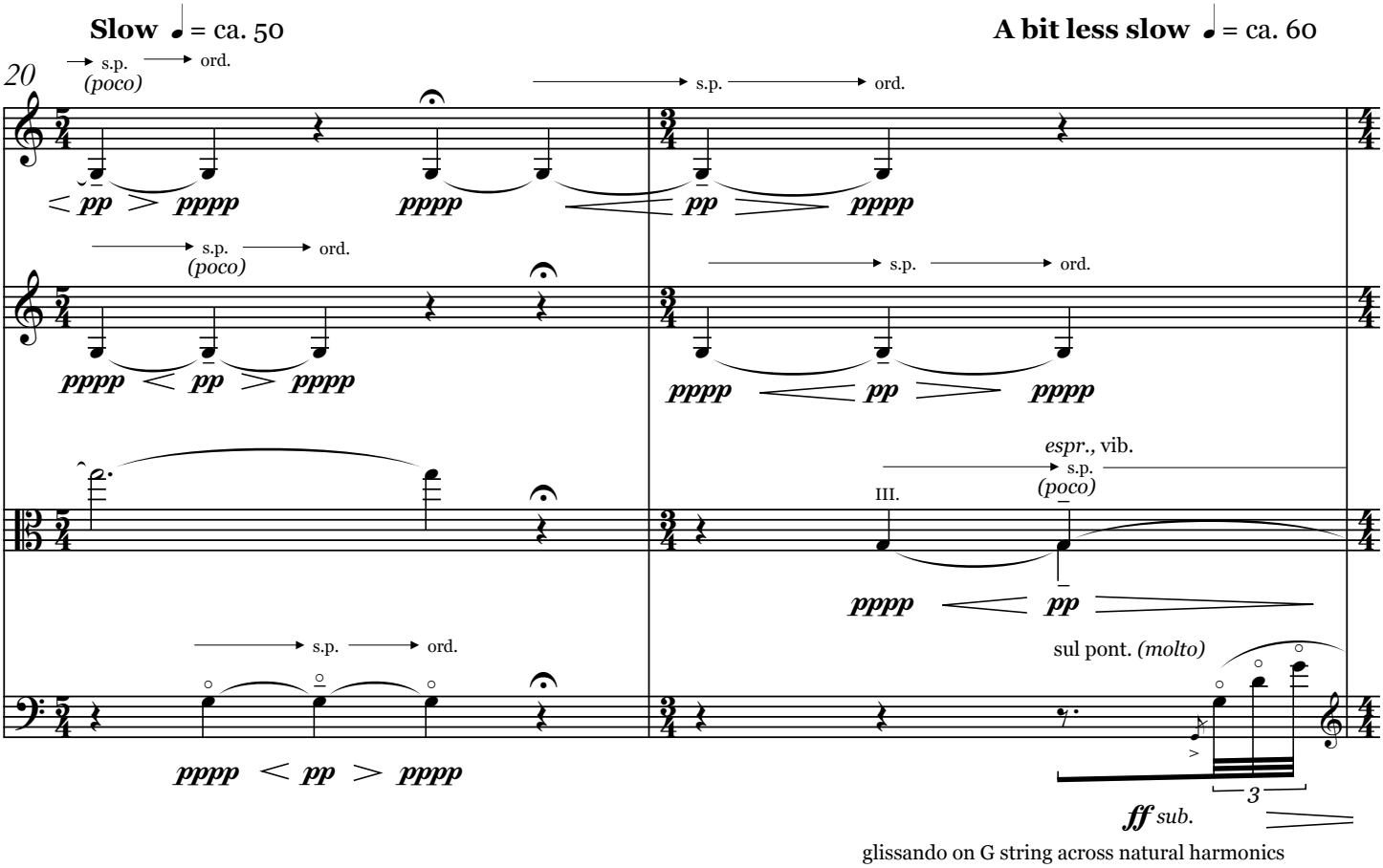
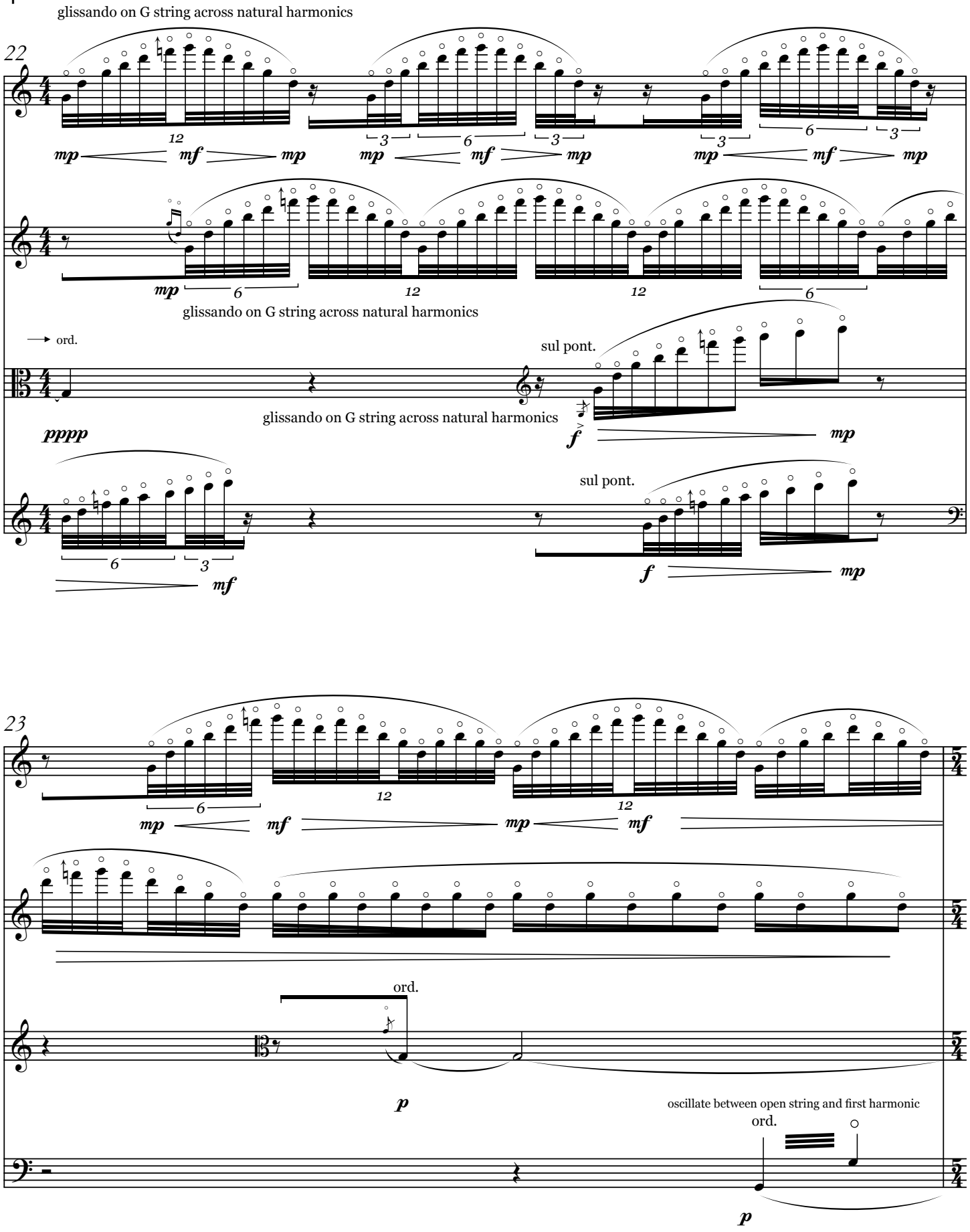

9
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
deliberately
deliberately
deliberately

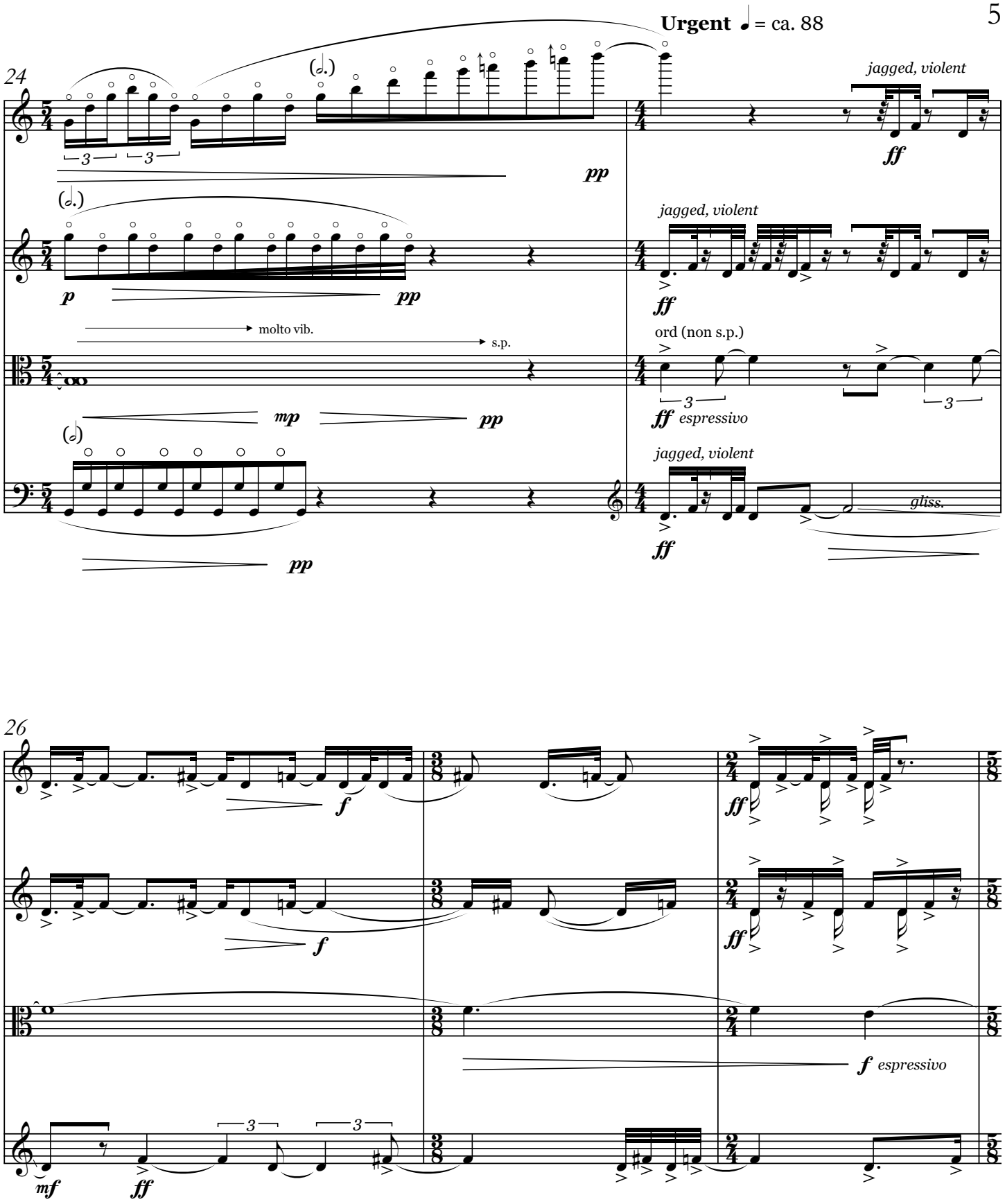

12
nervously
nervously
nervously
nervously
intense; molto vib.
intense; molto vib.
intense; molto vib.
intense; molto vib.
with suppressed energy
ord.
with suppressed energy
ord.
with suppressed energy
ord.
with suppressed energy
ord.
gliss.
more relaxed

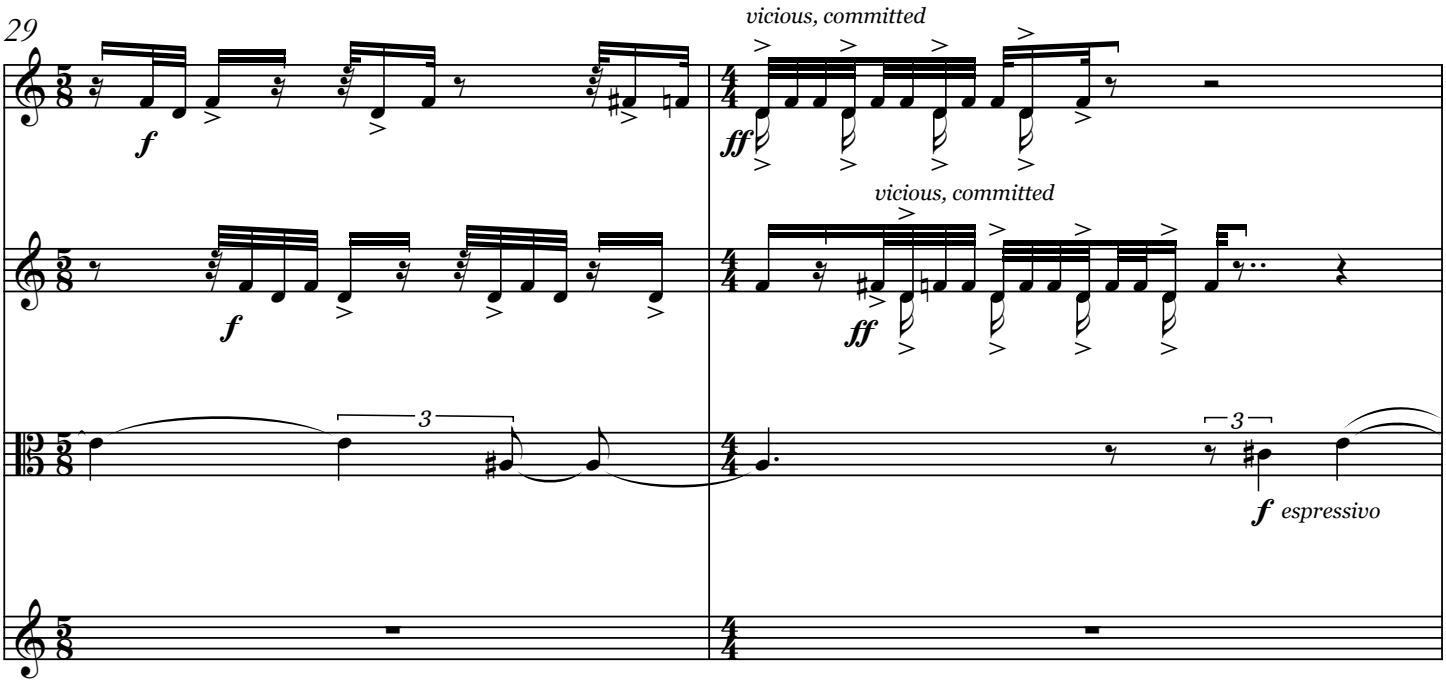


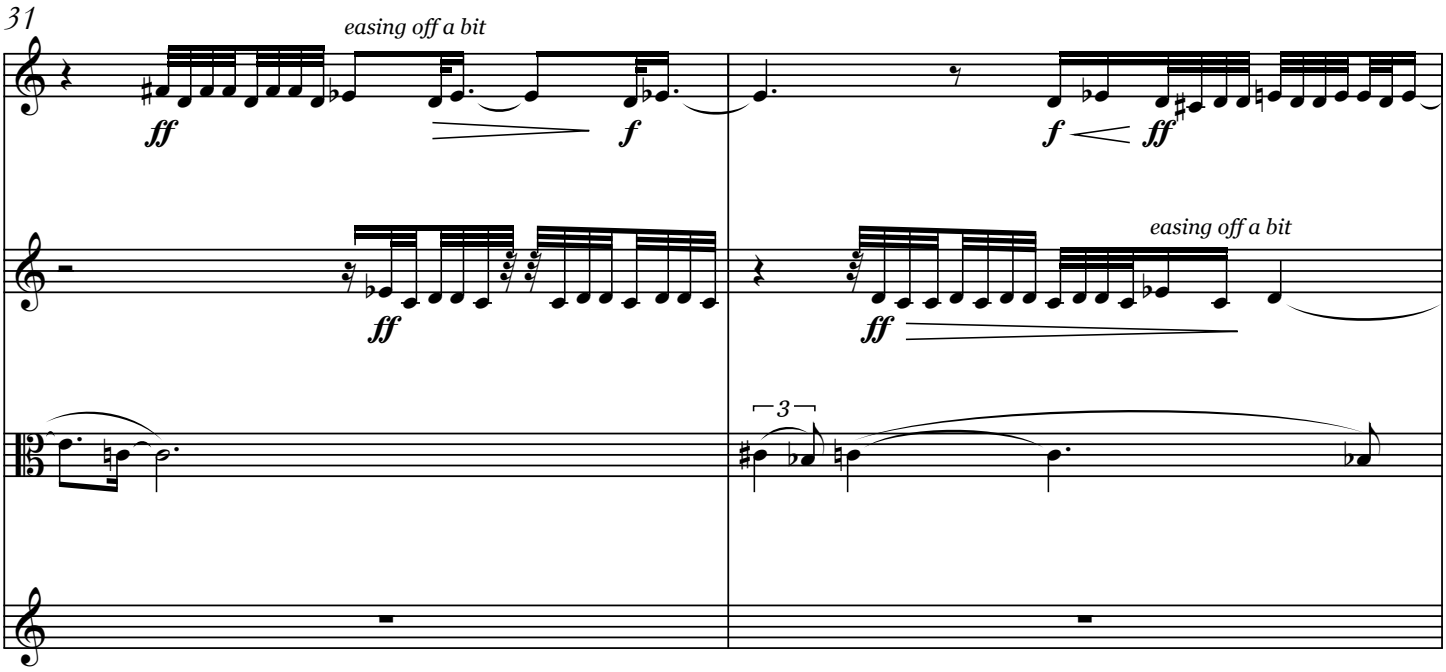


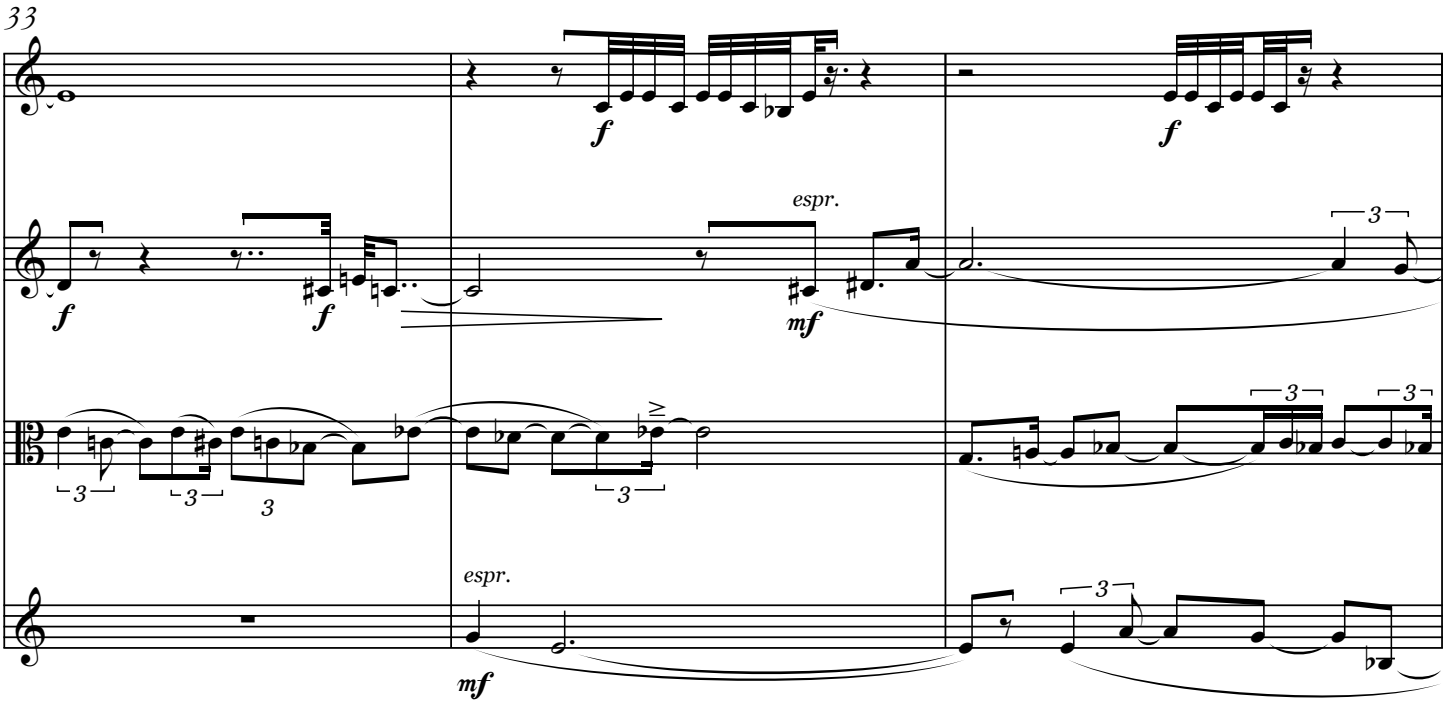
glissando on G string across natural harmonics


glissando on G string across natural harmonics
22
mp mf mp
mp mf mp
mp mf mp
mp
glissando on G string across natural harmonics
ord.
sul pont.
pppp
glissando on G string across natural harmonics
f mp
sul pont.
mf
f mp
23
mp mf mp mf
ord.
p
oscillate between open string and first harmonic
ord.
p

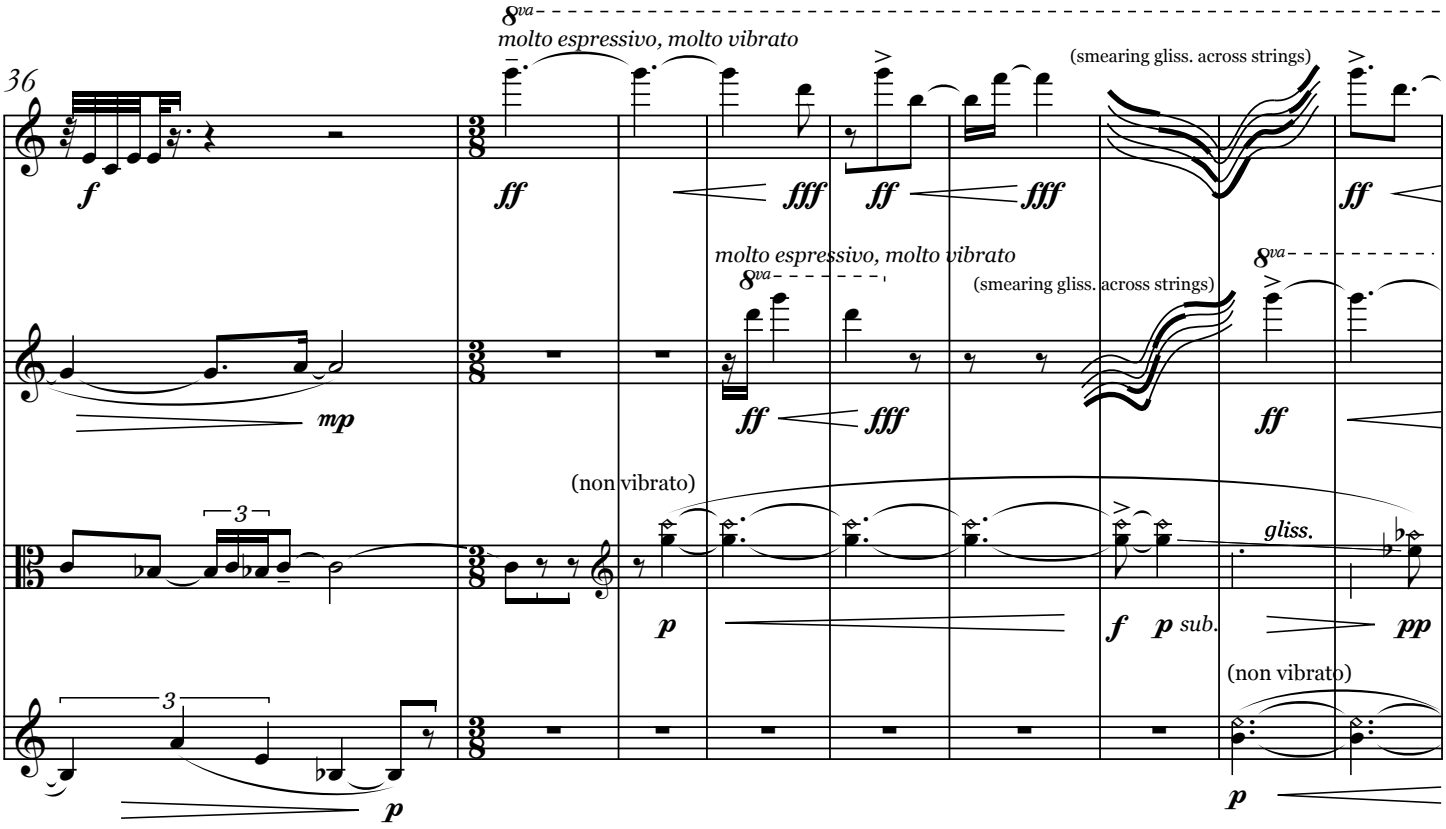

Urgent ♩ = ca. 88
24
jagged, violent
molto vib.
s.p.
ord (non s.p.)
espressivo
gliss.
26
espressivo

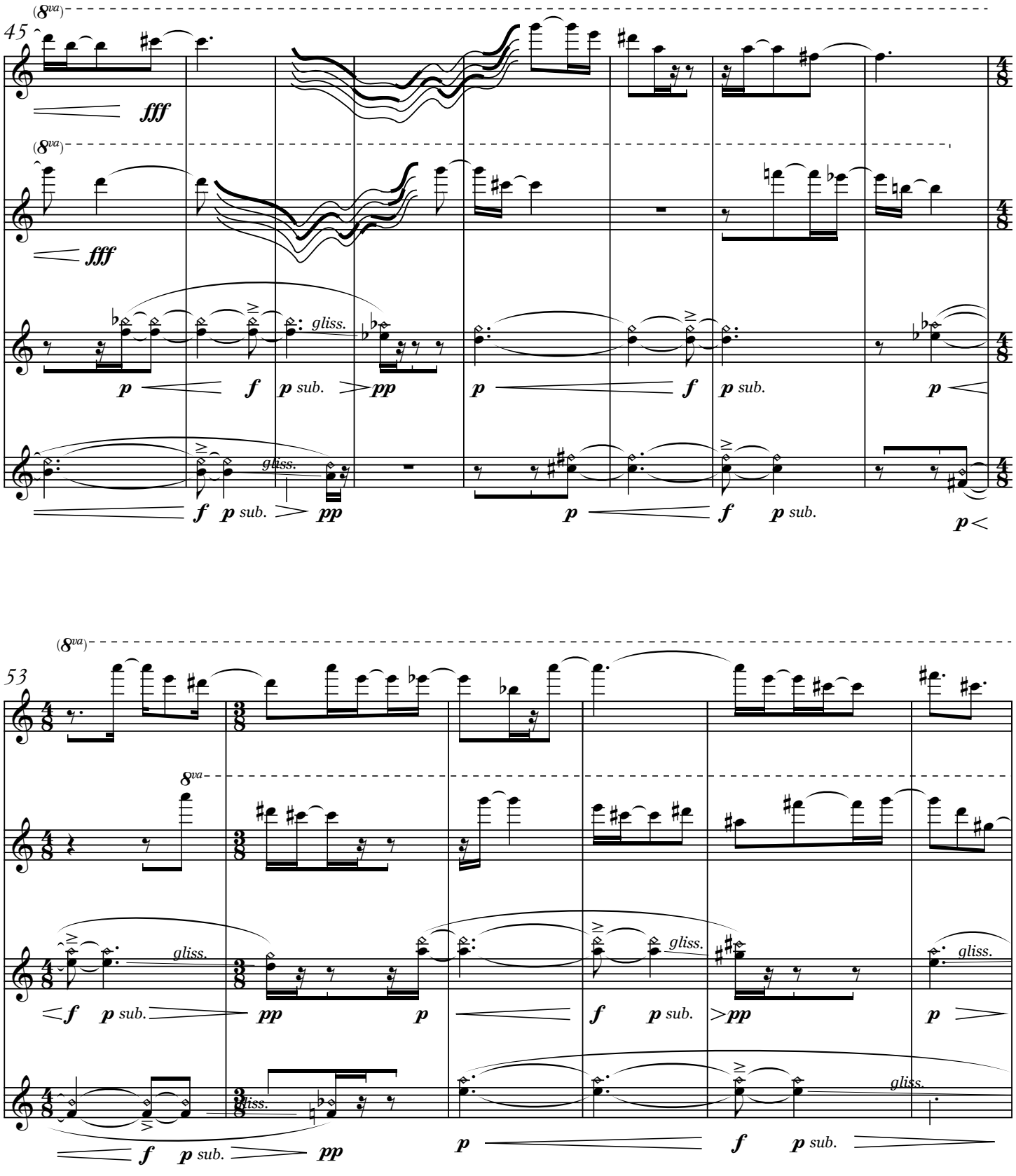

29
vicious, committed
vicious, committed
f
ff
3
f espressivo

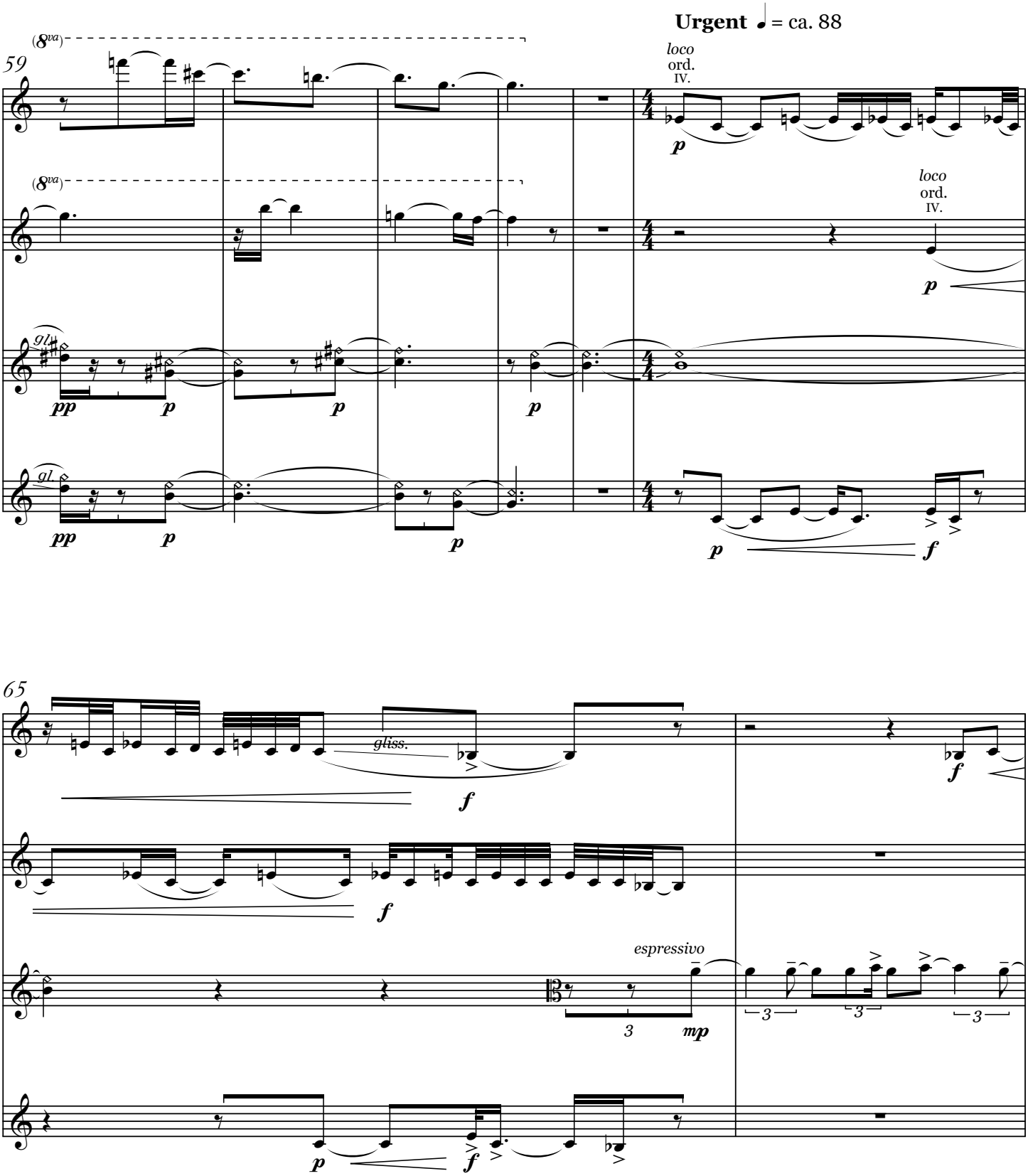

31
easing off a bit
ff
f
easing off a bit
3

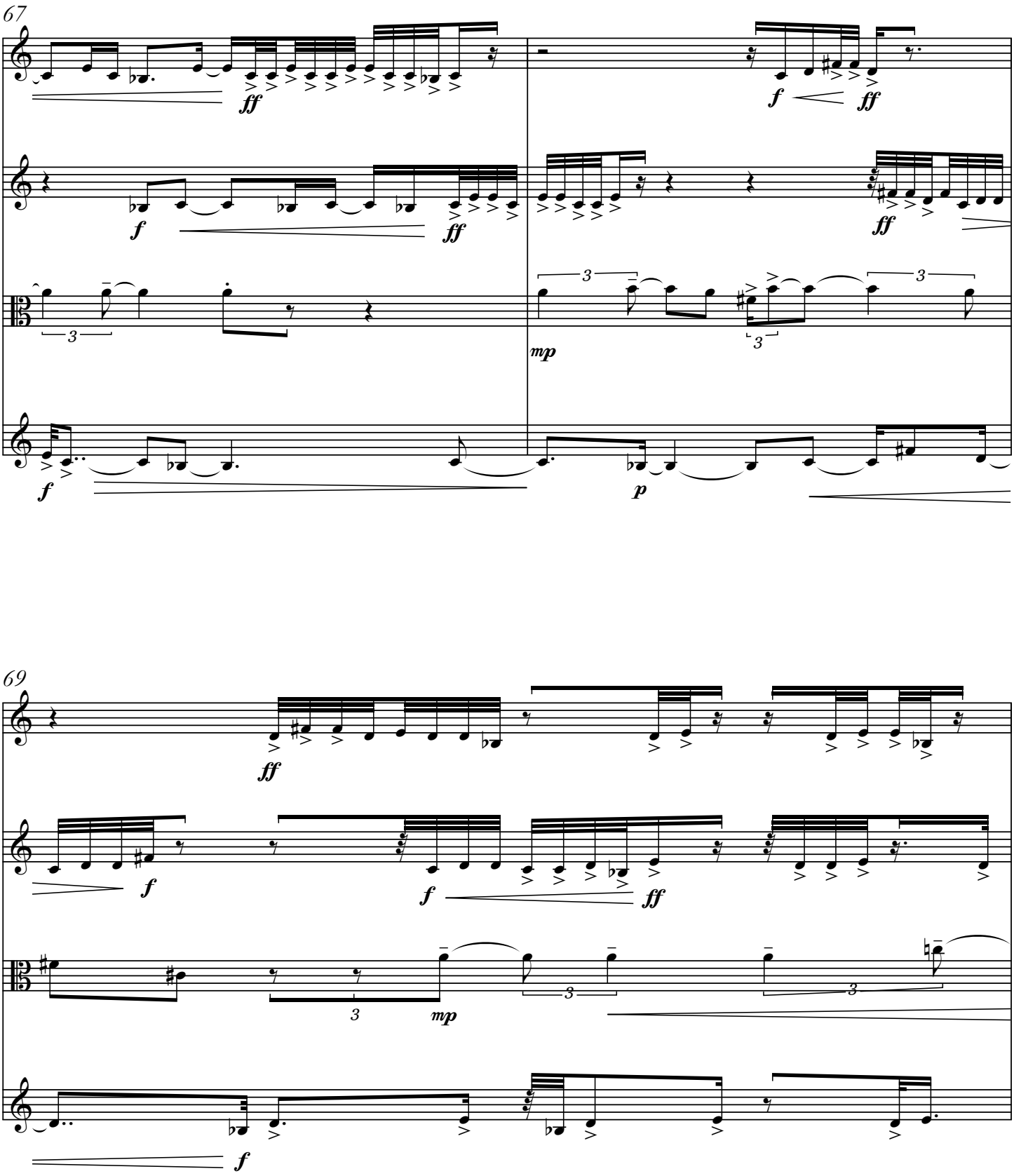


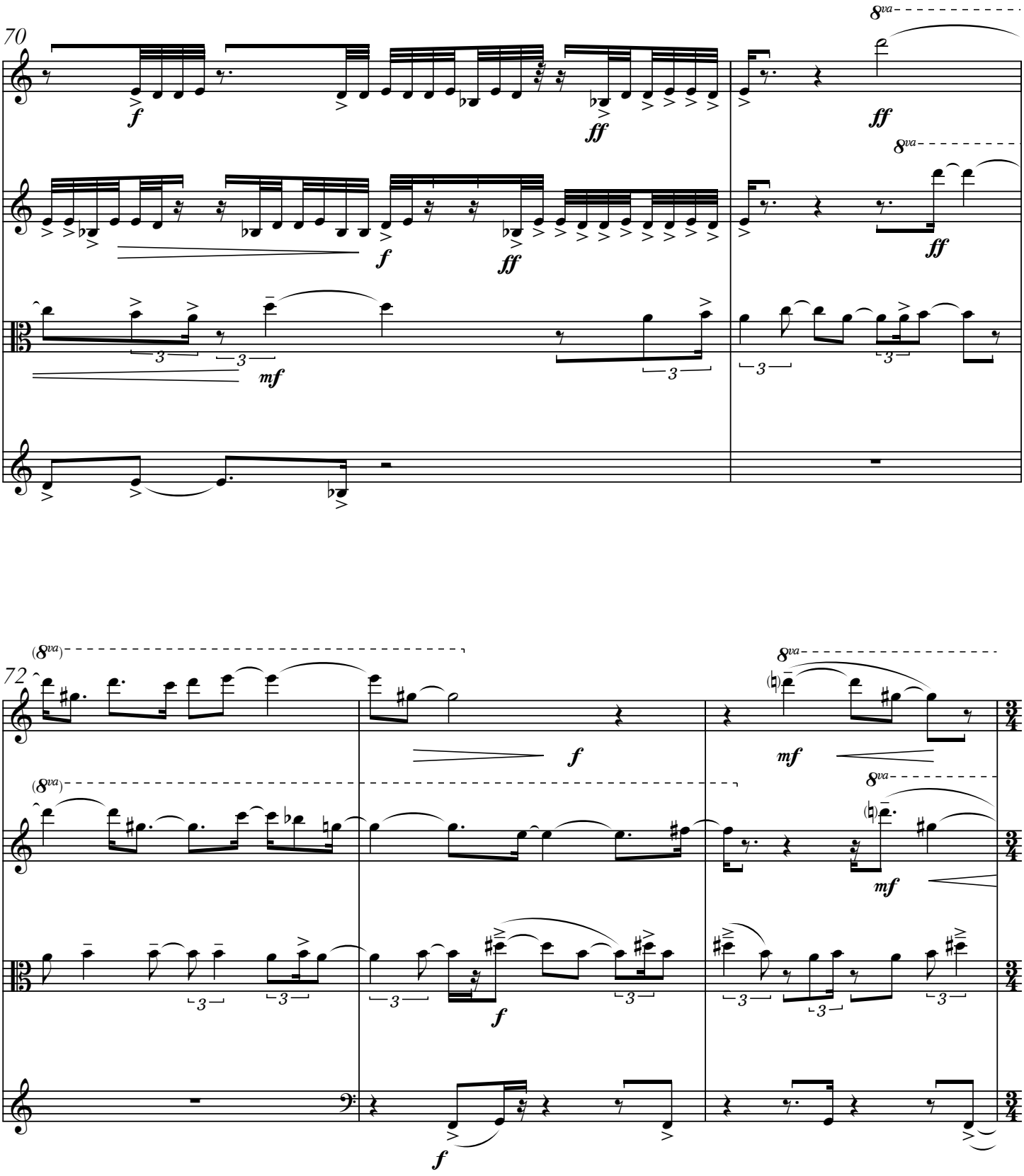
Fast, fleeting ♩. = ca. 69

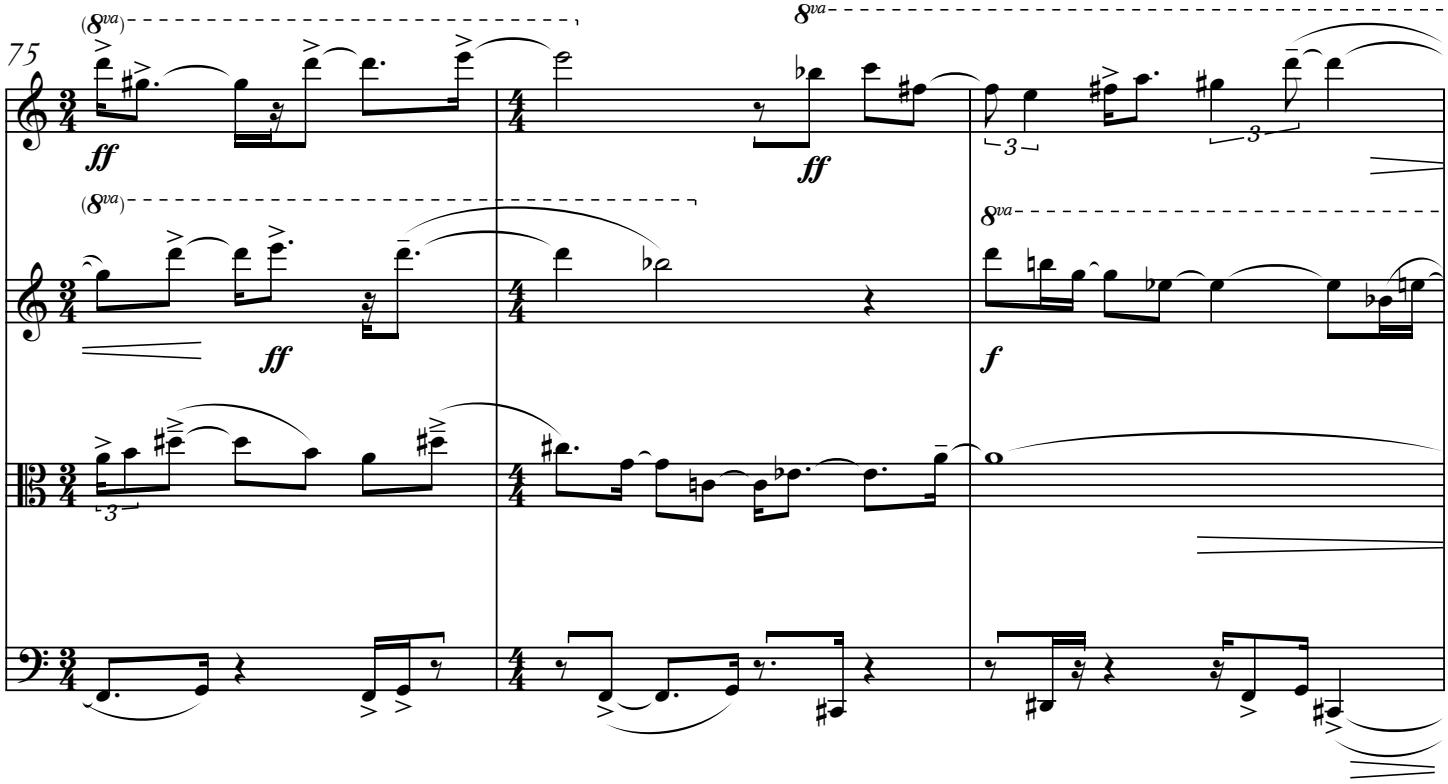


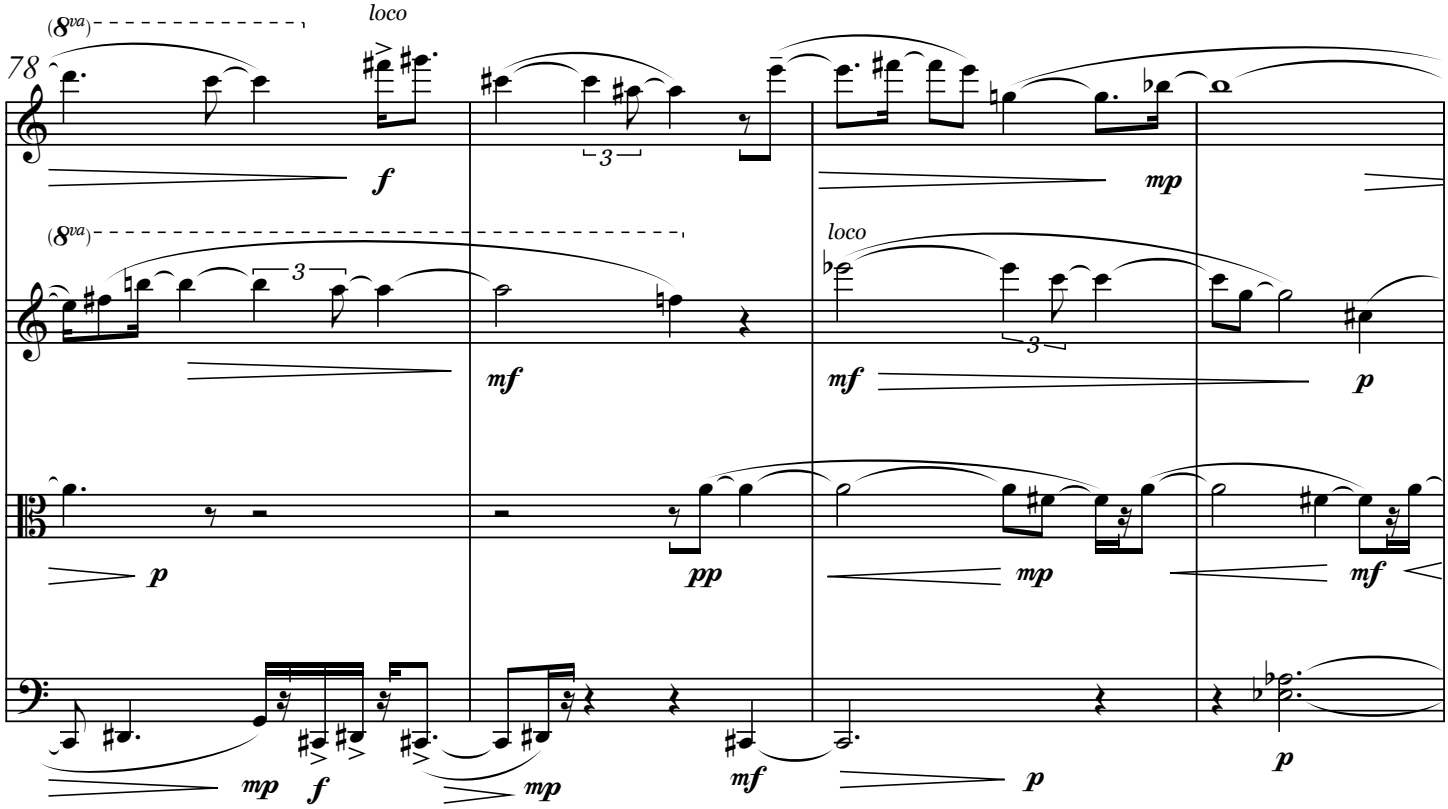

45
(8va)
fff
(8va)
fff
gliss.
p
f
p sub.
pp
p
f
p sub.
p
gliss.
f
p sub.
pp
p
f
p sub.
p
53
(8va)
8va
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
f
p sub.
pp
p
f
p sub.
pp
p
gliss.
f
p sub.
pp
p
f
p sub.

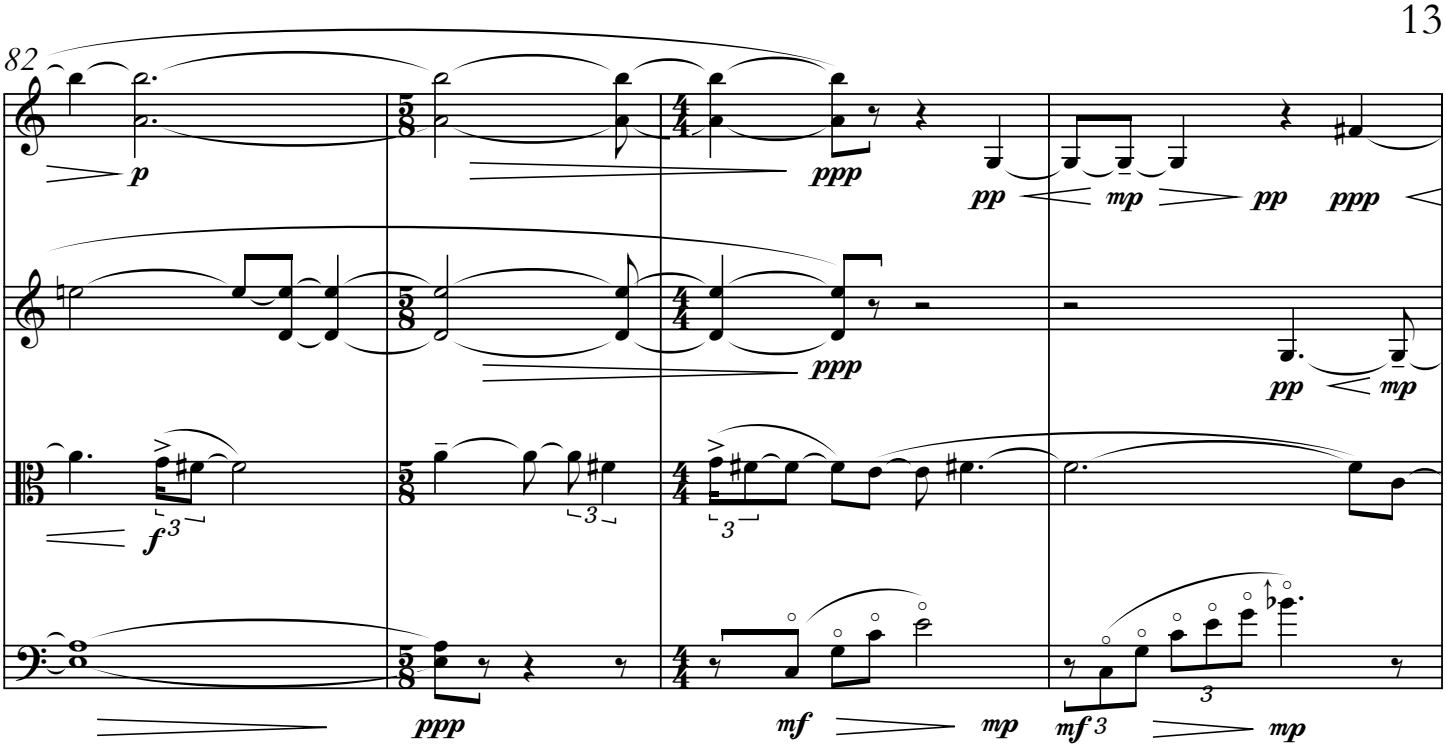

Urgent ♩ = ca. 88
59
(8va)
loco
ord.
IV.
p
(8va)
loco
ord.
IV.
p
gl.
pp
p
p
p
gl.
pp
p
p
p
f
65
gliss.
f
f
f
espressivo
3
mp
3
3
3
p
f

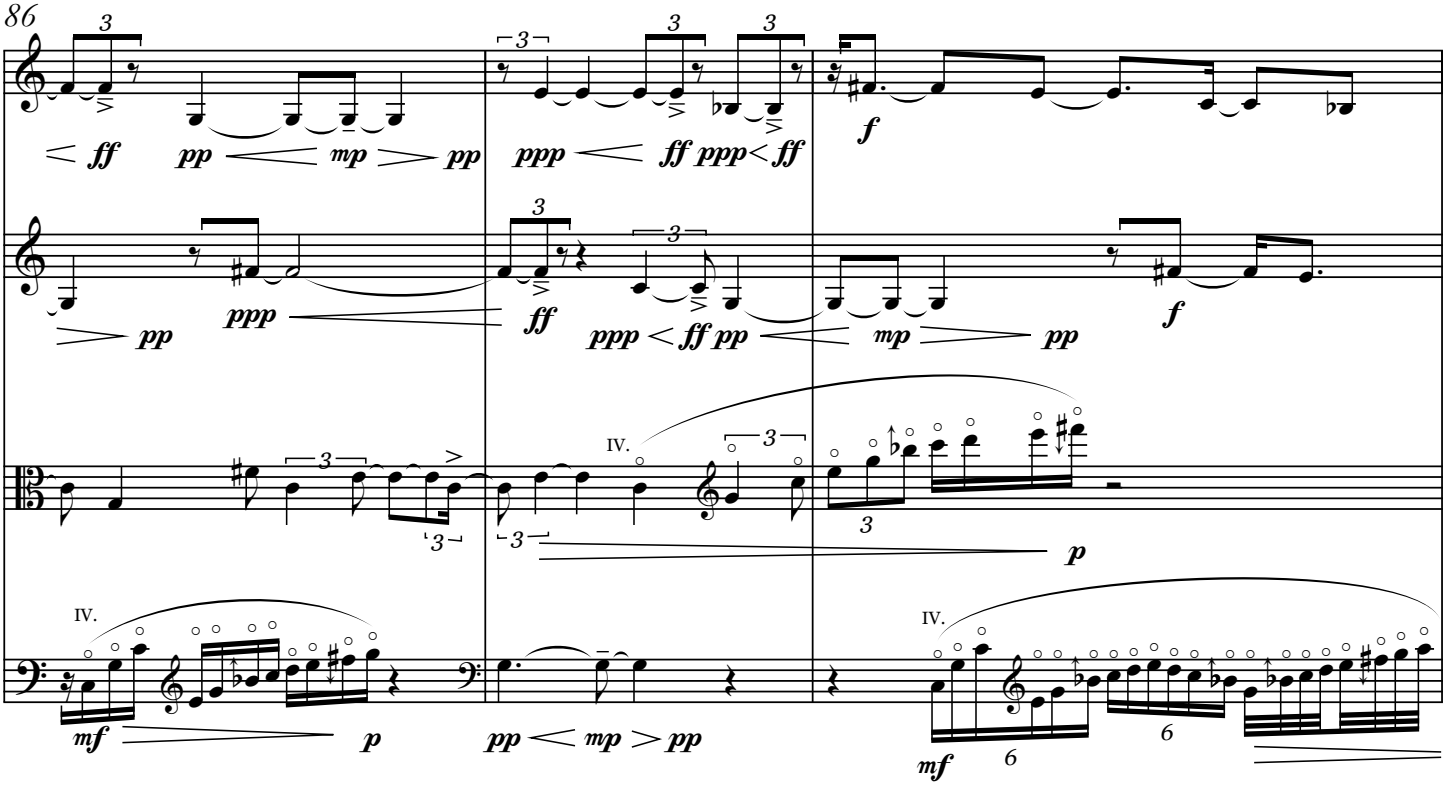

67
ff
f
ff
f
ff
ff
3
3
3
mp
f
p
69
ff
f
f
ff
3
mp
3
3
f

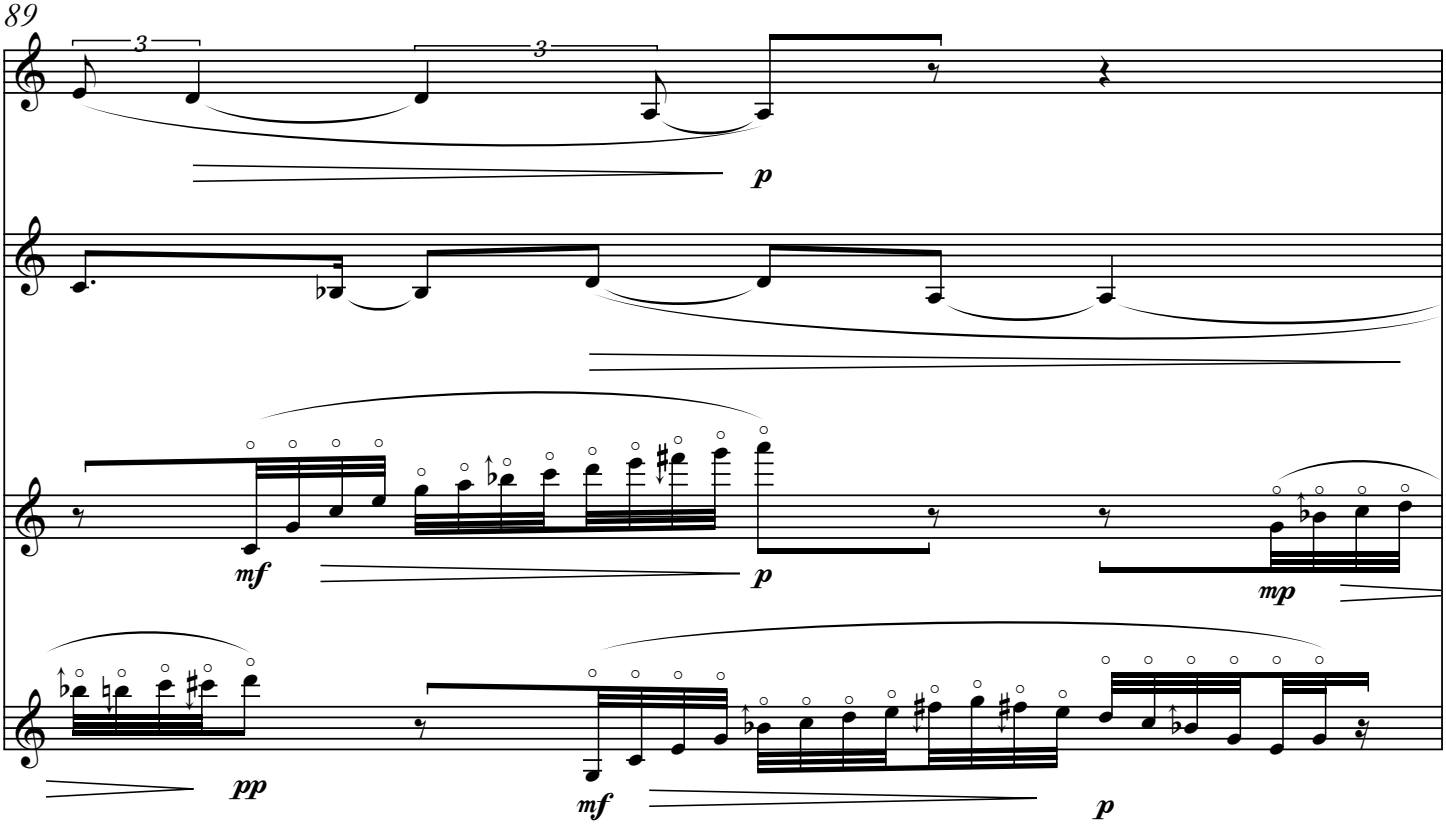

70
8va
f
ff
mf
72
(8va)

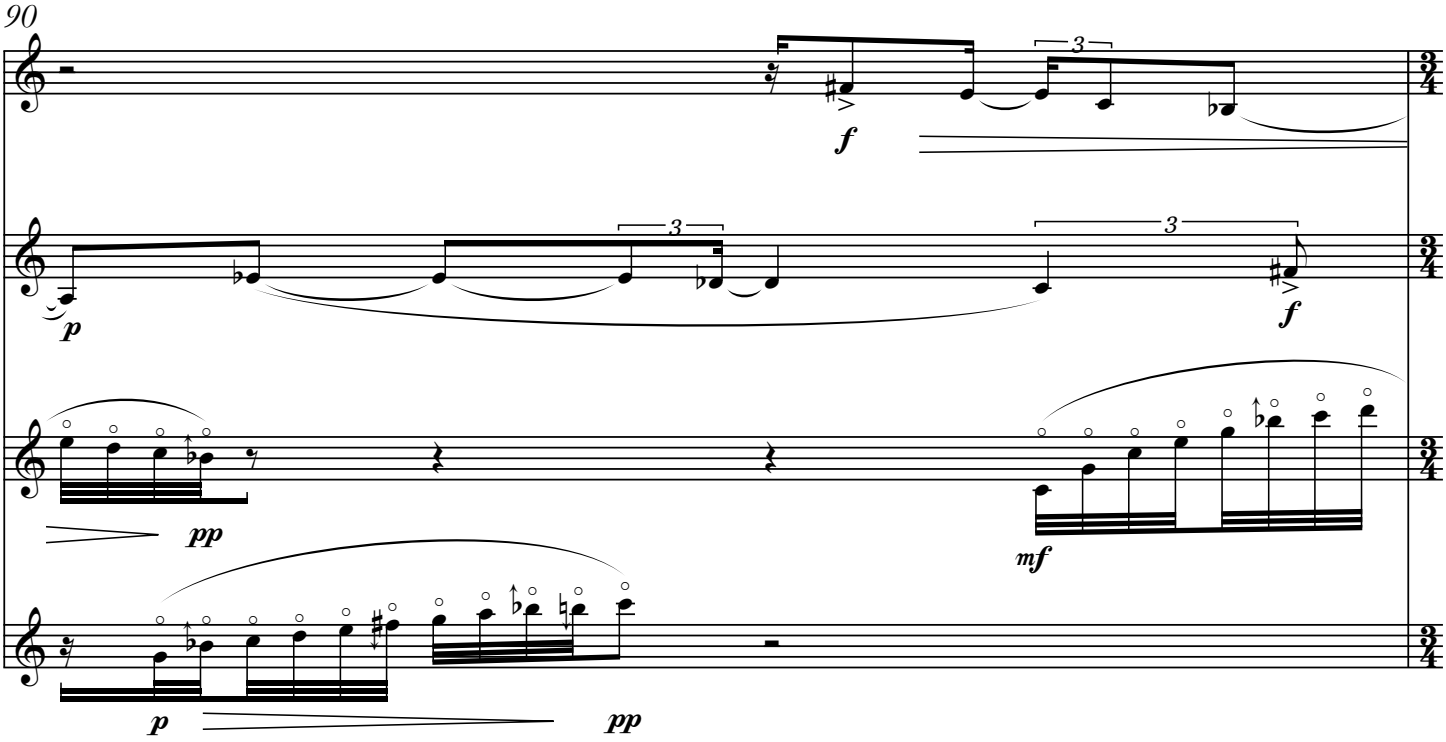

75
(8va)
ff
8va
ff
3
(8va)
ff
8va
f
3
3

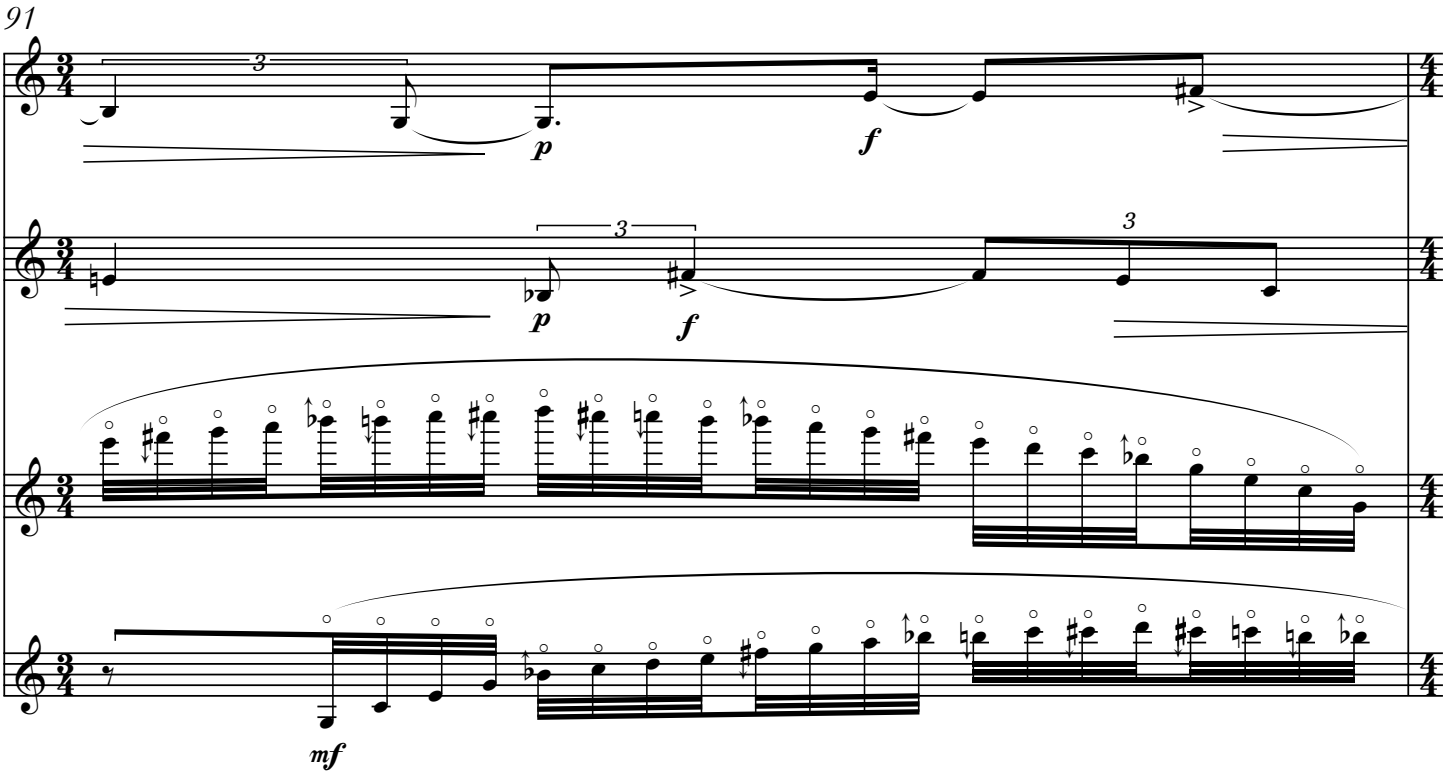

78
(8va)
loco
f
3
mp
(8va)
3
mf
loco
mf
3
p
p
pp
mp
mf
mp
f
mp
mf
p
p

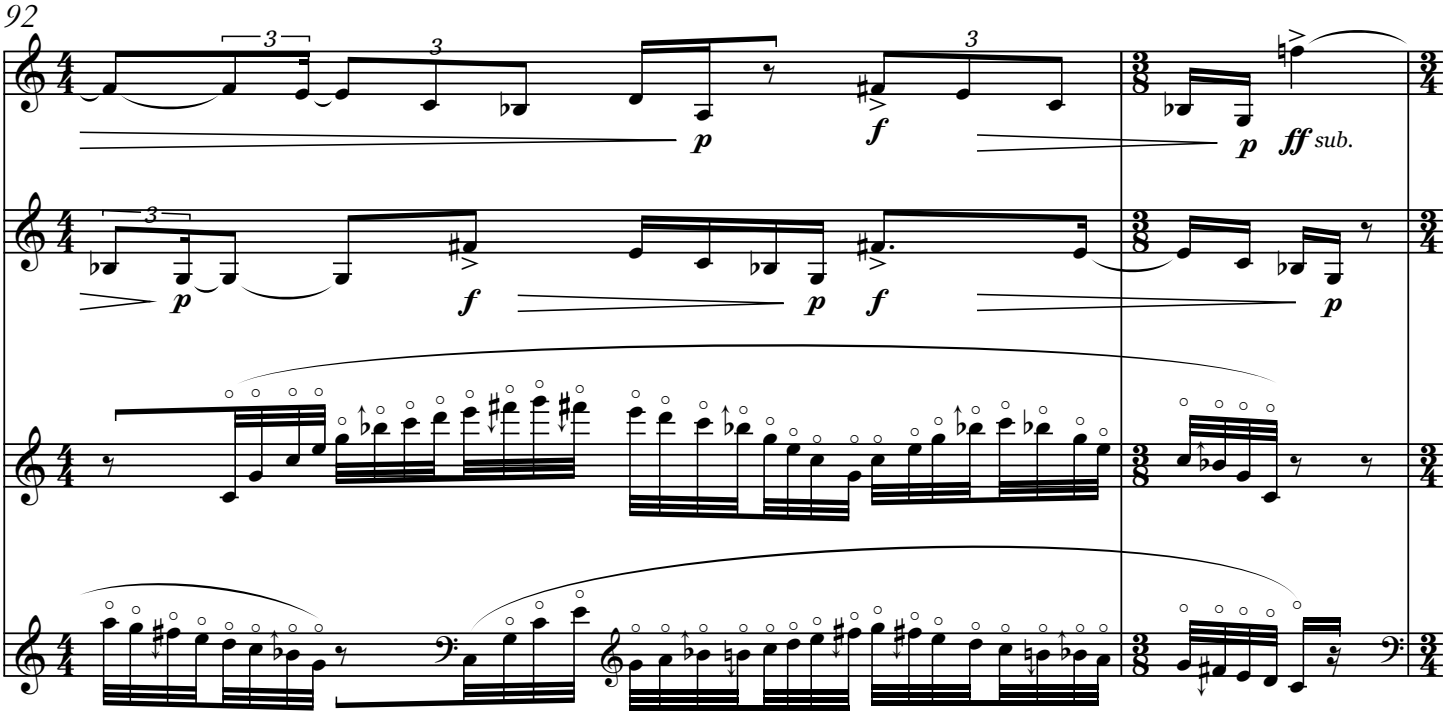

82
p
ppp
pp
mp
pp
ppp
ppp
pp
mp
f
3
3
3
ppp
mf
mp
mf 3
mp
3


86
3
ff
pp
mp
pp
ppp
ff ppp
ff
f
pp
ppp
ff
ppp
ff pp
mp
pp
f
IV.
3
p
IV.
IV.
mf
p
pp
mp
pp
mf
6
6

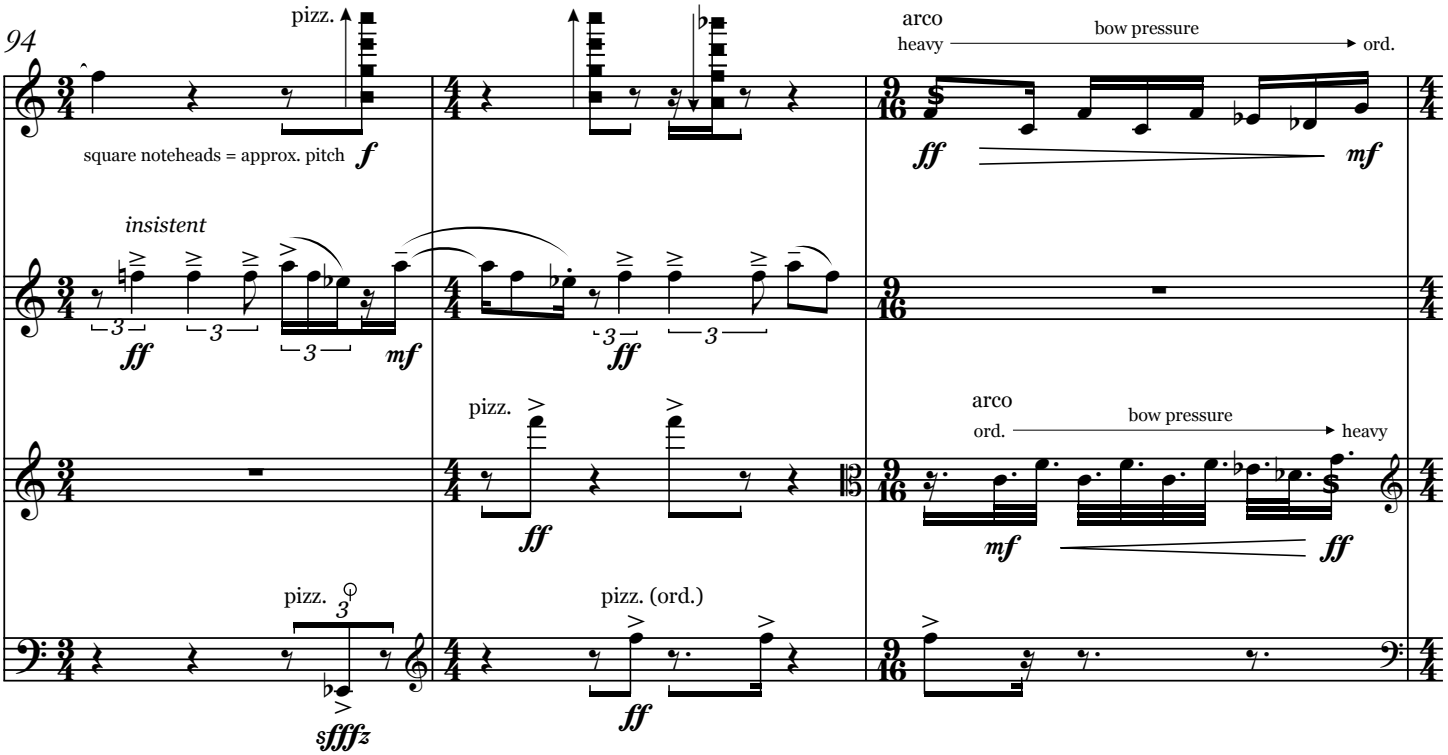

89
3
3
p
mf
p
mp
pp
mf
p

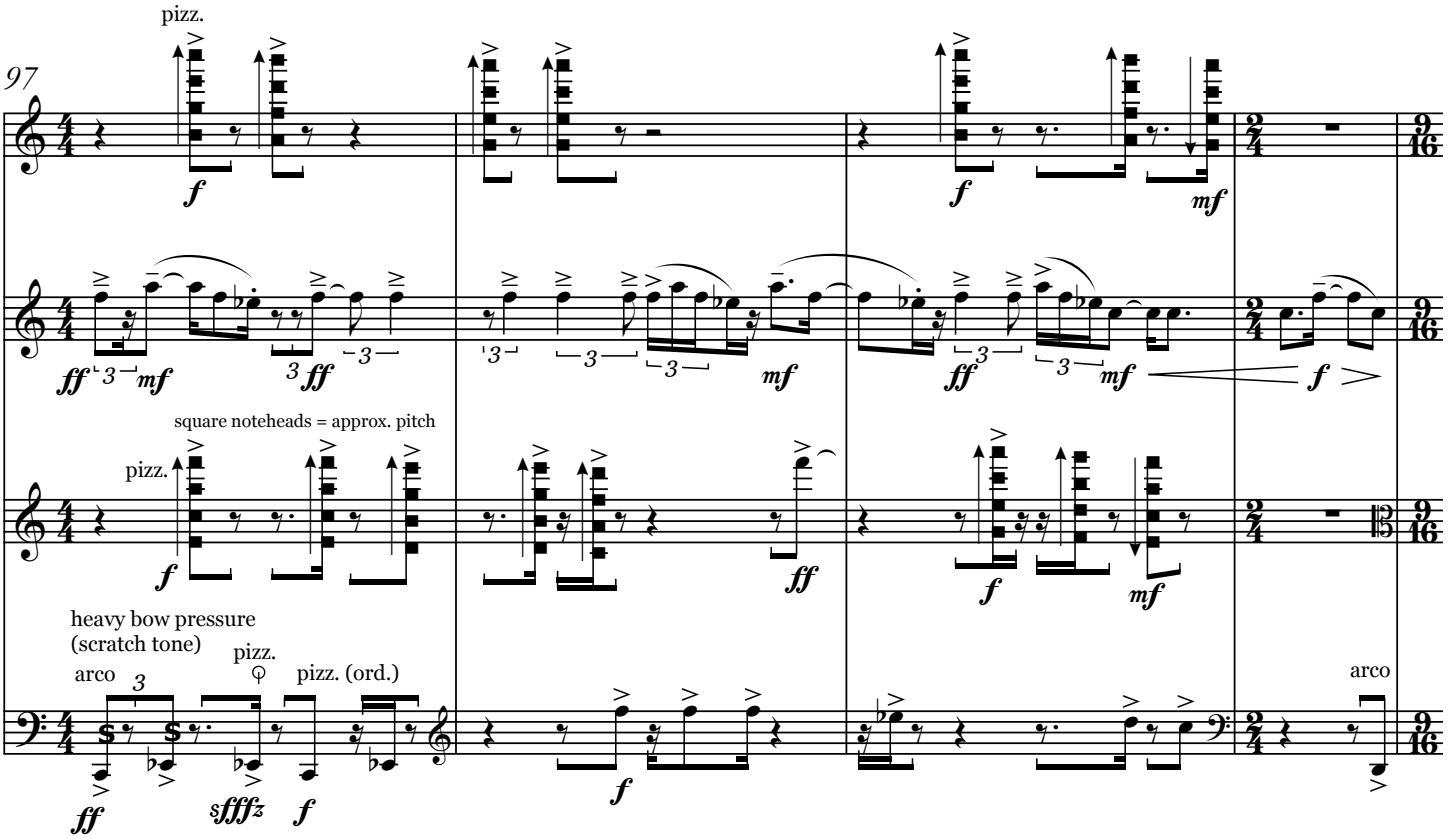

90
f
3
3
p
f
pp
mf
p
pp

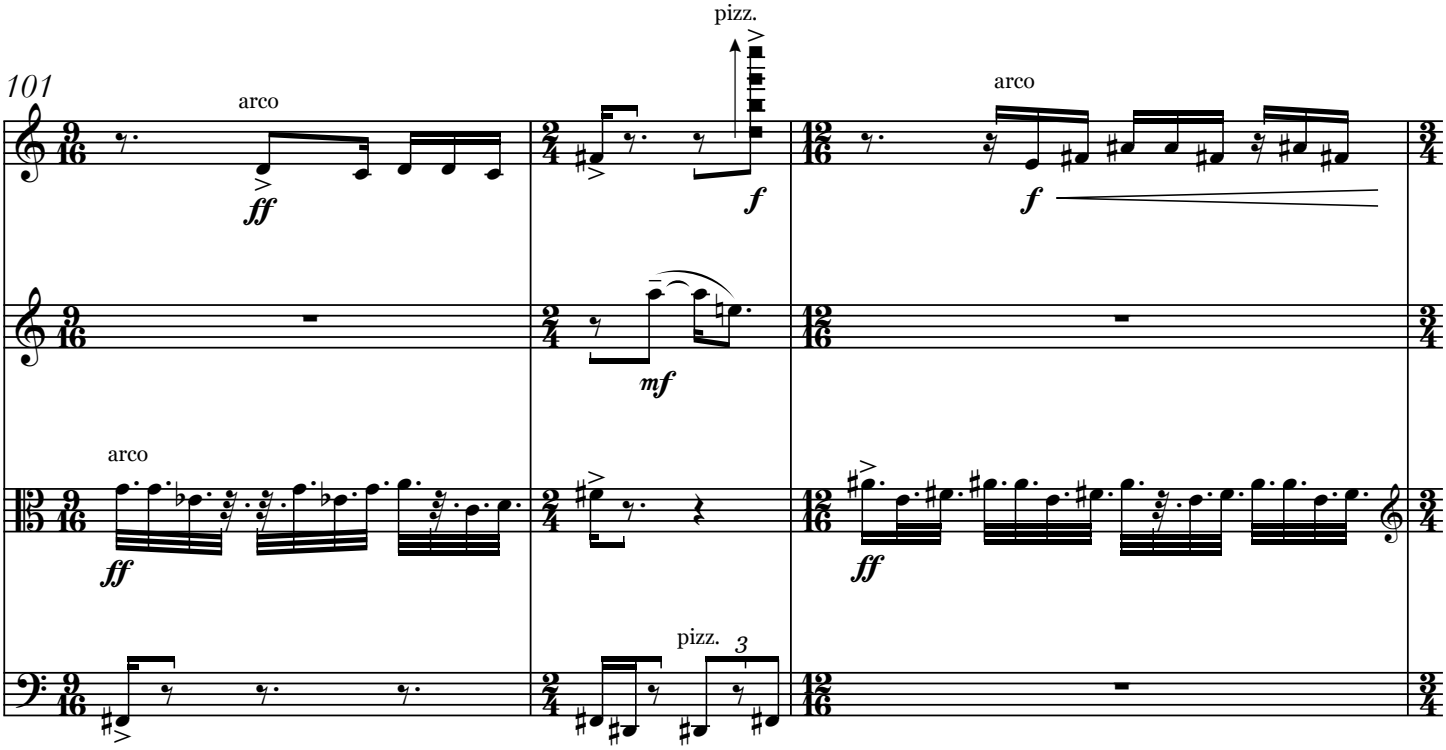

91
3
p
f
3
p
f
3
mf

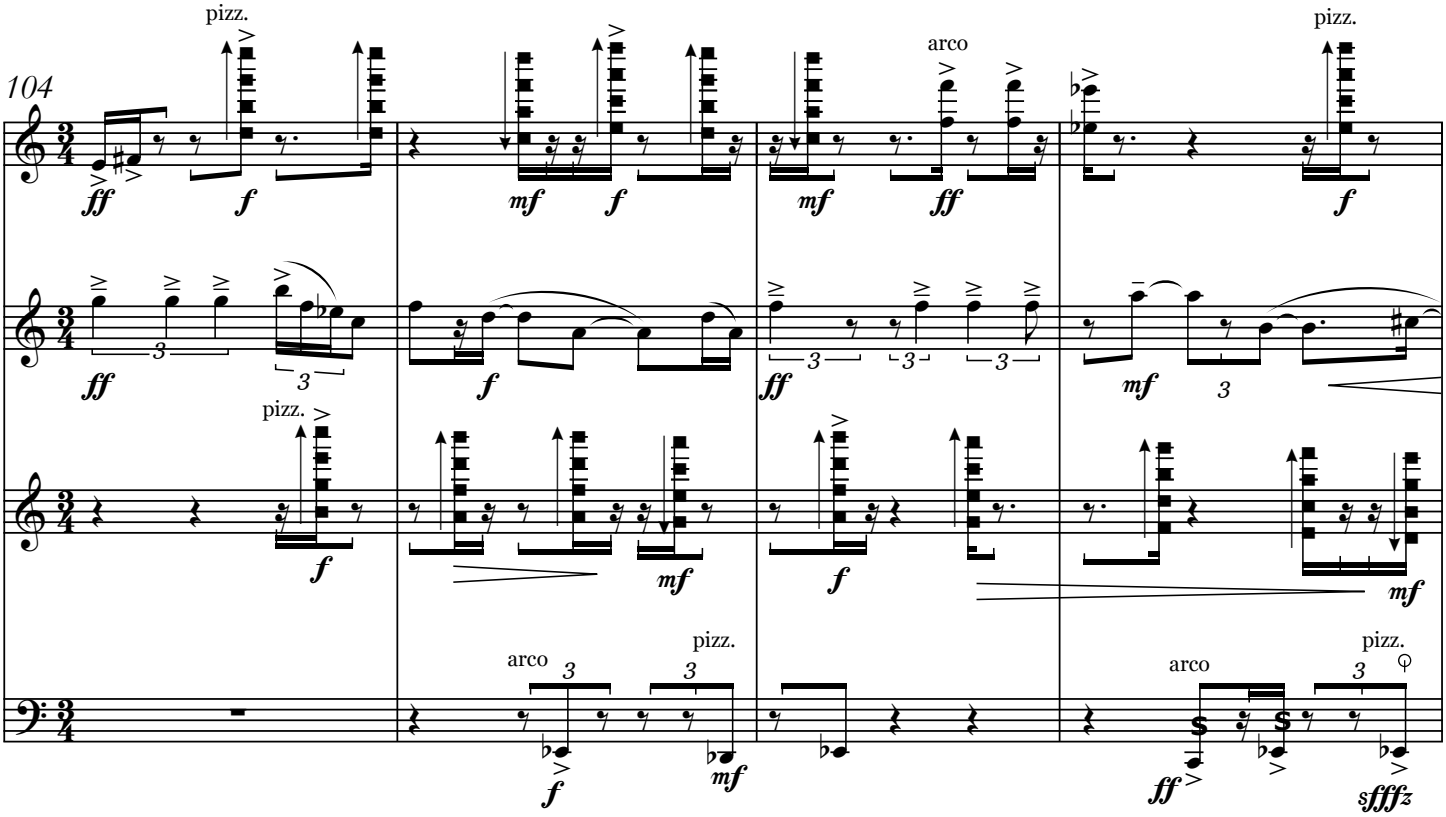

92
3
p
f
3
p
ff sub.
3
p
f
p
f
p

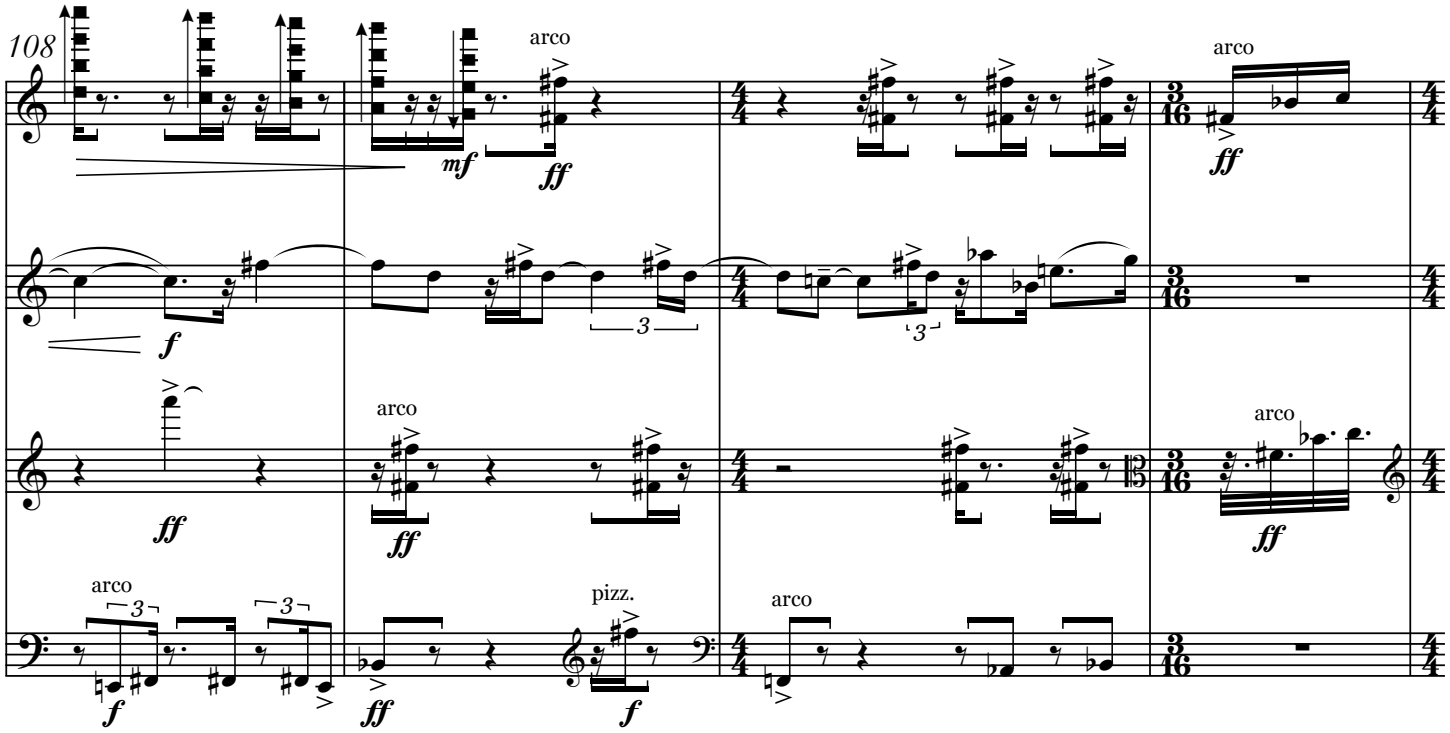
Twitchy, jumpy ♩ = ca. 104

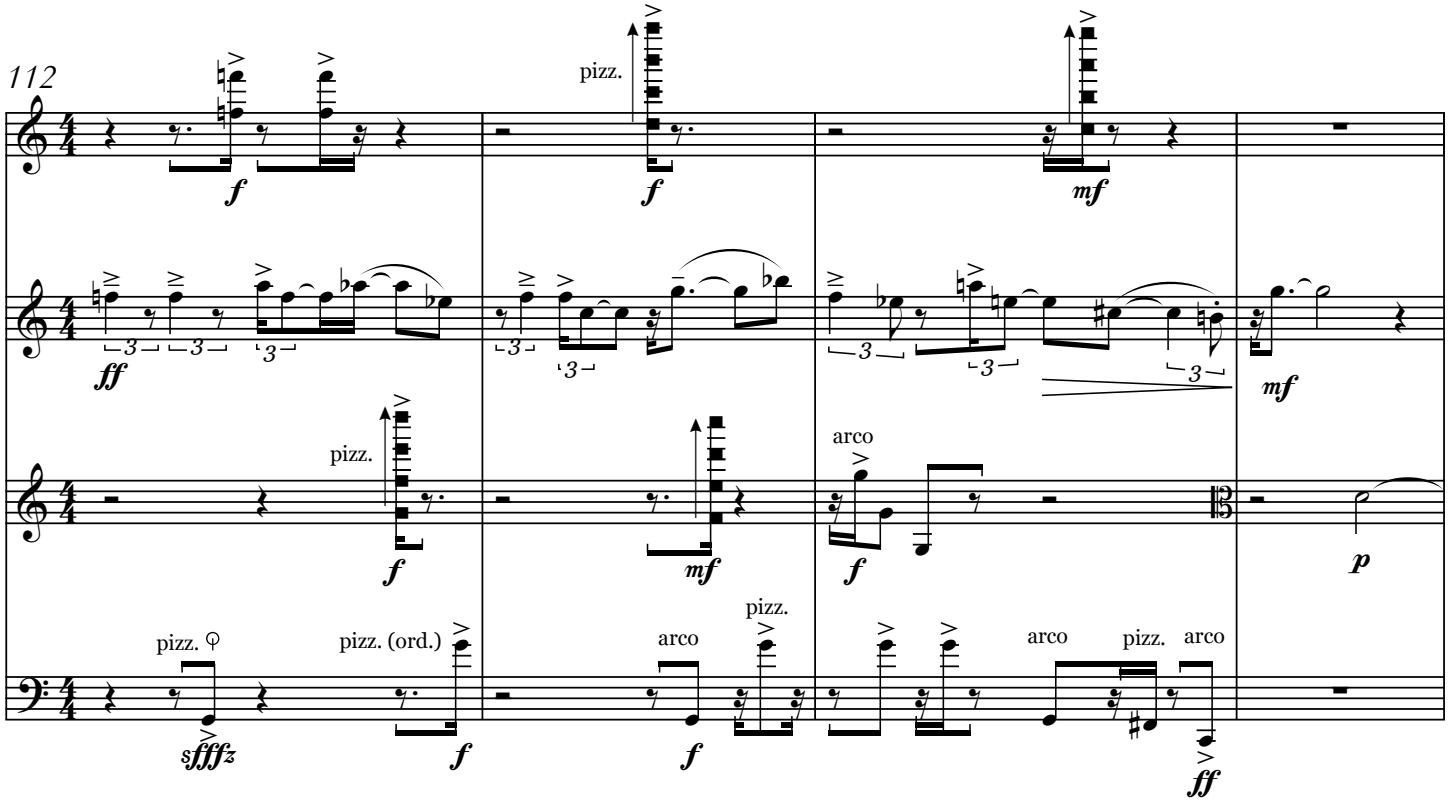




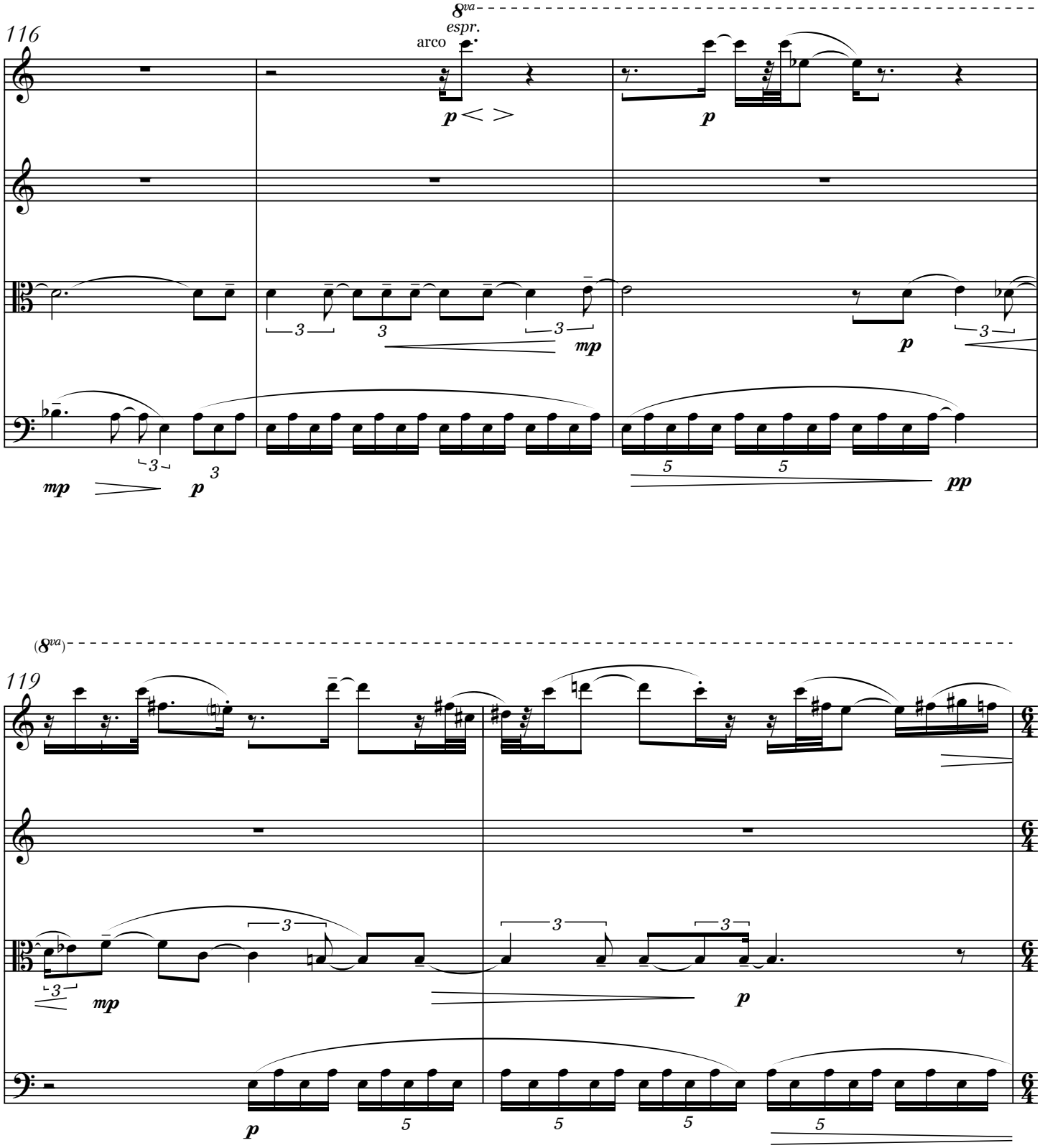

101
arco
pizz.
arco
arco
pizz.
3

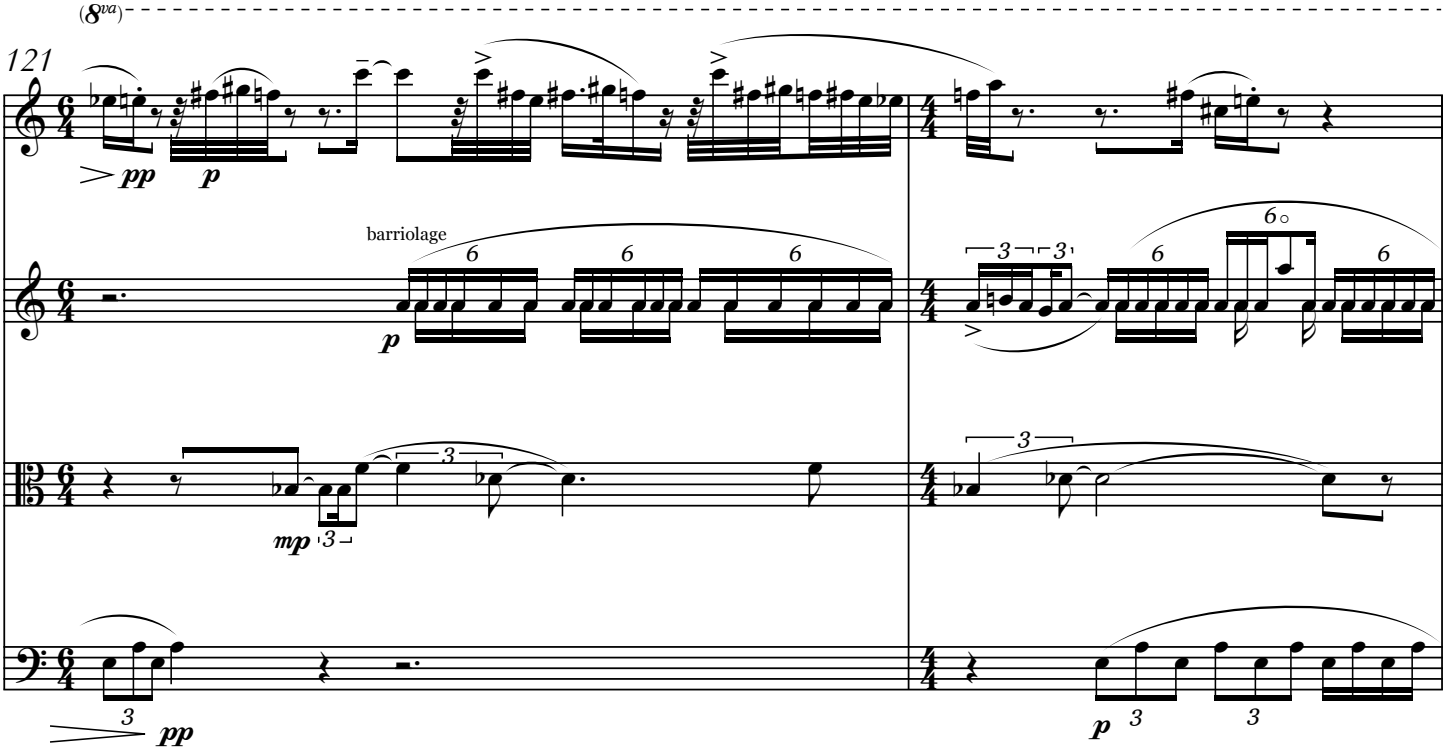

104
pizz.
arco
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.

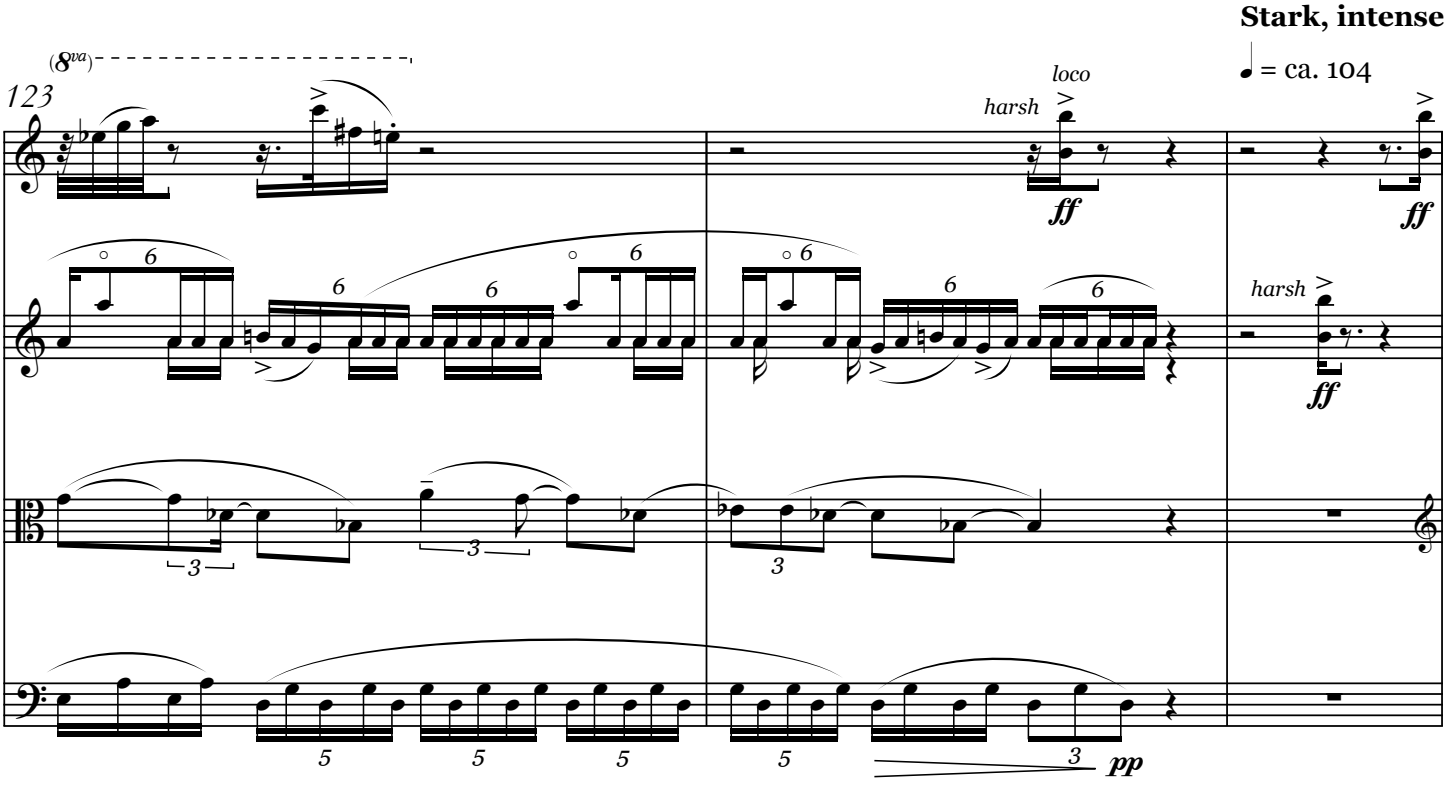

108
arco
mf
ff
arco
ff
f
3
3
arco
ff
ff
arco
ff
arco
3
3
f
arco
ff
pizz.
f
arco

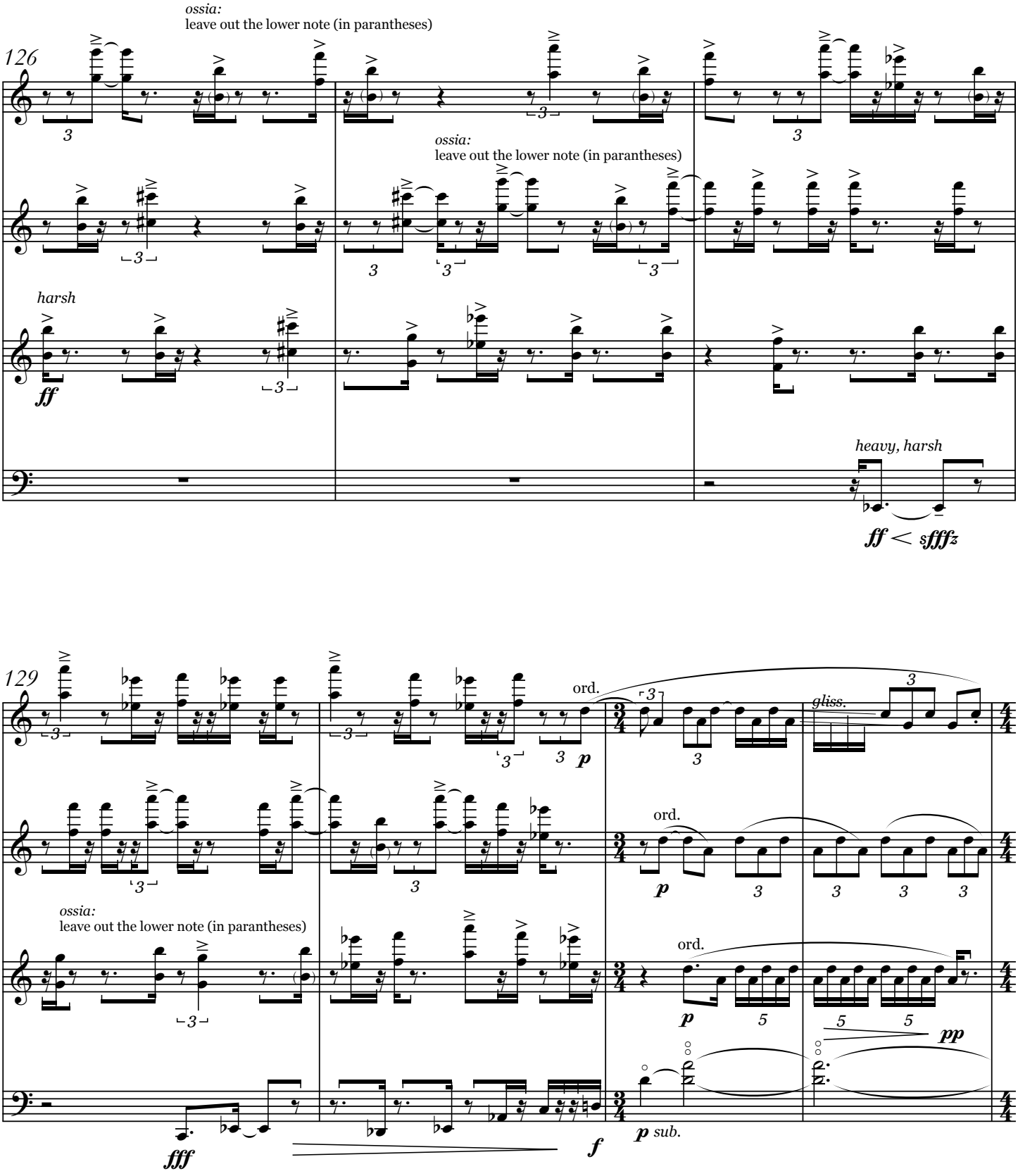

112
f
pizz.
f
mf
ff
3
3
3
3
3
mf
pizz.
f
mf
arco
f
p
pizz. ♀
sffffz
pizz. (ord.)
f
arco
pizz.
f
arco
pizz.
arco
ff

Quietly rustling and fluttering ♩ = ca. 88



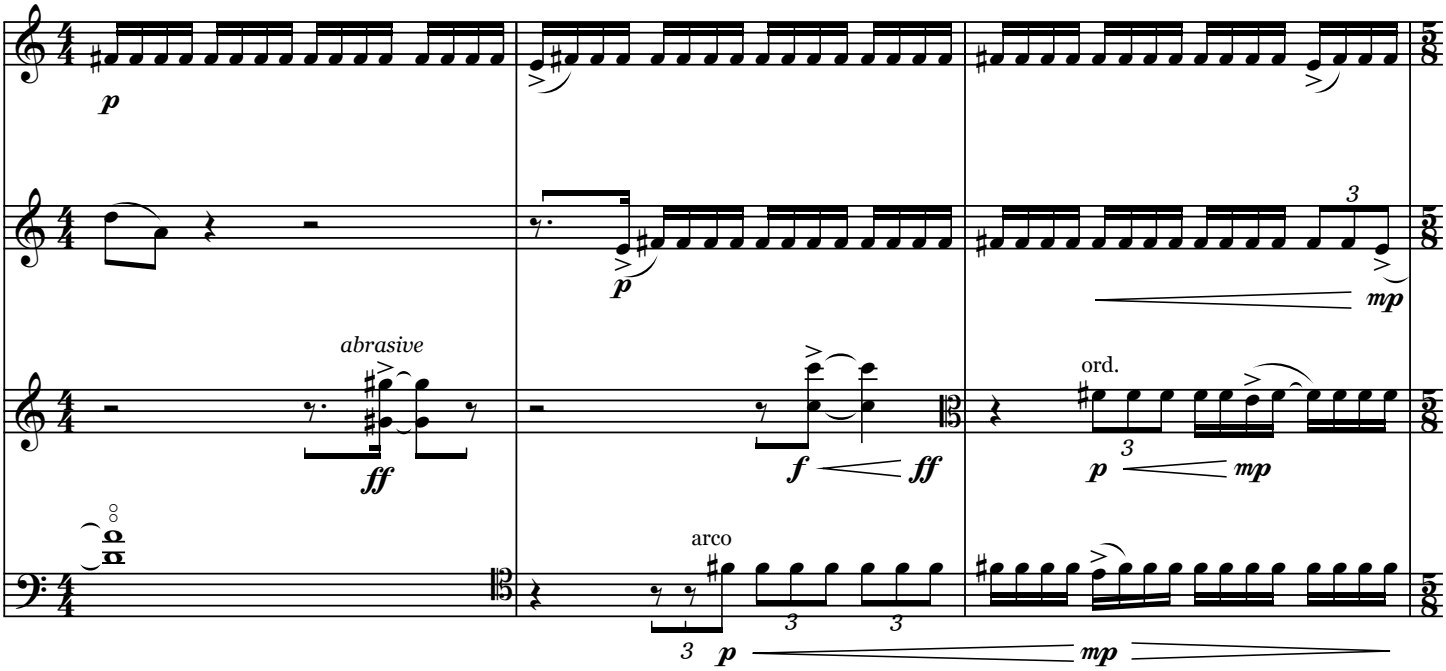

(8va)
121
pp
p
barriolage
p
mp
pp
p


Stark, intense
♩ = ca. 104
(8va)
123
loco
harsh
ff
ff
harsh
ff
pp


126
ossia:
leave out the lower note (in parantheses)
ossia:
leave out the lower note (in parantheses)
harsh
ff
heavy, harsh
ff < sfffz
129
ord.
p
gliss.
ord.
p
ossia:
leave out the lower note (in parantheses)
ord.
p
pp
fff
f
p sub.

133

Driving, steady ♩ = ca. 120



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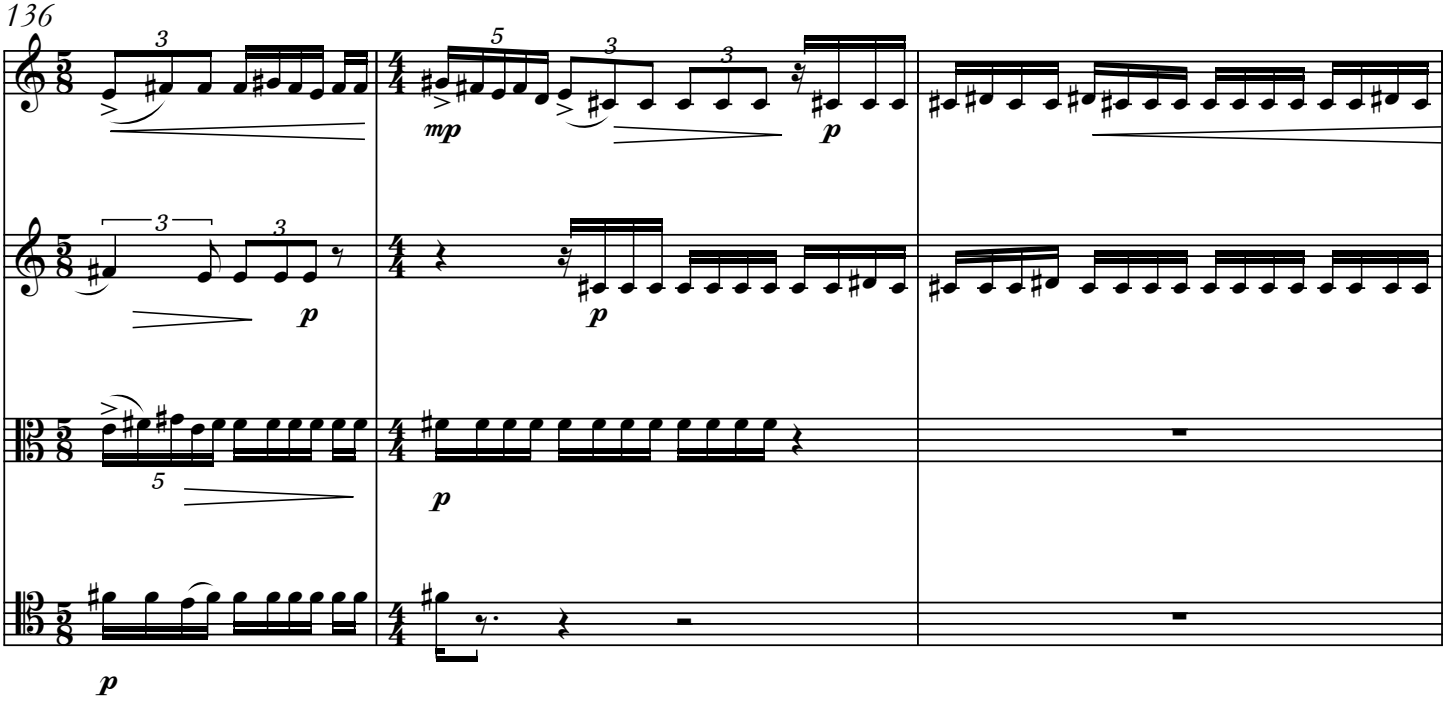

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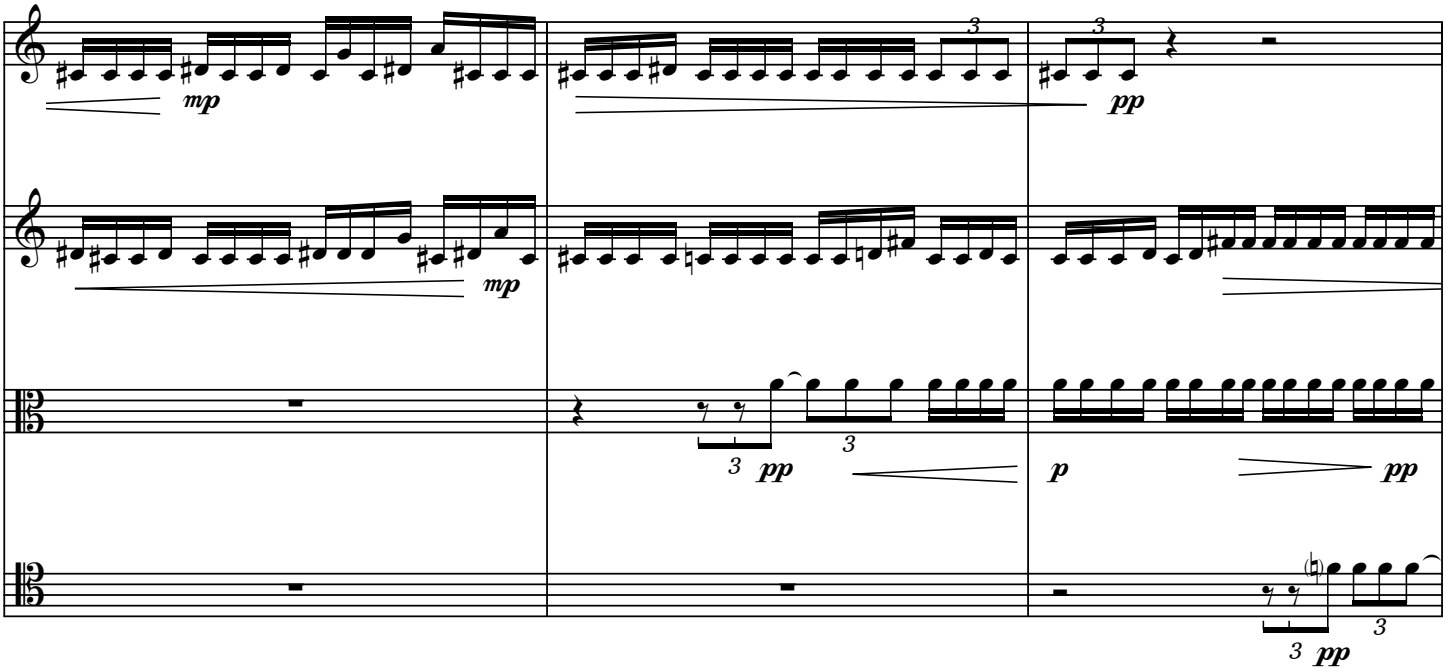

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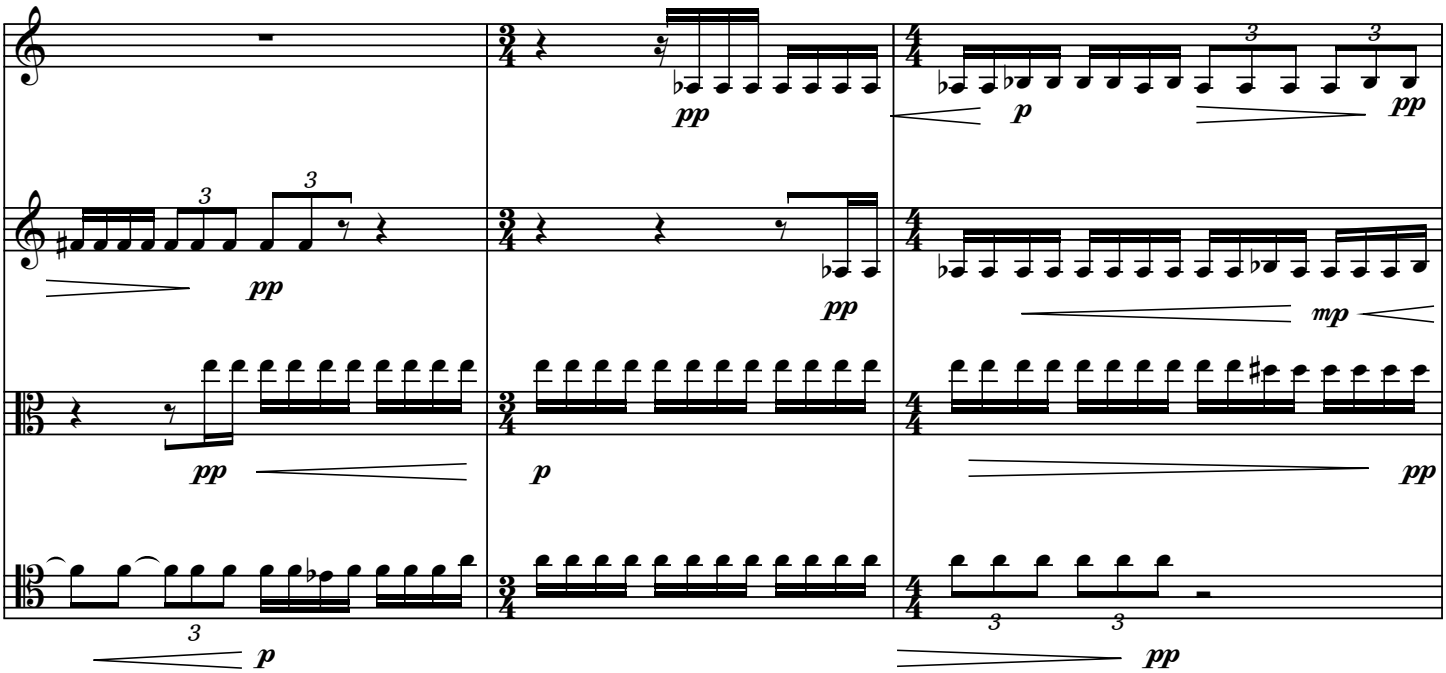
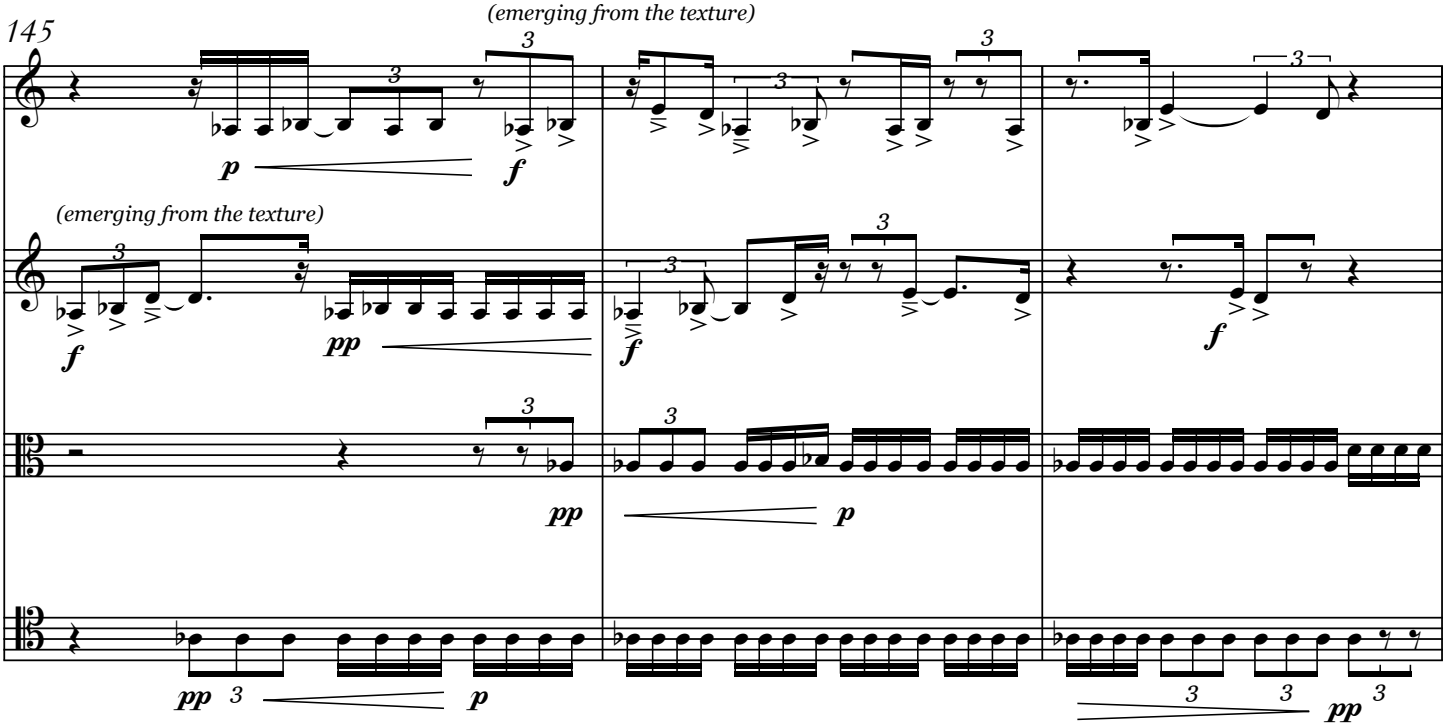
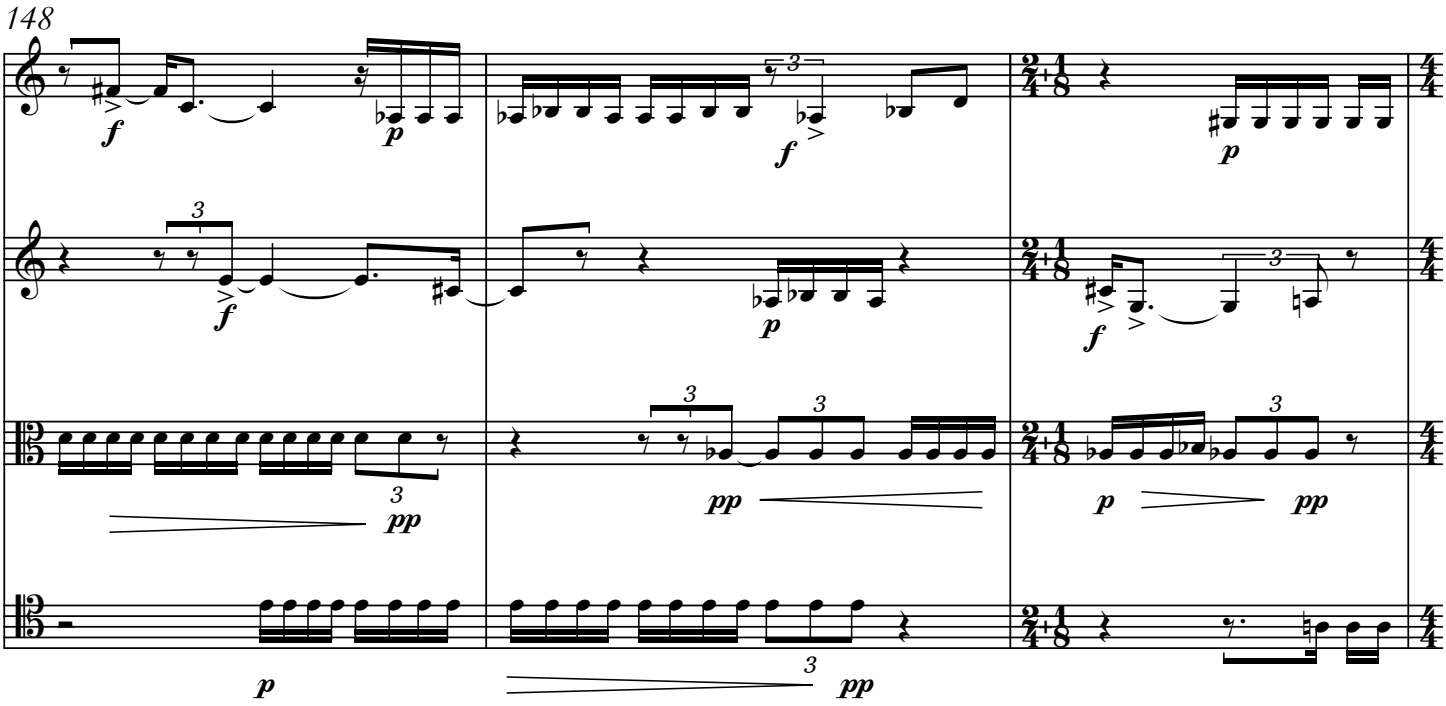
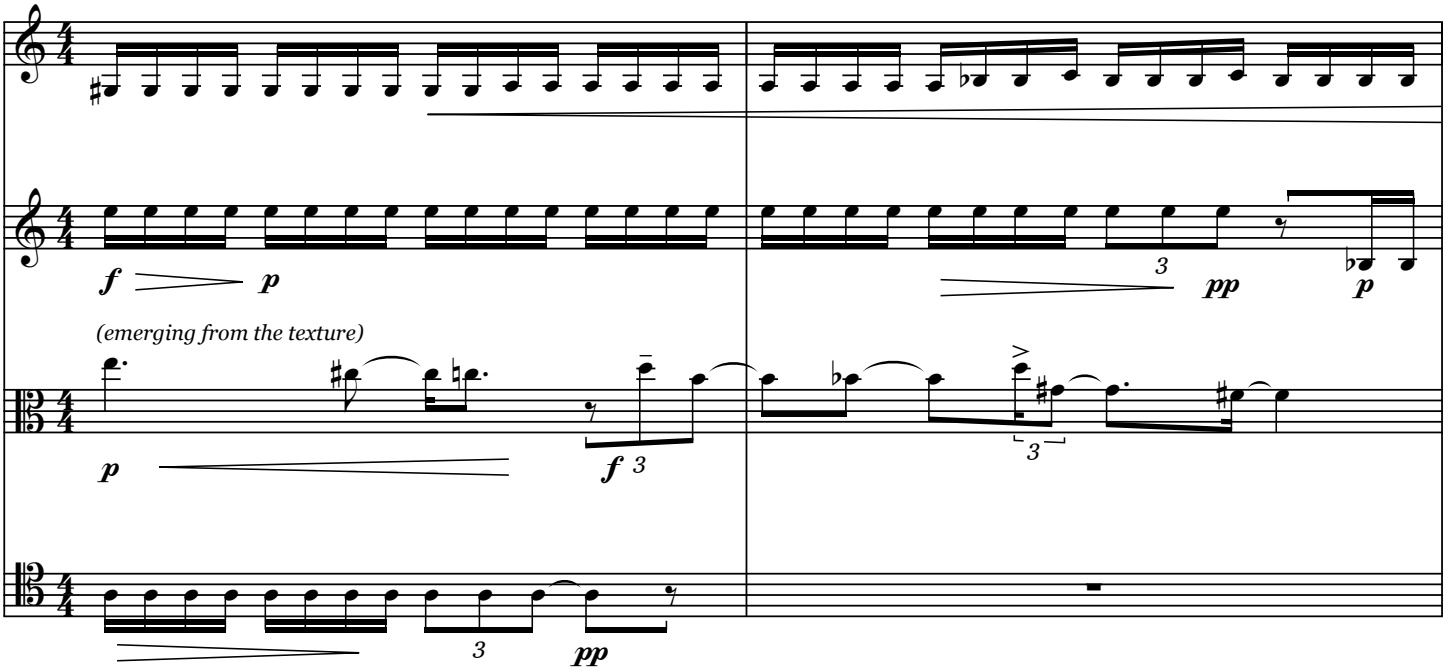


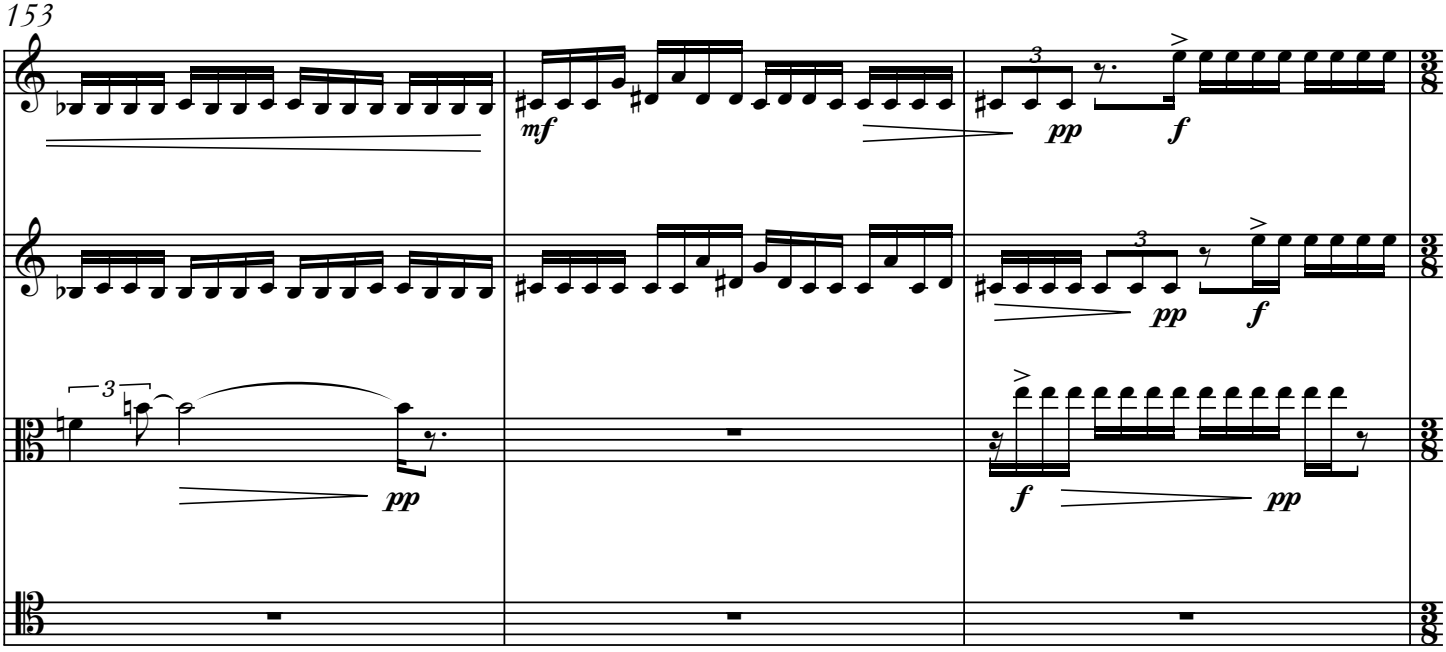

145
(emerging from the texture)
(emerging from the texture)


148

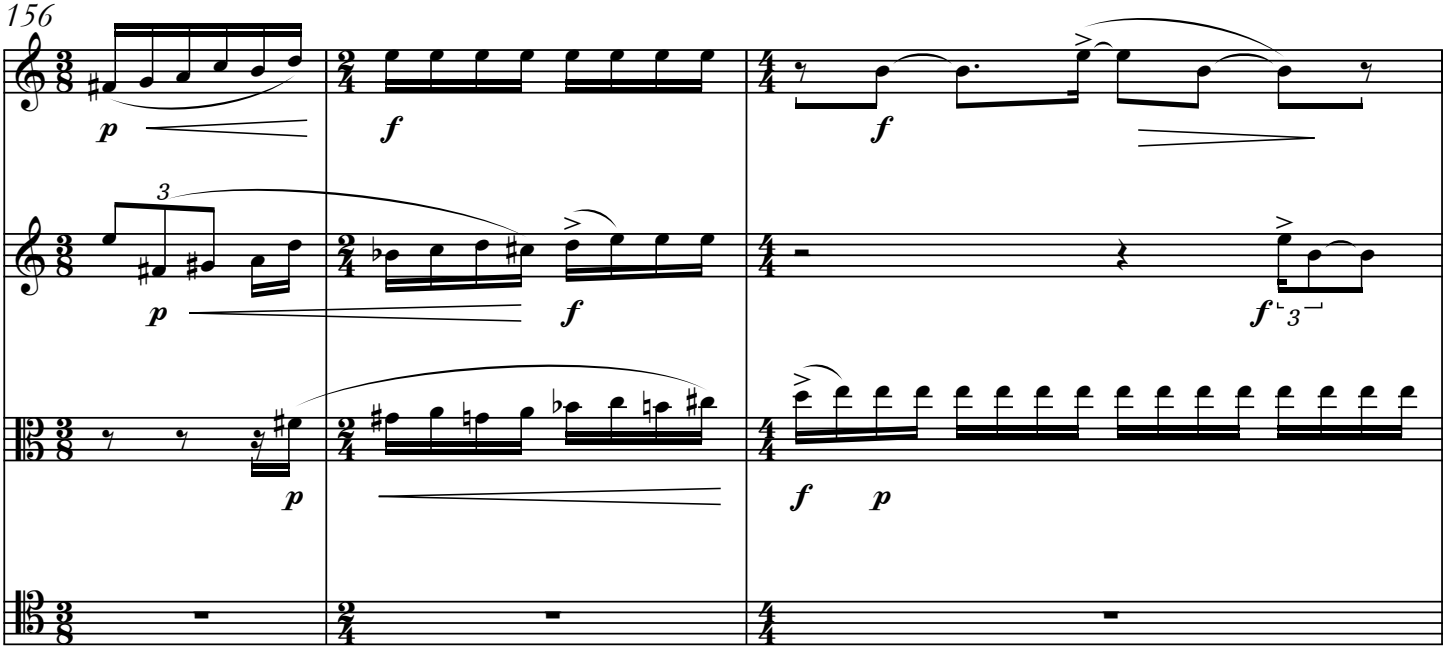
151



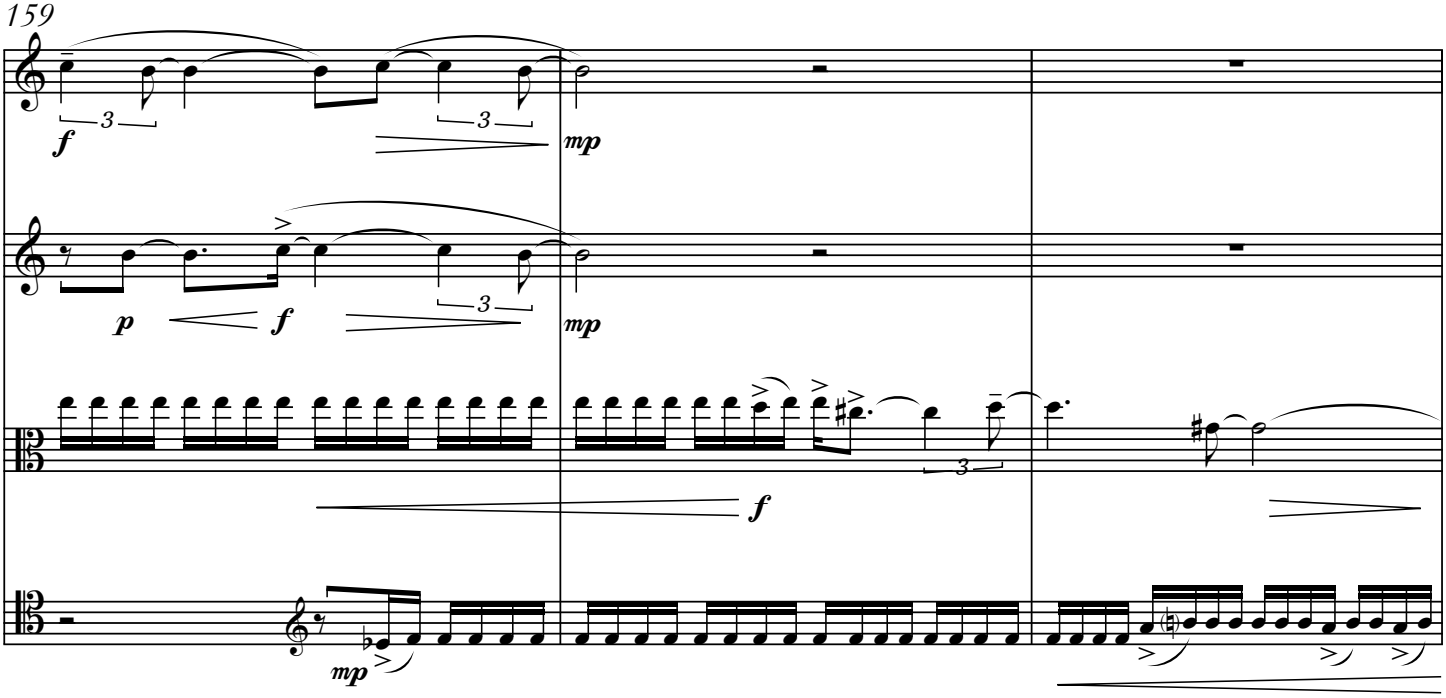
153

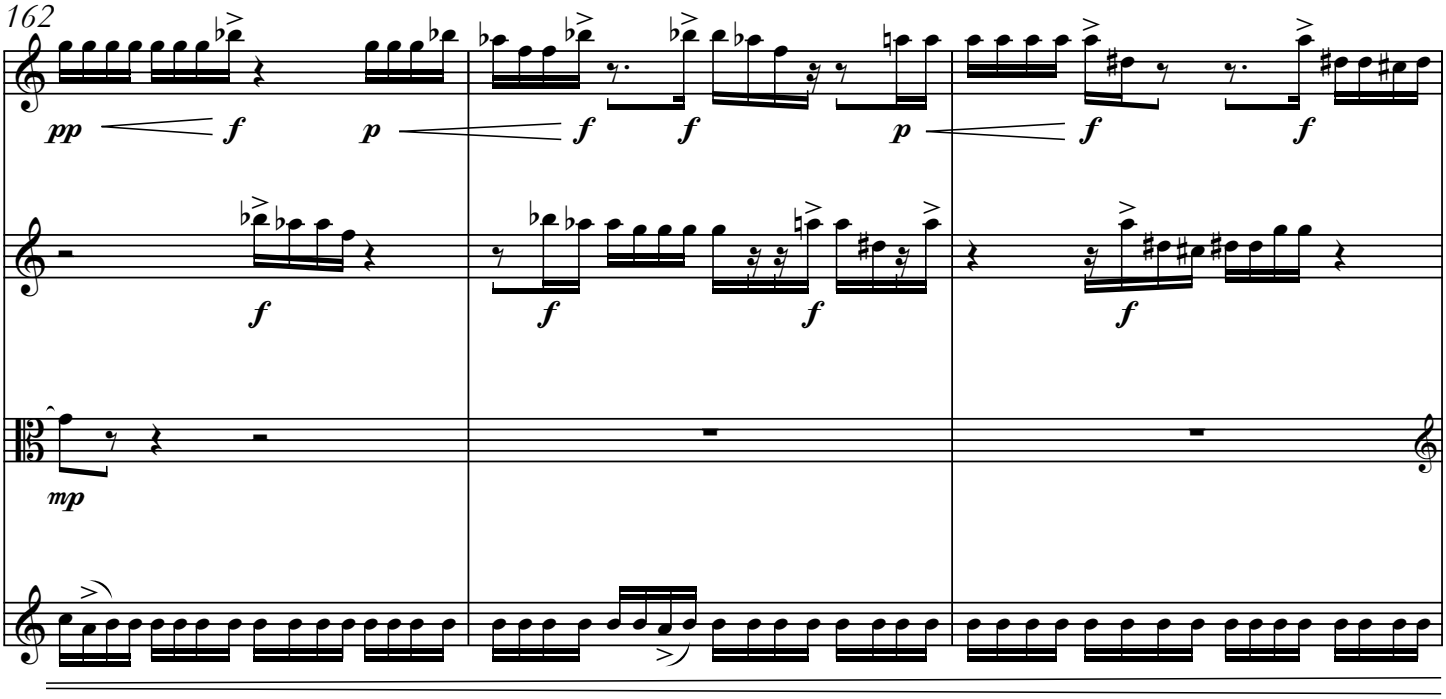


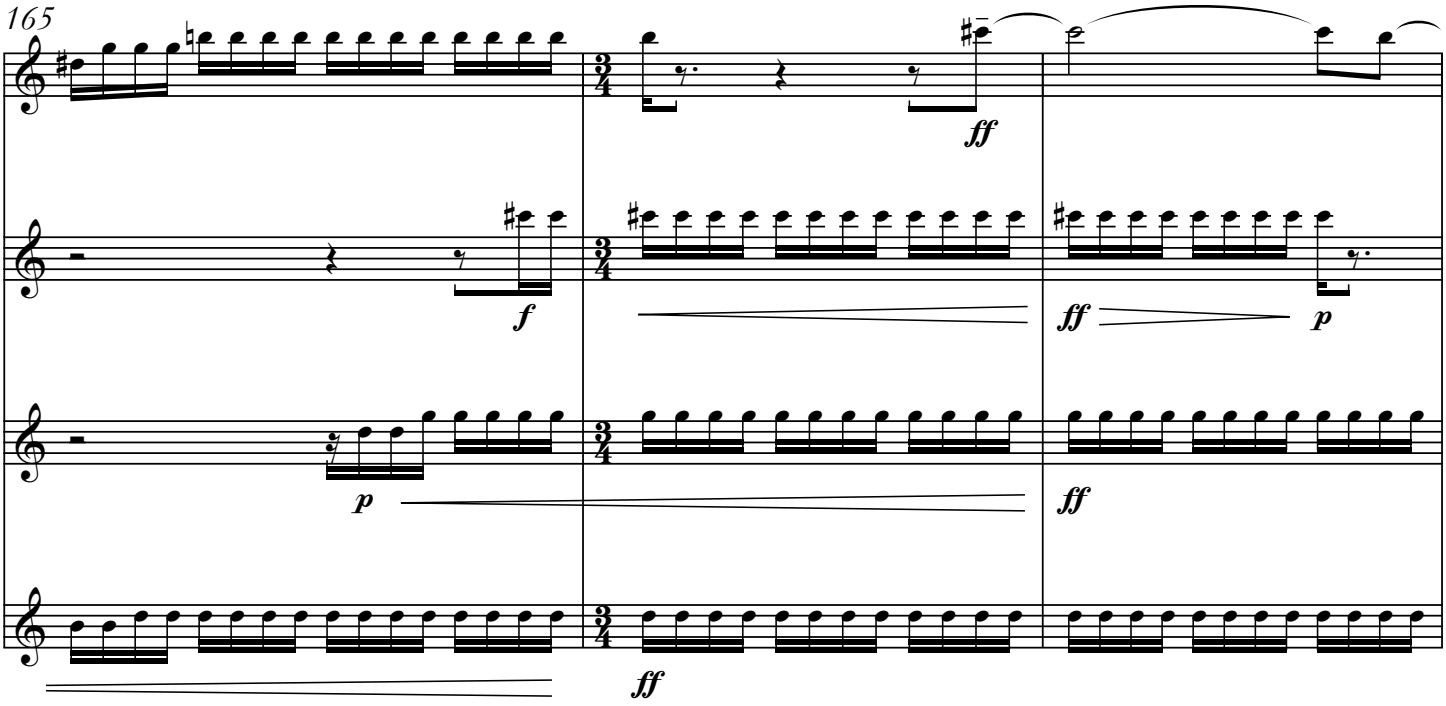
156

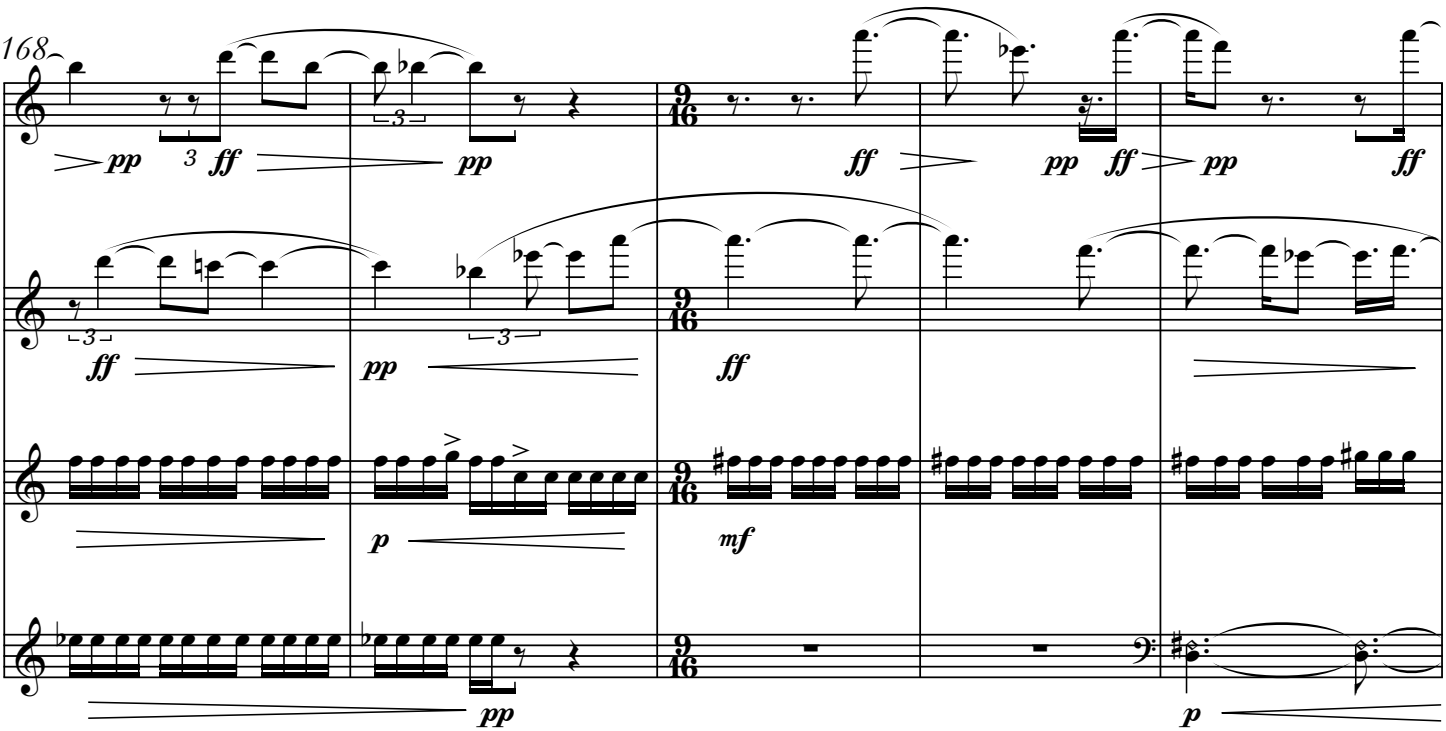


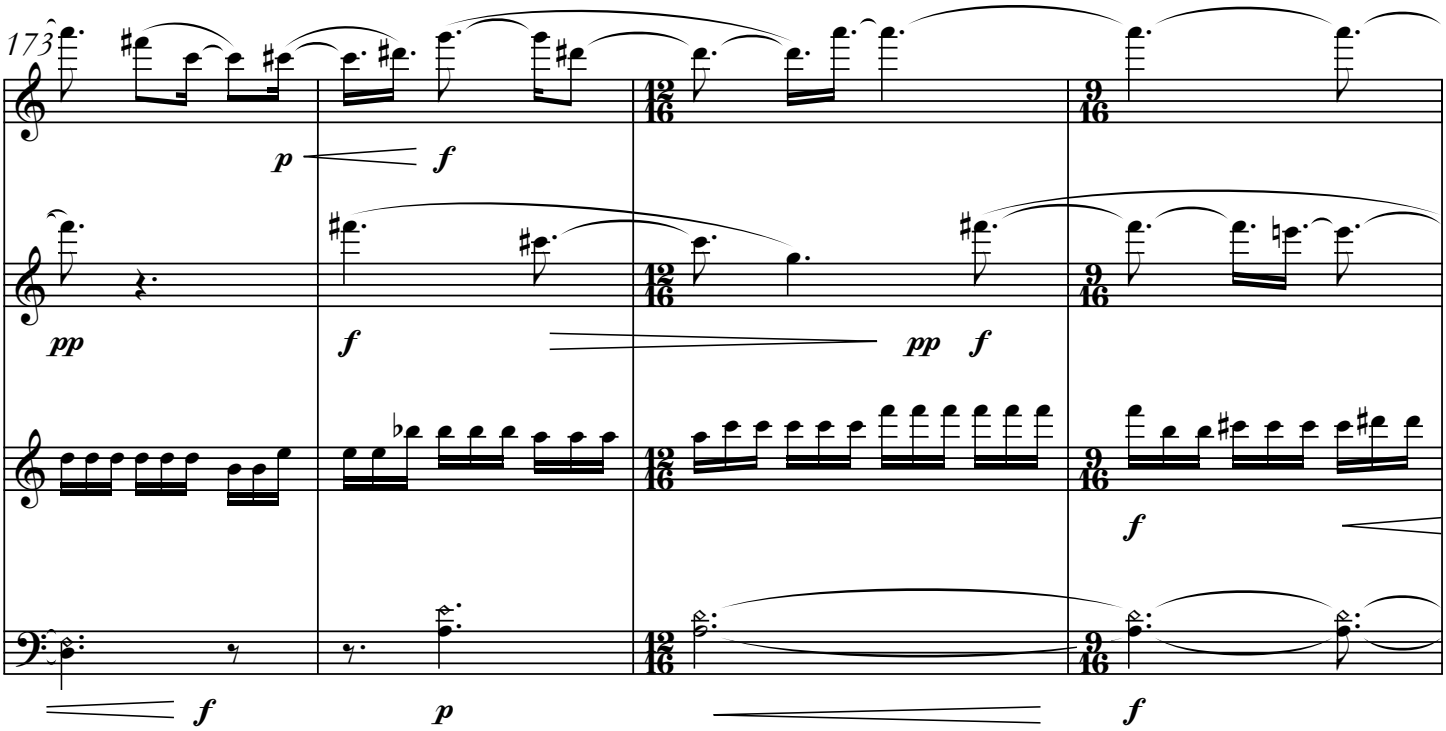
159

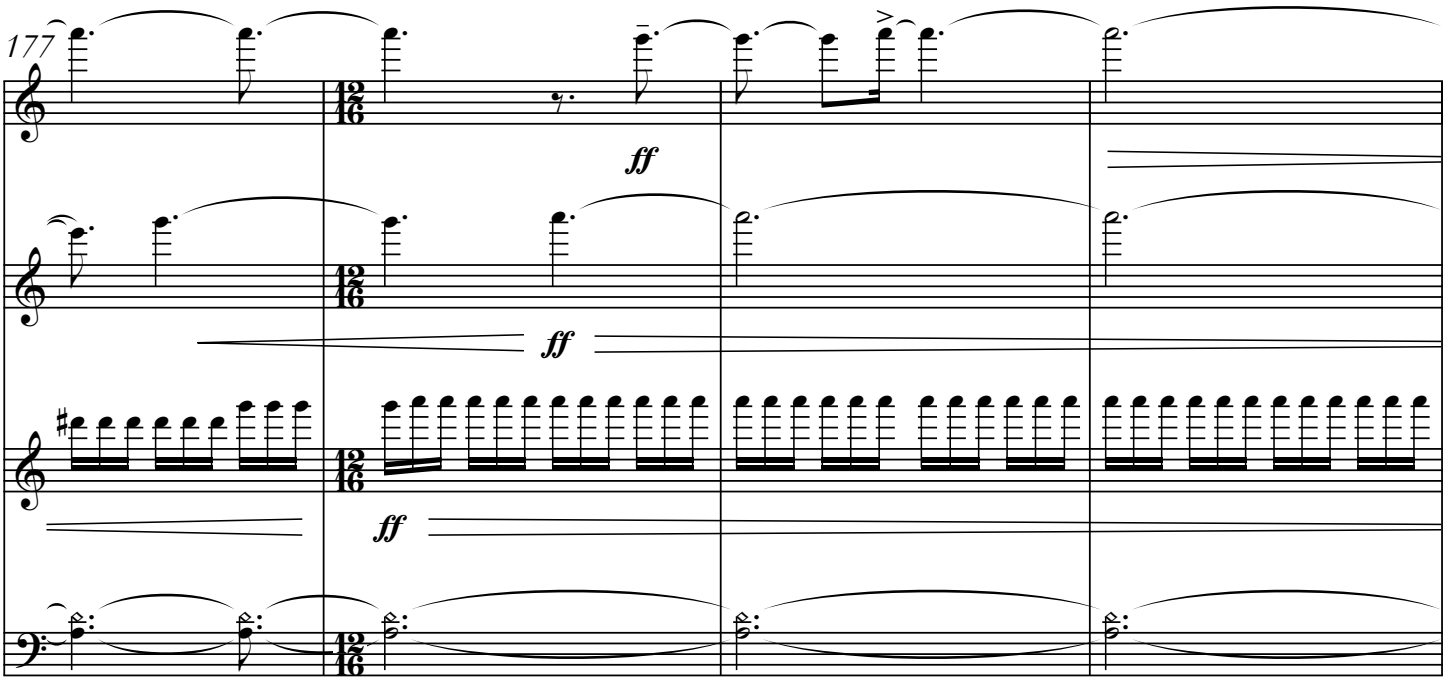


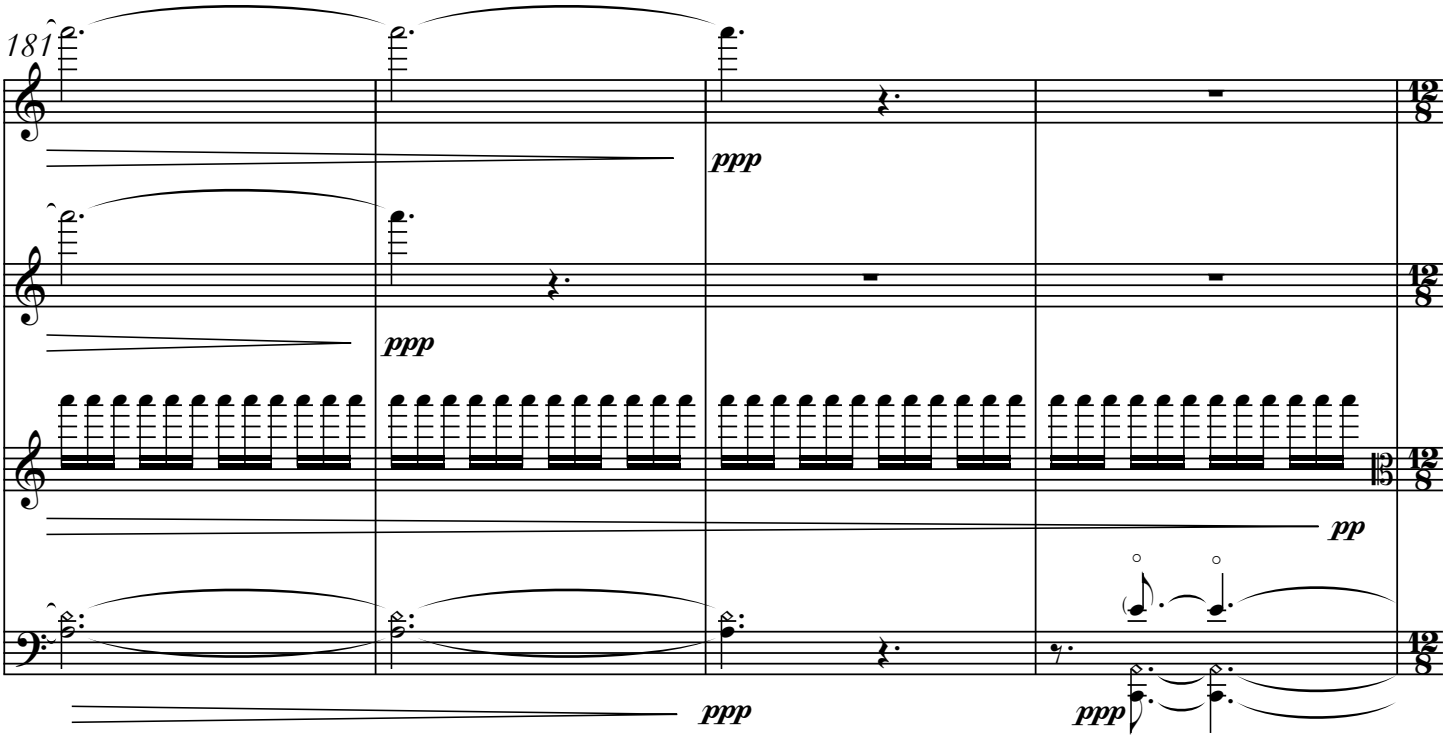

162
pp
f
p
f
f
p
f
f
f
f
f
f
mp

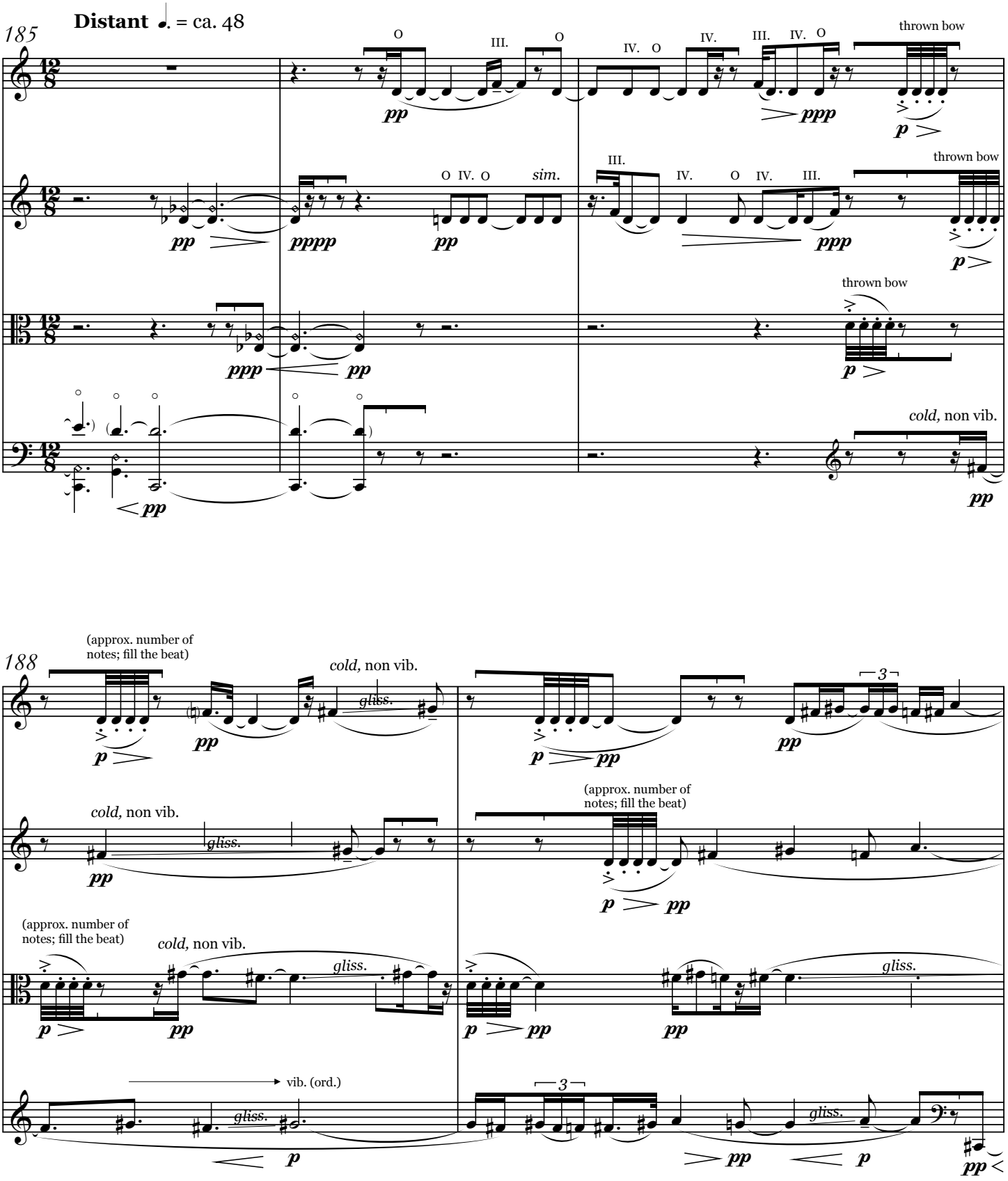

165
ff
f
ff
p
p
ff
ff

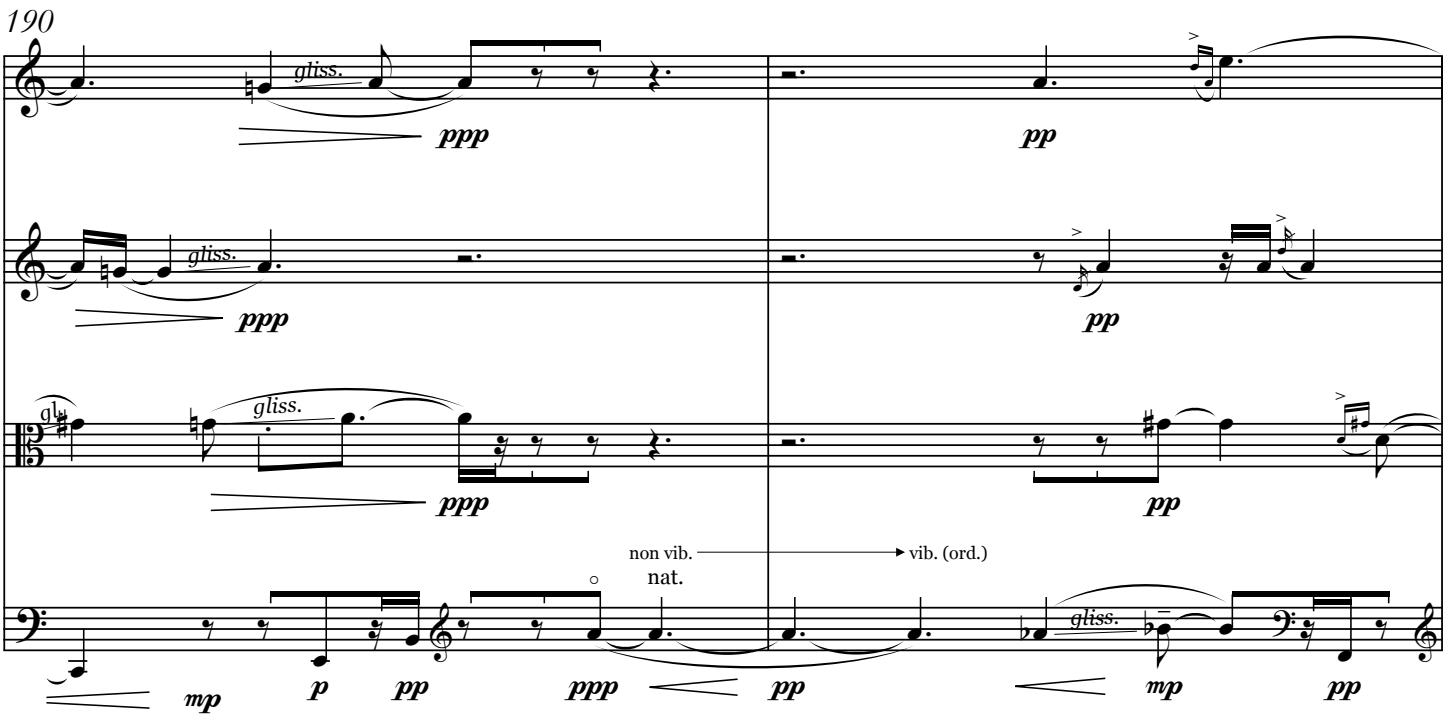

168
pp
ff
pp
ff
pp
ff
pp
ff
ff
pp
ff
p
mf
pp
p

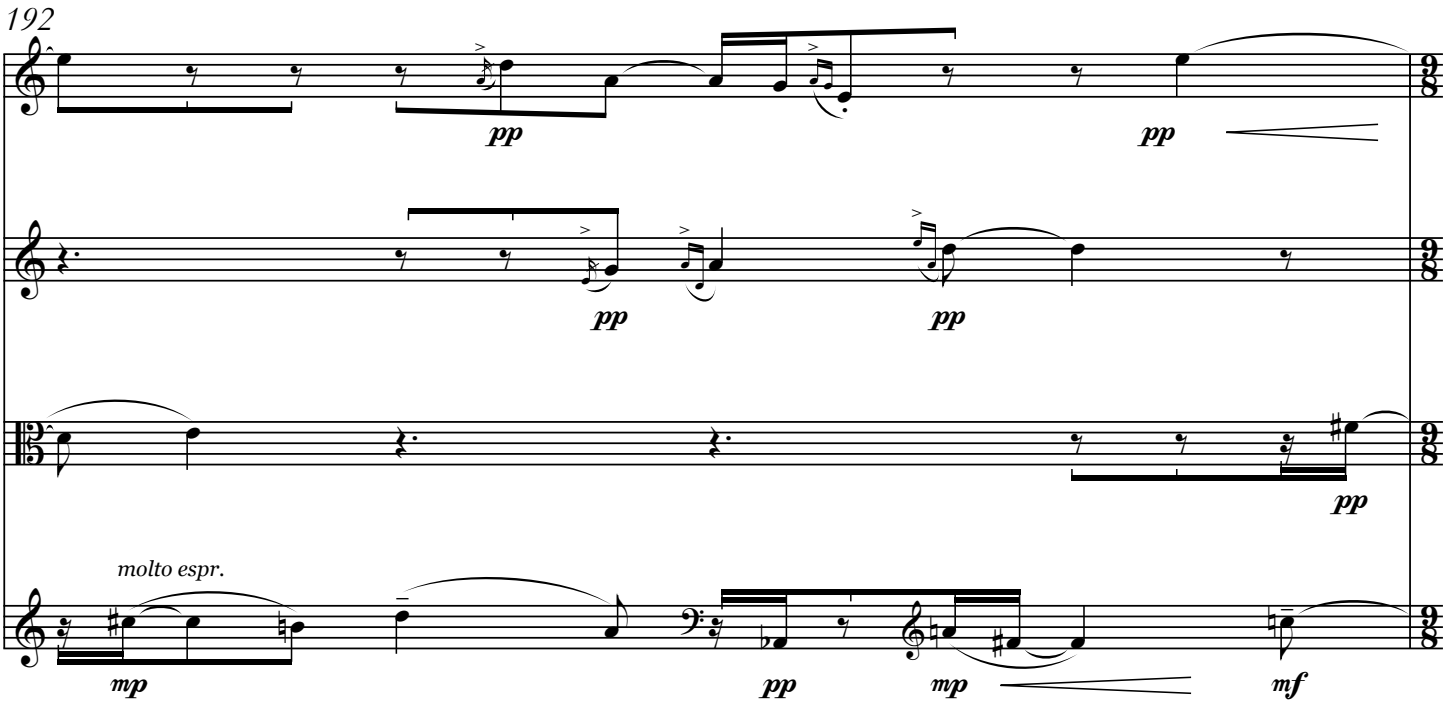

173
p
f
pp
f
pp
f
f
f
p
f

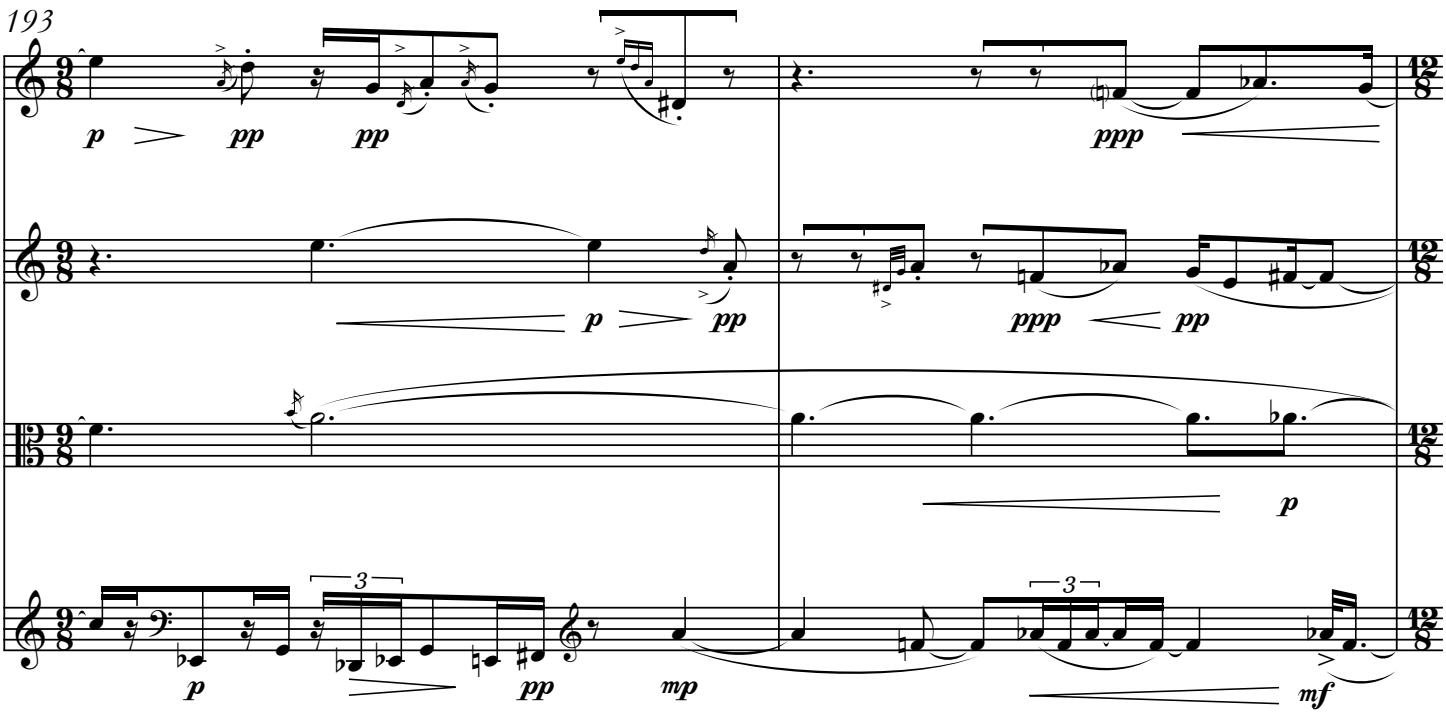

177
ff
ff
ff

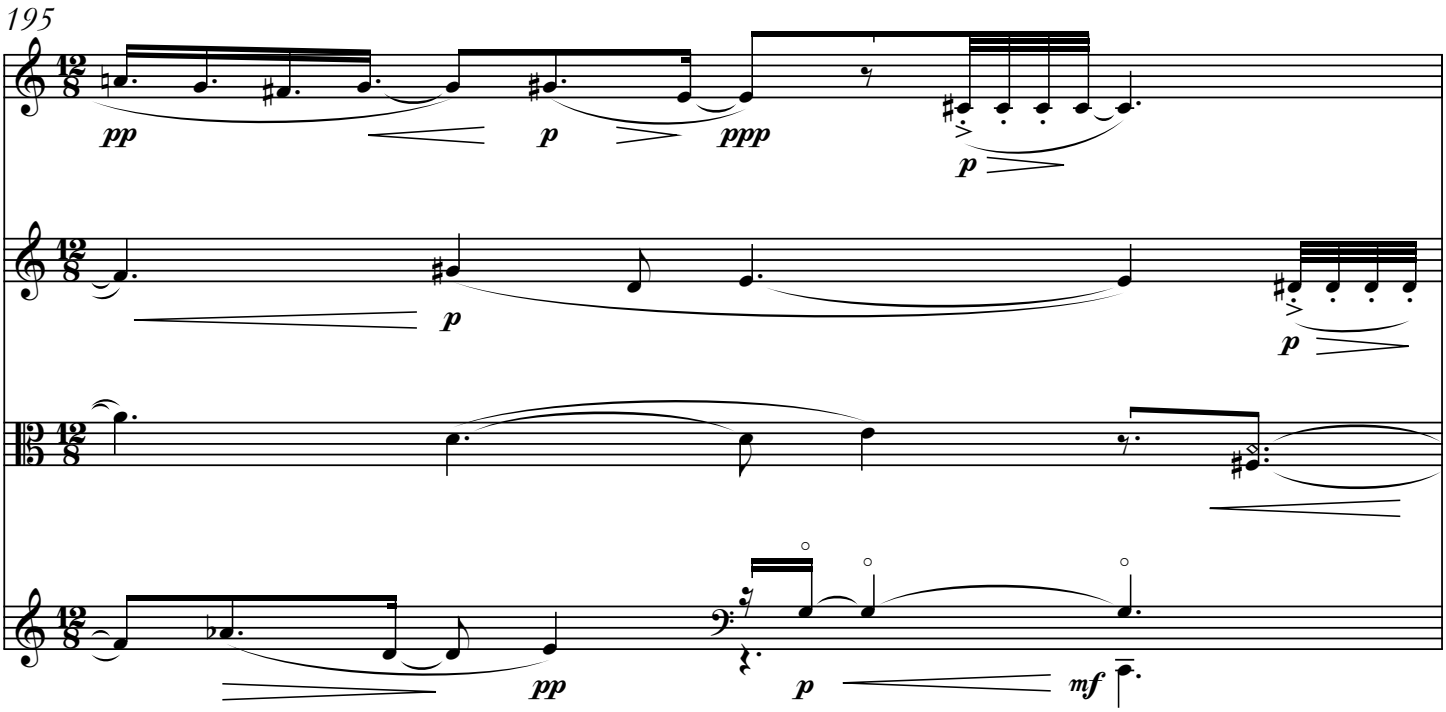

181
ppp
ppp
pp
ppp
ppp

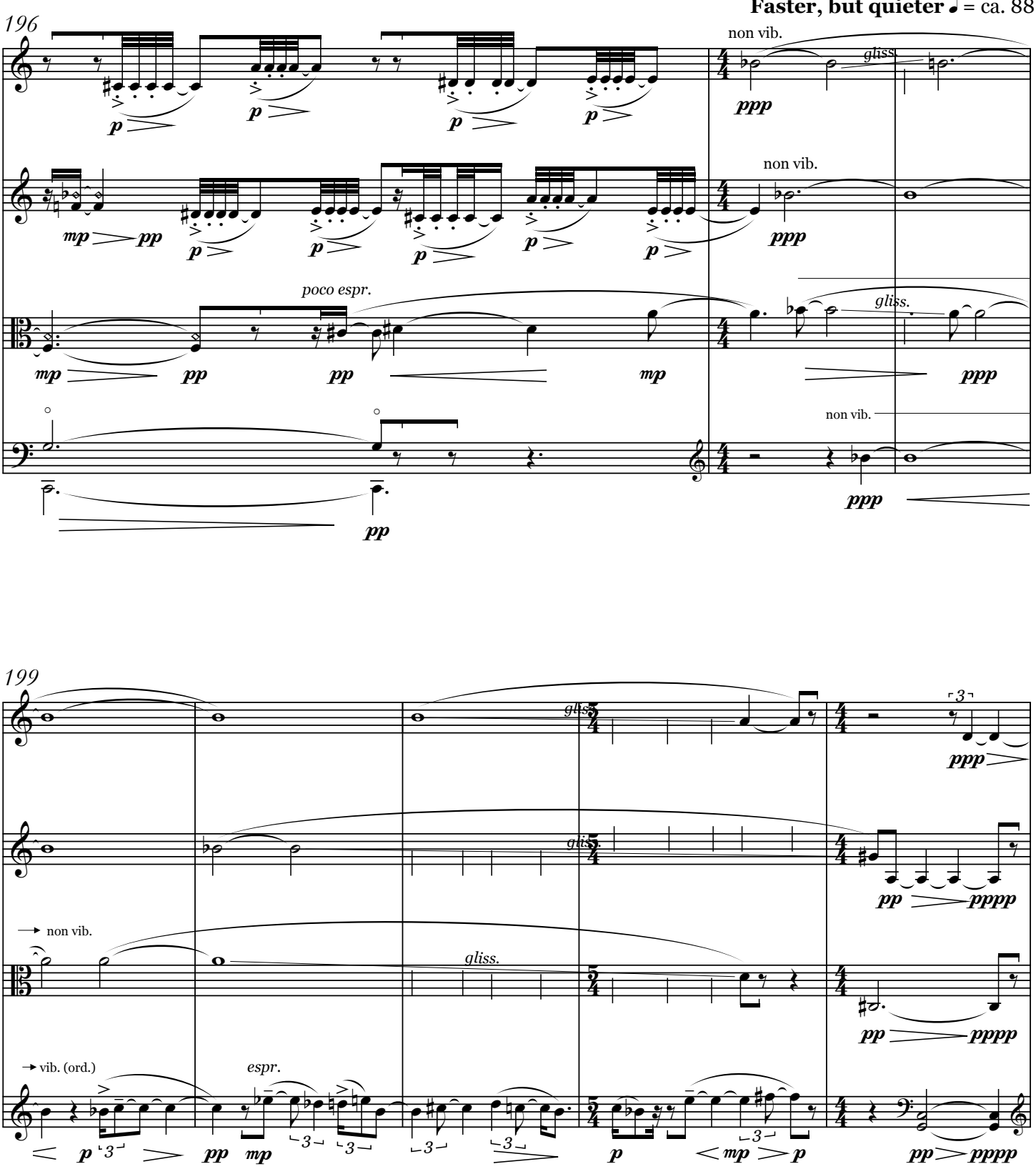

185
Distant ♩. = ca. 48
thrown bow
sim.
cold, non vib.
188
(approx. number of notes; fill the beat)
cold, non vib.
gliss.
vib. (ord.)


190
gliss.
ppp
pp
gliss.
ppp
pp
gliss.
ppp
pp
non vib.
nat.
vib. (ord.)
gliss.
mp
p
pp
ppp
pp
mp
pp


192
pp
pp
pp
pp
pp
molto espr.
mp
pp
mp
mf


193
p
pp
pp
ppp
p
pp
ppp
pp
p
p
3
pp
mp
3
mf


195
pp
p
ppp
p
p
p
pp
p
mf


Faster, but quieter ♩ = ca. 88
196
non vib.
gliss.
ppp
non vib.
ppp
poco espr.
gliss.
ppp
non vib.
ppp
199
gliss.
ppp
gliss.
pp
pppp
non vib.
gliss.
pp
pppp
vib. (ord.)
espr.
pp
mp
p
mp
p
pp
pppp

A bit faster ♩ = ca. 96

204

pppp

left hand tremolando on harmonics;
notes are free, in random order

p *pp*

espr.

p

3

205

left hand tremolando on harmonics;
notes are free, in random order

p *pp*

left hand tremolando on harmonics;
notes are free, in random order

p *pp*

pp

3 3 3

mp *pp*

as before, but continue glissando (left hand harmonic tremolando, grabbing whatever harmonics the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th fingers can manage, while continuing gliss.)

206

half-fingered; don't push the string all the way down (until m. 220)

gliss.

pp *insubstantial*

p **pp**

half-fingered; don't push the string all the way down (until m. 220)

gliss.

pp *insubstantial*

half-fingered; don't push the string all the way down (until m. 220)

p **pp**

gliss.

insubstantial

p

3

pp **mp**

3

p

3

209

Faster ♩ = ca. 104

(change bow as needed)

non vib.

gliss.

pp **p** **pp**

ppp

pp

(change bow as needed)

non vib.

gliss.

pp

ppp

pp

IV.

3

gliss.

pp

ppp > **n**

non vib.

pp

mp

3

3

pp

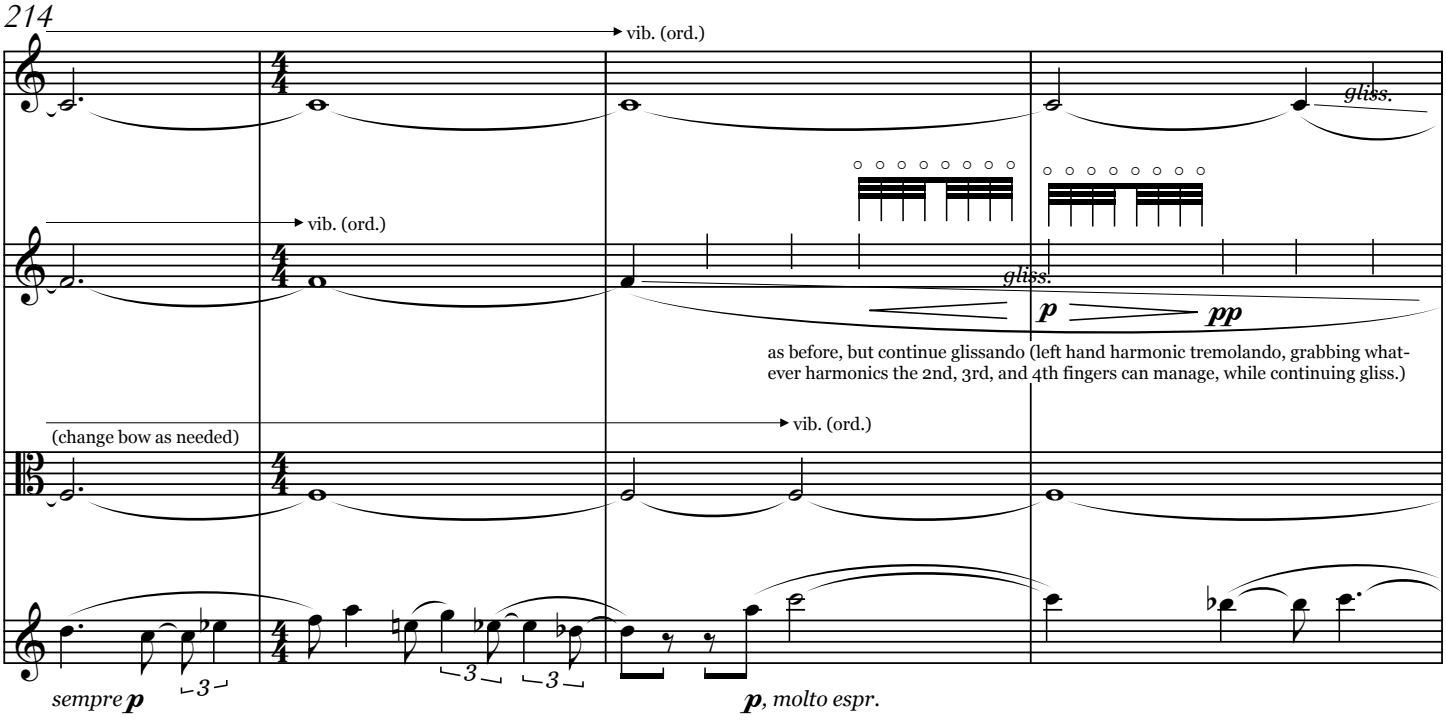
O

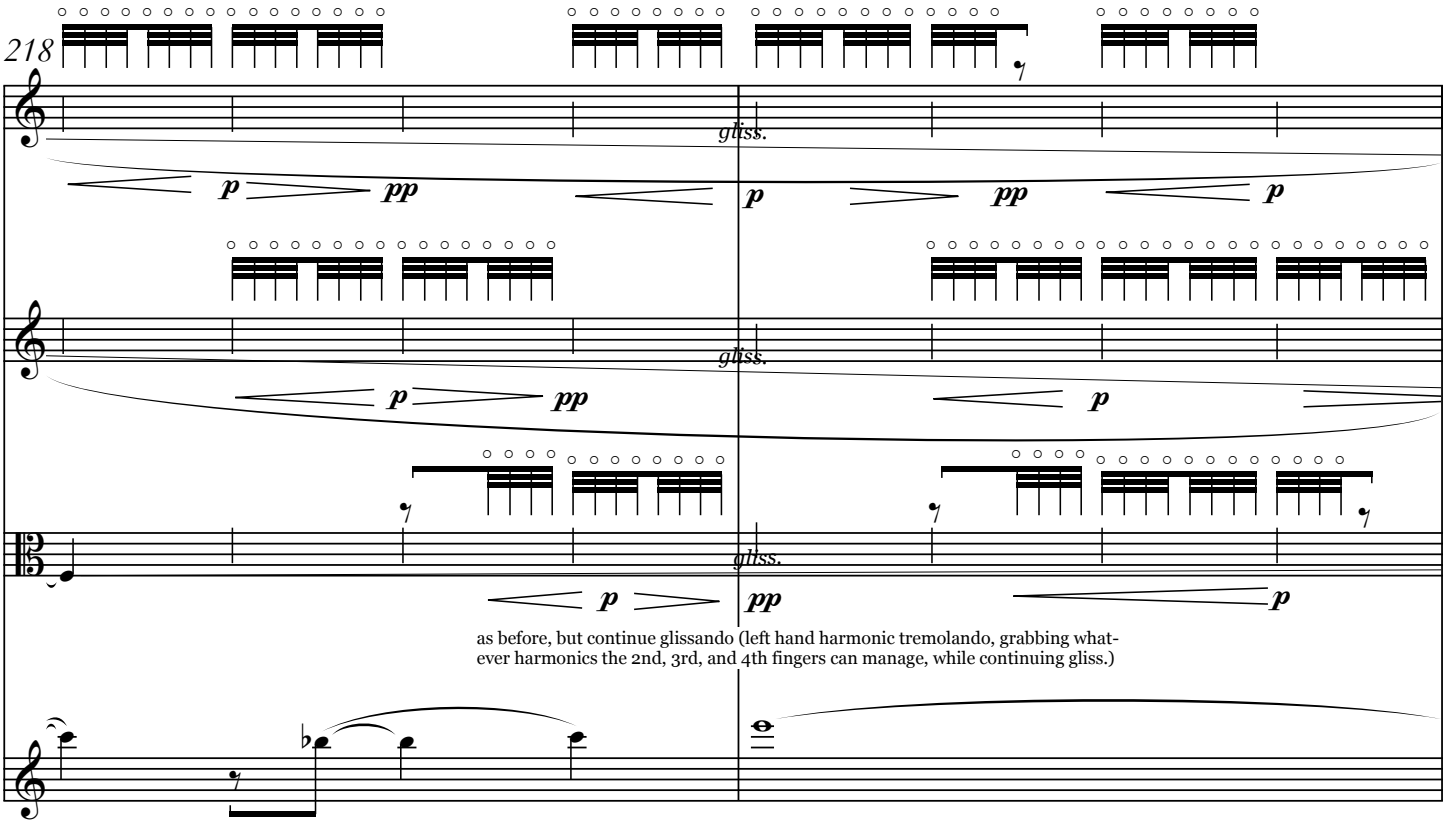
3 **pp** > **ppp**

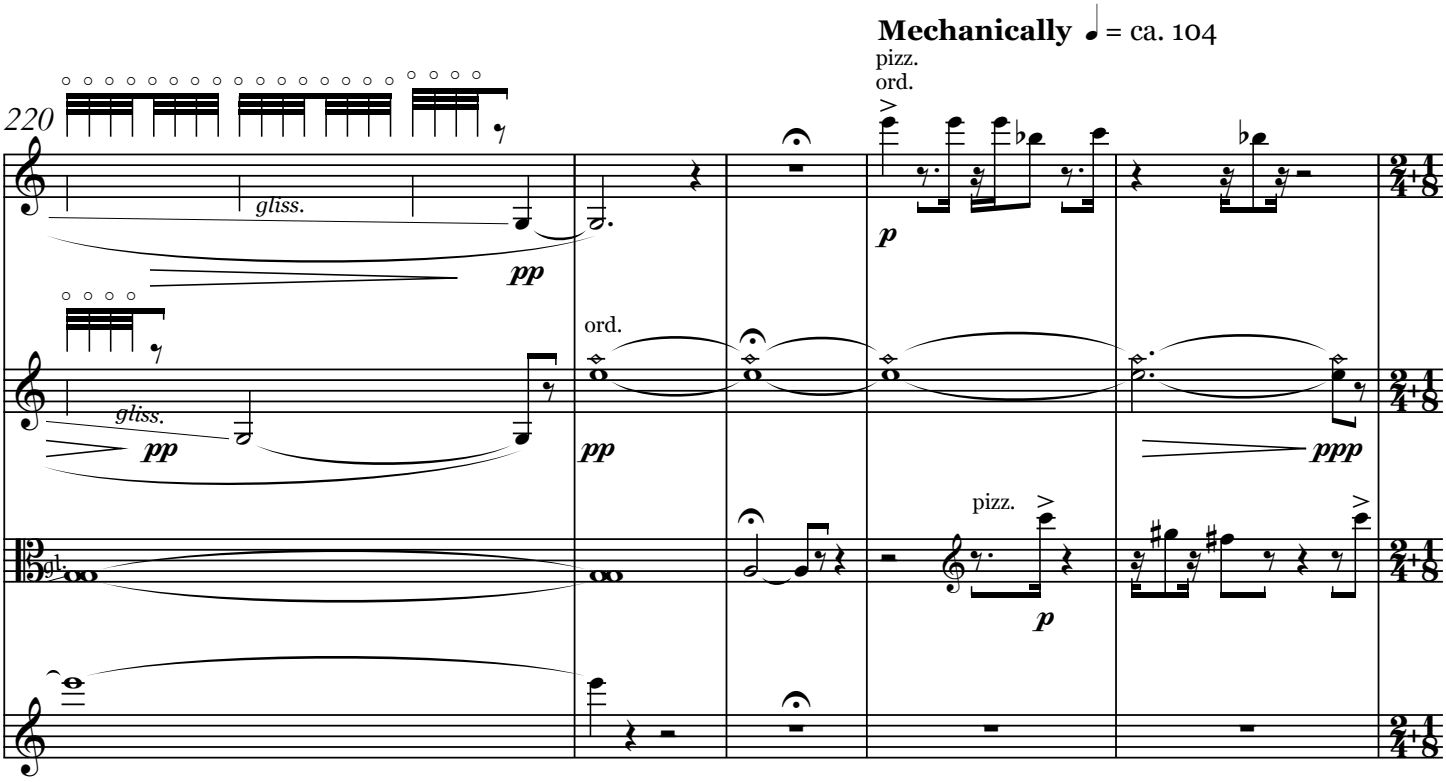
3

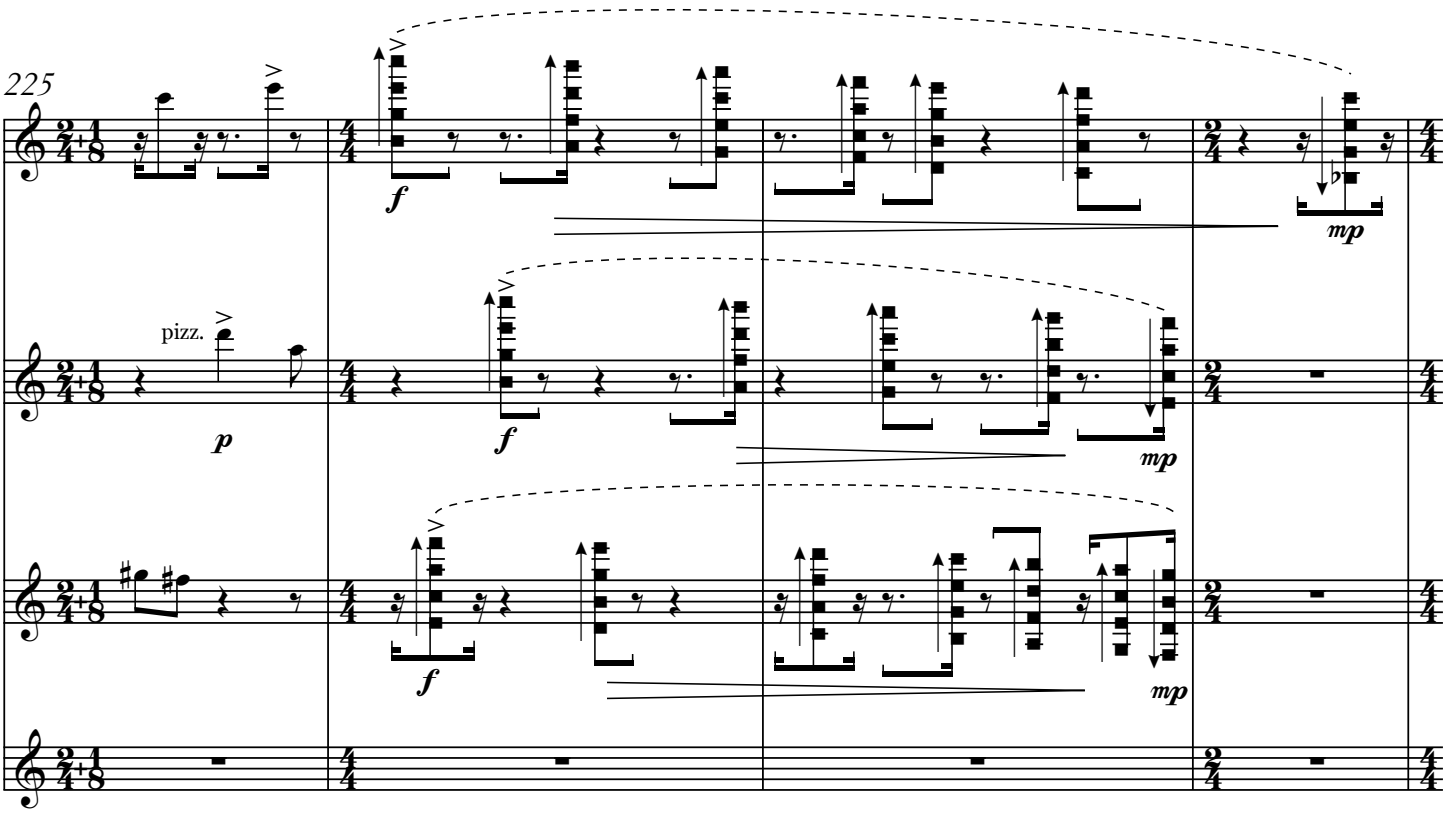
p, *dolce, espr.*

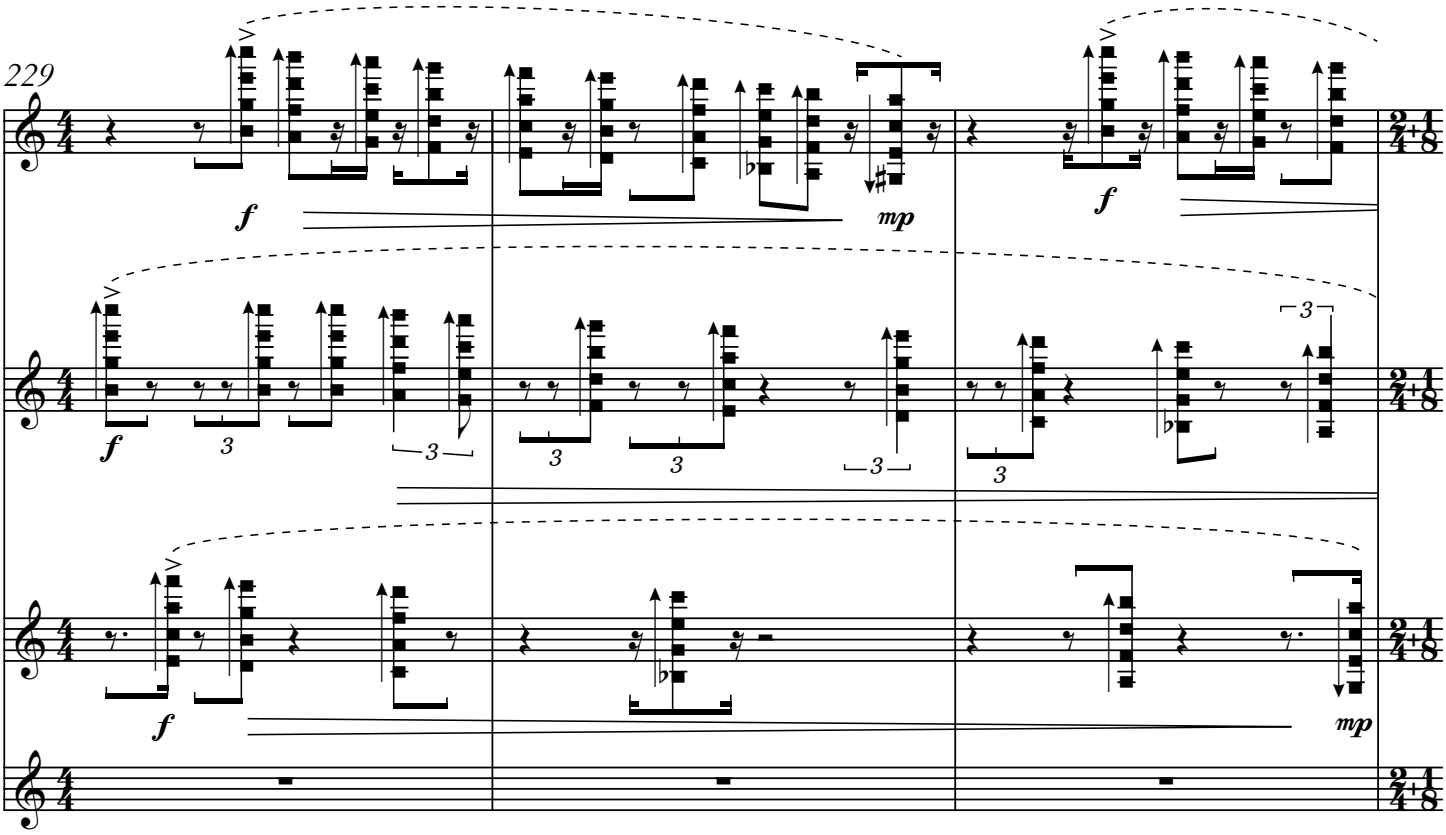
3


214
vib. (ord.)
gliss.
vib. (ord.)
gliss.
p
pp
as before, but continue glissando (left hand harmonic tremolando, grabbing whatever harmonics the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th fingers can manage, while continuing gliss.)
(change bow as needed)
vib. (ord.)
sempre p
3
3
3
p, molto espr.


218
gliss.
p
pp
p
pp
p
gliss.
p
pp
p
gliss.
p
pp
p
as before, but continue glissando (left hand harmonic tremolando, grabbing whatever harmonics the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th fingers can manage, while continuing gliss.)

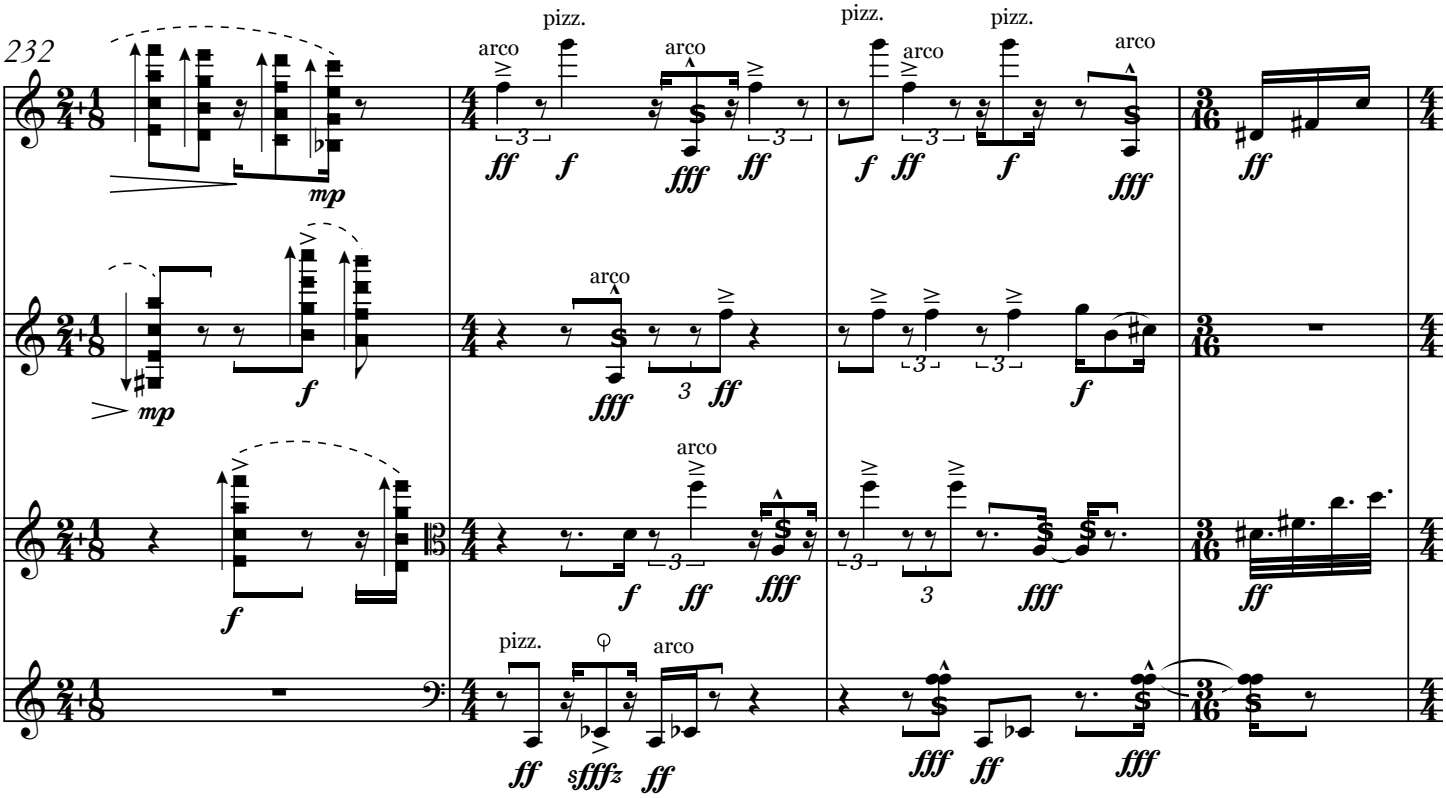

Mechanically ♩ = ca. 104
220
pizz.
ord.
gliss.
pp
ord.
pp
gliss.
pp
ppp
pizz.
p
p

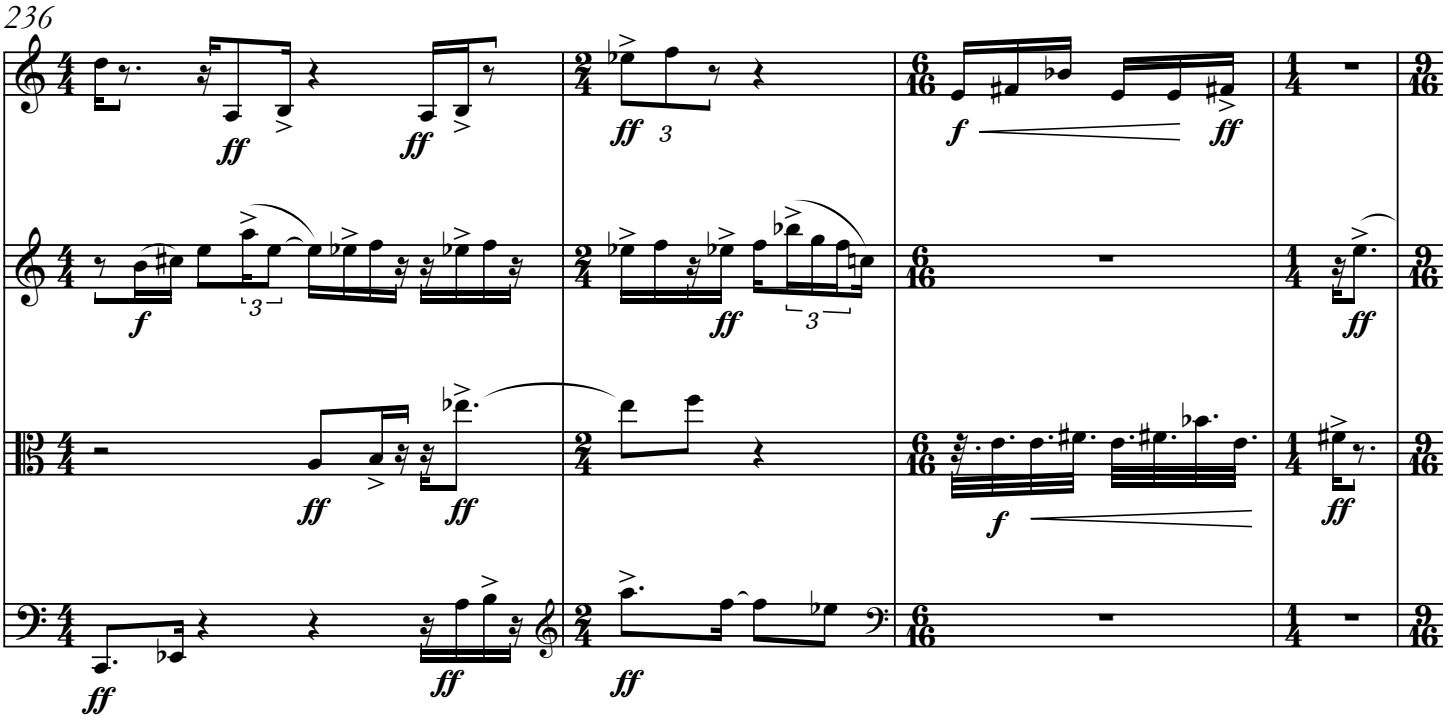

225
f
mp
pizz.
p
f
mp
f
mp

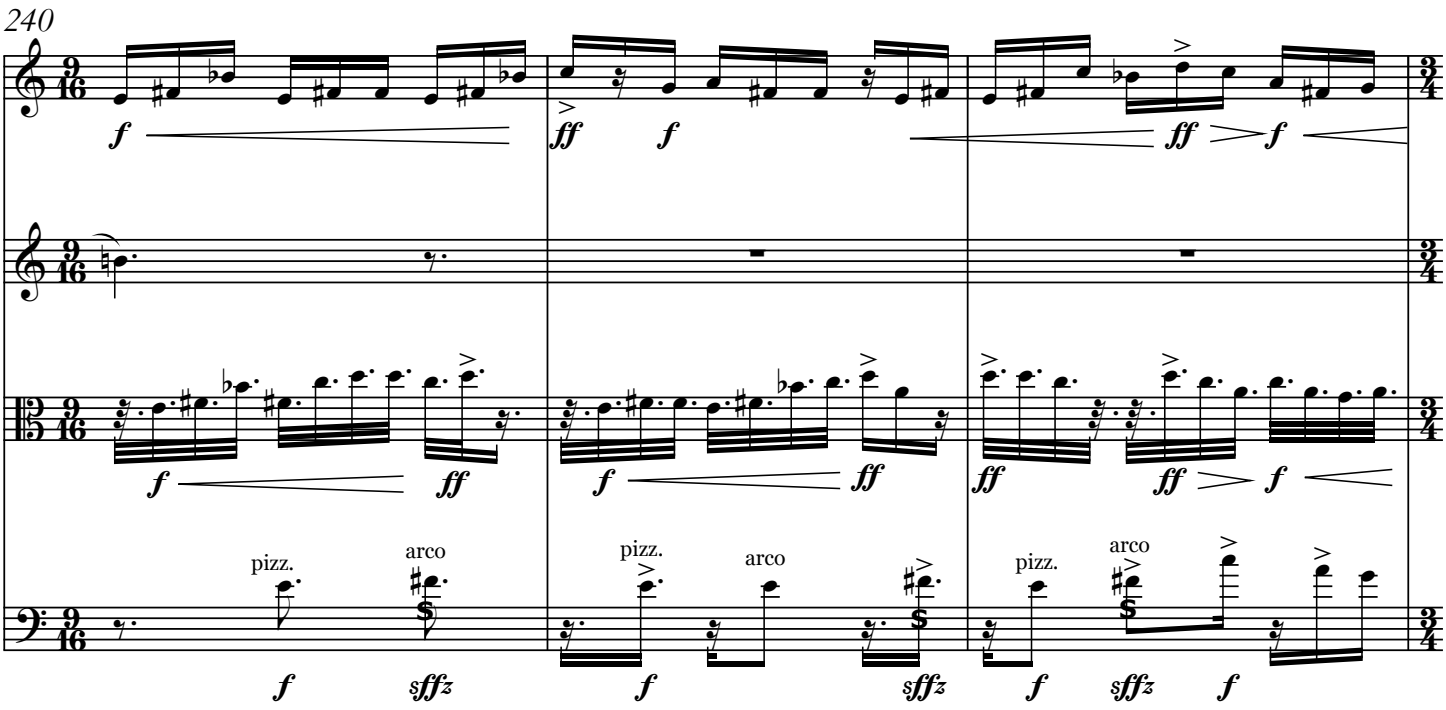


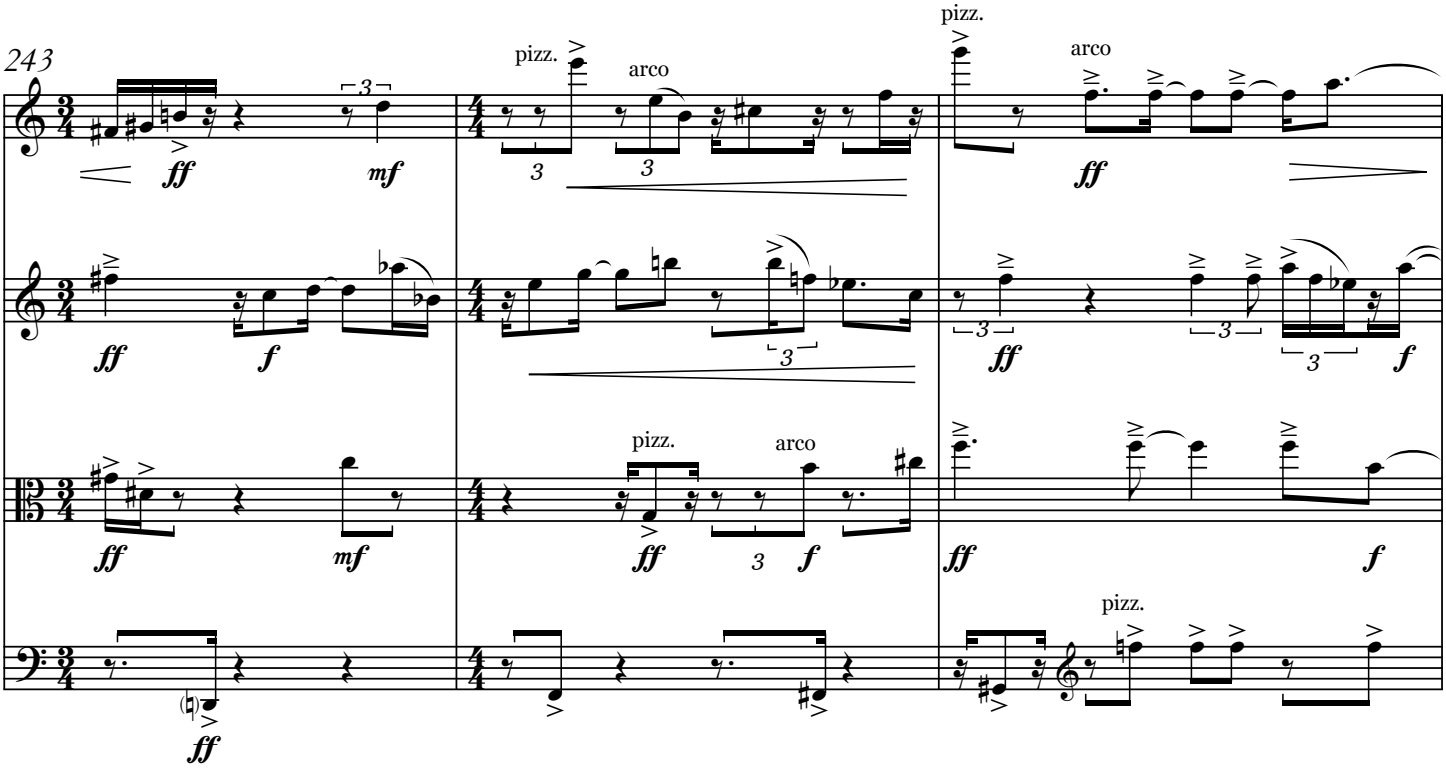
Twitchier, jumpier than before

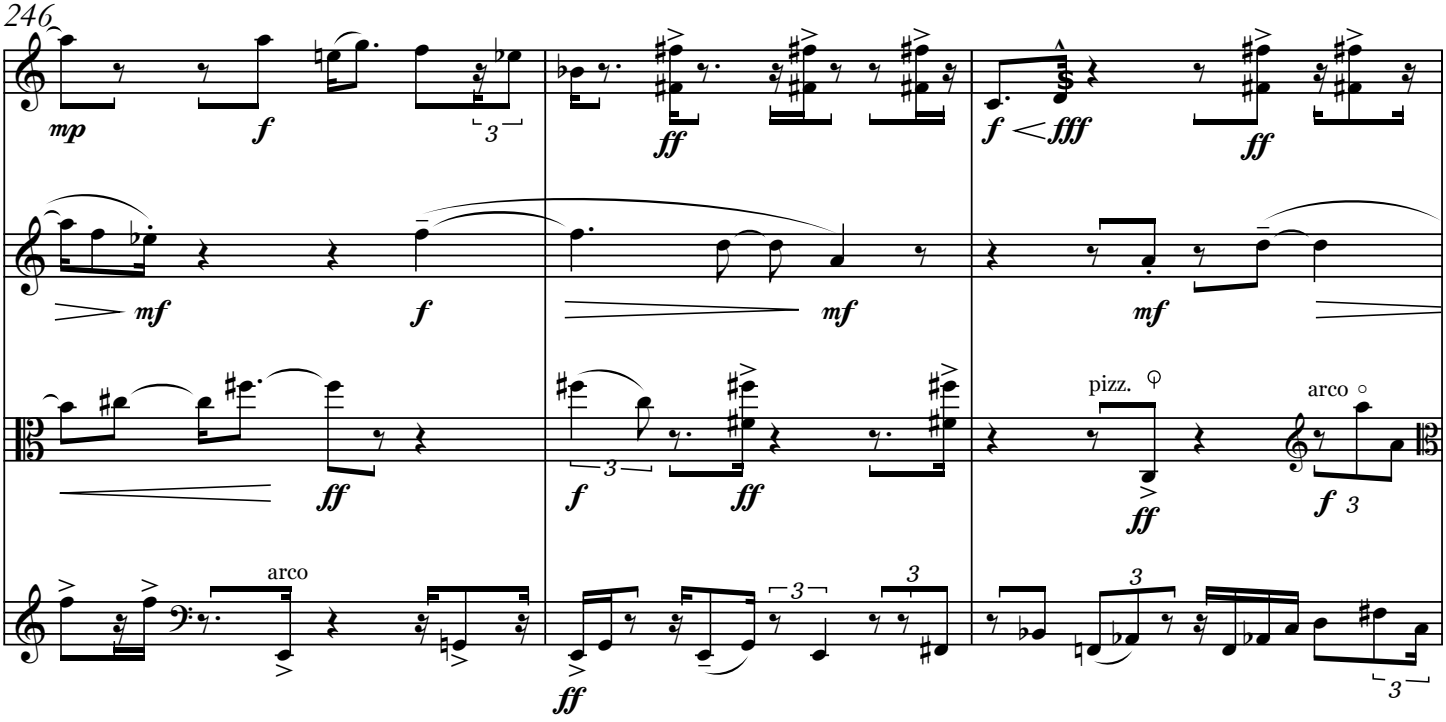
(but still ♩ = ca. 96–104)

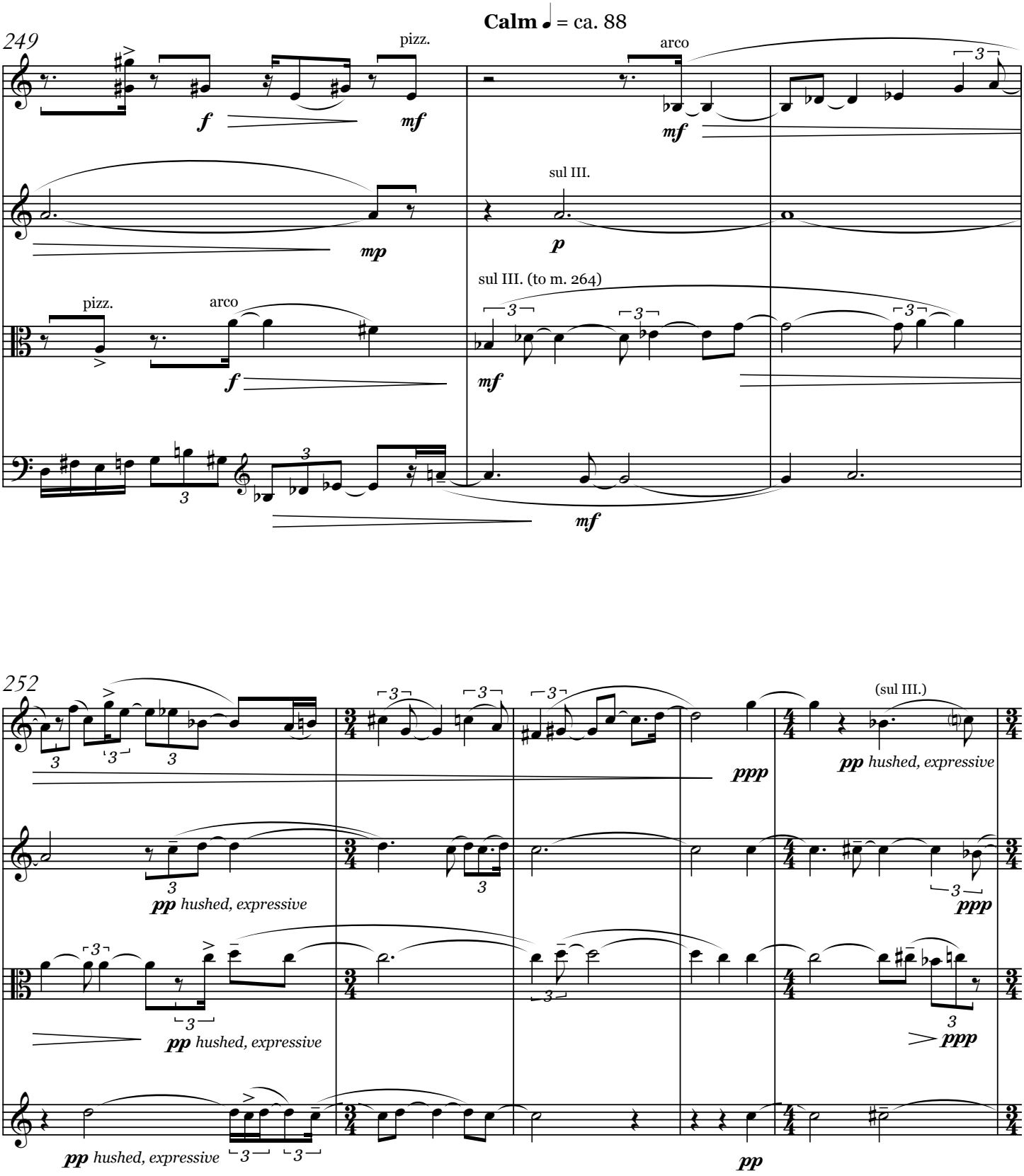


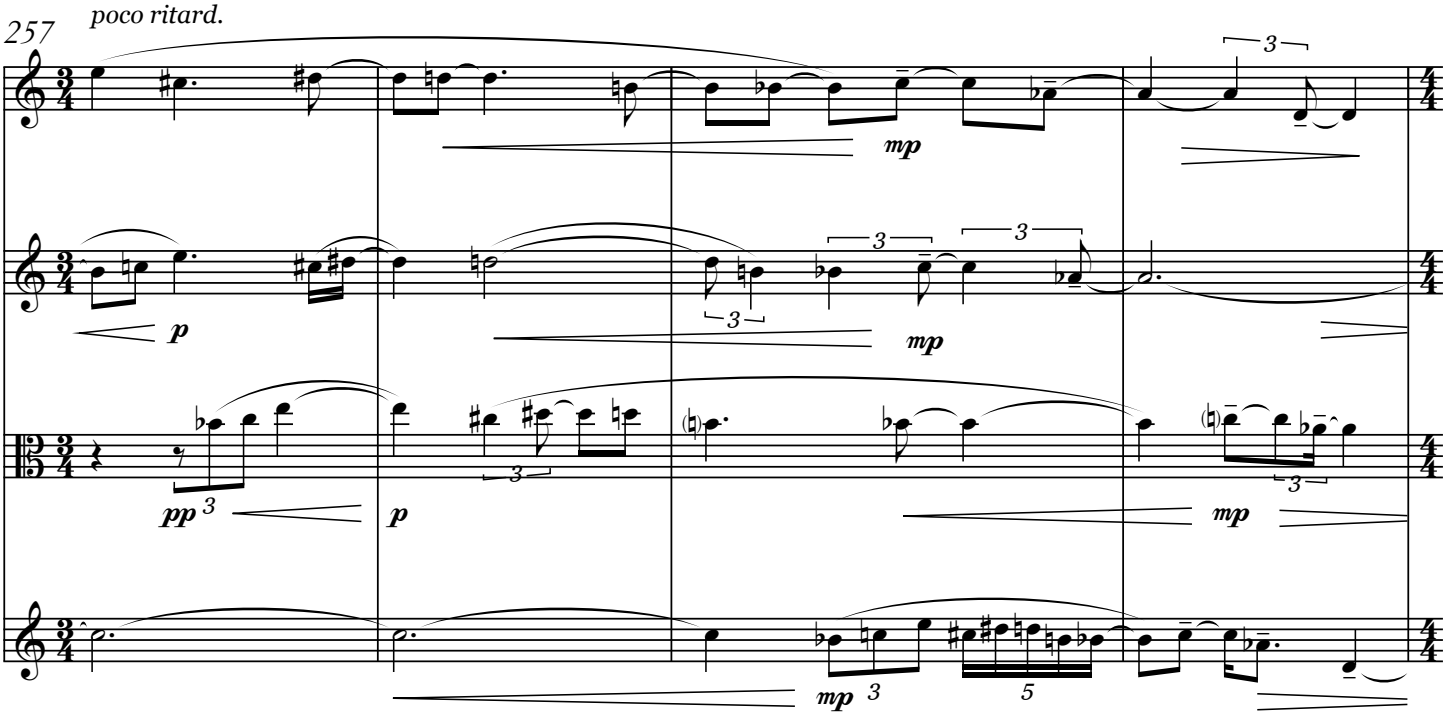

236


240
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco


243
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.


246
arco
pizz.
arco


Calm ♩ = ca. 88
249
pizz.
arco
sul III.
sul III. (to m. 264)
252
(sul III.)
pp hushed, expressive
ppp

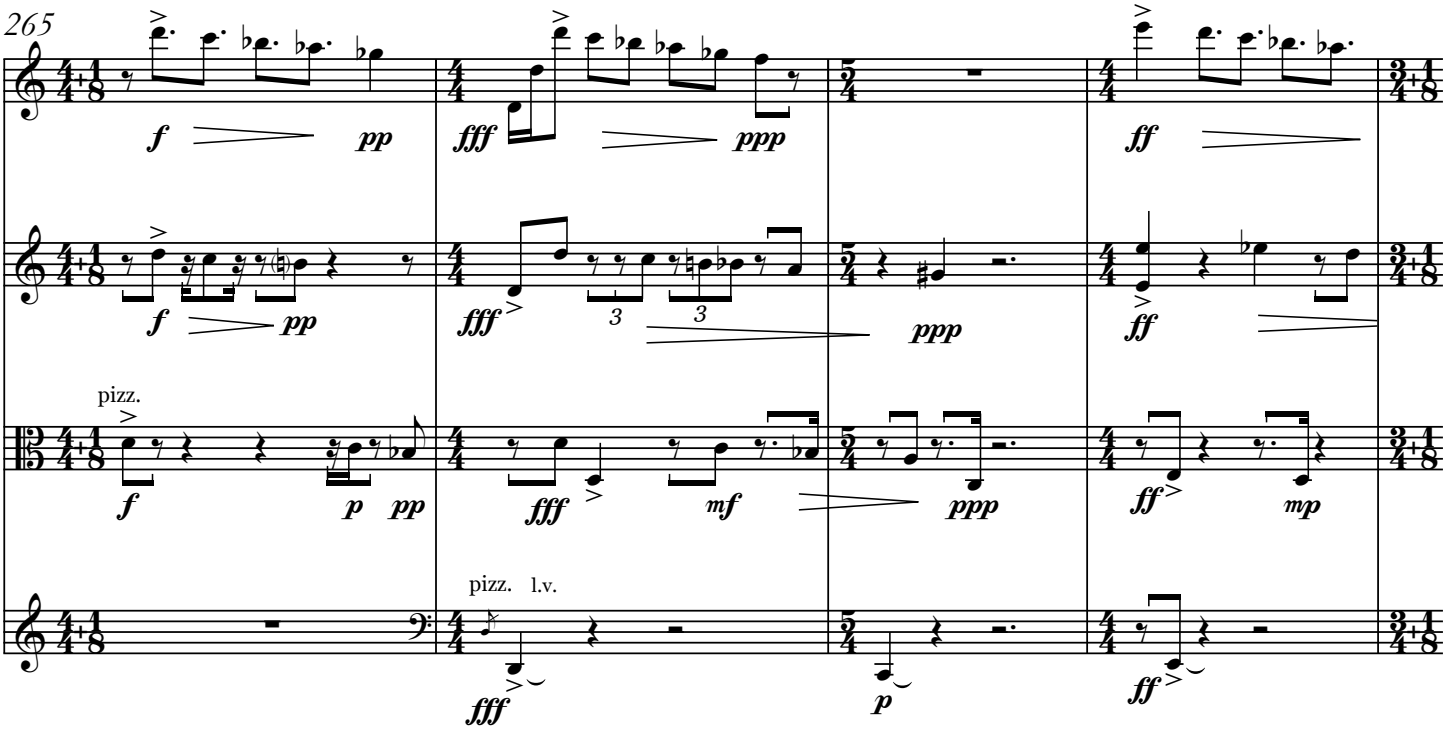


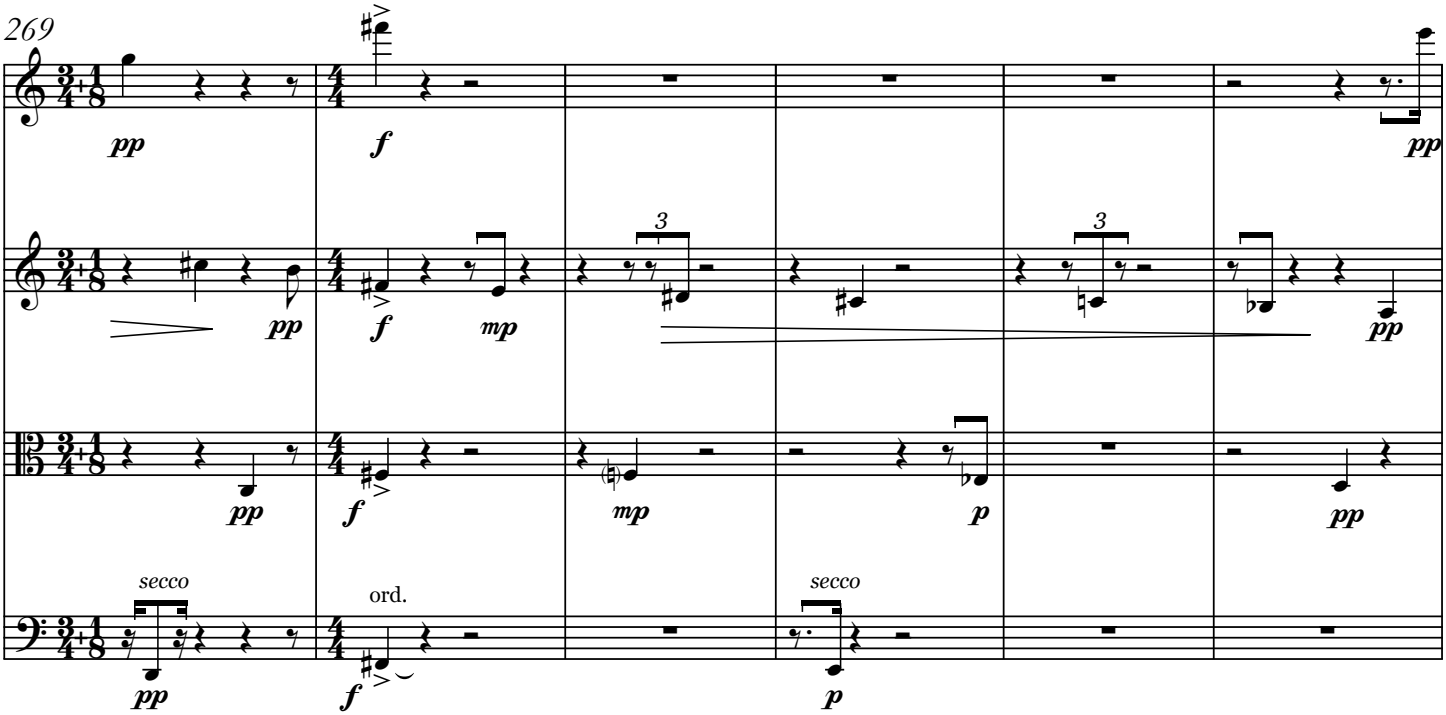
A bit slower ♩ = ca. 76

♩ = ca. 152

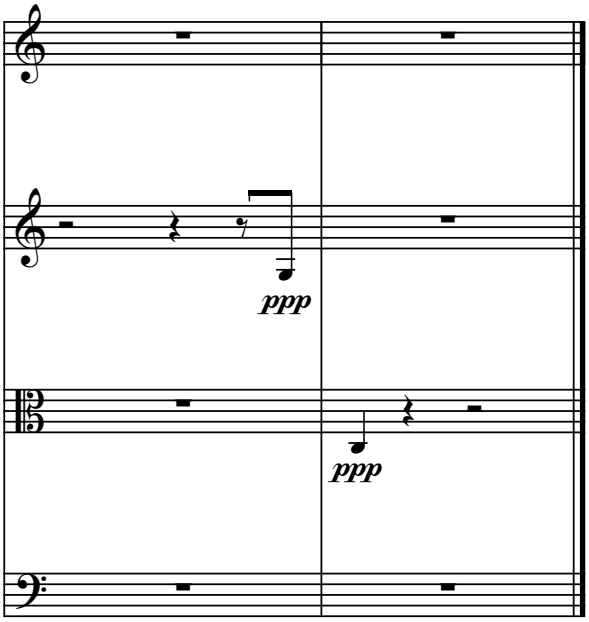
pizz.

261


265
pizz.
pizz. l.v.


269
secco
ord.
secco

275



8/10-10/20/09, Woodland, CA.