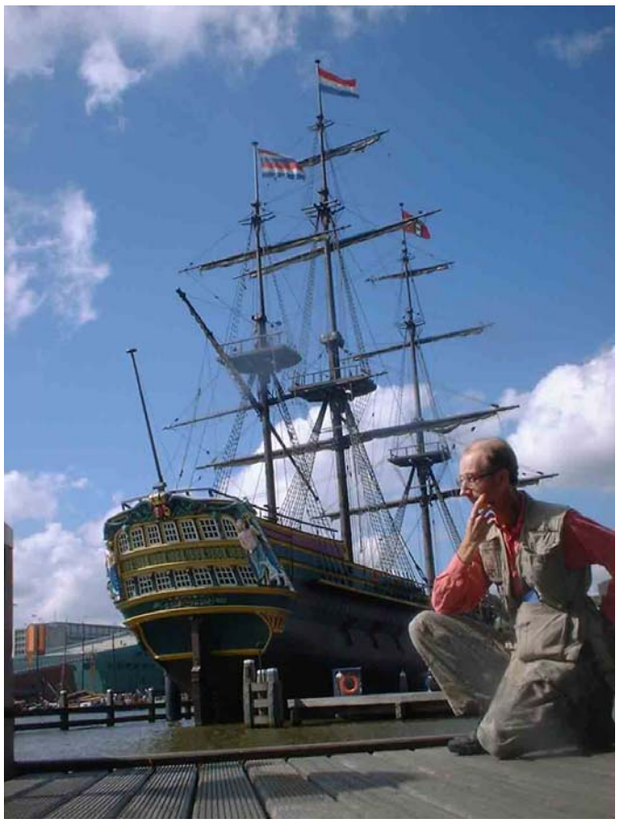
Variations on the Grosse Fuge

for

String Quartet and Orchestra



Bill Robinson

Variations on the Grosse Fuge
for String Quartet and Orchestra

January 6—March 22, 1987 (synth version), Las Cruces, New Mexico
revised 2003-2005, revised and orchestrated 2007, edited 2014
duration: about 18 minutes

in memoriam Ben Marcato

While a student at Eastman School of Music in 1973-74, I listened every other night to Beethoven's opus 133 string quartet *Grosse Fuge* with a couple of friends for at least two months. (The alternate nights were usually spent with *Hammerklavier*.) As a result this string quartet was branded on my brain, which may not have been the best thing for my early composition style—which tended to the too noisy and too crowded with notes, not to mention horribly hard to play.

I went to NTSU (now UNT) in Denton Texas in the fall of 1974, and started working on a string quintet/string orchestra piece that would be a variation on the *Grosse Fuge*—re-writing the piece in my own idiom and with significant differences. After about two years of work it was premiered at my senior composition recital in 1977. The performance was rather rough and the recital failed; I left school without a degree. (I returned to NTSU in the early '80s and got a BM in 1984.)

I took a break from composing in the fall of 1985 to start work on an experiment in transcendental physics. After moving to Las Cruces New Mexico in the fall of 1986, my project was at a standstill, and I livened up my life in a desert trailer slum by composing a completely new variation on the *Grosse Fuge*, disposing of the string quintet and using instead five synthesizers. I had written new and arranged older works for five synths. With this experience, but not having a synth or any electronic equipment myself, I simply imagined what I would like the piece to be like and designed it for live performance. The composition took from January 6 to March 22, 1987. I could neither find performers nor afford equipment to sequence or record the synth scores I'd written.

In 2003 I started using Finale which allowed synthesis, and so put a recording on my first CD in September 2003. I revised the score in January 2005 but still did not have a performable piece. I then realized in early 2007 that a string quartet could take on the most difficult passages, leaving more playable material for an orchestra with a reasonable skill level. A decent college orchestra should be able to play this work; the quartet will have to be of professional quality. During the orchestration I recomposed some sections and made several improvements. In late 2014, I revised the layout of the orchestral score and extracted a fresh set of parts.

There is also a version for piano quintet where the string quartet takes on considerably more material. As a result it is not simply a version with piano taking orchestral parts, but rather is a unique and separate rendition. Not surprisingly, considerable skill for all performers is required for the chamber version. The piano quintet was premiered by the Ciompi Quartet with Randall Love, piano, at the NC Museum of Art in January 2009.

With no apology, this music is intense, hypercomplex, and maybe just a little crazy—as such not so different from the original; but if a focused listener someday can achieve some familiarity with the music, I do hope that the sweat required for its production will have been worthwhile.

Whoever tells a lie cannot be pure in heart—and only the pure in heart can make a good soup. ---L. v. B.

Second Edition December 2014

Publisher Parrish Press Raleigh NC billrobinsonmusic@yahoo.com

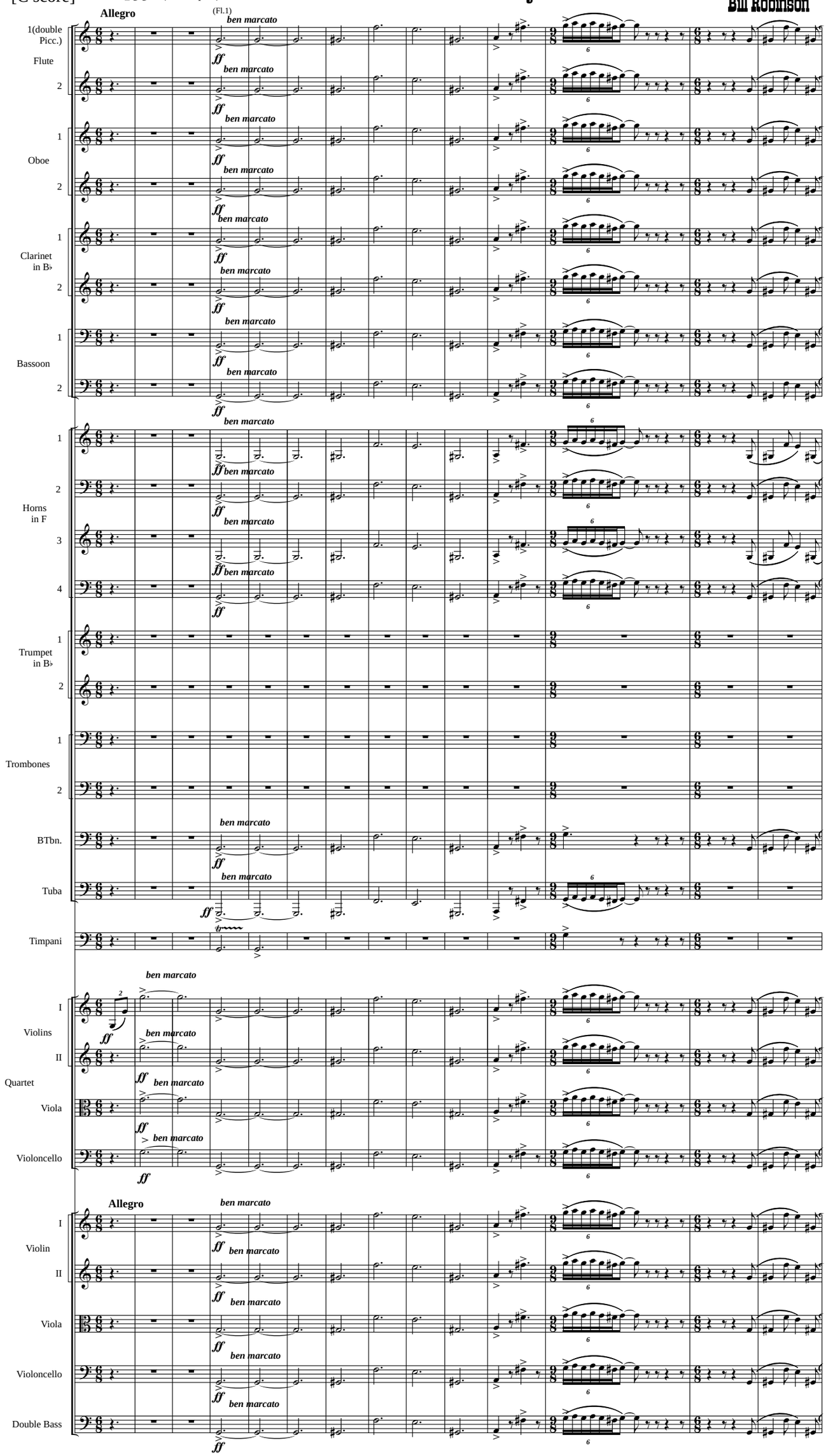
billrobinsonmusic.com

[C score] ♩. = 133 (as in 'opus')

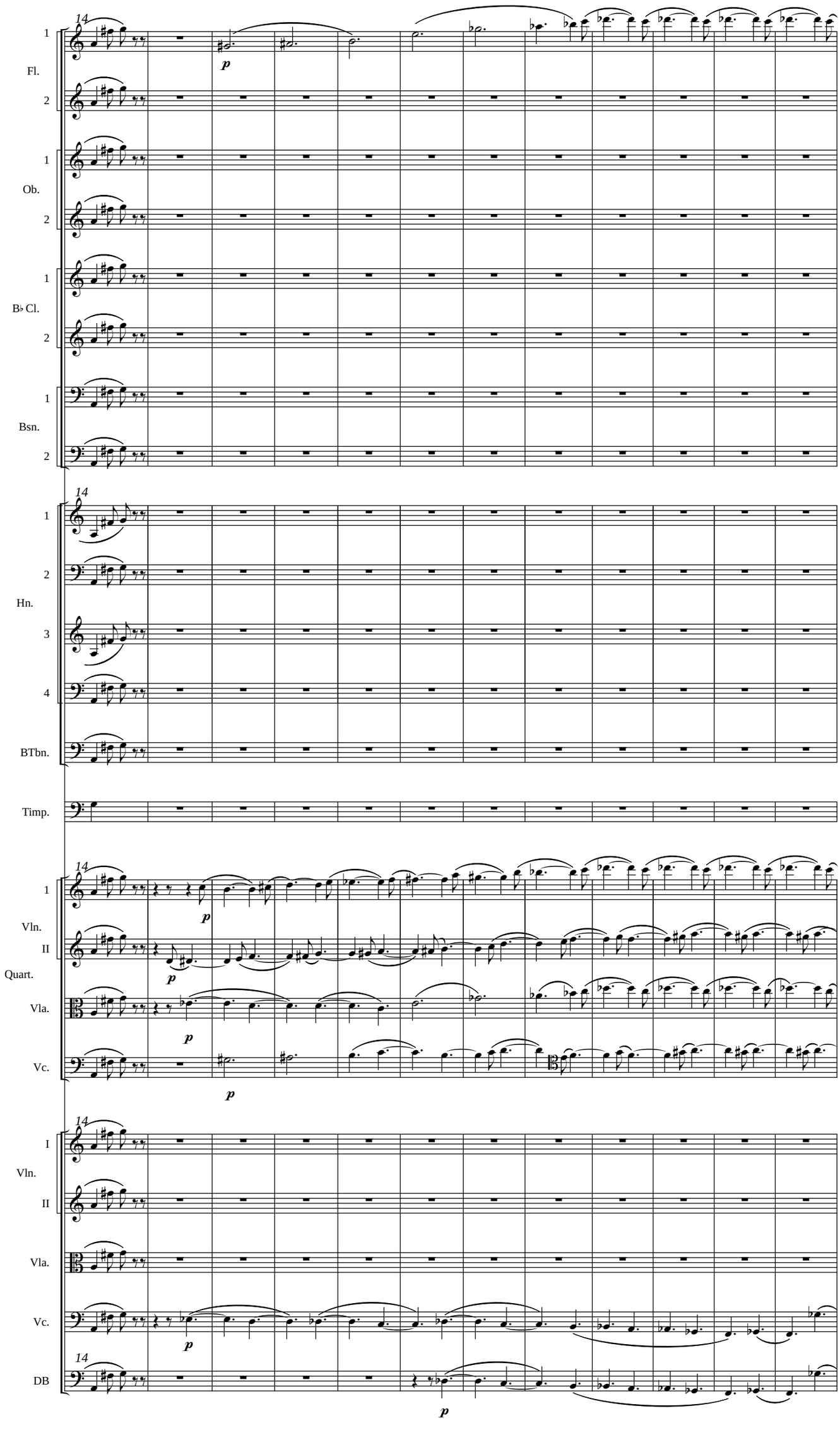
Variations on the Grosse Fuge

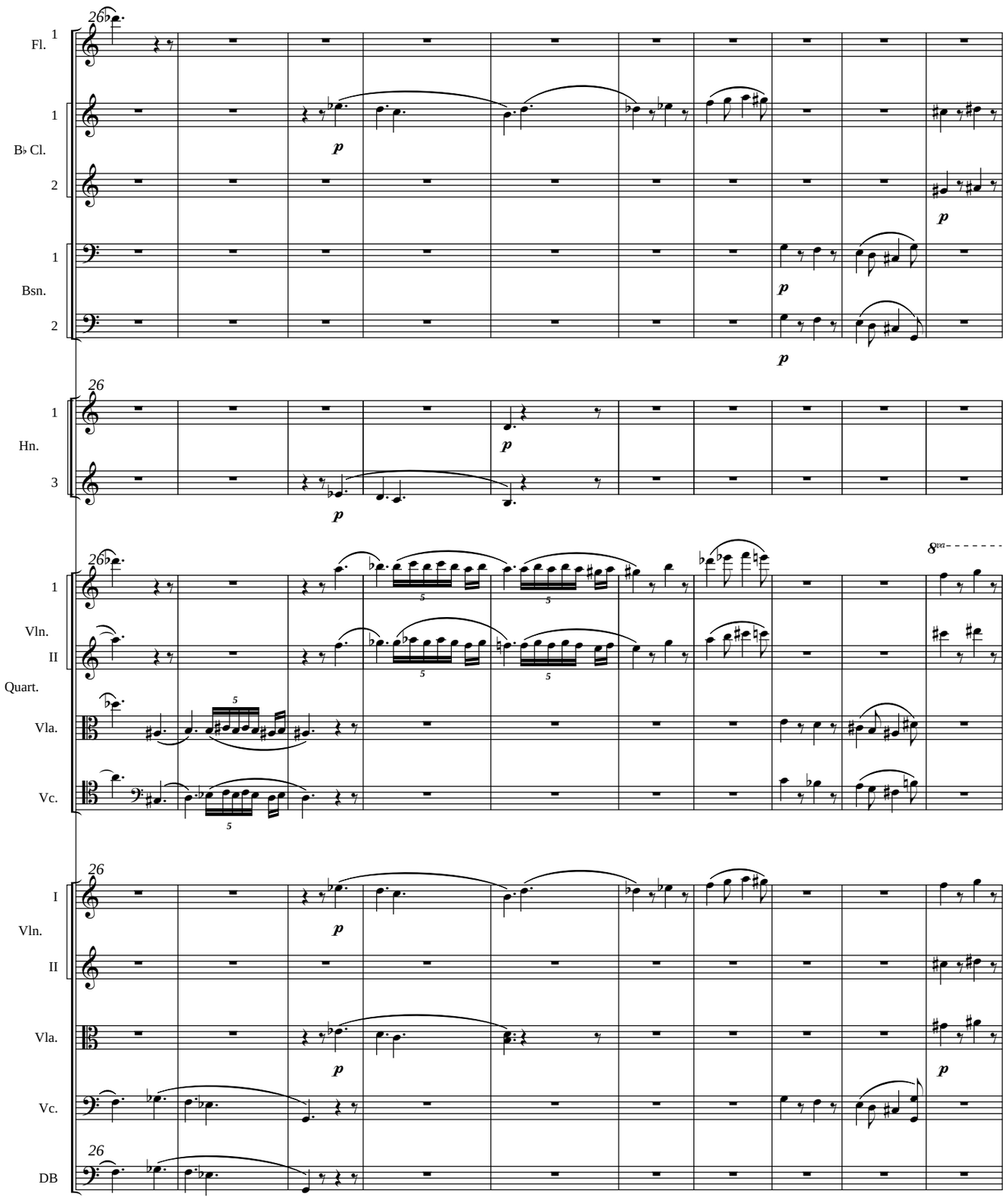
[18']

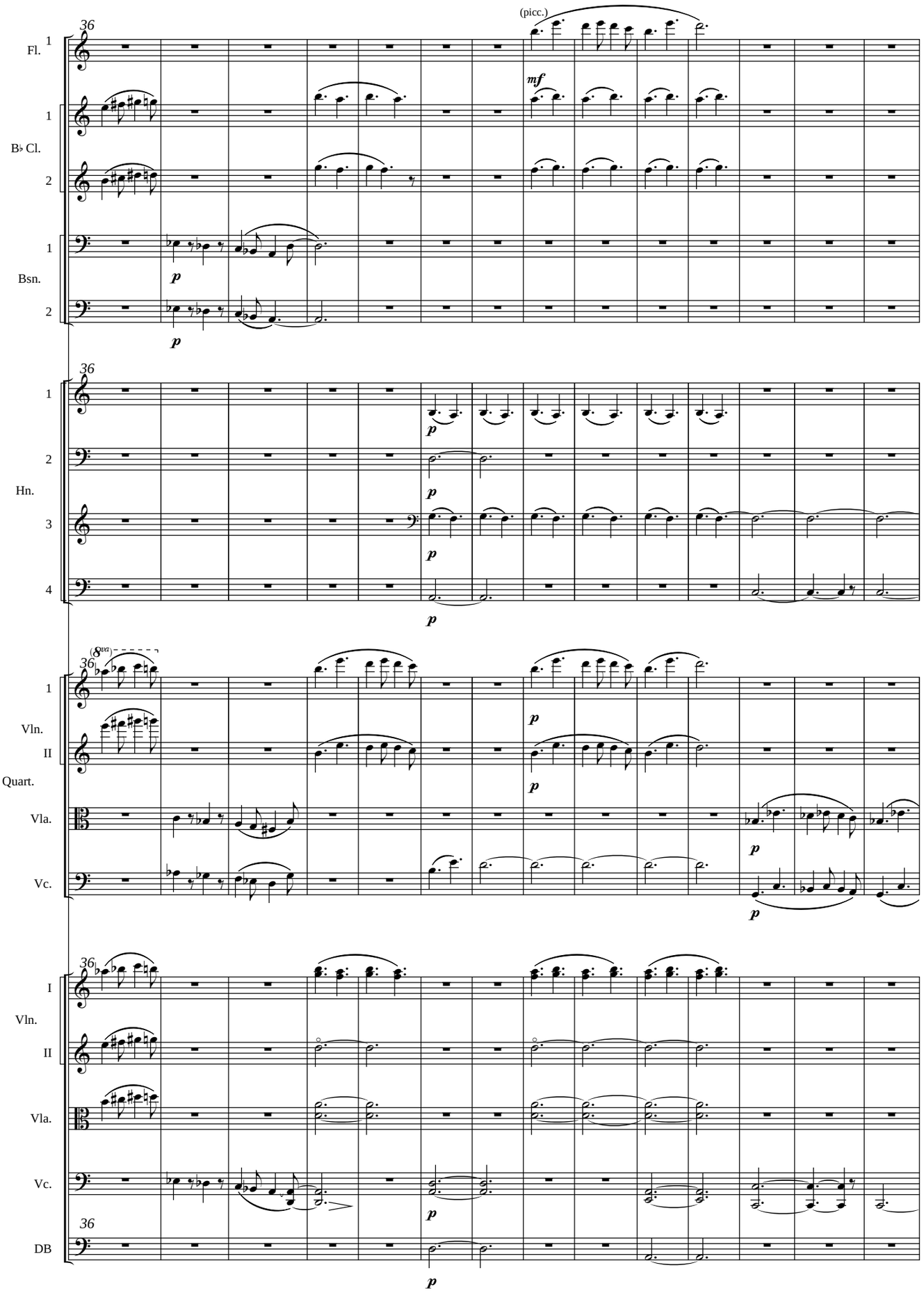
Bill Robinson

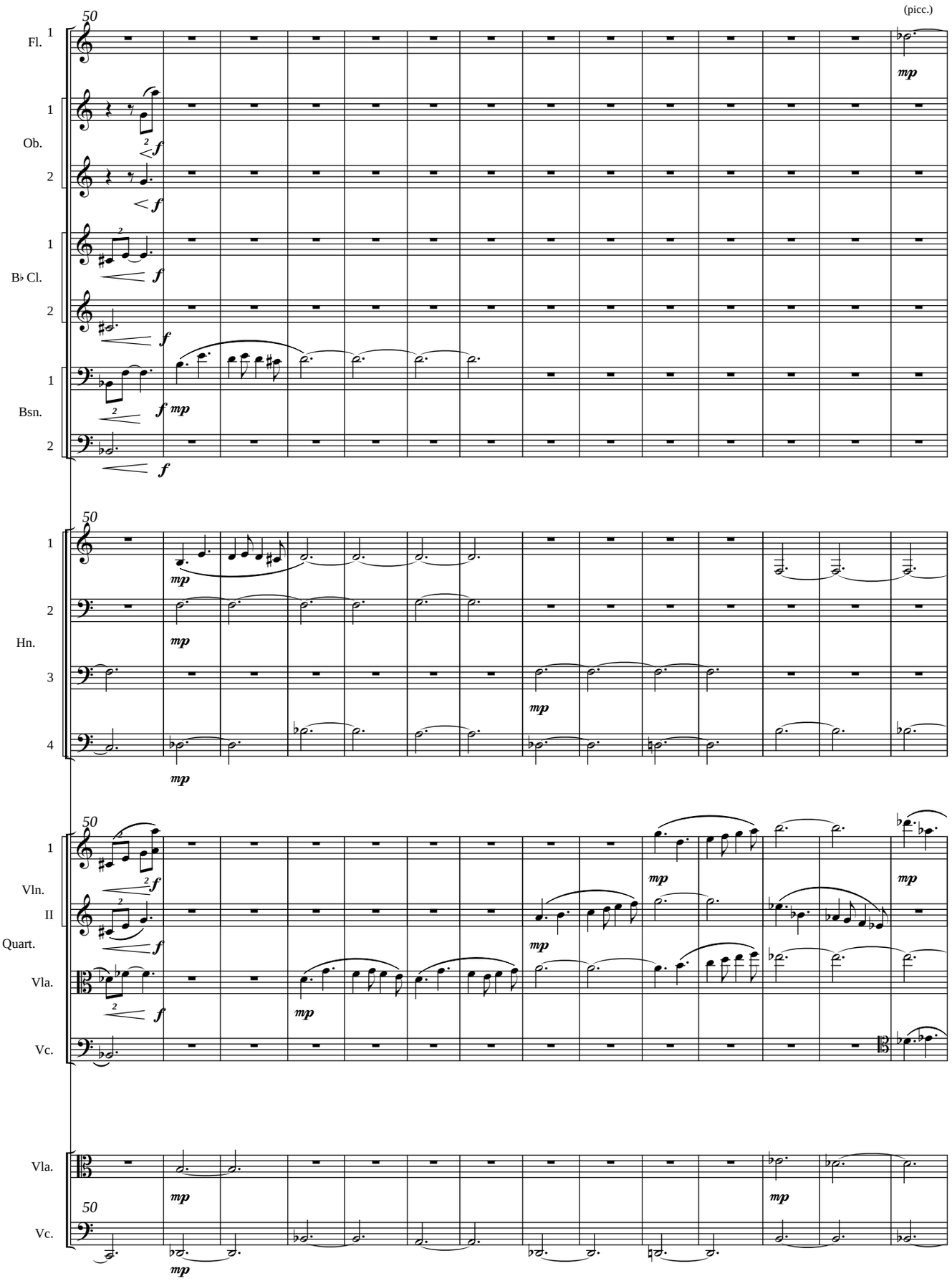


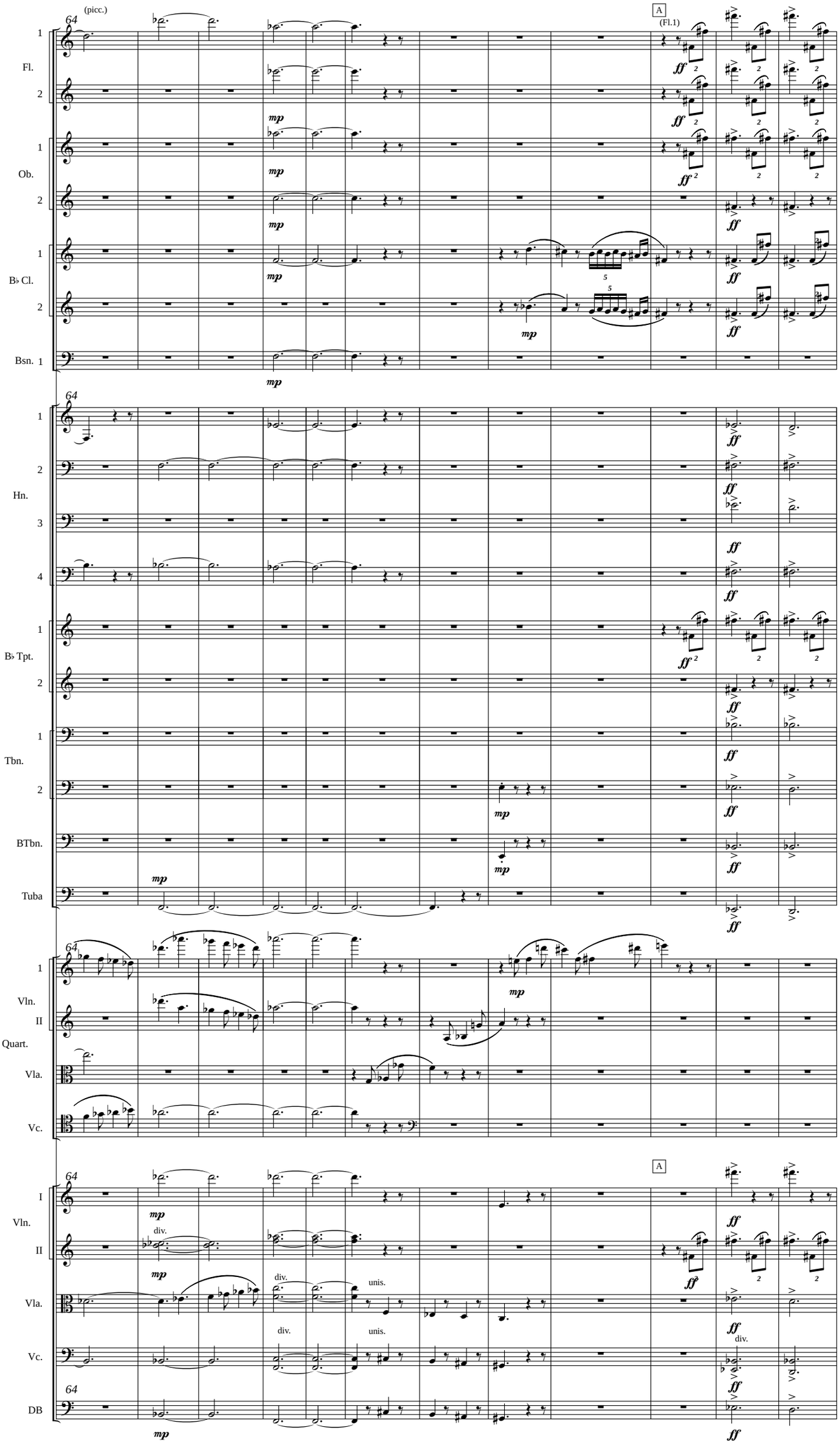
© 2007

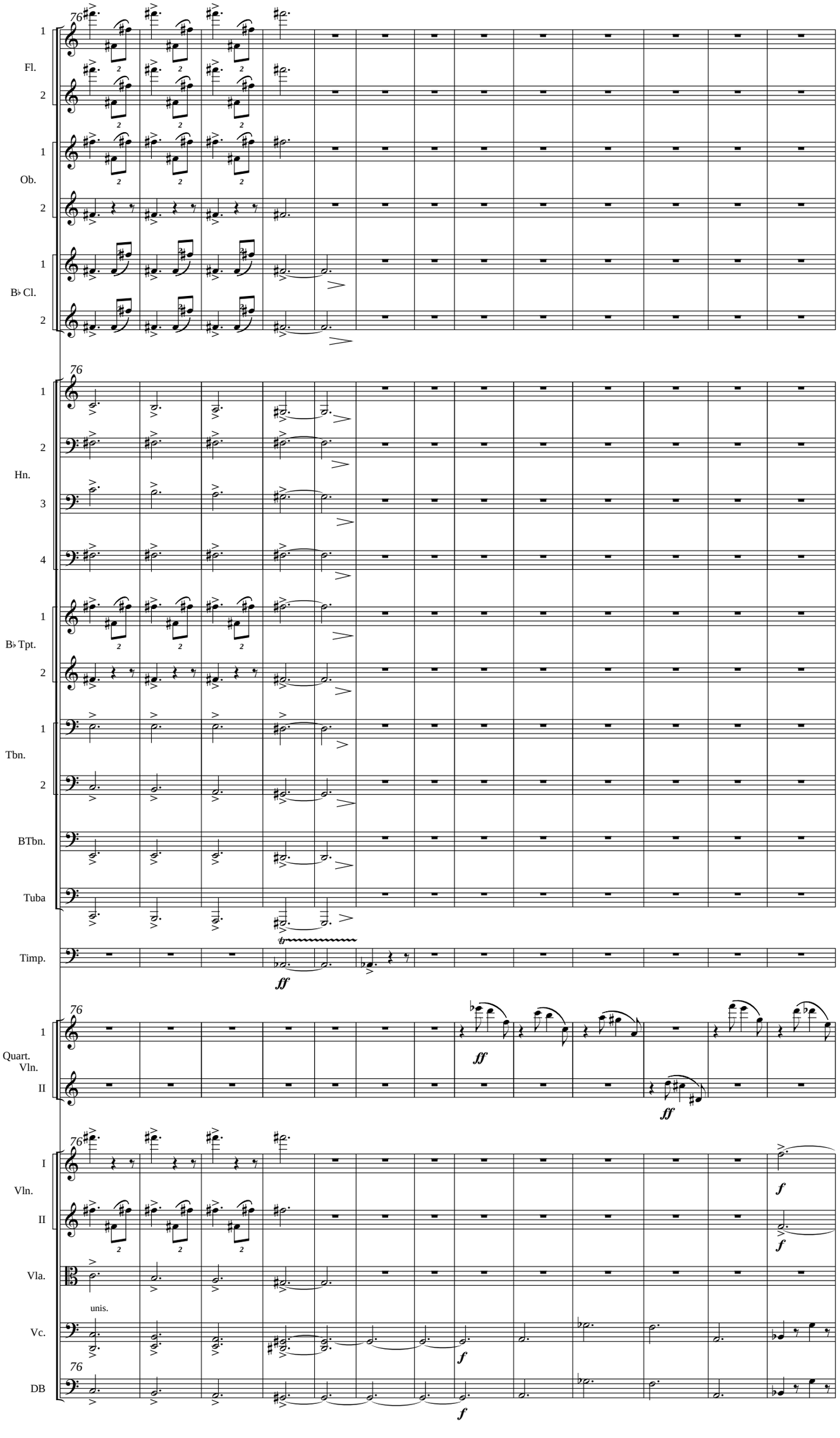

14
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
p
14
1
2
Hn.
3
4
BTbn.
Timp.
14
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
p
p
14
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
14
DB
p

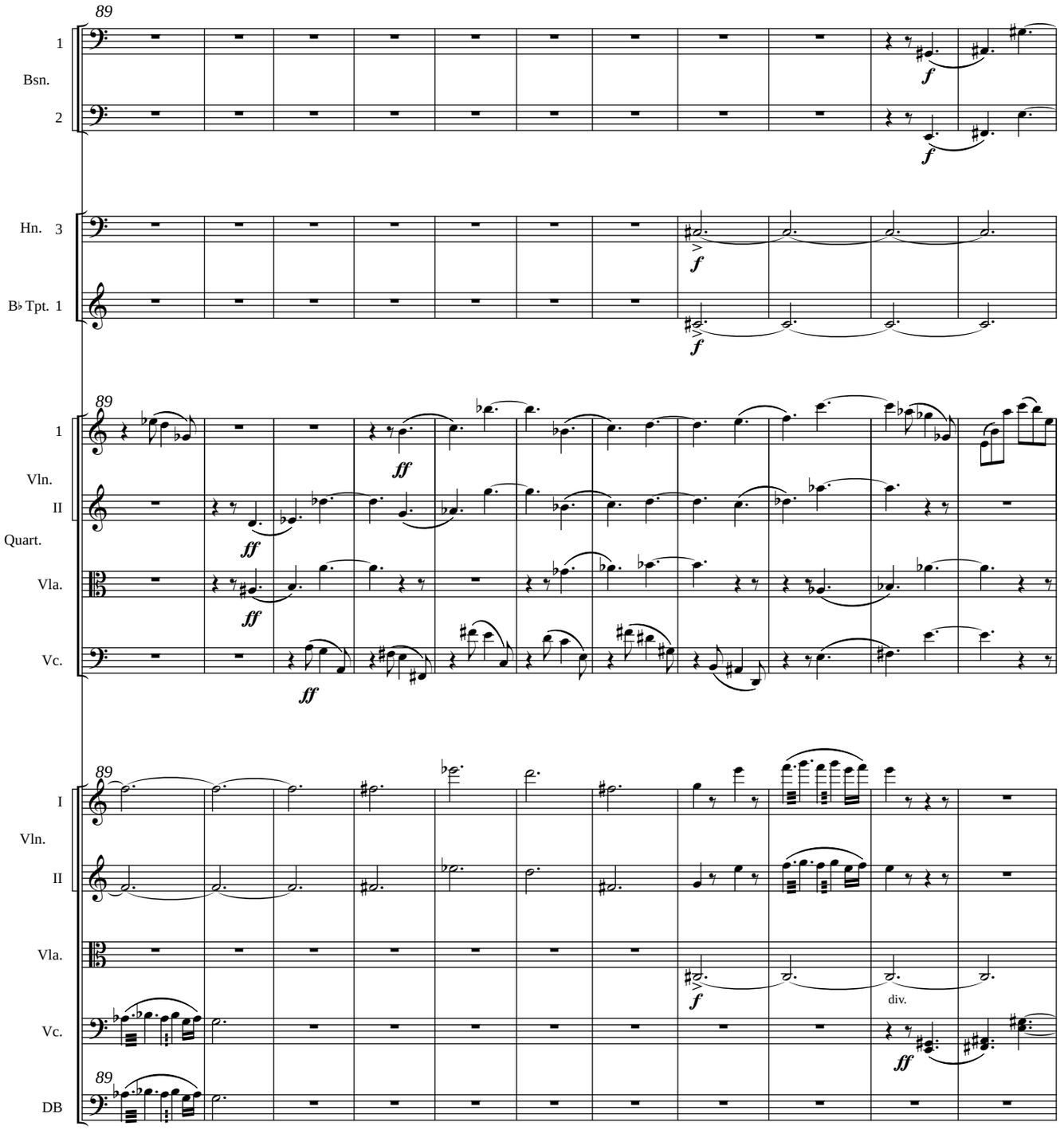

26
Fl.
1
1
B♭ Cl.
2
p
p
1
Bsn.
2
p
p
26
1
Hn.
3
p
p
26
8va
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
5
5
5
5
26
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
p
p
p
26
DB

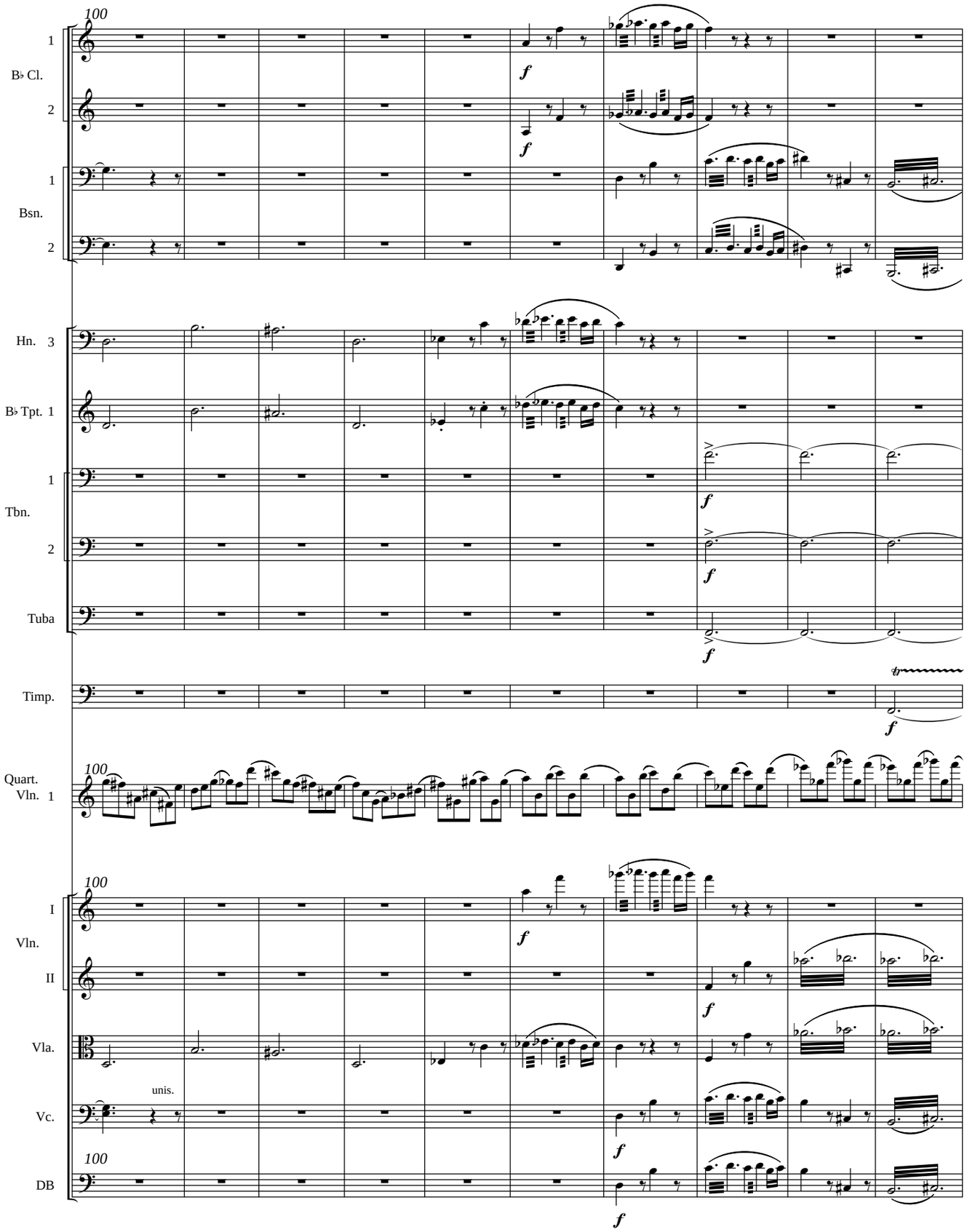

36
Fl.
1
(picc.)
mf
B♭ Cl.
1
2
p
Bsn.
1
2
p
36
Hn.
1
2
3
4
p
(8va)
36
Vln.
I
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
p
36
Vln.
I
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
36
p

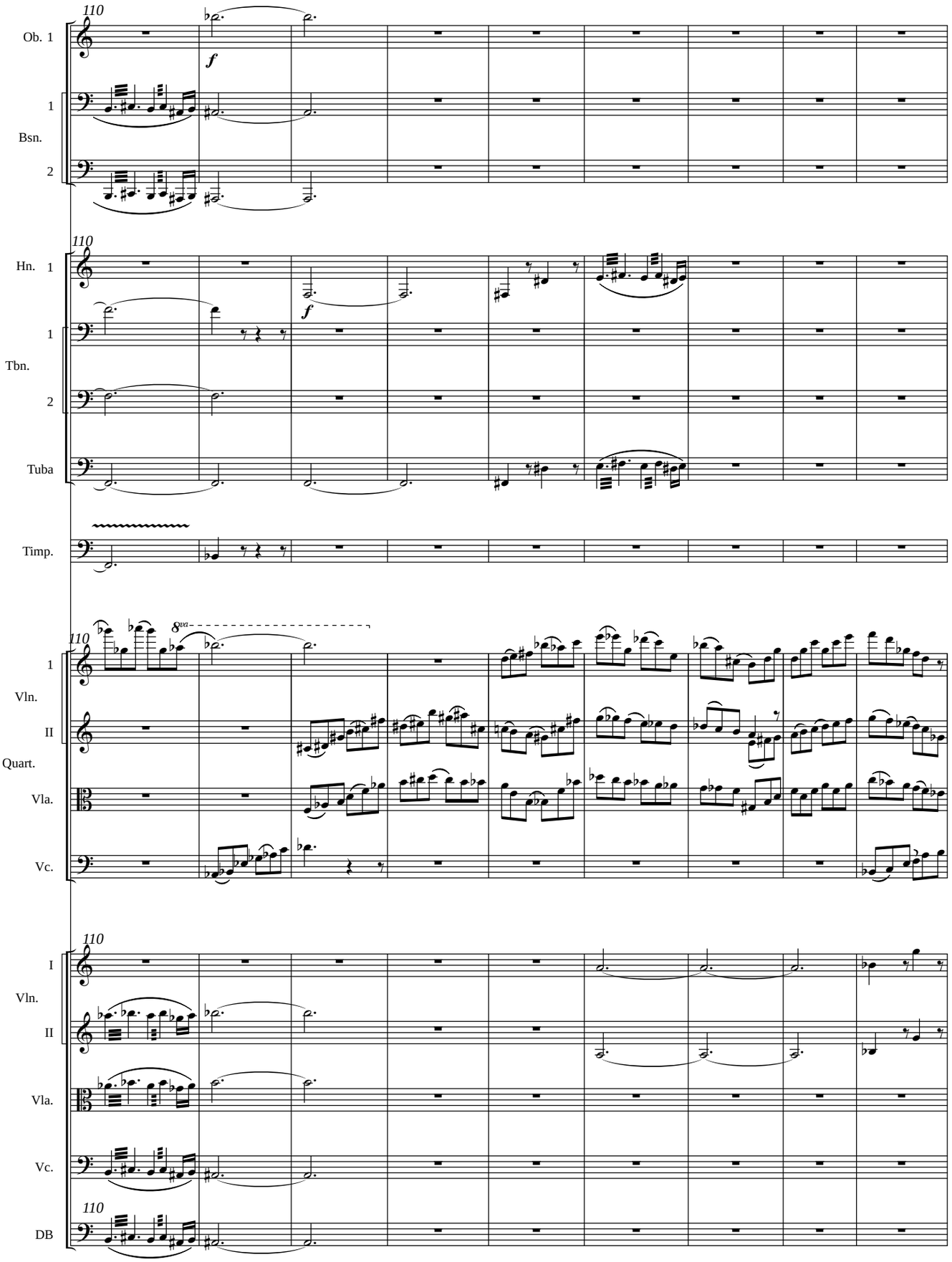

(picc.)
50
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
f
mp

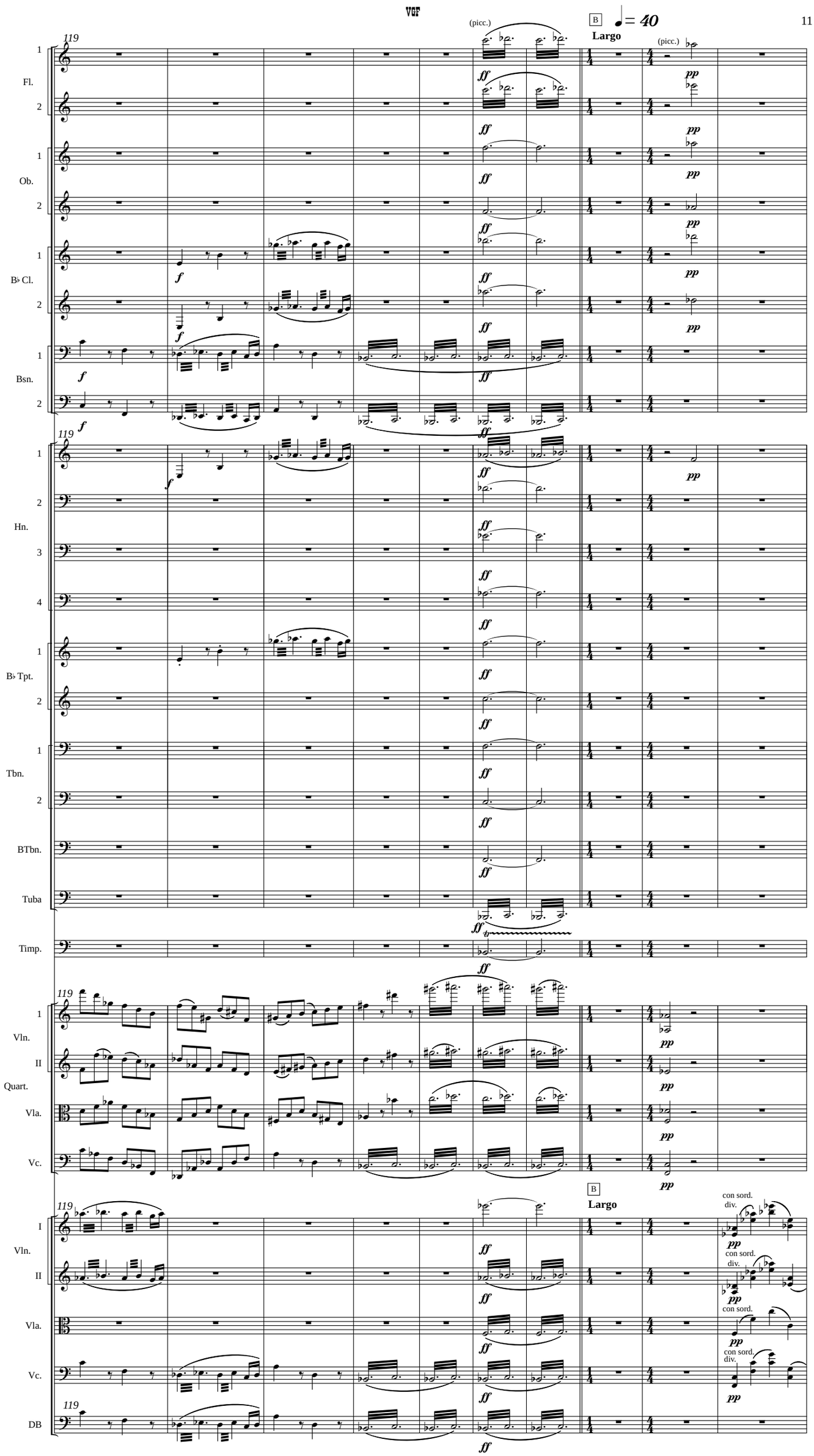

(picc.)
A
(Fl.1)
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
B♭ Cl. 1
B♭ Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
B♭ Tpt. 1
B♭ Tpt. 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
BTbn.
Tuba
Vln. I
Vln. II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
DB
div.
unis.

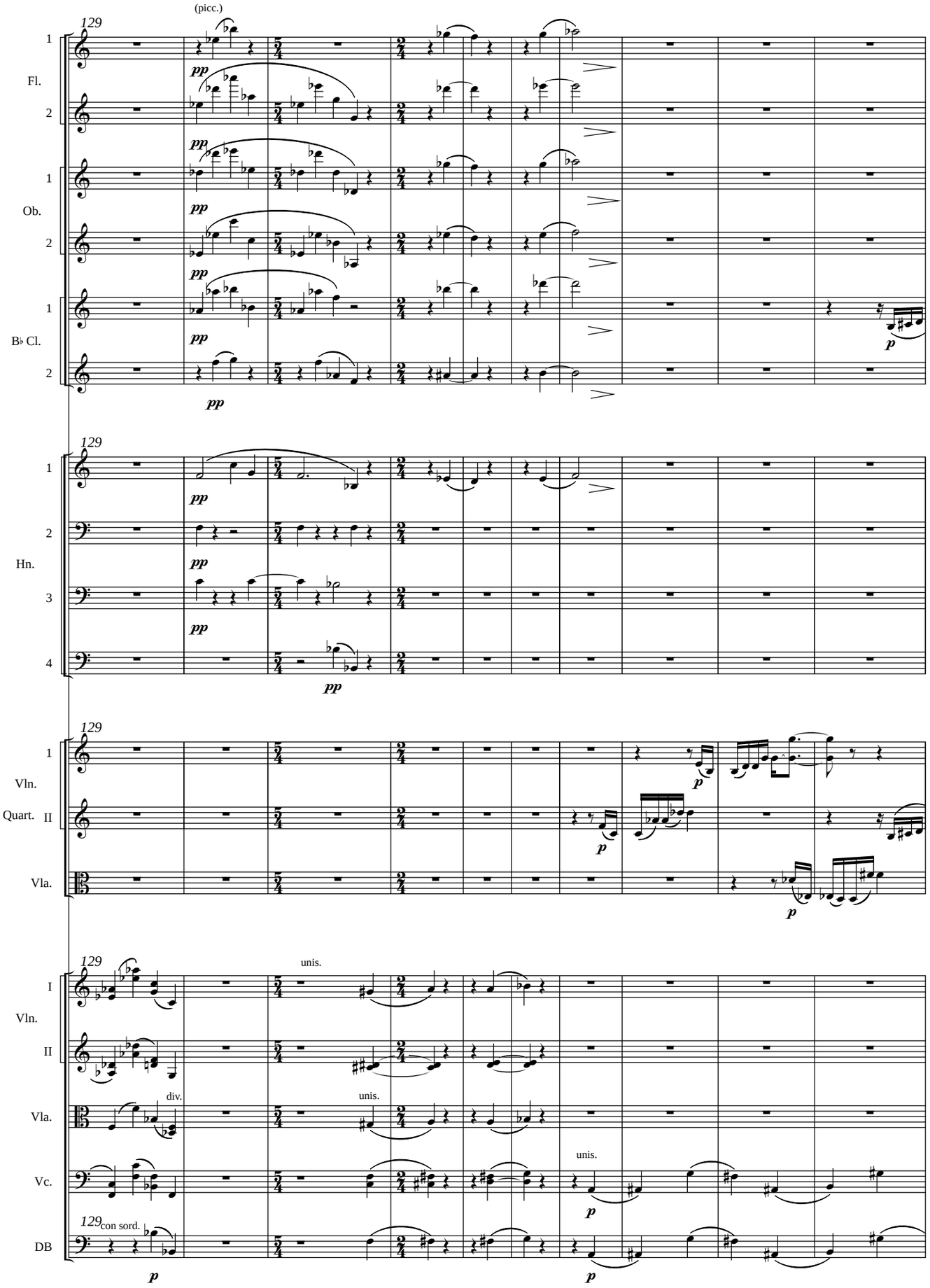

76
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
76
1
2
Hn.
3
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
ff
76
1
Quart.
Vln.
II
ff
ff
76
I
Vln.
II
f
f
Vla.
unis.
Vc.
f
76
DB
f

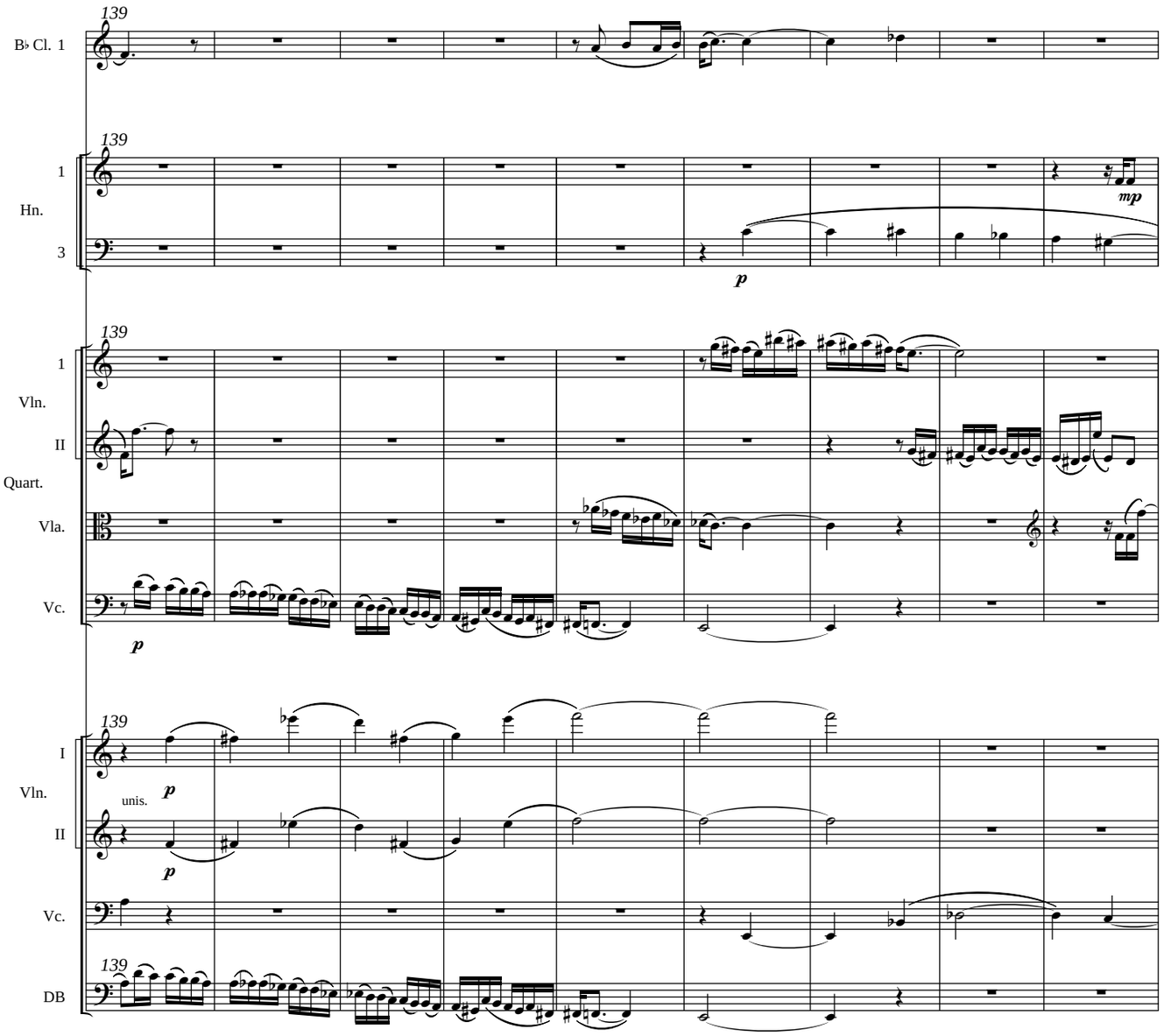

89
1
Bsn.
2
f
f
Hn. 3
B♭ Tpt. 1
f
f
89
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
ff
ff
ff
ff
89
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
f
div.
ff
89

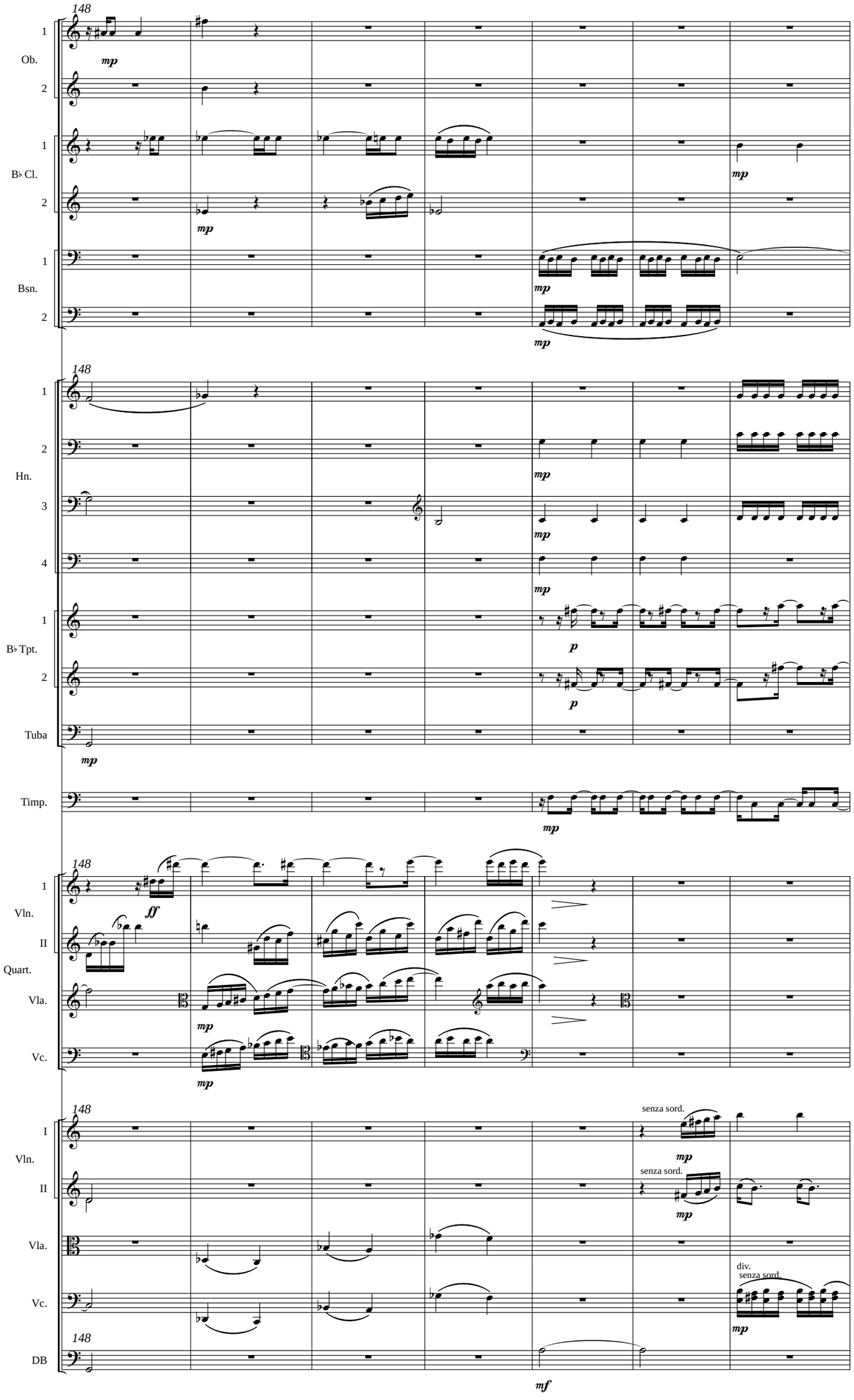

100
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
Hn. 3
B♭ Tpt. 1
1
Tbn.
2
Tuba
Timp.
100
Quart. Vln. 1
100
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
unis.
Vc.
100
DB
f

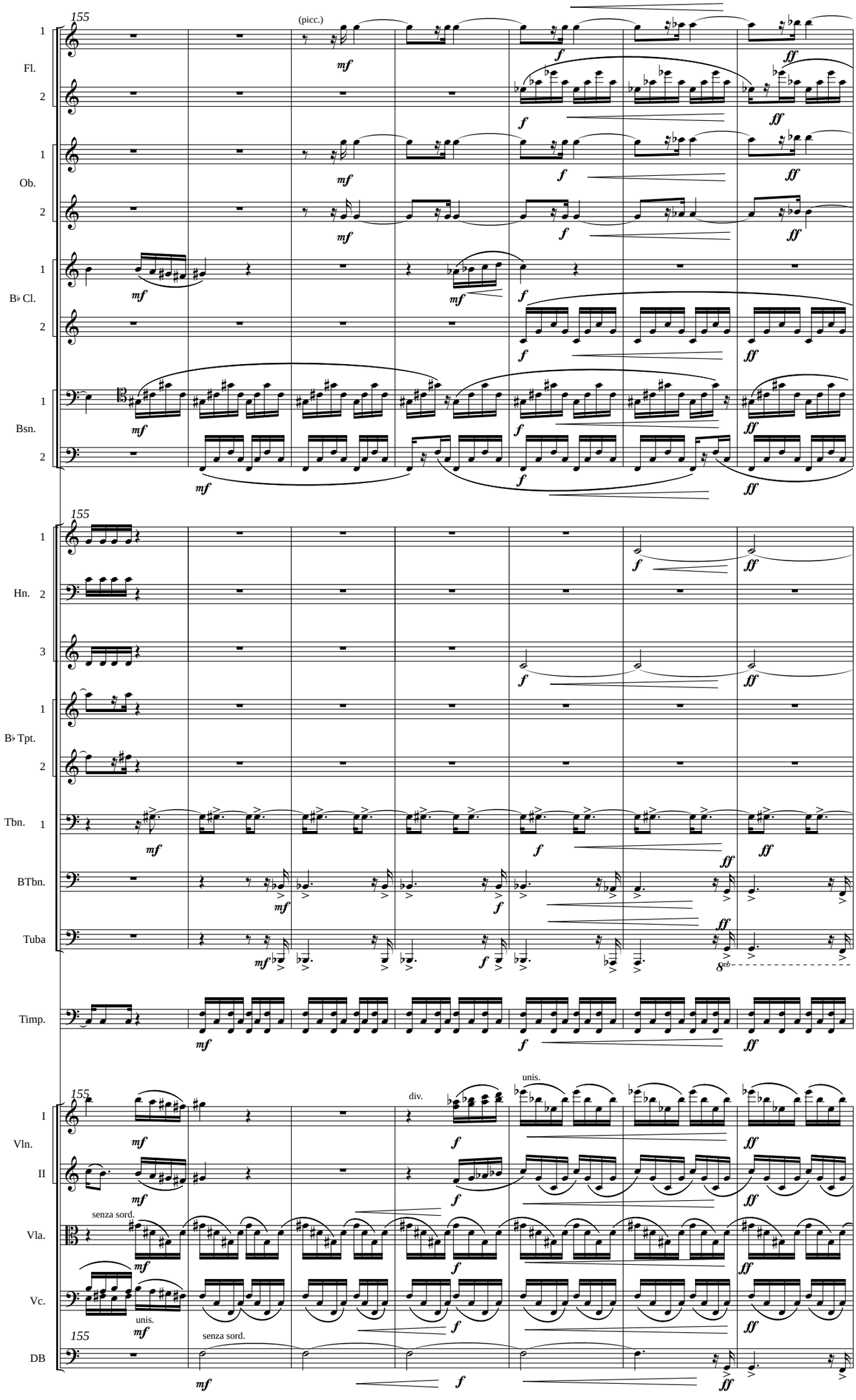

110
Ob. 1
f
1
Bsn.
2
110
Hn. 1
f
1
Tbn.
2
Tuba
Timp.
110
8va
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
110
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
110
DB

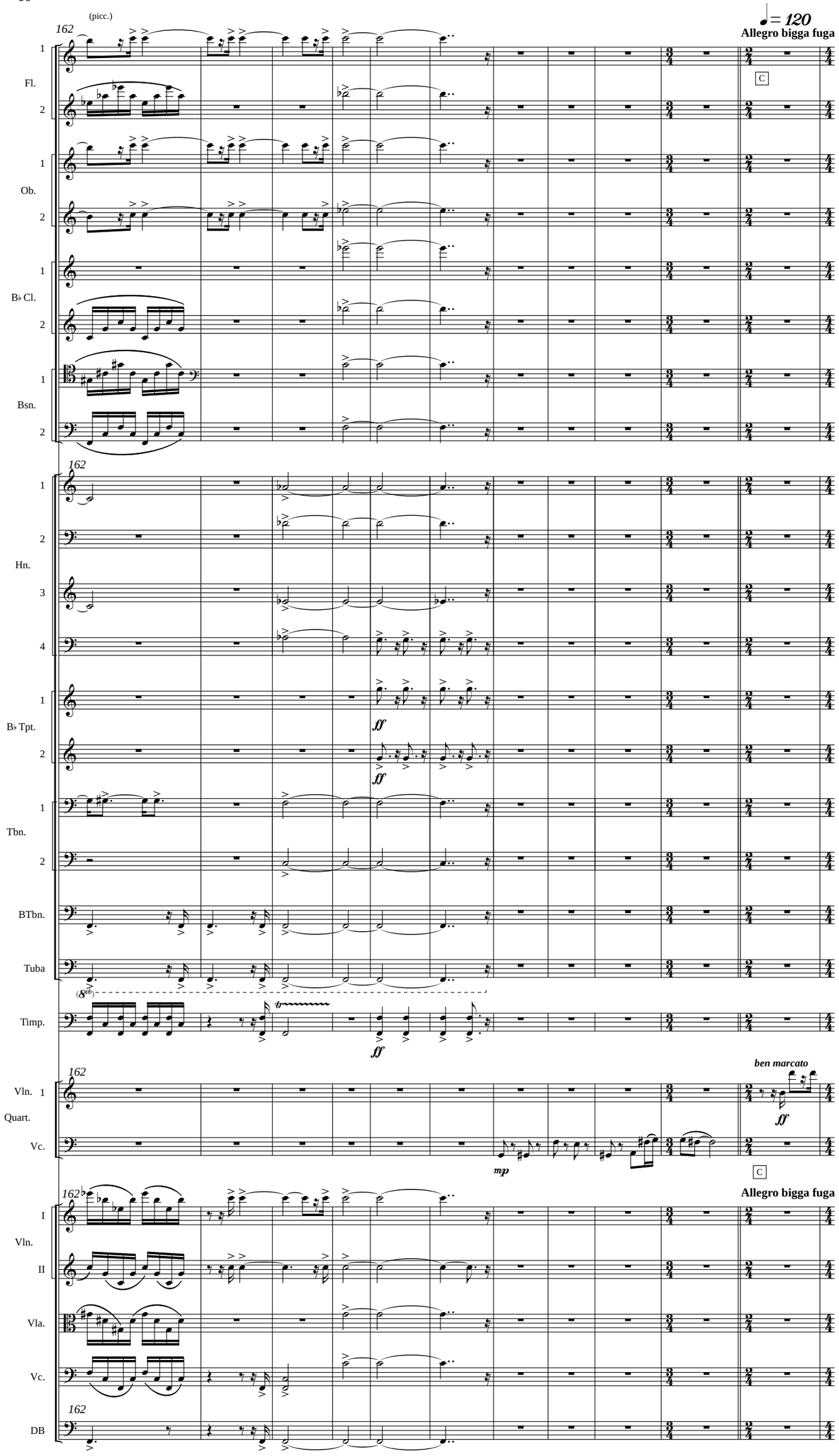

B
♩ = 40
Largo
(picc.)
119
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
DB
con sord.
div.

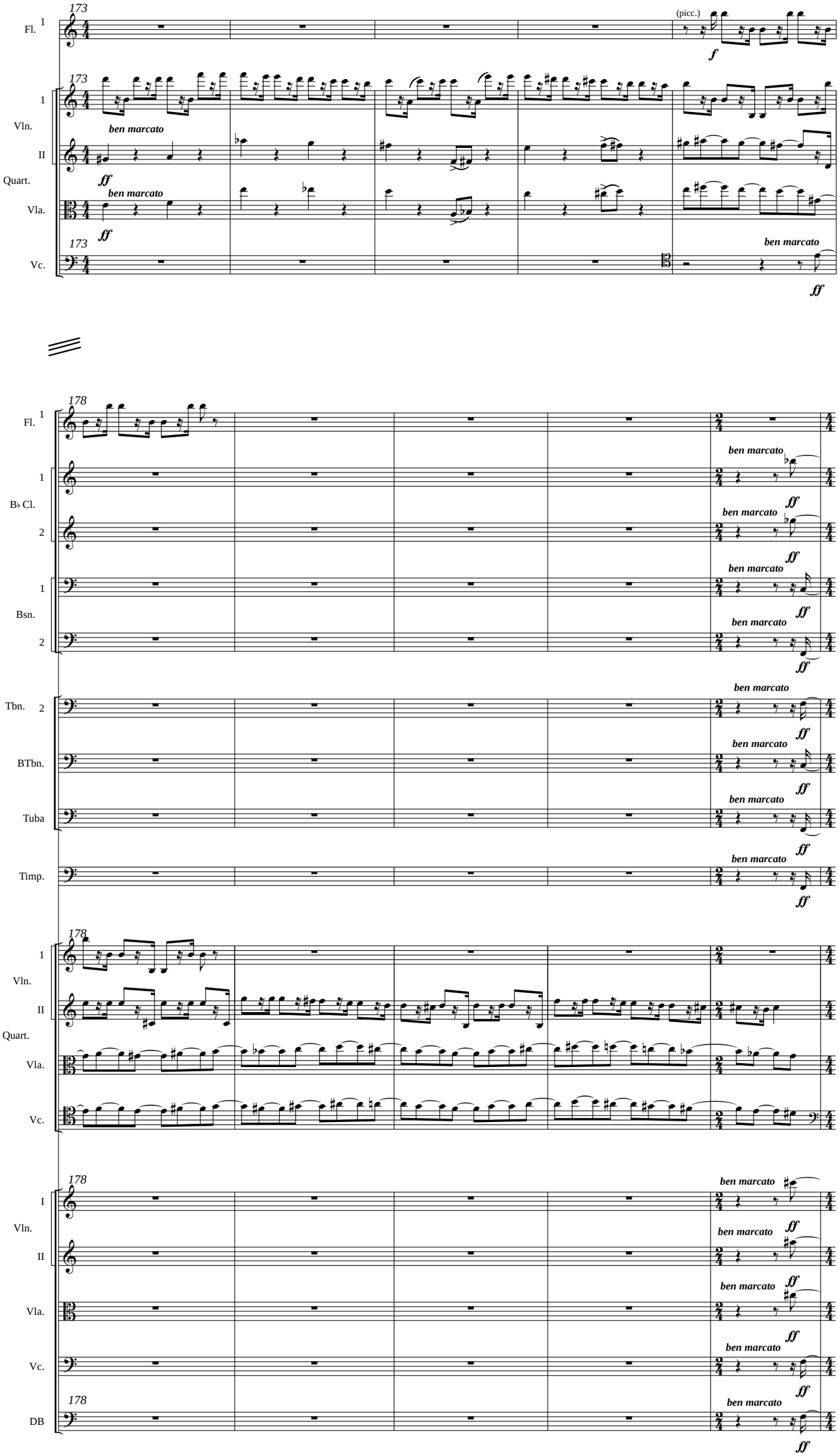

129
(picc.)
1
Fl.
2
pp
1
Ob.
2
pp
1
B♭ Cl.
2
pp
p
129
1
2
Hn.
3
4
pp
129
1
Vln.
Quart.
II
Vla.
p
129
unis.
I
Vln.
II
div.
unis.
Vla.
unis.
Vc.
129
con sord.
DB
p

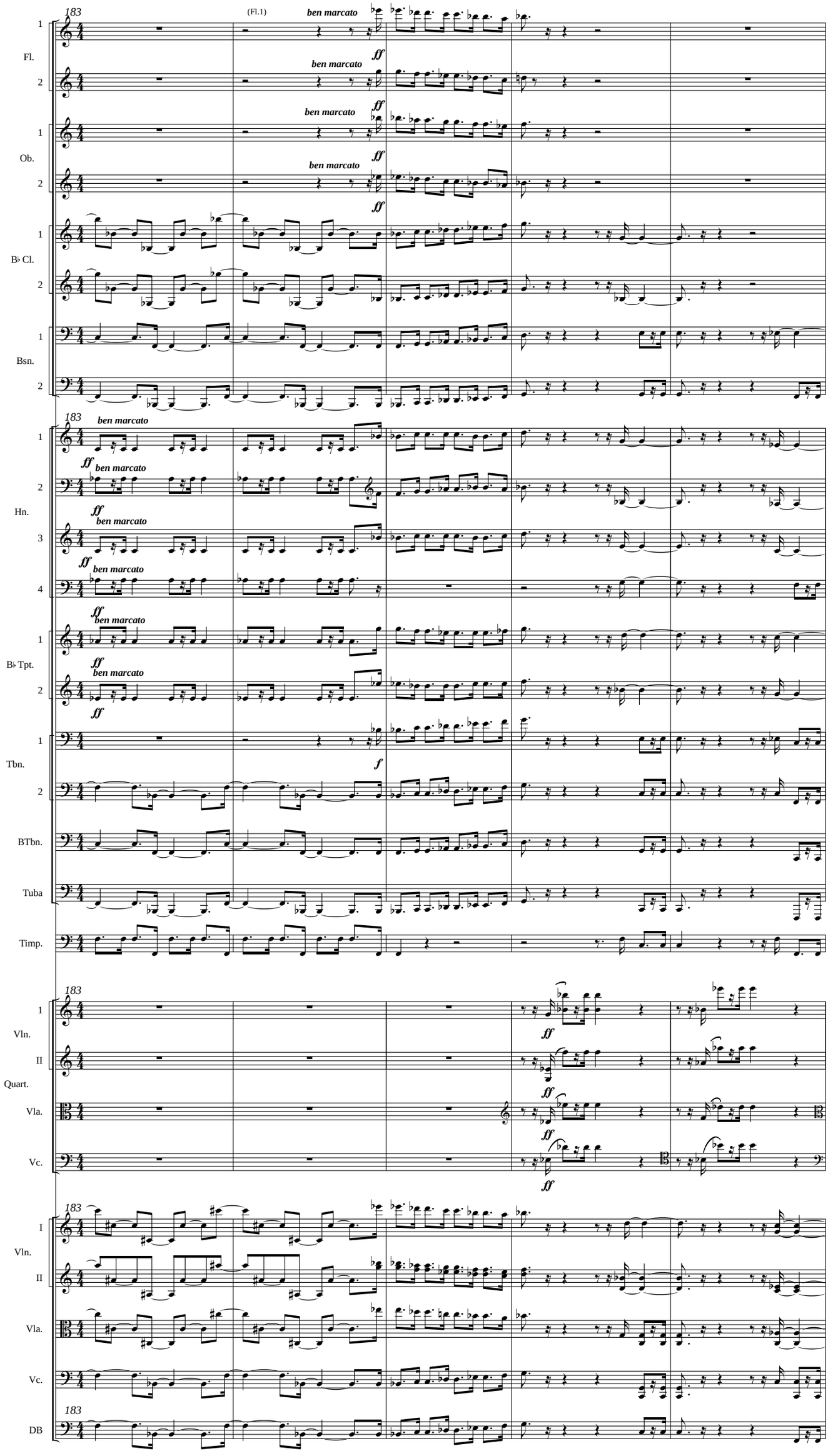

139
B♭ Cl. 1
139
1
Hn.
3
mp
p
139
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
p
139
I
Vln.
unis.
II
p
p
Vc.
139
DB

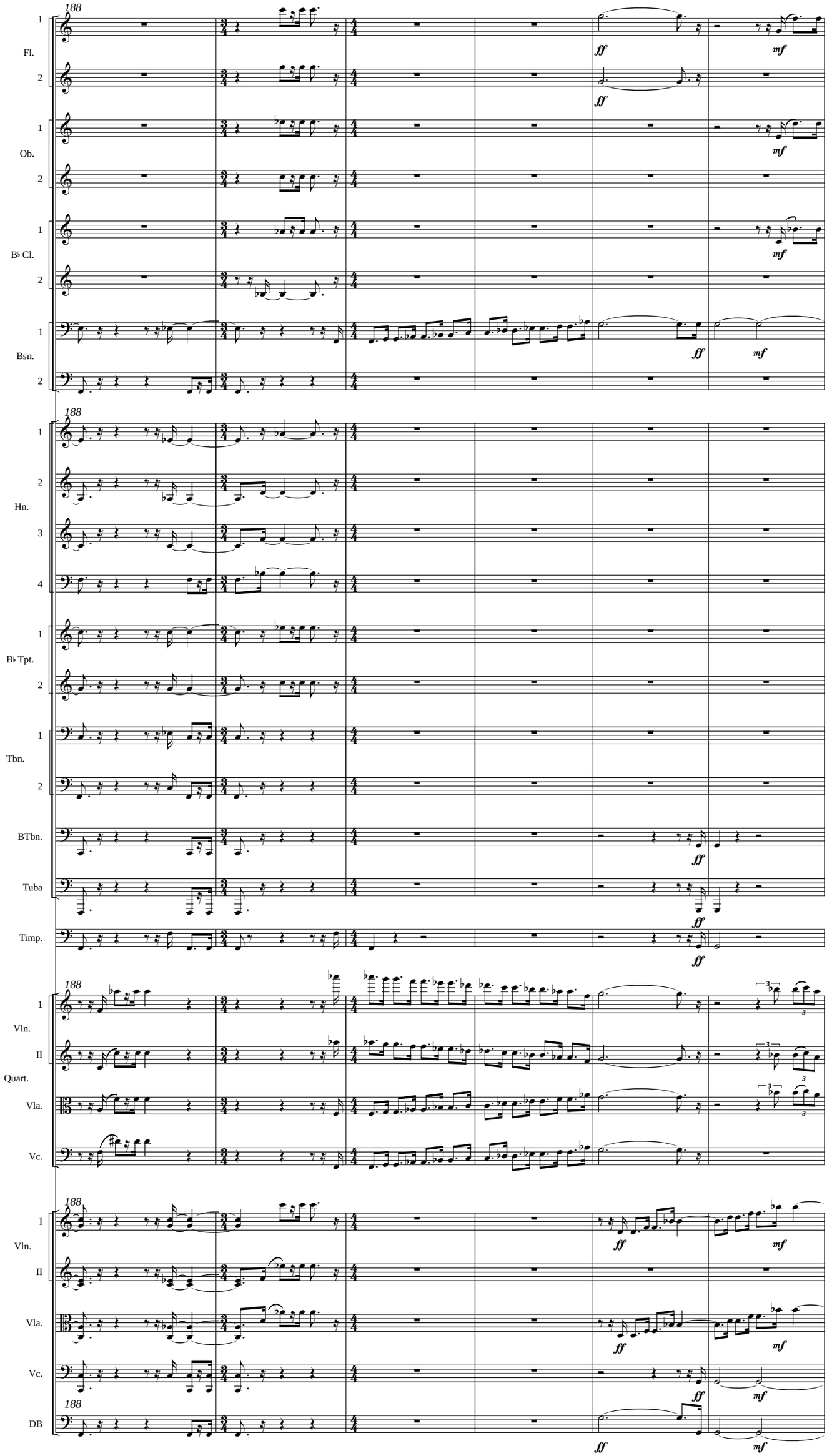

148
1
Ob.
2
mp
1
B♭ Cl.
2
mp
mp
1
Bsn.
2
mp
mp
148
1
2
Hn.
3
4
mp
mp
mp
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
p
p
Tuba
mp
Timp.
mp
148
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
ff
mp
mp
148
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
senza sord.
mp
senza sord.
mp
div.
senza sord.
mp
148
mf

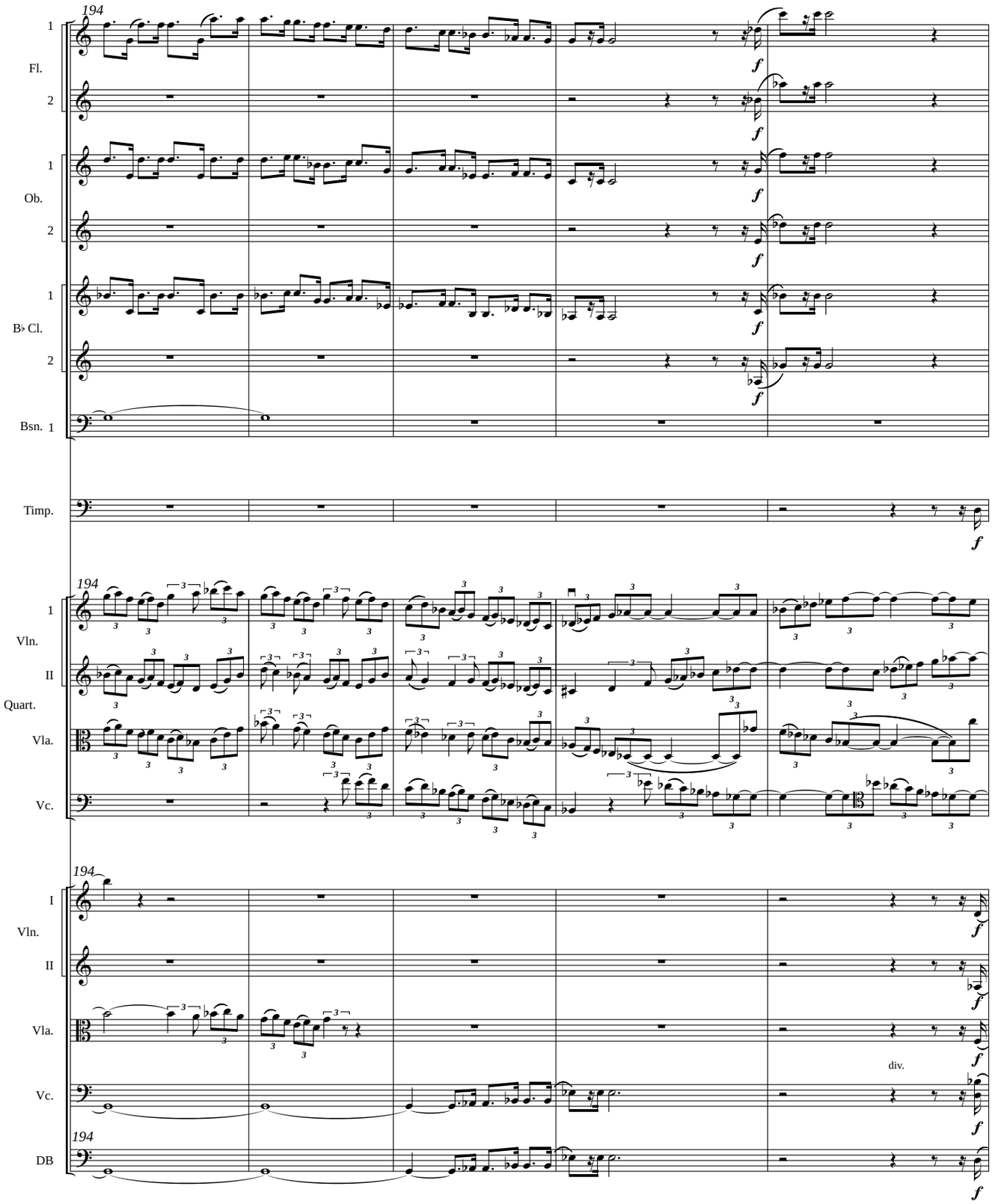

155
(picc.)
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
div.
unis.
senza sord.
mf
f
ff
8vb

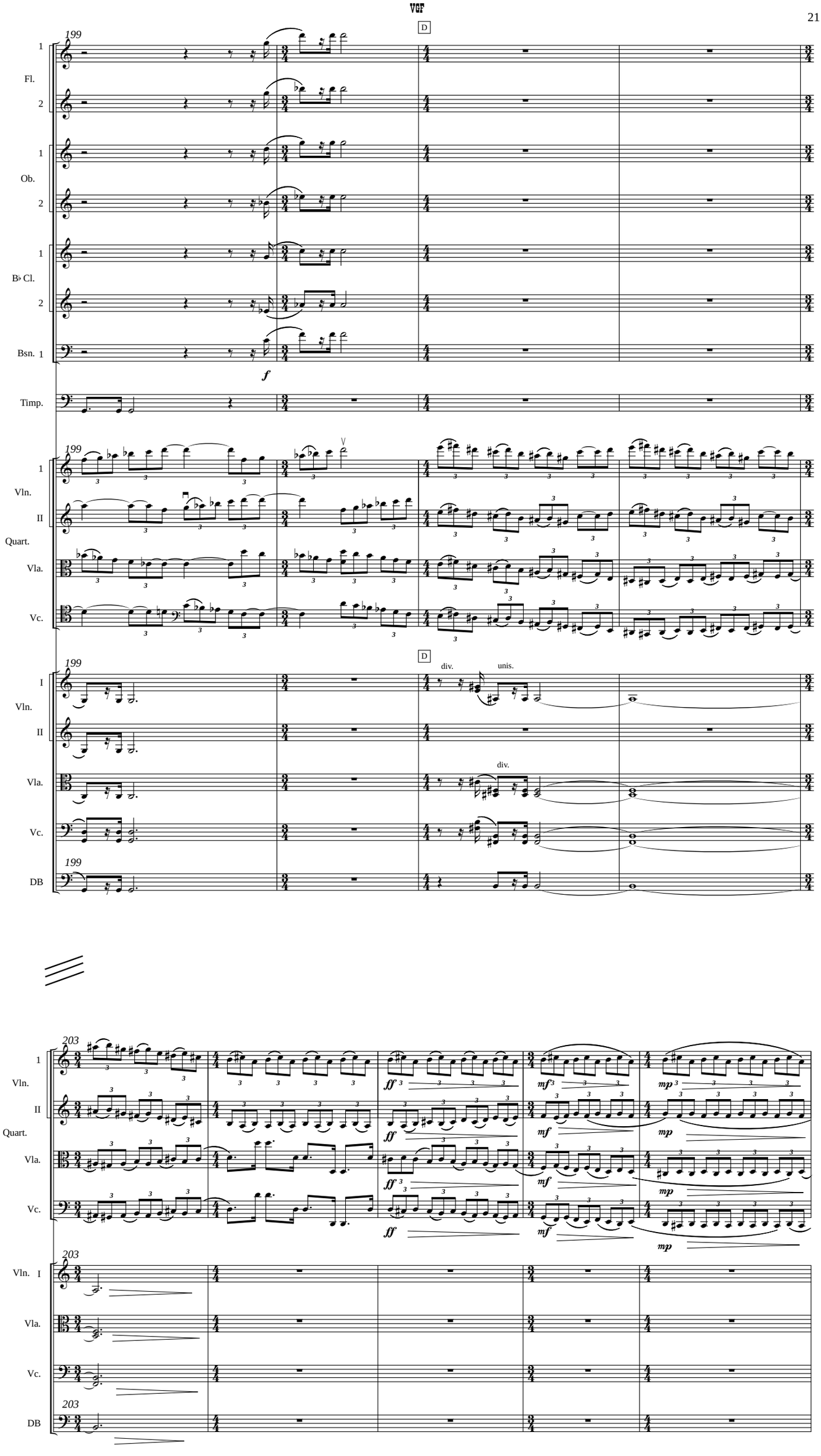

(picc.)
162
♩= 120
Allegro bigga fuga
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
Vln.
Quart.
Vc.
ben marcato
C
Allegro bigga fuga
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
DB

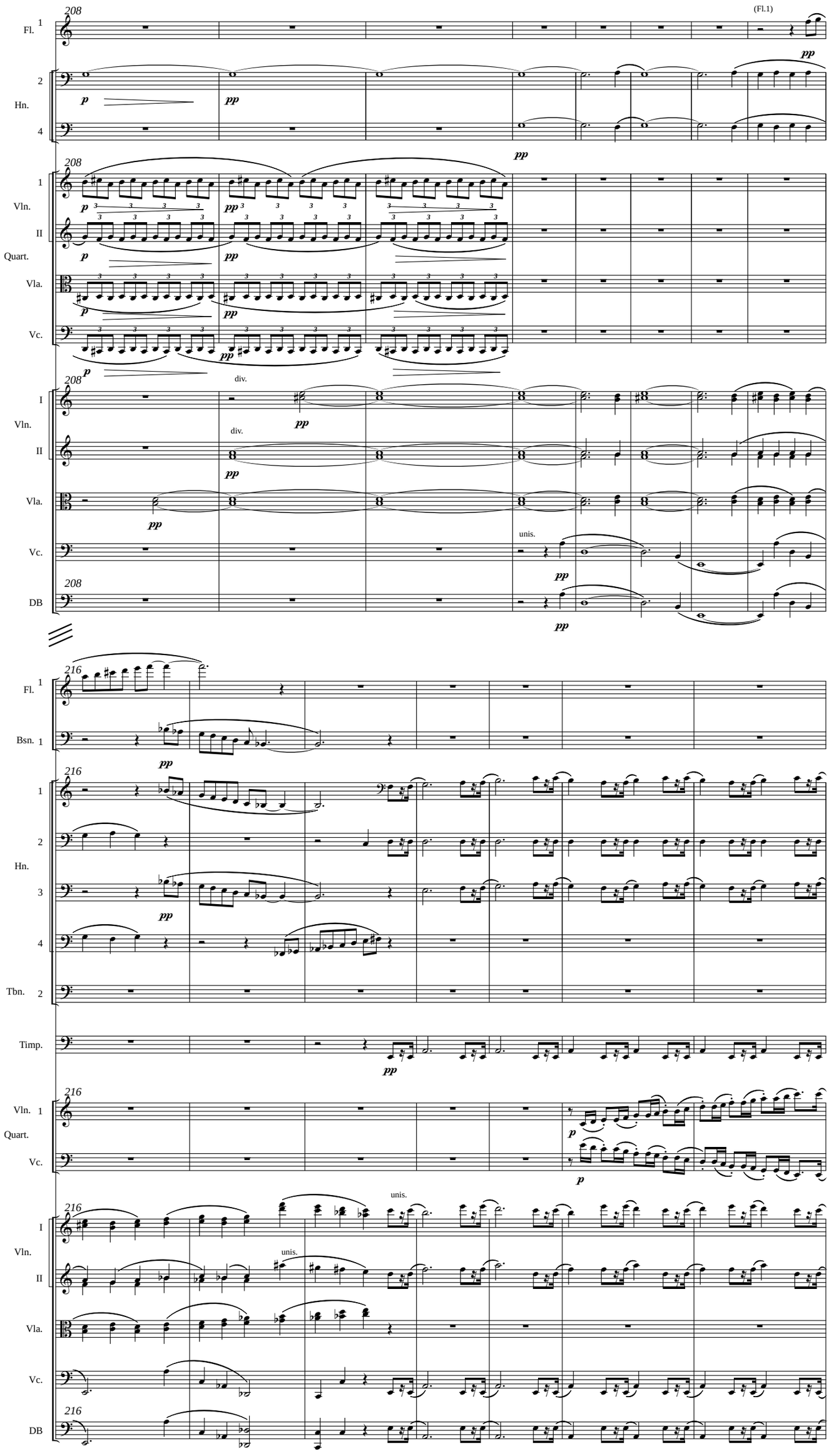

173
Fl. 1
(picc.)
f
173
1
Vln.
II
ben marcato
ff
Quart.
Vla.
ben marcato
ff
173
Vc.
ben marcato
ff
178
Fl. 1
ben marcato
ff
1
B♭ Cl.
2
ben marcato
ff
1
Bsn.
2
ben marcato
ff
ben marcato
ff
Tbn. 2
ben marcato
ff
BTbn.
ben marcato
ff
Tuba
ben marcato
ff
Timp.
ben marcato
ff
178
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
178
I
Vln.
II
ben marcato
ff
ben marcato
ff
Vla.
ben marcato
ff
Vc.
ben marcato
ff
178
DB
ben marcato
ff

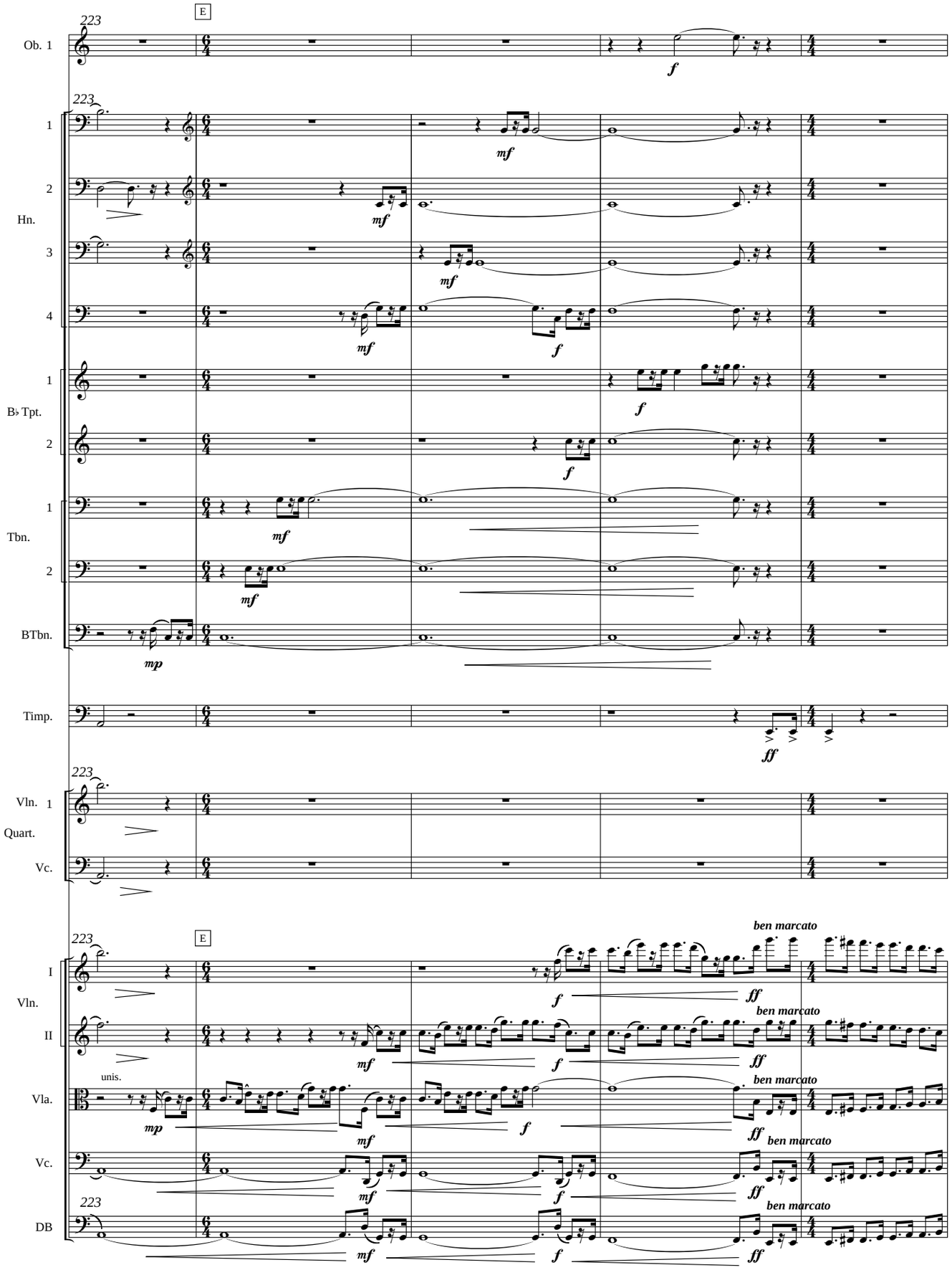

183
(Fl.1)
ben marcato
ff
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
f
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
I
DB

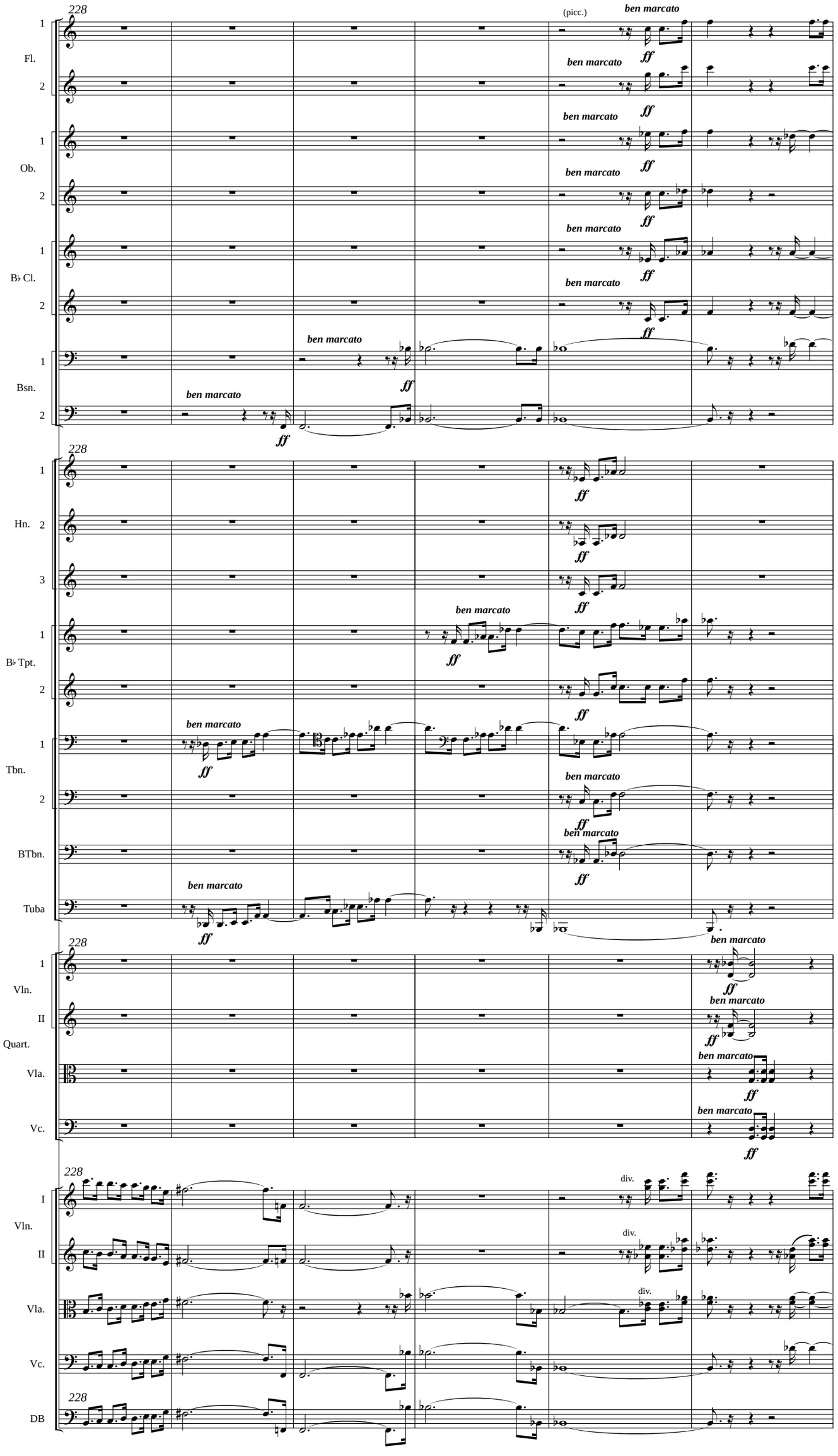

188
1
Fl.
2
ff
mf
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
188
1
2
Hn.
3
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
188
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
188
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
188
DB

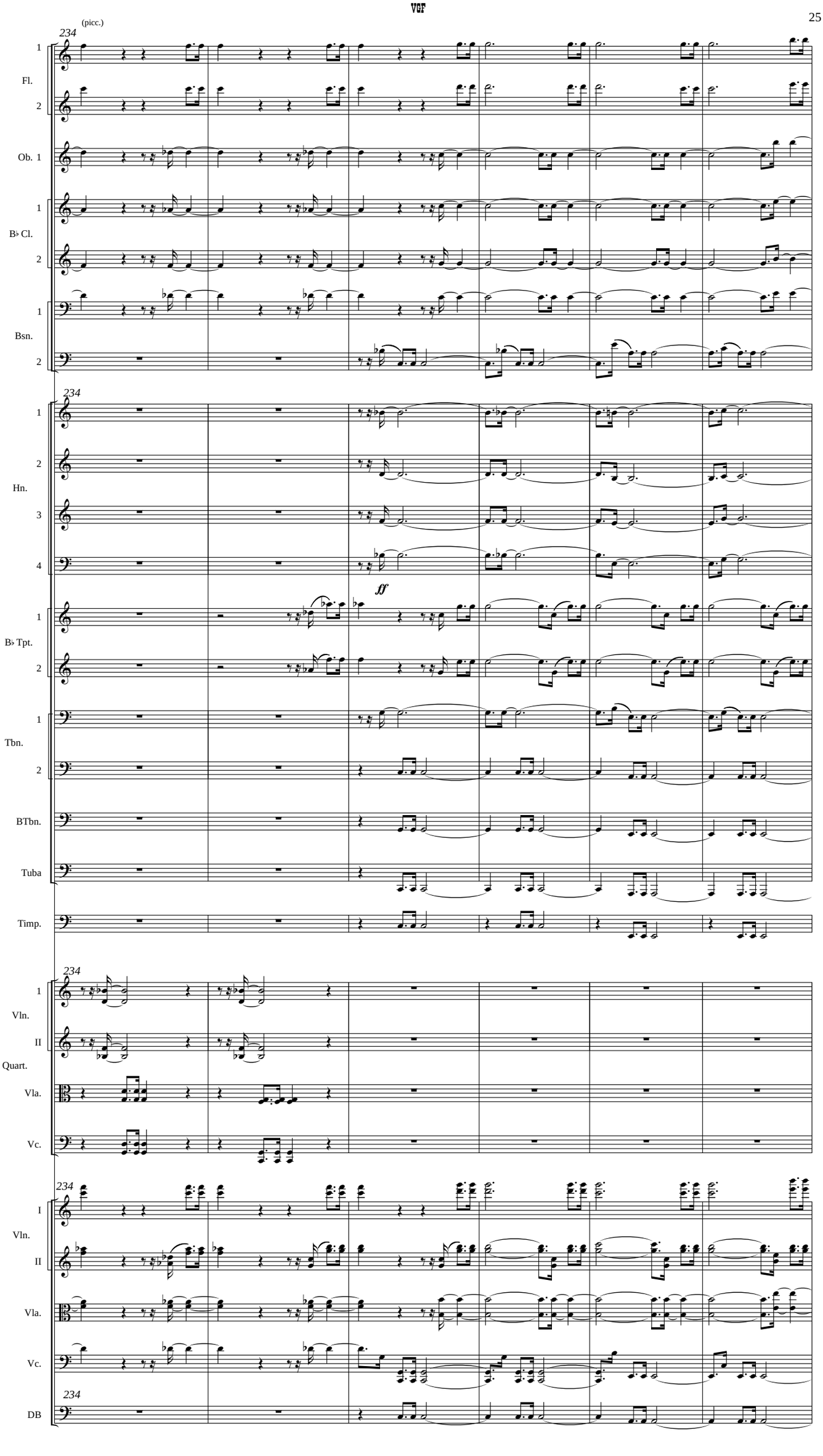

194
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
Bsn. 1
Timp.
194
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
194
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
div.
Vc.
194
DB

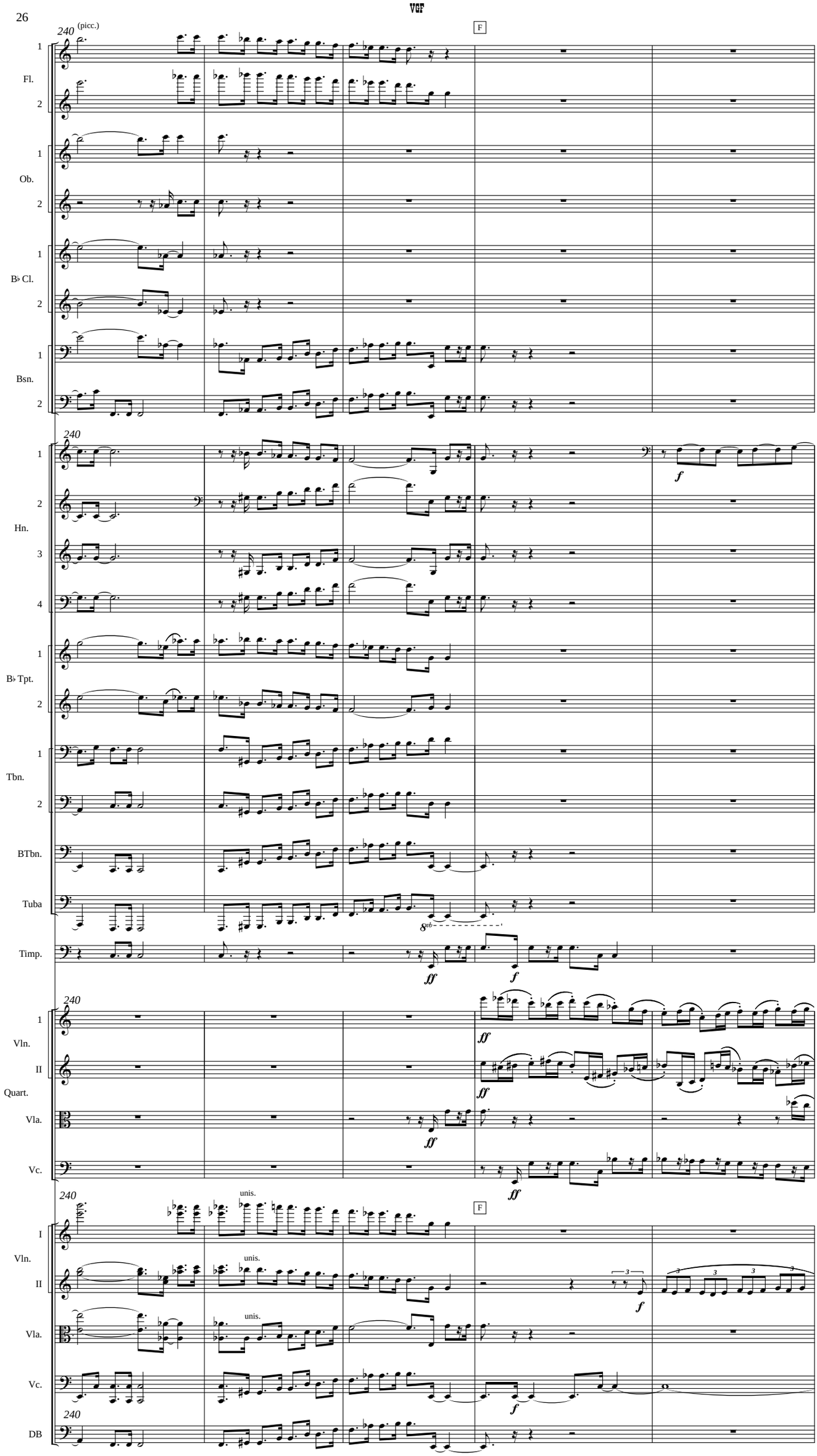

199
D
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
Bsn. 1
f
Timp.
199
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
199
D
I
Vln.
II
div.
unis.
Vla.
div.
Vc.
199
DB
203
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
ff
mf
mp
203
Vln. I
Vla.
Vc.
203
DB

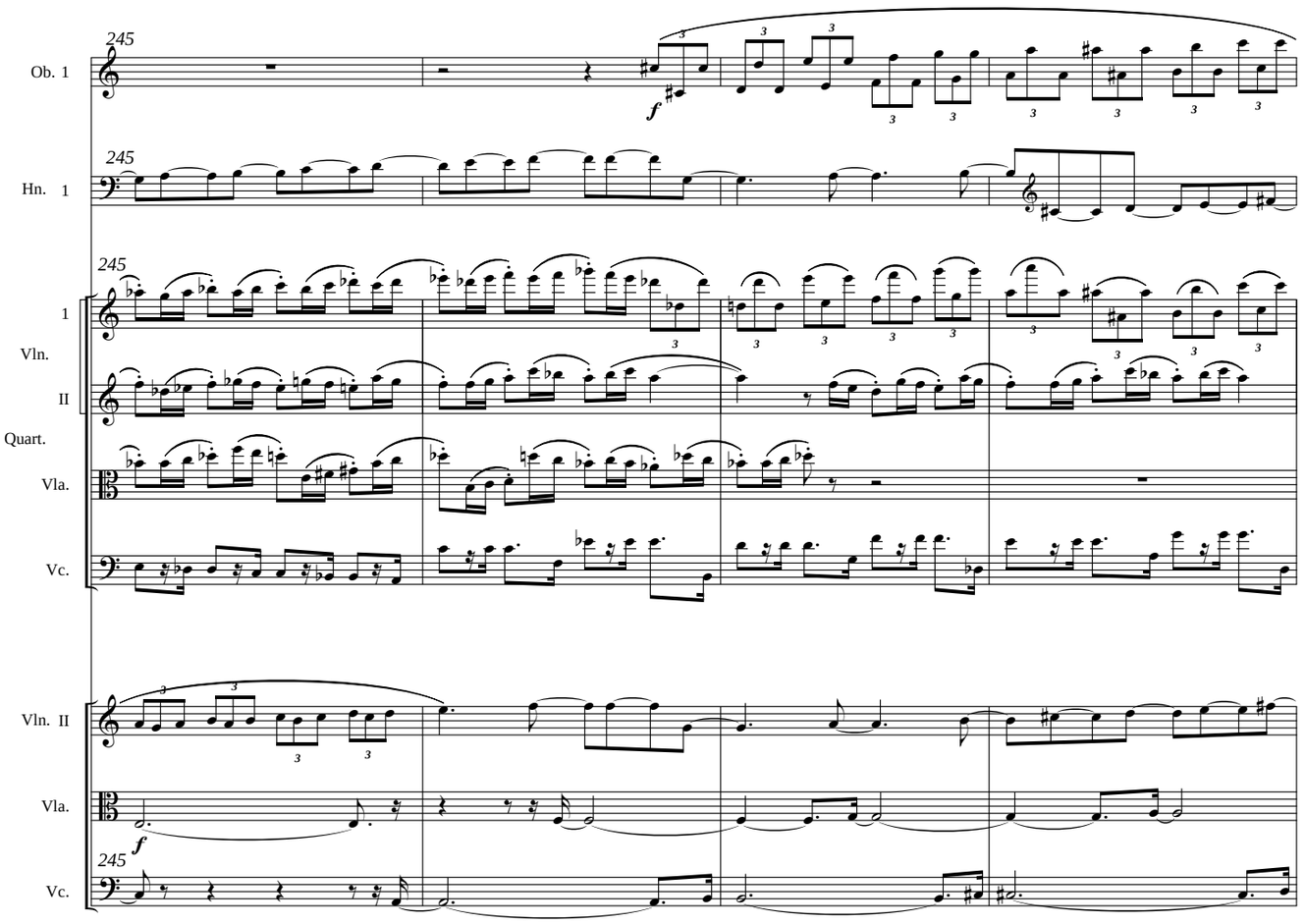

208
Fl. 1
(Fl.1)
2
Hn.
4
p
pp
208
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
208
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
div.
unis.
216
Fl. 1
Bsn. 1
Hn.
Tbn. 2
Timp.
Vln. 1
Quart.
Vc.
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB

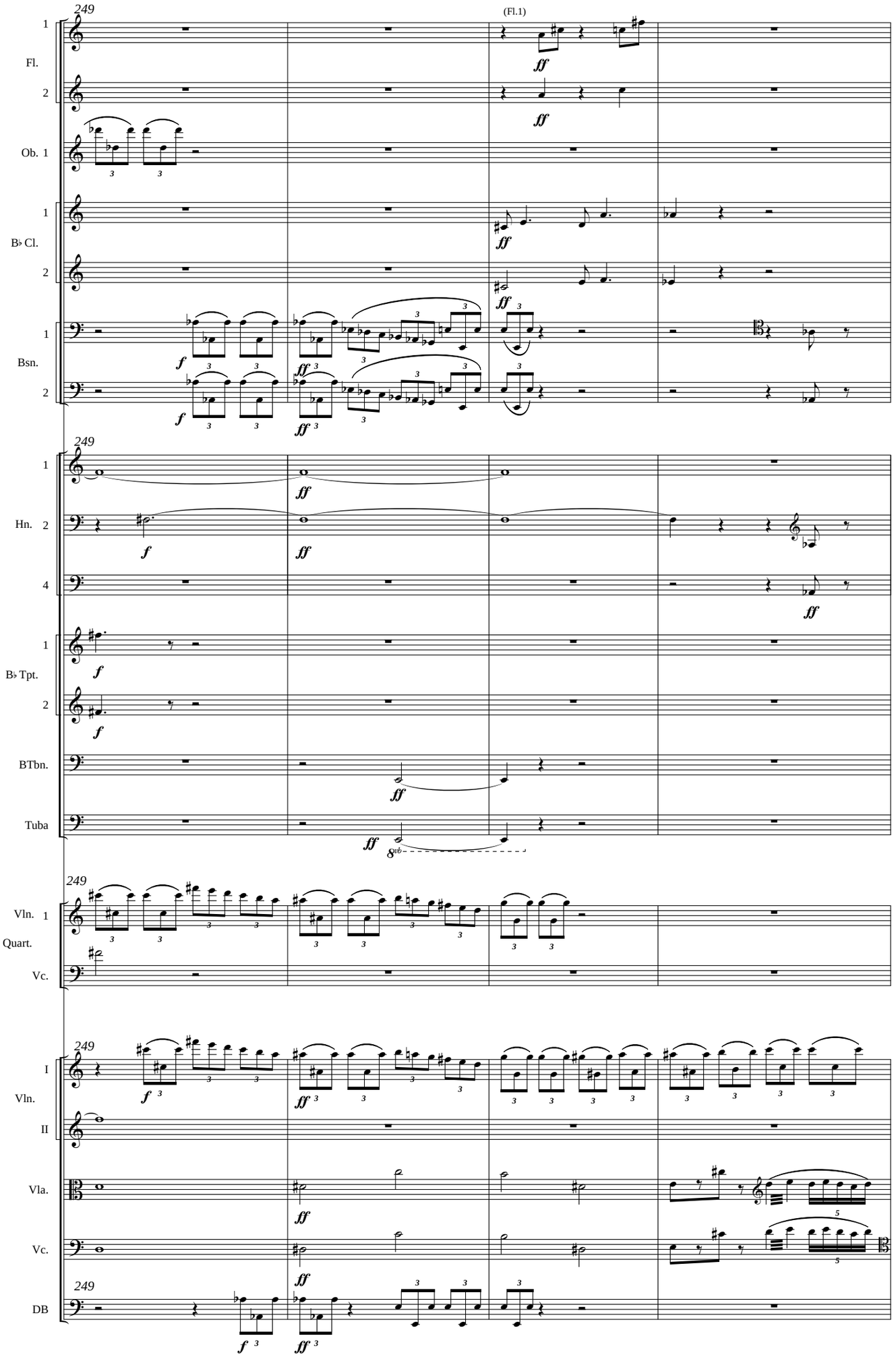

E
223
Ob. 1
1
2
Hn.
3
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Timp.
Vln. 1
Quart.
Vc.
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
unis.
ben marcato
mf
mp
f
ff

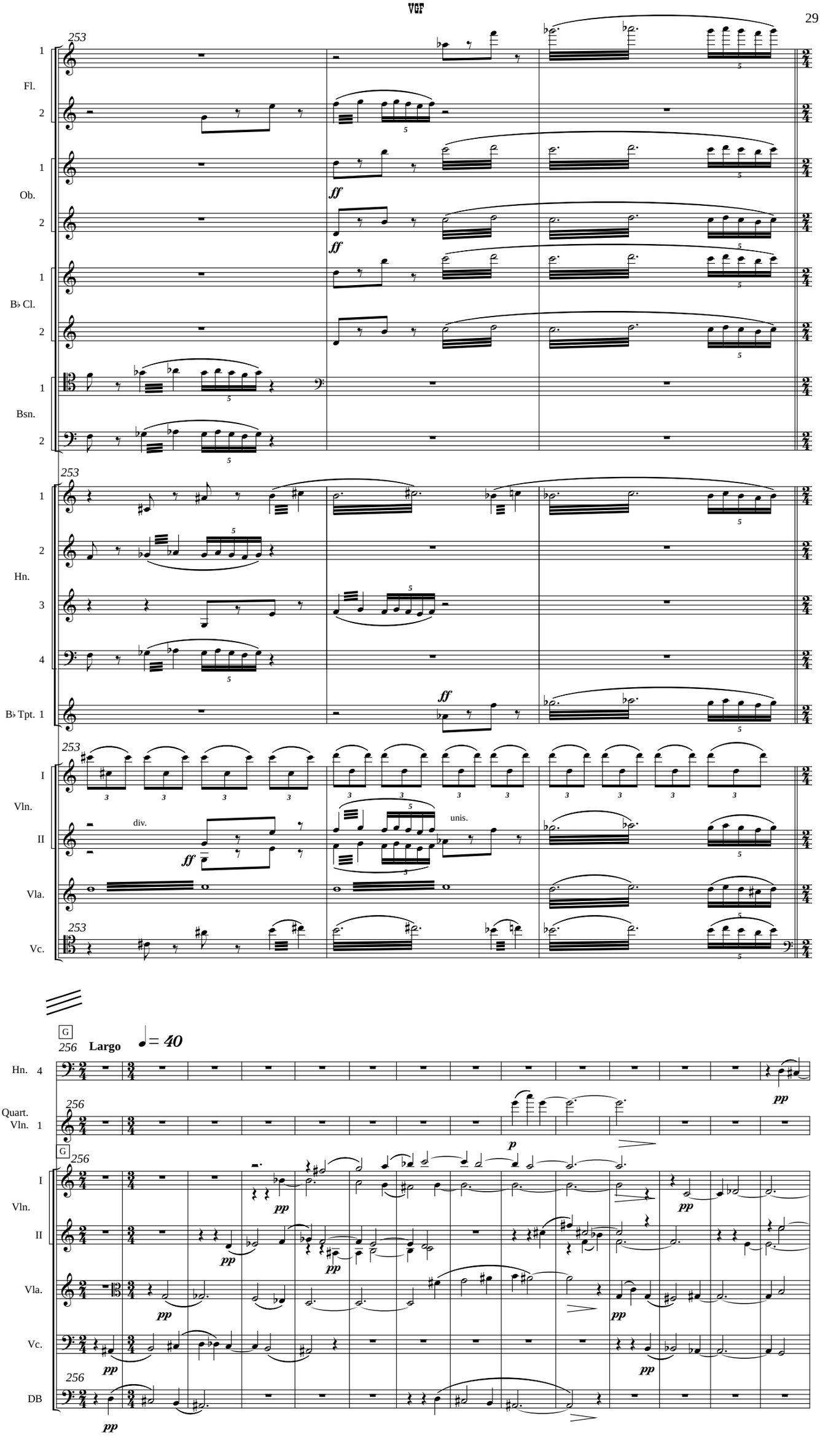

228
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
(picc.)
ben marcato
ff
228
1
Hn.
2
3
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
228
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
228
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
div.

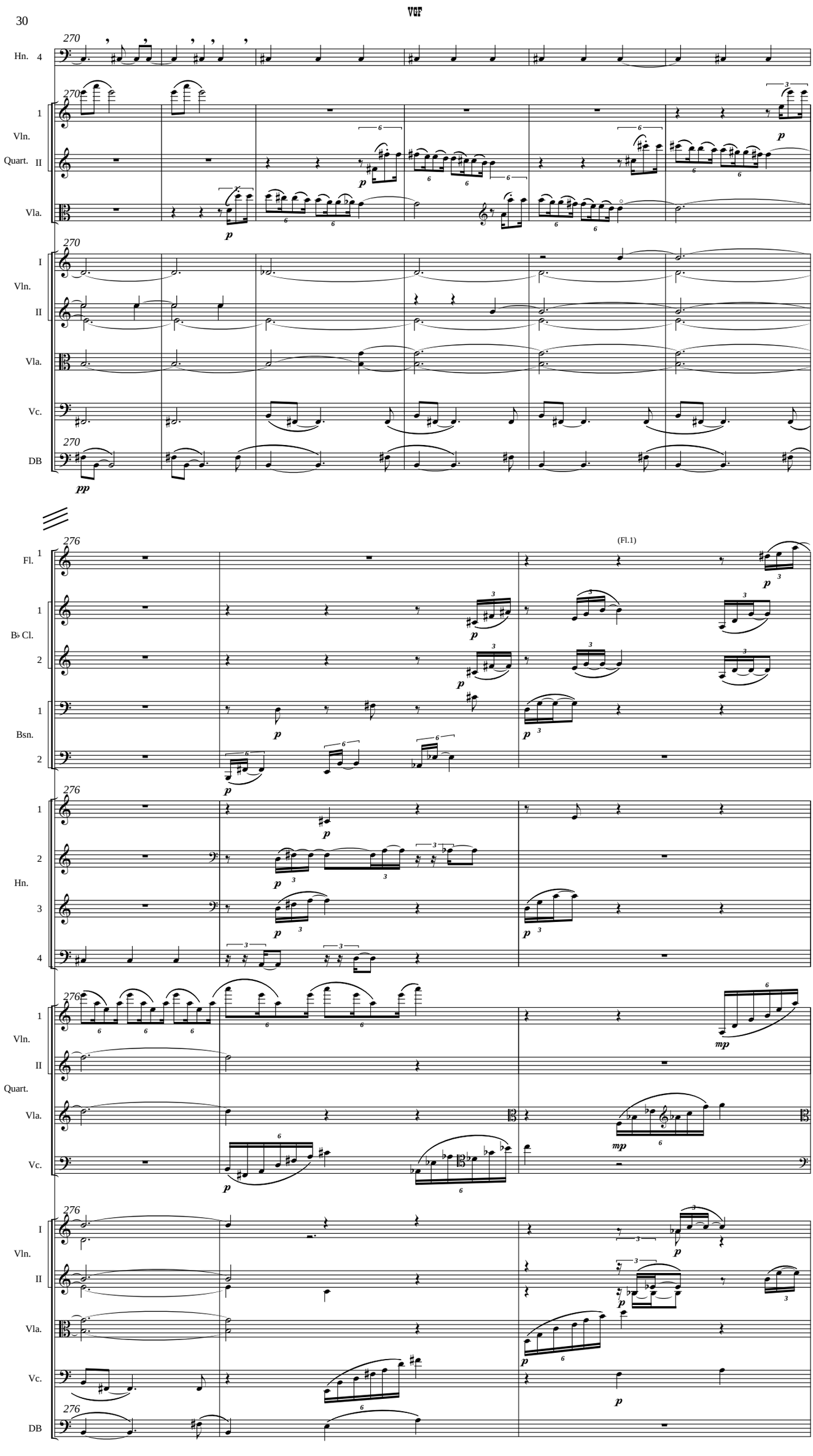

(picc.)
234
1
Fl.
2
Ob. 1
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
234
1
2
Hn.
3
4
ff
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
234
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
234
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
234
DB

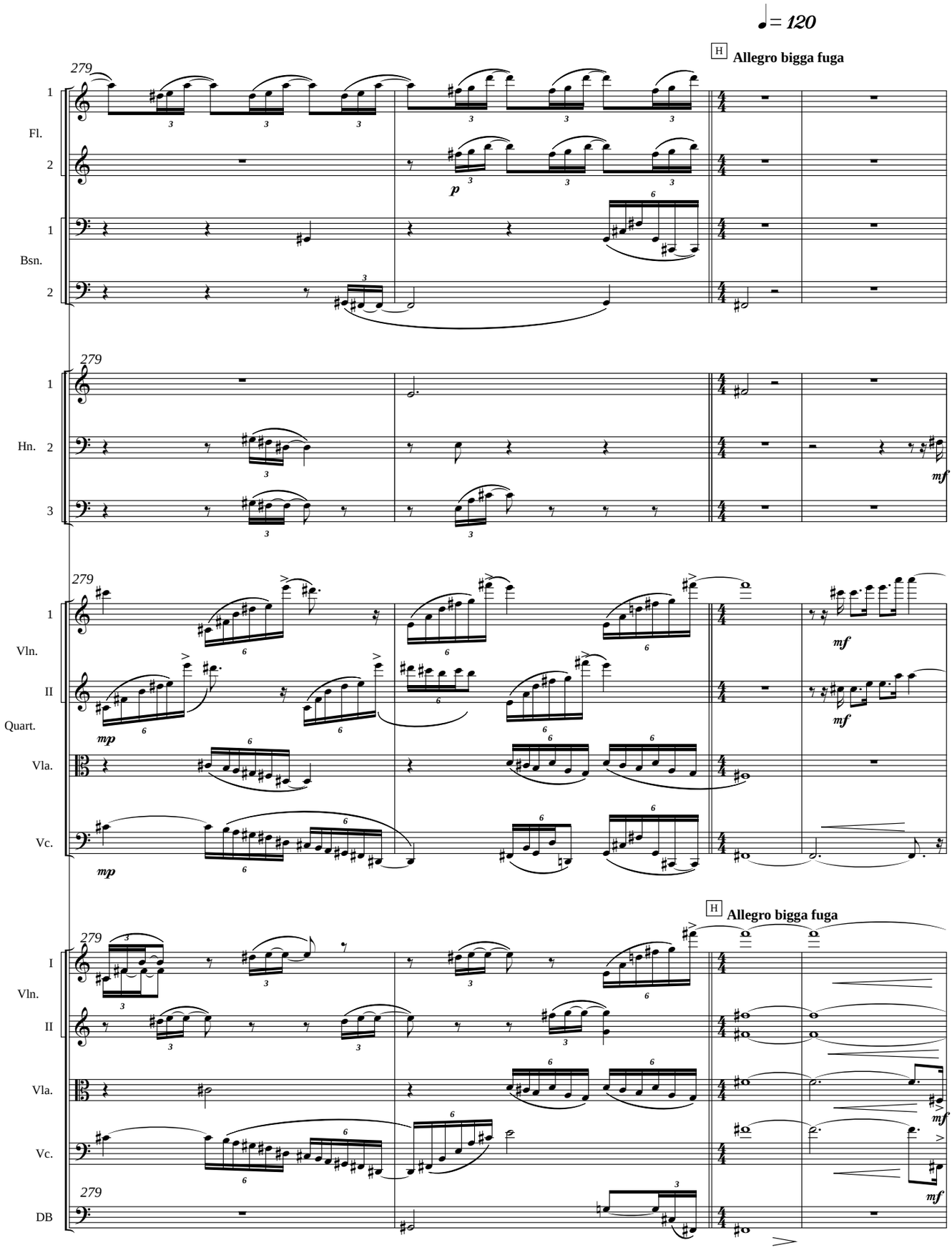

240
(picc.)
F
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
I
unis.
DB
ff
f

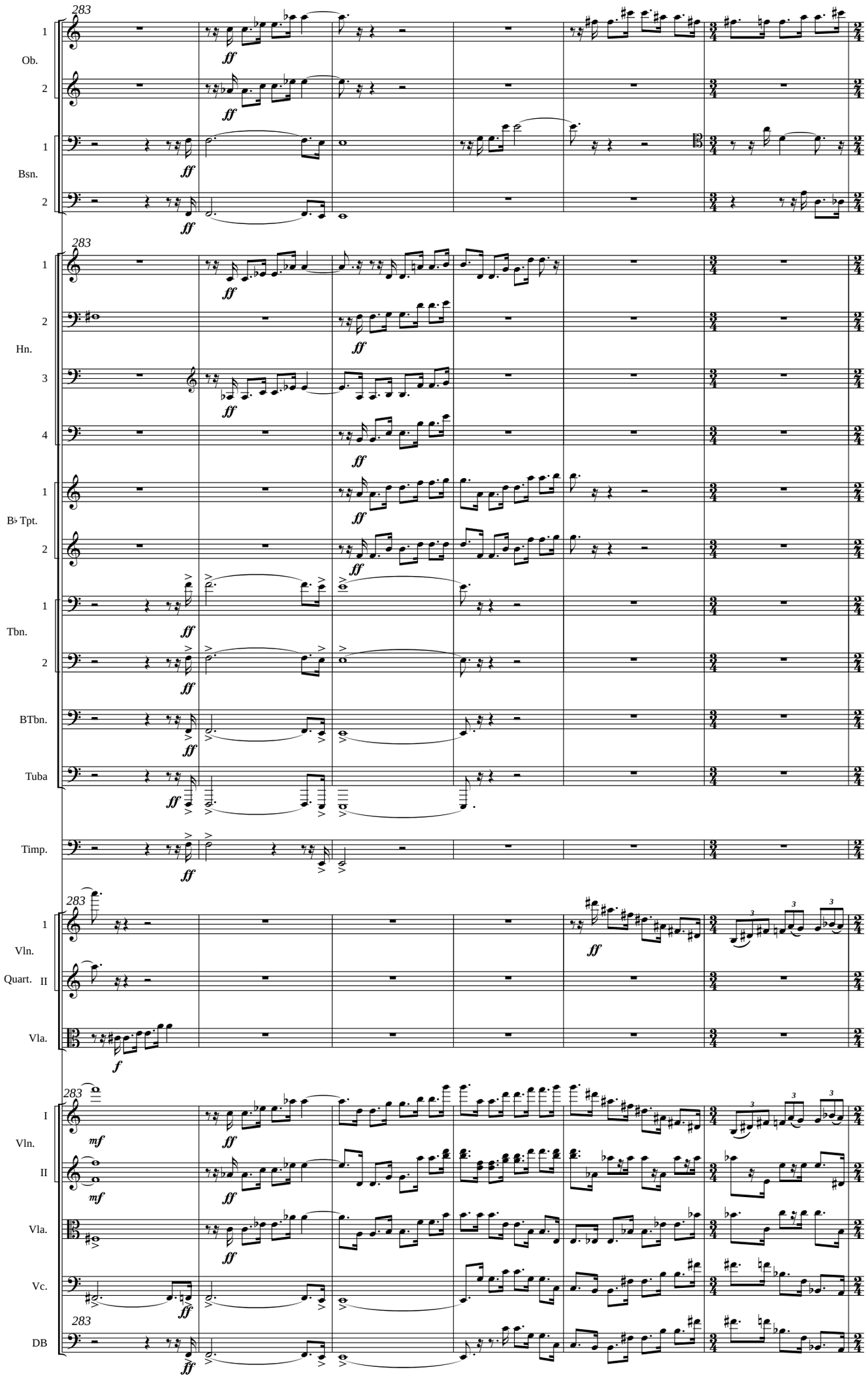

245
Ob. 1
f
245
Hn. 1
245
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
Vln. II
Vla.
f
245
Vc.

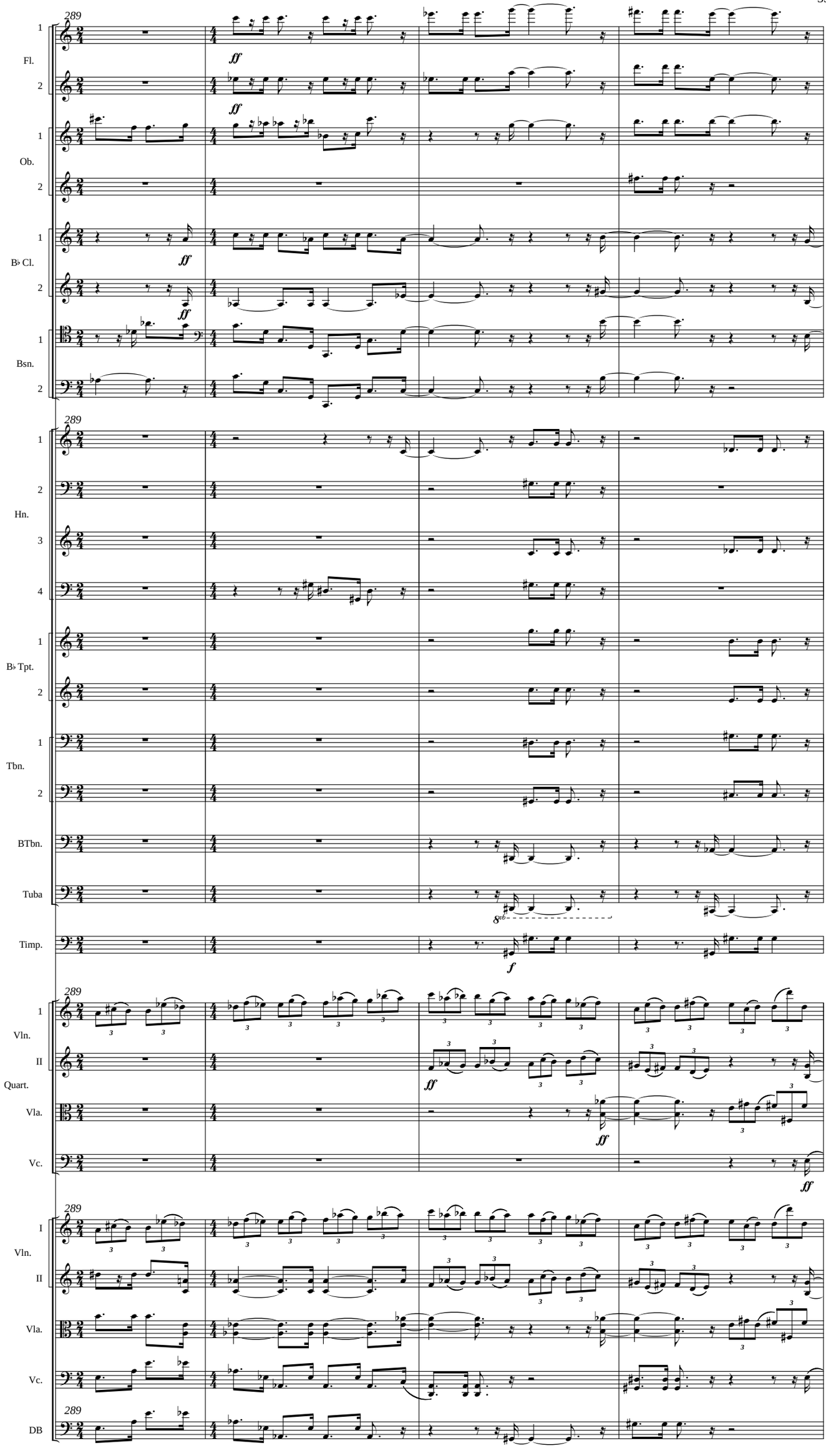

249
(Fl.1)
1
Fl.
2
Ob. 1
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
249
1
Hn. 2
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
249
Vln. 1
Quart.
Vc.
249
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
249
DB

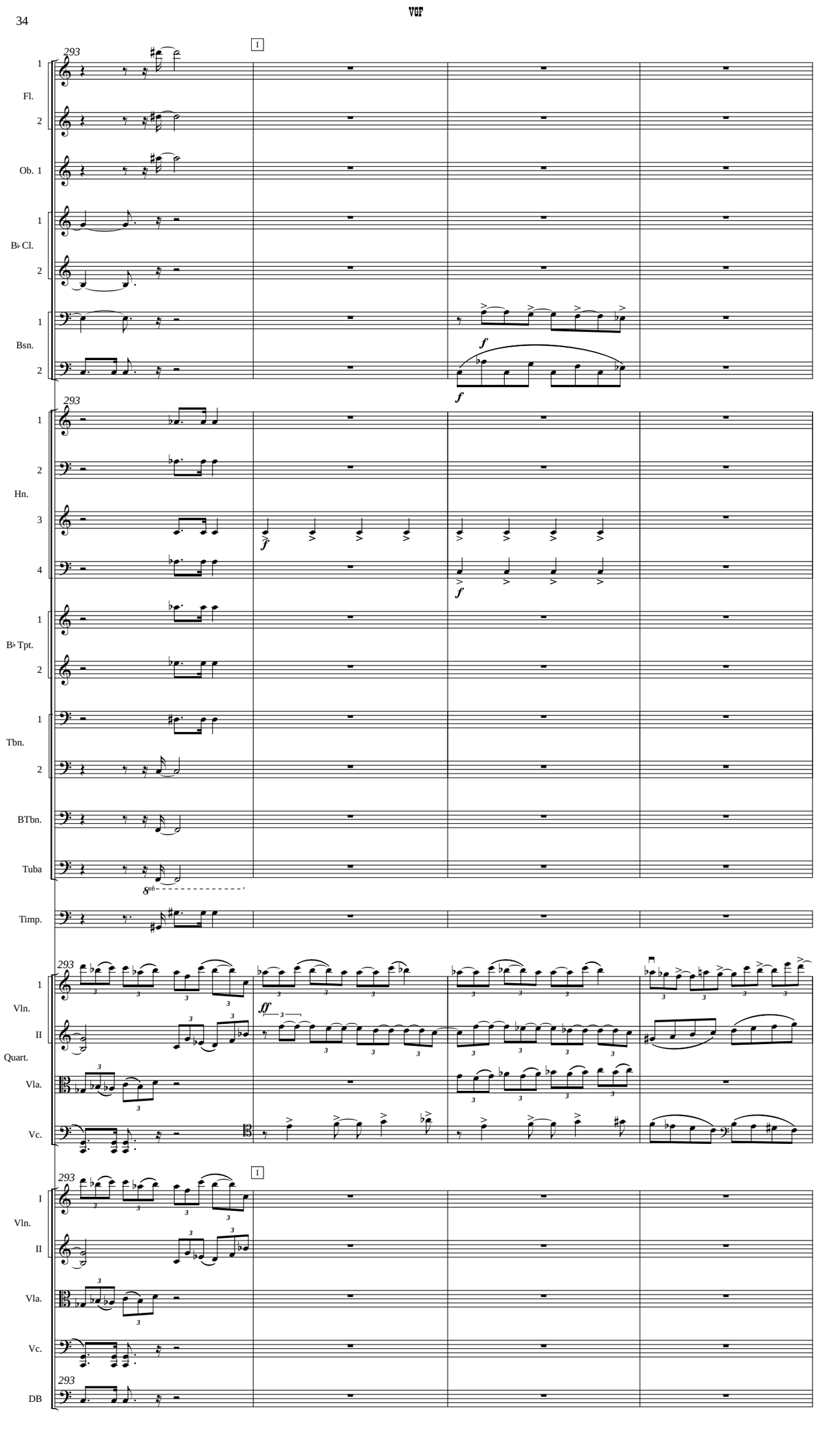

253
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt. 1
Vln.
I
II
Vla.
Vc.
ff
div.
unis.
G
256
Largo
♩= 40
Quart.
Vln. 1
Hn. 4
DB
pp
p

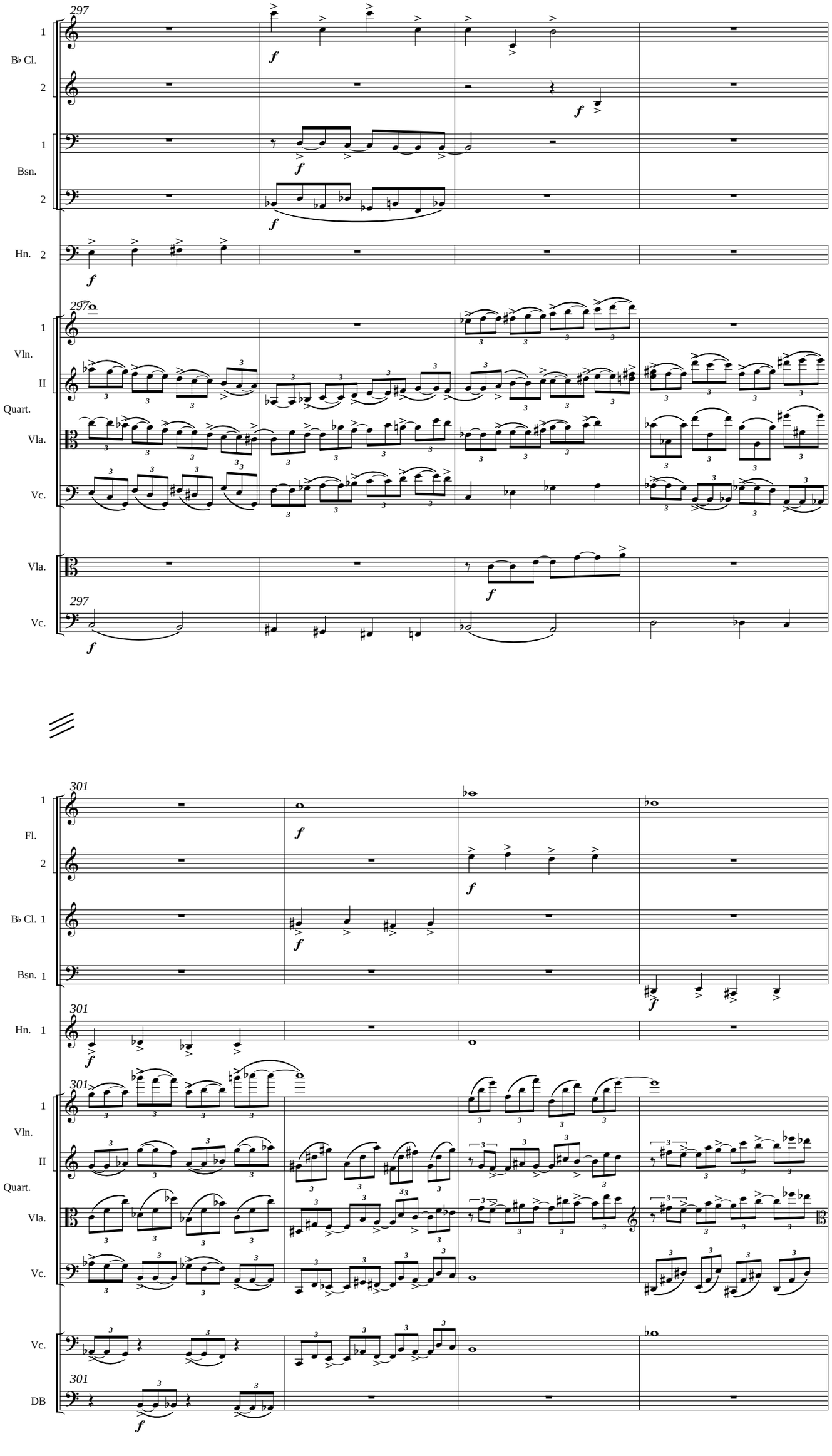

VGF
270
Hn. 4
1
Vln.
Quart. II
Vla.
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
pp
276
Fl. 1
(Fl.1)
B♭ Cl. 2
Bsn. 2
Hn. 3
4
mp

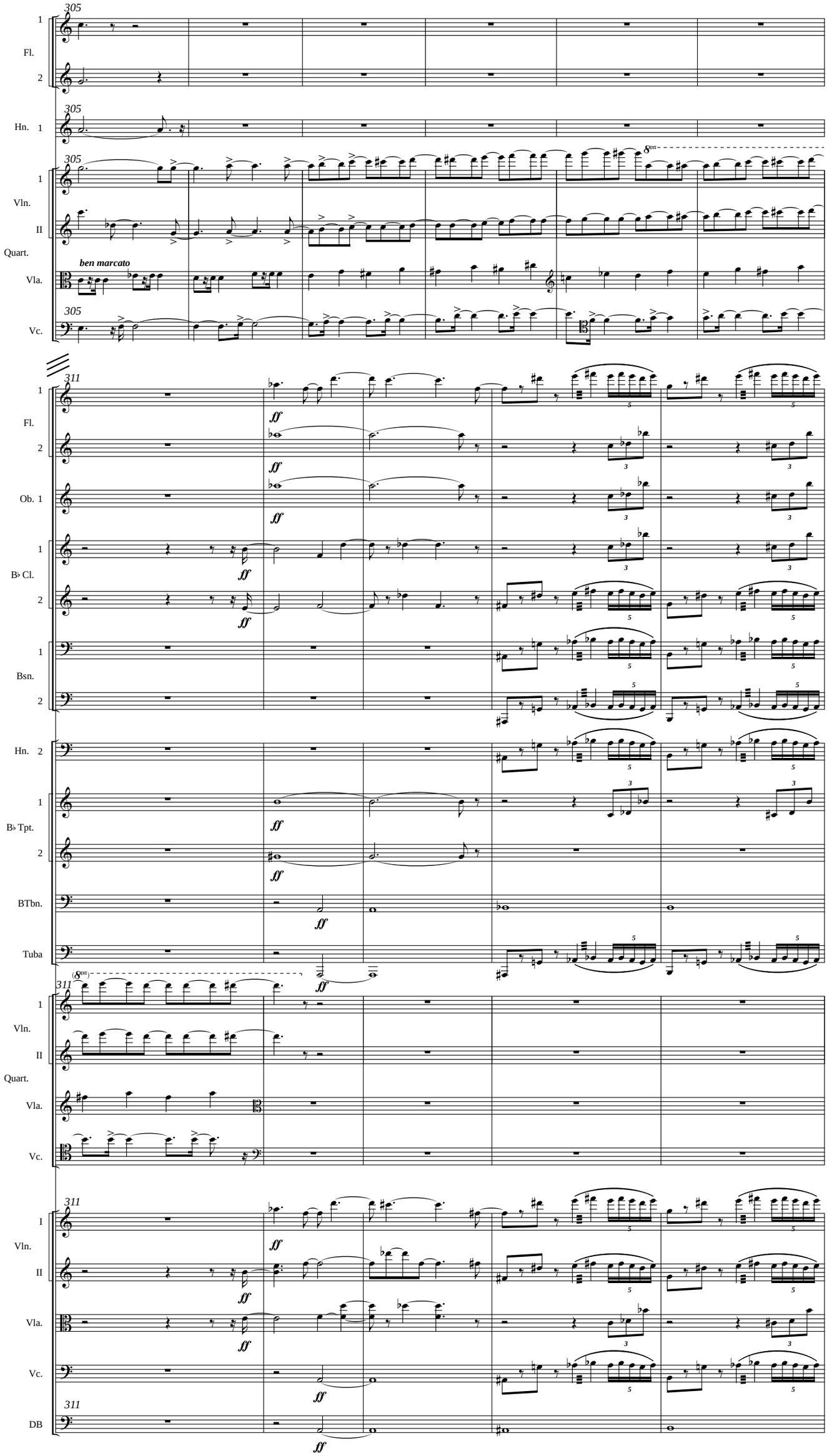

♩= 120
H Allegro bigga fuga
279
Fl.
Bsn.
Hn.
Vln.
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
DB
p
mp
mf

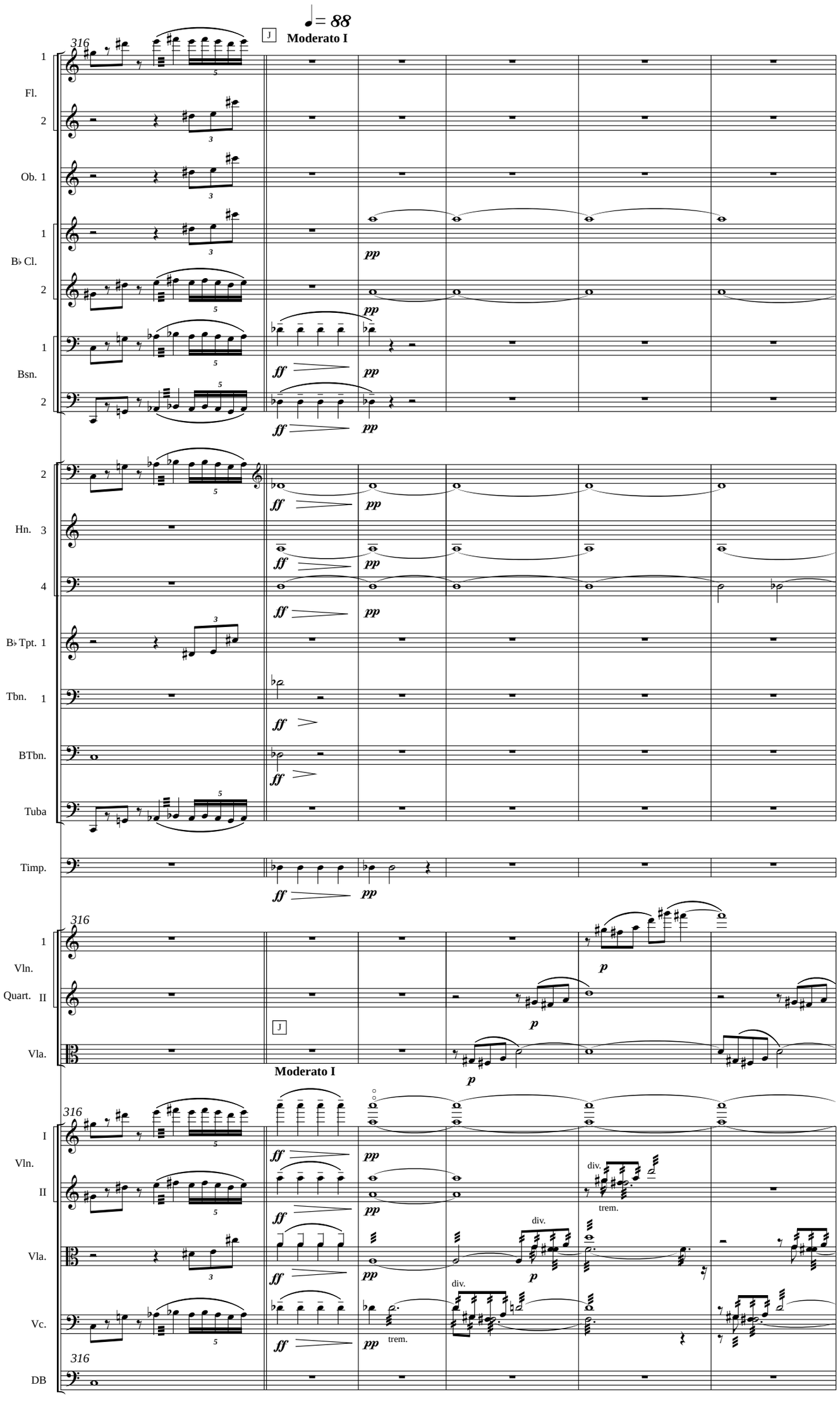

283
1
Ob.
2
ff
1
Bsn.
2
ff
283
1
2
Hn.
3
4
ff
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
ff
1
Tbn.
2
ff
BTbn.
ff
Tuba
ff
Timp.
ff
283
1
Vln.
Quart.
II
ff
Vla.
f
283
I
Vln.
II
mf
ff
Vla.
Vc.
283
DB
ff

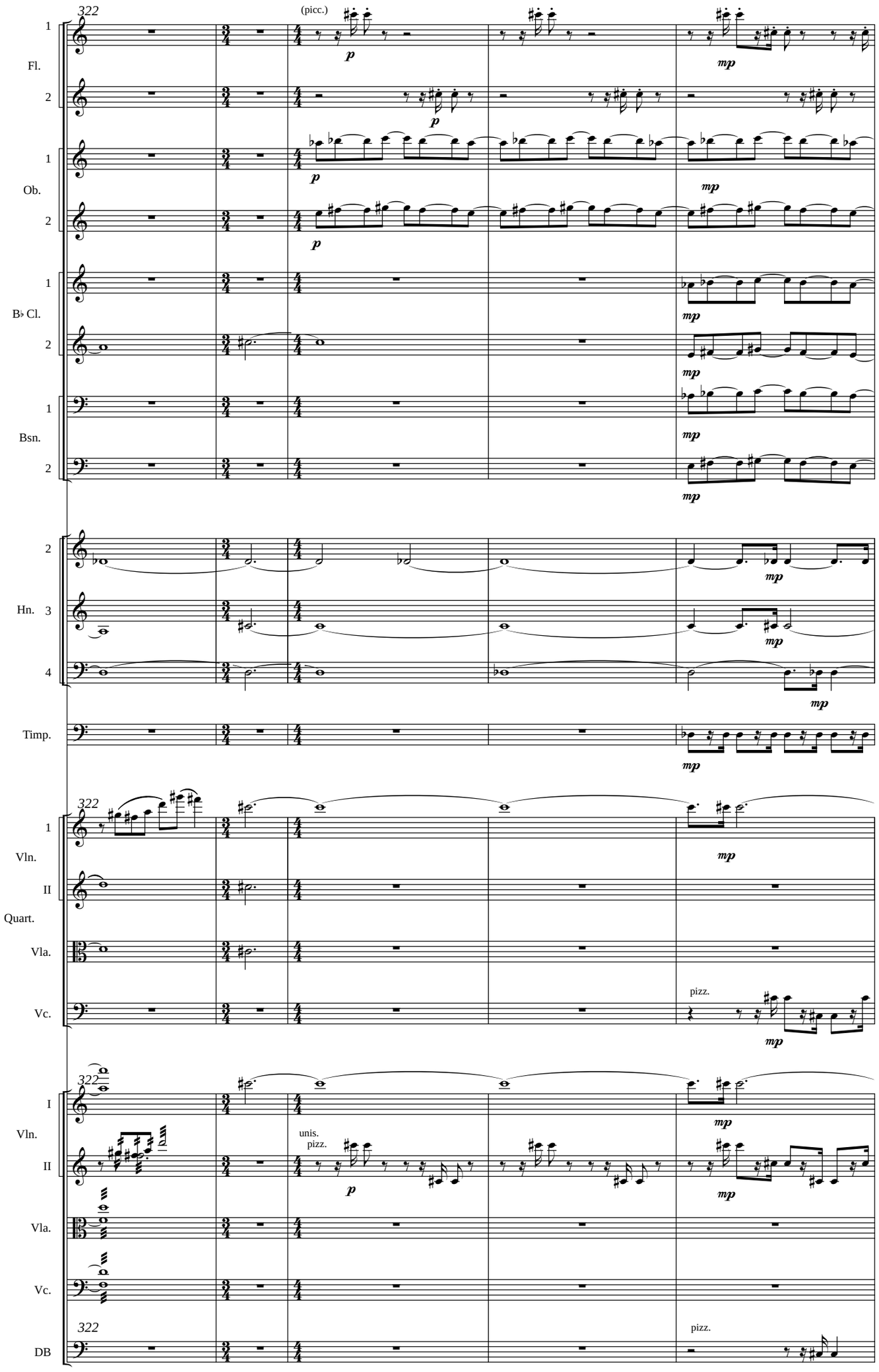

289
1
Fl.
2
ff
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
289
1
2
Hn.
3
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
8va
Timp.
f
289
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
289
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
289
DB

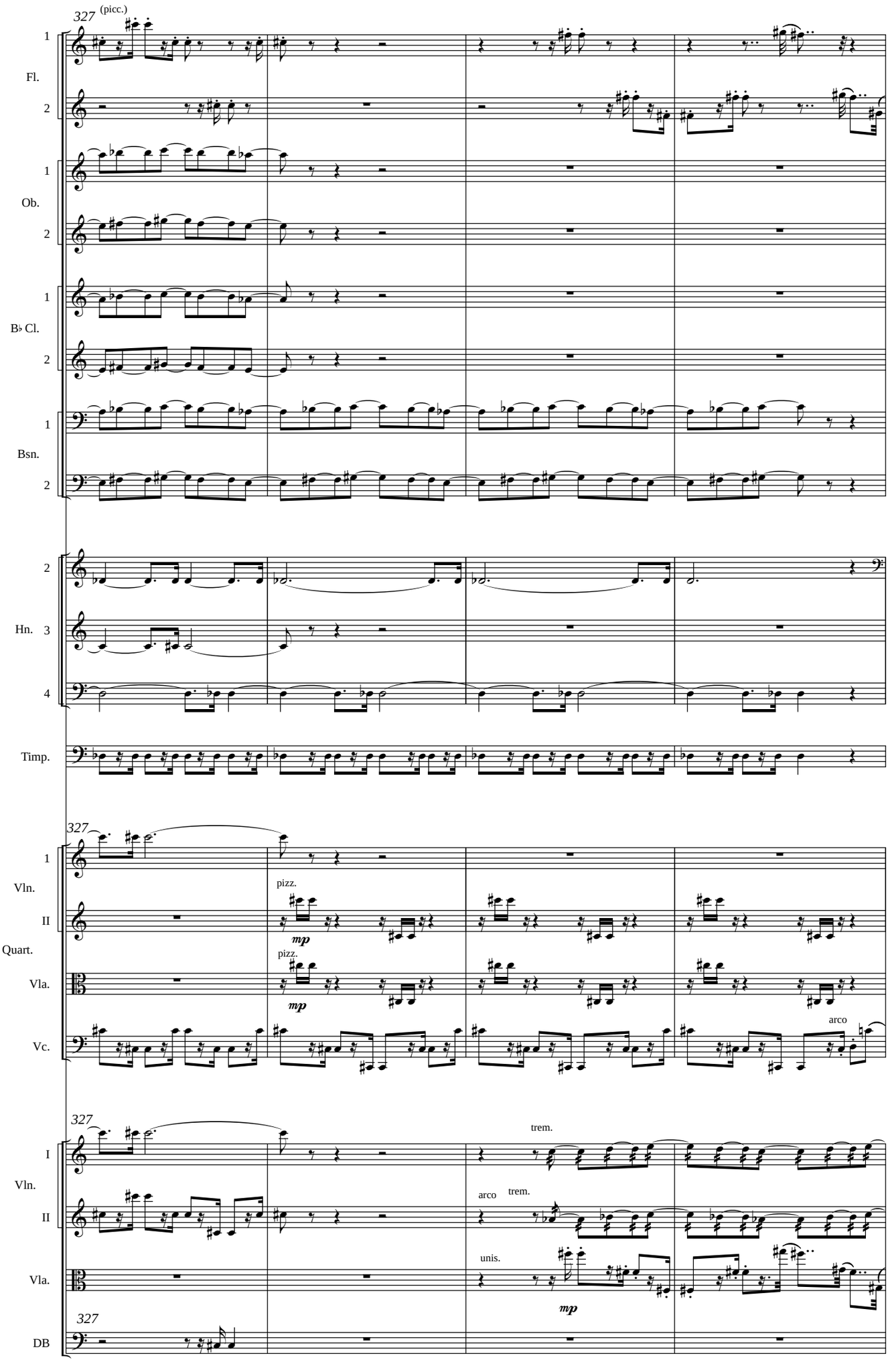

VGF
293
1
Fl.
2
Ob. 1
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
f
f
293
1
2
Hn.
3
4
f
f
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
8vb
Timp.
293
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
ff
293
1
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
293
DB

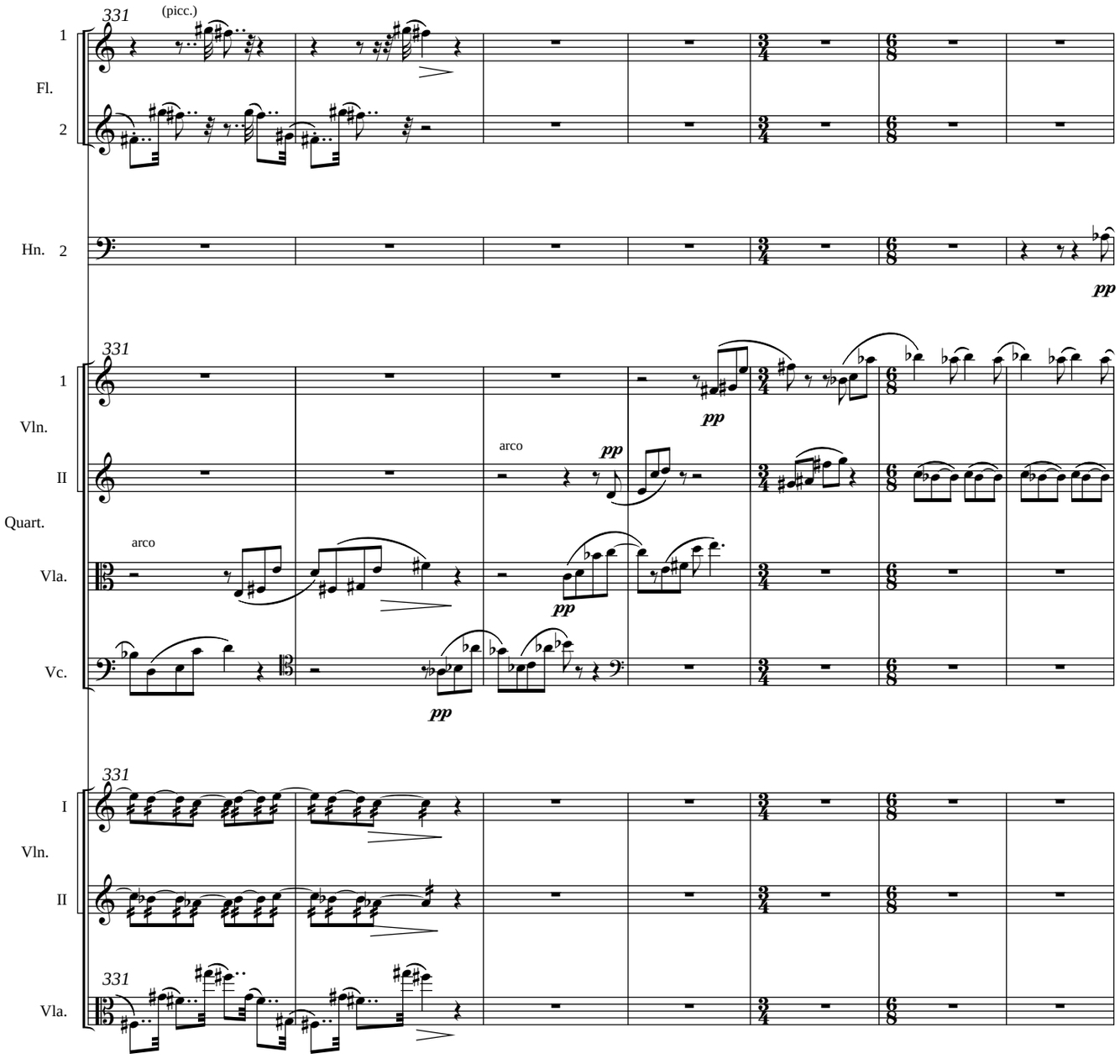

297
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
Hn. 2
297
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
Vla.
297
Vc.
301
1
Fl.
2
B♭ Cl. 1
Bsn. 1
301
Hn. 1
301
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
301
DB

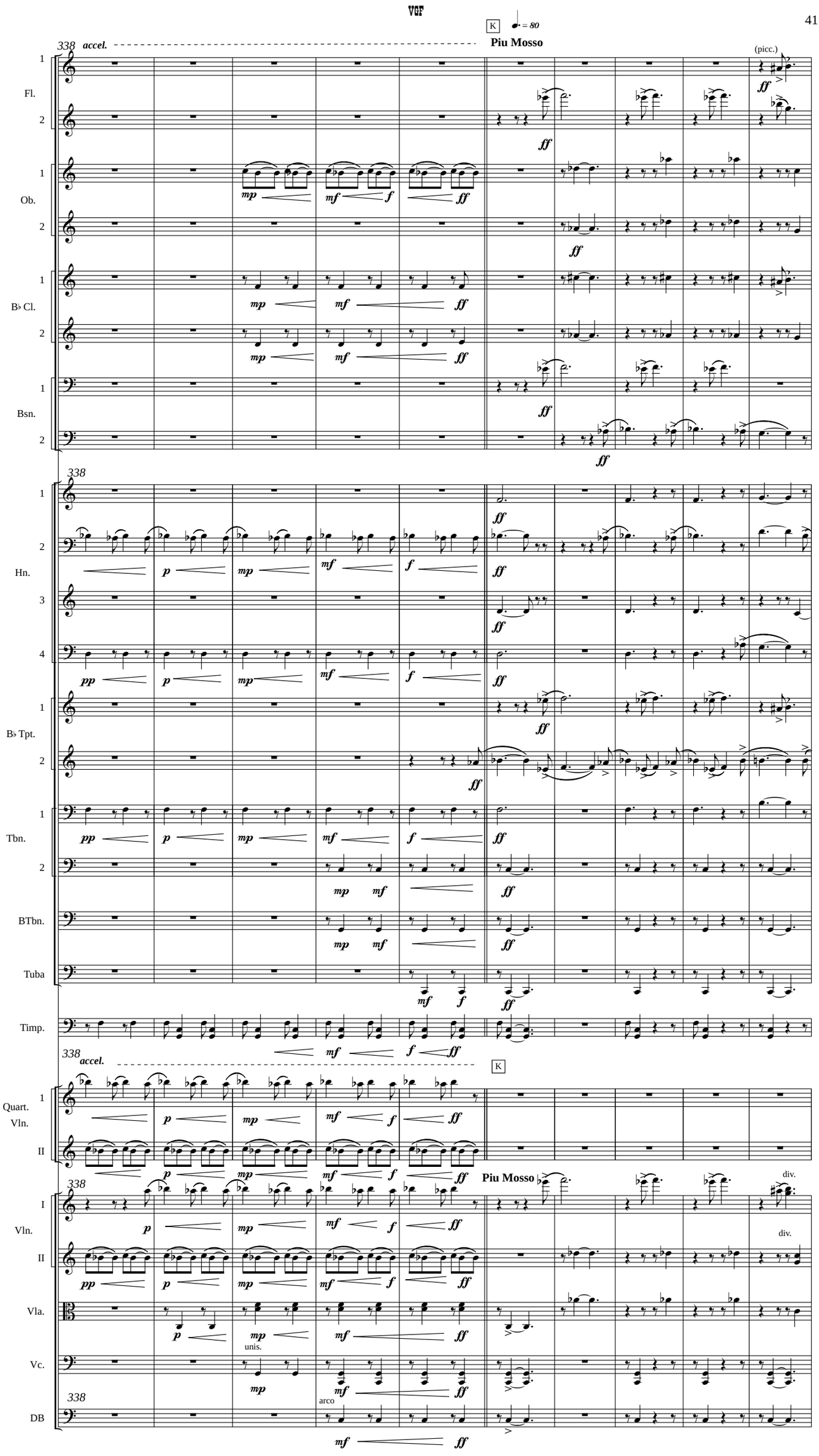

305
Fl.
Hn. 1
Vln. II
Quart.
ben marcato
Vla.
Vc.
311
Ob. 1
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. 2
B♭ Tpt.
BTbn.
Tuba
I Vln. II
DB
ff
8va

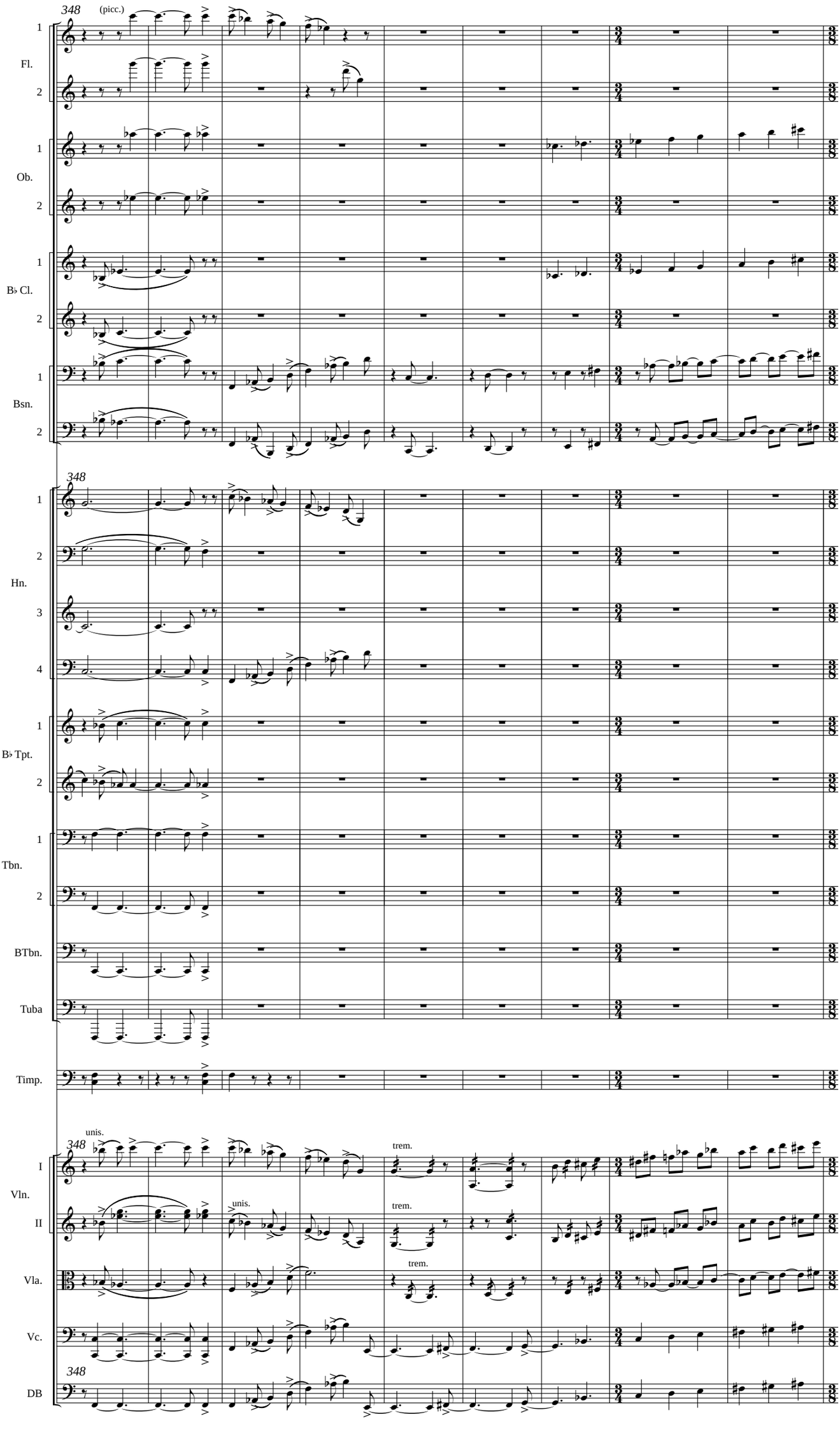

♩= 88
J
Moderato I
316
1
Fl.
2
Ob. 1
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
2
Hn. 3
4
B♭ Tpt. 1
Tbn. 1
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
316
1
Vln.
Quart. II
Vla.
J
Moderato I
316
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
pp
ff
p
div.
trem.

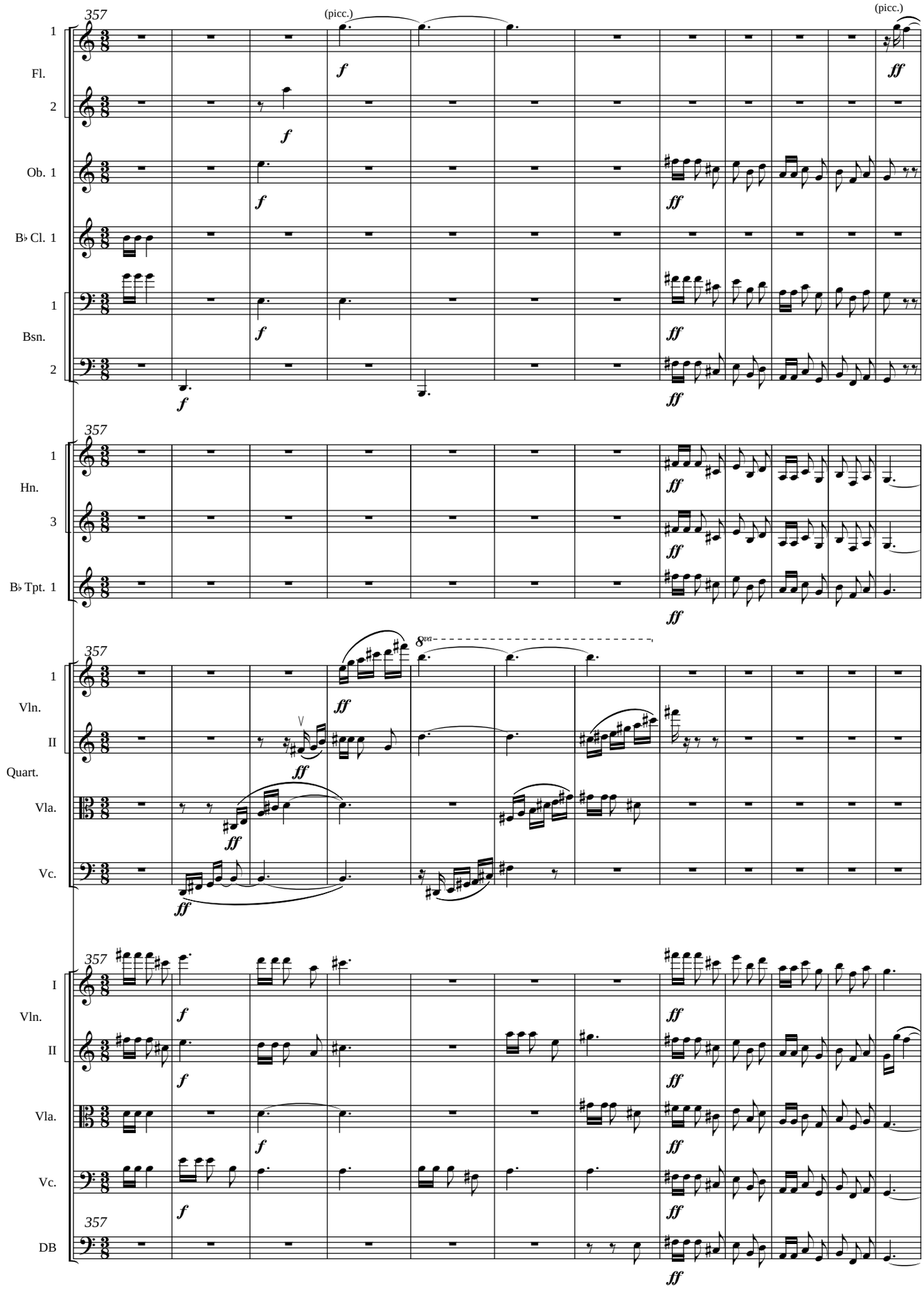

322
(picc.)
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
2
Hn.
3
4
Timp.
322
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
pizz.
322
I
Vln.
II
unis.
pizz.
Vla.
Vc.
322
DB
pizz.
p
mp

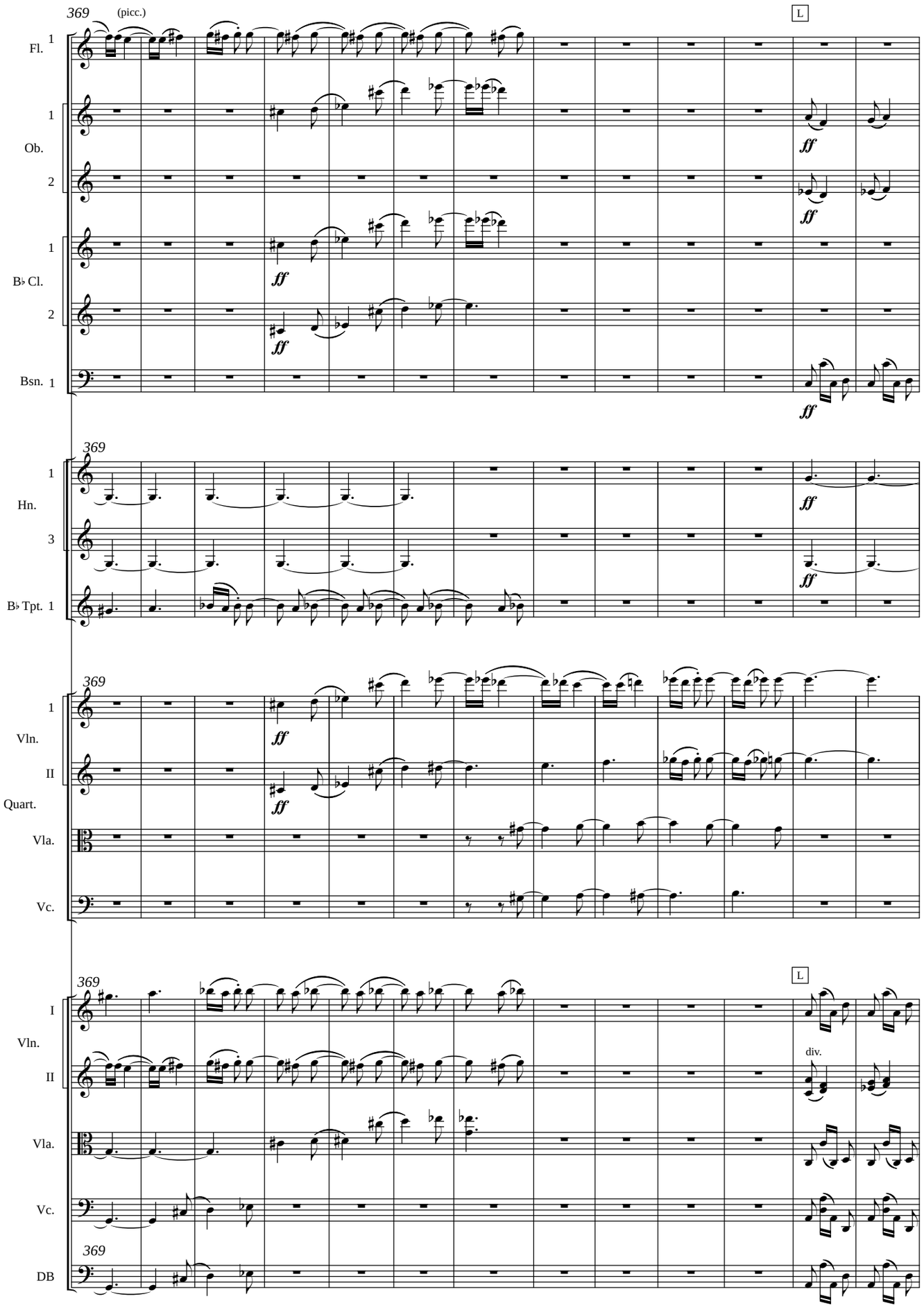

327
(picc.)
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
2
Hn.
3
4
Timp.
327
1
Vln.
II
pizz.
mp
Quart.
pizz.
mp
Vla.
Vc.
arco
327
I
Vln.
II
trem.
arco
trem.
unis.
mp
Vla.
327
DB

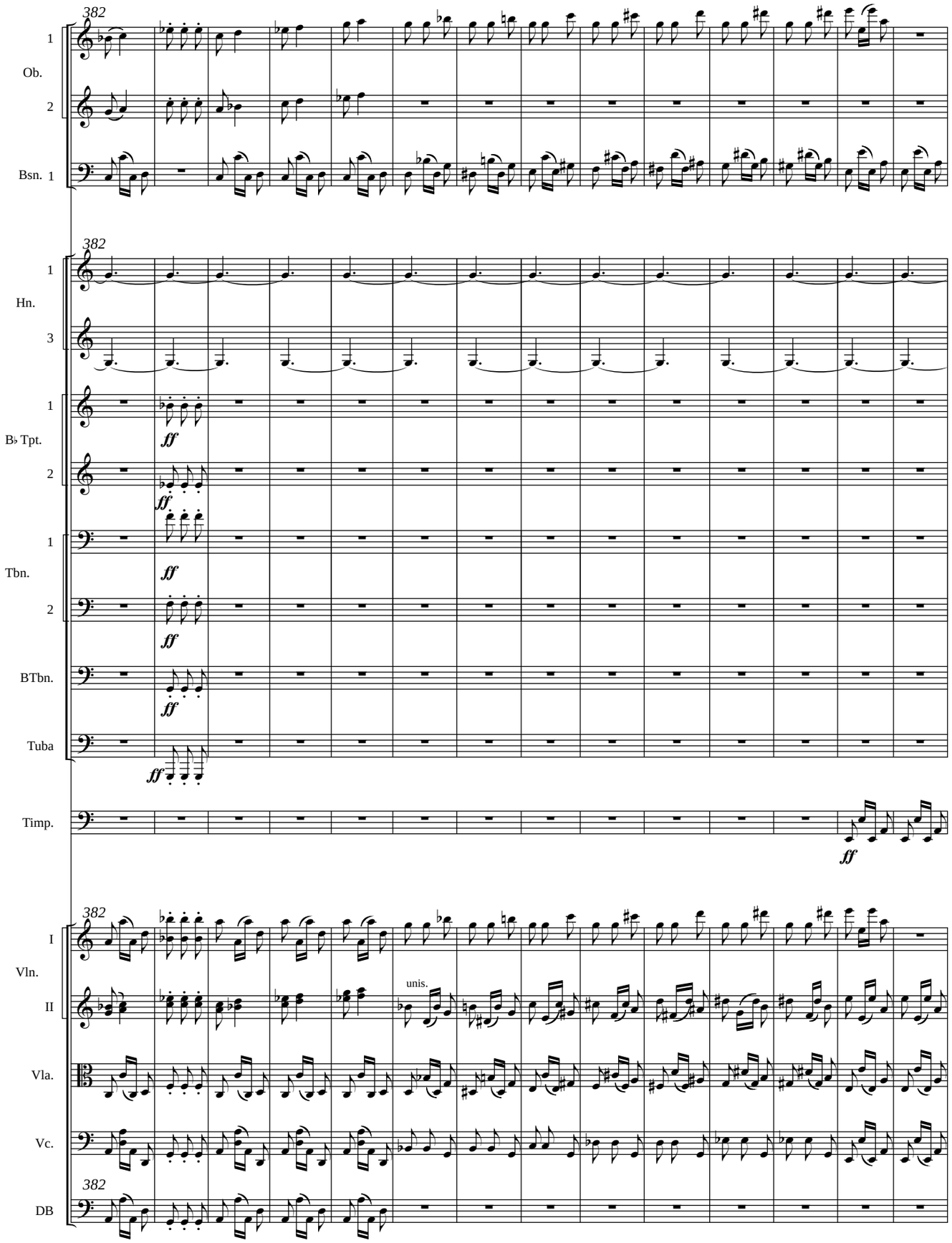

331
(picc.)
1
Fl.
2
Hn. 2
pp
331
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
arco
pp
Vla.
arco
pp
Vc.
pp
331
I
Vln.
II
331
Vla.

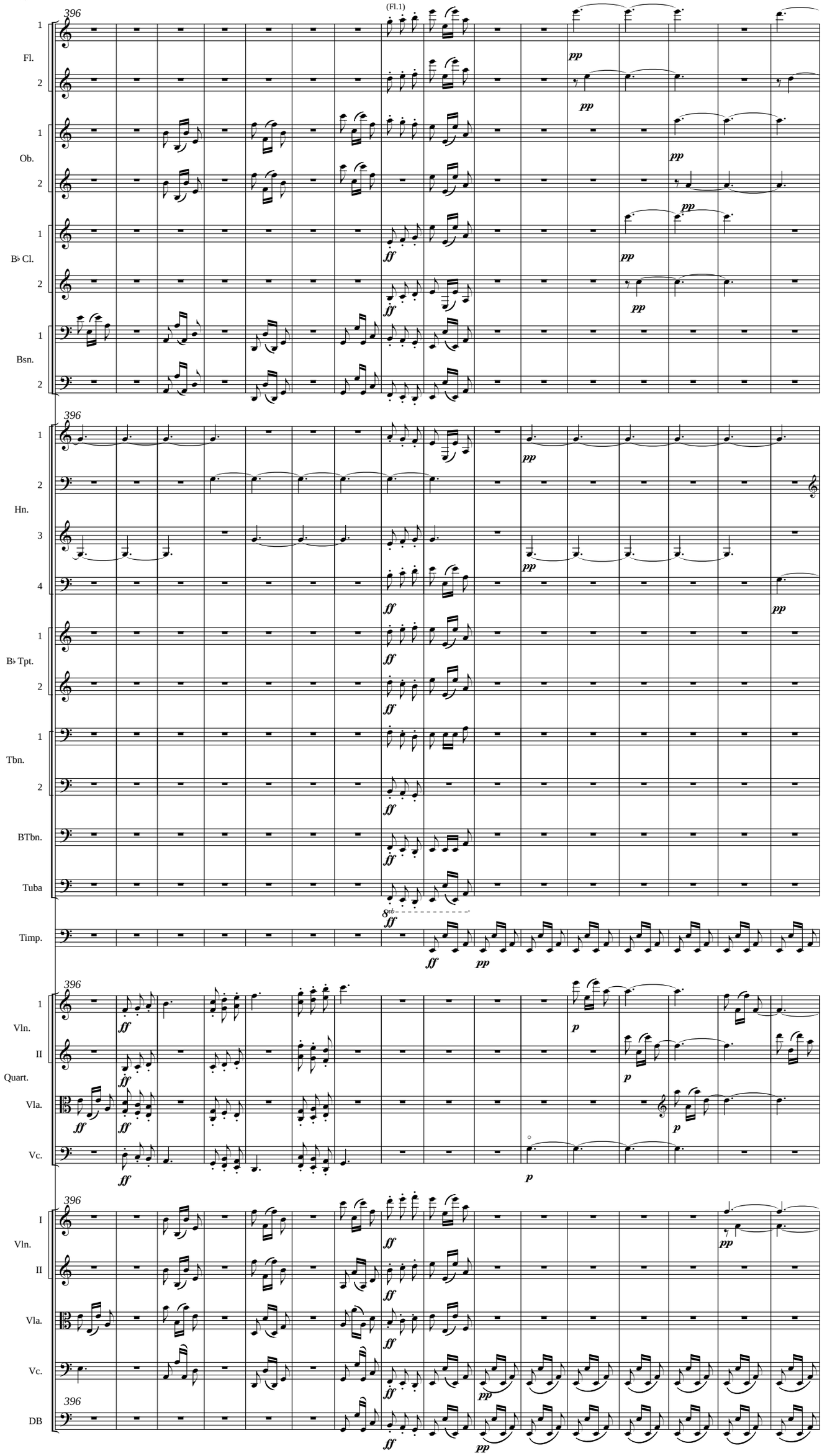

K
♩. = 80
338 accel.
Piu Mosso
(picc.)
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
Quart. Vln.
I
II
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
DB
unis.
arco
div.

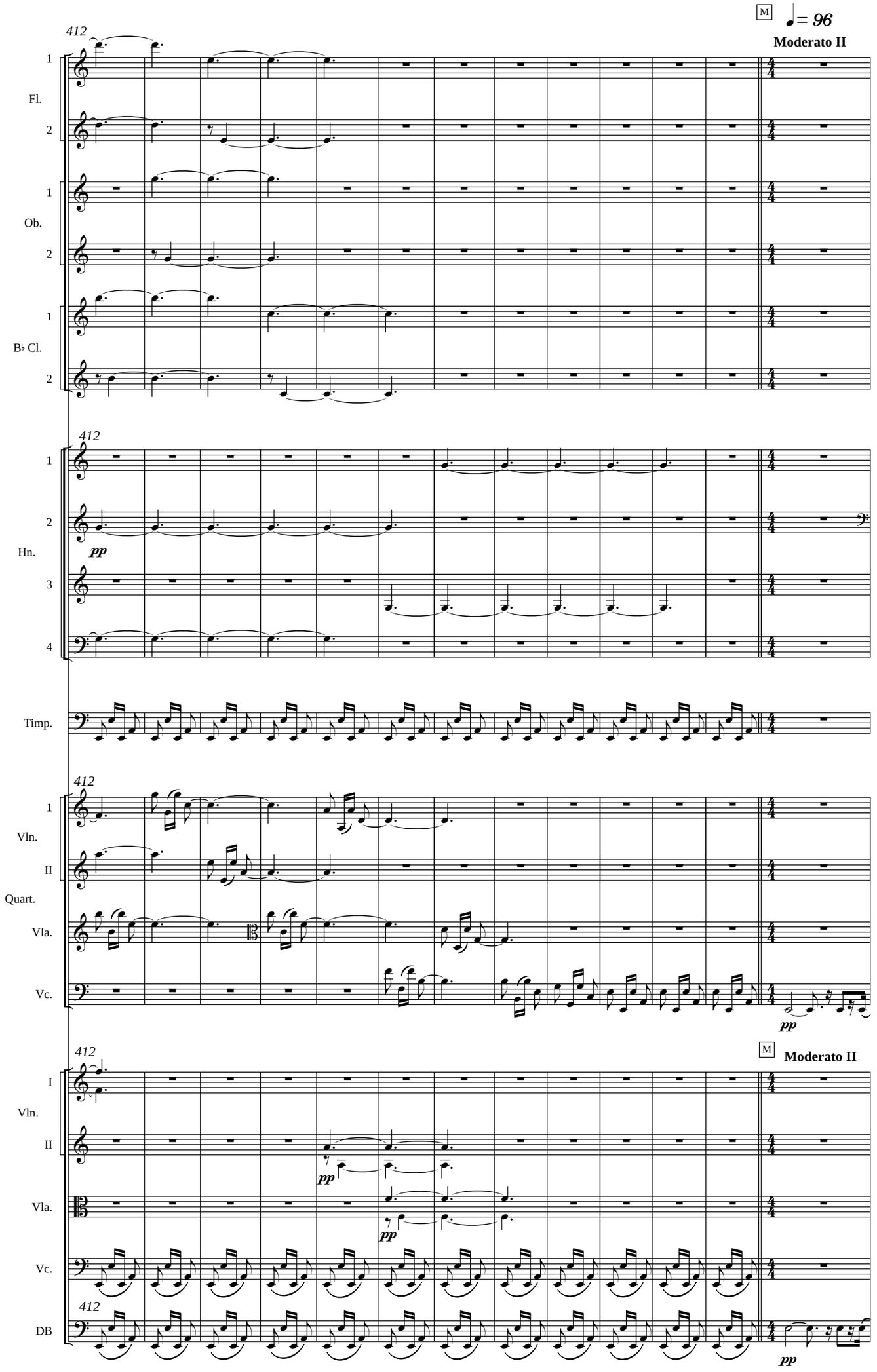

348
(picc.)
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
unis.
trem.
I
II
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
DB

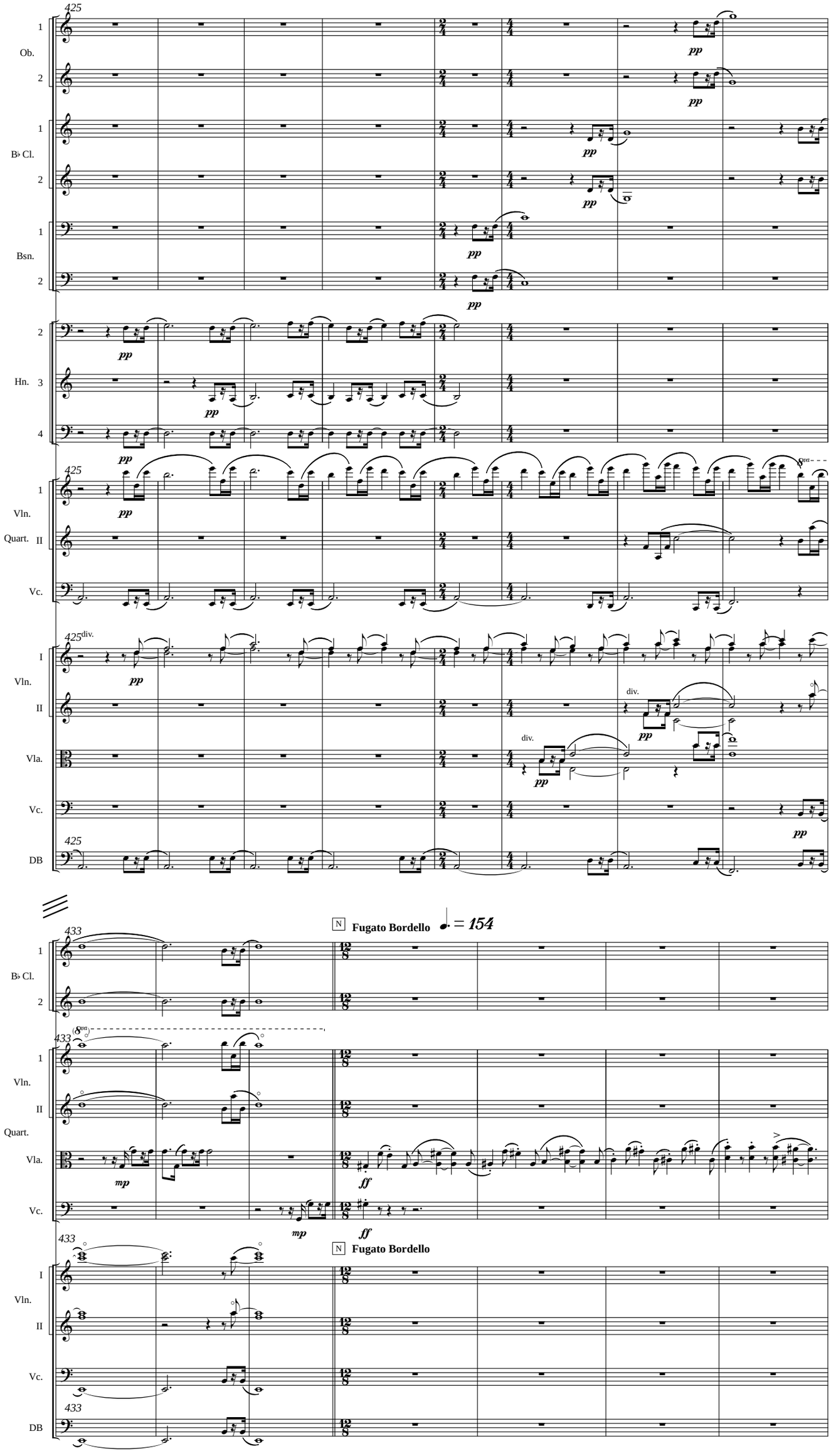

357
(picc.)
(picc.)
1
Fl.
2
Ob. 1
B♭ Cl. 1
1
Bsn.
2
f
ff
357
1
Hn.
3
B♭ Tpt. 1
ff
357
8va
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
ff
357
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
357
DB
f
ff

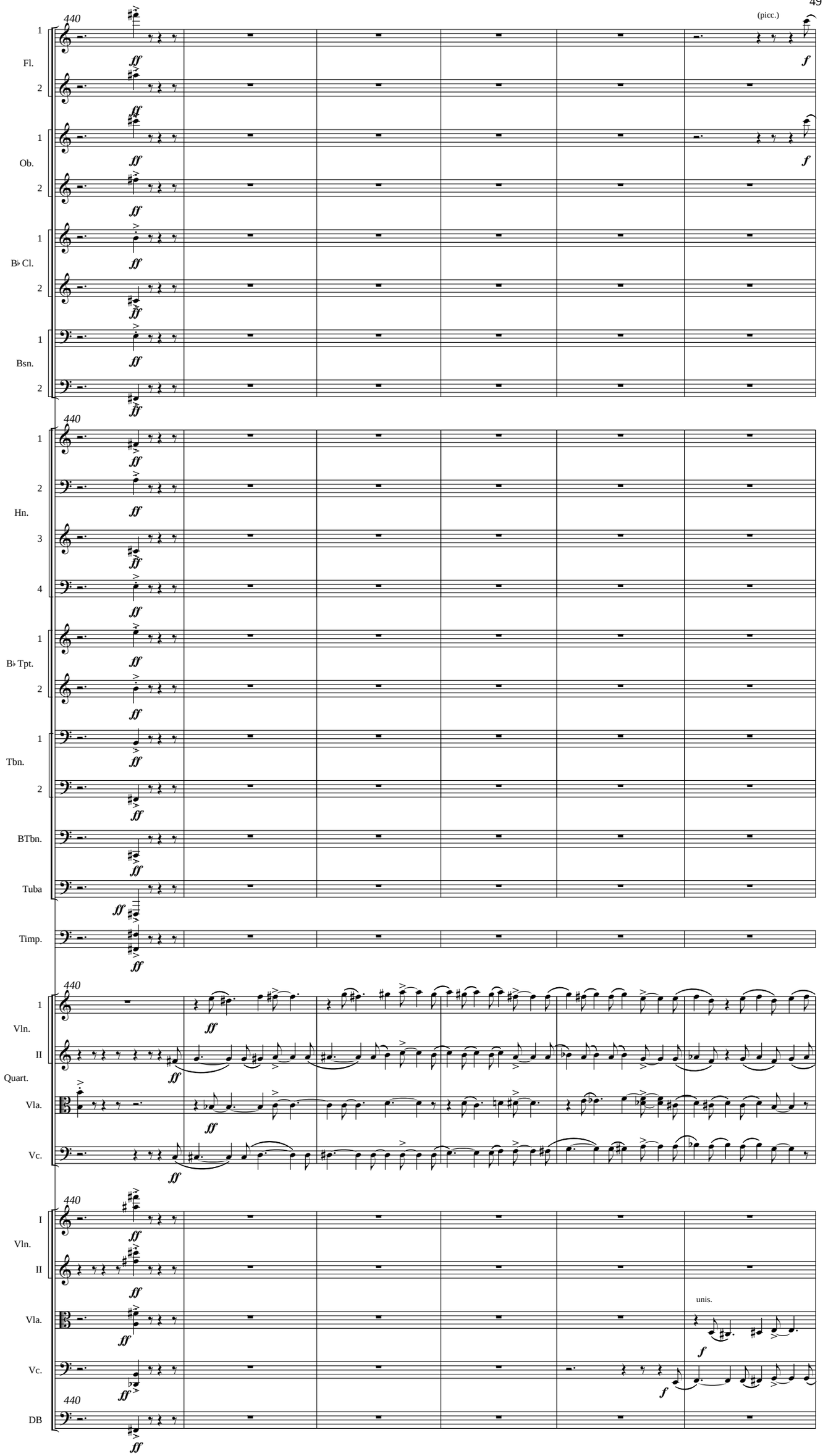

369
(picc.)
L
Fl. 1
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
B♭ Cl. 1
B♭ Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
ff
369
Hn. 1
Hn. 3
B♭ Tpt. 1
369
Vln. I
Vln. II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
369
L
Vln. I
Vln. II
div.
Vla.
Vc.
369
DB

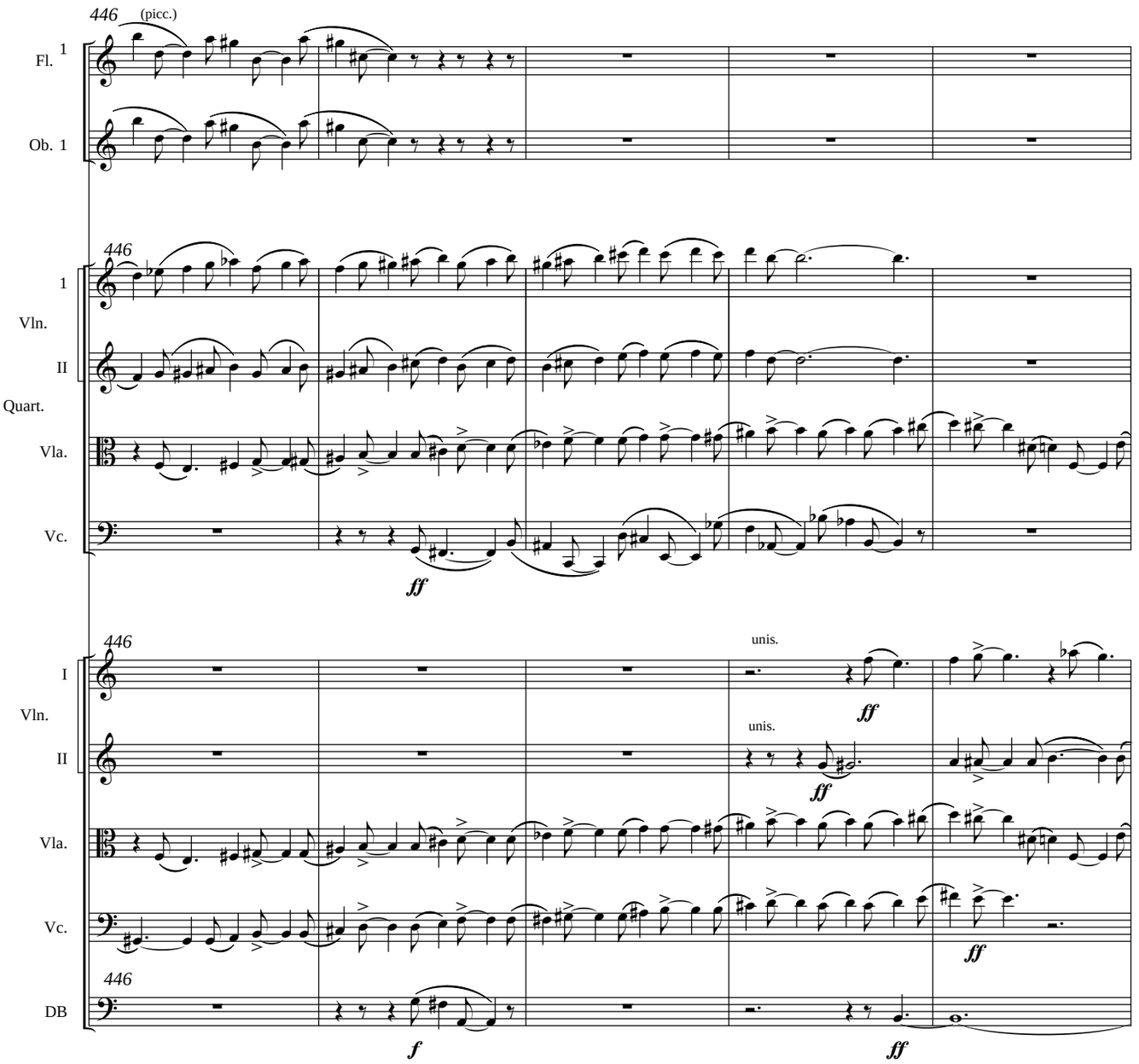

382
1
Ob.
2
Bsn. 1
382
1
Hn.
3
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
382
I
Vln.
II
unis.
Vla.
Vc.
382
DB

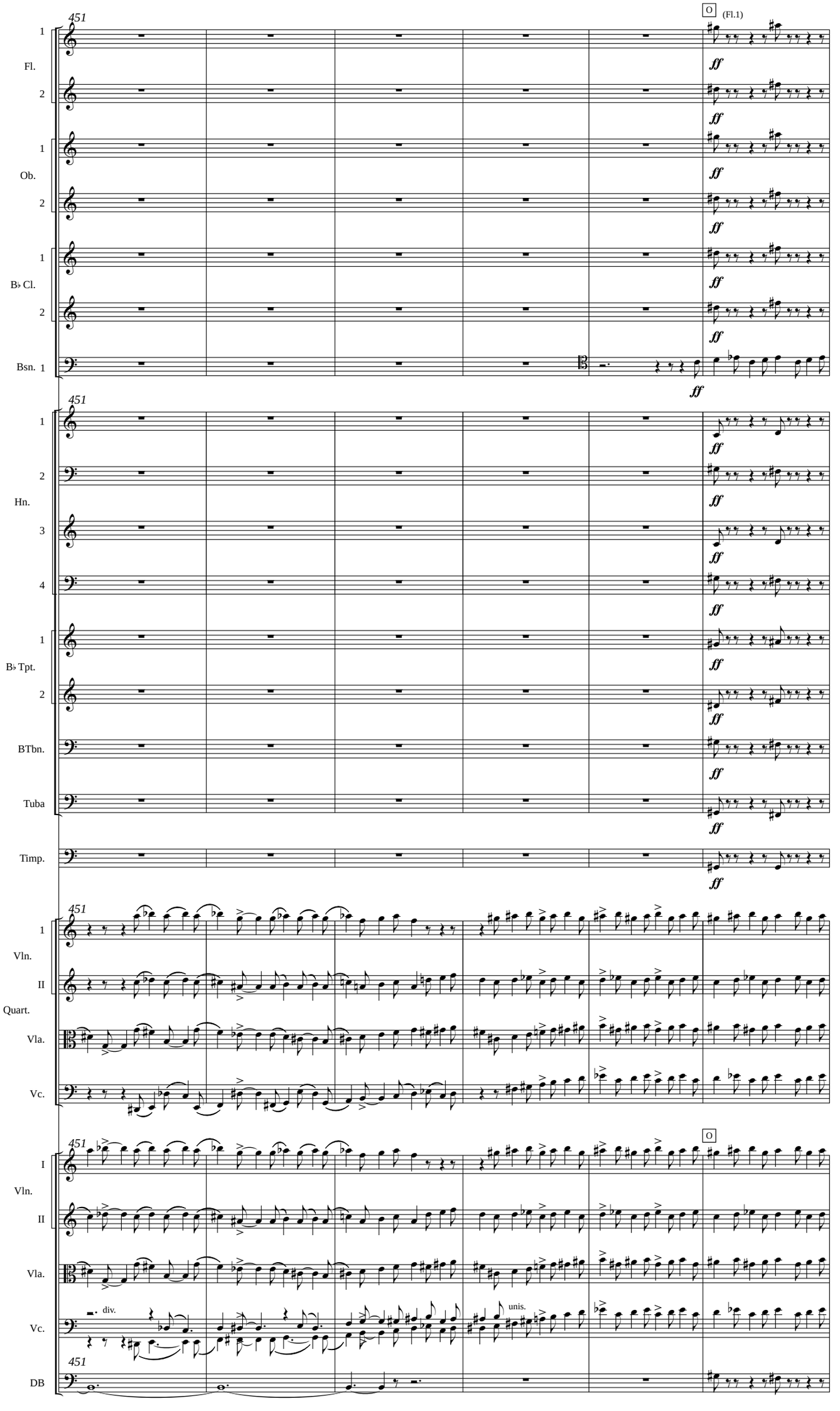

396
(Fl.1)
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
396
1
2
Hn.
3
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
8vb
Timp.
396
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
396
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
396
DB

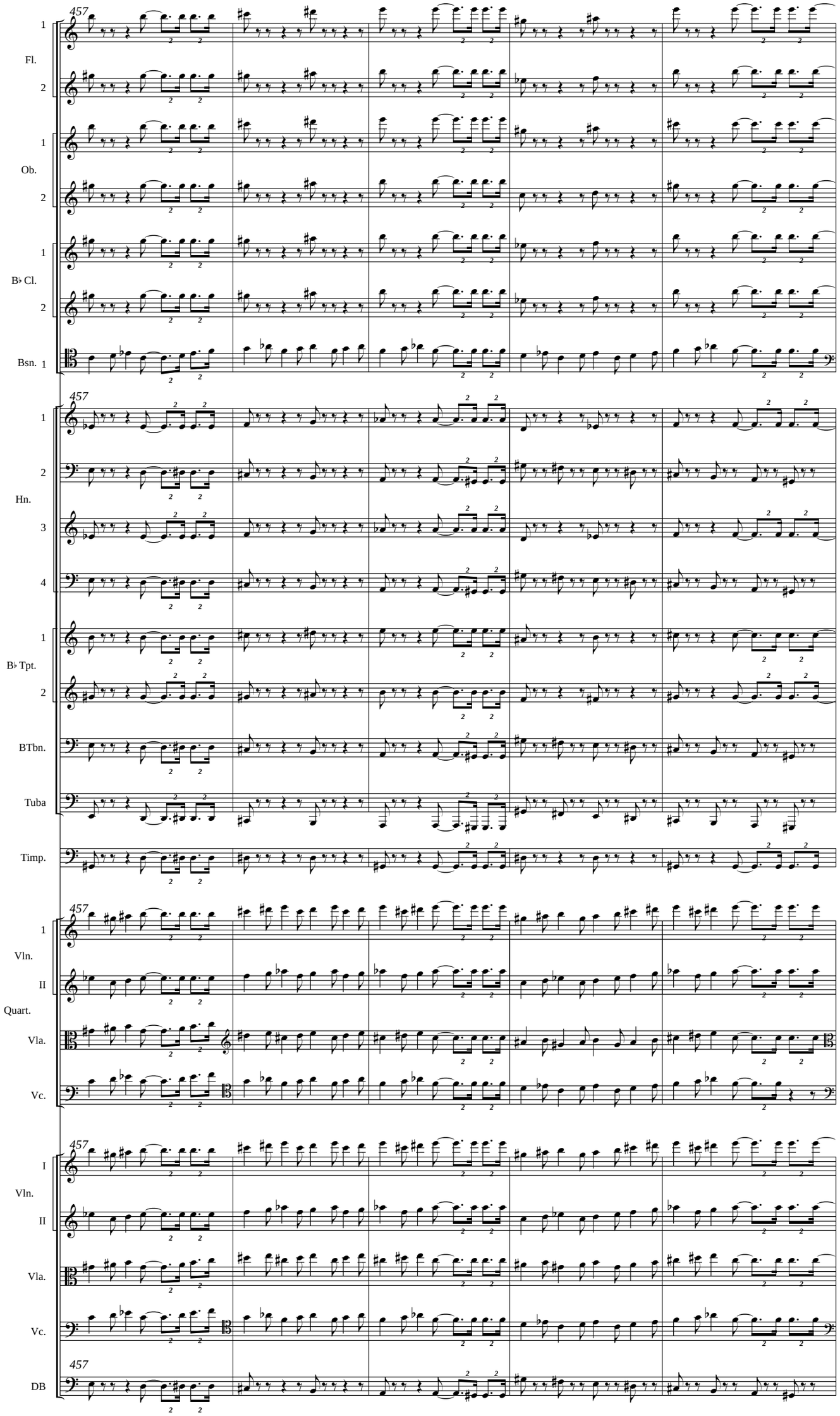

M
♩= 96
Moderato II
412
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
412
1
2
Hn.
pp
3
4
Timp.
412
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
pp
412
M
Moderato II
I
Vln.
II
pp
Vla.
pp
Vc.
412
DB
pp

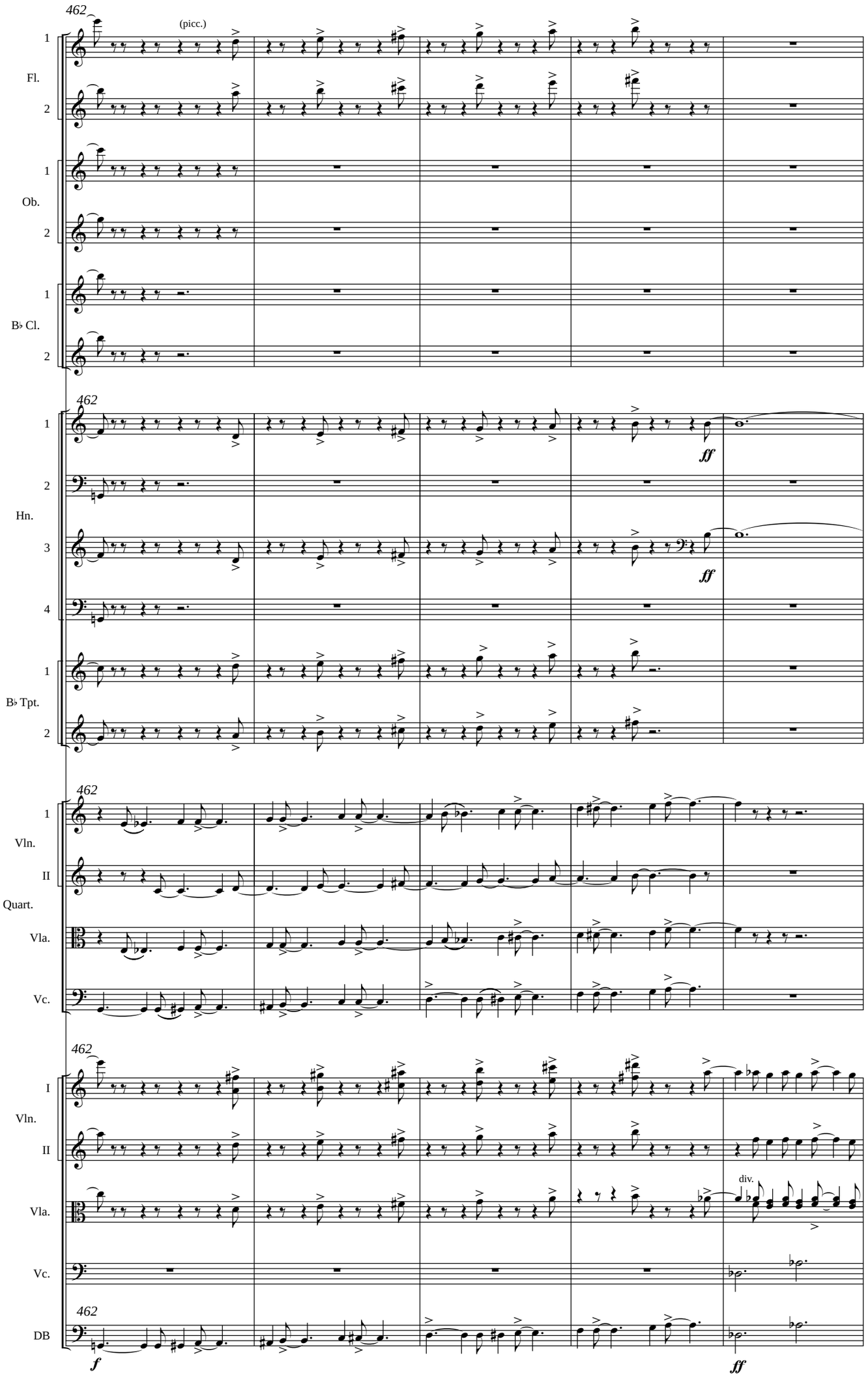

425
1
Ob.
2
pp
1
B♭ Cl.
2
pp
1
Bsn.
2
pp
2
pp
Hn.
3
pp
4
pp
425
1
Vln.
Quart.
II
pp
Vc.
425 div.
I
Vln.
II
pp
div.
pp
Vla.
div.
pp
Vc.
pp
425
DB
N Fugato Bordello
= 154
433
1
B♭ Cl.
2
433
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
mp
ff
Vc.
mp
ff
433
N Fugato Bordello
I
Vln.
II
Vc.
433
DB

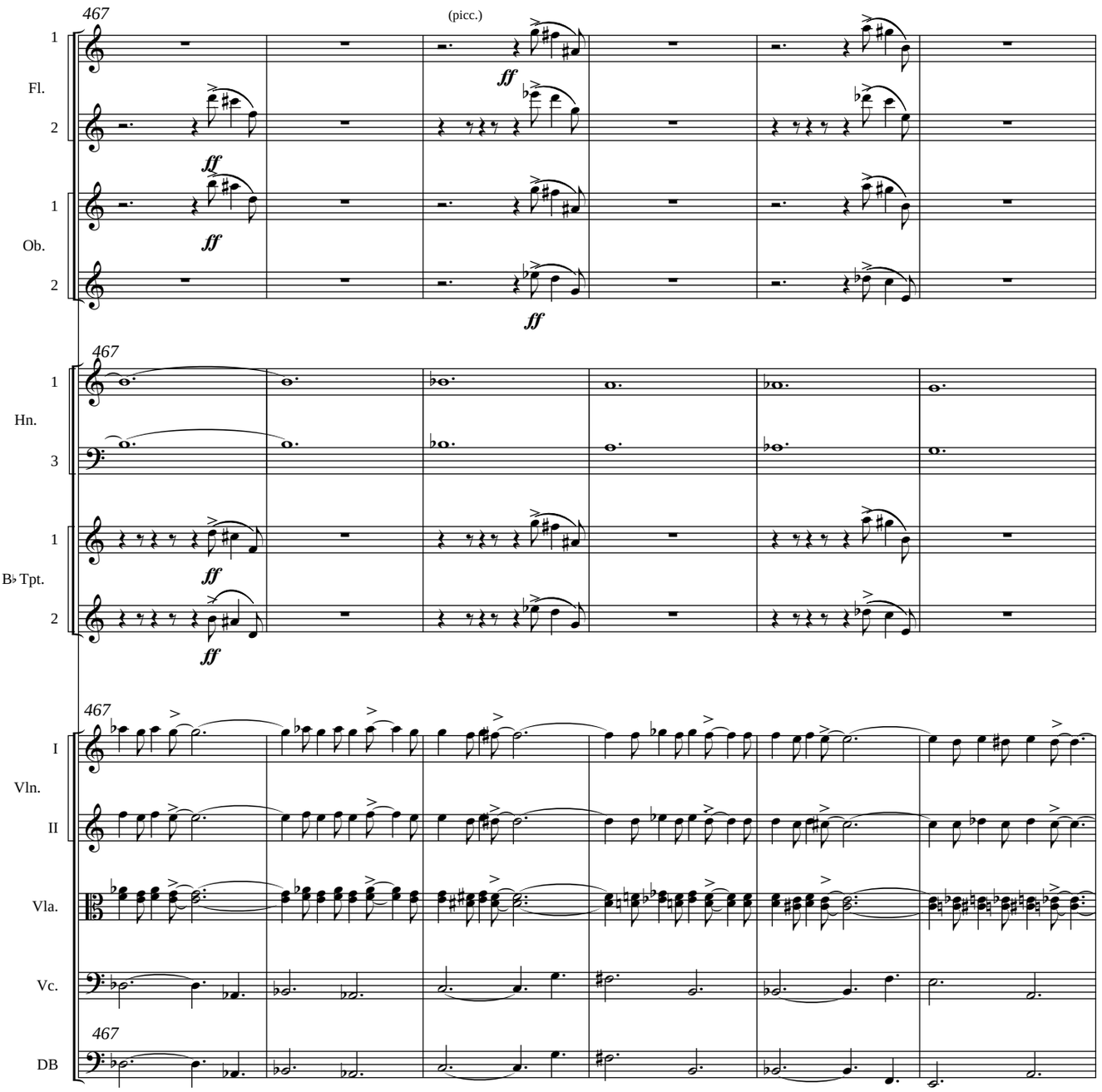

440
(picc.)
1
Fl.
2
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
3
4
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
Vln.
I
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
DB
unis.
ff
f

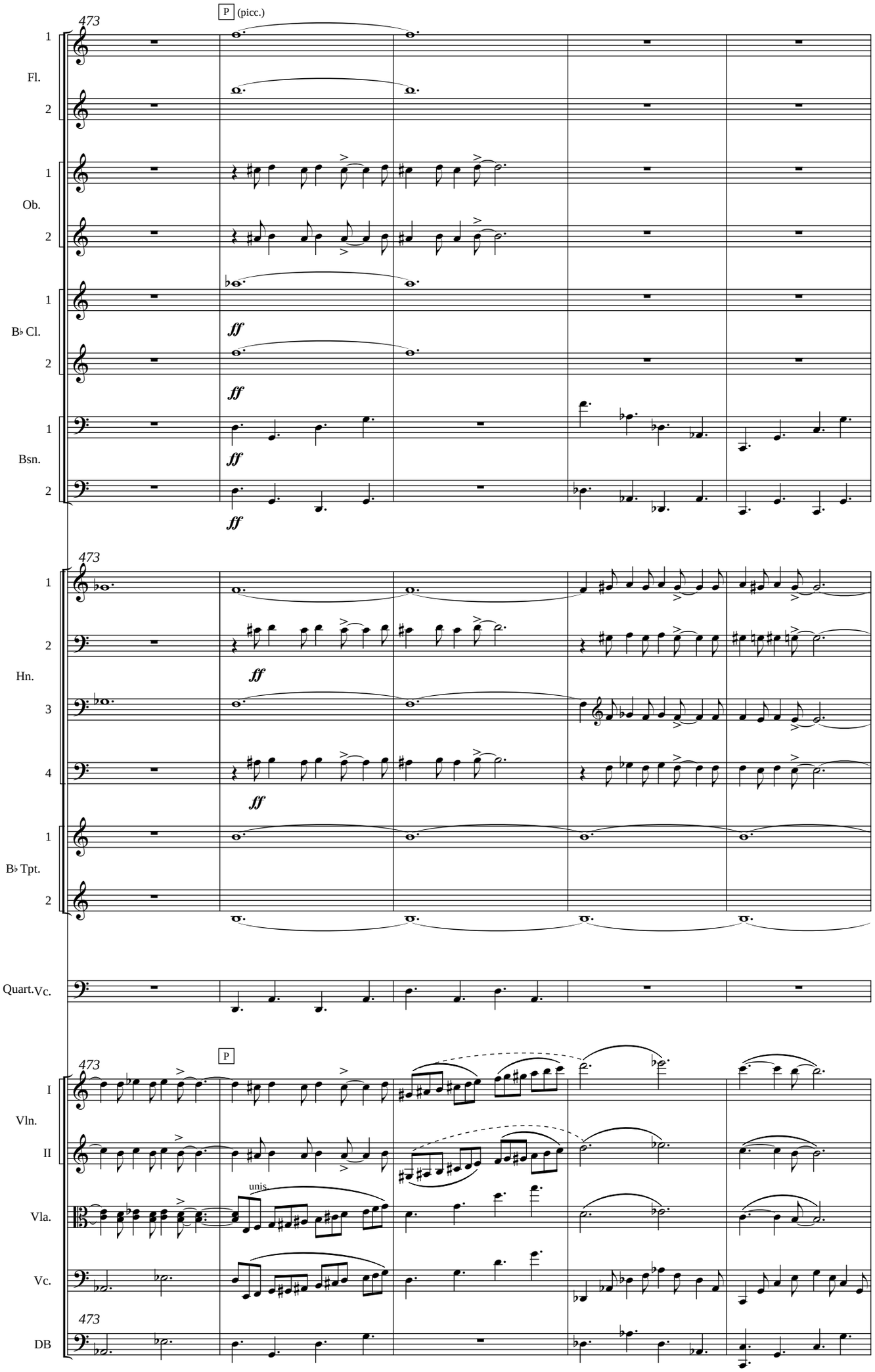

446
(picc.)
Fl. 1
Ob. 1
446
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
ff
446
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
unis.
ff
unis.
ff
ff
446
f
ff

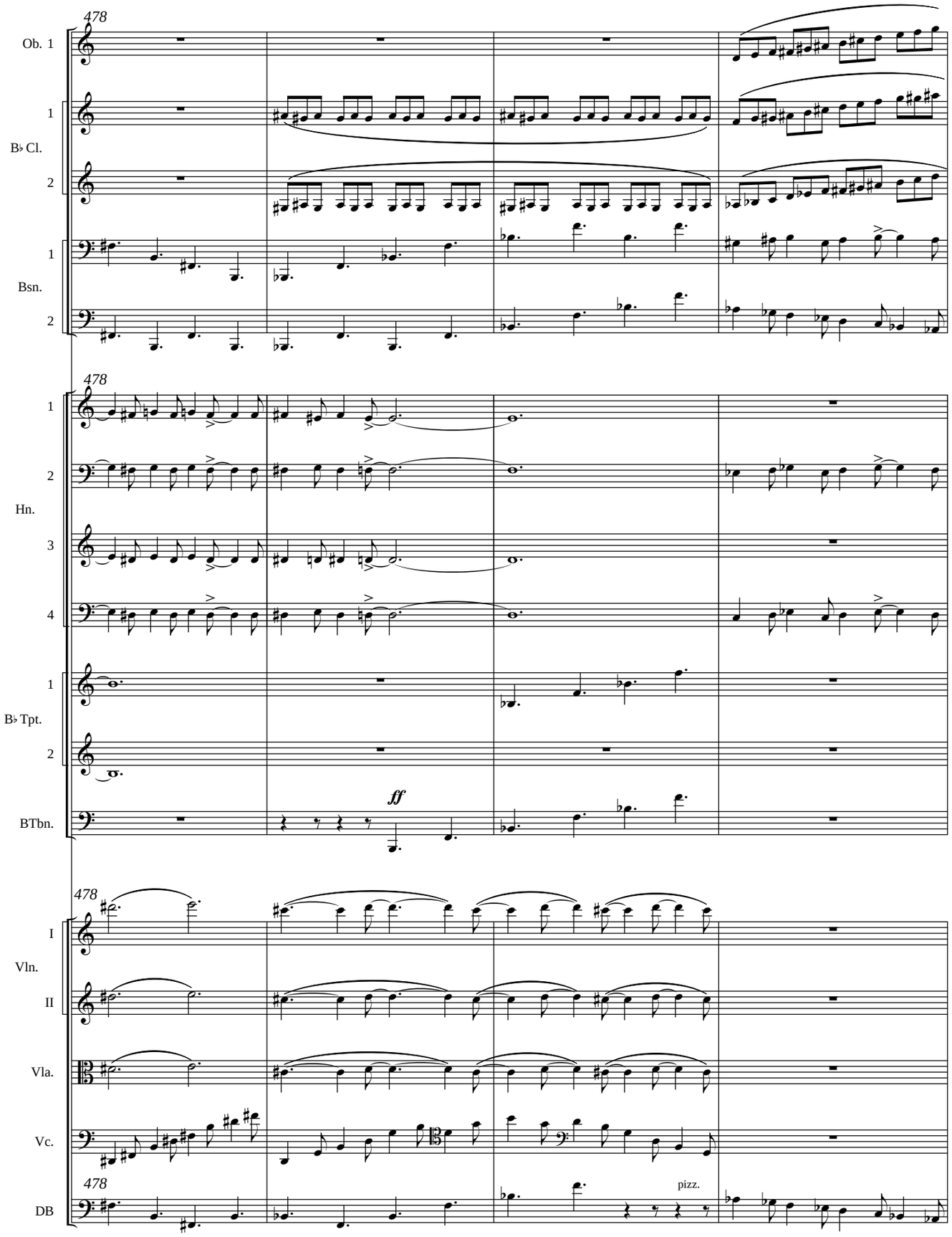

451
O
(Fl.1)
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
Bsn. 1
ff
451
1
2
Hn.
3
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
451
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
451
O
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
div.
unis.
Vc.
451
DB

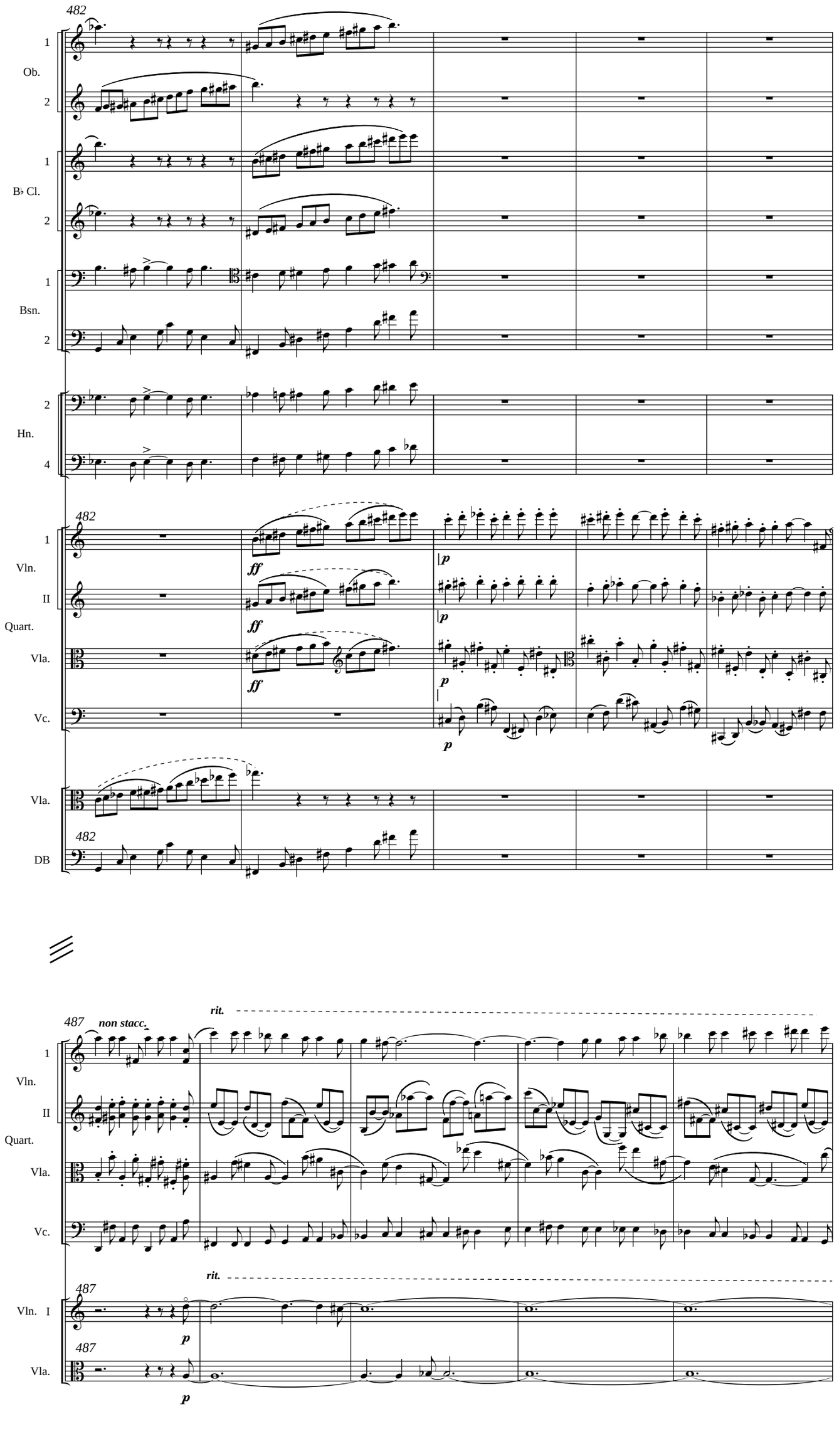

457
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
Bsn. 1
457
1
2
Hn.
3
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
457
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
457
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
457
DB

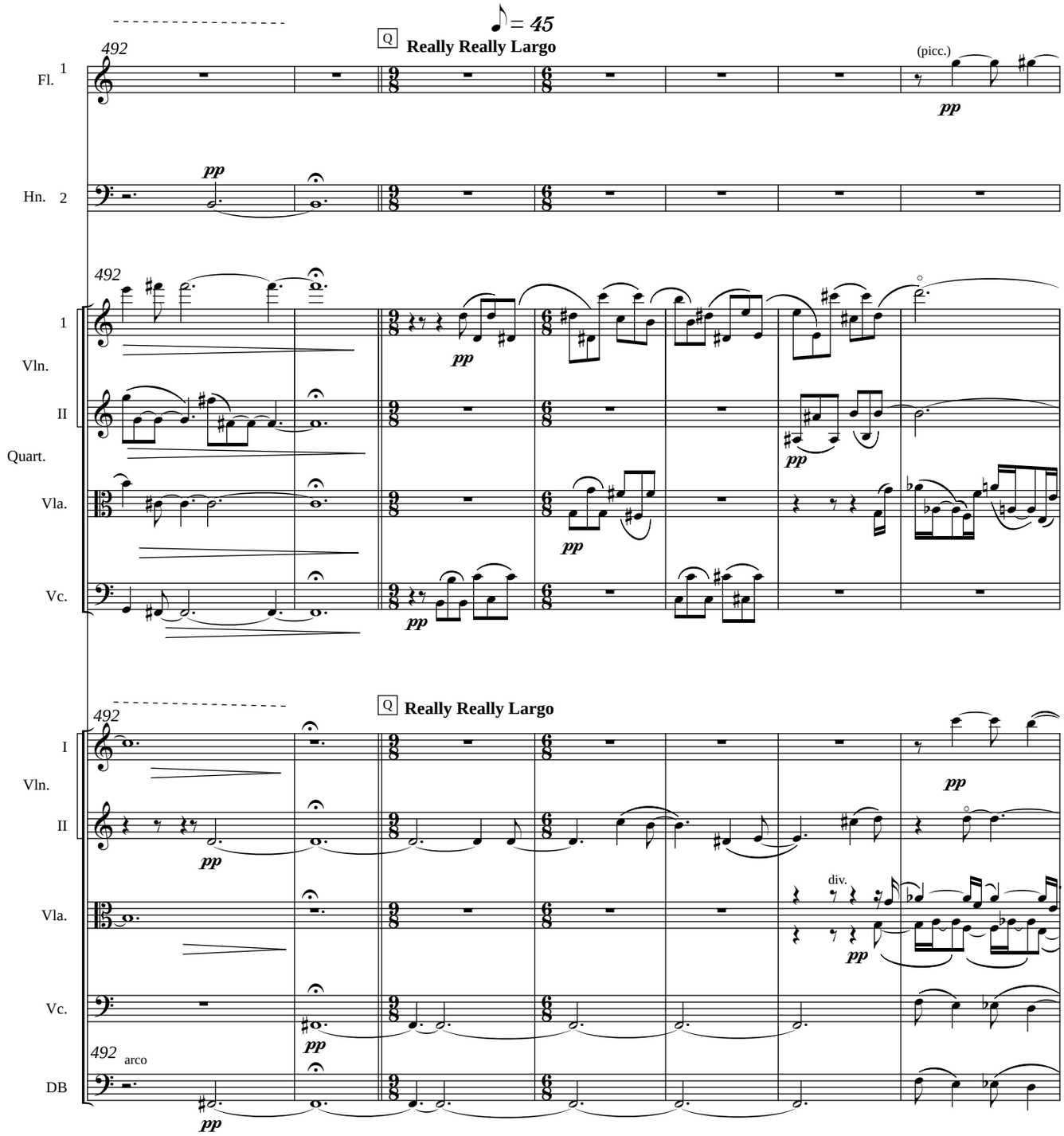

462
(picc.)
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
462
1
2
Hn.
3
4
ff
ff
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
462
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
462
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
DB
462
div.
f
ff

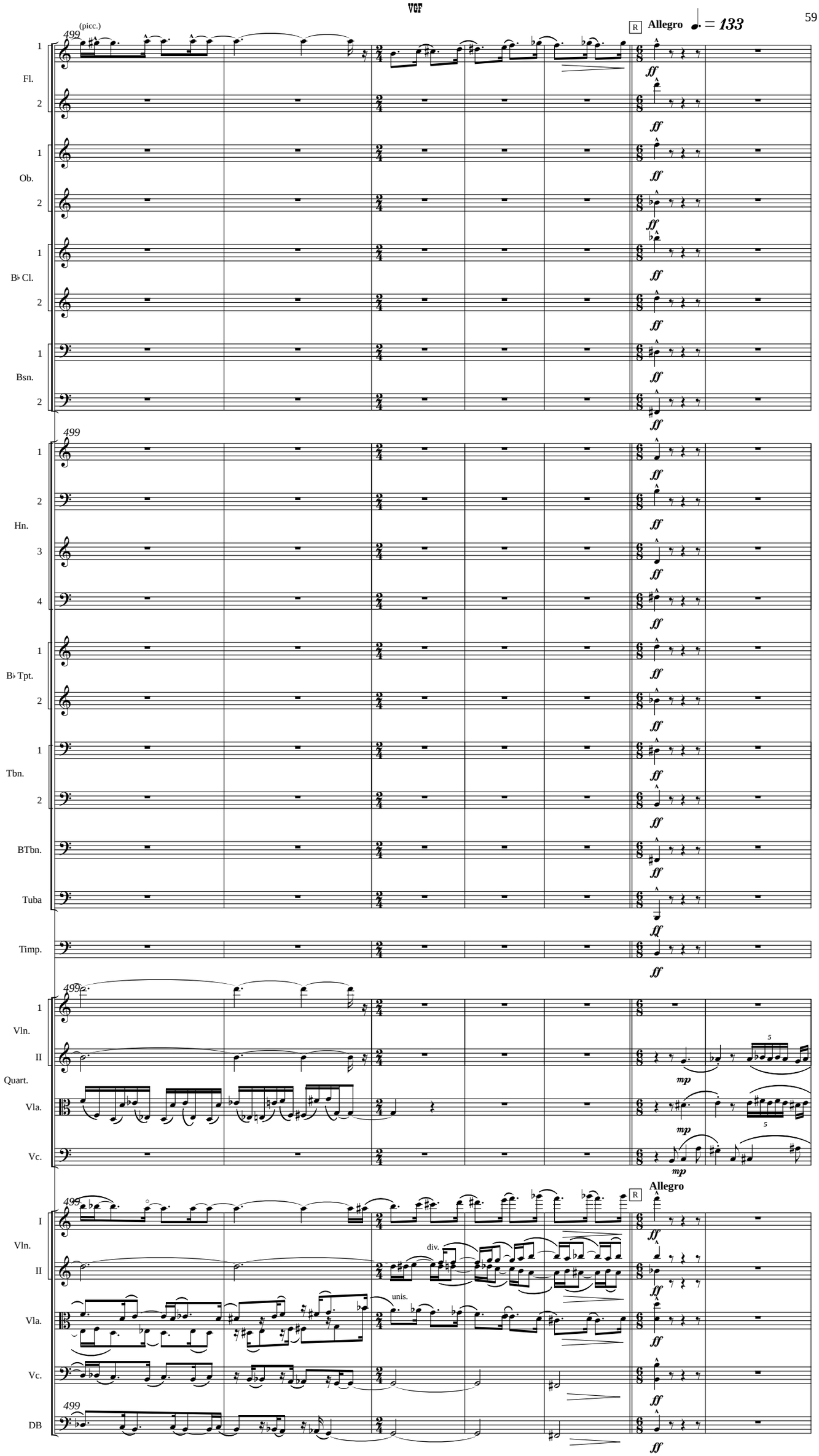

467
(picc.)
1
Fl.
2
ff
1
Ob.
2
ff
467
1
Hn.
3
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
ff
467
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
467
DB

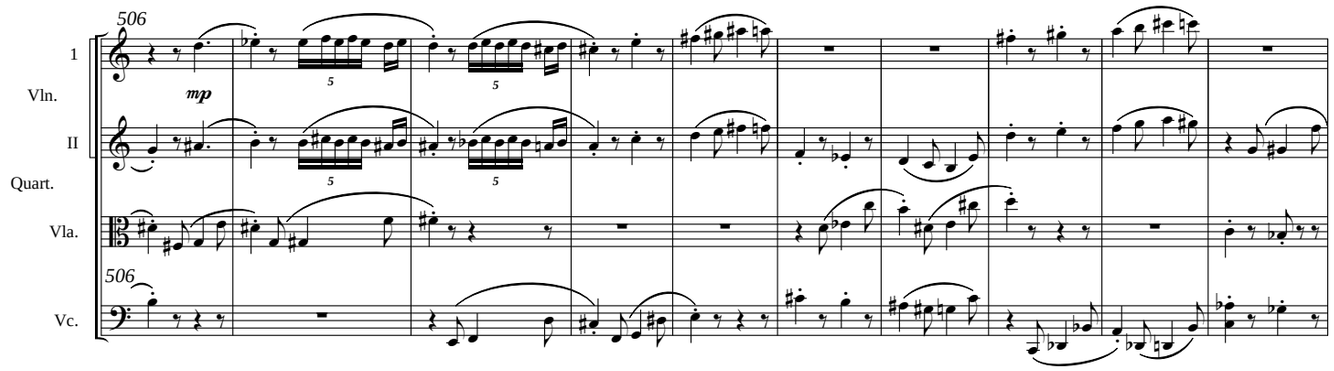

473
P (picc.)
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
ff
1
Bsn.
2
ff
473
1
2
Hn.
ff
3
4
ff
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
Quart.Vc.
473
P
I
Vln.
II
unis.
Vla.
Vc.
473
DB

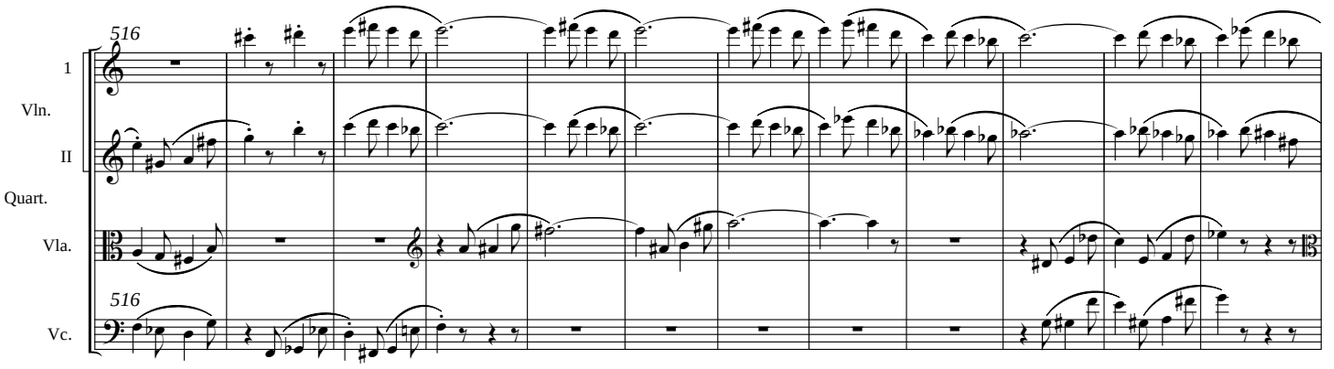

478
Ob. 1
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
478
1
2
Hn.
3
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
ff
BTbn.
478
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
478
pizz.
DB

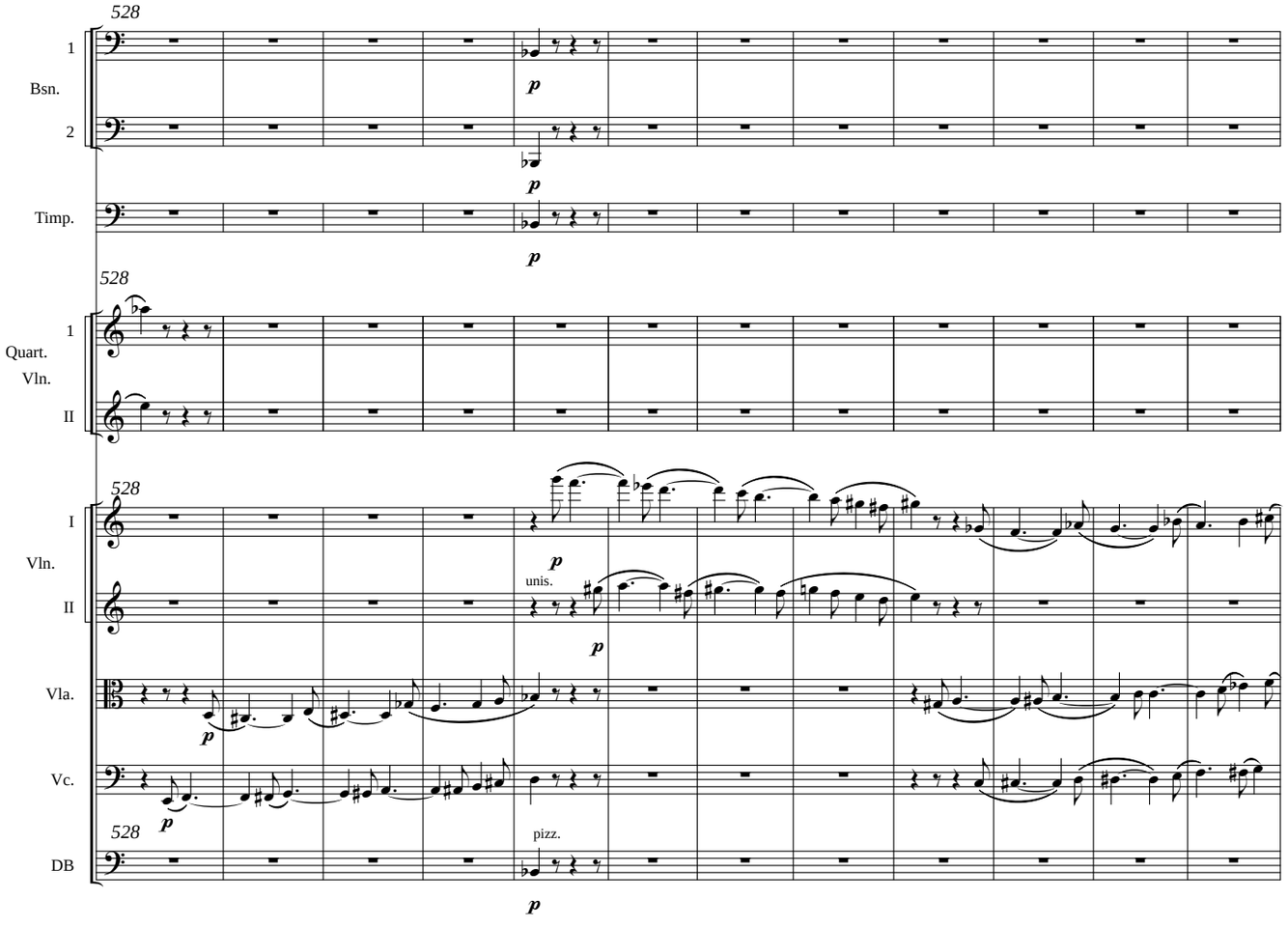

482
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
2
Hn.
4
482
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
Vla.
482
DB
ff
ff
ff
p
p
p
487
non stacc.
rit.
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
rit.
487
Vln. I
p
487
Vla.
p

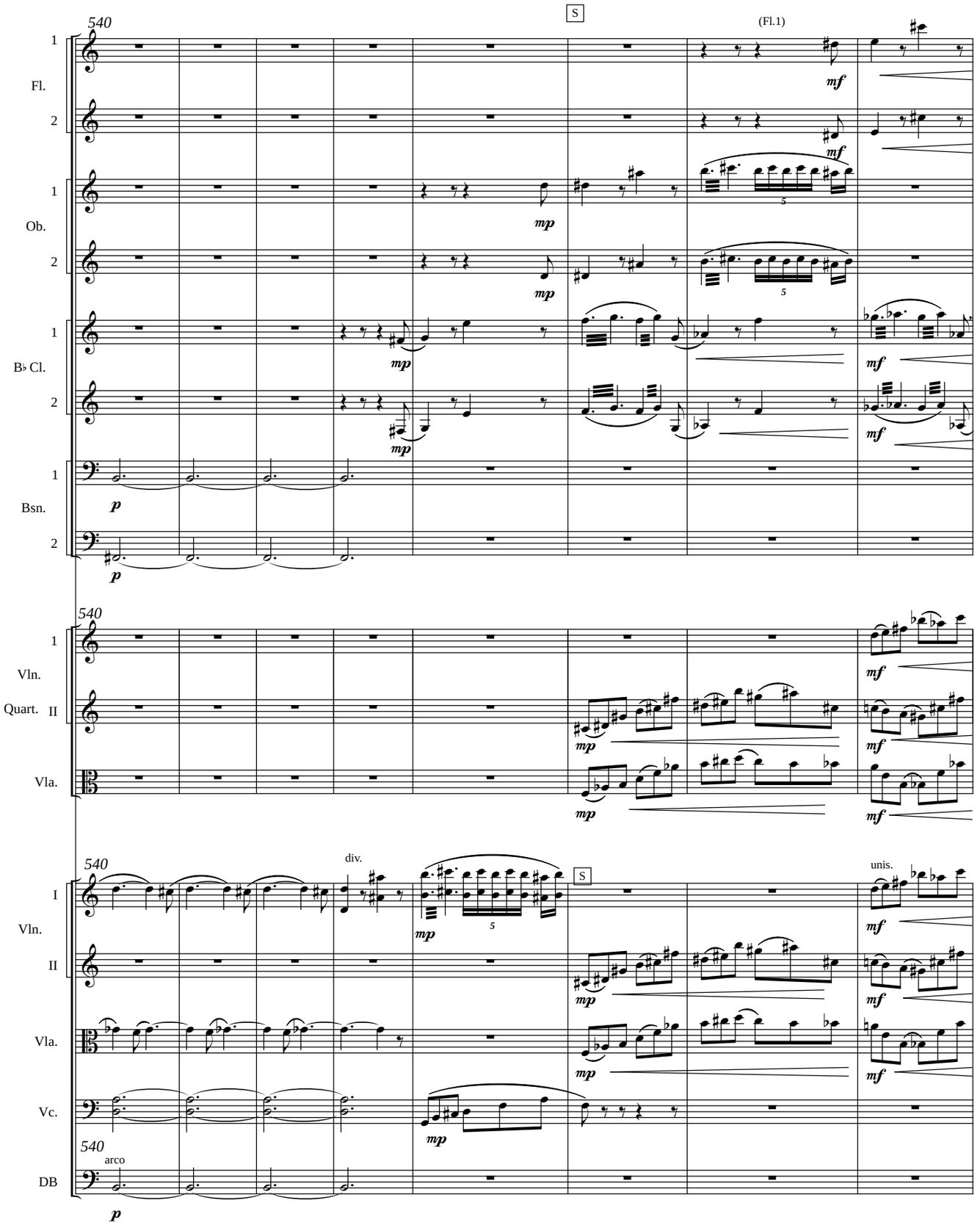

♪ = 45
Q
Really Really Largo
492
(picc.)
pp
Fl. 1
Hn. 2
Vln. I
Vln. II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
Q
Really Really Largo
492
div.
arco
DB

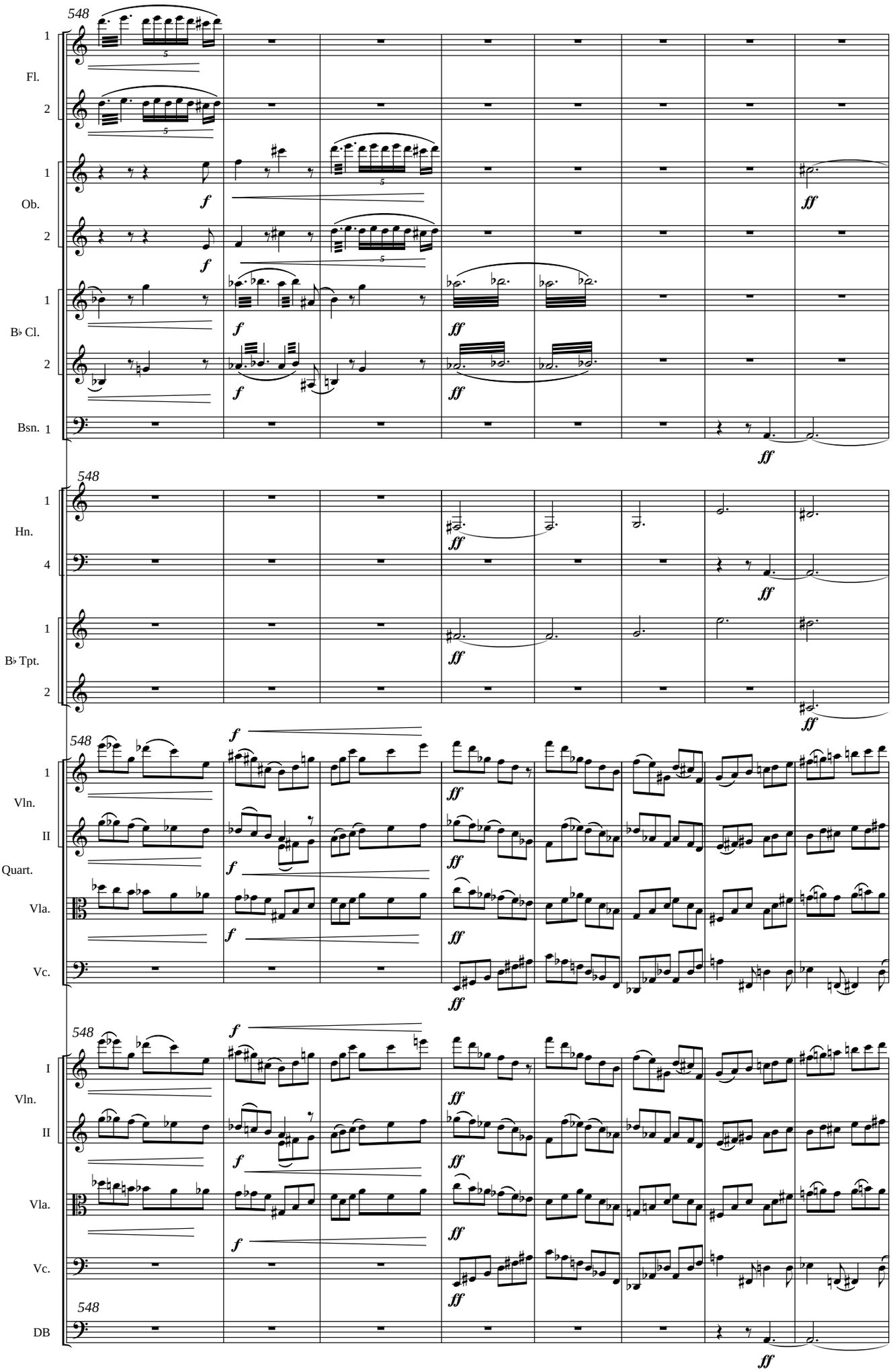

(picc.)
499
R
Allegro
♩. = 133
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
499
1
2
Hn.
3
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
1
Tbn.
2
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
499
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
mp
5
499
R
Allegro
I
Vln.
II
div.
unis.
Vla.
Vc.
499
DB
ff

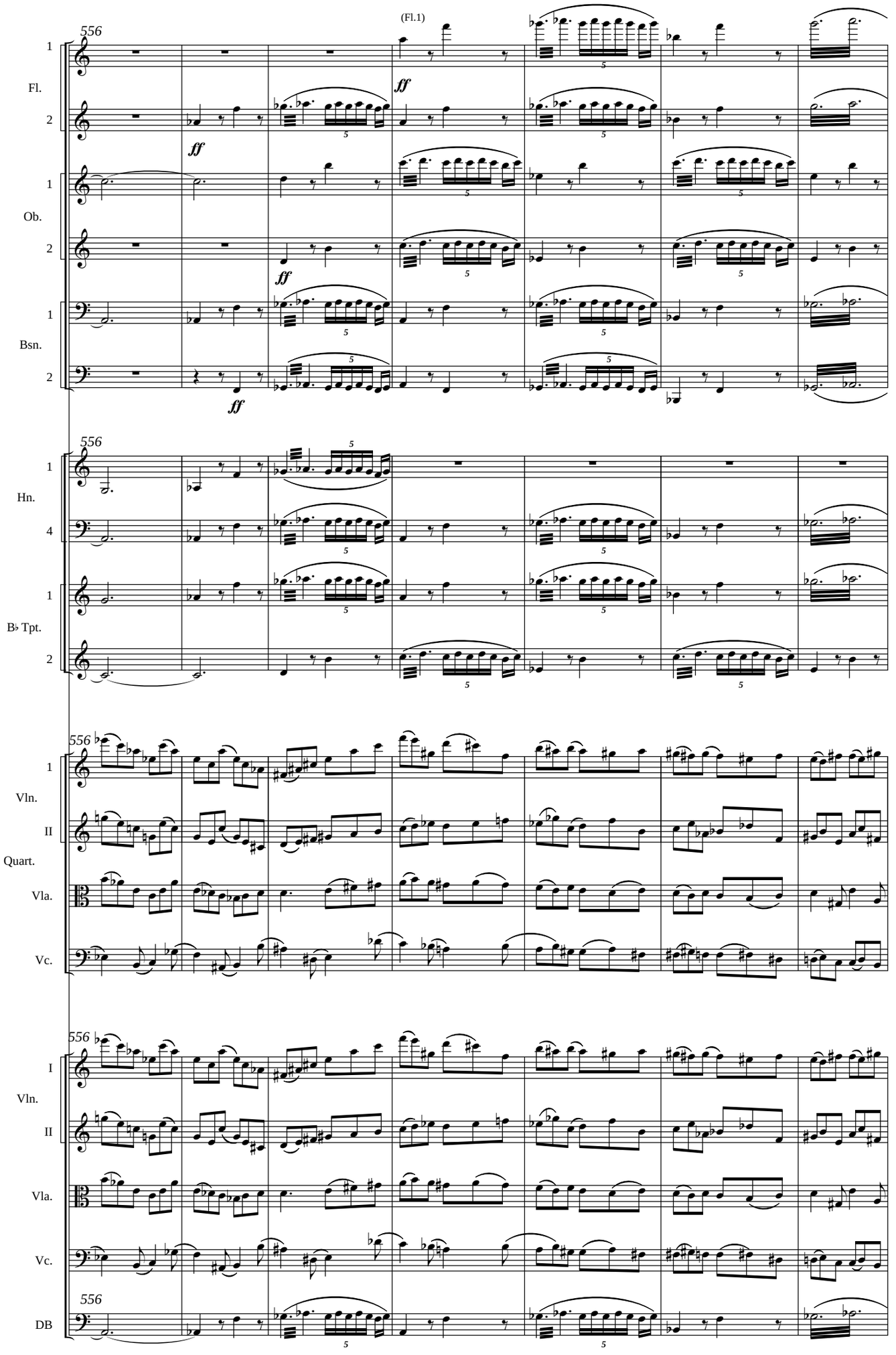

506
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
506
Vc.
mp
5
5

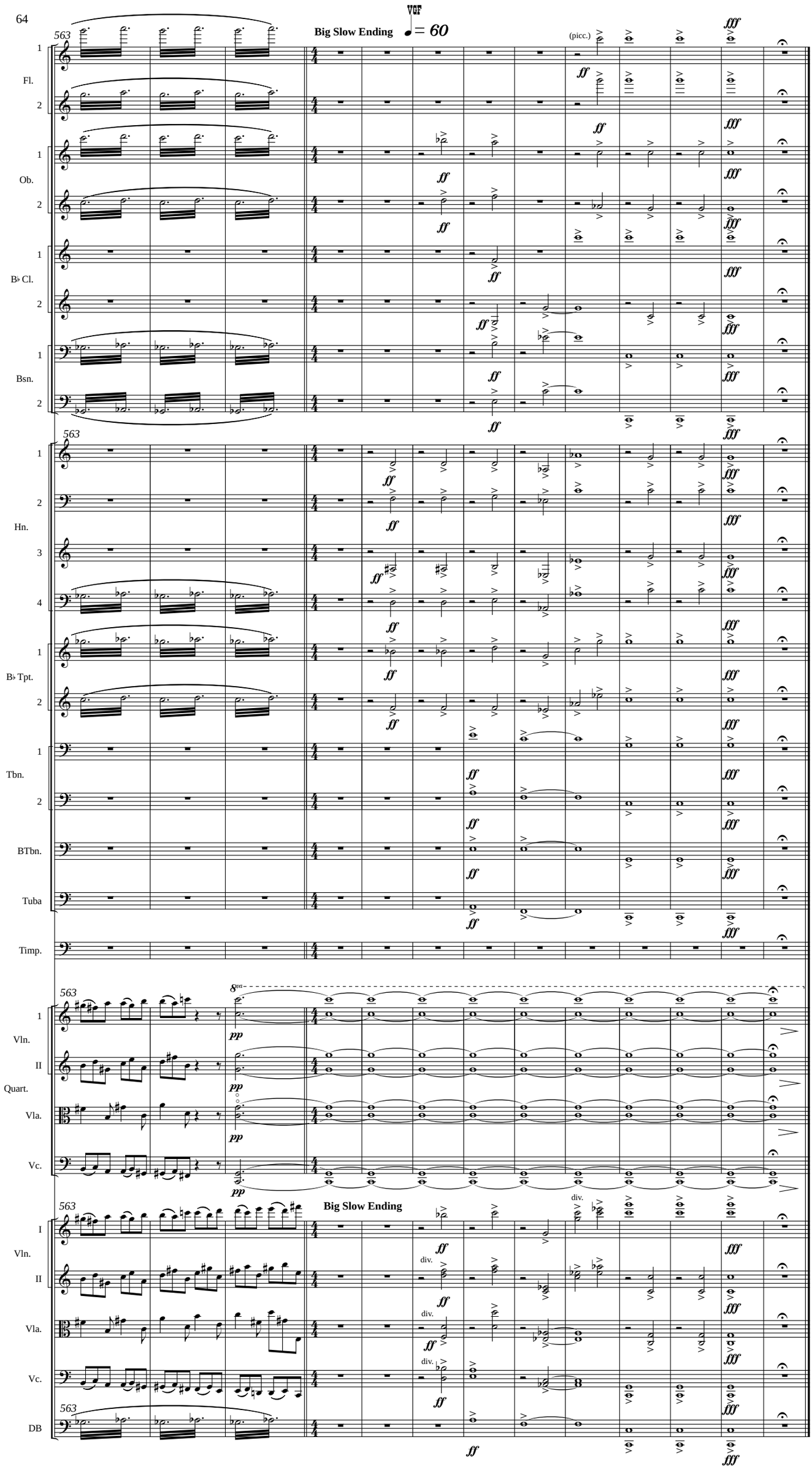

516
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
516
Vc.


528
1
Bsn.
2
Timp.
p
528
1
Quart.
Vln.
II
528
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
528
DB
unis.
pizz.
p


540
S
(Fl.1)
1
Fl.
2
1
Ob.
2
1
B♭ Cl.
2
1
Bsn.
2
mp
mf
p
5
540
1
Vln.
I
Quart.
II
Vla.
div.
unis.
Vc.
DB
arco


548
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt.
Vln.
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
DB
f
ff


(Fl.1)
556
1
Fl.
2
ff
1
Ob.
2
ff
1
Bsn.
2
ff
556
1
Hn.
4
1
B♭ Tpt.
2
556
1
Vln.
II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
556
I
Vln.
II
Vla.
Vc.
556
DB
5


VGF
Big Slow Ending
♩ = 60
563
(picc.)
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
B♭ Tpt.
Tbn.
BTbn.
Tuba
Timp.
8va
Vln. I
Vln. II
Quart.
Vla.
Vc.
DB
Big Slow Ending
div.
ff
fff
pp