String Quartet No. 4

Geoff Palmer

2009

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Inspired by the genius of Haydn, this work was written for the Celebrating Haydn Conference in Toronto, an event supported by The Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and York University, Toronto.

It was first performed in August 2009 by the Windermere String Quartet at the Port Milford Chamber Music Festival and at York University, Toronto, in a project made possible by The Wirth Institute.

It is offered as a mark of respect for those of all nations whose lives were ended or ruined in hostilities in and around Gaza in January 2009, and as a vision of reconciliation.

PERFORMANCE NOTE

This quartet was written for The Windermere String Quartet using period instruments tuned at A=430; the second violinist and violist are asked to "double" on modern instruments tuned at A=442, a quartertone higher.

The work is performable by non-period ensembles, but similar "doubling" and a similar (but not necessarily identical) tuning discrepancy will be required.

- In the first and third movements, Vl.II and Vla begin with period (or lower pitched) instruments and change where directed to modern (or higher pitched) instruments.
- In the second movement, they begin with modern (or higher pitched) instruments.
- In the fourth movement only period (or lower pitched) instruments) are required throughout.

If Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* was written "as Haydn might have written it had he lived in our day", then I suppose that this quartet is my *Classical String Quartet* - I have tried in my work to find something of the drama and astonishing musical and emotional scope of the Op 20 string quartets especially, and the layout of the quartet, into four roughly equal movements, is particularly classical.. But how different is our world now from that of Haydn in 1771 or that of Prokofiev in 1918!

The work was forming in my mind in January 2009, whilst I was in the Middle East. A short distance away war was taking place in Gaza. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the first movement presents melodic ideas which begin peaceably enough, but little by little descend into unease, and for a short time into a soundworld of destruction and despair. Only when the conflict and chaos has passed, and the birds venture to sing once more, can the original music be brought back.

Whereas a Haydn sonata form first movement might lose its tonic key and strive to regain it, the music here descends to the point where even the pitch basis of our normal musical language – the 12-tone division of the octave – is broken. You will notice that two of the members of the quartet swap from time to time to instruments tuned fractionally sharper to facilitate a quartertonal soundworld.

The *scherzando* second movement, although it grows out of first movement ideas and uses quartertonal harmonies, is playful. Its syncopations and contrasting textures eventually take us right into the D major Minuet and Trio of Haydn's Op 20 No 4, and for a while we straddle the two musics.

The third movement, *Molto adagio*, is perhaps the most classical movement – measured and deeply calm – but even here we are not entirely free of the unease of the opening movement. The final movement presents all of the ideas that have been pervading the quartet and strives to knit them all together contrapuntally into a coherent whole. The fugue which finishes the work leads us into a chorale-like section – a point where at last we are free of conflict and can begin to find hope for peace and unity.

I

Allegro moderato (𝅗𝅥)

♩ = 158 throughout

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

mezza voce

poco cresc.

poco più

sim.

9

mf

mp

5:4

17

sempre poco cresc. ma non troppo

ten.

5:3

pp cresc.

27

p cresc.

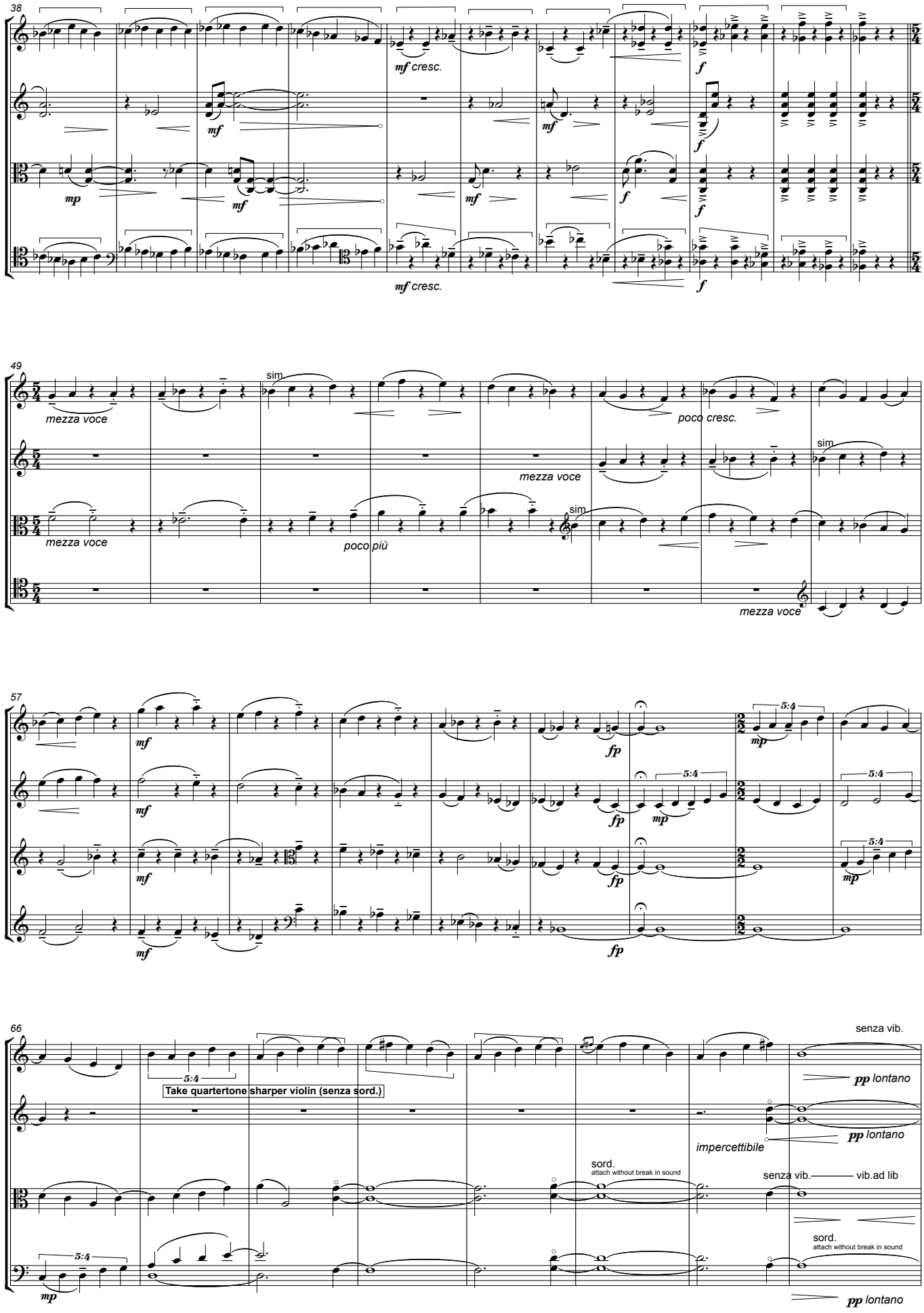
mp cresc.

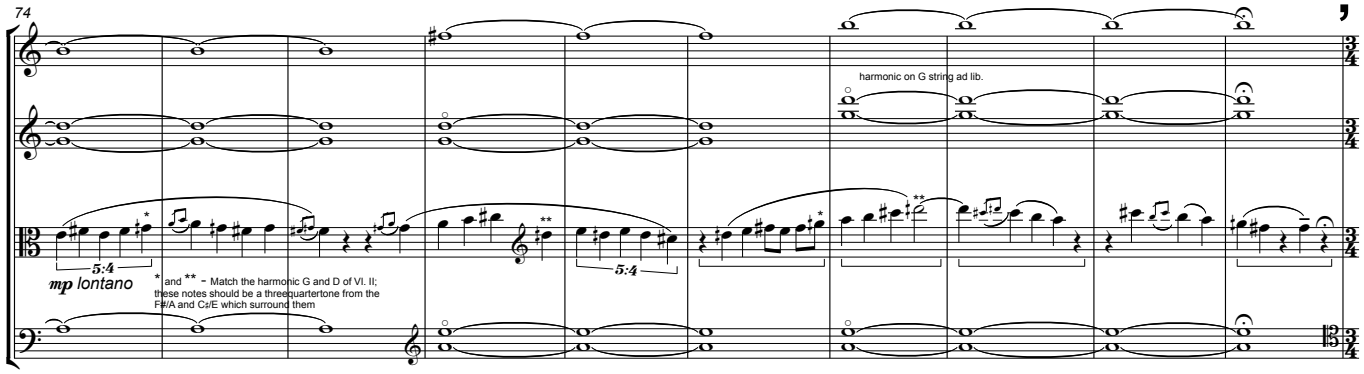
pp ma pesante ed oscuro

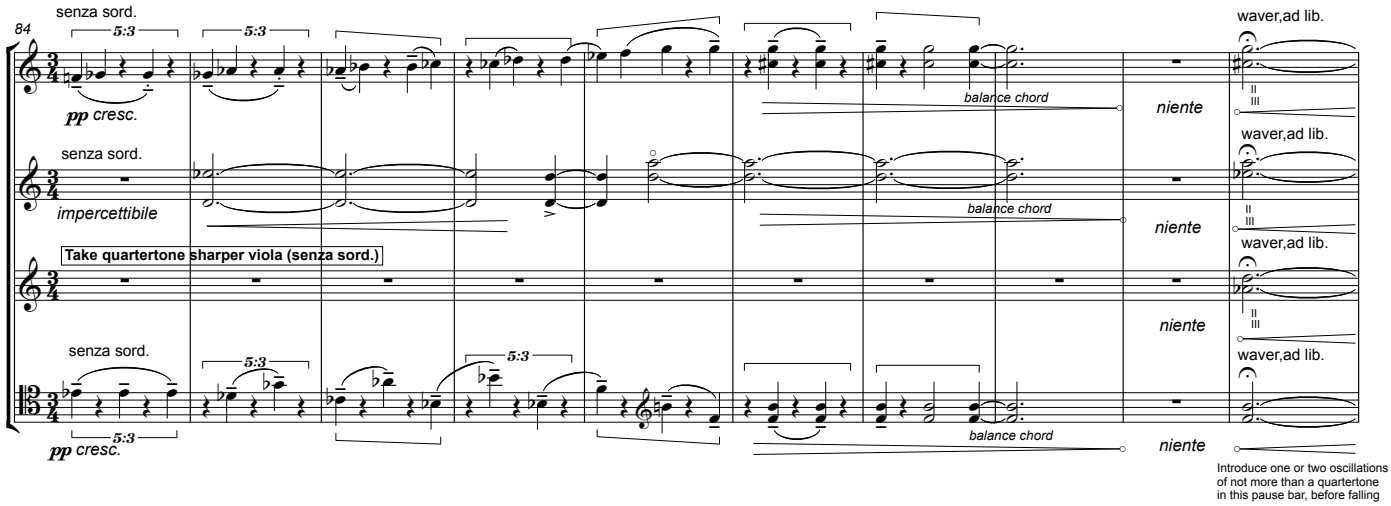
p

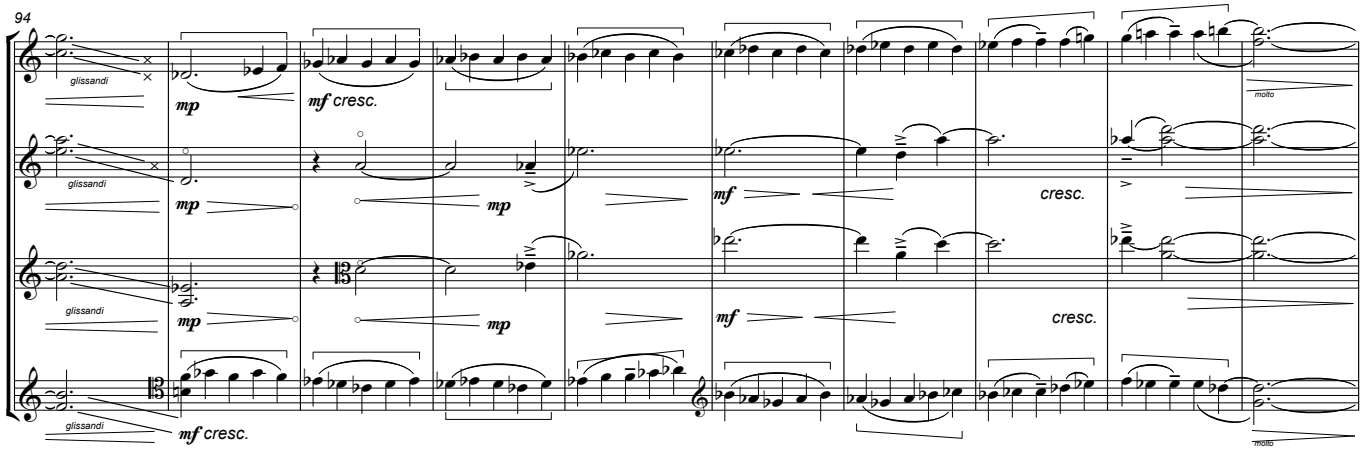
pp

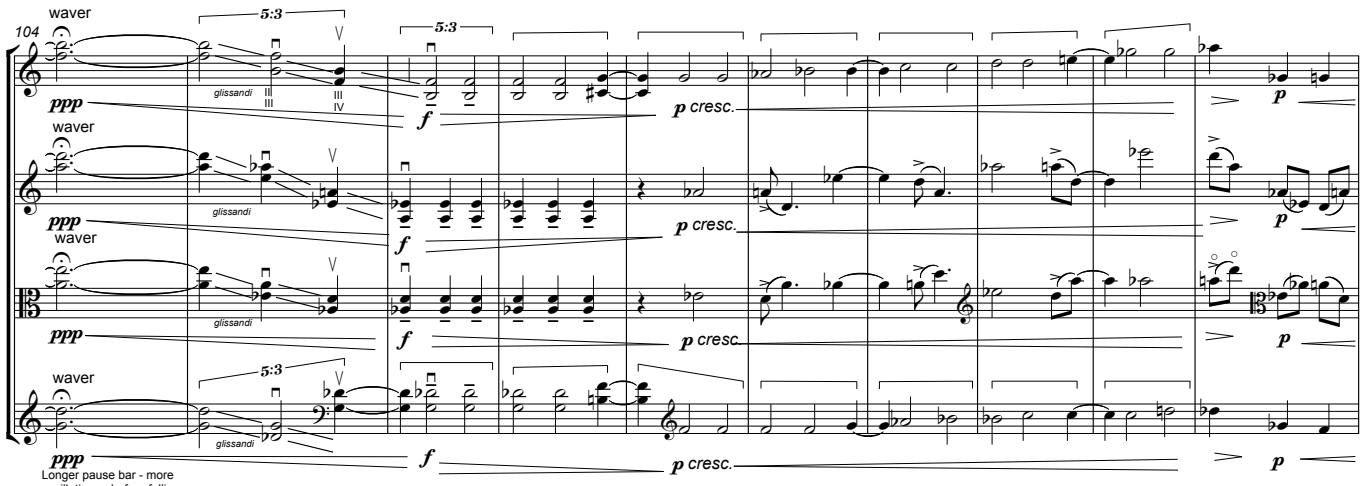
mp

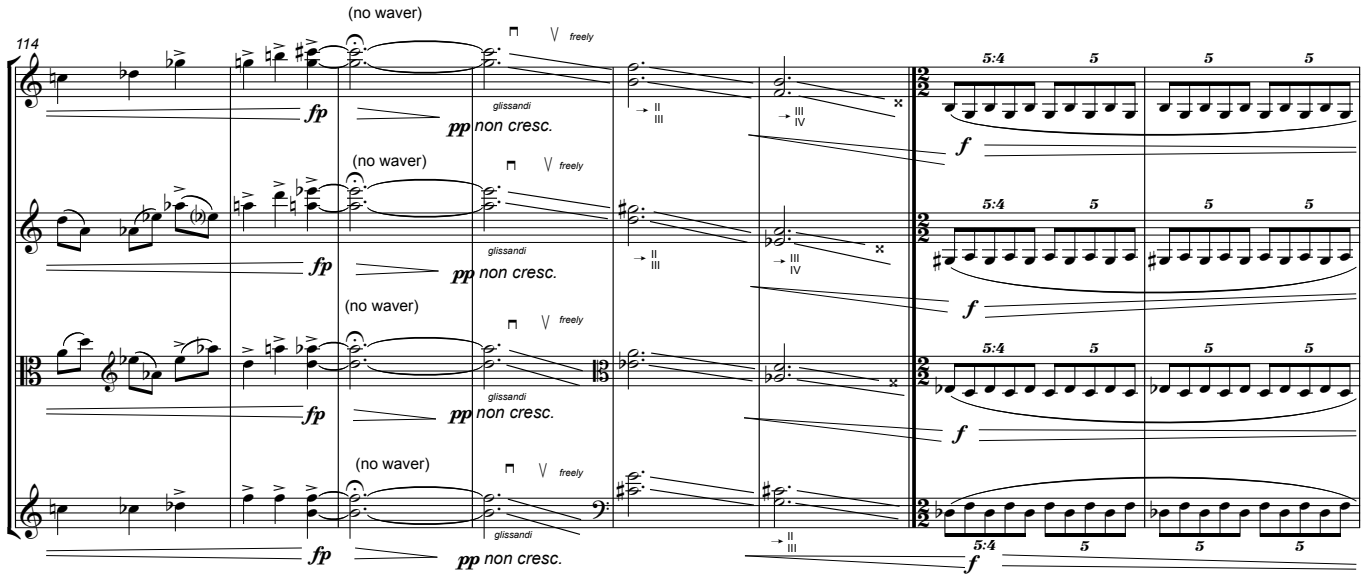

38
mf cresc.
mf
mp
mf
mf
f
f
f
mf cresc.
f
49
mezza voce
sim
poco cresc.
mezza voce
sim
mezza voce
poco più
sim
mezza voce
57
mf
mf
mf
mf
fp
fp
fp
5:4
mp
5:4
5:4
mp
66
senza vib.
5:4
Take quartertone sharper violin (senza sord.)
pp lontano
pp lontano
impercettibile
sord.
attach without break in sound
senza vib.
vib.ad lib
5:4
mp
sord.
attach without break in sound
pp lontano

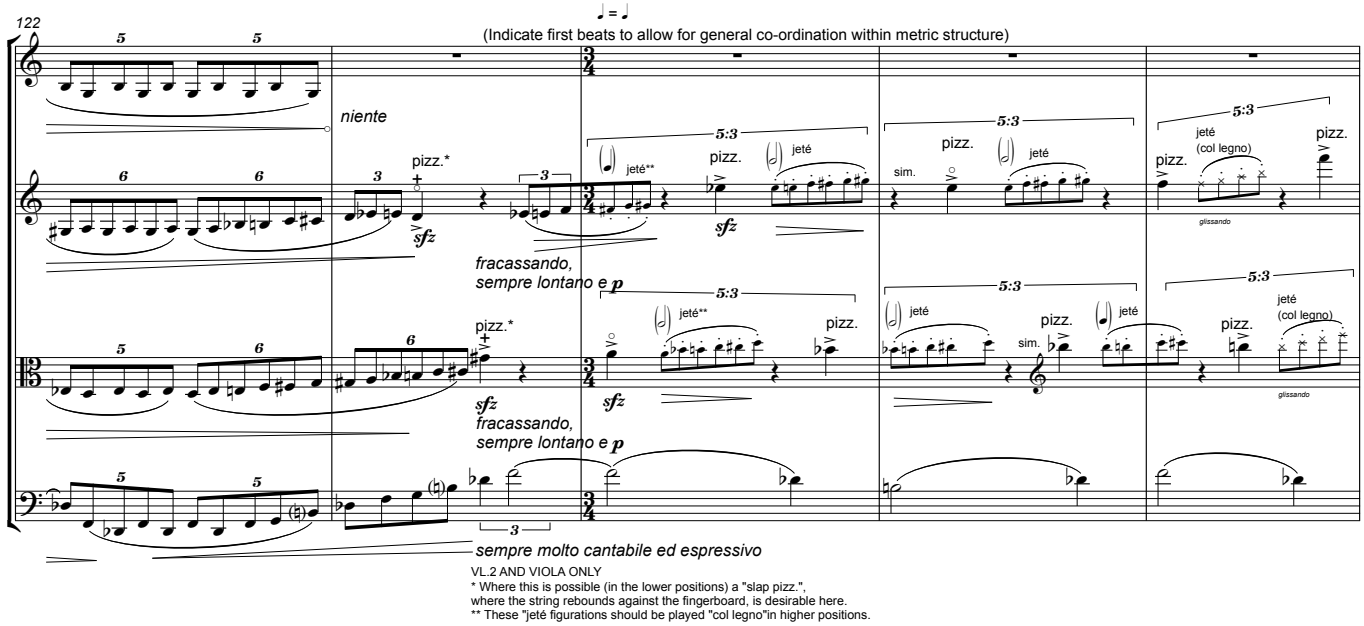

74
harmonic on G string ad lib.
5:4
mp lontano
* and ** - Match the harmonic G and D of Vl. II; these notes should be a threequartertone from the F#/A and C#/E which surround them
5:4

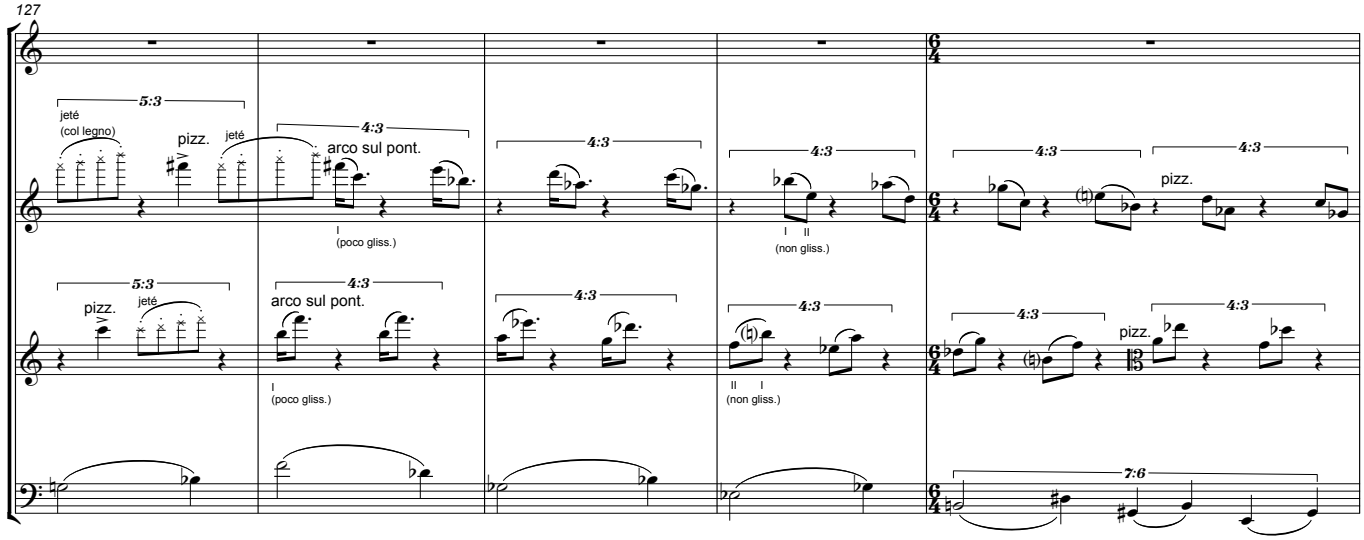

84
senza sord.
5:3
pp cresc.
balance chord
niente
waver,ad lib.
senza sord.
impercettibile
Take quartertone sharper viola (senza sord.)
senza sord.
pp cresc.
Introduce one or two oscillations of not more than a quartertone in this pause bar, before falling

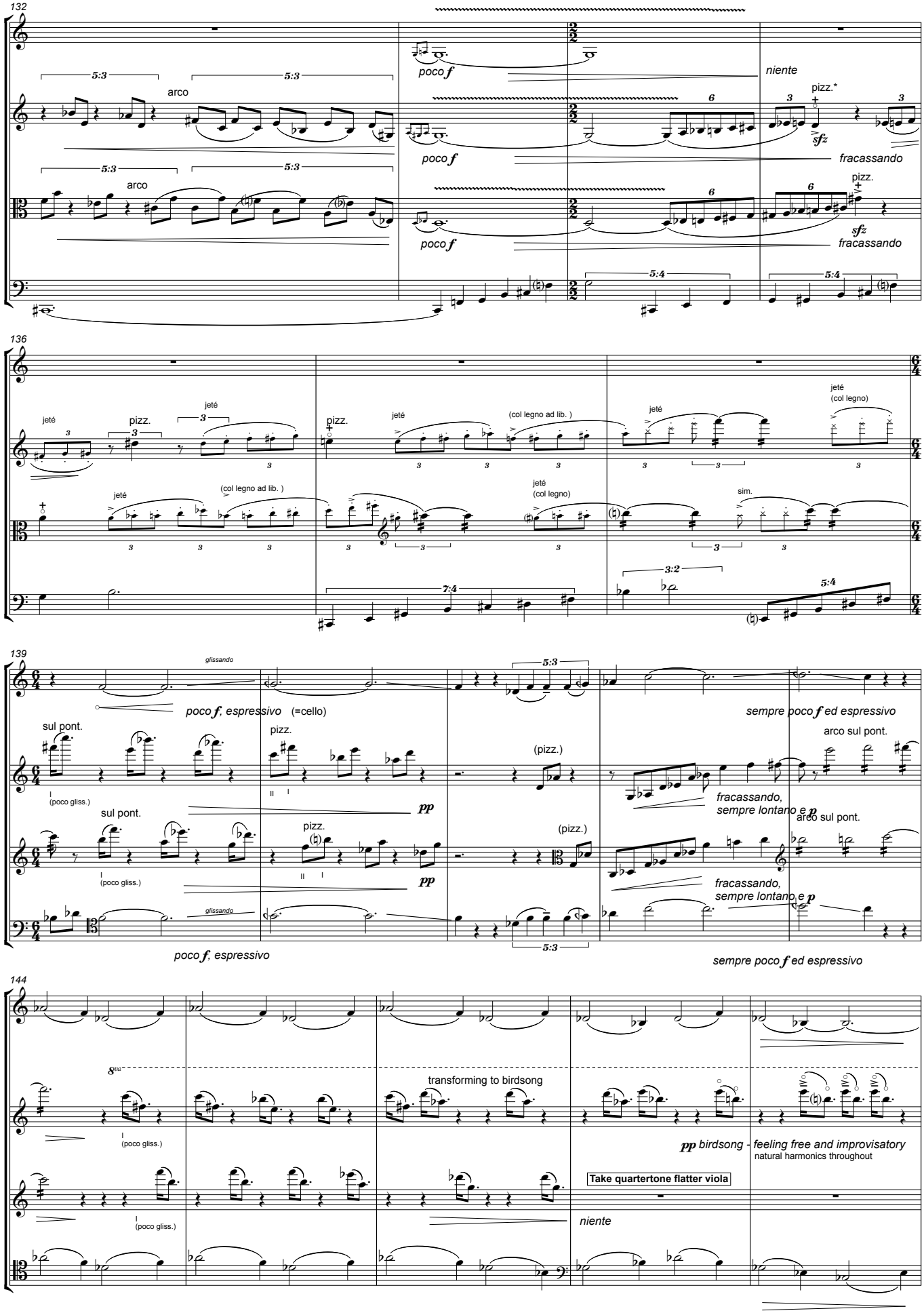

94
glissandi
mp
mf cresc.
mf
cresc.
molto

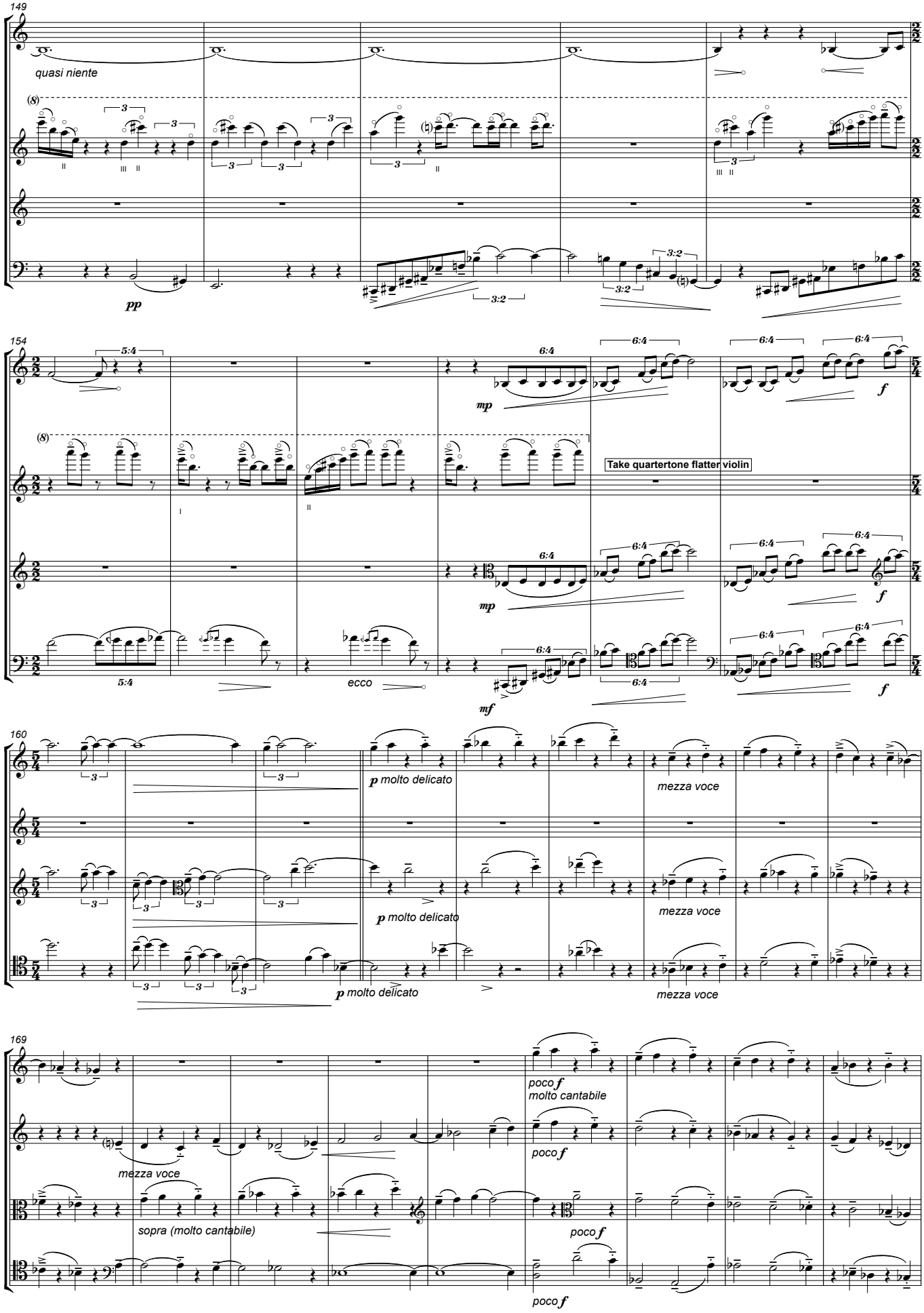

104
waver
5:3
glissandi
ppp
f
p cresc.
p
Longer pause bar - more oscillations - before falling

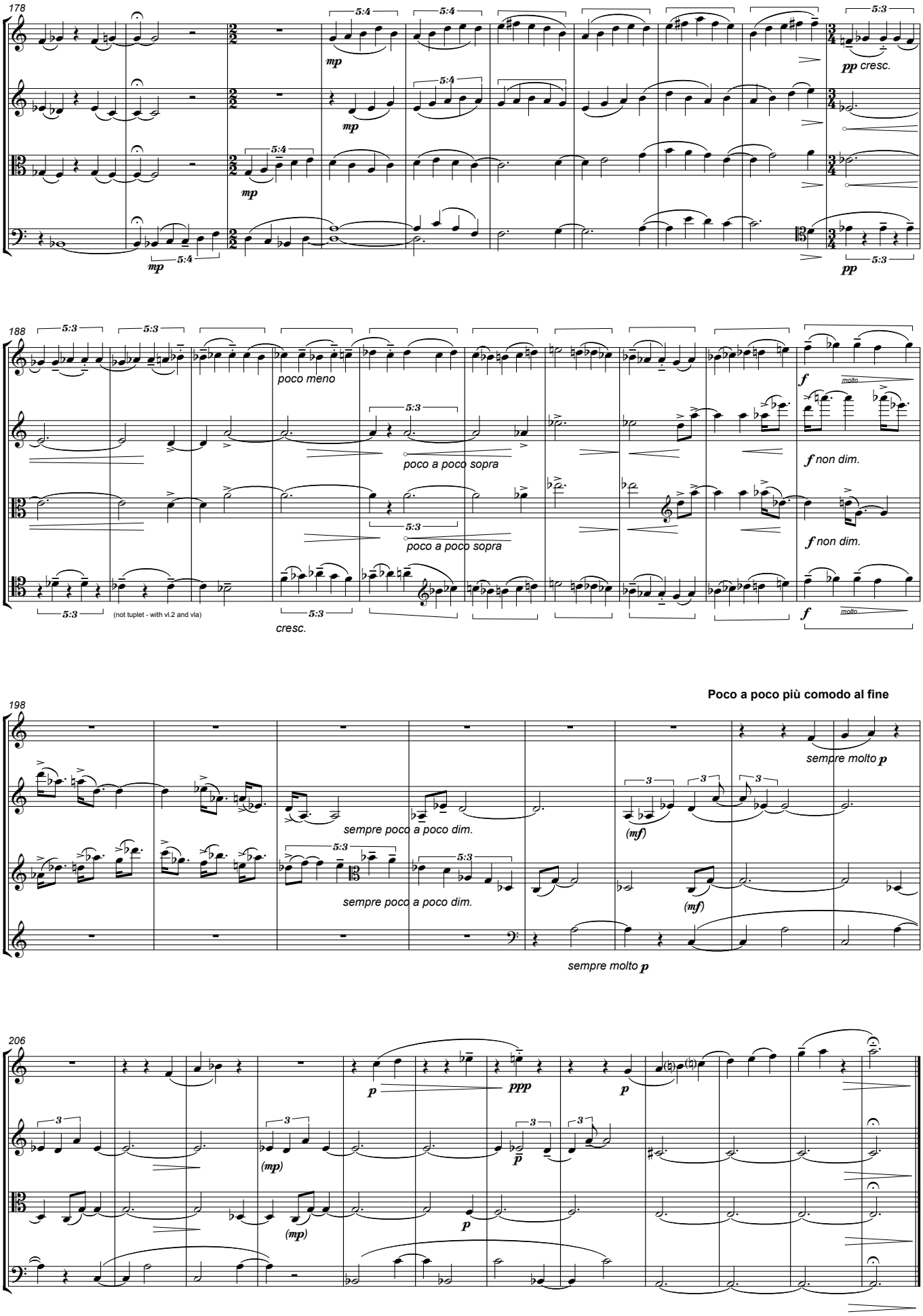

114
(no waver)
freely
glissandi
fp
pp non cresc.
5:4
f


122
(Indicate first beats to allow for general co-ordination within metric structure)
niente
pizz.*
sfz
fracassando,
sempre lontano e p
jeté**
5:3
sim.
jeté (col legno)
glissando
sempre molto cantabile ed espressivo
VL.2 AND VIOLA ONLY
* Where this is possible (in the lower positions) a "slap pizz.",
where the string rebounds against the fingerboard, is desirable here.
** These "jeté figurations should be played "col legno"in higher positions.


127
5:3
4:3
jeté
(col legno)
pizz.
arco sul pont.
(poco gliss.)
(non gliss.)
7:6


132
poco f
niente
pizz.*
sfz
fracassando
arco
5:3
6
3
5:4
136
jeté
pizz.
(col legno ad lib.)
(col legno)
sim.
7:4
3:2
139
glissando
poco f, espressivo (=cello)
sempre poco f ed espressivo
sul pont.
arco sul pont.
(poco gliss.)
pp
(pizz.)
fracassando,
sempre lontano e p
144
8va
transforming to birdsong
pp birdsong - feeling free and improvisatory
natural harmonics throughout
Take quartertone flatter viola
niente


149
quasi niente
pp
154
mp
f
Take quartertone flatter violin
ecco
mf
160
p molto delicato
mezza voce
169
poco f
molto cantabile
sopra (molto cantabile)


178
mp
pp cresc.
pp
188
poco meno
poco a poco sopra
poco a poco sopra
f non dim.
f non dim.
(not tuplet - with vl.2 and vla)
cresc.
f
molto
198
Poco a poco più comodo al fine
sempre molto p
sempre poco a poco dim.
sempre poco a poco dim.
(mf)
(mf)
sempre molto p
206
p
ppp
p
(mp)
(mp)
p
p

II

Scherzando

♩. =88; ♩ =132 (or faster)

Take quartertone sharper violin

Take quartertone sharper viola

pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco

p con energia sempre

poco cresc. sempre

p con energia sempre

poco cresc. sempre

p con energia sempre

poco cresc. sempre

6

♪= ♪ **sempre**

mf

mf

10

mf

mf

17

poco f

p sempre

mf

pizz.

poco f

p sempre

mf

pizz.

poco pesante

3/4 step down; match cello pitch momentarily

3/4 step up; match cello

pizz. arco

poco pesante

3/4 step; match viola pitch momentarily

mf

pizz. arco

22

arco

crescendo sempre

3/4 step up; match vl.2

mf

f

mp

f

arco

crescendo sempre

3/4 step up; match vl.1

mf

f

mp

f

p crescendo sempre

3/4 step up; match cello

mf

f

mp

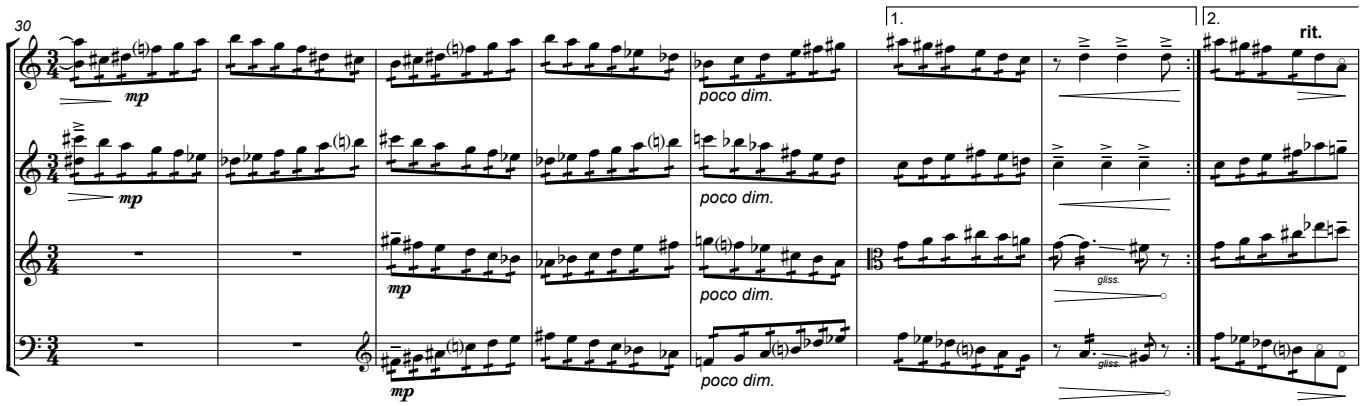
f

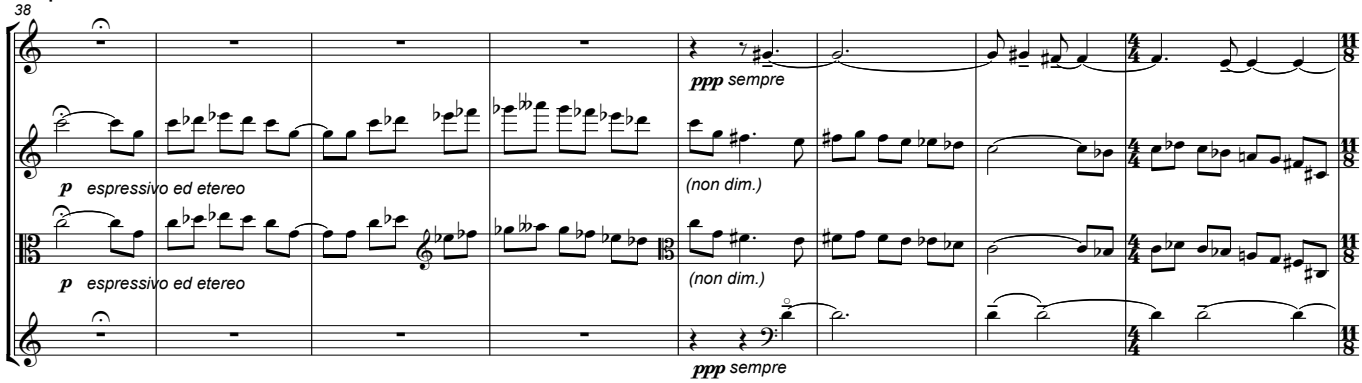
p crescendo sempre

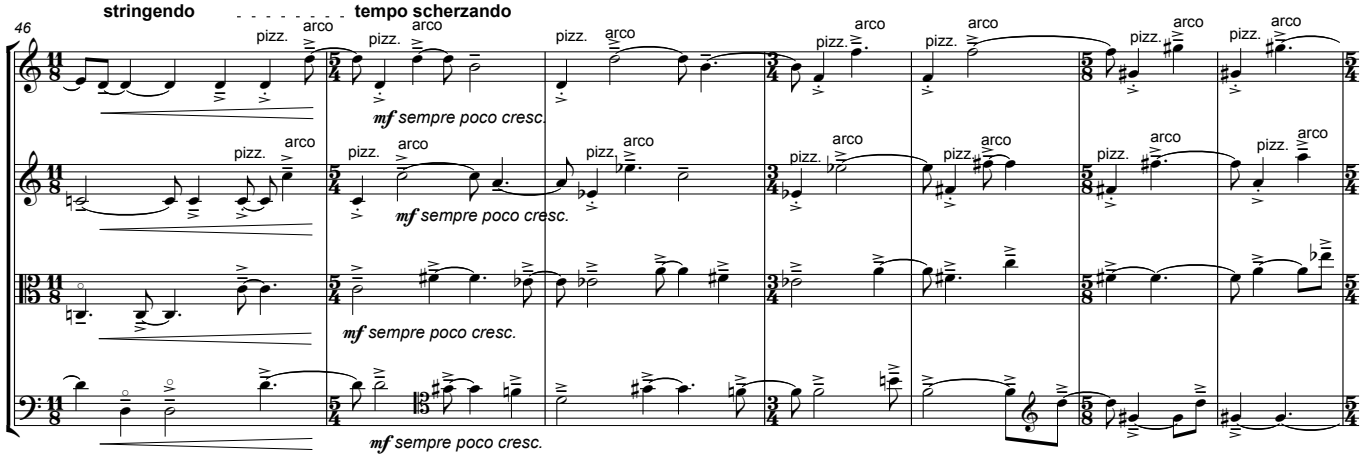
3/4 step up; match vla

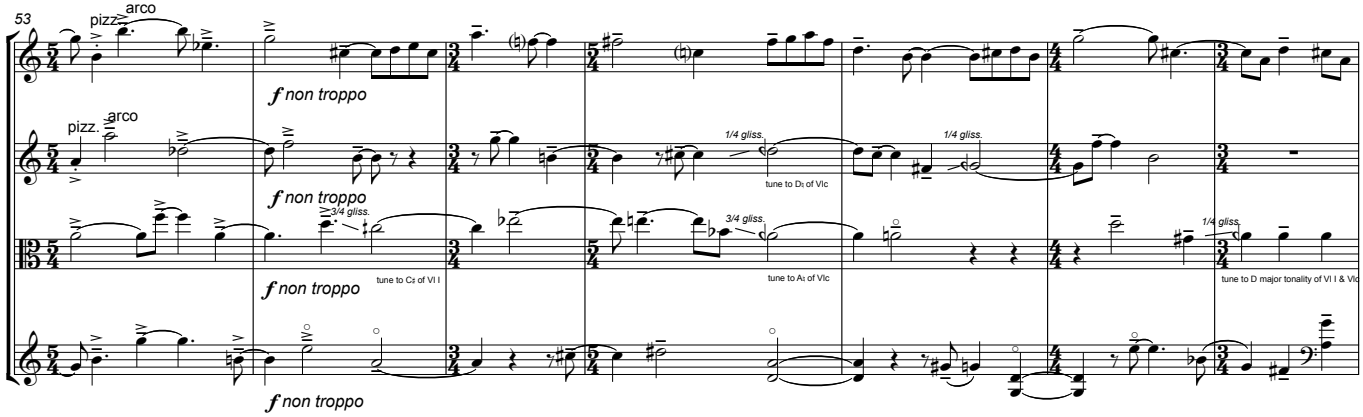
mf

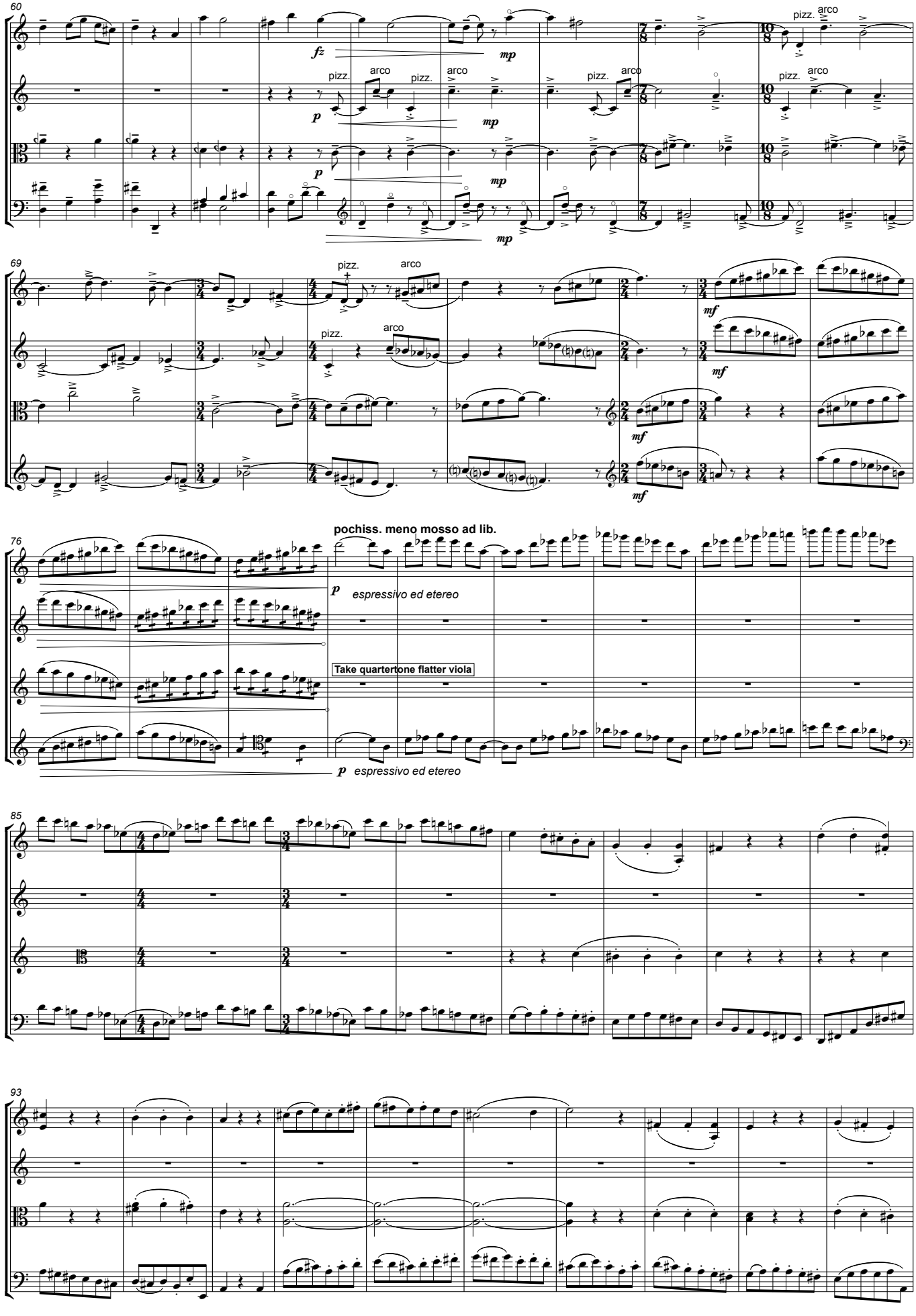
f

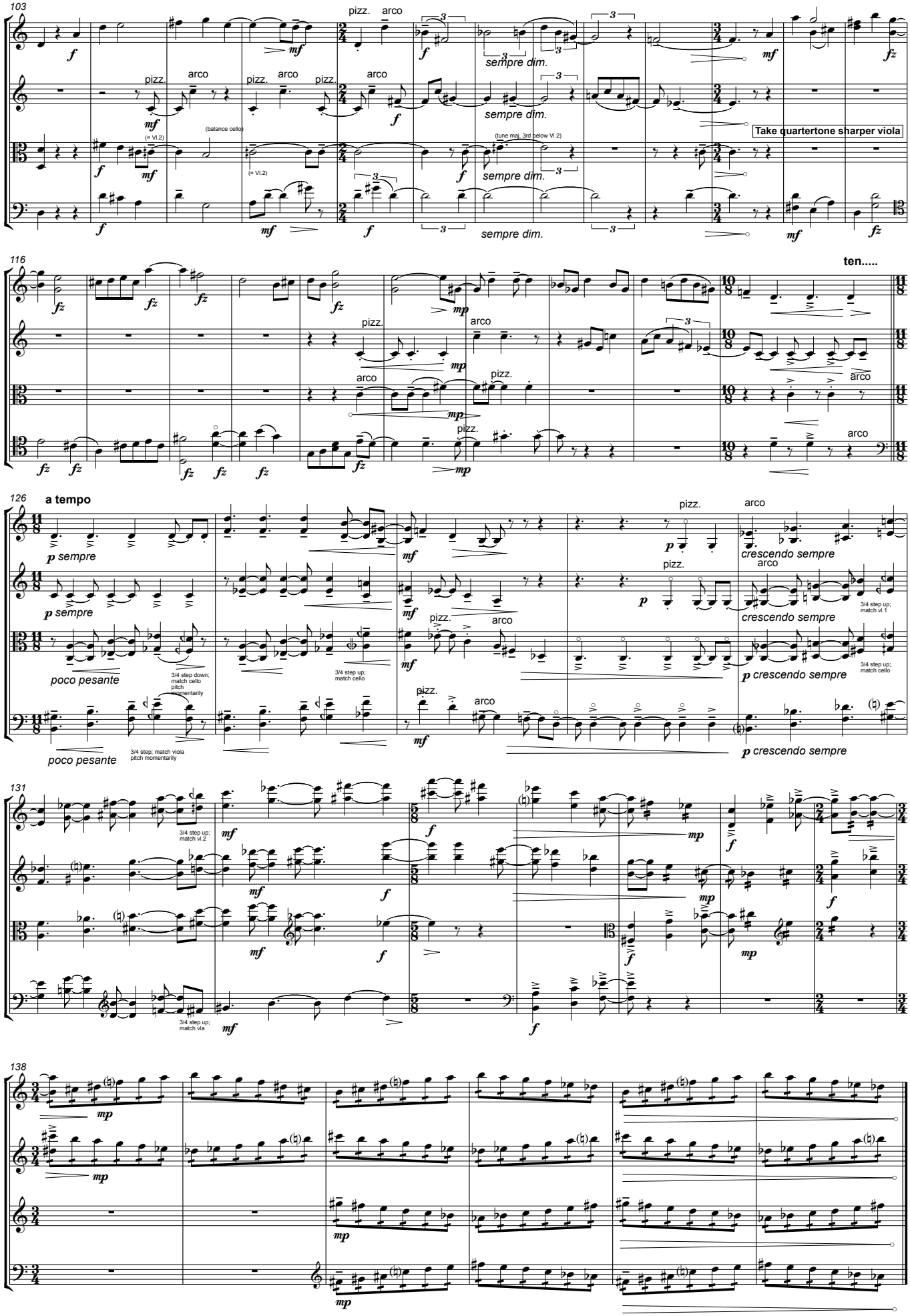

30
1.
2.
rit.
mp
poco dim.
gliss.


pochiss. meno mosso ad lib.
38
ppp sempre
p espressivo ed etereo
(non dim.)


stringendo
tempo scherzando
46
pizz.
arco
mf sempre poco cresc.

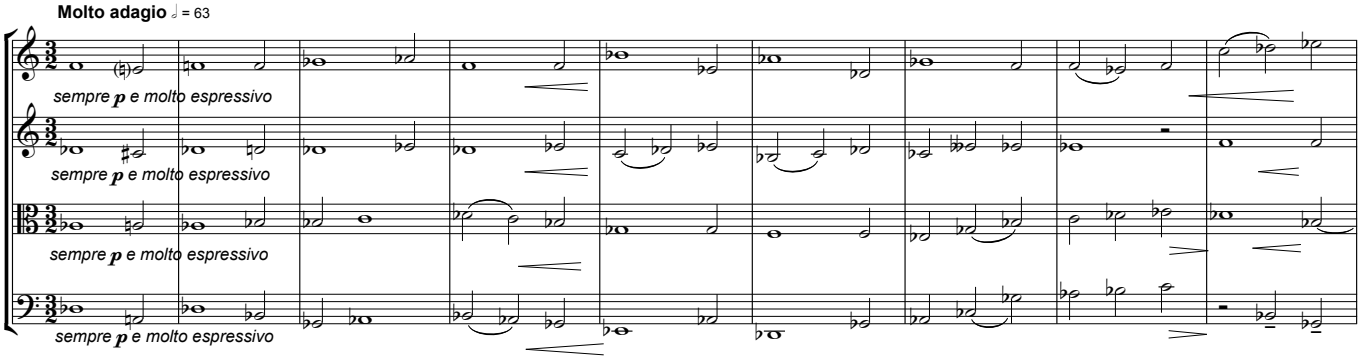

53
pizz.
arco
f non troppo
1/4 gliss.
3/4 gliss.
tune to D♭ of VIc
tune to A♭ of VIc
tune to C♯ of VI I
tune to D major tonality of VI I & VIc


60
fz
mp
p
pizz.
arco
69
mf
76
pochiss. meno mosso ad lib.
espressivo ed etereo
Take quartertone flatter viola
85
93

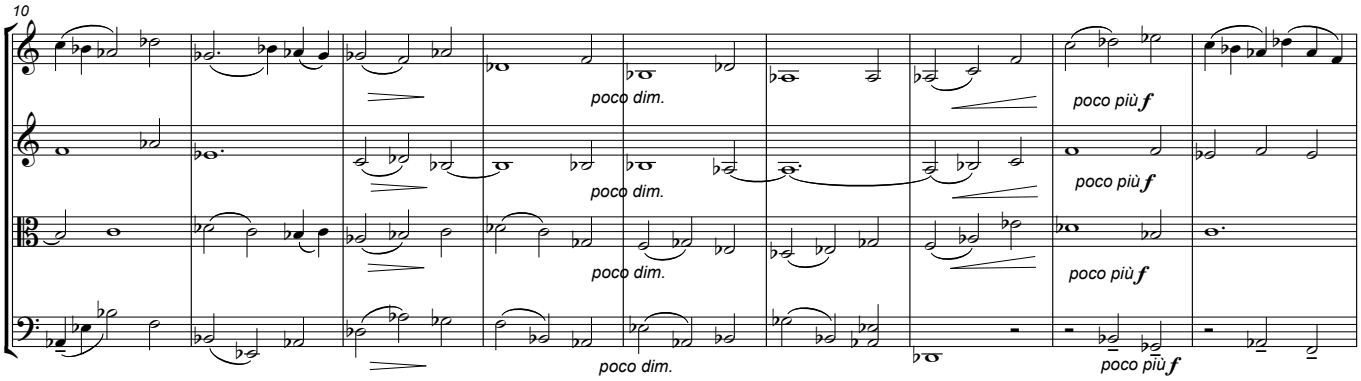

103
pizz.
arco
sempre dim.
(balance cello)
(= Vl.2)
(tune maj. 3rd below Vl.2)
Take quartertone sharper viola
116
ten.....
126
a tempo
p sempre
poco pesante
crescendo sempre
3/4 step down; match cello pitch momentarily
3/4 step up; match cello
3/4 step; match viola pitch momentarily
131
3/4 step up; match vl.2
3/4 step up; match vla
138

III

Molto adagio ♩ = 63

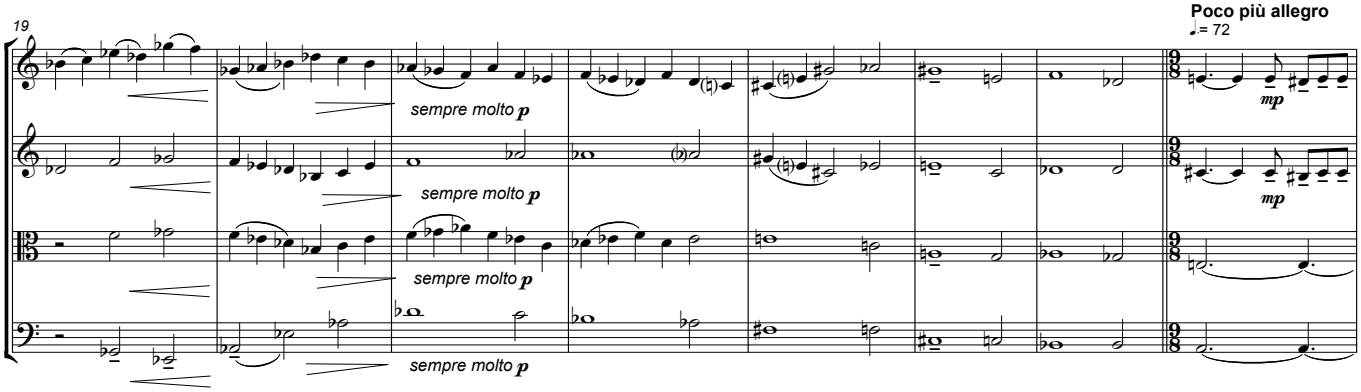


10

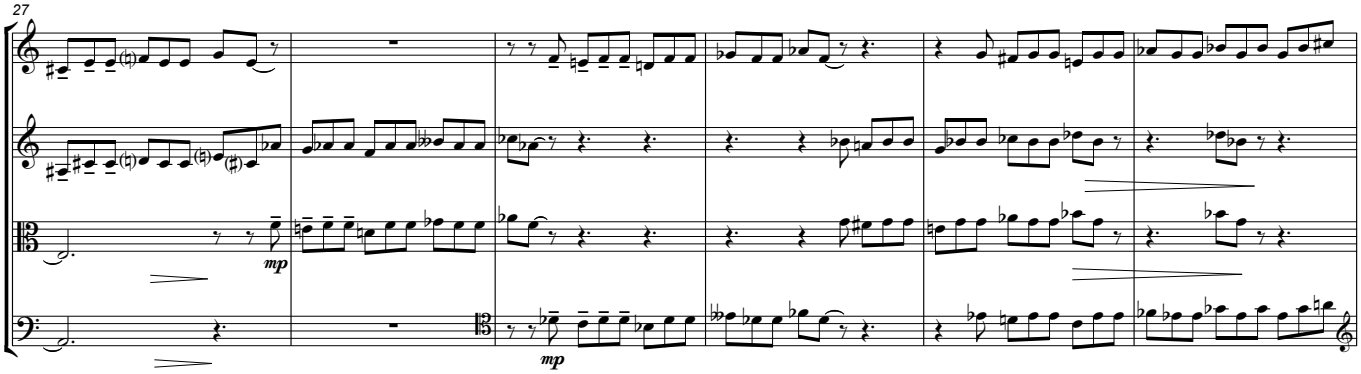


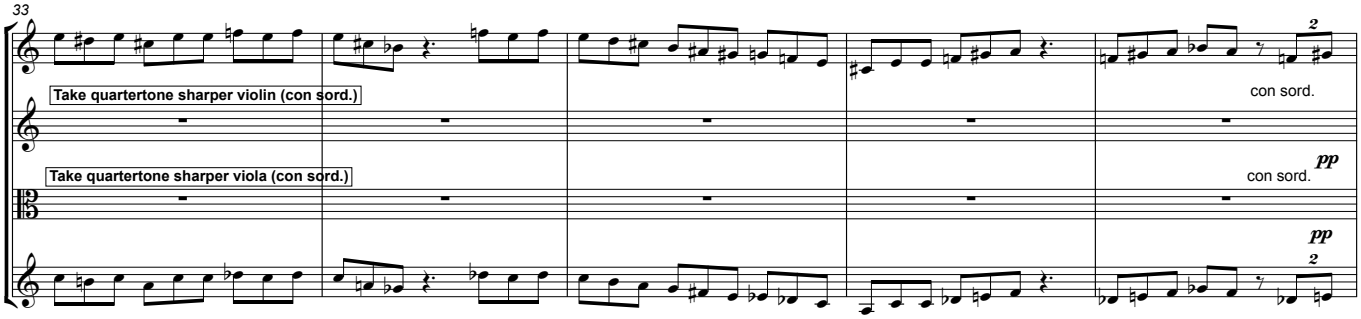
19

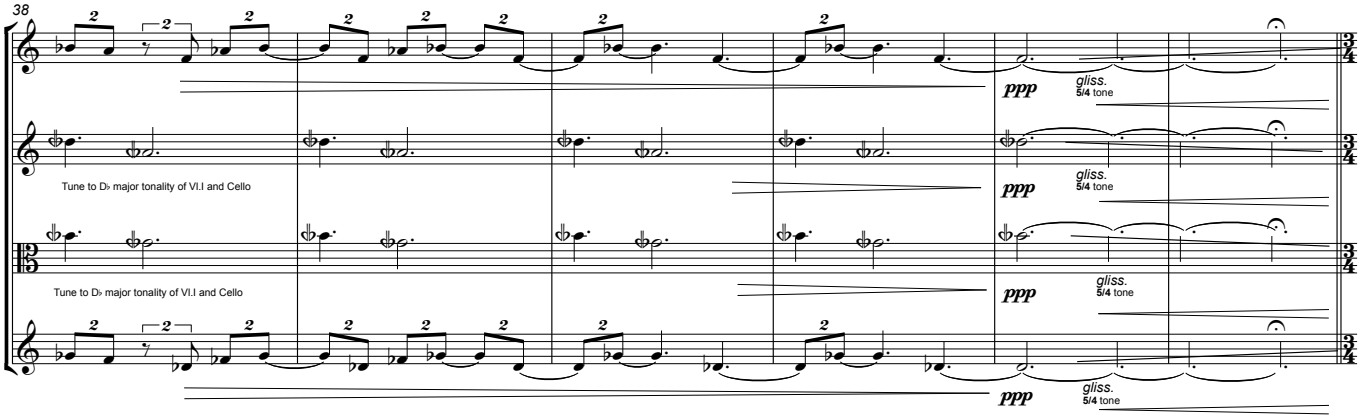
Poco più allegro
♩= 72

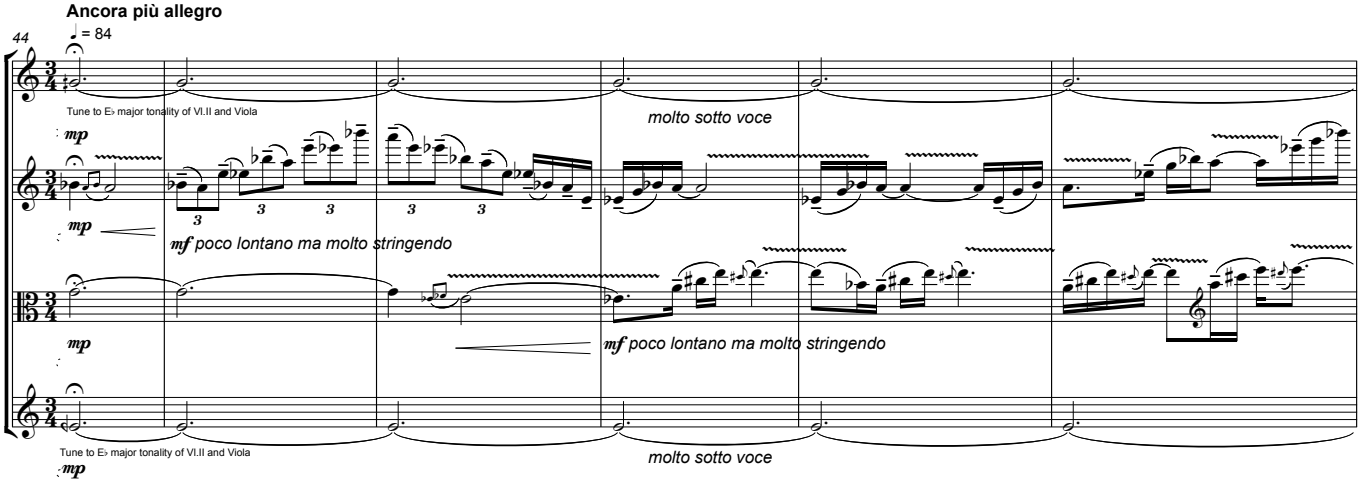


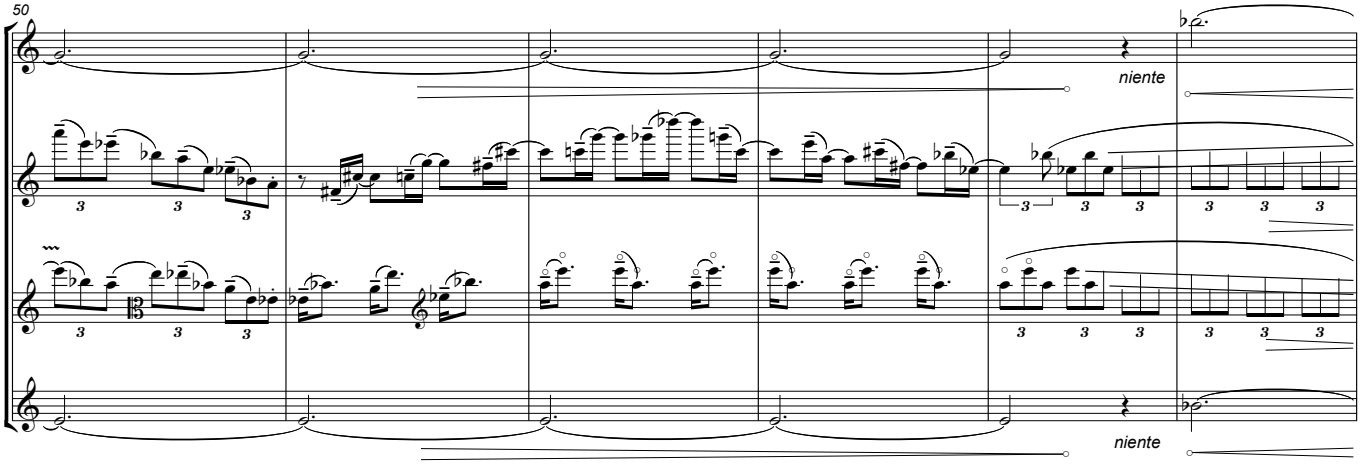
27

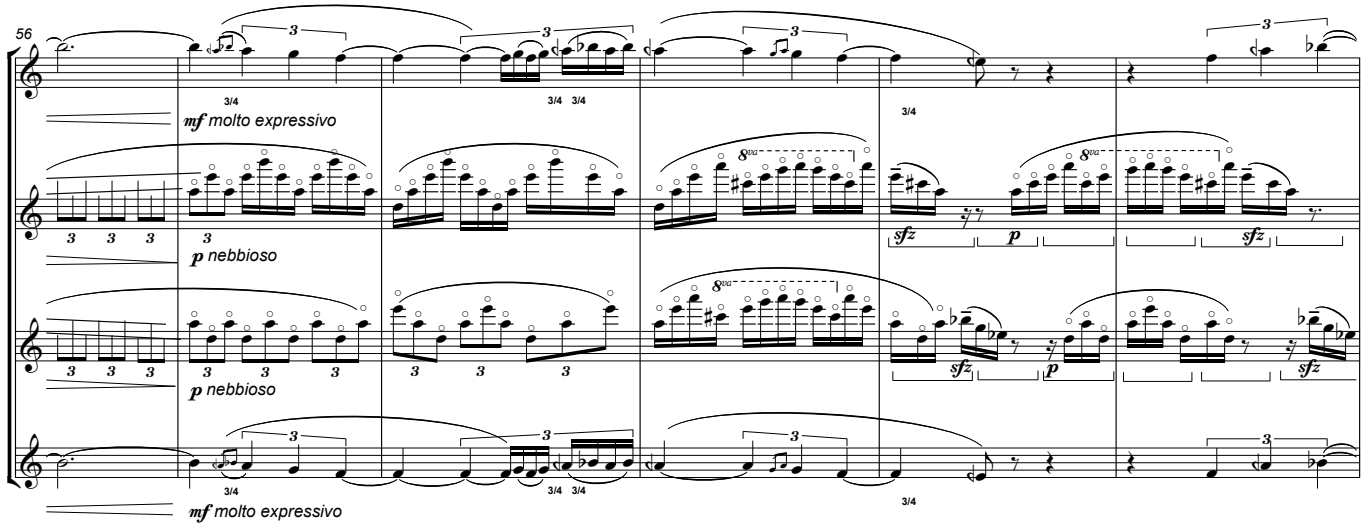


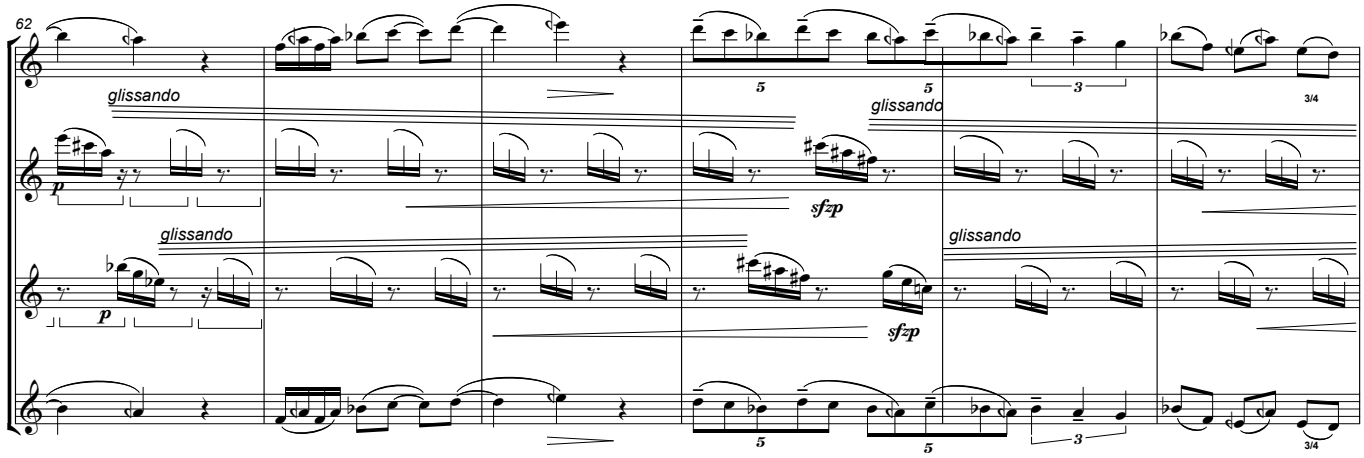

33
Take quartertone sharper violin (con sord.)
con sord.
Take quartertone sharper viola (con sord.)
con sord.
pp
pp

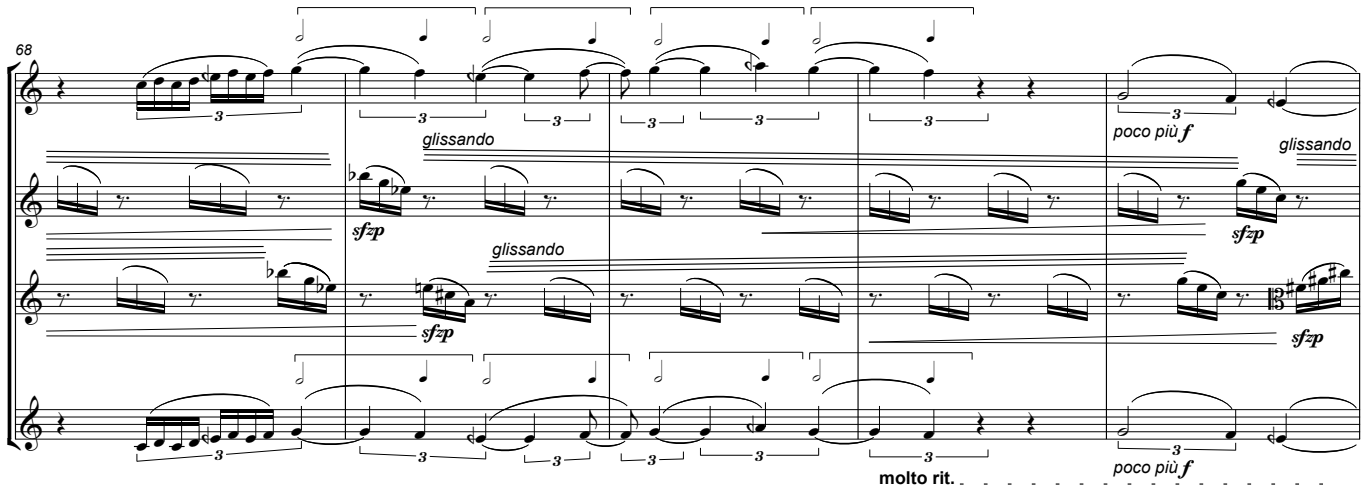

38
ppp
gliss.
5/4 tone
Tune to D♭ major tonality of VI.I and Cello
Tune to D♭ major tonality of VI.I and Cello

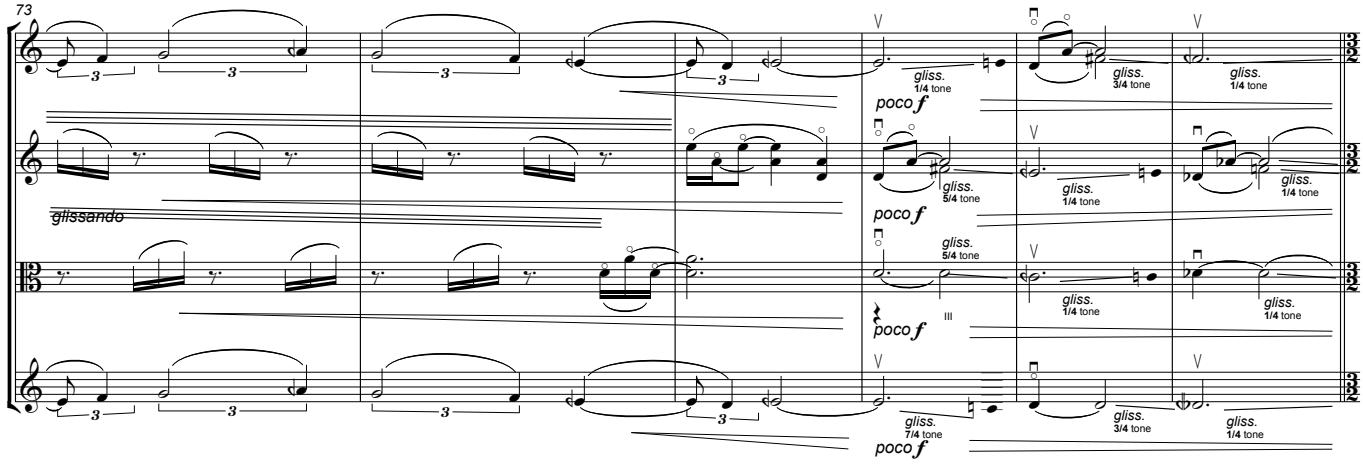

Ancora più allegro
44
♩ = 84
Tune to E♭ major tonality of VI.II and Viola
mp
molto sotto voce
mf poco lontano ma molto stringendo
Tune to E♭ major tonality of VI.II and Viola

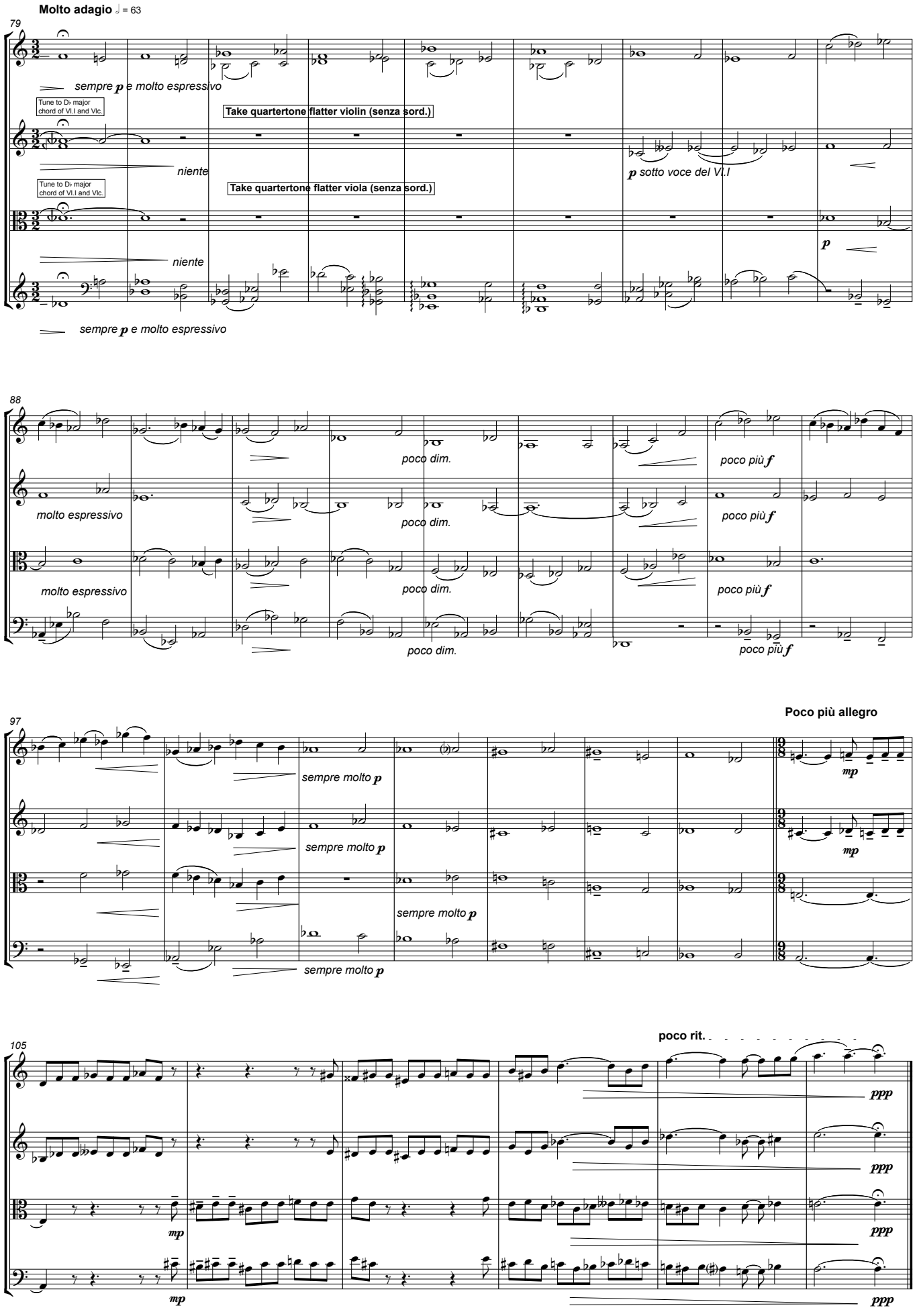

50
niente
niente


56
mf molto expressivo
p nebbioso
p nebbioso
mf molto expressivo
sfz
p
sfz
sfz
p
sfz
Co-ordination between Vl.I and Cello, and between Vl.II and Vla must be precise;
co-ordination between the two pairs of instruments need be approximate only (until **molto rit.** bar)


62
glissando
glissando
glissando
glissando
sfzp
sfzp

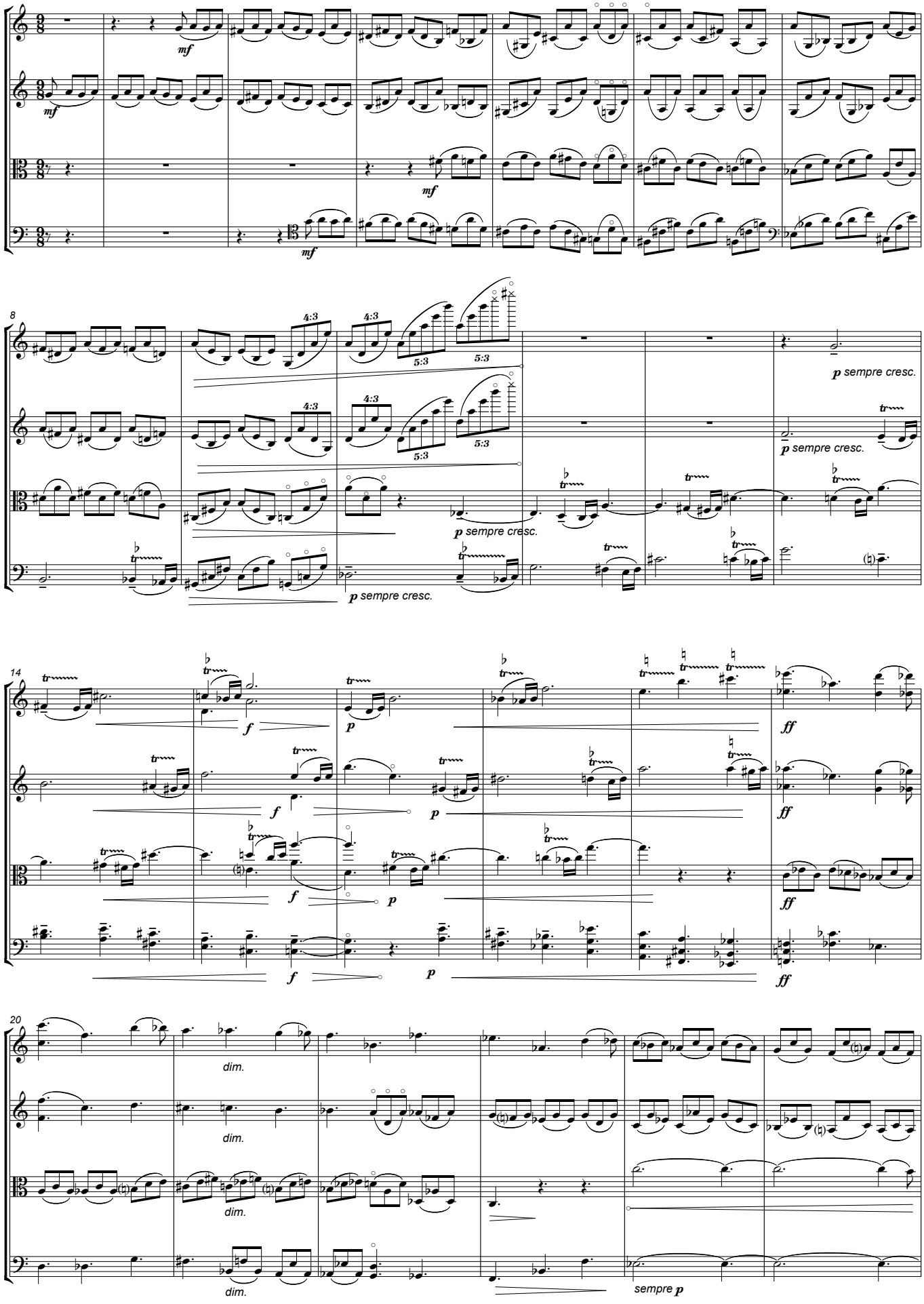

68
glissando
glissando
sfzp
sfzp
poco più f
glissando
sfzp
sfzp
poco più f
molto rit.

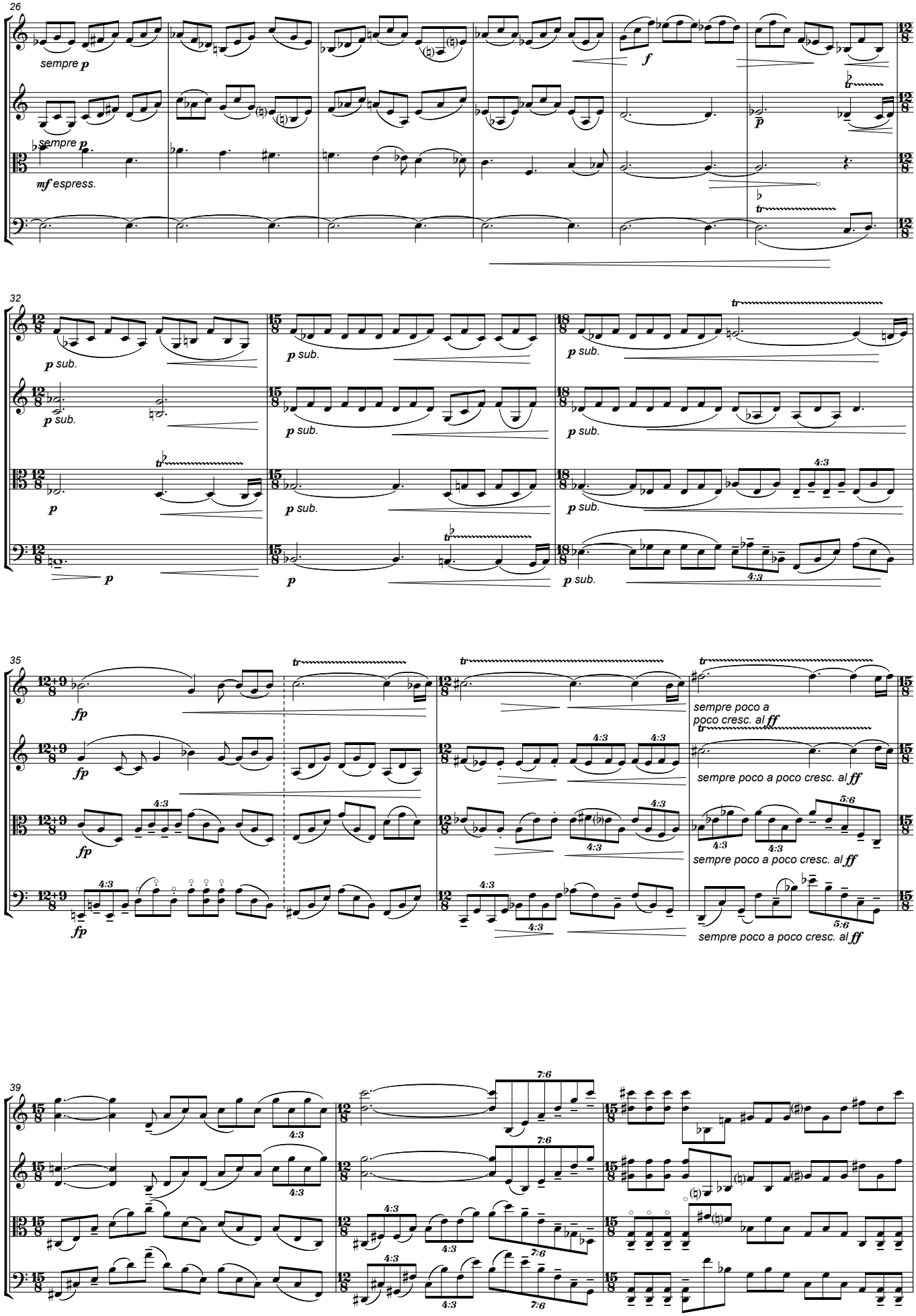

73
glissando
poco f
poco f
poco f
poco f
gliss. 1/4 tone
gliss. 3/4 tone
gliss. 1/4 tone
gliss. 5/4 tone
gliss. 1/4 tone
gliss. 5/4 tone
gliss. 1/4 tone
gliss. 1/4 tone
gliss. 7/4 tone
gliss. 3/4 tone
gliss. 1/4 tone

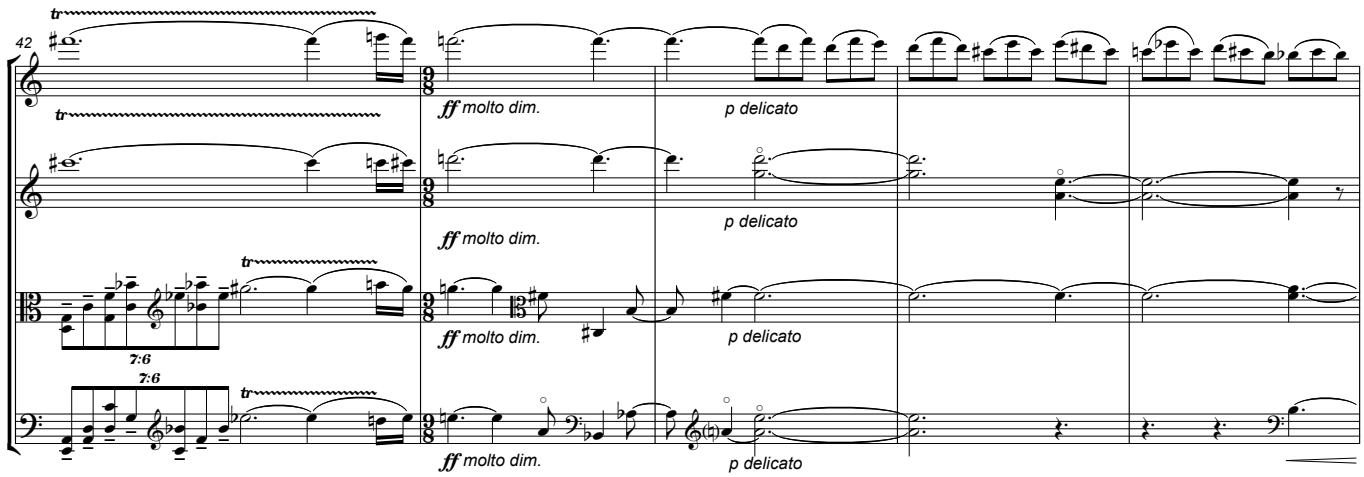

Molto adagio ♩ = 63
79
sempre p e molto espressivo
Tune to D♭ major chord of Vl.I and Vlc.
Take quartertone flatter violin (senza sord.)
niente
Tune to D♭ major chord of Vl.I and Vlc.
Take quartertone flatter viola (senza sord.)
p sotto voce del Vl.I
p
niente
sempre p e molto espressivo
88
molto espressivo
poco dim.
poco più f
molto espressivo
poco dim.
poco più f
molto espressivo
poco dim.
poco più f
poco dim.
poco più f
Poco più allegro
97
sempre molto p
mp
sempre molto p
mp
sempre molto p
sempre molto p
poco rit.
105
ppp
ppp
mp
ppp
mp
ppp

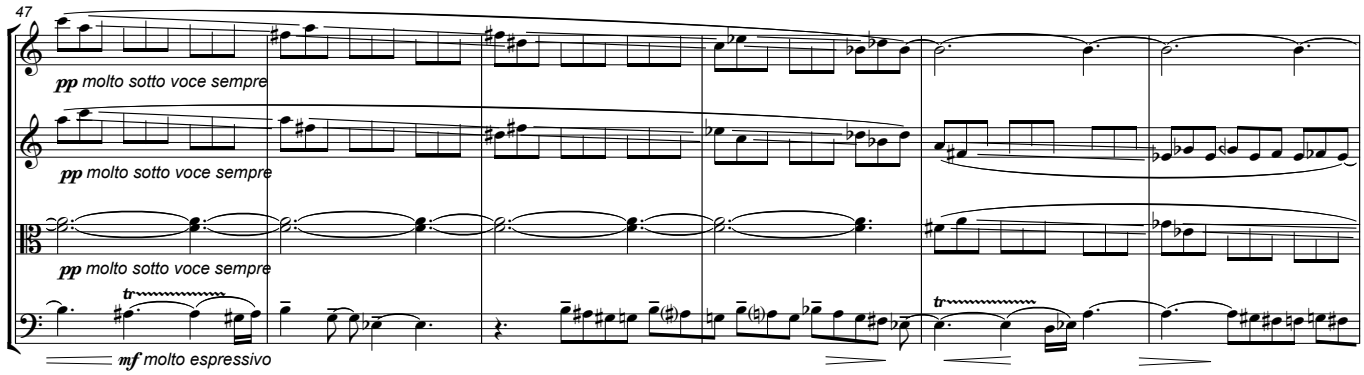
IV

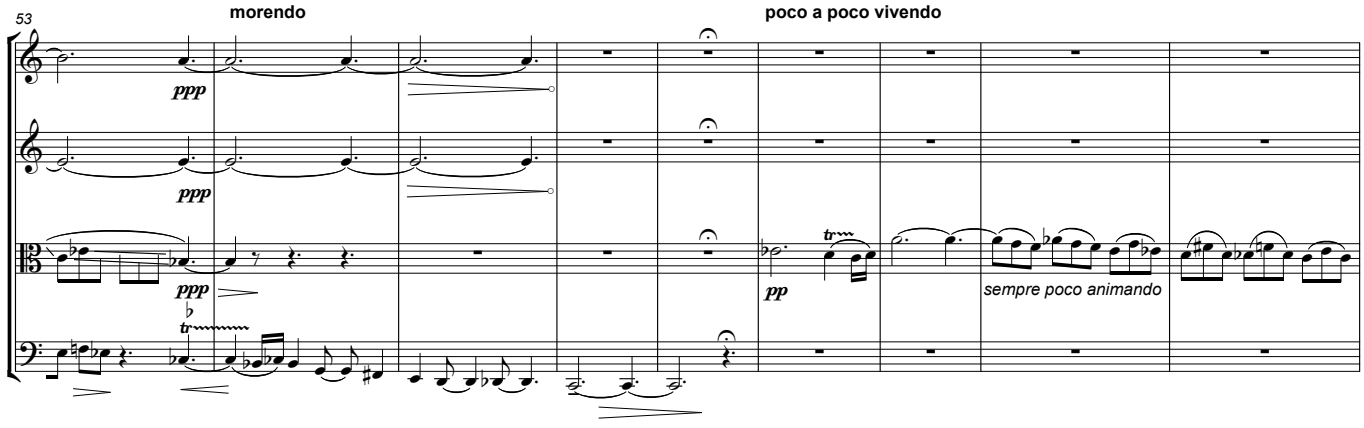
Fugato: allegro non troppo
♩. = 92 - 104

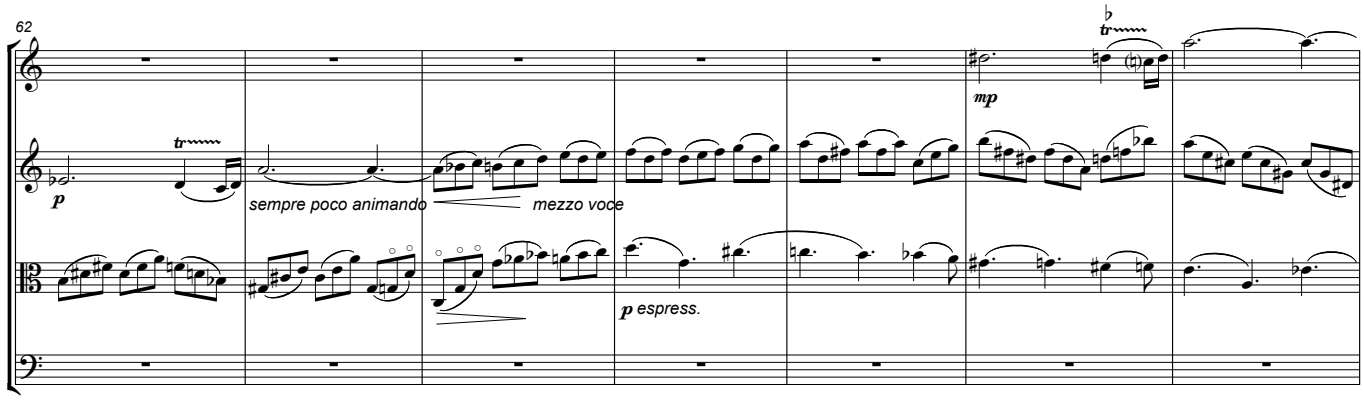


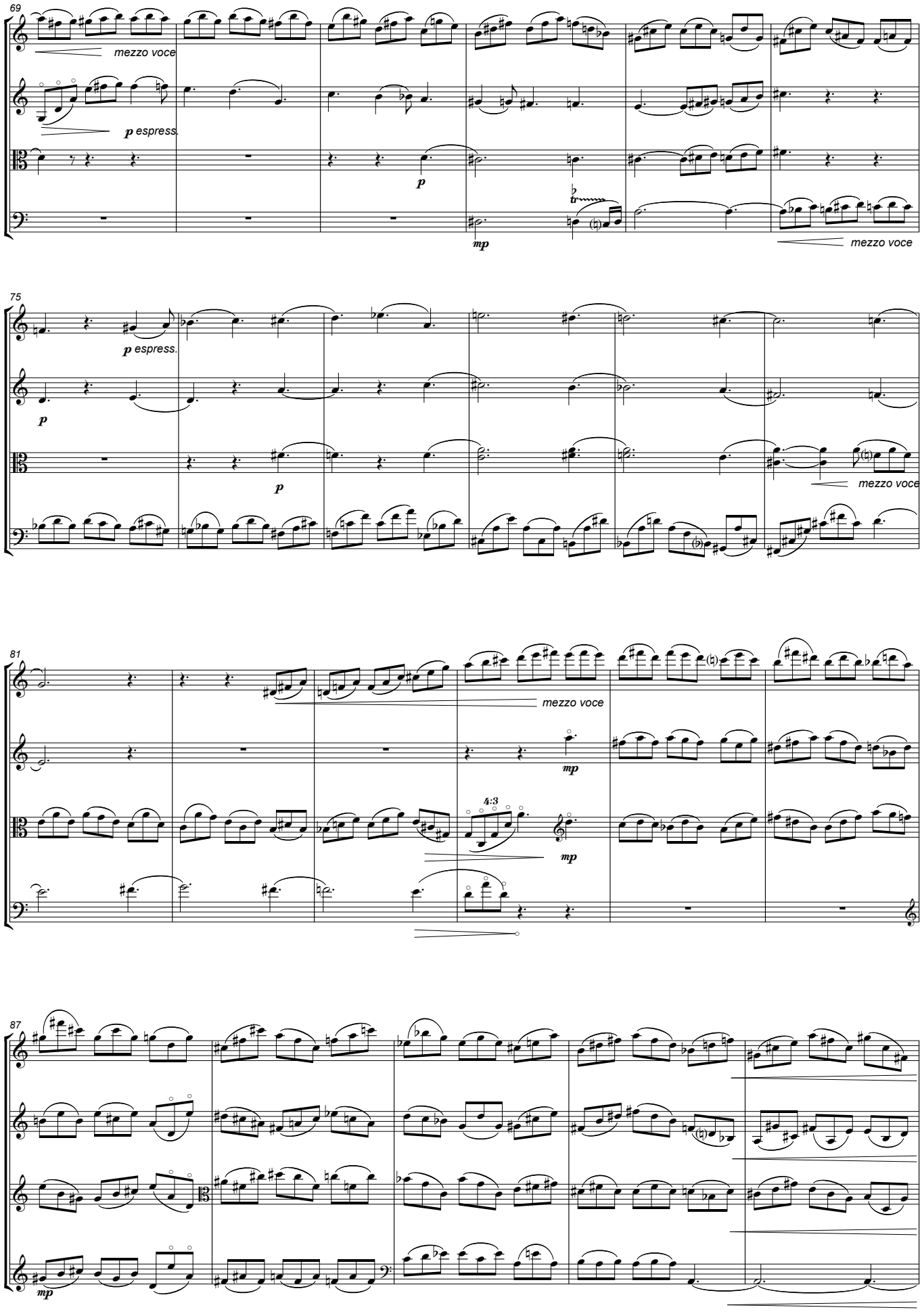

26
sempre p
sempre p
mf espress.
f
p
32
p sub.
35
fp
sempre poco a poco cresc. al ff
39
4:3
7:6
5:6

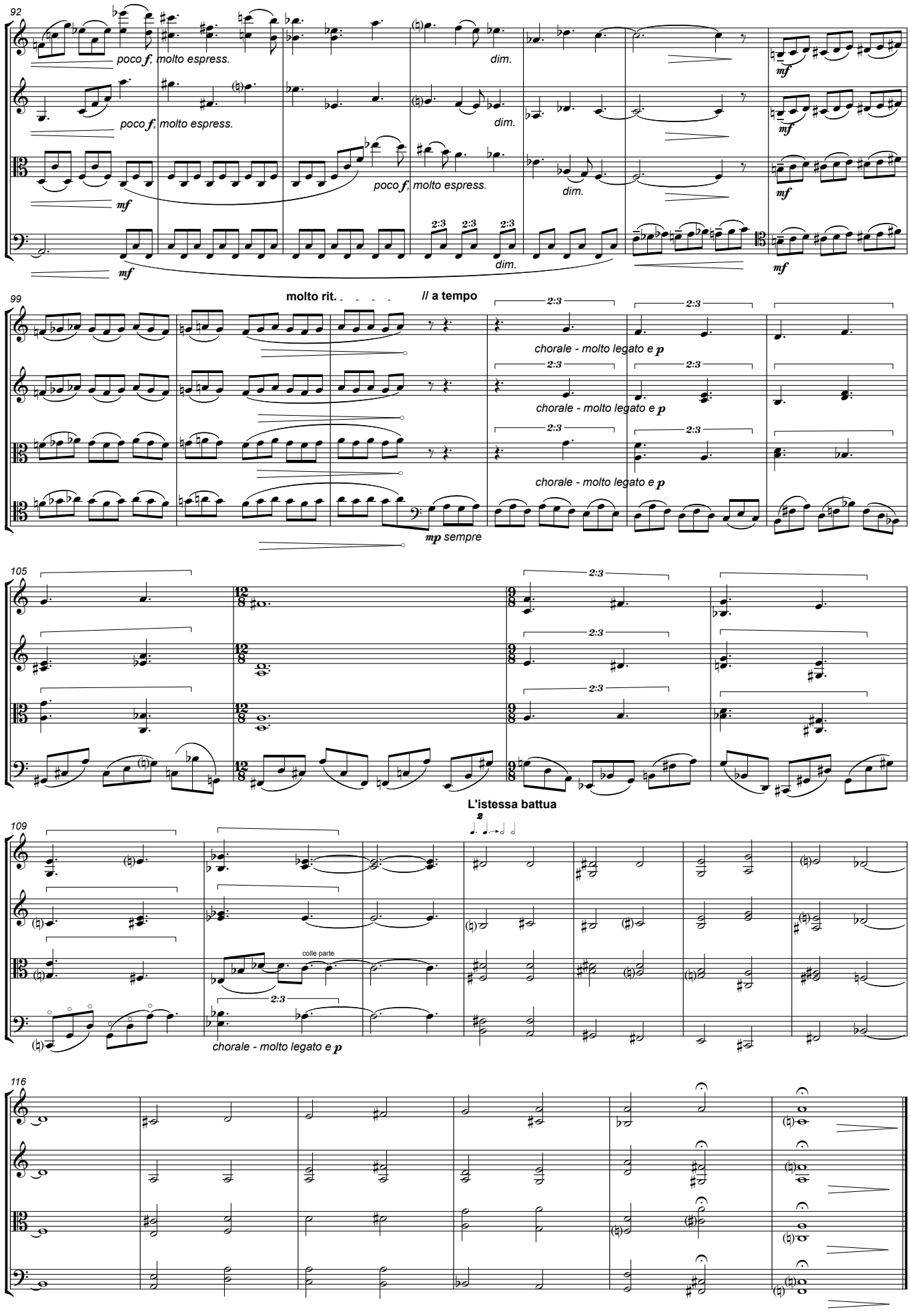

42
ff molto dim.
p delicato
7:6


47
pp molto sotto voce sempre
mf molto espressivo


53
morendo
poco a poco vivendo
ppp
pp
sempre poco animando


62
p
mp
sempre poco animando
mezzo voce
p espress.


69
mezzo voce
p espress.
p
mp
mezzo voce
75
p espress.
p
p
mezzo voce
81
mezzo voce
mp
4:3
mp
87
mp


92
poco f, molto espress.
dim.
mf
99
molto rit.
Il a tempo
chorale - molto legato e p
mp sempre
105
L'istessa battua
109
colle parte
chorale - molto legato e p
116