Vinetan Songs

seven songs for string quartet

Taylor Brook
2025

About *Vinetan Songs:*

Vinetan Songs was written for Quatuor Bozzini in the Winter and Spring of 2025, co-commissioned by The Earle Brown Music Foundation Charitable Trust, Le Vivier, Soundstreams, and Quatuor Bozzini with support from Canada Council for the Arts.

The title refers to the myth of Vineta, a sunken city in the Baltic that was first written about by Ibrahim ibn Jaqub around 965 c.a.. In composing this music, I imagine the music of Vineta, writing music that aspires to the richness and variety of structures, signs, and techniques that develop over generations in a musical tradition. This conception of writing music in an imaginary tradition demands that I reconsider and reinvent musical traditions familiar to me and question the basic assumptions and values they carry: how are instruments tuned and played? What is the social purpose of music? How are cultural concepts reflected in music?

The myth of Vineta is often used as an allegory for excess, describing a city punished for decadence by the tides, and I imagine a set of seven songs that could have existed there: three for dancing and four for listening. The seven songs represent a set, but each can be considered as standing alone and representing a different genre of music from Vineta:

1. Song of Loss
2. Puzzle Dance
3. Trance
4. Round Dance
5. Body Song
6. Stupor Dance
7. Chorus

Some of these "songs" take known musical cultures and works as inspiration or a starting point. *Song of Loss* uses a melodic fragment from a Sardinian lament and *Puzzle Dance* is based on the rhythmic complexity of Ars Subtilior music, for example. Others take their basis elsewhere, *Stupor Dance* is imagined as a music used to sweat out poison, alcohol, or narcotics, and *Trance* explores the subtleties of repetition and difference to evoke a half-waking state.

Notation Conventions:

Abbreviations:
a.s.t. - alto sul taso
s.t. - sul tasto
ord. - ordinario (used to reset bow placement)
p.s.p. - poco sul ponticello
s.p. - sul ponticello
m.s.p. - molto sul ponticello
norm. - normale (used to reset techniques)

Tuning:

"+" and "-" symbols followed by a number above a note indicates deviation in cents (hundredths of a semitone) from the notated pitch. For example, "+50" and "-50" would raise and lower the pitch by a quartertone.

This work was written using various approaches to just intonation. Cent deviations from 12-tone equal temperament are used to notate these harmonies, which are best understood in just intonation terms using ratios. For example, 5:4 as the just major 4rd is 14 cents smaller than an equal temperament major 3rd. When deviation form equal temperament is less than 5 cents, usually no cent deviation is provided.

Glissandi:

Glissandi should occur over the entire duration of the note.

Rearticulations during a glissando are notated using stems only, no notehead (see cello m.4).

Performance Techniques:

1-finger portamento - use only a single finger of the left hand, sliding between the notes. Some bending and inaccuracy is expected while using this technique.

m.s.p. overtone bowing - This technique is used in song 5, *Body Song*. Bow the string in a molto sul ponticello position using the thin edge of the bow hairs to bring out an harmonic. With each bow stroke try to bring out a single harmonic and as high of an harmonic as possible. A video showing this technique can be found here: https://www.taylorbrook.info/vinetan

Solid arrows are used to indicate gradual change.

 - left-hand mute
o - end left hand mute

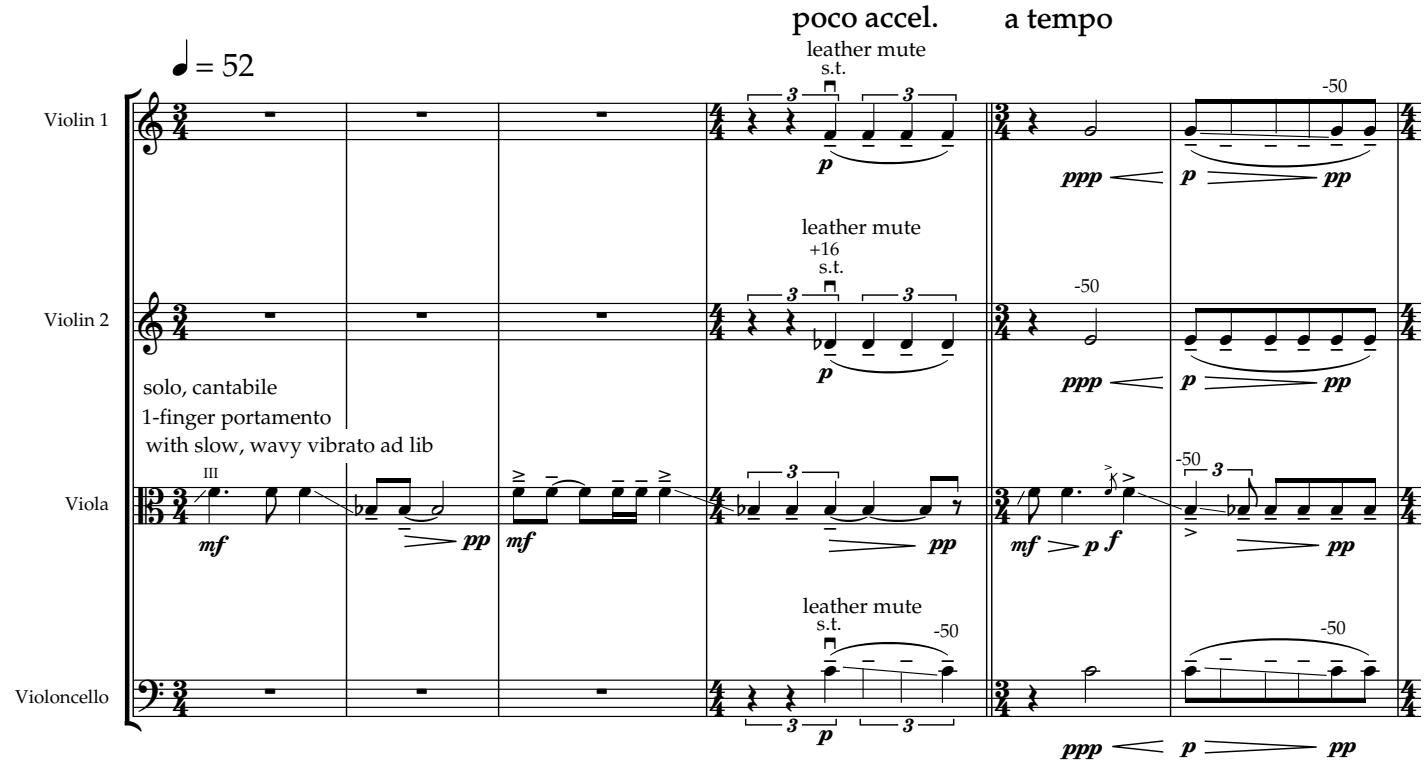
All other techniques are explained in the score as they appear.

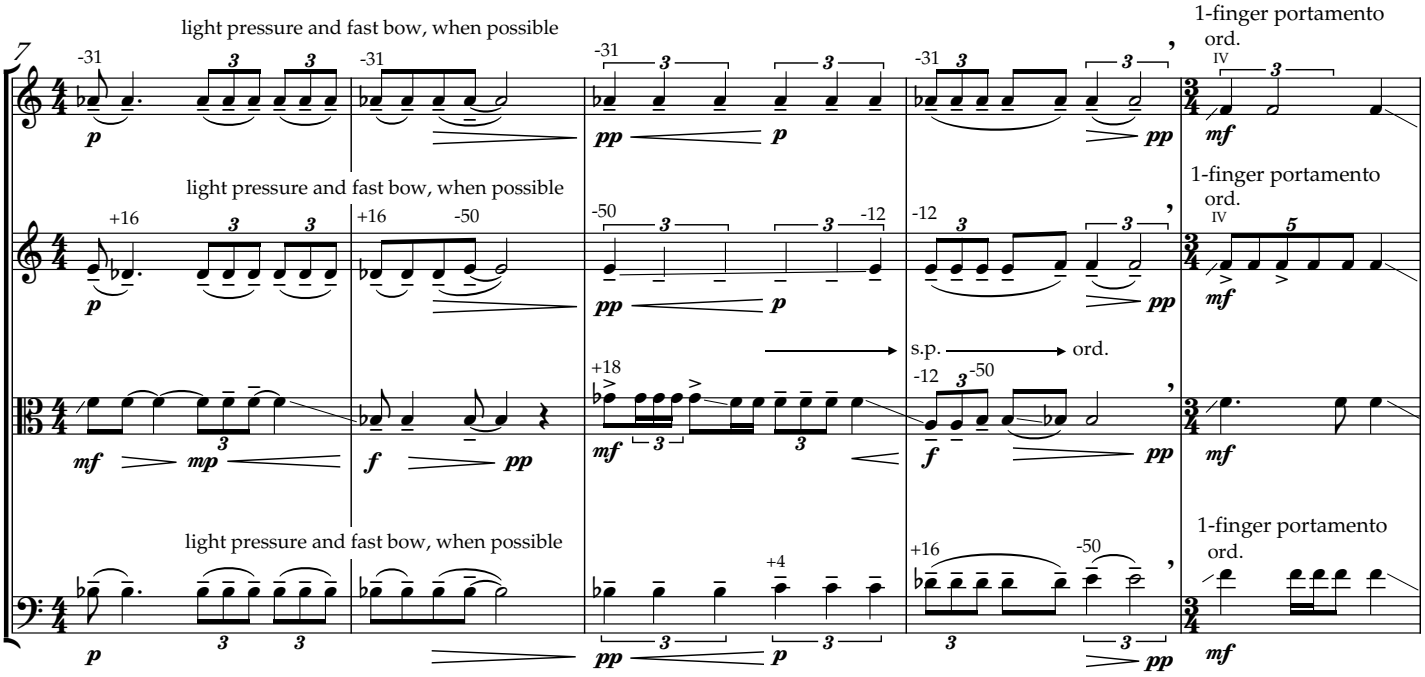
Vinetan Songs

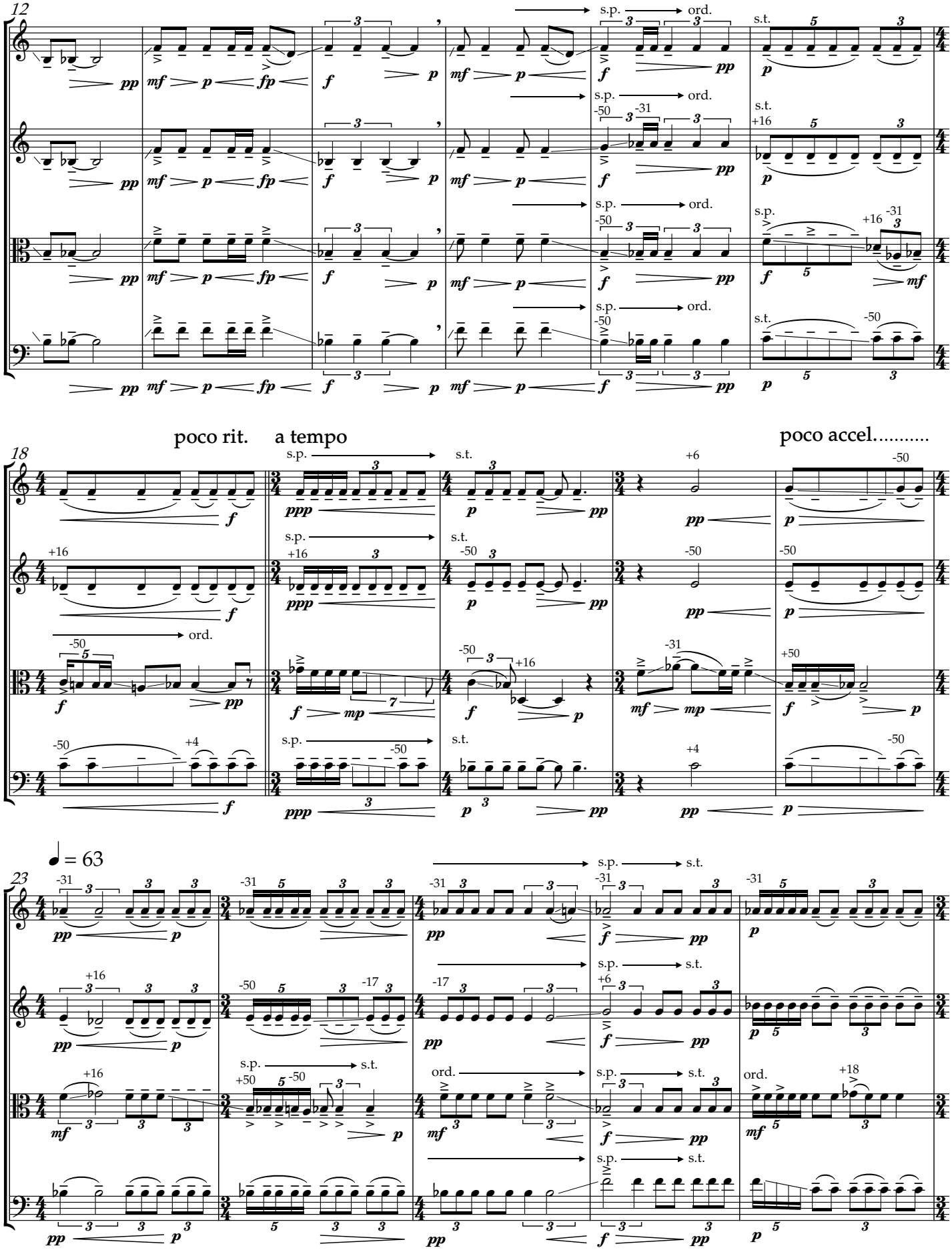
for Quatuor Bozzini

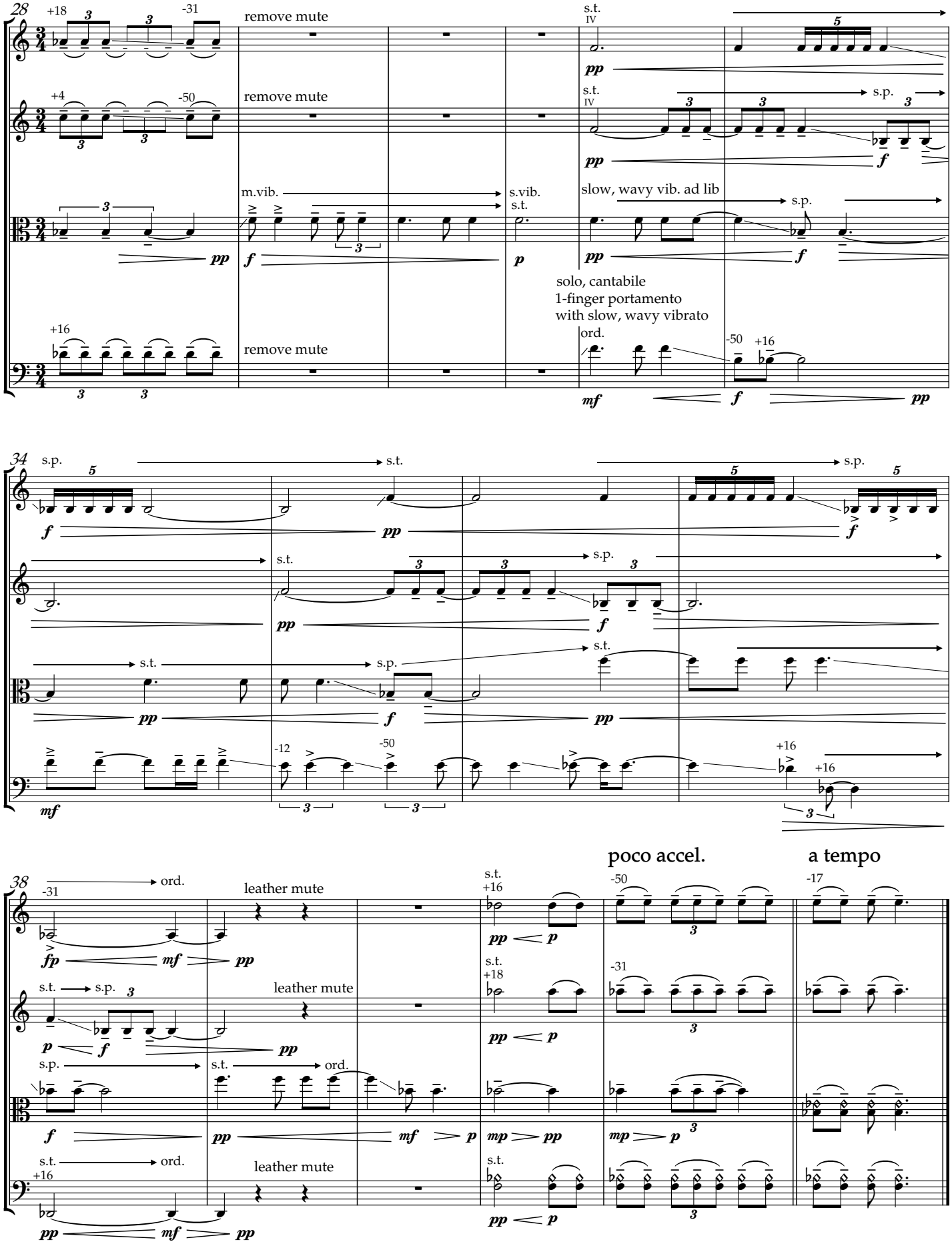
Taylor Brook

1. Song of Loss



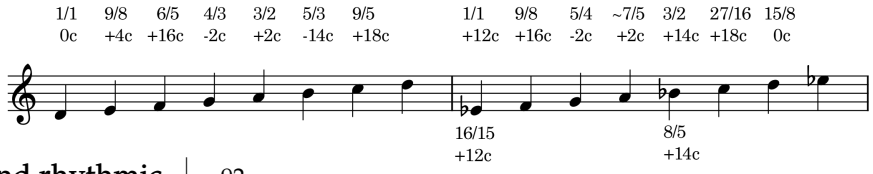



12
18
poco rit.
a tempo
poco accel.....
23
♩ = 63

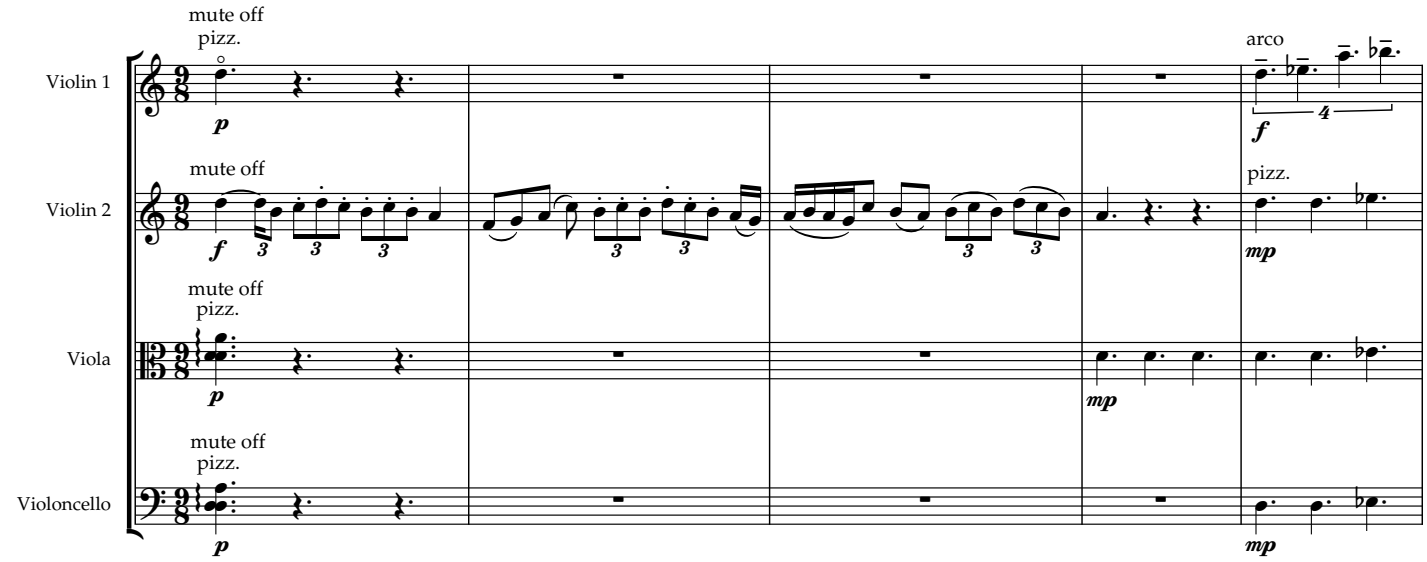

28
remove mute
remove mute
m.vib.
s.vib.
s.t.
slow, wavy vib. ad lib
s.p.
solo, cantabile
1-finger portamento
with slow, wavy vibrato
ord.
remove mute
34
s.p.
s.t.
38
ord.
leather mute
leather mute
leather mute
poco accel.
a tempo

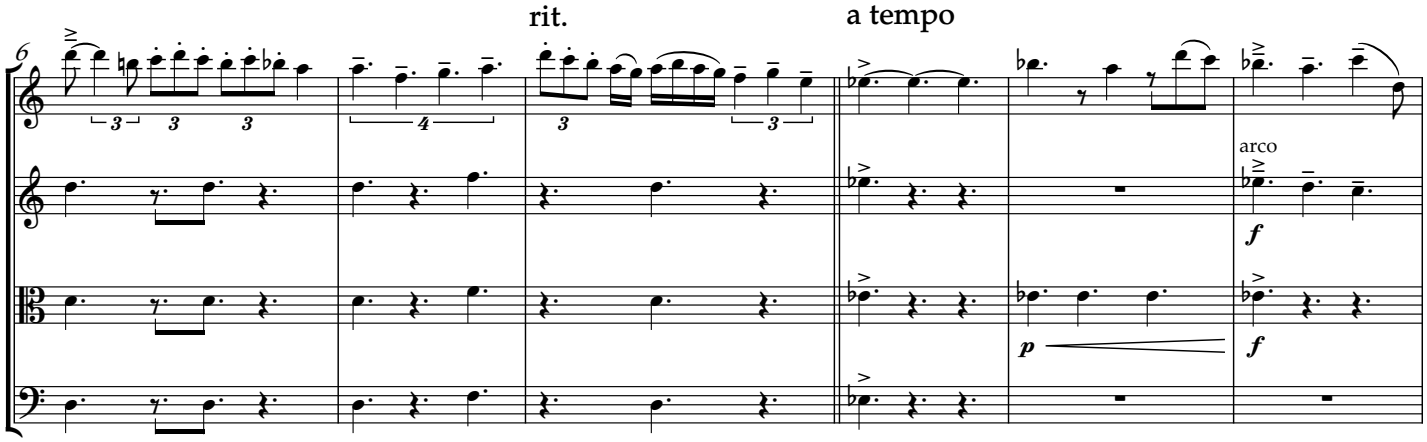
2. Puzzle Dance

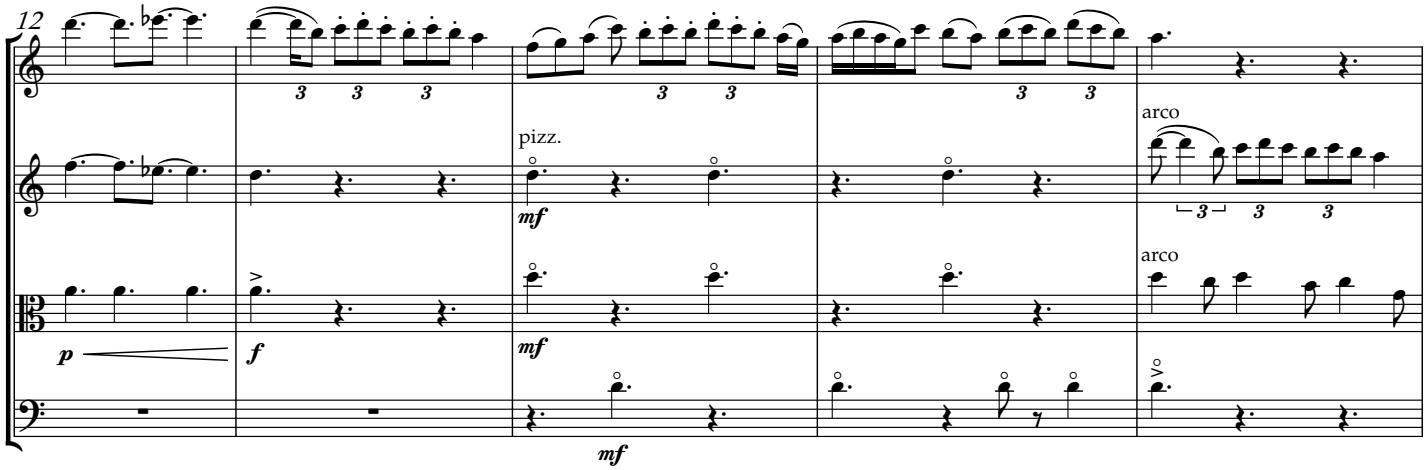
This piece should be played in the following two just intonation modes throughout. Most pitch classes are shared between the modes and it may be easiest to think in terms of a D Dorian mode that occasionally becomes an E-flat Lydian mode by shifting the root note while all other pitch classes remain the same.

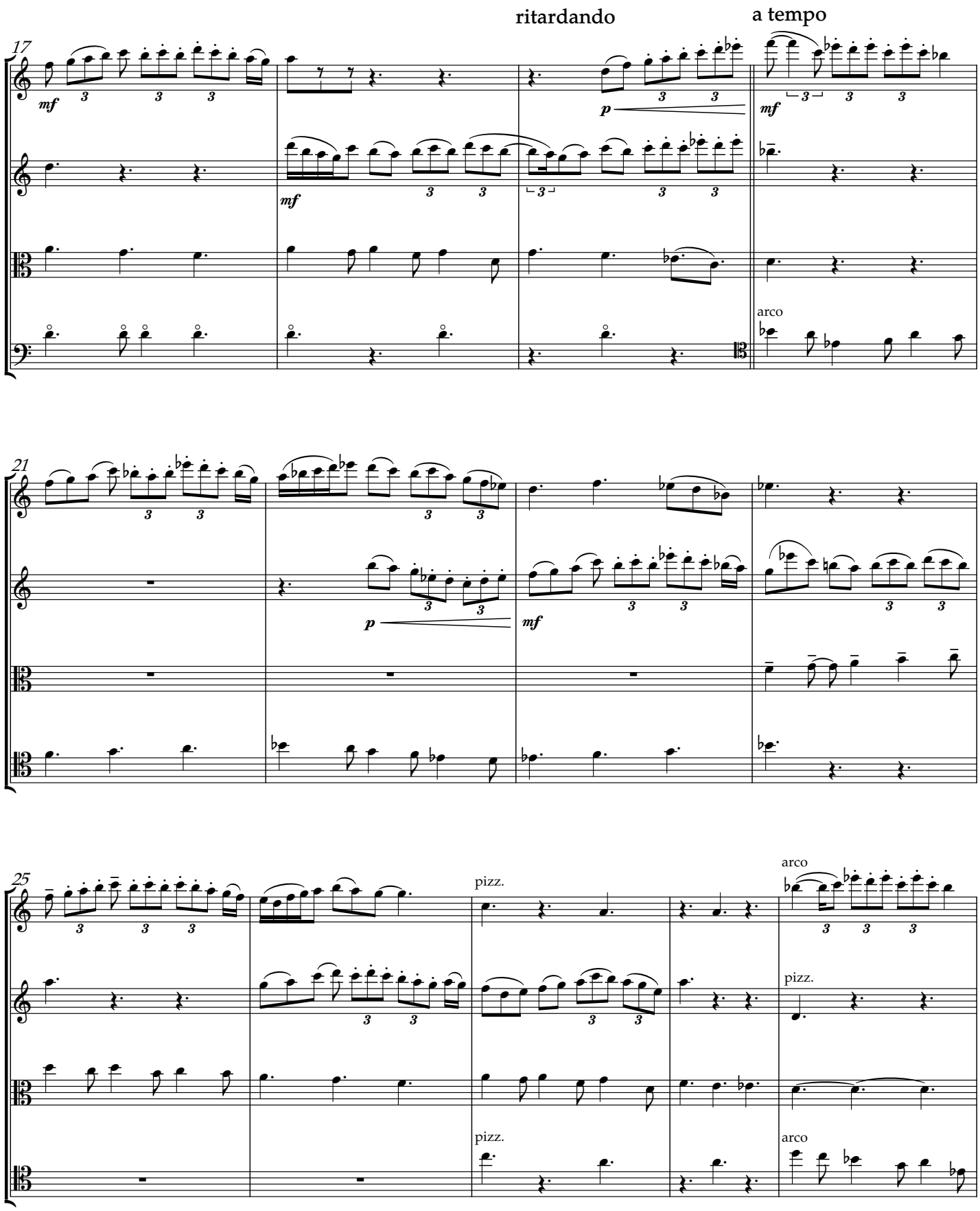


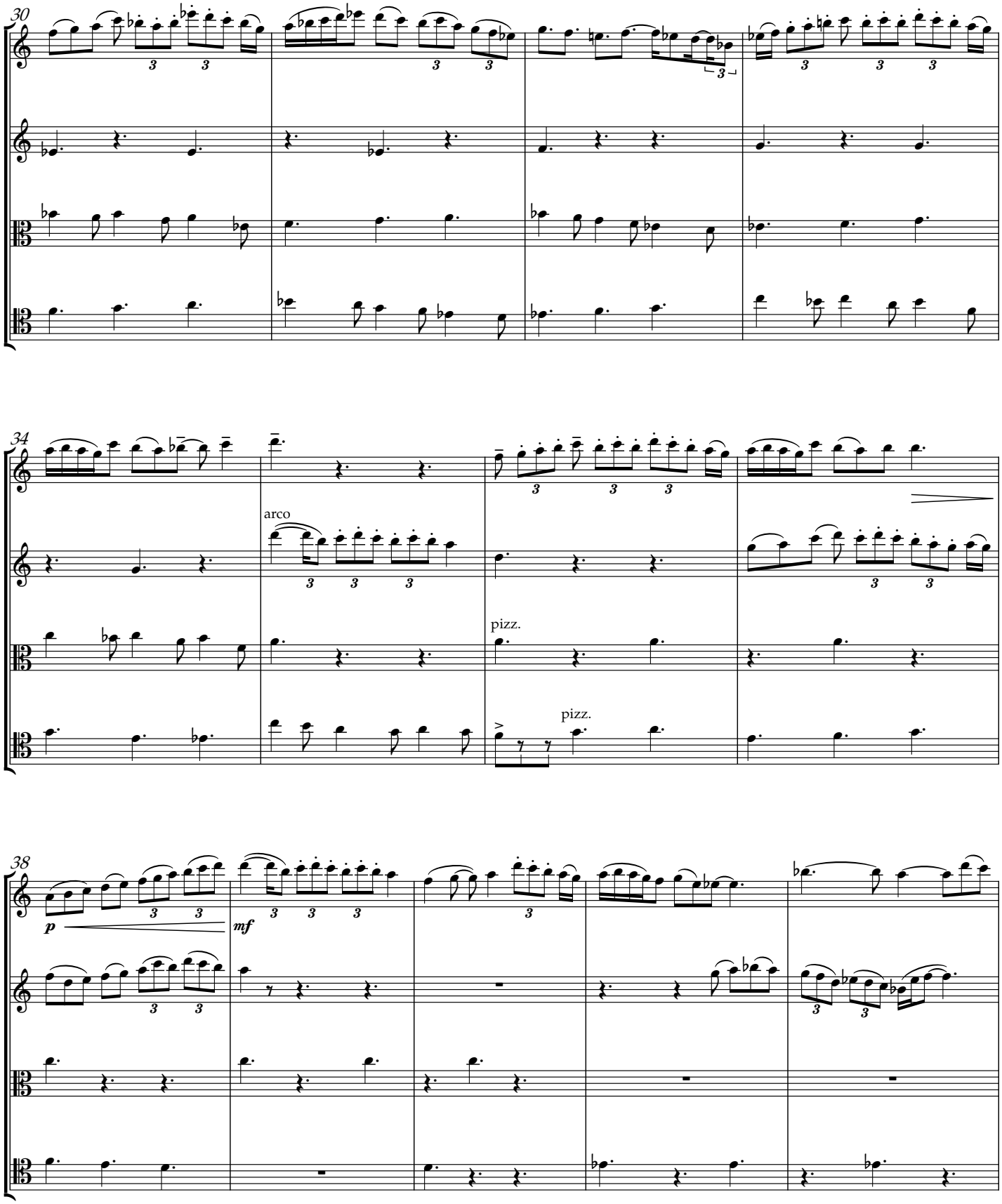
lively and rhythmic ♩. = 92

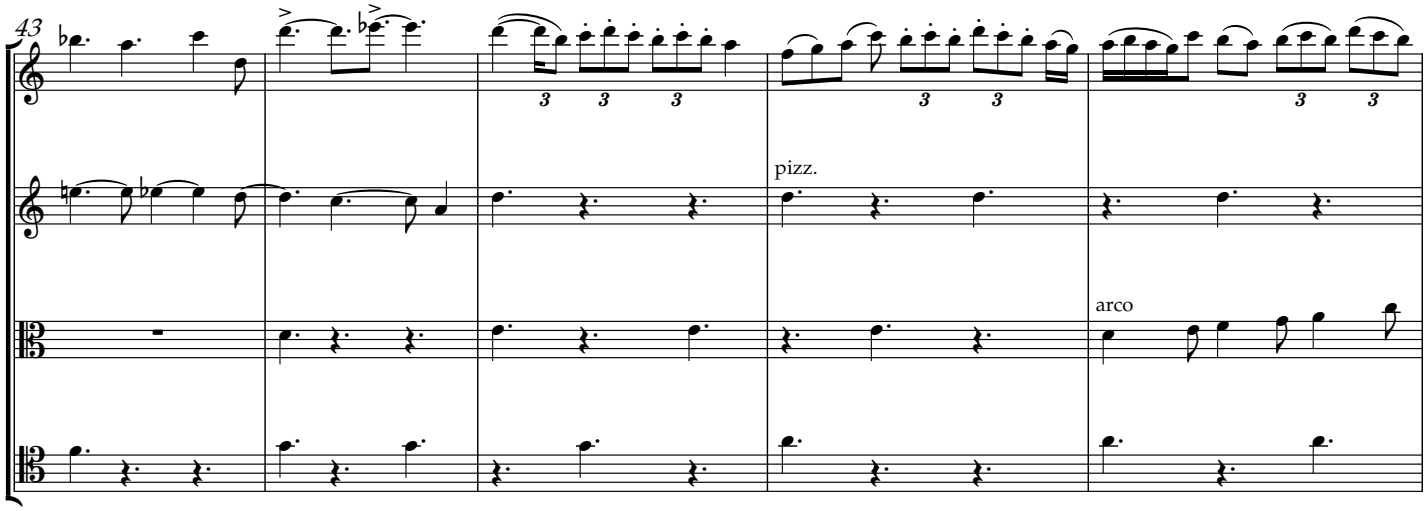


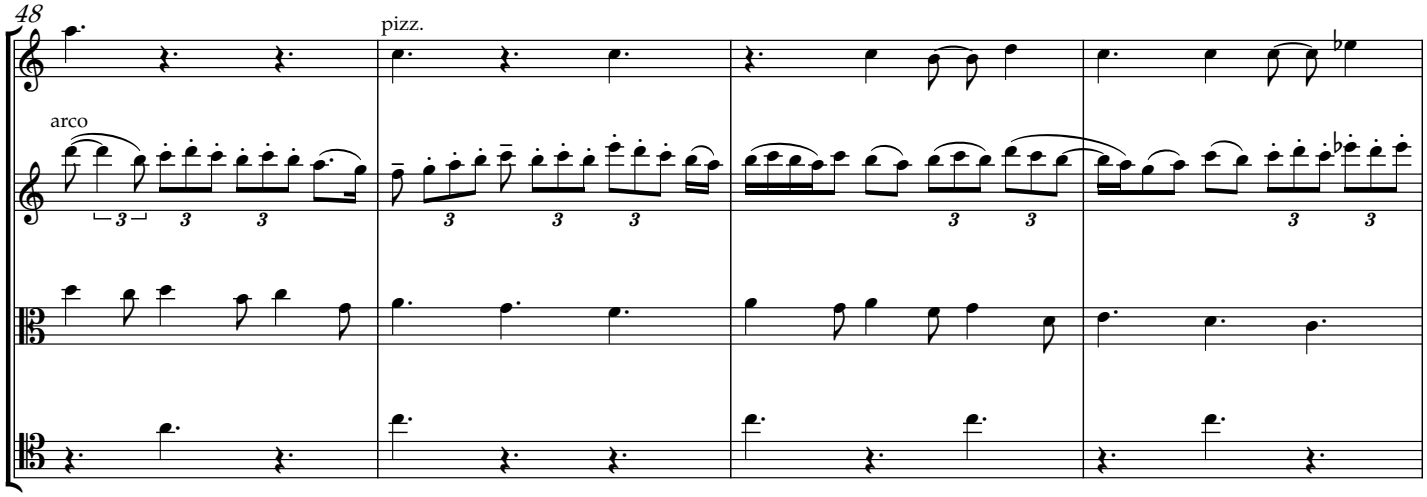


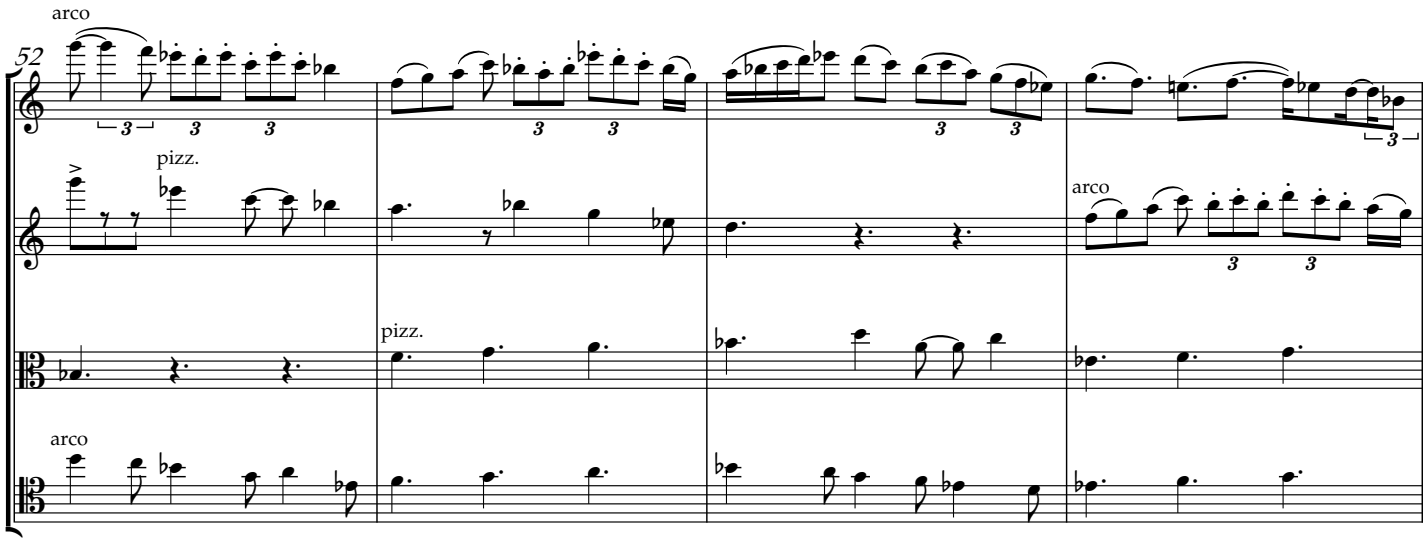


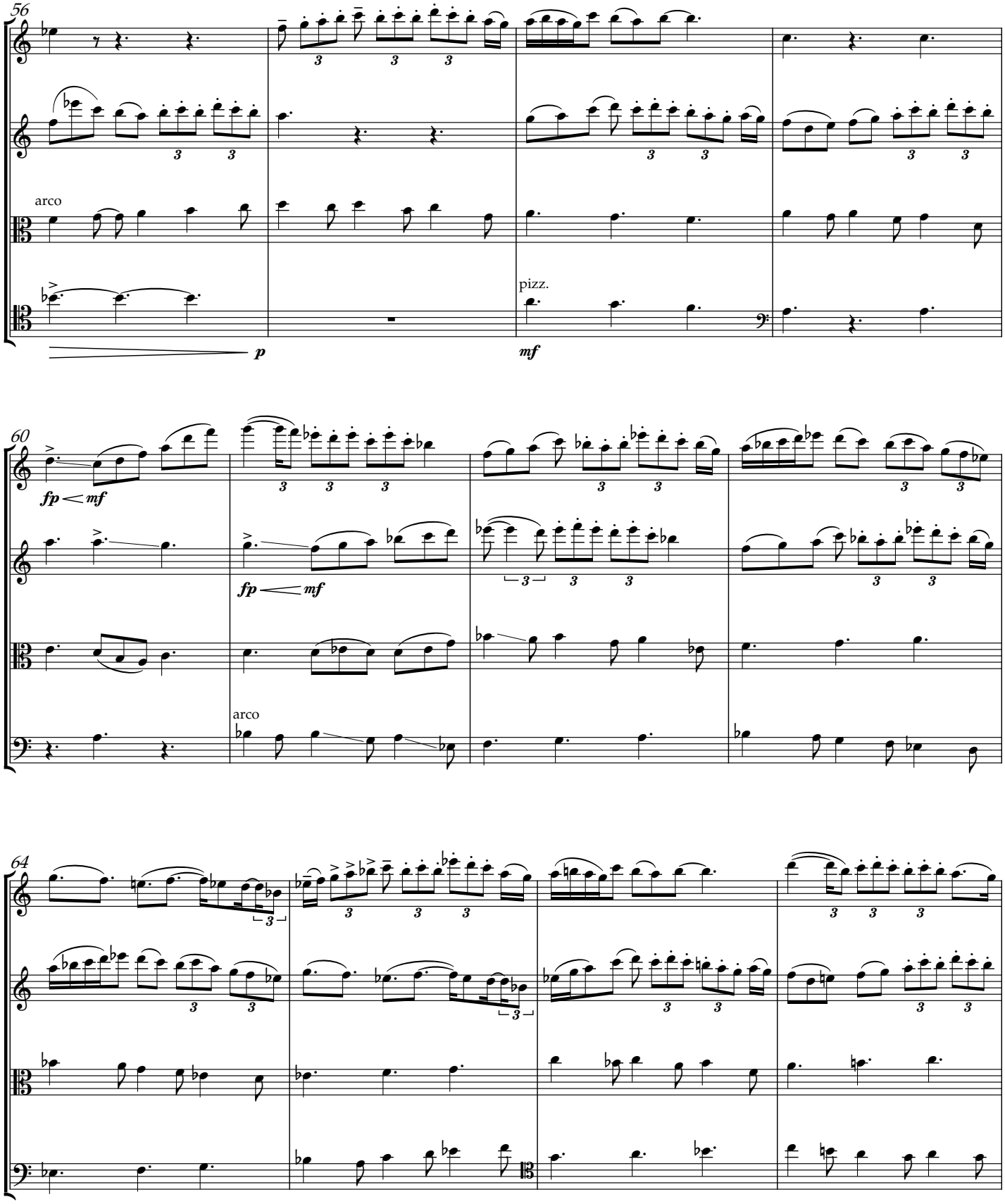

ritardando
a tempo
17
mf
p
mf
arco
21
p
mf
25
pizz.
arco
pizz.
pizz.
arco

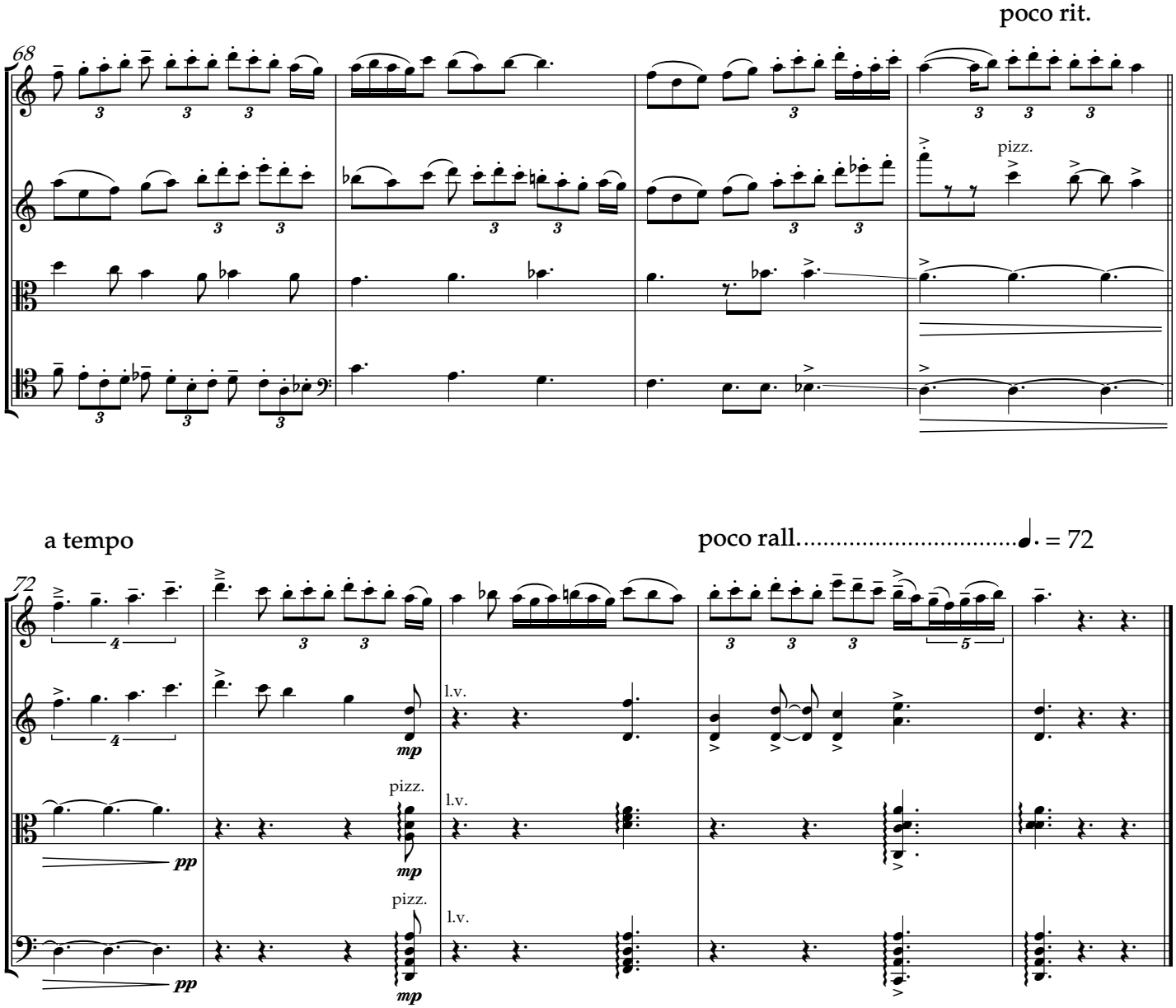

30
34
arco
pizz.
pizz.
38
p
mf


43
pizz.
arco


48
pizz.
arco

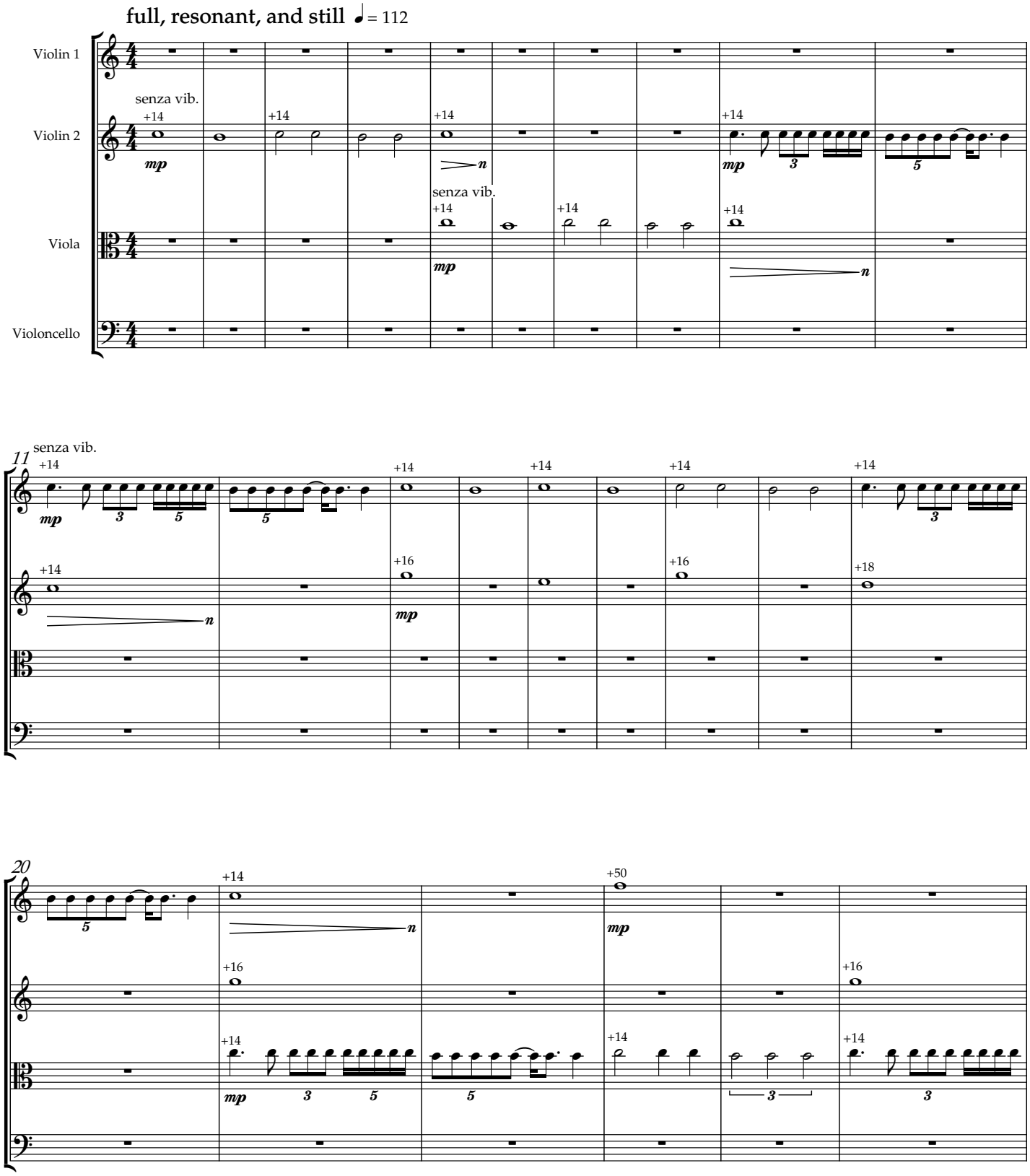

arco
52
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco

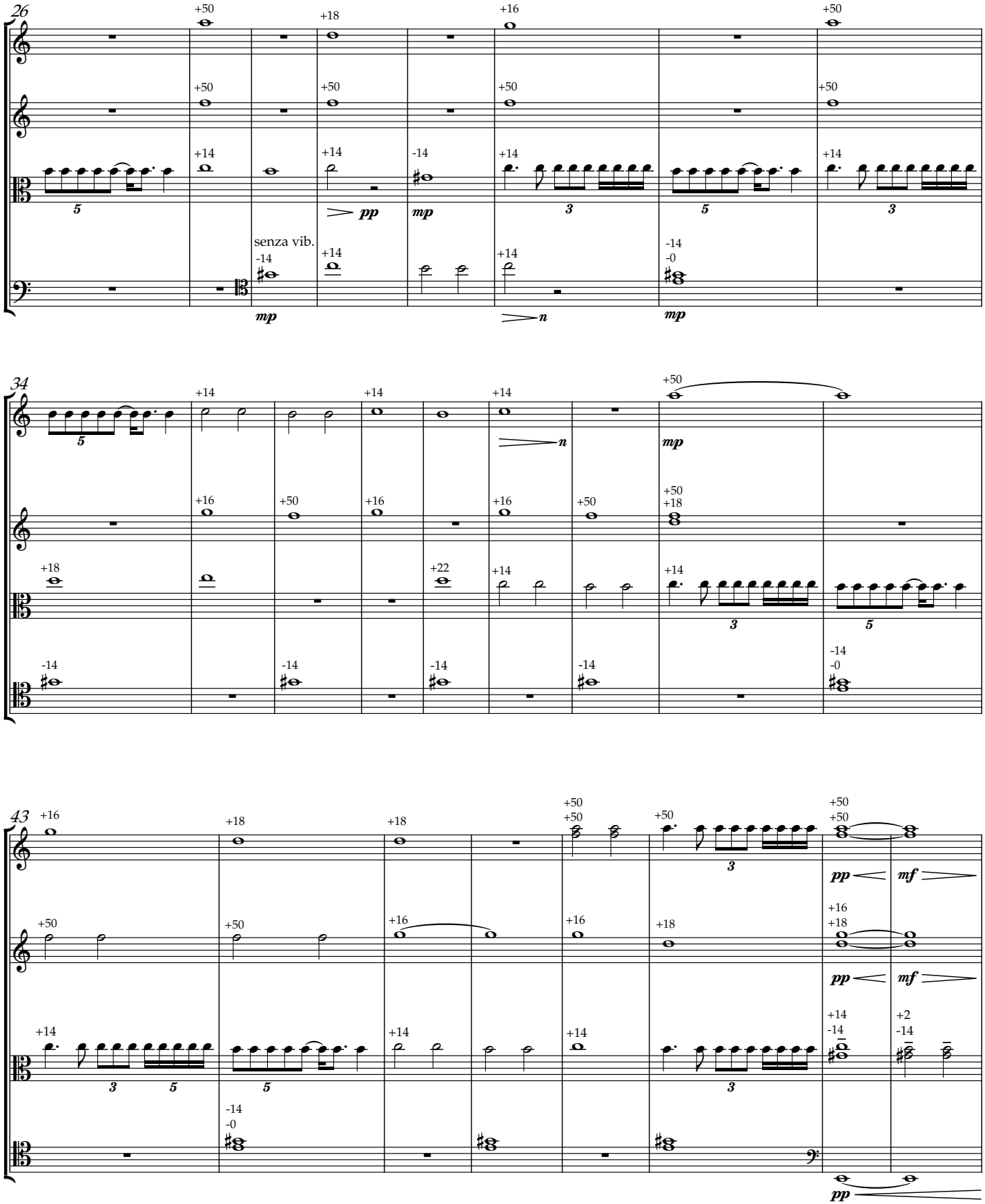

56
arco
pizz.
p
mf
60
fp mf
fp mf
arco
64

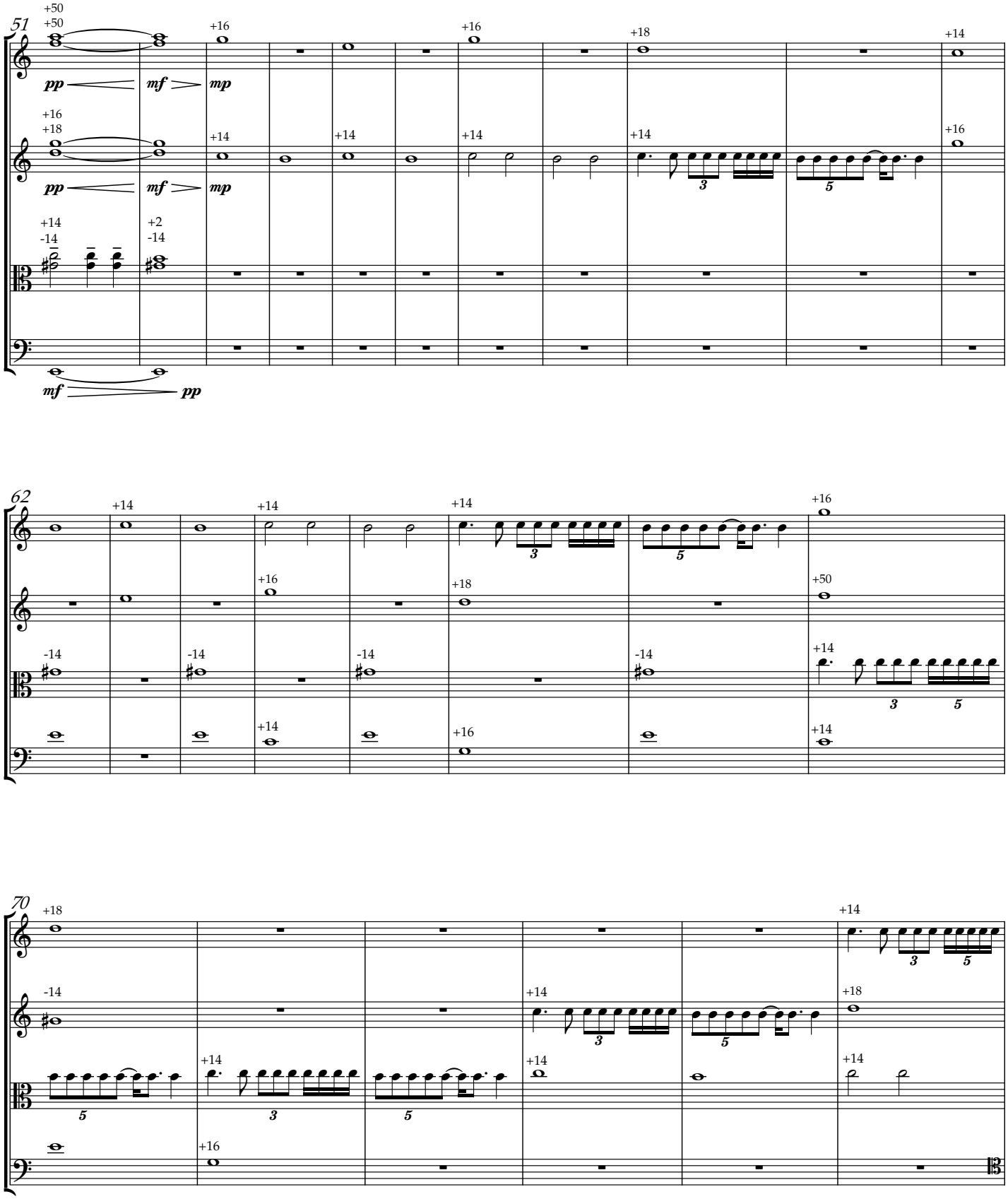

poco rit.
68
pizz.

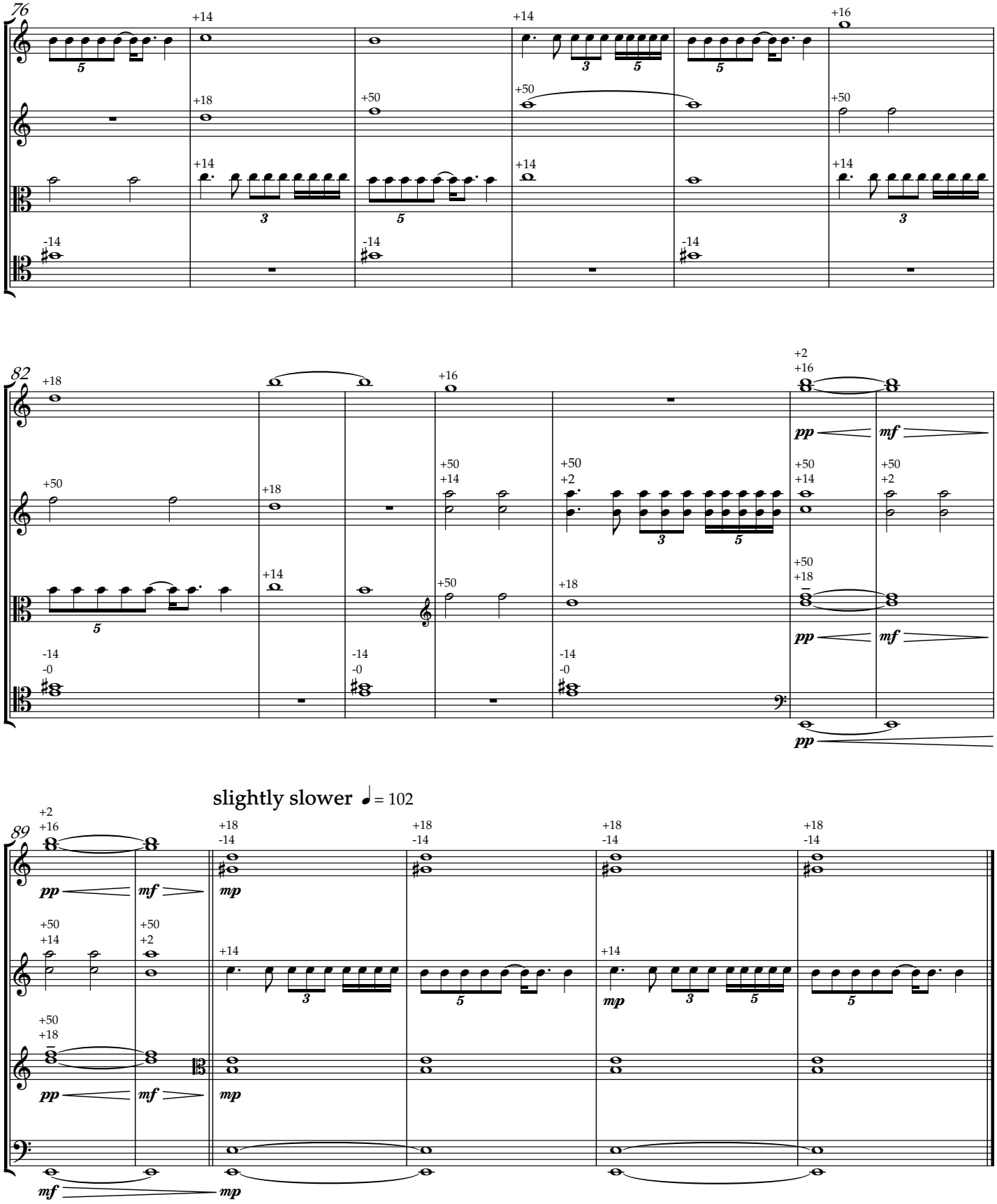
a tempo
poco rall.
= 72
72
l.v.
pizz.
mp
pp

3. Trance


full, resonant, and still ♩= 112
Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Violoncello
senza vib.
mp
n
11
20

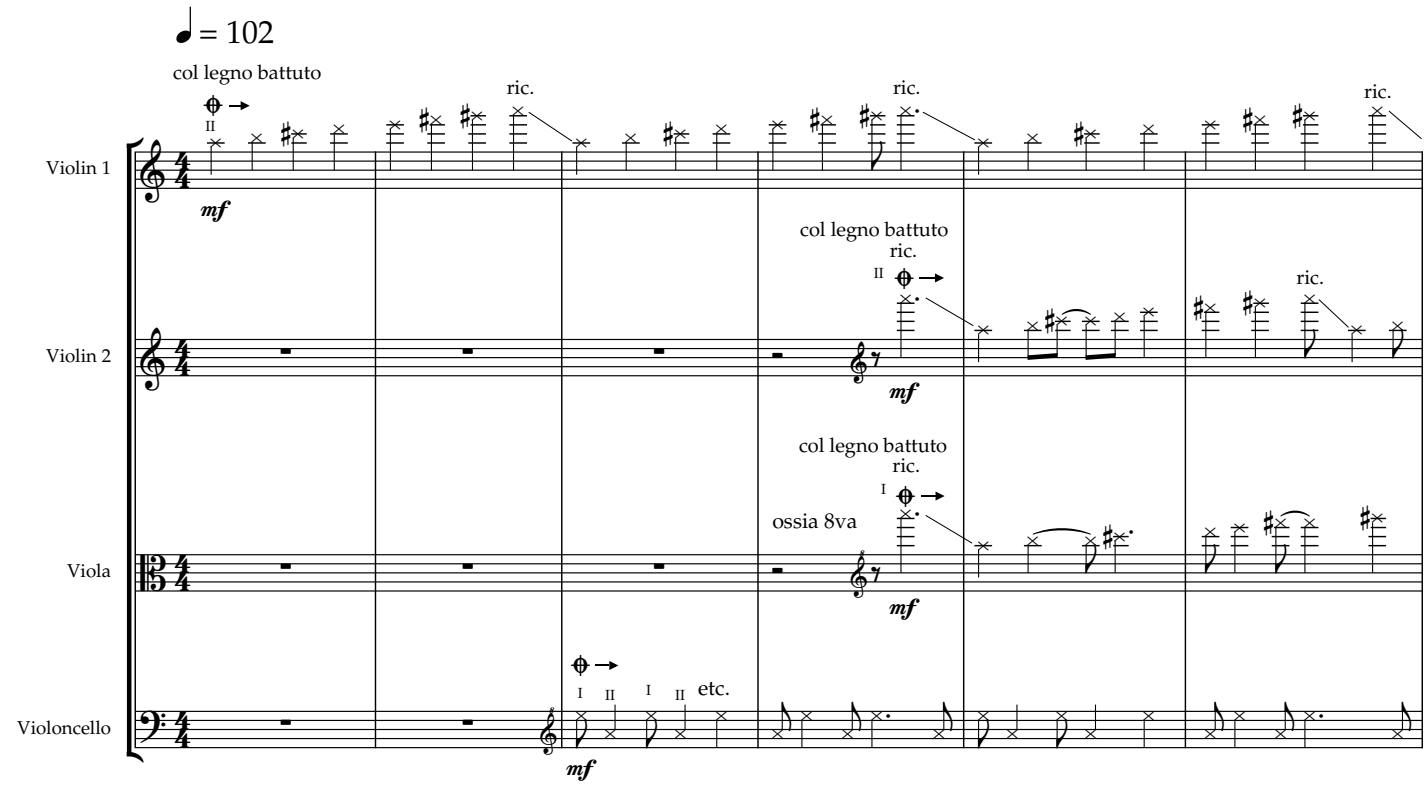

26
34
43
senza vib.
pp
mp
n
mf

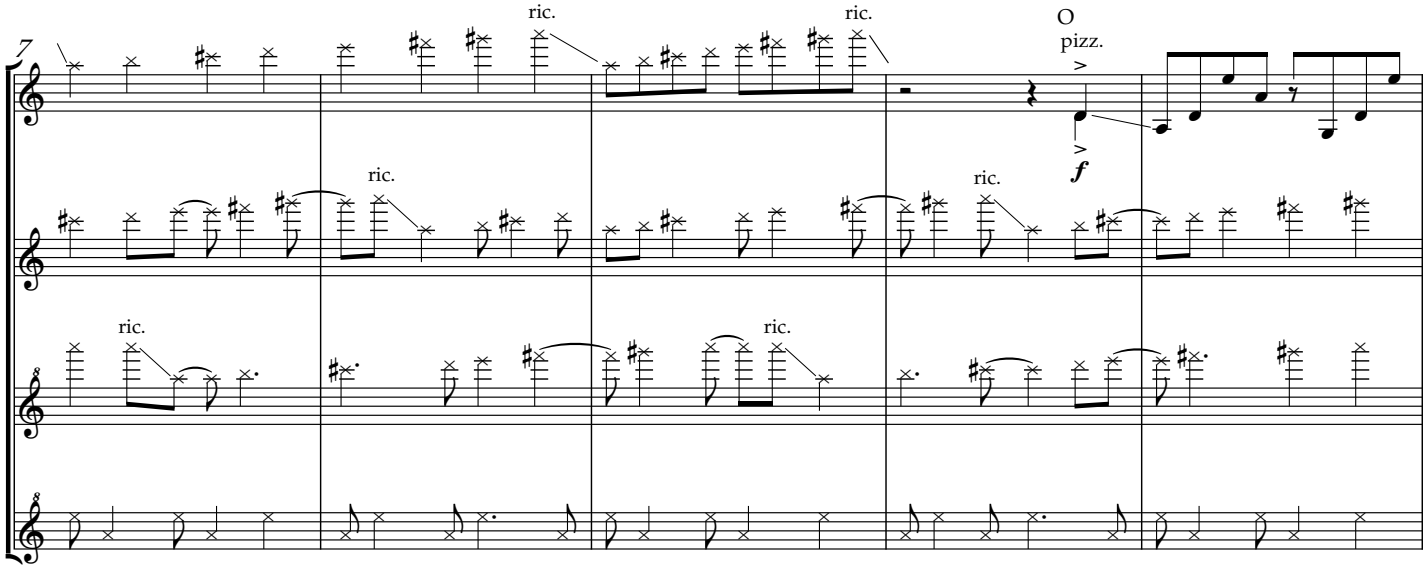

51
62
70
pp
mf
mp

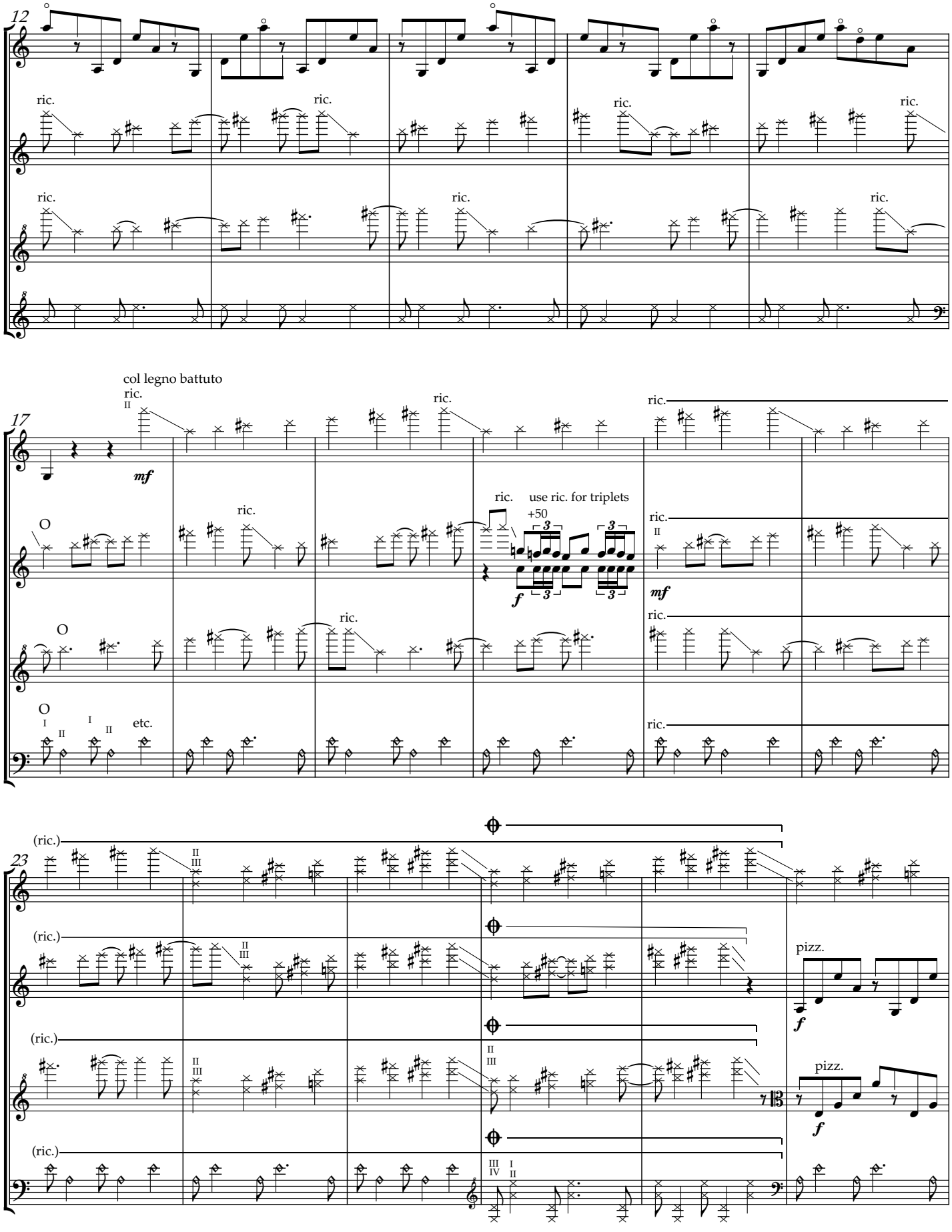

76
82
89
slightly slower ♩= 102

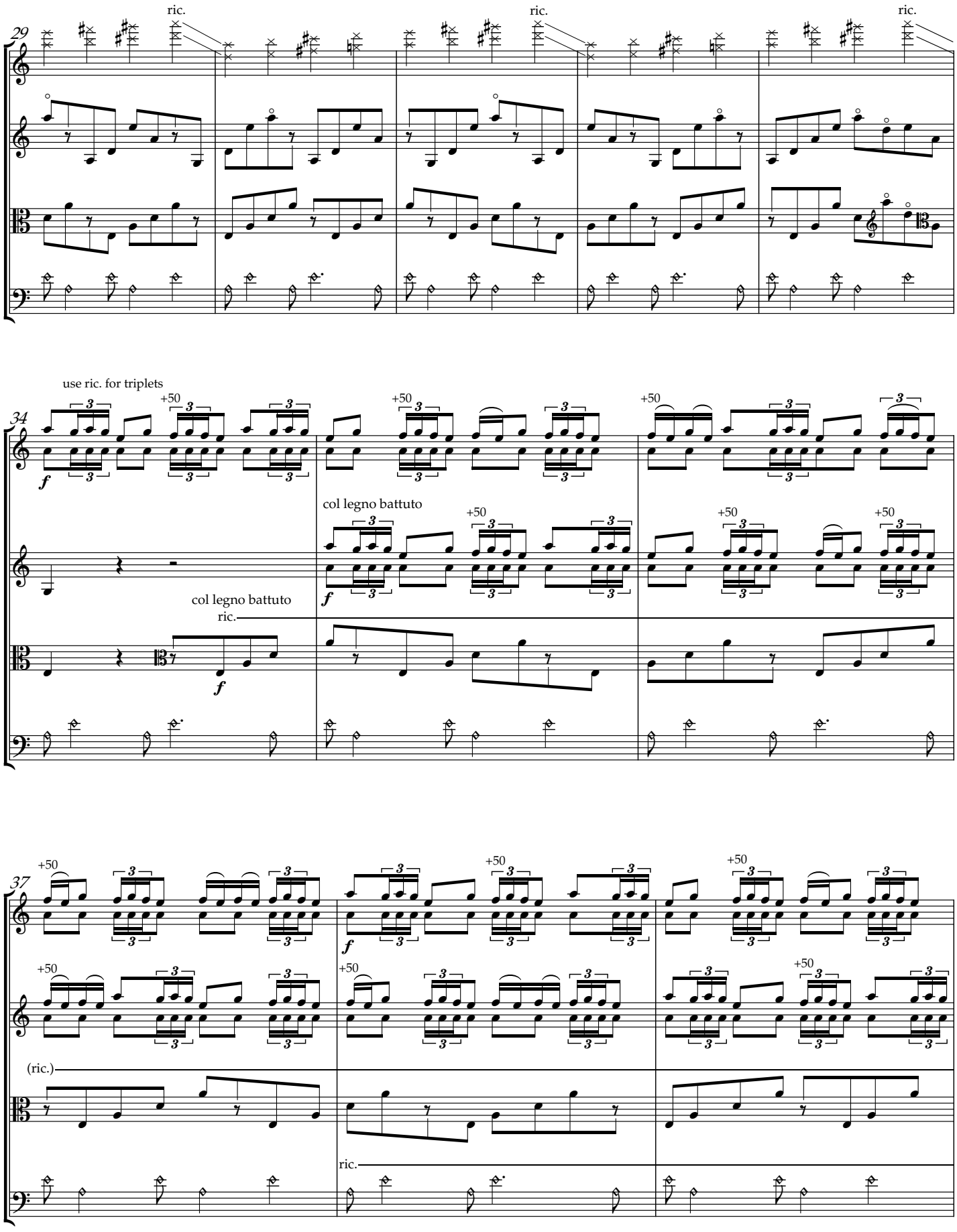
4. Rounds Dance

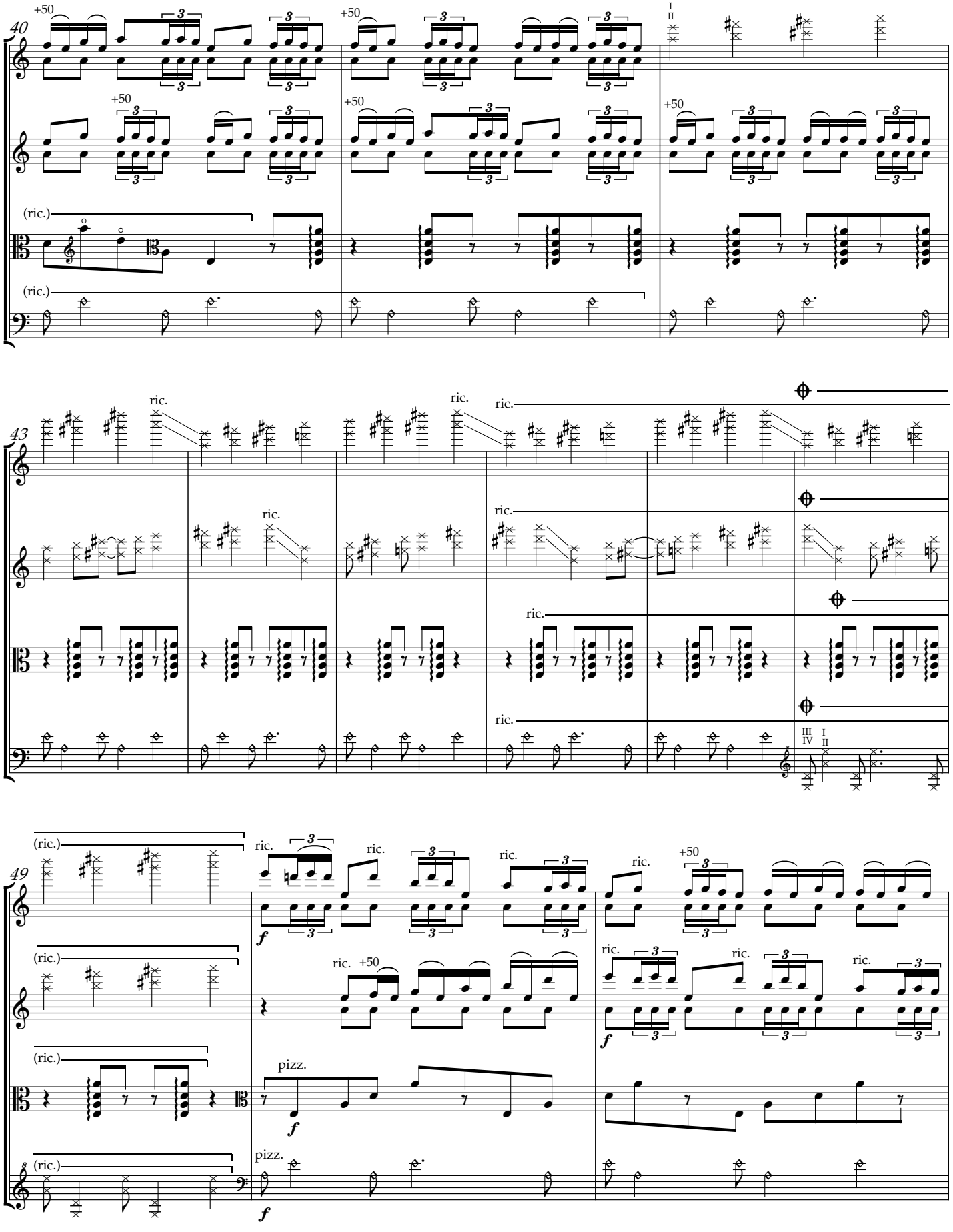
"x" notehead pitches are produced with the strike point of the the bow on the string.
These pitches will not and need not be perfectly precise, but should be close enough to give the impression of an A major scale.

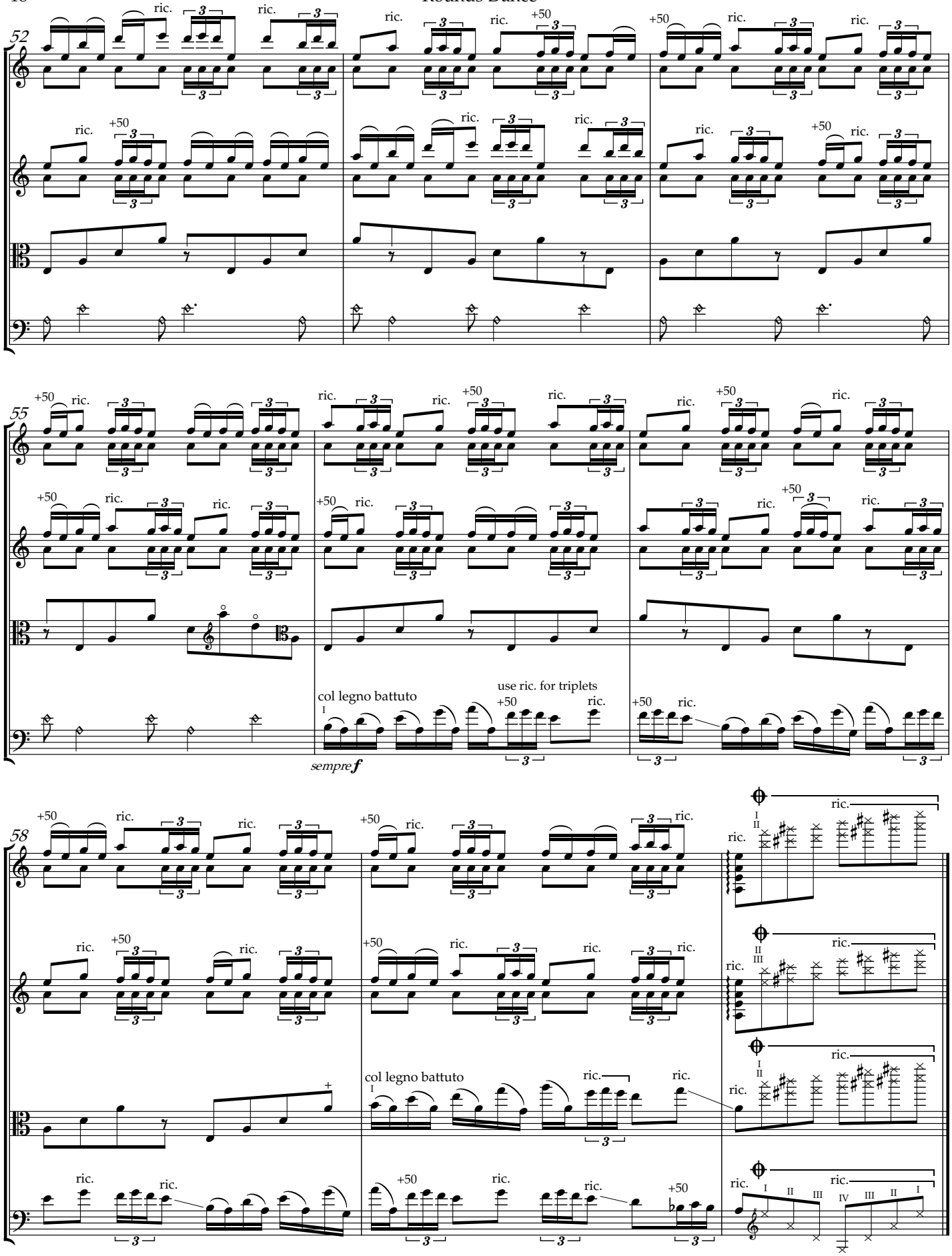





12
ric.
17
col legno battuto
mf
use ric. for triplets
+50
O
I II I II etc.
23
(ric.)
pizz.
f

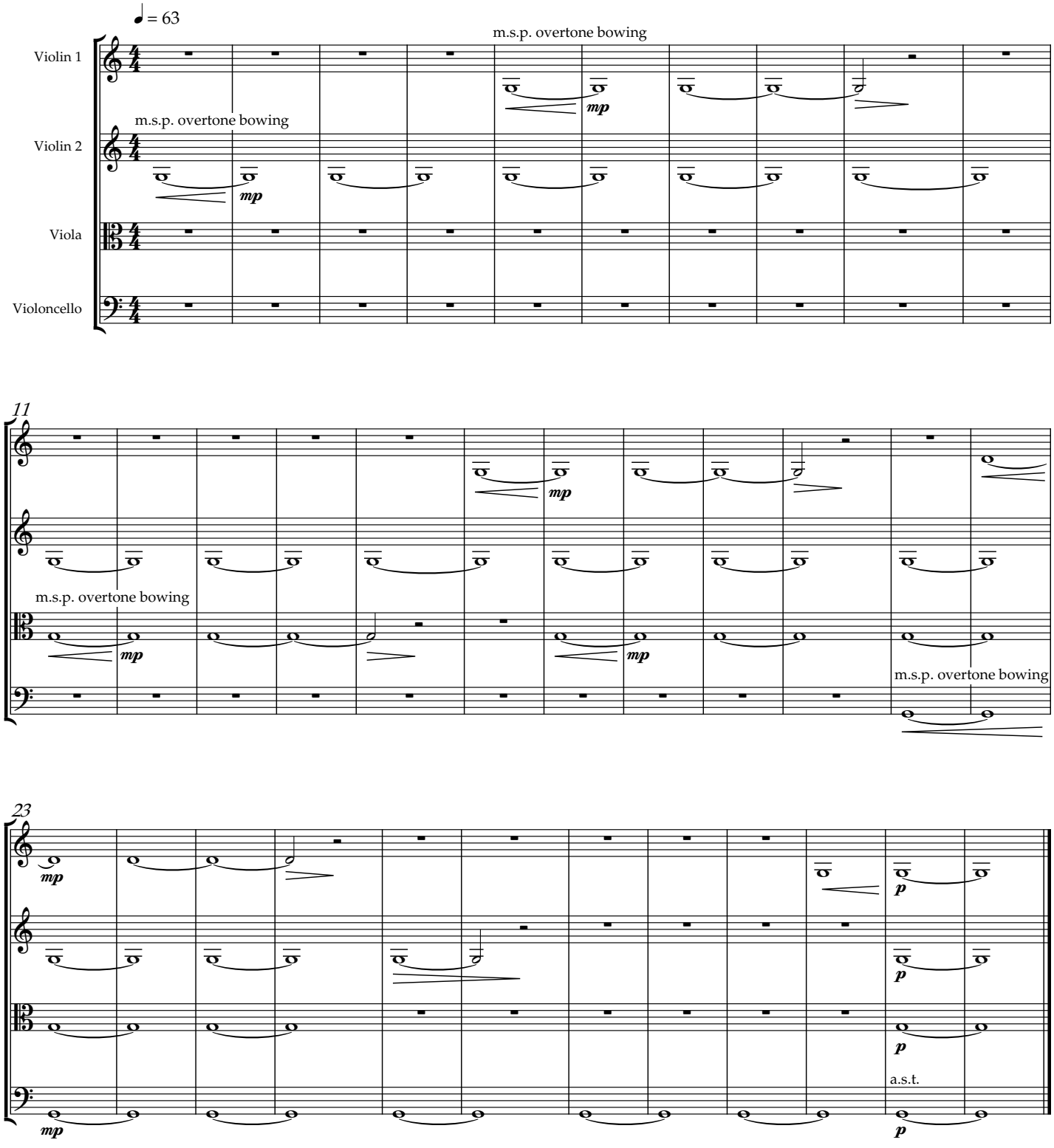

29
ric.
ric.
ric.
use ric. for triplets
34
+50
f
col legno battuto
ric.
37
(ric.)


40
43
49
+50
(ric.)
ric.
pizz.
f
I
II
III
IV


52
55
58
ric.
+50
col legno battuto
use ric. for triplets
sempre f

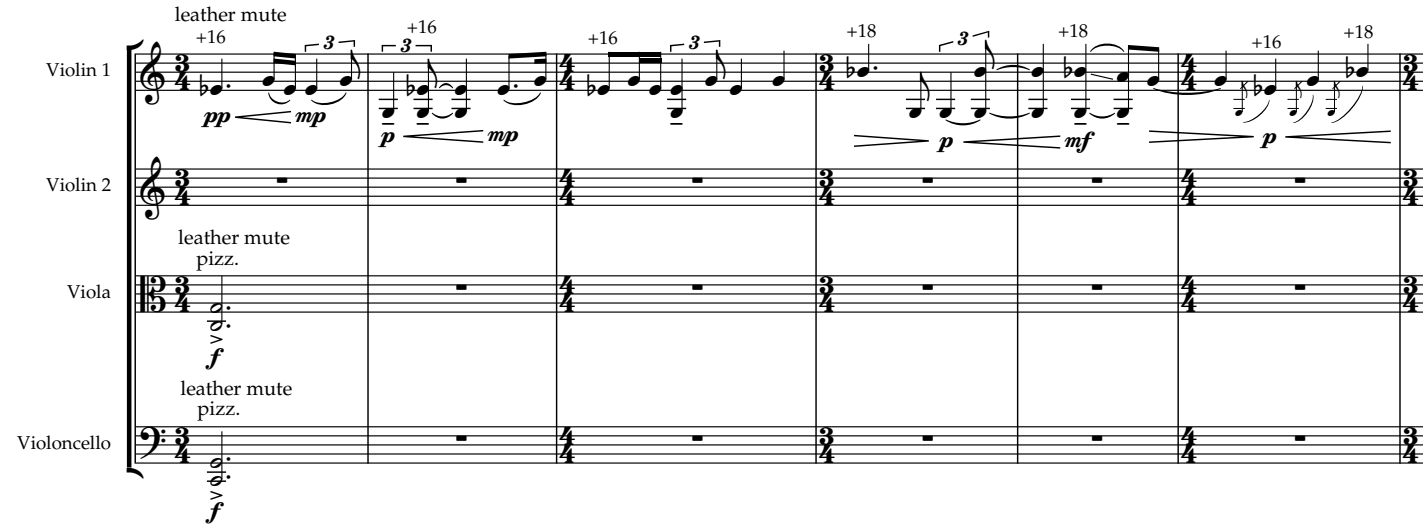
5. Body Song

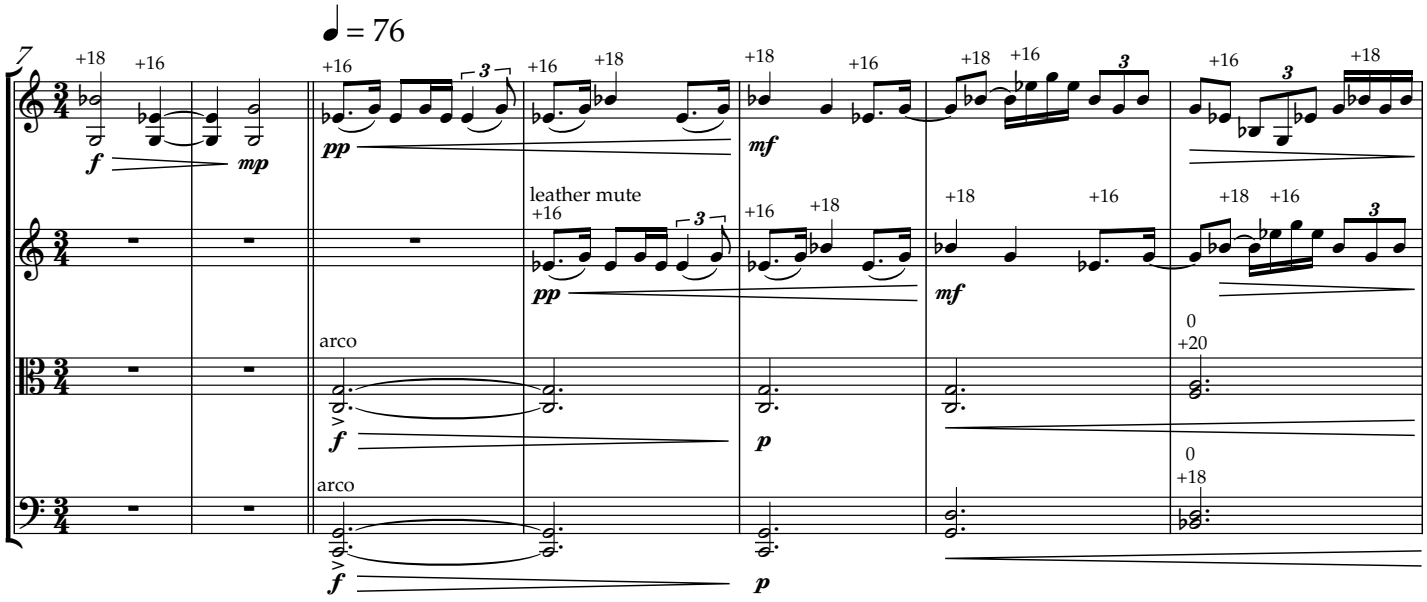
Throughout the movement use "overtone bowing": bow the string in a molto sul ponticello position using the thin edge of the bow hairs to bring out a harmonic. With each bow stroke try to isolate as high an harmonic as possible. See front matter of score for link to video recording.

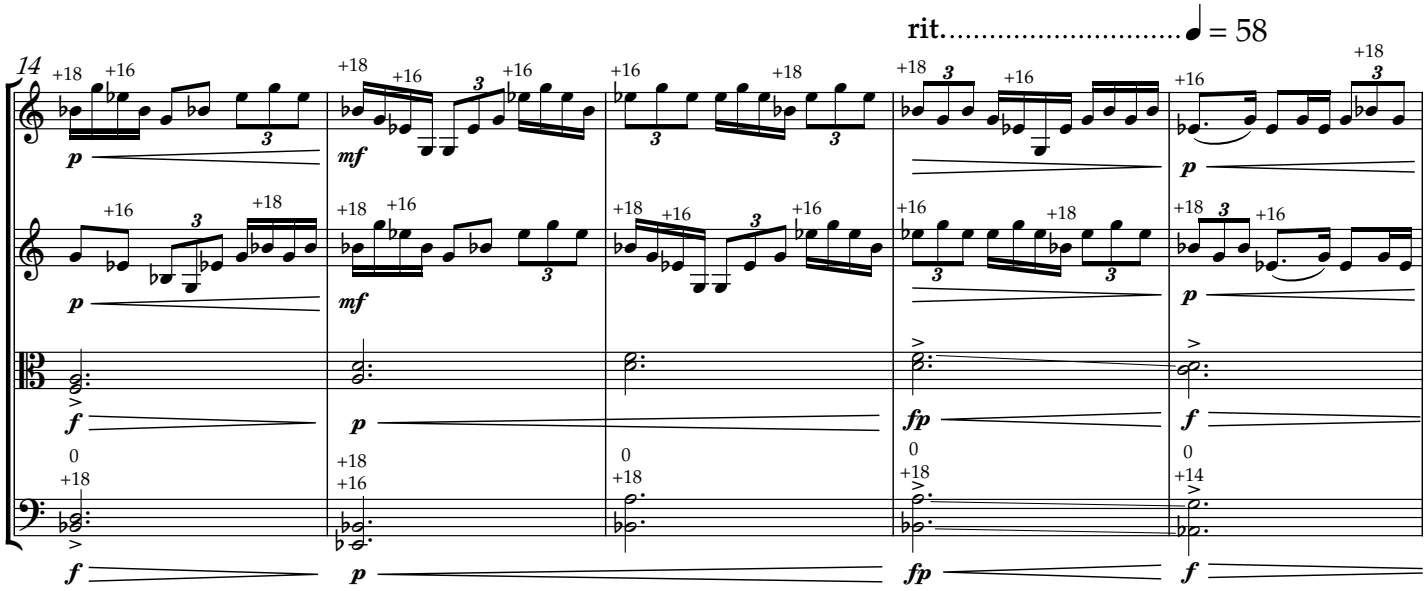


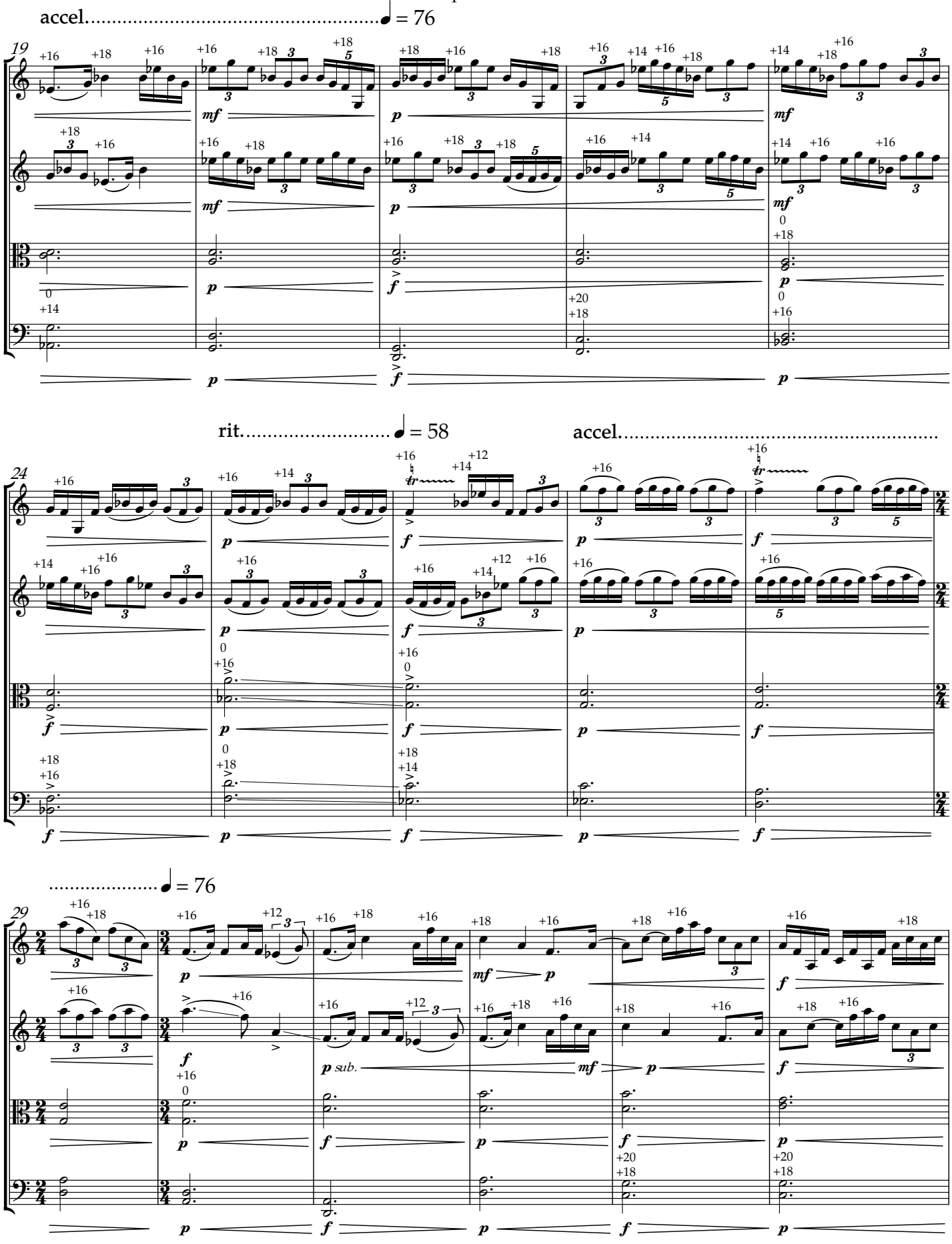
6. Stupor Dance

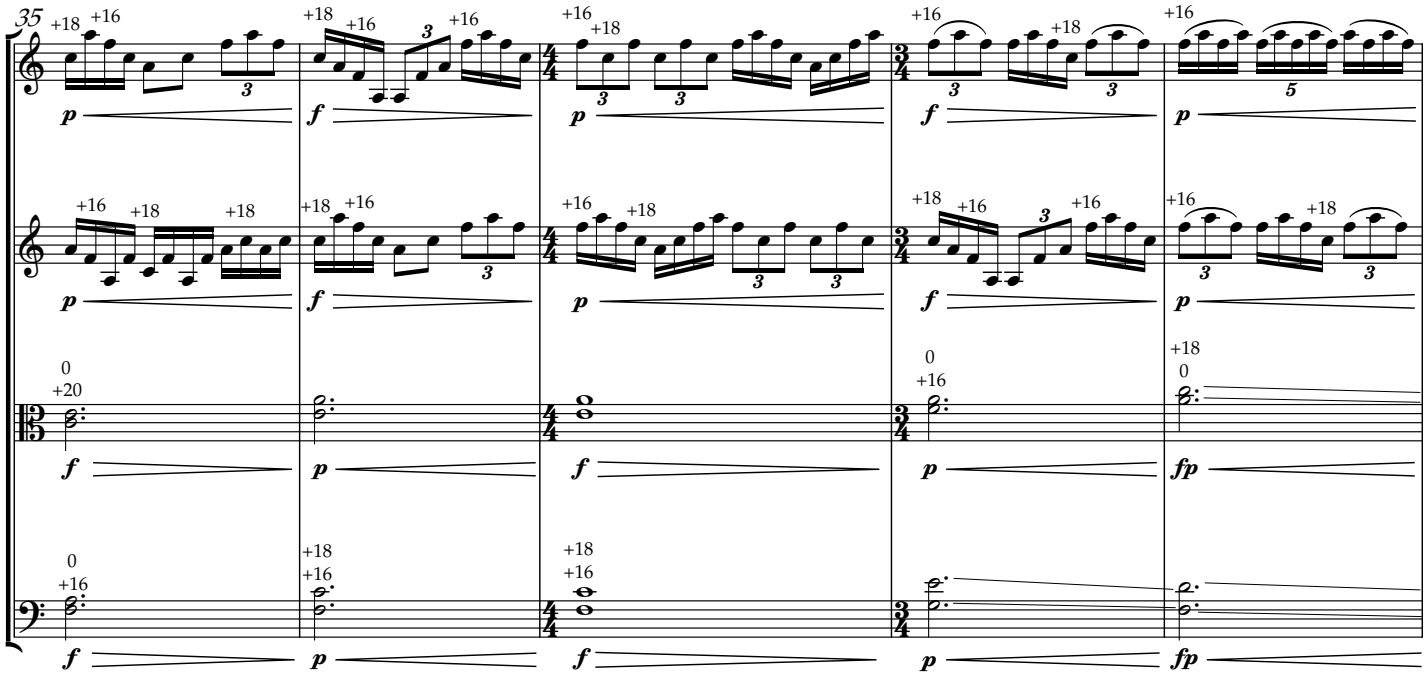
con rubato, lilting ♩ = 52–66

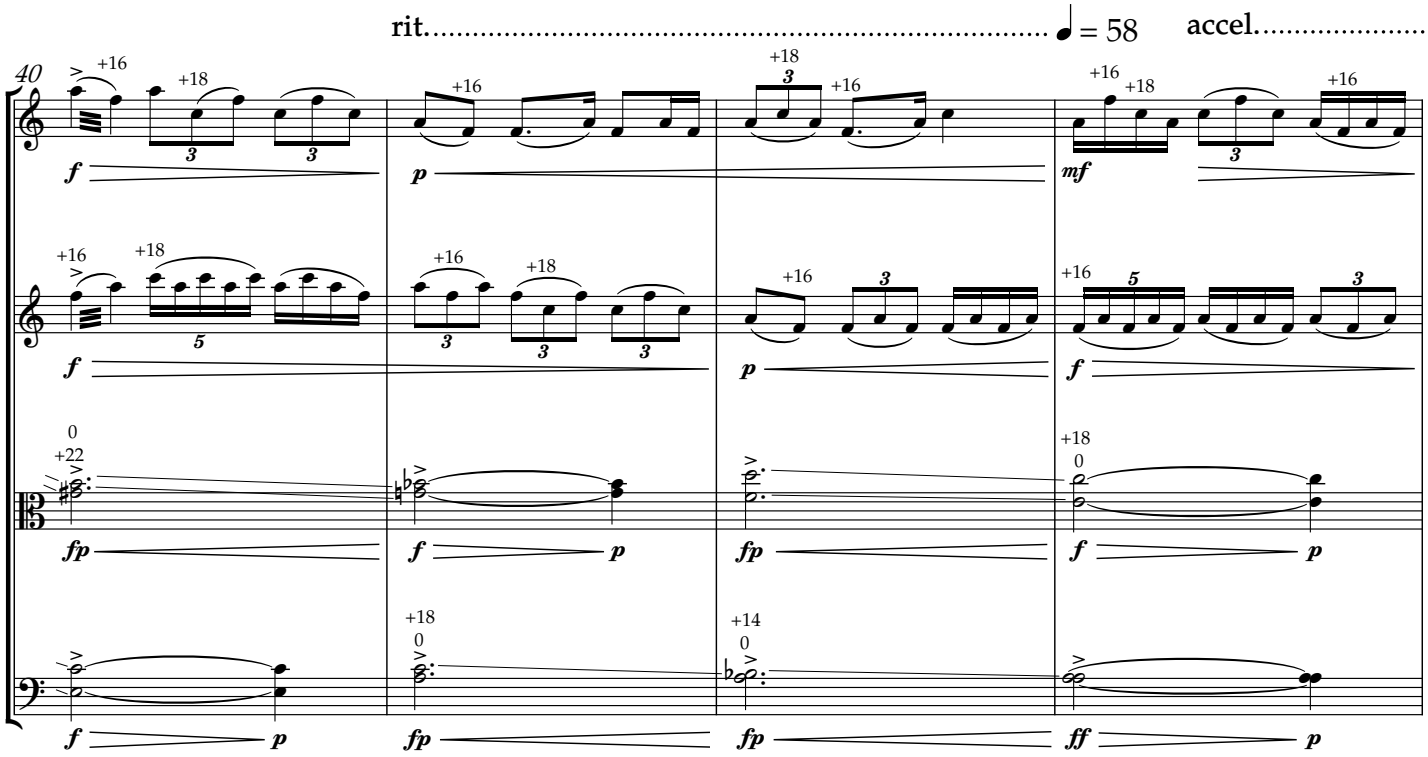


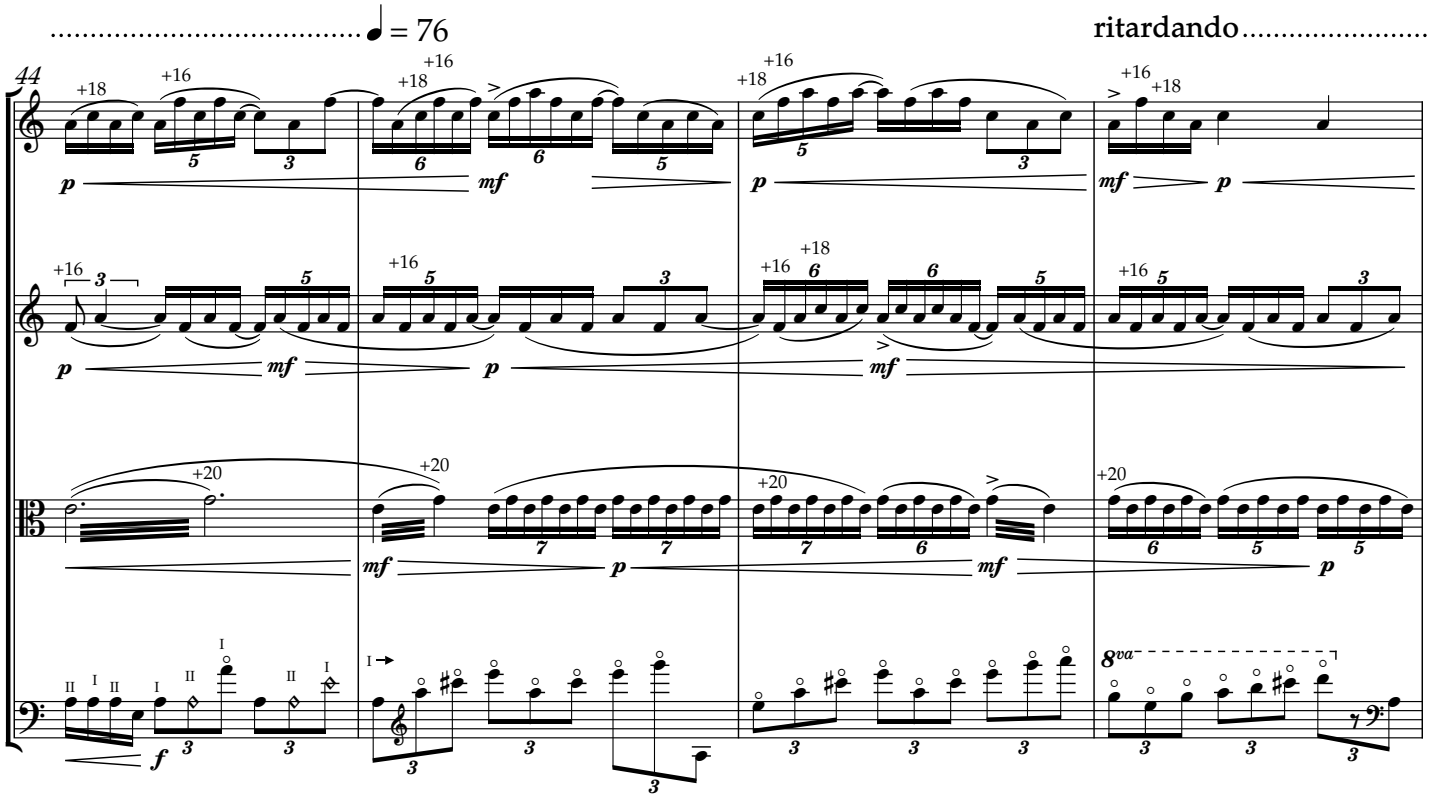


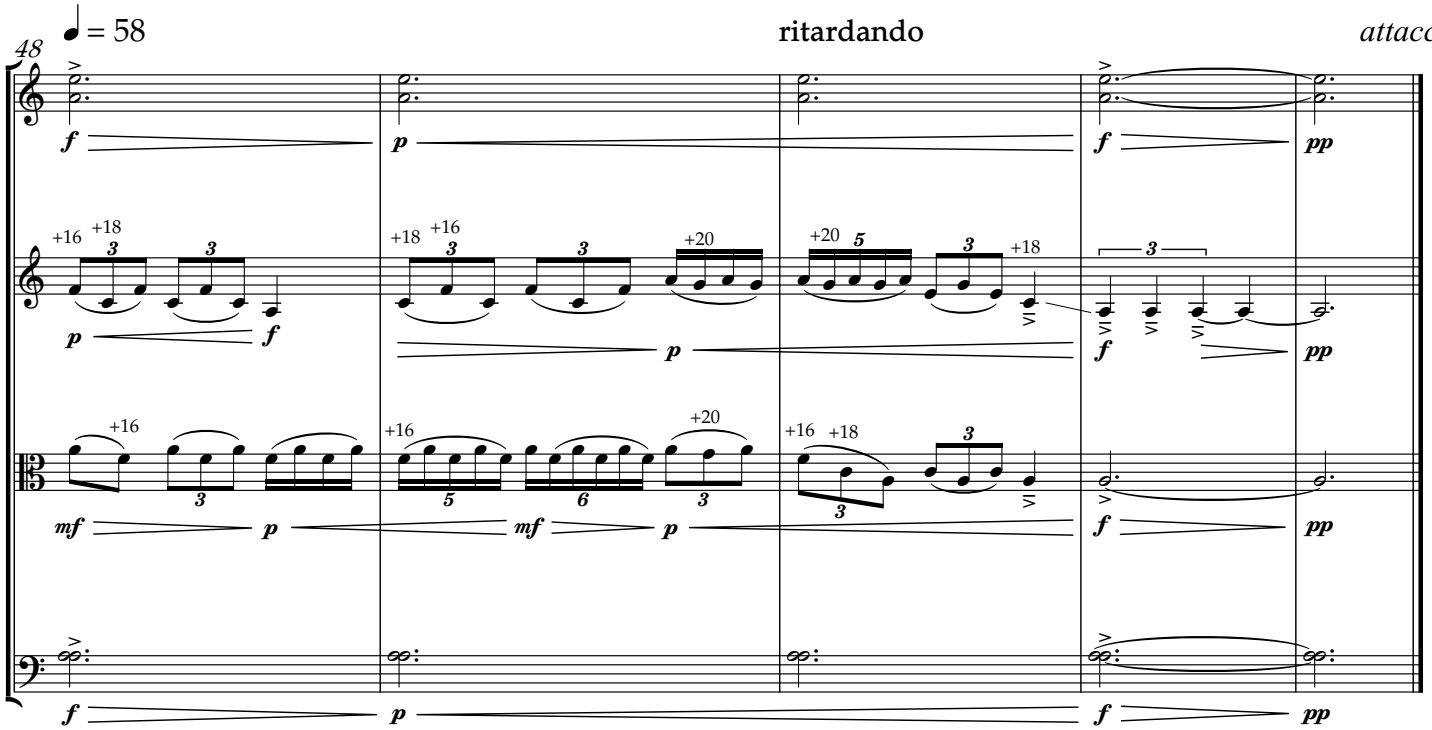



accel. ♩ = 76
19
rit. ♩ = 58
accel.
24
♩ = 76
29

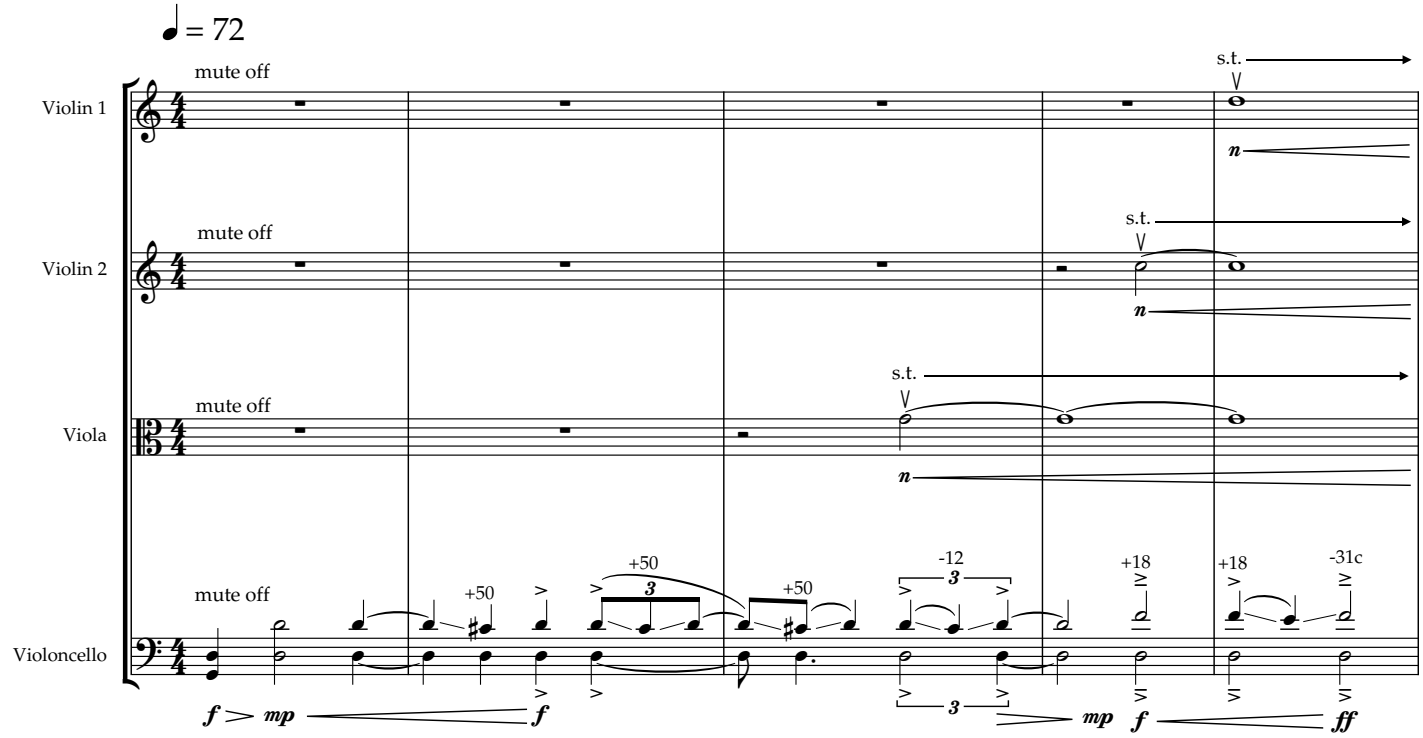

35
p
f
p
f
p
f
p
fp

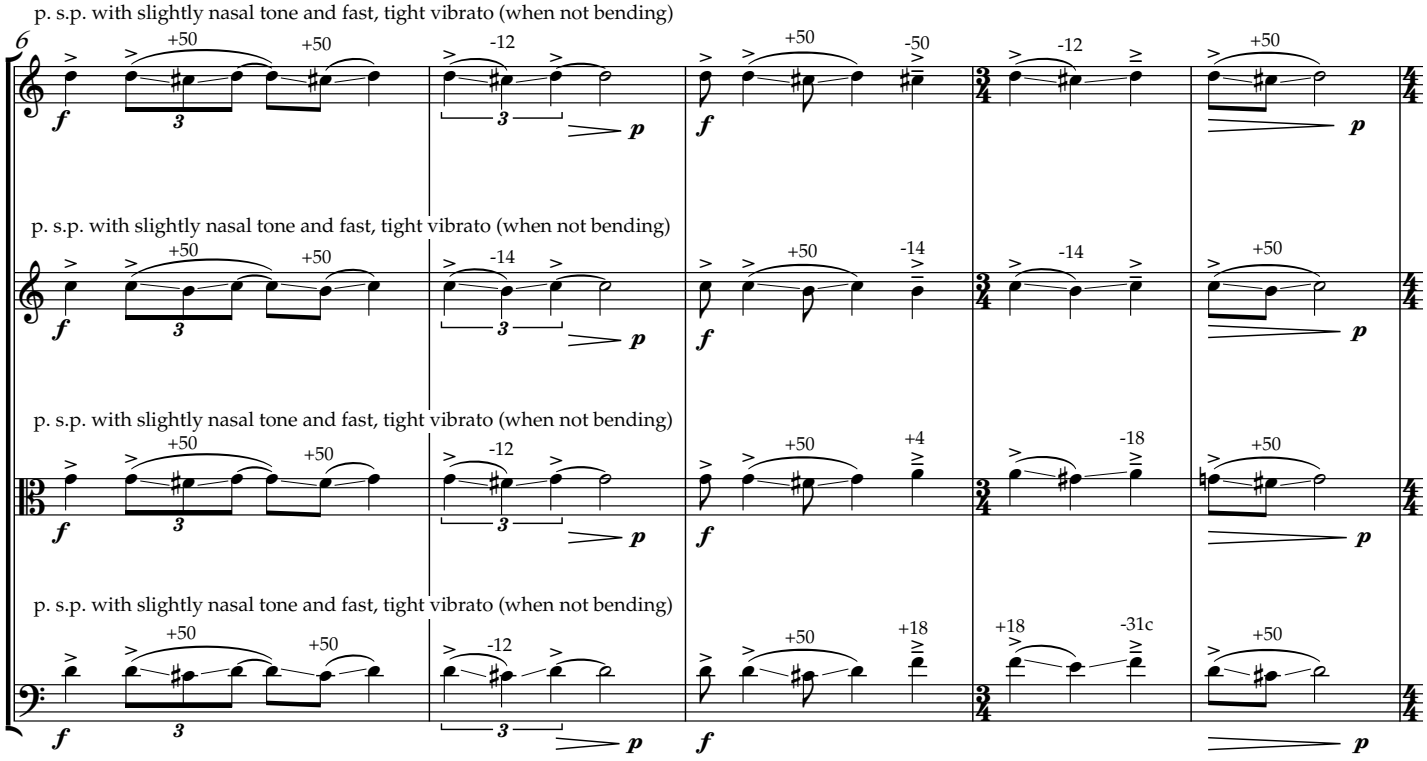

rit.
= 58
accel.
40
f
p
mf
fp
f
p
ff


♩ = 76
ritardando
44

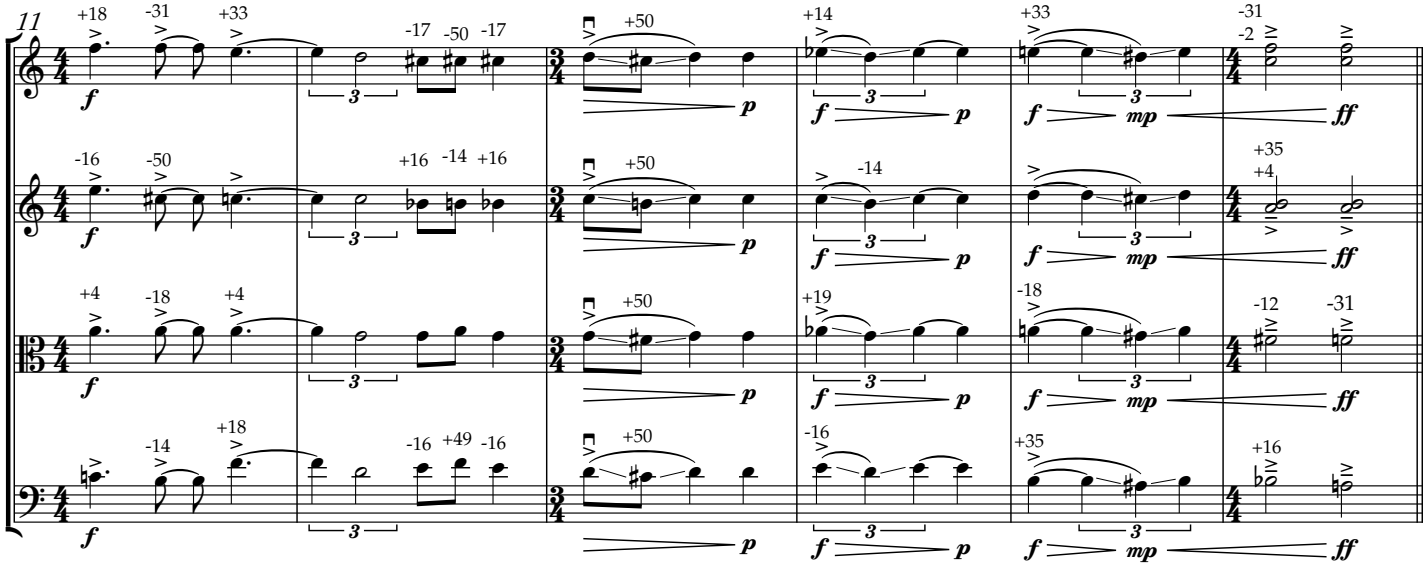

♩ = 58
ritardando
attacca
48

7. Chorus

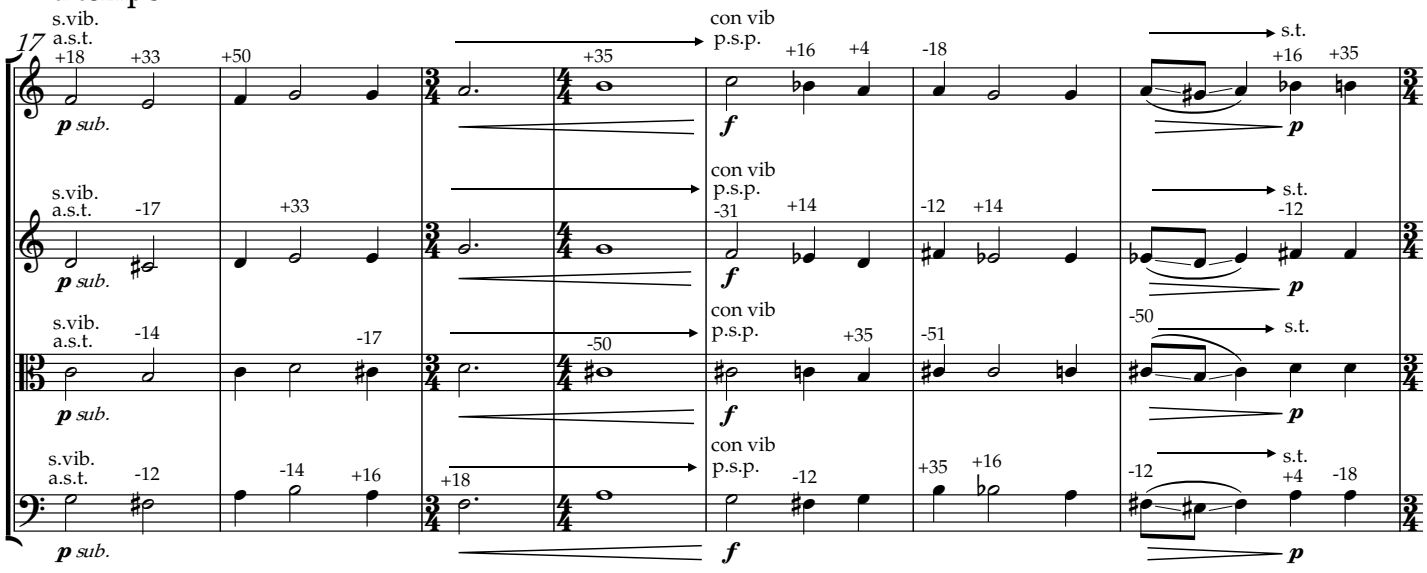

♩ = 72
Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Violoncello
mute off
s.t.
n
+50
-12
+18
-31c
f
mp
ff

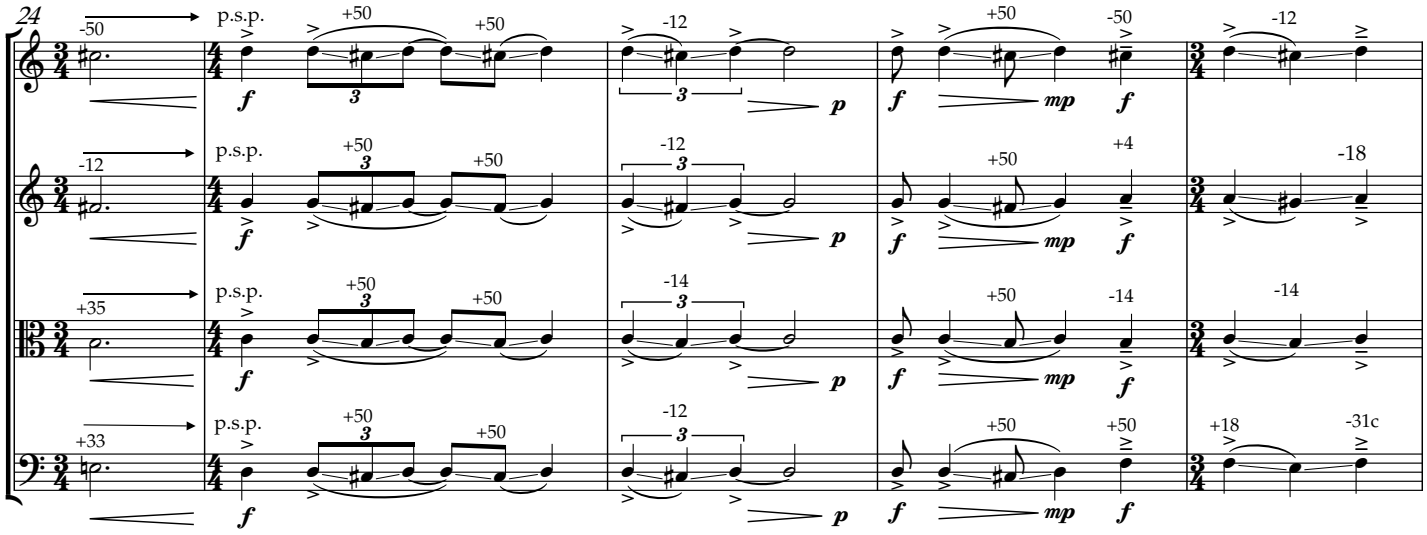

6
p. s.p. with slightly nasal tone and fast, tight vibrato (when not bending)
+50
-12
-50
-14
+4
-18
+18
-31c
f
p

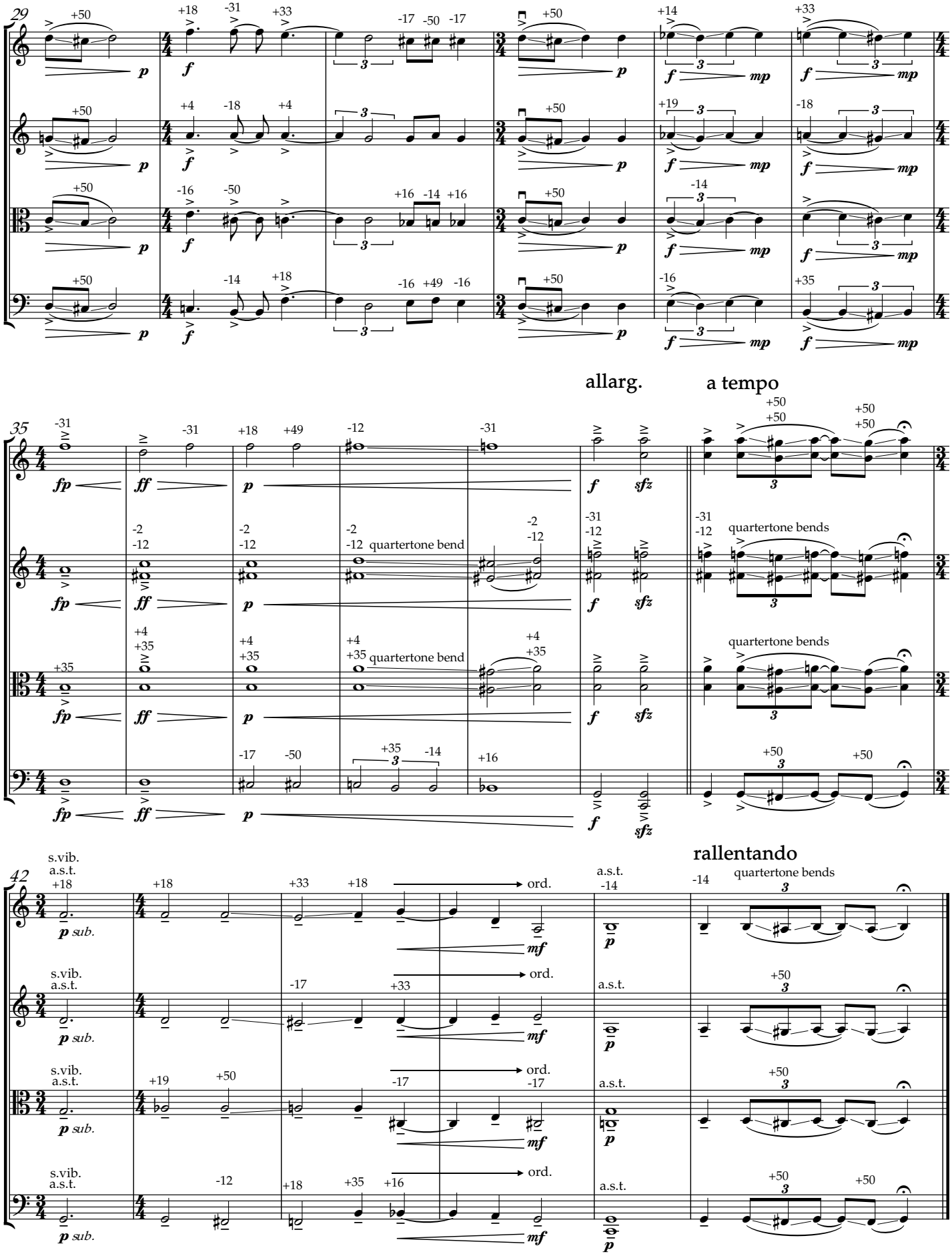
allargando



a tempo






29
35
42
allarg.
a tempo
rallentando
quartertone bend
quartertone bends
s.vib.
a.s.t.
sub.
ord.