Allen Brings

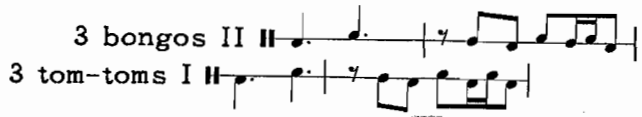
Four Canons

for percussion instruments

Seesaw Music
a division of
Subito Music Corporation
Verona, New Jersey 07044
WWW.SEESAWMUSIC.COM

Remarks

Canon I is a simple canon in three parts in which part II enters after only a half-measure and part III enters after three complete measures. Although it can undoubtedly also be played with varying degrees of success by other kinds of instruments, this piece is intended primarily for membranophones, preferably without snares. If each player chooses to use more than one representative of the particular type of instrument which he is playing, each tuned to a different pitch, he should be careful to co-ordinate his melodic line with those of the other players. The players of parts I and II might then interpret the opening measures thus:

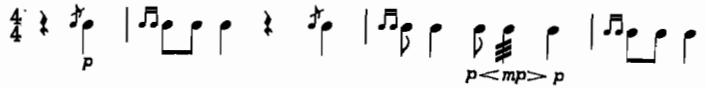


Whatever instruments are chosen, the characteristics of their sounds should be distinguishable enough so that the lines of the canon can be readily followed.

Canon II, the only piece specifying definite pitches, is a three-part *scherzo* in which part II imitates part I in inversion at a time interval of two beats while part III enters approximately midway imitating part III in diminution (and, of course, part I in both diminution and inversion). The players of parts II and III may read their parts, if they wish, from a mirror with the music turned upside down reading from the last line. Part II is governed by the second clef and its accompanying time and "key" signatures and enters at "II;" part III is governed by the third clef with its signatures and enters at "III."

Because it provides contrast in both tone color and register, the following instrumentation is preferred: four timpani for part I, a vibraphone with its motor on for part II, and a xylophone for part III. Other instruments may be substituted with more or less good effect, for example, a marimba for part II, a celesta (but *not* a Glockenspiel played only with mallets) for part II, and, of course, a piano, suitably played, for any part, always keeping in mind that part III must sound an octave higher than part II.

Canon III is a crab canon in which part I is imitated by part II in retrograde, both beginning at the same time. The player of part II may read his part either while holding it before a mirror or simply backwards. In order to achieve the desired effect, no more than one instrument should play each part, but any two relatively high pitched instruments of contrasting timbres capable of sustaining a roll may be used. Such embellishments as the flam and the drag, required by the technique of instruments like the snare drum, should be added as needed. The player of part II might then play the opening measures thus:



Canon IV is a double augmentation canon in which part II, beginning at the same time as part I, imitates part I at half the speed. Four beats later parts III and IV enter imitating parts I and II. This piece lends itself to a wide variety of instrumental combinations, the simplest being:

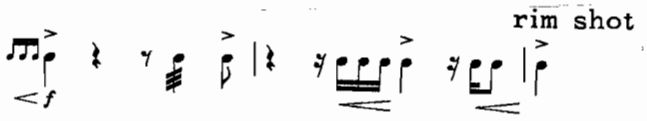
III snare drum
IV tenor drum played with mallets (or a second bass drum)
I military drum (or a second snare drum)
II bass drum

With this combination instruments of similar timbres imitate each other. At the same time parts with faster rhythms are assigned to higher pitched instruments and parts with slower rhythms to lower pitched instruments. Certain metallic instruments may also be used to play the notes whose stems are marked with an "X" ( ). For the assignment of such instruments the following solution is recommended:

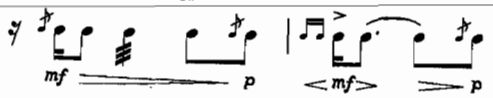
III a suspended cymbal choked
IV a small tam-tam allowed to ring
I a pair of cymbals choked
II a large tam-tam allowed to ring

During the second half of the piece, when parts I and III imitate only each other, other metallic instruments may be substituted to suit the changing character of the music.

Parts played by instruments such as the snare drum should be ornamented according to the practice of playing those instruments. For example, a snare drum might perform the opening measures of part I thus:

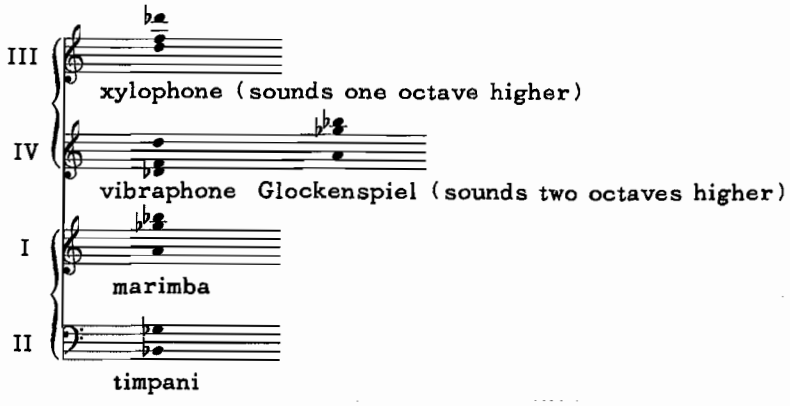


and the beginning of the second theme (identified by "Th II") thus:

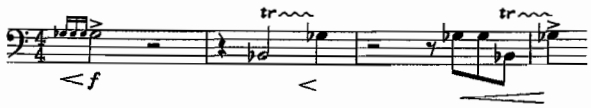


Altering the parts in this manner by introducing embellishments idiomatic to the instruments performing them suggests still another way of playing this piece. An almost heterophonic texture will result from performance by a large ensemble consisting of instruments of widely divergent types including those of definite pitch as well as some which are scraped or shaken. The following example may suggest ways in which pitches can be chosen and disposed for a performance using instruments of definite pitch.

Tones from the polychord G-flat, B-flat, D-flat, D, F, A are distributed among the parts in such a way that the tones presented by parts III and IV at least complete the collection of tones partially presented by parts I and II; at the same time no tone is represented more than once in each octave.



With the two or three tones which he has been assigned, each player then improvises a melodic line, always following the notated rhythm of his part. The opening measures of part II performed on two timpani might be played as follows:

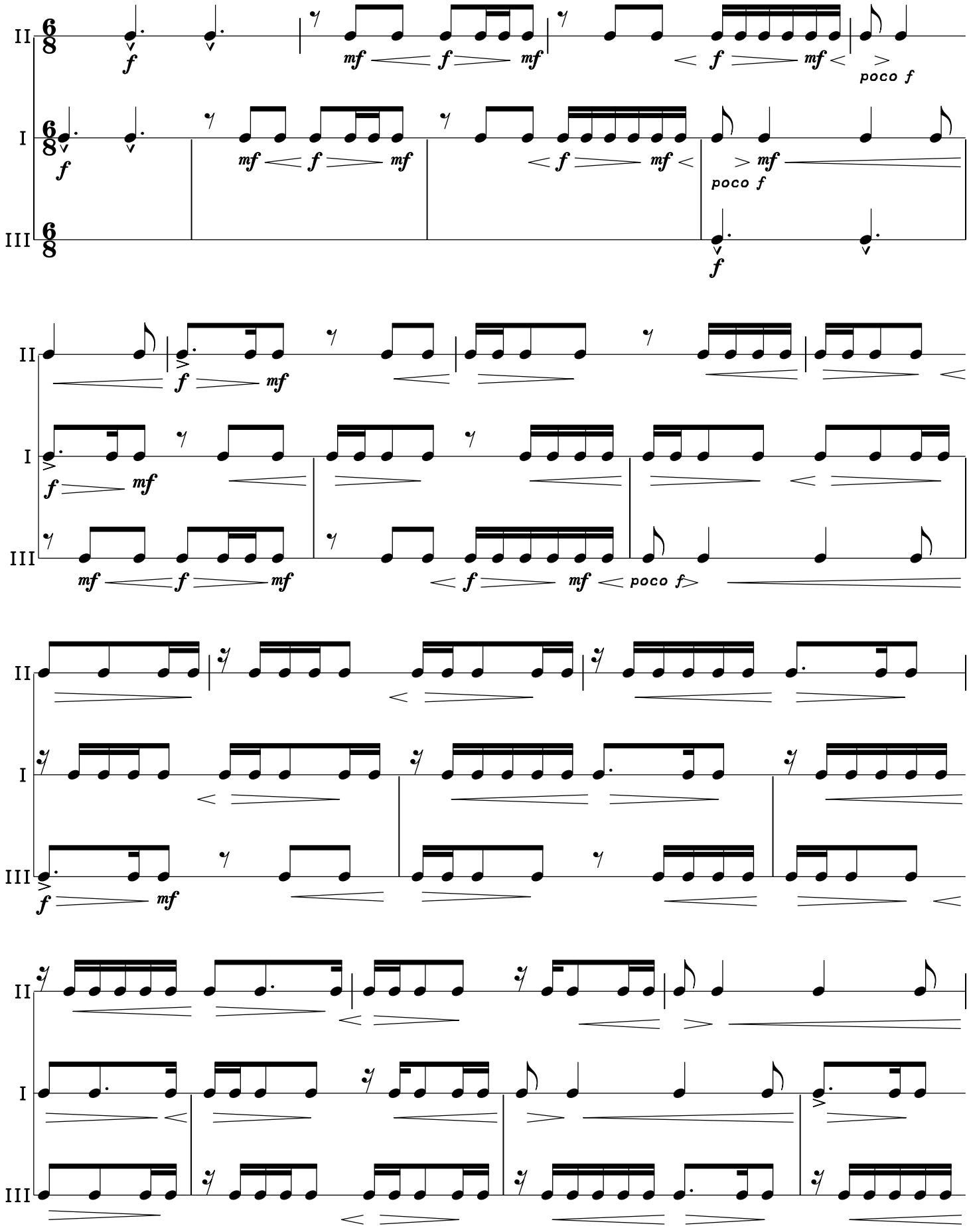


Comparable results can be obtained by assigning a set of Chinese temple blocks to part I and bongos to part III, tom-toms to part II and gongs of different sizes to part IV.

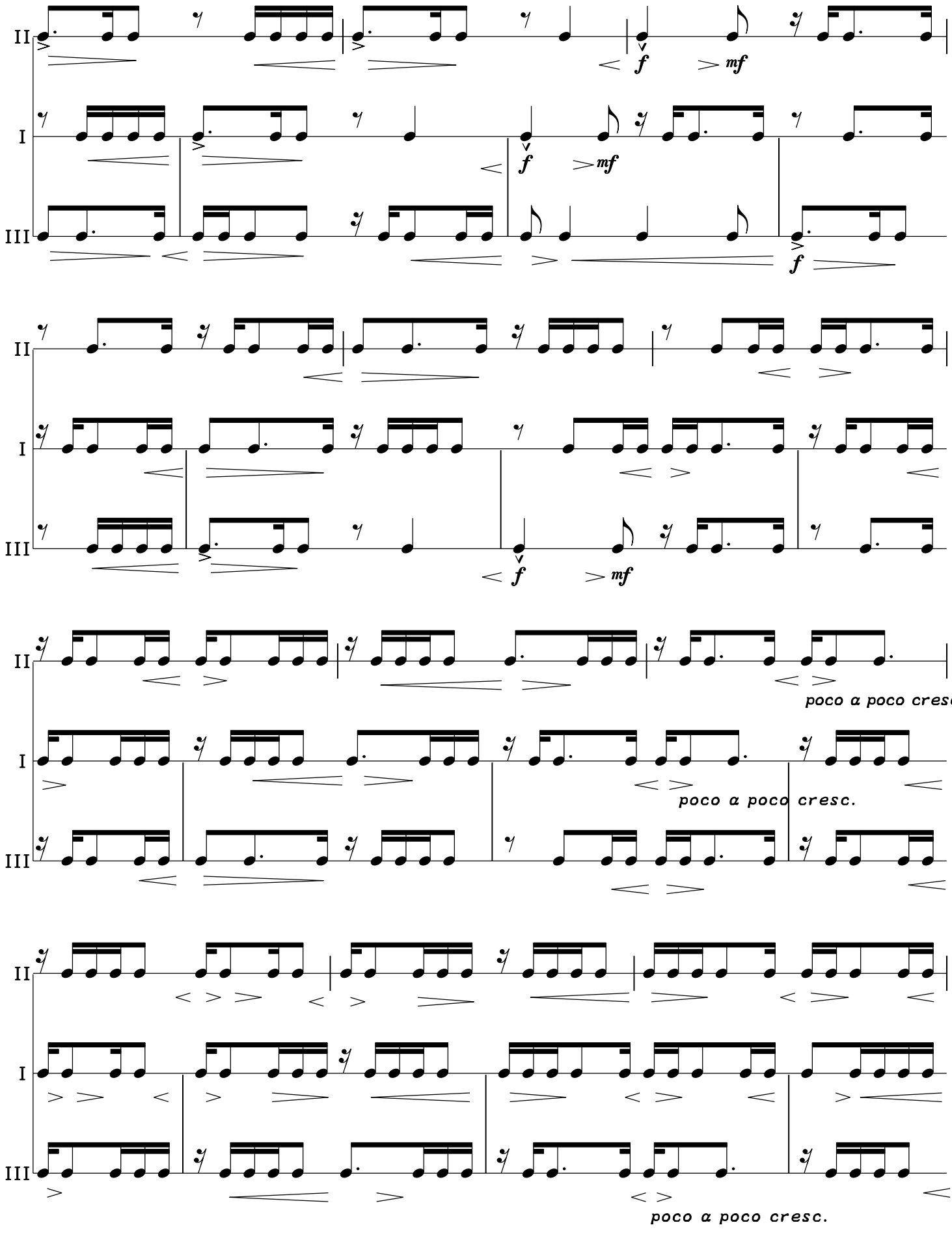
March 5, 1974
Rome

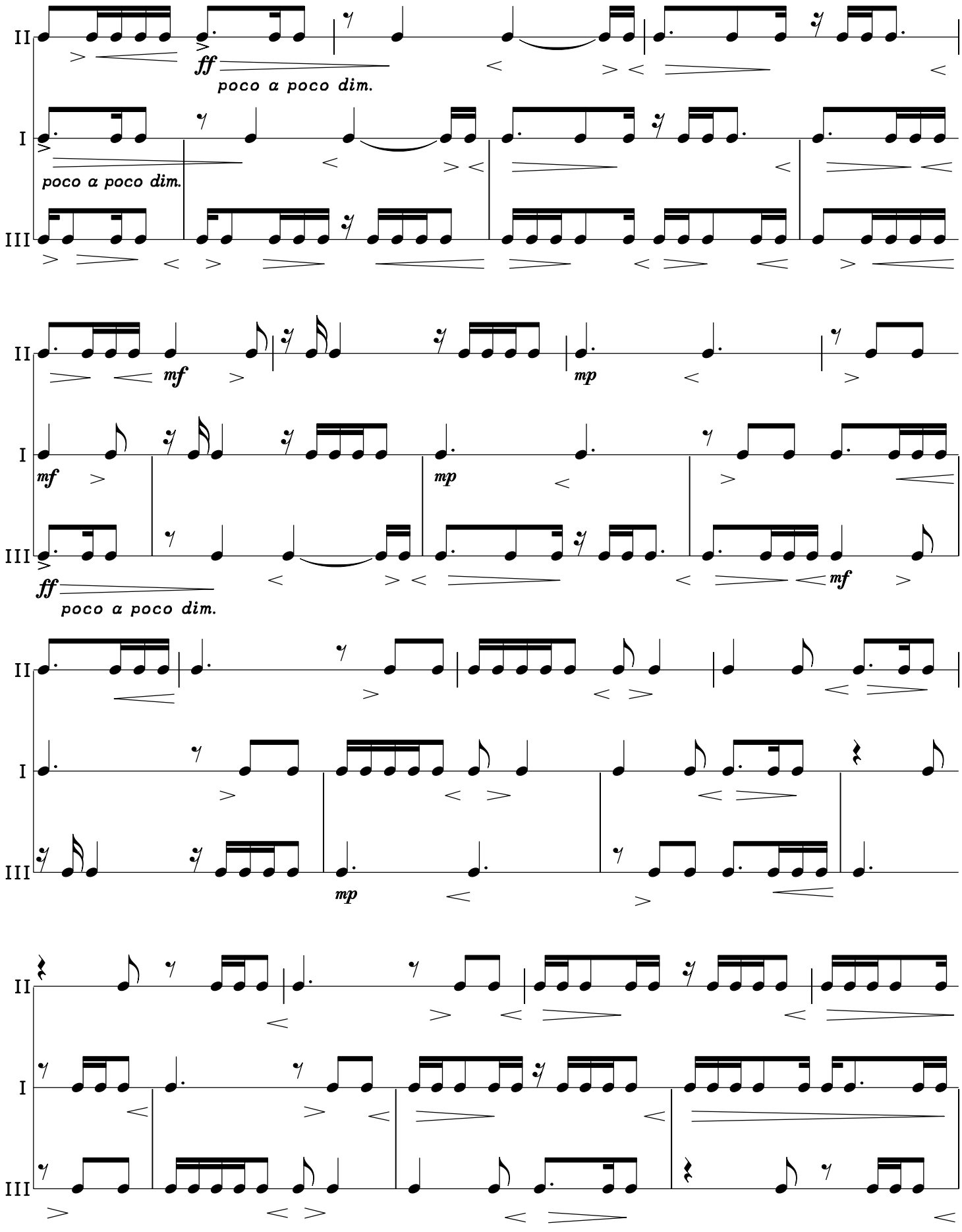
I

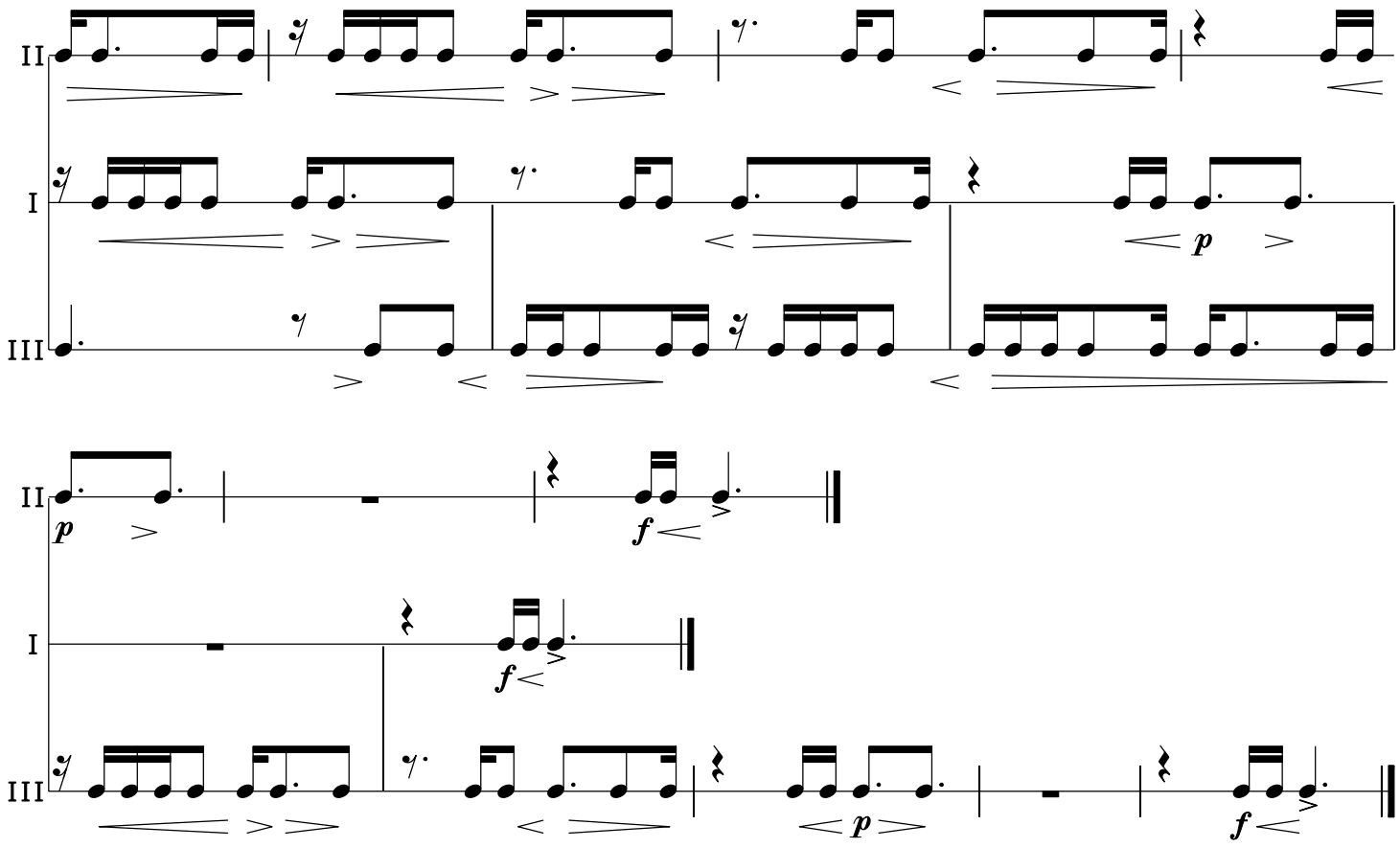
Allegro giocoso ♩. = 84



Copyright 1989 by Seesaw Music, a division of Subito Music Corp. (ASCAP)
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed in USA

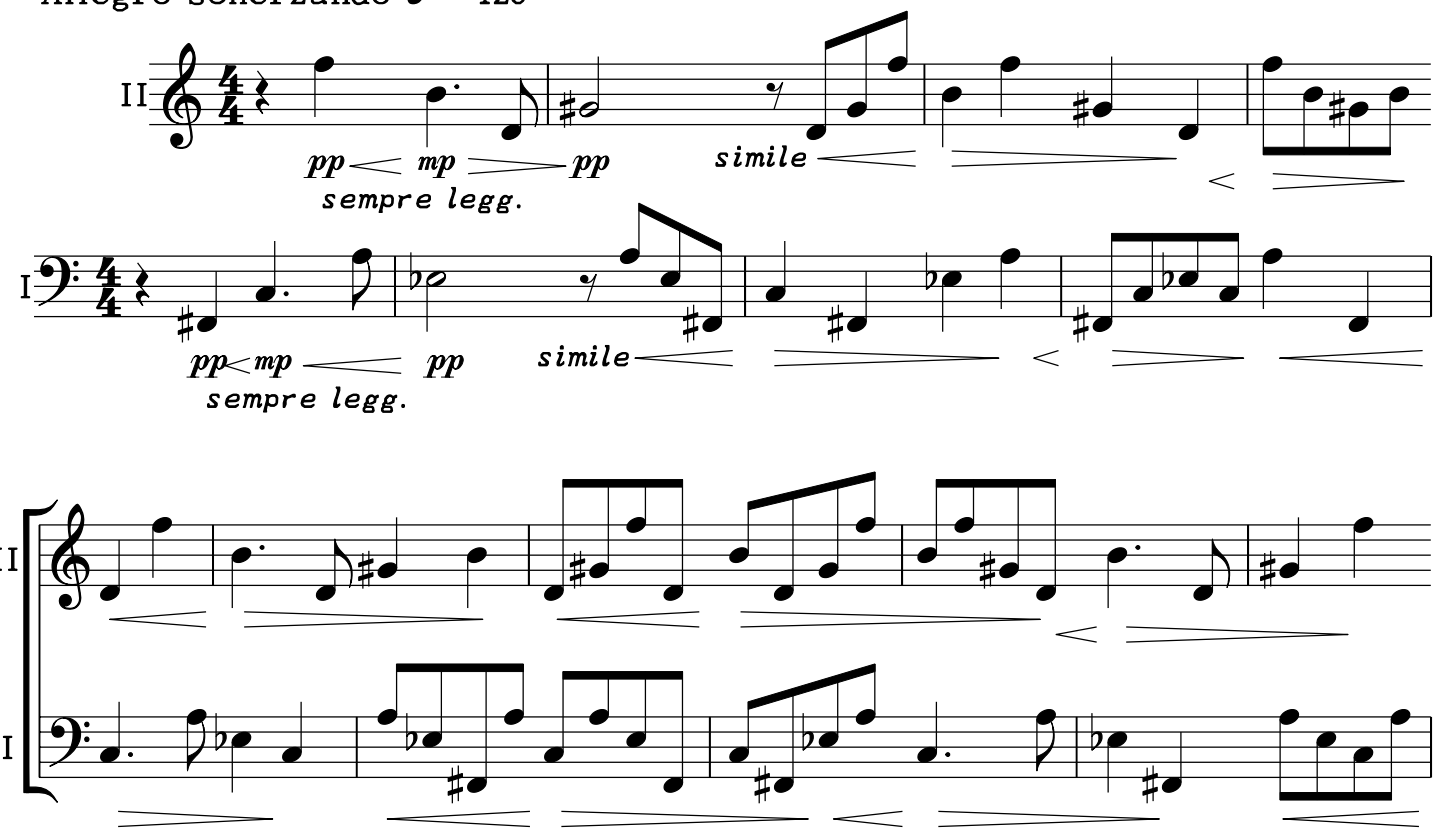

II
I
III
f
mf
poco a poco cresc.

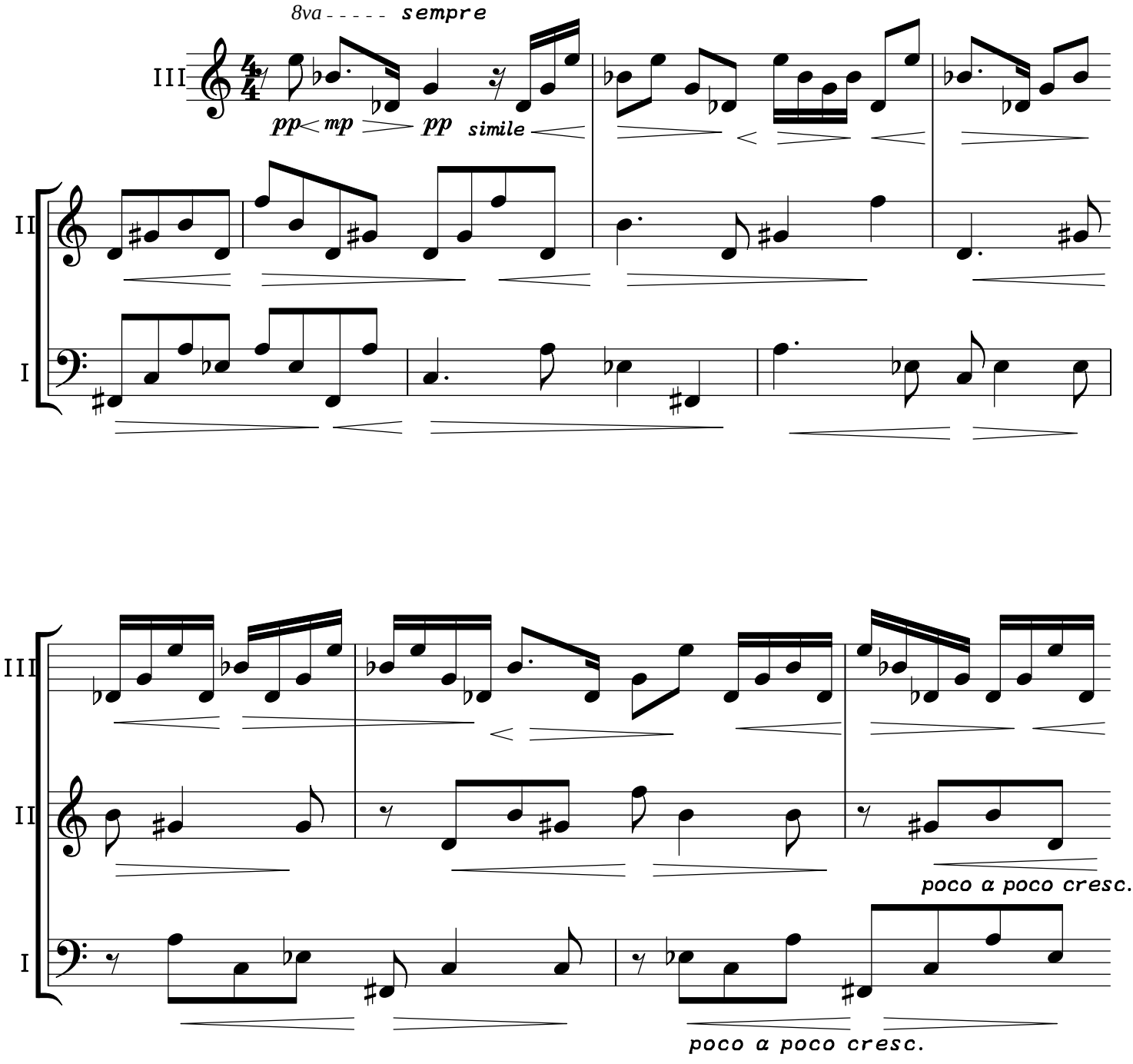

II
I
III
ff
poco a poco dim.
mf
mp

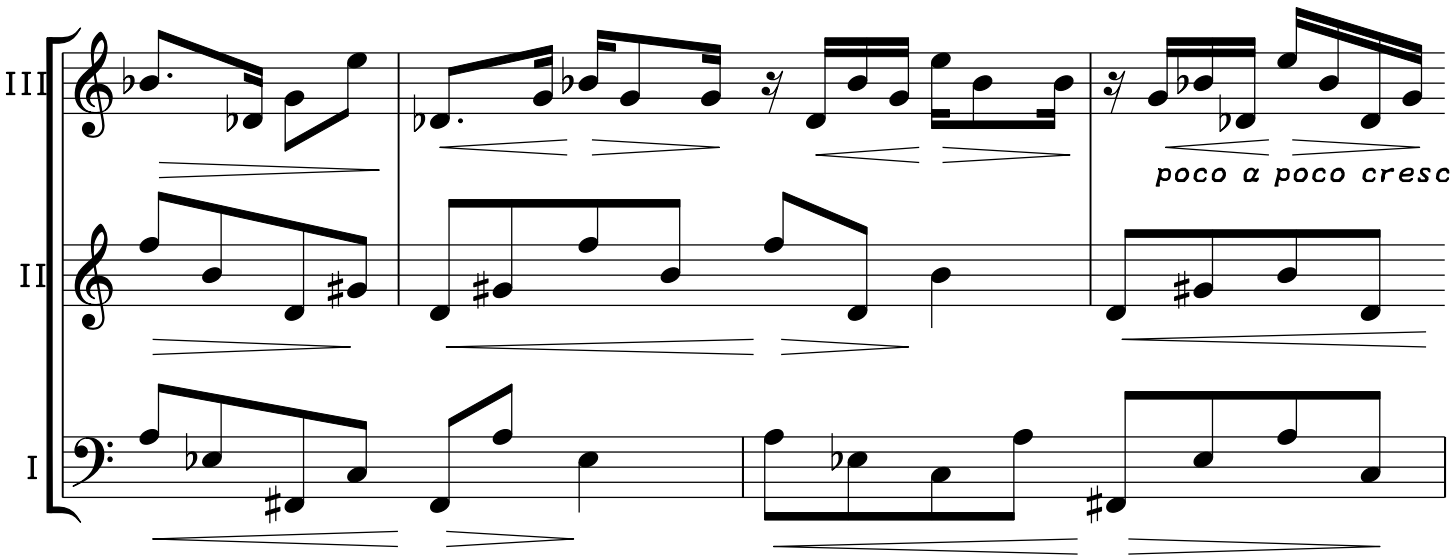


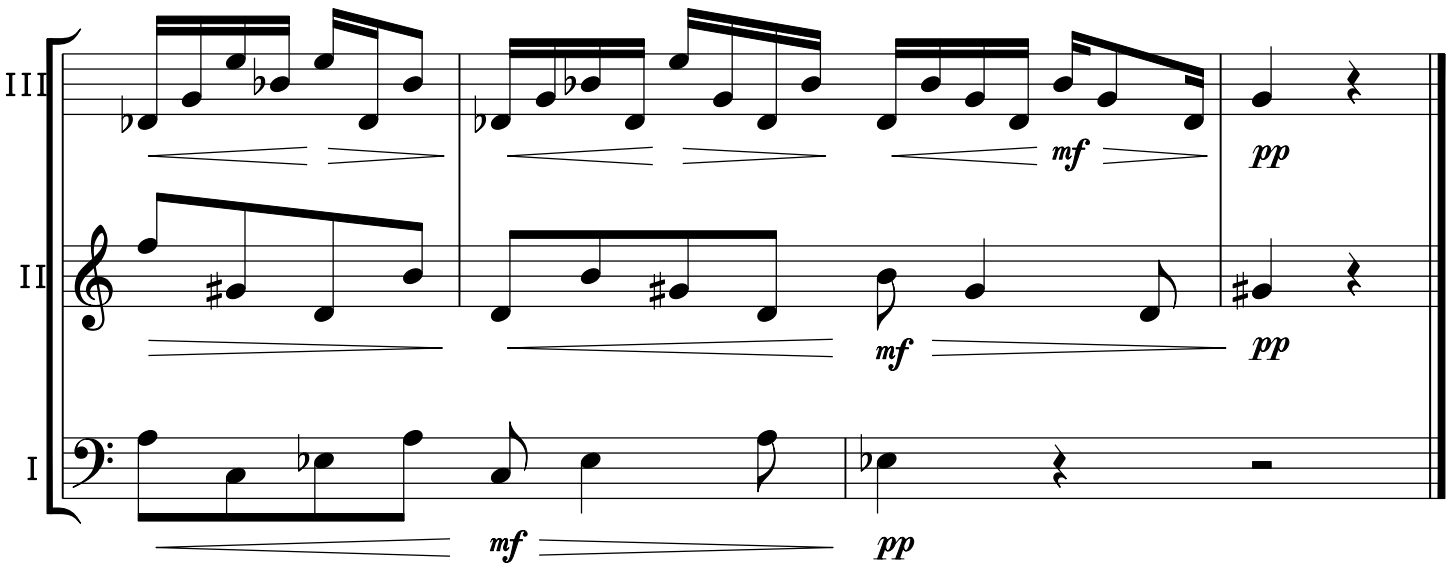
II

Allegro scherzando ♩ = 126

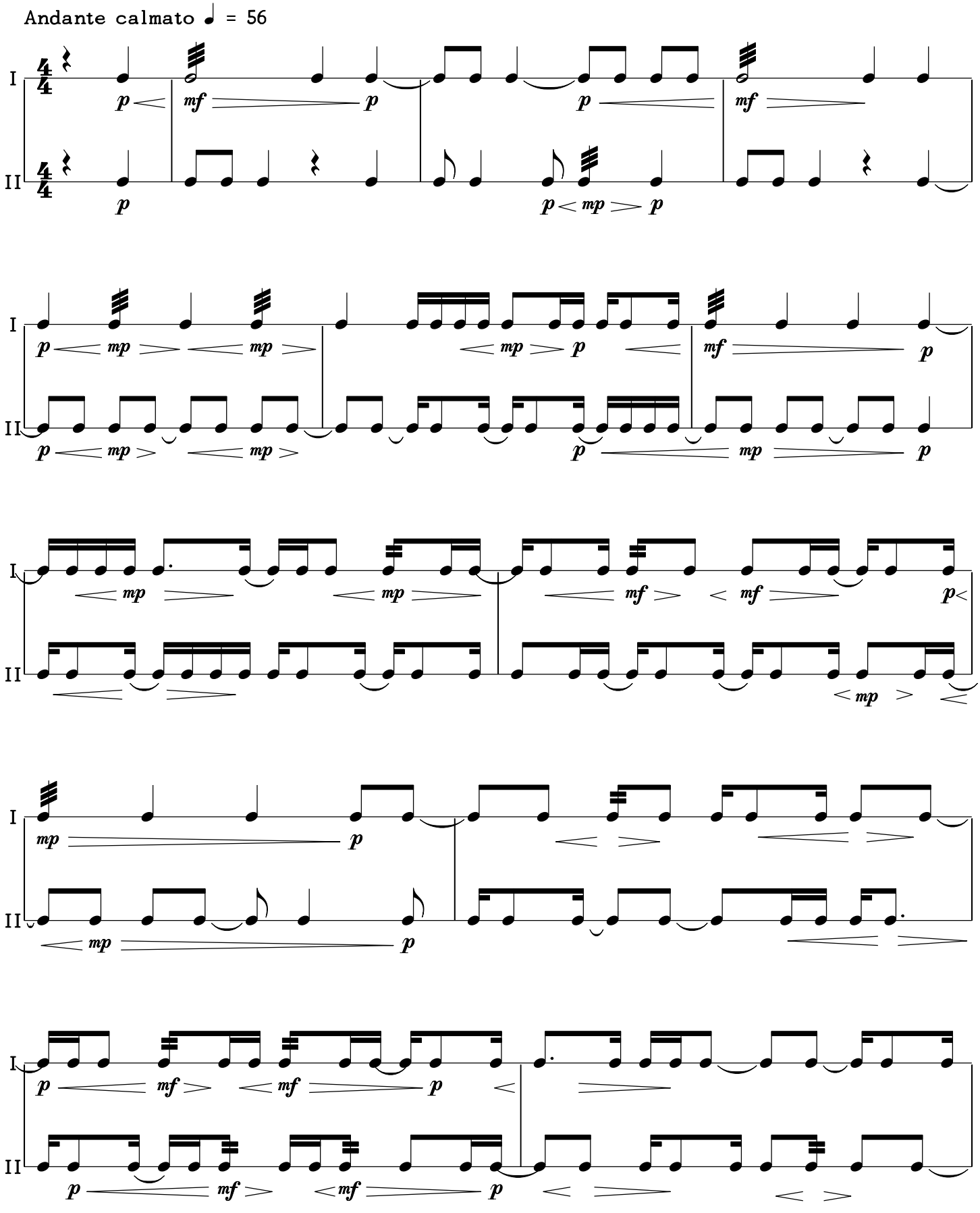


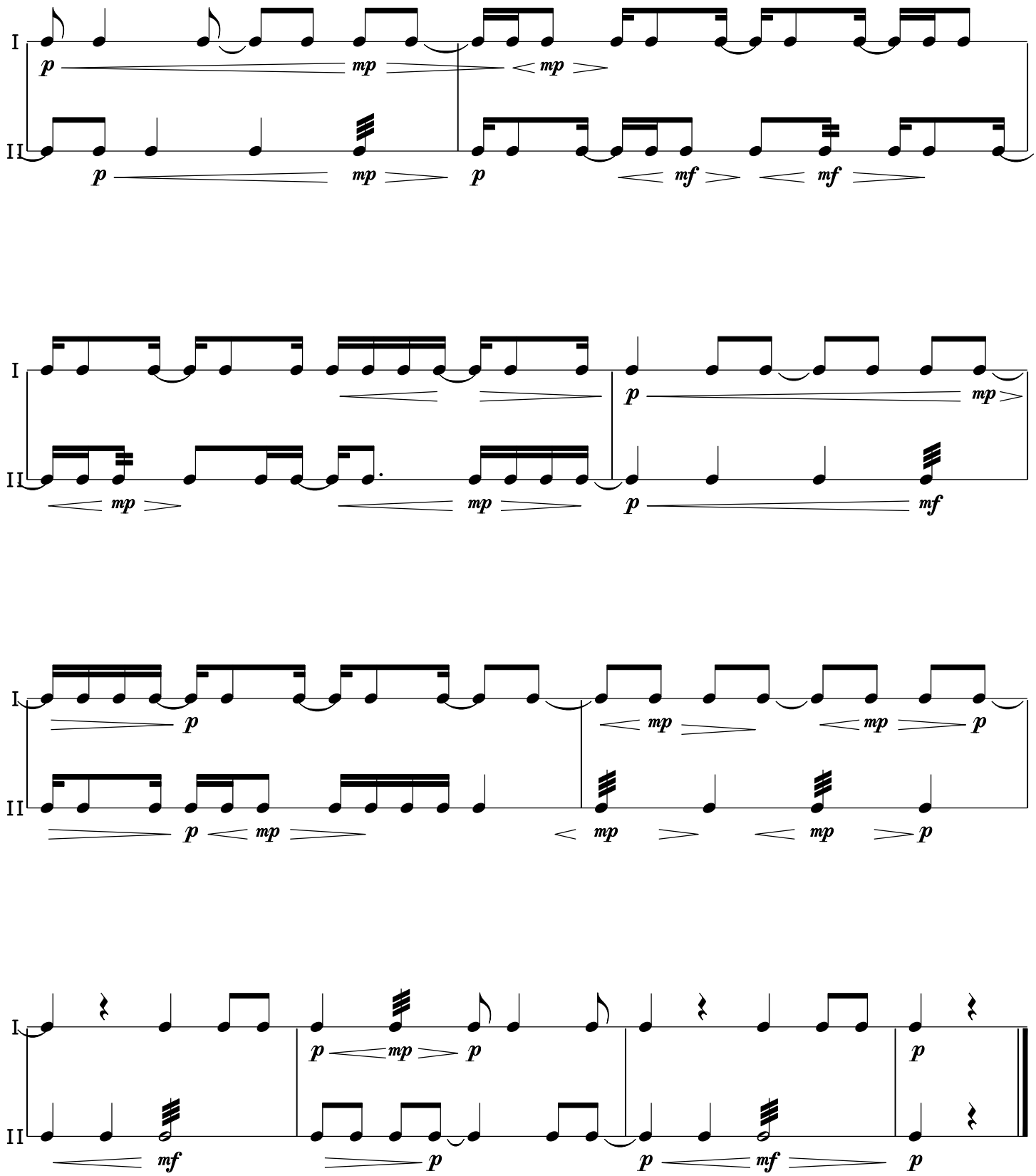

8va - - - - - sempre
III
II
I
pp < mp > pp simile
poco a poco cresc.
poco a poco cresc.


III
II
I
poco a poco cresc.


III
II
I
mf
pp
mf
pp
mf
pp

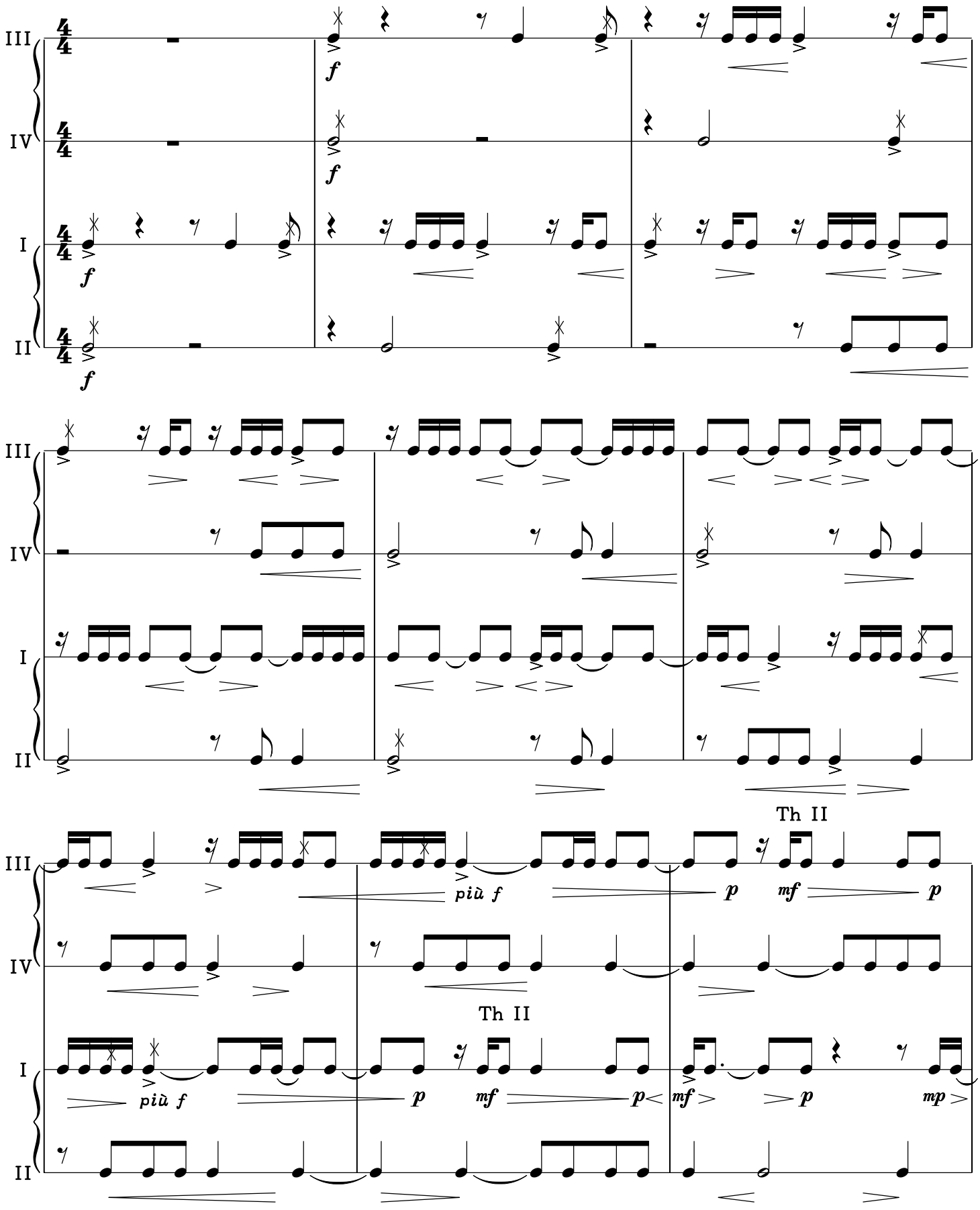
III

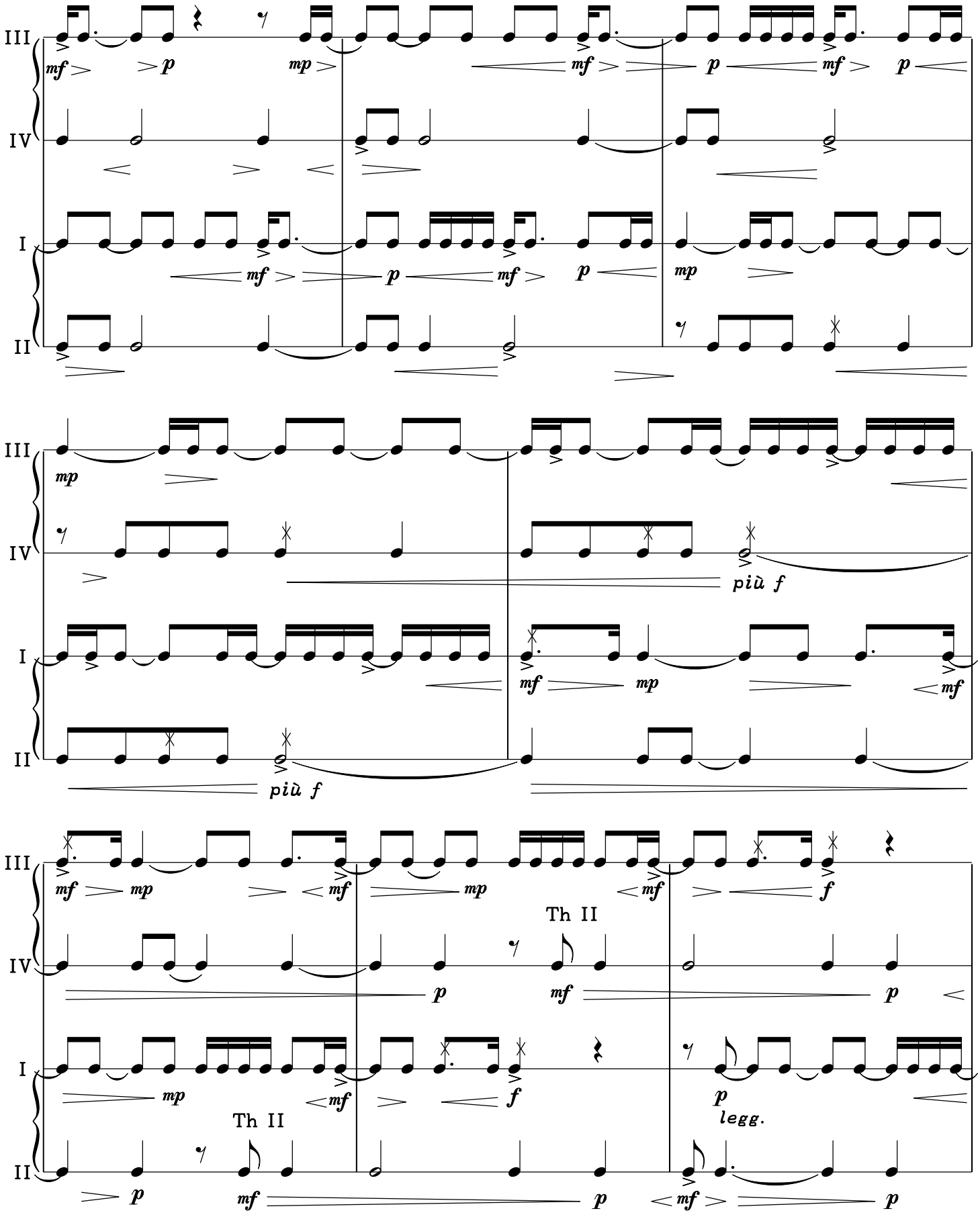


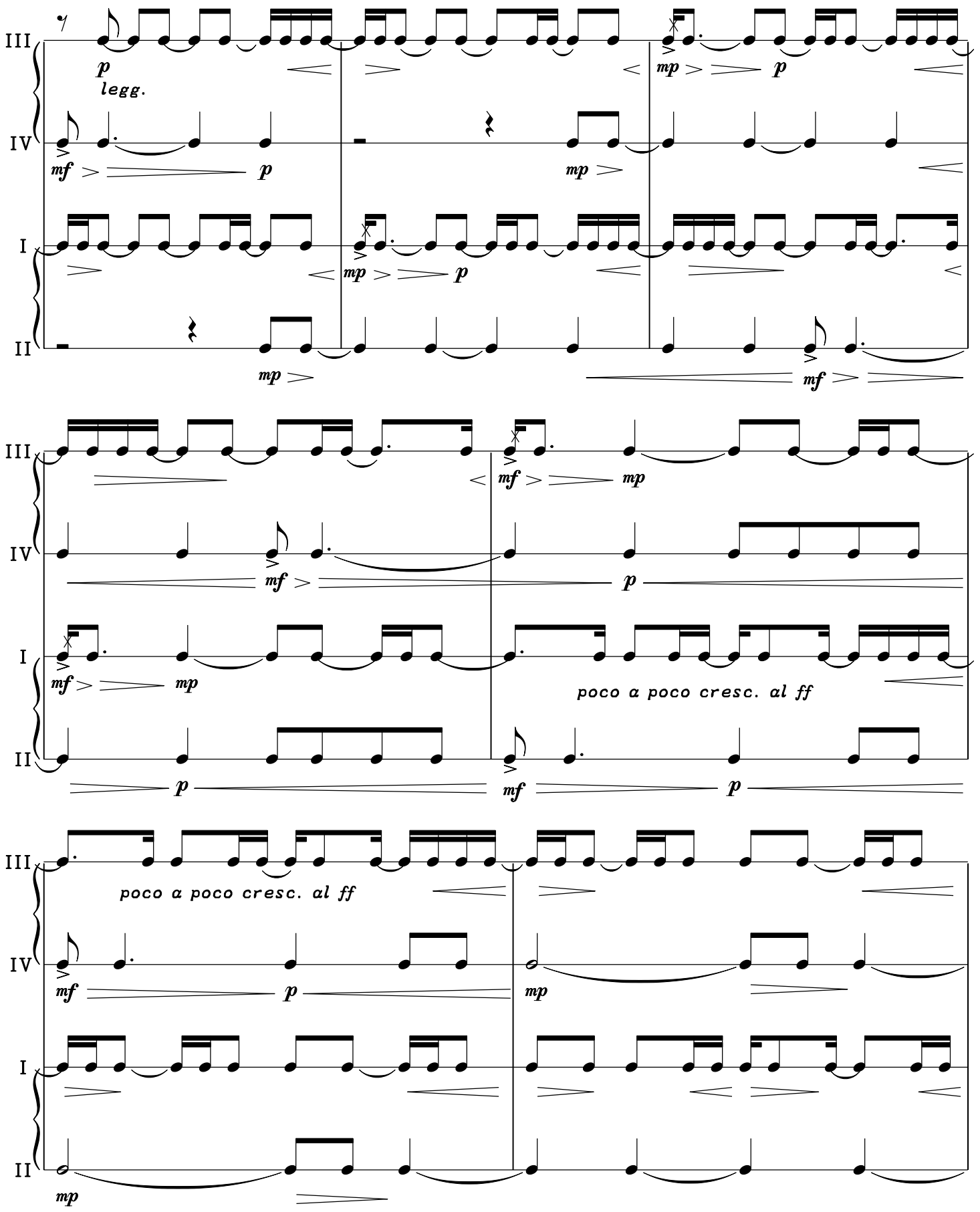

I
II
p
mp
mp
p
mp
p
mf
mf
I
II
mp
mp
p
mp
p
mf
I
II
p
mp
mp
p
p
mp
mp
p
I
II
mf
p
p
mf
p

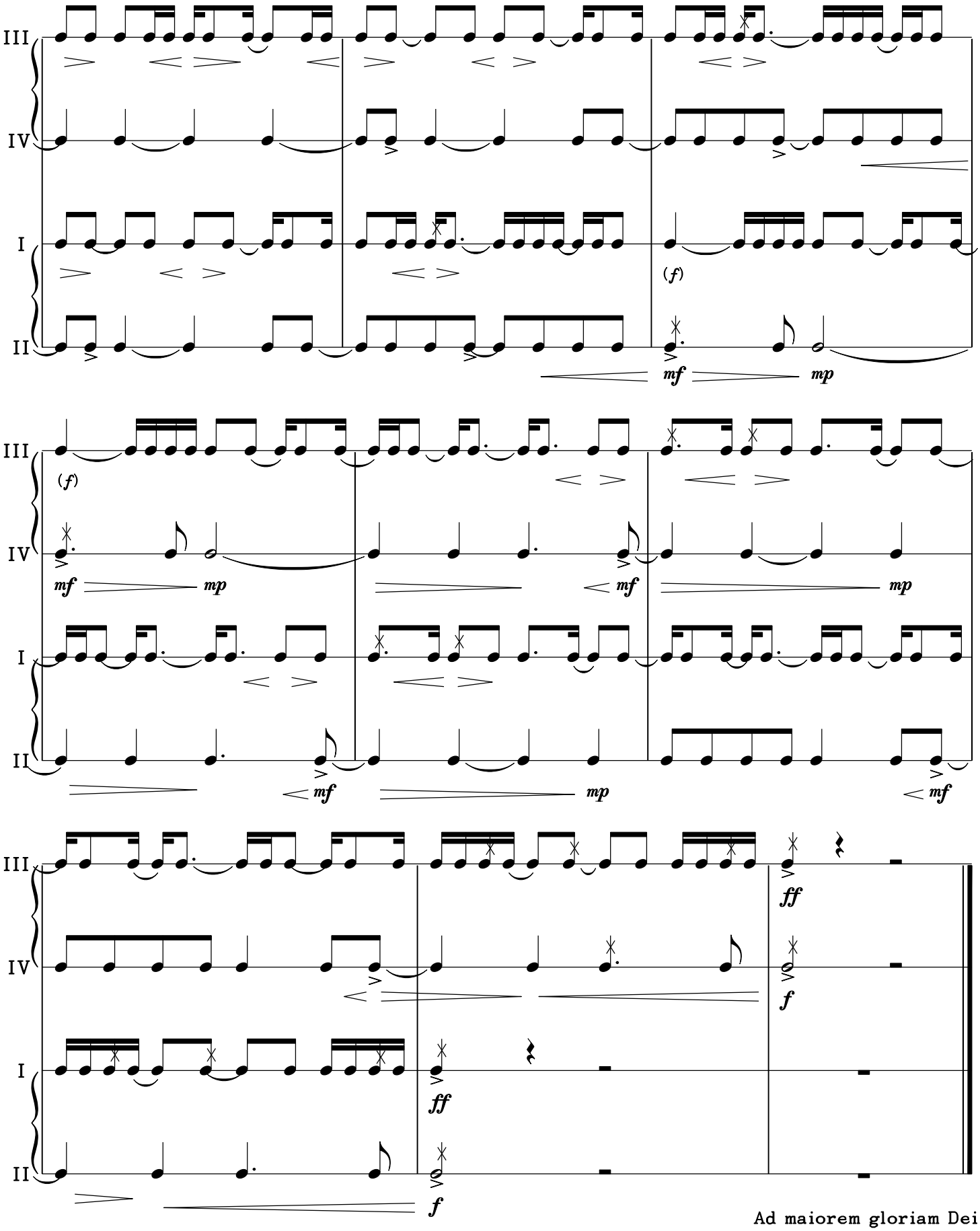
IV

Allegro deciso ♩ = 116




III
IV
I
II
mf
p
mp
più f
Th II
legg.


III
IV
I
II
p
legg.
mf
mp
poco a poco cresc. al ff



Ad maiorem gloriam Dei