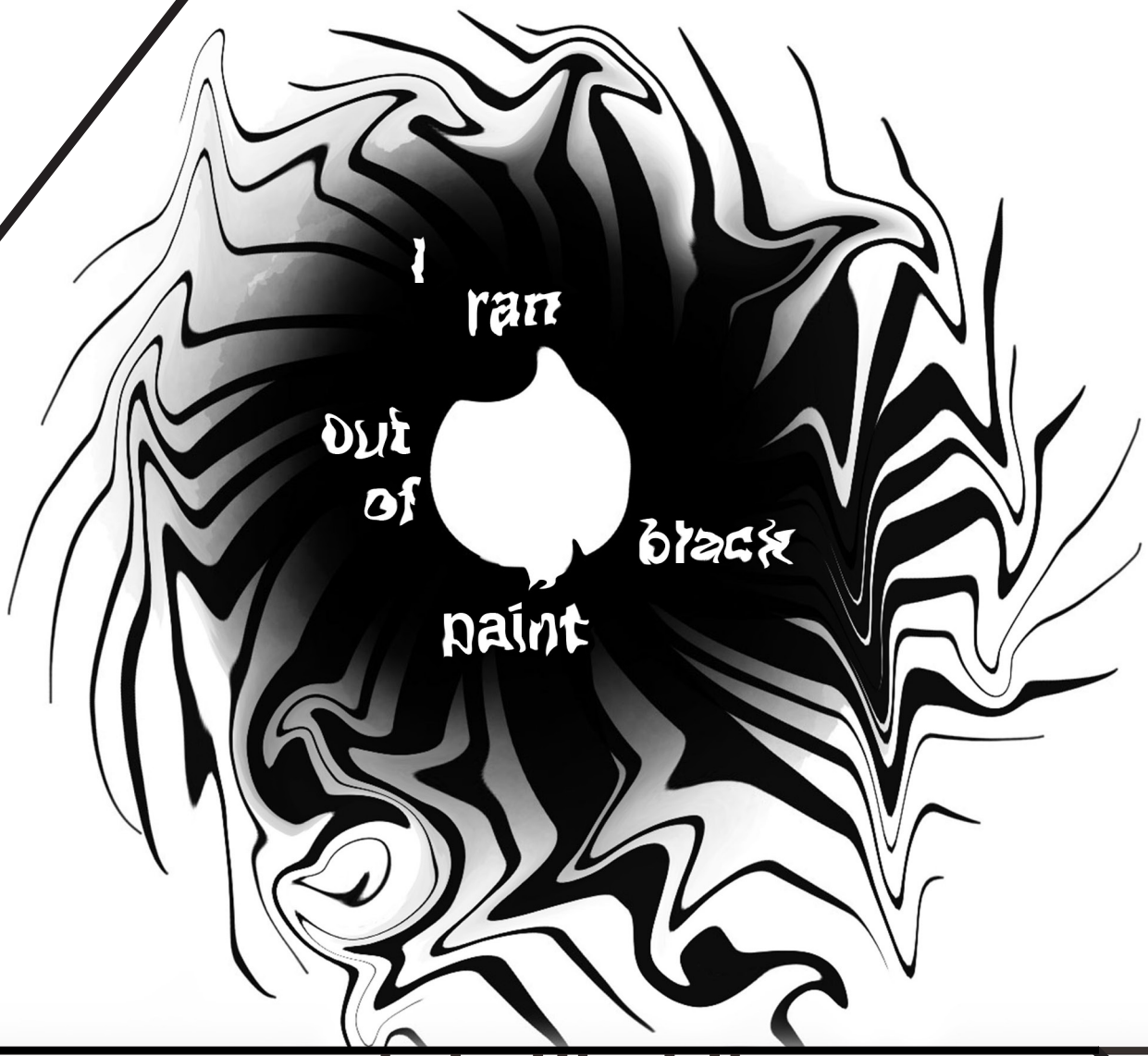


and sunshine

Kurt M. Mehlenbacher

I ran out of black paint and sunshine

for String Quartet and Harp

I. Prelude: Oh, the places you will go!
II. Geisel's Waltz
III. Song: I know it is wet...
IV. The perilous pants eating plants
V. Postlude: Your moutain is waiting

Composed by

Kurt M. Mehlenbacher

Commissioned by Kathryn Harms, harpist
with funds made possible by a grant from the American Harp Society, Inc.

For Kathryn Harms and the Altius Quartet

Duration: Approximately 15 minutes

2015

Dedicated with much admiration to

Kathryn Harms, harp
Joshua Ulrich, violin
Andrew Giordano, violin
Andrew Krimm, viola
Zachary Reaves, cello

Program Notes

"Write the piece that you have always wanted to write." These were the words spoken to me regularly by Robert Kyr, my composition teacher from my time at the Oregon School of Music. For the most part, I always thought I was; each piece in my catalogue garnered more and more passion and enthusiasm from me than the previous. But there was something different about this project than any other I had taken on, though I could not put my finger on it.

When Kathryn proposed the idea of a piece for string quartet and harp, I was immediately captivated by the possibilities of such an ensemble. As we began to research past pieces for the group, it became apparent that, for whatever reason, this ensemble has not been utilized as exhaustively as one would think. Of the pieces of note, André Caplet's "*Conte Fantastique (The Masque of the Red Death)" d'après Poe* (1924) and R. Murray Schaffer's *Theseus* (1983) are two major ones that may exist within a musicians common knowledge. I attribute the success of these pieces not only to their brilliant creators, but also because both composers realized the inherent narrative ability of the ensemble, embedding a vivid and magical story into each piece that is indivisible from the music itself. Taking that cue, I decided to embark on a journey to tell my own story, if only I knew what it was!

As I began work on the piece, the purpose of it changed quite regularly. Initially, I was planning on portraying a type of fantasy world, first without any particular plan, and then with something inspired by the Norse creation myth. That quickly fell by the wayside, however, as I remembered the quote from Dr. Kyr and started looking at everything I wanted to write versus what I thought I should write.

What was this piece I always wanted to write and how do I get to it? As I struggled with this question, it became apparent that honesty was going to be the best approach. In examining myself, I needed to come to grips with my influences. Sure, Tchaikovsky, Vaughan Williams, and Rimsky-Korsakov are my go-tos in a professional conversation, but I was raised listening to the soundtracks of musicals, with Andrew Lloyd Weber being a daily occurrence, followed regularly by the original cast recording of *Les Miserables*. Additionally, I was given a Nintendo Gameboy when I was five, and video games and their music have been a way of life ever since.

In examining all of these influences—especially the ones I had little control in selecting—it really boiled down to one thread that was consistent throughout my childhood, and well into my adulthood: Dr. Seuss. My father use to read *Fox in Socks* to my sister and me at night, I'm almost certain I learned to read with *Green Eggs and Ham* and *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*, and I still keep a copy of *Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are?* on my bookshelf for when a close friend falls ill and needs to be read to in bed. These were my influences, and this is from where my piece would draw.

Instead of pulling characters or places, it seemed more feasible to draw from Suess' poetry. Lifting single lines from a number of his books, my plan was to strip them of context and create a section of the piece based on personal interpretation of each isolated sentence. Four of the five movements are constructed through this approach, with the second movement being the only one directly inspired by the illustrations of Suess' books rather than any text in particular. *Oh, the places you will go!* comes from the book of the same title (admittedly, the book is titled *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*, but I really dislike contractions in this context) and was Suess' last book published in his life time (1990). *I know it is wet...* is a fragment from the ever-popular *Cat in the Hat* from 1957, *The perilous pants eating plants* is lifted from *Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are?* (one of my favorites) from 1973, and the last movement, *Your Mountain is Waiting*, comes again from *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*, though from the last page instead of the first.

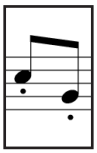
I ran out of black paint and sunshine is made possible from the tireless support of Kathryn Harms, whose support of contemporary music and enthusiasm of educating anyone and everyone on the harp and its endless uses in music has led me to rediscover myself and write the piece I have always wanted to write.

Kurt M. Mehlenbacher

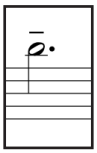
Notes to the Performance

While the notation of this piece is hopefully self-explanatory, there are a handful of general performance thoughts that should be addressed:

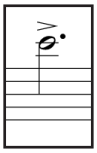
Articulations:



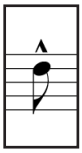
Staccatos are a "dit" articulation, separated and light.



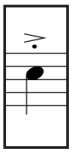
Tenutos are a "doo" articulation, legato in nature with a tiny bit of weight.



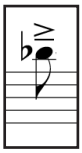
Accents are a "dah" articulation, adding much more weight to a note without changing its duration.



Marcatos are a "dot" articulation, heavier than an accent and much shorter.



Staccato accents are separated, more bouncy accents.



Tenuto accents have a bit more weight than accents with a legato touch.

Other Considerations

This work consists of approximately 15 minutes of near-continuous playing for many of the members of the ensemble with no breaks between movements to retune. As such, it is recommended that the ensemble tunes at a slightly higher frequency (c. A 442) to help negate any noticeably-sagging pitch at the end of the piece.

Any note that is tied to an eighth note and followed by an eighth rest indicates that the release occurs on the beat where the eighth note appears

Ponticello should be a very different, glassy color from normal position, wiry and rife with harmonics.

Harmonics, be they natural or artificial, should be played full body and with good tone, regardless of the written dynamic. All other dynamics should be adjusted appropriately based on the context.

In mvt. 3, mm. 14 and 79, the number of notes is not important. The effect of accelerating into and decelerating out of a tremolo is the end goal.

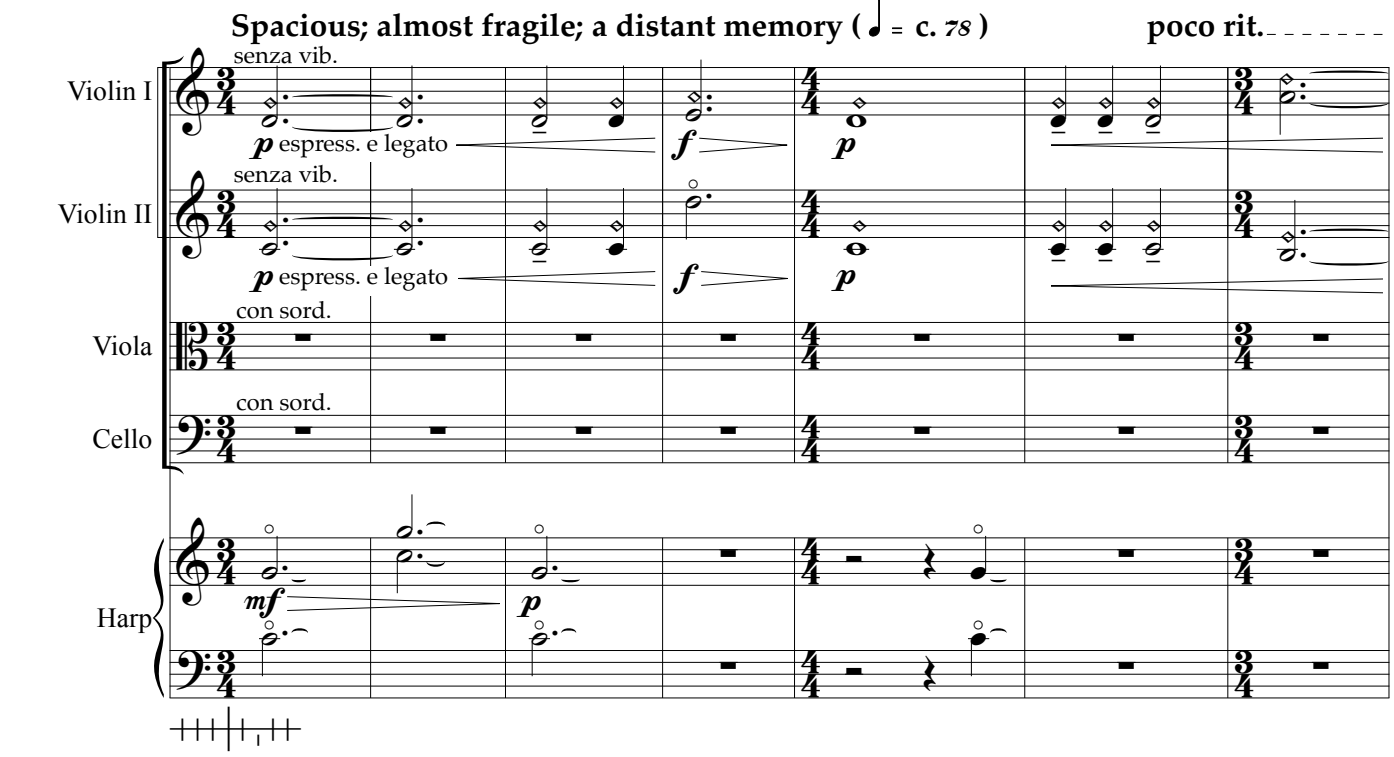
Commissioned by Kathryn Harms, harpist
made possible by a grant from the American Harp Society, Inc.
for Kathryn Harms and the Altius Quartet

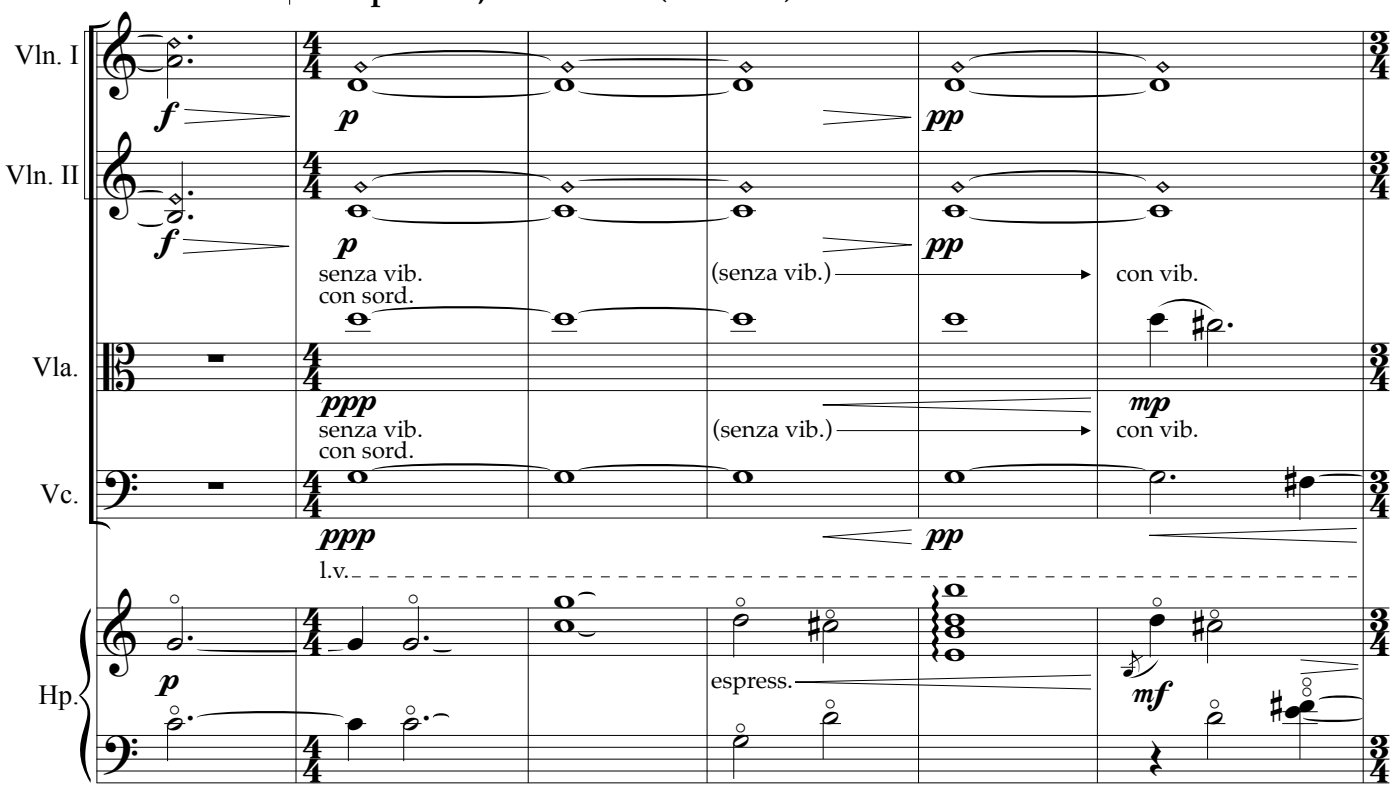
Score

I ran out of black paint and sunshine

Kurt M. Mehlenbacher

I. Prelude: Oh, the places you will go!





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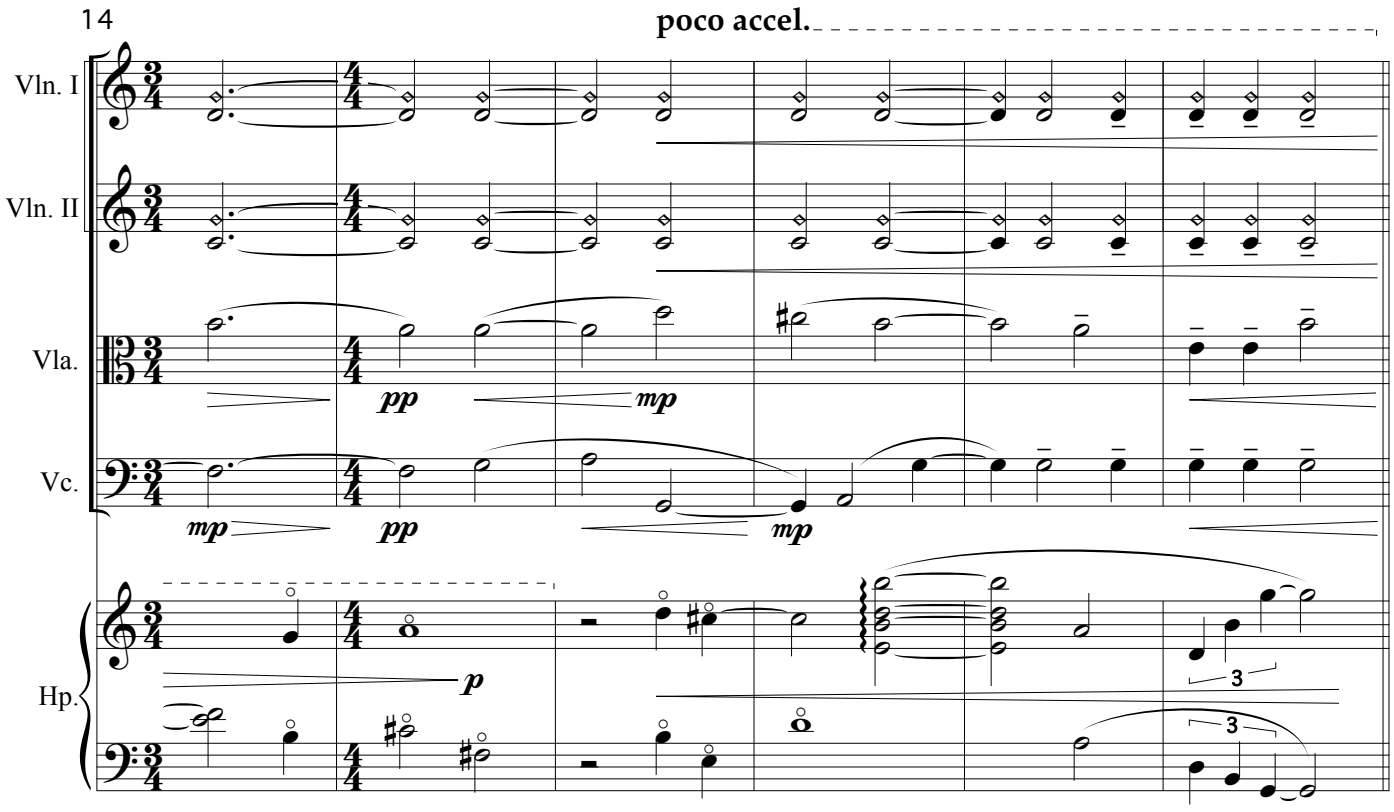
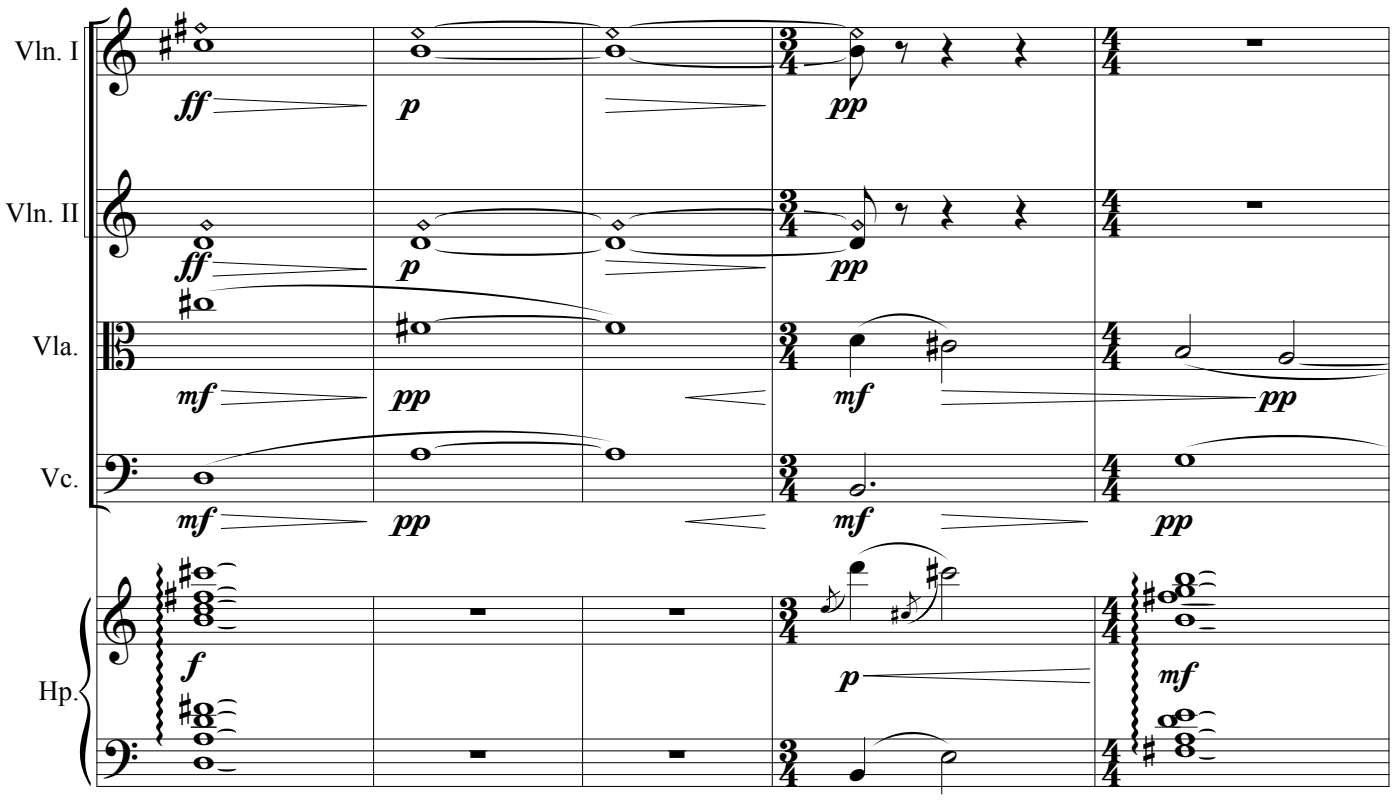
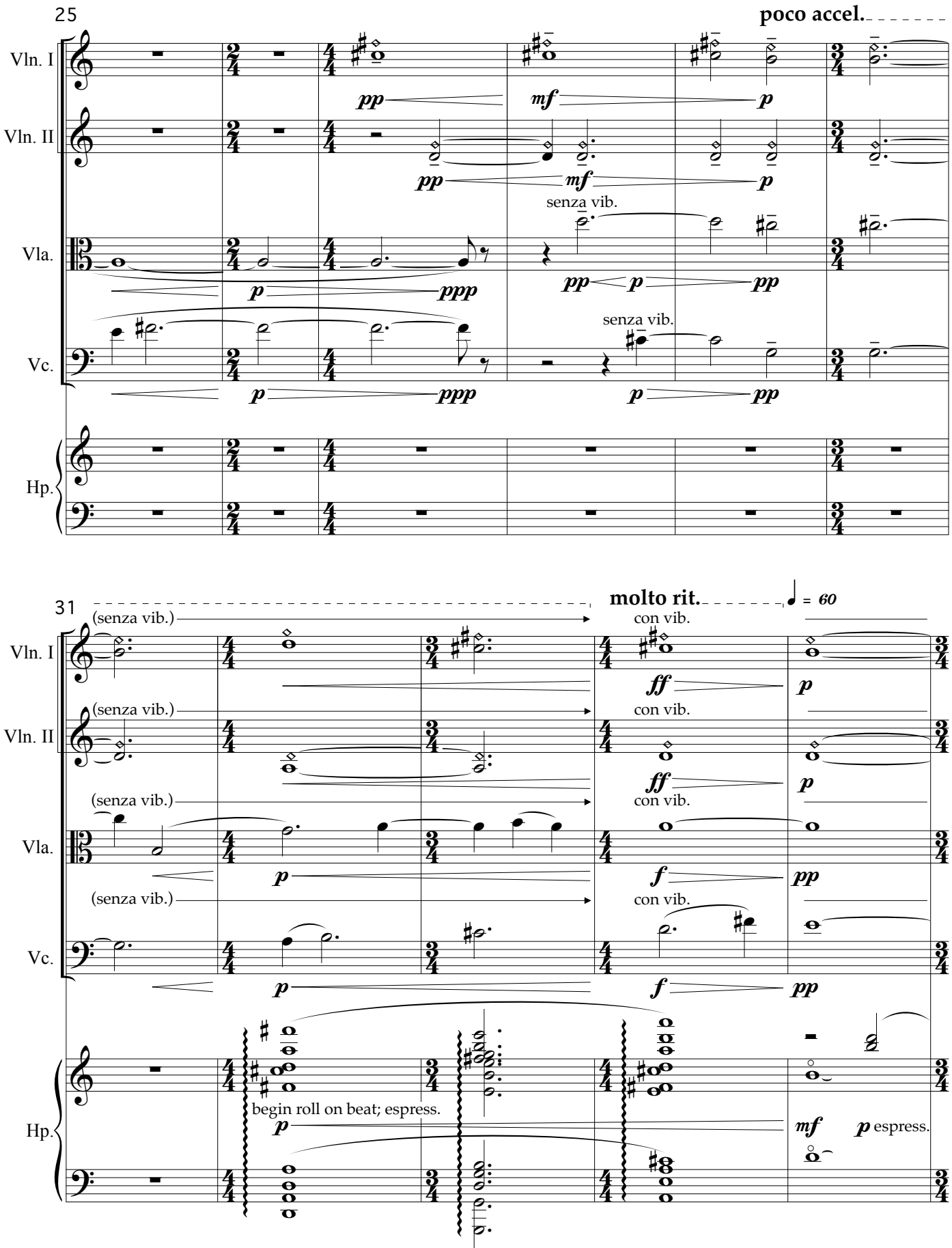
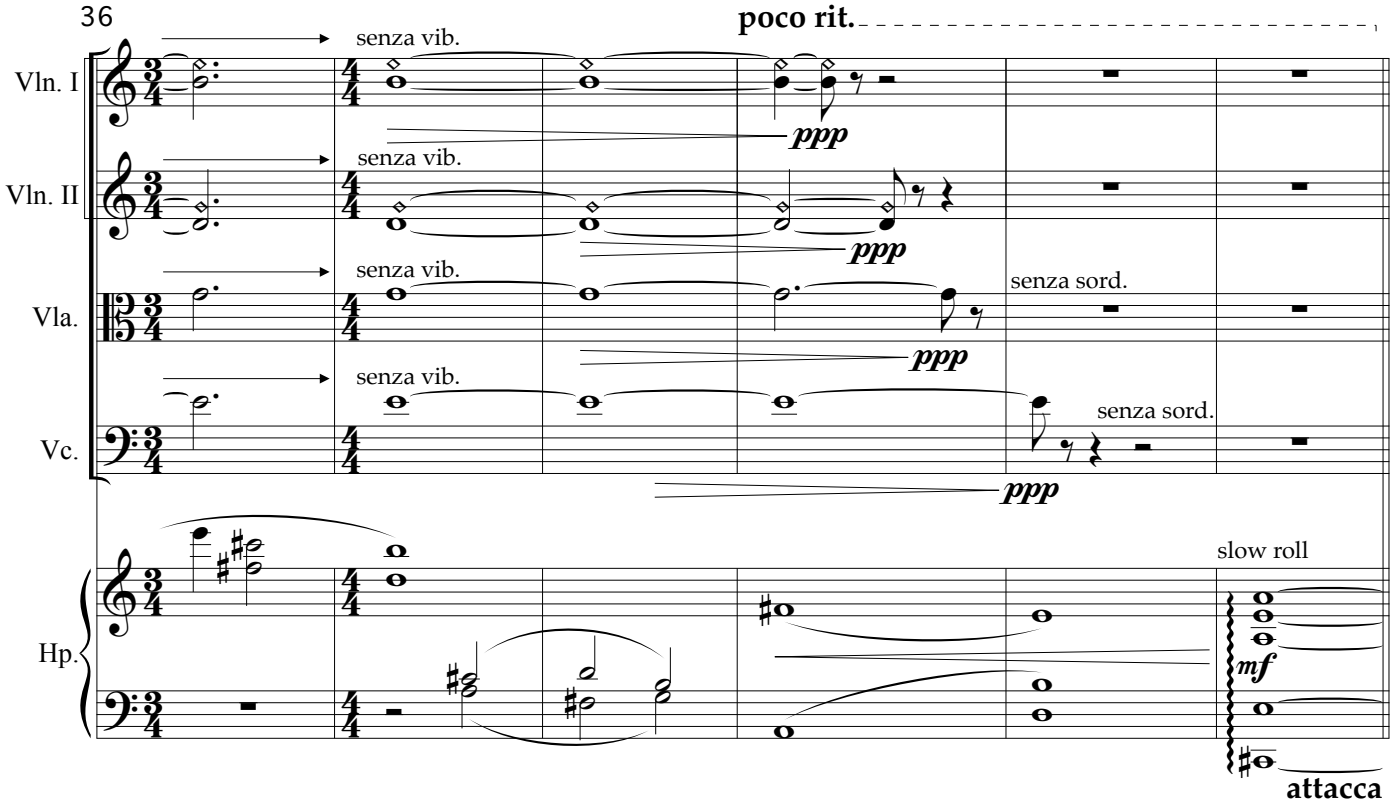
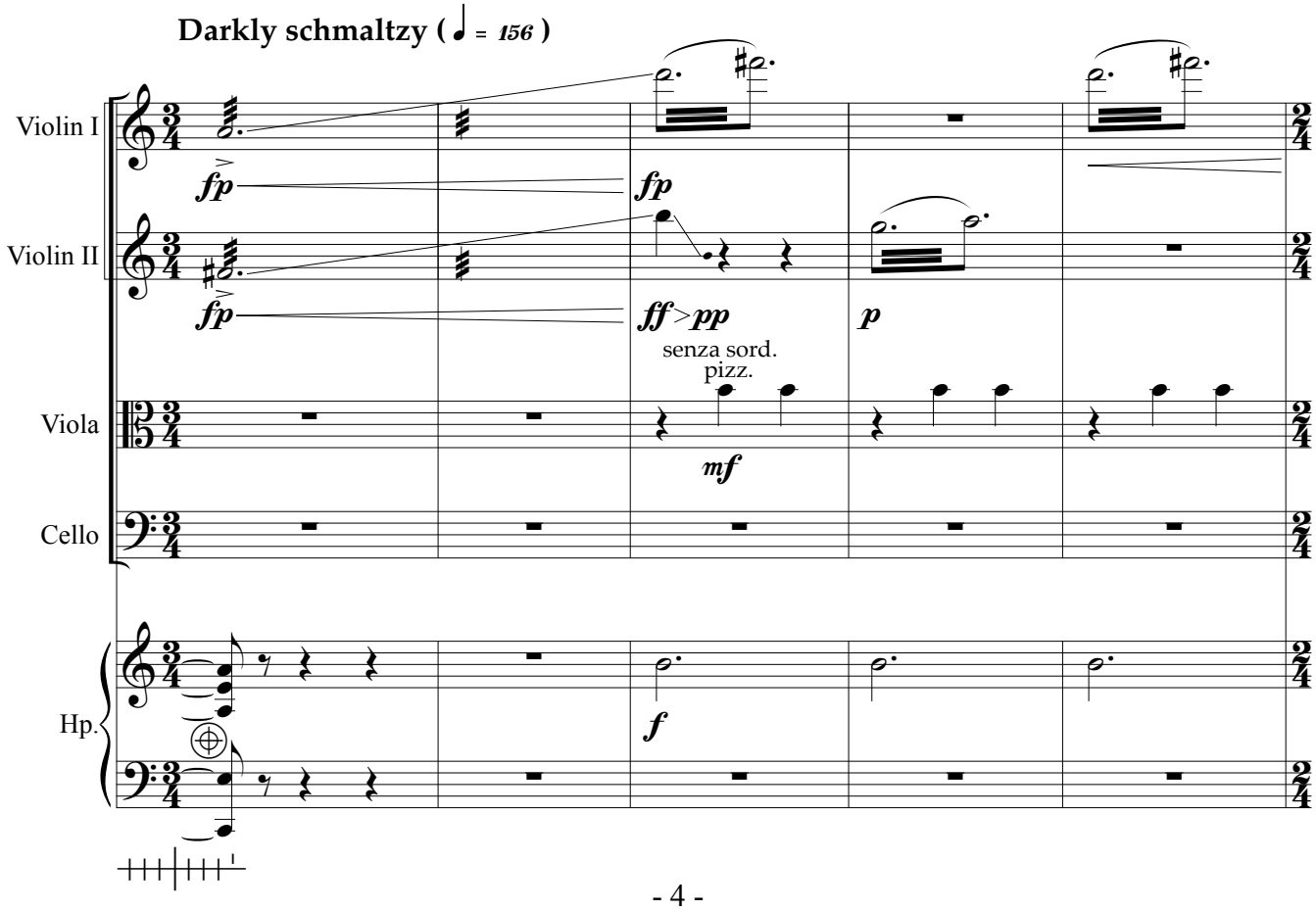

14
poco accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pp
mp
mp
mp
pp
mp
p
3
3

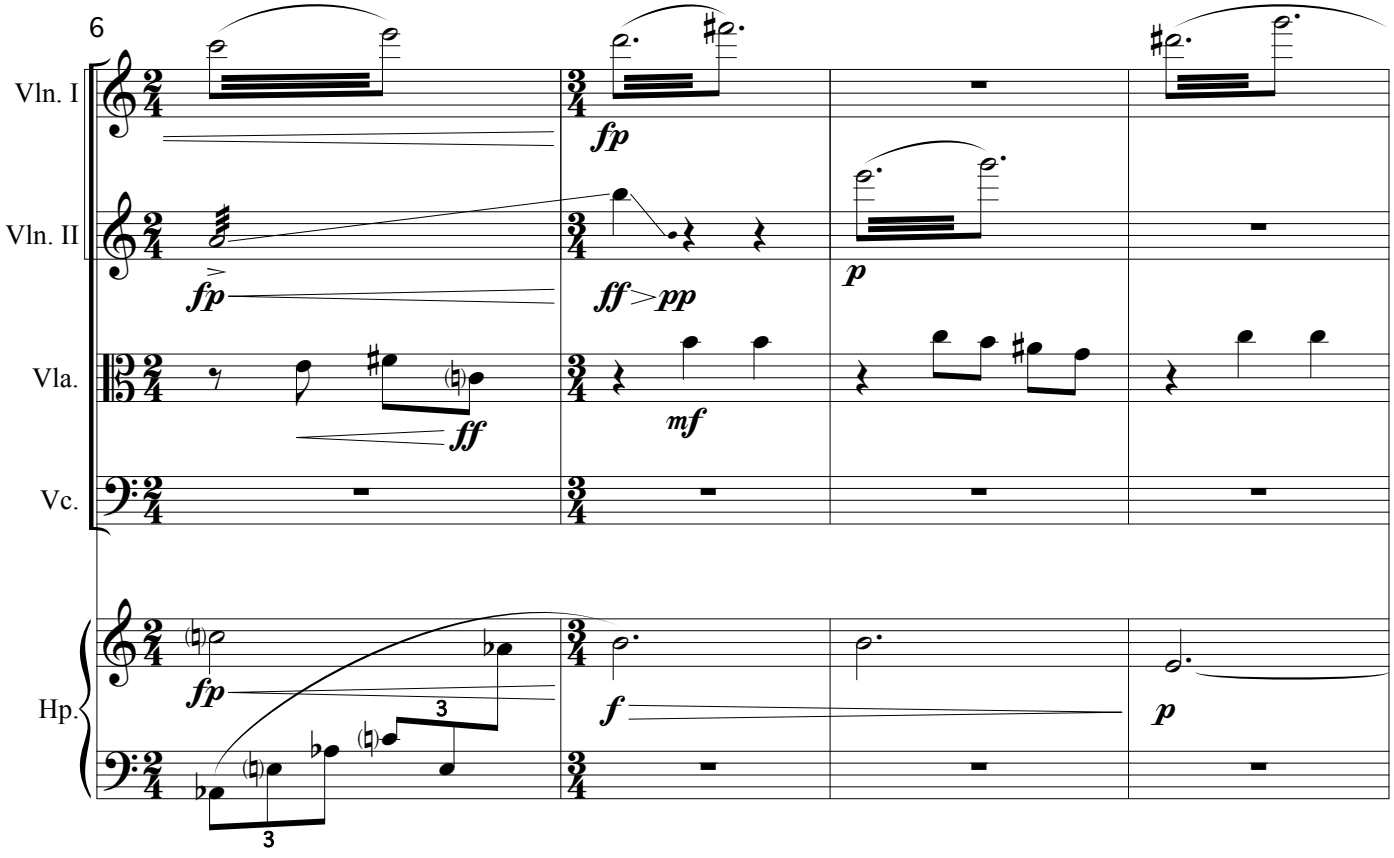

20 Broadly; Tempo I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
ff
p
pp
ff
p
pp
mf
pp
mf
pp
mf
pp
mf
pp
f
p
mf

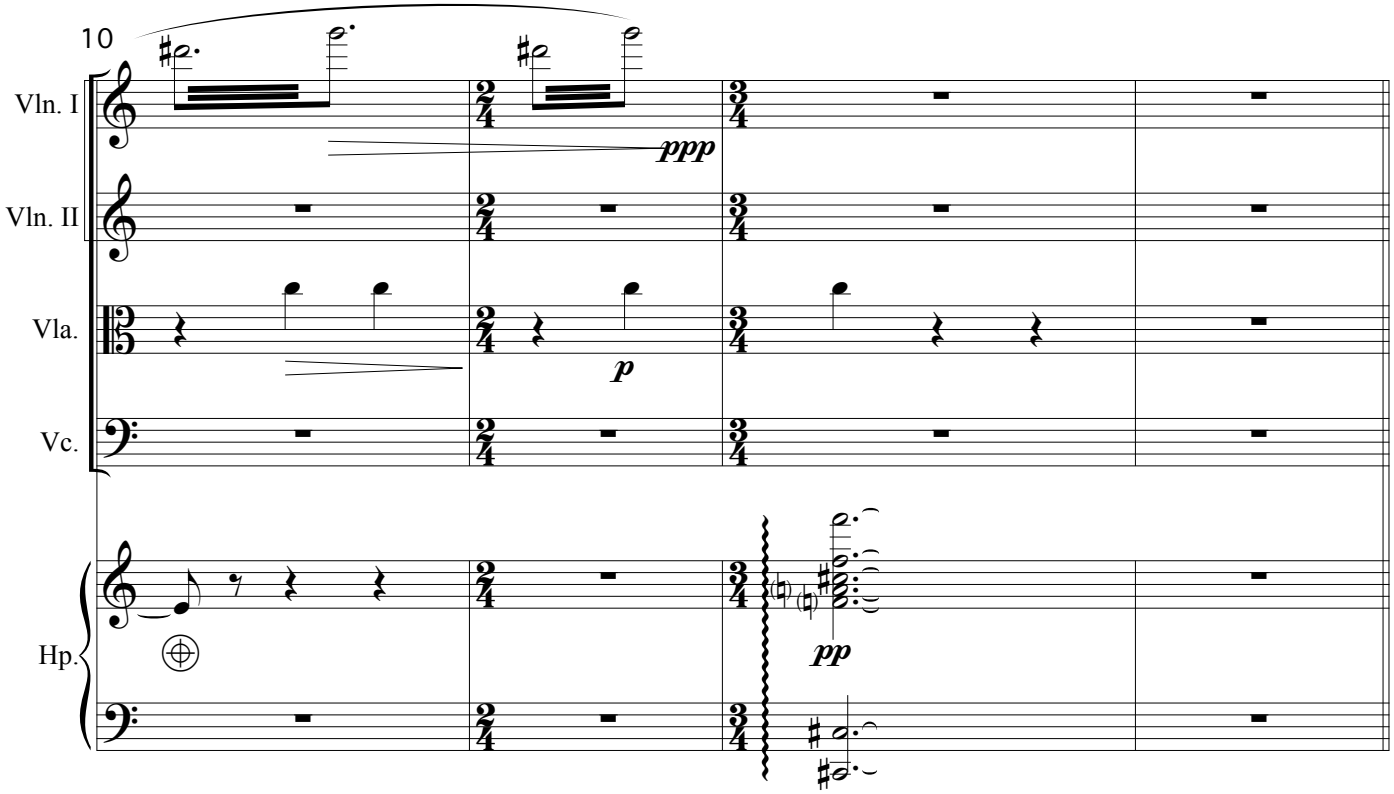

25
poco accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pp
mf
p
senza vib.
ppp
31
molto rit.
♩ = 60
(senza vib.)
con vib.
ff
f
begin roll on beat; espress.
espress.

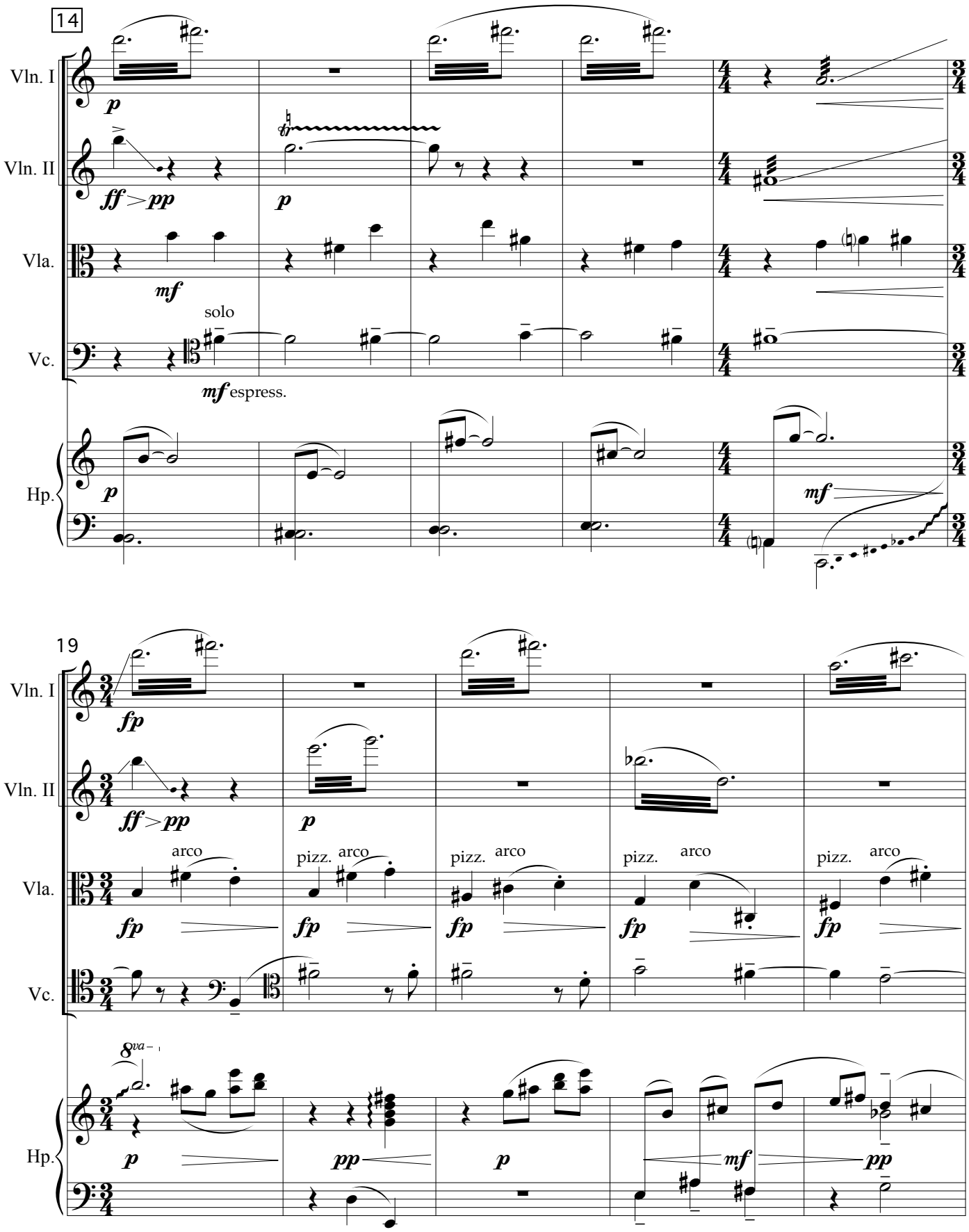


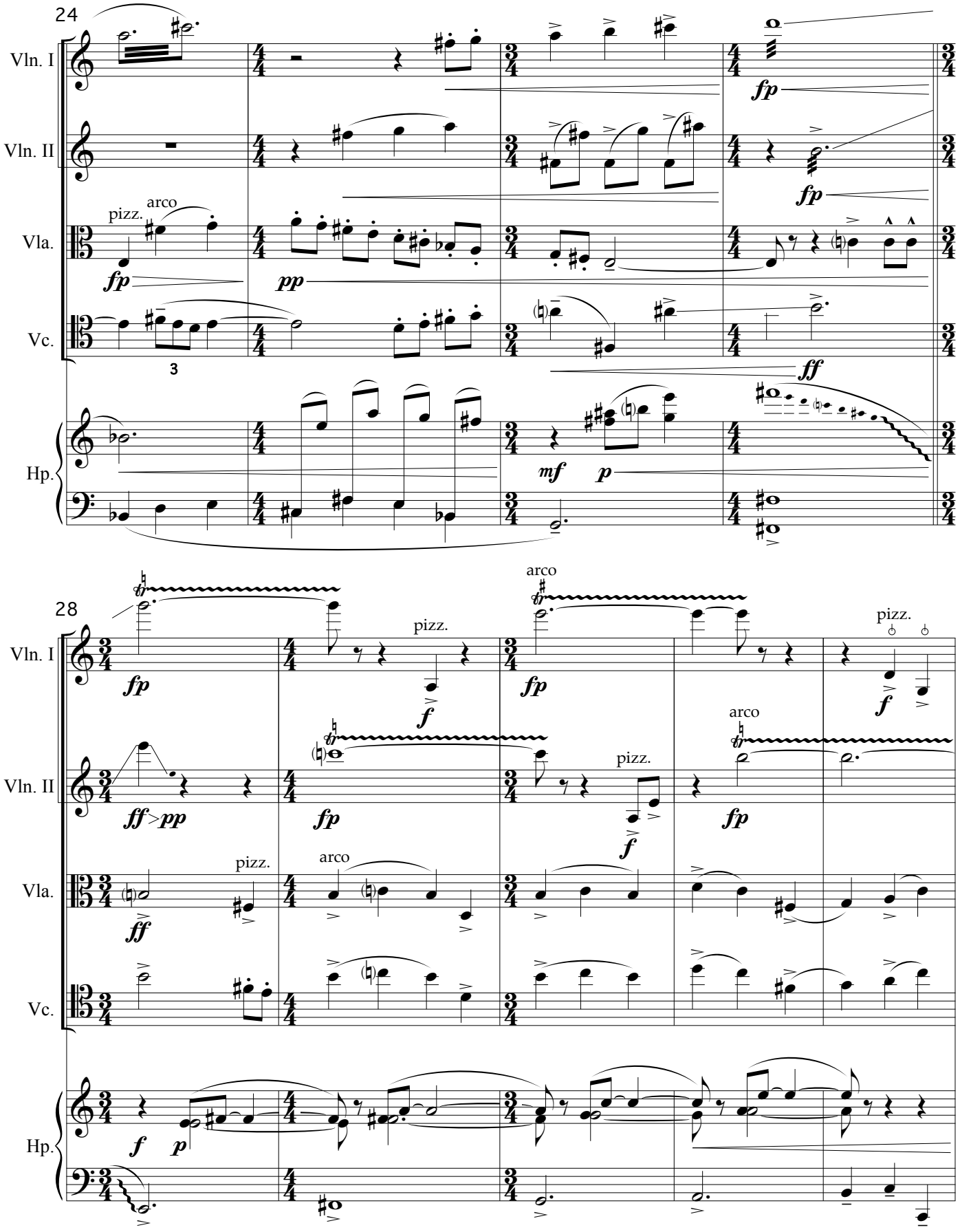
II. Geisel's Waltz

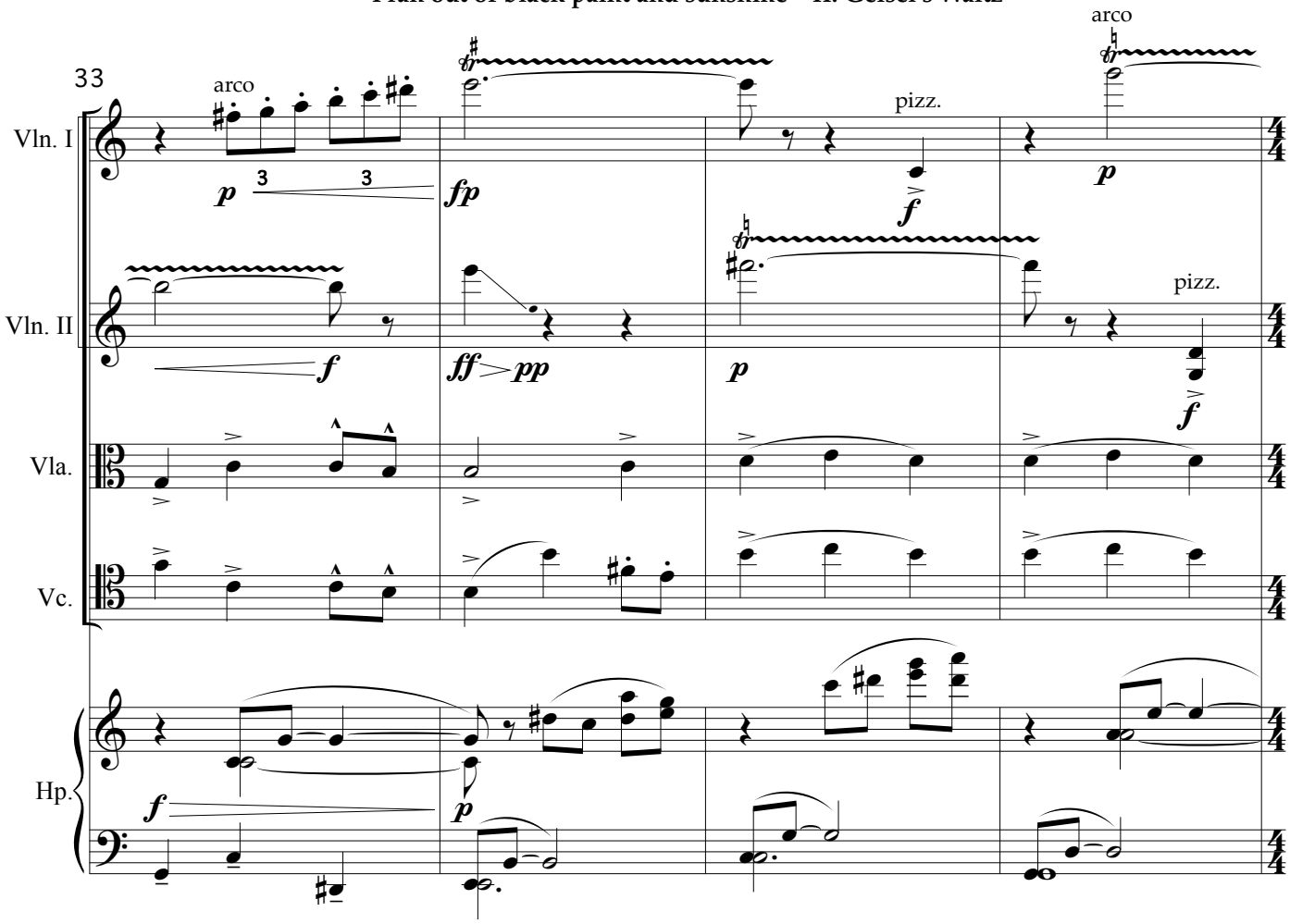


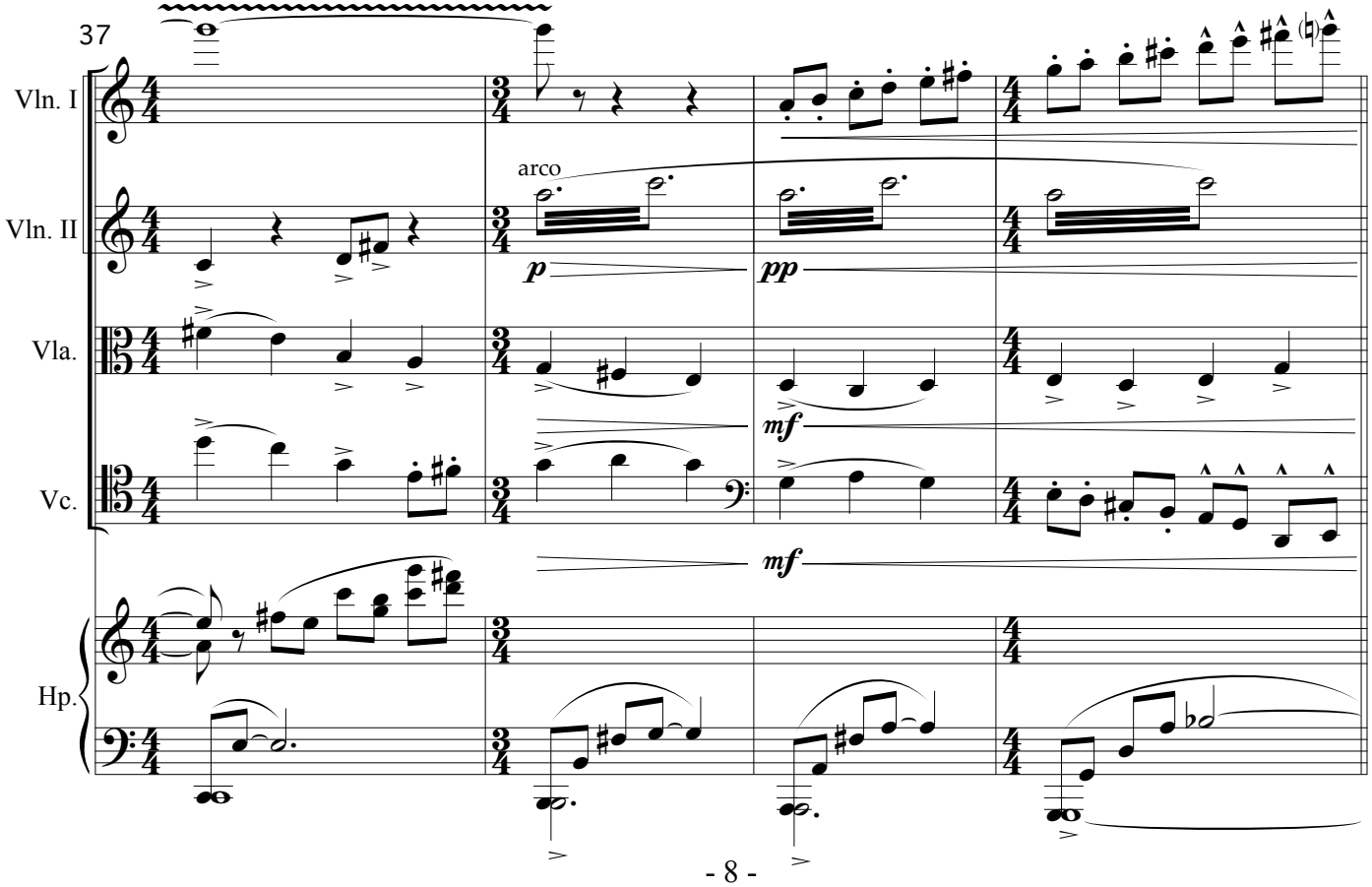

6
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
fp
ff
pp
mf
p
f
3

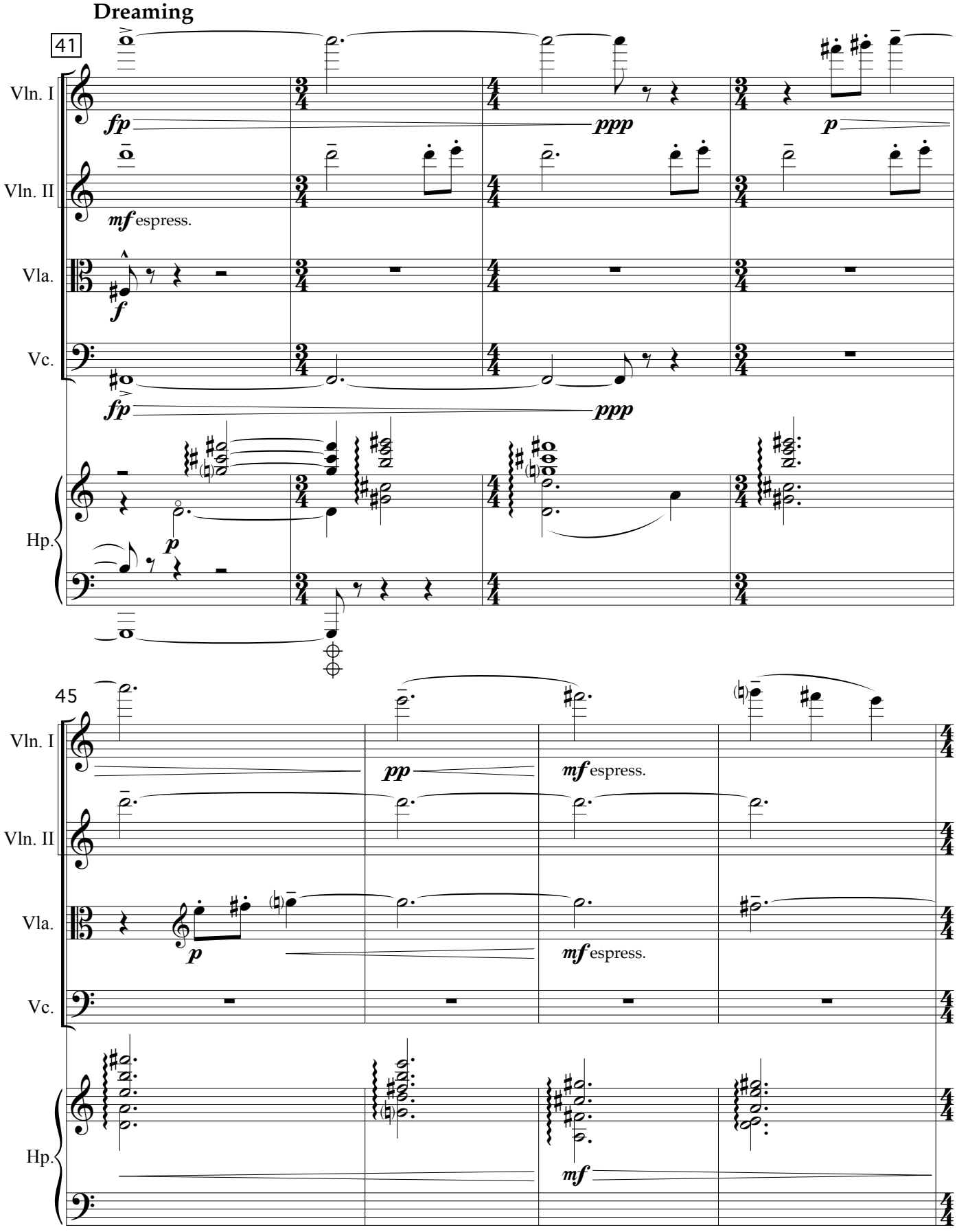

10
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
ppp
p
pp

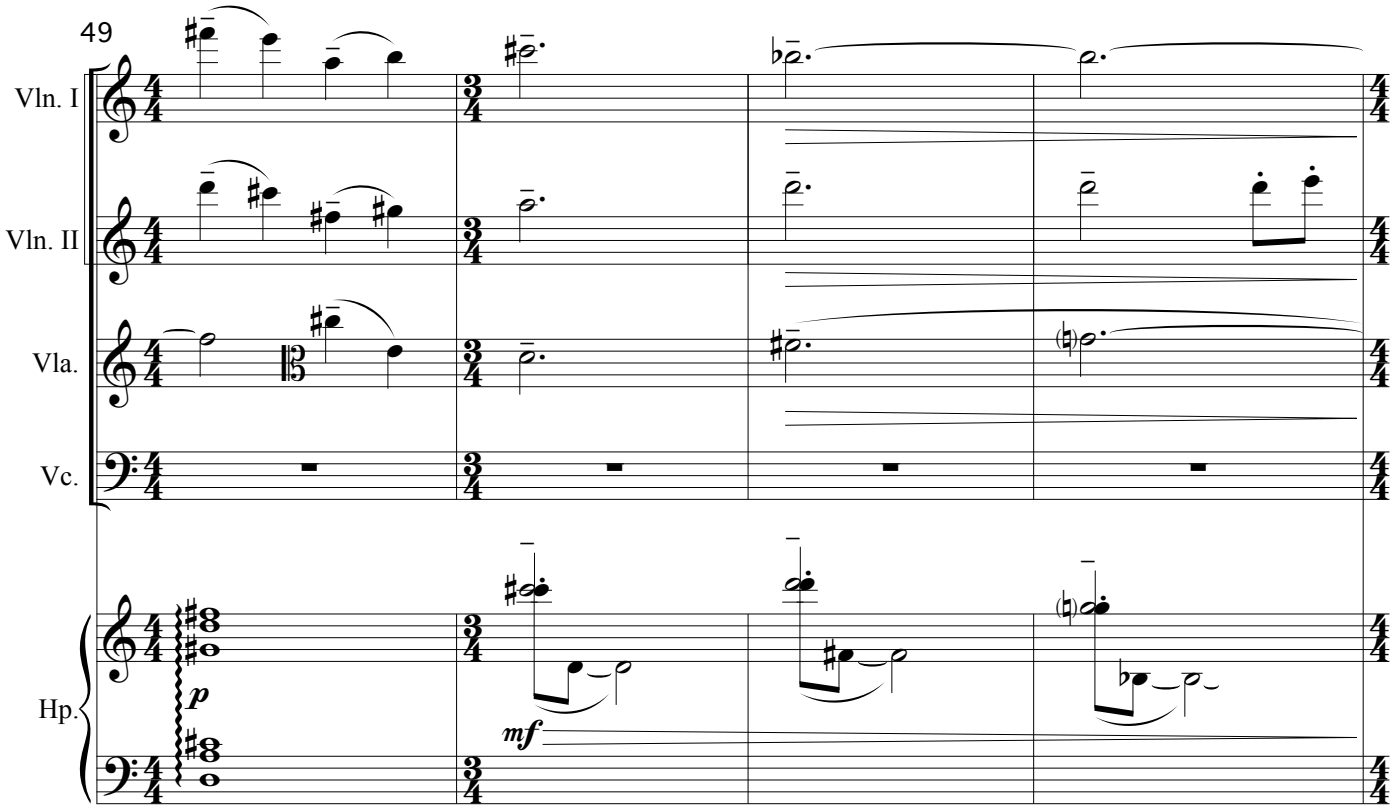

14
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
ff > pp
p
mf
solo
mf espress.
p
mf
19
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
fp
ff > pp
p
arco
pizz. arco
pizz. arco
pizz. arco
pizz. arco
fp
8va
p
pp
p
mf
pp

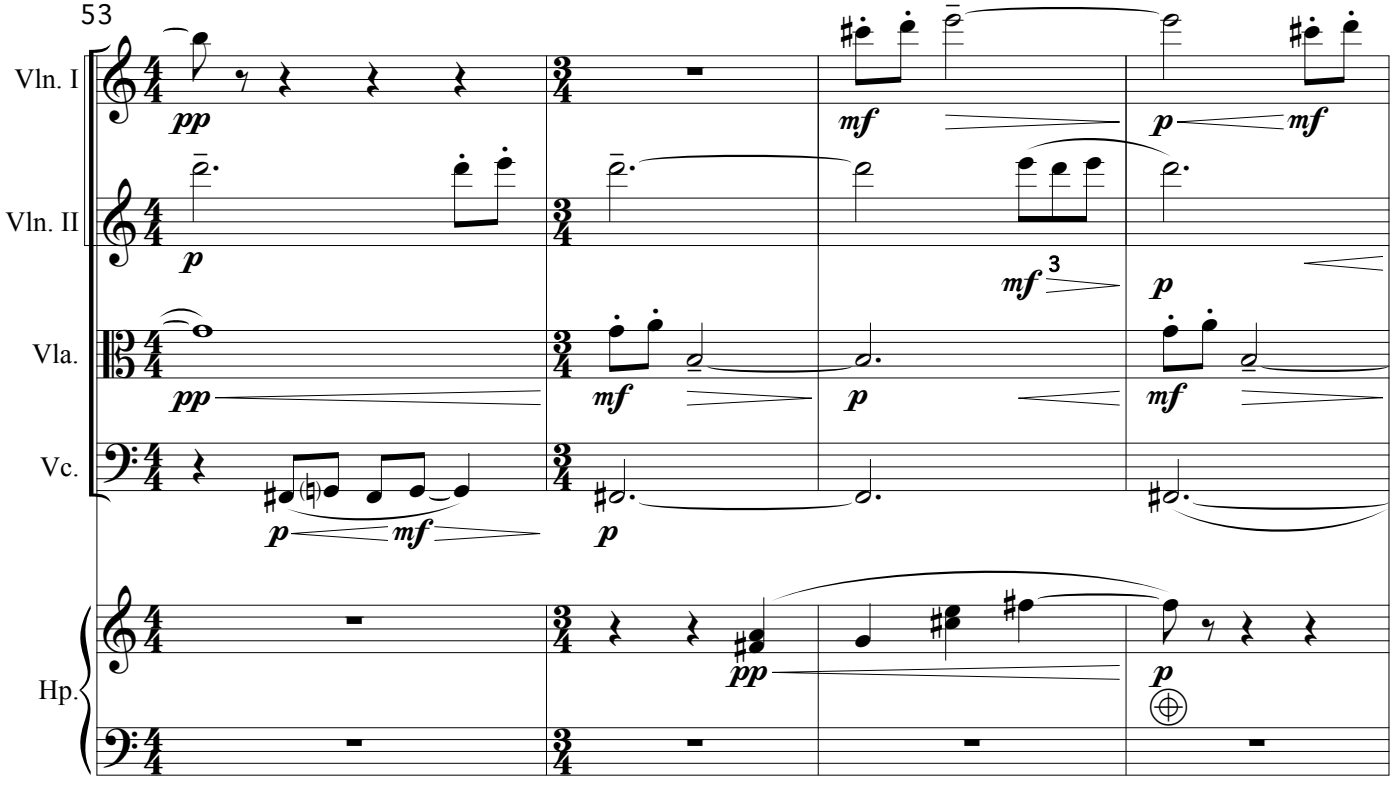

24
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pizz.
arco
fp
pp
ff
mf
p
3
28
f
ff>pp

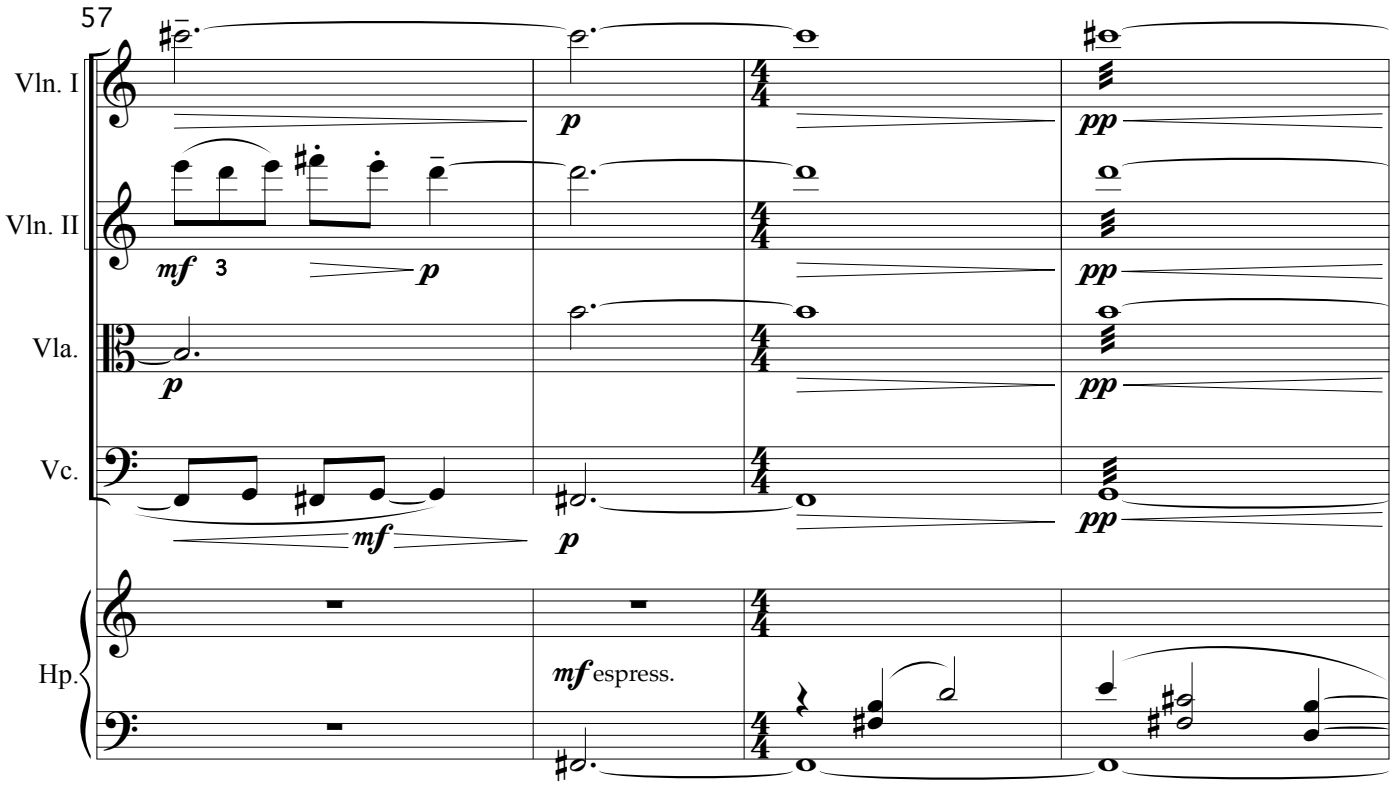

33
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
p
fp
f
p
f
ff
pp
p
f
f
p

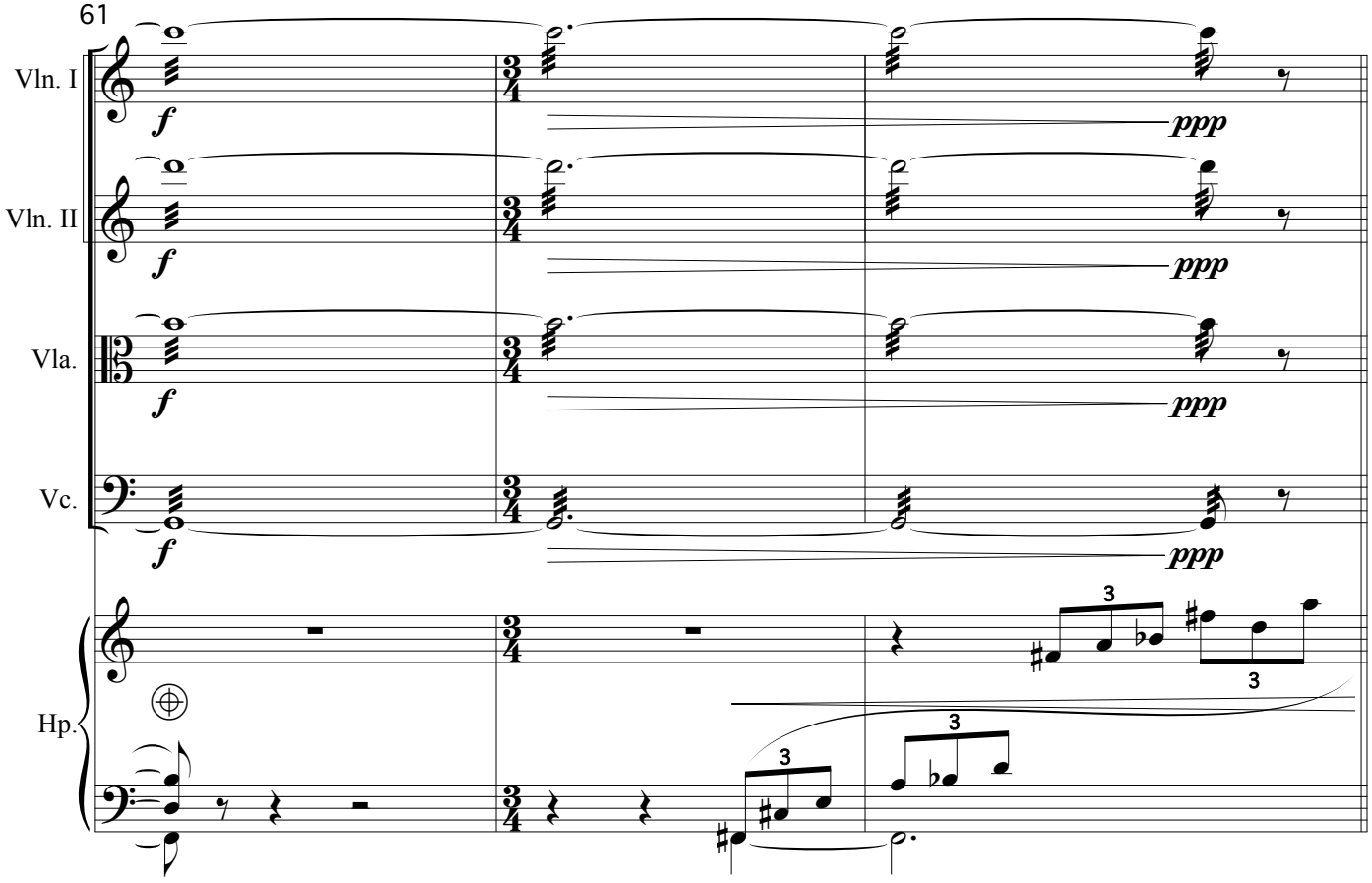

37
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
arco
p
pp
mf
mf


Dreaming
41
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
fp
ppp
p
mf espress.
f
45
pp
mf

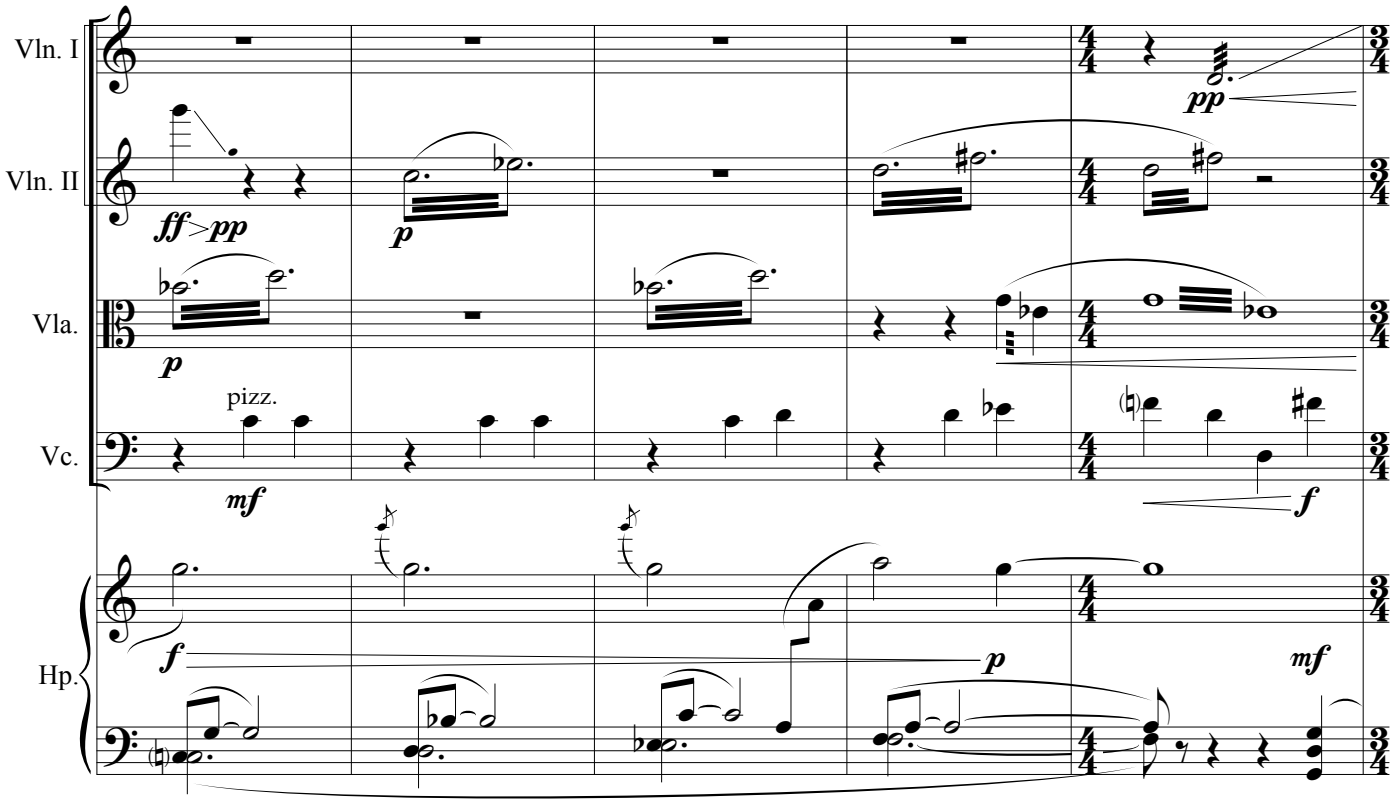

49
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
mf


53
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pp
p
mf
3

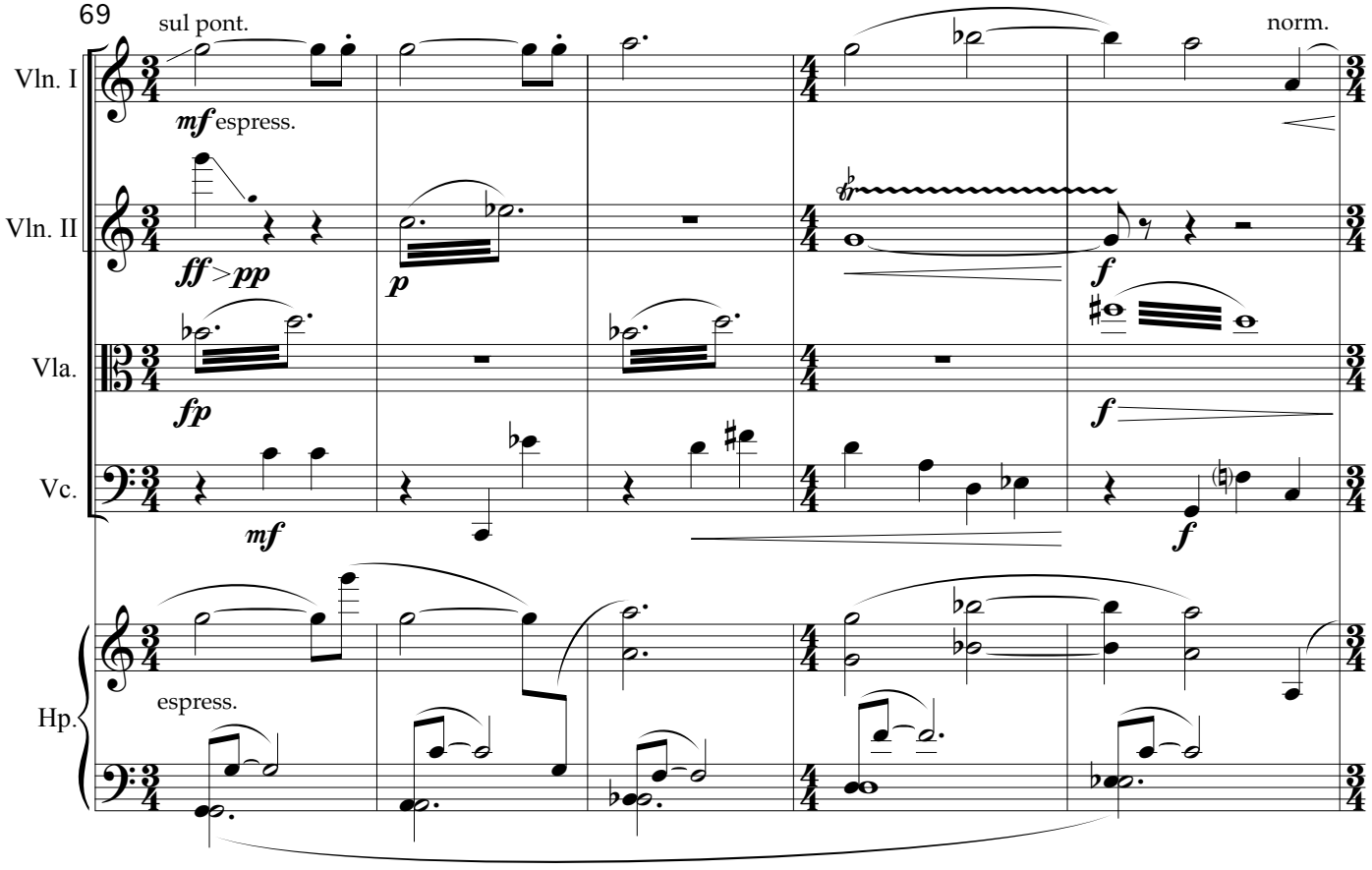

57
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
mf
3
p
pp
mf espress.

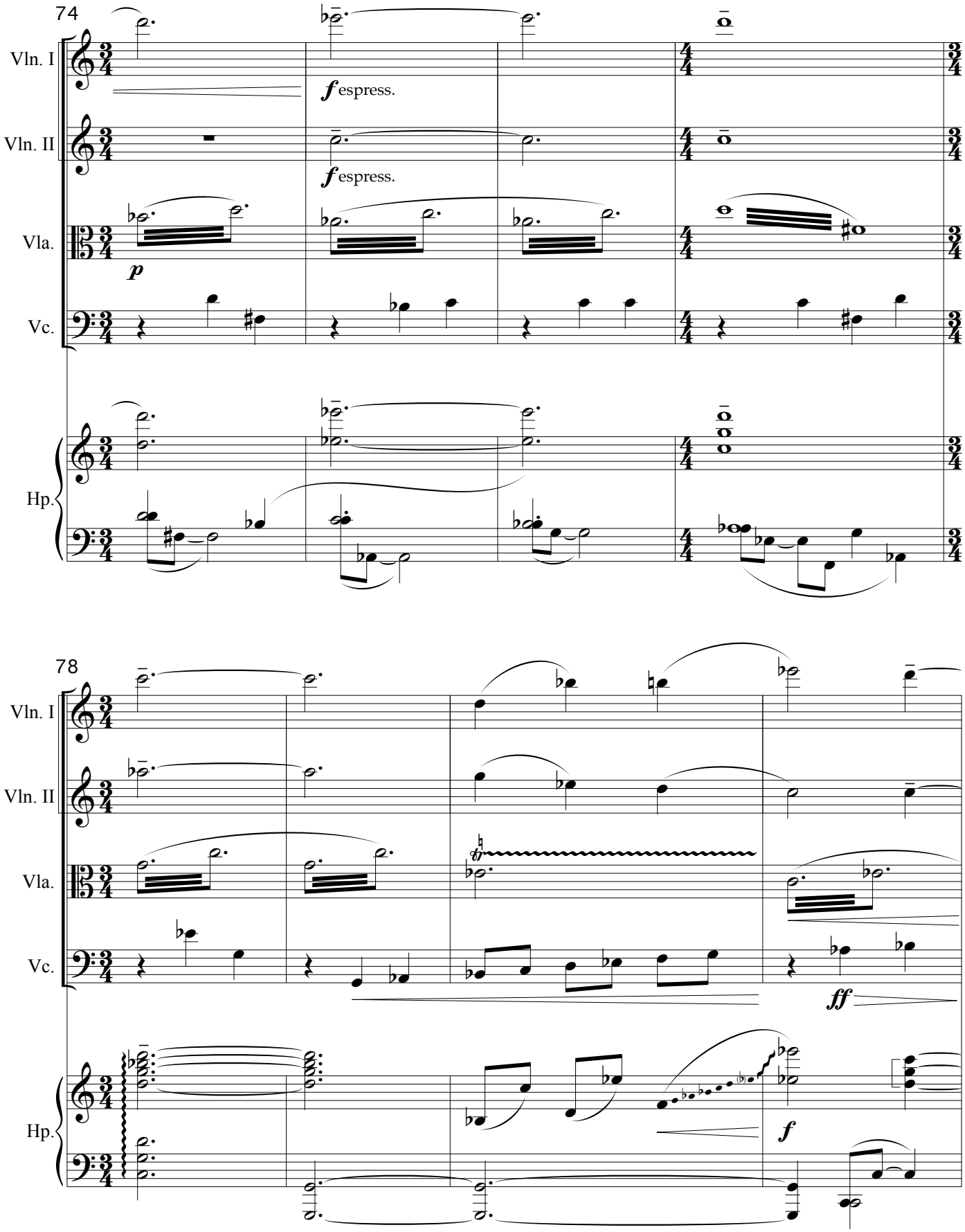

61
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
f
ppp
3

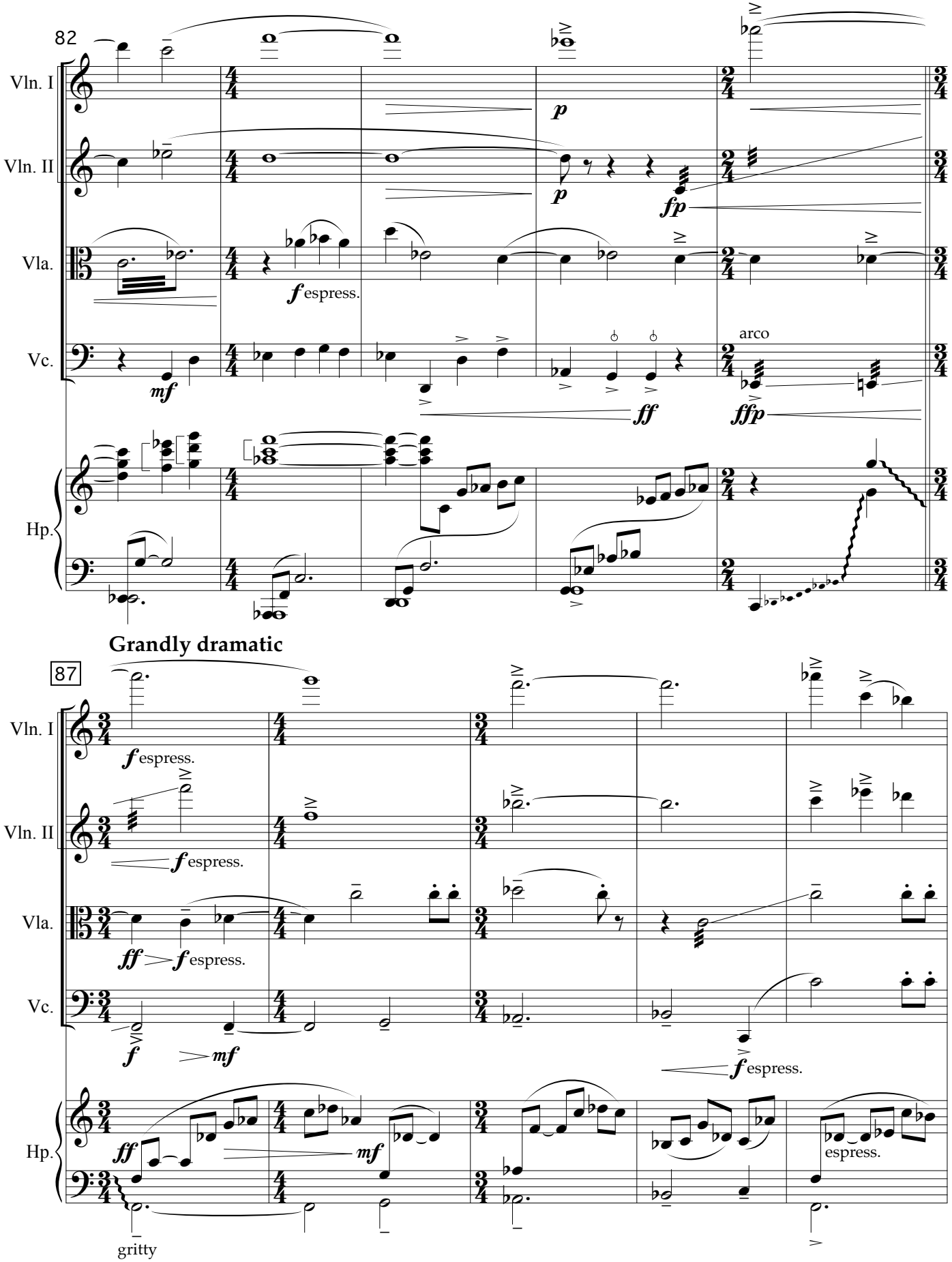
64 **Wispy**

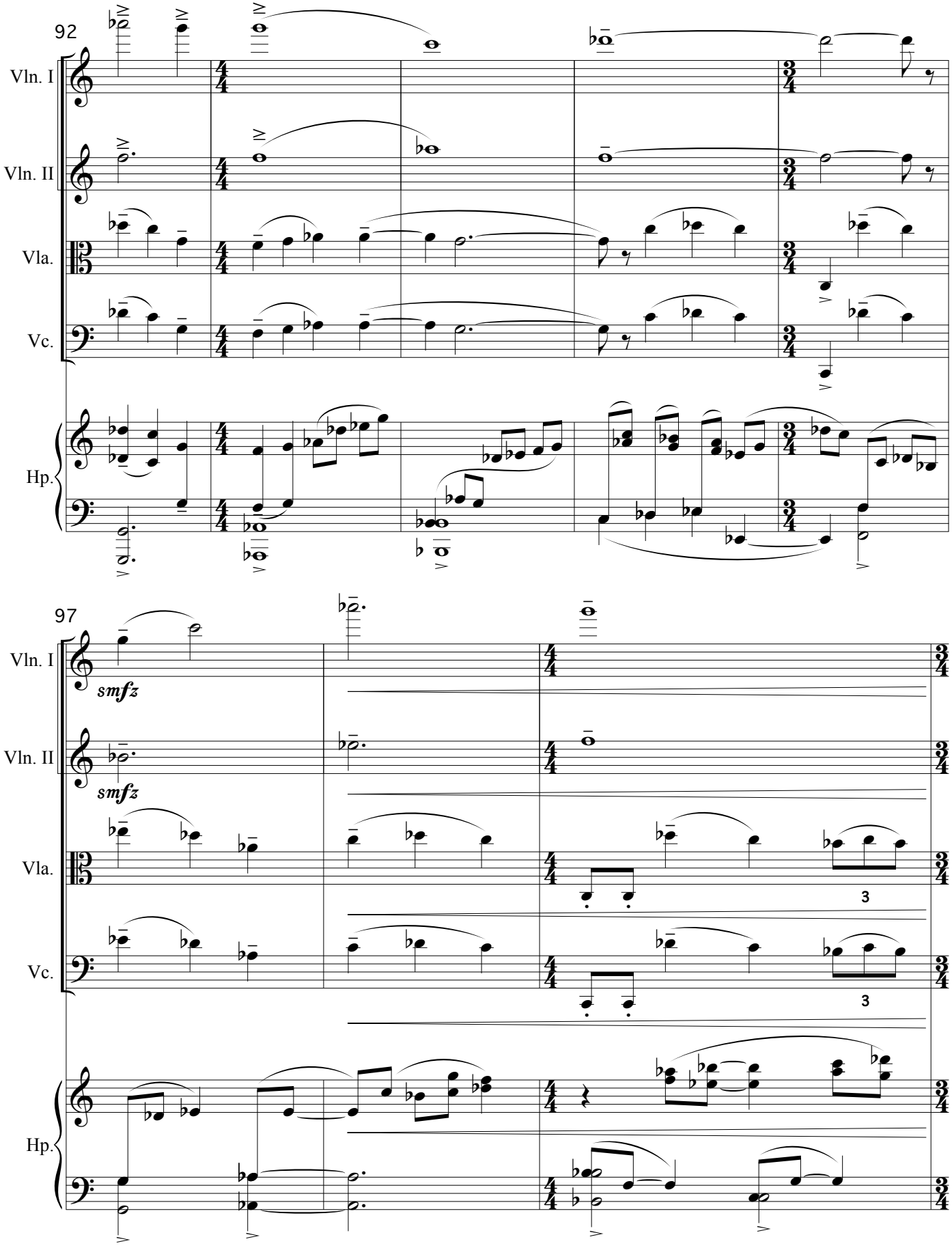

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pizz.

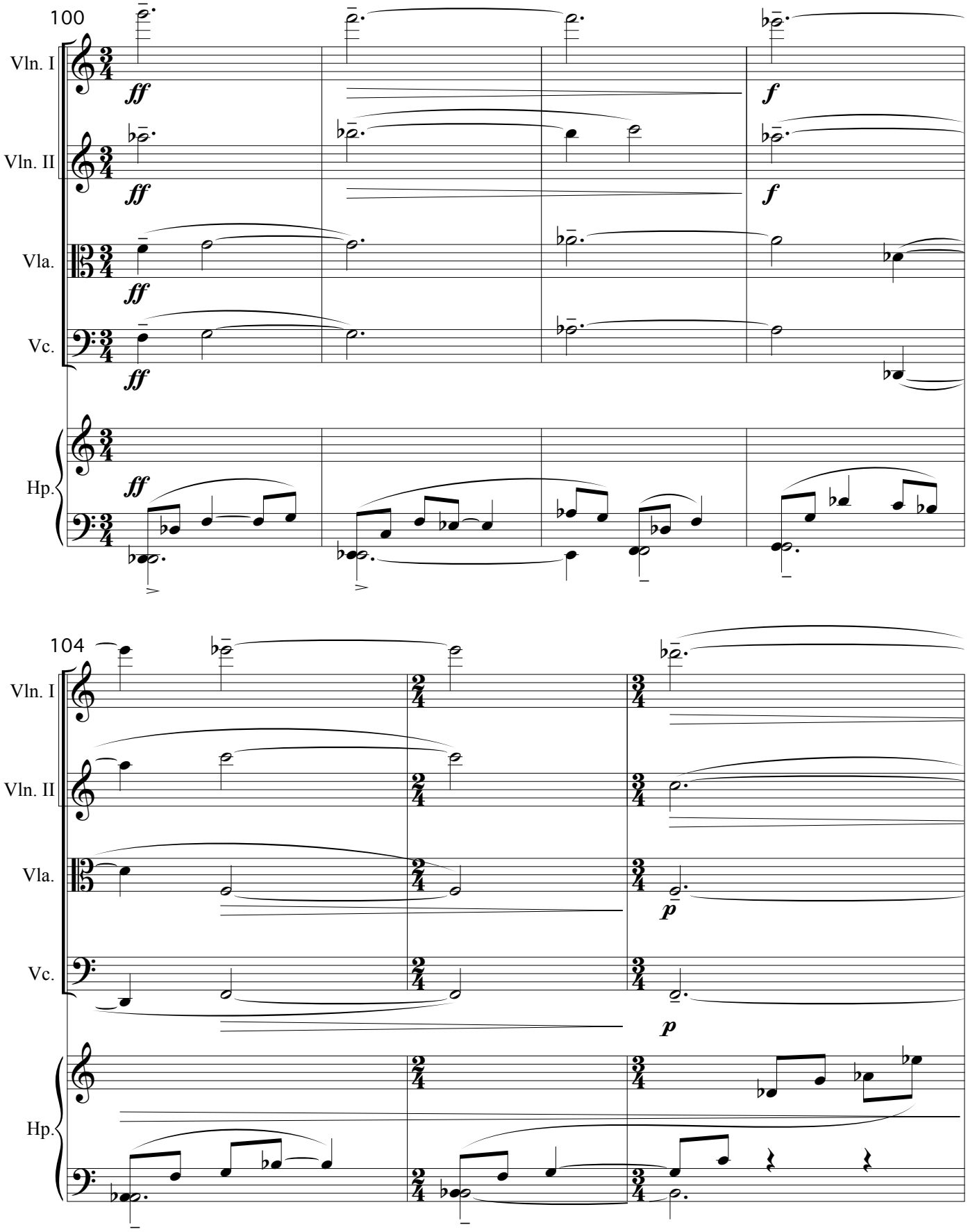
69

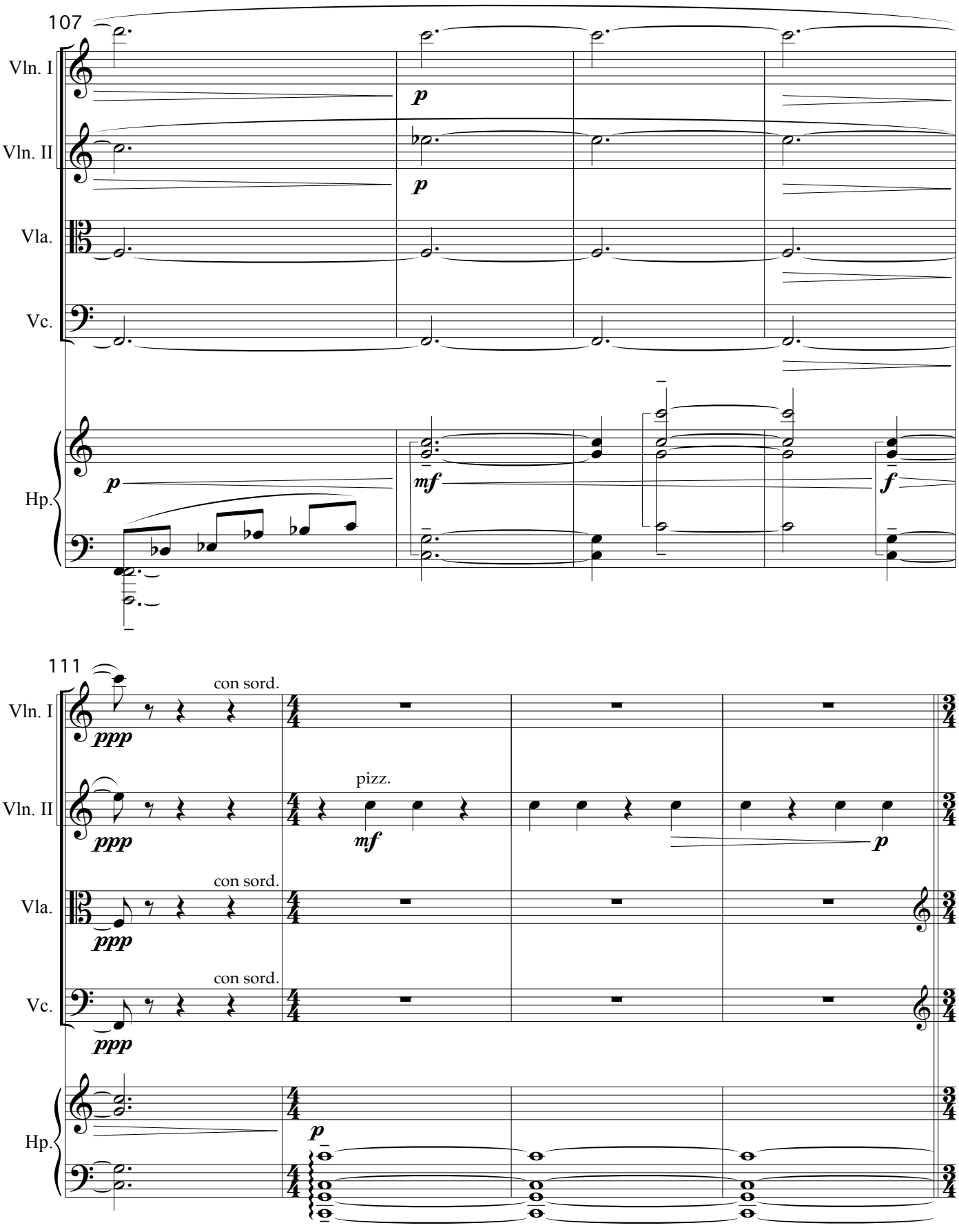

sul pont.
norm.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
espress.

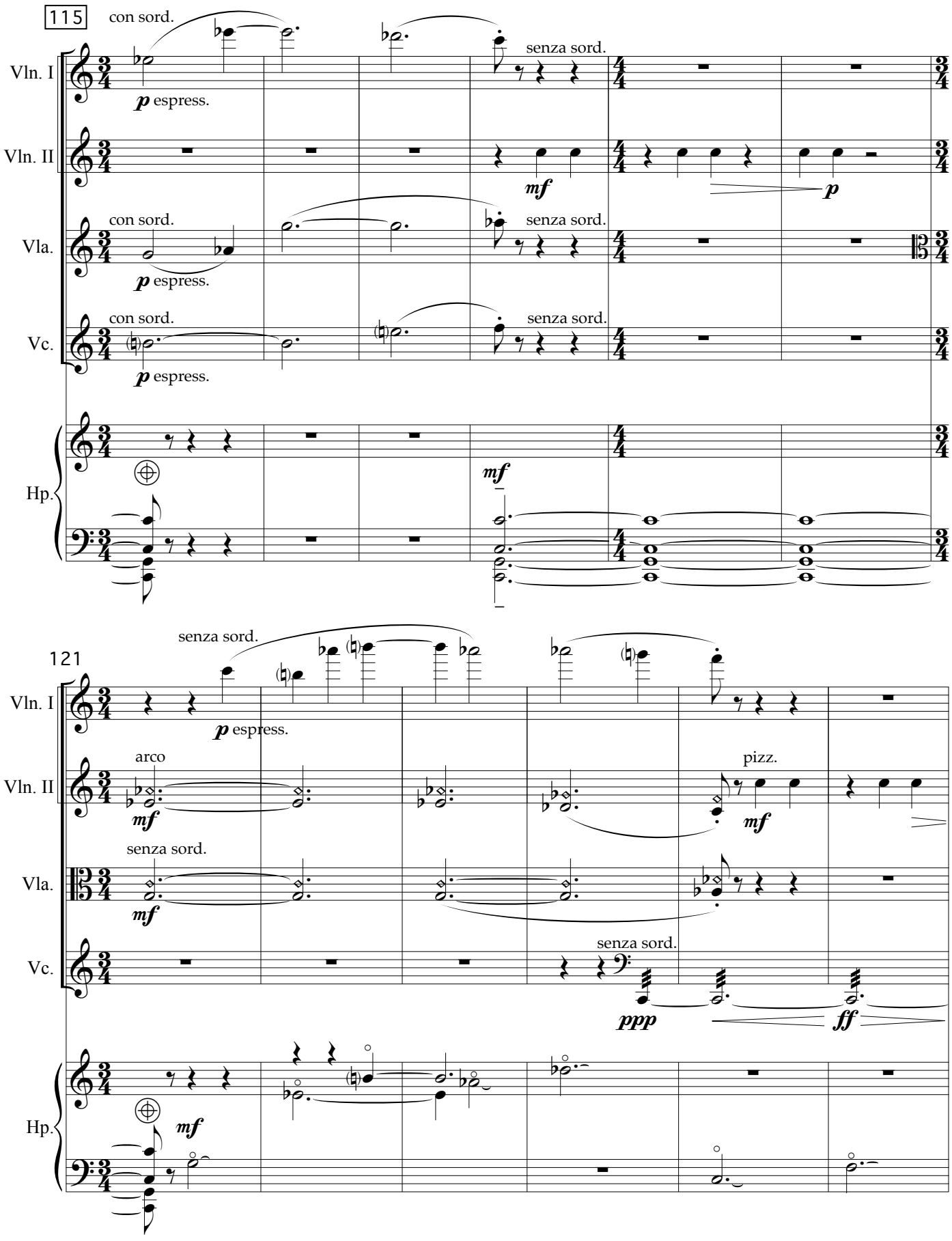

74
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
f espress.
f espress.
p
78
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
ff
f

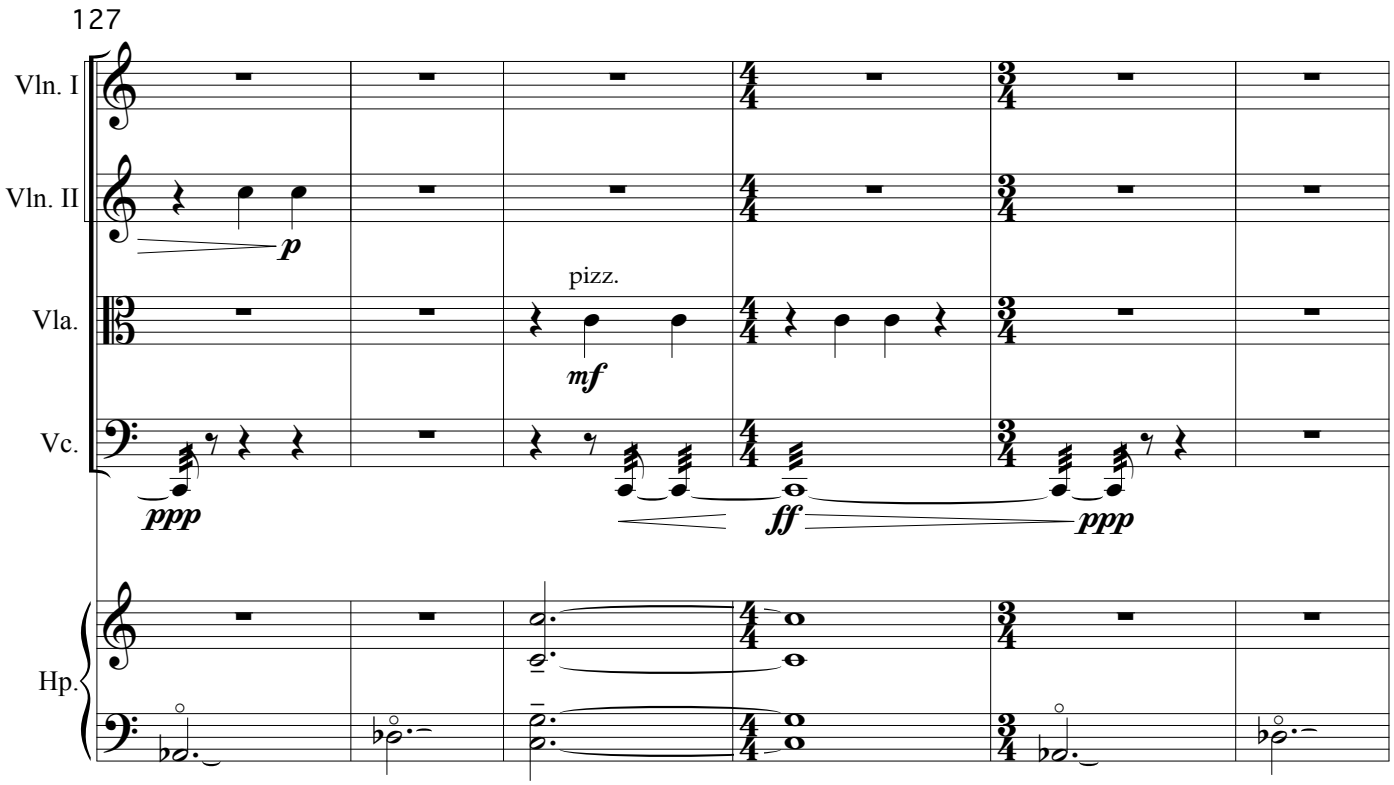

82
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
p
fp
f espress.
mf
ff
ffp
arco
Grandly dramatic
87
f espress.
f espress.
ff
f espress.
f
mf
f espress.
ff
mf
espress.
gritty

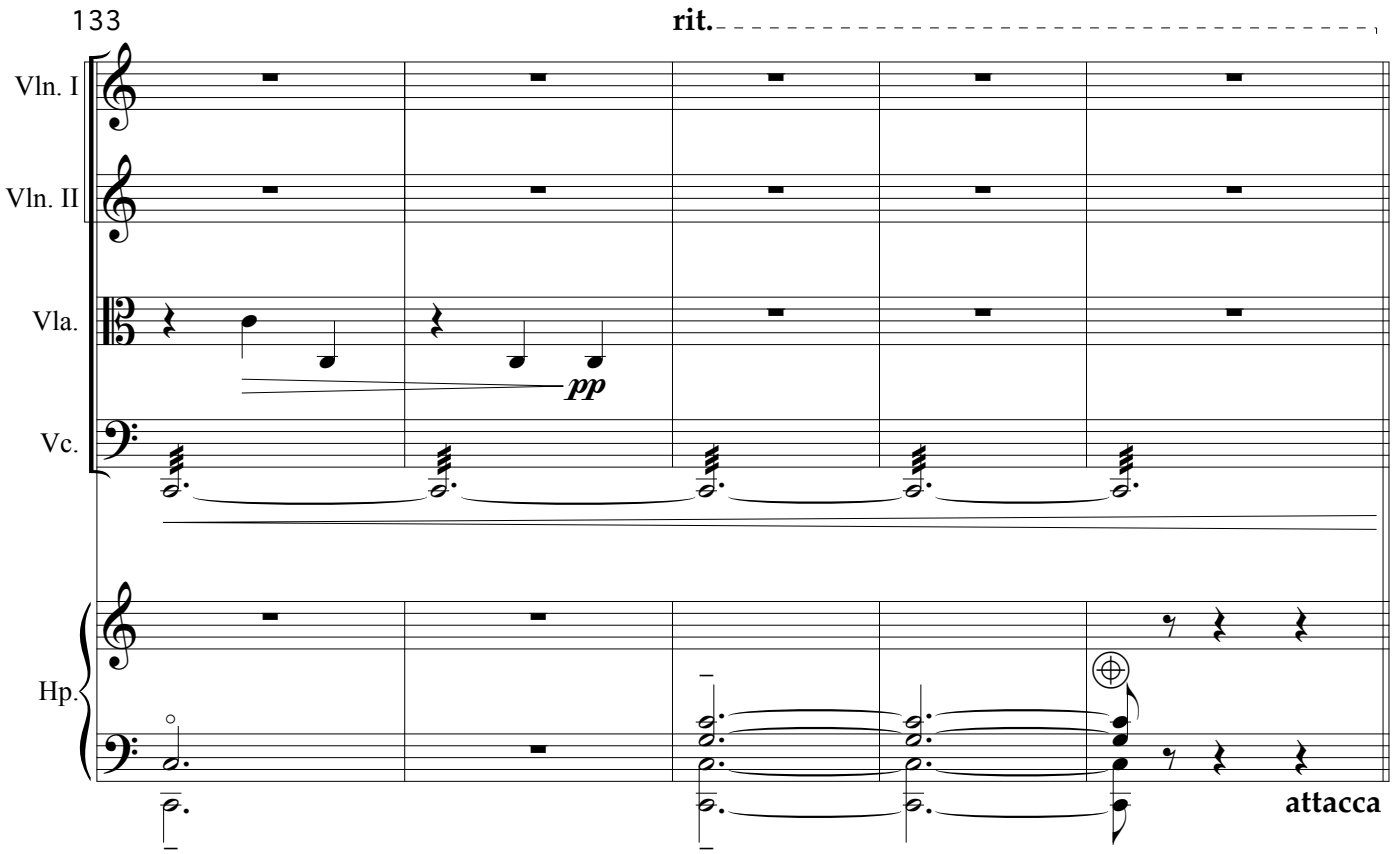

92
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
97
smfz
smfz
3
3


100
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
ff
f
104
p


107
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
mf
f
111
con sord.
ppp
pizz.
mf
p

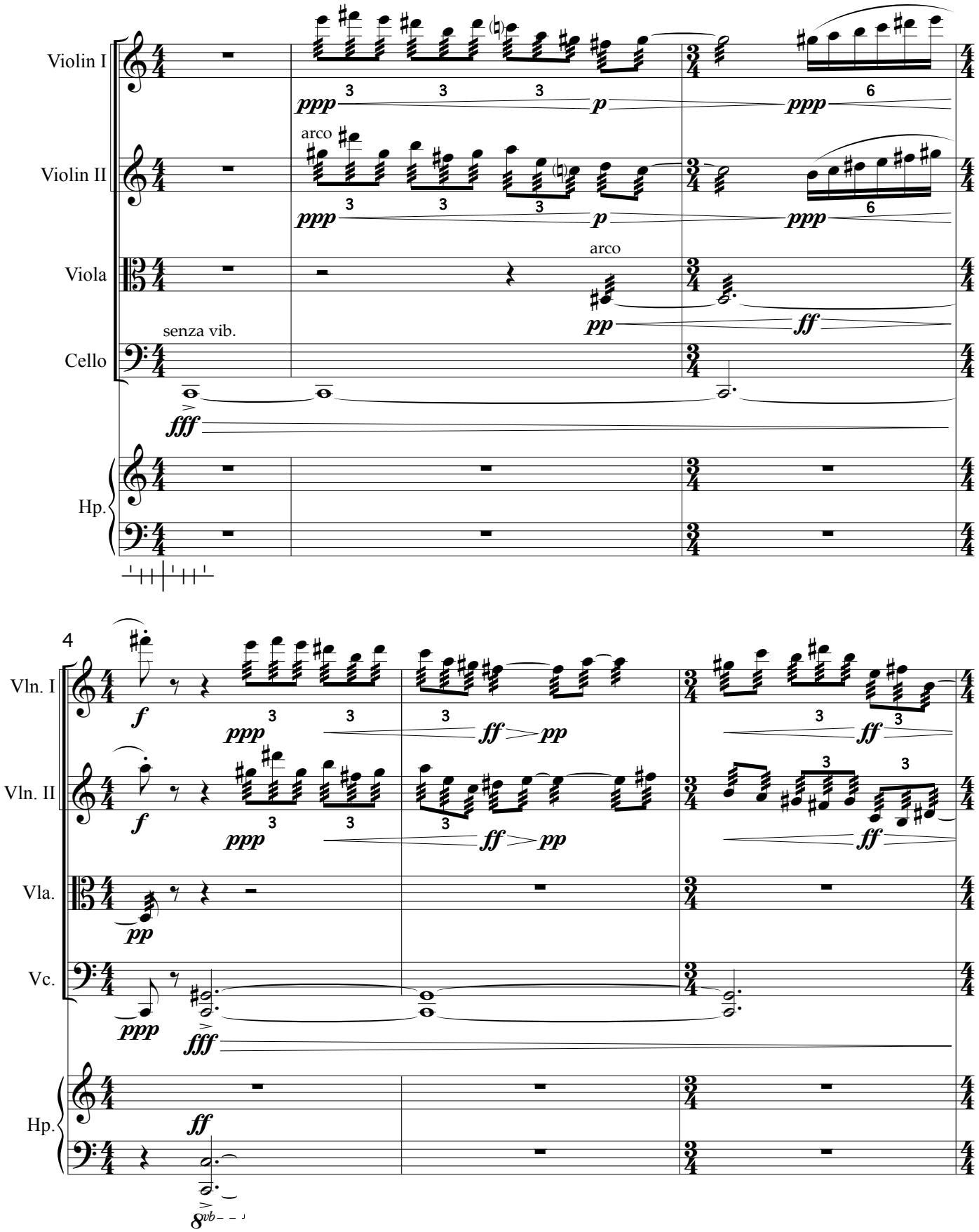

115
con sord.
senza sord.
Vln. I
p espress.
Vln. II
mf
p
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
121
arco
pizz.
ppp
ff

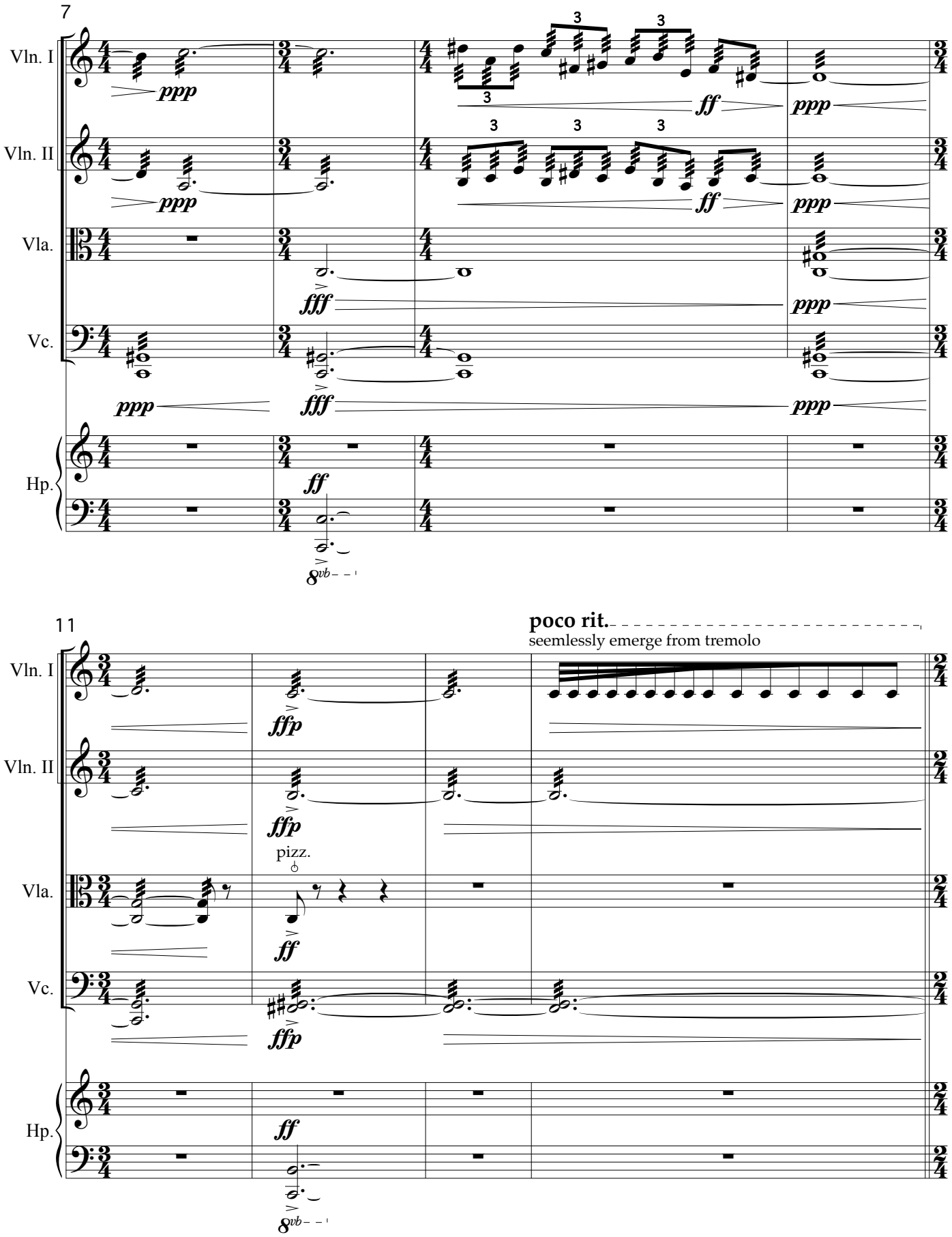

127
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
pizz.
mf
ppp
ff
ppp


133
rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pp
attacca

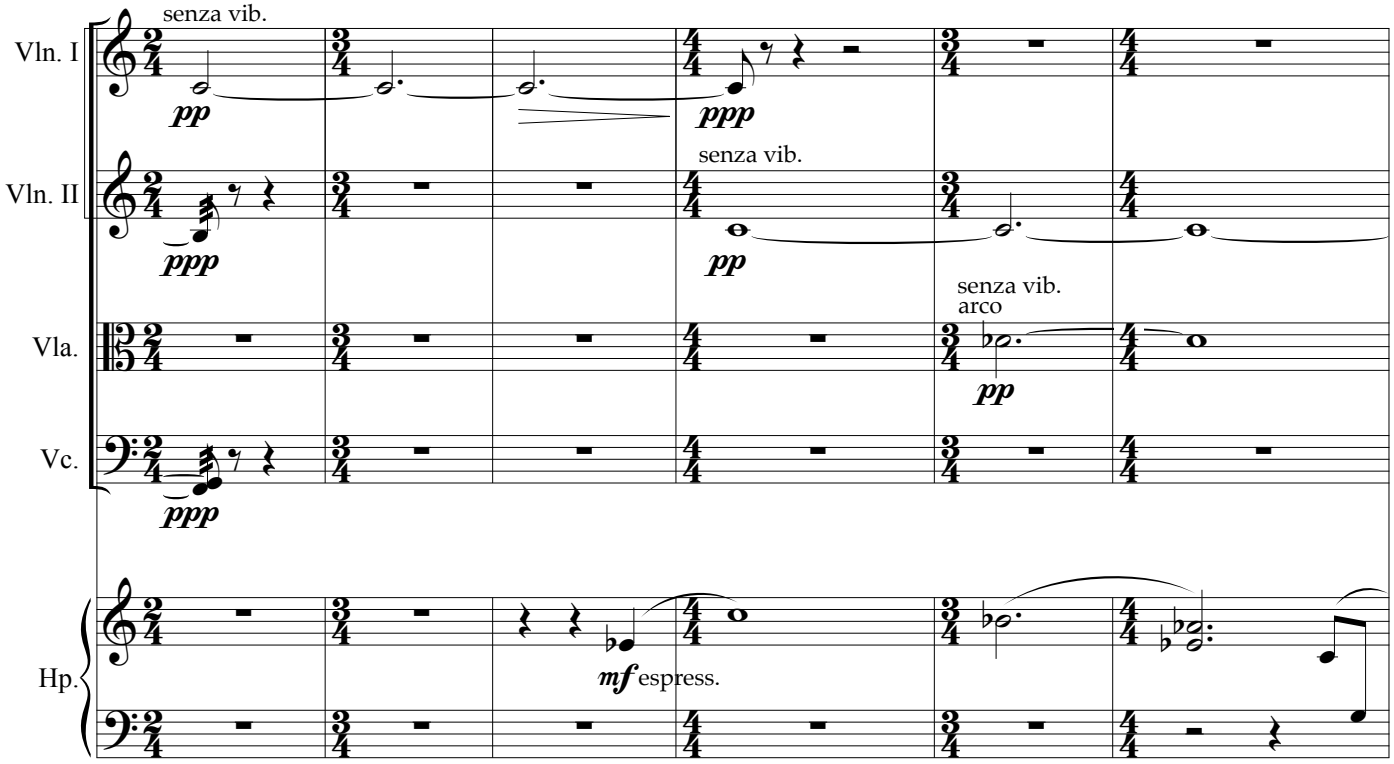
III. Song: I know it is wet...

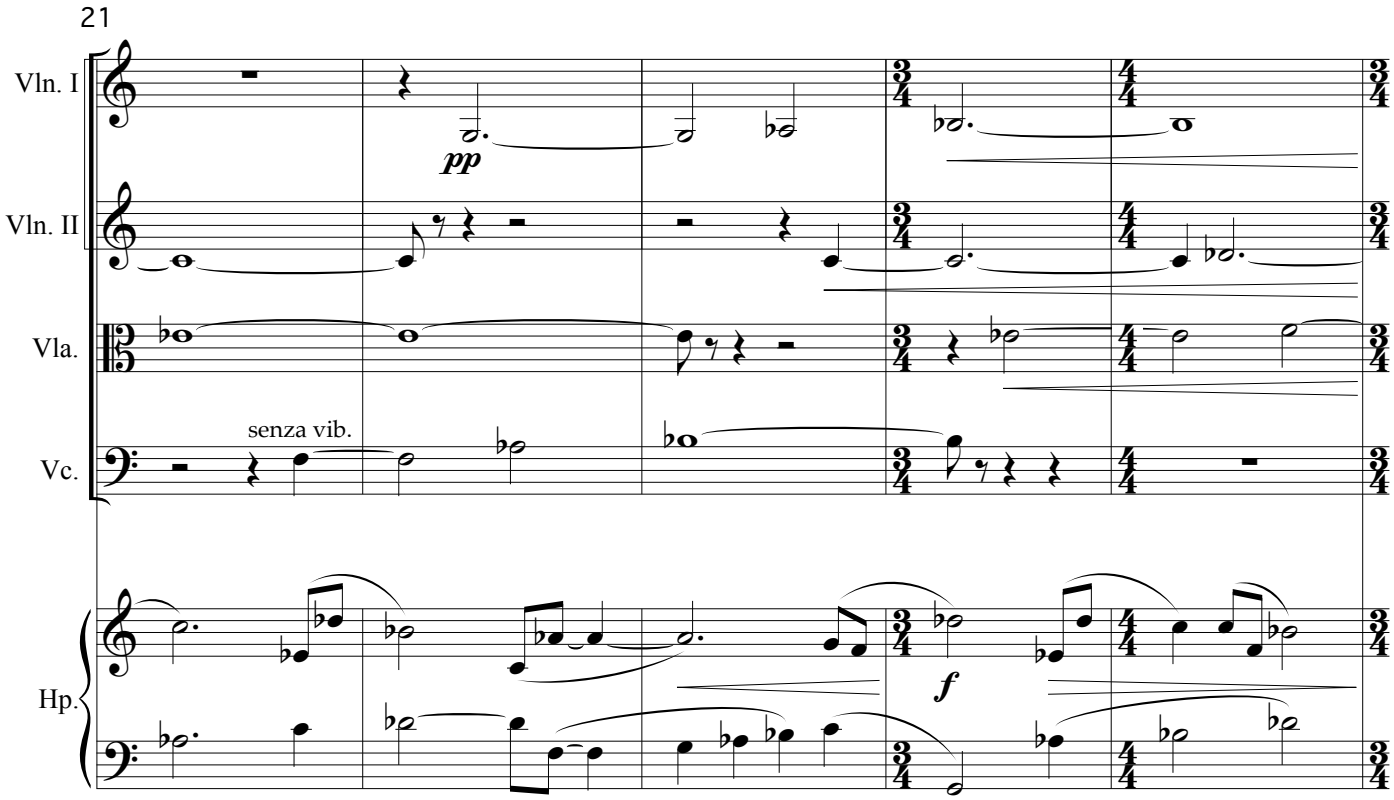
Clearing fog (♩ = 78)

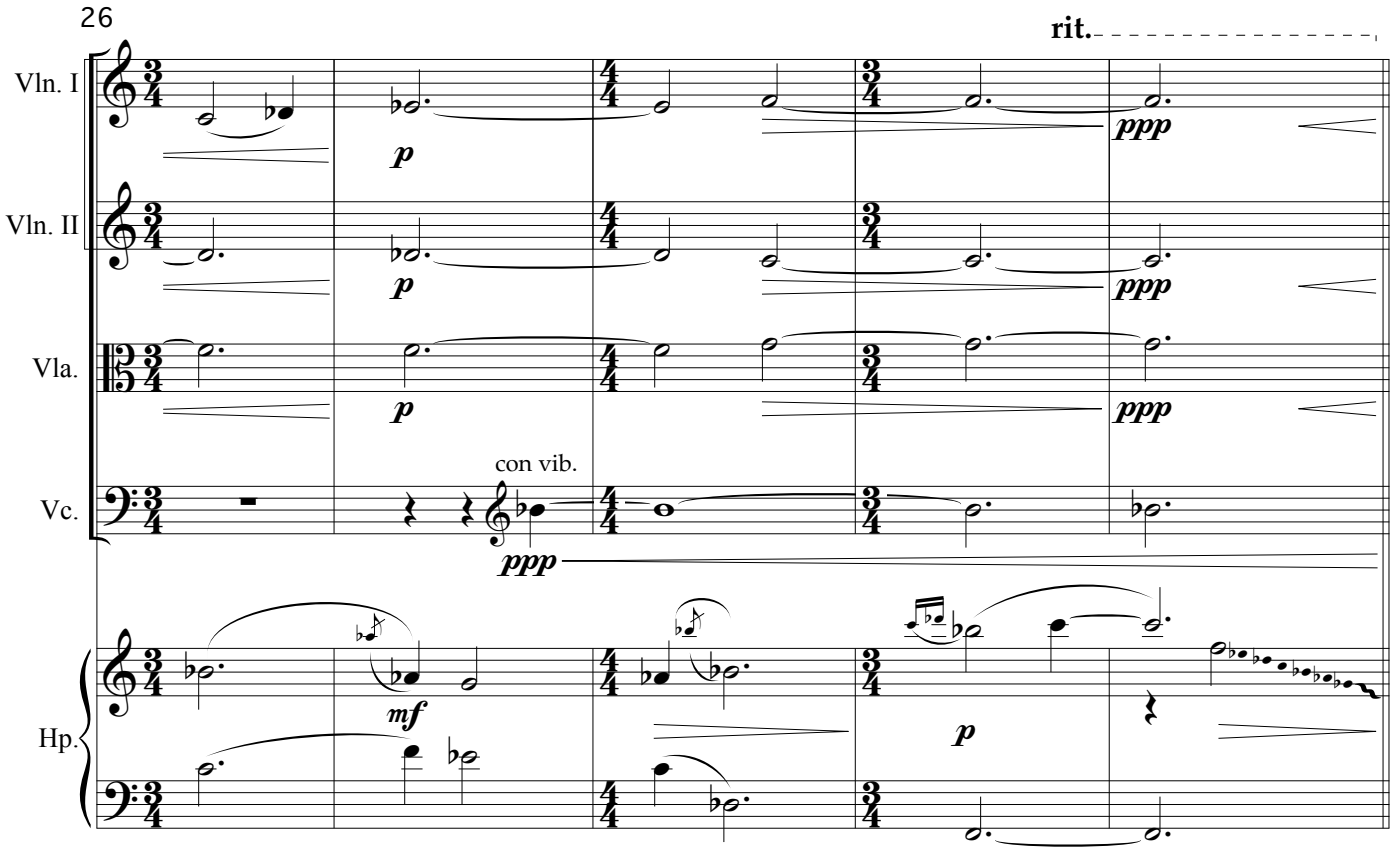


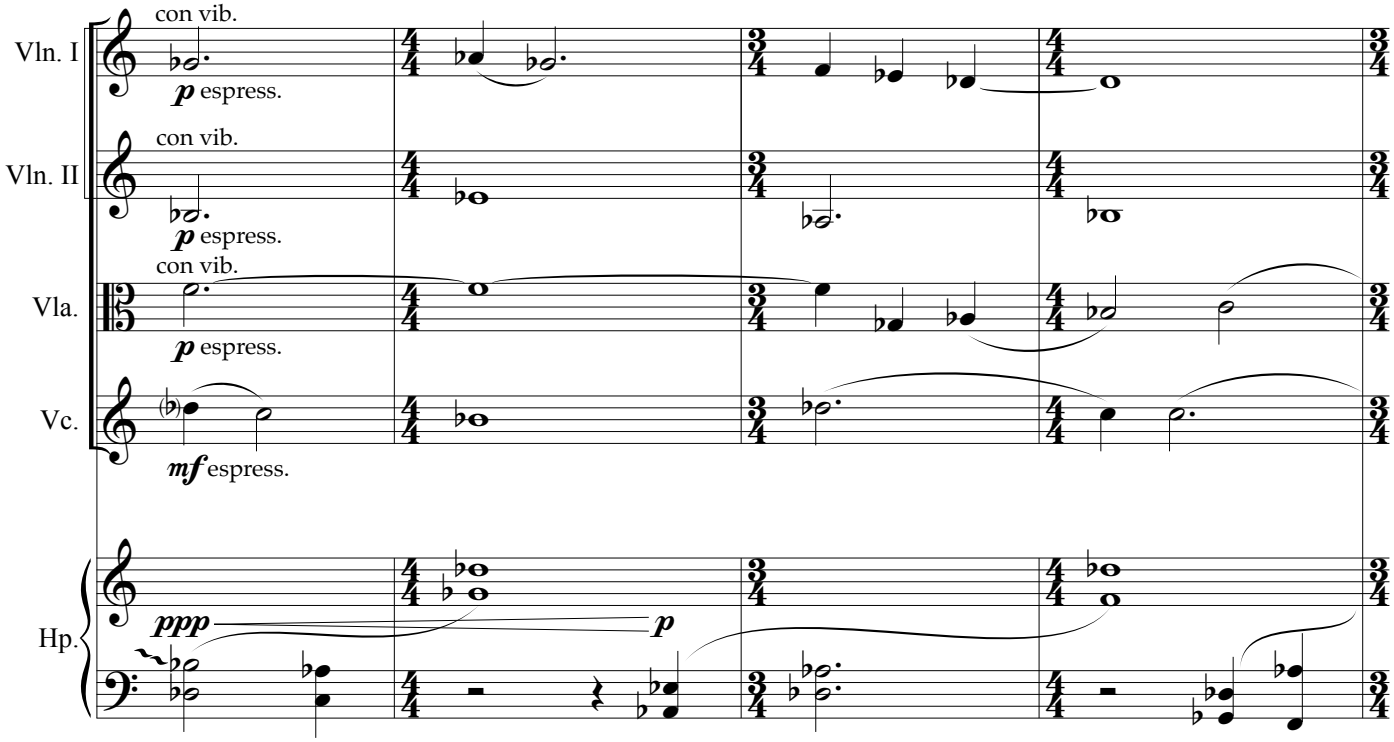

7
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
ppp
ff
fff
8vb
11
poco rit.
seemlessly emerge from tremolo
ffp
pizz.

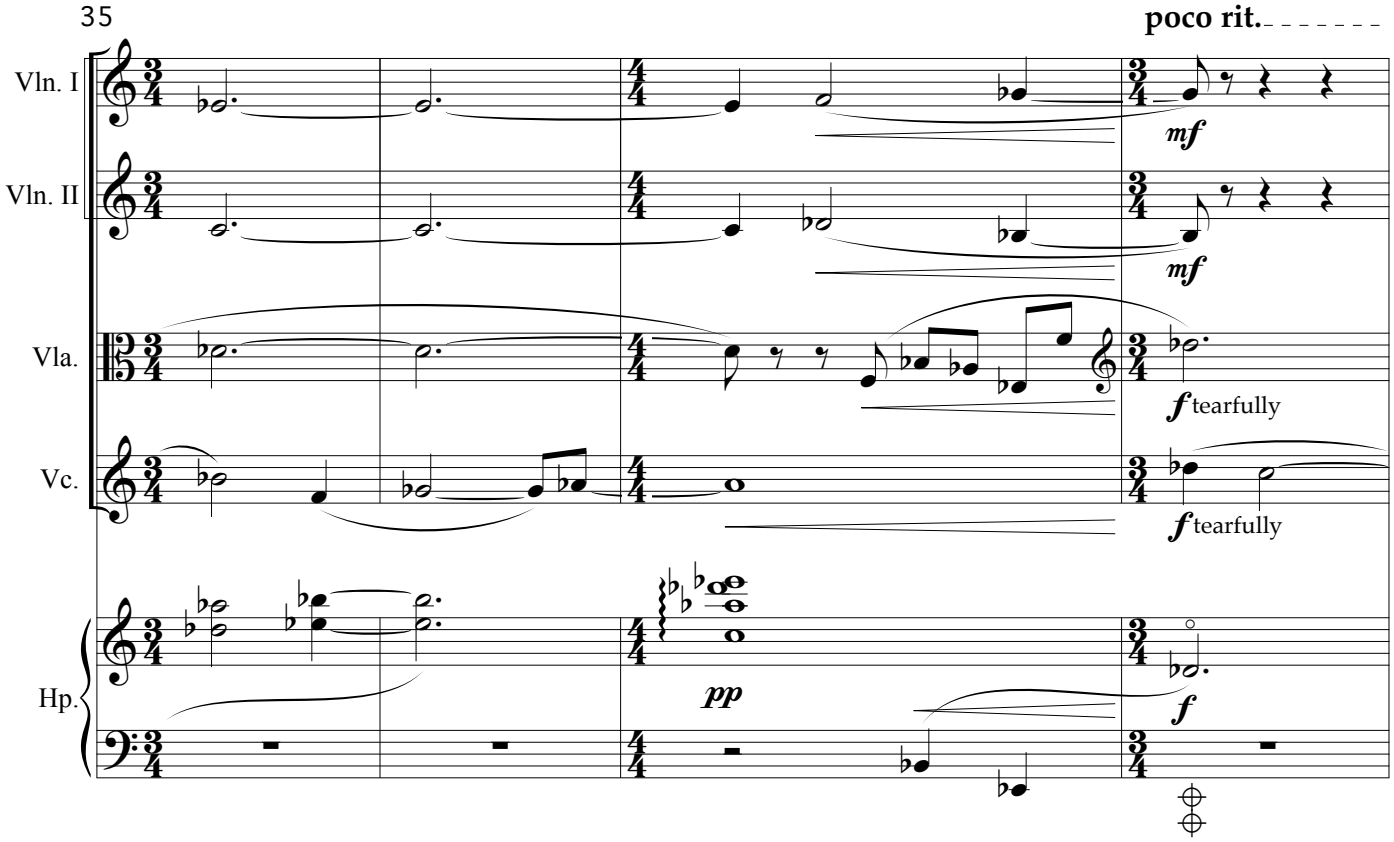
15 **Glisteningly; a cold lullaby (♩ = 60)**

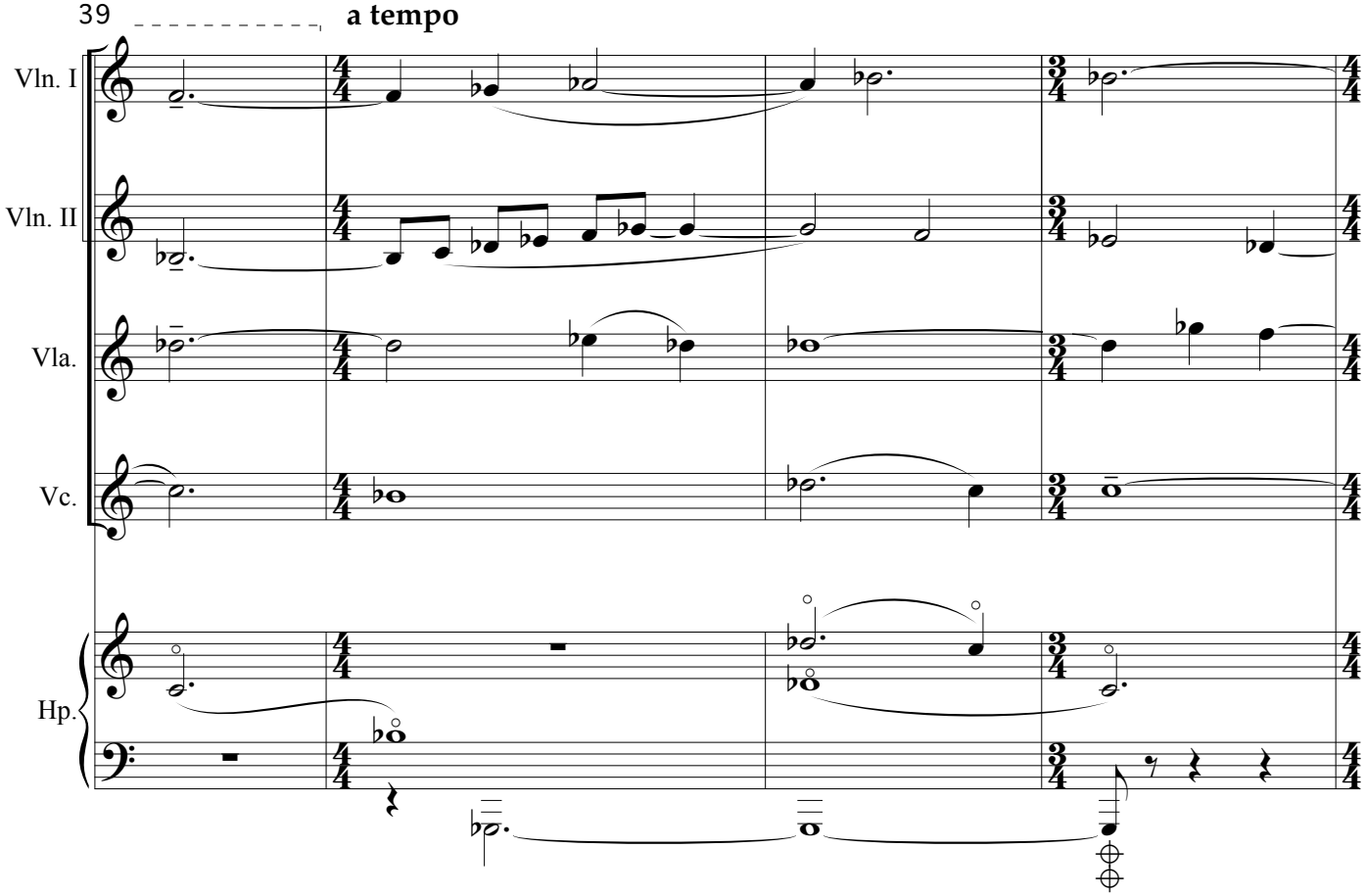


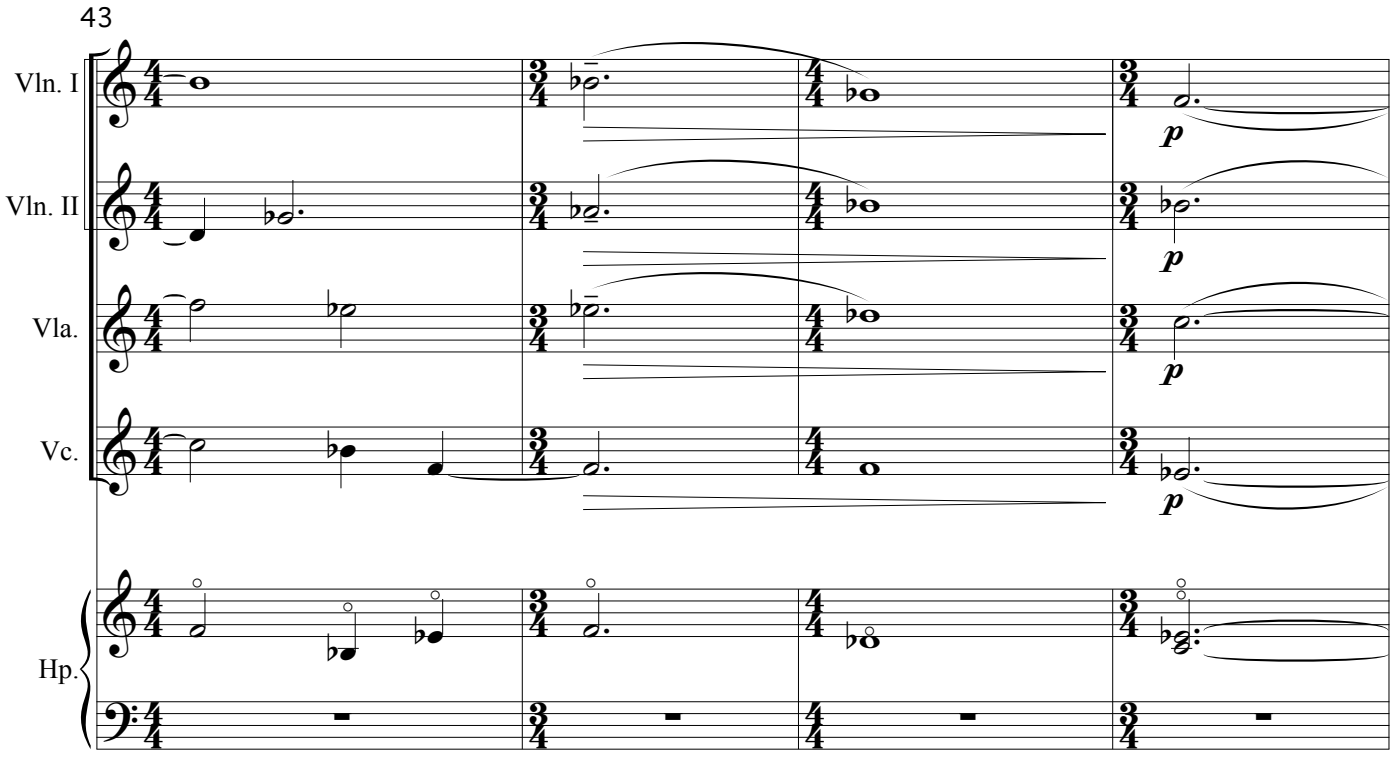


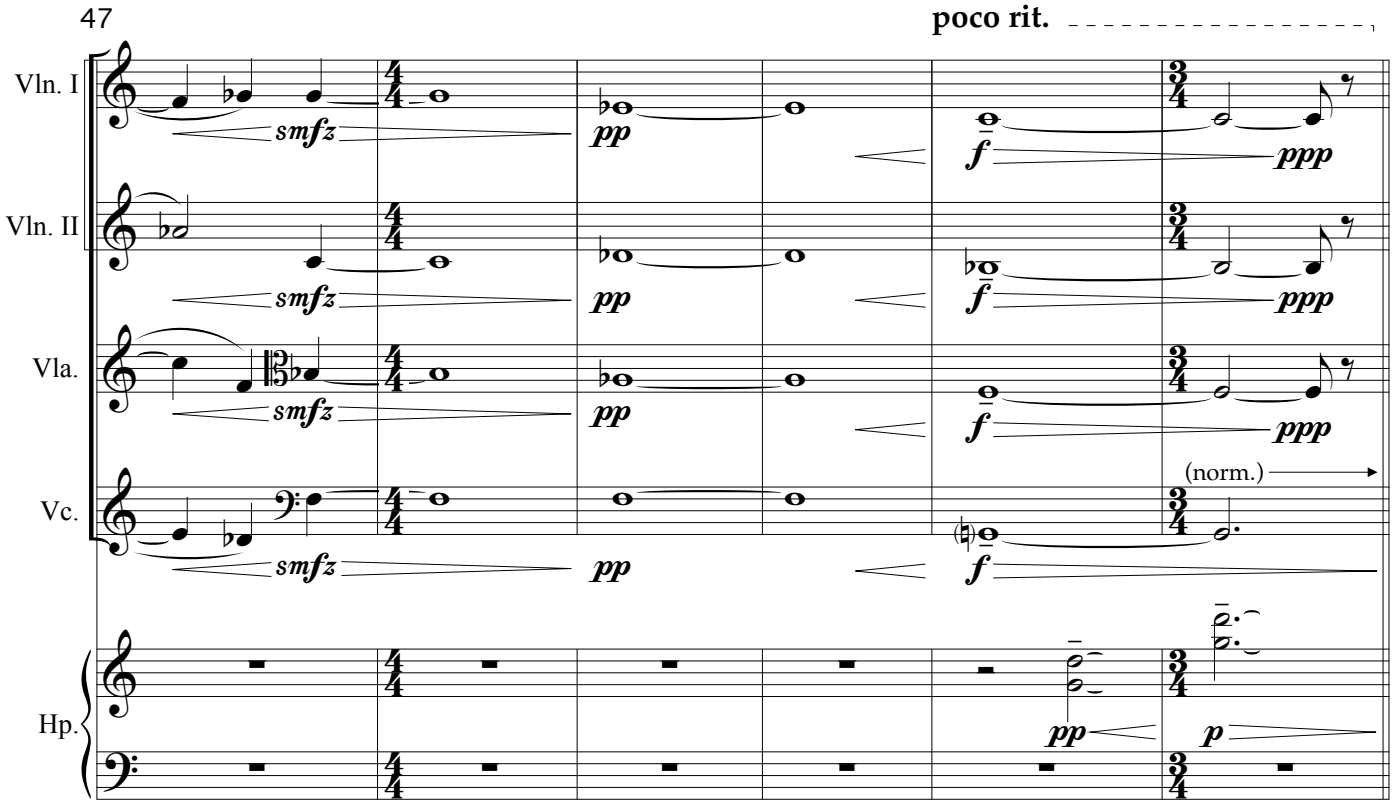

26
rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
ppp
con vib.
mf

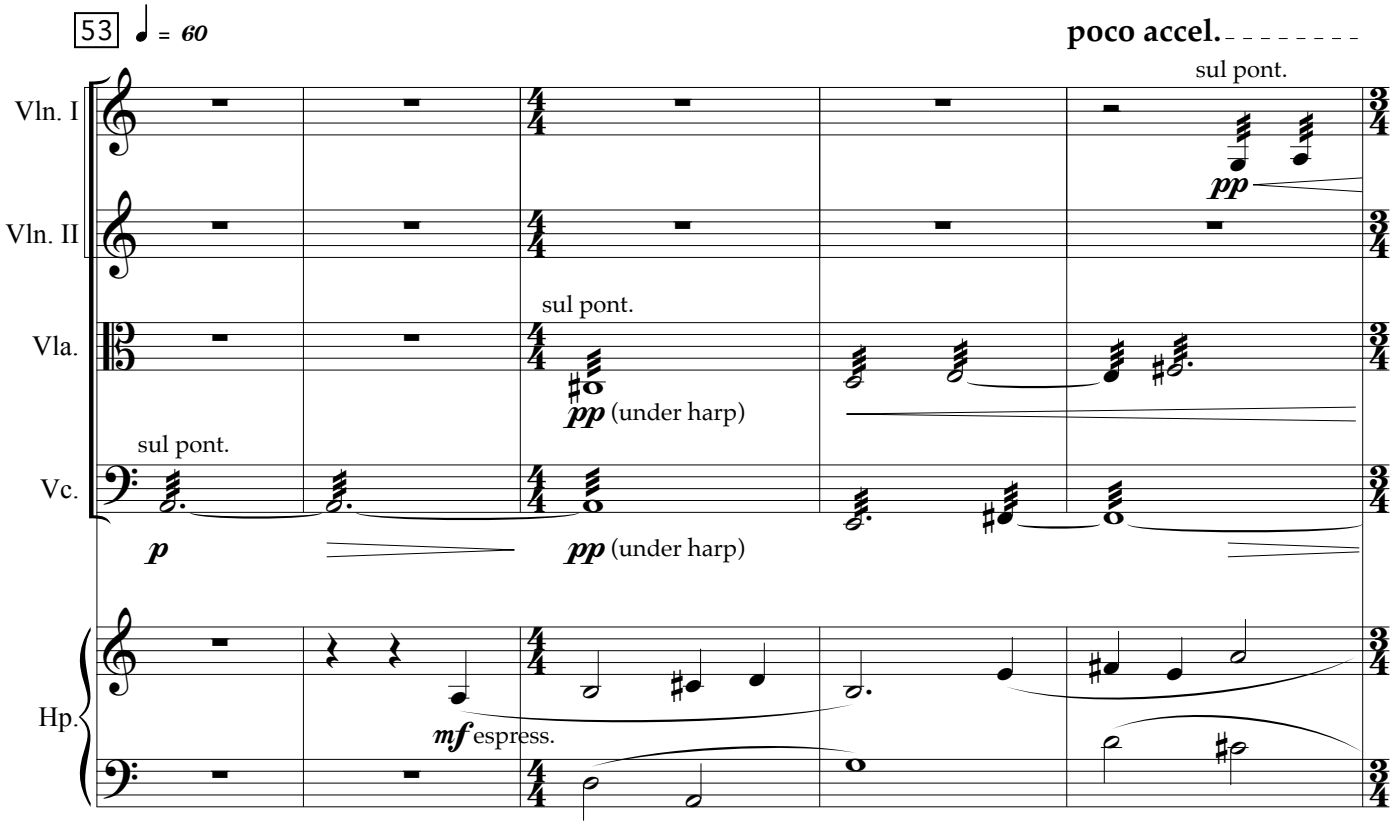

31 More motion; rubato e espressivo (= c. 66 – 72)
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
con vib.
p espress.
mf espress.
ppp
p

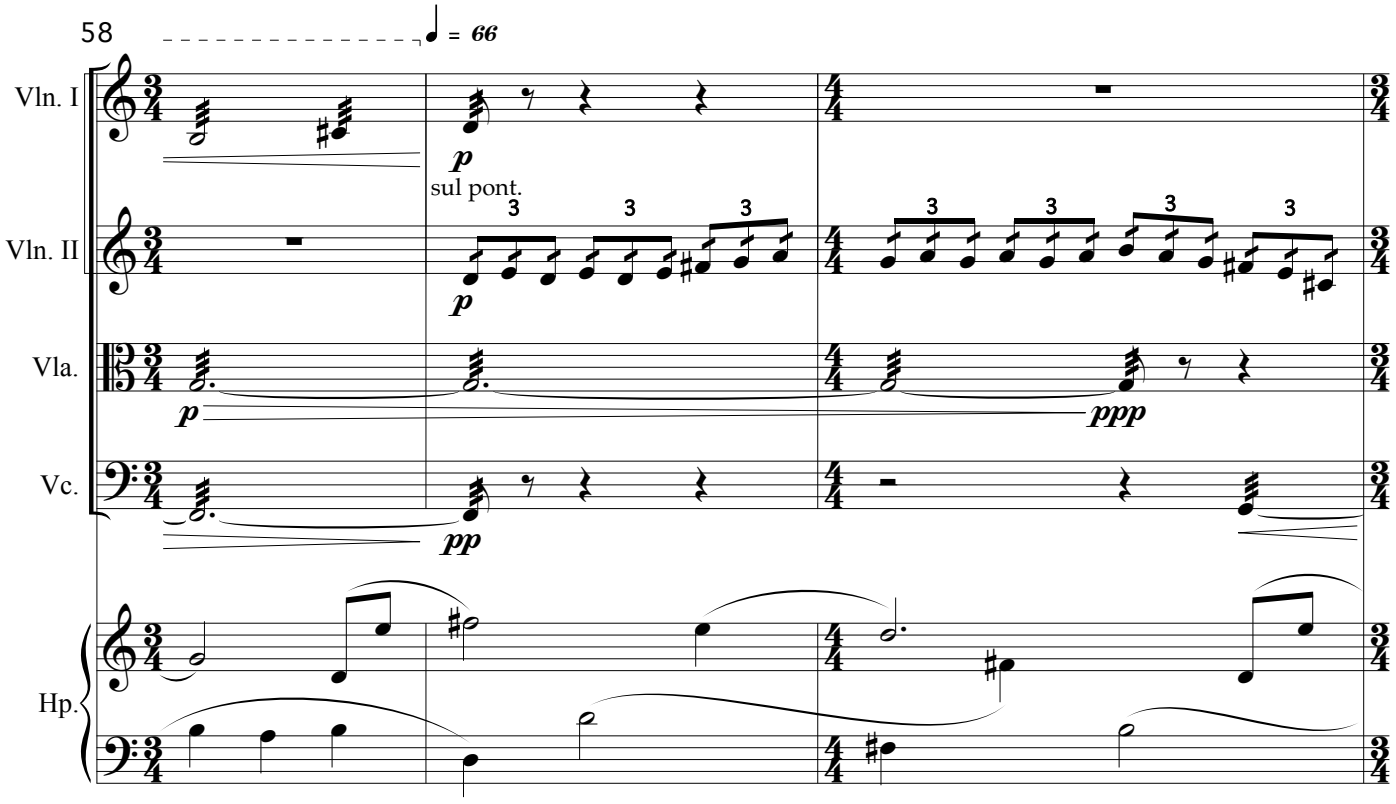

35
poco rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
mf
mf
f tearfully
f tearfully
pp
f

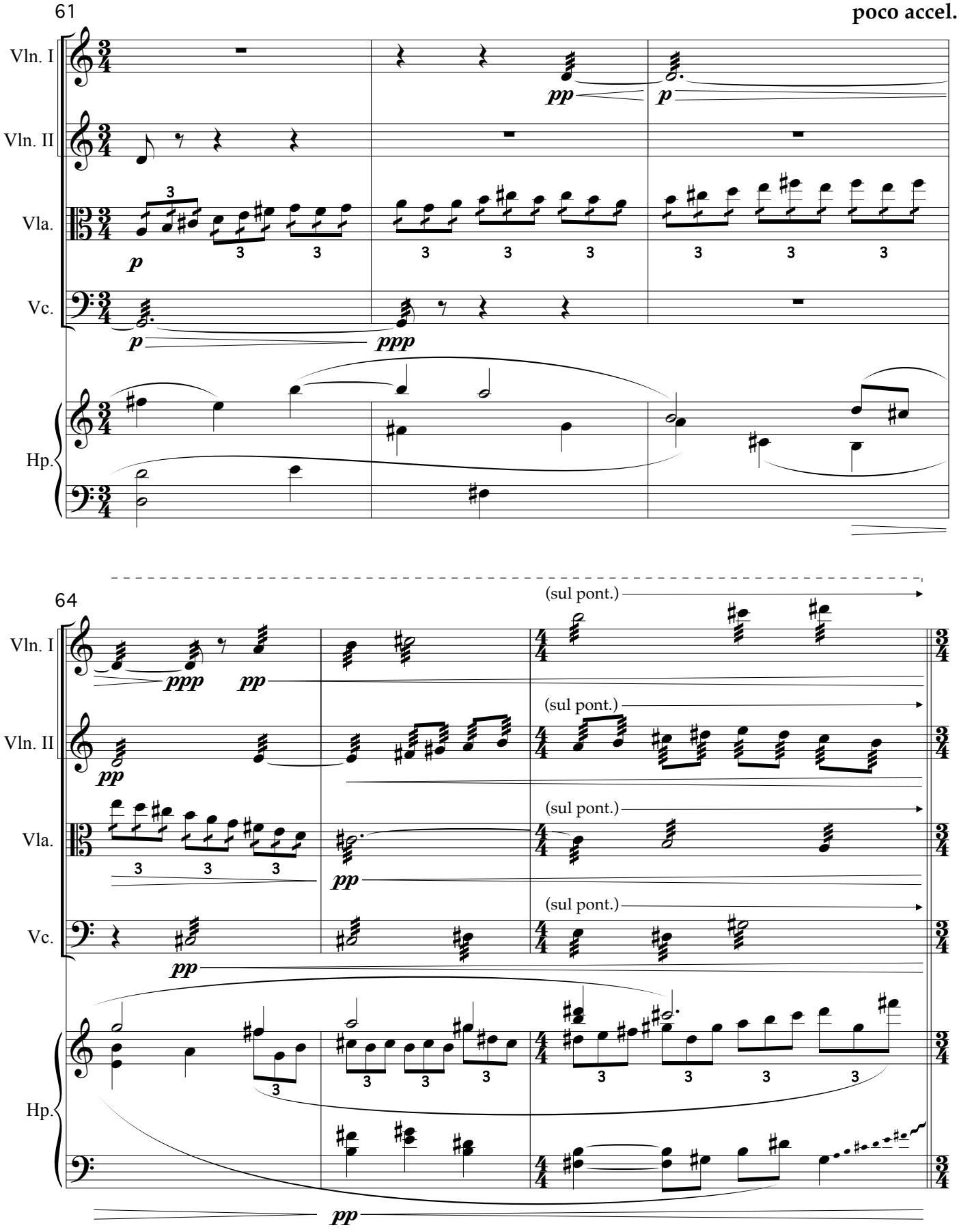

39
a tempo
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.

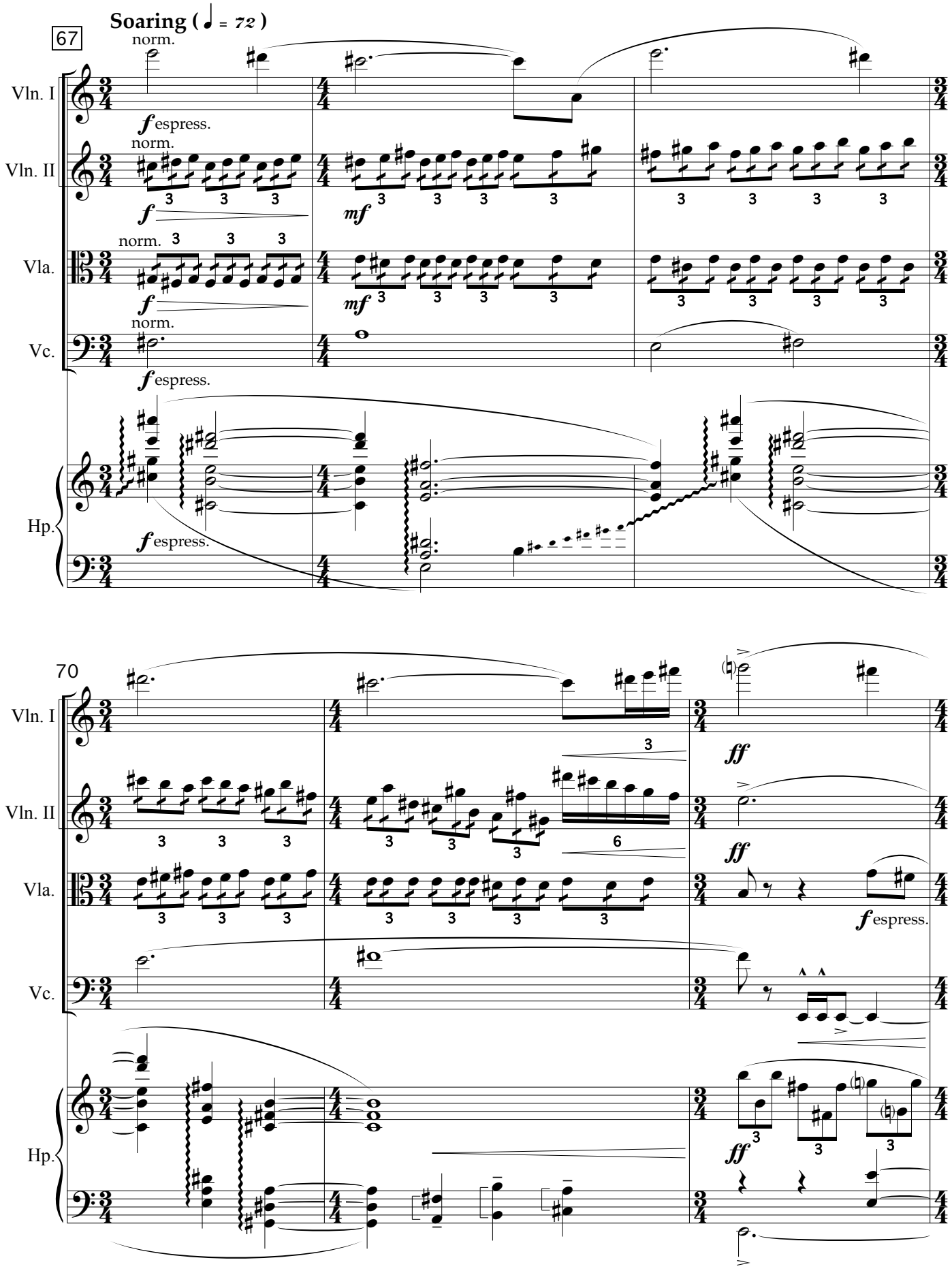

43
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p

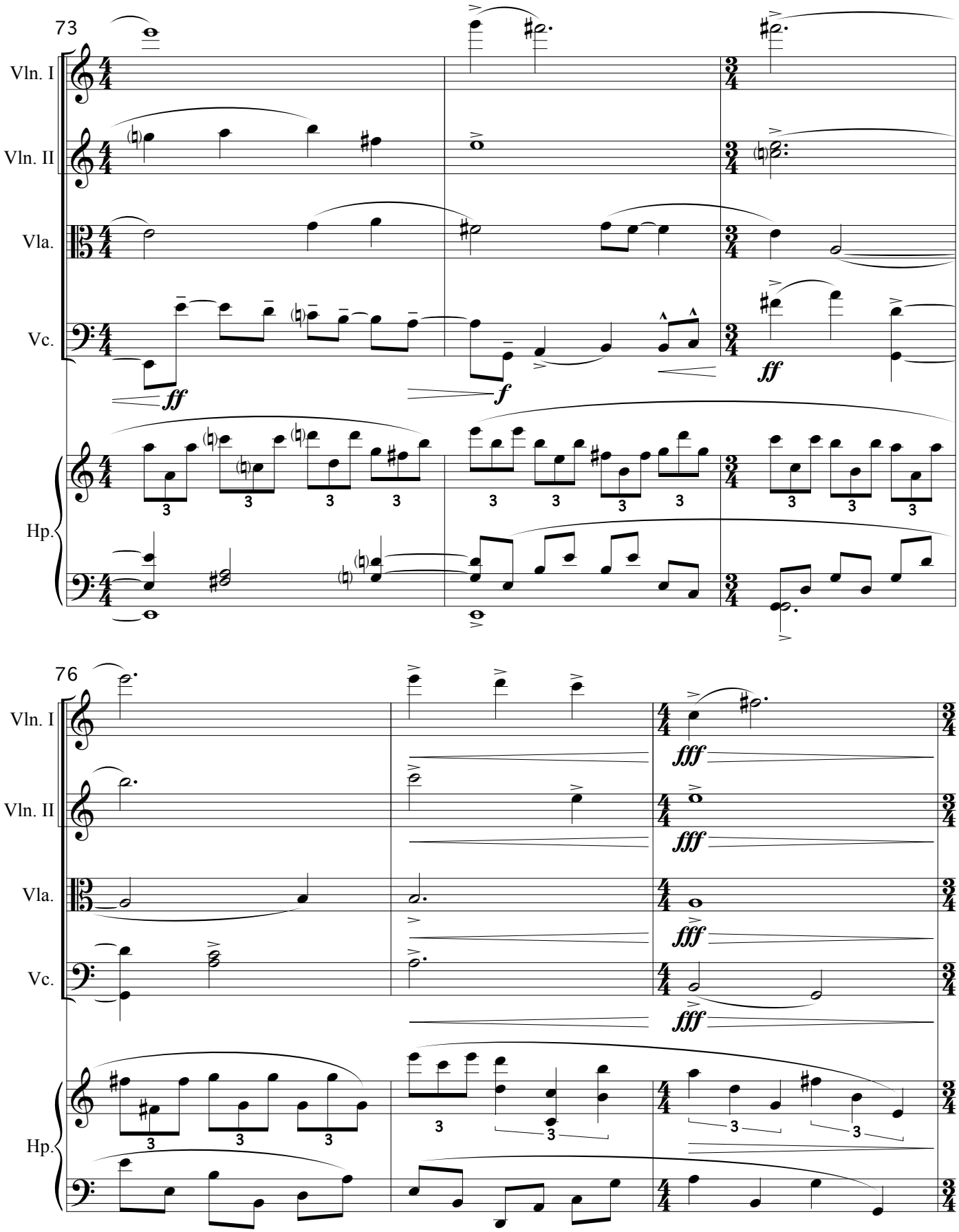

47
poco rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
smfz
pp
f
ppp
(norm.)

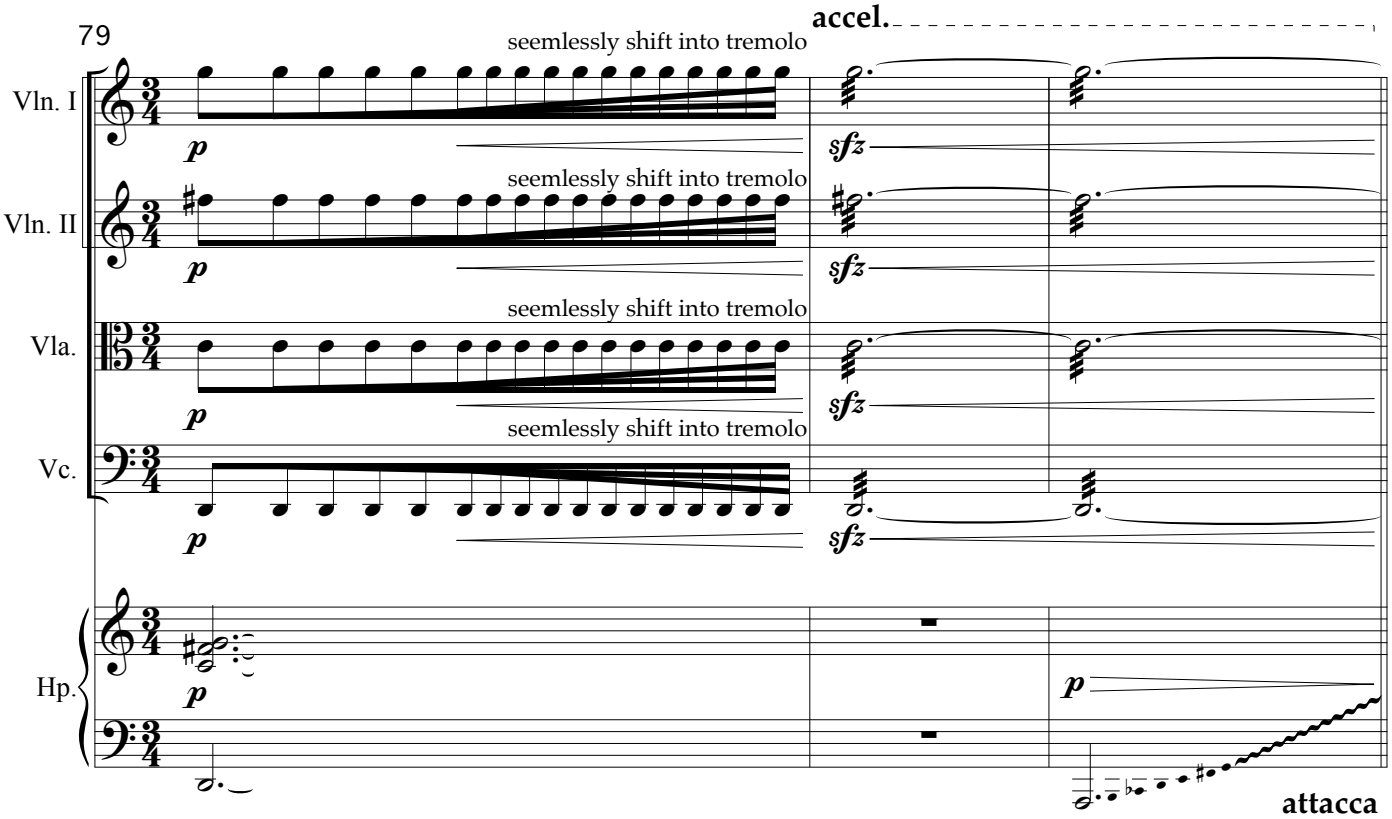

53
♩ = 60
poco accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
sul pont.
pp
sul pont.
pp (under harp)
sul pont.
p
pp (under harp)
mf espress.


58
♩ = 66
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
sul pont.
3
p
p
ppp
pp

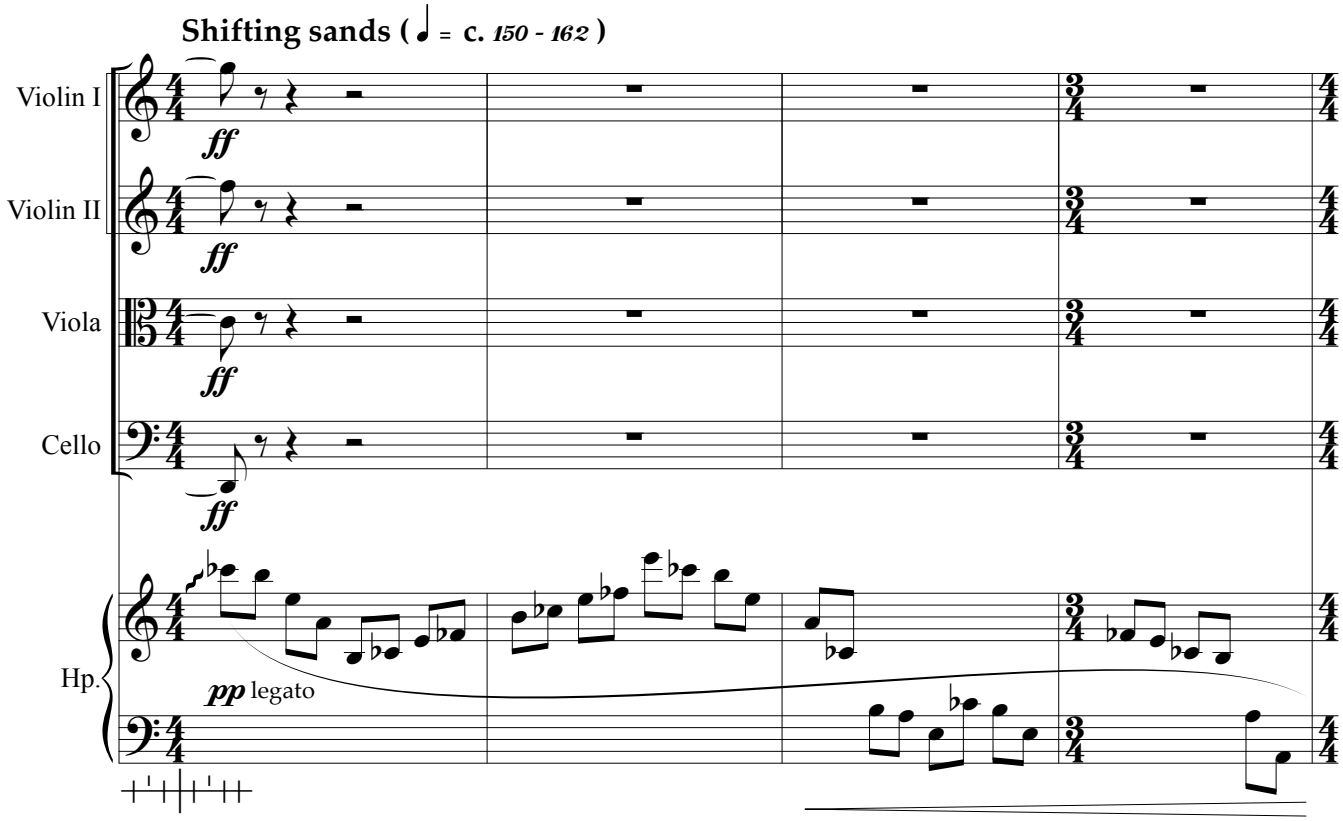

61
poco accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
64
(sul pont.)

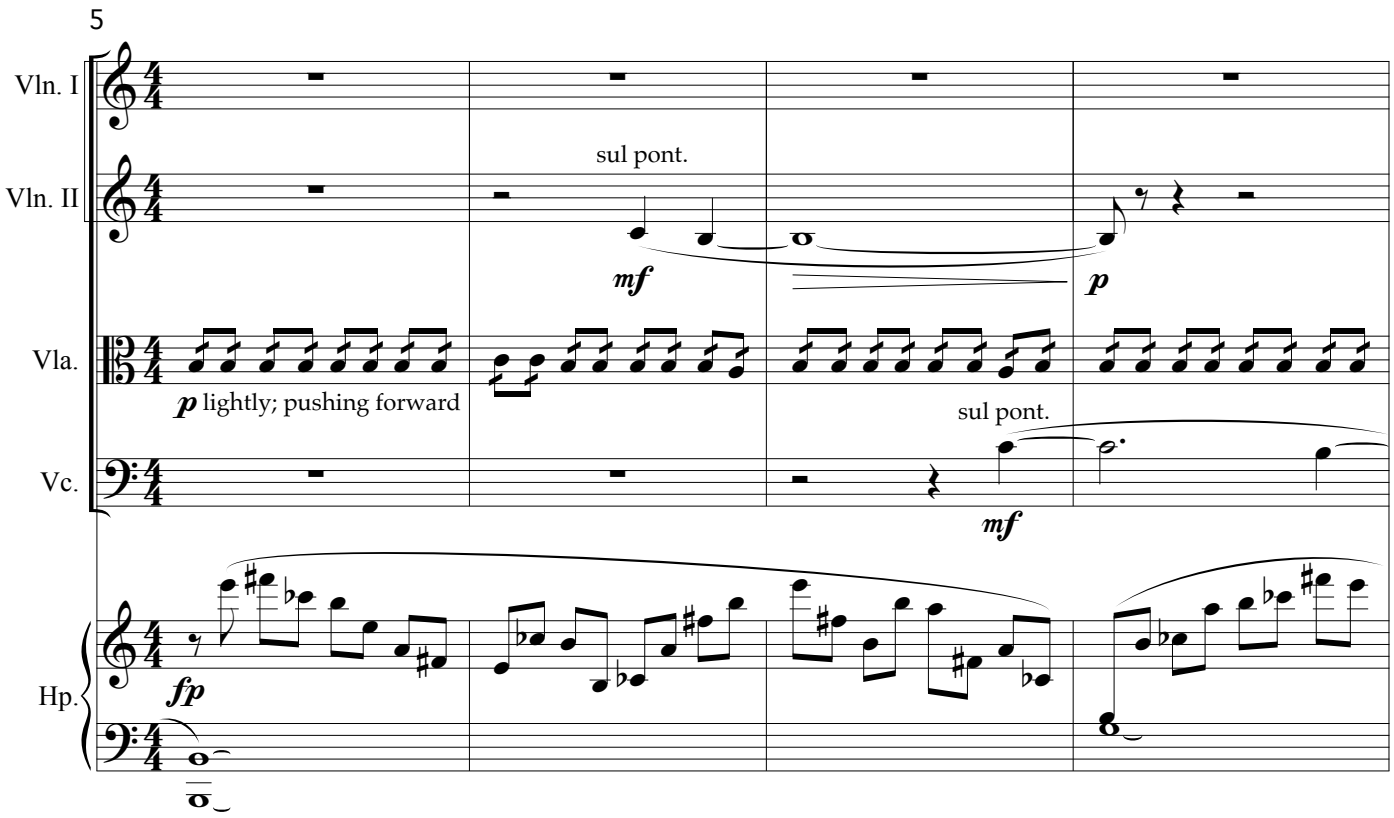

Soaring (♩ = 72)
67
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
norm.
f espress.
mf
70
ff
f espress.

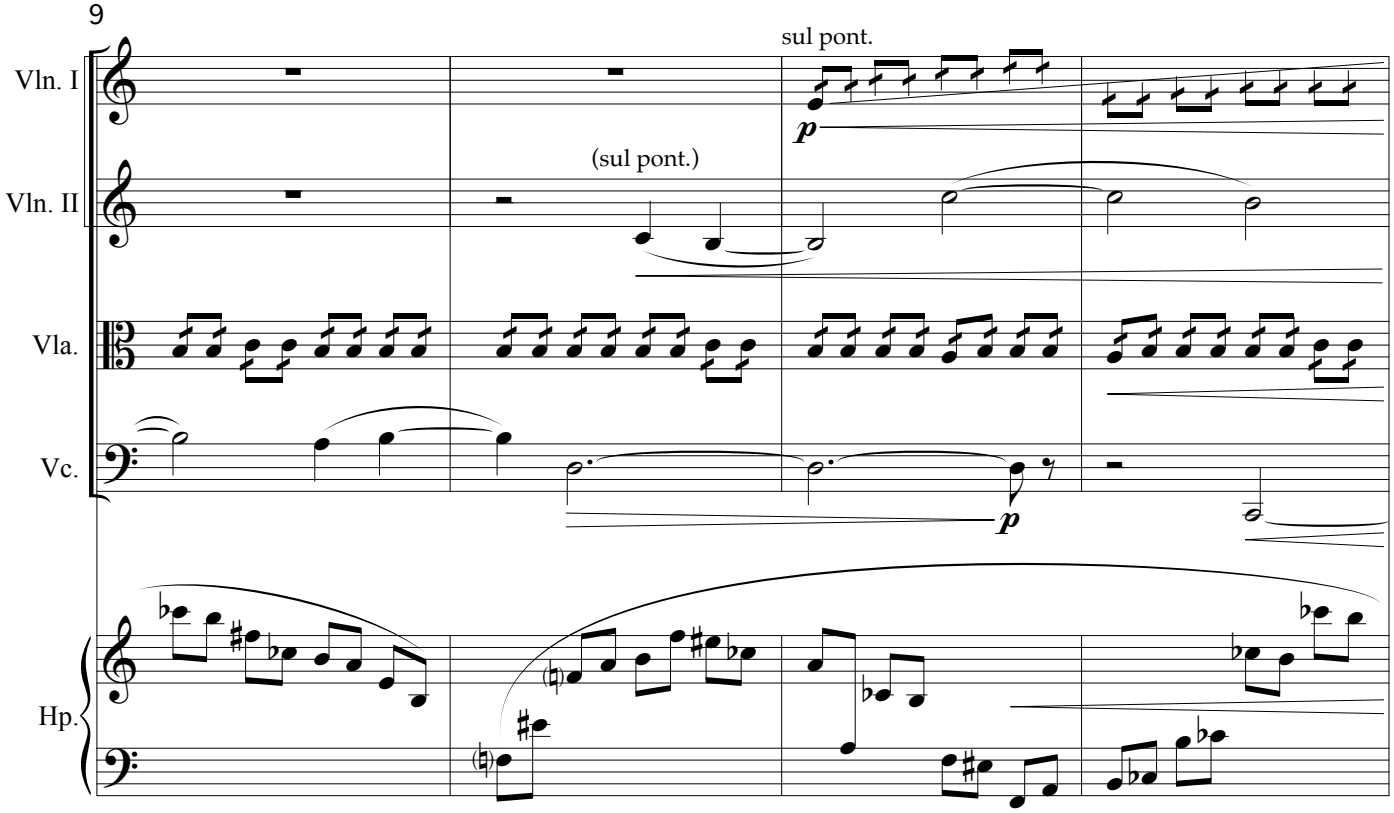

73
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
ff
f
ff
76
fff

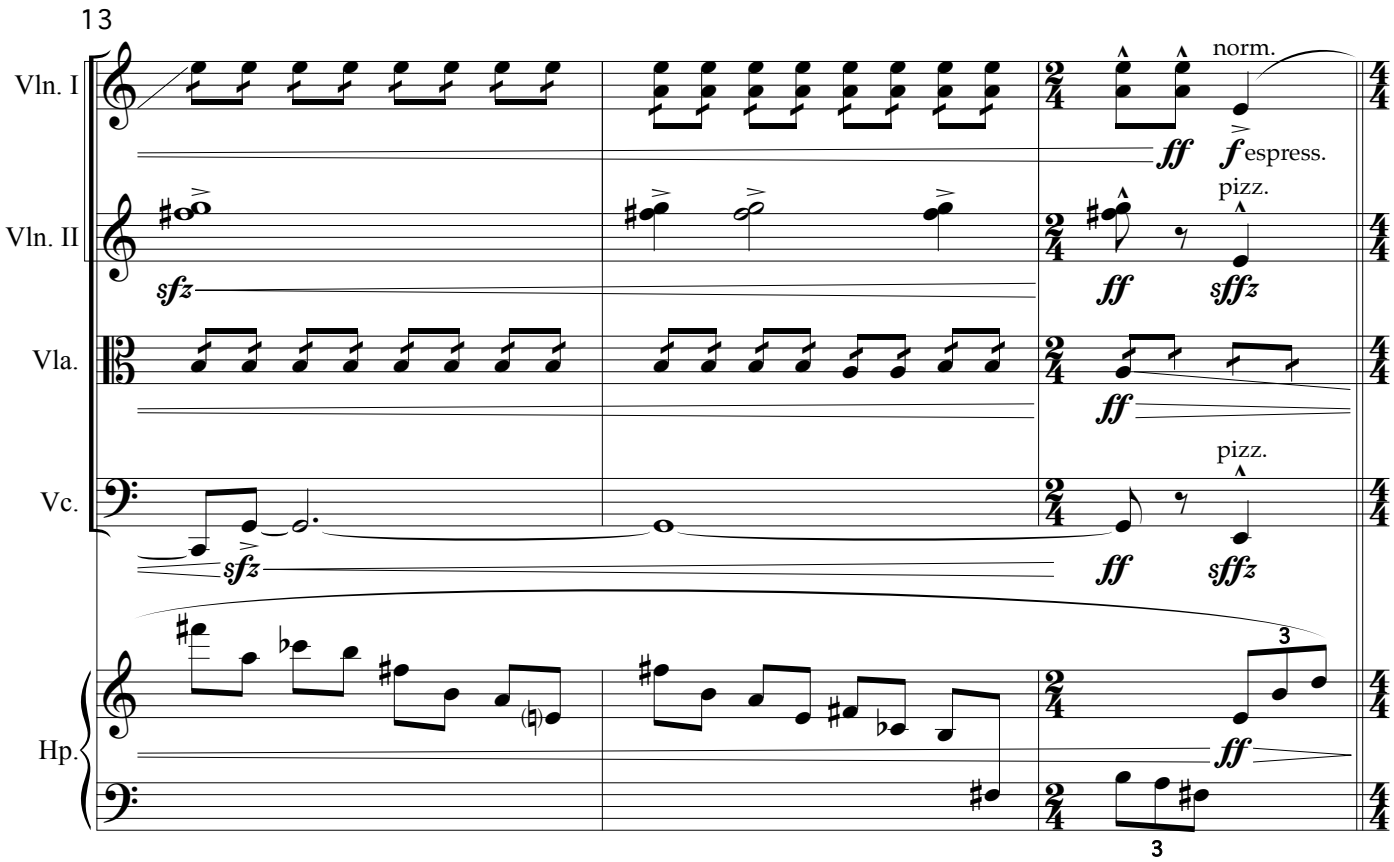


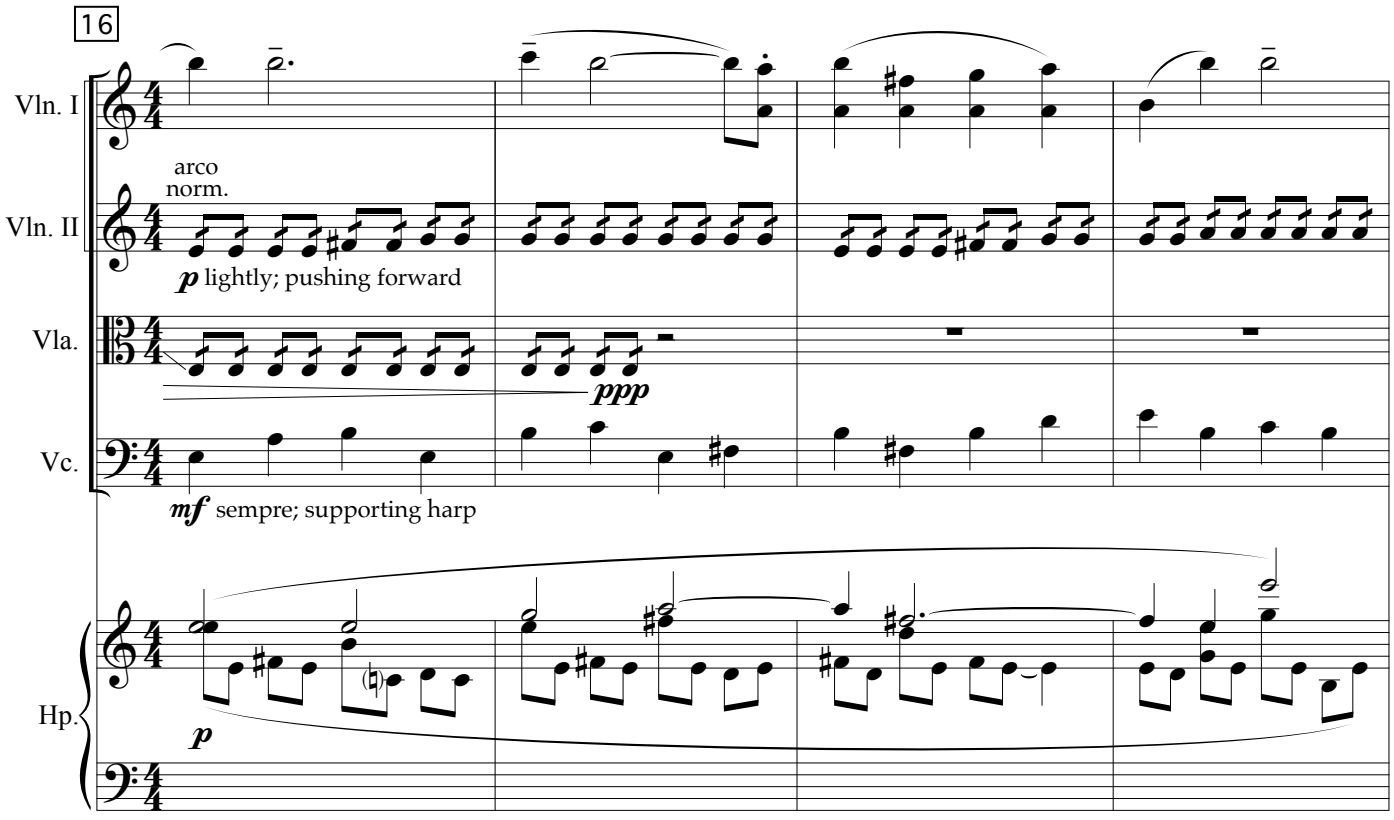
IV. The perilous pants eating plants

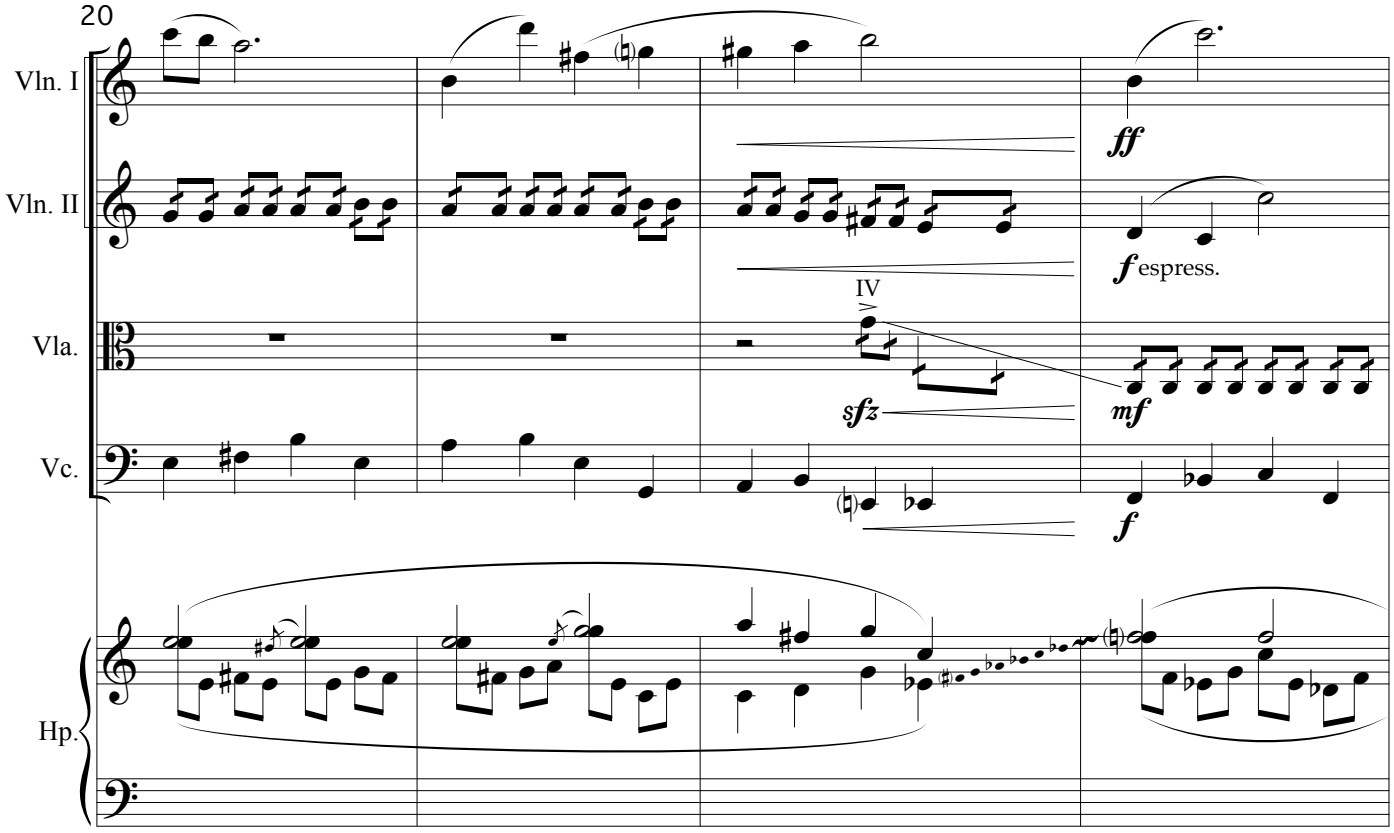


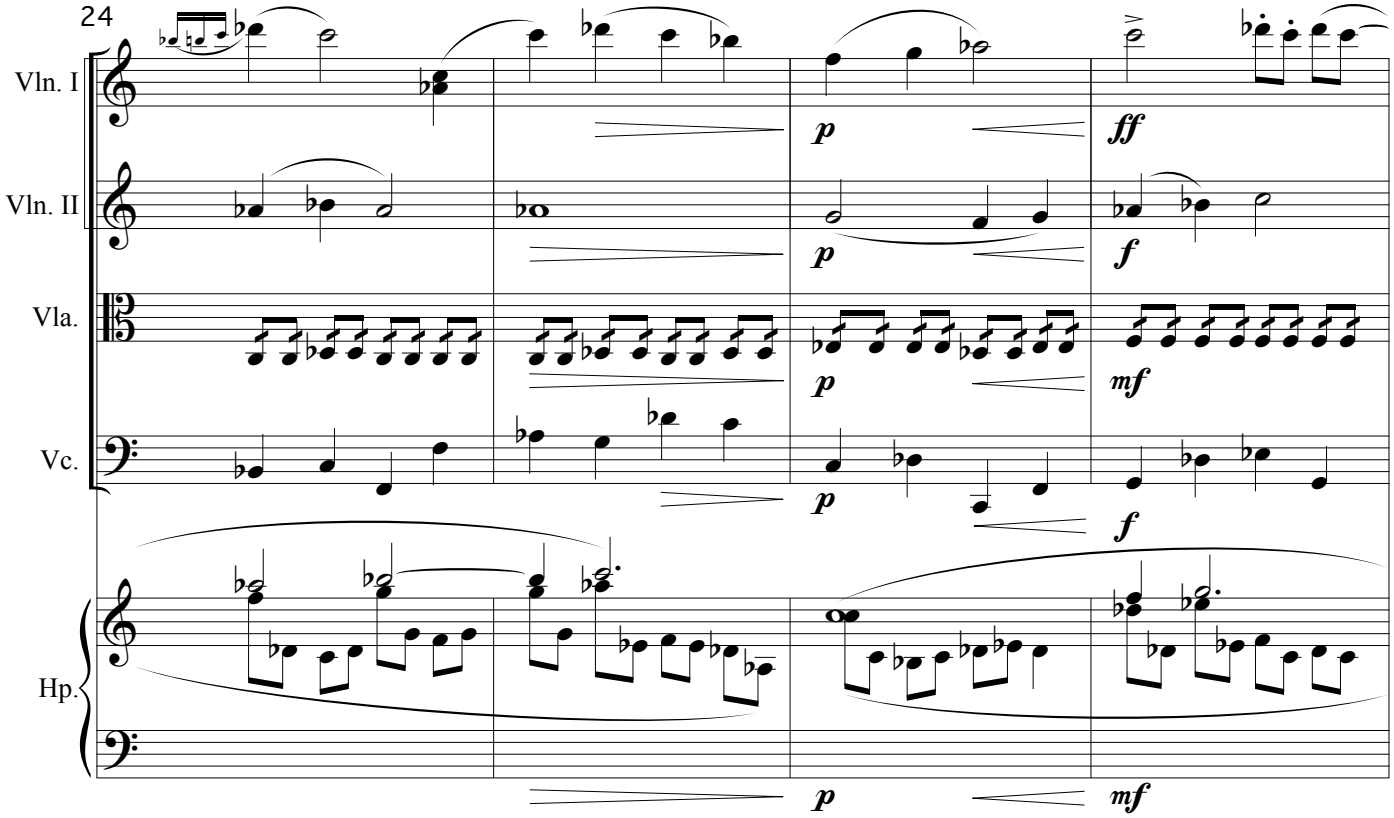

5
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
sul pont.
mf
p
p lightly; pushing forward
sul pont.
mf
fp

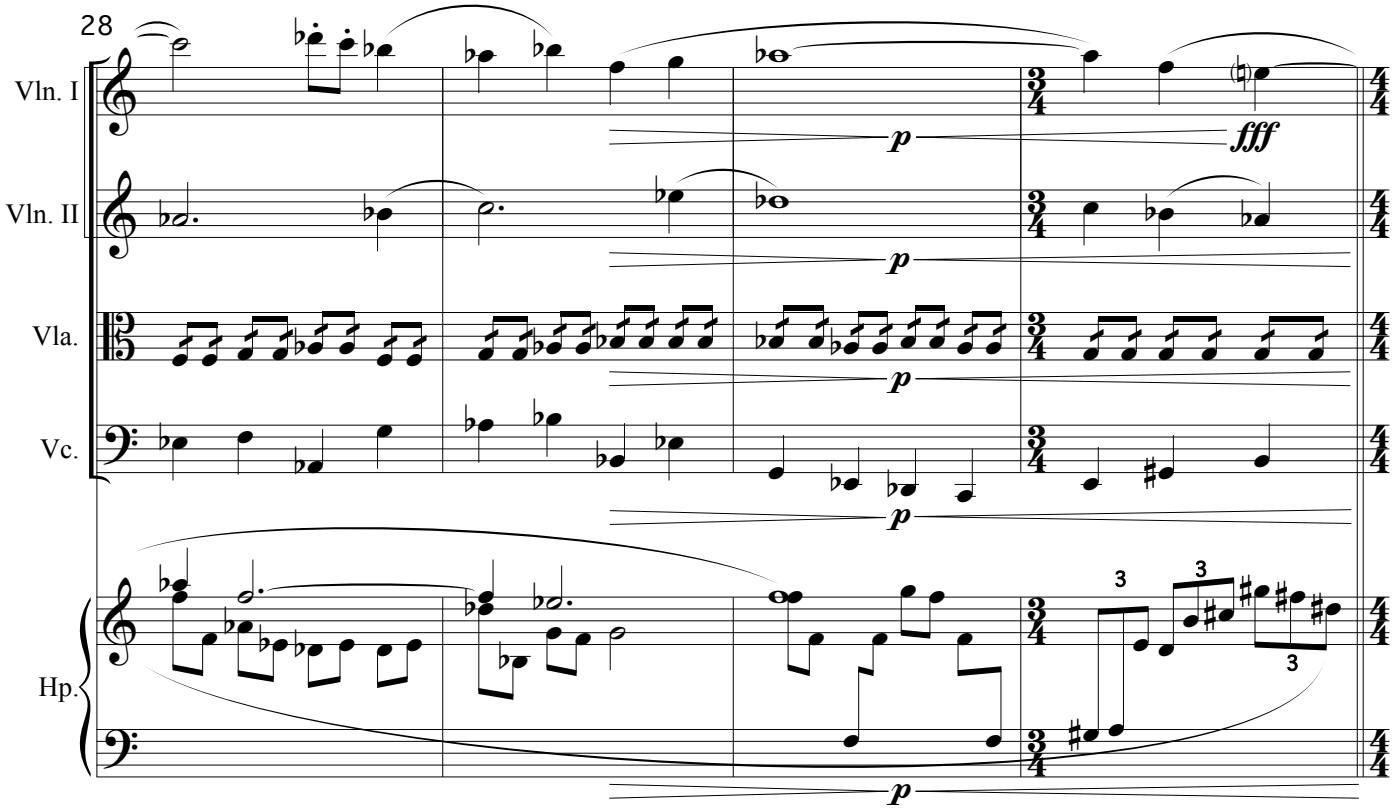

9
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
sul pont.
p
(sul pont.)
p

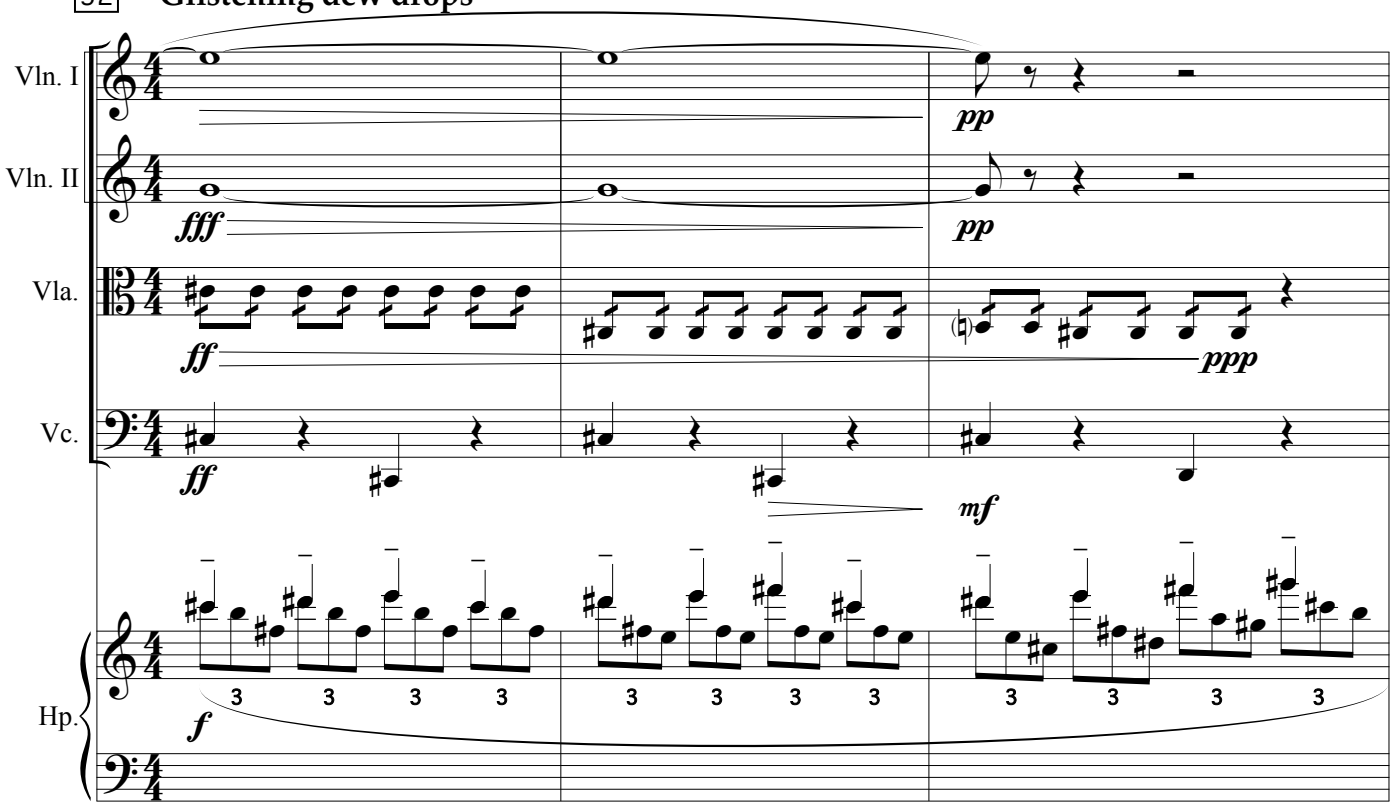

13
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
norm.
ff
f espress.
pizz.
sfz
sfffz
3

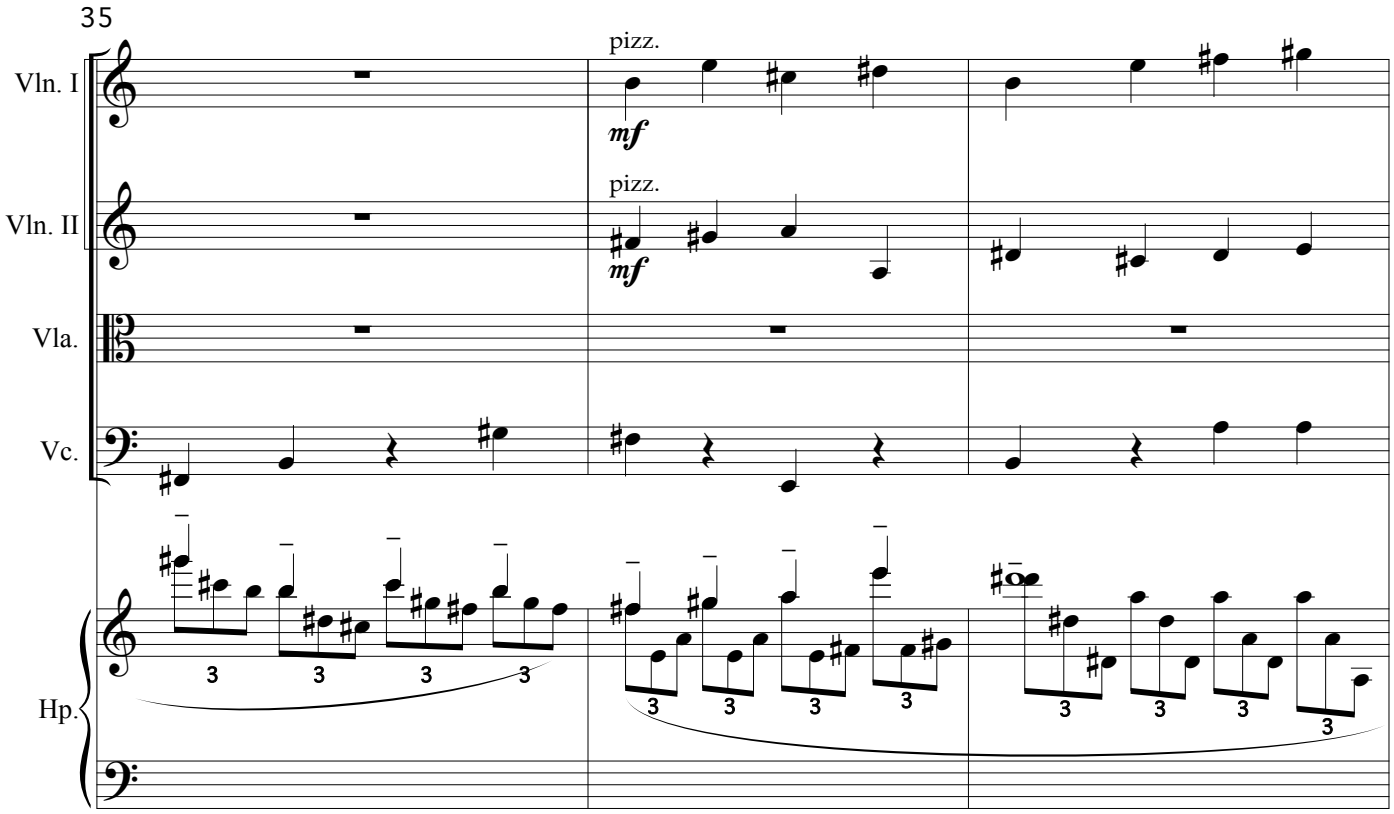

16
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
arco
norm.
p lightly; pushing forward
ppp
mf sempre; supporting harp
p

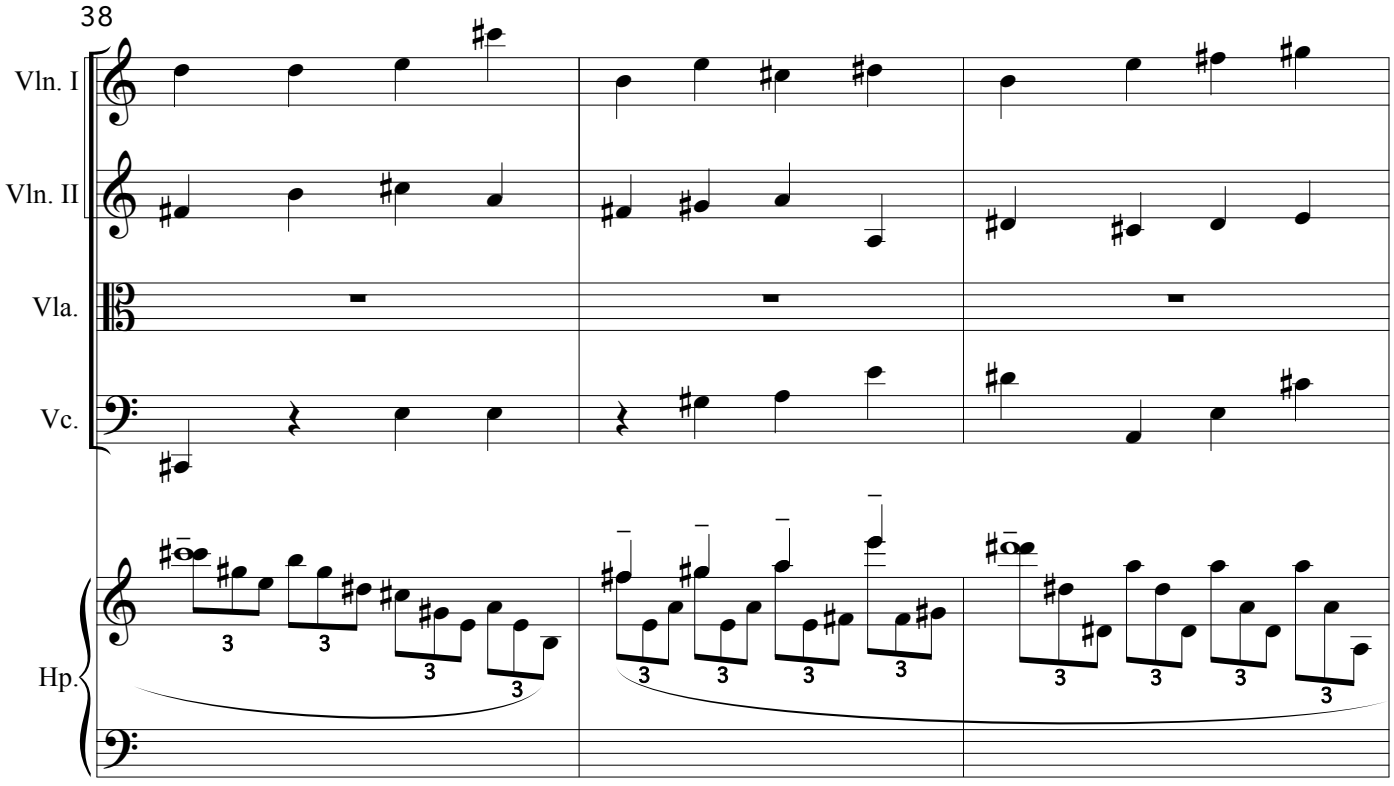

20
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
ff
f espress.
IV
sfz
mf
f

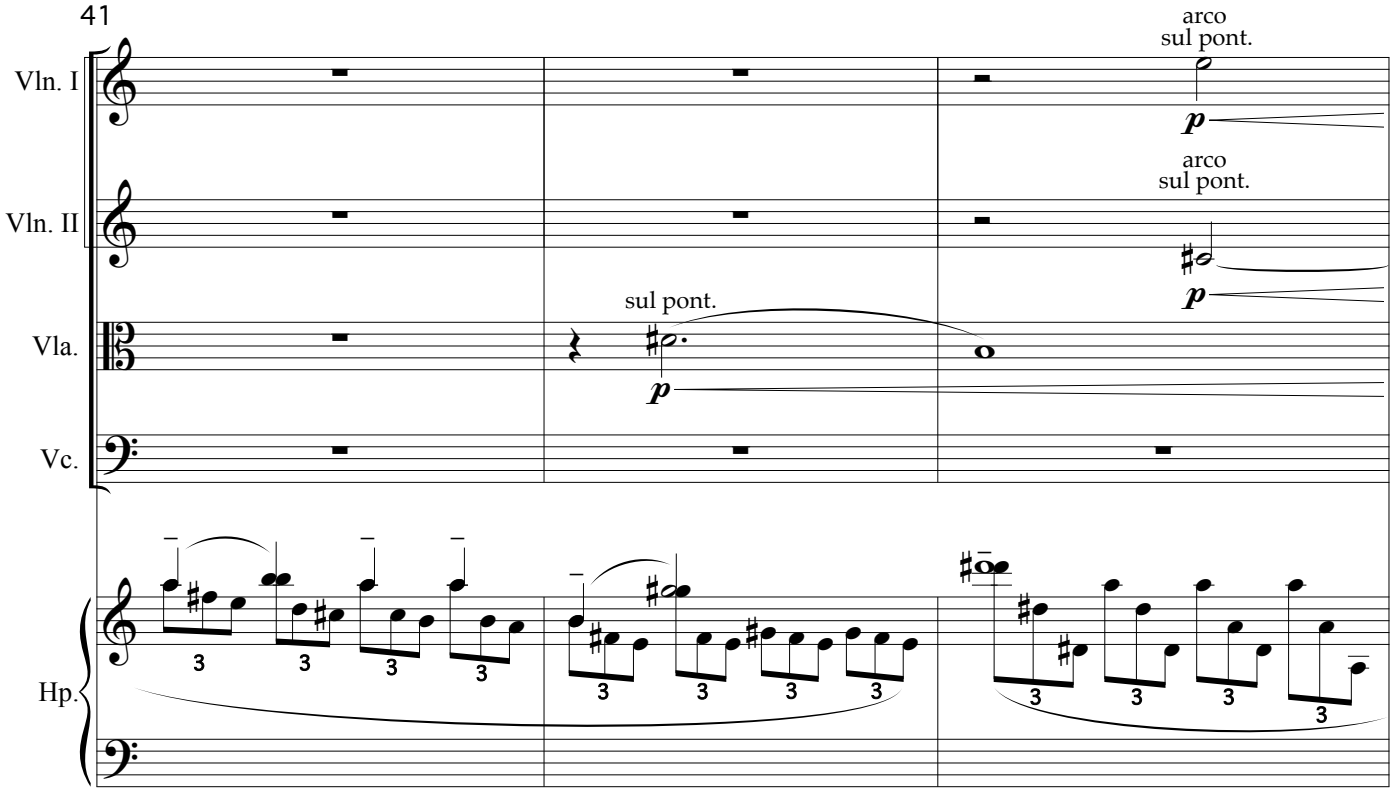

24
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
ff
p
f
p
mf
p
f
p
mf

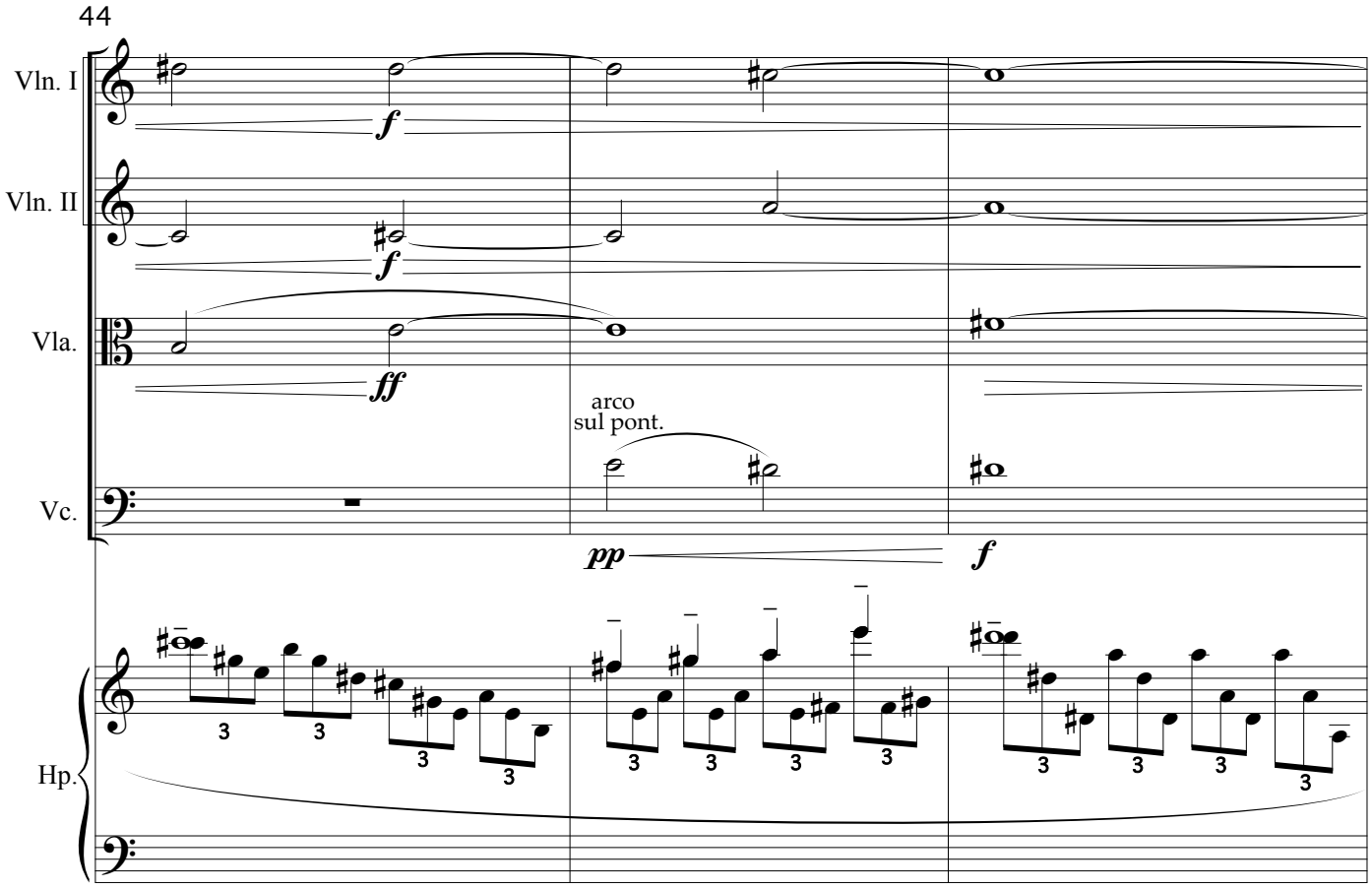

28
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
fff
3

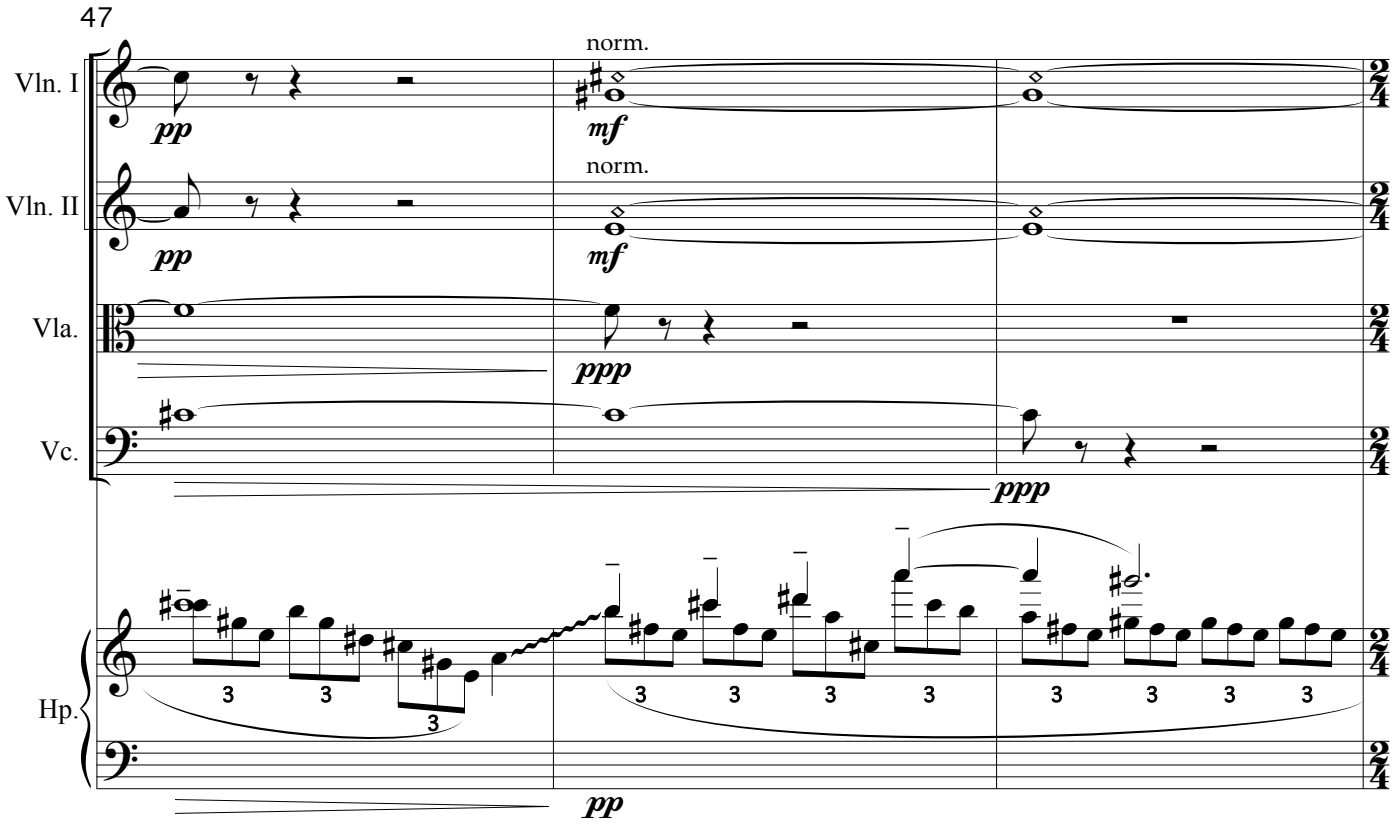

32
Glistening dew drops
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
fff
pp
ff
ppp
mf
f
3

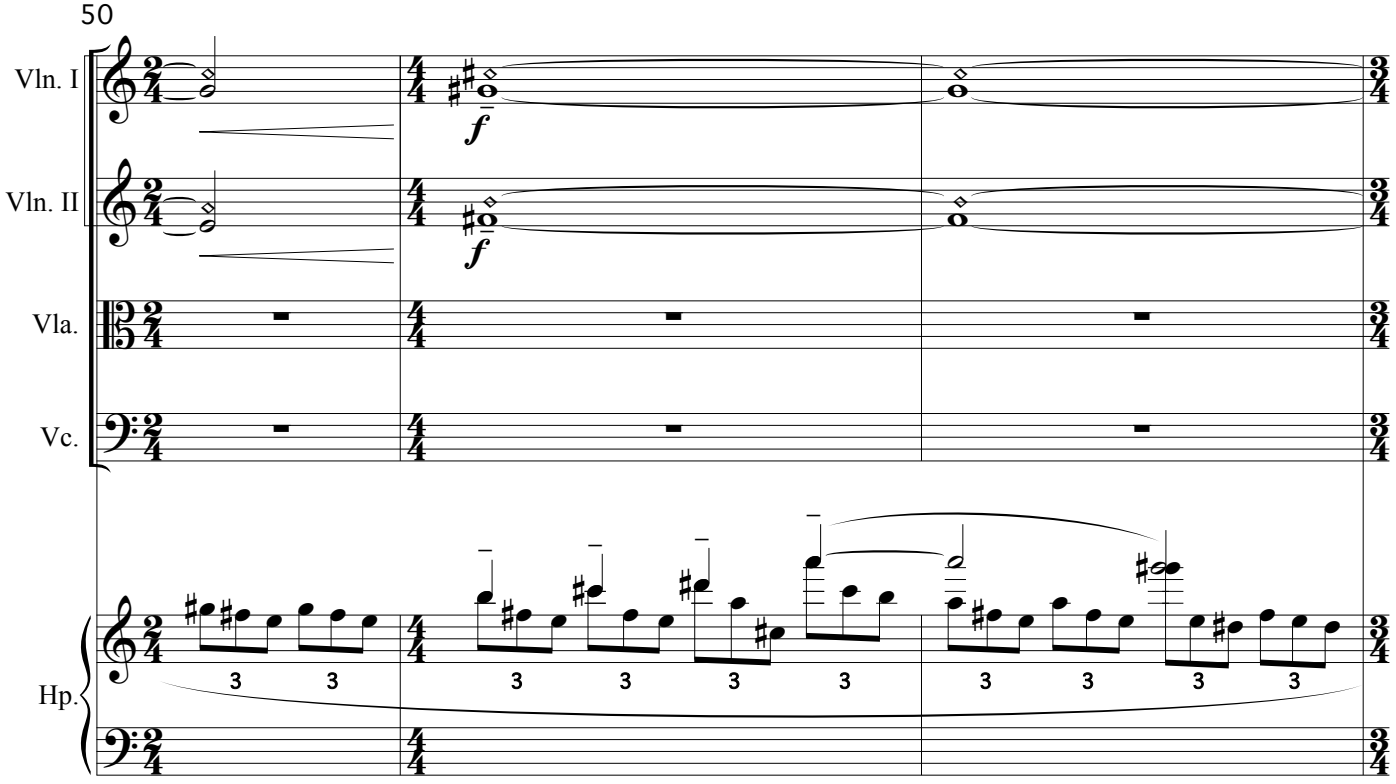

35
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pizz.
mf
pizz.
mf

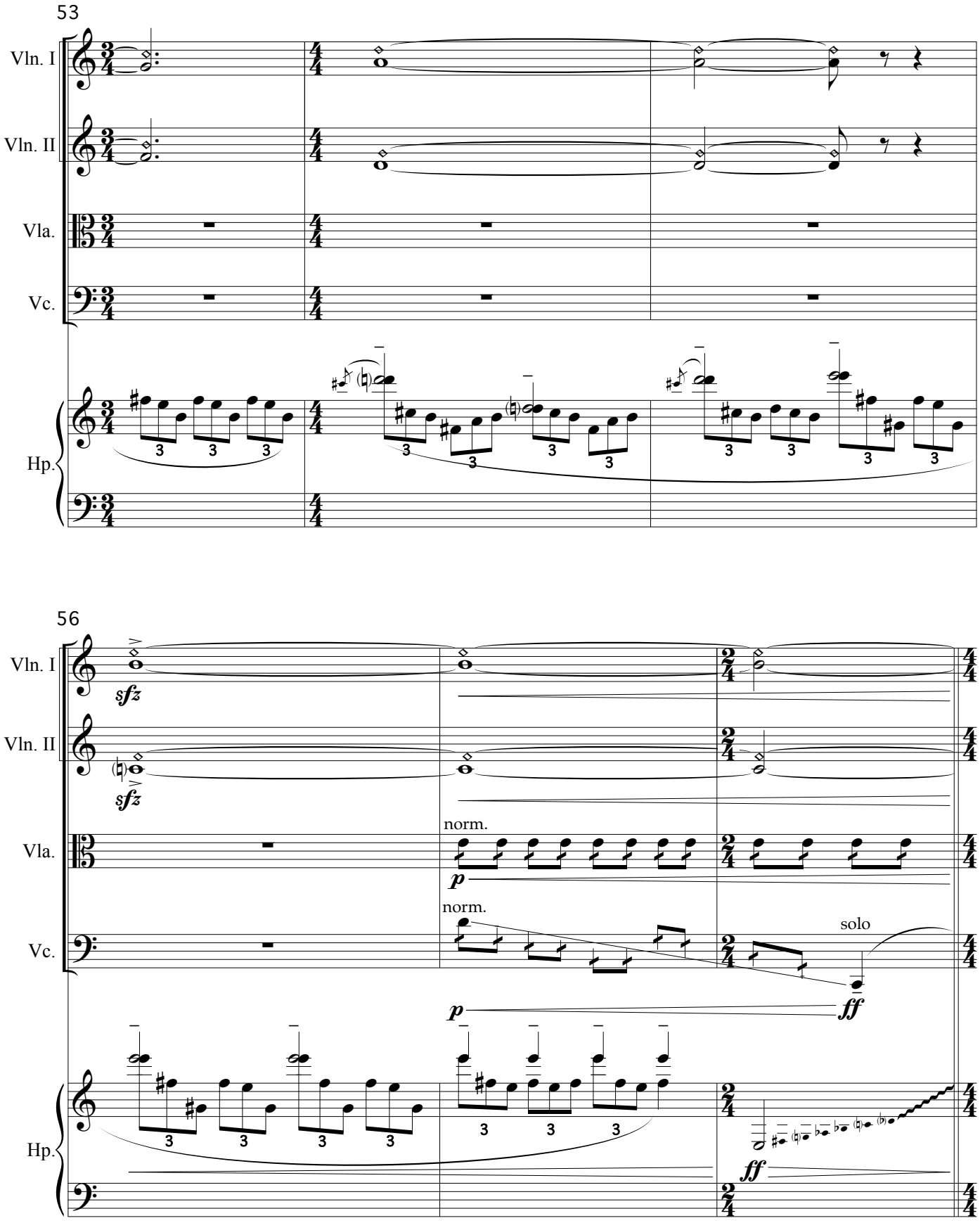

38
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.


41
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
arco
sul pont.
p
arco
sul pont.
p
sul pont.
p
3

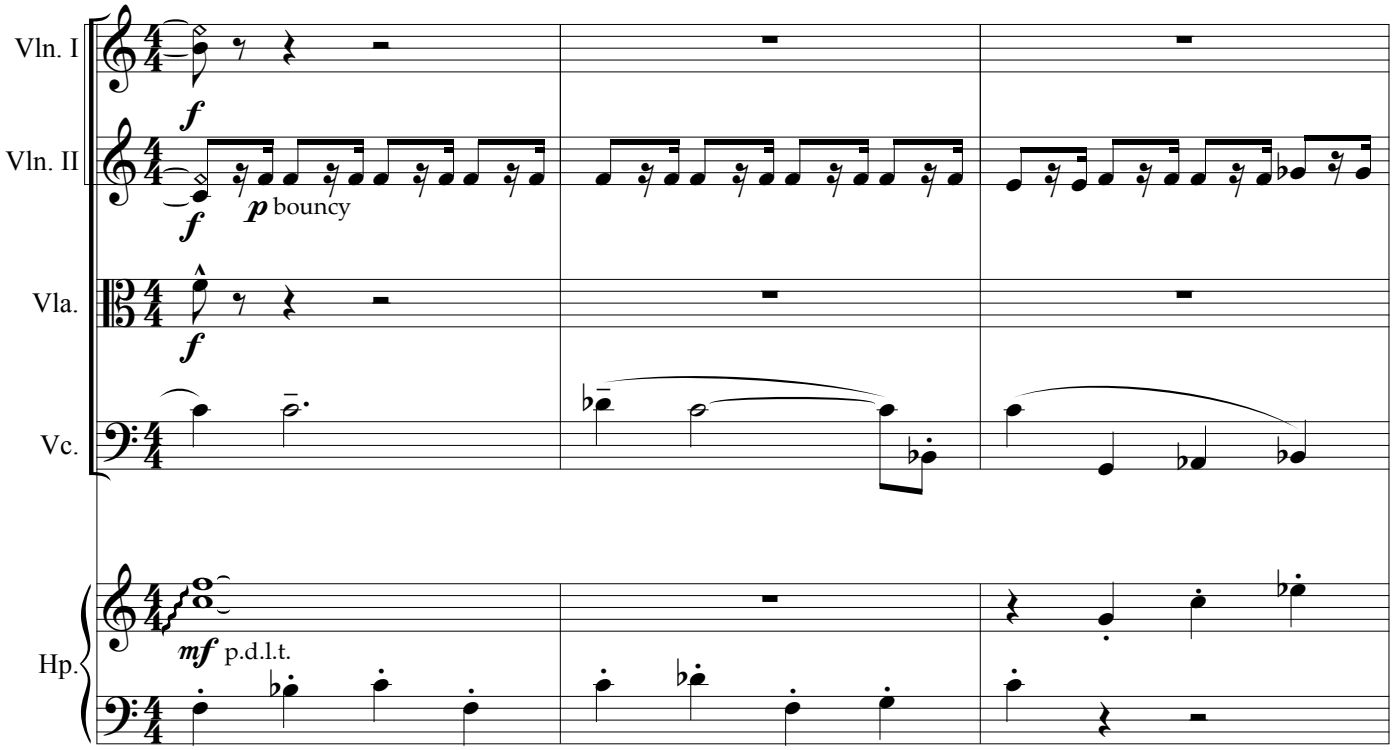

44
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
f
f
ff
arco
sul pont.
pp
f
3


47
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
norm.
norm.
pp
mf
pp
mf
ppp
ppp
pp

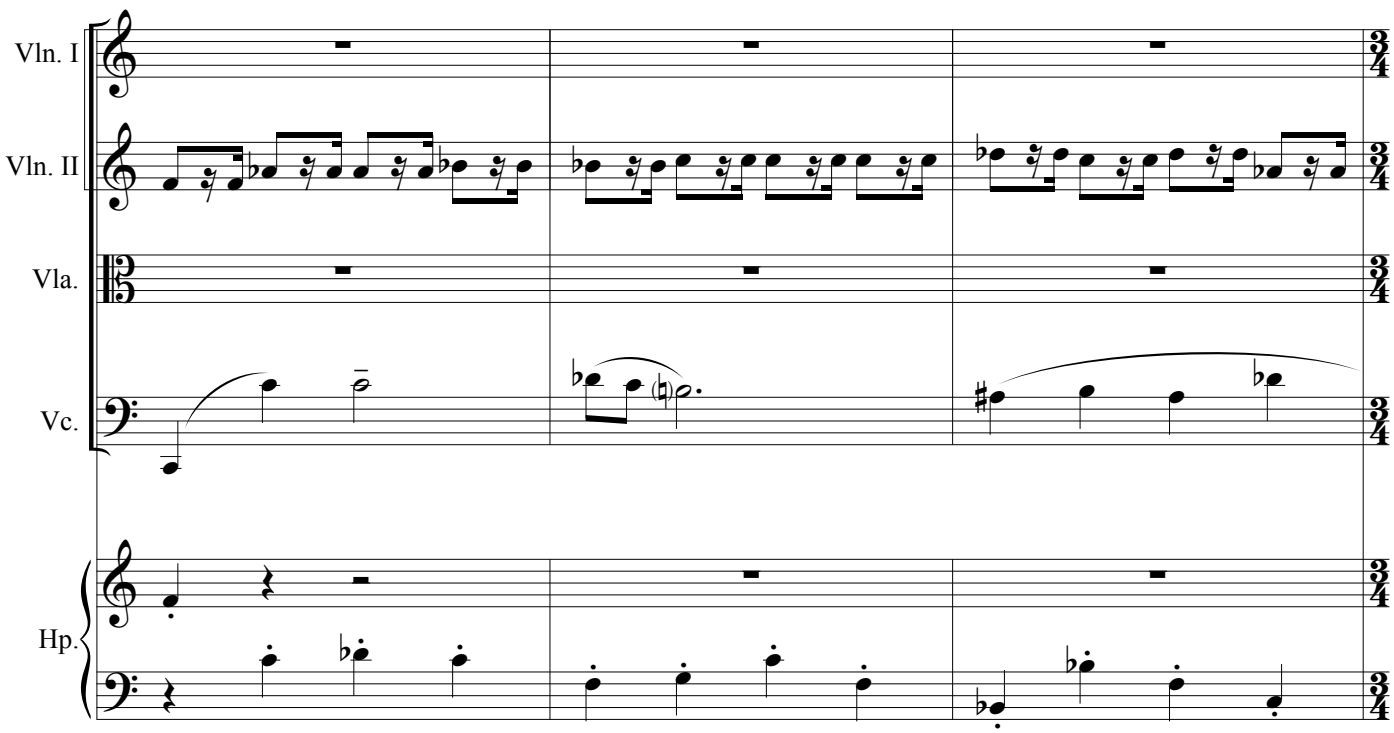

50
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
f
f

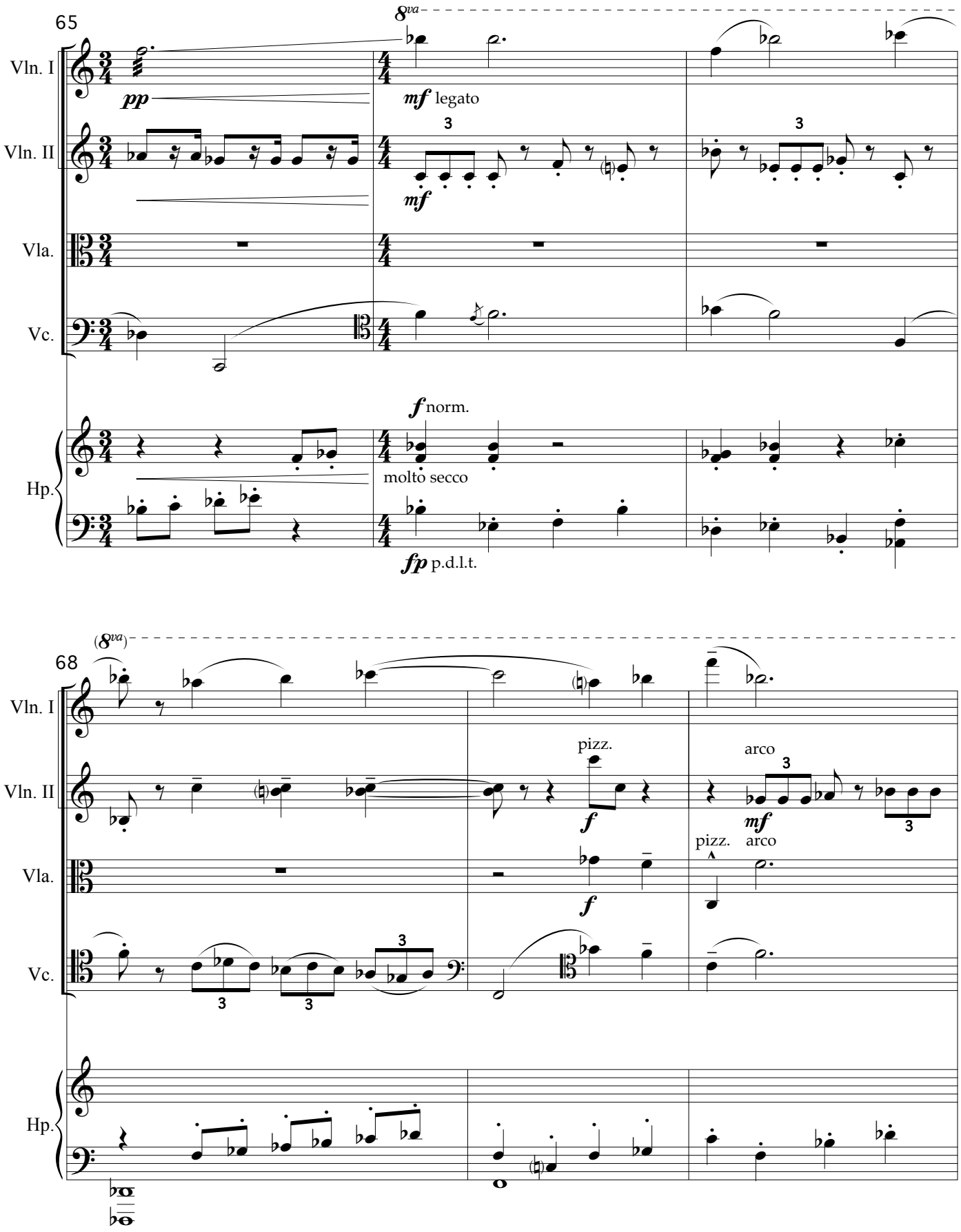

53
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
56
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
sfz
sfz
norm.
p
norm.
solo
p
ff
ff

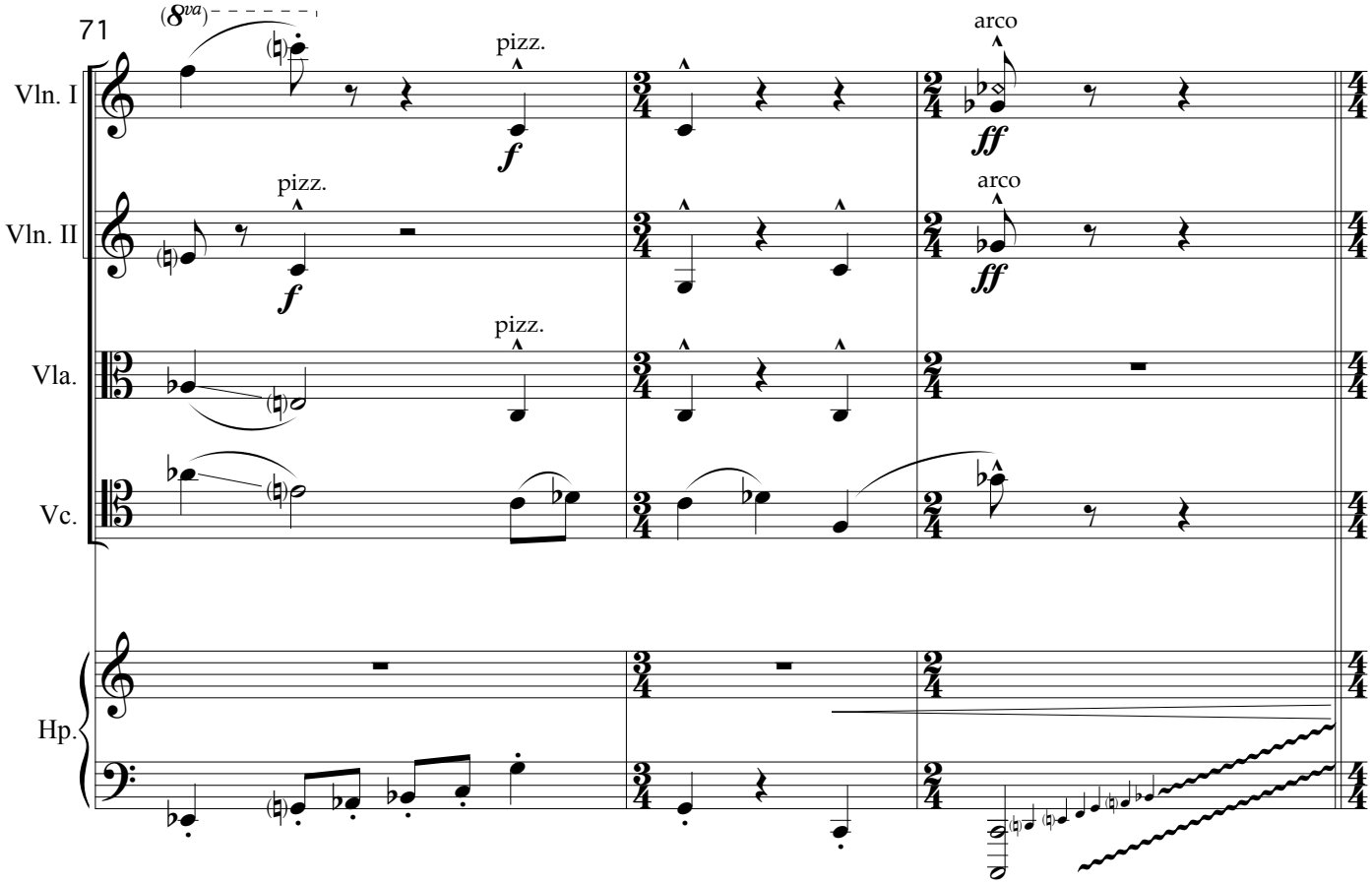
59 **Thorny; with regal twitch**



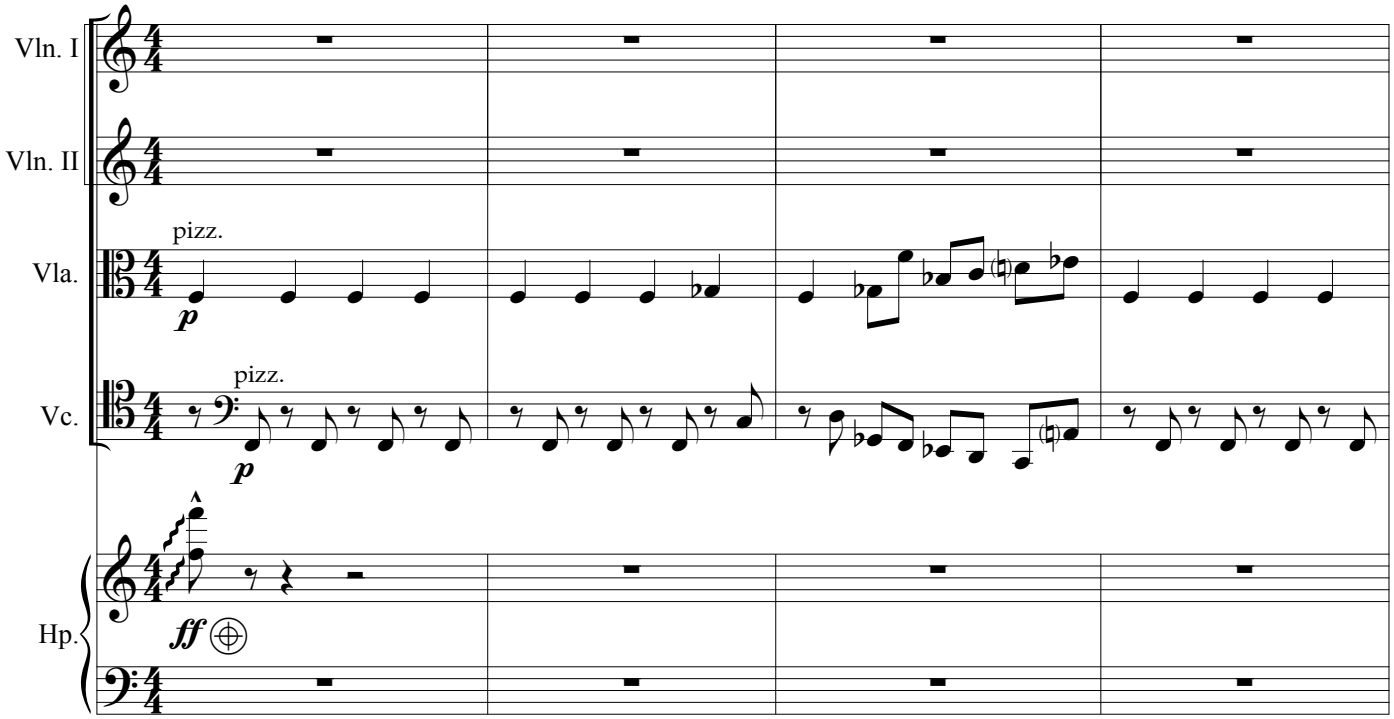
62

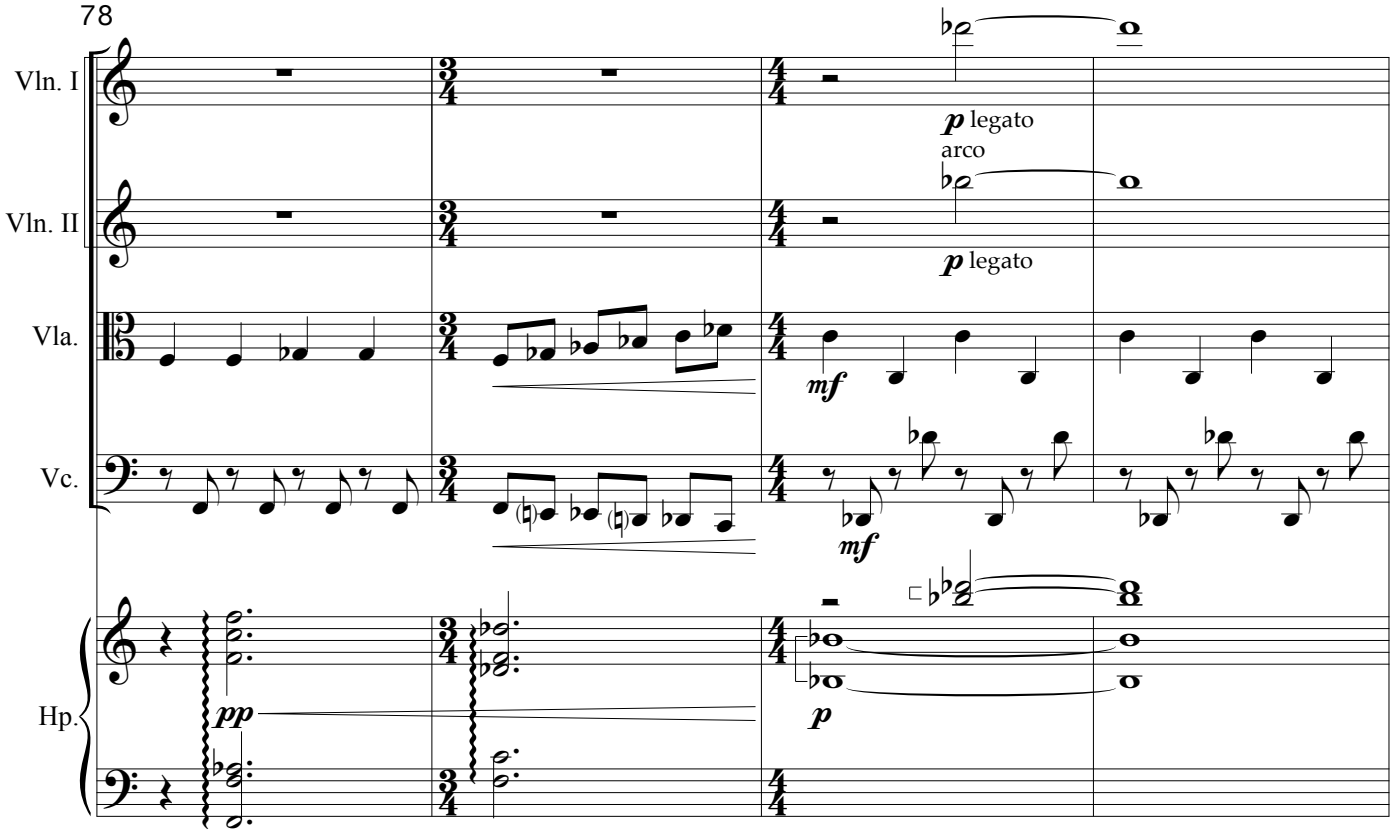


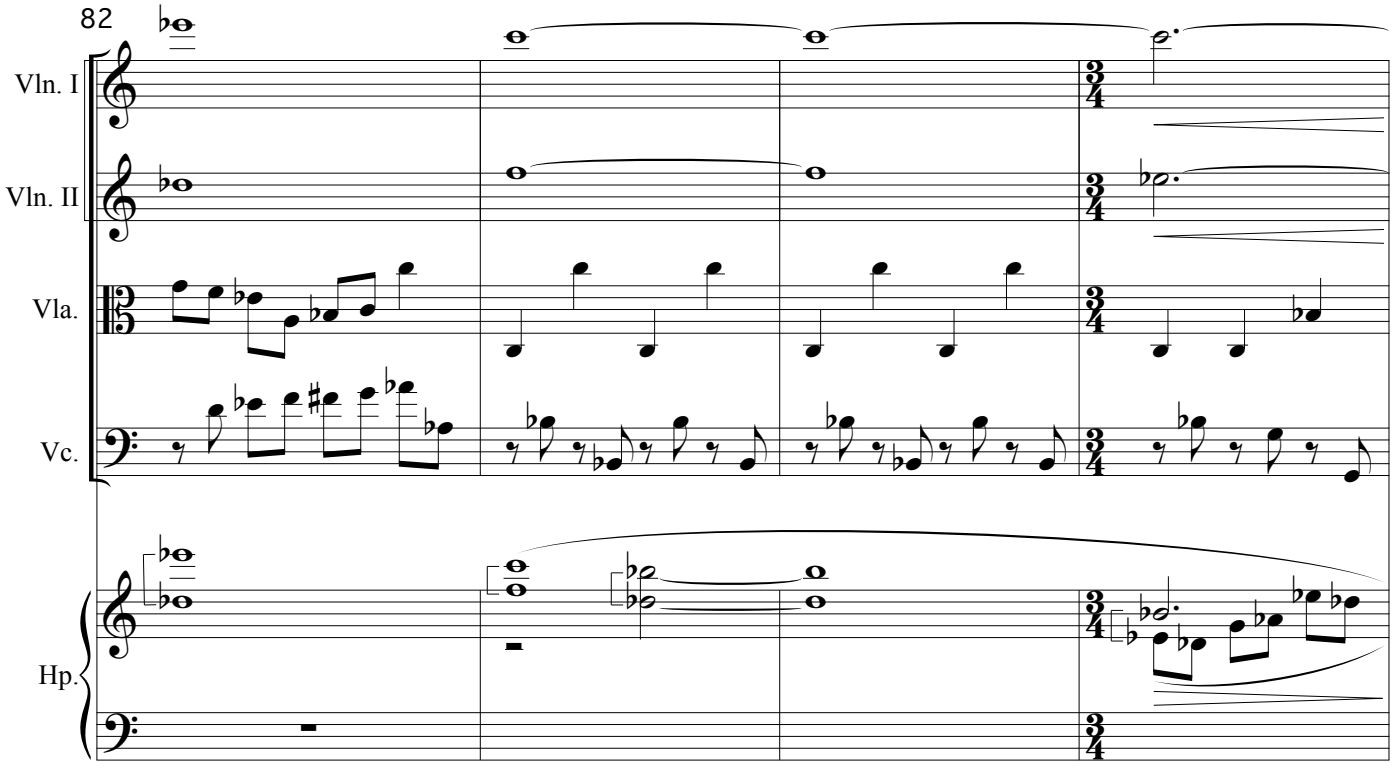

65
8va
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pp
mf legato
mf
f norm.
molto secco
fp p.d.l.t.
(8va)
68
pizz.
arco
f
mf
pizz.
arco
f

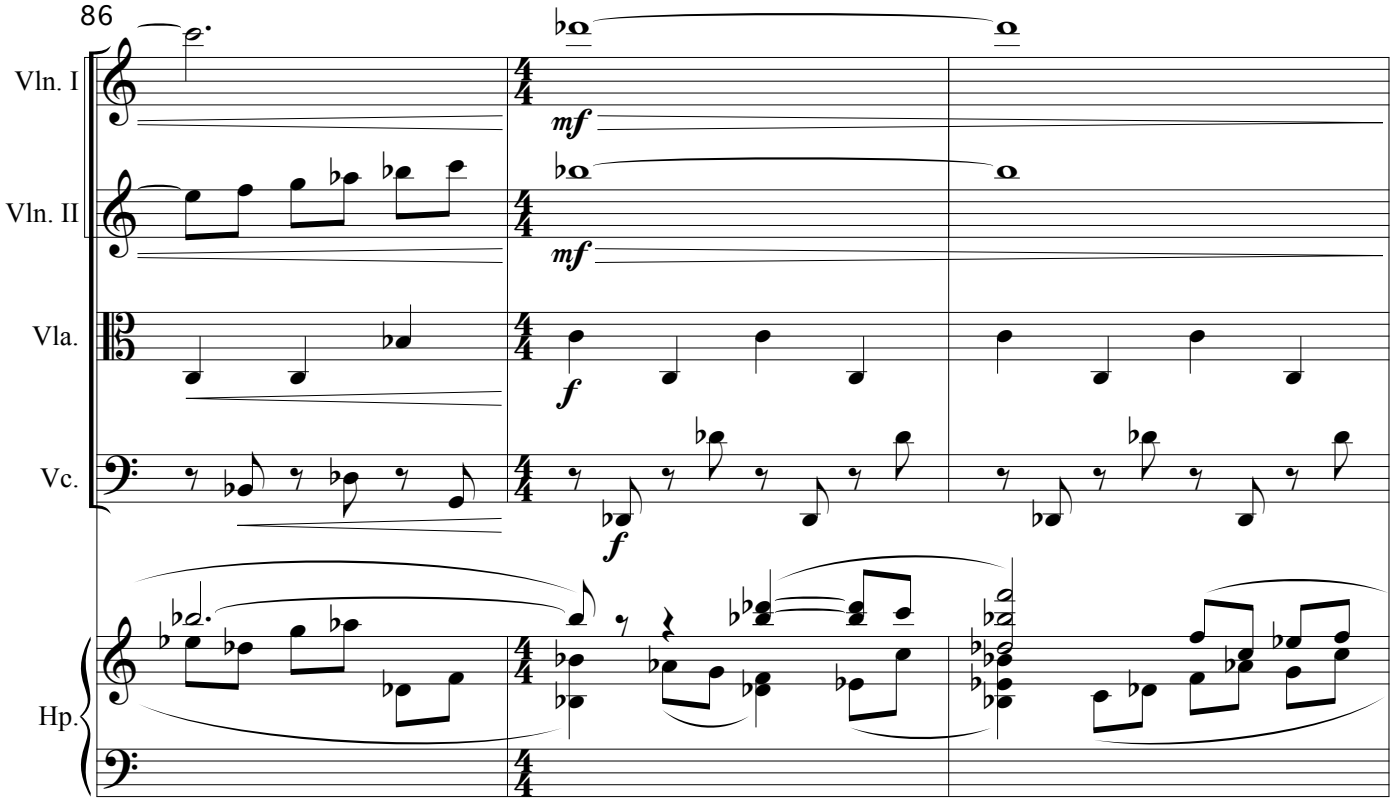


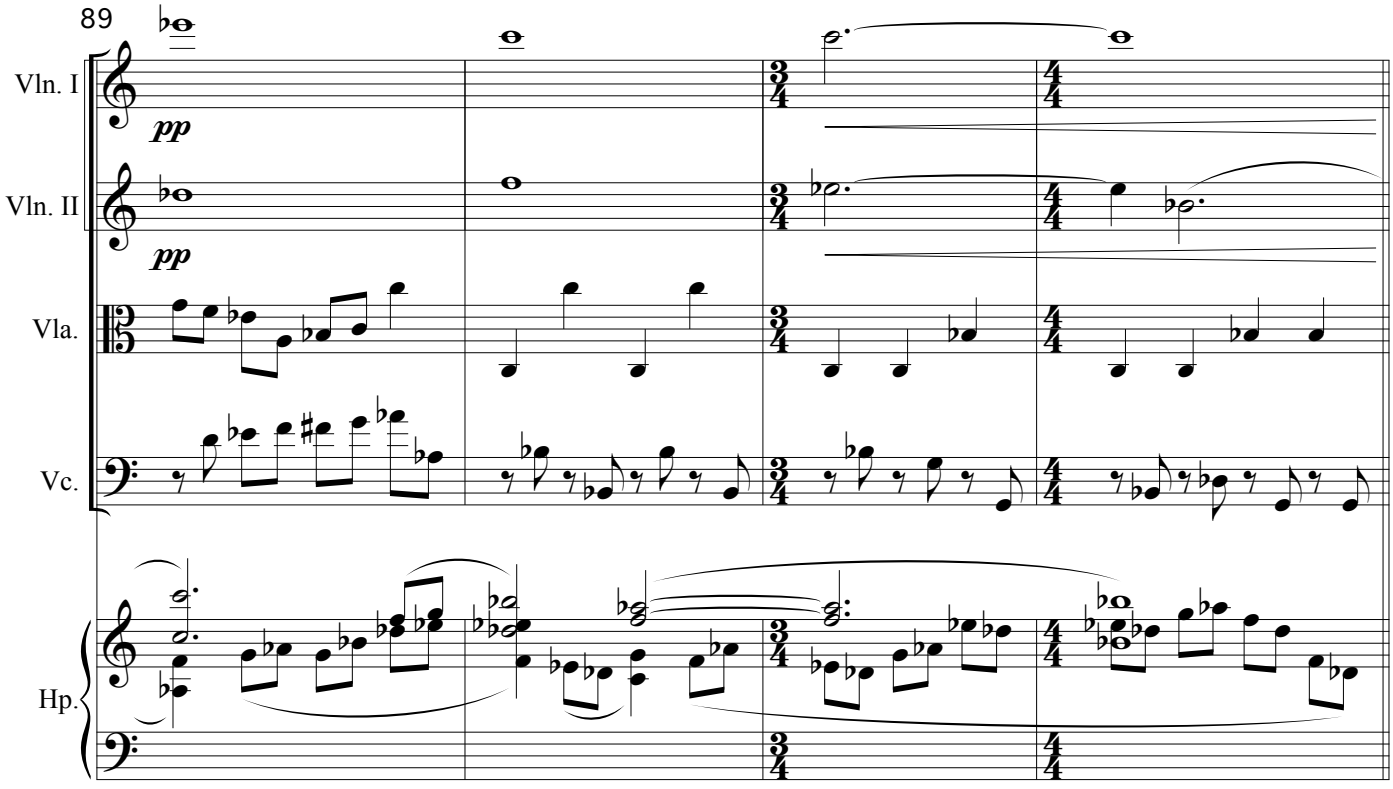
74 **A steady build; same tempo**

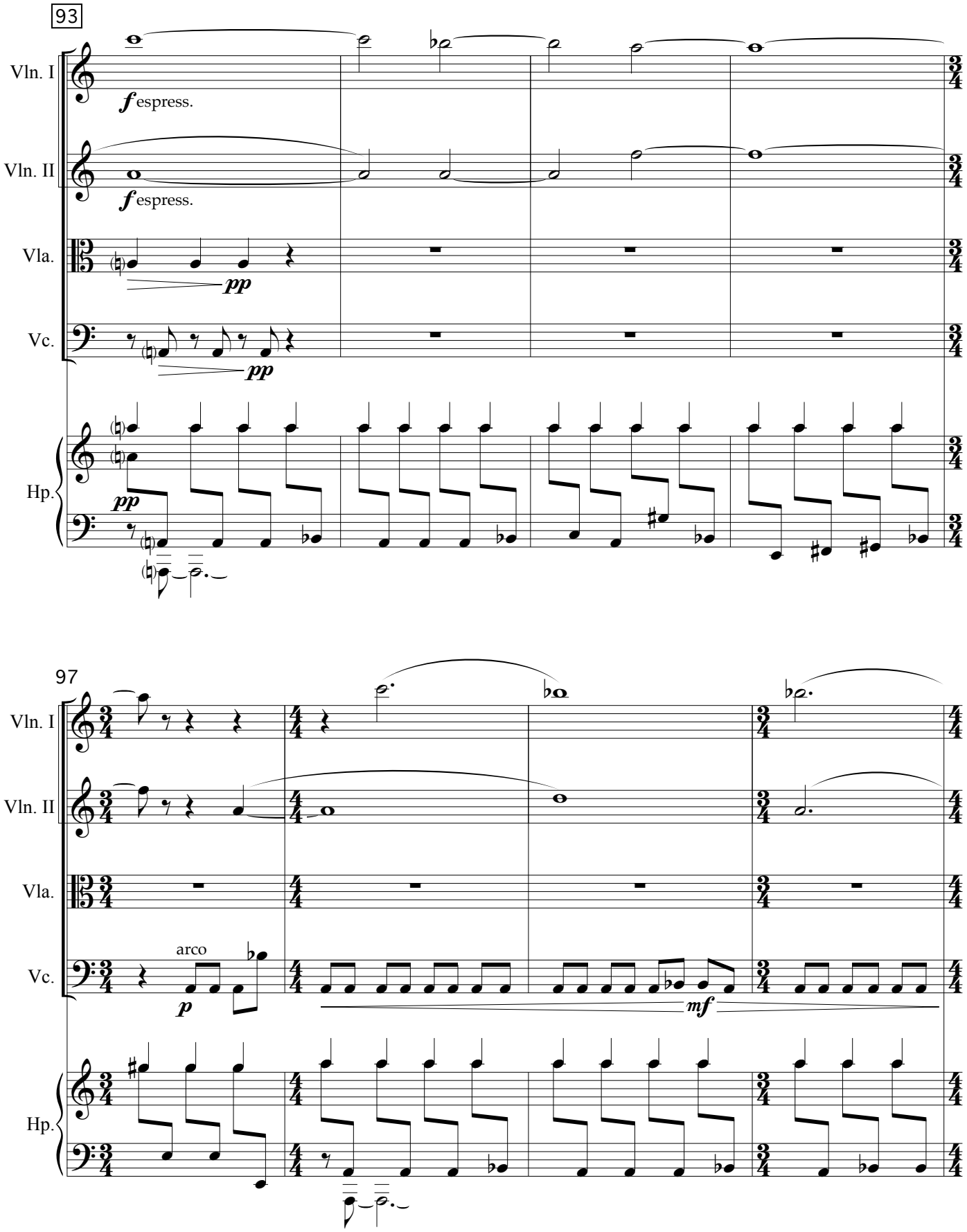


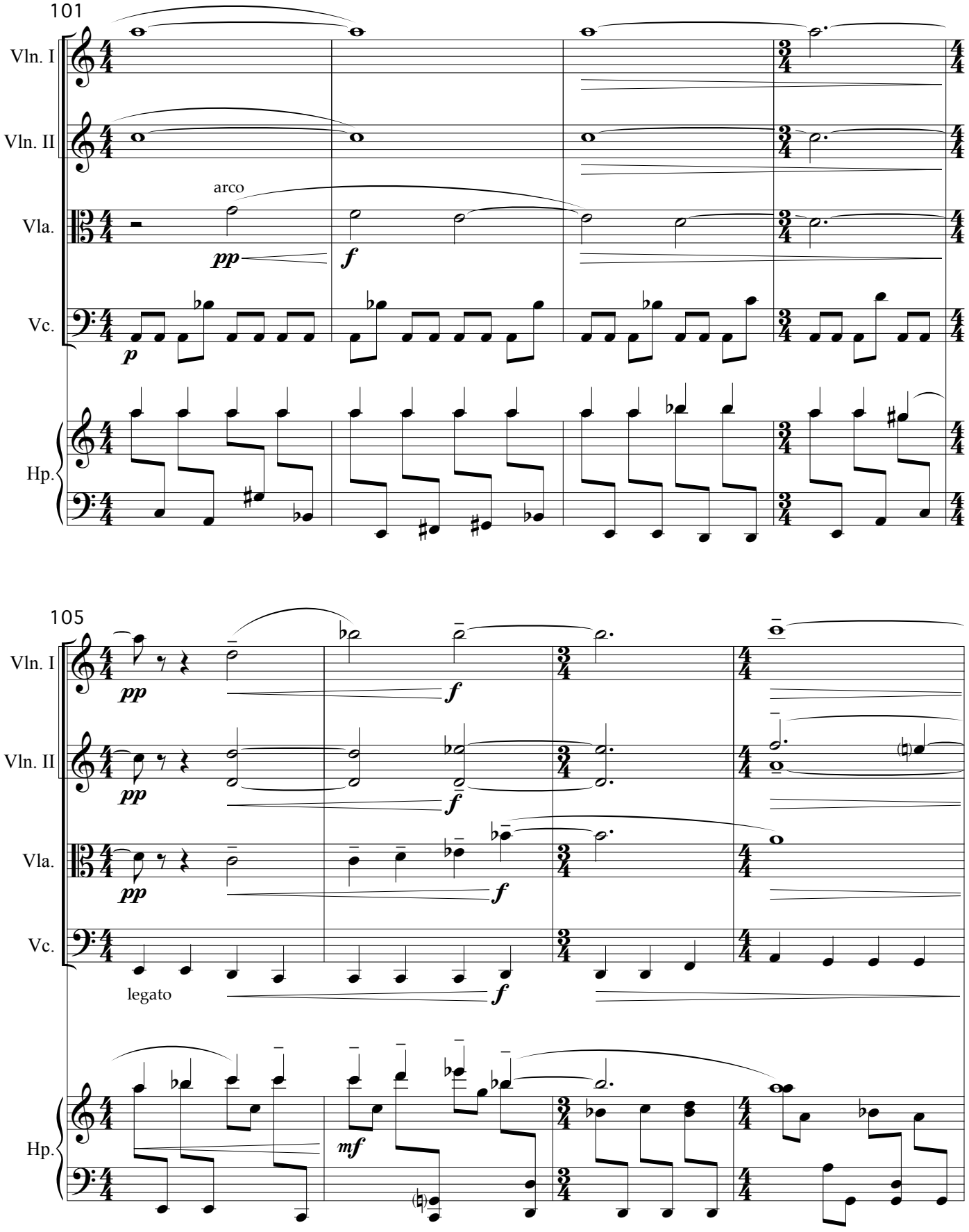

78
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p legato
arco
p legato
mf
mf
pp
p

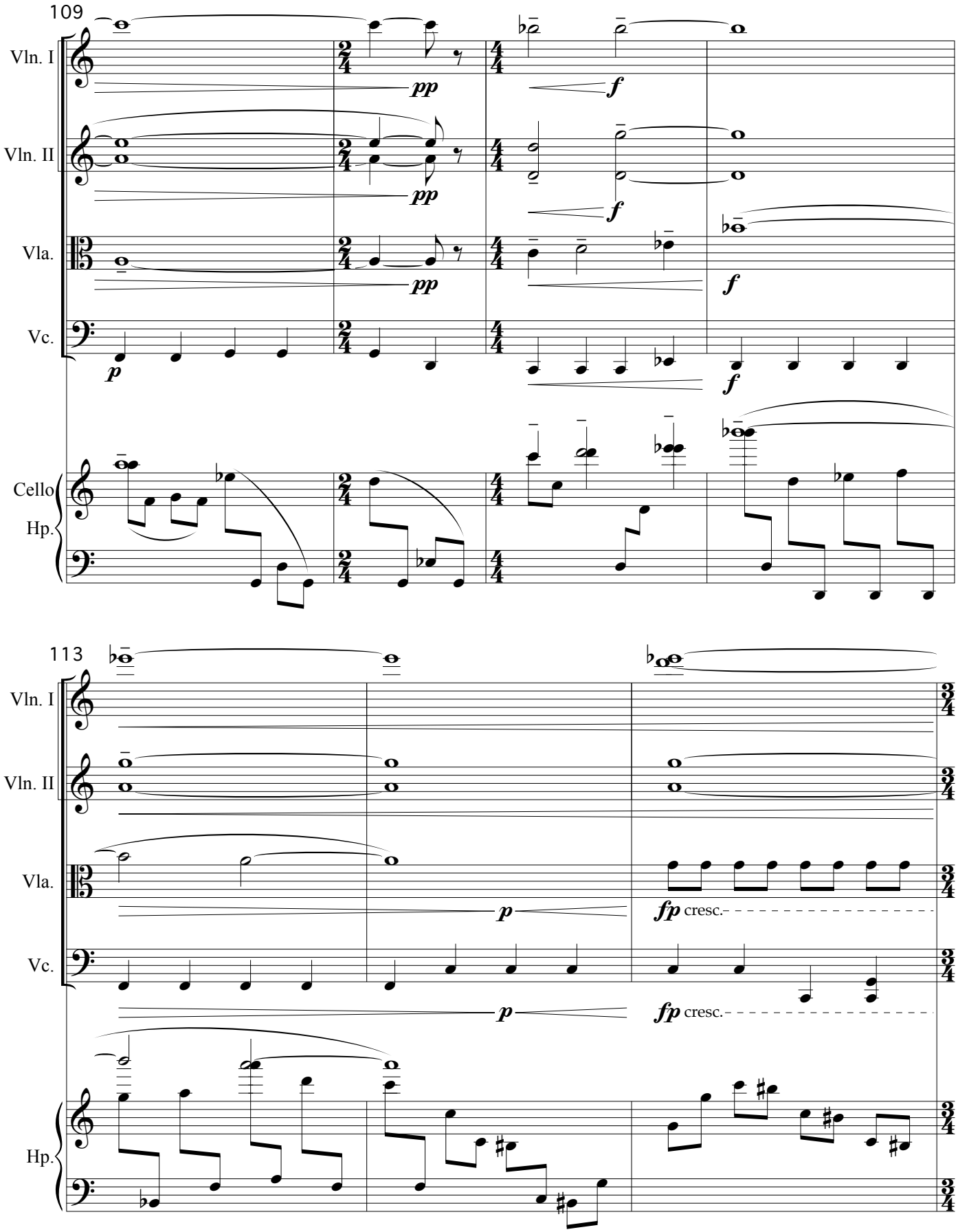

82
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.

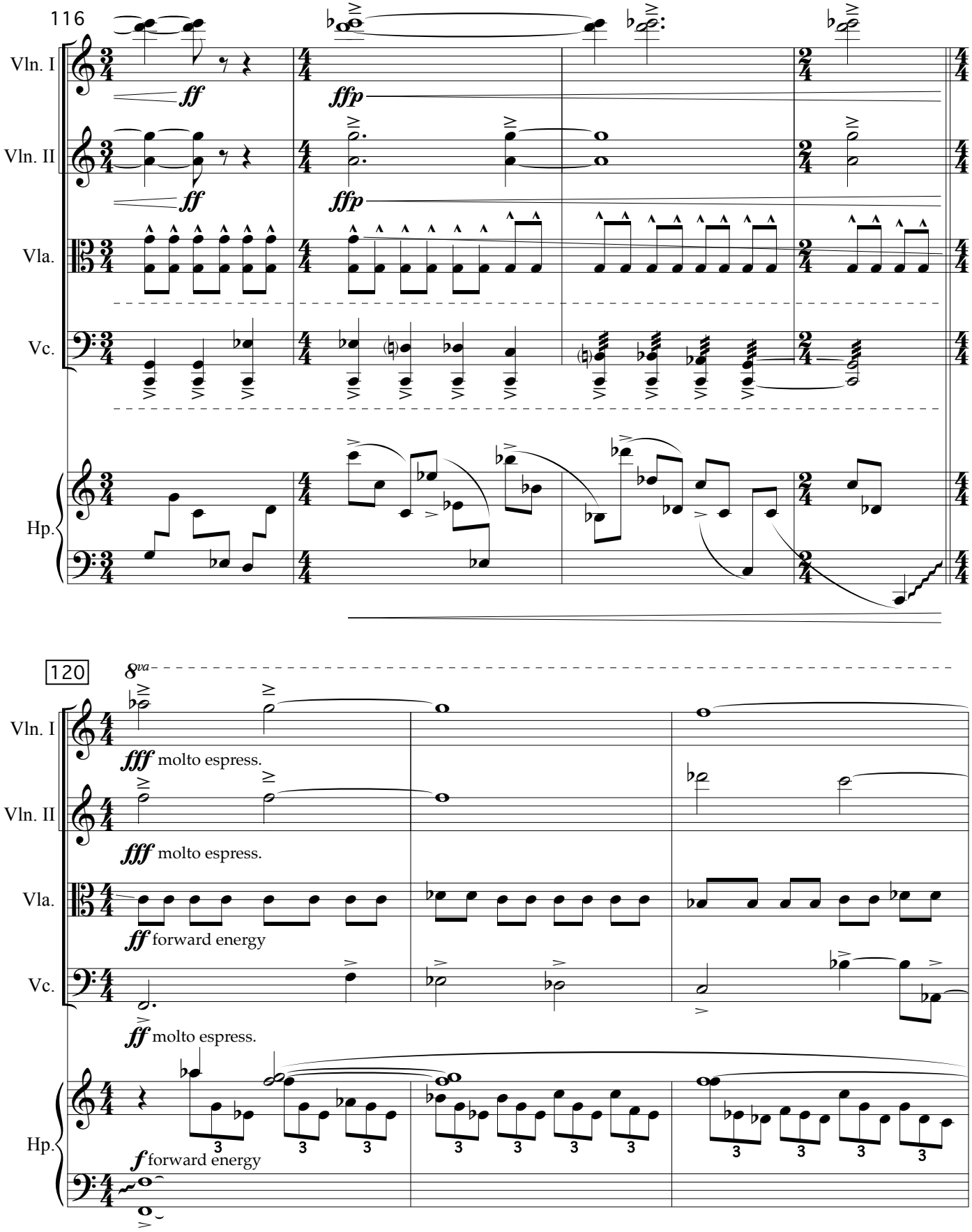

86
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
mf
mf
f
f

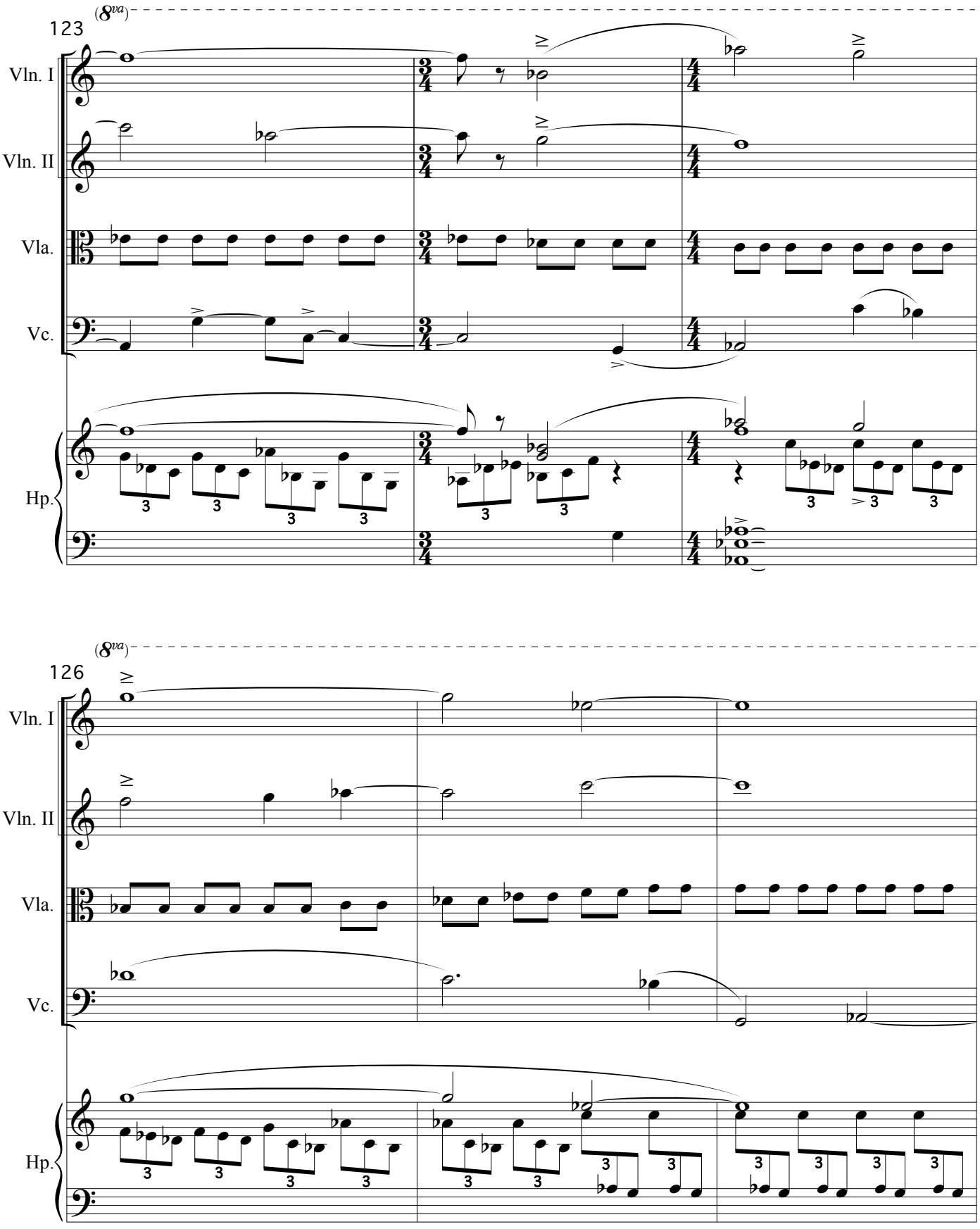

89
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pp
pp

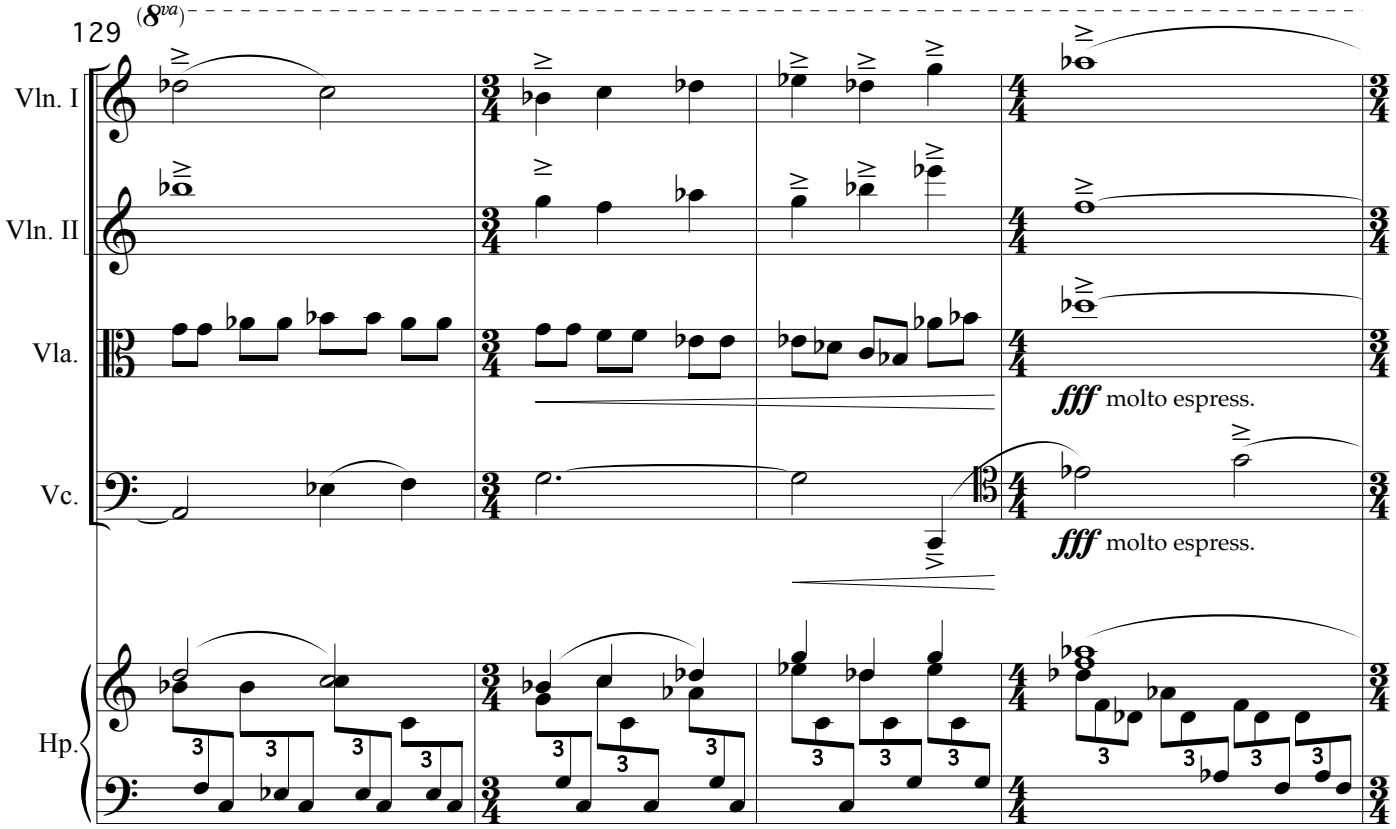

93
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
f espress.
f espress.
pp
pp
pp
97
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
arco
p
mf

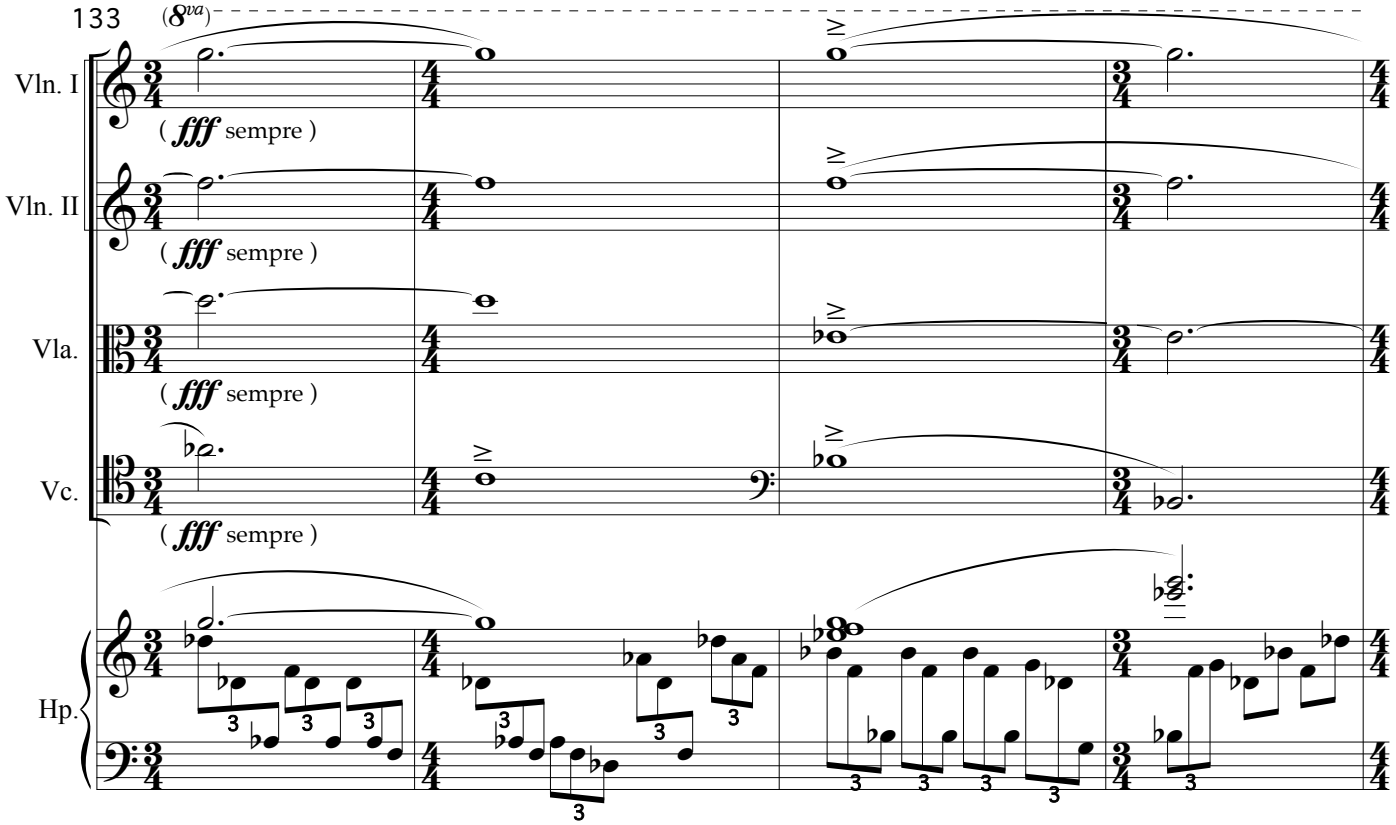

101
Vln. I
Vln. II
arco
Vla.
pp
f
Vc.
p
Hp.
105
Vln. I
pp
f
Vln. II
pp
f
Vla.
pp
f
Vc.
legato
f
Hp.
mf

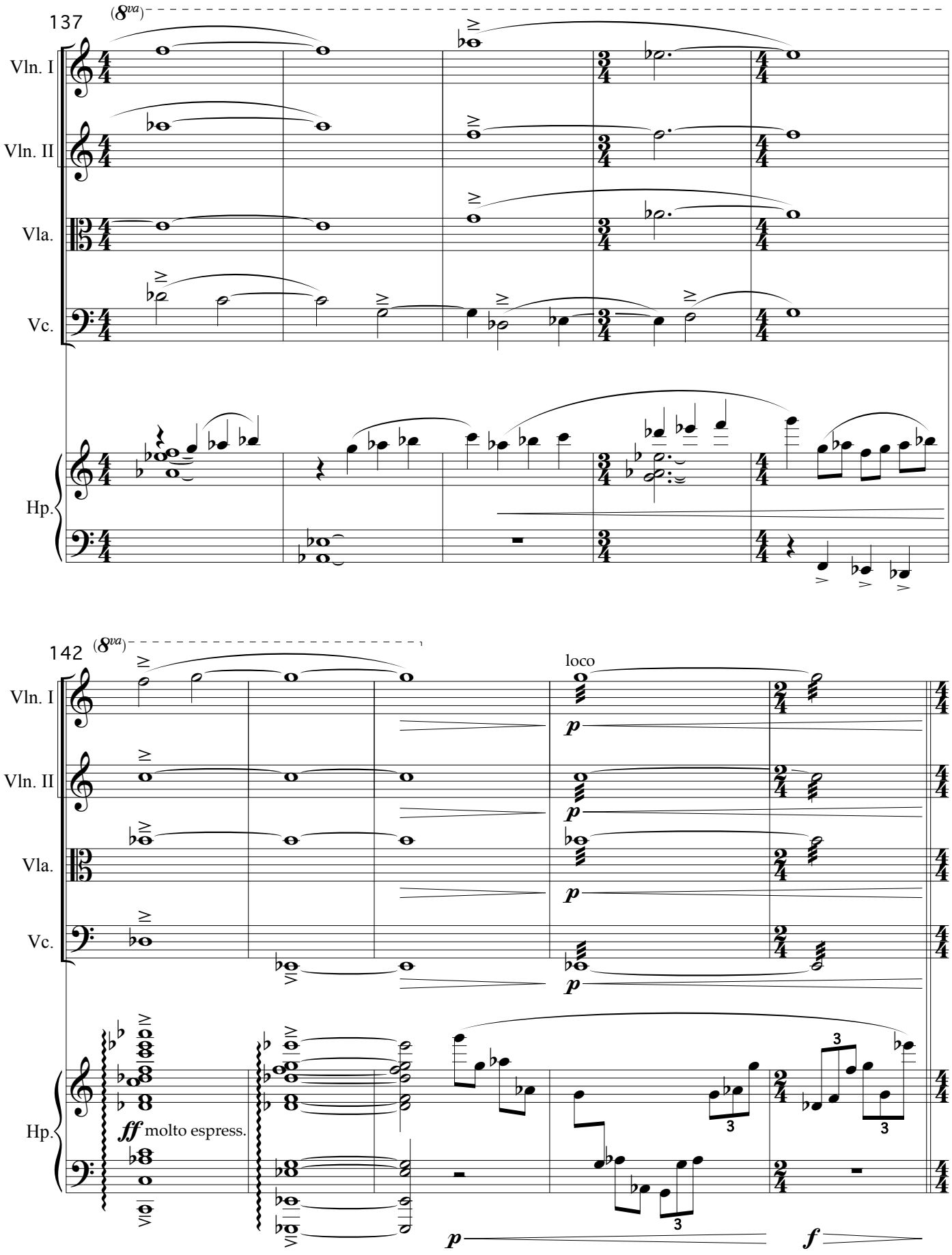

109
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cello
Hp.
pp
f
p
113
fp cresc.

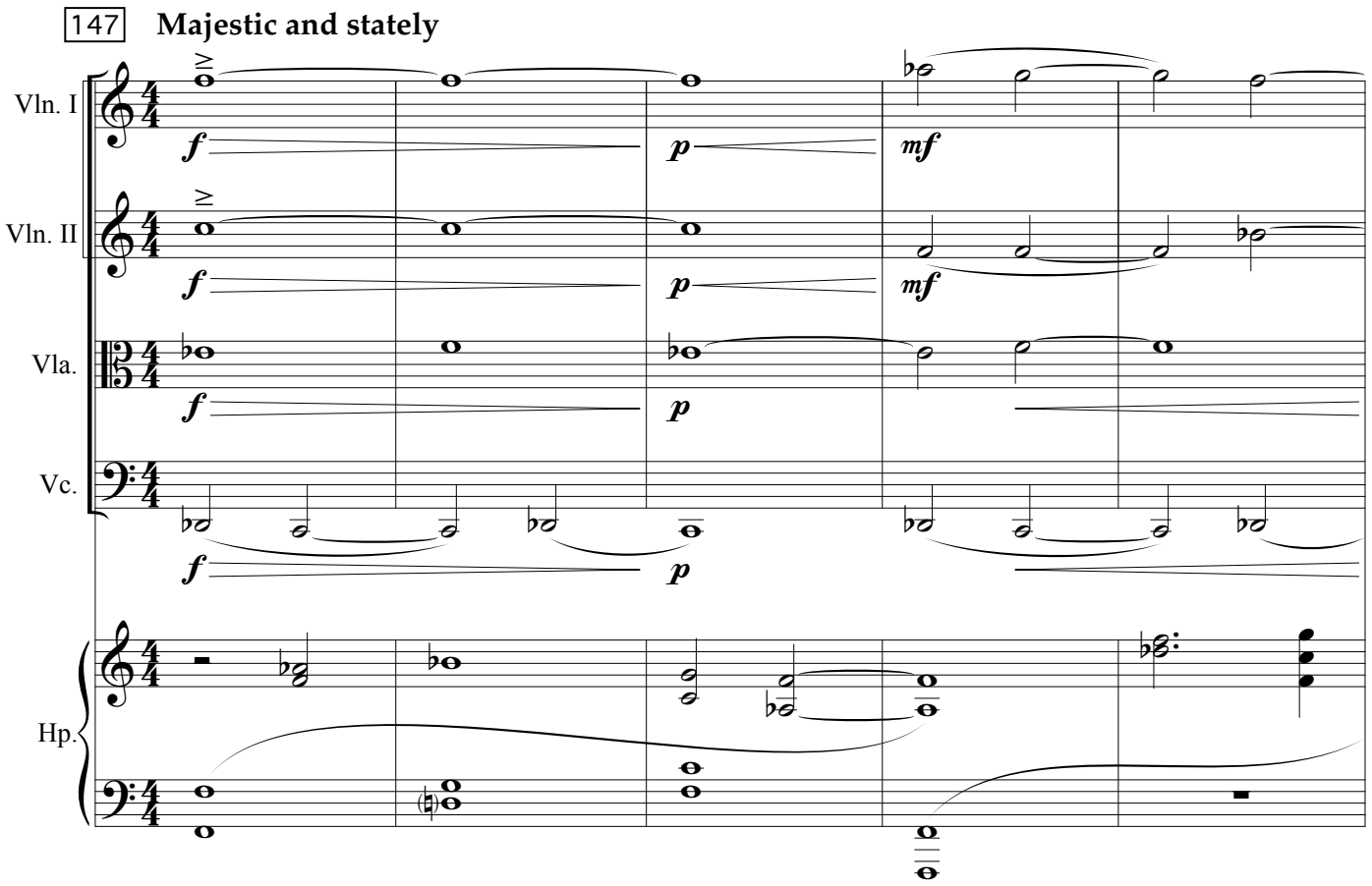

116
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
ff
ffp
120
8va
fff molto espress.
ff forward energy
ff molto espress.
f forward energy

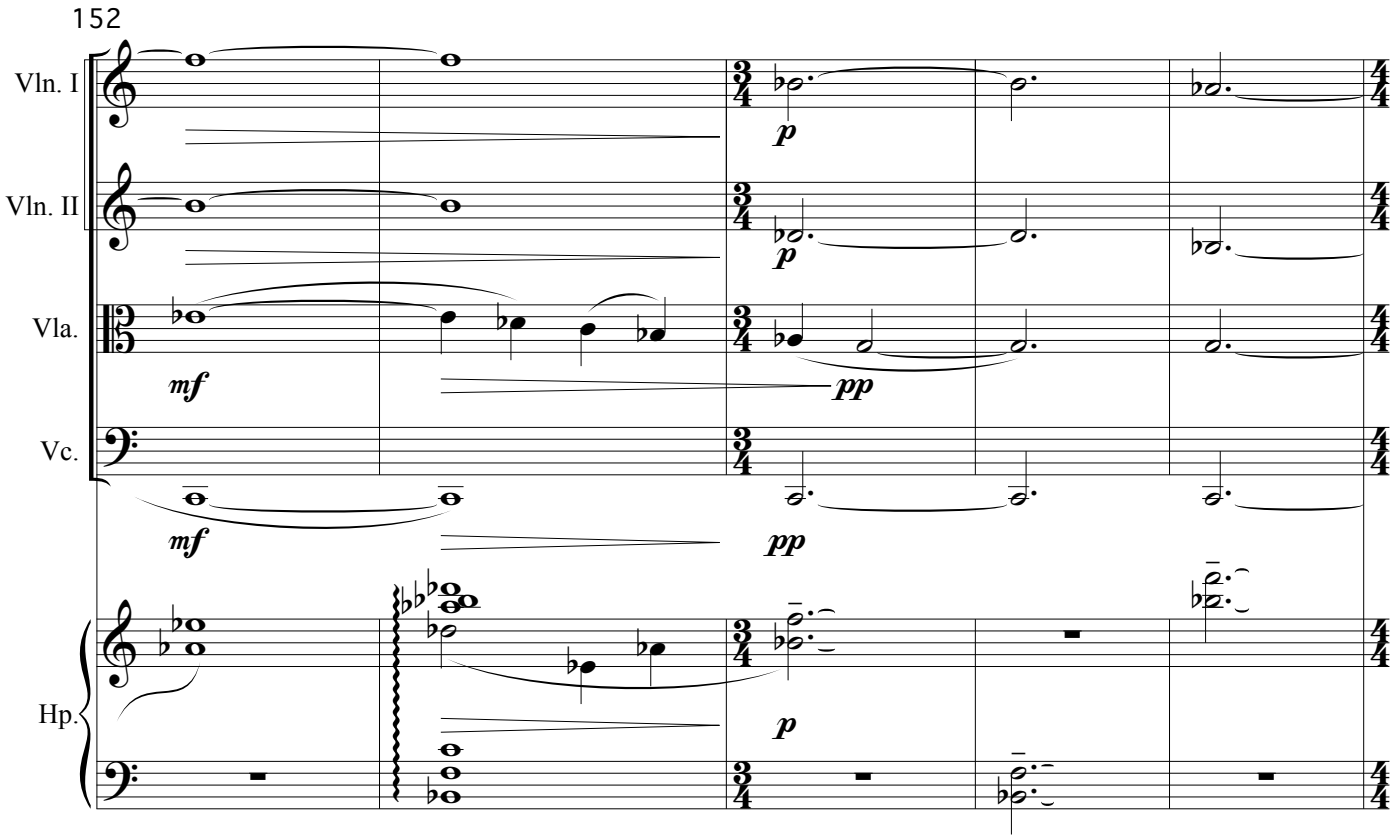

(8va)
123
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
(8va)
126
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.

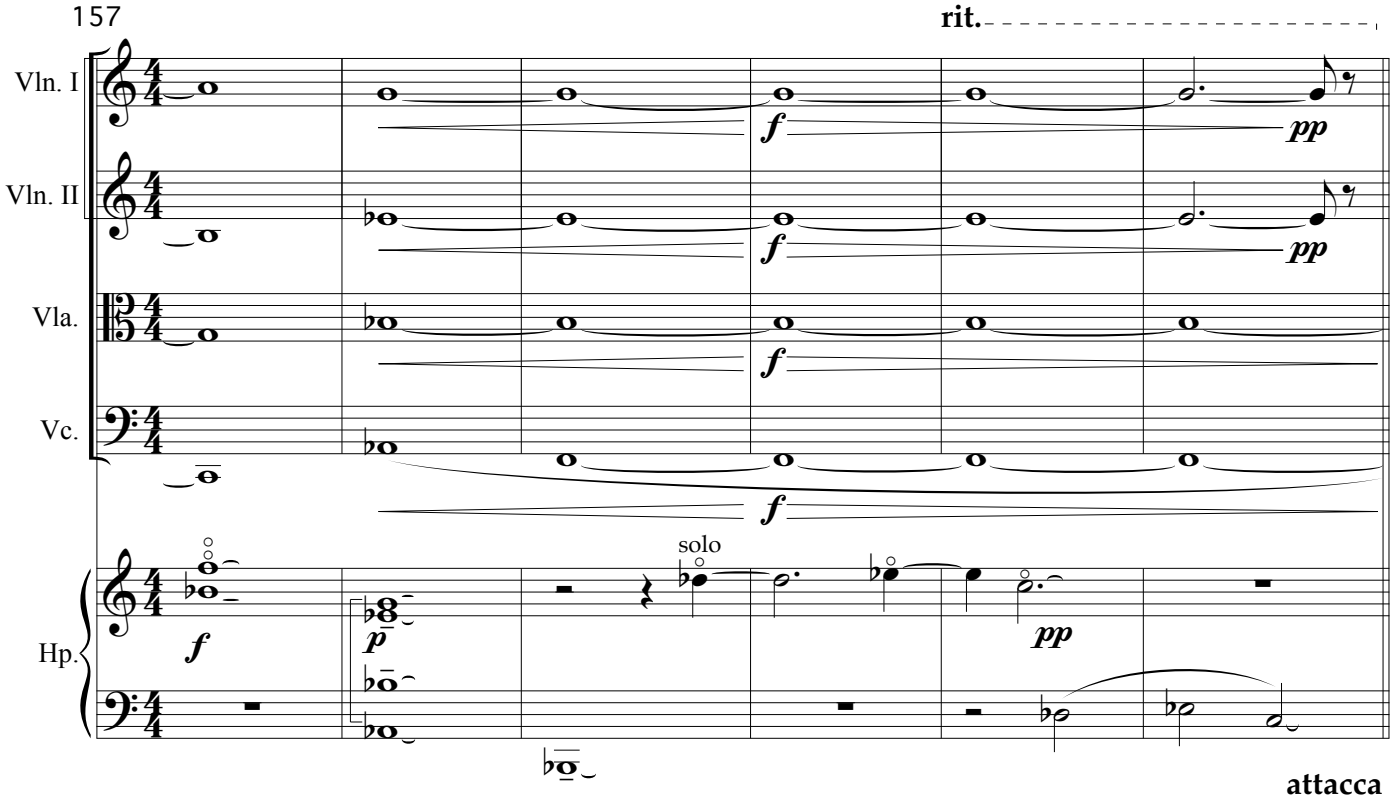

129
(8va)
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
fff molto espress.
fff molto espress.


133
(8va)
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
(fff sempre)
(fff sempre)
(fff sempre)
(fff sempre)


137
(8va)
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
142
(8va)
loco
p
ff molto espress.
f

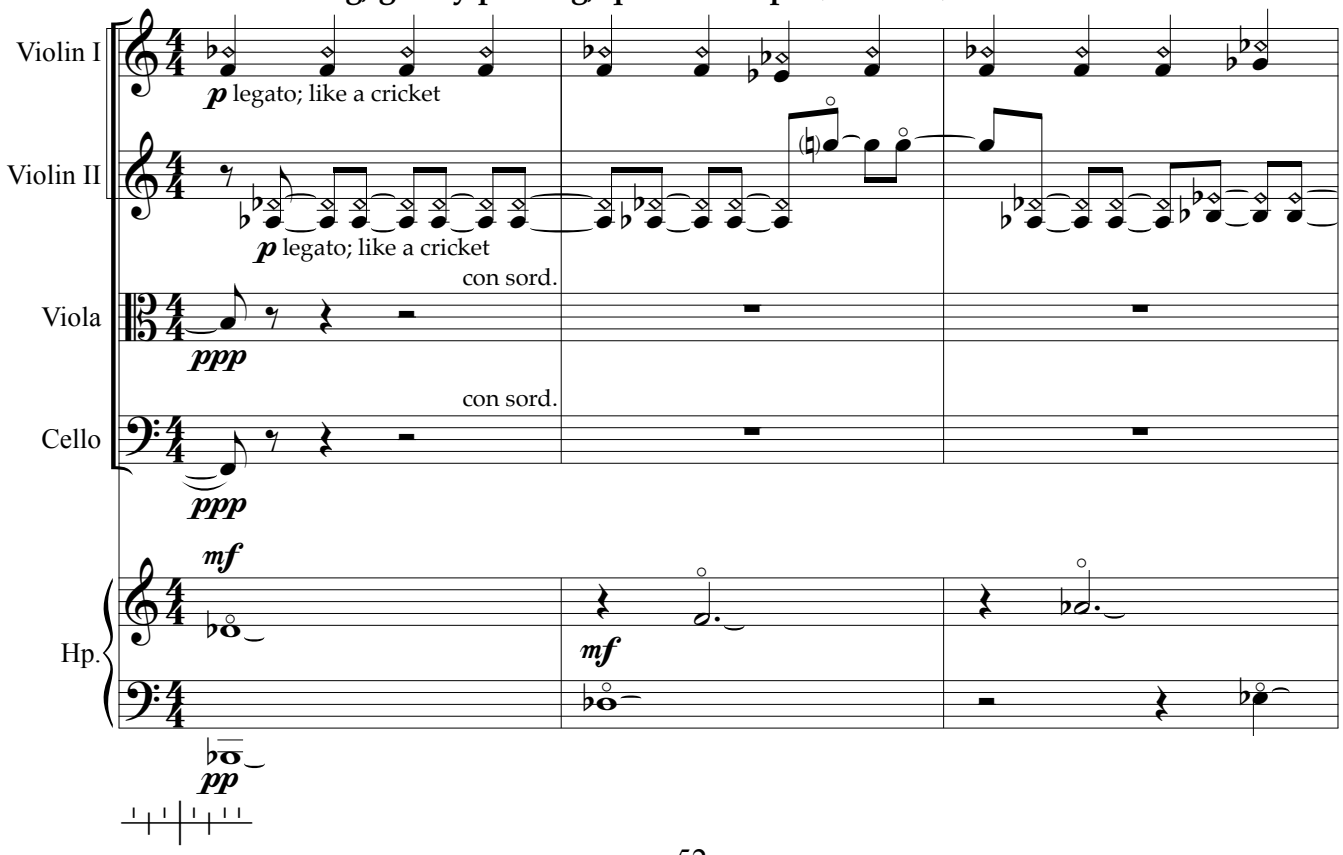

147
Majestic and stately
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
f
p
mf

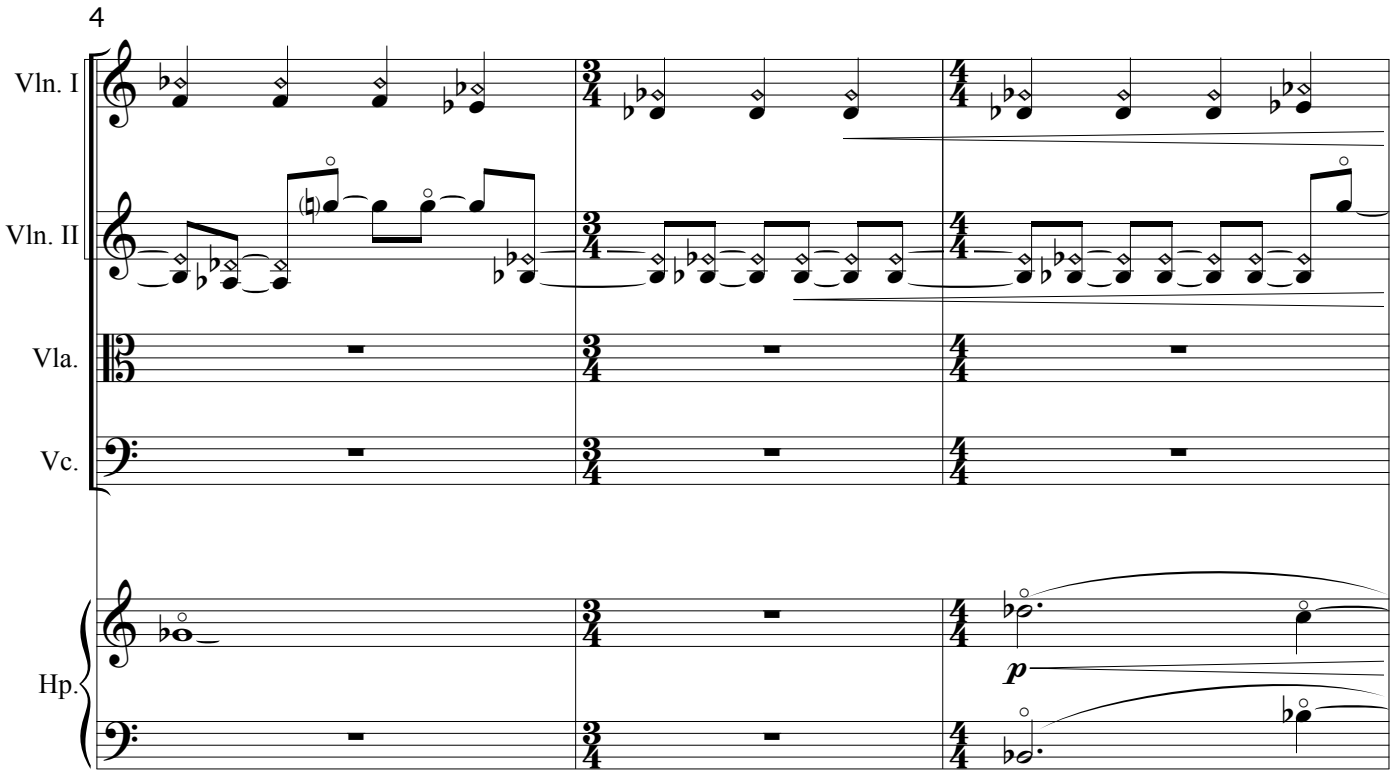

152
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
mf
pp

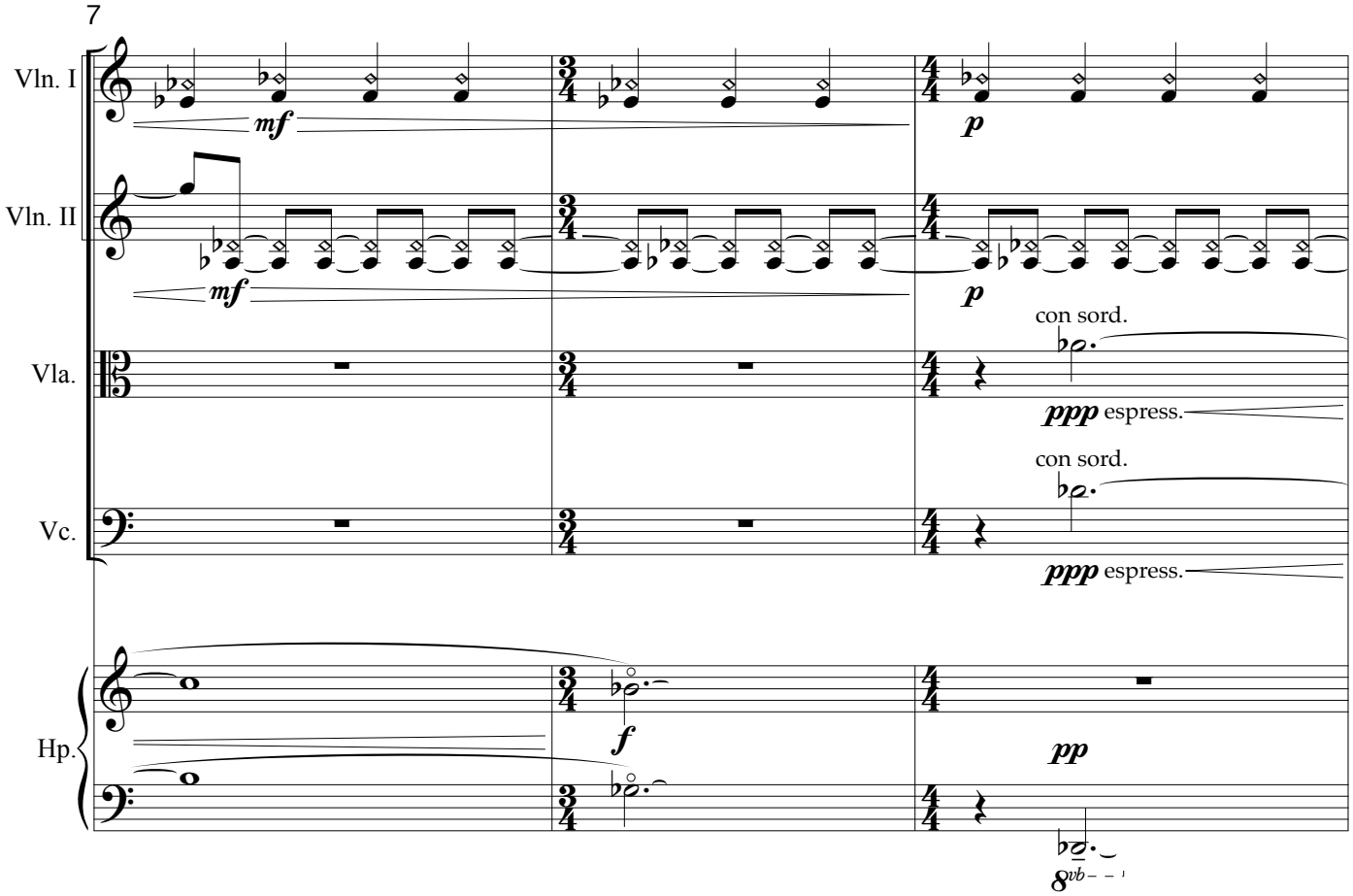


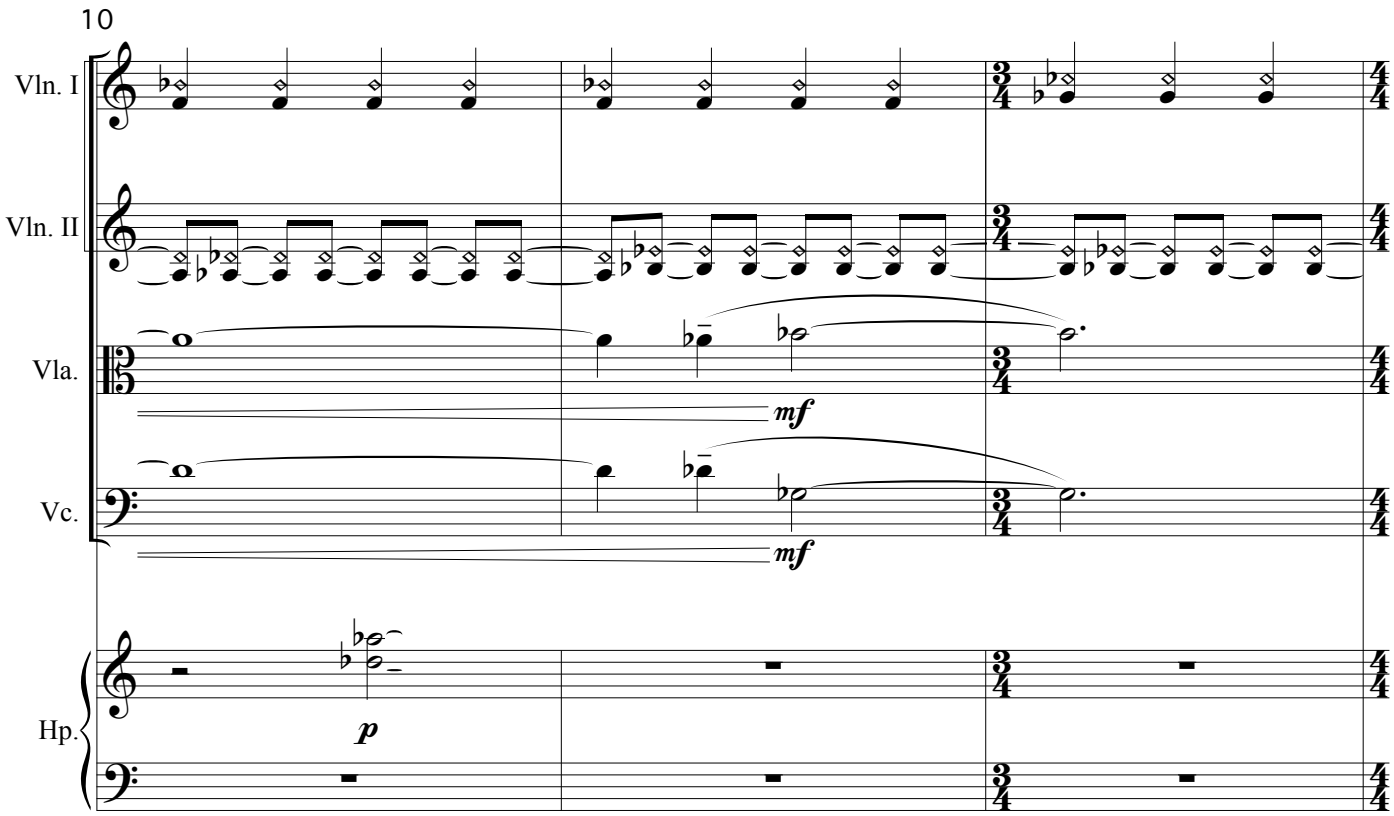
V. Postlude: Your mountain is waiting

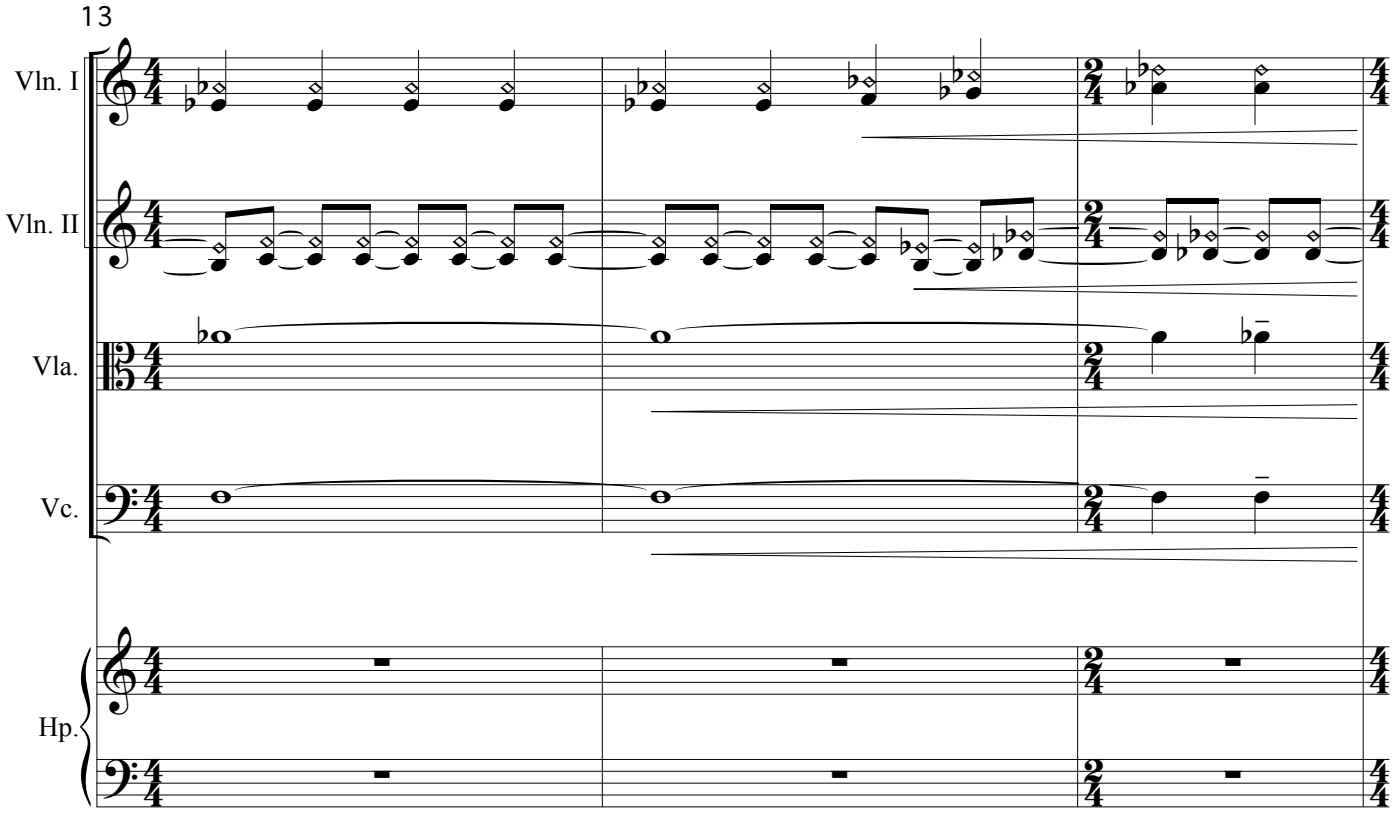
Shimmering; gently pulsing; quasi a tempo (♩ = c. *84*)

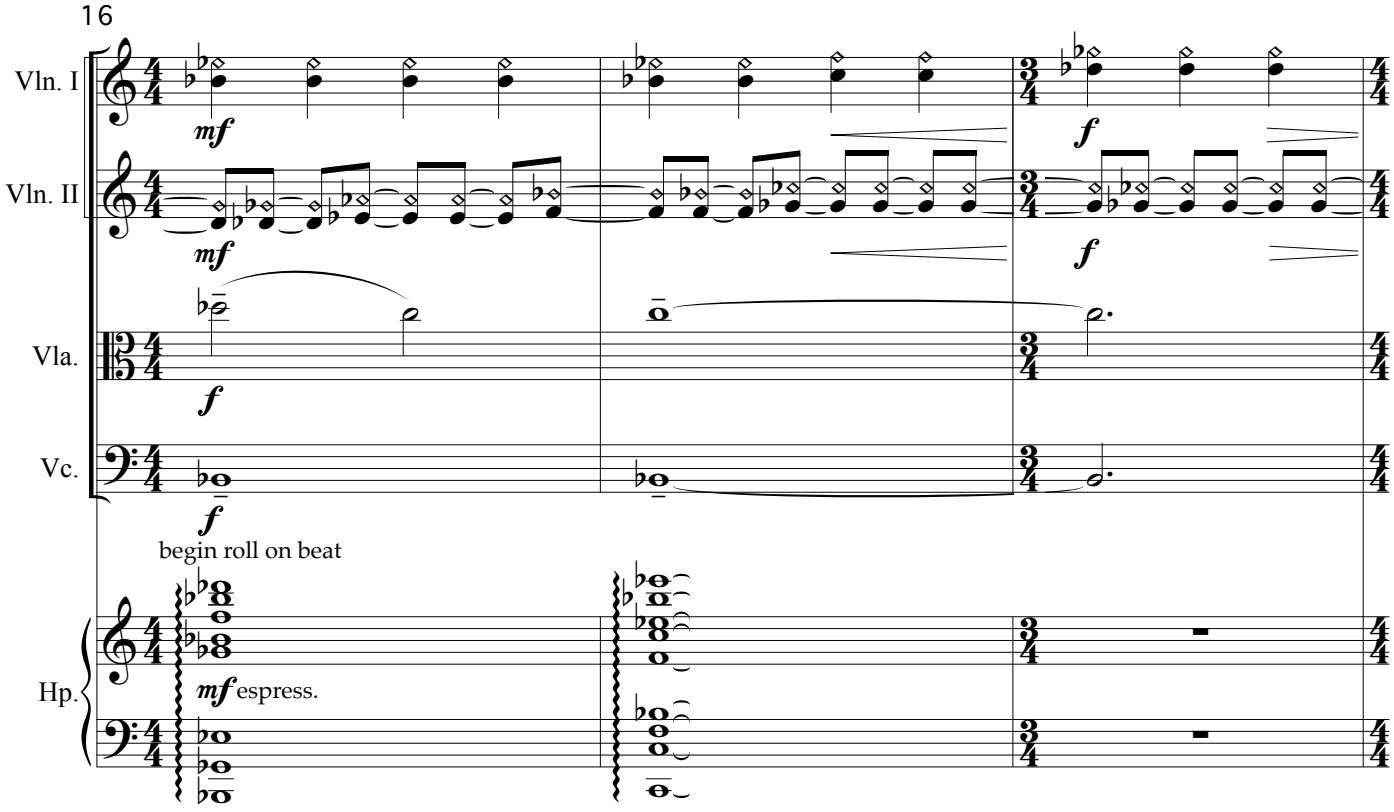


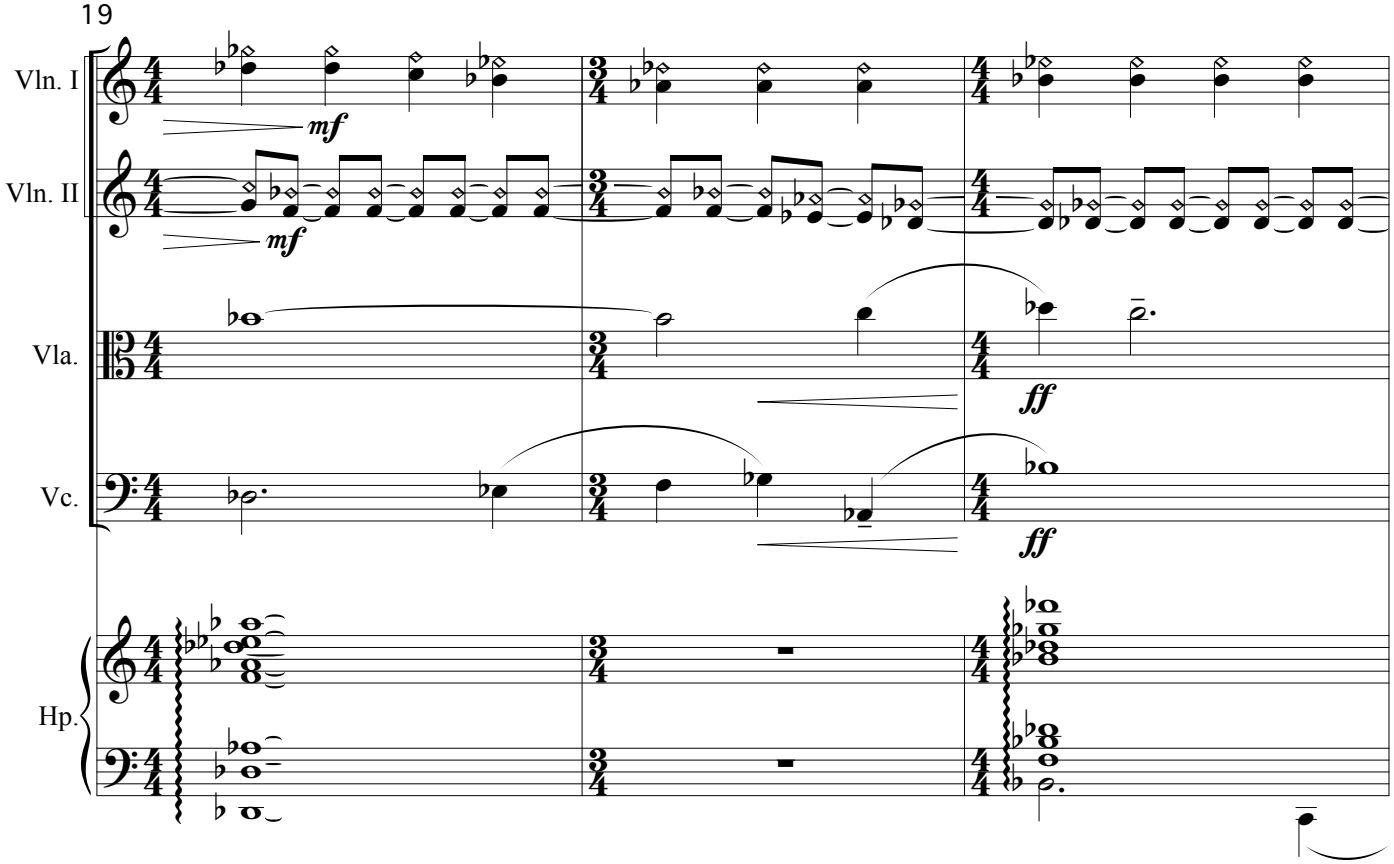

4
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p

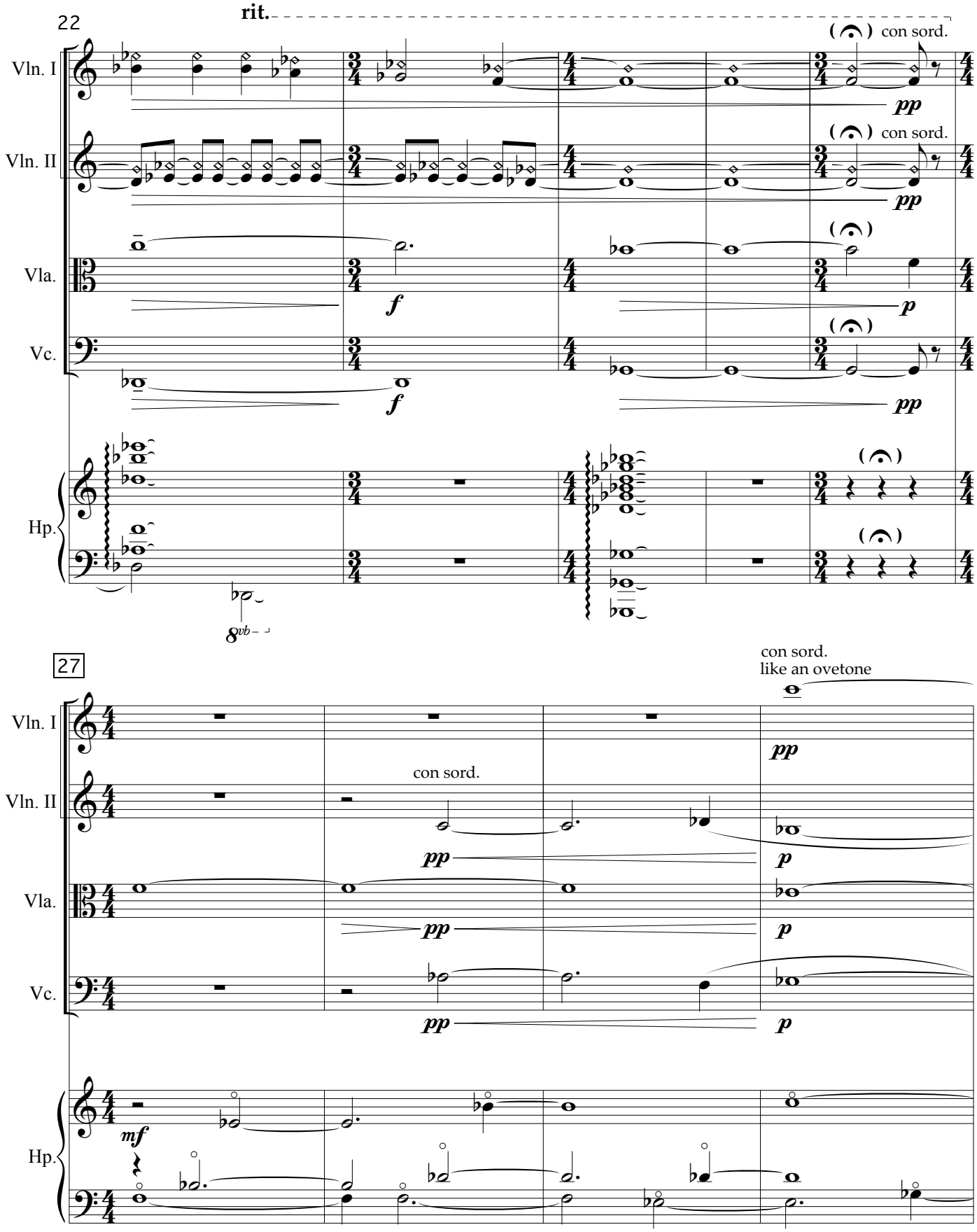

7
Vln. I
mf
p
Vln. II
mf
p
Vla.
con sord.
ppp espress.
Vc.
con sord.
ppp espress.
Hp.
f
pp
8vb

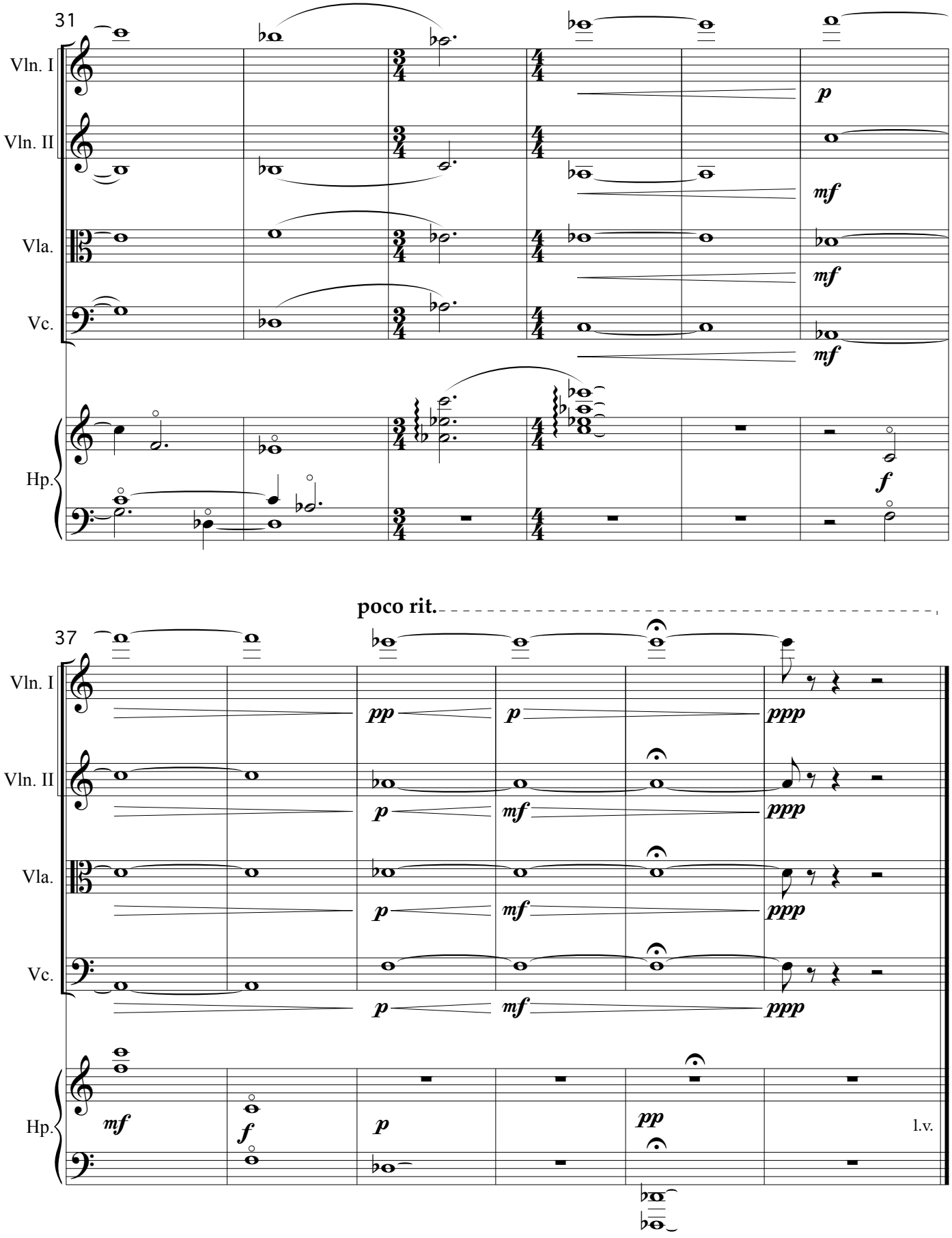

10
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
mf
mf
p


13
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.


16
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
mf
f
begin roll on beat
mf espress.


19
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
mf
ff


22
rit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
con sord.
con sord.
pp
f
p
8vb
27
con sord.
like an ovetone
mf


31
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
p
mf
mf
mf
f
poco rit.
37
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Hp.
pp
p
ppp
p
mf
ppp
p
mf
ppp
p
mf
ppp
mf
f
p
pp
l.v.