Number the Clouds

for flute, cello, and piano

Delvyn Case

Number the Clouds

Duration: 12 minutes

PROGRAM NOTE

Written hundreds of years before any other sacred Jewish scripture, the biblical book of Job is a radical exploration of the nature of with God's relationship to humanity. The title character is a prosperous and upright citizen who becomes a pawn in a battle between Satan and God. Satan contends that Job's admirable faith and moral character are only the results of the blessings God has given him. To prove him wrong, God allows Satan to remove these blessings one by one, wagering that Job's moral character will remain even when he is sorely afflicted. After losing his wife, children, property, and health, Job finally breaks down and dares to asks God the question we all ask when faced with suffering: why? Job's anger is righteous: he has been blameless and upstanding, deserving none of the tragedies he has endured. Of course, Job does not and cannot know that he has been a pawn in a competition between two eternal beings. So, after patiently listening, God does not smite Job for impertinence. Instead, He responds to him on an intellectual level, appealing to Job's sense of reason:

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?
Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.
Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.
Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?
Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?
Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven,
When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together?...
Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it…

What strikes me about this speech is that God does not simply tell Job the real story. Instead, he uses a line of reasoning that Job can understand. God reminds Job that all of Nature testifies to His power and dominion over the created world, and there is no way Job can understand the perspective of the One who can "number the clouds." Quietly, Job responds:

I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.
Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me,
which I knew not.

In response to Job's humility, God restores to Job all he had lost. Job never loses his faith, but instead he comes to a vastly deeper understanding of the nature of God by being brave enough to ask the most difficult question imaginable – and by being humble enough to listen to the answer that God wants to give.

Number the Clouds

Duration: 12 minutes

Number the Clouds is a musical response to the themes of tragedy and restoration that the book of Job explores. It uses the important themes of the book to tell a story about how the awareness of God's created glory can help heal the wounds of personal tragedy.

The piece begins *in media res* with the three instruments crying out to God in righteous anger and pain. The turbulence of the piece increases until a cataclysm that leaves them utterly defeated. But out of that moment, glimpses of hope appear in the form of a gradually emerging awareness of the extraordinary splendor of the natural world. (Specifically, the middle section of the piece is intended to evoke the tiny waterbugs that I have seen skitterring across the surface of the brook that runs through the Wheaton woods.) The wonder of these delightful little creatures grows into a passionate hymn of praise for the God whose made them – and who made the rich, complex, and mysterious world that we all share. At the end of the piece, the instruments cry out again, but this time ecstatically lifting their voices in thanksgiving for the Creator.

As I have embarked on my journey of healing from my own personal tragedy, I have been comforted again and again by my belief that the God who created the scampering, beautiful waterbugs in the Wheaton Woods is the same God who now holds me in loving hands: a God whose decisions I cannot fathom, but whose creation testifies to unending dominion power, and love for me an for all creation. Like Job, I can ask "why". But God does not answer my question with anger. Instead, God shows me the glories of creation, reminding me that there is hope for restoration, for healing, and for peace.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

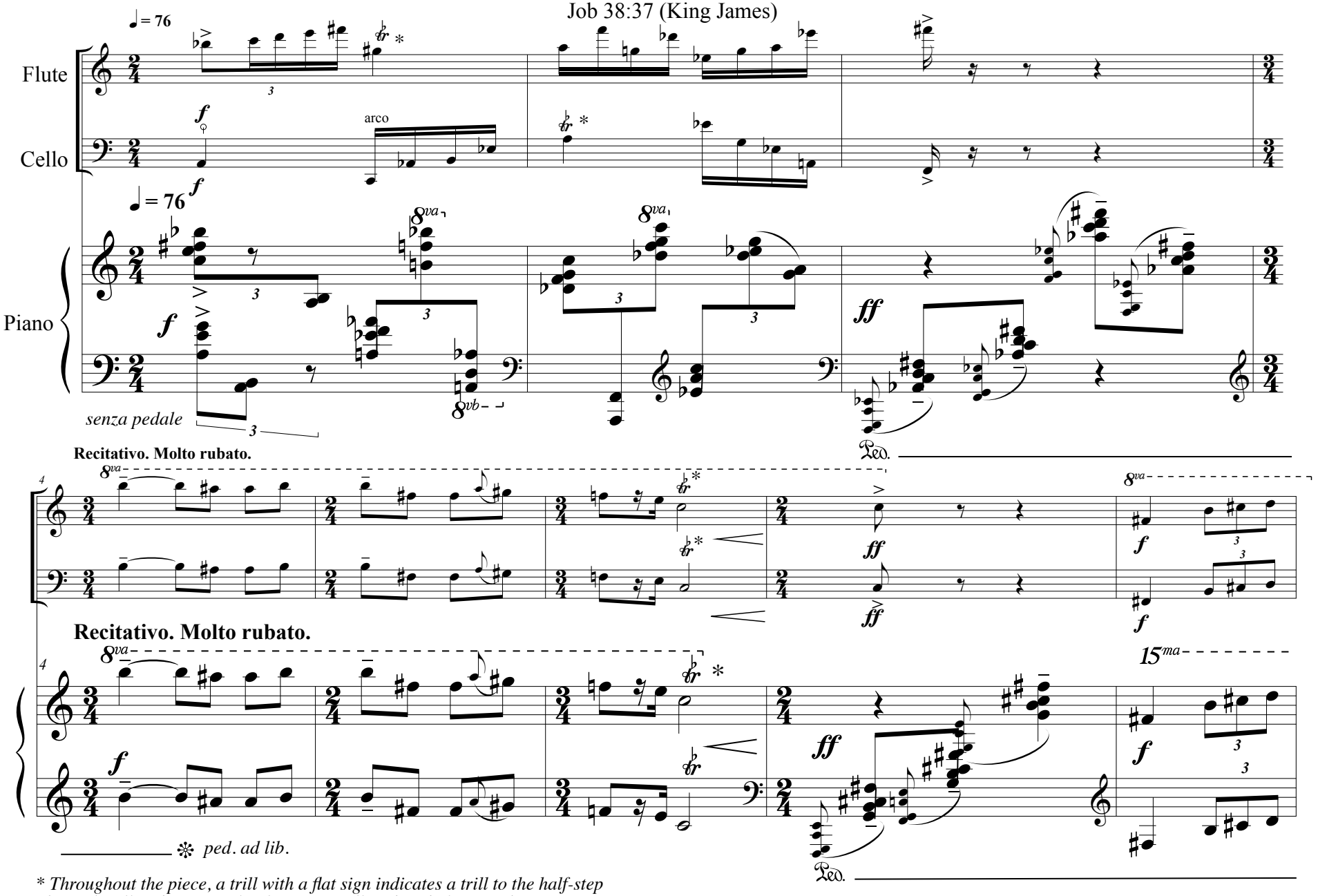
Delvyn Case is a composer, conductor, educator, and performer based in Boston. His music has been performed by over twenty-five orchestras from Florida to Alaska, including the San Antonio Symphony and Louisville Orchestra. Other performers of his music include the Grammy-winning quintet Chestnut Brass Company, the Dallas Wind Symphony, United States Coast Guard Band, mezzo-soprano D'Anna Fortunato, Ibis Camerata, and the Grammy-nominated pianist Charles Abramovic. He has received awards, honors, and fellowships from BMI, The MacDowell Colony, The Society of Composers, The Atlantic Center for the Arts, and The New York Virtuoso Singers, among others. His 2008 chamber opera *The Prioress's Tale,* which explores issues of religious intolerance, toured New England for three seasons years as part of a unique initiative to foster dialogue about peace-making and reconciliation. His most recent projects include two extensive pieces for narrator and chamber ensemble commissioned by the Portland Symphony Orchestra, which have been performed for over five thousand children in schools throughout the state of Maine since 2010. Delvyn Case studied at music at Yale (B.A. *summa cum laude)* and the University of Pennsylvania (Ph.D. in musical composition), as well as conducting at the Curtis Institute of Music. He is former member of the graduate faculty of the Longy School of Music, and has also taught at Boston College and Northeastern University. He now serves as Assistant Professor of Music at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, where he conducts the Great Woods Chamber Orchestra.

Originally composed for the Klemperer Trio
Version with flute transcribed and adapted for the Bayside Trio

Number the Clouds

Delvyn Case (BMI)

Job 38:37 (King James)



** Throughout the piece, a trill with a flat sign indicates a trill to the half-step above. A trill with a natural indiciates a trill to the whole-step above.*

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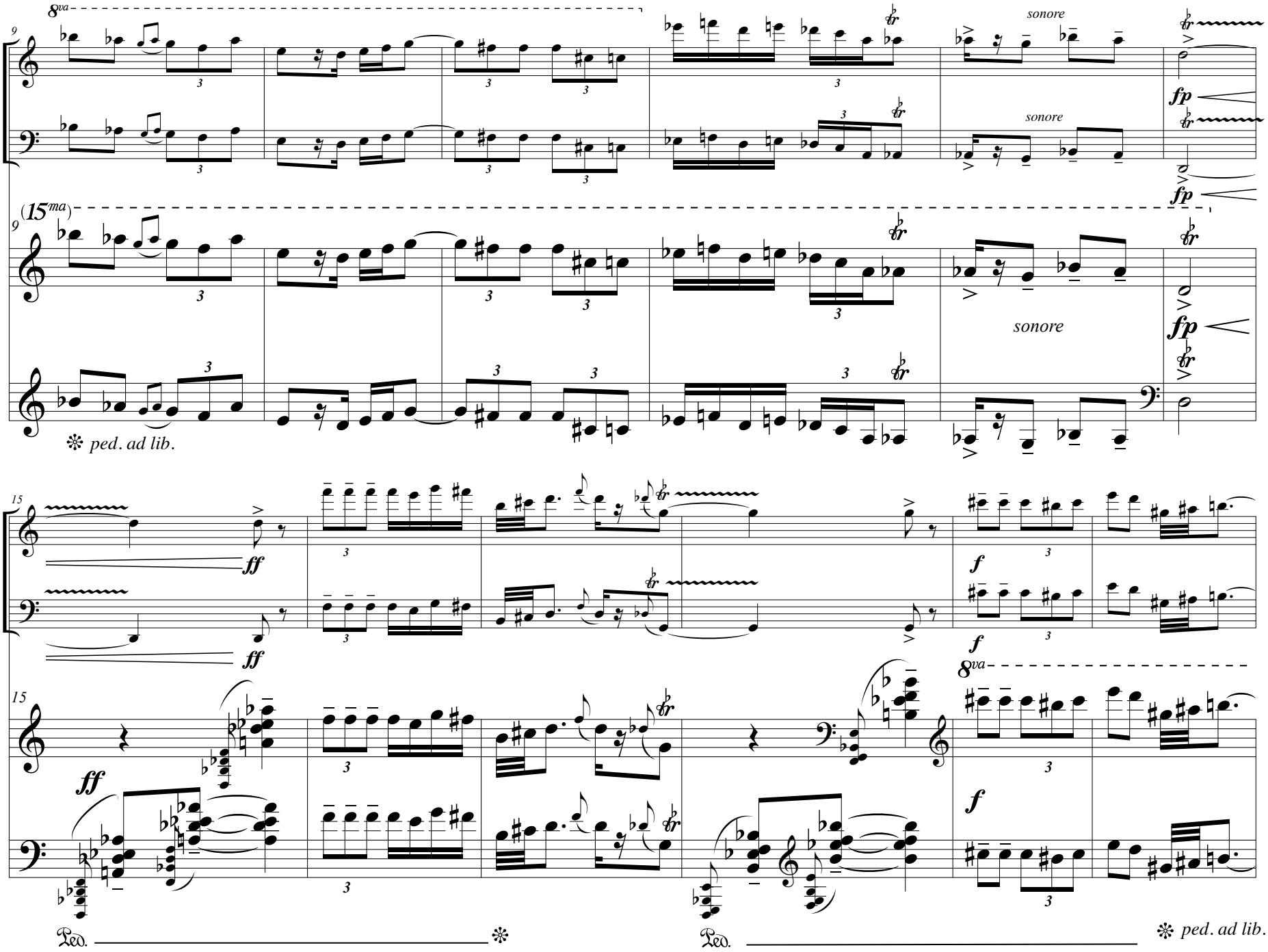
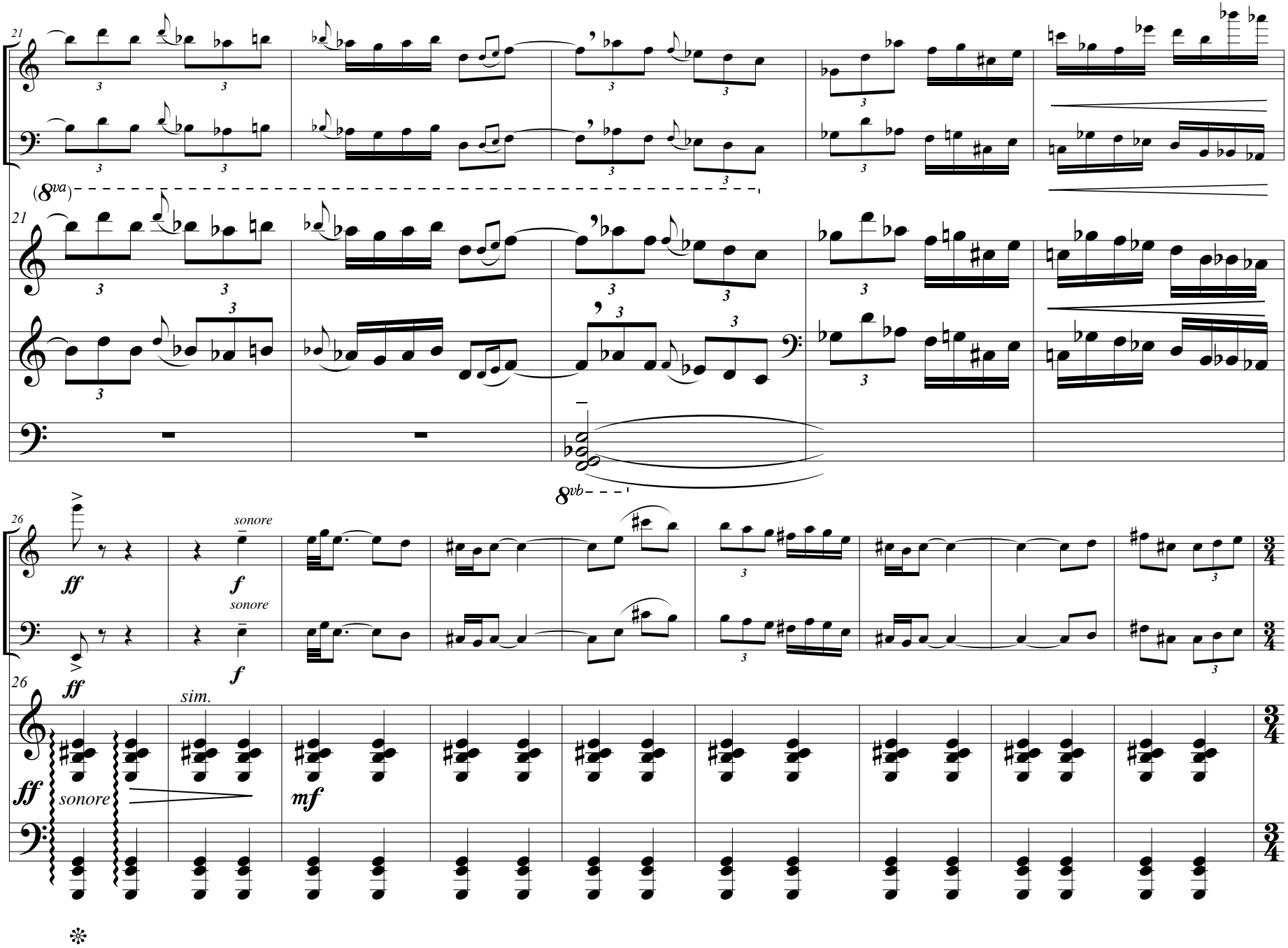
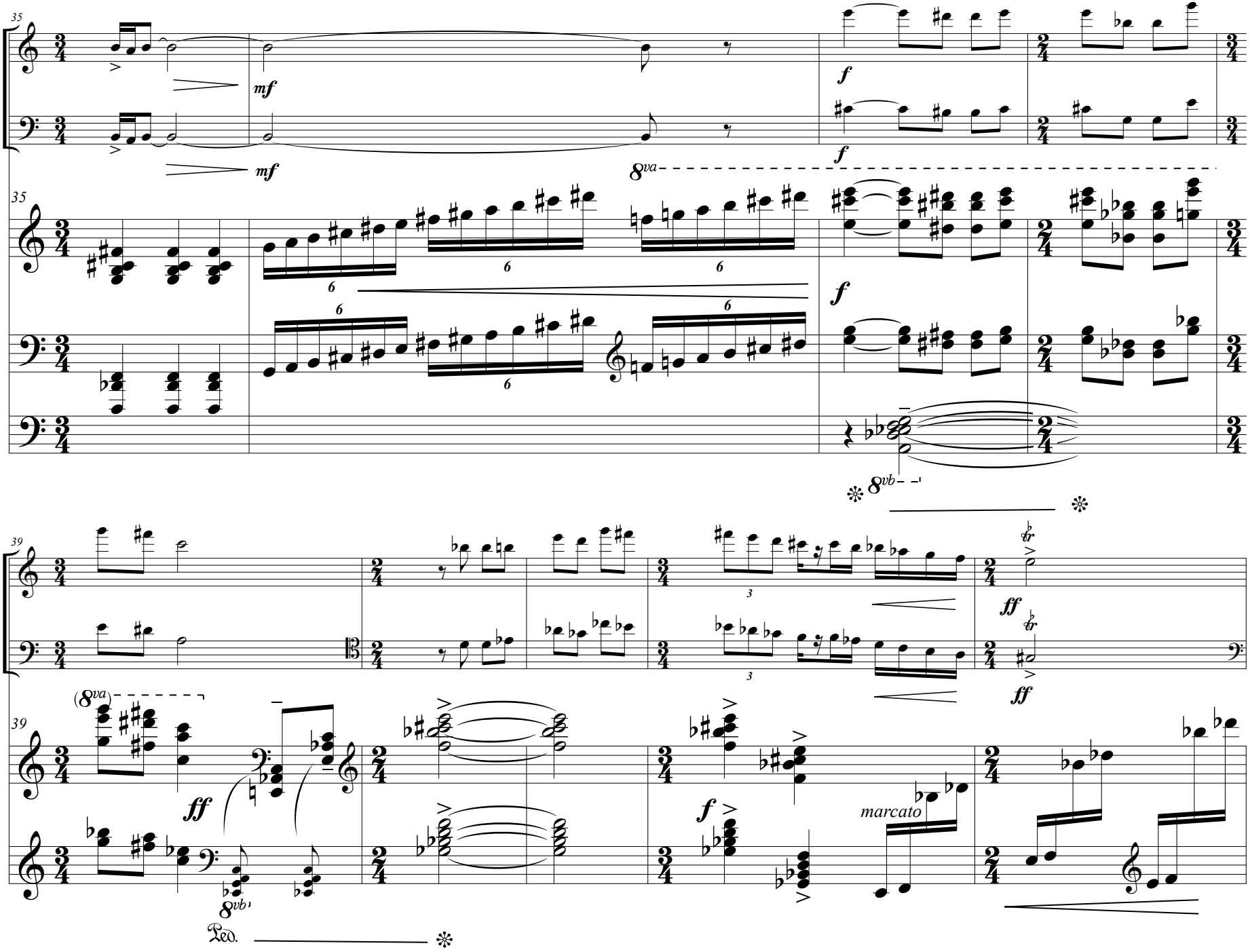
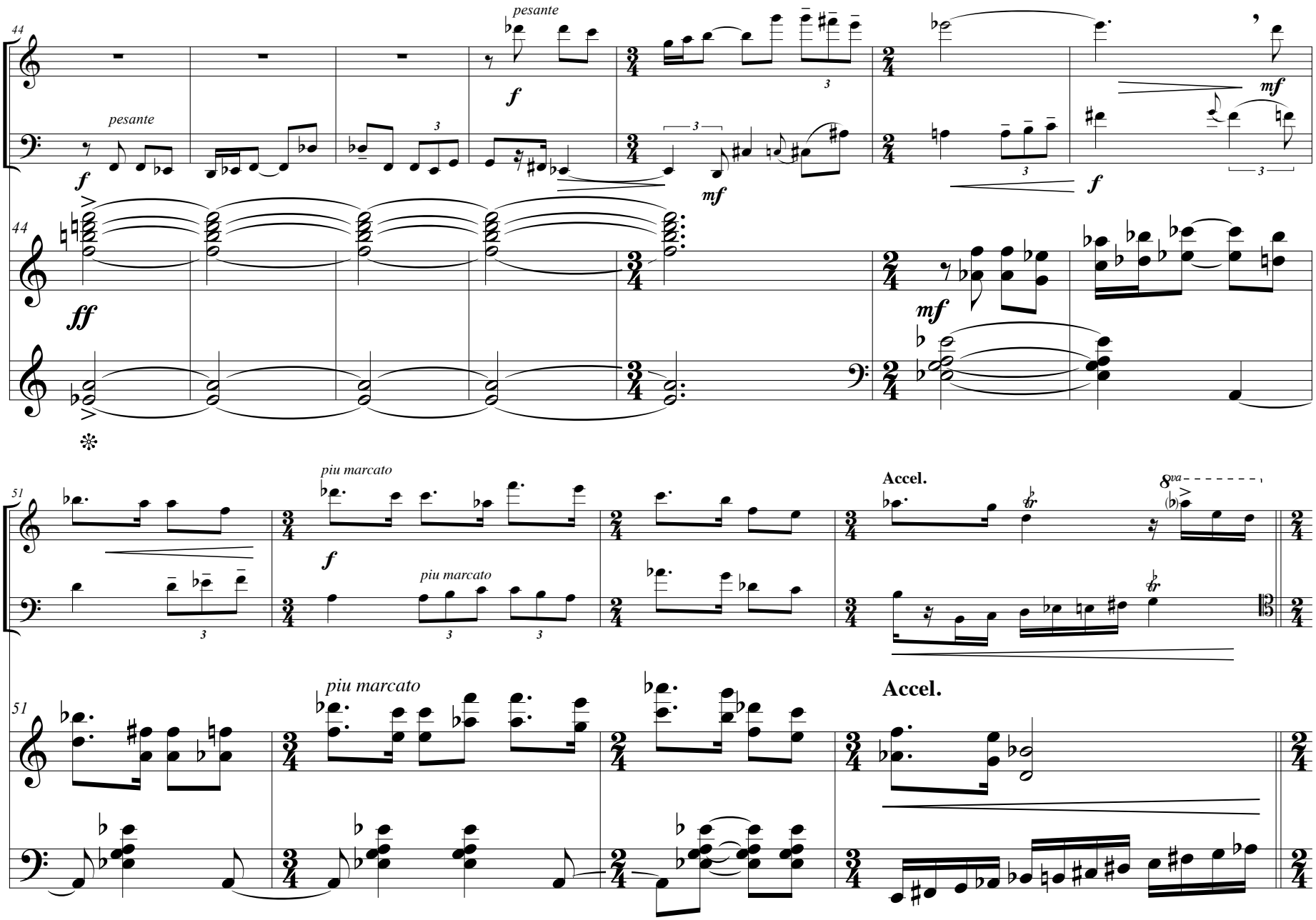
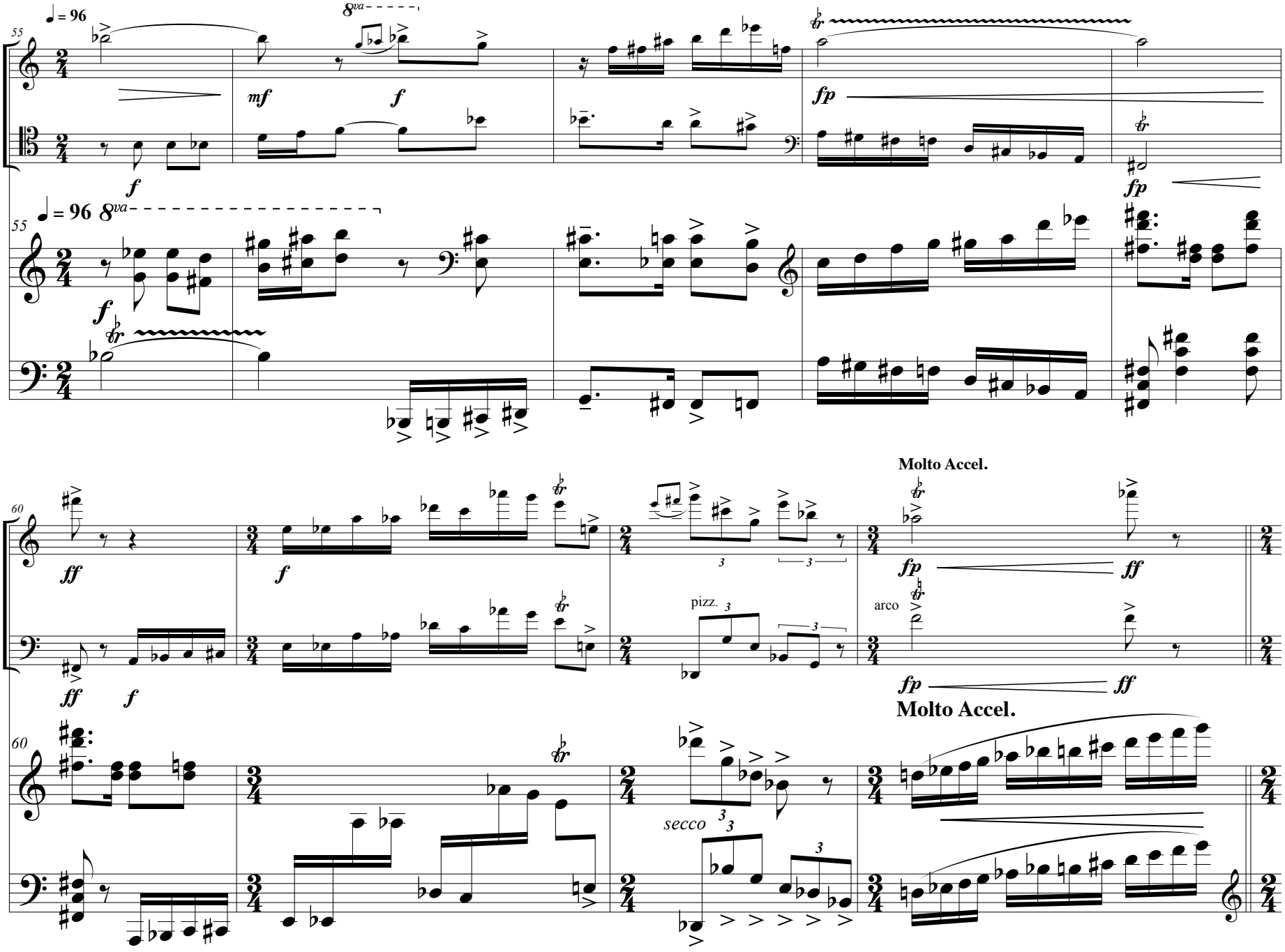
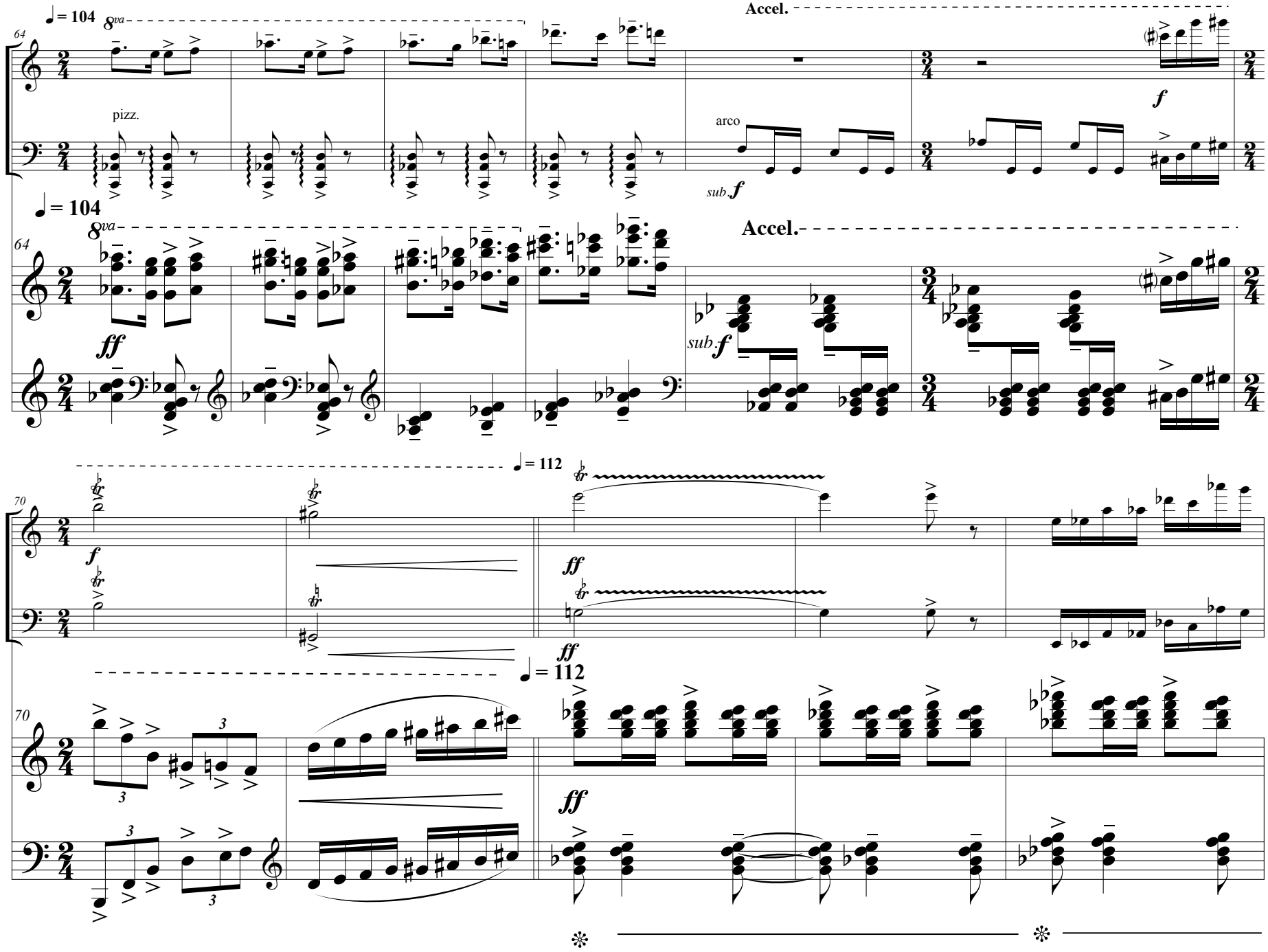

8va
sonore
sonore
fp
fp
(15ma)
sonore
ff
ff
f
f
8va
ff
f
Ped.
Ped.
ped. ad lib.
ped. ad lib.

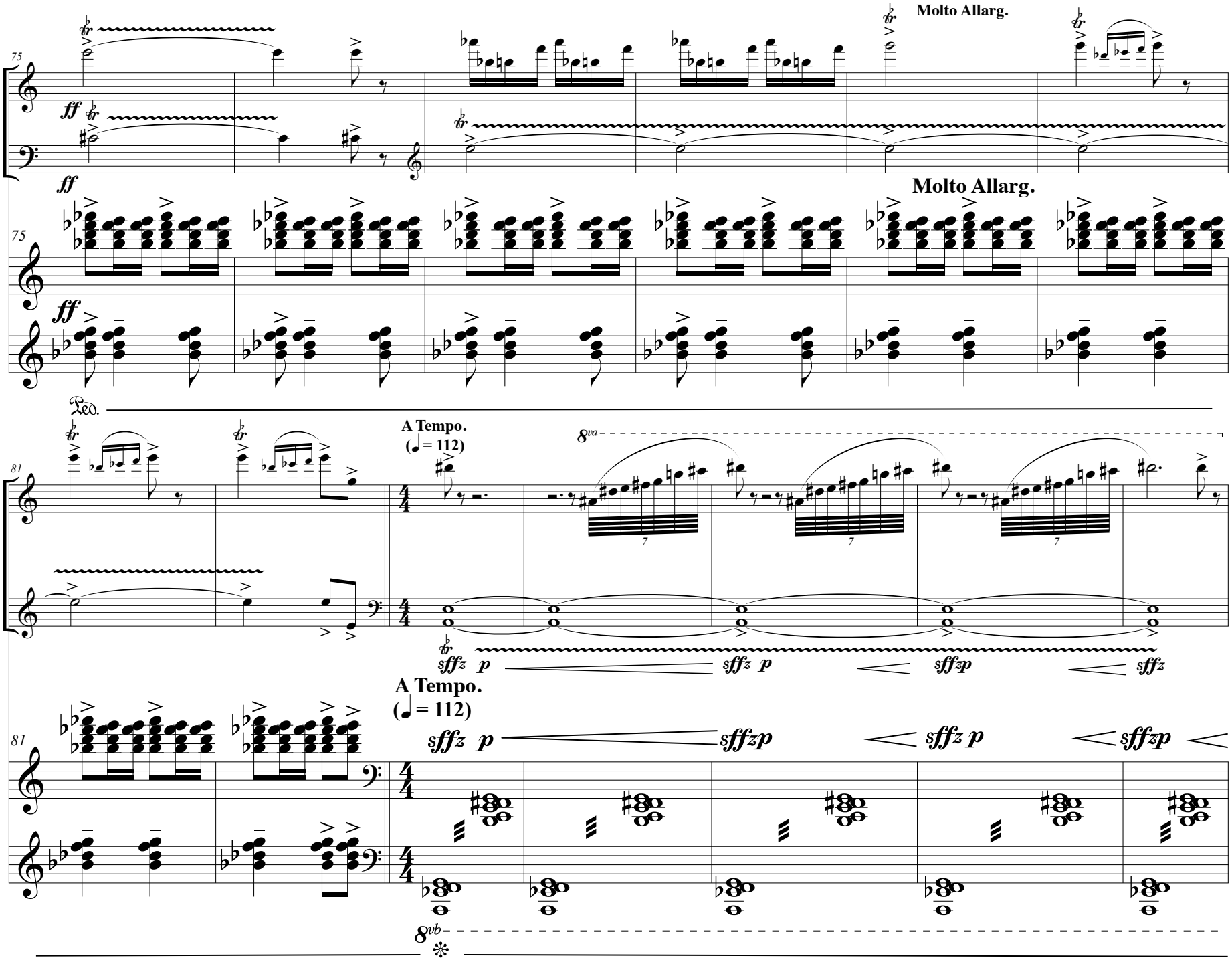

21
(8va)
8vb
26
ff
f
sonore
sim.
mf
3/4

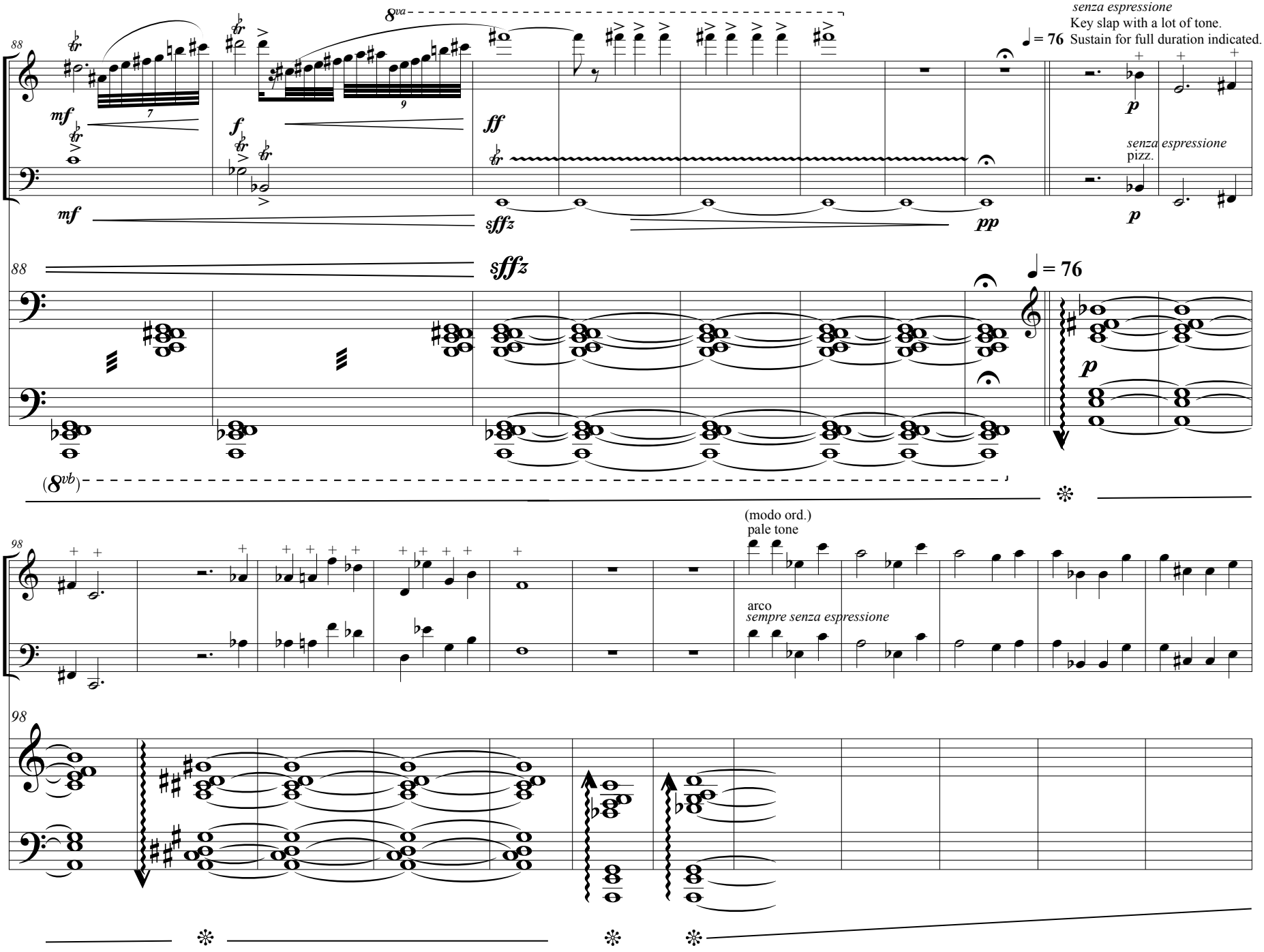

35
mf
f
8va
8vb
39
ff
(8va)
8vb
Ped.
marcato

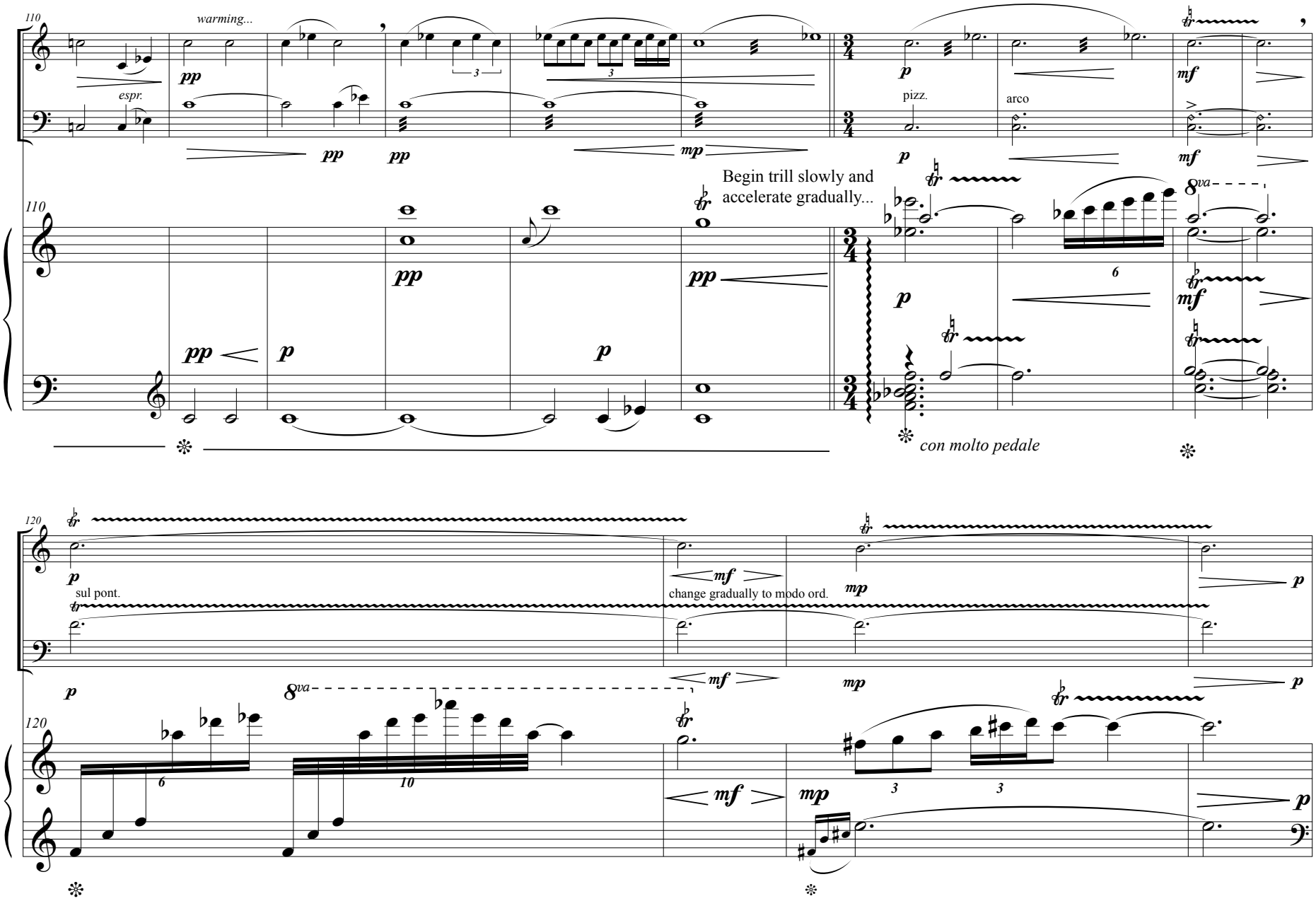

44
pesante
pesante
f
f
mf
f
mf
ff
mf
51
piu marcato
piu marcato
f
Accel.
8va
piu marcato
Accel.

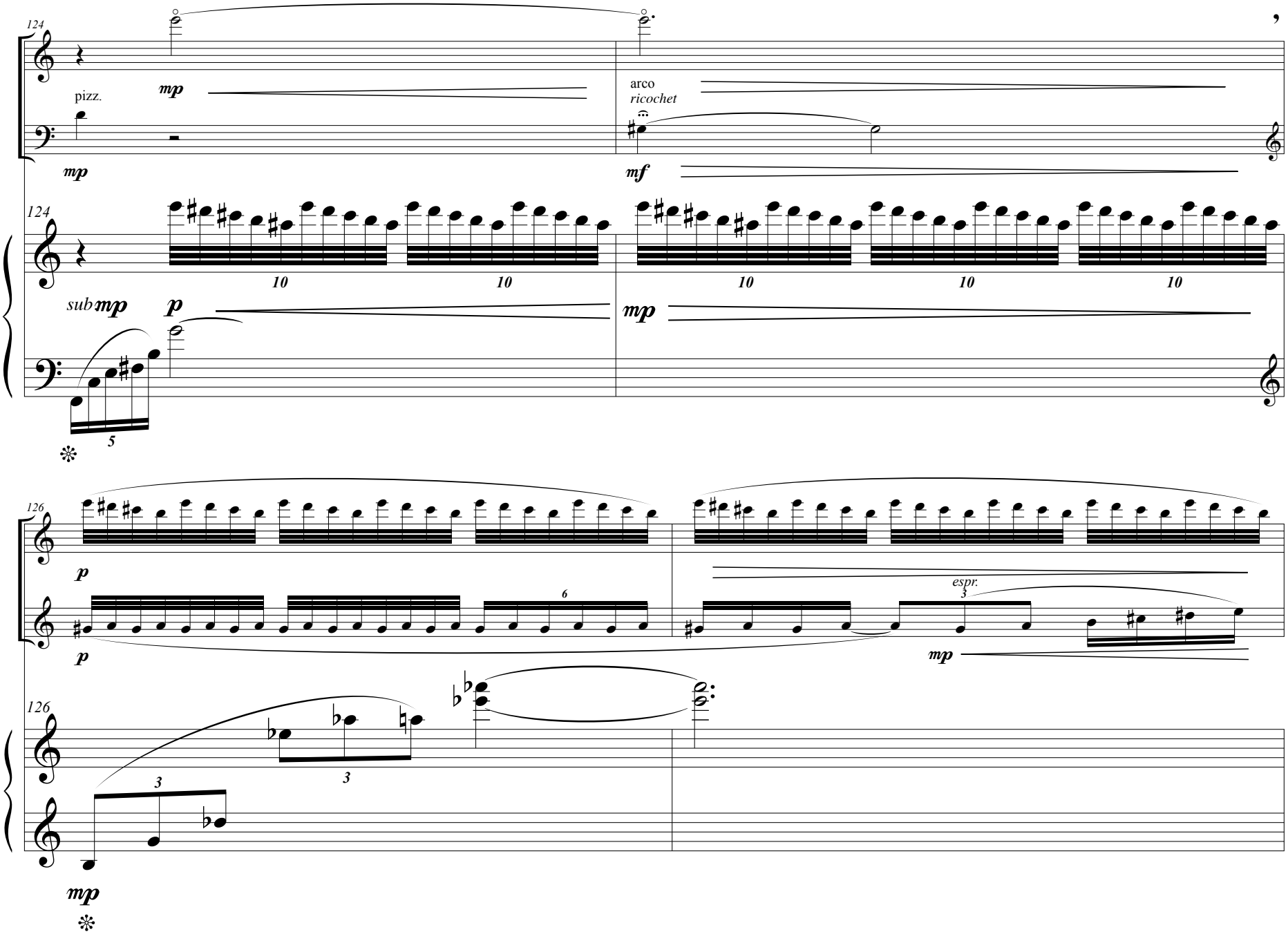

♩ = 96
8va
55
mf
f
fp
♩ = 96 8va
55
f
60
ff
f
fp
ff
Molto Accel.
pizz.
arco
secco
60
Molto Accel.

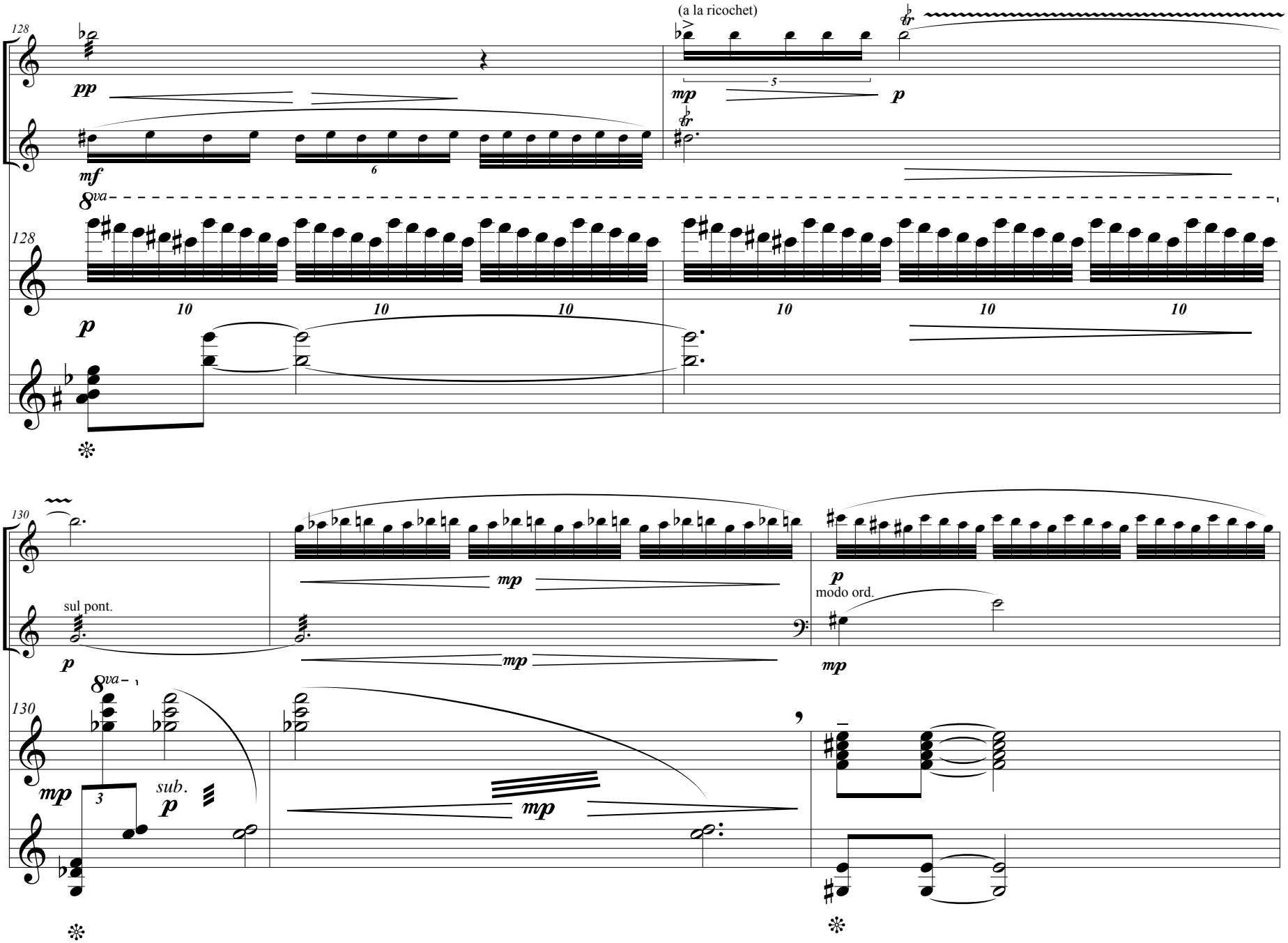

♩= 104
8va
Accel.
pizz.
arco
sub. f
f
ff
♩= 112
3

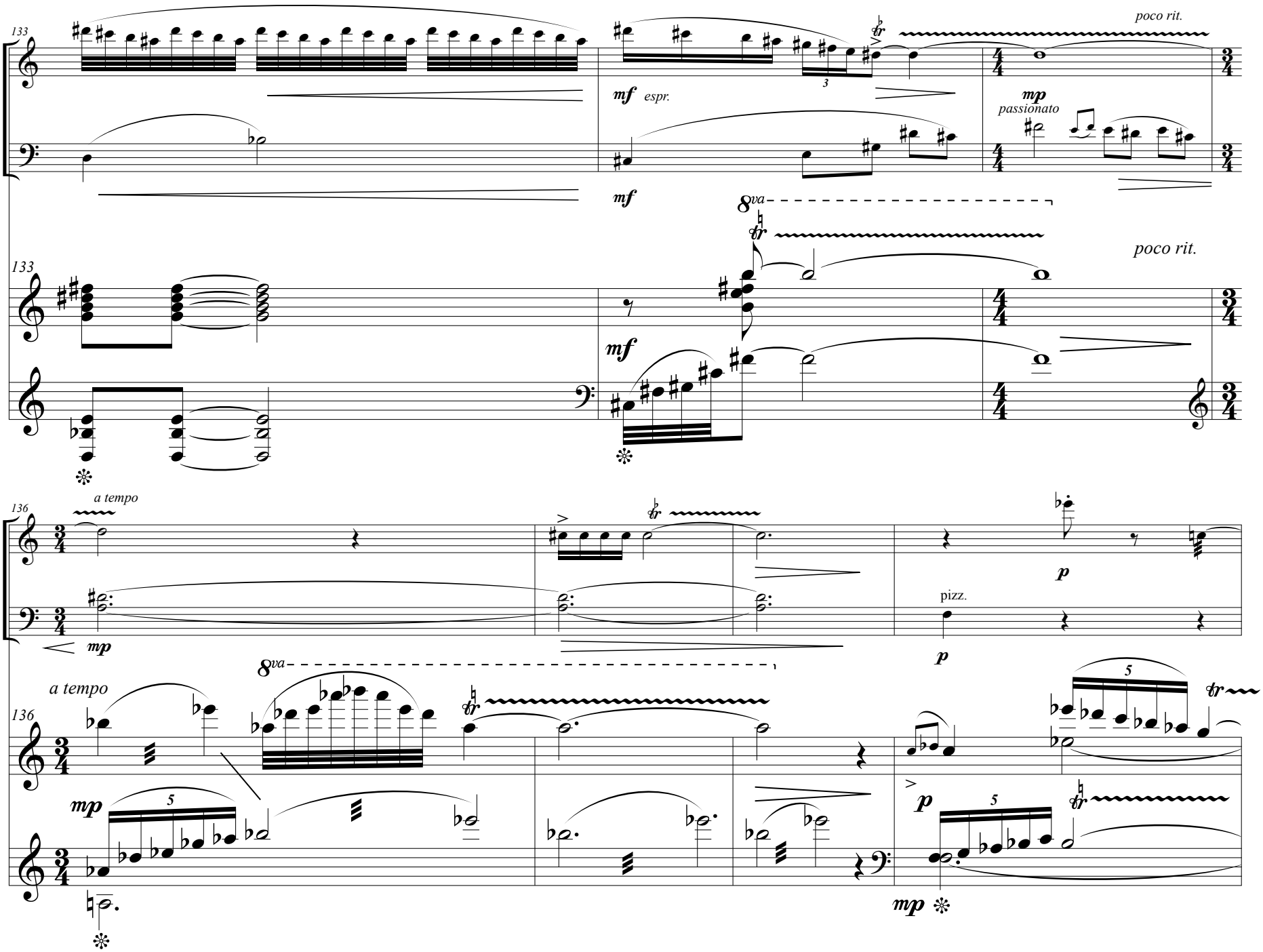

Molto Allarg.
Molto Allarg.
A Tempo.
(♩ = 112)
A Tempo.
(♩ = 112)
Ped.
8va
8vb

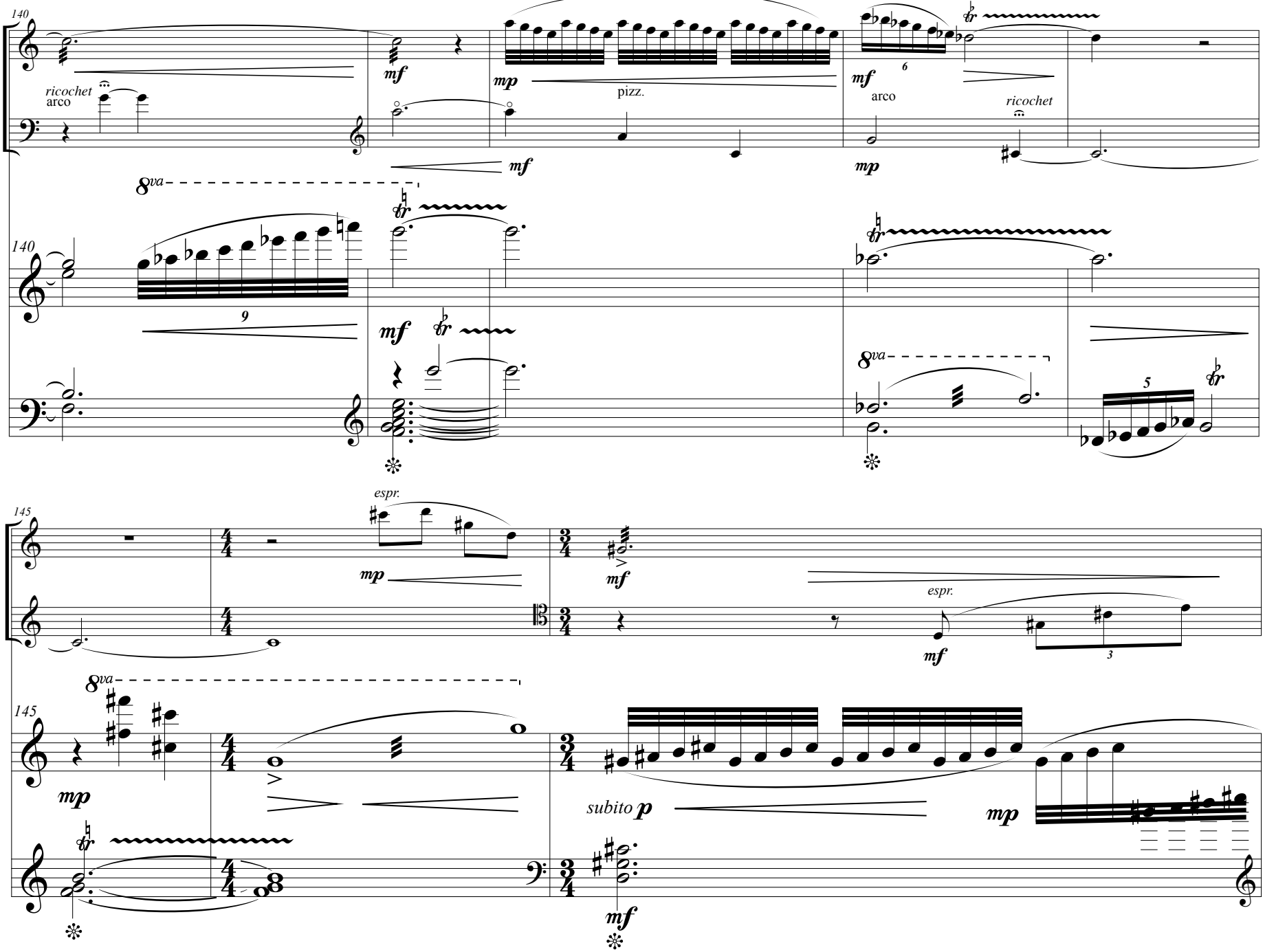

8va
senza espressione
Key slap with a lot of tone.
Sustain for full duration indicated.
♩ = 76
senza espressione
pizz.
(8vb)
(modo ord.)
pale tone
arco
sempre senza espressione

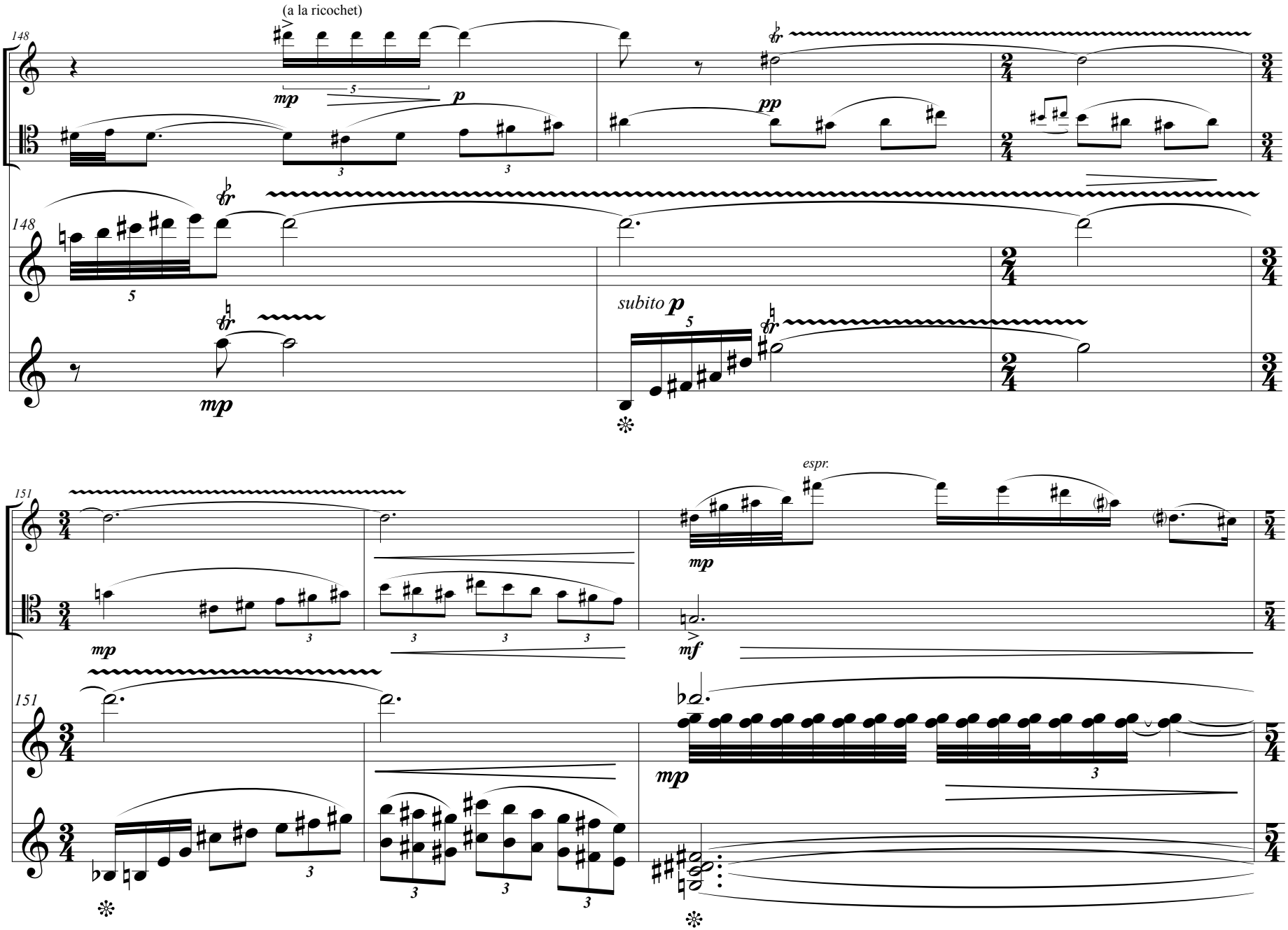

110
warming...
pp
espr.
pp
pp
mp
p
pizz.
arco
mf
Begin trill slowly and
accelerate gradually...
8va
6
con molto pedale
120
sul pont.
change gradually to modo ord.
10
3

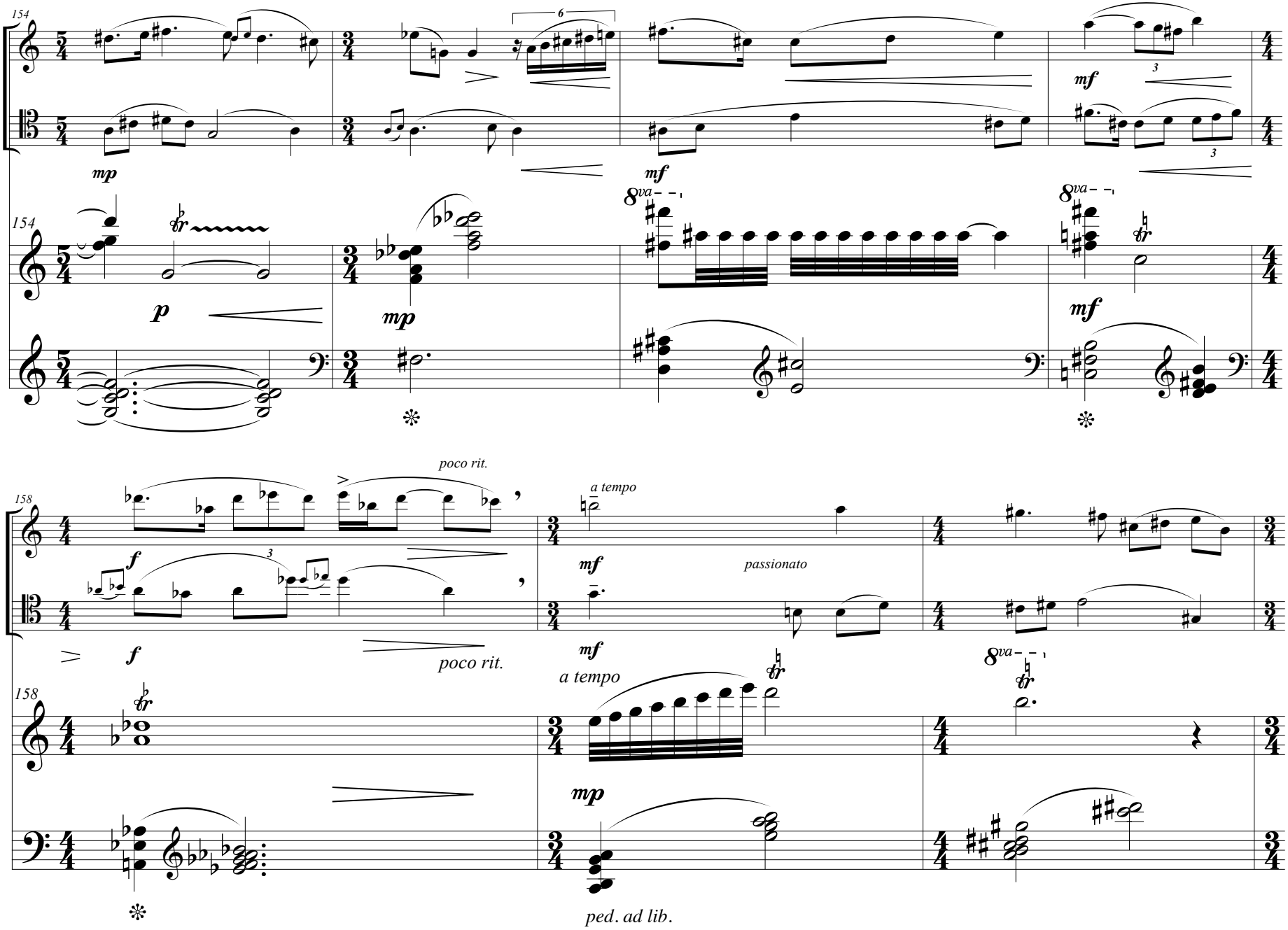

124
pizz.
mp
mp
arco
ricochet
mf
124
10
10
10
10
10
sub mp
p
mp
5
126
p
p
6
espr.
3
mp
126
3
3
mp

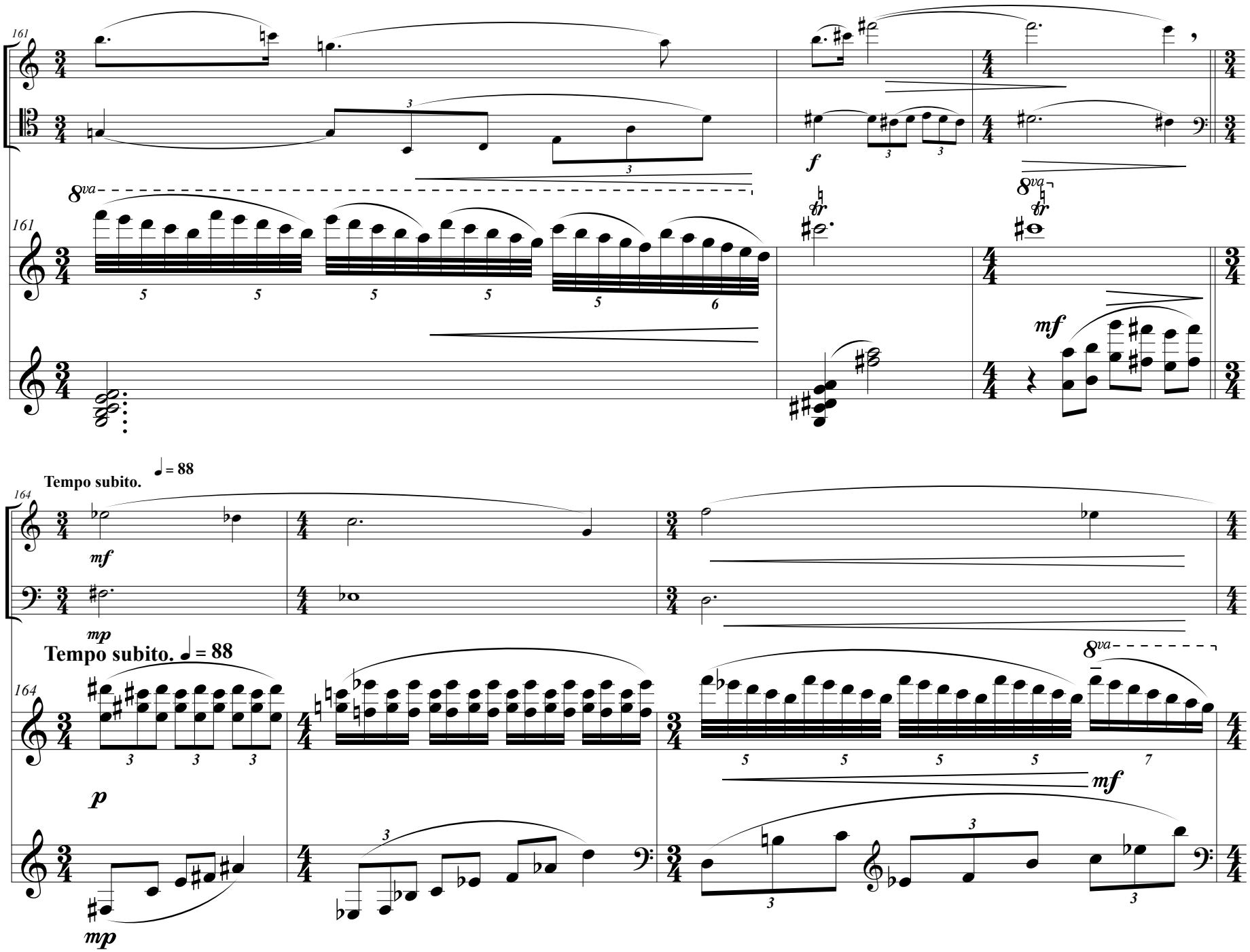

128
(a la ricochet)
pp
mf
mp
p
8va
10
130
sul pont.
modo ord.
sub.
3
5
6

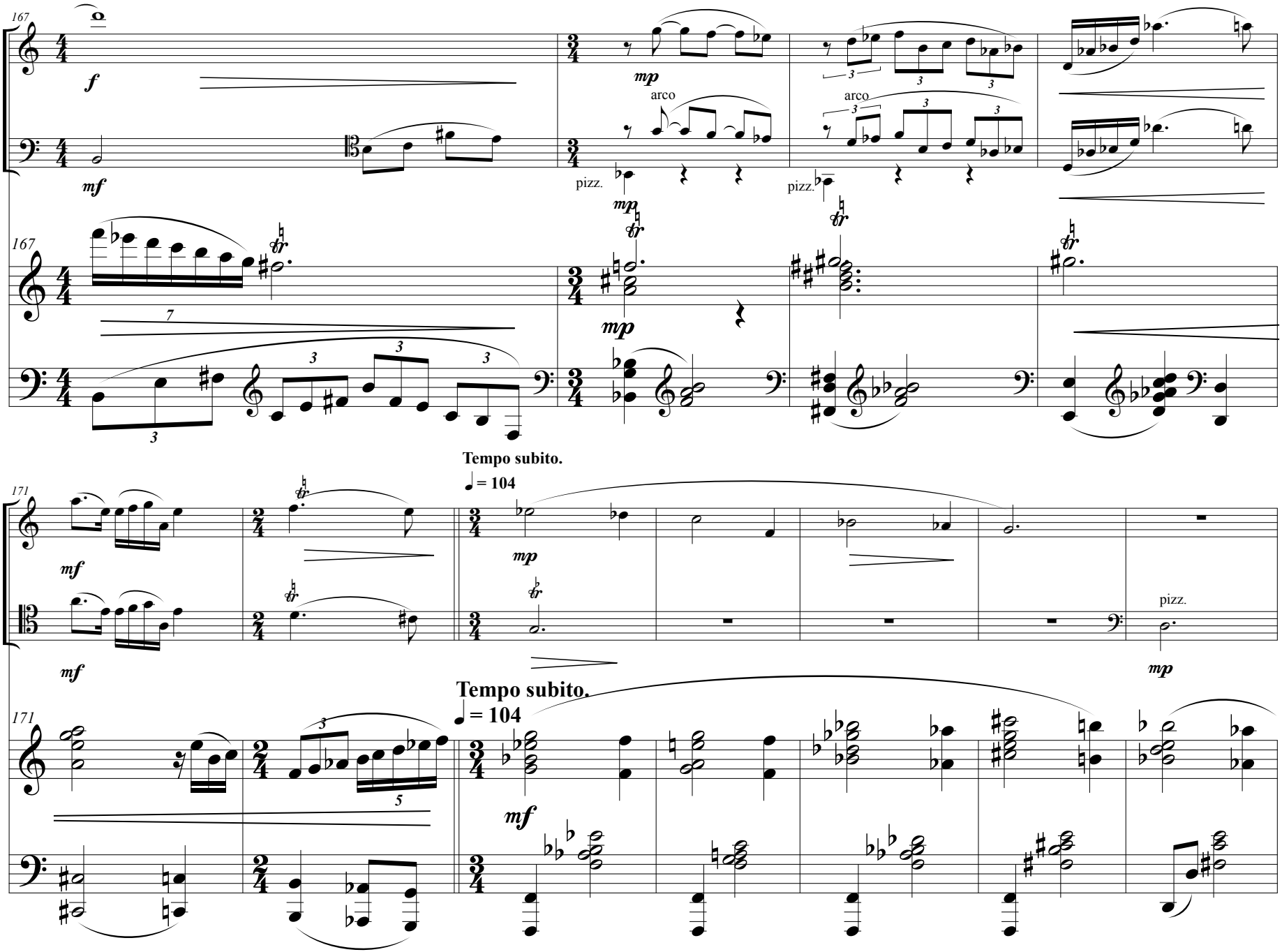

133
poco rit.
mf espr.
mp
passionato
mf
8va
poco rit.
mf
136
a tempo
mp
pizz.
p
p
a tempo
8va
mp
p
mp

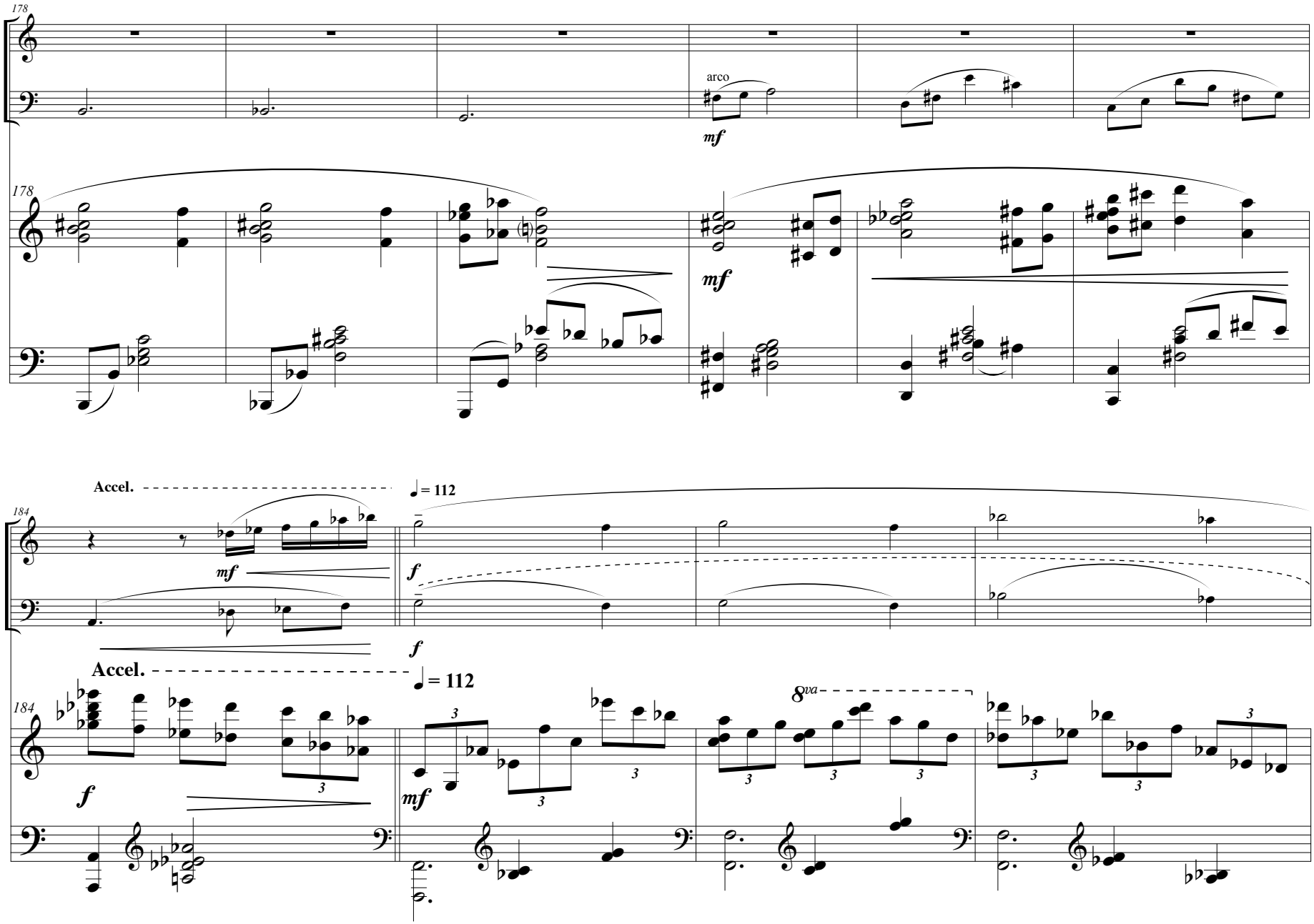

140
ricochet
arco
mf
mp
pizz.
mf
mp
arco
ricochet
8va
140
9
mf
8va
5
145
espr.
mp
mf
espr.
mf
3
8va
145
mp
subito p
mp
mf

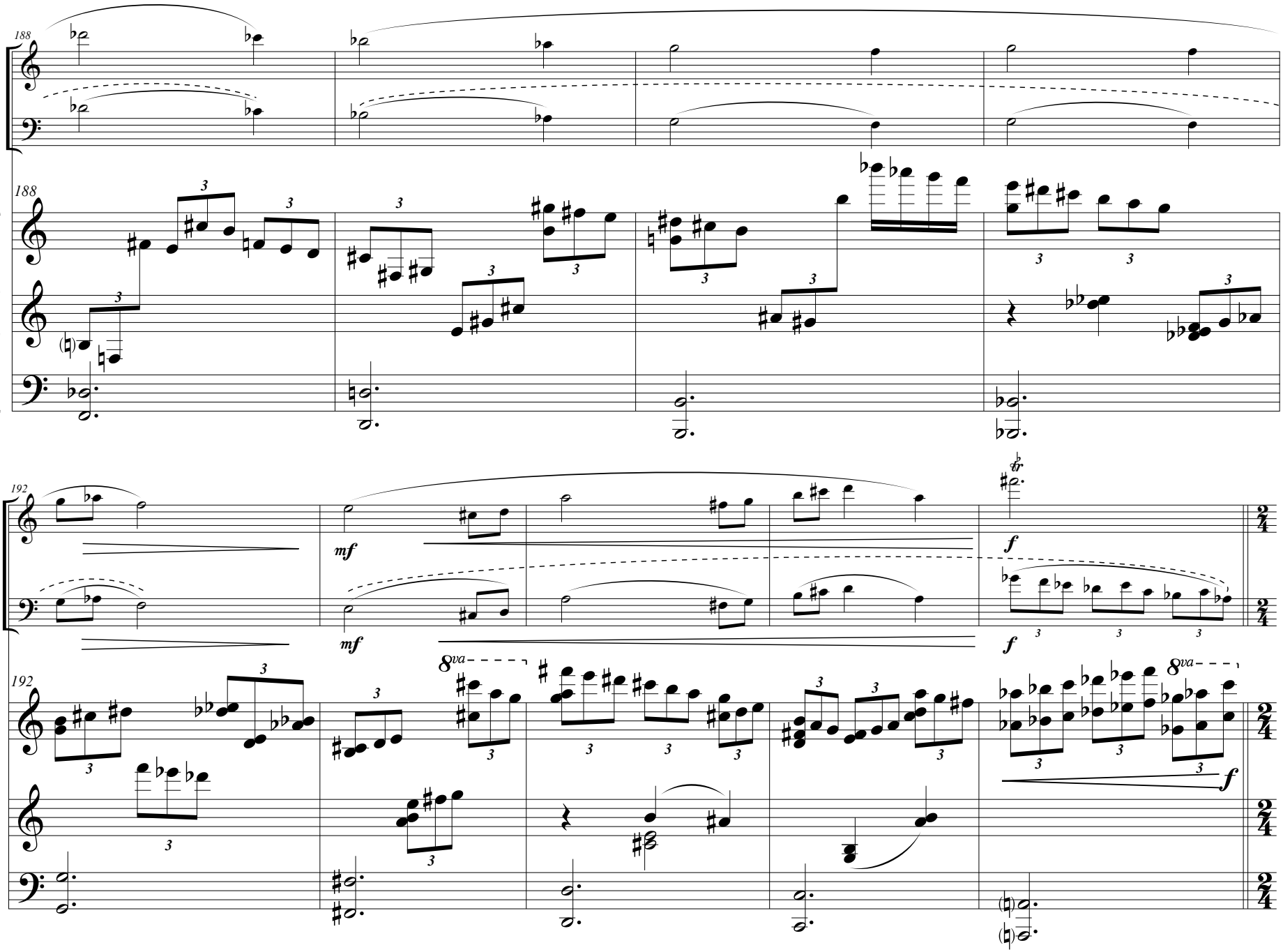

(a la ricochet)
148
mp
p
pp
148
mp
subito p
151
mp
espr.
mf
151
mp

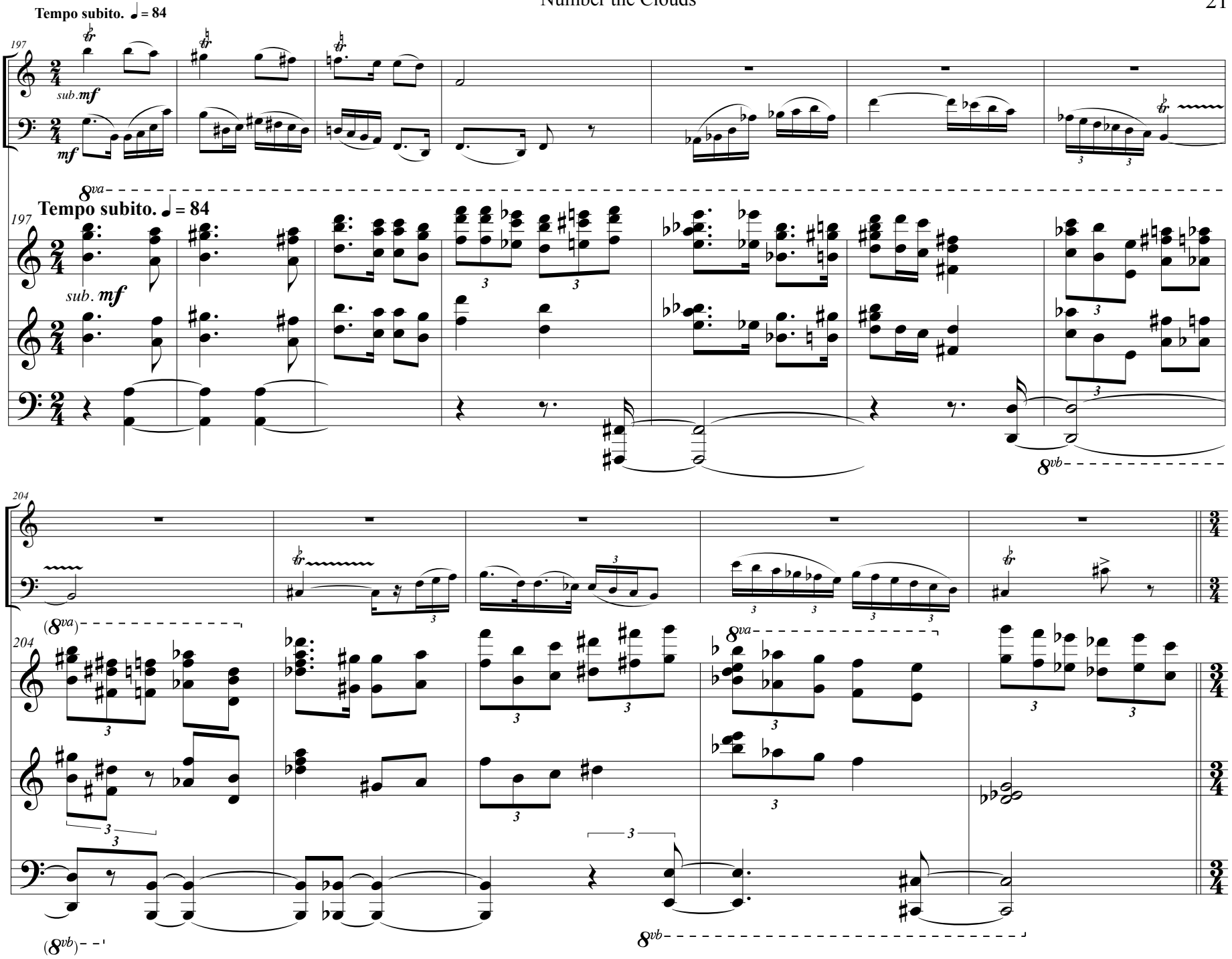

154
mp
mf
p
mp
mf
158
poco rit.
a tempo
f
mf
passionato
poco rit.
a tempo
mp
ped. ad lib.

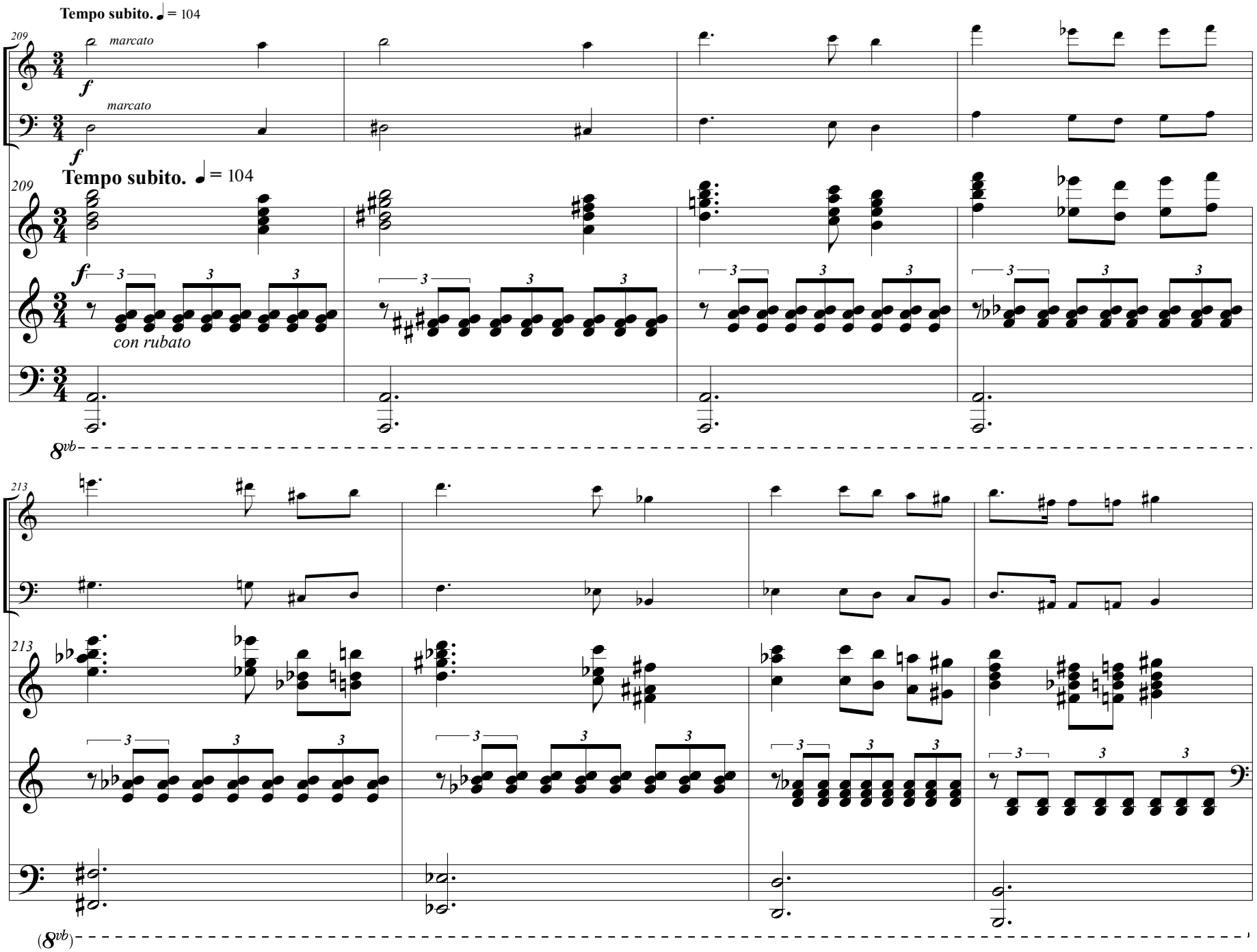

161
8va
f
mf
Tempo subito. ♩= 88
164
mf
mp
Tempo subito. ♩= 88
p
mp
mf

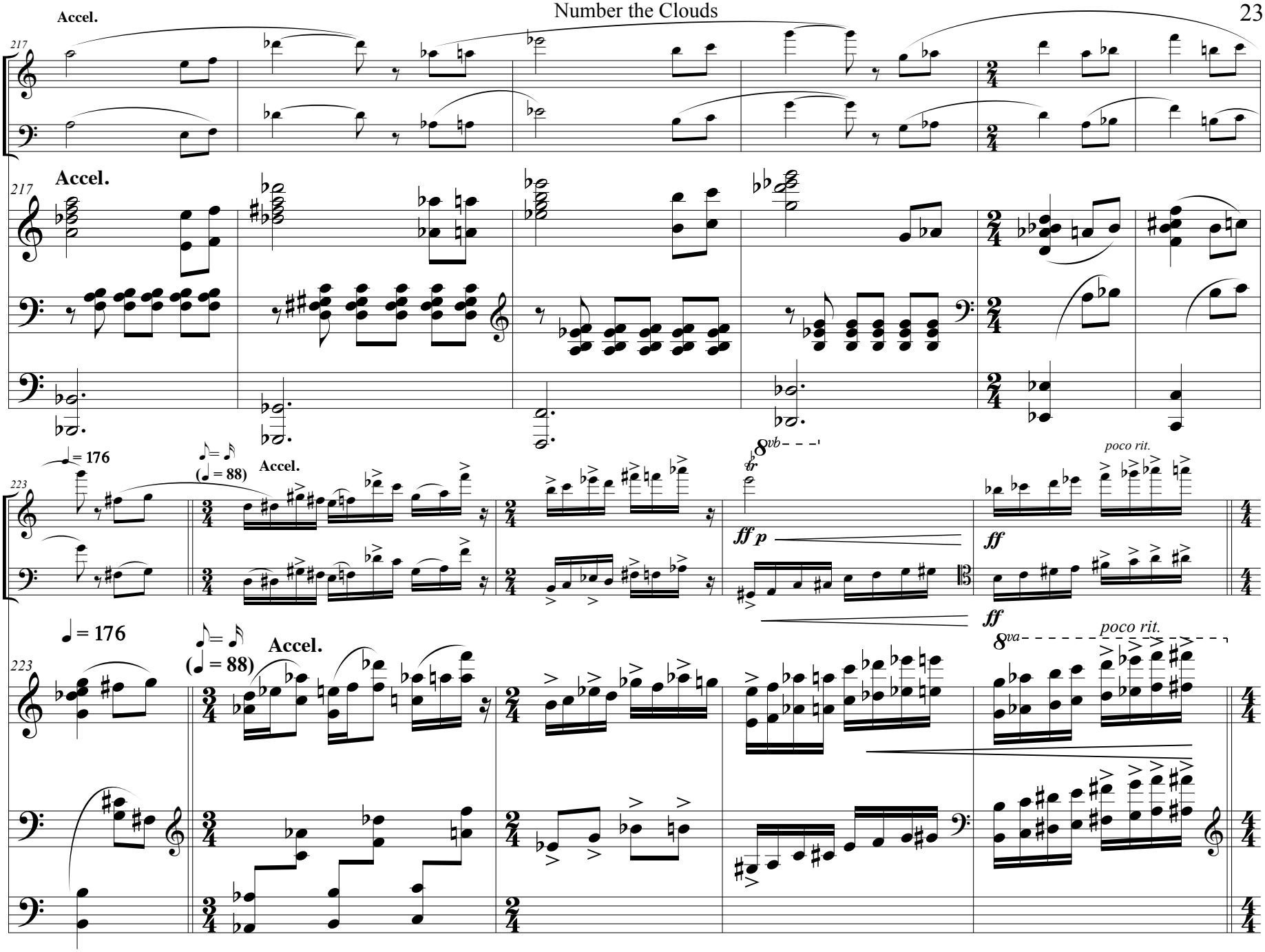

167
f
mf
mp
arco
pizz.
mp
arco
pizz.
167
mp
171
mf
mf
Tempo subito.
♩= 104
mp
pizz.
mp
171
Tempo subito.
♩= 104
mf

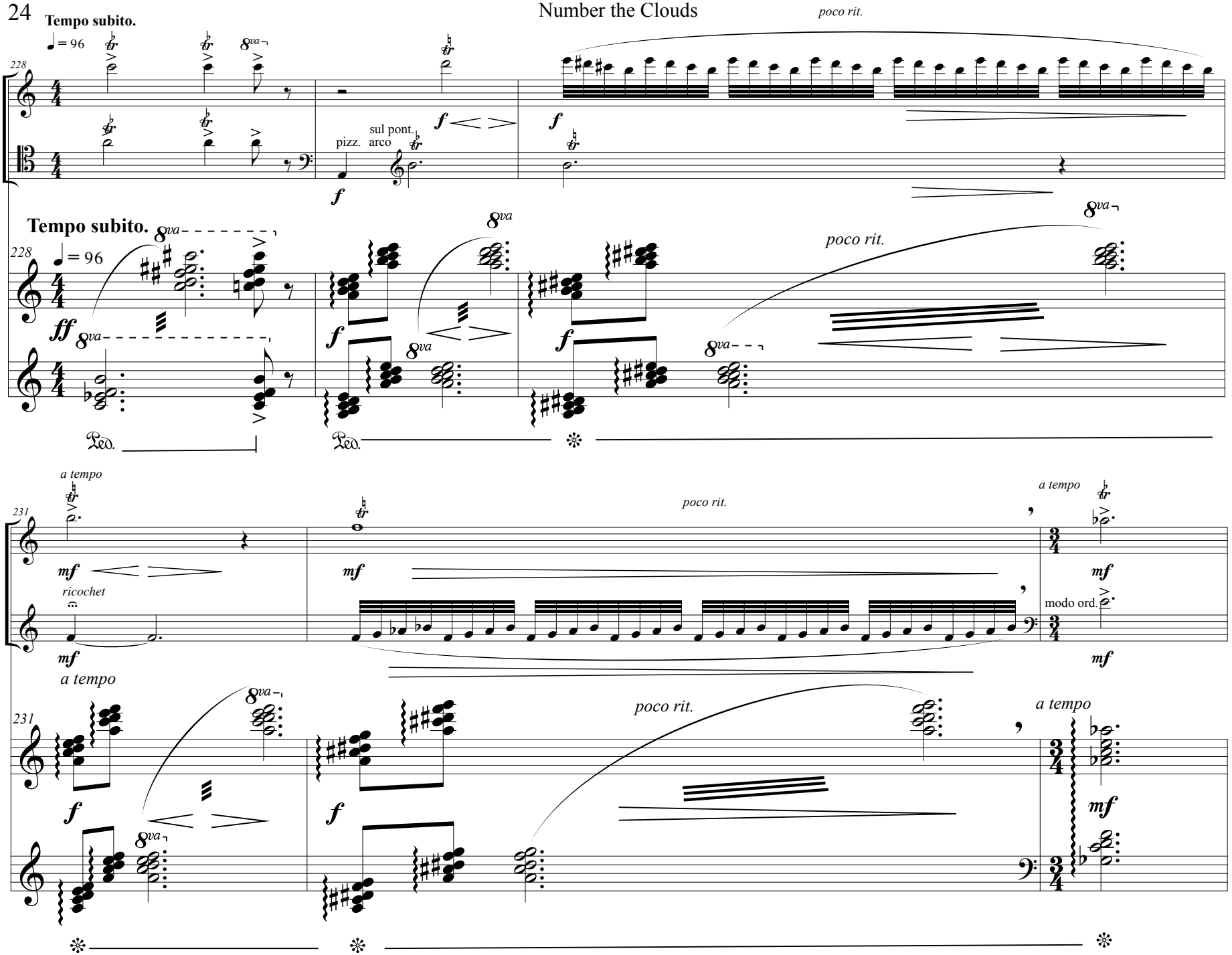

178
arco
mf
178
mf
Accel.
= 112
184
mf
f
f
Accel.
= 112
184
f
mf
8va

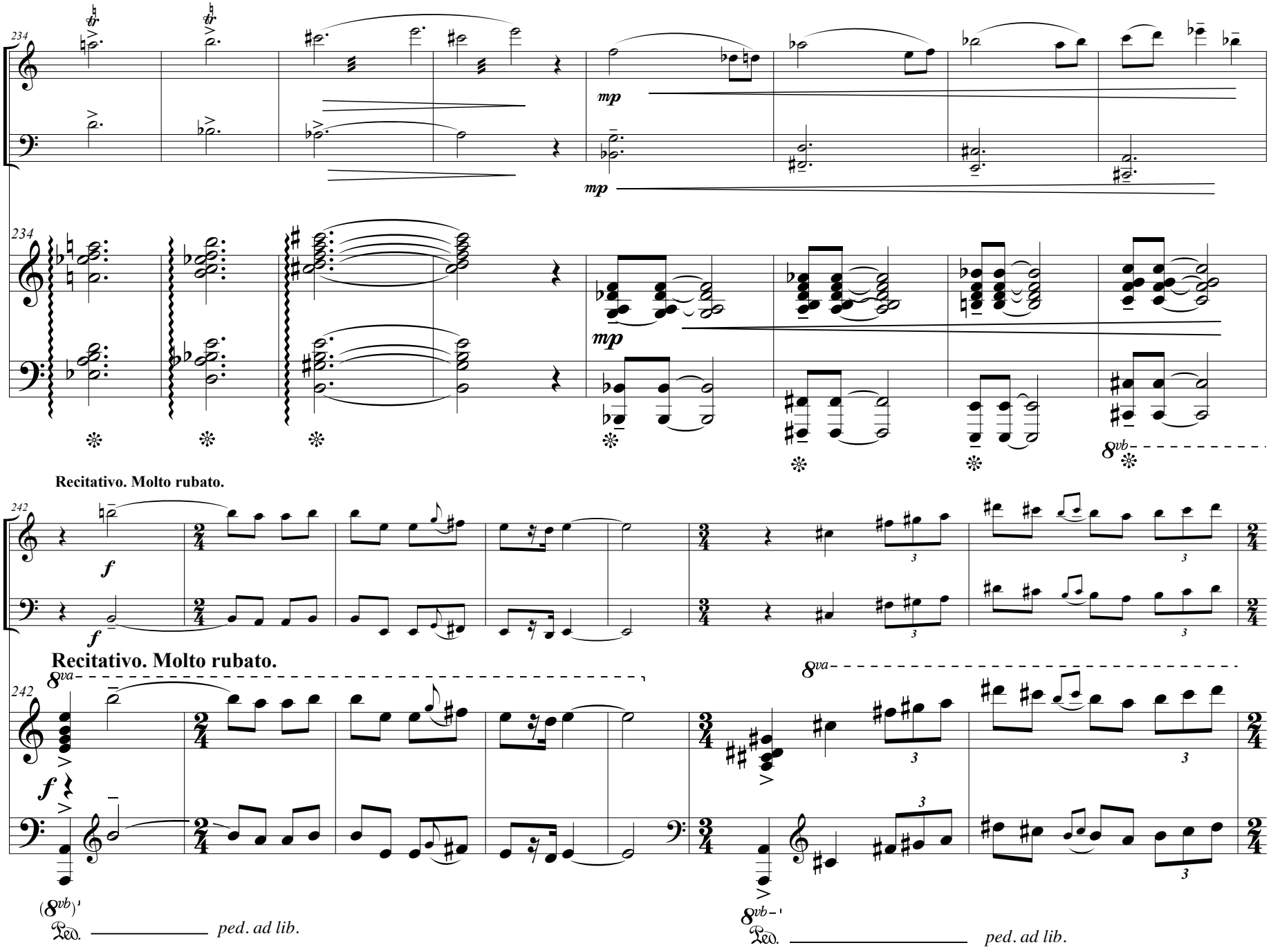

188
188
192
192
mf
mf
f
f
8va
8va
f

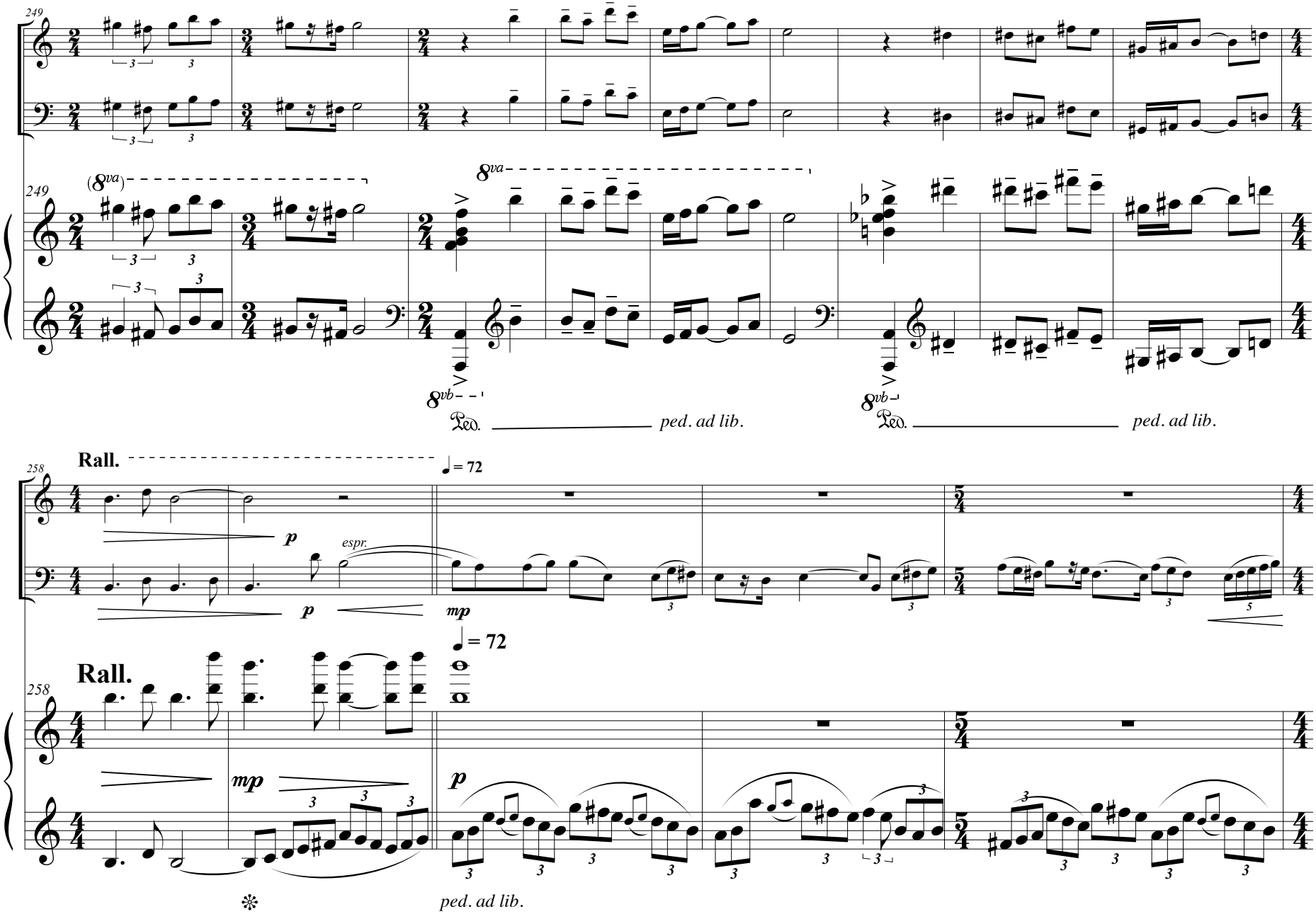

Tempo subito. ♩ = 84
197
sub. mf
mf
8va
Tempo subito. ♩ = 84
197
sub. mf
8vb
204
(8va)
204
8va
(8vb)
8vb

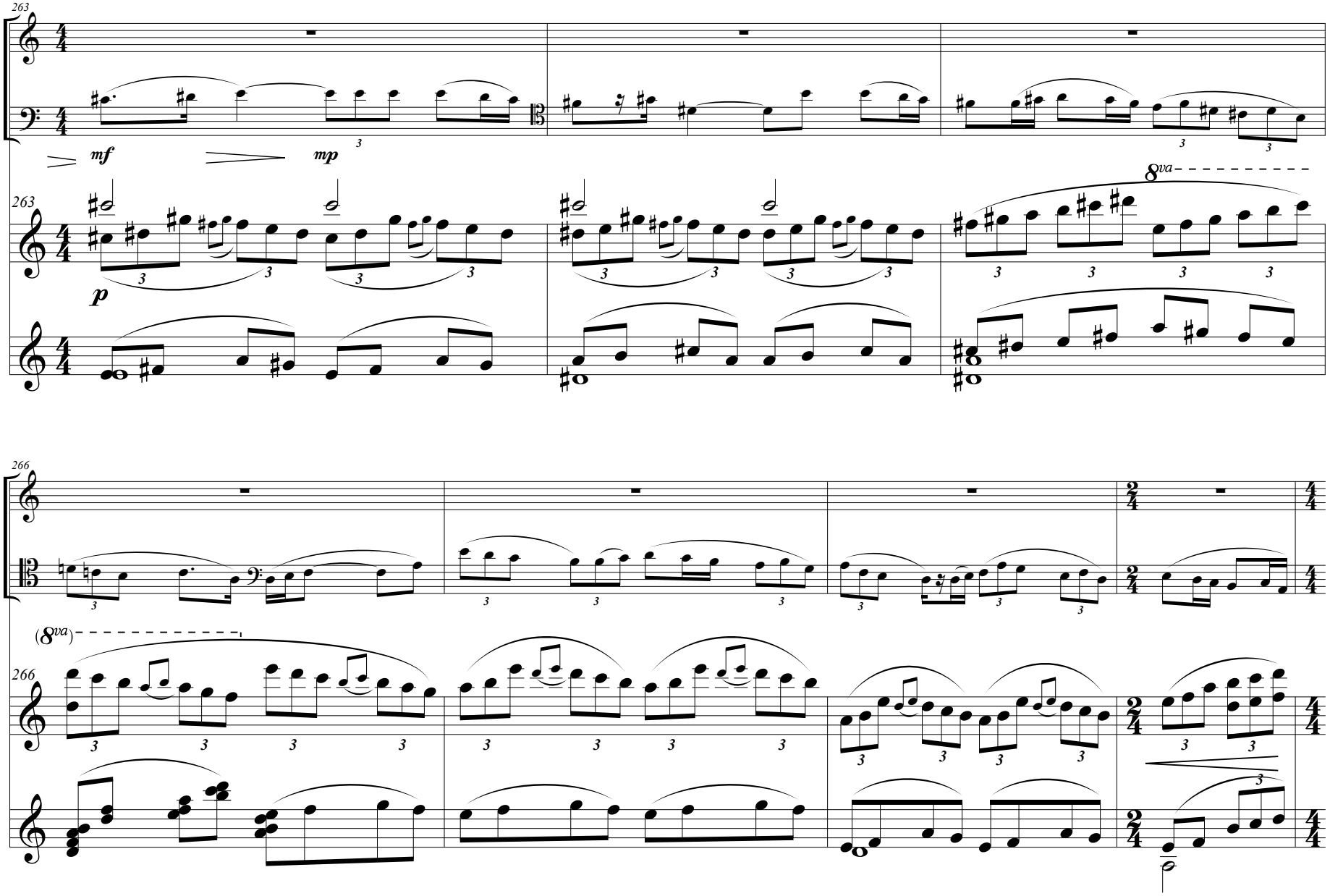

Tempo subito. ♩ = 104
209
marcato
f
marcato
f
Tempo subito. ♩ = 104
209
f
3
con rubato
8vb
213
213
(8vb)

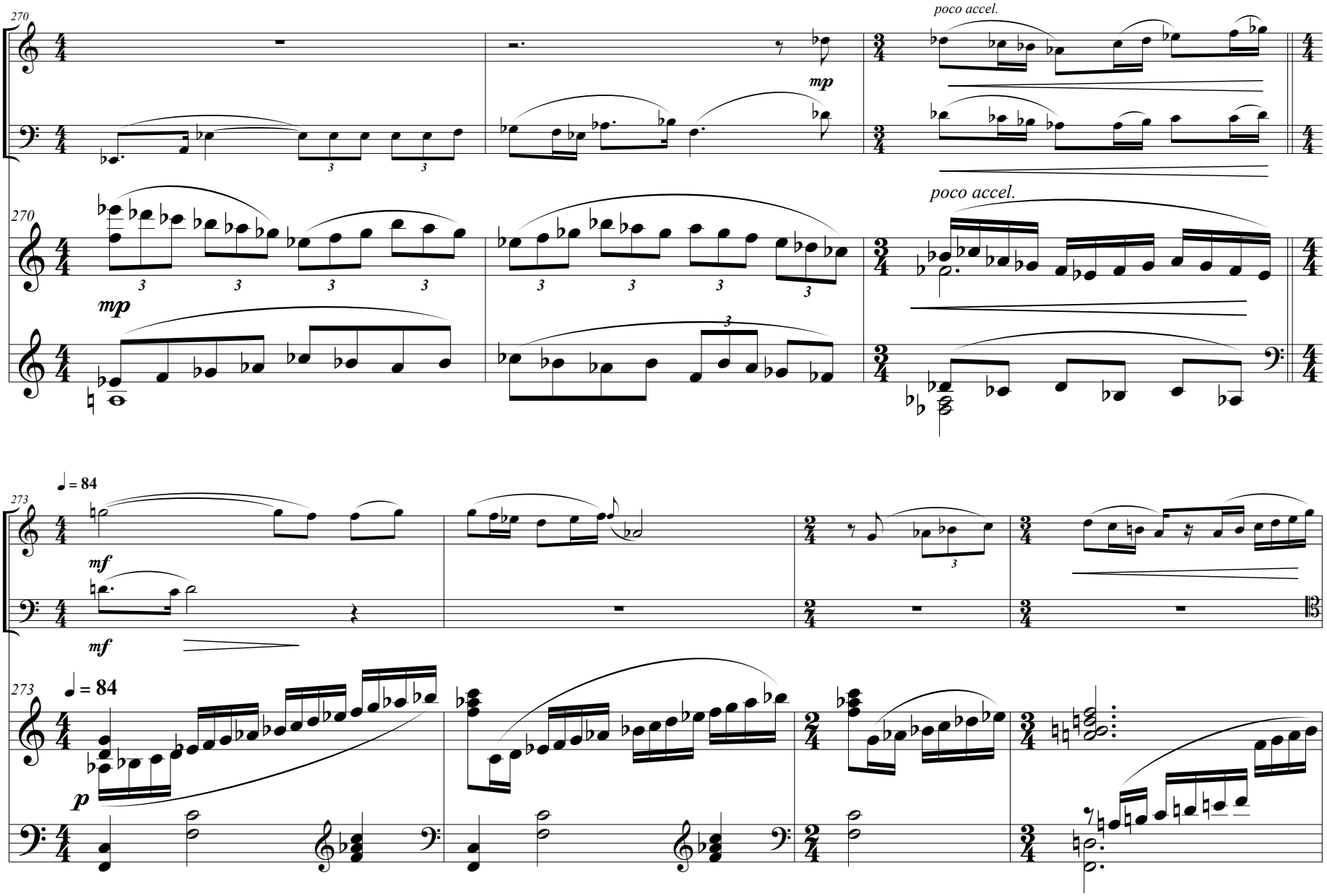

Accel.
217
Accel.
217
♩= 176
(♩= 88)
Accel.
223
8vb
ff p
poco rit.
ff
♩= 176
(♩= 88)
Accel.
223
ff
8va
poco rit.

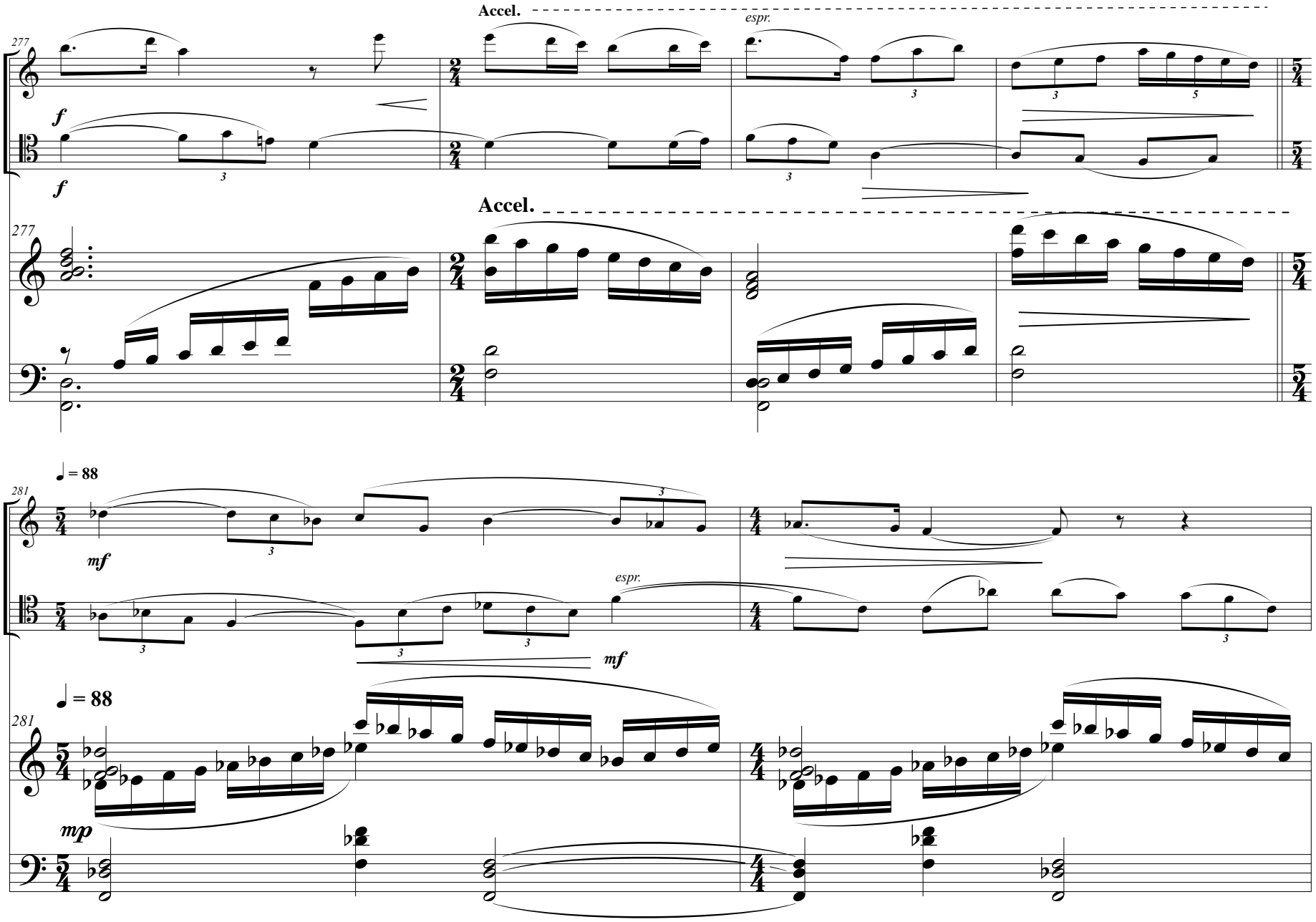

Tempo subito.
♩= 96
228
poco rit.
pizz.
arco
sul pont.
Tempo subito.
8va
ff
f
Ped.
a tempo
231
mf
ricochet
modo ord.
poco rit.

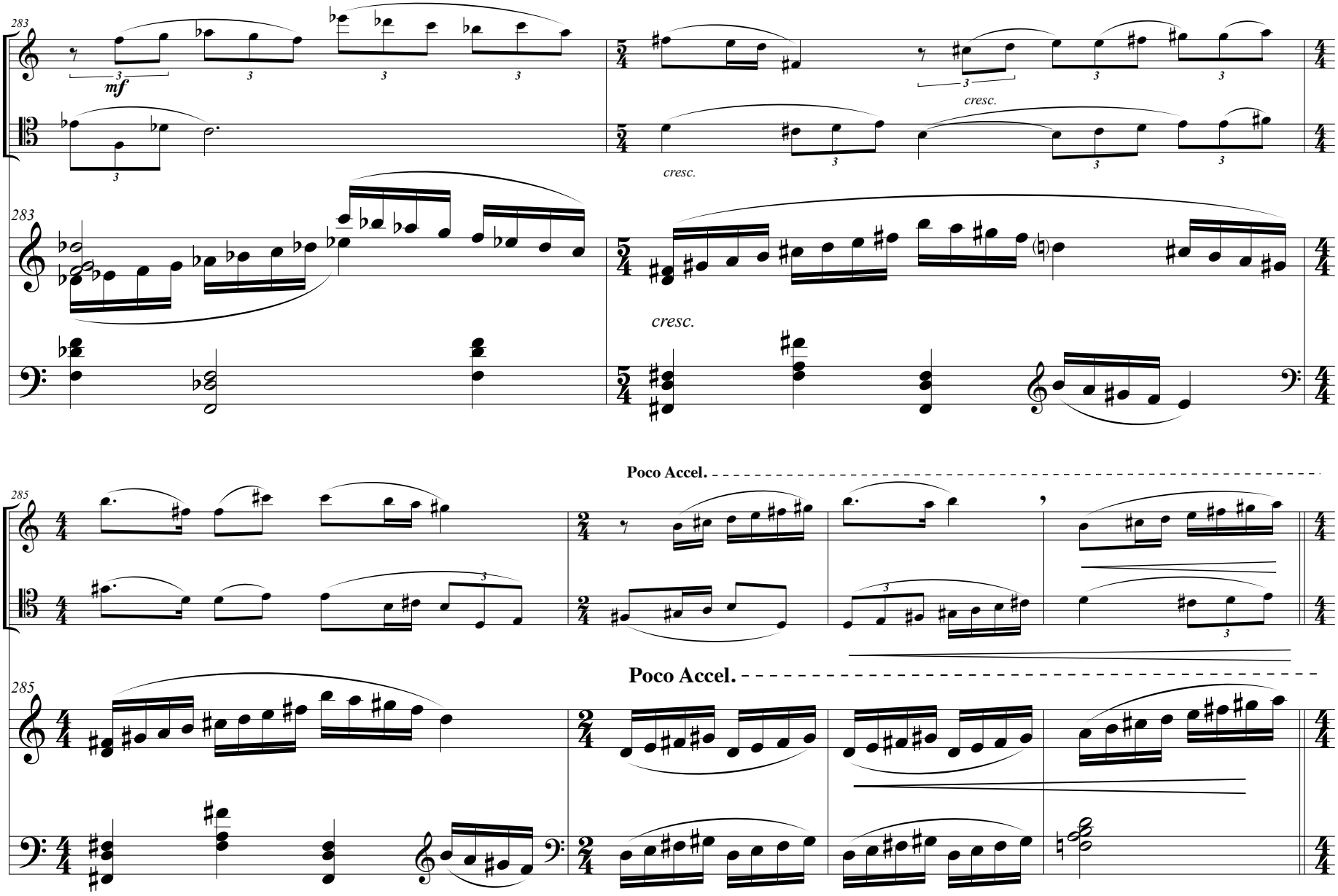

234
mp
mp
234
mp
8vb
Recitativo. Molto rubato.
242
f
f
Recitativo. Molto rubato.
242
8va
8va
f
(8vb)
Ped.
ped. ad lib.
8vb
Ped.
ped. ad lib.

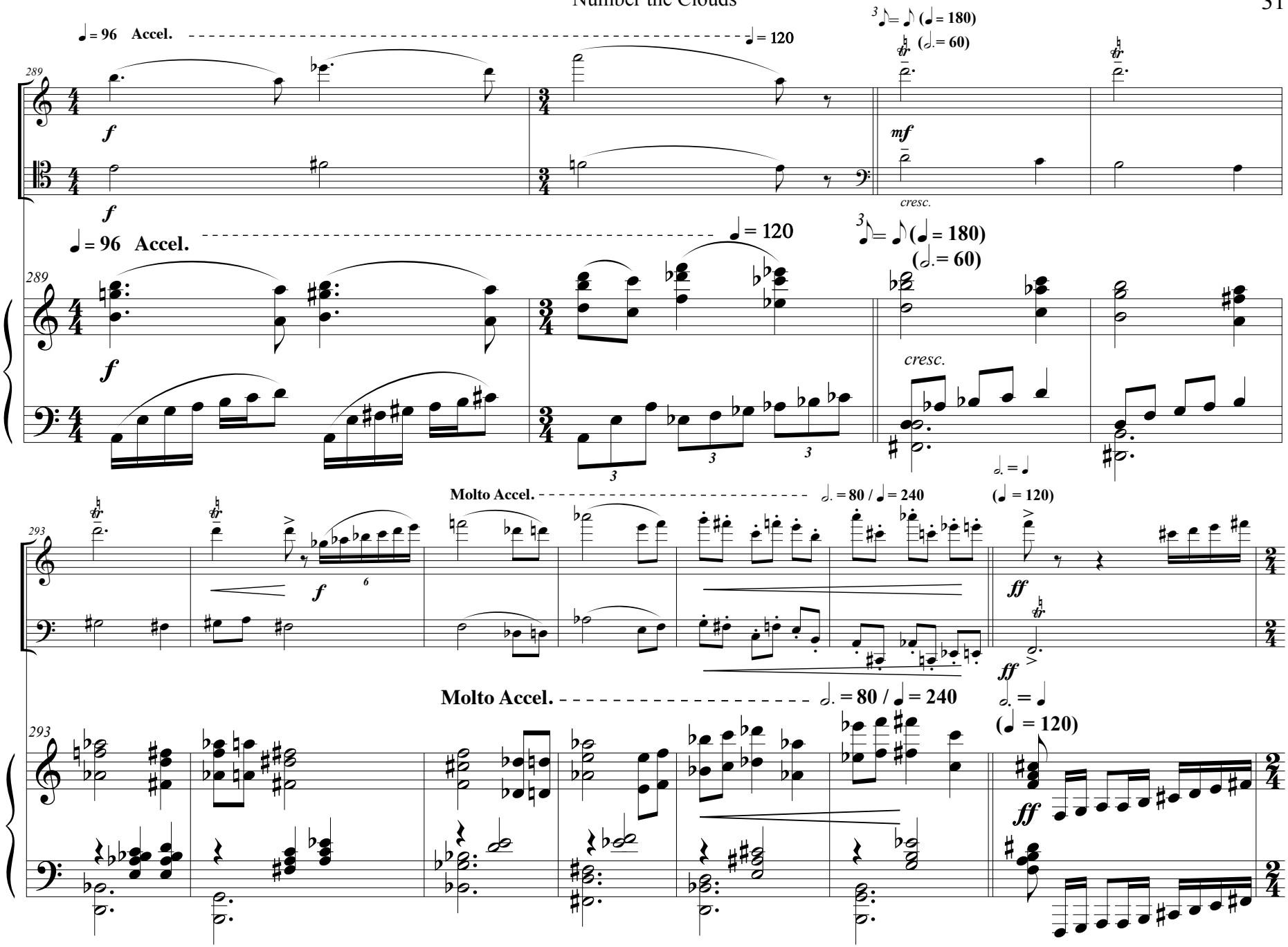

249
(8va)
8va
8vb
ped. ad lib.
ped. ad lib.
258
Rall.
♩ = 72
p
espr.
mp
Rall.
♩ = 72
mp
p
ped. ad lib.

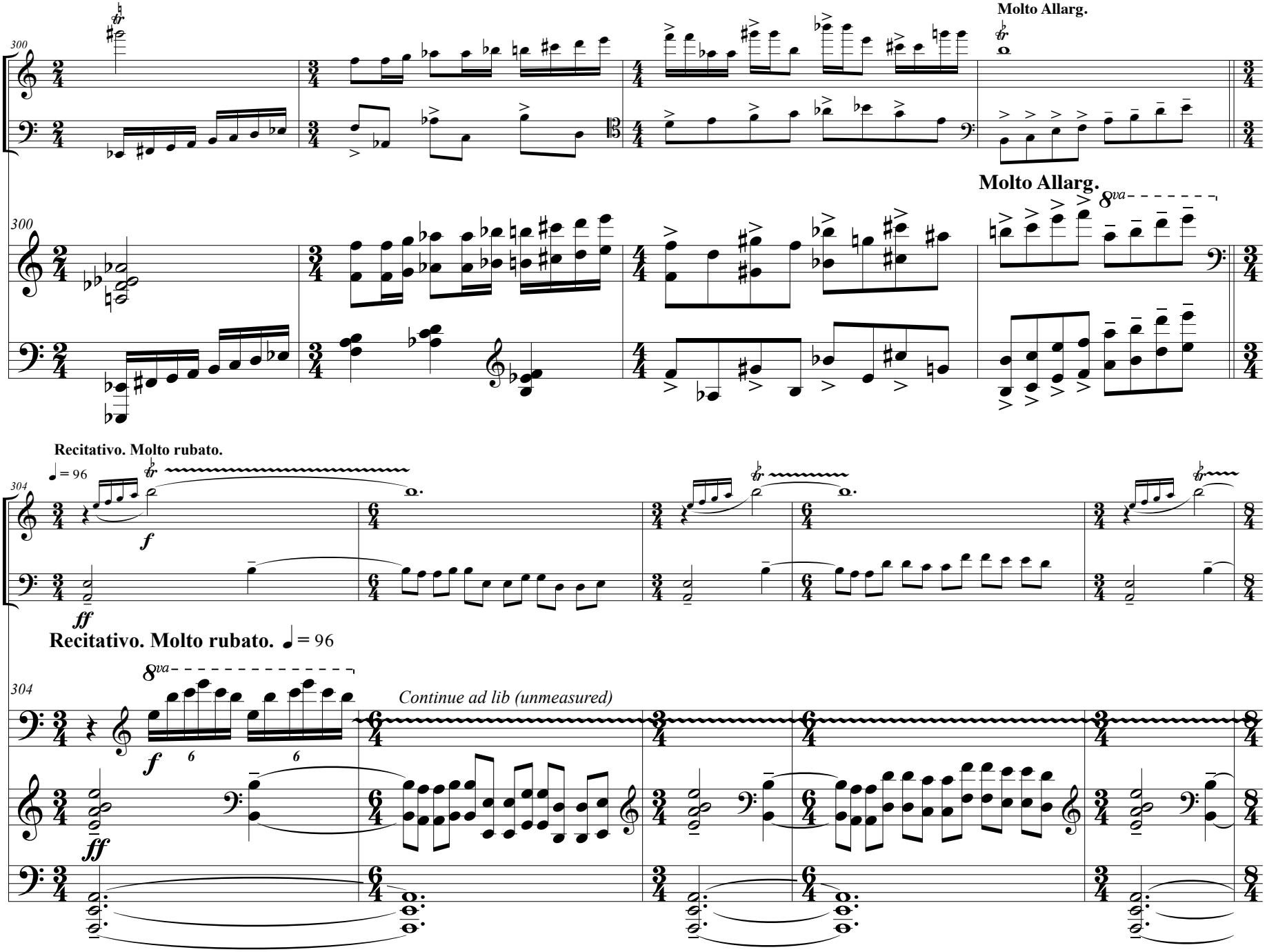

263
mf
mp
263
8va
p
266
(8va)
266

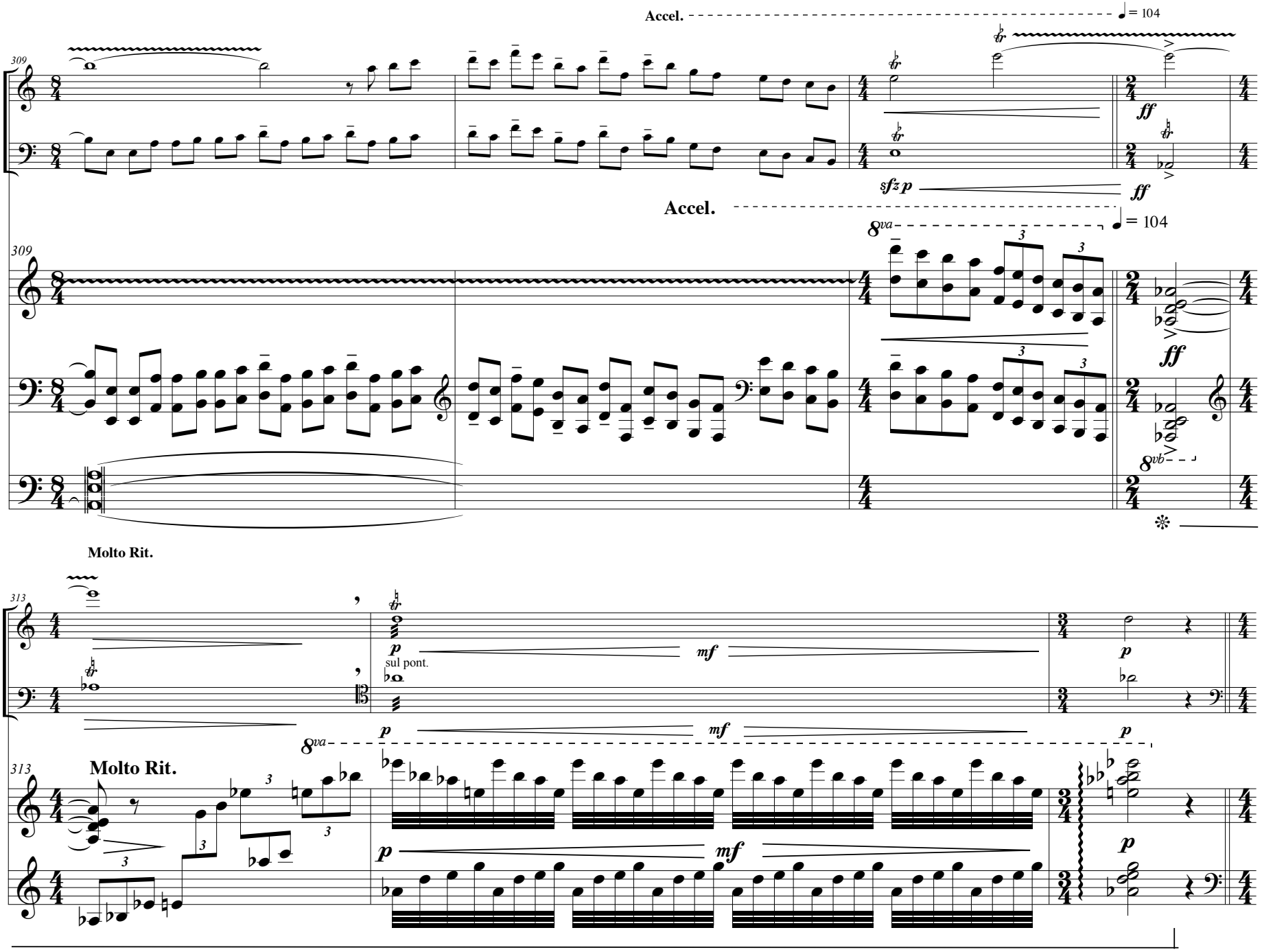

270
poco accel.
mp
270
poco accel.
mp
273
♩ = 84
mf
mf
273
♩ = 84
p

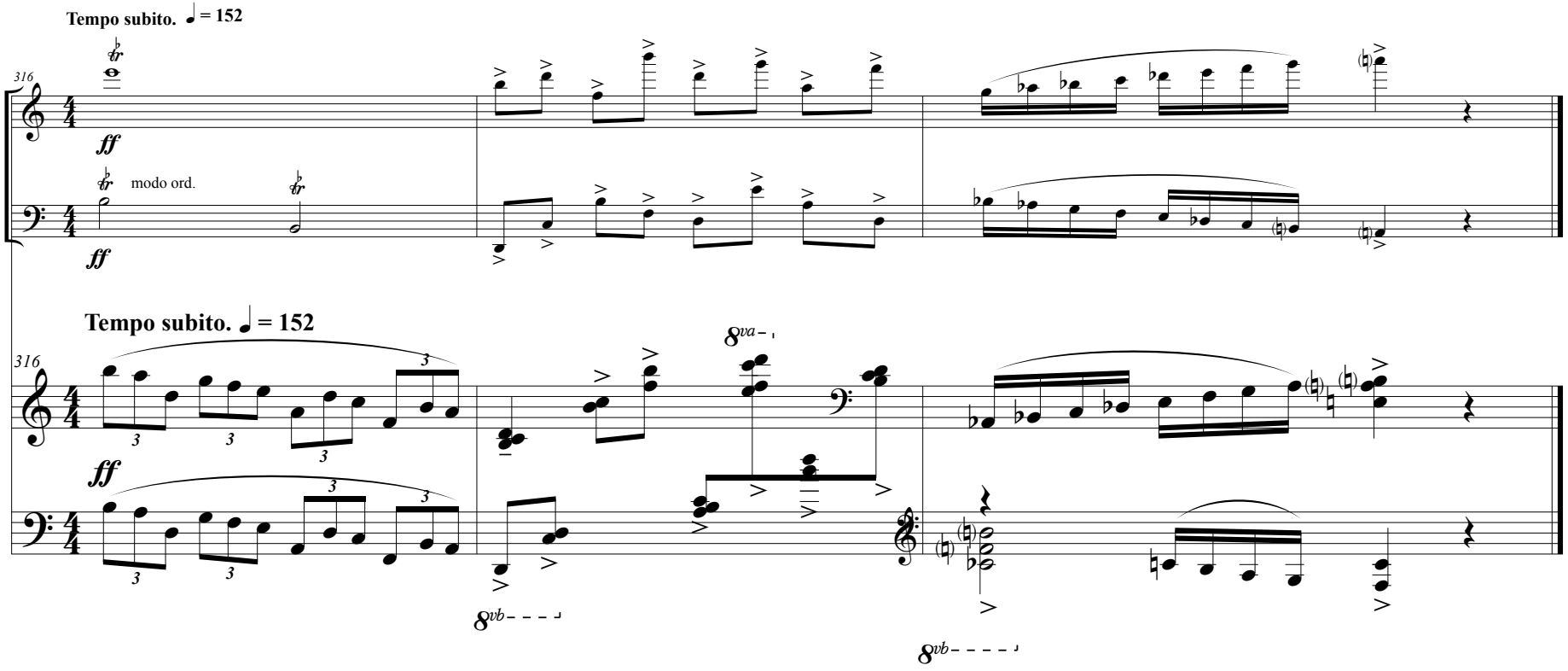

Accel.
espr.
277
f
f
Accel.
277
= 88
281
mf
espr.
mf
= 88
281
mp


283
mf
cresc.
cresc.
283
cresc.
Poco Accel.
285
285
Poco Accel.


♩= 96 Accel.
♩= 120
3♪= ♪ (♩= 180)
(𝅗𝅥.= 60)
289
f
mf
cresc.
Molto Accel.
𝅗𝅥.= 80 / ♩= 240
293
ff


Molto Allarg.
300
Molto Allarg.
8va
300
Recitativo. Molto rubato.
♩= 96
304
f
ff
Recitativo. Molto rubato. ♩= 96
8va
304
Continue ad lib (unmeasured)
f
ff
pedale ad lib.


Accel.
♩ = 104
309
ff
sfz p
ff
Accel.
♩ = 104
8va
309
3
3
3
3
ff
8vb
Molto Rit.
313
p
mf
sul pont.
p
8va
p
mf
p
313
Molto Rit.
3
3
3
3
p
mf
p


Tempo subito. ♩ = 152
316
ff
modo ord.
ff
Tempo subito. ♩ = 152
316
ff
8va
8vb
8vb