Canticle of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini

for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, violin, viola, and cello

Thomas J. Dempster (BMI)

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Thomas J. Dempster (BMI)

commissioned by Susan Bell Léon

composed for members of the
Arkansas Symphony Orchestra

dedicated to Susan and Rafa

Hot Springs, AR -- Feb. 2020 - Dec. 2021

Program Note

Canticle of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini is a work in honor of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini and those for whom she is the patron saint (immigrants and hospital workers). Frances Cabrini, born in Italy and an immigrant to the United States at the end of the 19th Century, settled ultimately in Chicago where she opened orphanages, hospitals, and schools for immigrants – principally of Italian descent but ultimately for all newcomers – during a time in this country's history when anti-immigrant sentiment (as well as anti-Catholic sentiment) was at, arguably, its peak. Frances Cabrini was not just the first canonized American saint: perhaps ironically, or fittingly, the first canonized saint from the United States was also an immigrant who became a naturalized American citizen.

As a pervading darkness swept back across this country – a darkness that still has potency and terror to it about which we must remain ever-vigilant – over the past few years, particularly toward immigrants and people of differing faiths, I revisited the lives of the saints (I admit having been a lapsed Catholic for almost three decades now), and around the time I was trying to, in a secular way, connect with the real and symbolic miracles offered up by the venerated and canonized, Susan Bell Léon approached me about composing a work for a chamber group from within the Arkansas Symphony. I began working on the piece early in 2020 when, not long into the year, the COVID-19 pandemic upended the globe (and it was only then that I learned of Cabrini's patron status to hospital workers and administrators; only fitting, sadly). I returned to the work and, with a March 2022 performance deadline, completed the piece in December 2021.

The *Canticle* is not religious in any strict sense of the term; it is, in essence, a rather secular paean to a woman who used her faith and courage during a time of deep resentment and bitterness toward people like her to better the world around her. It deals obliquely with the struggles, travails, fleeting moments of rapture, constant prayerfulness, and measured optimism she must have felt and that many of us have been trying to slog through for two years now in a world that seems at times utterly apocalyptic.

Canticle in a sense also traces some of my family's roots through immigration: Lithuania, Germany, Italian-speaking Slovenia and Austria. While deeply personal as to the choice, two folk songs are used – and the opening bassoon solo is kind of a hybrid of both with my own spin. The first is a Lithuanian *sutartinė*, or part-song, named "Kukaĺ Rože Ratilio" ("Corn-cockle and rose"), a summer solstice song, and the other a well-known Italian lullaby and Christmas carol "Dormi, Dormi, Bel Bambin" ("Sleep, sleep, beautiful child"). The songs are hidden and woven throughout, violently interrupted or abandoned, only to ultimately shine through in the middle, rollicking section before giving way to a more sparkling, less occluded, clearer final section that recalls and reconsiders both melodies as the underlying music both becomes more transparent but also more urgent as the end arrives.

Thomas J Dempster – 17 December 2021, Hot Springs, AR

Performance Notes

Accidentals apply only within the measure and the octave in which they appear.

Dynamics and articulations throughout are highly detailed. Proper balance and color depends upon following these strictly, particularly in more stratified textures.

Portamenti/glissandi/slides are notated as a solid line between pitches without “glissando.”

All artificial harmonics are given with full node and resultant pitch notation. Where there is no string designation for natural harmonics, the player may choose based on context.

Breath marks should not be interpreted as rhythmic/metrical pauses. They are not used with the strings.

Bowings are provided on occasion. If those are wrong or poorly-suggested, please do your own thing.

Frequently, sustained notes will tie into a rest. For especially string instruments, this notation suggests allowing the note to sustain beyond the notated duration. For winds, the sustained note can be dynamically tapered and released into the subsequent rests.

Other notes will be added for subsequent editions.

Questions? Comments? Contact the composer.

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Score in C

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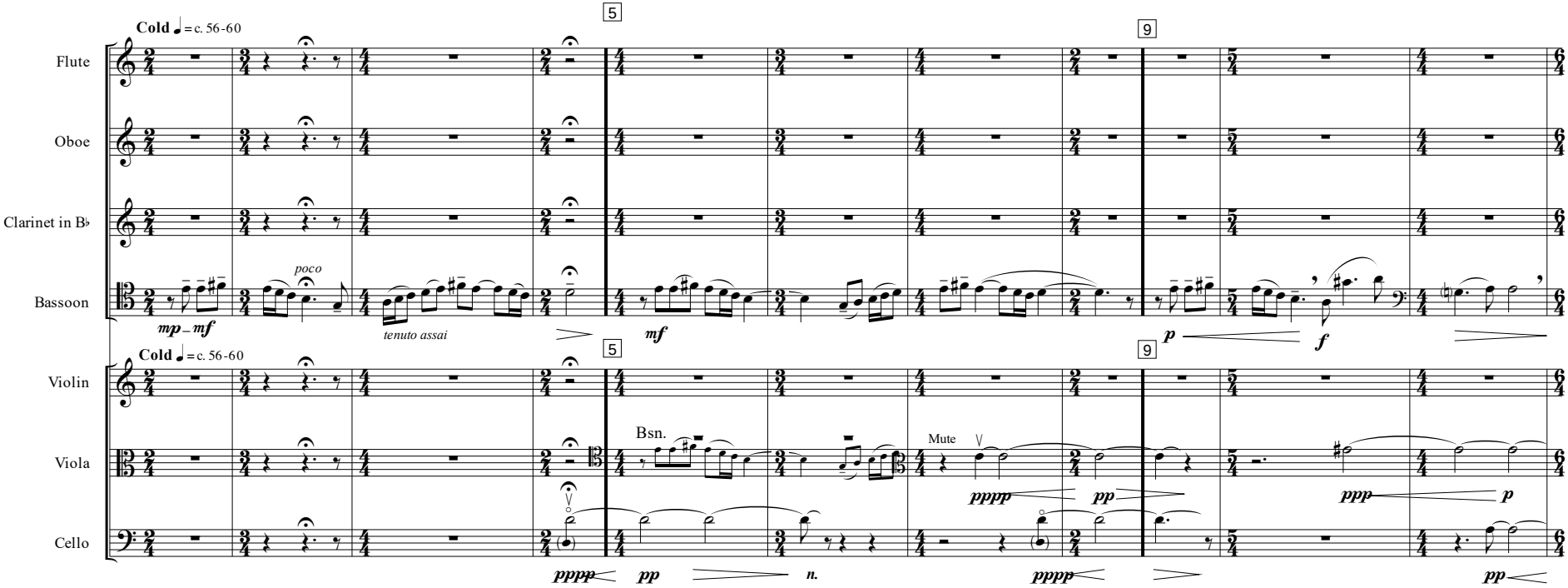

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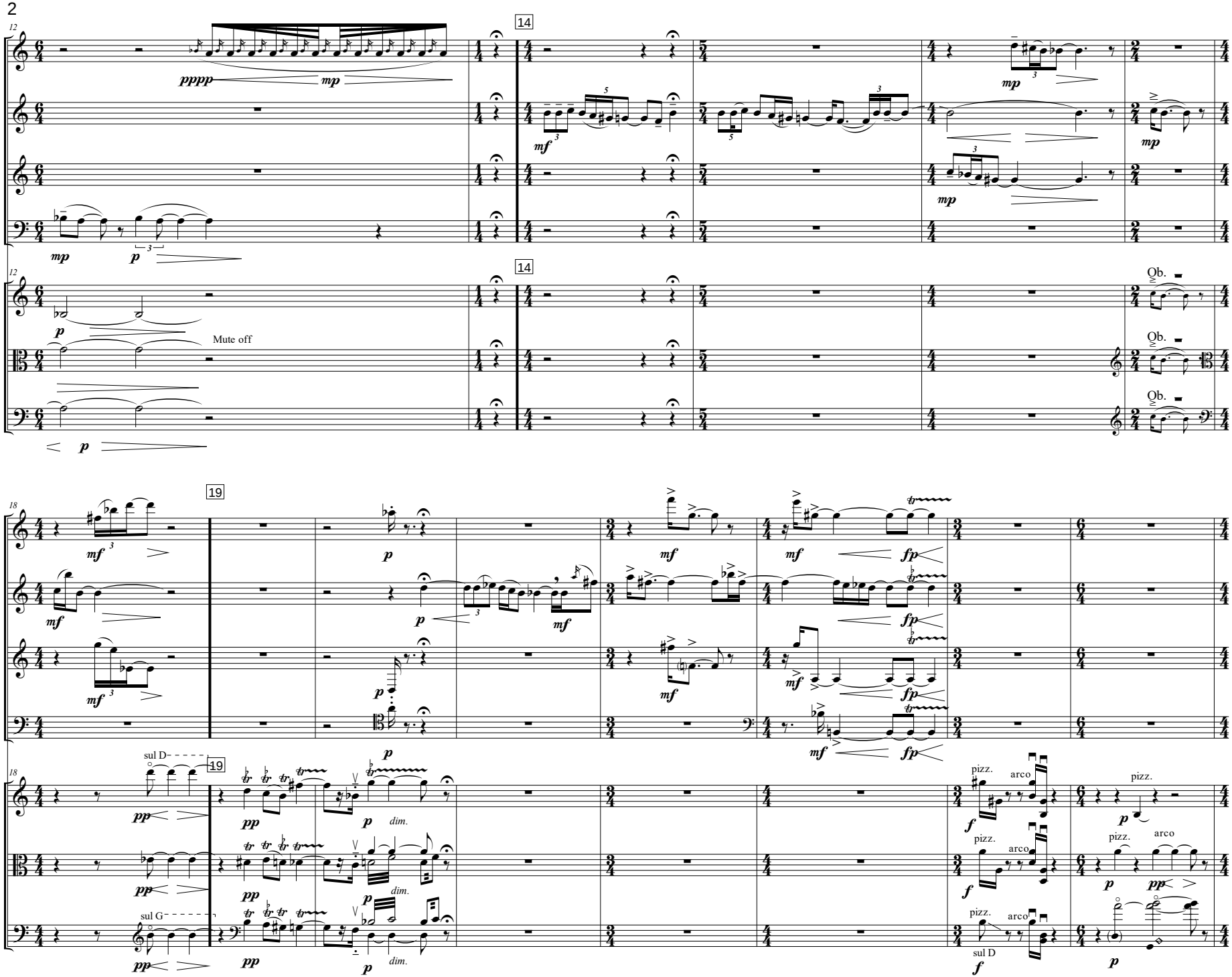
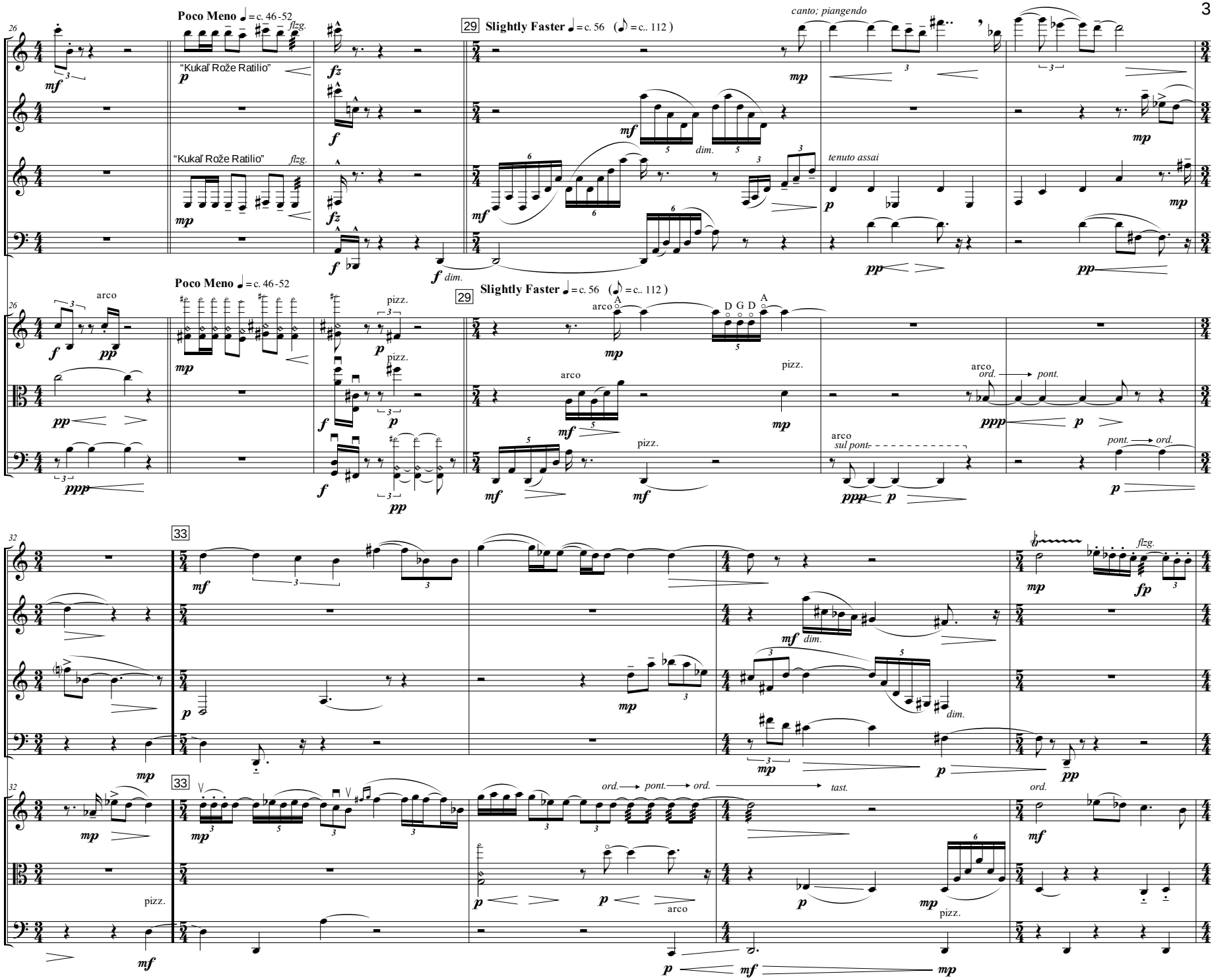
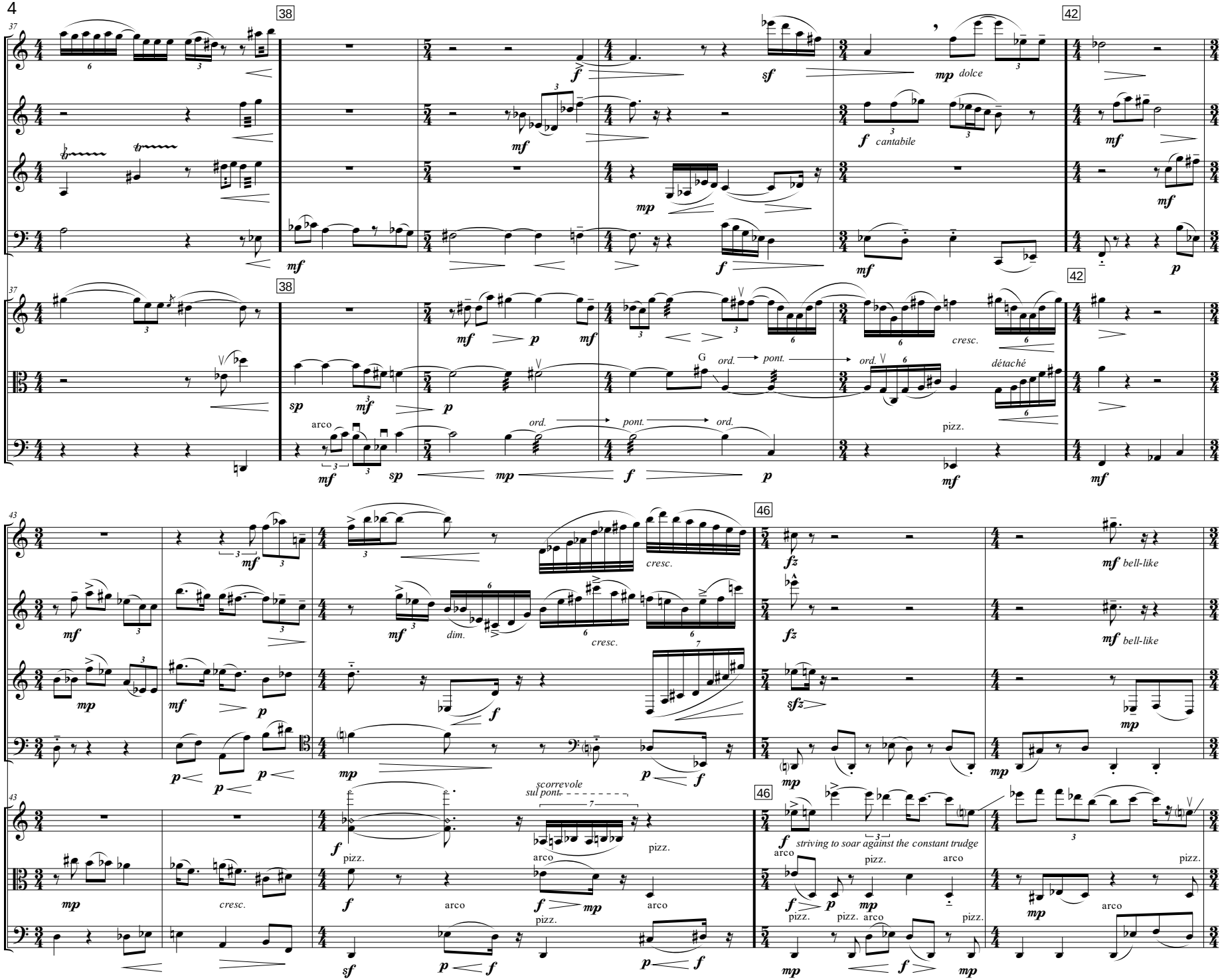
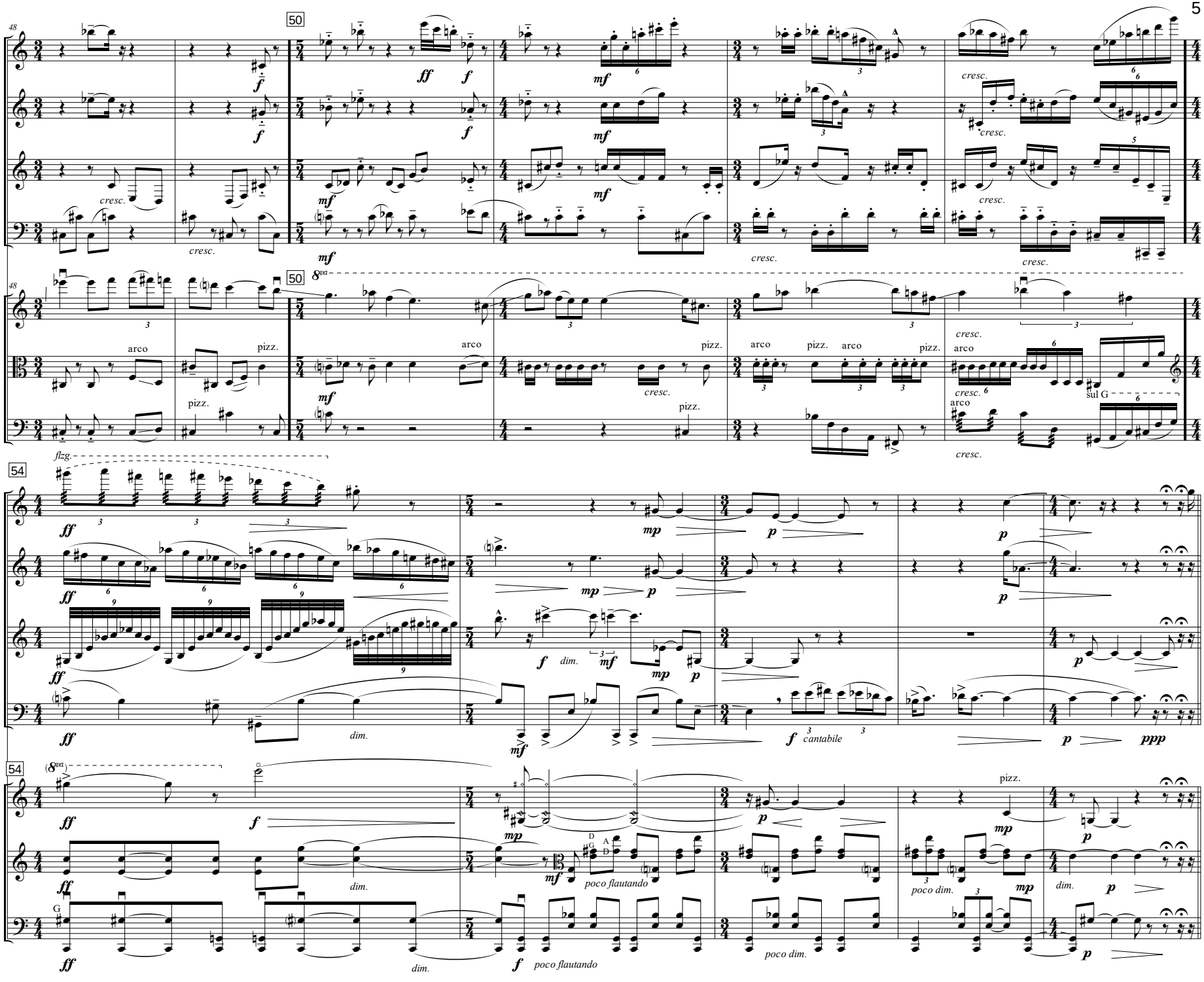
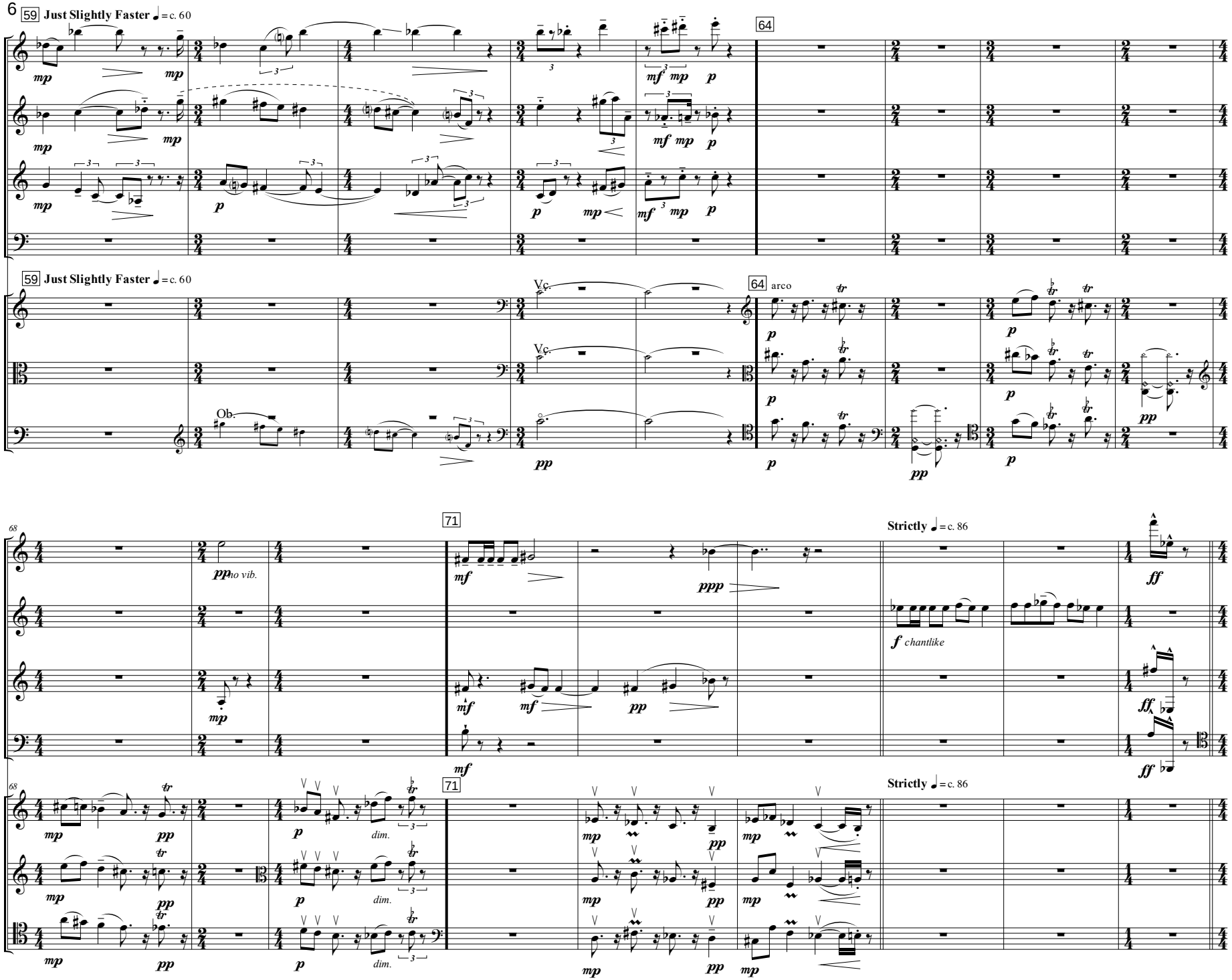
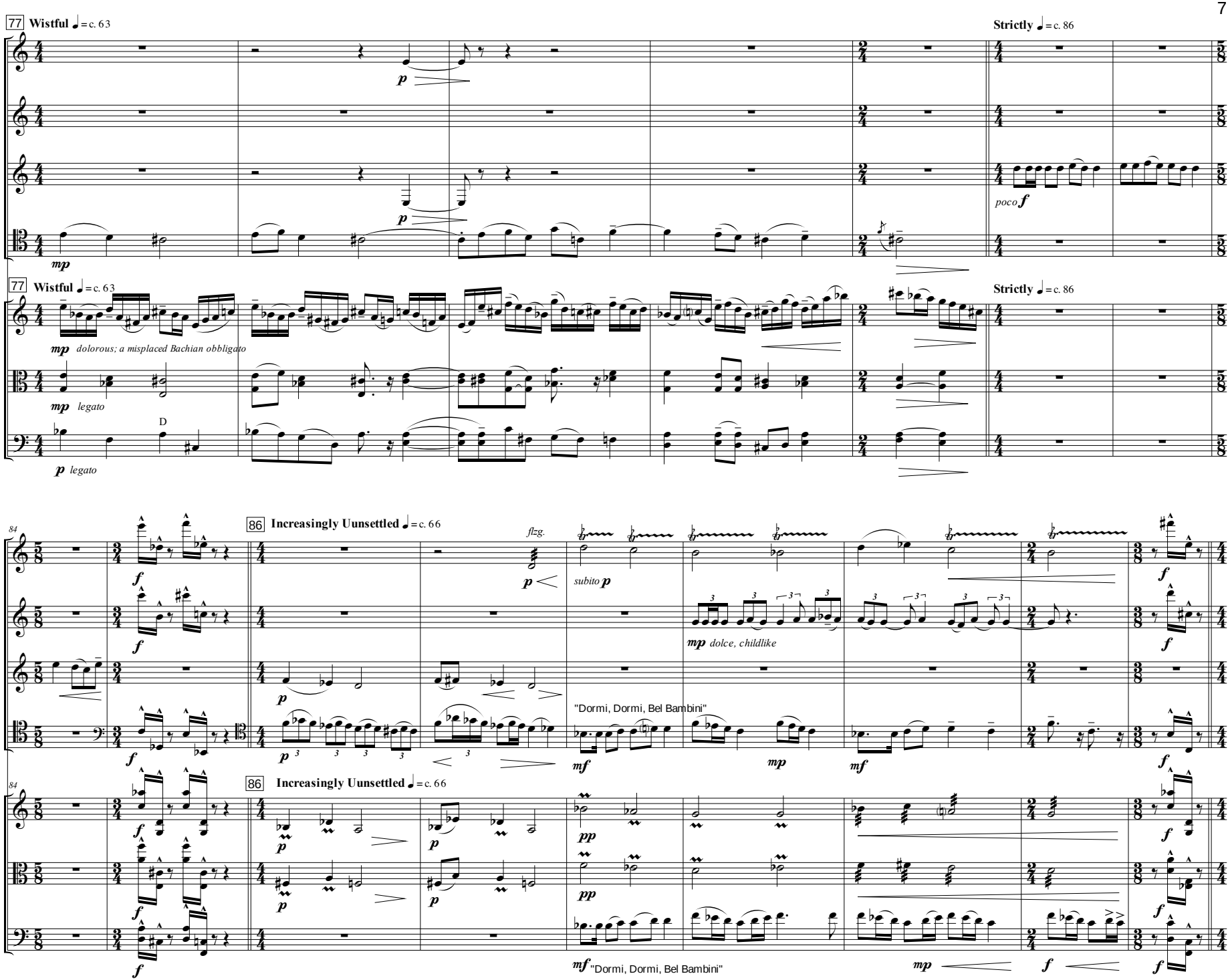

12
14
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Mute off
Ob.
18
19
sul D
sul G
pizz.
arco
dim.

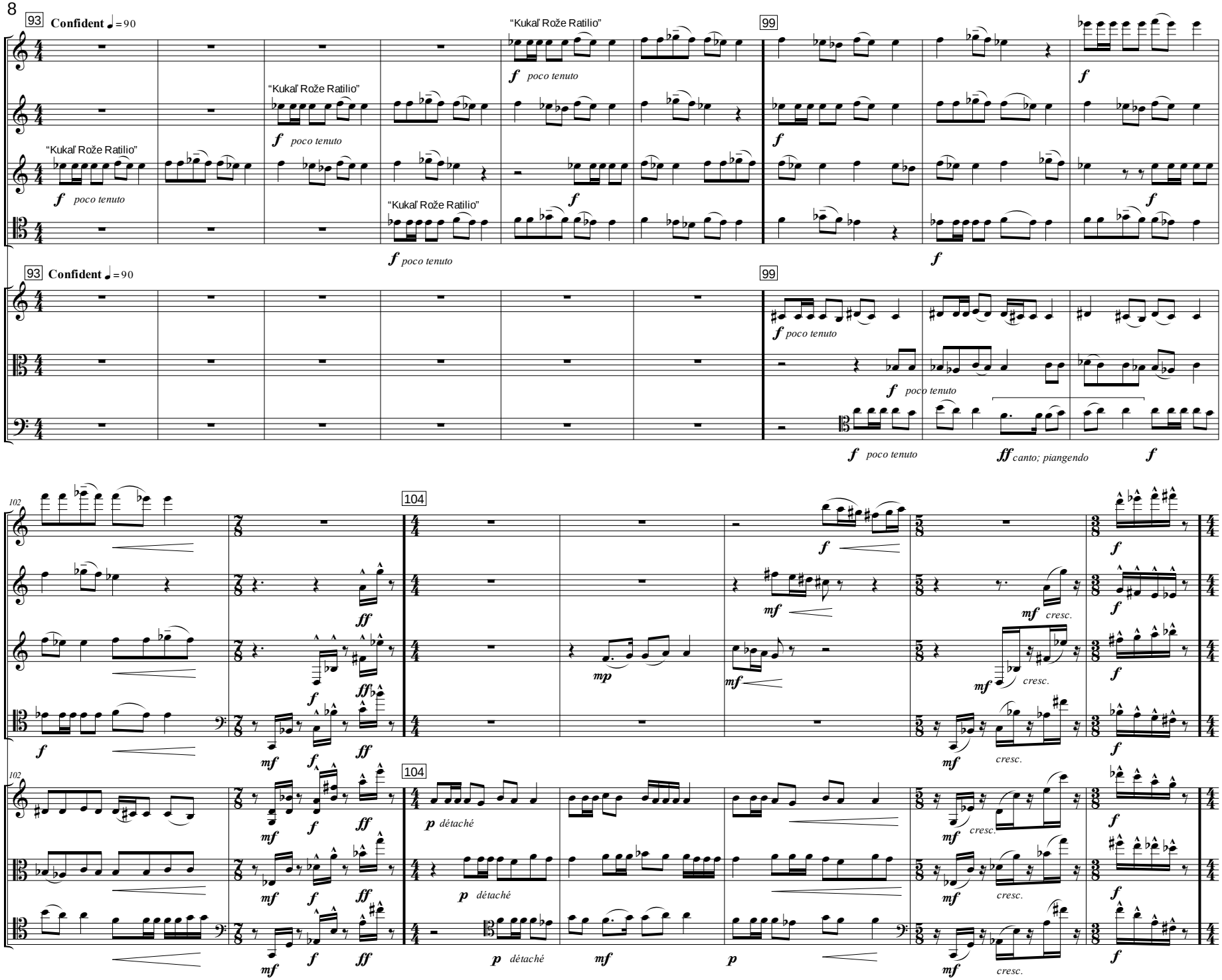

Poco Meno ♩= c. 46-52
Slightly Faster ♩= c. 56 (♪ = c.. 112)
"Kukaľ Rože Ratilio"
flzg.
canto; piangendo
tenuto assai
arco
pizz.
sul pont.
ord.
pont.
dim.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.

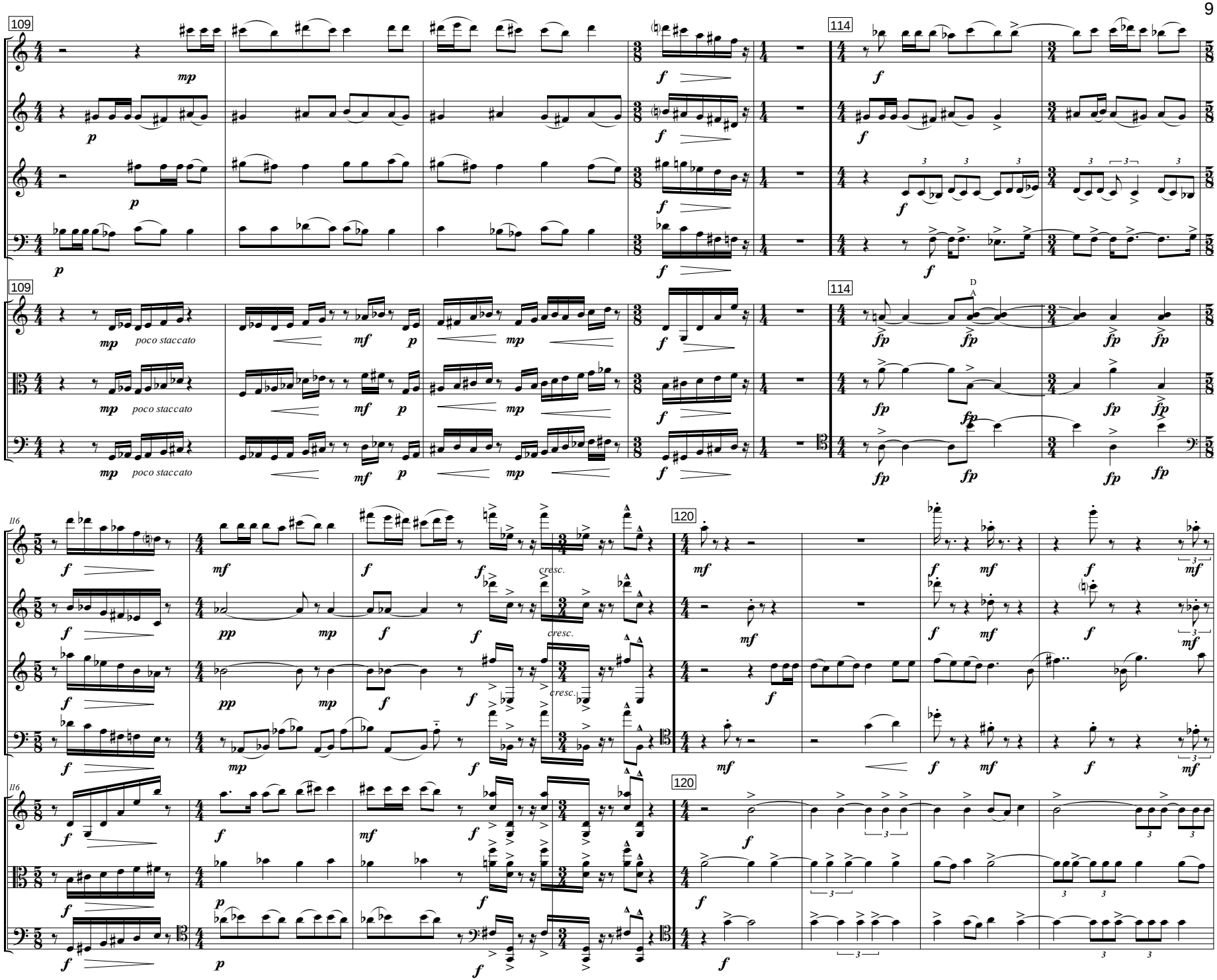

Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
38
42
46
dolce
cantabile
cresc.
ord.
pont.
détaché
arco
pizz.
dim.
bell-like
scorrevole
sul pont.
striving to soar against the constant trudge

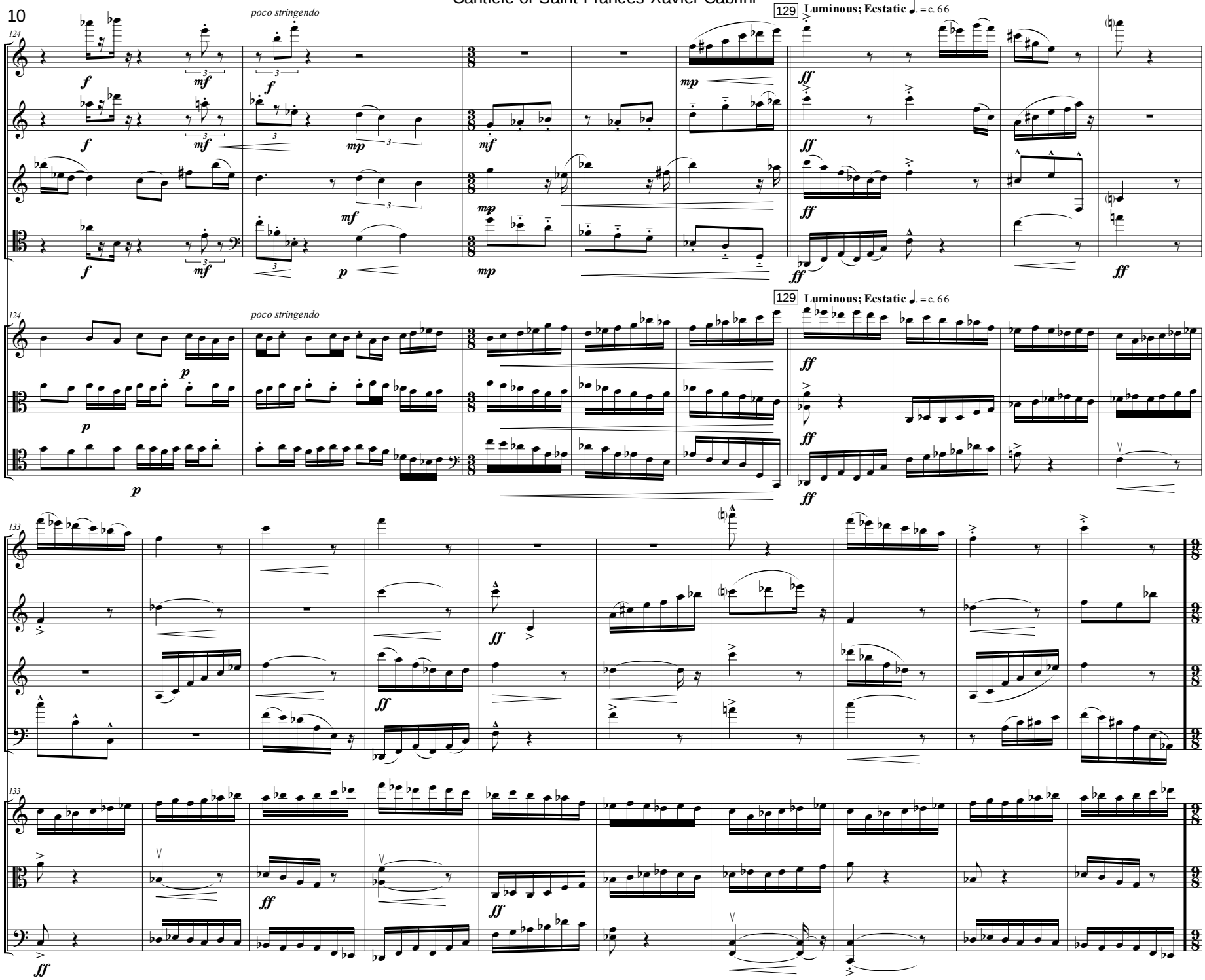

Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
50
54
cresc.
arco
pizz.
sul G
flzg.
dim.
cantabile
poco flautando
poco dim.
(8va)
ppp

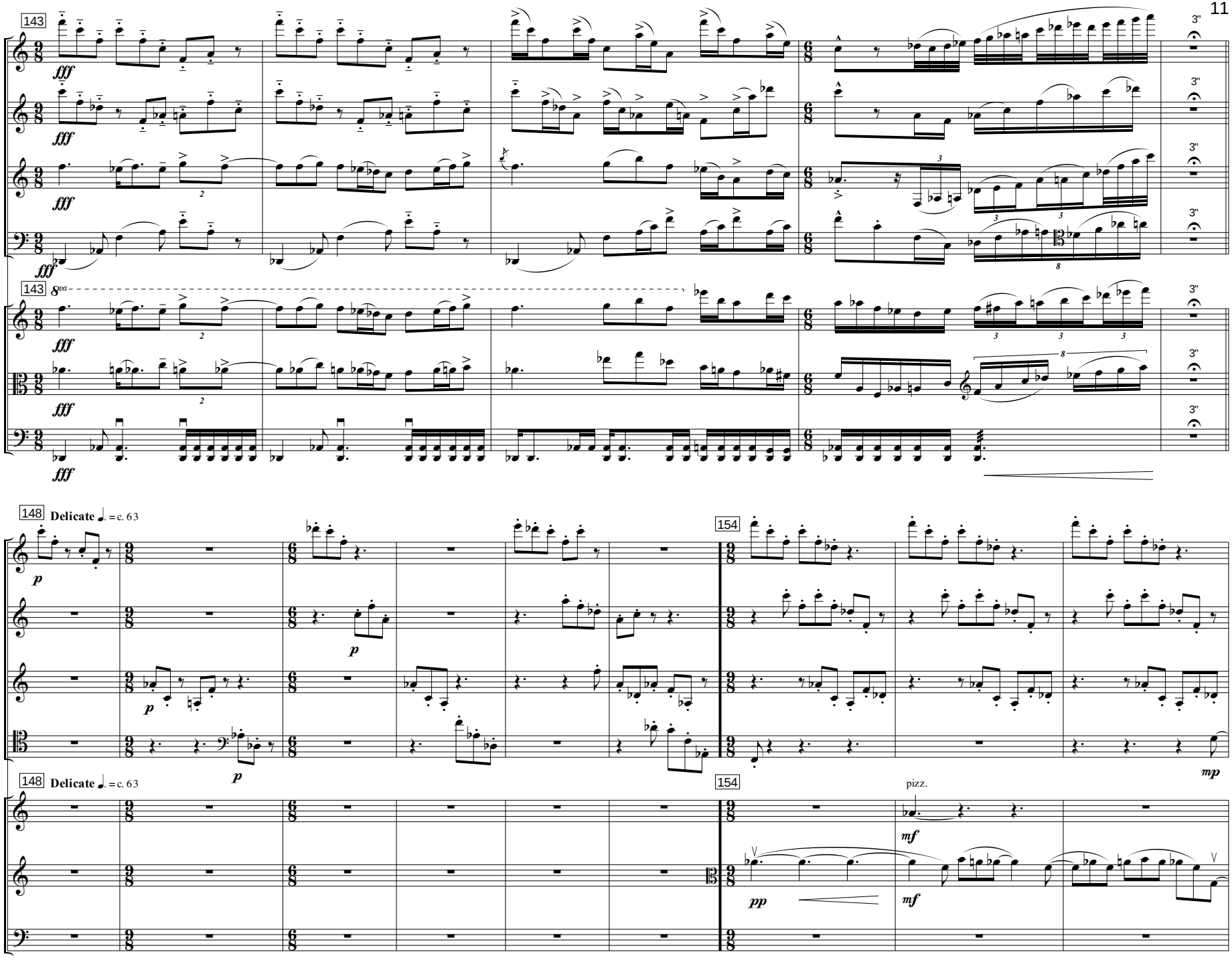

6
59 Just Slightly Faster ♩ = c. 60
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
64
arco
Vc.
Ob.
68
71
Strictly ♩ = c. 86
no vib.
chantlike
dim.

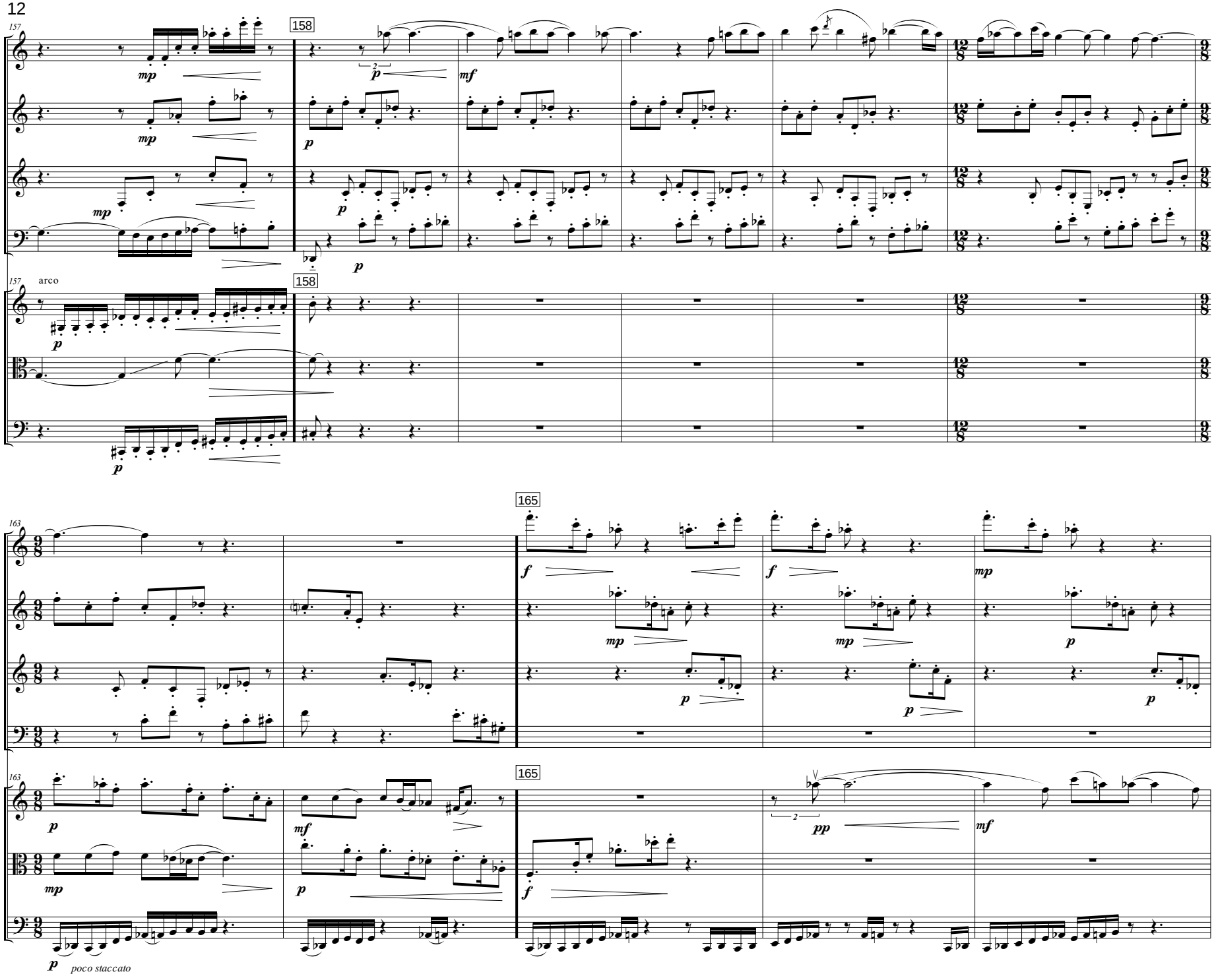

77 Wistful ♩= c. 63
Strictly ♩= c. 86
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
poco f
mp
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
mp dolorous; a misplaced Bachian obbligato
mp legato
D
p legato
84
86 Increasingly Uunsettled ♩= c. 66
flzg.
subito p
mp dolce, childlike
"Dormi, Dormi, Bel Bambini"
mf
mp
f
pp

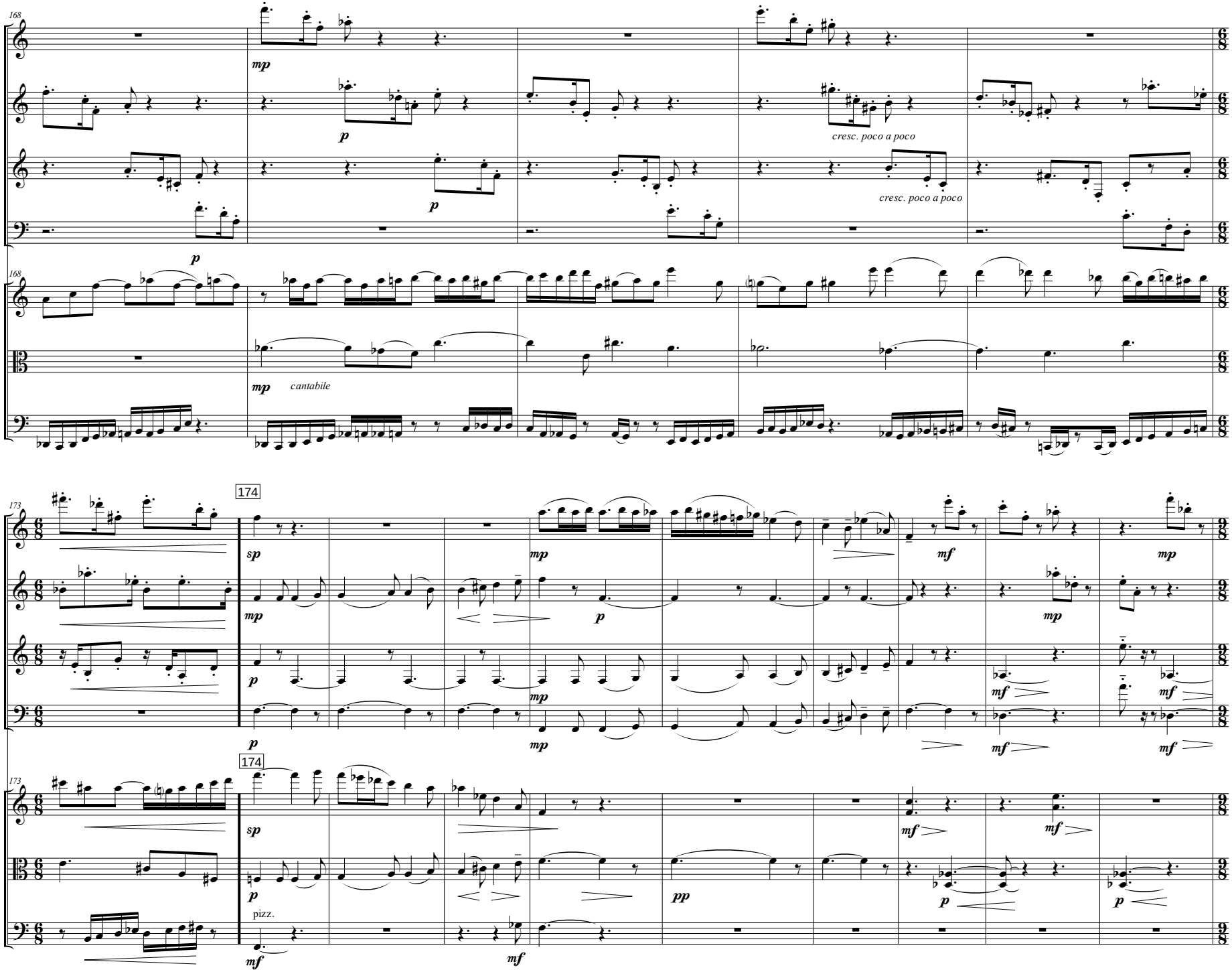

93
Confident ♩ = 90
99
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
"Kukaľ Rože Ratilio"
f poco tenuto
ff canto; piangendo
102
104
mf
mp
p détaché
cresc.

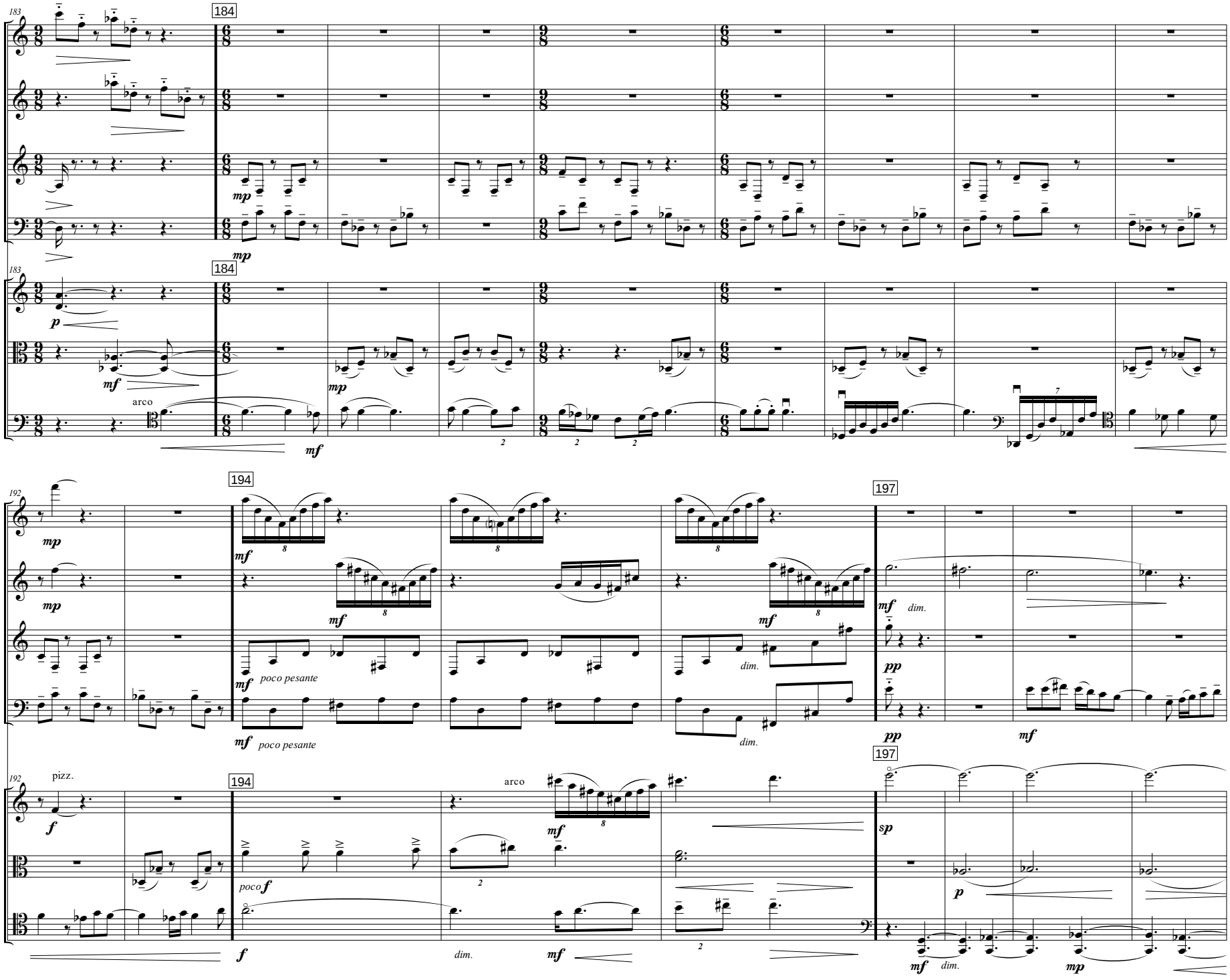

109
114
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
mp
poco staccato
mf
p
f
fp
D
A
116
120
pp
cresc.

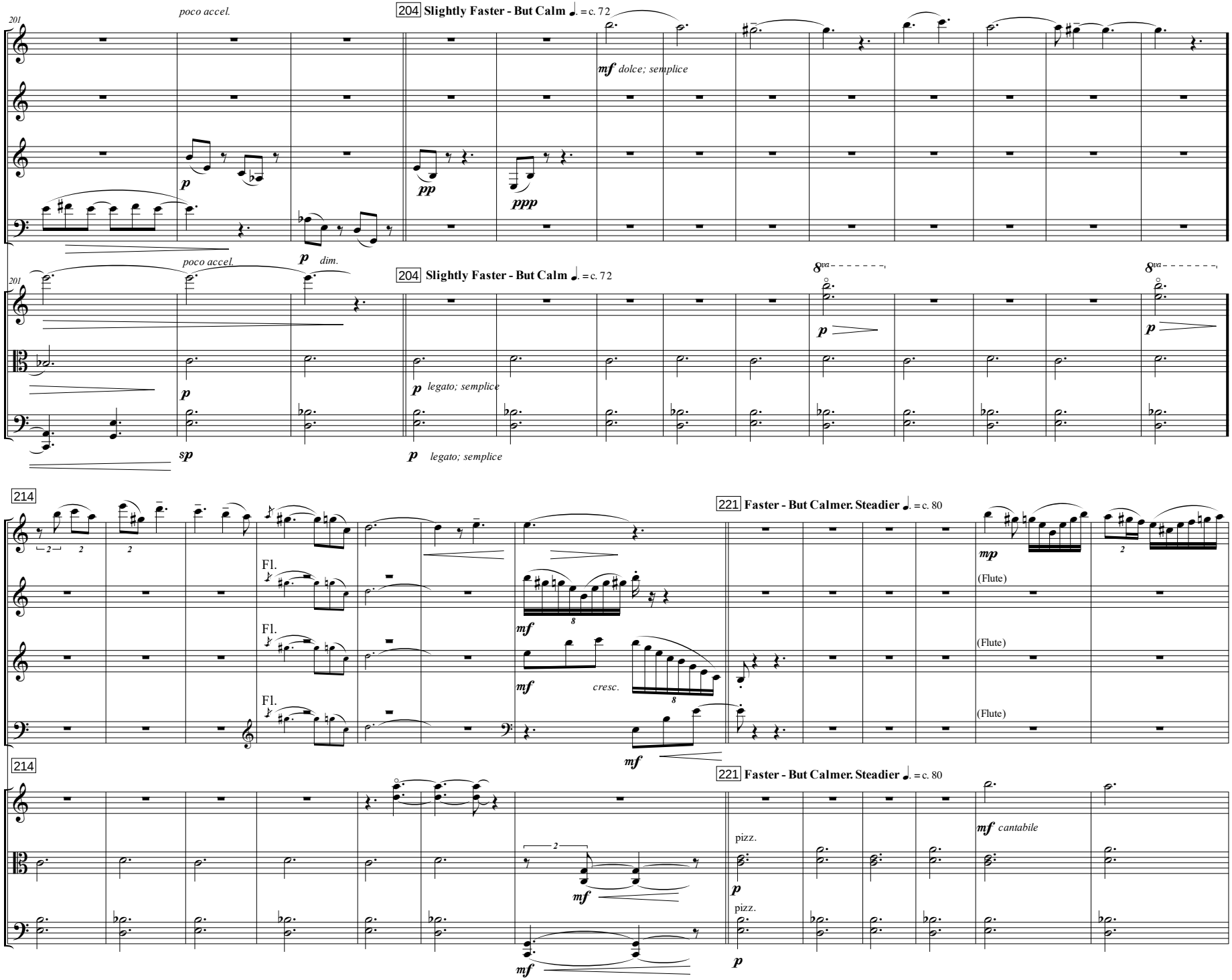
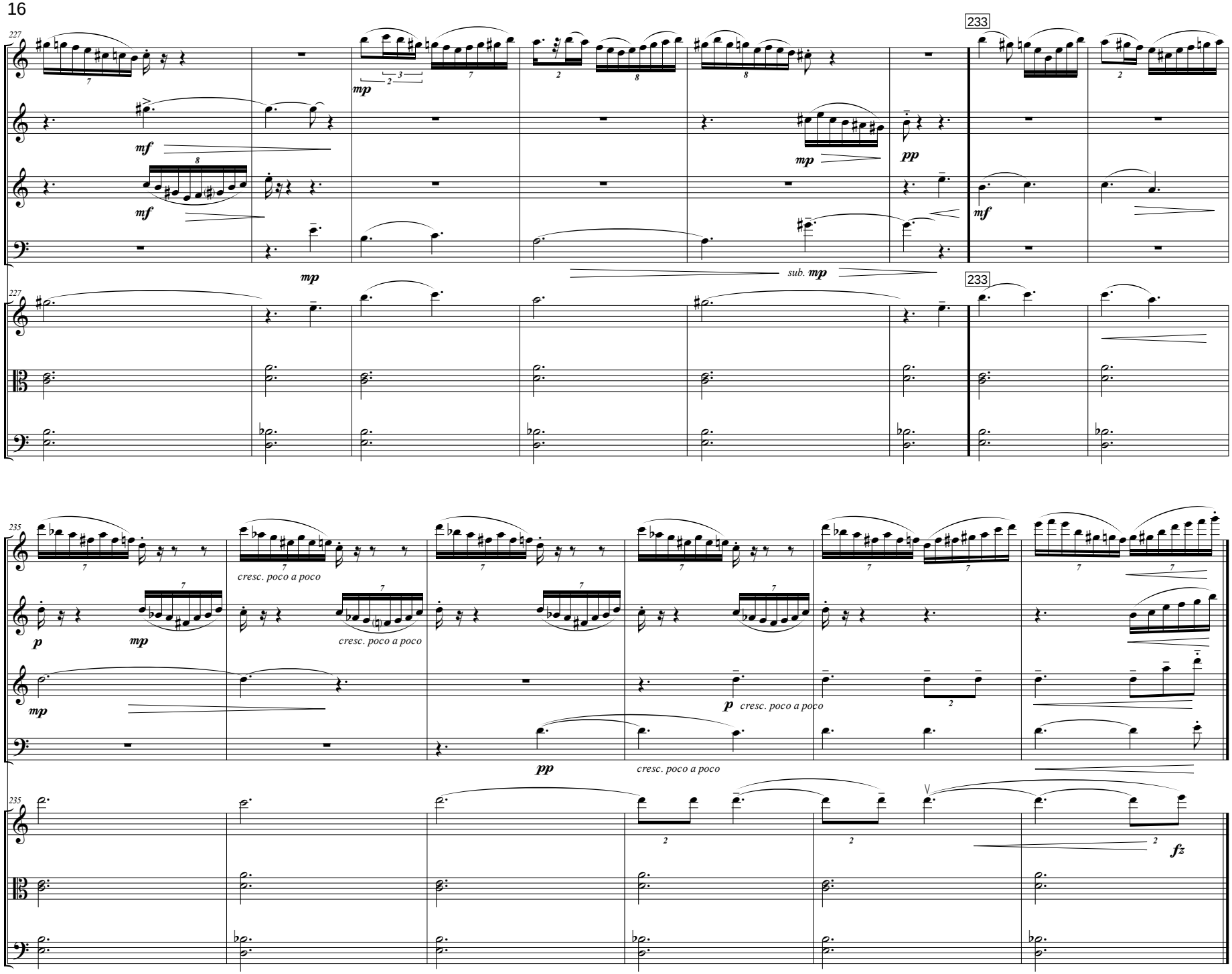

124
poco stringendo
129 Luminous; Ecstatic ♩. = c. 66
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
133


143
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
fff
8va
3"
148
Delicate ♩. = c. 63
154
p
mp
pizz.
mf
pp


157
158
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
arco
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
mp
p
mf
163
165
f
pp
poco staccato


168
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
mp
p
cresc. poco a poco
cresc. poco a poco
cantabile
173
174
sp
mf
pp
pizz.


183
184
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
mp
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
p
mf
arco
192
194
197
poco pesante
dim.
pizz.
poco f
f
sp
pp


201
poco accel.
204 Slightly Faster - But Calm ♩. = c. 72
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
mf dolce; semplice
p
pp
ppp
poco accel.
p dim.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
sp
p legato; semplice
8va
214
221 Faster - But Calmer. Steadier ♩. = c. 80
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
mp
(Flute)
mf
cresc.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
mf cantabile
pizz.

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