Cubic Deviations

from Brahms' ***Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel***

For Piano Quintet

Violoncello

for Electronic Music Readers

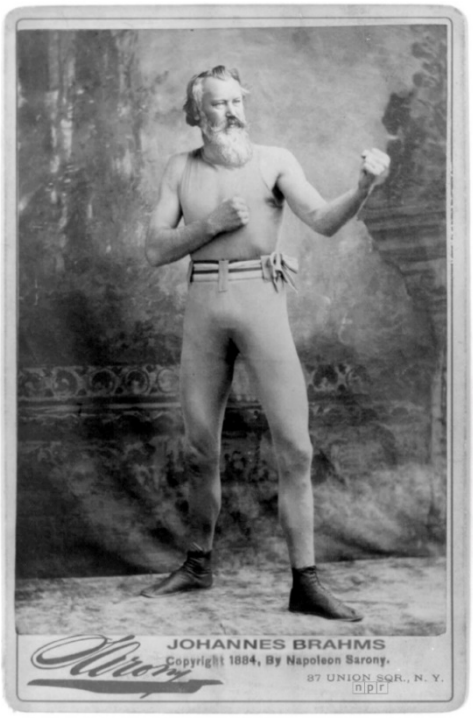
Bill Robinson

Cubic Deviations

from Brahms' *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*
for Piano Quintet

Duration: about 25 minutes October 24, 2022—April 1, 2023

for Eric Pritchard and the Ciompi Quartet



I finished *Violin Concerto No. 2* for Eric Pritchard in 2018, and then a little cello quartet. After that, I found myself mysteriously unable to compose anything for four years. My muse up and left me, and I assumed that I had retired for good. In spring 2022, I started several months of revising old scores, and had three performances of older chamber music. This got me back in the groove, and in October 2022 I started up again, choosing the ensemble that is easiest for me to write for, piano quintet, and the easiest format, a variation on an existing piece. I've done such a variation twice before, for Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* and for Vivaldi/Bach *Concerto for Four Violins/Harpsichords* (first movement only). This time I picked Brahms' *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel* for piano. That means that this work is *variations on variations on variations*, hence the title *Cubic Deviations*. This piano quintet is the basis of a version for full orchestra.

Handel was in his twenties when he wrote his original theme for harpsichord, and Brahms was 28. I am 68, and find it handy to borrow the youthful energy in my dotage.

There is a delicate balance in a process like this, where the composition can't be too close to the original, because then it's just a transcription and arrangement, but can't be too far away, because then what's the point? This piece follows the format of the Brahms original, although I have skipped three of the 25 variations. The initial statement of the theme is very close to Handel's original, with a few curve balls, and may deceive the audience into thinking this is a retrograde exercise in nostalgia. The first deviation should dispel that notion. This is a work of the 21st Century, written in my own style.

String parts are available in two versions; for printing on paper, or use with electronic music readers. Accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not apply to other octaves.

Bill Robinson

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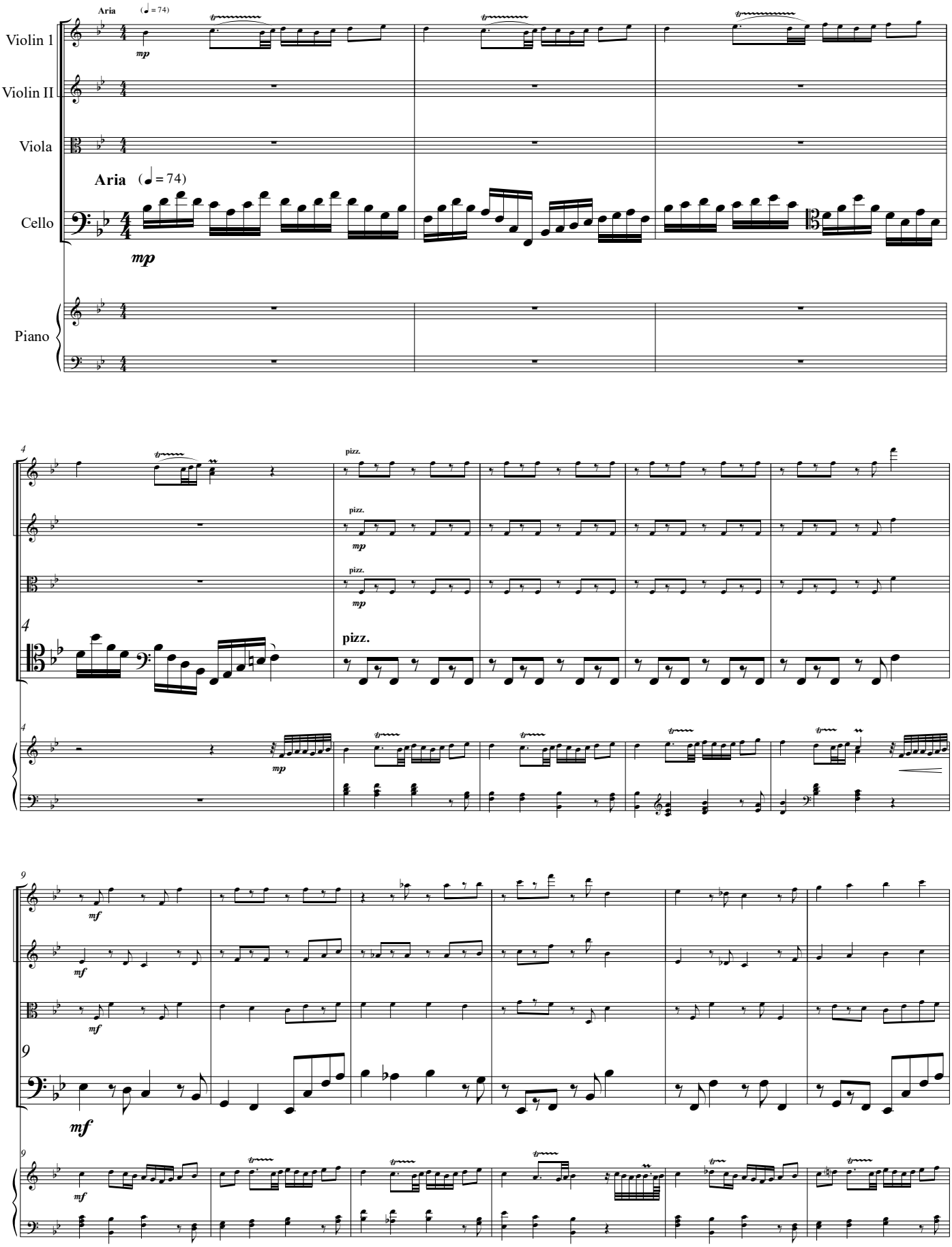
Cover art by Joseph Groupy, 1743 *Pugilist Brahms by NPR* billrobinsonmusic.com

Cello Part for Electronic Music Readers

Cubic Deviations

[corrected to 7/21/23]

Bill Robinson



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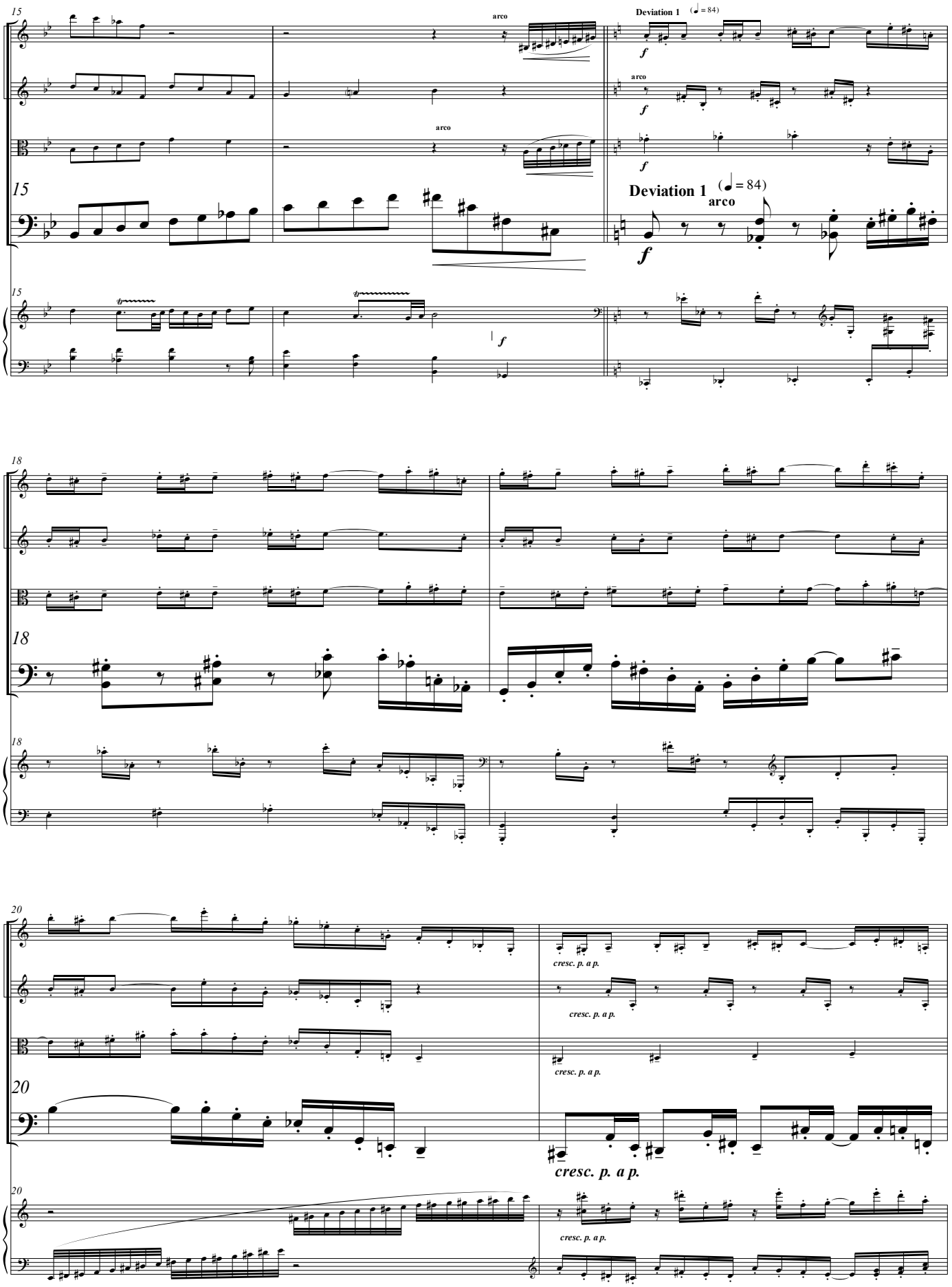
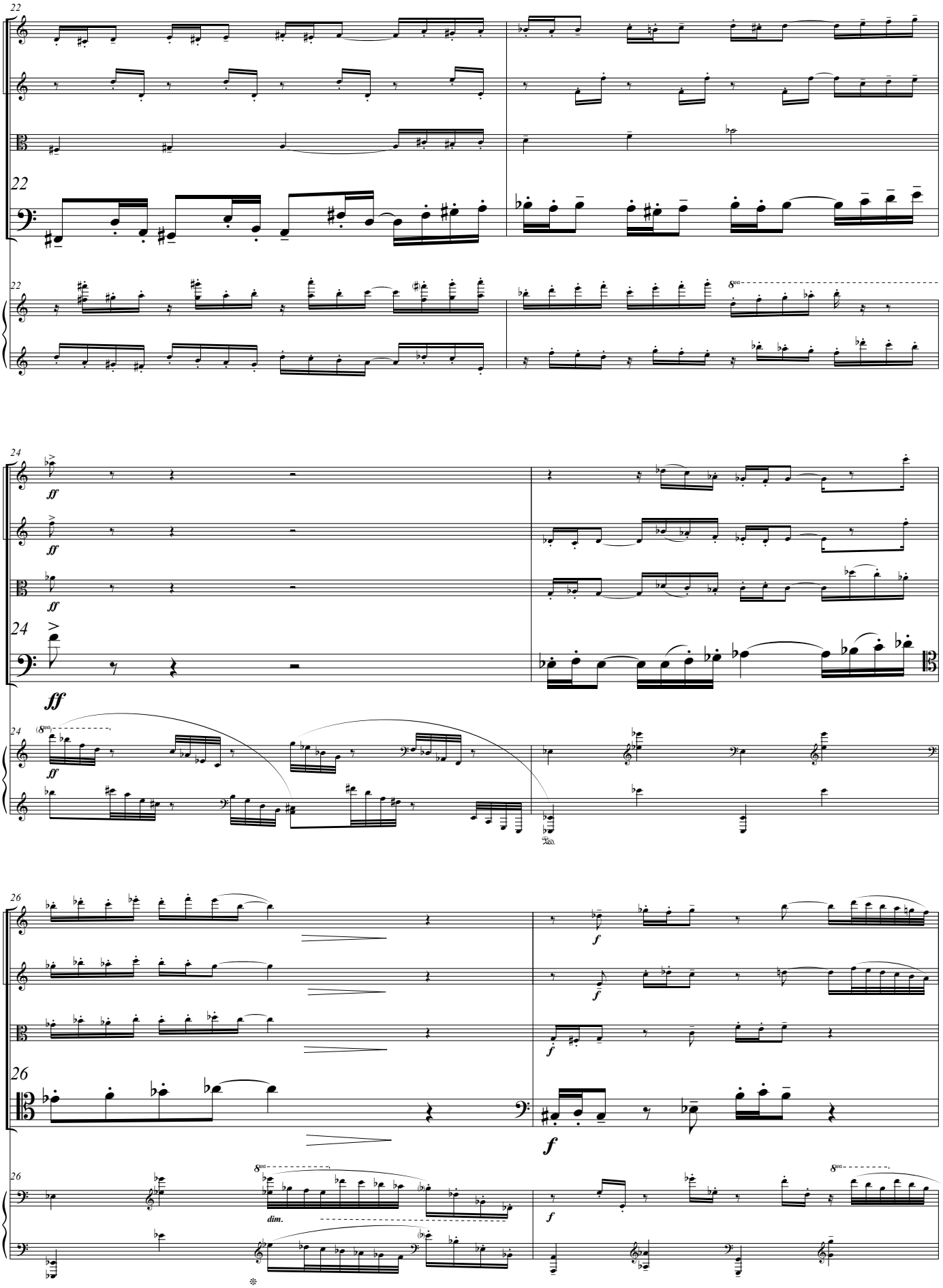
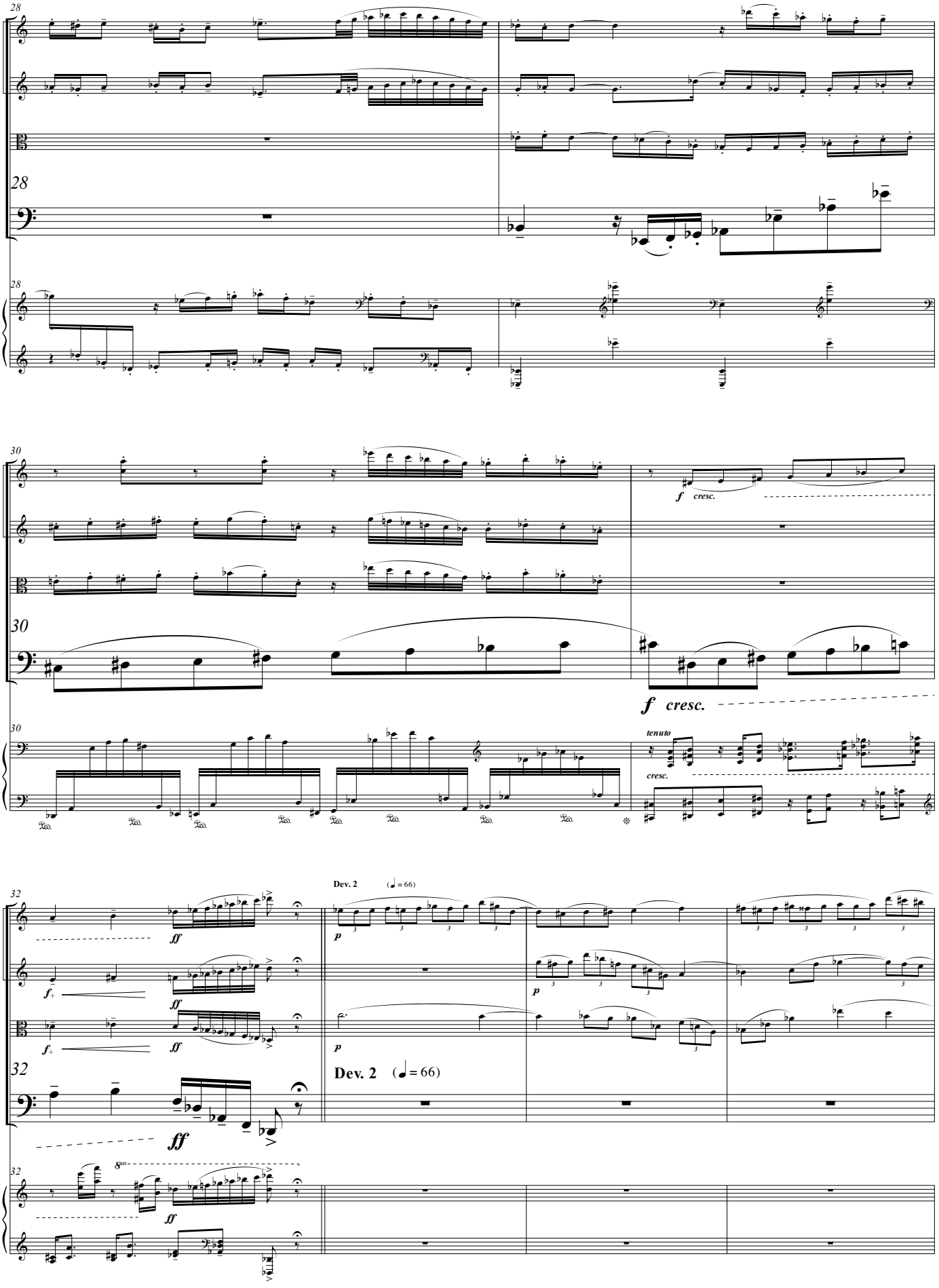
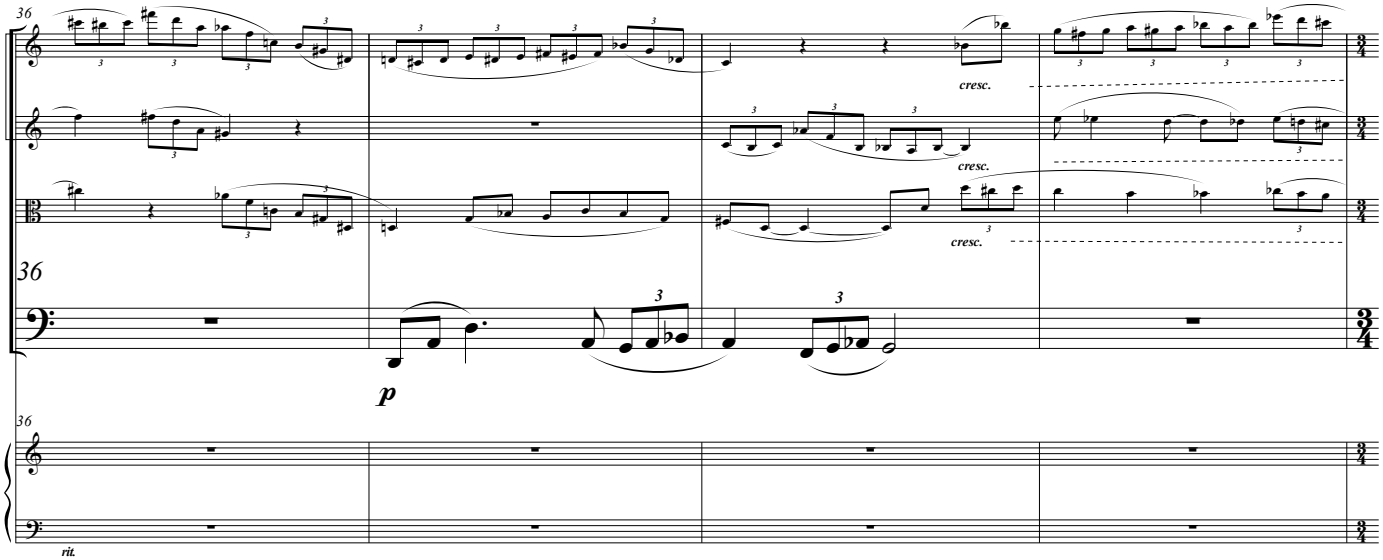
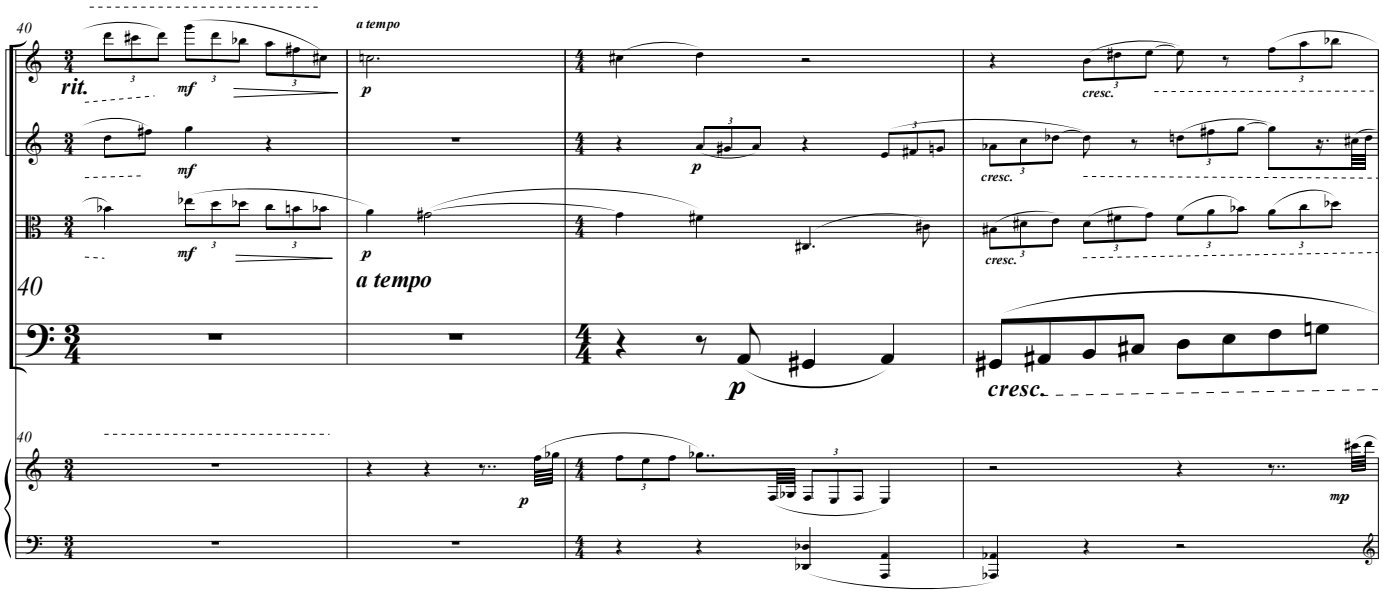
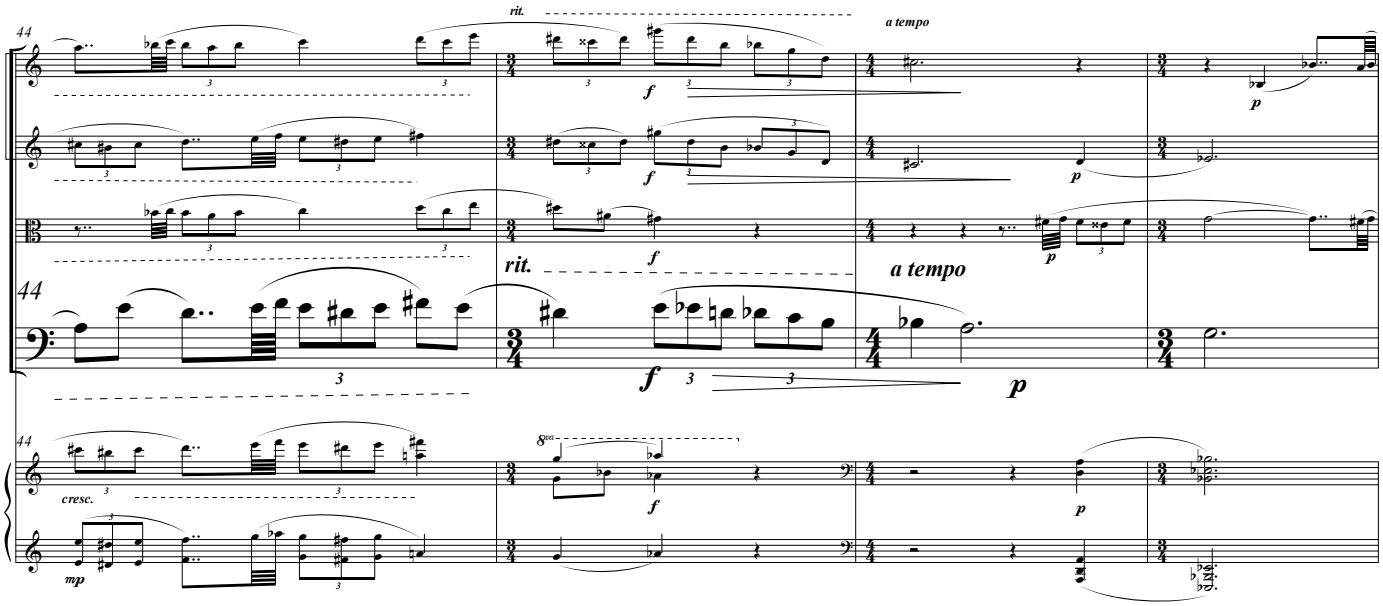

15
arco
Deviation 1 (♩ = 84)
f
arco
f
arco
f
15
Deviation 1 (♩ = 84)
arco
f
15
f
18
18
18
20
cresc. p. a p.
cresc. p. a p.
cresc. p. a p.
20
cresc. p. a p.
20
cresc. p. a p.

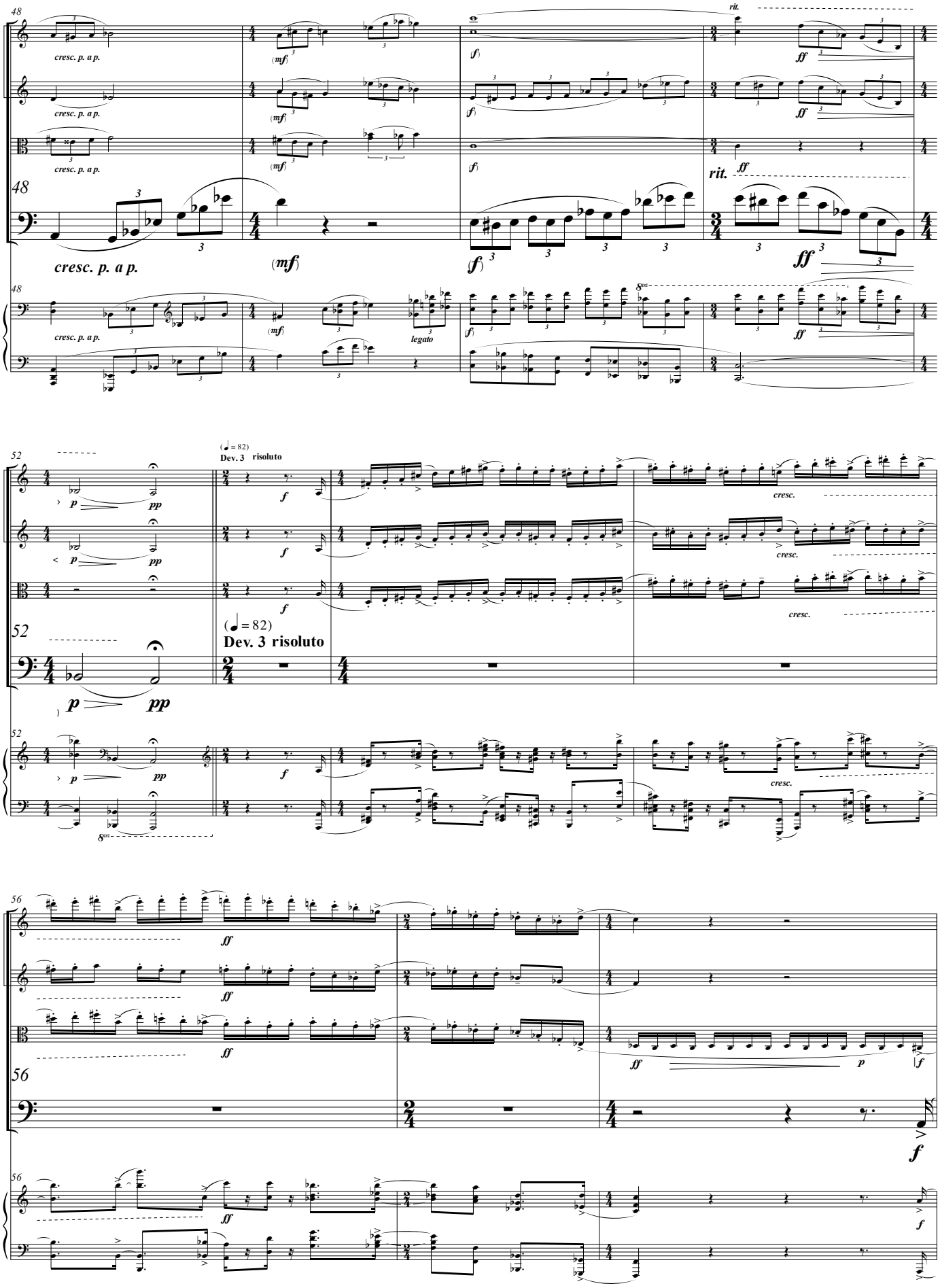

22
22
22
24
ff
ff
ff
ff
24
24
26
f
f
f
26
f
26
dim.

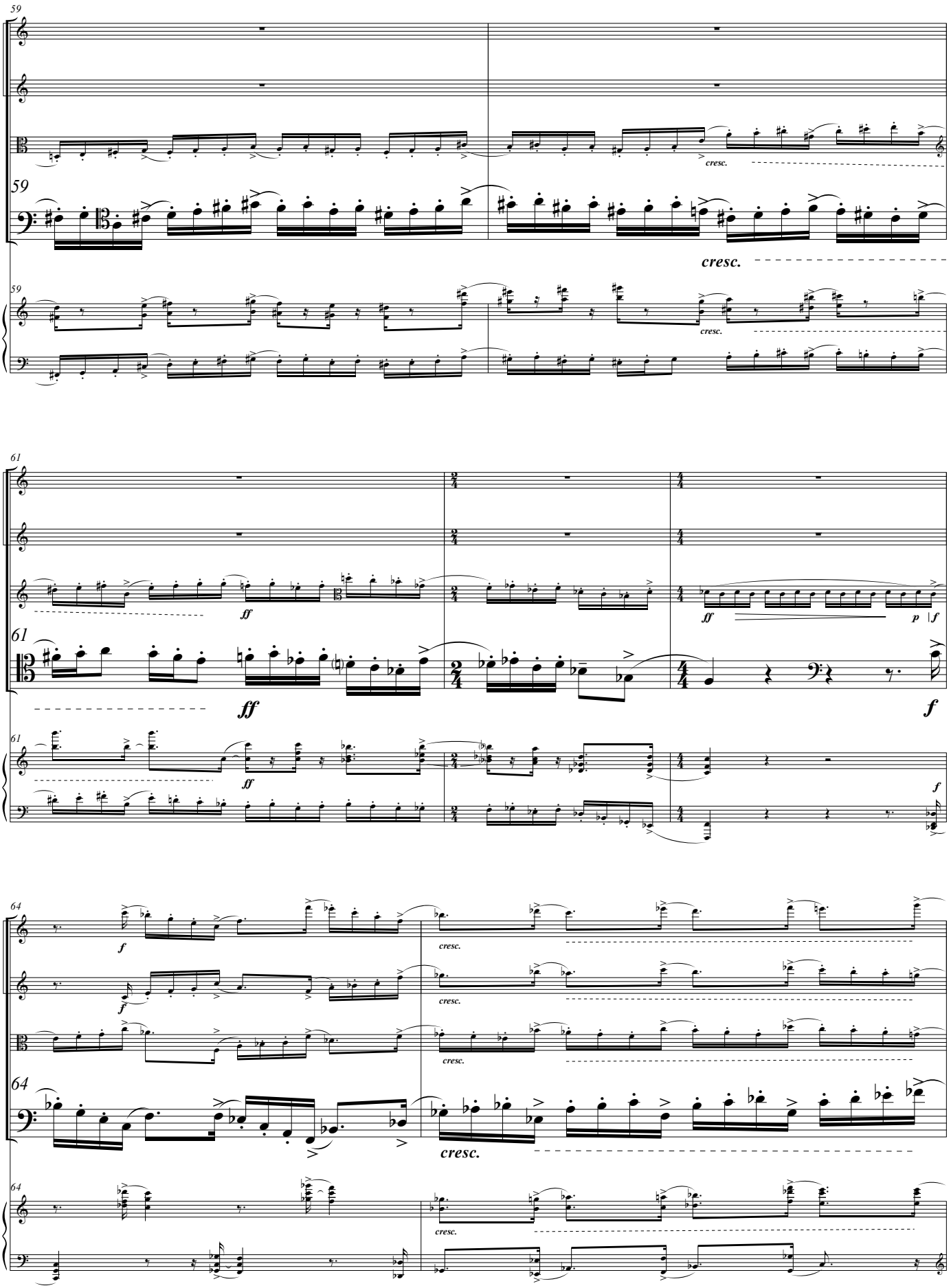

28
30
f cresc.
tenuto
32
ff
Dev. 2 (♩ = 66)
p

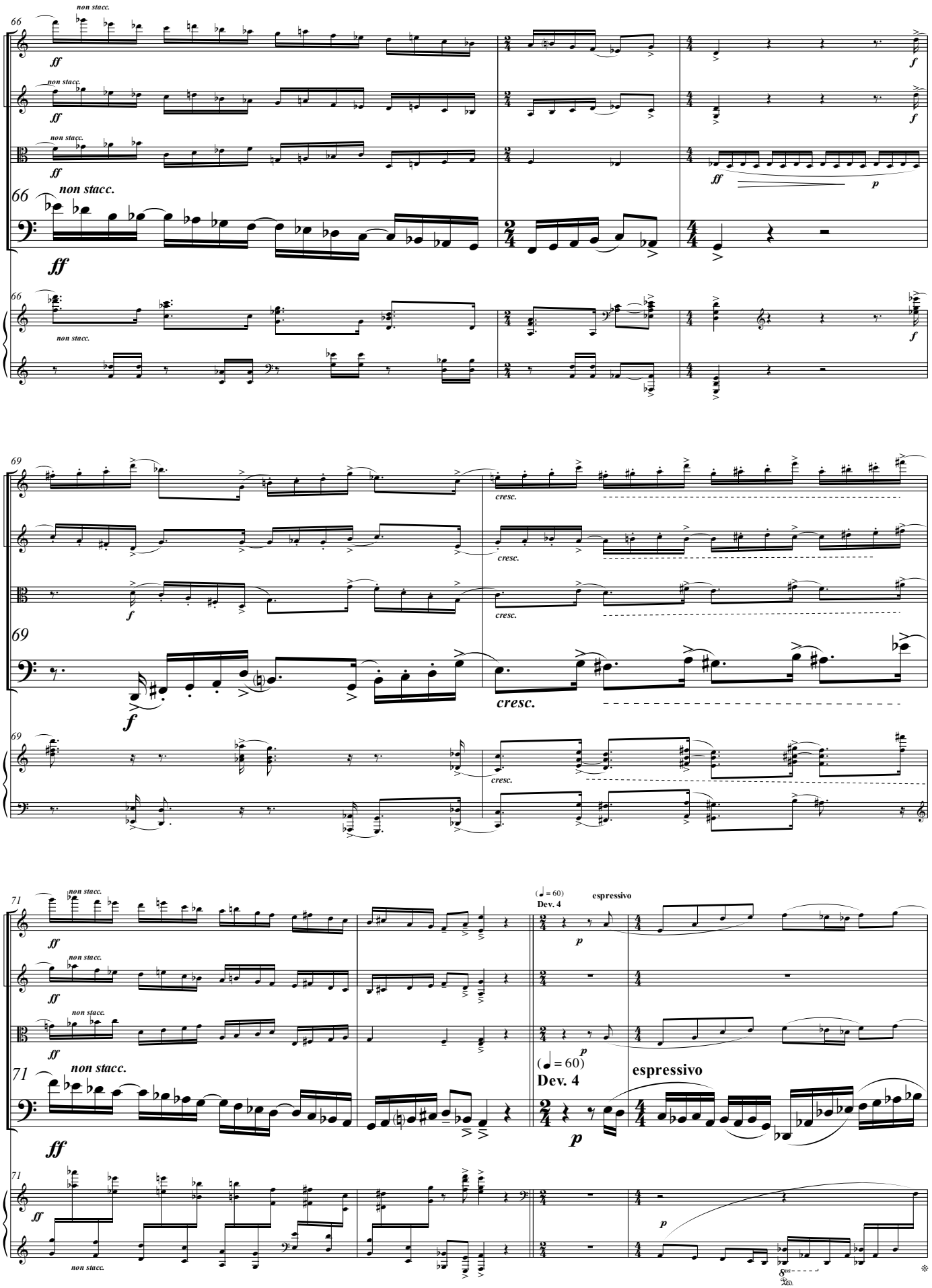

36
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
36
p
3
3
36
rit.

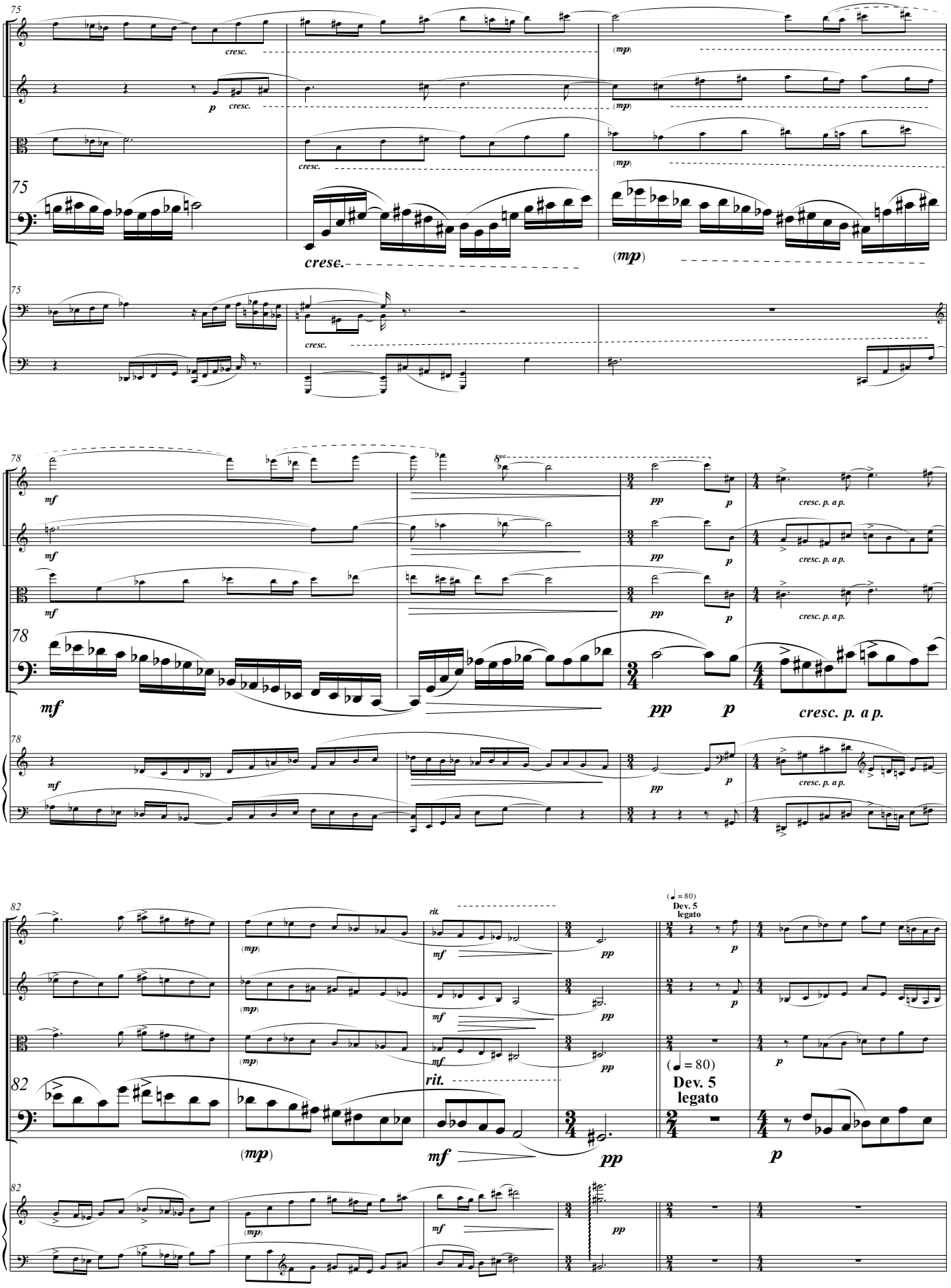

40
rit.
mf
a tempo
p
cresc.
mf
p
cresc.
mf
p
a tempo
cresc.
40
p
cresc.
40
p
mp

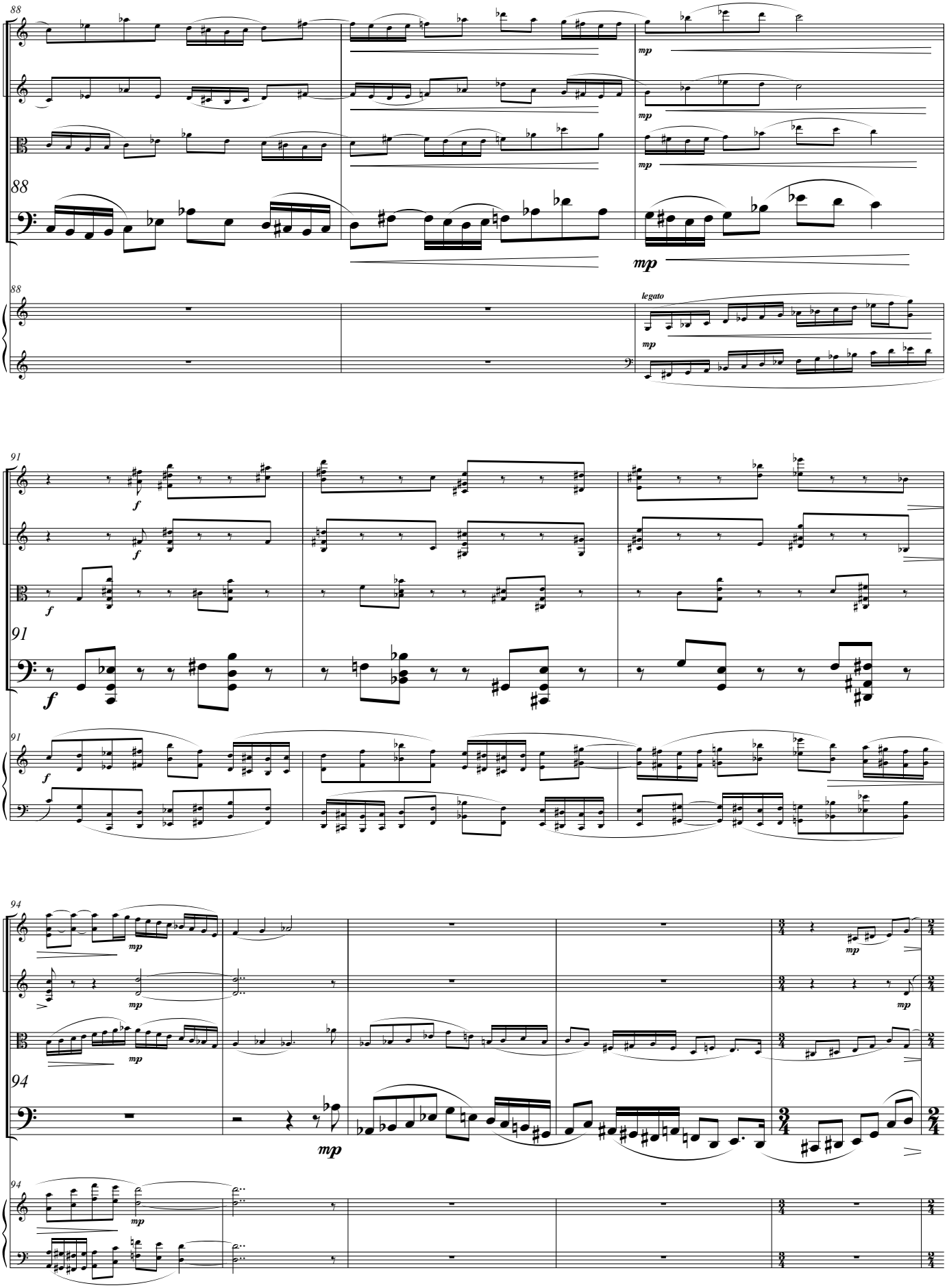

rit.
a tempo
44
f
p
f
p
rit.
f
a tempo
44
f
3
3
p
44
cresc.
8va
f
p
mp

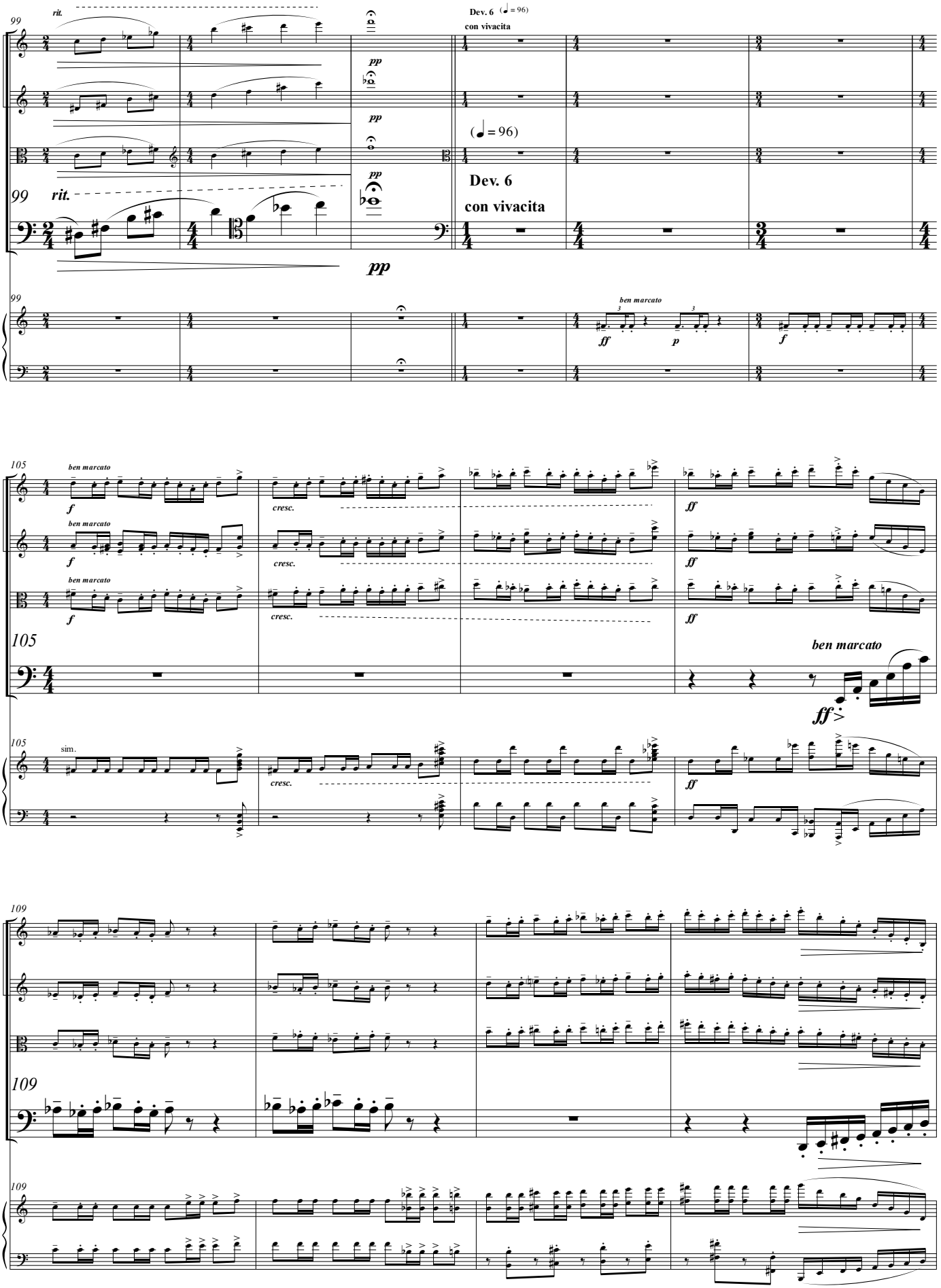

48
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
(f)
rit.
ff
legato
52
(♩ = 82)
Dev. 3 risoluto
p
pp
f
cresc.
56

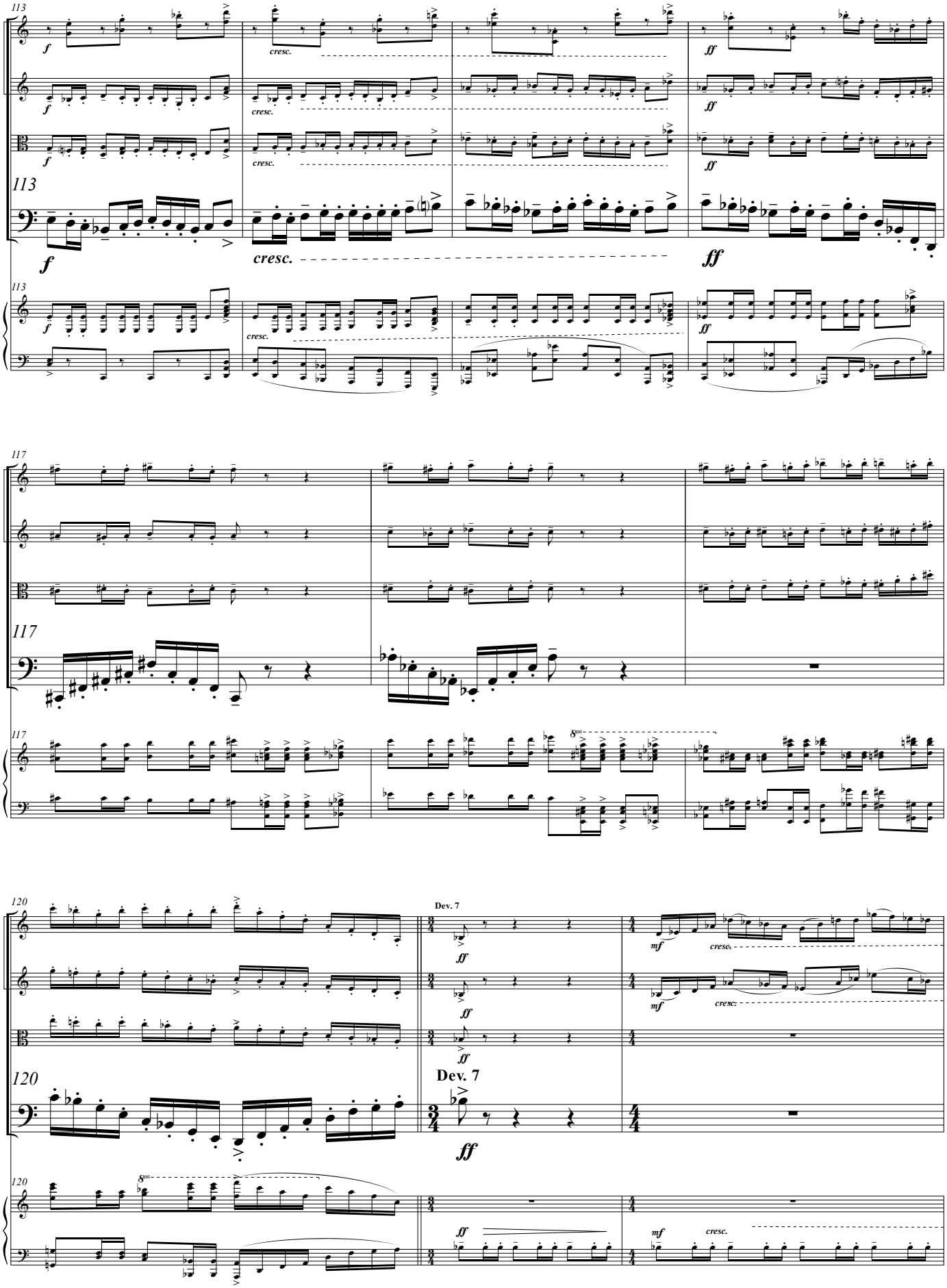

59
cresc.
61
ff
f
64
cresc.

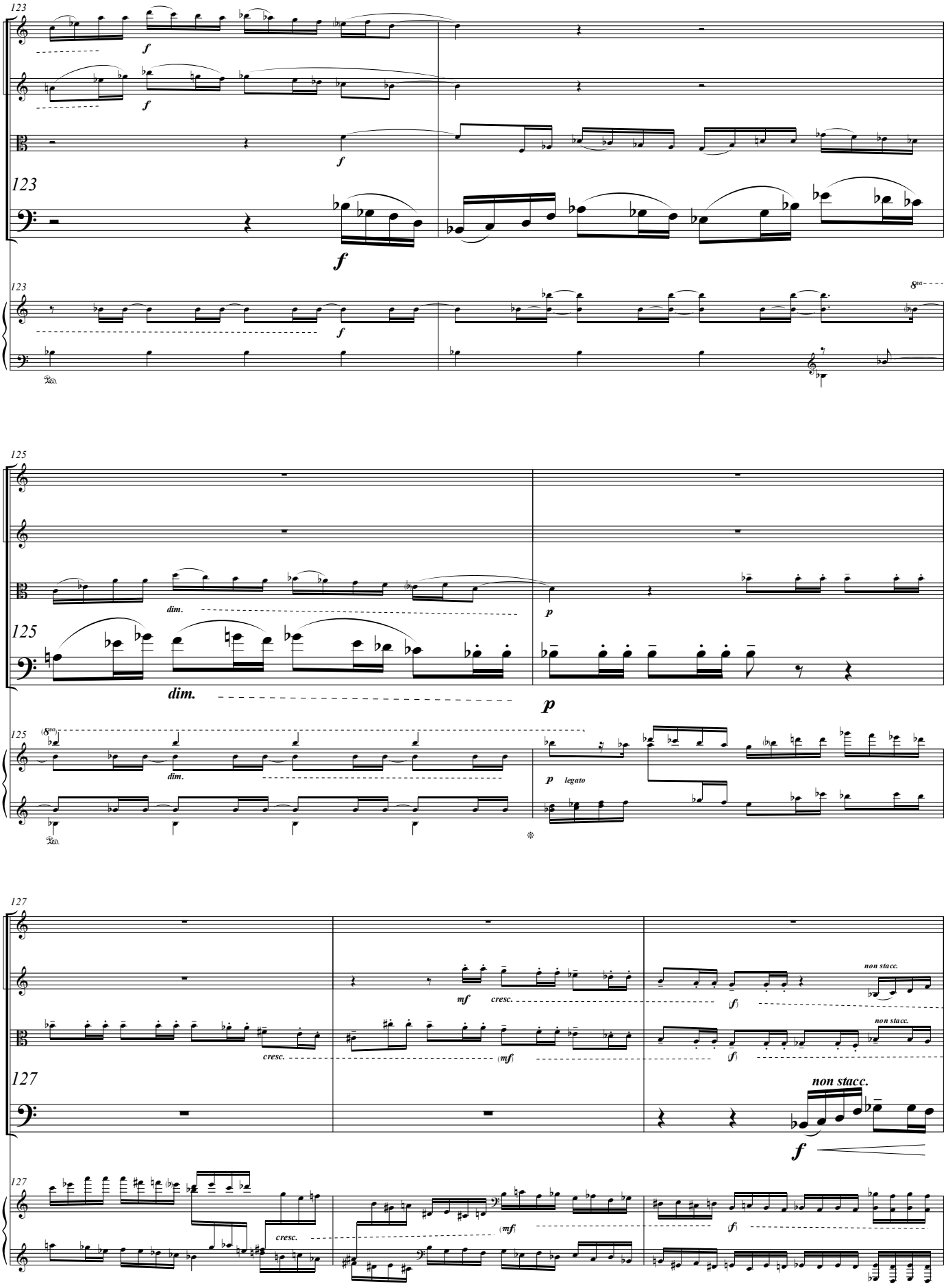

66
non stacc.
ff
f
p
69
cresc.
71
(♩ = 60)
Dev. 4
espressivo

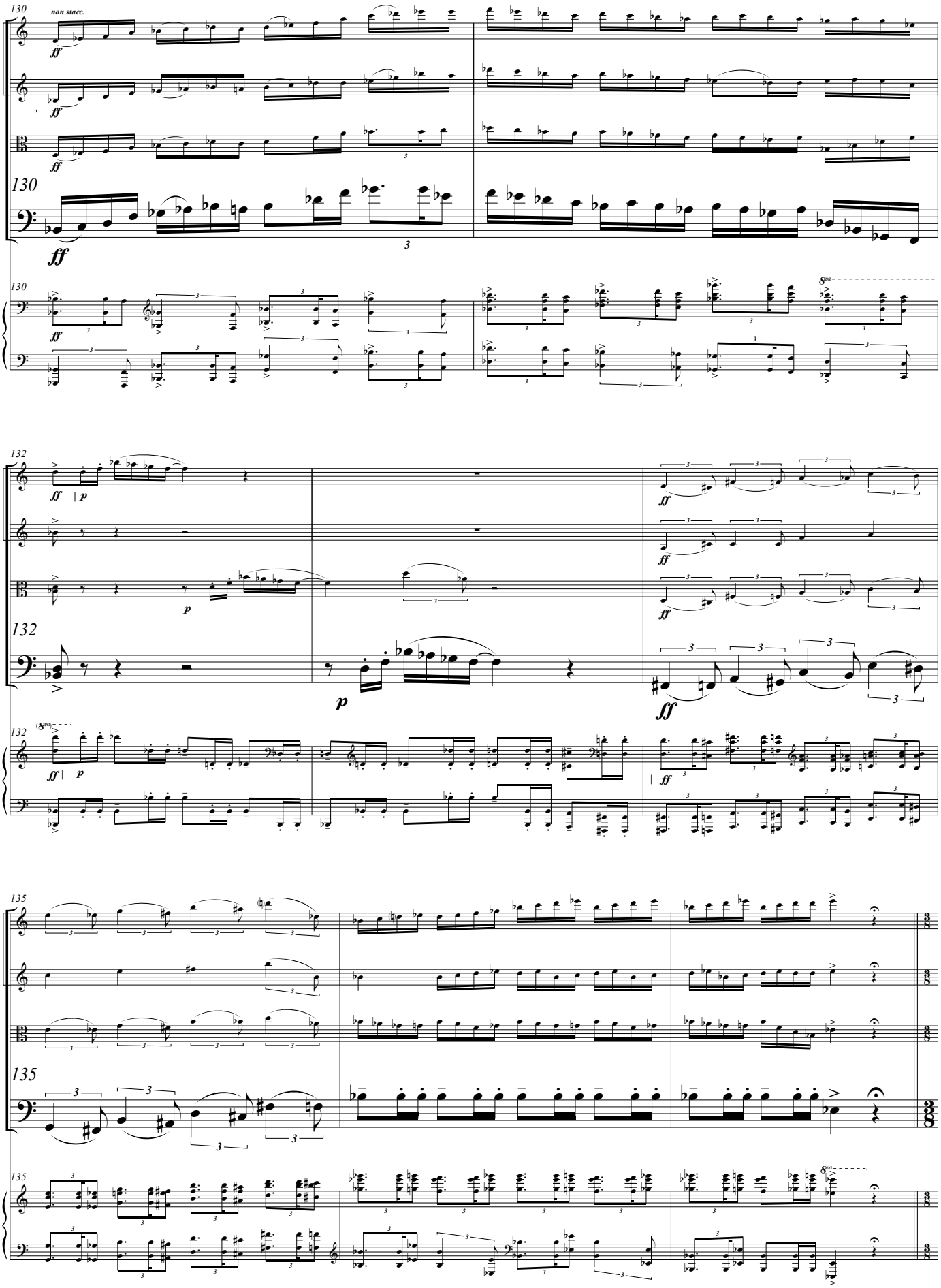

75
cresc.
(mp)
crese.
78
mf
pp
p
cresc. p. a p.
82
rit.
(♩ = 80)
Dev. 5
legato

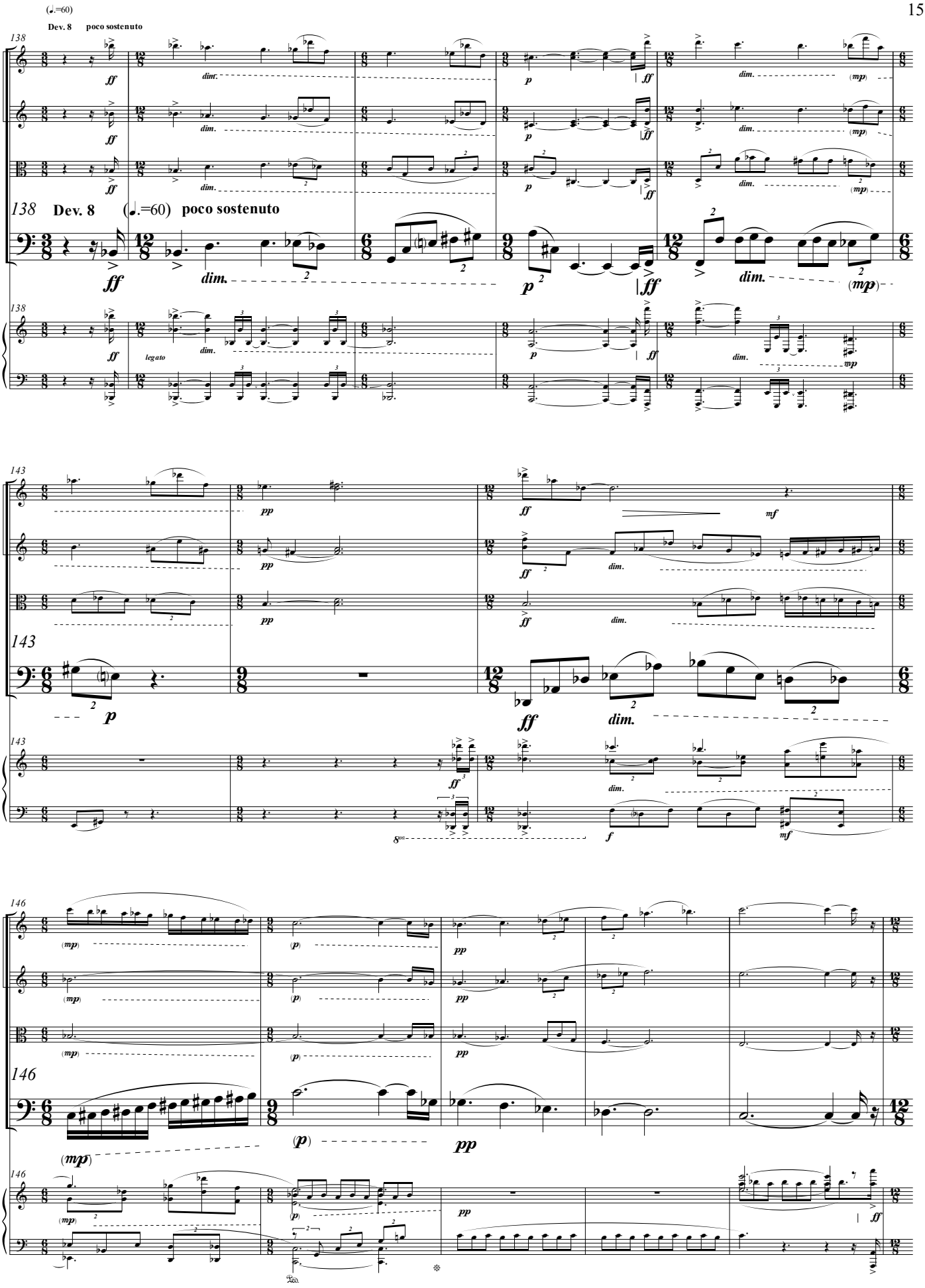

88
mp
legato
91
f
94
mp

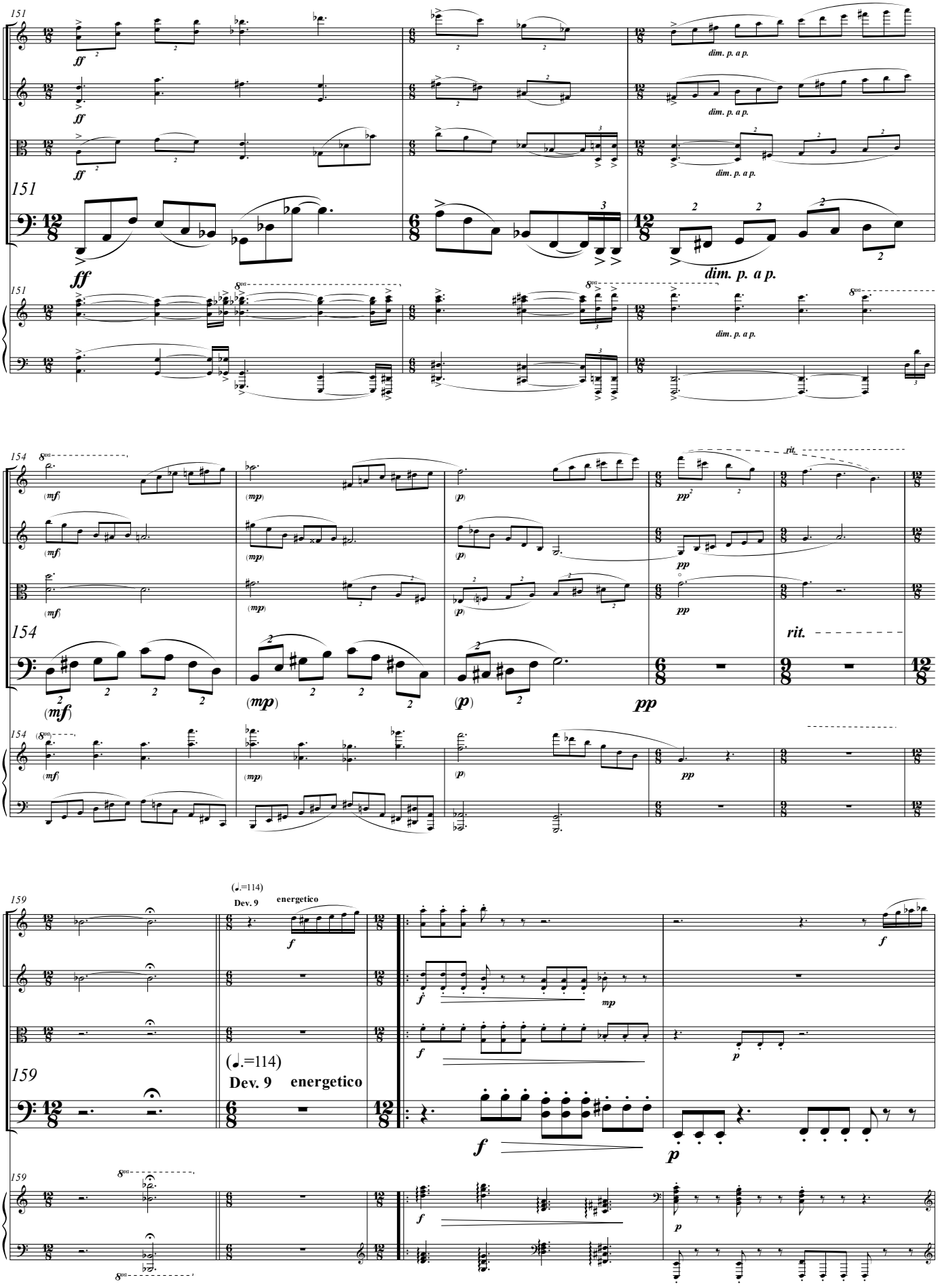

99
rit.
Dev. 6
con vivacita
(♩ = 96)
pp
ben marcato
ff
p
f
105
cresc.
ff
sim.
109

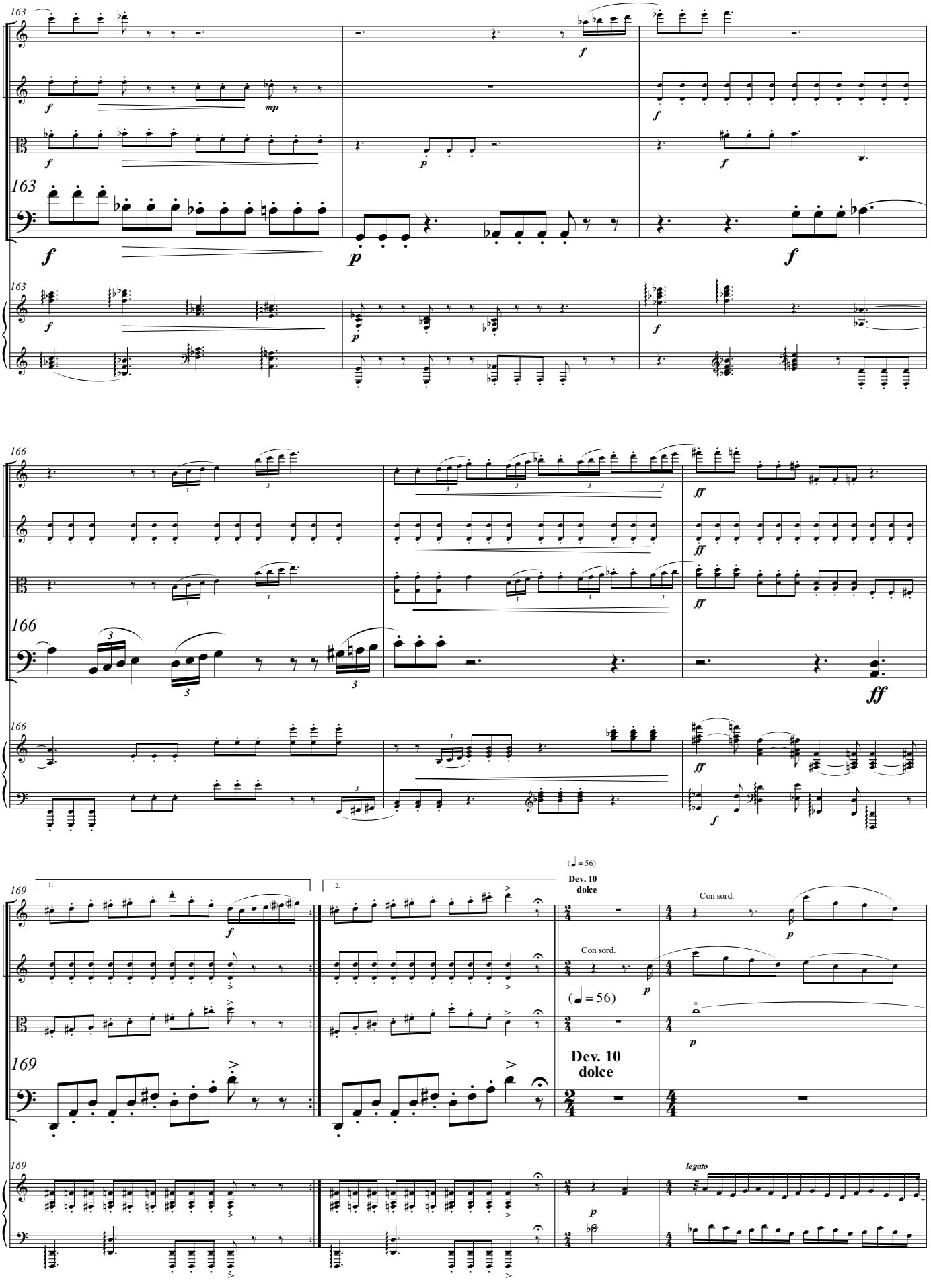

113
f
cresc.
ff
117
120
Dev. 7
mf

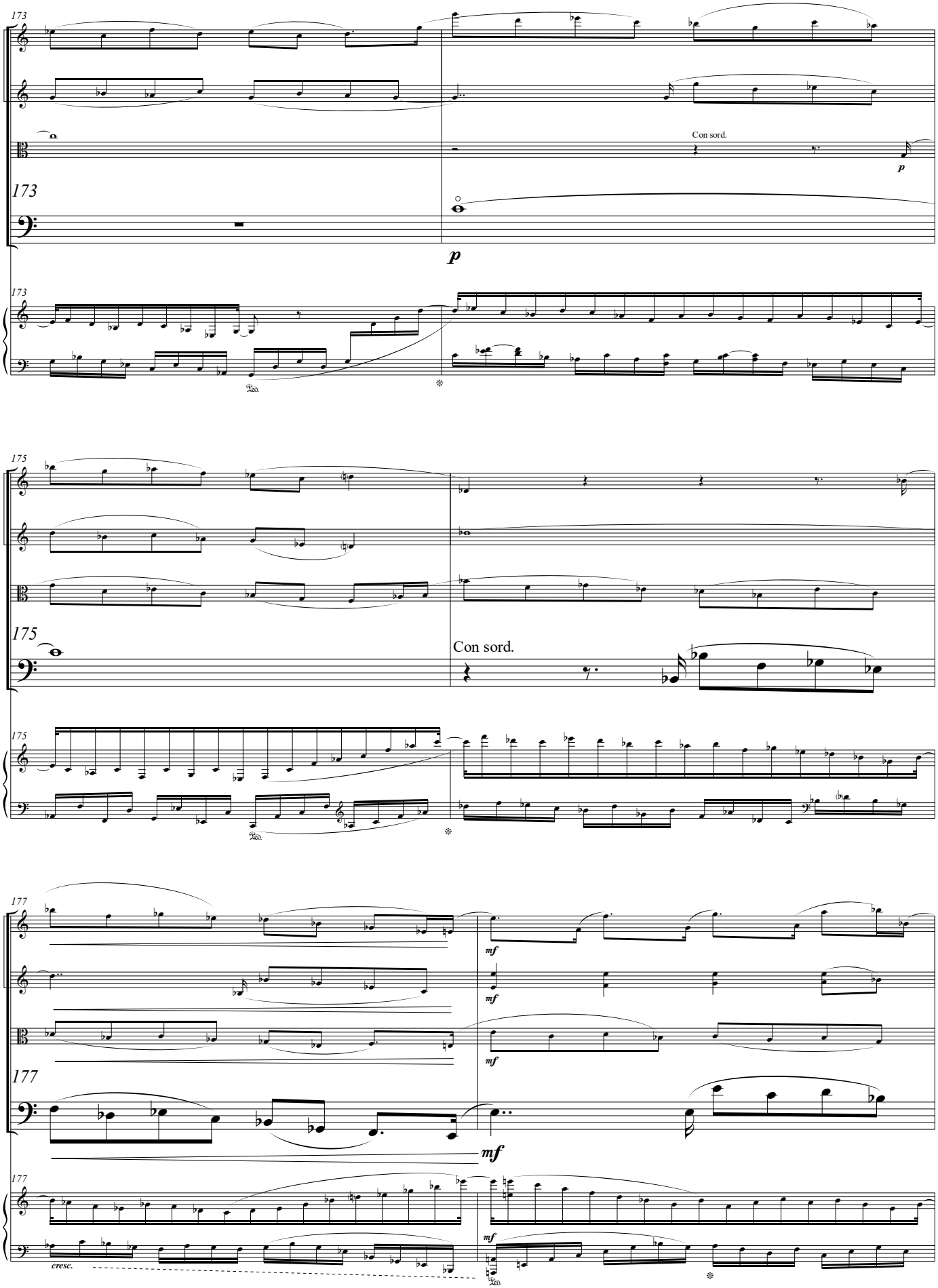

123
f
f
f
123
f
123
f
8va
125
dim.
p
125
dim.
p
125
(8va)
dim.
p legato
127
mf
cresc.
(f)
non stacc.
cresc.
(mf)
(f)
non stacc.
127
non stacc.
f
127
cresc.
(mf)
(f)

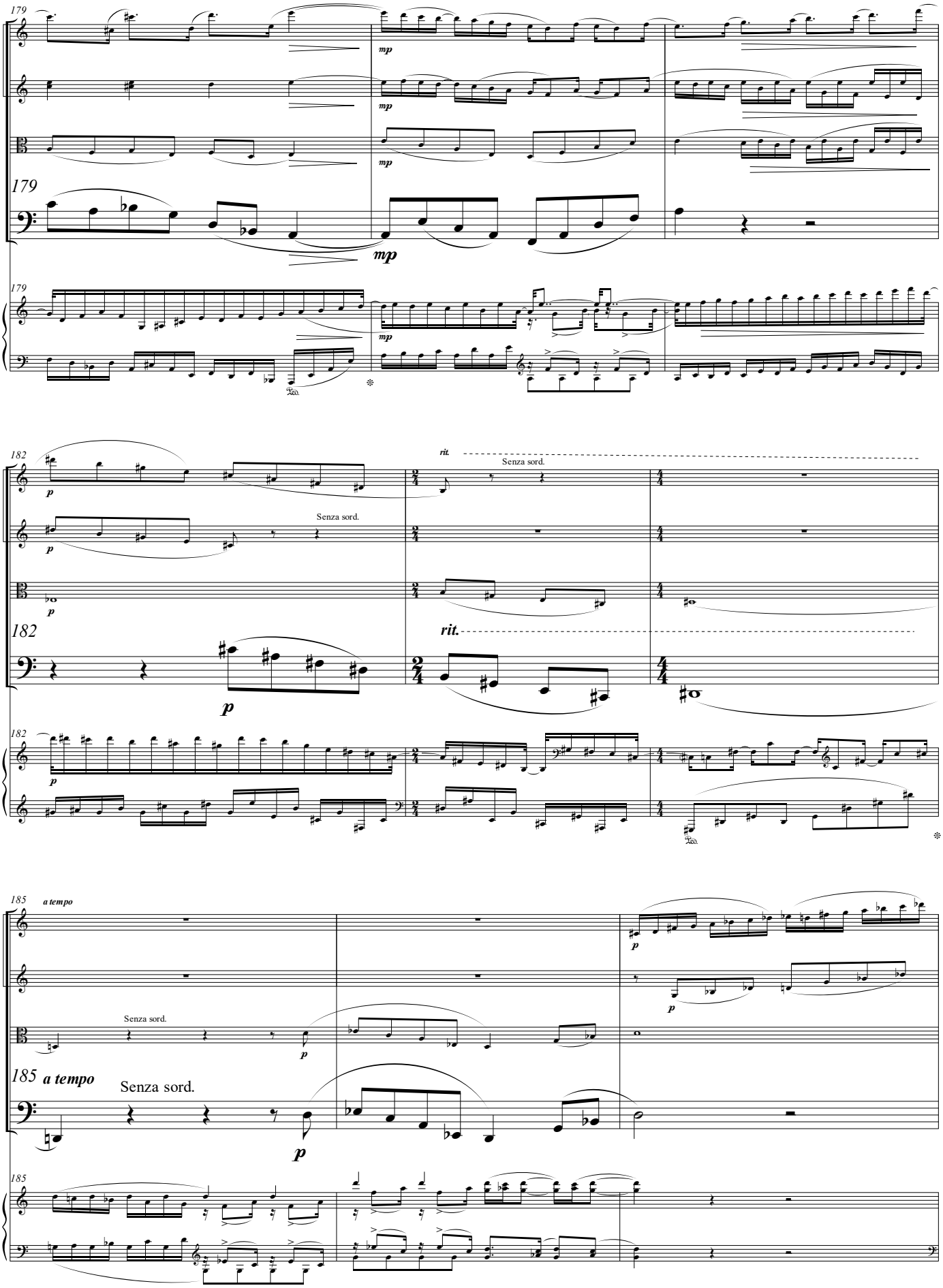

130
non stacc.
ff
132
p
135

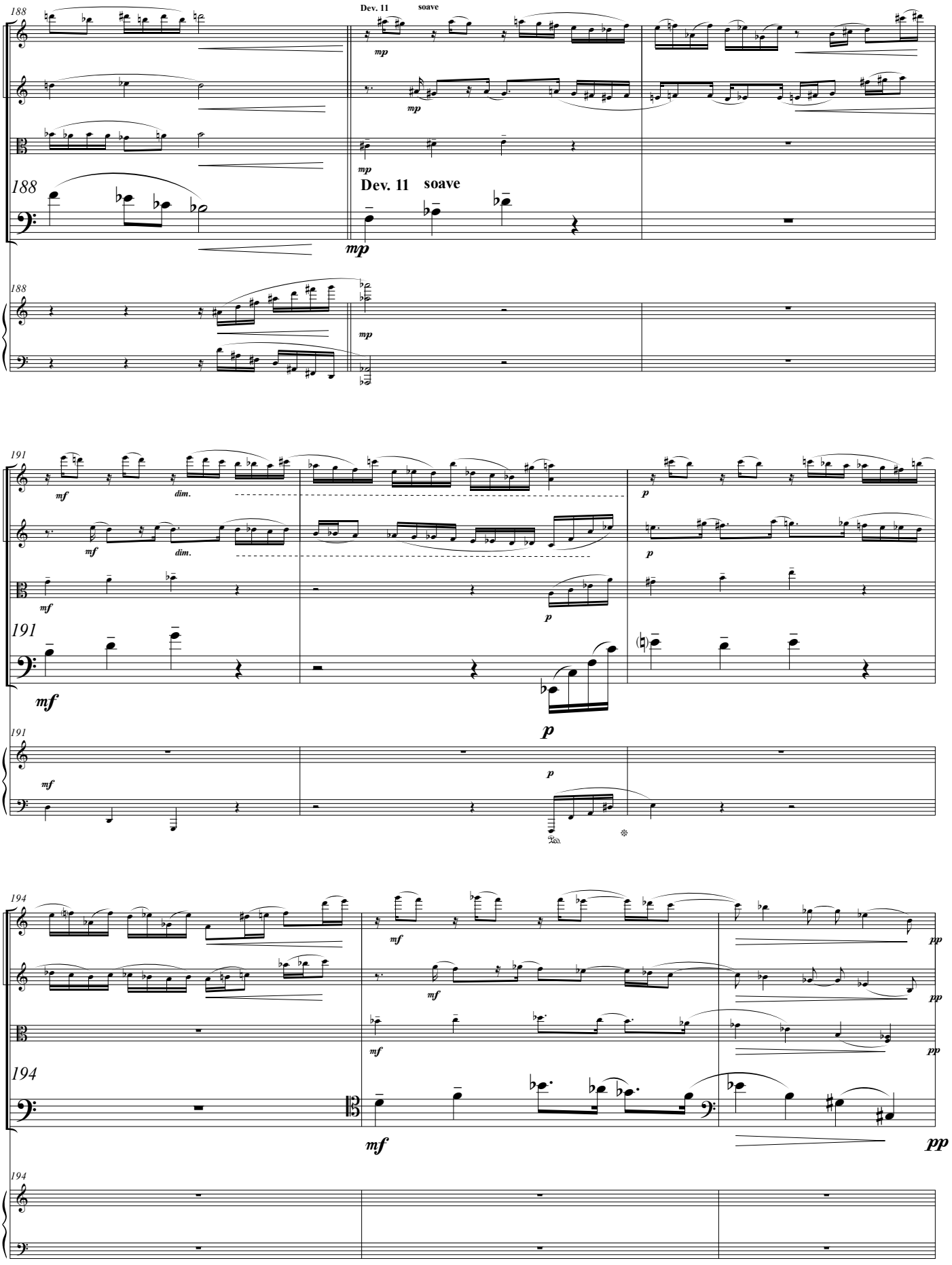

(♩.=60)
Dev. 8
poco sostenuto
138
ff
dim.
p
(mp)
legato
mp
143
pp
mf
f
8va
146
(p)
Ped.

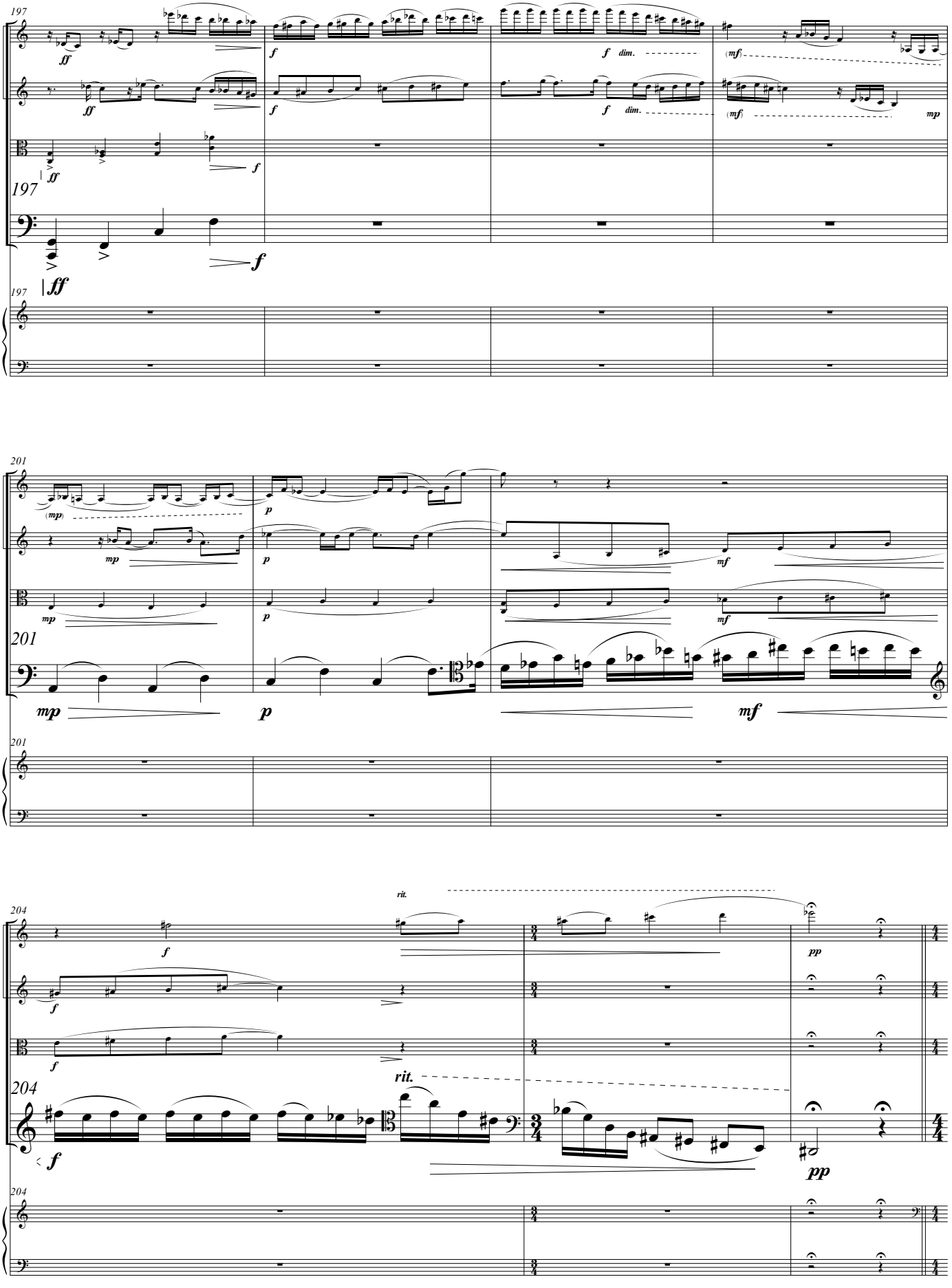

151
ff
dim. p. a p.
154
(mf)
(mp)
(p)
pp
rit.
159
(♩.=114)
Dev. 9
energetico
f
mp
p

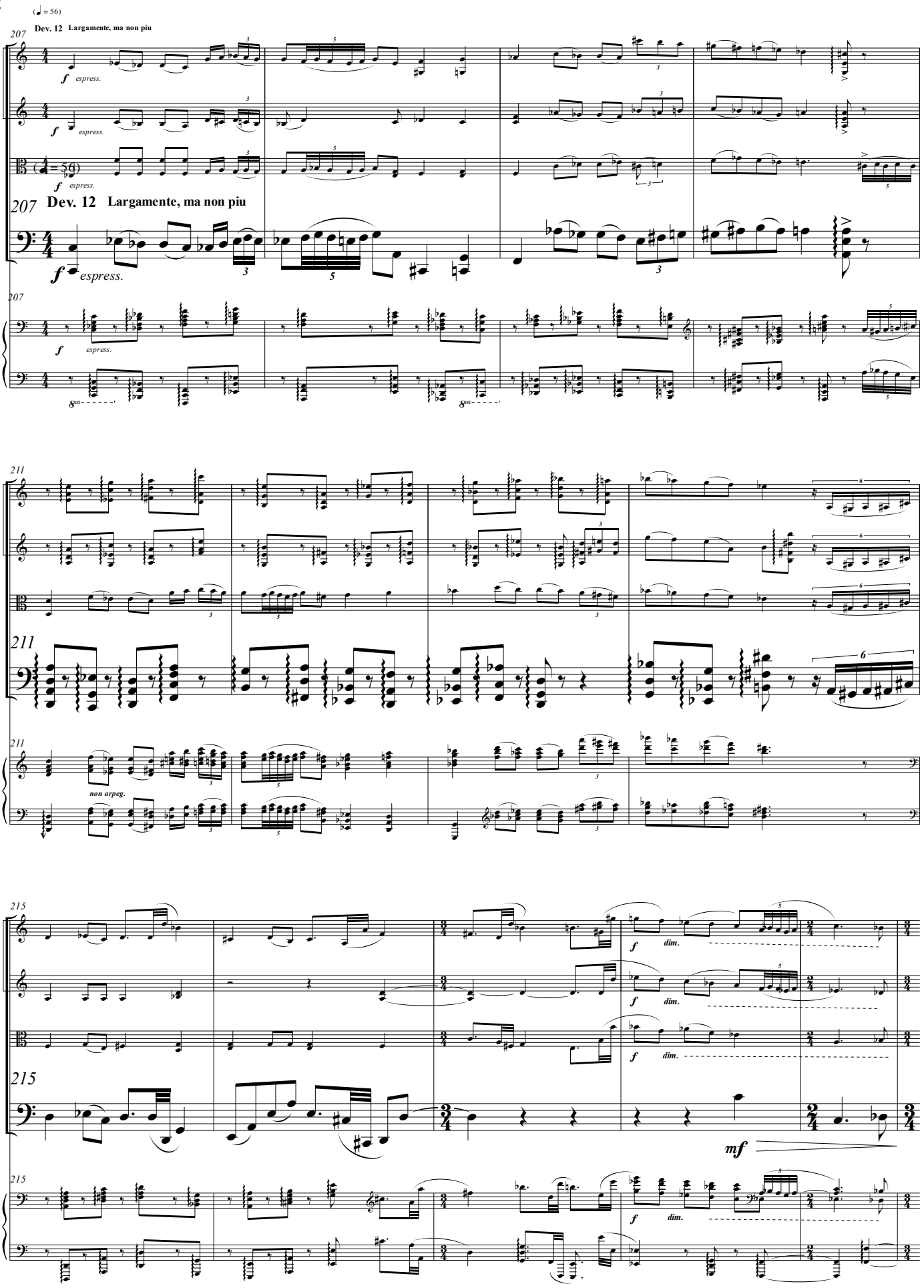

163
166
169
1.
2.
(♩ = 56)
Dev. 10
dolce
Con sord.
legato

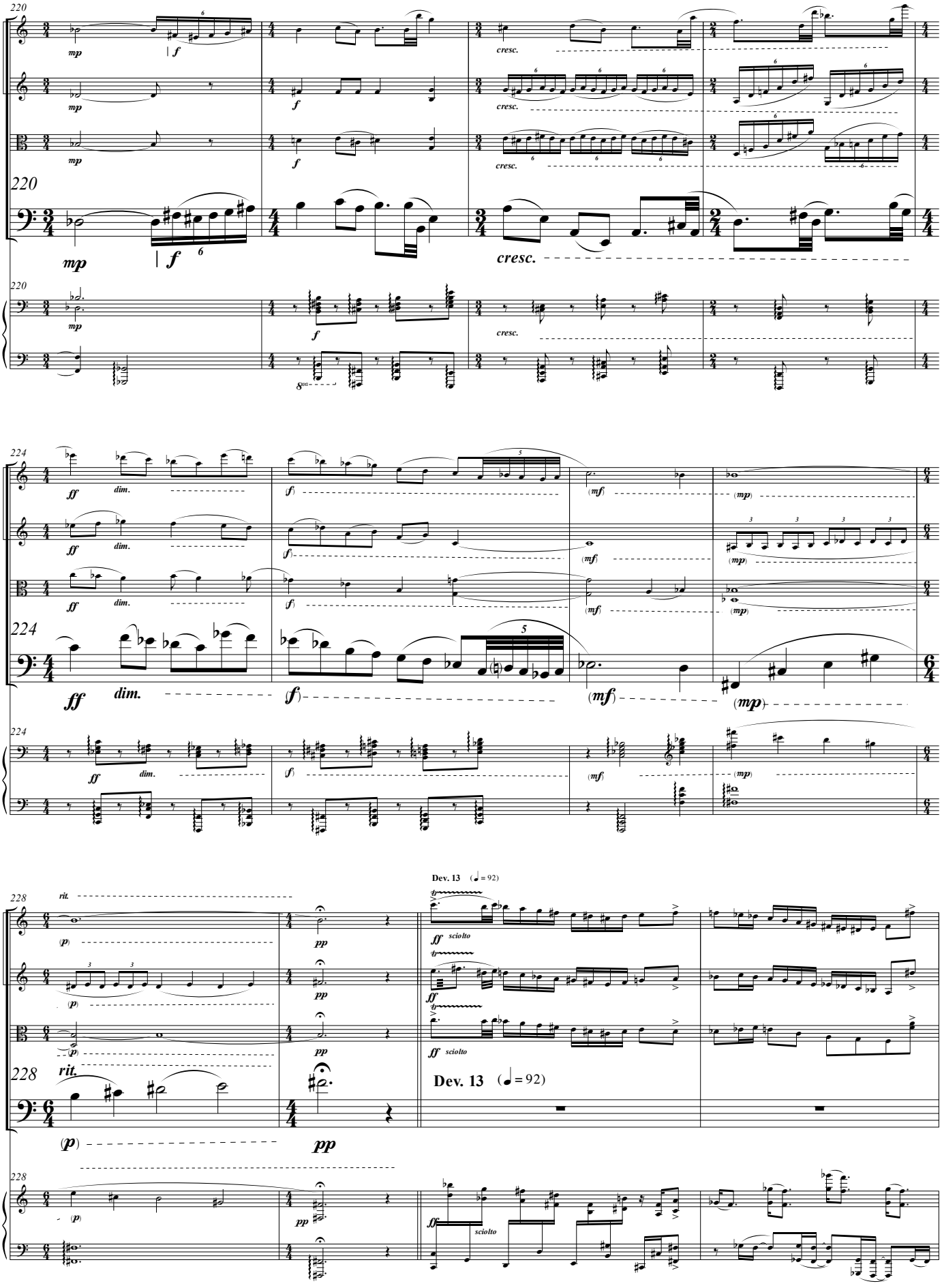

173
Con sord.
p
173
p
173
175
Con sord.
175
175
177
mf
mf
mf
177
mf
177
cresc.
mf

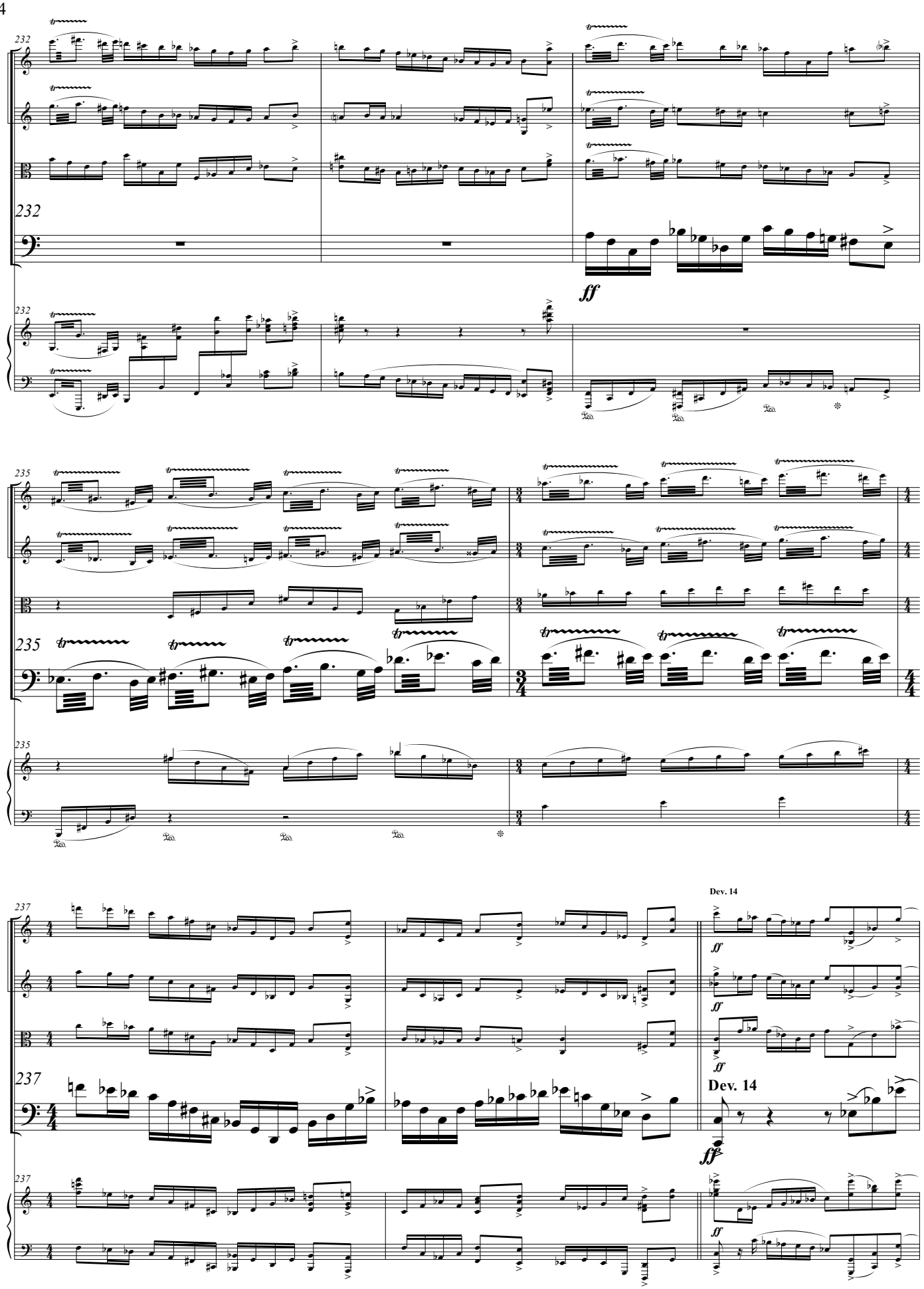

179
mp
182
p
rit.
Senza sord.
185
a tempo
Senza sord.

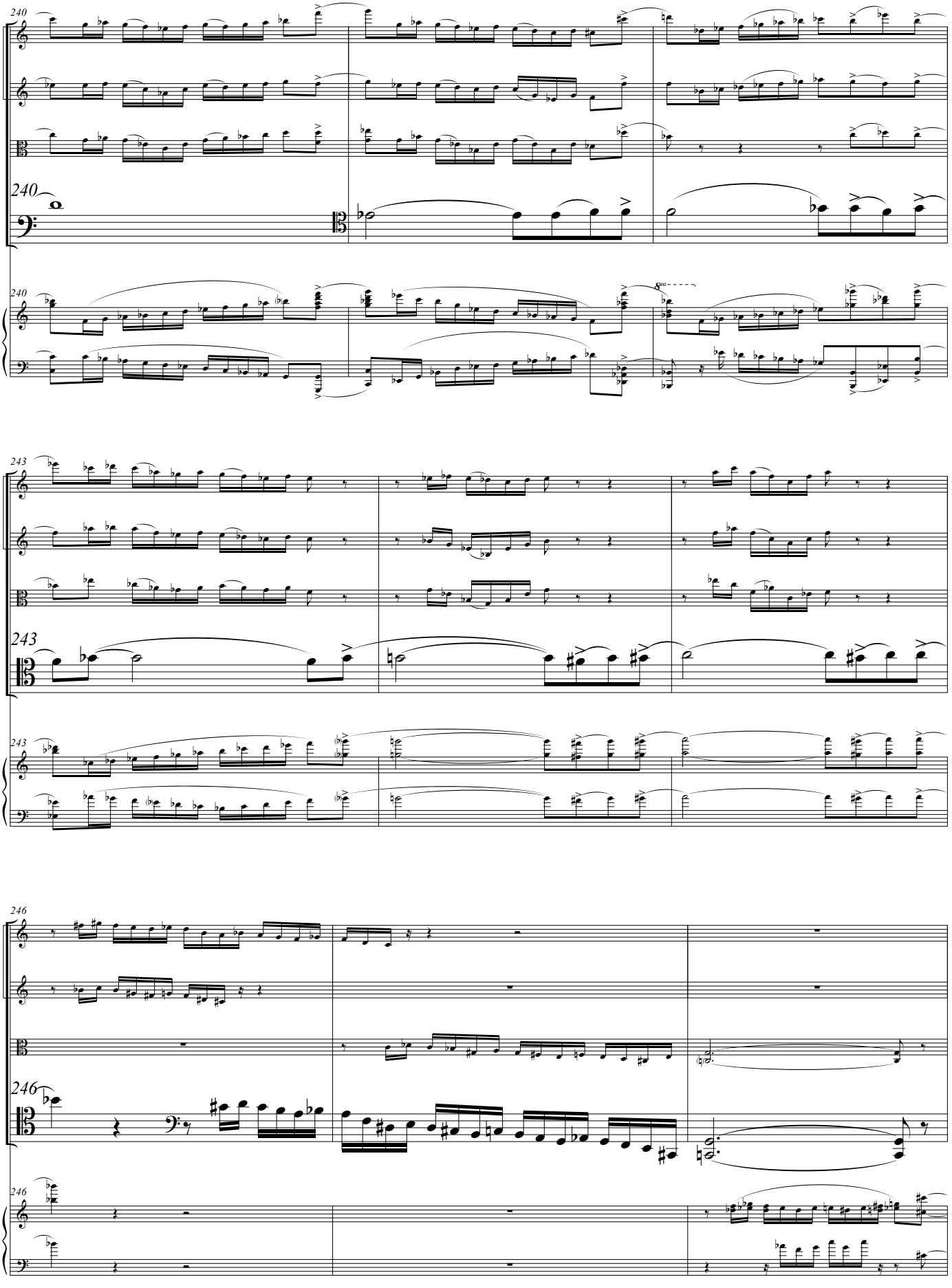

188
Dev. 11 soave
mp
188
Dev. 11 soave
mp
188
mp
191
mf
dim.
mf
dim.
mf
p
p
191
mf
p
191
mf
p
194
mf
mf
mf
pp
pp
pp
194
mf
pp
194


197
ff
f
f dim.
(mf)
mp
197
ff
f
197
ff
201
(mp)
mp
p
mf
201
mp
p
mf
201
rit.
204
f
pp
rit.
204
f
pp
204


(♩ = 56)
Dev. 12 Largamente, ma non piu
207
f espress.
211
non arpeg.
215
dim.
mf


220
mp
f
cresc.
224
ff
dim.
(f)
(mf)
(mp)
228
rit.
(p)
pp
Dev. 13 (♩ = 92)
ff sciolto


232
ff
235
237
Dev. 14


240
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243
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246
246
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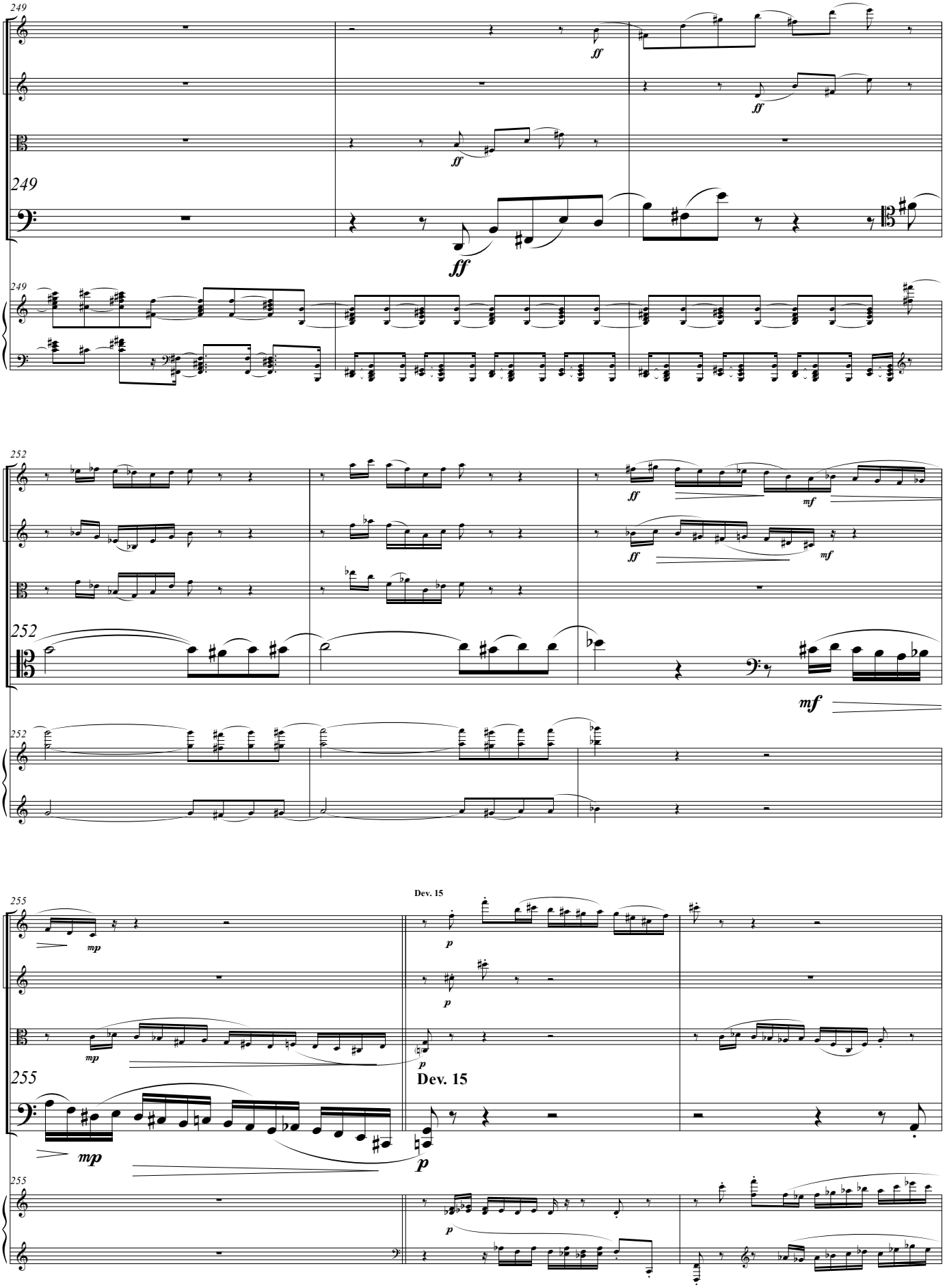
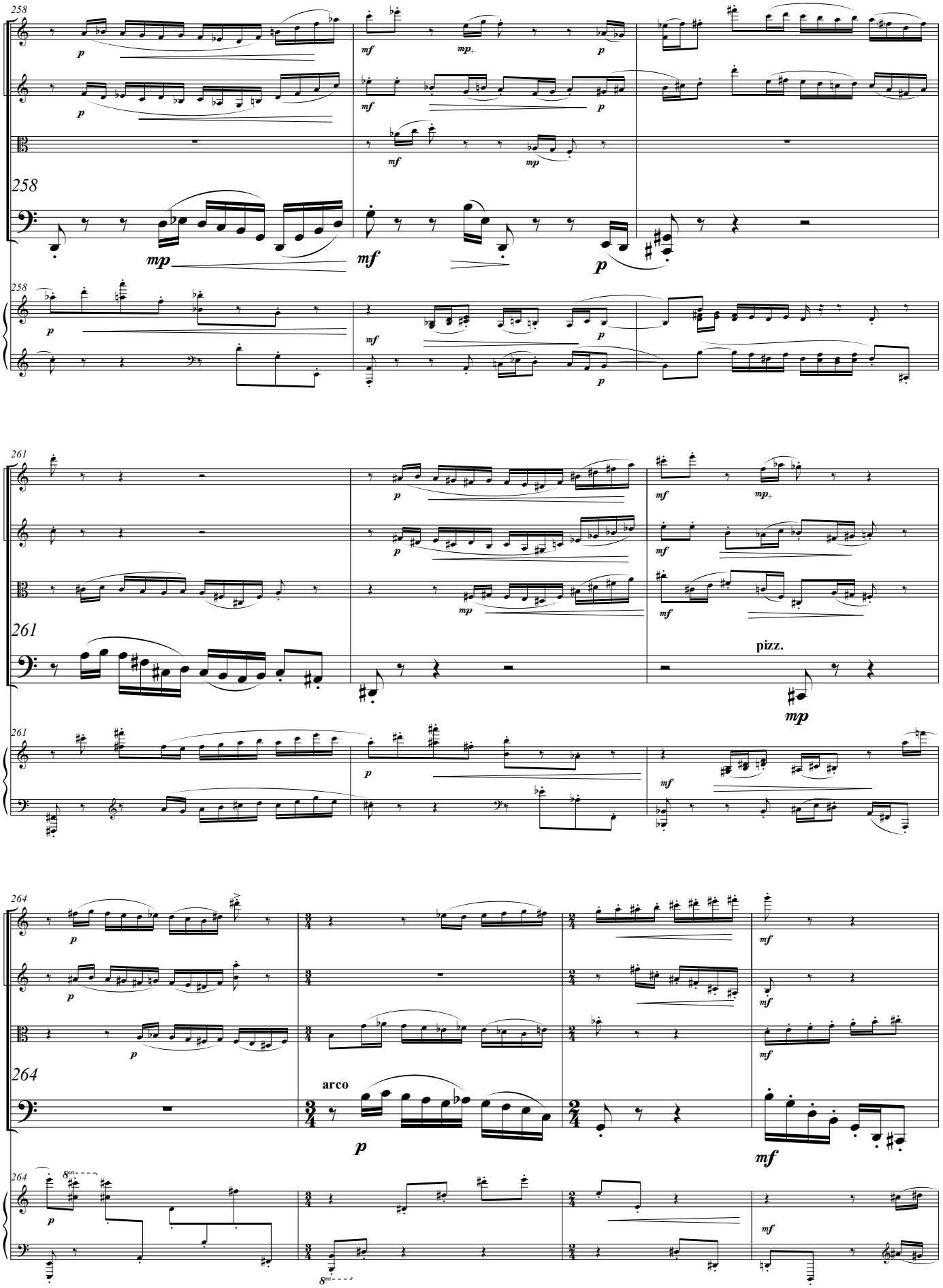
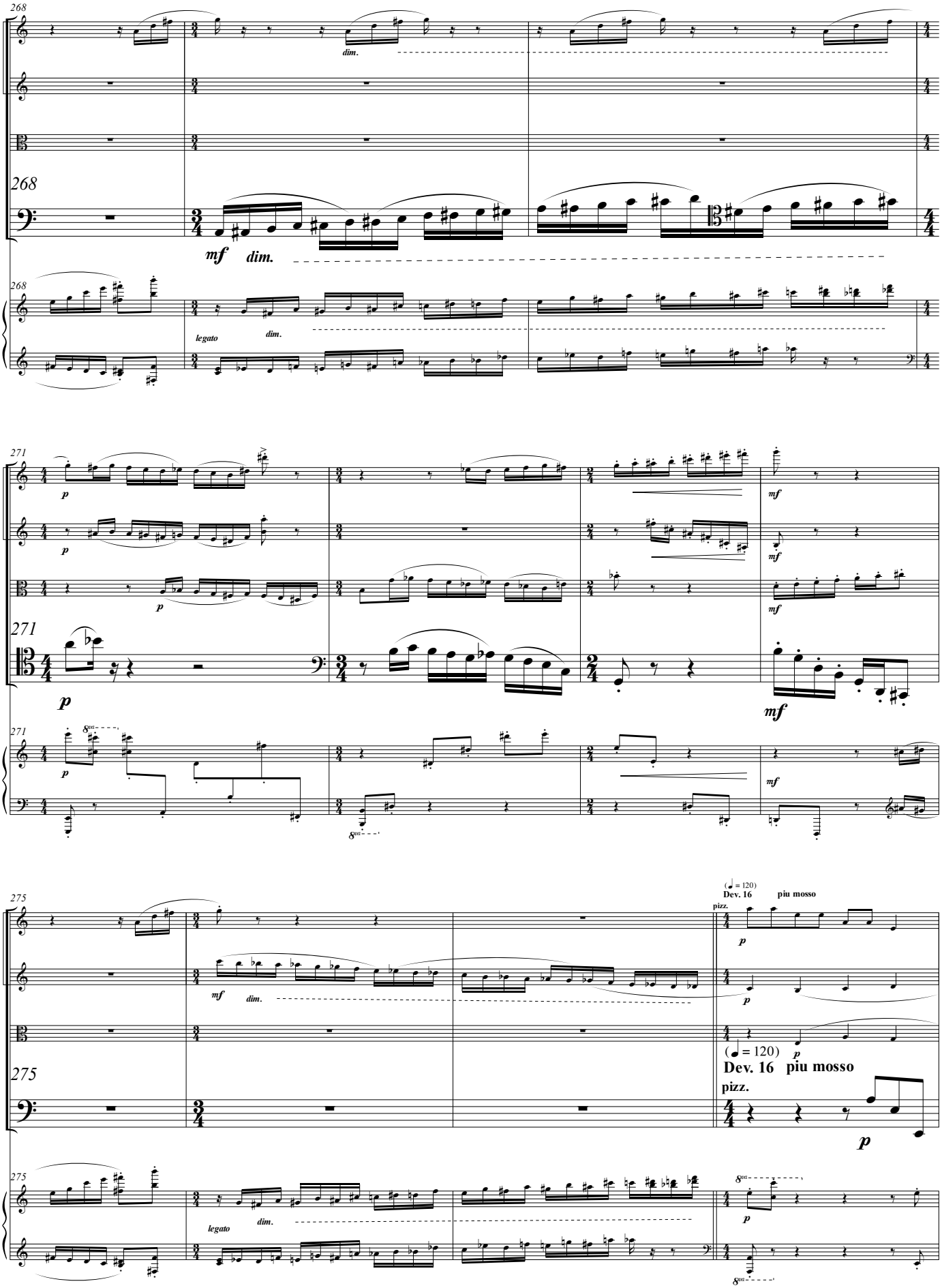
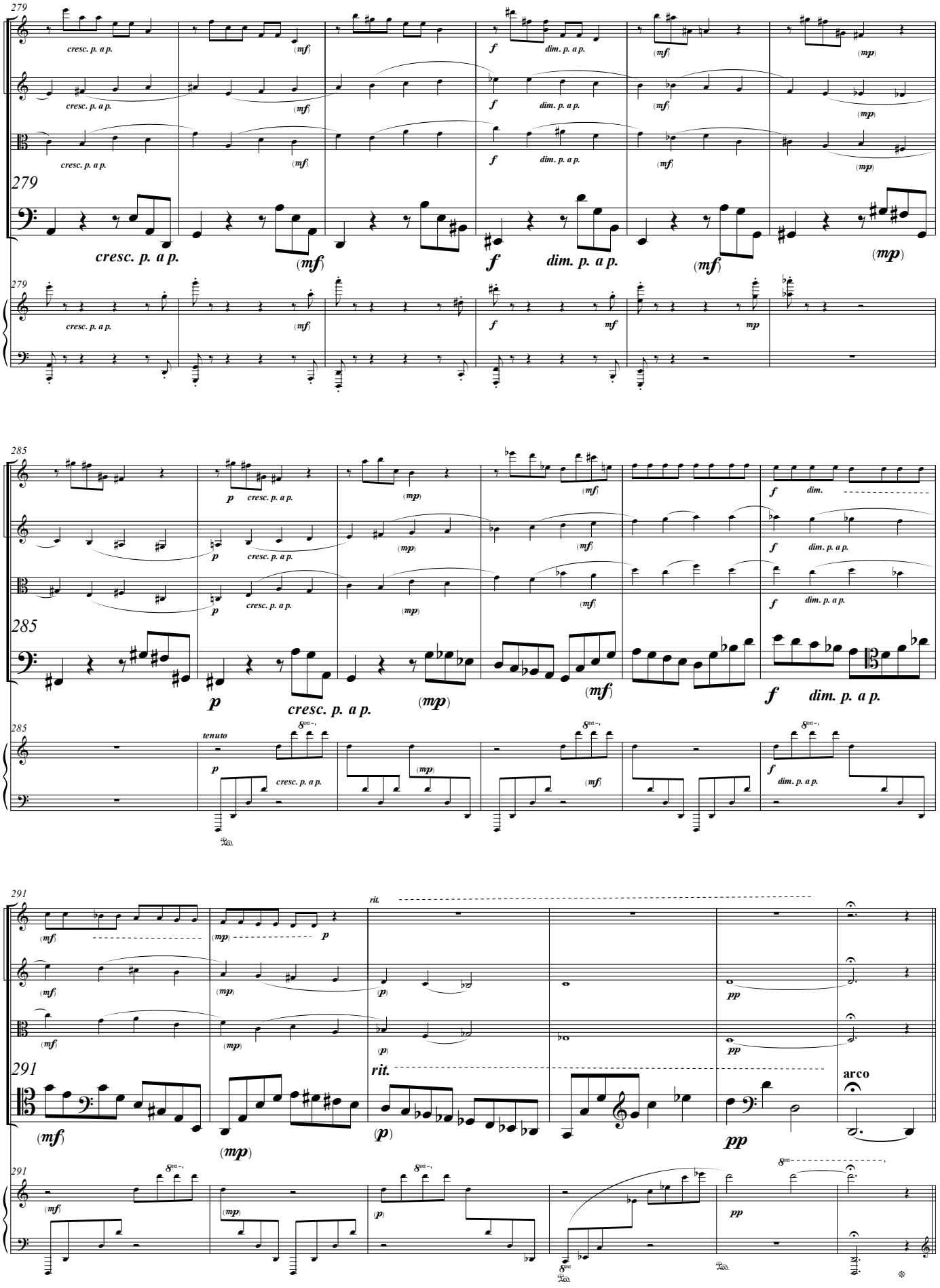
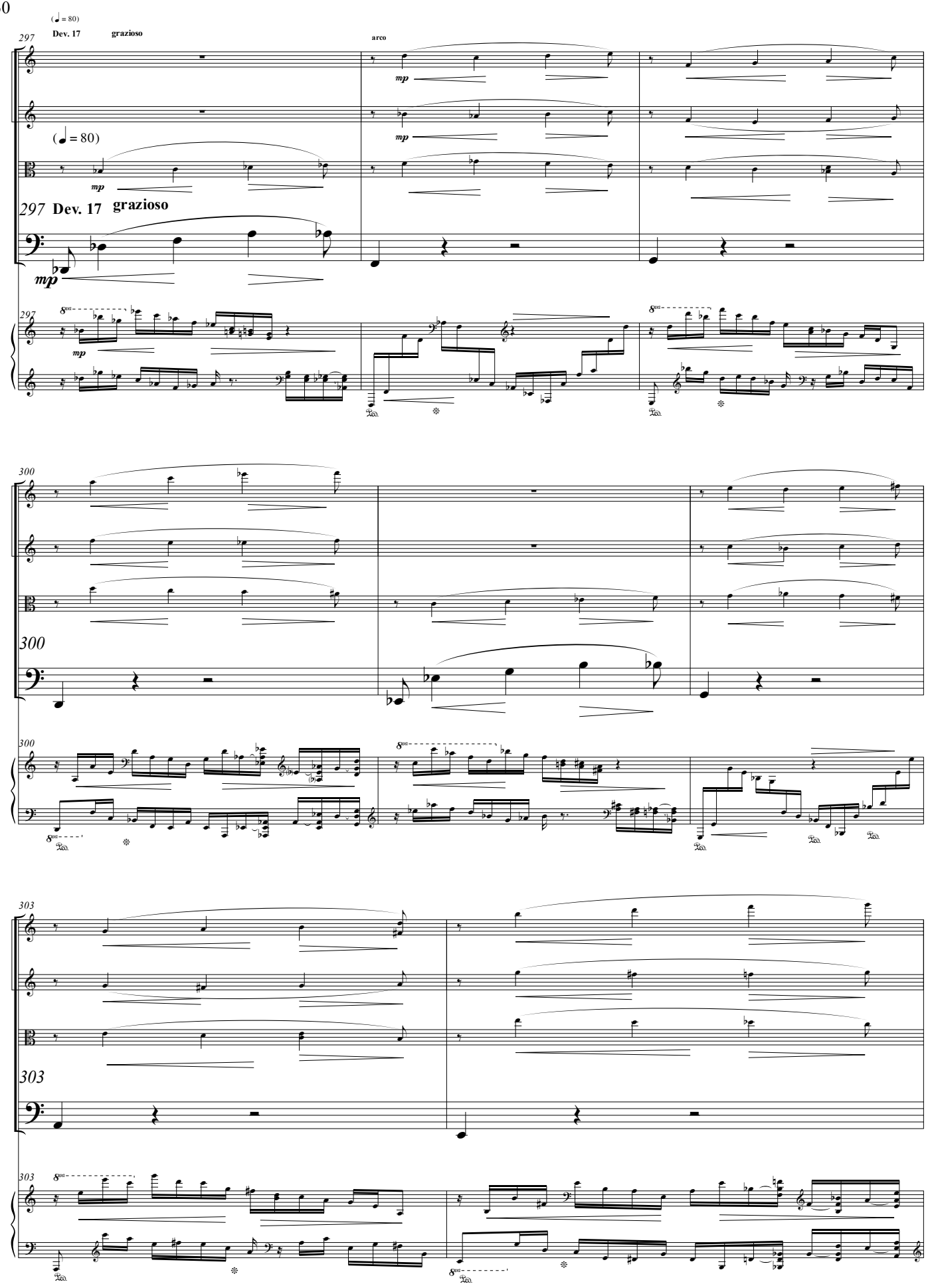
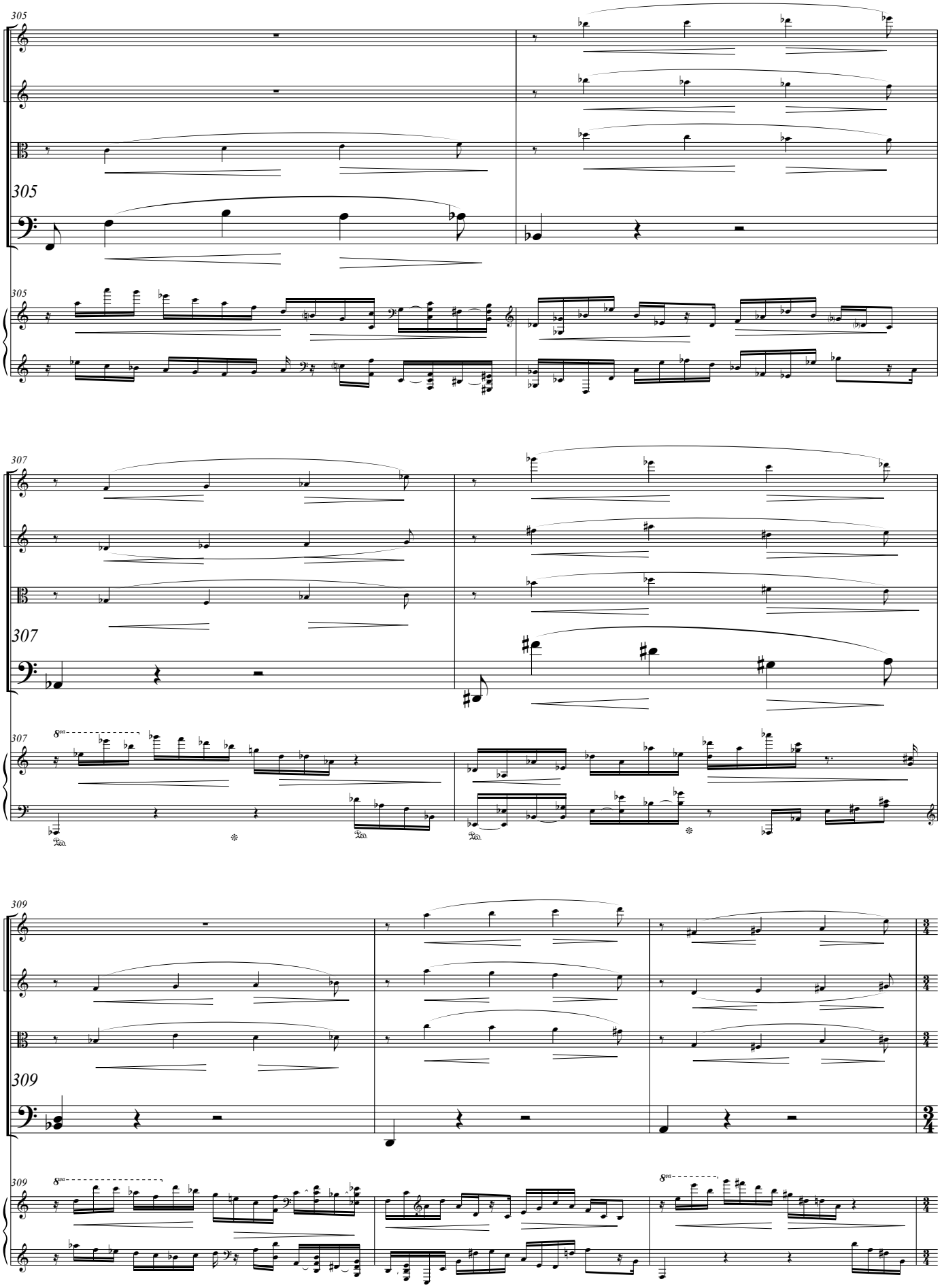

249
ff
249
252
mf
252
255
mp
Dev. 15
255

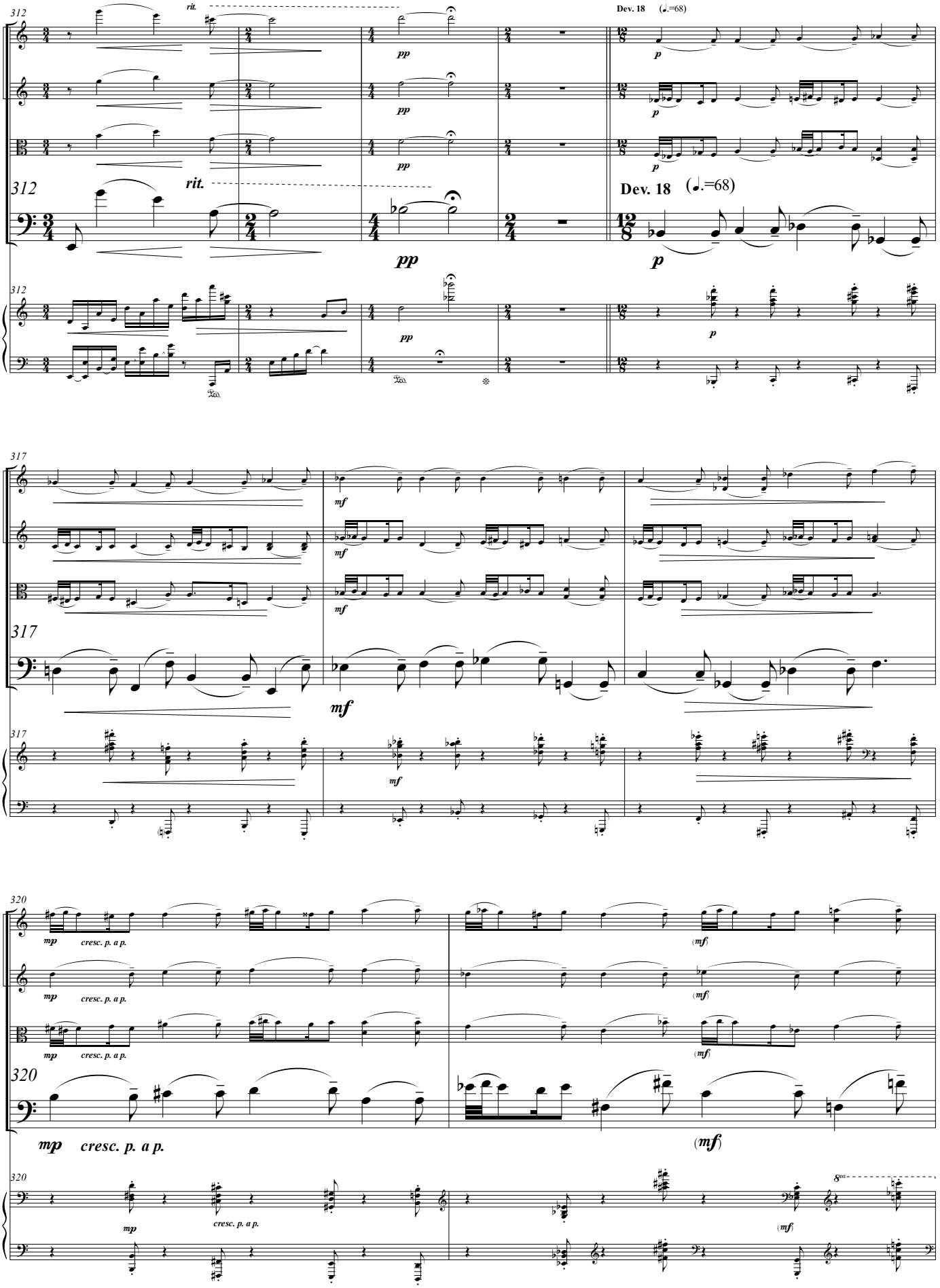

258
261
264
pizz.
arco

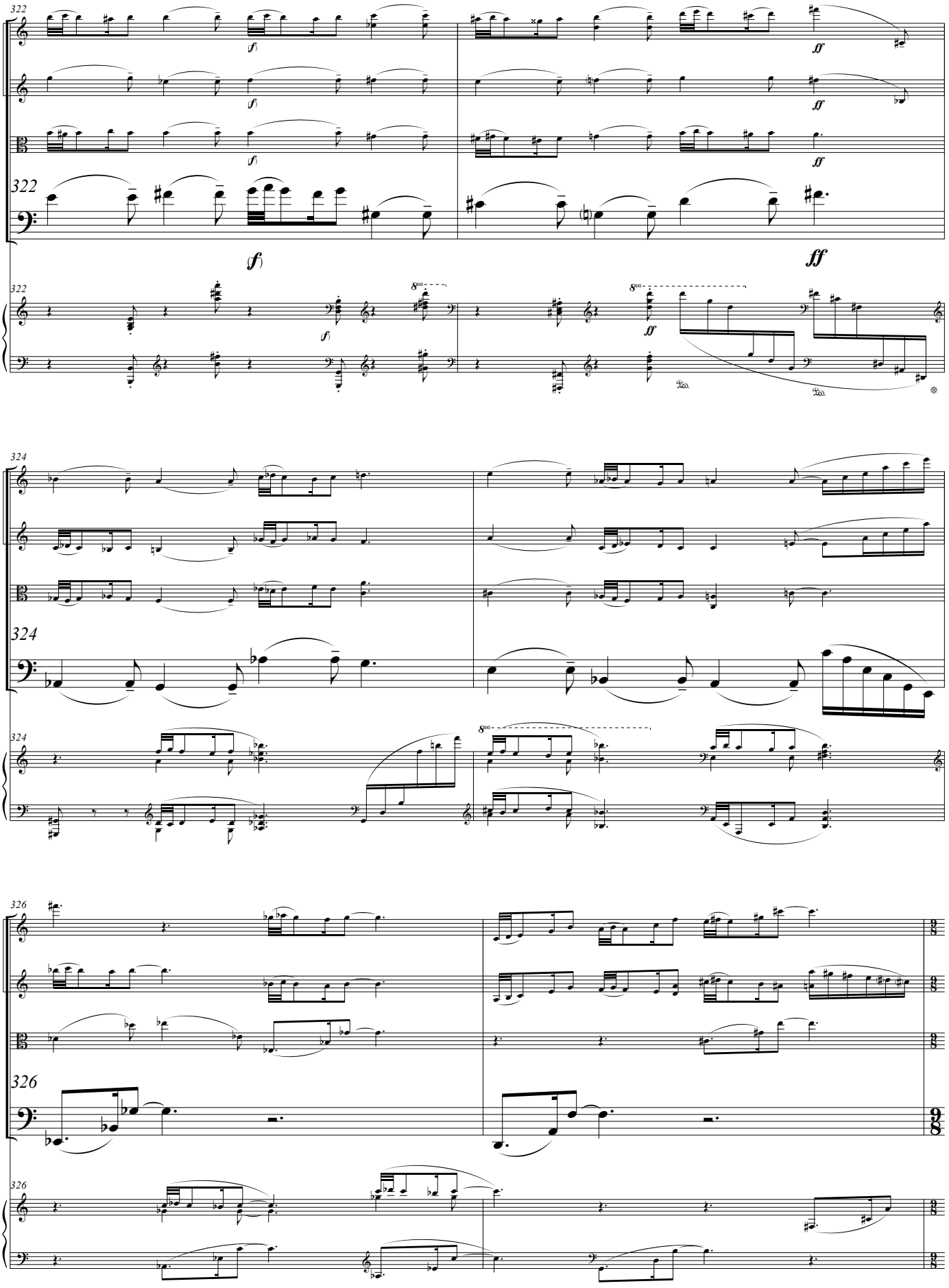

268
dim.
mf
dim.
legato
271
p
mf
8va
275
(♩ = 120)
Dev. 16
piu mosso
pizz.

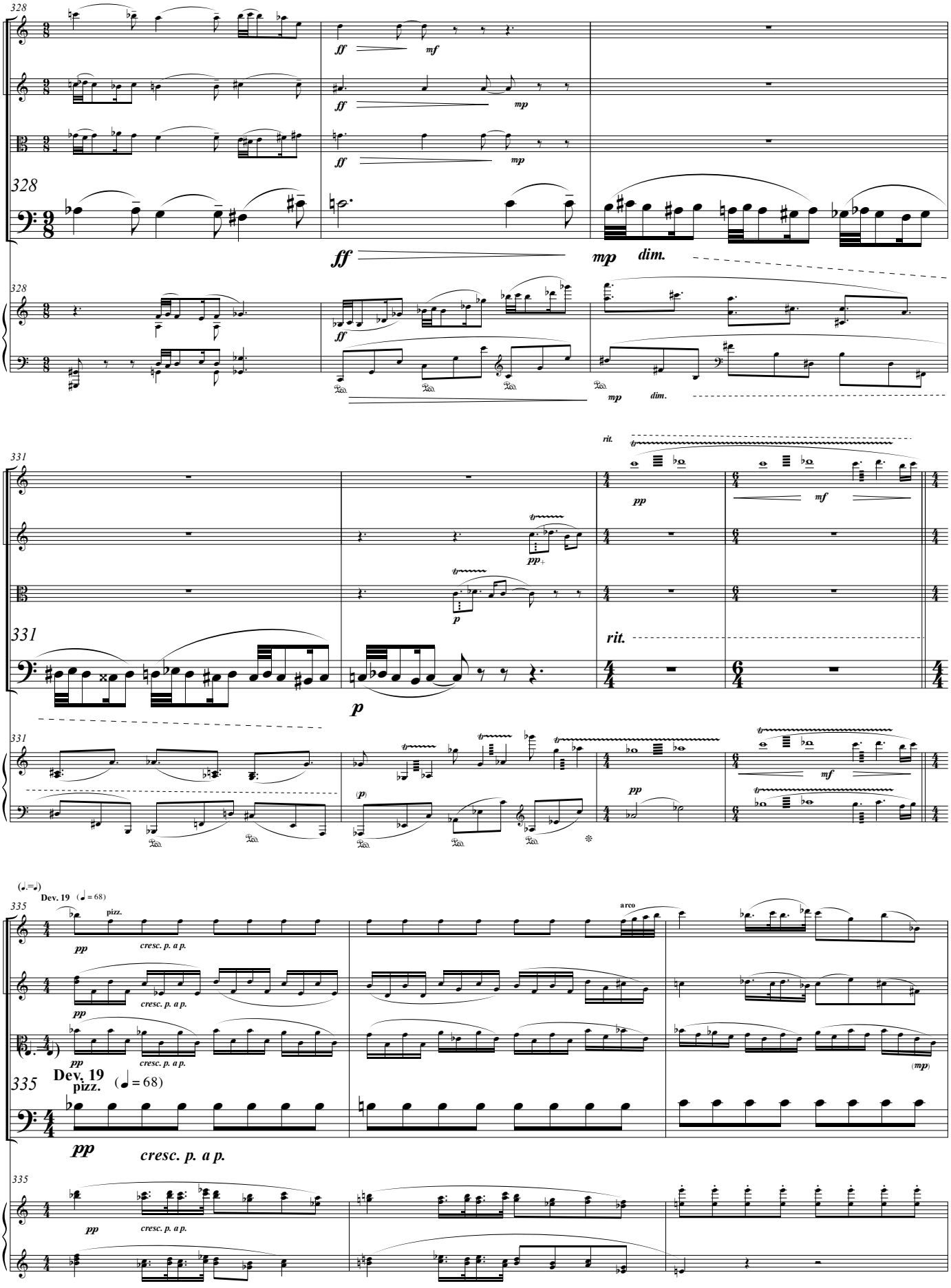

279
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
f
dim. p. a p.
(mp)
285
p
tenuto
291
rit.
pp
arco

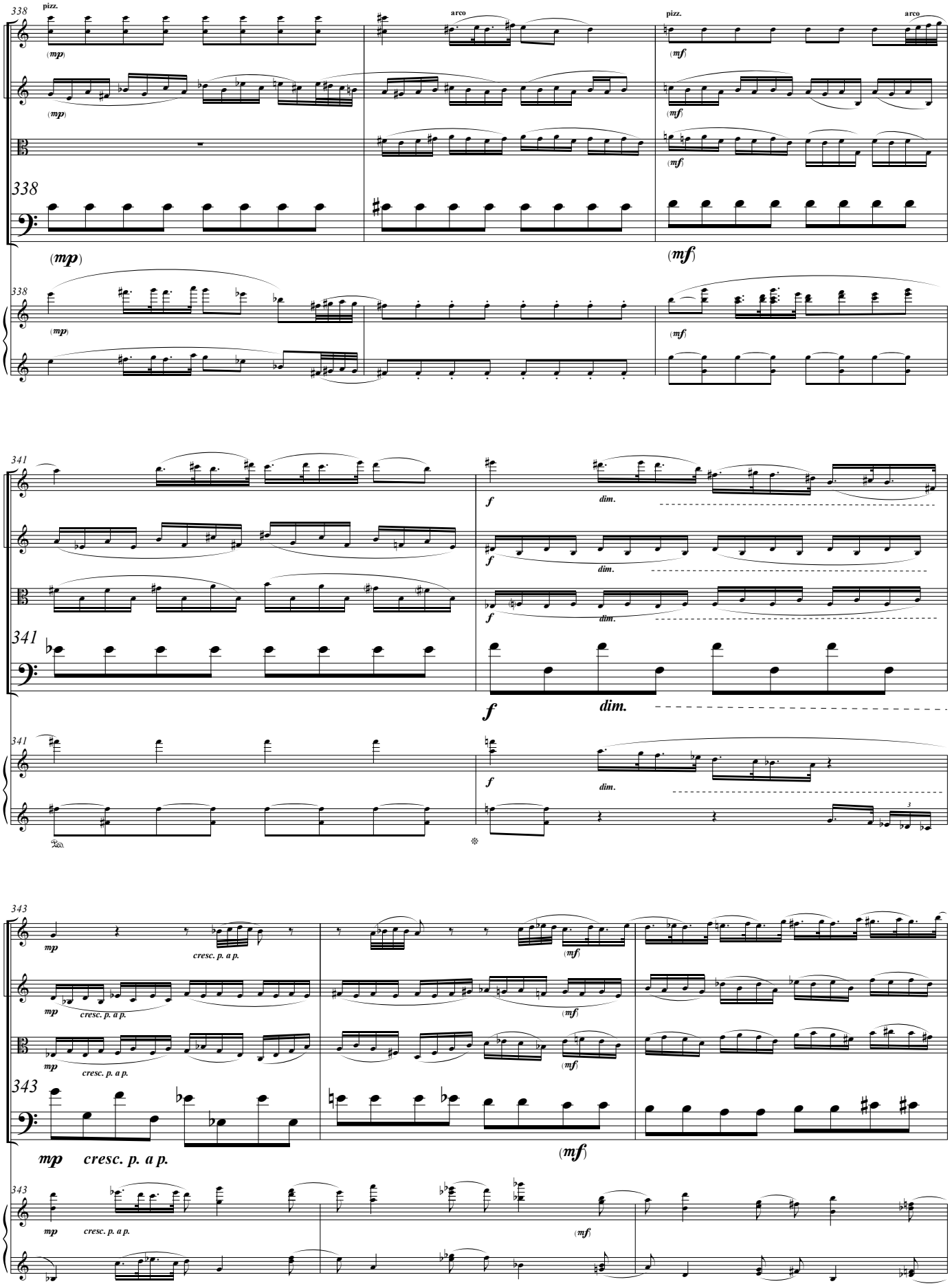

(♩ = 80)
Dev. 17
grazioso
arco
297
mp
300
303

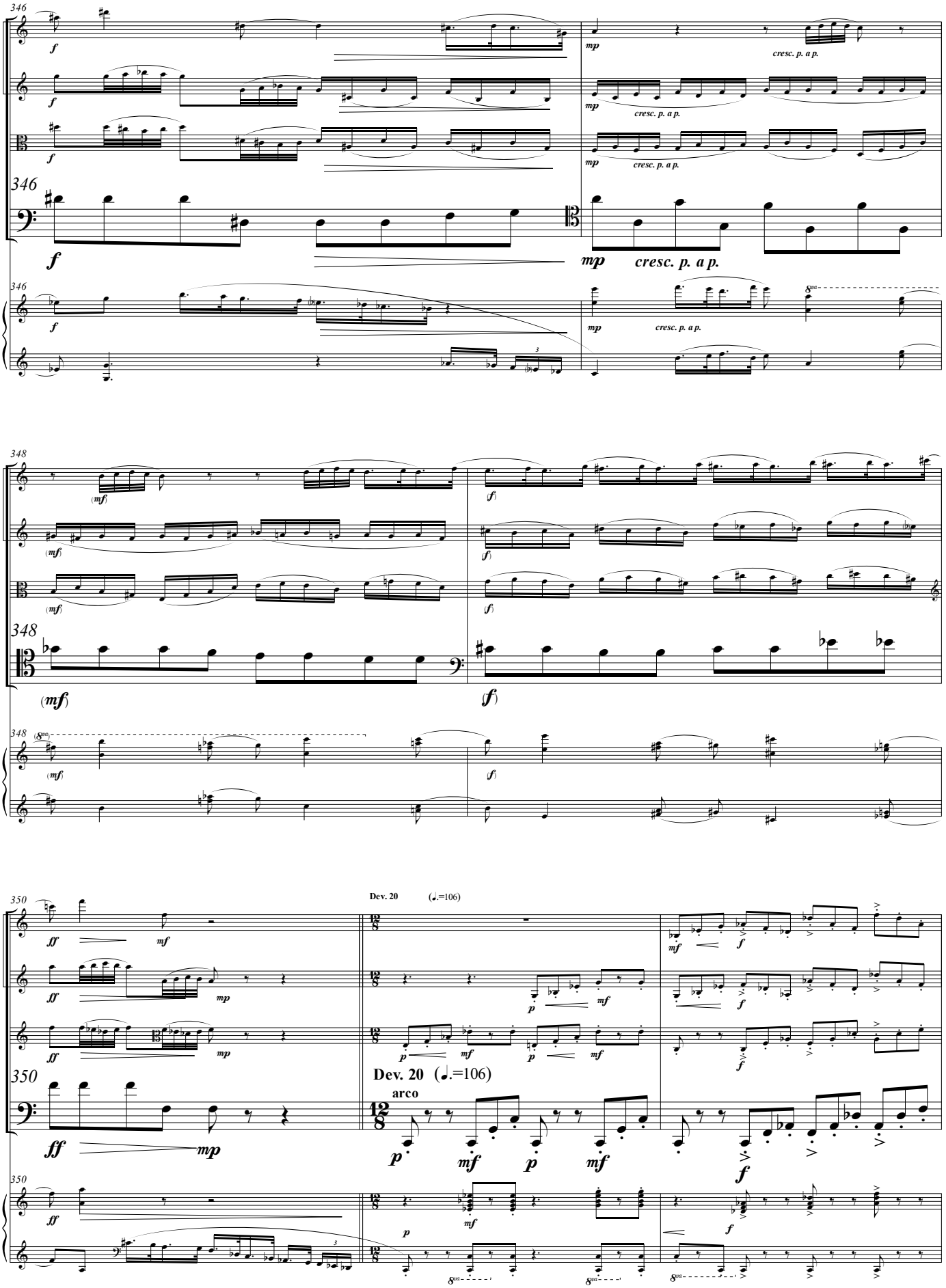

305
305
305
307
307
307
8va
309
309
309
8va
8va

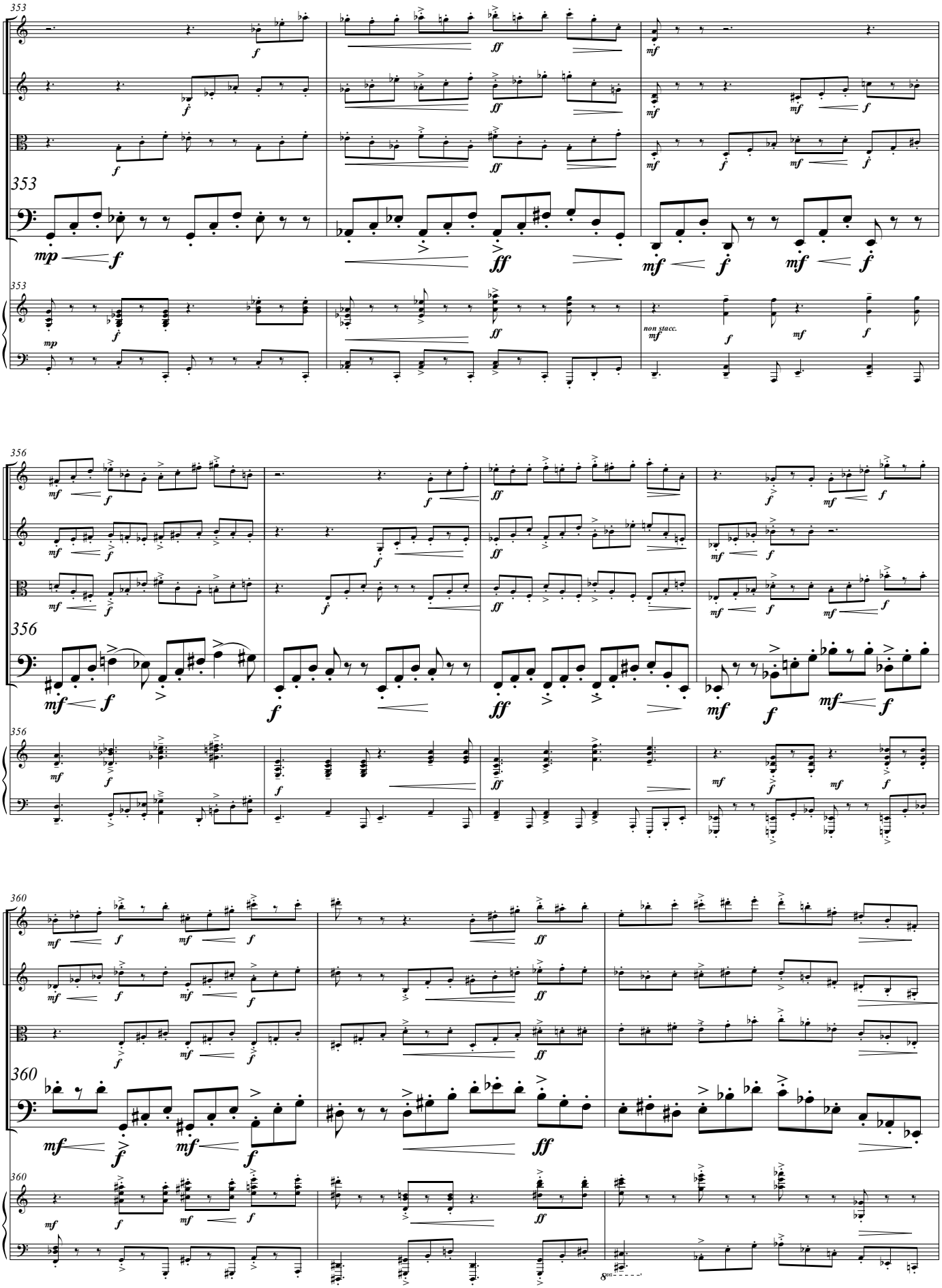

312
rit.
Dev. 18 (♩.=68)
pp
p
317
mf
320
mp cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
8va

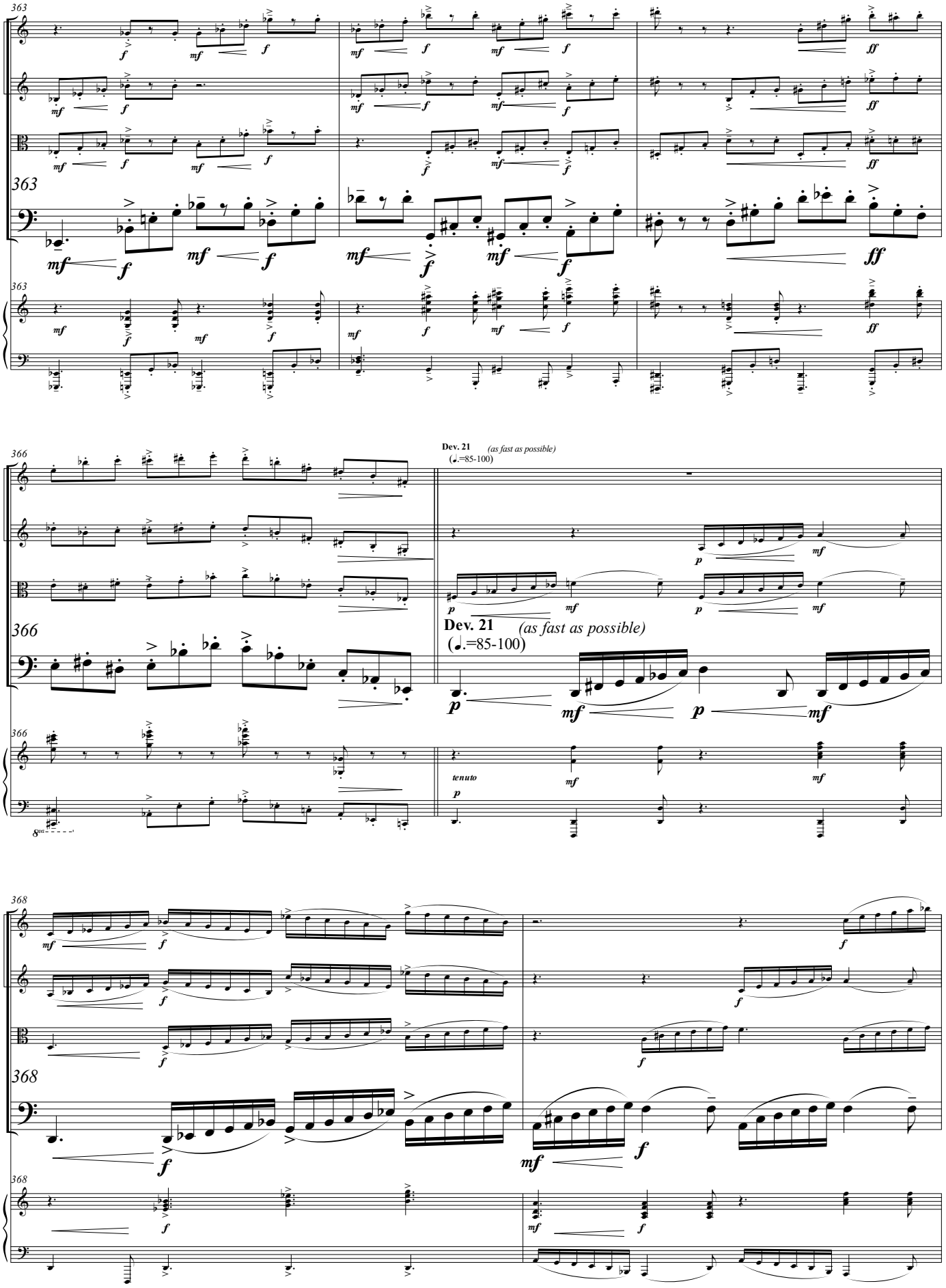

322
324
326

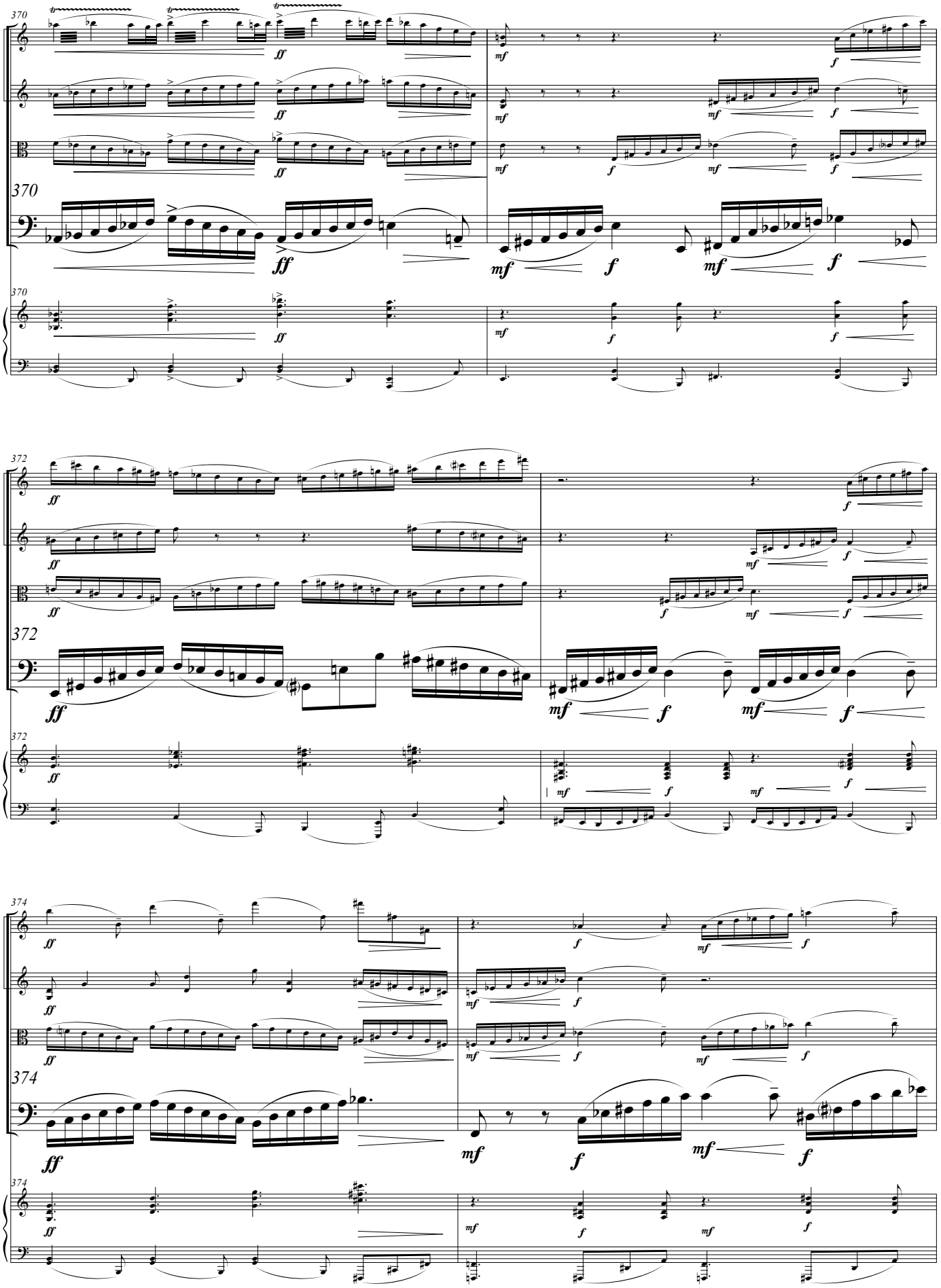

328
ff
mf
mp
dim.
331
rit.
pp
p
(p)
(♩.=♩)
Dev. 19 (♩ = 68)
335
pizz.
cresc. p. a p.
arco
(mp)

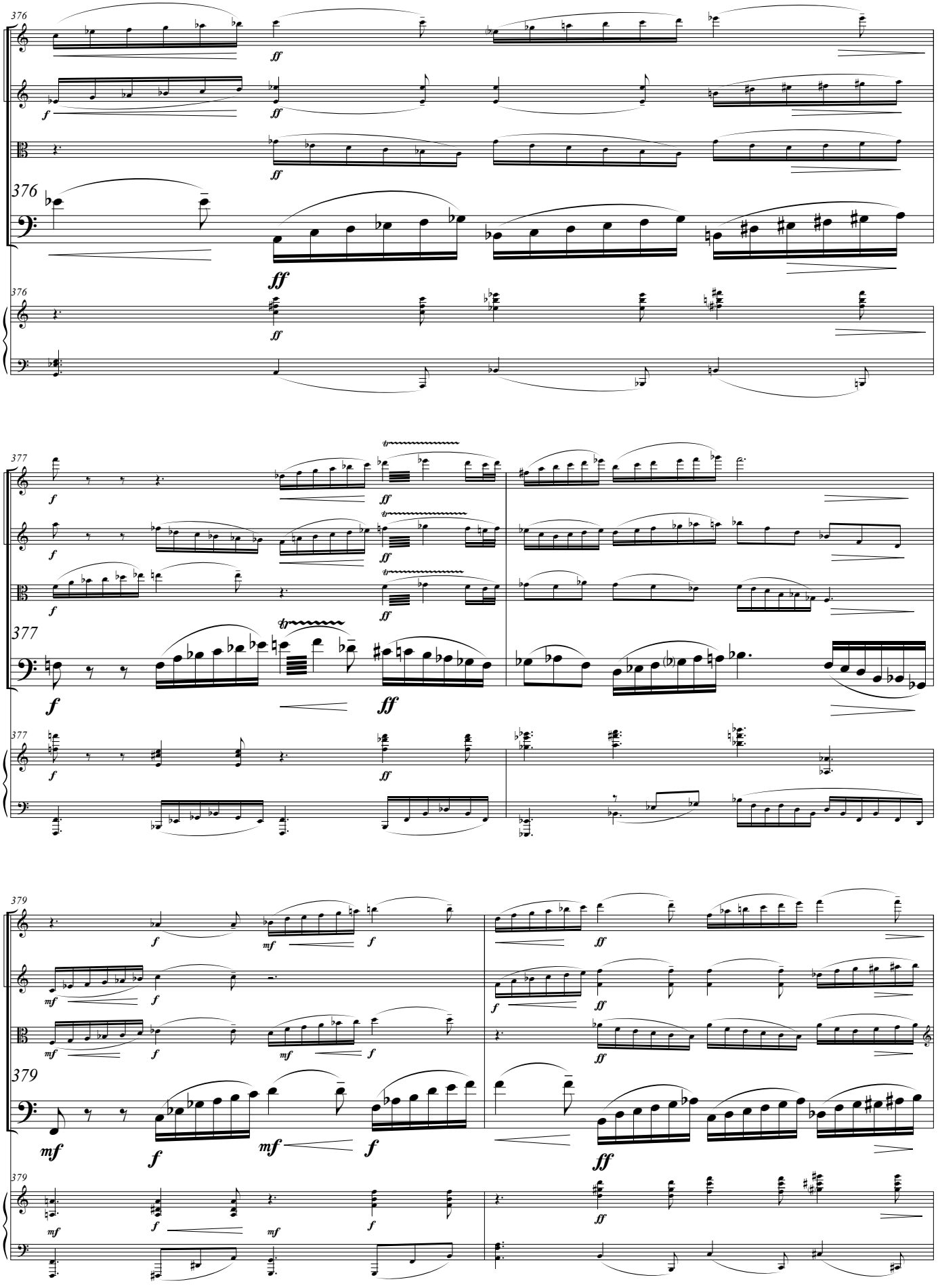

338
pizz.
arco
(mp)
(mf)
341
dim.
f
343
cresc. p. a p.
mp

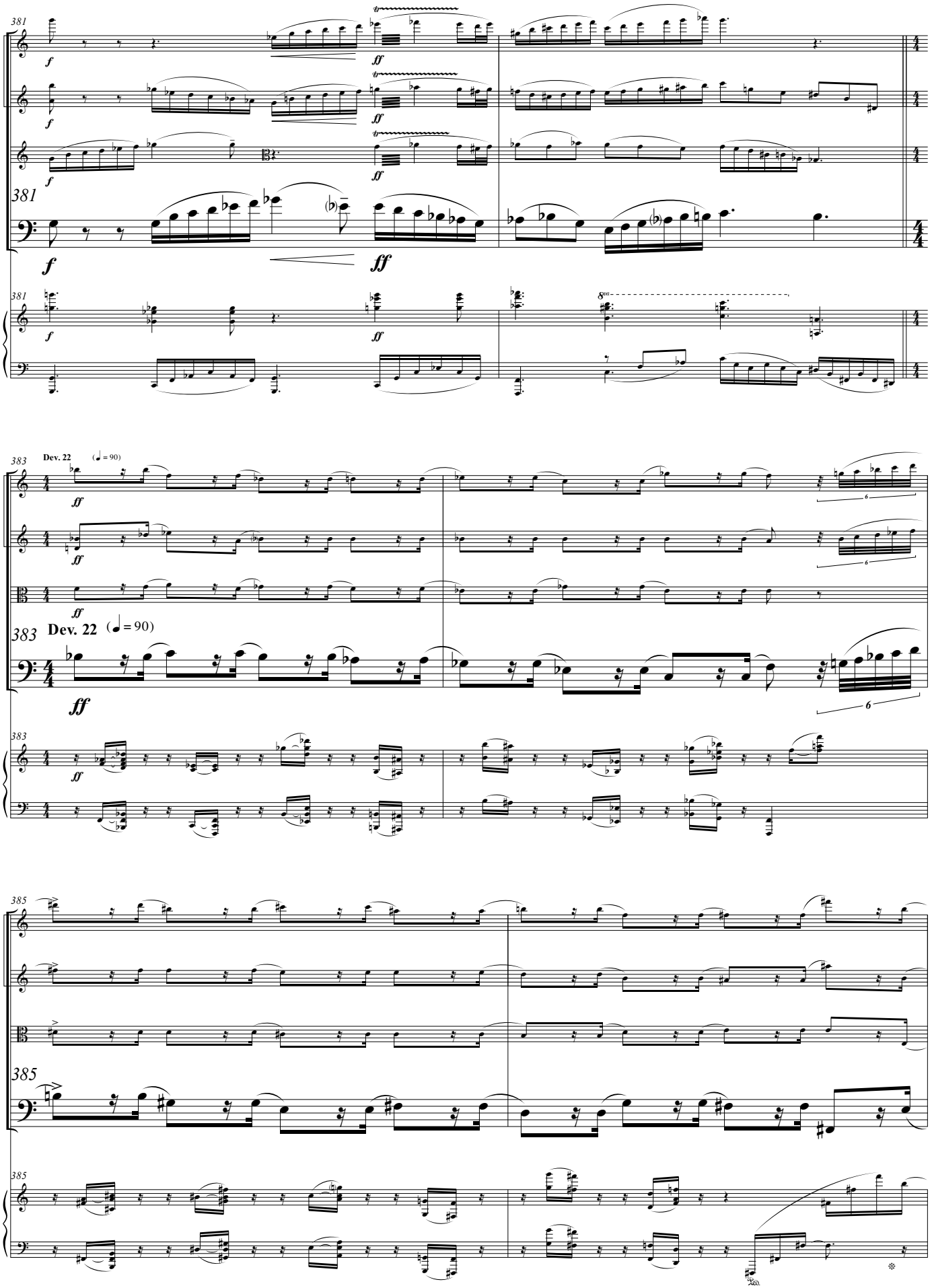

346
f
mp
cresc. p. a p.
348
(mf)
(f)
350
ff
mf
mp
Dev. 20 (♩.=106)
arco
p
f

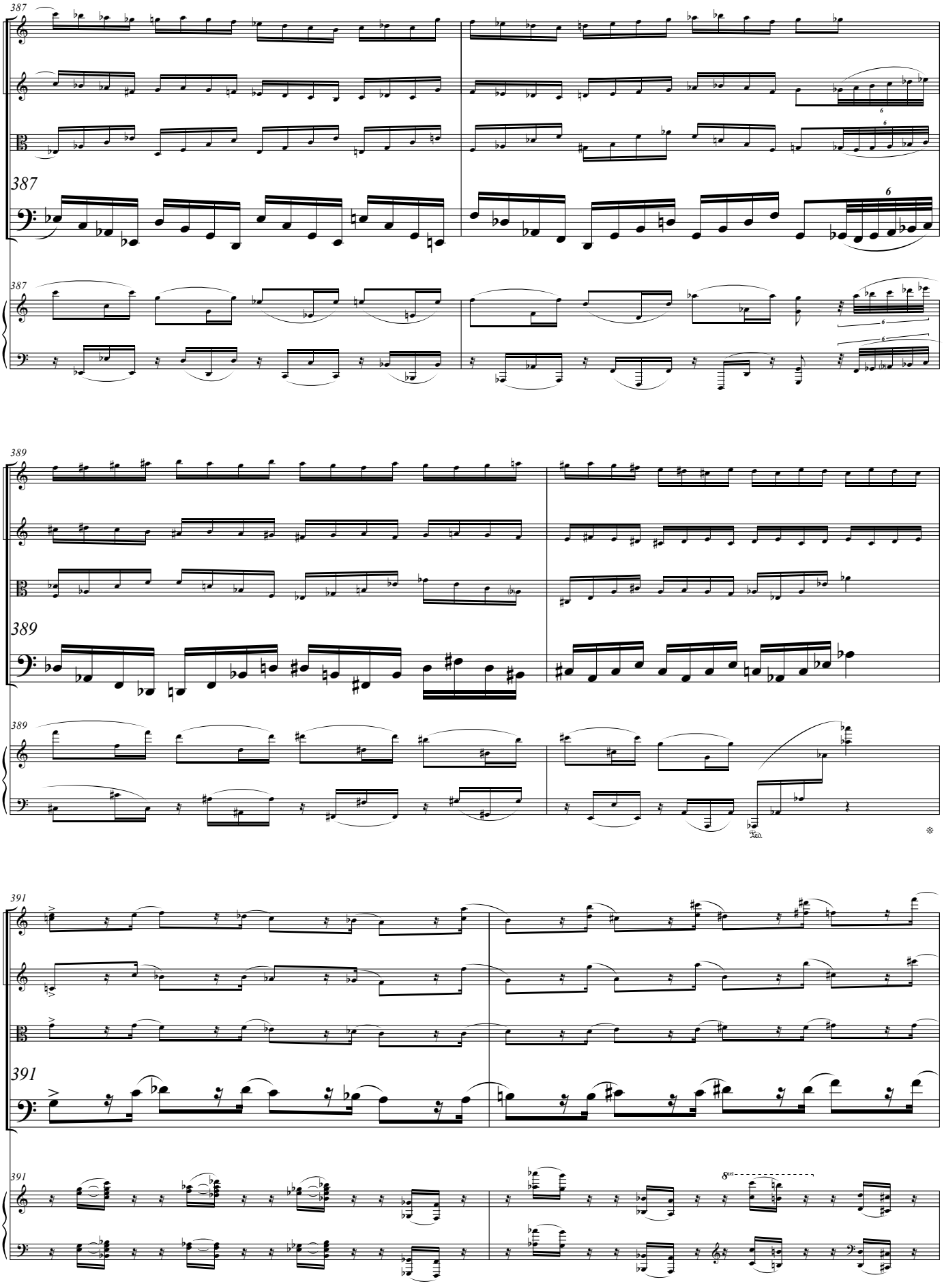

353
356
360
non stacc.
8va

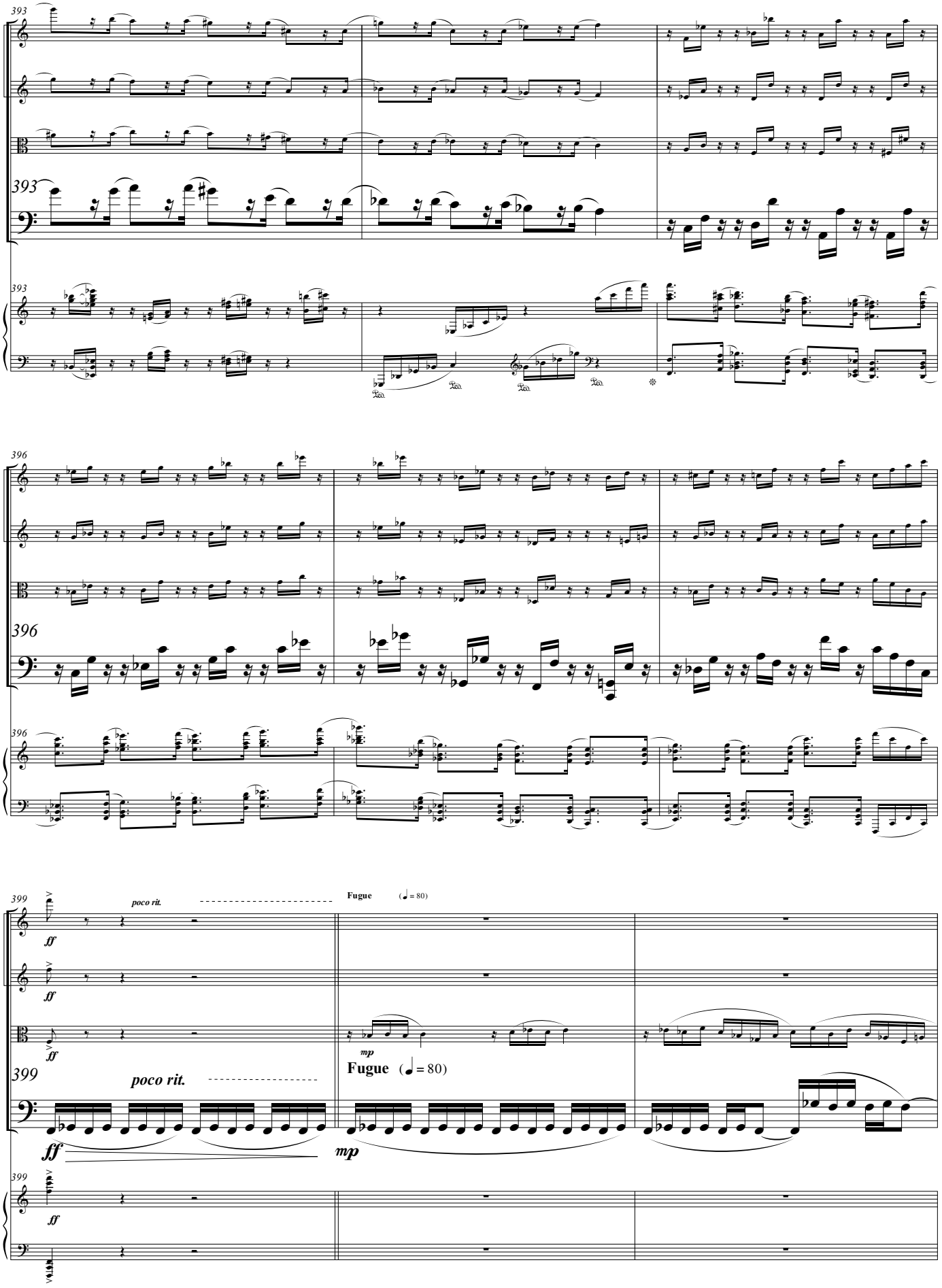

363
366
Dev. 21 (as fast as possible)
(♩.=85-100)
tenuto
368

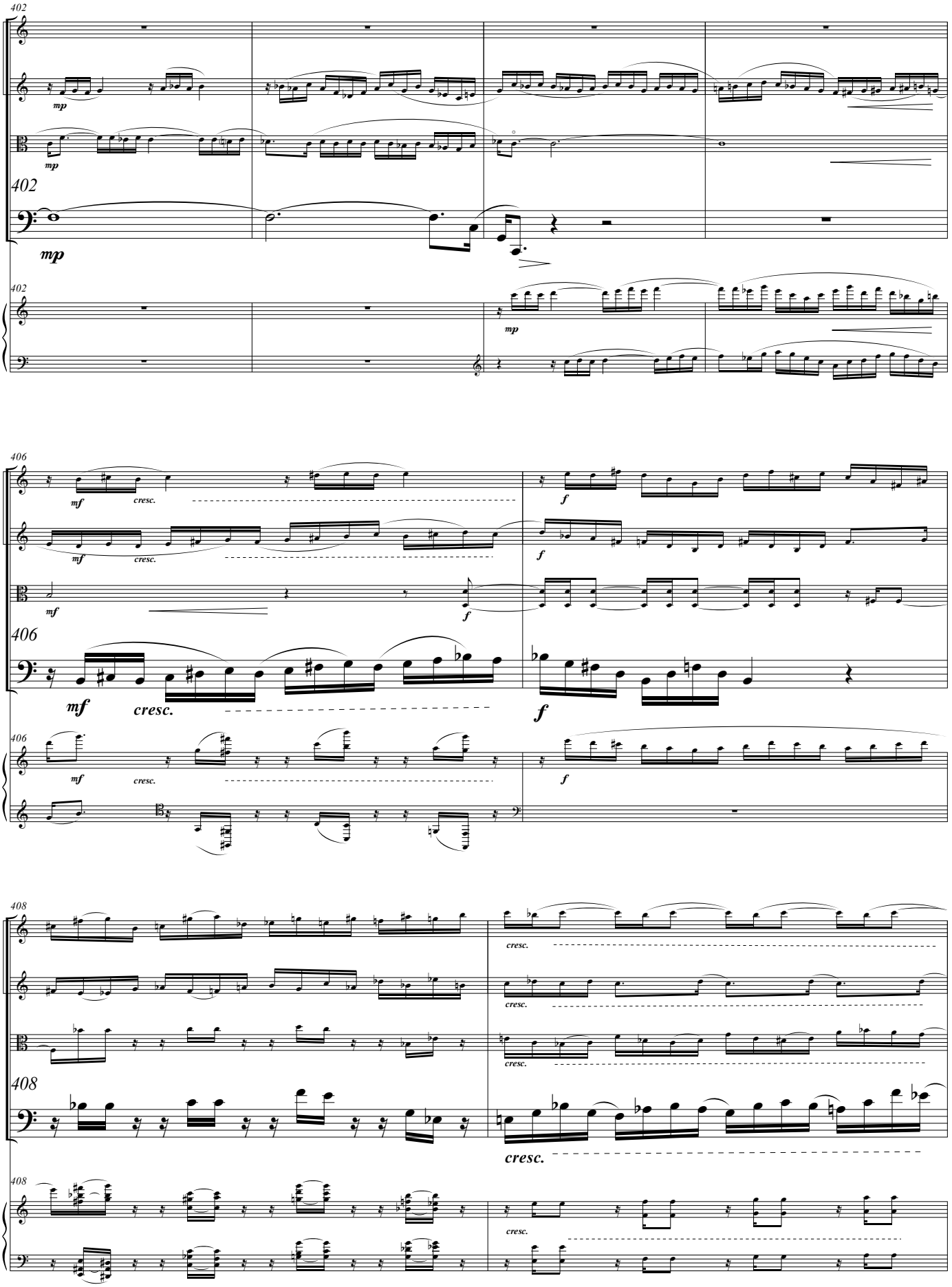


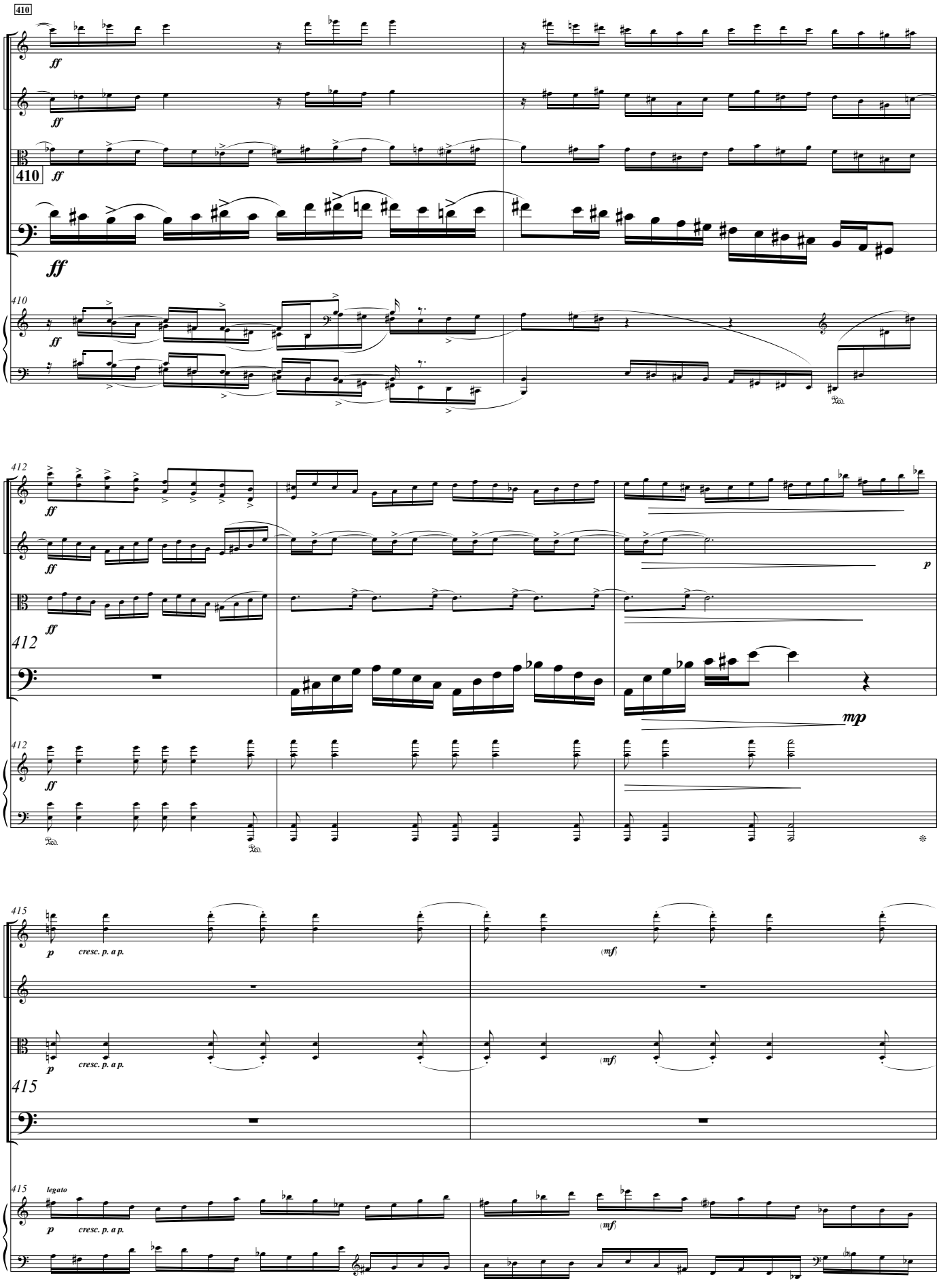


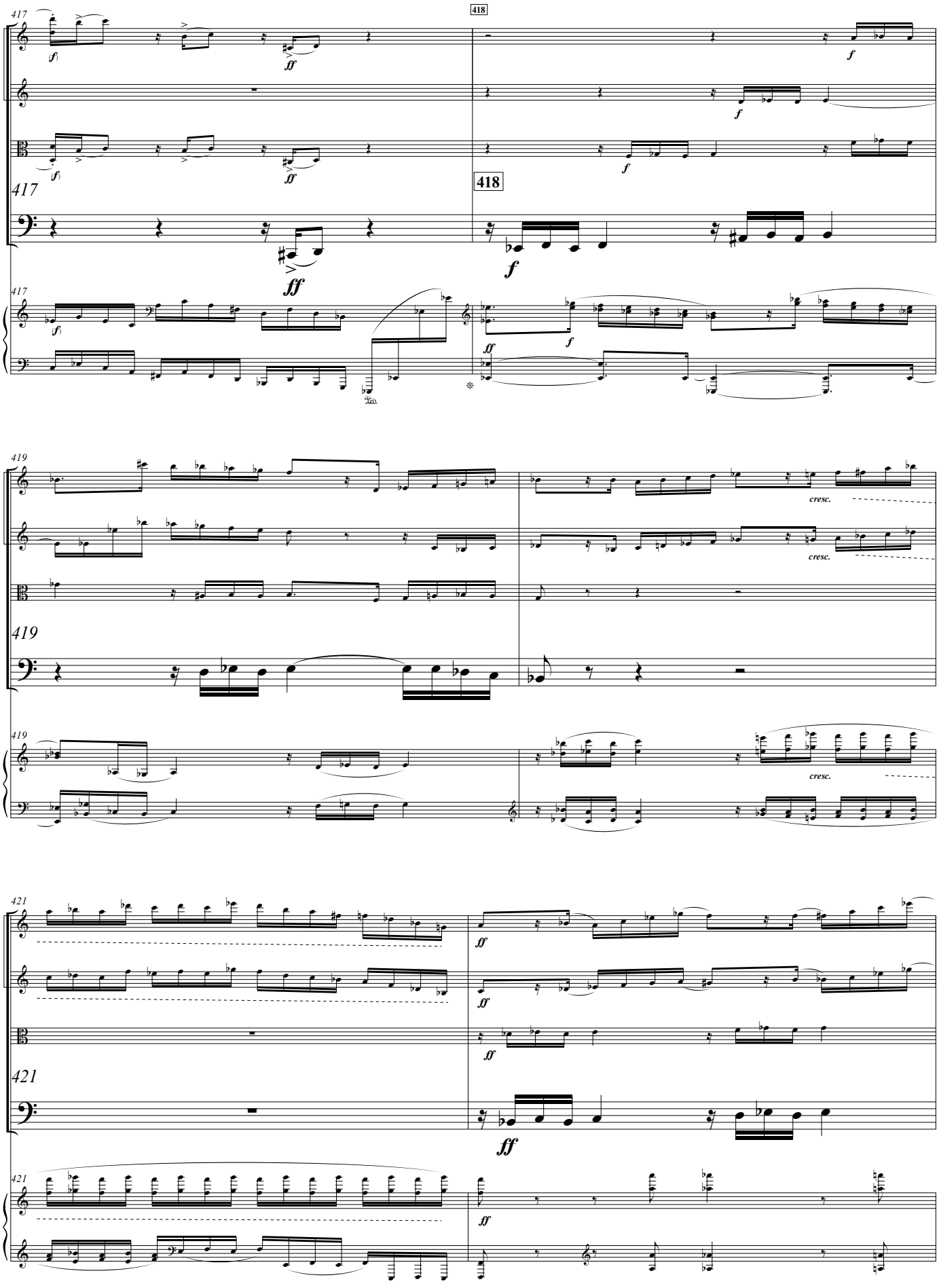

381
f
ff
381
f
ff
381
f
ff
8va
383
Dev. 22
(♩ = 90)
ff
383
Dev. 22
(♩ = 90)
ff
383
ff
6
385
385
385

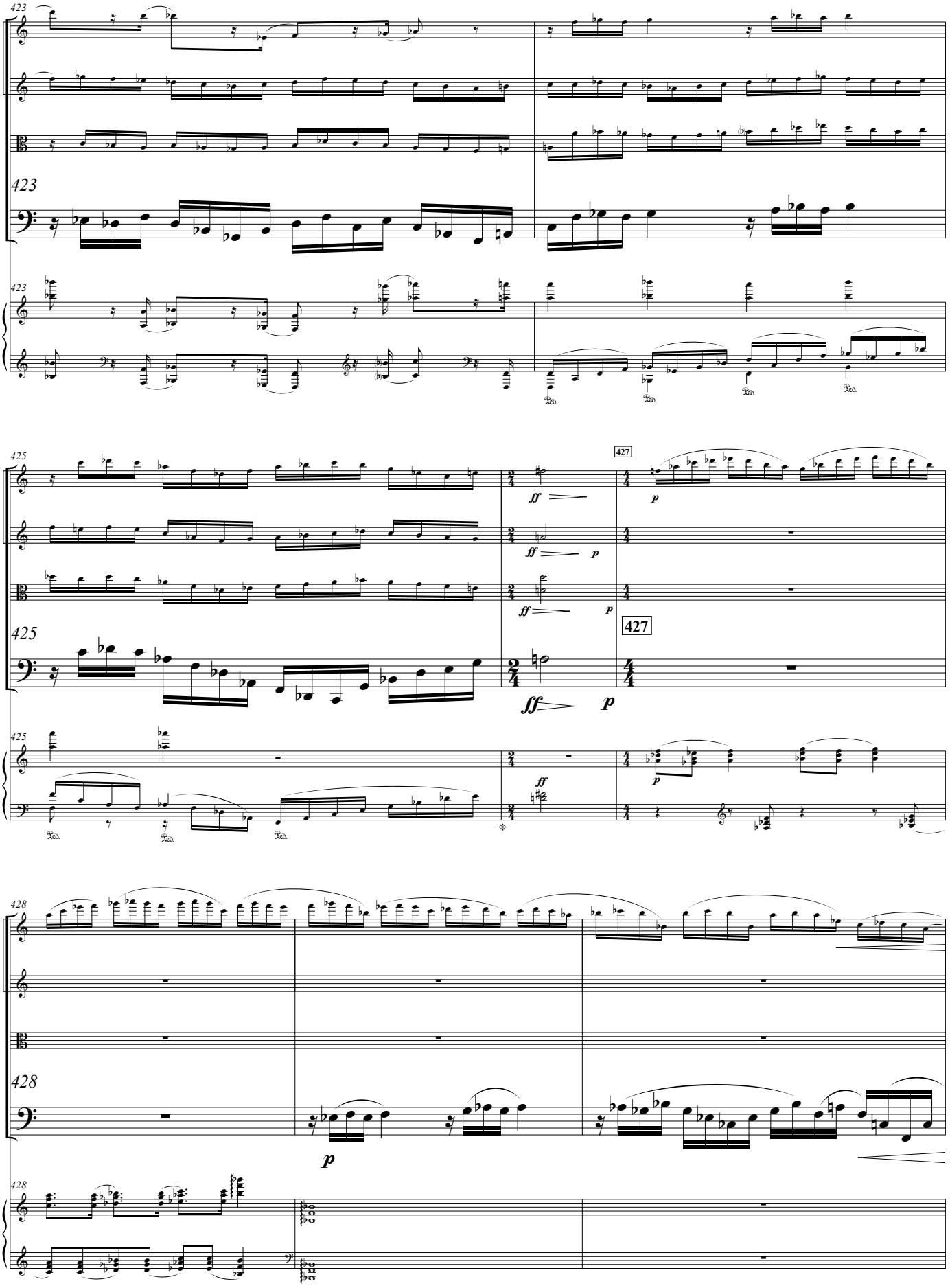

387
389
391
8va

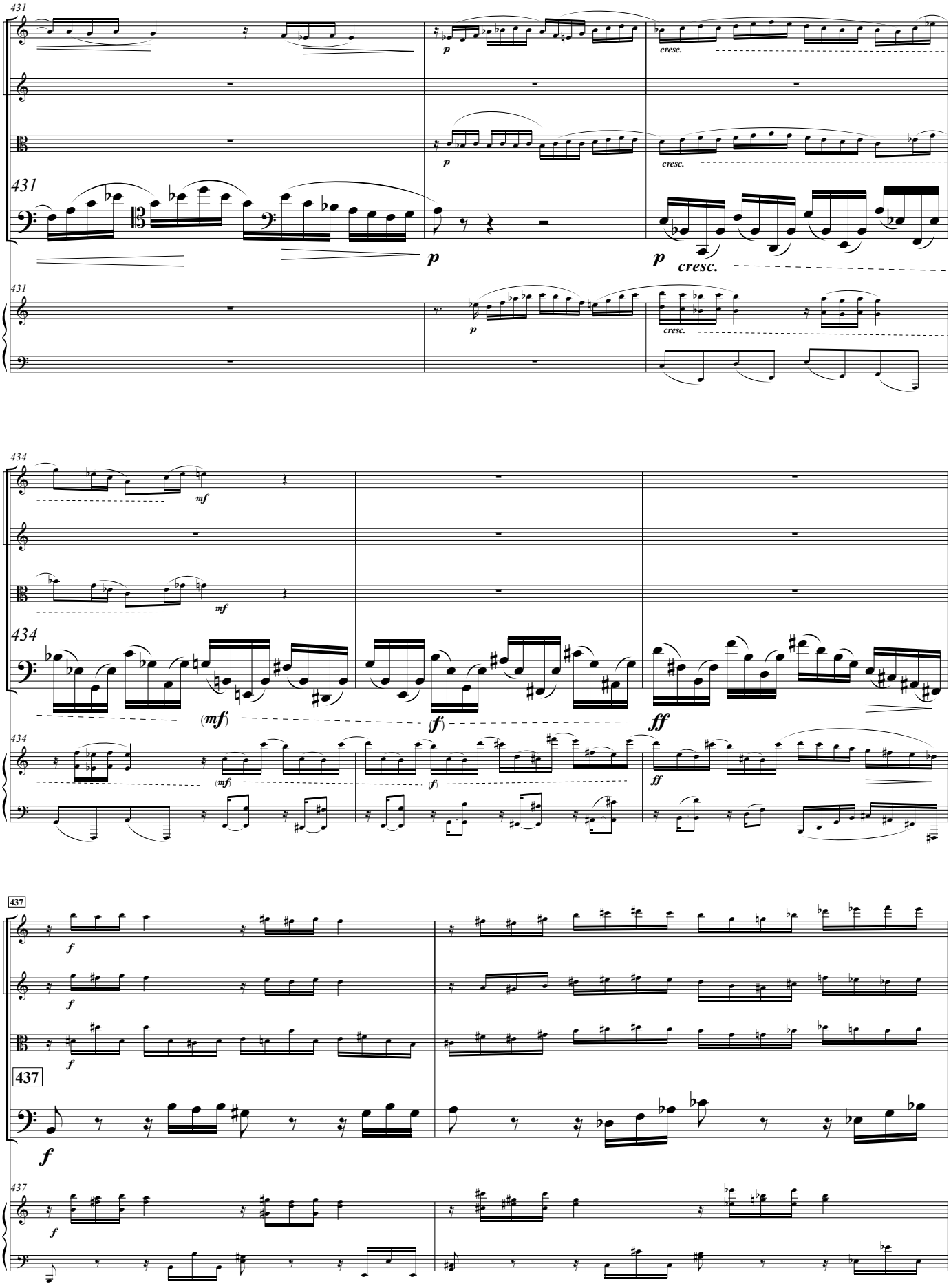

393
393
393
396
396
396
399
poco rit.
Fugue (♩ = 80)
ff
ff
ff
mp
399
poco rit.
Fugue (♩ = 80)
ff
mp
399
ff

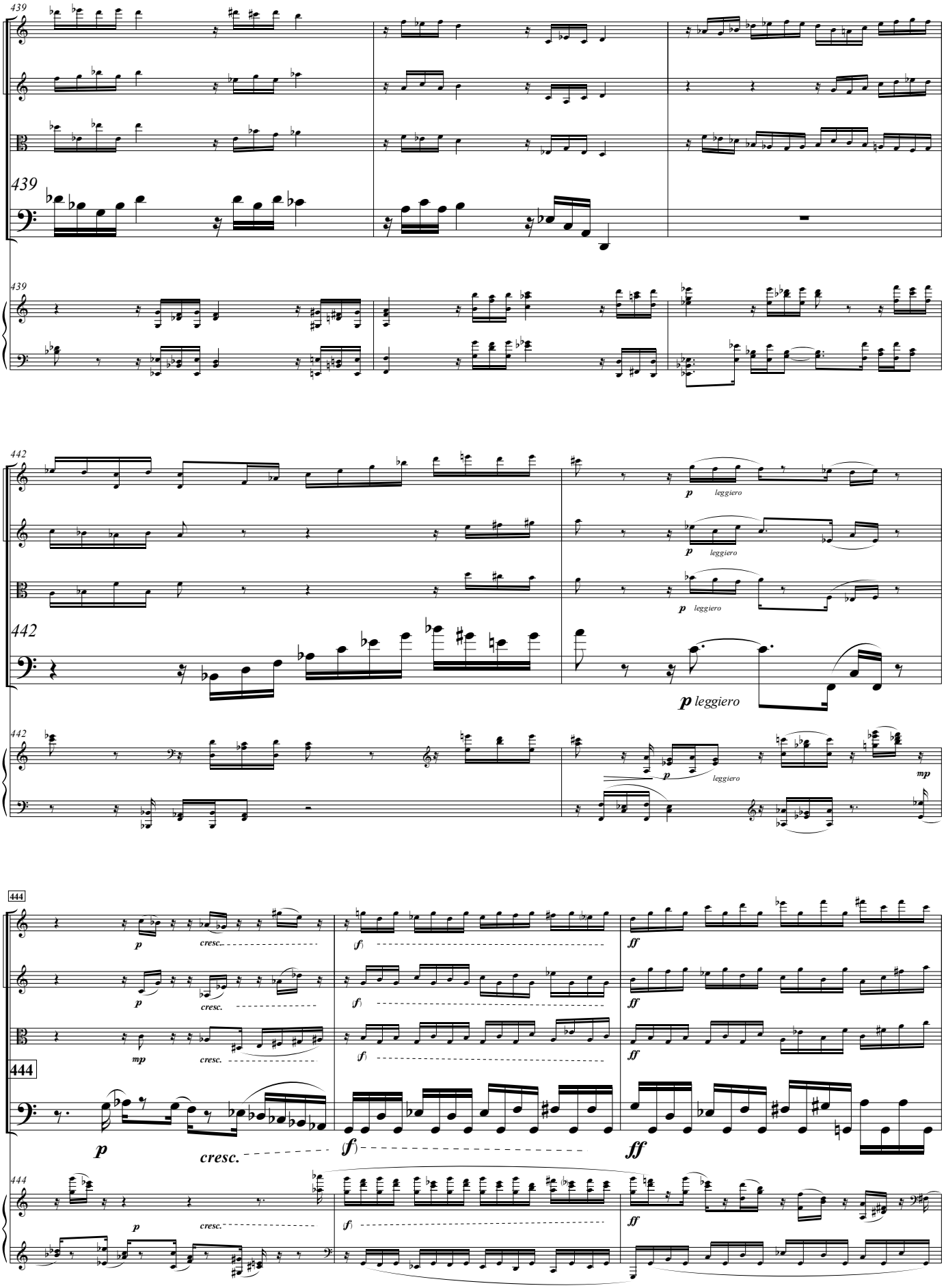

402
mp
mp
402
mp
402
mp
406
mf
cresc.
mf
cresc.
mf
f
f
406
mf
cresc.
f
406
mf
cresc.
f
408
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
408
cresc.
408
cresc.

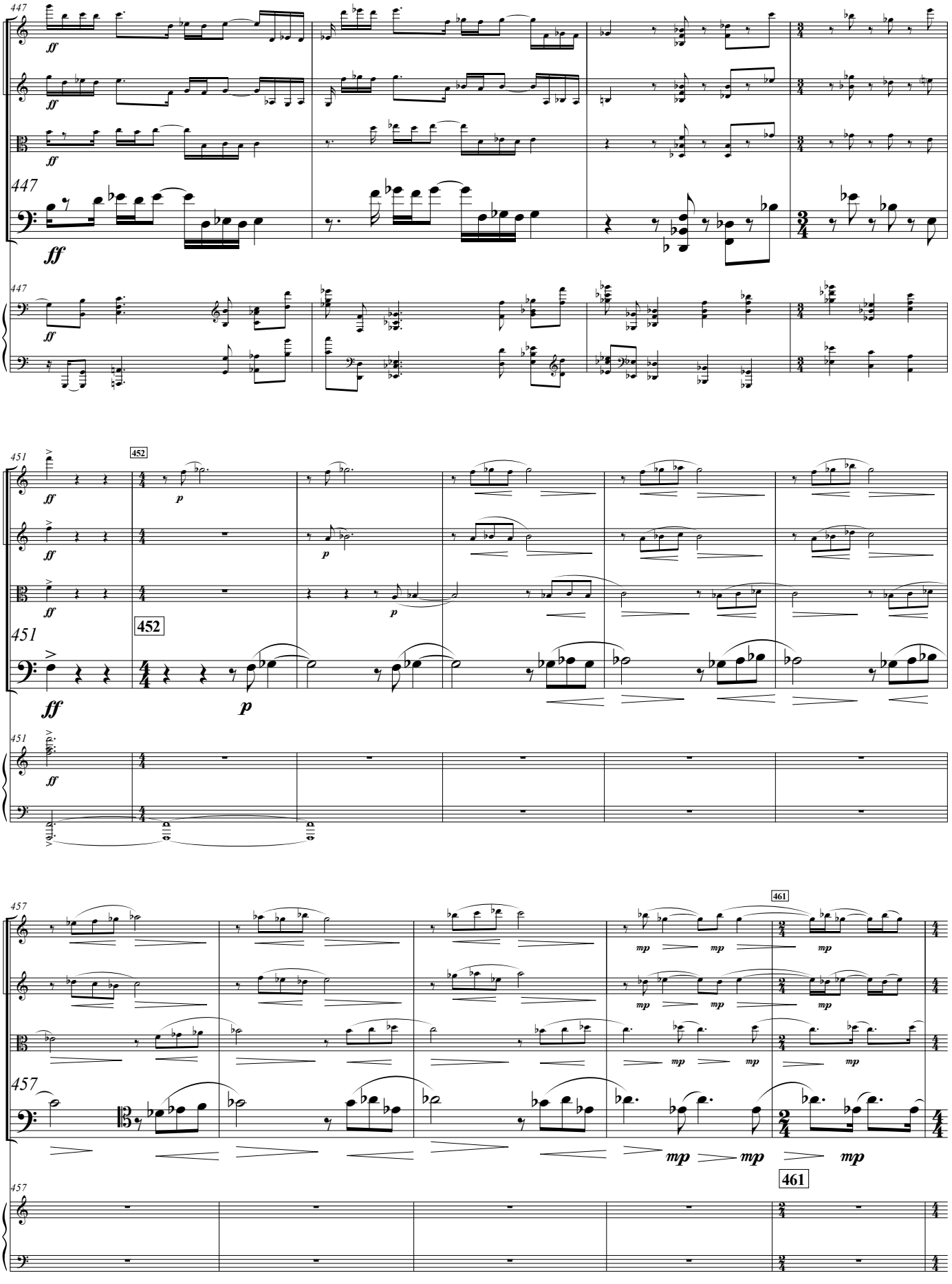

410
ff
410
ff
412
ff
p
mp
415
p
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
legato

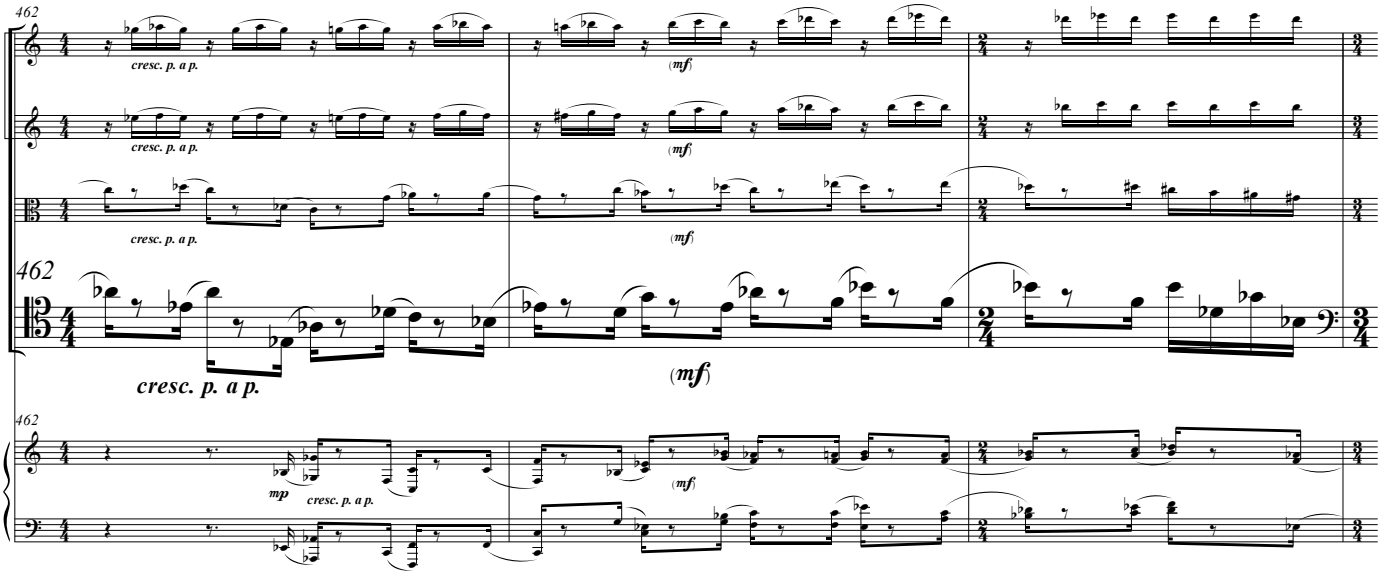

417
418
419
421
cresc.
ff
f

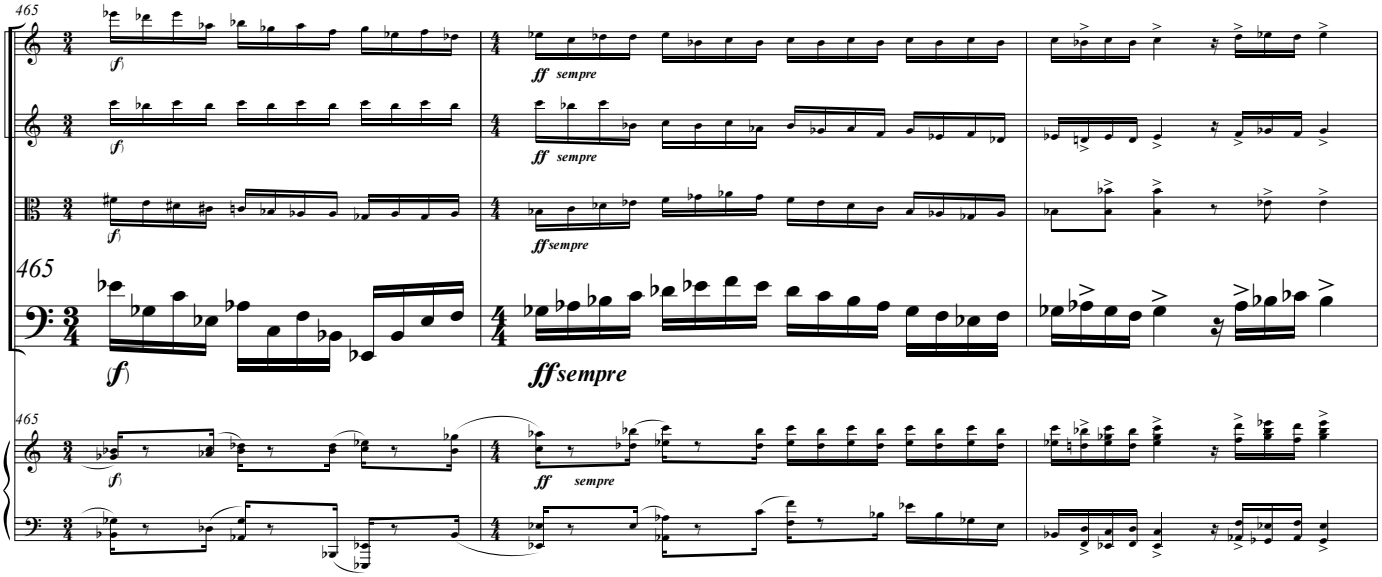

423
425
427
428
ff
p

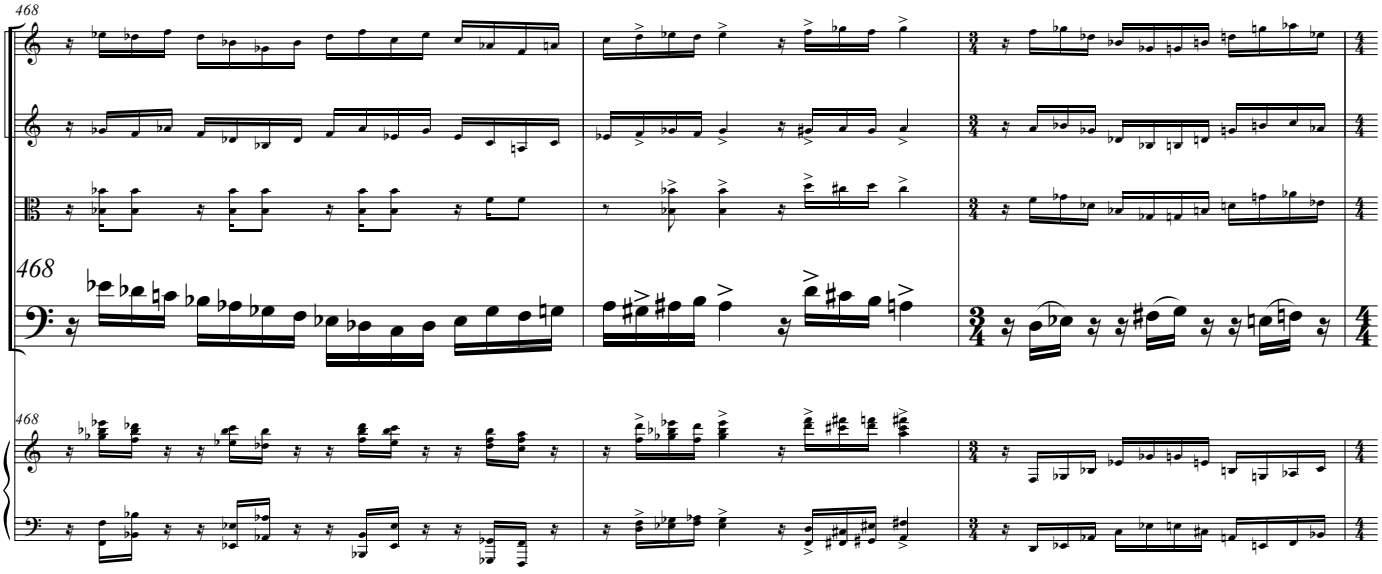

431
p
cresc.
434
mf
(mf)
(f)
ff
437
f

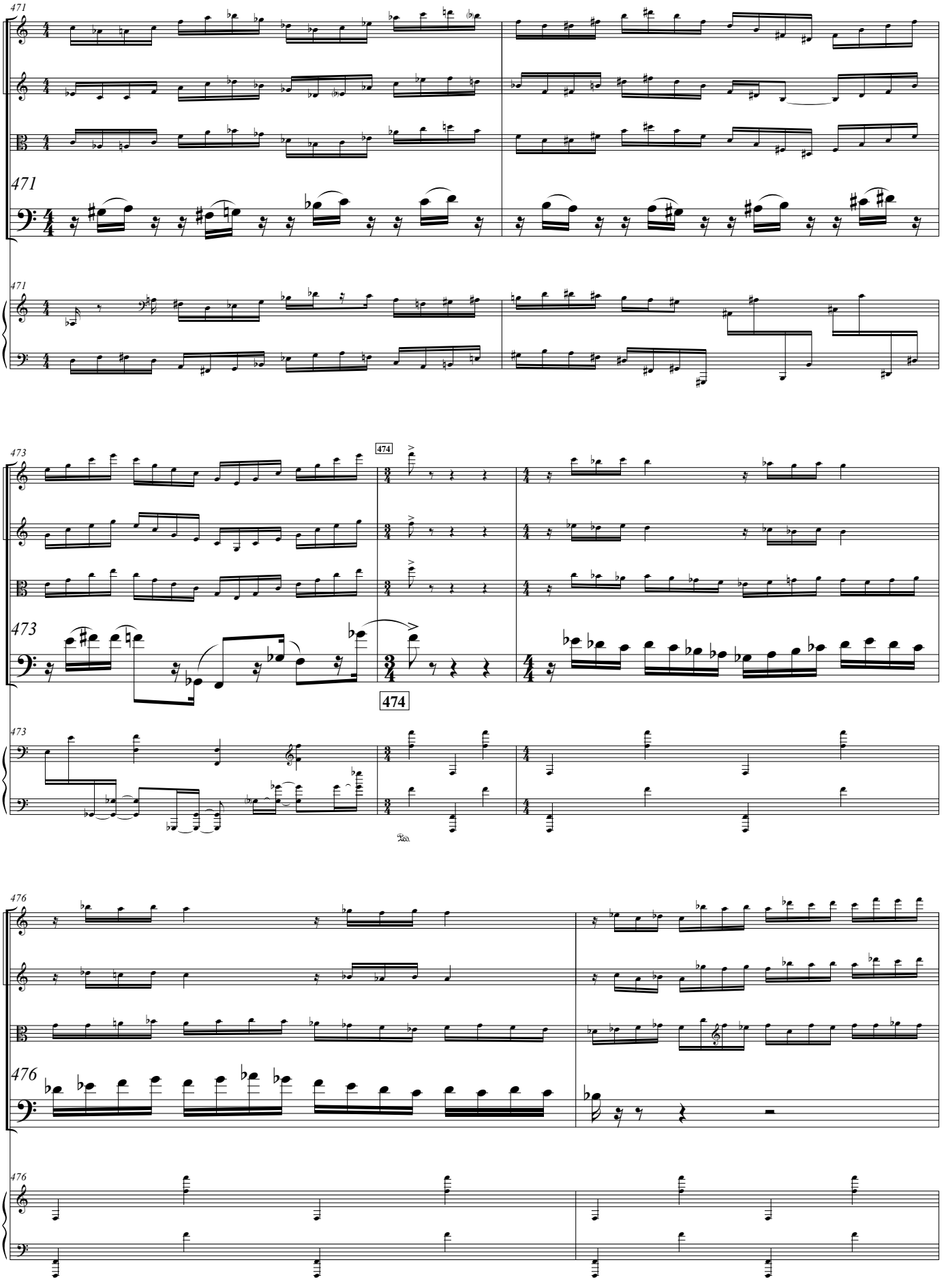

439
442
leggiero
444
p
cresc.
(f)
ff
mp

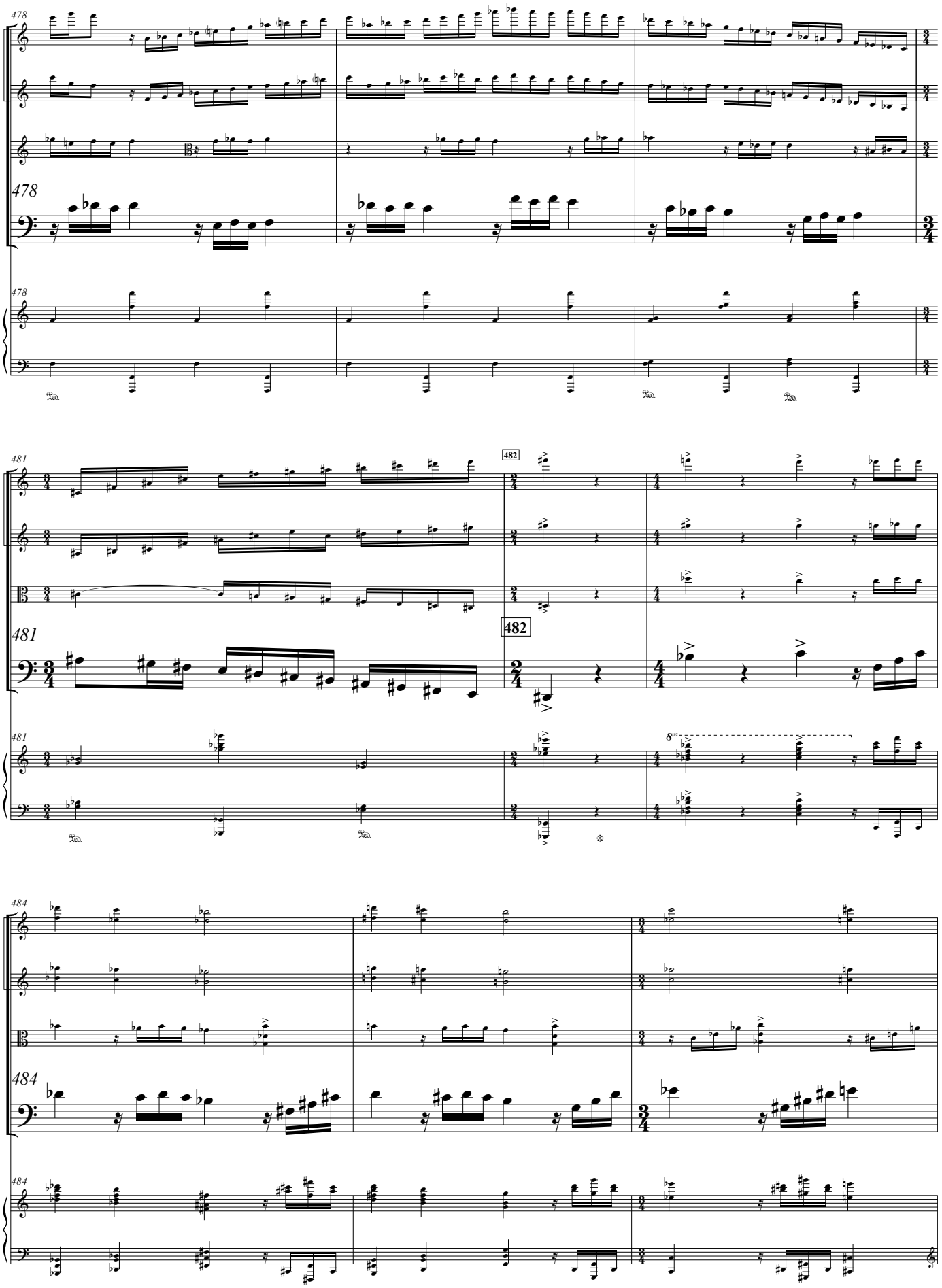

447
ff
447
ff
447
ff
451
452
ff
p
451
452
ff
p
451
ff
457
461
mp
457
461
mp

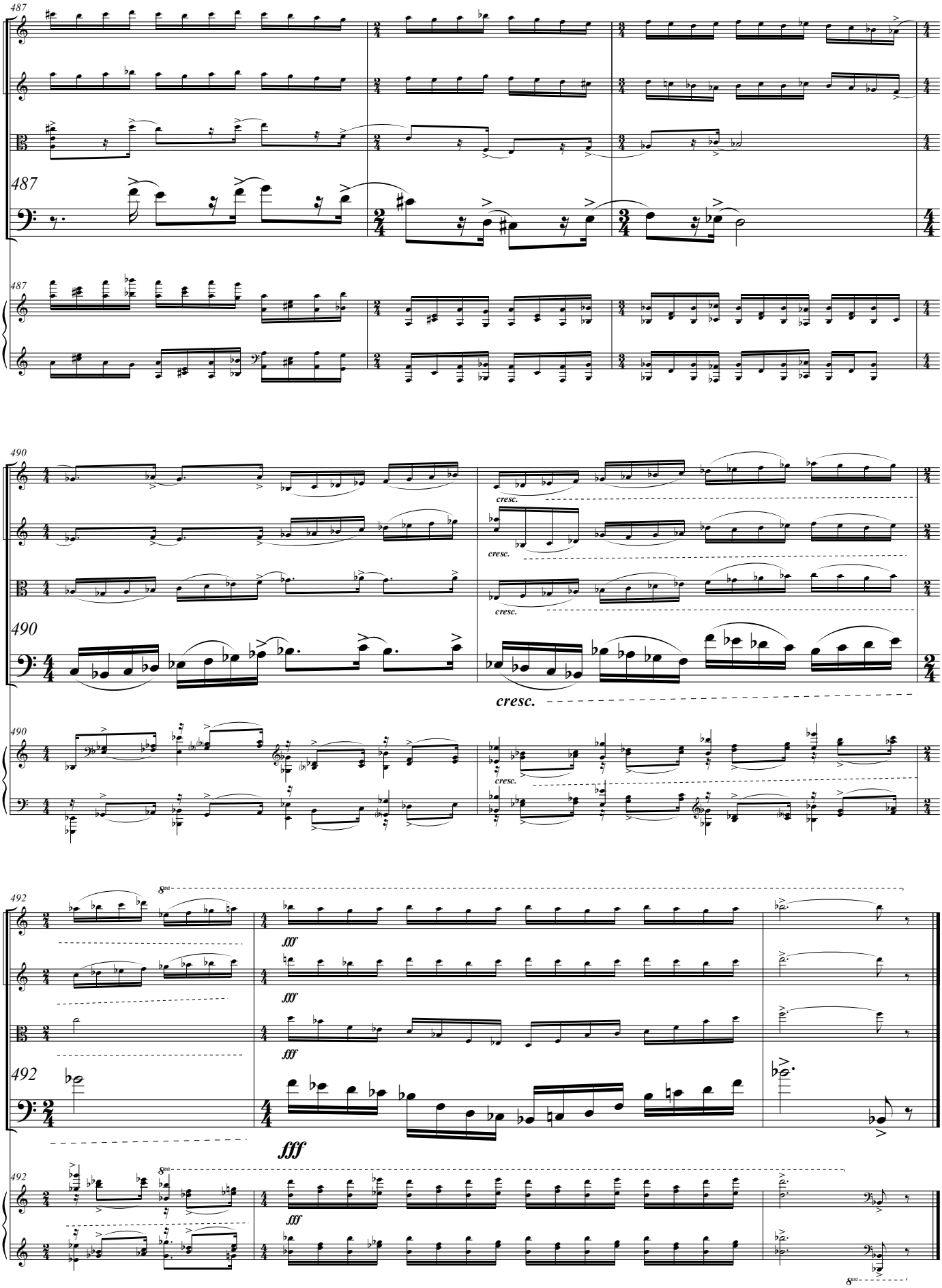

462
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)


465
(f)
ff sempre


468


471
473
474
476


478
478
478
481
482
481
481
484
484
484


487
487
487
490
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
490
cresc.
490
cresc.
492
8va
fff
fff
fff
492
fff
492
fff
8va