A Baker's Tale

Or:

The Parable of the Croissants

a suite for
clarinet, violin and piano
with optional narrator
by

David Jason Snow

"A Baker's Tale" is a suite in four movements for B-flat clarinet, violin and piano that may be performed with or without the narration. Total duration of the music: 10 minutes.

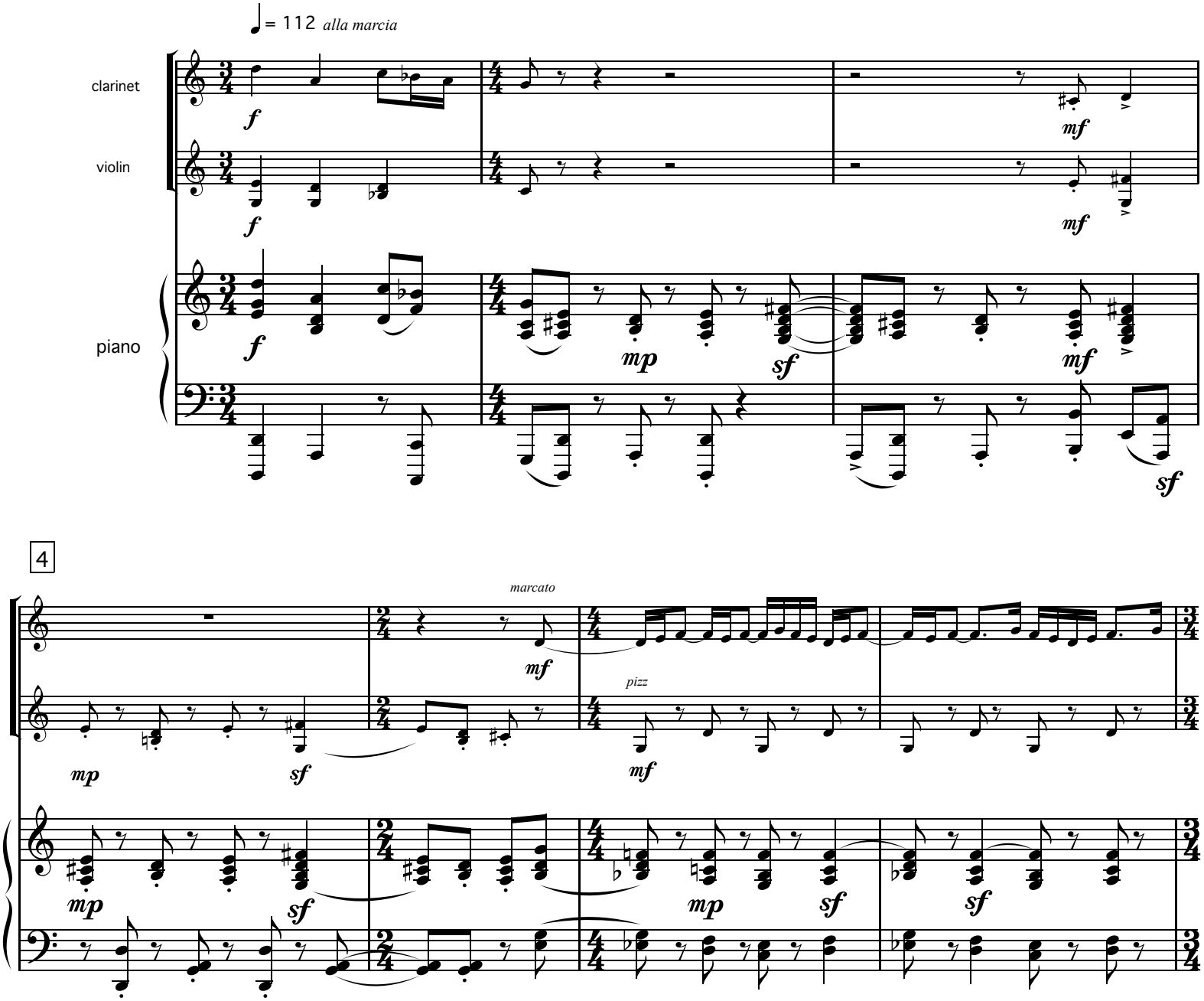
Concert score

A Baker's Tale

suite for clarinet, violin, and piano

David Jason Snow

1. Le Promenade du Pâtissier



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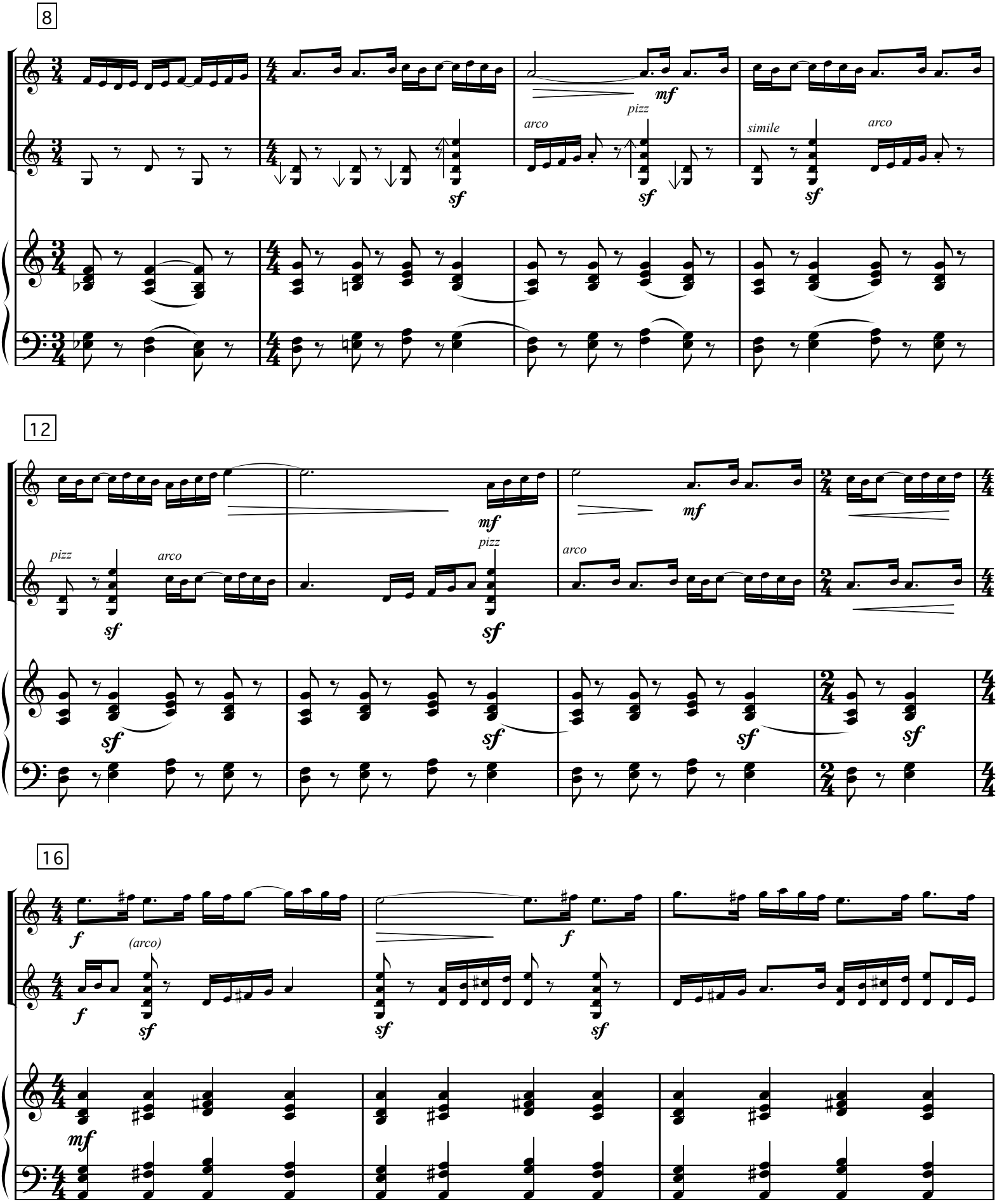
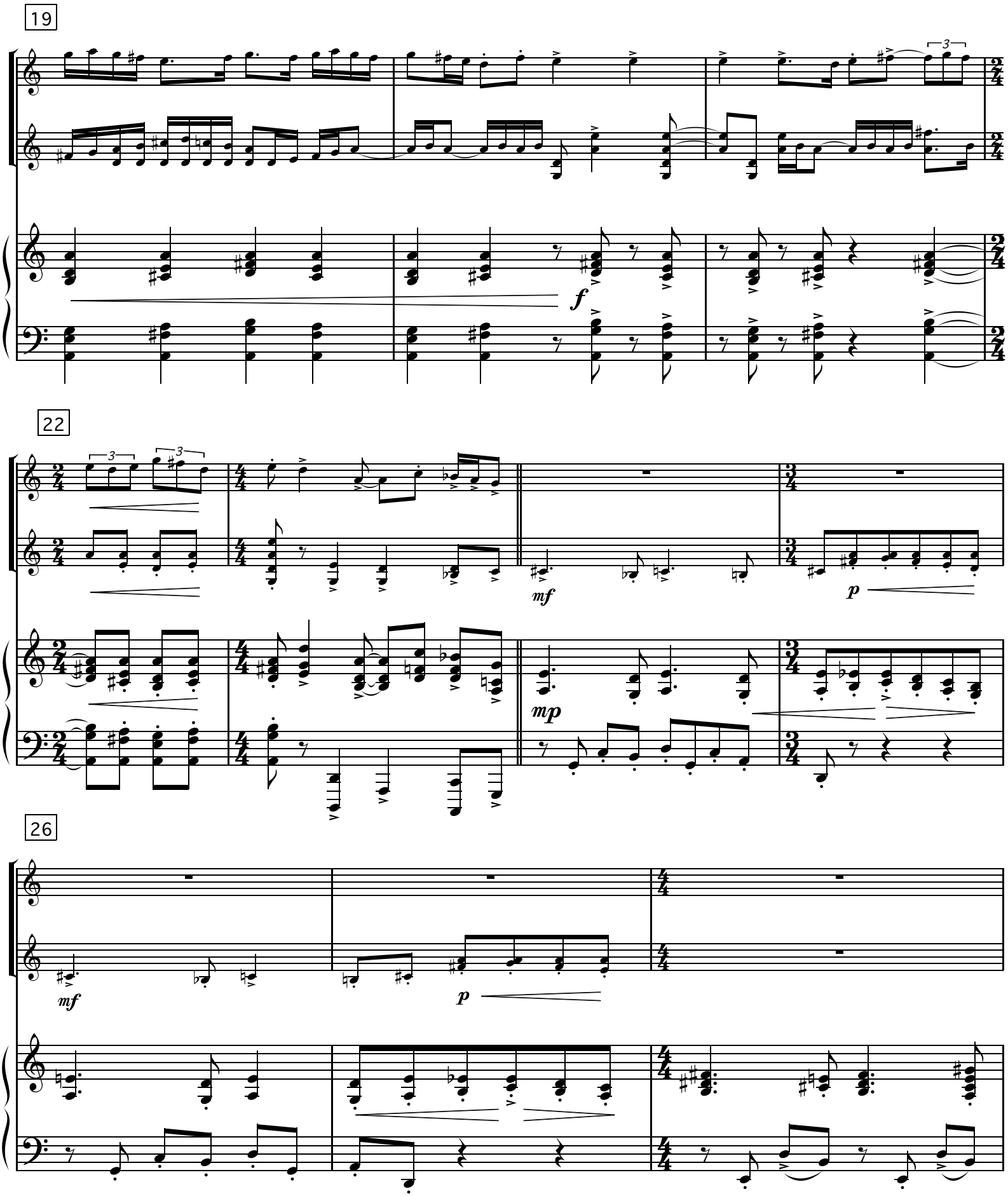
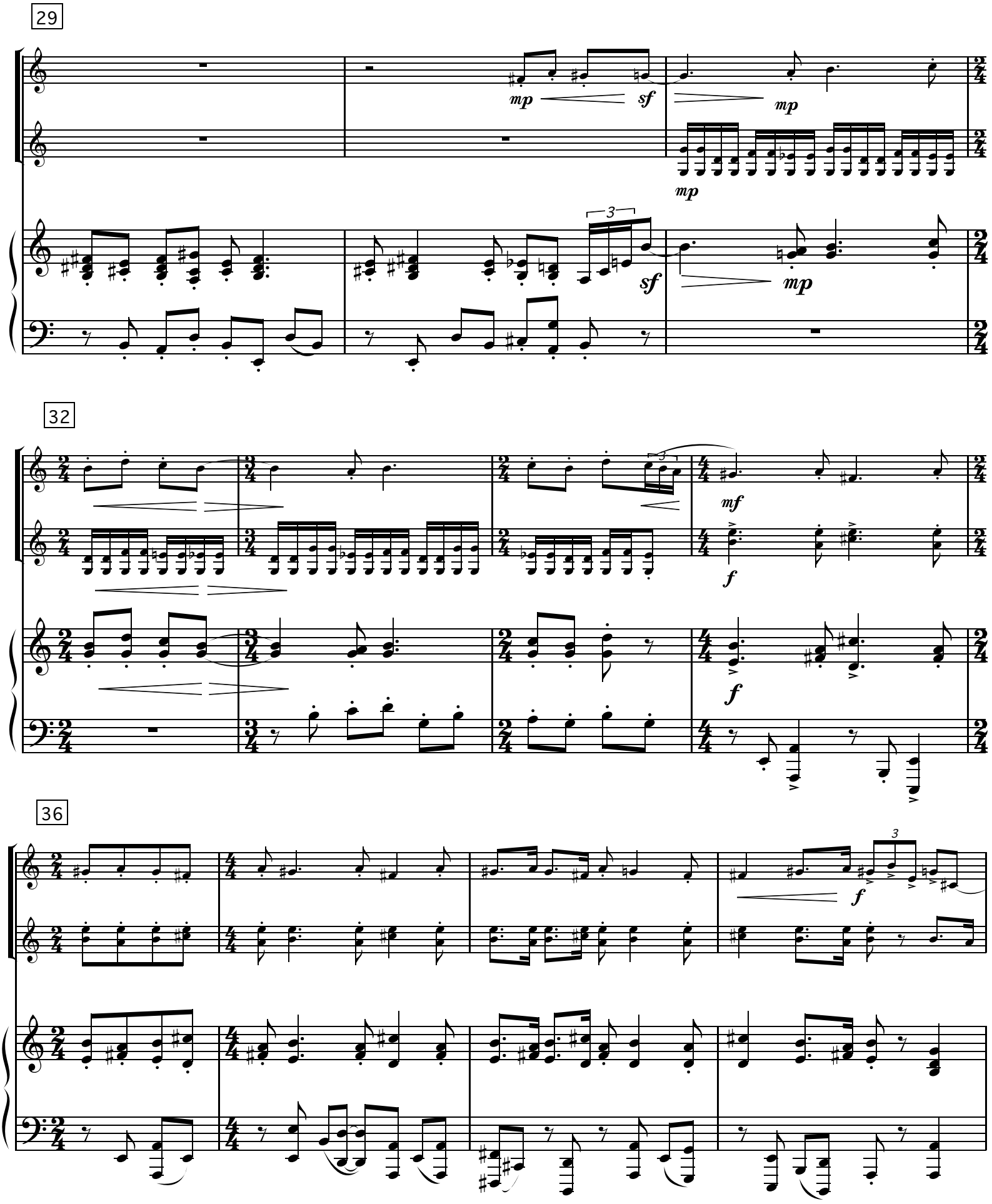
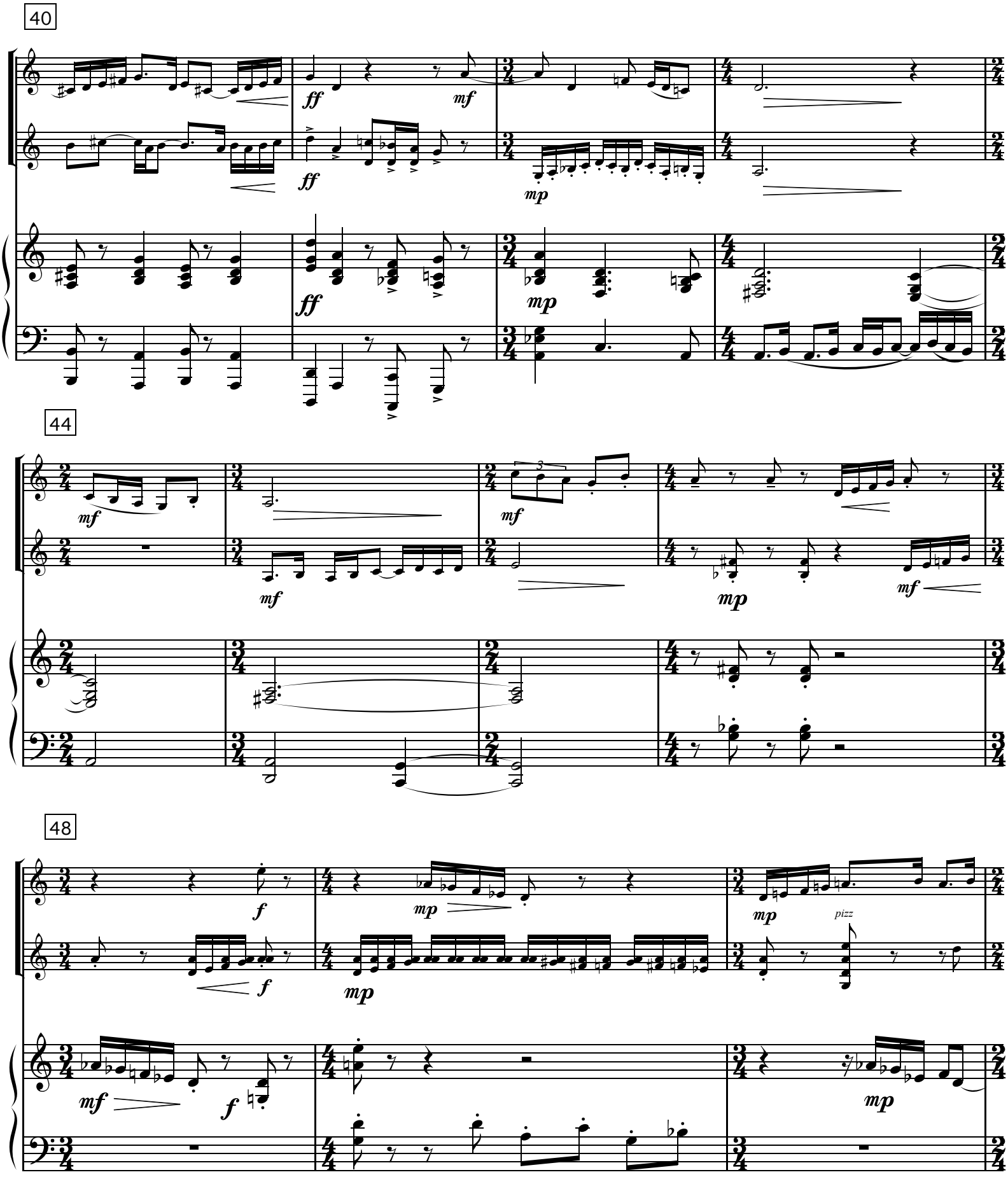
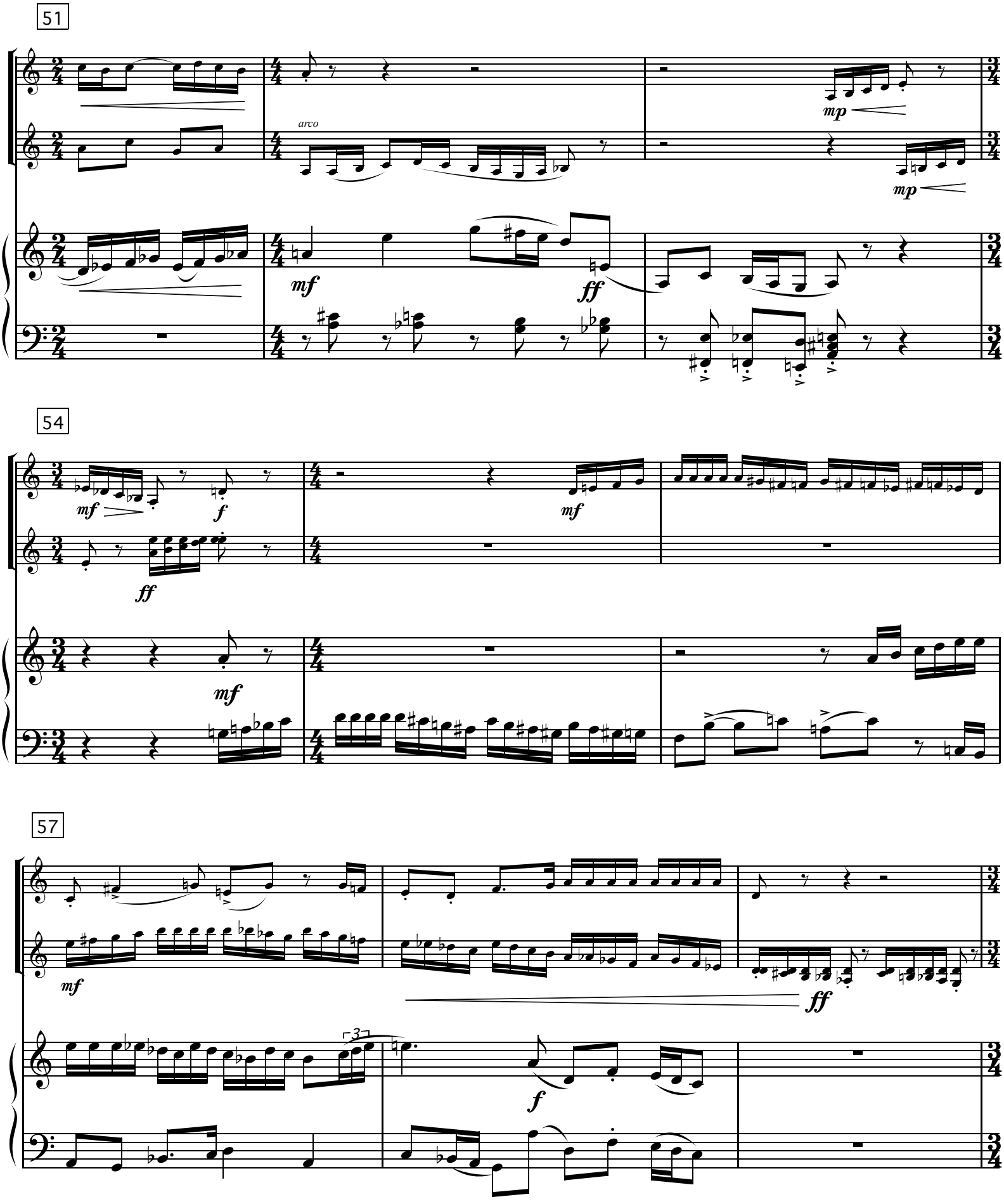
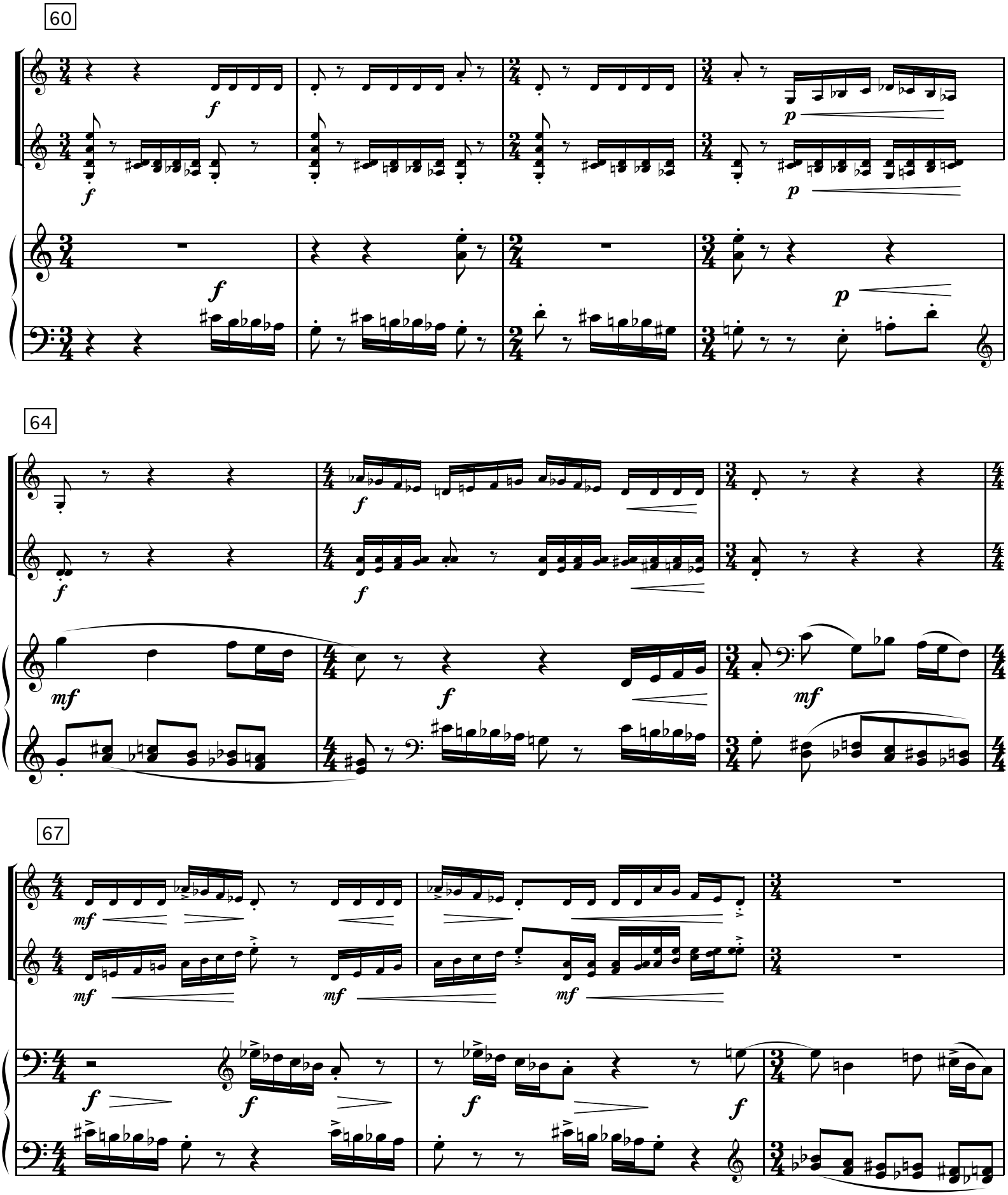

8
mf
arco
pizz
simile
arco
sf
12
pizz
arco
mf
pizz
arco
16
f
(arco)
mf

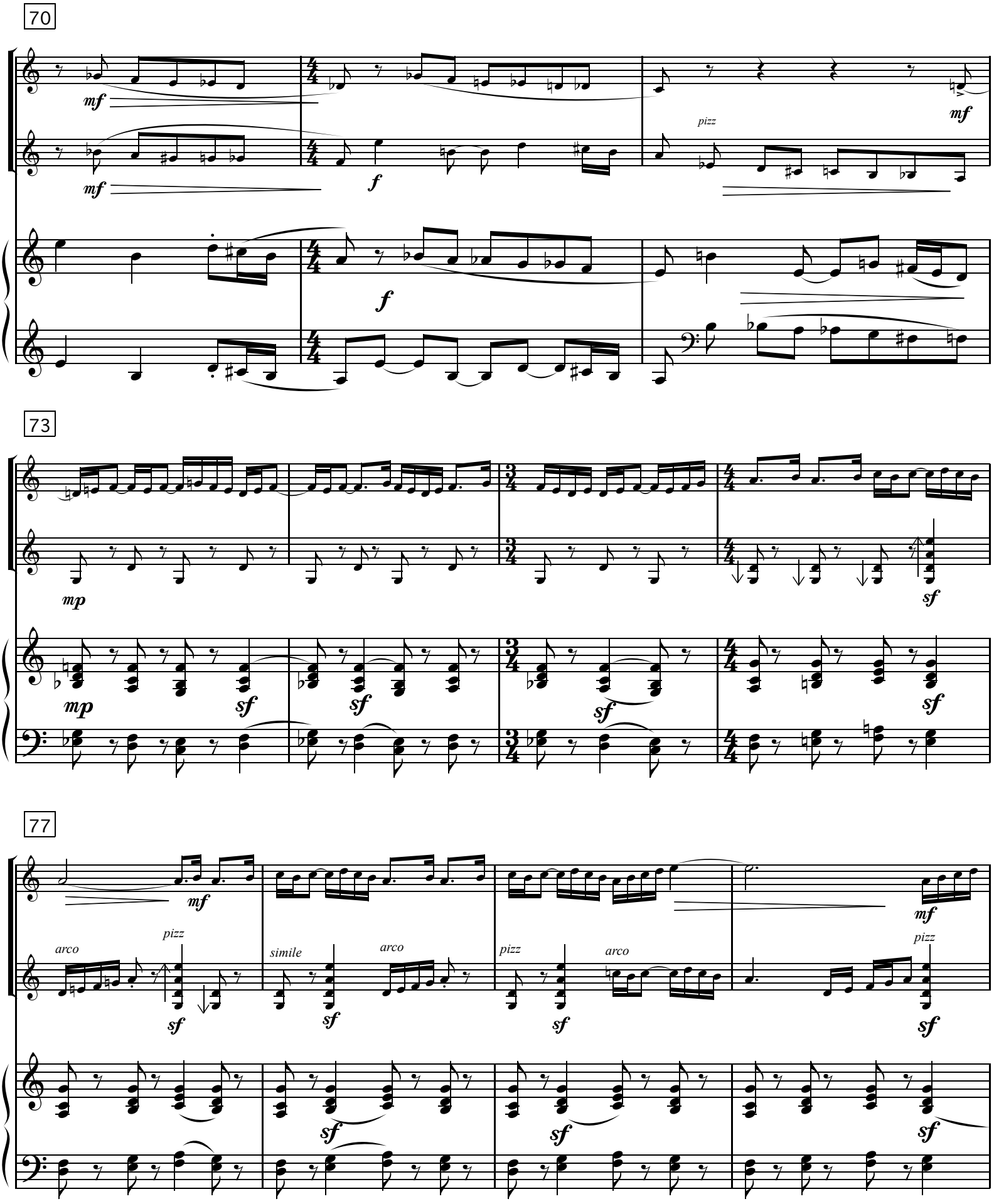

19
f
22
mf
p
mp
26
mf
p

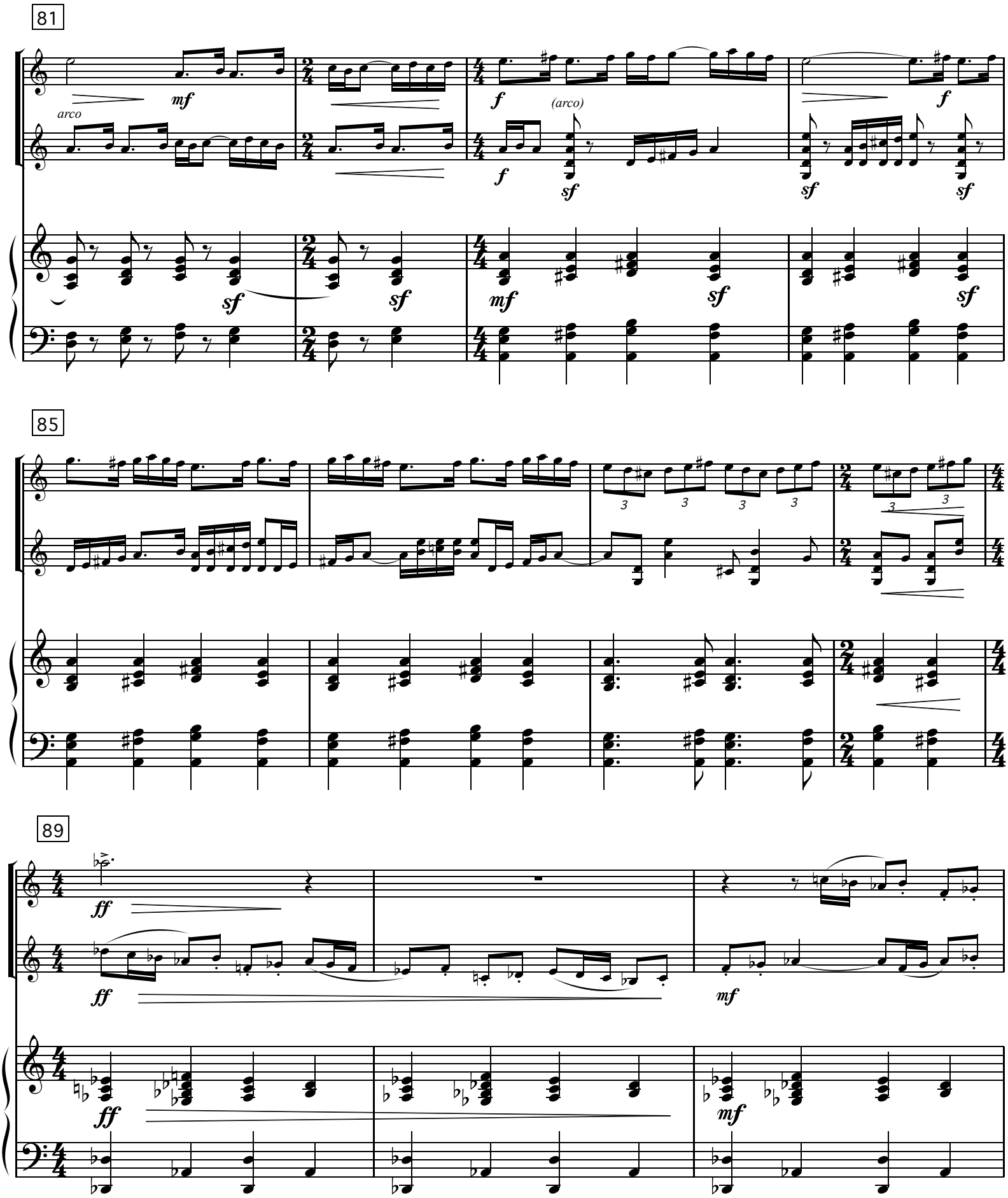

29
mp
sf
mp
mp
3
sf
mp
32
mf
f
f
36
3
f

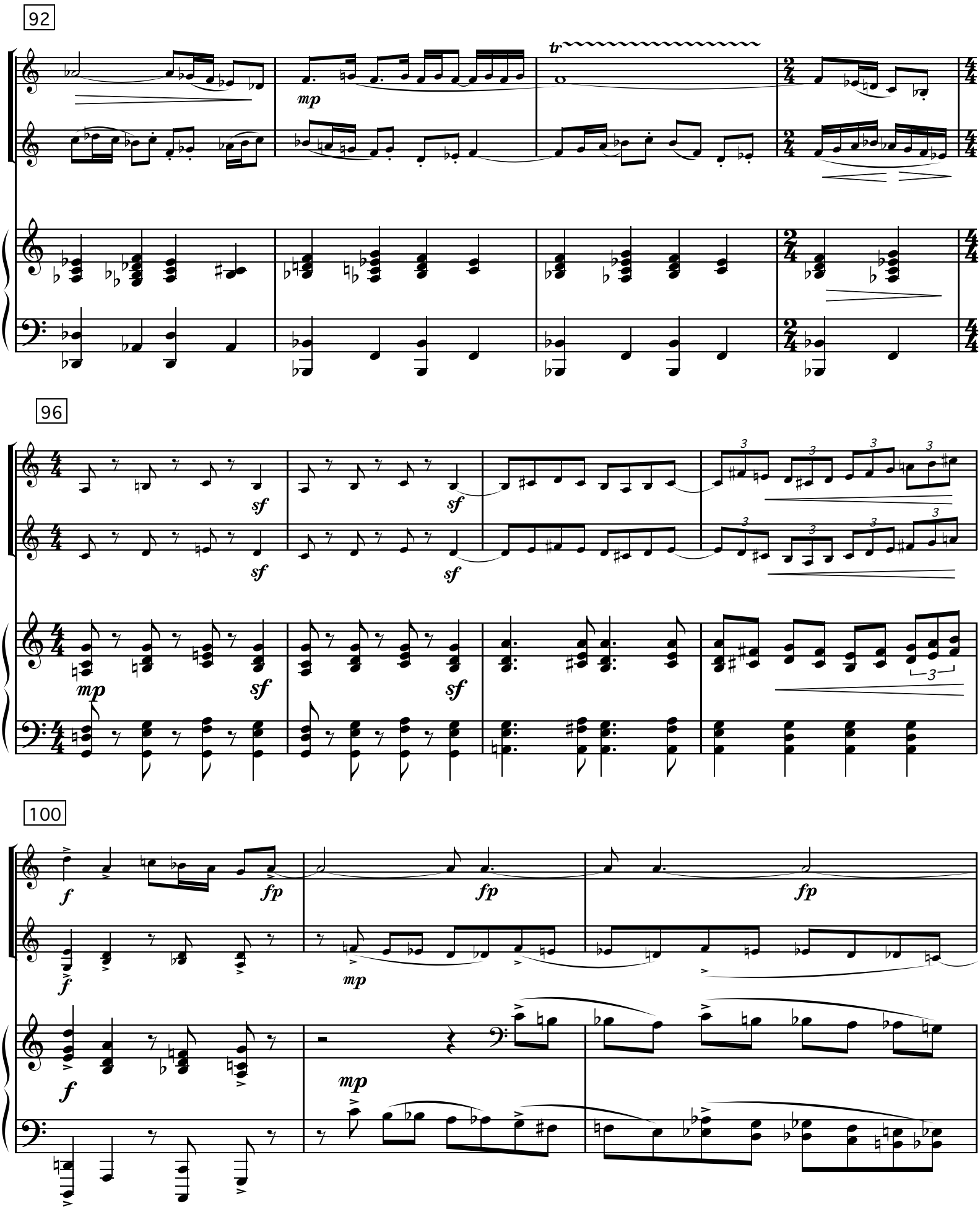

40
ff
mf
ff
mp
ff
mp
44
mf
mf
mf
mp
mf
48
f
mp
mp
pizz
mf
f
mp

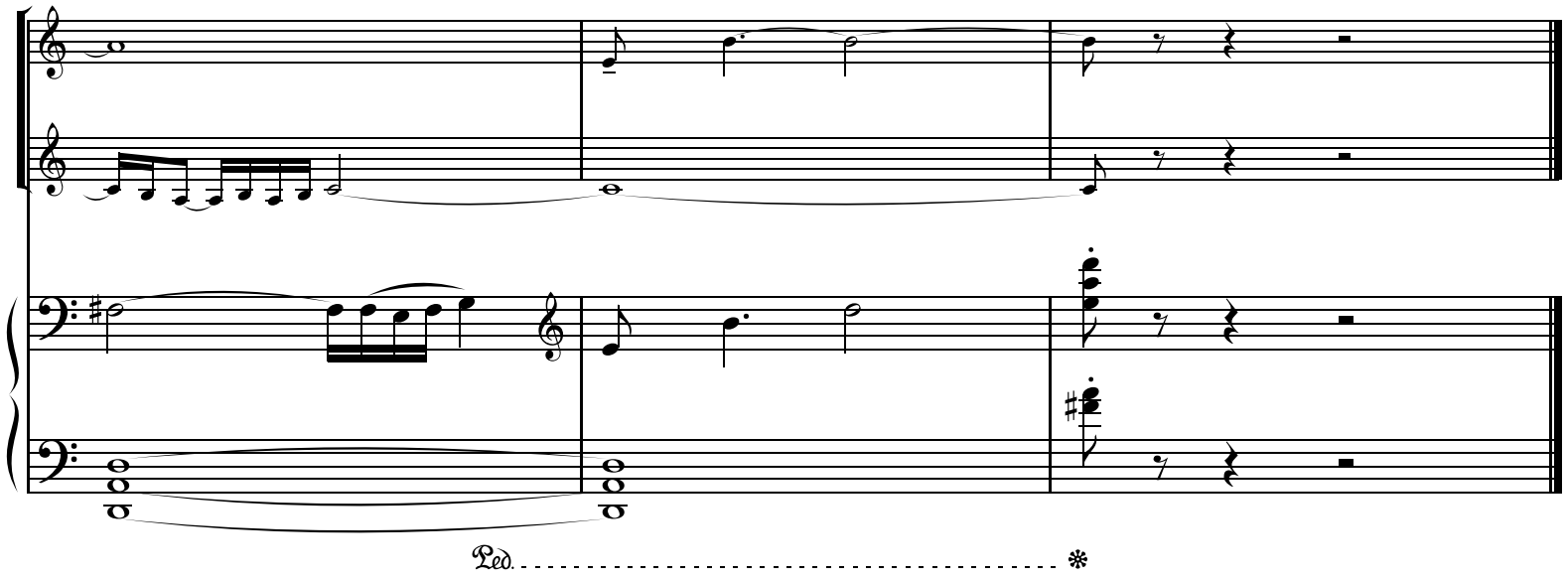

51
arco
mp
mp
mf
ff
54
mf
f
mf
ff
mf
57
mf
ff
3
f


60
64
67


70
mf
mf
f
pizz
mf
f
73
mp
mp
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
77
mf
arco
pizz
sf
simile
arco
sf
pizz
arco
sf
mf
pizz
sf
sf
sf
sf


81
arco
mf
f
(arco)
sf
85
3
89
ff
mf


92
tr
mp
96
sf
mp
100
f
fp

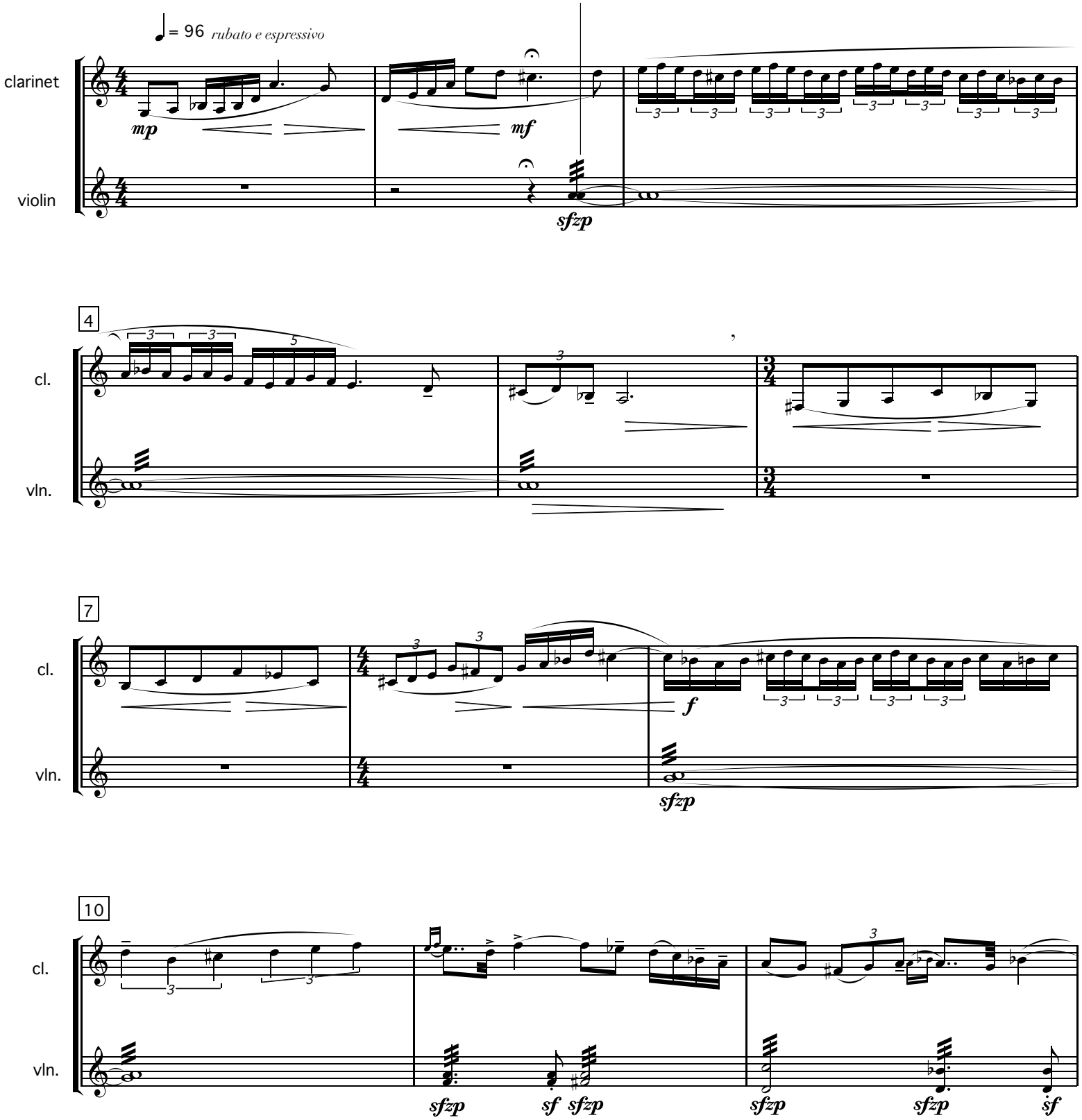

Ped.
*

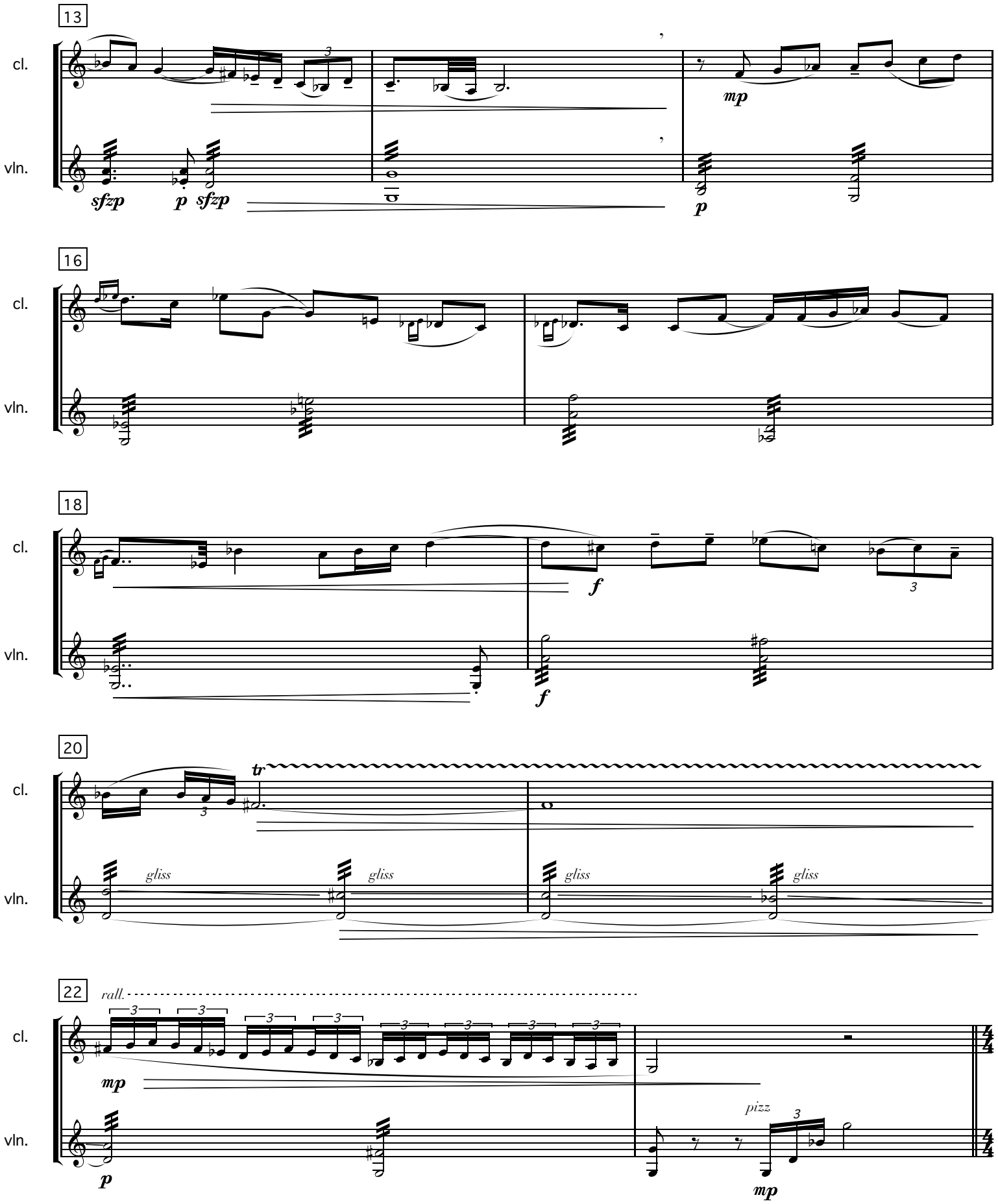
2. Méditations à la Croissance Spirituel

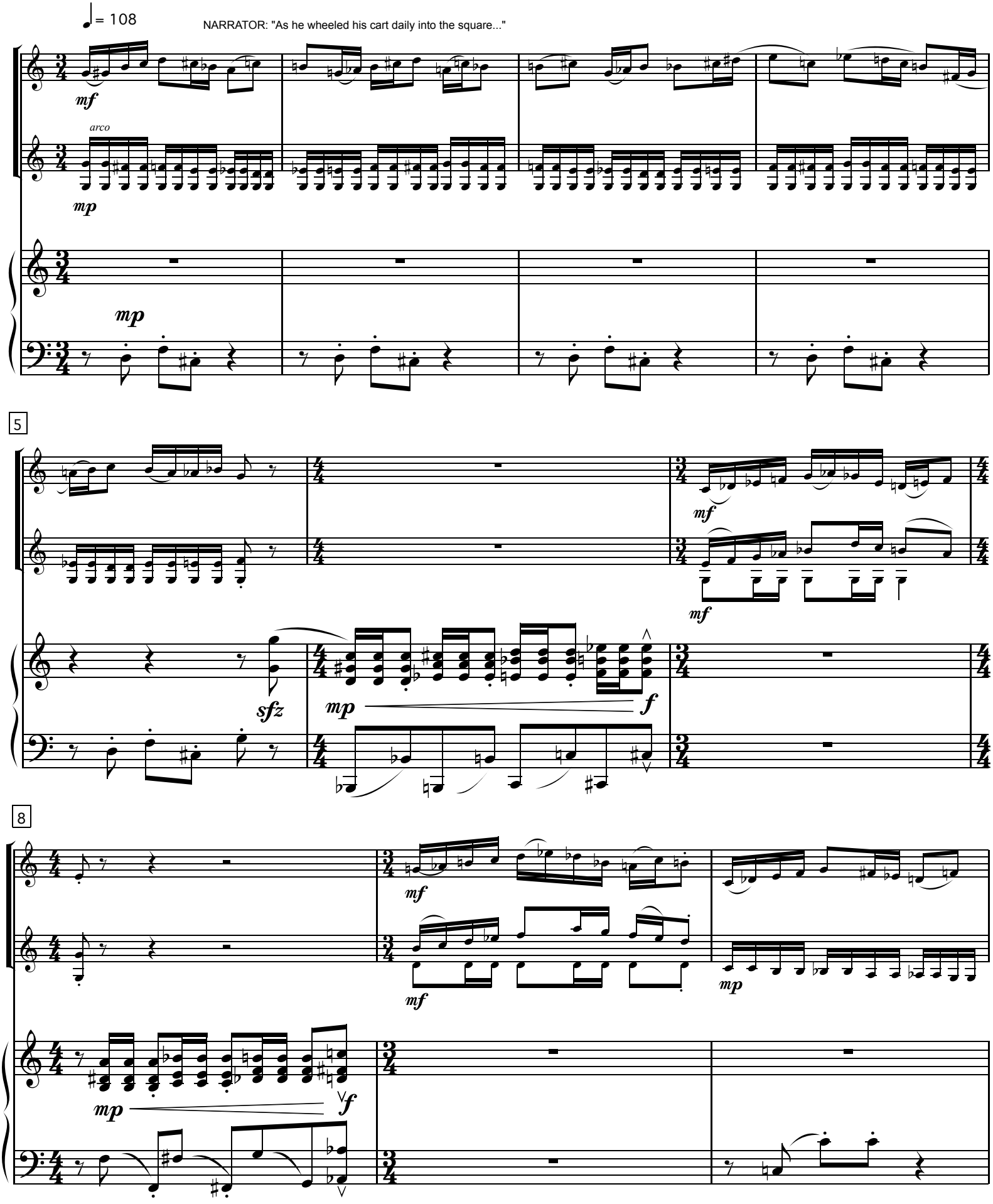
(Meditations upon Spiritual Growth)

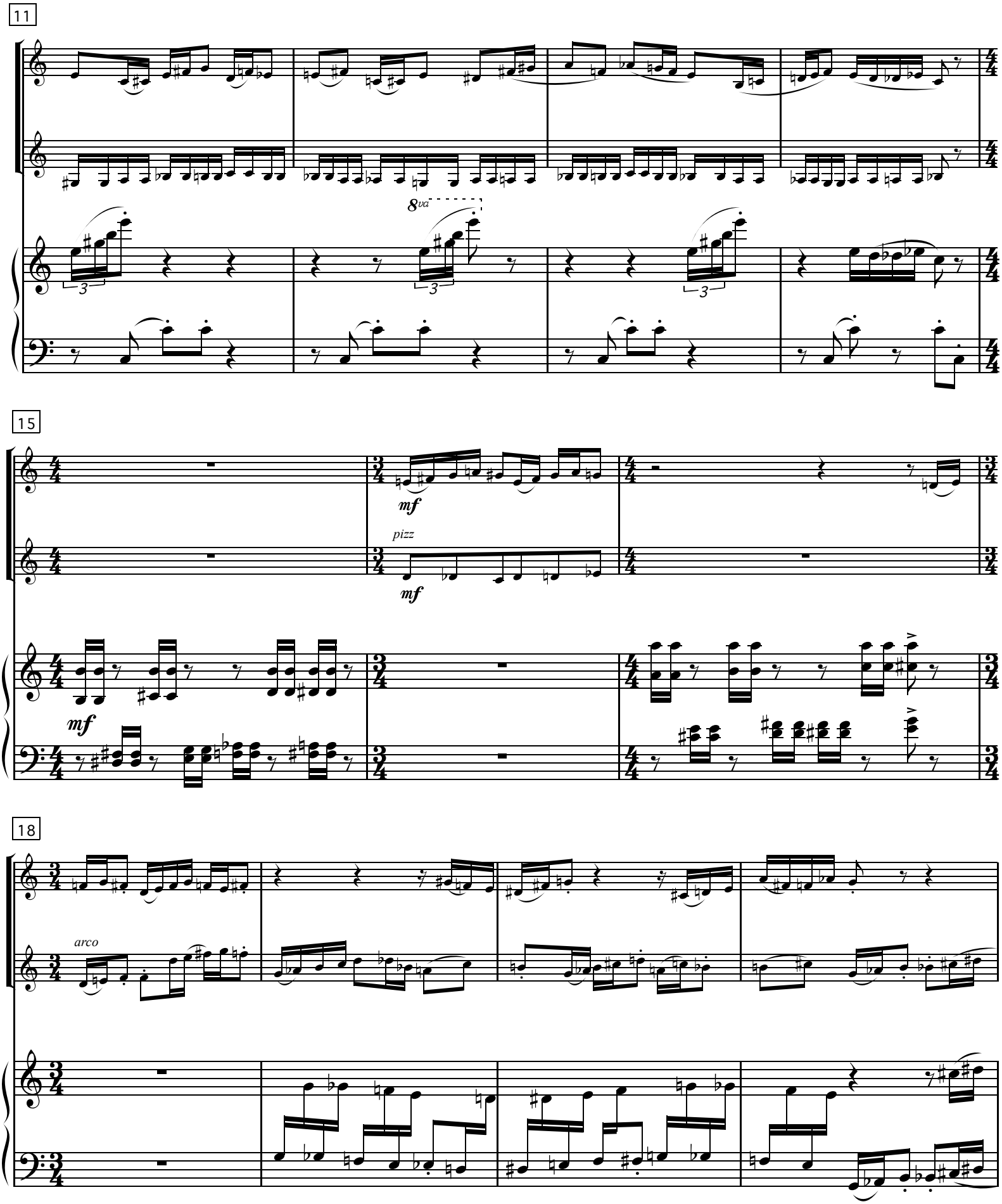
Cue clarinet entrance from narration: "...whose passion was croissants."

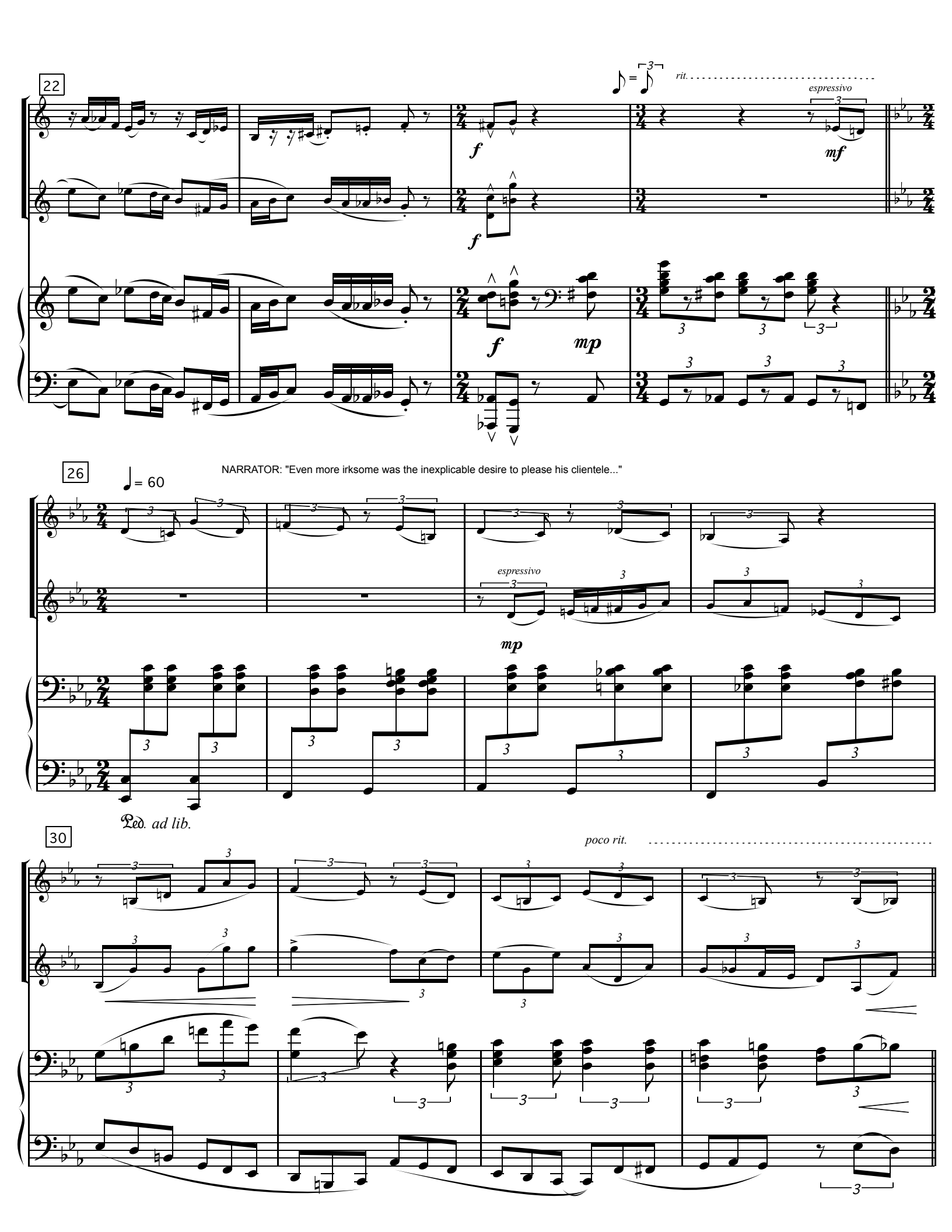
Cue violin entrance from narration: "Not just croissants, but CROISSANTS."

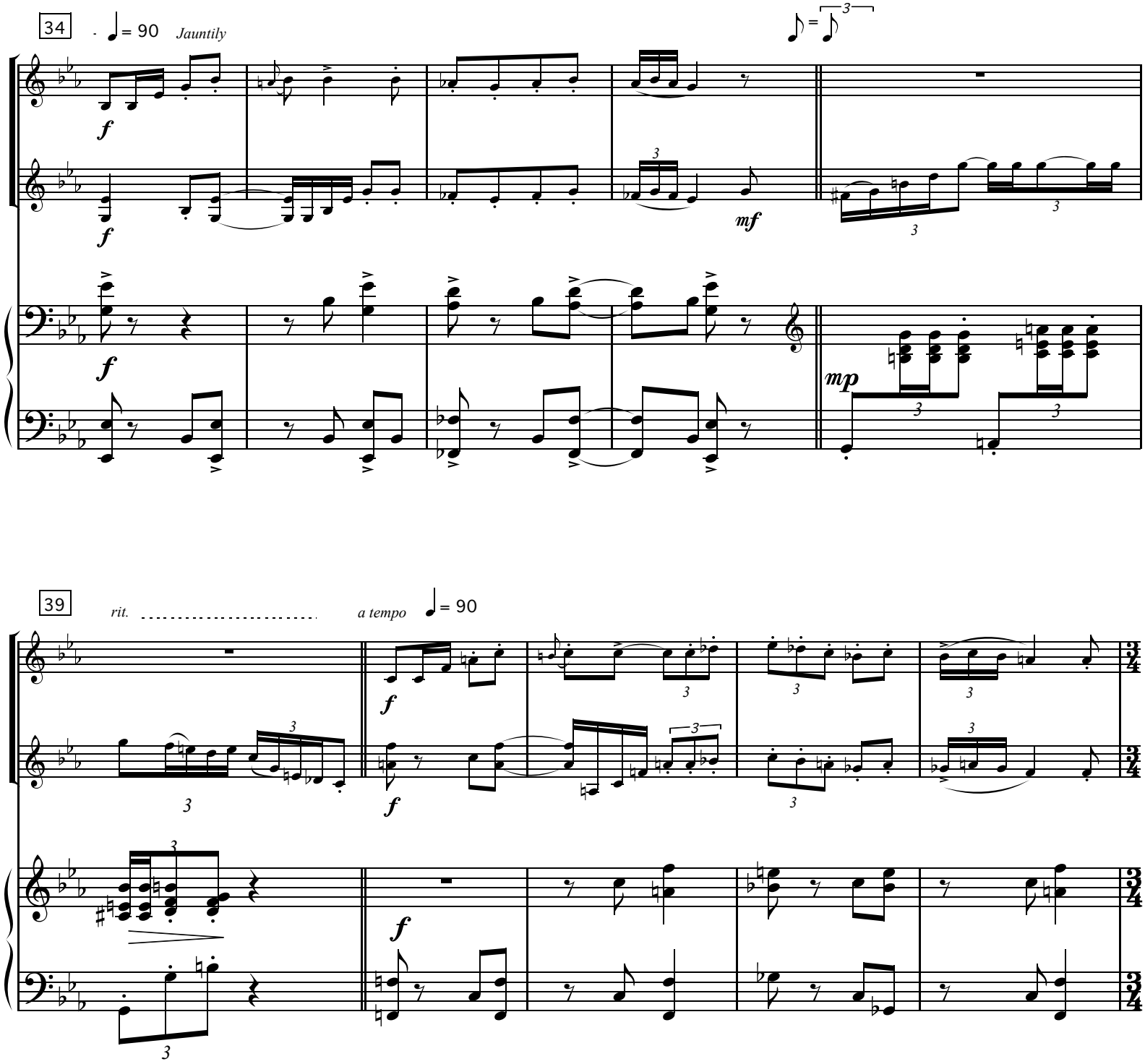


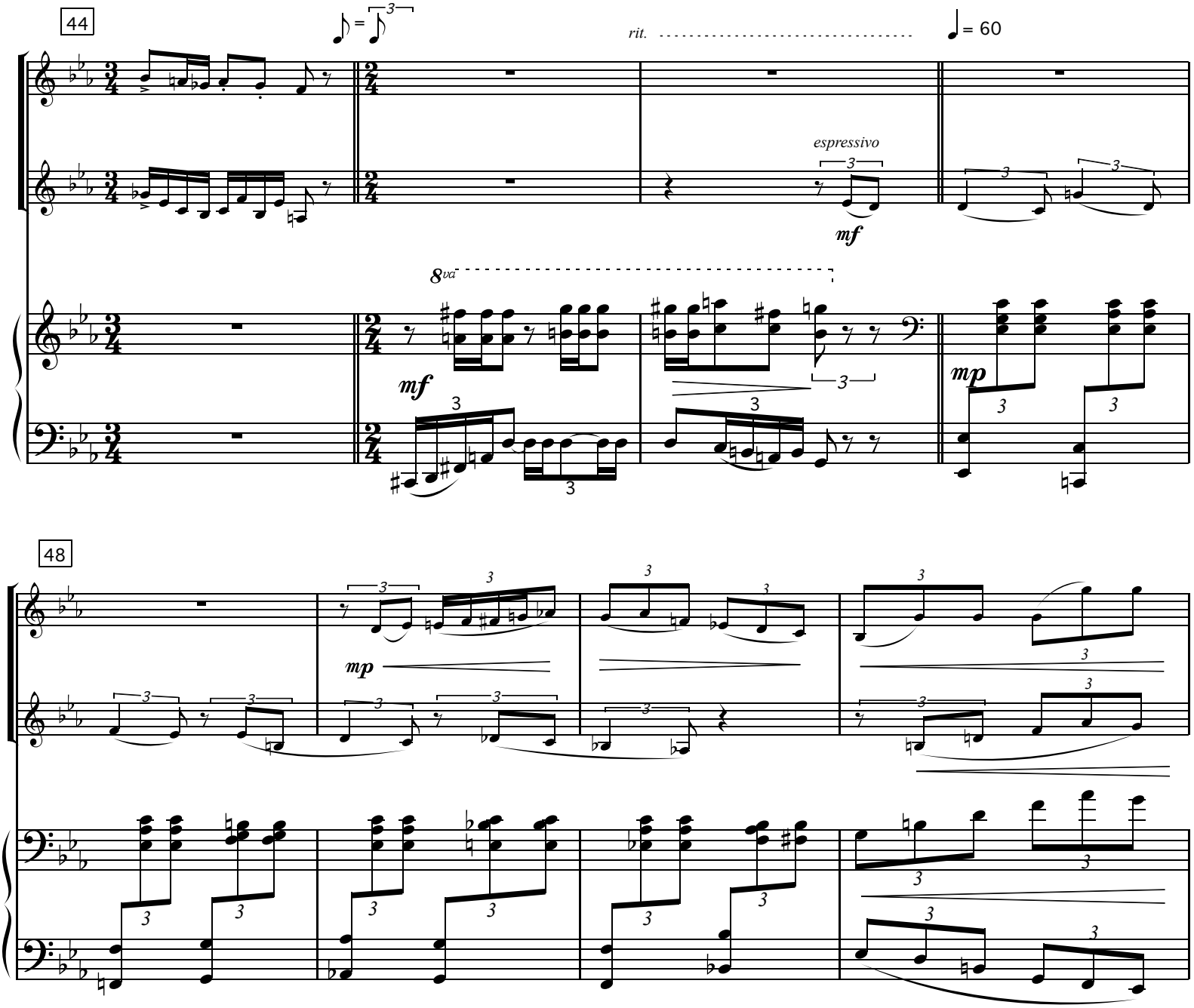

13
cl.
vln.
sfzp
p
sfzp
mp
p
16
cl.
vln.
18
cl.
vln.
f
f
3
20
cl.
vln.
tr
gliss
gliss
gliss
gliss
22
rall.
cl.
vln.
mp
p
pizz
mp
3

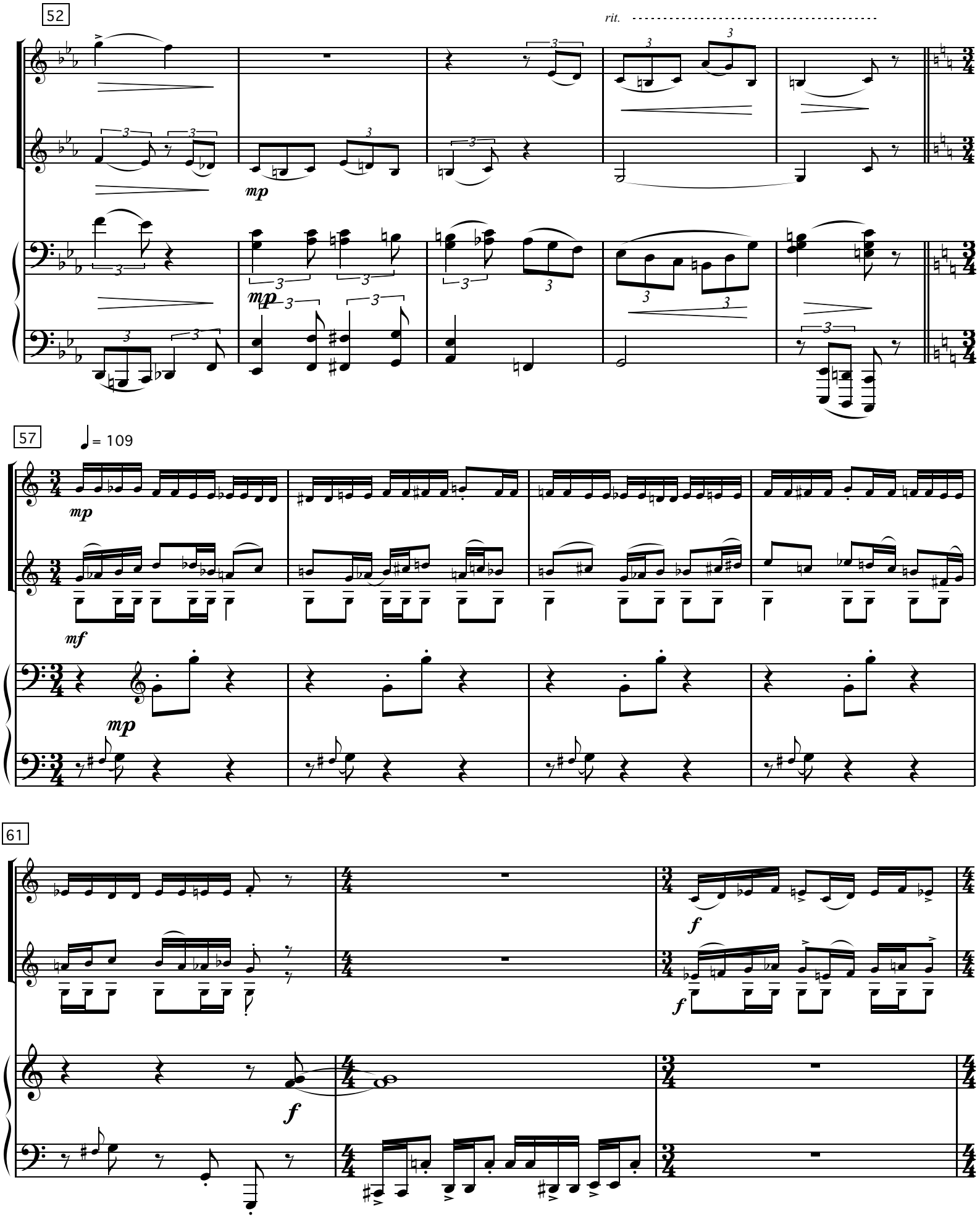

♩ = 108
NARRATOR: "As he wheeled his cart daily into the square..."
mf
arco
mp
mp
5
mf
mf
sfz
mp
f
8
mf
mf
mp
mp
f

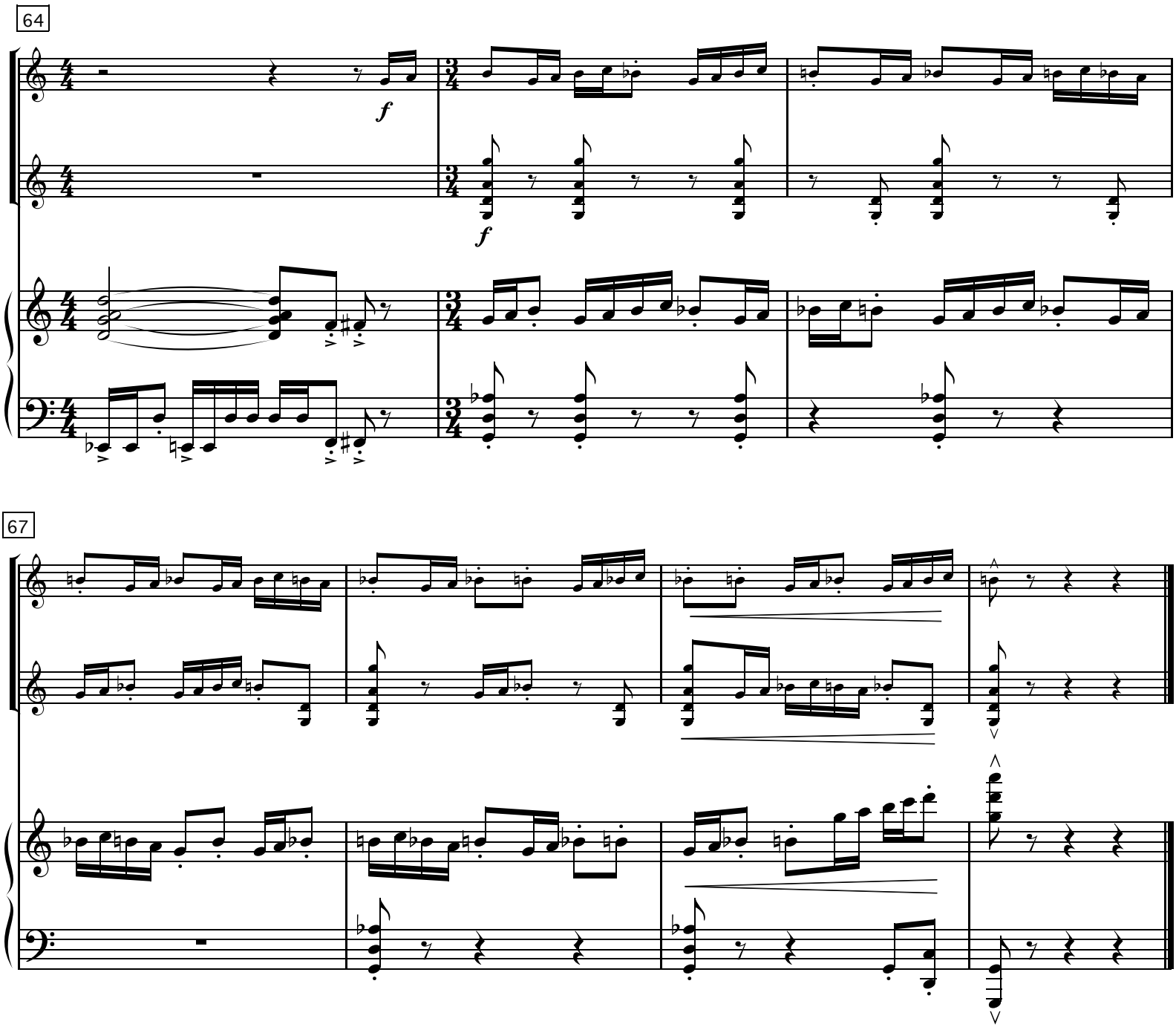

11
8va
15
mf
pizz
mf
mf
18
arco


22
rit.
espressivo
f
mf
mp
26
NARRATOR: "Even more irksome was the inexplicable desire to please his clientele..."
= 60
espressivo
mp
Ped. ad lib.
30
poco rit.


34
♩ = 90
Jauntily
♪ = ♪ 3
f
mf
mp
39
rit.
a tempo
♩ = 90
3/4


44
rit.
= 60
espressivo
mf
8va
mf
mp
48
mp

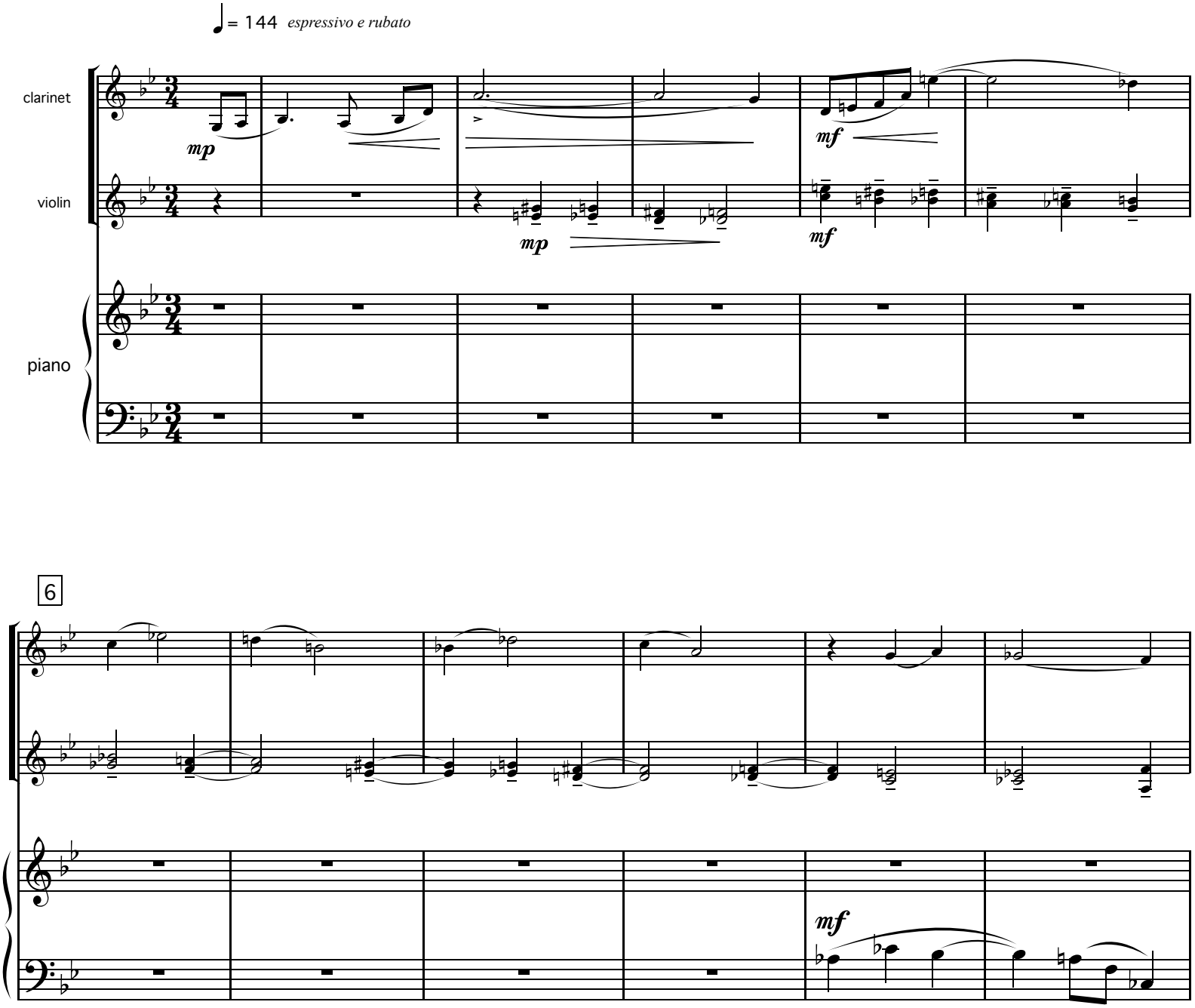

52
rit.
mp
mp
57
= 109
mp
mf
mp
61
f
f
f

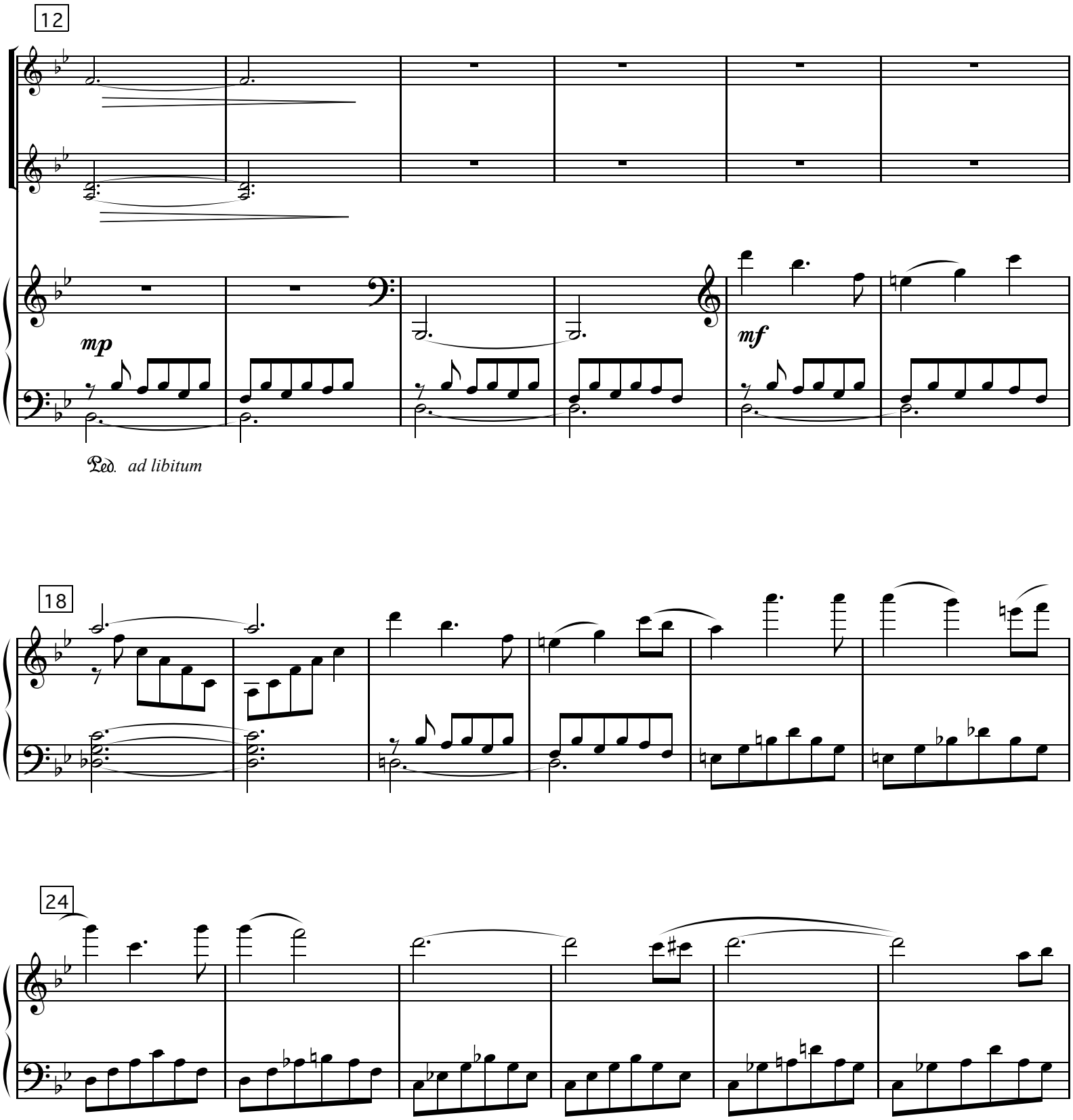

64
f
f
67

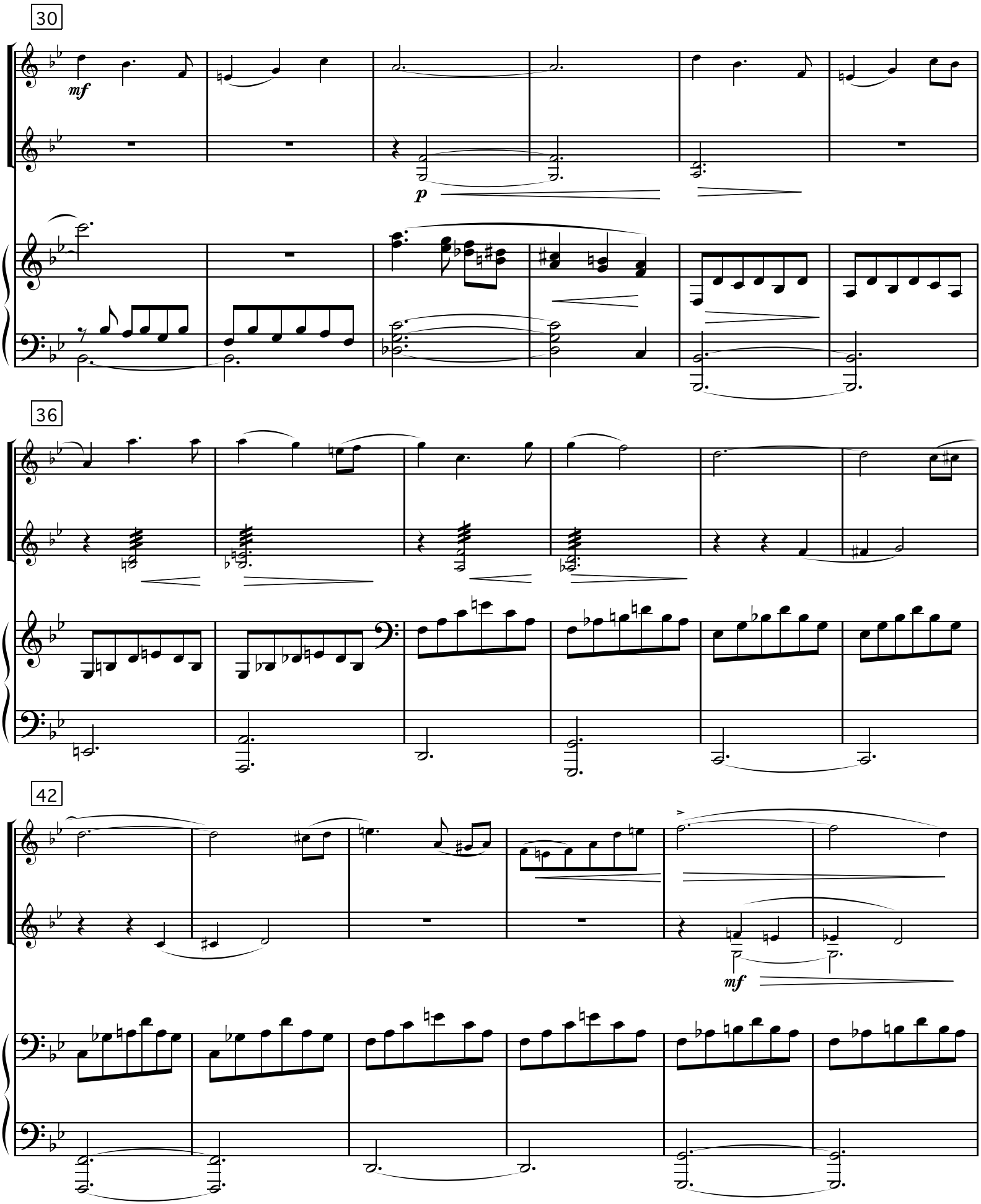
3. Hymne àu Village Céleste

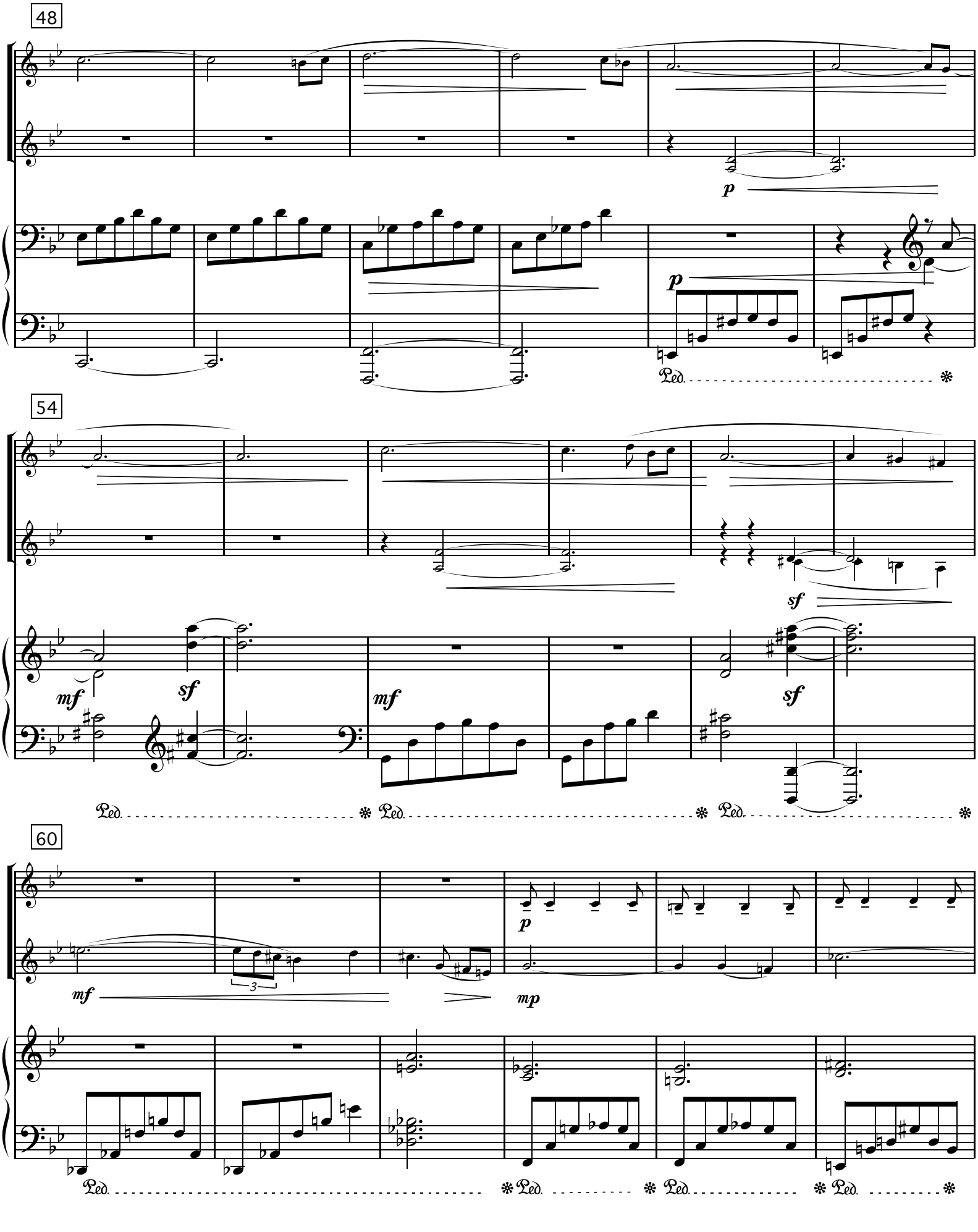
CUE TO START 3RD MOVEMENT:

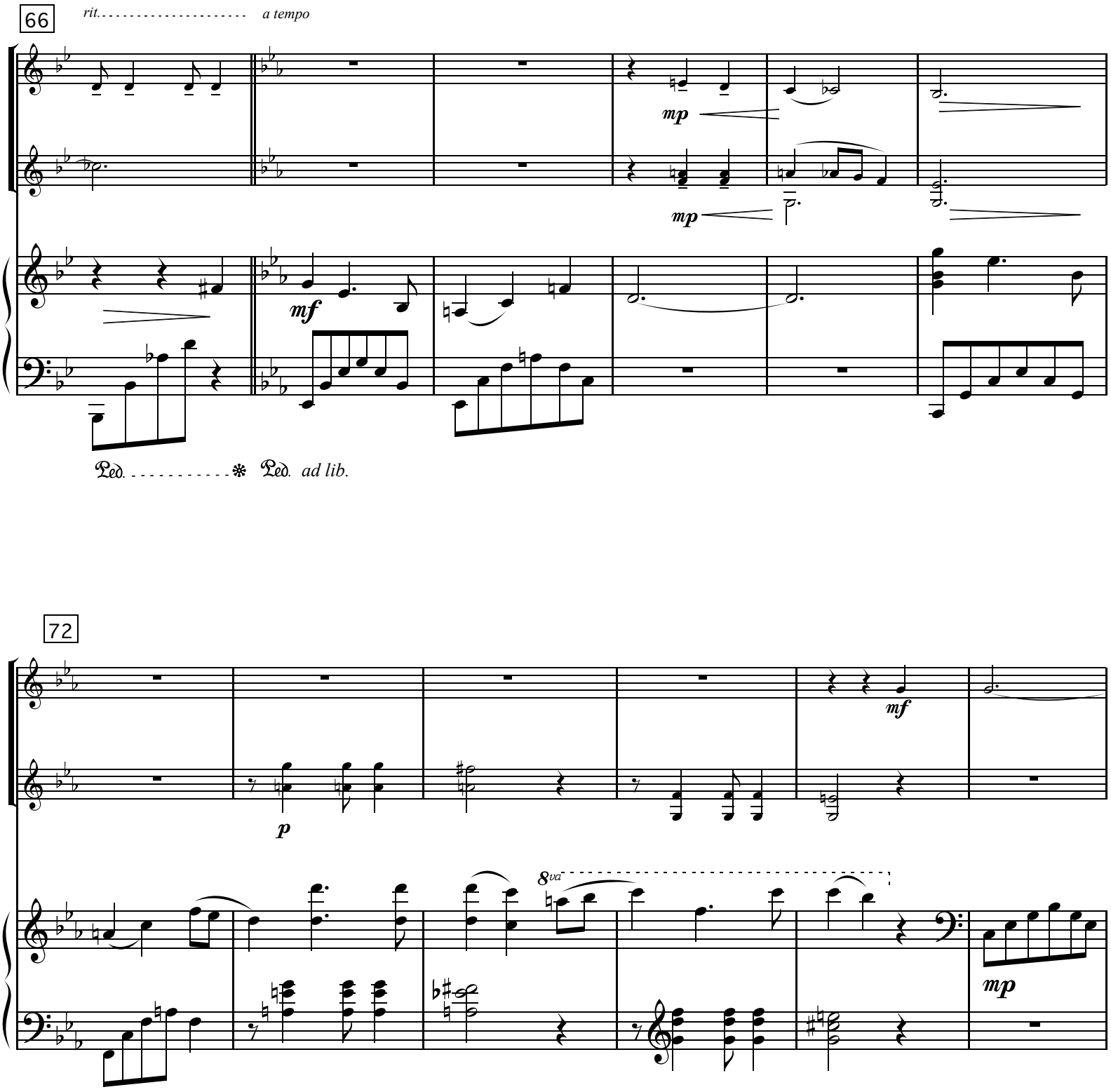
NARRATOR: "One day... an exceeding fine day, as he later remembered it..."

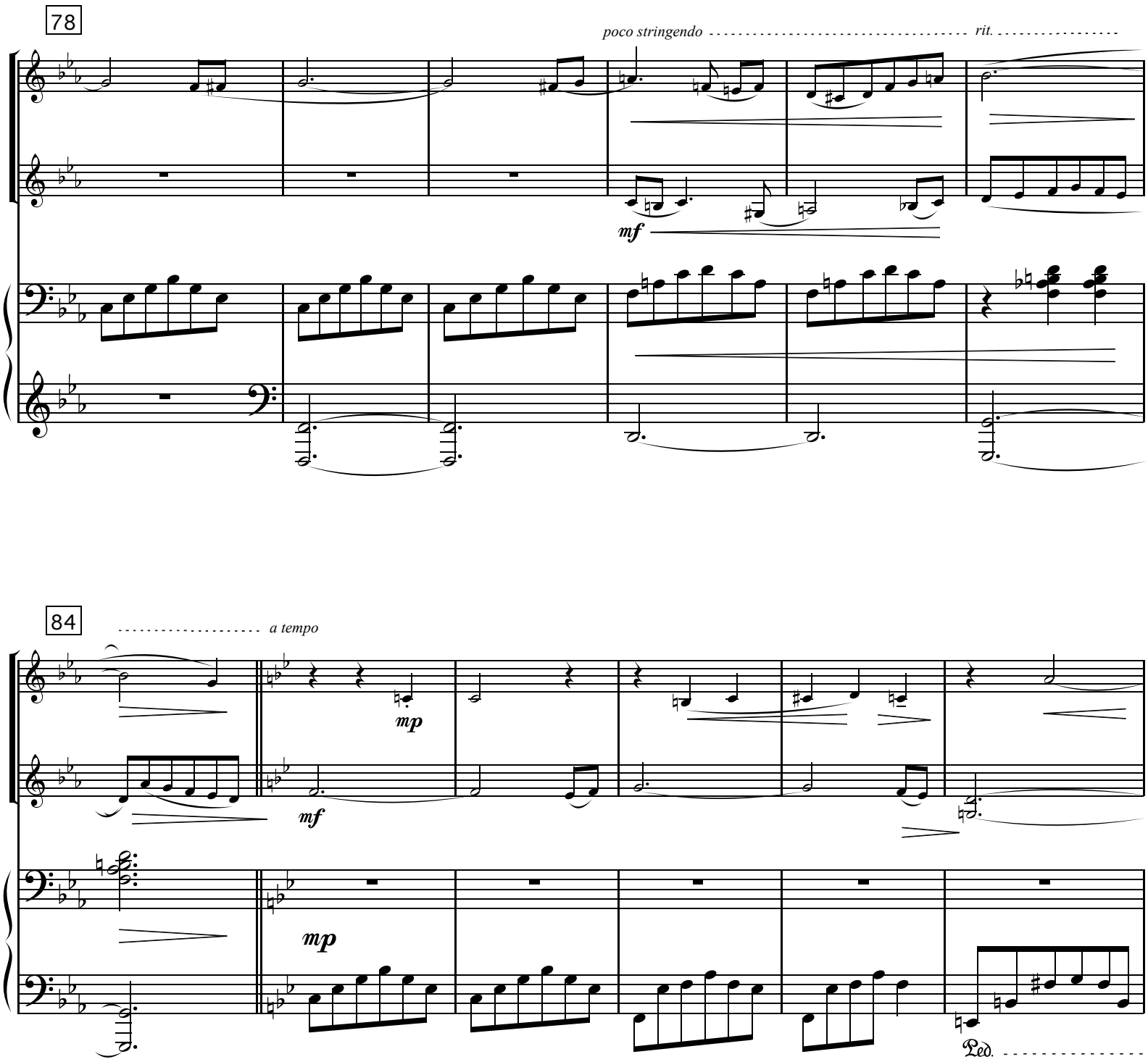


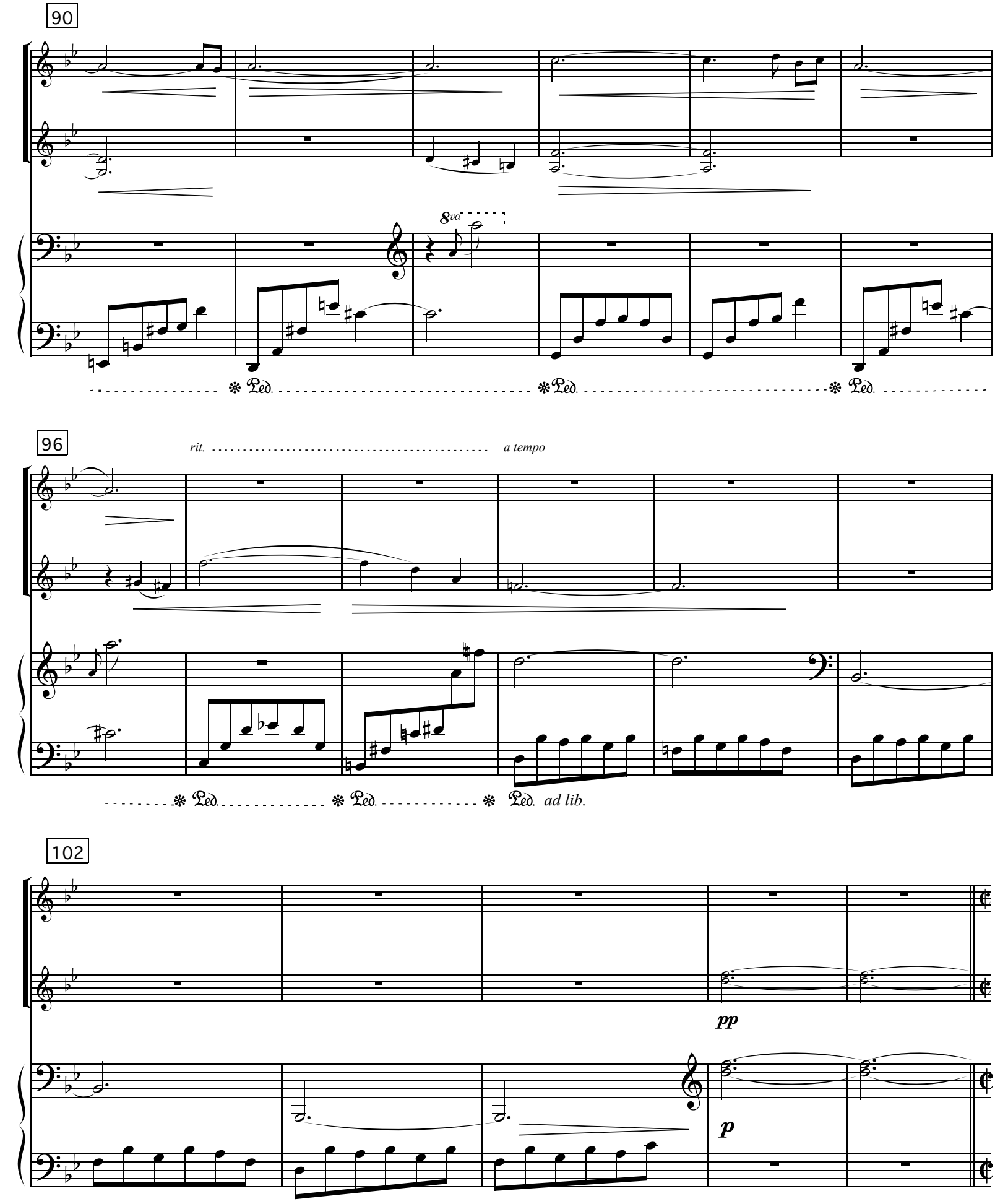

12
mp
mf
Ped. ad libitum
18
24

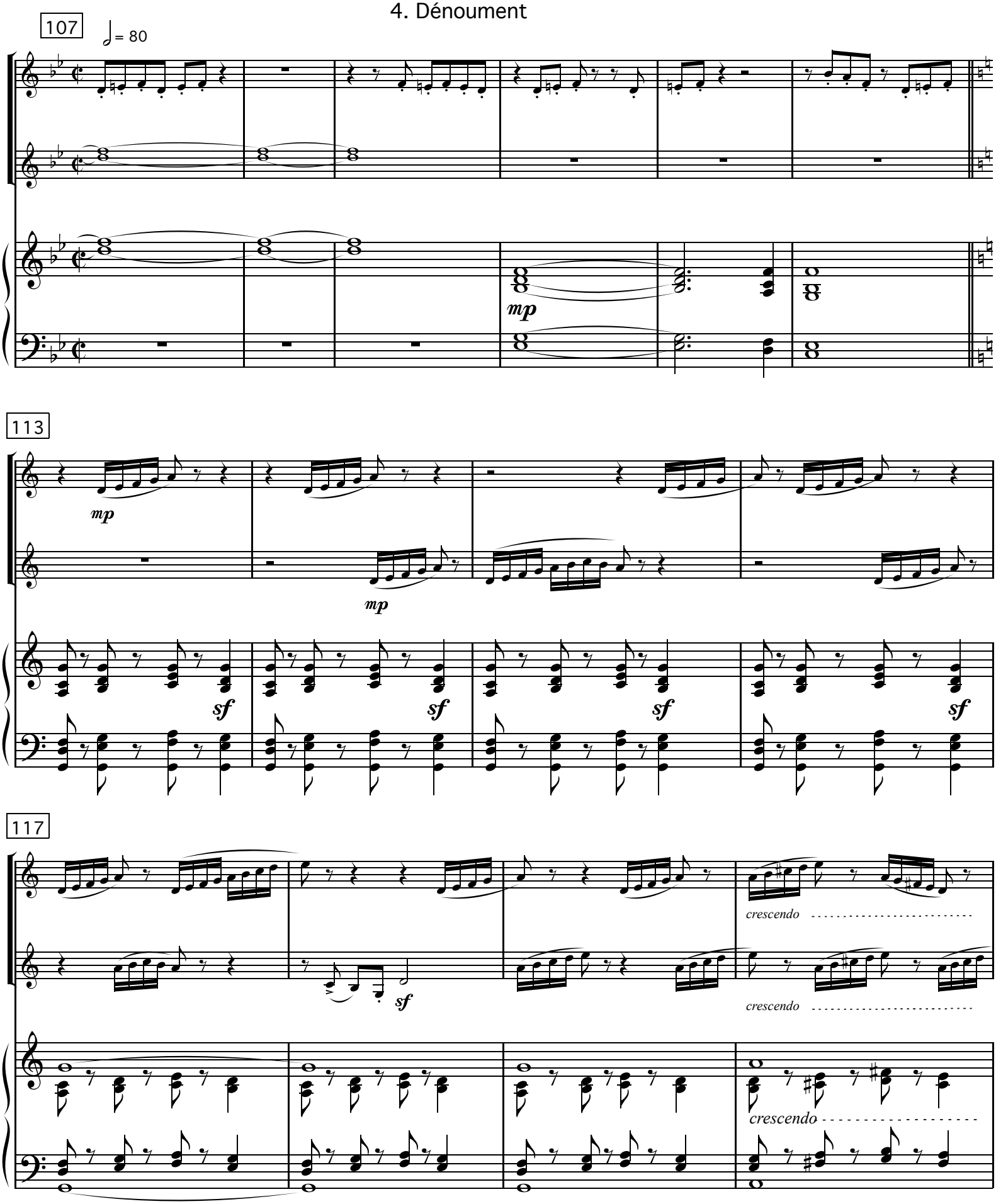

30
mf
p
36
42
mf

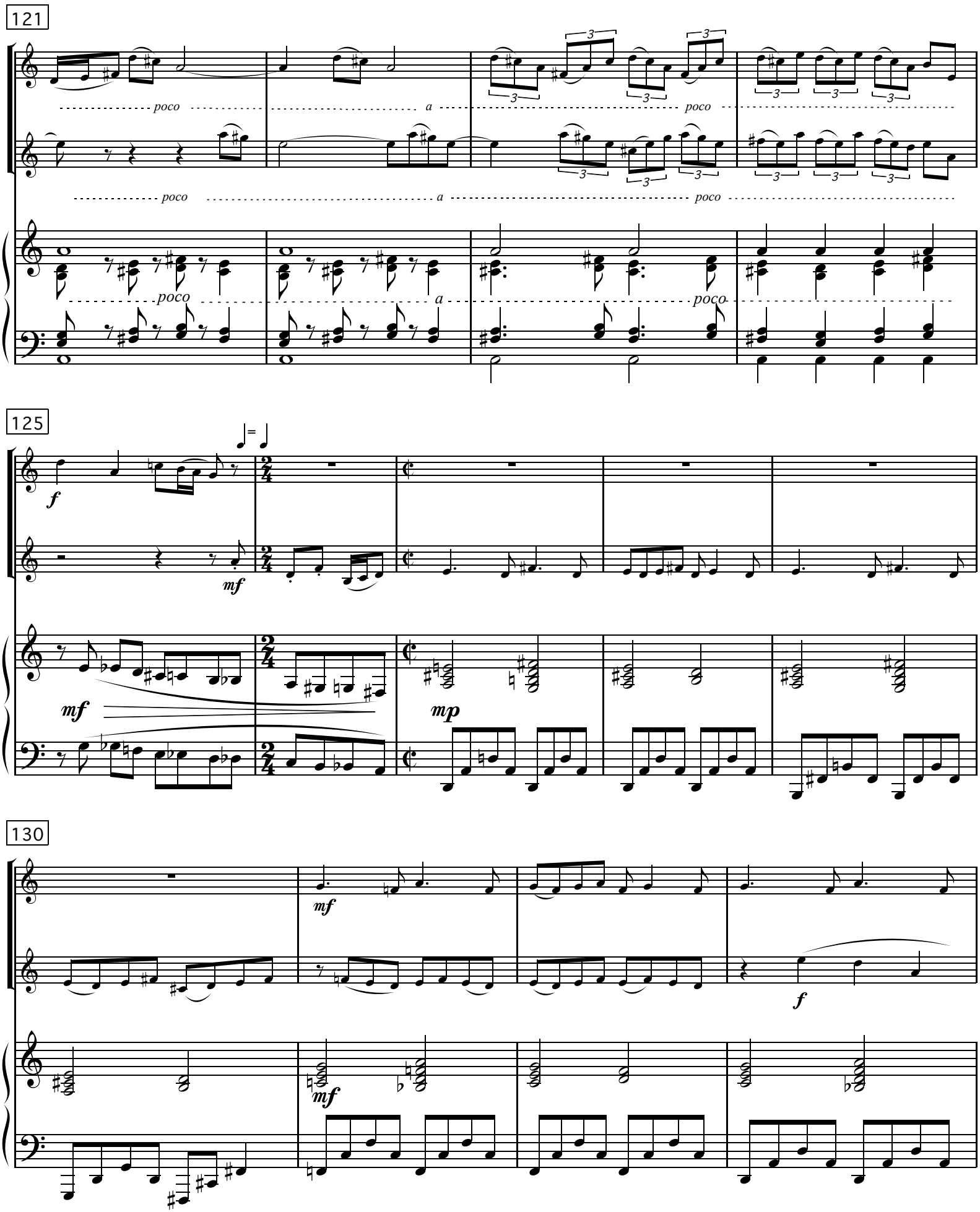

48
p
p
Ped.
54
sf
mf
sf
mf
sf
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
60
p
mf
3
mp
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

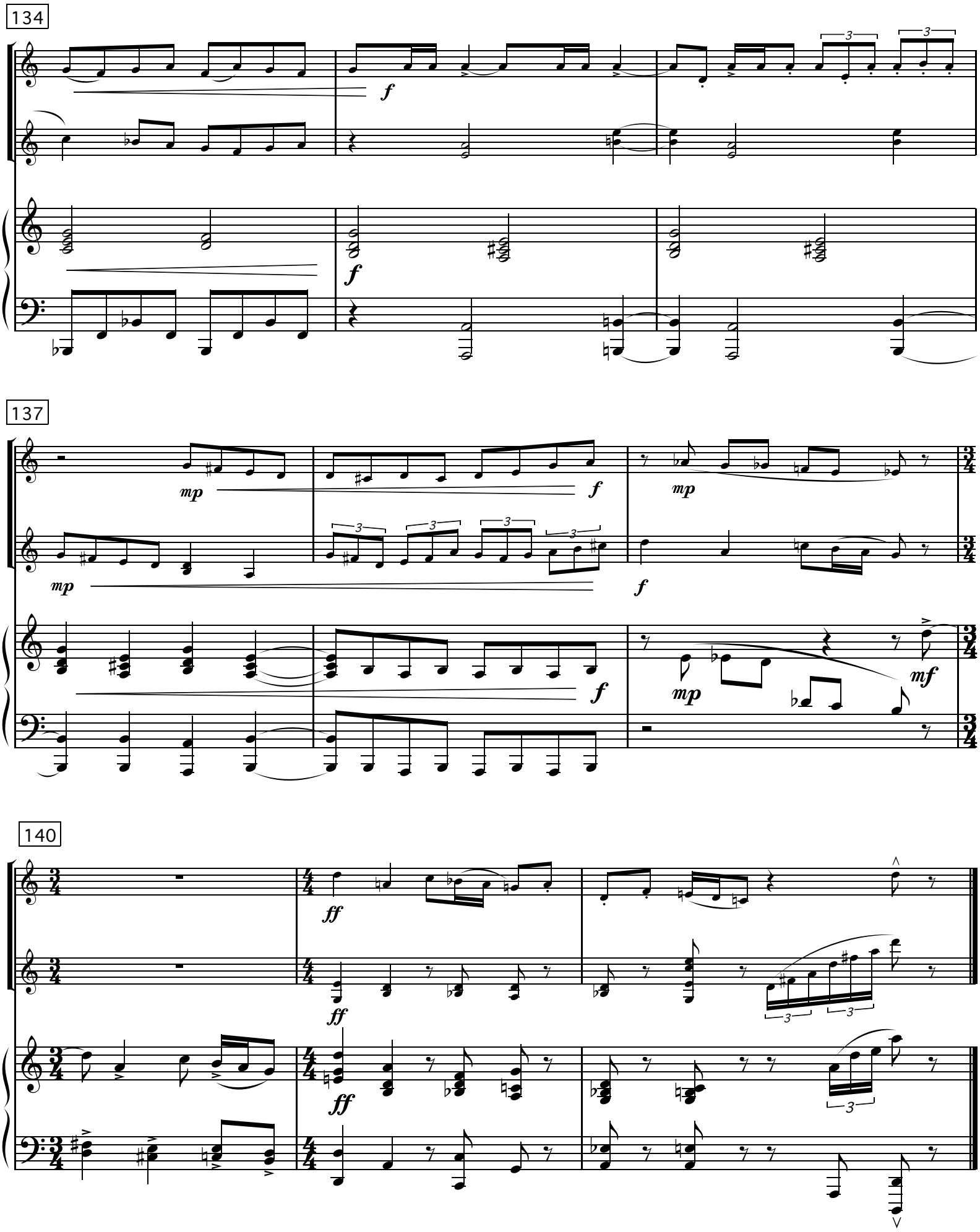

66
rit.
a tempo
mp
mp
mf
Ped.
Ped.
ad lib.
72
mf
p
8va
mp


78
poco stringendo
rit.
mf
84
a tempo
mp
mf
mp
Ped.


90
8va
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
96
rit.
a tempo
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
ad lib.
102
pp
p

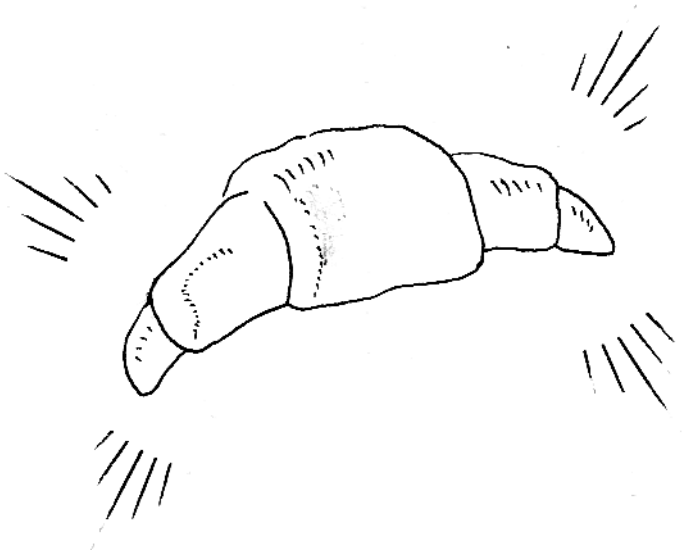

107
♩= 80
mp
113
mp
mp
sf
sf
sf
sf
117
sf
crescendo
crescendo
crescendo

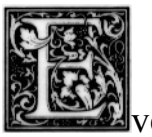

121
poco
a
poco
125
130


134
f
f
137
mp
f
mp
mp
f
mp
f
mf
140
ff
ff
ff

here was once a young baker... a very ambitious young baker... whose passion was croissants. Croissants, you ask? Not just croissants, but CROISSANTS: delicately flakey, extravagantly rich quarter-moons of pastry, fragrant from the oven. He would literally throw himself into his work, swiftly measuring by keen and experienced eye, deftly mixing with a few quick strokes of his wooden spoon, and then kneading, kneading with passionate vehemence or caressing tenderness as the spirit moved him, all of which spoke of some urgent longing or desperate need. For a few minutes each day he rose above the dross and drear of *la vie mondain* and become one with his work, fingers melting into dough, body rocking in rhythmic thrusts, giving life to the doughty mass, and it to him. He used to joke that someday he would turn into a croissant. This did not indicate a desire on his part to be either delicately flakey or extravagantly rich, but a longing for blissful surrender, of sacrificing mutuality between croissant and croissanteur, each defining the other out of unselfish necessity. The perfection of his art lay in its coming-into-being rather than its going-down-the-gullet. He knew well that the lustful attachment to croissants was a great source of misery in the world, and he devoted many hours a day to the contemplation of deep philosophical tracts on the topic. "You have the right to bake," he used to read, "but for the sake of baking only. You have no right to the croissants." And he applied himself diligently to this goal, seeking the still-point of perfect harmony within his little kitchen, each movement utilized, graceful, mind fixed on the process not the product, a virtual ballet of renunciation. Almost. For the heady fumes made his mouth water and his knees weak, and the chafed at the chance to peek in on his still-baking

creations, sometimes spoiling them in the act. "Discipline," he would say, "is the key to freedom." He was miserable.



 ven more irksome was the inexplicable desire to please his clientele, sometimes moving him to accommodate their tastes as best as he could guess them. There were the sophisticates who might demand an urbane Parisian croissant, or the low-lifers who might choose a coarser Bordeaux variety, or even petit-bourgeoisie who might prefer a tiny tea-croissantette. And for a time he would maintain this self-deception until ingrained habit overtook him, and he wearily reverted to culinary conventions that were, for better or worse, indisputably his own. This inclination-to-please he attributed to economic considerations, for "croissants," as he would say, "are not that by which man lives alone." Yet happiness remained but a croissant in the sky.

s he wheeled his cart daily into the square of each village, he was struck time and time again by the variety of characters that inhabited the marketplace, all so unique and all so involved in their own affairs. "Do they ever think about croissants?" he wondered. "I can't imagine how so many people could care about my little cartful of buns." But come they did, and eagerly he searched their faces for signs of approval, some nodding, some frowning, some mumbling, some grumbling, some complaining about cracks and crumbs. "These people," he would say, "don't know their brioches from their petit fours." And he went on his way strangely content yet vaguely dissatisfied. "I have a long way to go yet," he would say.

ne day... an "exceeding fine" day as he later remembered it... he wheeled off the main road down an unpaved path towards a village only briefly visited once long ago, before he gave much thought to croissants. It was a treacherous path, full of stones and holes, and he feared upsetting his cart. And indeed he might have turned back had the air been less sweet or the sky less clear. For he remembered this place as special in a peculiar way, and he longed to make a journey that might profitably sell his wares.

He came to the square, which was in most ways like any other, but was graced by nature and human craft beyond the requirements of mere function. There were trees, and a fountain, and greens that were neat but with wild edges, and jutting shoulders of rock that overlooked a cultivated valley below, somehow distant and foreign to this high place. And there were people about, busy with conventional concerns, but to him seeming to be not quite rooted to the ground they walked upon. And they came and bought his croissants, and he searched for signs of approval but got none. They bought all his stock before he knew it, and he hurried home to complete the next day's batch. "I must return here tomorrow," he said, "it is good business." And no sooner than he touched his threshold he set about to work. He baked all that night, though the time flew swiftly, and the next day returned at mid-morning. Again they bought his goods, though he noticed other vendors about, which stung him with jealousy, then with shame. "What right have I," he asked himself, "to claim this as my exclusive territory? It is a fair town and good profit for any decent baker. I can't afford to lose this market. I must be patient." And he went home and baked his croissants, and returned to sell them daily. Sometimes, when his wares sold only modestly or circumstance prevented the journey, he fell into dejection and cried,

"surely I am losing them, all is lost!" And when he sold well, the day seemed eternally bright, and he sang his croissant chansons all the way home, floating, as it were, on air.

The truth was, his croissants were much appreciated and sold well against the competition, yet competition was never discouraged, as all decent folk were welcome in the town. He himself never heard an explicit word of encouragement, and found himself often poised on the brink of despair, only to the redeemed by the merest intimation of approval. But as weeks passed he grew to know the people and their tastes and to judge their hunger, and to give them what they wanted almost before they asked. And he baked, and baked, and baked daily, the same stout, dependable recipe he knew as his own, and thought of little all the while, except to anticipate loading his cart and pushing it eagerly down the now-familiar path, which wasn't so treacherous after all. And day after day he handed out his croissants in the square, and waited for approval, until one day it struck him that he had been so very busy searching the faces of his customers that he had neglected to take their change. In a panic he seized his money box... and found it full of coins. Then as suddenly he realized he had as a habit been neglecting to collect money for weeks now, maybe even months. "What a fool I have been," said the baker. "Here I stood searching vainly for a smile, and have found myself kissed." And as he thought back over the past weeks he recalled how each night he would trudge home tired but with a fire in his heart, and bake his croissants into the wee hours, and then sleep without a care in the world, only to awake with renewed vigor. "It wasn't for money after all," he said. And he picked up one of his croissants and looked at it, and saw how it was less than perfect, a little squished at one end, and slightly overdone, not surprising for work done far past bed-time. And he bit into it, and it crumbled generously and richly over his apron and into his pockets. "Life," he said, "is like a croissant. It must he held delicately if it is to be held at all."

"And," he added, "it's pretty damned delicious."

Composer David Jason Snow (b. 1954) received his professional musical training at the Eastman School of Music (1972-1976) where he studied with Joseph Schwantner, Warren Benson, and Samuel Adler, and at the Yale School of Music (1976-1978) where he was a student of Jacob Druckman. While at Eastman, he was awarded the Bernard and Rose Sernoffsky Prize in composition (1974), the McCurdy Prize (1975), and the Howard Hanson Prize (1976), and at Yale he received the Frances E. Osborne Kellogg Prize (1978). Other honors include BMI Student Composer Awards (1977, 1979), Annapolis Fine Arts Foundation Composition Prizes (1981, 1983, 1984, 1985), an ASCAP Foundation Grant (1981), a National Association of Composers/USA Composition Prize (1981), a National Federation of Music Clubs Composition Prize (1981), National Endowment for the Arts Composer Fellowships (1982, 1985), a Meet the Composer Grant (1983), and Maryland State Arts Council Grants (1992, 1997). Snow has been awarded artist residencies at Yaddo (1981, 2000) and Millay Arts (2004), and commissions from the College Band Directors National Association Commission (1982) and the Renee B. Fisher Foundation (1997).

Among the organizations that have presented Snow's work in concert are the Ensemble Intercontemporain (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris), the New Juilliard Ensemble (Museum of Modern Art, New York), the American Brass Quintet (John F. Kennedy Center, Washington, DC), the Yale Contemporary Ensemble (Sprague Hall, New Haven), the Yale University Band (Woolsey Hall, New Haven), the Harvard Wind Ensemble (Sanders Theater, Cambridge), and the Banda Municipal de Bilbao (Euskalduna Palace, Bilbao).

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