lines in motion

for violin, cello & piano

Karim Al-Zand

(2022)

lines in motion

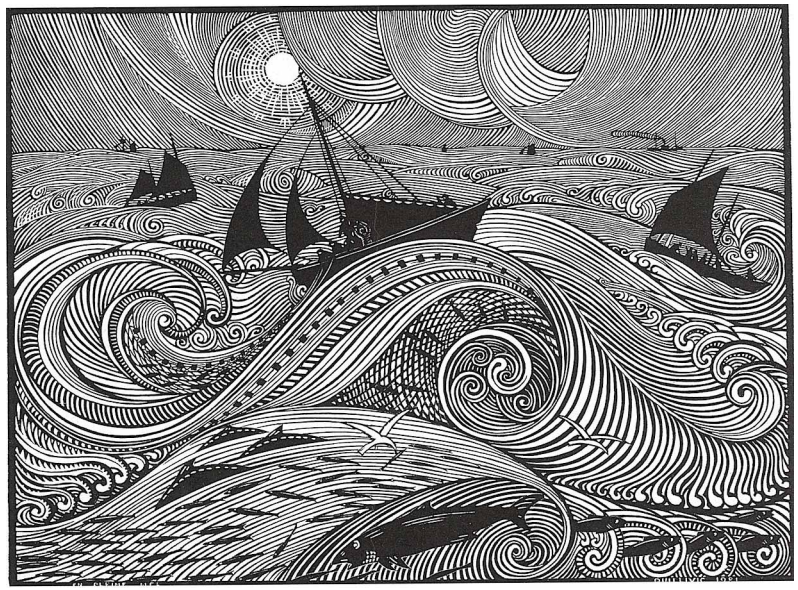
program note:

Lines in Motion is inspired by three striking black and white illustrations from the early 20th century. Though quite different in style, they all embody a strong sense of motion, with lines that project a kinetic energy that leaps off the page. In **En pleine mer** [On the Open Sea], the sweeping lines of Quillivic's maritime engraving are reflected in a roiling, liquid texture and undulating waves of sound. **In the Big City** echoes Masereel's imposing vertical cityscape through bold, chordal blocks interrupted by bustling activity. **At the Spirit Dance** turns Esherick's iconic woodcut figures into a bopping musical trio, swinging to a rhythmic groove.

duration:

ca. 10 minutes

Lines in Motion was jointly commissioned by Chamber Music Columbus and Chamber Music Houston for the Merz Trio. It was premiered on Janruy 17th, and May 6th of 2023.



En pleine mer [On the Open Sea], 1921, René Quillivic (1879–1969)

commissioned by Chamber Music Columbus and Chamber Music Houston for the Merz Trio

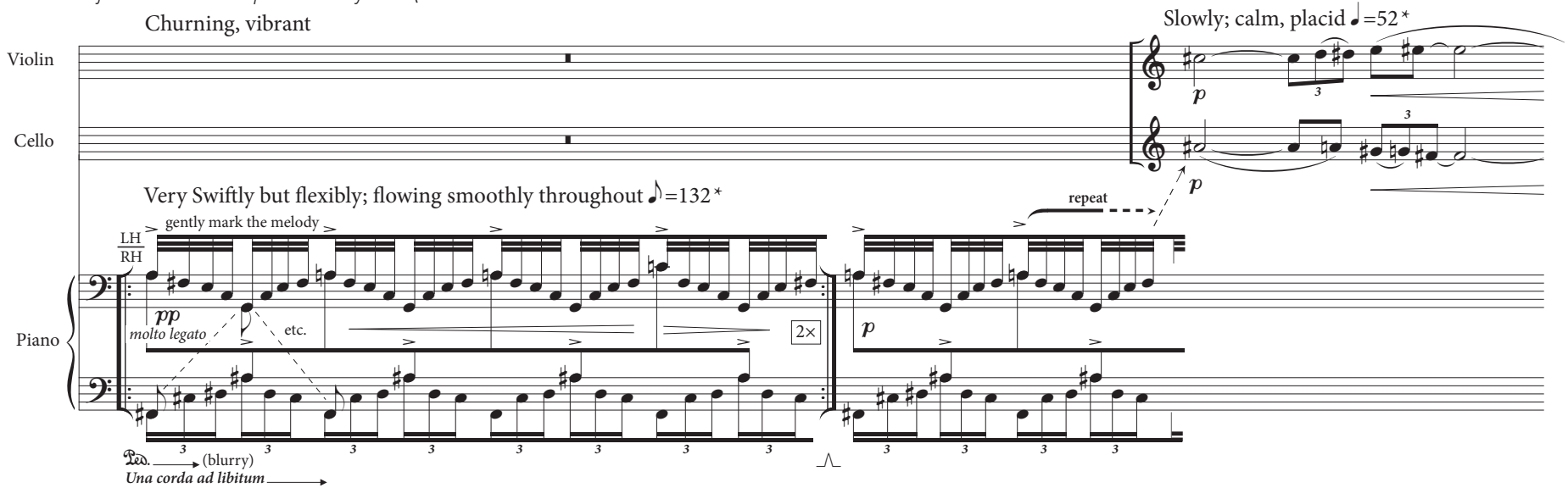
lines in motion

1. on the open sea

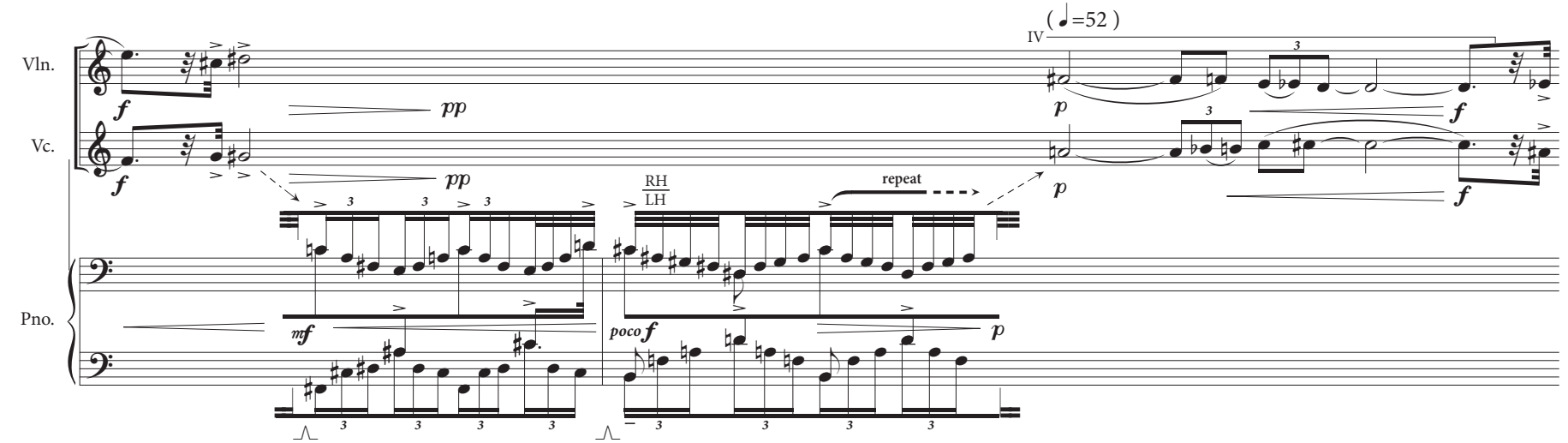
for violin, cello & piano

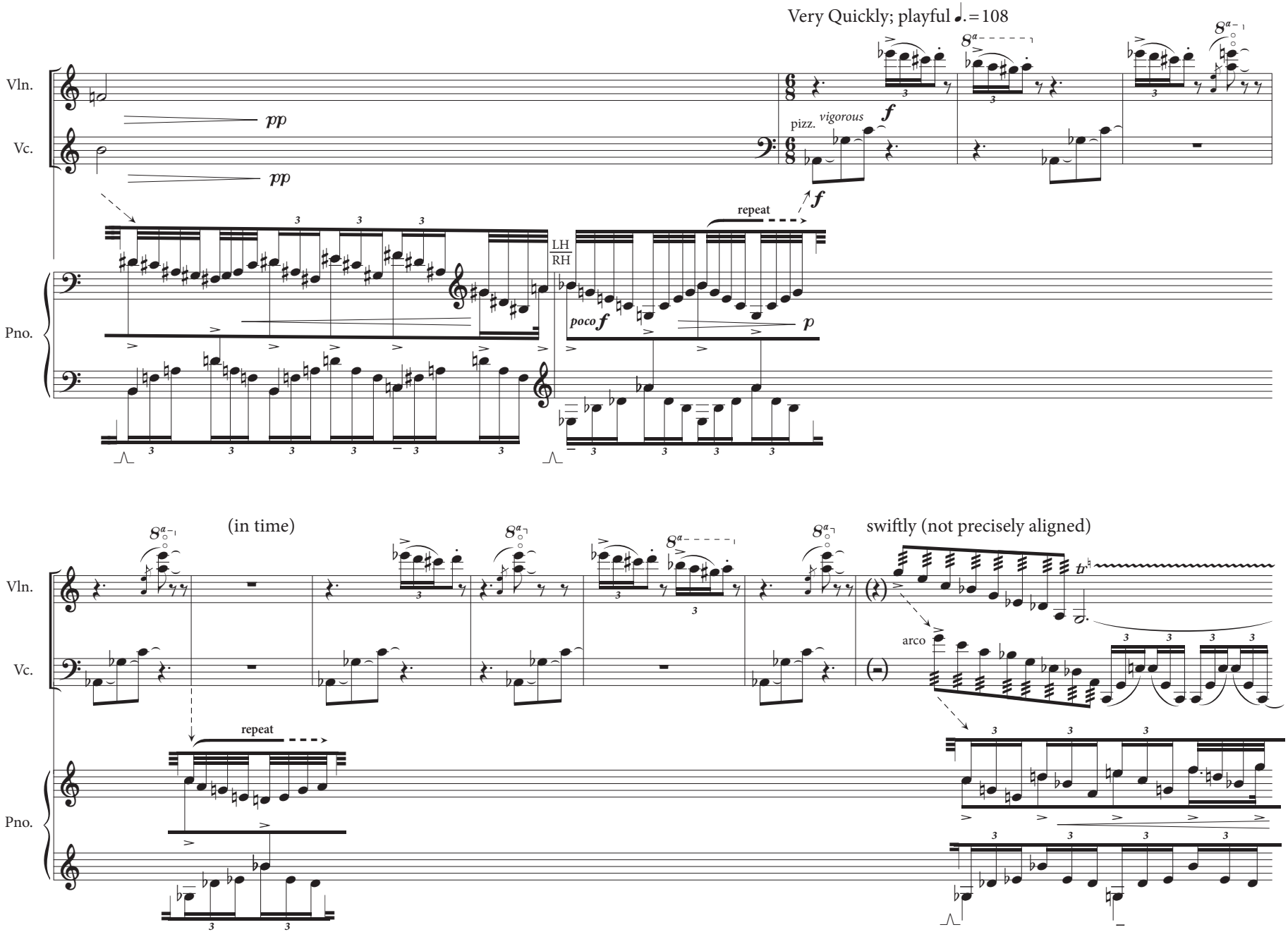
Karim Al-Zand (2022)

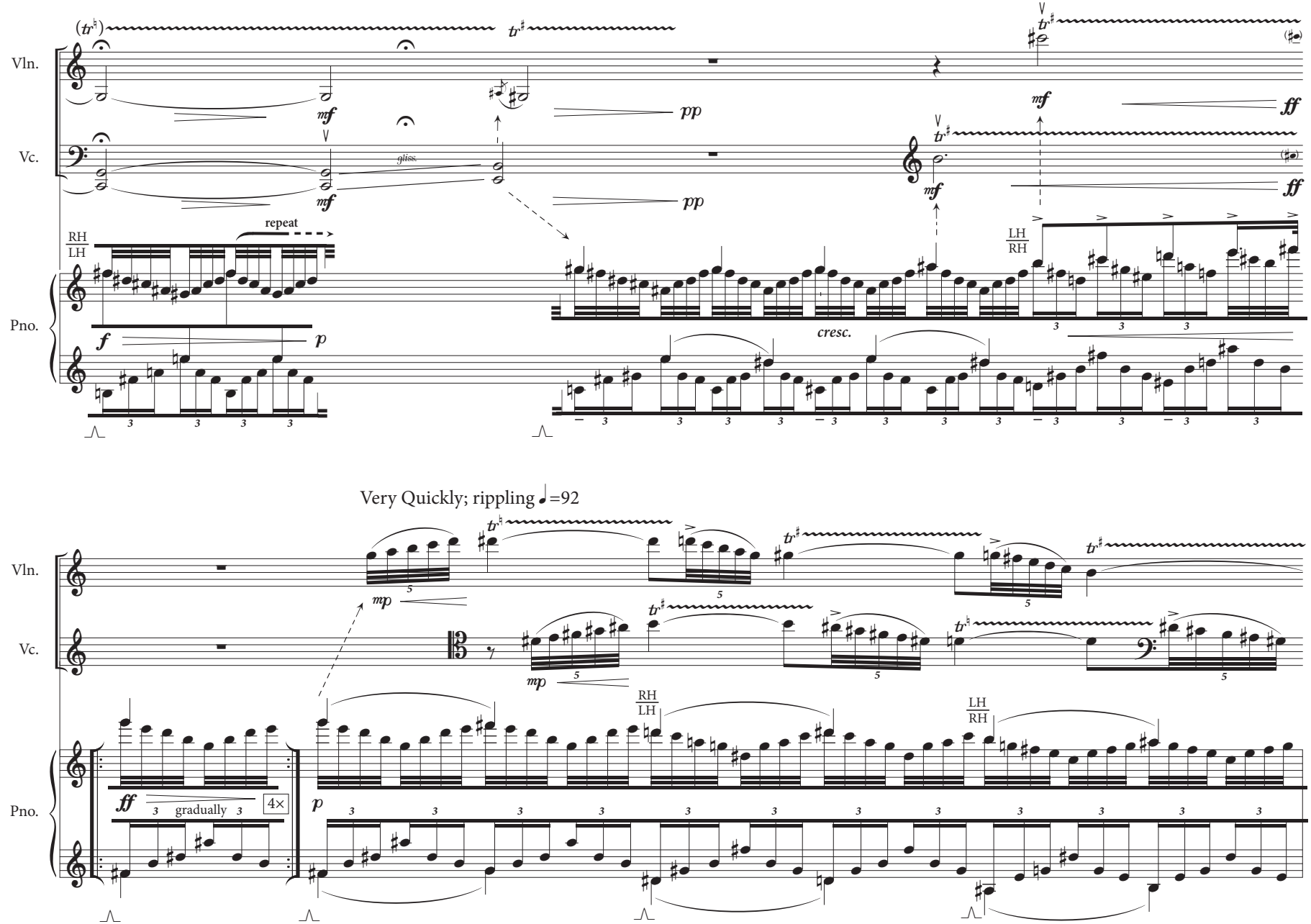
after the woodcut "En pleine mer" by René Quillivic

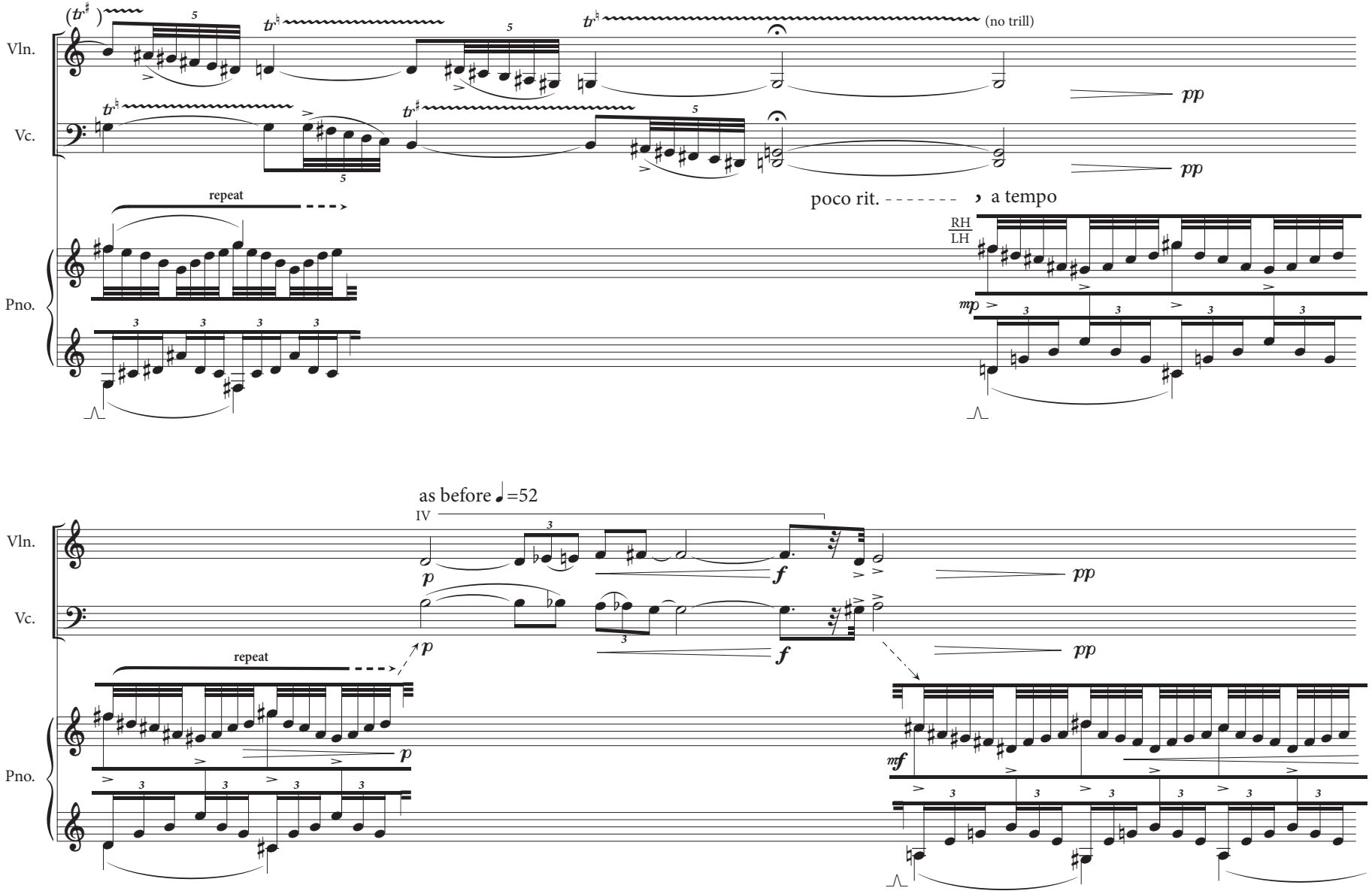


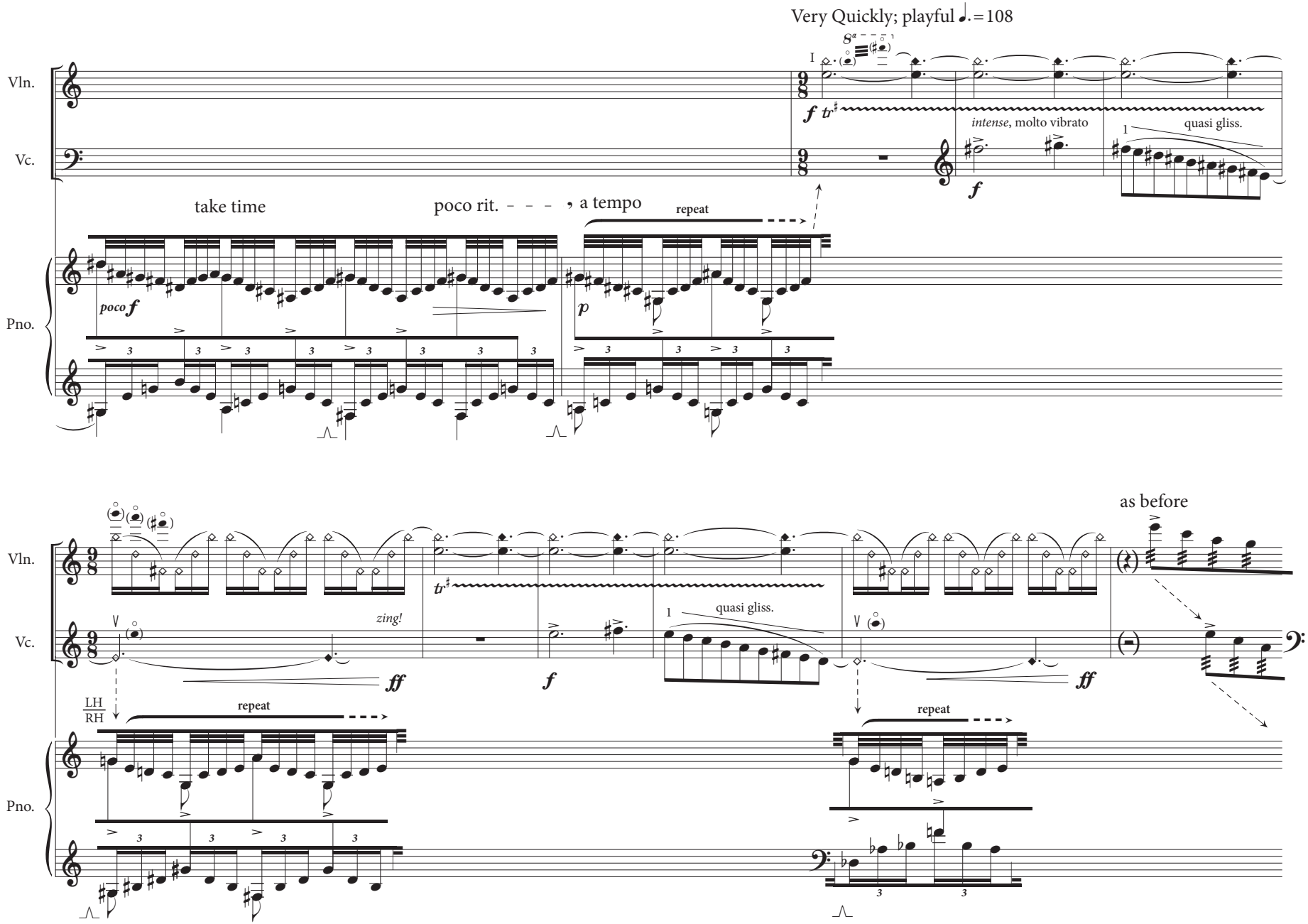
* The piano and the strings play quasi-independently, in their own tempos, however entrances (in the strings) and changes of figuration (in the piano) are cued by dotted-line arrows between the parts. These cues show the order of events, but not their precise timing. The overall musical pacing is thus left to the performers.

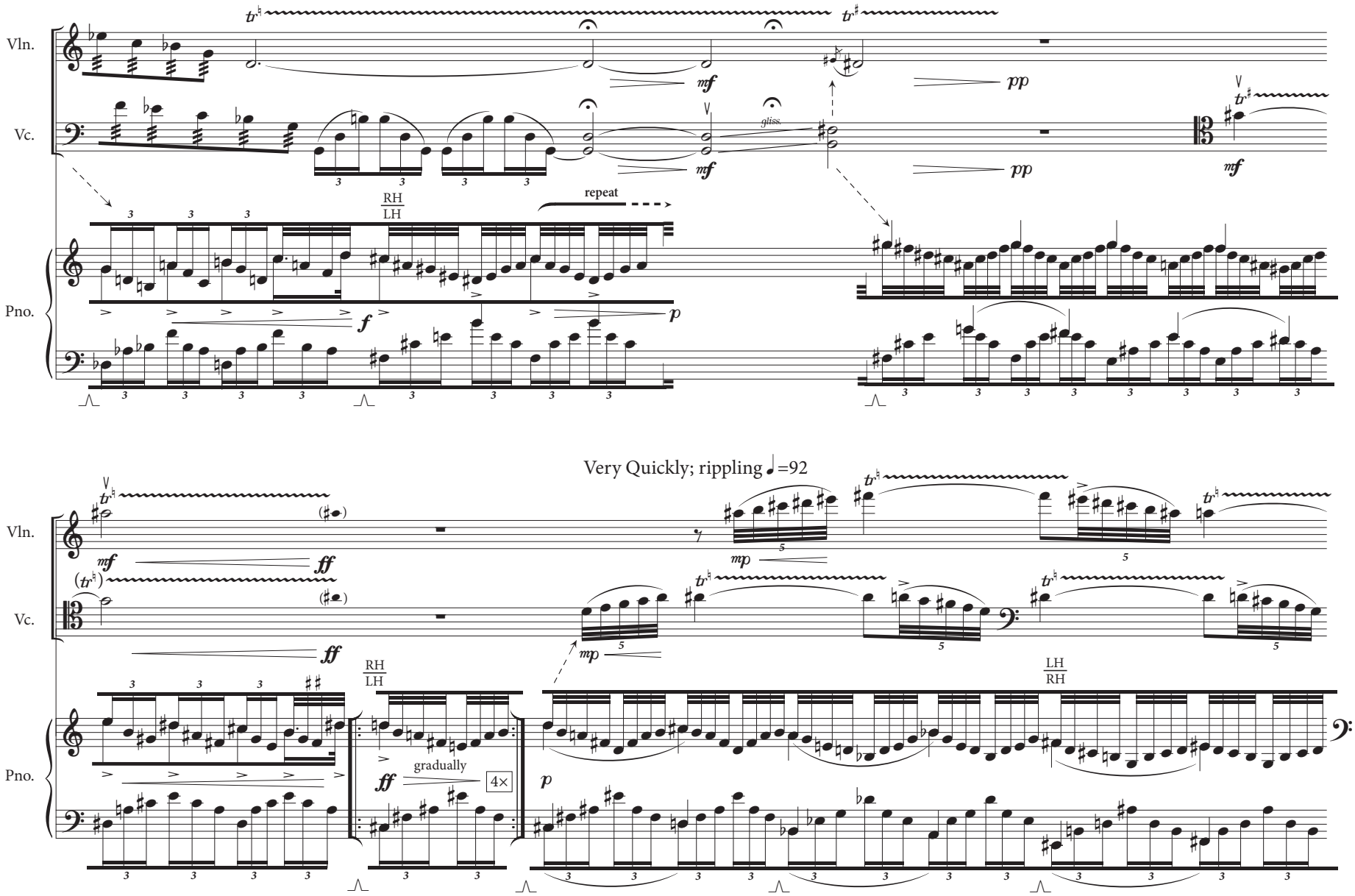


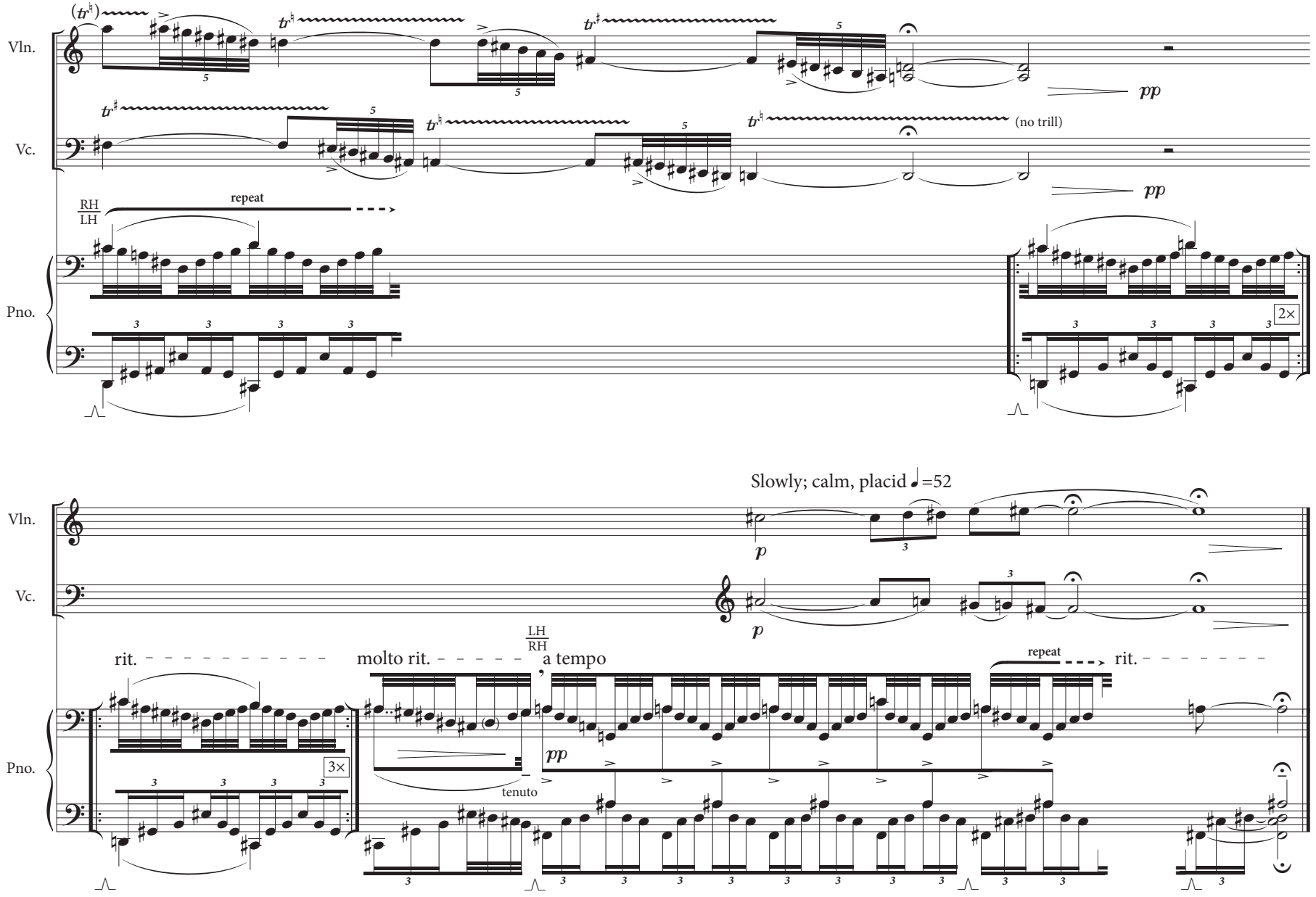

Very Quickly; playful ♩. = 108
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
pp
pp
pizz.
vigorous
f
f
repeat
LH
RH
poco f
p
(in time)
swiftly (not precisely aligned)
arco
repeat


Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
repeat
RH
LH
gliss.
cresc.
Very Quickly; rippling ♩=92
gradually
4×


Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
(no trill)
pp
repeat
poco rit.
a tempo
RH
LH
mp
as before ♩=52
IV
p
f
mf


Very Quickly; playful ♩.=108
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
I
f tr
intense, molto vibrato
quasi gliss.
take time
poco rit. - - - , a tempo
repeat
poco f
p
as before
zing!
ff
f
LH
RH


Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
mf
pp
gliss.
RH
LH
repeat
f
p
Very Quickly; rippling ♩=92
ff
mp
gradually
4×
LH
RH

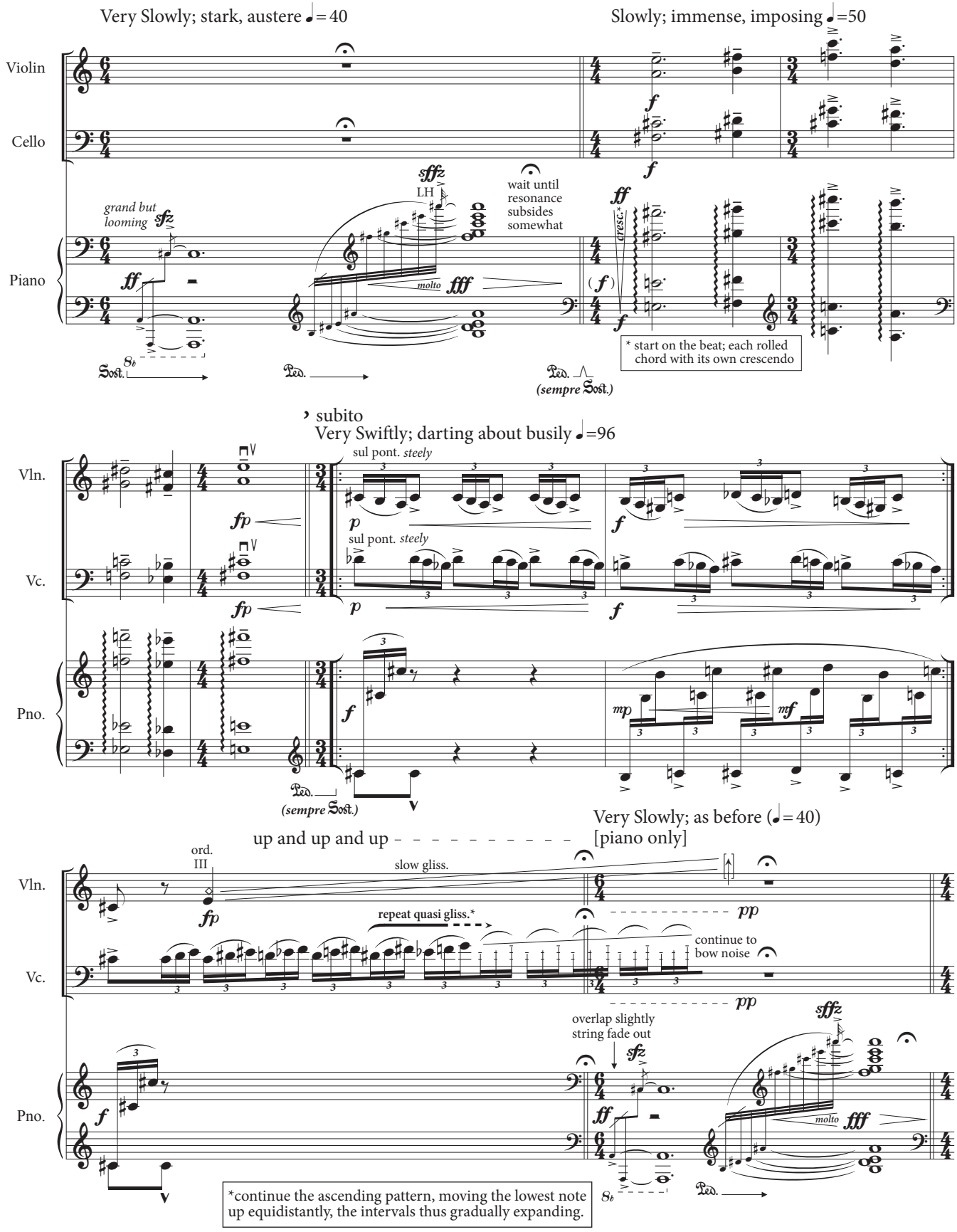


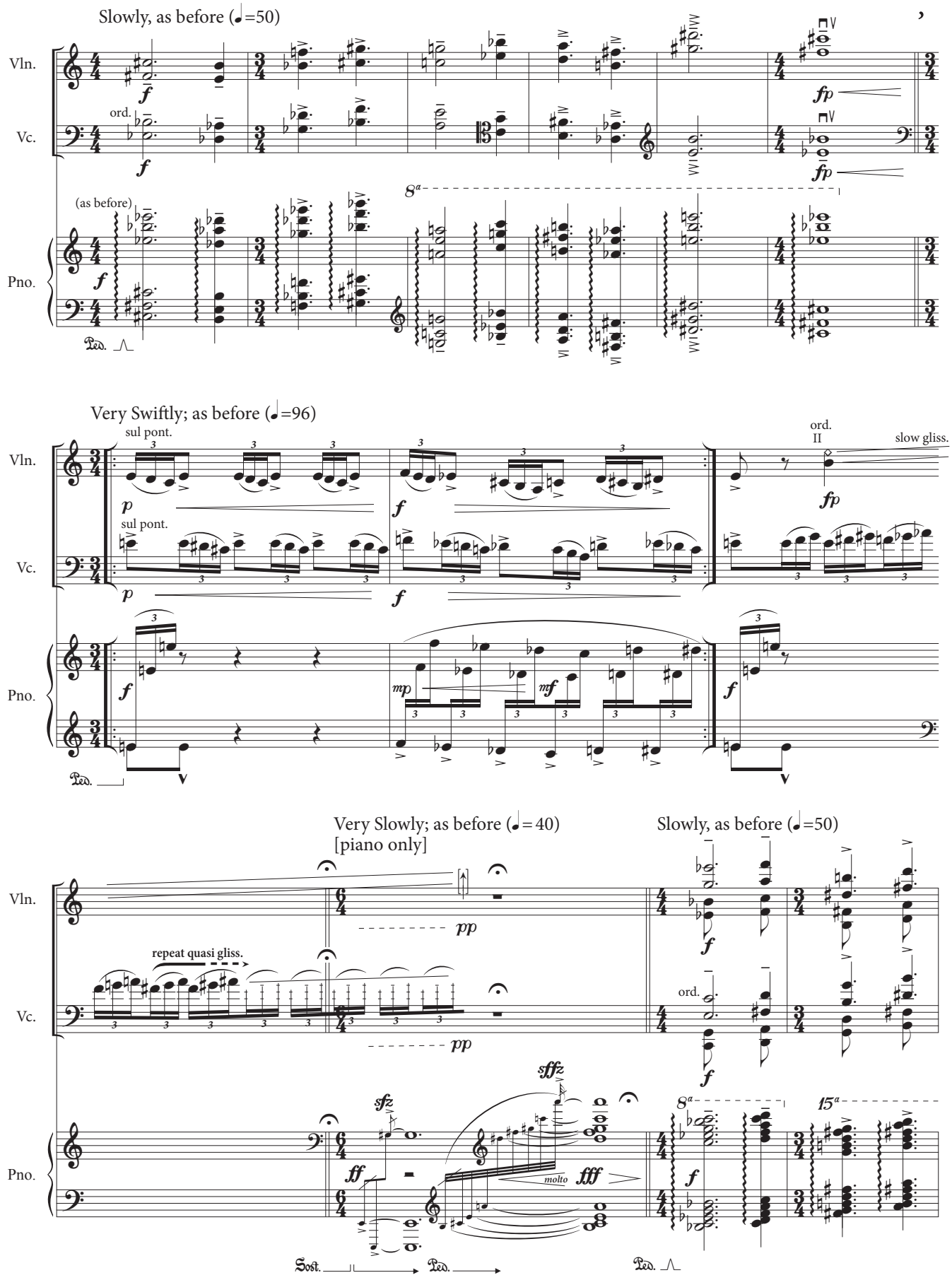
≈curling lines≈

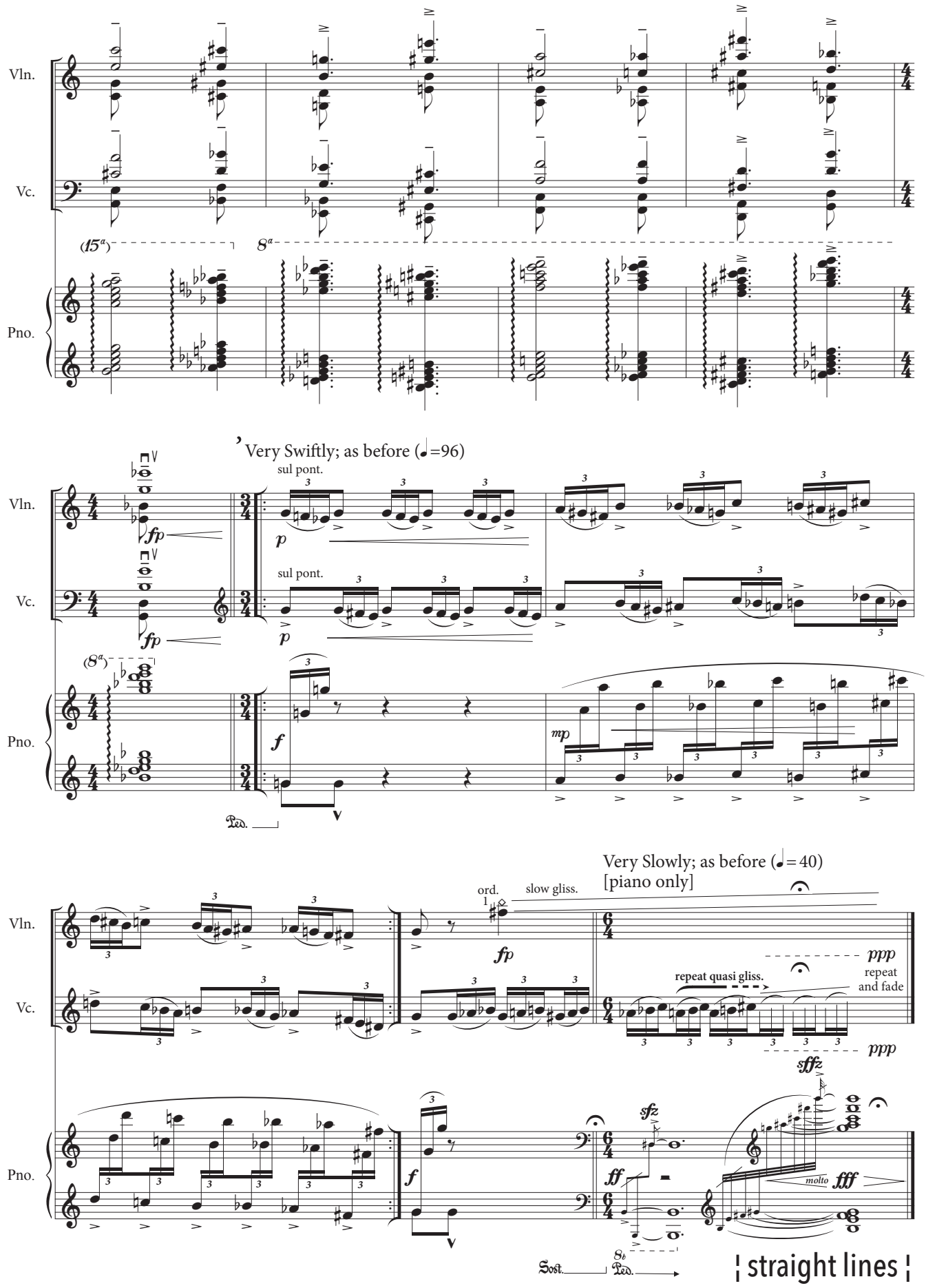
Amerika [America] 1922, Frans Masereel (1889–1972)

2. in the big city

after the illustration "America" by Frans Masereel




Slowly, as before (♩=50)
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
ord.
(as before)
Very Swiftly; as before (♩=96)
sul pont.
ord.
II
slow gliss.
Very Slowly; as before (♩=40)
[piano only]
Slowly, as before (♩=50)
repeat quasi gliss.
molto
Sost.
Ped.


Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
(15a)
8a
Very Swiftly; as before (♩=96)
sul pont.
fp
p
f
mp
Ped.
Very Slowly; as before (♩=40)
[piano only]
ord.
slow gliss.
repeat quasi gliss.
repeat
and fade
ppp
sffz
sfz
ff
molto
fff
Sost.
8b
Ped.
straight lines

Rhythms, 1922, Wharton Esherick (1887–1970)

Performance Instructions

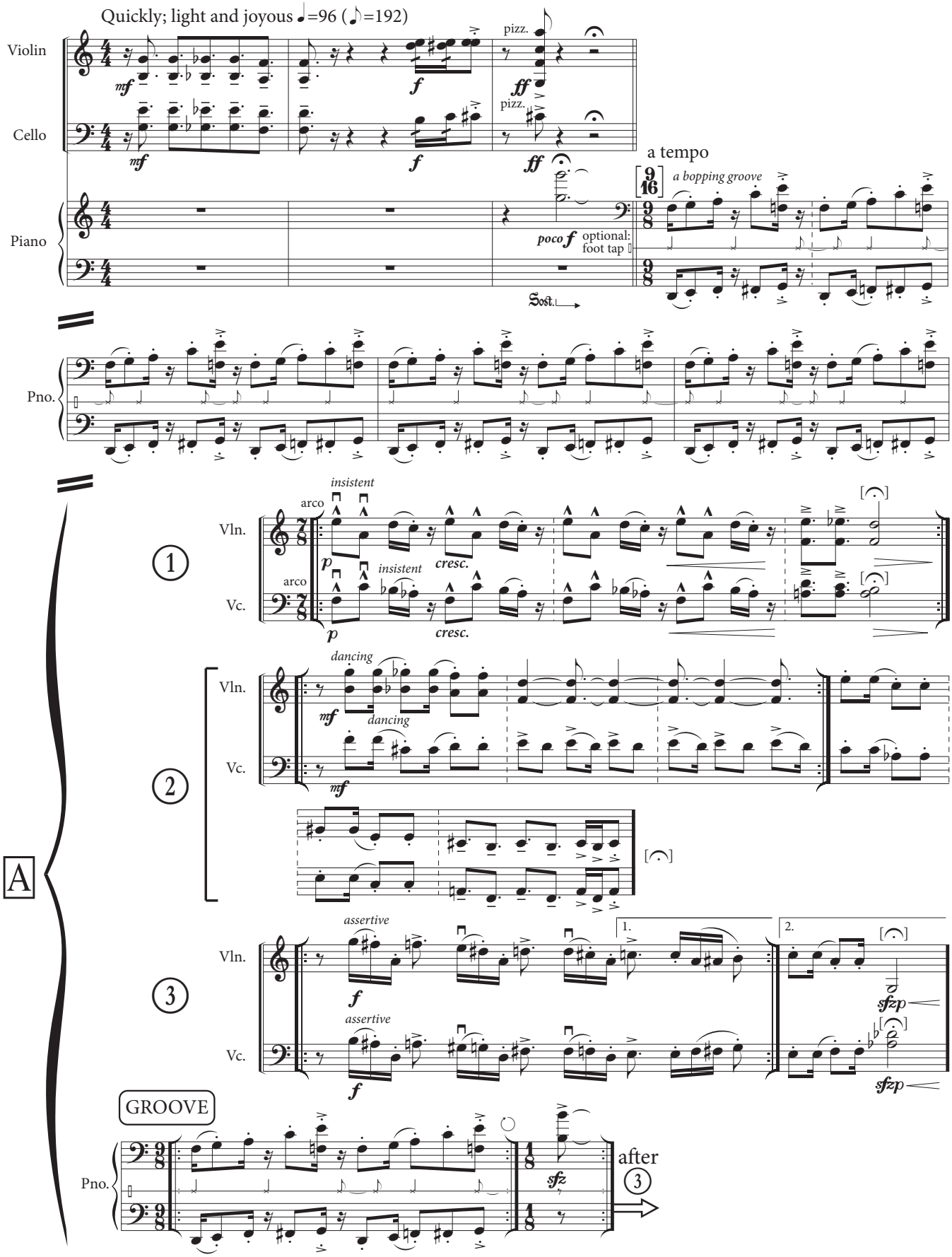
This movement incorpoates some freedom in its execution: its individual elements are fixed, but their deployment is performer-driven to an extent. It is a "sandbox" piece.

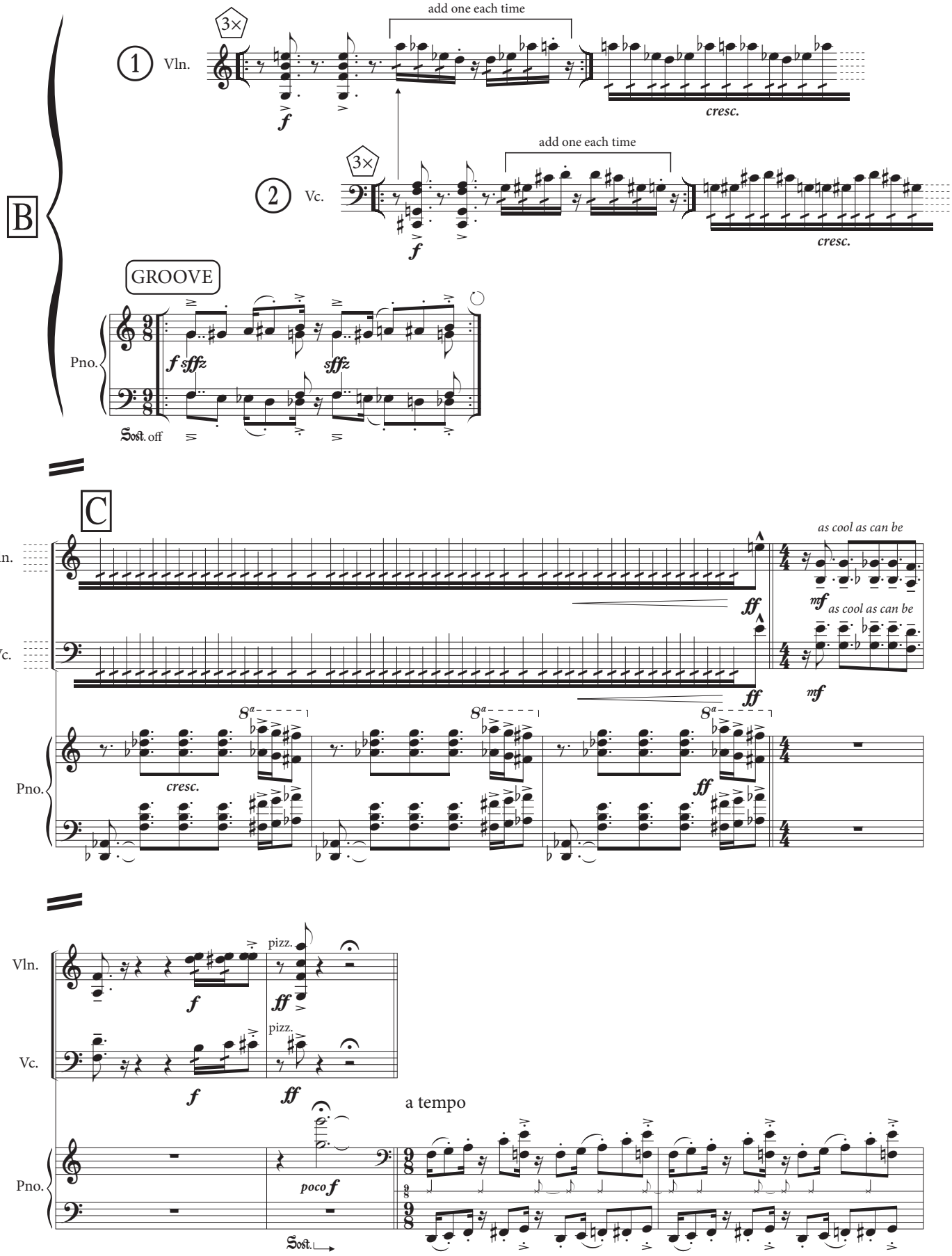
At letters A and D the piano plays its groove continuously. The strings enter together *ad libitum* (cuing each other) on any ♪ pulse, maintaining strict time thereafter. They begin with the section numbered ①, then play ②, then ③. When the strings reach the end of each numbered section (at the 𝄐 sign) the piano should finish an iteration of the groove pattern *ad libitum*, then play the ringing G "bell." The bell acts as a signal for the strings to release their fermata (when there is one) and to move on to their next numbered section, which is again begun and cued together *ad libitum*. After playing the "bell," the piano *returns* to the groove immediately (i.e., strictly in time), unless the strings have just finished ③, in which case the piano *moves on* immediately (i.e., strictly in time) to the *next* groove (B or E).

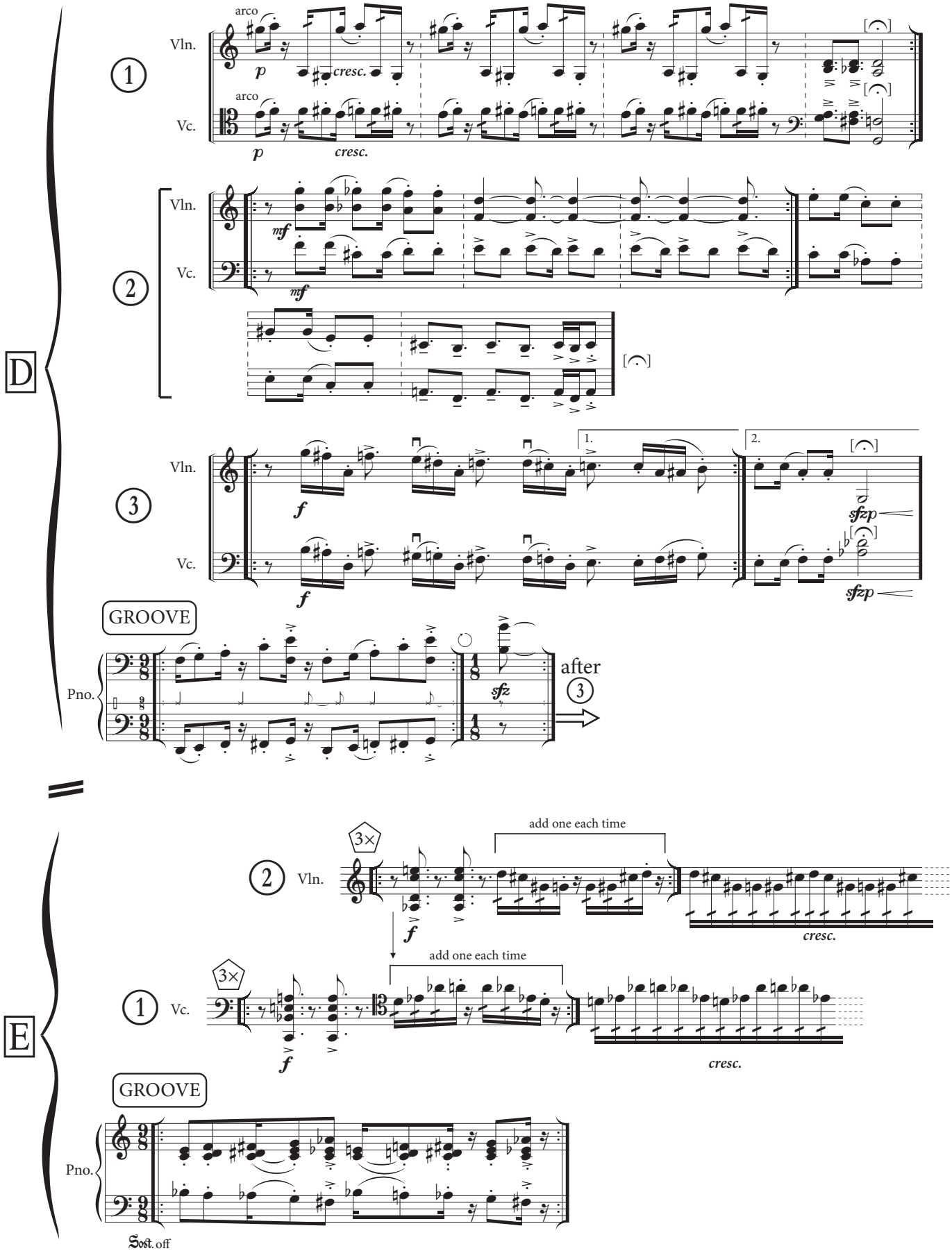
At letters B and at E the piano plays its groove continuously while the strings enter *one at a time* (violin enters first at B, cello enters first at E) in a sort of canon, as indicated. The parts need not be aligned in any particular way, but each instrument should enter on a ♪ pulse and maintain strict time thereafter. The strings each play their numbered sections ① and ② three times, with the bracketed portion extended with each iteration. The third playing is followed by immediately by continuous sixteenths, repeated as indicated, at which time the piano moves on to the music at either C or F.

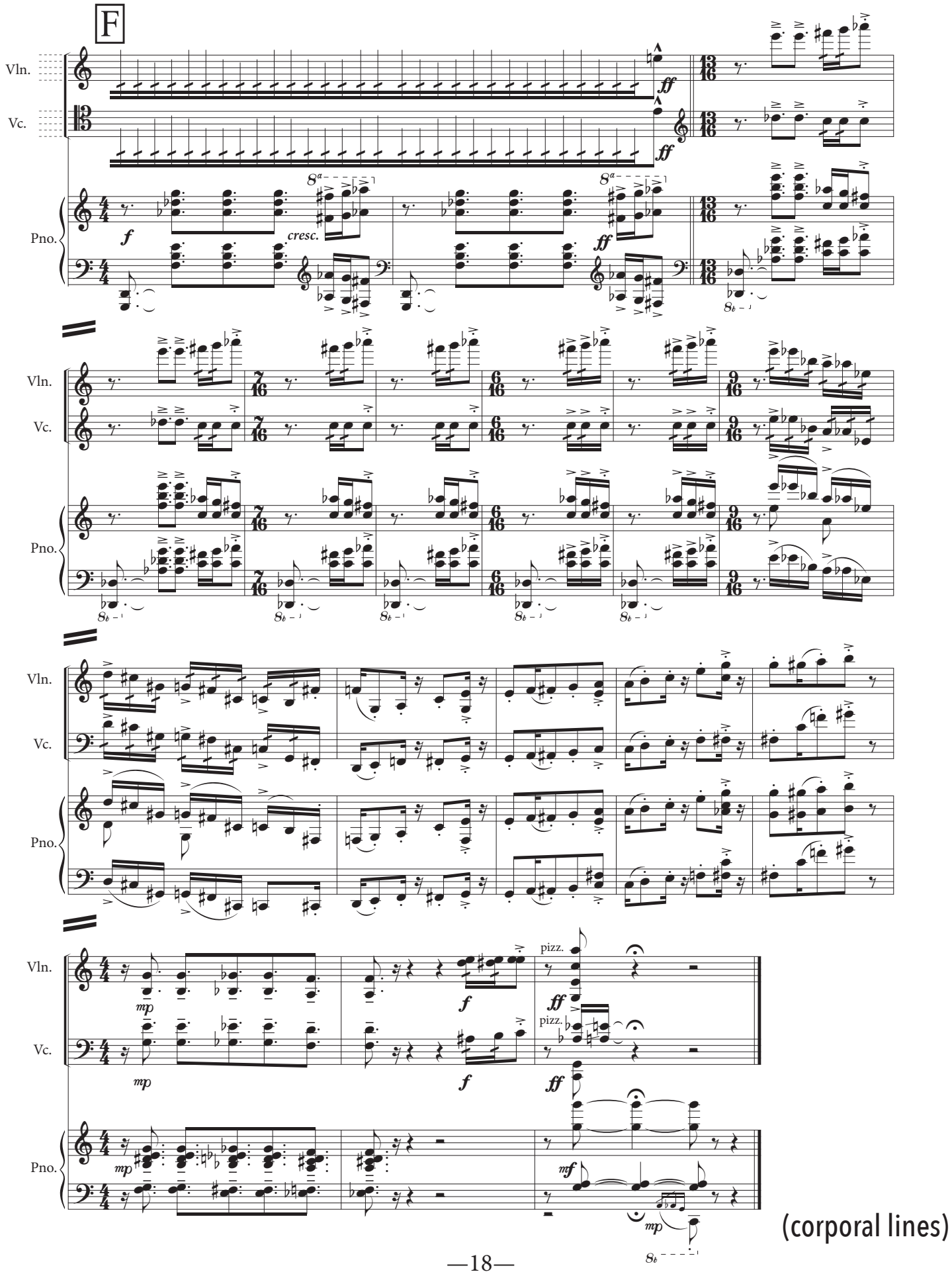
3. at the spirit dance

after the woodcut "Rhythms" by Wharton Esherick




B
1 Vln.
3×
add one each time
f
cresc.
2 Vc.
3×
add one each time
f
cresc.
GROOVE
Pno.
f sfffz
sfffz
Sost. off
C
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
as cool as can be
ff
mf as cool as can be
mf
cresc.
ff
pizz.
f
ff
pizz.
f
ff
a tempo
poco f
Sost.


D
1
arco
Vln.
p
cresc.
arco
Vc.
p
cresc.
2
Vln.
mf
Vc.
mf
3
Vln.
1.
2.
f
sfzp
Vc.
f
sfzp
GROOVE
Pno.
sfz
after
3
E
2
Vln.
3×
add one each time
f
cresc.
1
Vc.
3×
add one each time
f
cresc.
GROOVE
Pno.
Sost. off


F
Vln.
Vc.
Pno.
ff
f
cresc.
mp
mf
pizz.
(corporal lines)