STRING QUARTET NO. 4
STRANGE MACHINES

Karim Al-Zand

(2022)

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Program Note:

Strange Machines imagines three quirky musical automata. In *Alberti Machine* we encounter a steam-punk music box, its buttons, levers and dials adjusting a familiar accompanimental pattern until the machine breaks. Bach meets Rube in *Goldberg Machine*, a contraption that careens between variations in a musical chain reaction. *Mannheim Machine* is a cliché-bot, an unhinged device that furiously spits out distorted musical tropes from the dawn of the symphony.

Duration: 12'

1. Alberti Machine	4'
2. Goldberg Machine	4'
3. Mannheim Machine	4'

for the Balourdet Quartet, with support from Chamber Music America's Classical Commissioning Program

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1. ALBERTI MACHINE

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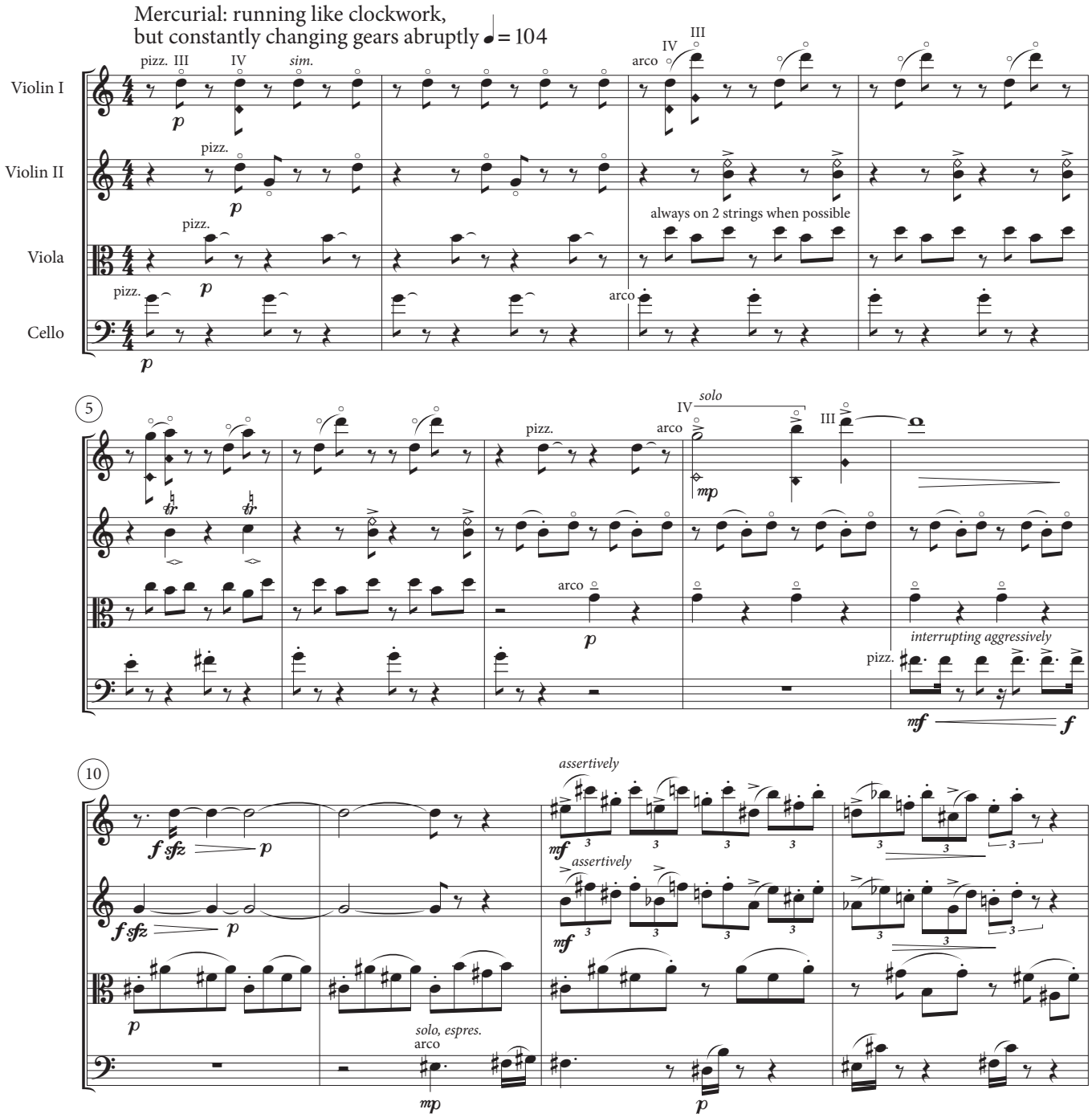
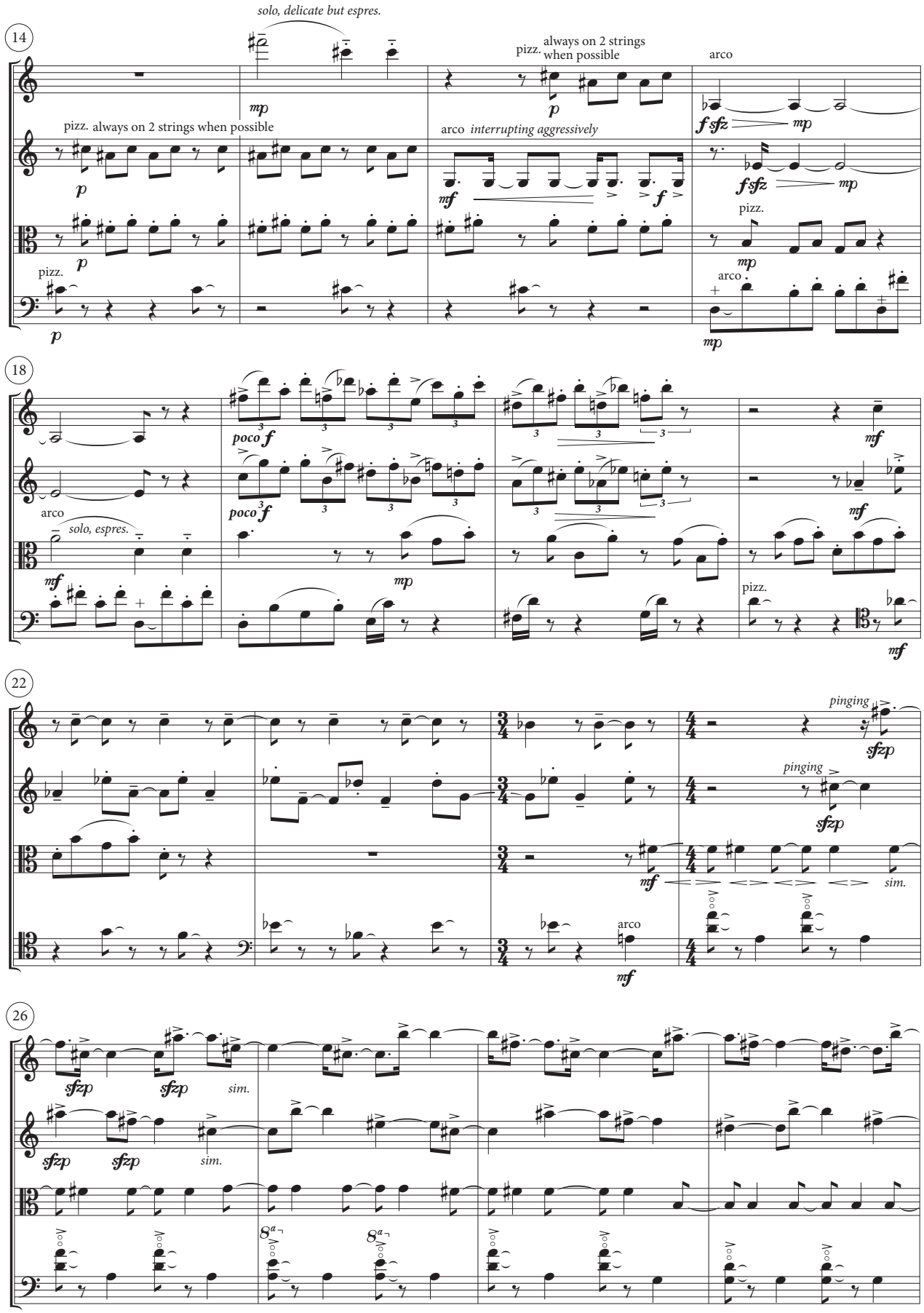
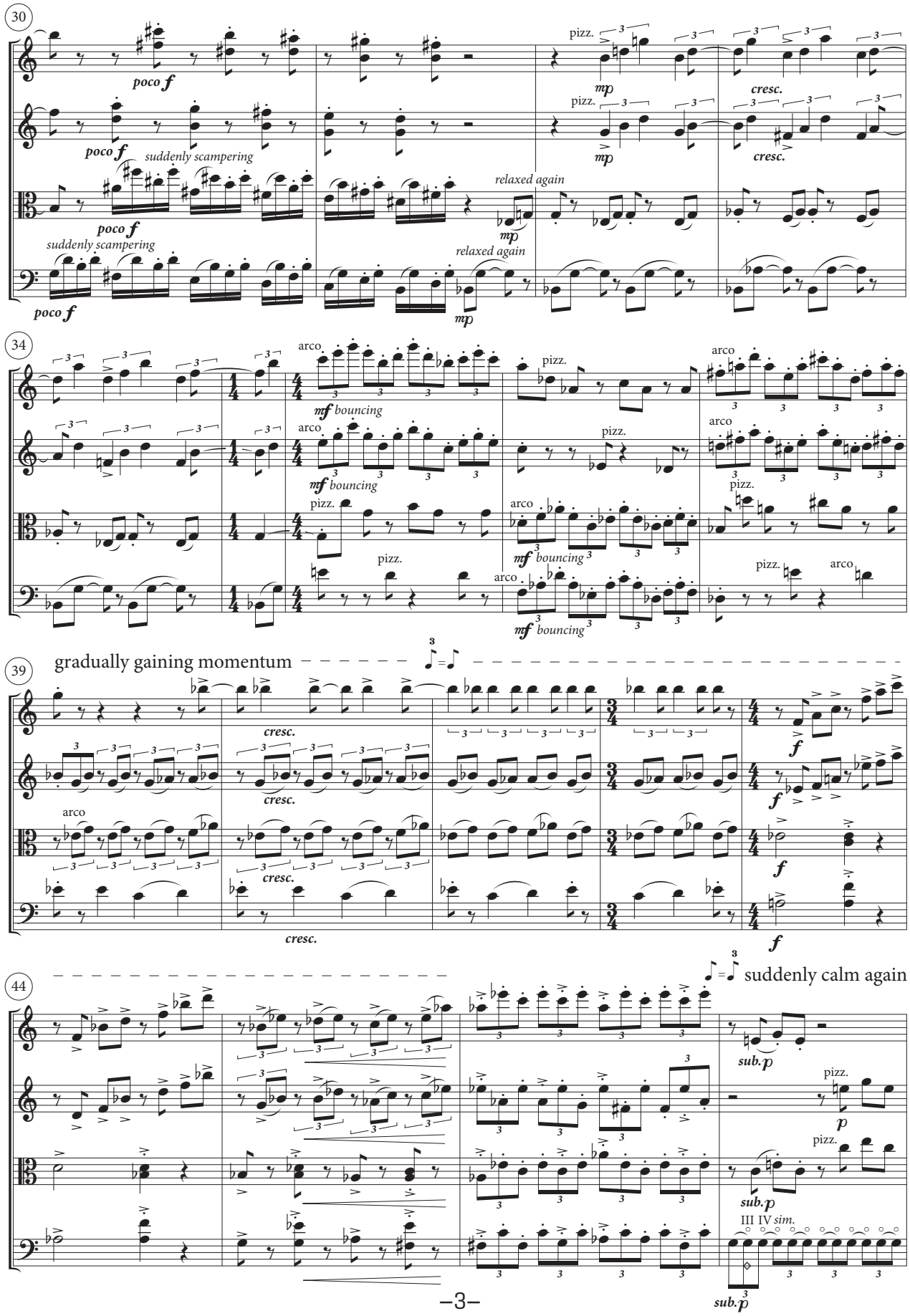
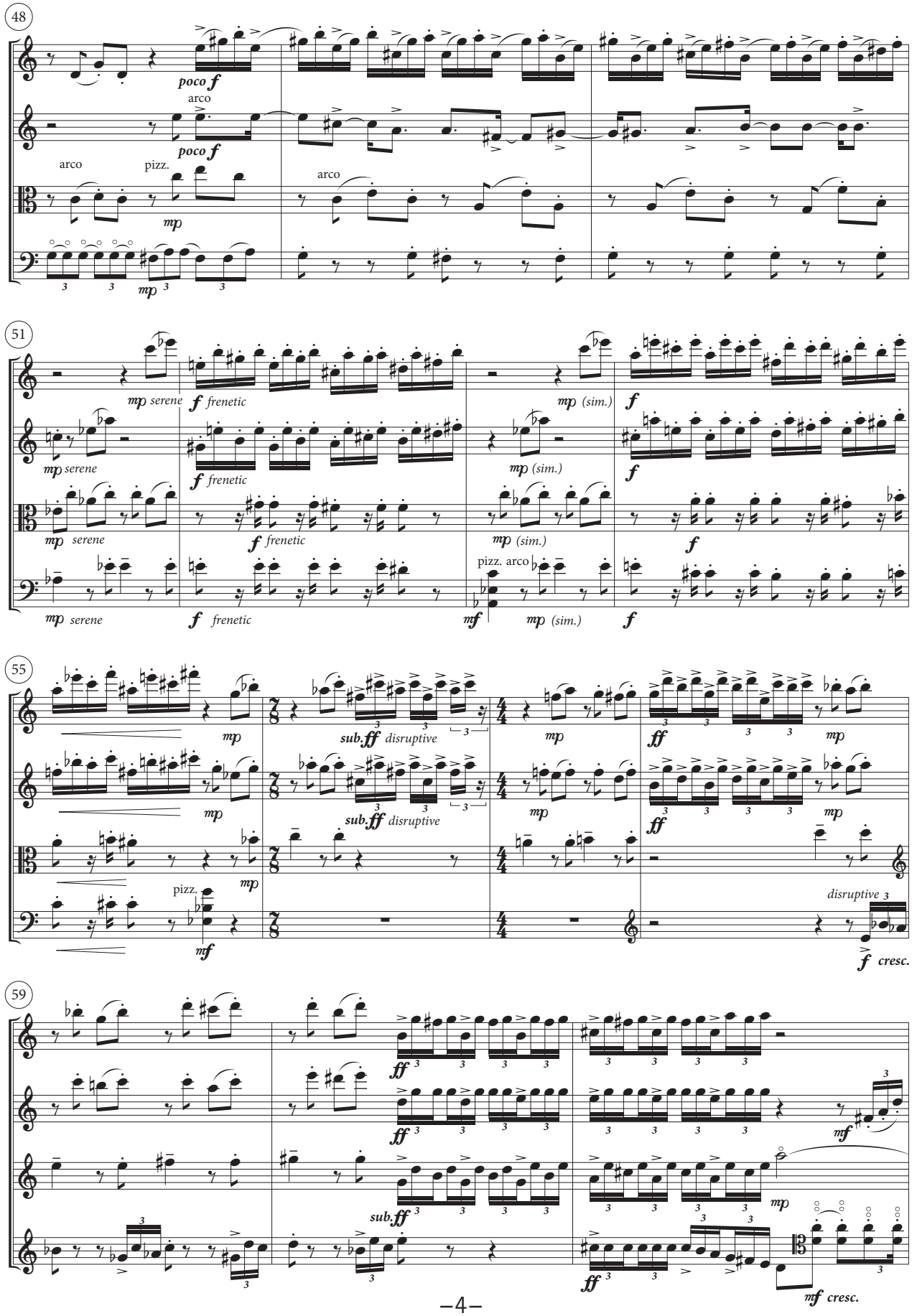
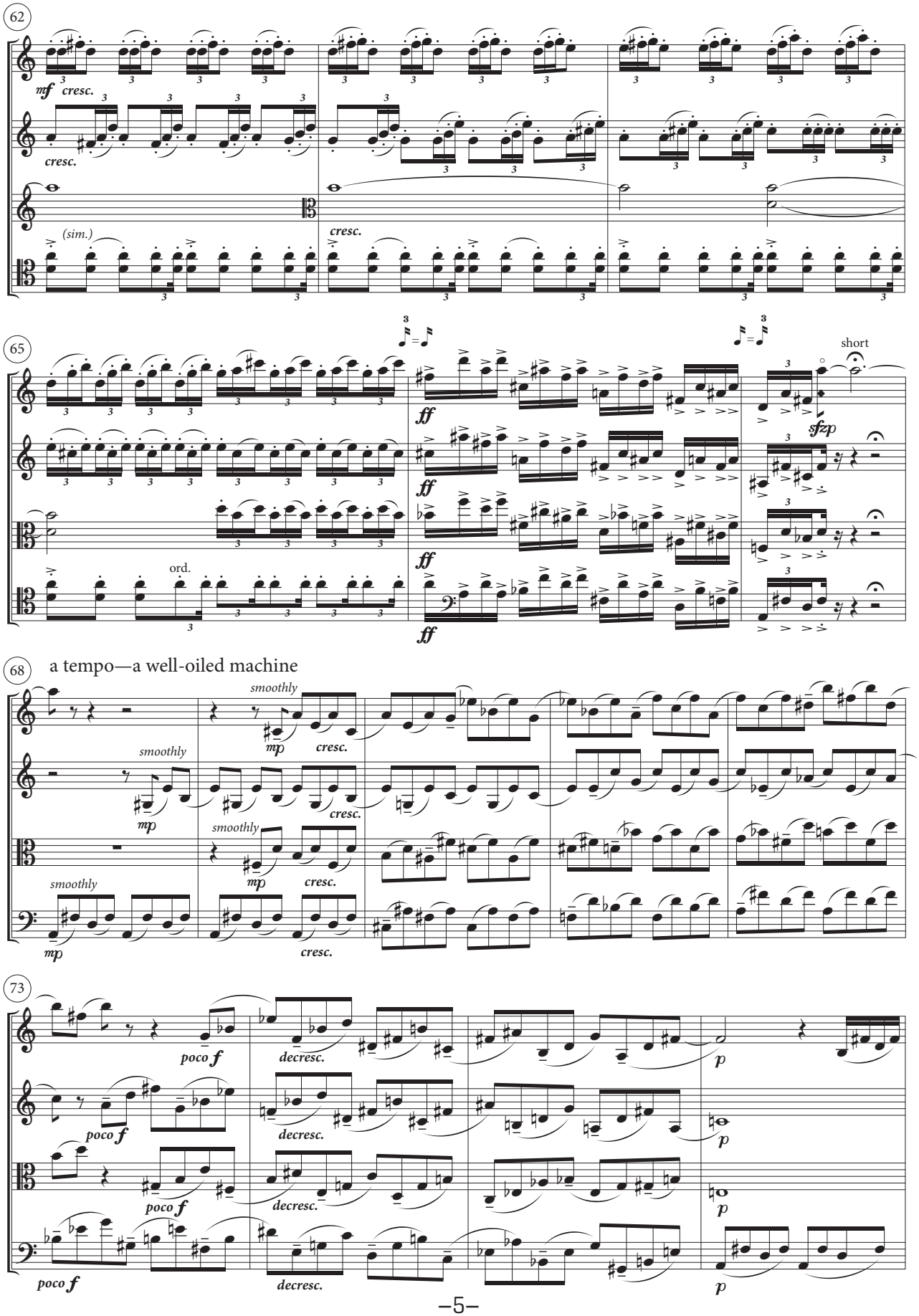
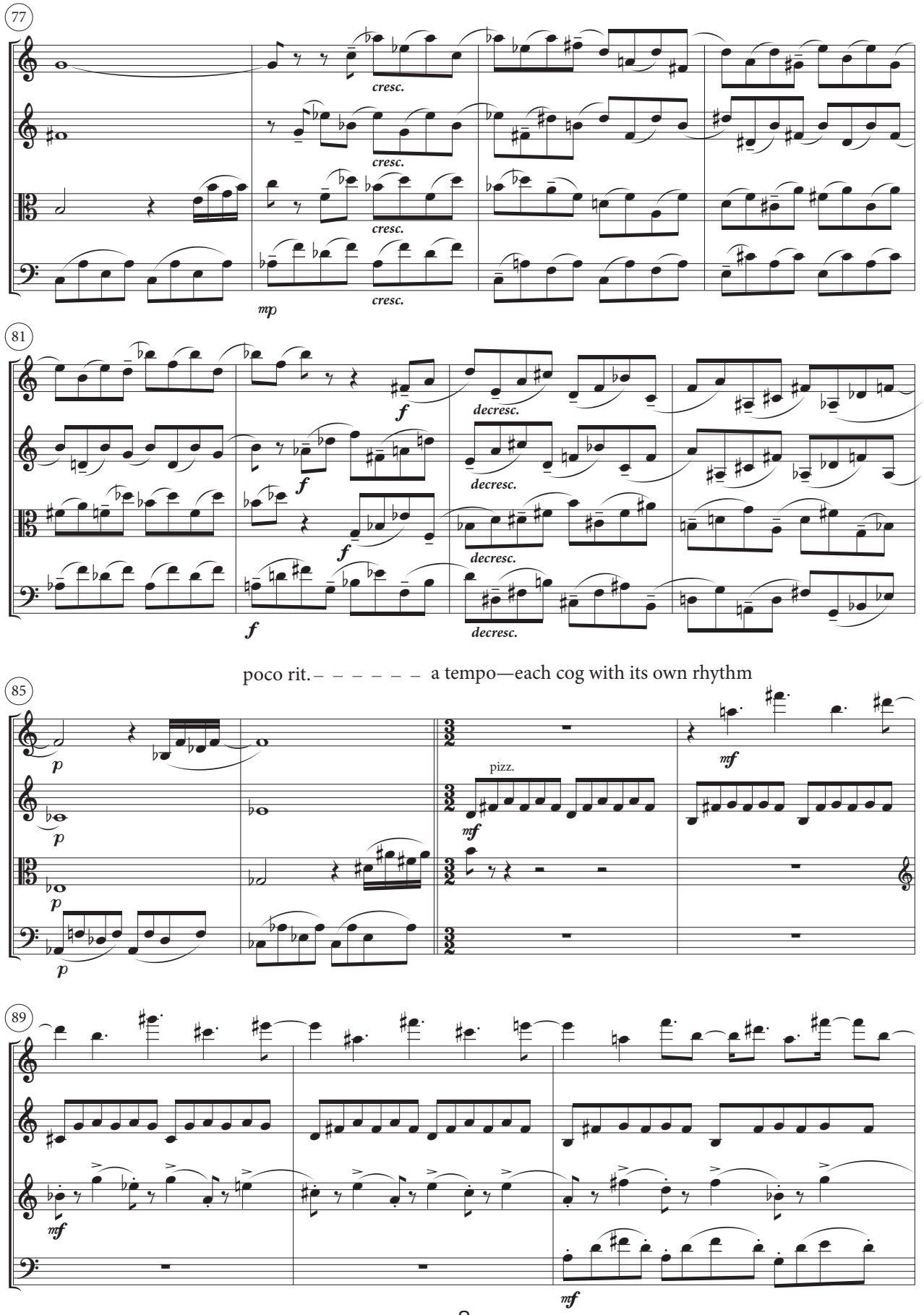


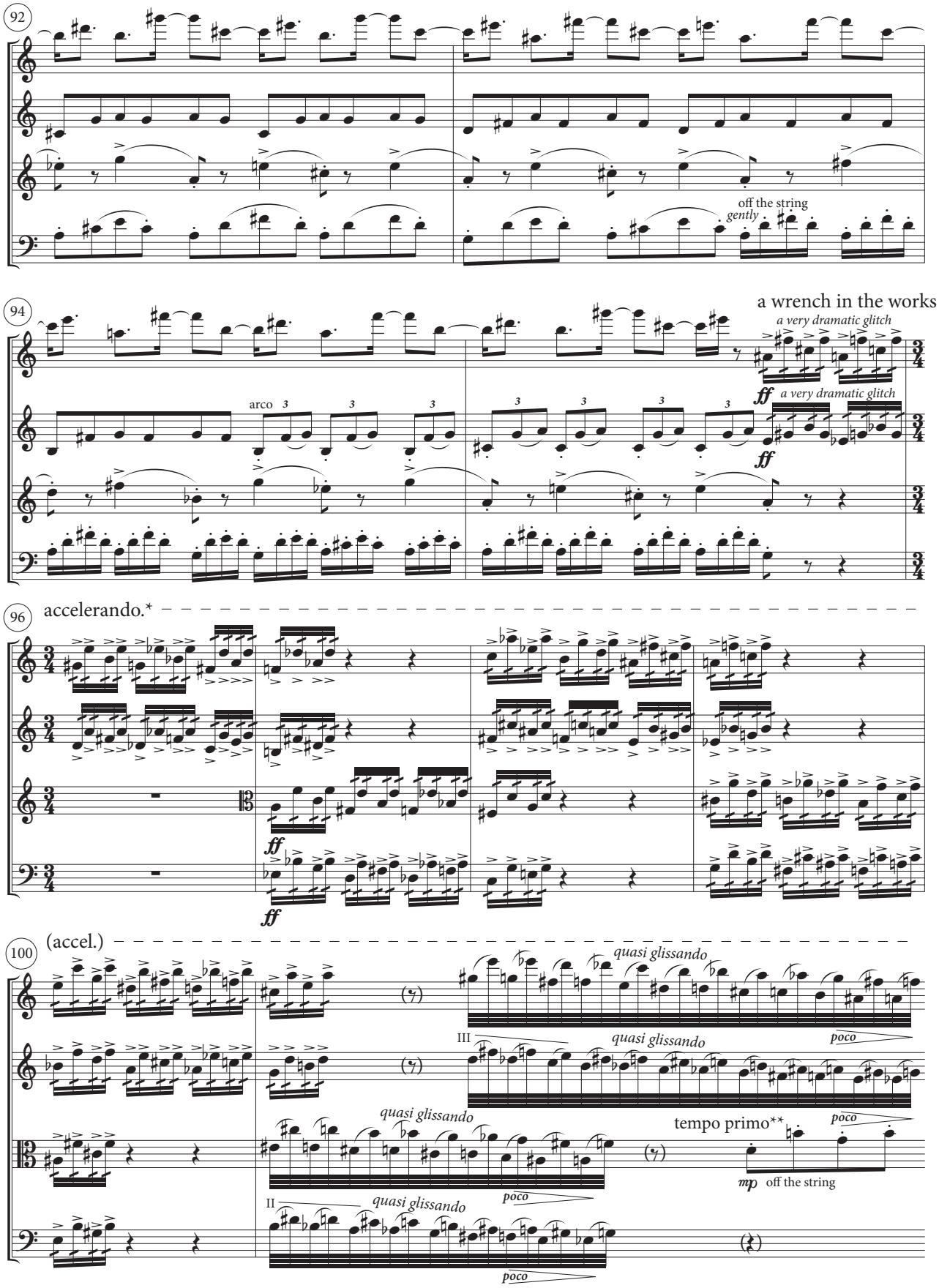

14
solo, delicate but espres.
pizz. always on 2 strings when possible
arco
pizz. always on 2 strings when possible
arco interrupting aggressively
pizz.
arco
18
poco f
arco
solo, espres.
pizz.
22
pinging
sfzp
sim.
arco
26
sfzp
sim.


30
poco f
pizz.
mp
cresc.
suddenly scampering
relaxed again
34
arco
mf bouncing
pizz.
39
gradually gaining momentum
cresc.
f
44
suddenly calm again
sub.p
p
III IV sim.

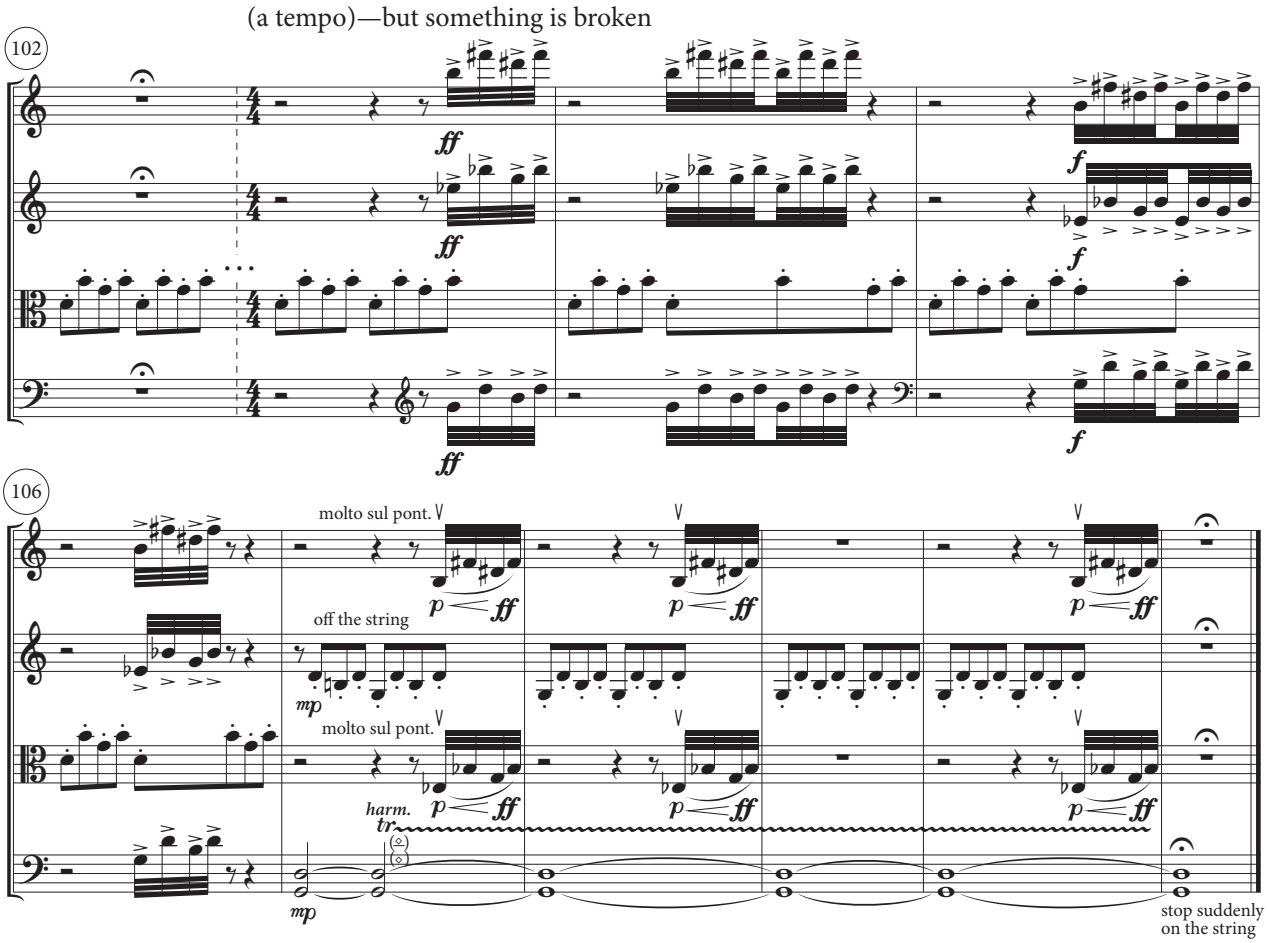

48
poco f
arco
poco f
arco
pizz.
mp
arco
mp
51
mp serene
f frenetic
mp (sim.)
f
mp serene
f frenetic
mp (sim.)
f
mp serene
f frenetic
mp (sim.)
f
mp serene
f frenetic
pizz. arco
mf
mp (sim.)
f
55
mp
sub.ff disruptive
mp
ff
mp
sub.ff disruptive
mp
ff
mp
pizz.
mf
disruptive
f cresc.
59
ff
ff
mf
sub.ff
mp
ff
mf cresc.


62
mf
cresc.
(sim.)
65
ff
short
sfzp
ord.
68
a tempo—a well-oiled machine
smoothly
mp
73
poco f
decresc.
p


77
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
mp
cresc.
81
f
decresc.
f
decresc.
f
decresc.
f
decresc.
poco rit. – – – – – – a tempo—each cog with its own rhythm
85
p
p
p
p
pizz.
mf
mf
89
mf
mf



* Each duo accelerates slightly, passing the tempo on to the next duo. The glissandi in m. 101 are as fast and frenetic as possible. The exact number of notes and specific pitches need not be followed, though each duo should enter together and end at roughly the same time.
** Emerge from (and begin before the completion of) the violin glissandi. Repeat the figure several times before going on to m. 103.


(a tempo)—but something is broken
102
ff
f
106
molto sul pont.
p
ff
off the string
mp
molto sul pont.
harm.
tr
mp
stop suddenly
on the string

2. GOLDBERG MACHINE

Capricious*; tempo and mood are volatile, constantly changeable

♩ = 112 *grand and imposing* ♩ = 120 *light and playful*

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

2+3 pizz. arco *f* *dancing* *p*

pizz. arco *f* *dancing* *p*

(pizz.) arco *f* *tr* *sub.pp*

pizz. *poco f*

* Most of the frequent changes of character and tempo in this movement—usually indicated with double barlines—are *sudden* and *immediate*, like flipping a switch.

4 *suddenly aggressive (same tempo)* *as before*

abruptly *f* *fp* *tr* *sub.pp* *p*

abruptly *f* *fp* *tr* *ff* *p*

abruptly *f* *fp* *tr* *ff* *p*

abruptly arco *f* *fp* *tr* *ff* pizz. *poco f*

7 *as before*

f *fp* *tr* *ff*

f *fp* *tr* *sub.p*

f *fp* *tr* *ff*

arco *f* *fp* *tr* *ff*

♩ = 84 *tense, building in excitement*

10

buzzing big accents III

slow whole-step gliss. fade under cello

p *cresc.* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *f* *p*

buzzing big accents (III)

slow whole-step gliss. fade under cello

sfz *cresc.* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *f* *p*

buzzing big accents (IV) III

slow whole-step gliss. fade under cello

p *cresc.* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *f* *p*

solo, *dramatic*

f *cresc.* *sfz*

♩ = 112 *as before* ♩ = 116 *racing on tip-toes* ♪ =80 (♩ = 160) *carefree, swinging*

14

2+3

f *p* *mp ringing*

f *p*

arco

f *p* *p*

f *p* *mf*

20

mf *p ringing*

mf *mf*

p *mf*

28

p

p ringing

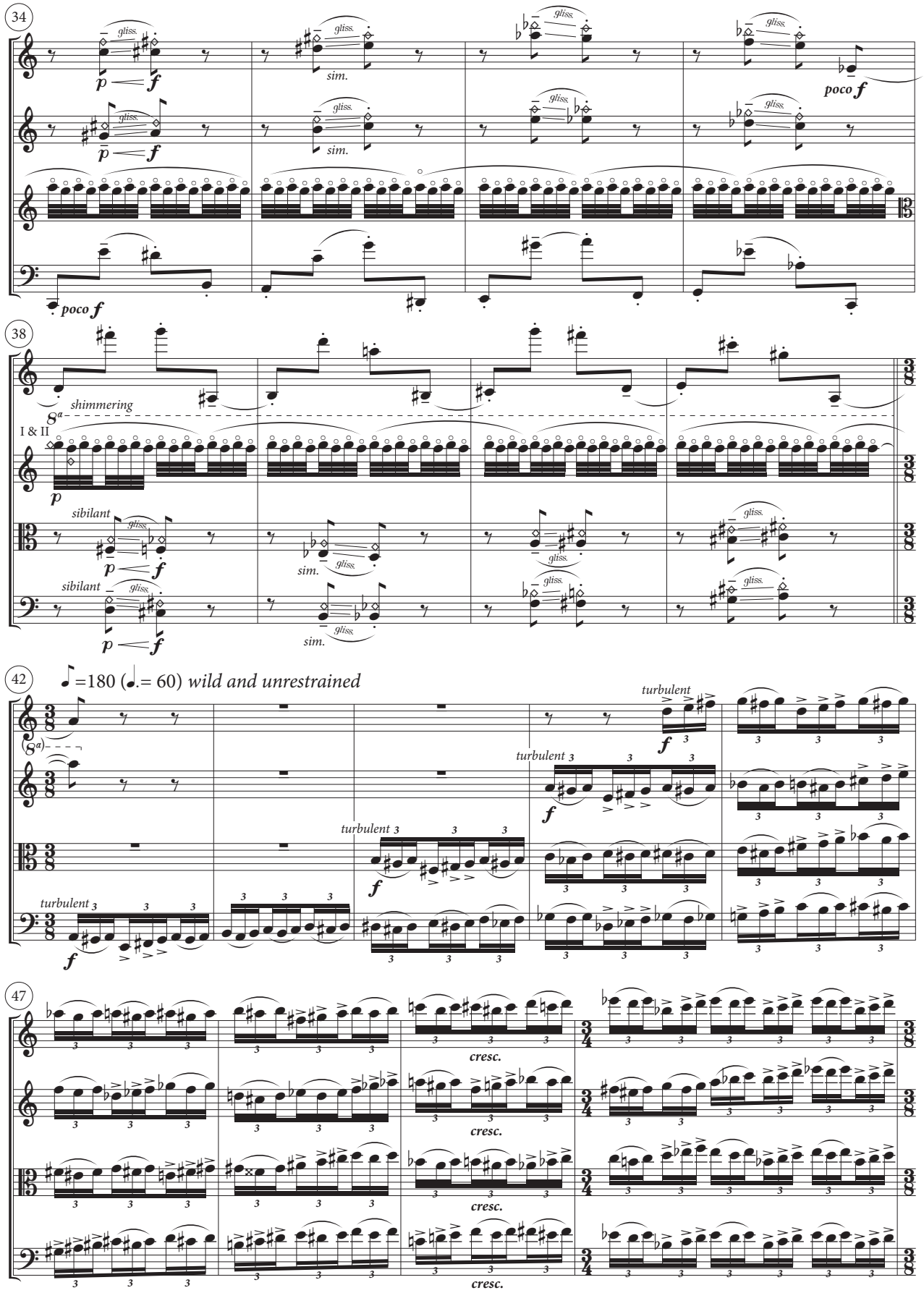
♪ =132 (♩ = 66) *delicate, fragile*

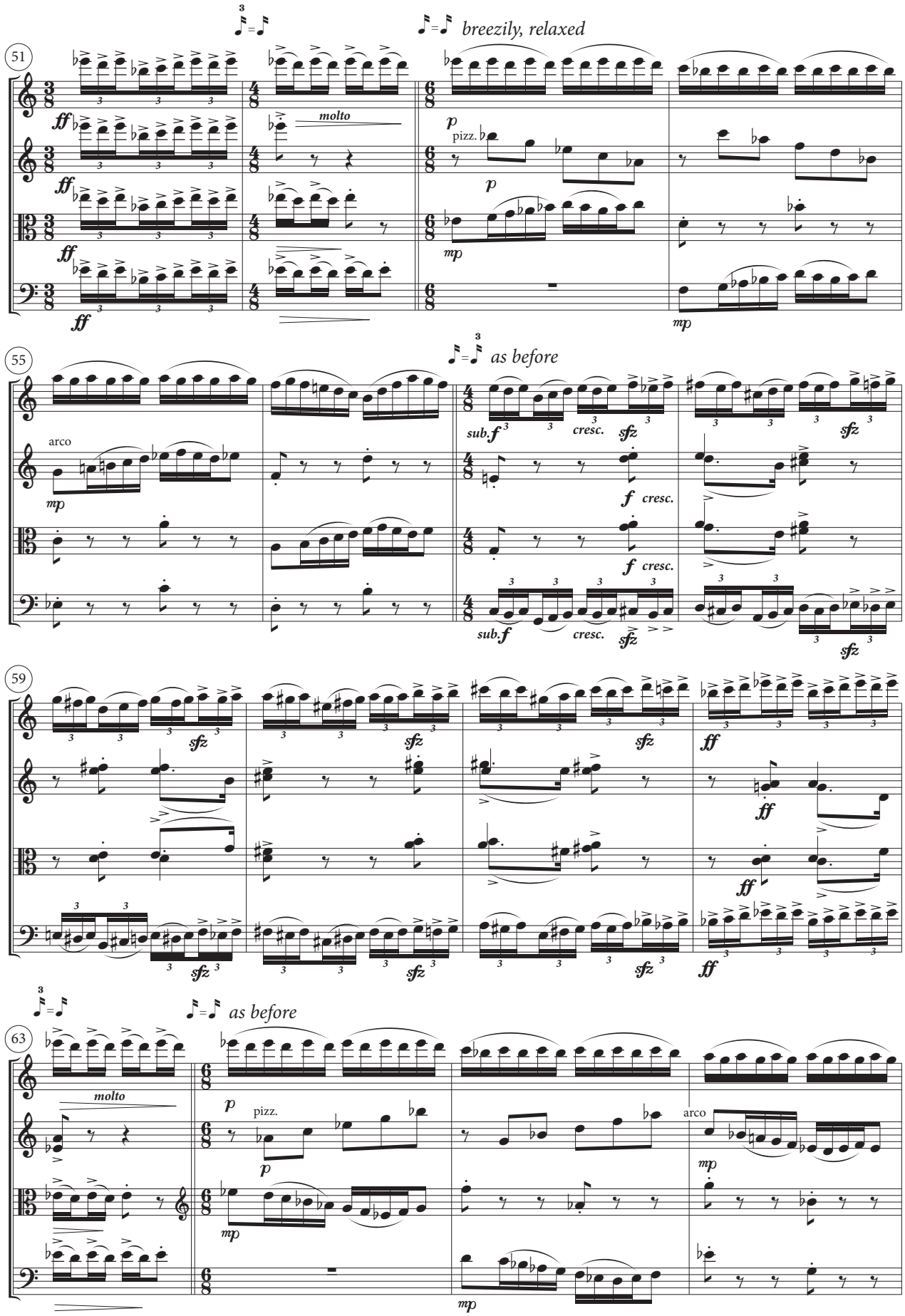
sibilant *gliss.* *p* *f*

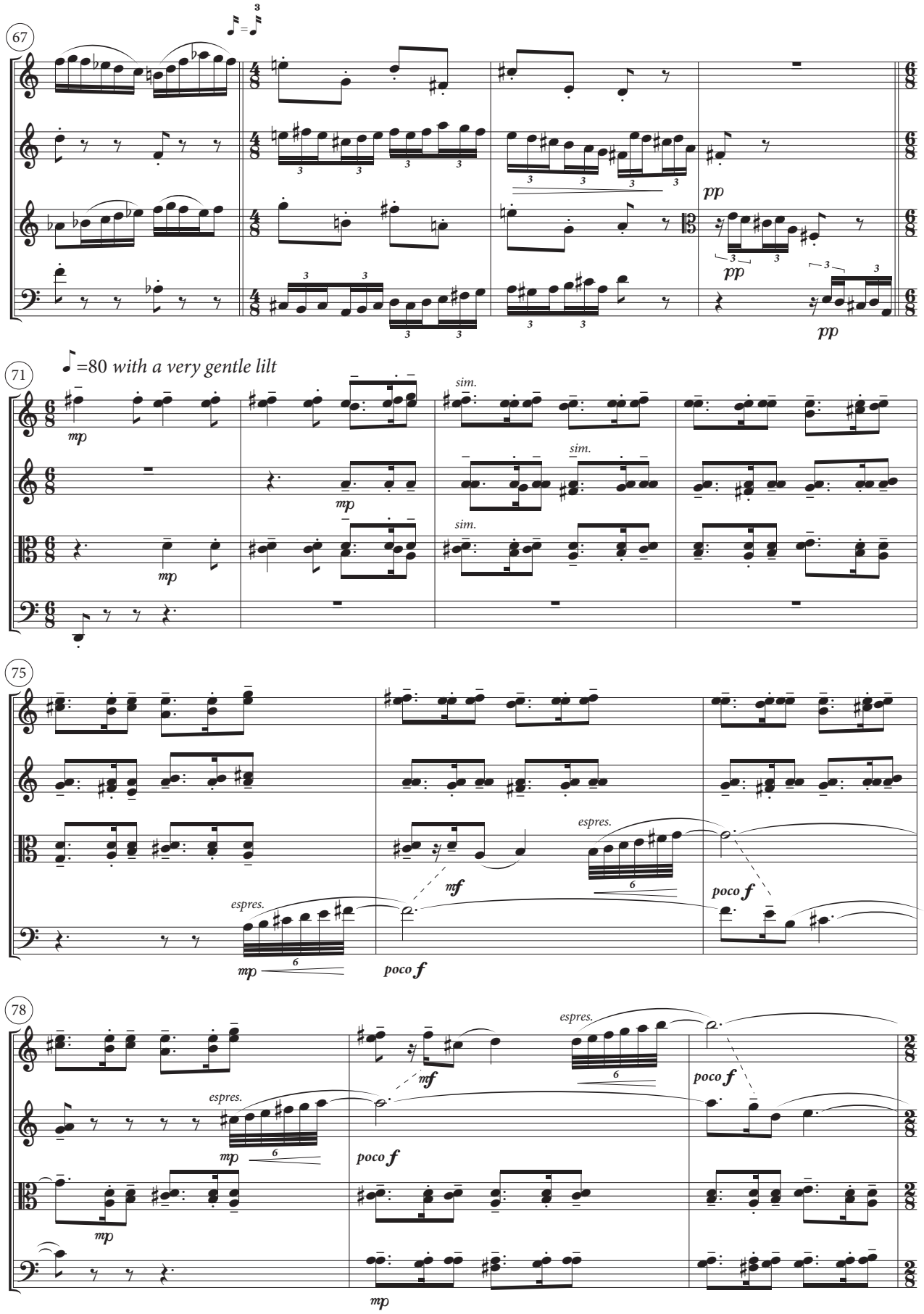
sibilant *gliss.* *p* *f*

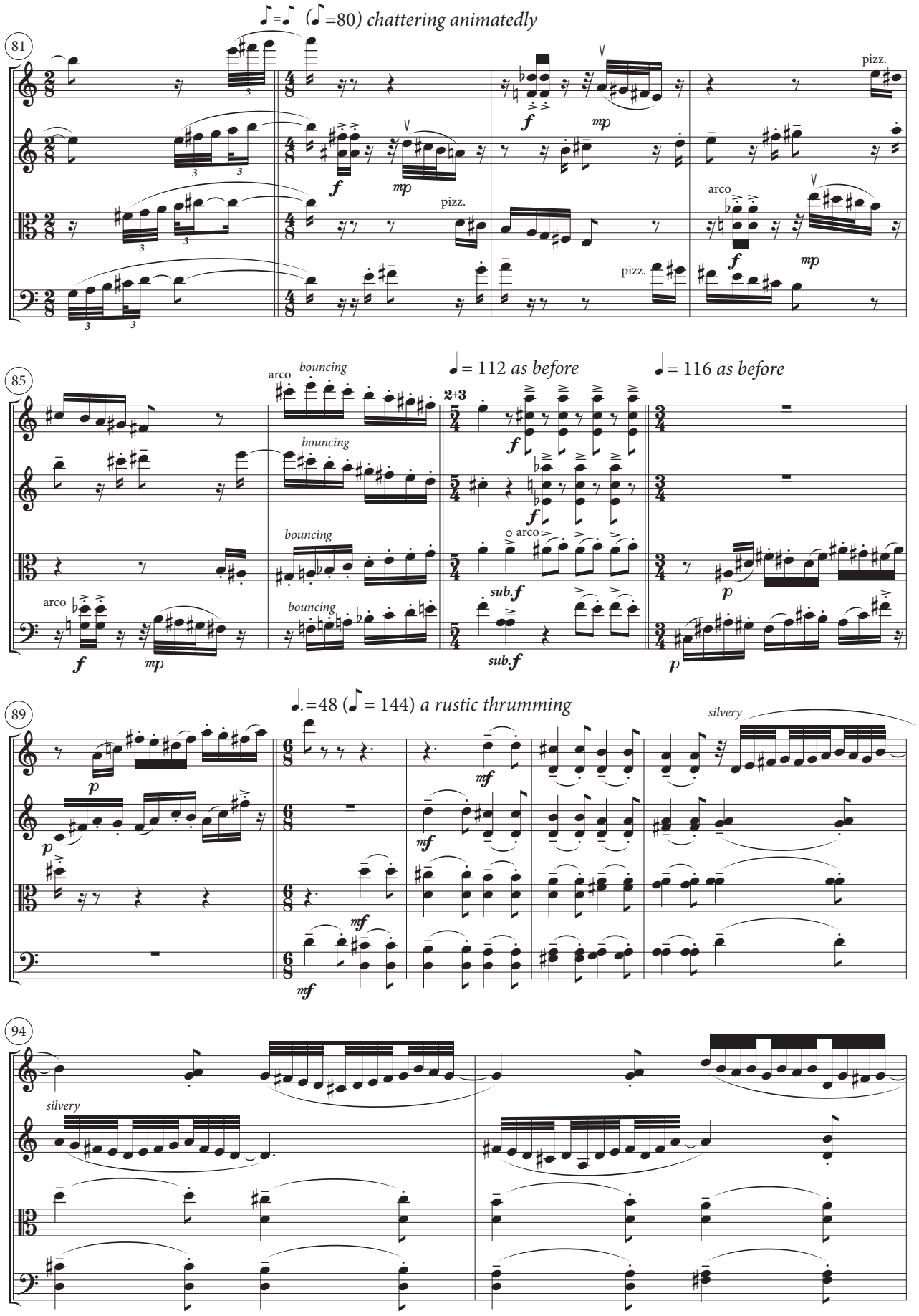
II & III *shimmering*

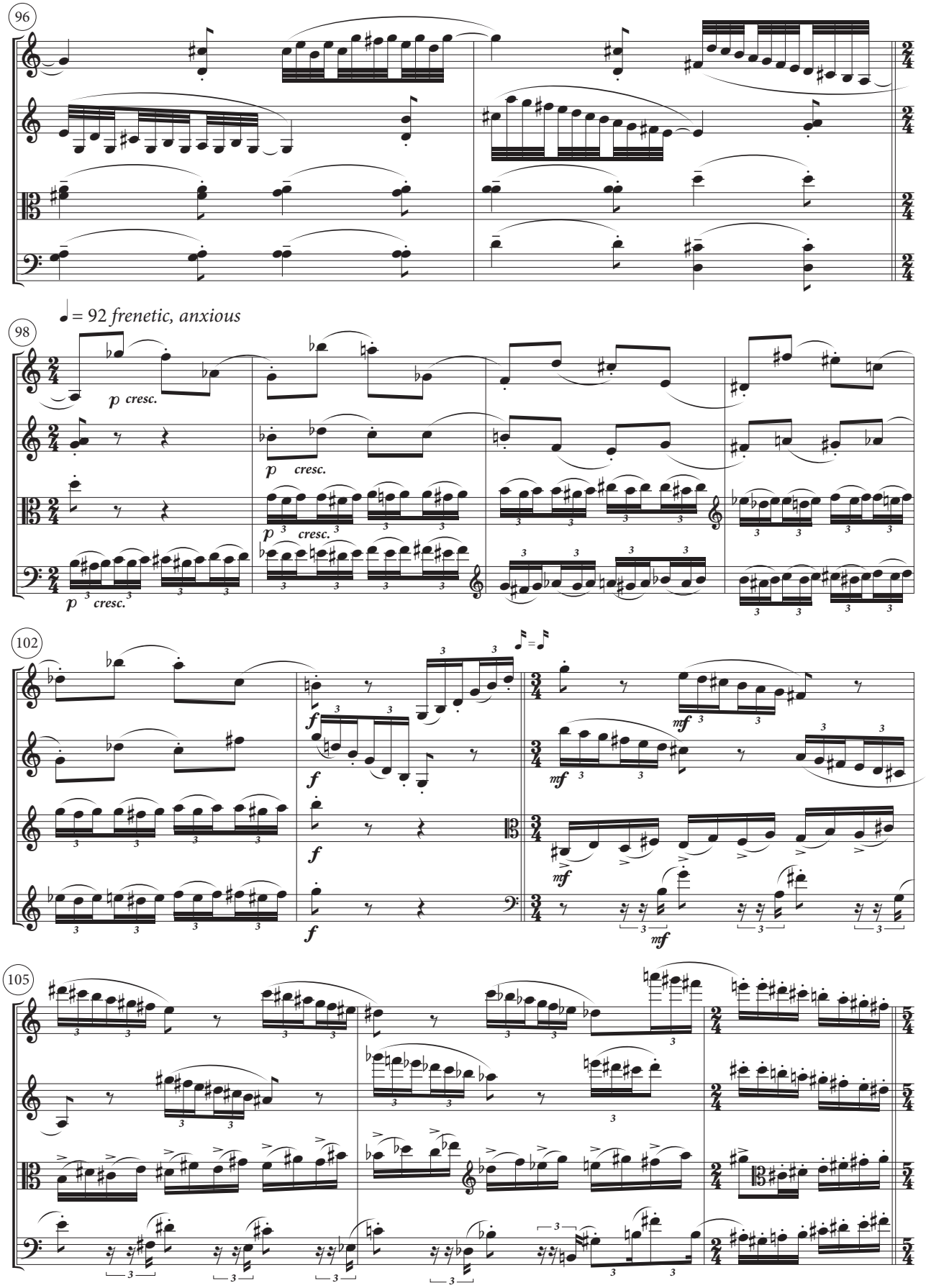
p

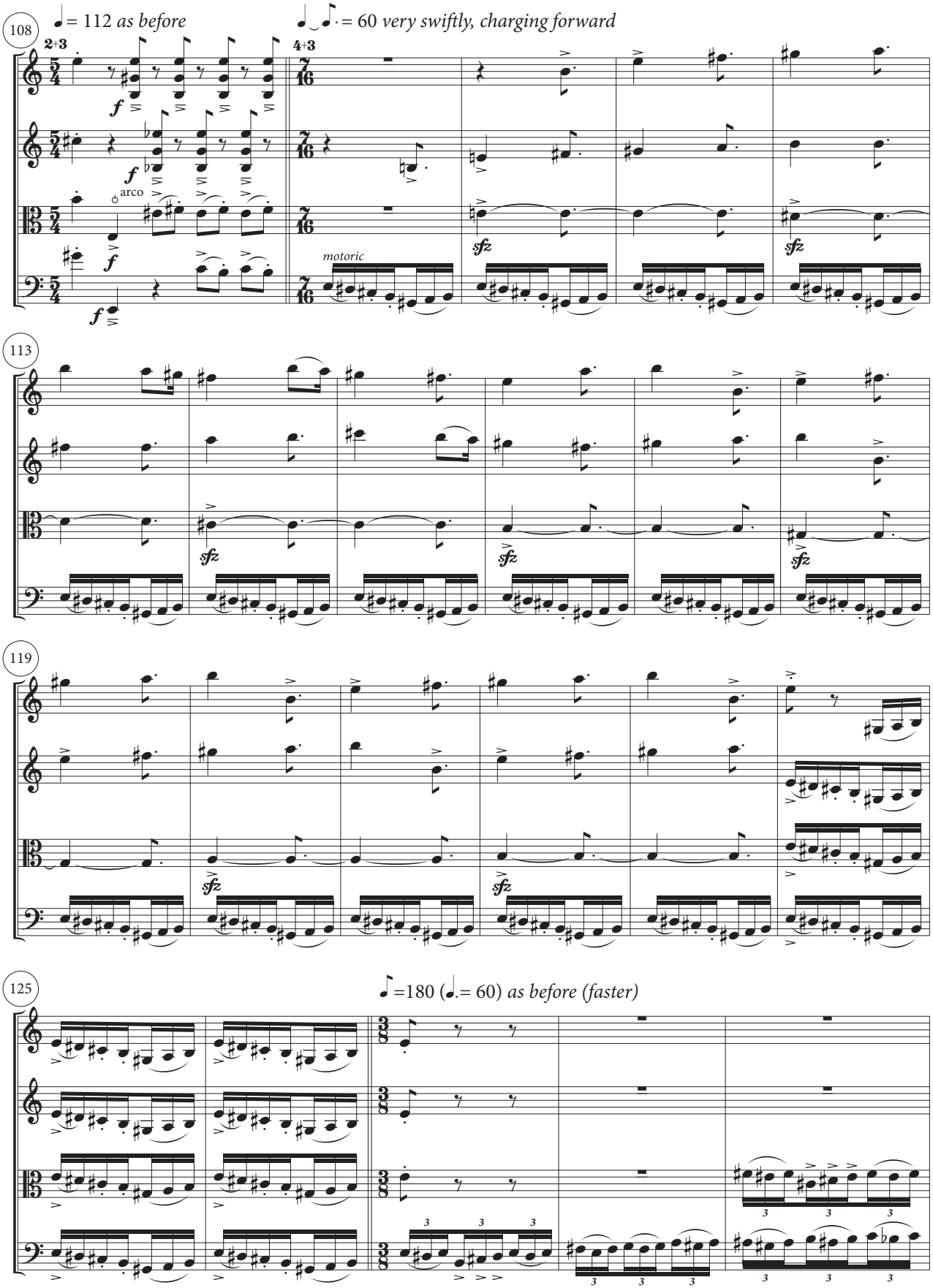

34
gliss.
p
f
sim.
poco f
38
shimmering
8a
I & II
sibilant
42
=180 (.= 60) wild and unrestrained
turbulent
47
cresc.

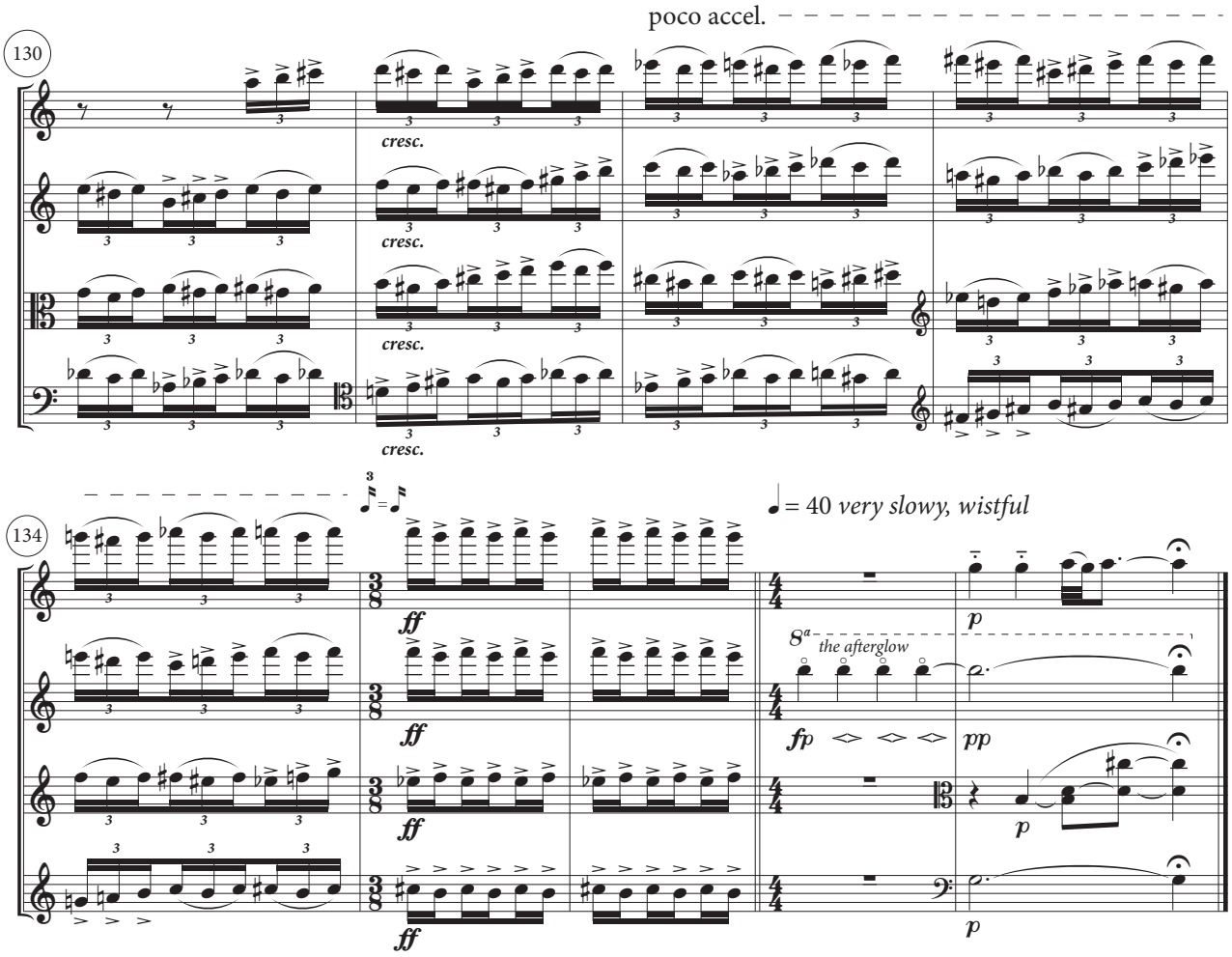

51
breezily, relaxed
molto
pizz.
arco
55
as before
sub.
cresc.
59
63
as before
molto
pizz.
arco


67
pp
71
=80 with a very gentle lilt
mp
sim.
75
espres.
mf
poco f
78
espres.
mf
poco f
mp


81
♪=♪ (♪=80) chattering animatedly
pizz.
arco
85
bouncing
♩= 112 as before
♩= 116 as before
2+3
arco
sub.f
89
♩.=48 (♪= 144) a rustic thrumming
silvery
94
silvery


96
♩ = 92 frenetic, anxious
98
p cresc.
102
f
mf
105


108
♩ = 112 as before
♩‿♪. = 60 very swiftly, charging forward
2+3
4+3
arco
motoric
113
119
125
♪ =180 (♩. = 60) as before (faster)


poco accel.
130
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
134
ff
ff
ff
ff
= 40 very slowly, wistful
8a
the afterglow
fp
pp
p
p
p

3. MANNHEIM MACHINE

Extremely Swifly; lightening in a bottle, manic ♩=176+ (184?)

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

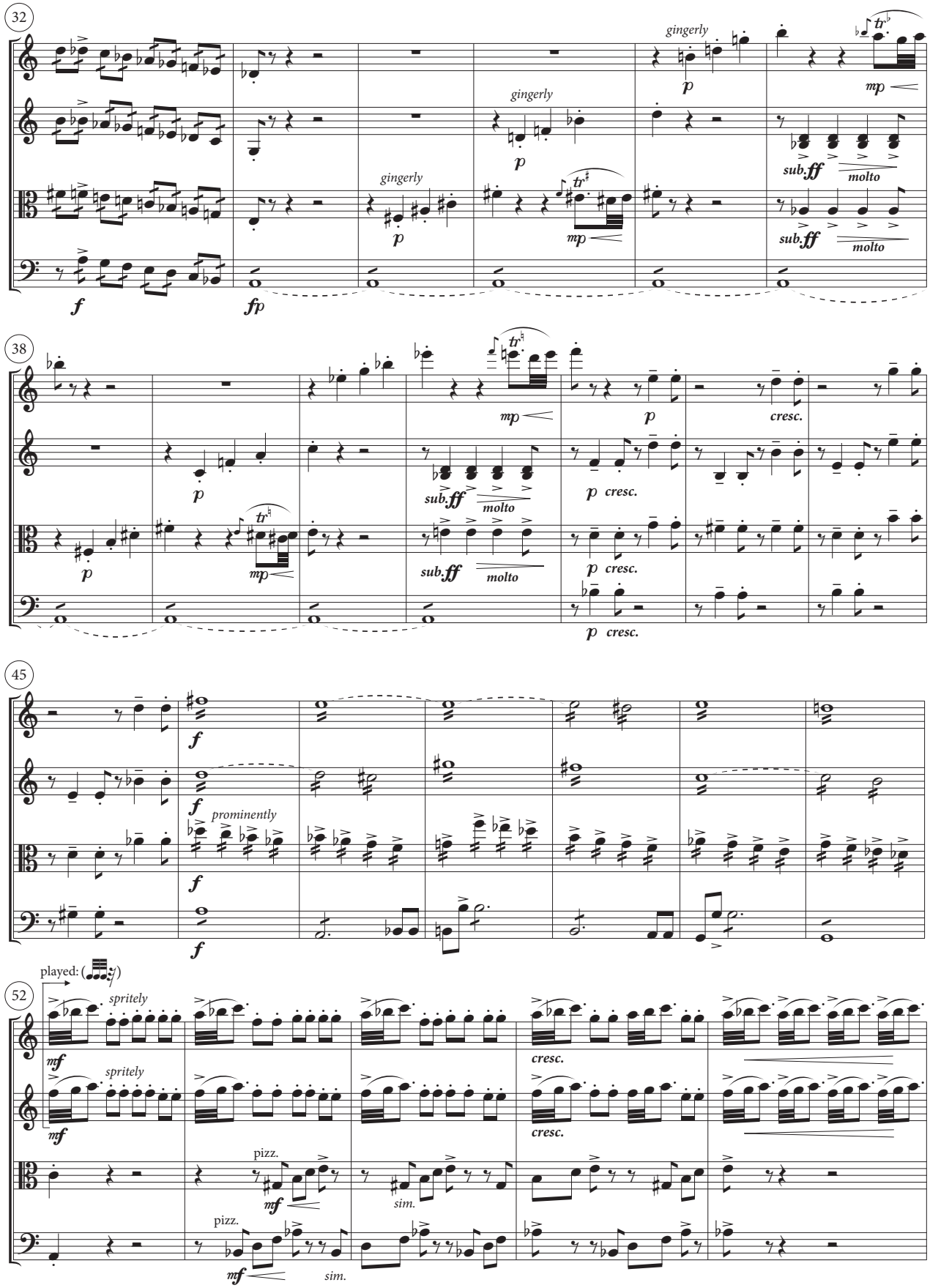
Cello

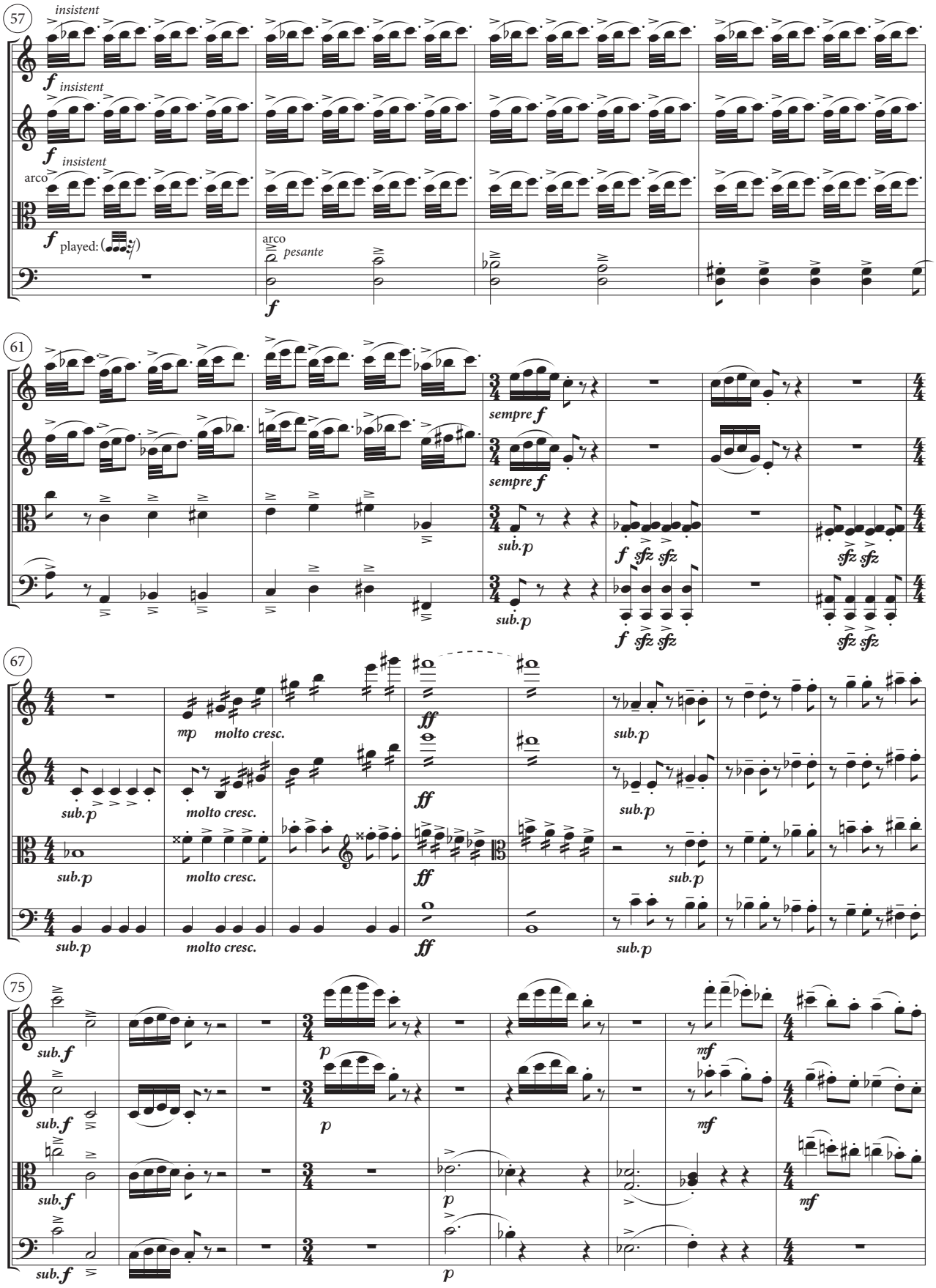
* All tremolos are measured, whether indicated (♪♪) or (♬).

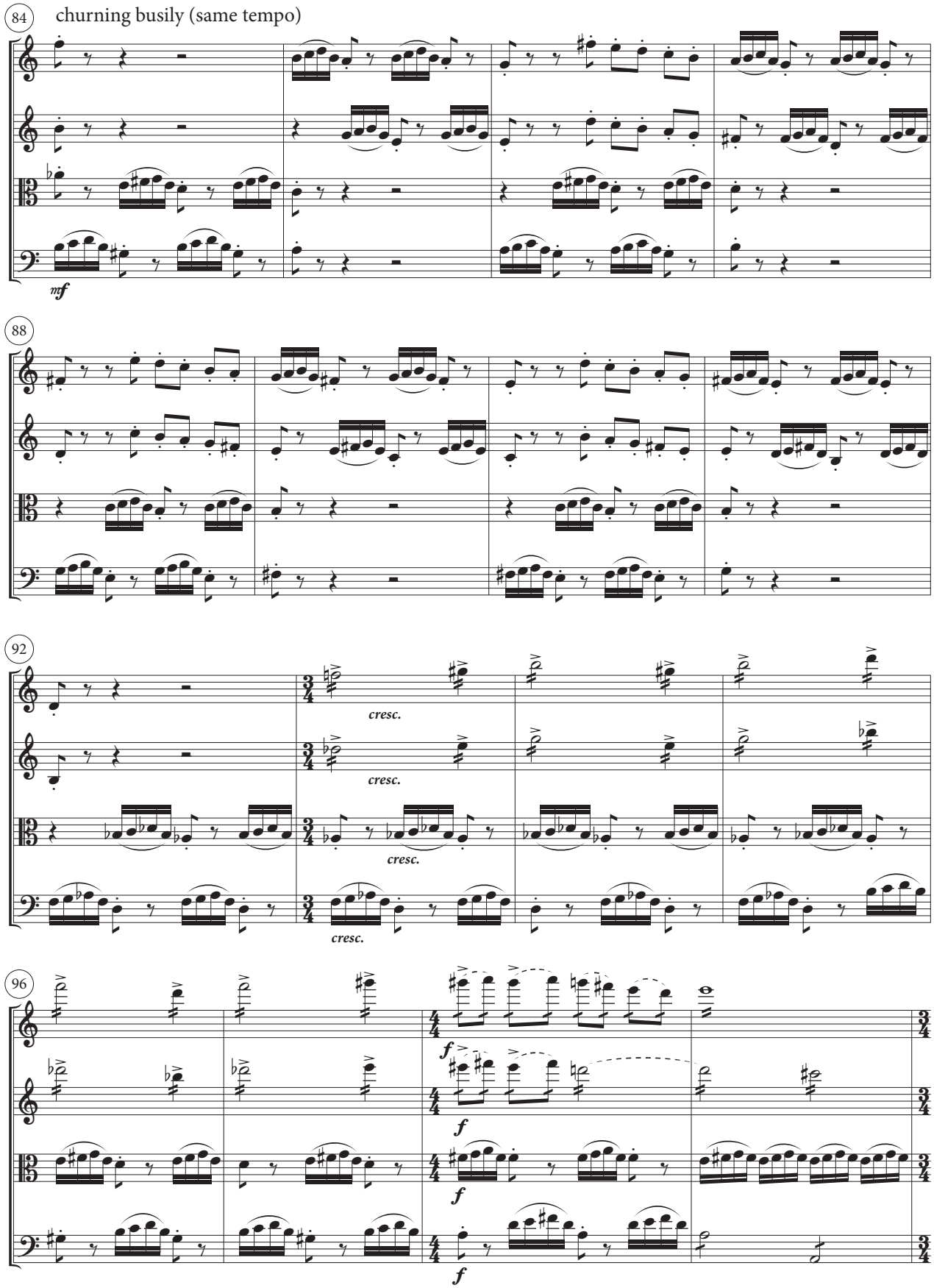
12

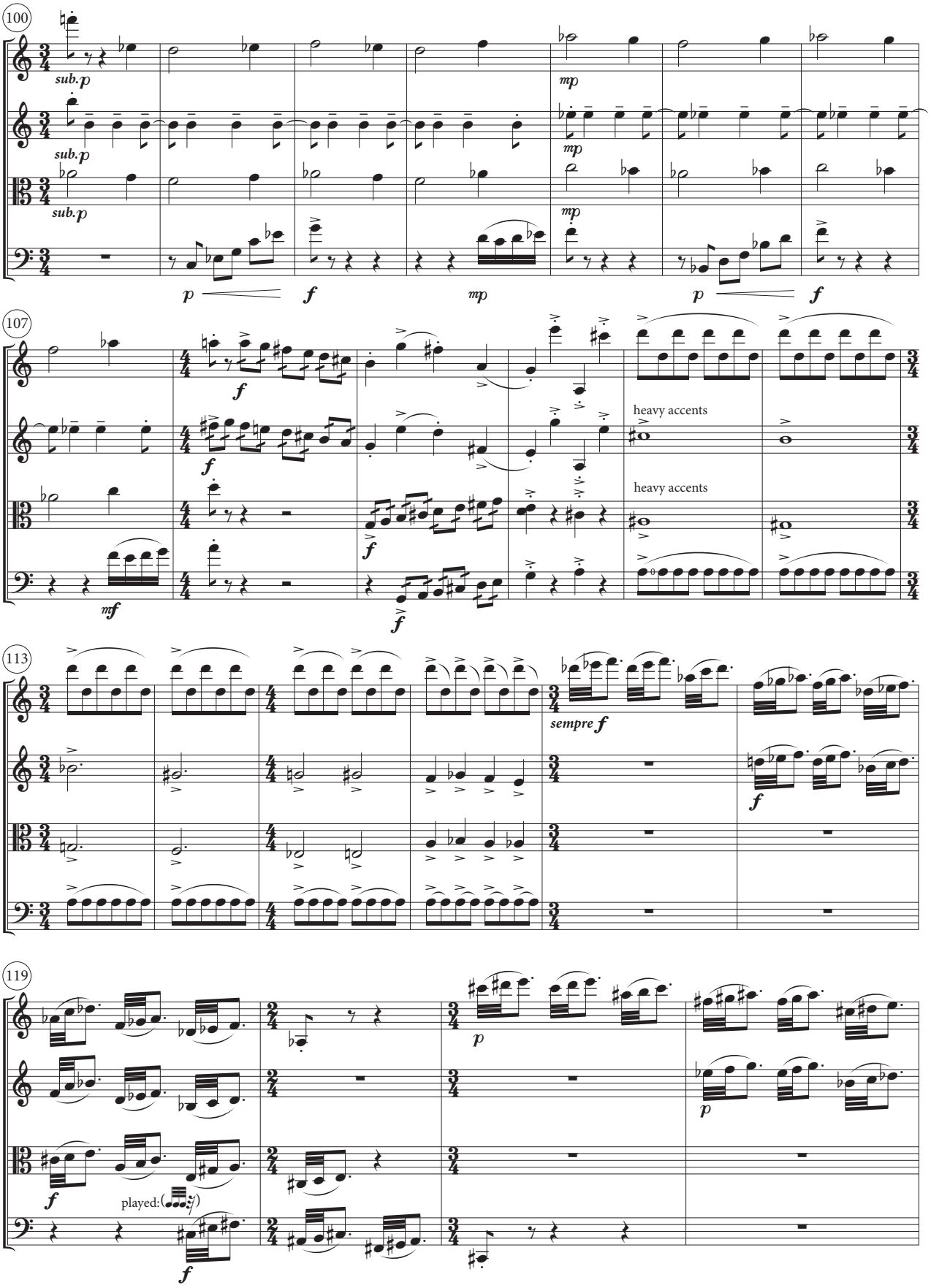
19

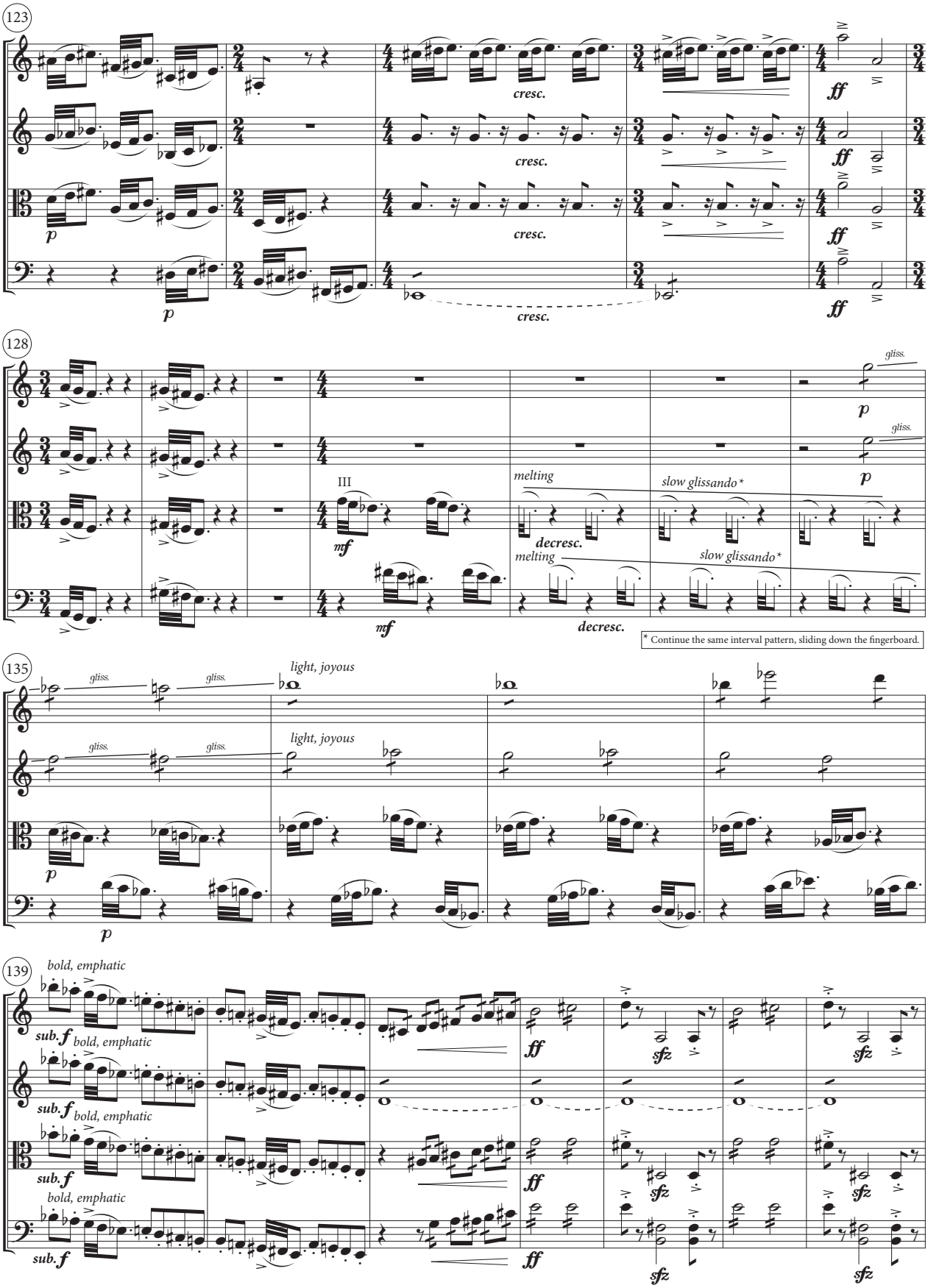
26

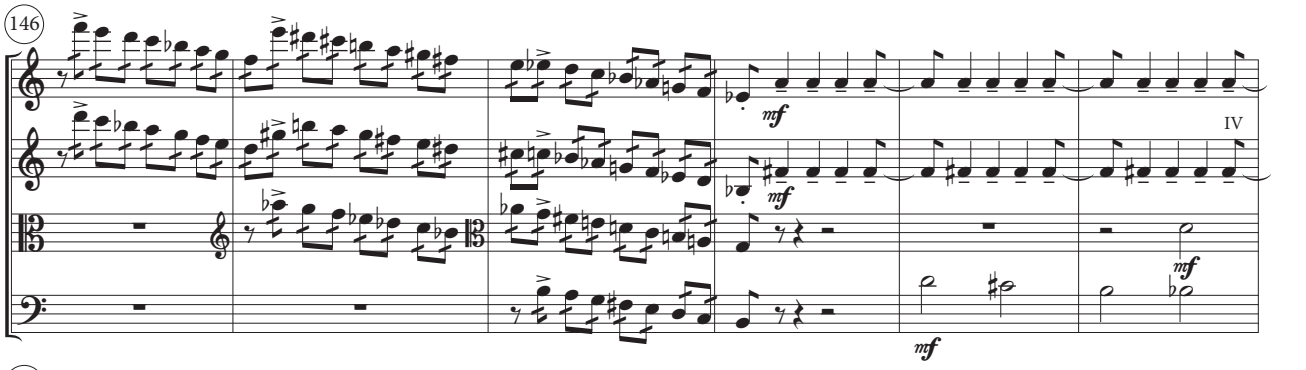

32
gingerly
p
mp
sub. ff
molto
f
fp
38
cresc.
45
f
prominently
played: (♩♩♩♩♪)
52
spritely
mf
pizz.
sim.

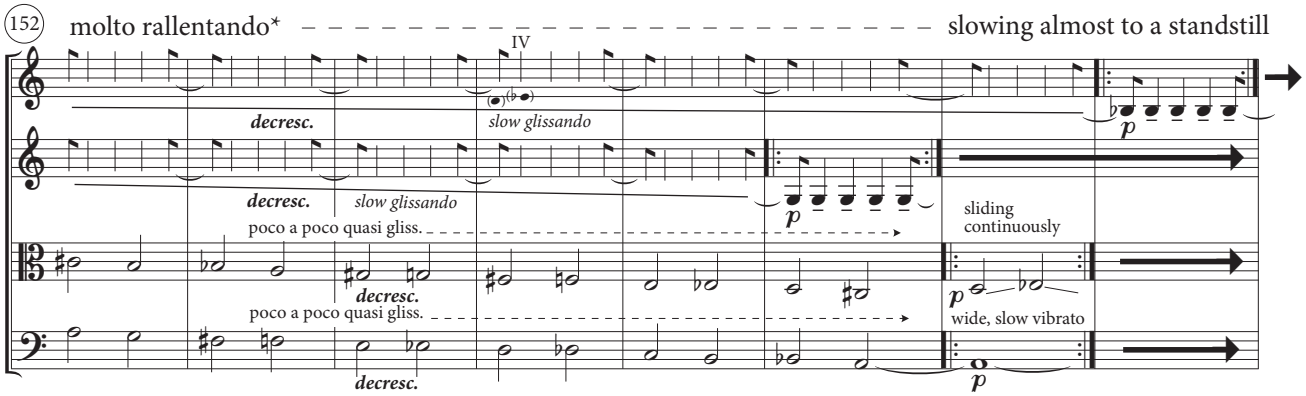

57
insistent
f
insistent
f
insistent
arco
f
played:
arco
pesante
f
61
sempre f
sempre f
sub. p
f sfz sfz
sub. p
f sfz sfz
sfz sfz
sfz sfz
67
mp
molto cresc.
ff
sub. p
sub. p
molto cresc.
ff
sub. p
sub. p
molto cresc.
ff
sub. p
sub. p
molto cresc.
ff
sub. p
75
sub. f
p
mf
sub. f
p
mf
sub. f
p
mf
sub. f
p


84
churning busily (same tempo)
mf
88
92
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
96
f
f
f
f

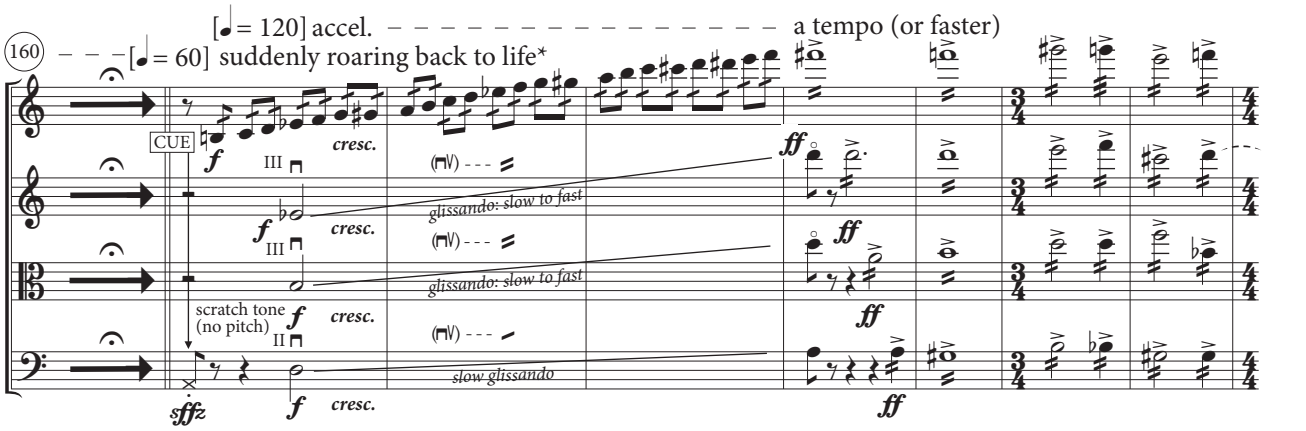
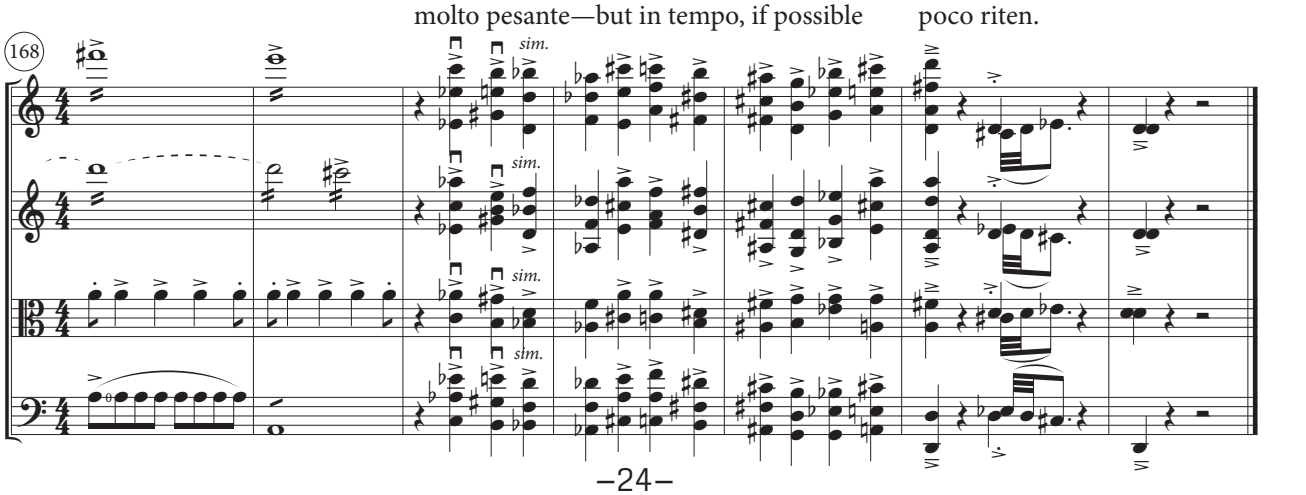

100
sub.p
mp
p
f
107
mf
heavy accents
113
sempre f
119
played:


123
cresc.
ff
p
128
gliss.
III
mf
melting
slow glissando*
decresc.
* Continue the same interval pattern, sliding down the fingerboard.
135
light, joyous
139
bold, emphatic
sub. f
sfz





* A pronounced and preciptious slow down, as though the machine has been unplugged and is winding down, losing all energy. Measure 160 may continue slowing/repeating, *ad lib*. The music is abruptly cut off by the Vc. scratch tone, which acts a "switch," turning the machine back on.



* Glissandi are coordinated to arrive at the designated pitch on/in time with Vln. I. They begin slurred, transitioning to measured tremolo (Vln. II, Vla to ♬, Vc. to ♩) roughly halfway through, eventually catching Vln. I. The transition need not be coordinated, but should "lock in" at m. 164.