Cubic Deviations

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

For Piano Quintet

Bill Robinson

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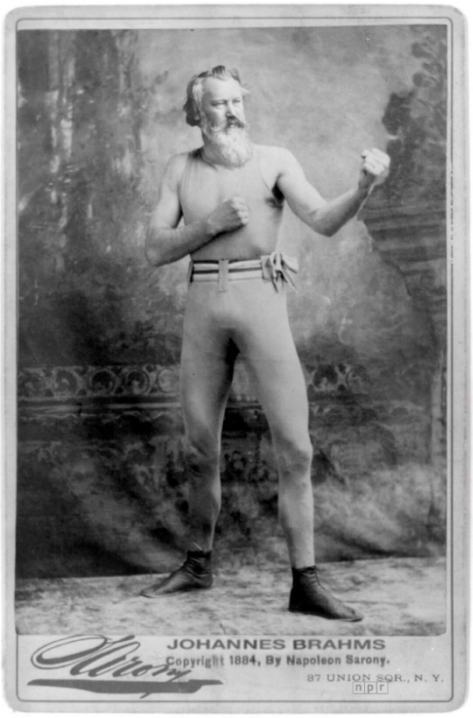
from Brahms' *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*
for Piano Quintet

Duration: about 28 minutes October 24, 2022—April 1, 2023

for Eric Pritchard



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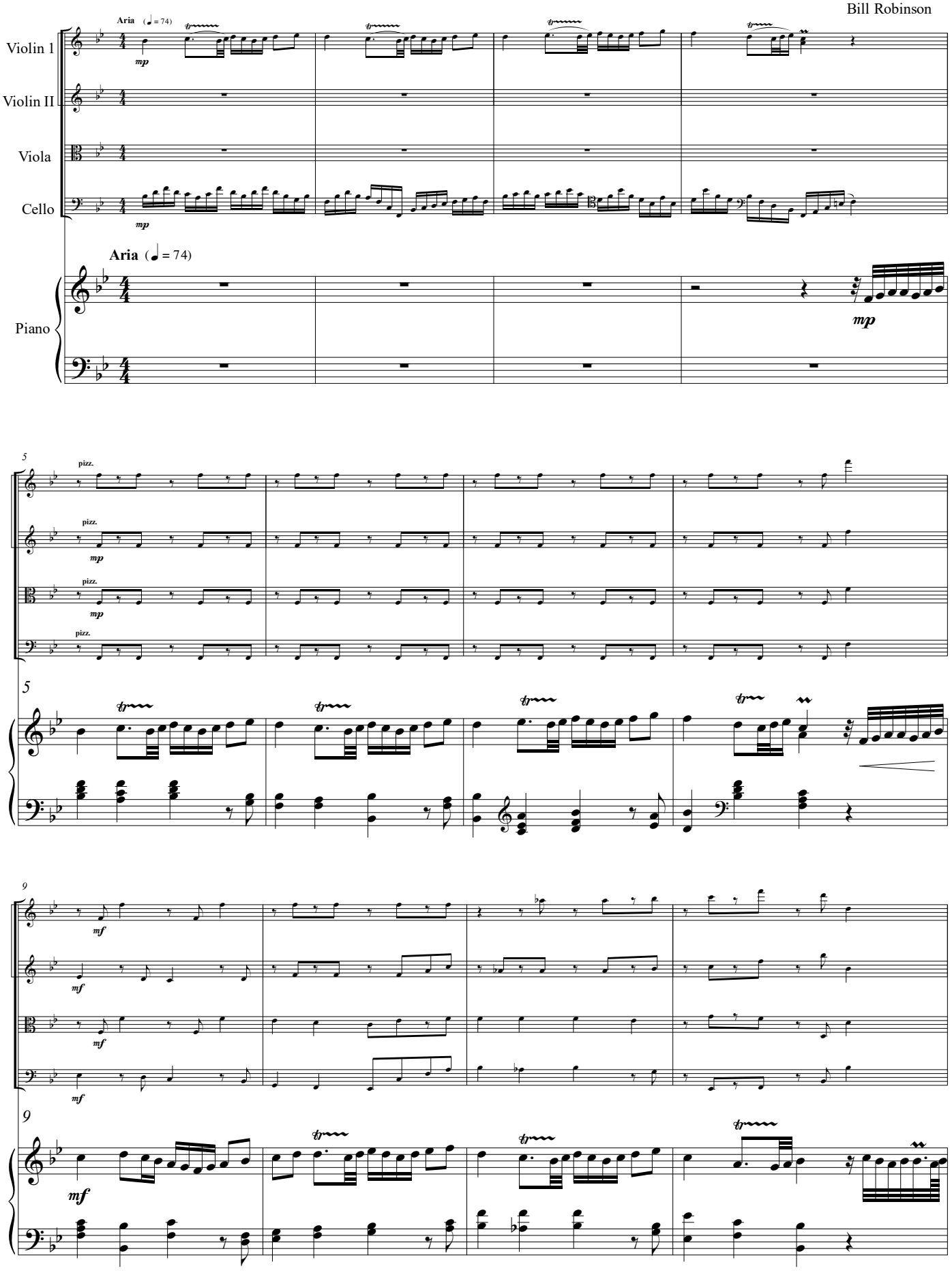
Cover art by Joseph Groupy, 1743 *Pugilist Brahms by NPR* billrobinsonmusic.com

Cubic Deviations

[corrected to 7/21/2023]

Bill Robinson



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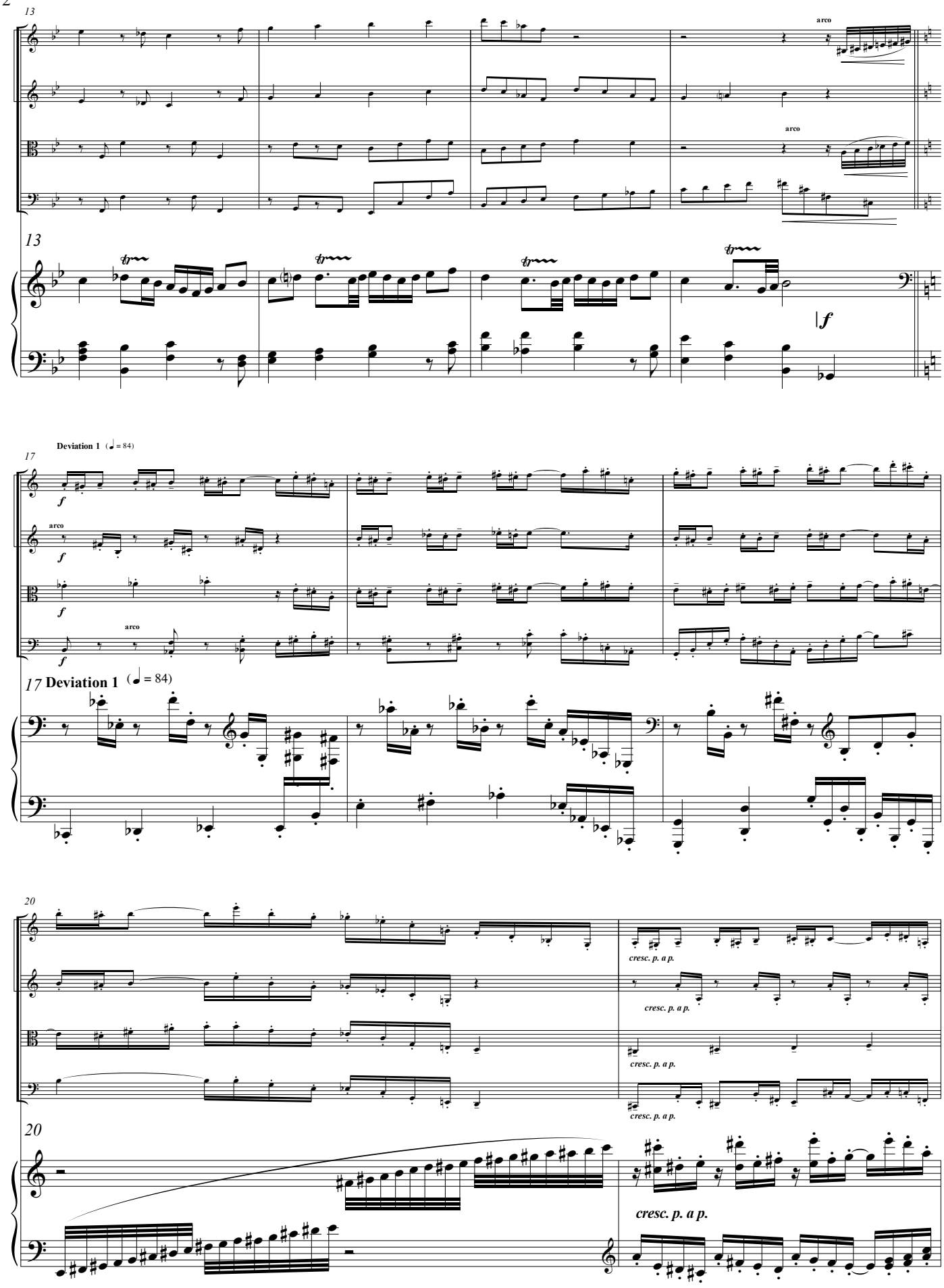
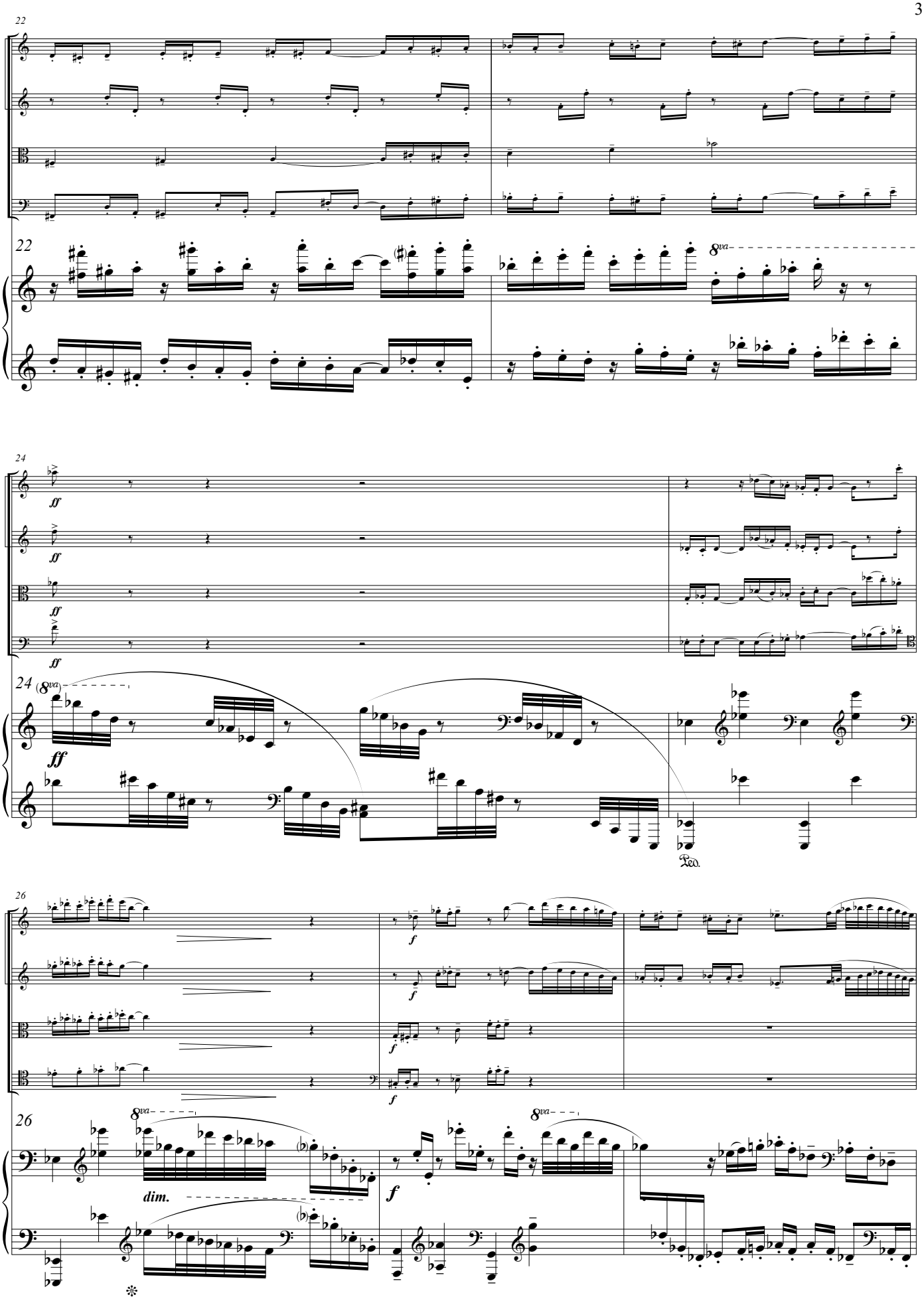
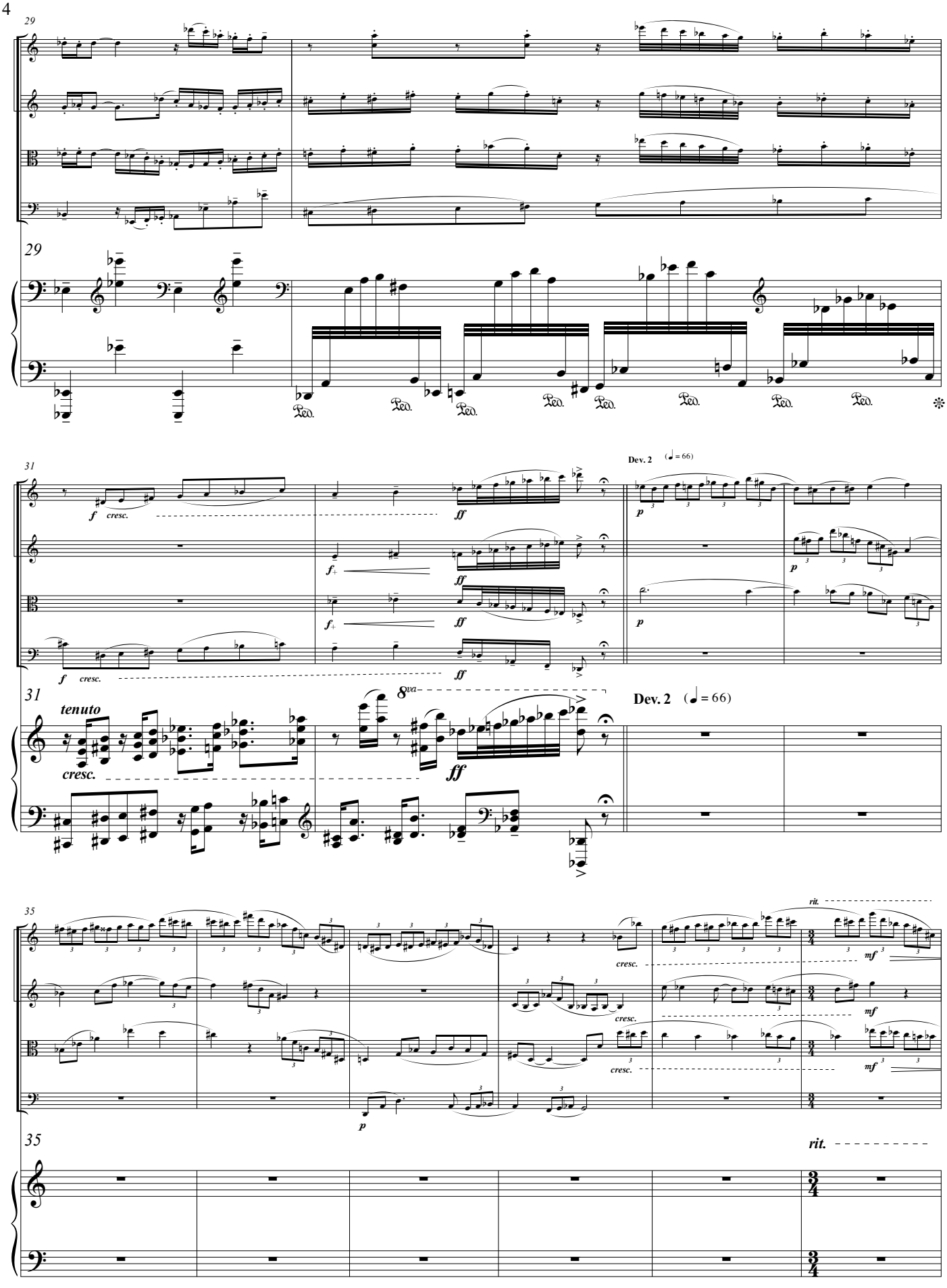
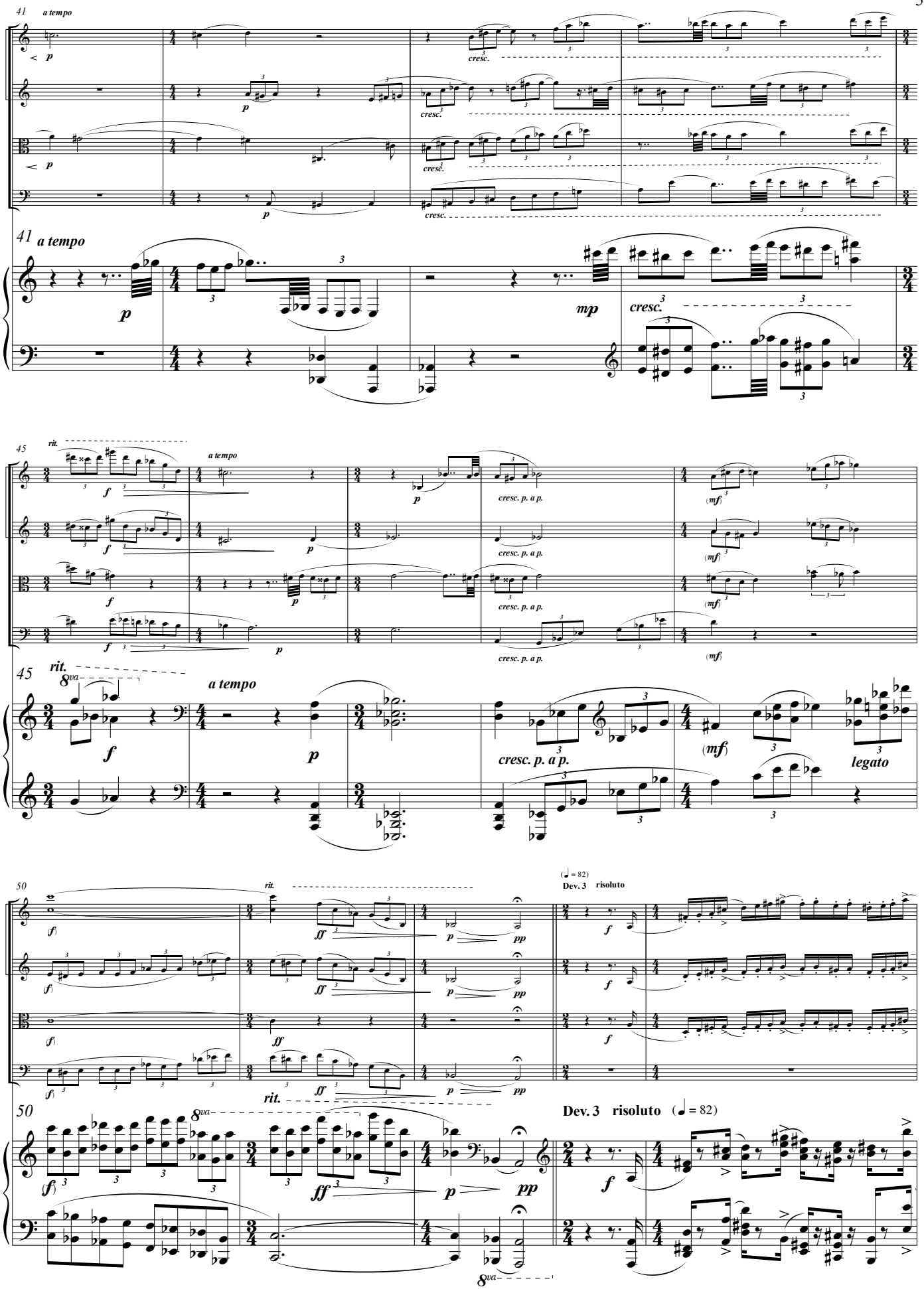
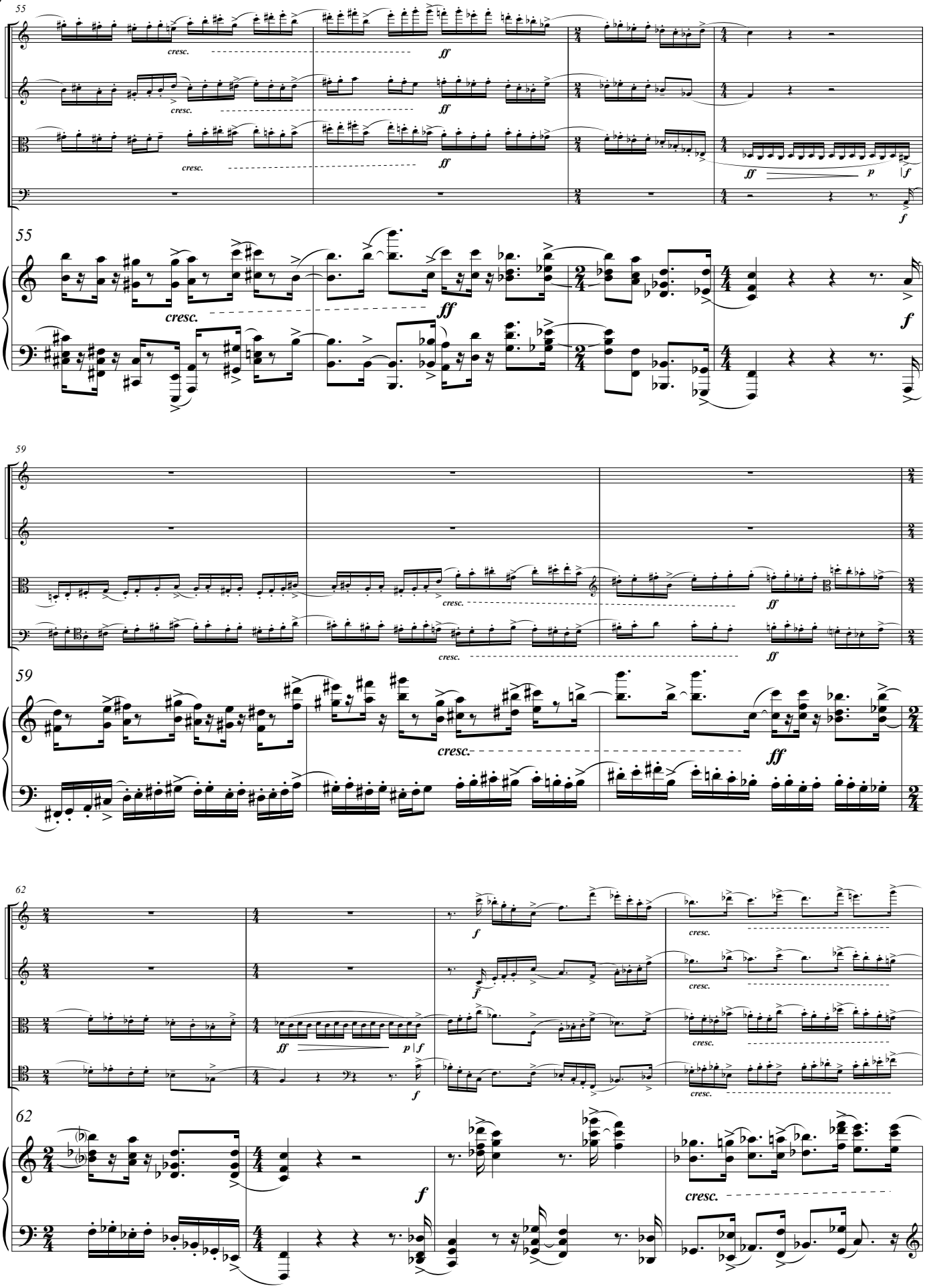
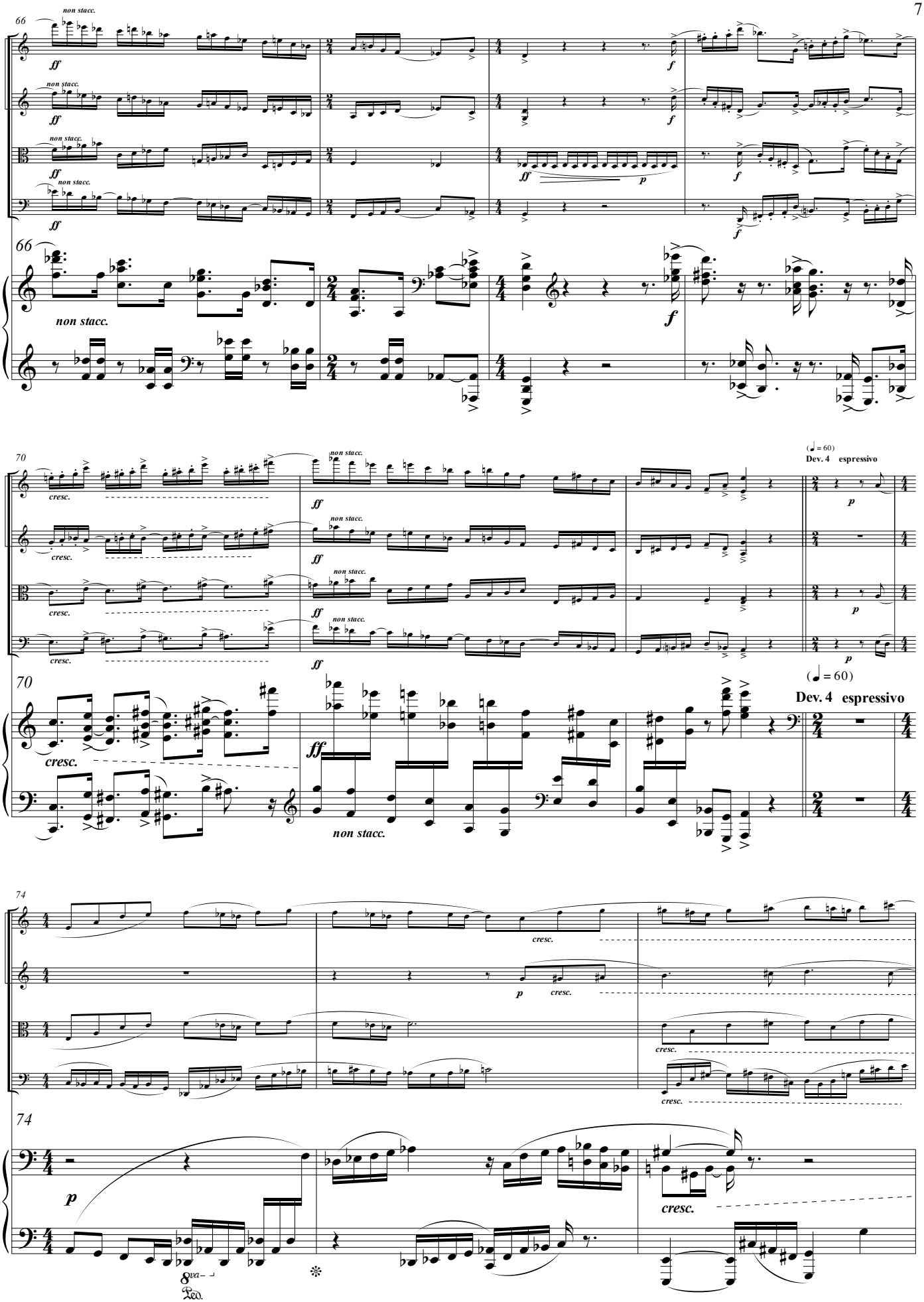

13
arco
arco
13
tr
tr
tr
tr
f
Deviation 1 (♩ = 84)
17
f
arco
f
f
arco
f
17 Deviation 1 (♩ = 84)
20
cresc. p. a p.
cresc. p. a p.
cresc. p. a p.
cresc. p. a p.
20
cresc. p. a p.

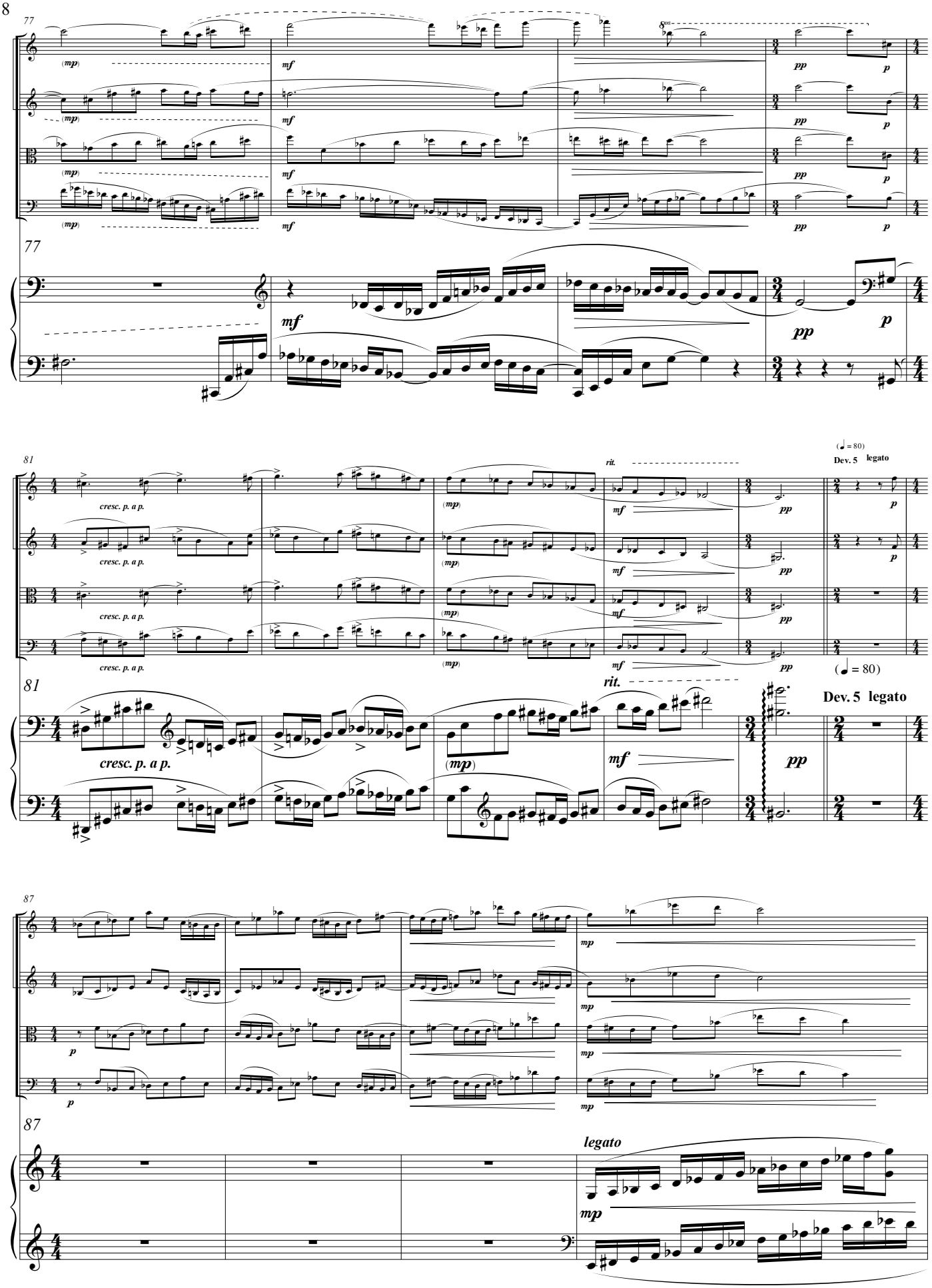

22
22
8va
24
ff
24
(8va)
ff
Ped.
26
f
26
8va
dim.
f
8va

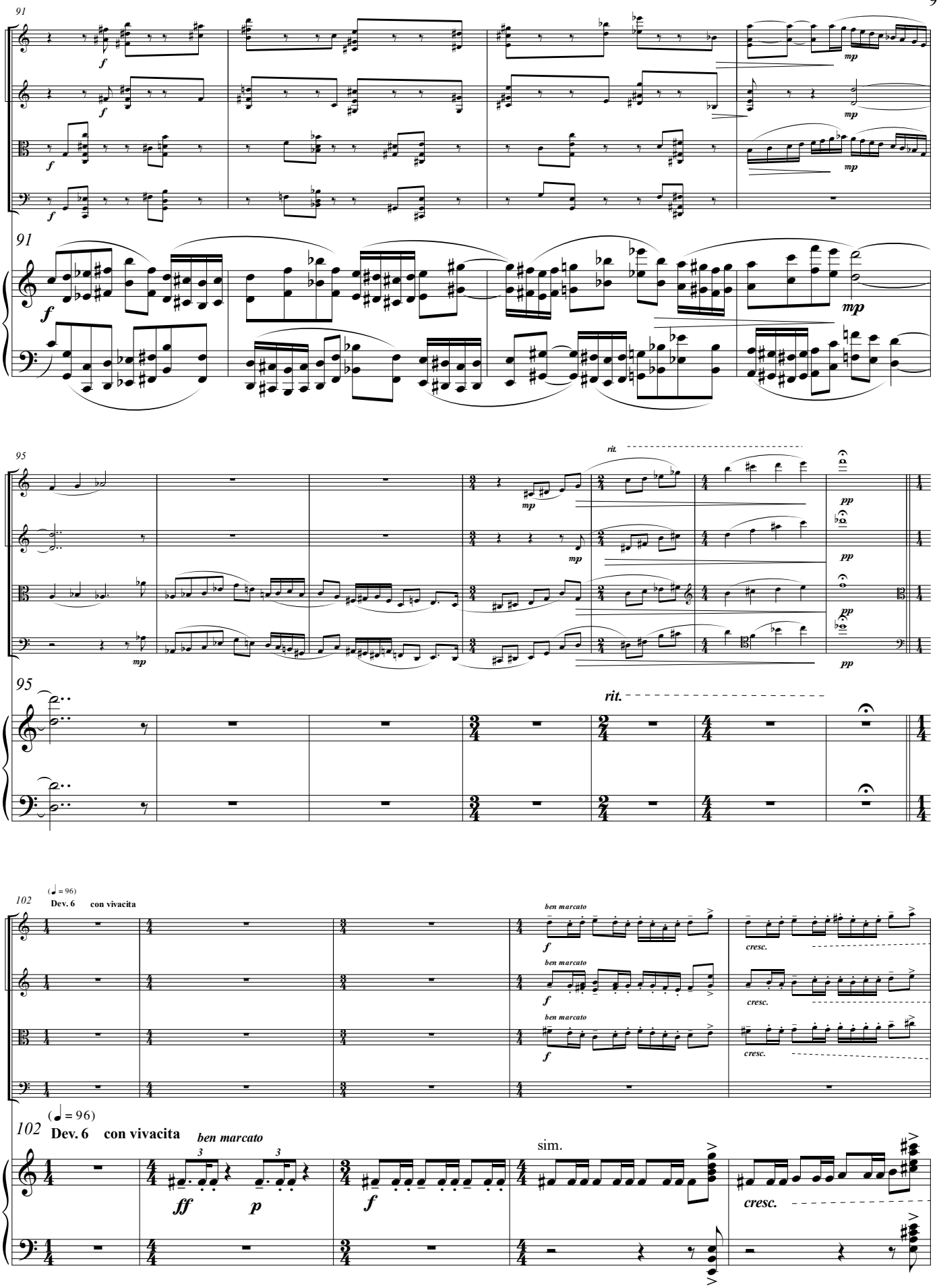

29
29
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
31
f cresc.
ff
Dev. 2 (♩ = 66)
p
31
tenuto
cresc.
8va
ff
Dev. 2 (♩ = 66)
35
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
rit.
mf
mf
mf
p
35
rit.

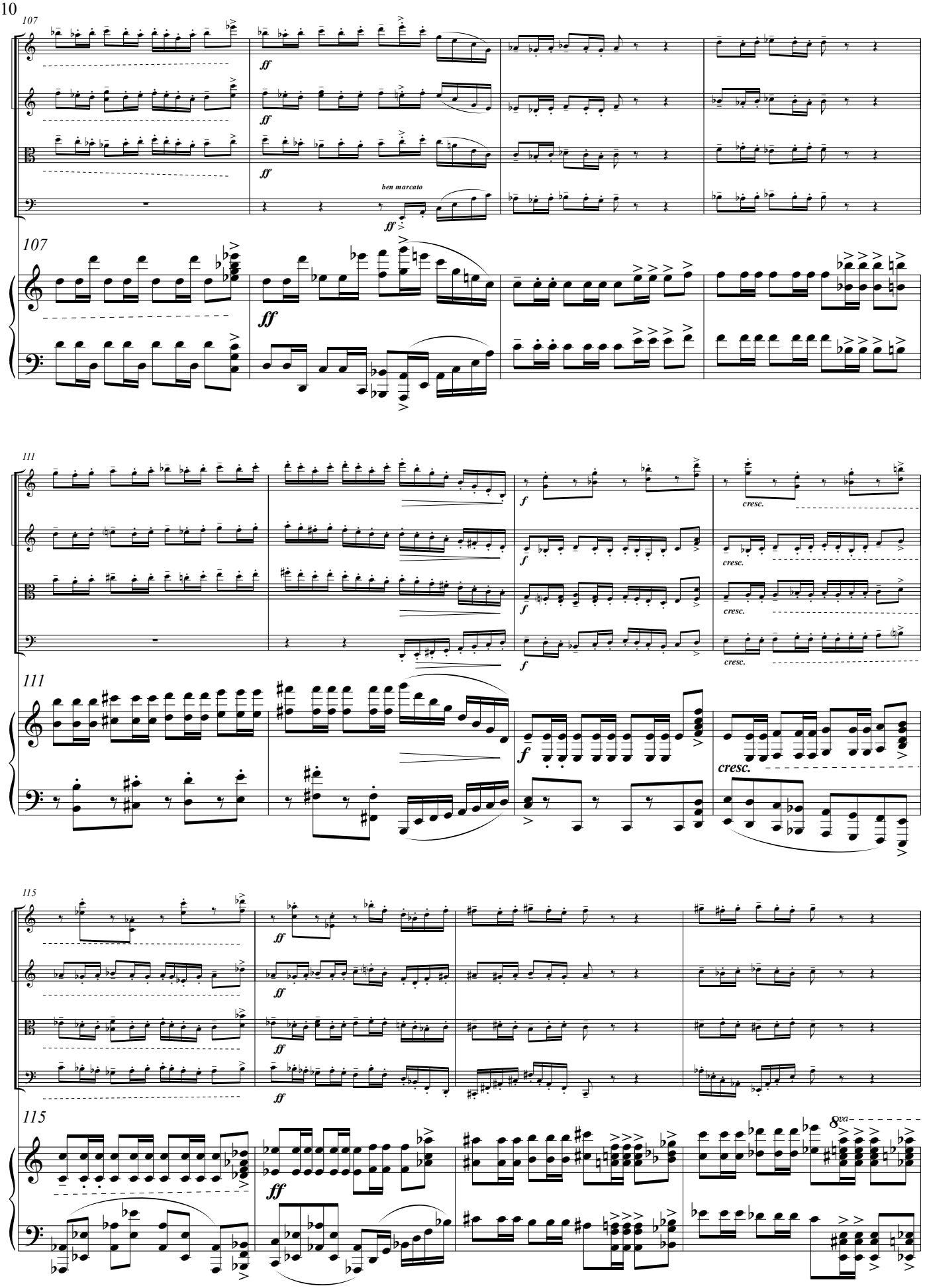

41 a tempo
p
cresc.
mp
45 rit.
a tempo
f
(mf)
cresc. p. a p.
legato
50 rit.
ff
pp
Dev. 3 risoluto
(♩ = 82)
8va

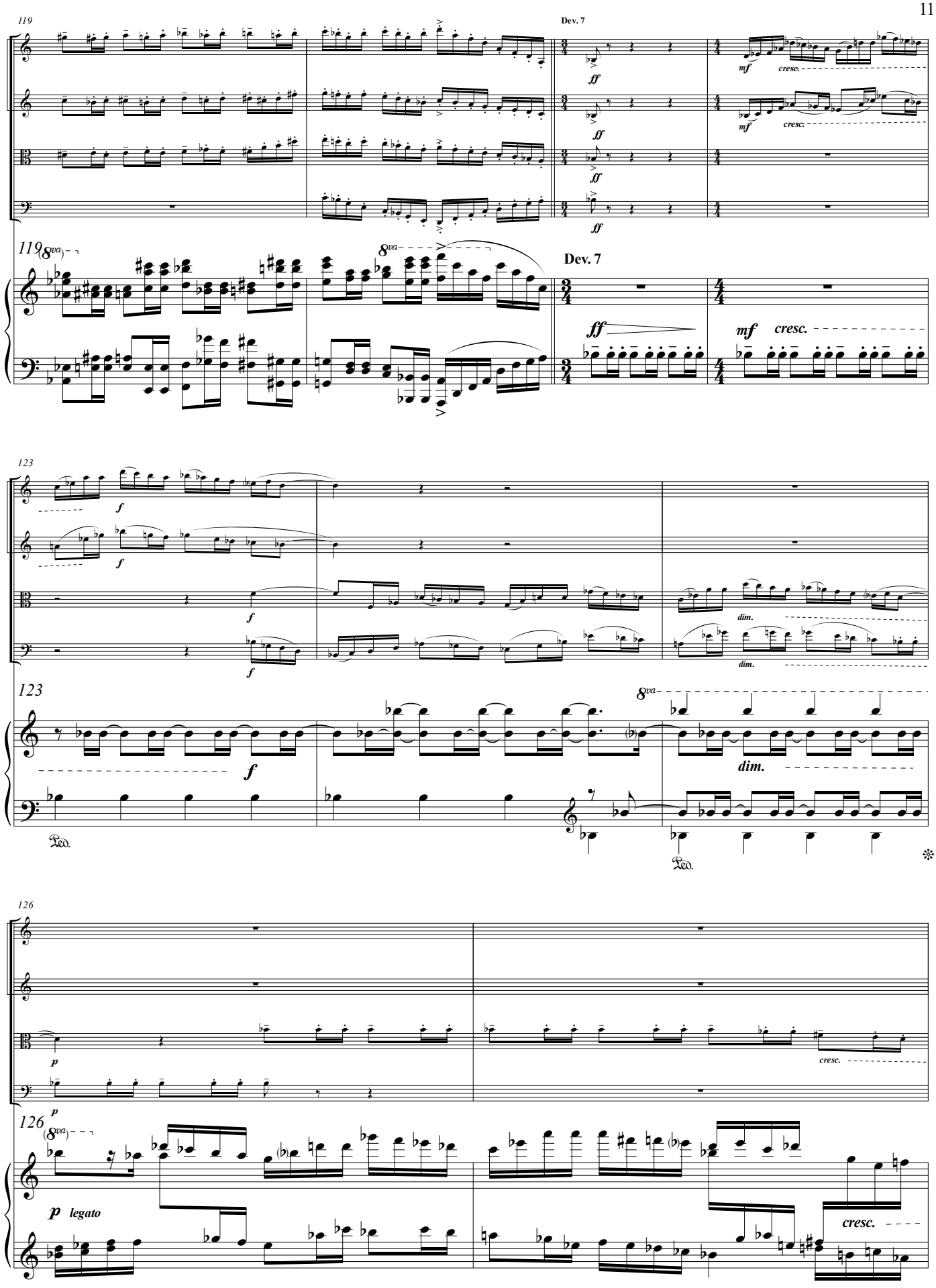

55
cresc.
ff
p
f
59
62

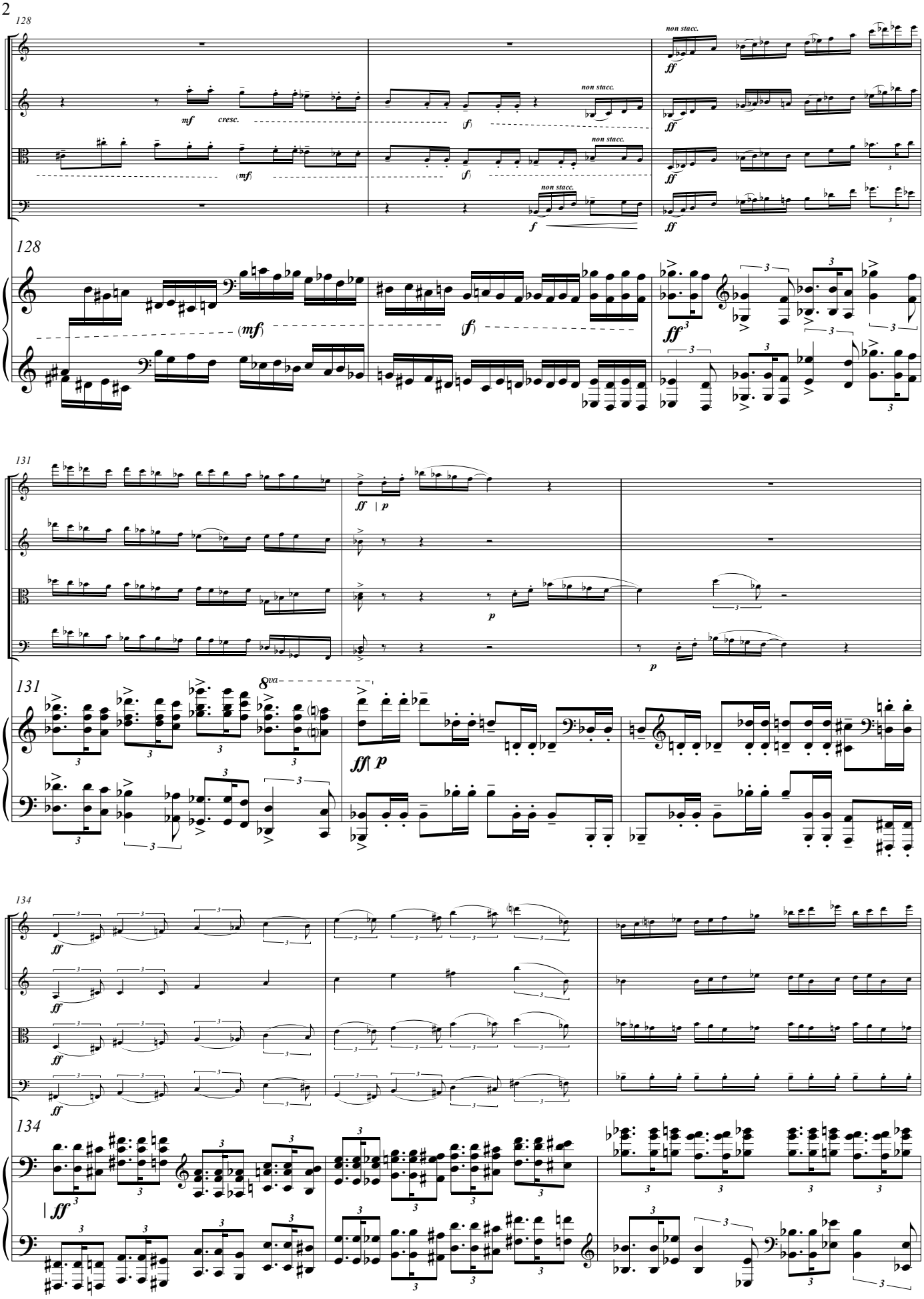

66
non stacc.
ff
f
p
66
non stacc.
f
70
cresc.
non stacc.
ff
(♩ = 60)
Dev. 4 espressivo
p
70
cresc.
ff
non stacc.
(♩ = 60)
Dev. 4 espressivo
74
cresc.
p
74
p
cresc.
8va
Ped.

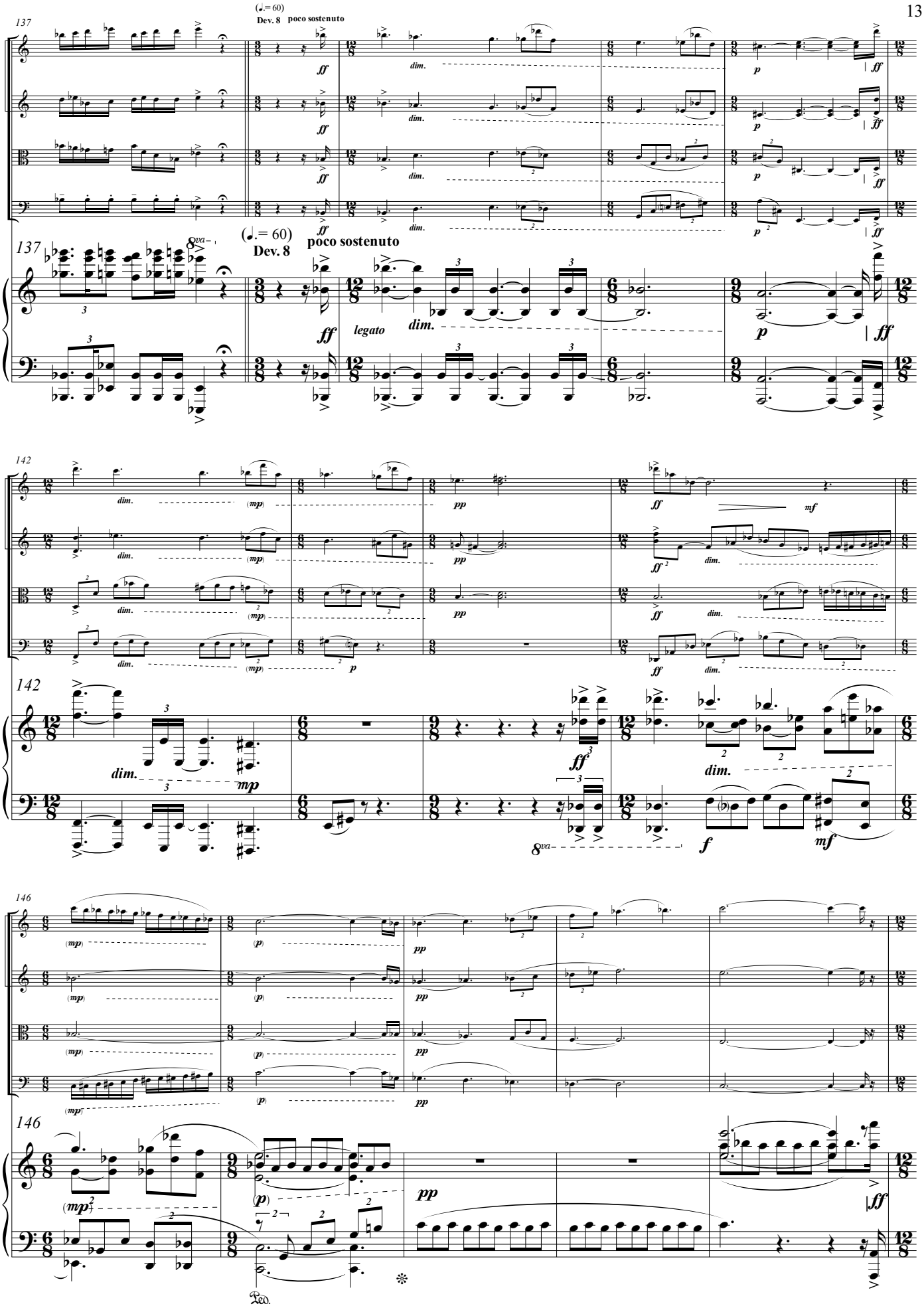

77
(mp)
mf
pp
p
81
cresc. p. a p.
rit.
(♩ = 80)
Dev. 5 legato
87
legato

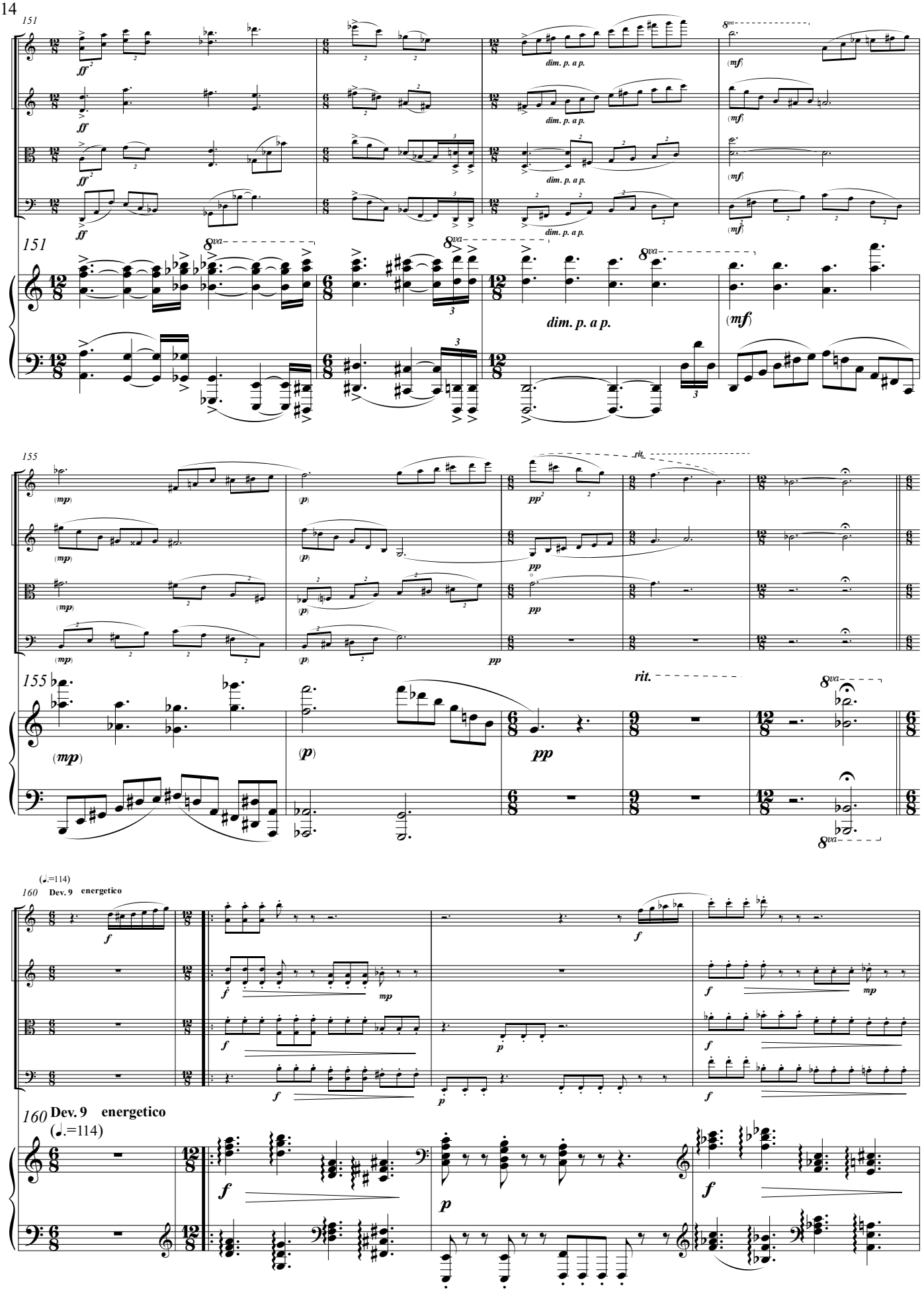

91
f
mp
91
95
mp
rit.
pp
95
rit.
102
(♩ = 96)
Dev. 6 con vivacita
ben marcato
cresc.
sim.
ff
p

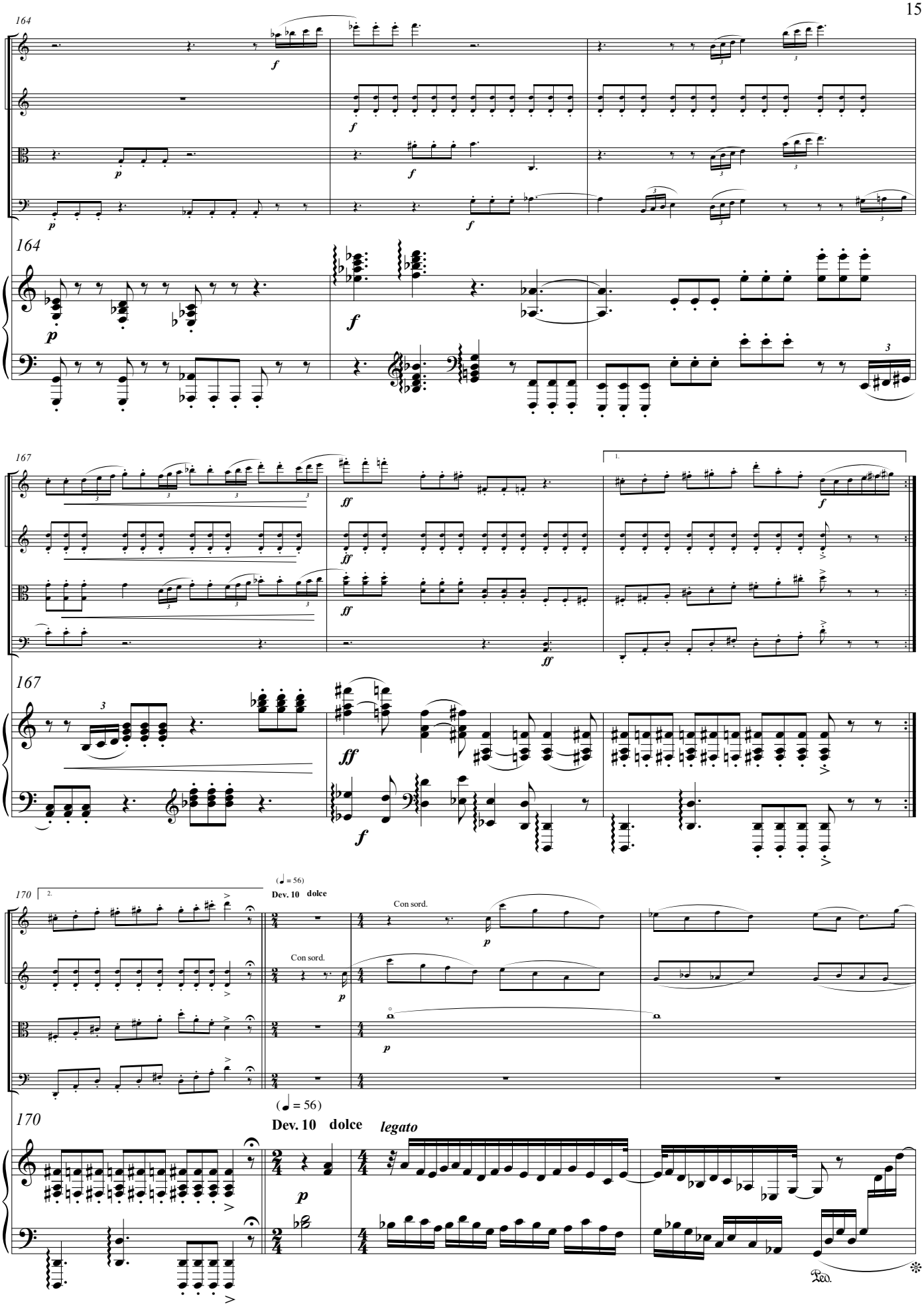

107
ff
ben marcato
111
f
cresc.
115
ff
8va

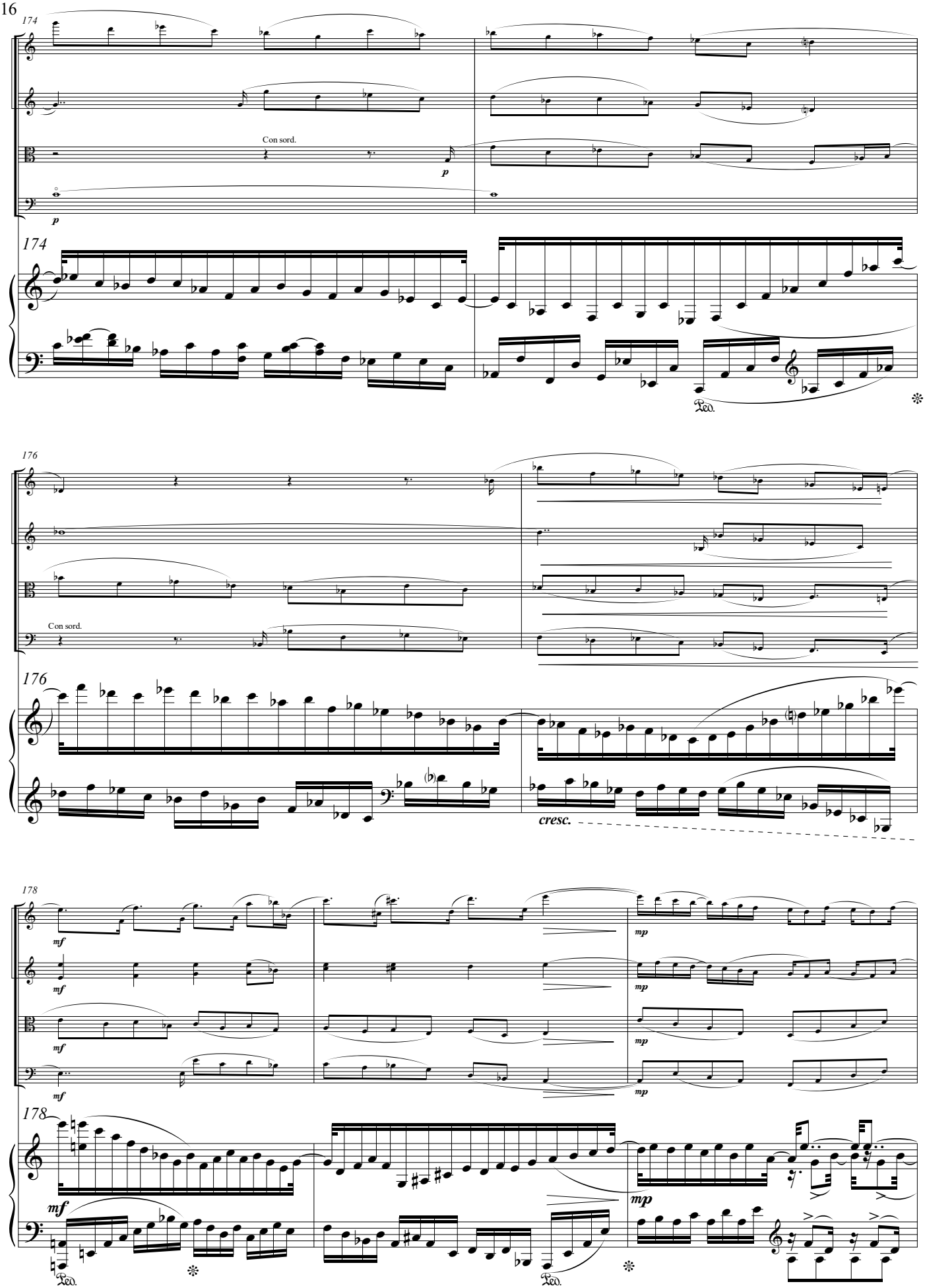

119
Dev. 7
ff
mf
cresc.
8va
123
f
dim.
Ped.
126
p
legato

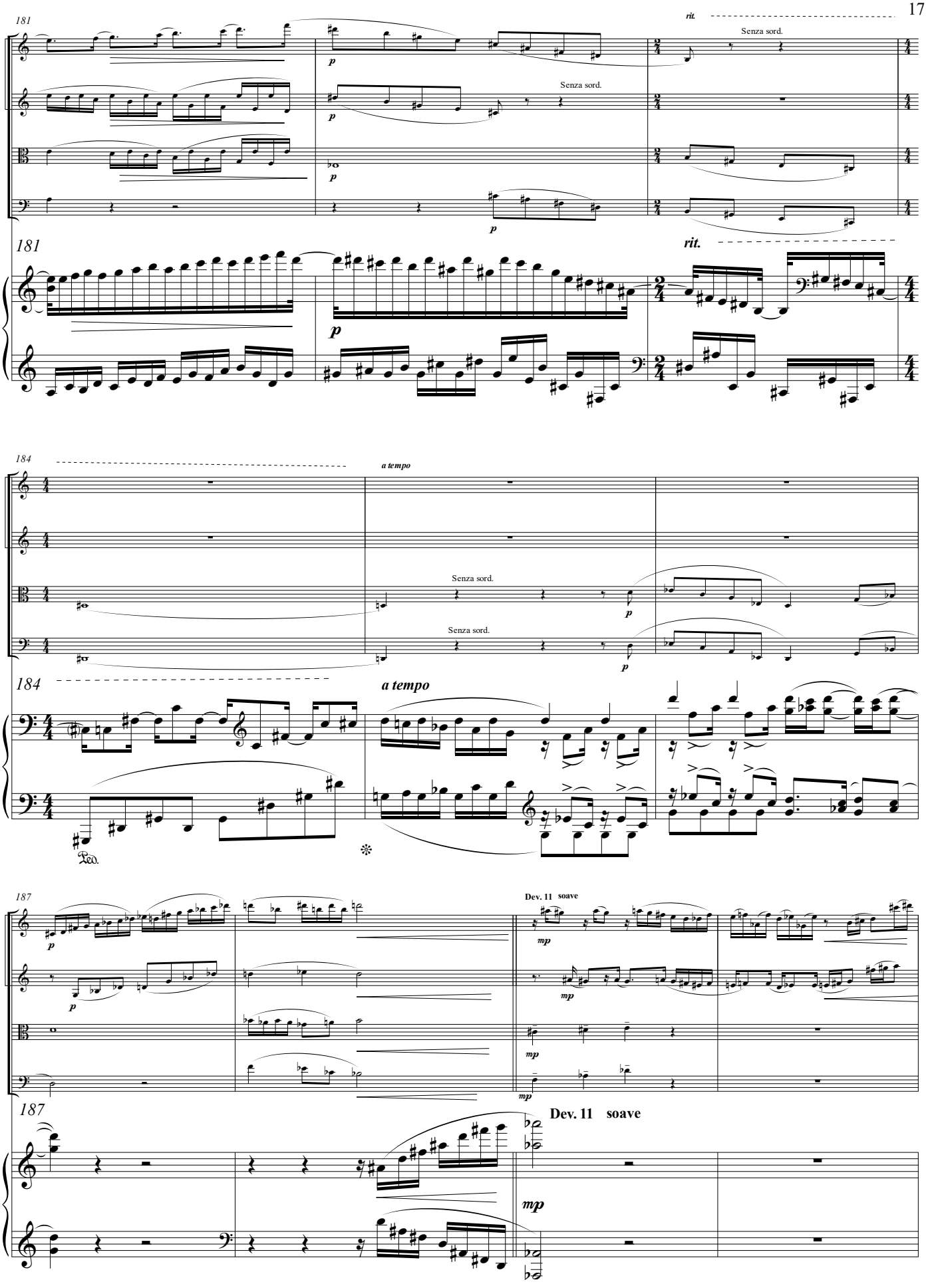

128
non stacc.
mf
cresc.
(f)
(mf)
f
ff
131
ff | p
p
8va
134

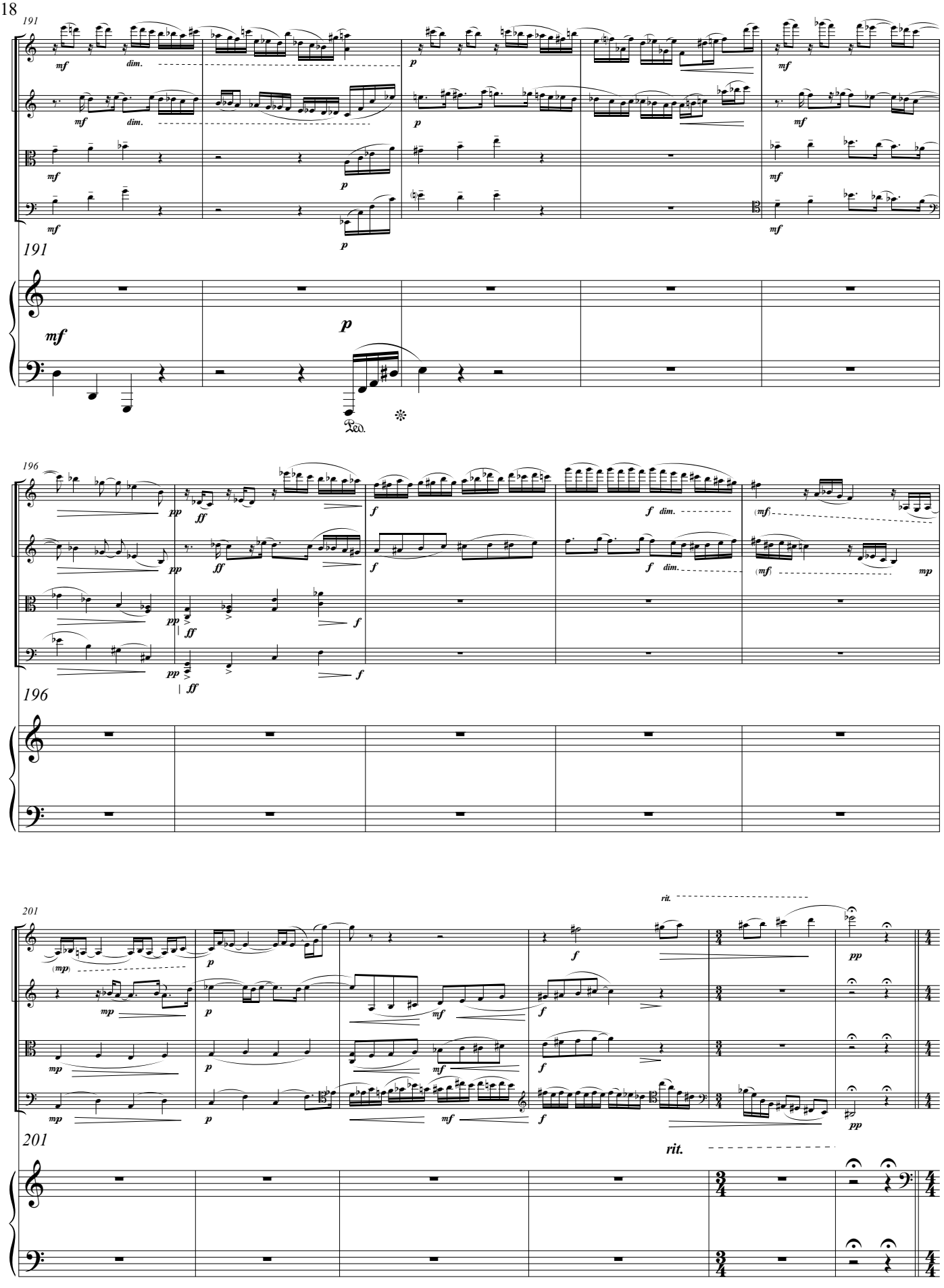

(♩.= 60)
Dev. 8
poco sostenuto
ff
dim.
p
8va
legato
mp
pp
mf
f
Ped.

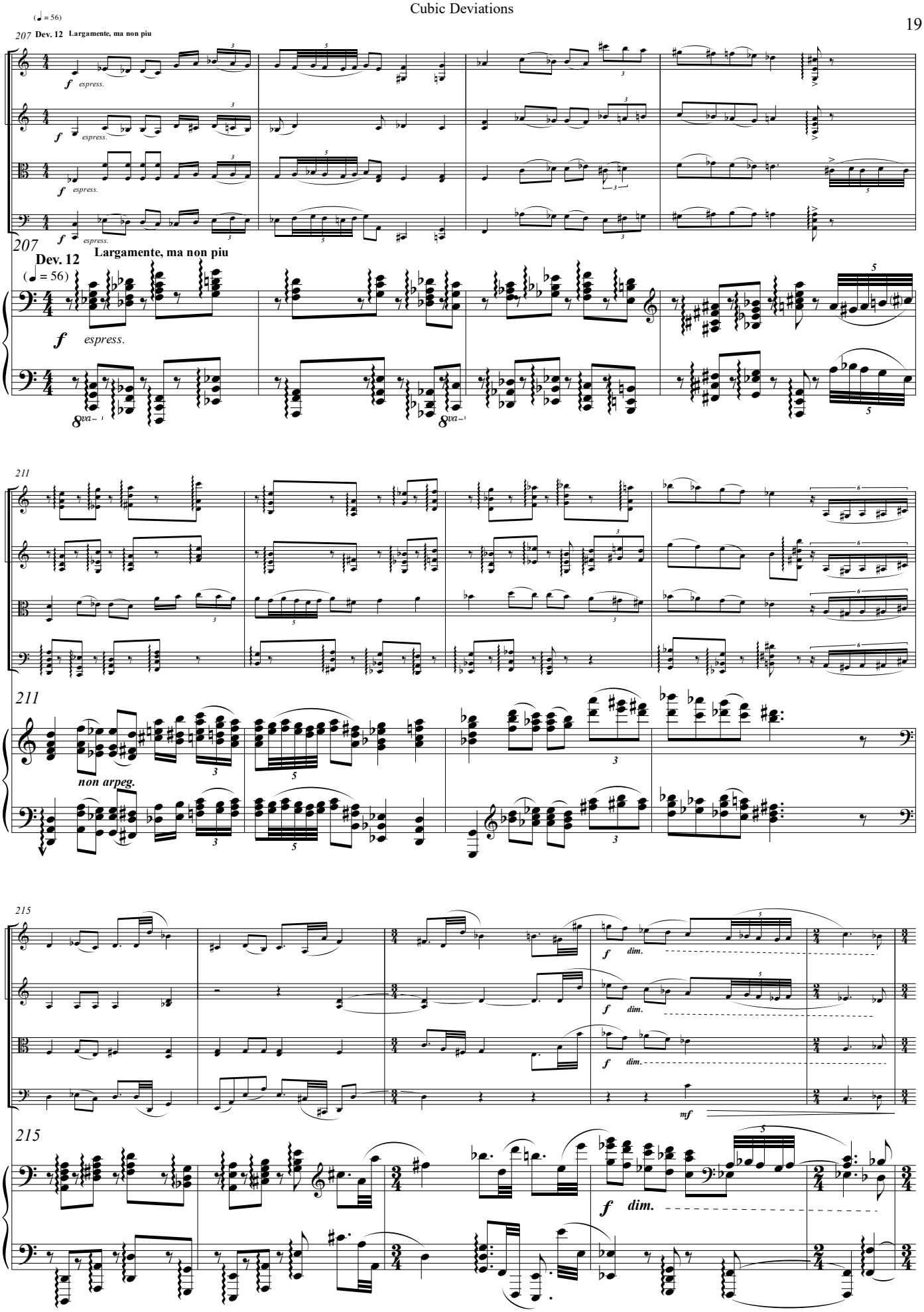

151
ff
dim. p. a p.
(mf)
8va
155
(mp)
(p)
pp
rit.
160
Dev. 9 energetico
(♩.=114)
f
mp

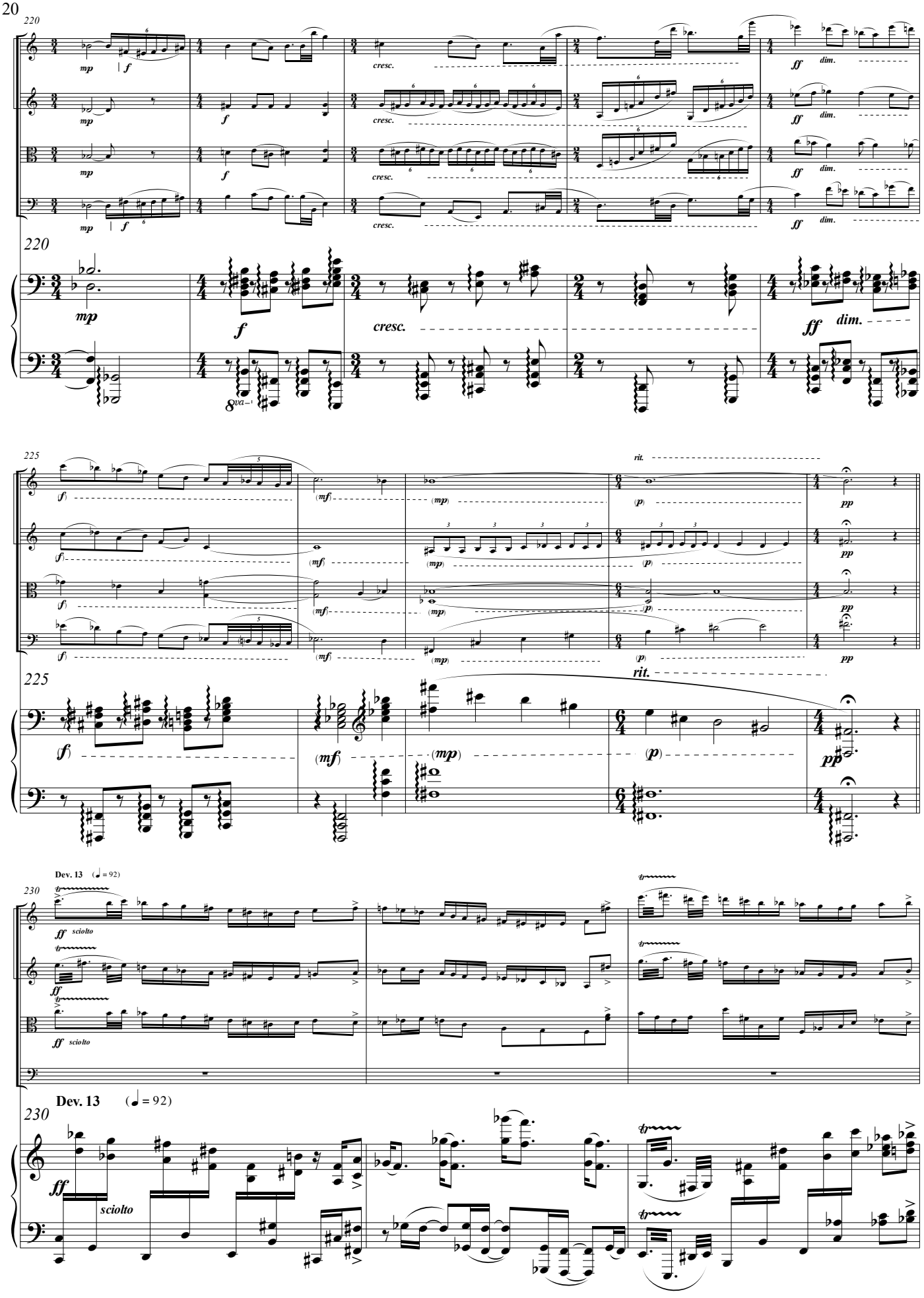

164
f
p
164
f
p
167
ff
1.
f
167
ff
f
170
2.
(♩ = 56)
Dev. 10 dolce
Con sord.
p
170
(♩ = 56)
Dev. 10 dolce legato
p
Ped.

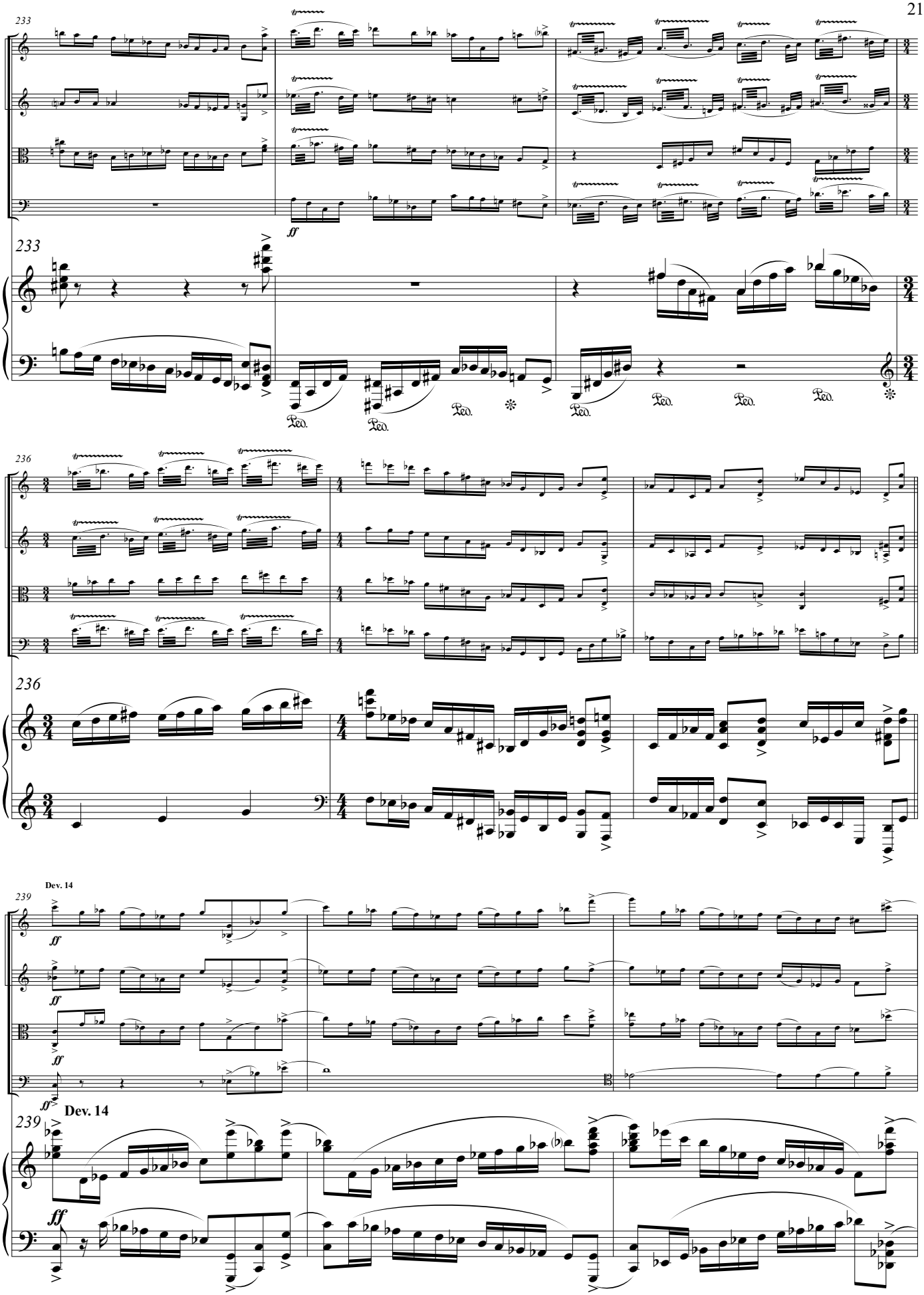

174
Con sord.
p
p
174
Ped.
176
Con sord.
176
cresc.
178
mf
mf
mf
mf
mp
mp
mp
mp
178
mf
mp
Ped.
Ped.

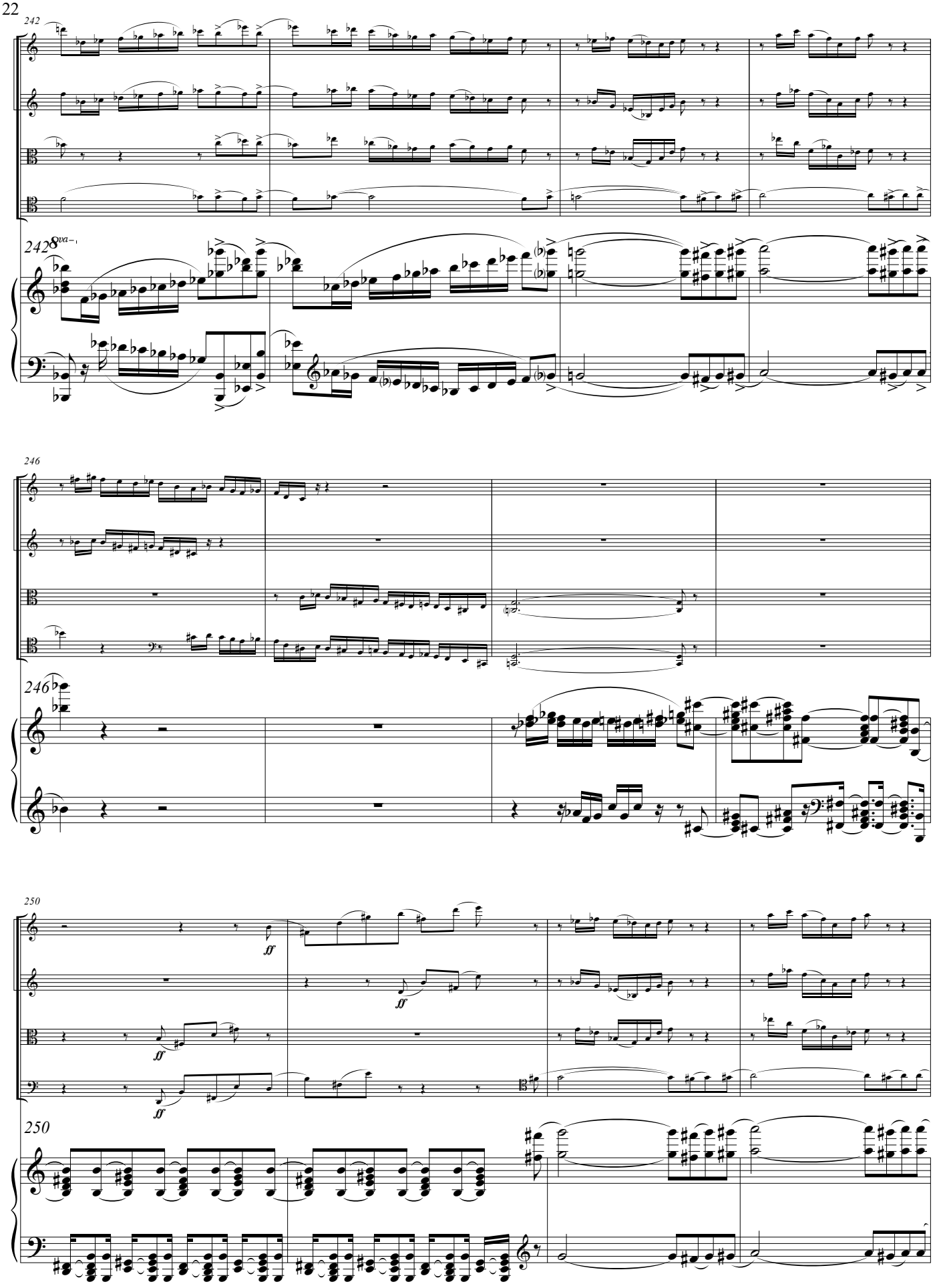

181
rit.
Senza sord.
p
Senza sord.
p
p
181
rit.
p
184
a tempo
Senza sord.
p
Senza sord.
p
184
a tempo
Ped.
187
Dev. 11 soave
mp
mp
mp
mp
187
Dev. 11 soave
mp

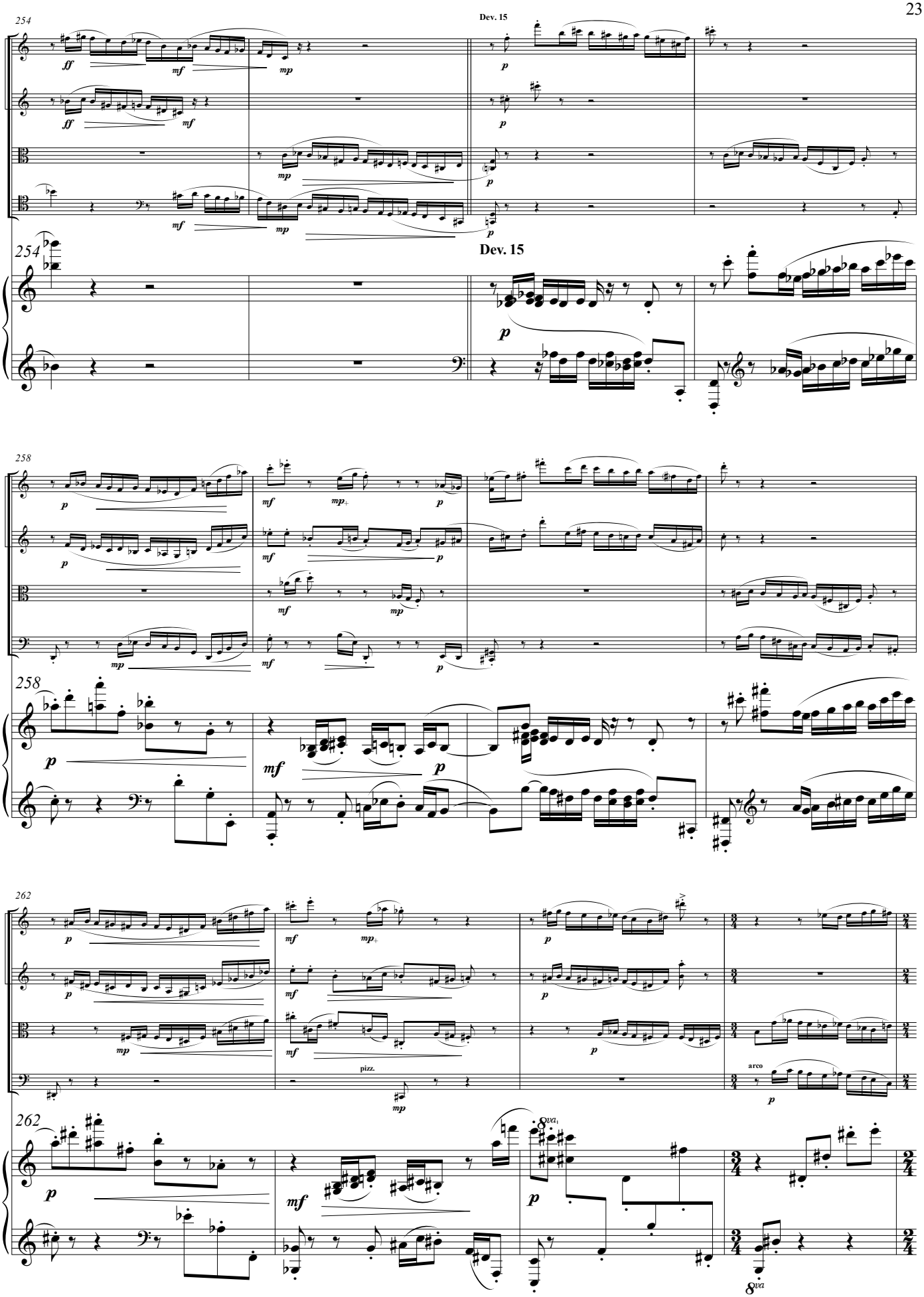

191
mf
dim.
p
mf
191
mf
p
Ped.
196
pp
ff
f
dim.
(mf)
mp
196
201
(mp)
mp
p
mf
f
pp
rit.
201
rit.

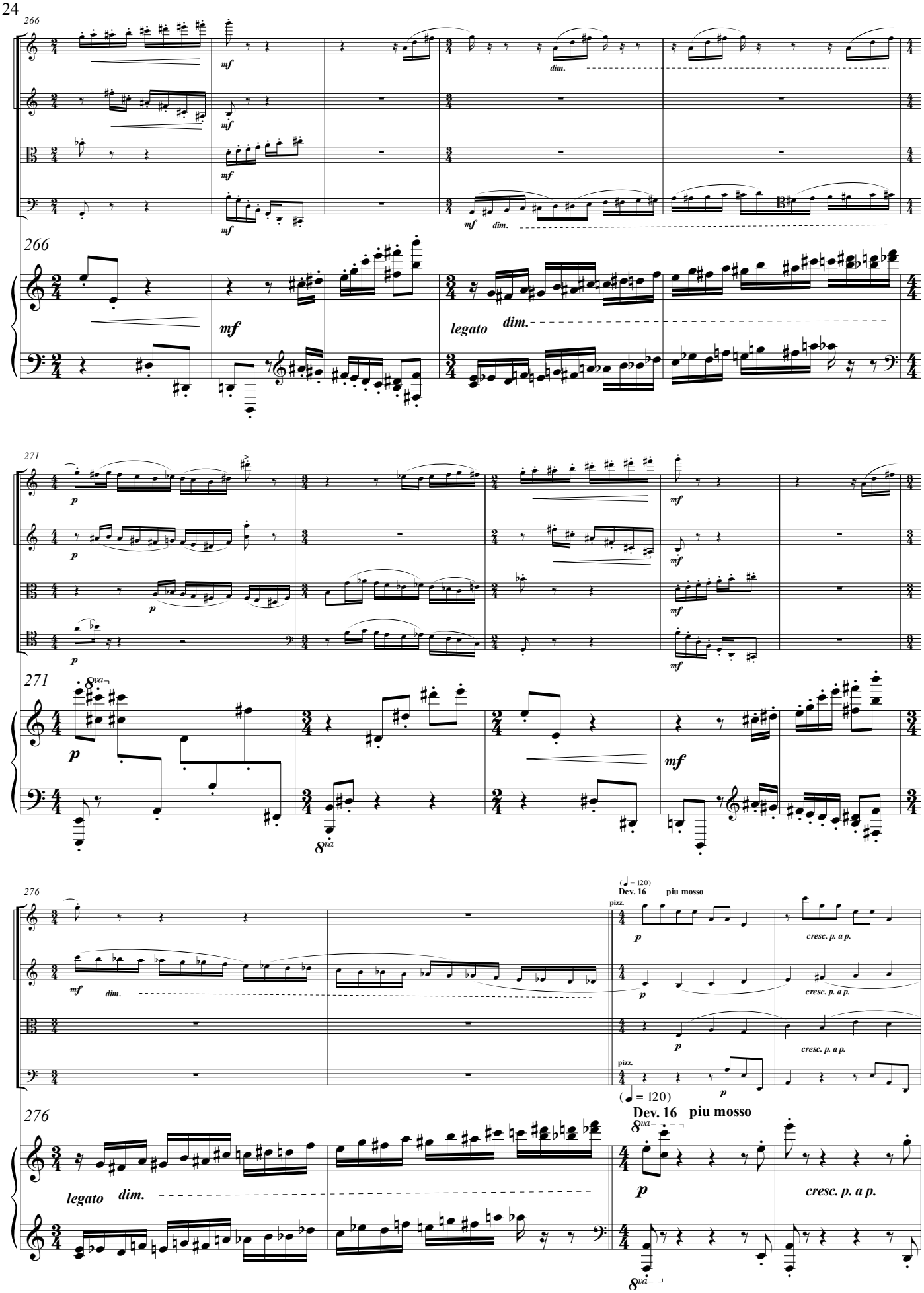

(♩ = 56)
207 Dev. 12 Largamente, ma non piu
f espress.
211
non arpeg.
215
f dim.
mf

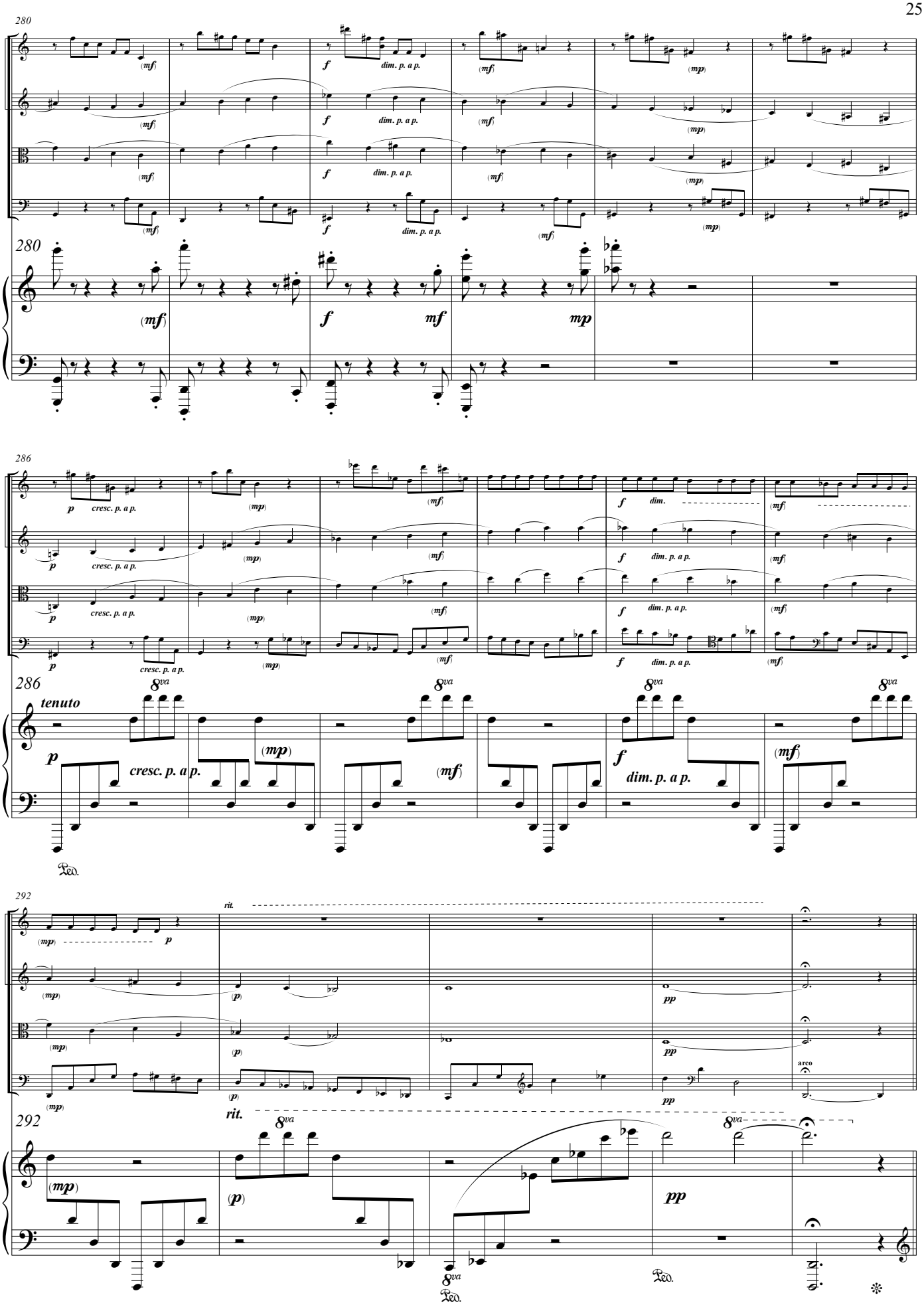

220
mp
f
cresc.
ff
dim.
8va
225
(f)
(mf)
(mp)
(p)
pp
rit.
230
Dev. 13 (♩ = 92)
ff sciolto
tr


233
ff
233
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
236
236
Dev. 14
239
ff
ff
ff
ff
Dev. 14
239
ff


242
8va
246
250
ff


254
Dev. 15
ff
mf
mp
p
258
262
pizz.
arco
8va


266
mf
dim.
legato
271
p
8va
276
(♩ = 120)
Dev. 16
piu mosso
pizz.
cresc. p. a p.


280
(mf)
f
dim. p. a p.
(mp)
286
tenuto
8va
p
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
(mf)
f
dim. p. a p.
Ped.
292
rit.
(mp)
(p)
pp
arco
Ped.

297 (♩ = 80) **Dev. 17 grazioso**

arco

mp

mp

mp

mp

Dev. 17 grazioso (♩ = 80)

297 8va

mp

Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻

300

300

8va

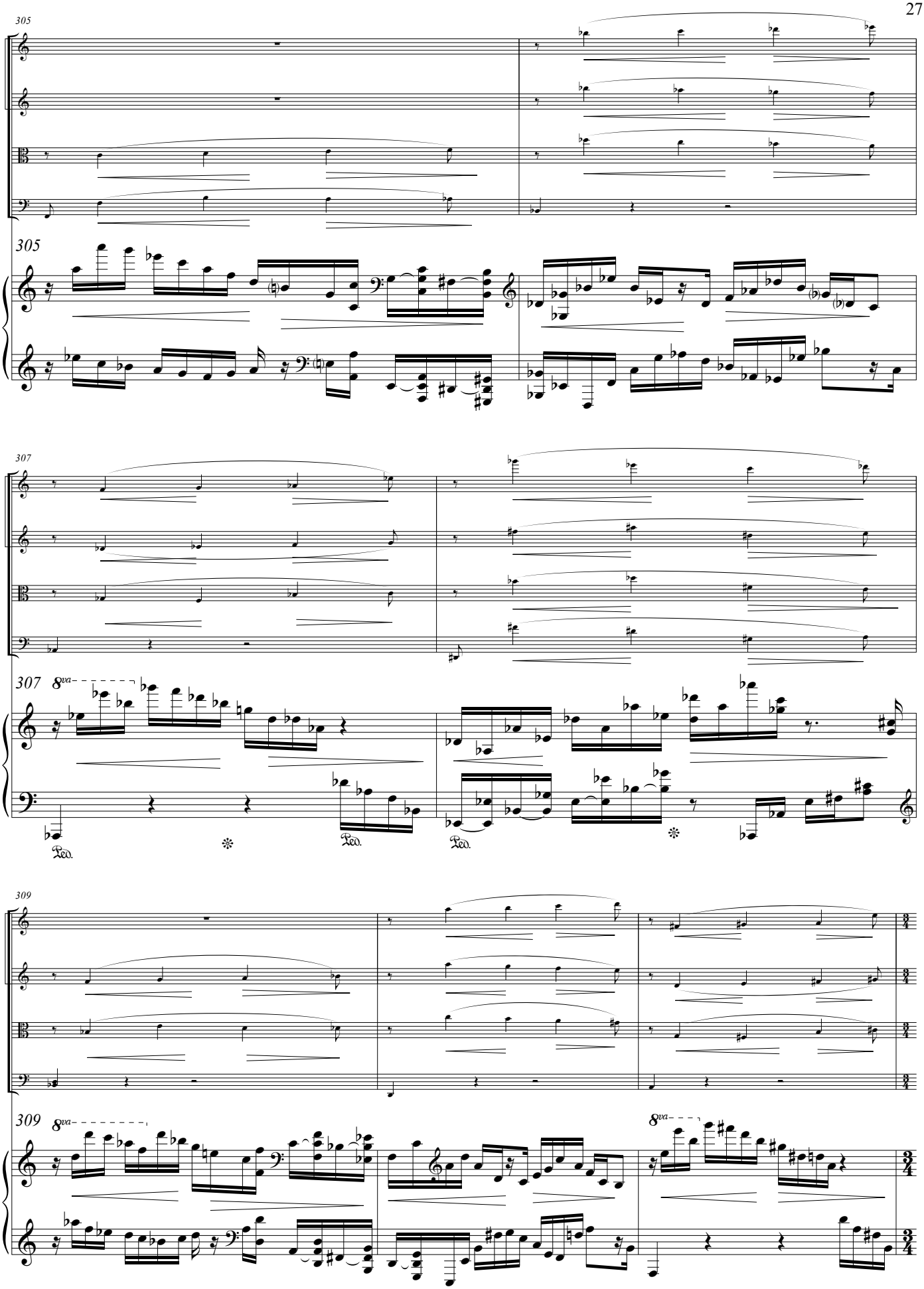
8va Ped. ✻

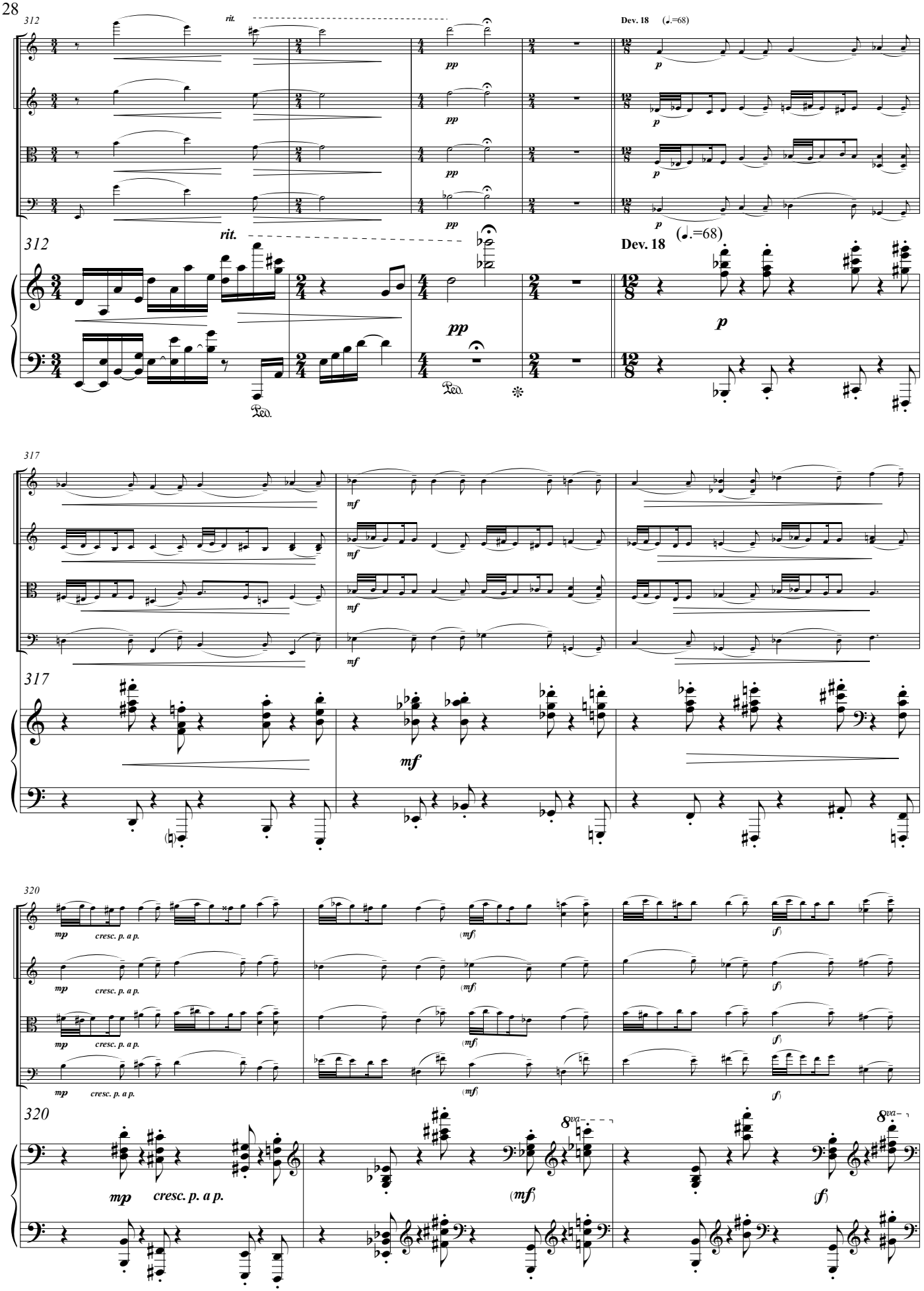
302

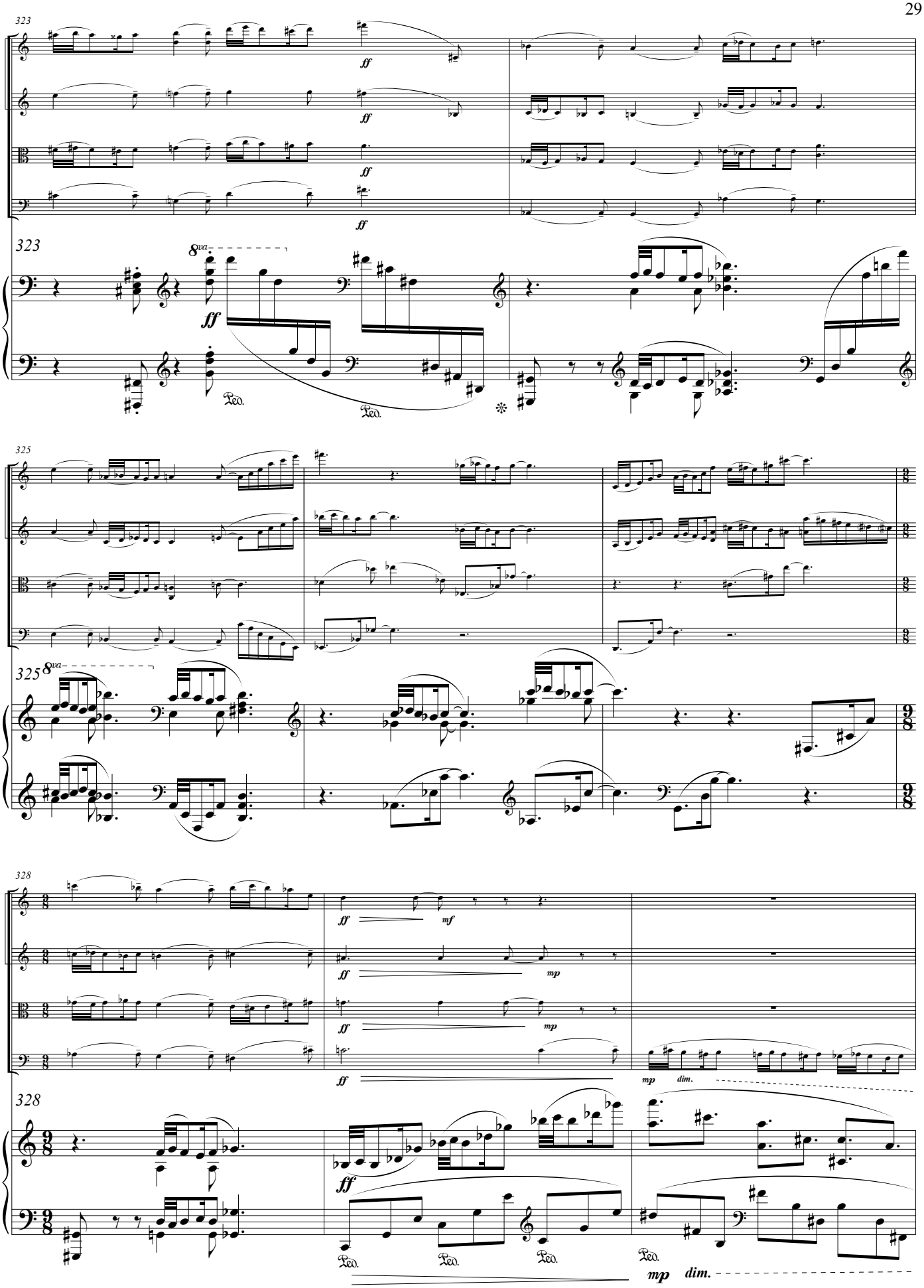
302

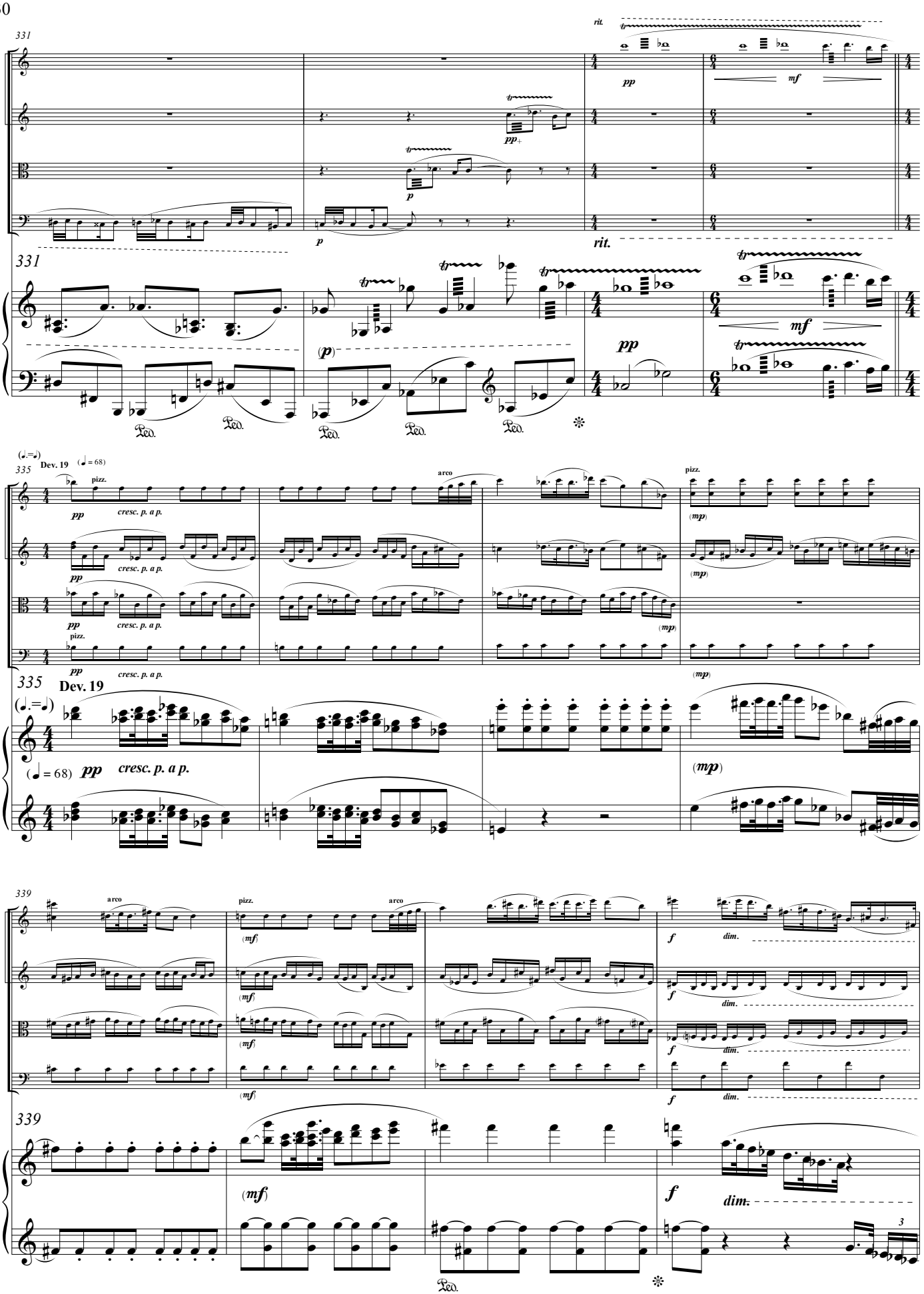
8va

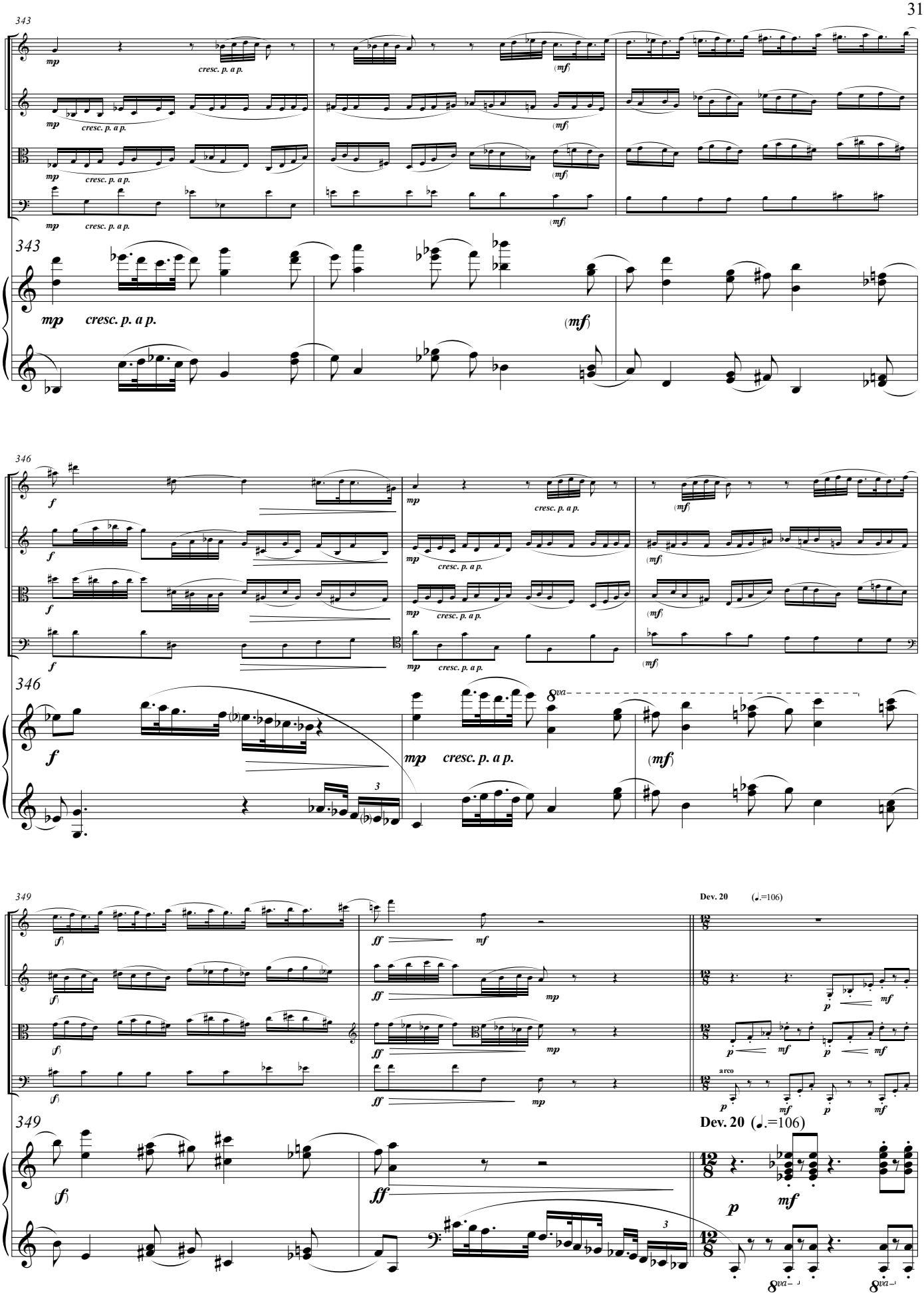
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. ✻ 8va Ped. ✻

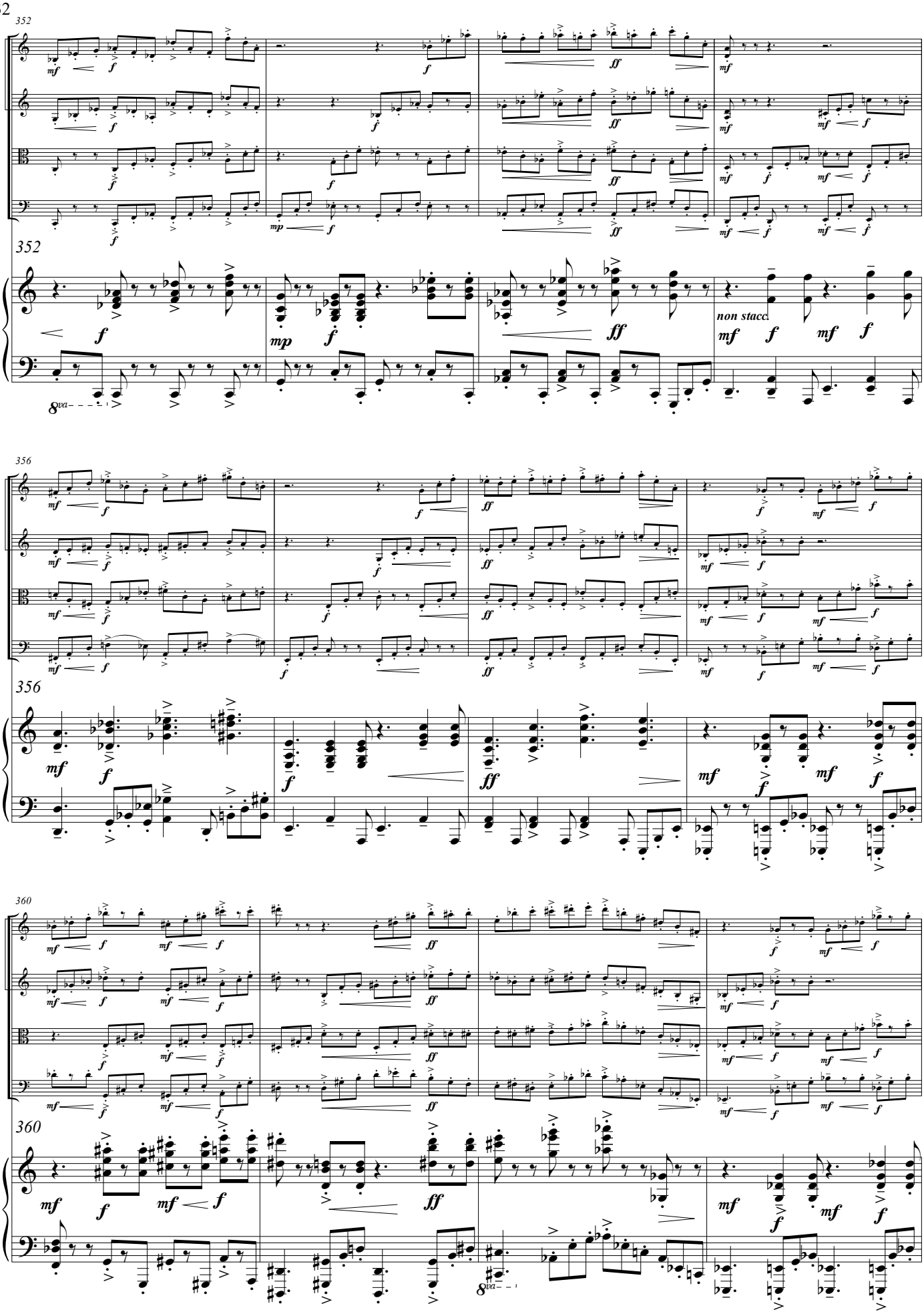

305
305
307
307
8va
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
309
309
8va
8va

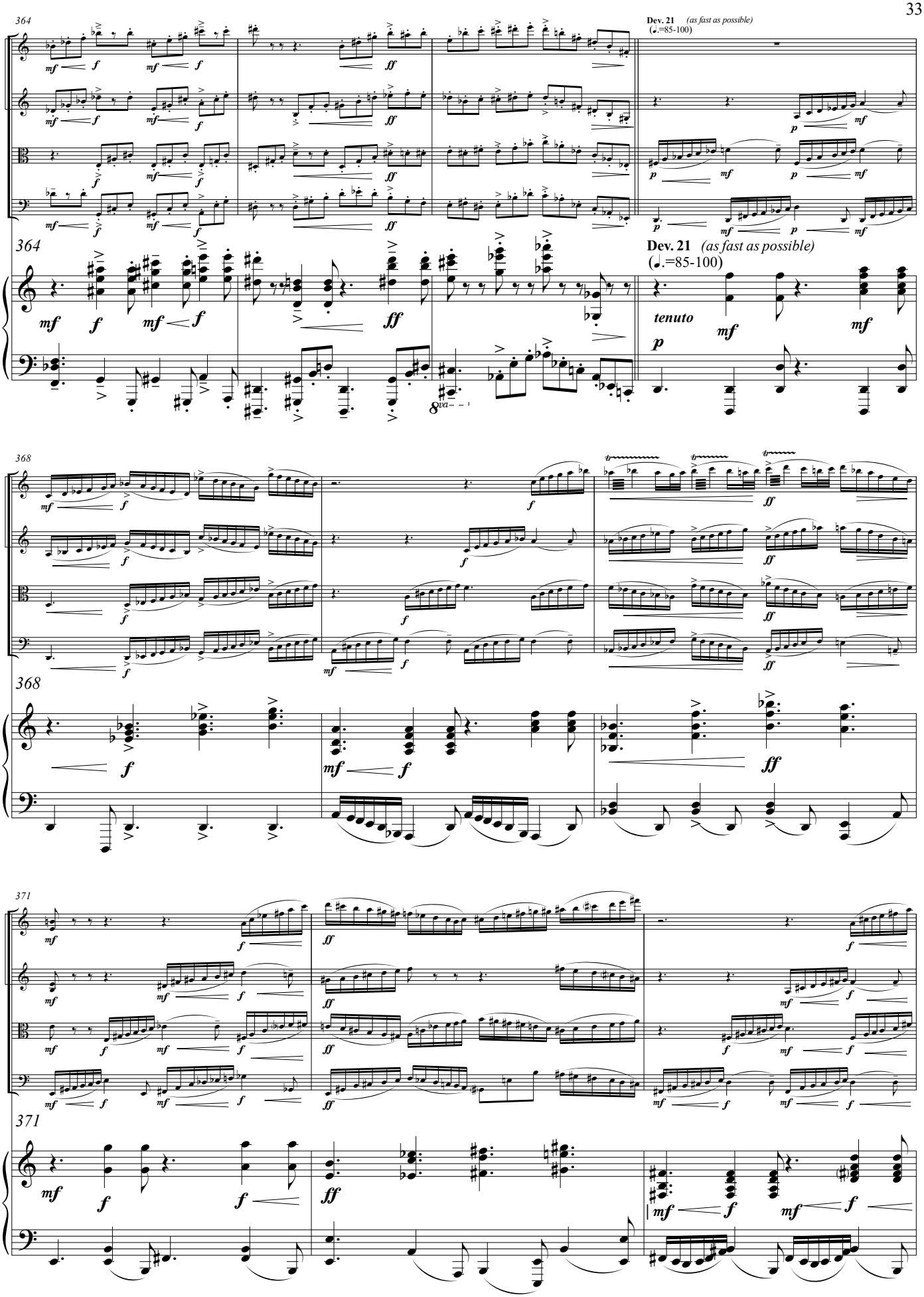

312
rit.
Dev. 18 (♩.=68)
pp
p
Ped.
317
mf
320
mp cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
(f)
8va

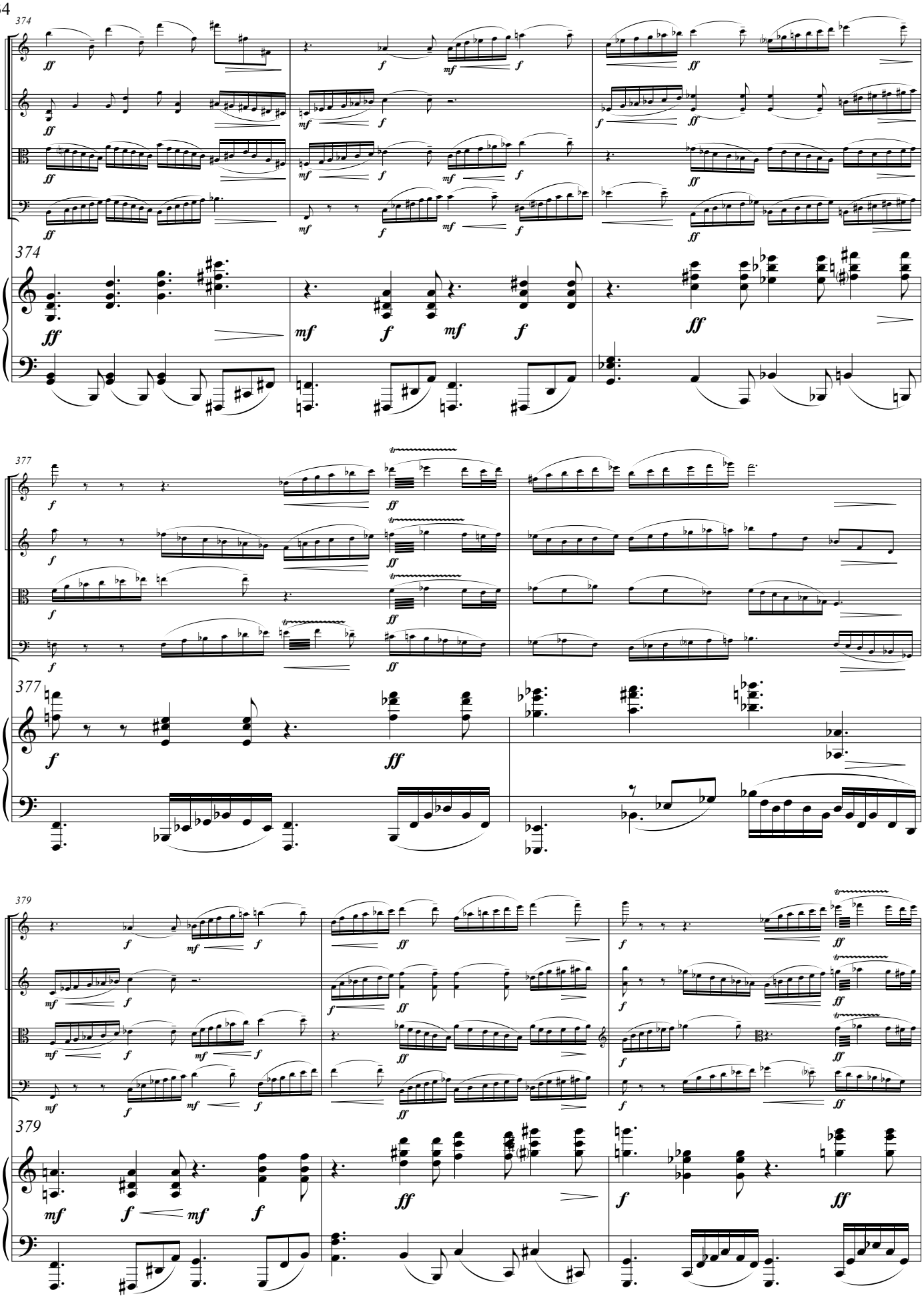

323
ff
323
8va
ff
Ped.
Ped.
325
325
8va
328
ff
mf
ff
mp
ff
mp
dim.
328
ff
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
mp
dim.

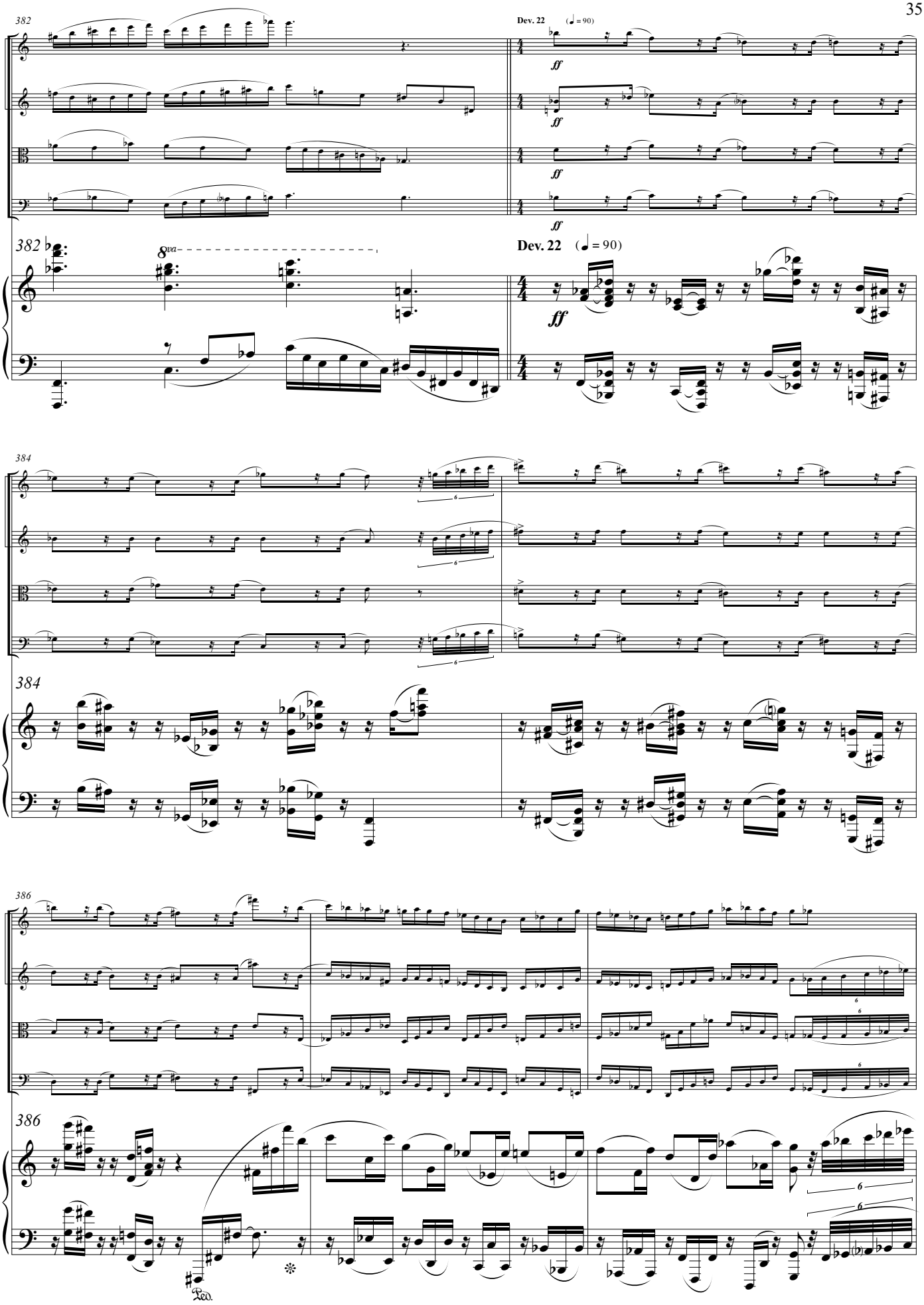

331
rit.
pp
mf
p
rit.
331
(p)
pp
mf
Ped.
335
Dev. 19
(♩.=♩)
(♩ = 68)
pizz.
arco
pp
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
335
Dev. 19
(♩.=♩)
(♩ = 68)
pp
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
339
arco
pizz.
arco
(mf)
f
dim.
339
(mf)
f
dim.
Ped.

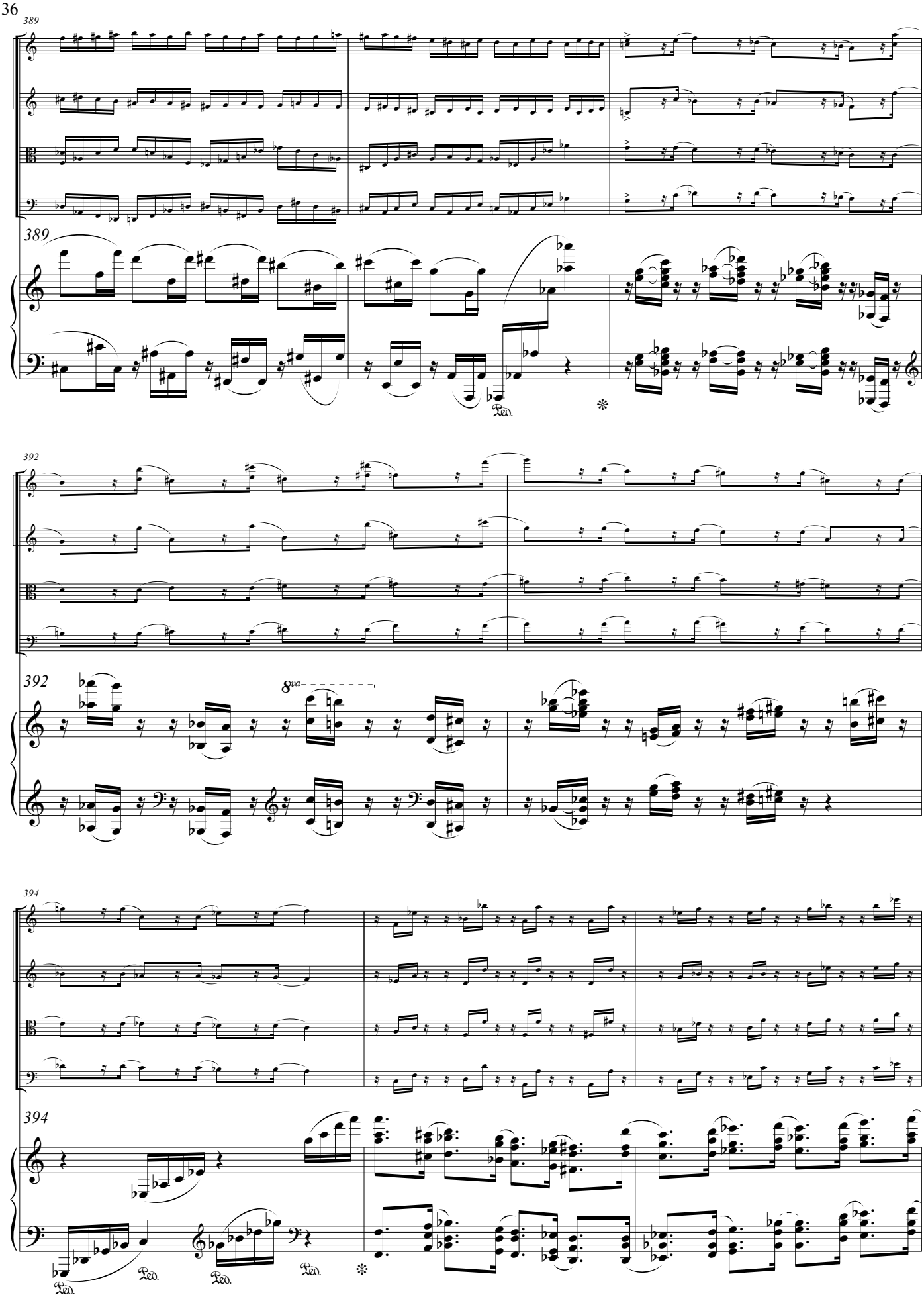

343
mp
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
346
f
mp
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
8va
349
(f)
ff
mf
mp
Dev. 20 (♩.=106)
p
arco

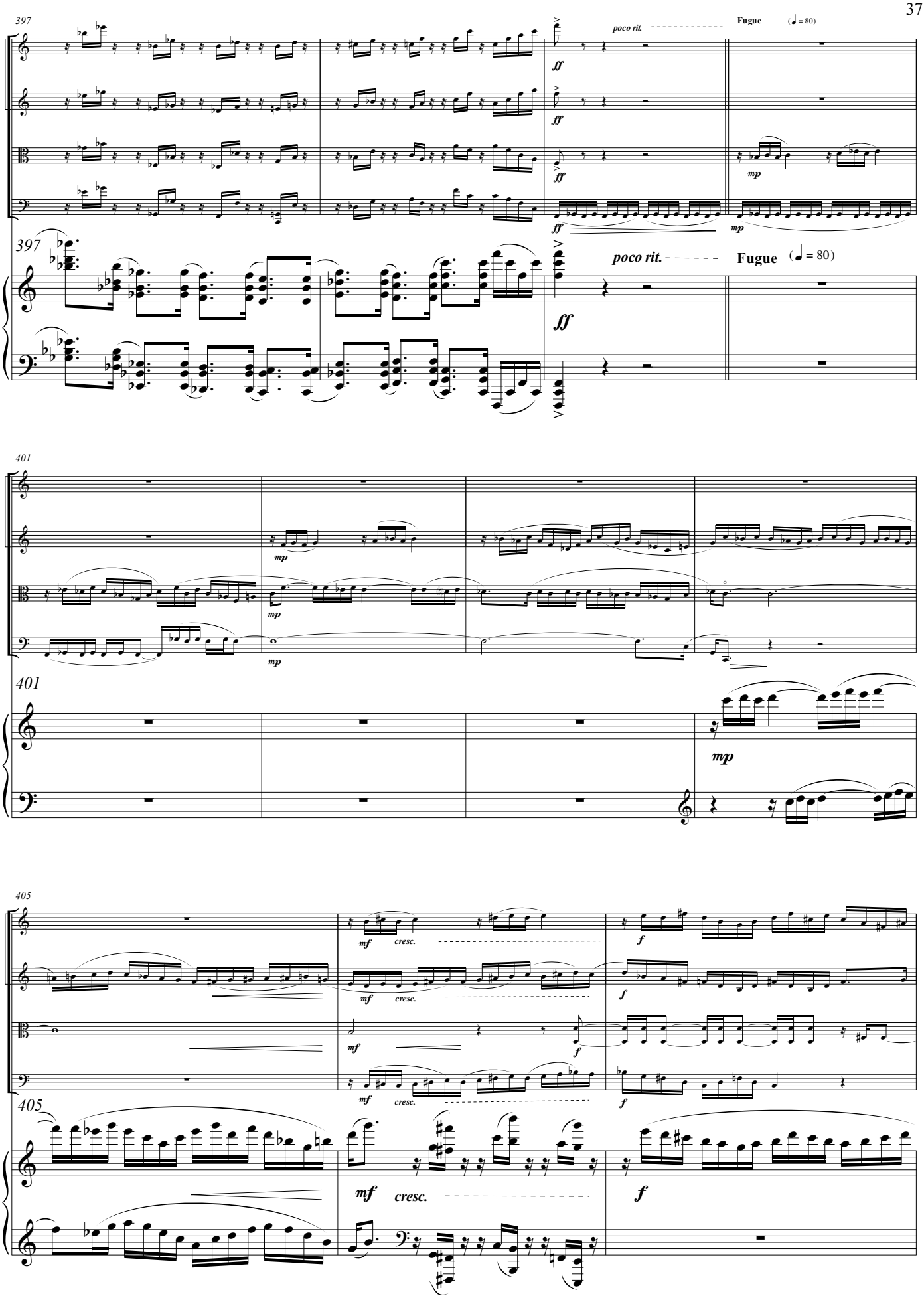

352
352
non stacc.
8va
356
356
360
360
8va

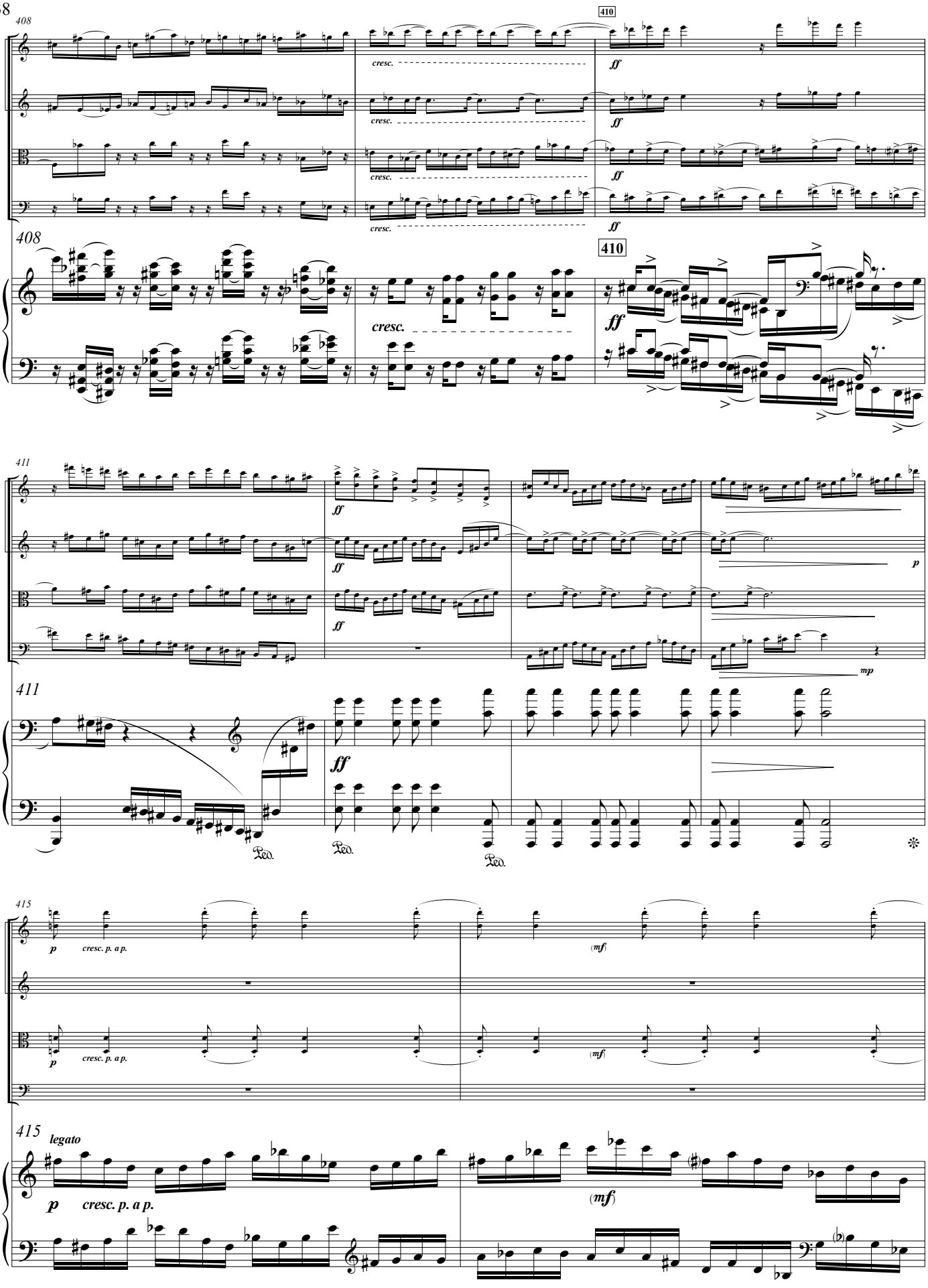

364
Dev. 21 (as fast as possible)
(♩.=85-100)
368
371


374
374
377
377
379
379


382
Dev. 22 (♩ = 90)
ff
8va
384
386
Ped.


389
389
Ped.
392
392
8va
394
394
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


397
poco rit.
Fugue
(♩ = 80)
ff
mp
401
mf
cresc.
f
405


408
410
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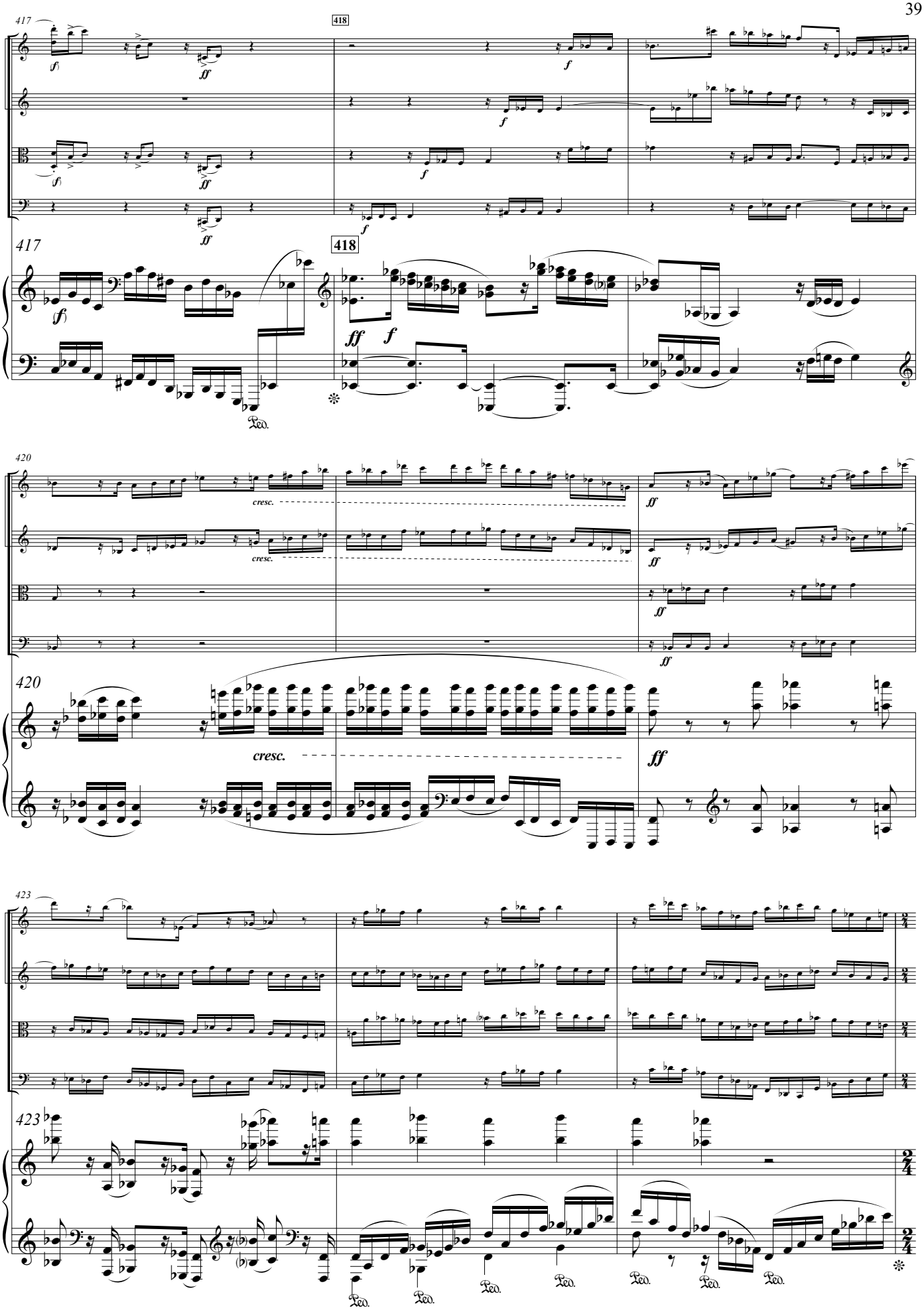
ff
411
p
mp
Ped.
415
legato
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)


417
418
(f)
ff
f
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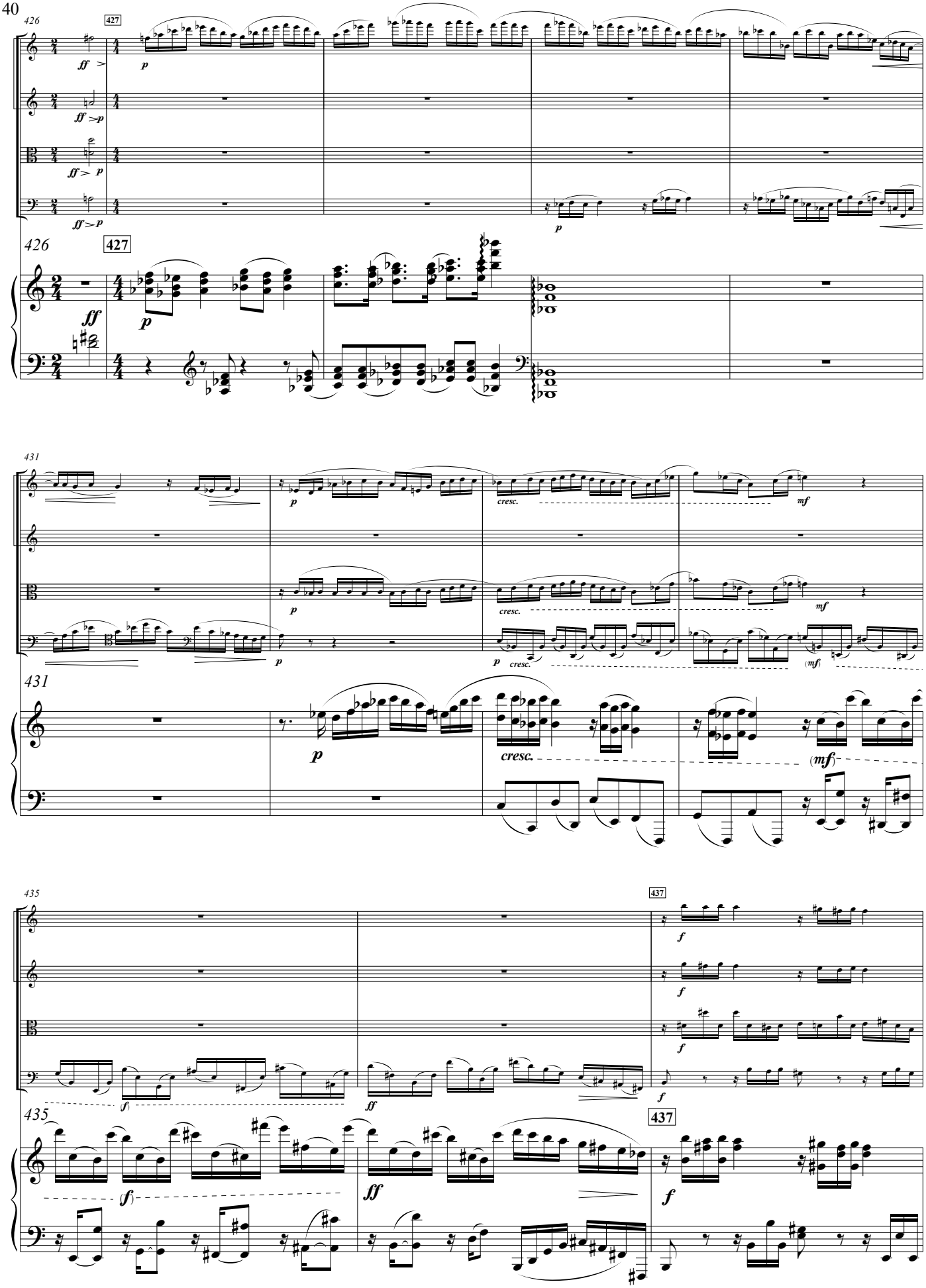
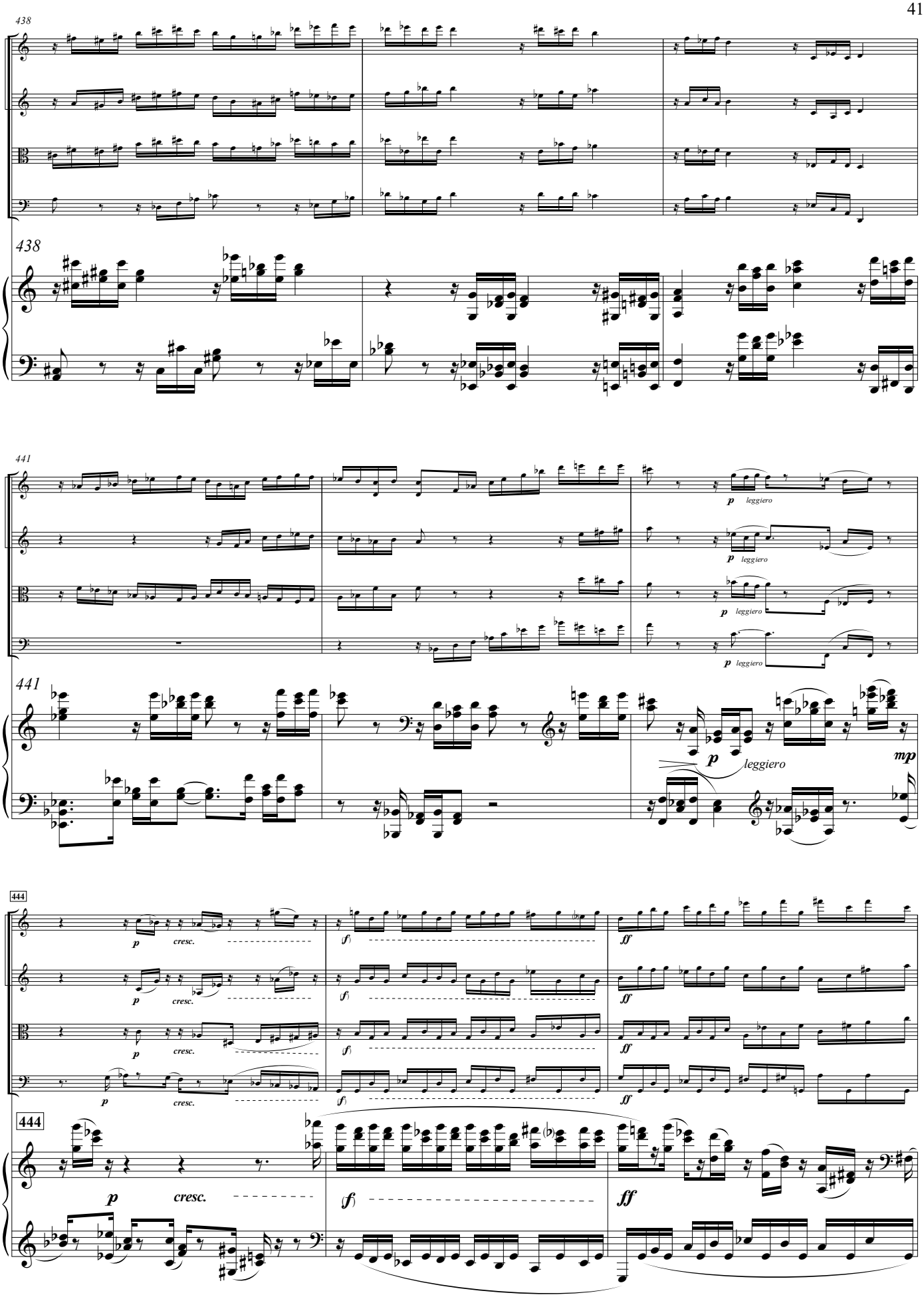
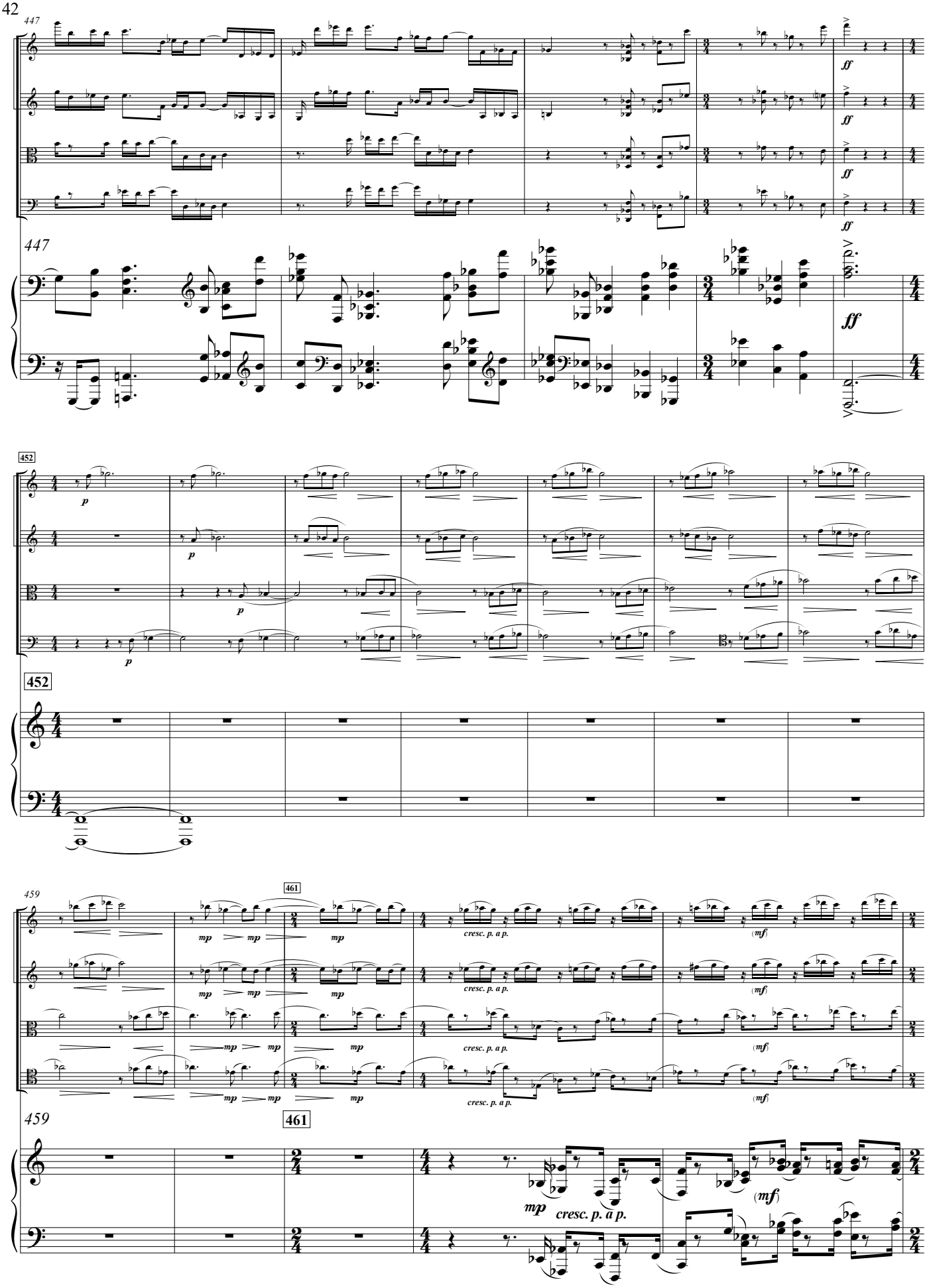
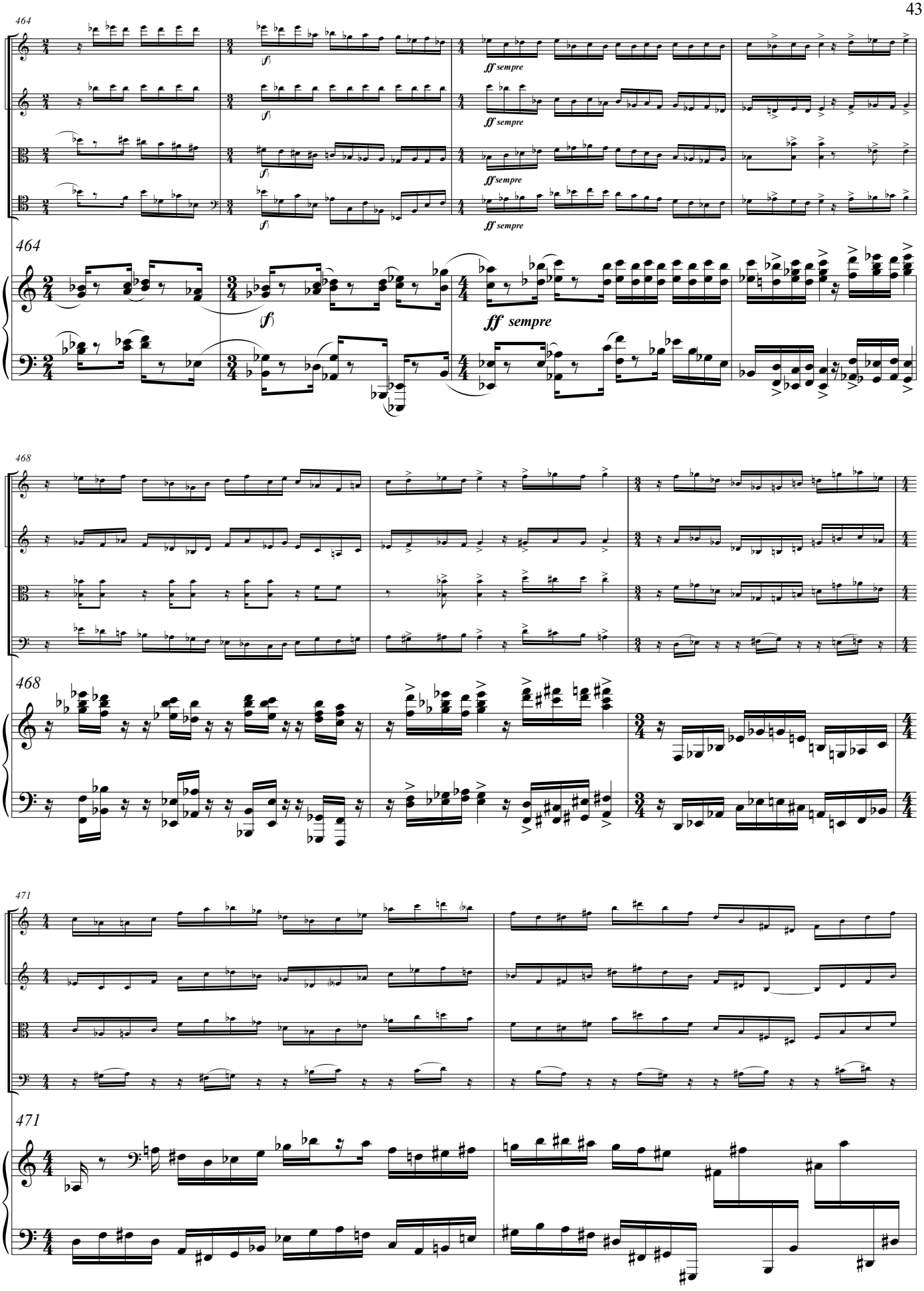
420
423
Ped.


426
427
ff
p
ff > p
ff > p
ff > p
p
426
427
ff
p
431
p
cresc.
mf
p
cresc.
mf
p
cresc.
(mf)
431
p
cresc.
(mf)
435
437
f
f
f
(f)
ff
f
435
437
(f)
ff
f


438
438
441
441
p leggiero
mp
444
444
p cresc.
(f)
ff


447
ff
452
p
452
459
461
mp
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)


464
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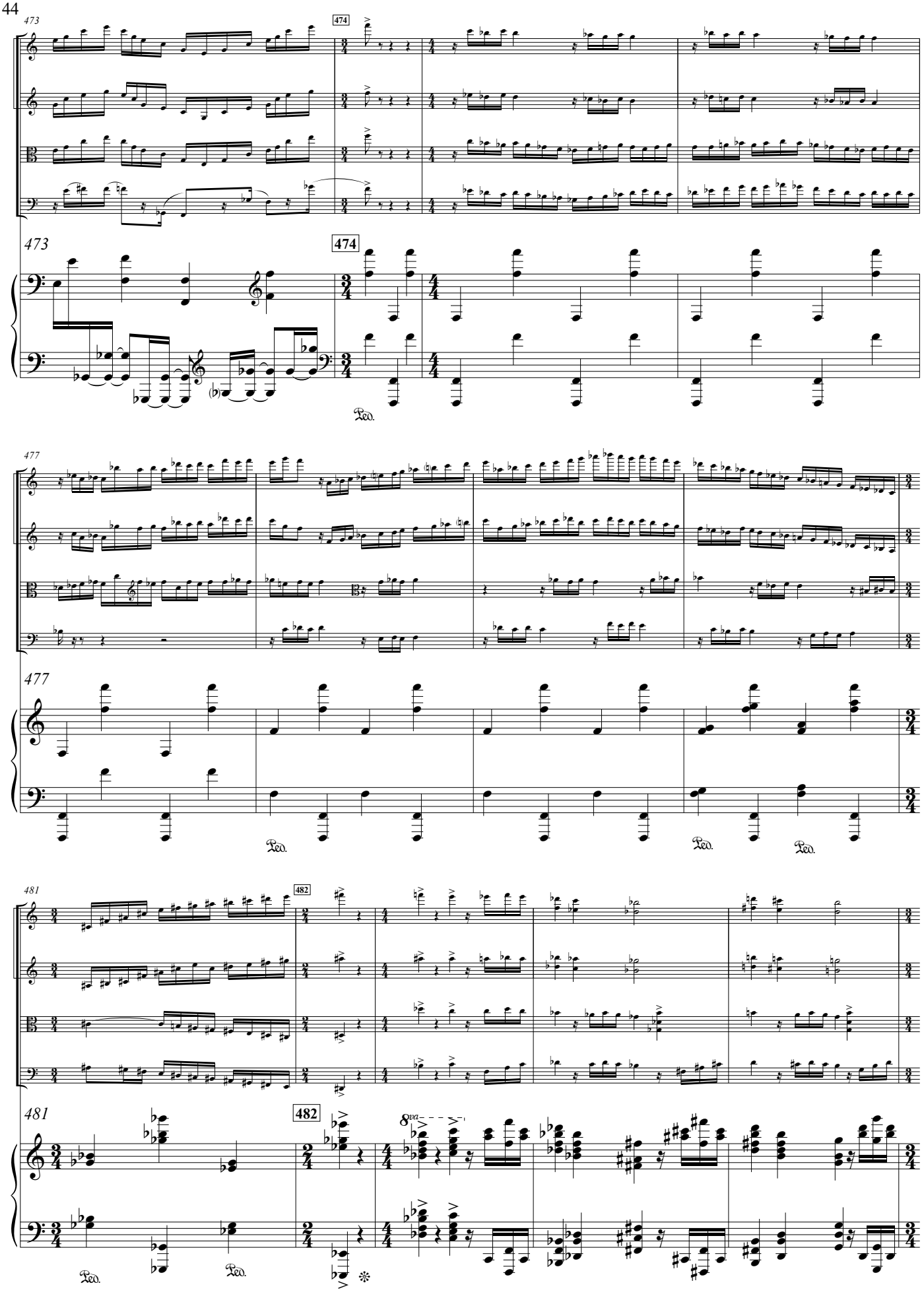
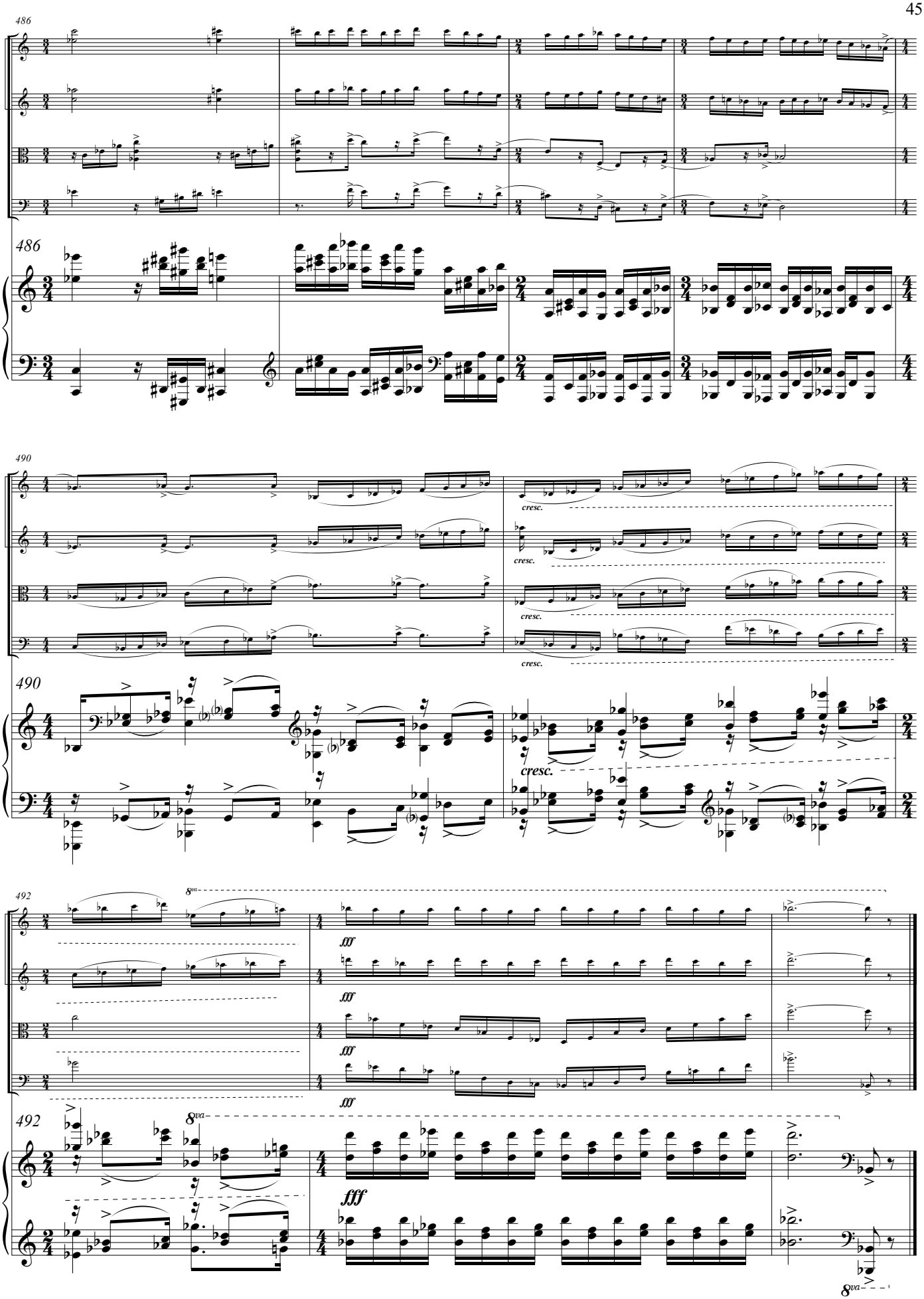
468
471


473
474
Ped.
477
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
481
482
8va
Ped.
Ped.


486
490
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492
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