Mosaics

String Quartet no. 7

2015

Lawrence Kramer

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This composition originated during work on an *a capella* setting of a short lyric by Walt Whitman, "Twilight." It occurred to me in mid-stream that the piece would also have a nice sound on string quartet, so I began making the new version. It then occurred to me that the fragmentary nature of the poem invited further treatment as well. The result is this quartet, a series of seven short movements that constitute a series of variations without a theme. Each movement is conceived as a kind of mosaic in itself. At the same time, by rearranging (reinterpreting, recasting, reframing) elements shared with the others, each movement also adds itself as a tile to the larger mosaic. The underlying impulse (prefigured in the first movement) is an alternation of slow, reflective movements focused on harmony with increasingly lively faster movements focused on melody. The slow "Twilight" movement, no. 5, forms both a long-awaited point of arrival and a necessary point of departure. The poem (in its entirety) reads:

> The soft voluptuous opiate shades,
> The sun just gone, the eager light dispell'd—(I too will soon be gone, dispell'd,)
> A haze—nirwana—rest and night—oblivion.

The music both yields to this evocation and resists it. The poem is one of Whitman's frequent portrayals of oblivion as a quasi-erotic bliss. The beauty of its language is captivating, but I don't want to believe what it's telling me. Mosaics" is a musical expression of this contradiction.

Composed 2015. Duration: 18 minutes.

Mosaics

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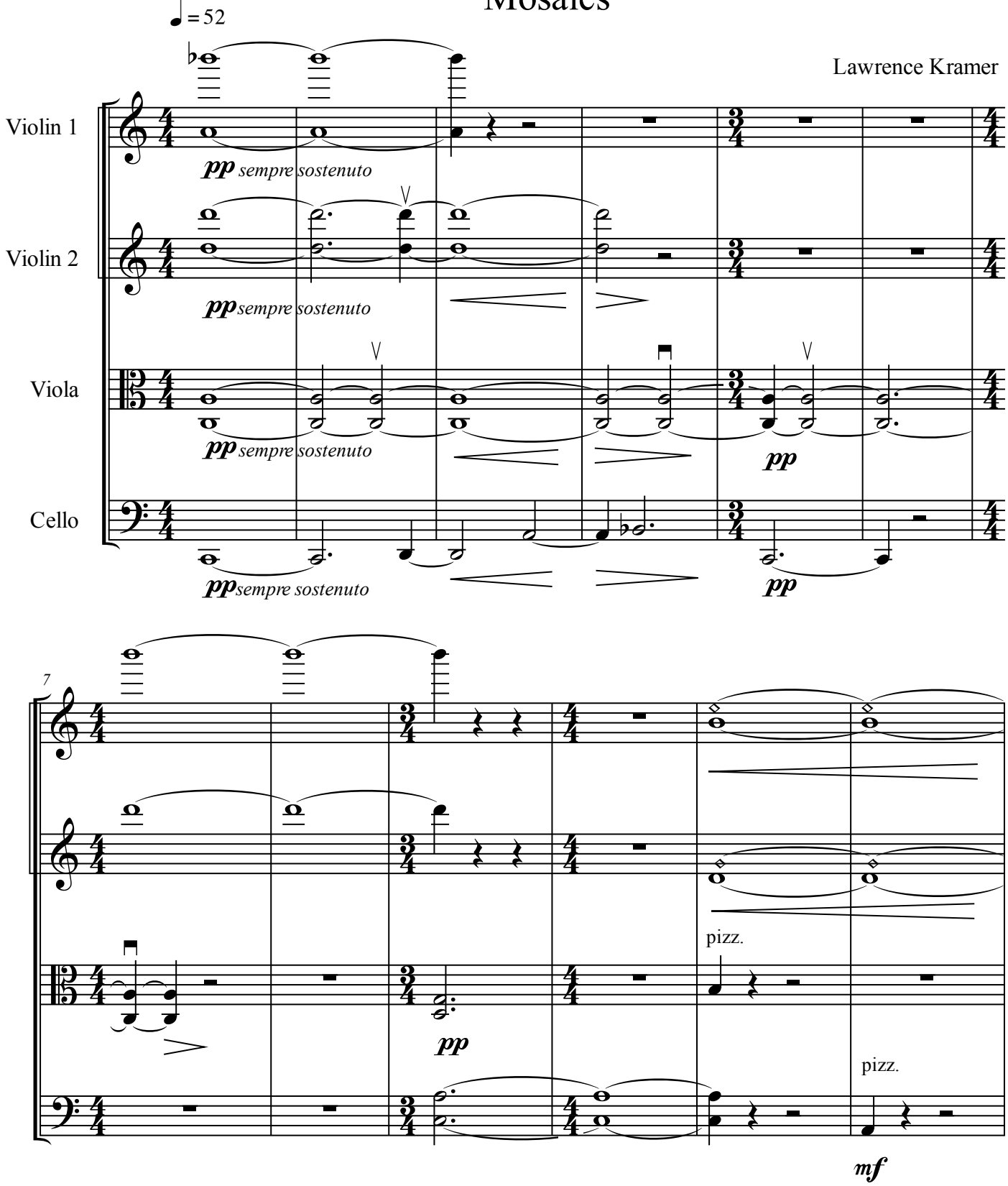
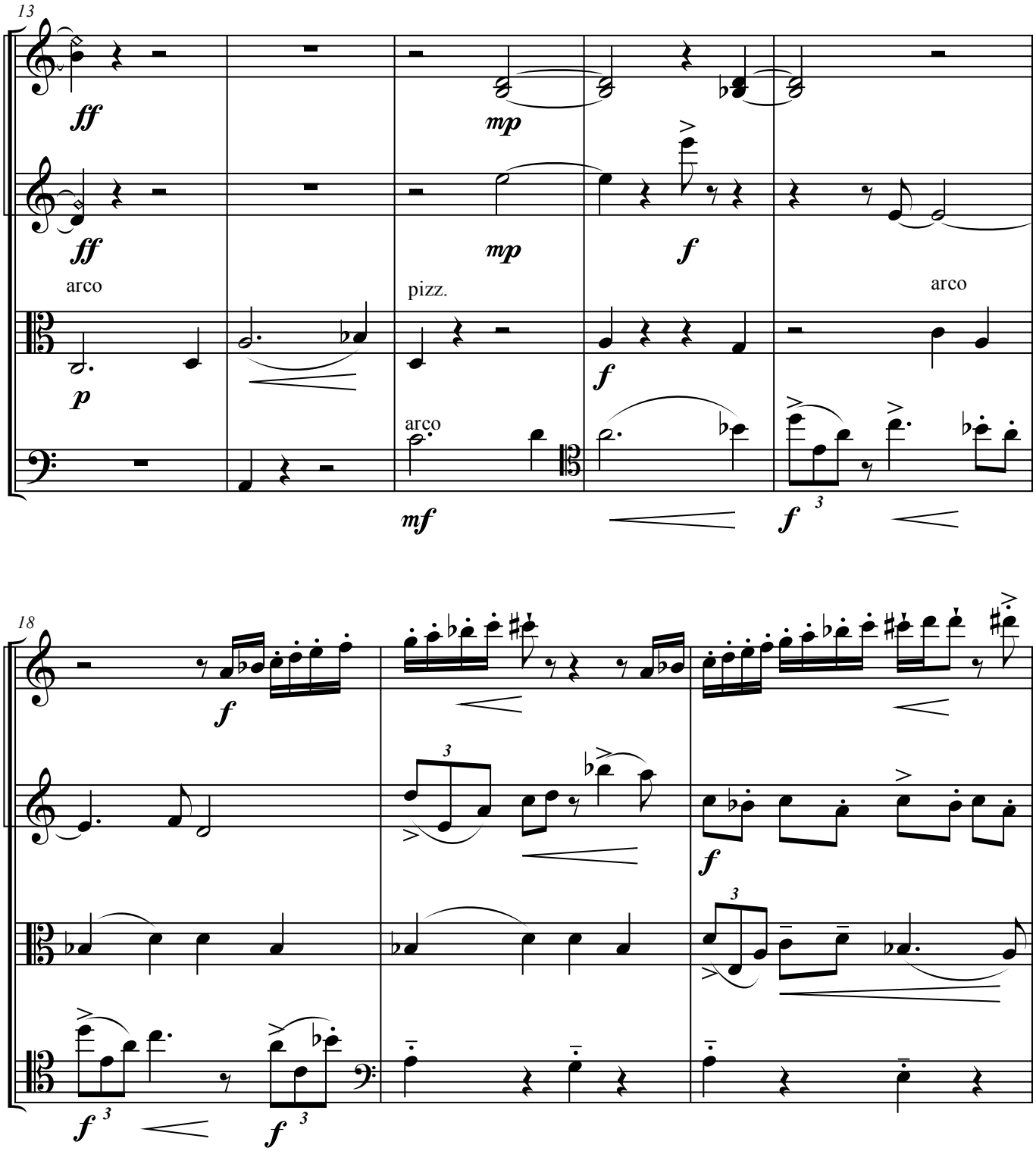
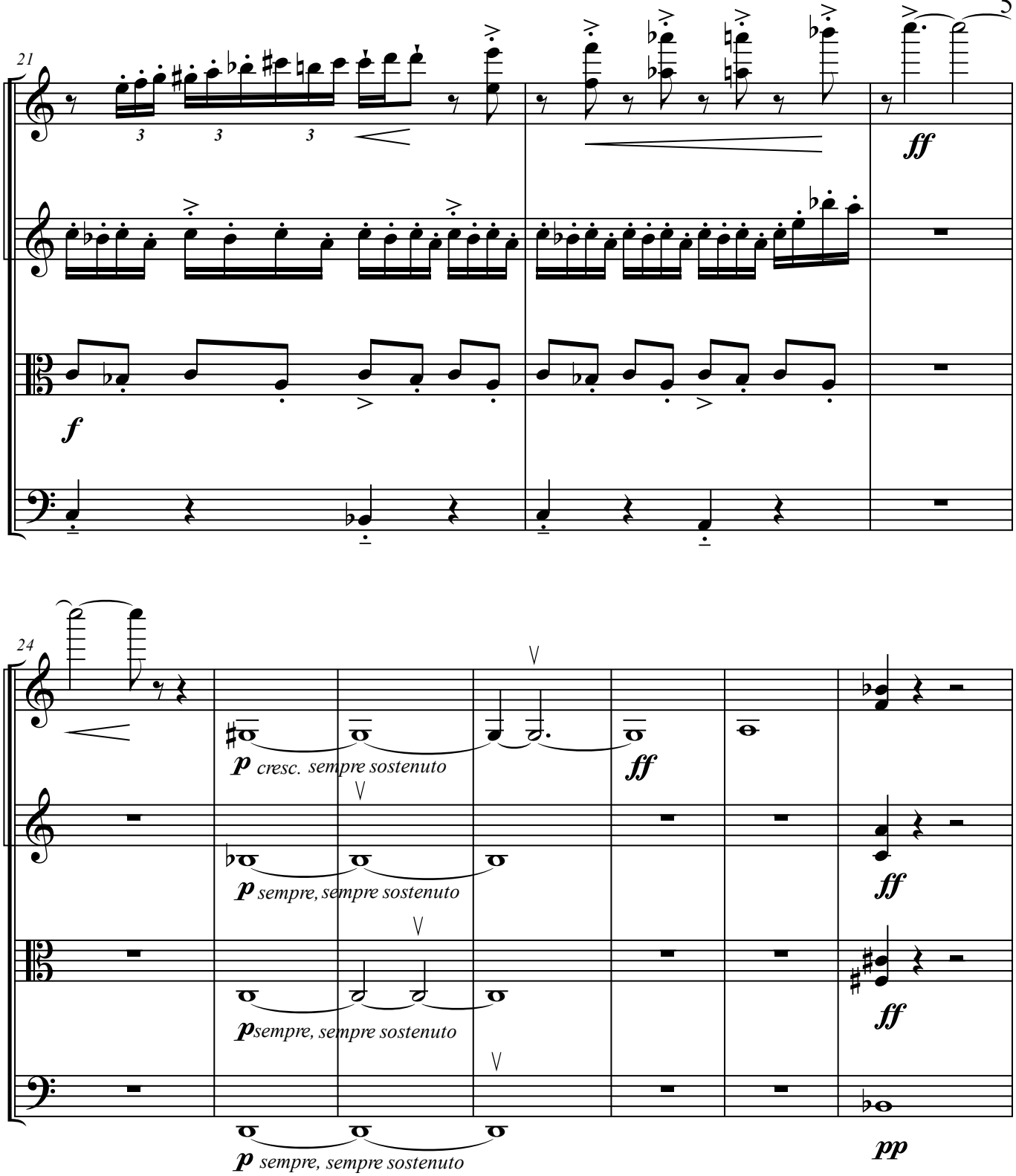
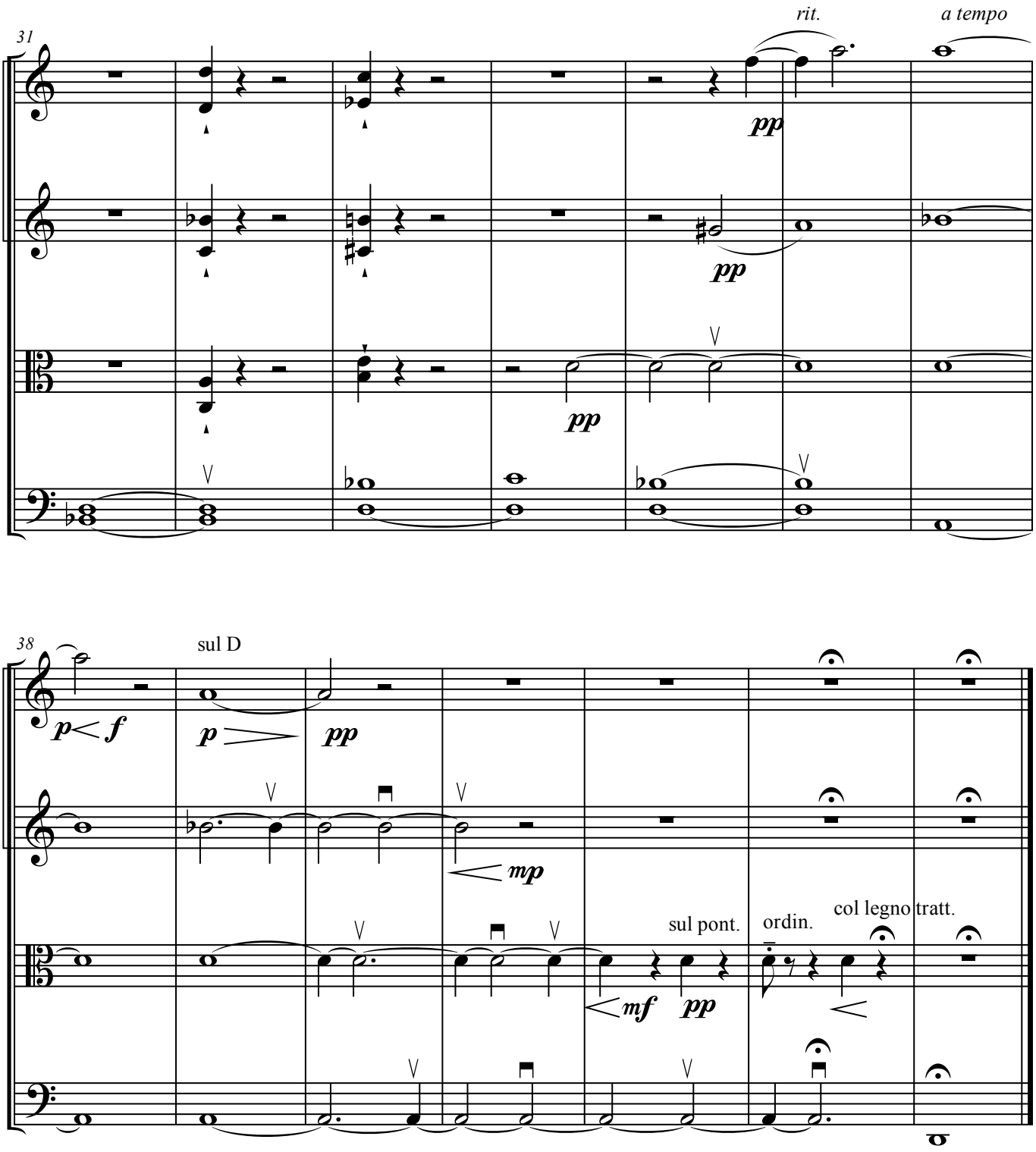
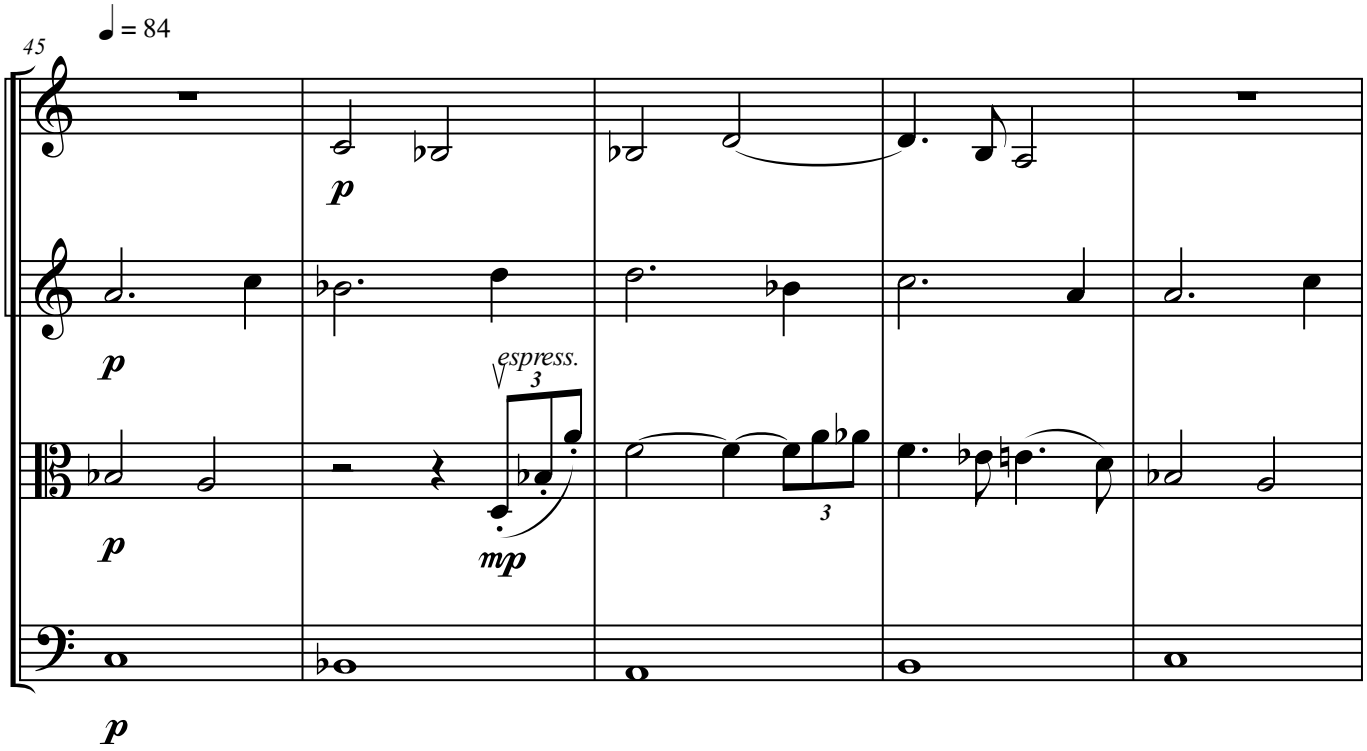


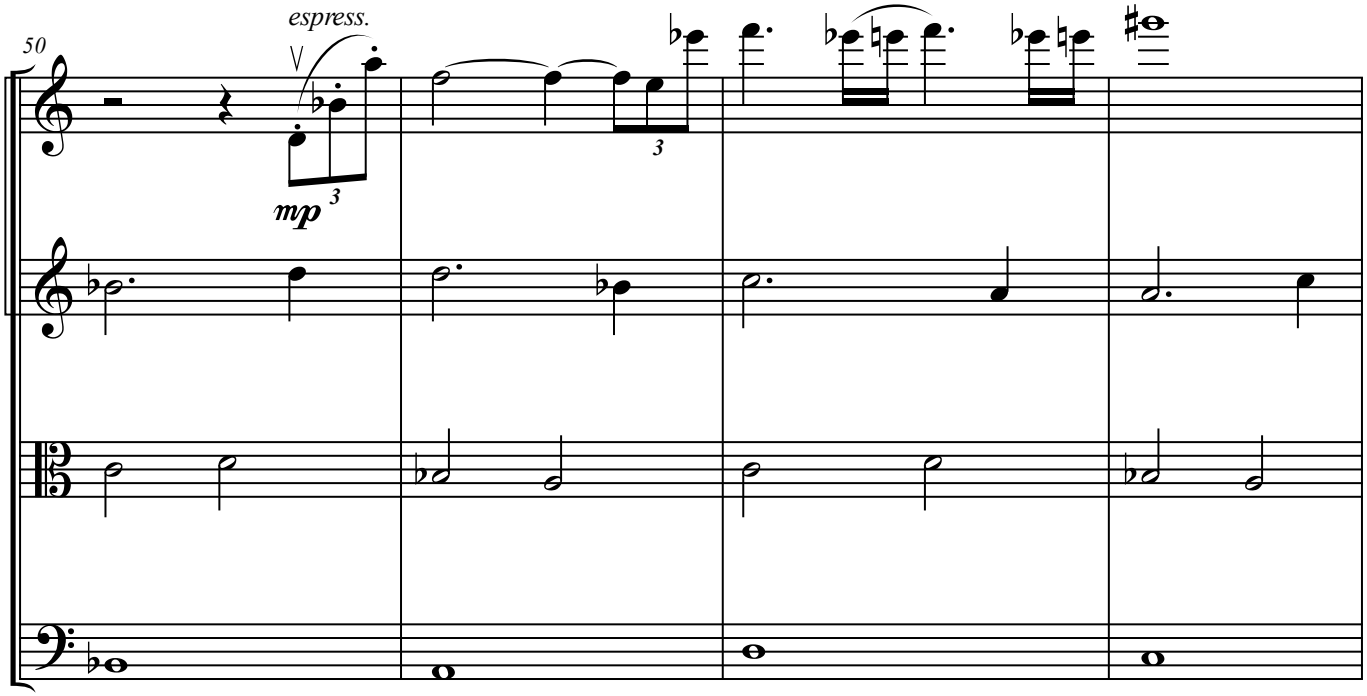
©2015

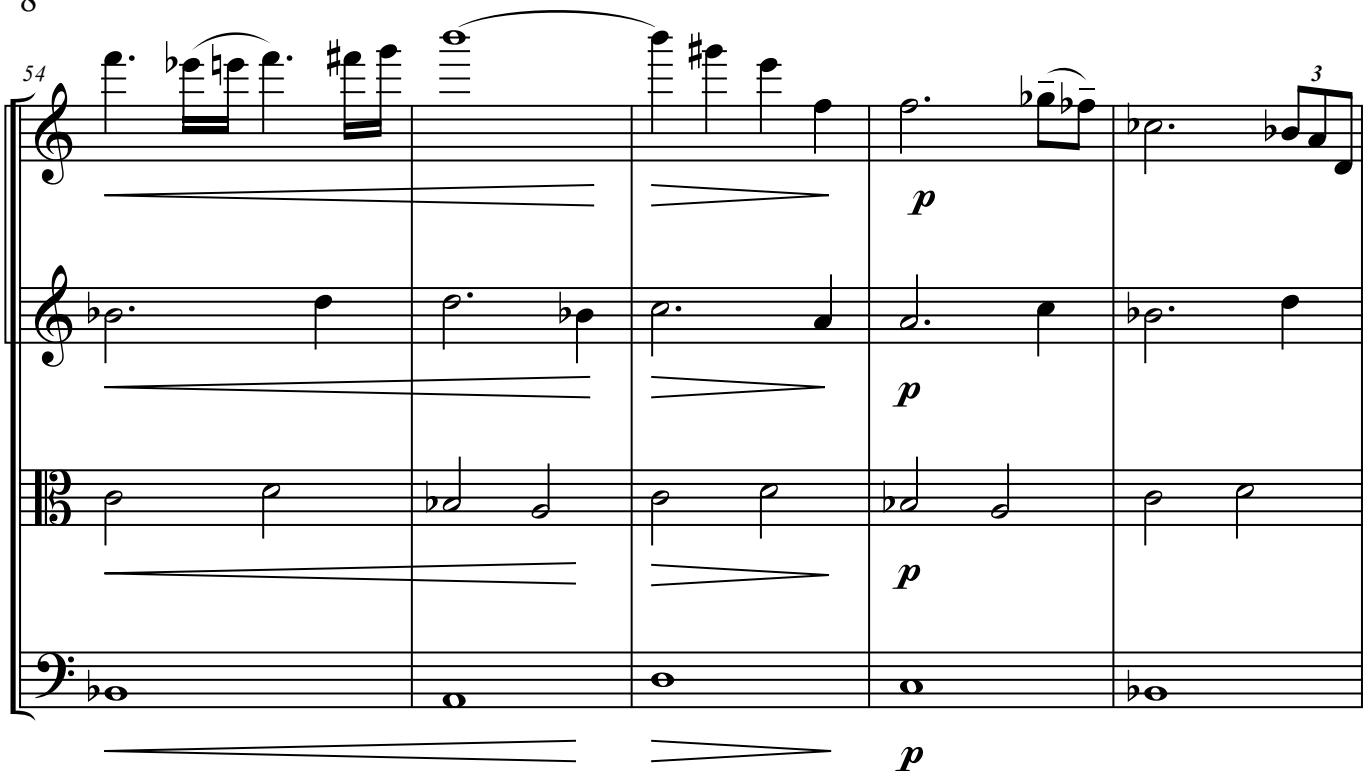

13
ff
mp
ff
mp
f
arco
pizz.
arco
p
f
arco
mf
f
3
18
f
3
3
f
f
3
f
3

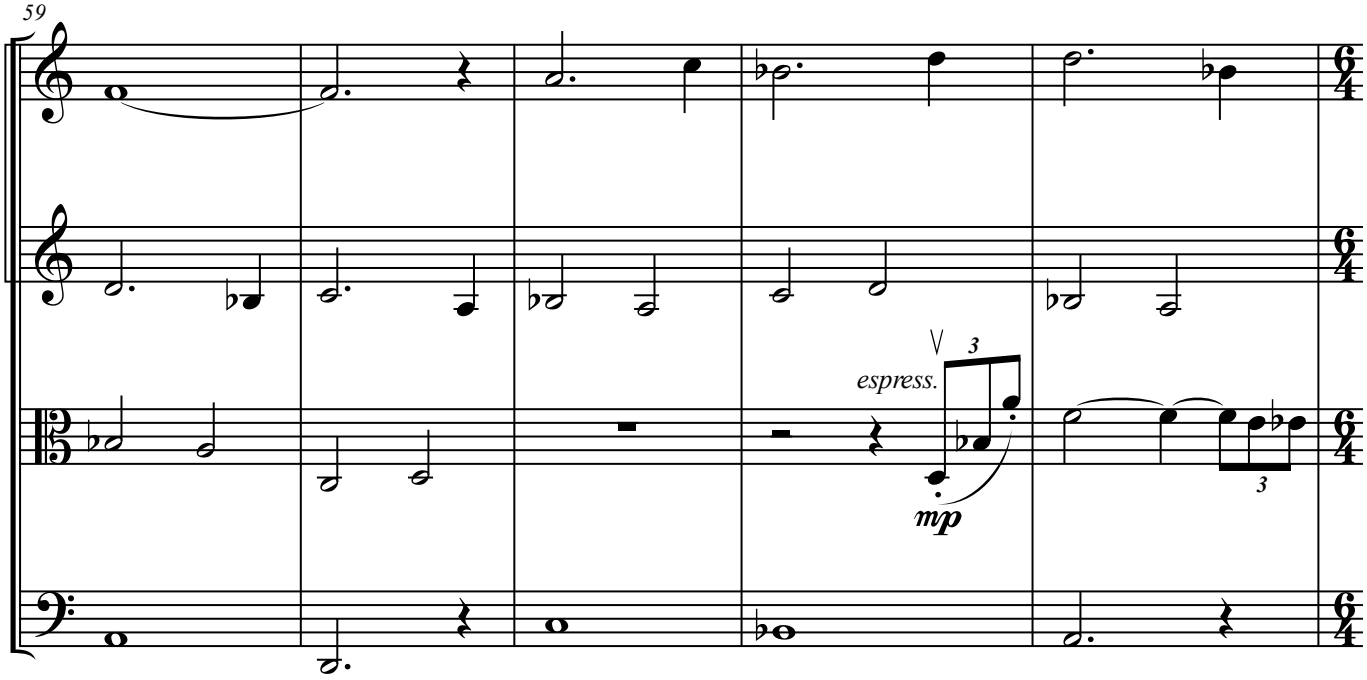

21
ff
f
24
p cresc. sempre sostenuto
ff
p sempre, sempre sostenuto
ff
psempre, sempre sostenuto
ff
p sempre, sempre sostenuto
pp

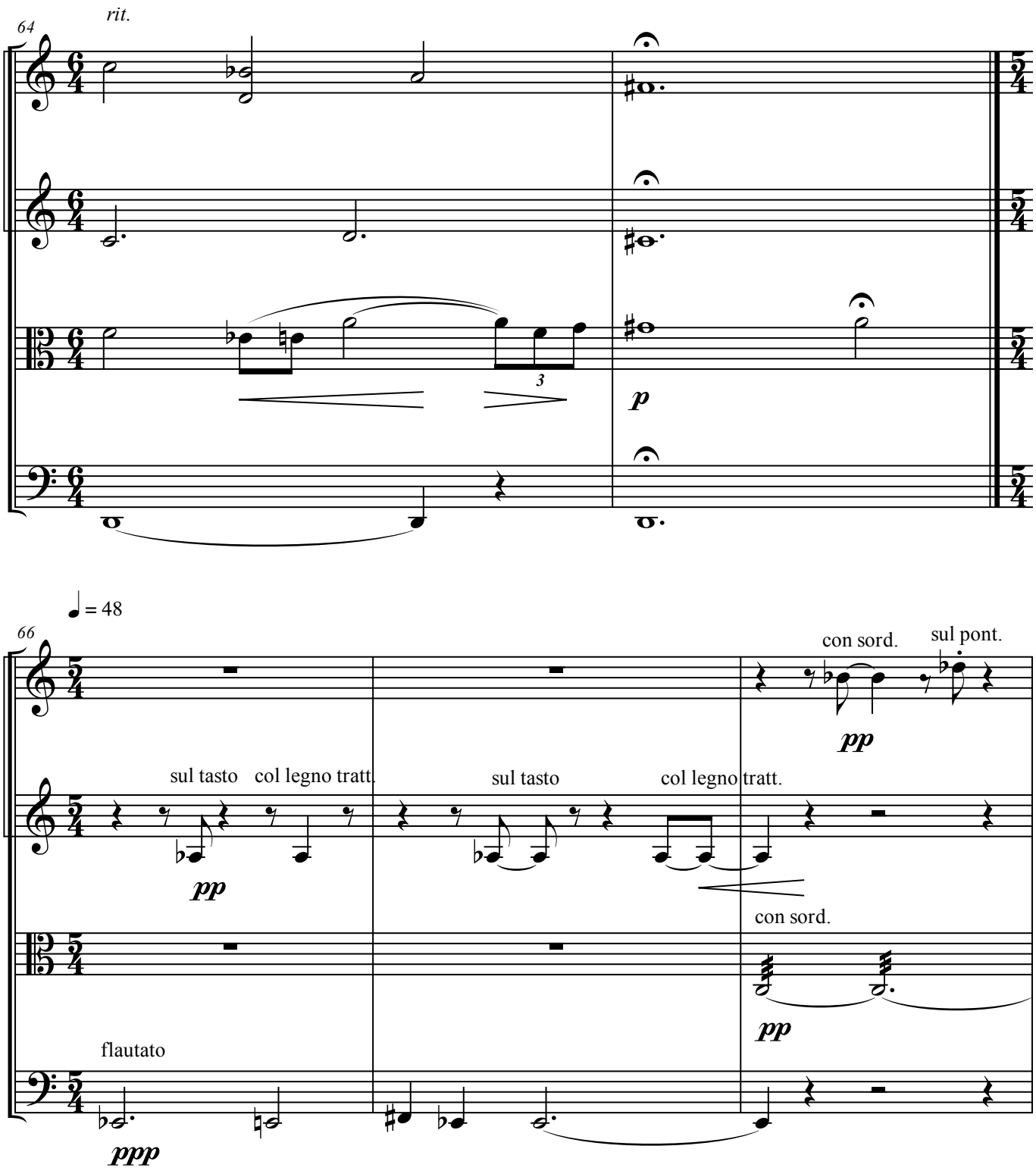

31
rit.
a tempo
pp
pp
pp
38
sul D
p < f
p
pp
mp
sul pont.
ordin.
col legno tratt.
mf
pp

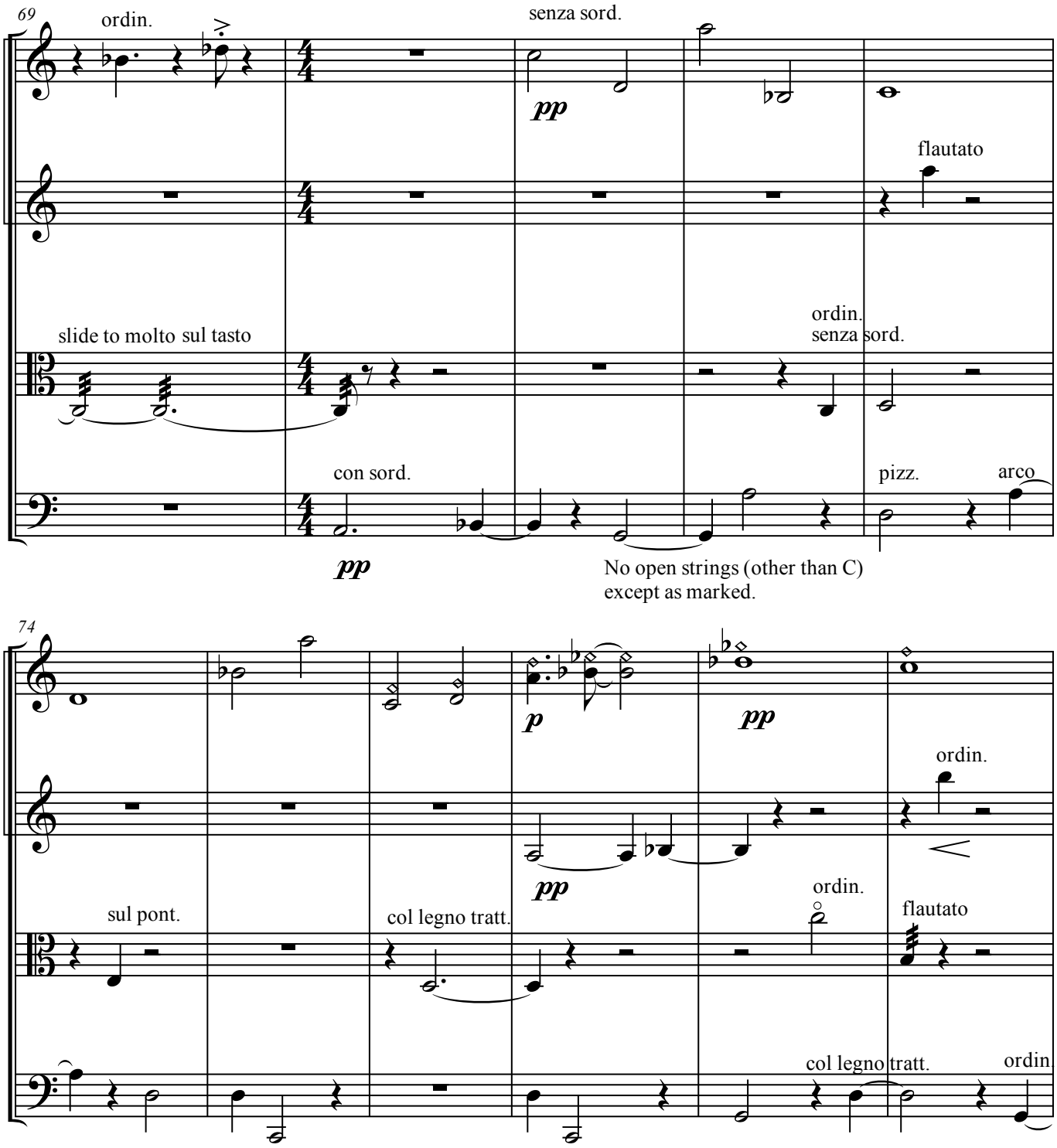

45
♩ = 84
p
p
espress.
3
mp
3
p

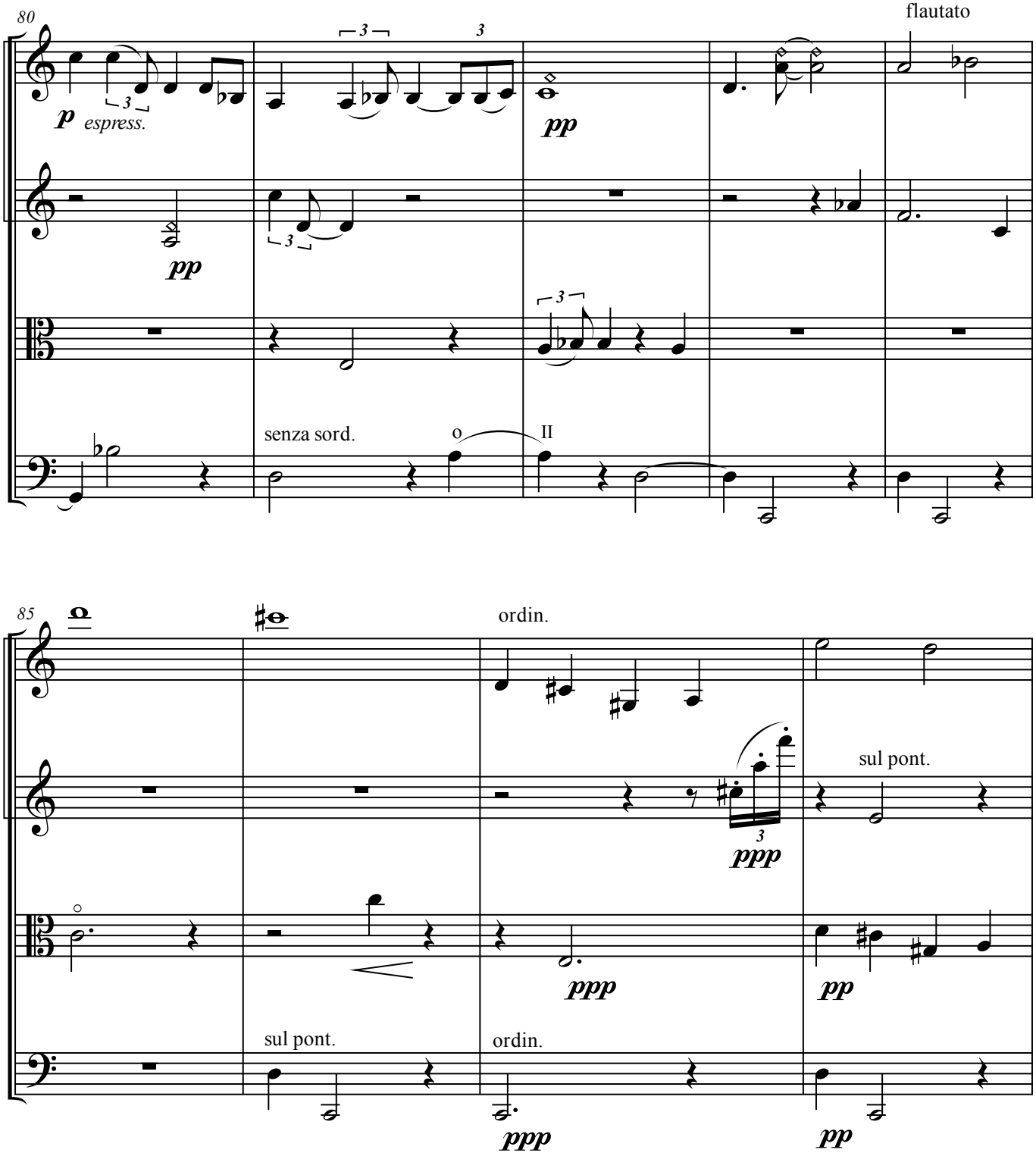

50
espress.
mp
3
3

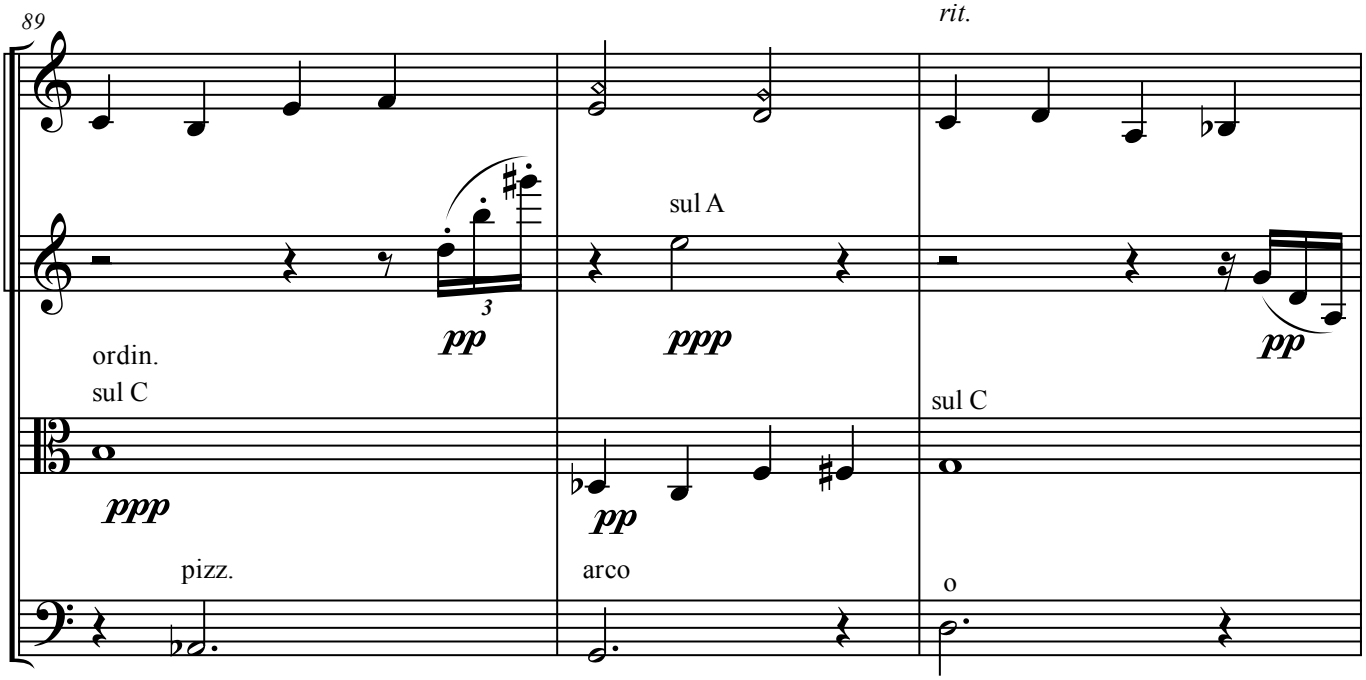

54
3
p
p
p
p

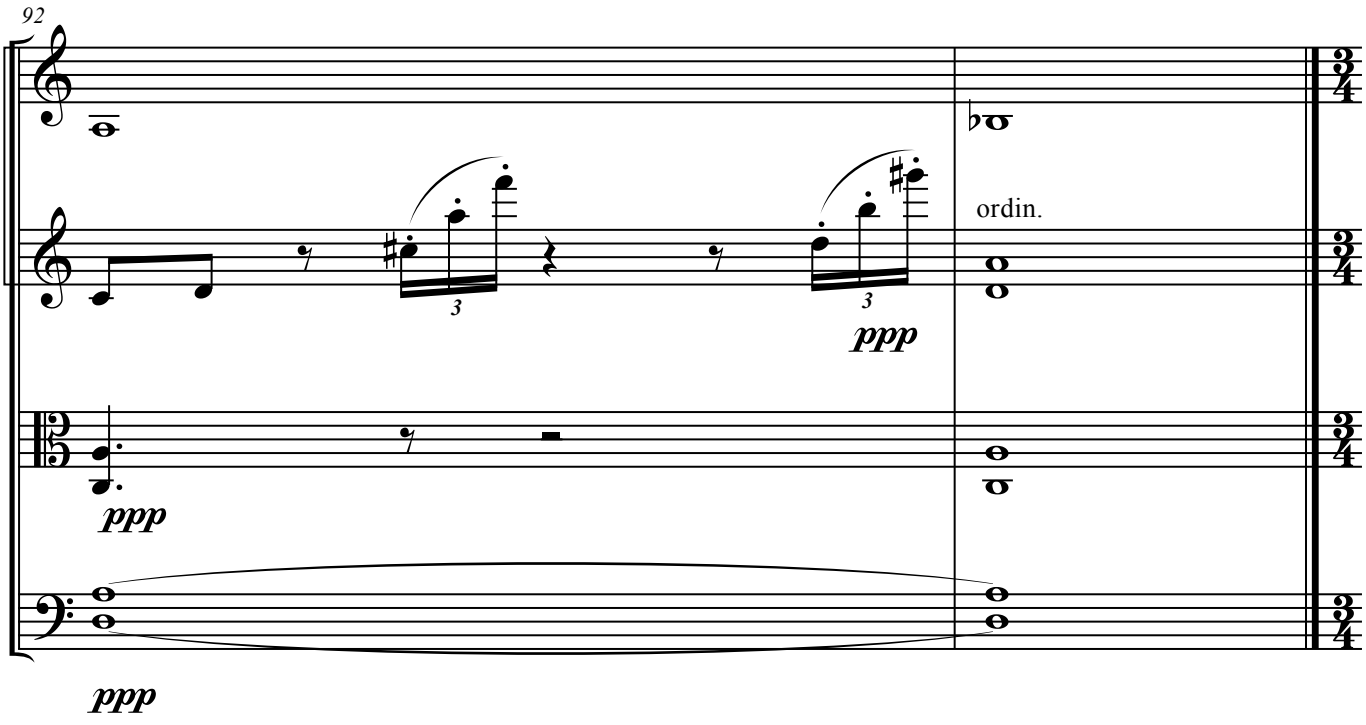

59
espress.
3
mp
3
6
4

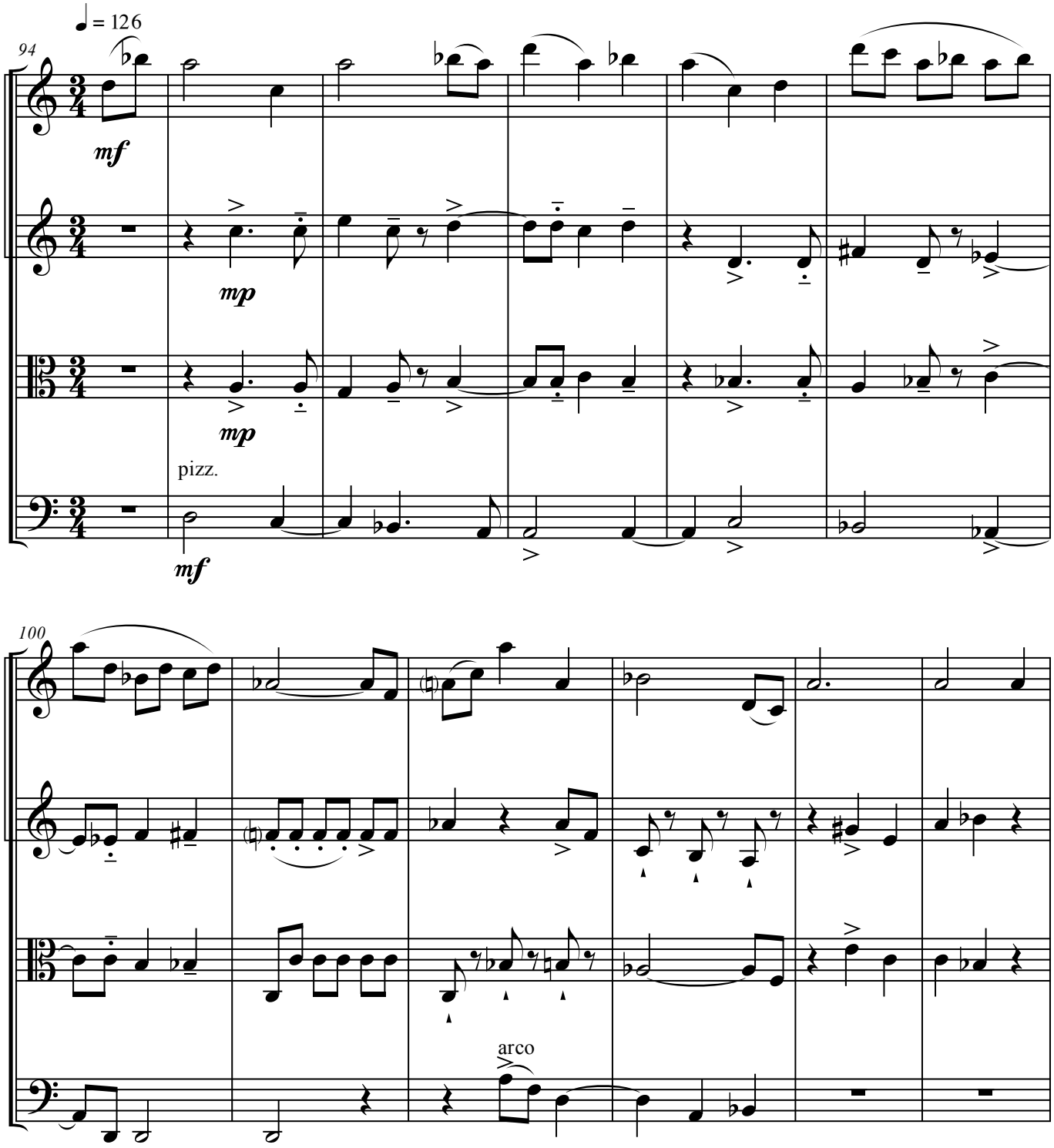

64
rit.
3
p
66
♩ = 48
con sord.
sul pont.
pp
sul tasto
col legno tratt.
sul tasto
col legno tratt.
pp
con sord.
pp
flautato
ppp

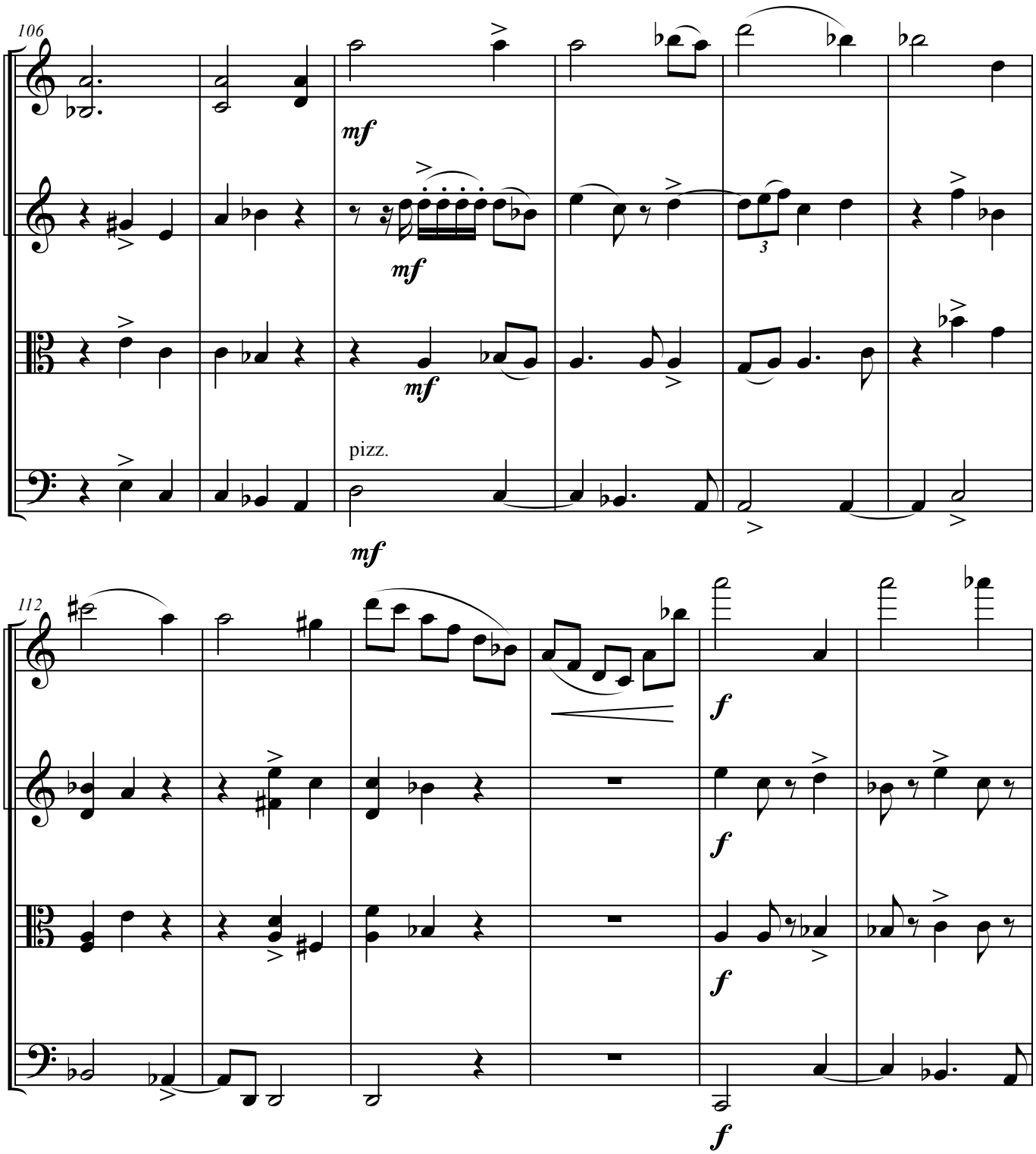

69
ordin.
senza sord.
pp
flautato
slide to molto sul tasto
ordin.
senza sord.
con sord.
pizz.
arco
pp
No open strings (other than C)
except as marked.
74
p
pp
pp
ordin.
sul pont.
col legno tratt.
ordin.
flautato
col legno tratt.
ordin

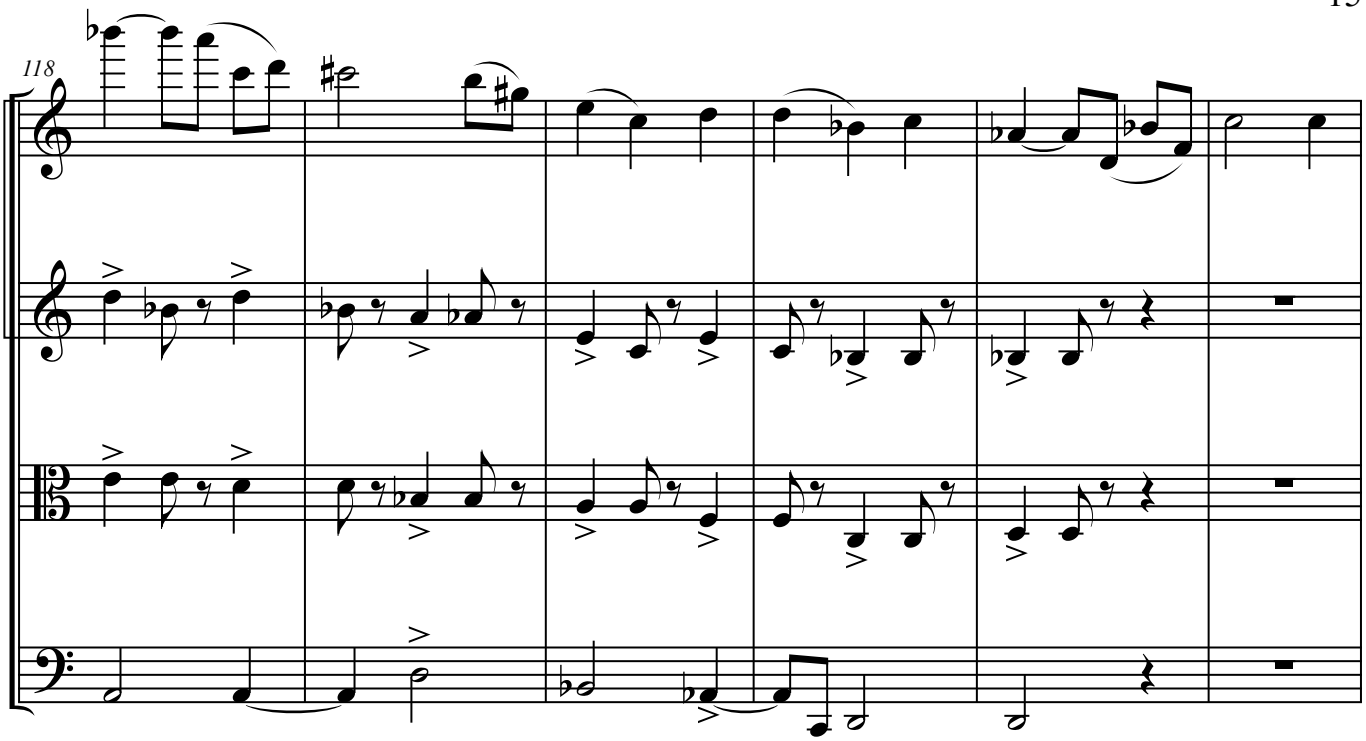

80
flautato
p
espress.
pp
pp
senza sord.
o
II
85
ordin.
sul pont.
ppp
ppp
pp
sul pont.
ordin.
ppp
pp

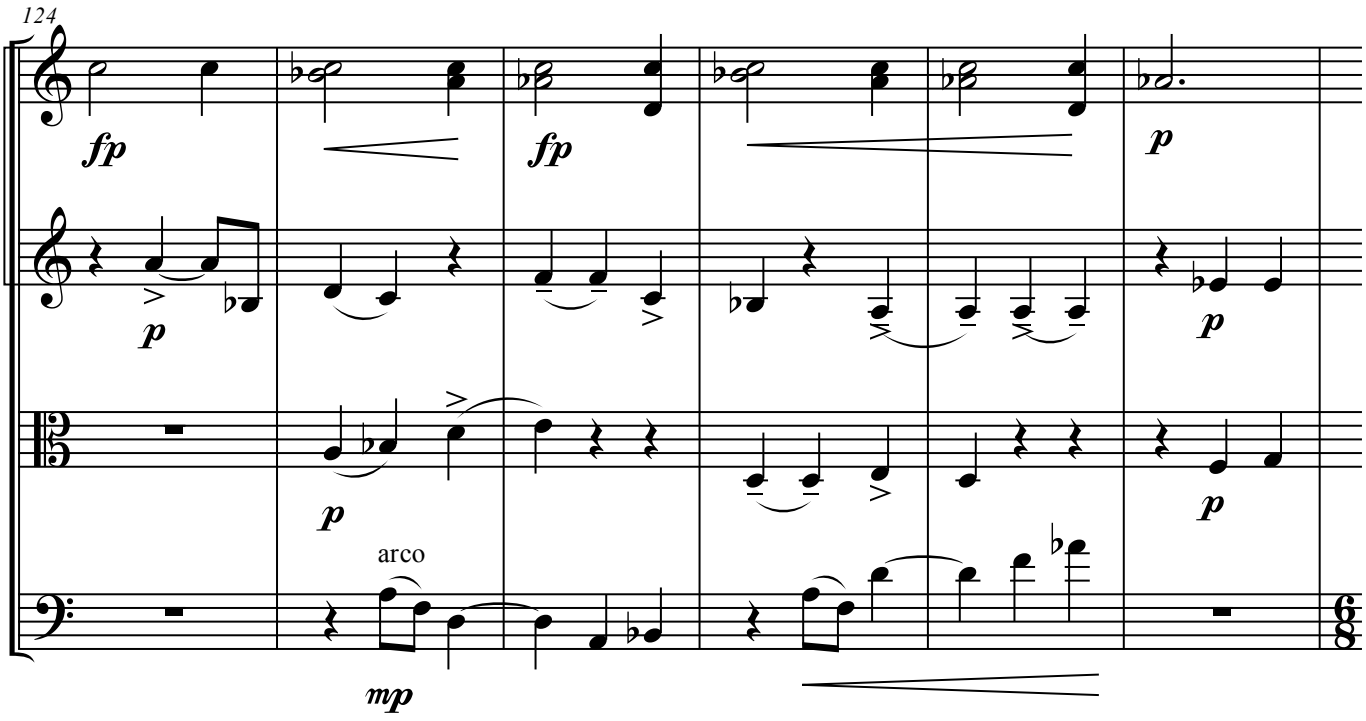

89
rit.
sul A
ordin.
sul C
sul C
pizz.
arco
o

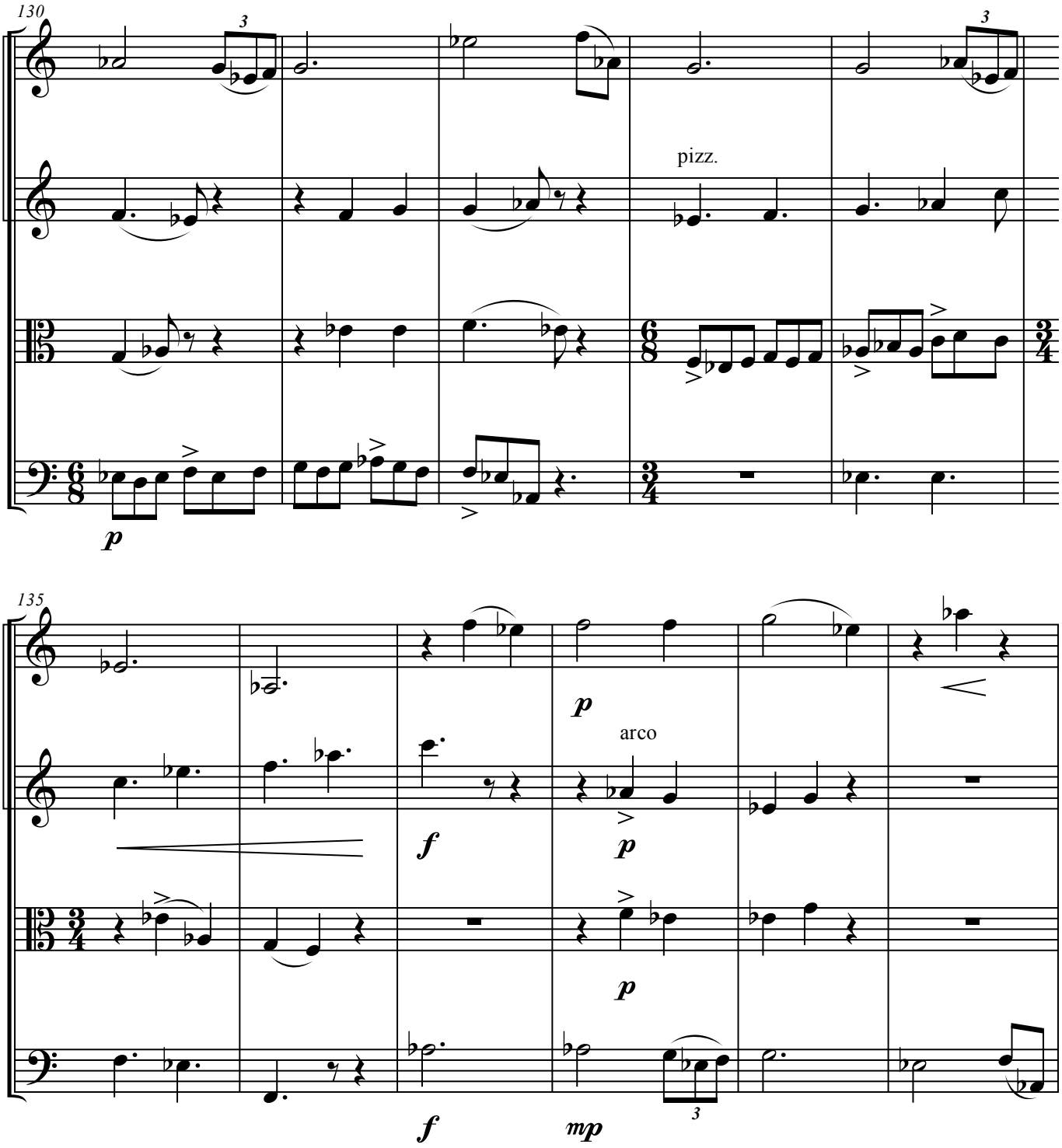

92
ordin.

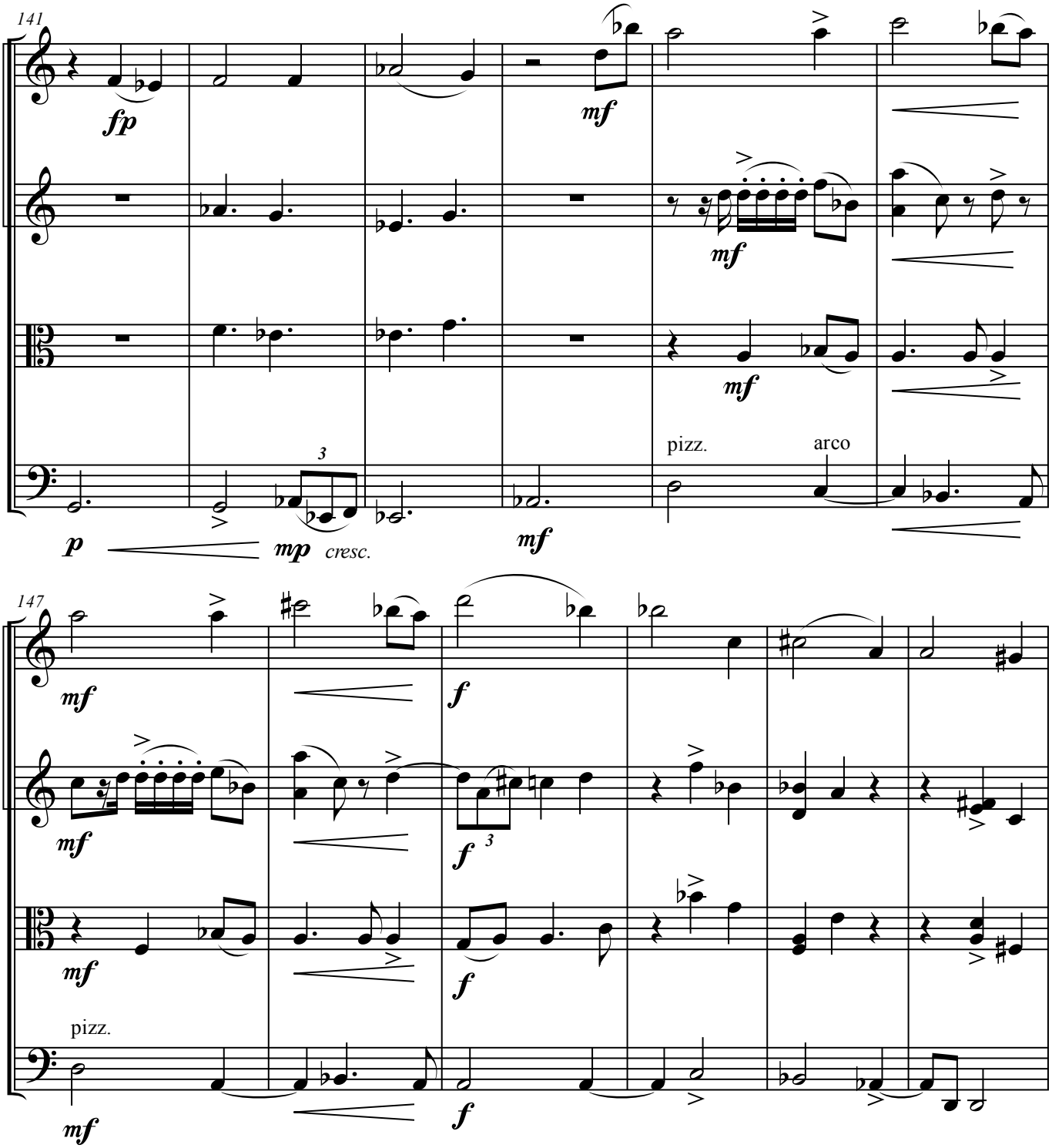

♩ = 126
94
mf
mp
mp
pizz.
mf
100
arco

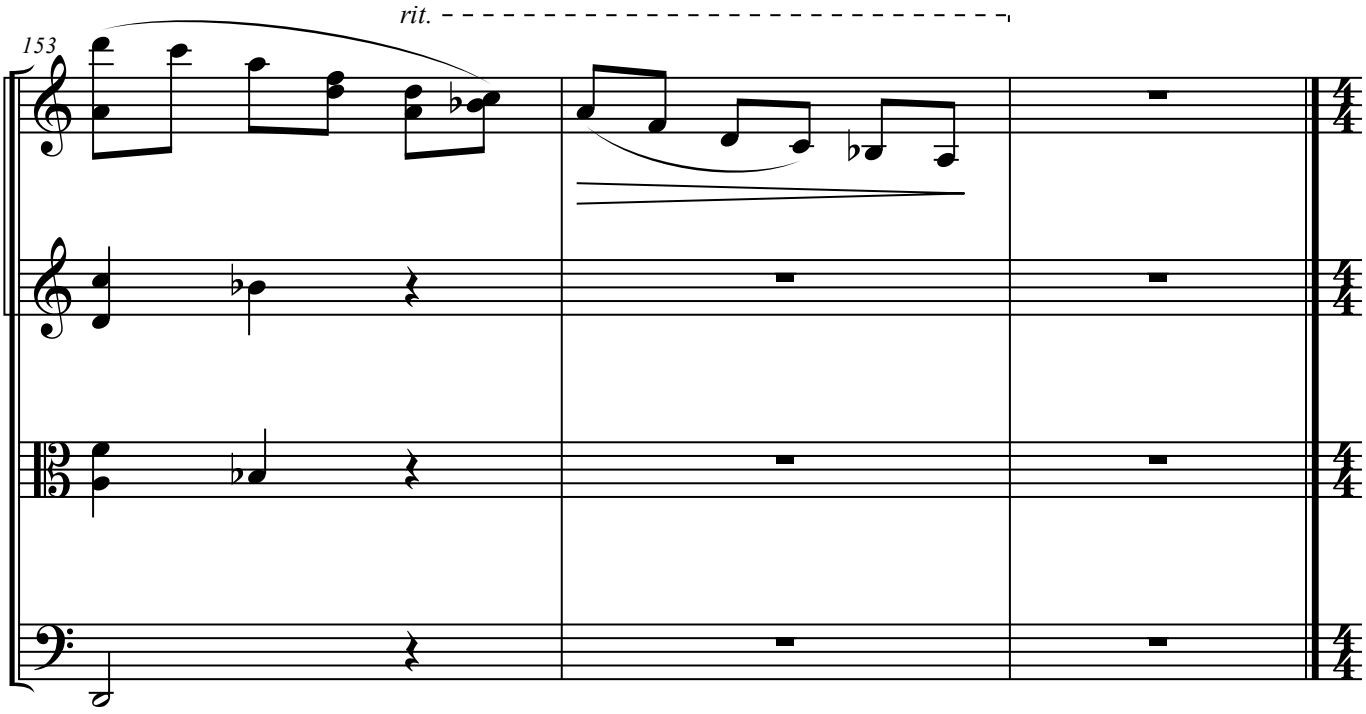

106
mf
mf
mf
pizz.
mf
112
f
f
f
f


118


124
fp
fp
p
p
p
p
p
arco
mp

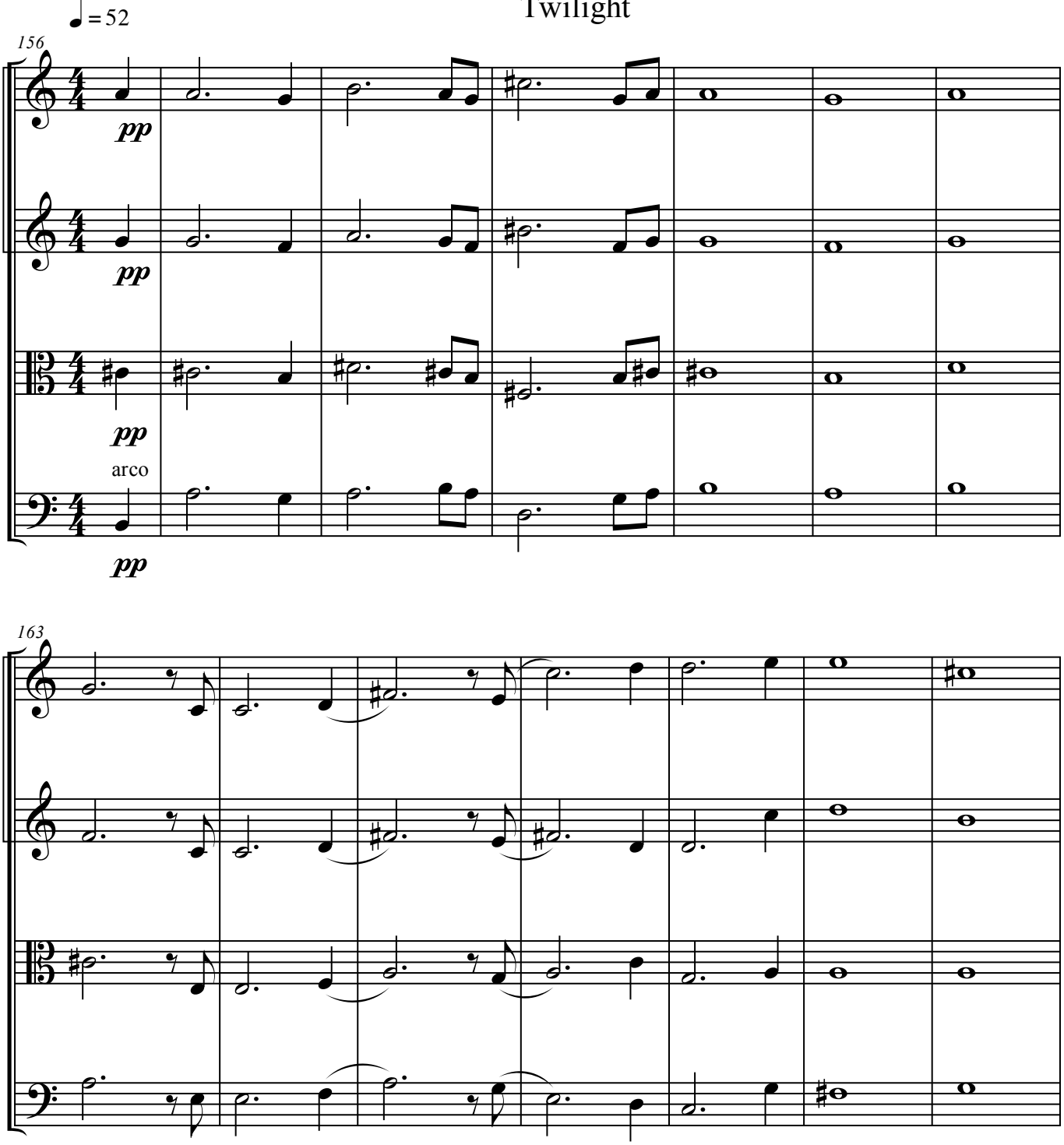

130
3
pizz.
p
135
p
arco
f
p
p
f
mp

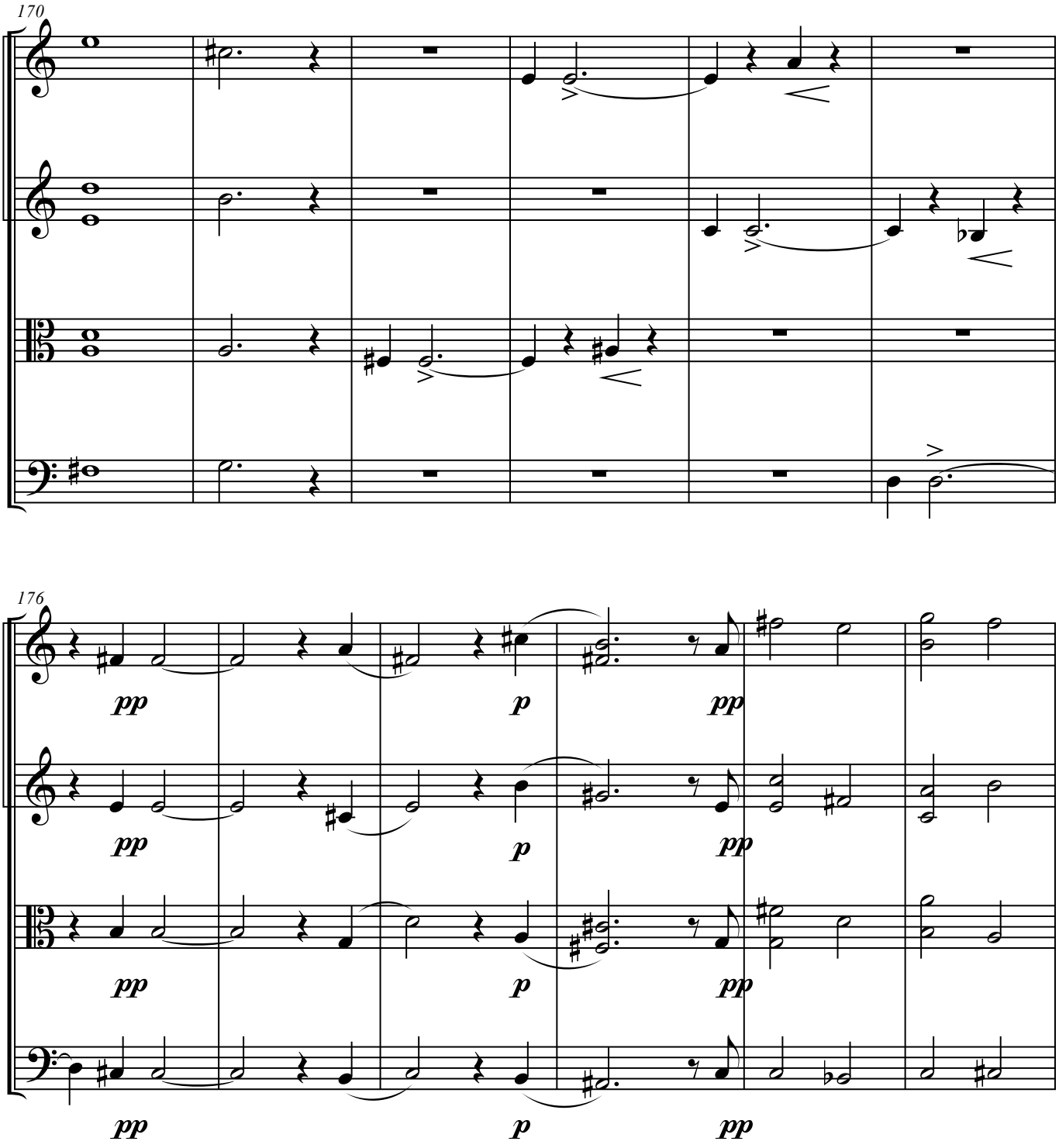

141
fp
mf
mf
mf
3
pizz.
arco
p
mp
cresc.
mf
147
mf
f
mf
3
f
mf
f
pizz.
mf
f

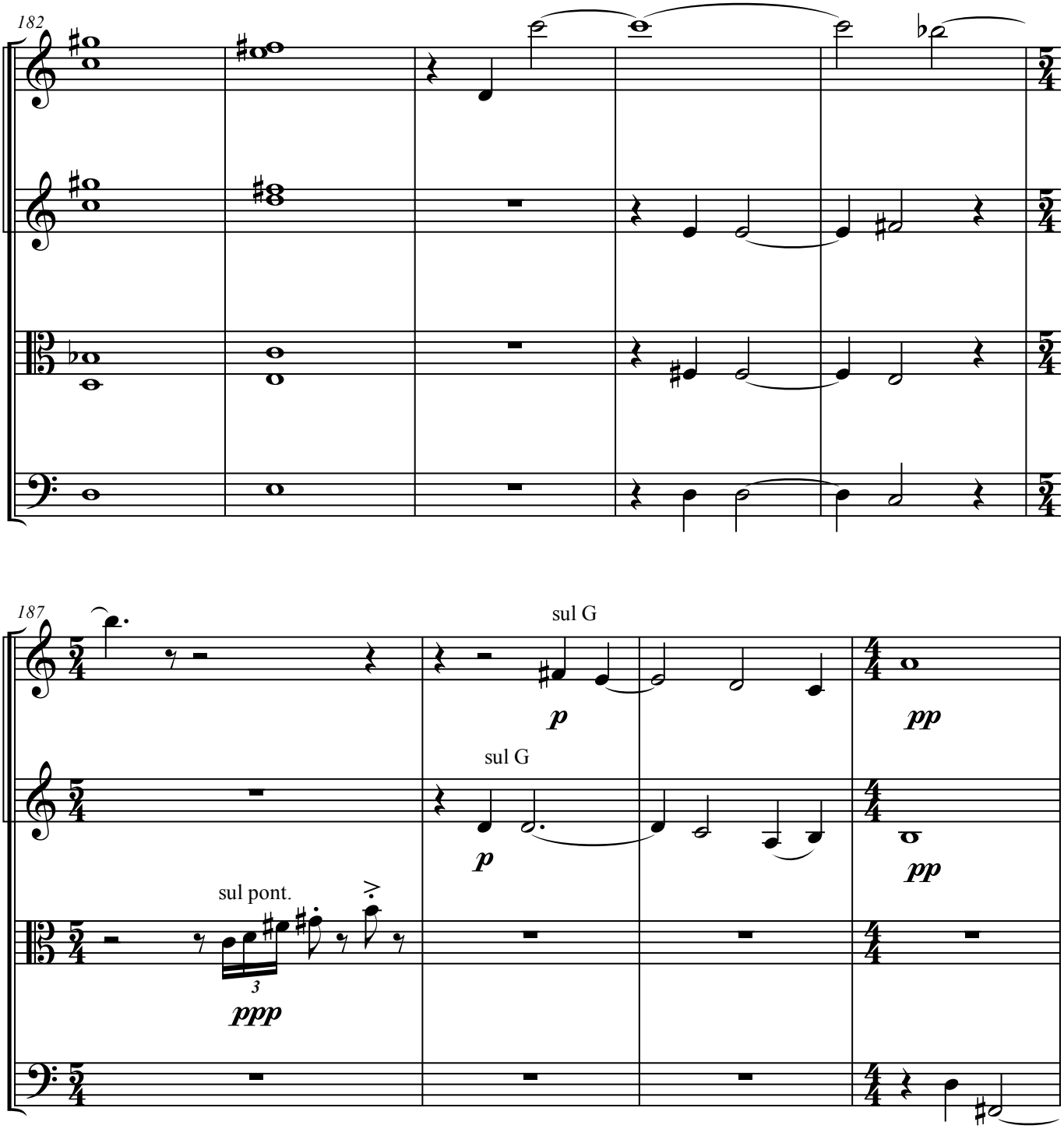


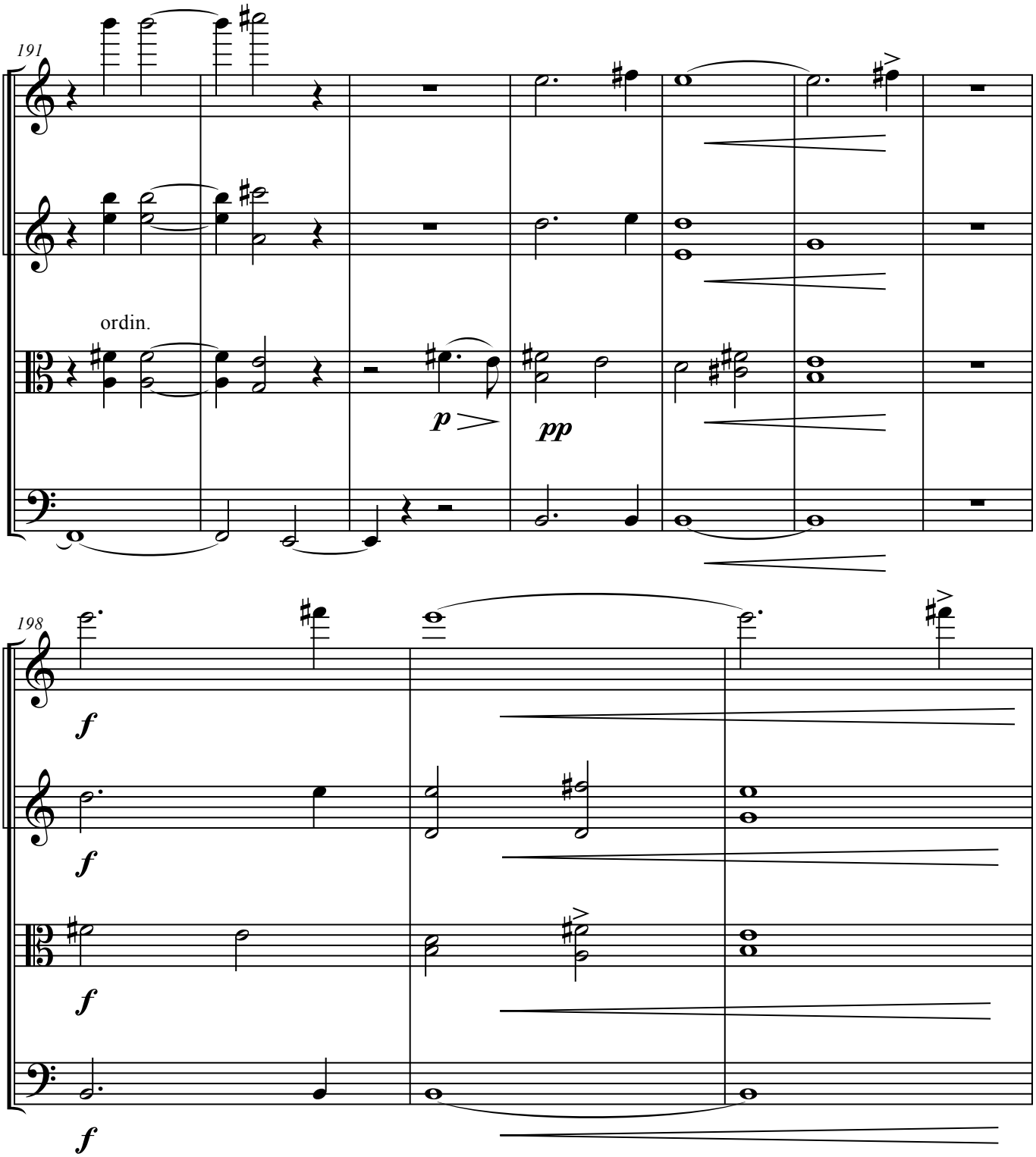
attacca:

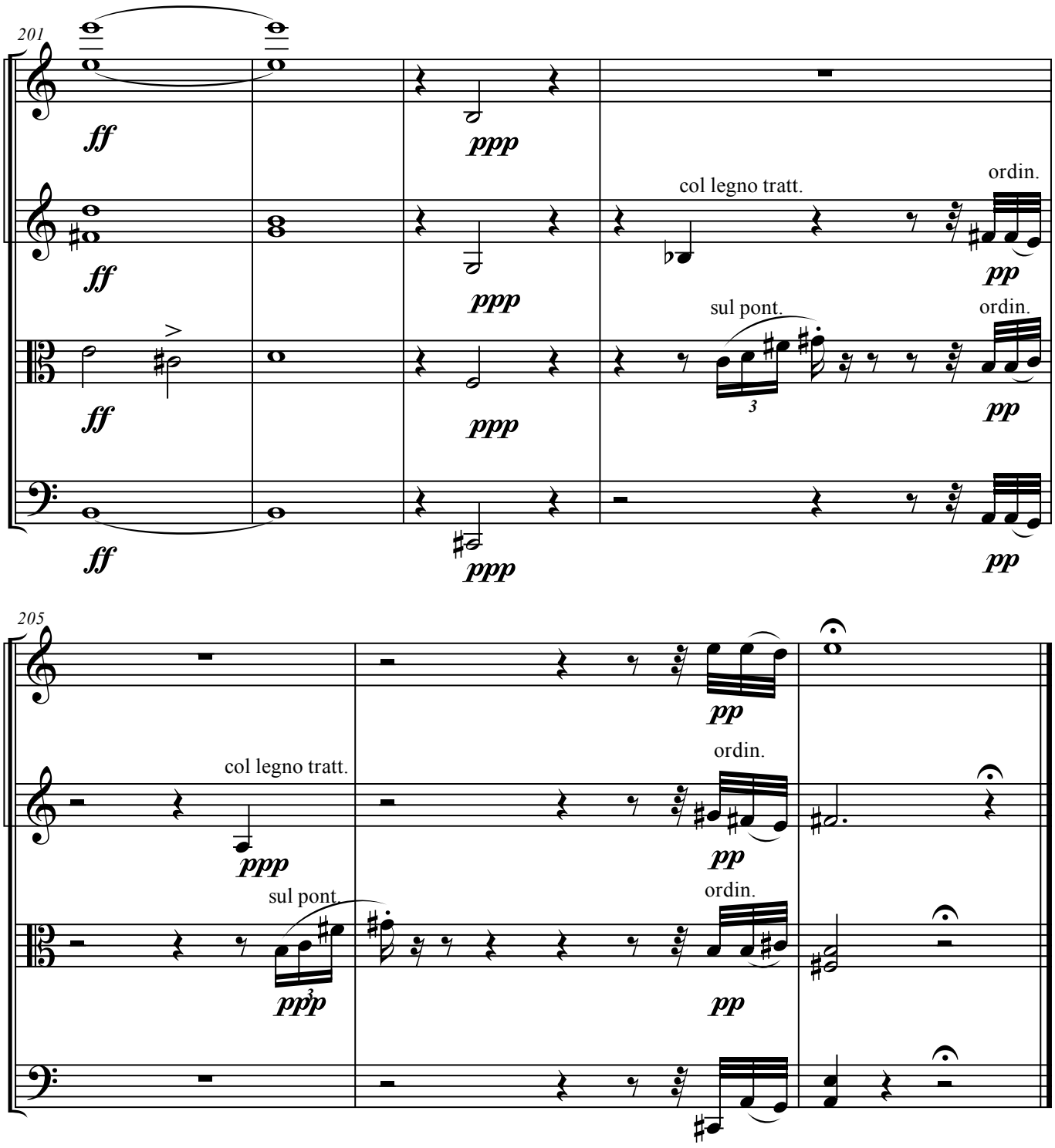
Twilight

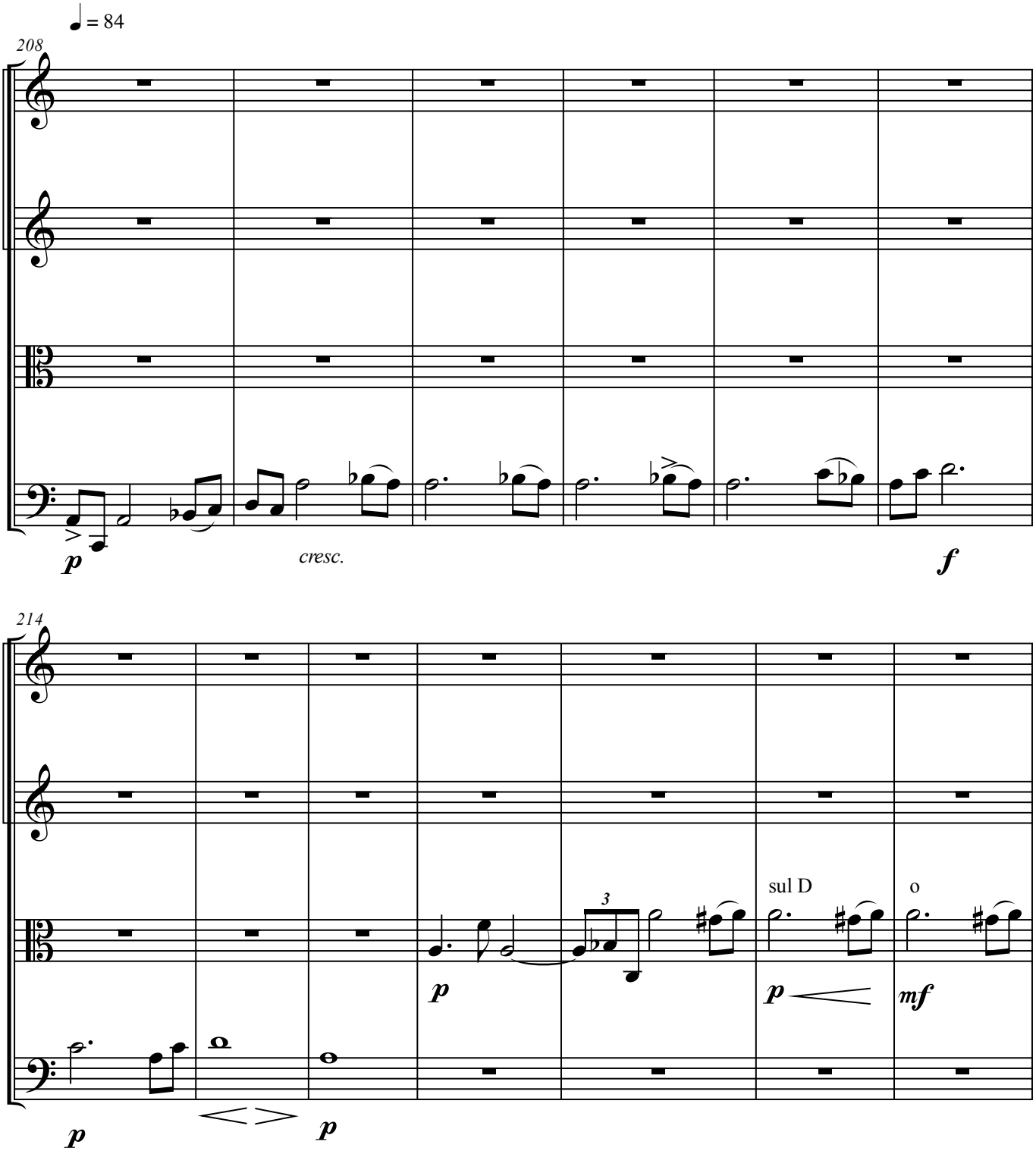


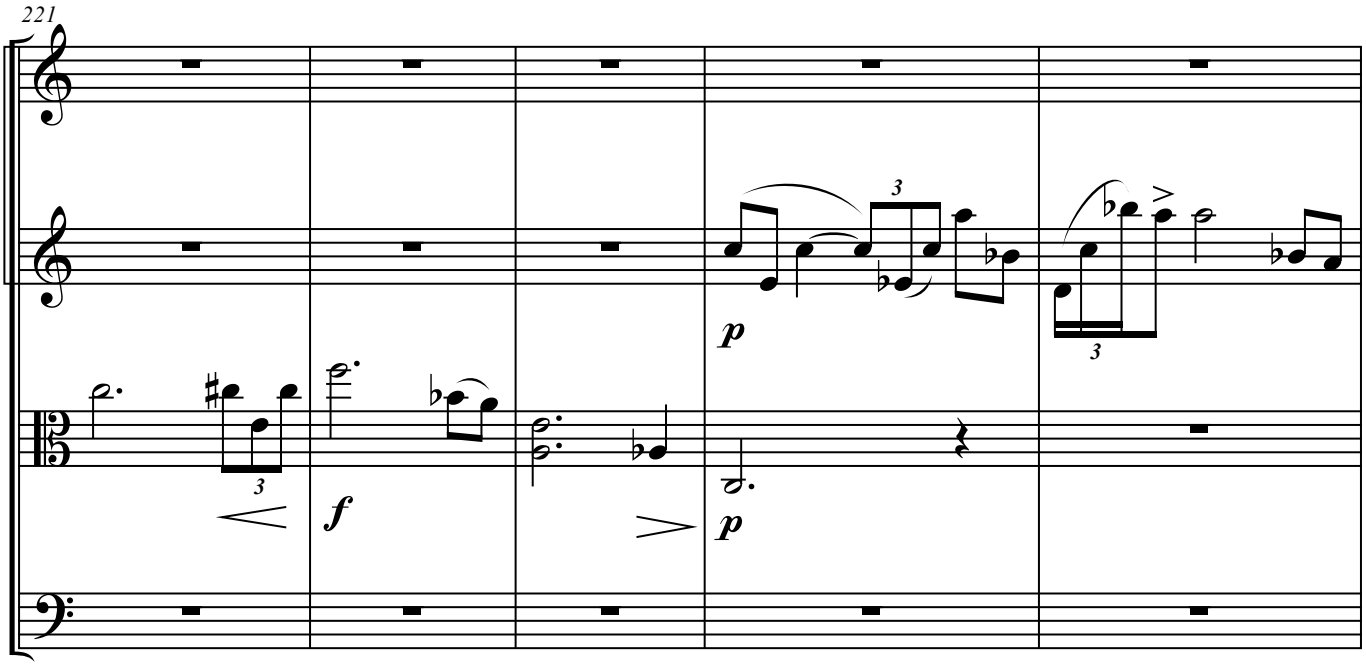

170
176
pp
p
pp

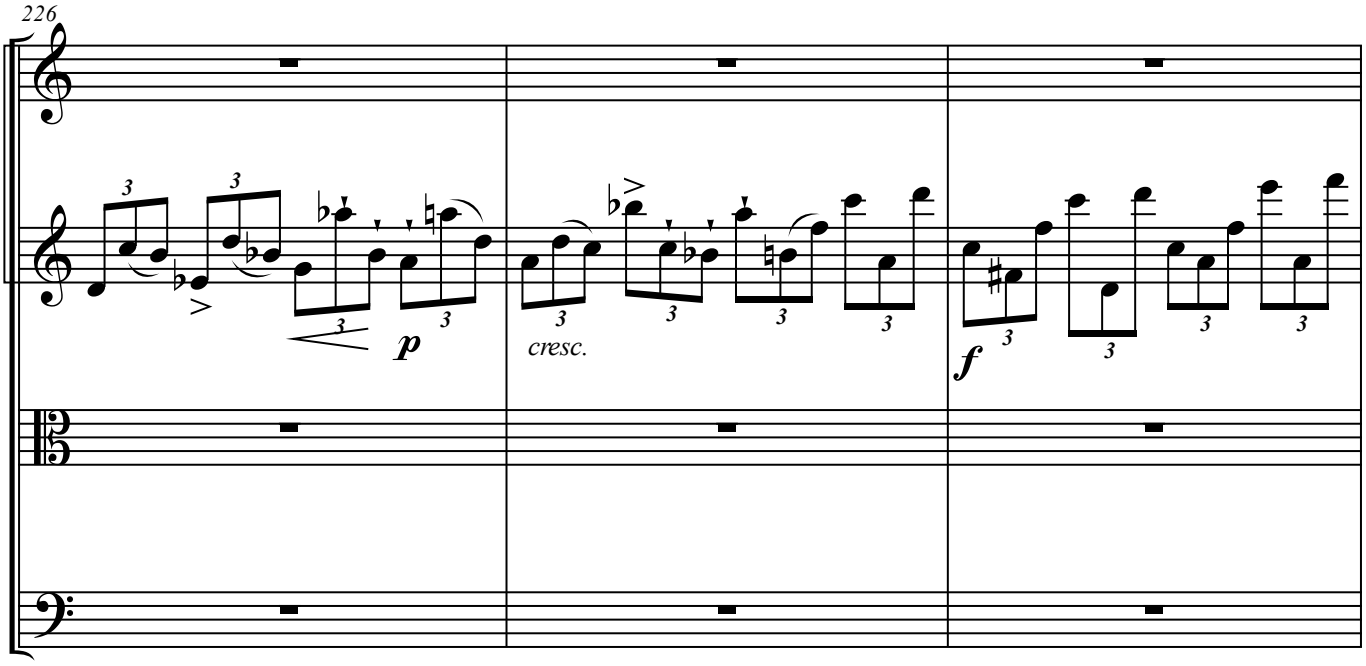

182
187
sul G
sul G
sul pont.
p
p
pp
pp
ppp
3

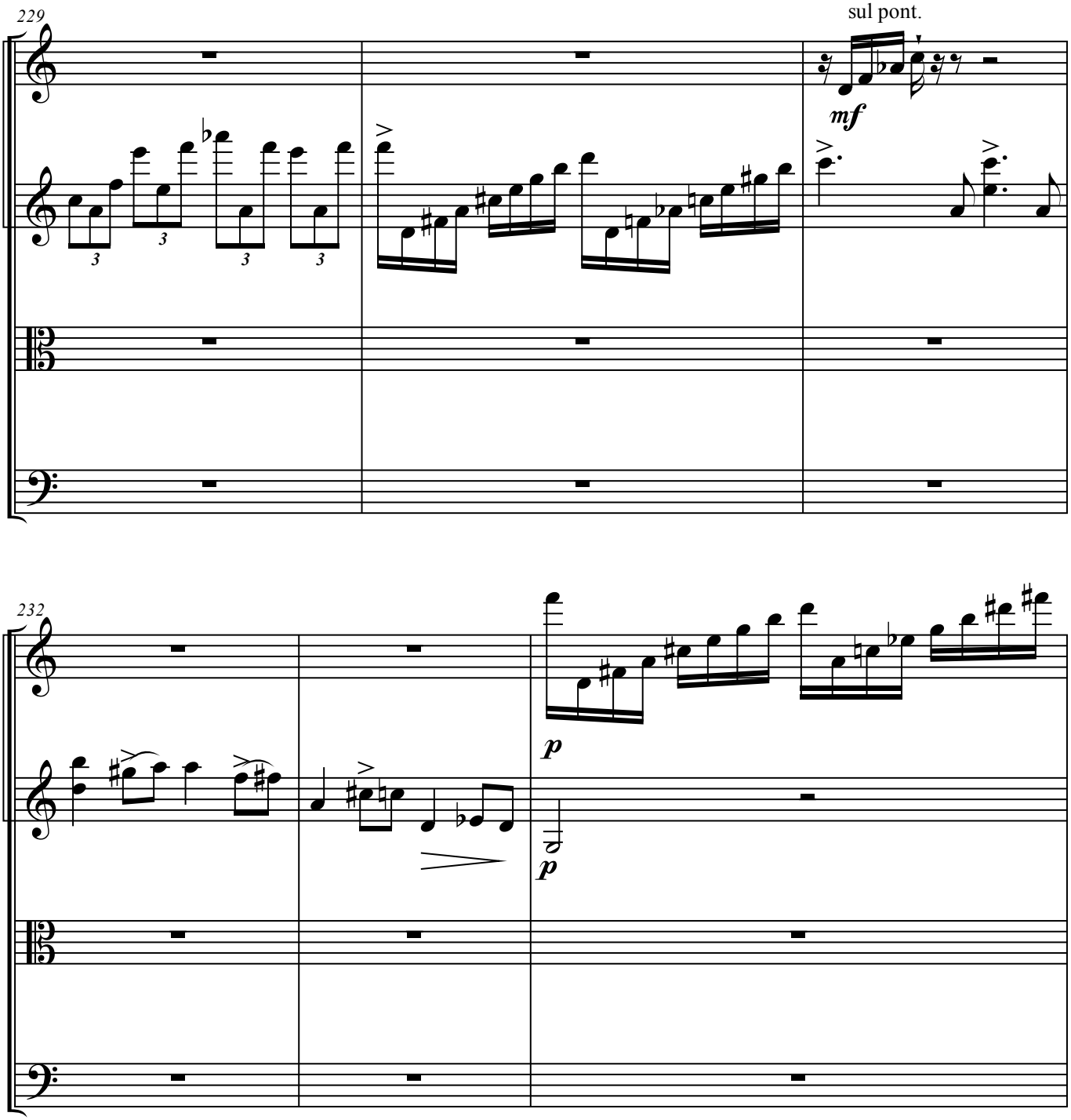

191
ordin.
p
pp
198
f
f
f
f

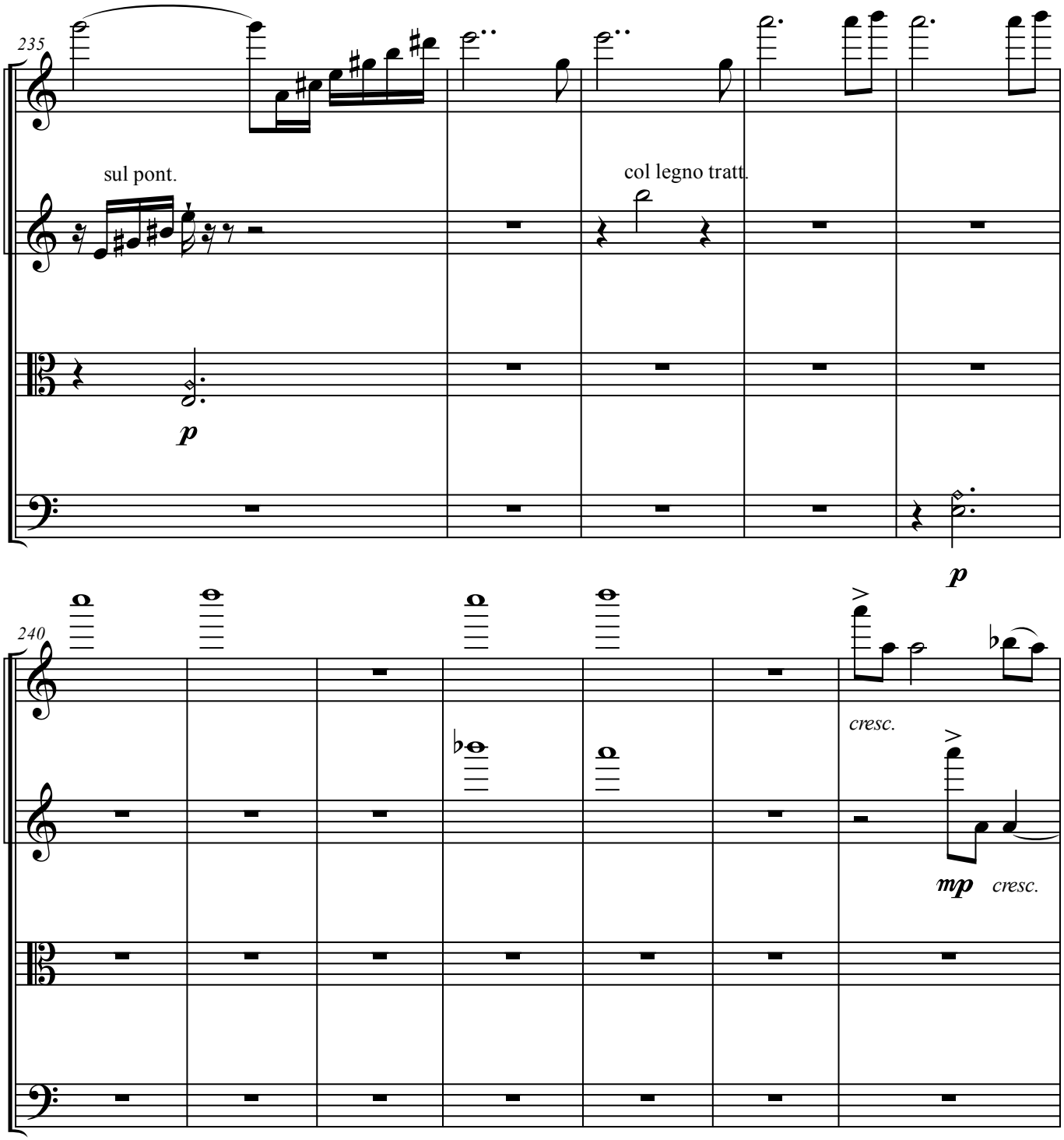

201
ff
ppp
col legno tratt.
ordin.
pp
sul pont.
3
205
ppp
ppp
pp

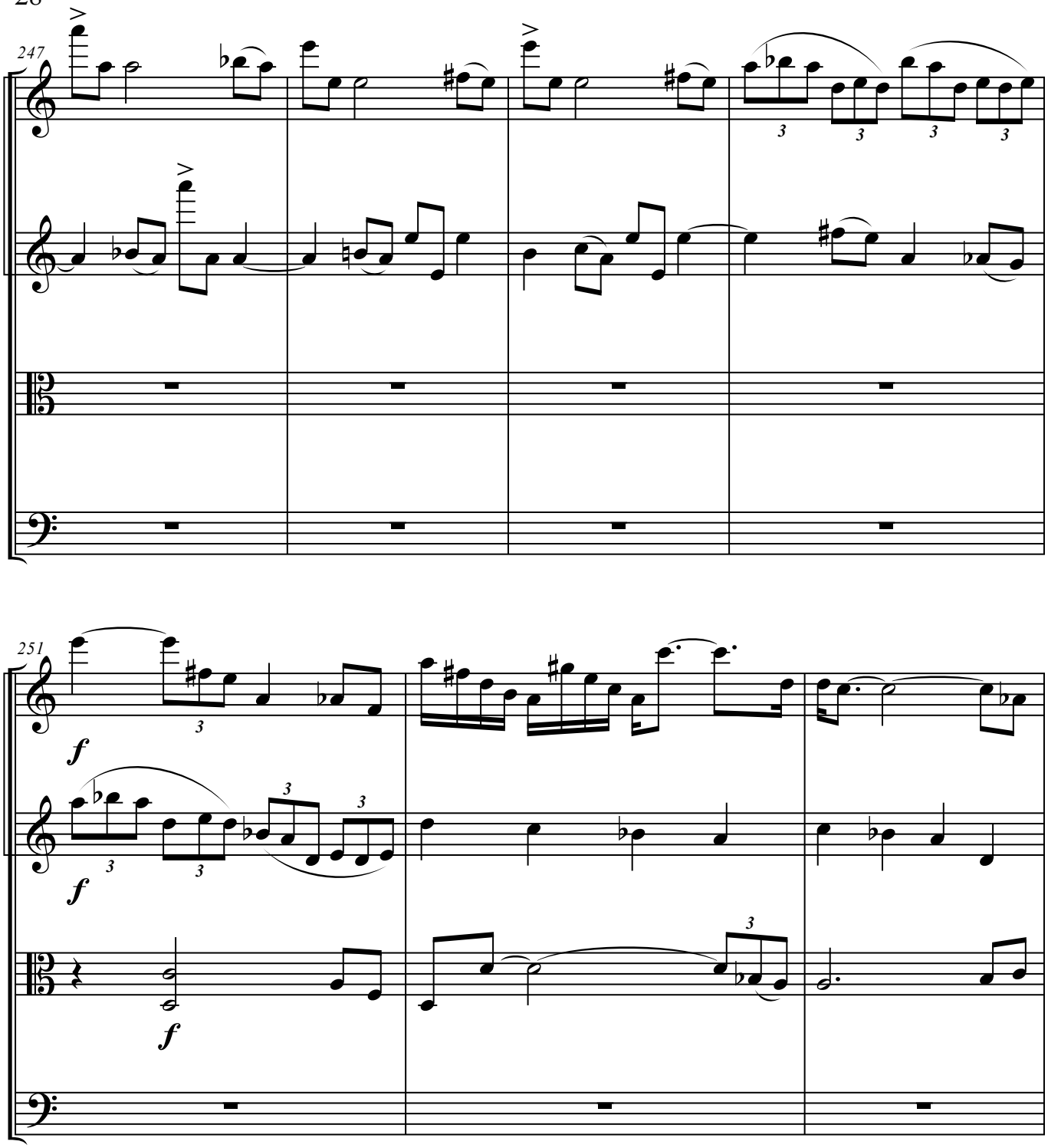

♩ = 84
208
p
cresc.
f
214
p
p
p
3
sul D
o
p
mf

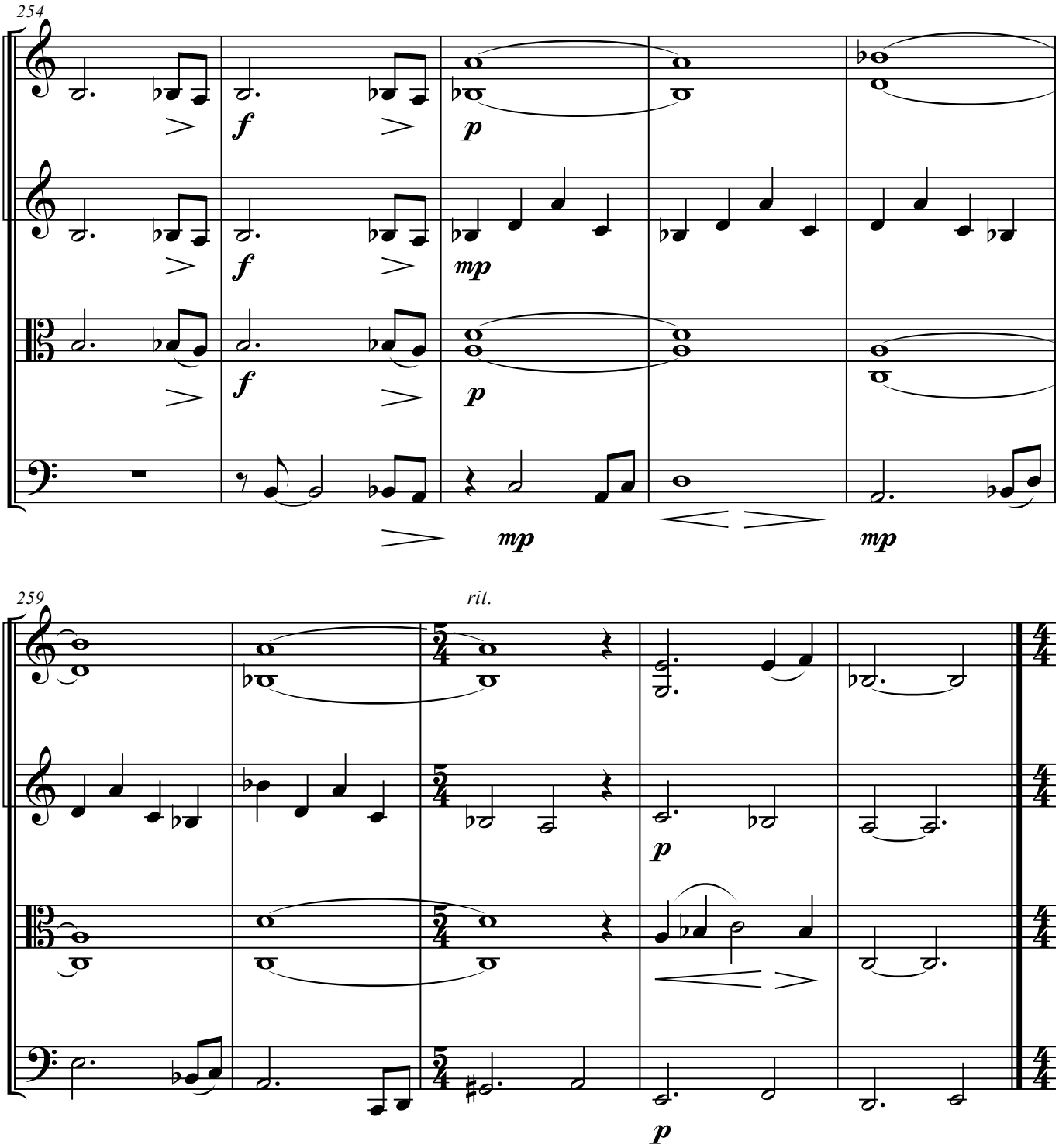

221
f
p
p

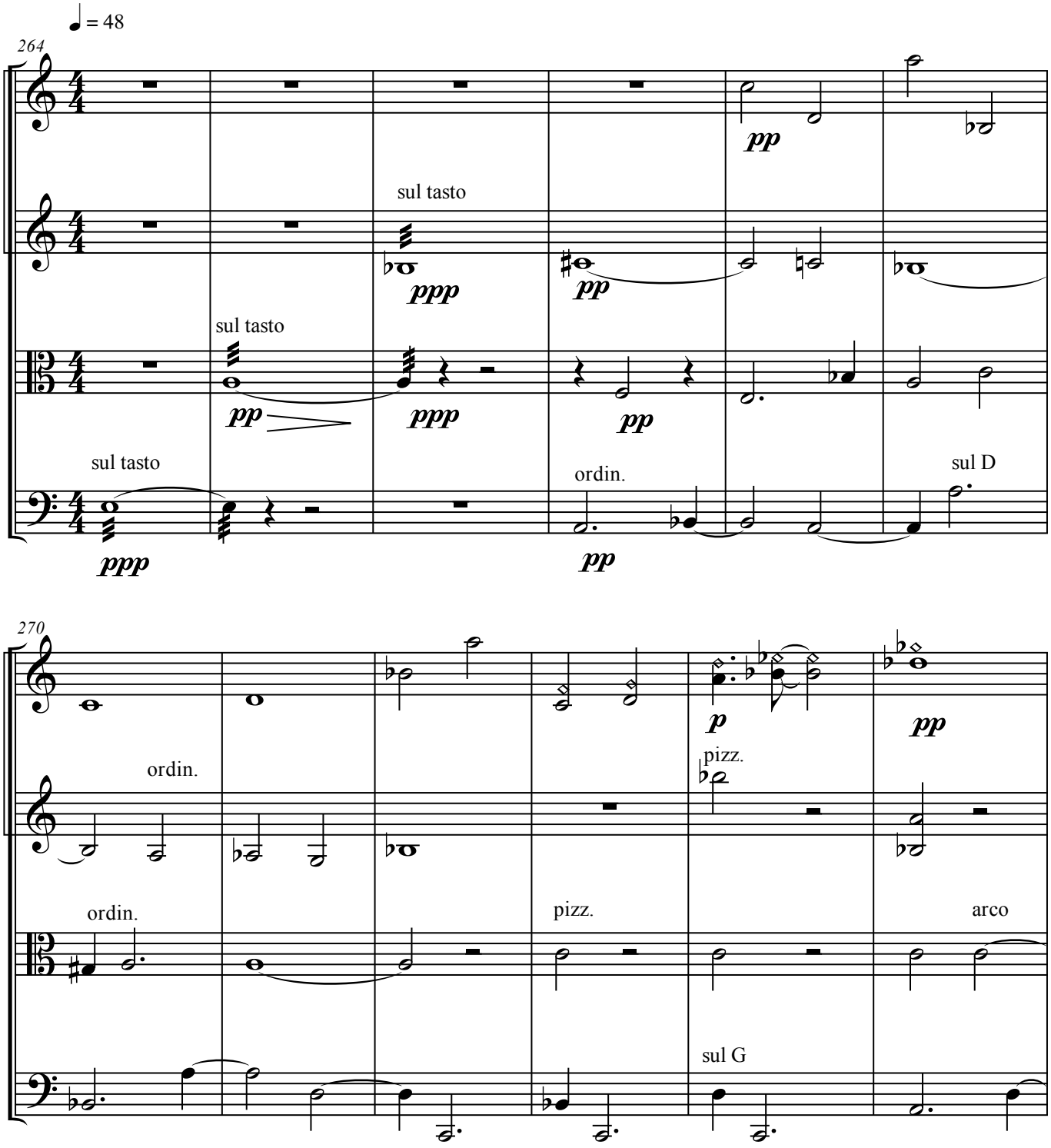

226
p
cresc.
f

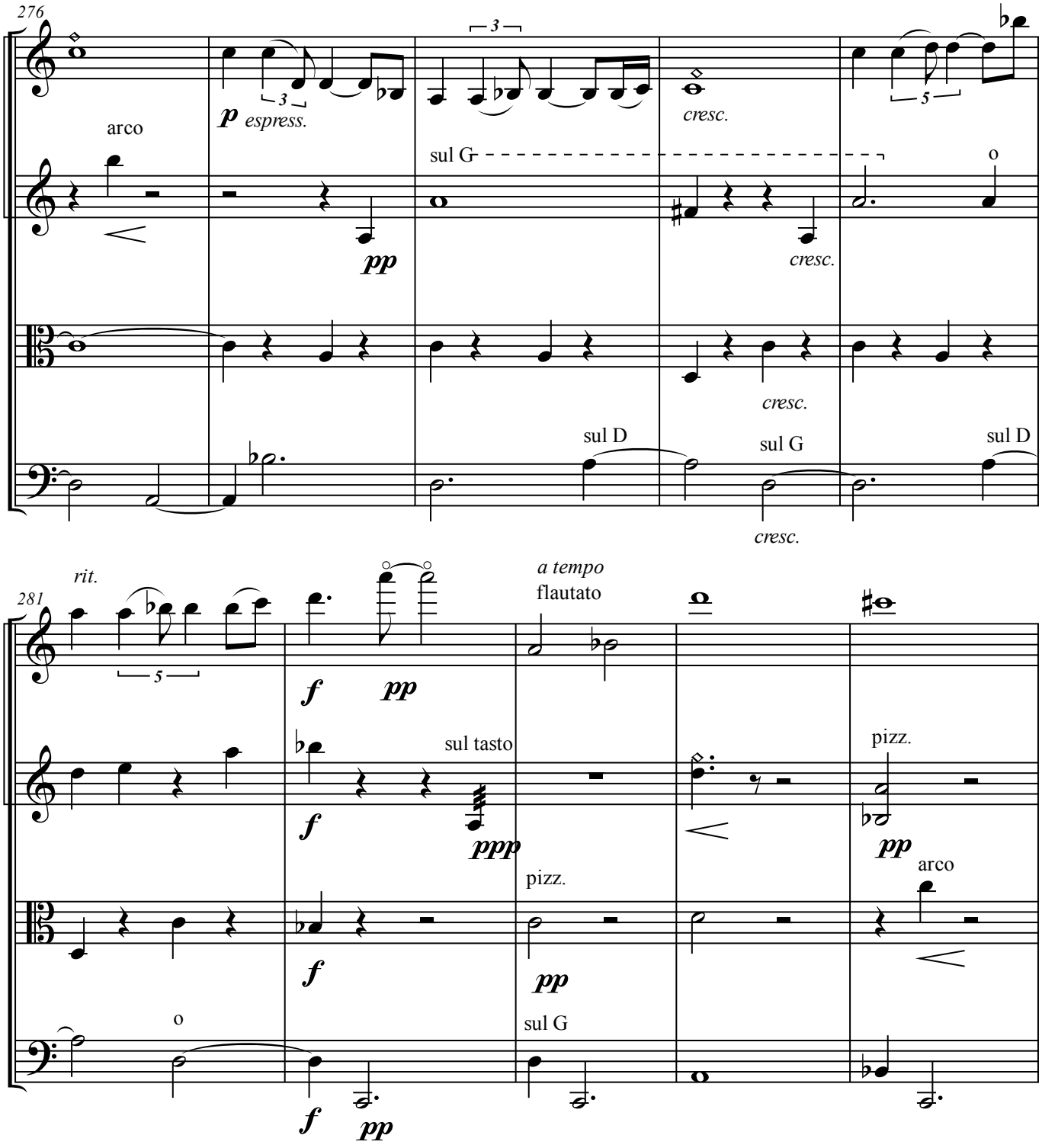

229
sul pont.
mf
232
p
p

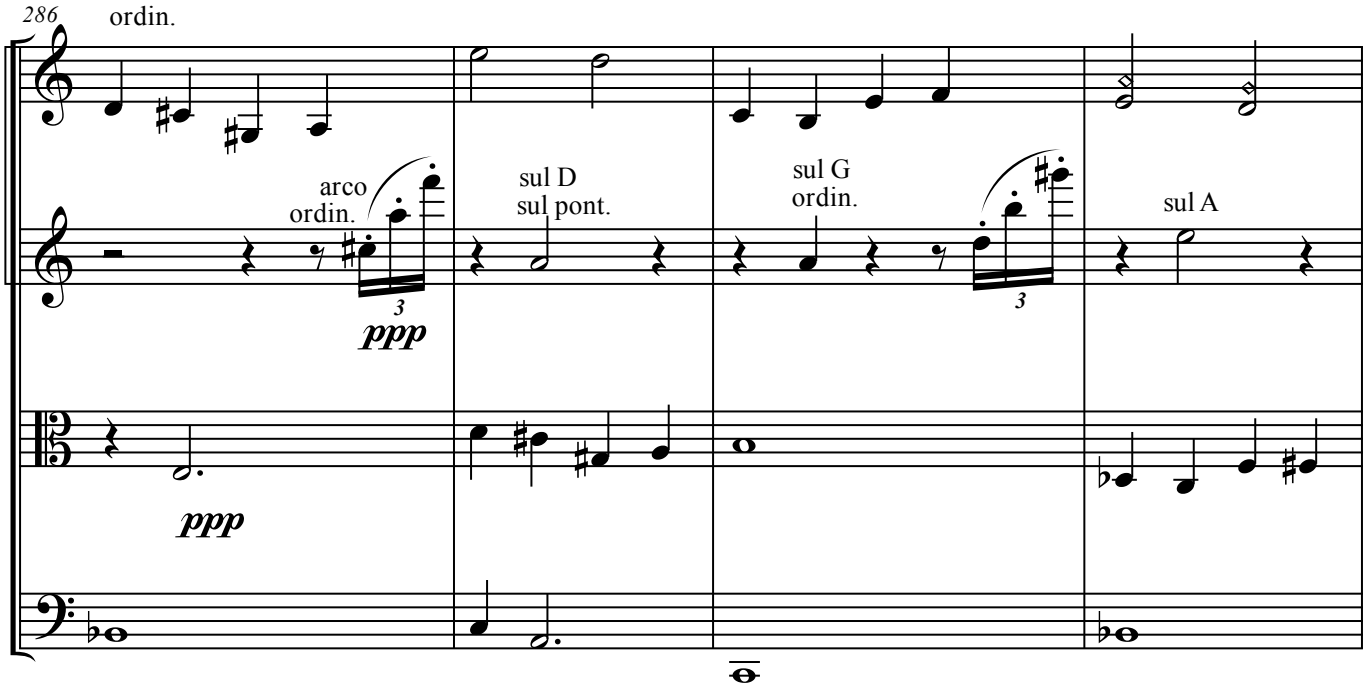

235
sul pont.
col legno tratt.
p
p
240
cresc.
mp
cresc.

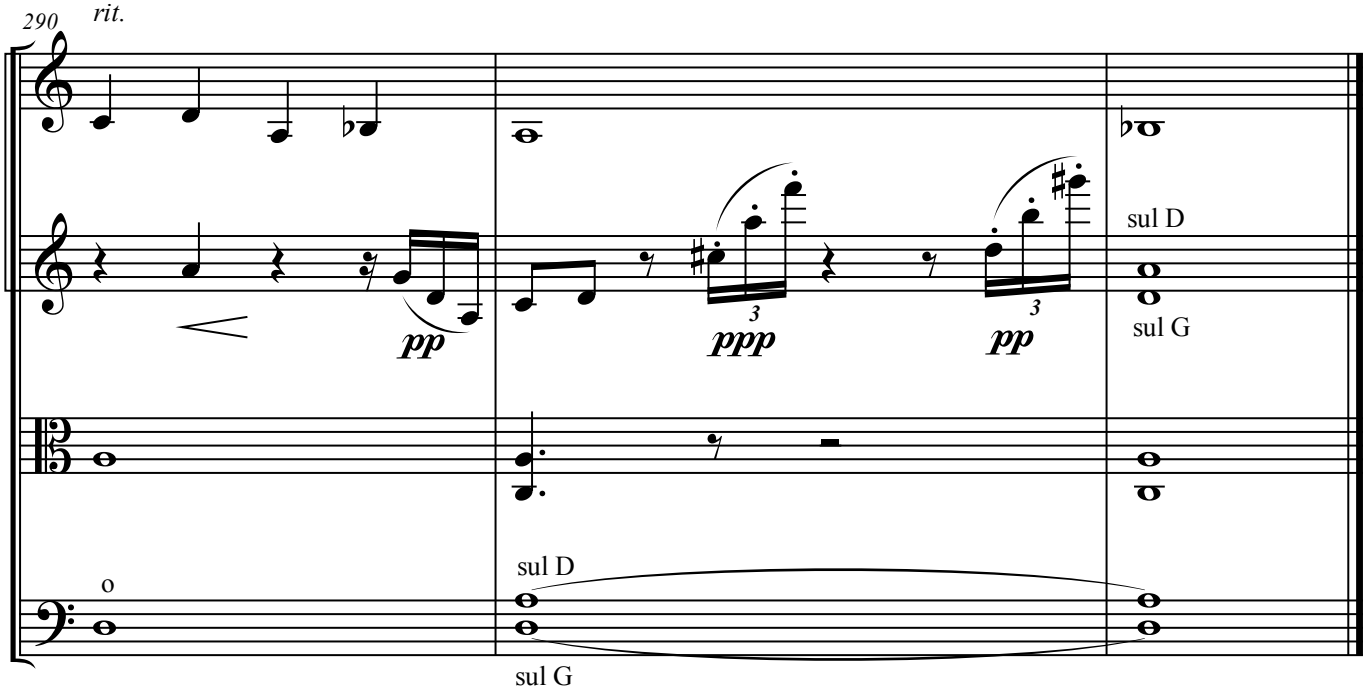

247
251
f
f
f


254
f
p
mp
rit.
259


♩ = 48
264
sul tasto
sul tasto
sul tasto
ordin.
sul D
270
ordin.
ordin.
pizz.
arco
sul G


276
arco
p espress.
pp
sul G
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
sul D
sul G
sul D
281
rit.
a tempo
flautato
f
pp
sul tasto
ppp
pizz.
arco
o
sul G


286
ordin.
arco
ordin.
ppp
sul D
sul pont.
ppp
sul G
ordin.
sul A


290
rit.
pp
ppp
pp
sul D
sul G
o
sul D
sul G