Number the Clouds

for piano trio

Delvyn Case

Number the Clouds

Duration: 13 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 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.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

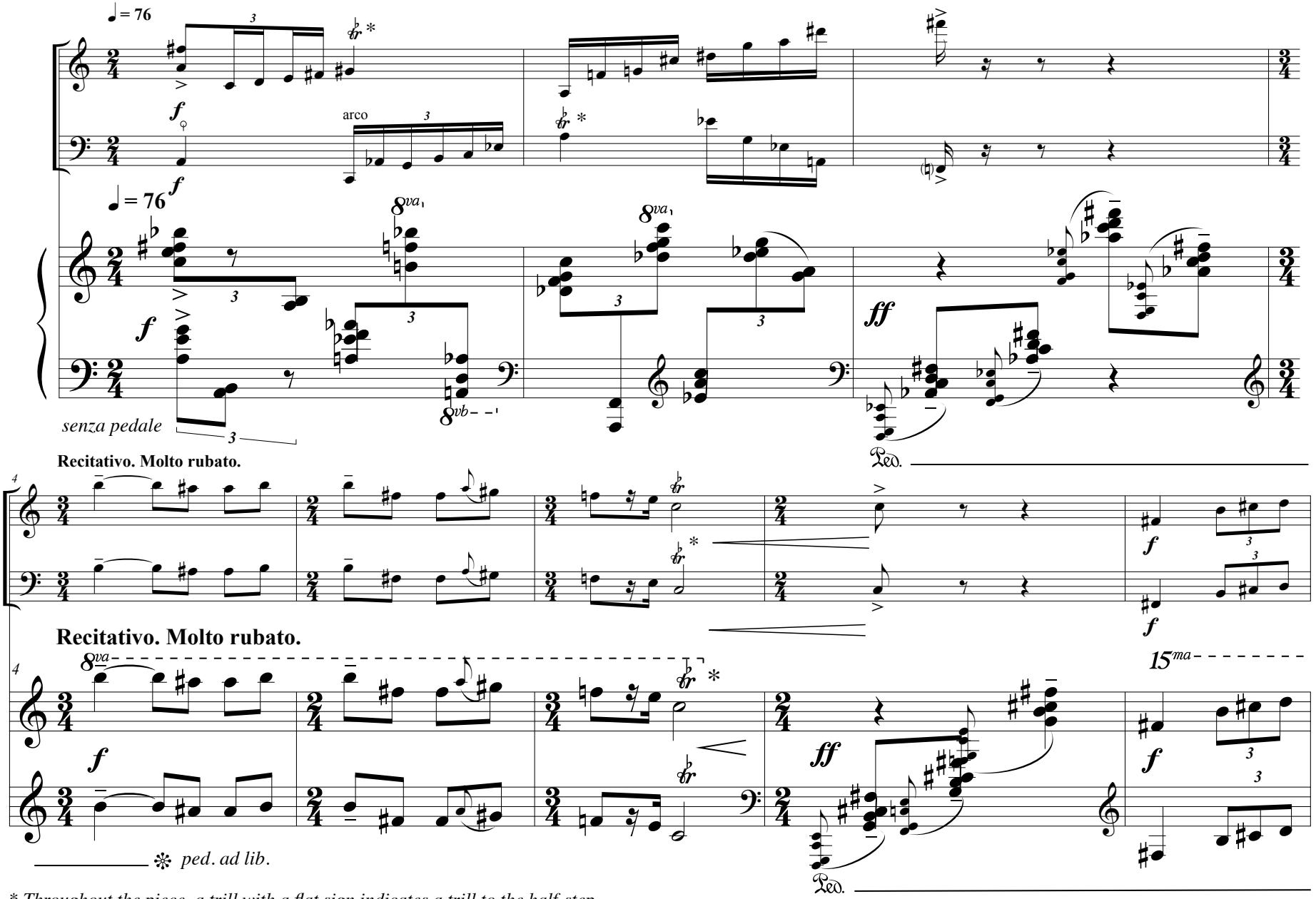
Delvyn Case is a composer, conductor, educator, and performer based in Boston. His music has been performed by over twenty-five orchestras from Florida to Alaska, including the National Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony, San Antonio Symphony and Louisville Orchestra. Other performers of his music include the Grammy-winning quintet Chestnut Brass Company, the Dallas Wind Symphony, United States Coast Guard Band, mezzo-soprano D'Anna Fortunato, Rome's Freon Ensemble, 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.

Number the Clouds

Job 38:37 (King James)

Delvyn Case (BMI)



** 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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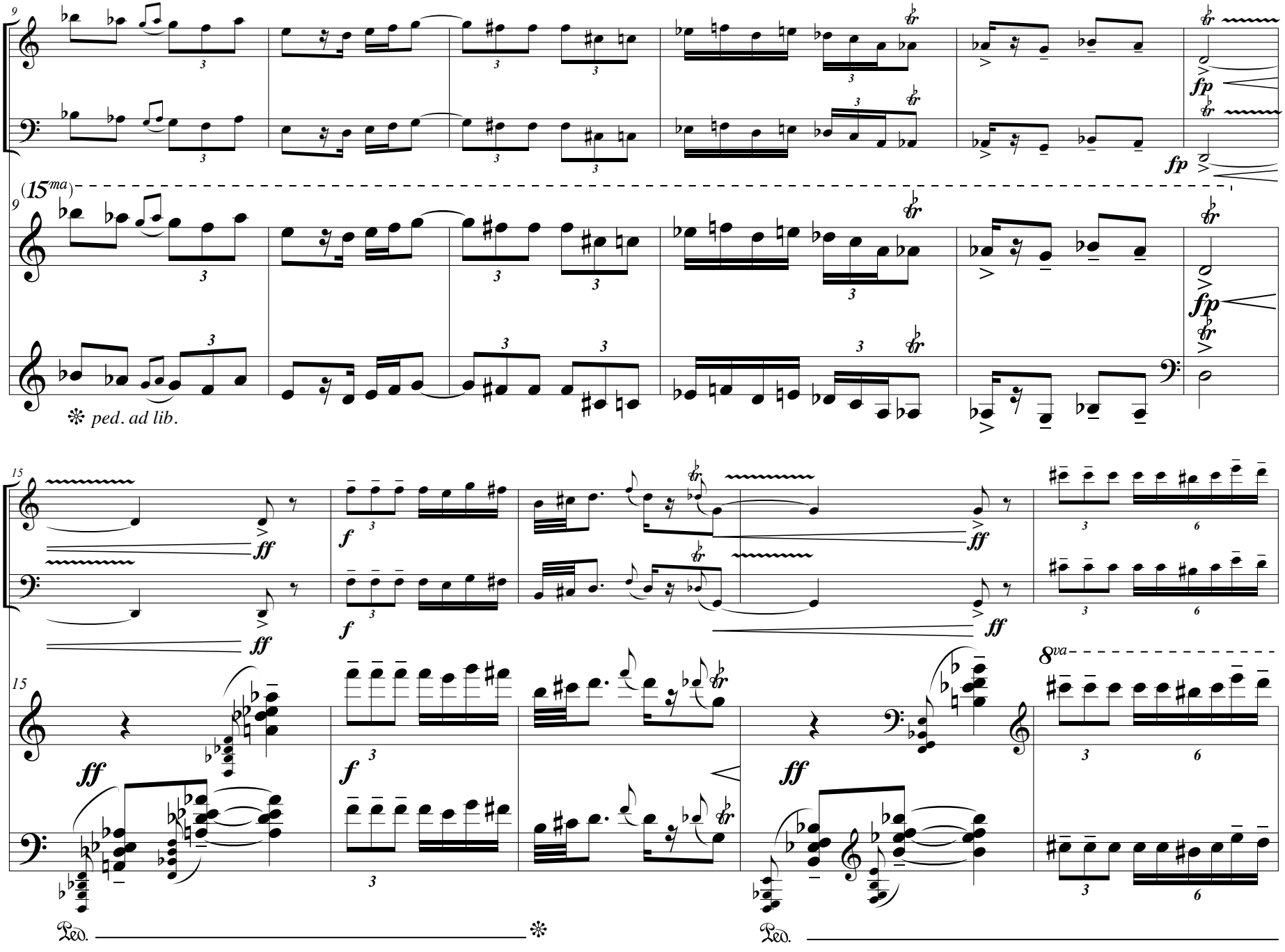
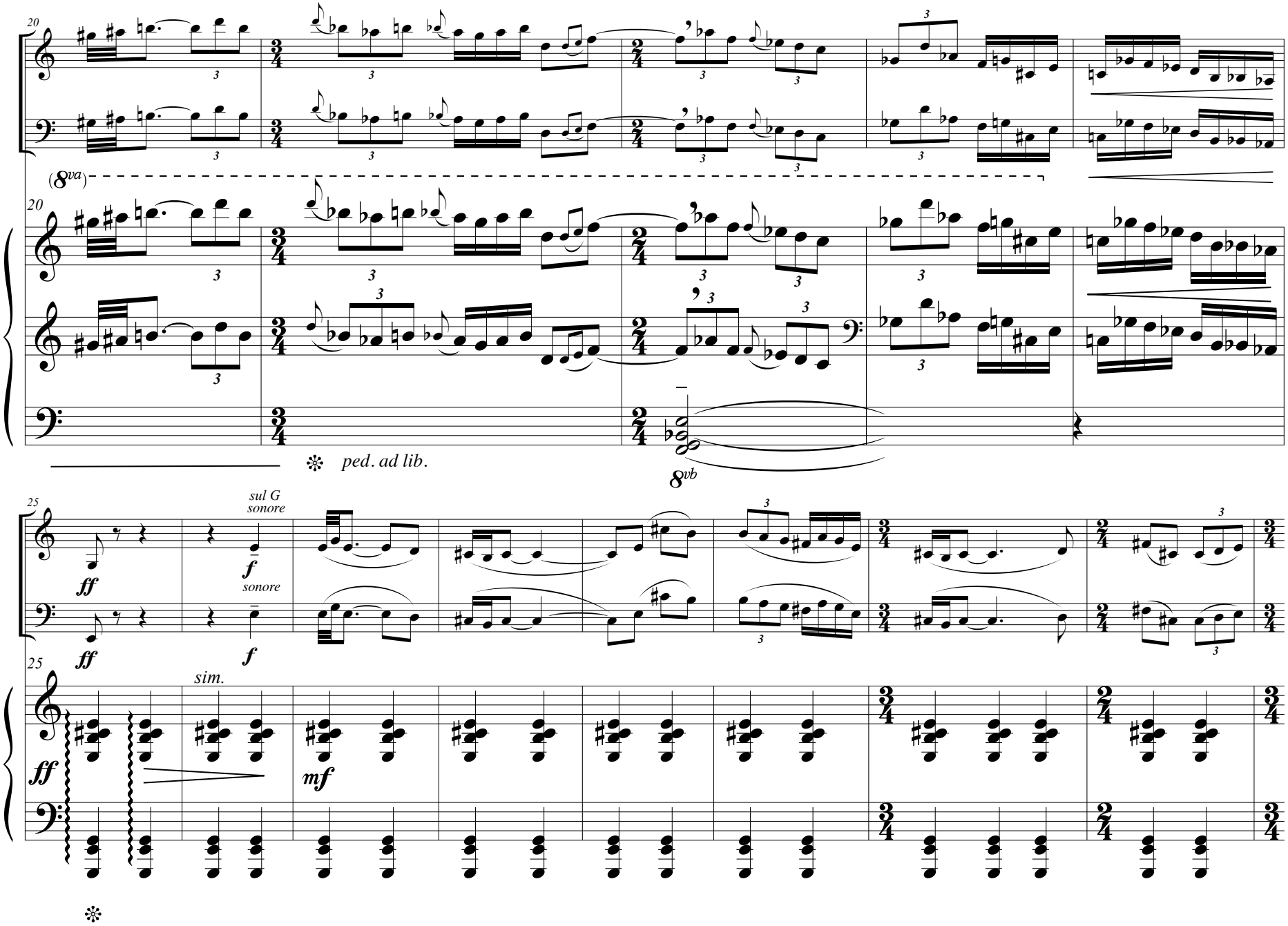
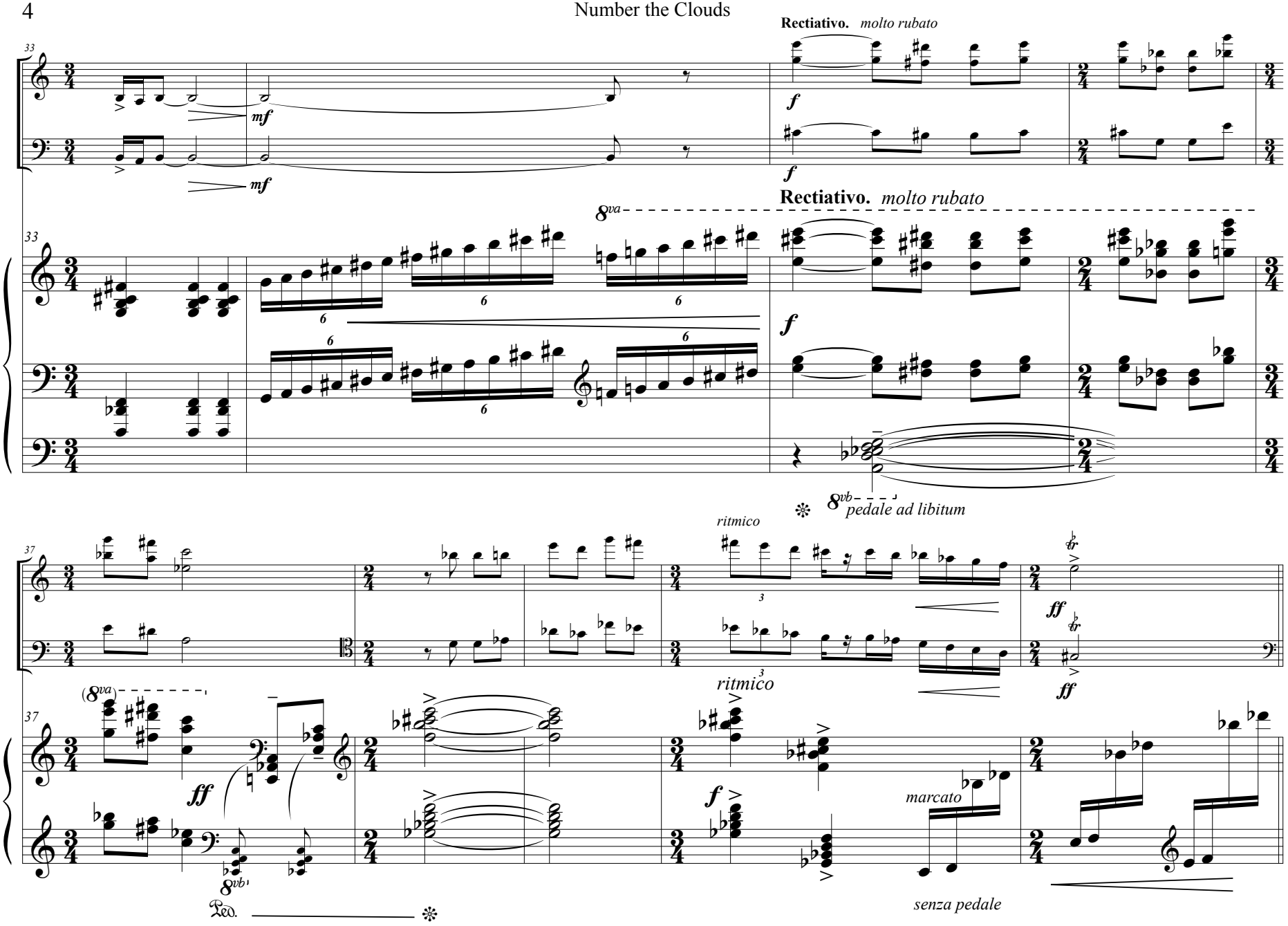
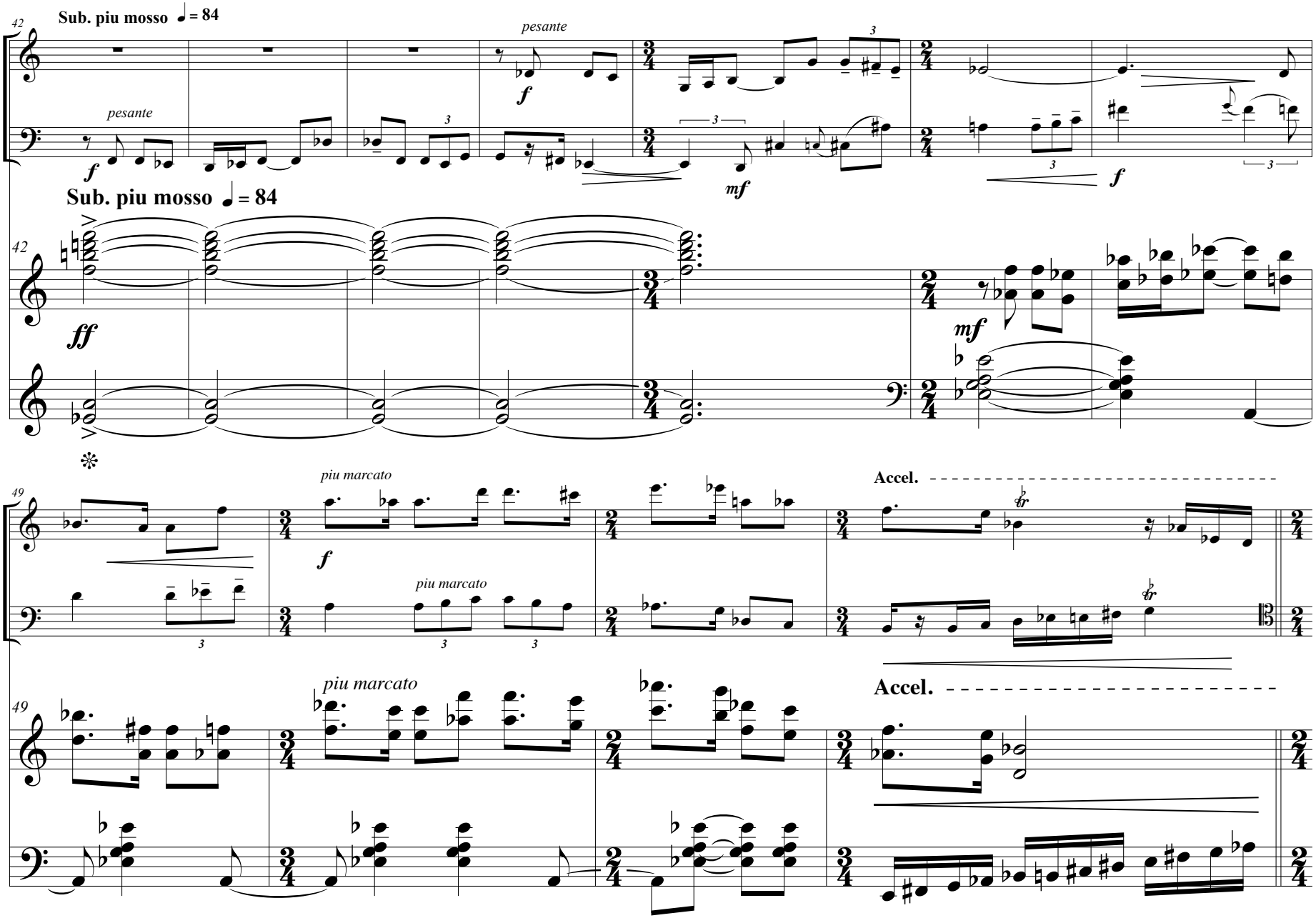
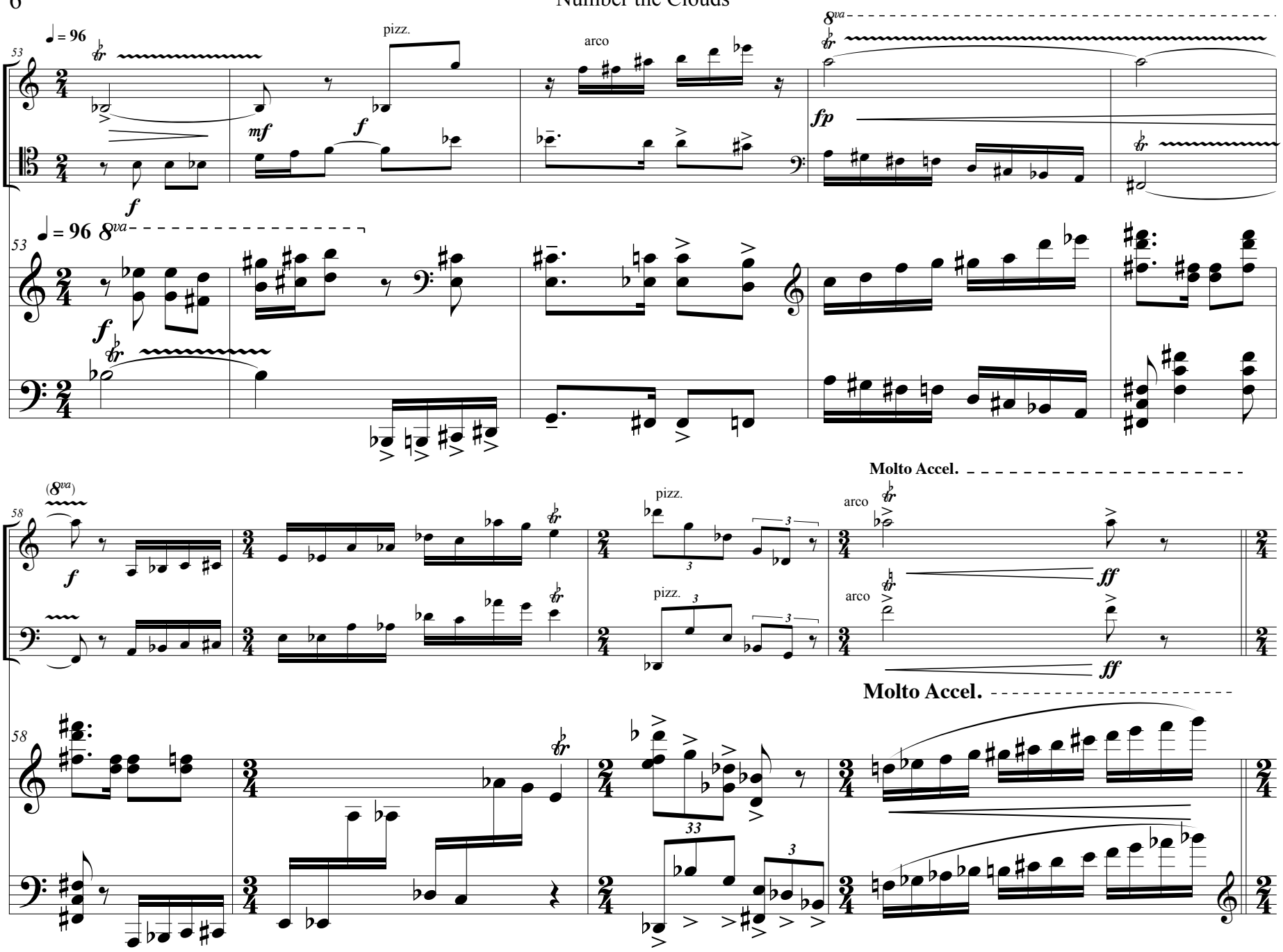
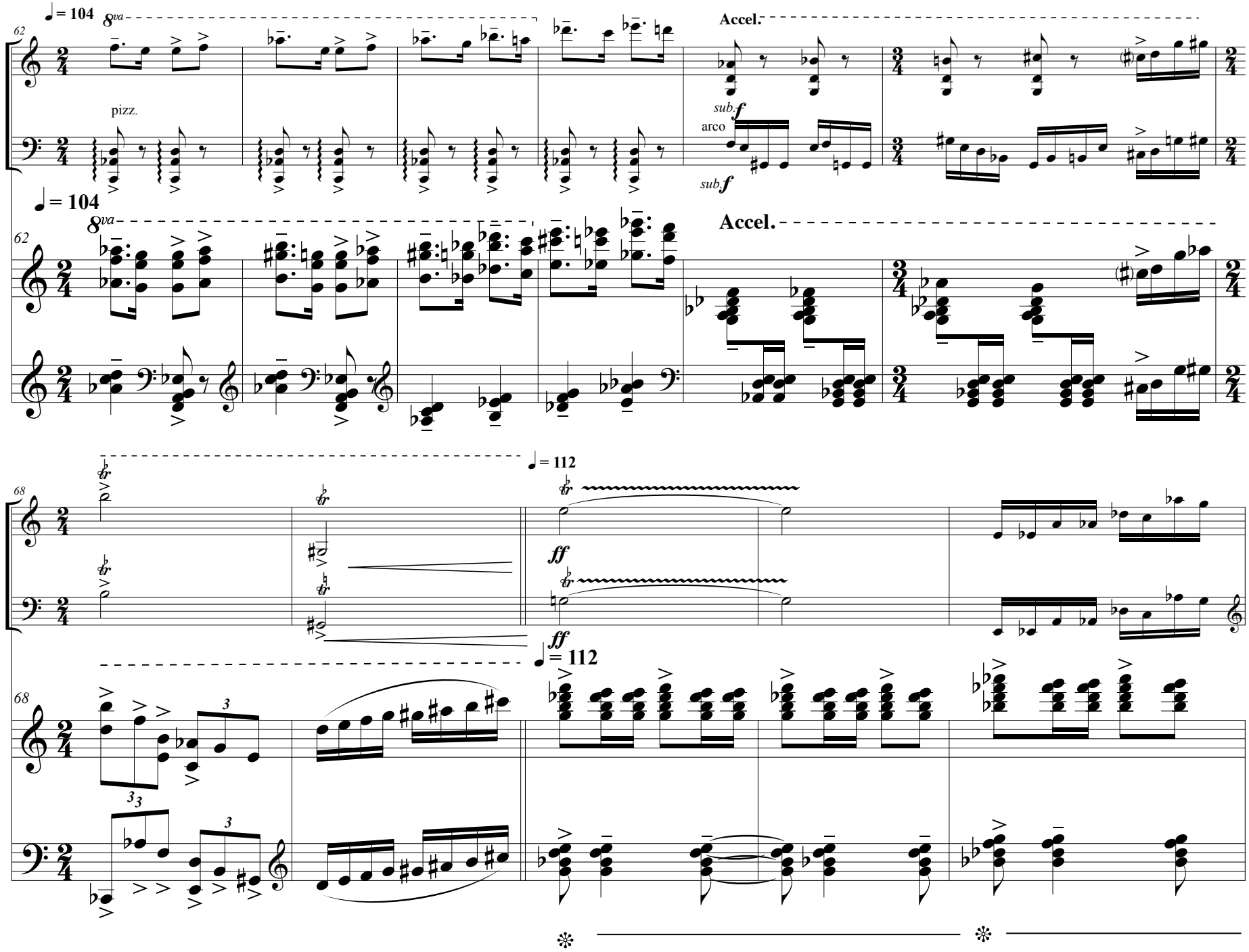

9
(15ma)
fp
fp
❊ ped. ad lib.
15
ff
f
ff
8va
Ped.
❊
Ped.

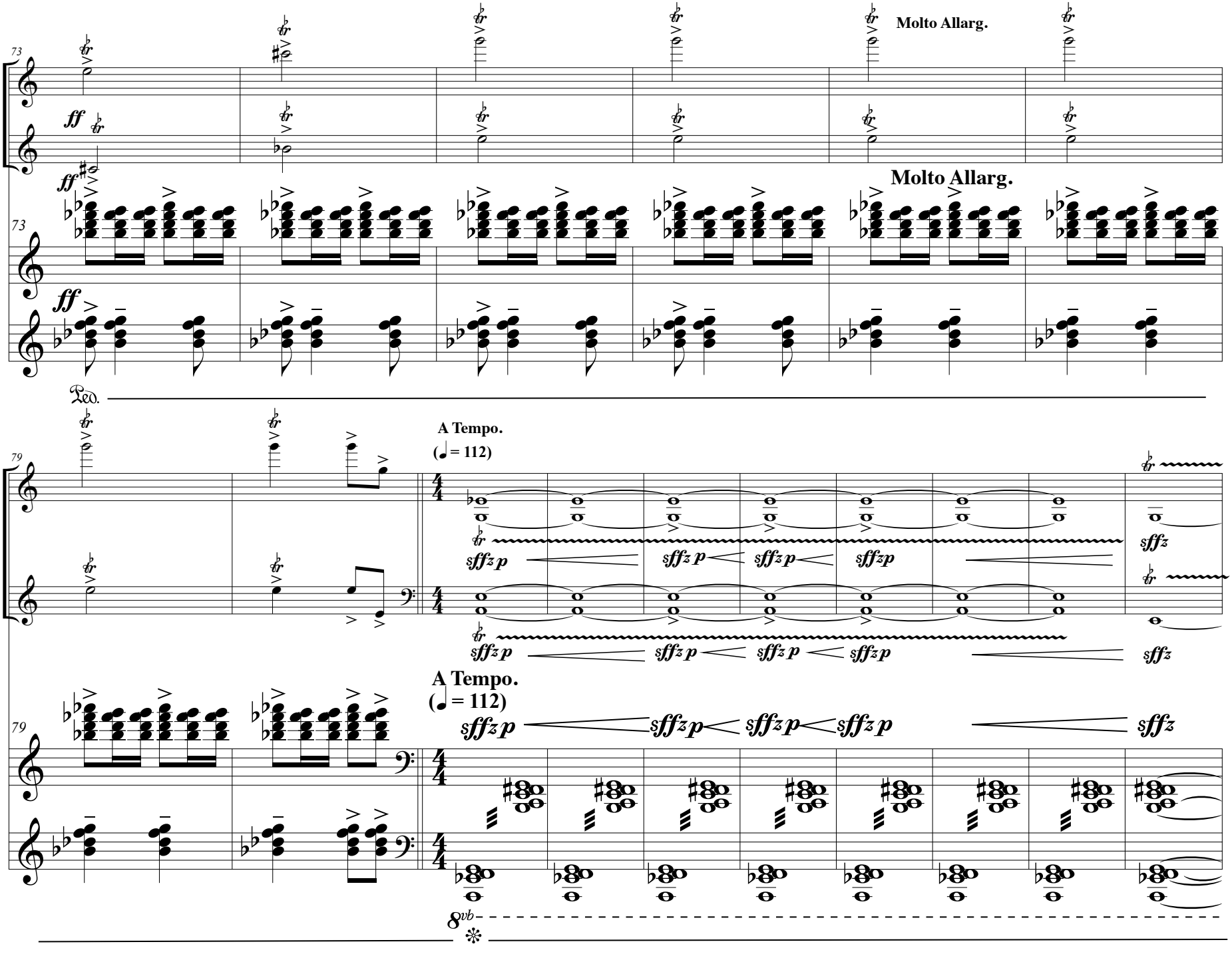

20
(8va)
20
ped. ad lib.
8vb
25
sul G
sonore
ff
f
sonore
ff
f
25
sim.
ff
mf

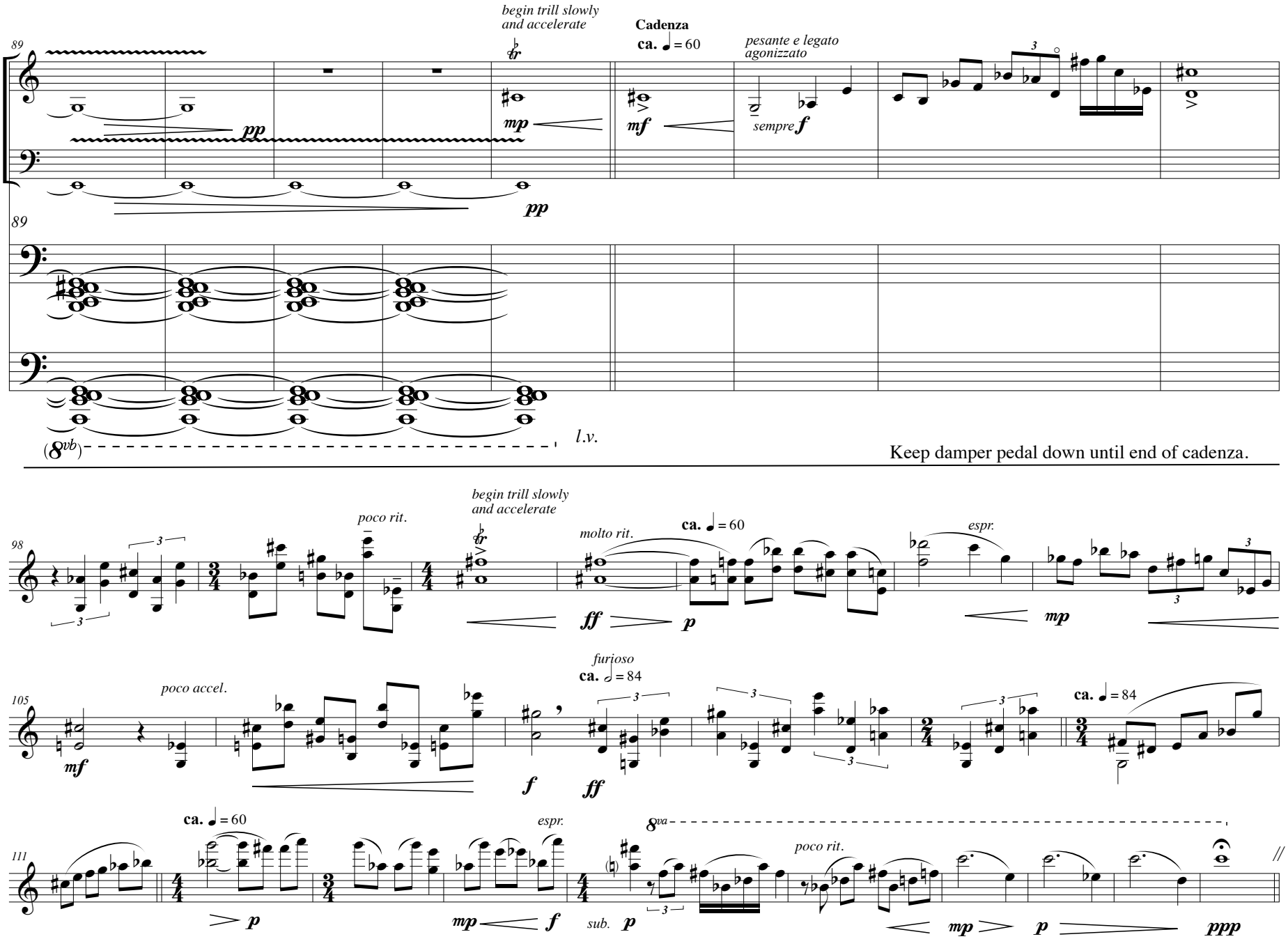

Rectiativo. molto rubato
33
mf
f
8va
8vb
pedale ad libitum
ritmico
37
ff
(8va)
8vb
Ped.
marcato
senza pedale

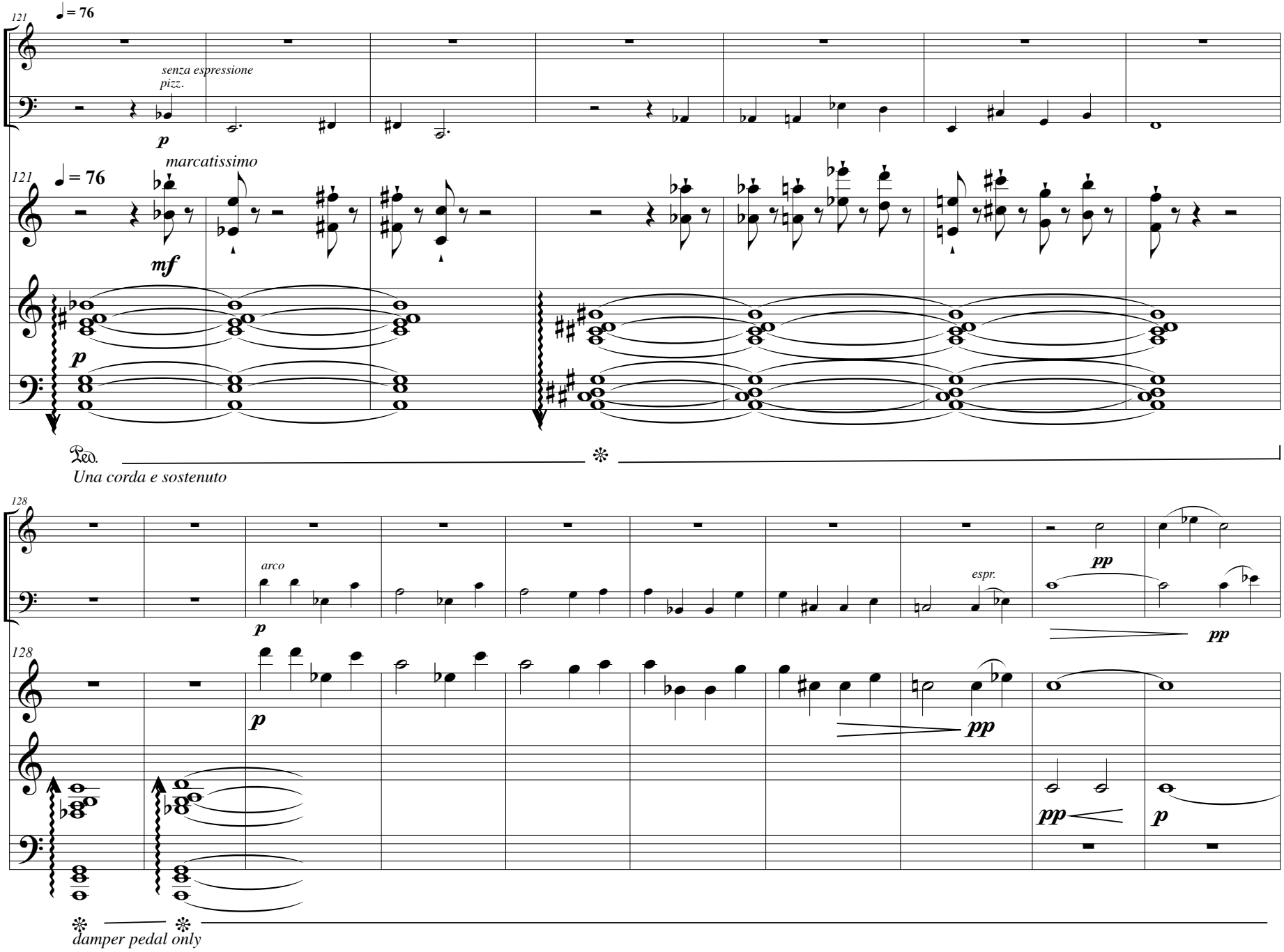

42
Sub. piu mosso ♩ = 84
pesante
f
mf
ff
49
piu marcato
Accel.

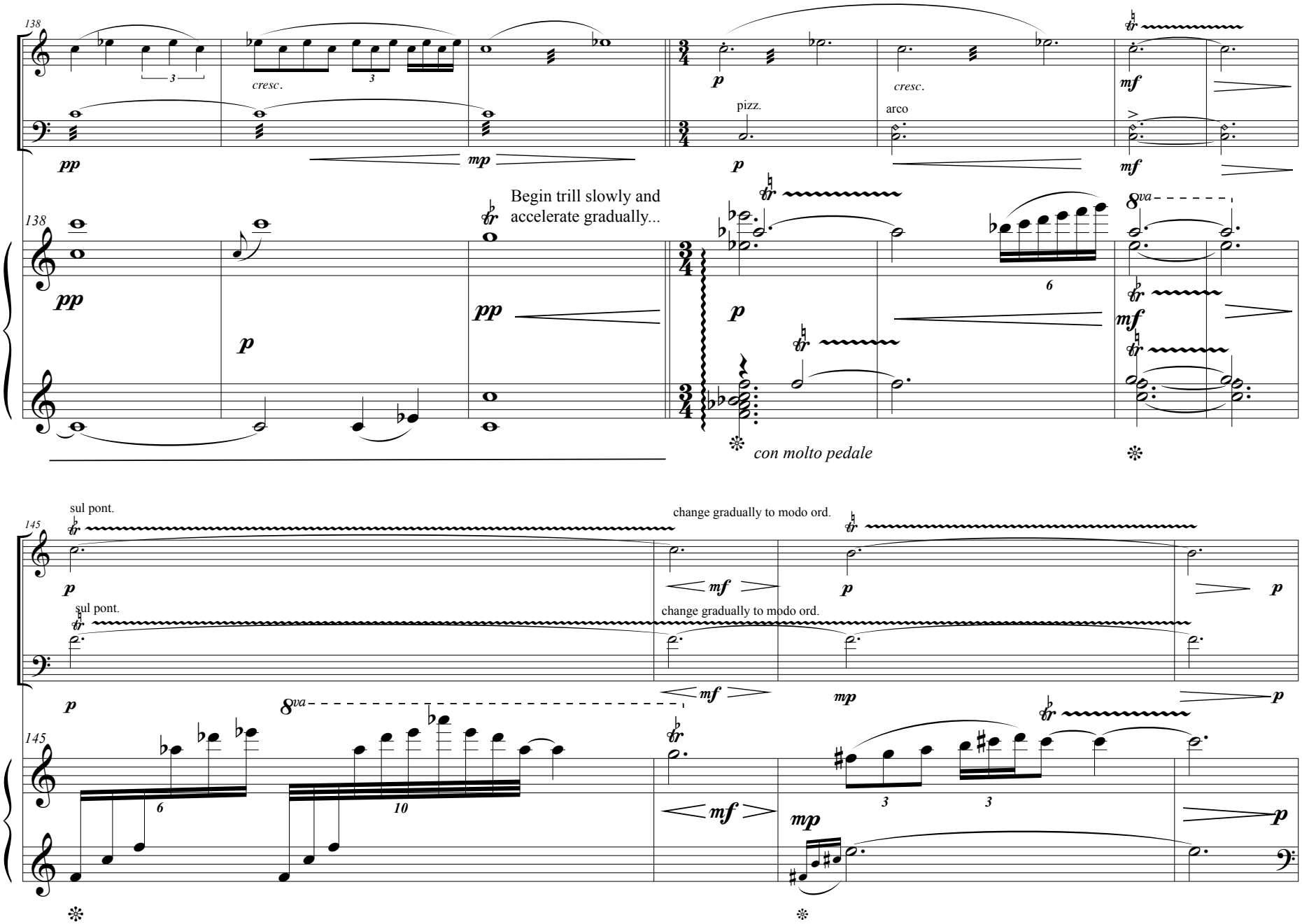

♩= 96
pizz.
arco
8va
mf
f
fp
(8va)
Molto Accel.
ff

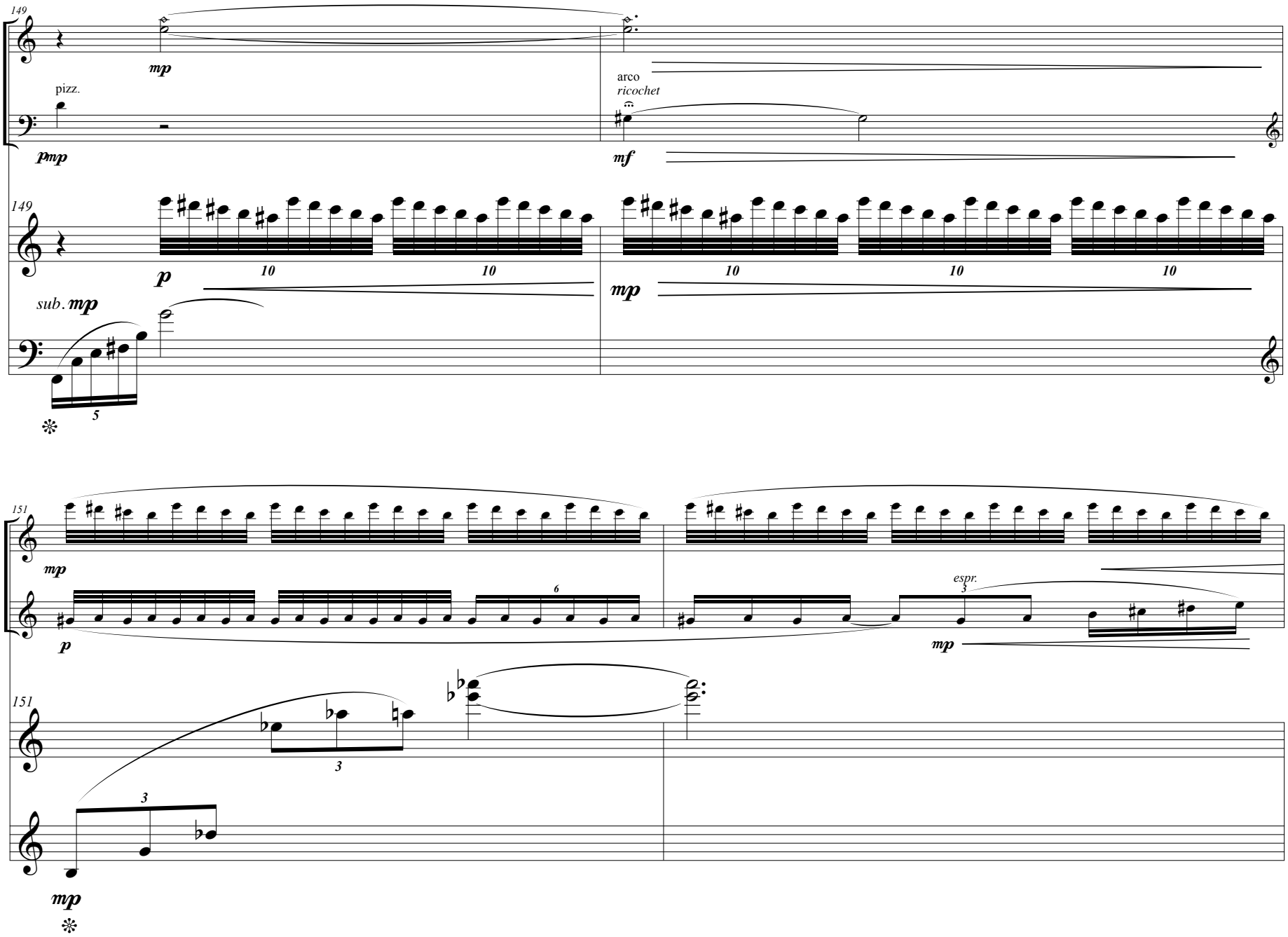

♩ = 104
8va
62
pizz.
Accel.
sub. f
arco
sub f
♩ = 104
8va
62
Accel.
68
♩ = 112
ff
ff
♩ = 112
68

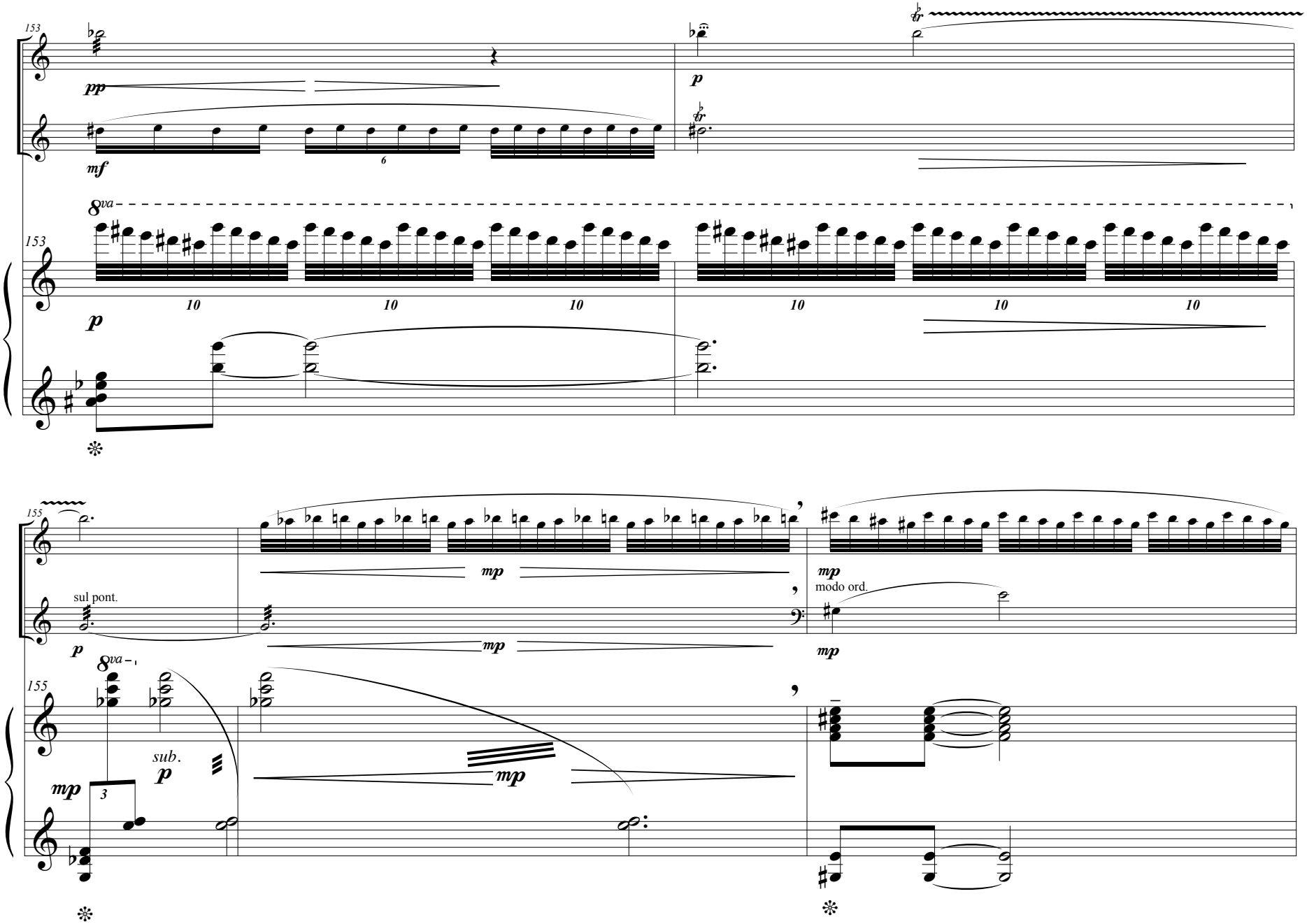

Molto Allarg.
73
ff
Molto Allarg.
Ped.
A Tempo.
(♩ = 112)
79
sffz p
sffz
A Tempo.
(♩ = 112)
8vb

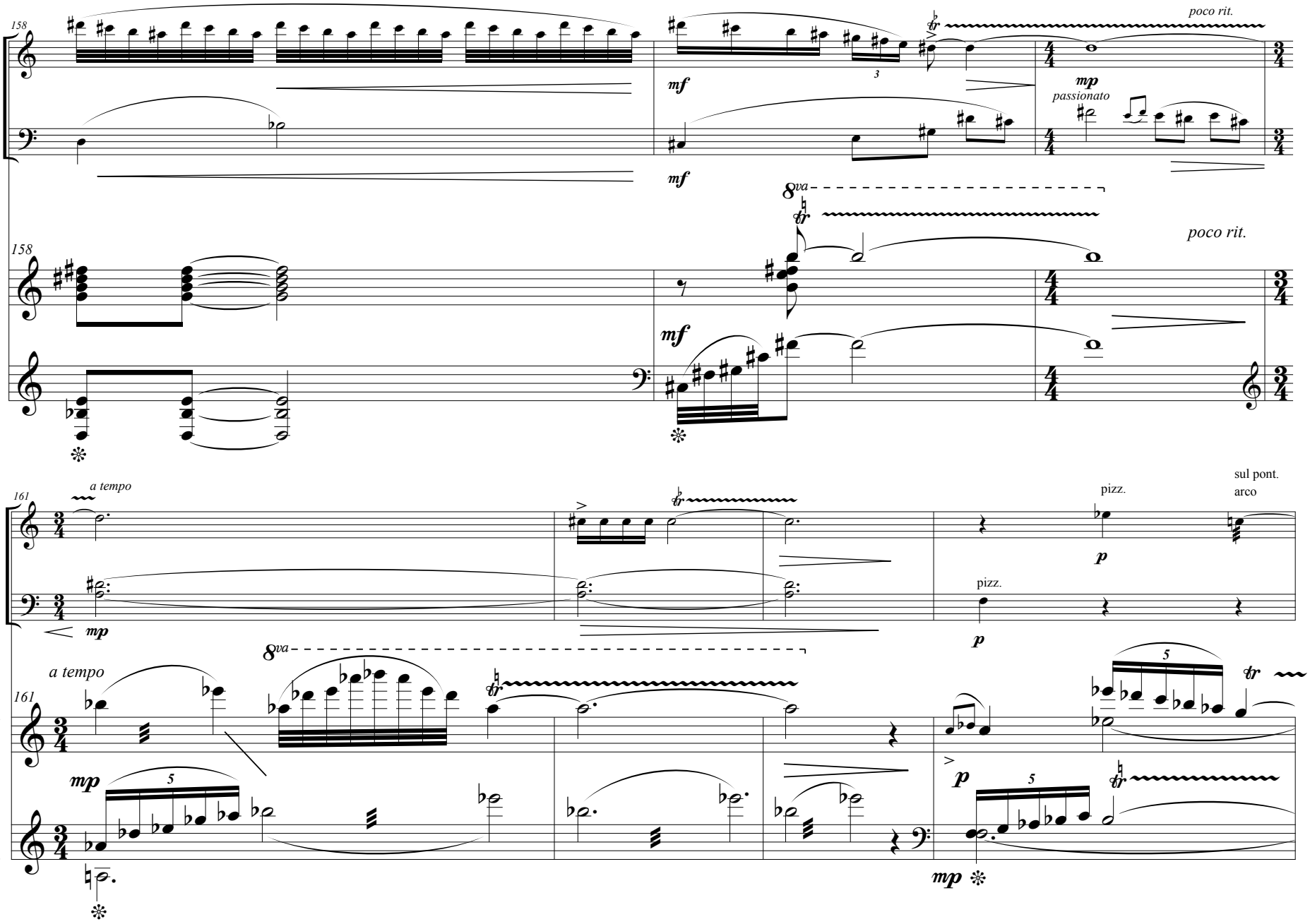

begin trill slowly and accelerate
Cadenza
ca. ♩ = 60
pesante e legato agonizzato
sempre f
pp
mp
mf
89
(8vb)
l.v.
Keep damper pedal down until end of cadenza.
poco rit.
molto rit.
espr.
98
ff
p
mp
poco accel.
furioso
ca. ♩ = 84
105
mf
f
ff
111
sub. p
8va
ppp

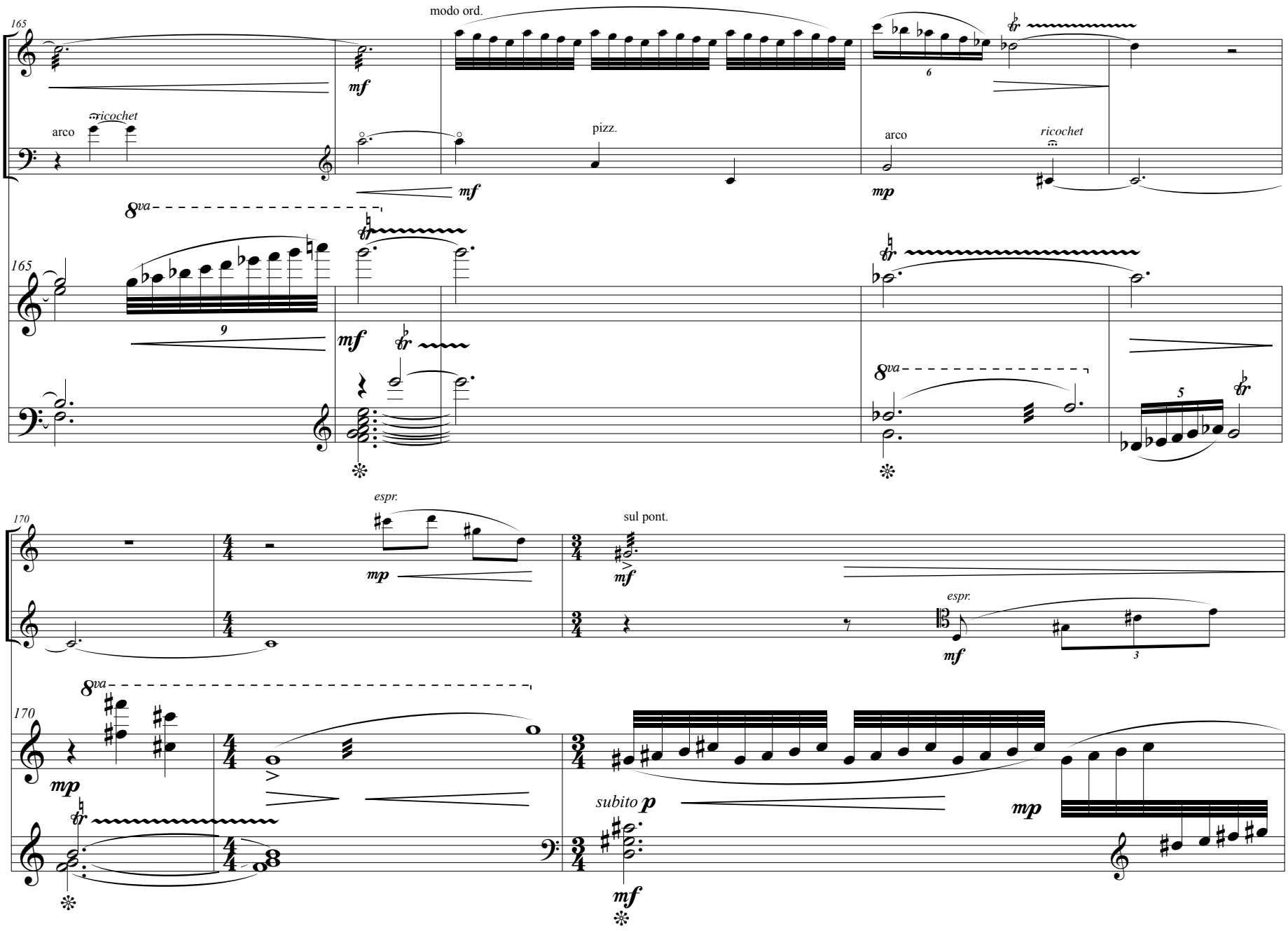

121
♩= 76
senza espressione
pizz.
p
121
♩= 76
marcatissimo
mf
p
Ped.
Una corda e sostenuto
128
arco
p
espr.
pp
pp
128
p
pp
pp
p
damper pedal only

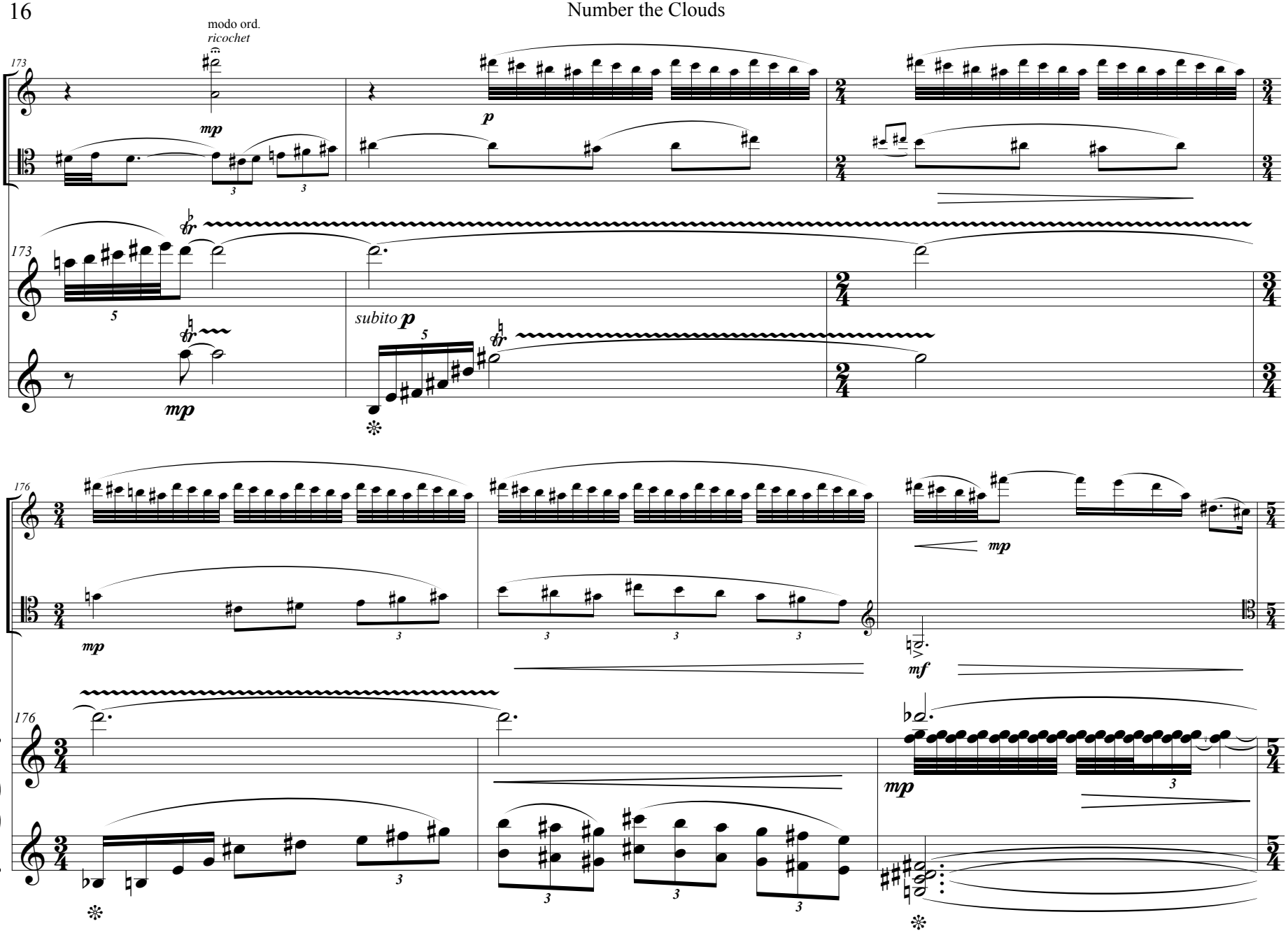

138
cresc.
pizz.
arco
Begin trill slowly and accelerate gradually...
con molto pedale
8va
145
sul pont.
change gradually to modo ord.

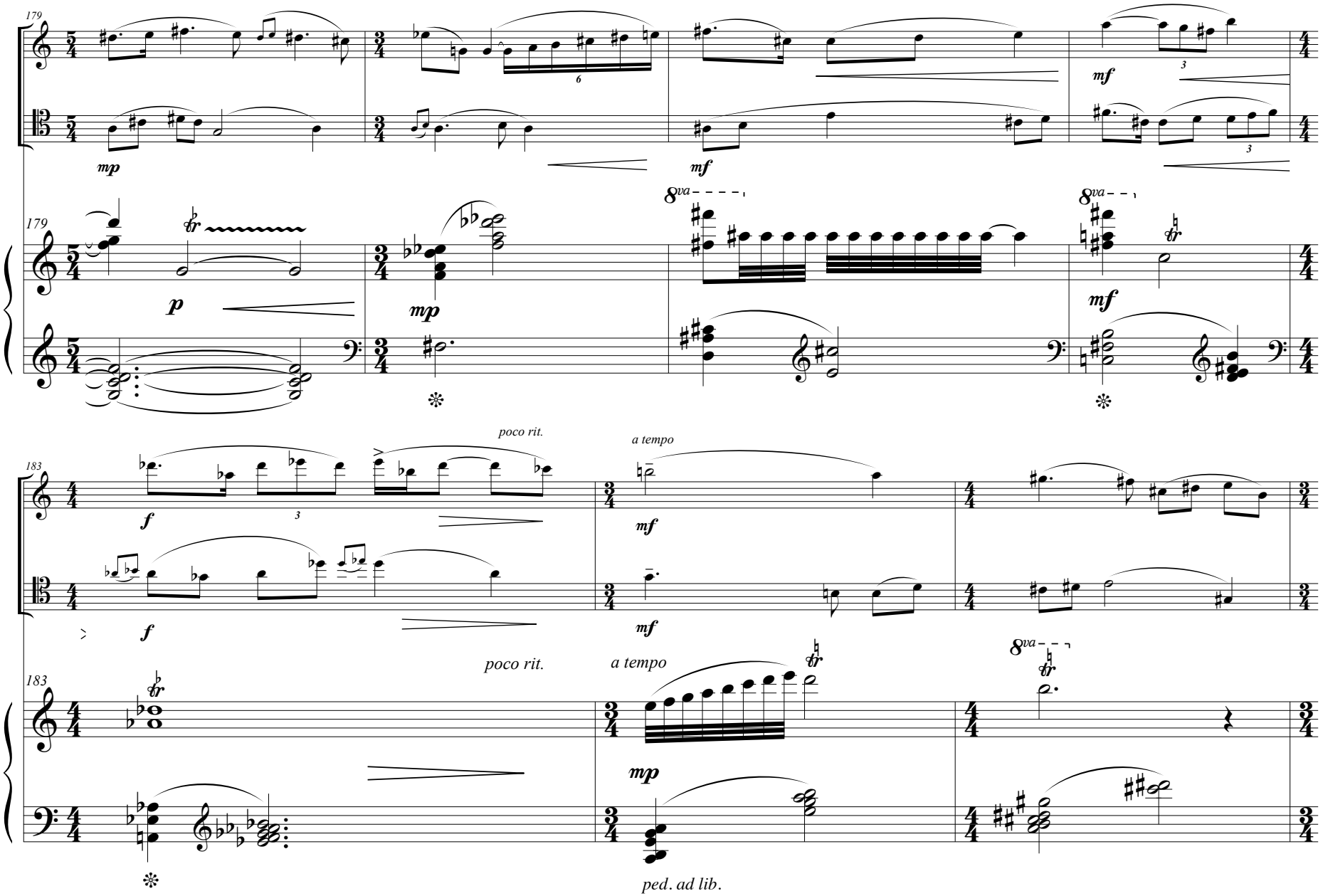

149
mp
pizz.
ppmp
arco
ricochet
mf
149
p
10
10
10
10
10
mp
sub. mp
5
151
mp
p
6
espr.
3
mp
151
3
3
mp

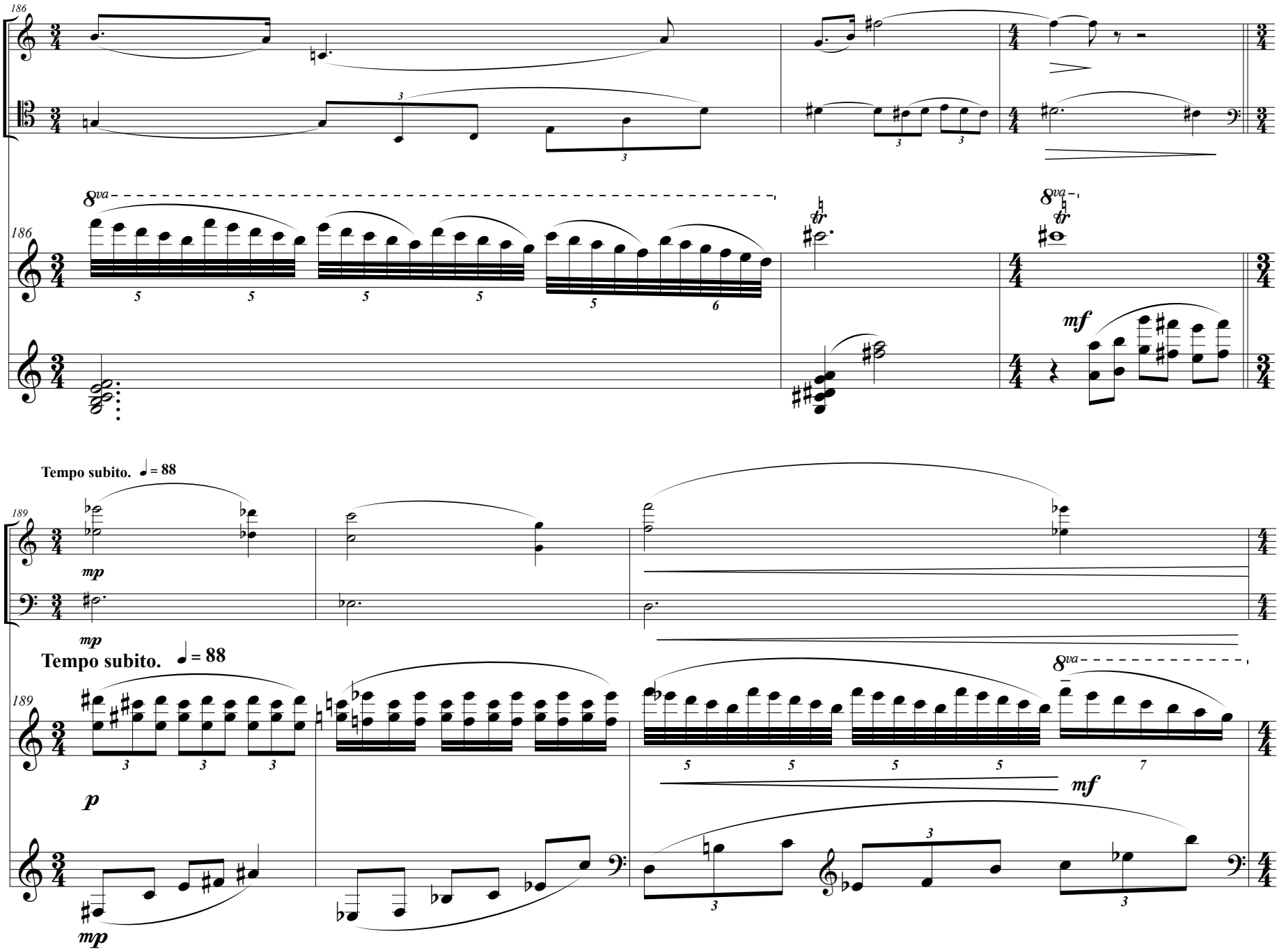

153
pp
mf
p
8va
153
10
10
10
10
10
10
p
155
sul pont.
p
mp
mp
mp
modo ord.
8va
155
sub.
p
mp
3
mp

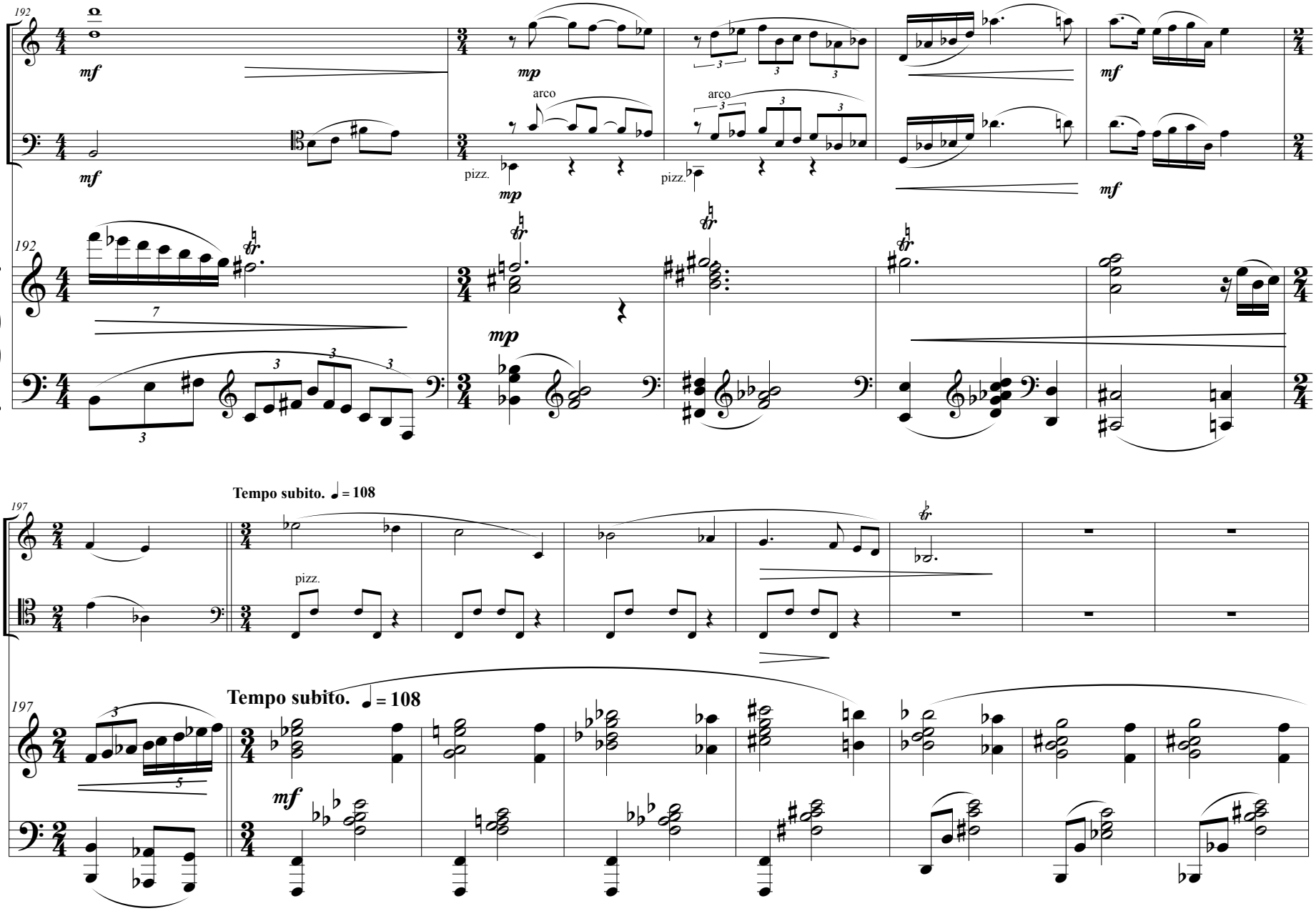

158
poco rit.
mf
mp
passionato
8va
161
a tempo
pizz.
sul pont.
arco
p
5

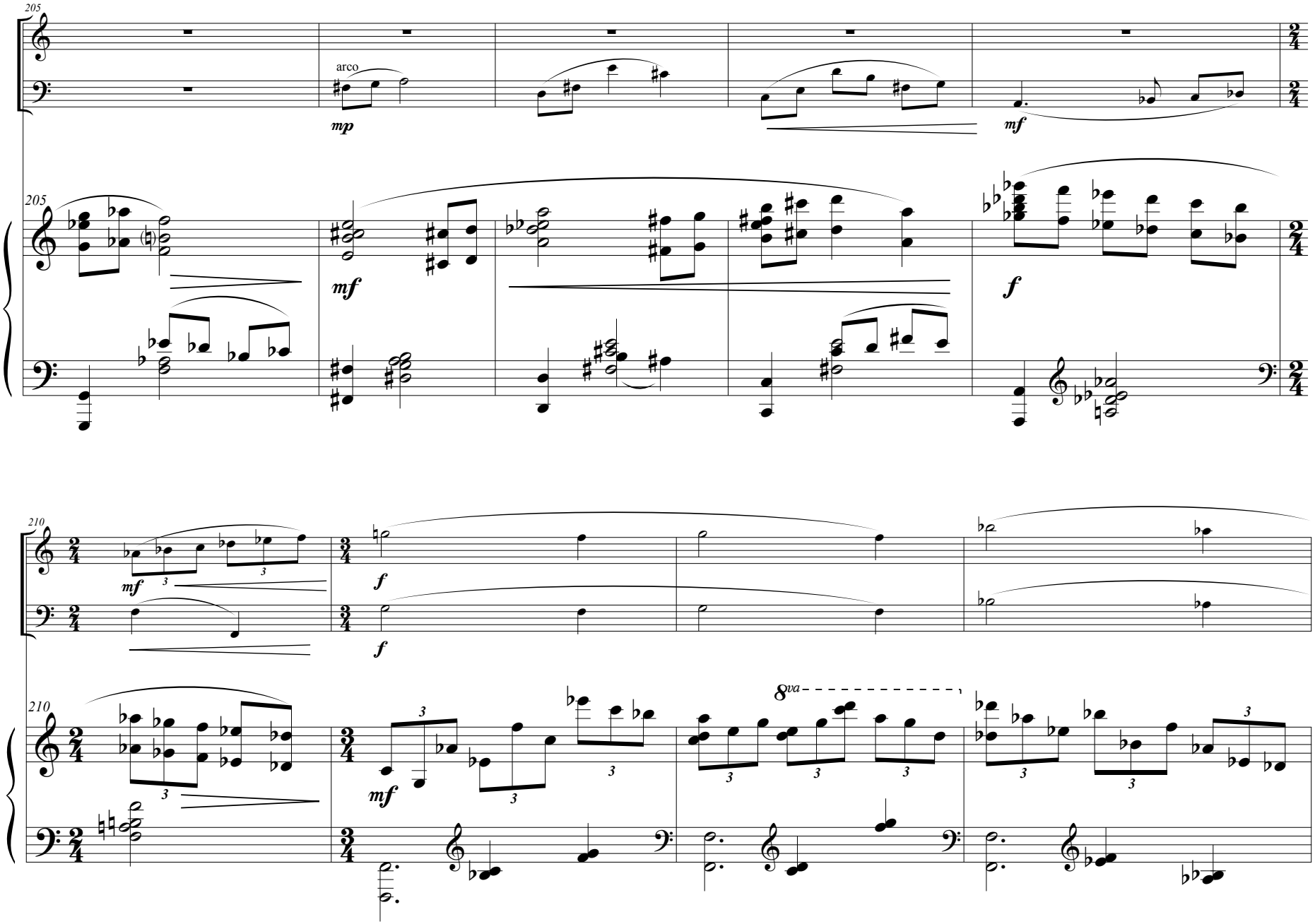

165
modo ord.
mf
arco
ricochet
pizz.
mf
arco
mp
ricochet
8va
9
mf
8va
5
170
espr.
mp
sul pont.
mf
espr.
mf
3
8va
mp
subito p
mp
mf

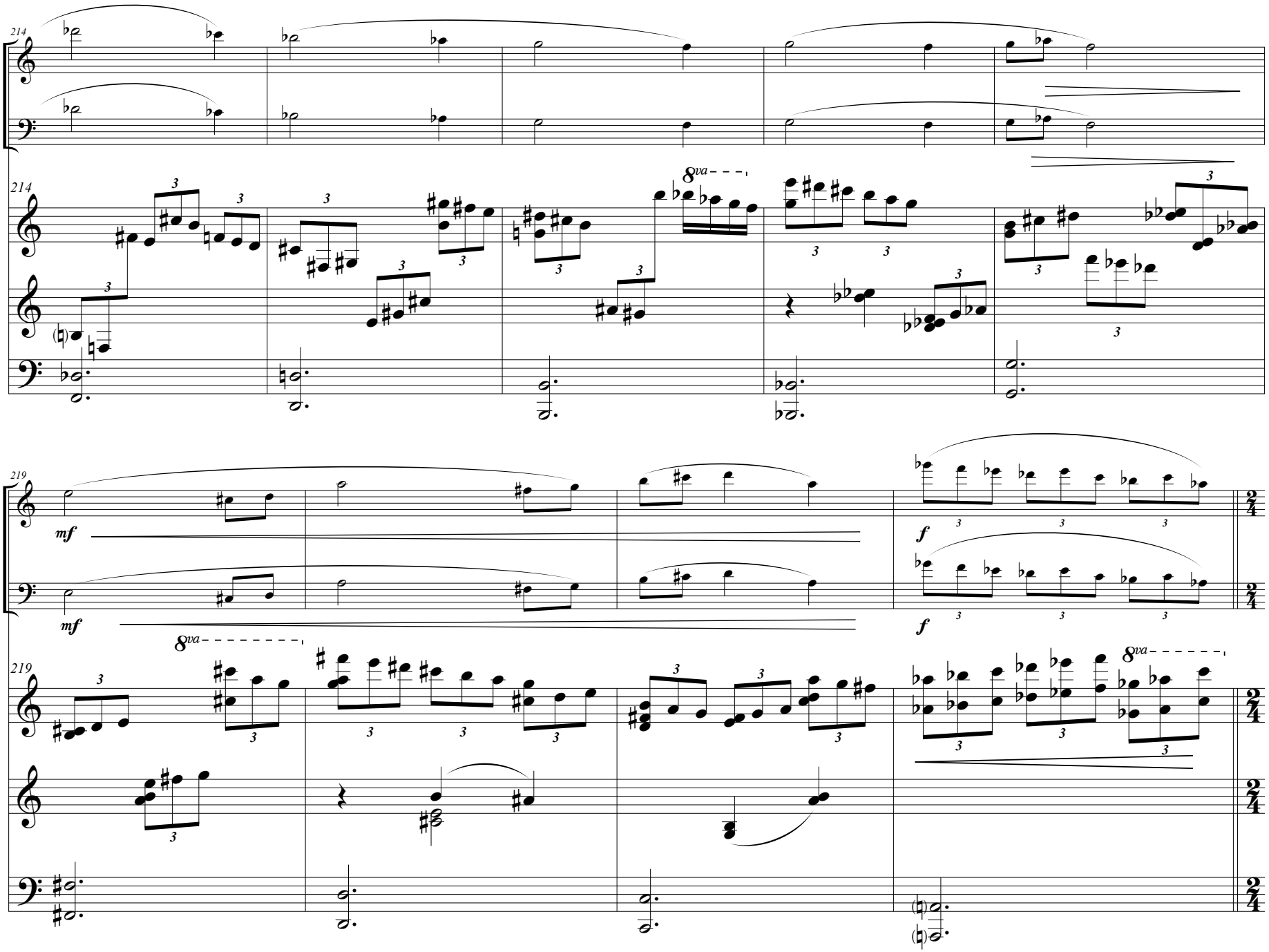

modo ord.
ricochet
173
mp
p
173
subito p
mp
176
mp
mf
176
mp

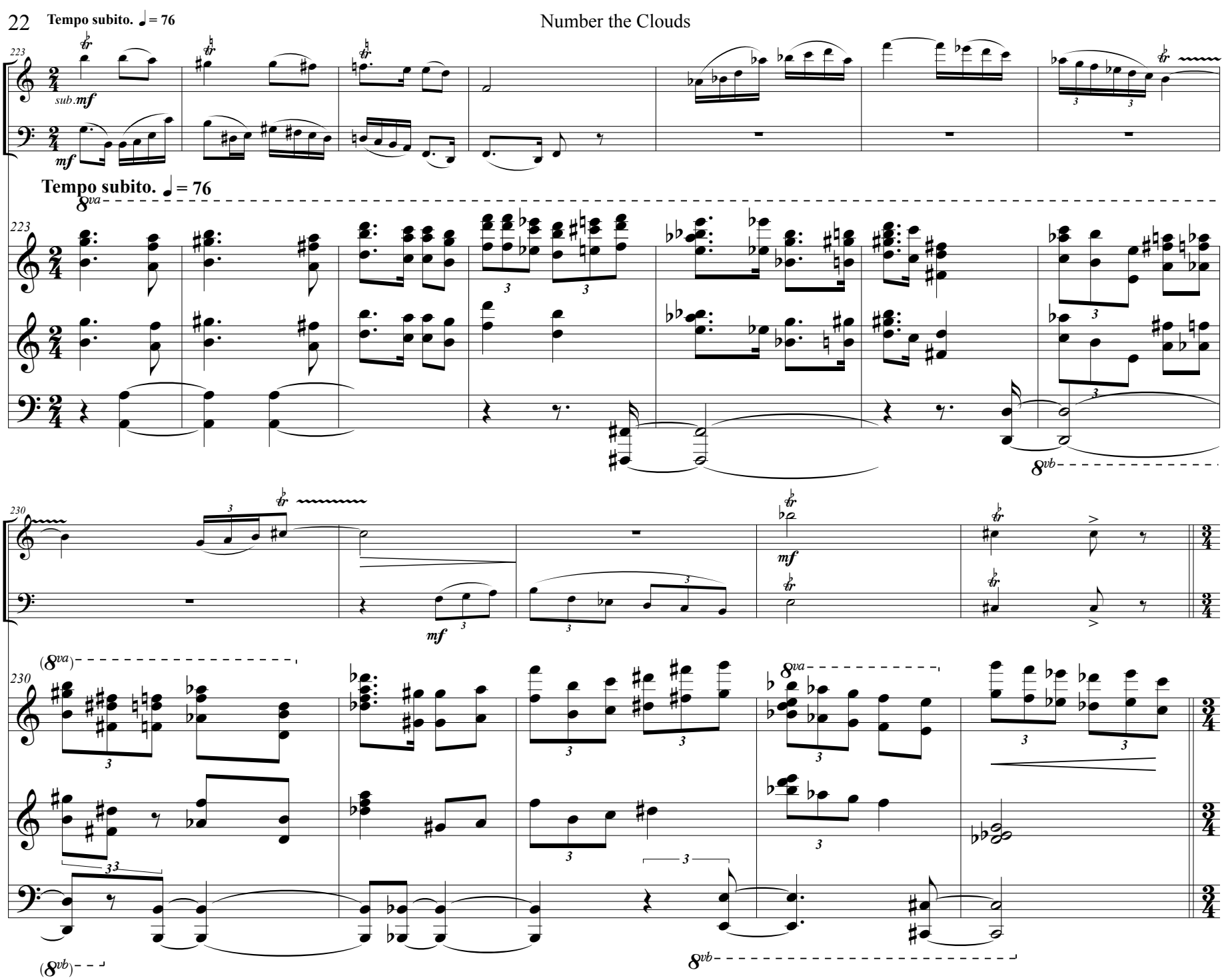

179
mp
mf
mf
179
p
mp
8va
8va
mf
183
poco rit.
a tempo
f
f
mf
mf
poco rit.
a tempo
183
8va
mp
ped. ad lib.

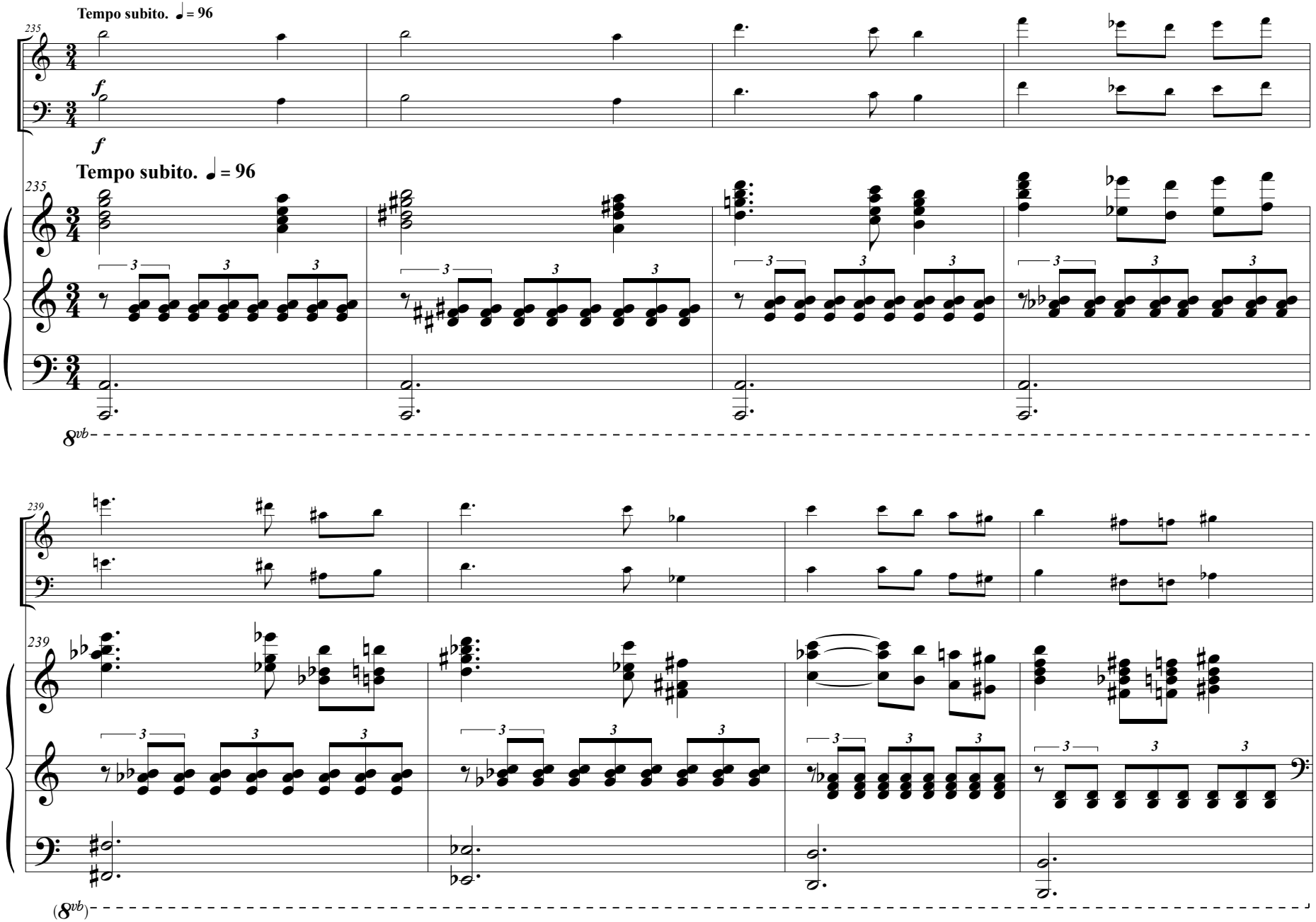

186
8va
tr
mf
Tempo subito. ♩= 88
189
mp
p

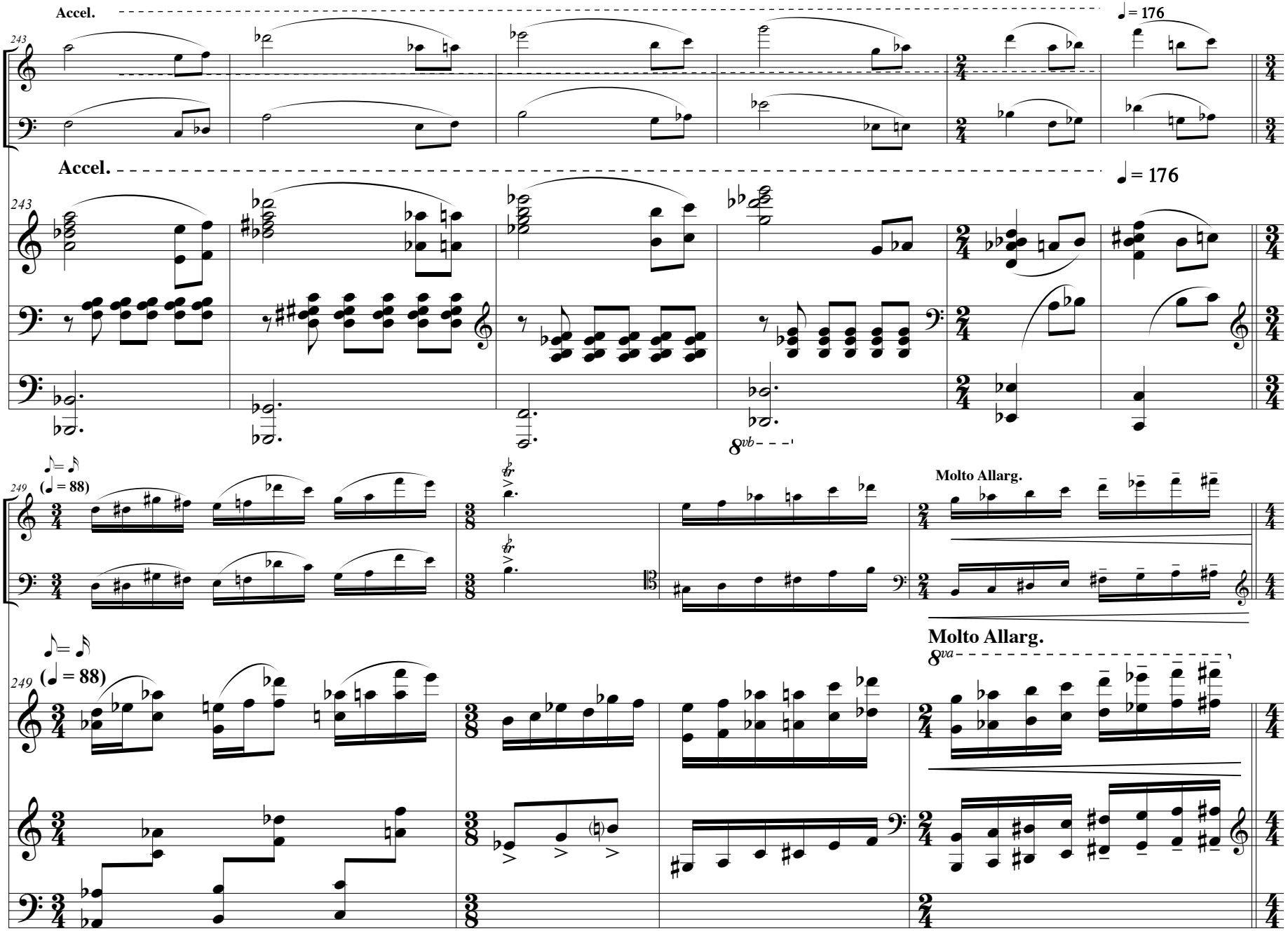

192
mf
mp
arco
pizz.
mf
Tempo subito. ♩ = 108
197
pizz.
Tempo subito. ♩ = 108
mf

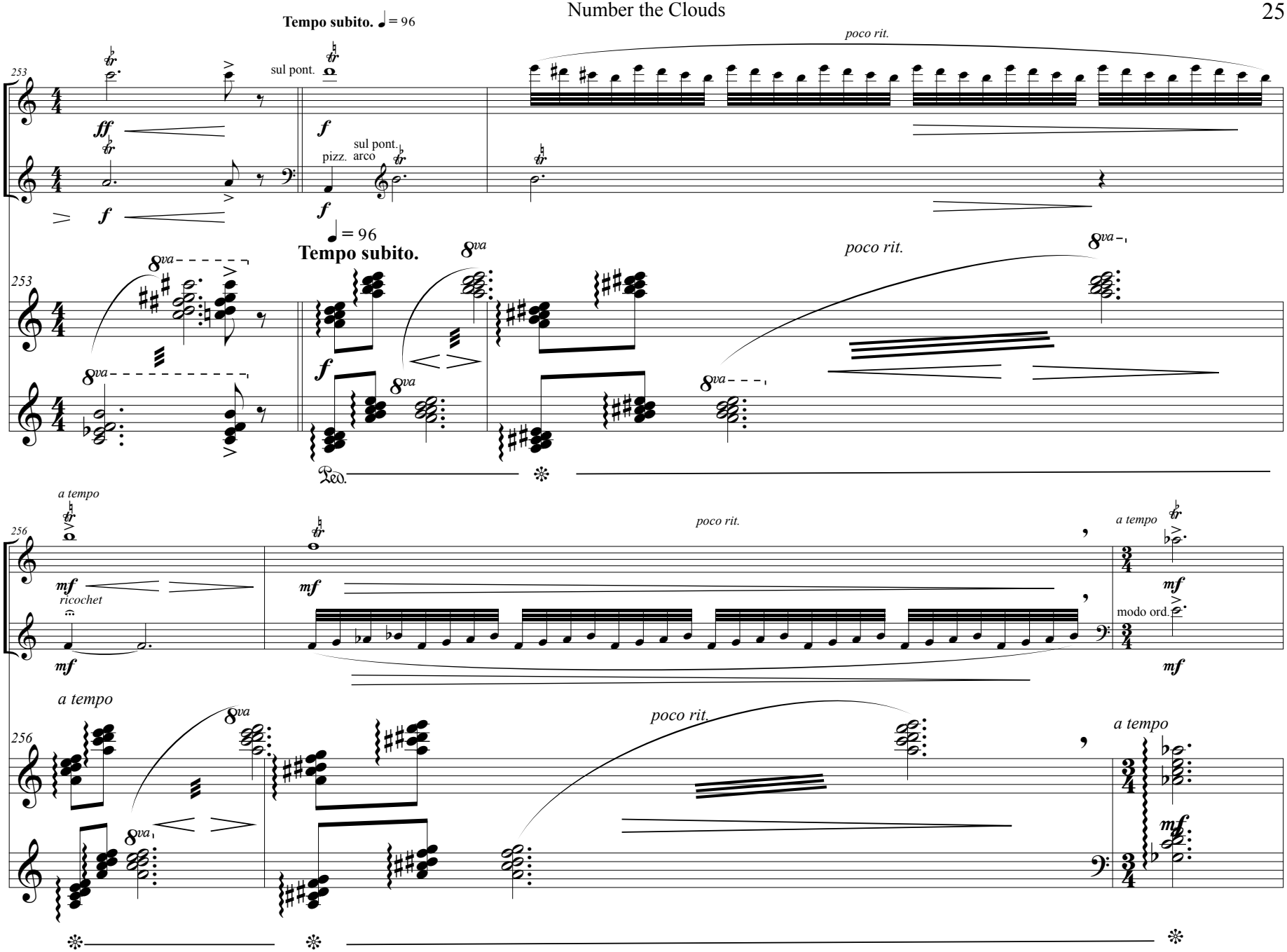

205
arco
mp
mf
205
mf
f
210
mf
f
f
210
mf
8va

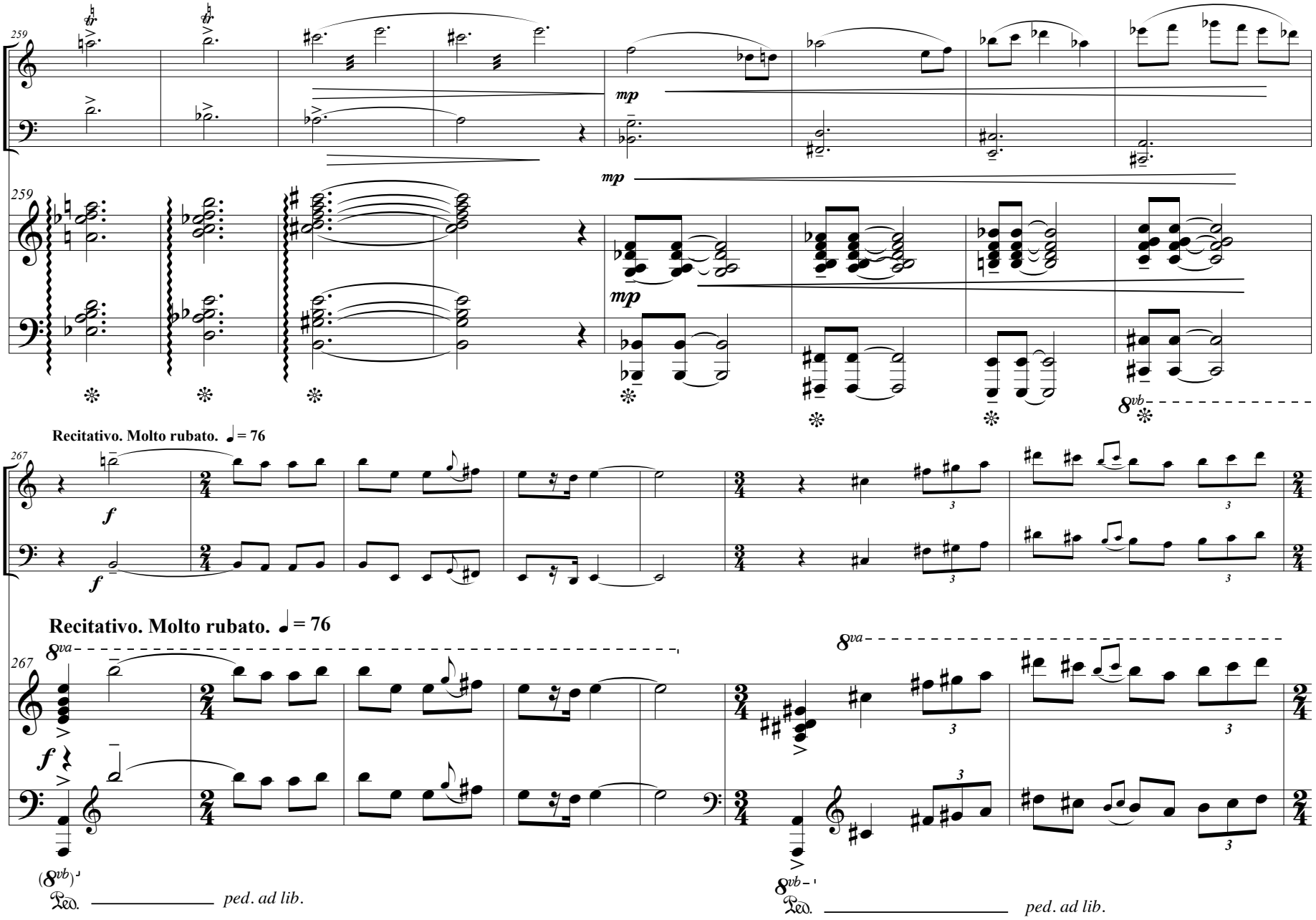

214
8va
219
mf
mf
f
f
8va
8va

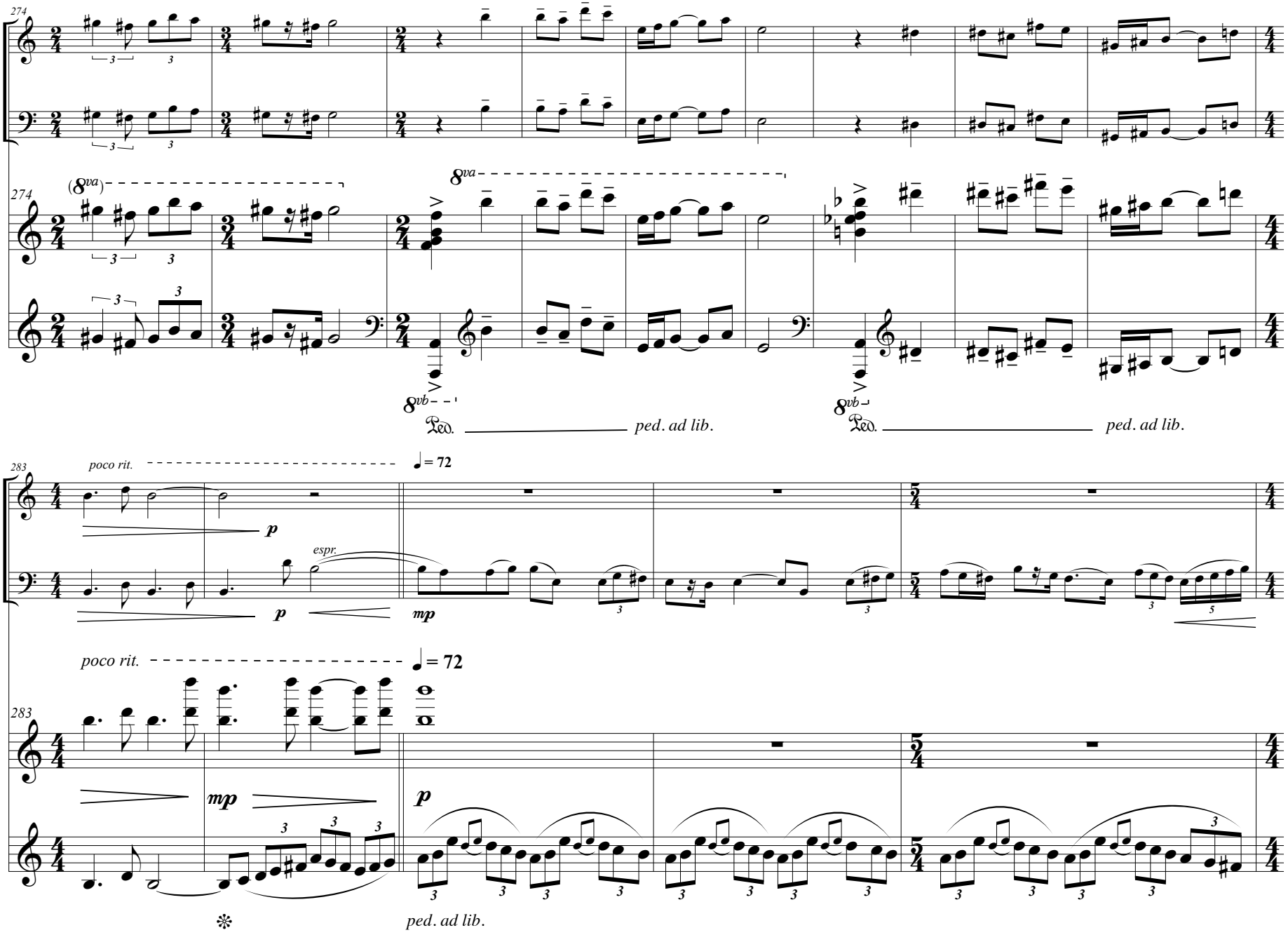

Tempo subito. ♩ = 76
223
sub. mf
mf
Tempo subito. ♩ = 76
8va
8vb
230
mf
(8va)
(8vb)

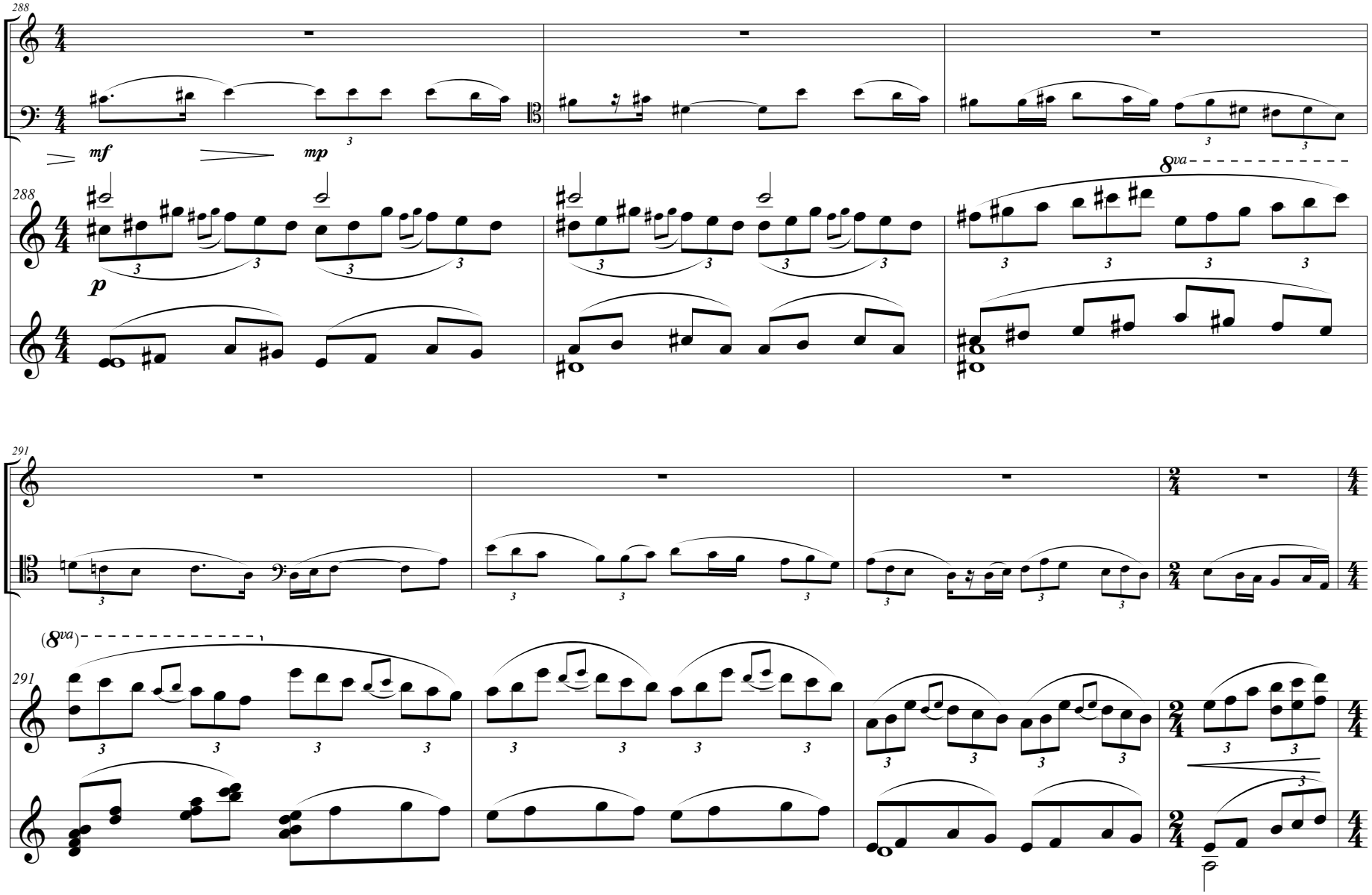

Tempo subito. ♩= 96
235
f
Tempo subito. ♩= 96
235
8vb
239
239
(8vb)

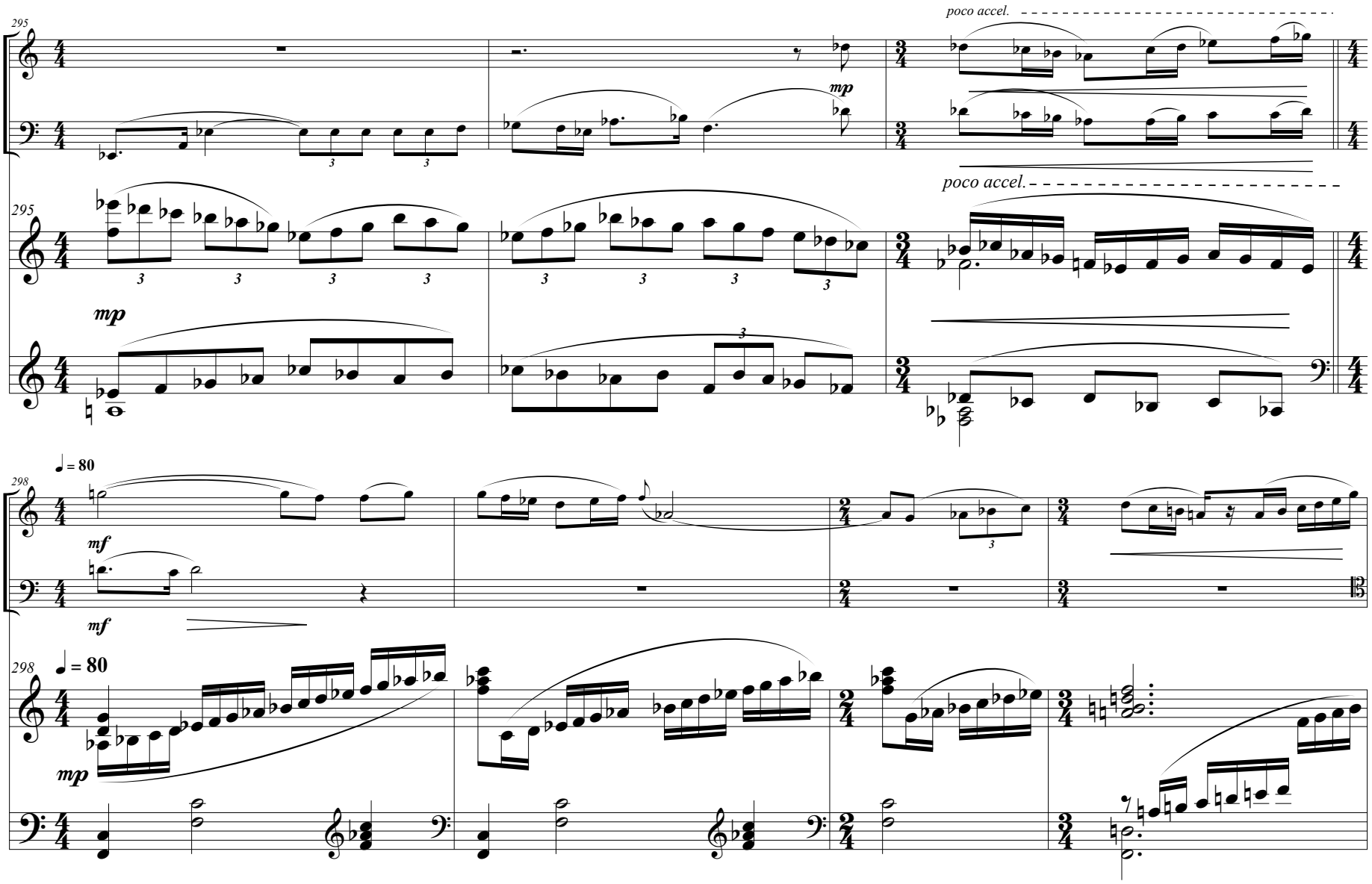

Accel.
♩= 176
243
Accel.
♩= 176
243
8vb
♪= ♪
(♩ = 88)
249
Molto Allarg.
♪= ♪
(♩ = 88)
249
Molto Allarg.
8va

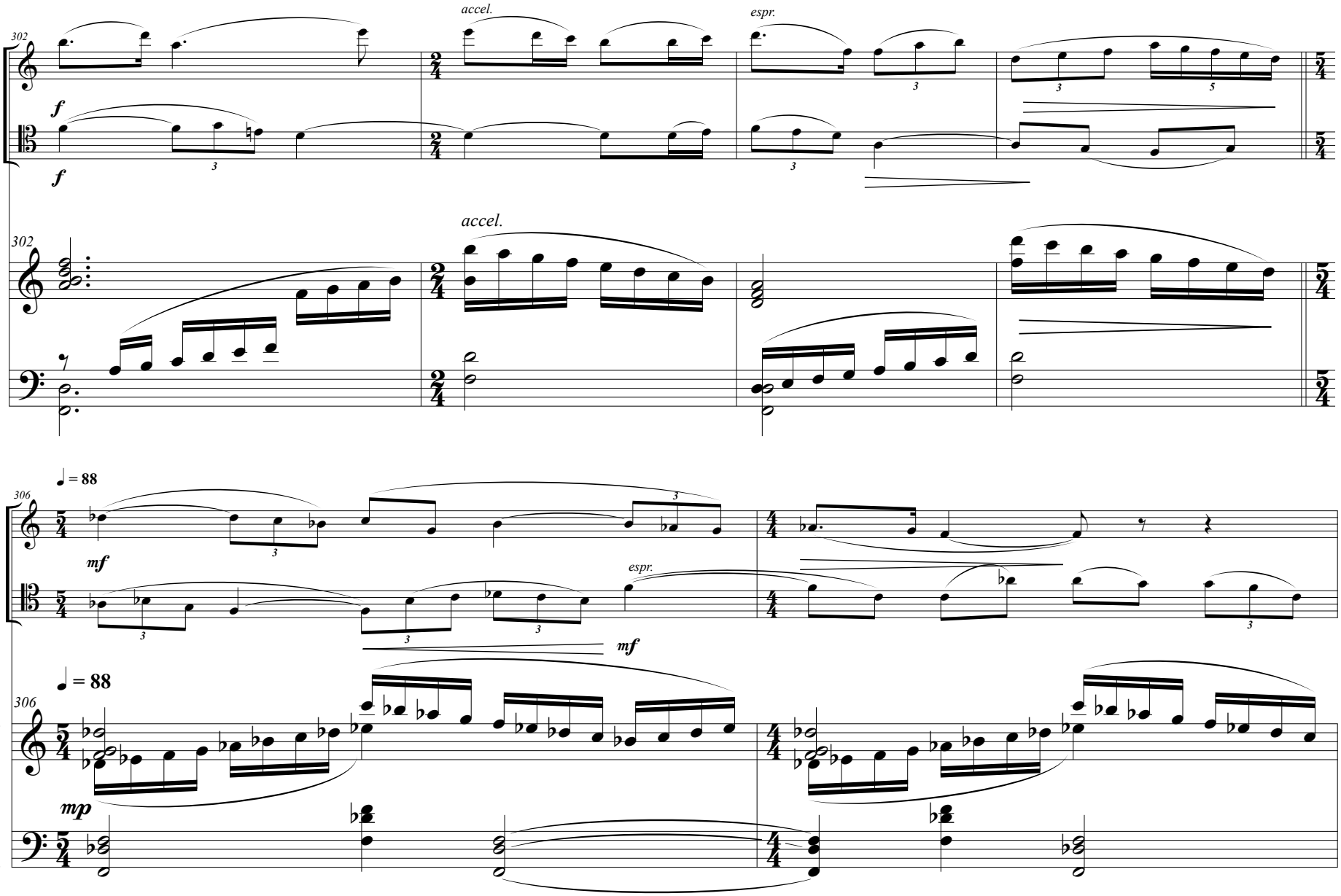

Tempo subito. ♩= 96
poco rit.
253
sul pont.
ff
f
pizz.
arco
sul pont.
♩= 96
Tempo subito.
8va
poco rit.
Ped.
a tempo
256
mf
ricochet
poco rit.
a tempo
modo ord.

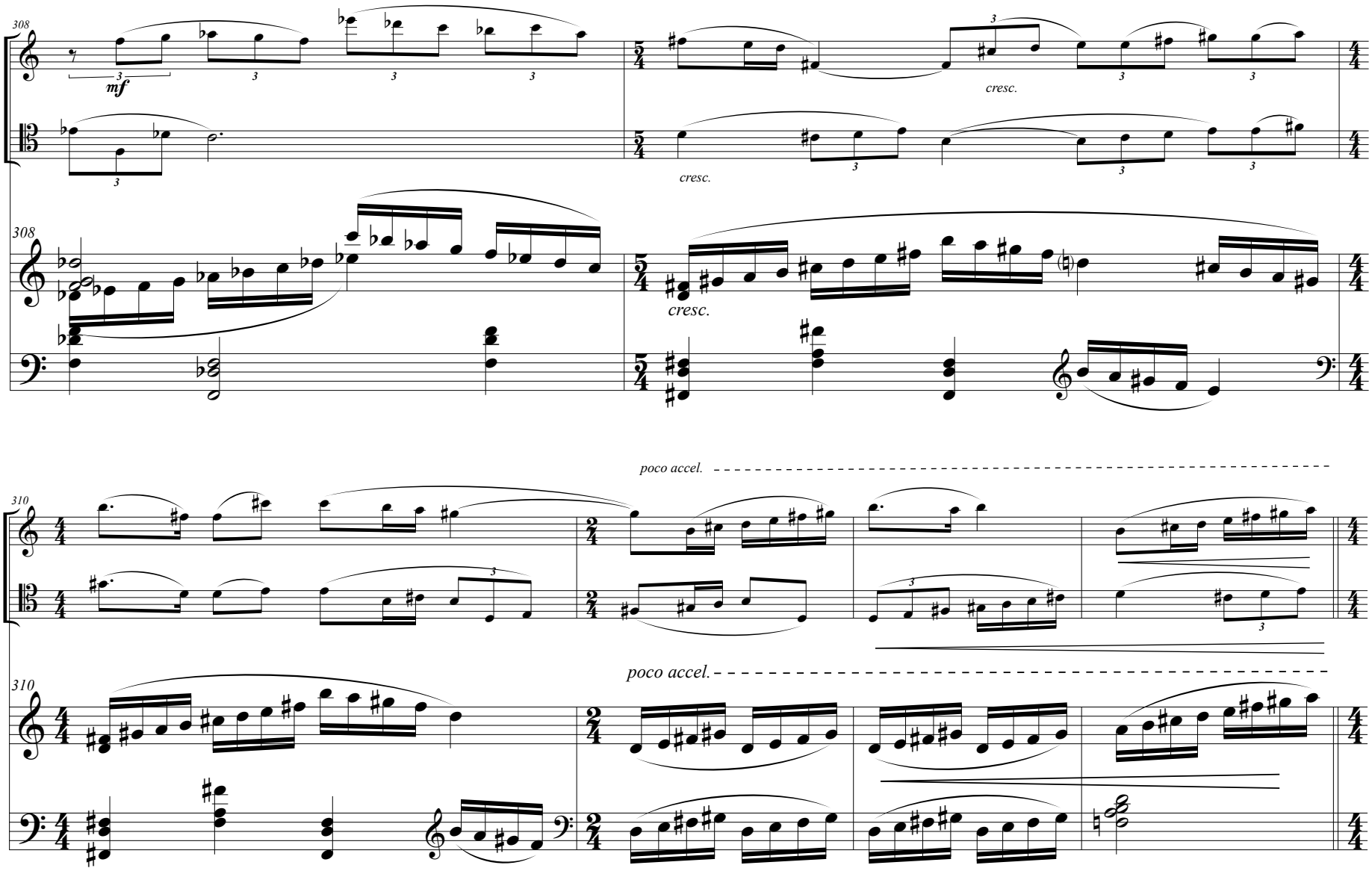

259
mp
mp
mp
8vb
Recitativo. Molto rubato. ♩= 76
267
f
f
Recitativo. Molto rubato. ♩= 76
267
8va
f
8va
(8vb)
Ped.
ped. ad lib.
8vb
Ped.
ped. ad lib.

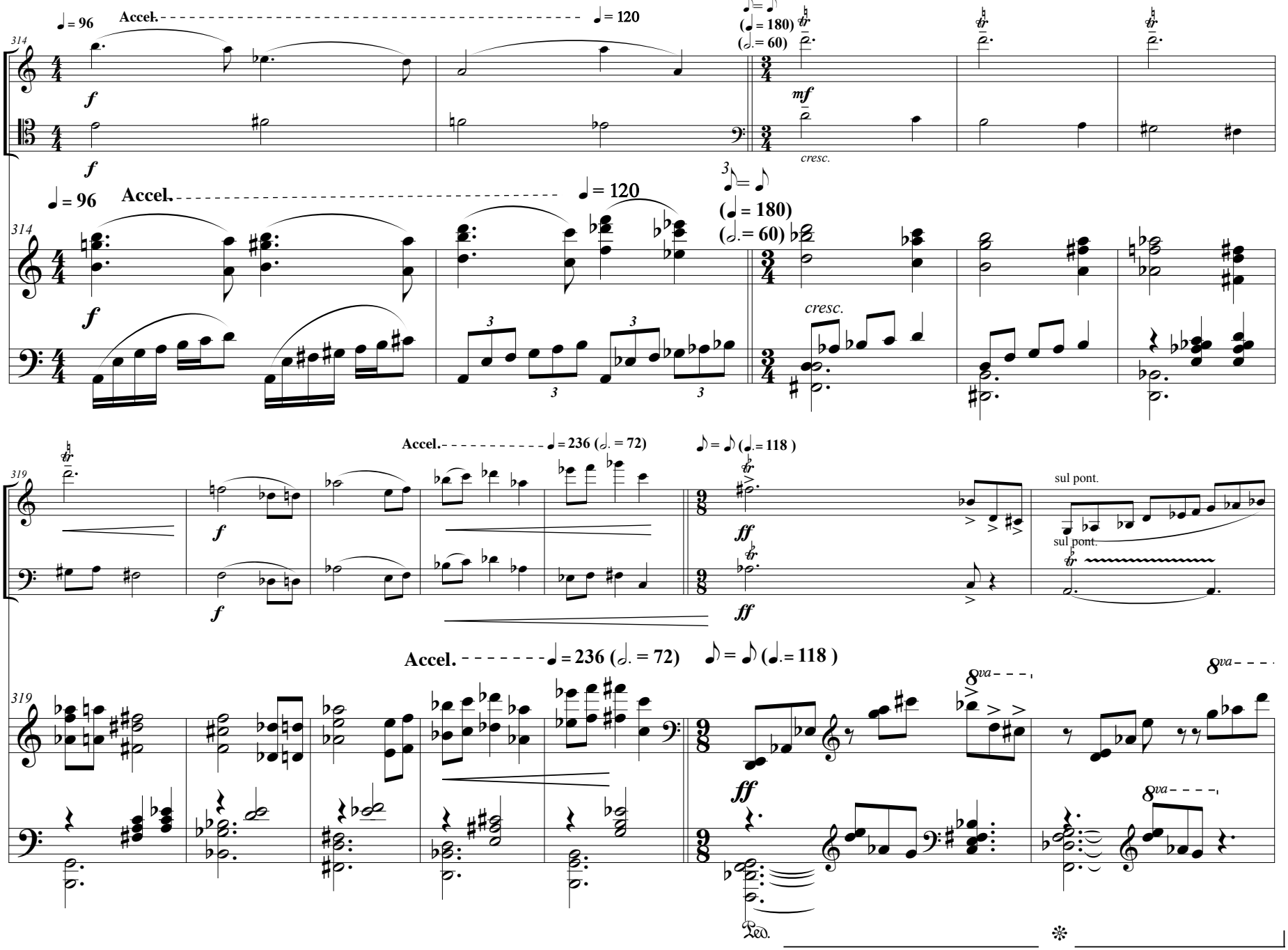

274
(8va)
8va
8vb
Ped.
ped. ad lib.
283
poco rit.
♩= 72
p
espr.
mp
poco rit.
♩= 72
mp
p
ped. ad lib.


288
mf
mp
288
8va
p
291
(8va)
291

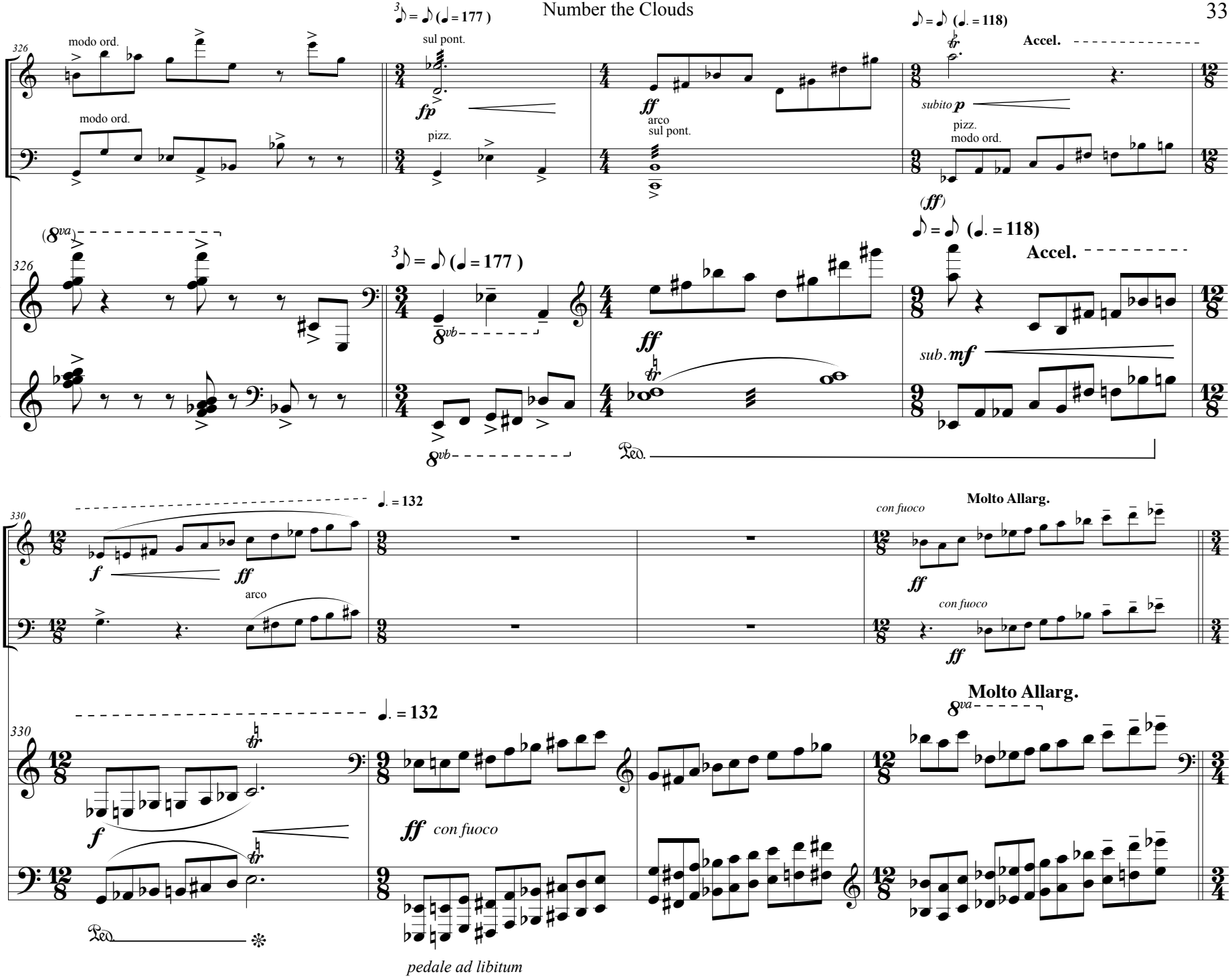

295
poco accel.
mp
295
poco accel.
mp
298
♩ = 80
mf
mf
298
♩ = 80
mp

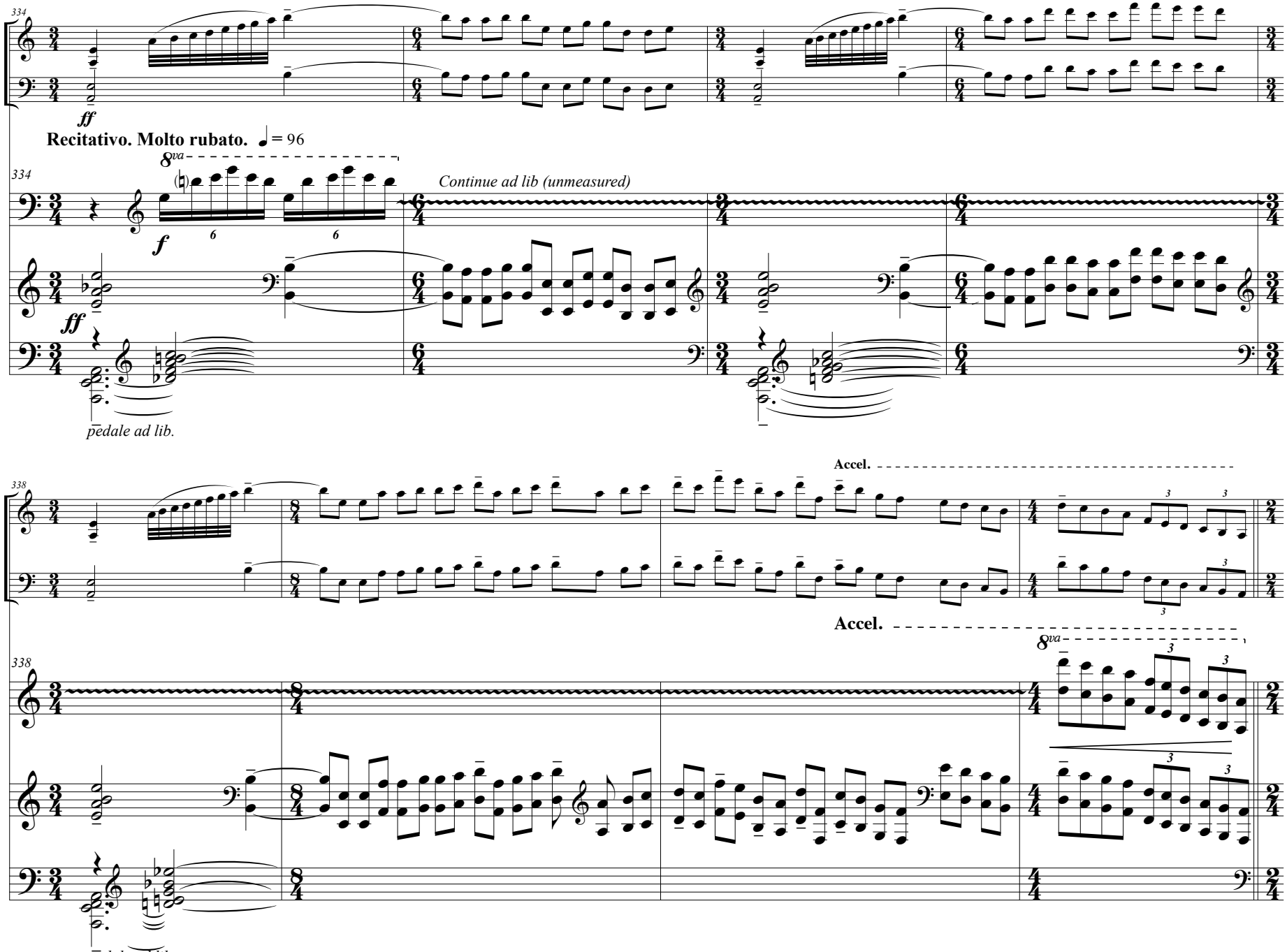

302
accel.
espr.
f
f
302
accel.
306
♩ = 88
mf
espr.
mf
306
♩ = 88
mp

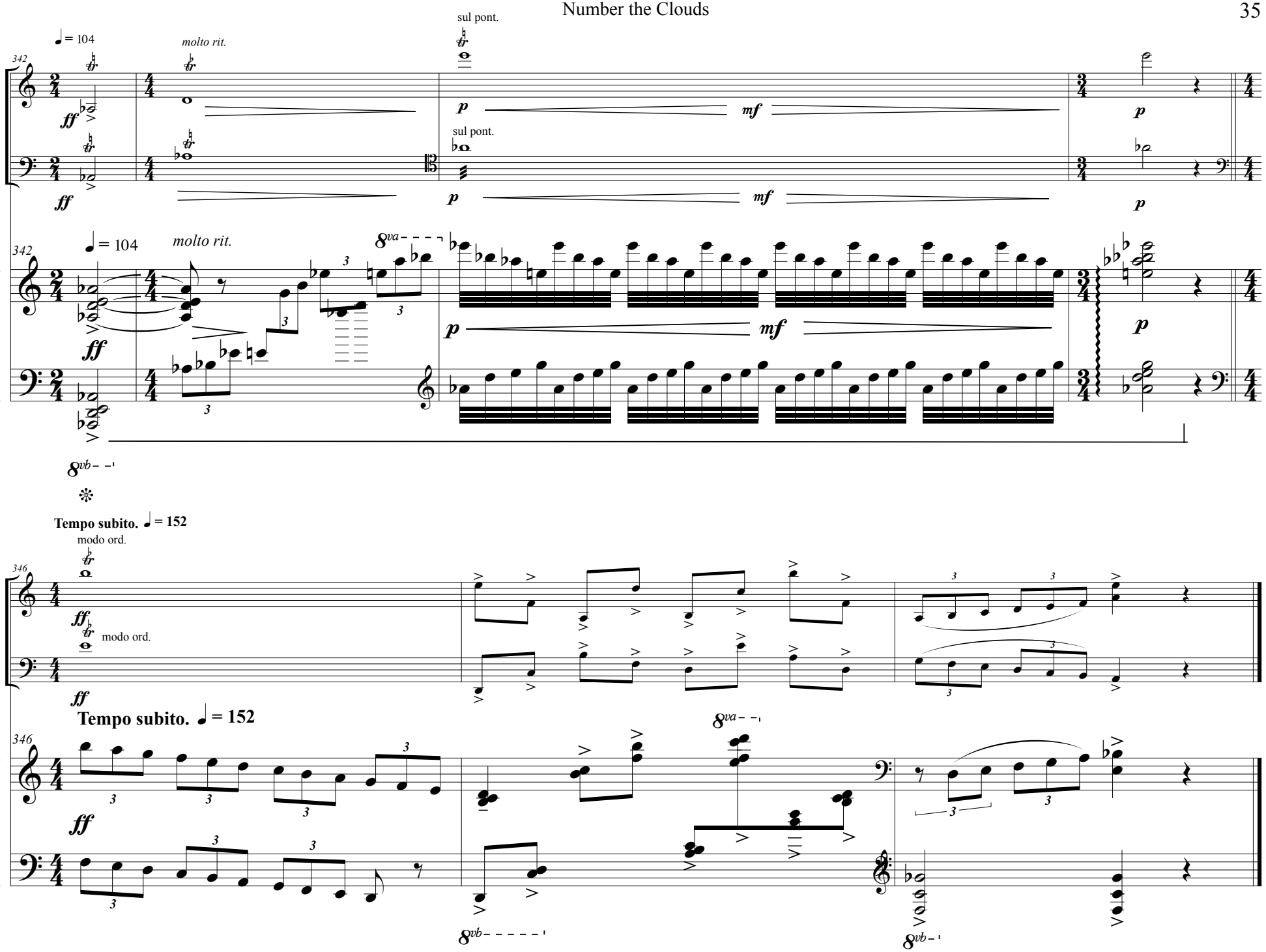

308
mf
cresc.
cresc.
308
cresc.
poco accel.
310
poco accel.
310



314
♩= 96
Accel.
♩= 120
(♩= 180)
(𝅗𝅥.= 60)
f
mf
cresc.
319
Accel.
♩= 236 (𝅗𝅥. = 72)
♪= ♪ (♩.= 118)
ff
sul pont.
8va
Ped.


326
modo ord.
modo ord.
sul pont.
pizz.
arco
sul pont.
Accel.
subito p
pizz.
modo ord.
(ff)
Accel.
sub. mf
330
arco
con fuoco
Molto Allarg.
con fuoco
pedale ad libitum


334
ff
Recitativo. Molto rubato. ♩= 96
8va
Continue ad lib (unmeasured)
f
ff
pedale ad lib.
338
Accel.
8va
pedale ad lib.


342
♩ = 104
molto rit.
sul pont.
ff
p
mf
Tempo subito. ♩ = 152
modo ord.
346
8va
8vb