Béla Bartók

Slovakian Folk Tunes

(From "For Children" for piano)

Book 2

Transcribed for String Quartet

by Alan Bonds

FOR CHILDREN Book 2 (1909)

The two books of Béla Bartók's *For Children* are part of a long continuous tradition of special pieces composed for young pianists. They are the product of Bartók's first forays into Hungarian and Slovakian folk music and his interest in setting them for a variety of purposes. At about the same time Bartók completed the *Hungarian Folk Songs* for voice & piano and his publisher Károly Rozsnyai sensed the popular appeal of piano pieces in the same style.

Significantly, Bártok also finished the *Bagatelles* and the *10 Easy Pieces* at the same time, but the publisher Rozsavölgy didn't want anything quite so experimental or modern (especially as in the *Bagatelles*). In a letter to Bartók he says:

> "I wish to emphasize that it would be better if the rules of classical harmony would be even more strictly observed without any modernization than in the ones already published. I should not like to see a new trend in the undertaking but rather the beaten track on which you can continue working from time to time…"

Szelényi observes that this was simply a reflection of the conservatism of the time. However, within these strictures, Bartók was determined to set his folk melodies in a manner which reflected their modality. He wished to move beyond the clichéd diatonic accompaniments common at this time. Of the 40 Hungarian pieces, (36 of which were his own transcriptions), 14 are major-minor, 16 are modal, 5 are pentatonic and 5 are polymodal. Of the 40 Slovakian tunes, 13 are major-minor, 12 are modal, one is pentatonic and 13 are bi-modal.

In a lecture, Bartók said:

> "It is always important, however, that the musical mantle in which we dress the melody should be related to the character of the melody as well as the musical traits openly or disguisedly inherent in the melody. In other words, so that the melody and every addition to it should create the impression of being an organic entity."

Given the constraints of the publisher (including that they should be for the pre-octave student pianist's hand) Bartok's solutions are masterly.

The Slovakian collection (Book 2) are decidely more adventurous and probably came later.

The reason they work so beautifully for strings is that the part-writing is so elegant. I found that it was very rarely necessary to disturb the beautiful voice-leading, and only a few needed transposing to a 'string-friendly' key. Repetition of phrases (esp. in the Hungarian collection) allowed for dialogue between string parts, making them true chamber music. The only figurations which caused concern were the Alberti accompaniments, which never sound as good on strings.

The tune of the *Swinherd's Dance* (No. 40) which Szigeti transcribed so virtuosically, and which Bartók himself transcribed for full orchestra in the *Hungarian Pictures* (1931, has also been set here an octave lower, but sounds wonderful at the original pitch if the 1st violinist can manage it.

Bartók was obviously proud of these pieces because he frequently performed small suites from them, and often used them as little encores. He returned to them in the last year of his life and revised them for Boosey & Hawkes.

Kodály continued to champion *For Children* for the whole of his life, arguing for their inclusion in the new Hungarian music curriculum.

Obviously the *Mikrokosmos* later eclipsed these pieces, seeing as they comprise an almost complete curriculum for piano and offer a superb insight into Bartók's more mature and adventurous compositional techniques of the 20's and 30's. However *For Children* should not be overlooked as an important insight into the later style and especially the compositional skill involved in setting tunes within specific constraints.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Bartók himself endorsed changing the name from *For Children* to *Hungarian & Slovakian Folk Tunes* when he and Joseph Szigeti arranged some of them for violin & piano in 1926. The original title was in the same tradition as Schumann & others, aimed at the newly emerging demand for music for the young.

This version for strings could be the beginning of a voyage of discovery for the string player which culminates in the duos, string quartets and the works for string orchestra and full orchestra. Naturally one should start with the *44 Duos*, but to facilitate this journey I have also arranged the *Roumanian Colinda*, the *Transylvanian Dances*, the *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs*, the *Petite Suite*, the *Roumanian Dances* and a large number of the *Mikrokosmos* for strinq quartet and string orchestra. It is hoped that string players will approach the later works in the same natural and methodical way as pianists.

To absorb the idiom, especially the natural inflections, I thoroughly recommend listening to the excellent recordings by famous Hungarian pianists (including & especially Bartók himself). This is particularly so regarding the *parlando rubato* style. Bartók never plays them metronomically. Even better, modern technology now permits hearing the original singers and players in Bartók's own field recordings.

These pieces have been specially layed out for a quartet to be able to study and perform them from the full score. Because they are fairly short they are ideal cases for study from the score, a practice I wish was more common in student ensembles. It is even more valuable in the *parlando rubato* songs in which the melodist is invited to play freely and spontaneously. In some cases it will be necessary to photocopy a third page to avoid a page turn. Parts are really only necessary to perform a few of the longer ones.

The order in which to perform them is a matter of choice, but those marked by Bartok *attacca ad lib.* (e.g. 1, 2 & 3) indicate his wish for them to be taken in groups.

In order to see Bartok's original phrasings in the piano version, they have been retained and bowings overlayed. Every care has been taken to preserve the natural song or dance accentuations, usually taking strong beats on down bows and weak beats on up bows in the traditional way. Bartok's hierarchy of accentuations is very clear and has been faithfully retained.

Likewise Bartók's articulations are always very clear and have been scrupulously retained. Only a few are specifically pianistic and require interpretation.

A few fingerings have been suggested, mostly to restrain players from using too sophisticated an approach, and sometimes to deliberatly encourage the use of open strings in the dances.

Alan Bonds
Perth, Western Australia
September 2006
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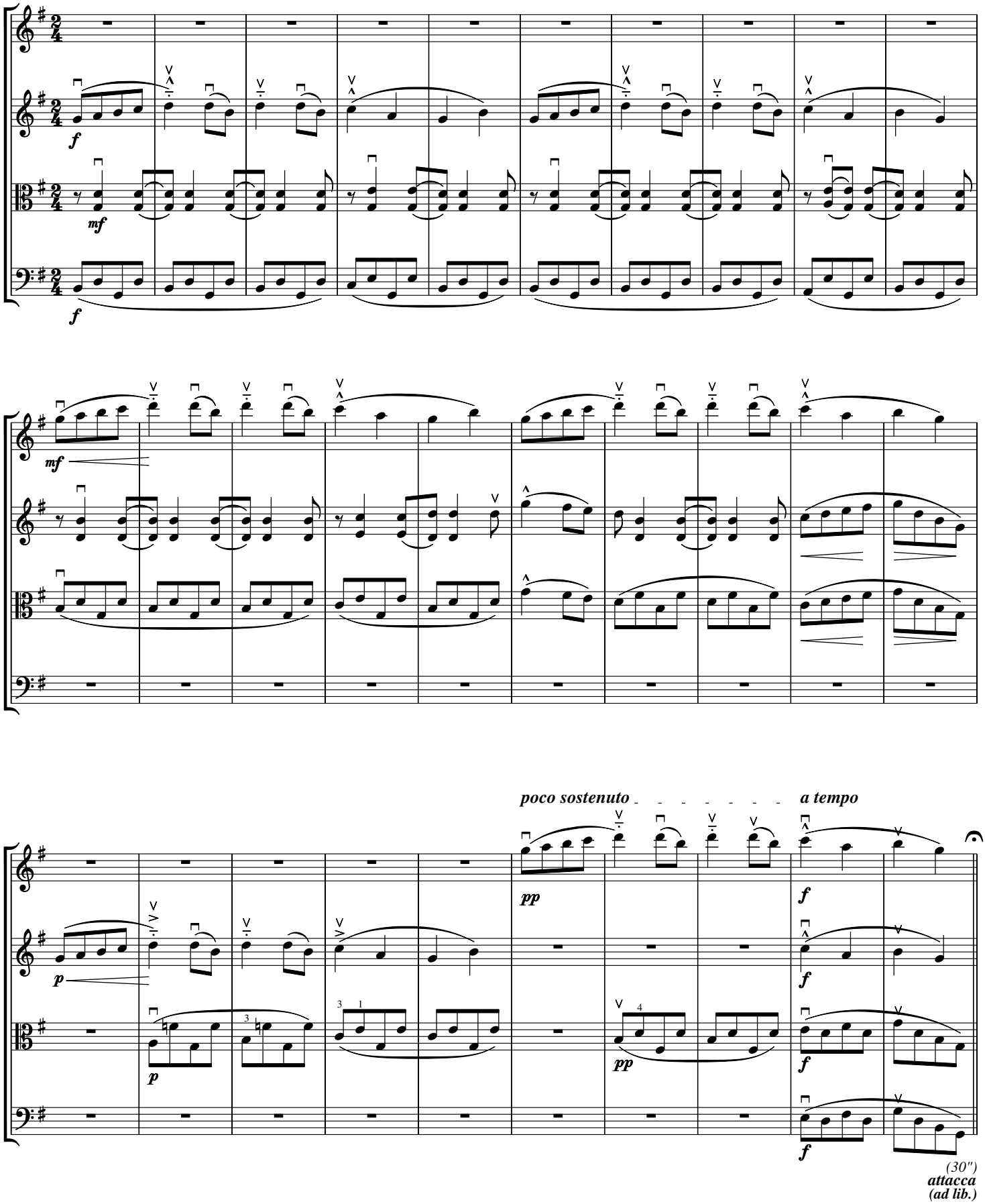
Volume I Index (1947)

1. *Játszó gyermekek* (Children at Play). Allegro
2. *Gyermekdal* (Children's Song). Andante
3. Quasi adagio
4. *Párnatánc* (Pillow Dance). Allegro
5. *Játék* (Play). Allegretto
6. *Balkéztanulmány* (Study for the Left Hand). Allegro
7. *Játékdal* (Play Song). Andante grazioso
8. *Gyermekjáték (*Children's Game). Allegretto
9. *Dal* (Song). Adagio
10. *Gyermektánc* (Children's Dance). Allegro molto
11. Lento
12. Allegro
13. *Ballada* (Ballad). Andante
14. Allegretto
15. Allegro moderato
16. *Régi magyar dallam* (Old Hungarian Tune). Andante rubato
17. *Körtánc* (Round Dance). Lento
18. *Katonadal* (Soldier's Song). Andante non troppo
19. Allegretto
20. *Bordal* (Drinking Song). Allegro
21. Allegro robusto
22. Allegretto
23. *Táncdal* (Dance Song). Allegro grazioso
24. Andante sostenuto
25. Parlando
26. Moderato
27. *Tréfa* (Jest). Allegramente
28. *Kórusdal* (Choral). Andante
29. *Ötfokú dallam* (Pentatonic Tune). Allegro scherzando
30. *Gúnydal* (Jeering Song). Allegro ironico
31. *Allegro tranquillo* — attacca
32. Andante
33. Allegro non troppo
34. Allegretto
35. Con moto
36. *Részegek nótája* (Drunkard's Song). Vivace
37. *Kanásznóta* (Swine-herd's Song). Allegro
38. *Regös ének* (Winter Solstice Song). Molto vivace
39. Allegro moderato
40. *Kanásztánc* (Swine-herd's Dance). Allegro vivace

41. Allegro
42. Andante
43. Allegretto
44. *Lakodalmas* (Wedding Song). Andante
45. *Változatok* (Variations). Molto andante — A tempo — A tempo — L'istesso tempo
46. *I. Körtánc* (Round Dance I). Allegro
47. *Bánat (*Sorrow). Andante
48. *Táncdal* (Dance). Allegro non troppo
49. *II. Körtánc* (Round Dance II). Andante
50. *Temetésre szól az ének* (Funeral Song). Largo
51. Lento — attacca
52. Andante rubato — attacca
53. Allegro
54. Moderato
55. *I. Dudanóta* (Bagpipe I). Molto tranquillo
56. *Panasz* (Lament). Lento
57. Andante
58. *Gúnydal* (Teasing Song). Sostenuto
59. *Románc* (Romance). Assai lento
60. *Kerget dzés* (Game of Tag). Presto
61. *Tréfa* (Pleasantry). Allegro moderato
62. *Duhajkodó* (Revelry). Molto allegro
63. Andante tranquillo - attacca
64. Andante
65. Scherzando. Allegretto
66. *Furulyaszó* (Peasant's Flute). Andante, molto rubato
67. *Még egy tréfa* (Pleasantry II). Allegro
68. Andante, molto rubato
69. *Kánon* (Canon). Allegro non troppo
70. *Szól a duda* (Bagpipe II). Vivace
71. *Betyárnóta* (The Highway Robber). Allegro
72. Pesante
73. Andante tranquillo
74. *Búcsú* (Farewell). Adagio
75. *Ballada* (Ballad). Moderato
76. -
77. *Rapszódia* (Rhapsody). Parlando, molto rubato
78. *Siratóének* (Dirge). Lento
79. *Halotti ének* (Mourning Song). Lento

41.

Allegro, ♩ = 132



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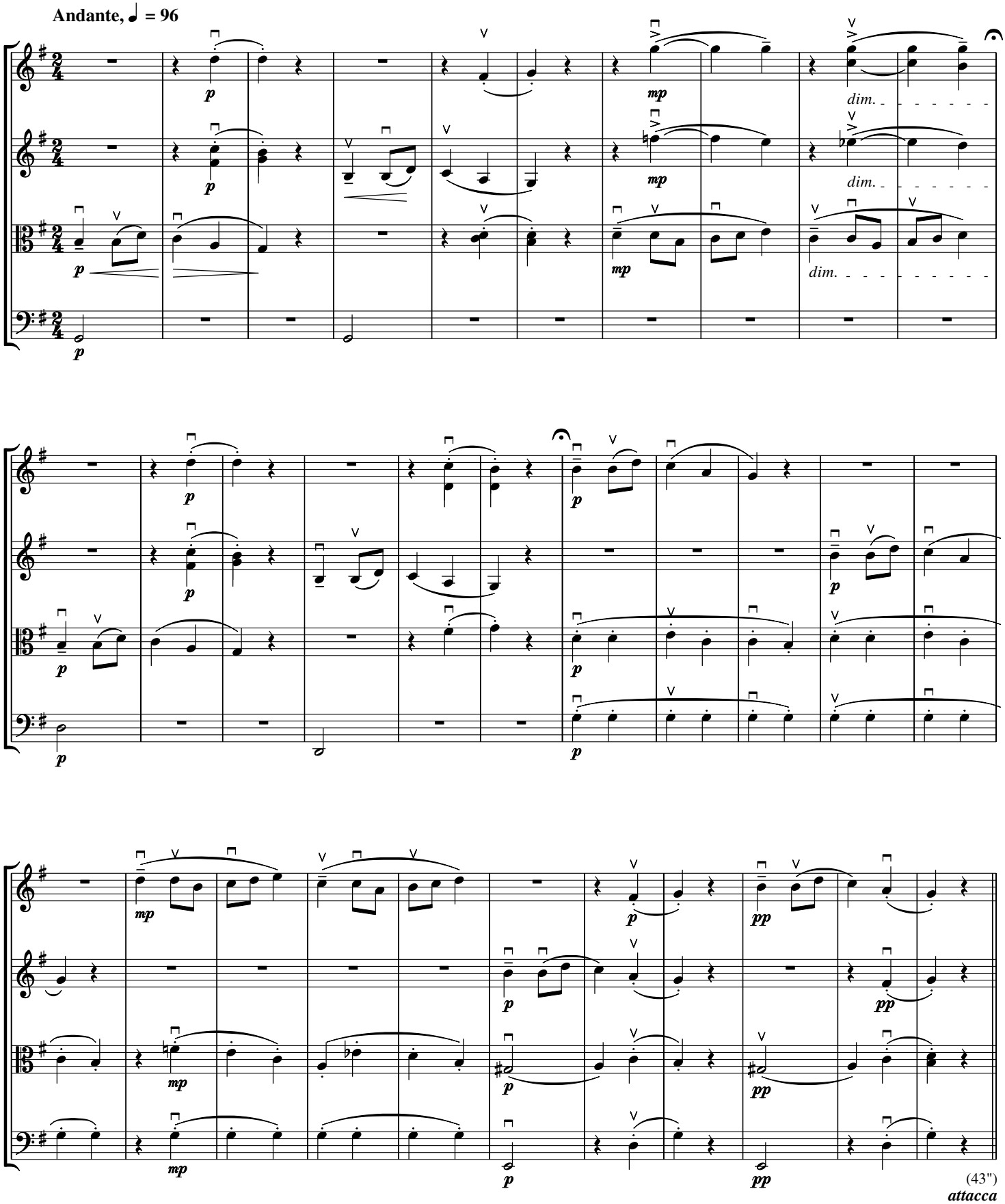
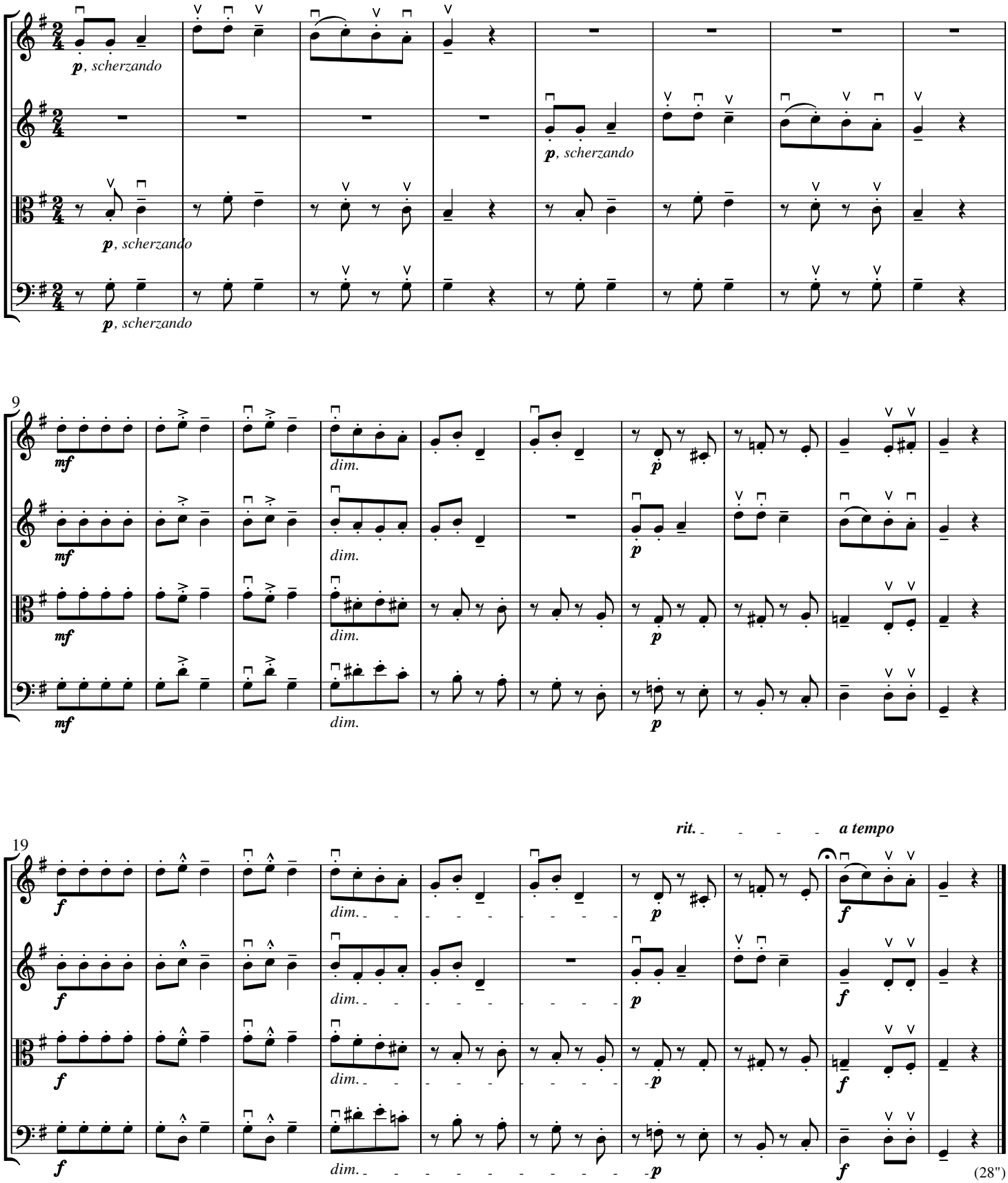


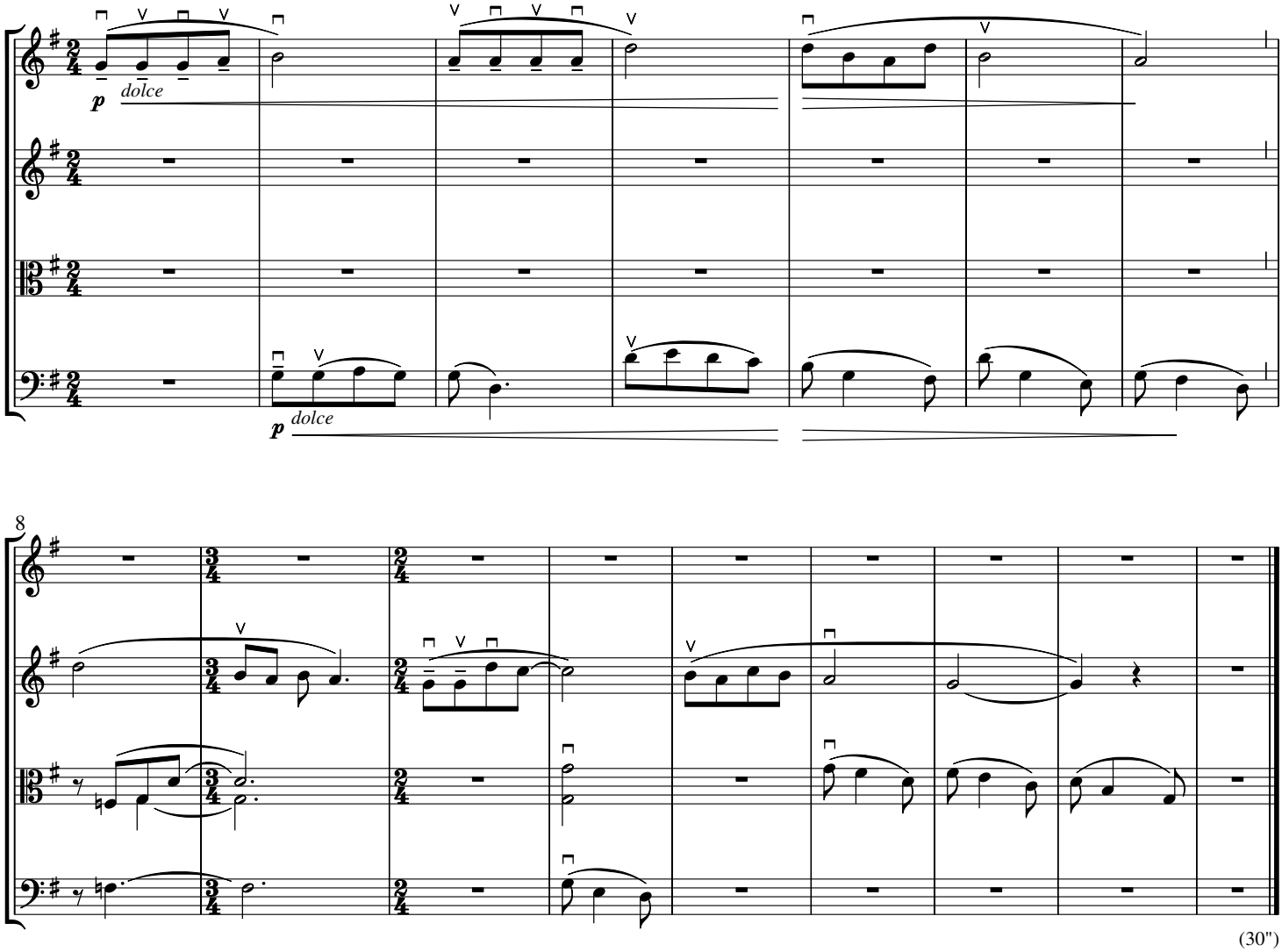
43.

Allegretto, ♩ = 126



44. Wedding Song

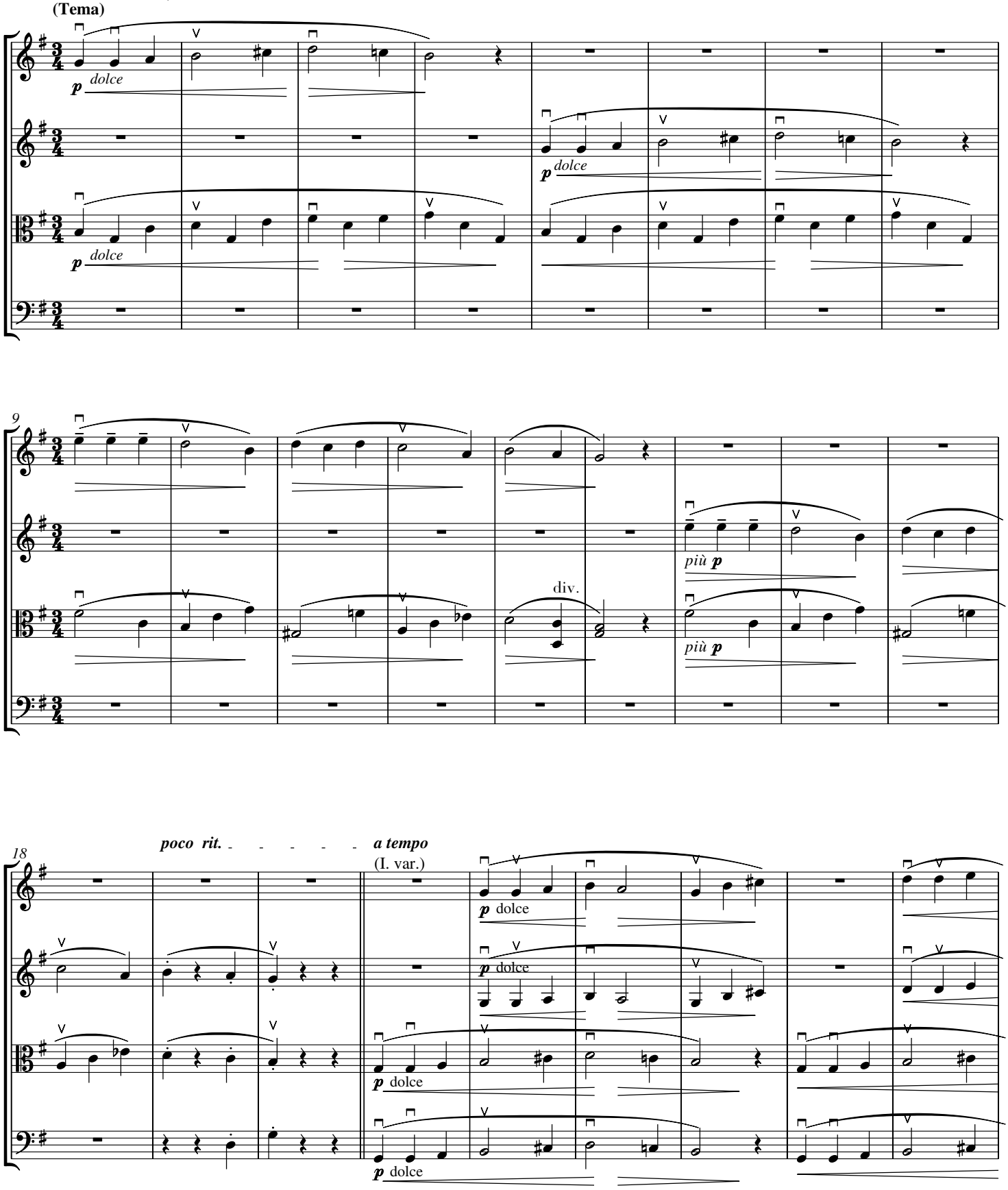
Andante, ♩ = 72

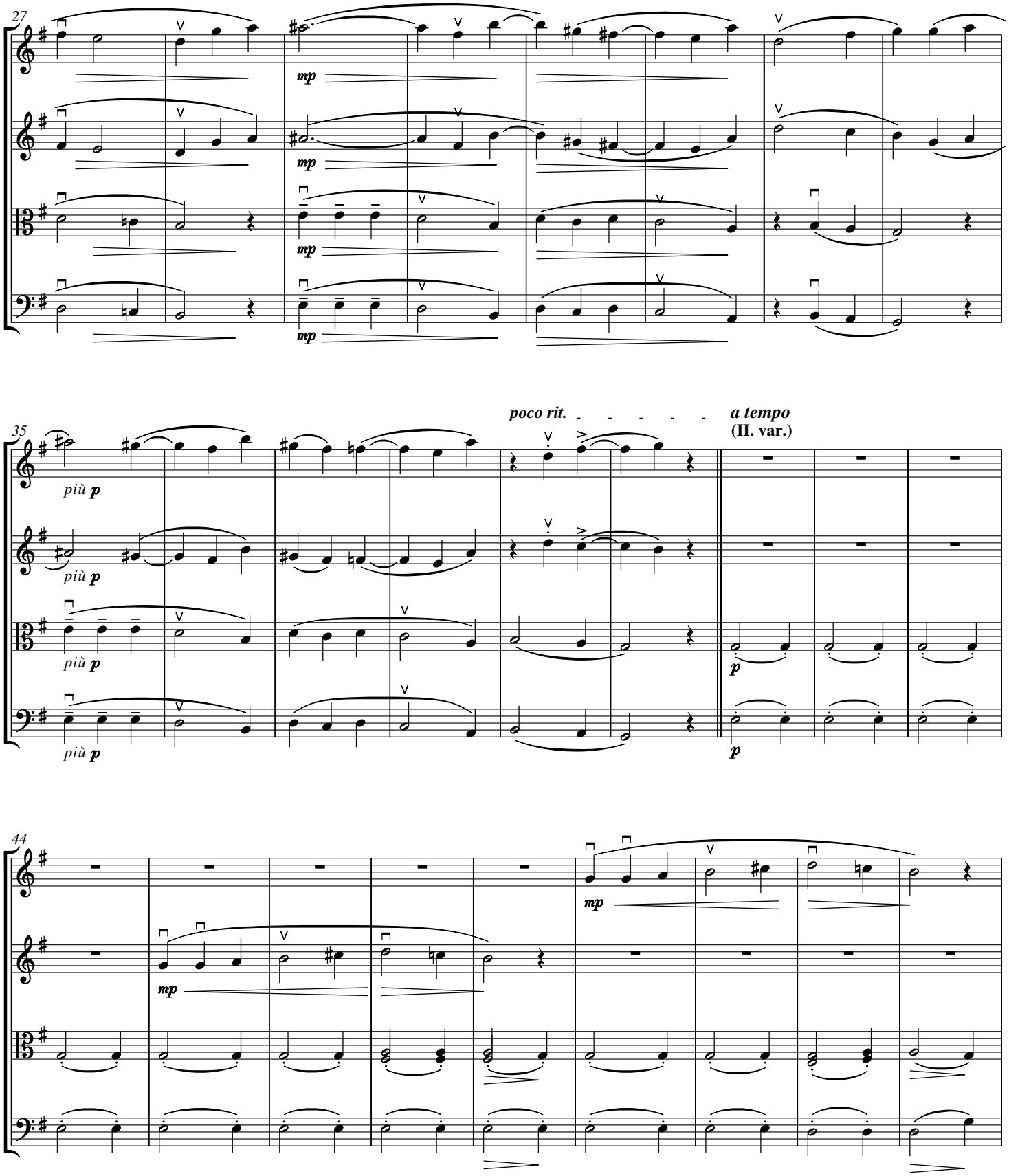


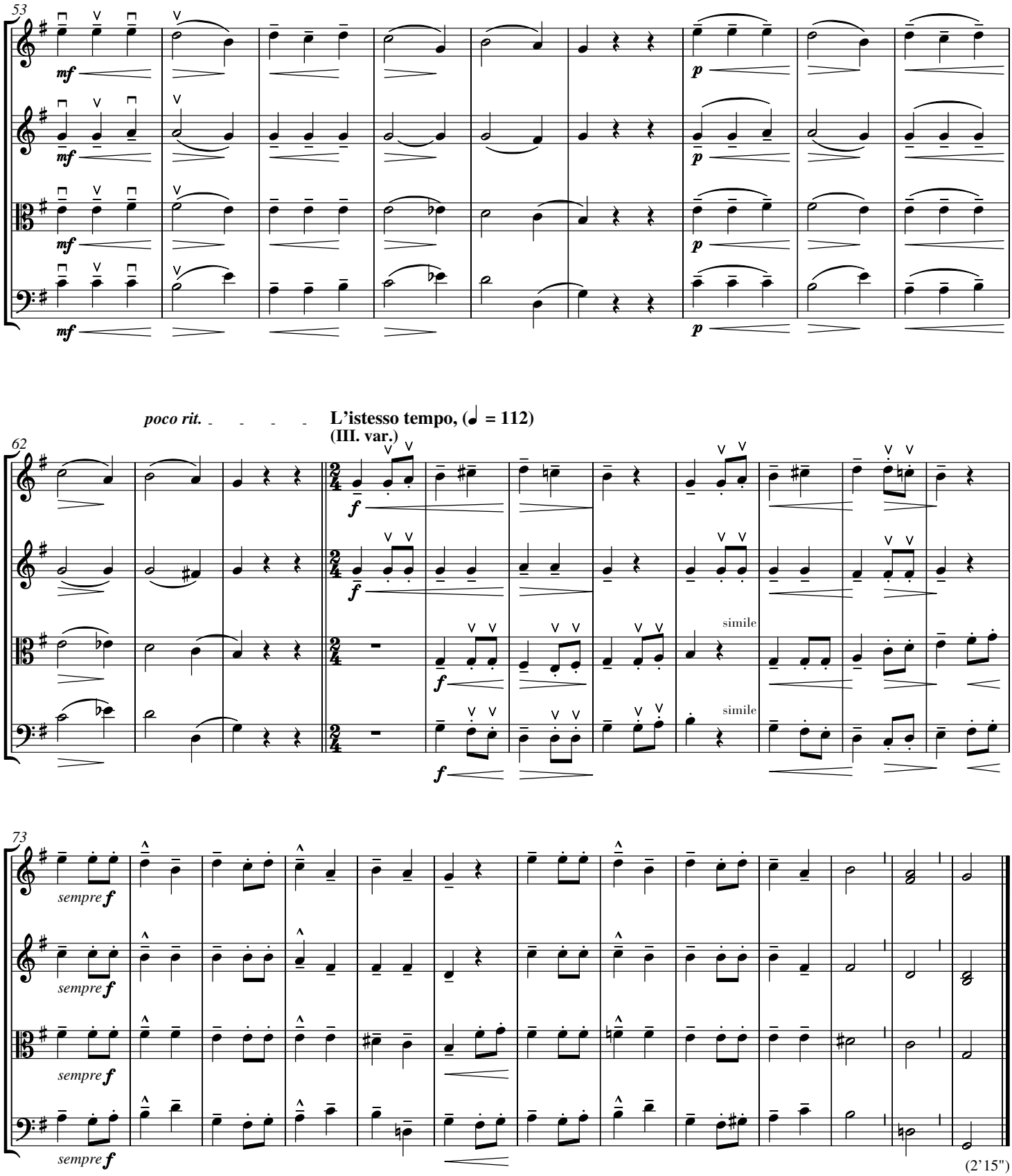
(30")

45. Variations

Molto andante, ♩ = 112
(Tema)




27
mp
mp
mp
mp
35
poco rit.
a tempo
(II. var.)
più p
più p
più p
più p
p
p
44
mp
mp


53
mf
p
poco rit.
L'istesso tempo, (♩ = 112)
(III. var.)
62
f
simile
73
sempre f
(2'15")

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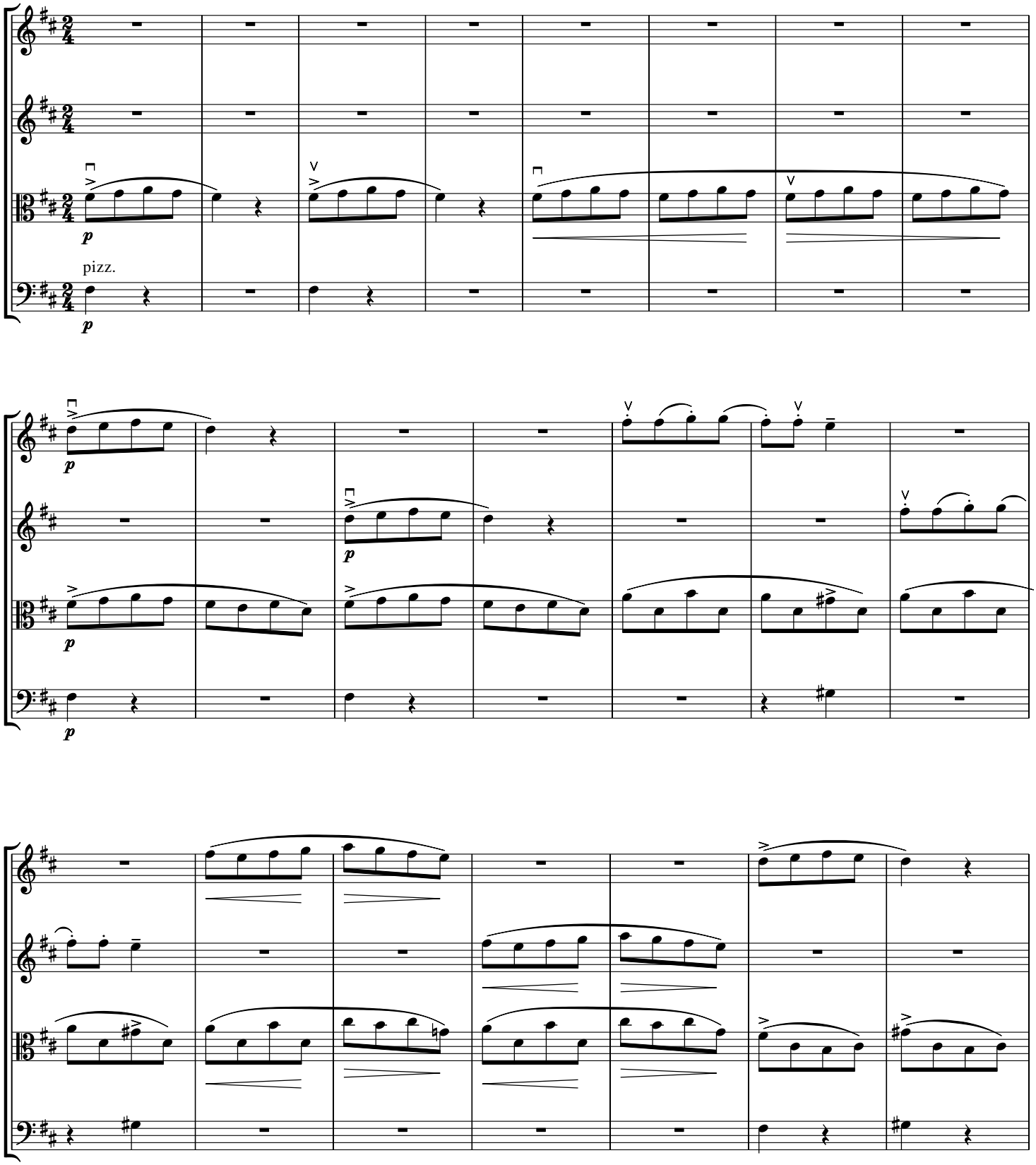
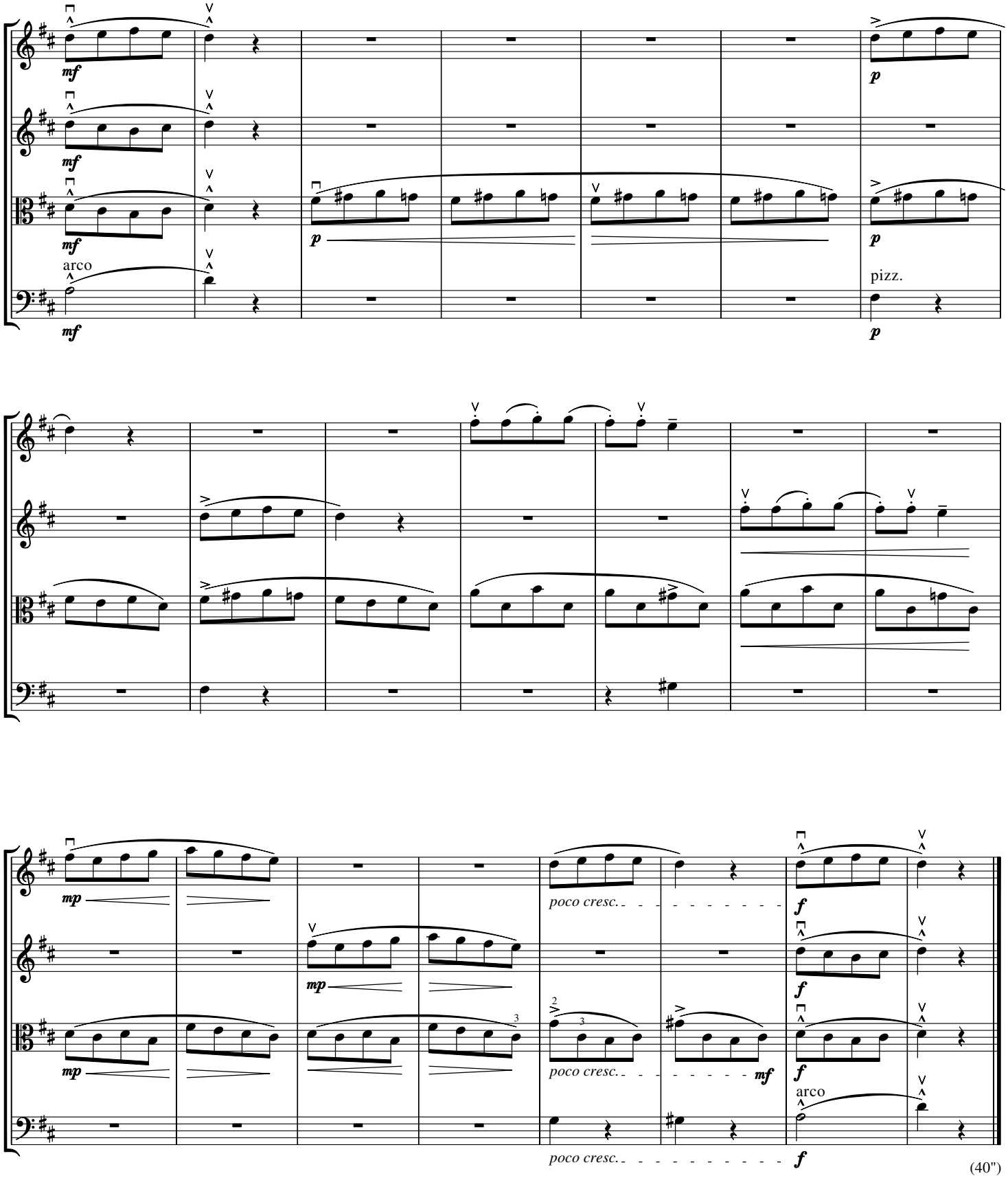
46. Round Dance I

Allegro, ♩ = 138

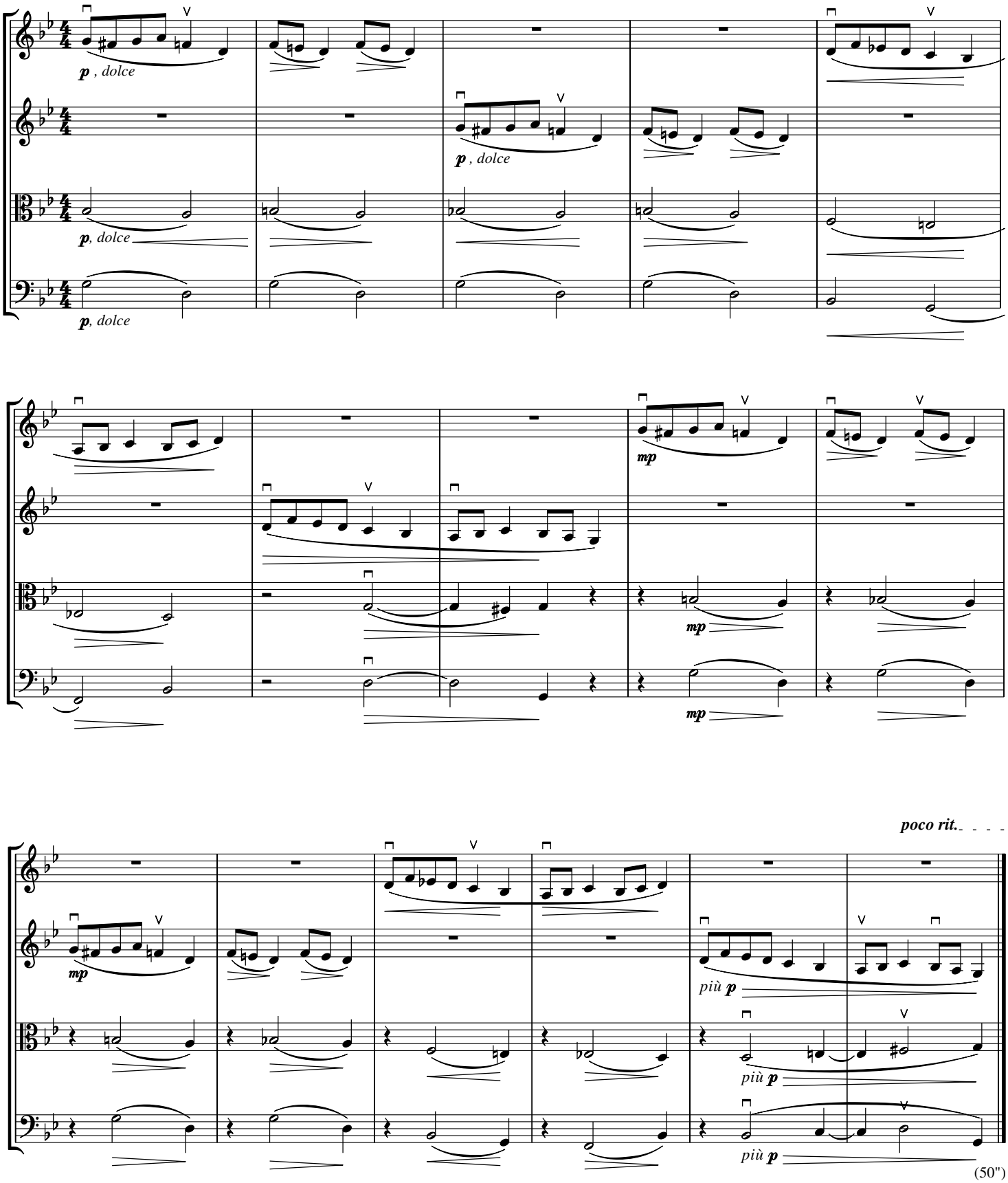



mf
mf
mf
arco
mf
p
p
p
pizz.
p
mp
mp
mp
poco cresc.
poco cresc.
poco cresc.
mf
f
f
f
arco
f

(40")

47. Sorrow

Andante, ♩ = 84



(50")

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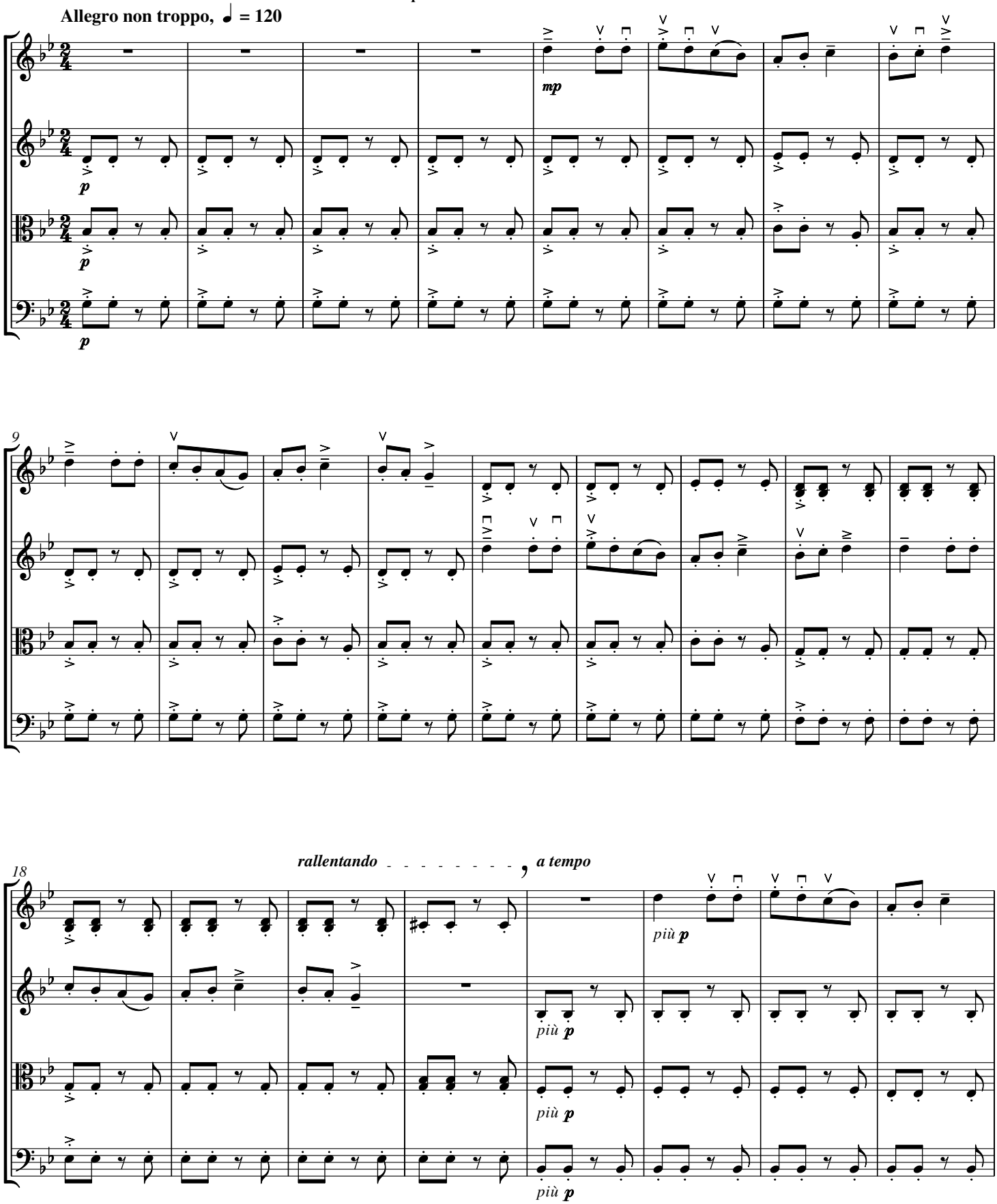
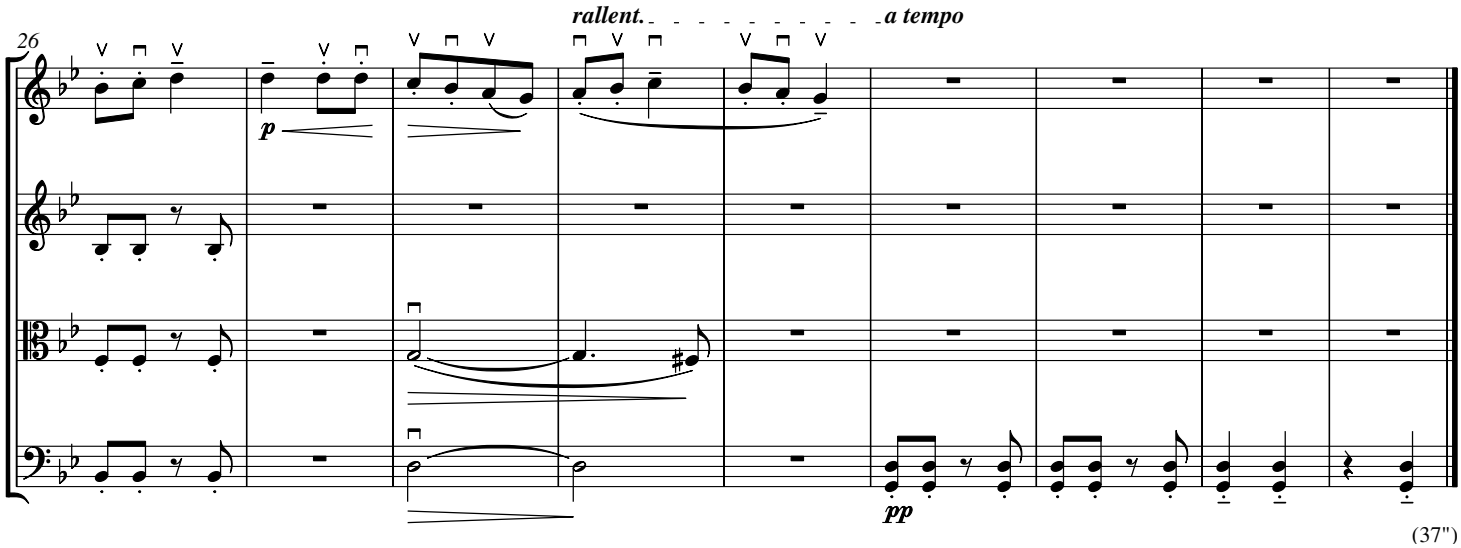
48. Dance

There sits a pair of doves, and kiss and kiss



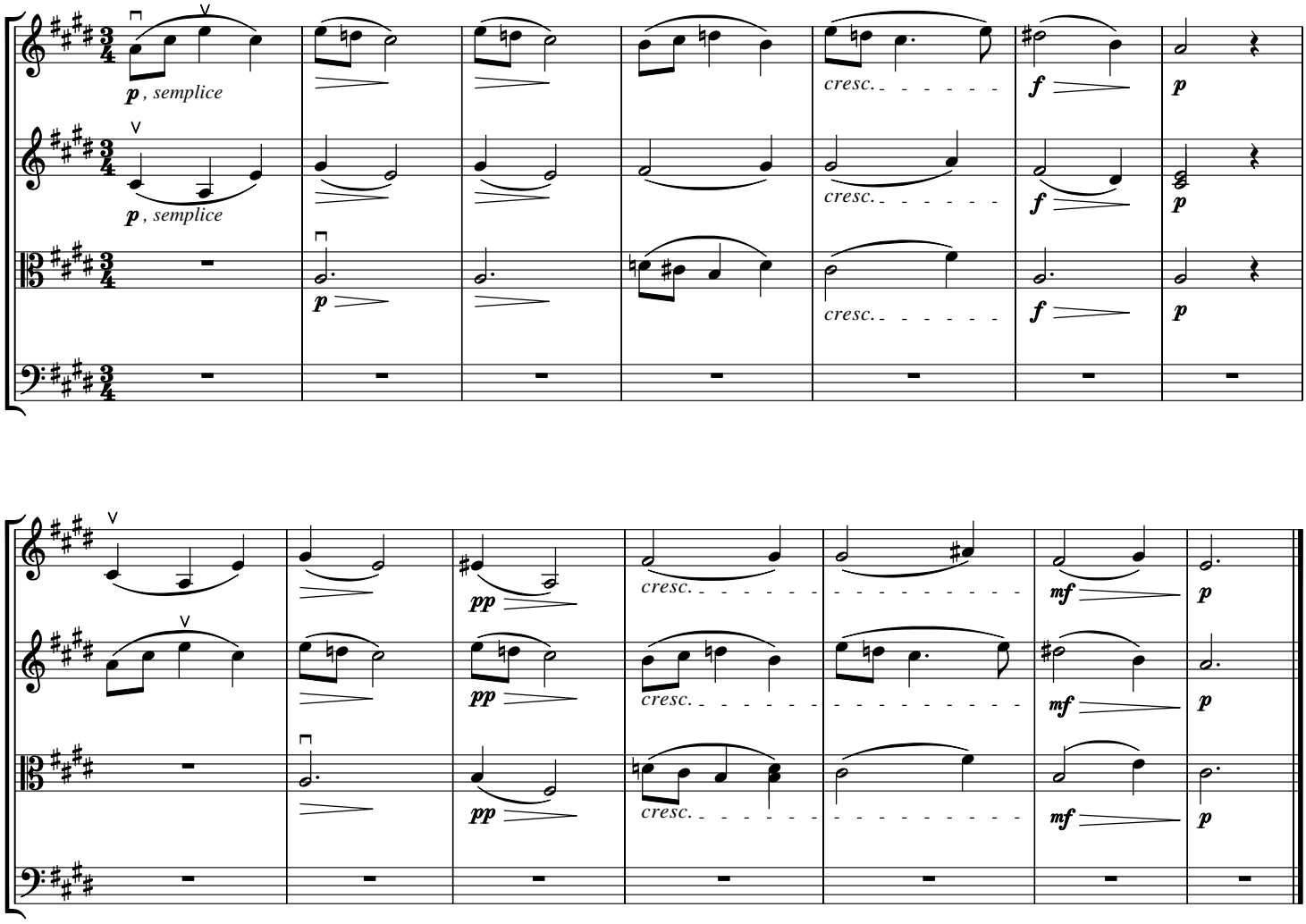


(37")

49. Round Dance in Spring

Grow green, bushes and flower, only flower,
Shrubs growing at the island's edge, the island's edge.

Andante, ♩ = 88

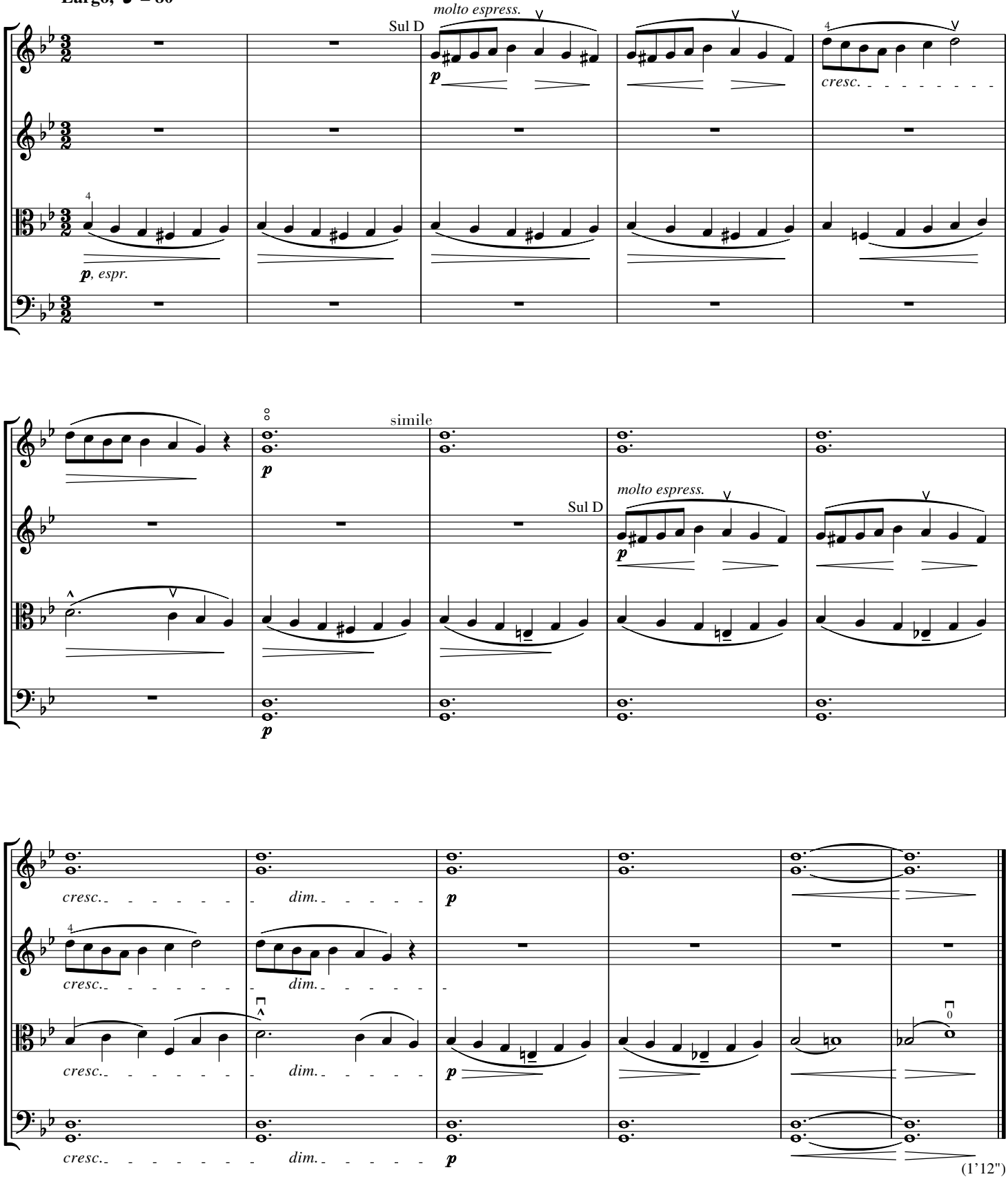


(30")

50. Funeral Song

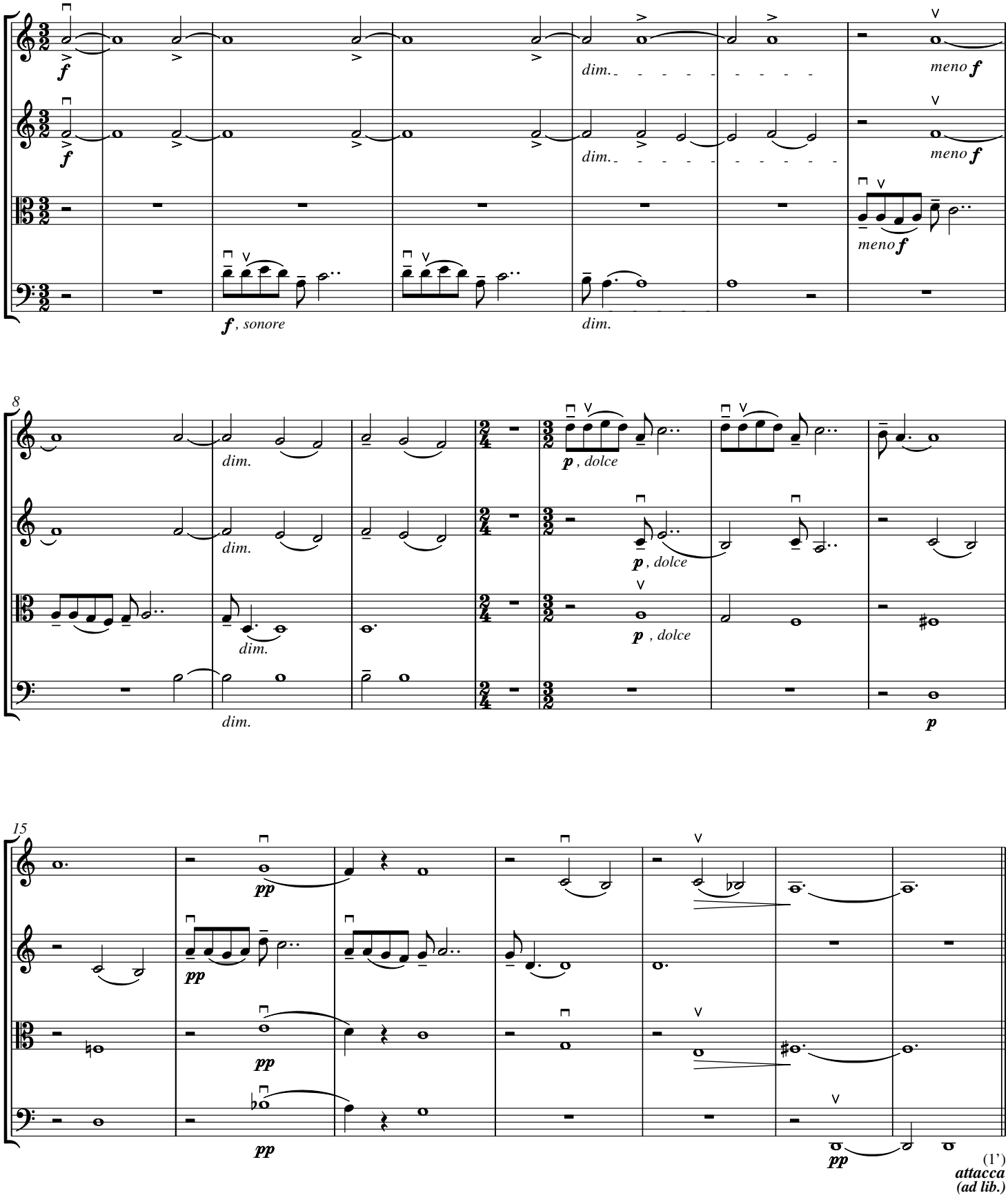
A Young Girl's Mourning Song for a Dead Soldier

Largo, ♩ = 80

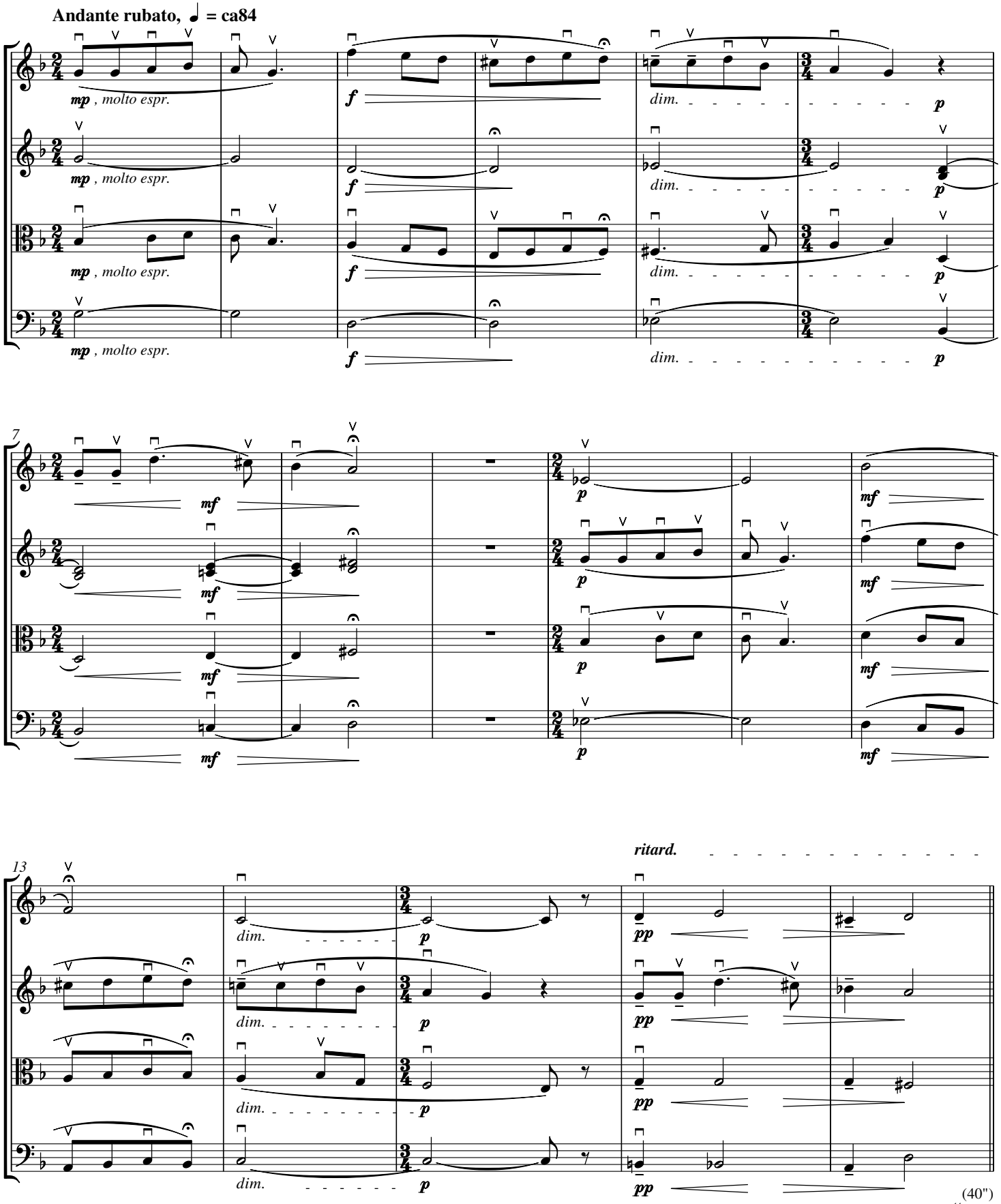


51.

Lento, 𝅗𝅥 = 58

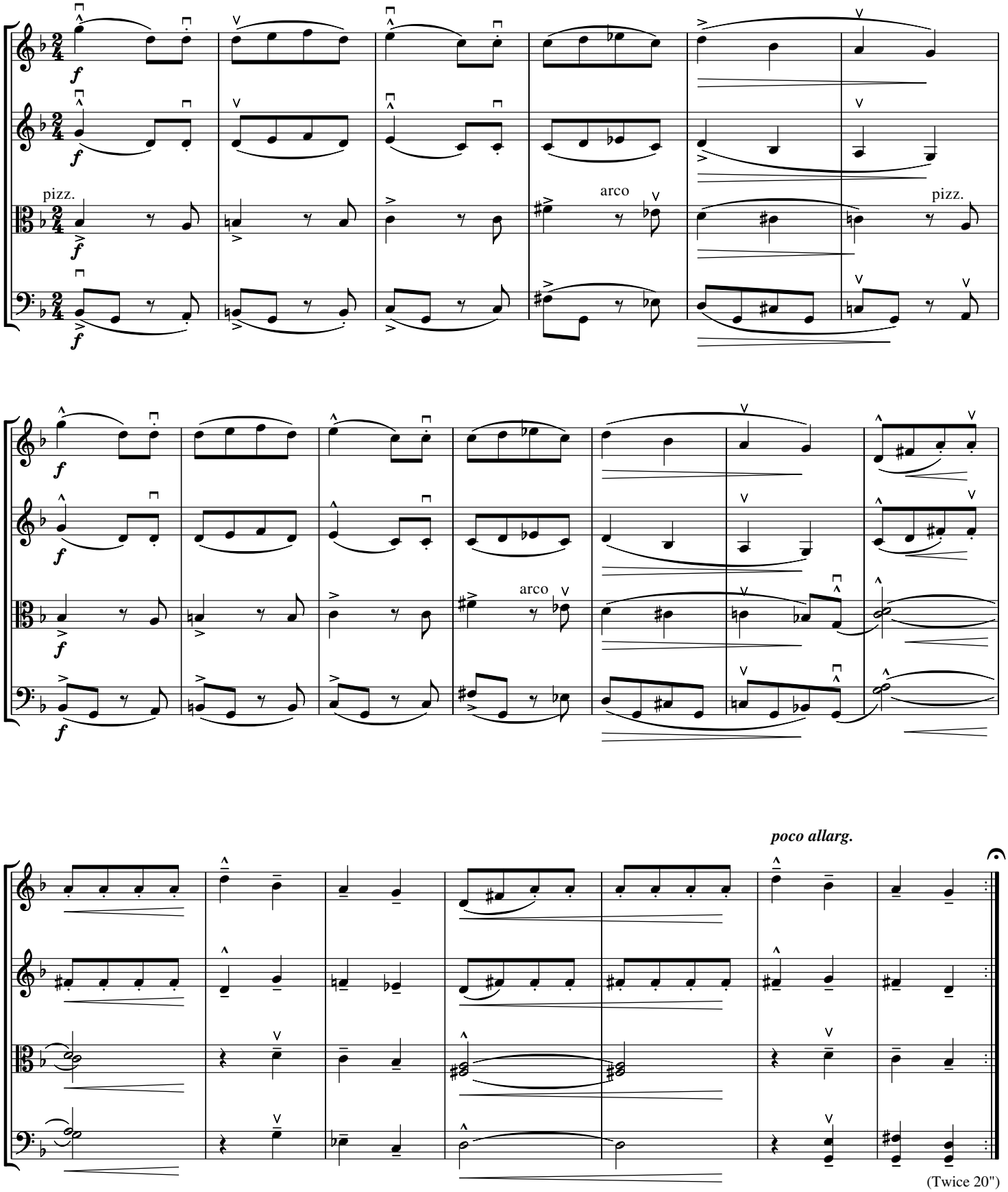


52.


Andante rubato, ♩ = ca84
mp , molto espr.
f
dim.
p
7
mf
13
ritard.
pp
(40")
attacca
(ad lib.)

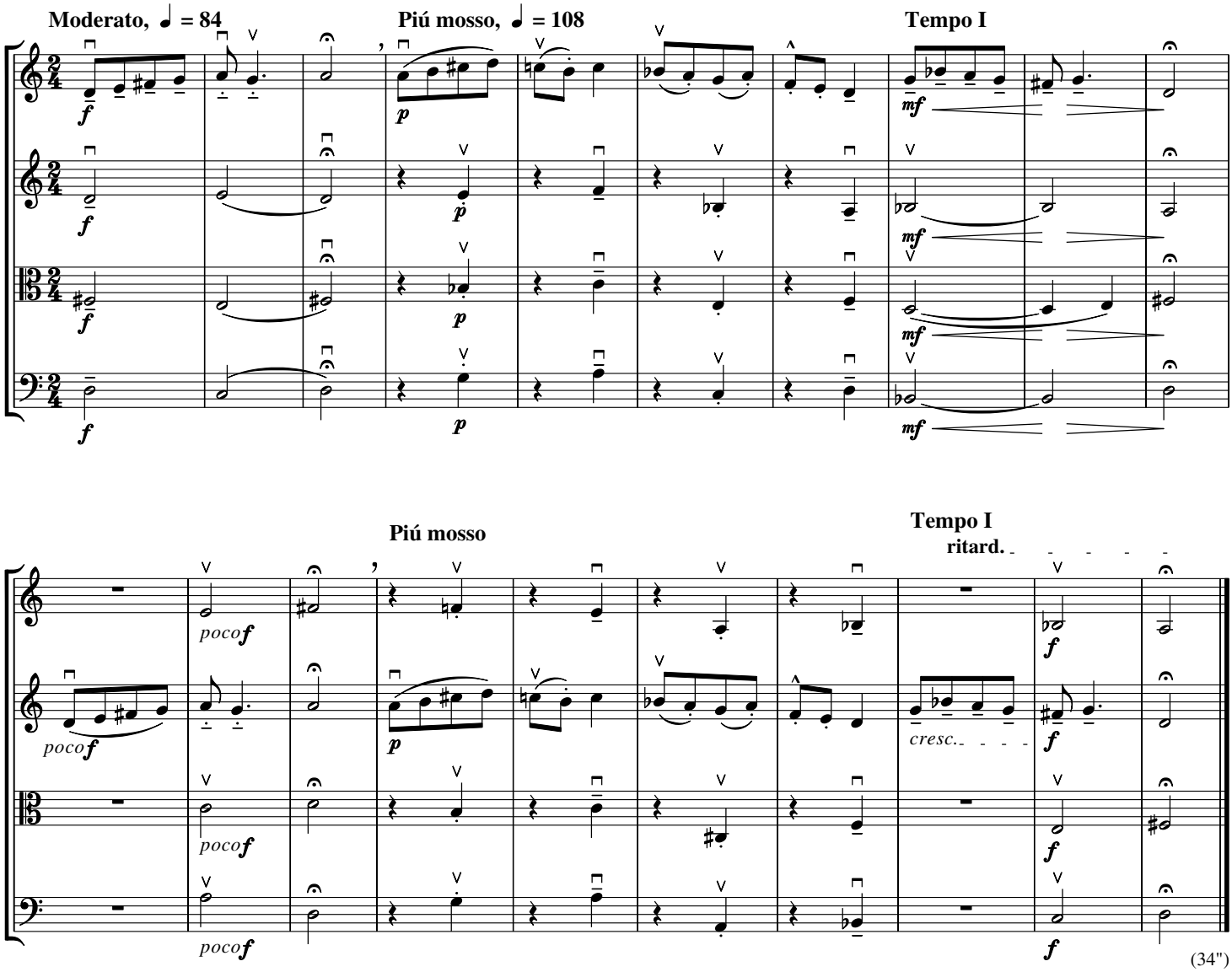
53.

Allegro, ♩ = 132



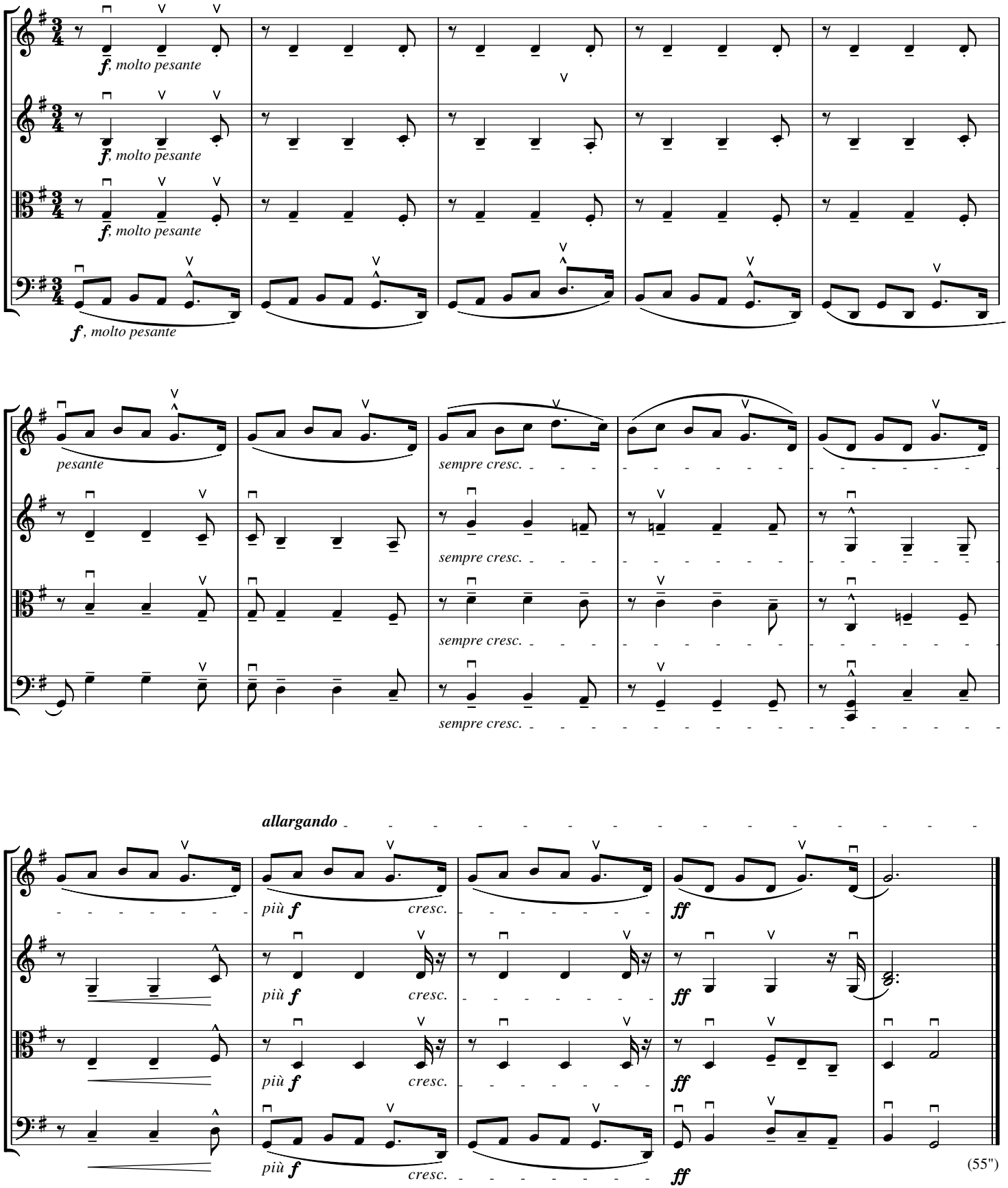
(Twice 20")

54.


Moderato, ♩ = 84
Piú mosso, ♩ = 108
Tempo I
Piú mosso
Tempo I
ritard.
poco f
cresc.
(34")

55. Bagpipe I

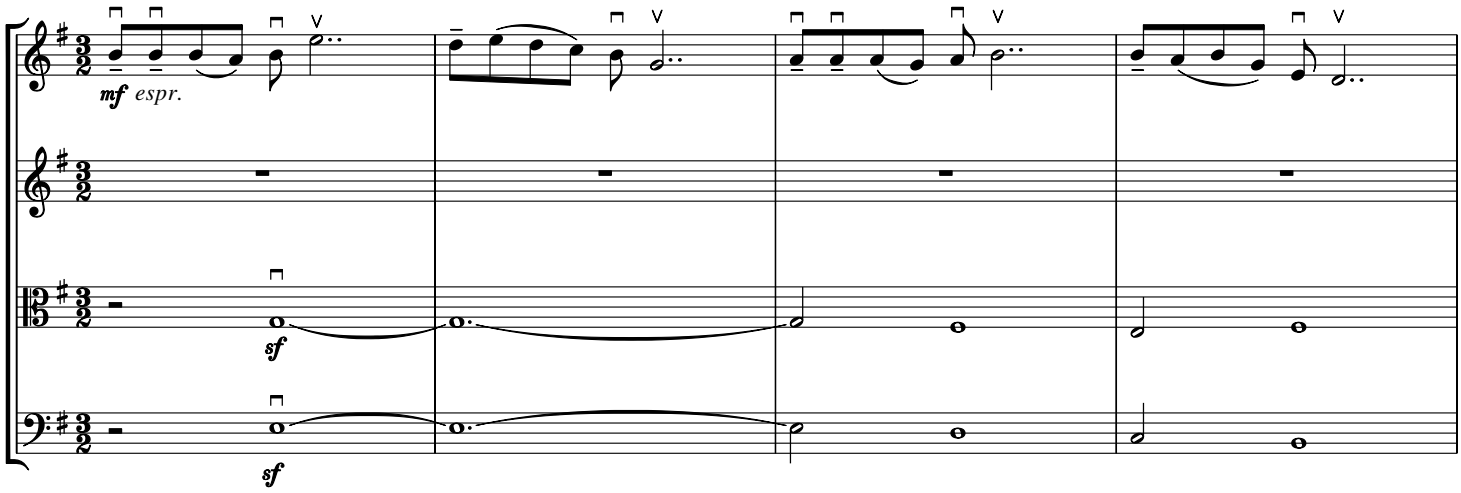
Molto tranquillo, ♩ = 52



(55")

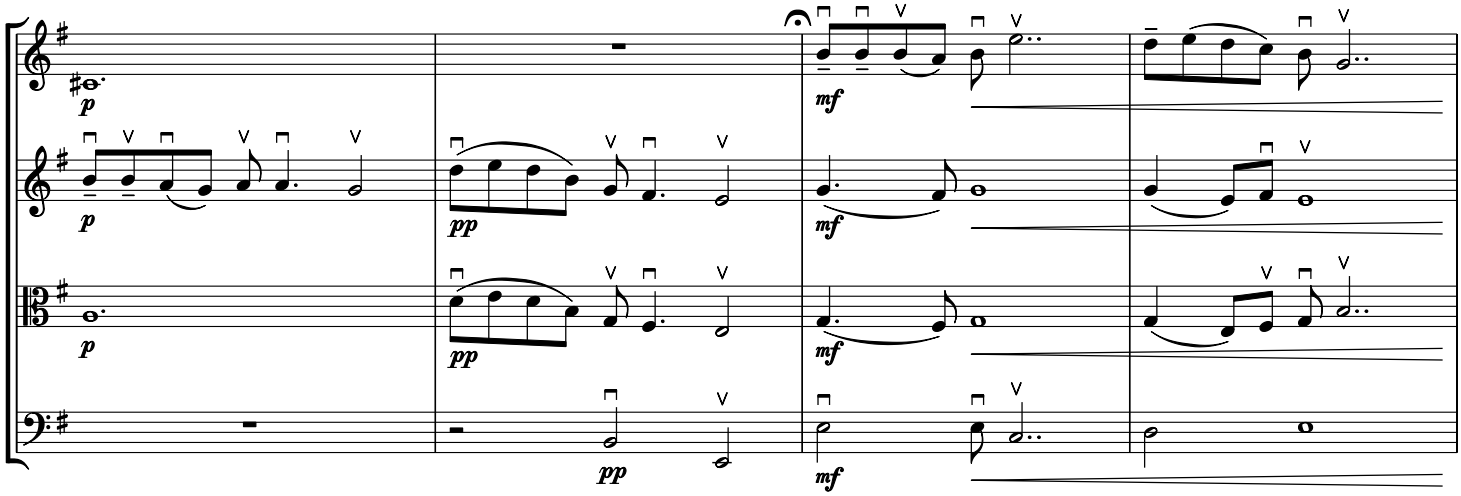
56. Lament

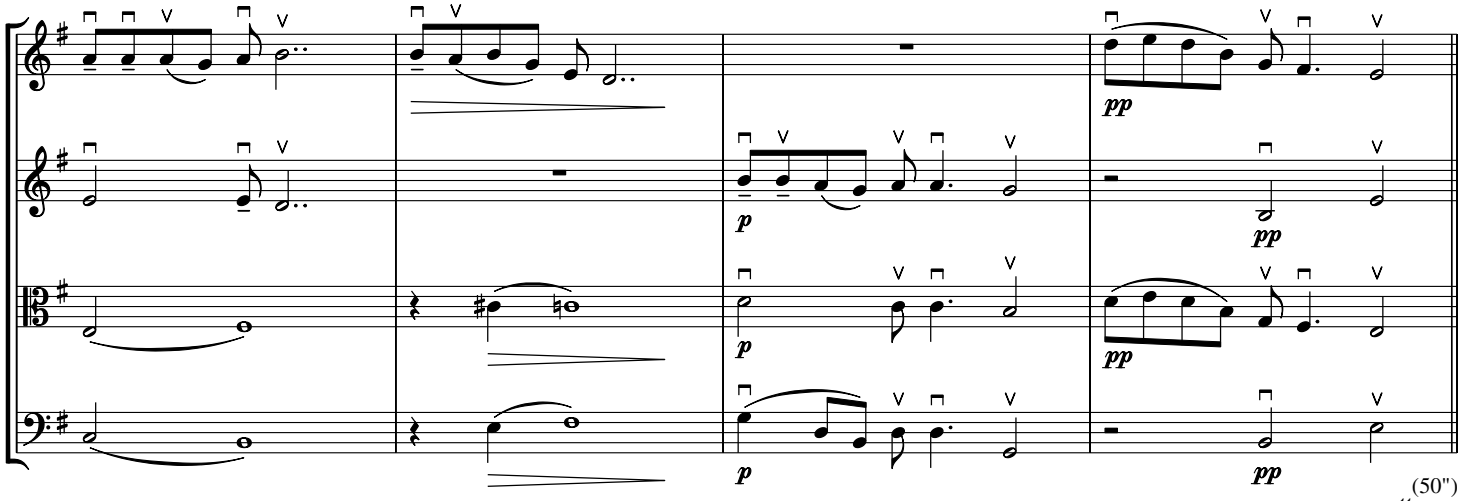
Lento, ♩ = 100



Piú lento, ♩=84

Tempo I.

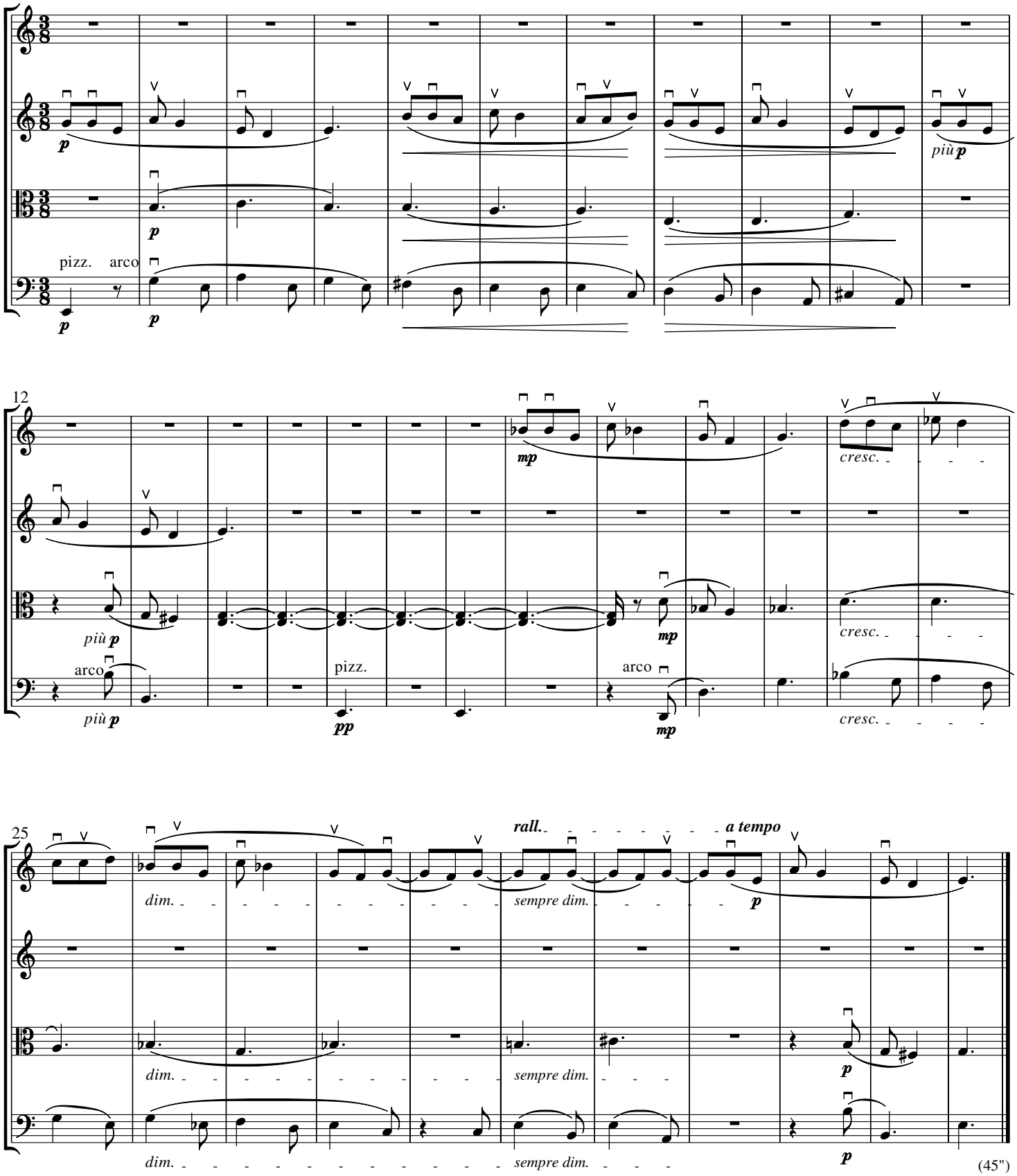




(50")
attacca
(ad lib.)

57. Ballad

Andante, ♩. = 50



(45")

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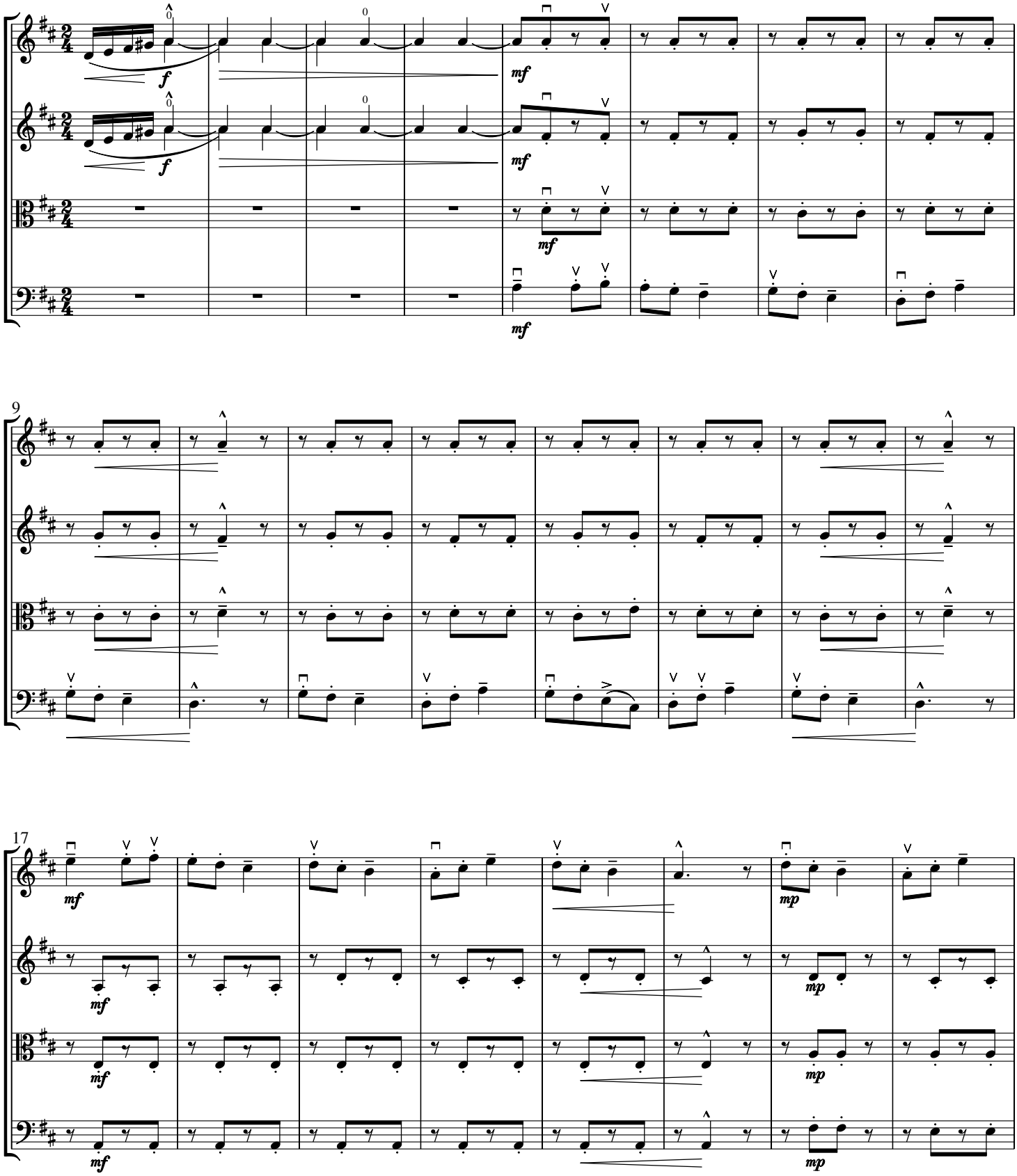
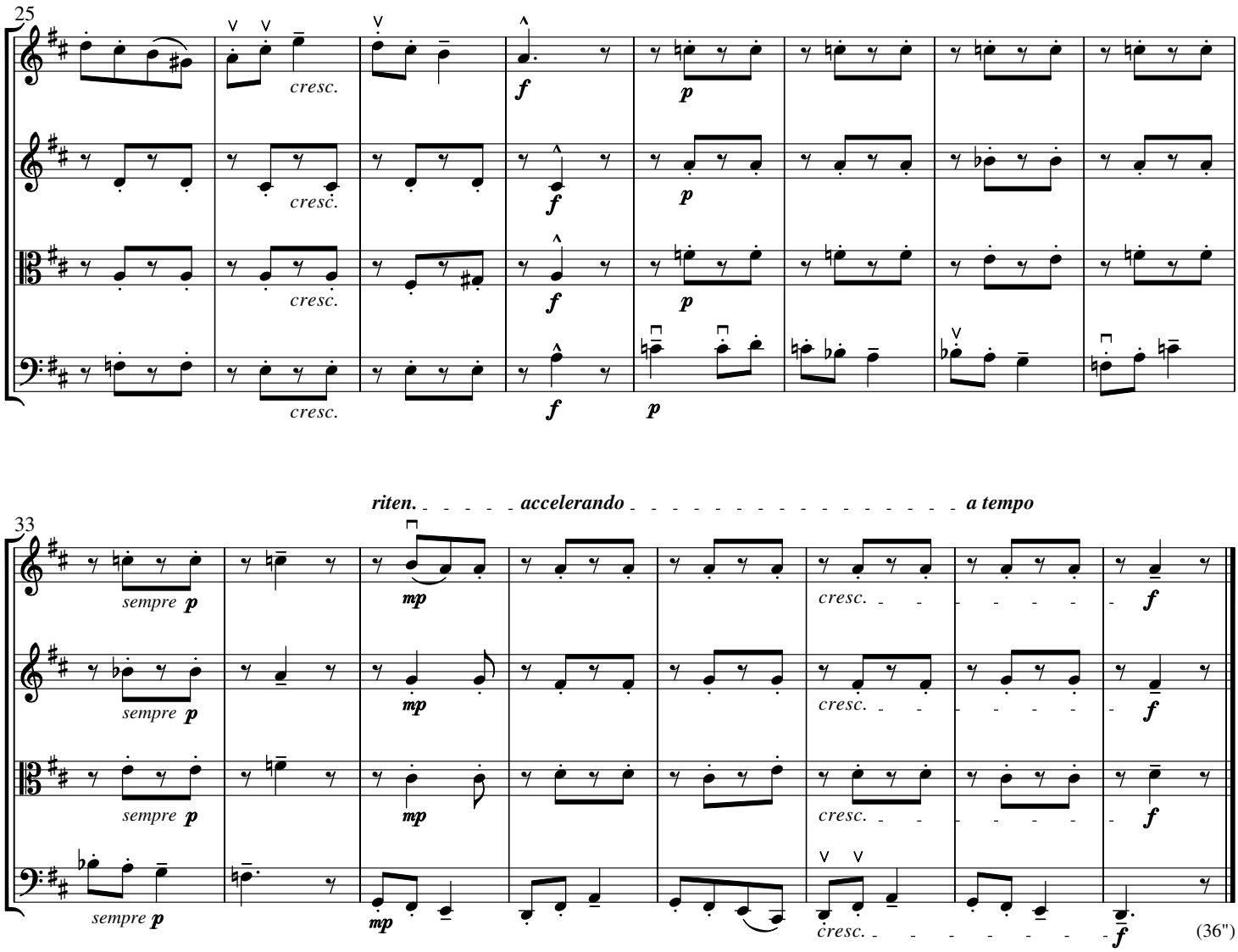
58. Teasing Song

Sostenuto, ♩ = 100

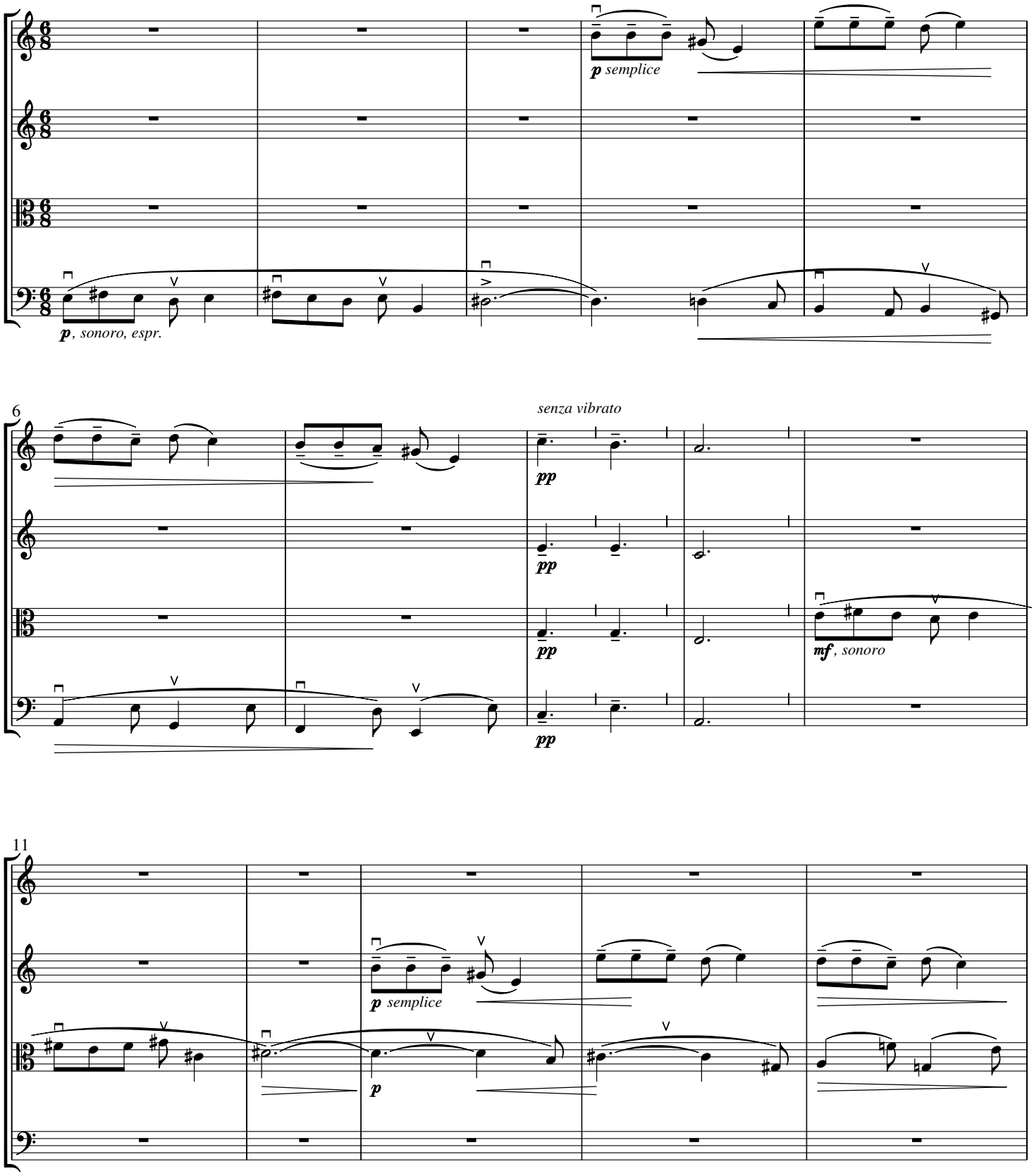
Allegro vivace, ♩ = 144

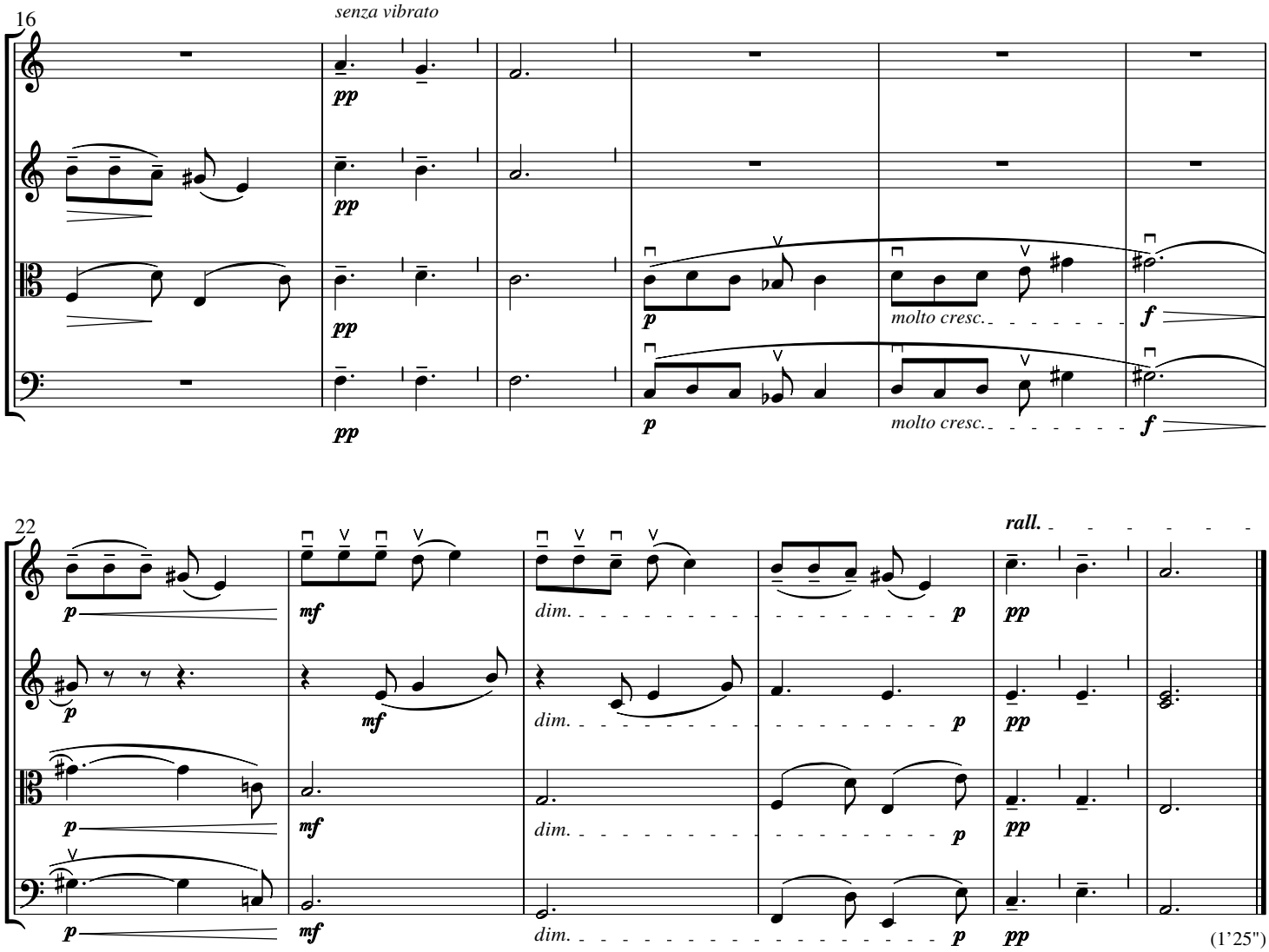



25
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
f
p
riten.
accelerando
a tempo
33
sempre p
mp
cresc.
f
(36")

59. Romance

Assai lento, ♪ = ca 125

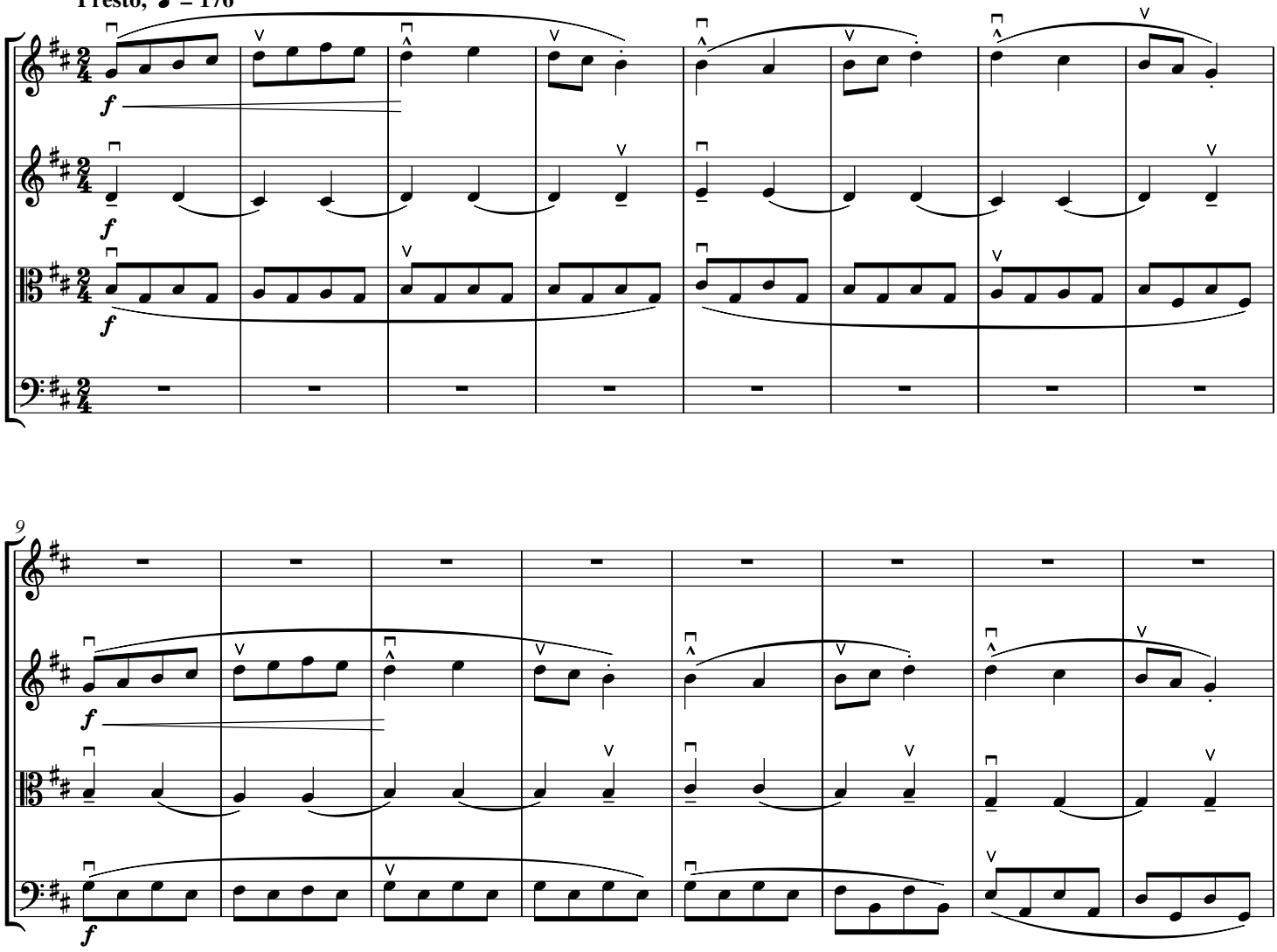



16
senza vibrato
pp
pp
pp
pp
p
molto cresc.
f
p
molto cresc.
f
22
rall.
p
mf
dim.
p
pp
p
mf
dim.
p
pp
p
mf
dim.
p
pp
p
mf
dim.
p
pp
(1'25")

60. Game of Tag

Maiden, don't run to the rosebush in the first light of day...

Presto, ♩ = 176



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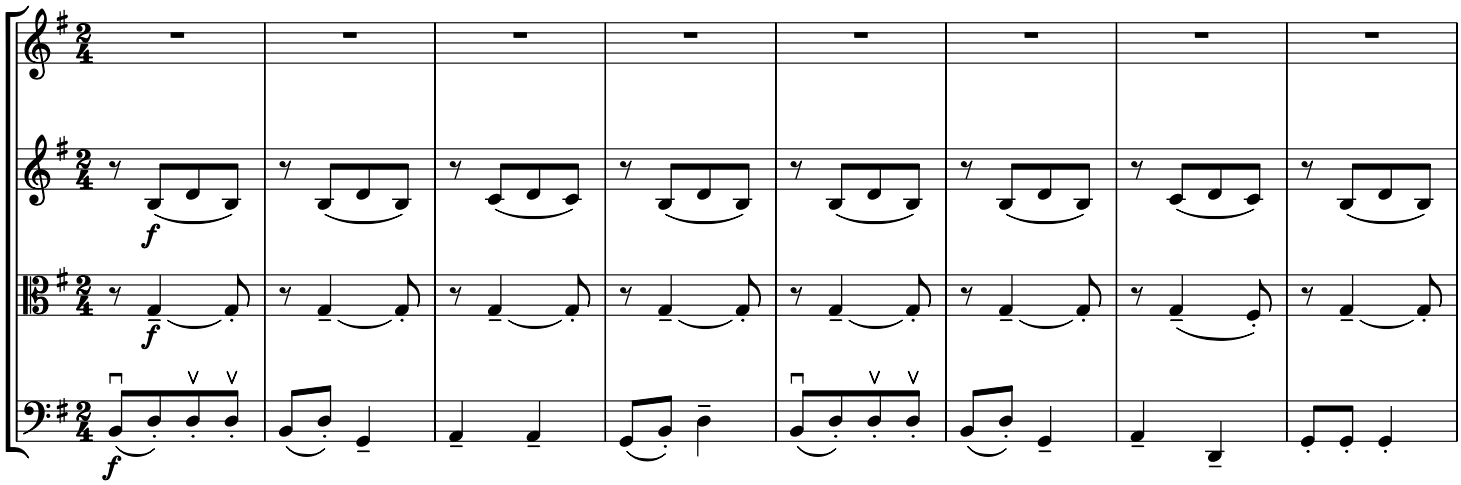
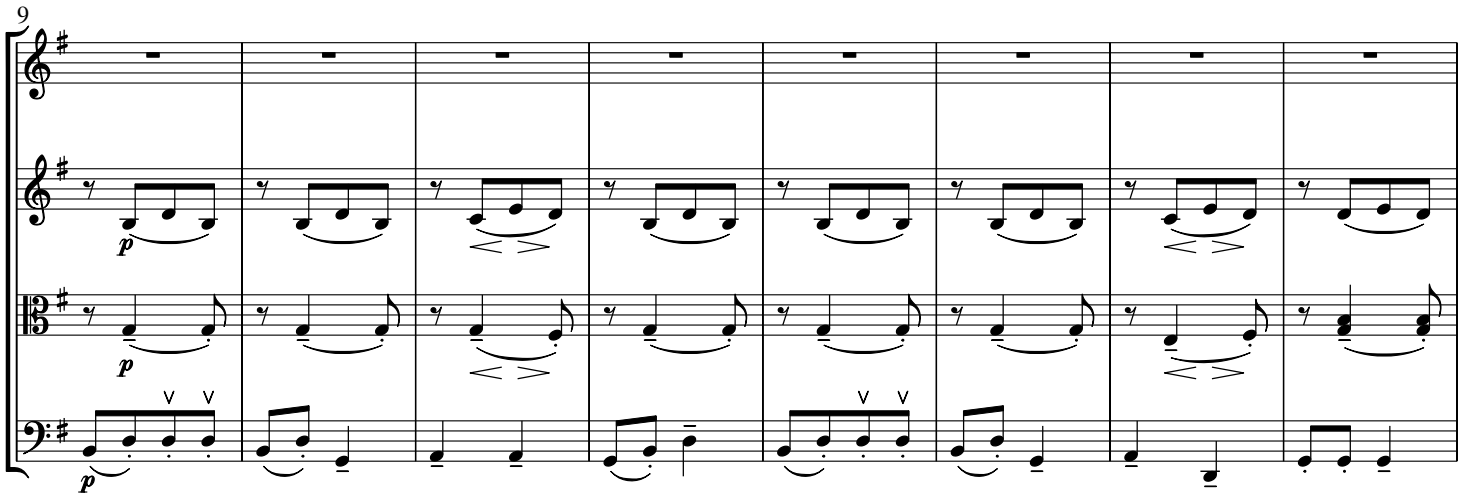
61. The Glutton

Joking Song

Allegro moderato, ♩ = 126



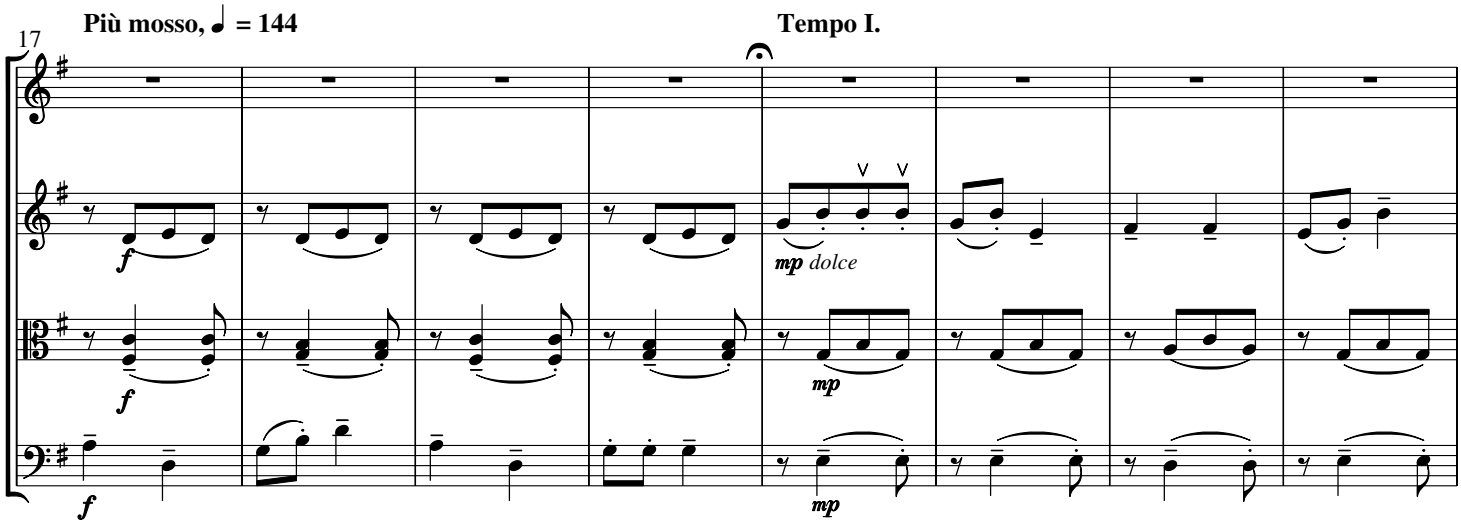
9

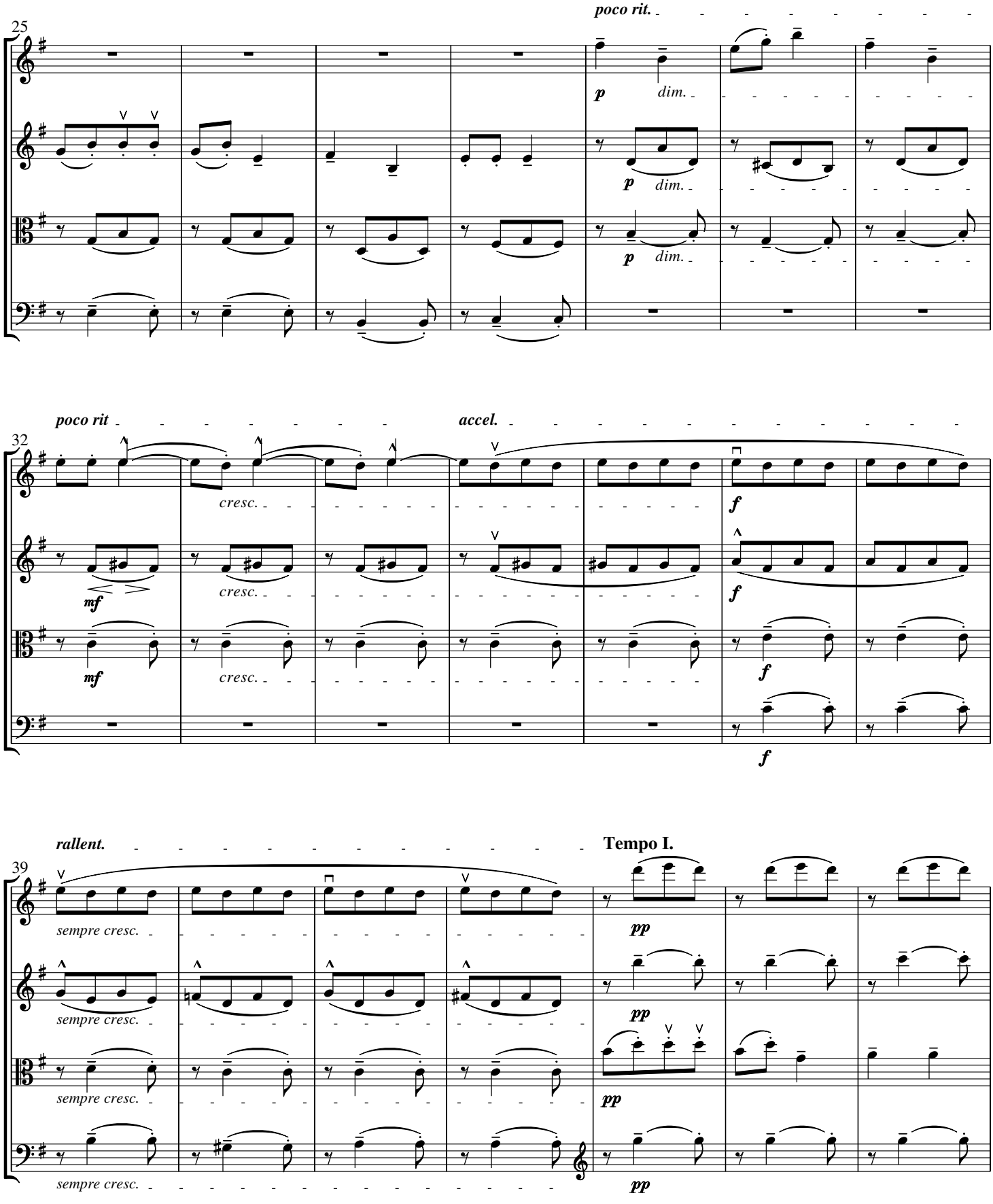


17

Più mosso, ♩ = 144

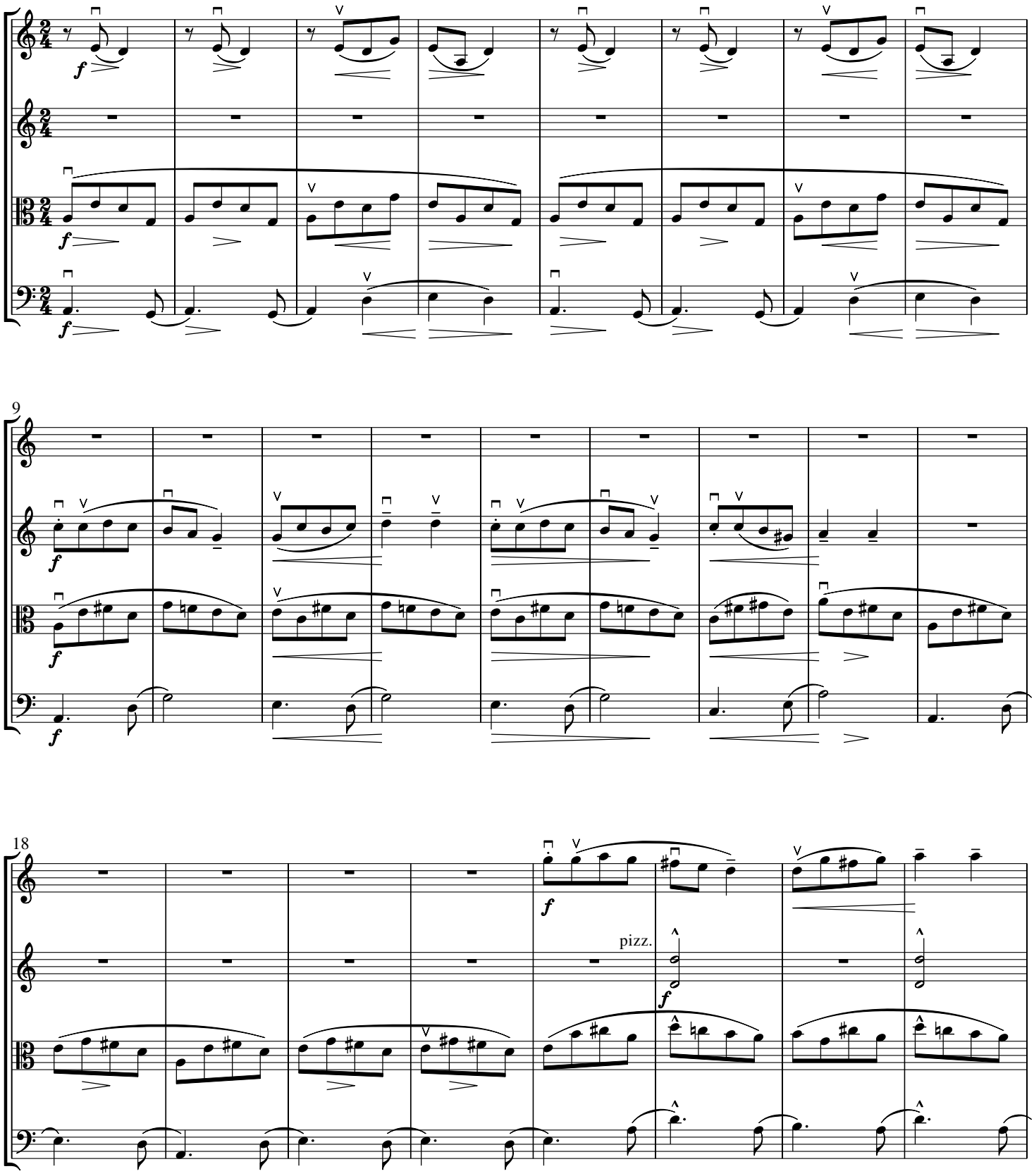
Tempo I.

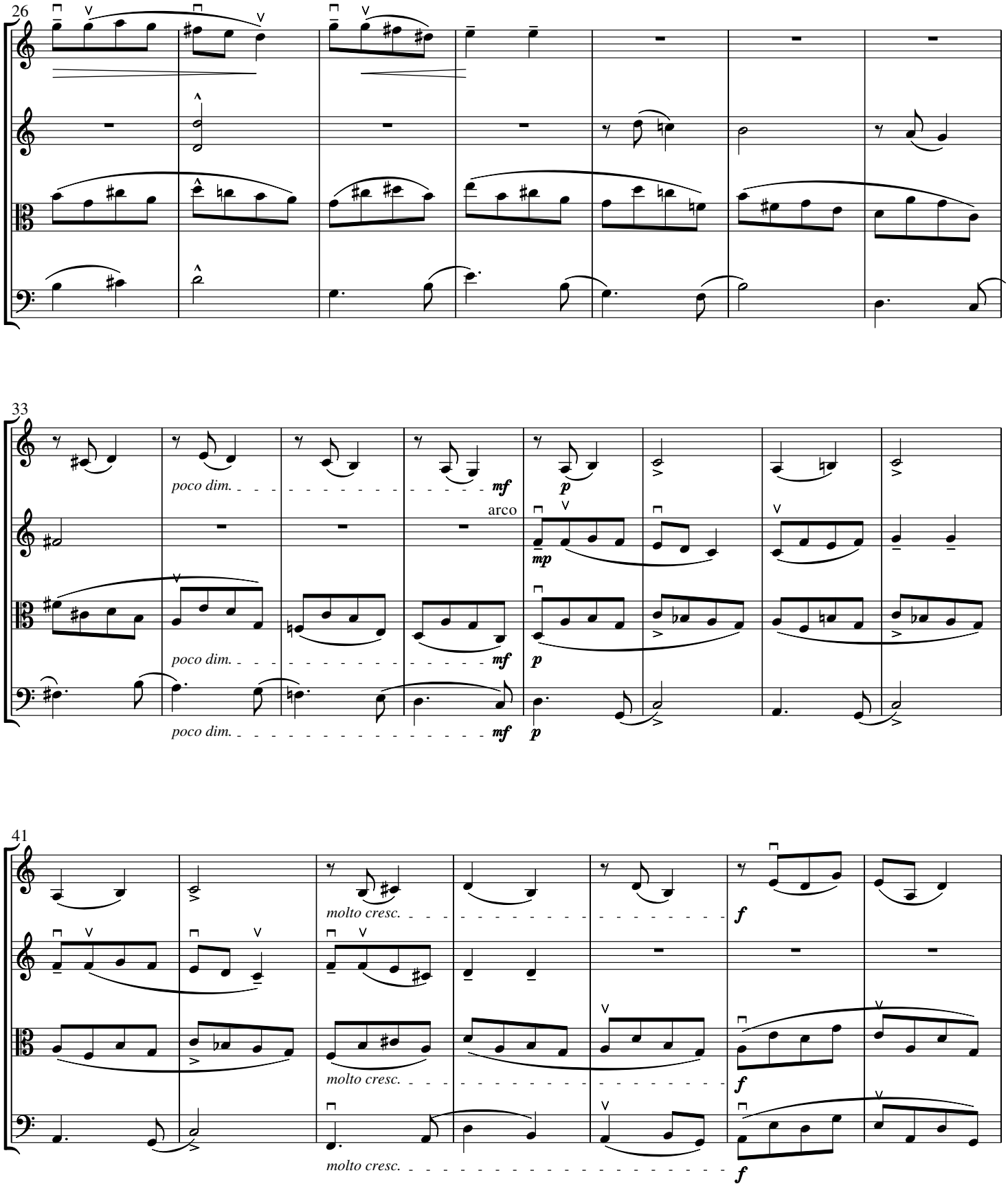


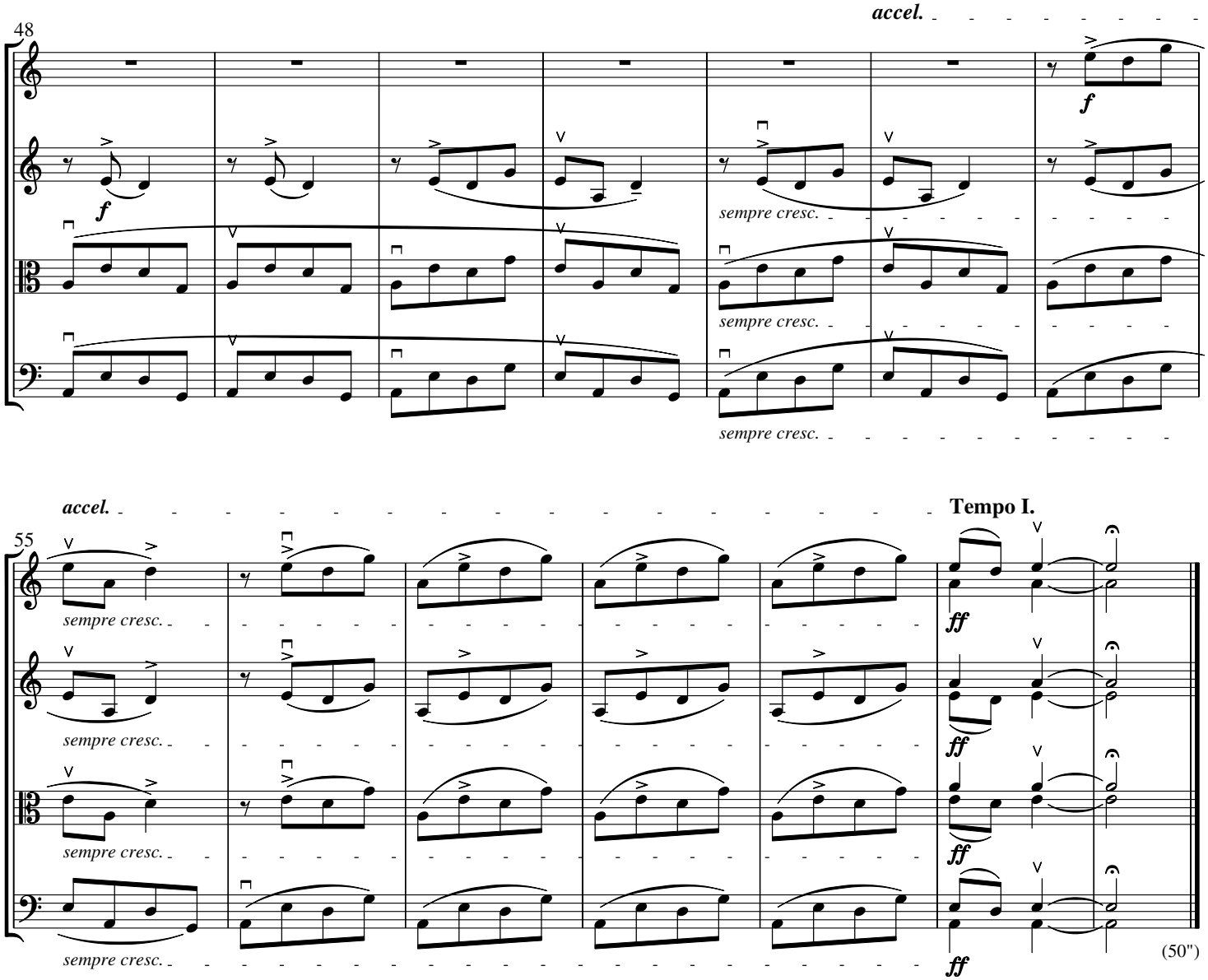

25
poco rit.
p
dim.
p
dim.
p
dim.
poco rit
accel.
32
cresc.
mf
cresc.
mf
cresc.
f
f
f
f
rallent.
Tempo I.
39
sempre cresc.
sempre cresc.
sempre cresc.
sempre cresc.
pp
pp
pp
pp

62. Song of the Glutton

Molto allegro, ♩ = 152

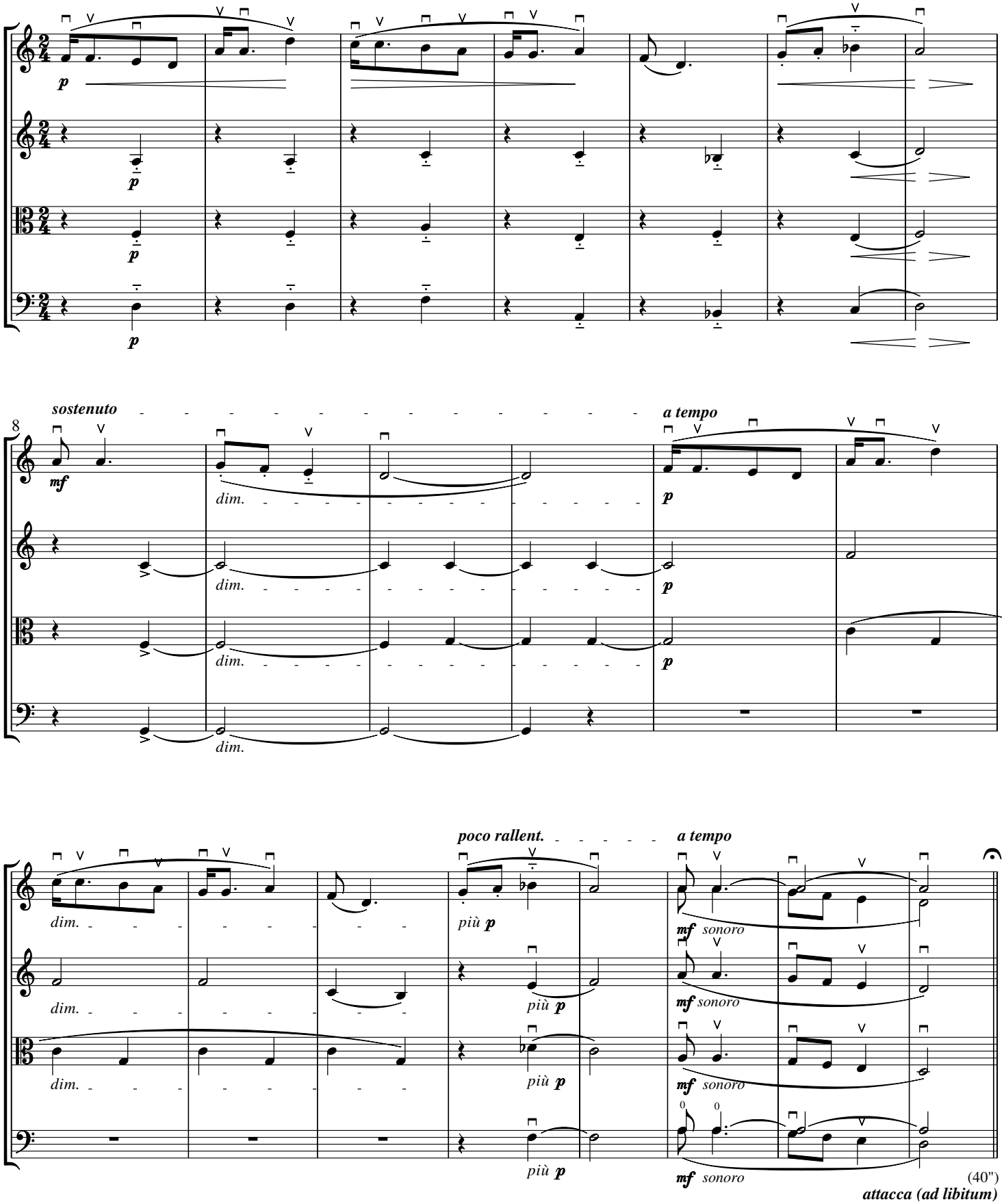



26
33
poco dim.
mf
p
arco
mp
poco dim.
mf
p
poco dim.
mf
p
41
molto cresc.
f
molto cresc.
f
molto cresc.
f

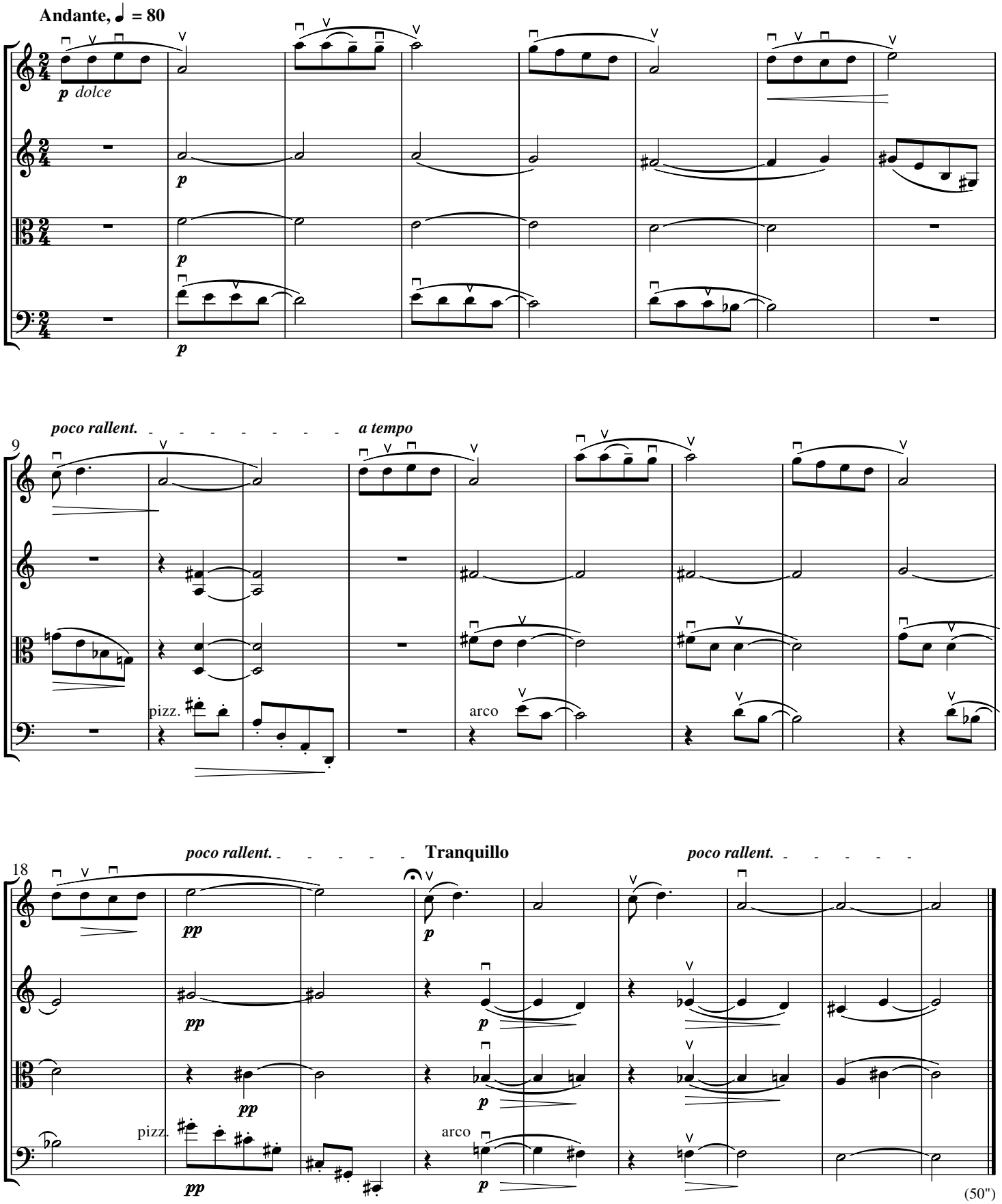

accel.
48
f
sempre cresc.
sempre cresc.
sempre cresc.
accel.
Tempo I.
55
sempre cresc.
sempre cresc.
sempre cresc.
sempre cresc.
ff
ff
ff
ff
(50")

63.

Andante tranquillo, ♩ = 72

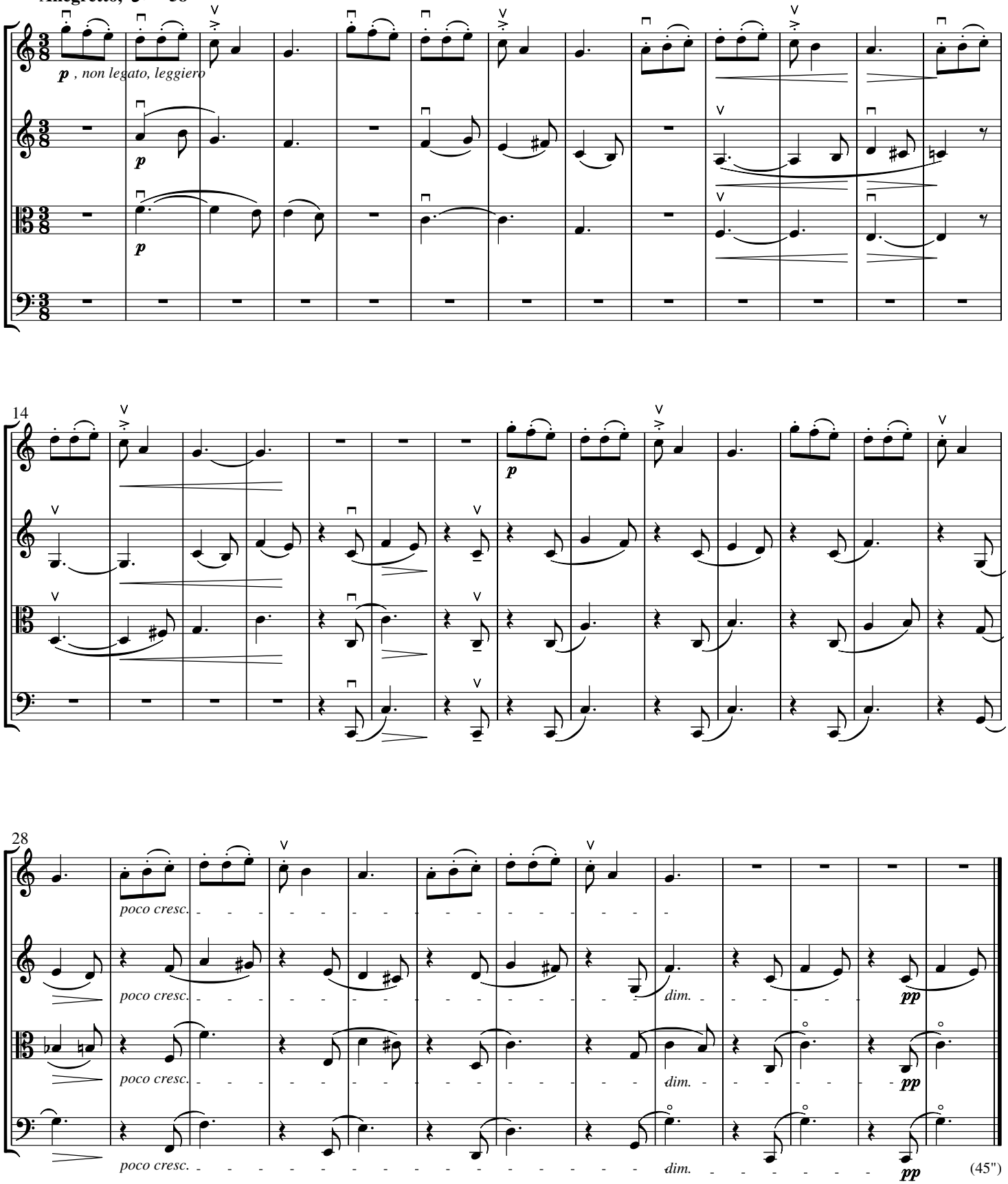


64.

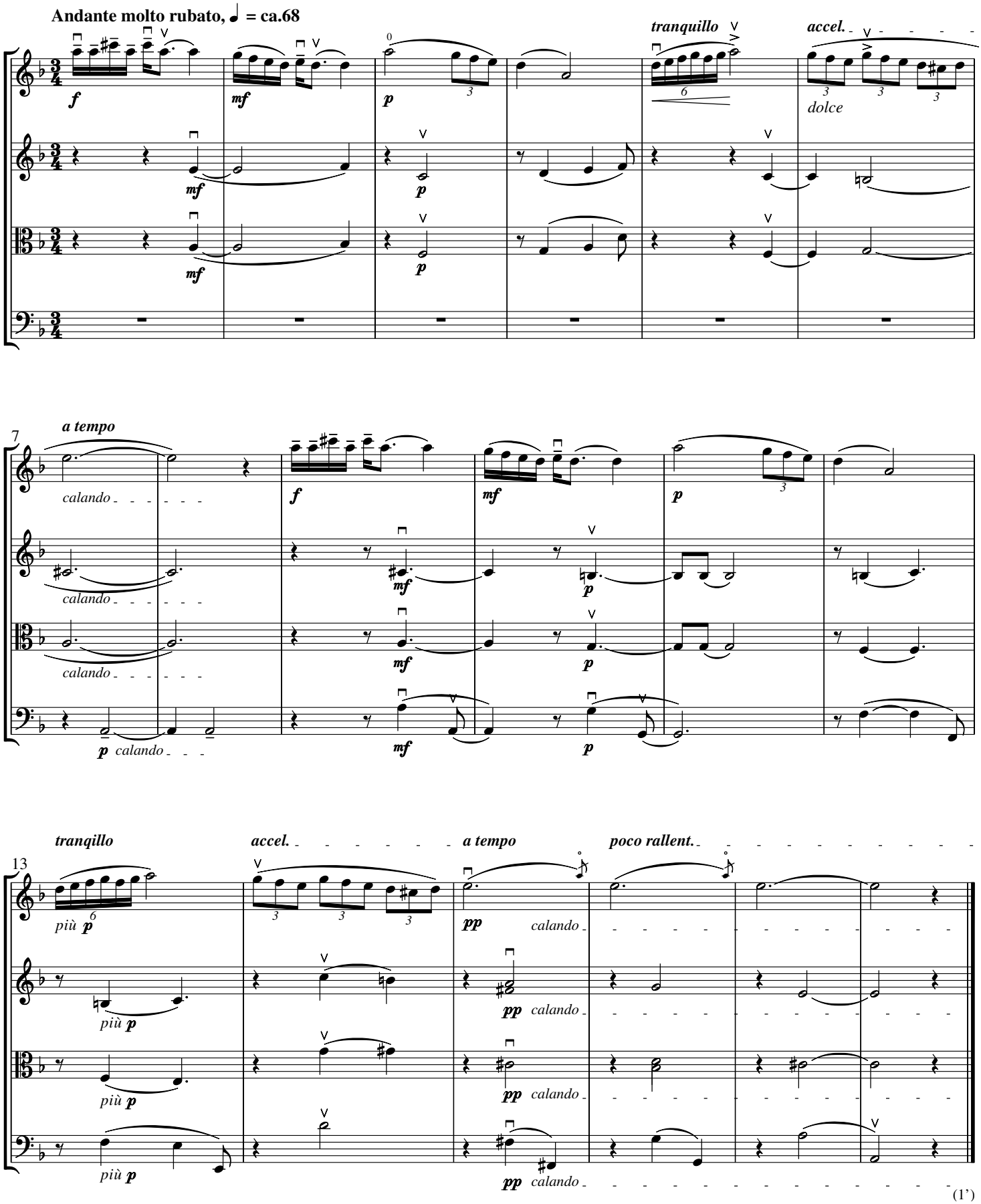

Andante, ♩ = 80
p dolce
p
p
p
poco rallent.
a tempo
9
pizz.
arco
poco rallent.
Tranquillo
poco rallent.
18
pp
pp
pp
pizz.
pp
p
p
p
arco
p
(50")

65. Scherzando

Allegretto, ♩. = 58



66. The Flute of the Slovak Shepherd



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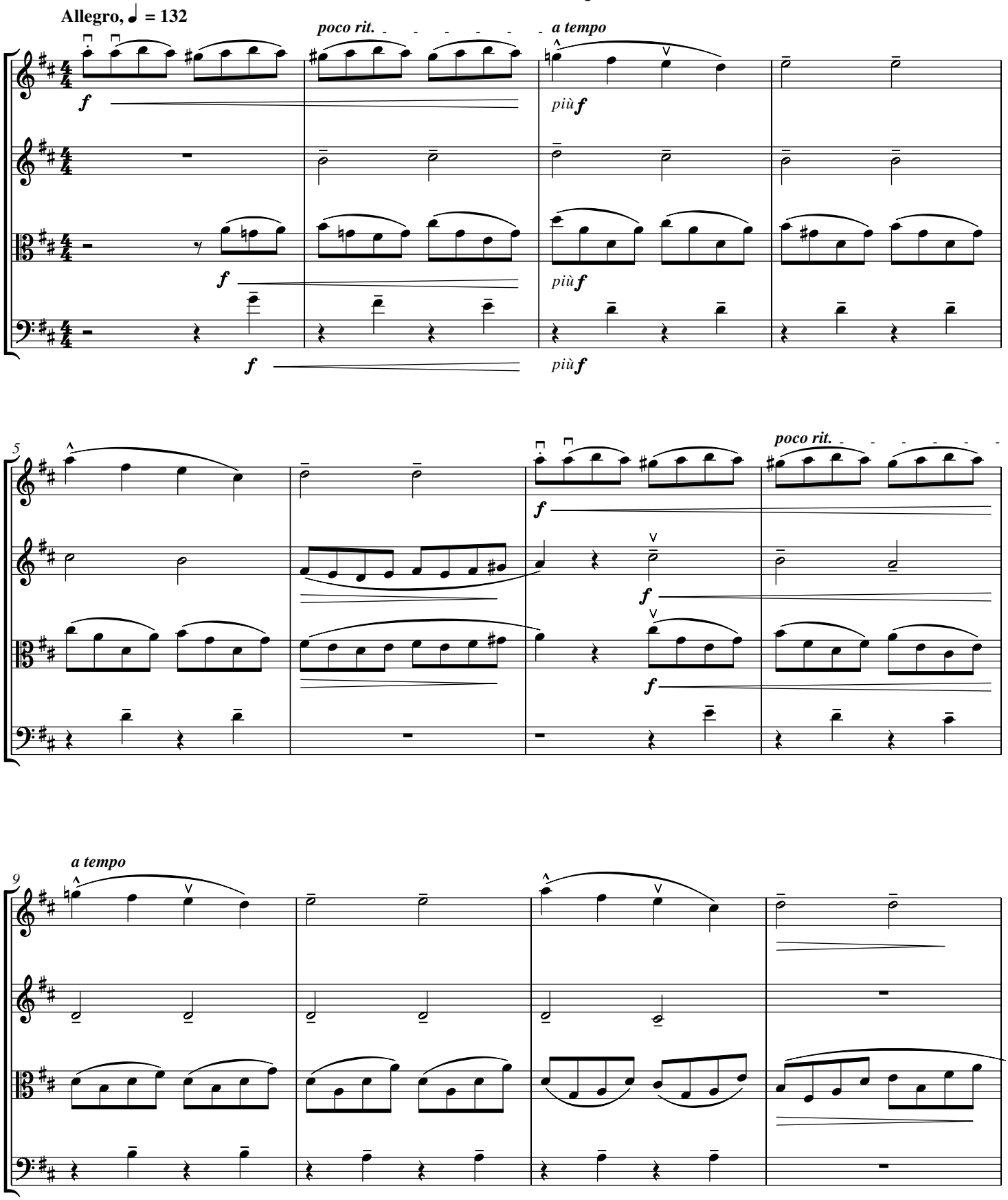
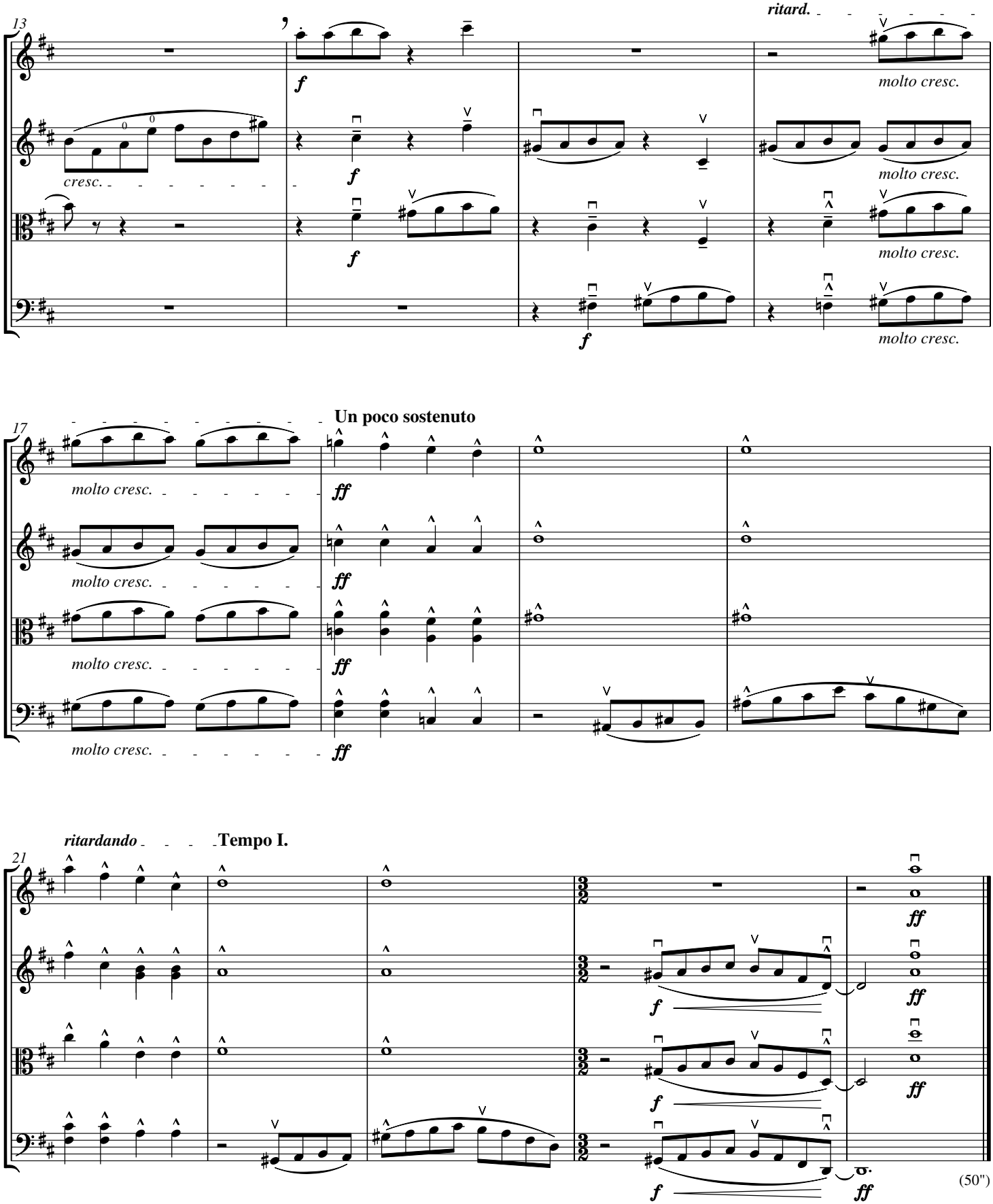
67. Pleasantry II

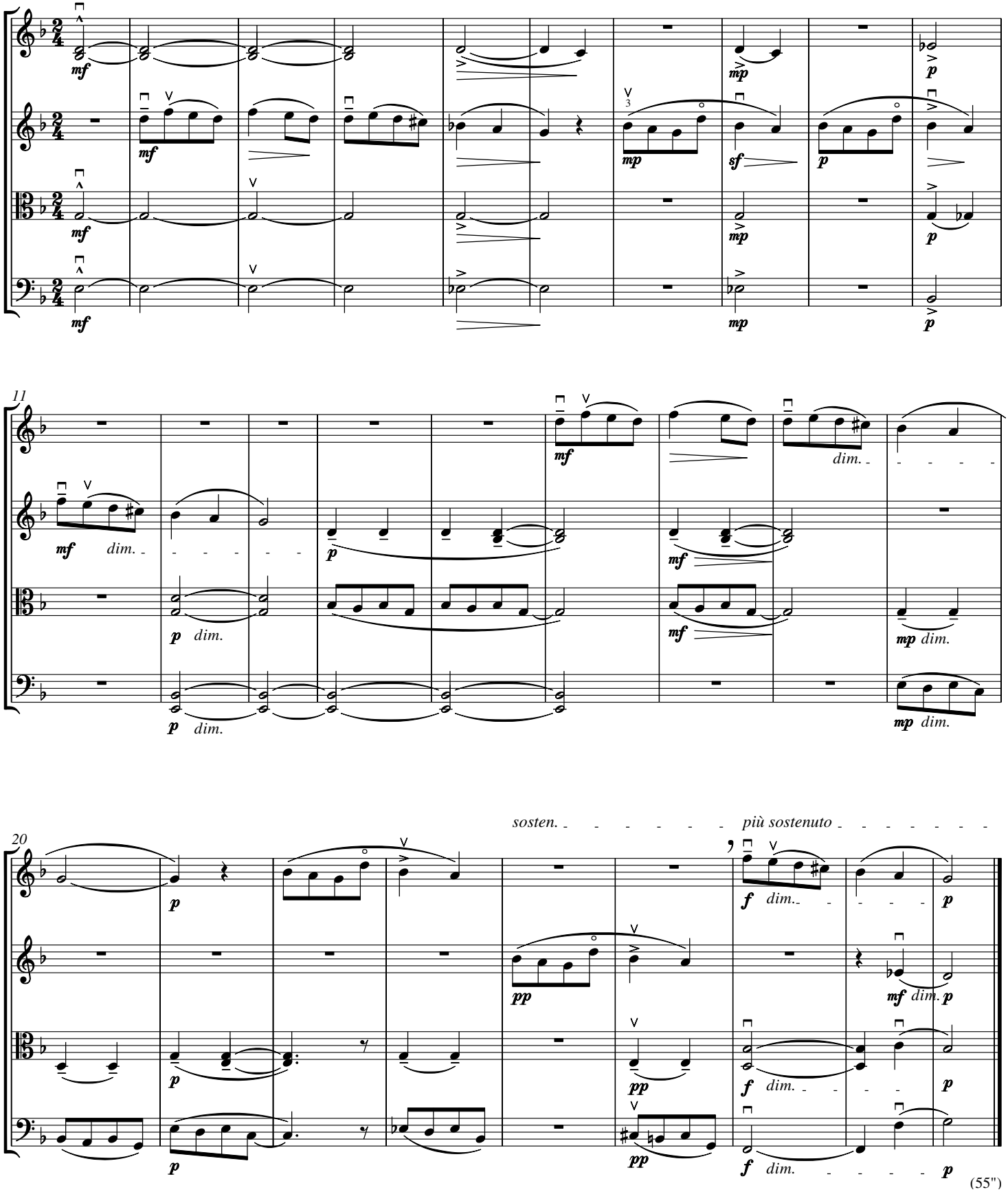



13
ritard.
f
molto cresc.
cresc.
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
17
Un poco sostenuto
molto cresc.
ff
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
21
ritardando
Tempo I.
ff
f
(50")

68. Love Song

Often at night I wandered by steep paths

Andante, molto rubato, ♩ = ca.70



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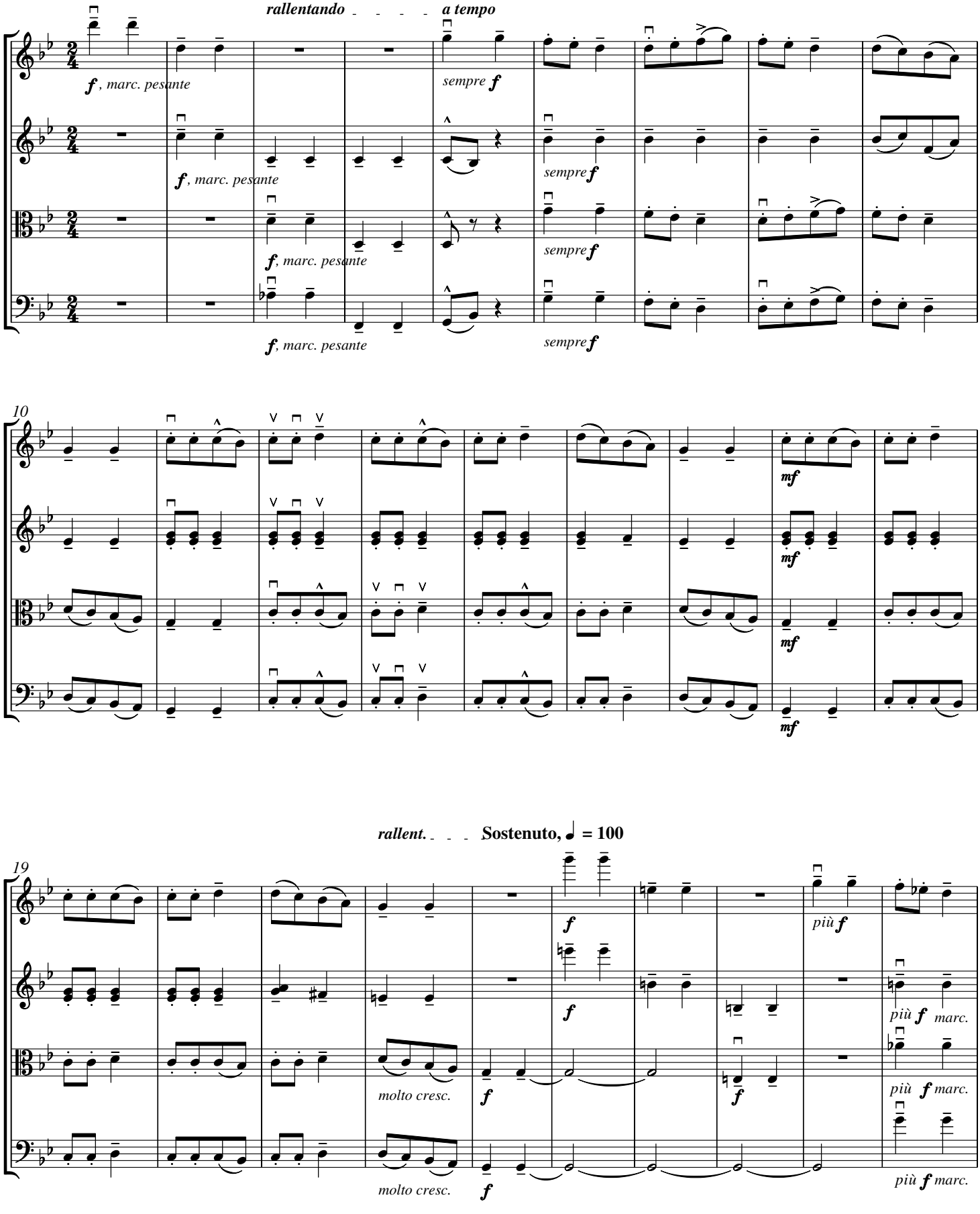
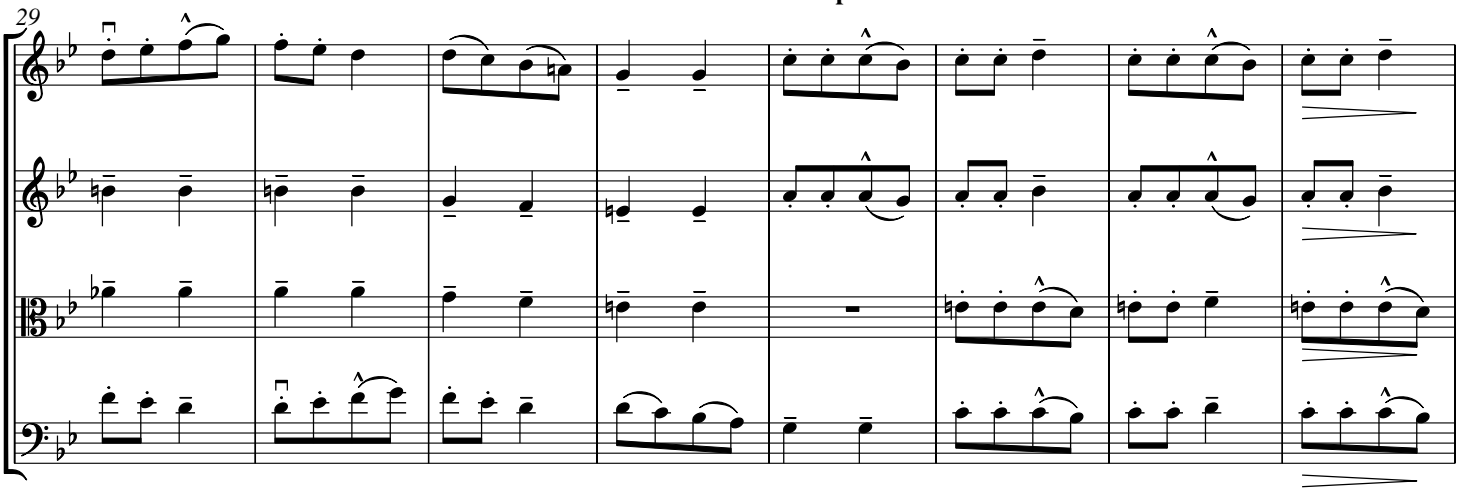
69. Canon

Allegro non troppo, ♩ = 120

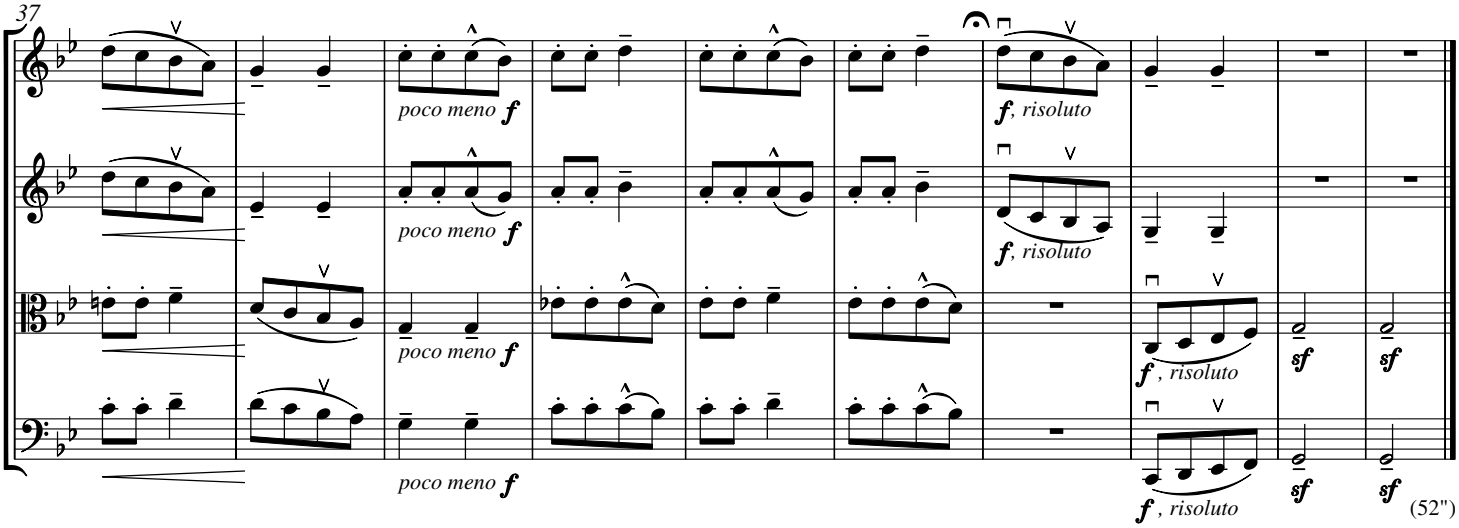


Tempo I.

29



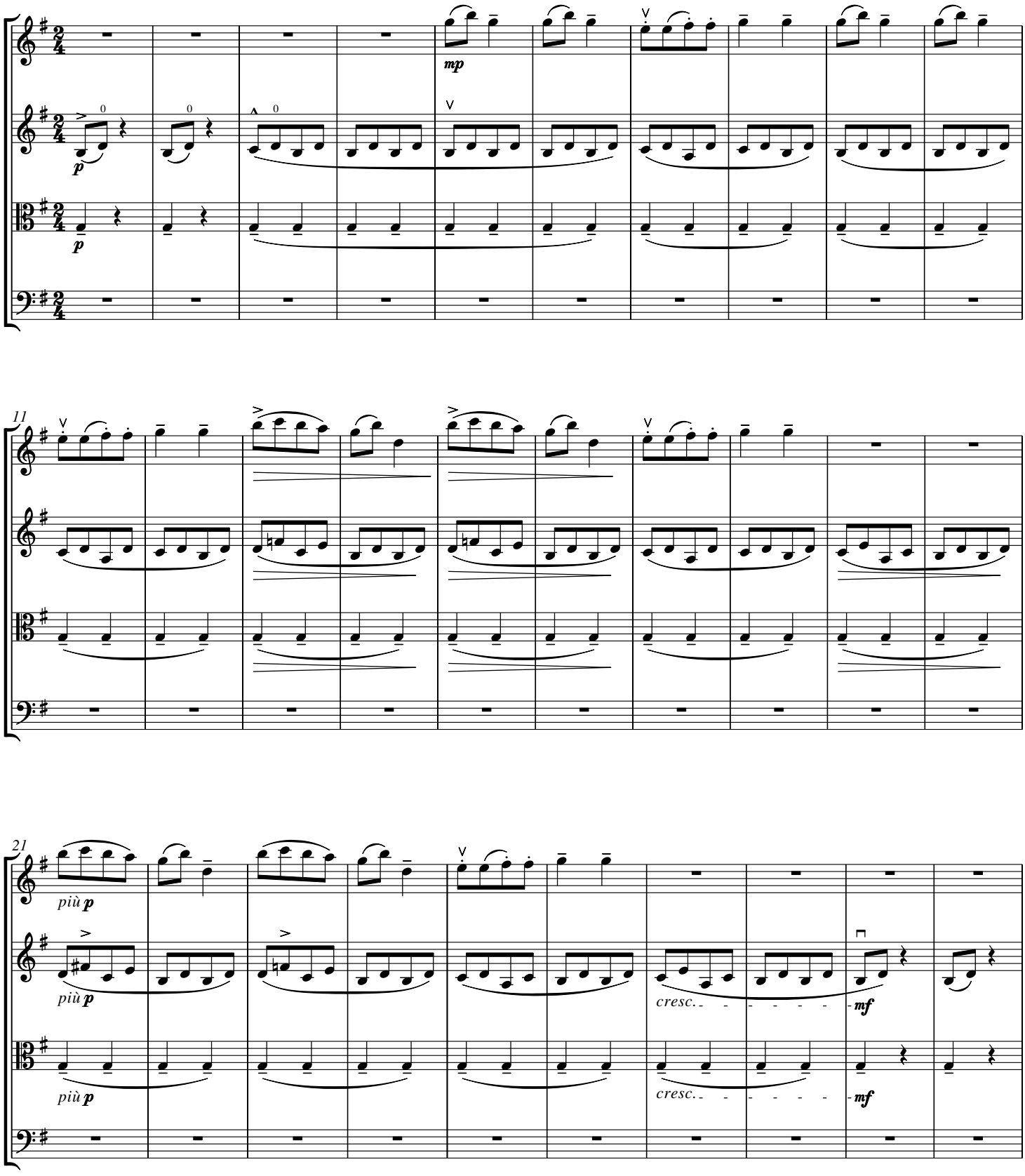
37

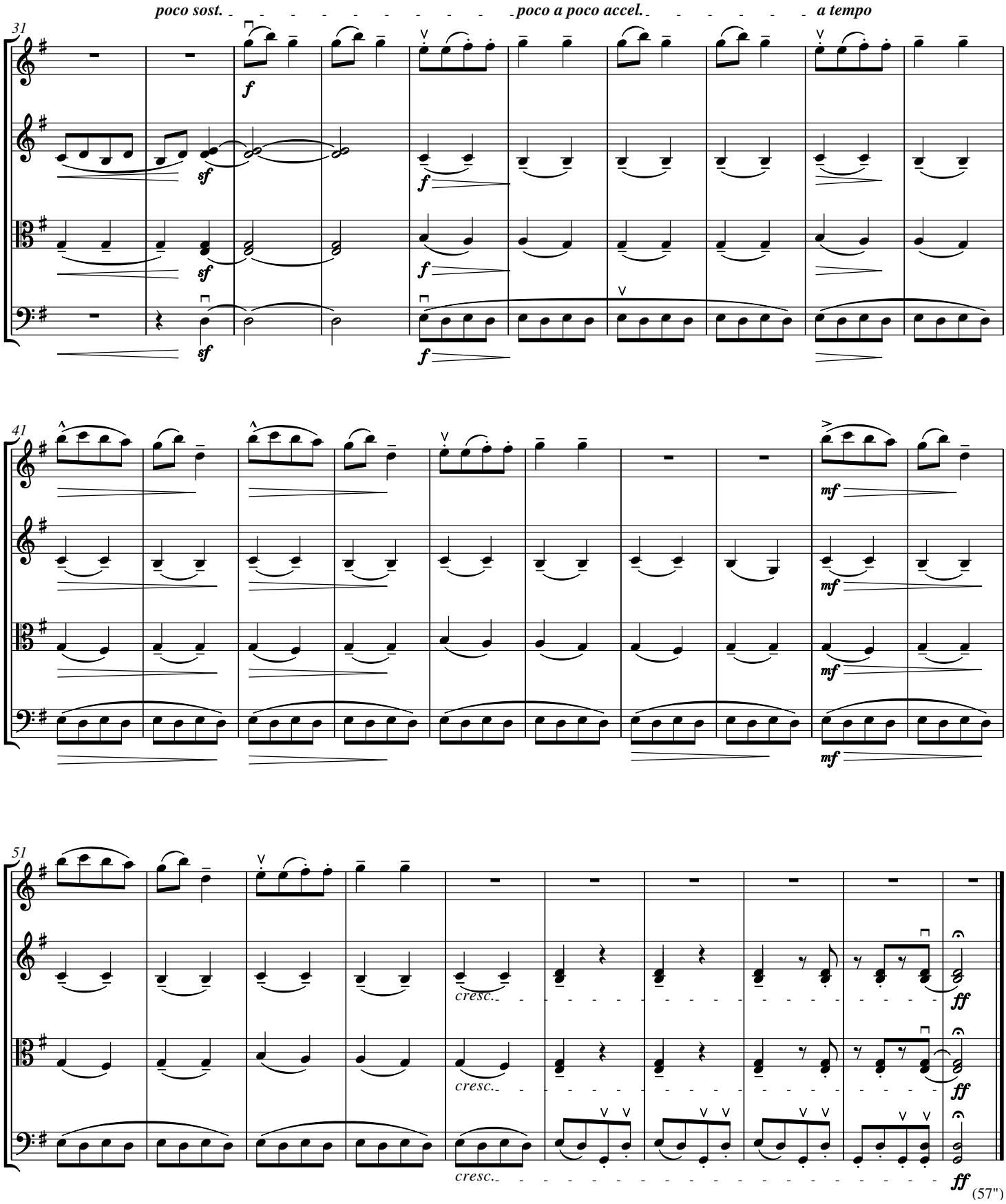


(52")

70. Bagpipe II

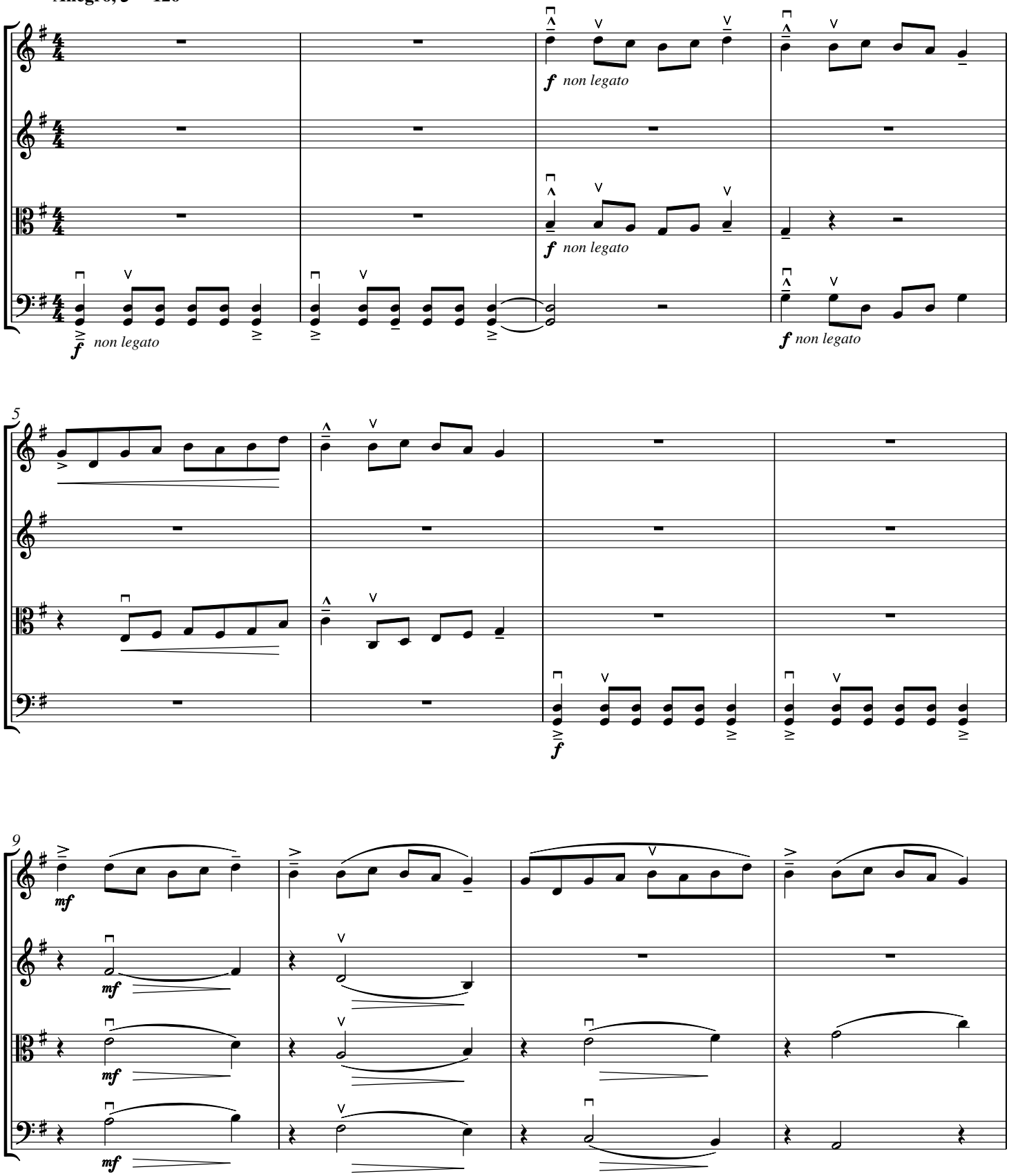
Vivace, ♩ = 138

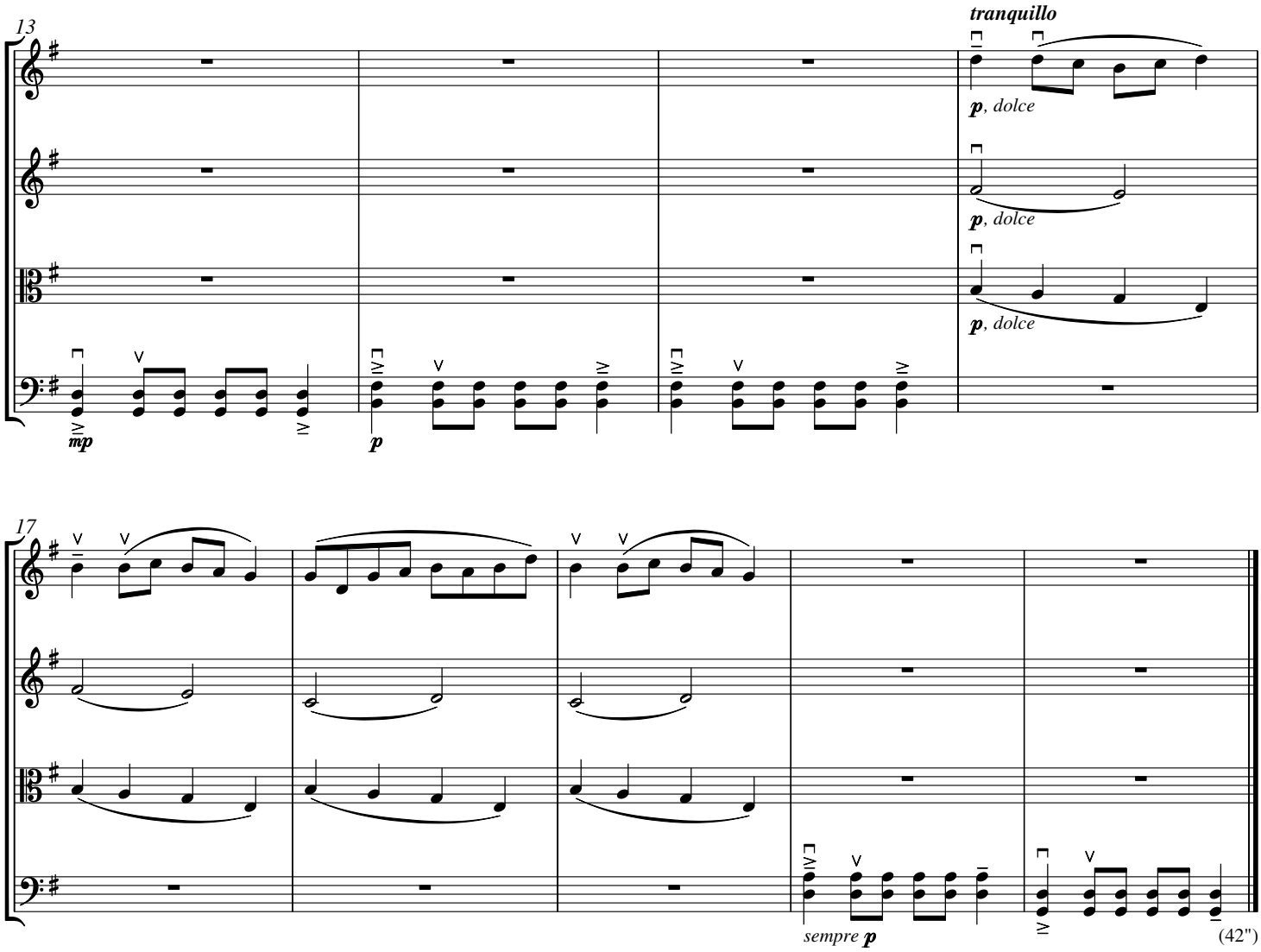



poco sost.
poco a poco accel.
a tempo
31
41
51
cresc.
(57")

71. The Highway Robber

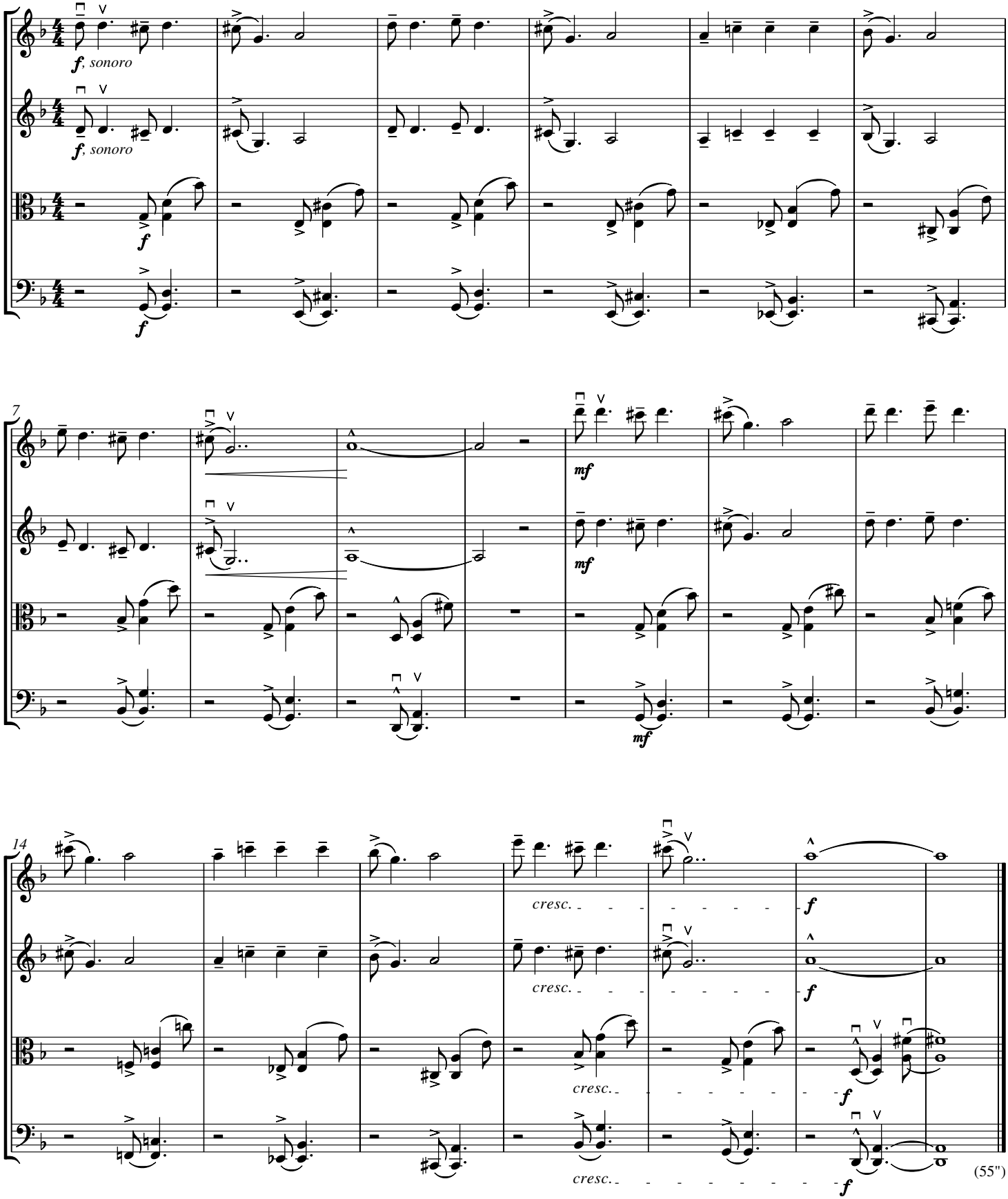
Allegro, ♩ = 126




13
tranquillo
p, dolce
p, dolce
p, dolce
mp
p
17
sempre p
(42")

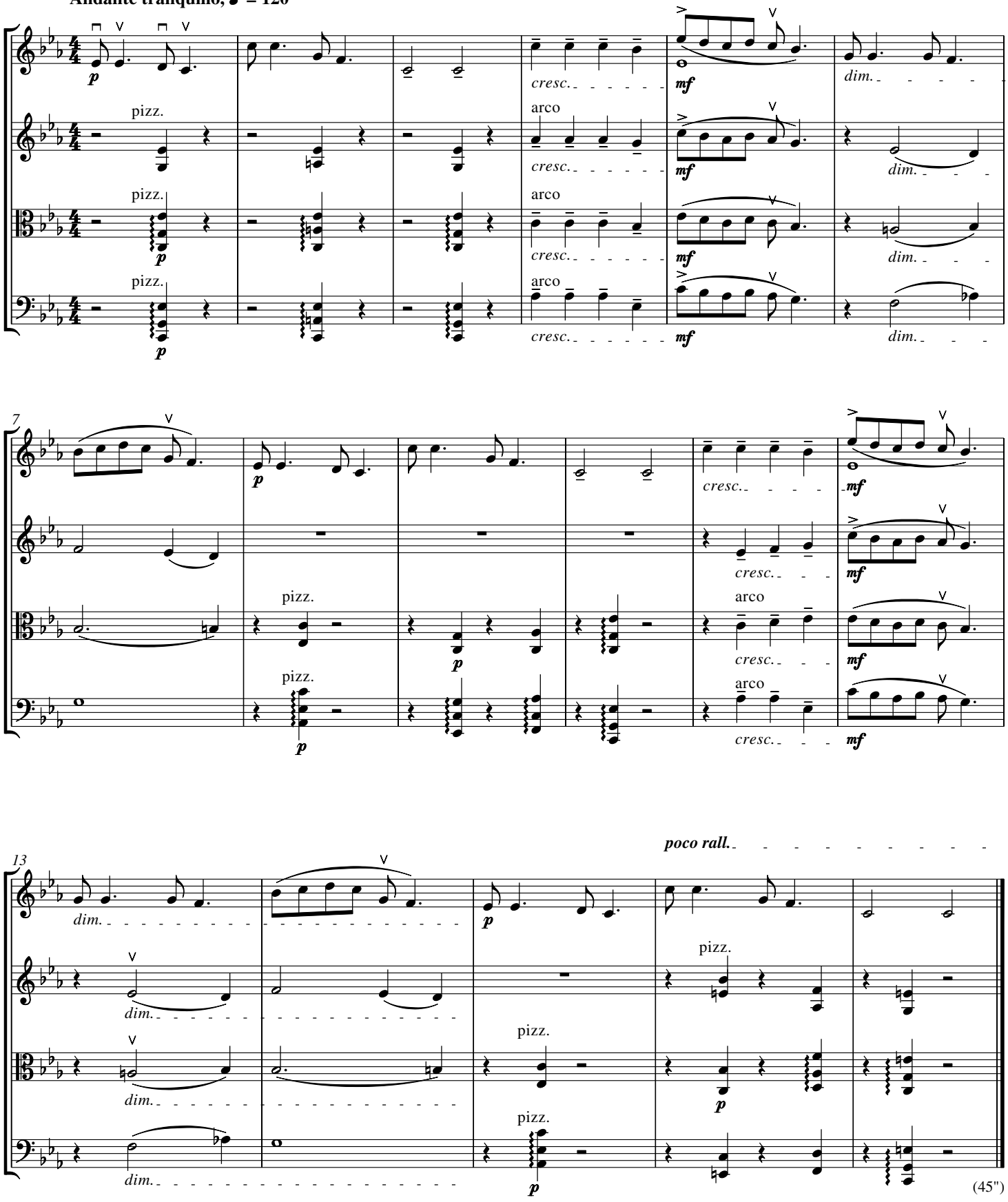
72.

Pesante, ♩ = 84



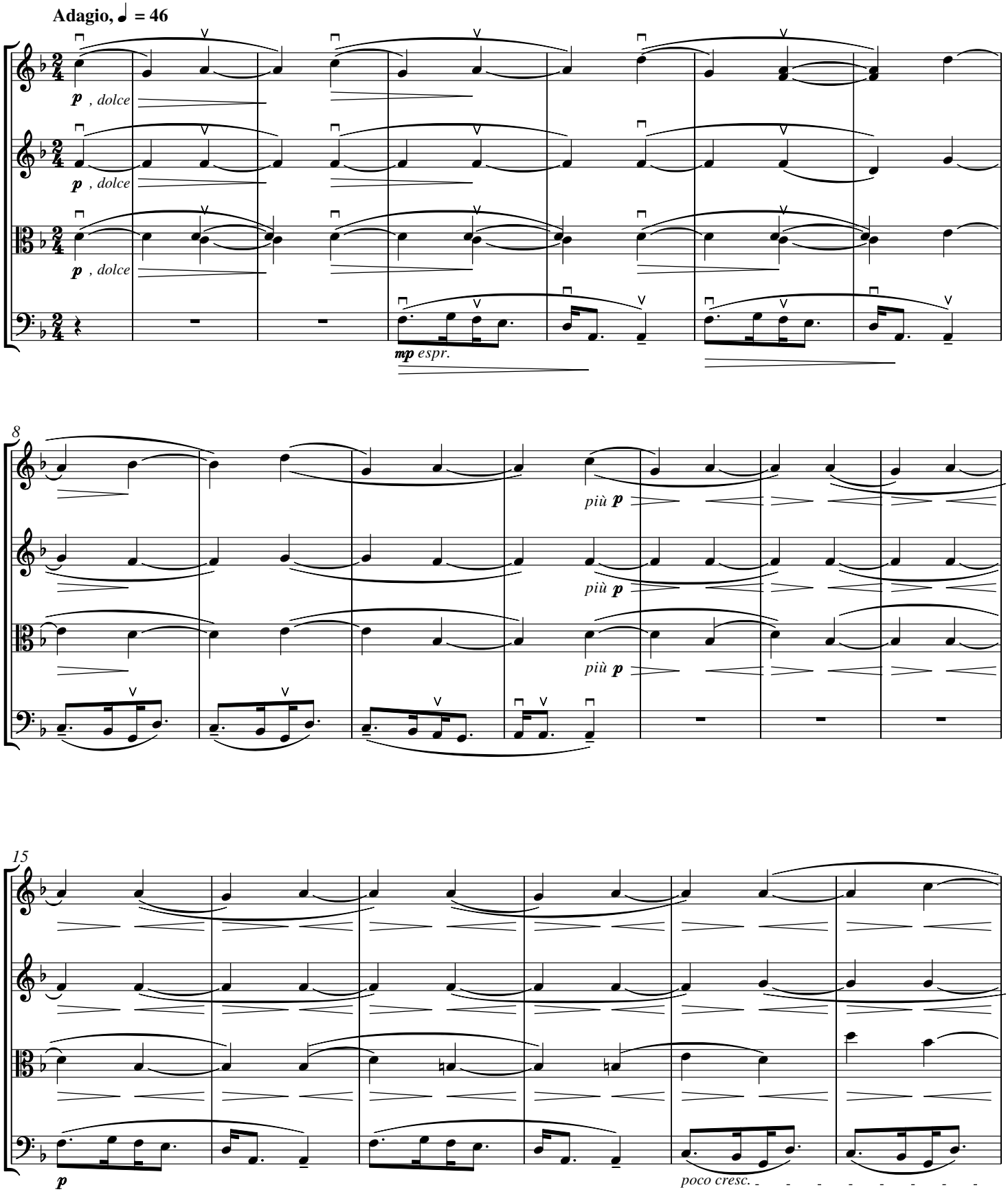
73.

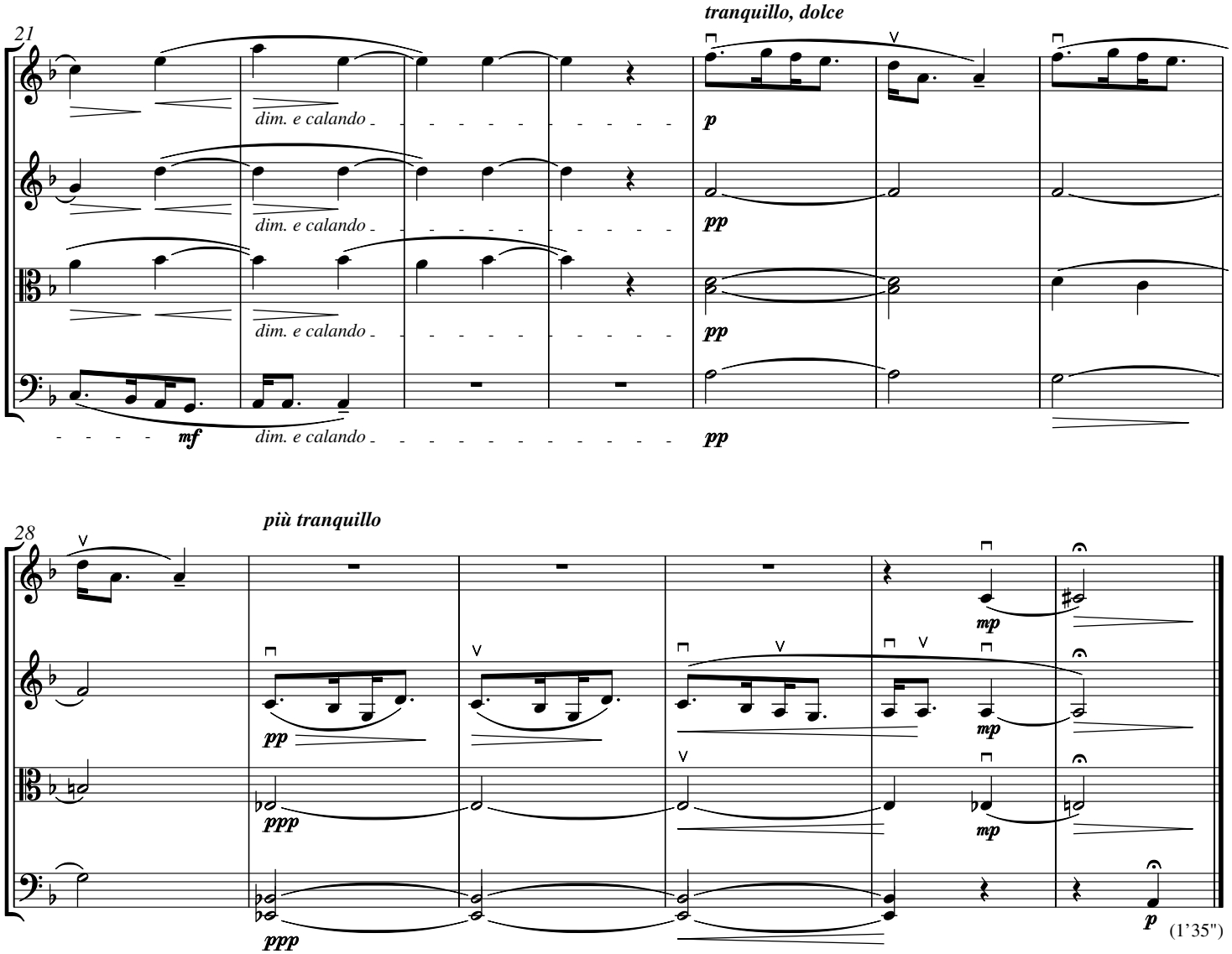
Andante tranquillo, ♩ = 120



(45")

74. Farewell

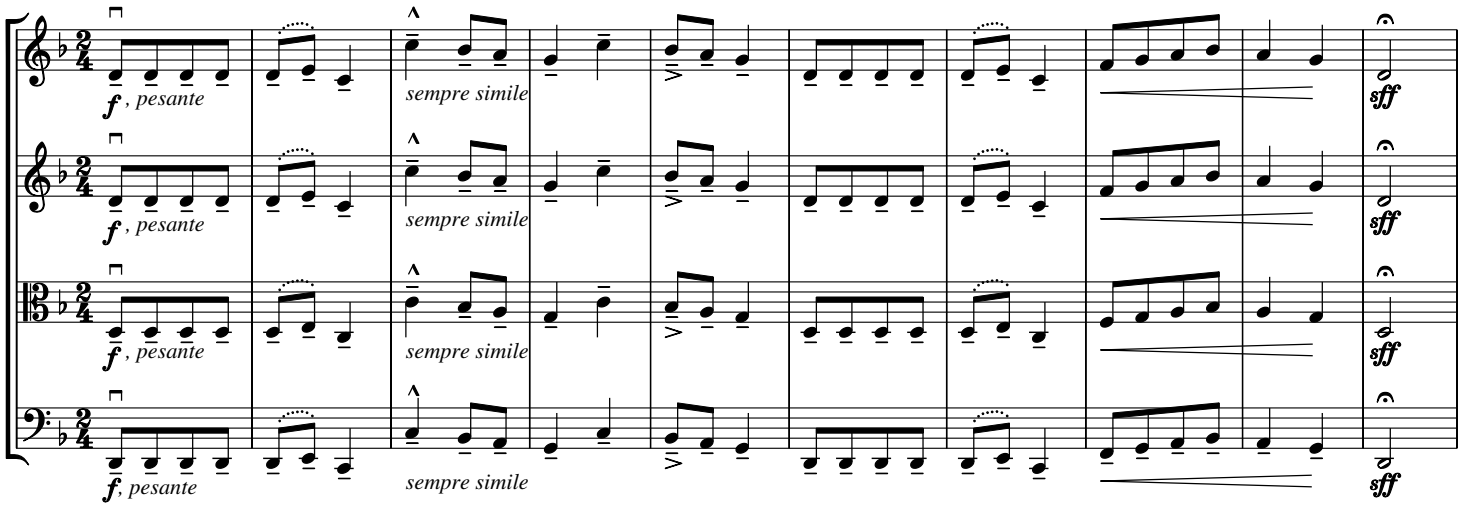

Adagio, ♩ = 46
p , dolce
p , dolce
p , dolce
mp espr.
8
più p
più p
più p
15
p
poco cresc.


21
tranquillo, dolce
dim. e calando
mf
p
pp
28
più tranquillo
mp
ppp
(1'35")

75. Ballad

Moderato, ♩ = 100

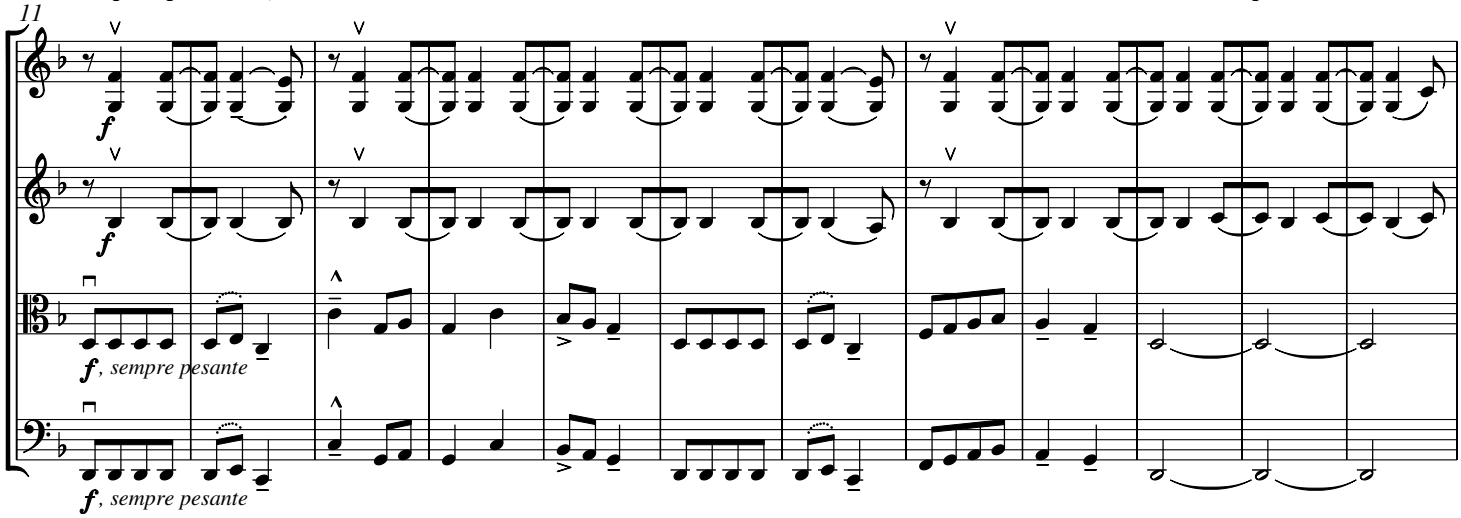
poco rit.



un poco più mosso, ♩ = 112

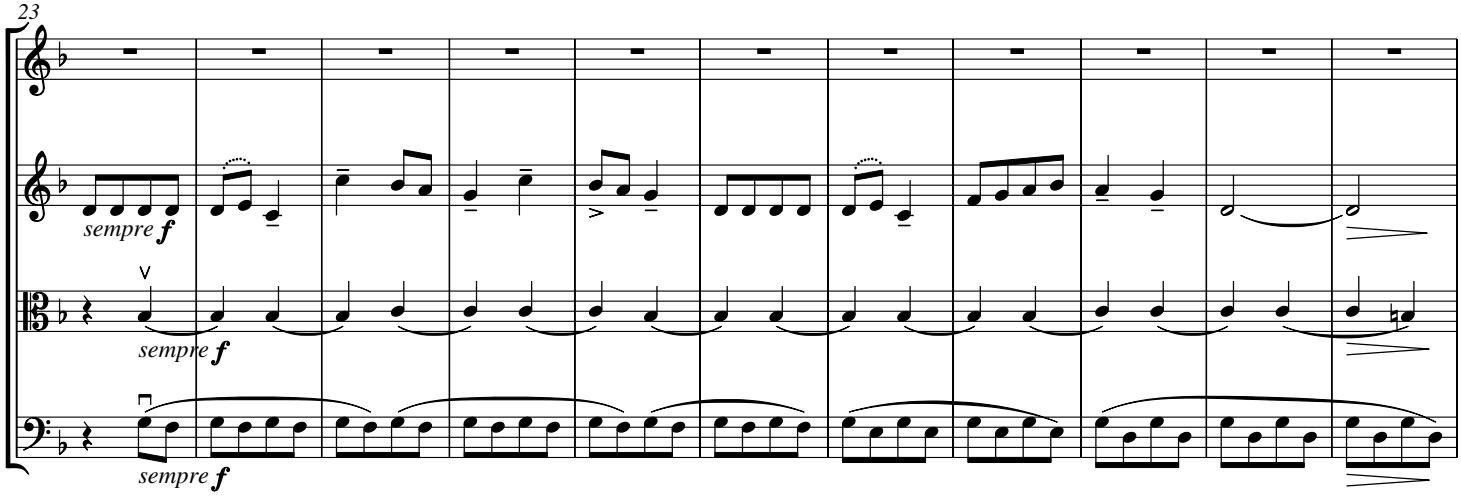
poco rallent.

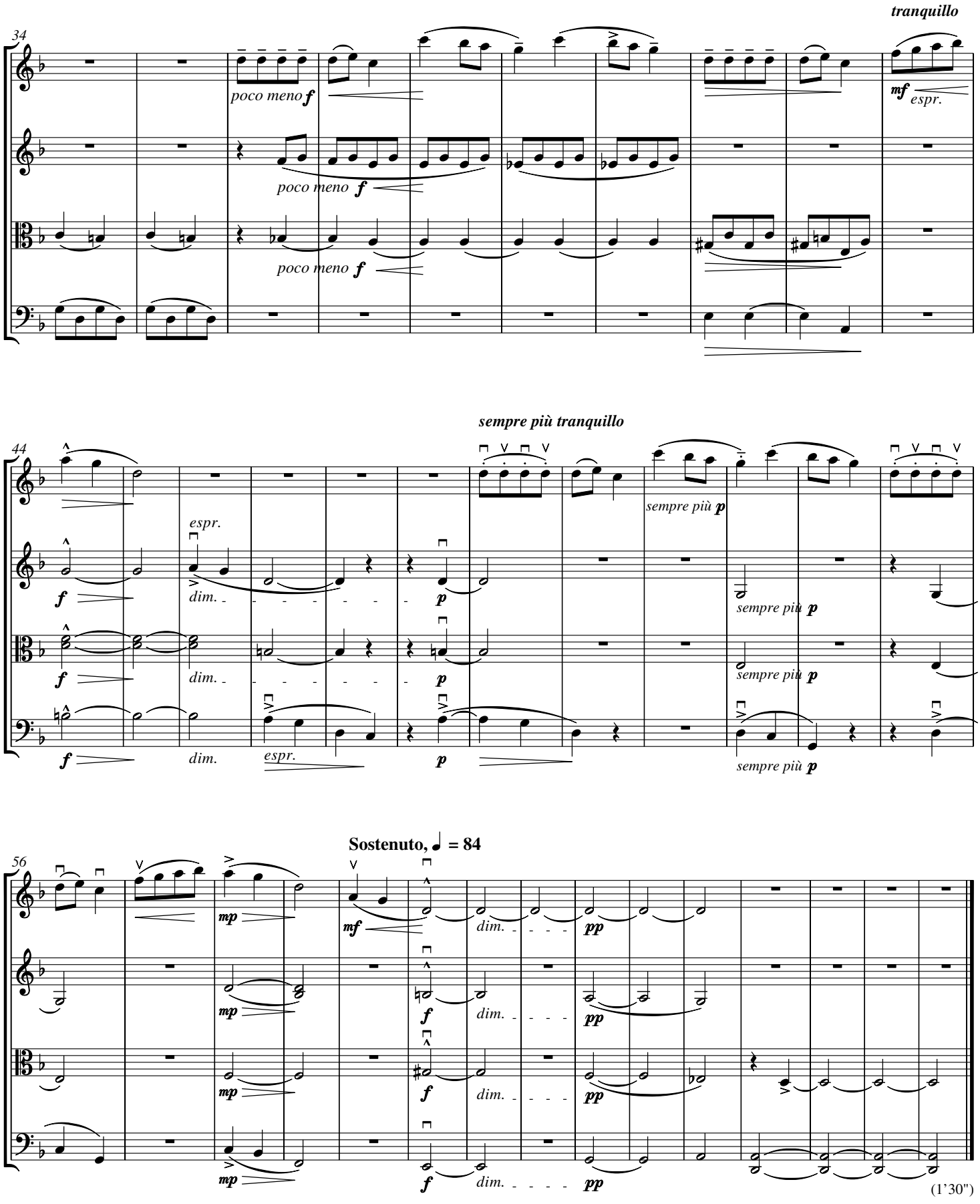
11



Allegro, ♩ = 132

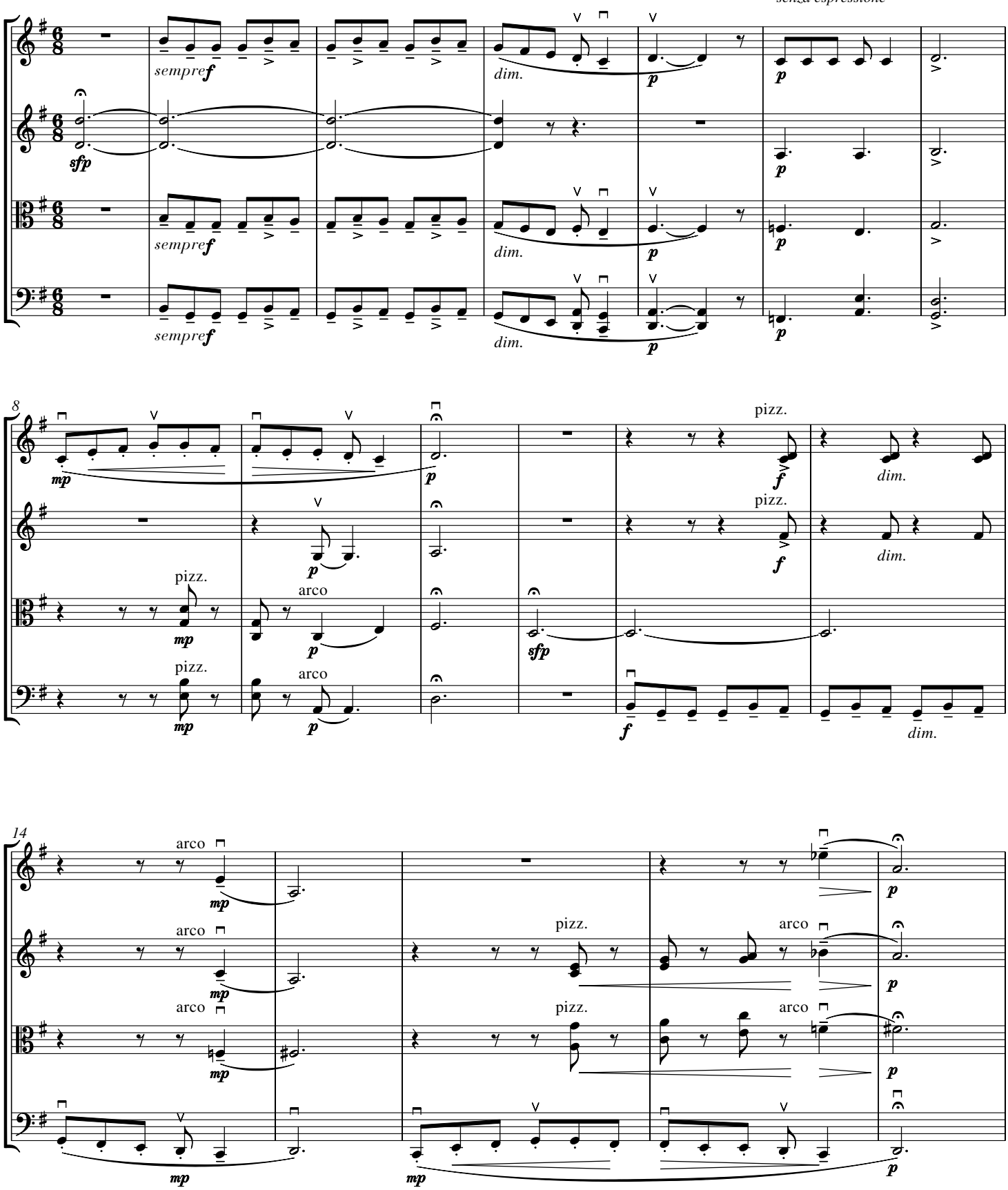
23




tranquillo
34
poco meno f
poco meno f
poco meno f
mf espr.
sempre più tranquillo
44
espr.
f
dim.
p
sempre più p
sempre più p
sempre più p
sempre più p
f
dim.
espr.
p
Sostenuto, ♩ = 84
56
mp
mf
dim.
pp
mp
f
dim.
pp
mp
f
dim.
pp
mp
f
dim.
pp
(1'30")

76 - 77. Rhapsody

Parlando, molto rubato, ♩. = 69 - 56



Allegro moderato, ♩ = 116

19

f pesante

f pesante

f pesante

f pesante

27

sf

sf

sf

Tempo I.

36

mf

sfp

p

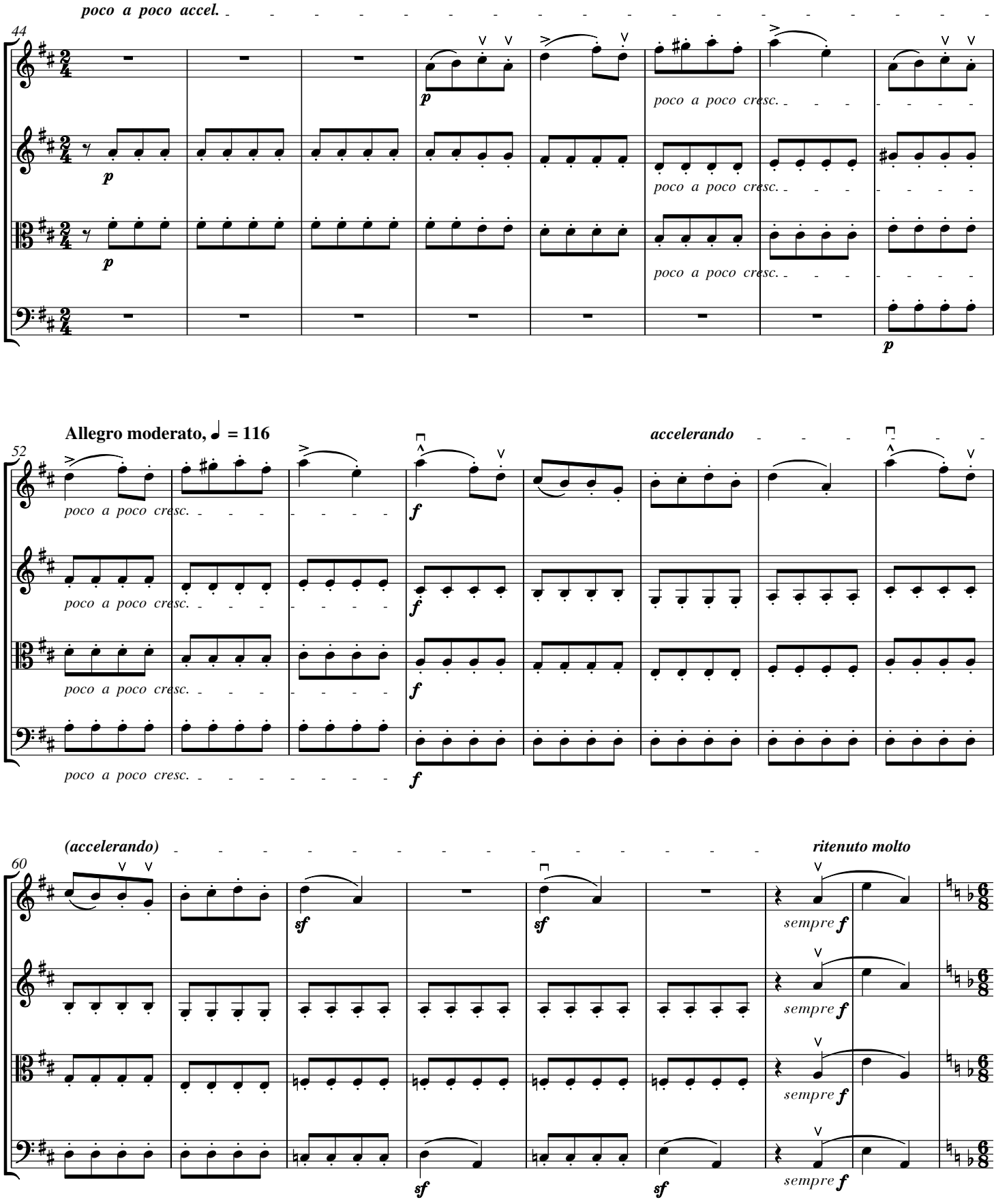
p

pp

pp

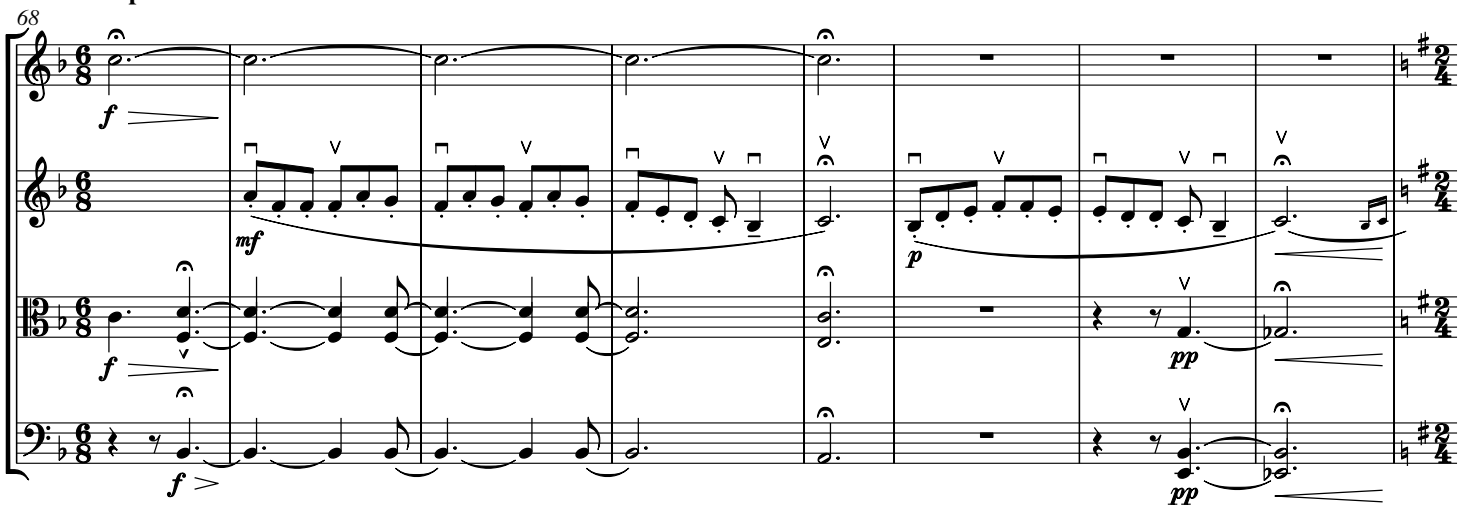
pp

pp


poco a poco accel.
44
p
poco a poco cresc.
Allegro moderato, ♩ = 116
52
accelerando
f
(accelerando)
60
ritenuto molto
sf
sempre f

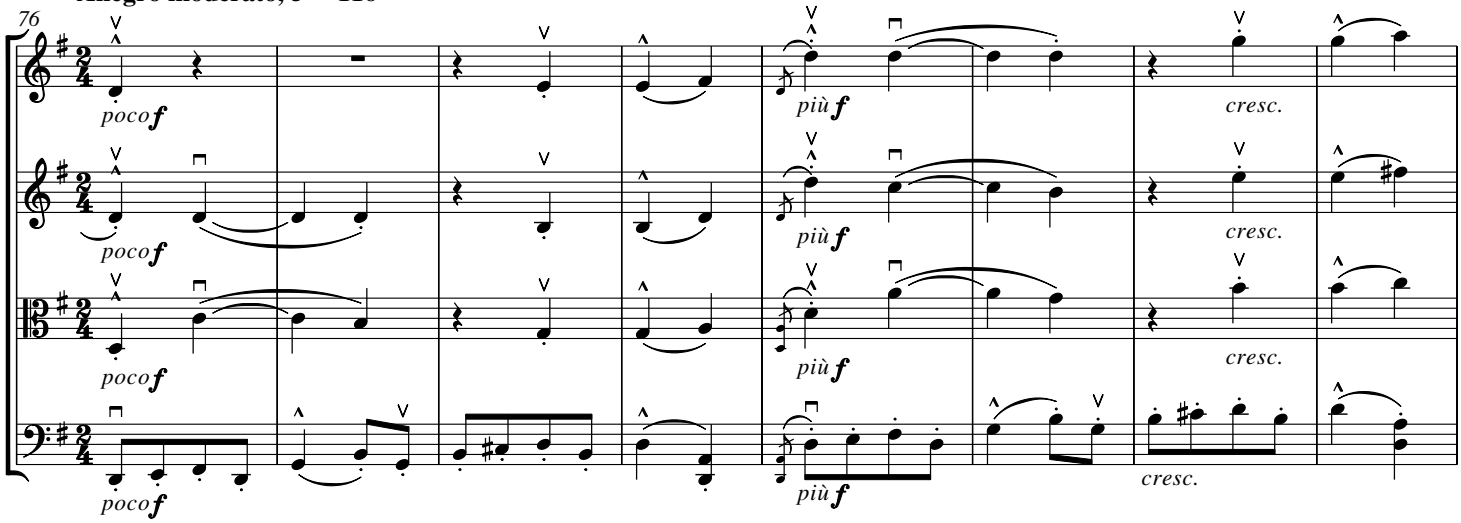
Tempo I.

68

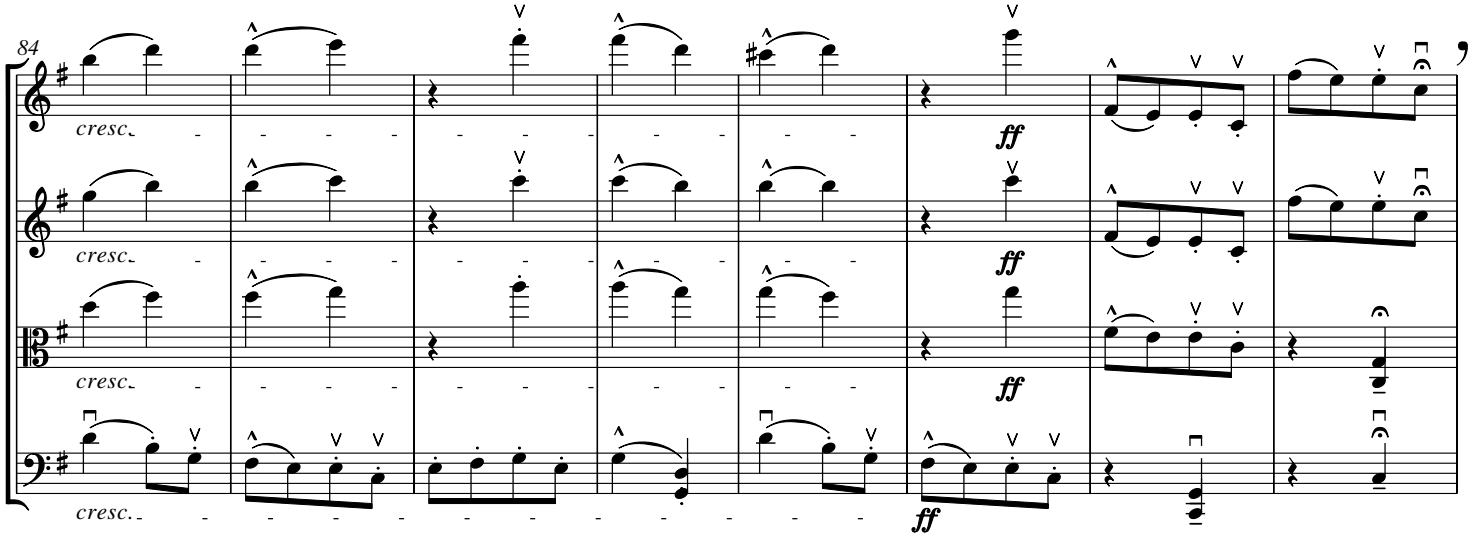


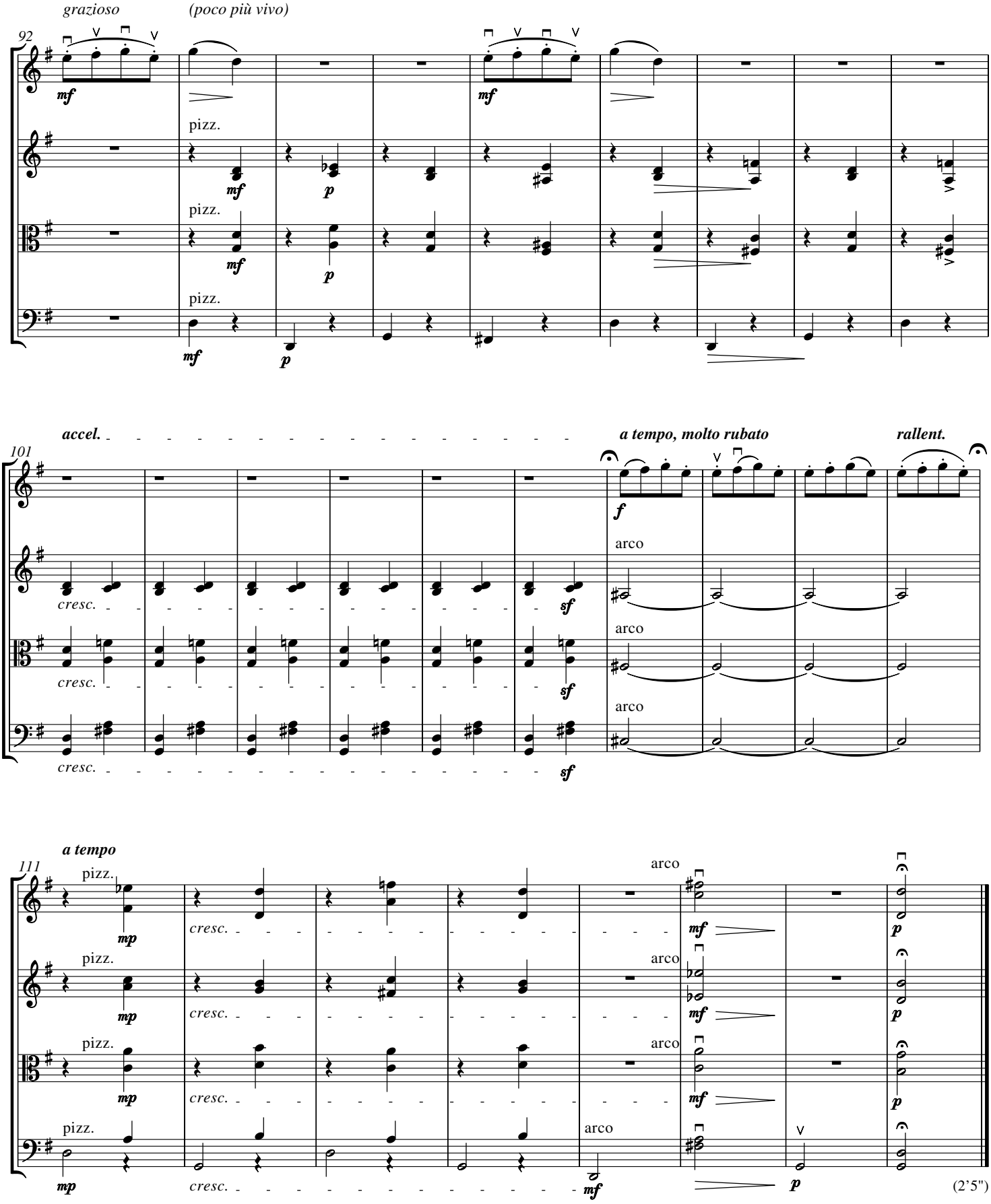
Allegro moderato, ♩ = 116

76



84




grazioso
(poco più vivo)
92
pizz.
accel.
a tempo, molto rubato
rallent.
101
arco
cresc.
a tempo
111
(2'5")

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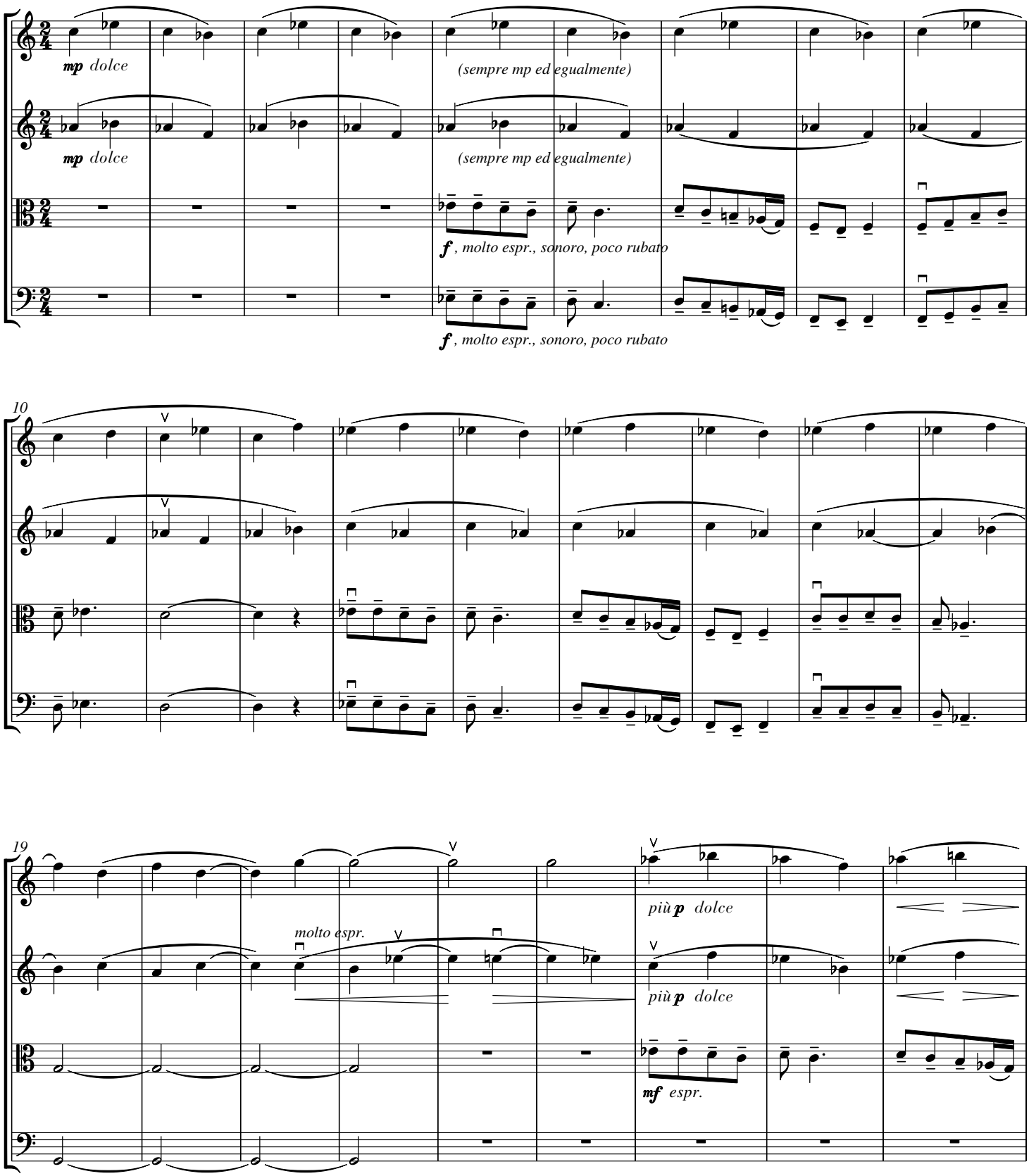
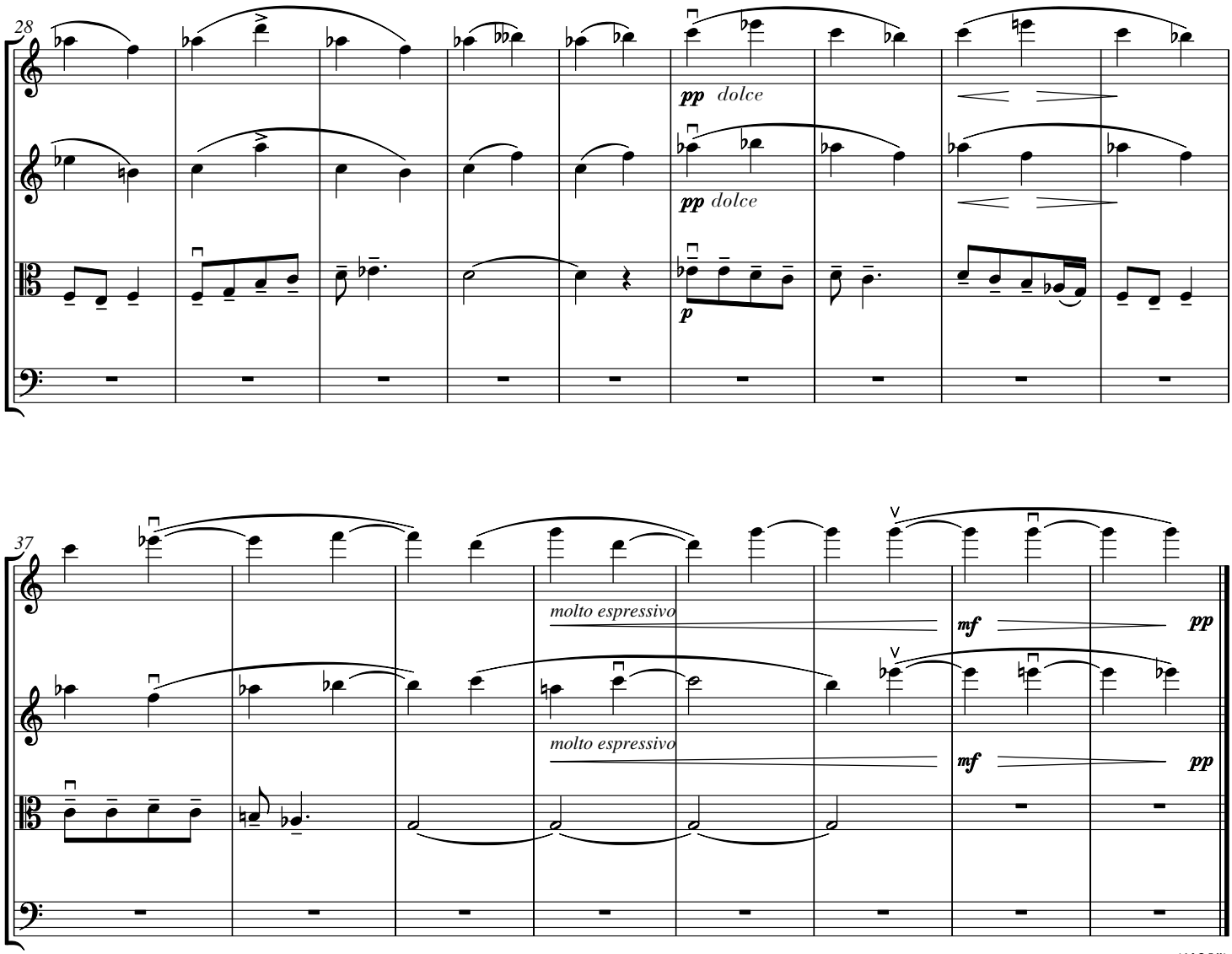
78. Elegy

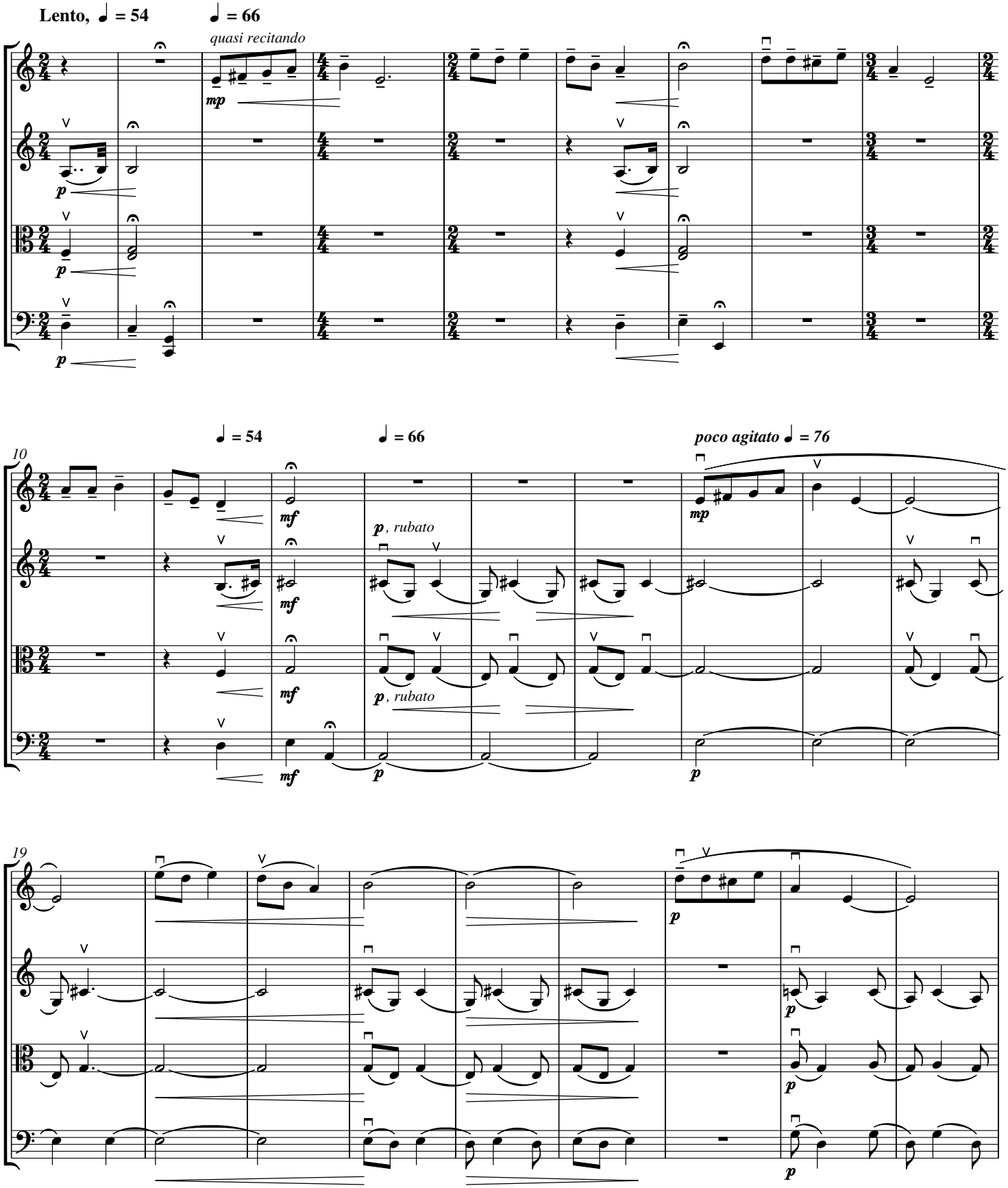
Lento, ♩ = 60 - 66

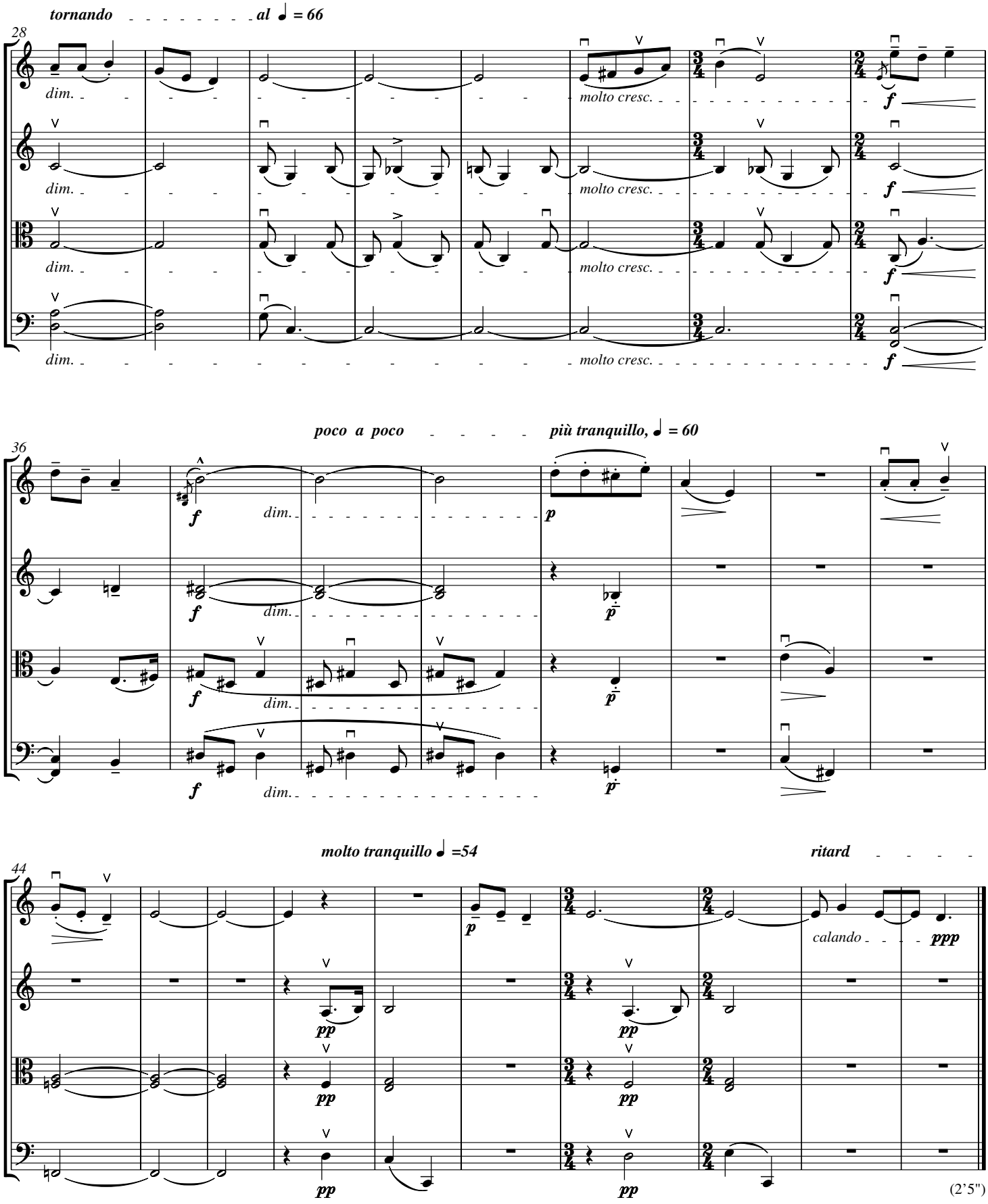



28
pp dolce
pp dolce
p
37
molto espressivo
mf
pp
molto espressivo
mf
pp

(1'30")

79. Mourning Song




tornando
al ♩ = 66
28
dim.
molto cresc.
f
poco a poco
più tranquillo, ♩ = 60
36
p
molto tranquillo ♩ =54
ritard
44
calando
ppp
pp

(2'5")