Score

Viola Sonata

for viola and piano

Jake Berran

(2022, rev. 2023)

Program Notes

The second movement was written in 2022, and in it I sought to step away from my then-typical strategy of scaffolding my music with webs of musical and extramusical concepts. Rather, I wanted to focus on the sound, narrative, and lyricism in a more abstract manner. I also used quarter-tone harmonic ideas proposed by my teacher Jesse Jones in his doctoral thesis, *Microtonalis: A Systematic Approach to Microtonal Composition*. In particular, minor thirds and perfect fourths, which contain odd numbers of semitones, are "cut" exactly in half, often producing a pitch in the harmonic series of the root note.

A year later, the first and third movements were born out of my desire to better establish the quarter tones beforehand and take a more dramatic turn afterward. In the first movement, three versions of B-flat are constantly reiterated: the equal-tempered one, the slightly flatter one from the C harmonic series, and the even lower B-three-quarters-flat. In the third movement, previous material is spun into a struggle between two alternating themes, one of which sucks the energy out of the other.

Viola Sonata was written for Jóia Findeis, a friend and violist at the Oberlin Conservatory. I want to thank them for their input throughout and for collaborating in the brainstorming stage. (Fun fact: Jóia has synesthesia, and C minor is a "murky violet" to them. So we started with that!)

Duration: 13 minutes (2 + 6 + 5)

Performance Notes

Viola

• The following quarter-tone accidentals alter a pitch by the specified number of semitones:

𝄫 = −3/2 𝄳 = −1/2 𝄲 = +1/2 𝄪 = +3/2

• Dashed arrows indicate a gradual transition from one technique to another.
• Solid arrows indicate a continuation of a technique until the end of the line.
• After the "vib." instruction in the second gesture, use of vibrato is up to the performer.
• *port.* means to slide to the next note near the end of the first note's duration, and *gliss.* means to slide to the next note over the entire duration of the first.

Piano

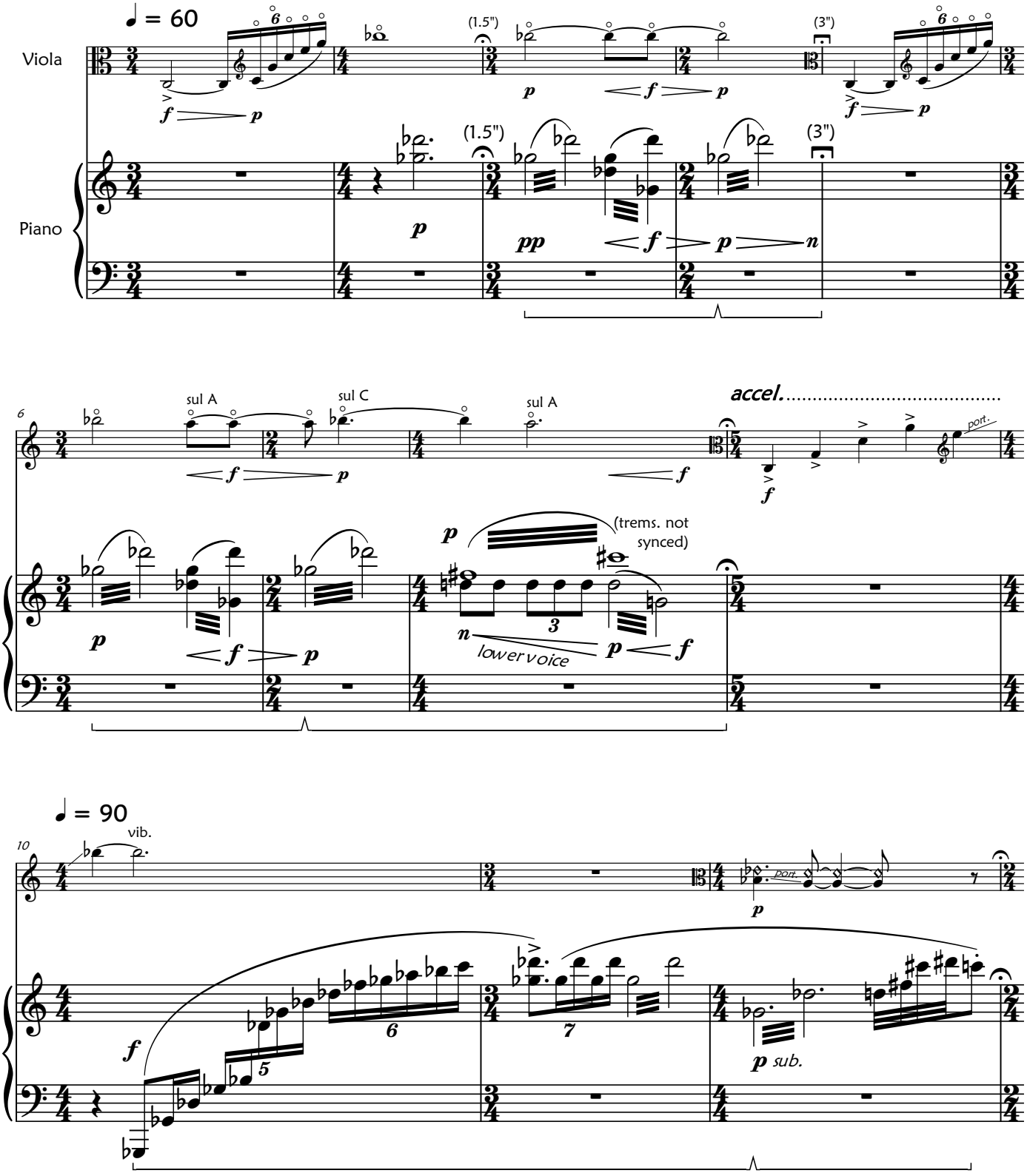
• In mvt. II, mm. 4-5, the articulation ⌣ and ⌢ indicate pressing a key while it's still somewhat depressed, producing a quiet "echo."
• Unconnected ties after notes are equivalent to "let ring."
• u.c. = una corda; t.c. = tre corde. Sustain pedal lines are meant to be a rough guide.
• Boxed material is to be repeated continuously until the extension line terminates.

for Jóia Findeis

Viola Sonata

Jake Berran
(2022, rev. 2023)

I



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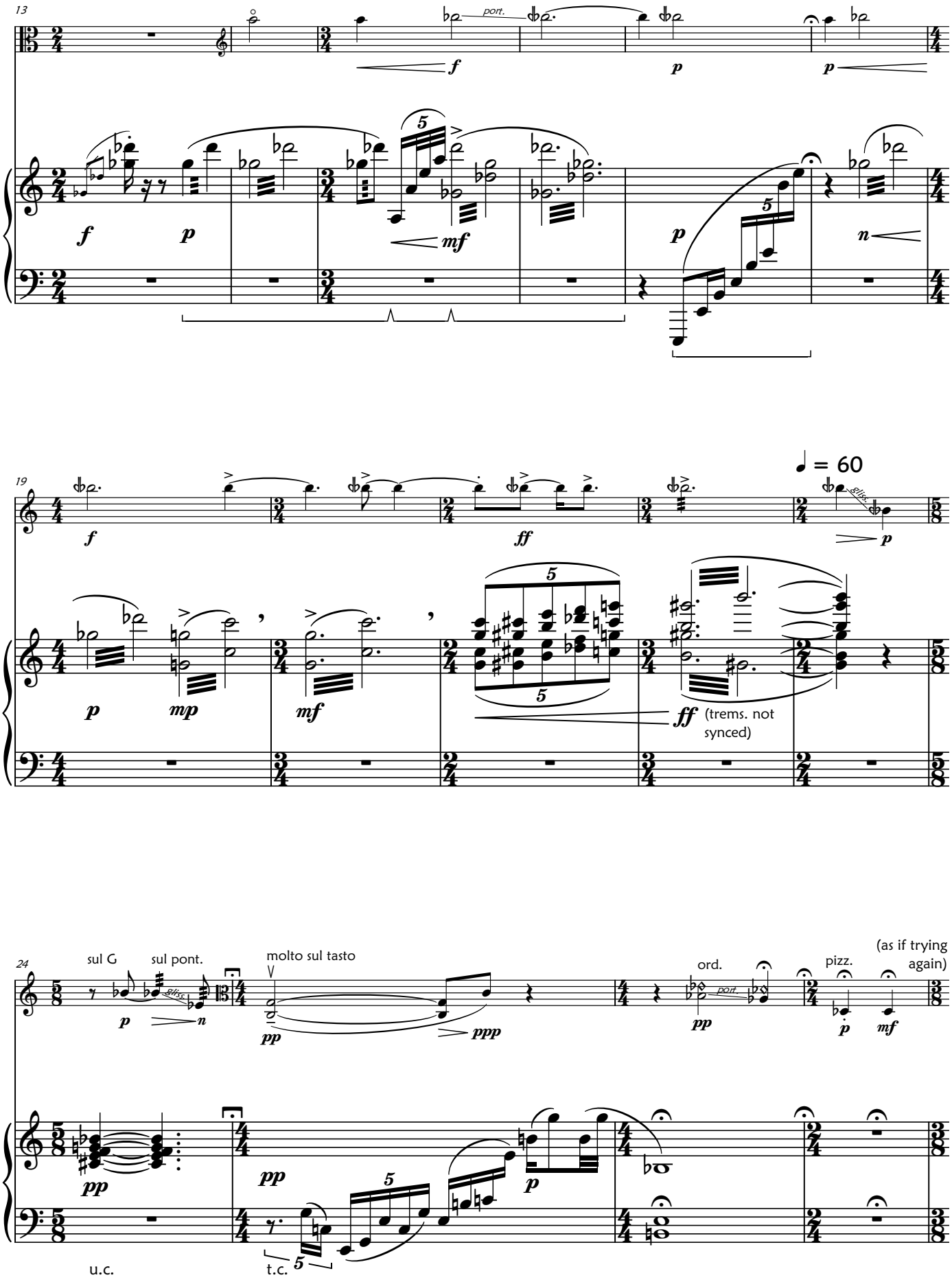
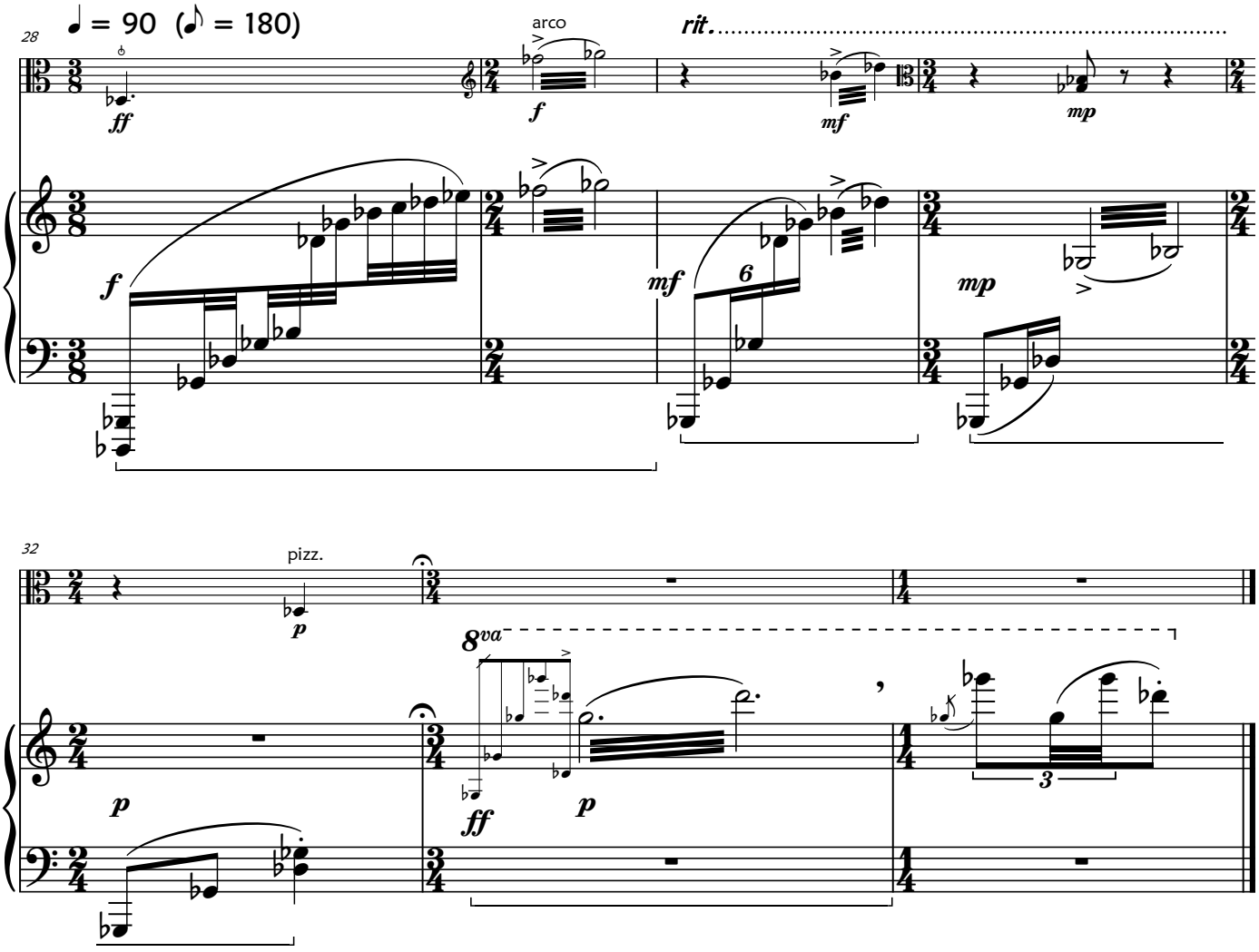
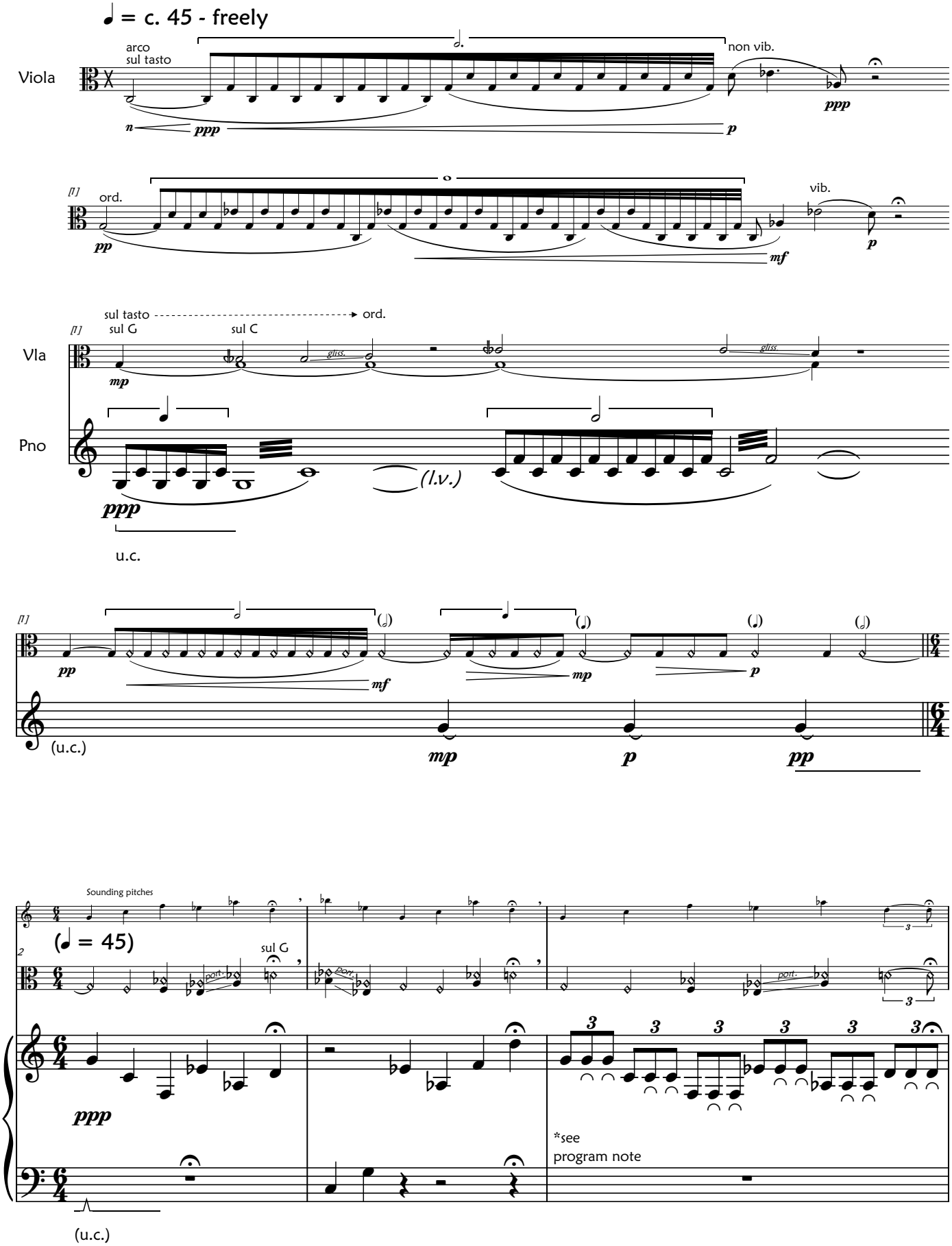
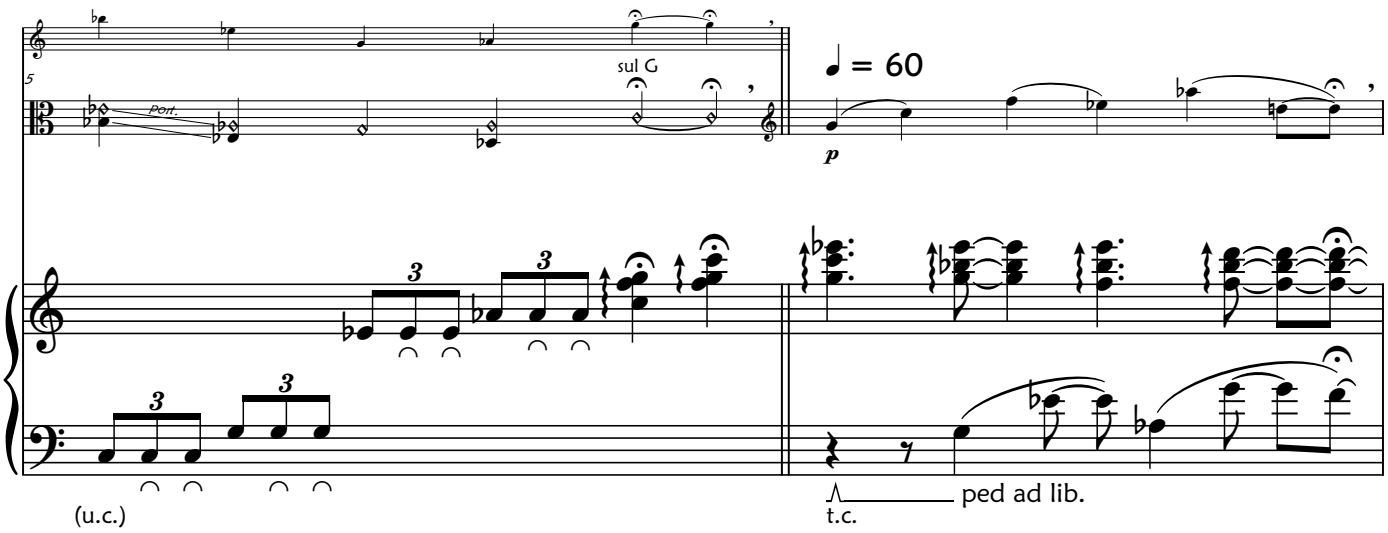
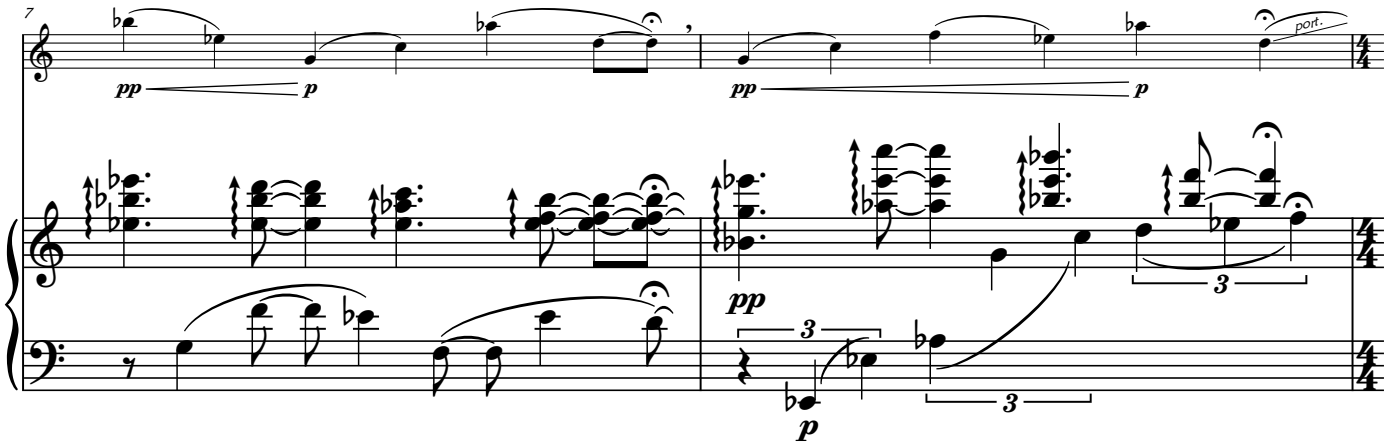

13
pont.
f
p
p
f
p
mf
p
n
19
f
ff
p
♩ = 60
glis.
p
p
mp
mf
ff (trems. not synced)
24
sul G
sul pont.
molto sul tasto
ord.
pizz.
(as if trying again)
p
n
pp
ppp
pp
p
mf
pp
pp
p
u.c.
t.c.

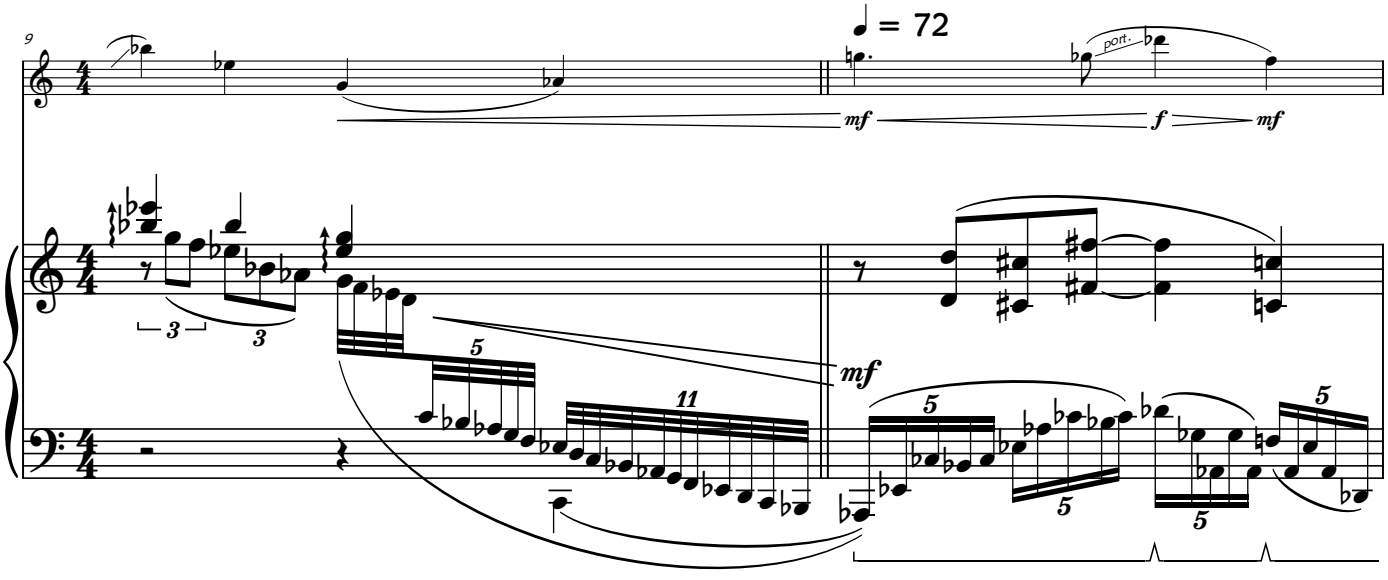

28
♩ = 90 (♪ = 180)
arco
rit.
ff
f
mf
mp
6
32
pizz.
p
8va
3

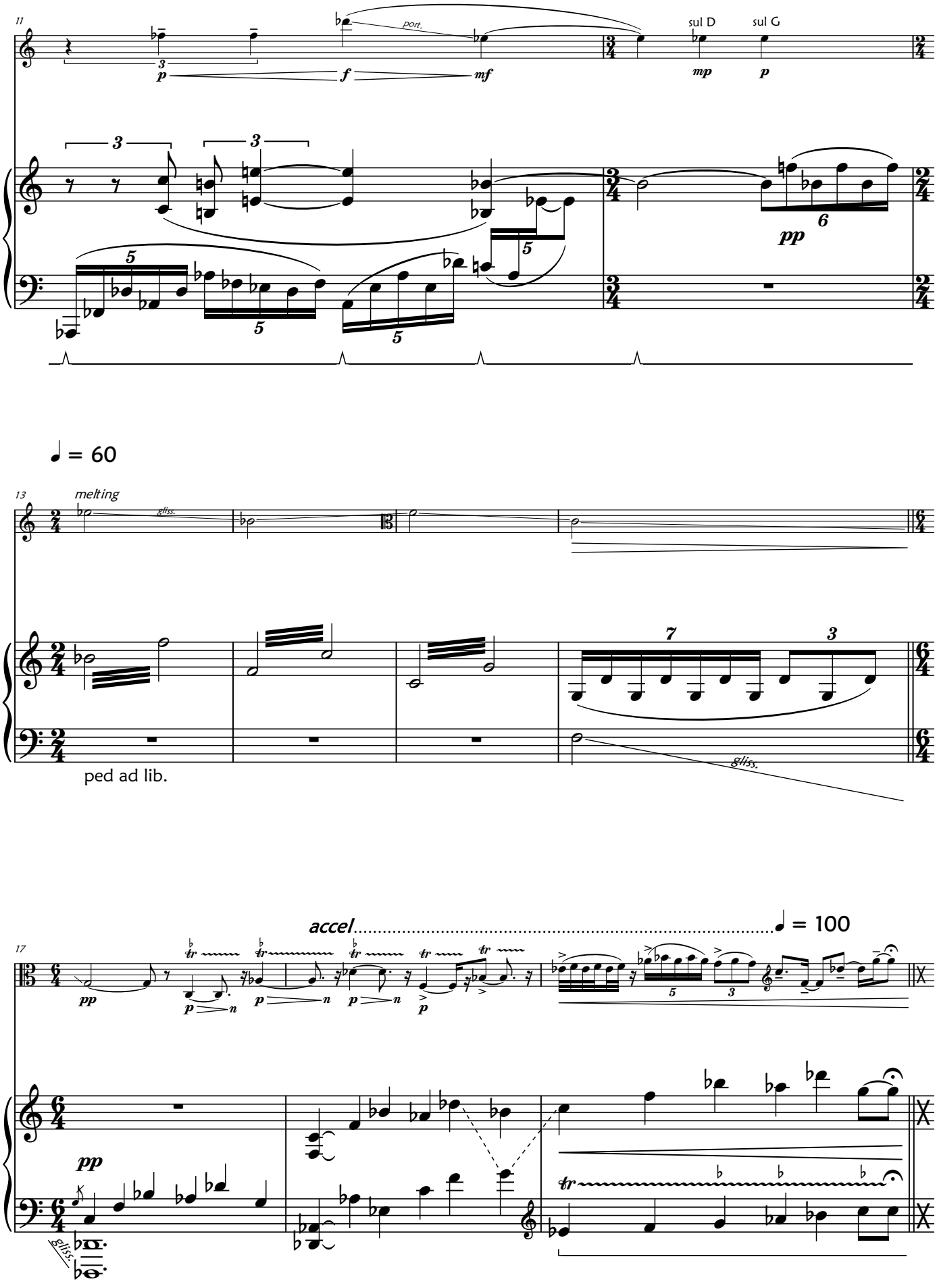
II

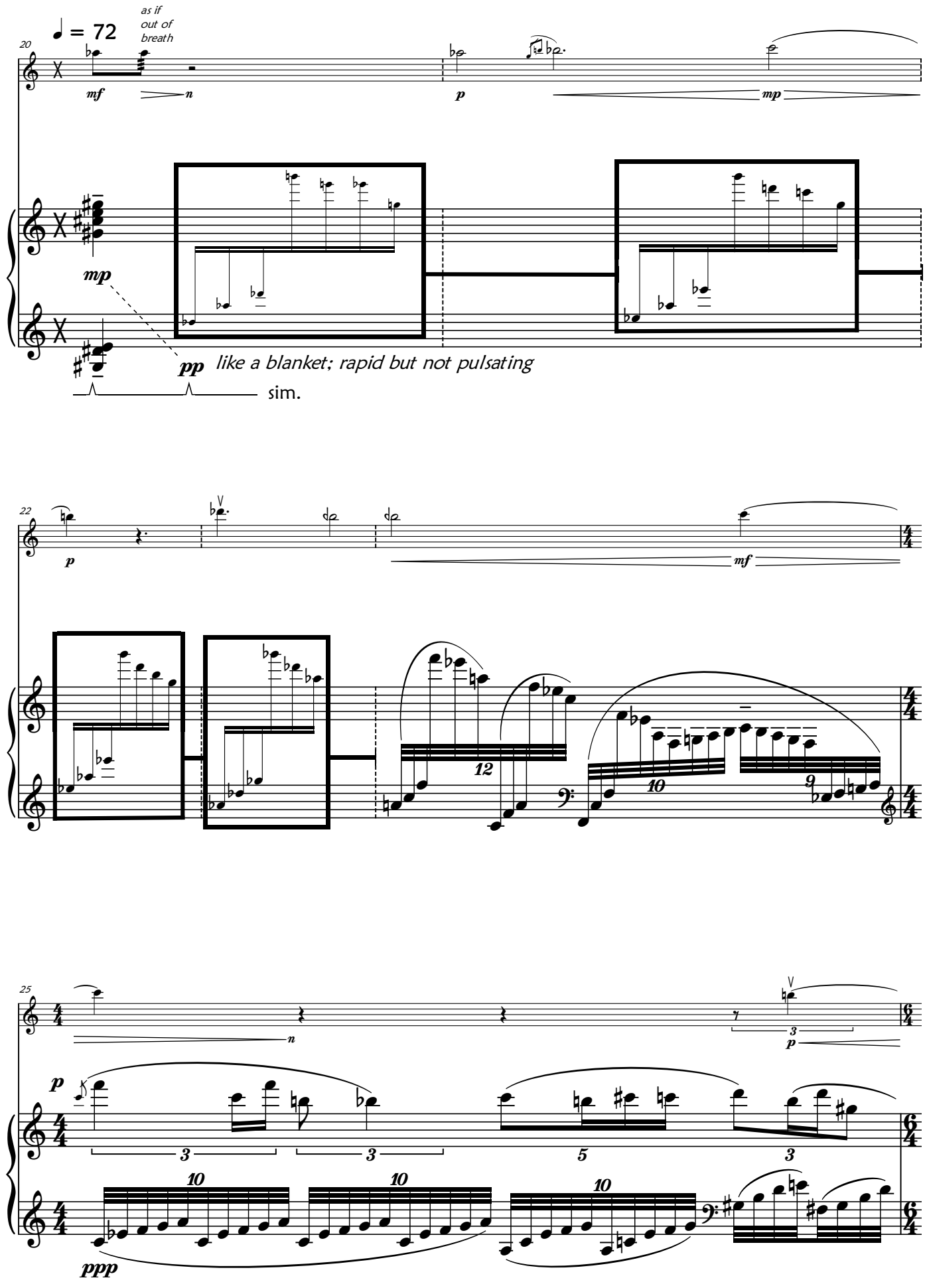

♩ = c. 45 - freely
Viola
arco
sul tasto
non vib.
ppp
p
ord.
pp
mf
vib.
sul tasto
ord.
sul G
sul C
Vla
Pno
mp
gliss.
(l.v.)
ppp
u.c.
pp
mf
mp
p
(u.c.)
Sounding pitches
(♩ = 45)
sul G
port.
3
*see
program note
(u.c.)

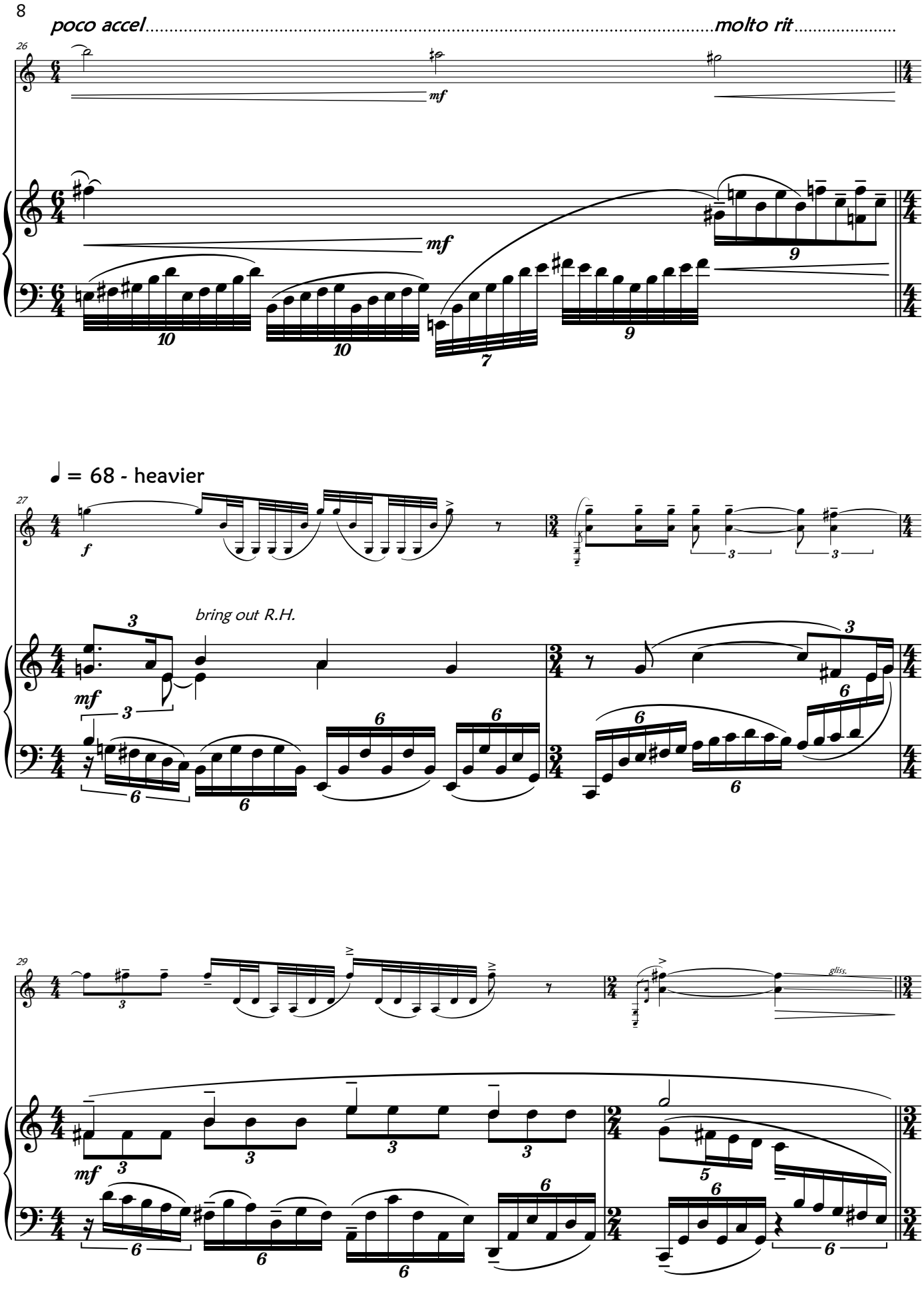

5
port.
sul G
♩ = 60
p
(u.c.)
t.c.
ped ad lib.


7
pp
p
pp
p
port.
pp
p

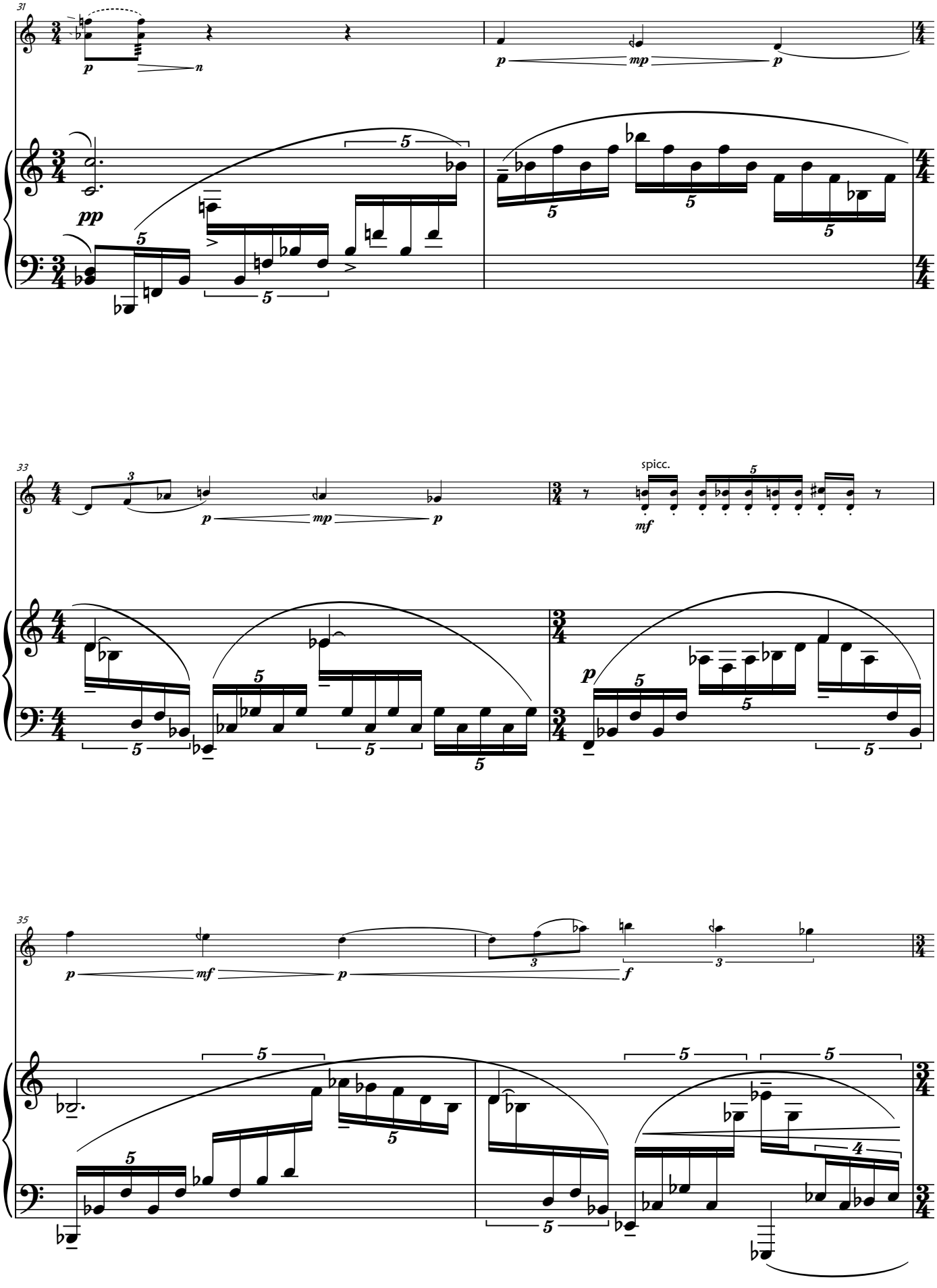

9
♩ = 72
mf
f
mf
port.
mf

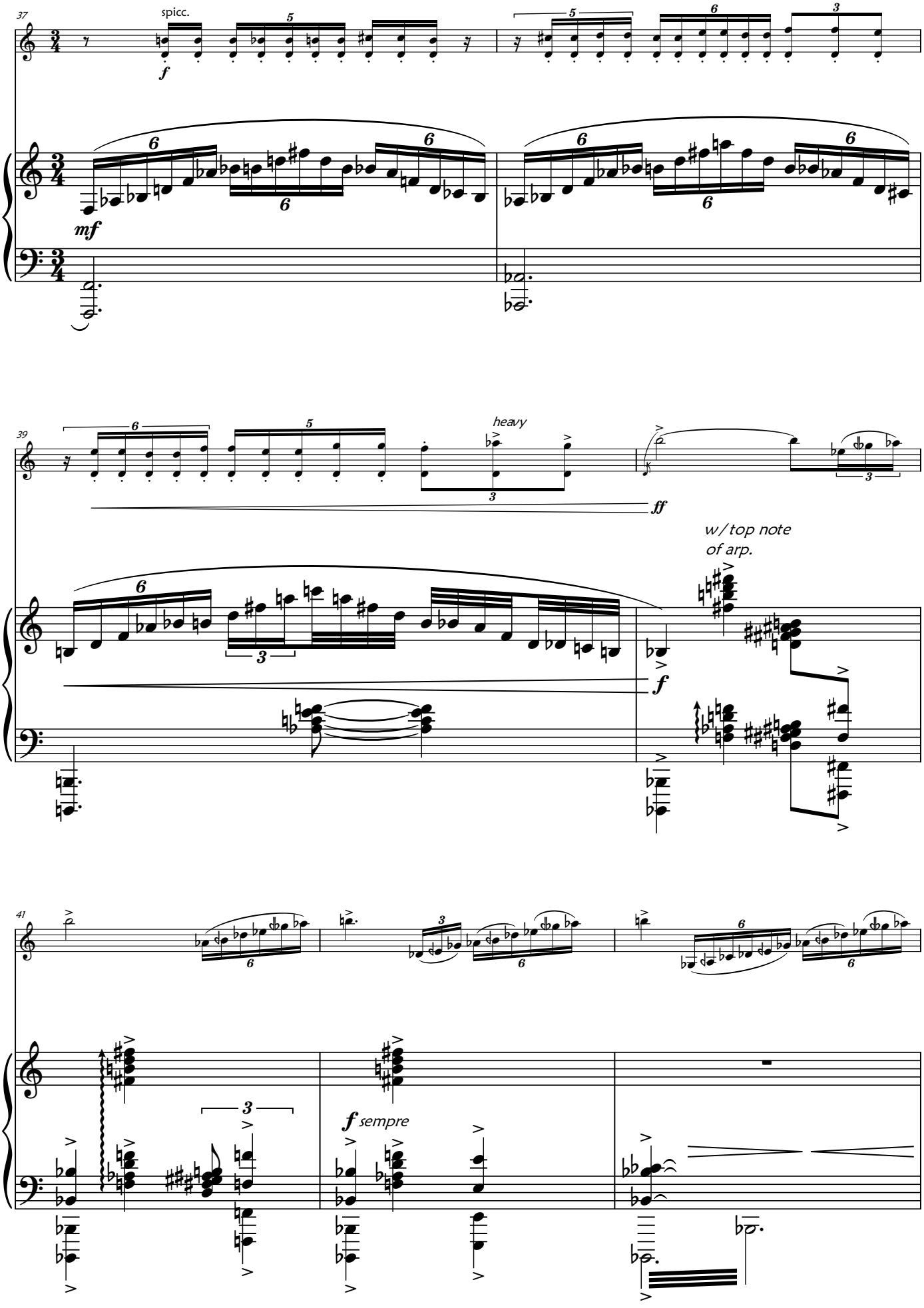

11
port.
sul D
sul G
mp
p
f
mf
pp
♩ = 60
13
melting
gliss.
7
3
gliss.
ped ad lib.
accel.....♩ = 100
17
pp
tr
gliss.

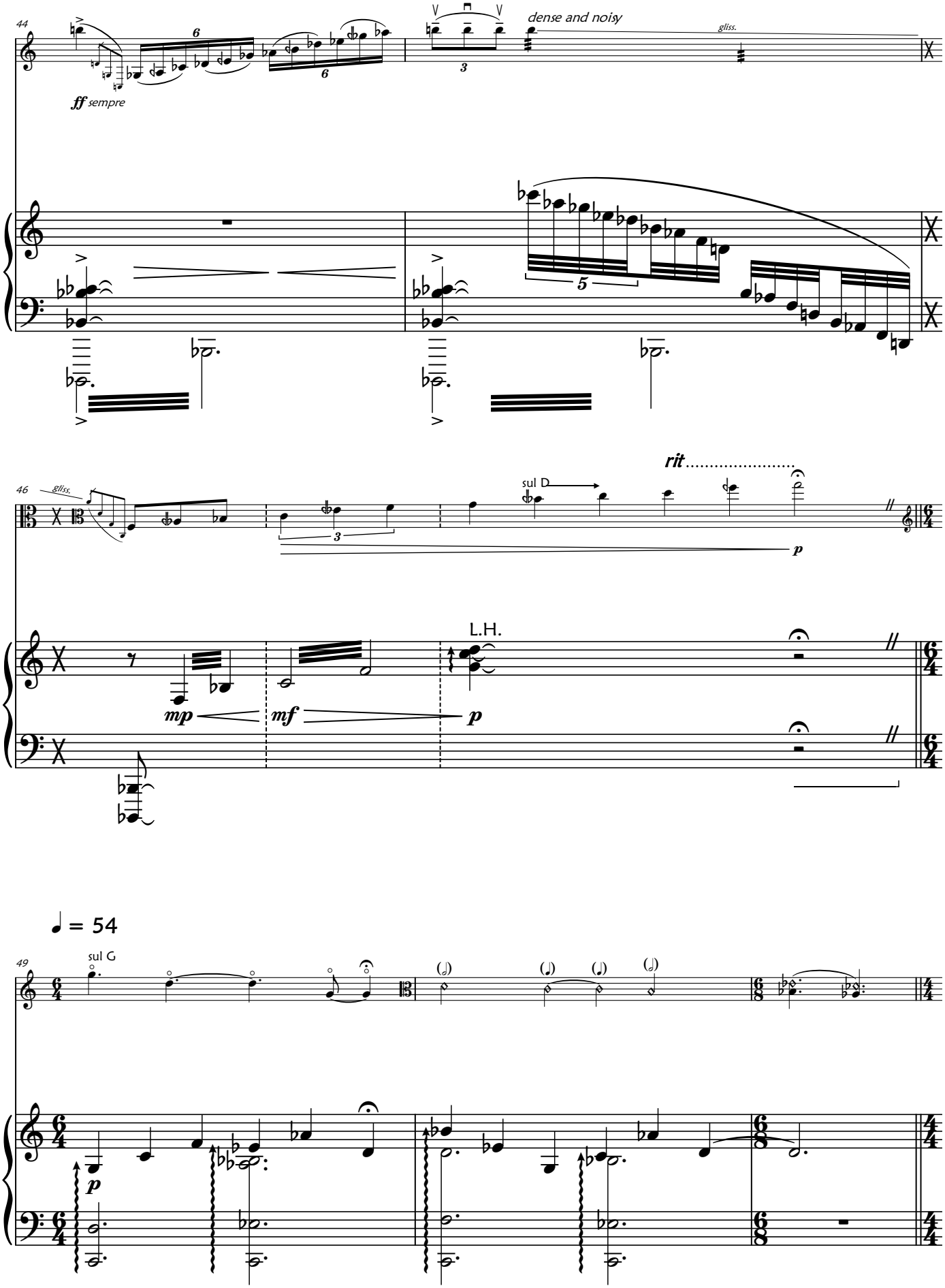

♩ = 72
as if out of breath
20
mf
n
p
mp
mp
pp
like a blanket; rapid but not pulsating
sim.
22
p
mf
12
10
9
25
n
p
3
p
3
3
5
3
10
10
10
ppp

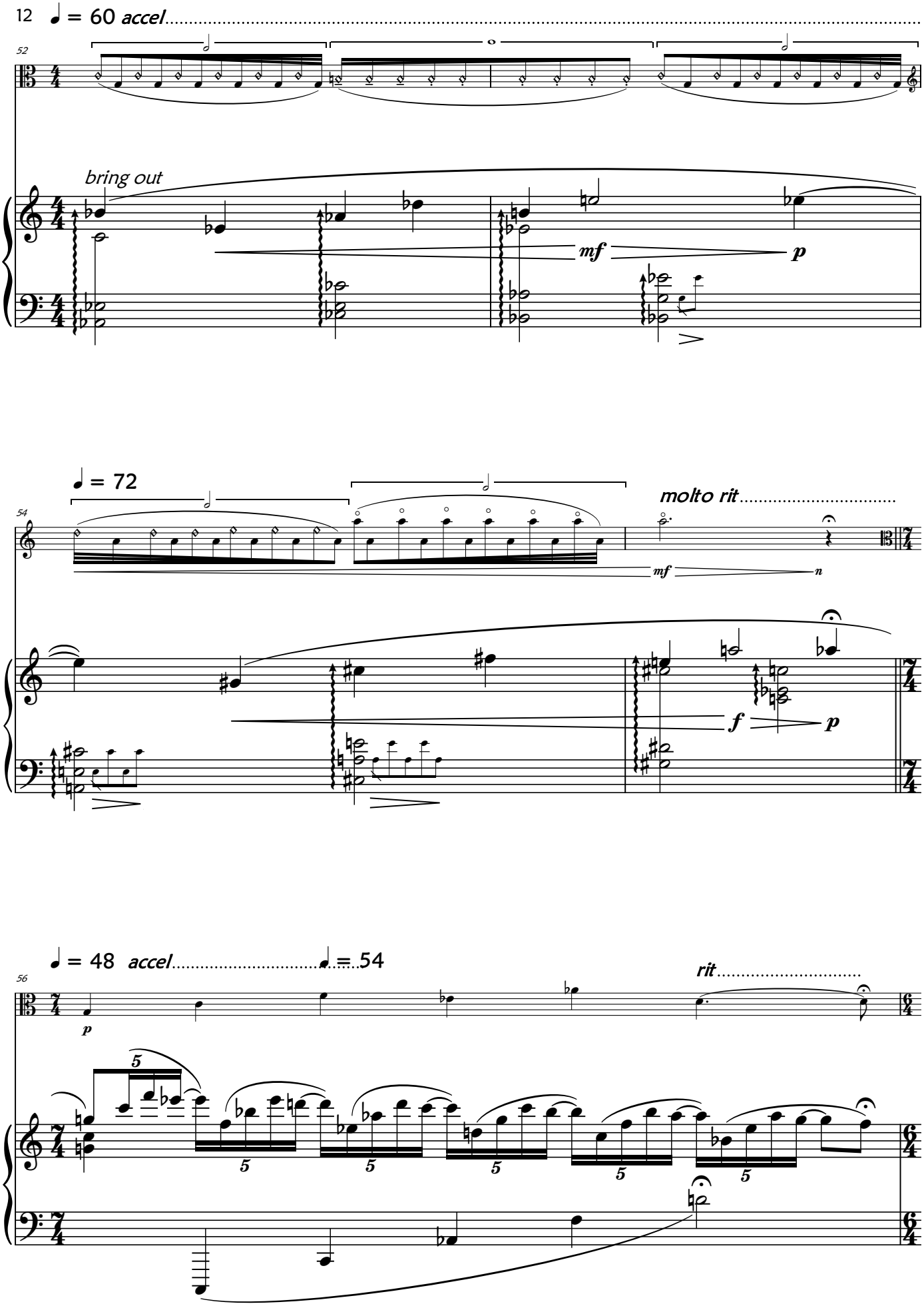

poco accel
molto rit
26
mf
mf
10
10
7
9
9
♩ = 68 - heavier
27
f
bring out R.H.
mf
29
mf
gliss.

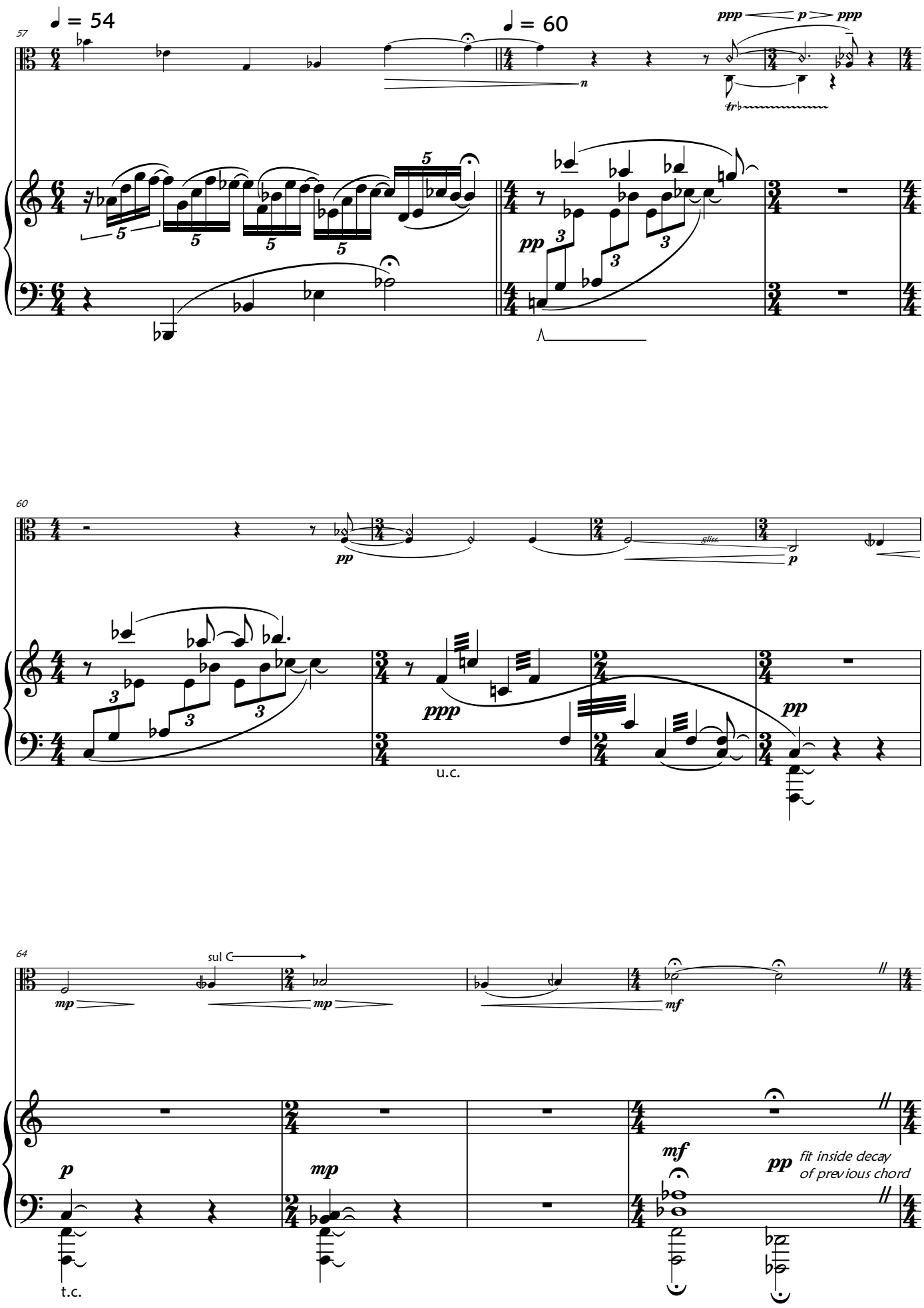
♩ = 80 - agitated

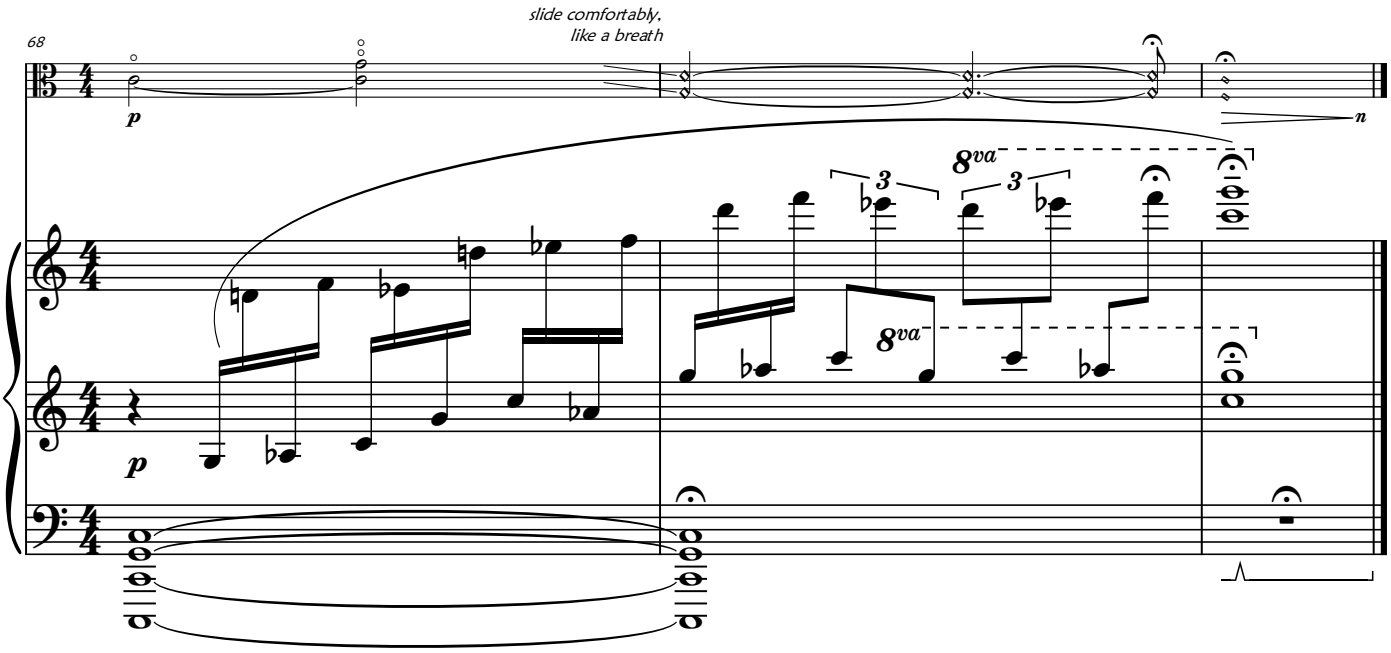



37
spicc.
f
mf
39
heavy
ff
w/top note
of arp.
f
41
f sempre

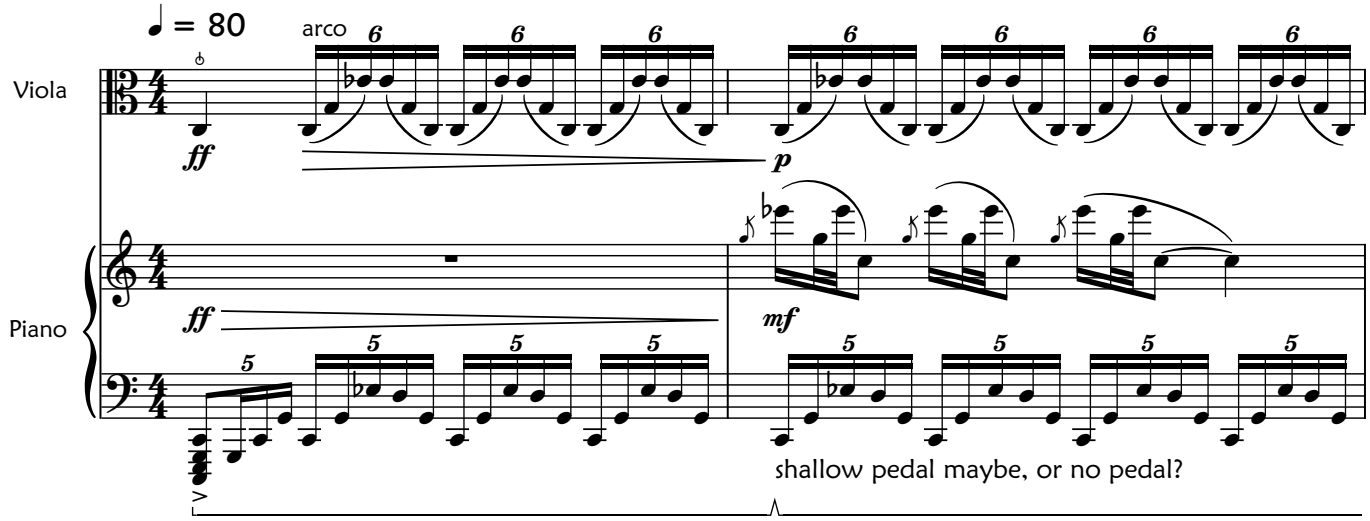

44
ff sempre
dense and noisy
gliss.
46
gliss.
sul D
rit
mp
mf
p
L.H.
♩ = 54
49
sul G
p

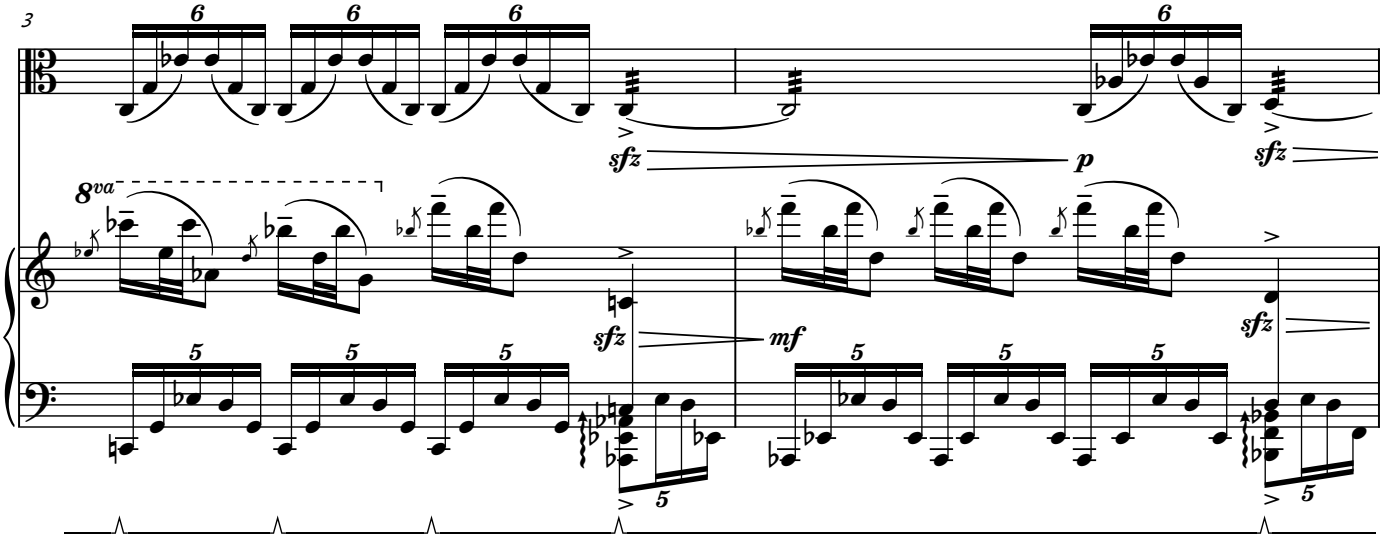

♩ = 60 accel
52
bring out
mf
p
♩ = 72
54
molto rit
mf
n
f
p
♩ = 48 accel
♩ = 54
56
rit
p
5

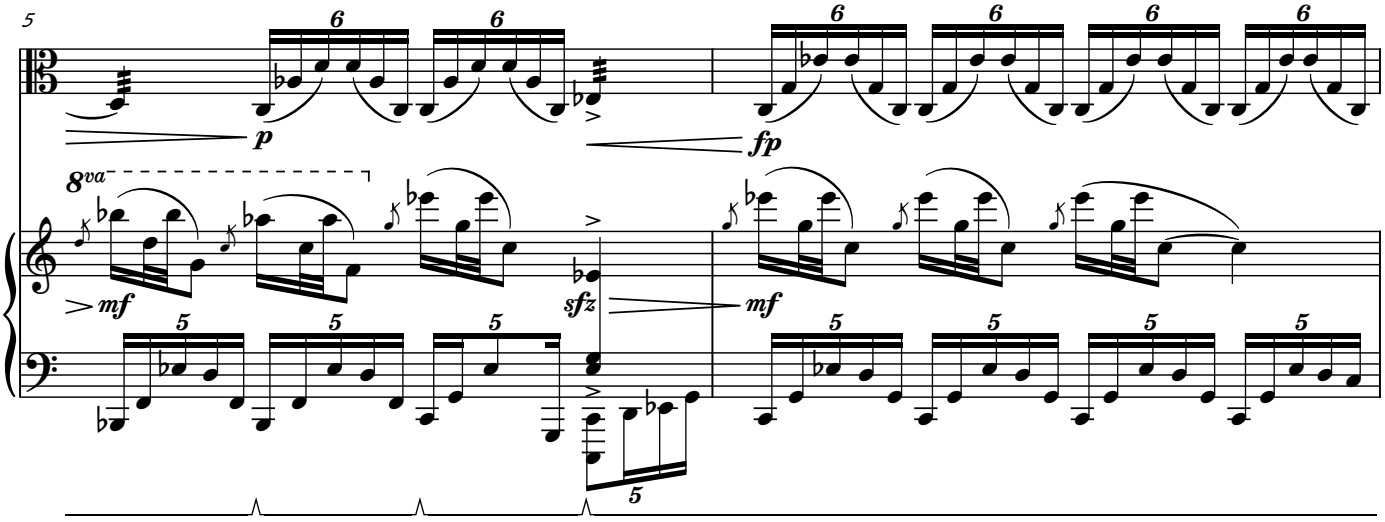

57
♩ = 54
♩ = 60
ppp p ppp
n
tr
pp
60
pp
gliss.
p
ppp
u.c.
pp
64
sul C
mp
mp
mf
p
mp
mf
pp
fit inside decay
of previous chord
t.c.

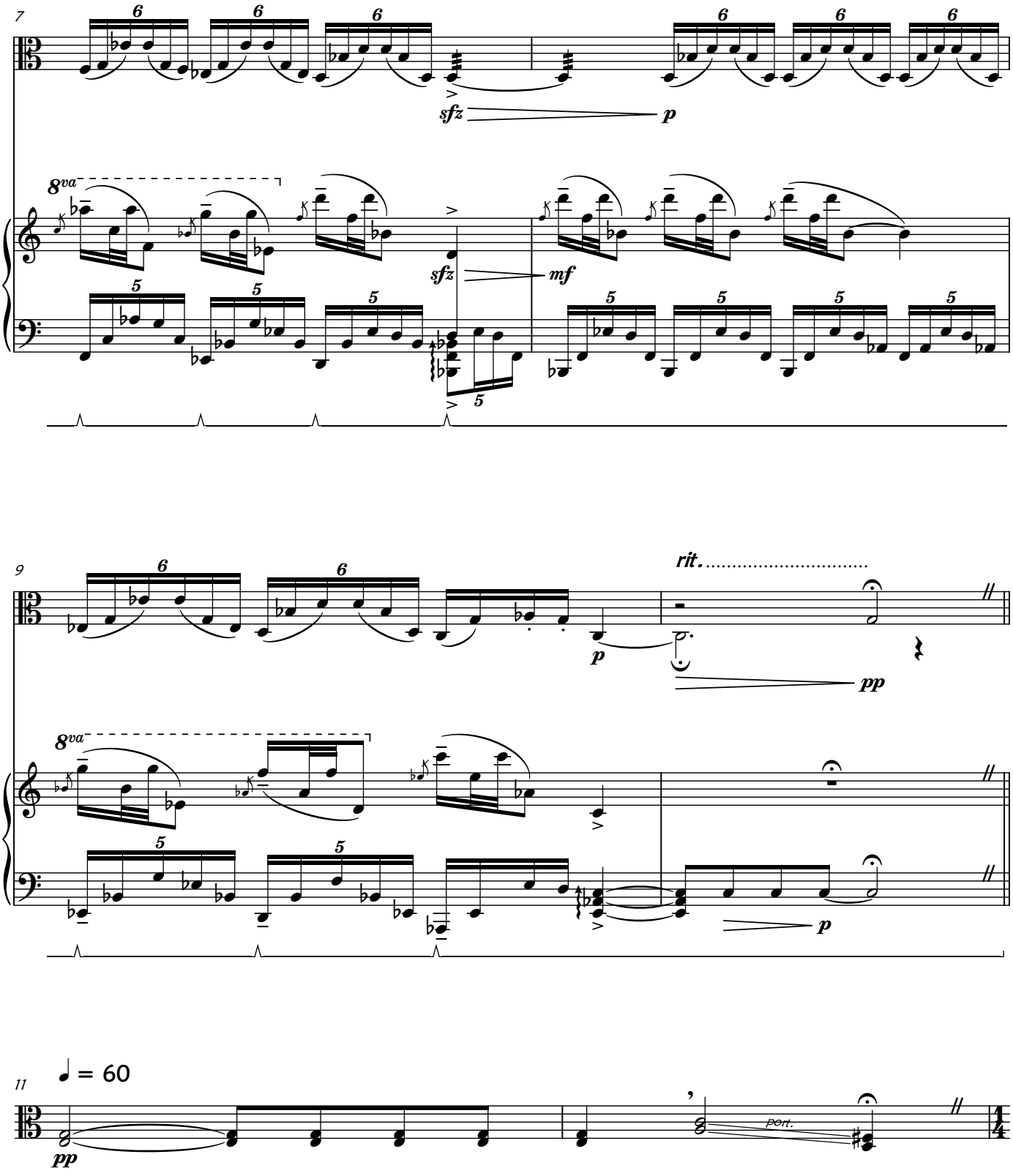

68
slide comfortably,
like a breath
p
n
8va
3
3
8va
p

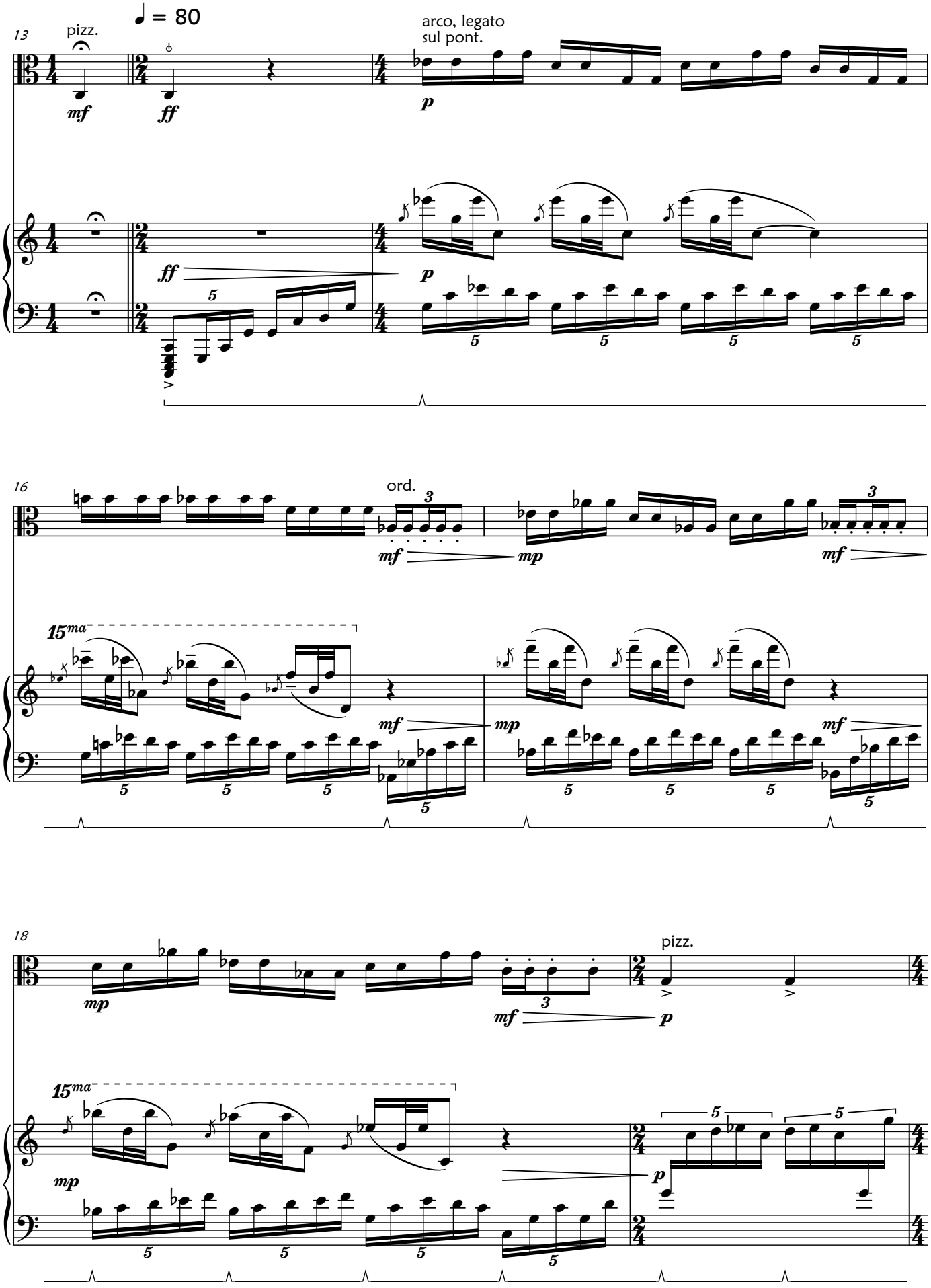
III

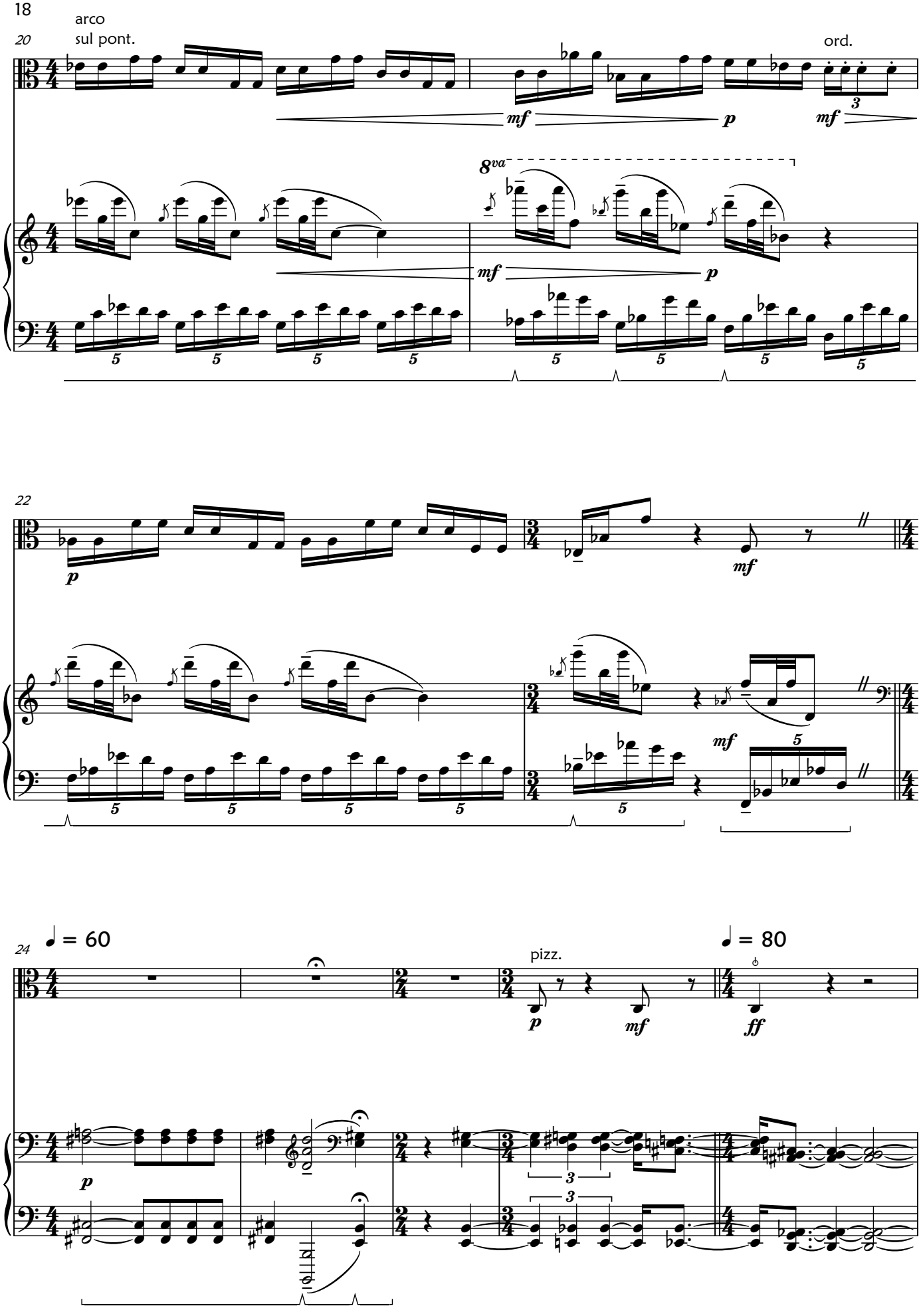

♩ = 80
arco
Viola
Piano
shallow pedal maybe, or no pedal?

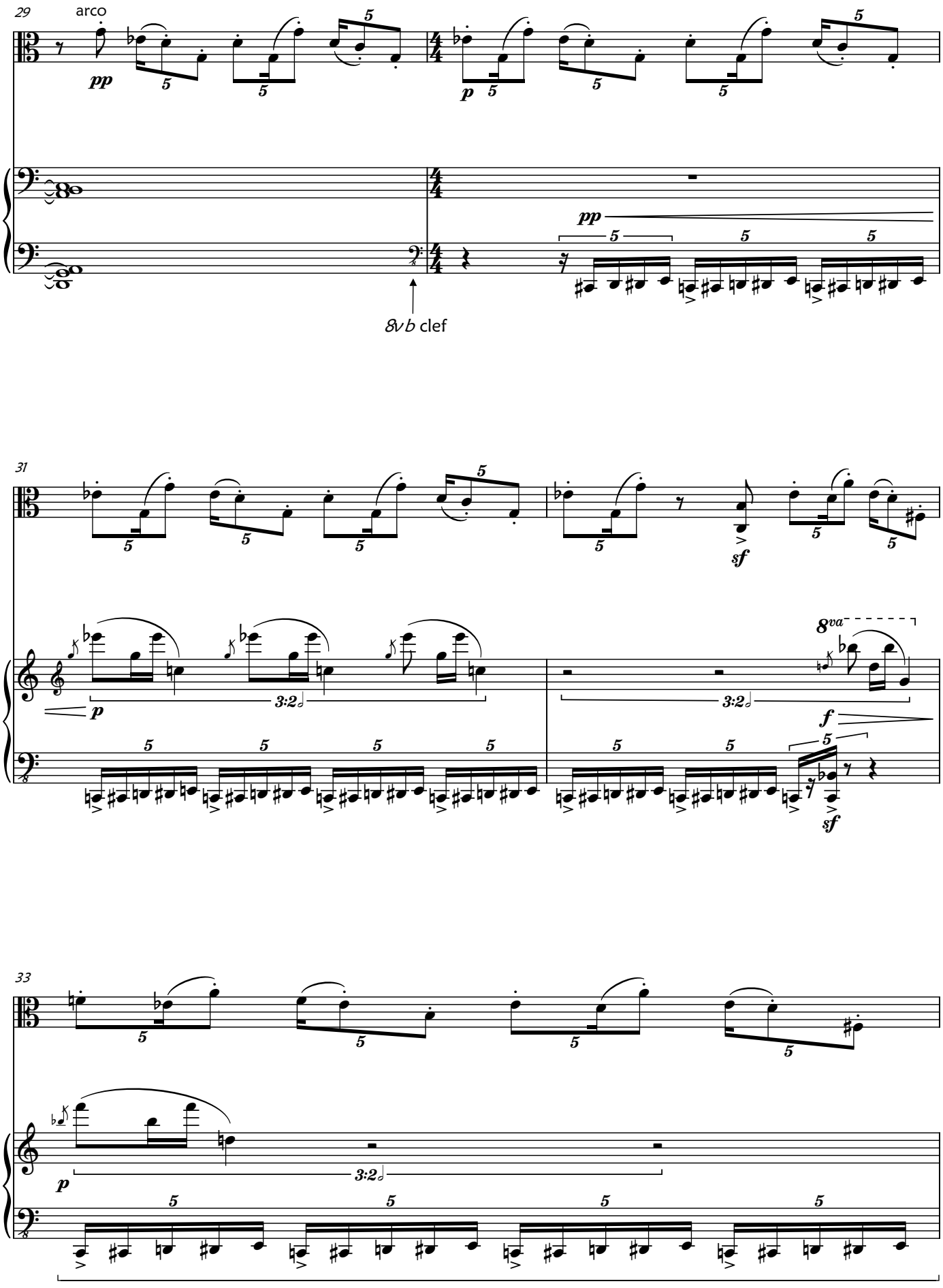

3
8va

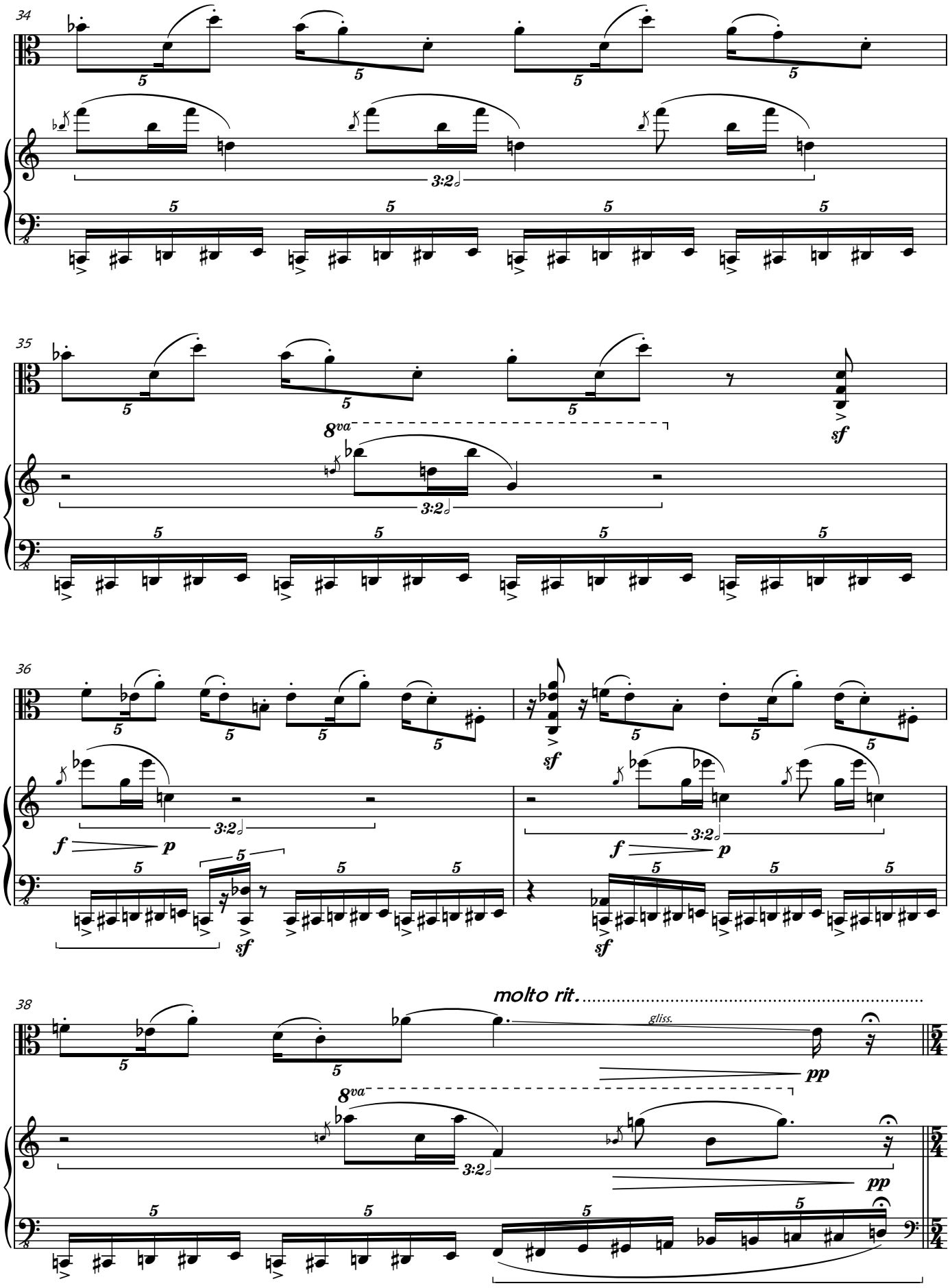

5
8va

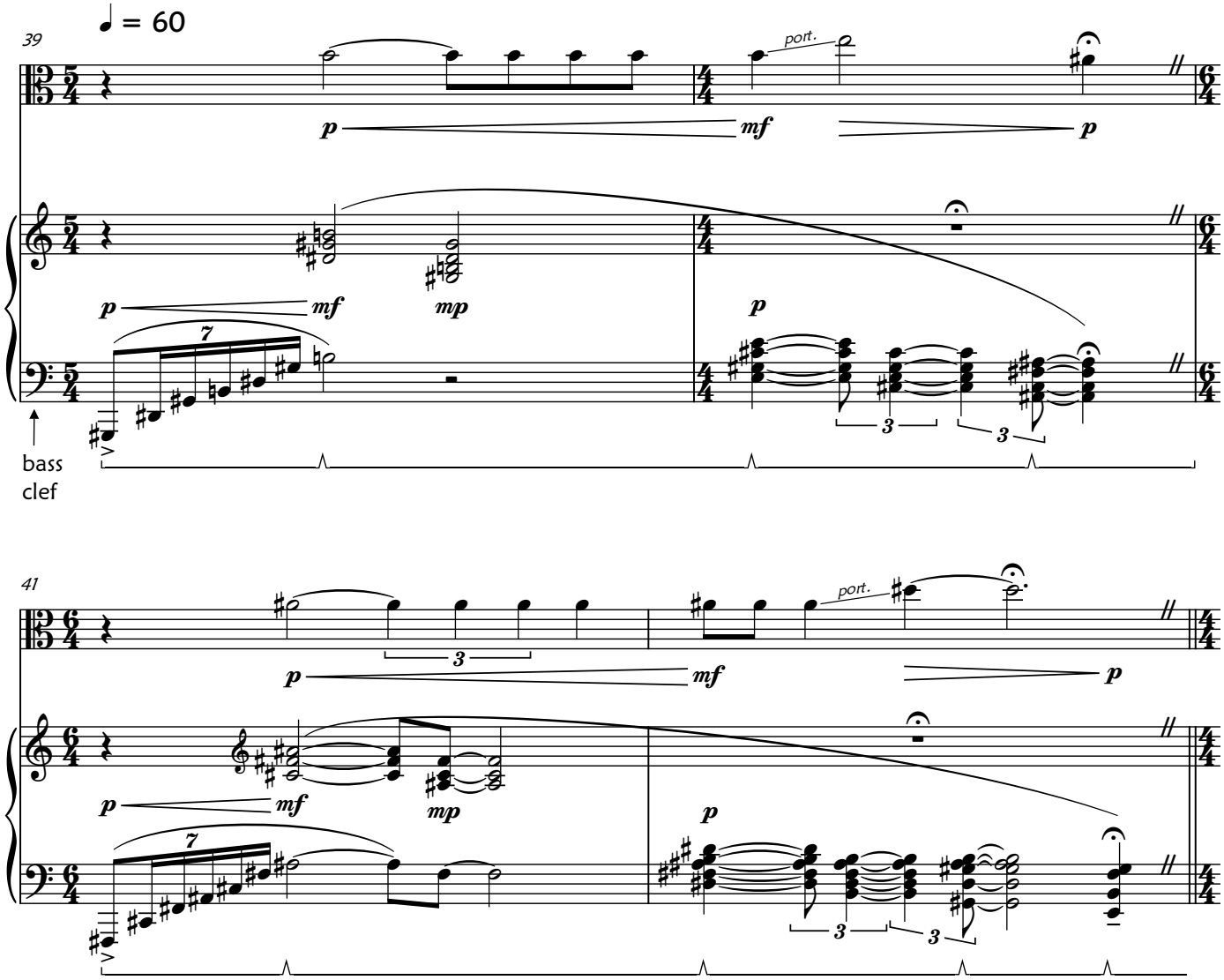

7
sfz
p
8va
sfz
mf
9
rit.
p
pp
8va
p
11
♩ = 60
pp
port.

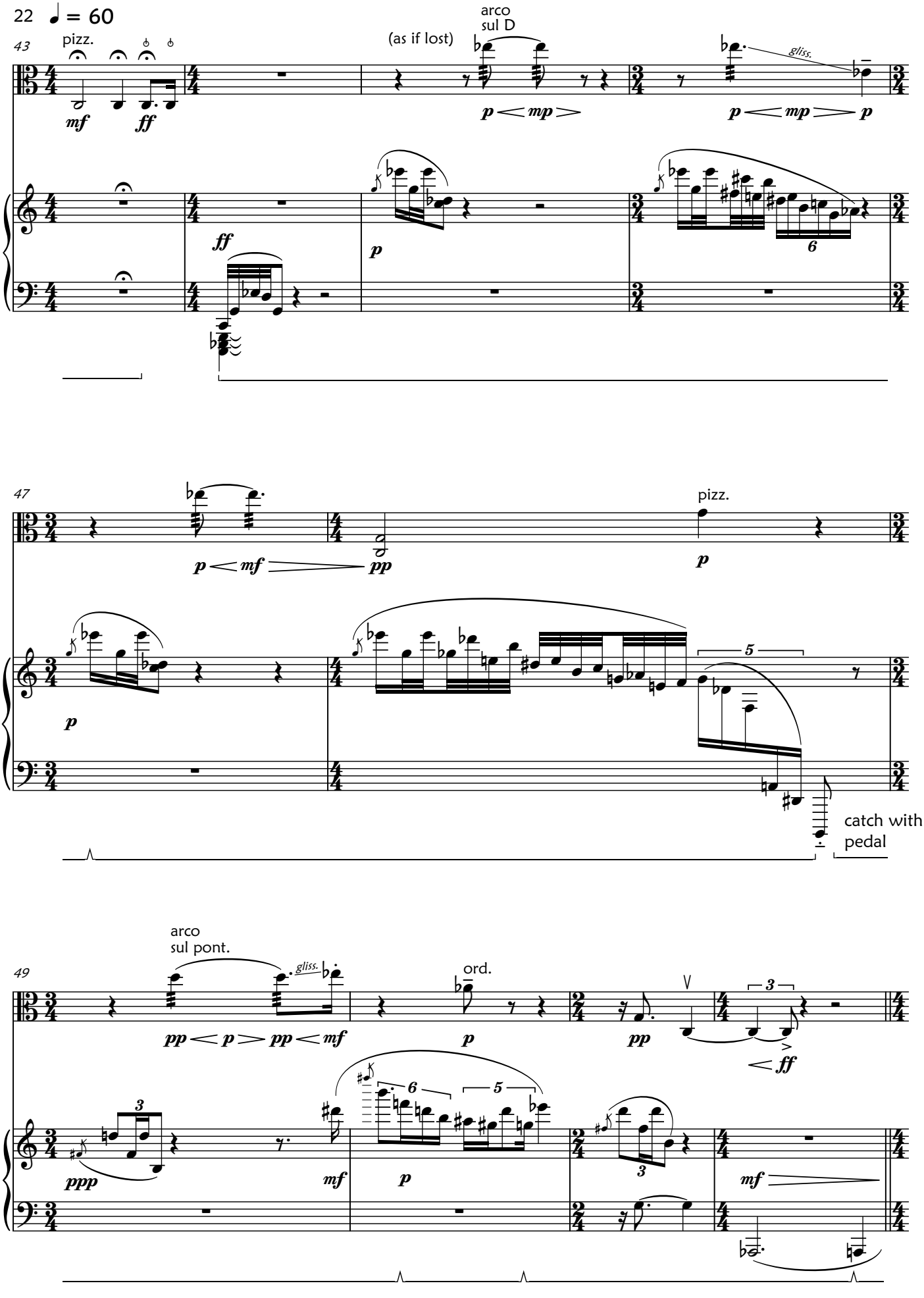

♩ = 80
13
pizz.
mf
ff
arco, legato
sul pont.
p
ff
p
16
ord.
mf
mp
mf
15ma
mf
mp
mf
18
mp
mf
pizz.
p
15ma
mp
p

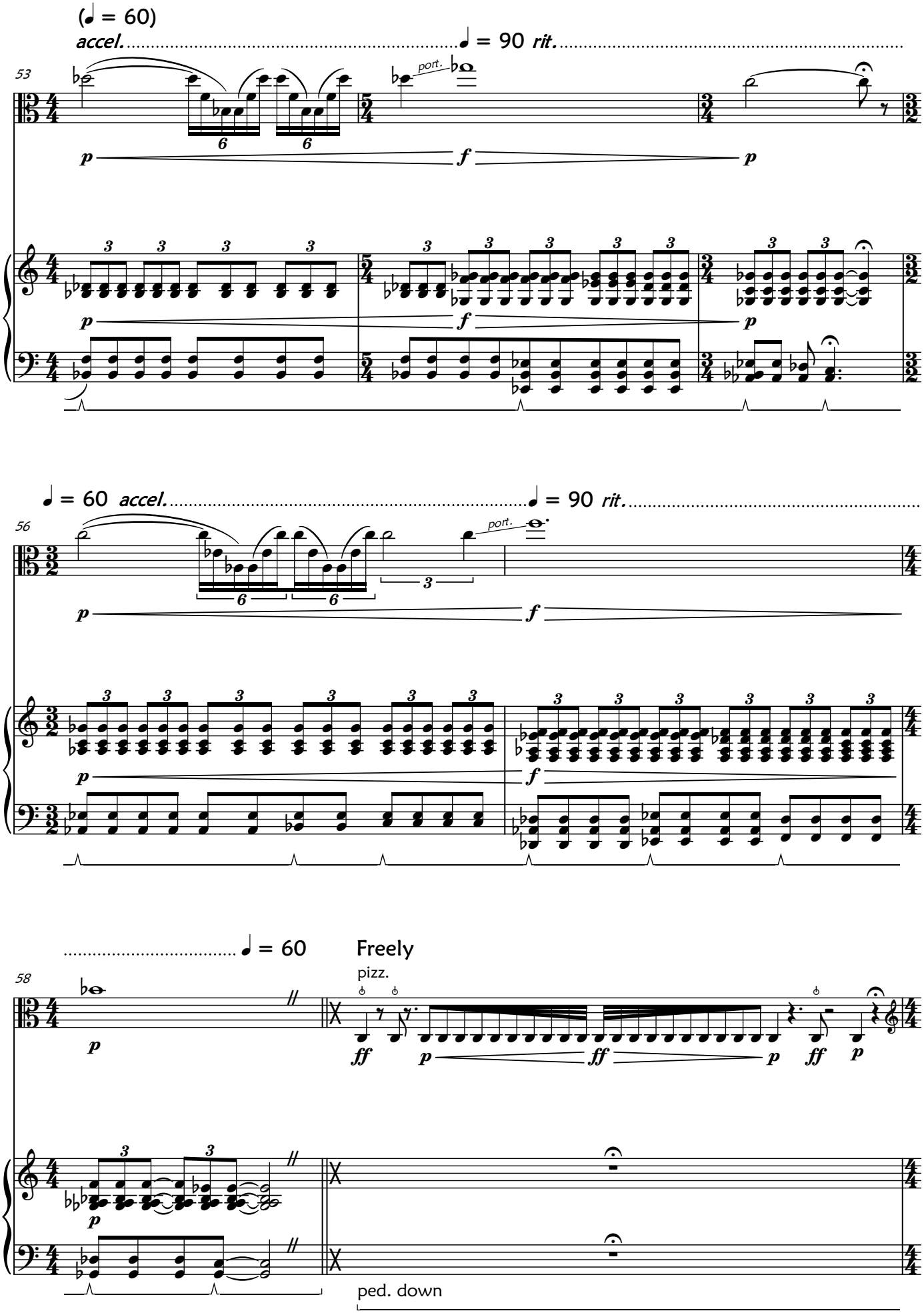

arco
sul pont.
20
ord.
mf
p
mf
8va
mf
p
5
22
p
mf
mf
5
24
♩ = 60
pizz.
p
mf
♩ = 80
ff
p
3
3

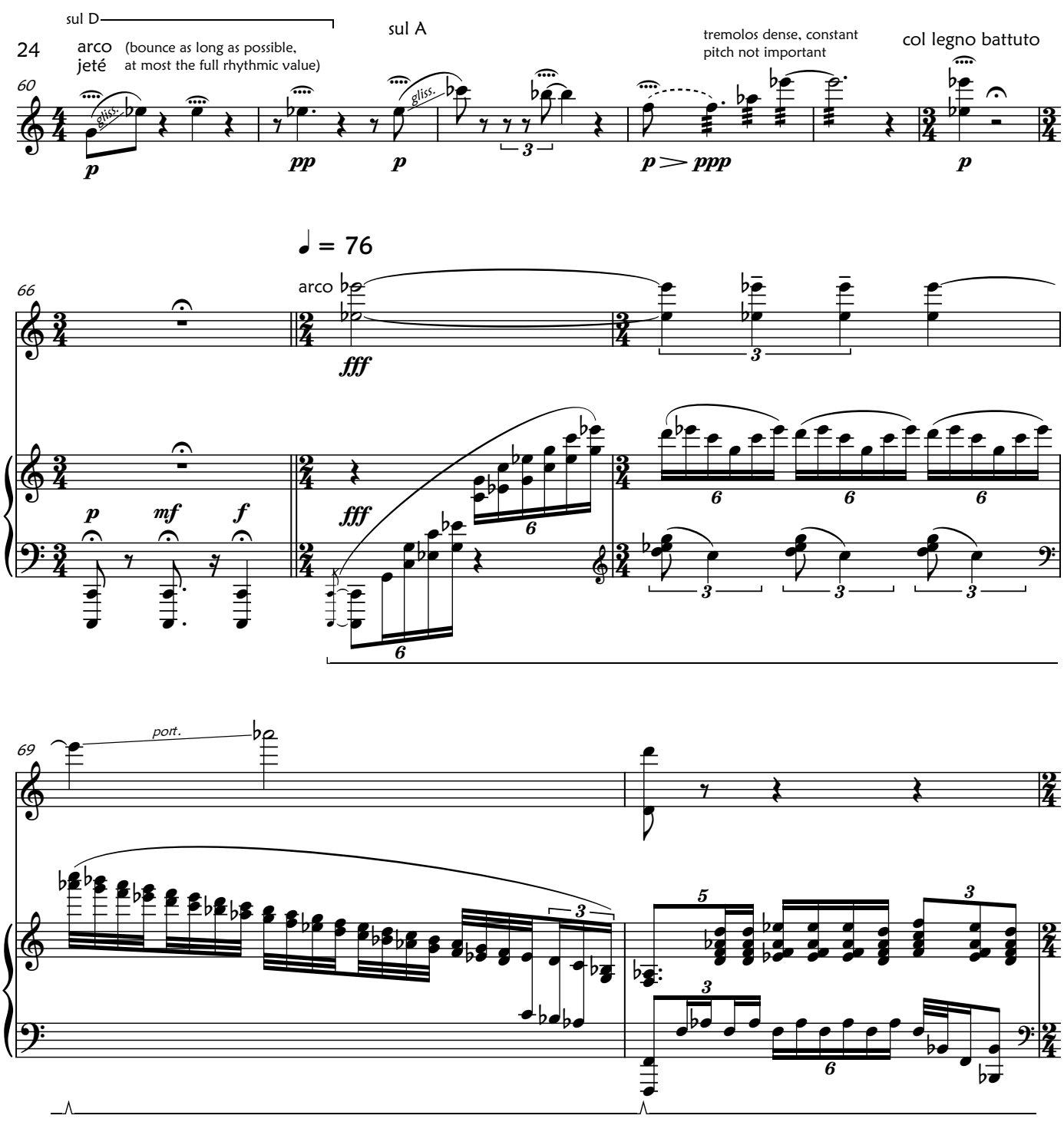

29
arco
pp
p
pp
8vb clef
31
sf
8va
3:2
p
f
sf
33
3:2
p

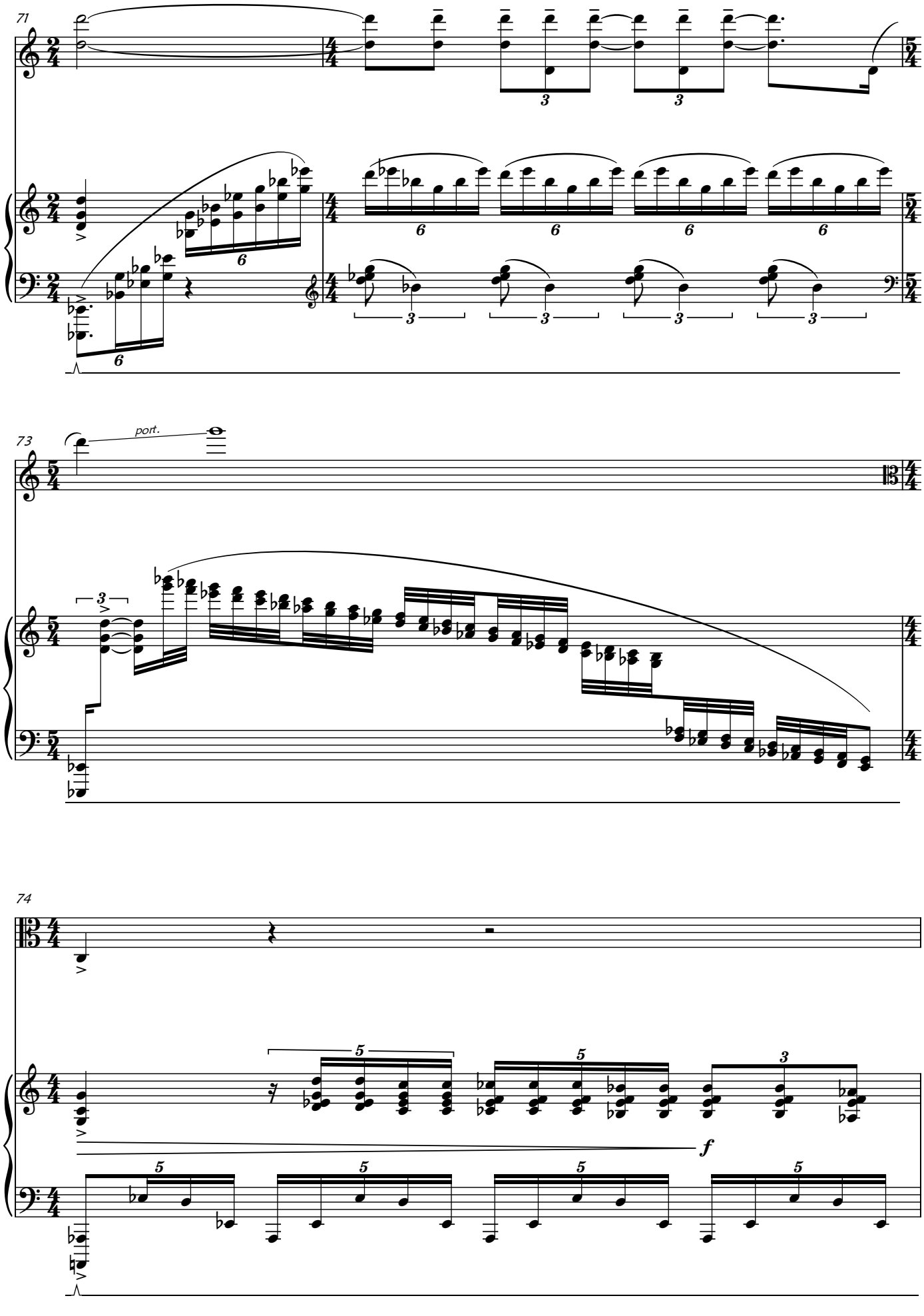

34
35
8va
sf
36
f
p
sf
38
molto rit.
gliss.
pp
8va
pp

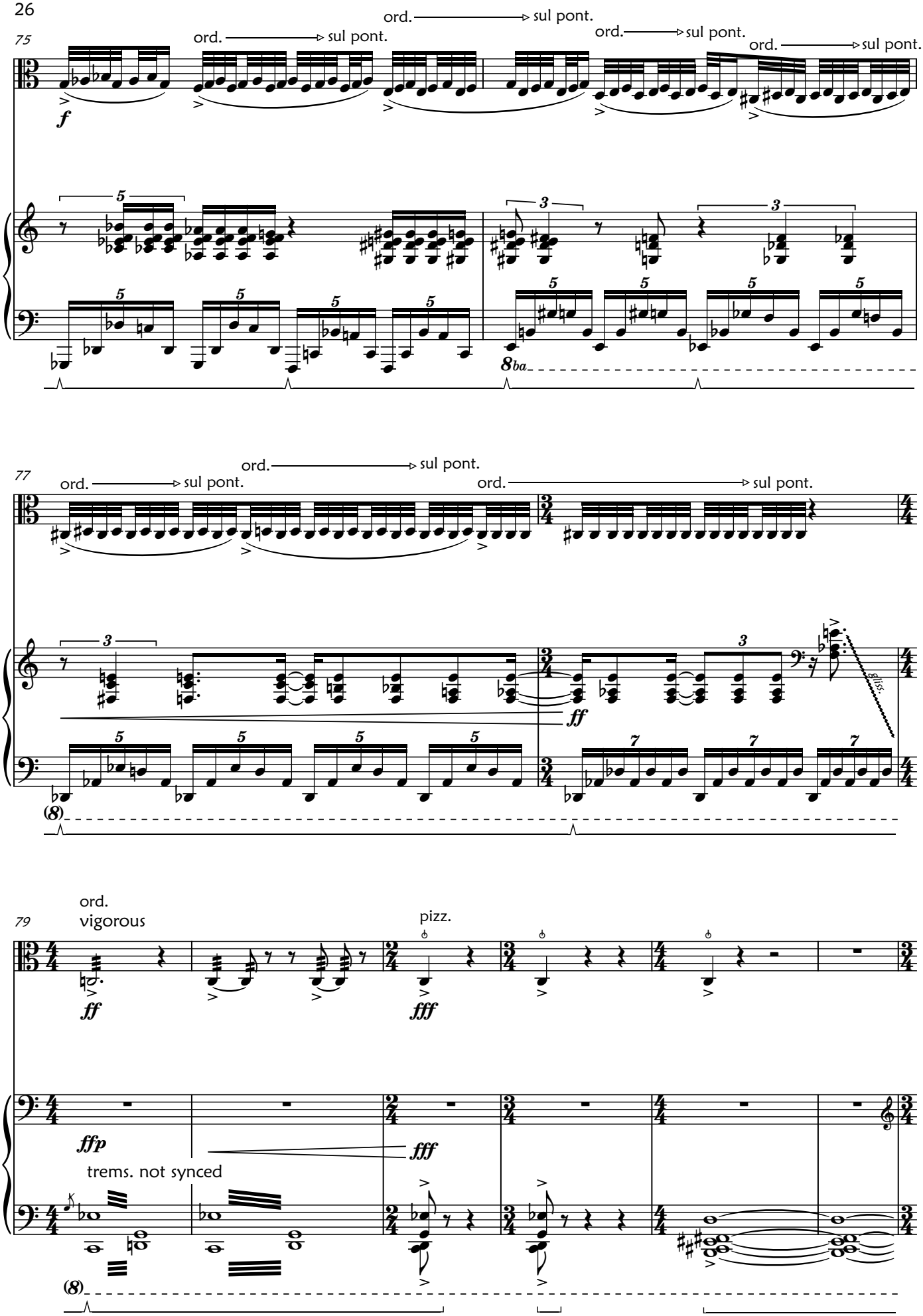

39
♩ = 60
port.
bass clef
41
port.

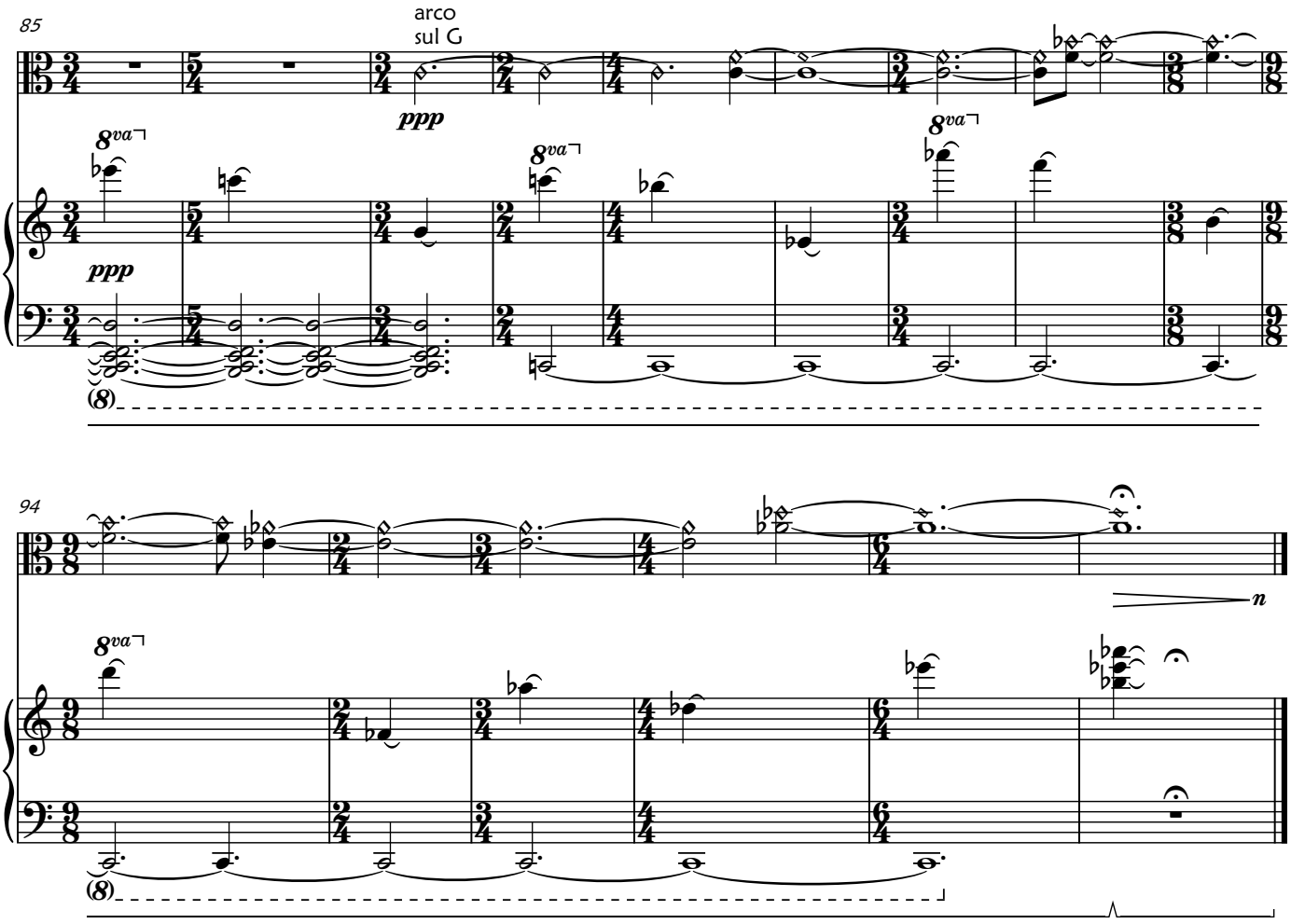

22 ♩ = 60
43
pizz.
mf
ff
(as if lost)
arco
sul D
p < mp >
gliss.
p < mp > p
ff
p
6
47
p < mf >
pp
pizz.
p
p
5
catch with
pedal
49
arco
sul pont.
gliss.
pp < p > pp < mf
ord.
p
pp
V
3
< ff
ppp
3
mf
6
5
p
3
mf


(♩ = 60)
accel.
♩ = 90 rit.
53
port.
p
f
p
♩ = 60 accel.
♩ = 90 rit.
56
port.
p
f
♩ = 60
Freely
58
pizz.
ff
p
ff
p
ff
p
p
ped. down


24
sul D
arco
jeté
(bounce as long as possible, at most the full rhythmic value)
sul A
tremolos dense, constant pitch not important
col legno battuto
60
gliss.
p
pp
p
3
p > ppp
p
♩ = 76
66
arco
fff
p
mf
f
fff
6
3
69
port.
5


71
73
port.
74
f


75
ord.
sul pont.
ord.
sul pont.
ord.
sul pont.
ord.
sul pont.
f
8ba
77
ord.
sul pont.
ord.
sul pont.
ord.
sul pont.
ff
gliss.
(8)
79
ord.
vigorous
pizz.
ff
fff
ffp
fff
trems. not synced
(8)


85
arco
sul G
ppp
8va
ppp
8va
8va
(8)

94
n
8va
(8)