PETER JAMES LEARN

SHANT

For String Quartet

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Dedicated to the Henri Mancini Institute String Quartet
(Particularly to Abby Young, who has performed my works with inspiring musicianship and sensitivity)

PERFORMANCE NOTES

- Glissandi occupy entire rhythmic value of initial note, evenly.

- The string upon which natural harmonics are to be performed is sometimes indicated by a lower parenthesized note-head for clarity. The node is indicated by the traditional diamond-shaped note-head. Artificial harmonics lack the parentheses.

PROGRAM NOTE

Sailors in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries lived hard lives. Months, sometimes years, spent away from family and homeland, as well as harsh working conditions, were hazards of the job, as were the ever-present threats of pirates, privateers, and the whims of the weather, which threatened their lives and livelihoods on a daily basis. Yet, ironically, one of the most important skills these rough men had to possess was the ability to carry a tune. Sailors used shanties and rope-pull songs to time the intricate dance of brute force required to manually operate a ship's mechanisms, such as the pull of boom, sail, and anchor, as well as to accompany the less salutary land-fall pursuits of grogging and press-ganging. The shanties of the Northern Isles are of particular interest to me as I can trace my own personal heritage there and the tradition of the Irish sea song is a rich one, although all creeds and nationalities of mariner developed their own work musics. This string quartet draws from these somtimes-simple, utilitarian, and soulful tunes in various ways, stylistically and formally. Sometimes the pitches are my own, but the rhythms are from the shanties, sometimes it is the other way around. Sometimes a direct statement of the source music is employed, but at others a shanty is set as a cantus firmus or head motif, from which other musical ideas might emerge, or be entirely suppressed into the greater texture. Additionally, some of the motives are my own, but composed to mimic the style of the source material with which they coexist here. I have endeavored to capture the spirit of the nautical work songs in their essence, through both process and allusion, couching these traditional folk utterings in a fresh context and making them my own. But, frankly, some of these melodies leapt out of the repertoire at me, seeming to demand stark presentation and minimal meddling on my part, by dint of their inherent charm and beauty. In any case, I hope the listener and performer alike enjoy this work for string quartet; I enjoyed researching and tinkering with these little gems of sea-farer's history.

(Ca. 7'30")

Dedicated to the Henri Mancini Institute Quartet

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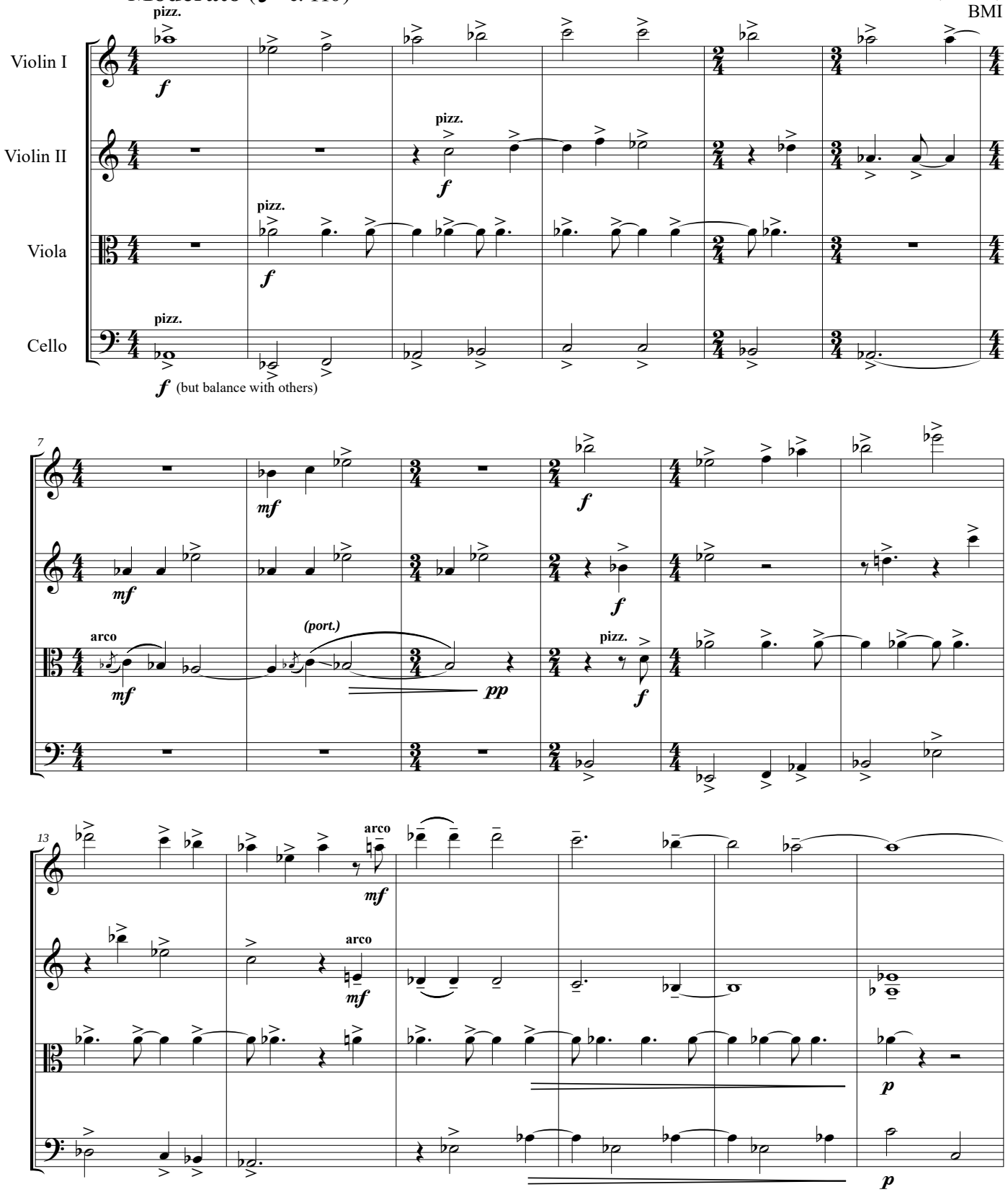
Moderato (♩= c. 110)

PETER JAMES LEARN (b. 1982)
BMI



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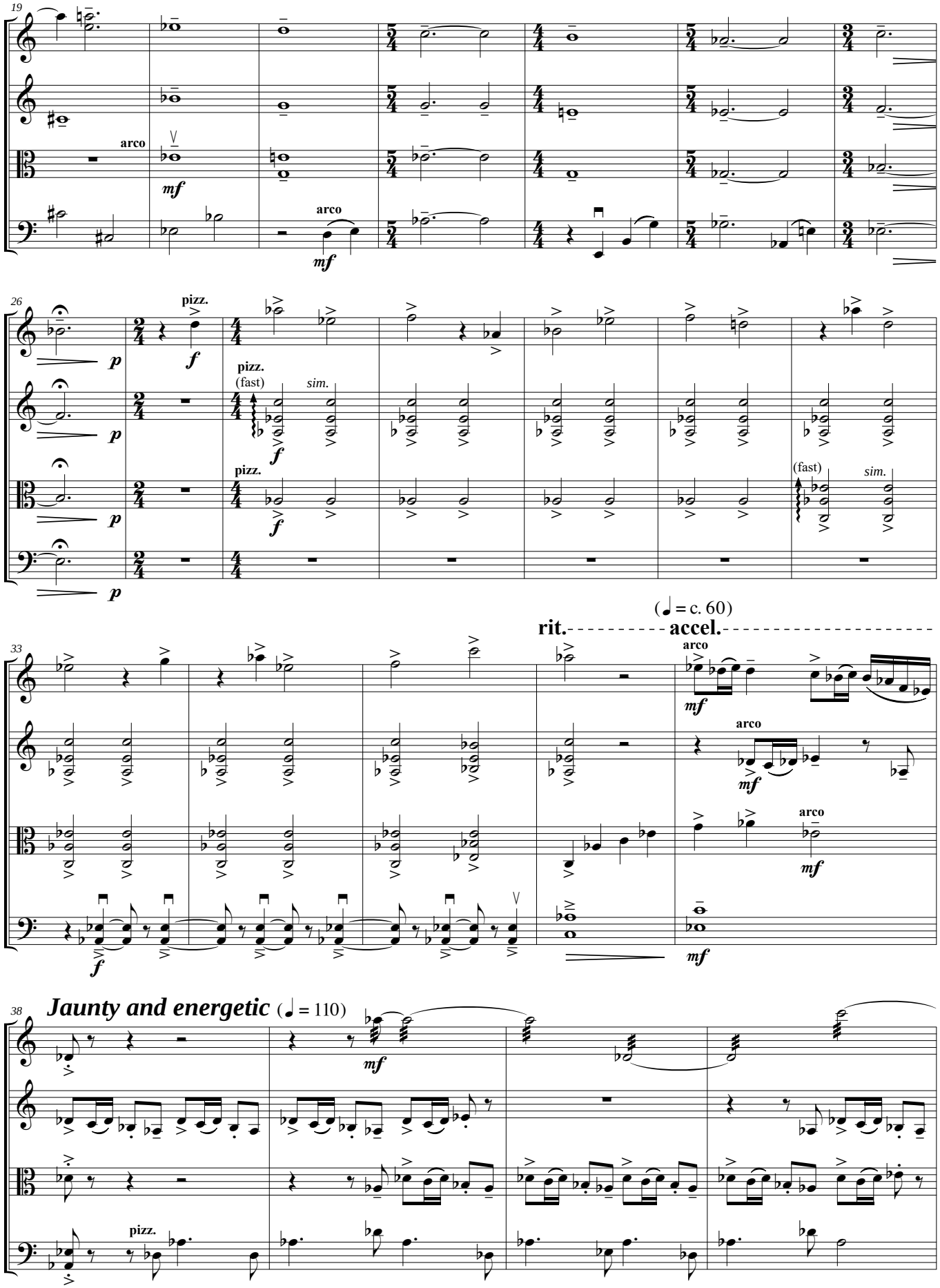
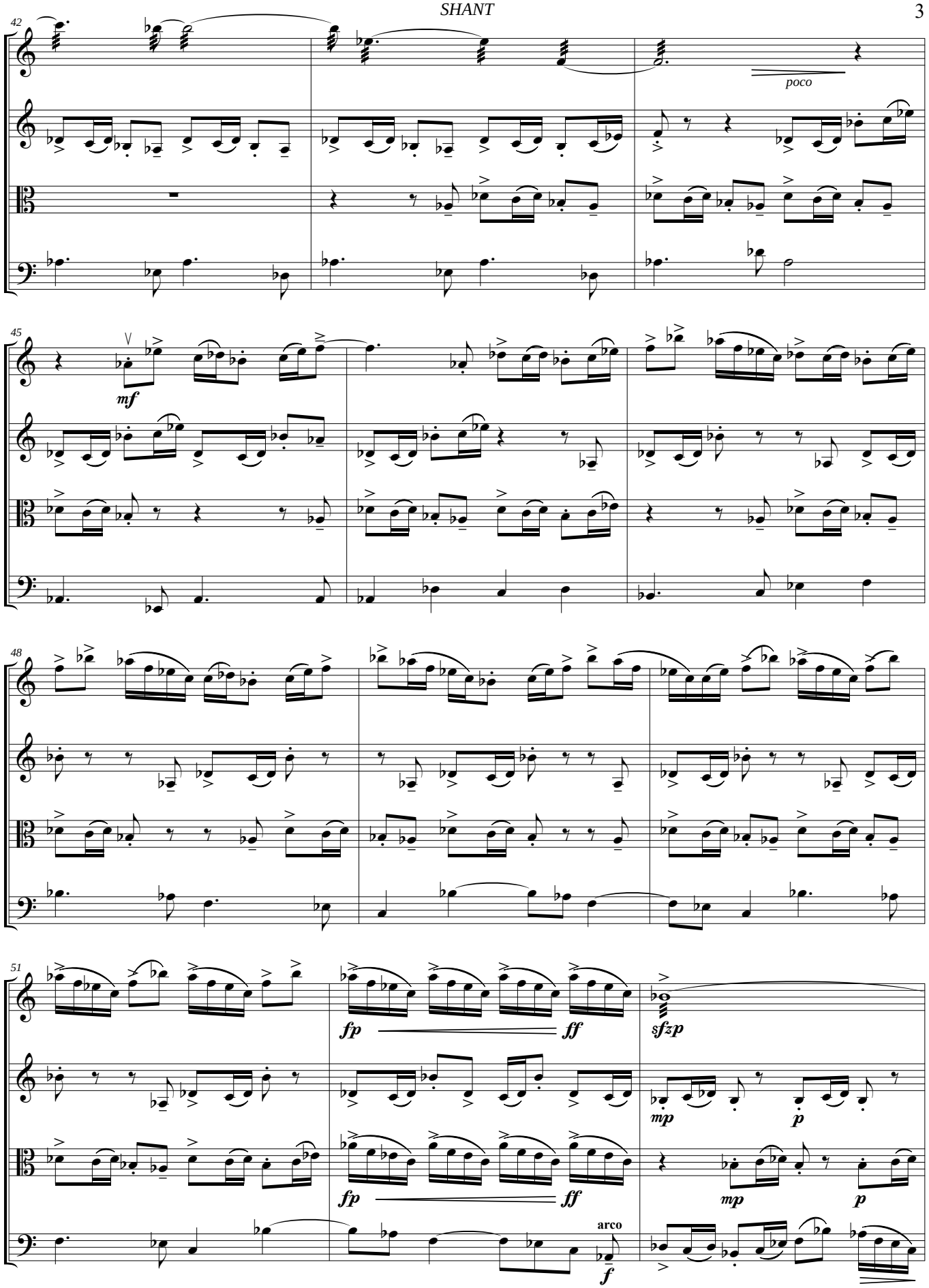
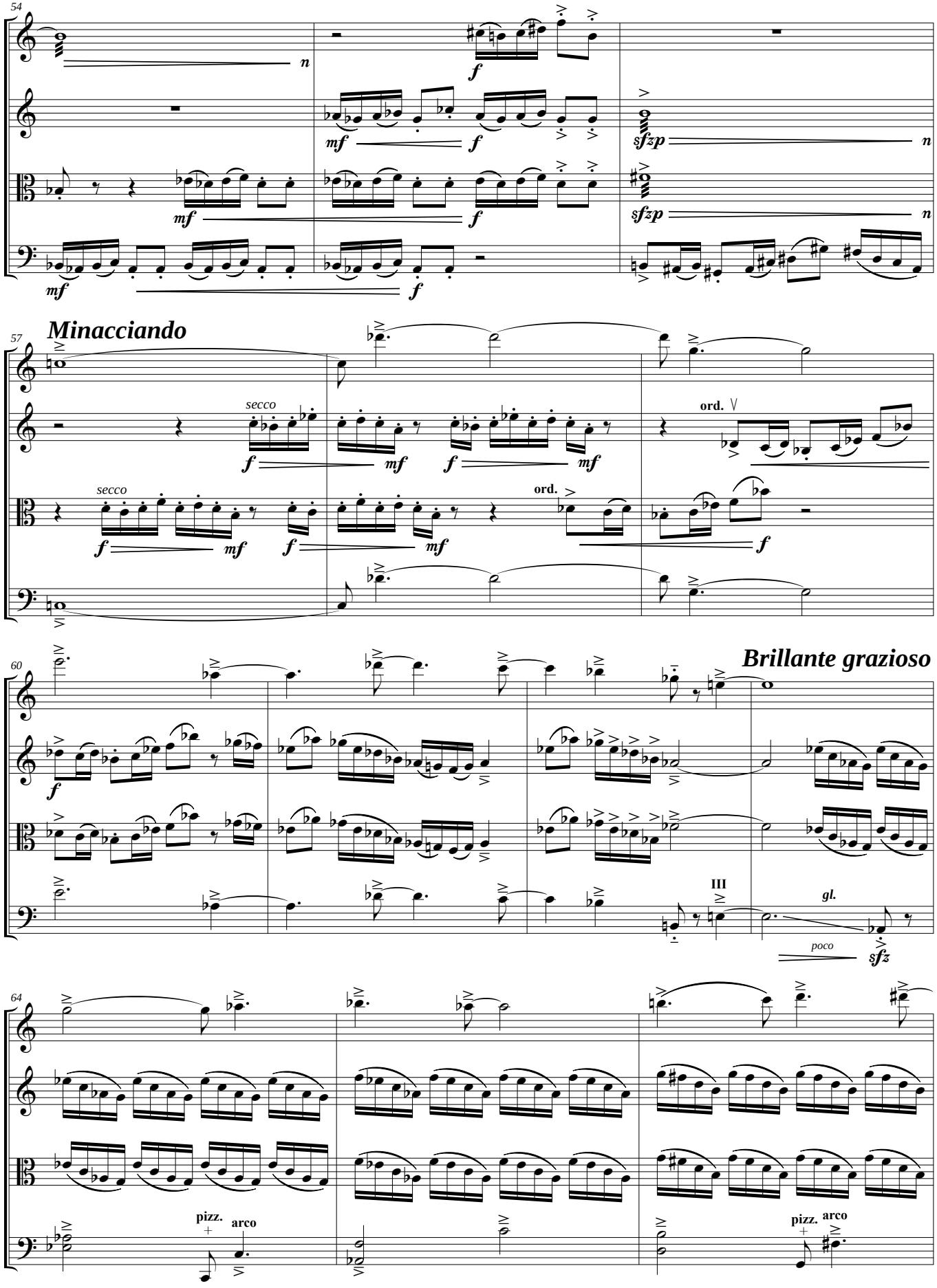
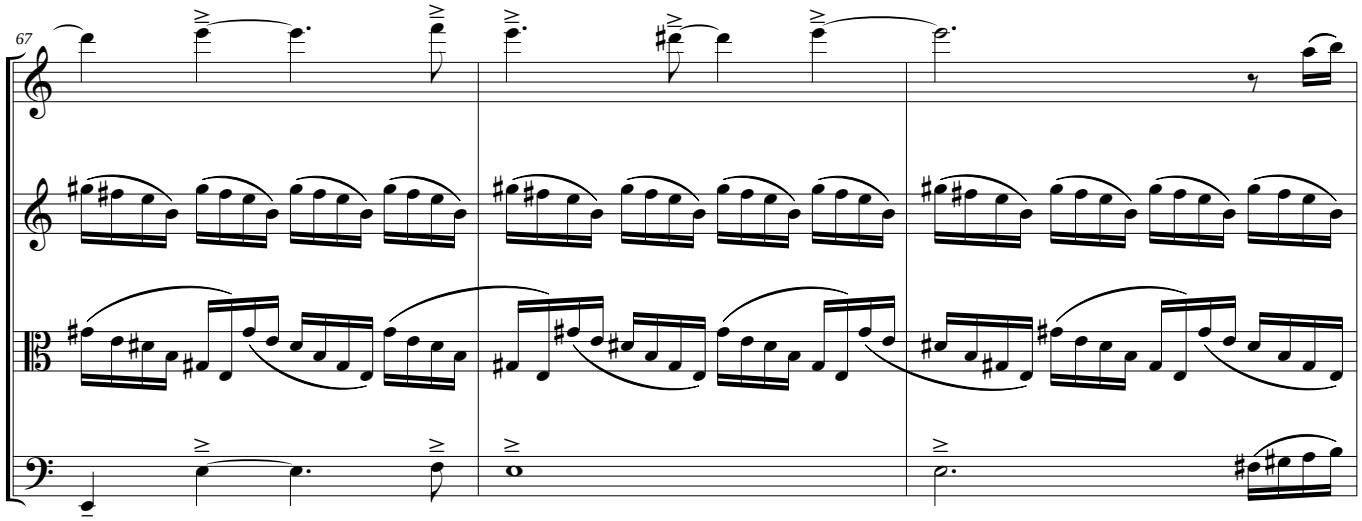
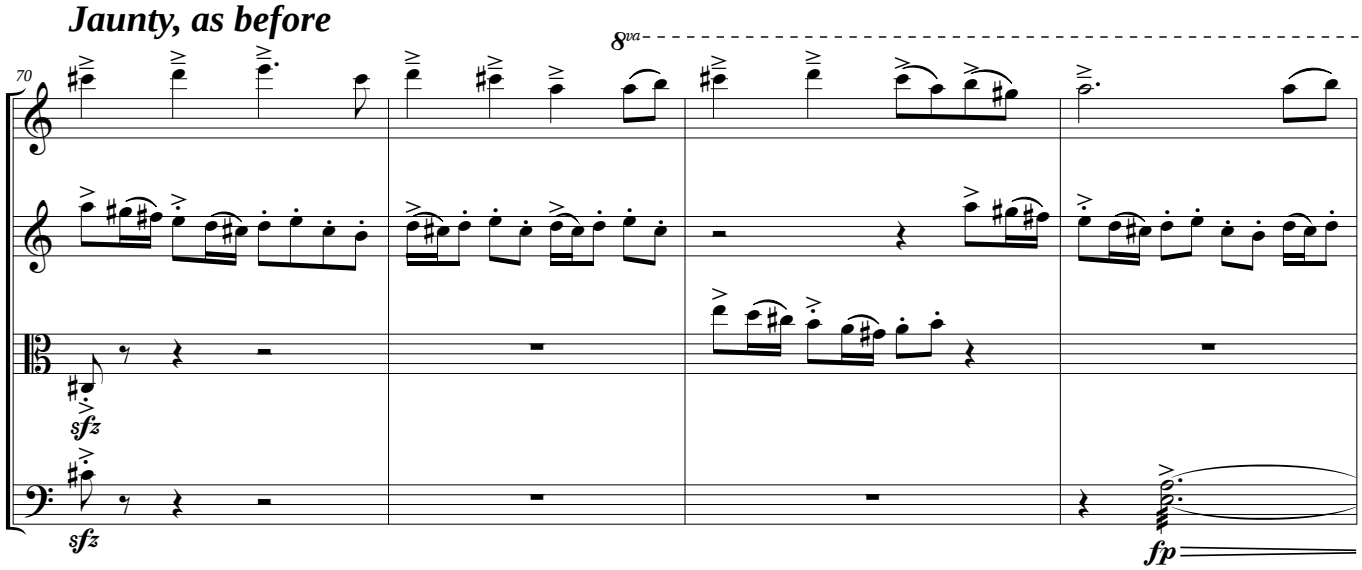

19
arco
mf
arco
mf
26
pizz.
f
p
pizz.
(fast)
sim.
f
pizz.
f
(fast)
sim.
33
(♩ = c. 60)
rit.
accel.
arco
mf
arco
mf
arco
mf
f
mf
38
Jaunty and energetic (♩ = 110)
mf
pizz.

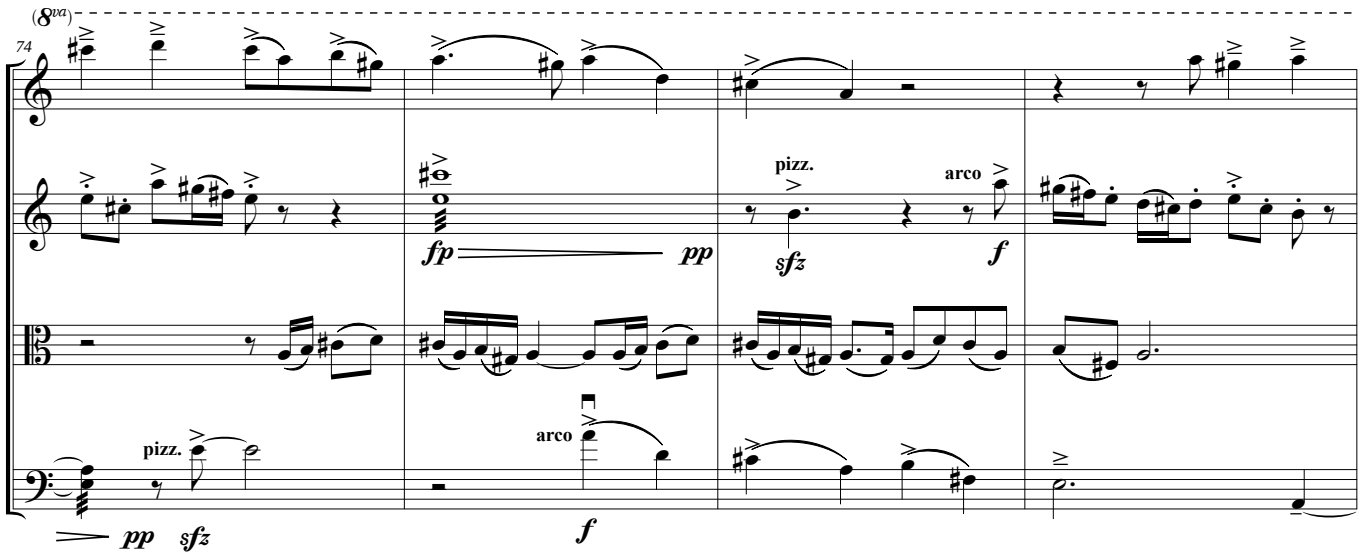

42
poco
45
mf
48
51
fp
ff
sfzp
mp
p
fp
ff
mp
p
arco
f

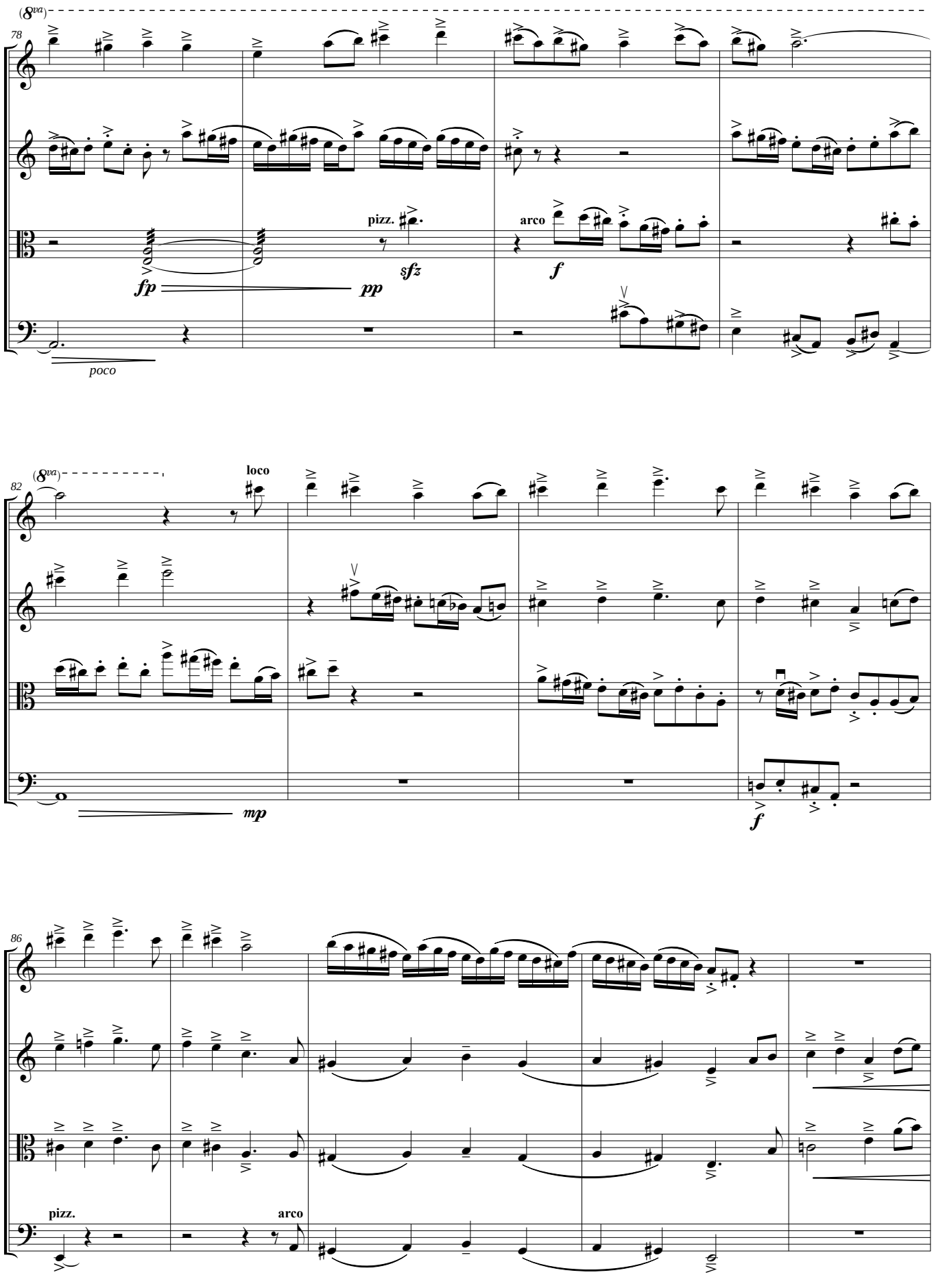

54
n
f
mf
f
sfzp
n
mf
f
sfzp
n
mf
f
57
Minacciando
secco
f
mf
f
mf
ord.
secco
f
mf
f
mf
ord.
f
60
Brillante grazioso
f
III
gl.
poco
sfz
64
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco

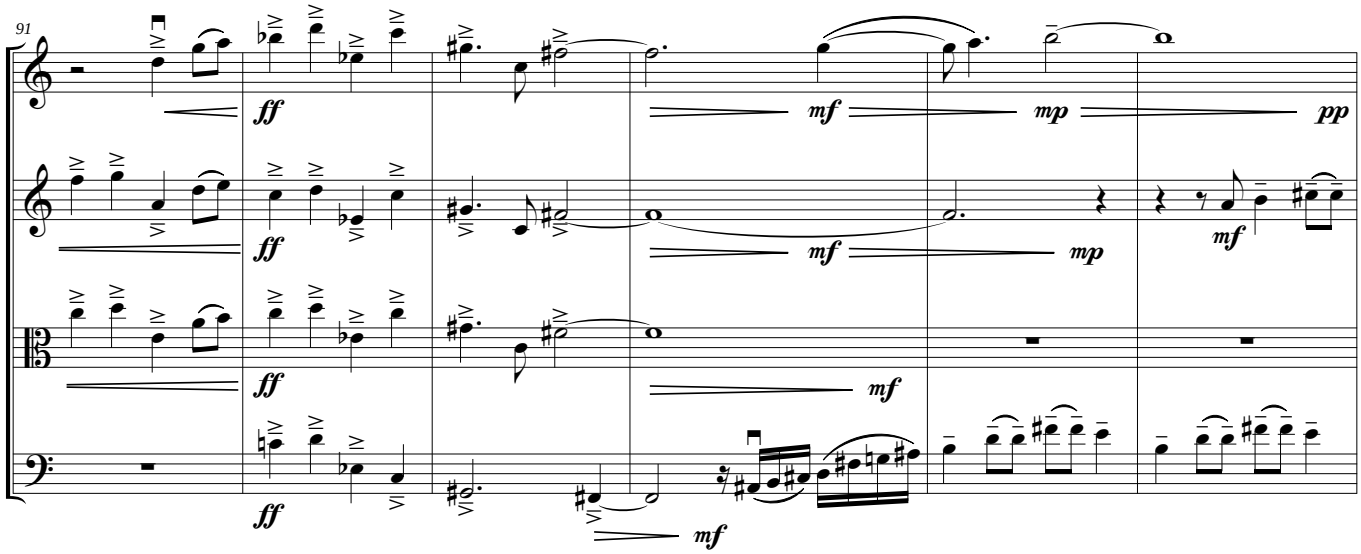


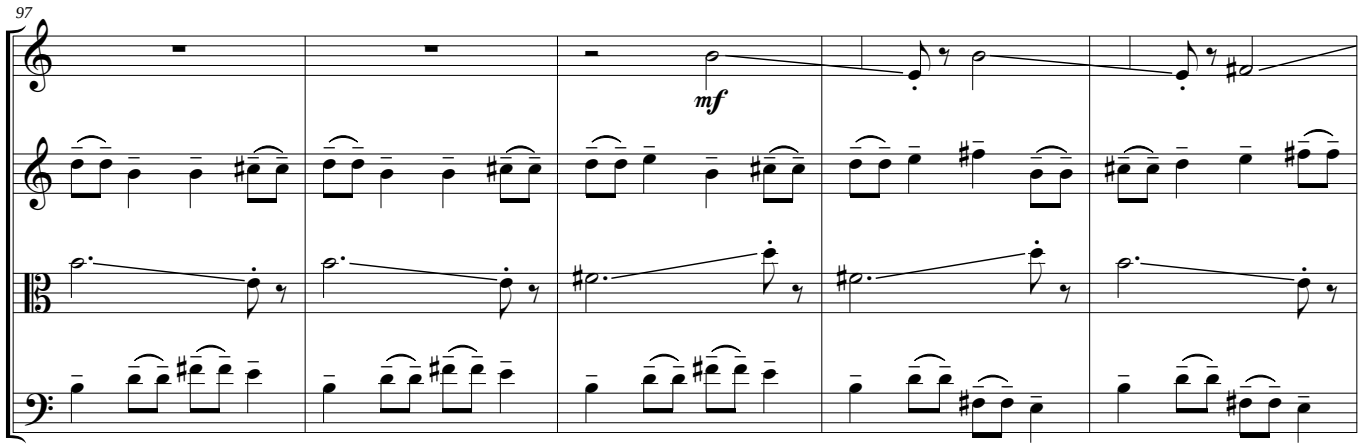
Jaunty, as before

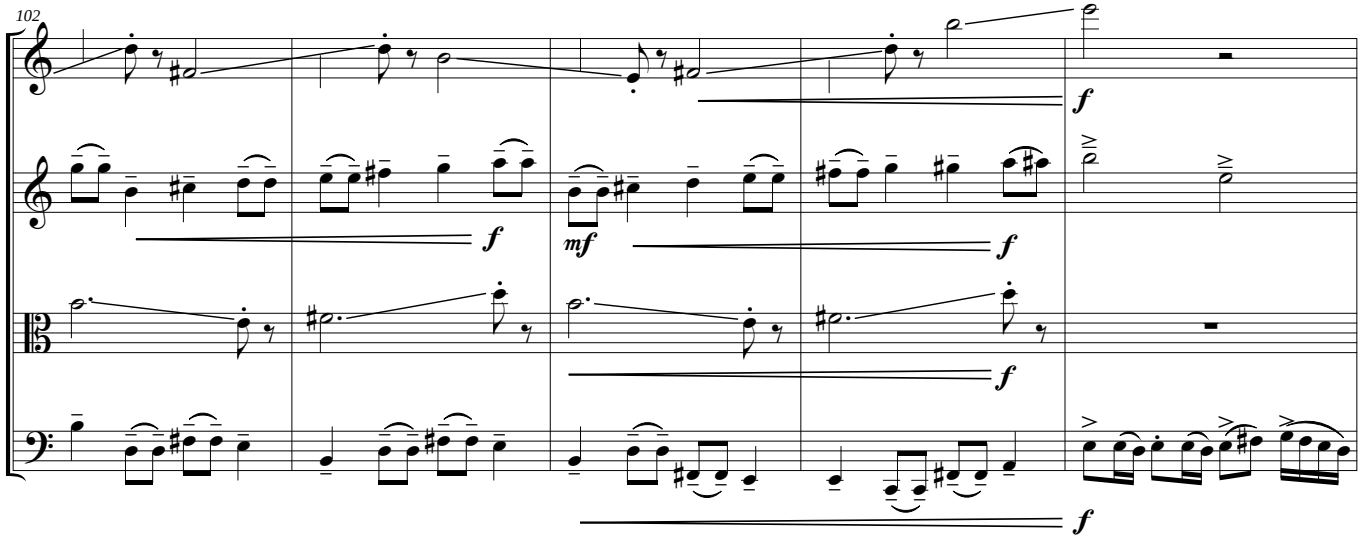


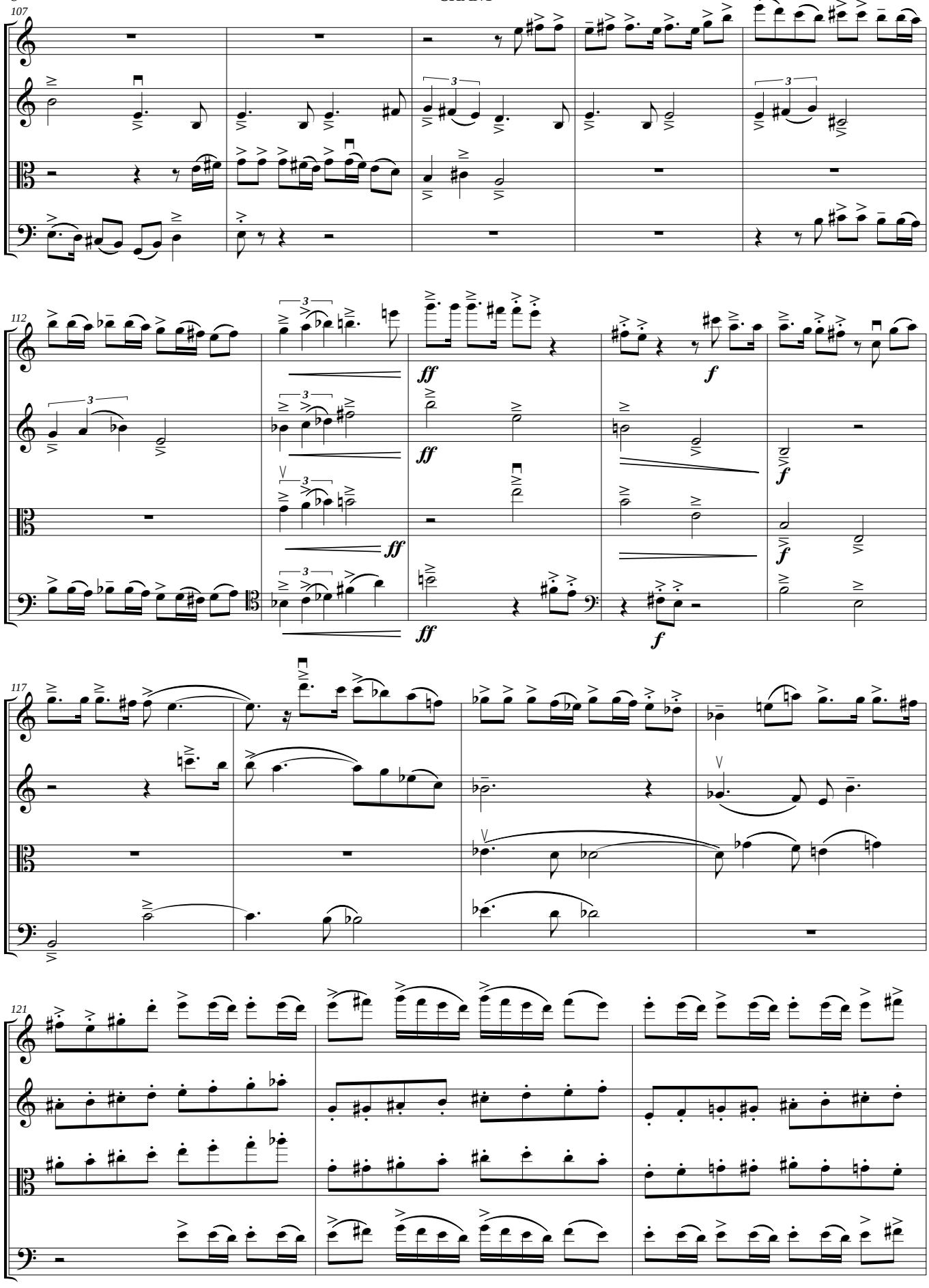


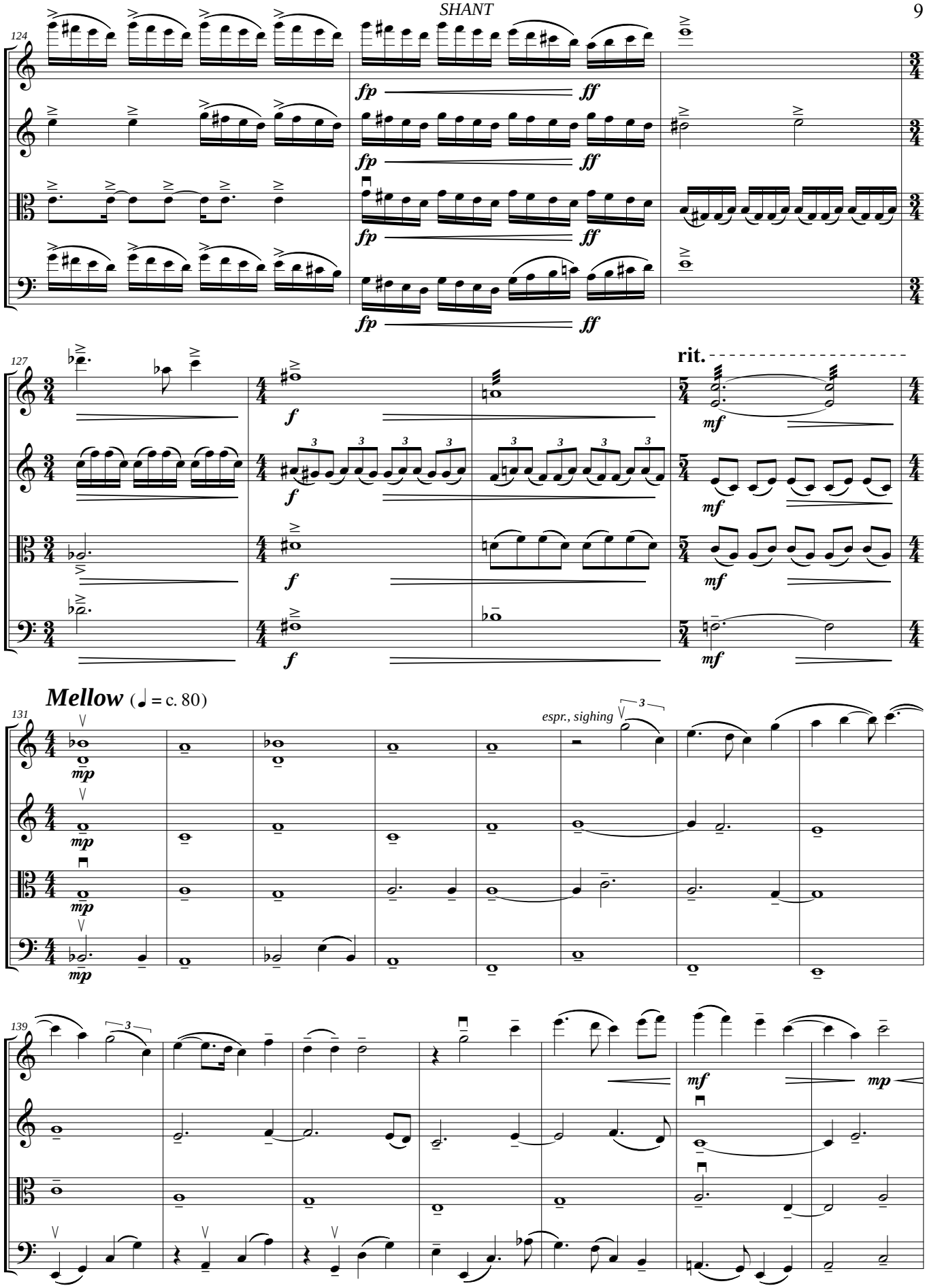

(8va)
78
pizz.
arco
fp
pp
sfz
f
poco
(8va)
82
loco
mp
f
86
pizz.
arco

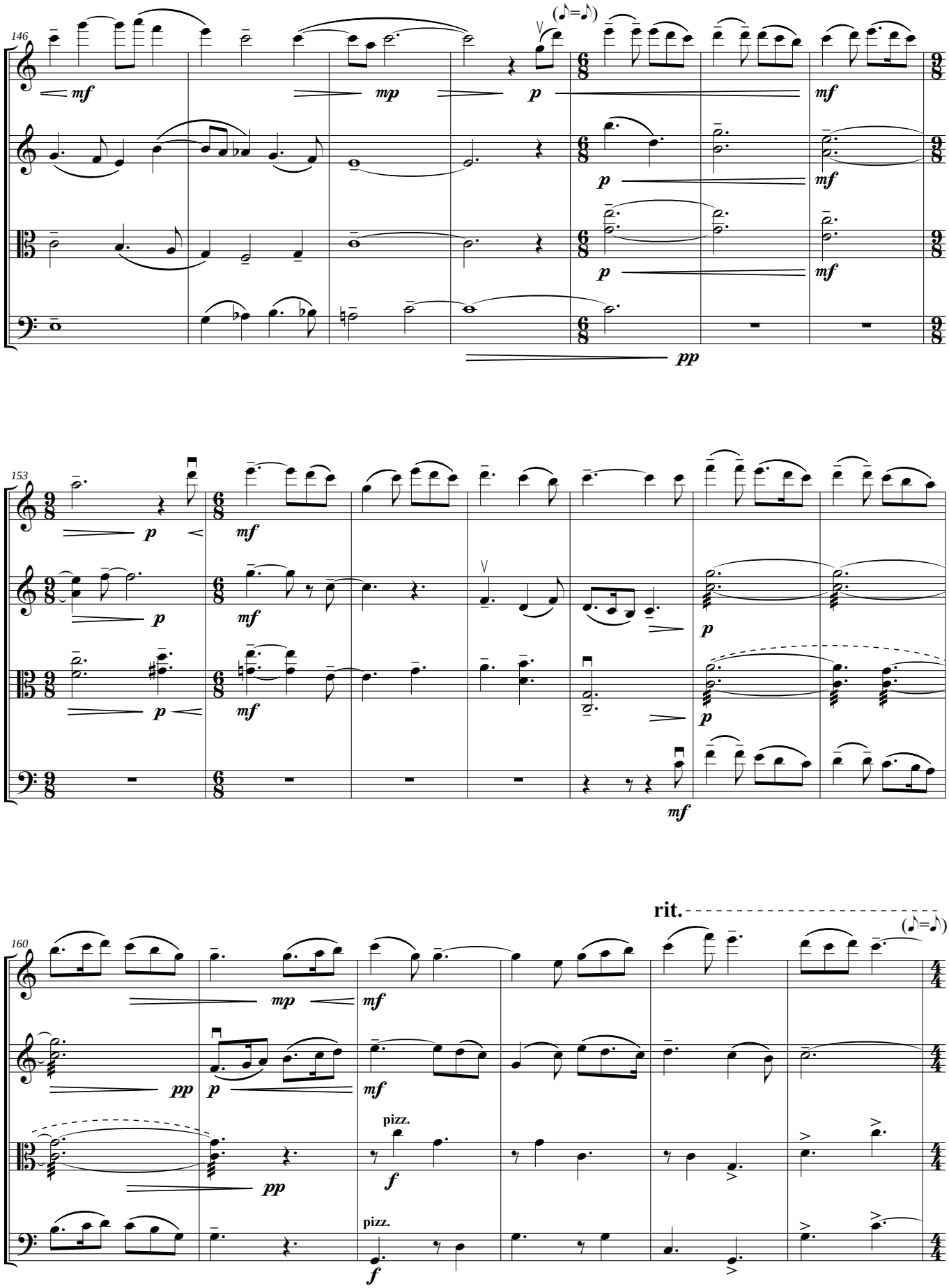

91
ff
mf
mp
pp

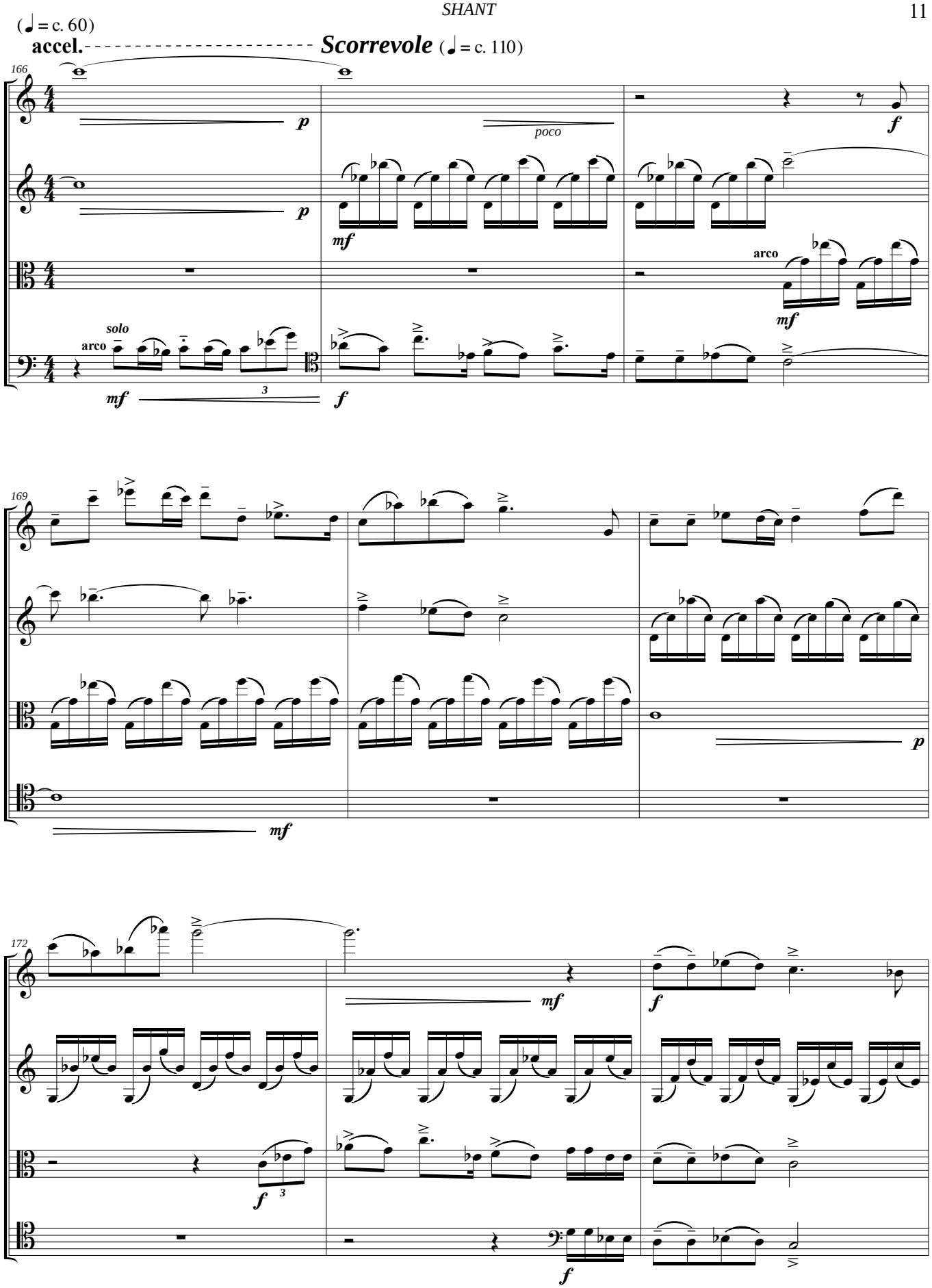

97
mf

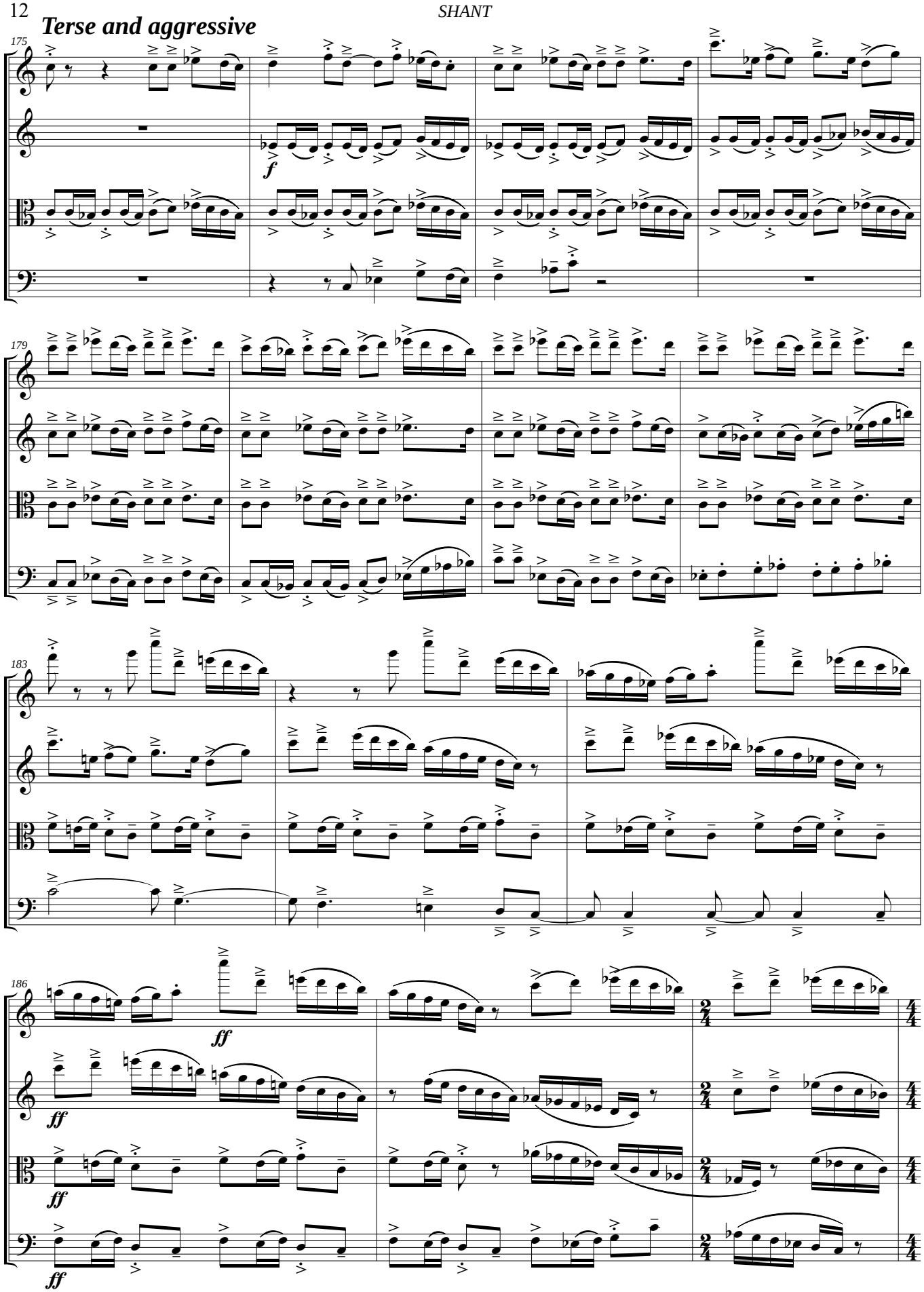

102
f
mf

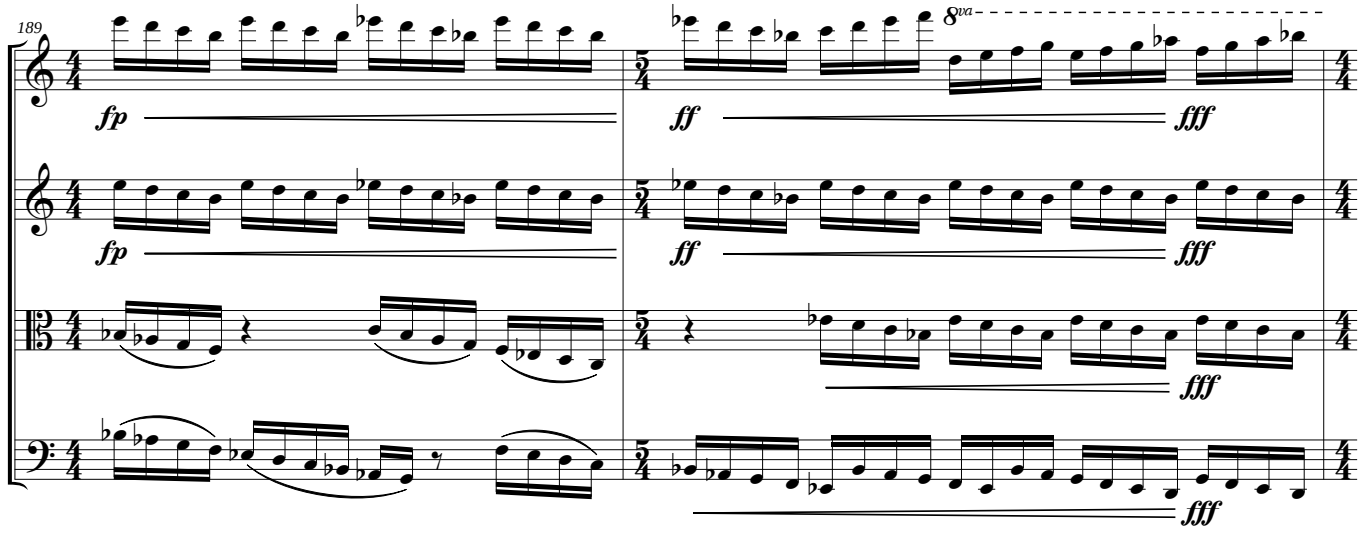

107
112
117
121
ff
f

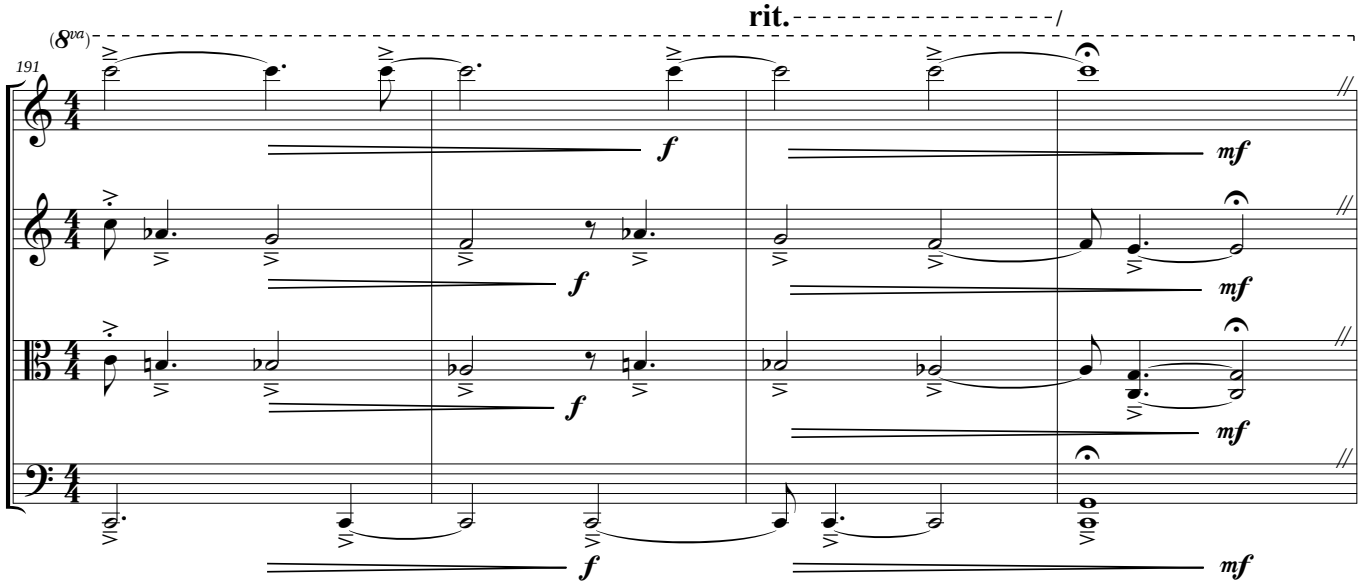
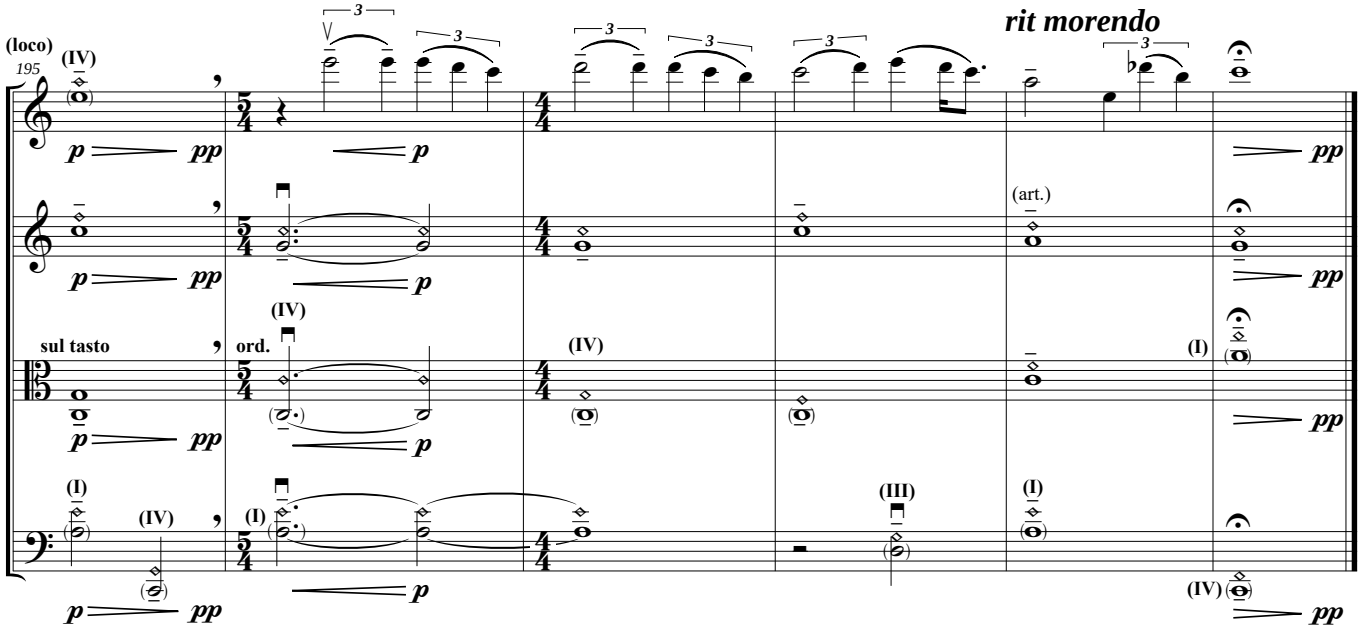

124
fp
ff
127
f
rit.
mf
Mellow (♩ = c. 80)
131
mp
espr., sighing
3
139
mf
mp


146
153
160
rit.
pizz.
pizz.


(♩ = c. 60)
accel.
Scorrevole (♩ = c. 110)
166
p
poco
f
mf
arco
solo
arco
mf
3
f
169
mf
p
172
mf
f
f
3
f


Terse and aggressive
175
f
179
183
186
ff
ff
ff





Lontano, ethereal (♩ = c. 60)