Reflections

on three paintings by Paul Klee

for

flute, violin & cello

Allen Brings

The following scale of dynamic levels should be observed in the performance of this piece: *pp, più p, p, poco p, mp, mf, poco f, f, più f, ff.*

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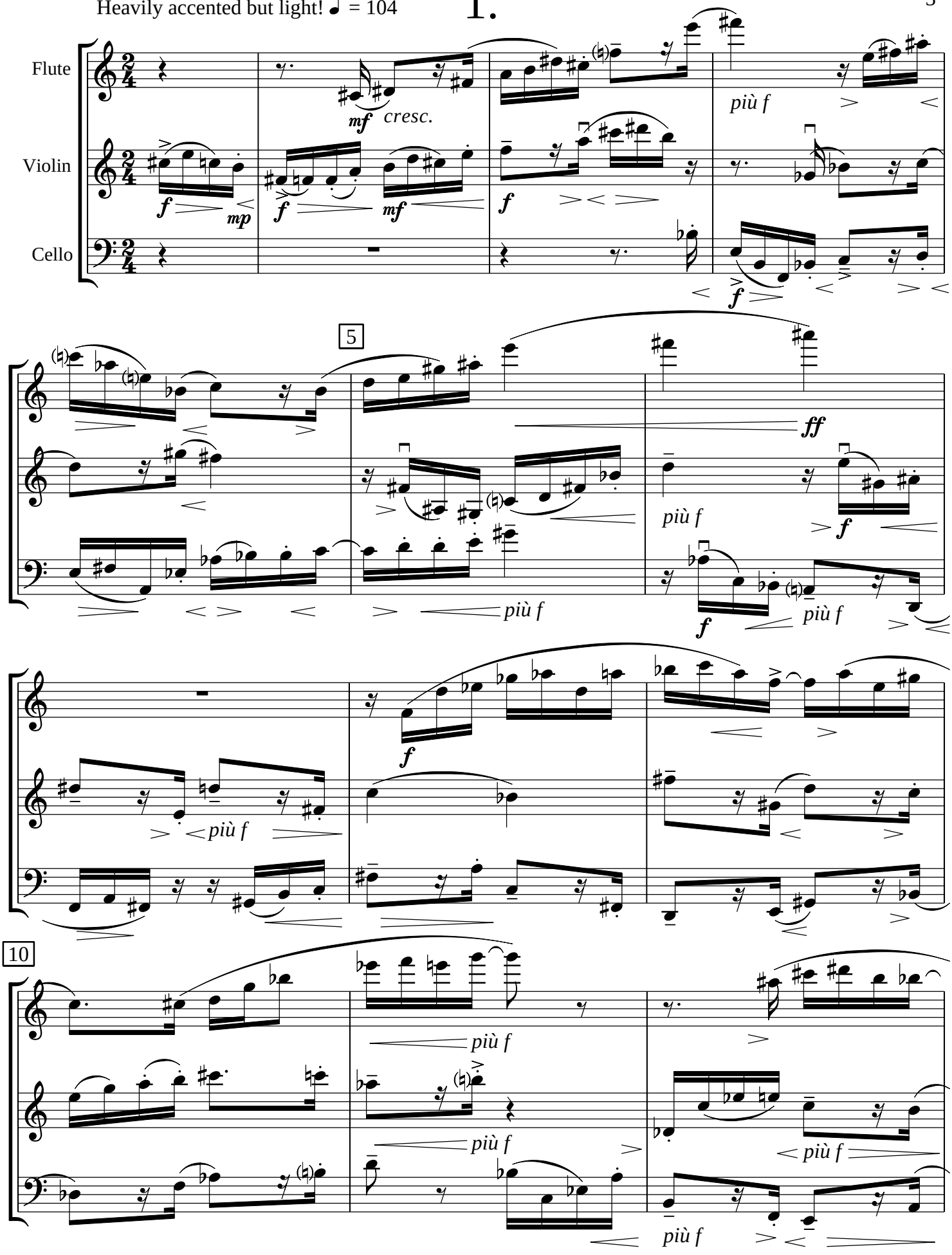
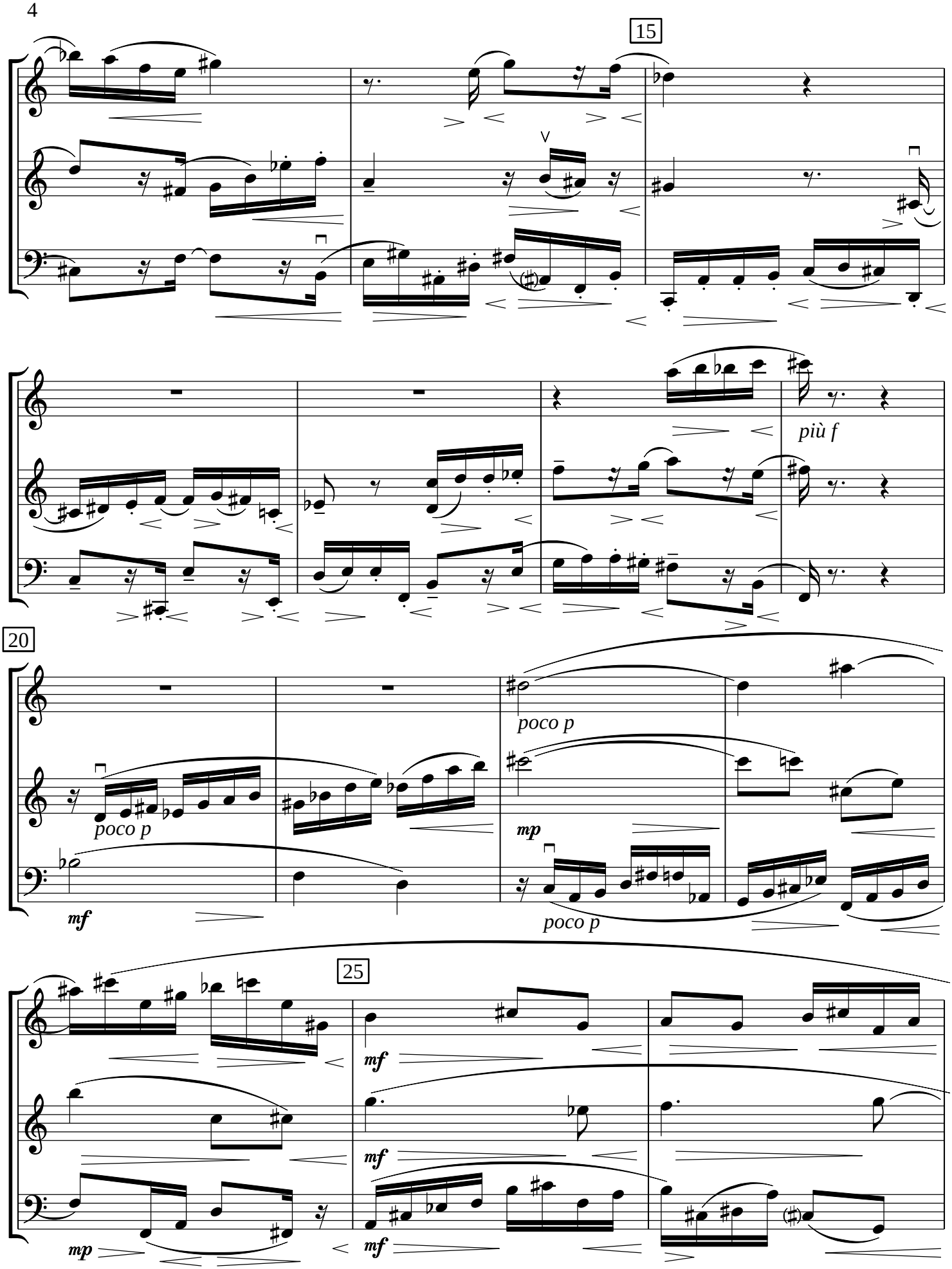
Although I had been acquainted with the work of Paul Klee for the better part of my life, until I visited the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in April, 2010, when one of several exhibits of his work was being shown there, I was never aware of the musicality of his paintings, their ability to elicit musical responses. On that occasion I found myself drawn as by an unseen force to a painting he called *Fast getroffen — nearly hit*. Before I had reached it I began to imagine the kind of music it seemed to suggest, deciding even that it had to be scored for an ensemble consisting only of a flute, a violin, and a cello. The nature of the initial musical gesture, if not the exact pitches and rhythms, was clear to me as was the general character of the rest of the piece. Aware that any piece resulting from this interaction would be too short for performance by itself, I began to look for another example by Klee that might elicit a similar response and found it only a few feet away in the next room. It was *Rotes Villenquartier — red villa quarter*, and the first sounds I heard were those of the cello played roughly, even coarsely, in its dark, lowest register. Having now found the sources of the first two movements of what I realized would have to become a three-movement suite, I set about to find a third painting and discovered it in a book intended for children entitled *Dreaming Pictures*. It was a reproduction of a painting Klee called *Rose Wind*. About it the German author of the text, Jürgen von Schemm, wrote, "You can't paint wind. But you can draw lines to show how the wind moves." A little further he also wrote, "It seems as though we can actually hear the wind whistling around the rose in the middle of the picture," an observation I had already made before I had read his remark. That Klee had learned to play the violin when he was very young came as no surprise but that his work could have such a productive effect on me did.

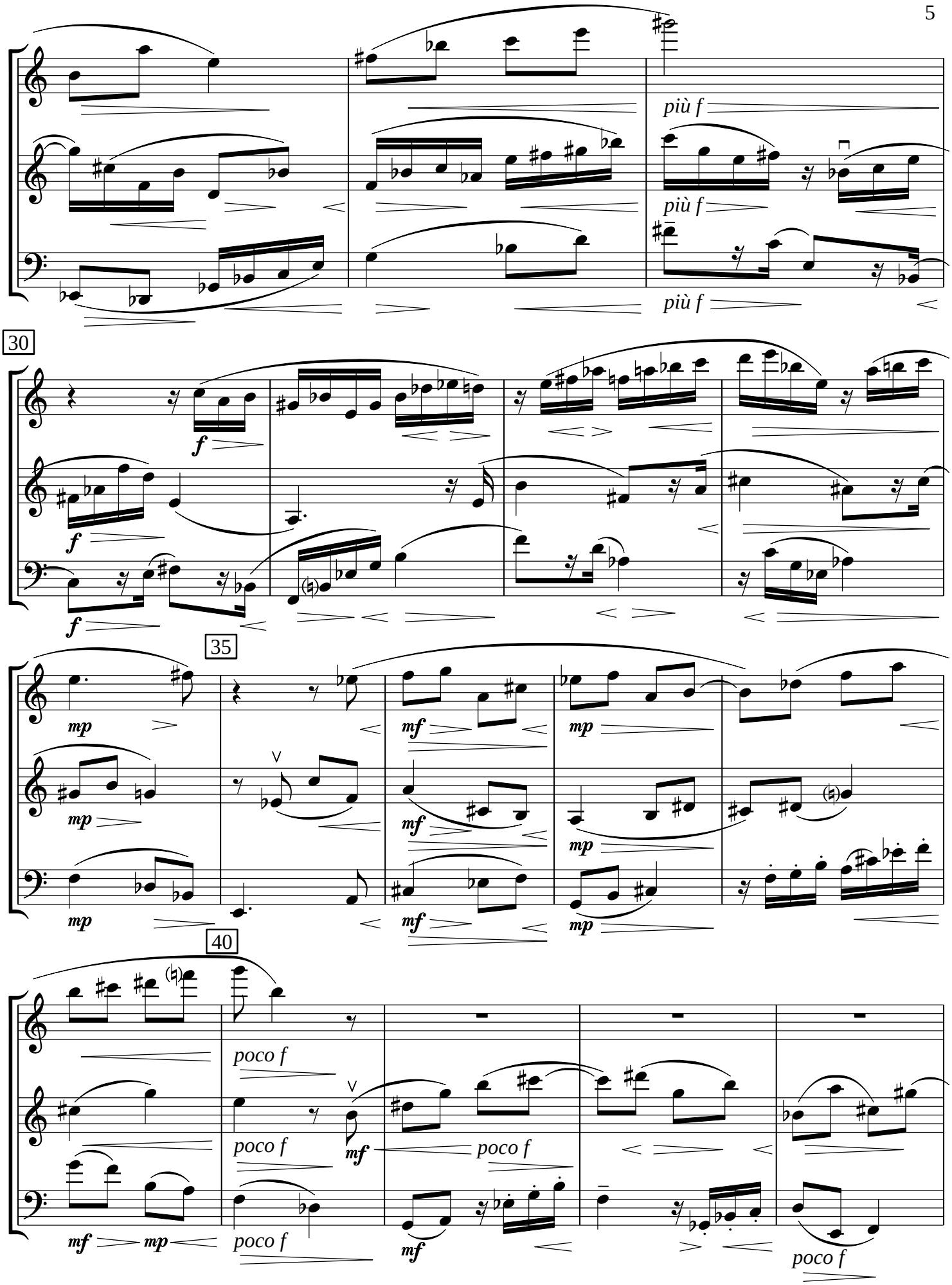
My intention in composing *Reflections*, however, was not to trace the motion apparent in Klee's paintings (so obvious in *Rose Wind* but also apparent in the expression on the face of the character depicted in *Fast getroffen*, in which we see the expression at the moment it is becoming an expression, not merely after it has become one) but rather to record my reactions upon seeing the paintings and the musically conceived thoughts that followed from them. *Reflections* then is not an example of program music or of a kind of background music designed to accompany one's viewing of the paintings. As Klee obeyed the laws of art which he had learned while painting, so I obeyed the laws of music as I had learned them while composing. It is my hope that those who listen to *Reflections* will reflect on my work as I did on Klee's.

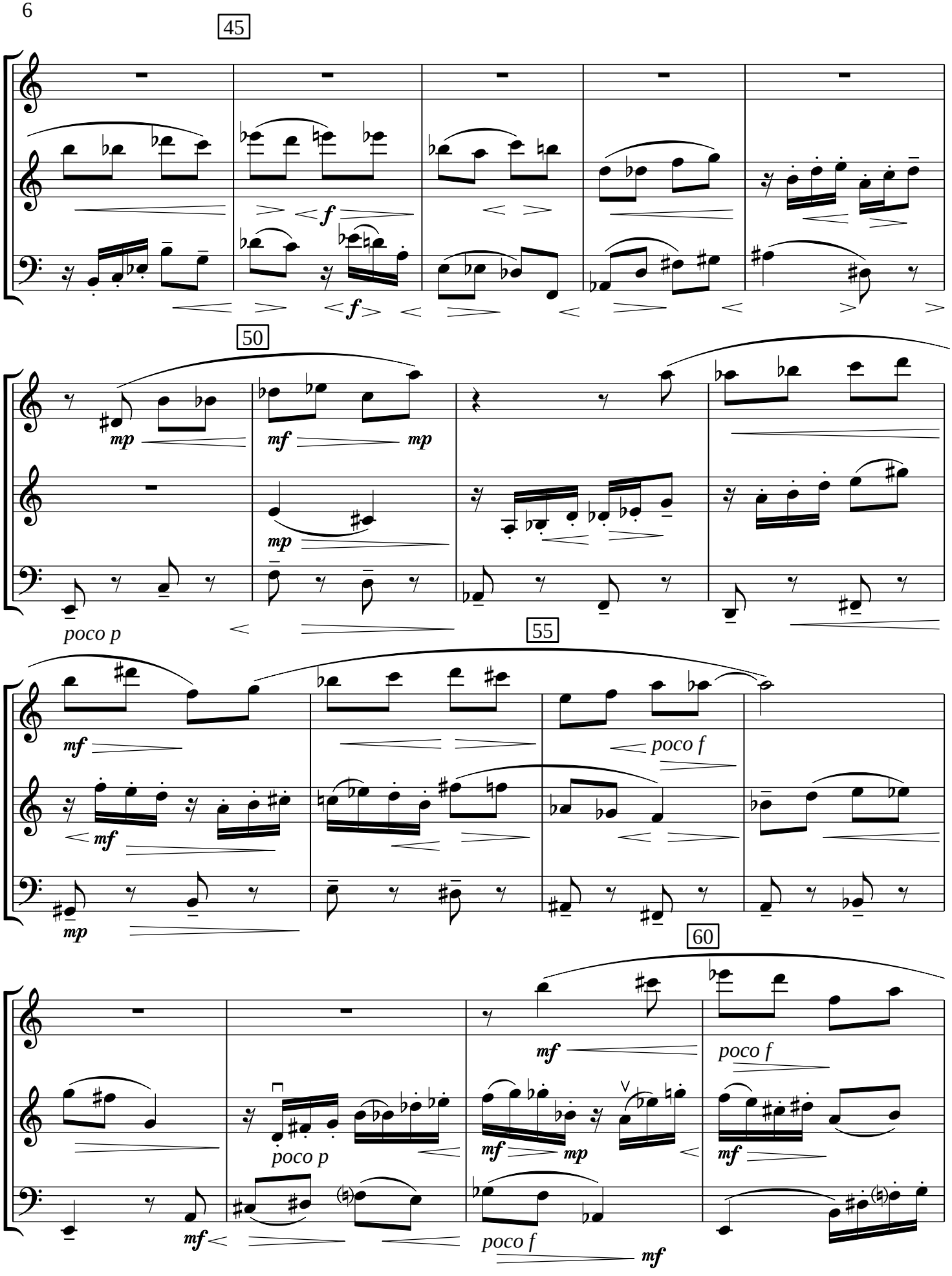
Heavily accented but light! ♩ = 104

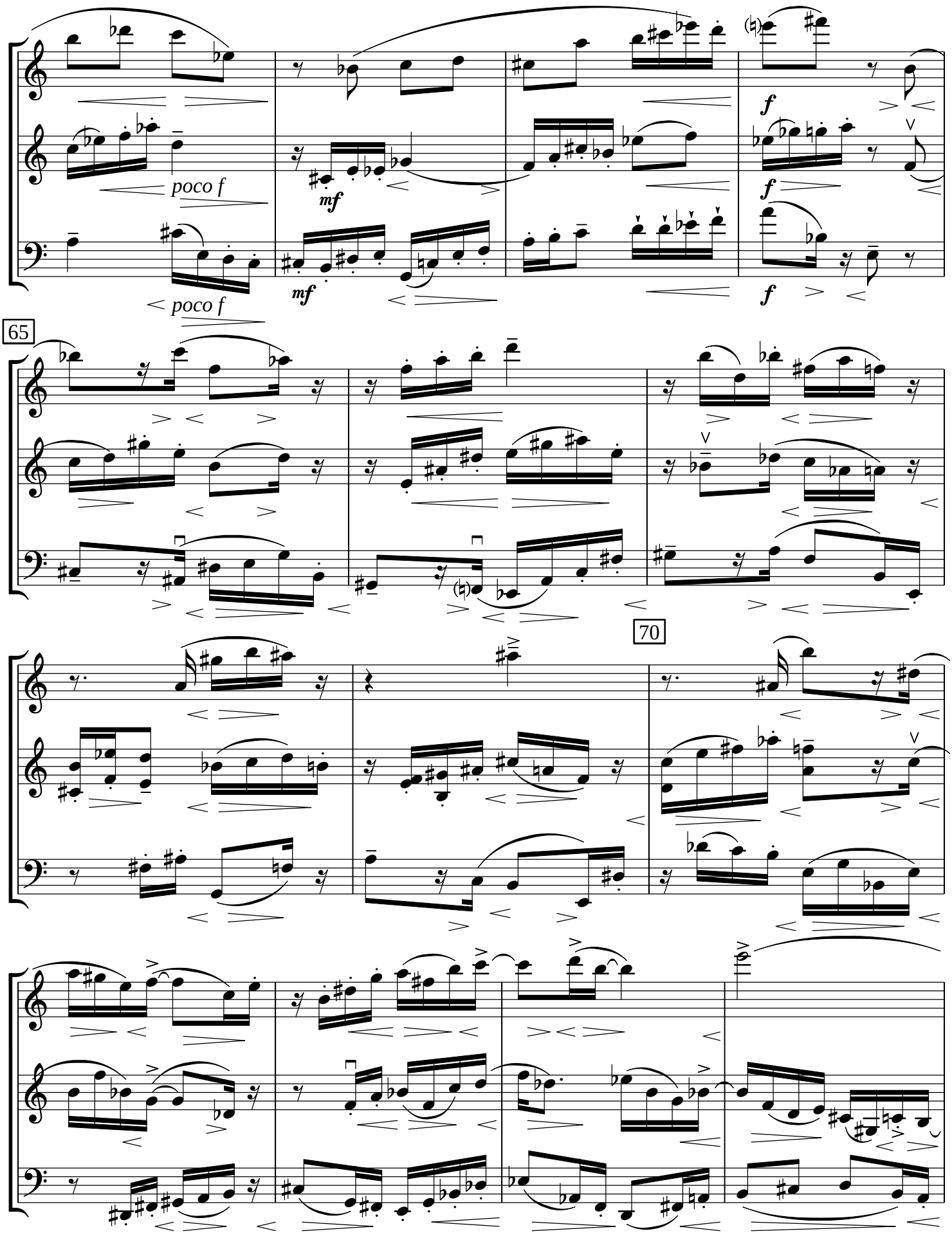
1.

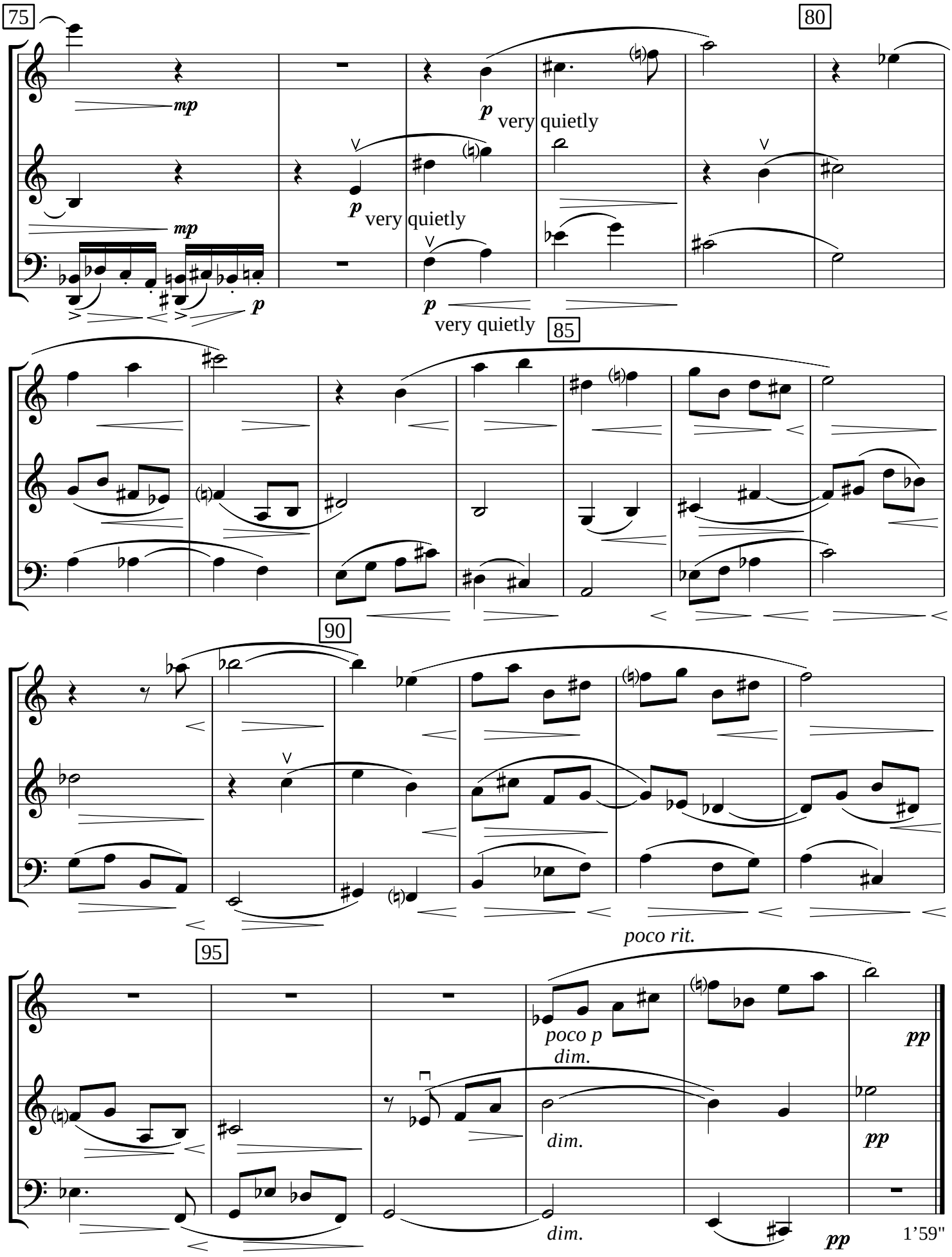



15
più f
20
poco p
poco p
mp
poco p
mf
25
mf
mf
mp
mf


più f
più f
più f
30
f
f
f
35
mp
mp
mp
mf
mf
mp
mp
40
poco f
poco f
mf
poco f
poco f
mf
mp
mf
poco f

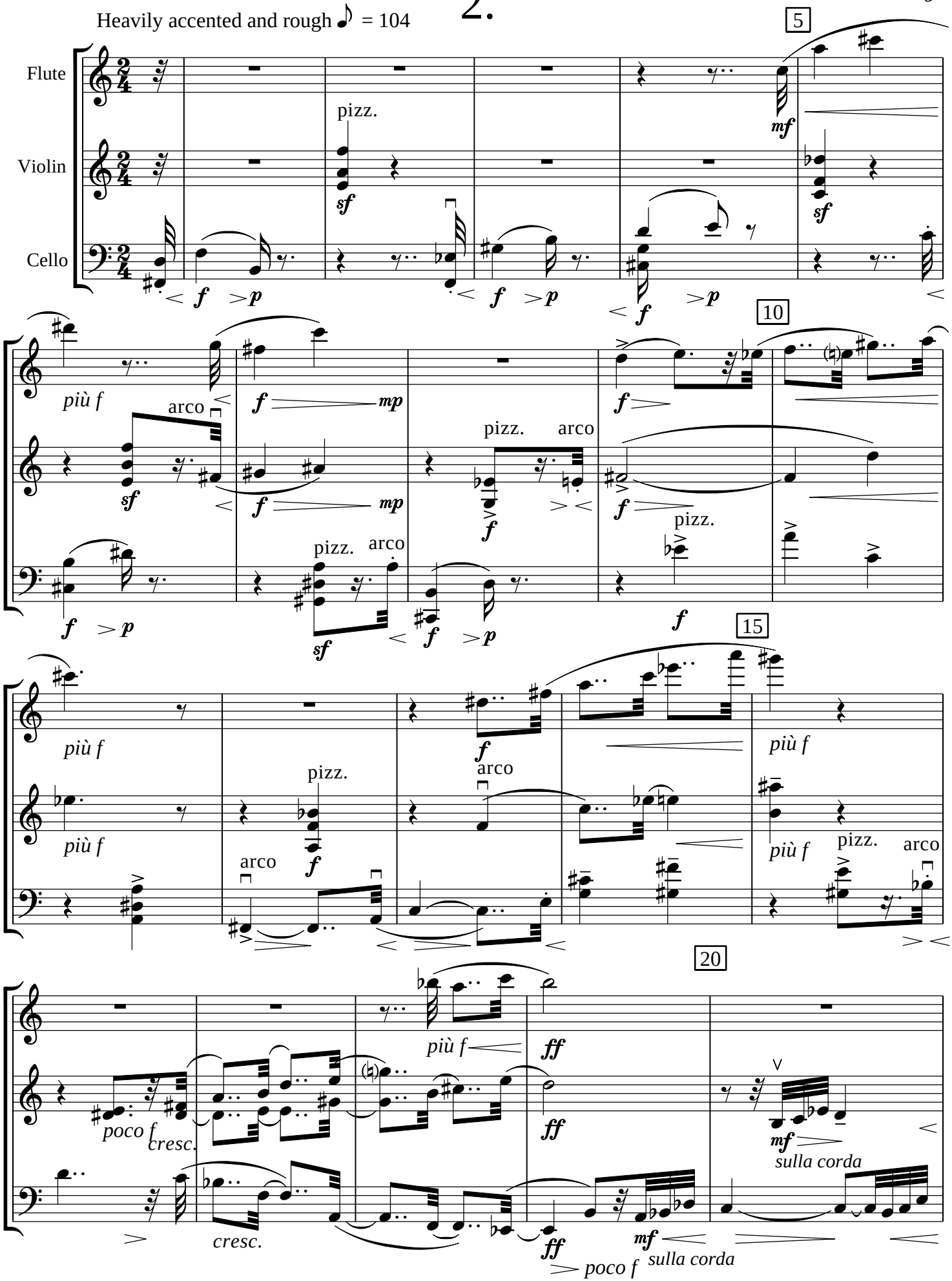

45
f
f
50
mp
mf
mp
mp
poco p
55
mf
mf
mp
poco f
60
mf
poco f
poco p
mf
mf
mp
mf
poco f
mf

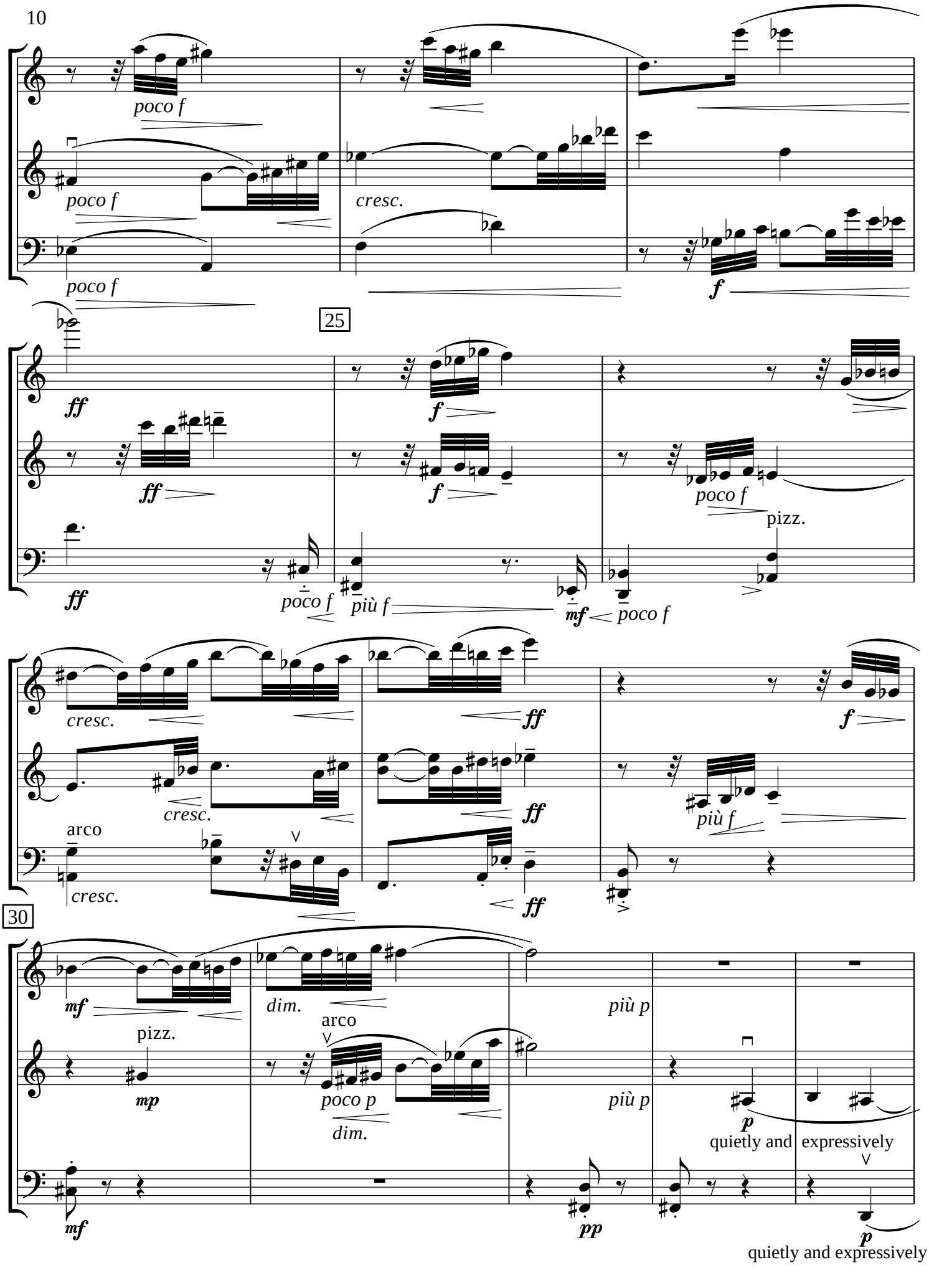

poco f
mf
f
65
70

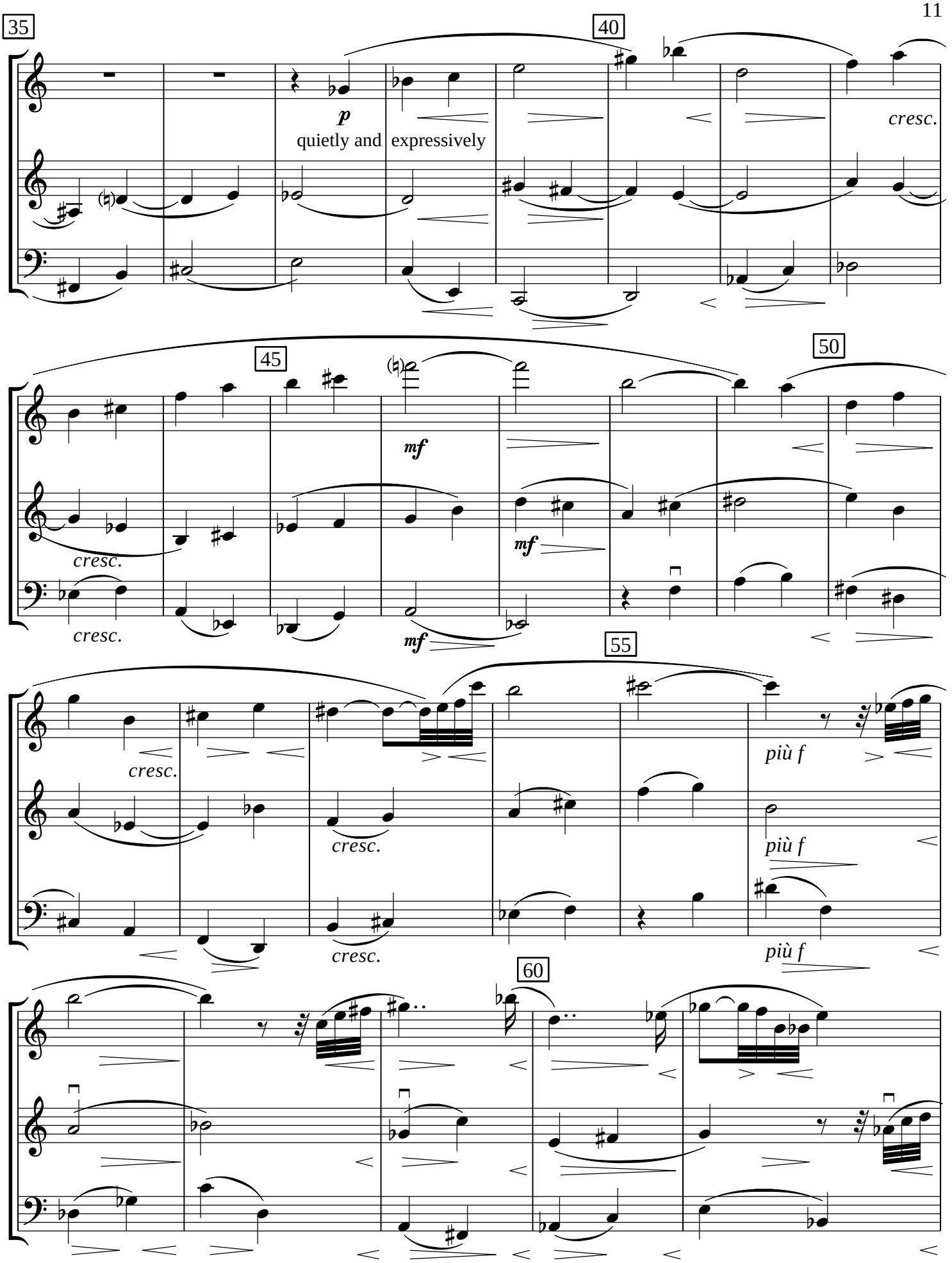

75
80
mp
p very quietly
mp
p very quietly
p
p very quietly
85
90
poco rit.
95
poco p
dim.
dim.
dim.
pp
pp
pp
1’59"

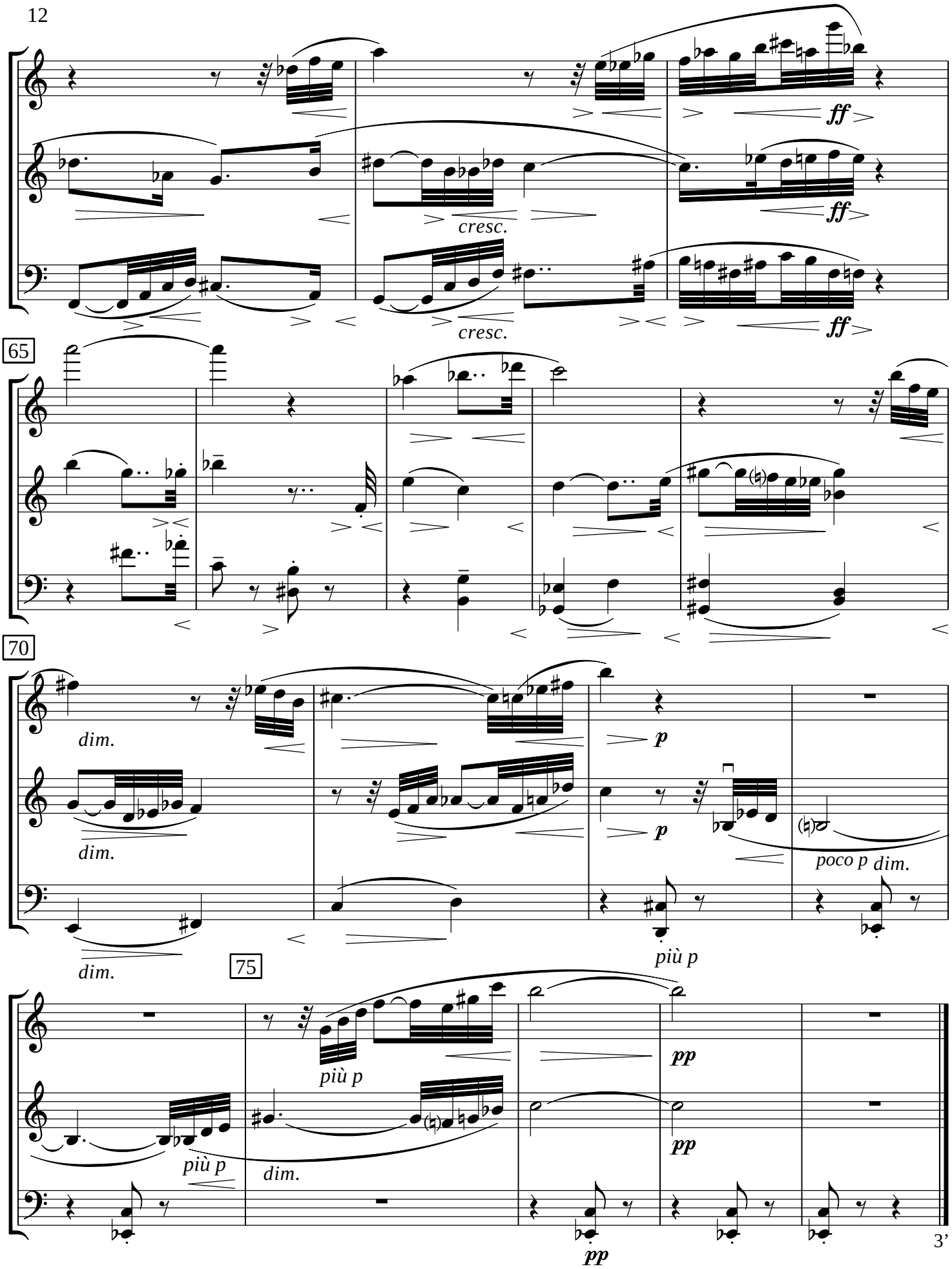
2.

Heavily accented and rough ♪ = 104

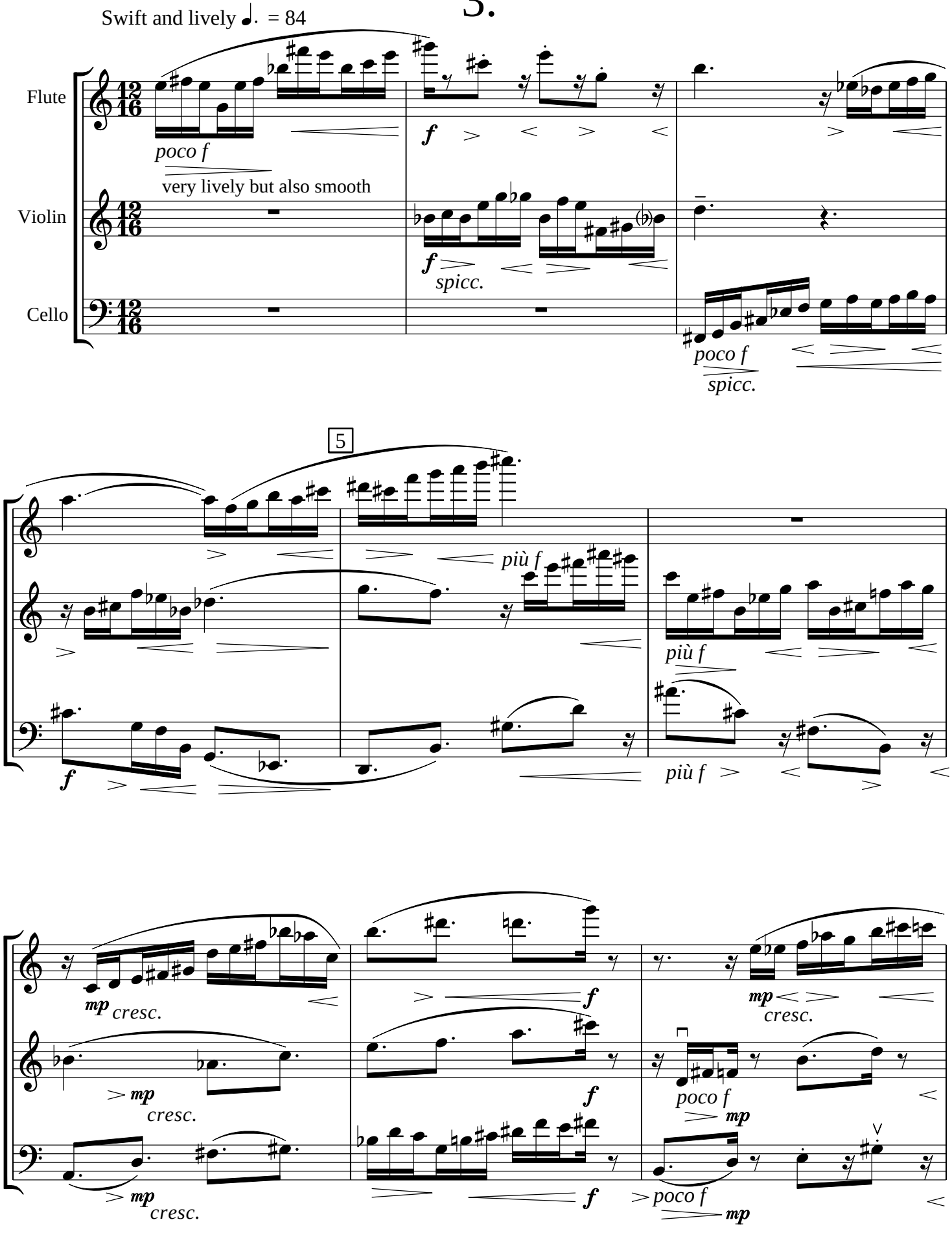


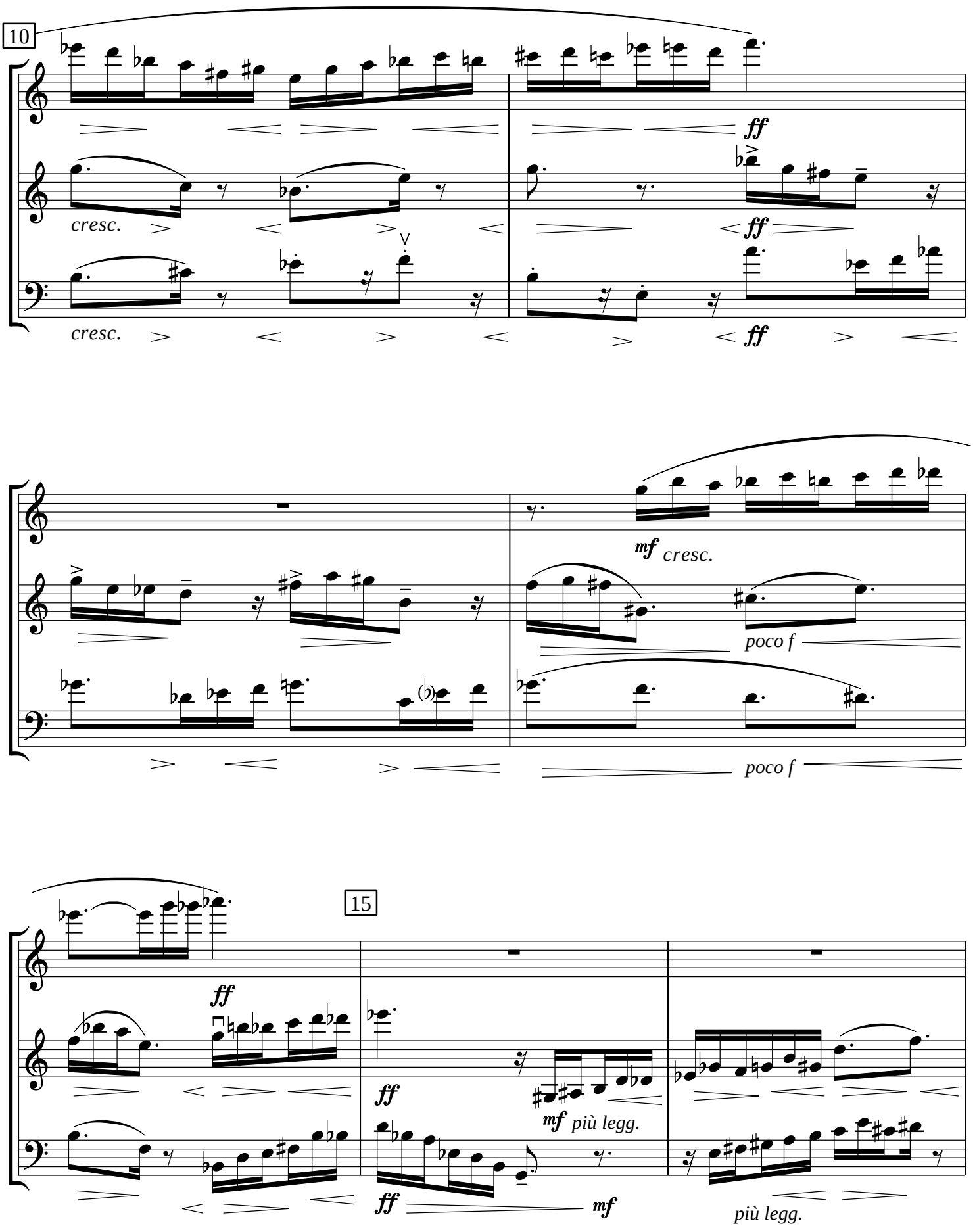

poco f
poco f
poco f
cresc.
f
25
ff
ff
ff
f
poco f
pizz.
poco f
più f
mf
poco f
cresc.
cresc.
arco
cresc.
ff
ff
ff
f
più f
30
mf
pizz.
mp
dim.
arco
poco p
dim.
più p
più p
p
quietly and expressively
mf
pp
p
quietly and expressively

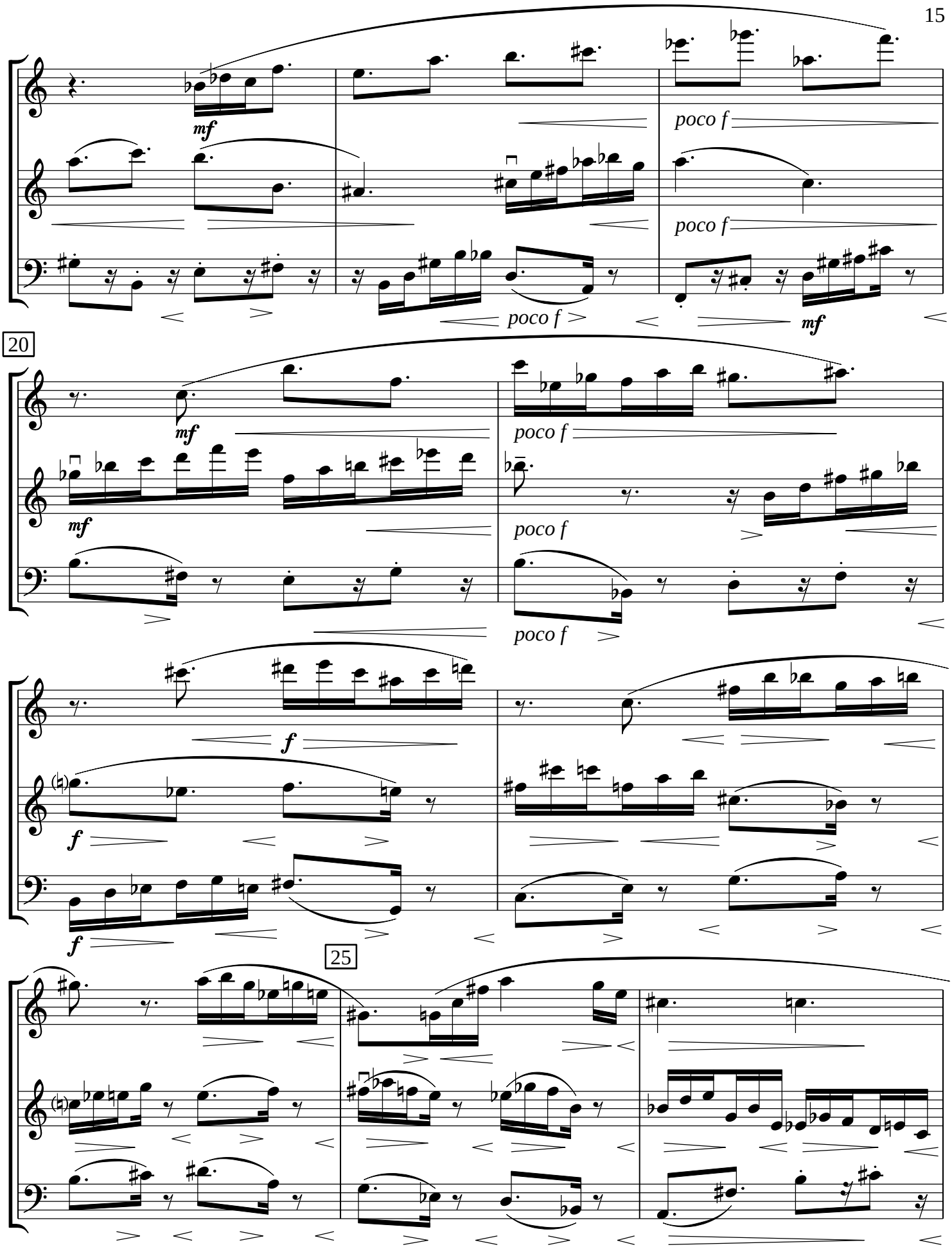

35
40
p
quietly and expressively
cresc.
45
50
mf
mf
cresc.
cresc.
mf
55
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
più f
più f
più f
60

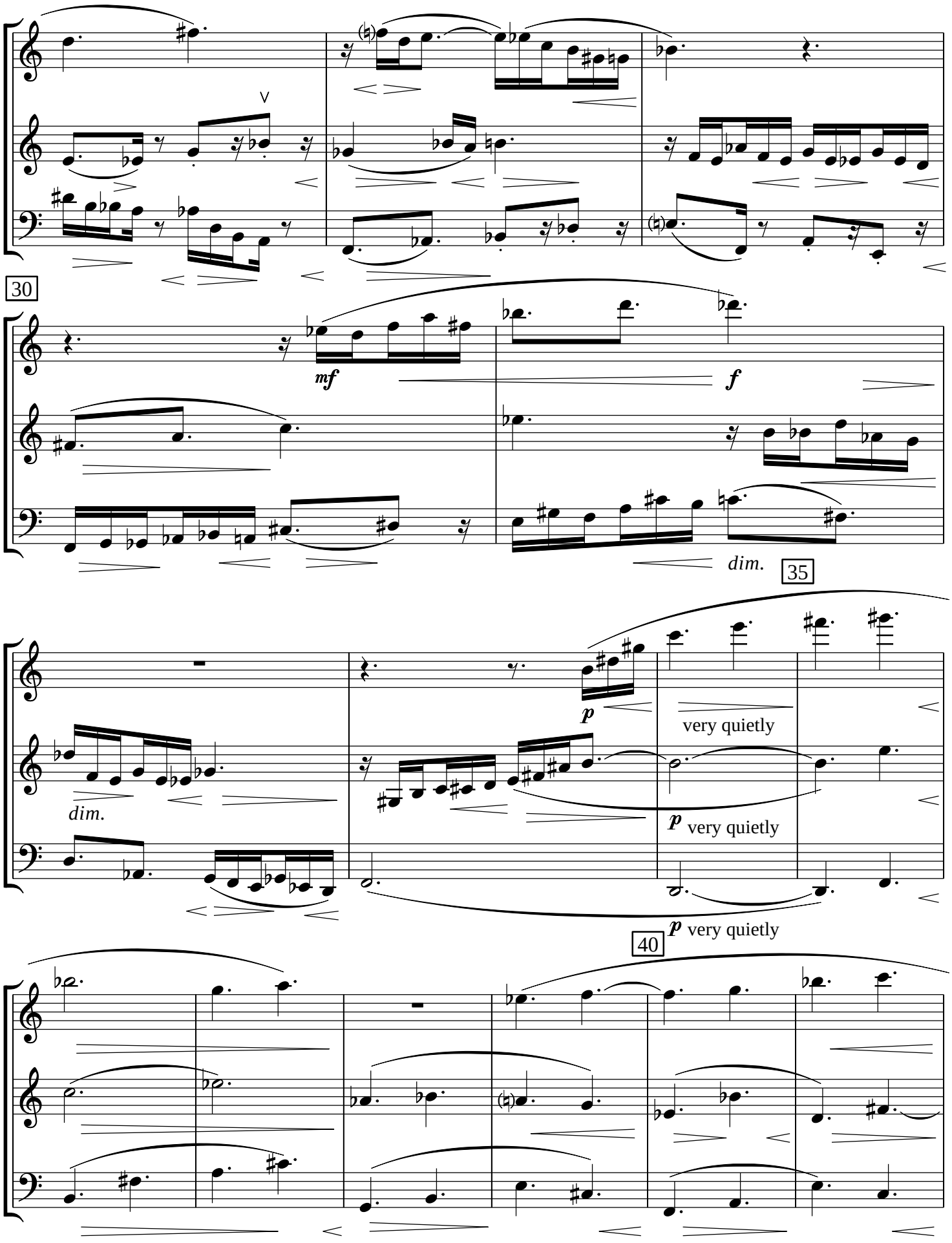

ff
cresc.
65
70
dim.
p
poco p
più p
75
pp
3'

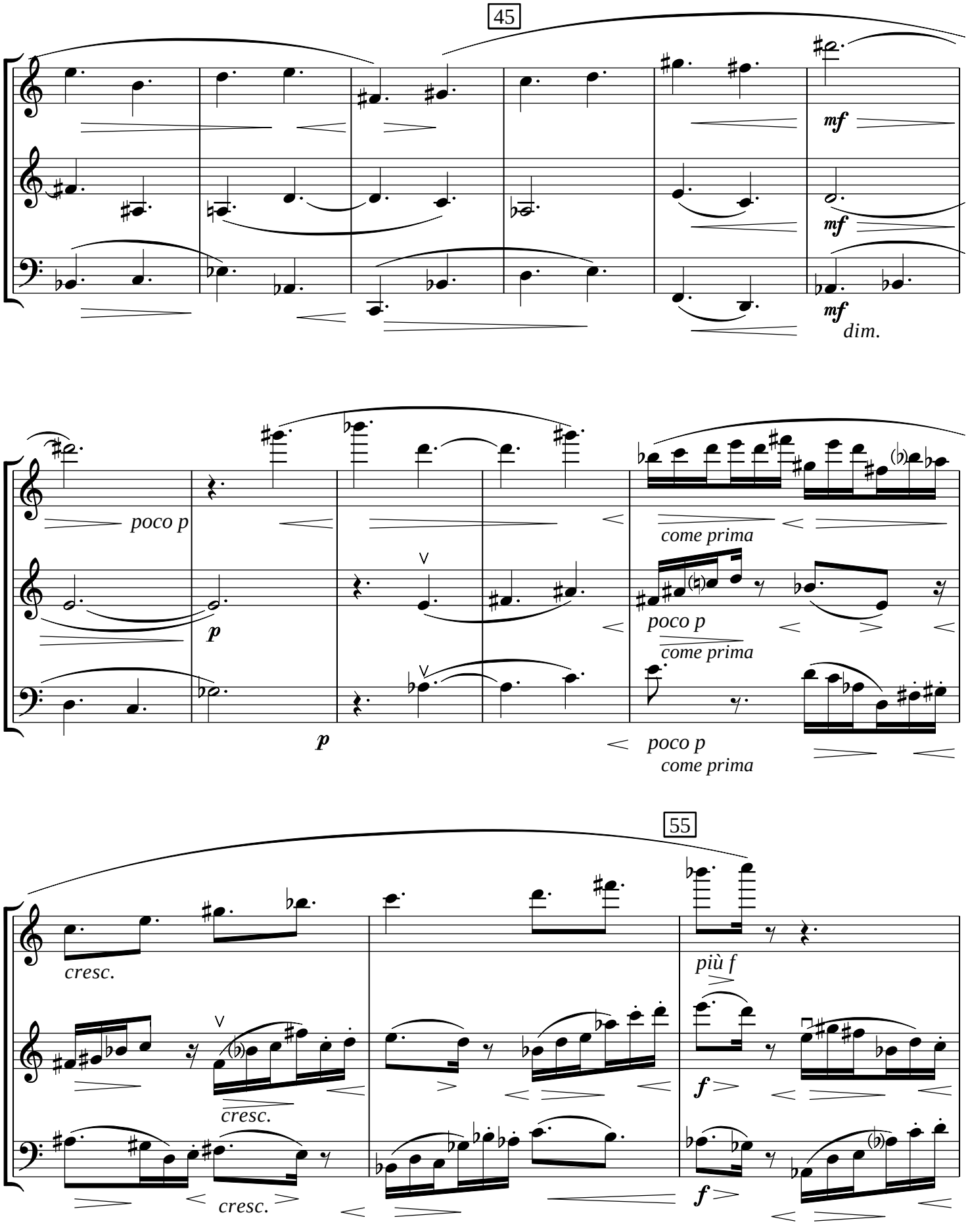
3.

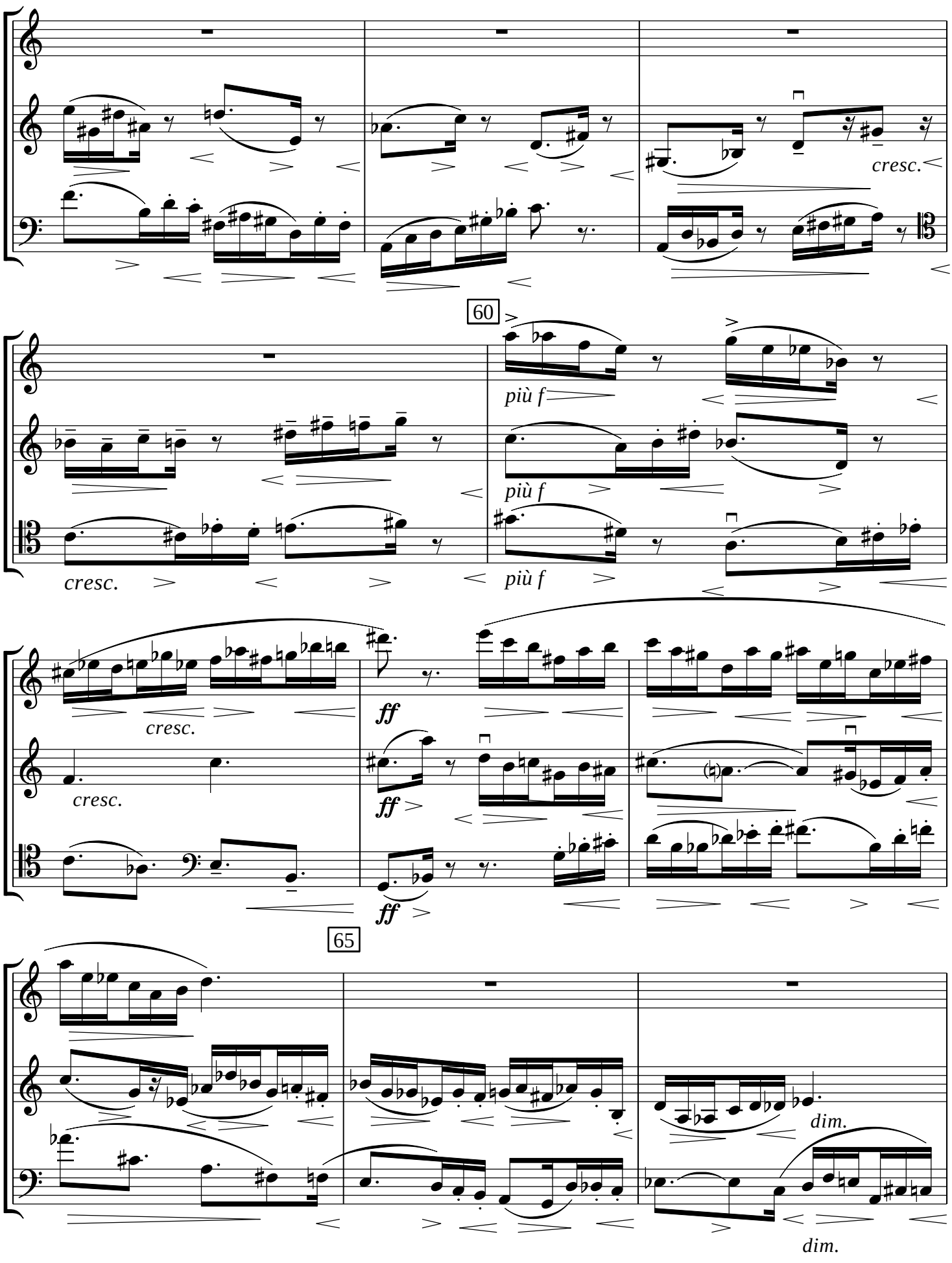

Swift and lively ♩. = 84
Flute
Violin
Cello
poco f
very lively but also smooth
f
spicc.
poco f
spicc.
5
più f
più f
più f
mp
cresc.
mp
cresc.
f
mp
cresc.
f
poco f
mp
f
poco f
mp

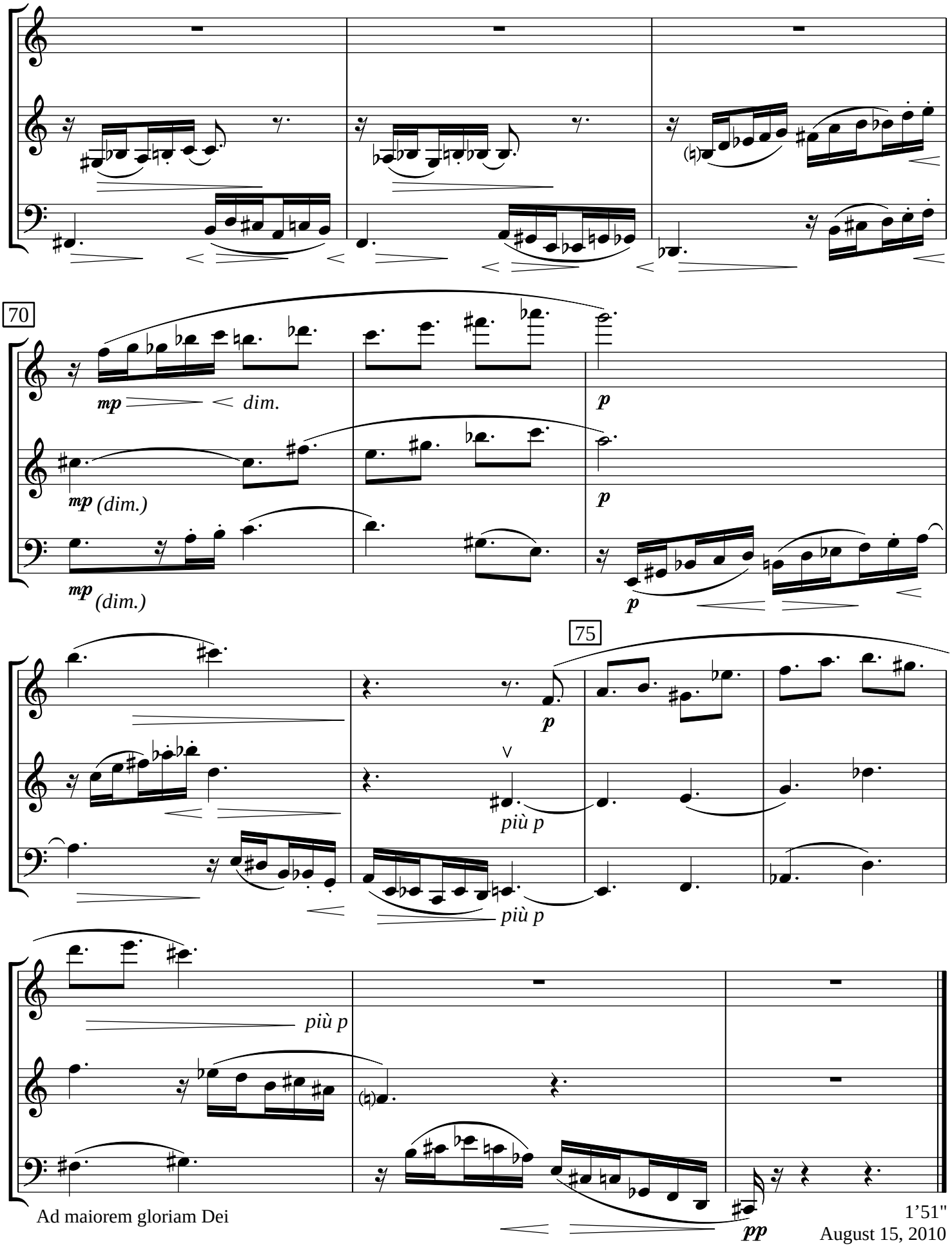

10
cresc.
cresc.
ff
ff
ff
mf cresc.
poco f
poco f
15
ff
ff
ff
mf più legg.
mf
più legg.


mf
poco f
poco f
poco f
mf
20
mf
poco f
mf
poco f
poco f
f
f
f
25


30
mf
f
dim.
35
dim.
p
very quietly
p very quietly
p very quietly
40


45
mf
mf
mf
dim.
poco p
p
come prima
poco p
come prima
p
poco p
come prima
55
cresc.
più f
cresc.
f
cresc.
f


cresc.
60
più f
più f
più f
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
ff
ff
ff
65
dim.
dim.



Ad maiorem gloriam Dei

1’51"
August 15, 2010
Wilton