Cello Concerto

October 22, 2015–January 25, 2016
Duration: about 27 minutes

for Bonnie Thron and Grant Llewellyn

I have had the pleasure of making music with cellist Bonnie Thron and her husband clarinetist Fred Jacobowitz since 2008. When she asked me in the summer of 2015 to write her a cello concerto, I got started as soon as other projects were done.

This cello concerto is in four movements:

I. Over the Stone (Tros y Garreg)		
Adagio; Cyflym; Adagio; Cyflym; Cymedrol; Ychydig yn gyflymach		[9']
II. Heart Song	Largo	[8']
III. Contradanza	Fidelio	[2']
IV. Schlimmbesserung	Vivace	[7:20]

The theme for the first movement is the traditional Welsh song "Tros y Garreg", or "Over the Stone". The song is attributed to Rhys Bodychen, who fought at the Battle of Bosworth Field on the side of the Tutors against Richard III in 1485. The lyrics reflect on those who have fallen in battle. This melody has been altered from the original by George Thompson, who published Welsh airs in 1809, 1811, and 1817. I prefer his version for this purpose to the original. Note that the end of the melody resembles the theme from the last movement of J. S. Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*, which factors into my treatment. Also, the traditional harp music of Wales led me to have an important harp part throughout this concerto.

I made a point of using particularly incomprehensible, unspellable, and unpronounceable Welsh words for tempo markings in the first movement. *Cyflym* means "fast"; *Cymedrol* means "moderate"; *Ychydig yn gflymach* means "a little faster."

The very short third movement started life back about 1990 as the second movement of my *Fourth Sonata for Solo Violin*. (There is a total of ten such sonatas.) Until recently I thought it was a tango, as I am easily bored with details in music theory and sometimes don't look things up. In fact, it is a contradanza, a dance form originating in Havana--hence the tempo marking "Fidelio". The solo cello part can be performed by itself in a pinch. The instrumentation in the third movement is the same as the rest of the piece, except that it lacks the second trumpet.

The fourth movement is titled *Schlimmbesserung*, which is German for "an effort to make things better that ends up making things worse".

Performance notes

Instrumentation: two flutes (first flute doubles piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, harp, solo cello, and strings.

In the first movement, measures 163-176, and 273 to the end, the solo part is marked *tutti*. The soloist is playing with the orchestra, and it doesn't matter that it cannot be heard distinctly. There are several passages through the piece where the orchestra will probably overpower the solo cello. In those places, the cello can be amplified, thus allowing full volume for the ensemble.

As the harp has a prominent part, it should be located in proximity to the soloist, not in the back as usual.

Accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not apply to octaves.

Cover art: frontispiece from *Musical and poetical relicks of the Welsh bards* by Edward Jones, 1784.

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billrobinsonmusic.com

Cello Concerto

I. Over the Stone (Tros y Garreg) [9']

Bill Robinson

Theme
Adagio (♩.= 52)

1 (double picc.) Flute
2
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B♭
2 Bassoons
2 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in B♭
Timpani
Harp
Solo Cello
I Violin
II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

[Sections marked between (tutti) and (solo) are optional for the solo cello.]

p *mp* *mf* *f*

Theme
Adagio (♩.= 52)

10
Solo
Vc.
DB

mp *f* *mf*

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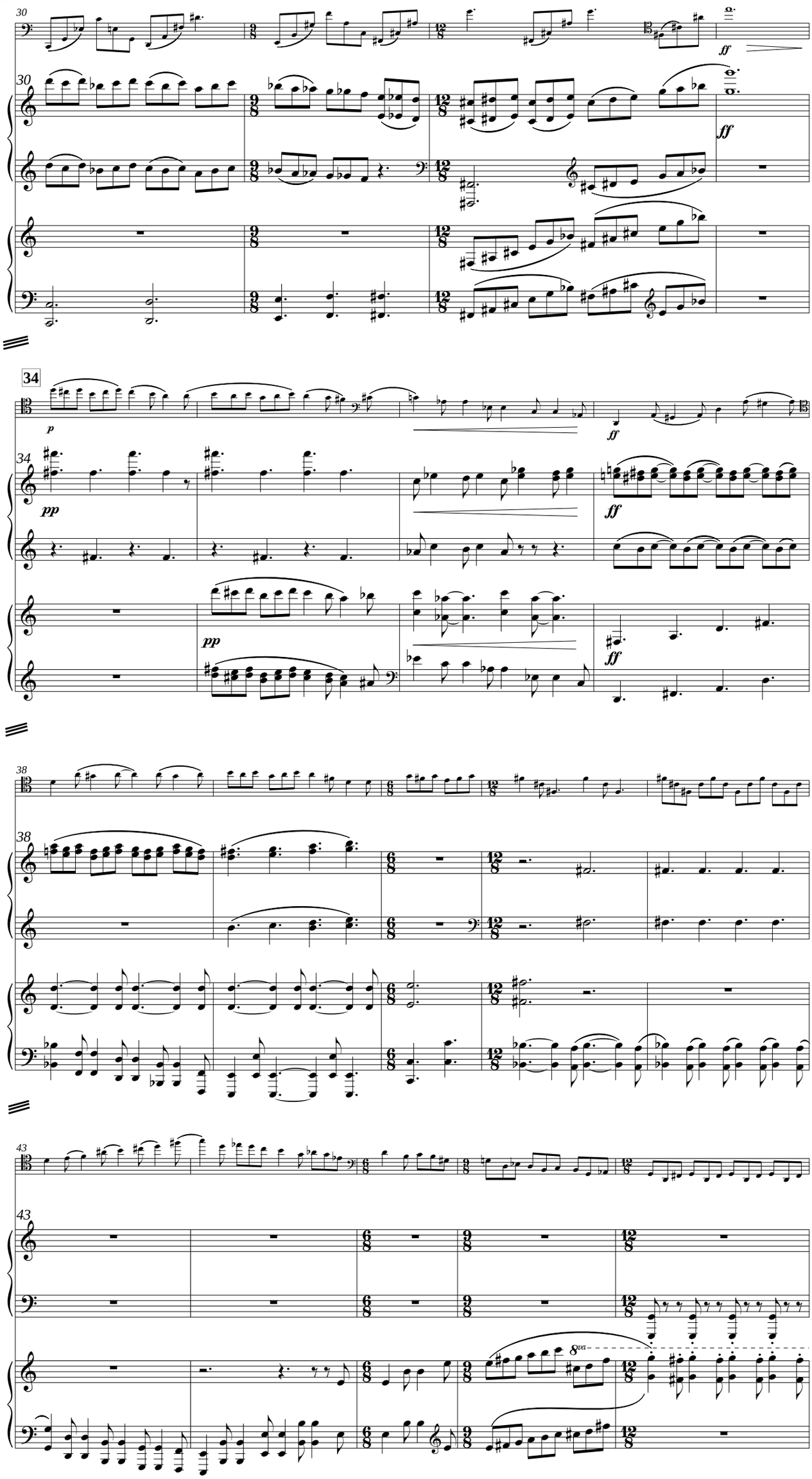
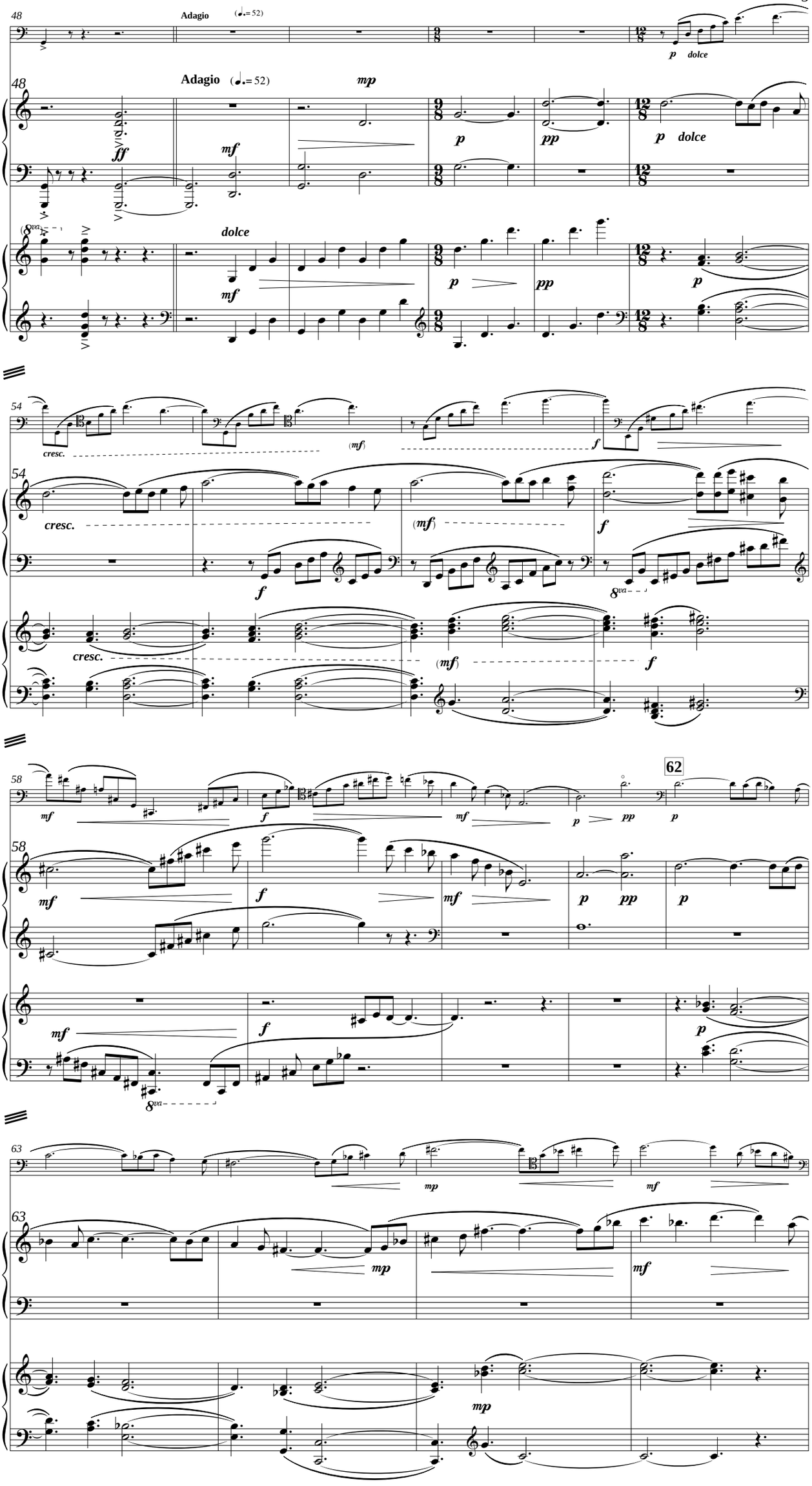
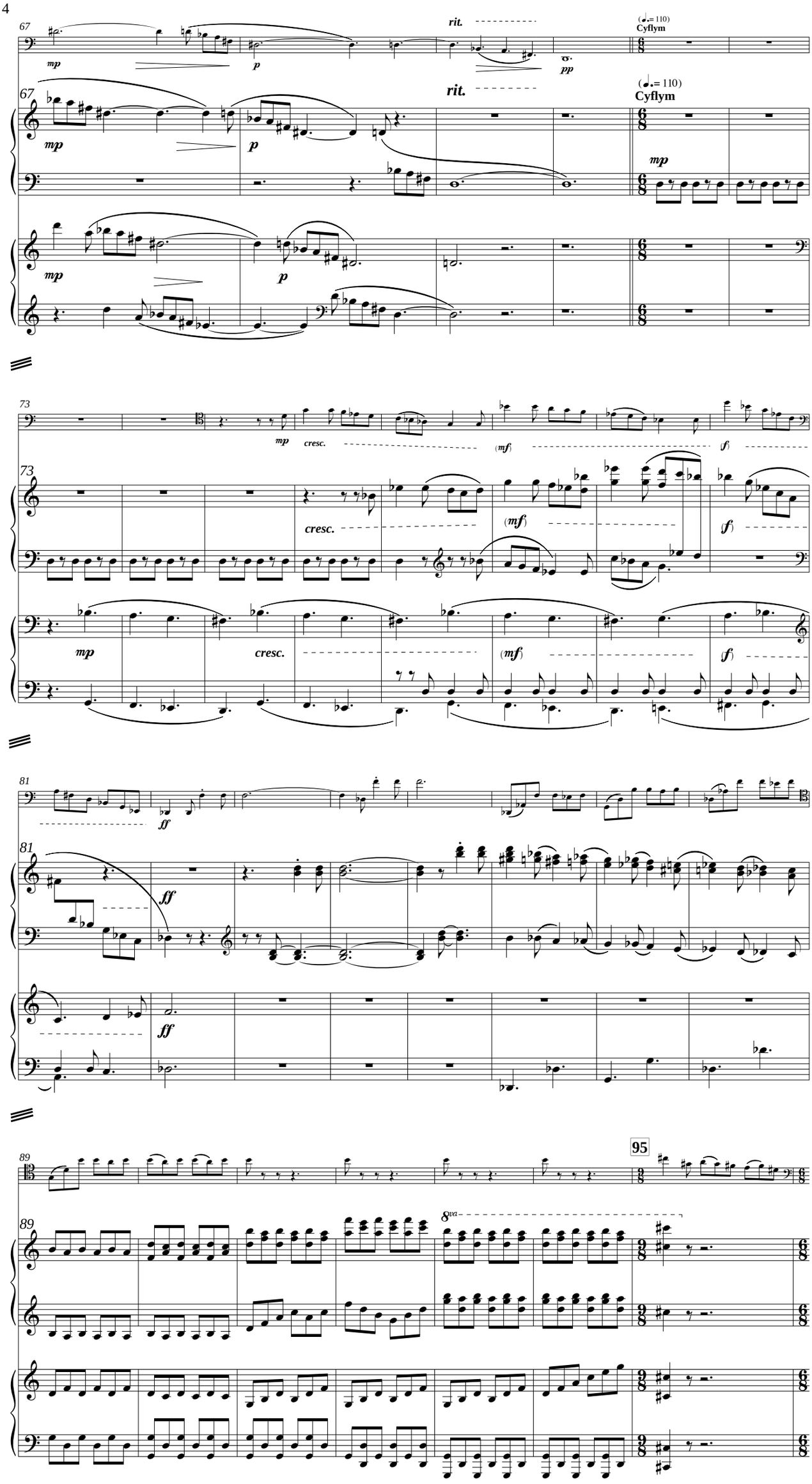
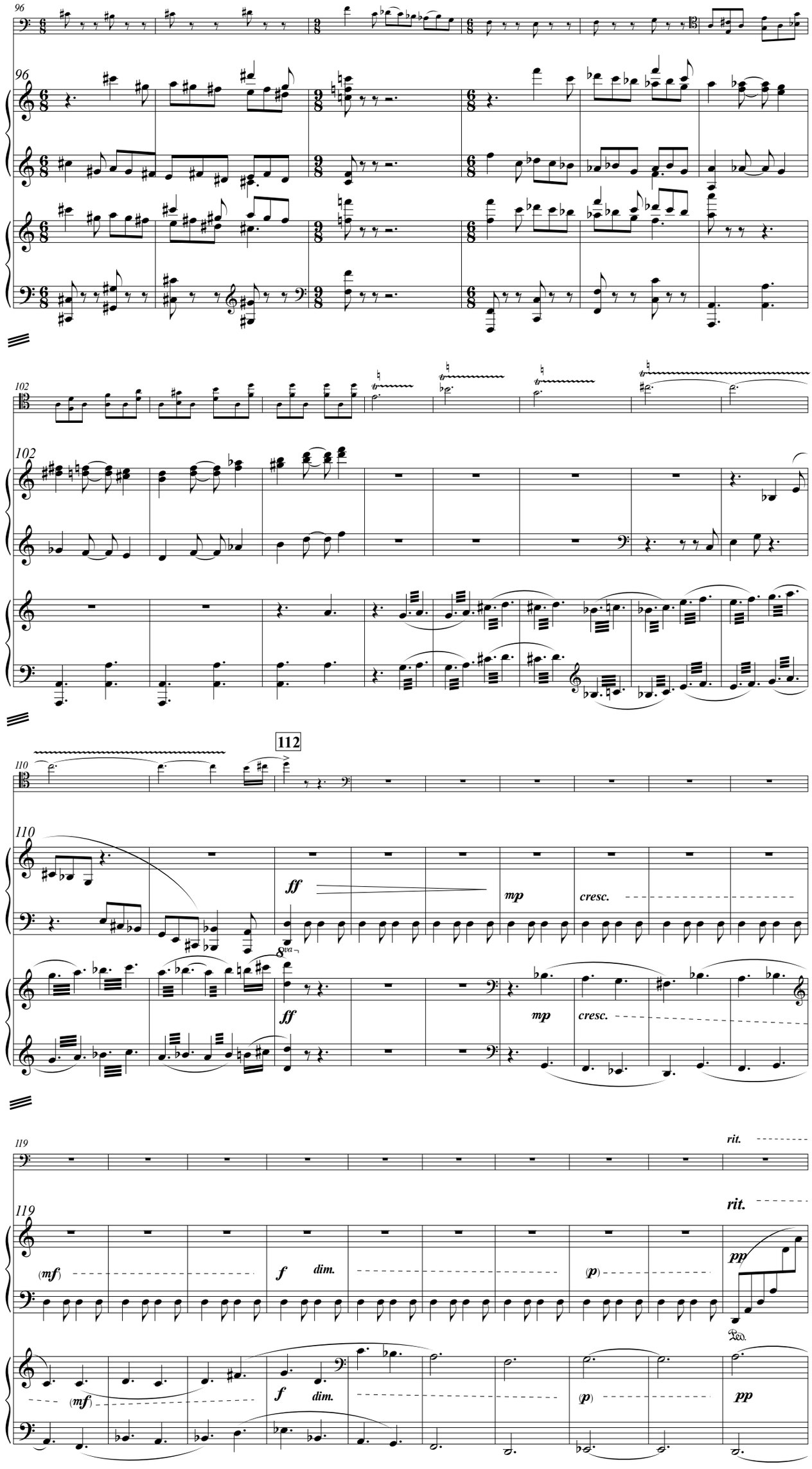
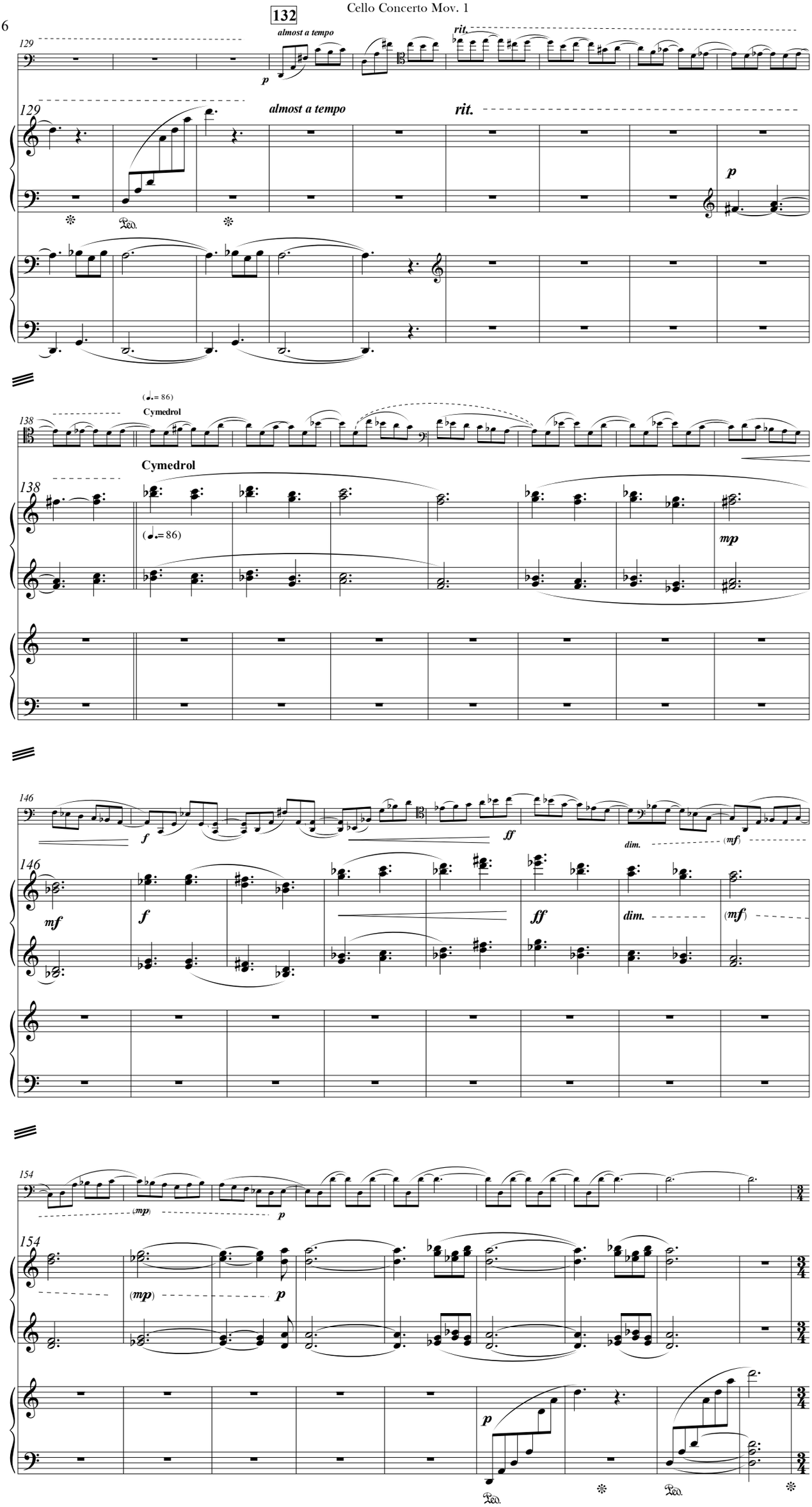
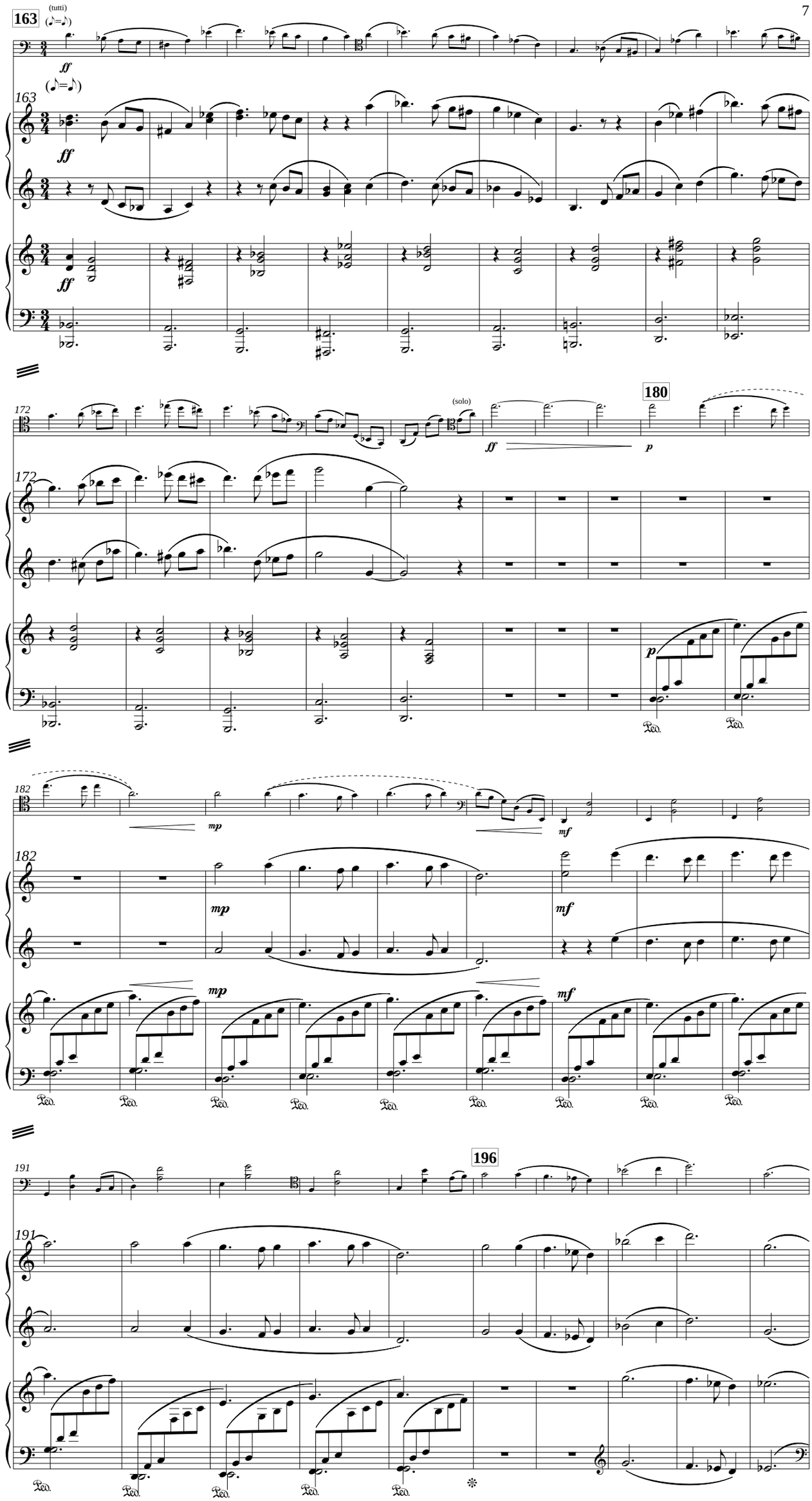

30
ff
34
p
pp
ff
38
43
8va

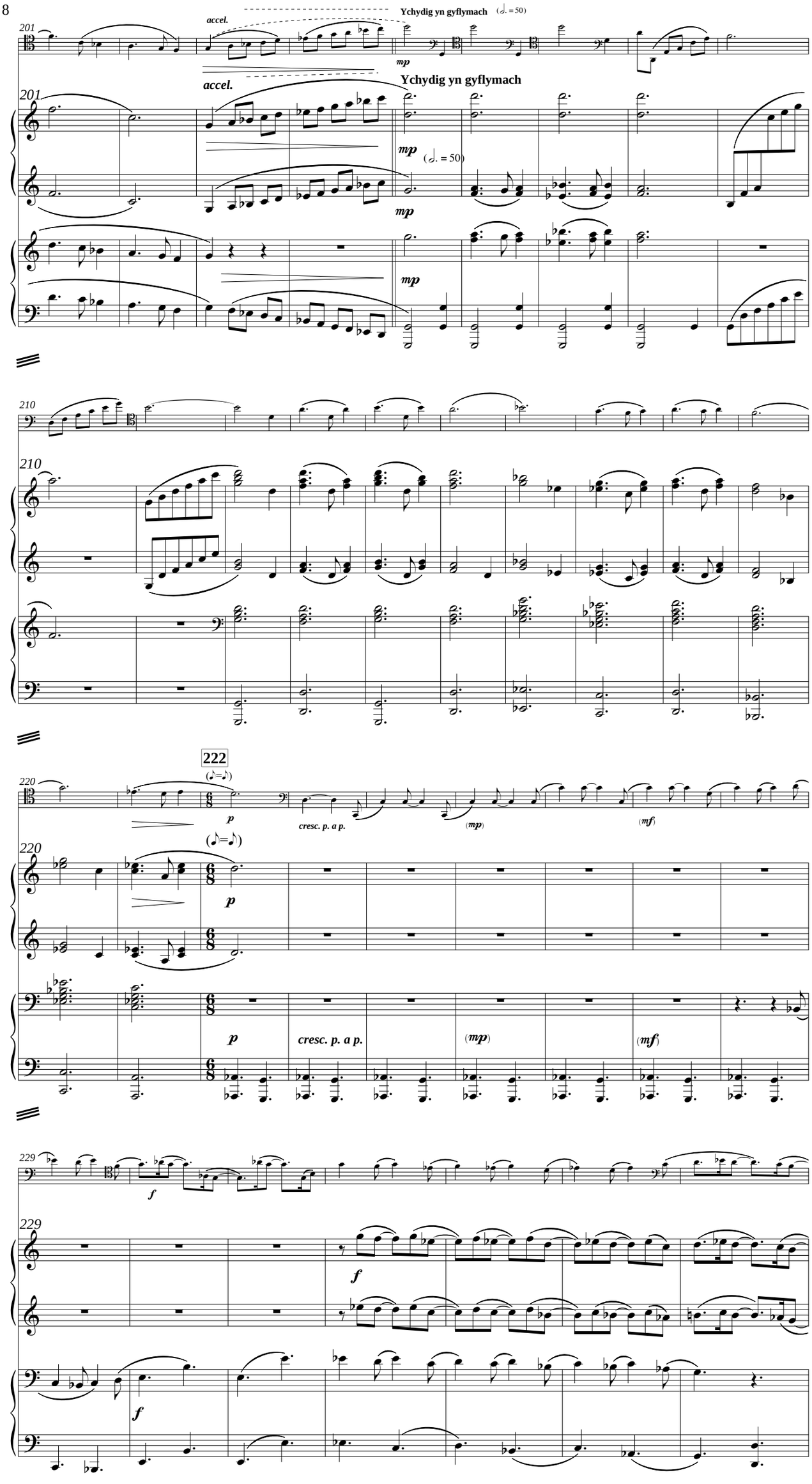

48
Adagio
(♩.= 52)
p dolce
ff
mf
mp
p
pp
dolce
8va
54
cresc.
(mf)
f
58
62
63

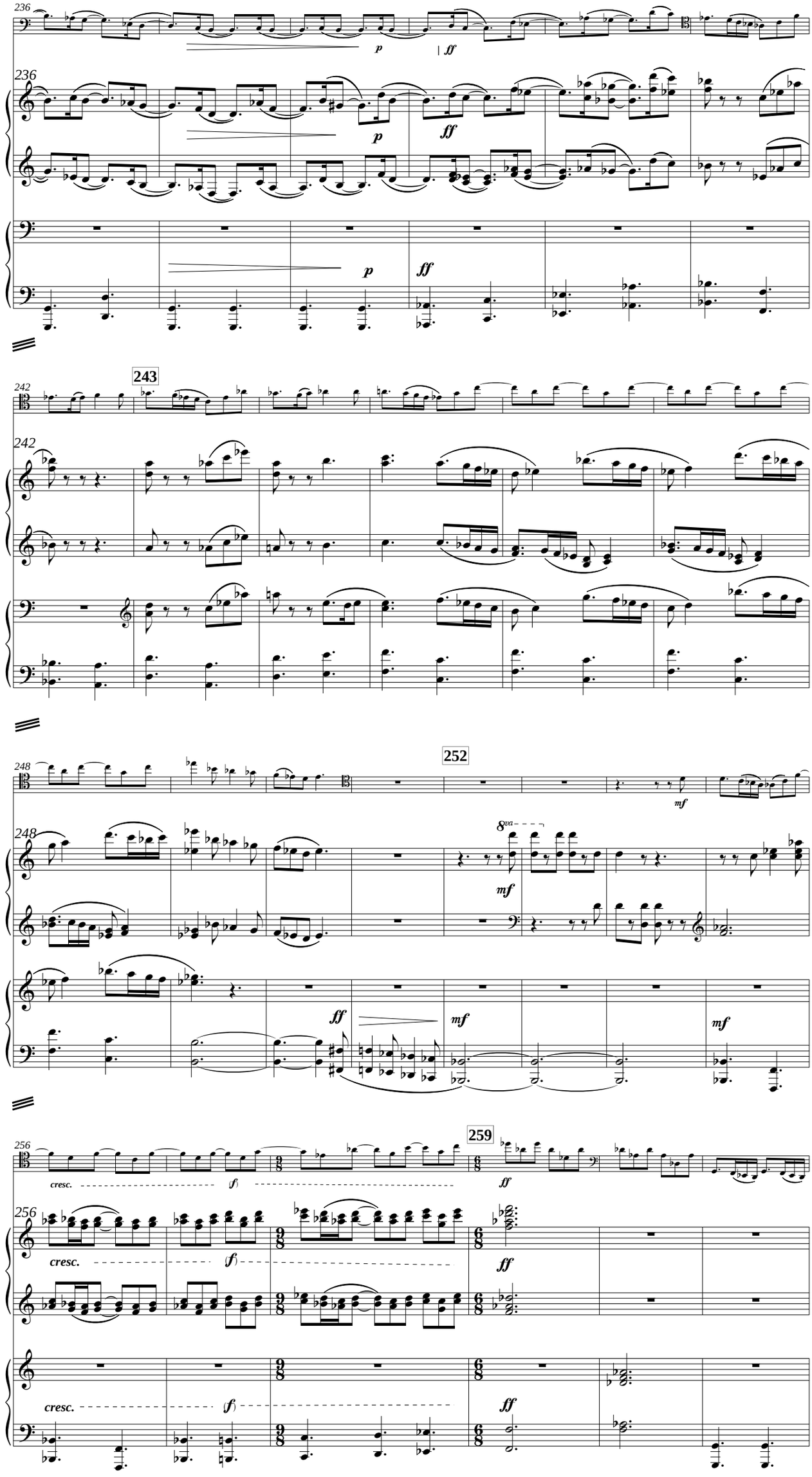

67
rit.
(♩.= 110)
Cyflym
mp
p
pp
73
cresc.
(mf)
f
81
ff
89
95
8va

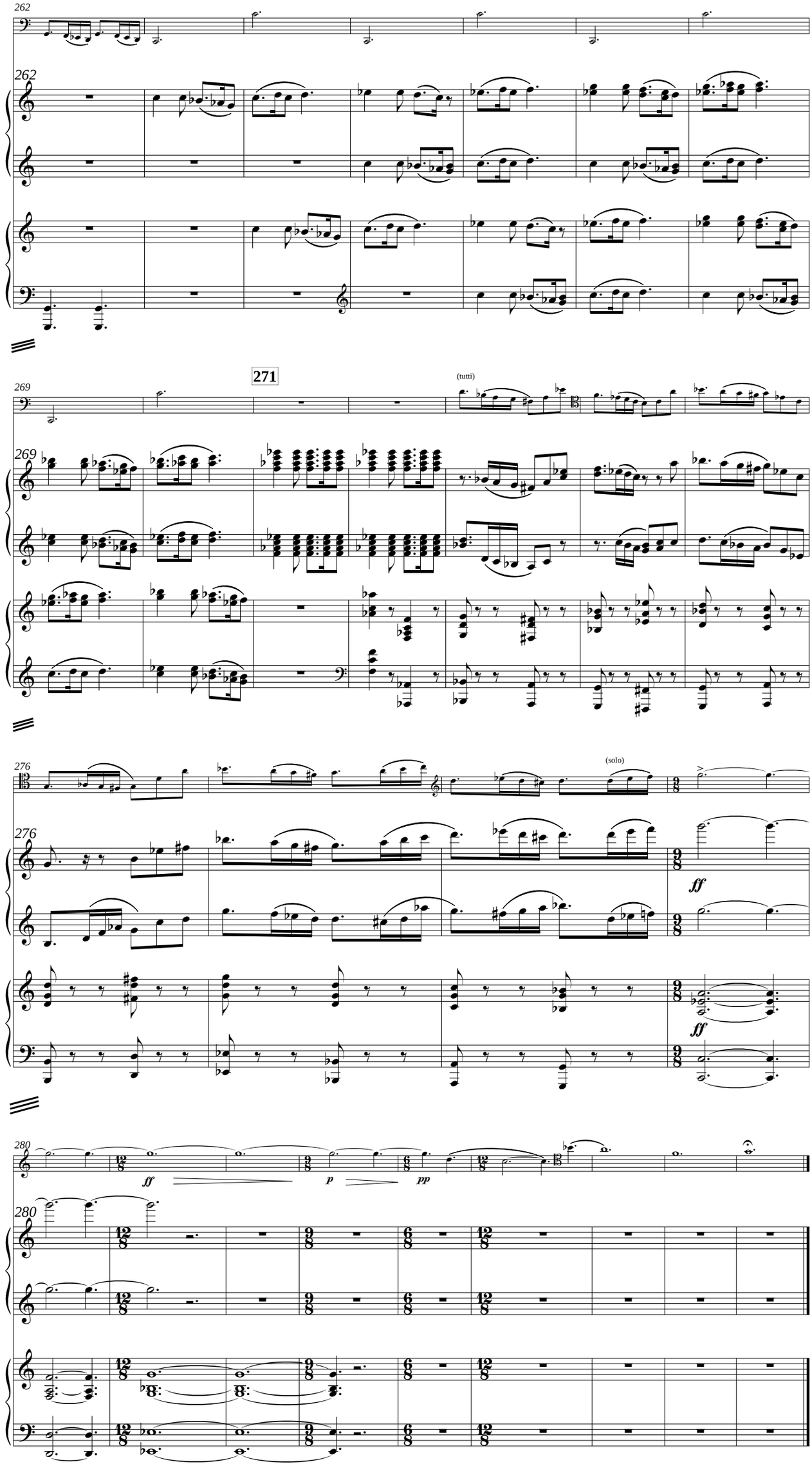

96
102
110
112
ff
mp
cresc.
8va
119
rit.
(mf)
f
dim.
(p)
pp
Ped.

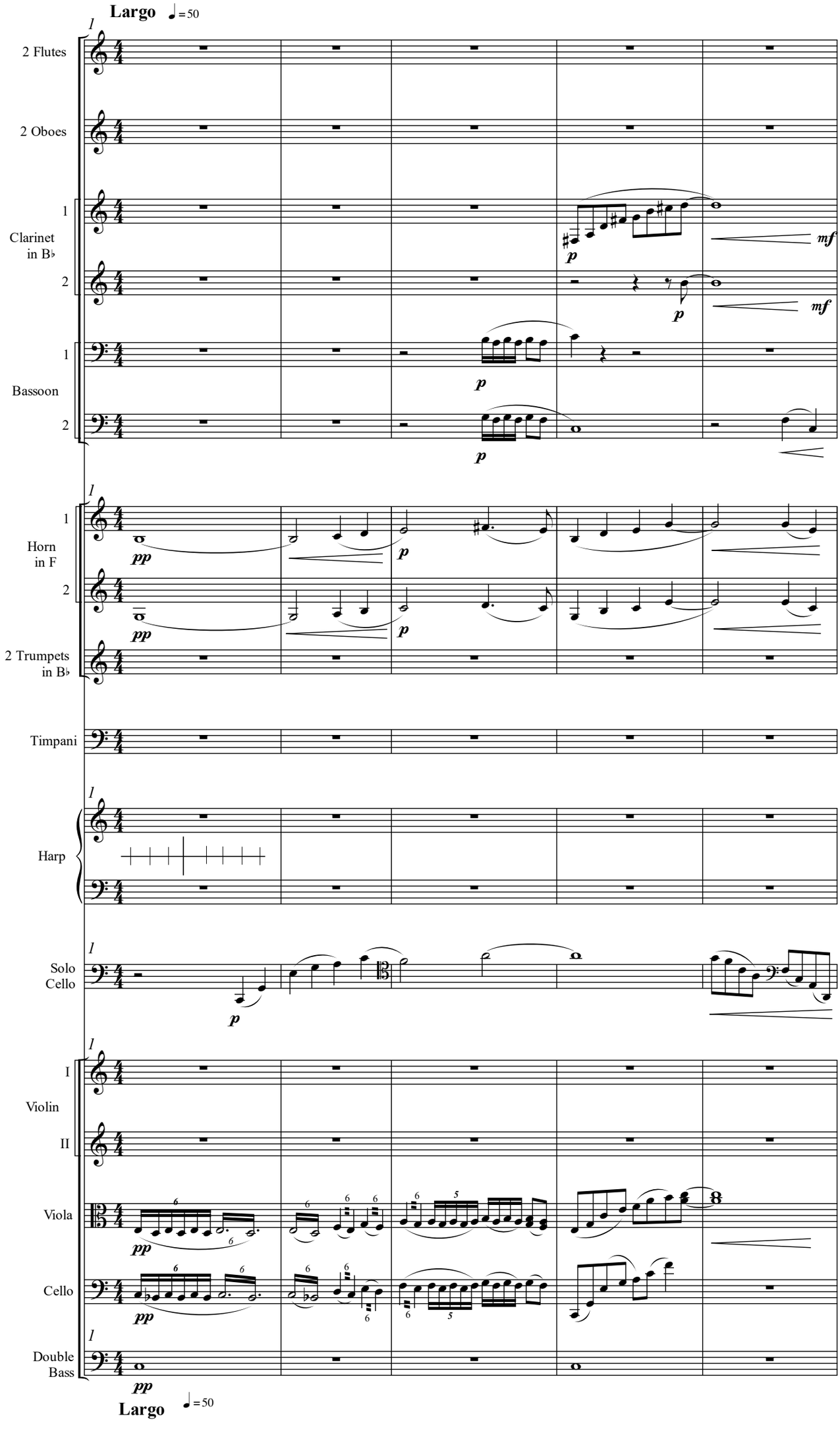

132
almost a tempo
rit.
129
p
Ped.
(♩.= 86)
Cymedrol
138
mp
146
f
ff
dim.
(mf)
mf
154
(mp)
p

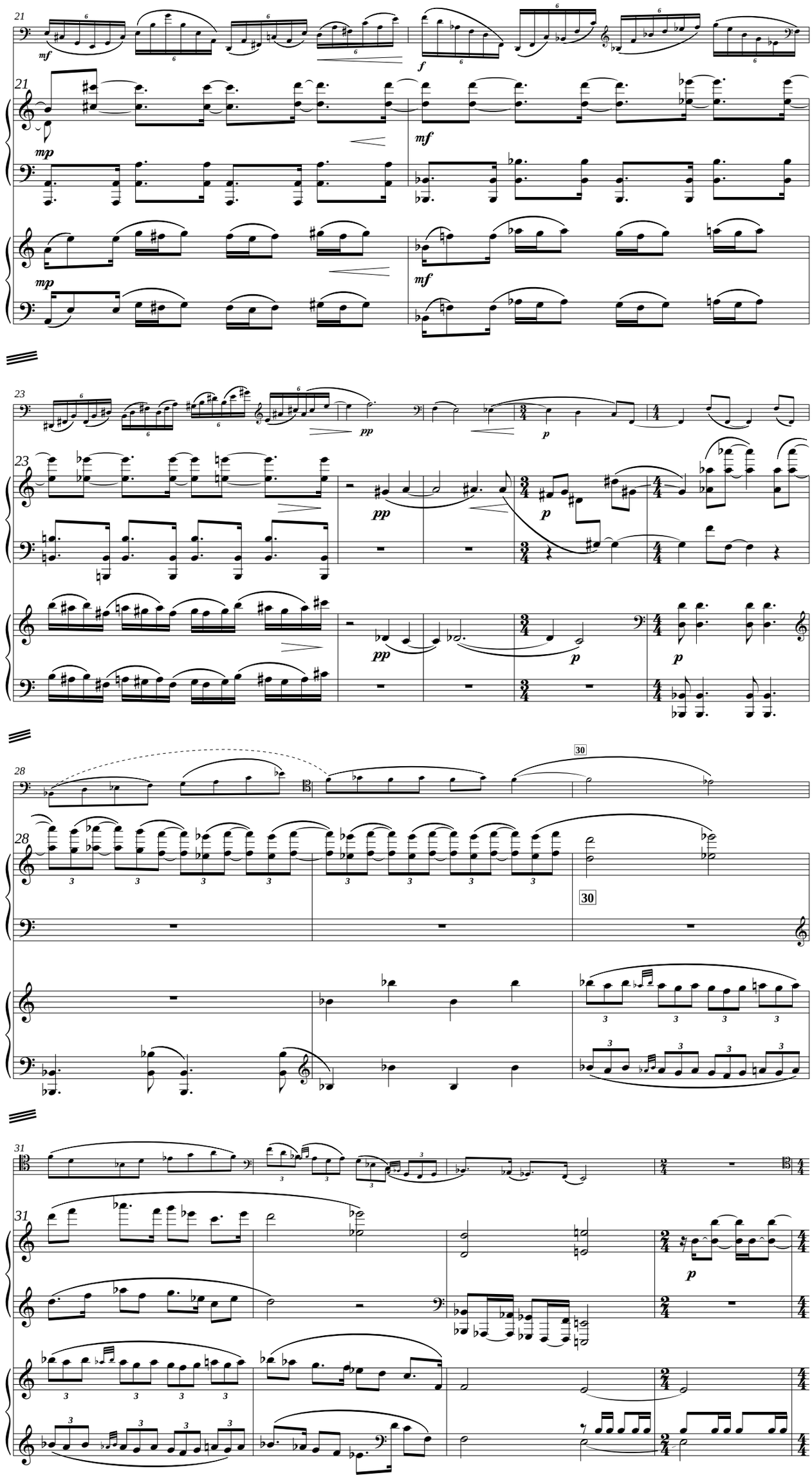

163
(tutti)
(♪=♪)
ff
163
172
(solo)
180
p
182
mp
mf
191
196
Ped.

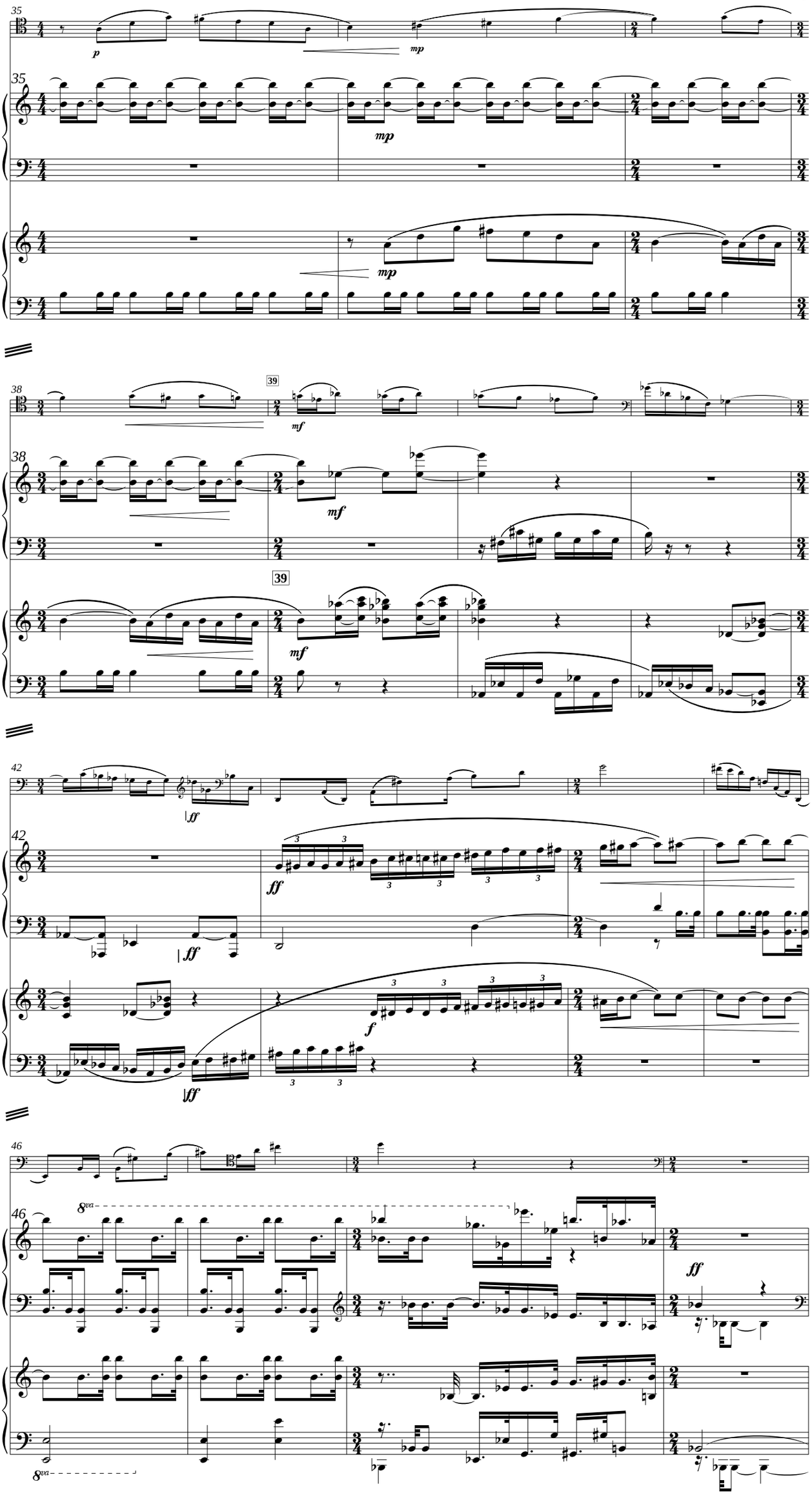

accel.
Ychydig yn gyflymach (𝅗𝅥. = 50)
mp
201
210
220
222
(𝅘𝅥𝅮=𝅘𝅥𝅮)
p
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
(mf)
6/8
229
f

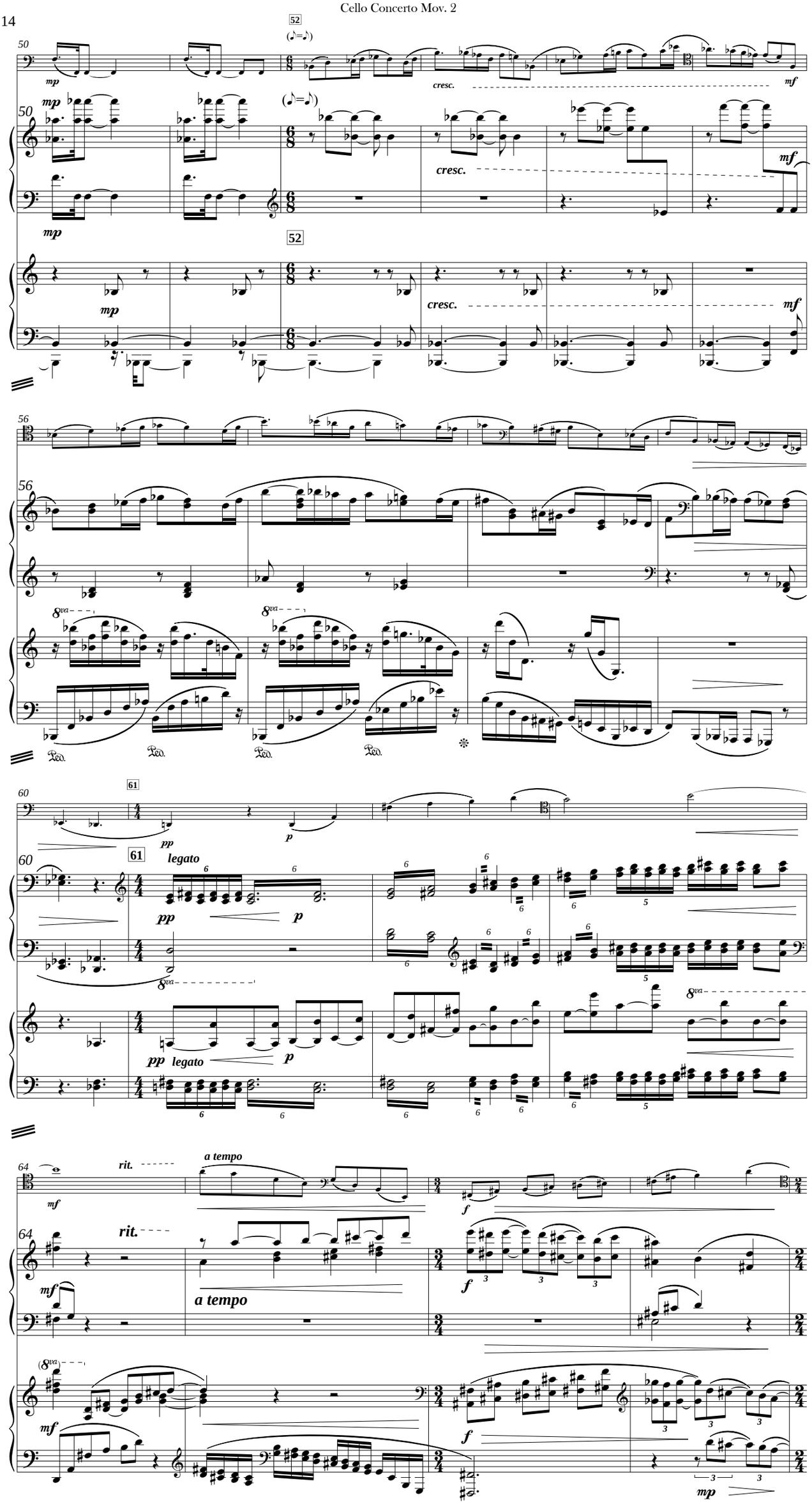

236
p
ff
243
242
248
252
8va
mf
256
cresc.
f
259

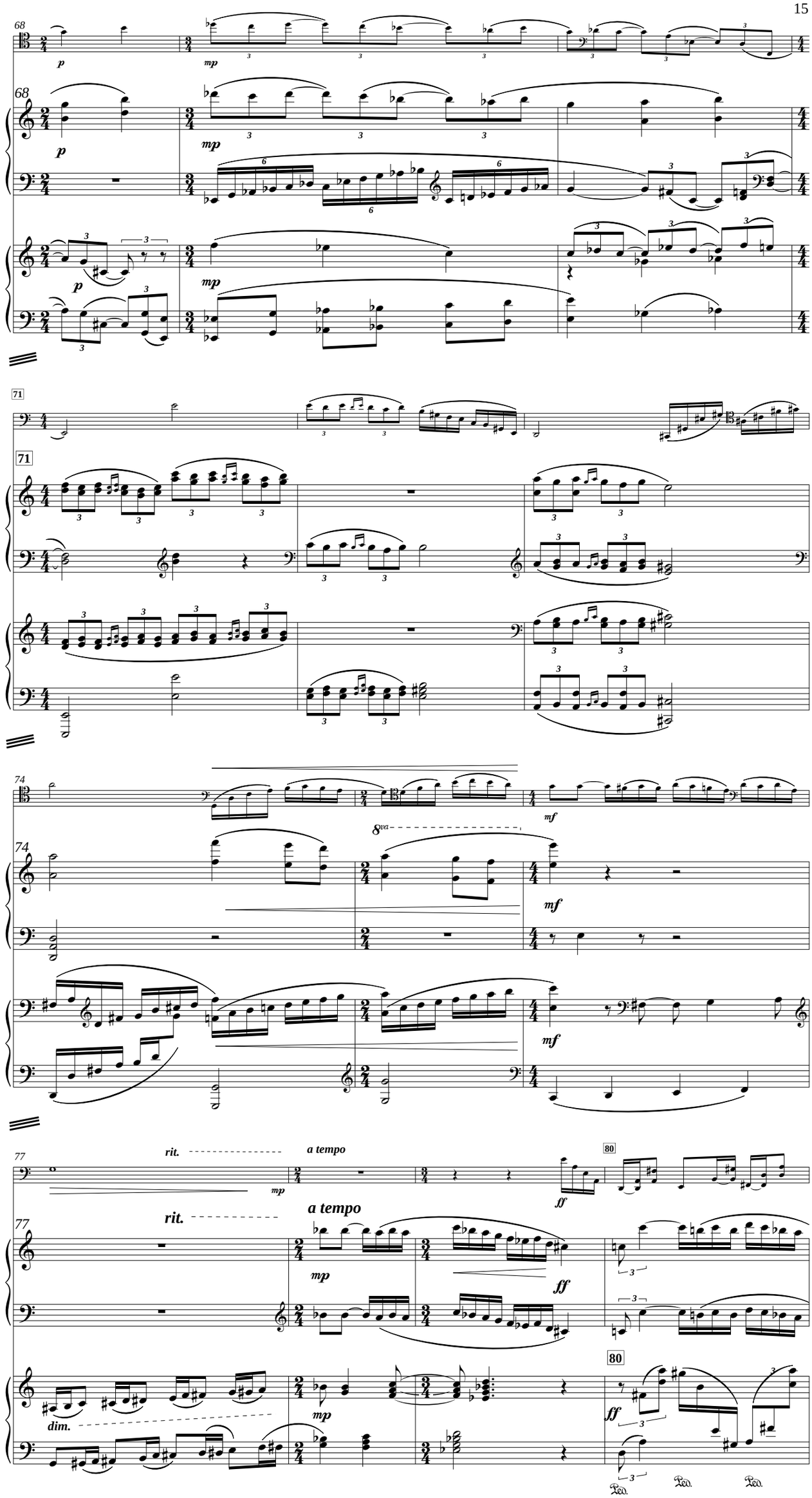

262
271
(tutti)
269
276
(solo)
ff
280
p
pp

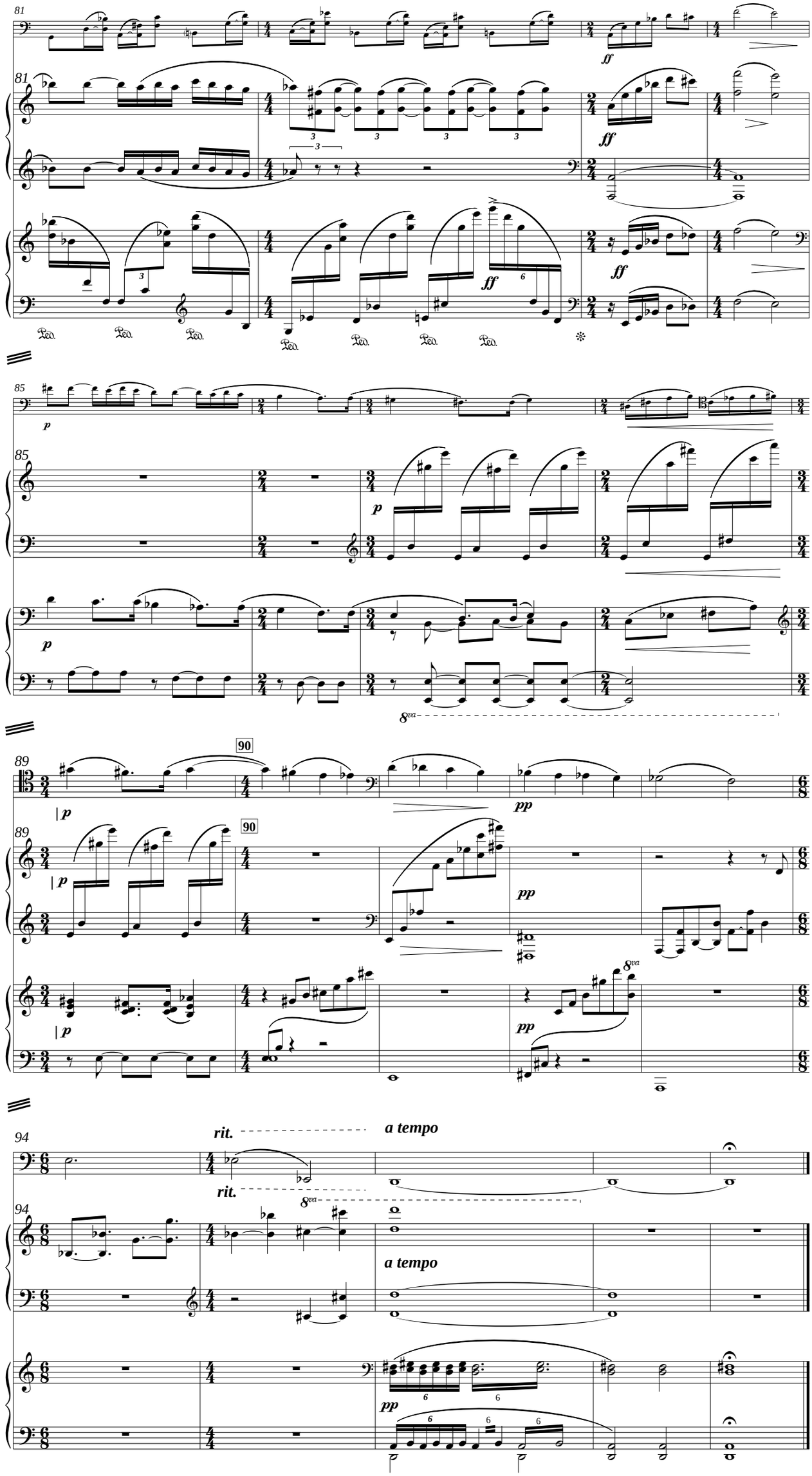

Largo ♩= 50
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
Clarinet in B♭ 1
2
Bassoon 1
2
Horn in F 1
2
2 Trumpets in B♭
Timpani
Harp
Solo Cello
Violin I
II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass
Largo ♩= 50


21
mf
f
mp
mf
23
pp
p
28
30
31


35
p
mp
35
mp
mp
38
39
mf
38
mf
39
mf
42
ff
42
ff
ff
f
ff
46
8va
46
ff
8va


50
52
(𝅗𝅥=𝅗𝅥)
mp
cresc.
mf
56
8va
Ped.
60
61
pp
p
legato
64
rit.
a tempo
f
mp


68
p
mp
71
74
8va
mf
77
rit.
a tempo
mp
ff
80
dim.
Ped.


81
ff
Ped.
85
p
8va
89
90
pp
94
rit.
a tempo

III. Contradanza [2']

Fidelio ♩= 66

1 (double picc.) Flute
2
2 Oboes
1 Clarinet in B♭
2
1 Bassoon
2
1 Horn in F
2
Trumpet in B♭ 1
Timpani
Harp
Solo Cello
I Violin
II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

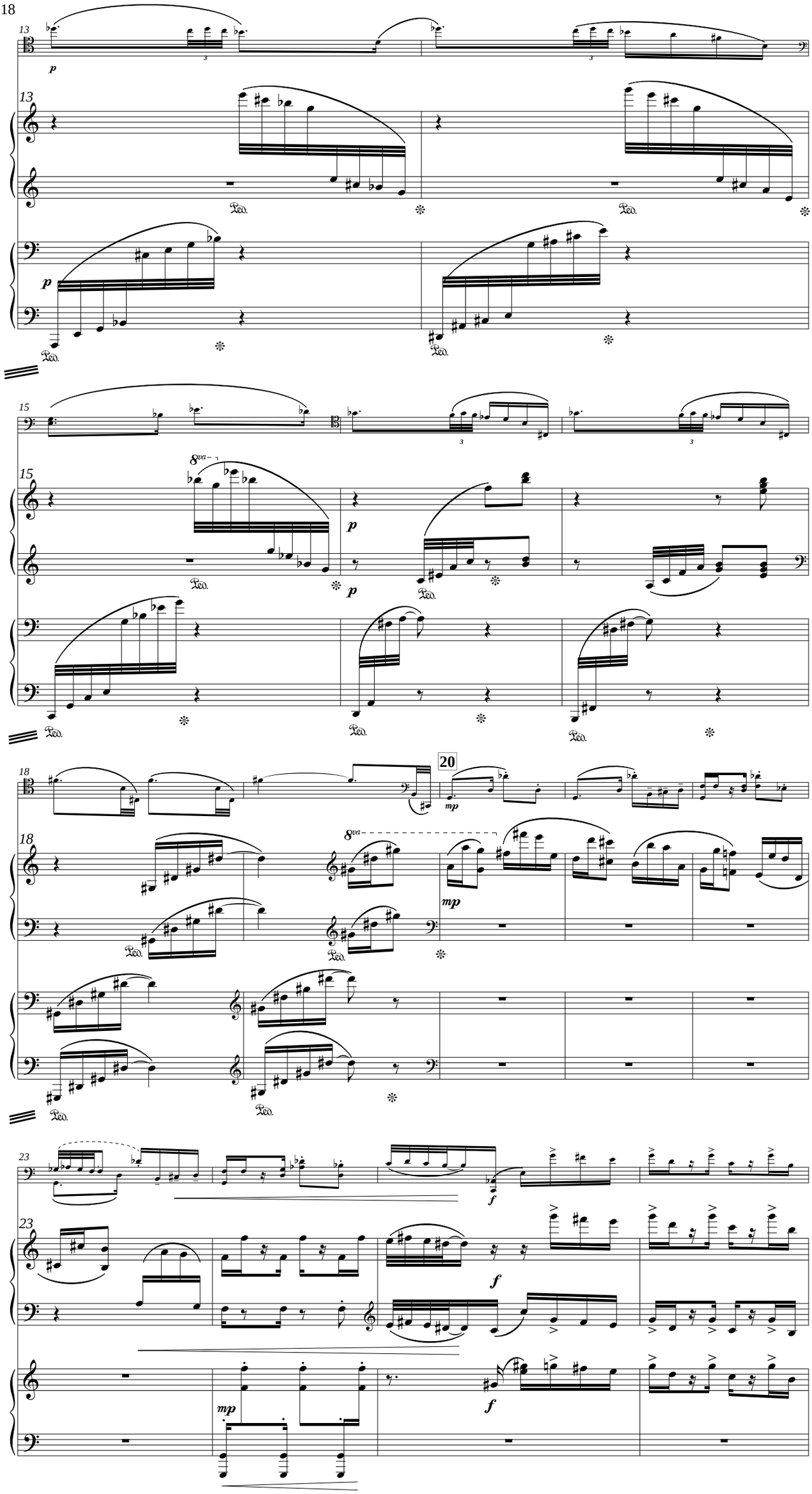
(Fl. 1)

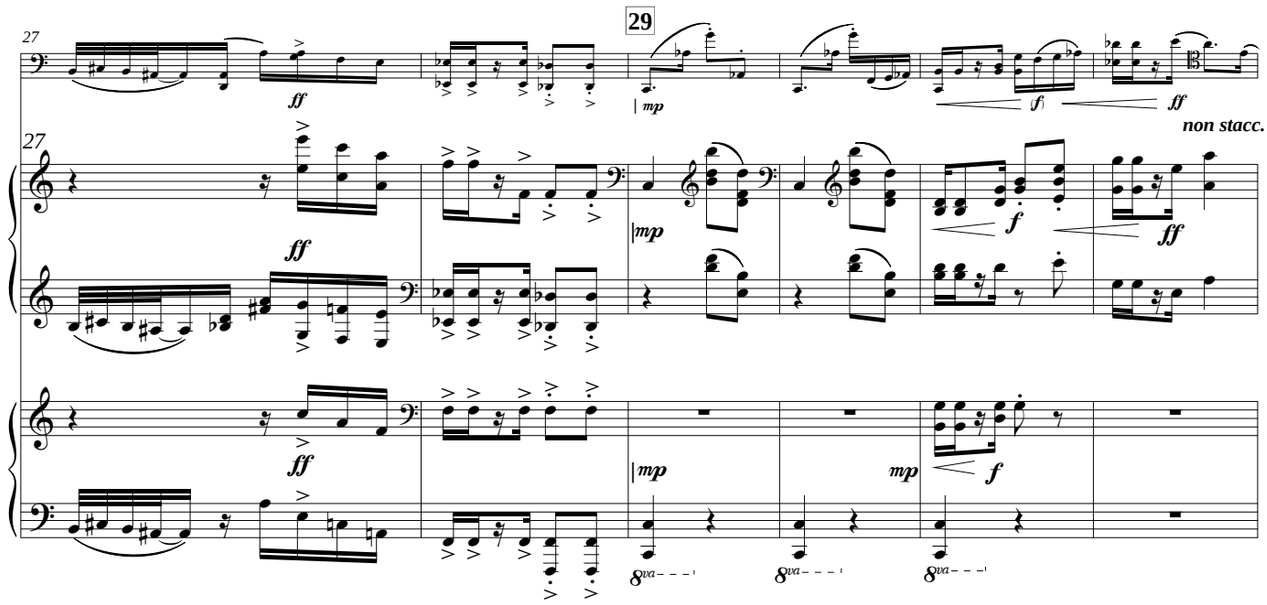
mp *mp*+ *f* *mf*

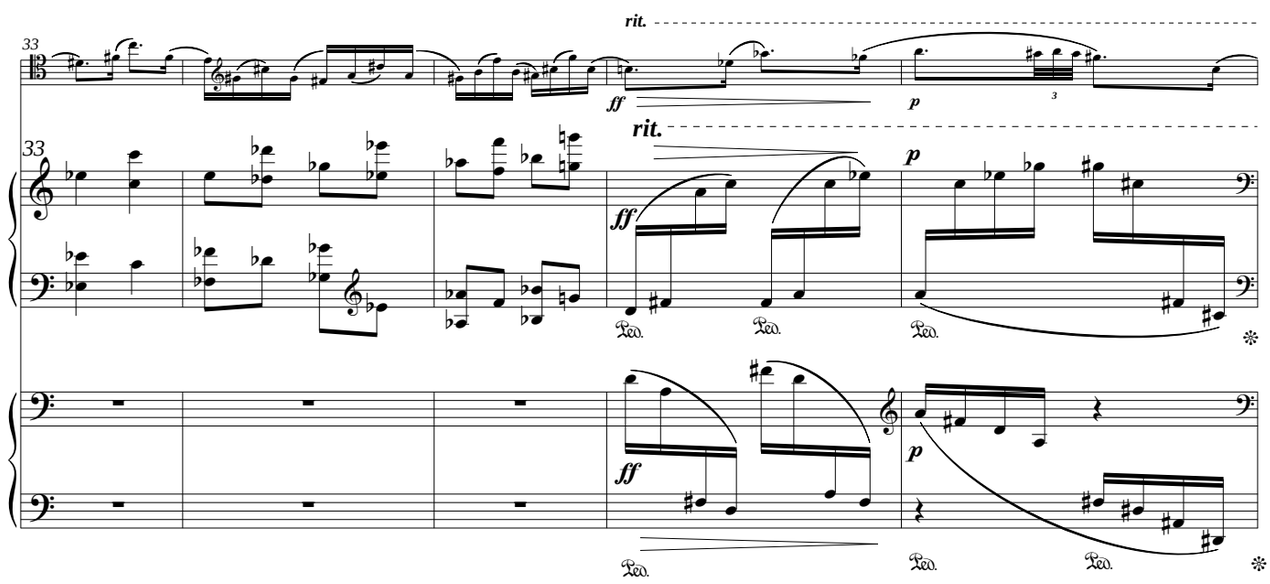
sempre non arpeggio

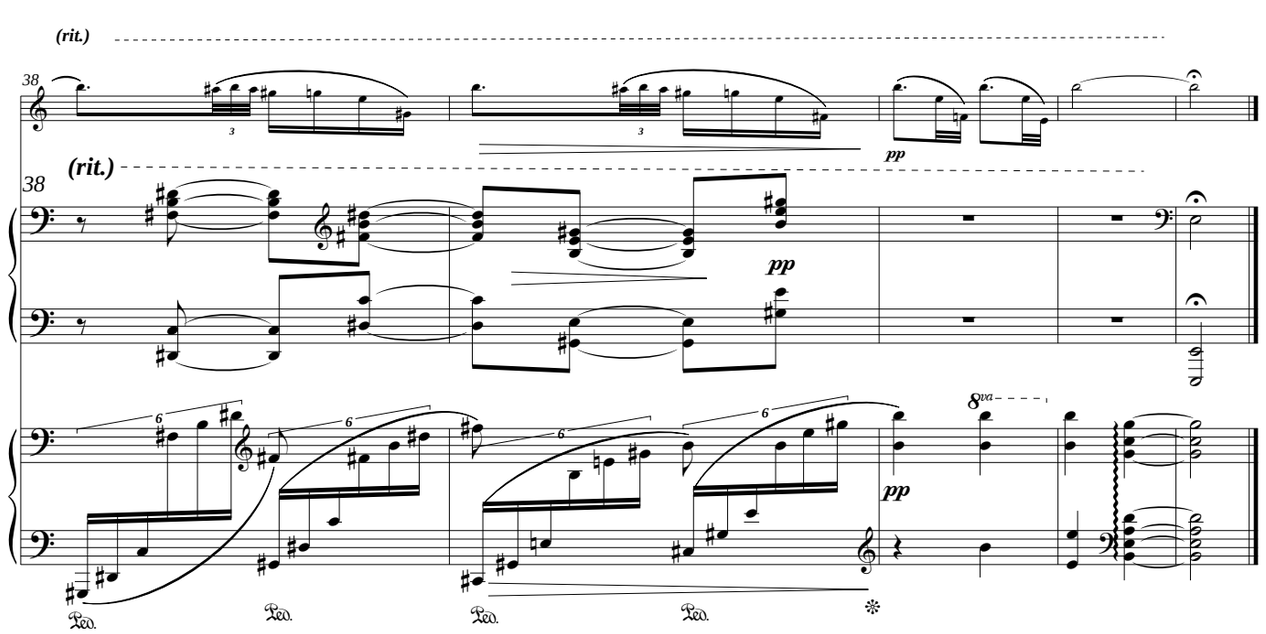
pizz. arco

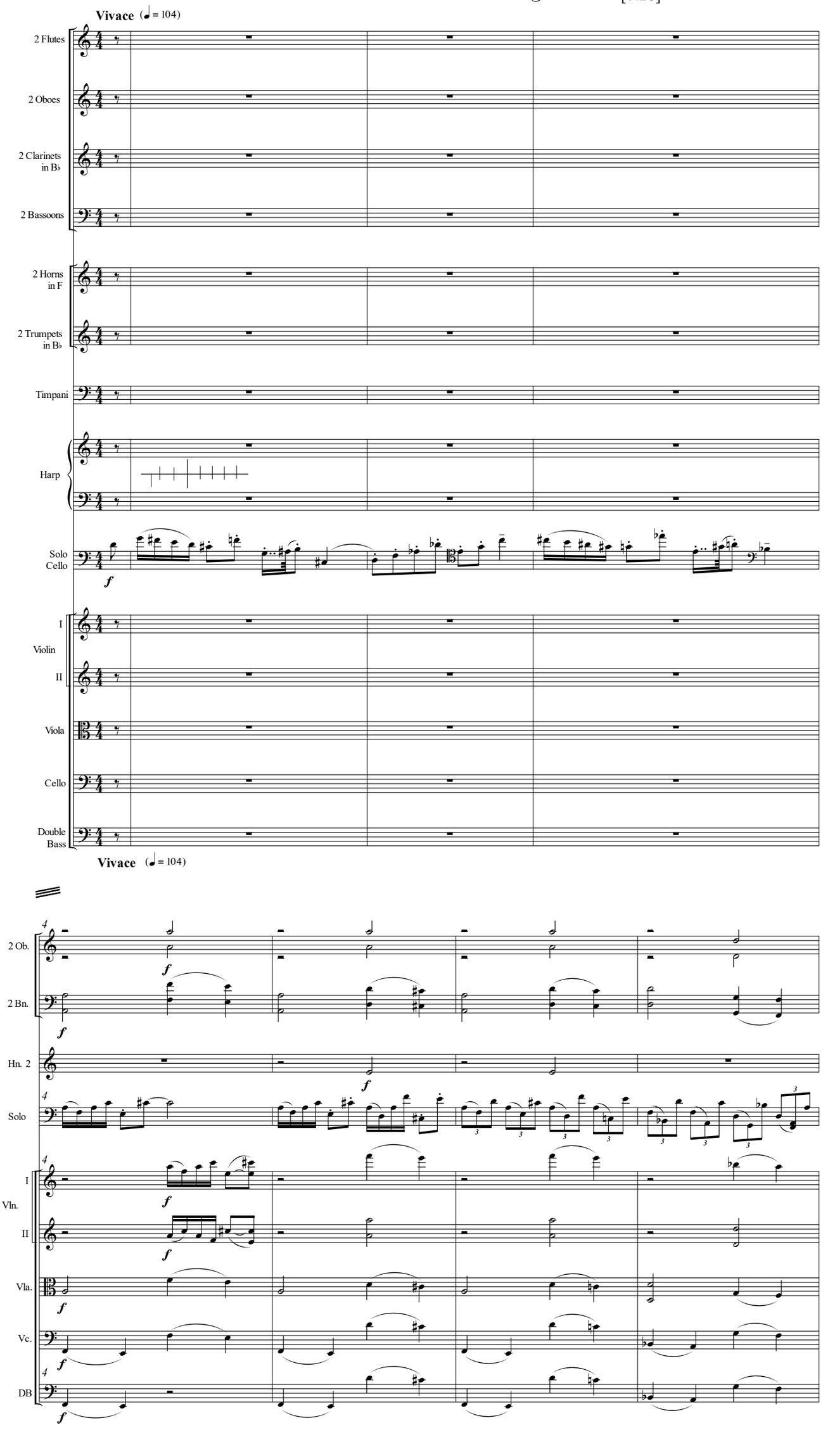
Fidelio ♩= 66

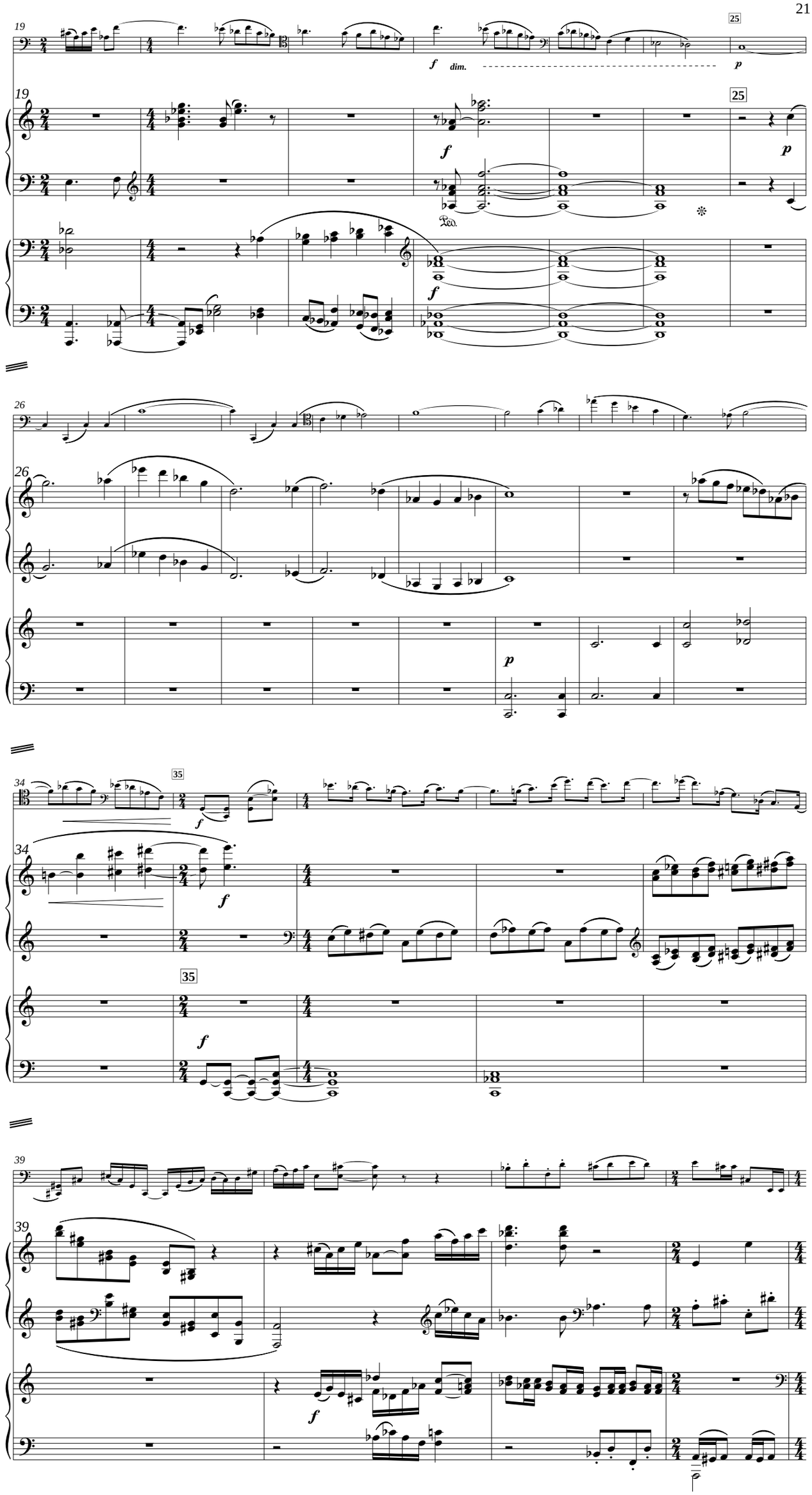

13
p
Ped.
15
8va
18
20
mp
23
f

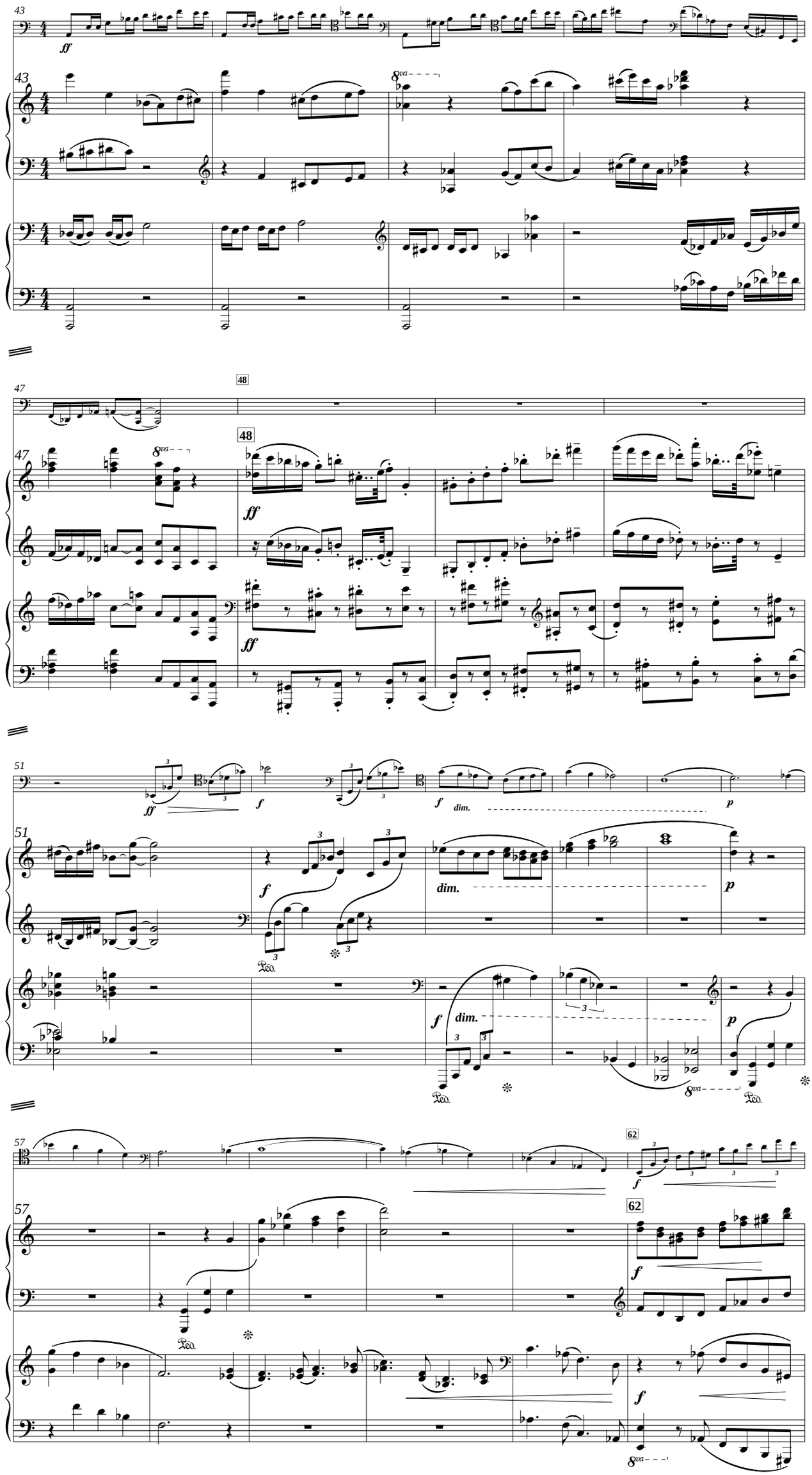

27
29
ff
mp
f
non stacc.
8va

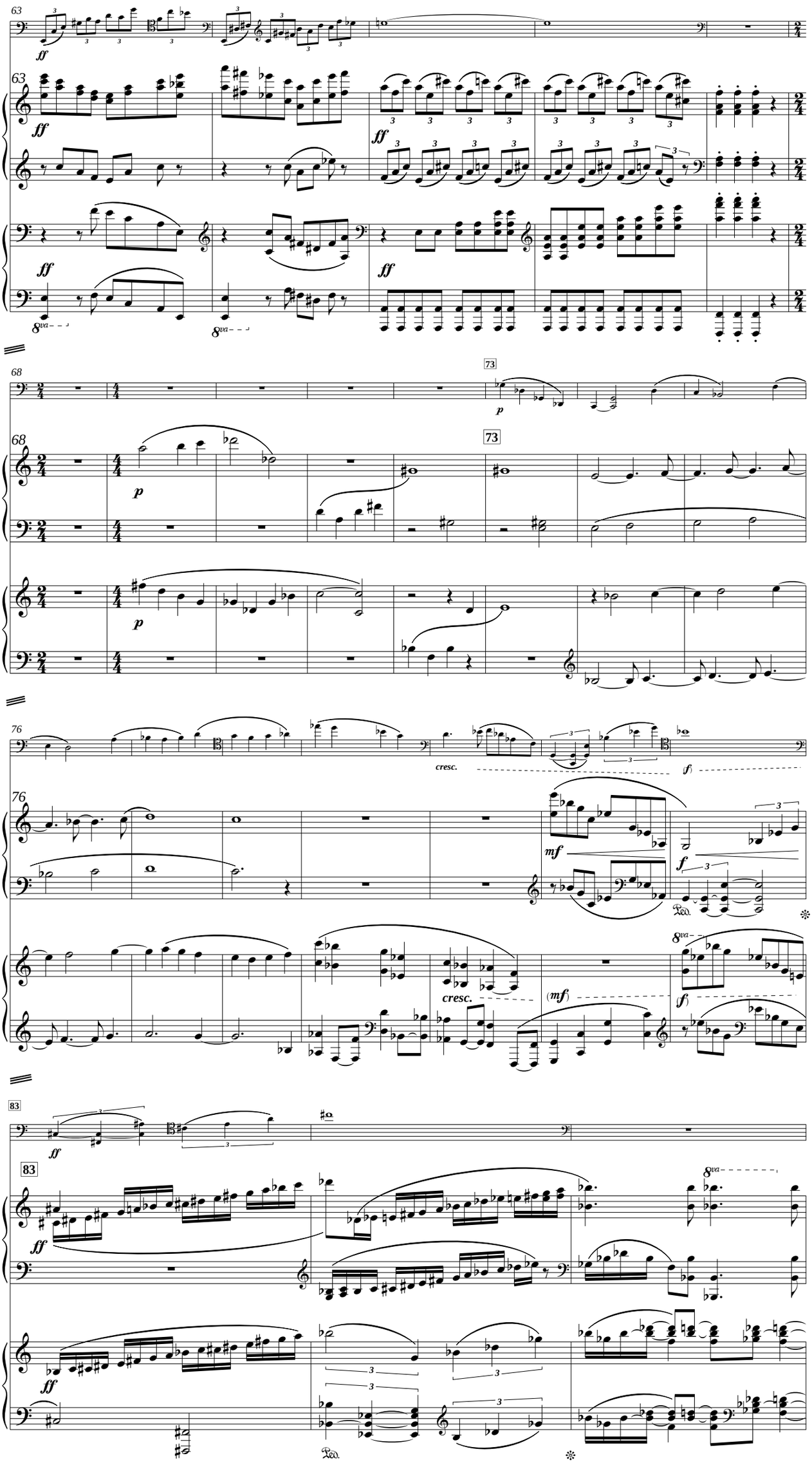

33
rit.
ff
p
Ped.

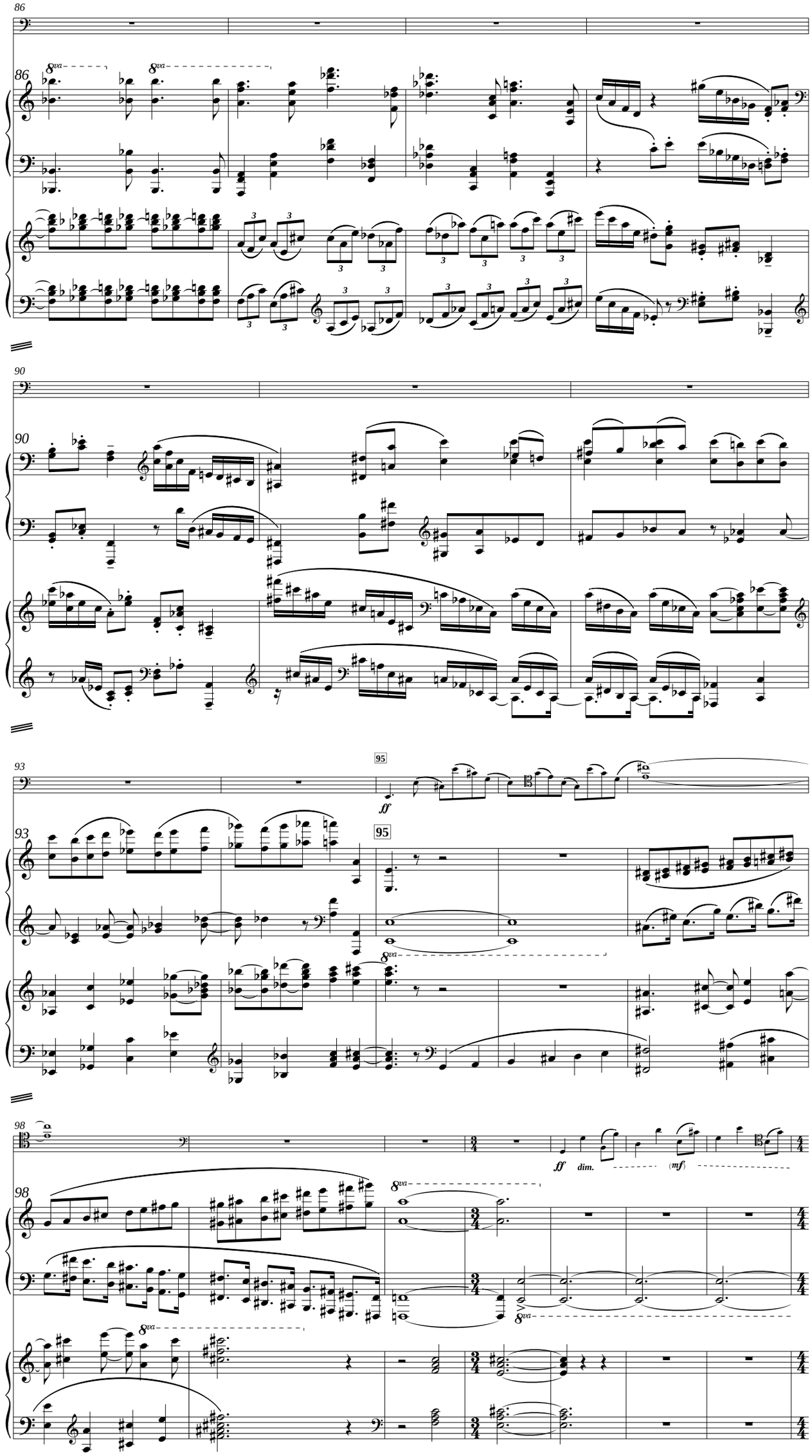

38
(rit.)
pp
8va
Ped.

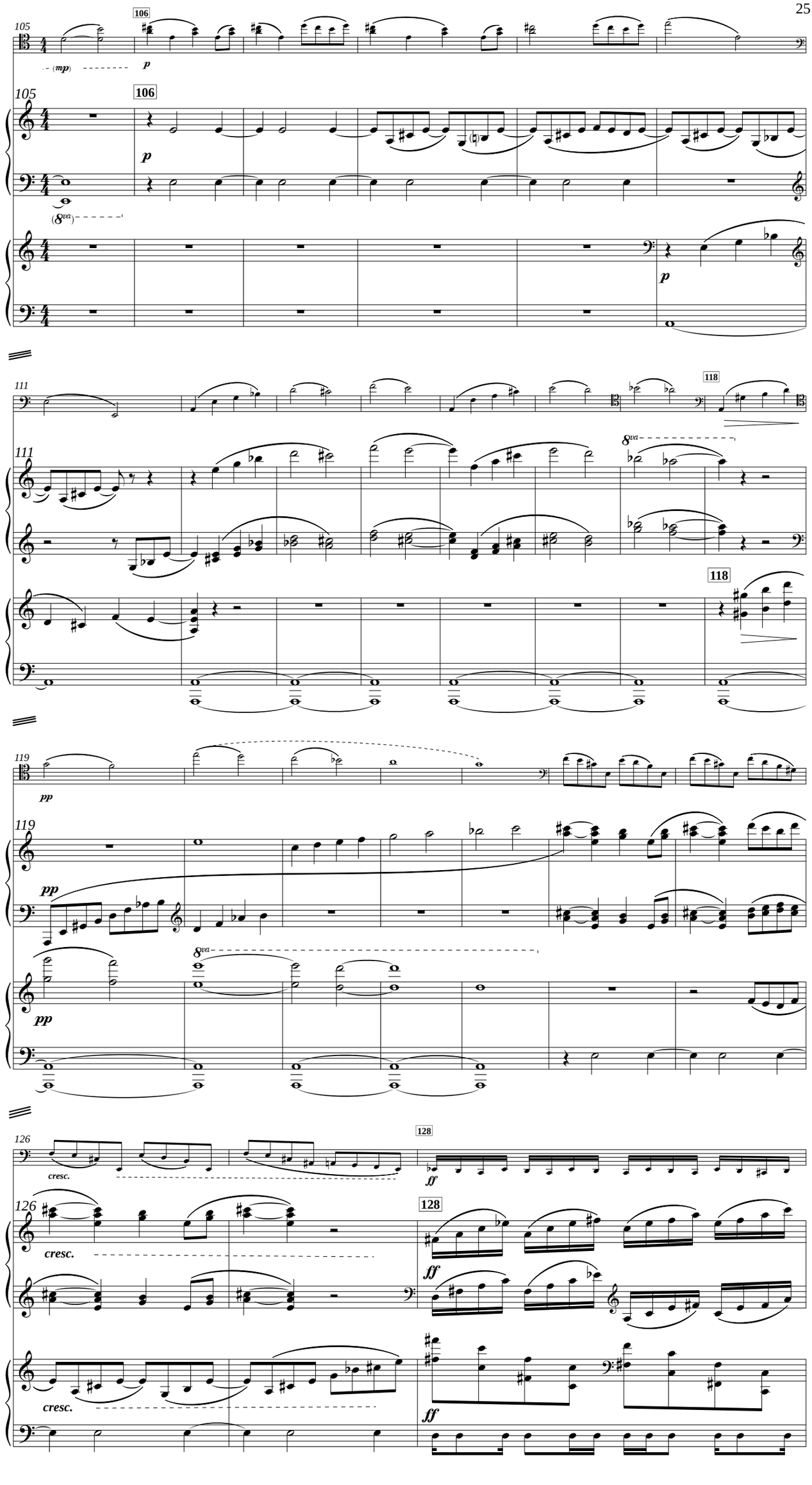

Vivace (♩= 104)
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B♭
2 Bassoons
2 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in B♭
Timpani
Harp
Solo Cello
I Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass
Vivace (♩= 104)
2 Ob.
2 Bn.
Hn. 2
Solo
I Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
DB

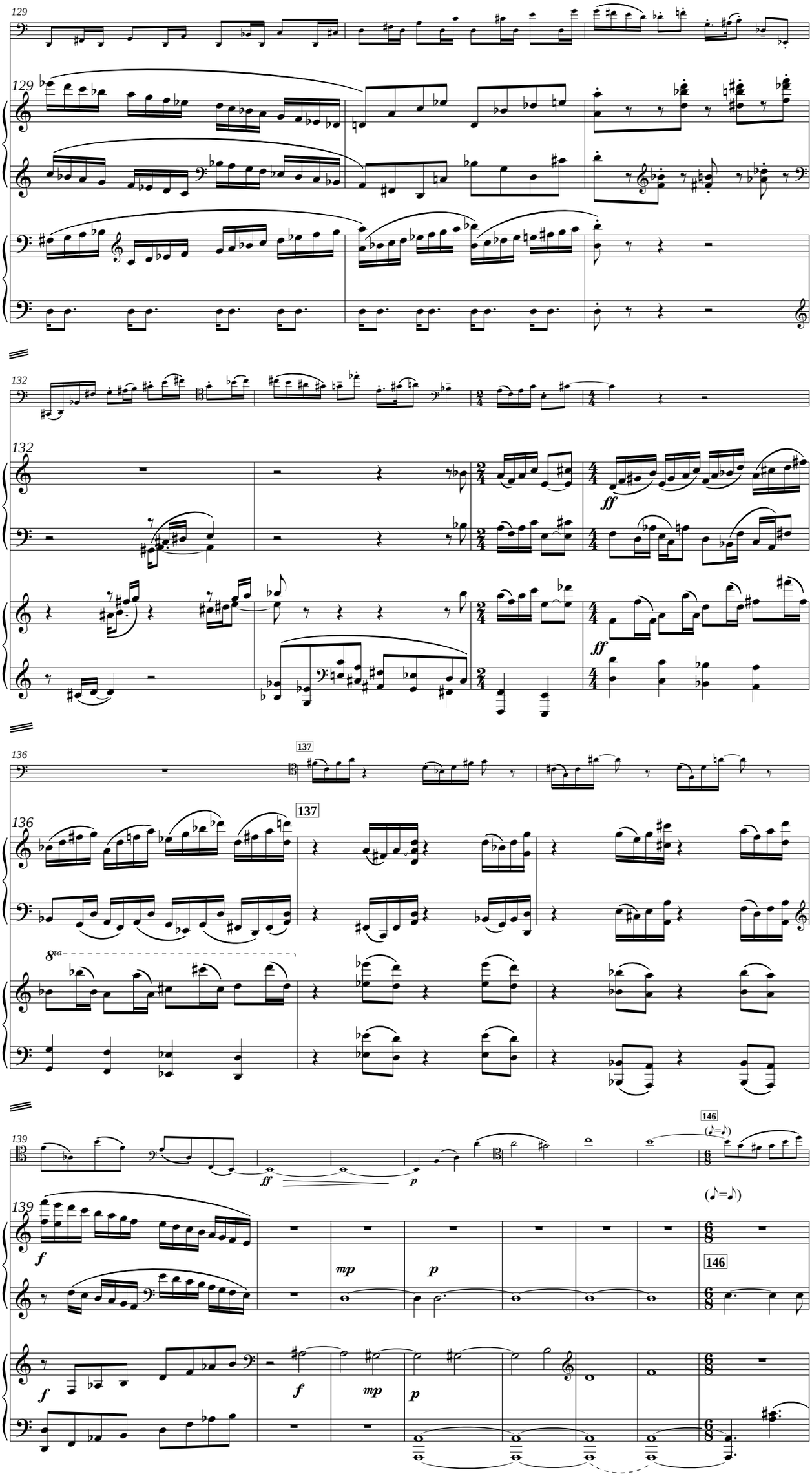

19
25
f
dim.
p
Ped.
26
35
34
39

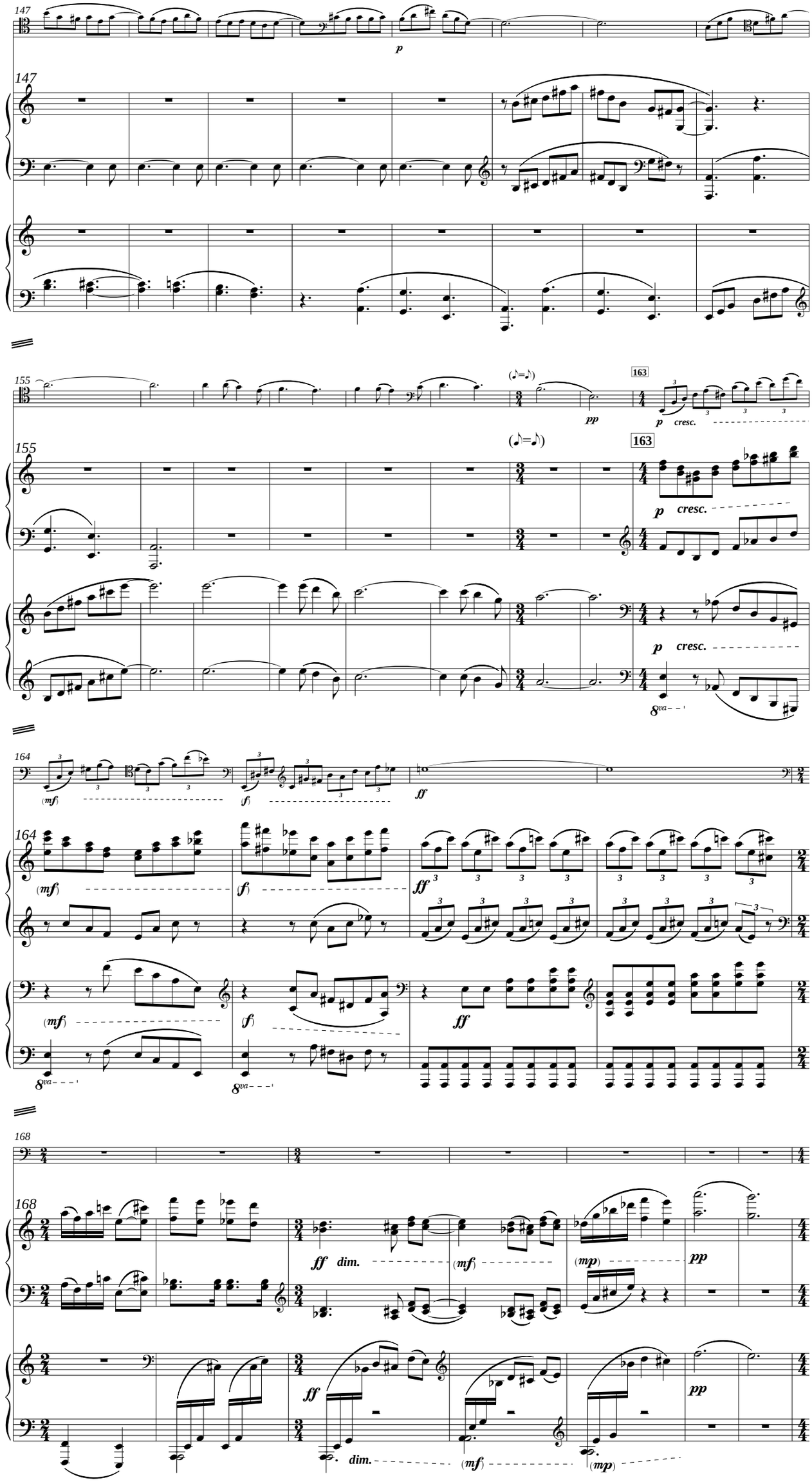

43
ff
8va
47
48
ff
51
f
dim.
p
Ped.
57
62
8va

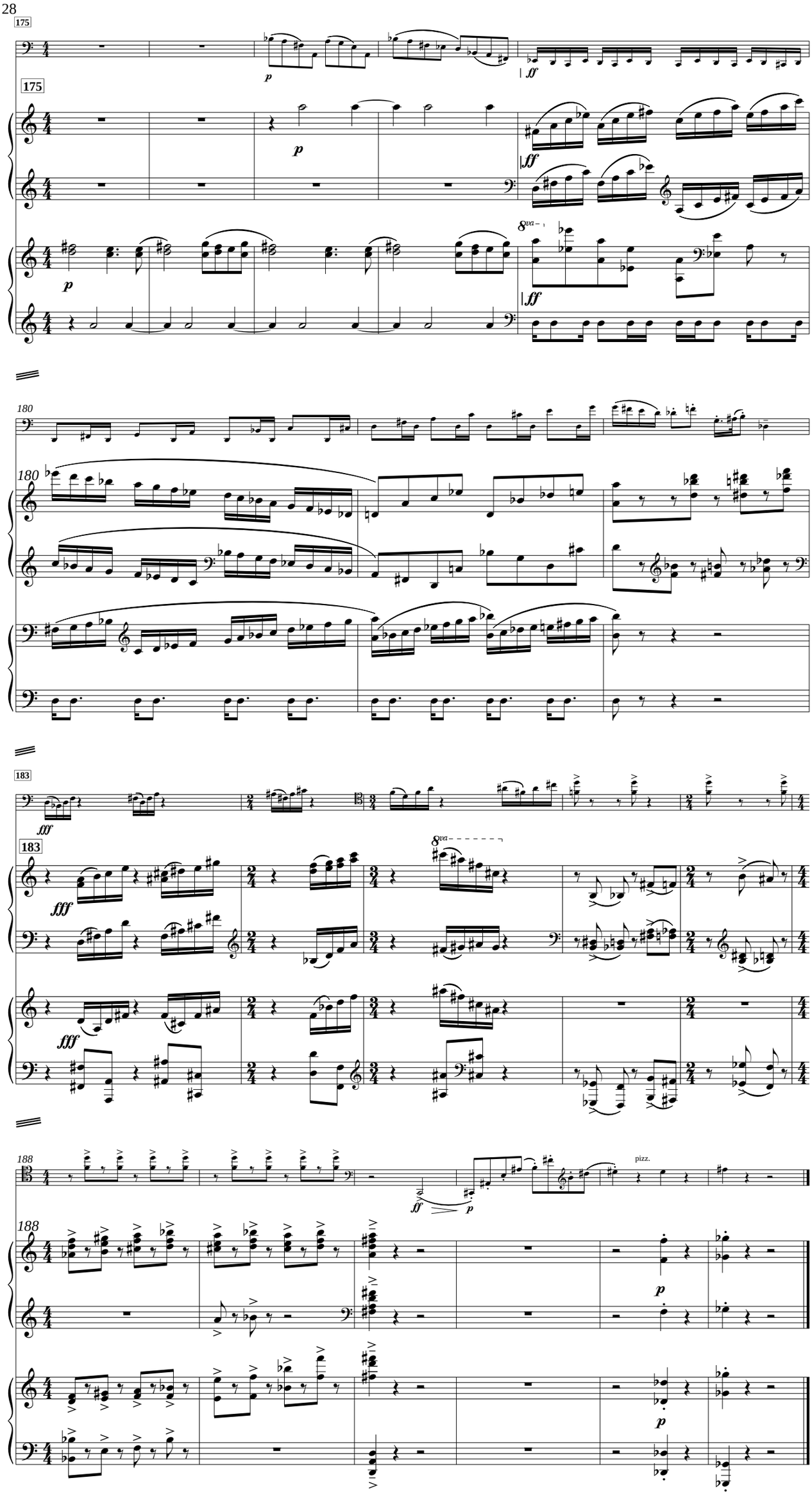

63
ff
8va
68
73
p
76
cresc.
f)
mf
f
Ped.
(mf)
83


86
8va
90
93
95
ff
98
ff
dim.
(mf)


105
106
(mp)
p
105
106
p
(8va)
p
111
118
111
8va
118
119
pp
119
pp
8va
pp
126
128
cresc.
ff
126
128
cresc.
ff
cresc.
ff


129
132
ff
136
137
8va
139
146
f
mp
p


147
p
147
155
(♪=♪)
163
pp
p cresc.
155
(♪=♪)
163
p cresc.
p cresc.
8va
164
(mf)
(f)
ff
164
(mf)
(f)
ff
8va
8va
168
168
ff dim.
(mf)
(mp)
pp
ff
dim.
(mf)
(mp)
pp


175
p
ff
8va
180
fff
183
188
pizz.