Christopher Stark

W I N T E R M U S I C

for string quartet

(2016)

Full Score

S O M M E R S O P U B L I S H I N G

PROGRAM NOTE

"For the listener, who listens in the snow," begins the final stanza of Wallace Stevens' profound musing on nothingness, "The Snow Man." For many artists, winter has been a rich source of inspiration, and in the discipline of music, there have been many compositions written over the span of hundreds of years that have directly responded to the December solstice. Vivaldi and Haydn composed winter-themed movements in their *Seasons*; Tchaikovsky's First Symphony is subtitled, *Winter Daydreams*; contemporary composers such as Hans Abrahamsen (*Winternacht*; *Schnee*) and Niccolò Castiglioni (*Inverno In-Ver*) have contributed substantial works to this genre; and of course, there is the well-known song cycle by Schubert, *Winterreise*, and the piano Prélude by Debussy, *Des pas sur la neige*. *Winter Music* is my attempt to dialogue with this tradition and offer my own musings on the cold and dark months of winter.

I have lived in St. Louis for two years, and it has been wonderfully normal to experience the distinct and beautiful, equal-length seasons of eastern Missouri. Having spent the majority of my life in western Montana and upstate New York, I have grown accustomed to long winters; and while I do not miss them, I am nostalgic for the silence generated by a heavy blanket of snow, the cozy darkness of the sunless evenings, and the contemplative space that can naturally accompany these conditions. At its core, *Winter Music* is an introverted work whose discourse is guided by the way one's thoughts can fixate, float, revolve, interrupt, and spiral when confronted with the long days, weeks, and months of winter introspection.

There are several musical subjects that weave this work together: a melody (stated at the beginning and marked by a rising major second); an echoing two-against-three rhythmic motive; glassy trills; quick bursts of harsh and dissonant accents; imitations of sounds played backwards and echoed; harmonies orchestrated as bundled flurries of sound; and finally, two Schubert quotations from *Winterreise*. As these materials recur, they build energy, develop, and expand, but ultimately topple, regroup, and build again. Finally, consolation is found in a quotation of Schubert's *Der Lindenbaum*. In the Wilhelm Müller poem, which Schubert set, the linden tree whispers to the winter traveler, "You'd find your peace with me." There is comfort and shelter in the firm, exposed structure of the trees, and we watch their branches awaiting the first signs of spring.

DURATION

ca. 12'30"

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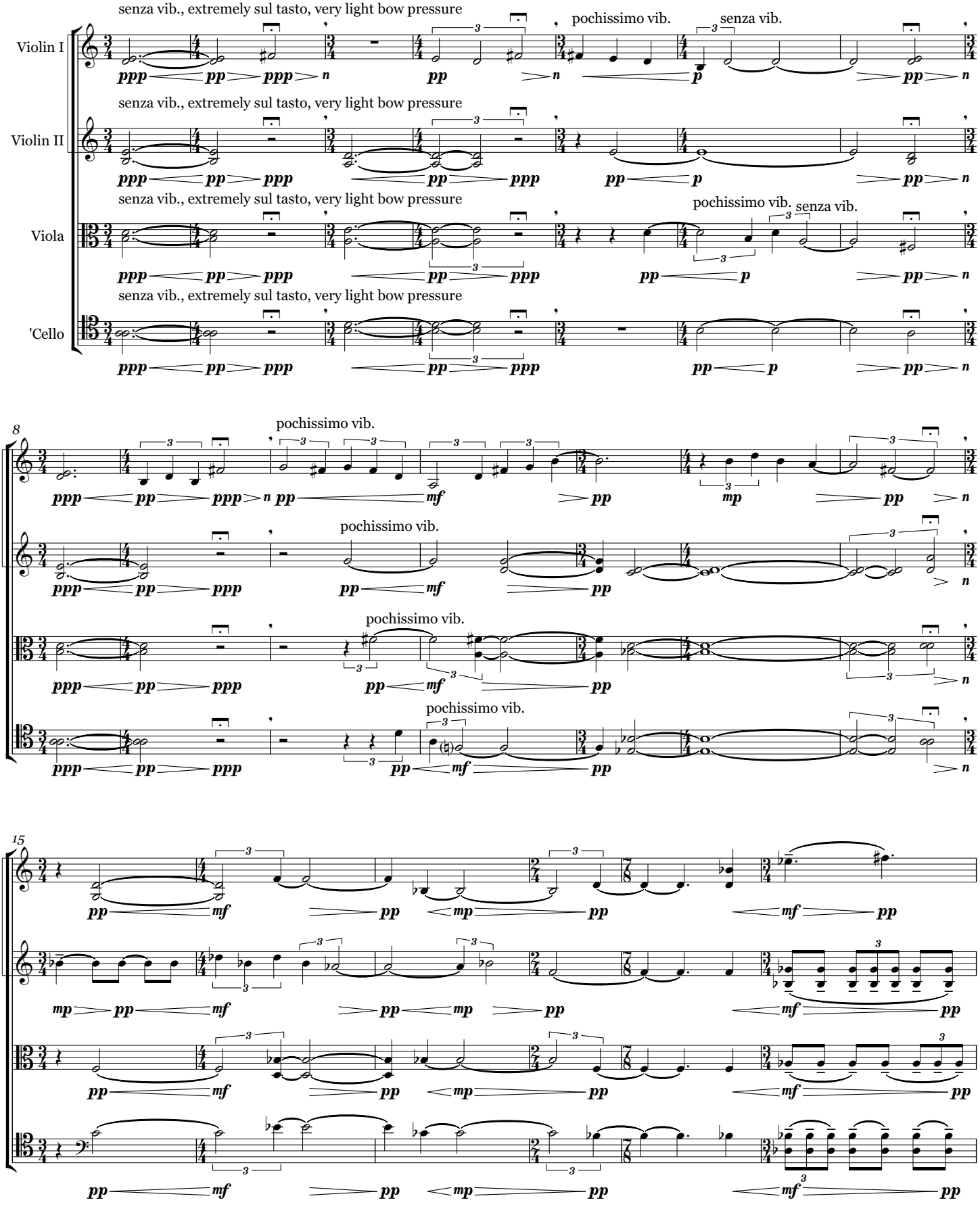
WINTER MUSIC

Christopher Stark (2016)

Delicately, patiently, ghostly, distant, with rubato (♩. = 72)



rit.

With energy ♩. = 60

21

mp pp p ppp n pp

27

ff

Play this measure 4x

(repeat ord.)

29

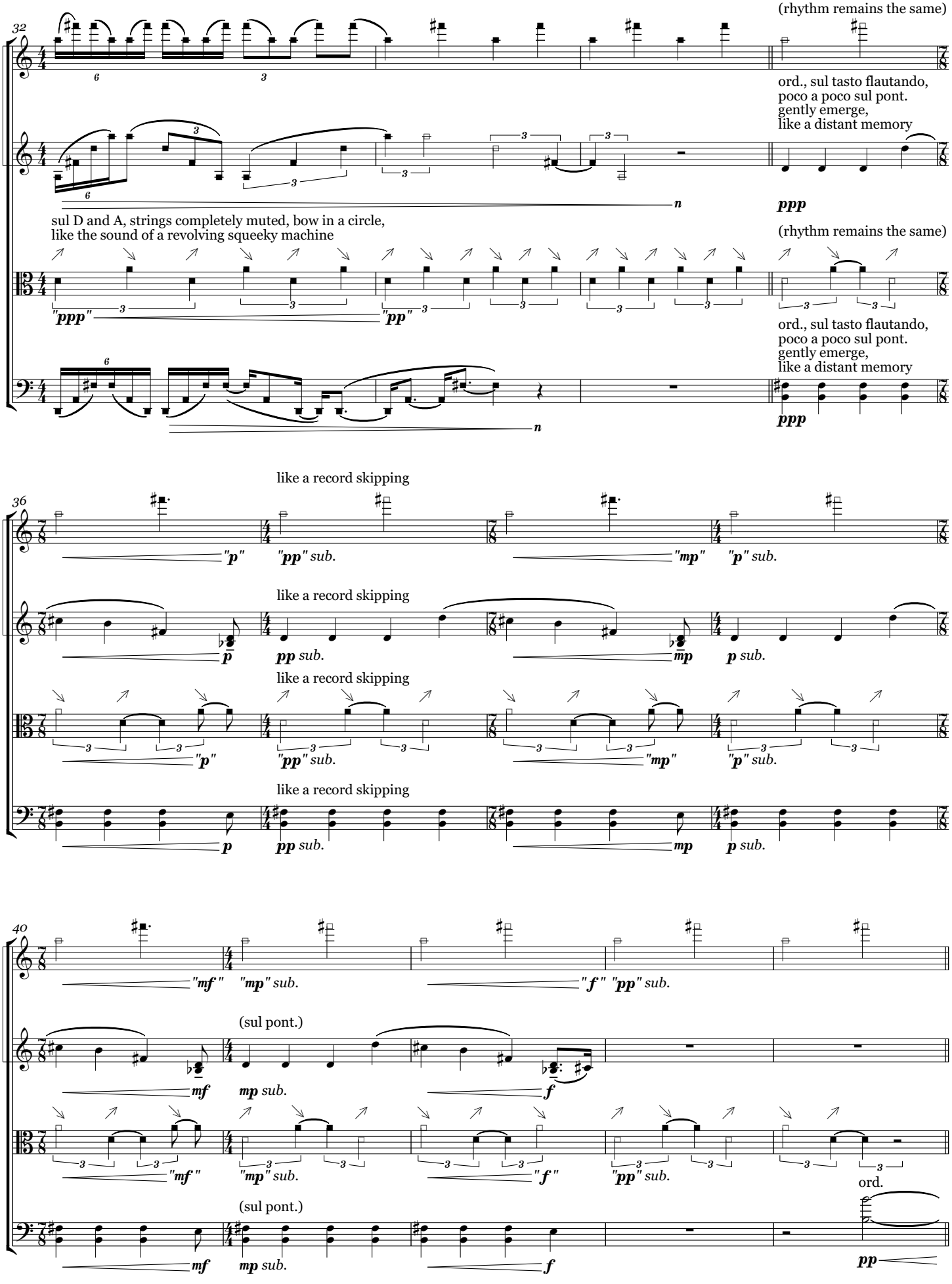
decresc. poco a poco
don't fade too quickly

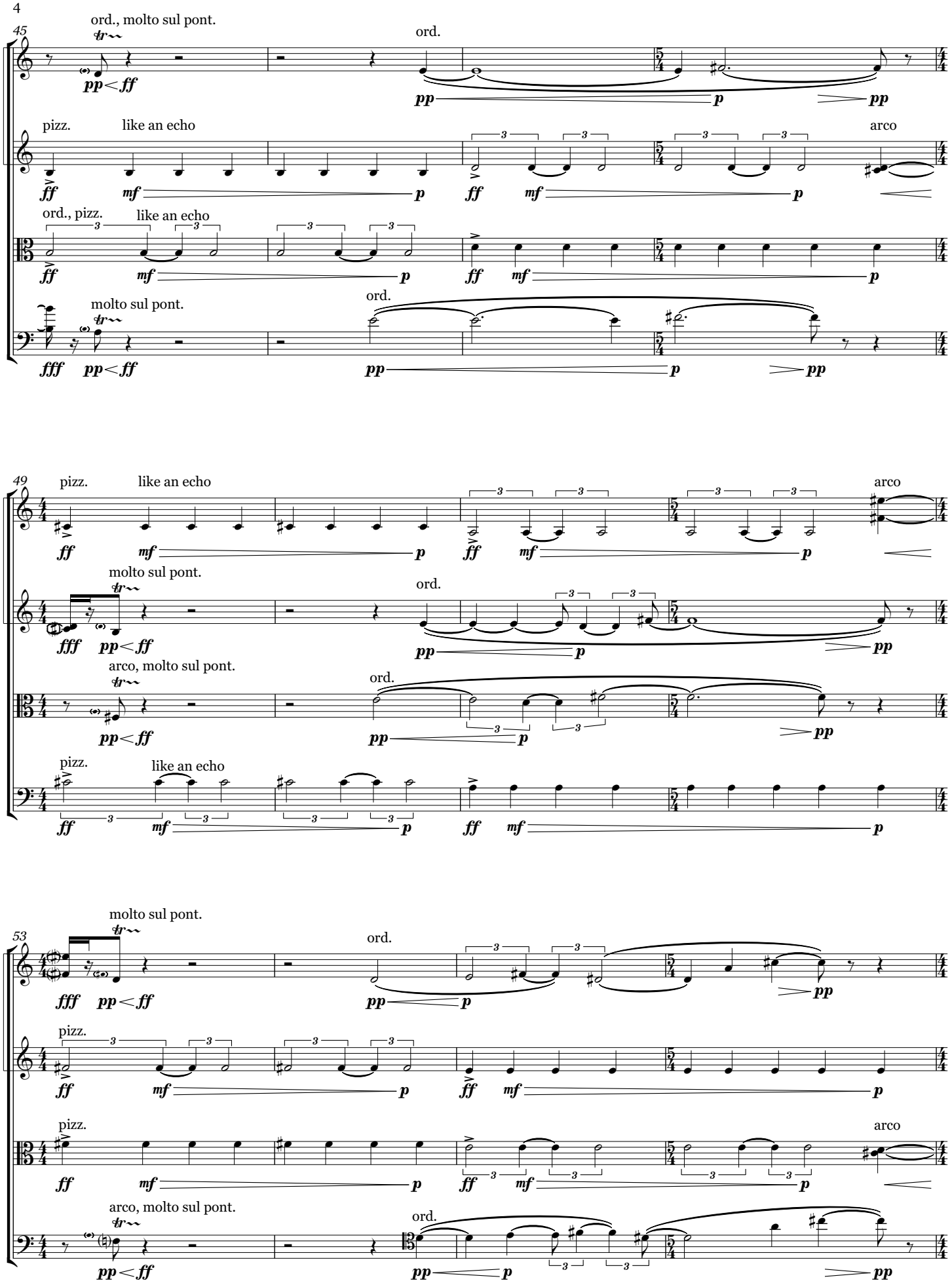
(p continue decresc.)

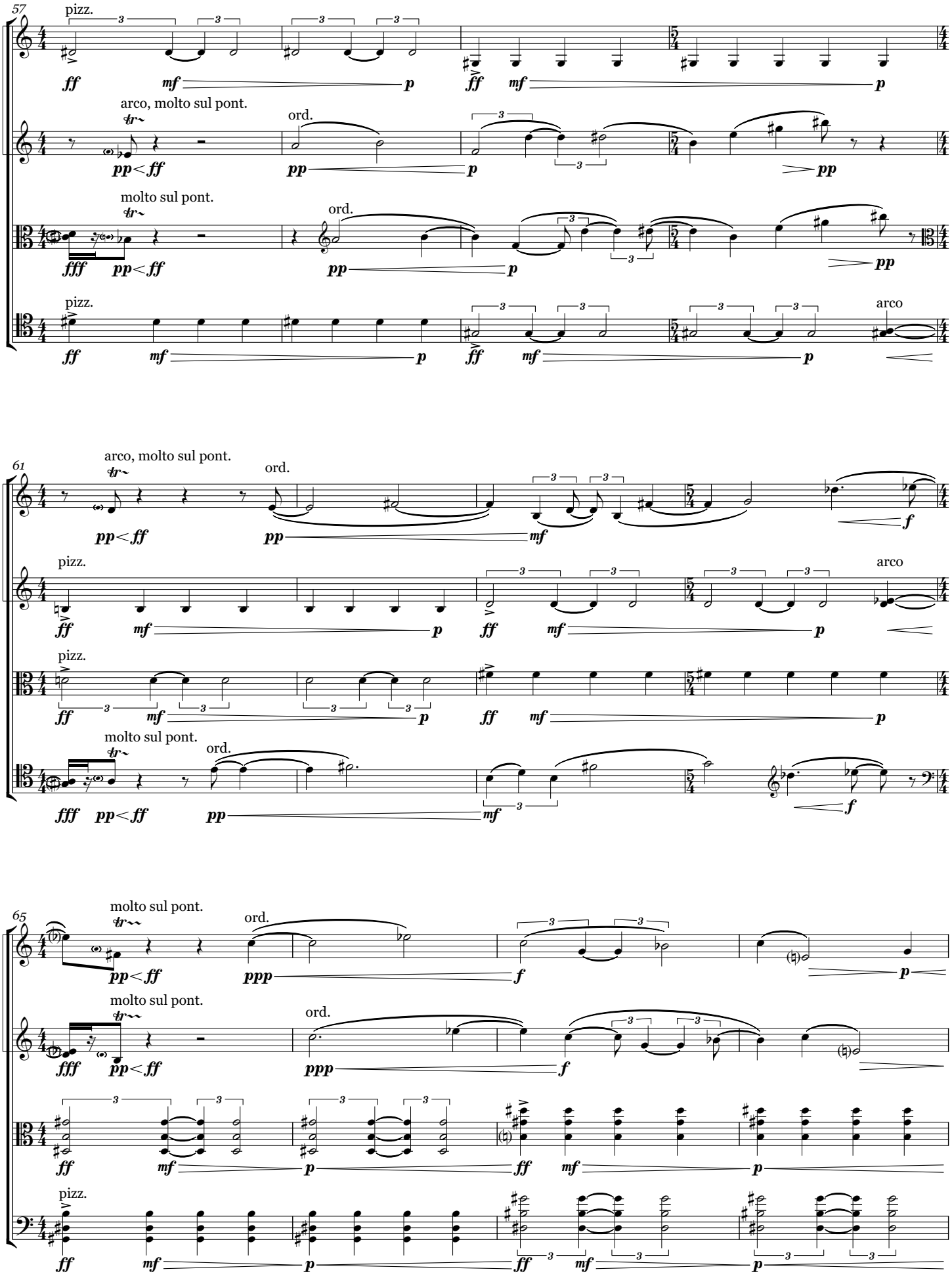
gradually becoming toneless
lifting fingers, gradually muting strings,
disintegrating

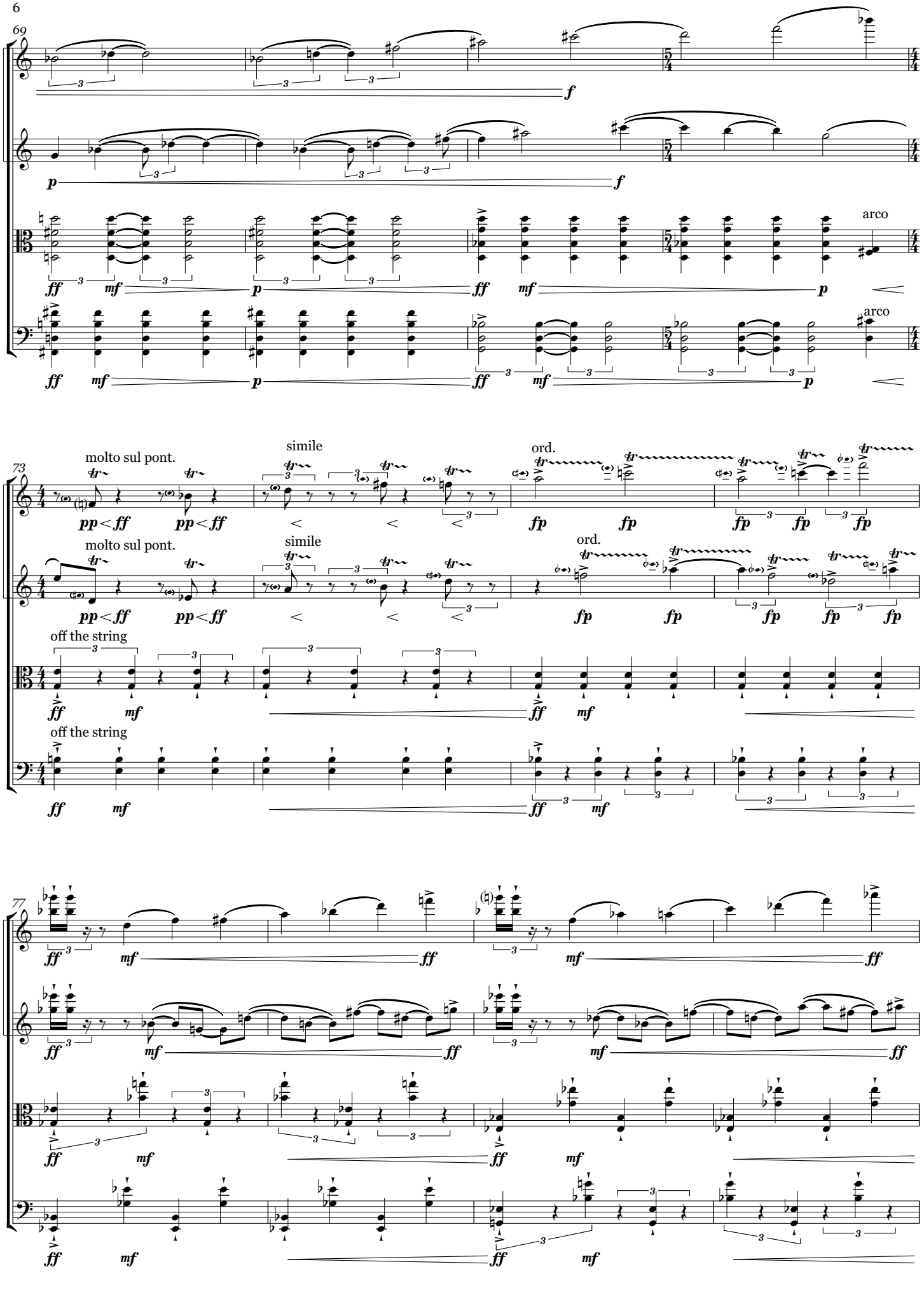
muted, toneless, noise

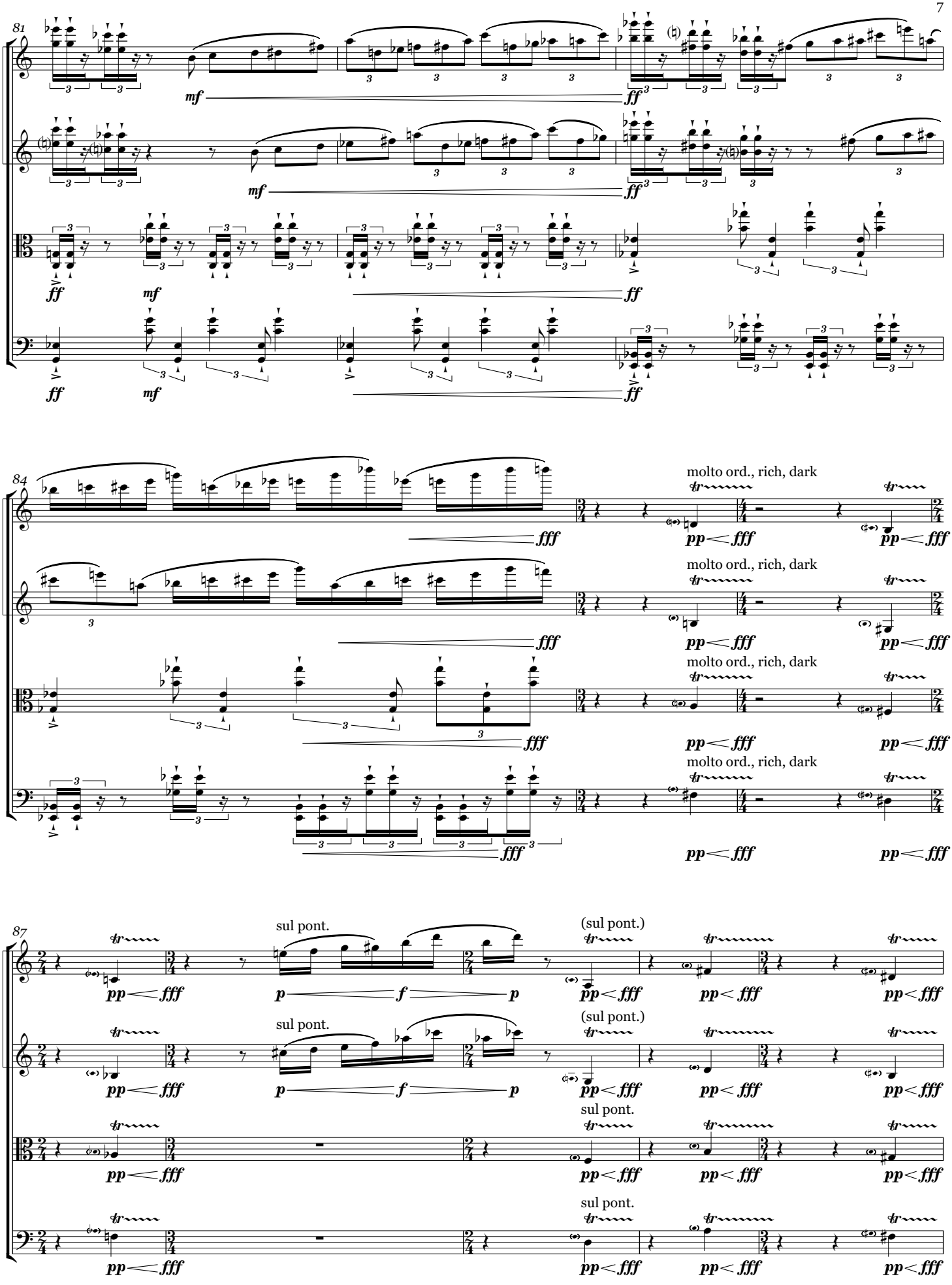
"ppp" sempre

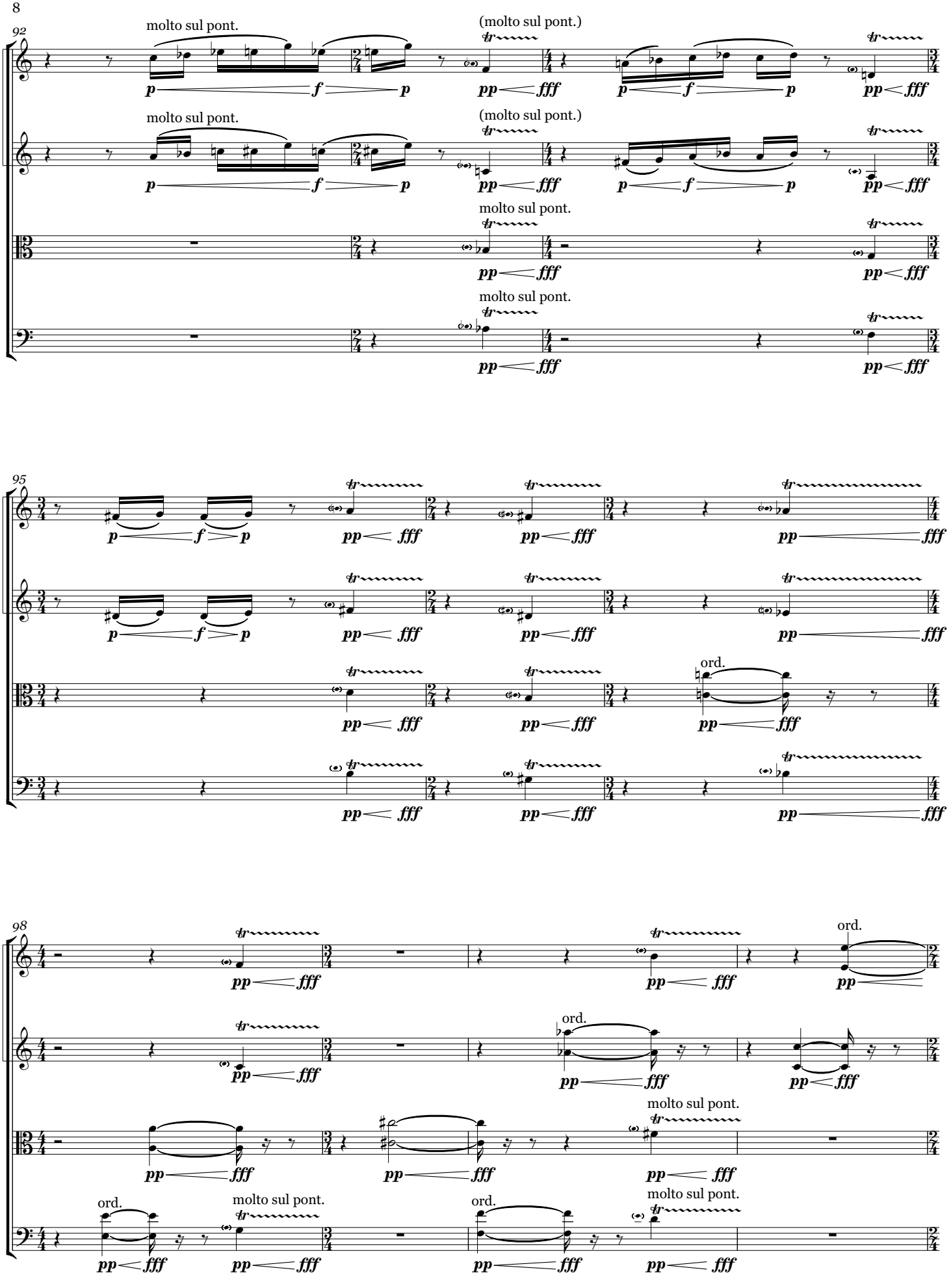

32
(rhythm remains the same)
ord., sul tasto flautando,
poco a poco sul pont.
gently emerge,
like a distant memory
ppp
n
sul D and A, strings completely muted, bow in a circle,
like the sound of a revolving squeeky machine
"ppp"
"pp"
(rhythm remains the same)
ord., sul tasto flautando,
poco a poco sul pont.
gently emerge,
like a distant memory
ppp
n
36
like a record skipping
"p"
"pp" sub.
"mp"
"p" sub.
like a record skipping
p
pp sub.
mp
p sub.
like a record skipping
"p"
"pp" sub.
"mp"
"p" sub.
like a record skipping
p
pp sub.
mp
p sub.
40
"mf"
"mp" sub.
"f"
"pp" sub.
(sul pont.)
mf
mp sub.
f
"mf"
"mp" sub.
"f"
"pp" sub.
ord.
(sul pont.)
mf
mp sub.
f
pp

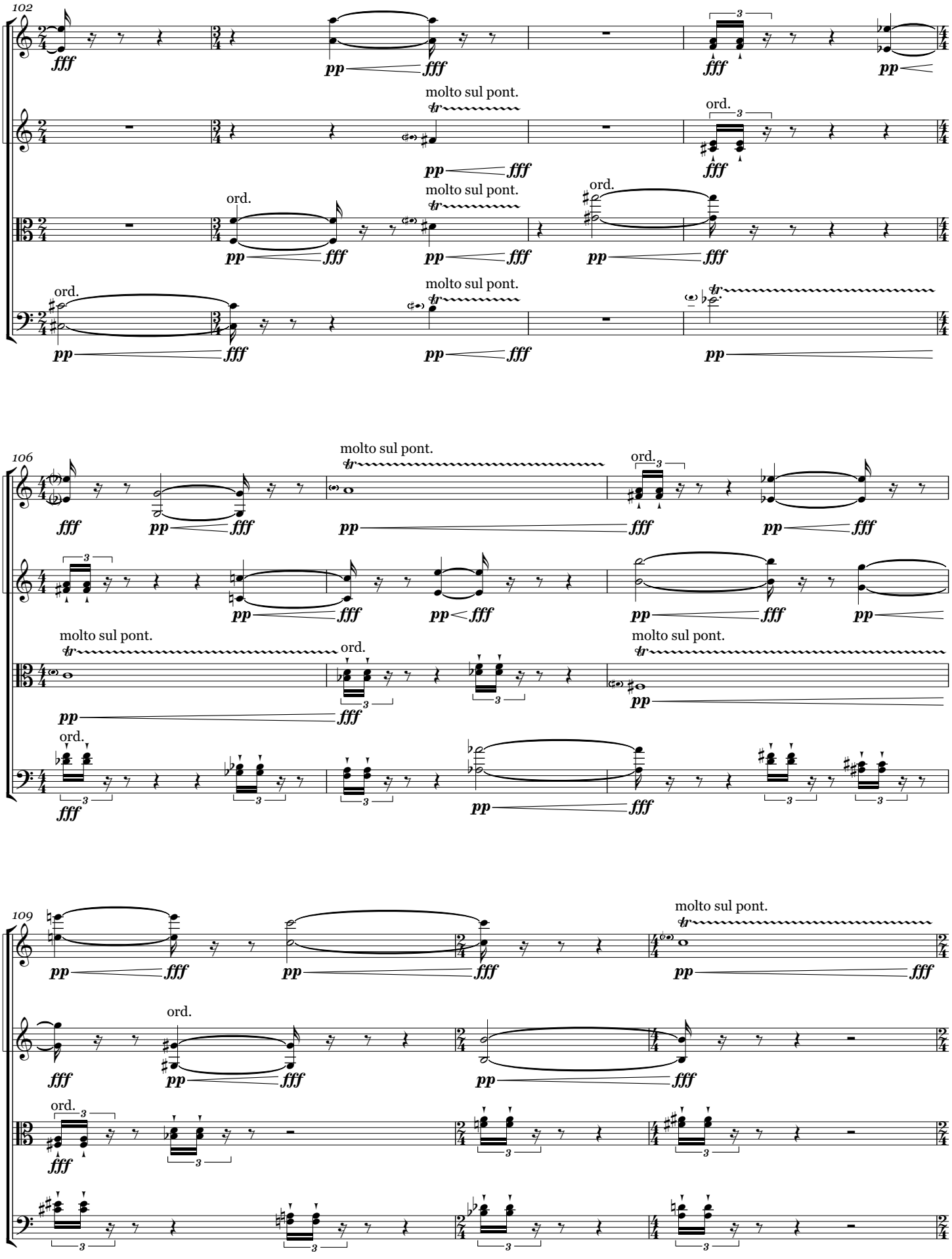

45
ord., molto sul pont.
ord.
pizz.
like an echo
arco
ord., pizz.
like an echo
molto sul pont.
ord.
49
pizz.
like an echo
arco
molto sul pont.
ord.
arco, molto sul pont.
ord.
pizz.
like an echo
53
molto sul pont.
ord.
pizz.
pizz.
arco
arco, molto sul pont.
ord.

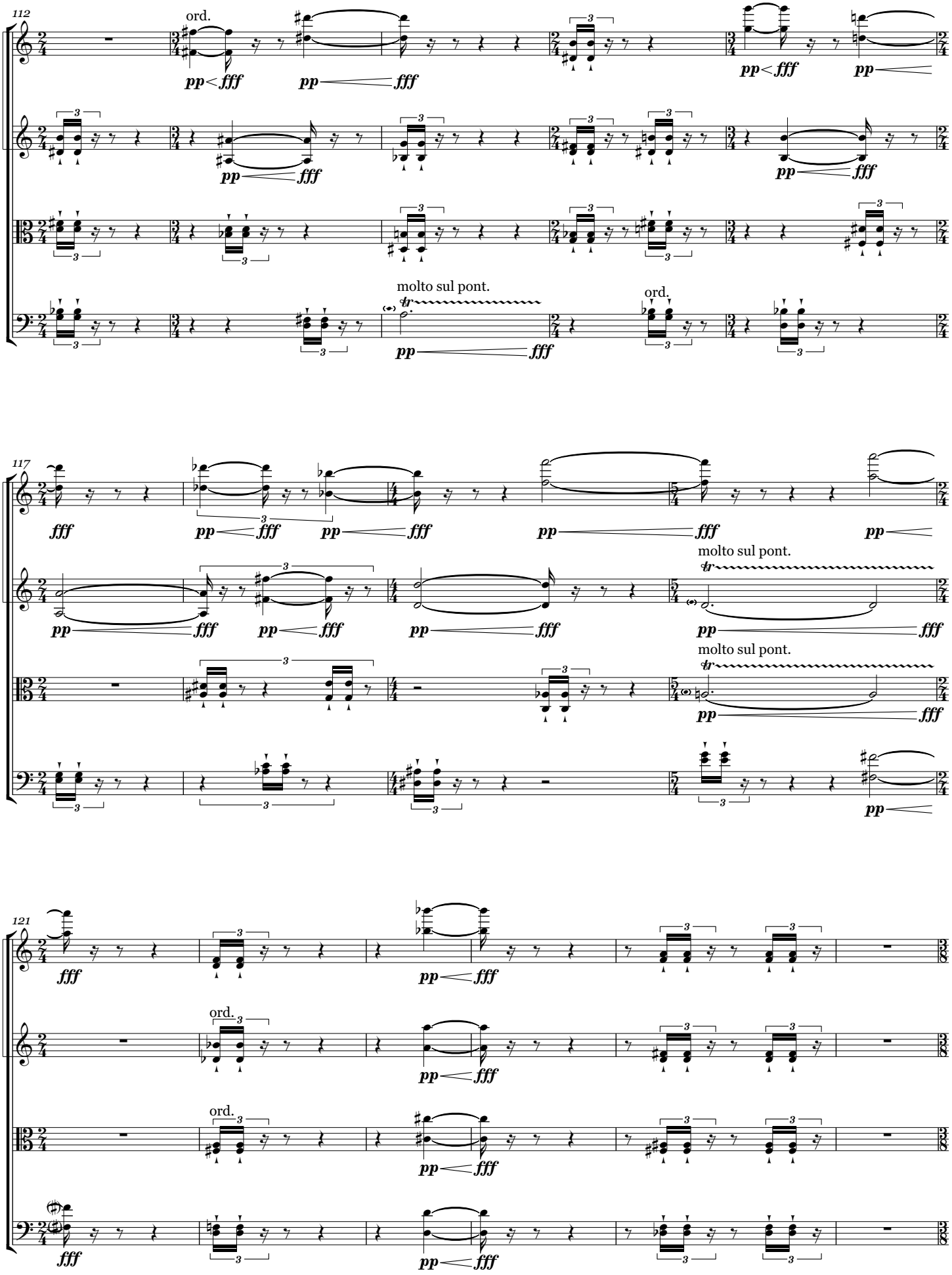

57
pizz.
arco, molto sul pont.
ord.
molto sul pont.
ord.
pizz.
arco
61
arco, molto sul pont.
ord.
pizz.
arco
pizz.
molto sul pont.
ord.
65
molto sul pont.
ord.
molto sul pont.
ord.
pizz.

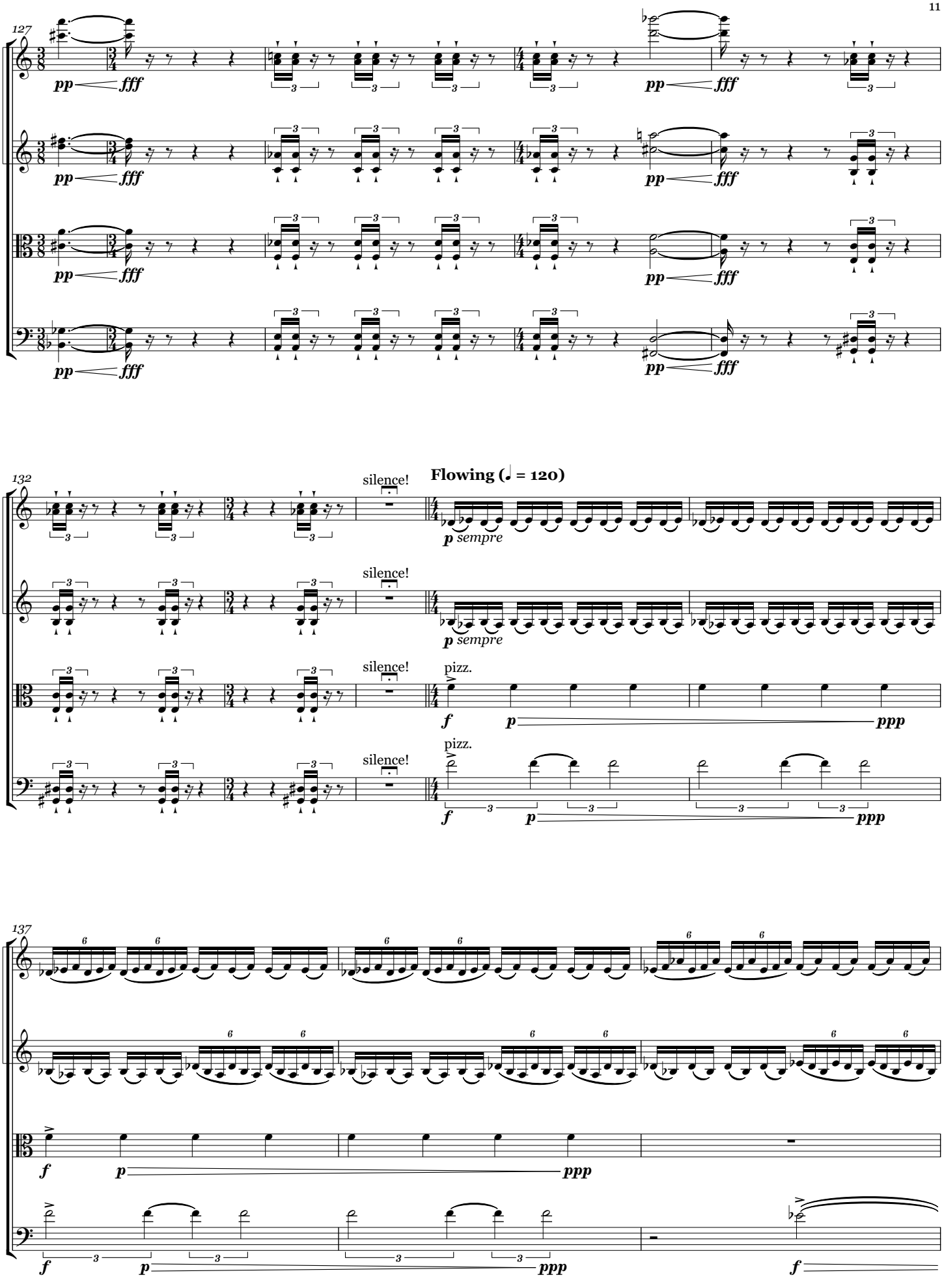

69
arco
arco
73
molto sul pont.
simile
ord.
molto sul pont.
simile
ord.
off the string
off the string
77

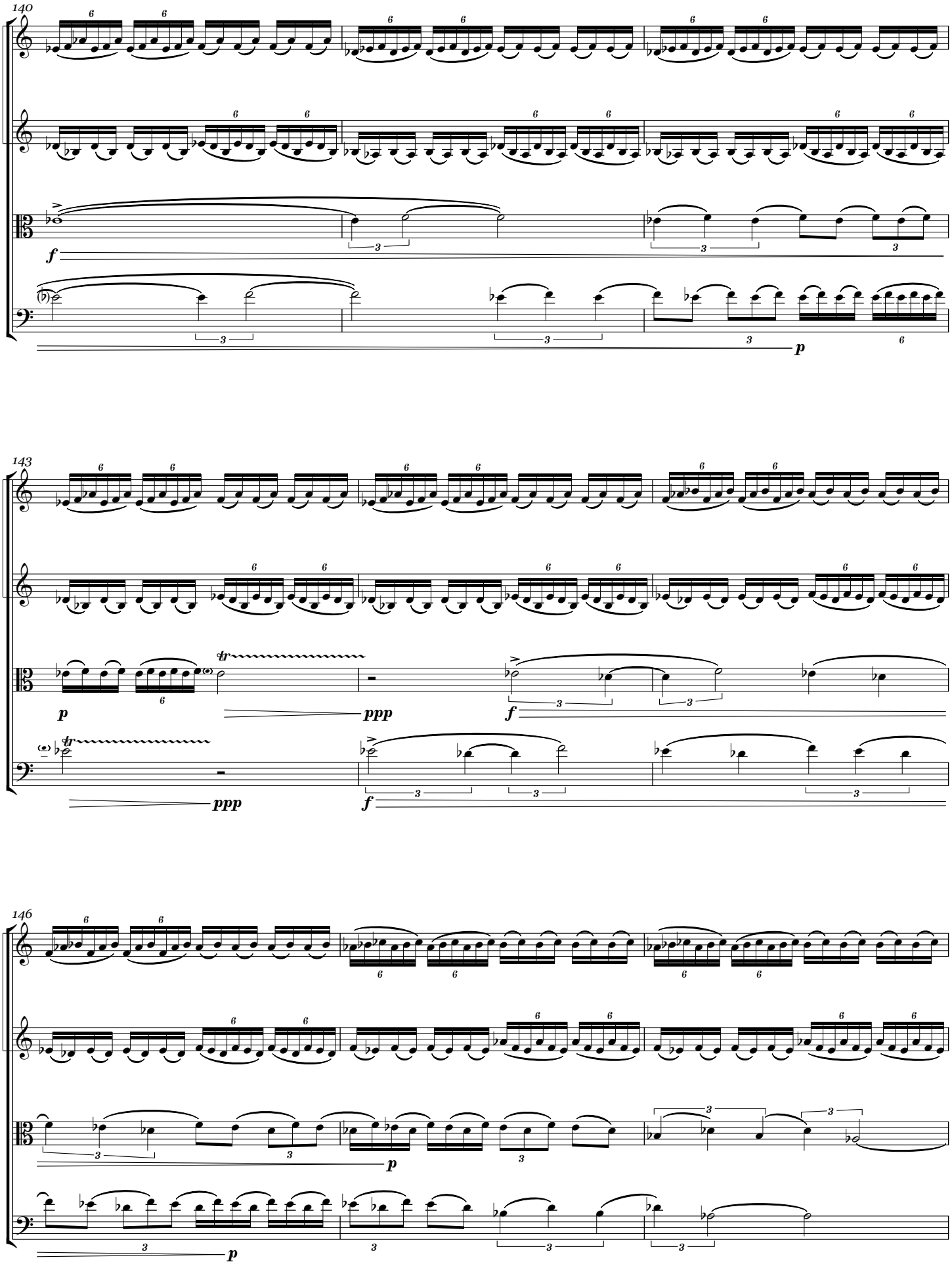

81
mf
ff
84
molto ord., rich, dark
pp
fff
87
sul pont.
(sul pont.)
p
f

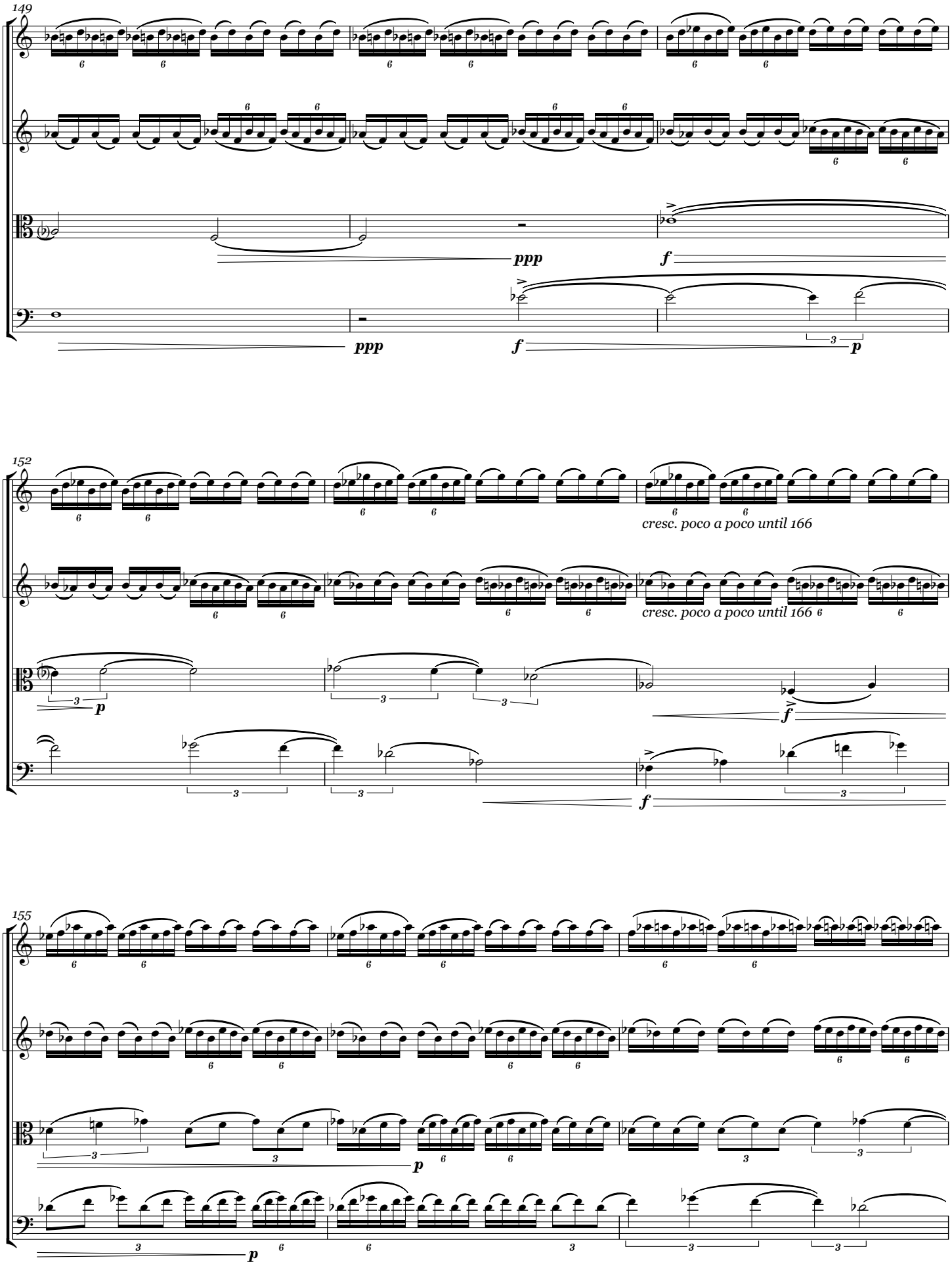

92
molto sul pont.
(molto sul pont.)
molto sul pont.
molto sul pont.
molto sul pont.
95
ord.
98
ord.
molto sul pont.
ord.
molto sul pont.
ord.
molto sul pont.

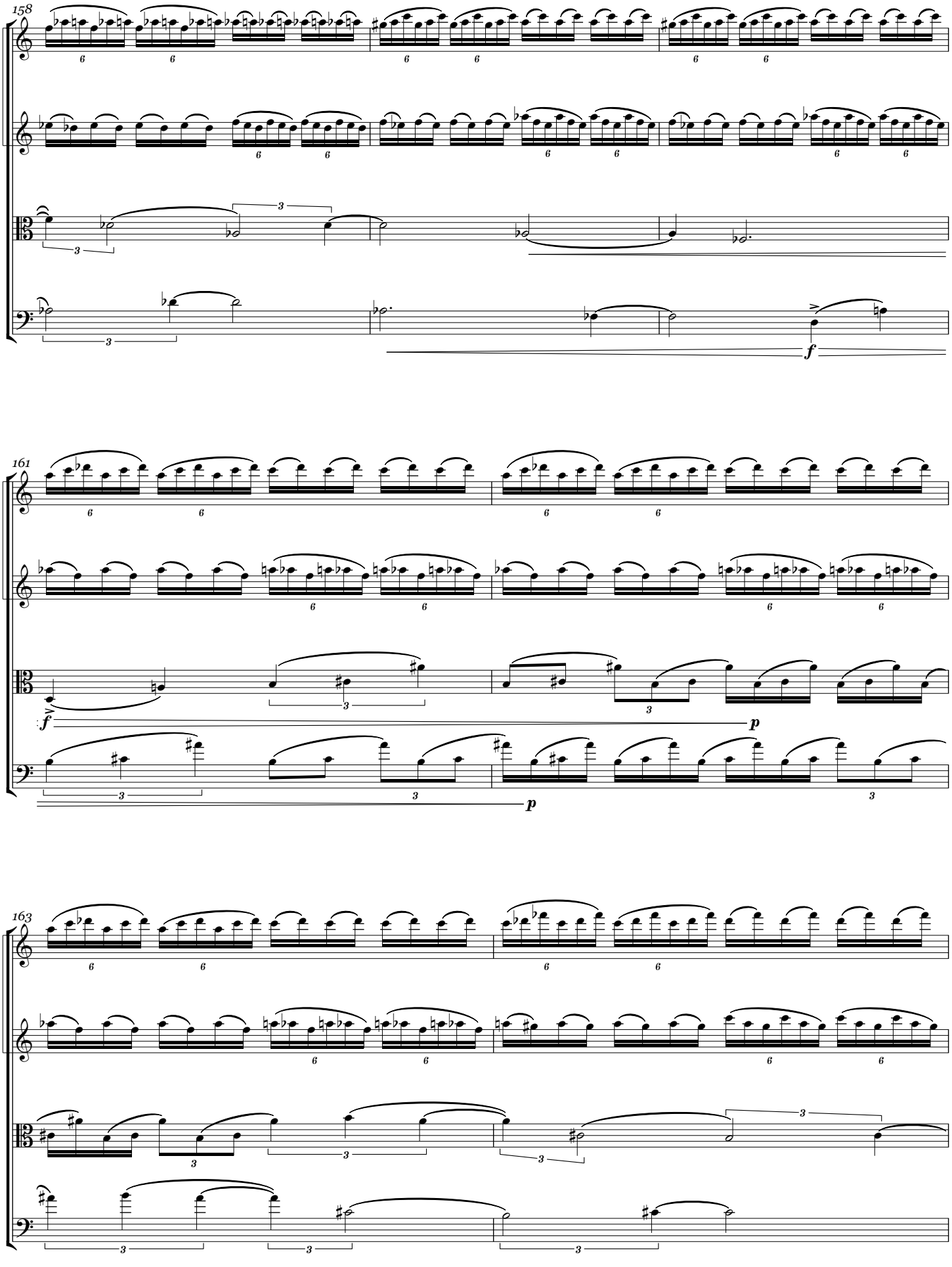

102
molto sul pont.
ord.
106
109

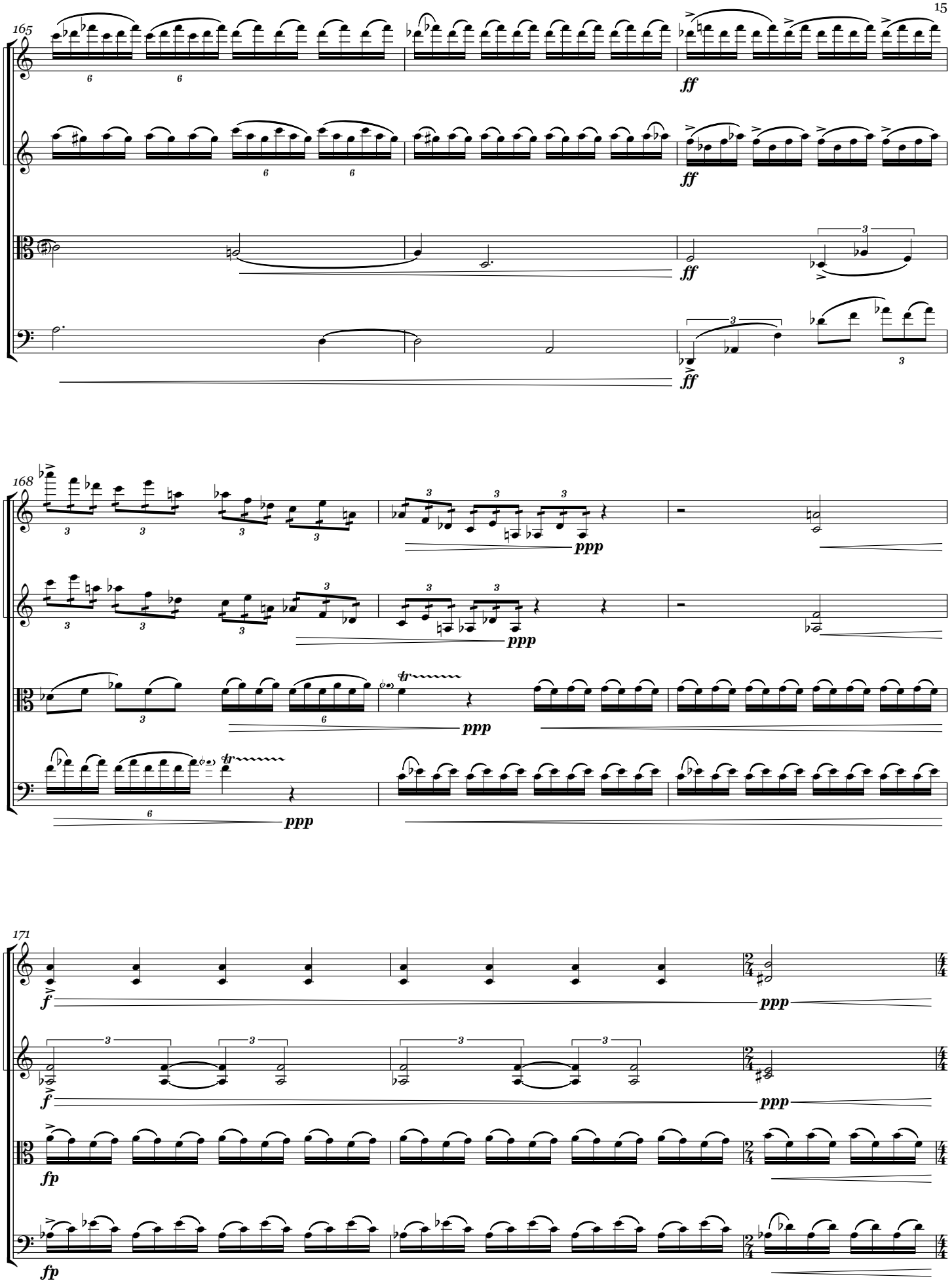

112
ord.
molto sul pont.
ord.
117
molto sul pont.
molto sul pont.
121
ord.
ord.

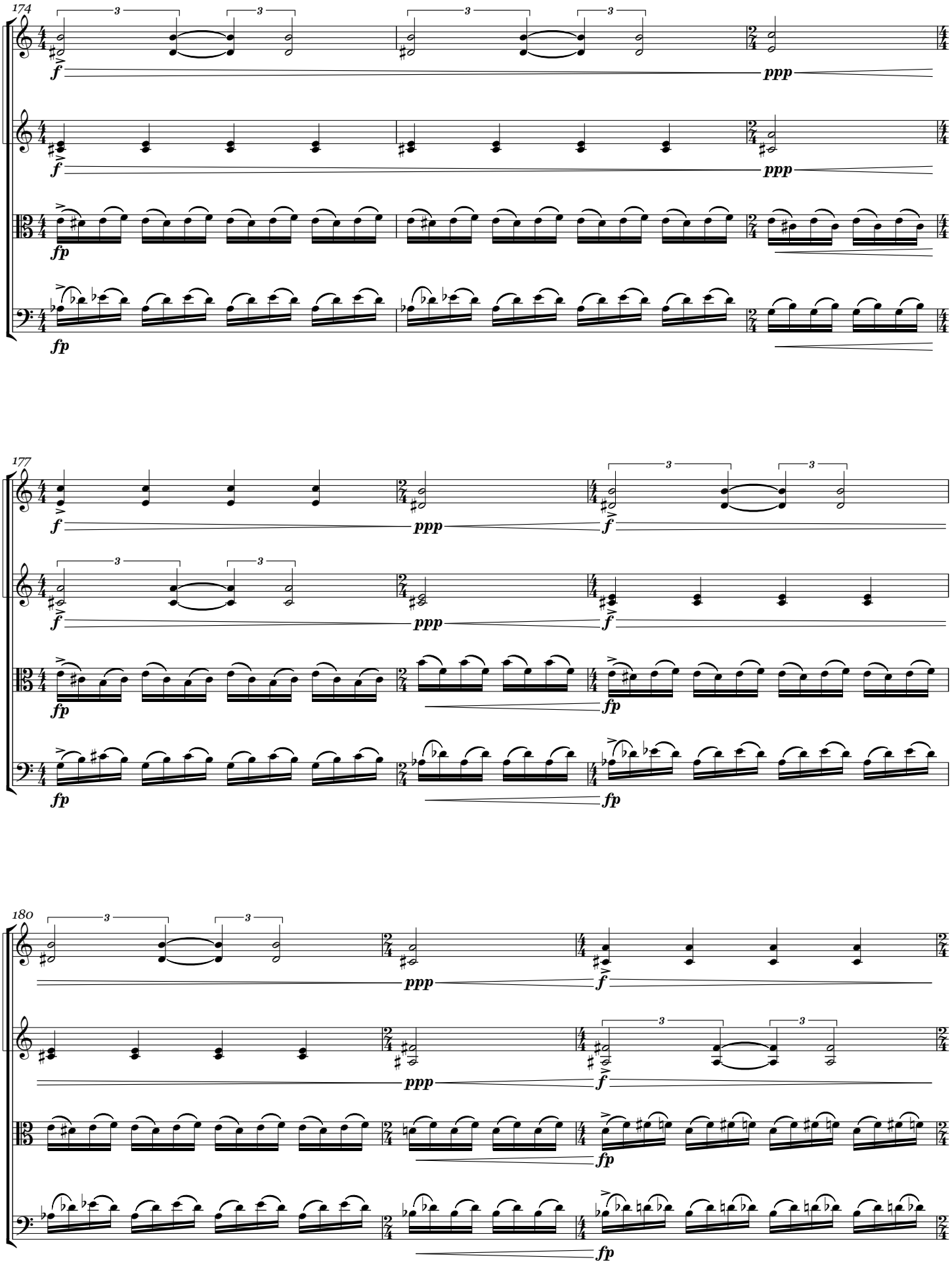

127
pp fff
132
silence!
Flowing (♩ = 120)
p sempre
pizz.
f p ppp
137
6
f p ppp


140
143
146
f
p
ppp
tr

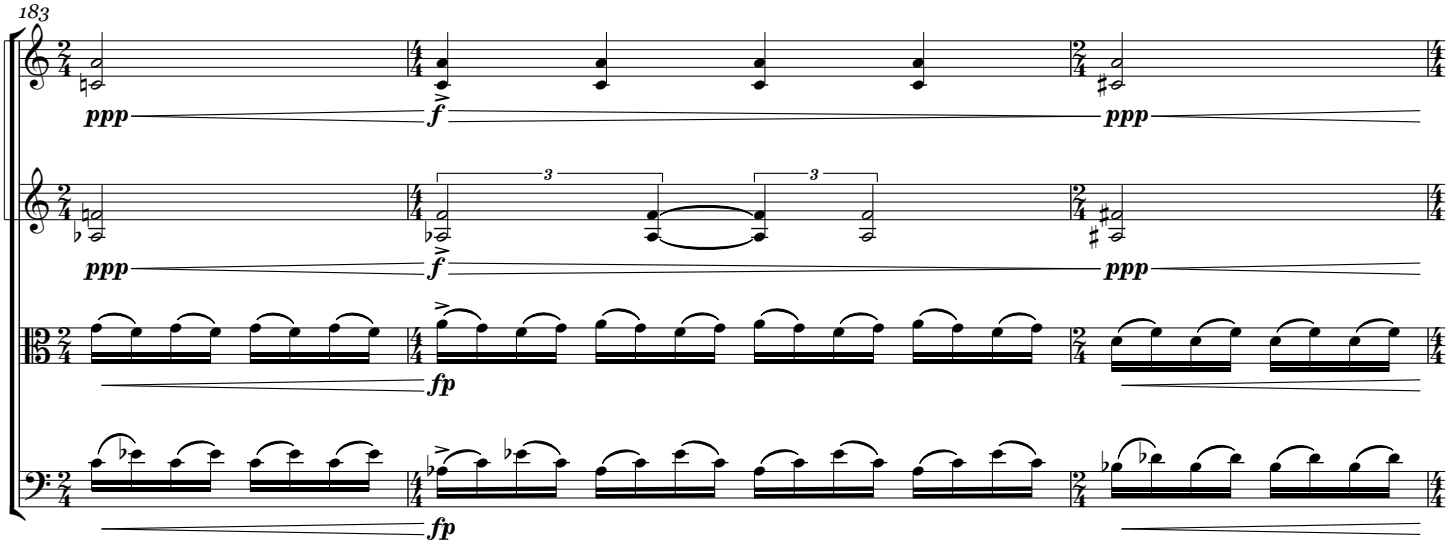

149
ppp
f
ppp
f
p
152
cresc. poco a poco until 166
cresc. poco a poco until 166
p
f
f
155
p
p


158
161
163
f
p

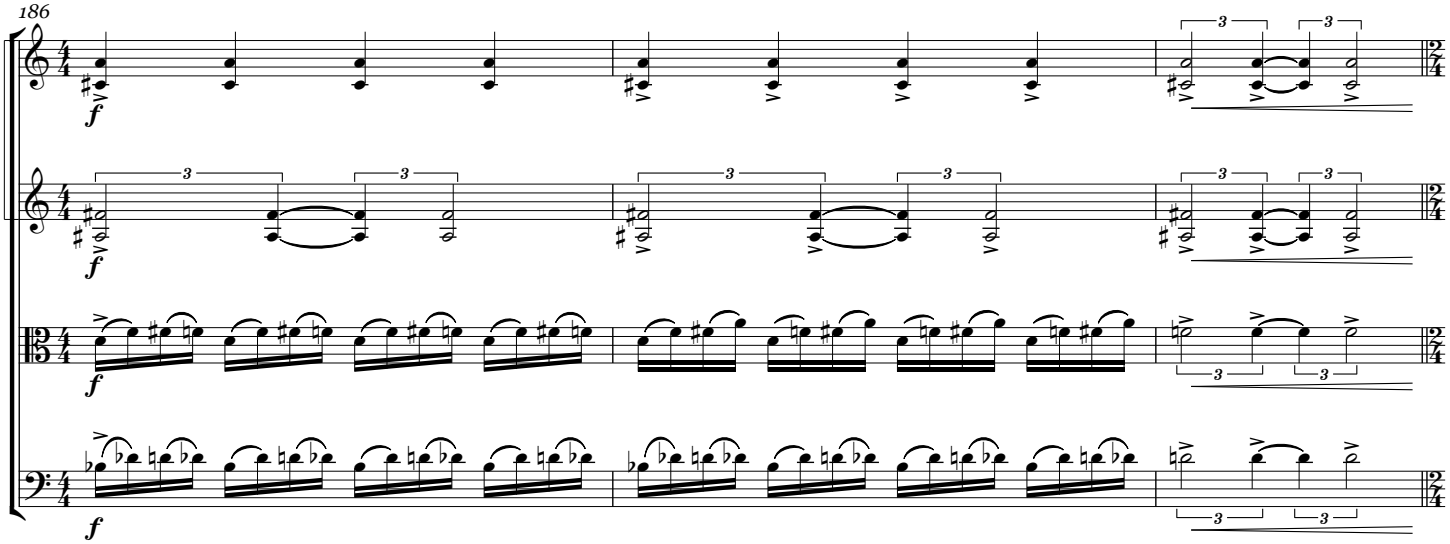

165
ff
ff
ff
ff
168
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp
171
f
ppp
f
ppp
fp
fp


174
177
180
f
ppp
fp
3

183

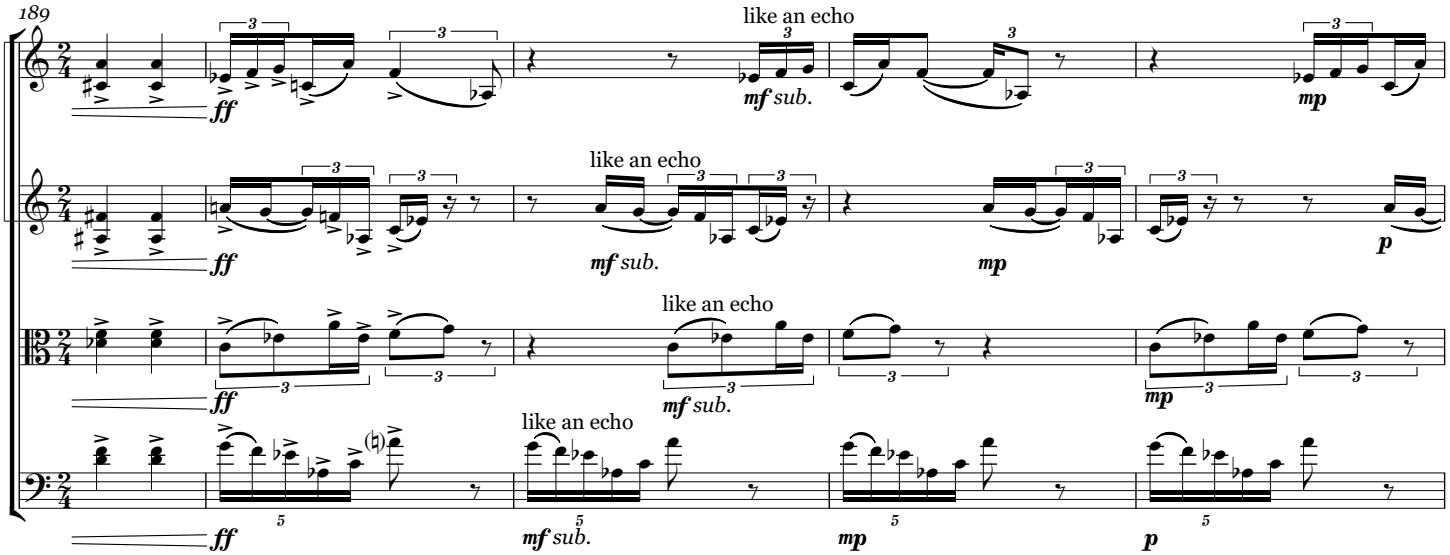


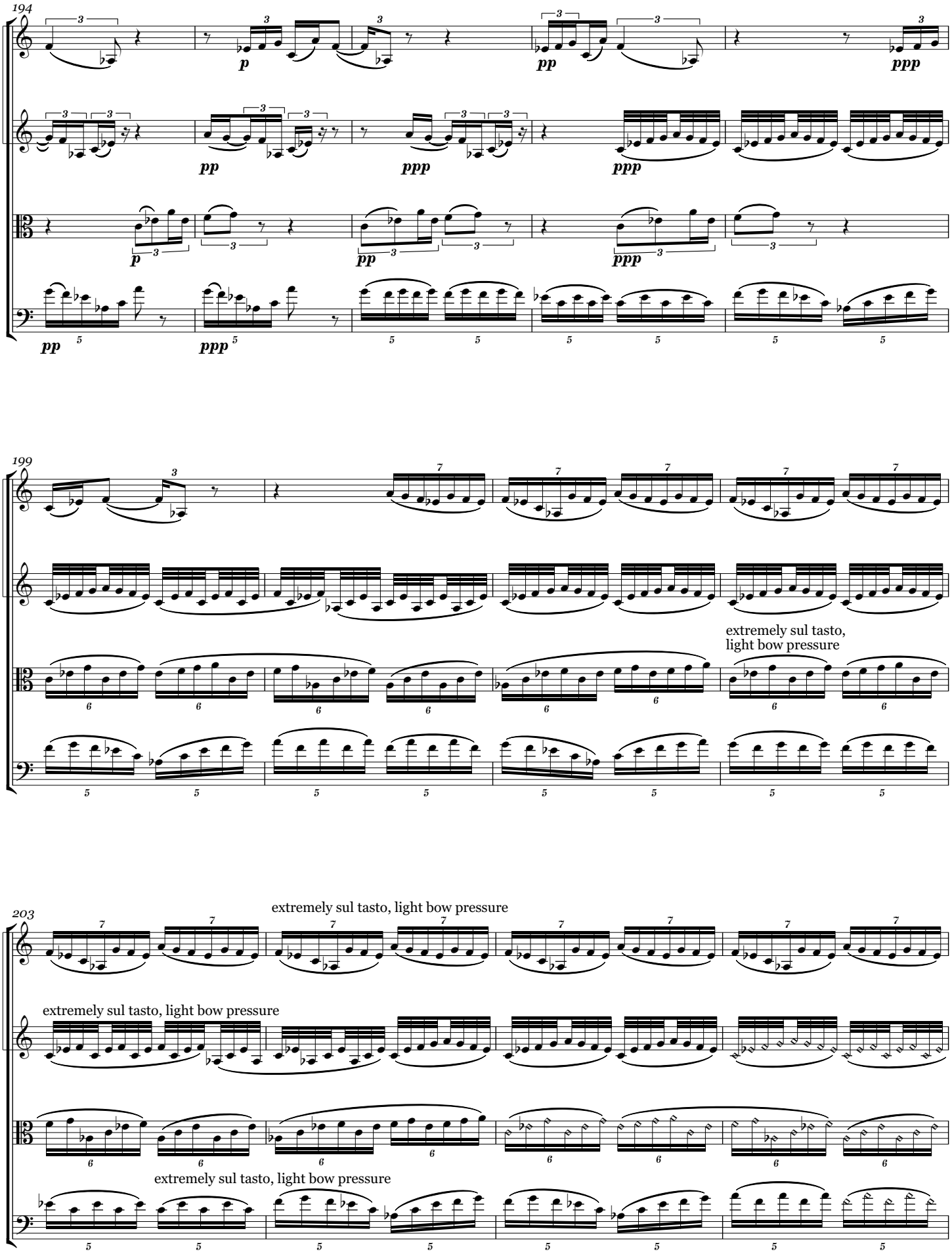
186

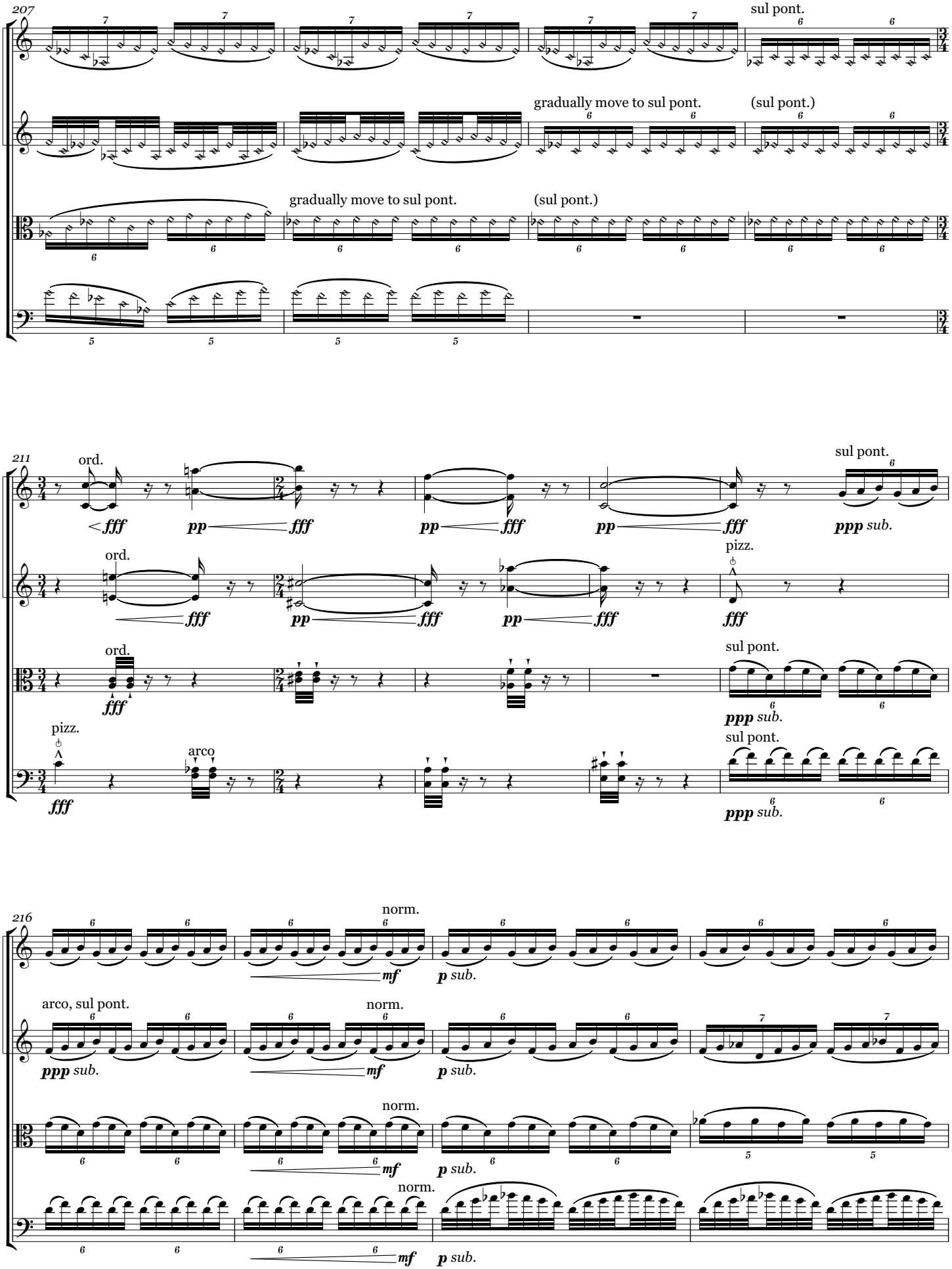


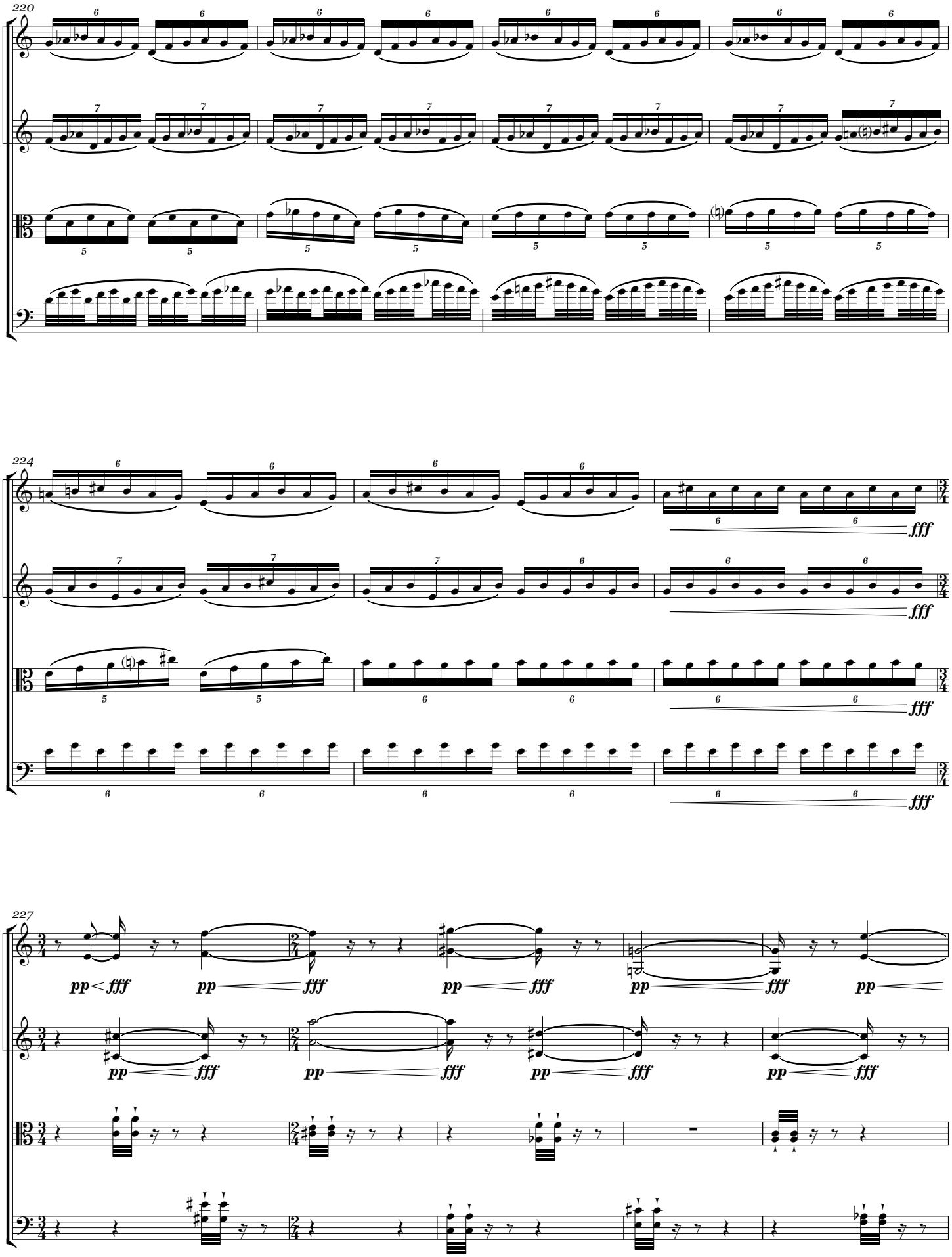
← 3 = ♩ → (♩ = 90)

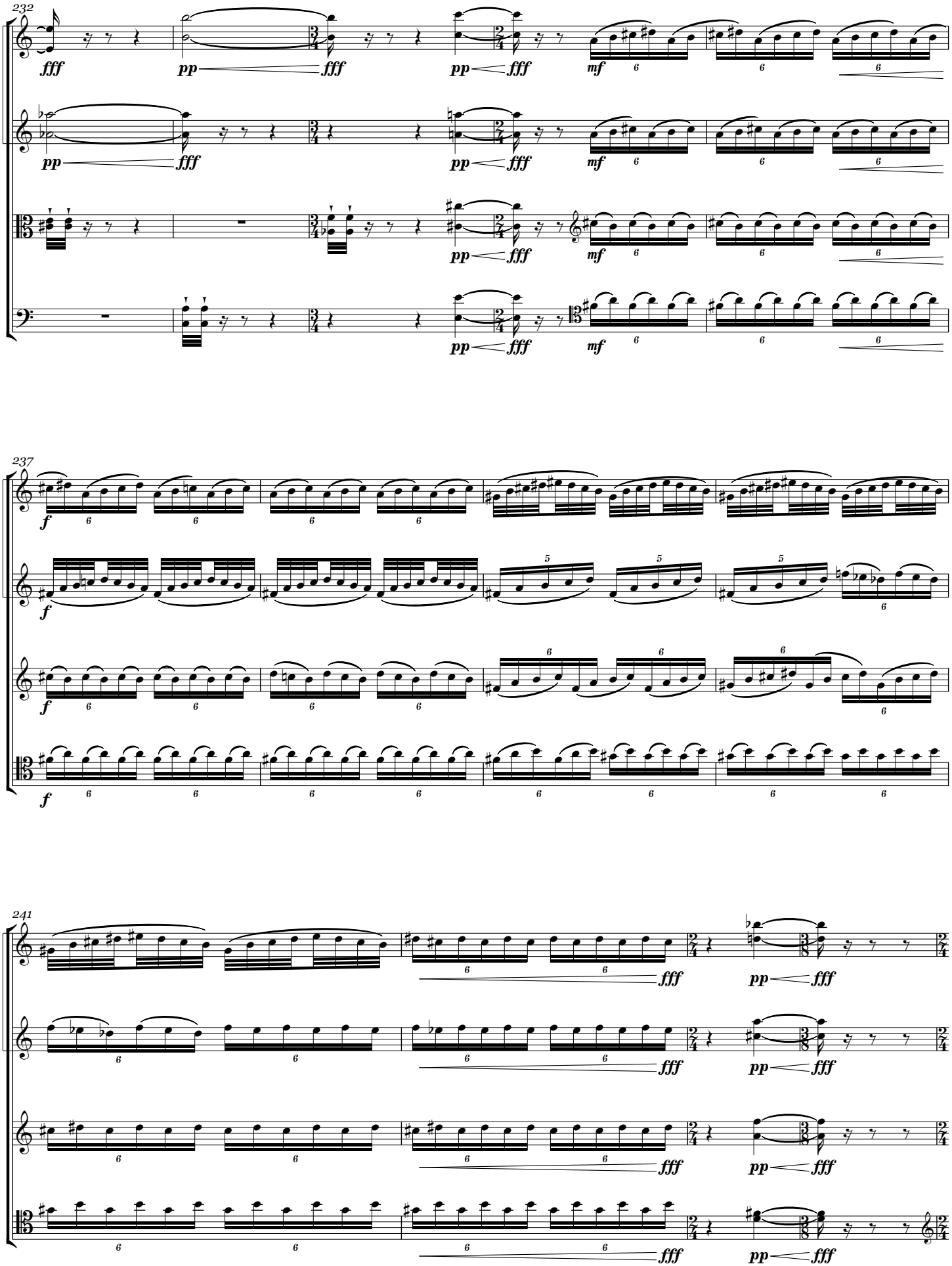
189



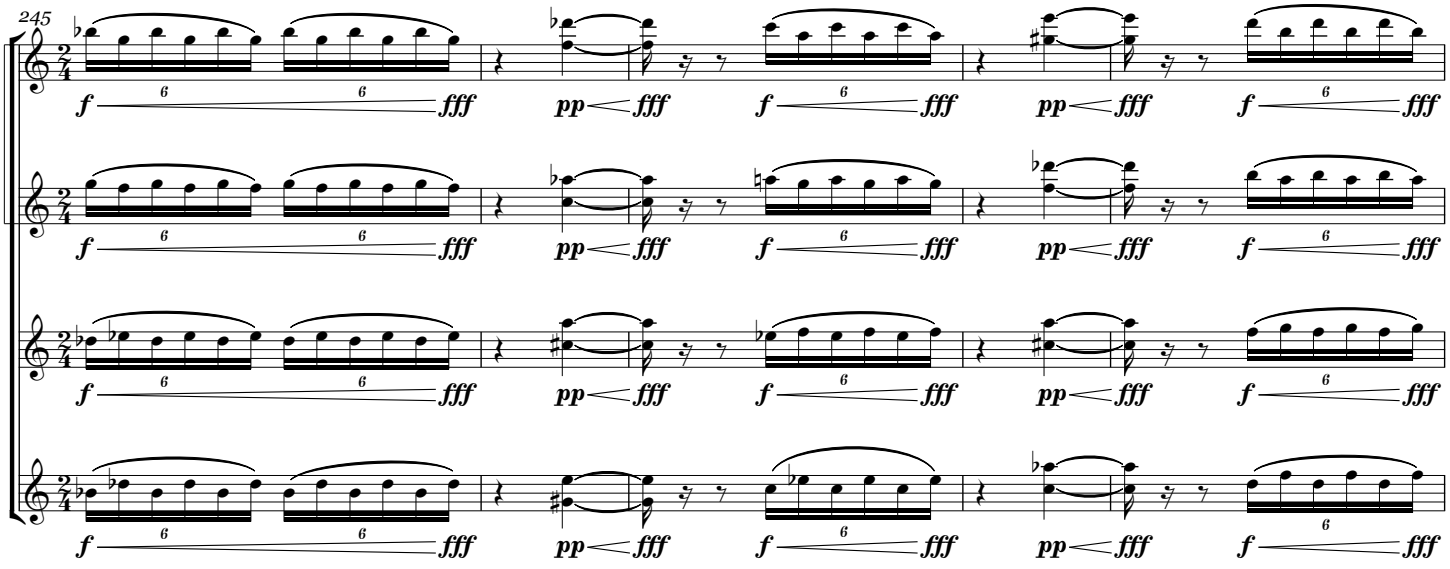

194
p
pp
ppp
199
extremely sul tasto,
light bow pressure
203
extremely sul tasto, light bow pressure
extremely sul tasto, light bow pressure
extremely sul tasto, light bow pressure


207
sul pont.
gradually move to sul pont.
(sul pont.)
gradually move to sul pont.
(sul pont.)
211
ord.
fff
pp
fff
pp
fff
pp
fff
ppp sub.
sul pont.
ord.
fff
pp
fff
pp
fff
pizz.
fff
ord.
fff
sul pont.
ppp sub.
pizz.
fff
arco
sul pont.
ppp sub.
216
norm.
mf
p sub.
arco, sul pont.
ppp sub.
norm.
mf
p sub.
norm.
mf
p sub.
norm.
mf
p sub.

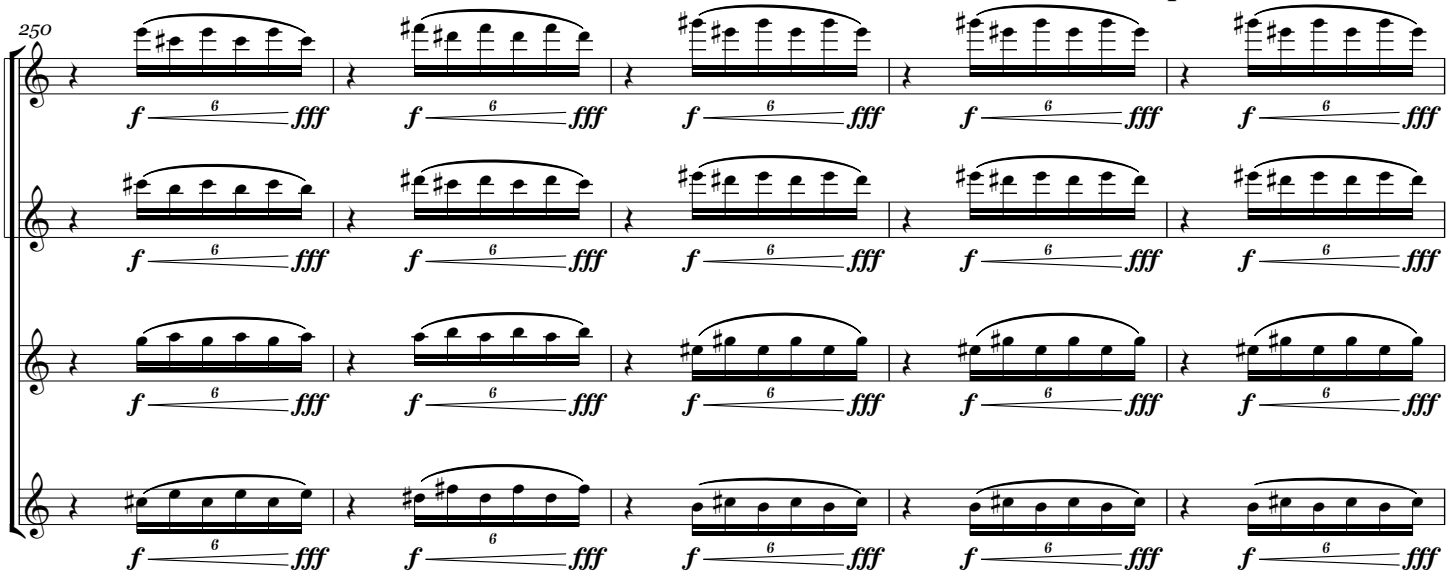

220
224
227
fff
pp
fff


232
fff
pp
fff
pp
fff
mf
237
f
241
fff
pp
fff

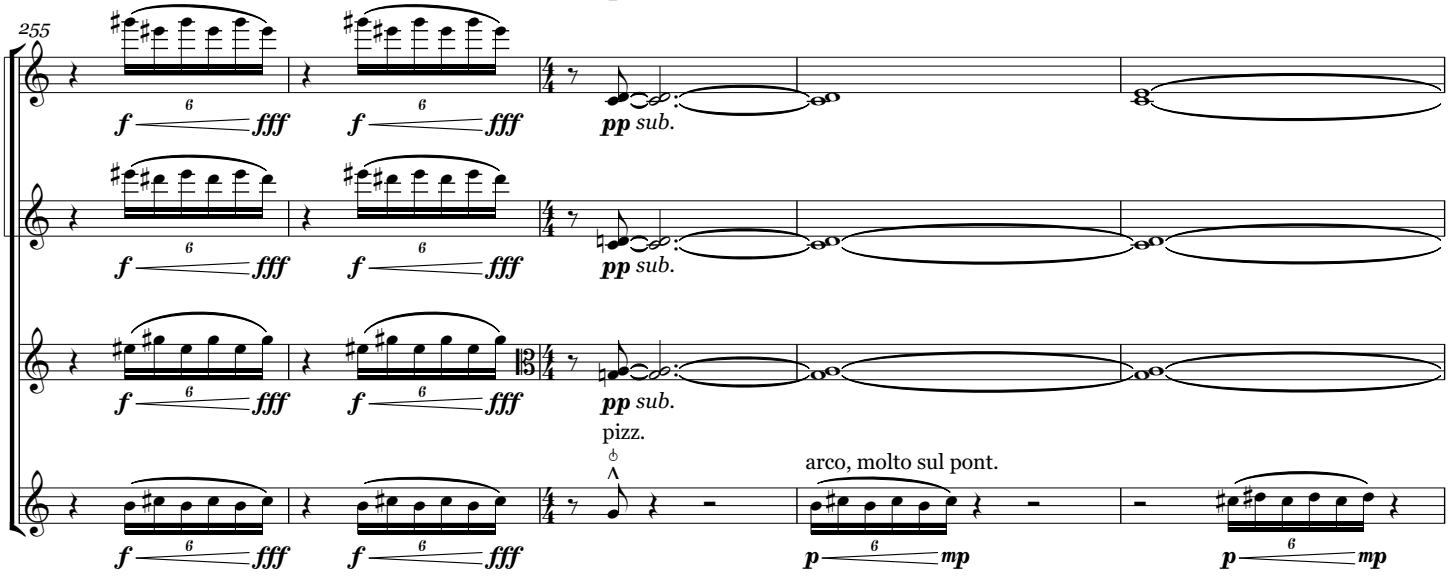
poco accel.

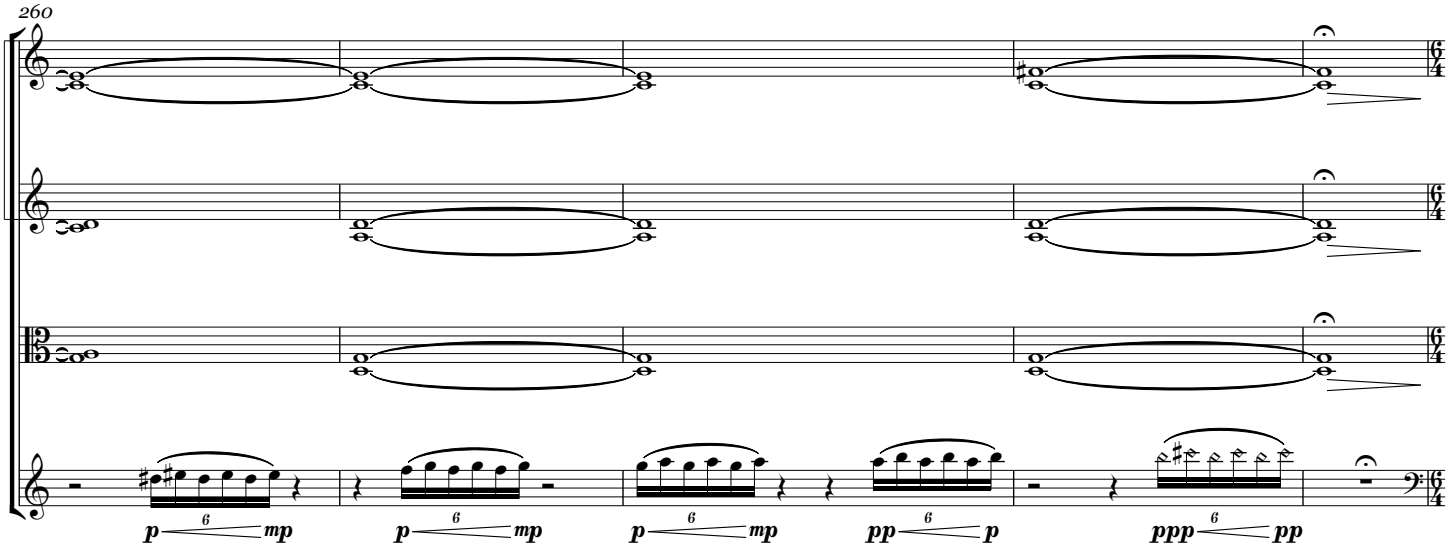


poco rit.

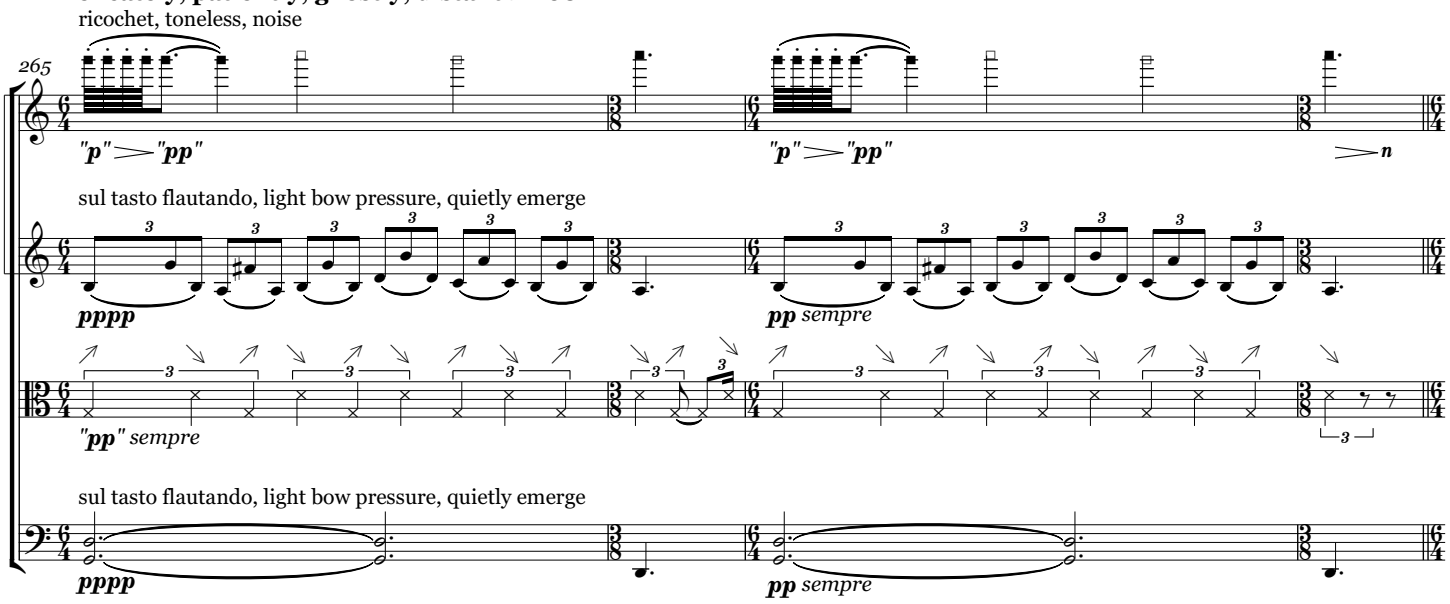


a tempo

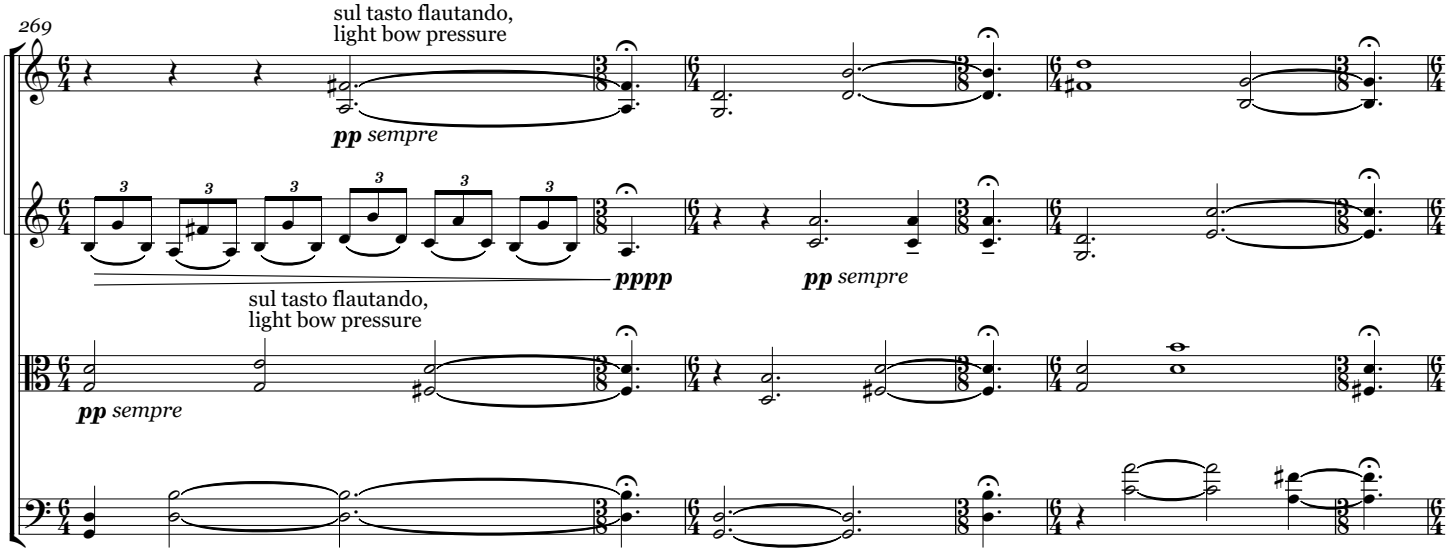




Delicately, patiently, ghostly, distant ♩. = 60

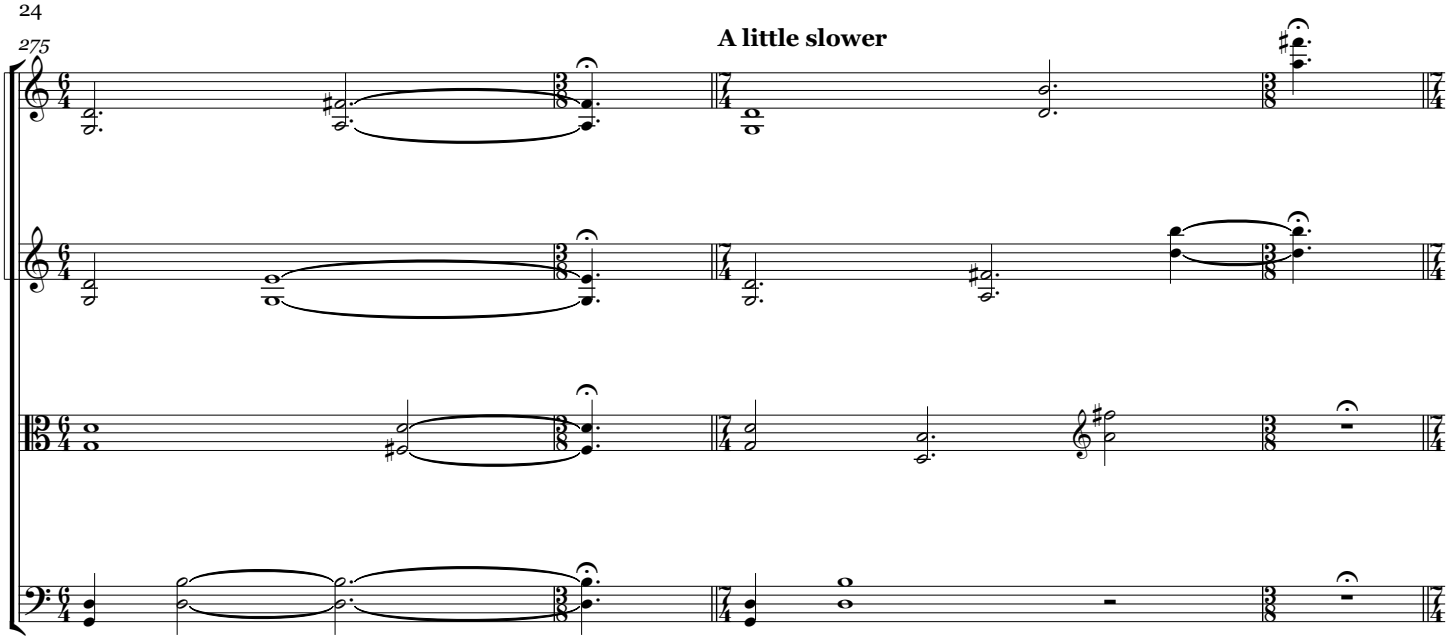
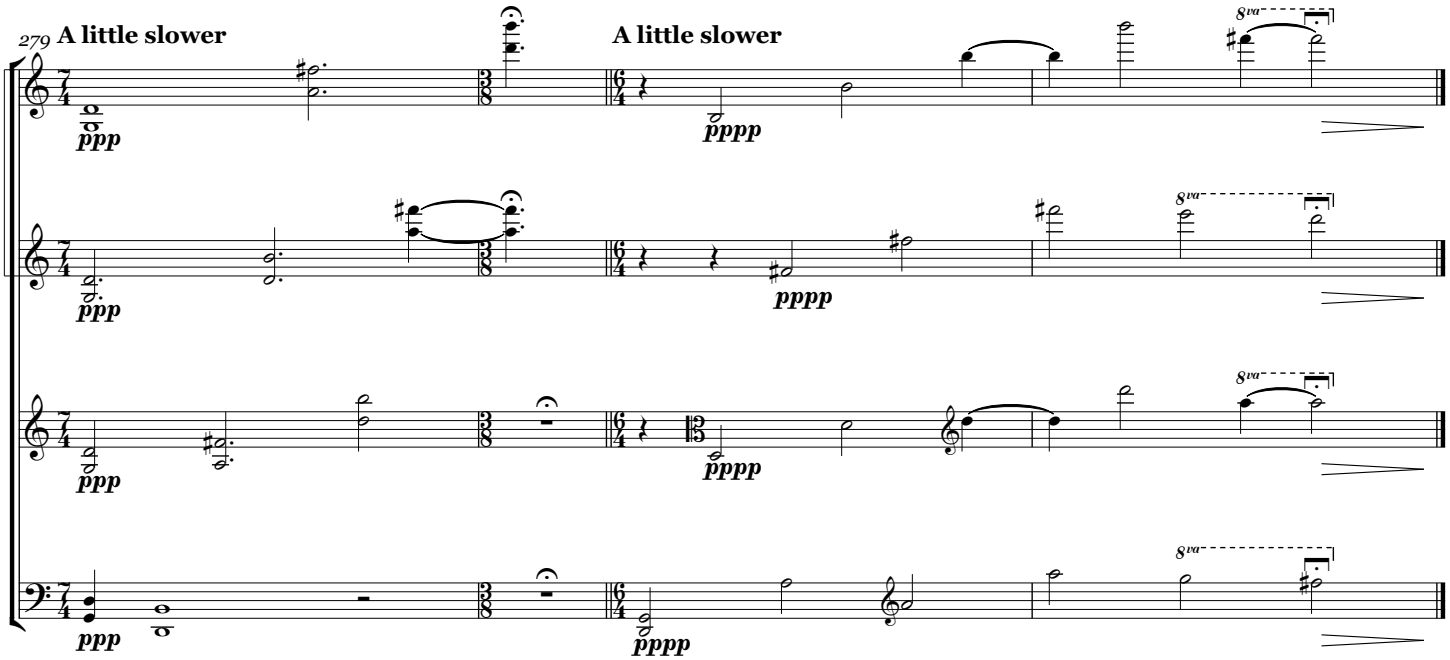


A little slower



275

A little slower



279 **A little slower** **A little slower**