Birthday Quartet

for Violin, Viola,
Violoncello, and Piano

Violin

Bill Robinson

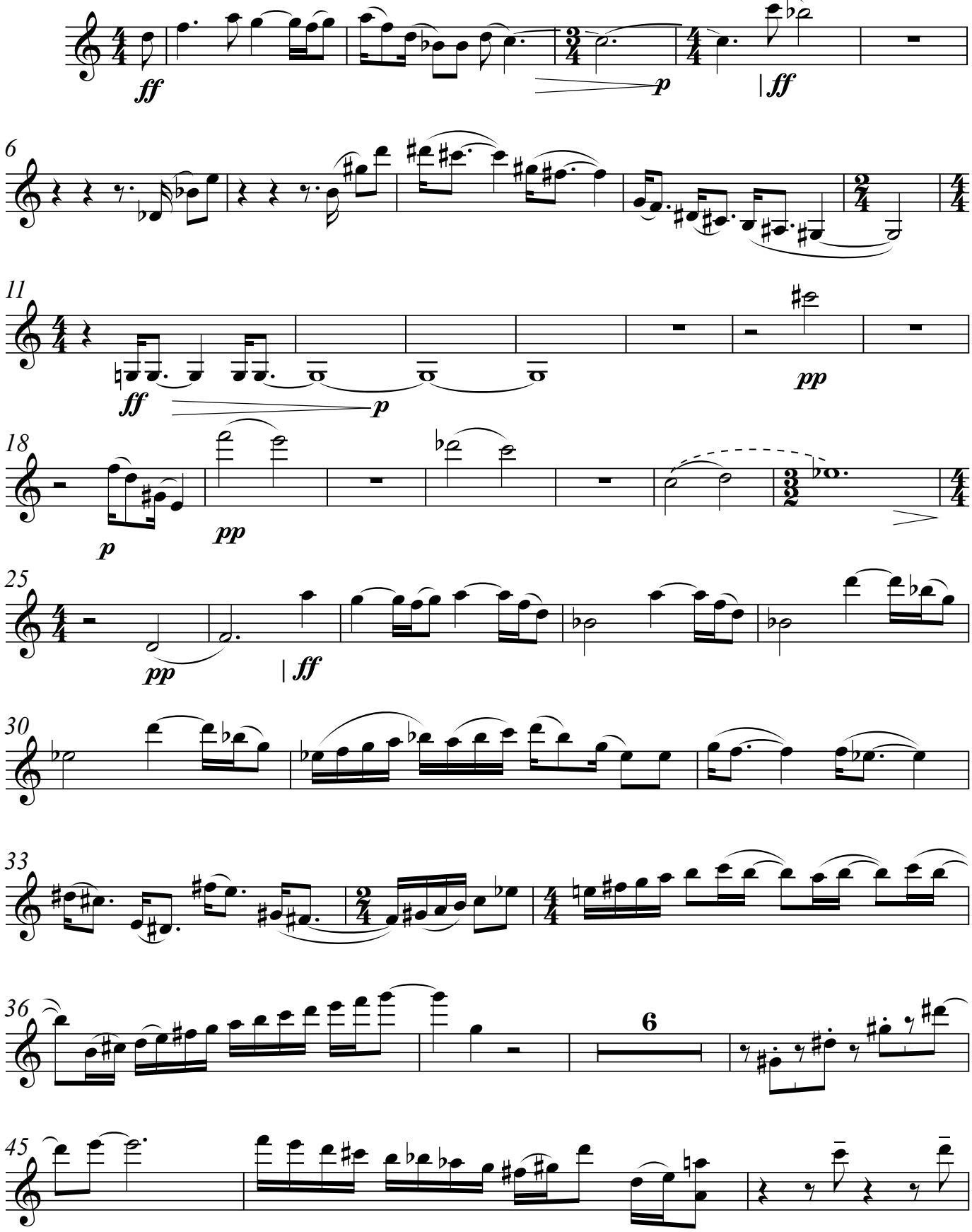
Violin

Birthday Quartet (Piano Quartet version)

I. How Long? Not Long [7:30]

Bill Robinson

And they're off (♩ = 80)



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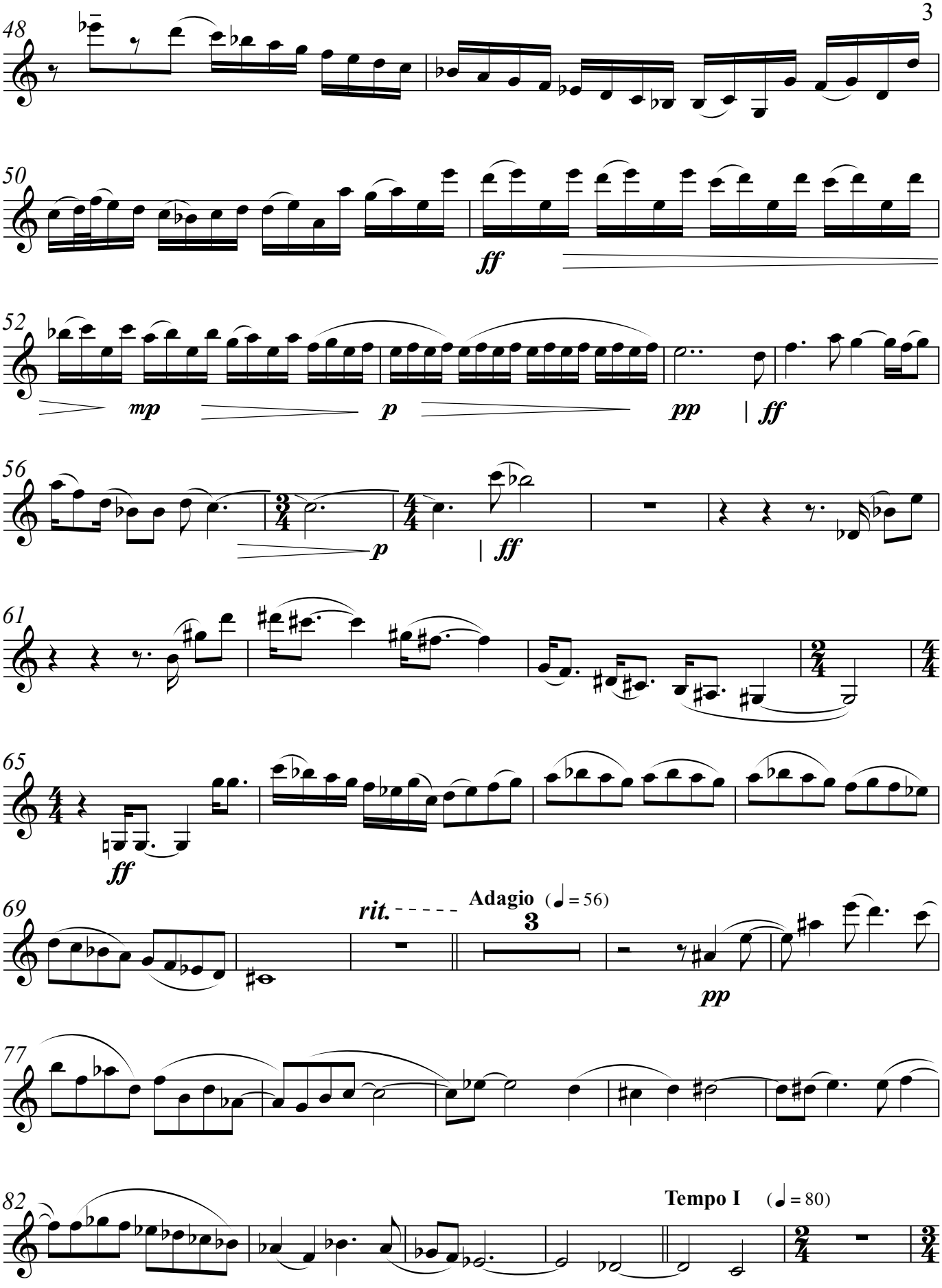
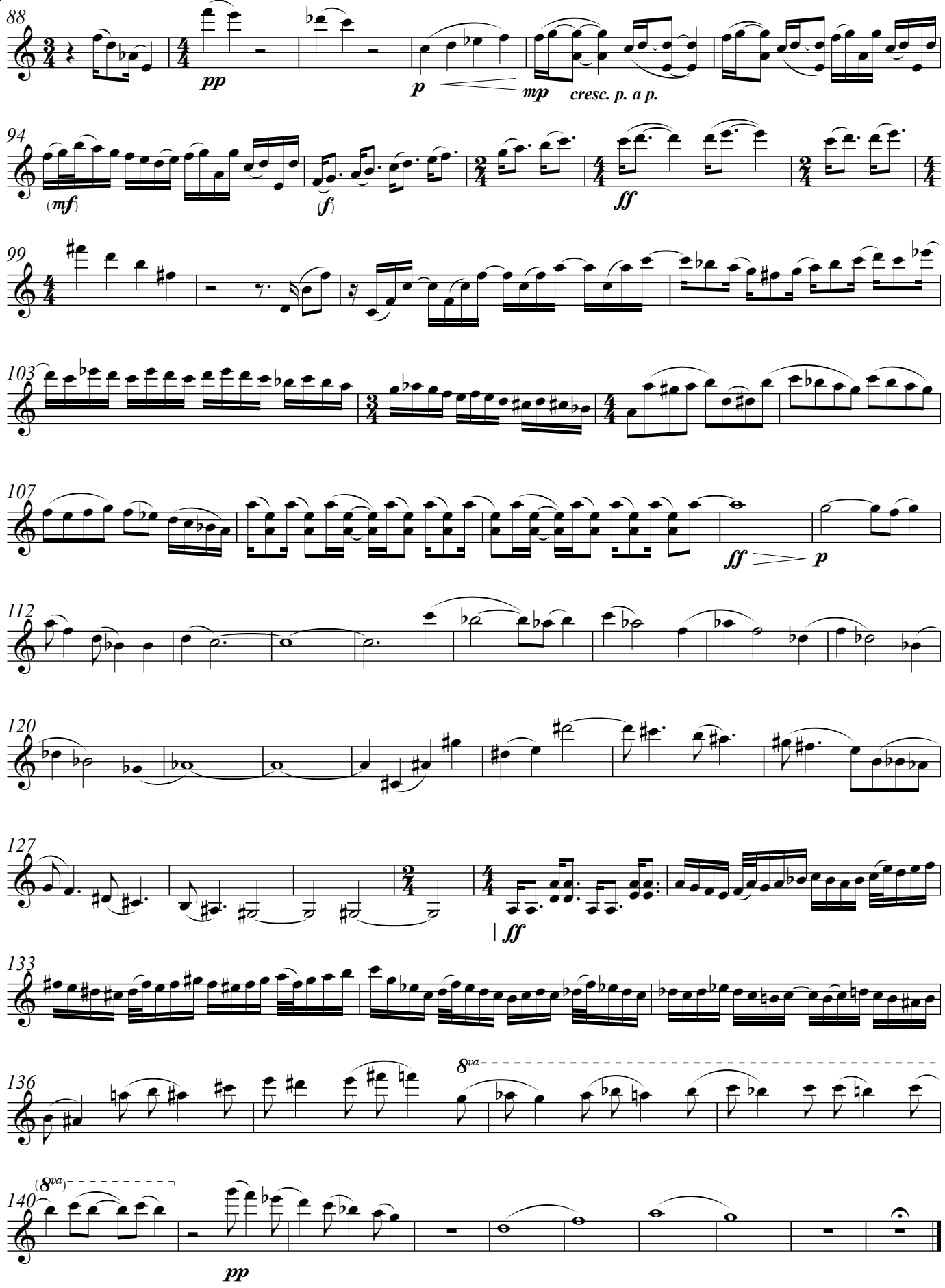
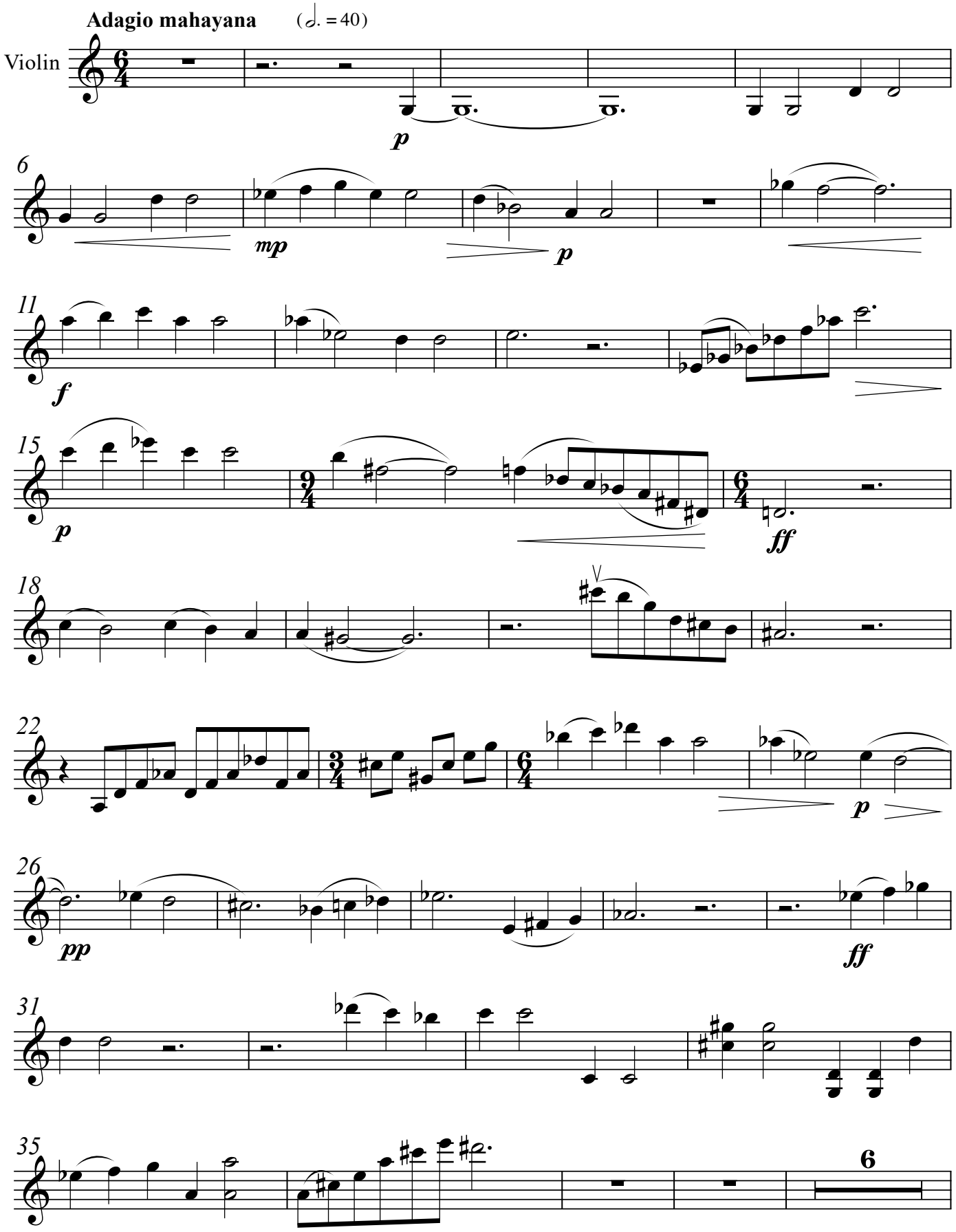
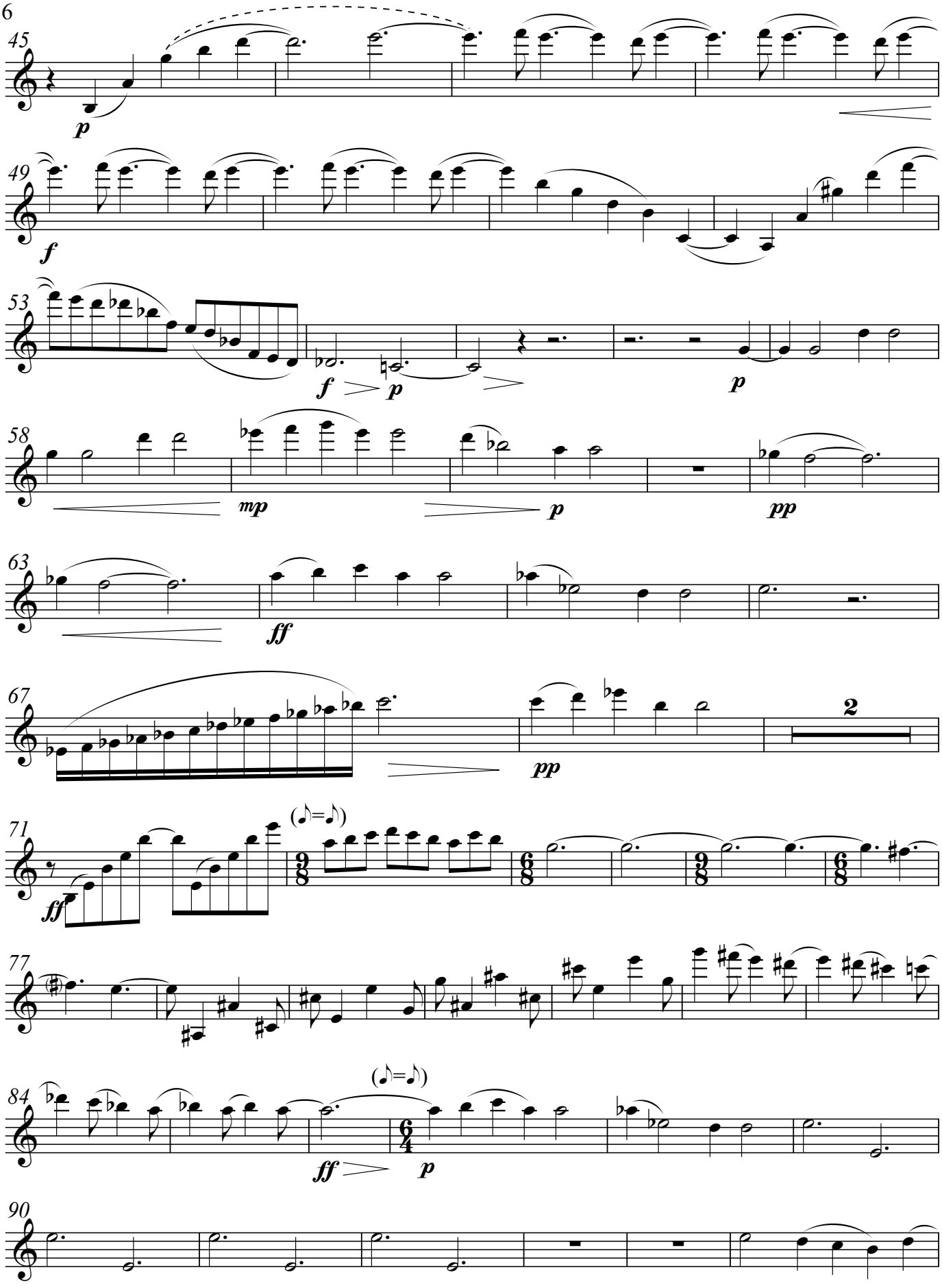
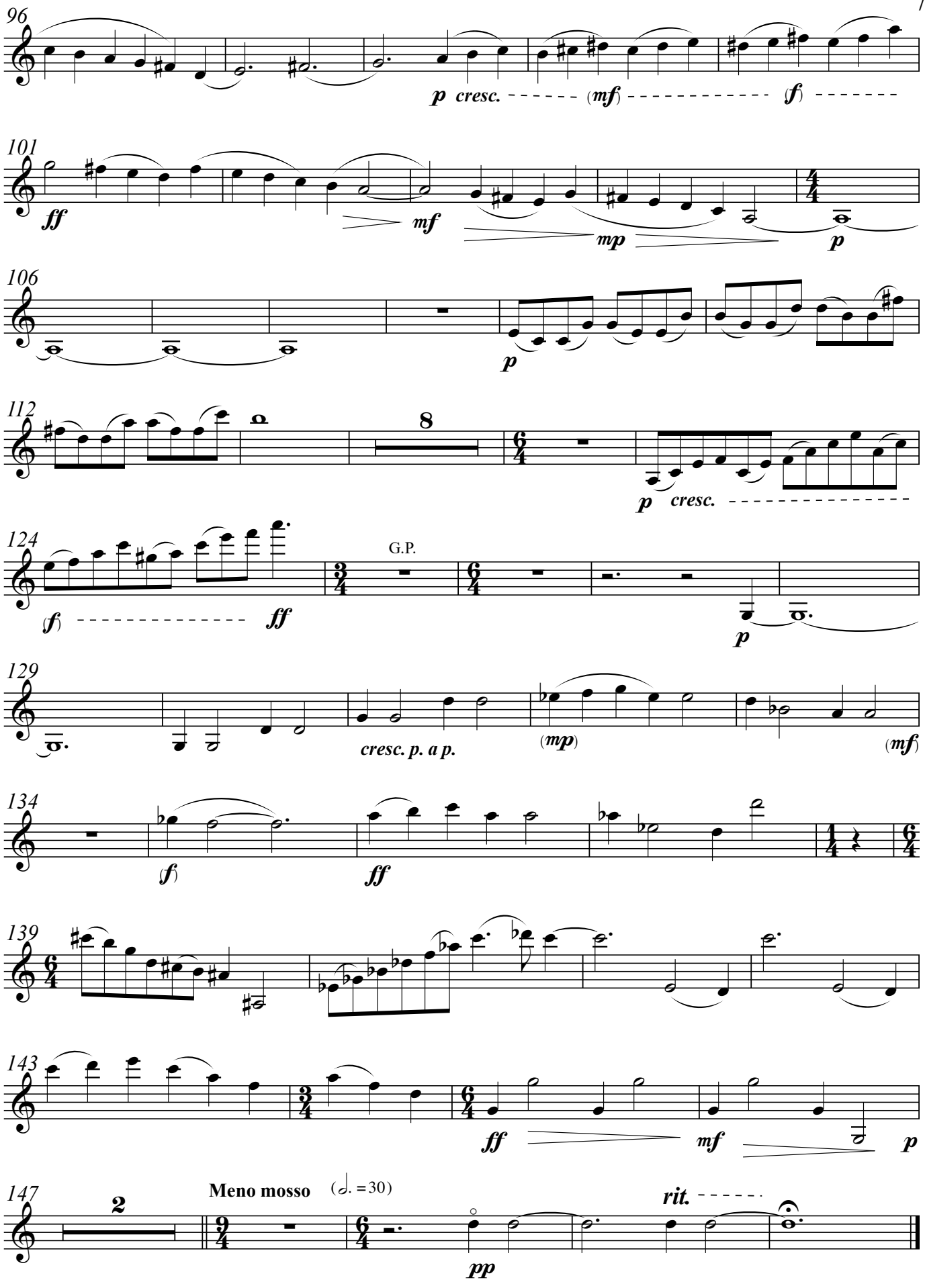

48
50
ff
52
mp
p
pp
ff
56
p
ff
61
65
ff
69
rit.
Adagio (♩ = 56)
3
pp
77
82
Tempo I (♩ = 80)


88
pp
p
mp
cresc. p. a p.
94
(mf)
(f)
ff
99
103
107
ff
p
112
120
127
ff
133
136
8va
(8va)
140
pp


Adagio mahayana
(𝅗𝅥. = 40)
Violin
p
6
mp
p
11
f
15
p
ff
18
22
p
26
pp
ff
31
35
6

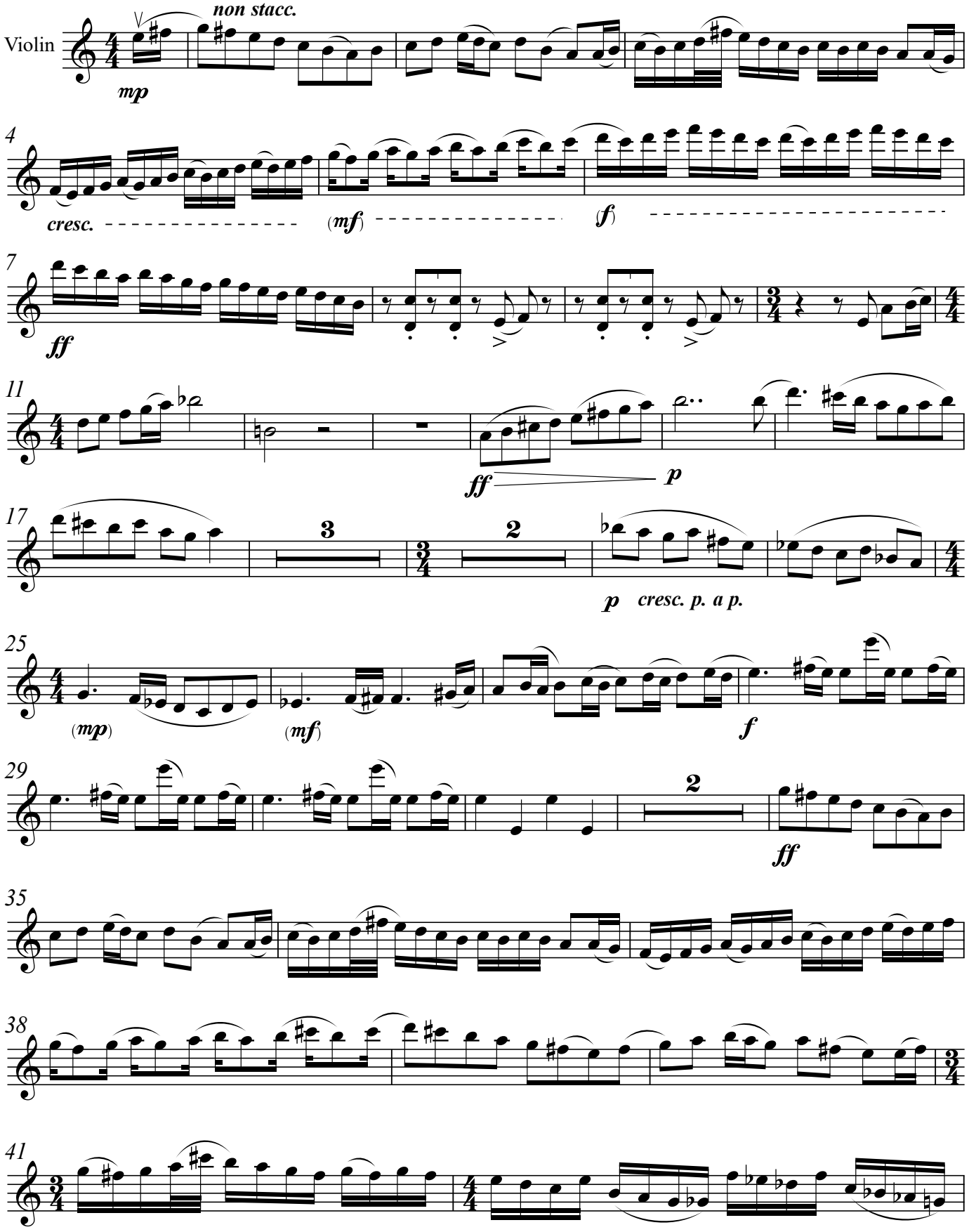

45
p
49
f
53
f
p
p
58
mp
p
pp
63
ff
67
pp
2
71
(♪=♪)
ff
77
84
(♪=♪)
ff
p
90

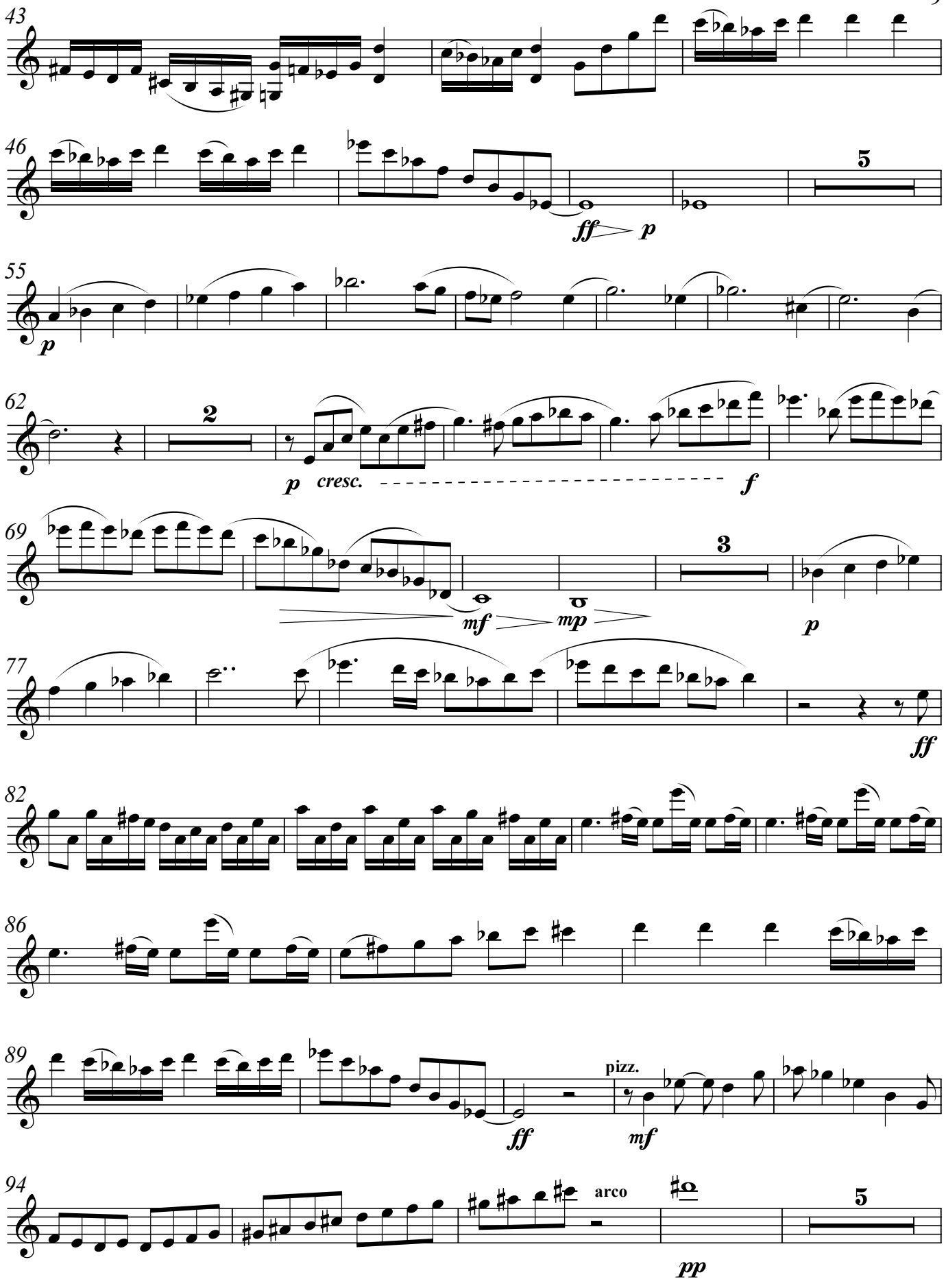

96
p cresc.
(mf)
(f)
101
ff
mf
mp
p
106
p
112
8
p cresc.
124
(f)
ff
G.P.
p
129
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
(mf)
134
(f)
ff
139
143
ff
mf
p
147
2
Meno mosso
(𝅗𝅥. = 30)
rit.
pp

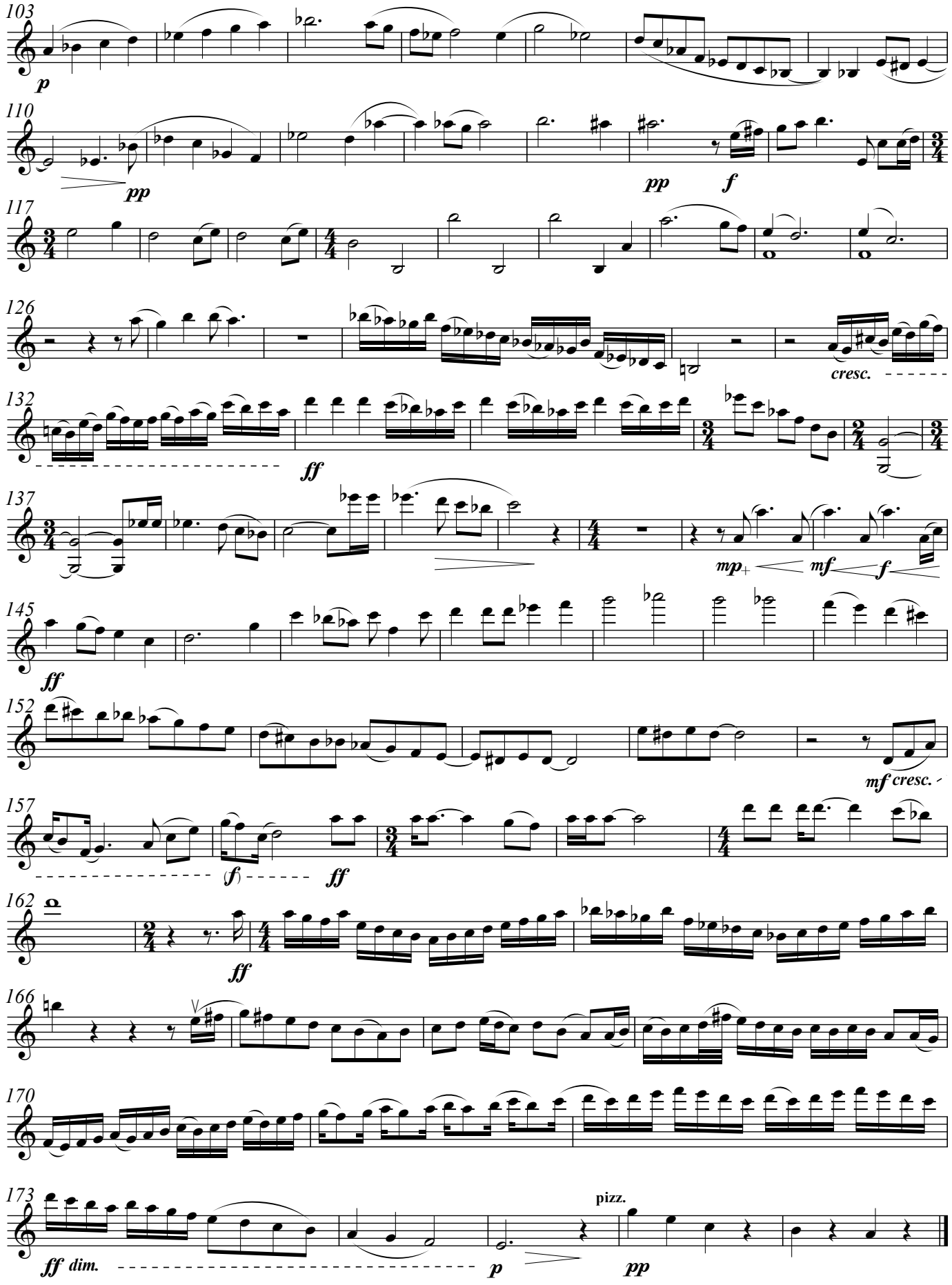
III. Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord [7:10]

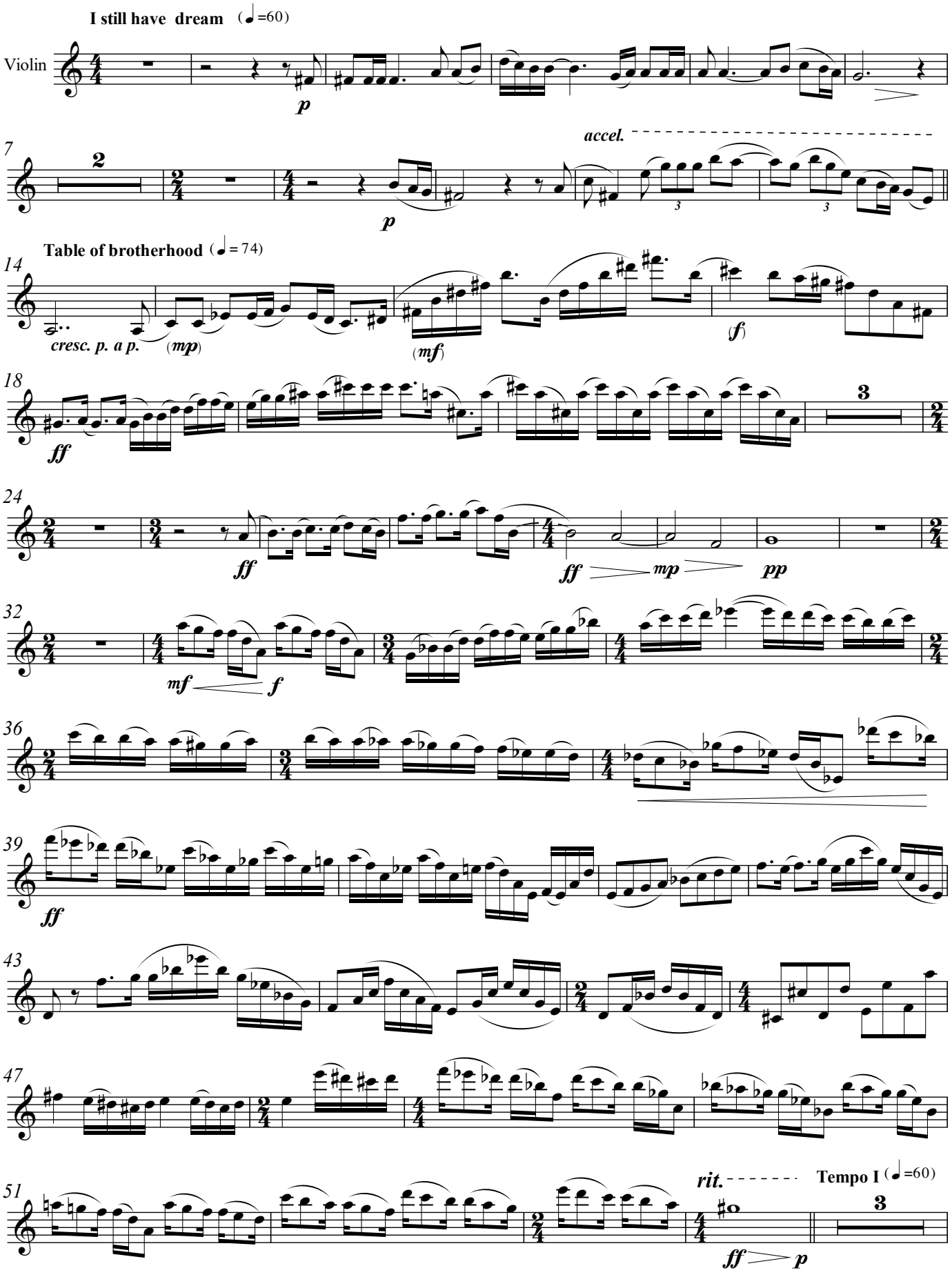
Picco di montagna (♩ = 96)

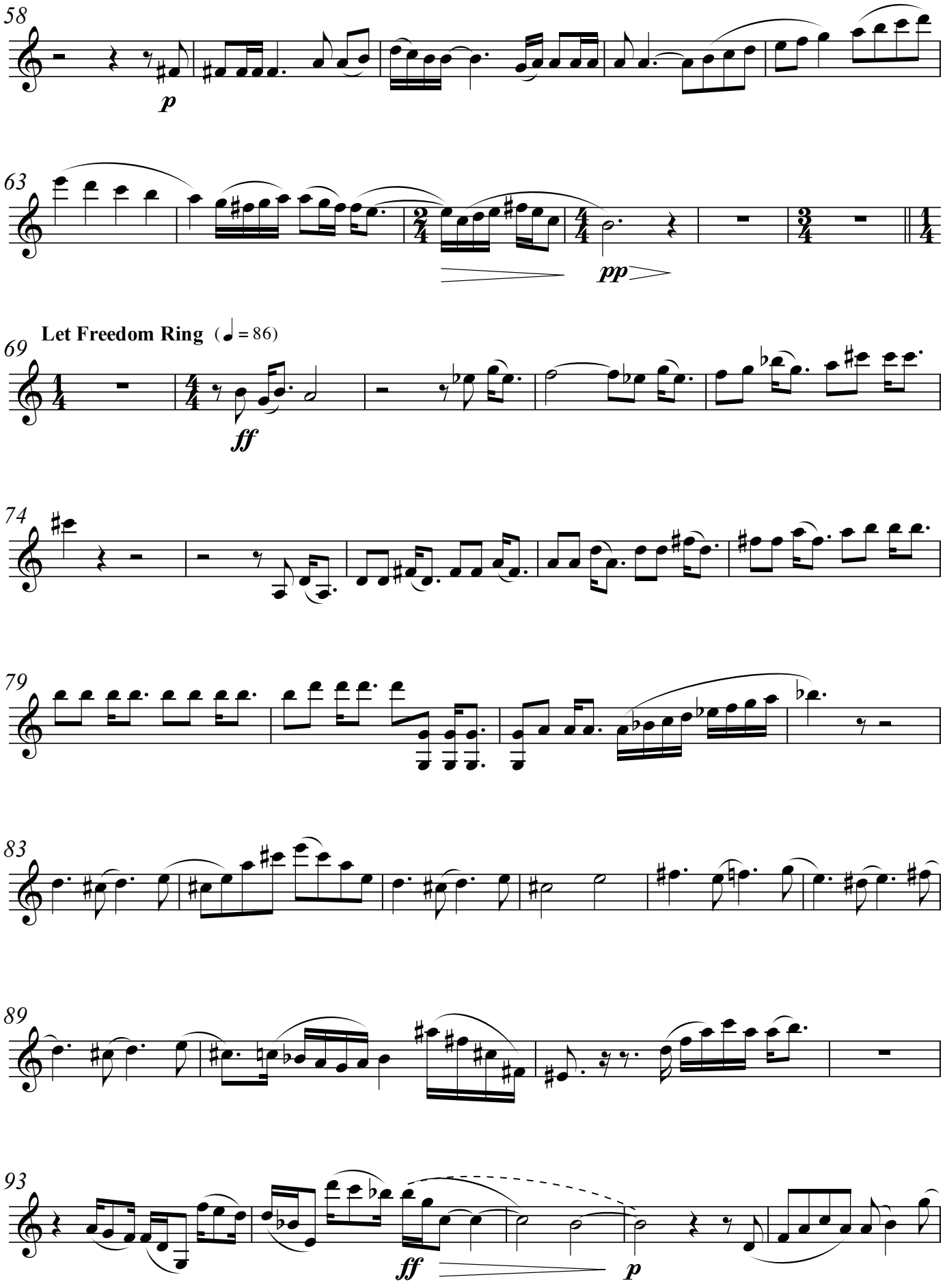
Violin

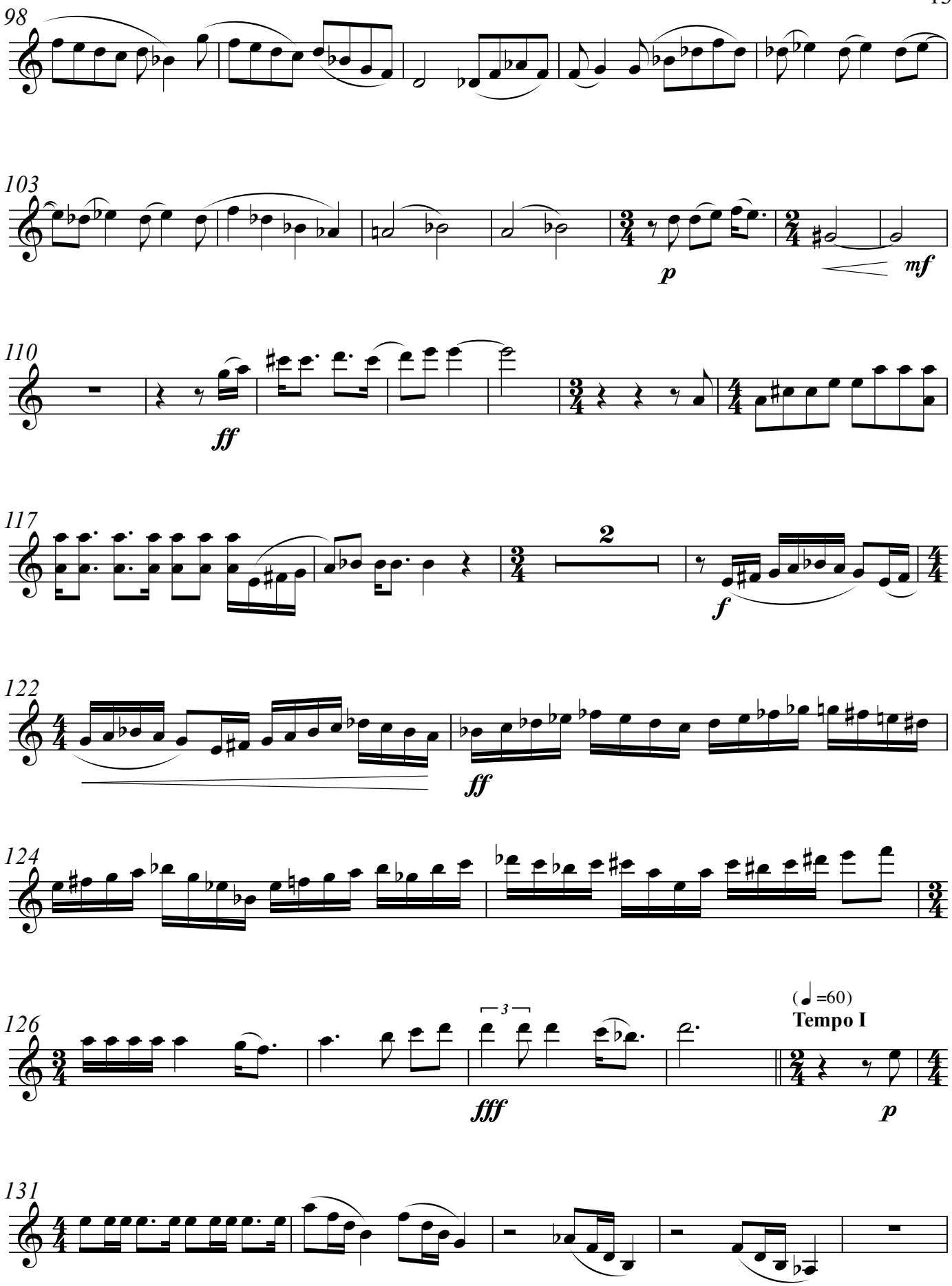


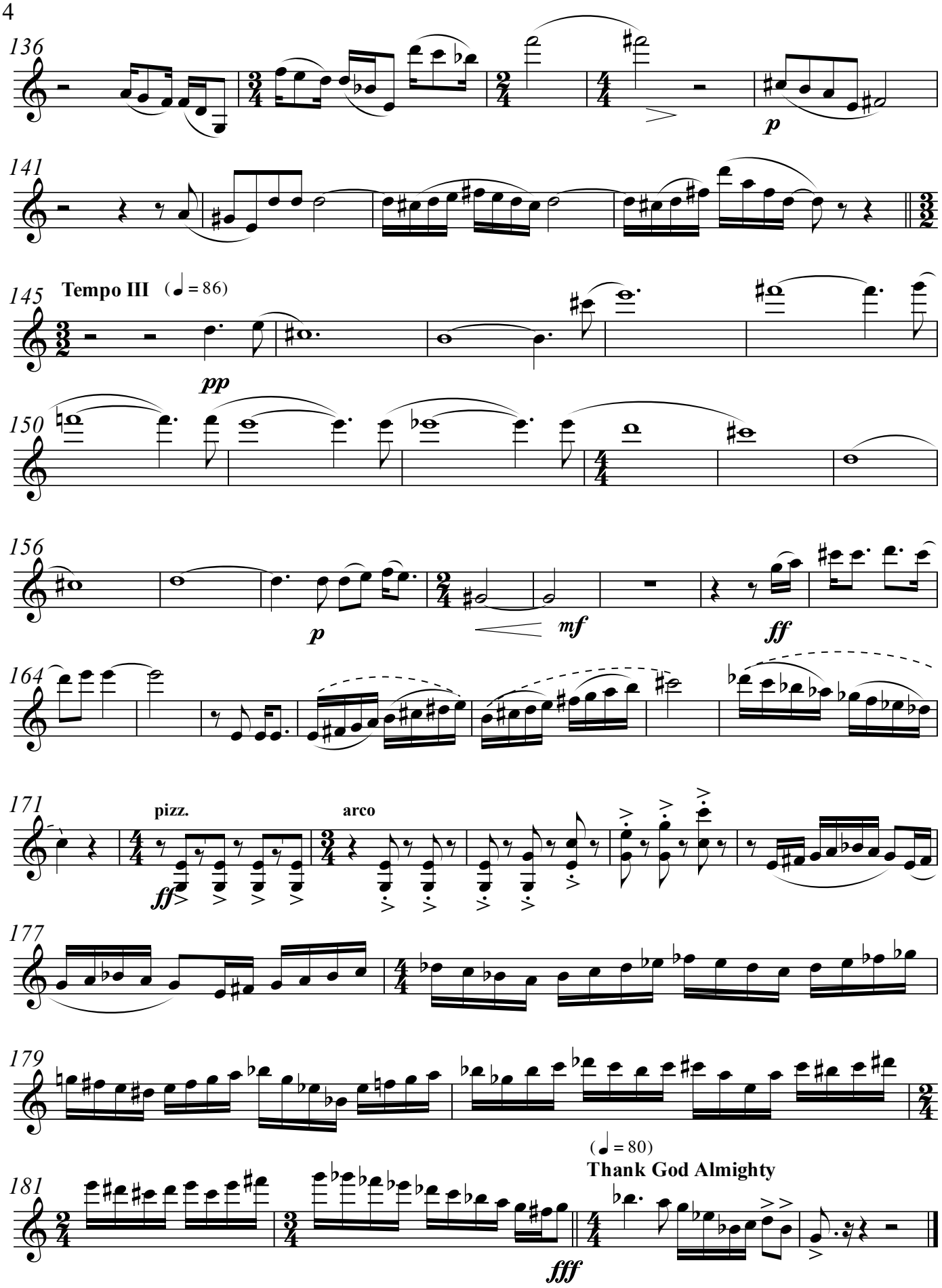

43
46
5
ff
p
55
p
62
2
p
cresc.
f
69
3
mf
mp
p
77
ff
82
86
89
ff
pizz.
mf
94
arco
5
pp


103
p
110
pp
pp
f
117
126
cresc.
132
ff
137
mp
mf
f
145
ff
152
mf cresc.
157
f
ff
162
ff
166
170
173
ff dim.
p
pizz.
pp


I still have dream (♩=60)
Violin
p
accel.
Table of brotherhood (♩= 74)
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
(mf)
(f)
ff
mp
pp
mf
f
rit.
Tempo I (♩=60)


58
p
63
pp
Let Freedom Ring (♩ = 86)
69
ff
74
79
83
89
93
ff
p


98
103
p
mf
110
ff
117
2
f
122
ff
124
126
3
fff
(♩=60)
Tempo I
p
131


136
141
145
Tempo III (♩ = 86)
pp
150
156
p
mf
ff
164
171
pizz.
arco
ff
177
179
181
(♩ = 80)
Thank God Almighty
fff

Birthday Quartet

for Violin, Viola,
Violoncello, and Piano

Viola

Bill Robinson

Birthday Quartet
for Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano

Composed May 9—October 20, 2013; Aug. 29—October 5, 2015
Duration: about 30 minutes

In early 2010, I had a peculiar dream of a respectful conversation with Elvis Presley. He said I should write a symphony based on speeches by Martin Luther King Jr. Well—who can refuse the King of Rock and/or Roll? Especially since I share my birthday, January 15, with MLK, and classical radio stations frequently play a composer's music on his birthday.

The speeches of Martin Luther King are copyrighted, and the MLK Center is notoriously litigious. Thus this cannot be a choral work, nor can it have direct references to texts in the score. Instead I use the rhythms and inflections from speeches that are incorporated in themes. The first movement uses a few phrases from the "How long? Not long" speech of March 25, 1965 at the Alabama State Capitol. The second movement is based on the Buddhist mantra "Gate gate, paragate, parasamgate, bhodi swaha"; this can be roughly translated (as by Ram Dass) as "Beyond, beyond the beyond, beyond the beyond the beyond, hail the goer." The third movement returns to MLK and uses bits of the "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech given on April 3, 1968 in Memphis Tennessee. The first version of the fourth movement (started writing it Aug. 28, 2013) used the final section of the Dream Speech given at the March on Washington on August 28, 1968, with narrator. After hearing the chamber version, I thought this first version of the fourth movement was not suitable, and I withdrew it.

On August 29, 2015, I started writing a second version of the last movement. The beginning uses the rhythm of the words "And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.' I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." The music then departs from the text, with the motives from "table of brotherhood" and "I have a dream" used repeatedly. Next comes "Let freedom ring" along with other phrases from the speech. The movement closes with "Free at last, free at last (repeated), thank God almighty we are free at last!"

The premiere performance of this piece was of the chamber edition for violin, clarinet, cello and piano on February 18, 2014, with the original fourth movement, without narrator. I made this additional chamber version for piano quartet at the same time.

Accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not refer to other octaves. Sometimes I include courtesy accidentals to avoid confusion.

Bill Robinson

Publisher Parrish Press, Garner, NC Fourth Edition, September 2022
www.billrobinsonmusic.com

cover photograph; March on Washington, August 28, 1963

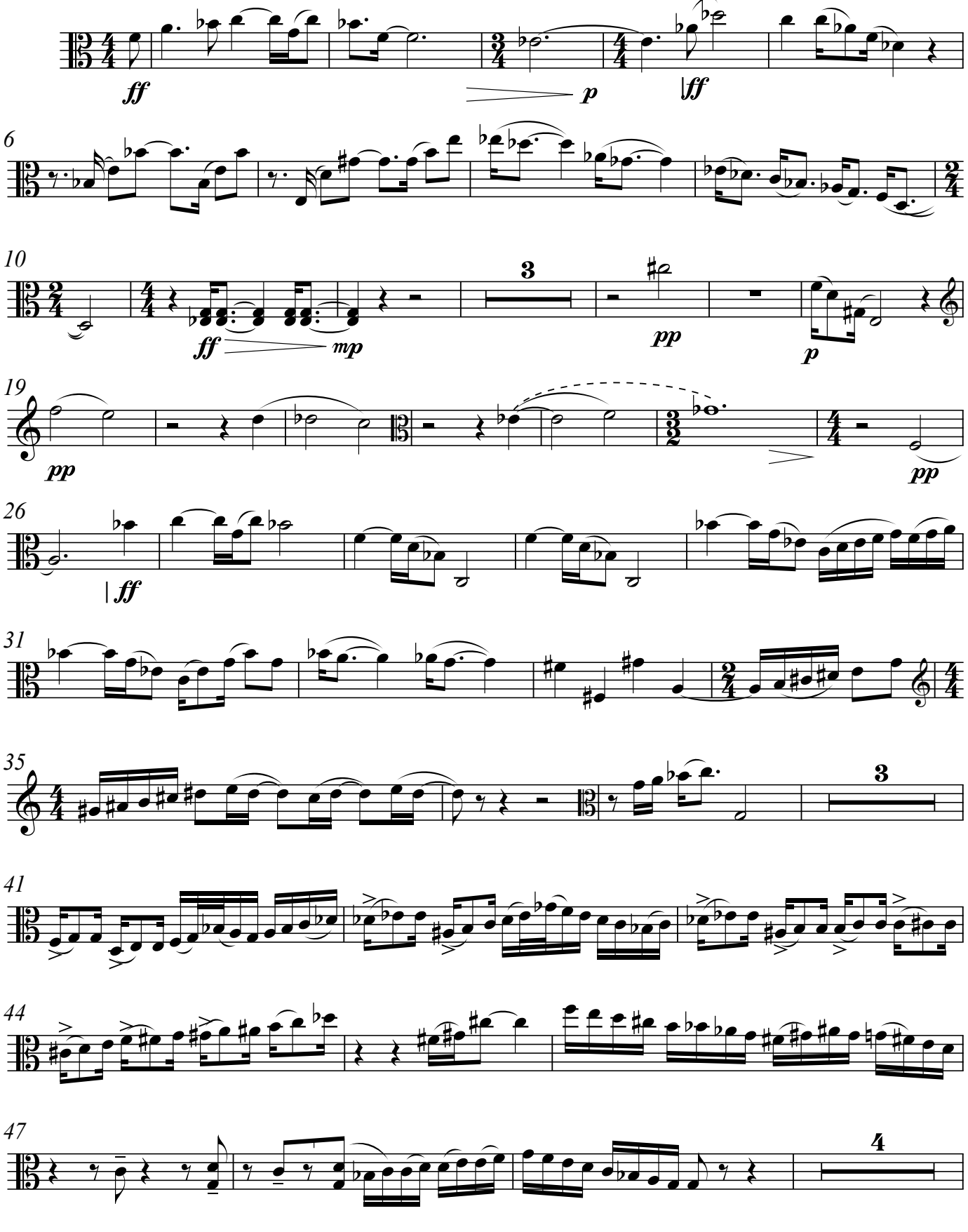
Birthday Quartet (Piano Quartet version)

Viola

I. How Long? Not Long [7:30]

Bill Robinson

And they're off (♩ = 80)



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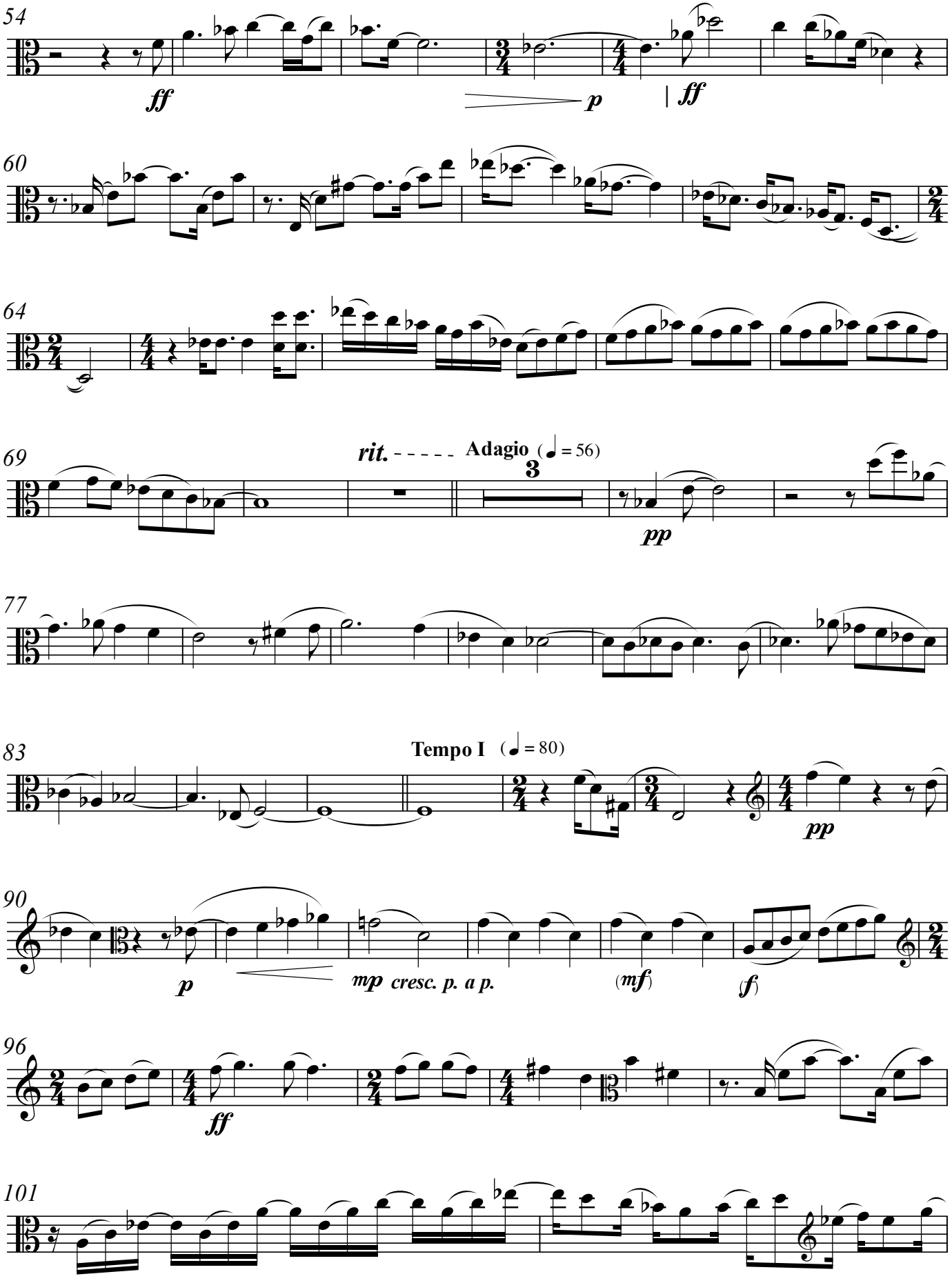
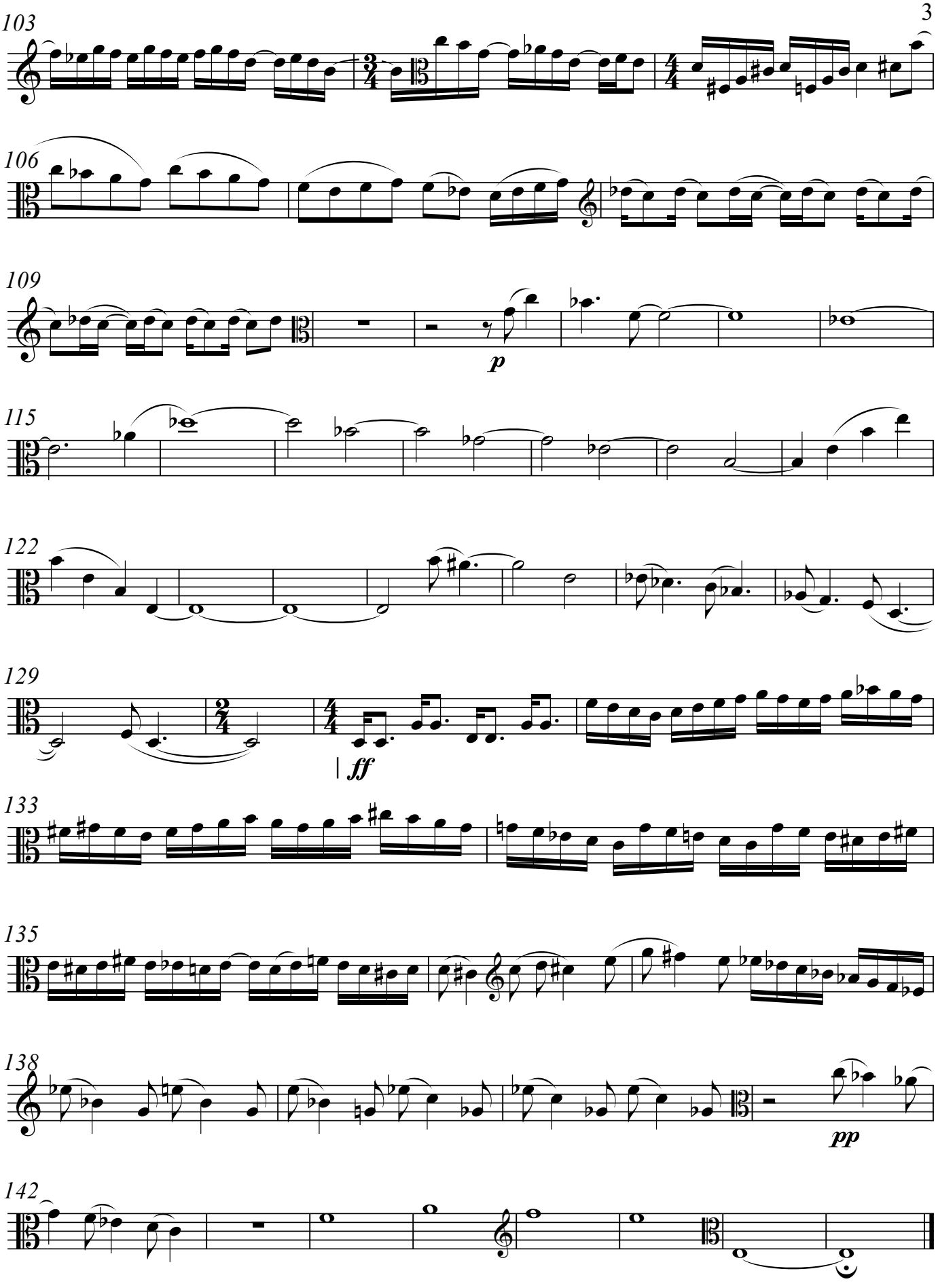
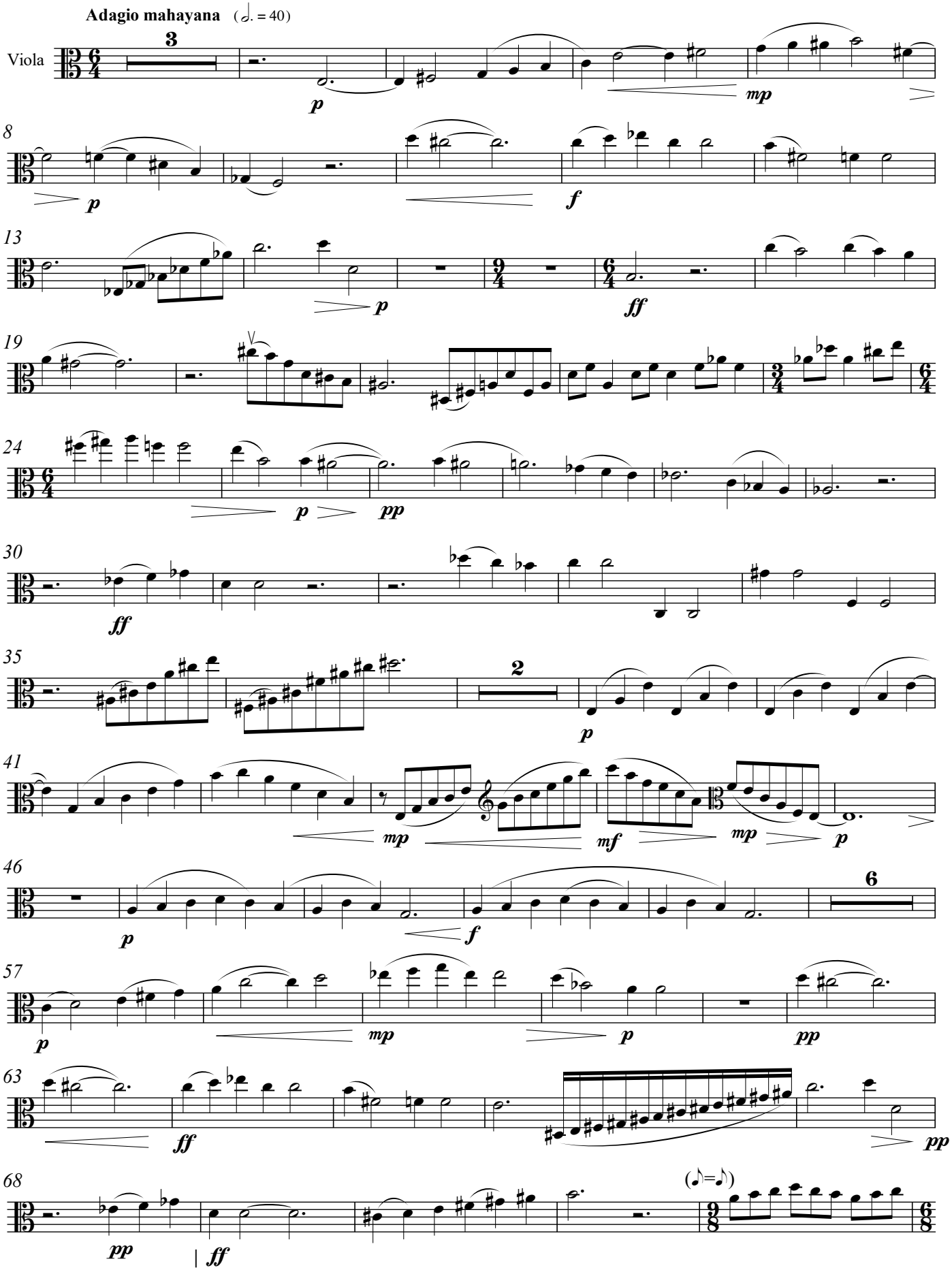
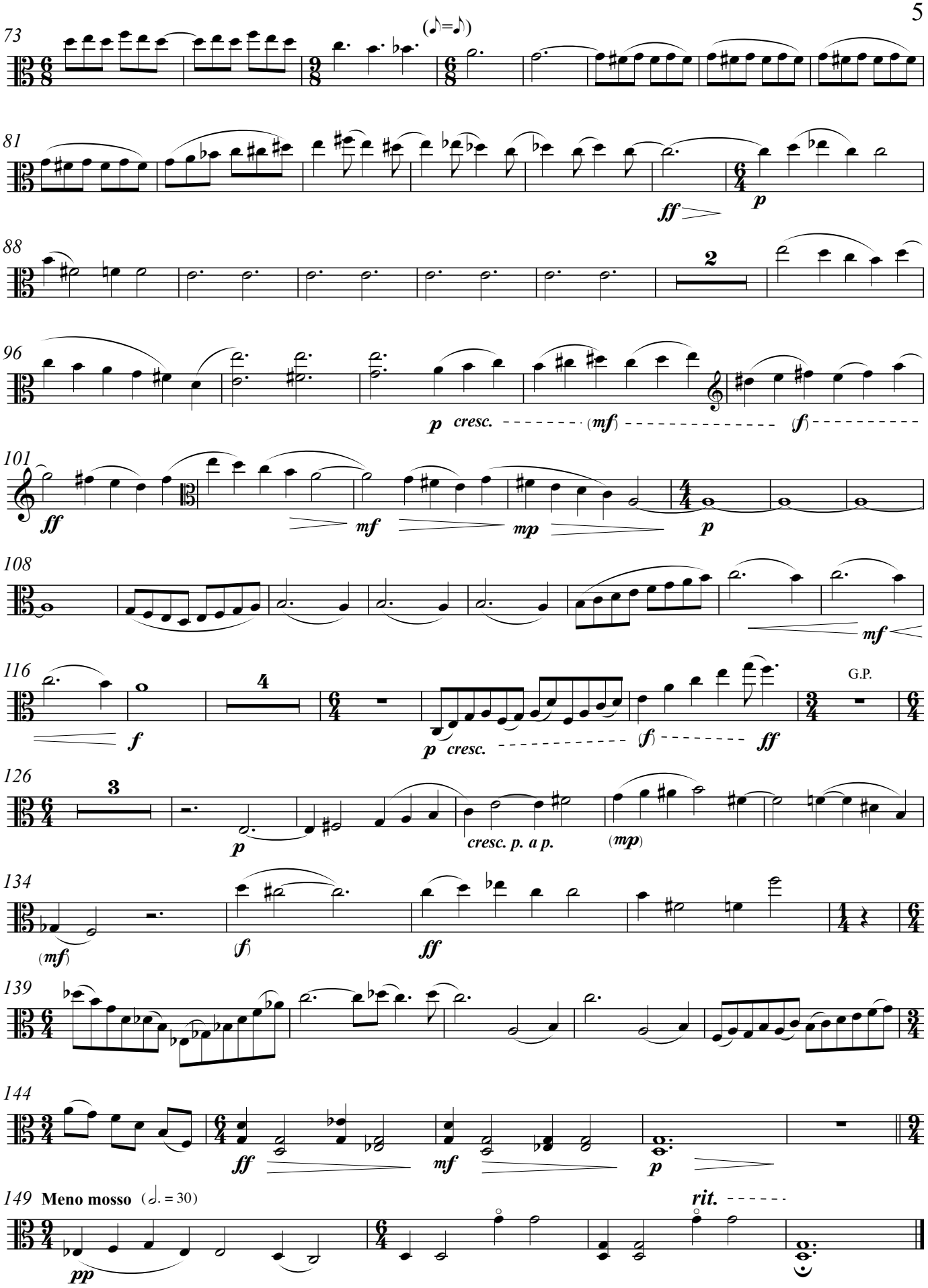
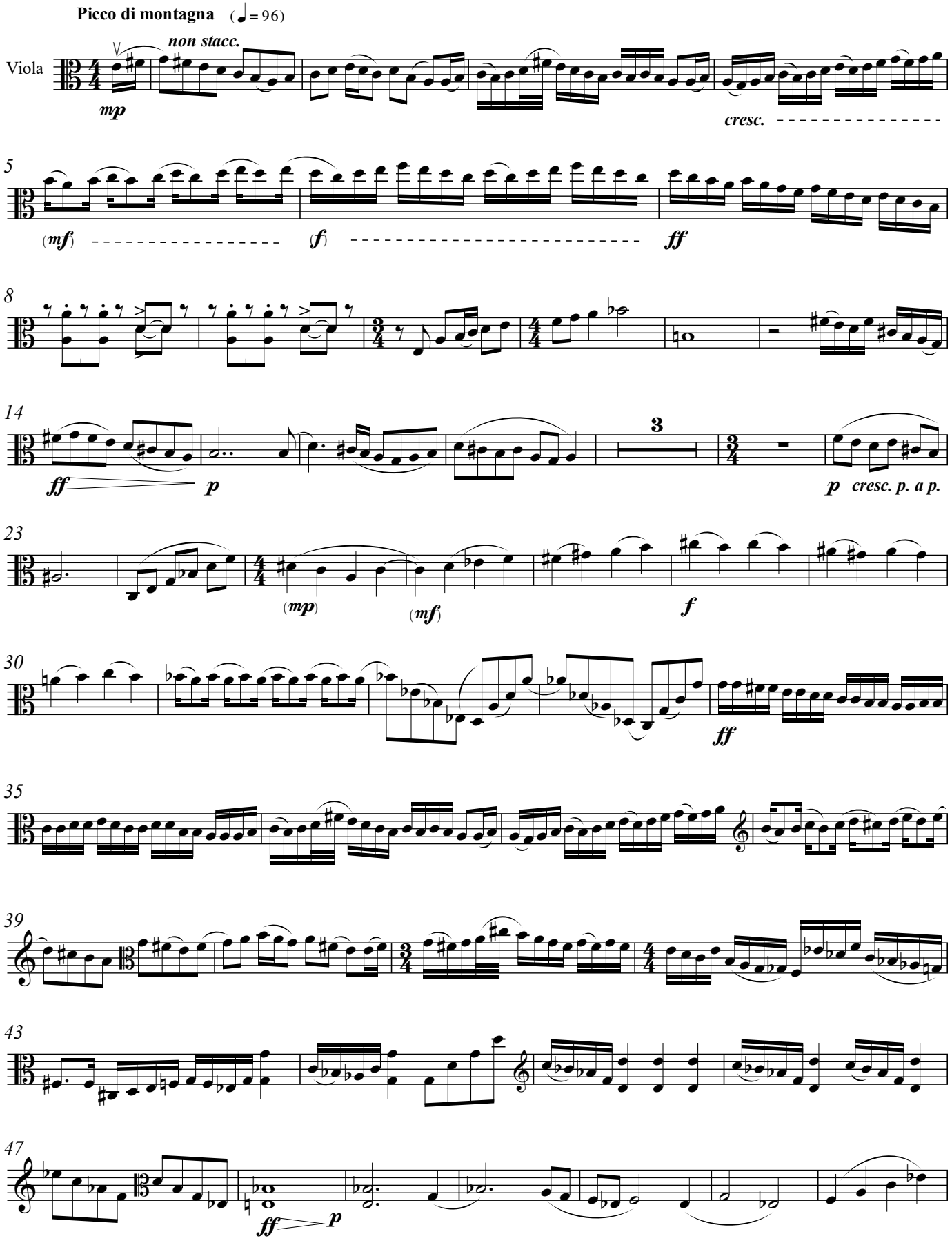
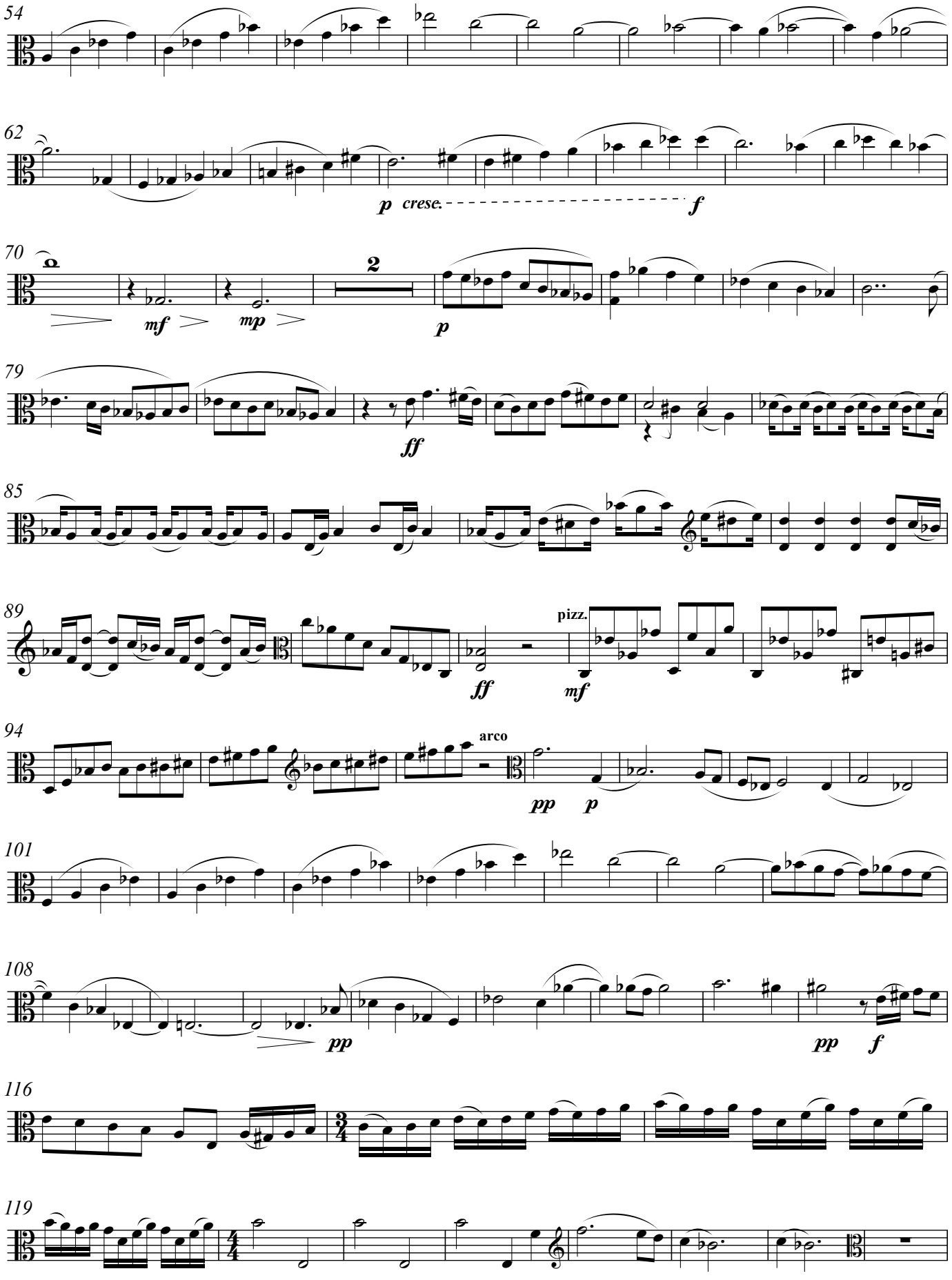

54
ff
p
ff
60
64
69
rit.
Adagio (♩ = 56)
3
pp
77
83
Tempo I (♩ = 80)
pp
90
p
mp cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
(f)
96
ff
101

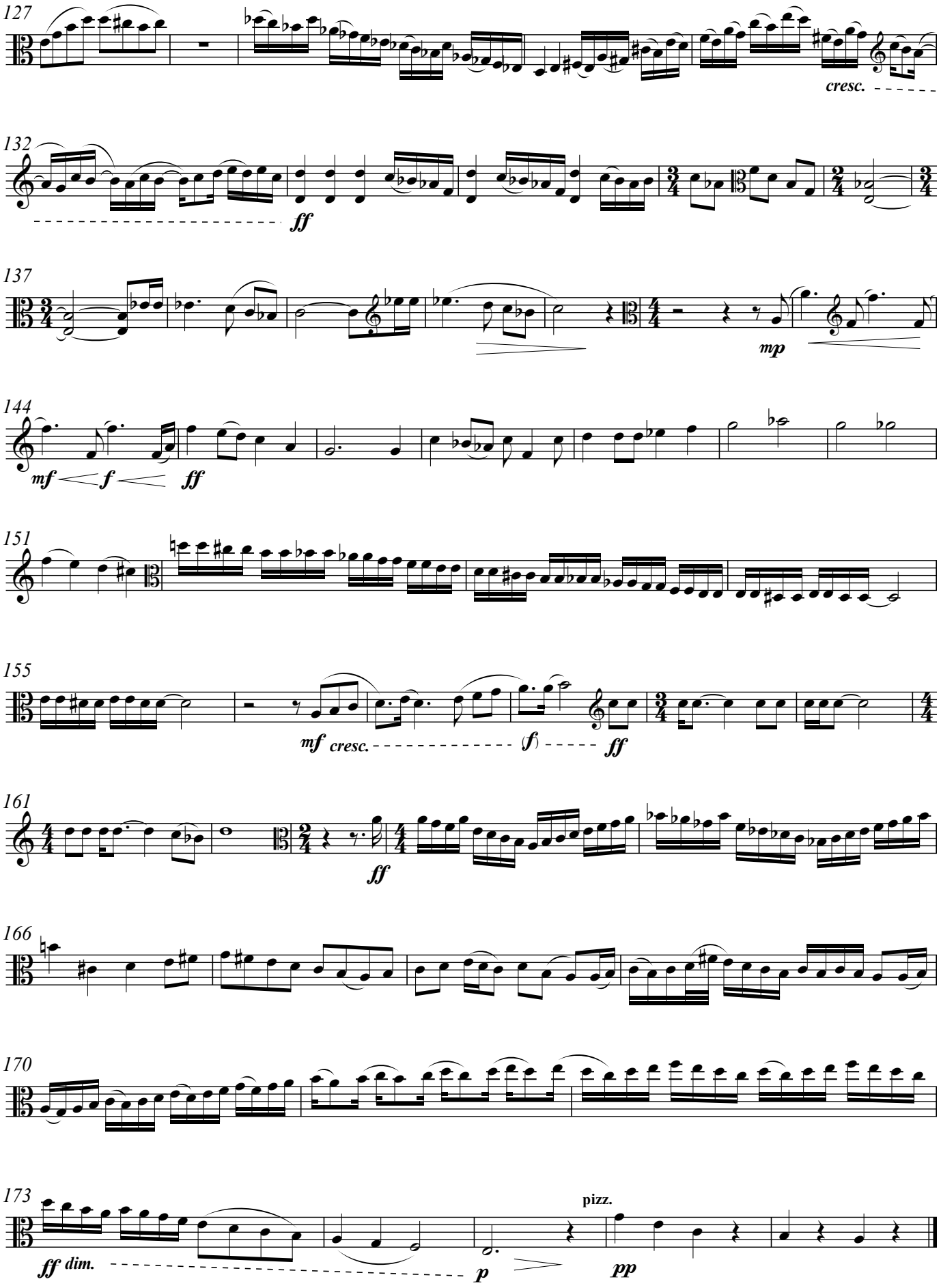

103
106
109
p
115
122
129
ff
133
135
138
pp
142

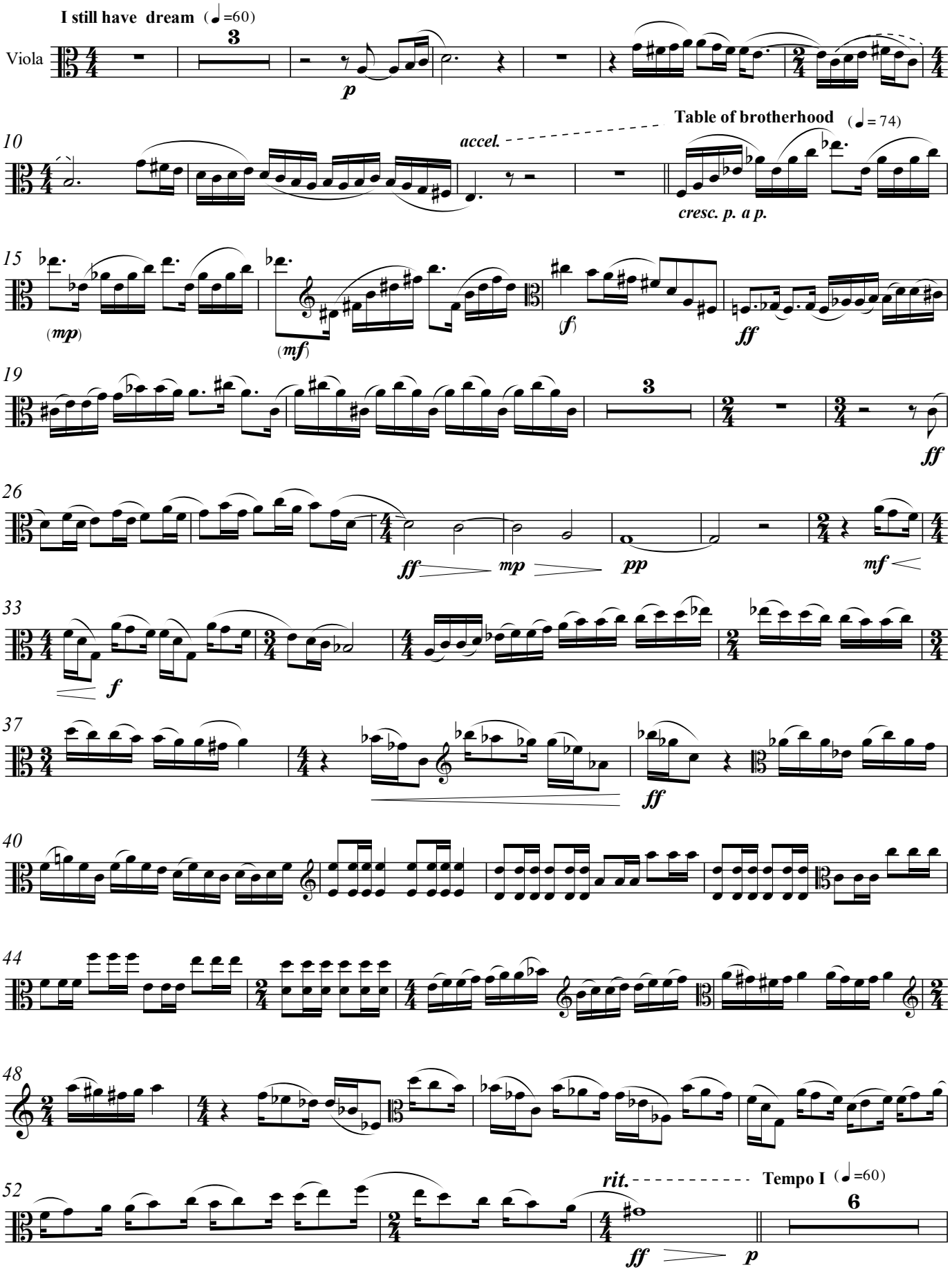

Adagio mahayana (𝅗𝅥. = 40)
Viola
3
p
mp
8
p
f
13
p
ff
19
24
p
pp
30
ff
35
2
p
41
mp
mf
mp
p
46
6
p
f
57
p
mp
p
pp
63
ff
pp
68
pp
| ff
(𝅘𝅥𝅮=𝅘𝅥𝅮)

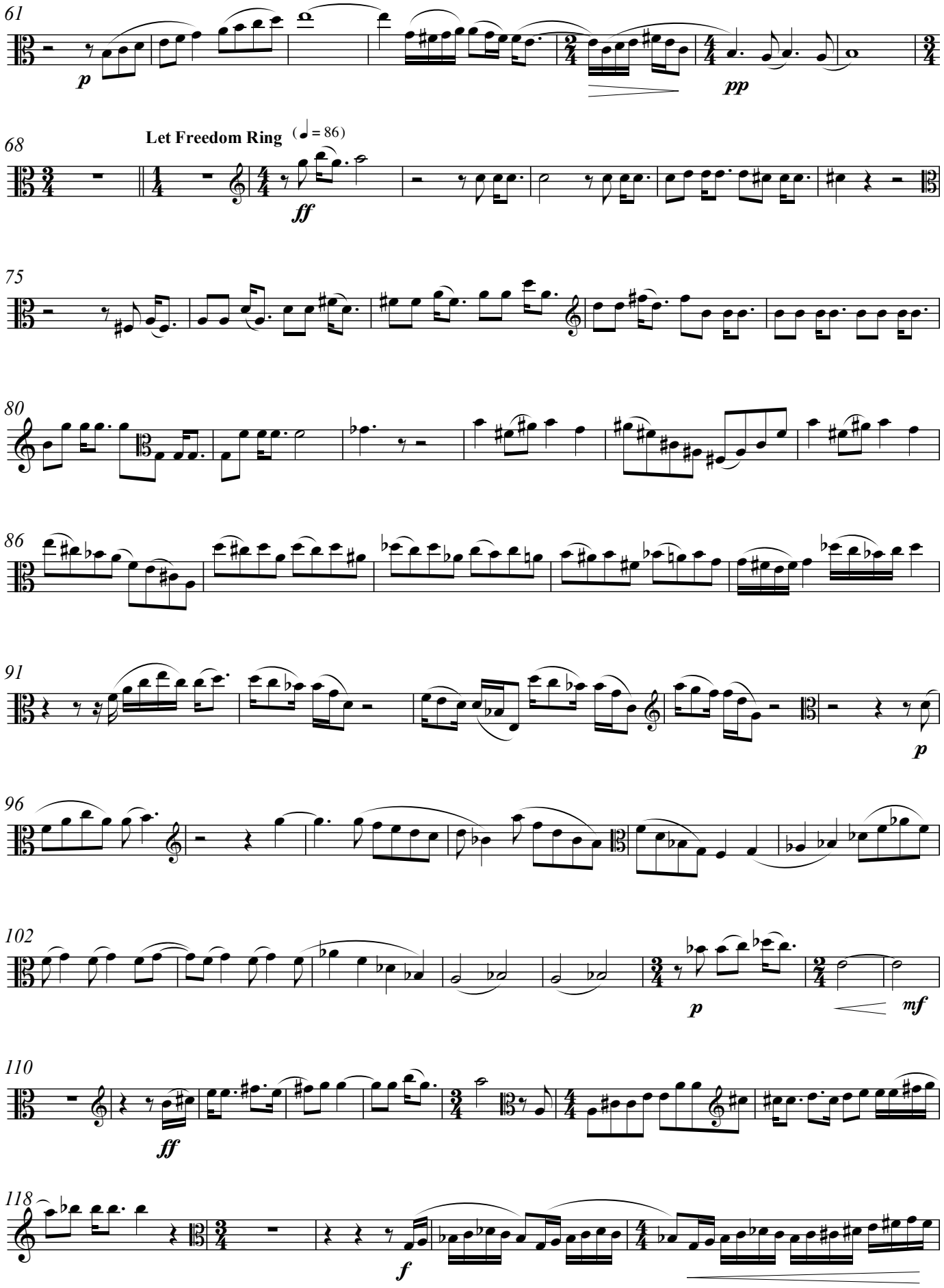

(♪=♪)
73
81
ff
p
88
2
96
p cresc.
(mf)
(f)
101
ff
mf
mp
p
108
mf
116
f
4
p cresc.
(f)
ff
G.P.
126
3
p
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
134
(mf)
(f)
ff
139
144
ff
mf
p
149 Meno mosso (𝅗𝅥. = 30)
pp
rit.

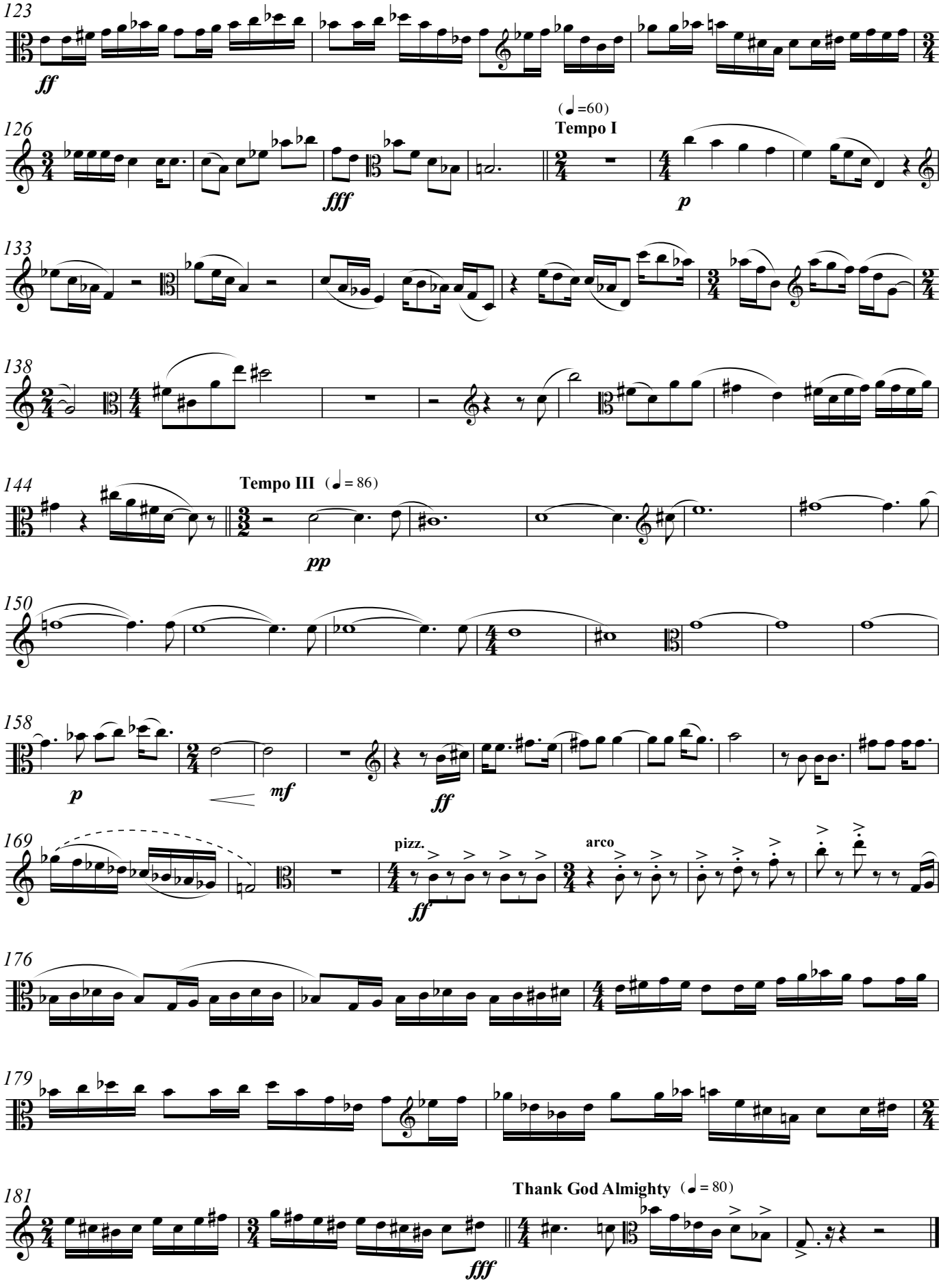

Picco di montagna (♩= 96)
Viola
non stacc.
mp
cresc.
5
(mf)
(f)
ff
8
14
ff
p
3
p cresc. p. a p.
23
(mp)
(mf)
f
30
ff
35
39
43
47
ff
p


54
62
p crese.
f
70
2
mf
mp
p
79
ff
85
89
ff
pizz.
mf
94
arco
pp
p
101
108
pp
pp
f
116
119


127
cresc.
132
ff
137
mp
144
mf
f
ff
151
155
mf cresc.
(f)
ff
161
ff
166
170
173
ff dim.
p
pizz.
pp


I still have dream (♩=60)
Viola
3
p
10
accel.
Table of brotherhood (♩= 74)
cresc. p. a p.
15
(mp)
(mf)
(f)
ff
19
3
ff
26
ff
mp
pp
mf
33
f
37
ff
40
44
48
52
rit.
Tempo I (♩=60)
6
ff
p


61
p
pp
68
Let Freedom Ring
♩ = 86
ff
75
80
86
91
p
96
102
p
mf
110
ff
118
f


123
ff
126
(♩=60)
Tempo I
fff
p
133
138
144
Tempo III (♩= 86)
pp
150
158
p
mf
ff
169
pizz.
arco
ff
176
179
181
Thank God Almighty (♩= 80)
fff

Birthday Quartet

for Violin, Viola,
Violoncello, and Piano

Violoncello

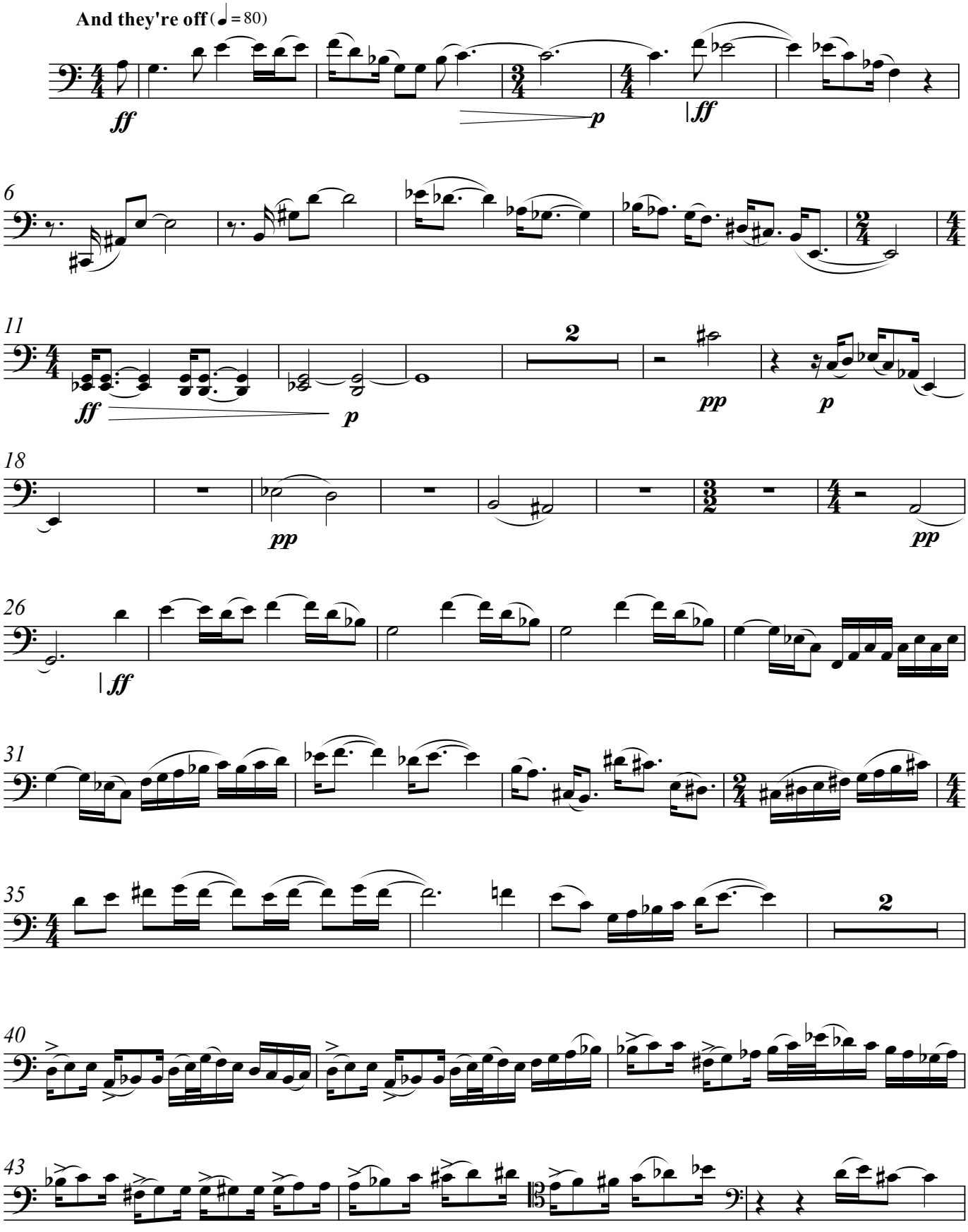
Bill Robinson

Cello

Birthday Quartet (Piano Quartet version)

I. How Long? Not Long [7:30]

Bill Robinson



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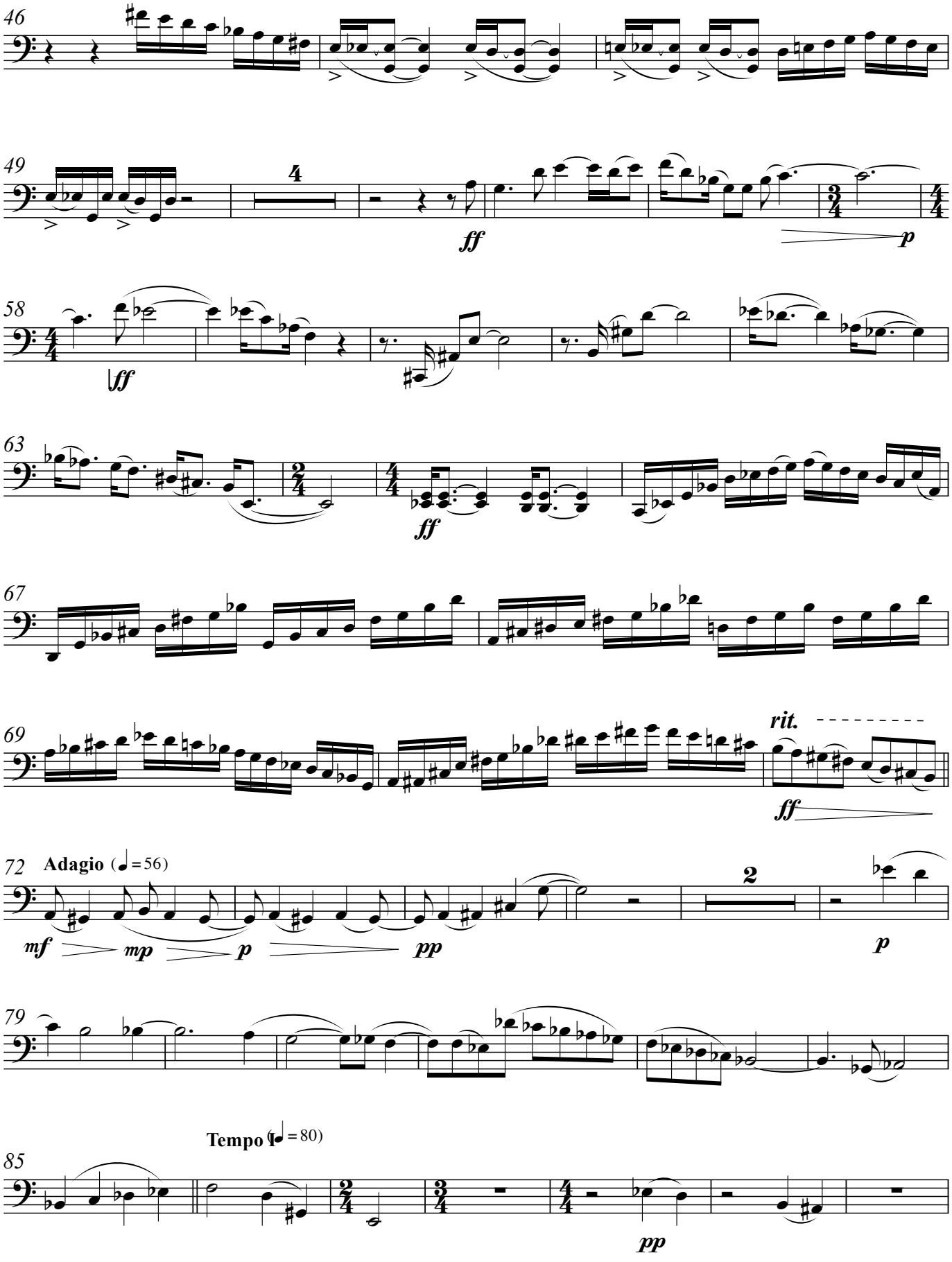
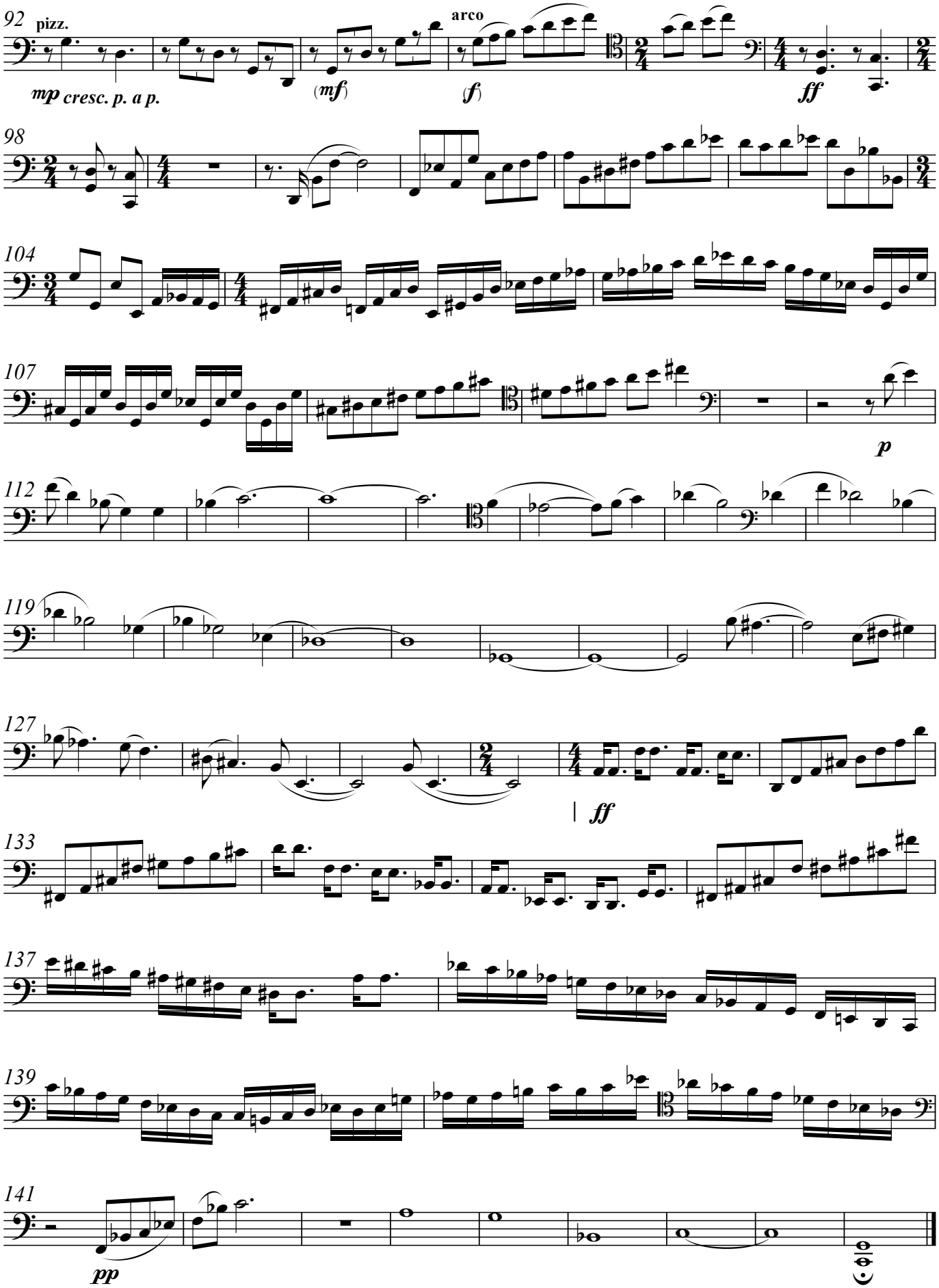
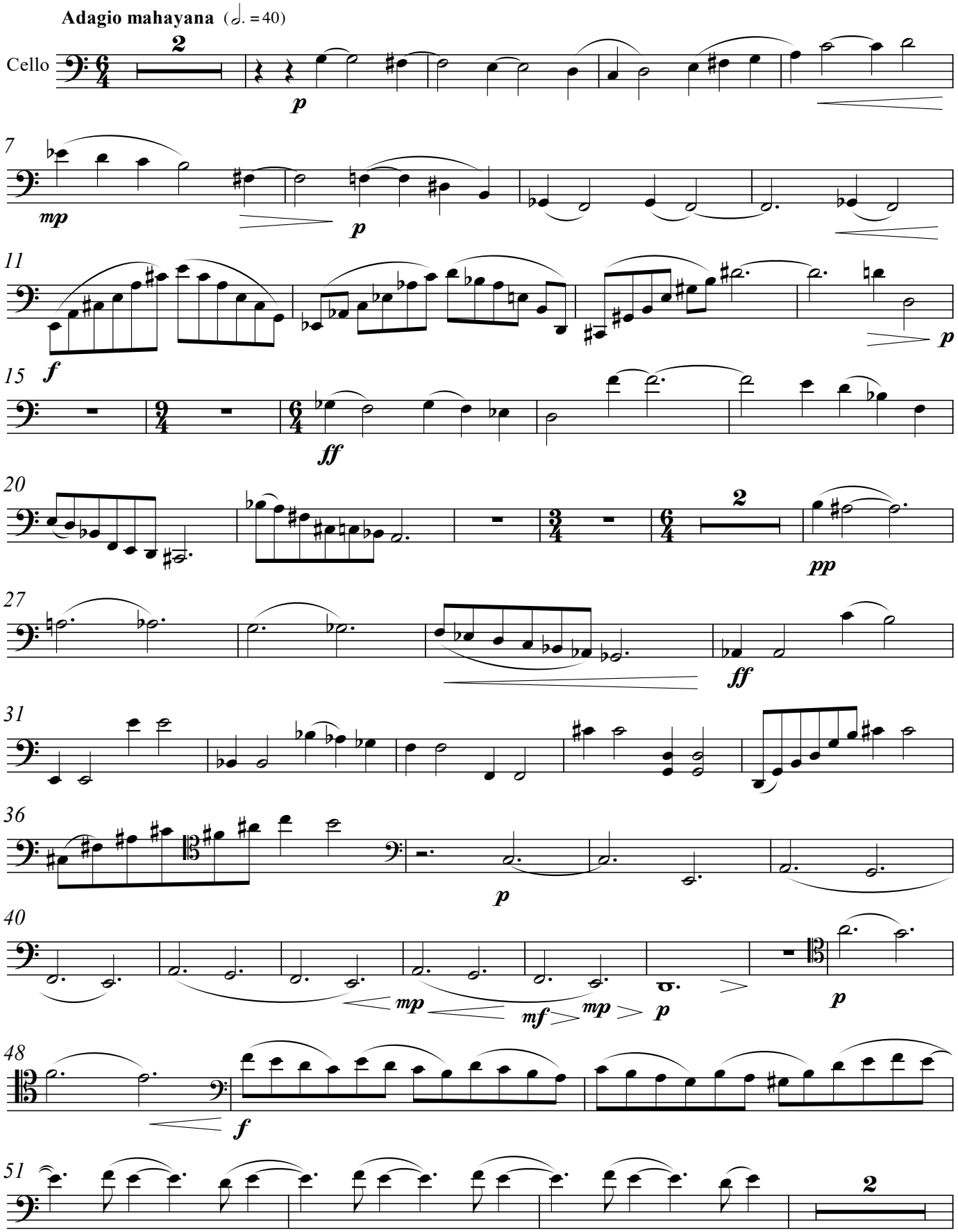
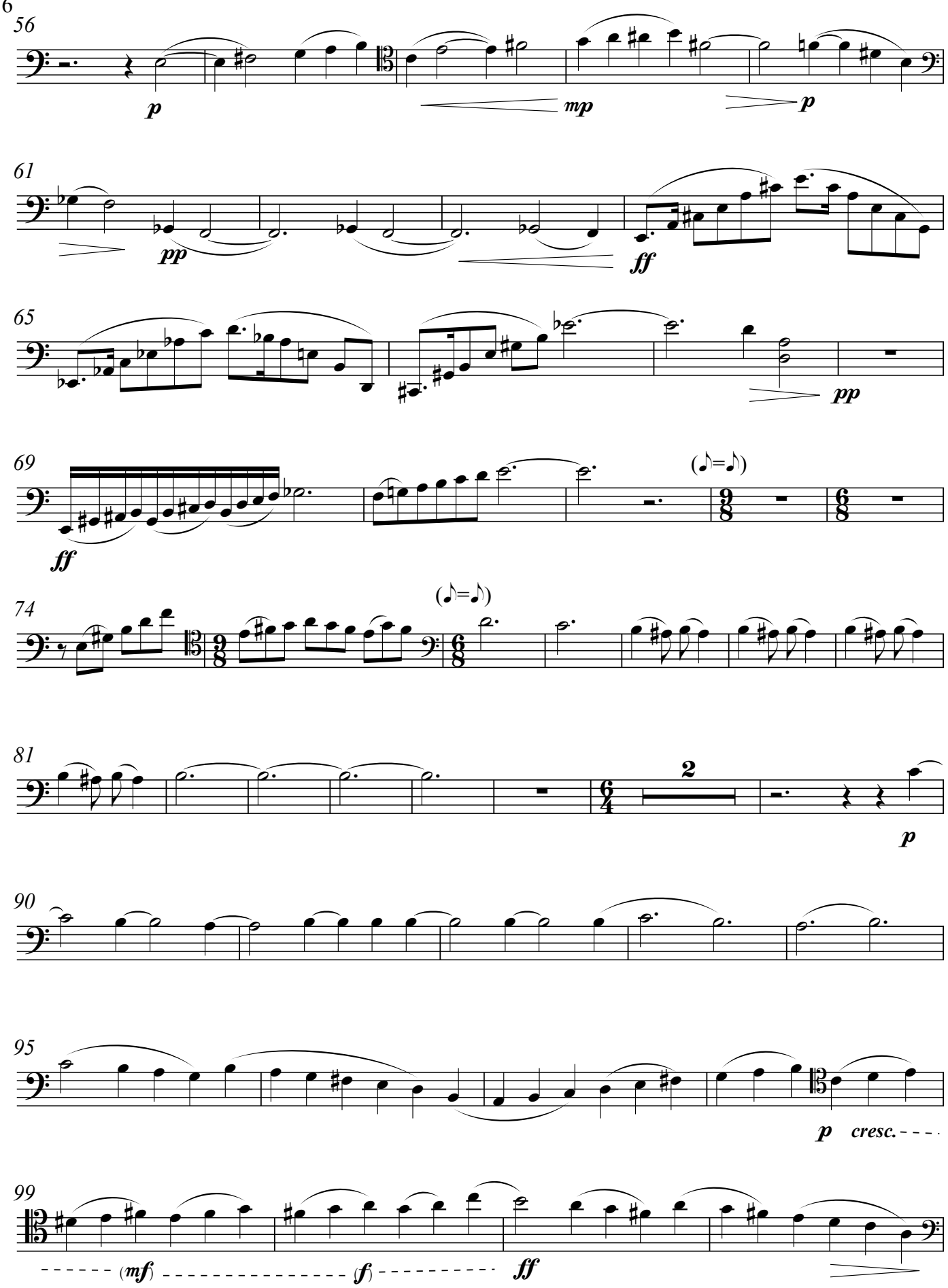
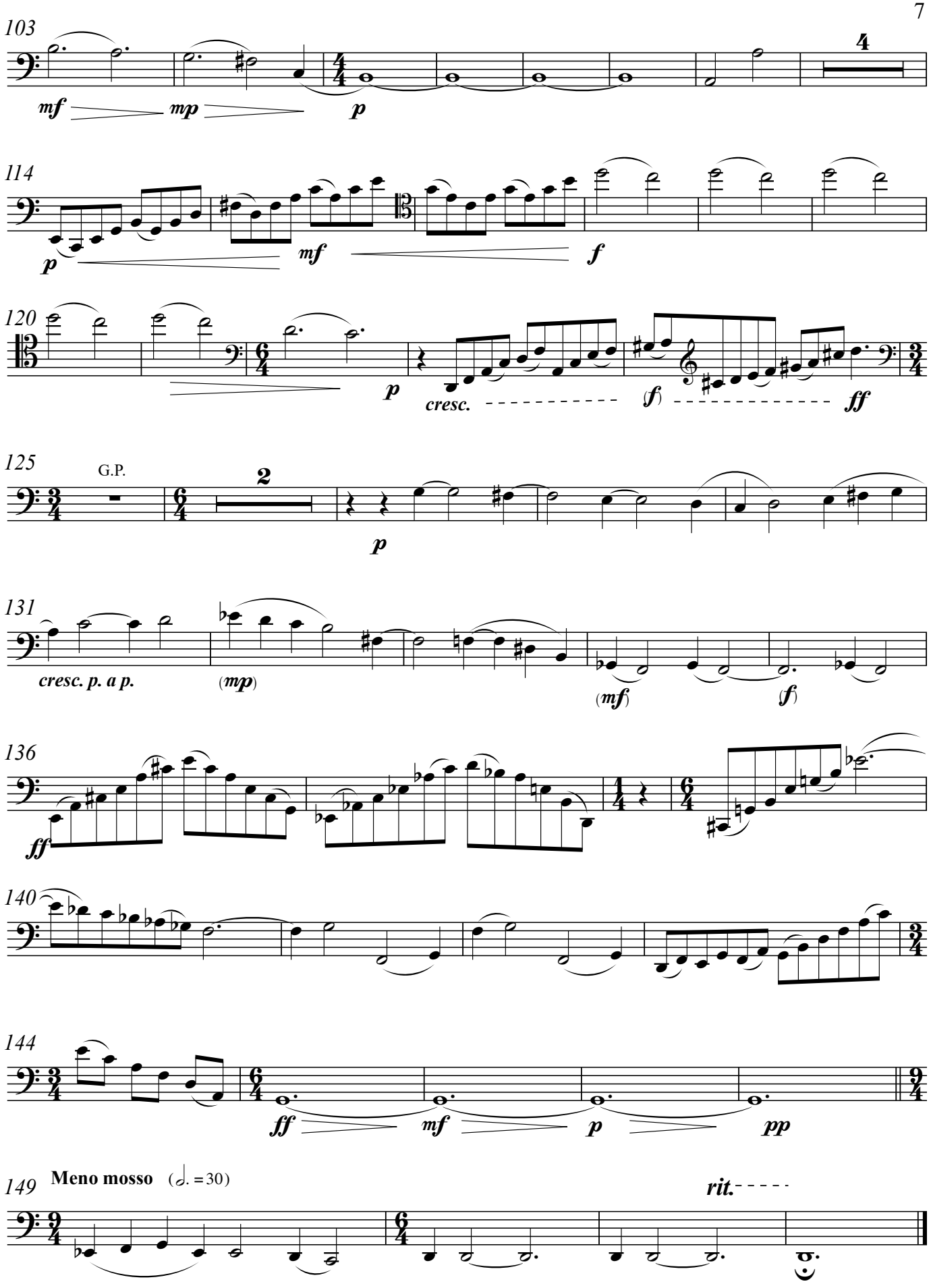
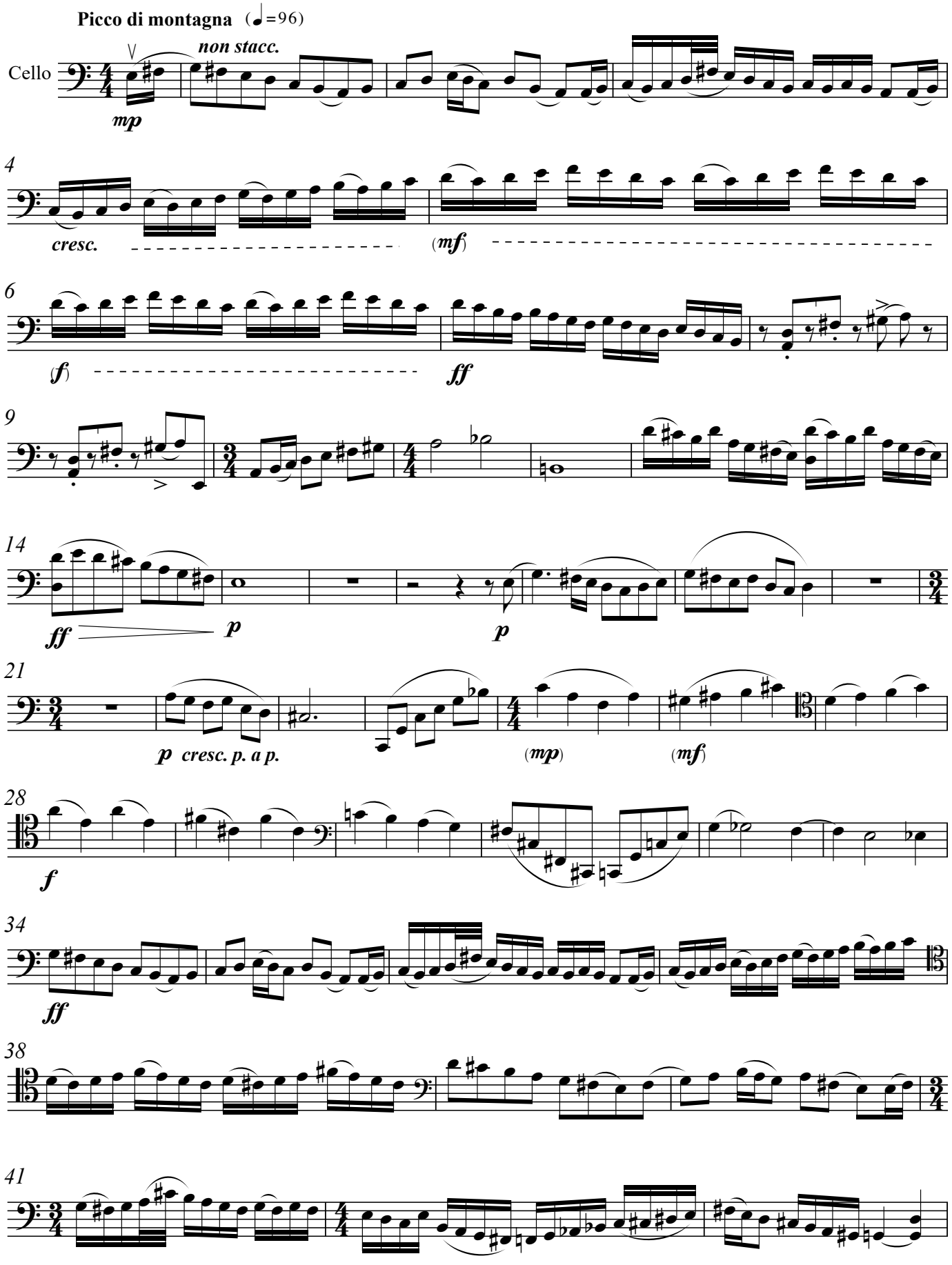

46
49
4
ff
p
58
ff
63
ff
67
69
rit.
ff
72
Adagio (♩ = 56)
mf
mp
p
pp
2
p
79
Tempo I (♩ = 80)
85
pp

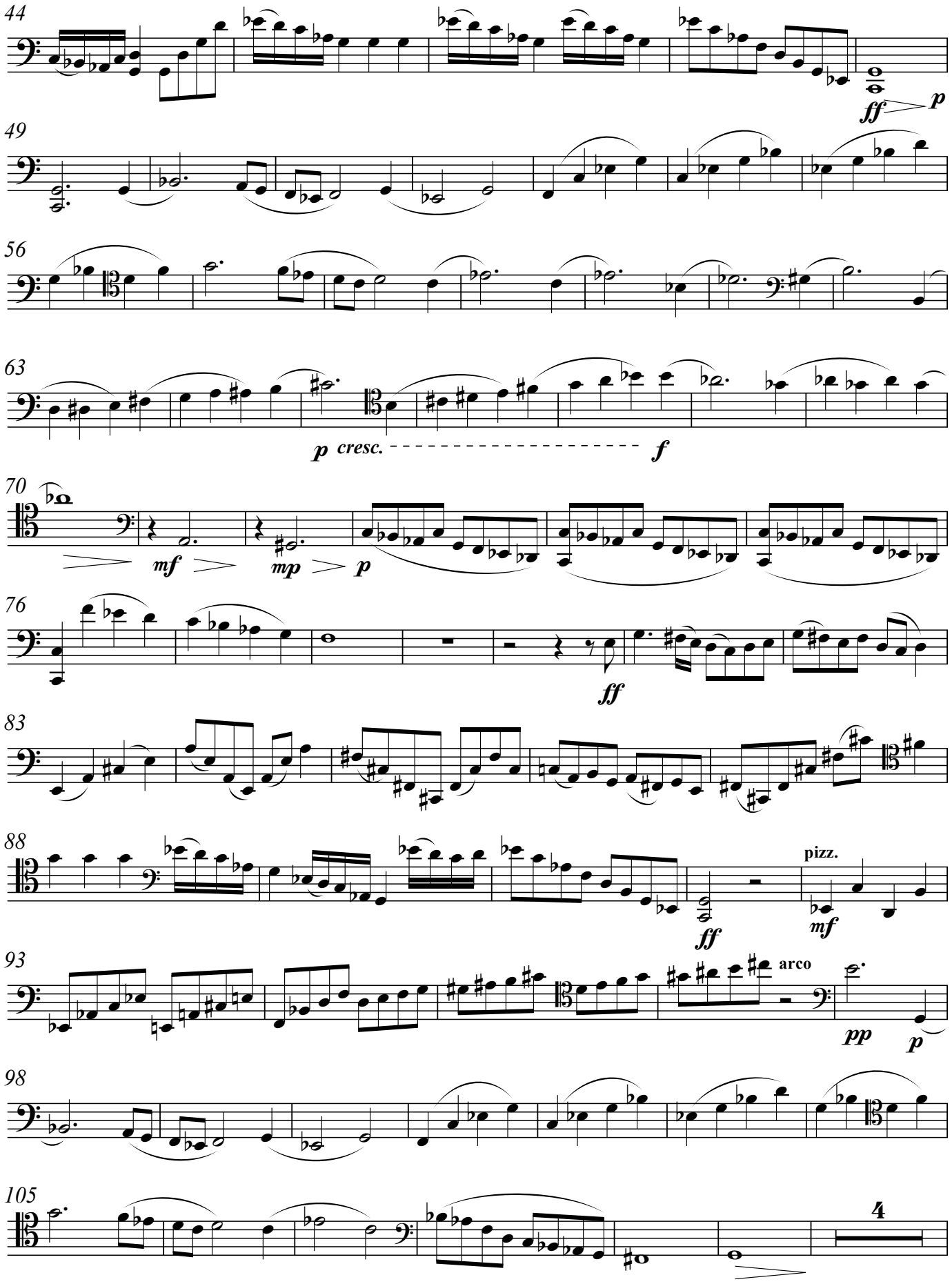

92
pizz.
mp cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
arco
(f)
ff
98
104
107
p
112
119
127
ff
133
137
139
141
pp

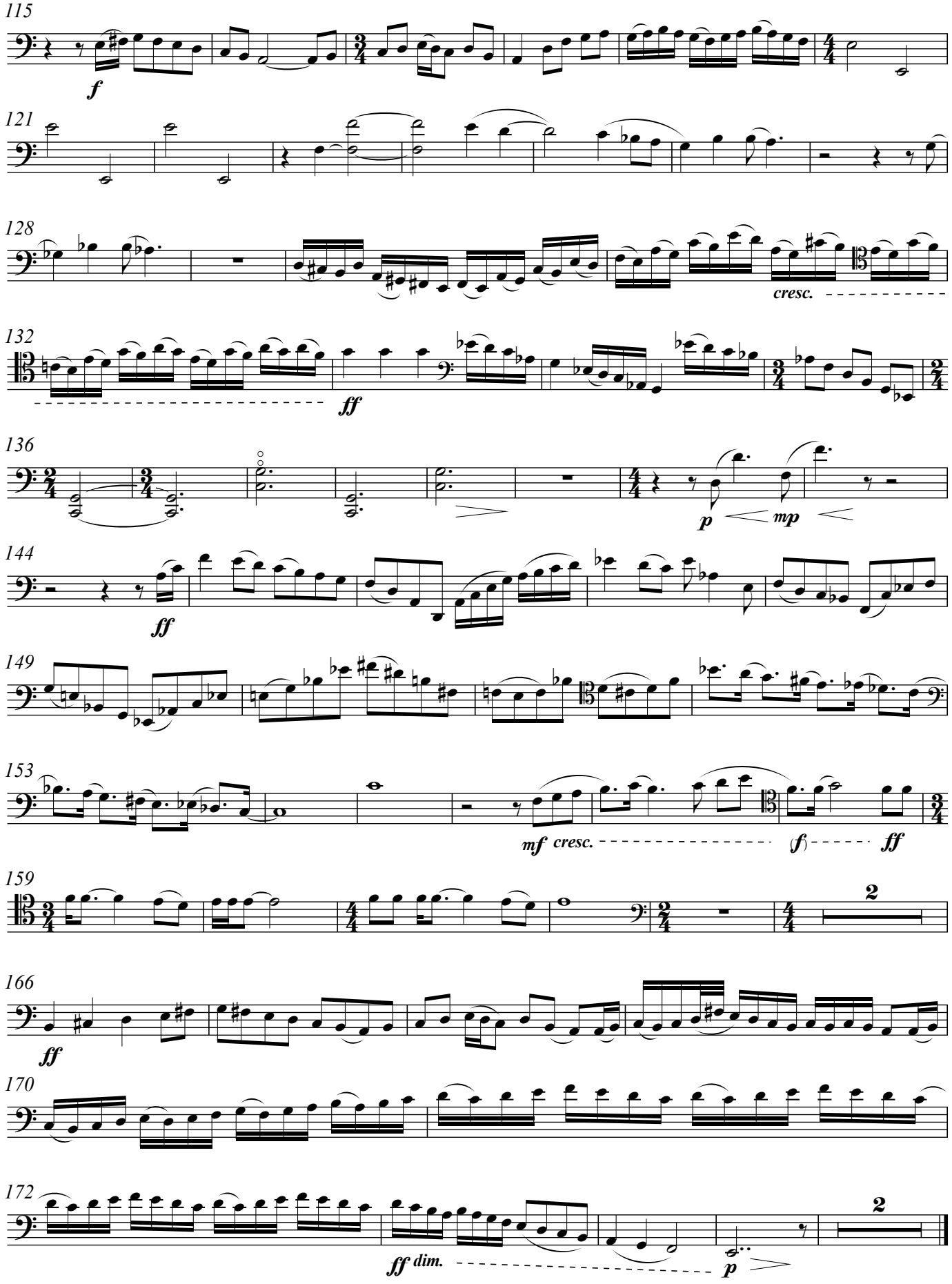

Adagio mahayana (𝅗𝅥. = 40)
Cello
2
p
7
mp
p
11
f
p
15
ff
20
2
pp
27
ff
31
36
p
40
mp
mf
mp
p
p
48
f
51
2

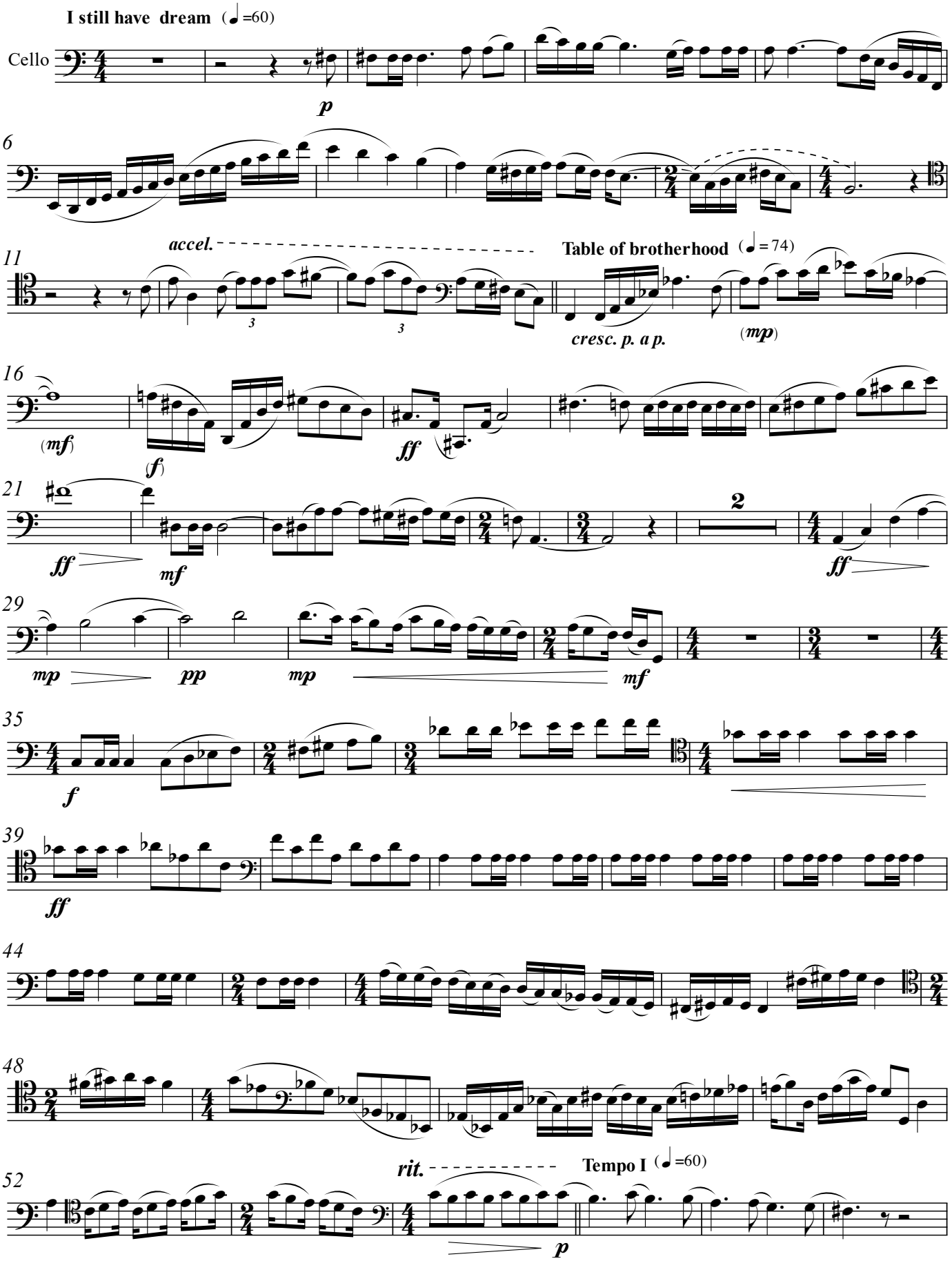

56
p
mp
p
61
pp
ff
65
pp
69
ff
(♪=♪)
74
(♪=♪)
81
2
p
90
95
p cresc.
99
(mf)
(f)
ff

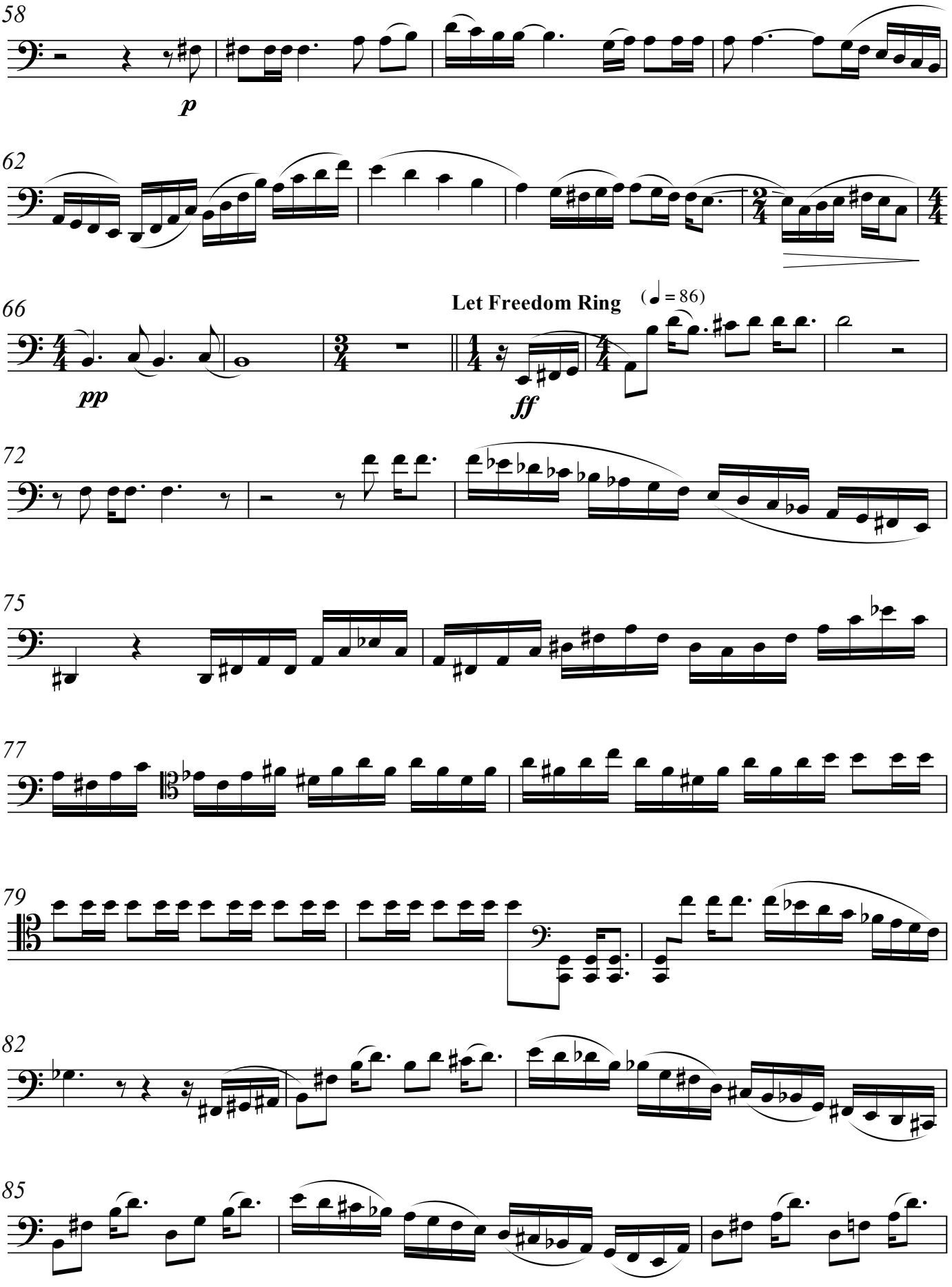

103
4
mf
mp
p
114
p
mf
f
120
p
cresc.
(f)
ff
125
G.P.
2
p
131
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
(mf)
(f)
136
ff
140
144
ff
mf
p
pp
149
Meno mosso (𝅗𝅥. = 30)
rit.

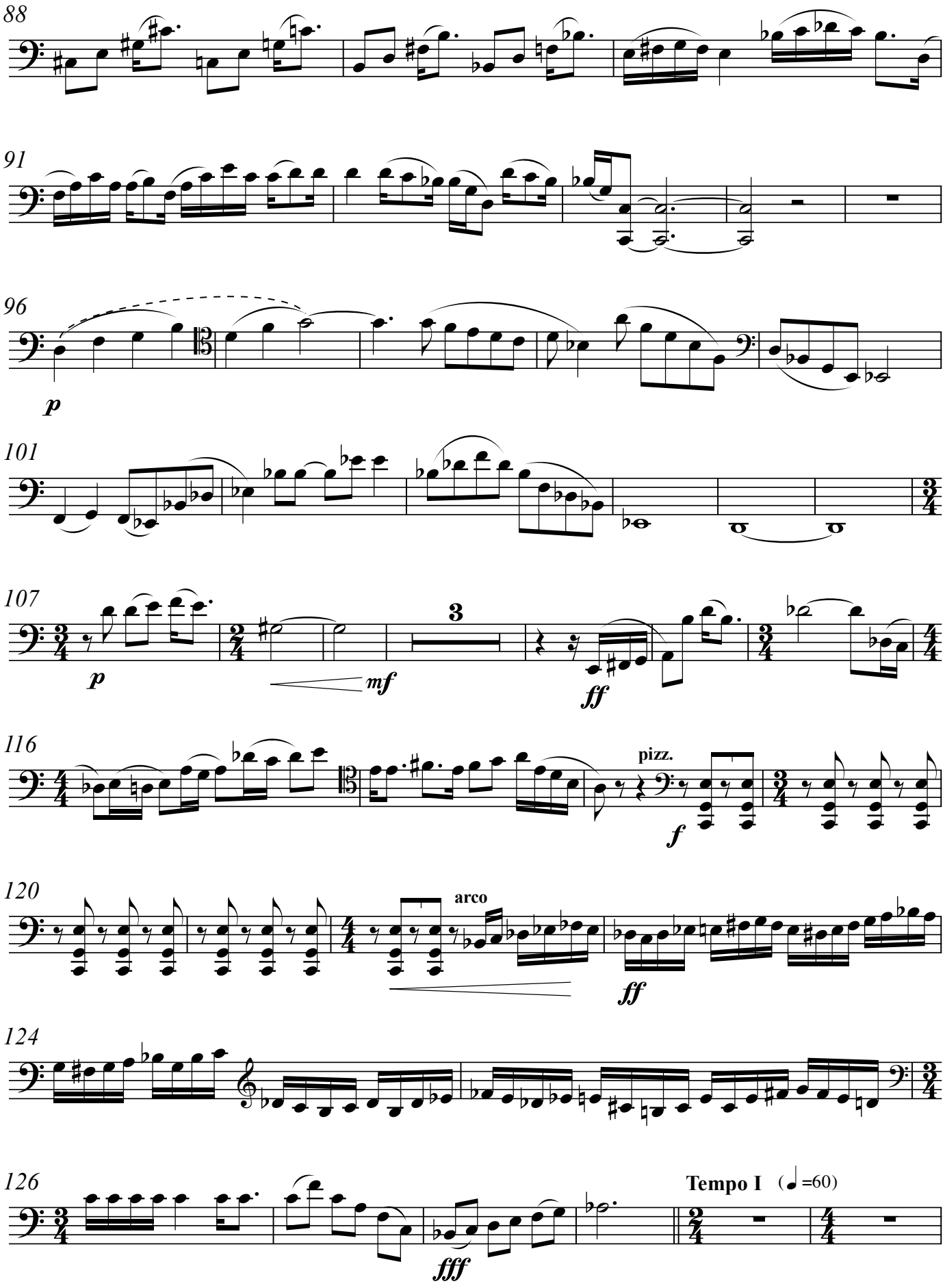

Picco di montagna (♩=96)
Cello
non stacc.
mp
cresc.
(mf)
(f)
ff
p
p
p cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
(mf)
f
ff


44
ff
p
49
56
63
p cresc.
f
70
mf
mp
p
76
ff
83
88
ff
pizz.
mf
93
arco
pp
p
98
105
4


115
f
121
128
cresc.
132
ff
136
p
mp
144
ff
149
153
mf cresc.
(f)
ff
159
2
166
ff
170
172
ff dim.
p
2


I still have dream (♩=60)
Cello
p
6
accel.
11
Table of brotherhood (♩=74)
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
16
(mf)
(f)
ff
21
ff
mf
2
ff
29
mp
pp
mp
mf
35
f
39
ff
44
48
rit.
Tempo I (♩=60)
52
p


58
p
62
66
pp
Let Freedom Ring
(♩ = 86)
ff
72
75
77
79
82
85


88
91
96
p
101
107
p
mf
3
ff
116
pizz.
f
120
arco
ff
124
126
fff
Tempo I (♩=60)

132

p

136

143

Tempo III (♩=86)

pp

149

155

p

mf

ff

165

172

pizz.

ff

arco

178

180

182

Thank God Almighty (♩=80)

fff