Pulsation

for Piano Quartet

2010-11

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The title *Pulsation* is a literal description of what happens in this single-movement work for piano quartet, but it also alludes to a famous passage from William Blake:

> For in this Period the Poets work is done: and all the Great
> Events of Time start forth & are conceivd in such a Period
> Within a Moment: a Pulsation of the Artery.
>
> (*Milton*, 29: 1-3)

The basis of the music is virtually unbroken eighth-note pulsation in the strings at the heartbeat tempo of quarter note = 72; departures from the pulsating texture are highly marked. The piano plays both with and against this pattern, which it continually varies and transforms and ultimately draws into a state in which time slows and even, for a moment, seems to stop. A further layer of pulsation is added by the repetition of whole segments at irregular intervals throughout. The string tessitura is deliberately restricted, the upper strings in particular being kept largely away from their higher registers. The aim is to create a complex, acoustically rich musical space in which listeners, led by the piano (which in a sense speaks for their listening as a form of imagination), can become wholly absorbed and perhaps catch an echo of the fundamental pulsebeat in which Blake located the origin of creative energy.

Duration: 16 minutes.

Pulsation

♩ = 72 (no slower!)

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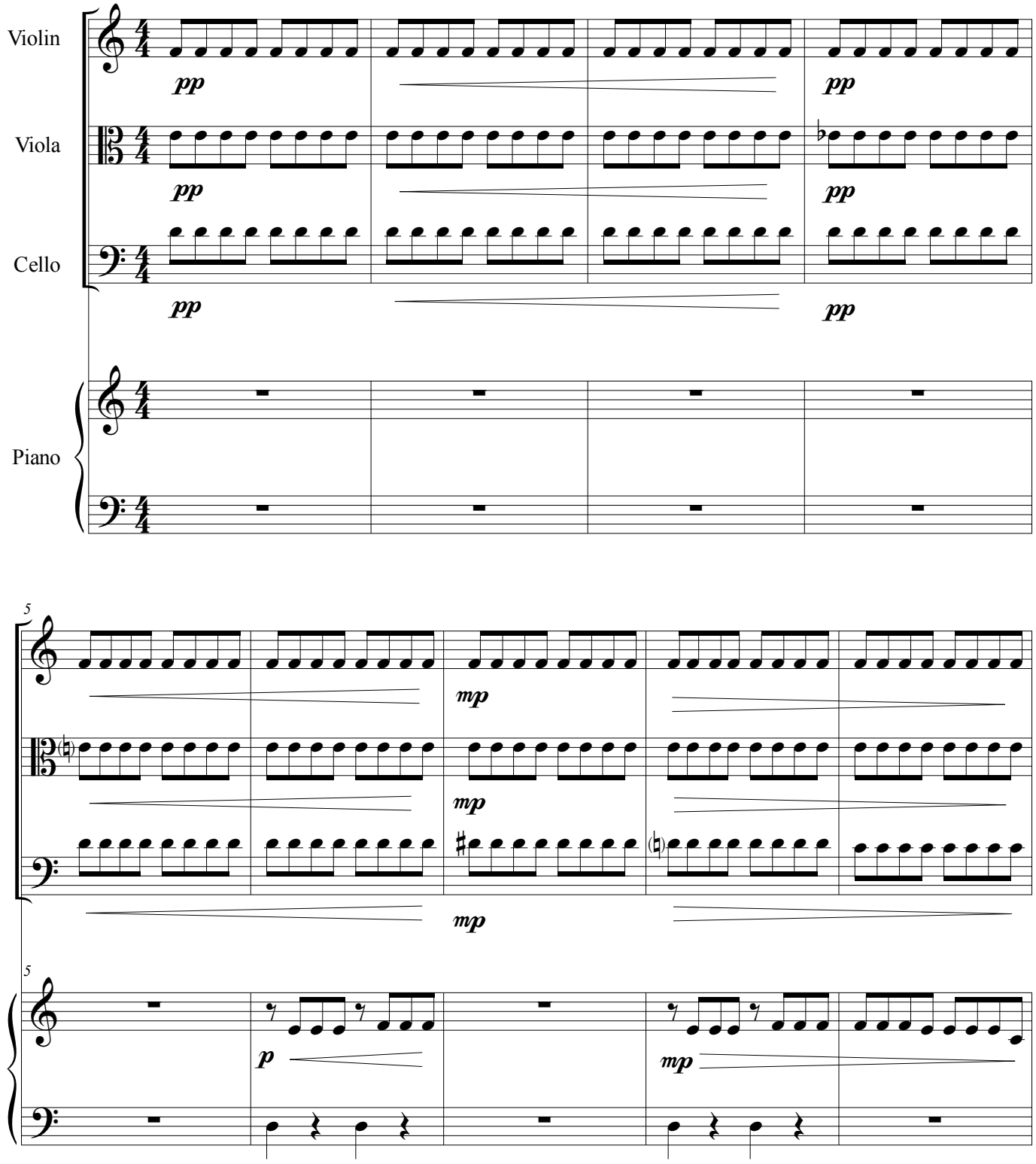

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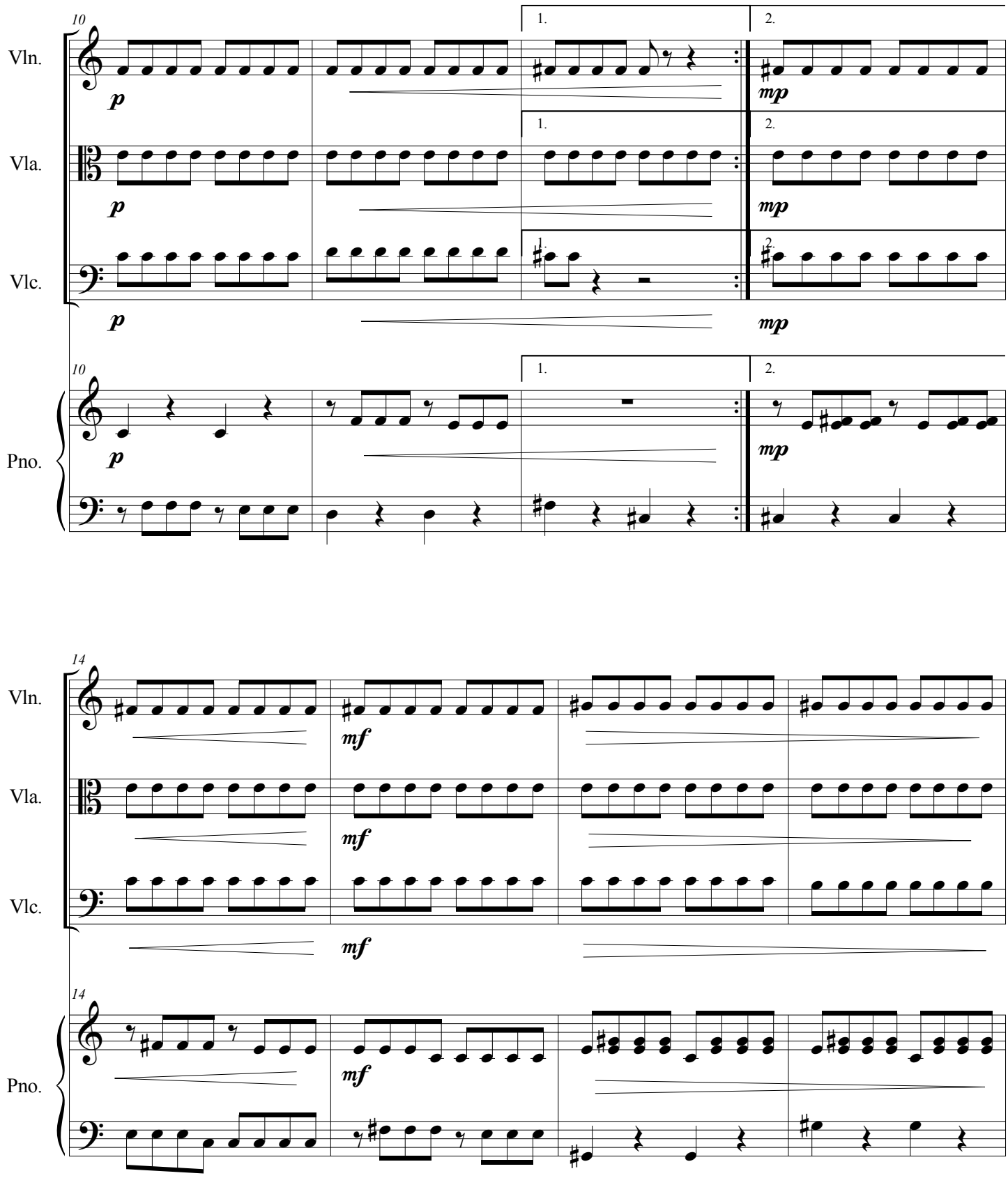
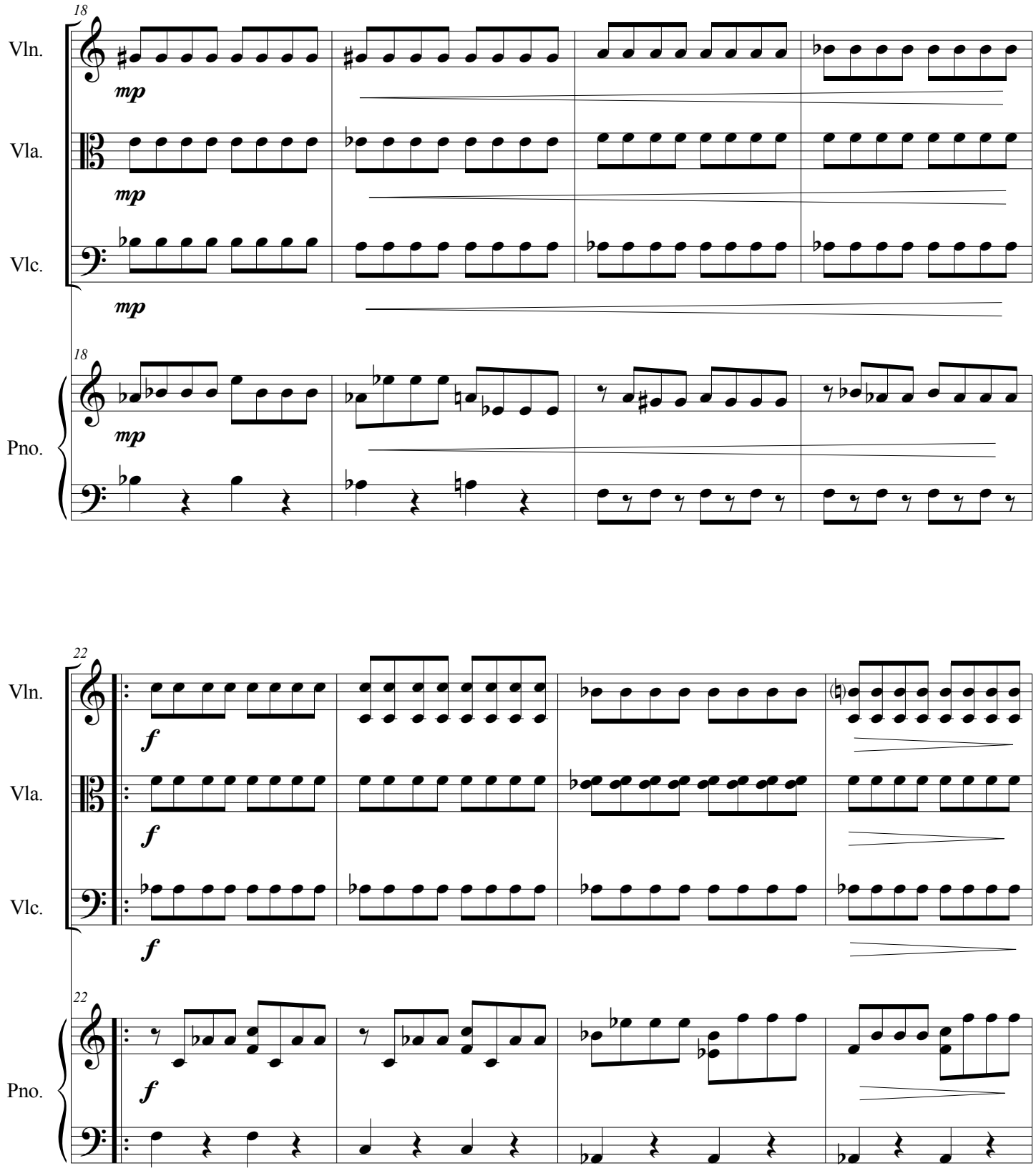
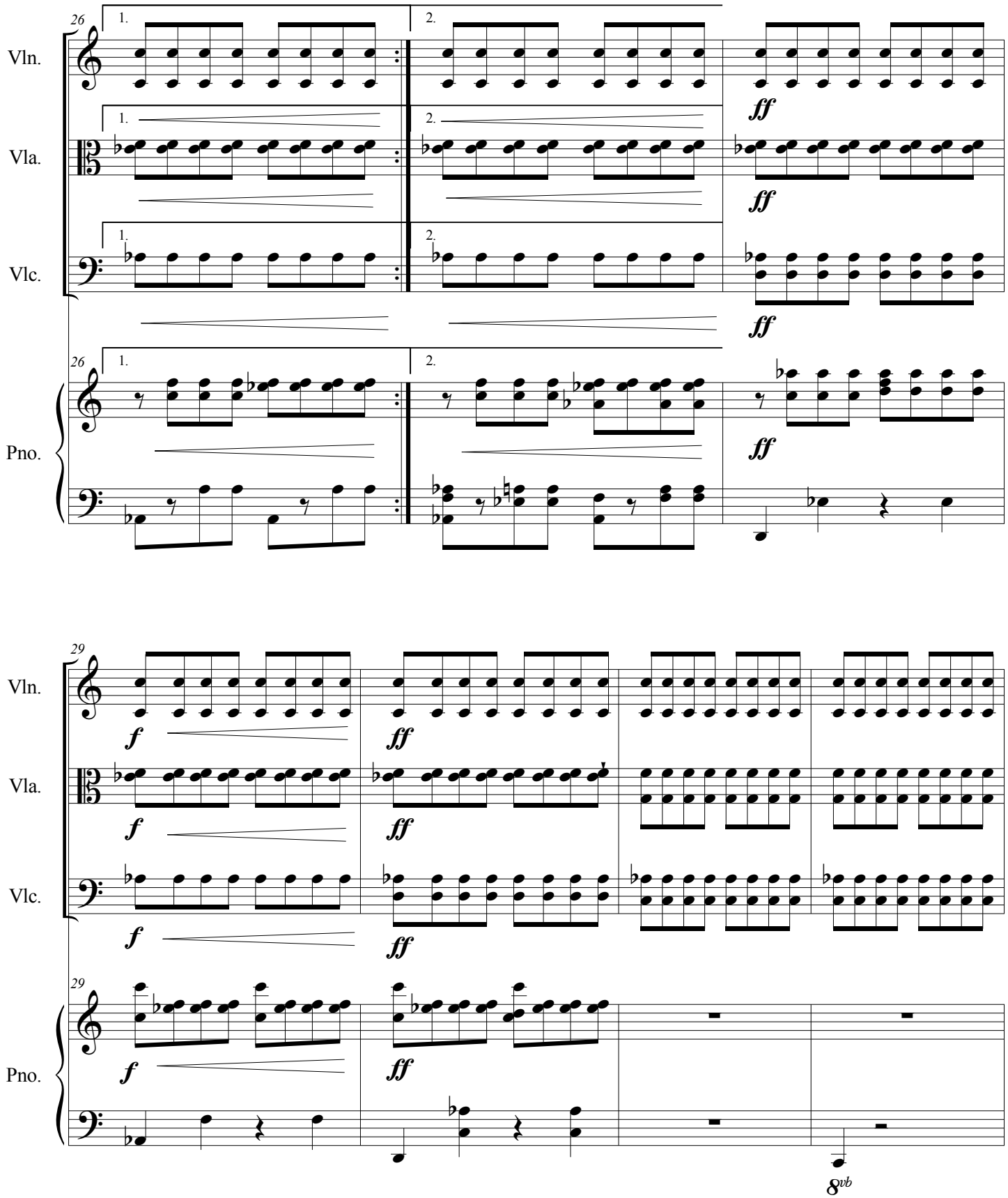
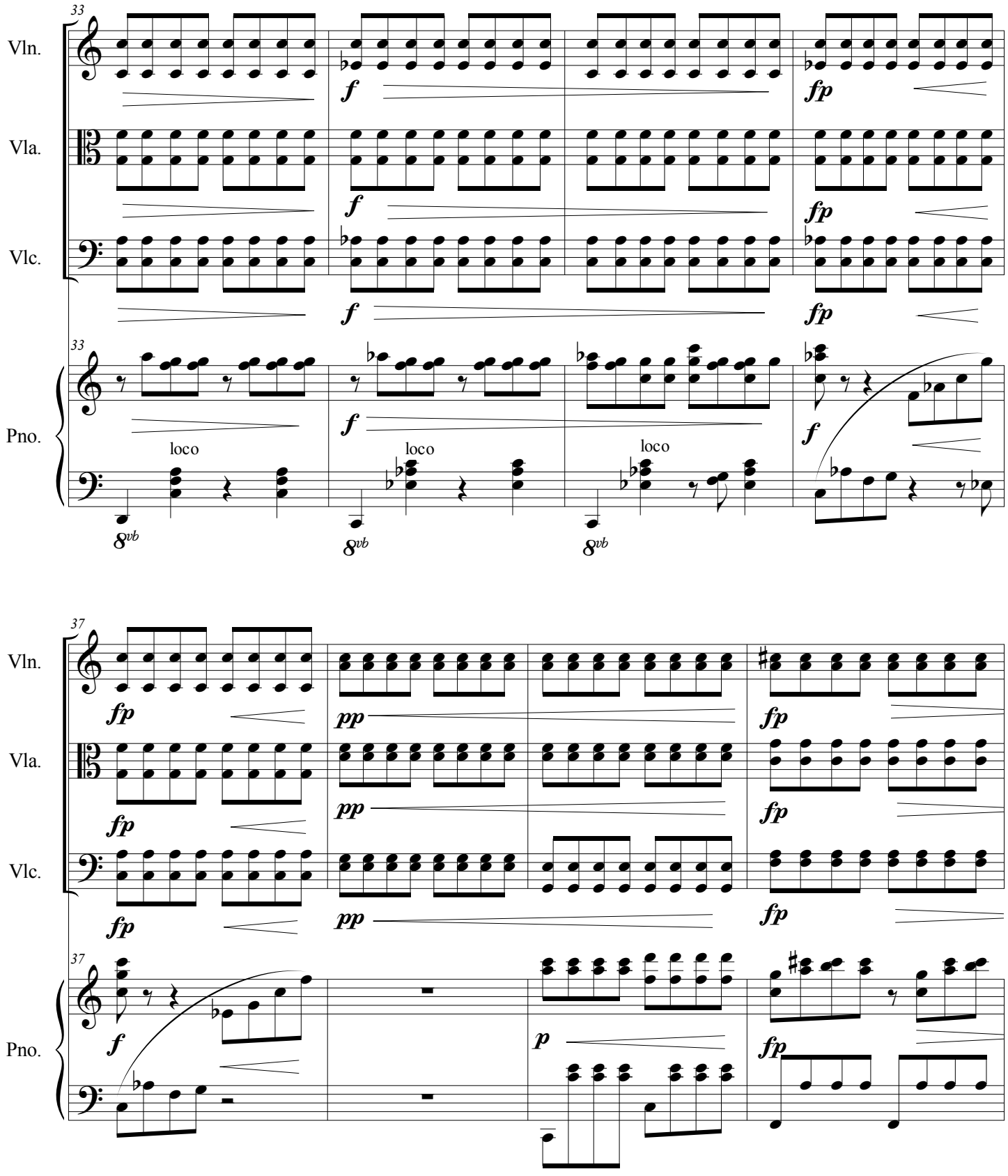
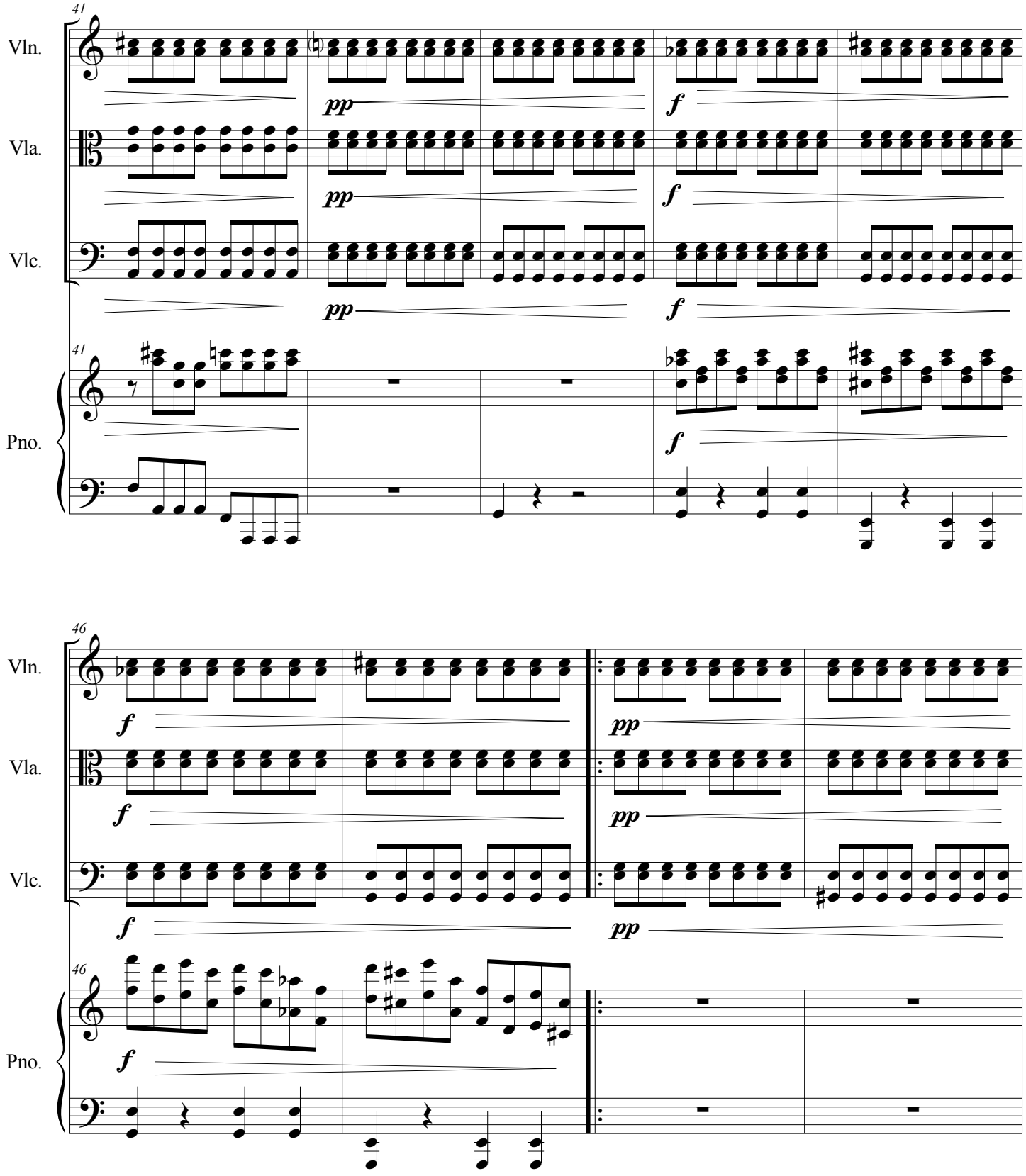
Pulsation

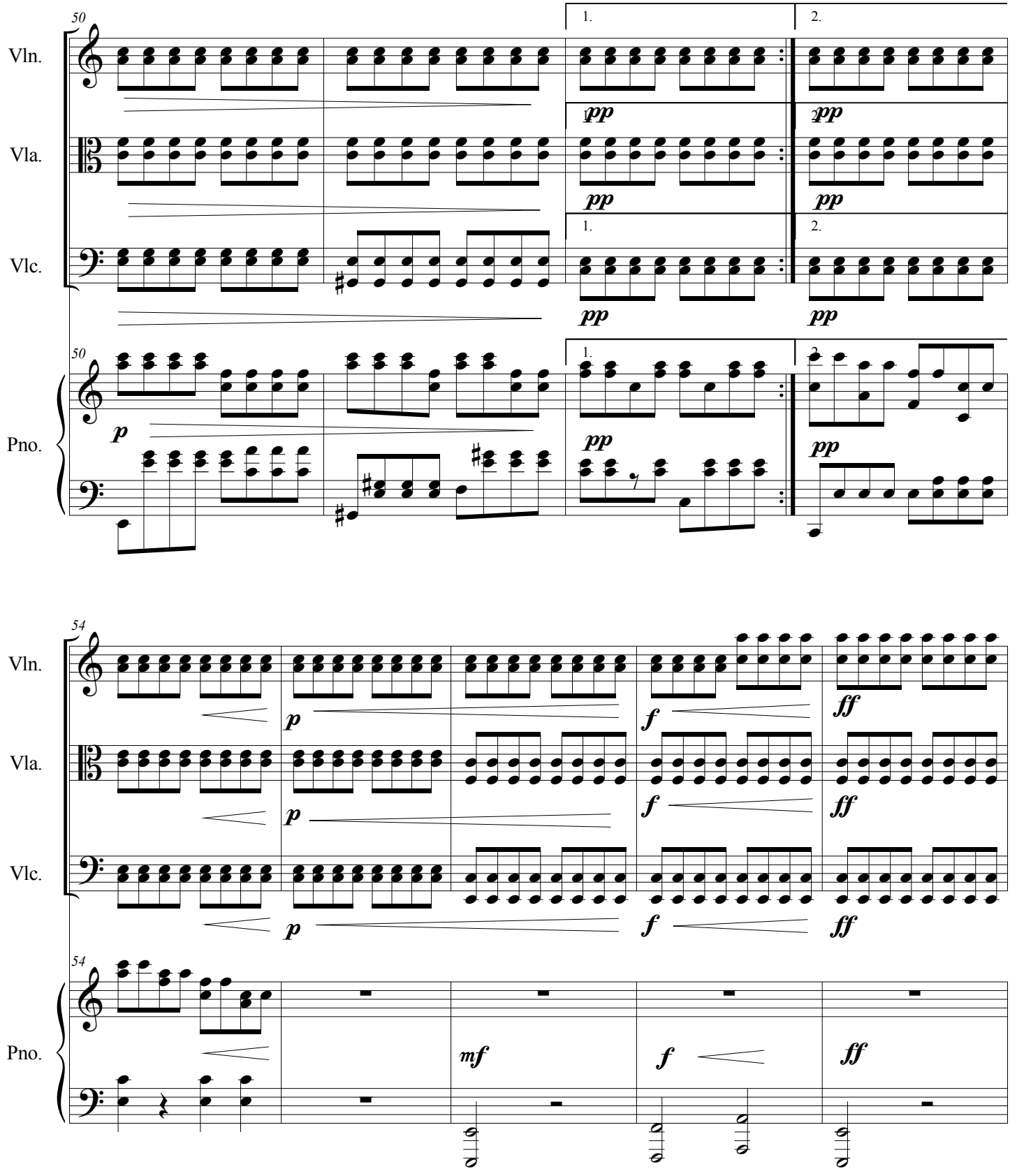


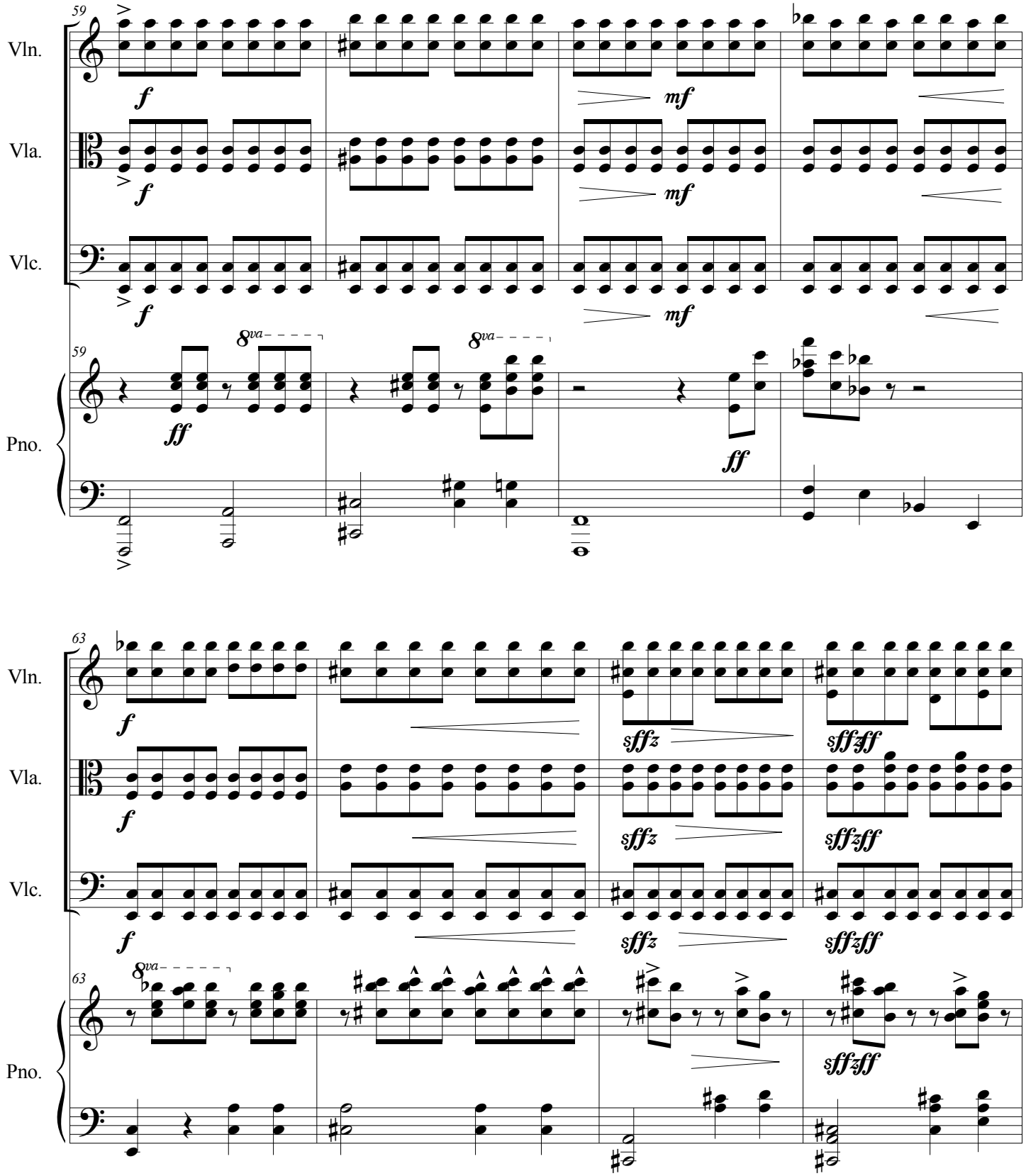

18
Vln.
mp
Vla.
mp
Vlc.
mp
18
Pno.
mp
22
Vln.
f
Vla.
f
Vlc.
f
22
Pno.
f

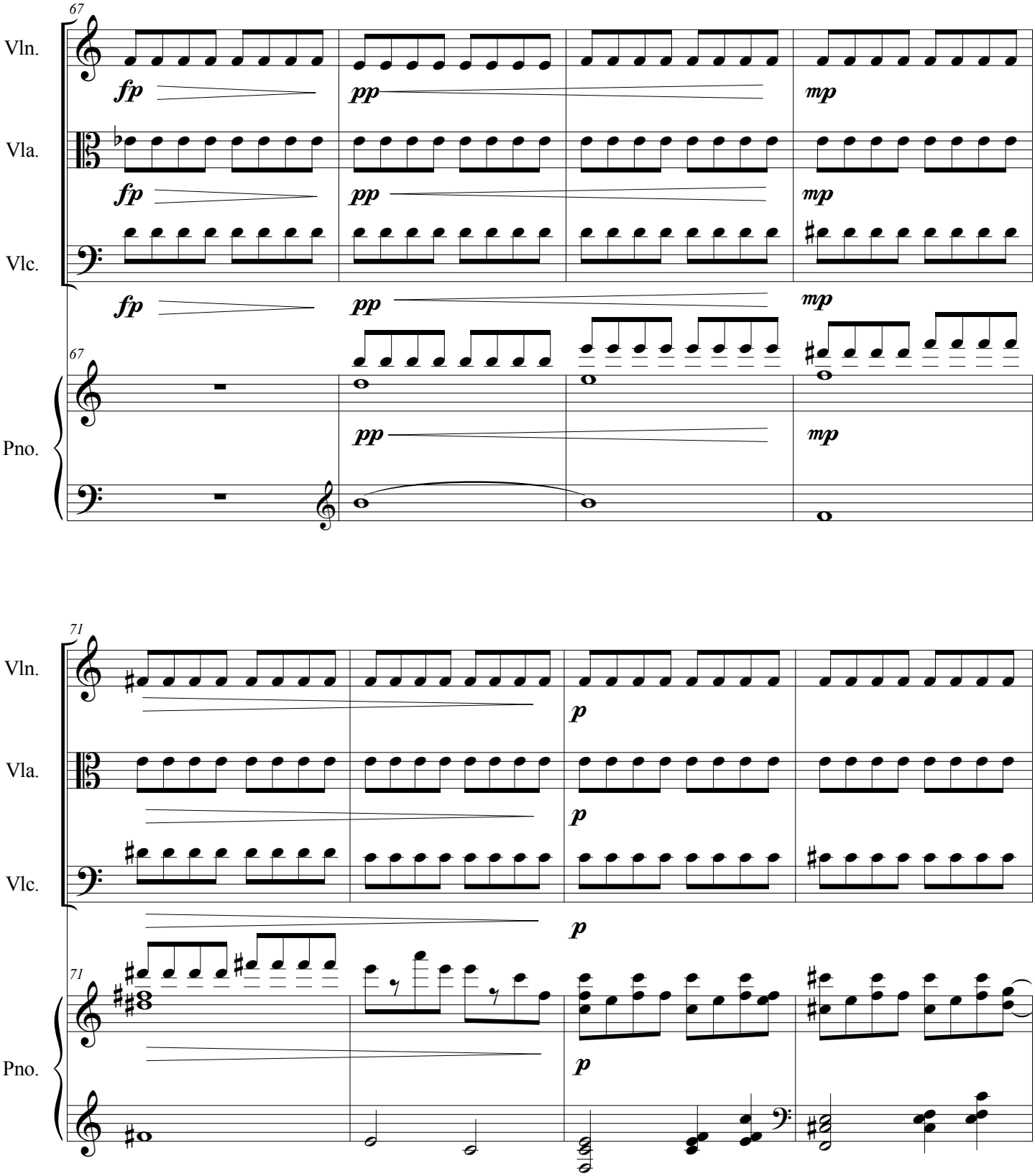

26
1.
2.
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
ff
29
f
ff
8vb

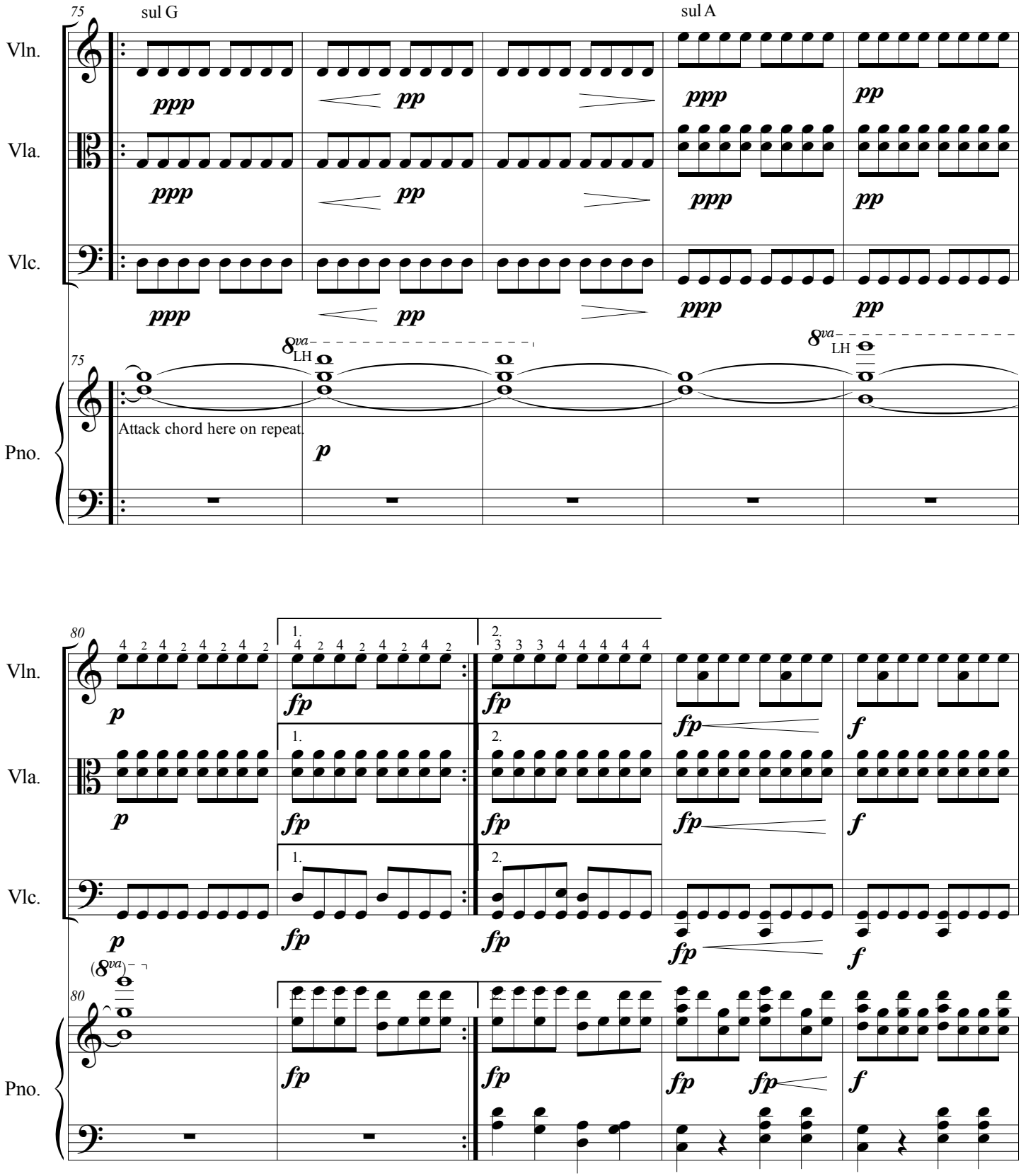

33
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
f
fp
loco
8vb
37
pp
p

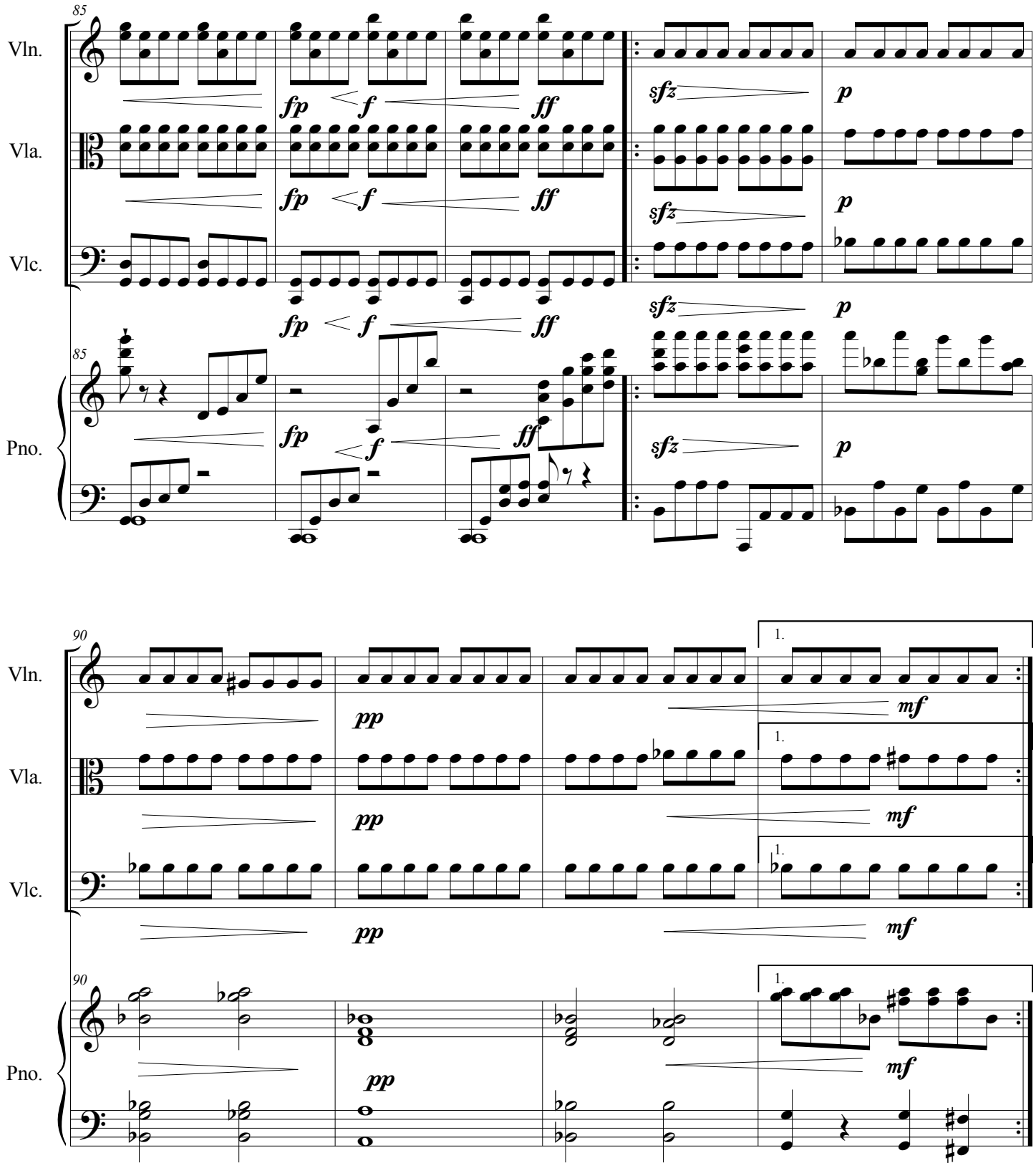

41
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
pp
f
46

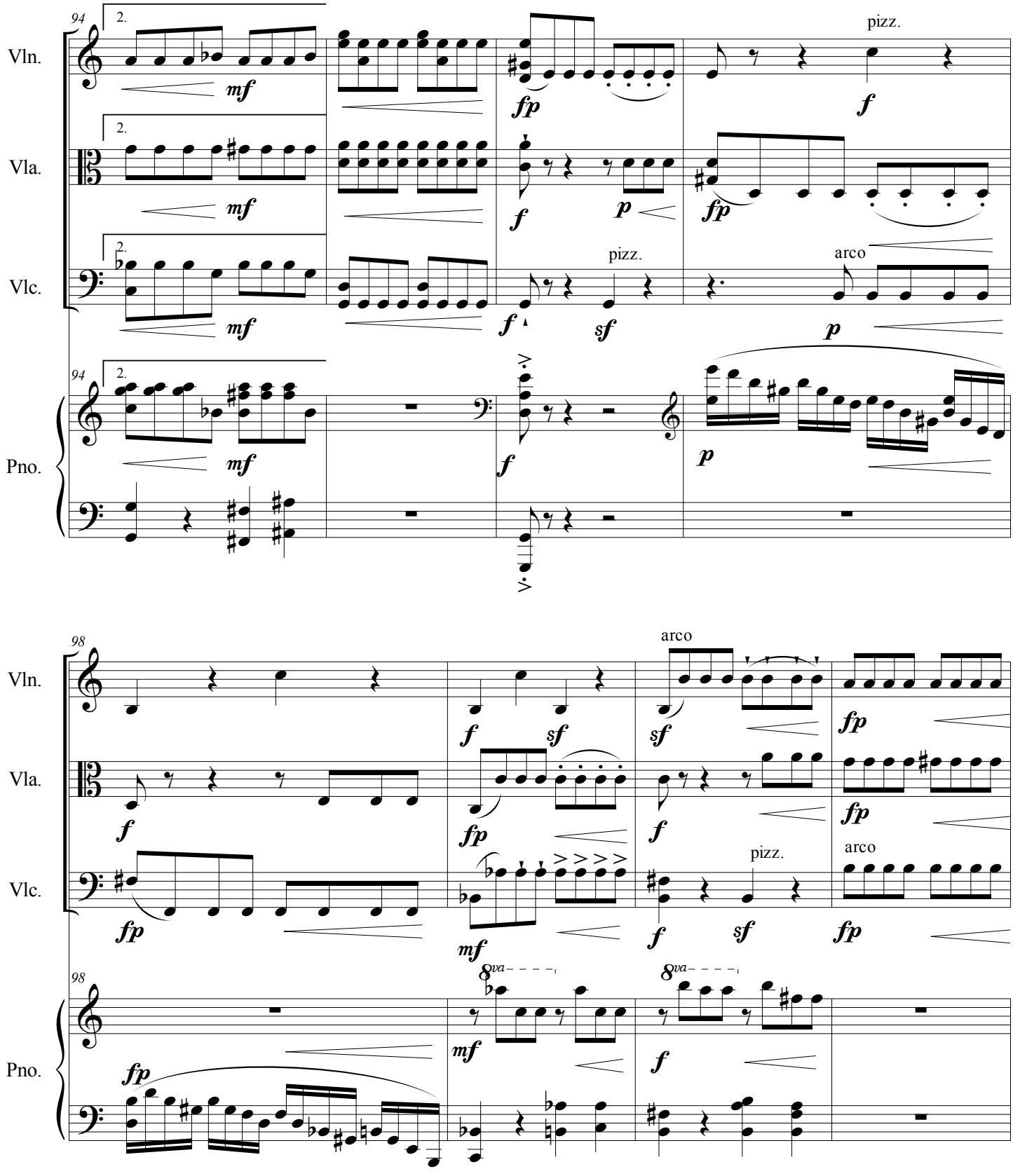

50
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
1.
2.
pp
p
54
f
ff
mf

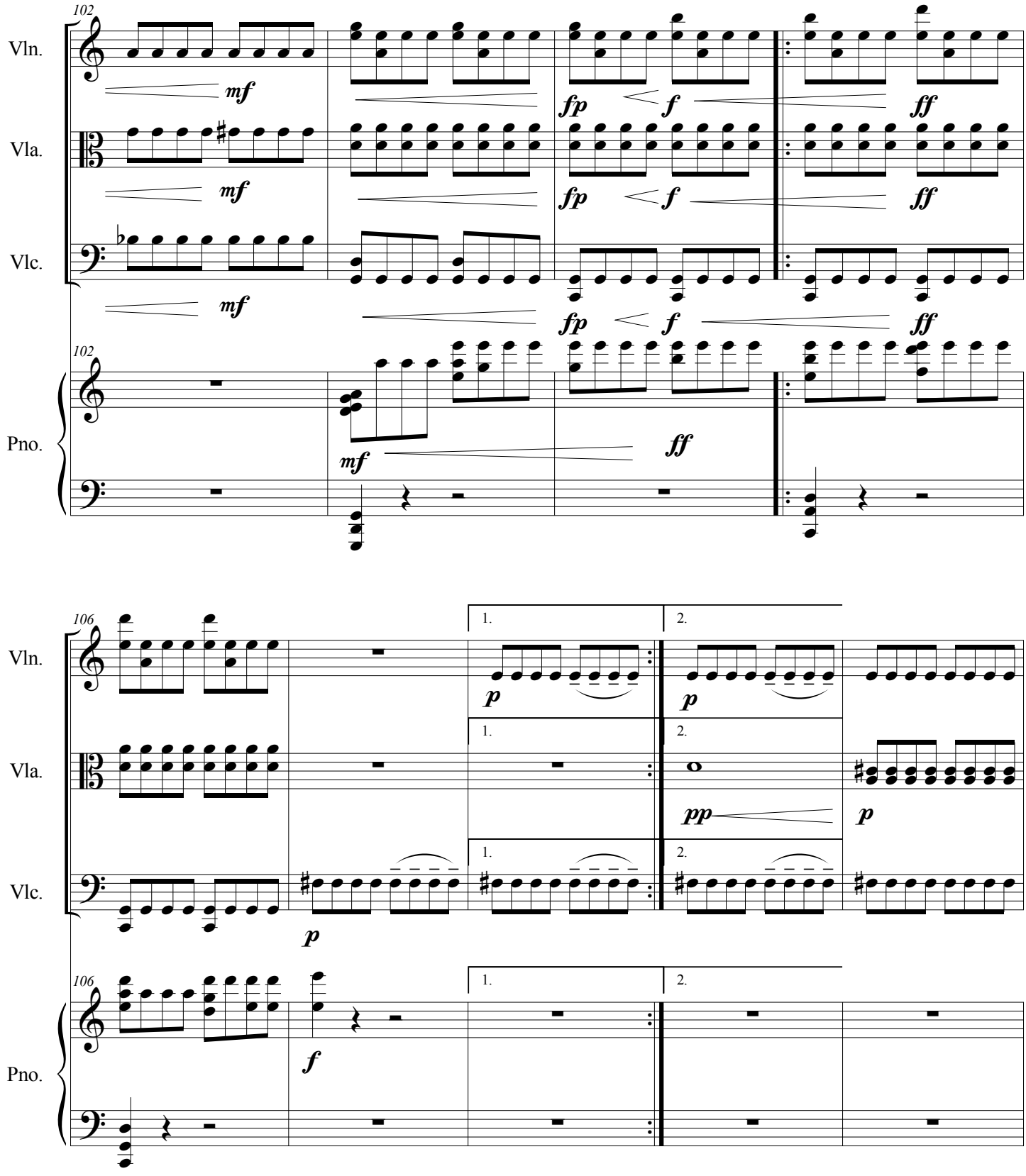

59
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
f
mf
ff
8va
63
sffz
sffzff

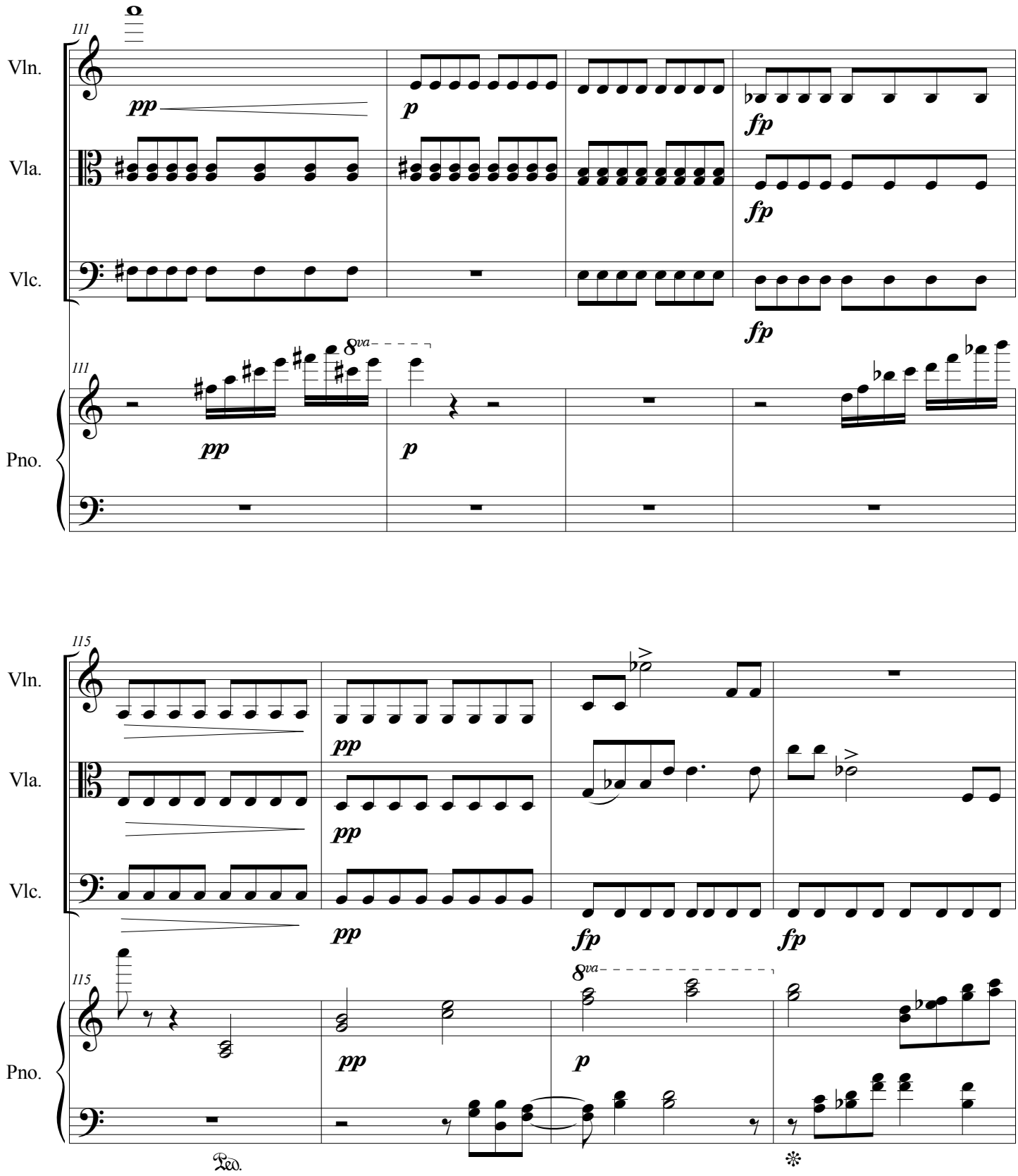

67
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
fp
pp
mp
71
p

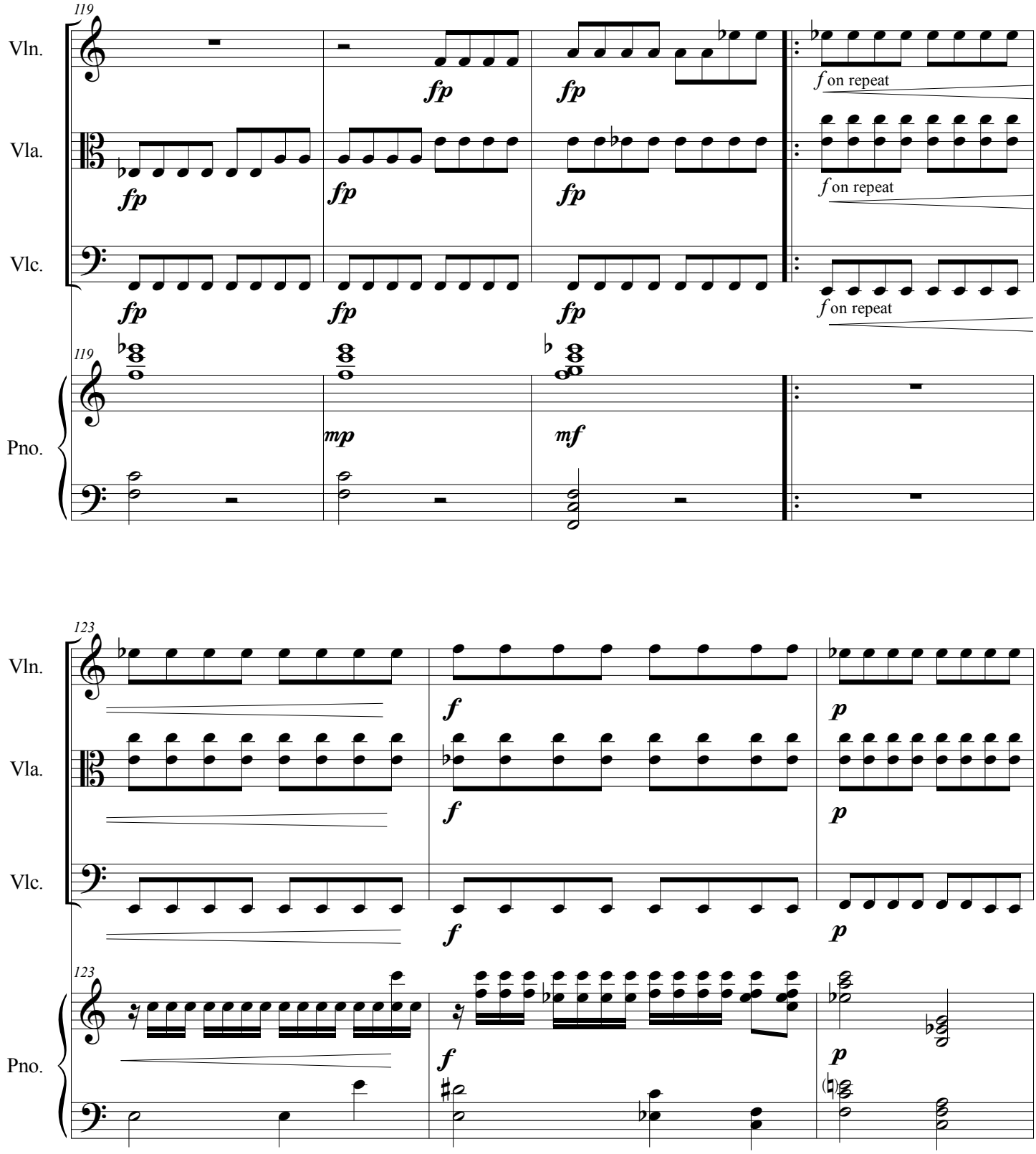

75
sul G
sul A
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
ppp
pp
8va
LH
Pno.
Attack chord here on repeat.
p
80
1.
2.
fp
f
(8va)

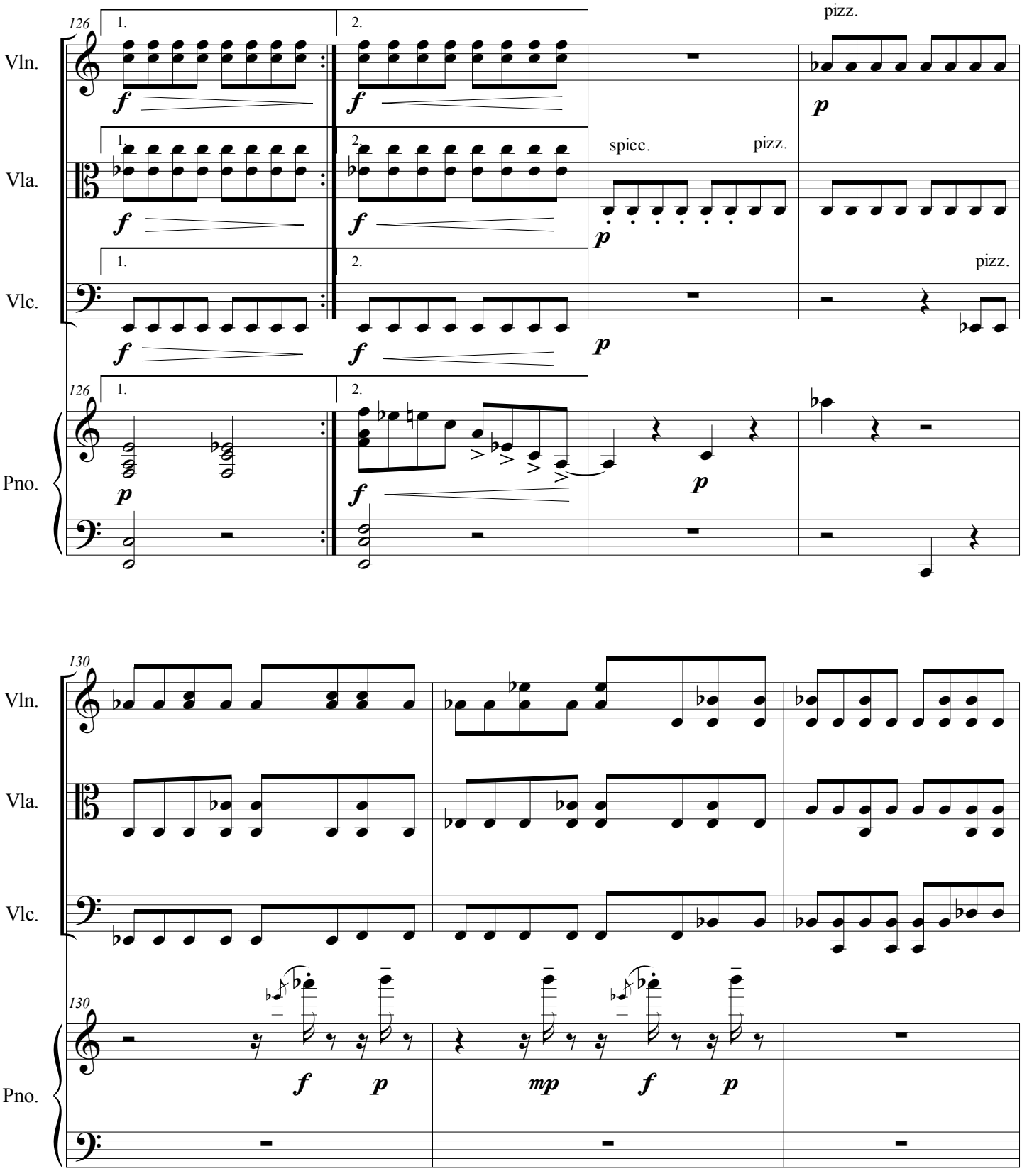

85
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
fp
f
ff
sfz
p
90
1.
pp
mf

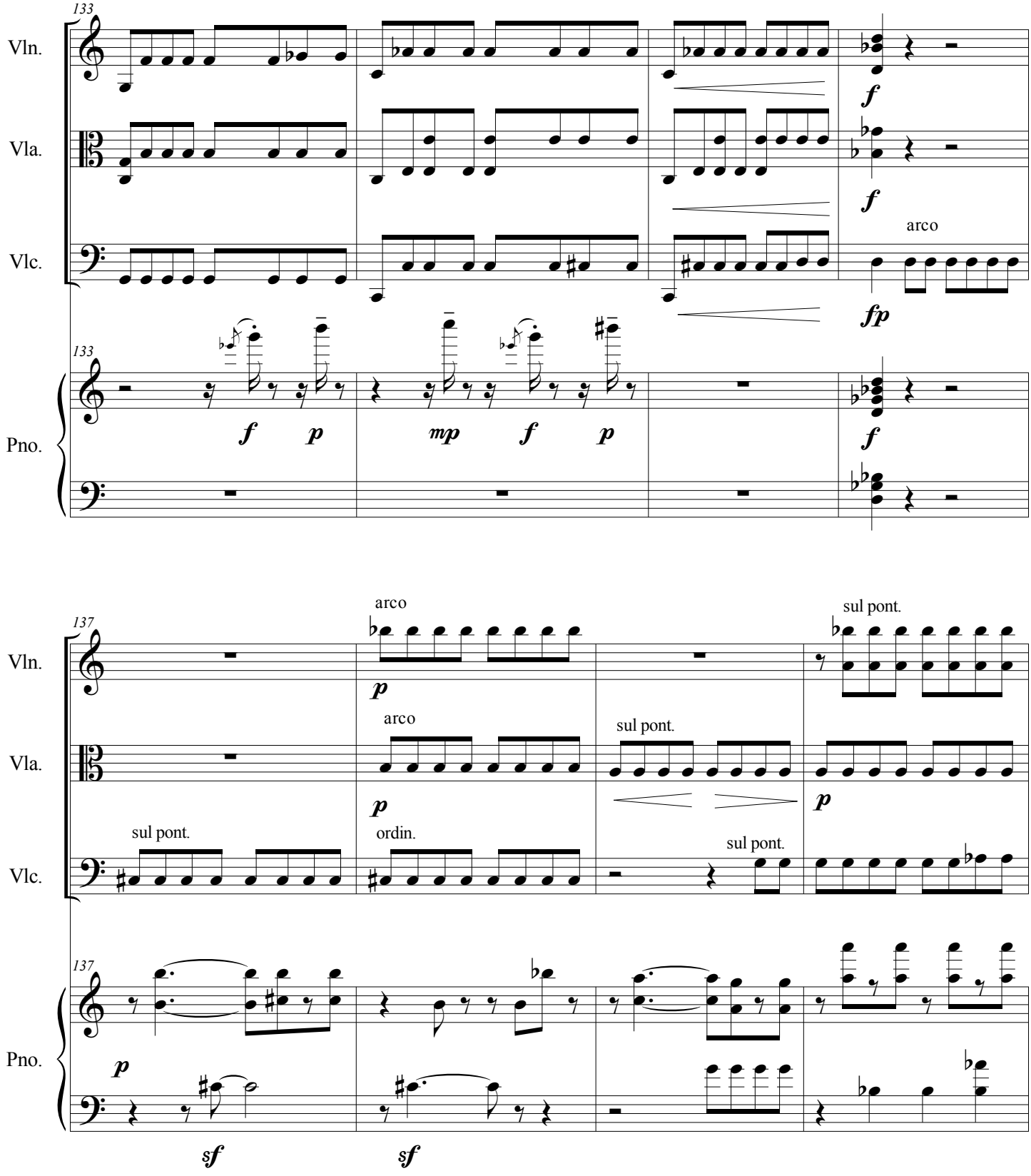

94
2.
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
mf
fp
f
pizz.
p
sf
arco
98
8va
sf

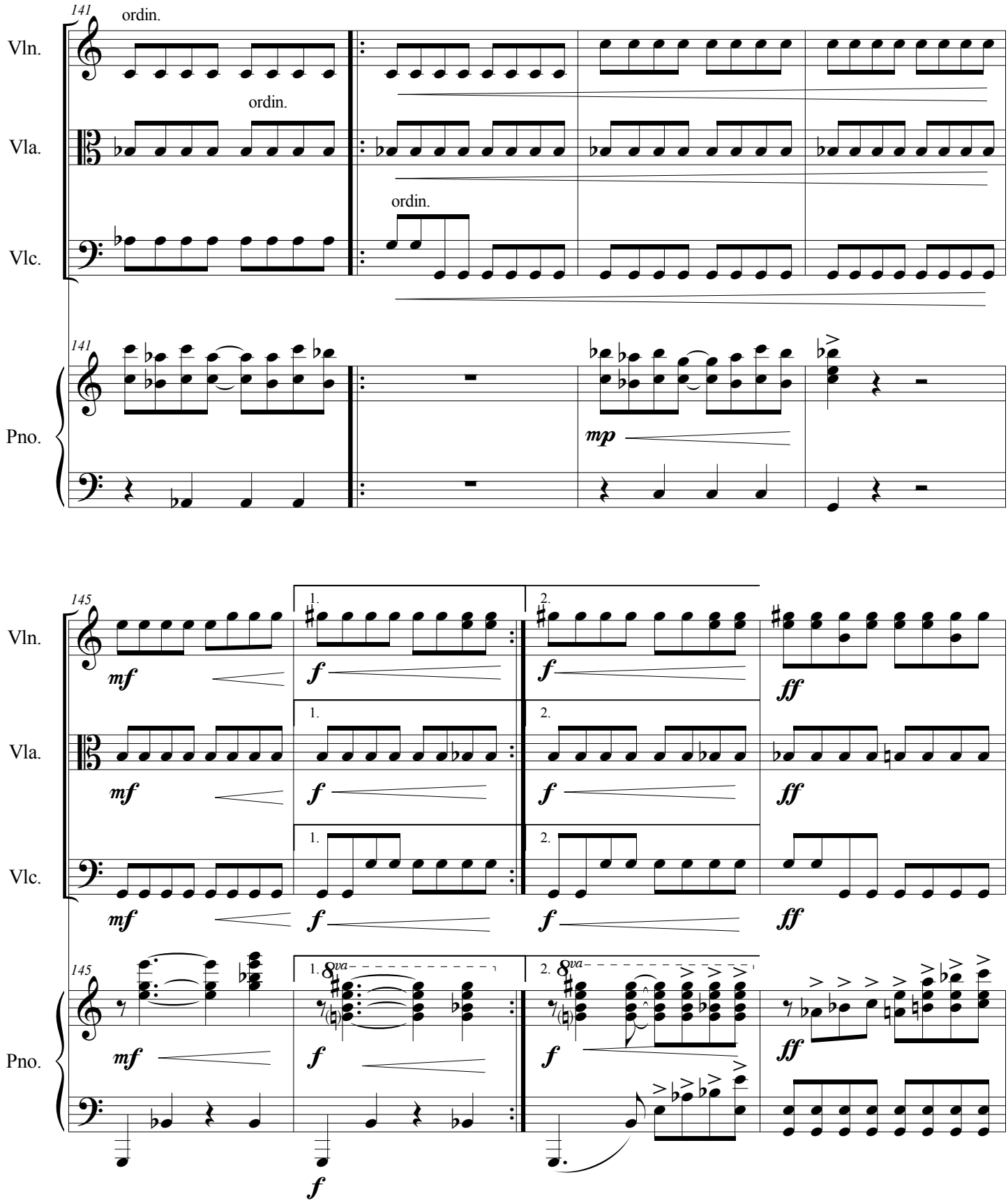

102
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
mf
fp
f
ff
106
1.
2.
p
pp

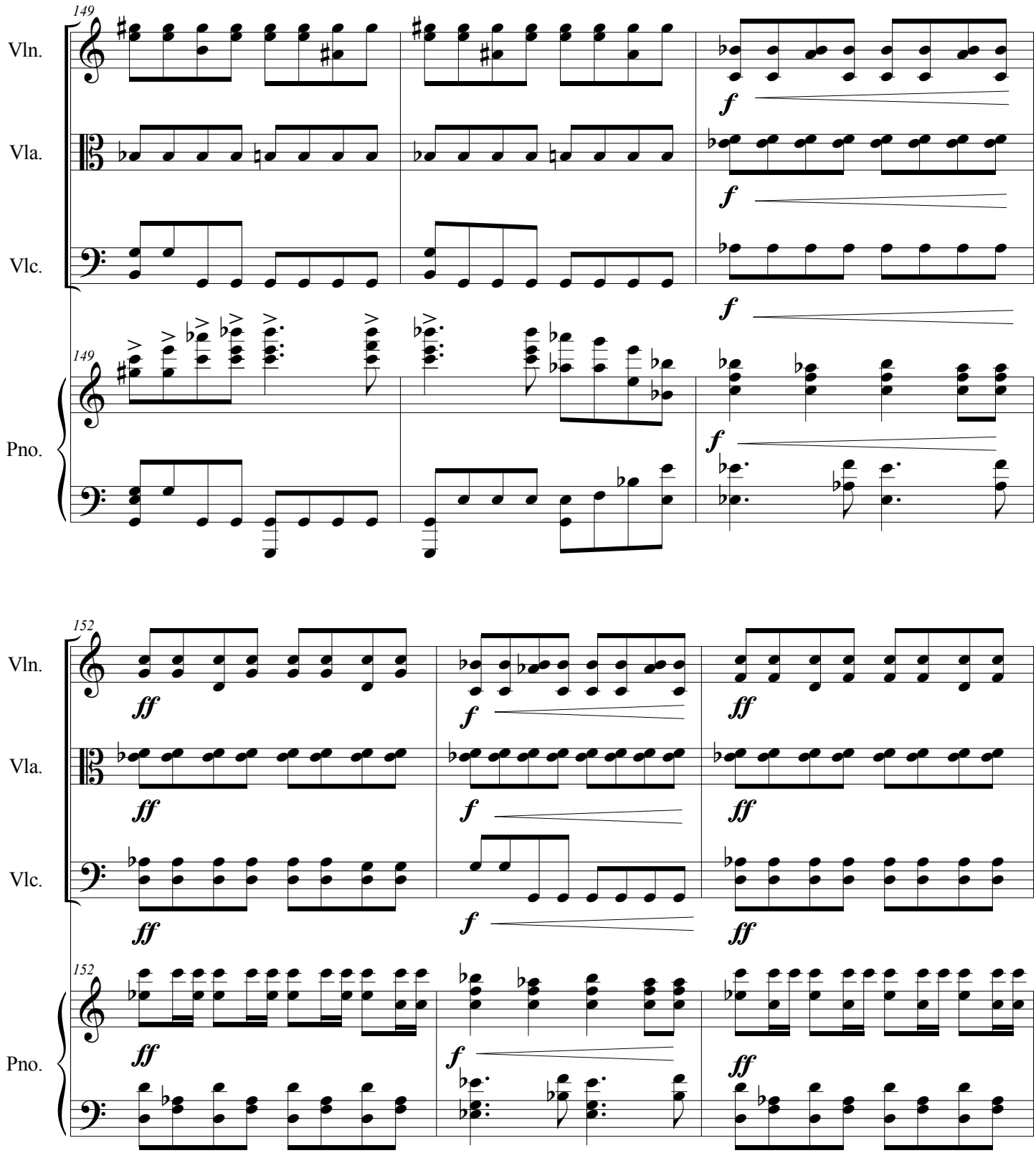

111
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
pp
p
fp
8va
115
Ped.

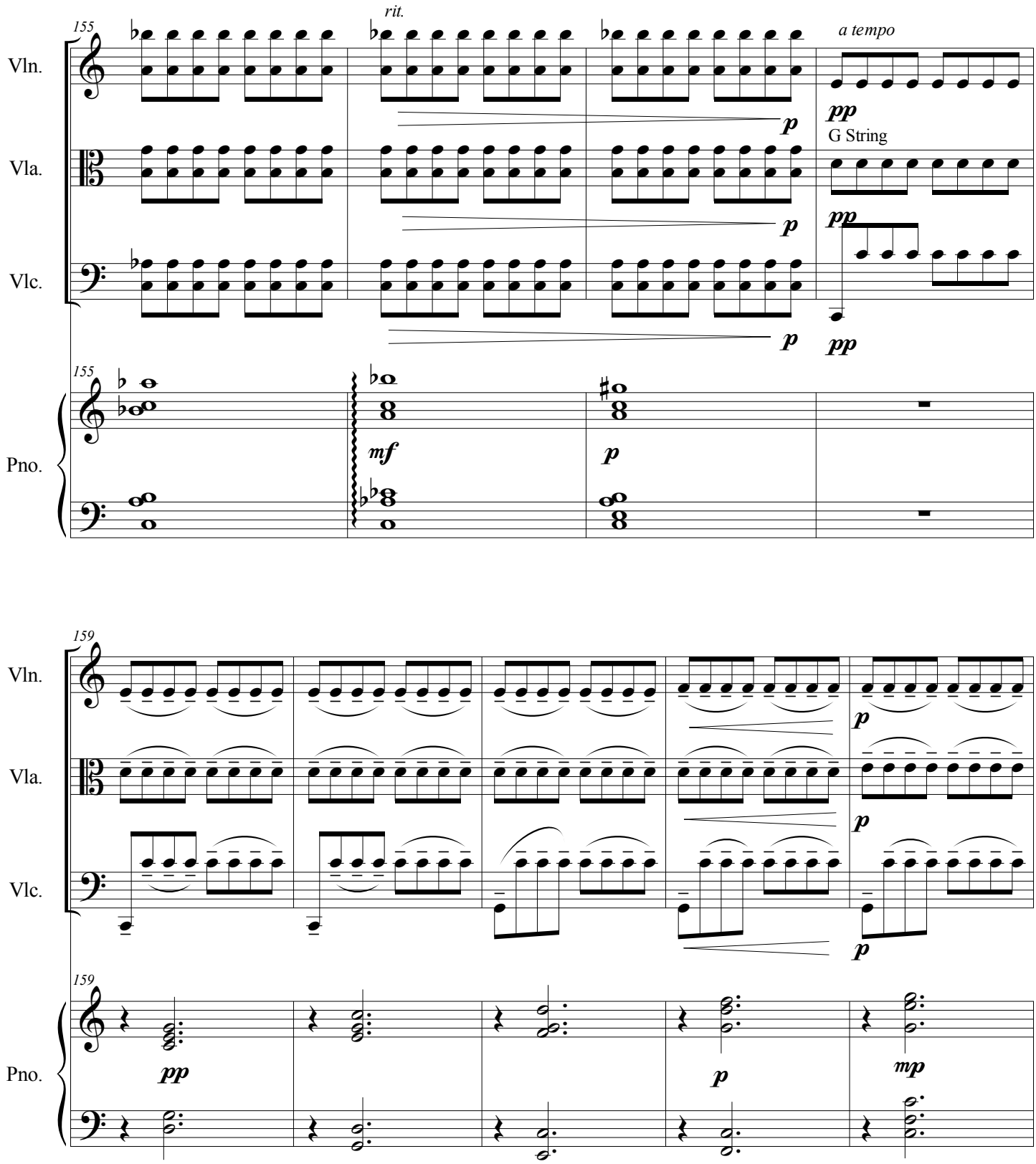

119
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
fp
f on repeat
mp
mf
123
f
p

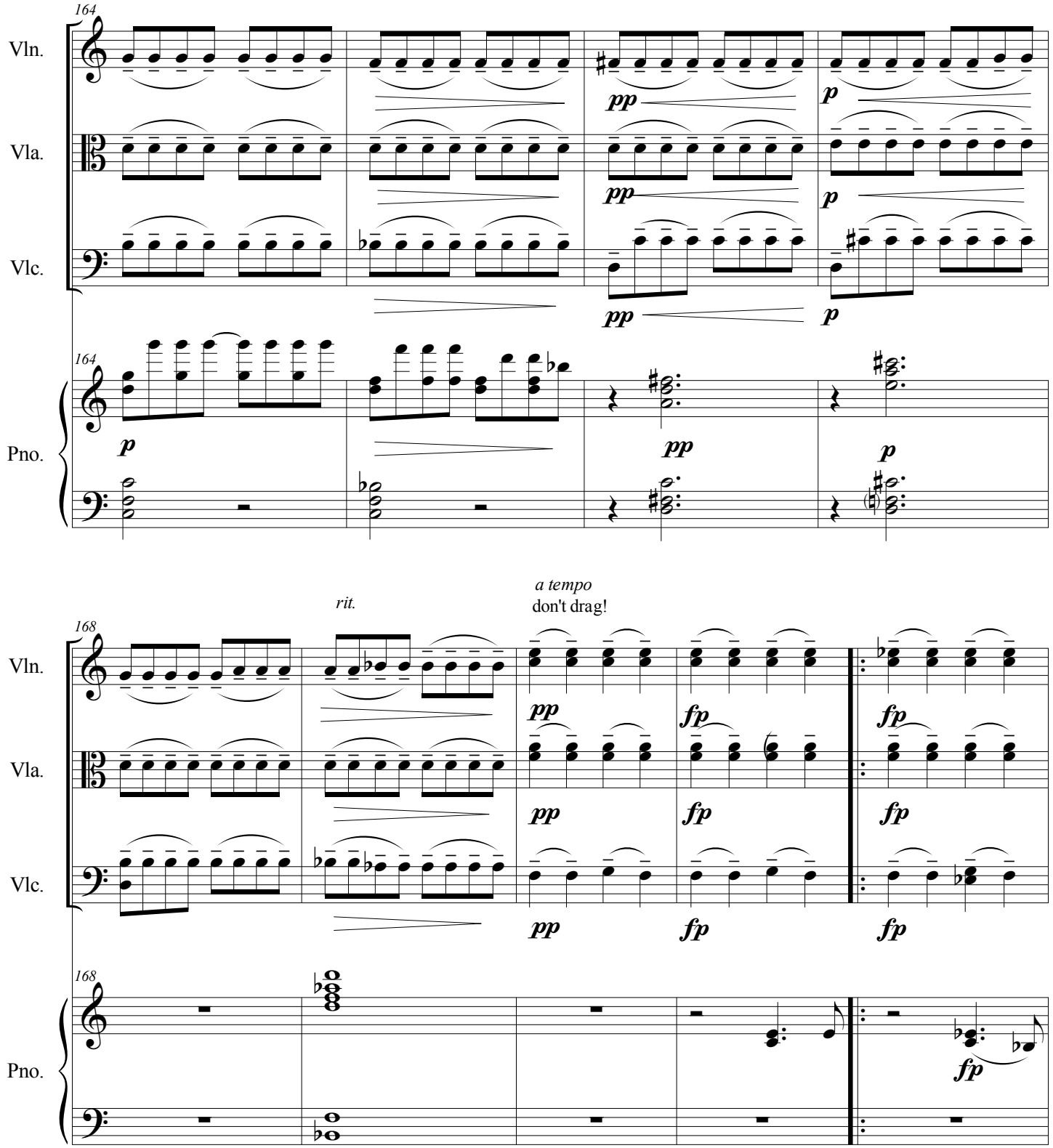

126
1.
2.
pizz.
Vln.
Vla.
spicc.
pizz.
Vlc.
pizz.
Pno.
130
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.

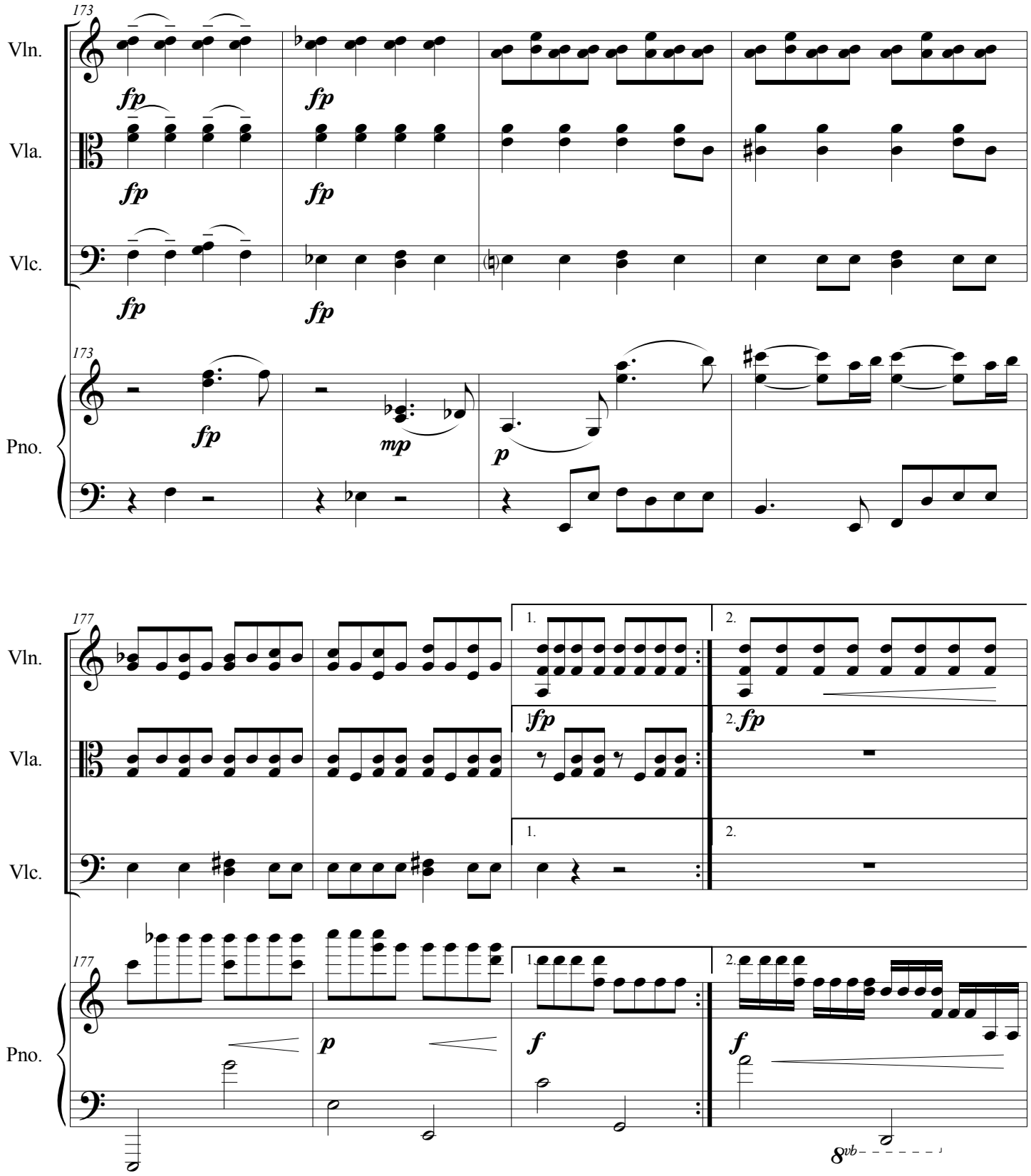

133
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
f
f
arco
fp
f p
mp f p
f
137
arco
sul pont.
p
arco
sul pont.
p
p
sul pont.
ordin.
sul pont.
p
sf
sf

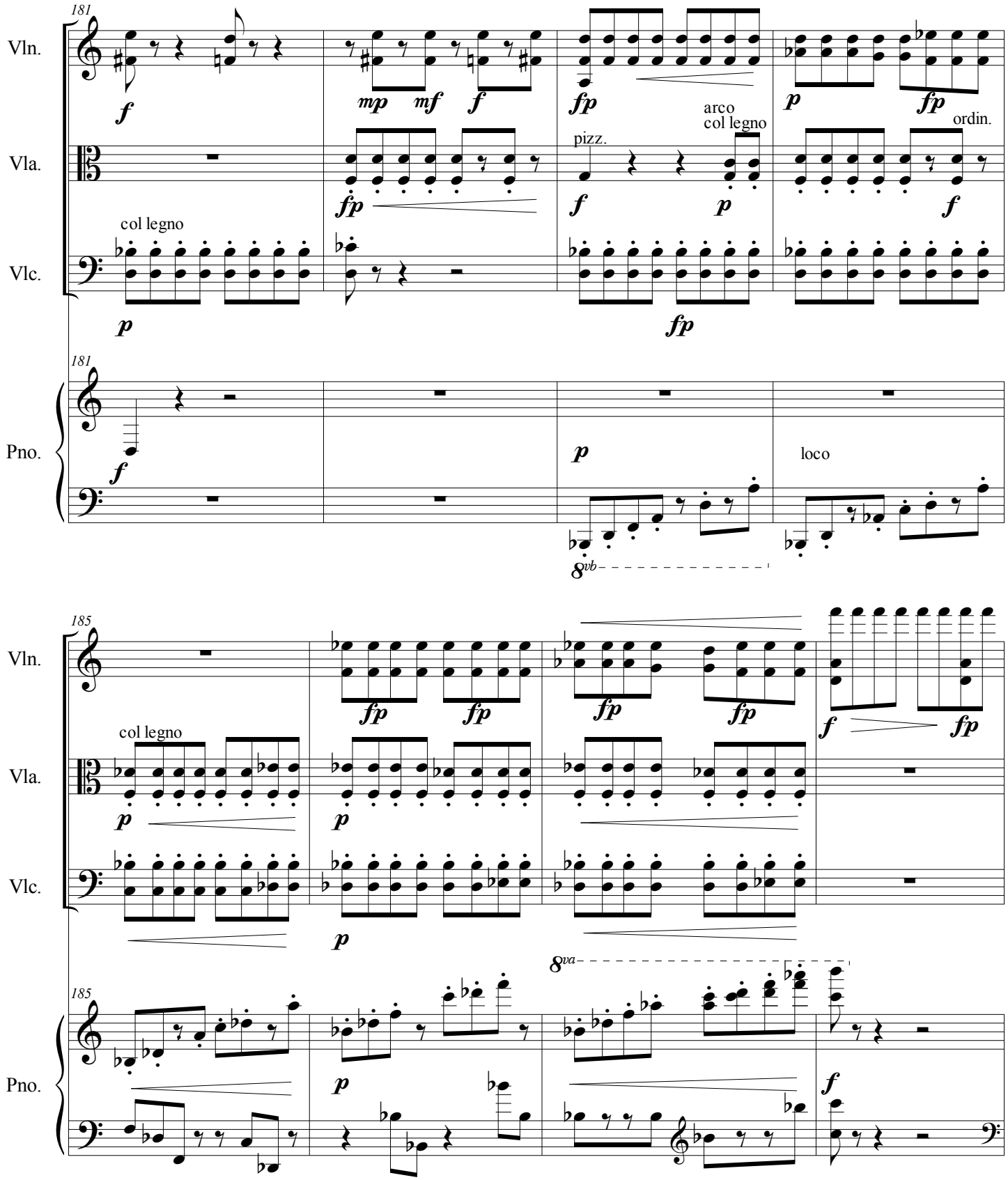

141
ordin.
Vln.
ordin.
Vla.
ordin.
Vlc.
141
Pno.
mp
145
1.
2.
Vln.
mf
f
ff
Vla.
Vlc.
145
Pno.
8va
f

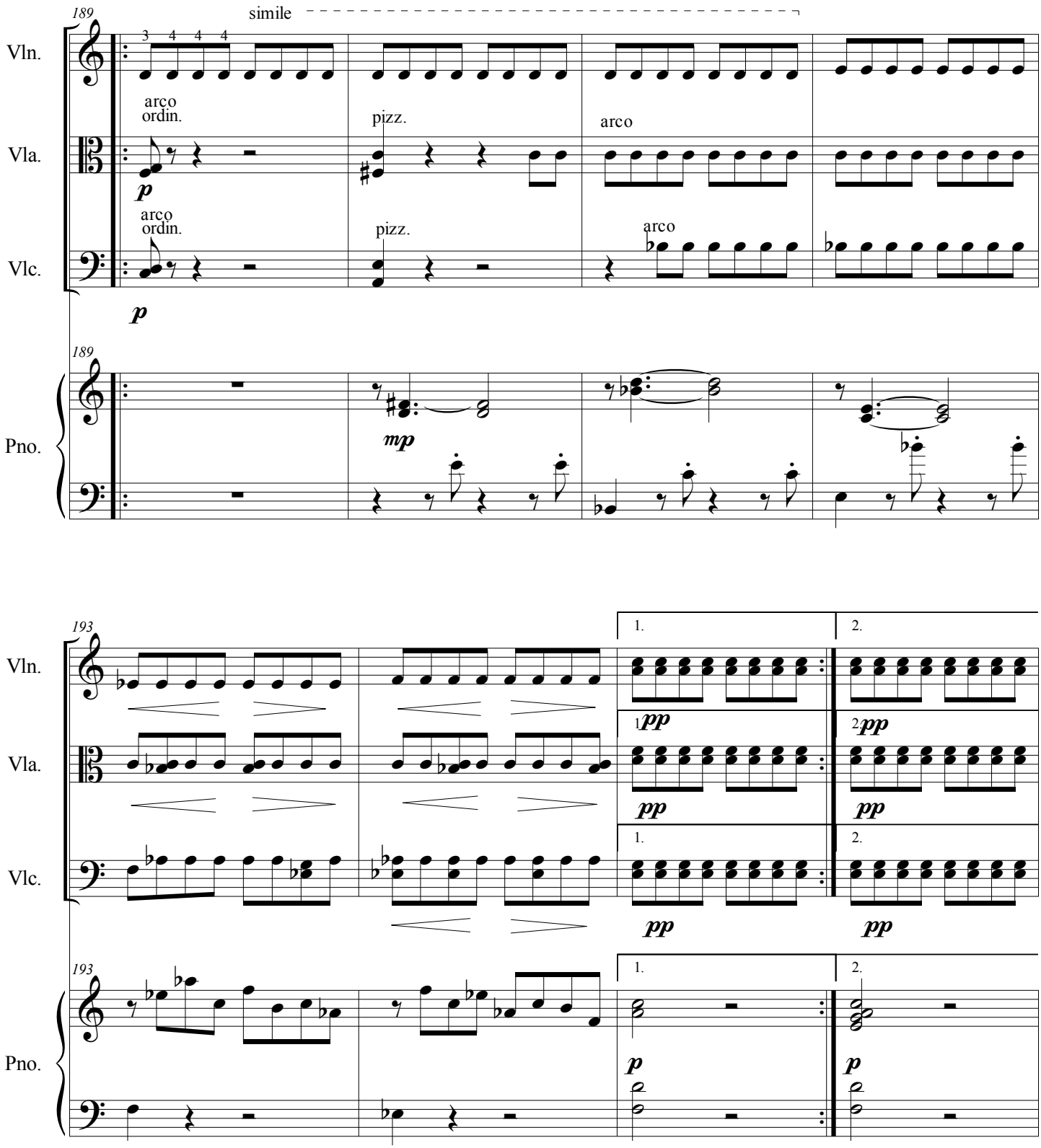

149
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
f
152
ff
f
ff

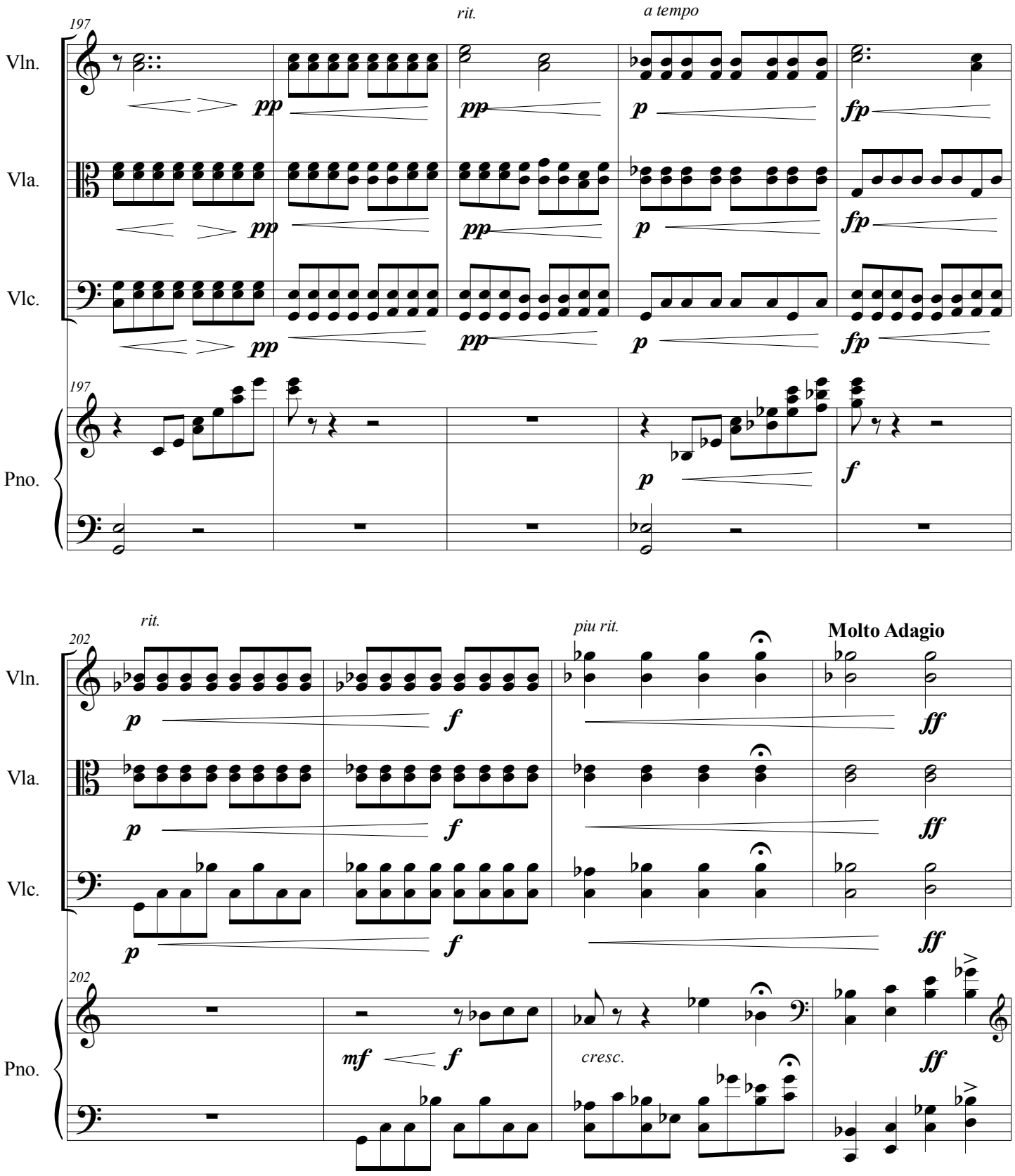

155
rit.
a tempo
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
G String
Pno.
159

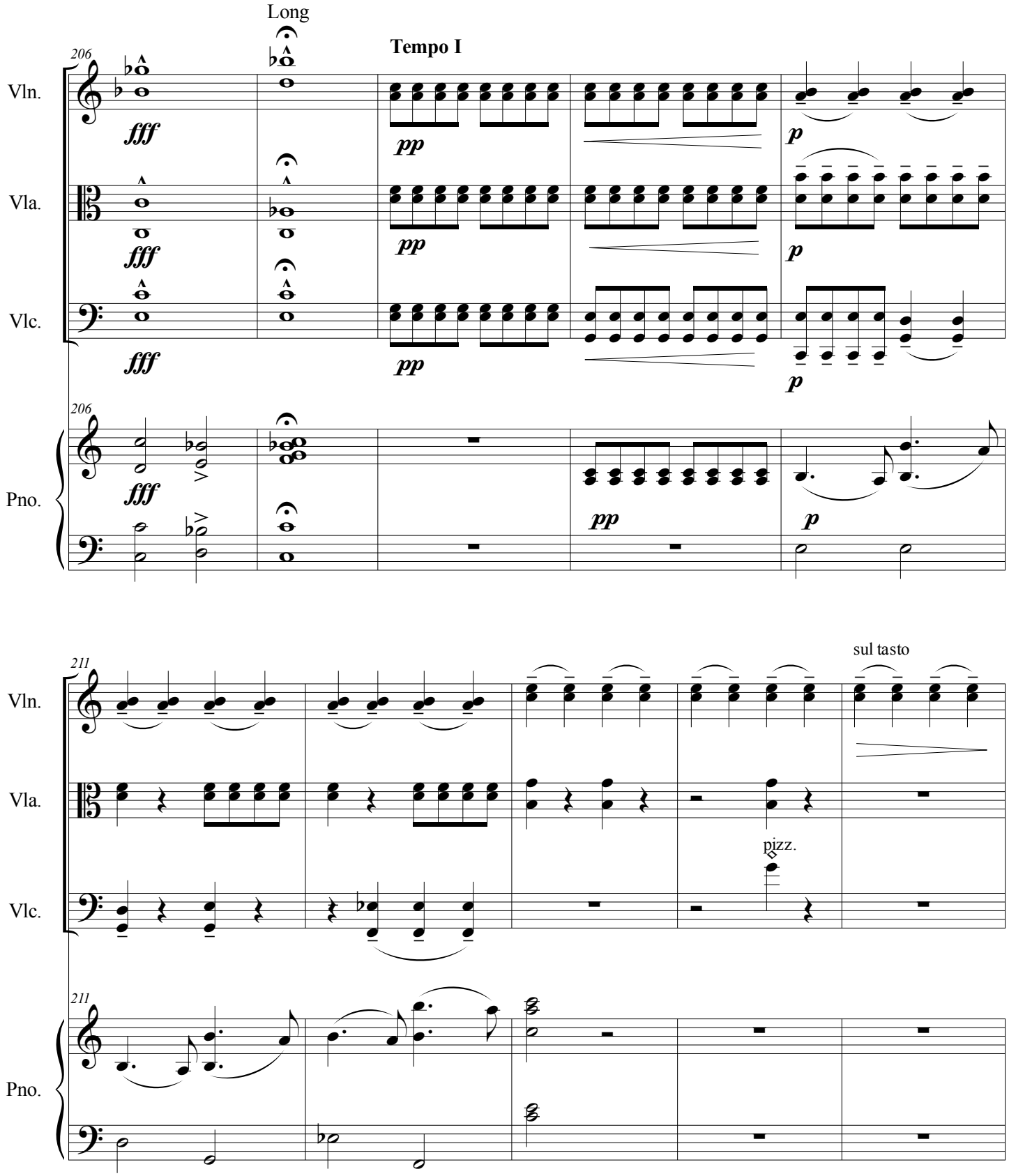

164
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
pp
p
rit.
a tempo
don't drag!
168
fp

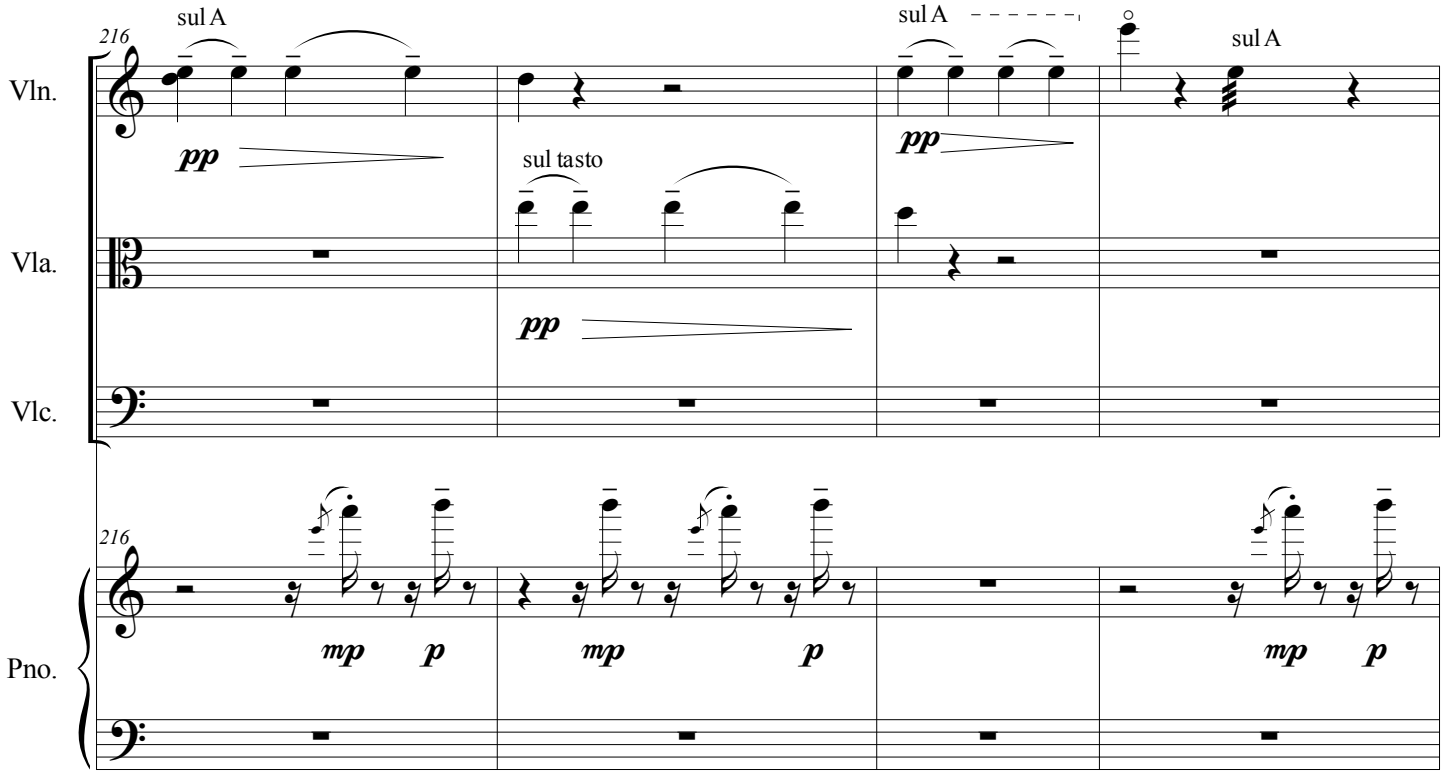

173
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
fp
mp
p
177
1.
2.
f
8vb

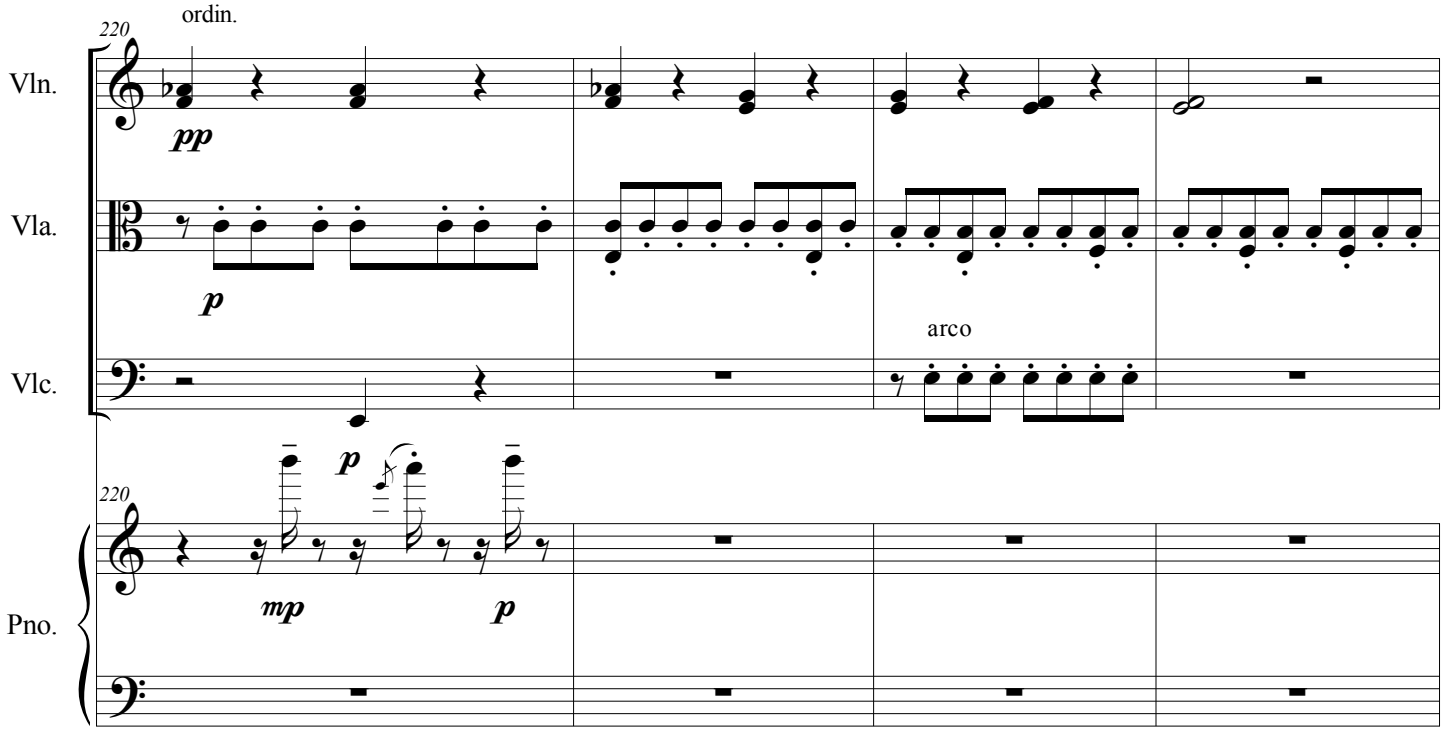

181
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
col legno
pizz.
arco
col legno
ordin.
loco
8vb
185
8va

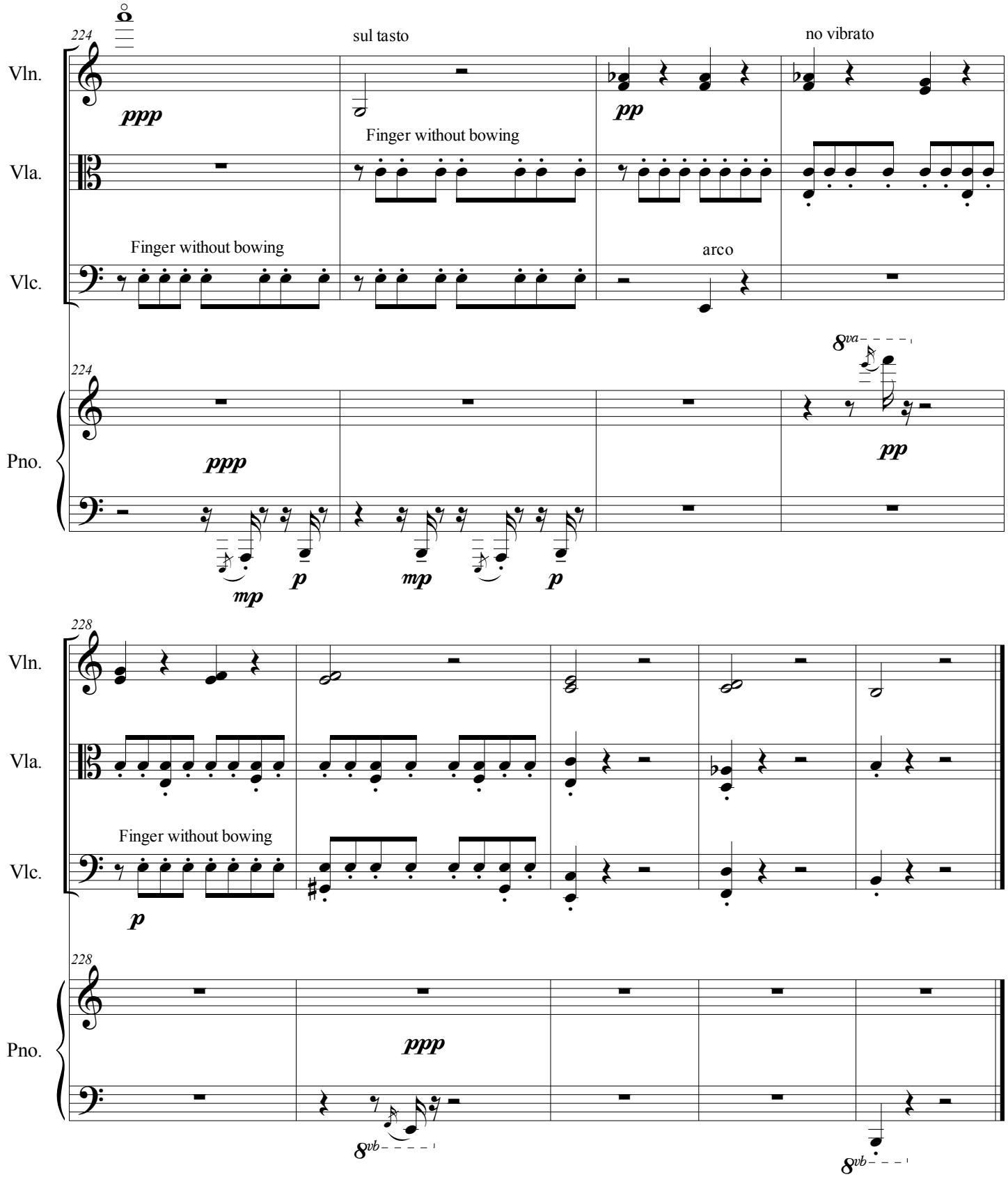

189
simile
Vln.
arco
ordin.
pizz.
arco
Vla.
p
arco
ordin.
pizz.
arco
Vlc.
p
189
Pno.
mp
193
Vln.
1.
2.
1pp
2pp
Vla.
pp
pp
1.
2.
Vlc.
pp
pp
193
1.
2.
Pno.
p
p


197
rit.
a tempo
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
pp
p
fp
f
202
rit.
piu rit.
Molto Adagio
mf
cresc.
ff


Long
Tempo I
206
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
fff
pp
p
211
sul tasto
pizz.


216
sul A
sul A
sul A
Vln.
pp
pp
sul tasto
Vla.
pp
Vlc.
216
Pno.
mp
p
mp
p
mp
p


220
ordin.
Vln.
pp
Vla.
p
arco
Vlc.
220
p
Pno.
mp
p


224
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
sul tasto
no vibrato
Finger without bowing
Finger without bowing
arco
ppp
pp
ppp
pp
mp
p
mp
p
8va
228
Vln.
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
Finger without bowing
p
ppp
8vb
8vb