Jolyon Laycock

String Quartet (2011)

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Programme note:

In writing for string quartet, I find it hard to resist the influence of those two revolutionary giants of the medium, Beethoven and Bartok. Beethoven's late quartets are a kind of journey through a succession of states of mind. My quartet shares with Beethoven's op.131, a structure of six movements to be played without a break. I pay homage to Bartok's first quartet in my opening bars, not only in the searching duet between first and second violin, but also in the bit-by-bit revelation of a motivic cell which unifies the complete work. In my case the unifying principle is provided by a pair of 6-note interval sets - patterns of notes which contain all the chromatic intervals, heard once each. In this case the two sets are exactly complimentary to one another in a kind if Yin/Yang relationship. Both sets belong to a class of quasi-fractal set that I discovered some years ago that can be used to create micro-macro structures: that is to say structures which follow the same shape at all structural levels from the microcosmic level of melody, through sentences and paragraphs up to the highest level of the sequence of movements. This is the real reason why the quartet has six movements. The starting point of each movement corresponds to the notes of one of the 6-note interval sets. These sets can be described as quasi fractal because they are the musical equivalents of the Mandelbrot Set – the mathematical formula that generates endlessly recurring visual patterns of great beauty and variety.

Fractal forms are found everywhere in nature: the florets of a cauliflower; the branching structure of fern leaves; the inlets of a coastline whose shape seems to imitate the crystalline structure of the rocks. This String Quartet is my first large-scale work to use fractal principles to control all aspects of the pitch content of the music. This process is spelt out very audibly early on in the first movement where the notes of a melodic sequence are sustained to create six chord-shapes which become the harmonic material for the whole work.

For a more detailed description of all-interval fractal sets go to www.jolyonlaycock.uk

Notes on senza misura section bars 431-437:
Coordinate parts between players as indicated.
Hold unison notes at the end of each bar until all players arrive before moving to next bar.
Bow long held notes freely as necessary to maintain tone and dynamic.

First performance by The Bristol Ensemble Quartet
Roger Huckle & Rachel Gough – violins
Moira Alabaster – viola
Alison Gillies – cello
25 November 2011 Arnolfini, Bristol as part of *Strings Time Four*
promoted by Severnside Composers Alliance

Jolyon Laycock - biography

Jolyon Laycock was born in Bath in 1946 and studied for B.Mus. under Ivor Keys and Arnold Whittall at the University of Nottingham. He went on the gain an M.Phil in composition. His composition teachers included Henri Pousseur, Cornelius Cardew and Roger Smalley. Later in life he studied for a Ph.D. at York University under Nicola Lefanu. During the 1970s he pursued a freelance career as an experimental sound artist based at the Birmingham Arts Laboratory and Spectro Arts Workshop, Newcastle. In 1979 he took up the post of Music and Dance Coordinator at the Arnolfini. In 1990 he became Concert Director at the University of Bath and at the Michael Tippett Centre at Bath Spa University where he founded the award-winning concert series Rainbow over Bath. He left the University in 2000 to complete his book *A Changing Role for the Composer in Society*. In 2004 he was appointed Senior Lecturer in Arts Management at Oxford Brookes University. He retired in 2010 and took on the chairmanship of Severnside Composers Alliance. In 2012 he won the EPSS Jubilee Song Competition with his setting of Philip Larkin's *The North Ship* which led to a collaboration with Sarah Leonard resulting in the composition of *Dark Seas*, a setting of five poems of Philip Larkin for coloratura soprano, clarinet and piano. In 2010 he discovered the compositional principle of all-interval fractal sets which has formed the theoretical basis of most his music since that date.

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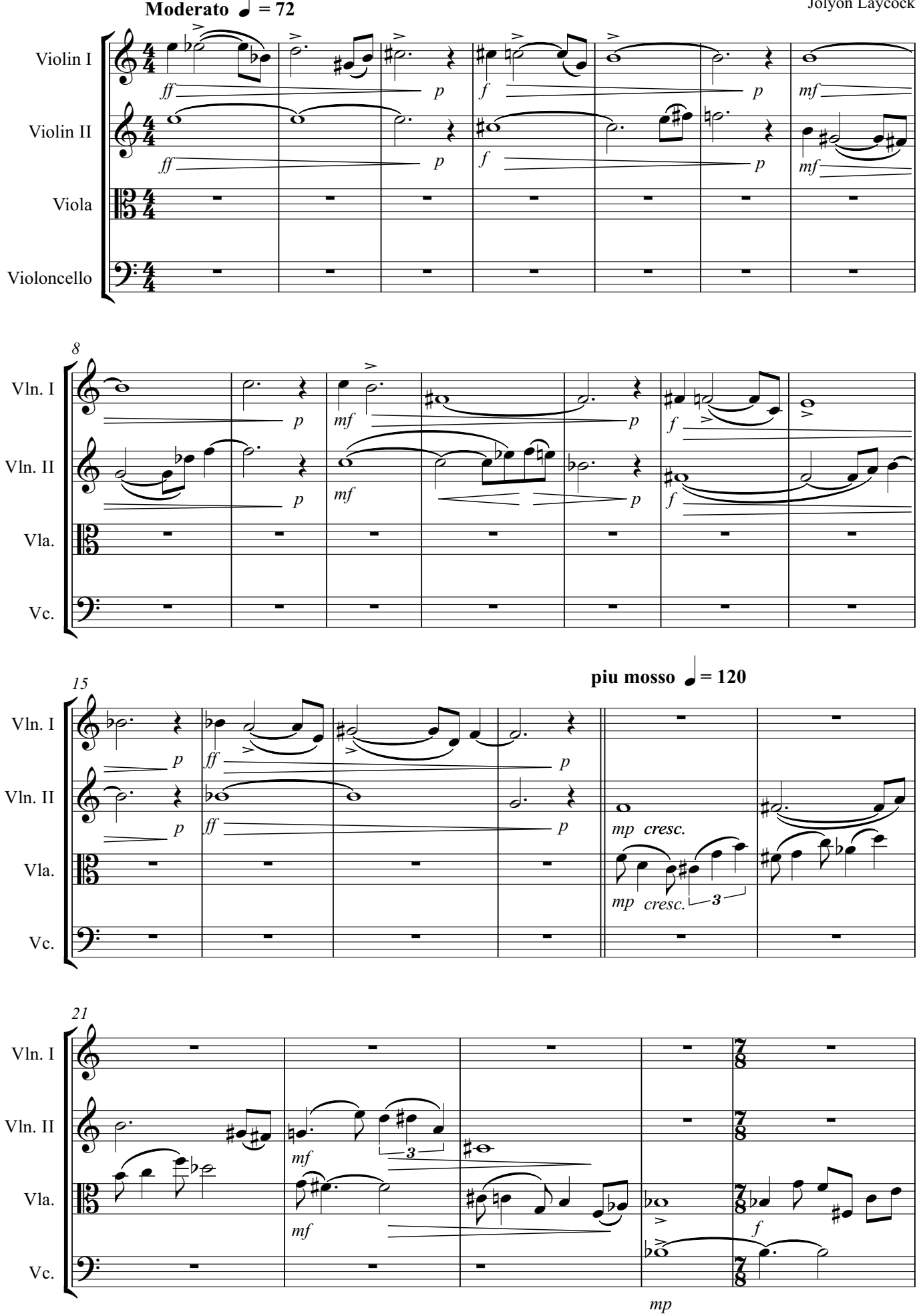
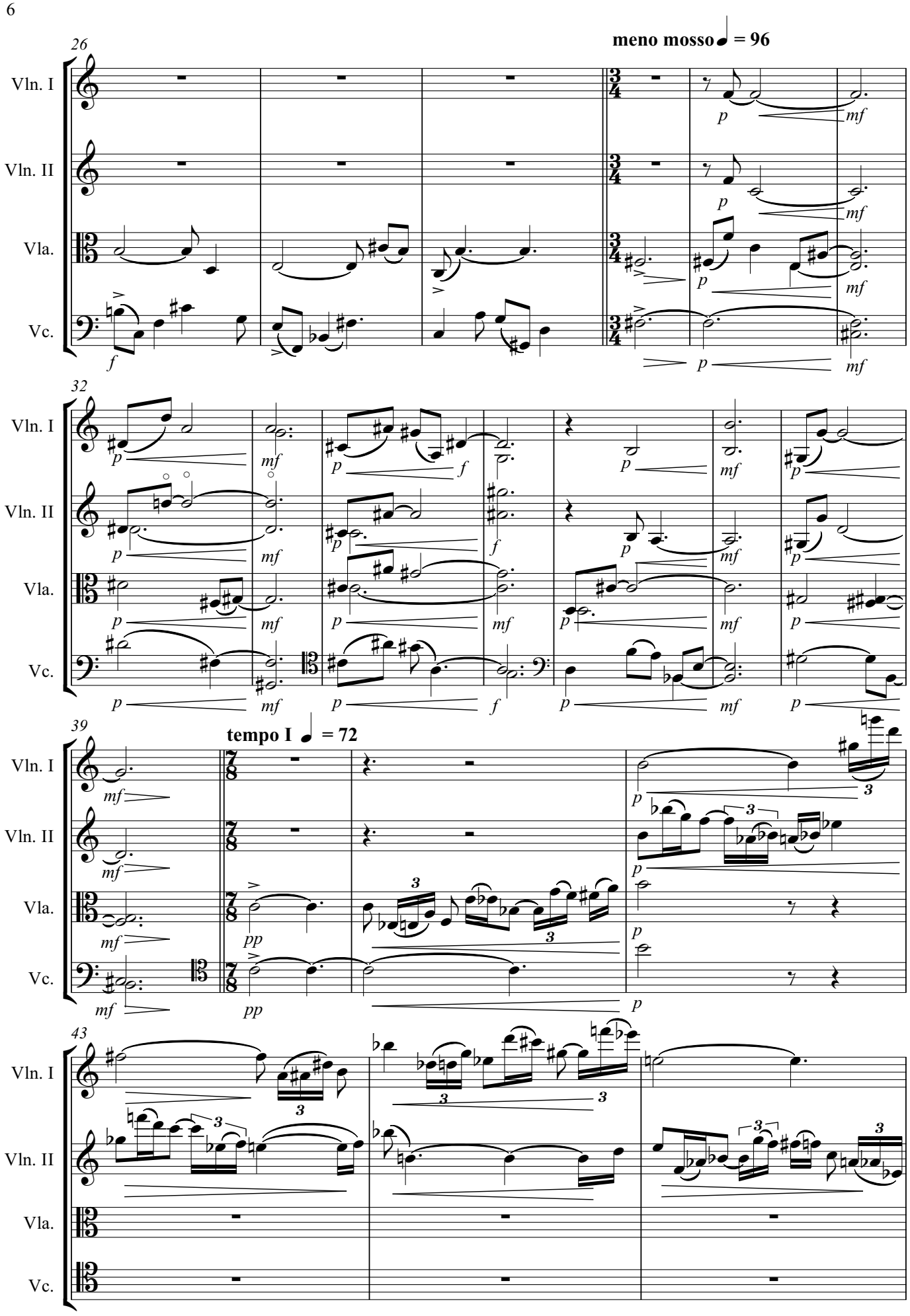
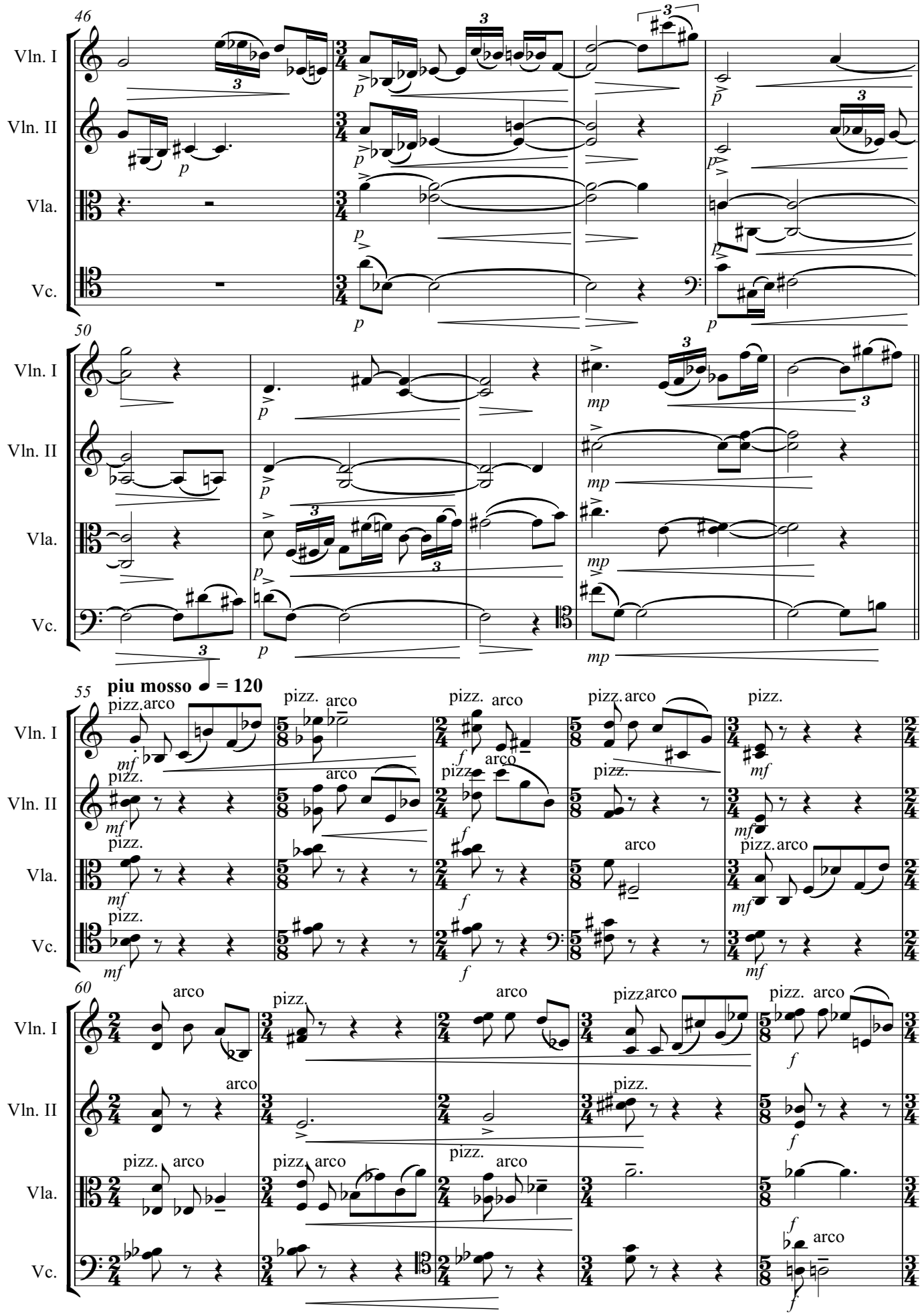
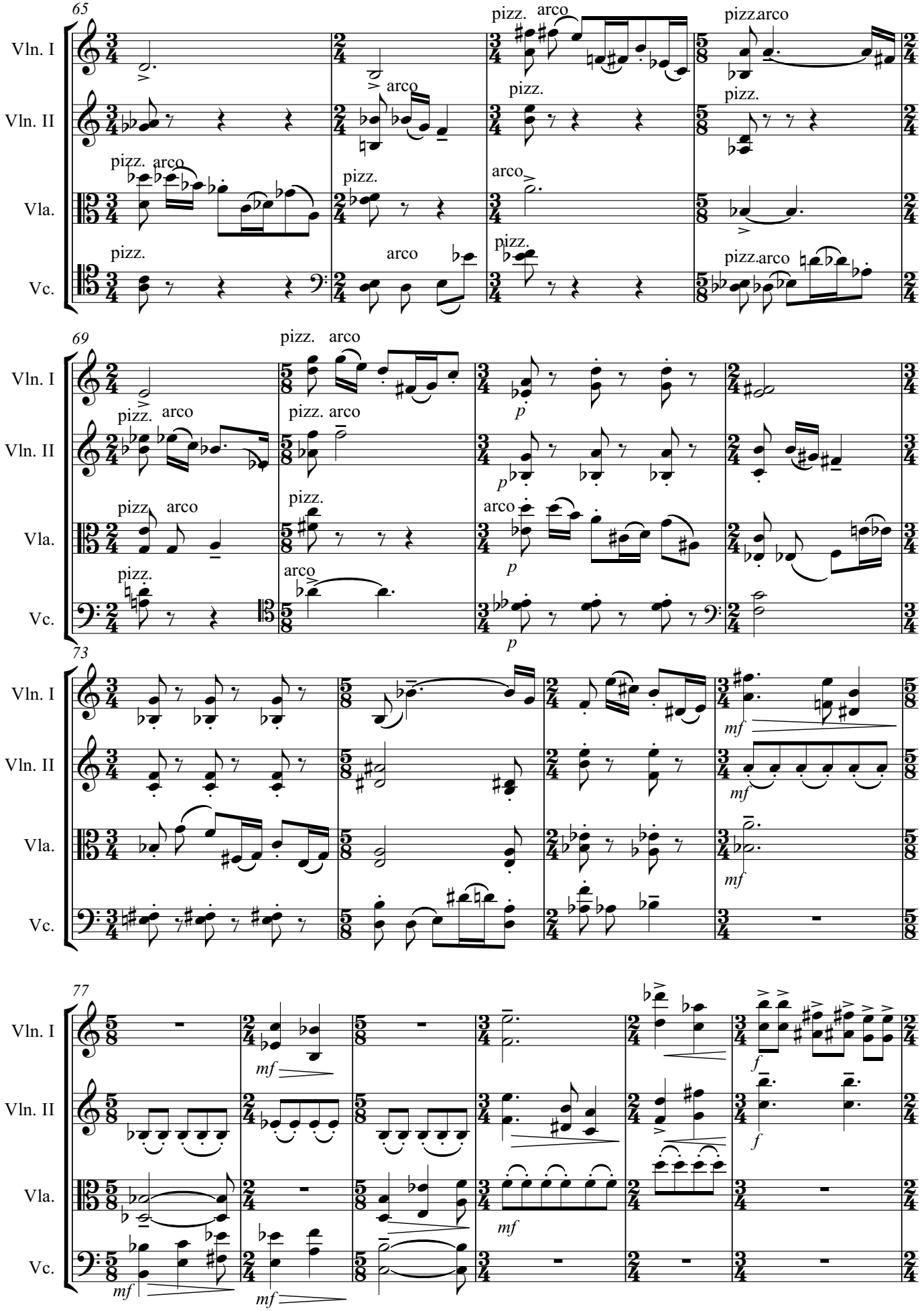
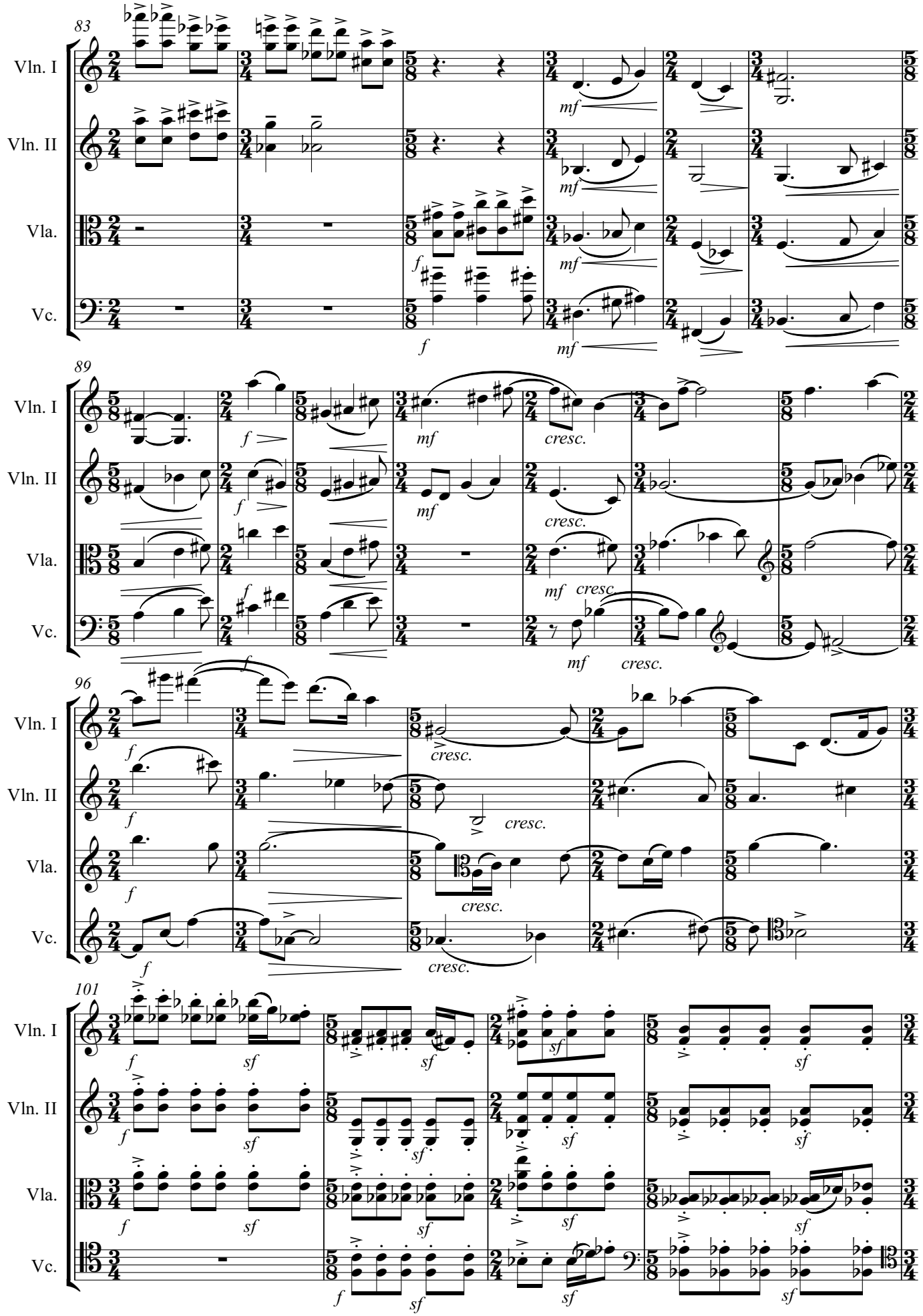
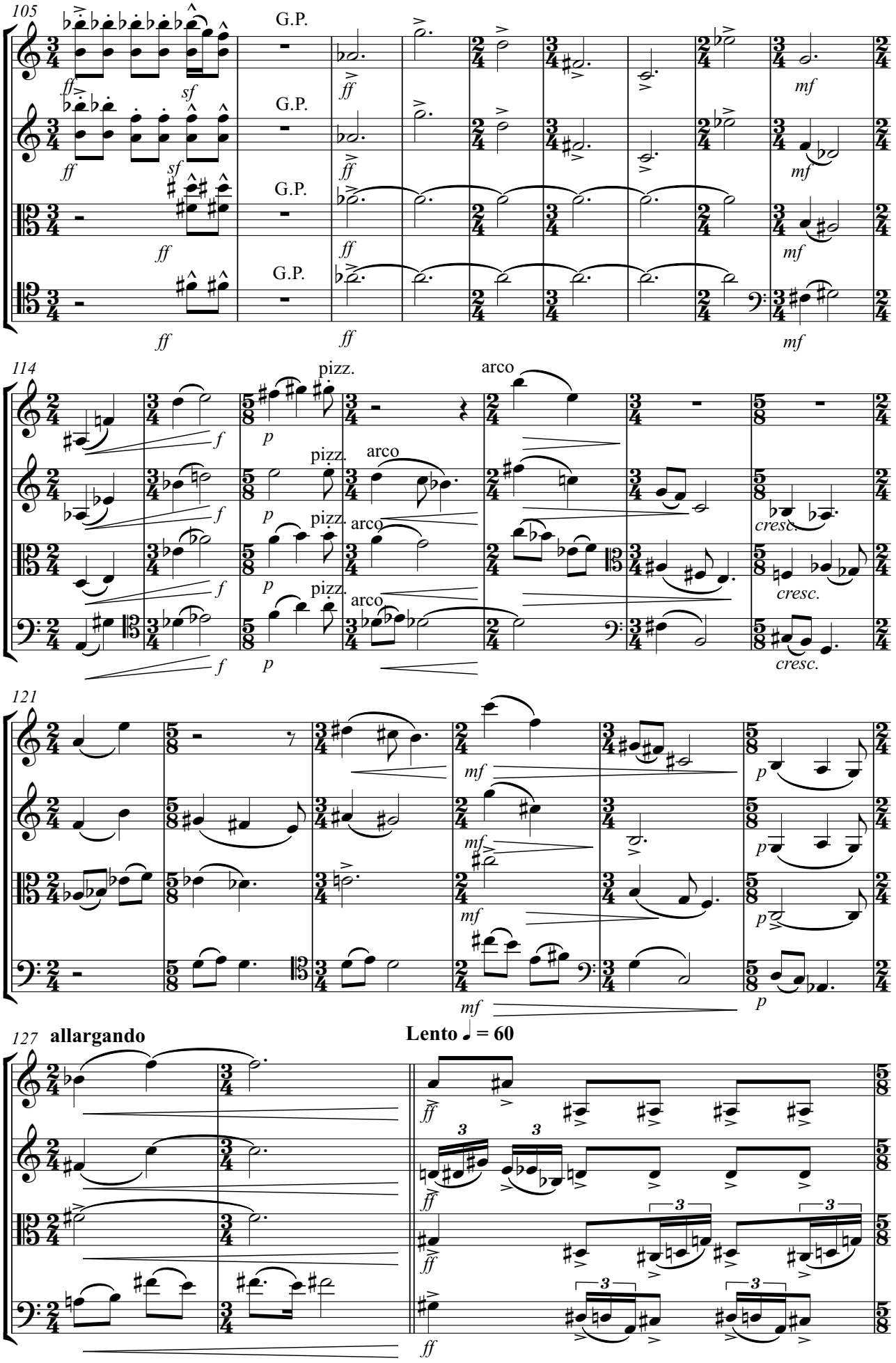

Moderato ♩ = 72
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
8
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
15
piu mosso ♩ = 120
mp cresc.
21
mf
f
mp

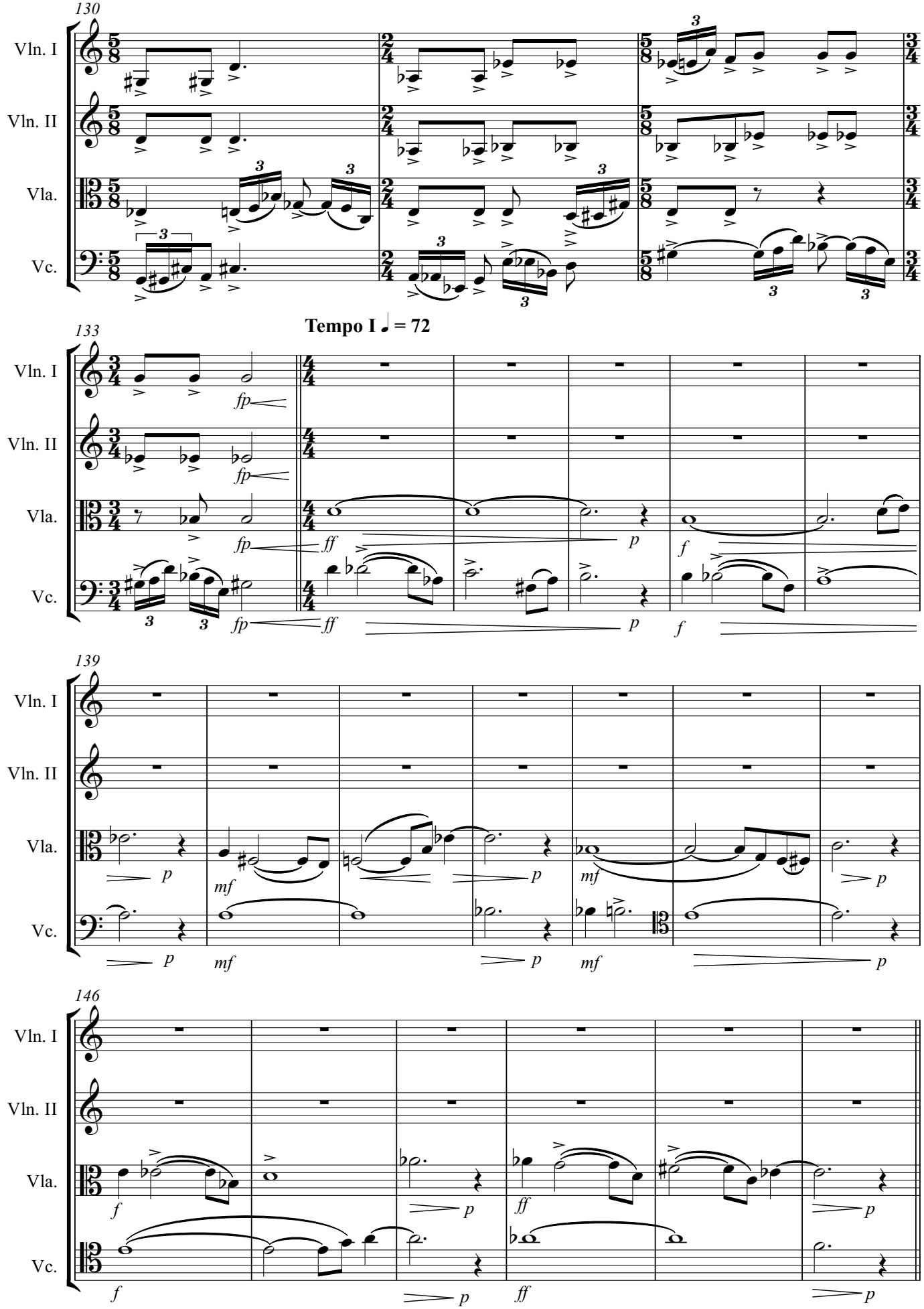

26
meno mosso ♩ = 96
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
32
39
tempo I ♩ = 72
43

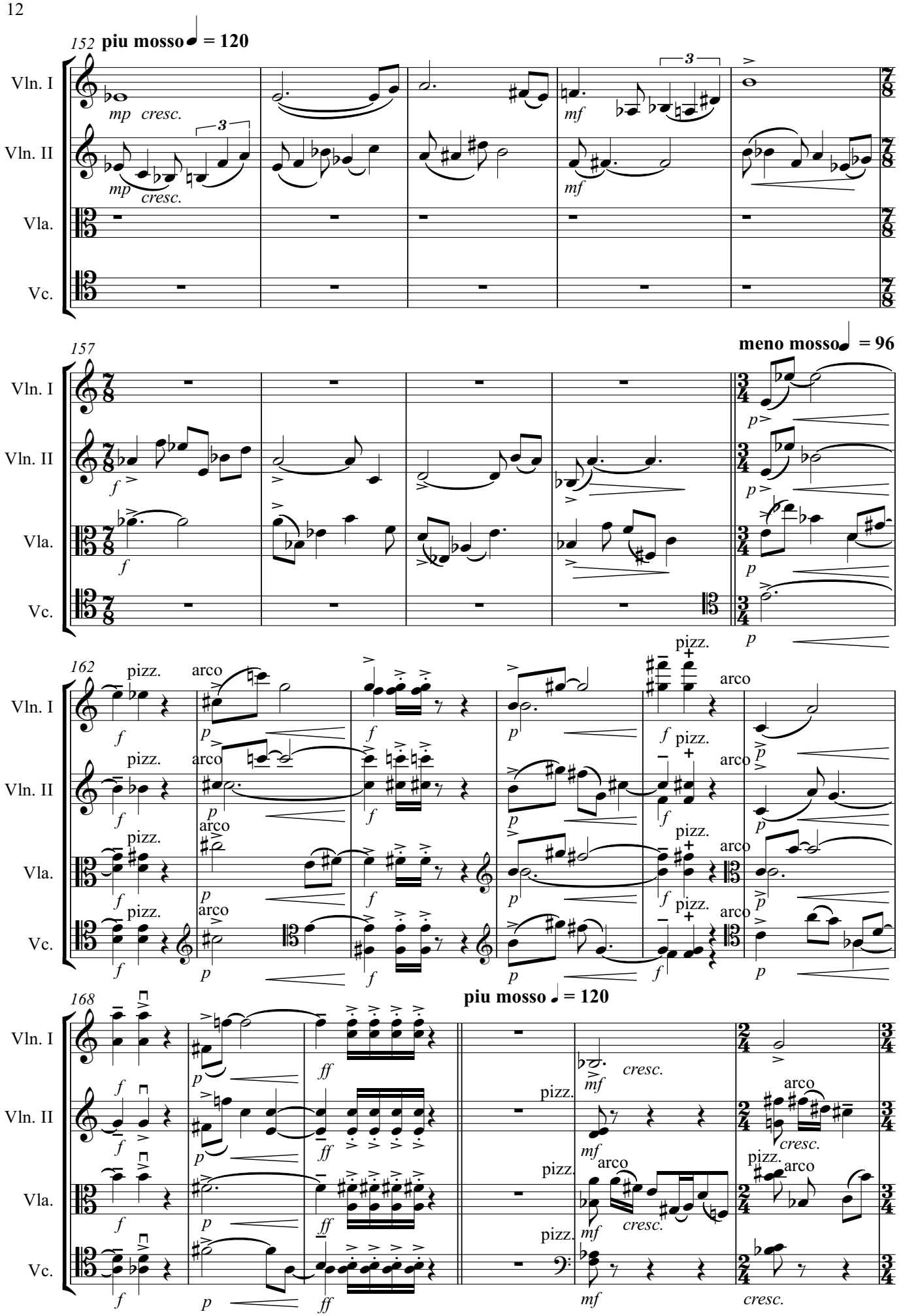

46
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
50
55
piu mosso ♩ = 120
60
pizz.
arco

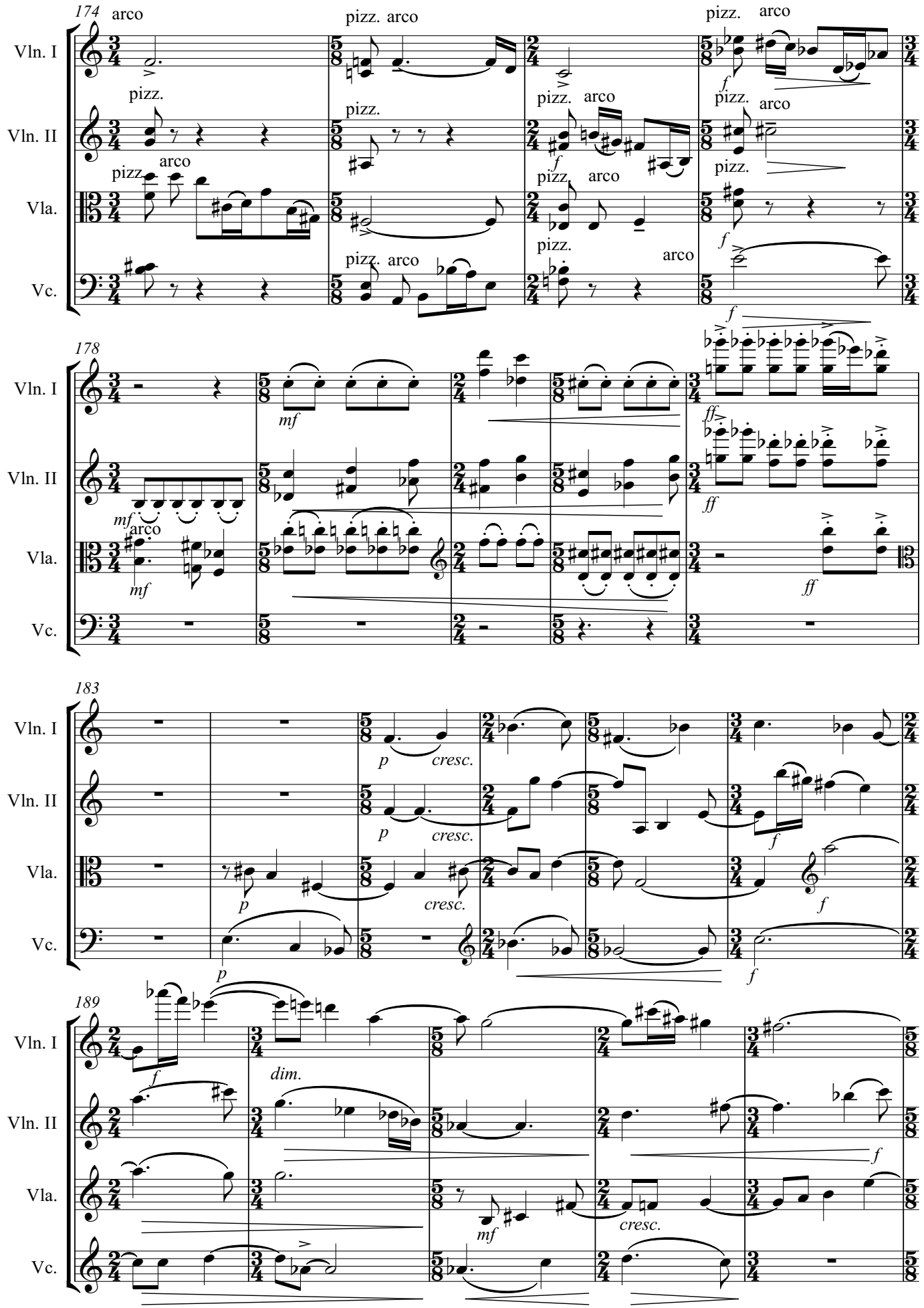

65
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pizz.
arco
pizz.arco
69
p
73
mf
77
f

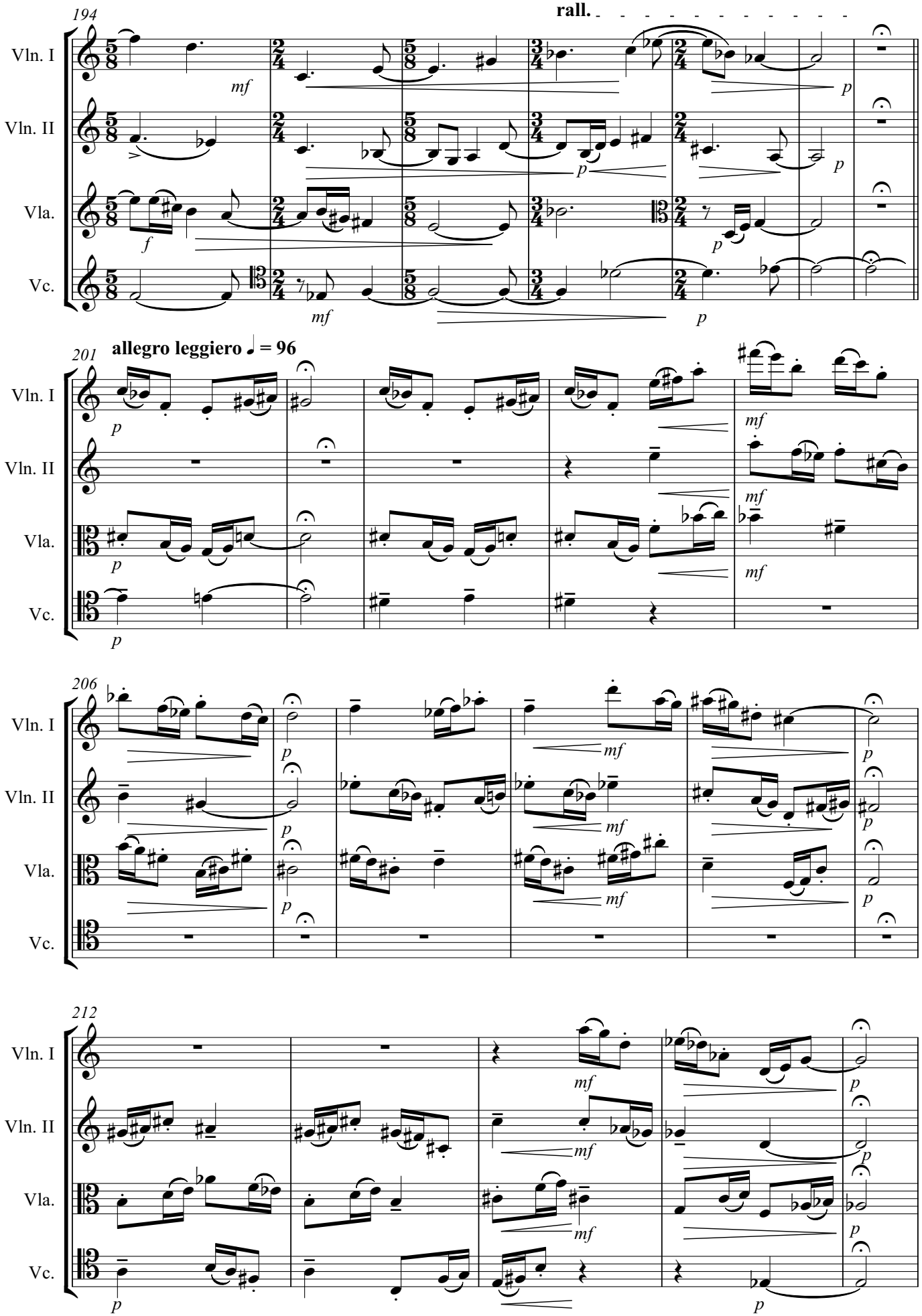

83
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
89
96
101

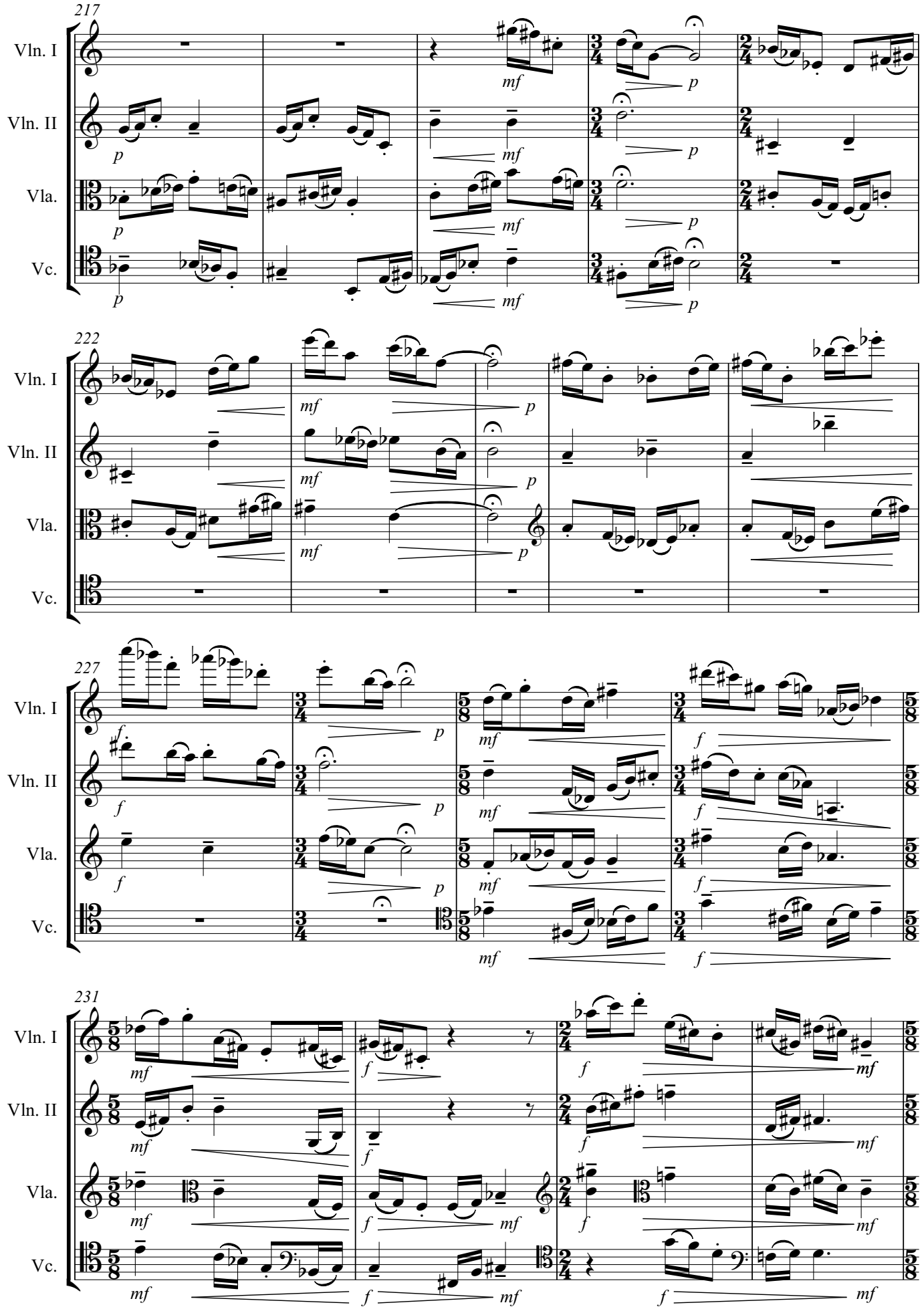

105
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
G.P.
ff
sf
mf
114
pizz.
arco
f
p
cresc.
121
mf
p
127
allargando
Lento ♩ = 60
3

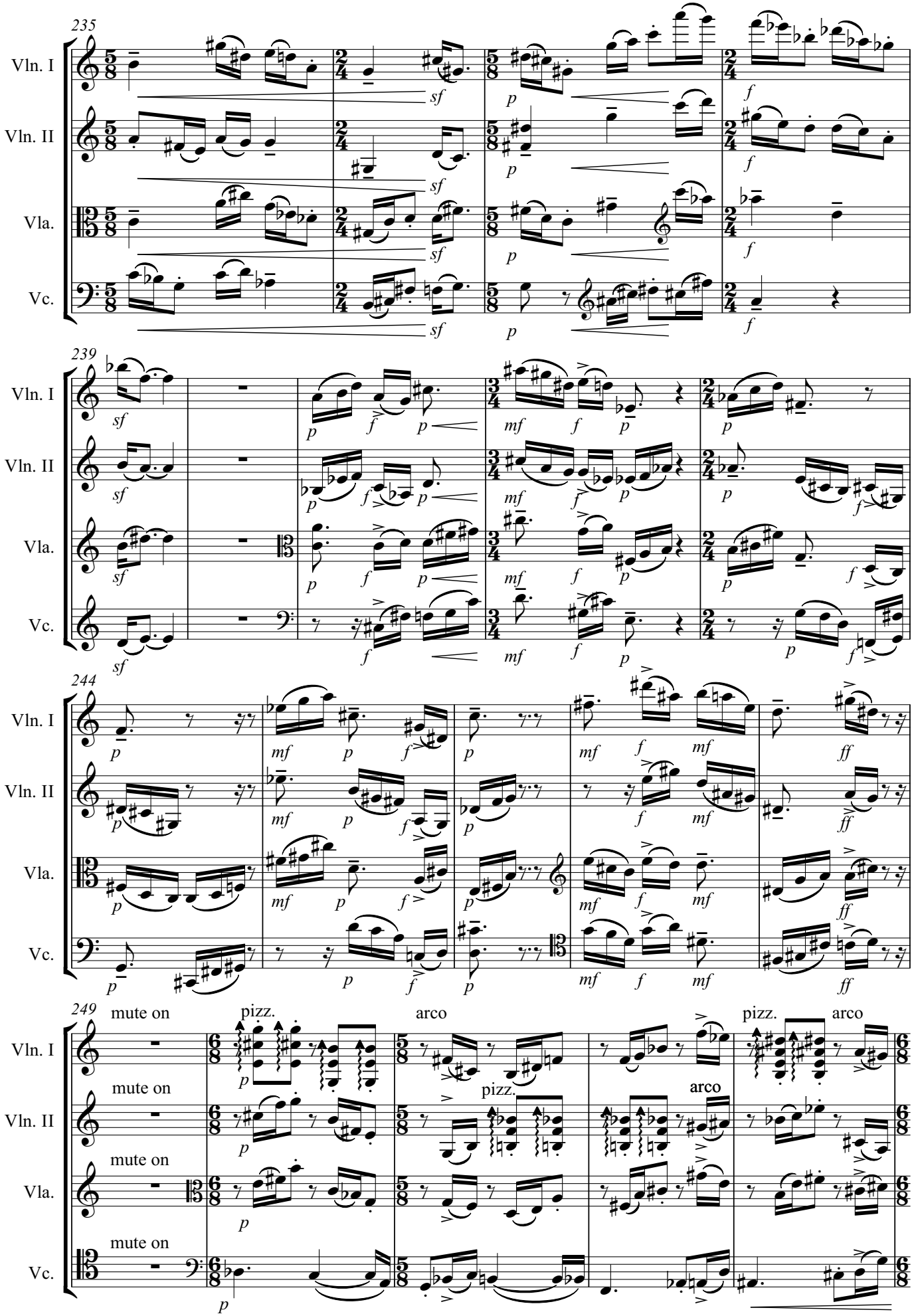

130
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
133
Tempo I ♩ = 72
fp
ff
p
f
139
mf
146

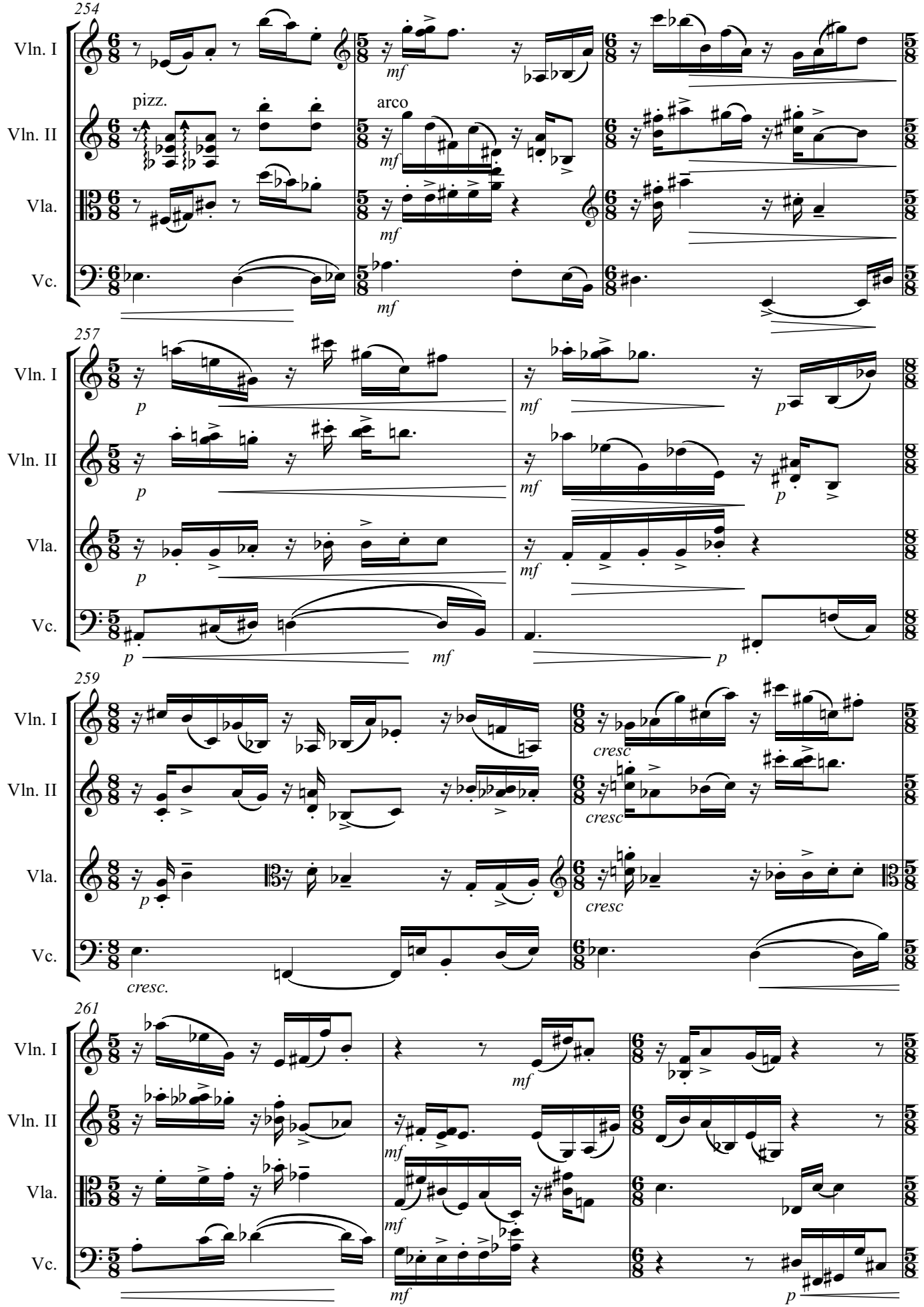

152
piu mosso ♩ = 120
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
mp cresc.
mf
157
meno mosso ♩ = 96
f
p
162
pizz.
arco
168
piu mosso ♩ = 120
ff
cresc.

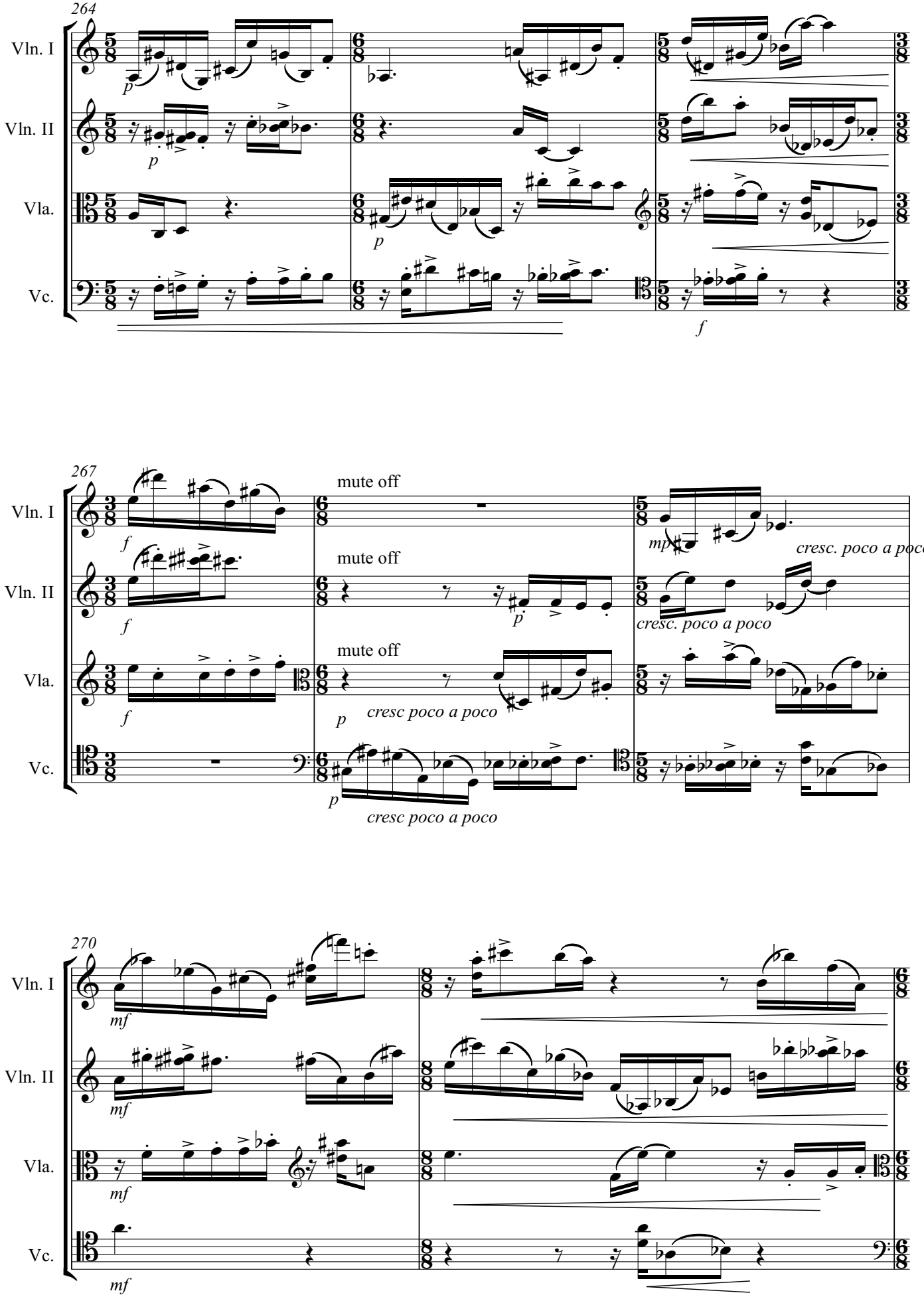

174
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
arco
pizz.
pizz. arco
178
mf
ff
183
p
cresc.
f
189
dim.
mf

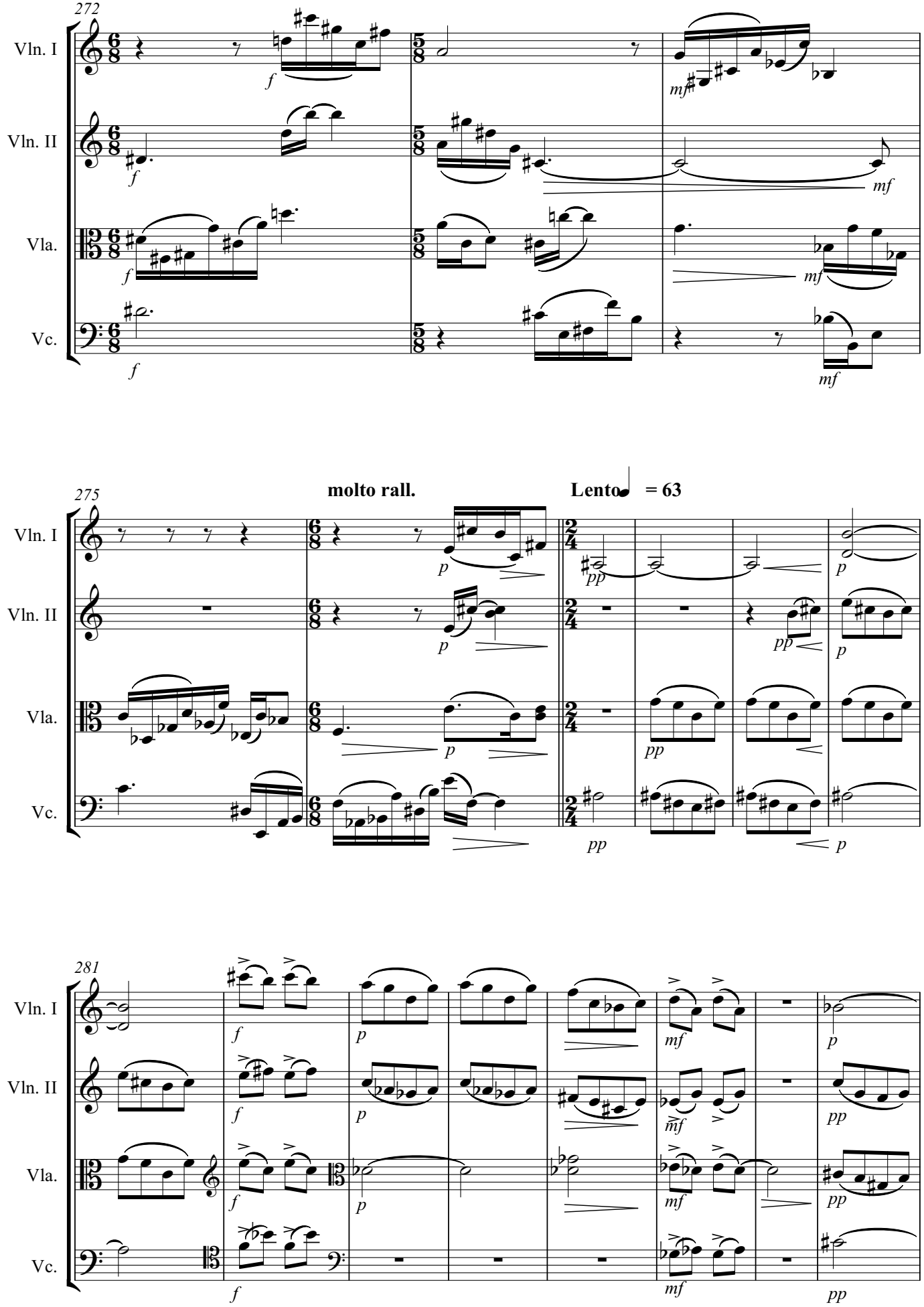

194
rall.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
mf
p
f
201
allegro leggiero ♩ = 96
206
212

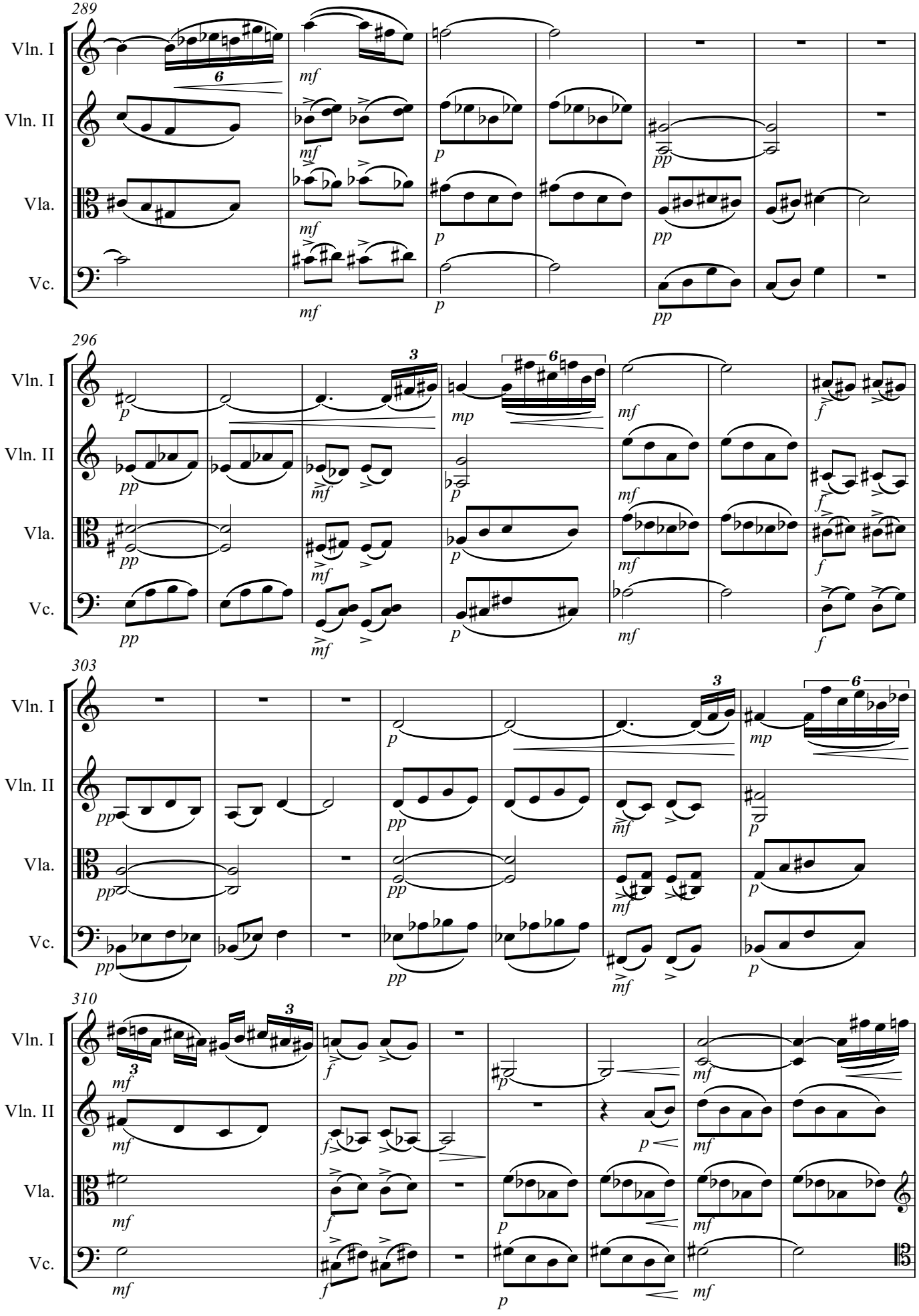

217
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
222
227
231

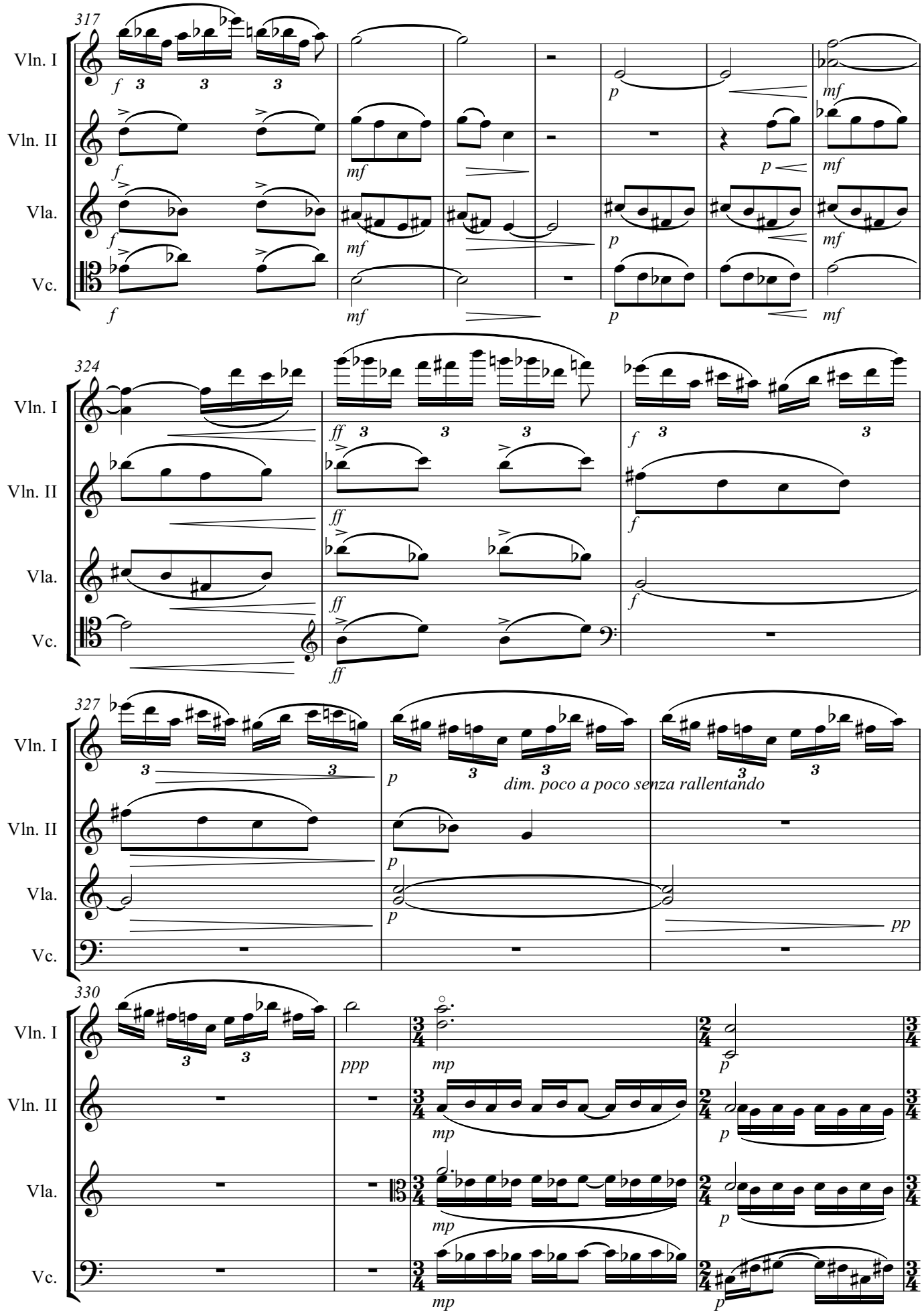

235
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
239
244
249
mute on
pizz.
arco

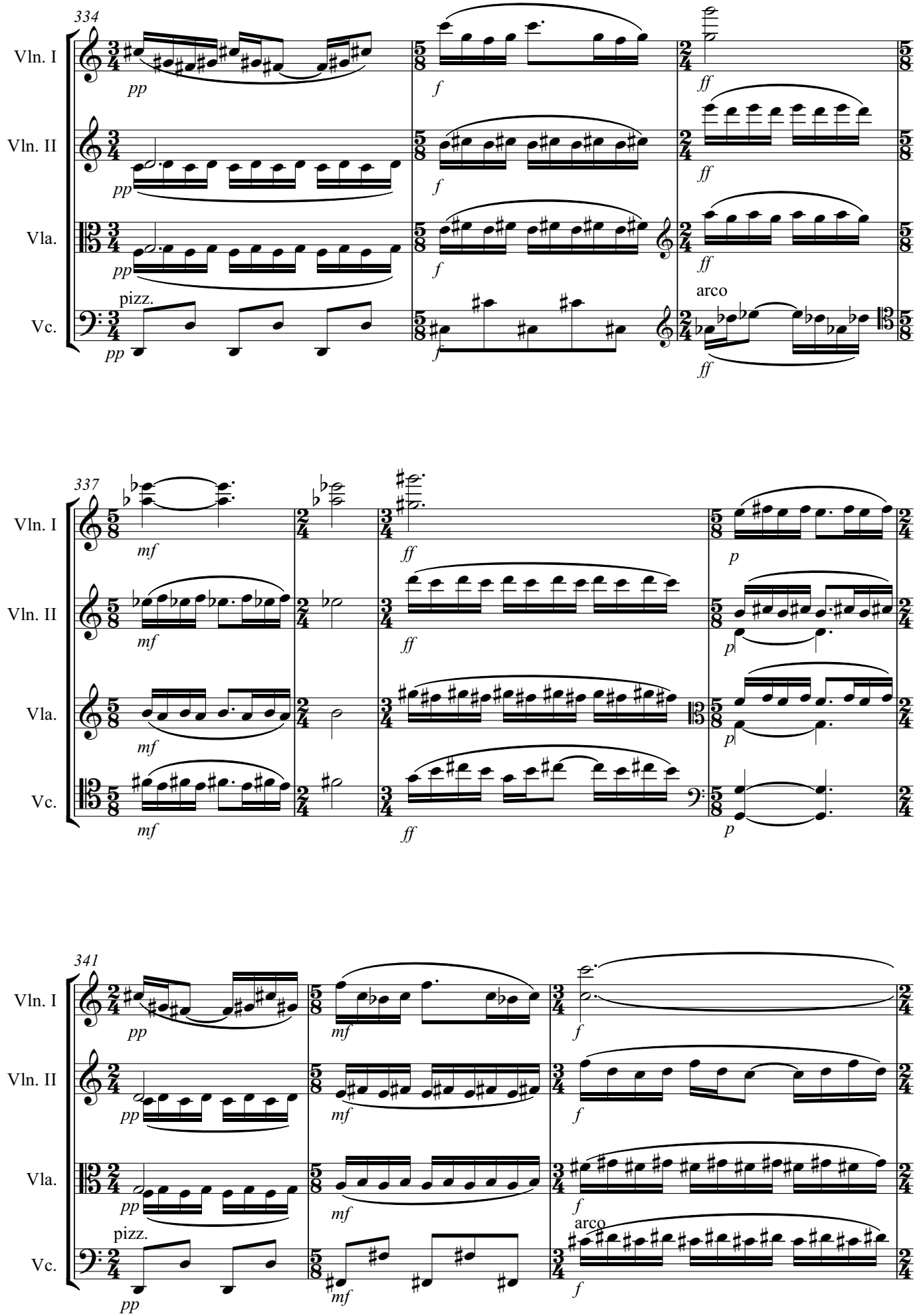

254
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pizz.
arco
mf
257
p
mf
259
cresc
cresc.
261

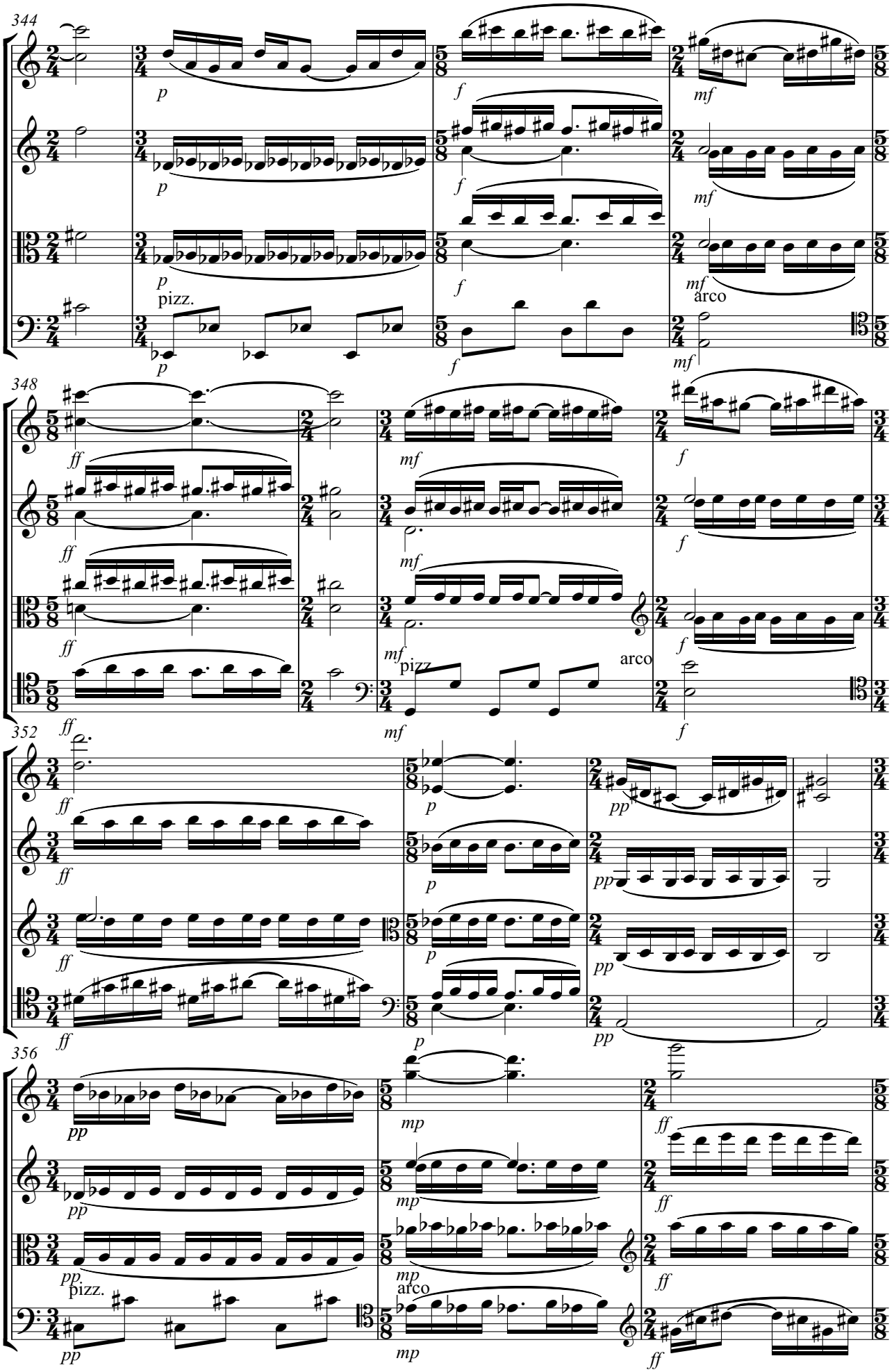

264
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
p
f
267
mute off
mp
cresc. poco a poco
cresc poco a poco
270
mf

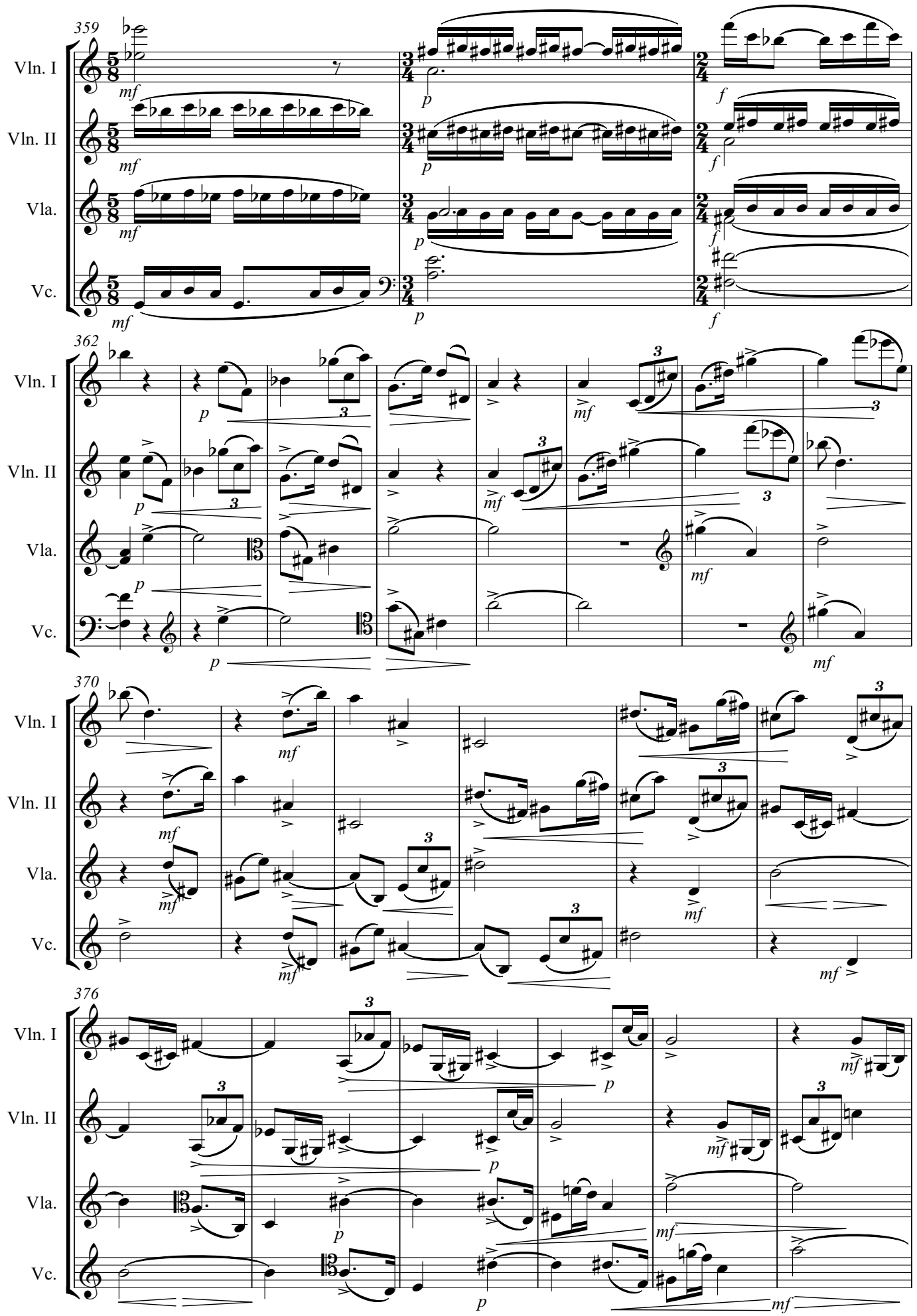

272
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
275
molto rall.
Lento = 63
281

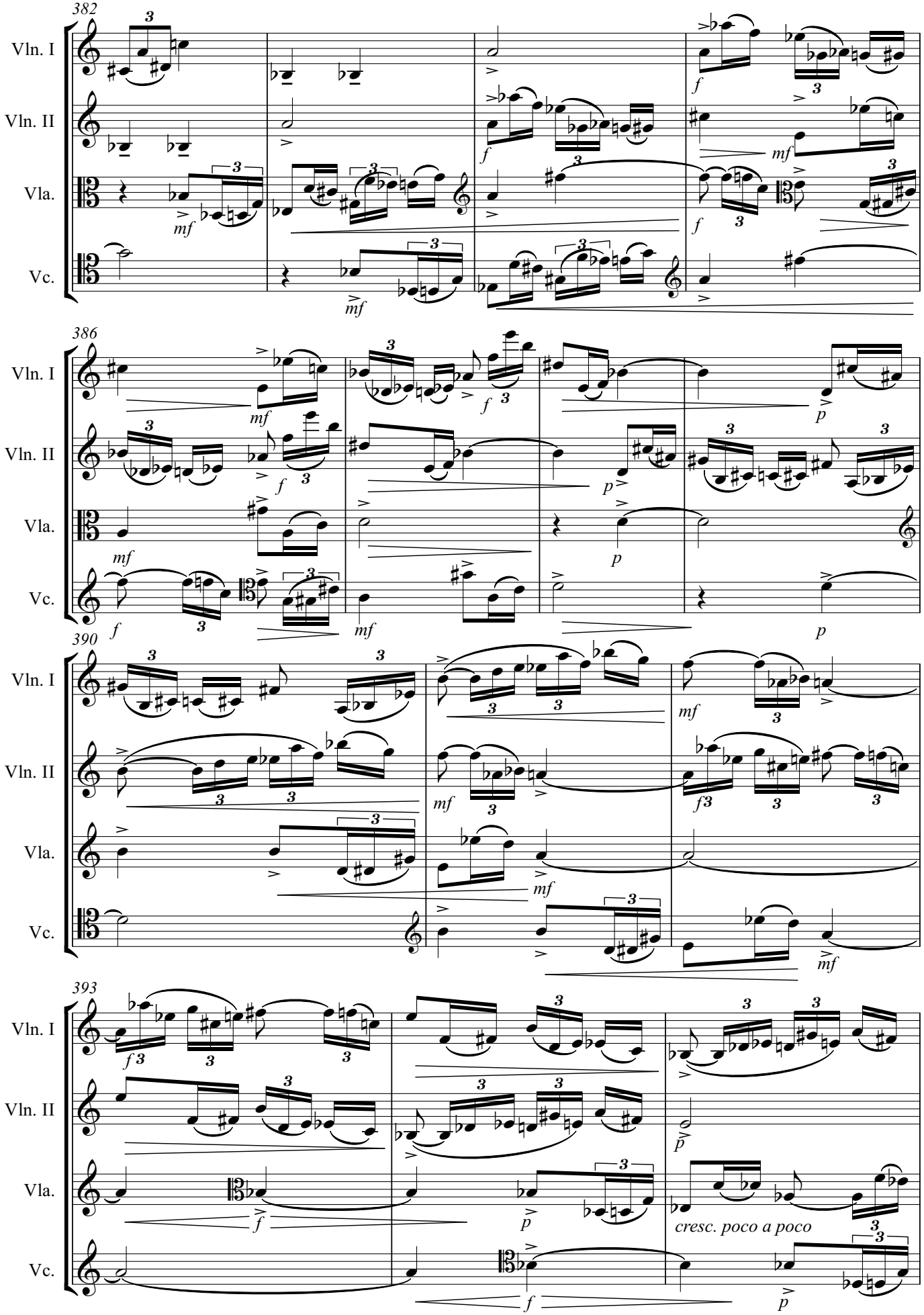

289
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
296
303
310

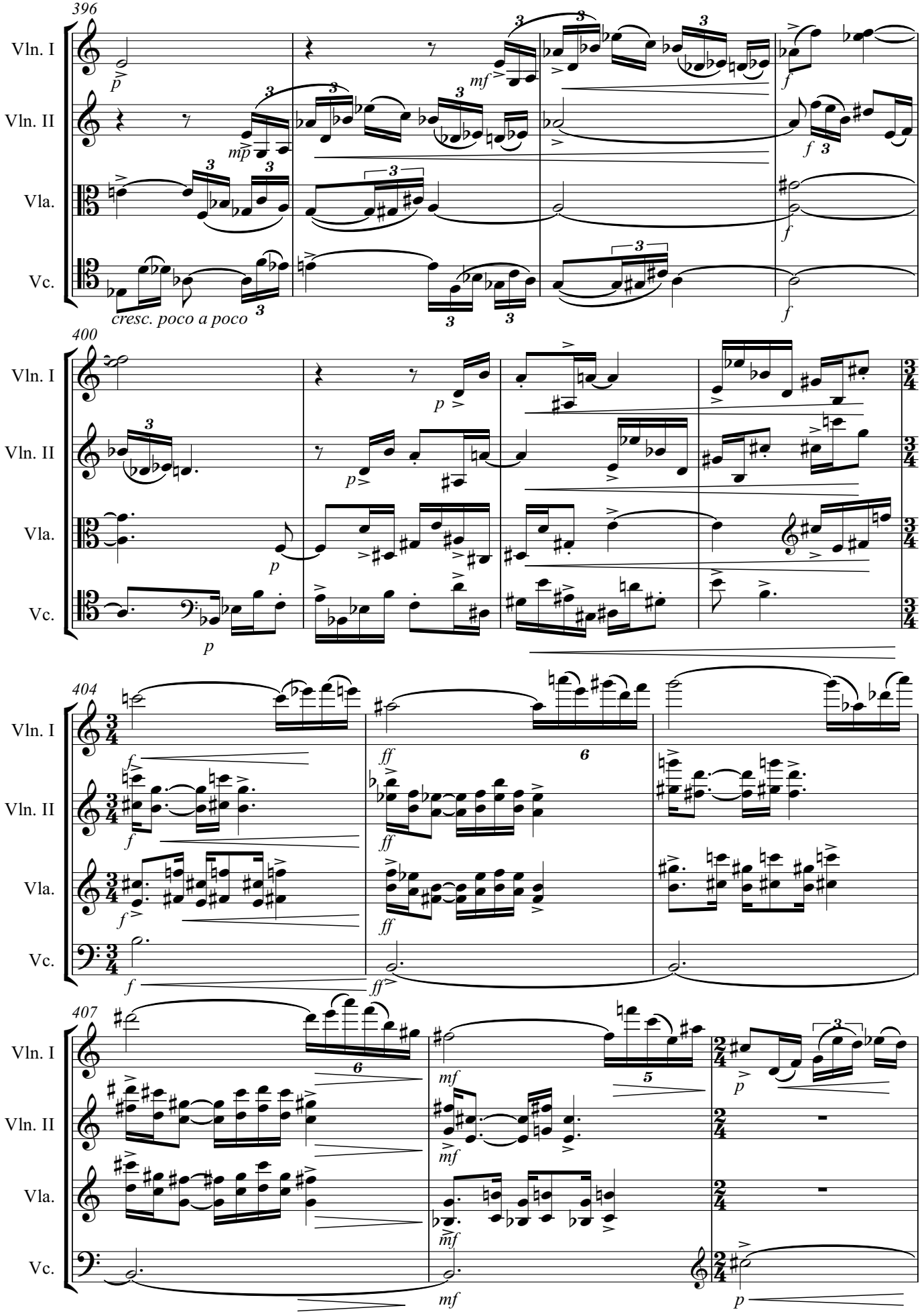

317
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
f
mf
p
324
ff
327
dim. poco a poco senza rallentando
pp
330
ppp
mp

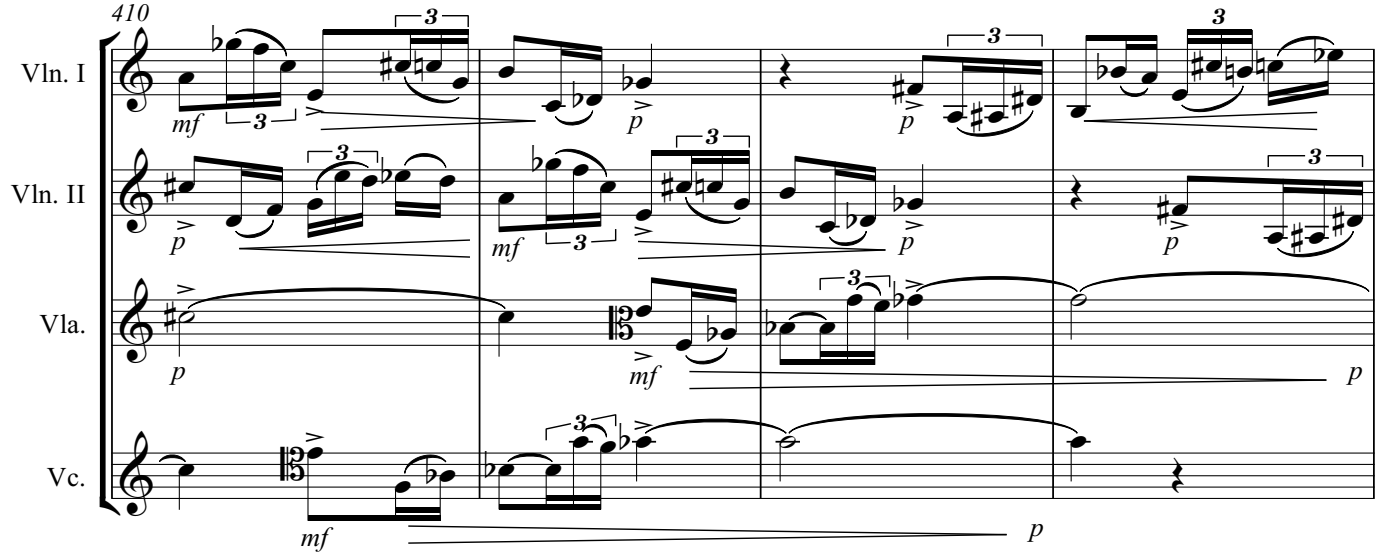

334
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pp
f
ff
pizz.
arco
337
mf
p
341

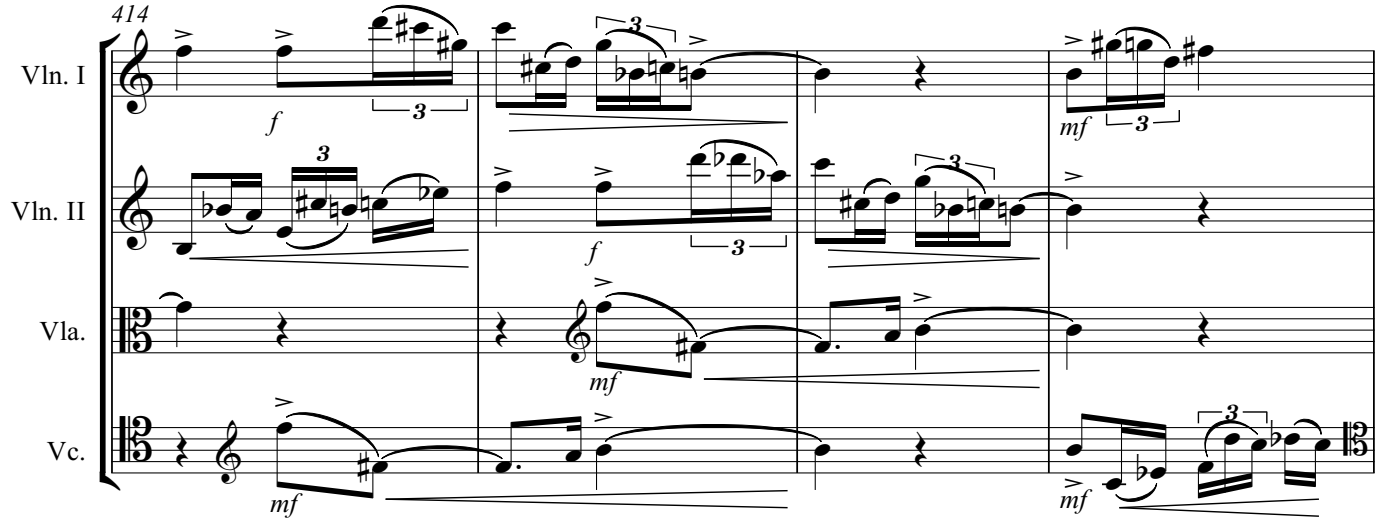

344
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pizz.
arco
348
352
356


359
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
362
370
376


382
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
386
390
393
cresc. poco a poco


396
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
cresc. poco a poco
400
404
407


410
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.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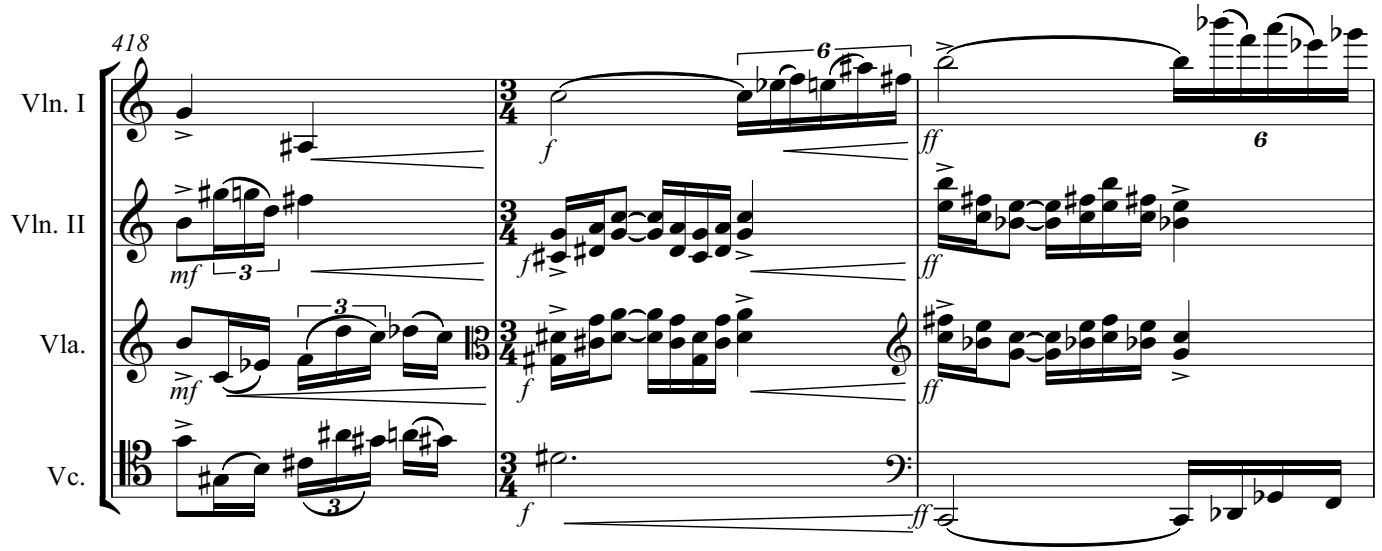
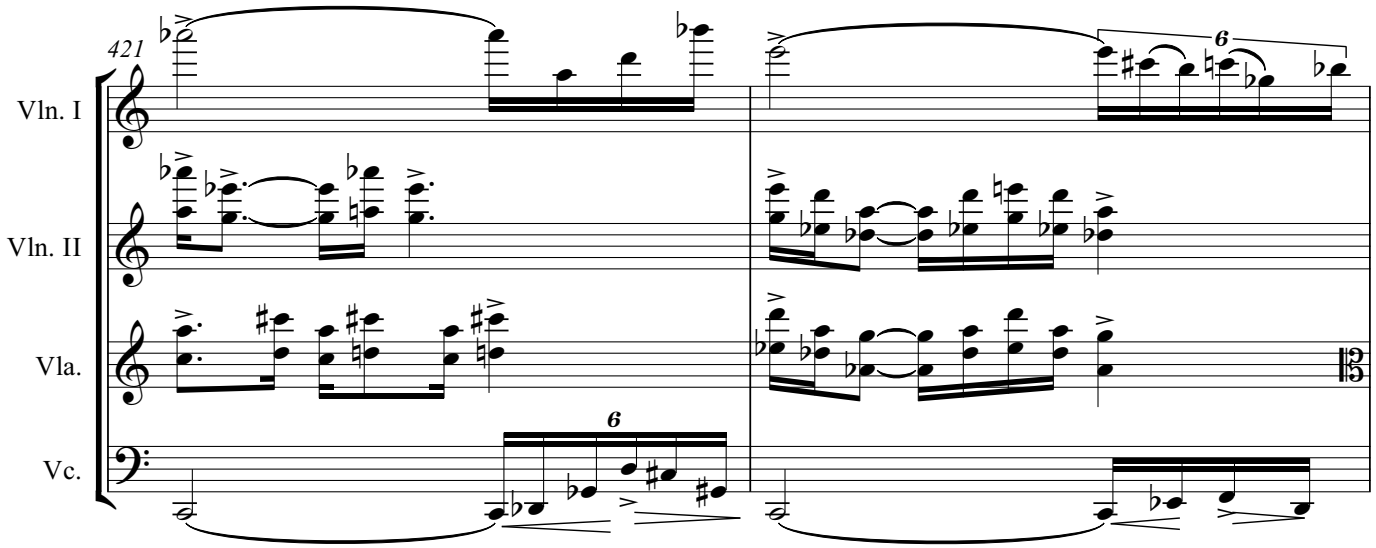
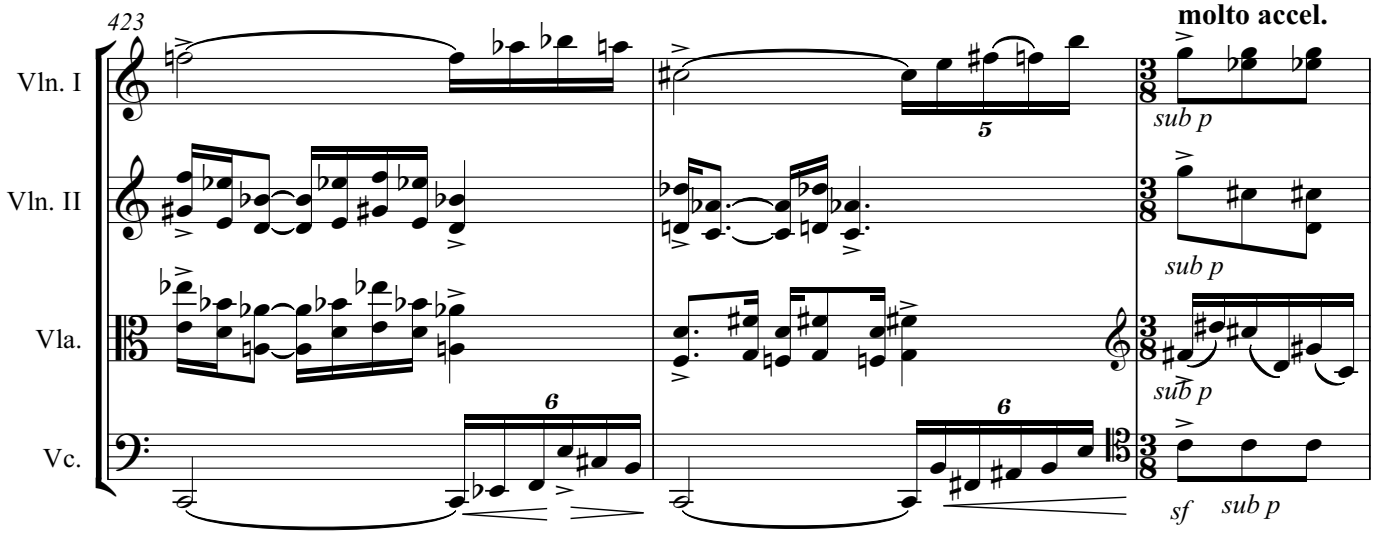
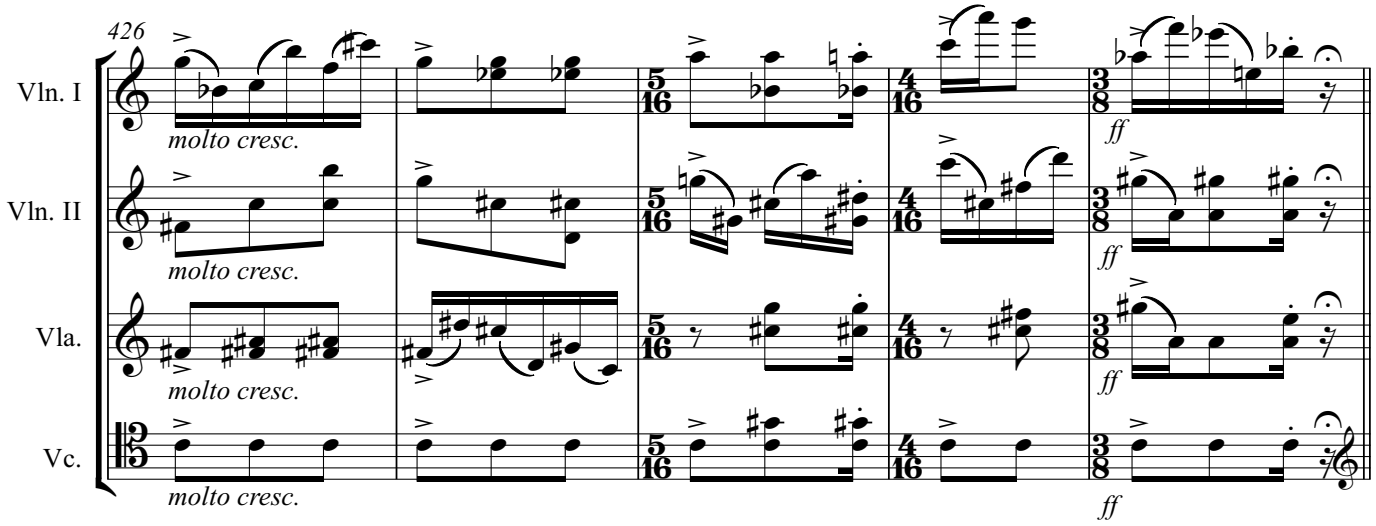
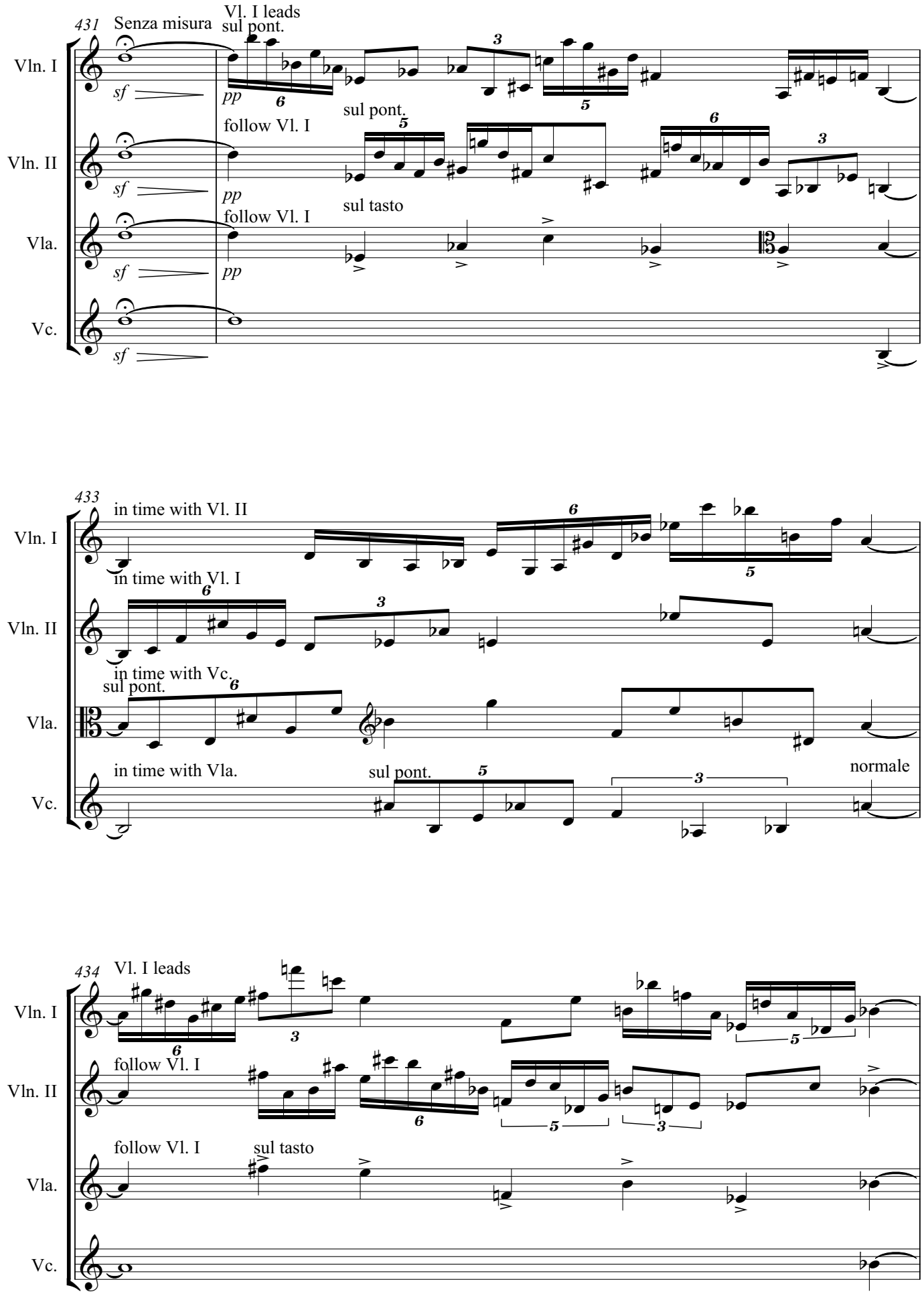
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

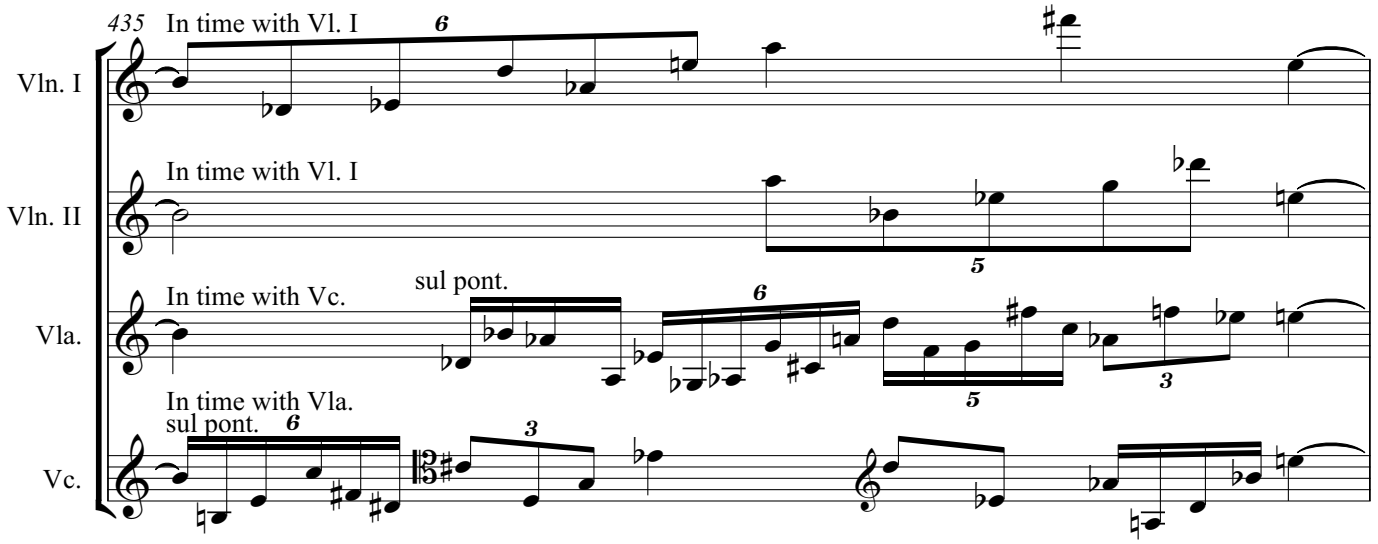

418
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

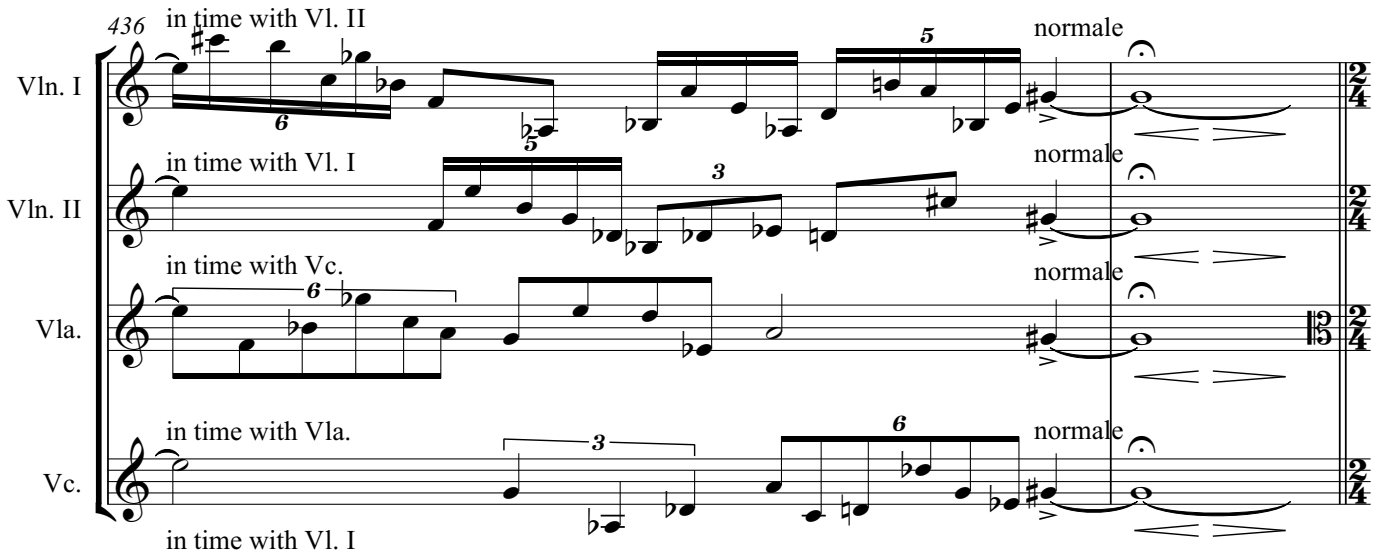

421
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
6
6

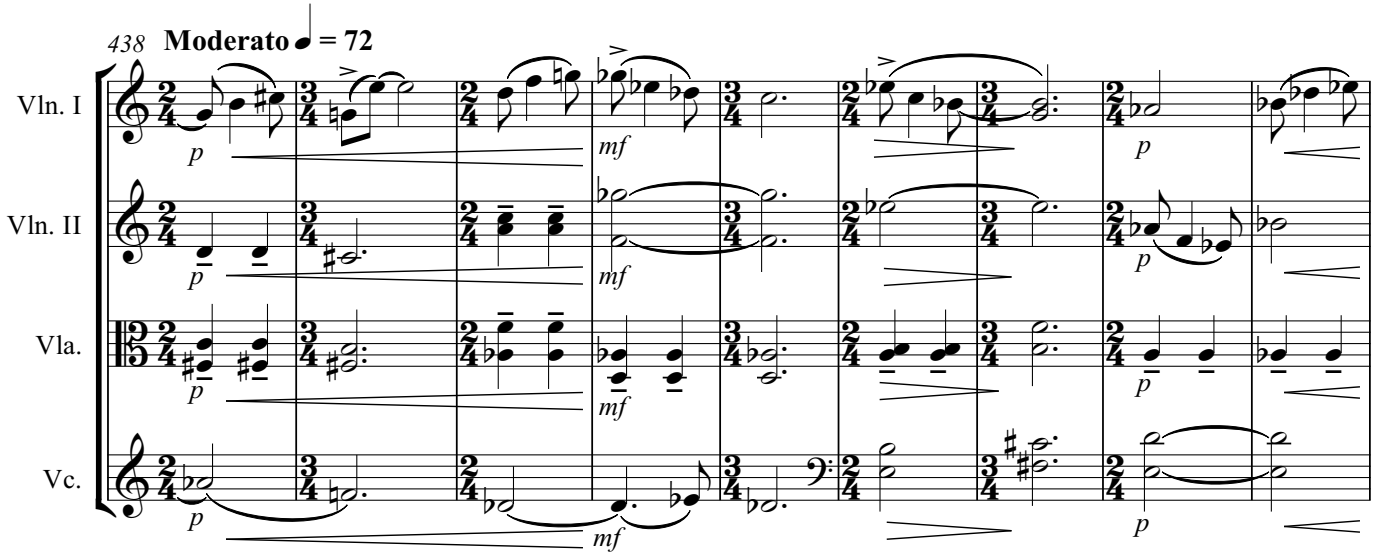

423
molto accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
5
6
6
sub p
sub p
sub p
sf
sub p

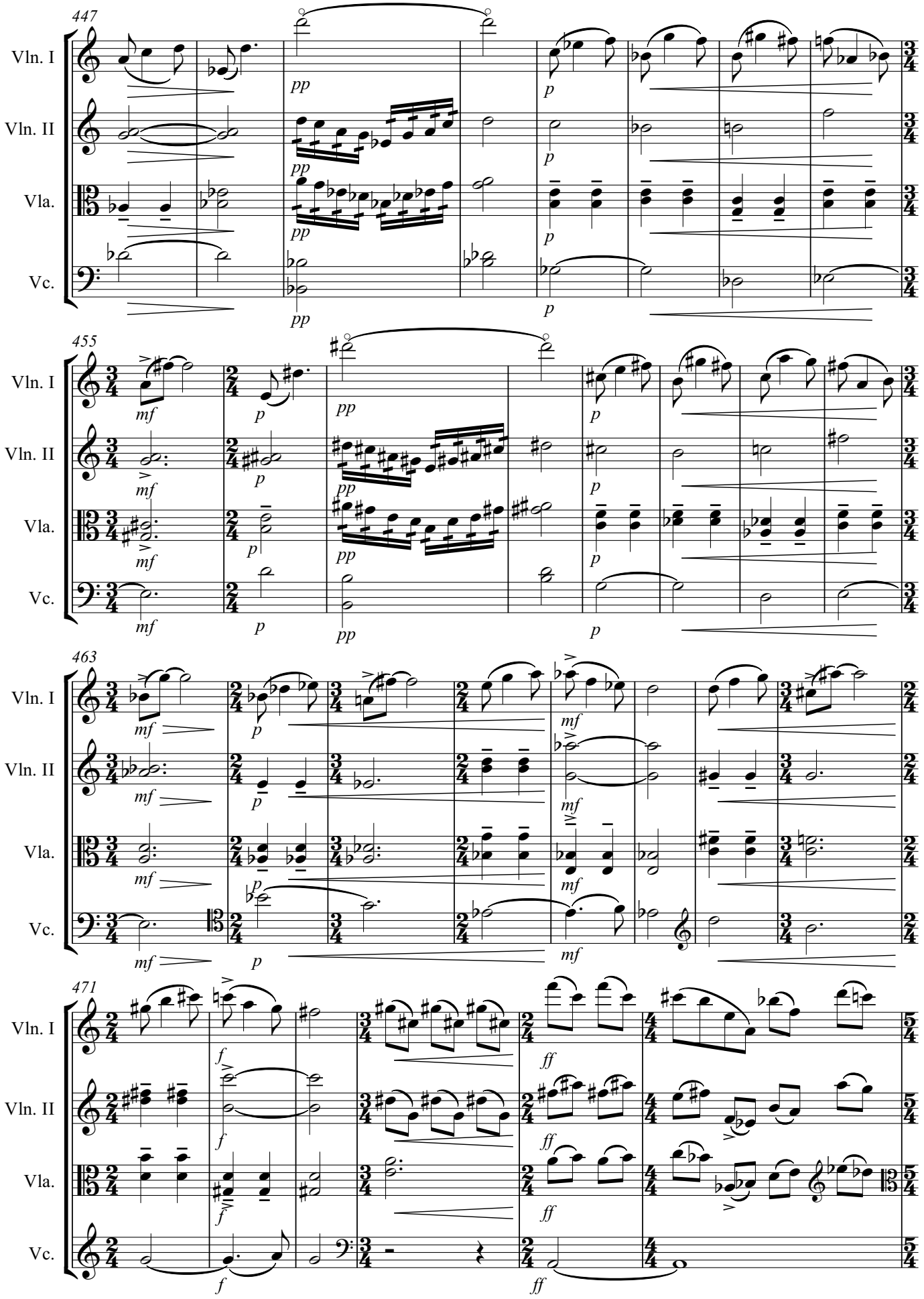

426
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
ff
ff
ff
ff

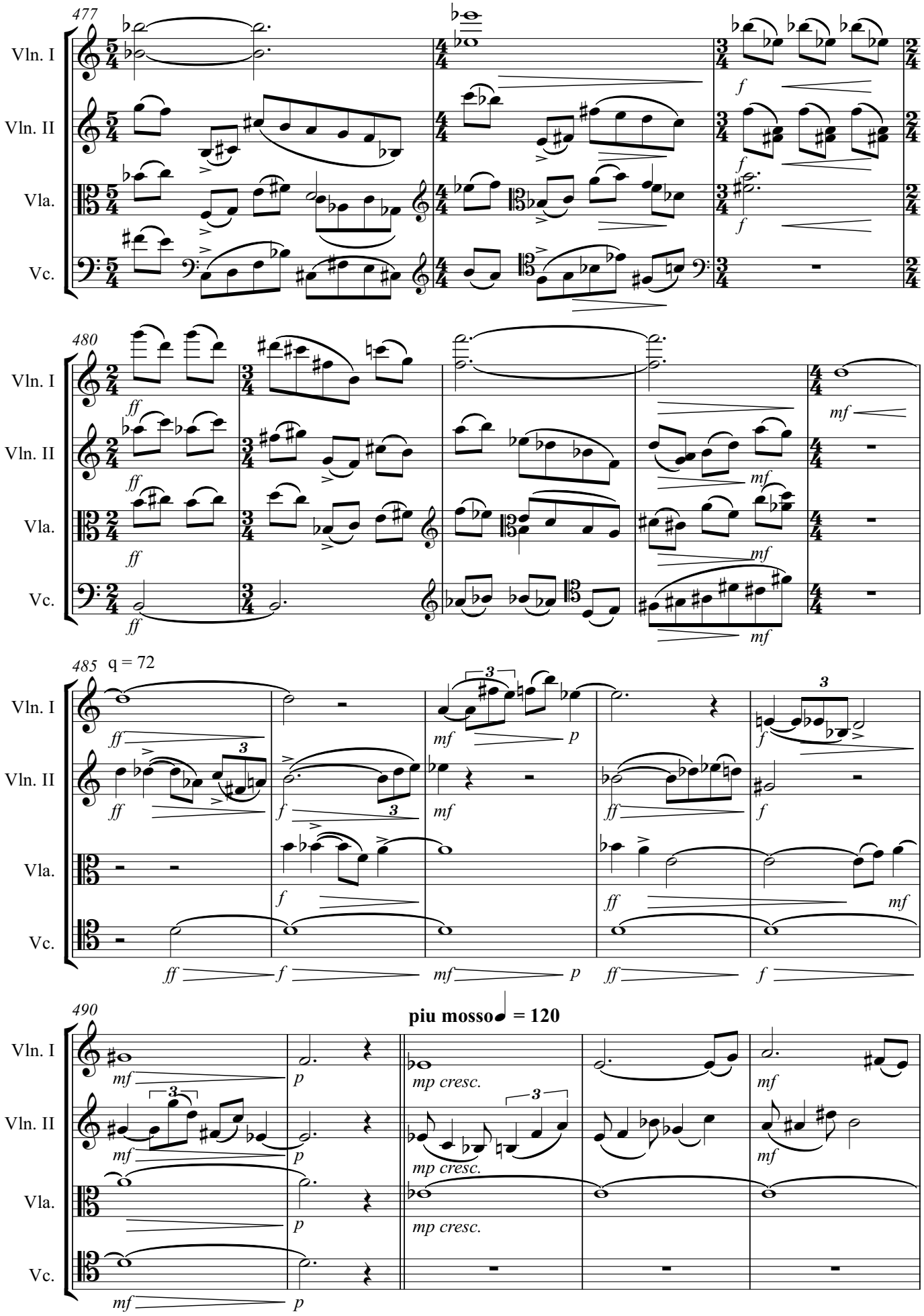

431
Senza misura
Vl. I leads
sul pont.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
sf
pp
follow Vl. I
sul pont.
sul tasto
433
in time with Vl. II
in time with Vl. I
in time with Vc.
sul pont.
in time with Vla.
normale
434
Vl. I leads
follow Vl. I
follow Vl. I
sul tasto

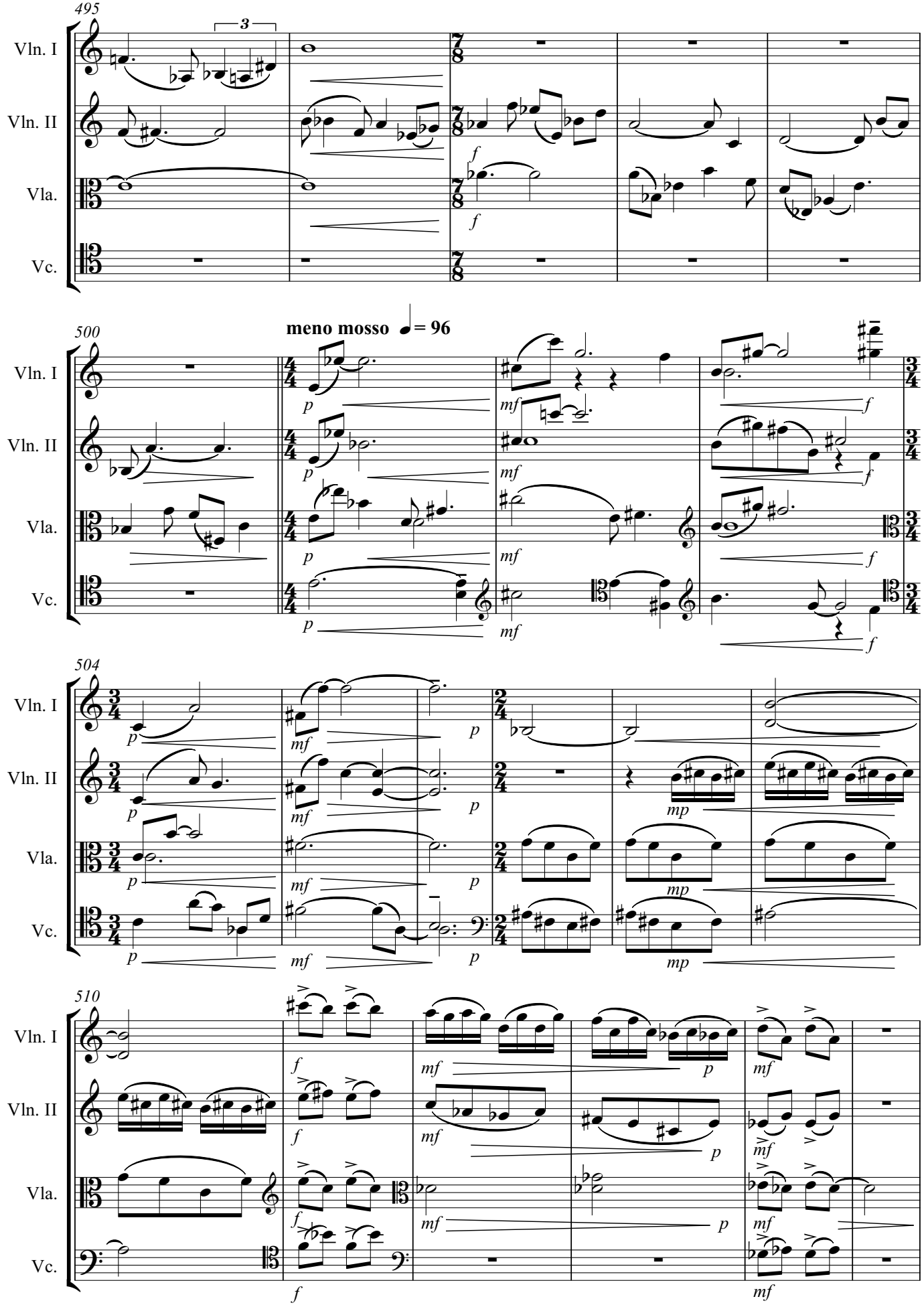

435
In time with Vl. I
Vln. I
In time with Vl. I
Vln. II
In time with Vc.
sul pont.
Vla.
In time with Vla.
sul pont.
Vc.

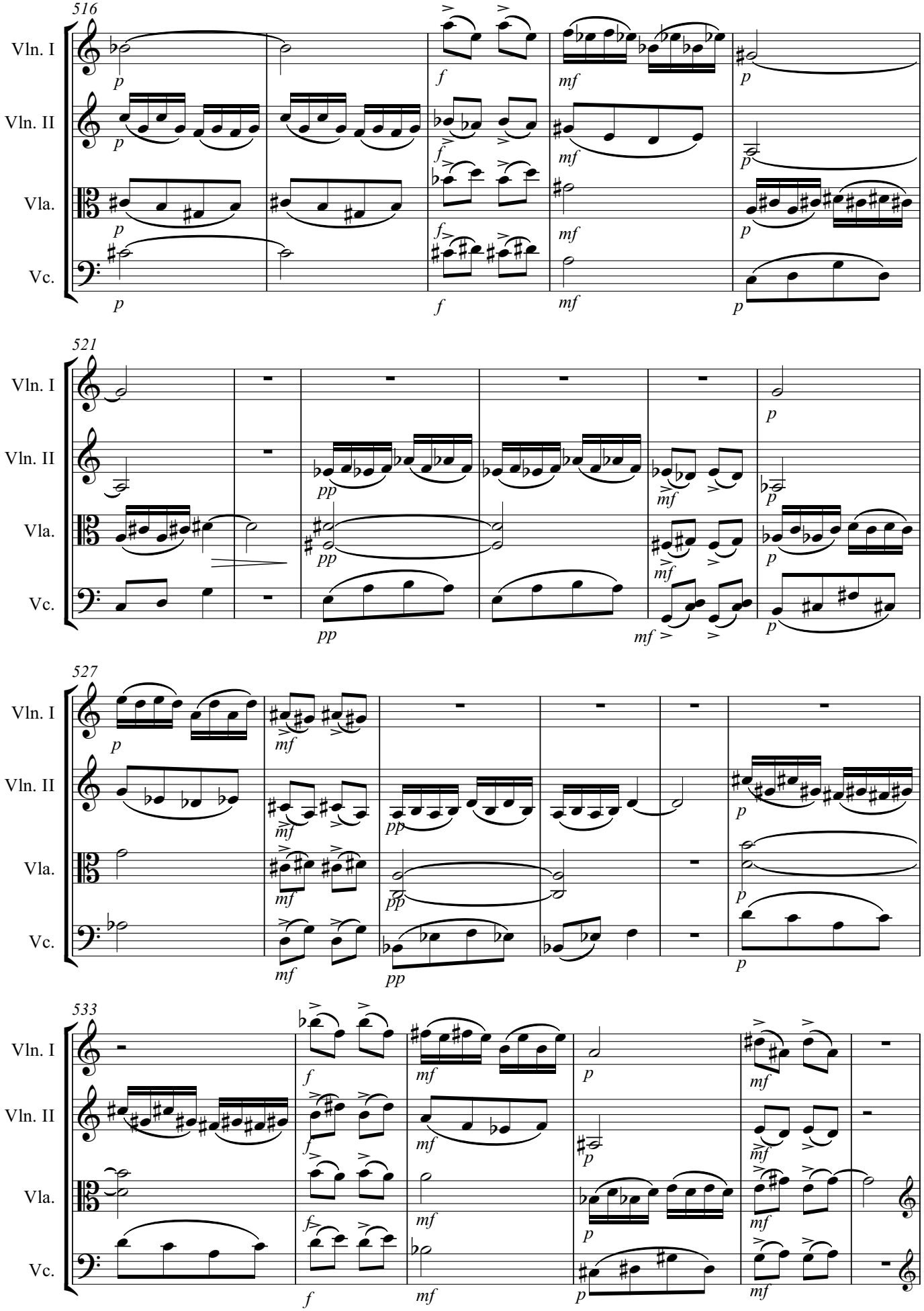

436
in time with Vl. II
normale
Vln. I
in time with Vl. I
normale
Vln. II
in time with Vc.
normale
Vla.
in time with Vla.
normale
Vc.
in time with Vl. I

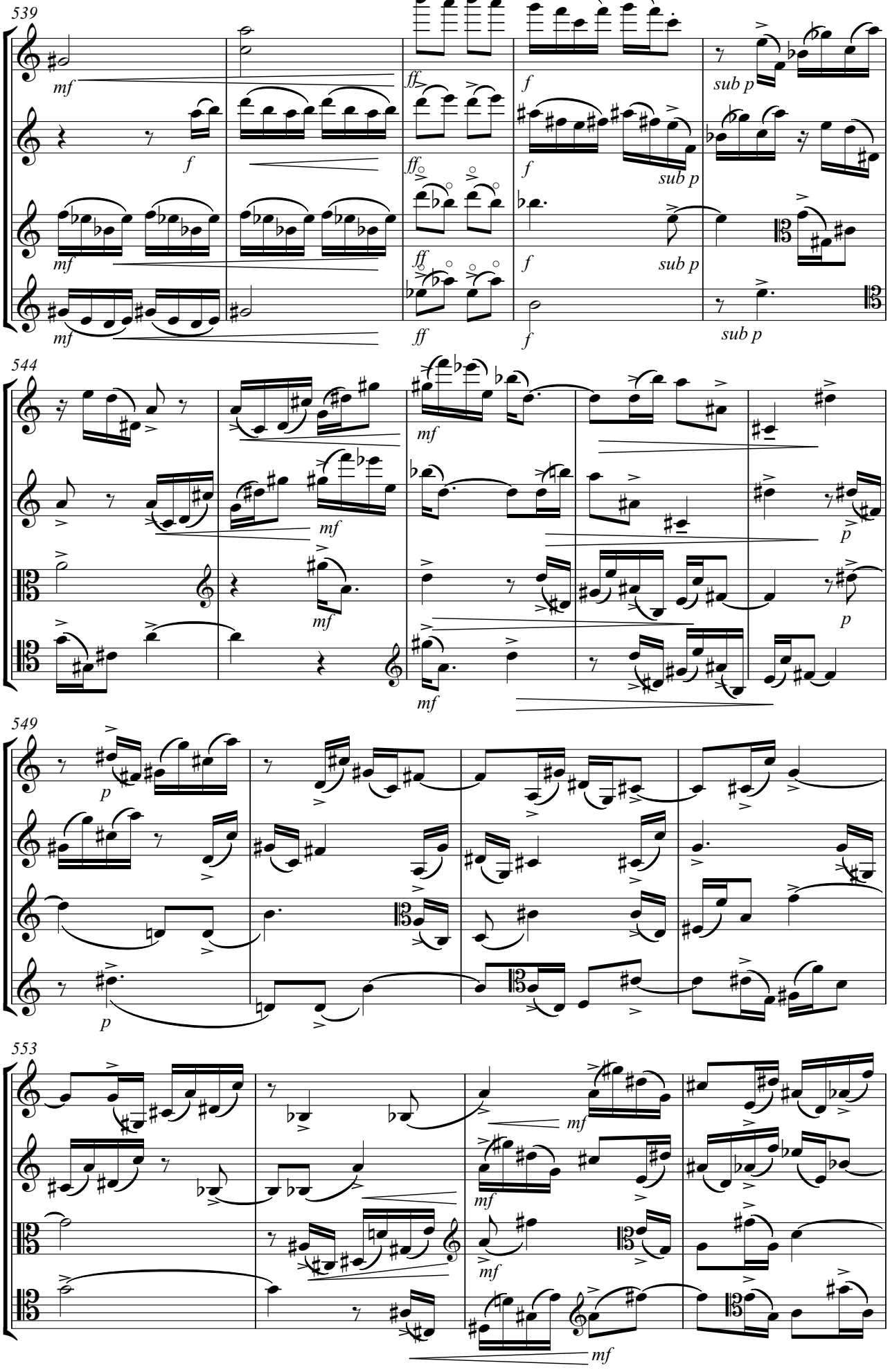

438
Moderato ♩ = 72
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
p
mf


447
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
455
463
471


477
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
480
485
q = 72
490
piu mosso ♩ = 120
mp cresc.


495
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
3
f
500
meno mosso ♩= 96
p
mf
f
504
mp
510


516
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
521
527
533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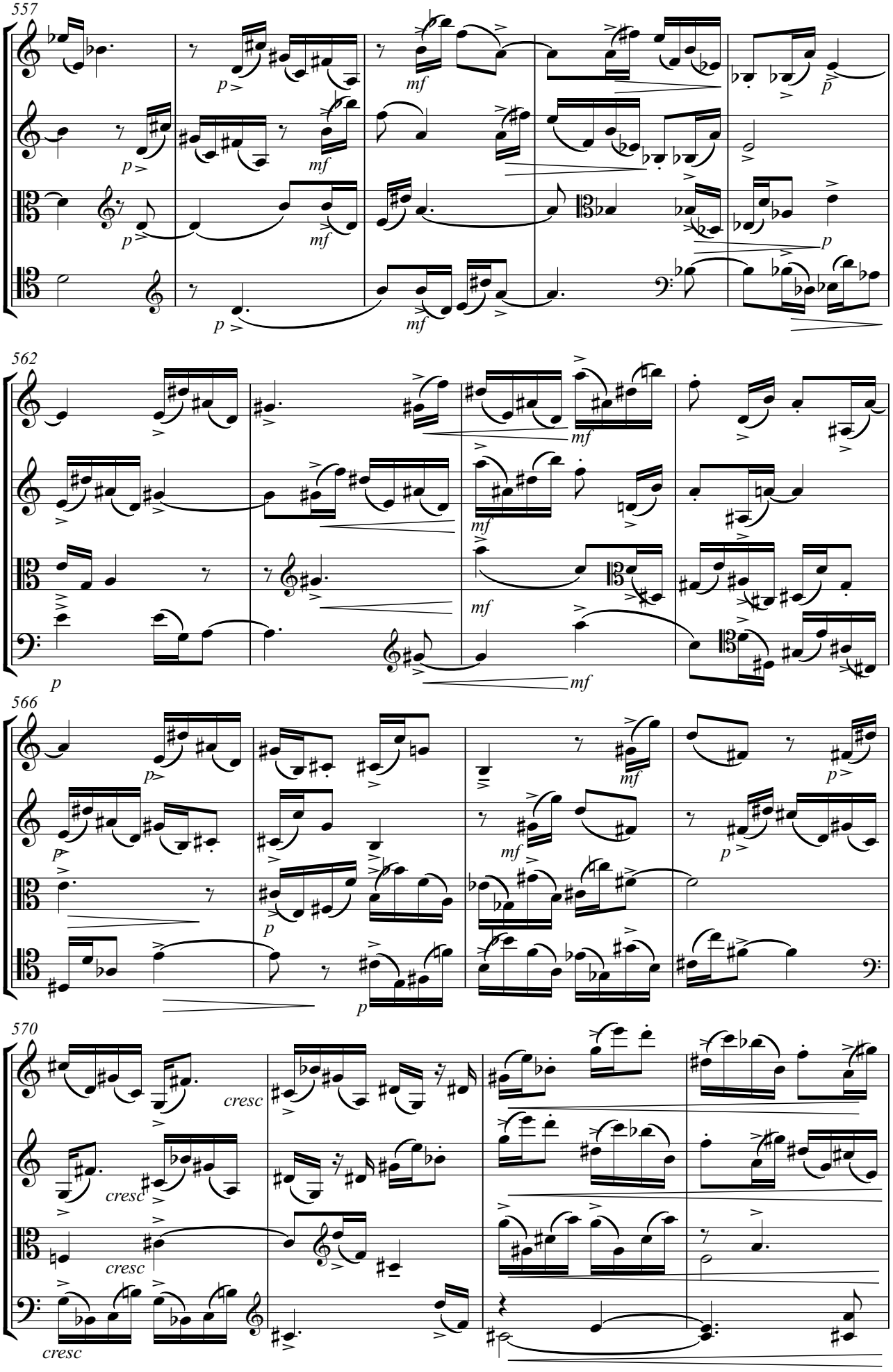
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
mf
f
ff
sub p
544
549
553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Vla.
Vc.
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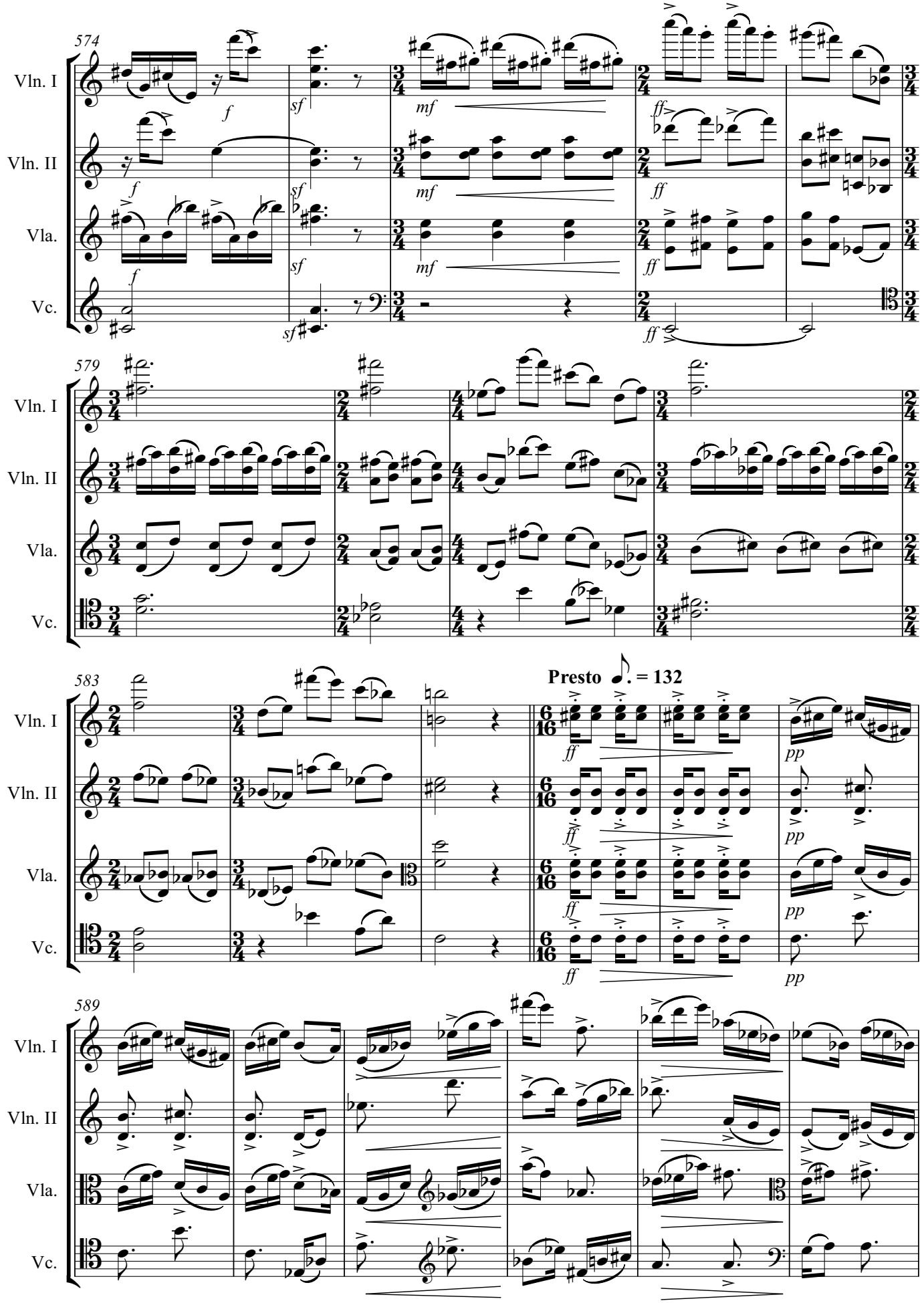
570
cresc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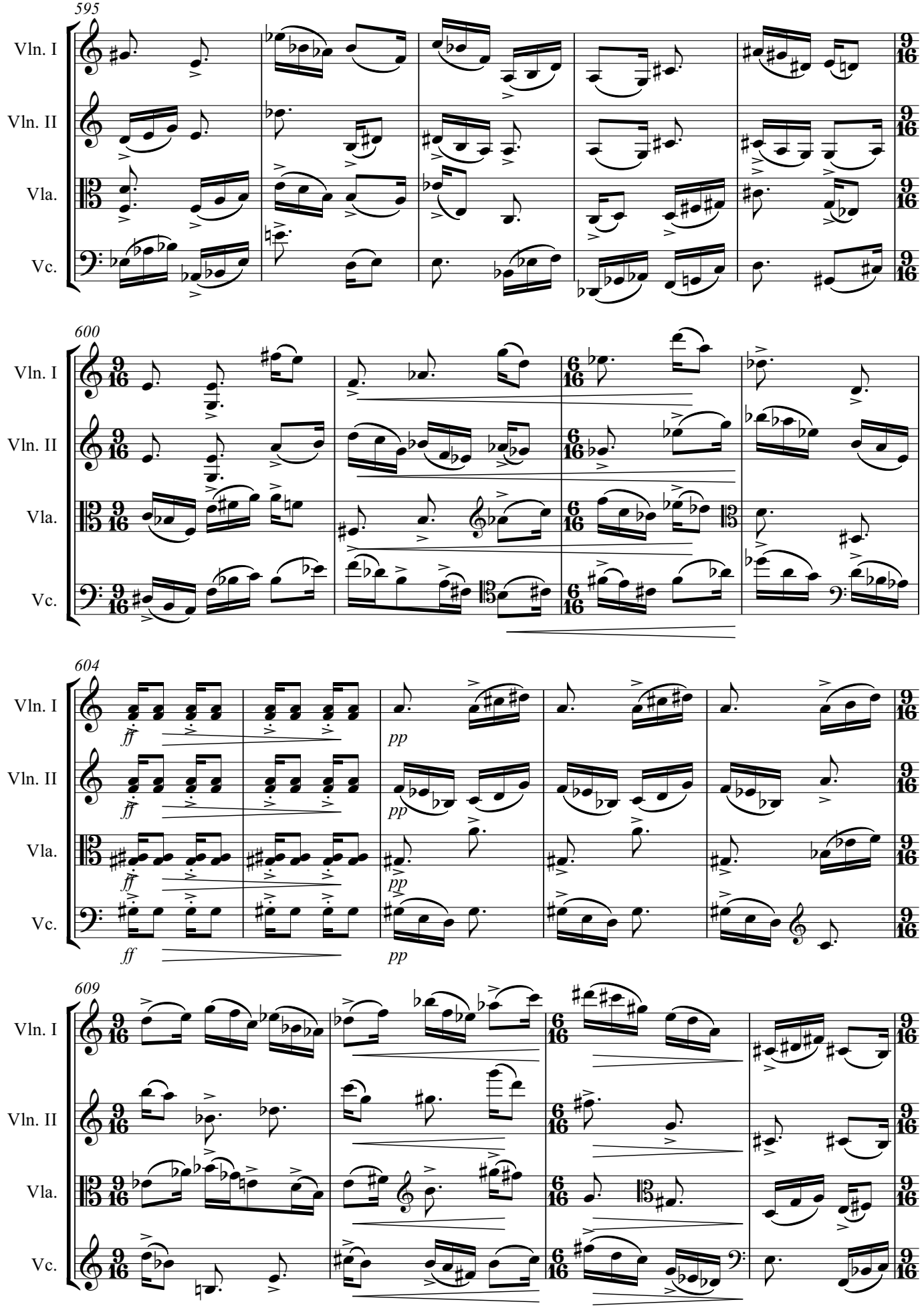
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
579
583
Presto ♩. = 132
589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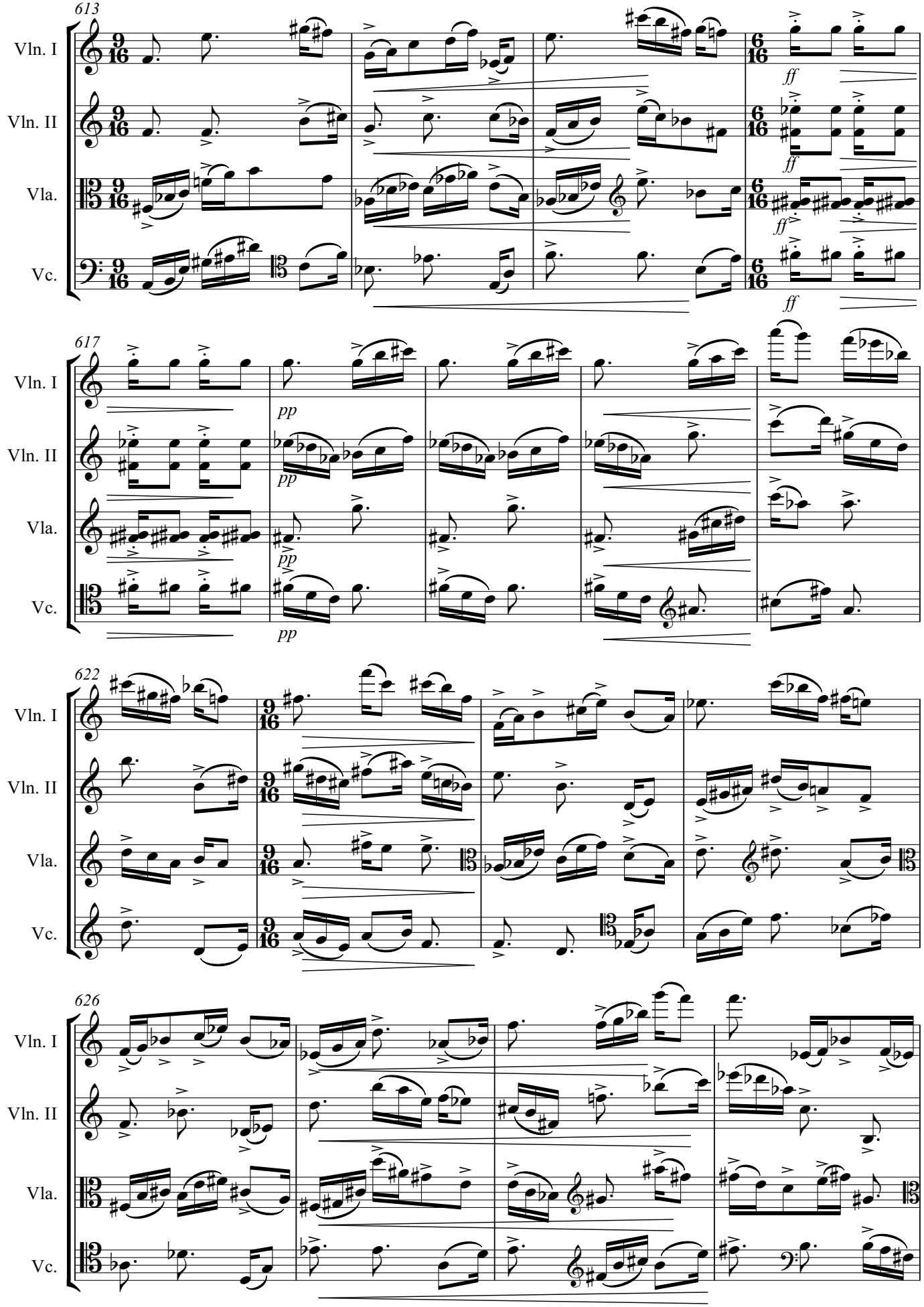
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
600
604
ff
pp
609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Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
ff
617
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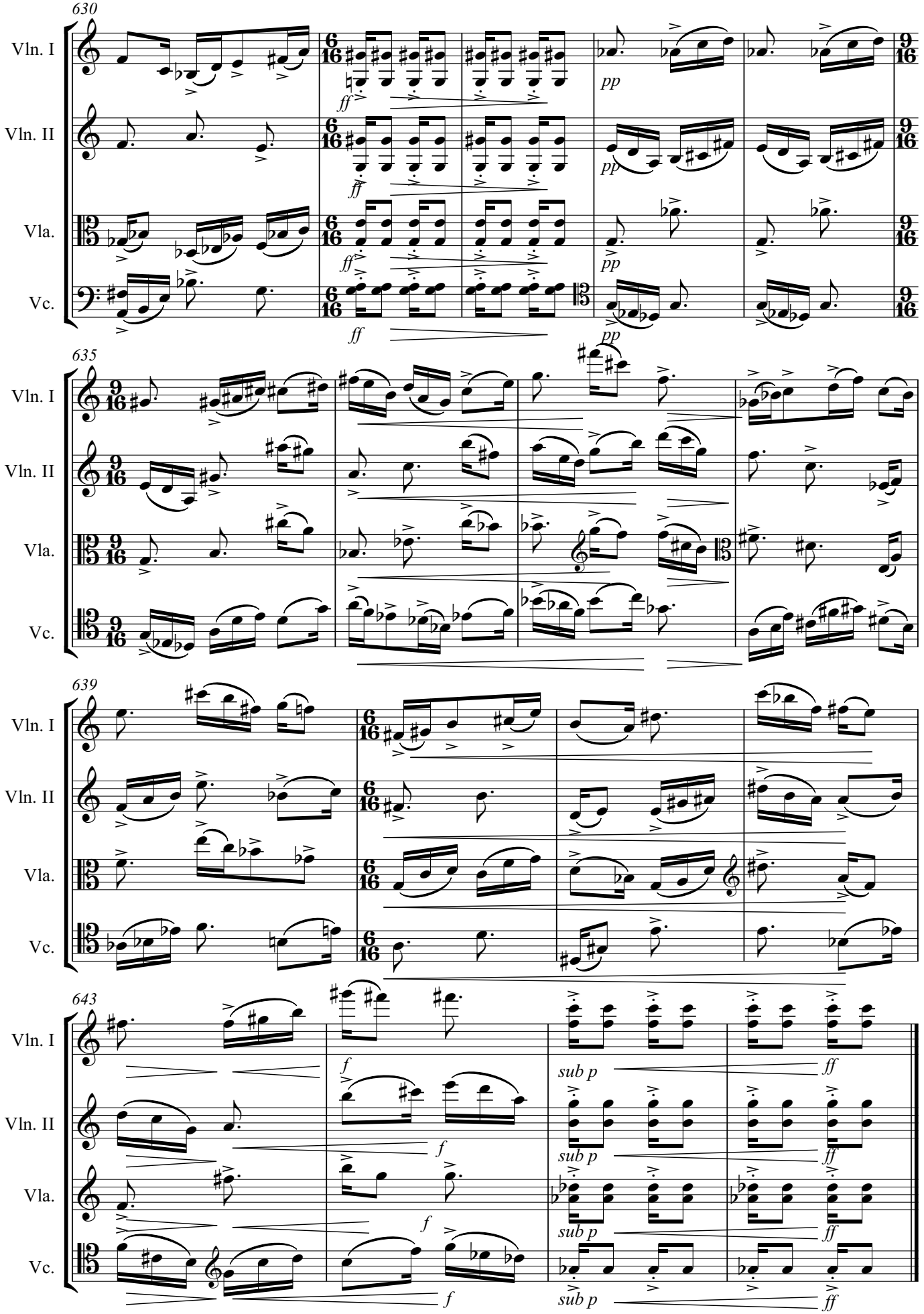
622
626


630
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
ff
pp
635
639
643
f
sub p

Music by Jolyon Laycock

Four Times Four for 16 actors/dancers/singers with electronics (1971)
Locations I, II, III, and IV - sound sculptures (1970 rev. 1973)
***Lattice* - for 12 solo strings and electronics** (1972 - Commissioned by the Barber Institute, University of Birmingham)
Pluramusic - electronic sound installation (1972-1977)
This Could Happen to You - participatory audio-visual installation (1974-1976)
Tyrannos - 12 audio-visual cycles on the myth of Oedipus (unfinished) - Earth Cycle, Moon Cycle, Uranus Cycle, Pluto Cycle, and Equinox Cycle first performed 1977
***Bladud* - a wordscape with music** - commissioned by Bathampton Primary School (1985)
Woden's Dyke - music-theatre for school and community performance based on the story of the Anglo-Saxon chieftain Ceawlin of Wessex. Commissioned by Wansdyke Arts Council (1987).
Hetty Pegler - music theatre piece commissioned by Prema Arts Centre, Uley, Gloucestershire (1988)
High Wood - solo oboe (1988)
In Bruton Town - Fantasia of a Somerset folk song for string orchestra (1988)
Seven Stars - Community opera based on Thomas Clarkson's investigations into the Bristol slave trade in 1787. Bristol City Commission.(1994)
A Dream of Flying - for clarinet, horn, bassoon, string trio, double bass and piano (1995).
Eadgar Cyning - settings for soloists, choir and orchestra in the original language of three poems from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle about the coronation and death of King Edgar at Bath. (1996).
***Un Tiento Rasguado* (homage to Joaquin Rodrigo)** junior competition test piece for the Bath International Guitar Festival 1996.
Sinfonietta for String Orchestra (1998) - revised and re-issued as ***Tetraktis*** (2014)
Mengjiang Weeping at the Wall - Music-theatre piece for soprano, choir, small ensemble, Chinese instruments and junior school children; Commissioned by the Corsham Festival (2002).
Die! A-One Sparrow for piano duet (2002)
Among Seven Hills Sinfonia Concertante for piano and orchestra (2009)
12 Landscape Studies for piano (1996-2010)
12 River Preludes for piano (2011)
6 Sonnets of Edna St. Vincent Millay for mezzo soprano and piano (2011)
3 Sonnets of Gerard Manley Hopkins for tenor or high baritone and piano (2012)
String Quartet (2012)
***An Entangled Bank* -** A setting for 8 part *a cappella* choir of the final paragraph of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin (2013).
Cantilena for solo cello and open score ensemble (2013)
The Ballad of Gogmagog an entertainment for baritone and small orchestra (2014)
Clarion Call for solo bass clarinet and open score ensemble (2014)
Dark Seas - 5 poems of Philip Larkin for coloratura soprano, clarinet and piano (2014)
***The Swan* - after Camille Saint-Saëns** for cello and two pianos (2014)
***Orbium Cœlestium* -** Cantata for mixed chorus, soloists and orchestra on a text by Nicholaus Copernicus
Trilithon for orchestra (begun 1968 – completed & revised 2015)
The Persistence of Memory - sonata for violin and piano after Salvador Dali and Phiolip Larkin (2016)
Three Shakespeare Sonnets for tenor or high baritone and piano (2016)
Latham Variations for oboe and piano (2017)
Mountains of the Mind 12 poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins for tenor or high baritone and piano (2018)

Theoretical writings:
A Changing Role for the Composer in Society
A Study of the Historical Background and Current Methodologies of Creative Music-Making
Peter Lang, European Academic Publishers, Switzerland (2005) http://www.peterlang.com/all/index.cfm
All Interval Fractal Sets - a technical explanation - http://www.jolyonlaycock.uk/theoretical-writings

Poetry:
To Tolverne - a Riddle A poem inspired by the D-day museum at Tolverne, Cornwall (2001)
Berliner Schnauze A collection of poems in the form of an entertainment in words and music inspired by a visit to Berlin ten years after the fall of the Berlin wall (1999).
A Mendip Ploughing Match at Priddy and other Mendip poems
Estrildis operatic libretto in verse on a story from Geoffrey of Monmouth *The History of the Kings of Britain*.
Polonaise of Chopin declamation with piano accompaniment (2015)
For more details visit: http://www.jolyonlaycock.uk/