Ottorino Respighi

(1879 - 1936)

Gli Uccelli (Birds)

(1927-8)

arranged for Wind Quintet (Flute & optional Piccolo; Oboe; A, B♭ & Bass Clarinets; Horn & optional hand horn in F; Bassoon) by Toby Miller (2021)

Ottorino Respighi is best remembered now for his tone poems, *The Fountains of Rome* (1916), *The Pines of Rome* (1924) and *Roman Festivals* (1929), for large orchestra. The first of these brought him success (at its second outing), which in turn engendered the two later works. Perhaps not surprisingly, as a former student of Rimsky-Korsakov, Respighi was thought of (then as now) primarily as a highly skilled orchestrator. He was Koussevitsky's recommendation to Rachmaninov (no slouch himself at the art) as the ideal person to orchestrate his *Études Tableaux*. Unfortunately, one of those who appreciated the tone poems, and had his own view of their symbolism, was Mussolini. Mussolini appropriated the works for his own purposes, but Respighi never encouraged this, and in fact spoke up for Italians more openly political and anti-Fascist such as Toscanini. (Toscanini's championship of Respighi's music in turn opened doors for the composer in the US).

Respighi seems to have turned to smaller forces after working on these large tone-poems; after *Festivals* he wrote: 'With the present constitution of the orchestra, it is impossible to achieve more, and I do not think I shall write any more scores of this kind. Now I am much more interested in small ensembles and the small orchestra.' Respighi, who was a good violinist, viola-player and pianist, also had a strong interest in old music - especially of Italy but also of France - well before this became more fashionable. He produced both transcriptions (such as that of J S Bach's *Passacaglia in C minor*, which also attracted Stokowski) and re-compositions of less well known pieces. Accustomed as we are now to pieces such as Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* (1910), Ravel's *Tombeau de Couperin* (1914-7), Warlock's *Capriol Suite* (1926) and Poulenc's *Suite Française d'après Claude Gervaise*, it is easy to forget that dusty old music was still a minority interest. Composers such as Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms, and editors such as Philipp Spitta, had revived interest in Bach, but digging in archives for old works, and 'recycling' them in new compositions, was eccentric, and Respighi is still insufficiently credited for being among pioneers. Unlike Warlock, Respighi did not indulge in tricks or pseudonyms in his recycling, but acknowledged sources directly, and encouraged others (such as his pupil Ferenc Farkas) to follow his lead.

Respighi's ear for tone colour is in evidence in all his compositions, for both large and smaller forces. I detect a particular fondness for woodwind instruments, and perhaps especially the sounds of the double reeds: audible in other works such as the *Botticelli Triptych* (composed just before *Birds* in 1927) and the first two suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances*, as well as very obviously in this virtuoso pictorial suite, a sort of 20th century *Concerto Grosso* for woodwinds on bird themes by ancient composers. (I disagree with '*The Birds*' as a translation of *Gli Uccelli* – these are representatives of different species not particular birds!)

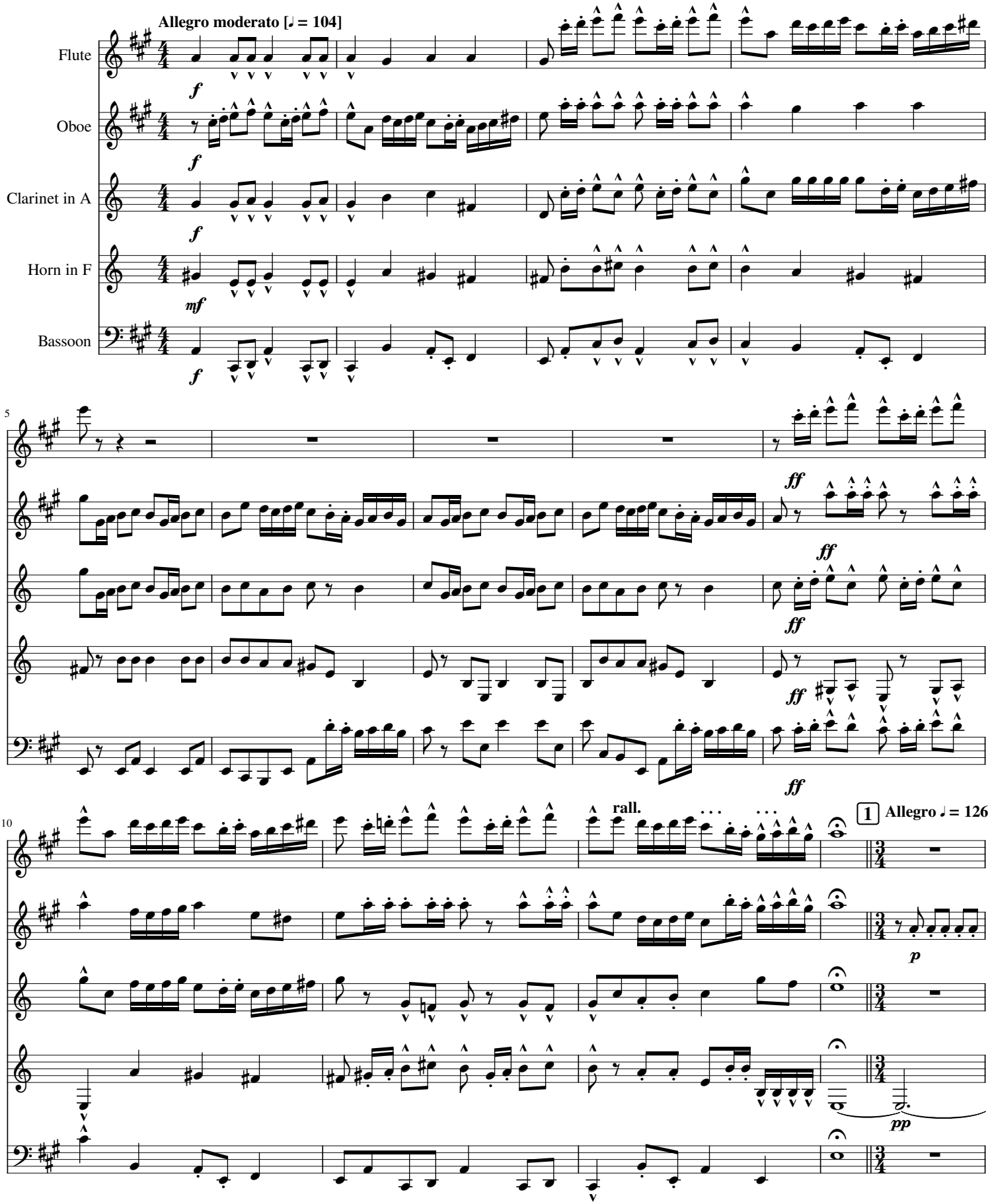
The *Prelude* is an operatic-style overture, opening in grand Baroque style before previewing the following movements. Bernardo Pasquini was a contemporary of Buxtehude: harpsichordist and composer of many operas, he spent most of his life in the service of the Borghese family in Rome. Jacques Gallot was a lutenist and composer in 17th century Paris; the *Dove* is a beautiful but mournful piece, a style that Respighi was fond of in his *Ancient Airs and Dances*. The *Hen* by Jean-Philippe Rameau is a much better known harpsichord piece by a composer of a later generation (published 1729/30) - according to Mahan Esfahani it was a favourite salon piece of pianist Louis Diémer, dedicatee of César Franck's *Variations Symphoniques* - and Respighi extracts its full comic potential. The *Nightingale* was said by Respighi to be by an 'anonymous English composer', but it's now thought to be a transcription of a folksong by the Dutch recorder virtuoso Jacob van Eyck (d. 1657), and therefore the earliest of Respighi's sources. The *Cuckoo* is based on another piece by Pasquini, and his overture returns to close the suite. *Birds* is a showpiece in its original form, and becomes an additional test of stamina in this quintet reduction, which keeps the original scoring whenever possible (some sections marked 'background' could be omitted where needed). But I hope that ambitious players will enjoy playing individual movements among friends. Piccolo and hand horn are both optional (in *Nightingale* and *Hen* respectively), but the clarinettist will need all three instruments in order to cover the range, as well as the keys, required in all movements.

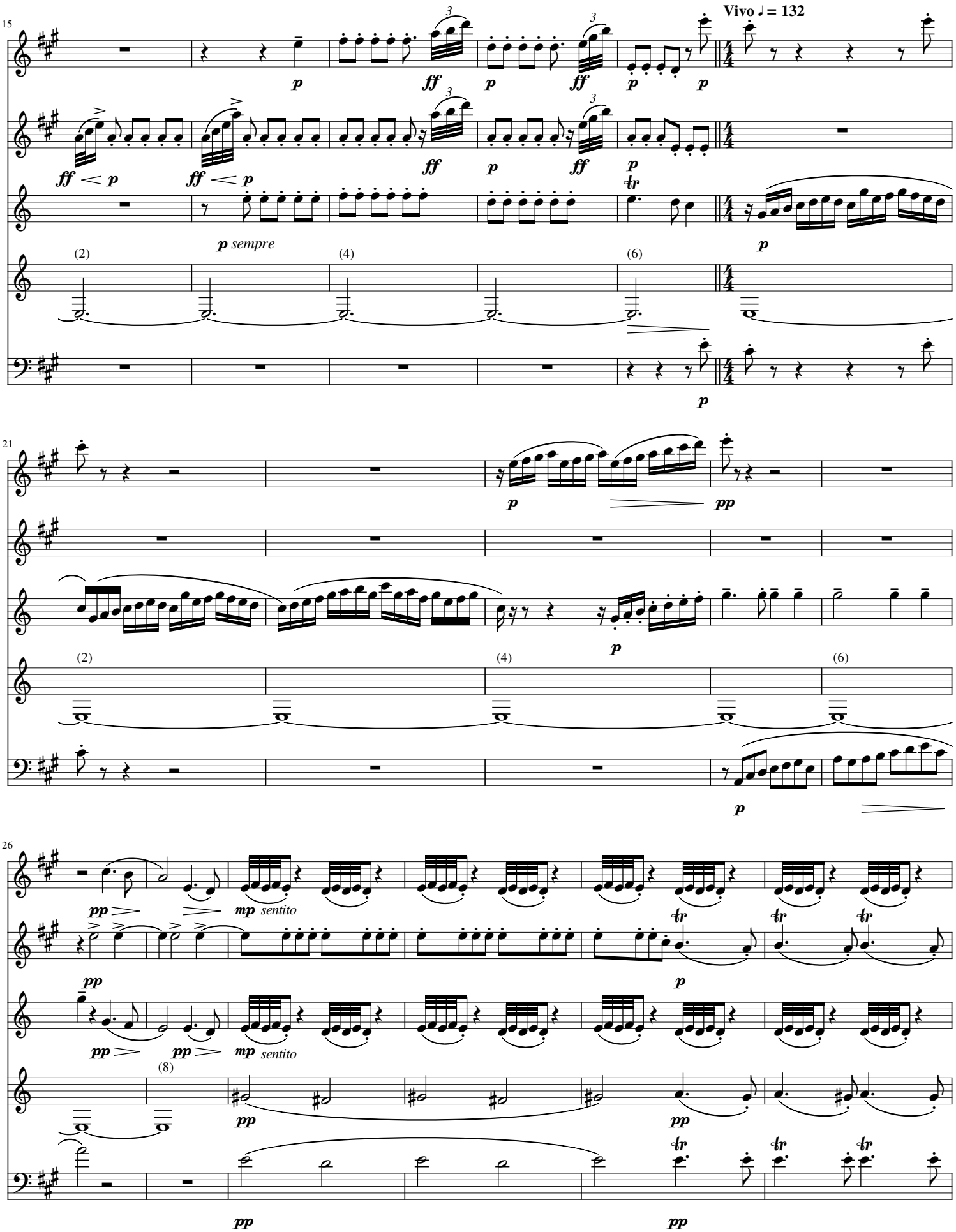
Score (instrumental pitch)

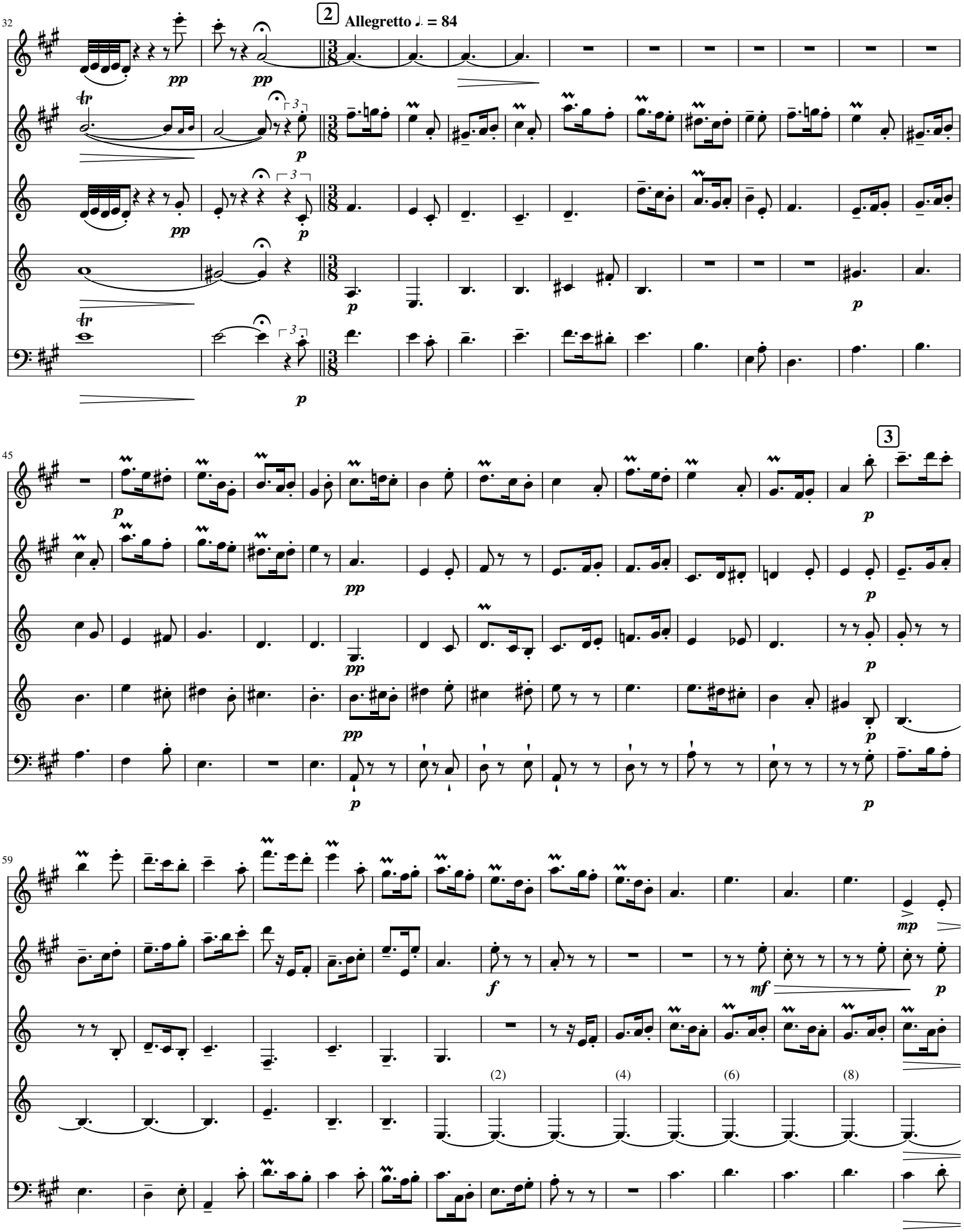
(The) Birds arr. for wind quintet by Toby Miller

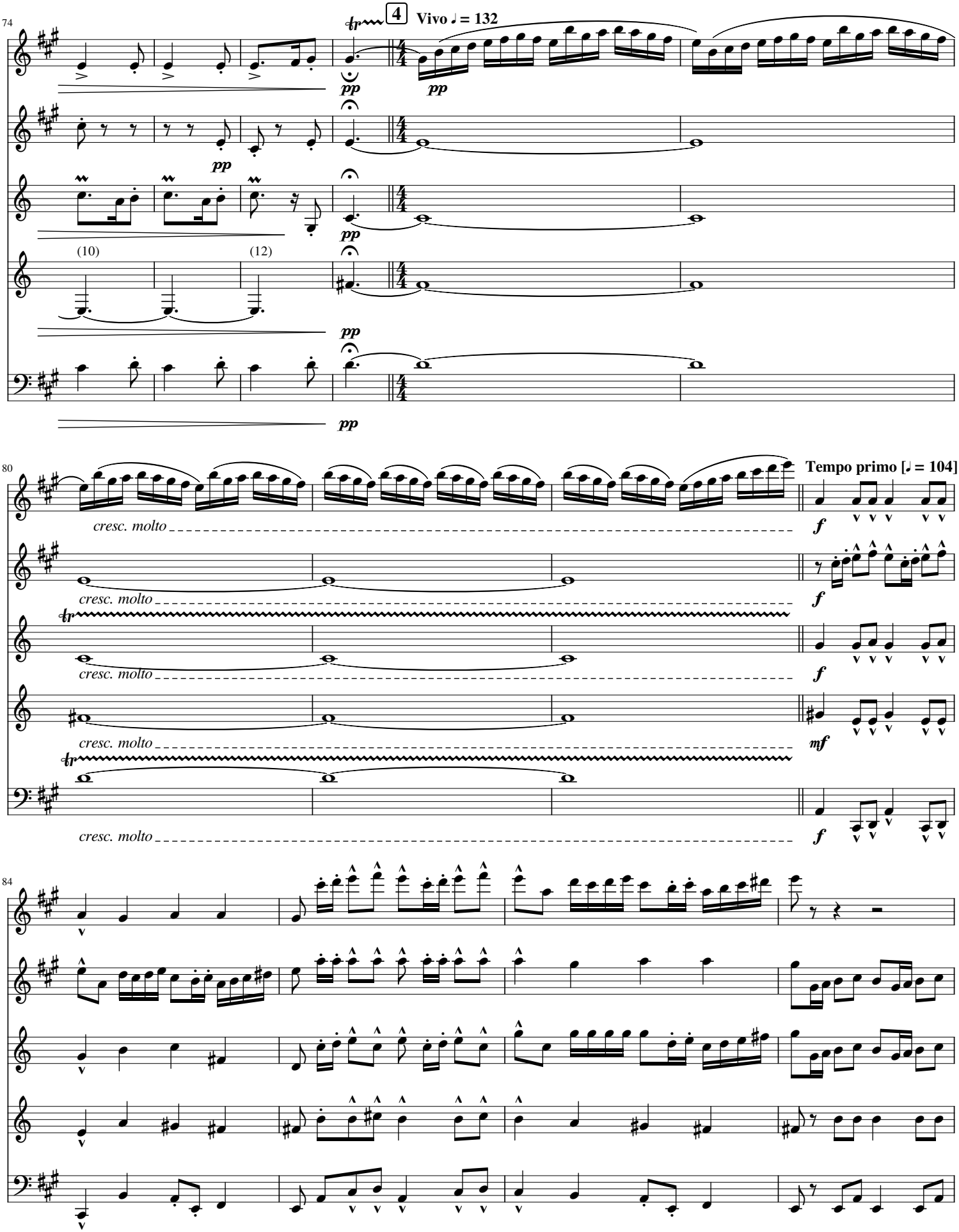
I - Preludio *after Bernardo Pasquini*

Respighi




Vivo ♩ = 132
p sempre
mp sentito
mp sentito


32
2
Allegretto ♩. = 84
45
3
59
(2)
(4)
(6)
(8)


74
4
Vivo ♩ = 132
pp
(10)
(12)
80
Tempo primo [♩ = 104]
cresc. molto
f
mf
84

88

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

92

rall. [molto]

Score (instrumental pitch)

(The) Birds arr. for wind quintet by Toby Miller

II - La Colomba (Dove) *after Jacques de Gallot*

Respighi

Andante espressivo [♩. = 69]

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in A

Horn in F

Bassoon

pp (? flutter-tongue or substitute trill figure)

pp

p *dolce*

pp

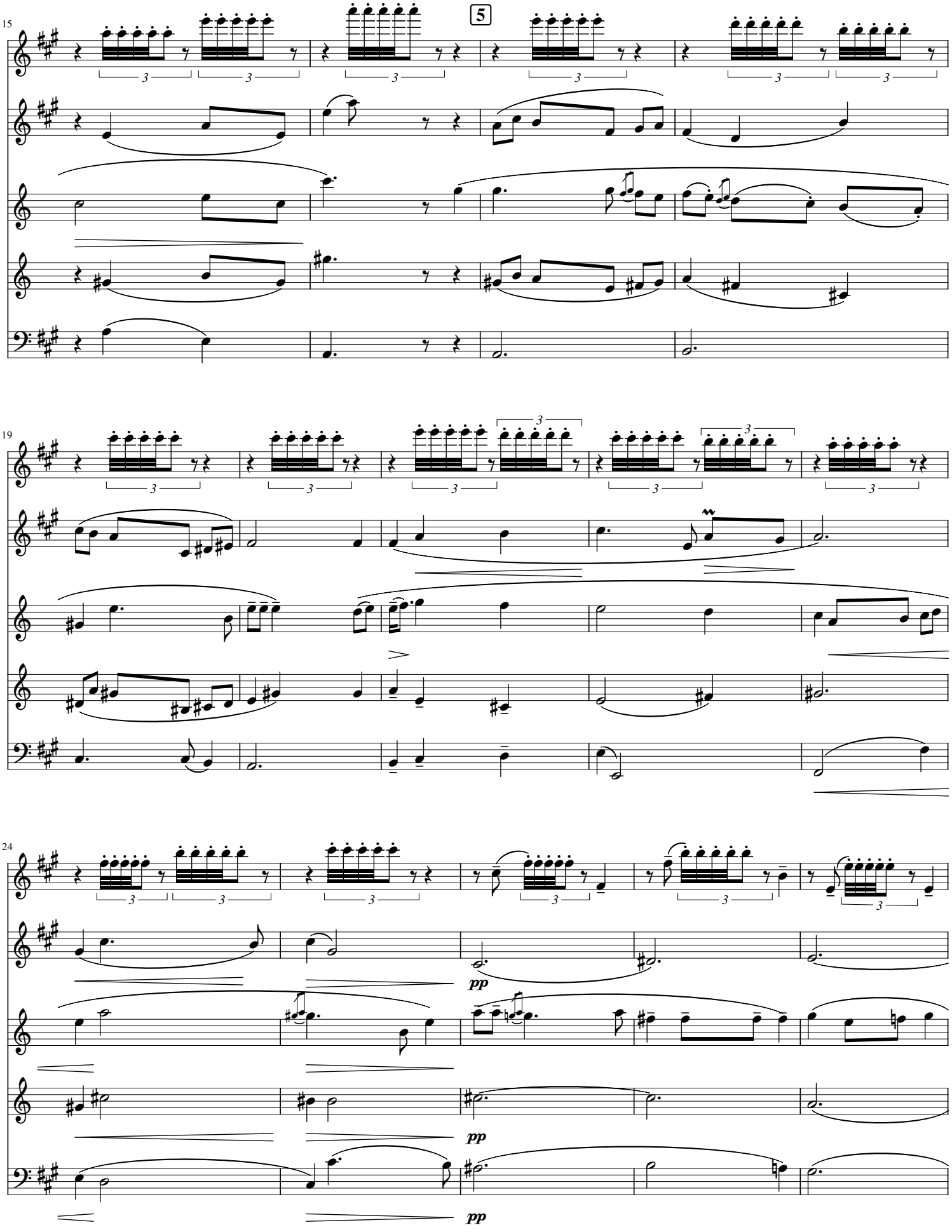
pp

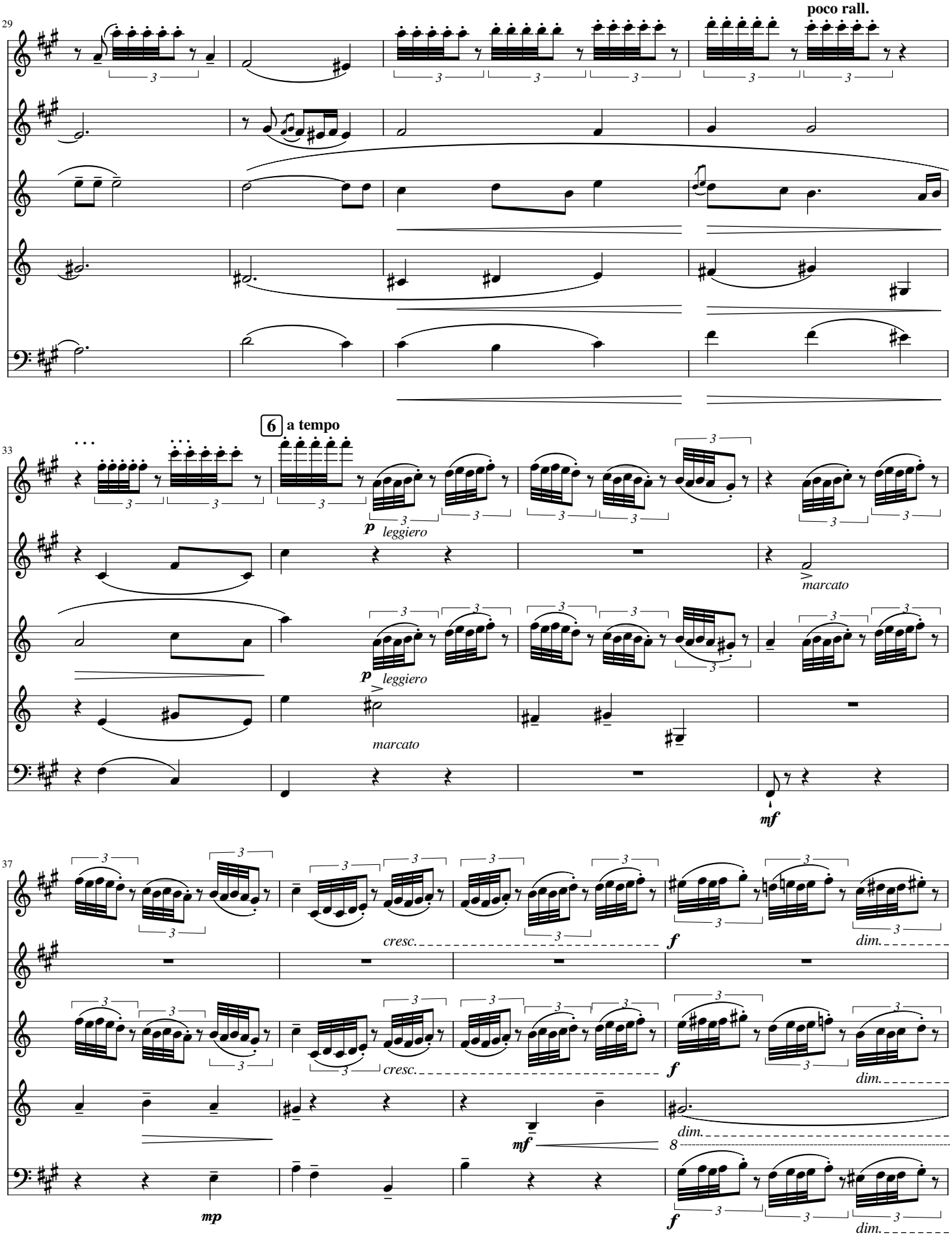
5

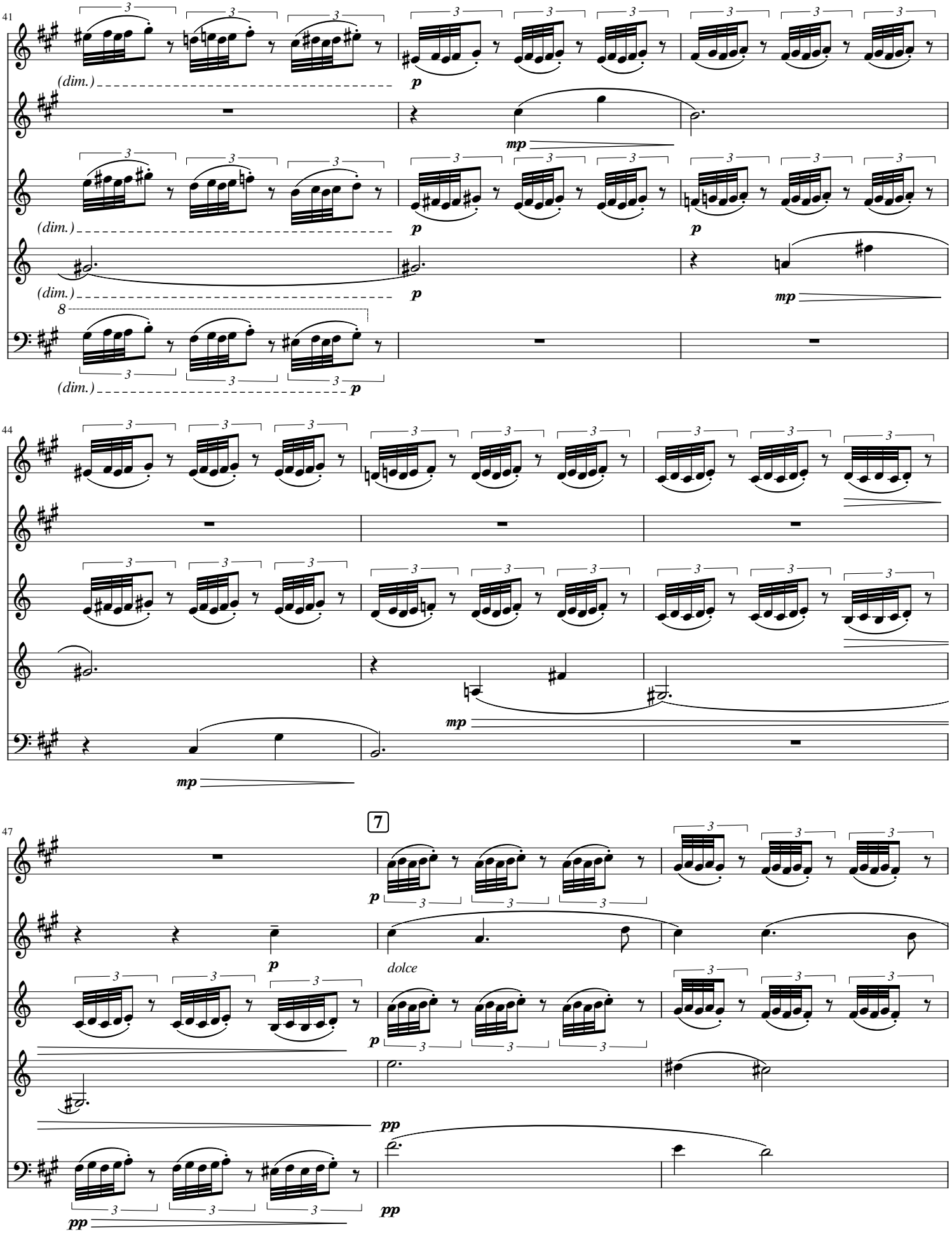
10

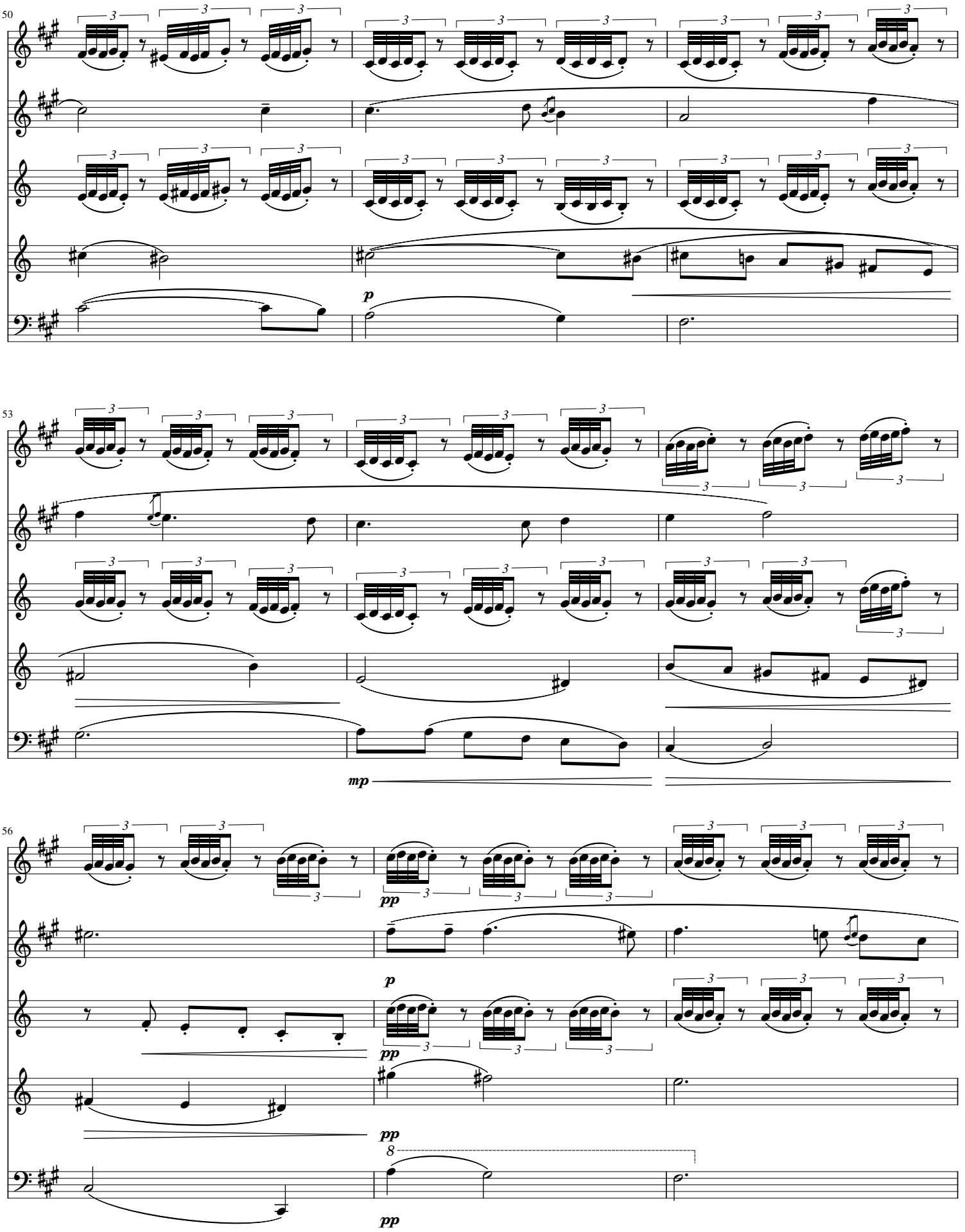
mp

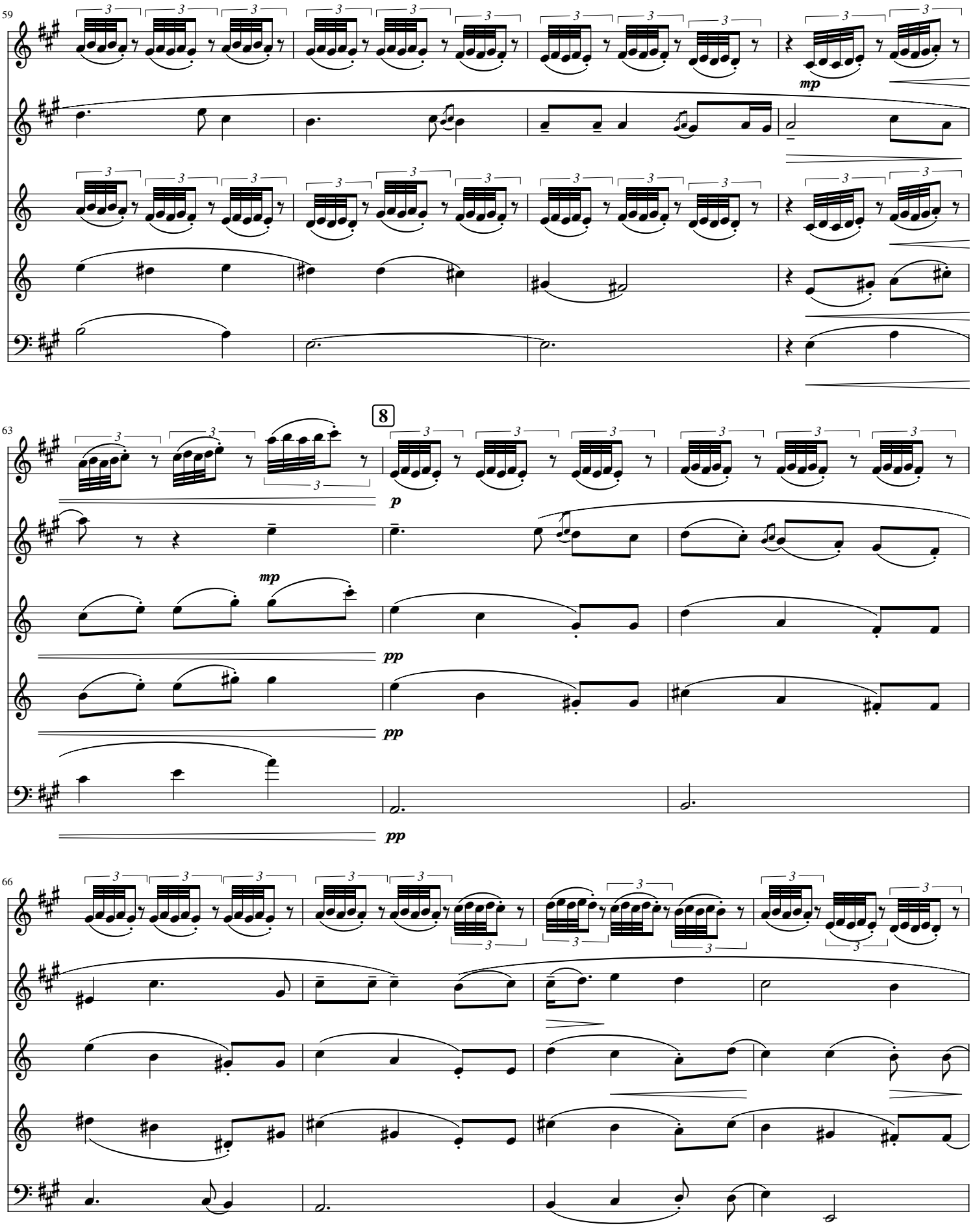
pp

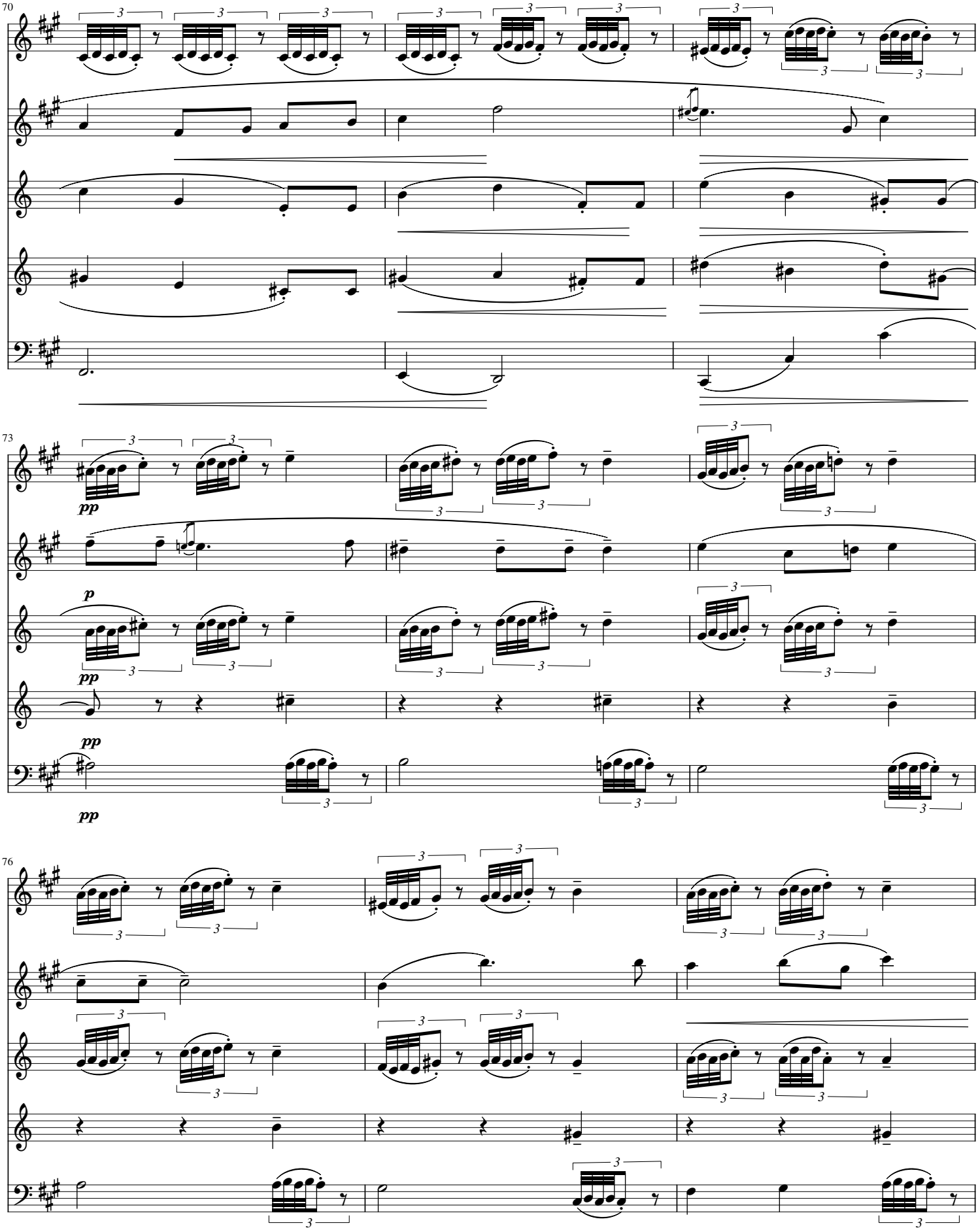

15
5
19
24
pp
pp
pp

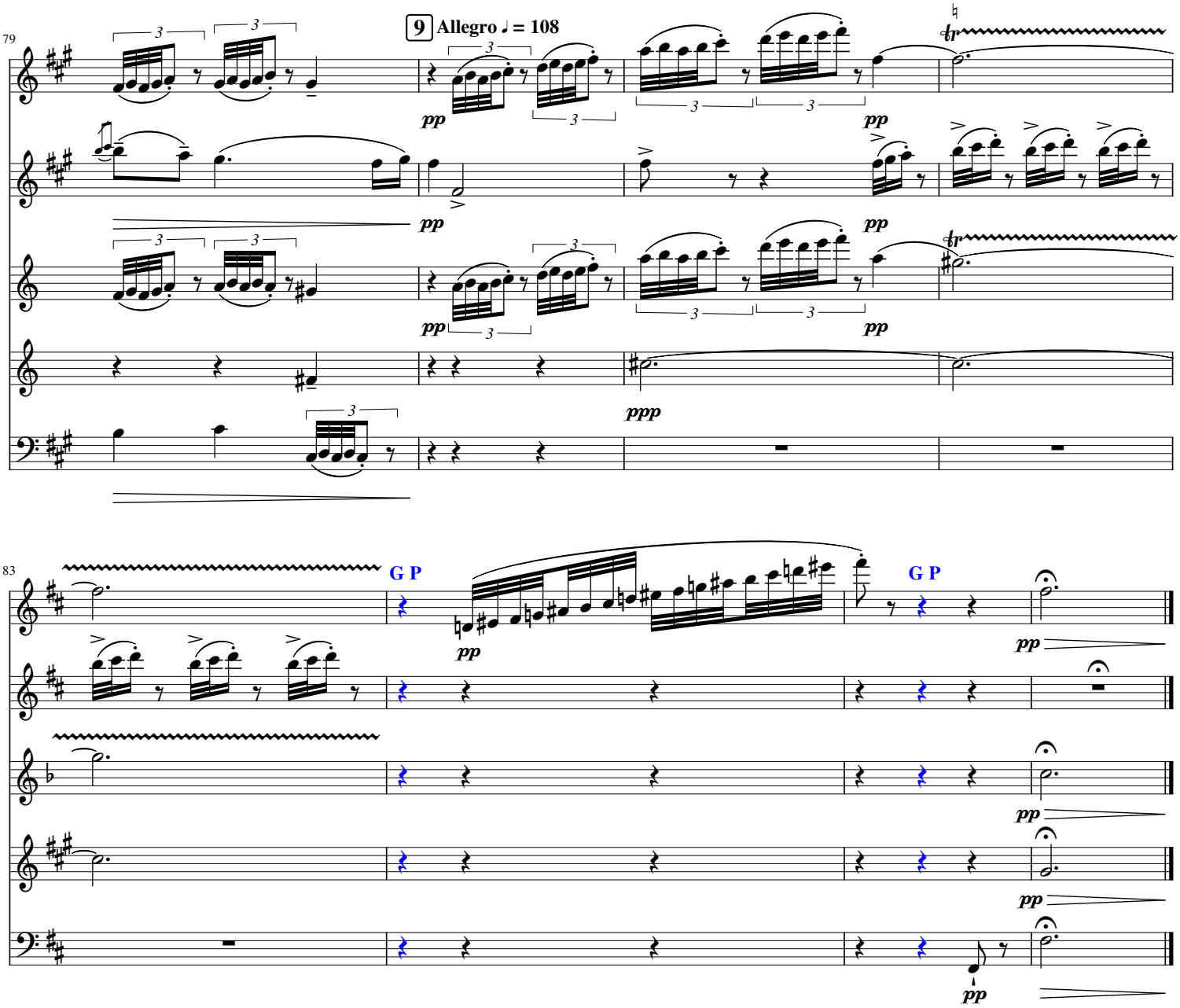

29
poco rall.
6
a tempo
33
p
leggiero
marcato
mf
37
cresc.
f
dim.
mp


41
(dim.)
p
mp
(dim.)
p
p
(dim.)
mp
8
(dim.)
p
44
mp
mp
47
7
p
p
dolce
pp
pp
pp


50
p
53
mp
56
pp
p
pp
pp
8
pp


59
mp
63
8
p
mp
pp
pp
pp
66


70
73
pp
p
pp
pp
pp
76

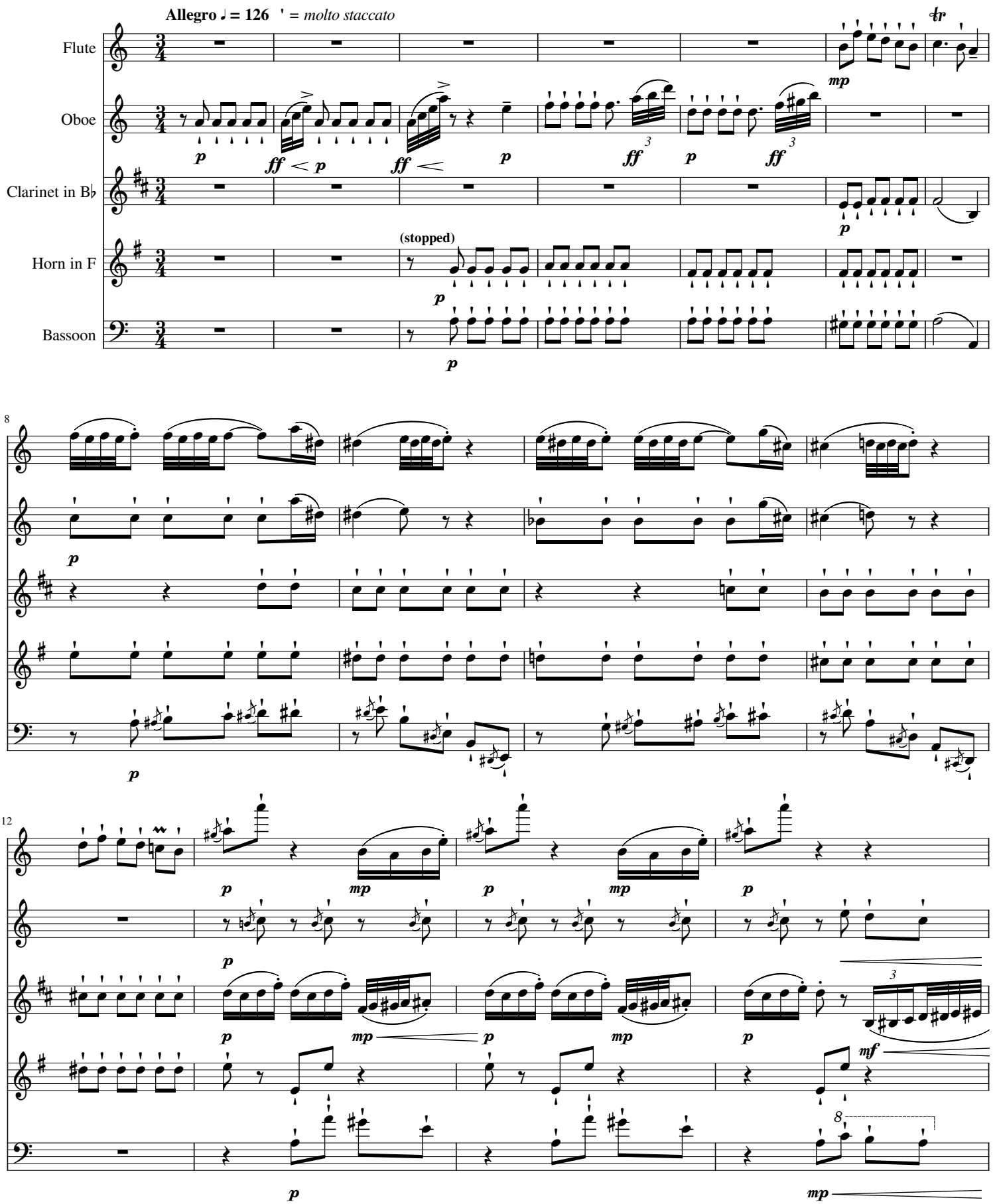

79
9 Allegro ♩ = 108
pp
ppp
83
G P
G P
pp

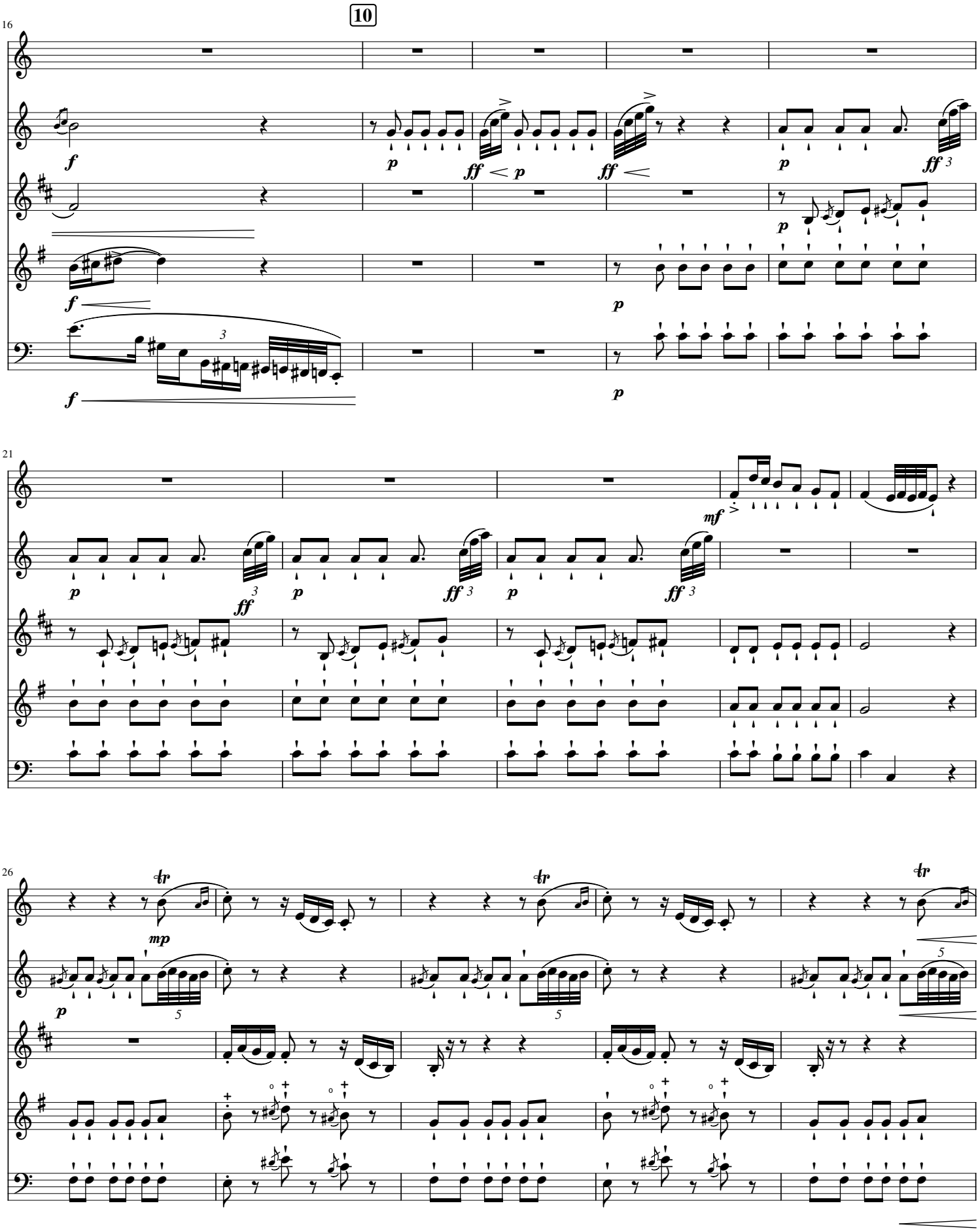
Score (instrumental pitch)

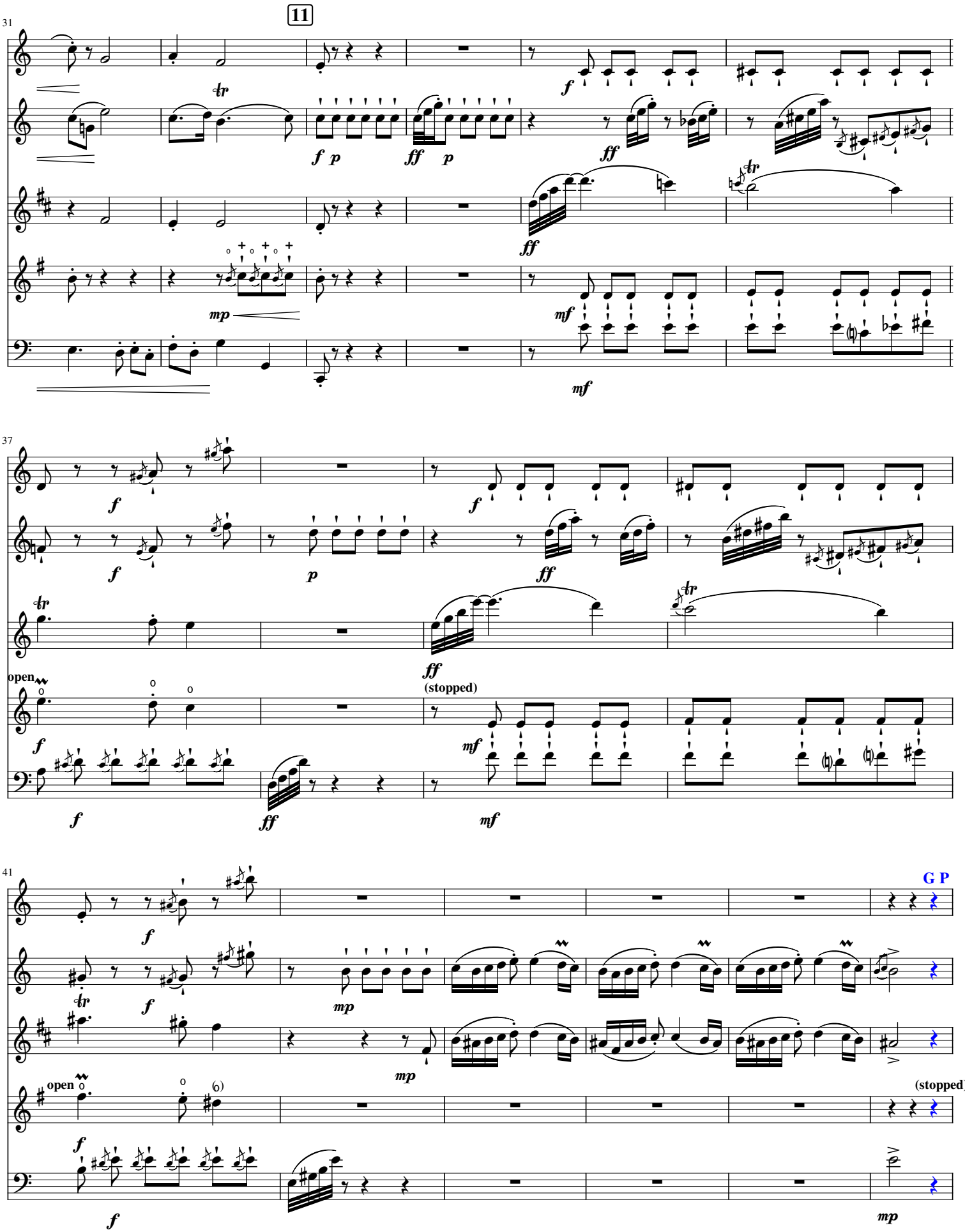
(The) Birds arr. for wind quintet by Toby Miller

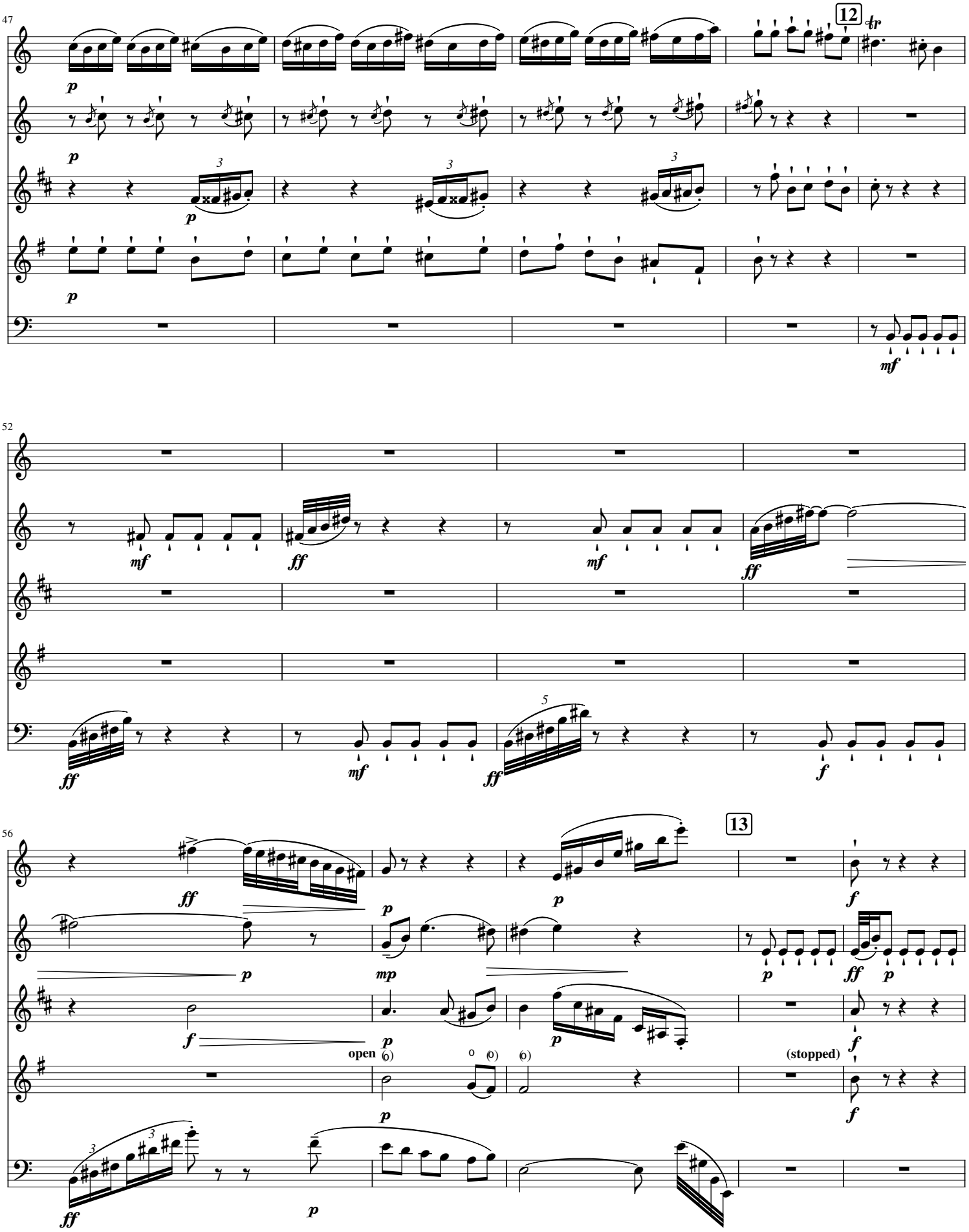
III - La Gallina (Hen) *after Jean-Philippe Rameau*

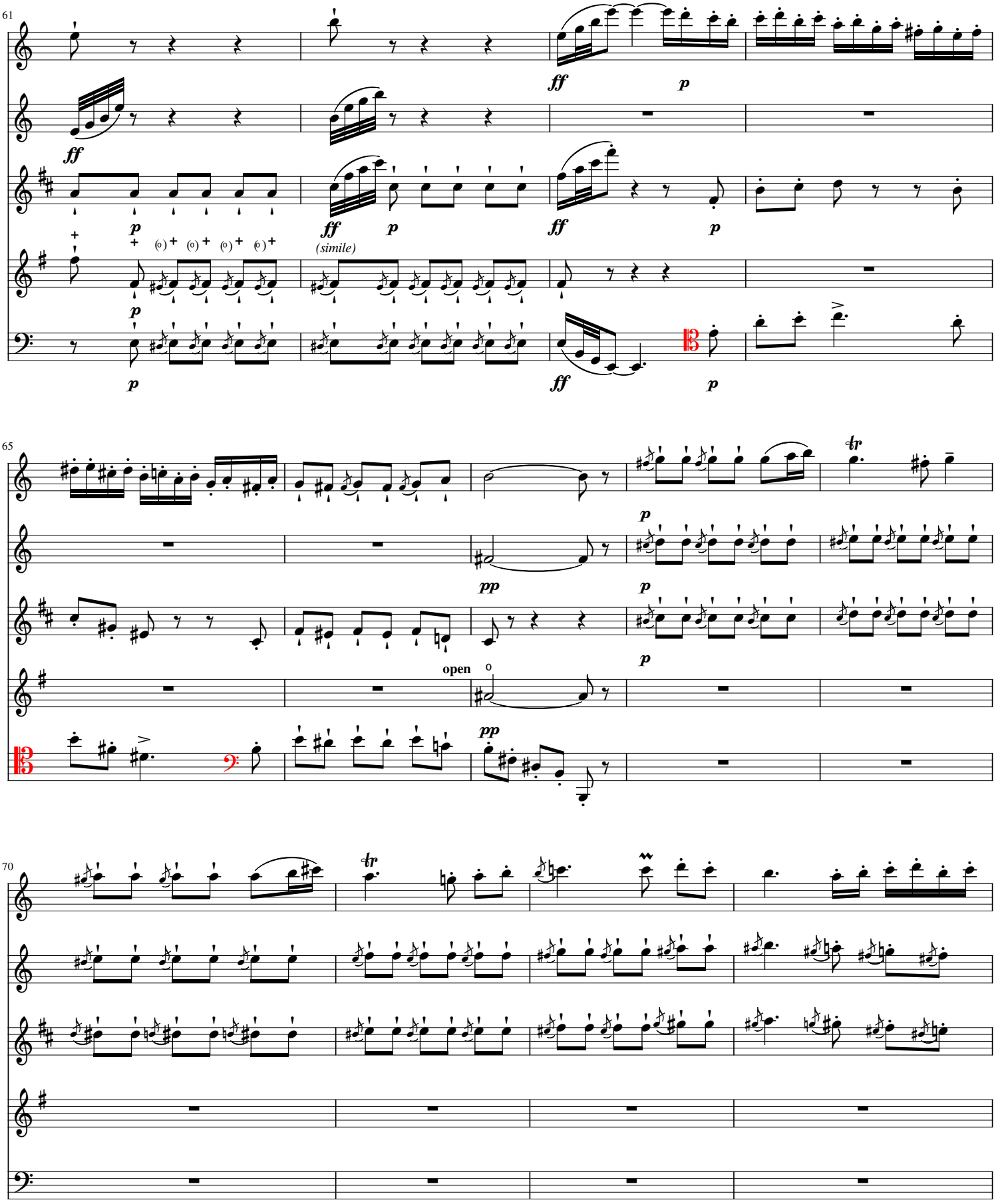
Respighi

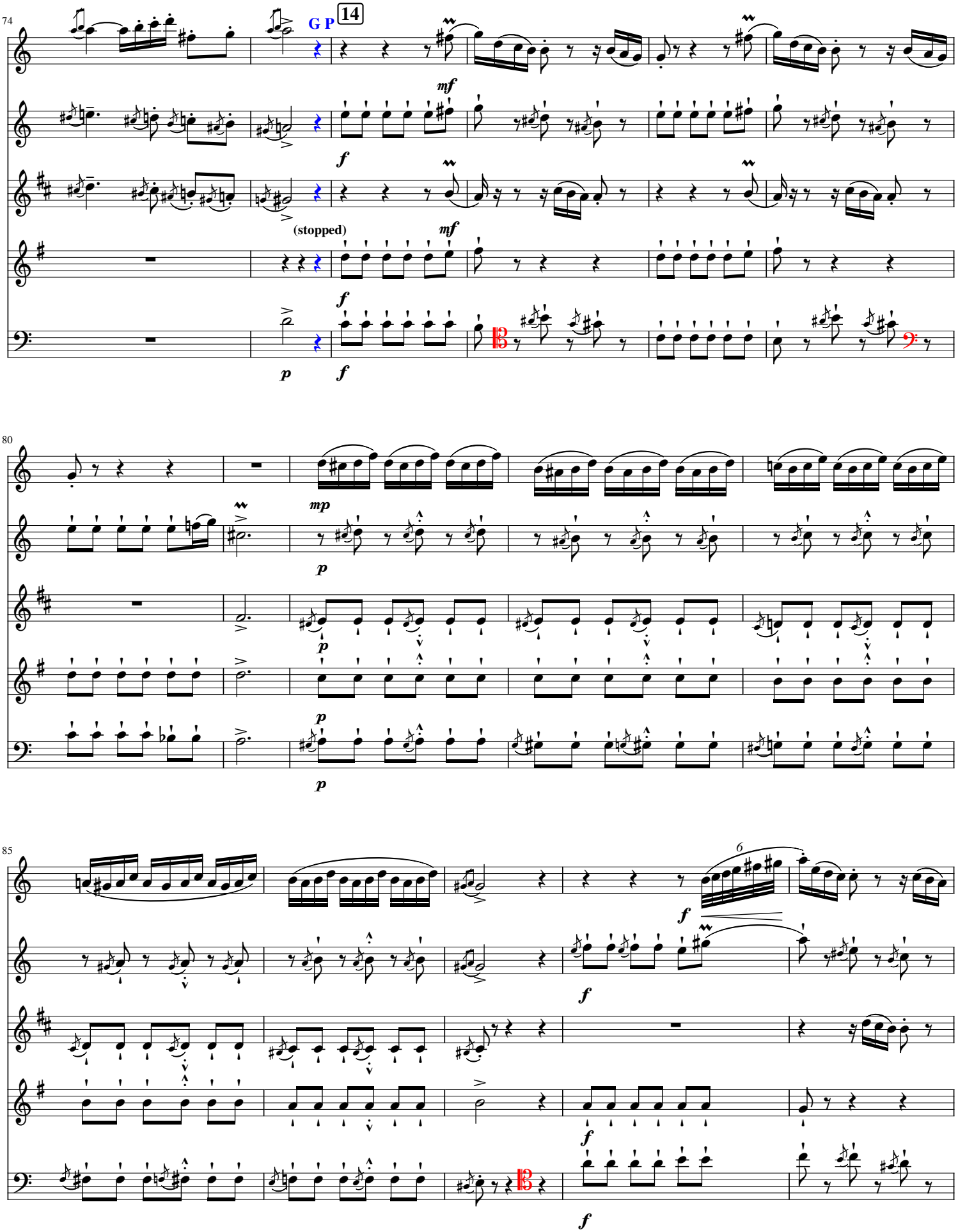


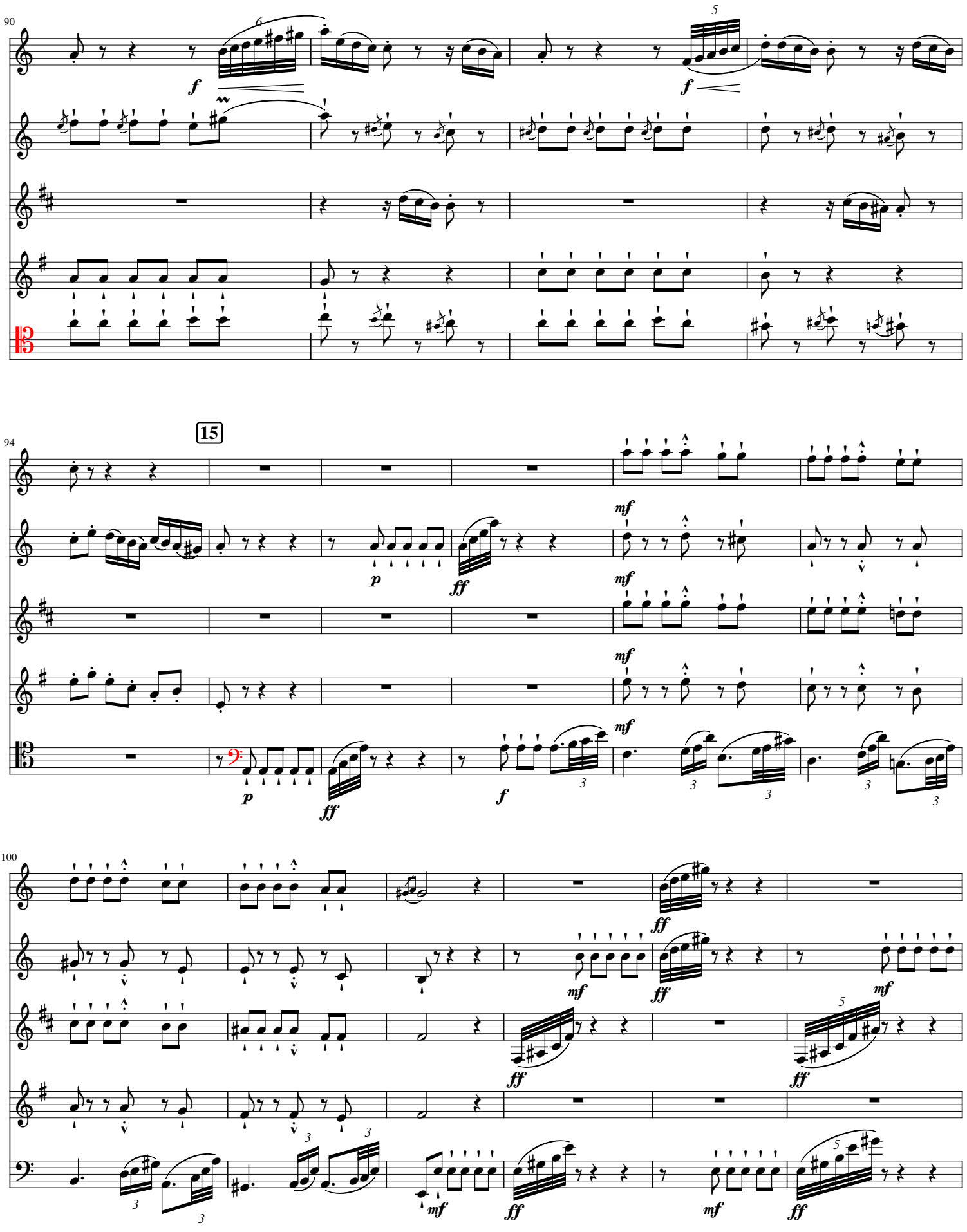

10
16
21
26

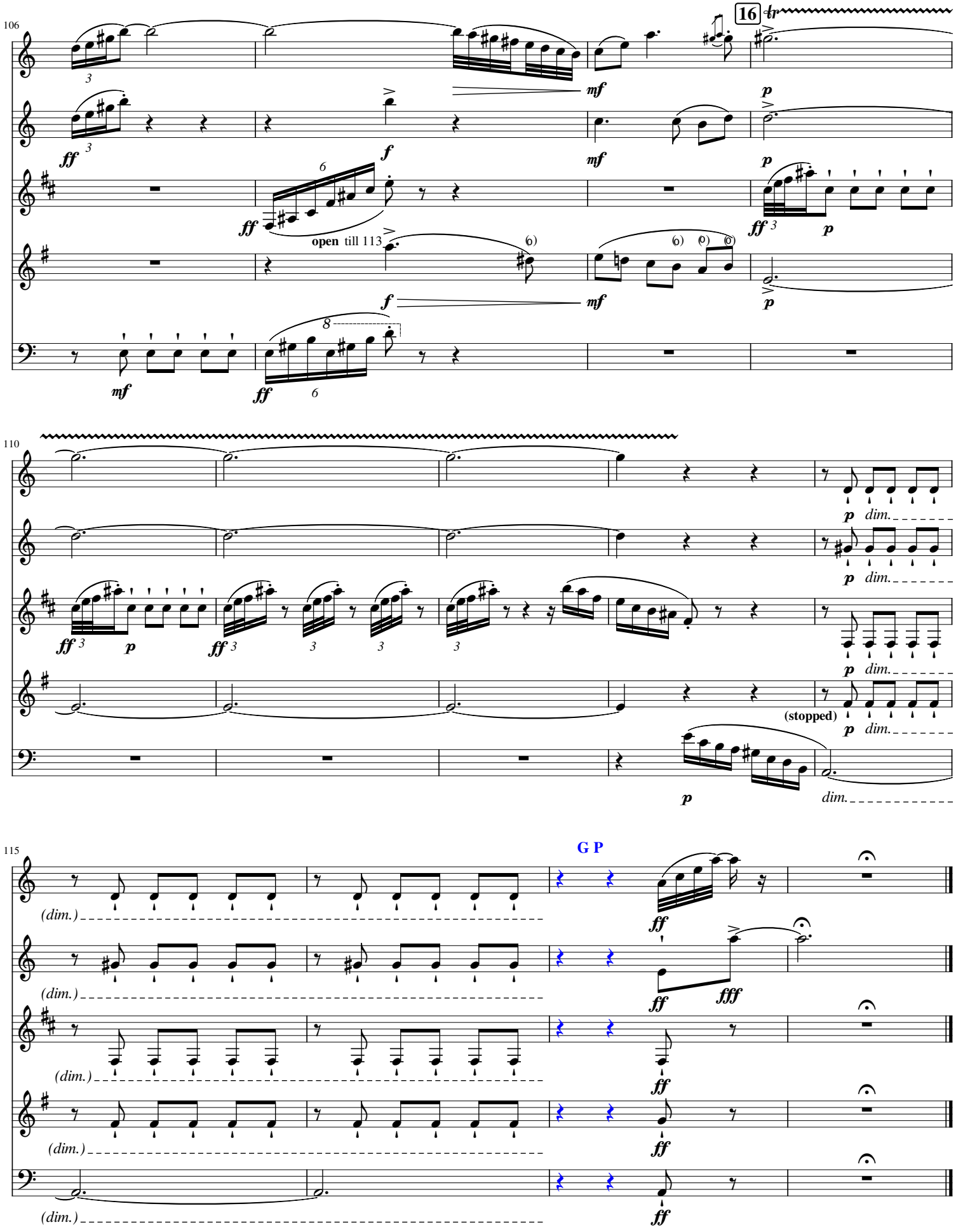

11
31
37
41
open
(stopped)
G P


47
12
tr
p
mf
52
ff
f
56
13
mp
open
(stopped)


61
ff
p
(simile)
65
pp
open
70


74
G P
14
mf
f
(stopped)
mf
f
p
f
80
mp
p
p
p
p
85
6
f
f
f
f


90
94
15
100


106
16
tr
ff
mf
f
p
open till 113
110
dim.
(stopped)
115
G P
(dim.)
fff

Score (instrumental pitch)

(The) Birds arr. for wind quintet by Toby Miller

IV - L'Usignuolo (Nightingale) *after a folksong tr. Jacob van Eyck*

Respighi

Andante mosso ♩ = 96

Flute

Oboe

Bass Clarinet

Horn in F

Bassoon

ppp *pp* *dolce* *pp* *ppp* (4) *pp* *ppp* *pp*

7

Fl

Ob

BC

Hn

Bn

p *ppp* *p* *ppp* (8) *pp* (12) *ppp*

13

Fl

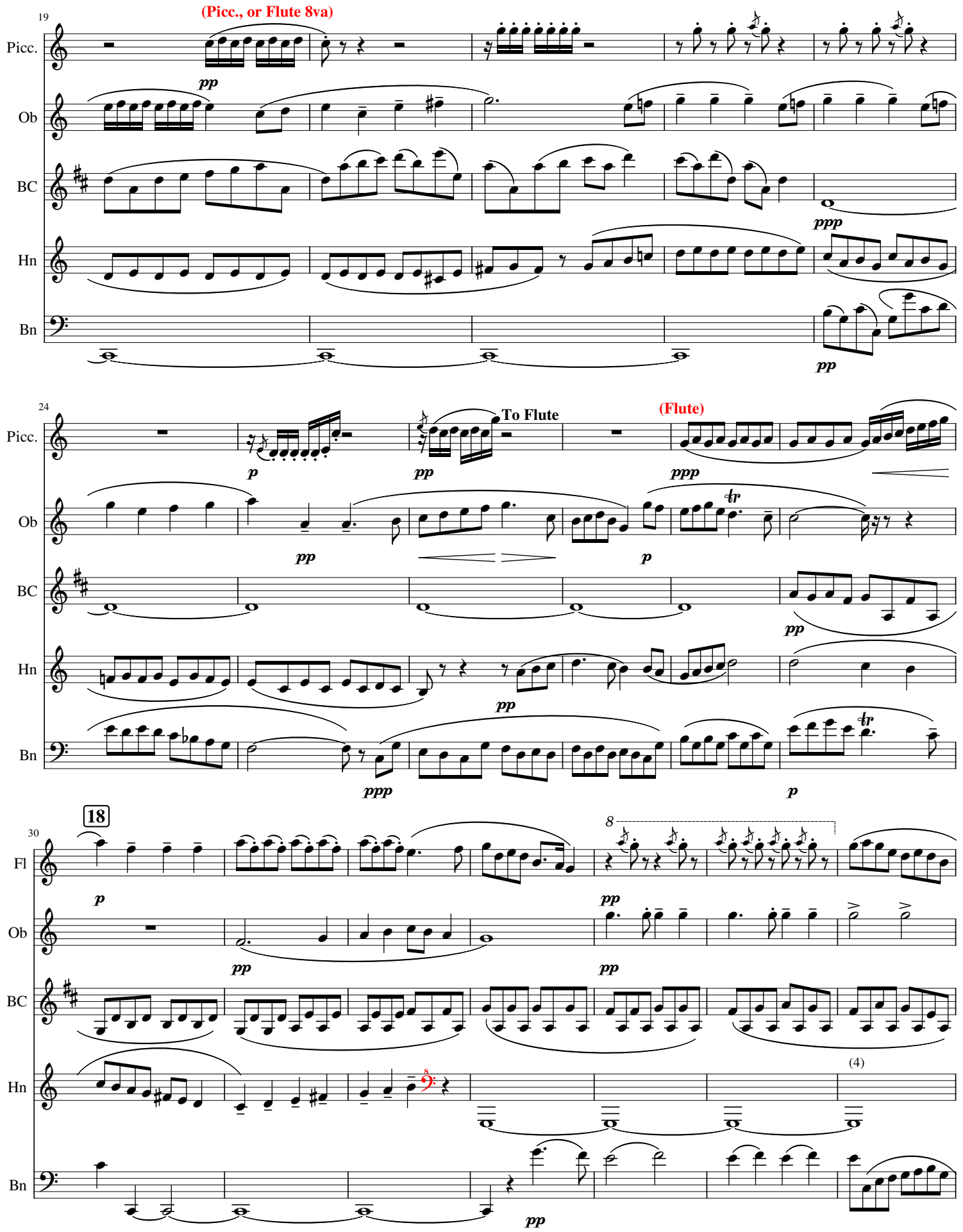
Ob

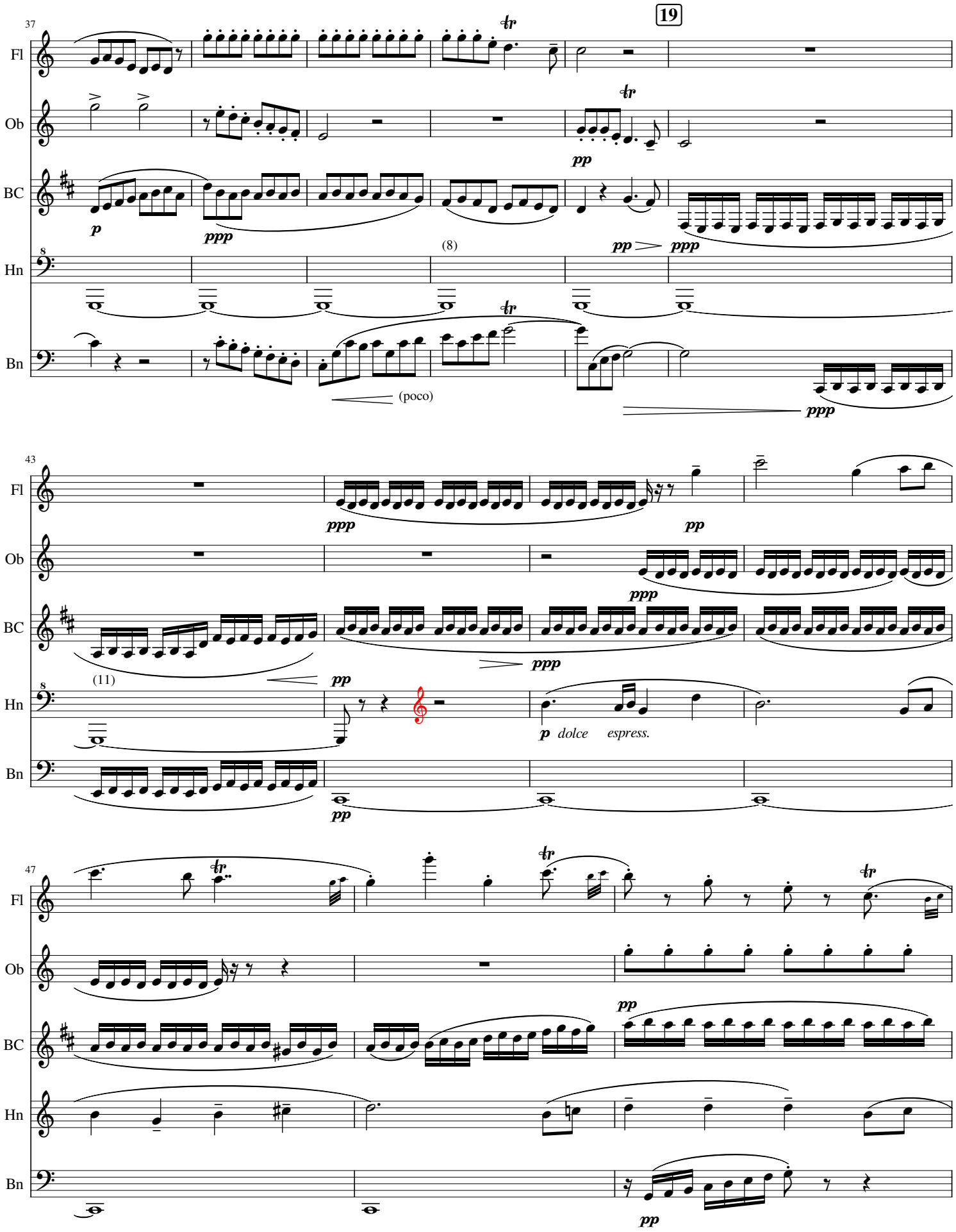
BC

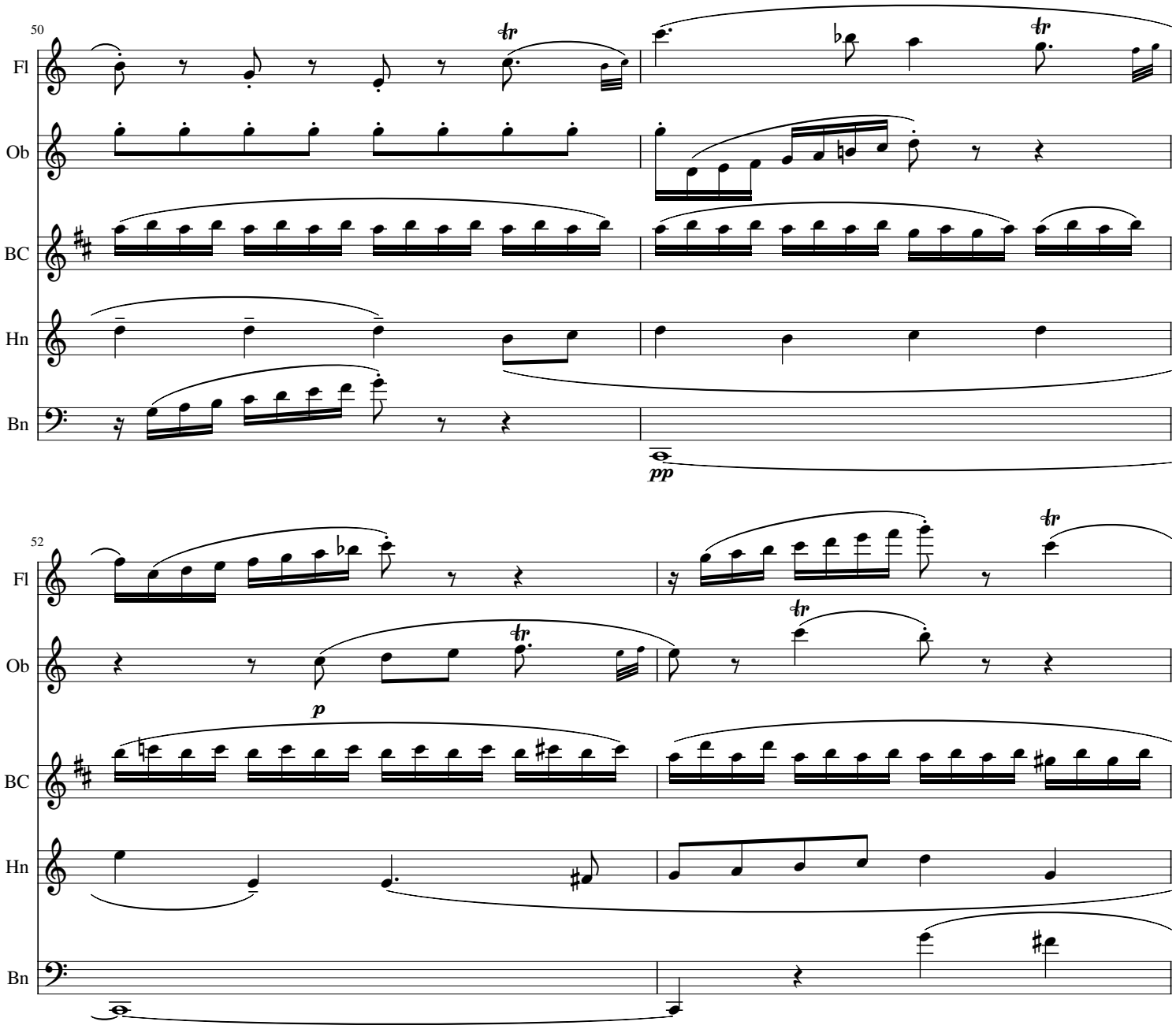
Hn

Bn

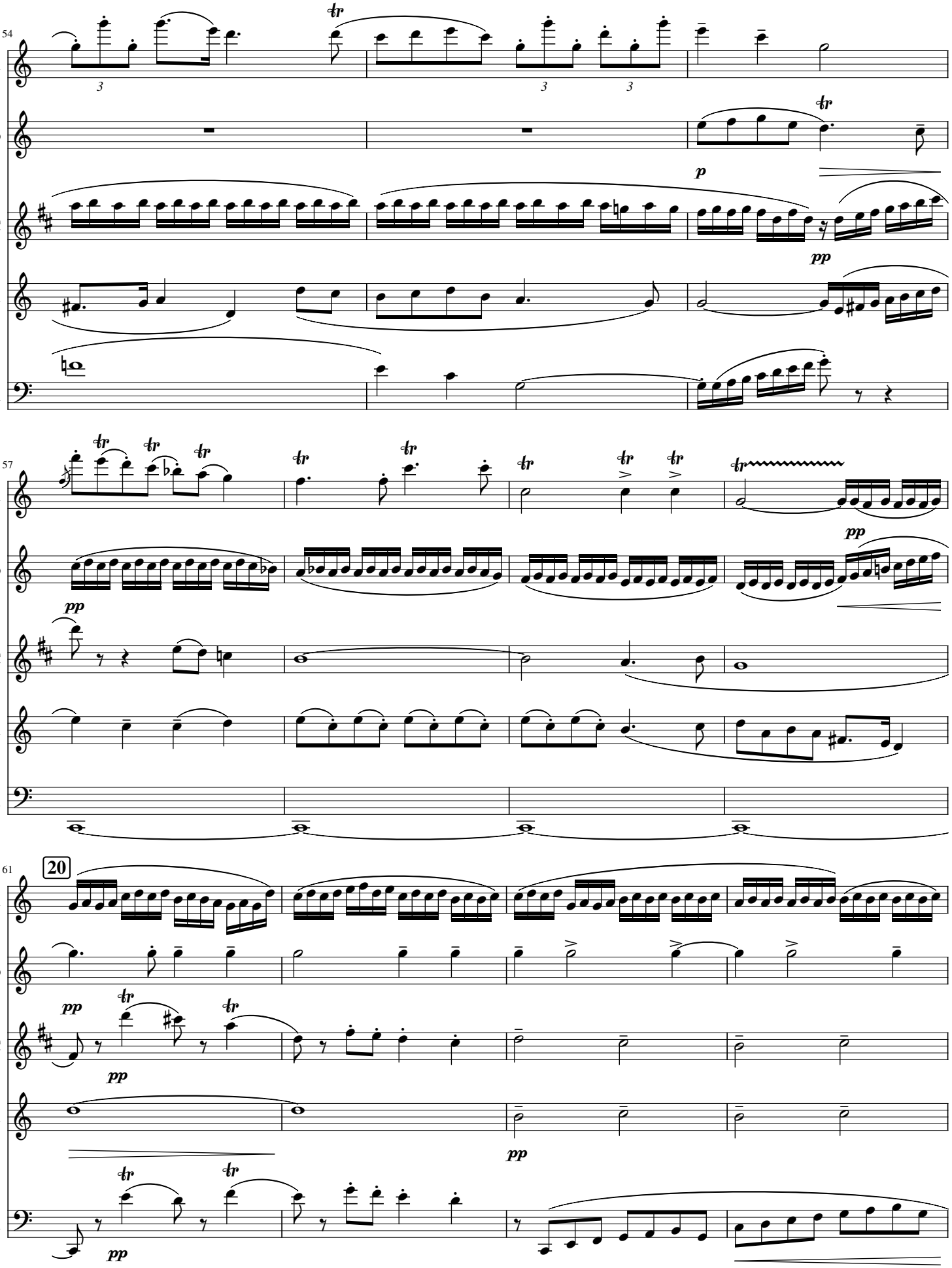
p **17** **To Piccolo** *ppp* *pp* *p* *ppp* *p* *pp* (16) *(pp)* *p* *ppp* *pp*

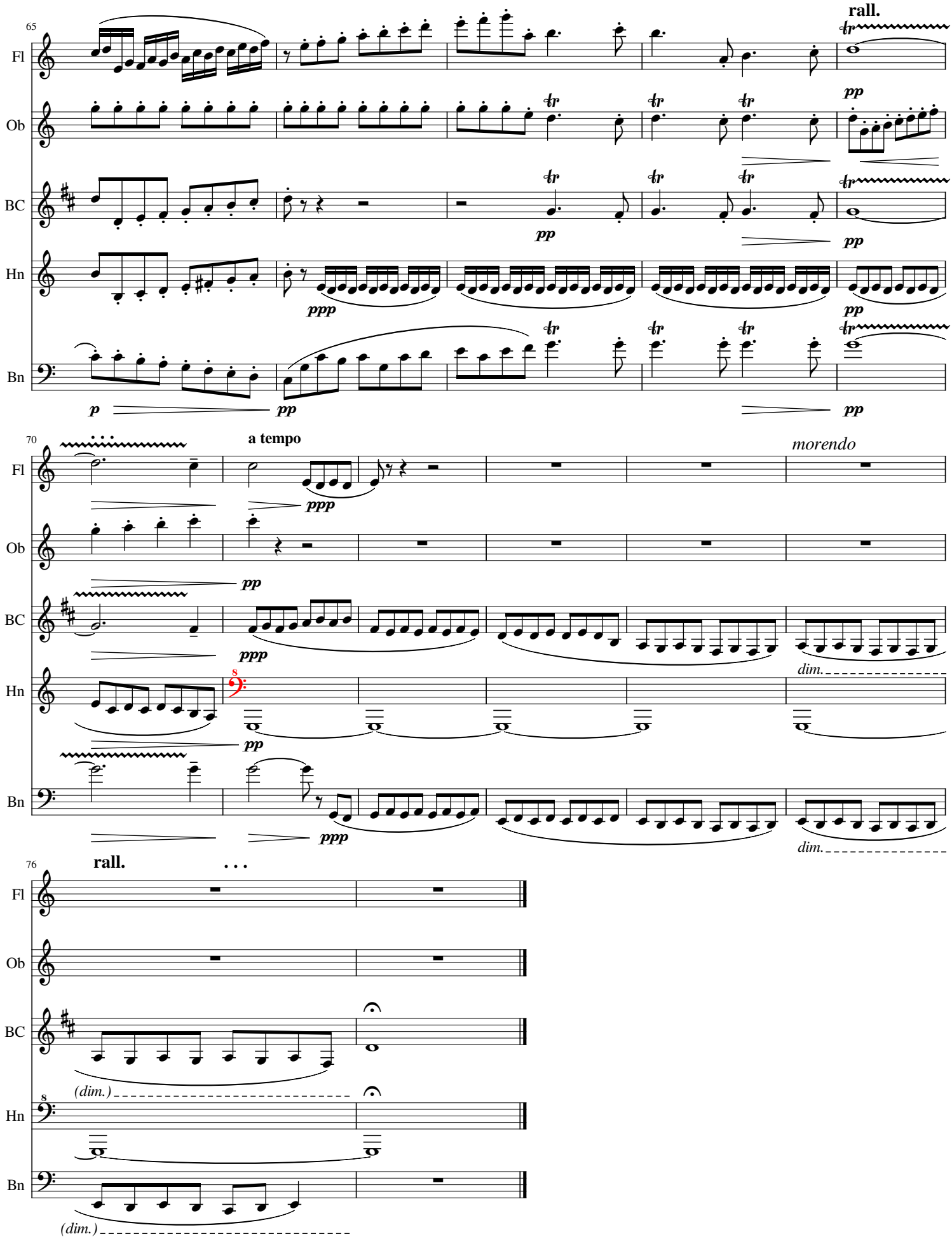

19
(Picc., or Flute 8va)
Picc.
Ob
BC
Hn
Bn
pp
ppp
24
To Flute
(Flute)
p
ppp
tr
18
30
8
Fl
(4)


19
37
Fl
Ob
BC
Hn
Bn
p
ppp
pp
(8)
(poco)
43
(11)
p dolce espress.
47


50
Fl
Ob
BC
Hn
Bn
tr
tr
pp

52
Fl
Ob
BC
Hn
Bn
tr
tr
p


54
Fl
Ob
BC
Hn
Bn
p
pp
57
pp
61
20
pp

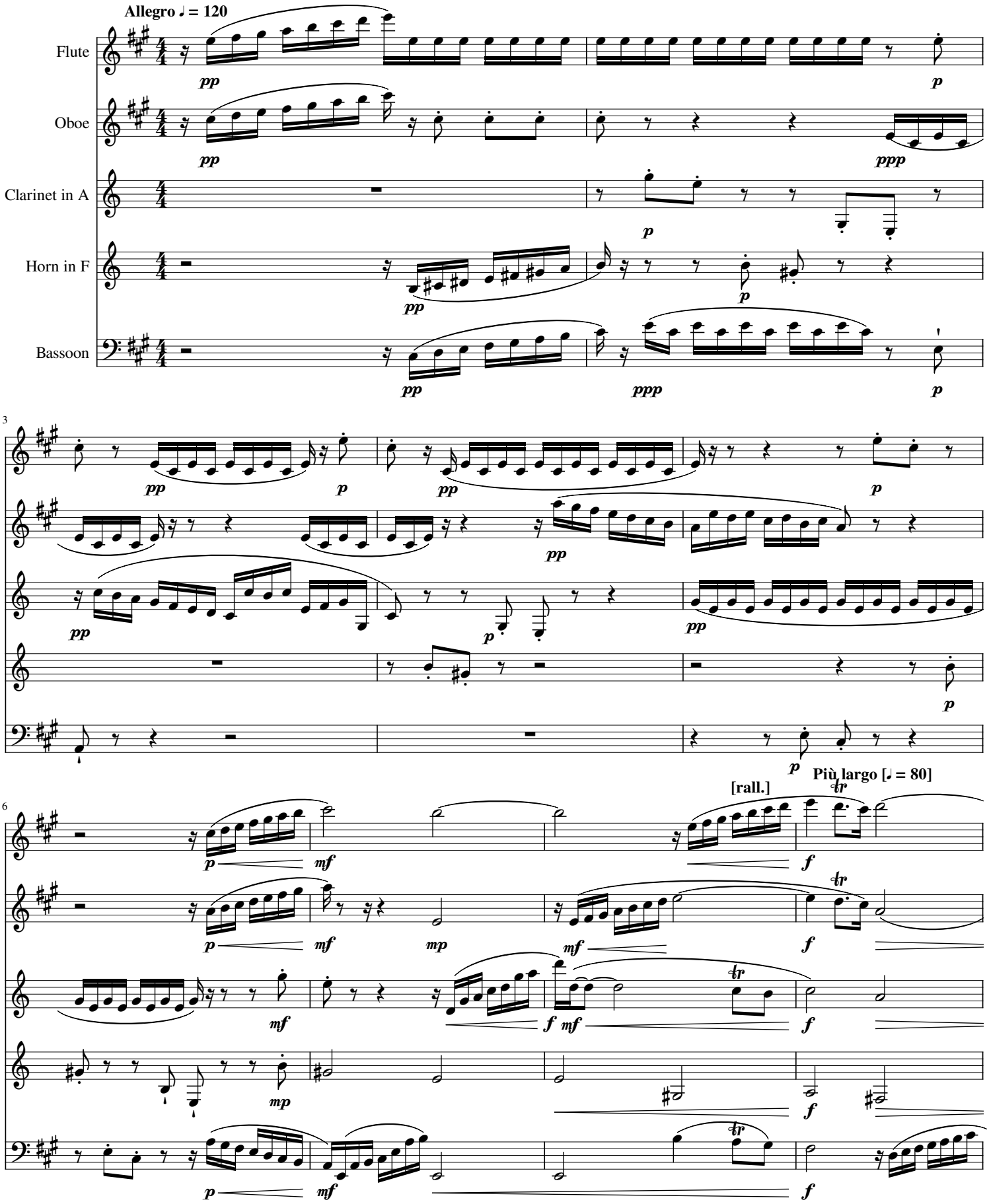

65
rall.
Fl
Ob
BC
Hn
Bn
pp
ppp
p
70
a tempo
morendo
dim.
76
rall.
(dim.)

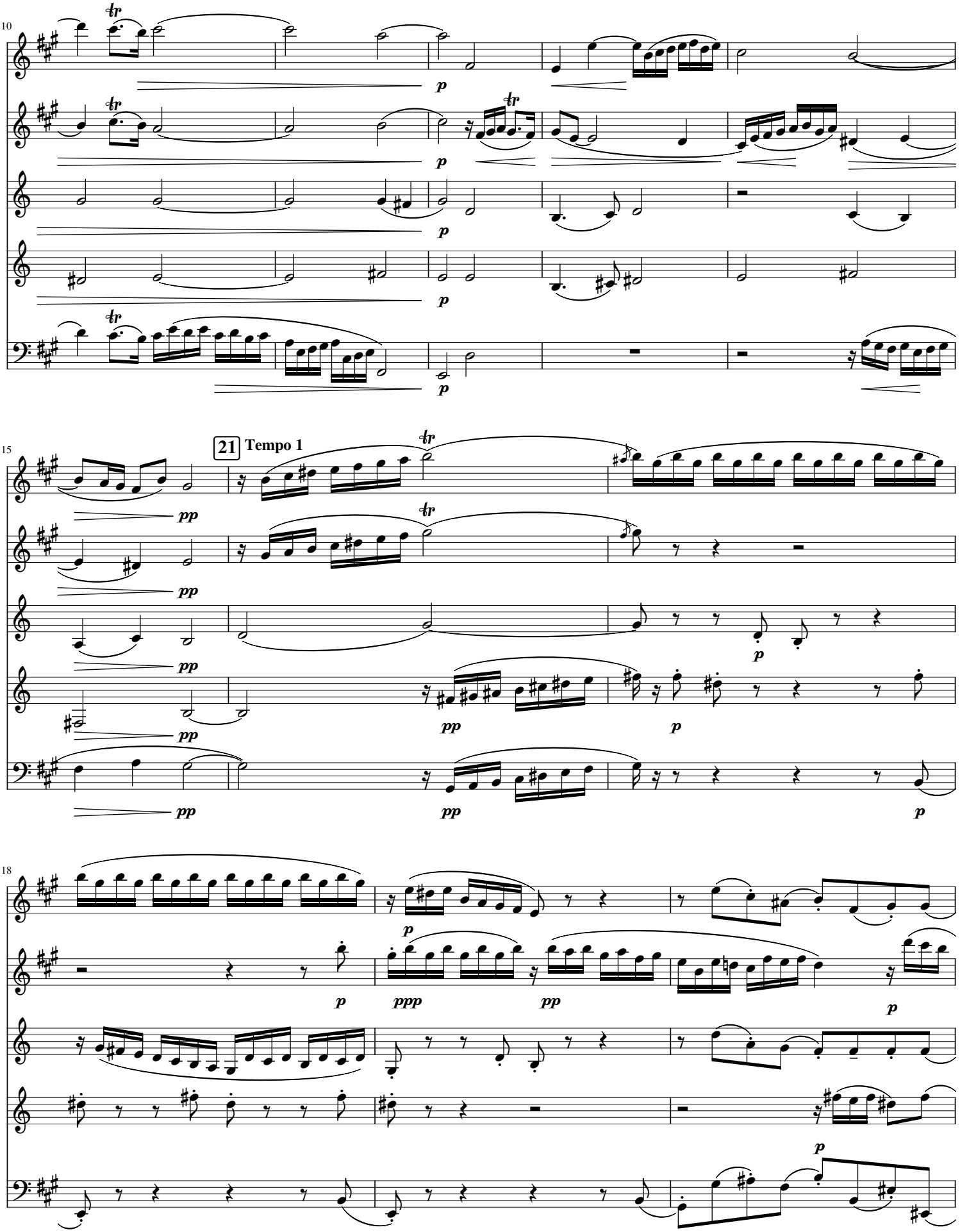
Score (instrumental pitch)

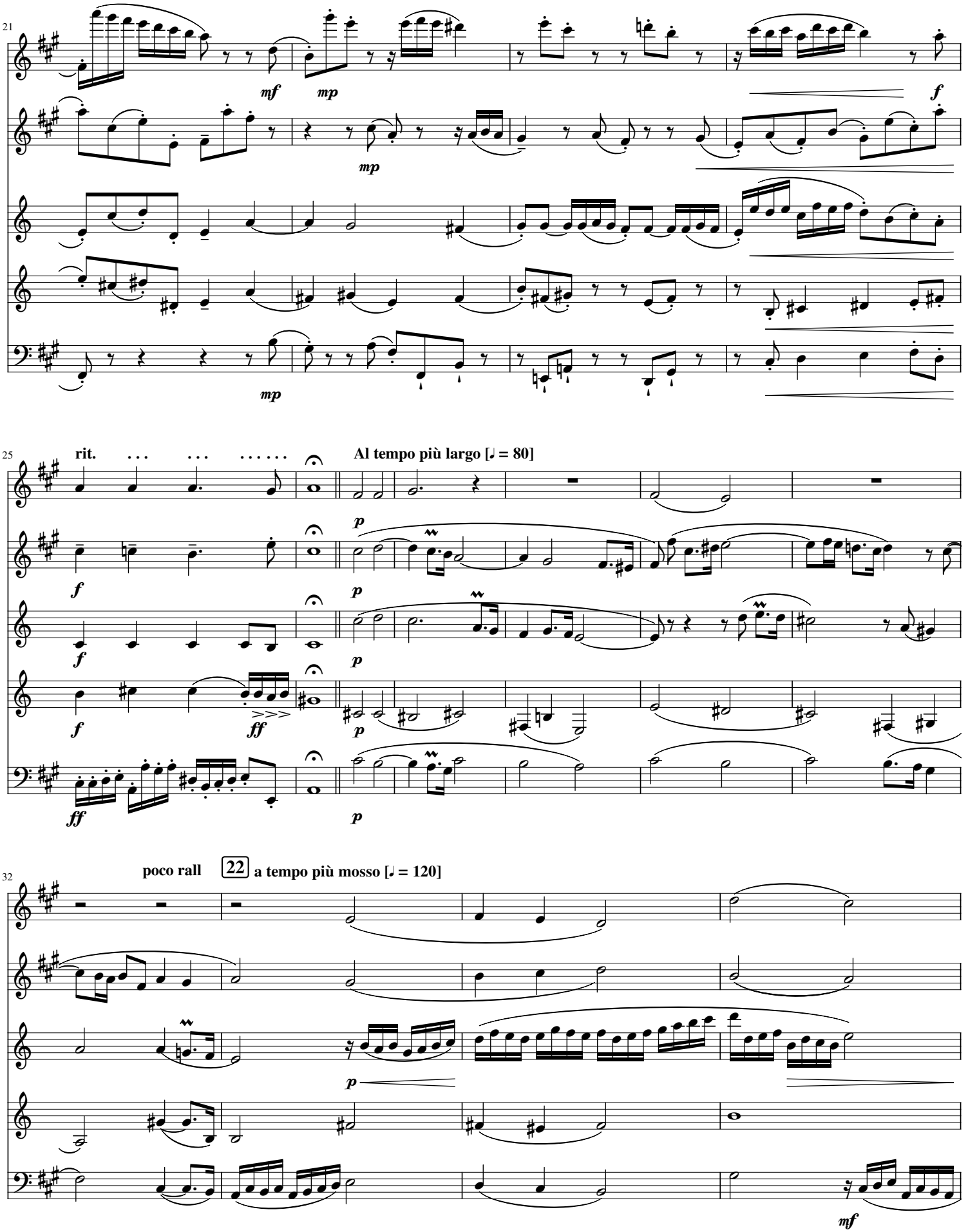
(The) Birds arr. for wind quintet by Toby Miller

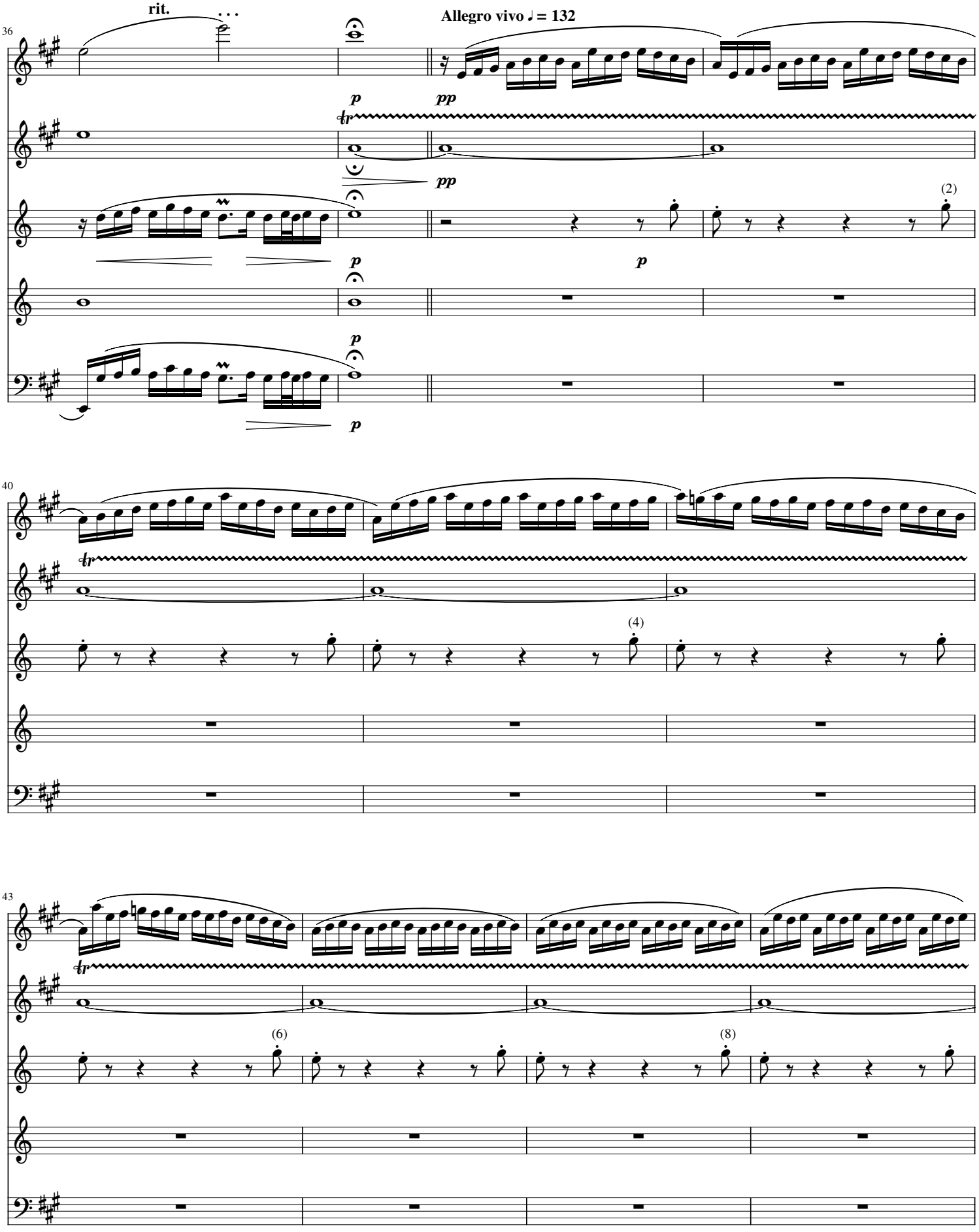
V - Il Cucù (Cuckoo) *after Bernardo Pasquini*

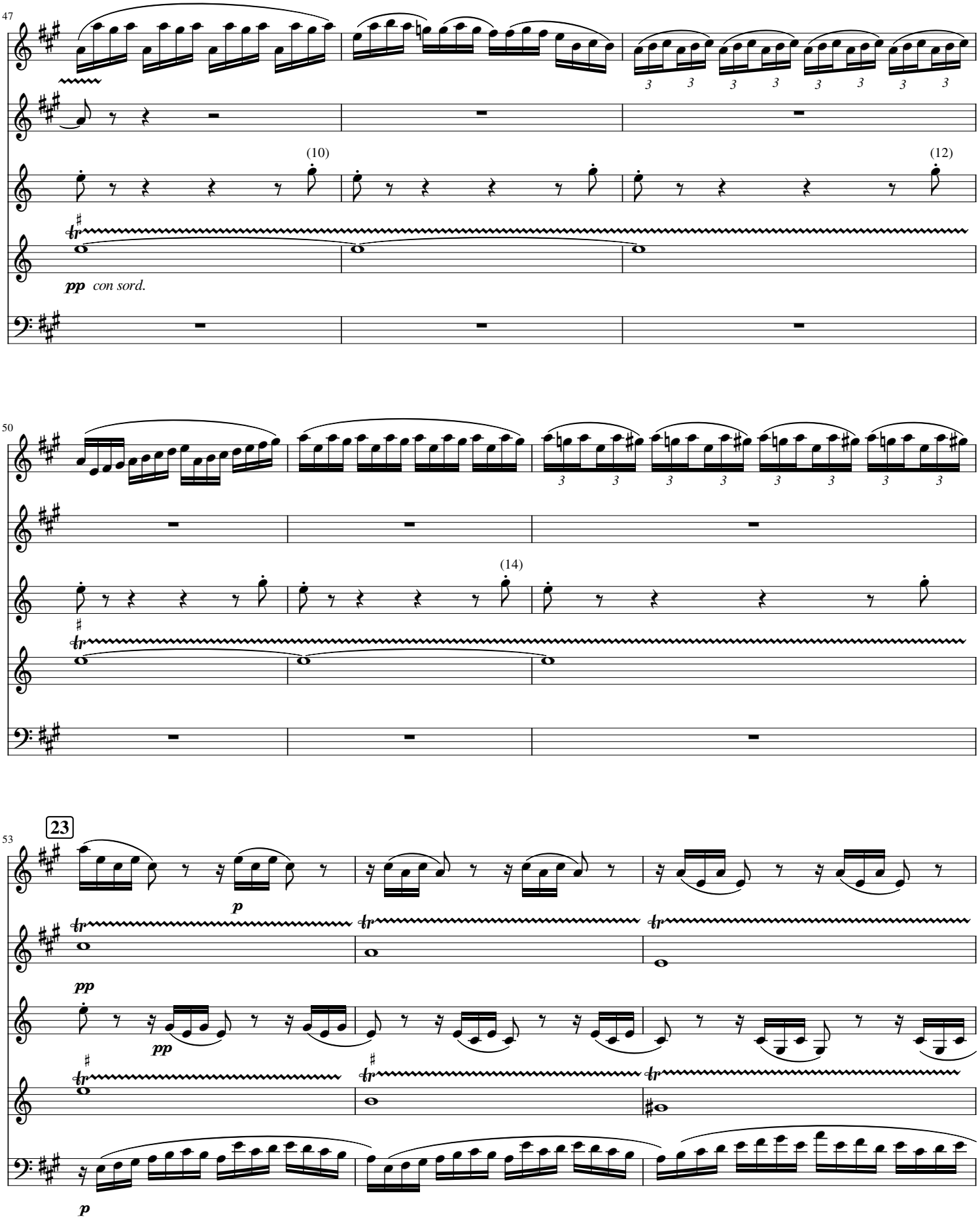
Respighi

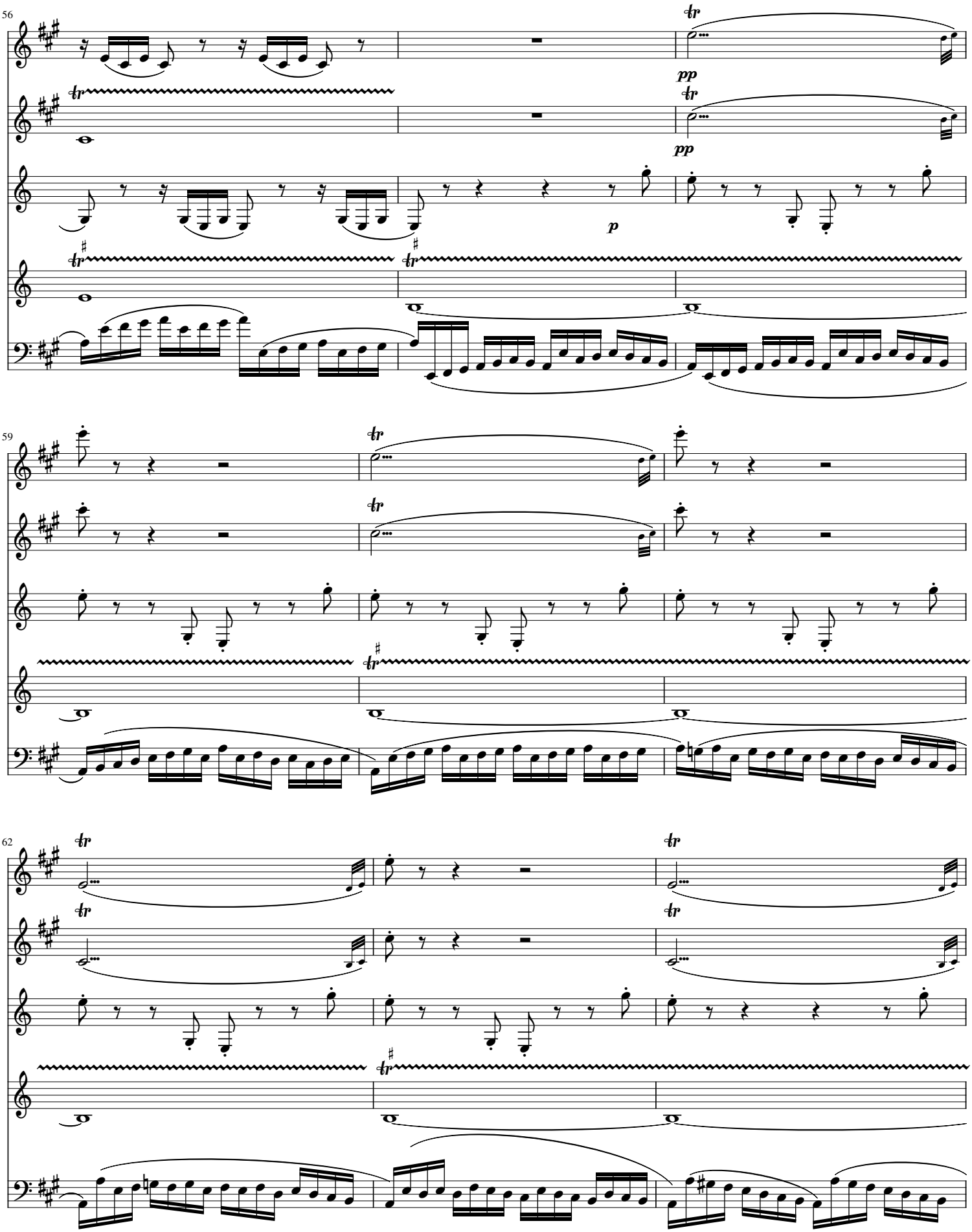


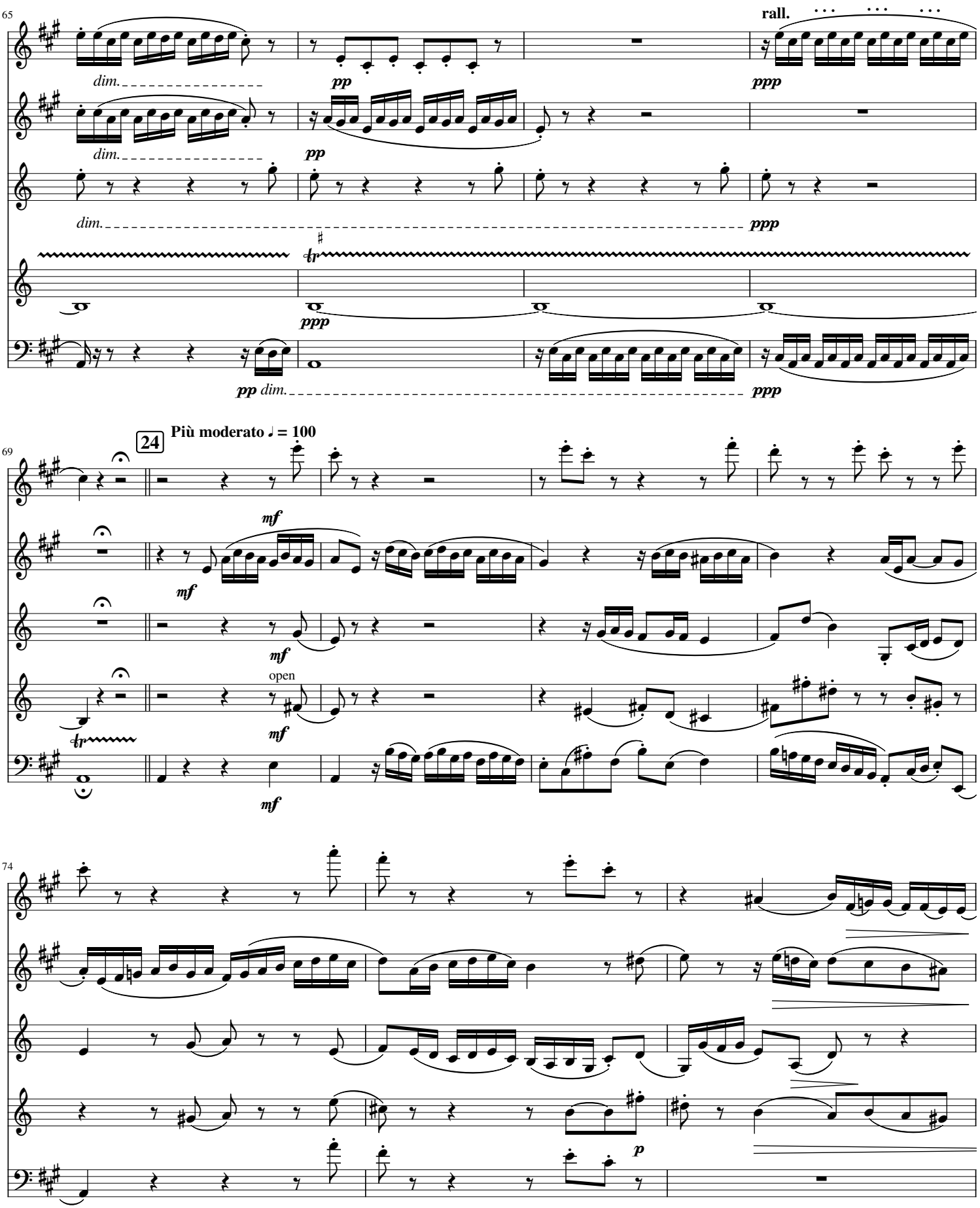

10
15
21 Tempo 1
18

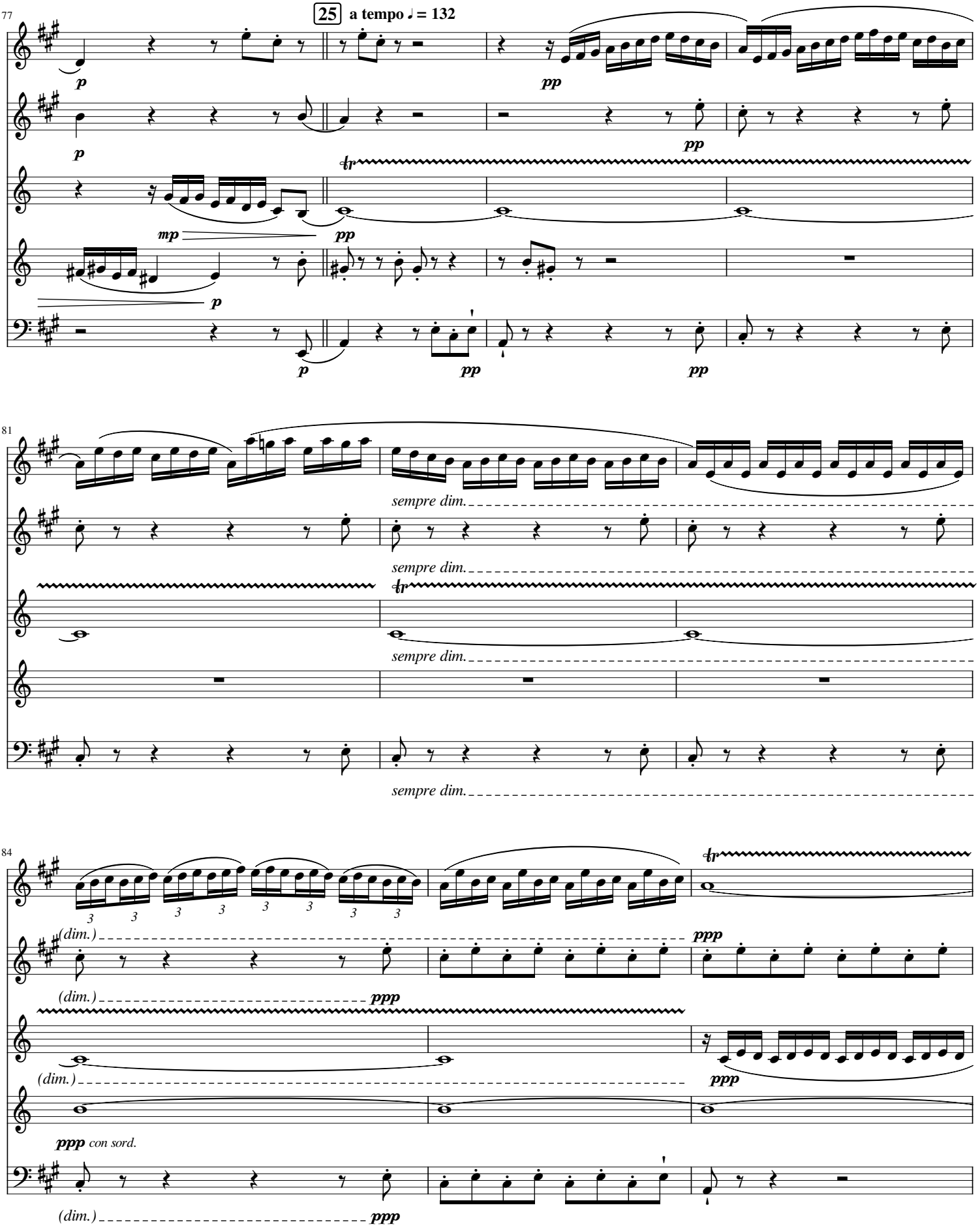

21
mf
mp
mp
mp
f
25
rit.
Al tempo più largo [♩ = 80]
f
f
f
ff
ff
p
p
p
p
32
poco rall
22
a tempo più mosso [♩ = 120]
p
mf

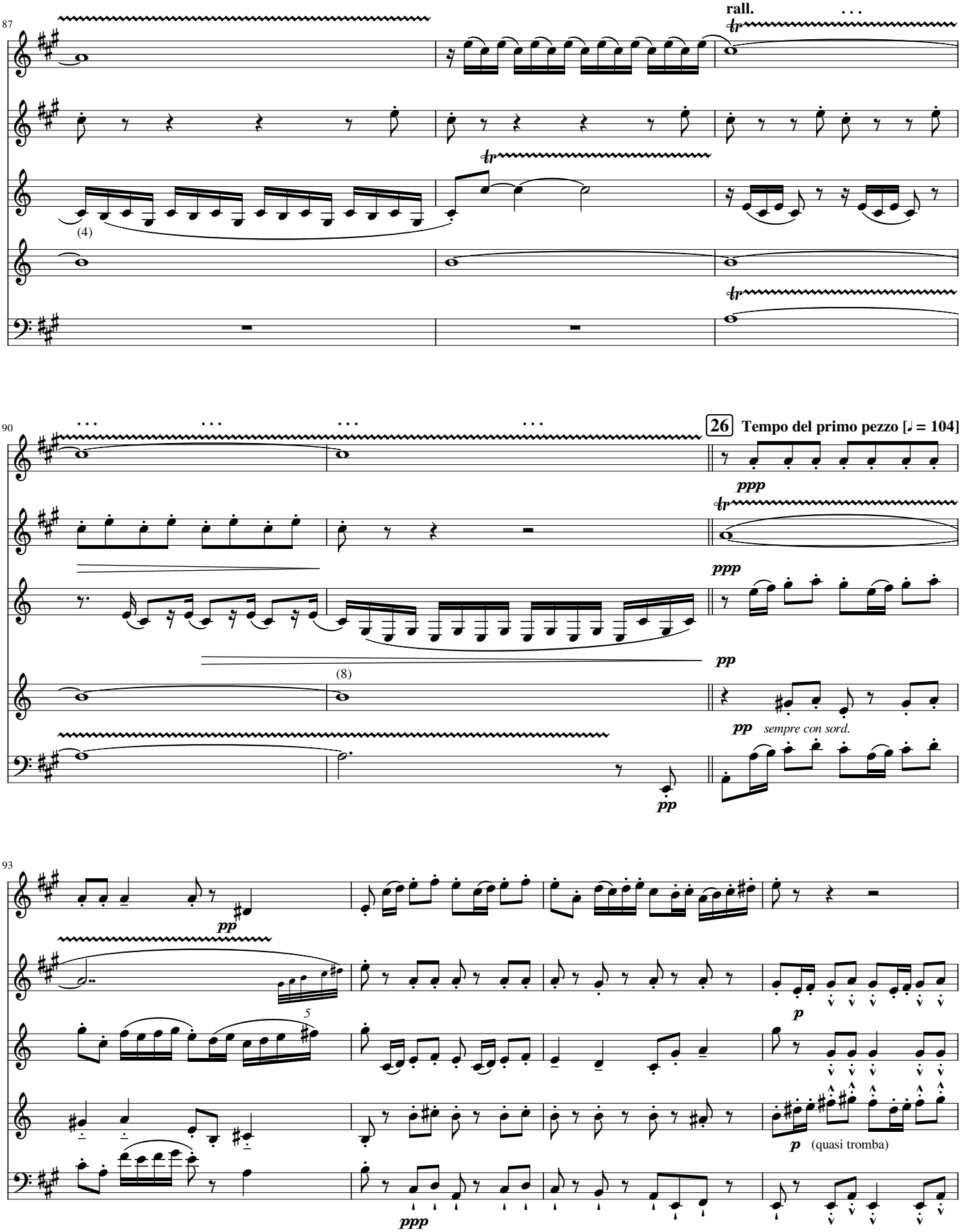

rit.
Allegro vivo ♩ = 132
36
40
43
(2)
(4)
(6)
(8)

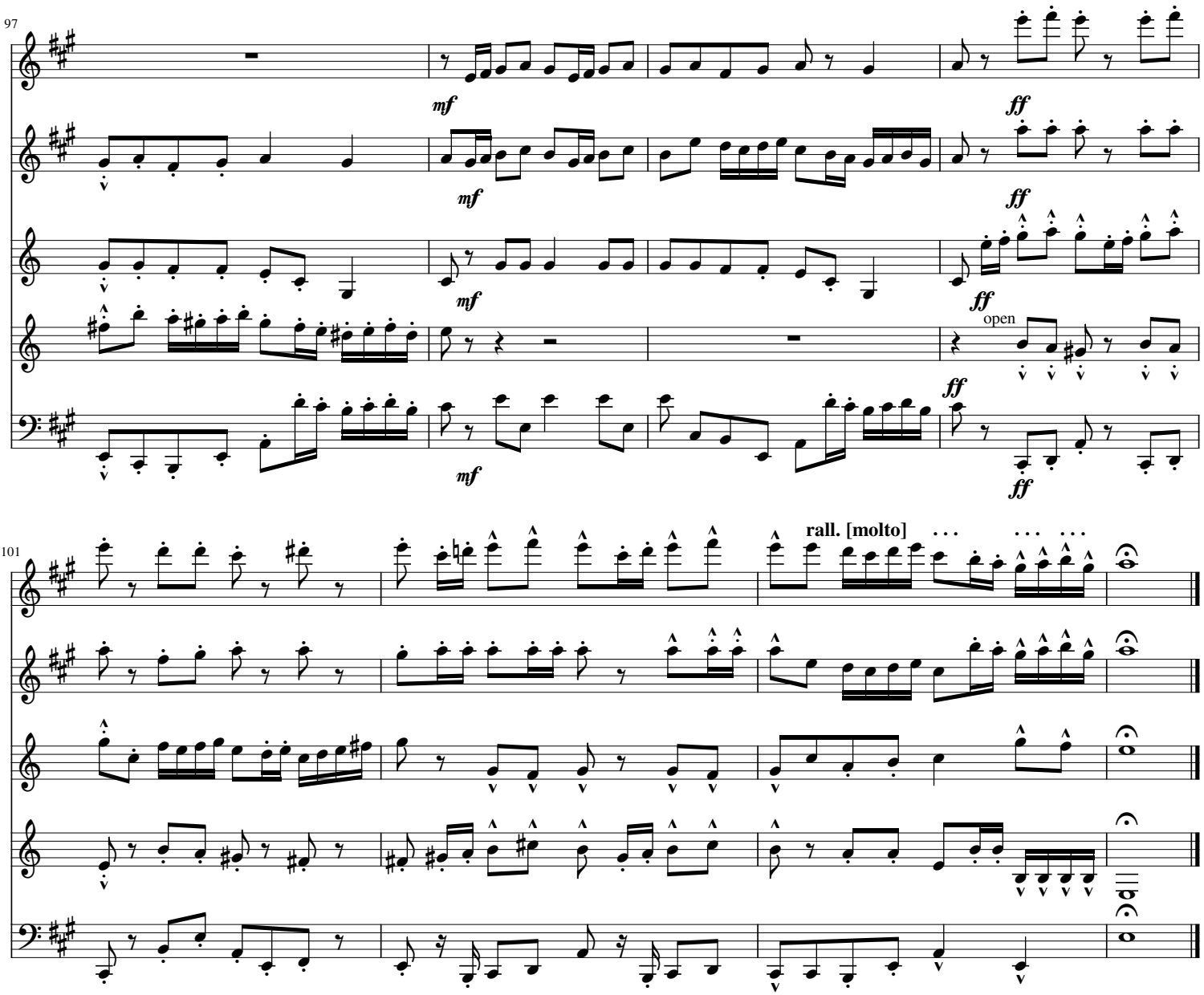

47
(10)
(12)
pp con sord.
50
(14)
53
23
p
pp
pp
p


56
pp
pp
p
59
62


65
rall.
dim.
pp
ppp
dim.
pp
dim.
ppp
ppp
pp dim.
ppp
69
24
Più moderato ♩ = 100
mf
mf
mf
open
mf
74
p


77
25 a tempo ♩ = 132
p
pp
mp
81
sempre dim.
84
(dim.)
ppp
ppp con sord.


87
rall.
(4)
90
26 Tempo del primo pezzo [♩ = 104]
ppp
ppp
pp
(8)
pp
pp sempre con sord.
pp
93
pp
5
p
p (quasi tromba)
ppp


97
mf
ff
open
101
rall. [molto]