Frank Bridge
(1879 - 1941)
Novelletten *(1904)*
for string quartet

arranged for Wind Quintet by Toby Miller (2016)

Thanks to Trevor Bray: Frank Bridge – A Life in Brief for the biographical details below.
http://trevor-bray-music-research.co.uk/Bridge%20LinB/contents.html

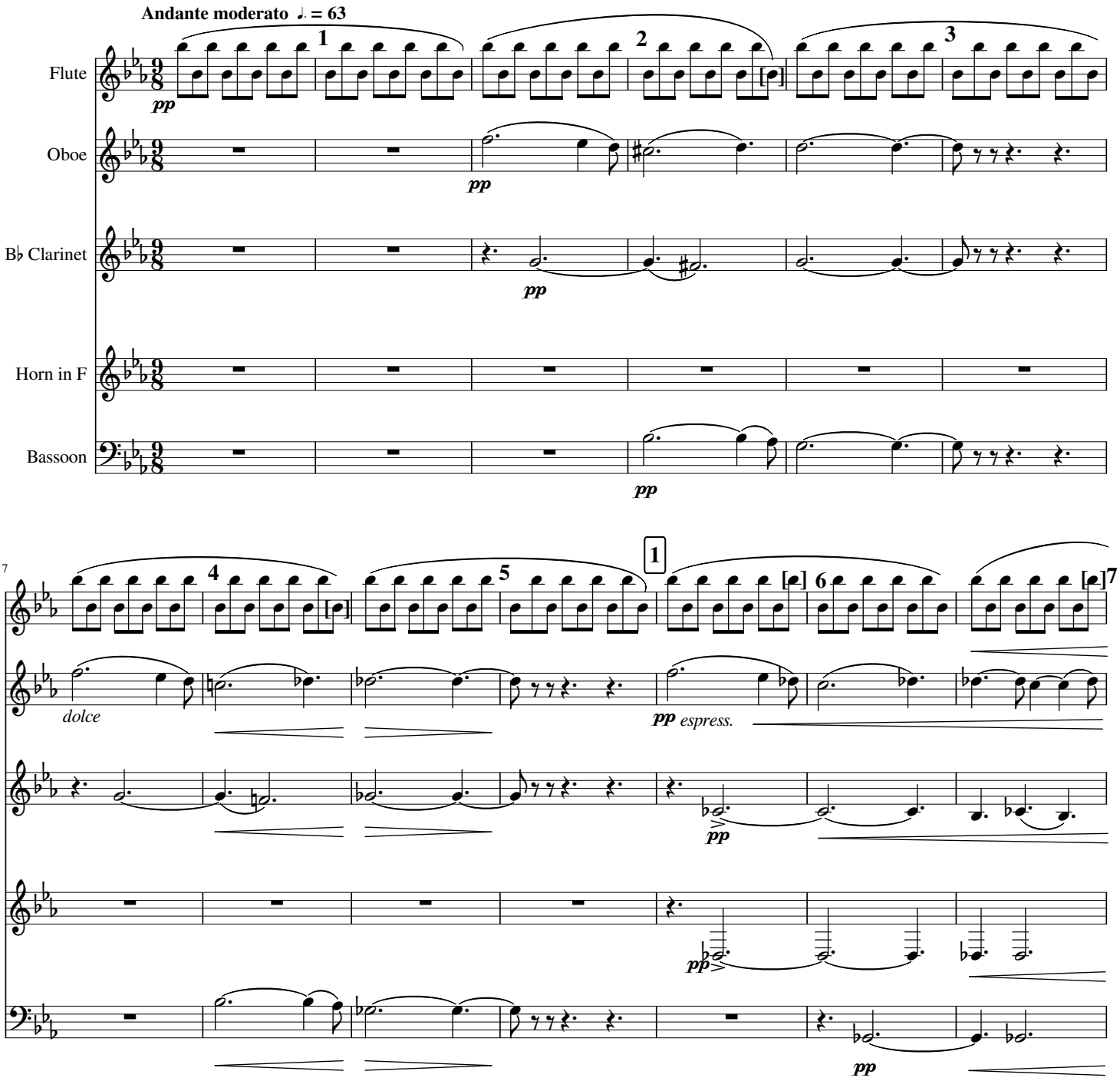
Frank Bridge was a musician who surely deserves more than most the title 'professional'. He played violin and viola professionally; was known as the 'emergency conductor' of professional orchestras (Henry Wood was one of many who always called on Bridge as a deputy); was the teacher and mentor of the most famous English composer of the twentieth century, Benjamin Britten; and he was a composer – professional after 1923 thanks to support from the American heiress Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. Yet Bridge fell out of favour, increasingly isolated later in life as he moved away from the 'English school', the compositional establishment dominated by fellow alumni of the Royal College of Music (RCM), and is still under-represented in concert programmes today, overshadowed by pupil and peers. Some of his key formative influences were:

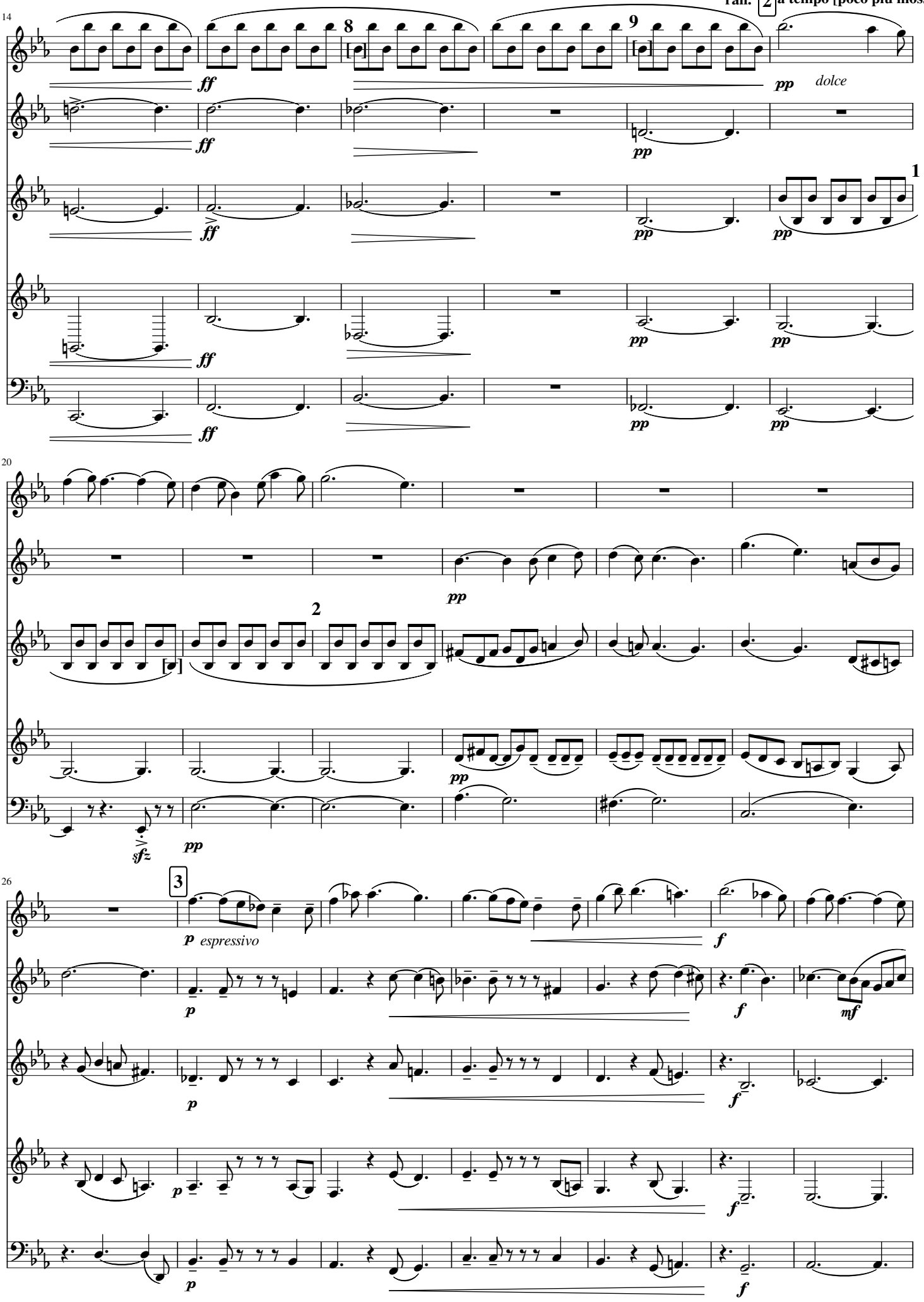
- his father William. Stern disciplinarian and hard taskmaster, he gave up his printing profession in middle age in favour of music: peripatetic violin teacher in private schools (and of his son), and musical director of a theatre orchestra in Brighton, in which Frank began playing and later also deputising for his father as conductor.
- his musical siblings (he was the 10th of 12 altogether, from William's three wives); though only two others were notably musical, they joined in a family string quartet, shaping Frank's lifelong preference for chamber music from an unusually early age.
- the RCM, where Frank went aged 17 to study the violin and piano. In 1896 its building next to the Royal Albert Hall was only three years old, and it had existed for just ten years before that. Hubert Parry was the director and music historian, C V Stanford the rigorous, unbending composition teacher ('*it won't do, me bhoy*') and orchestral conductor, and Achille Rivardo Frank's violin professor. Both Rivardo and especially Stanford stood for hard work and a 'no nonsense' practical approach without affectation: attitudes which rubbed off on Bridge (and through him on Britten), even while he resented Stanford's musical conservatism.
- W W Cobbett, amateur chamber music enthusiast who published a *Cyclopedic Survey* in 1929 which has remained a standard work ever since. In 1905 he started a composition competition designed to revive the Elizabethan 'Phantasy', a single movement with contrasting sections and looser rules than classical forms like the sonata. Bridge's Phantasy (String) Quartet won second prize in 1906, and his Piano Trio took first prize in 1907. All five prizewinners were pupils of Stanford. Cobbett later commissioned Bridge's Phantasy (Piano) Quartet.

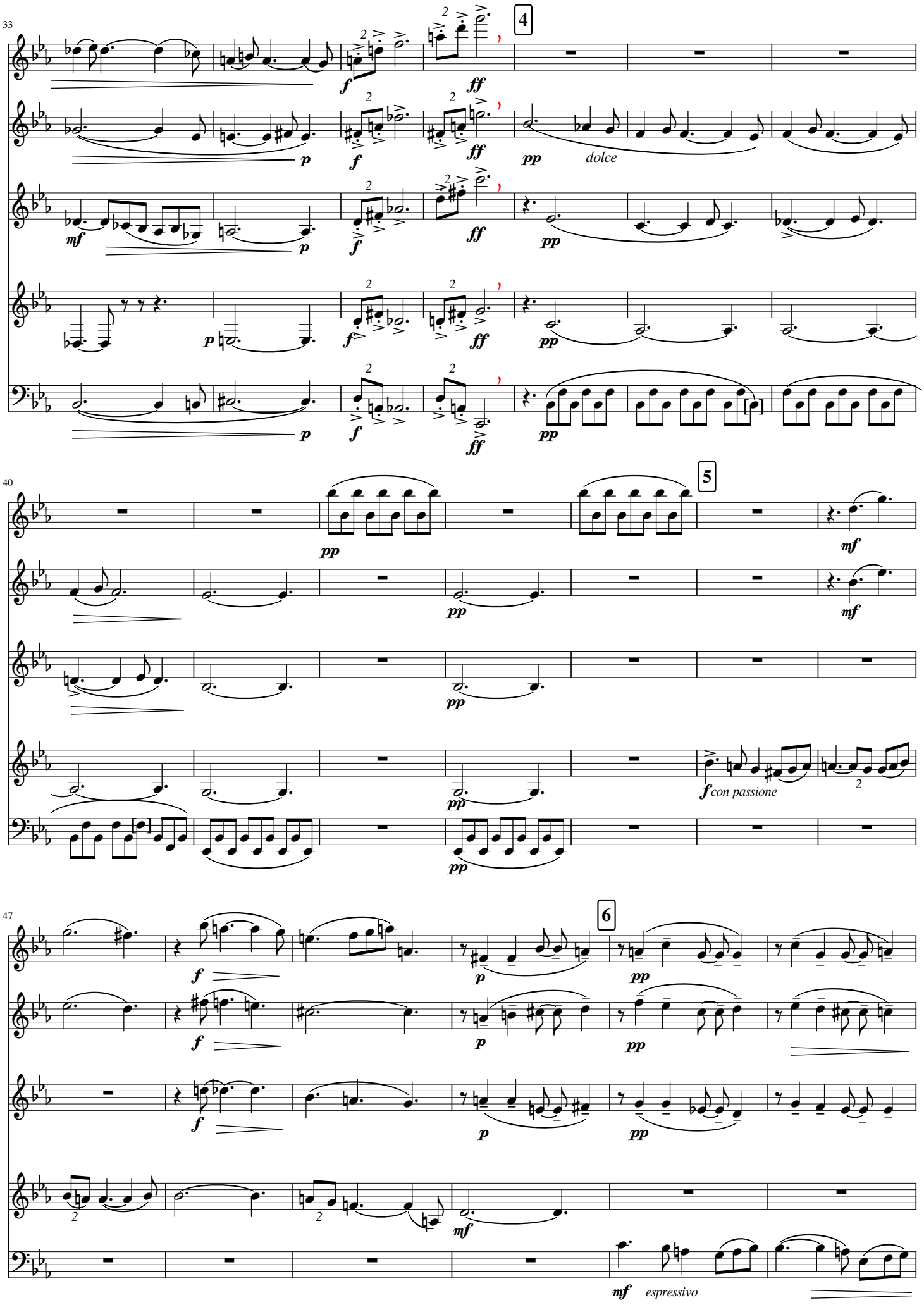
Bridge made the most of his time at the RCM, studying, practising, conducting, joining chamber groups and meeting his future wife. By the time he officially left in 1903 (he returned regularly), he was playing in three professional string quartets, two on viola and one on second violin. This period of Bridge's life, continuing up to the First World War, was also his most prolific and successful as a composer. His early music is accessible, drawing not only on the Romantic German tradition that he was exposed to at the RCM but also French and more contemporary influences, yet distinctly original from the start. Thus in the second of these *Novelletten* (a title first used by Schumann, suggesting the idea of story-telling), written in 1904, we find a clear quotation from the Scherzo of the String Quartet by César Franck, which was published only 12 years earlier in 1892; but overall the music sounds distinctly English to our ears. The three pieces (clearly intended to be played together, as with Schumann's) are strongly contrasting. As with the last movement of Franck's quartet, the fanfare subject which opens Bridge's third piece seems to want to exceed the bounds of four stringed instruments, and suggested the transcription for wind (in fact this movement would work well for brass I think). But other passages and the first piece call for extreme delicacy, while the second piece with its constant changes of tempo and short silences (also a hallmark of Franck's Scherzo) is very challenging ensemble writing. So—not recommended for groups just looking for pieces to play through, but I hope those looking for music worth working on will enjoy these.

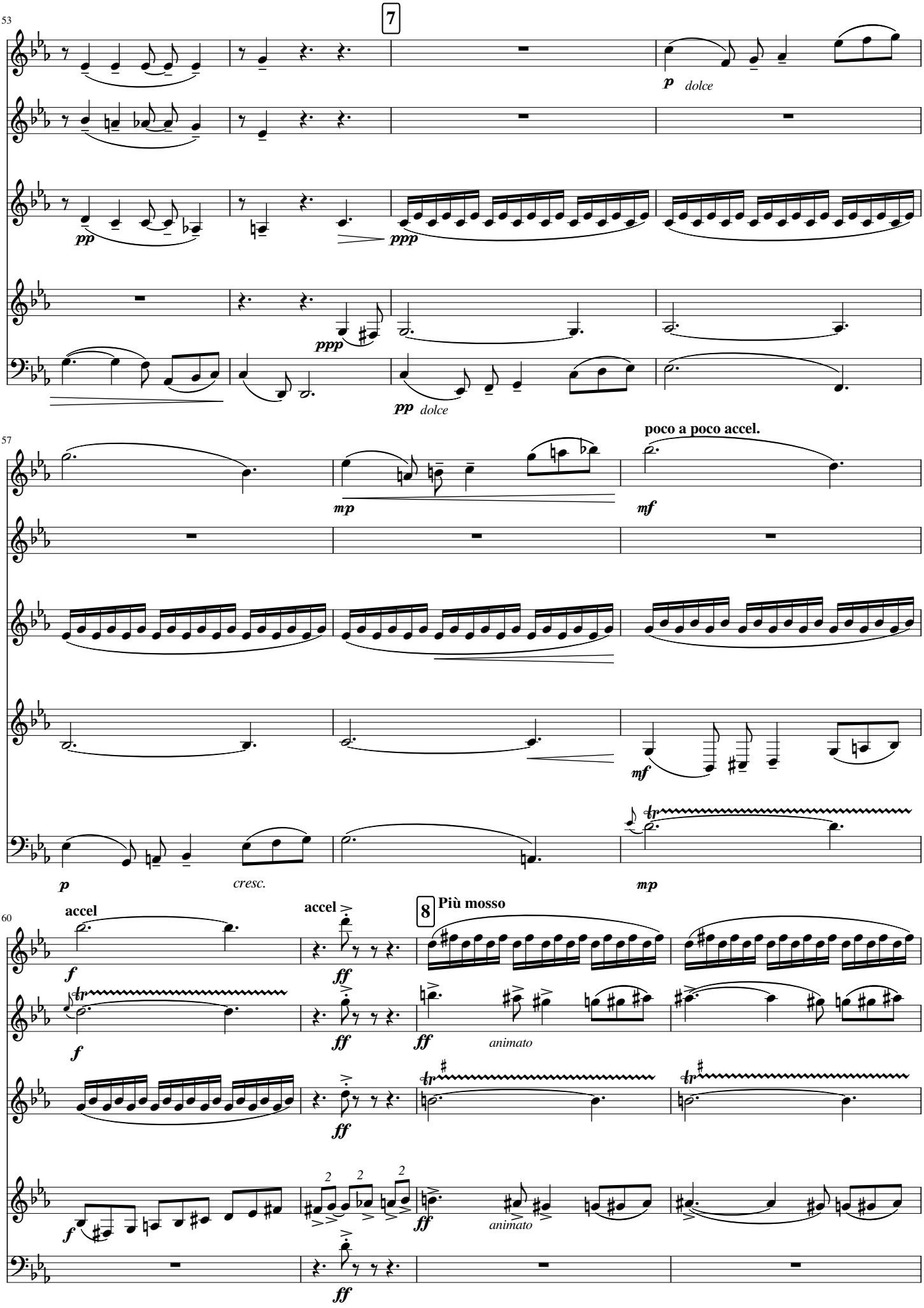
3 Novelletten for String Quartet arr. for Wind Quintet by Toby Miller

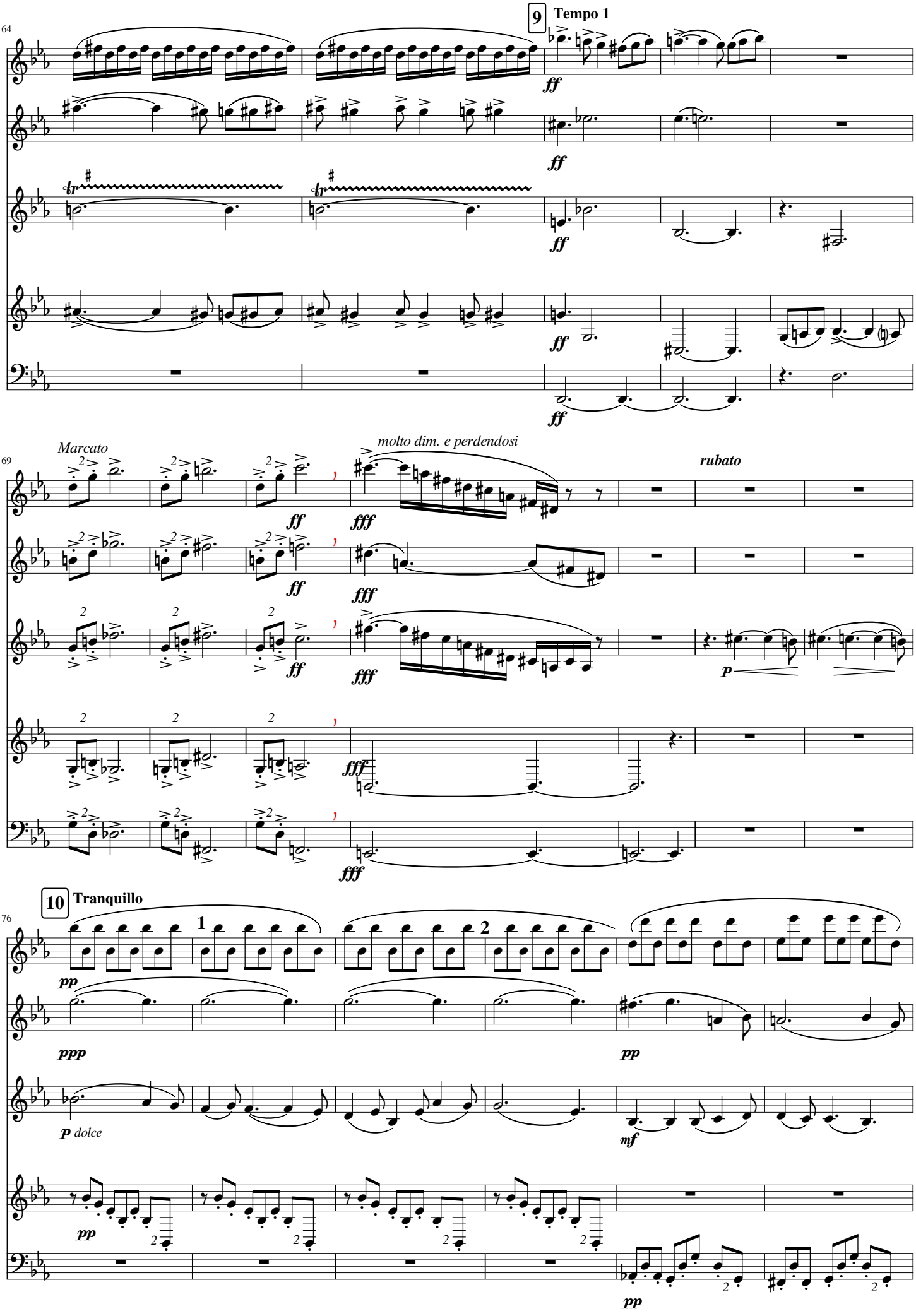
Score (concert pitch) **I** - Andante moderato Bridge

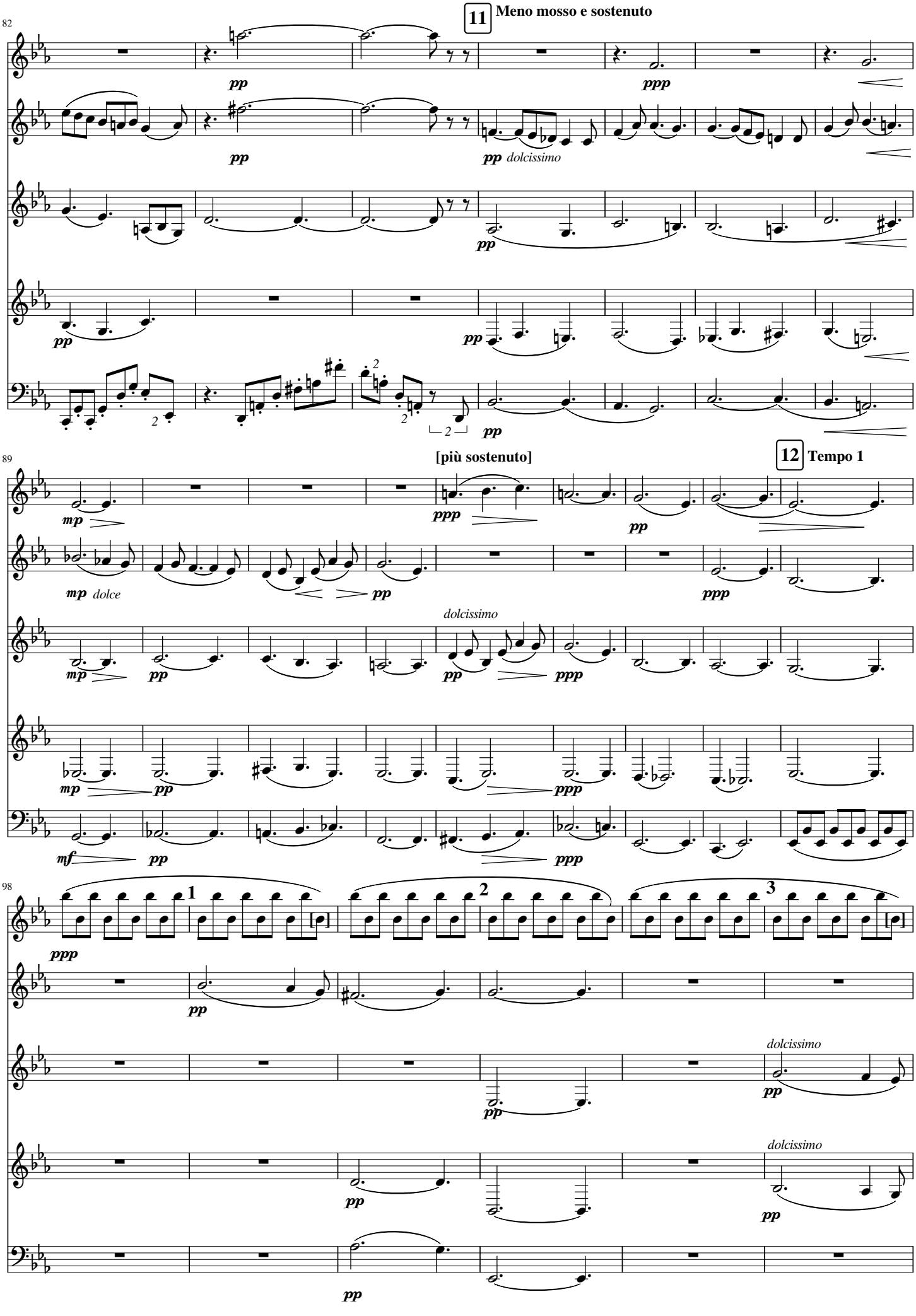


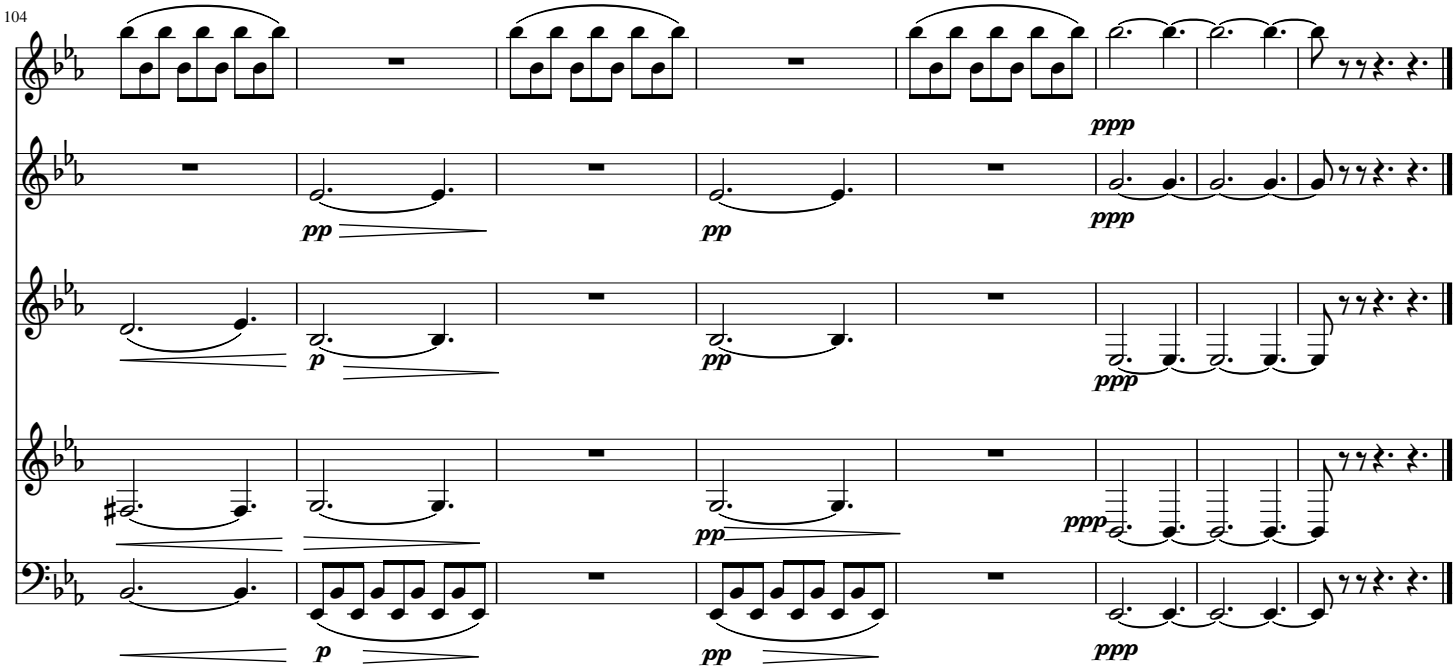

rall.
2
a tempo [poco più mosso]
14
8
9
ff
pp
dolce
1
20
2
pp
sfz
26
3
p
espressivo
f
mf


33
4
dolce
40
5
con passione
47
6
espressivo


53
7
p dolce
pp
ppp
ppp
pp dolce
57
poco a poco accel.
mp
mf
mf
p
cresc.
mp
60
accel
accel
8
Più mosso
f
ff
ff
animato
ff
animato
f
ff


64
9
Tempo 1
ff
69
Marcato
molto dim. e perdendosi
fff
rubato
p
10
Tranquillo
76
pp
ppp
p dolce
mf


82
11 Meno mosso e sostenuto
pp
ppp
pp
pp dolcissimo
pp
pp
pp
89
[più sostenuto]
12 Tempo 1
mp
ppp
pp
mp dolce
pp
ppp
dolcissimo
mp
pp
pp
ppp
mp
pp
ppp
mf
pp
ppp
98
1
2
3
ppp
pp
dolcissimo
pp
pp
dolcissimo
pp
pp


104
ppp
pp
ppp
p
pp
ppp
pp
ppp
p
pp
ppp

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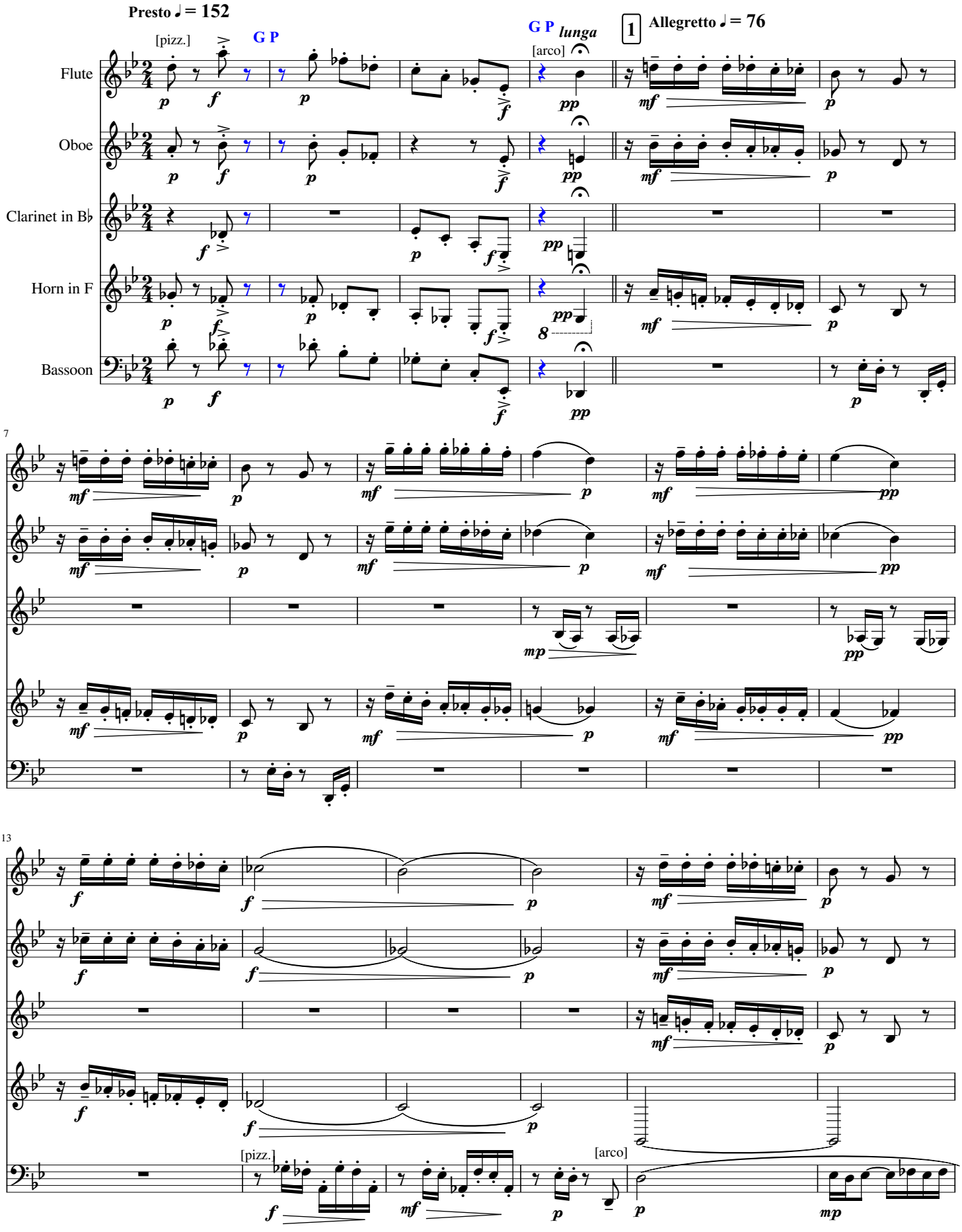
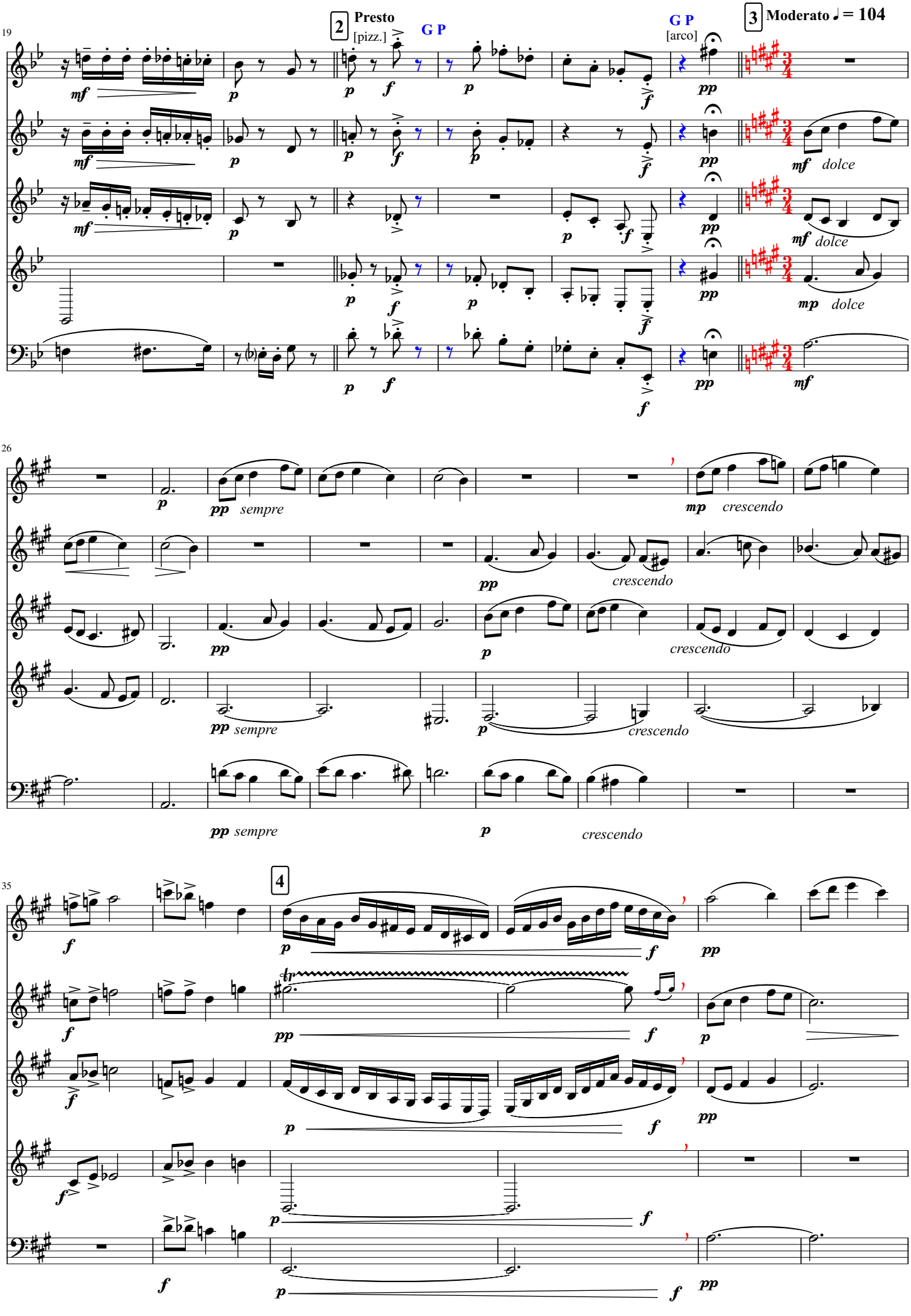
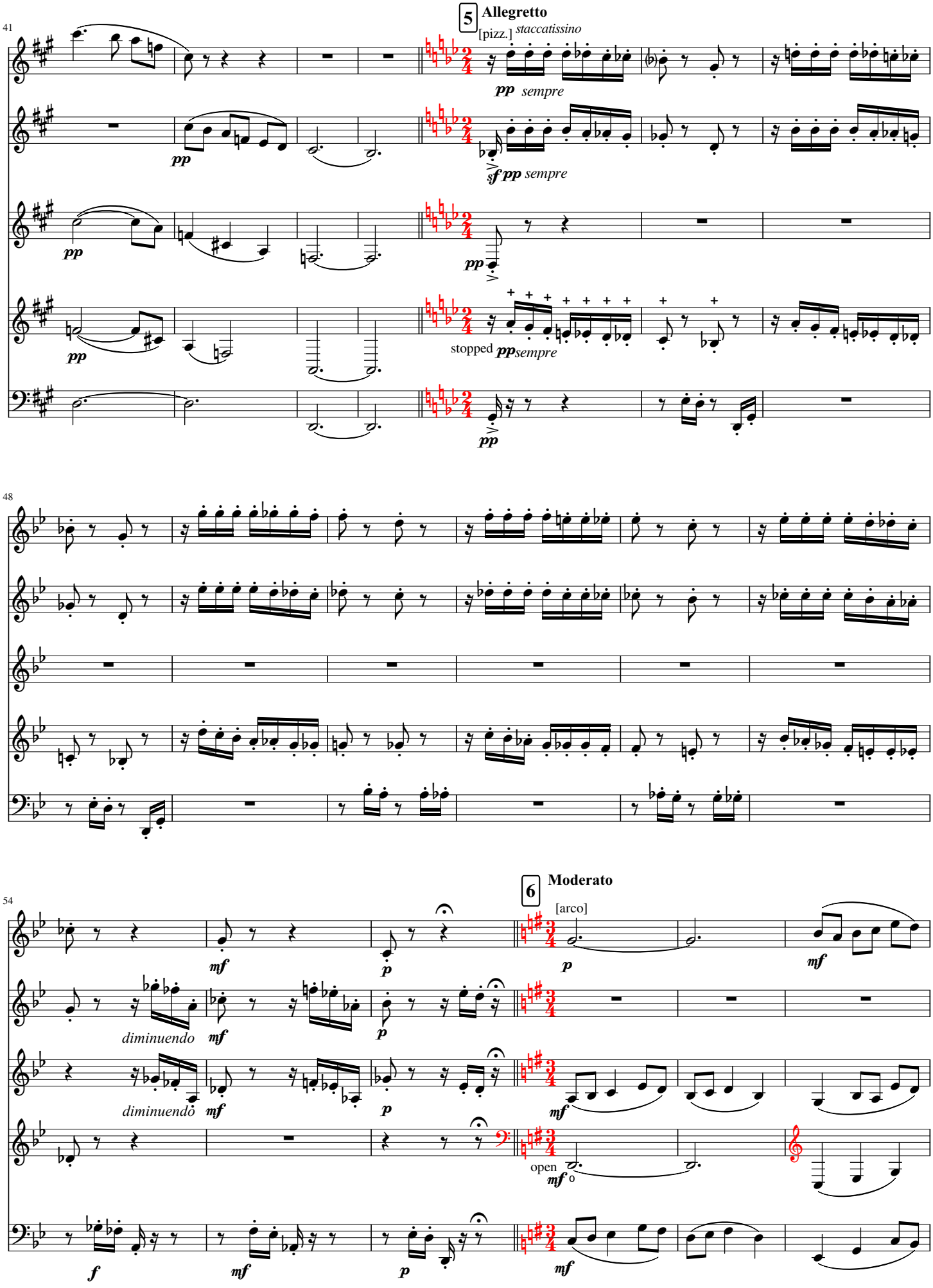
Score (concert pitch)

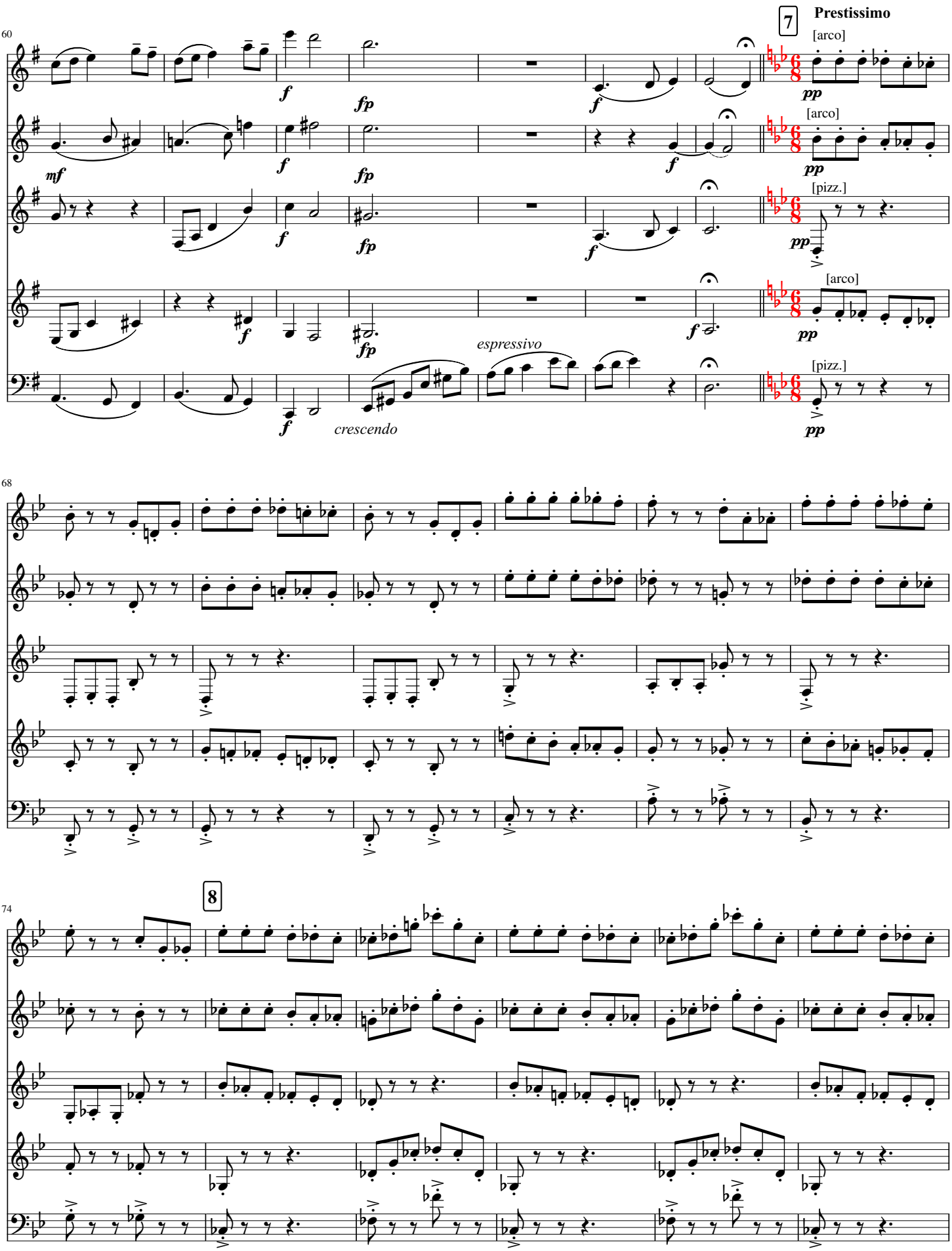
II - Presto - Allegretto - Moderato

Bridge




19
2
Presto
[pizz.]
G P
G P
[arco]
3
Moderato ♩ = 104
mf
p
f
pp
mf dolce
mp dolce
mf
26
pp sempre
mp crescendo
crescendo
35
4
tr


41
5
Allegretto
[pizz.] staccatissino
pp sempre
sf pp sempre
stopped pp sempre
48
54
6
Moderato
[arco]
diminuendo
diminuendo
open


60
7
Prestissimo
[arco]
[arco]
[pizz.]
[arco]
[pizz.]
espressivo
crescendo
68
74
8

80

87

L'istesso tempo

G P

[pizz.]

[arco]

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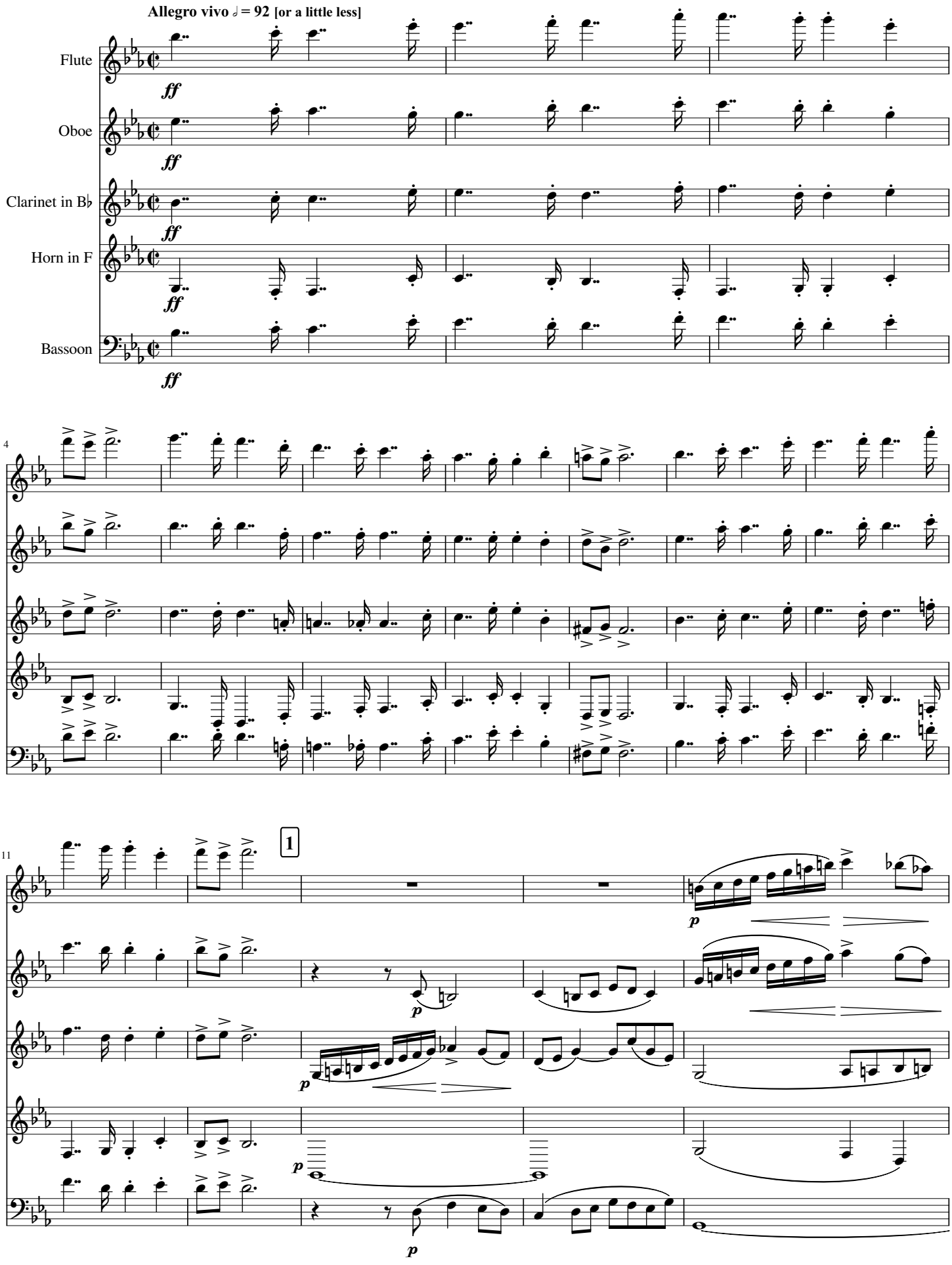
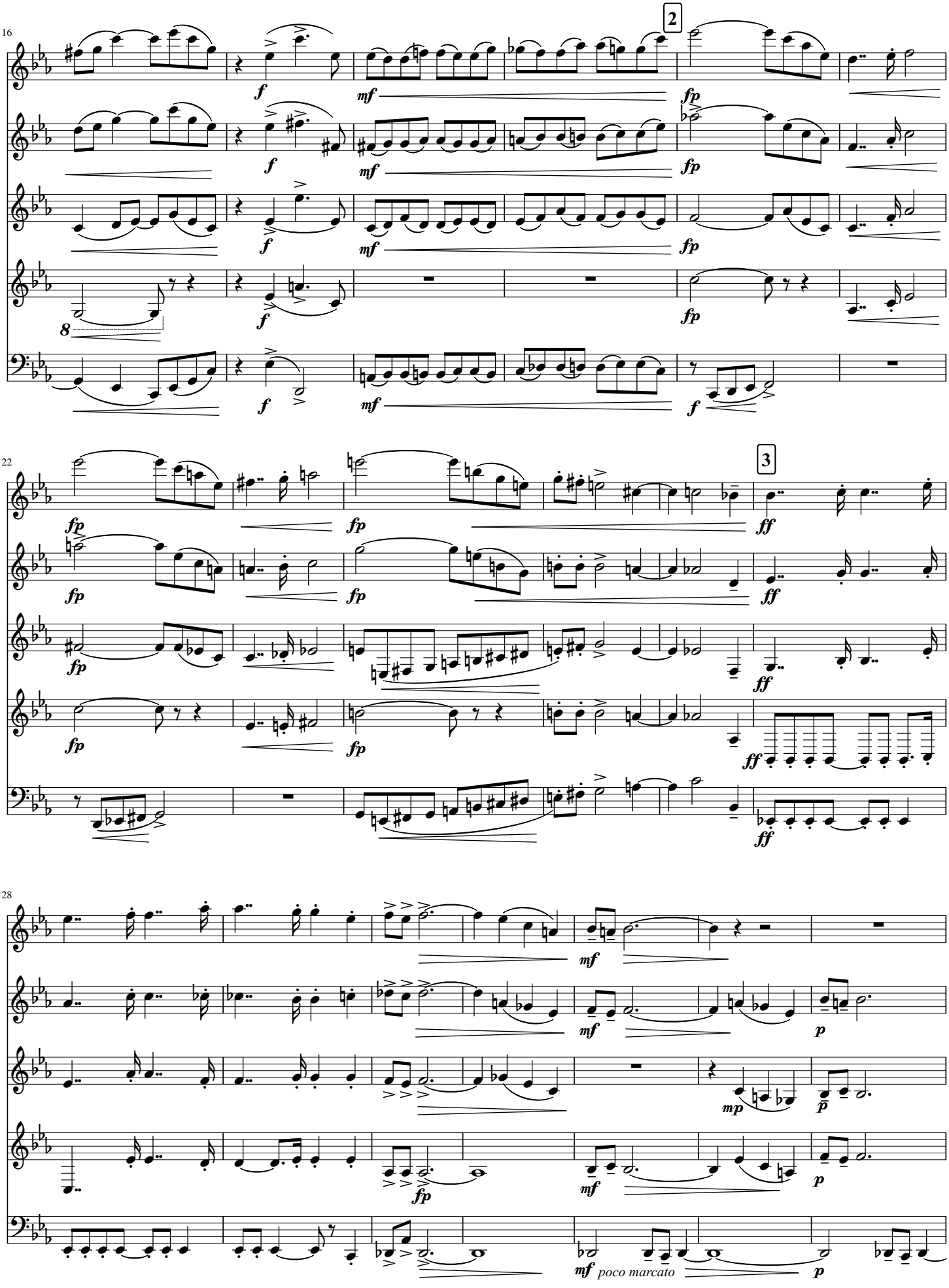
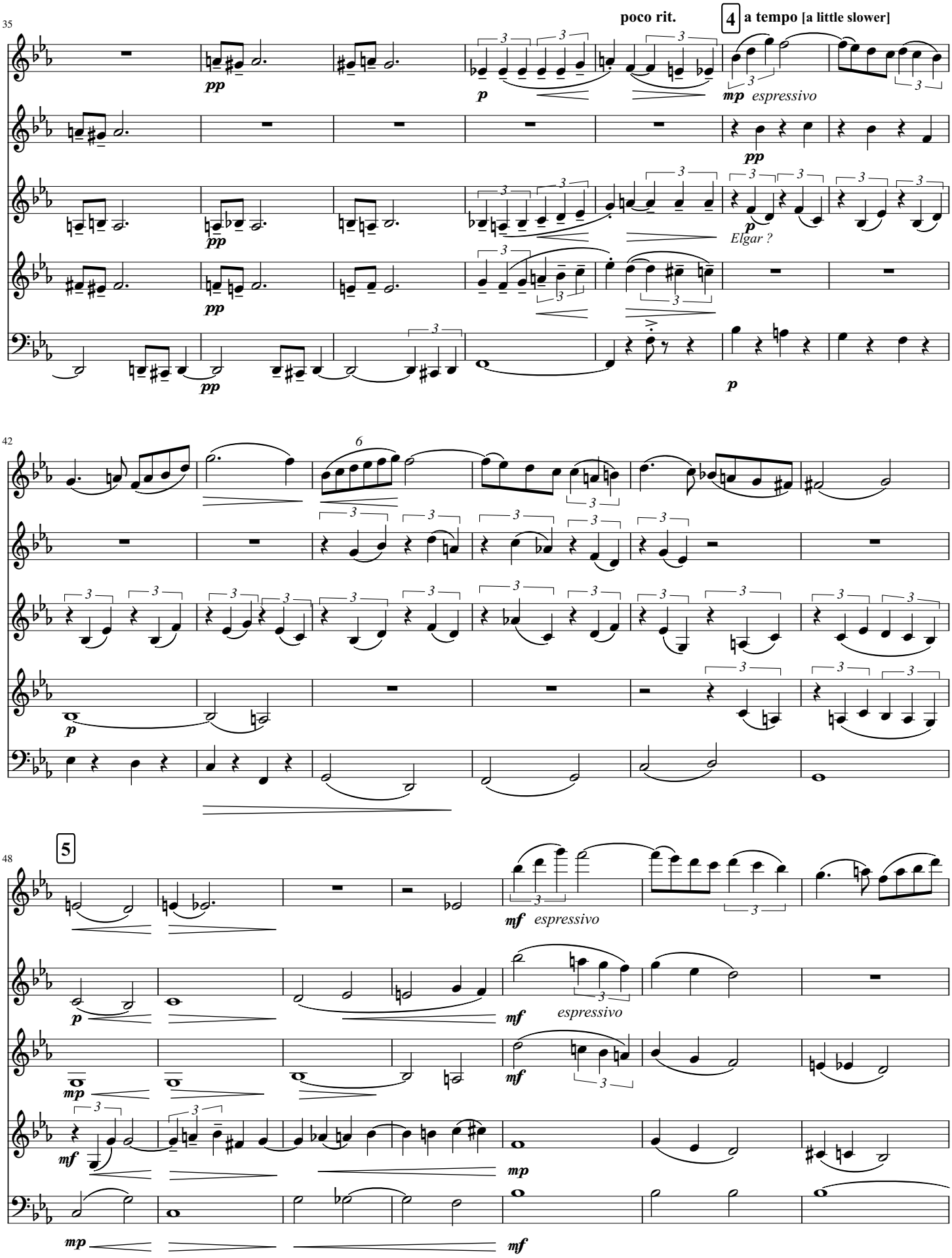
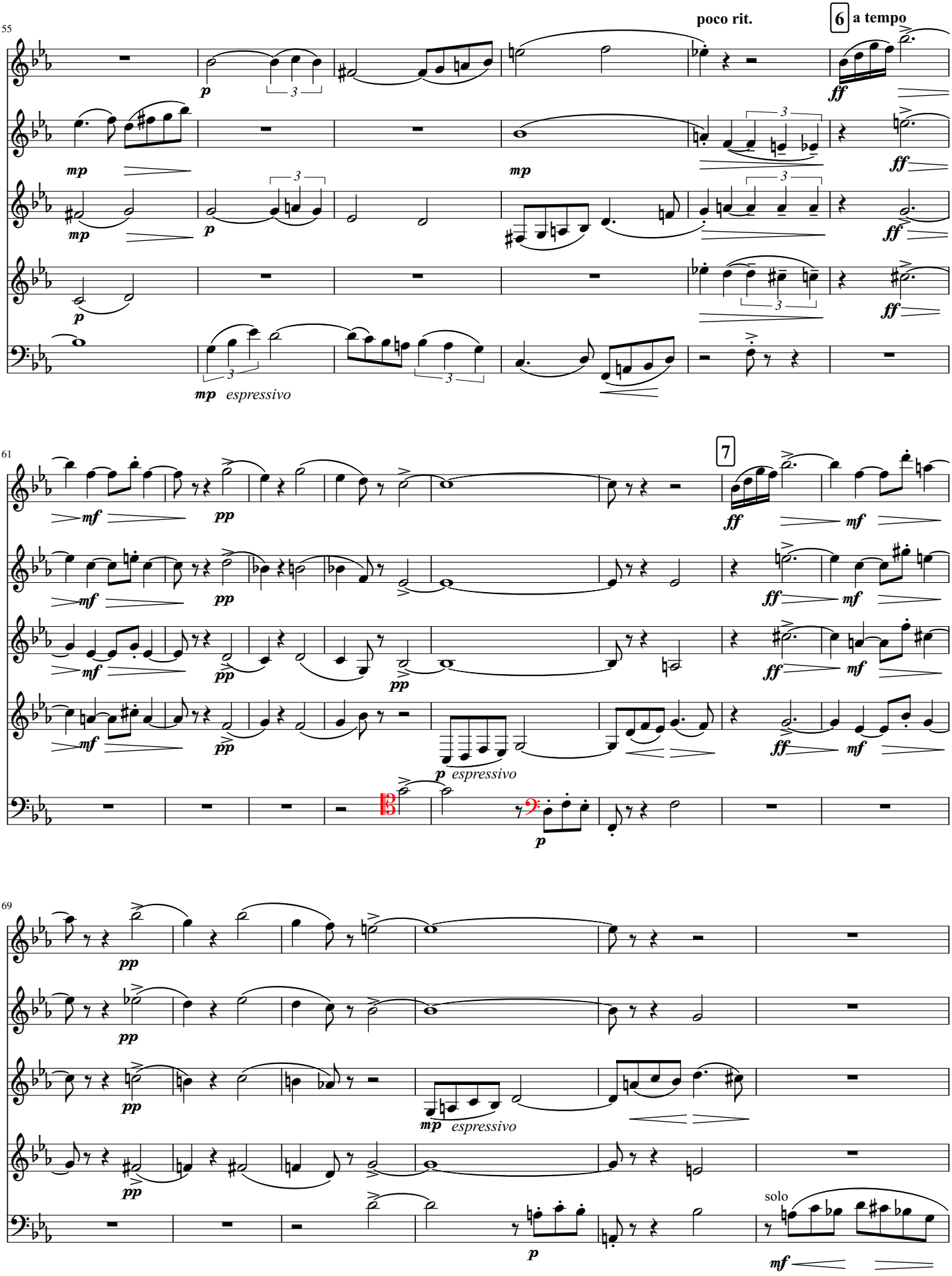
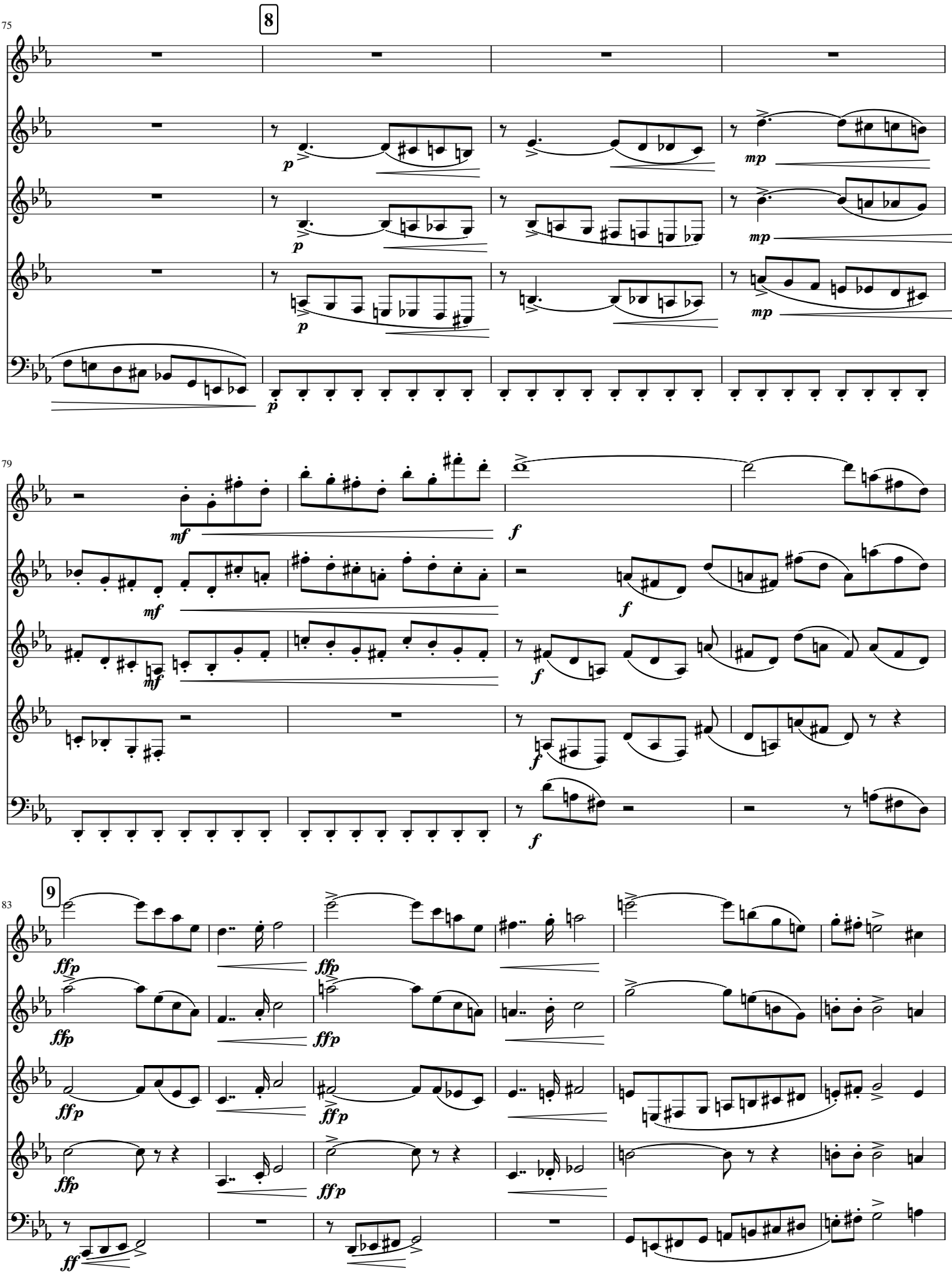
Score (concert pitch) **III** - Allegro vivo Bridge

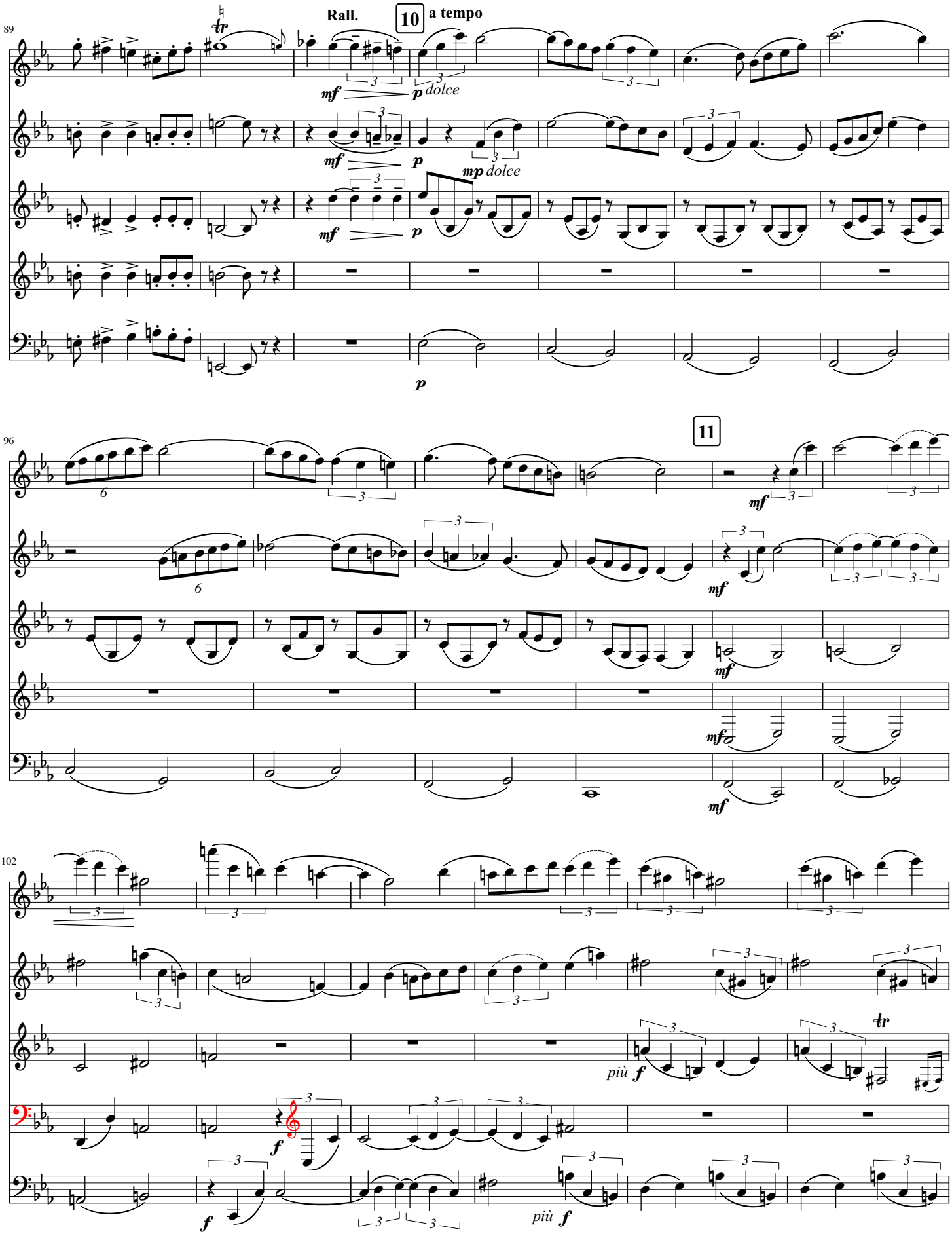


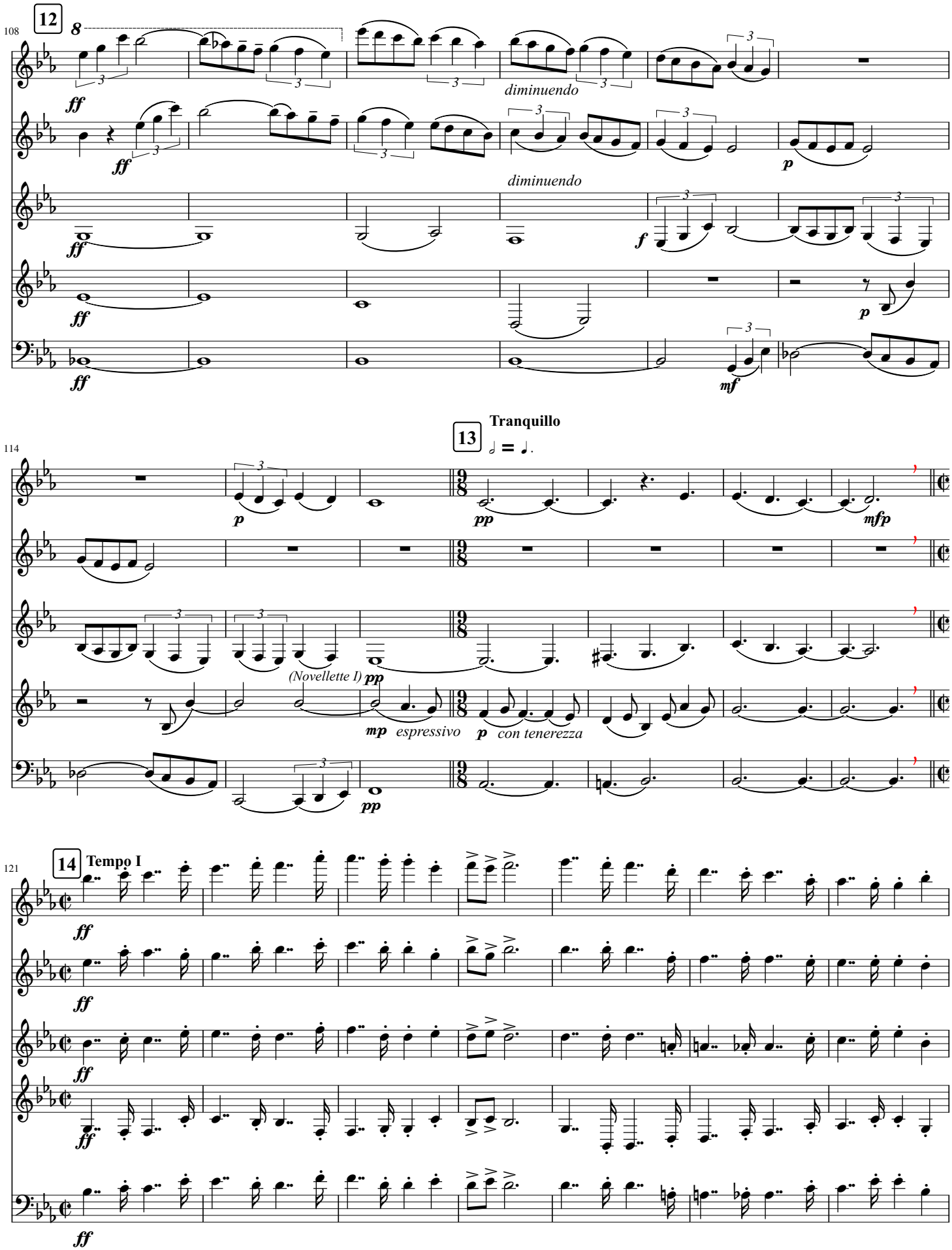

16
2
f
mf
fp
8
22
3
ff
28
mp
p
poco marcato

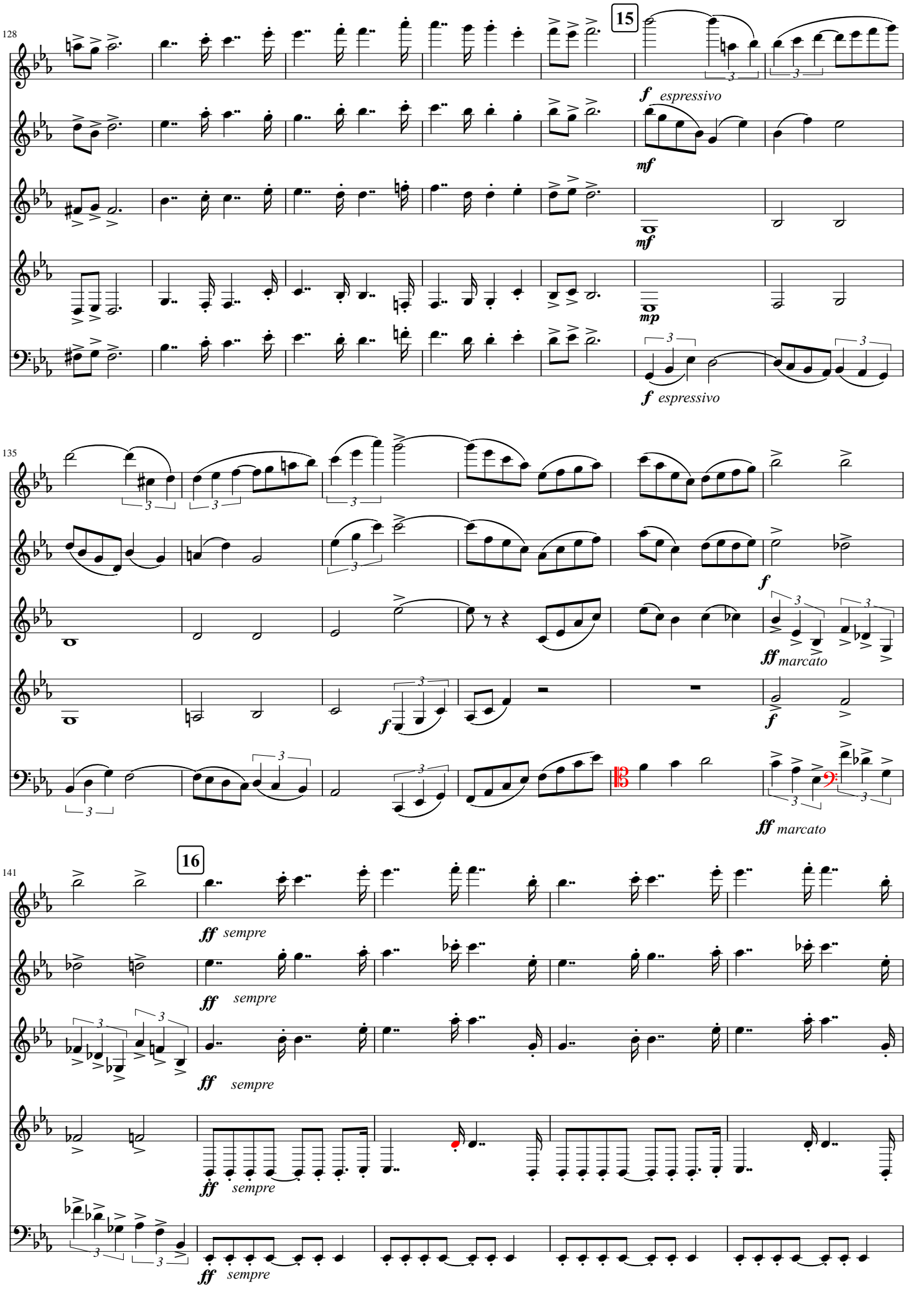

35
poco rit.
4
a tempo [a little slower]
pp
p
mp espressivo
Elgar ?
42
6
5
48
mf espressivo
mp
mf

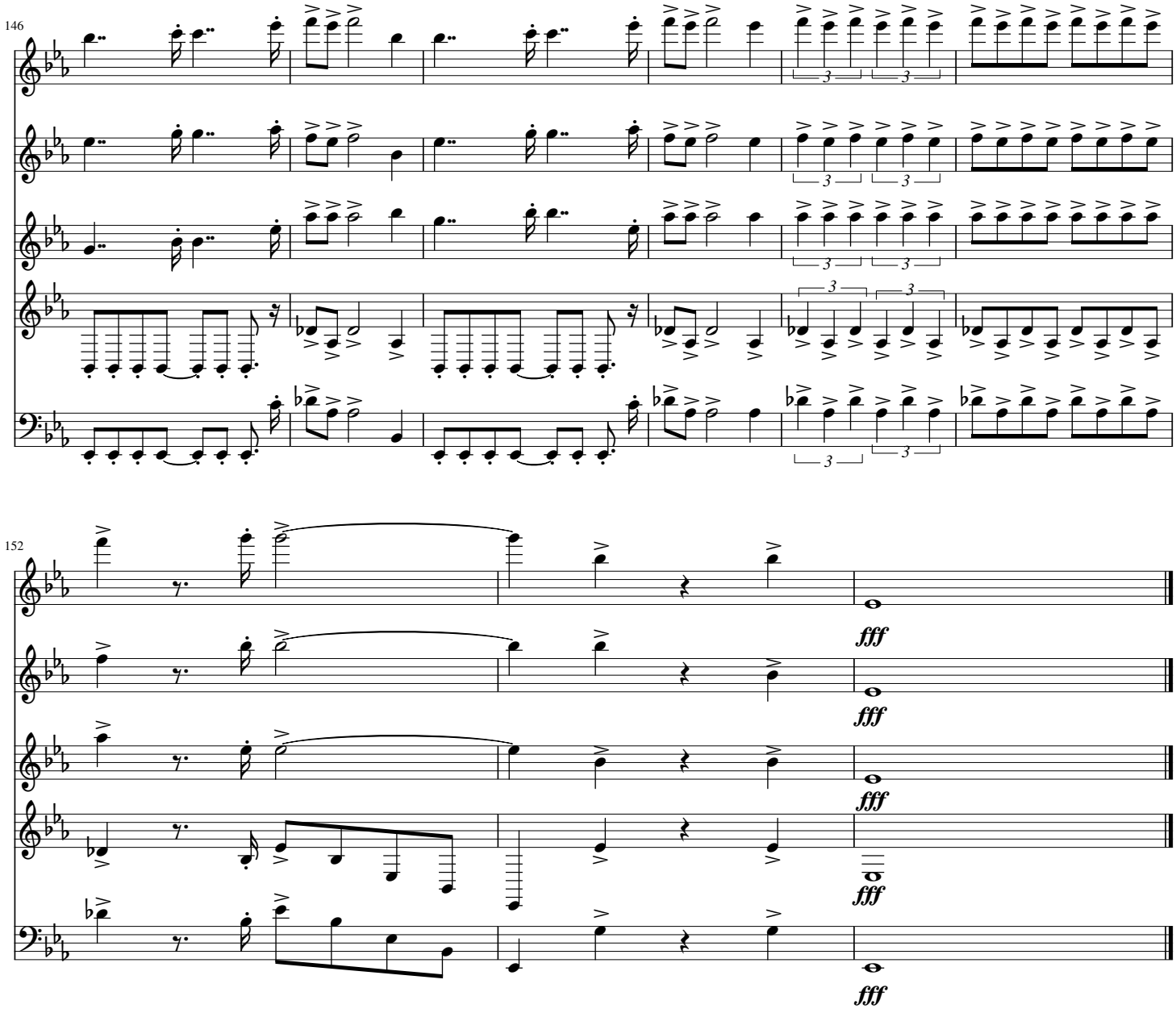

55
poco rit.
6
a tempo
mp espressivo
61
7
p espressivo
69
mp espressivo
solo


75
8
p
mp
79
mf
f
83
9
ffp
ff


89
Rall.
10
a tempo
mf
p dolce
mp dolce
96
11
102
più f


108
12
8
ff
diminuendo
p
f
mf
114
13
Tranquillo
♩. = ♩.
pp
mfp
(Novellette I)
mp
espressivo
con tenerezza
121
14
Tempo I


128
15
f espressivo
mf
mf
mp
f espressivo
135
f
ff marcato
f
f
ff marcato
141
16
ff sempre
ff sempre
ff sempre
ff sempre
ff sempre


146
152
fff
fff
fff
fff
fff