Yongwoo Lee

The Music of Earth

for string quartet

2023

PROGRAM NOTE

This music draws inspiration from Leonard Bernstein's book *The Unanswered Question*. Bernstein explores 20th-century music within the context of tonality and humanity's existence on Earth. He delves into two main subjects: Stravinsky's polyphonic approach and Schoenberg's serialism. His conclusion regarding both compositional techniques is that they ultimately retain tonal context.

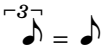
In the final part of the book, Bernstein poses the question of what future music will entail. In response, I cautiously propose minimalism, freeform, and microtonality as contemporary music history following the paths of polyphony and serialism. My point is that we cannot escape the concept of tonality as inhabitants of Earth. Within this context, this piece narrates history through its three movements (1st to 3rd). The structure, musical texture, and intervals I've utilized have been influenced by observed historical developments.

Ultimately, the microtones attempted by the second violin and viola in the 3rd movement aim to present each tonic of polyphony introduced in the 1st movement and converge into the natural C note. Various aspects characterize the sounds that need to be tuned away from these microtones. Whether due to players' instincts or instruments' inherent tendencies to revert to the tuned tone, even if the second violin or viola excels at producing distinct notes, the first violin or cello might deviate from its tuning and mirror the distinct notes of the other instruments. This ultimately signifies a return to the nature of sound governed by the rules derived from natural harmonics.

Therefore, I titled the work *The Music of Earth,* drawing inspiration from Bernstein's reference to *The Poetry of Earth* by John Keats in a similar context.

1. Polyphonic Serialism ⟶ 2. Minimal Free Form ⟶ 3. Microtonality

EXPLANATION



Metric modulation: just changing in pulse rate

White noise (on the brdige)

Overpressure bowing

The Music of Earth

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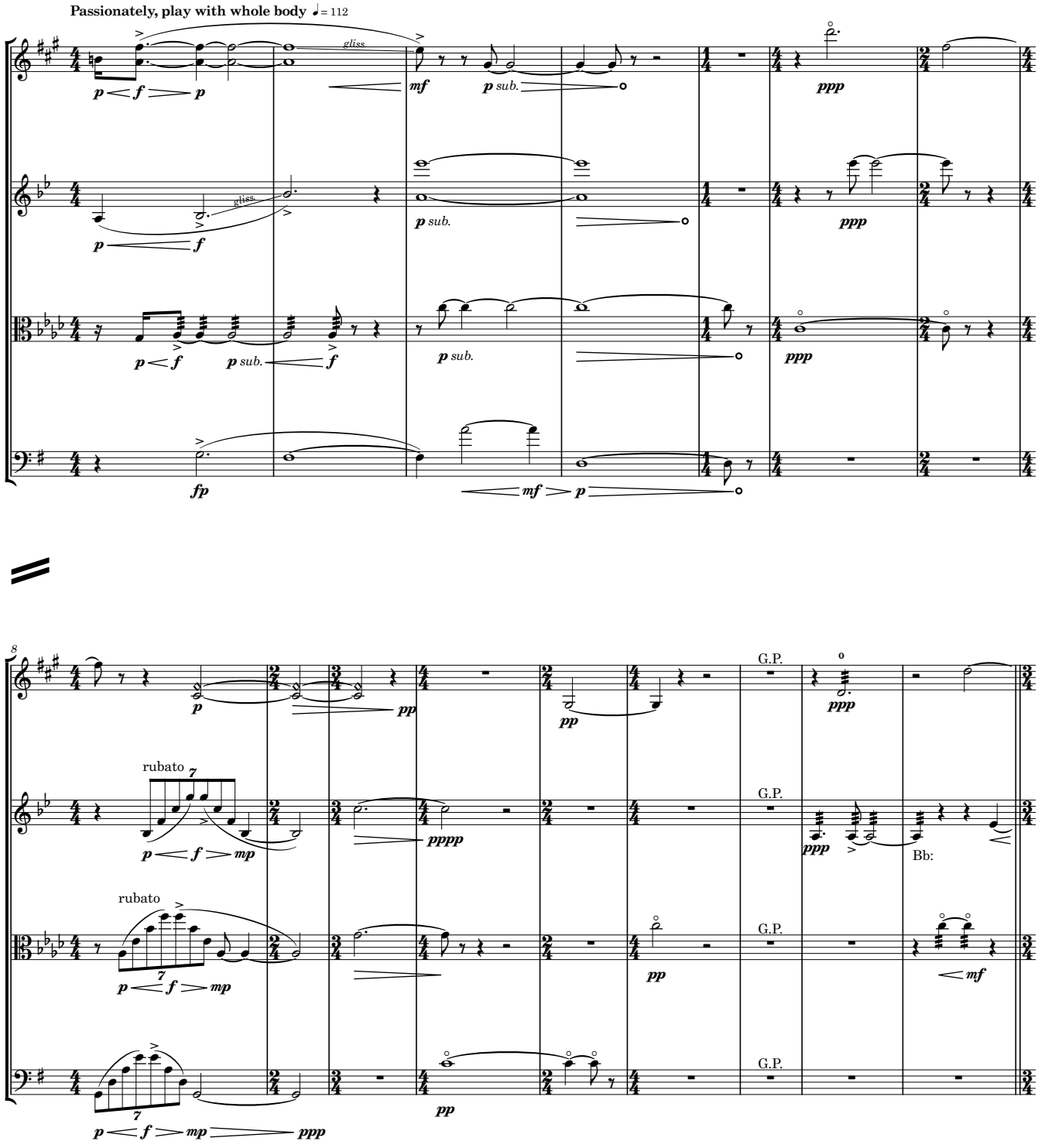
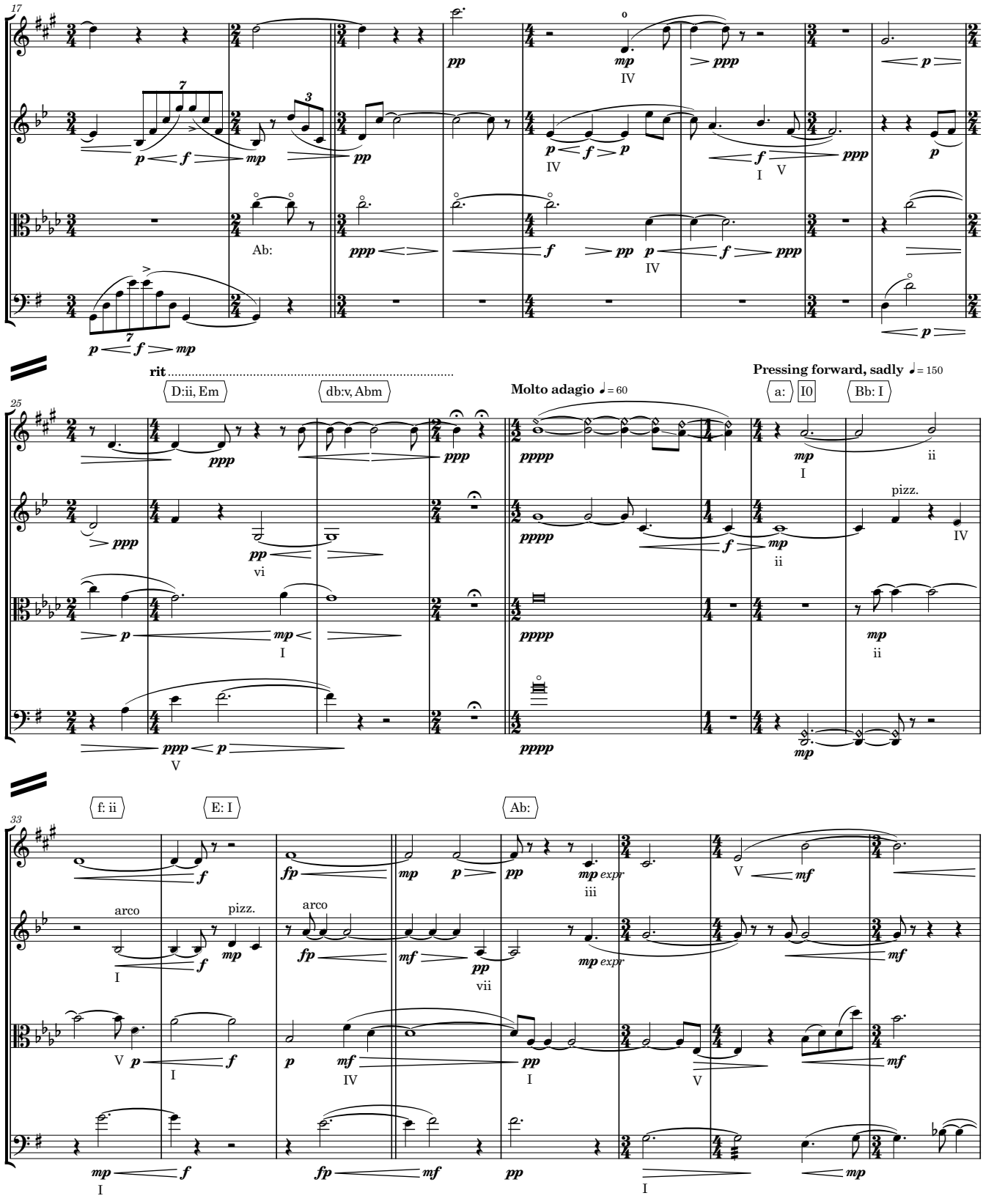
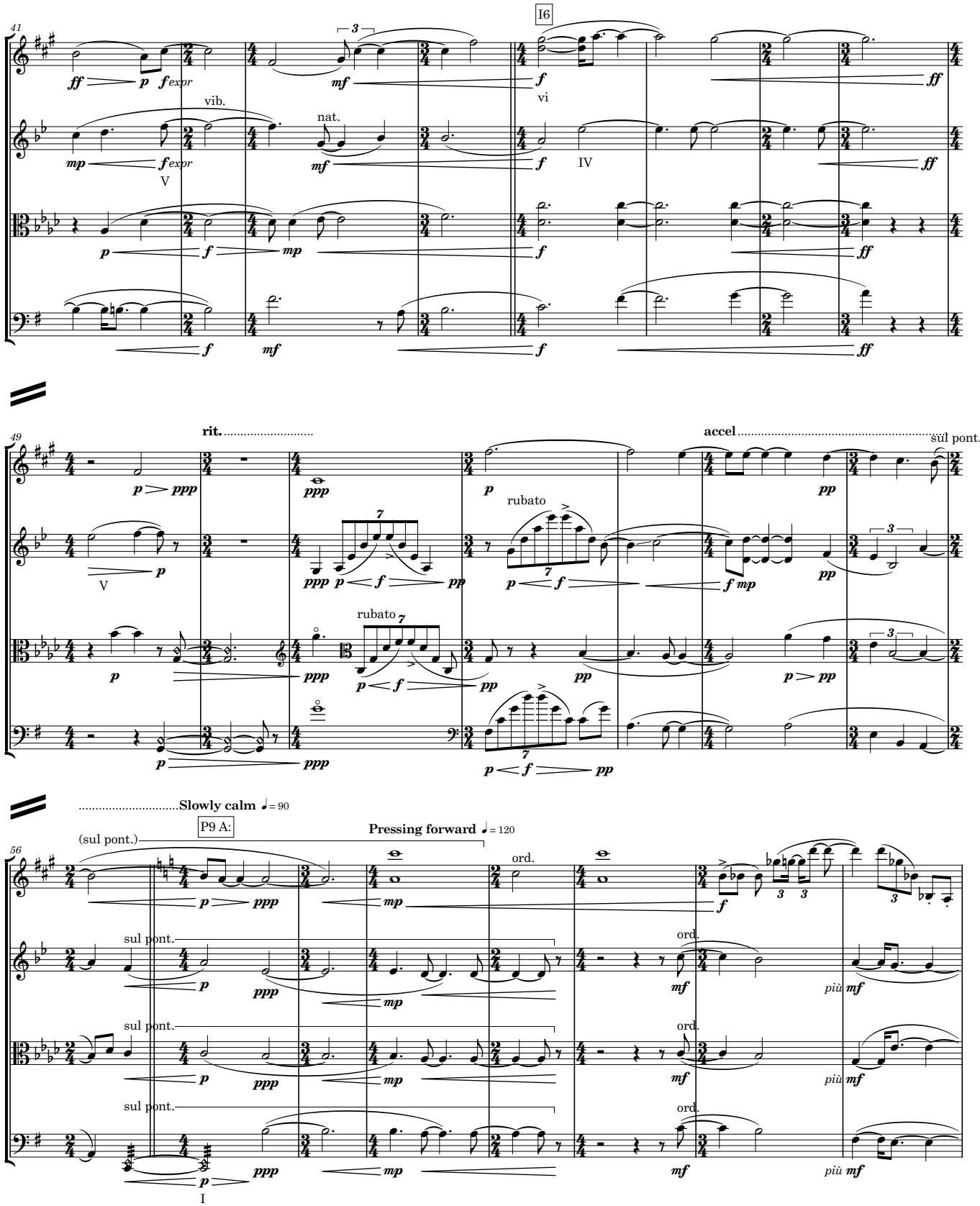
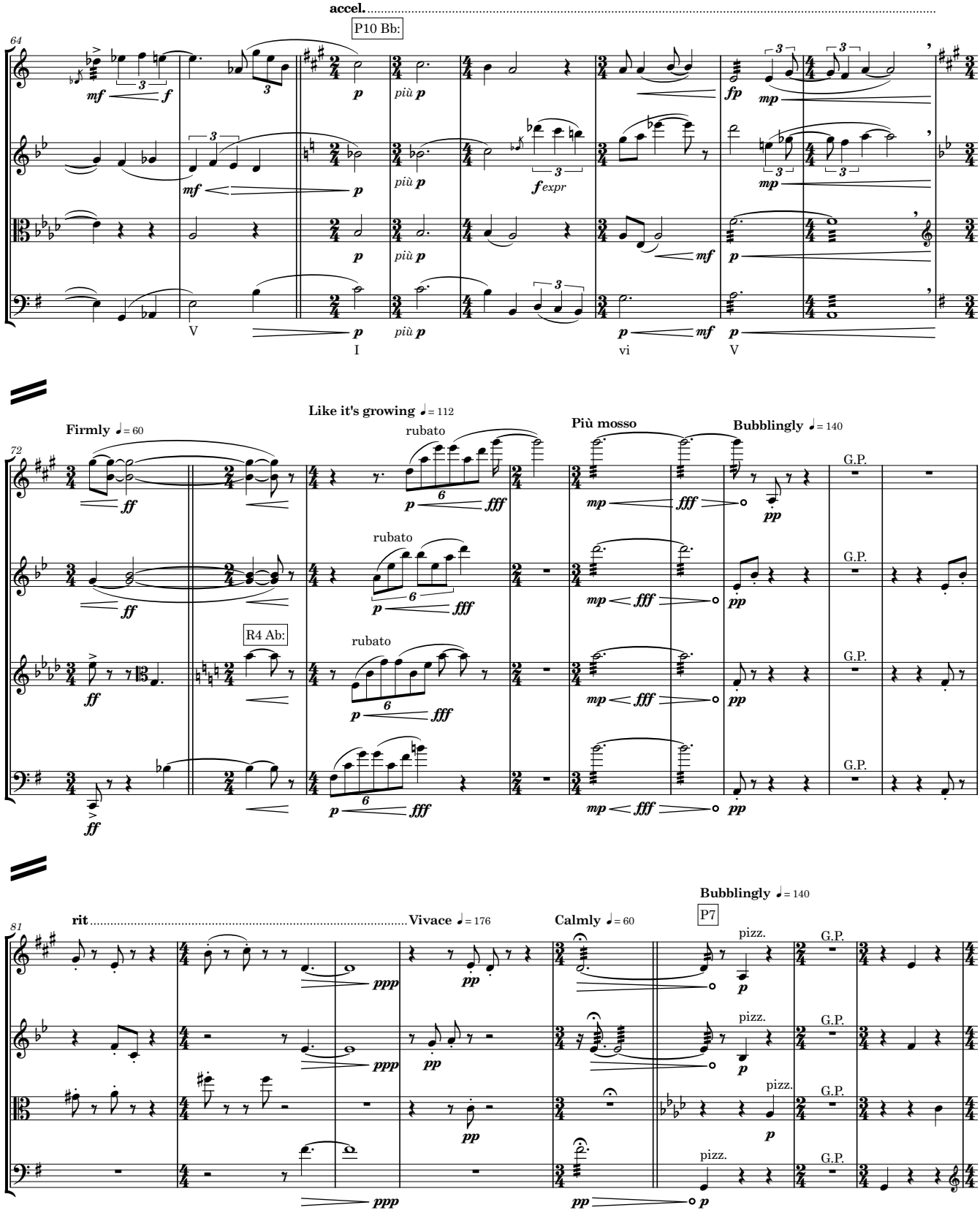
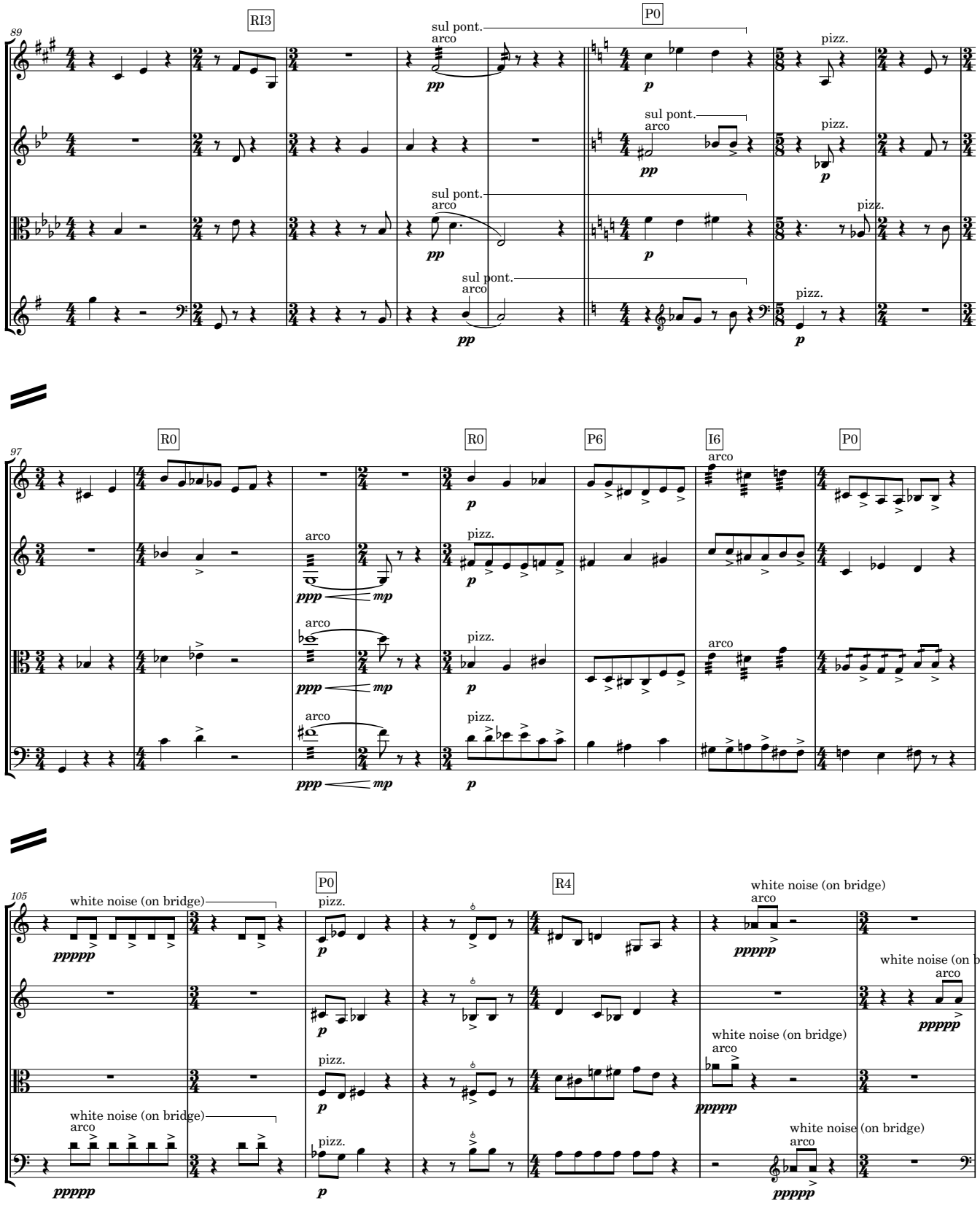
1. Polyphonic Serialism

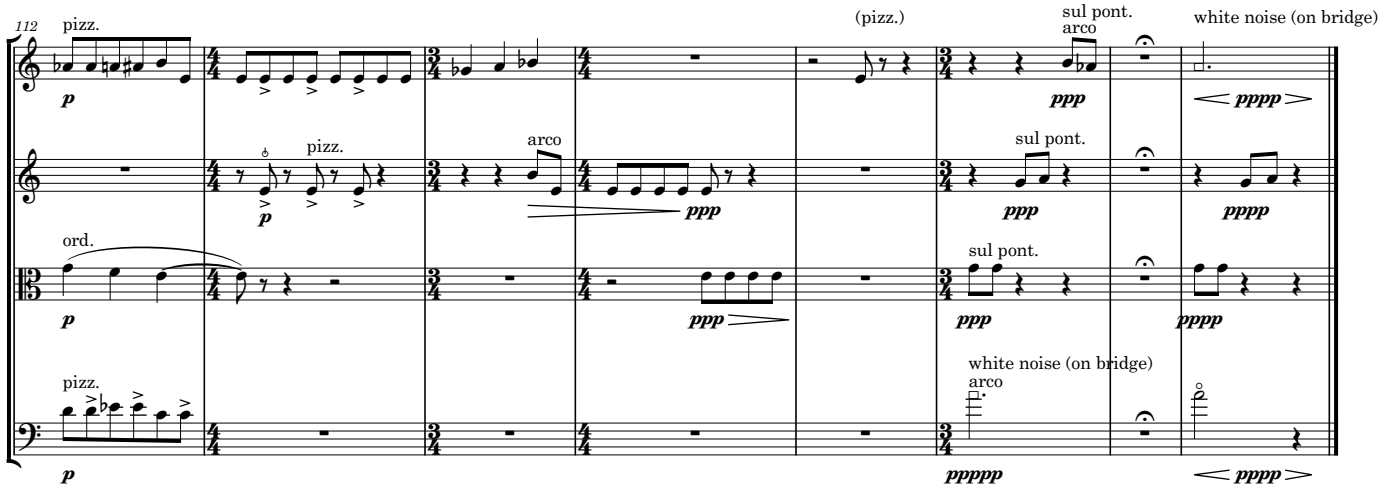



17
Ab:
25
rit
D:ii, Em
db:v, Abm
Molto adagio ♩= 60
Pressing forward, sadly ♩= 150
a: I0
Bb: I
pizz.
33
f: ii
E: I
Ab:
arco
pizz.
arco

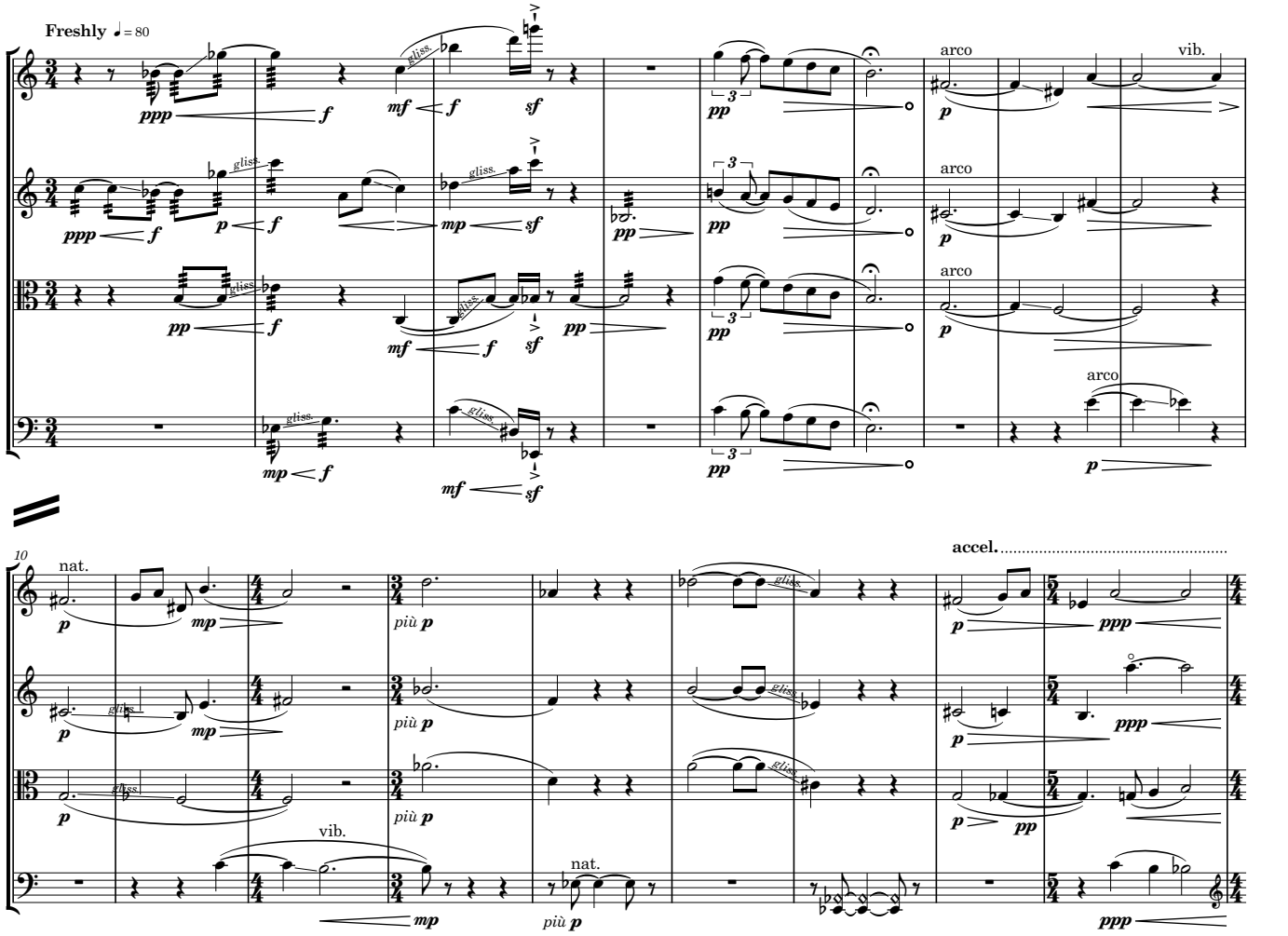

41
I6
vib.
nat.
V
IV
vi
49
rit.
accel
sül pont.
rubato
Slowly calm ♩= 90
P9 A:
Pressing forward ♩= 120
56
(sul pont.)
sul pont.
ord.
più mf
I

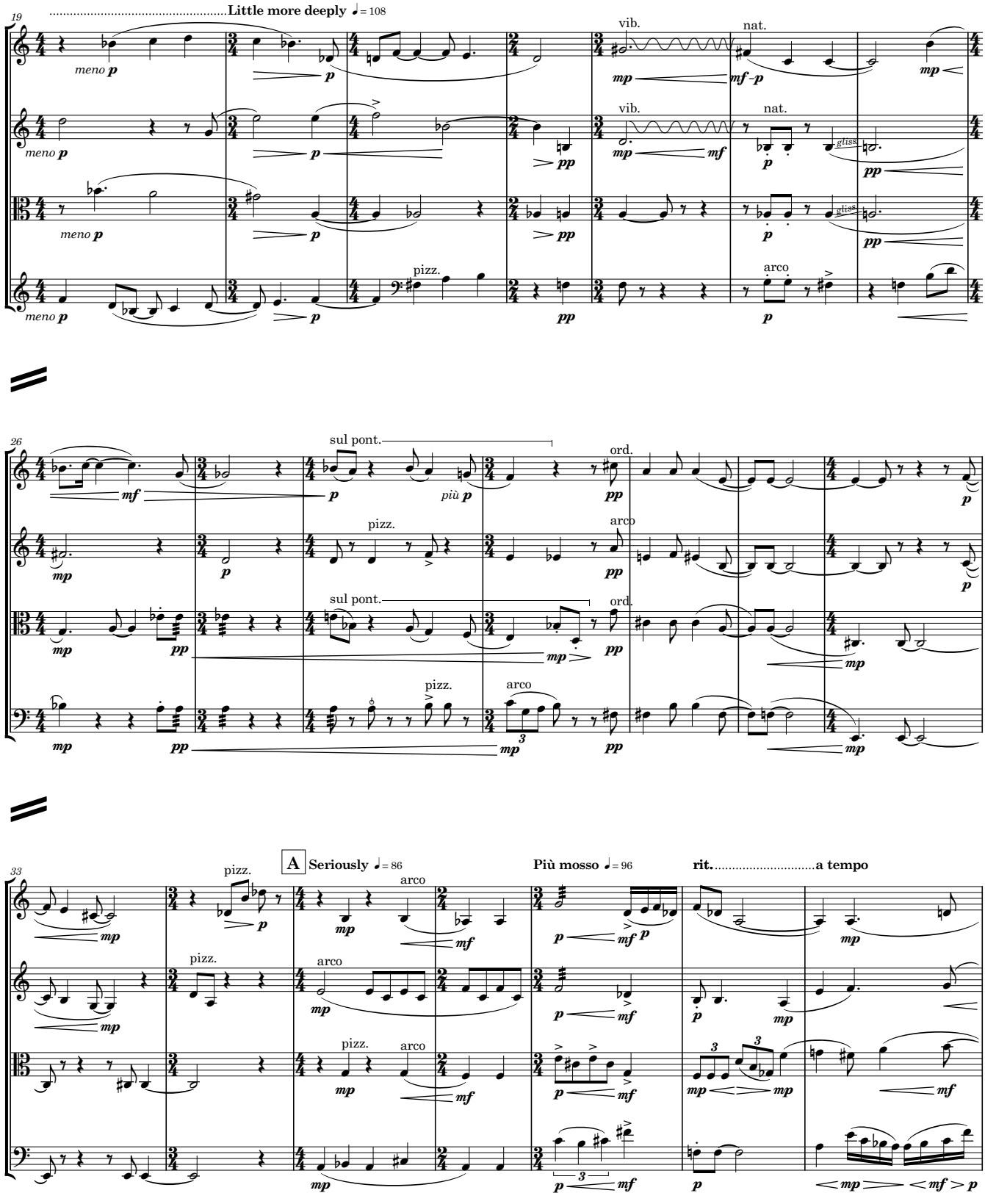

accel.
P10 Bb:
64
mf
f
p
più p
fp
mp
fexpr
V
I
vi
V
Like it's growing ♩= 112
Firmly ♩= 60
Più mosso
Bubblingly ♩= 140
72
ff
rubato
fff
R4 Ab:
G.P.
pp
rit
Vivace ♩= 176
Calmly ♩= 60
Bubblingly ♩= 140
P7
81
ppp
pizz.

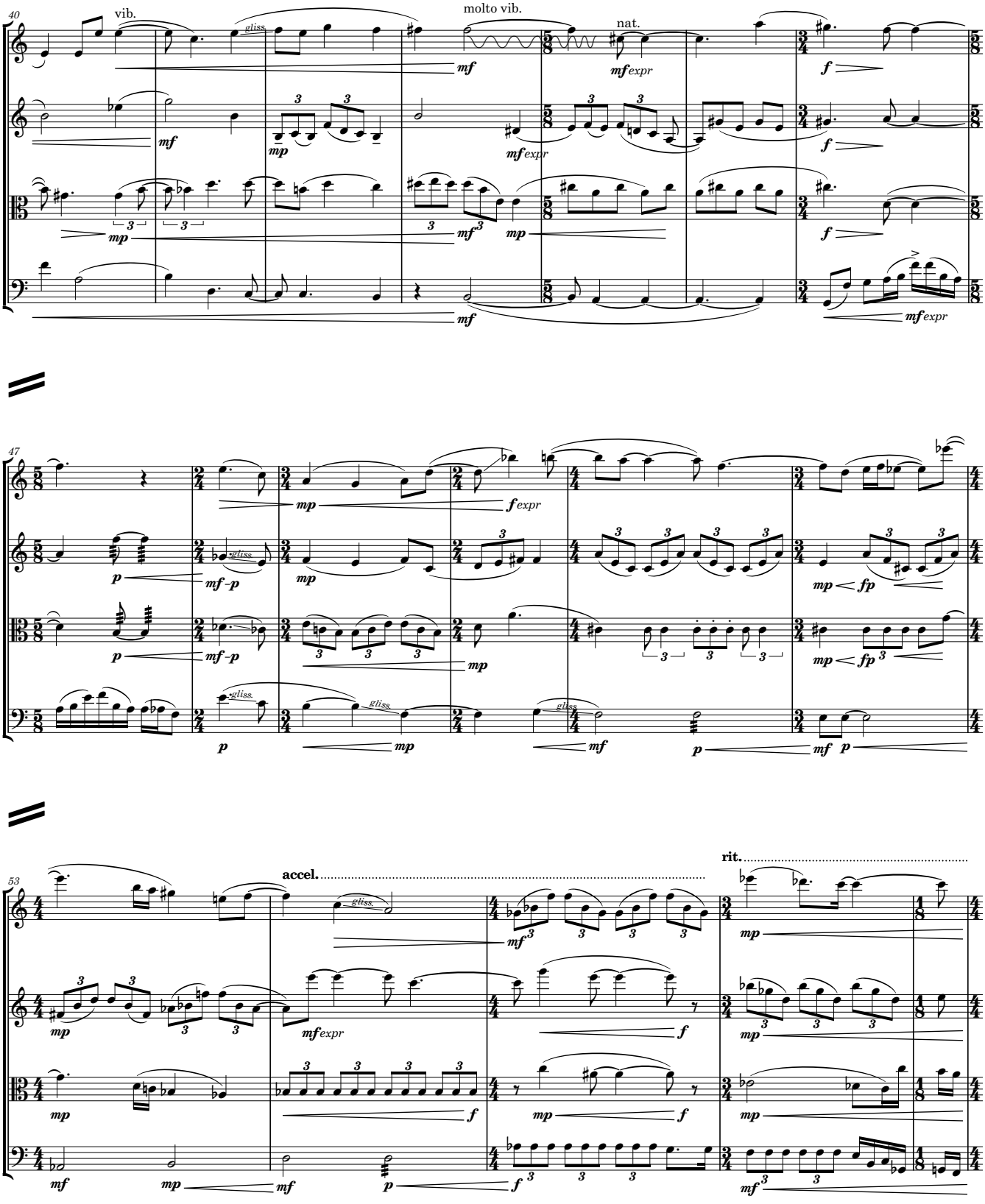

89
RI3
P0
sul pont.
arco
pizz.
pp
p
97
R0
R0
P6
I6
P0
ppp
mp
105
P0
R4
white noise (on bridge)
ppppp

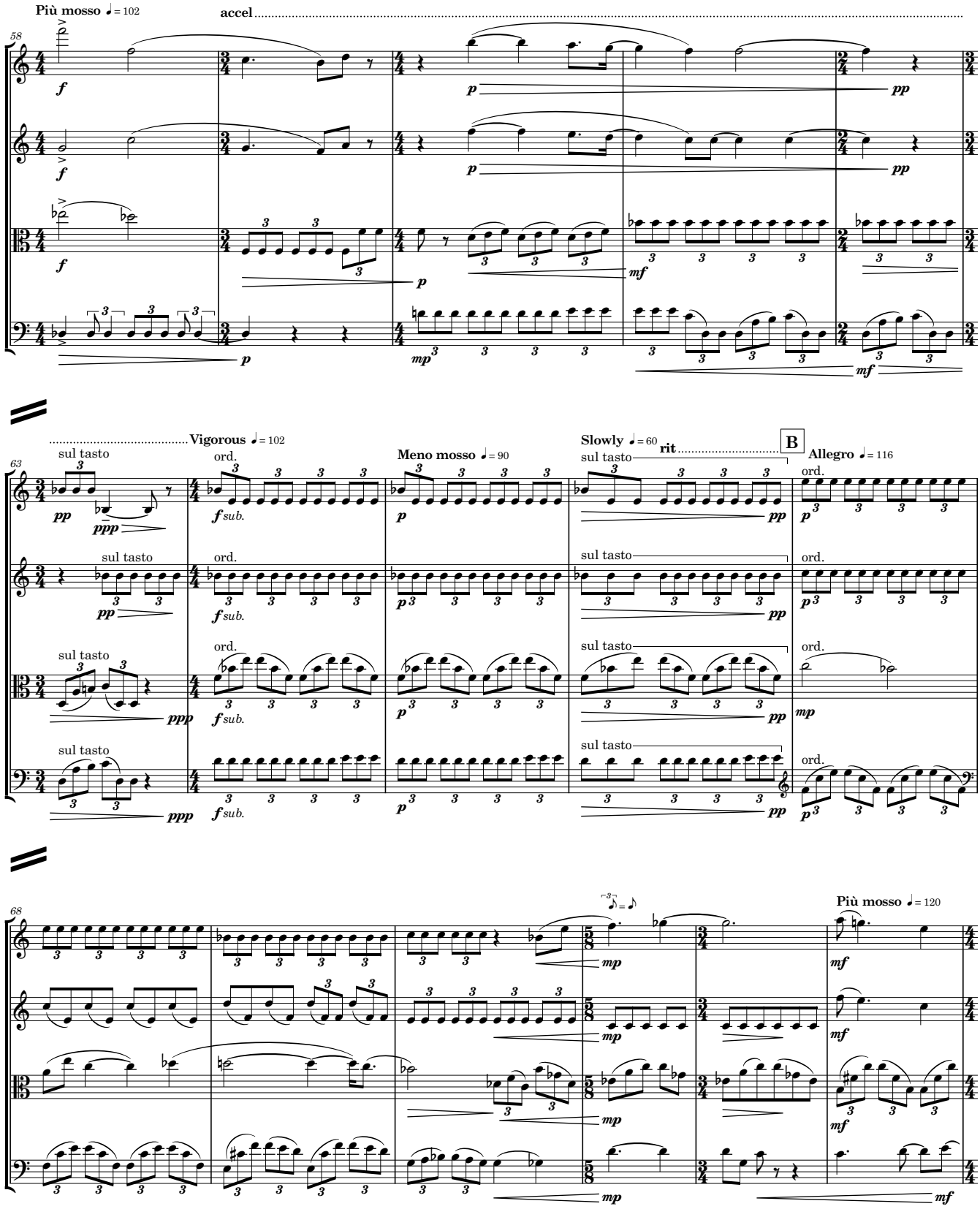


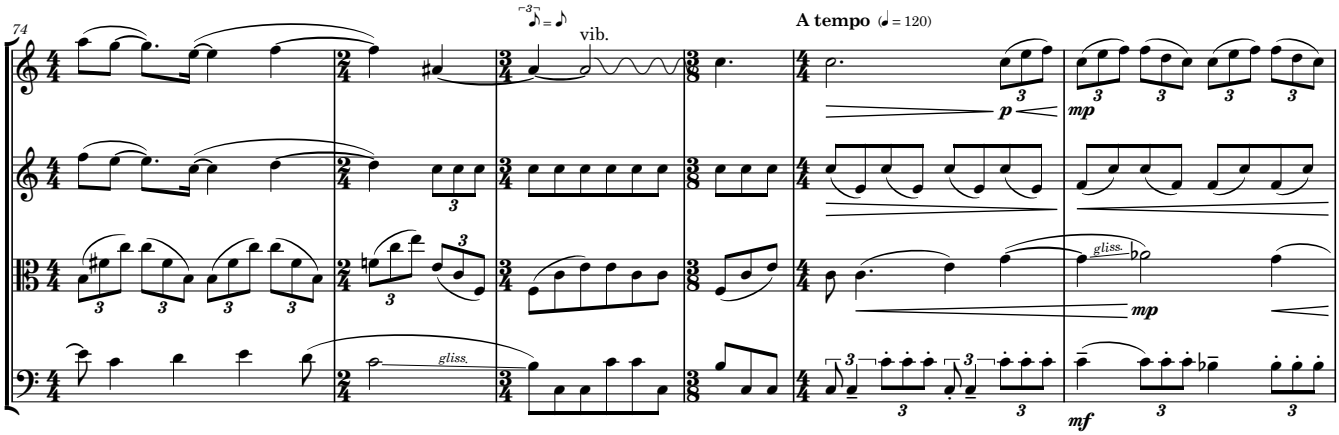
2. Minimal Free Form

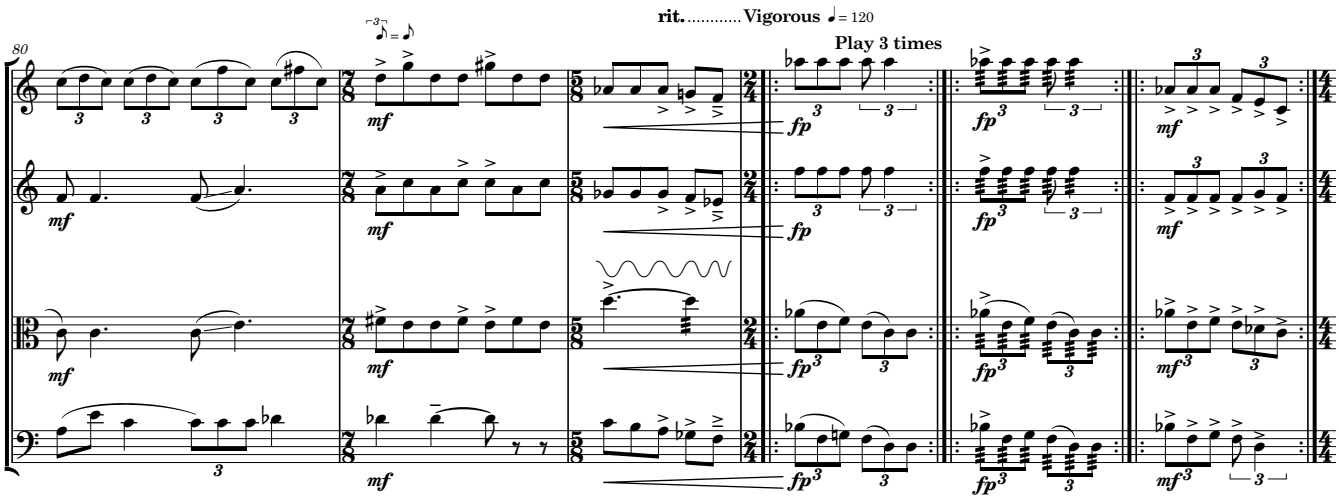


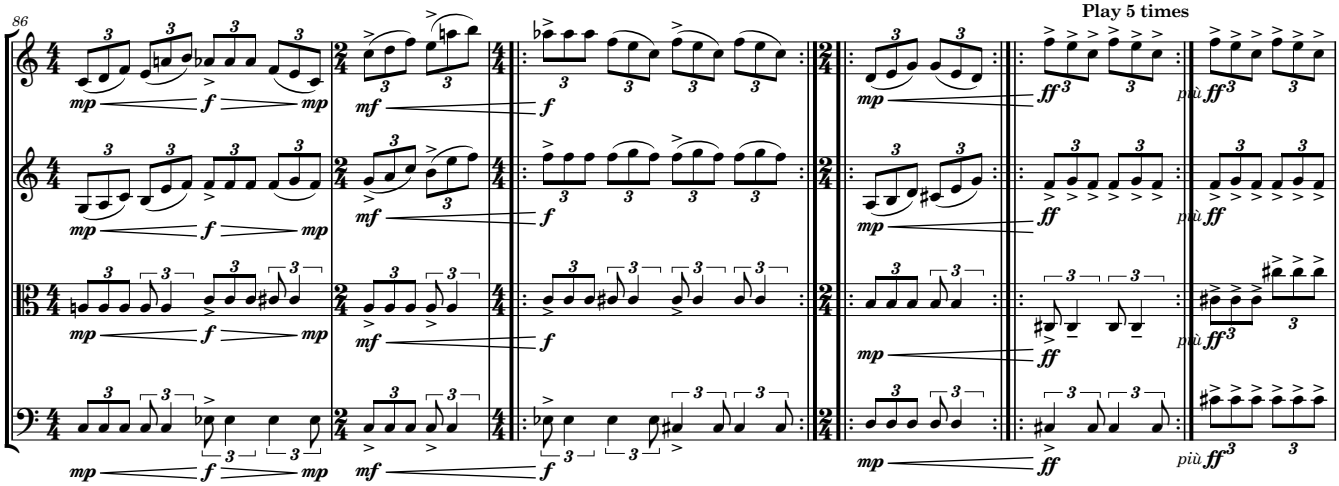

Little more deeply ♩= 108
meno p
vib.
nat.
gliss.
pizz.
arco
sul pont.
ord.
più p
A Seriously ♩= 86
Più mosso ♩= 96
rit.
a tempo

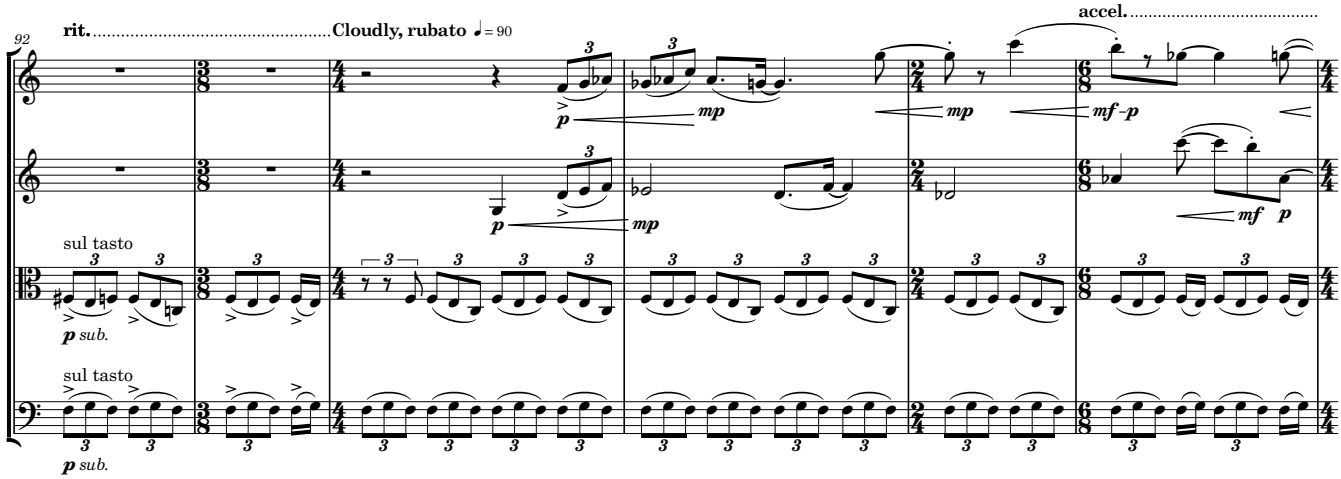

40
vib.
molto vib.
nat.
gliss.
47
accel.
rit.

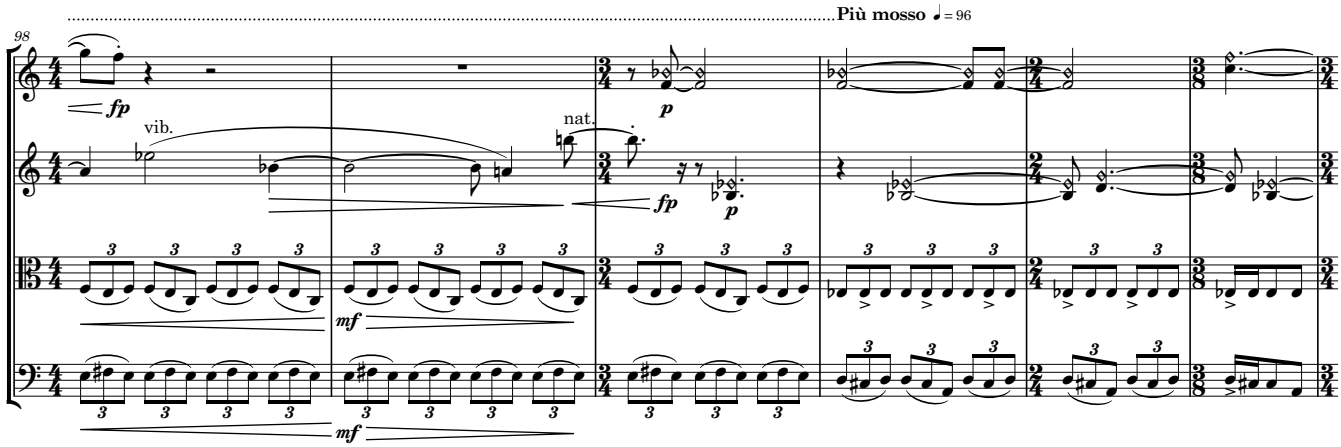

Più mosso ♩= 102
accel
58
Vigorous ♩= 102
Meno mosso ♩= 90
Slowly ♩= 60
rit
B
Allegro ♩= 116
63
sul tasto
ord.
Più mosso ♩= 120
68

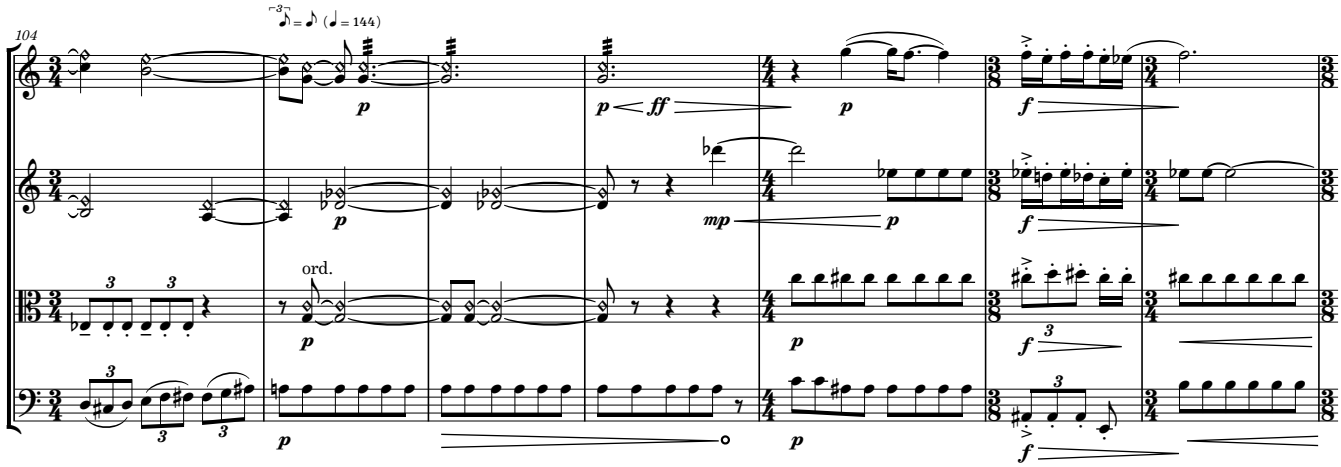

74
vib.
A tempo (♩= 120)
gliss.
gliss.

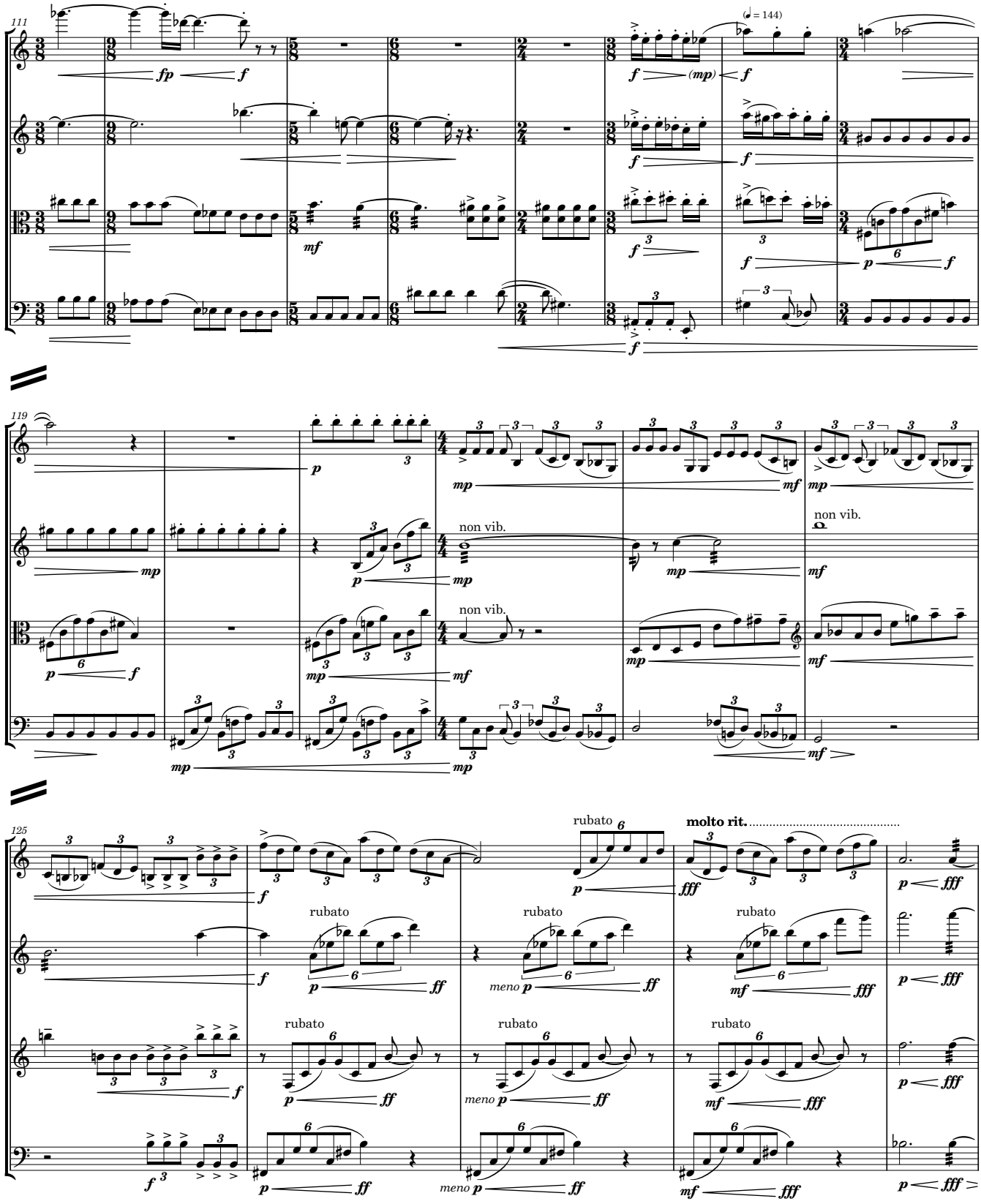

80
rit. ..... Vigorous ♩= 120
Play 3 times

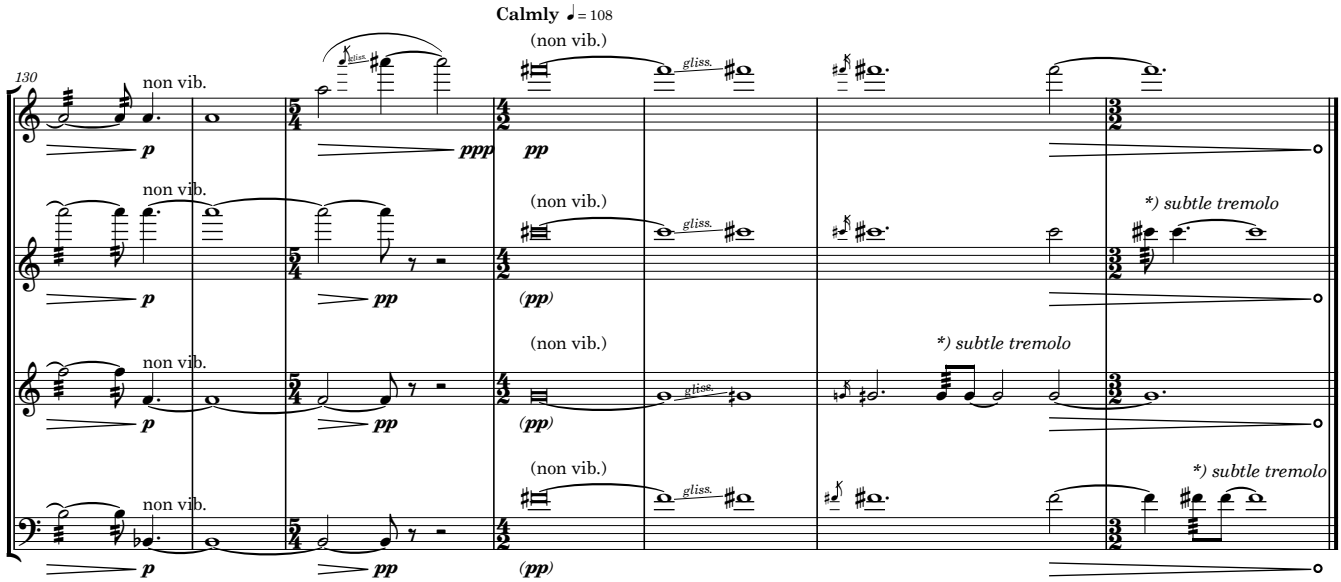

86
Play 5 times
più


92
rit.
Cloudly, rubato ♩= 90
accel.
sul tasto
p sub.
sul tasto
p sub.

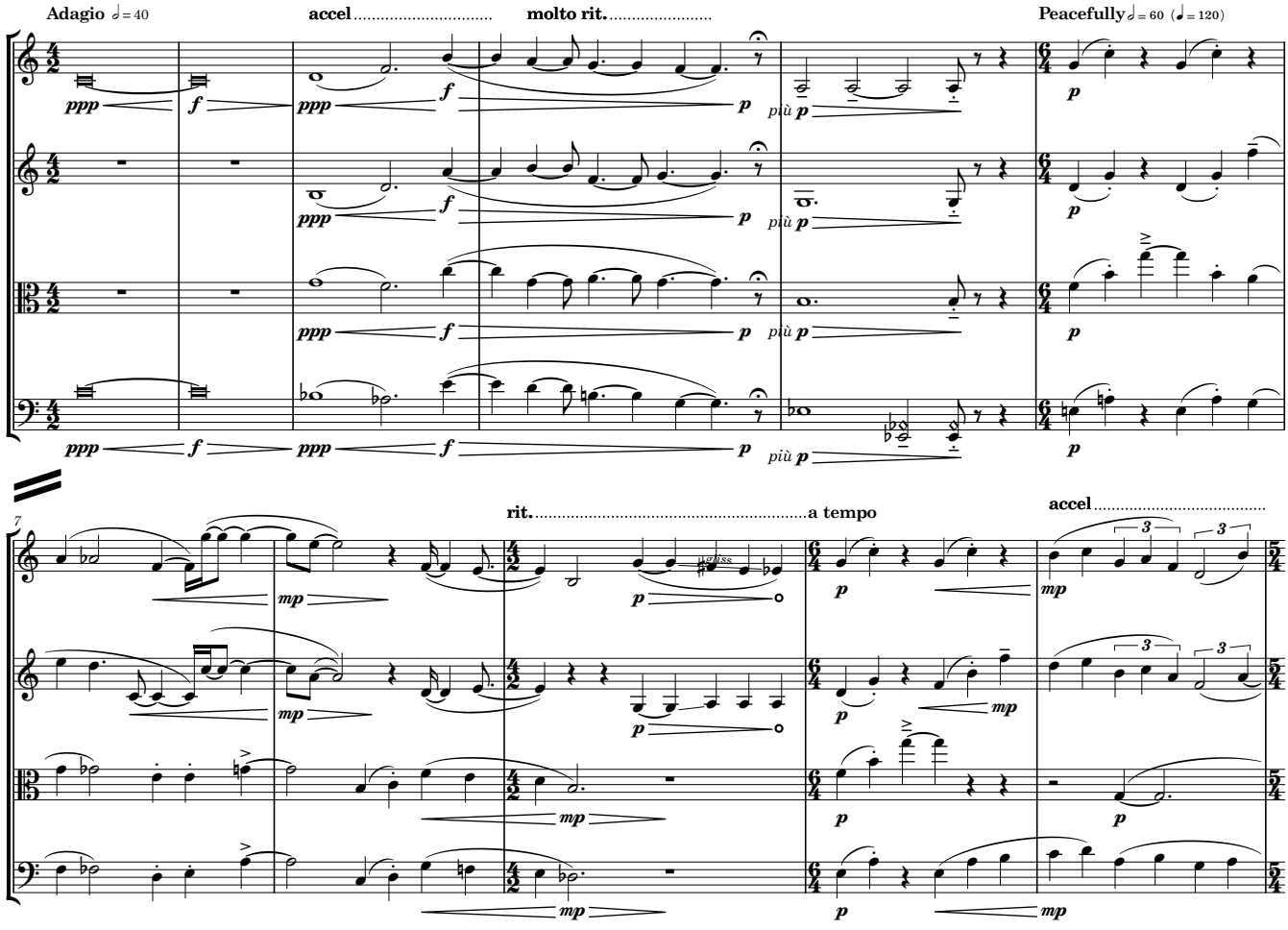

98
Più mosso ♩= 96
vib.
nat.

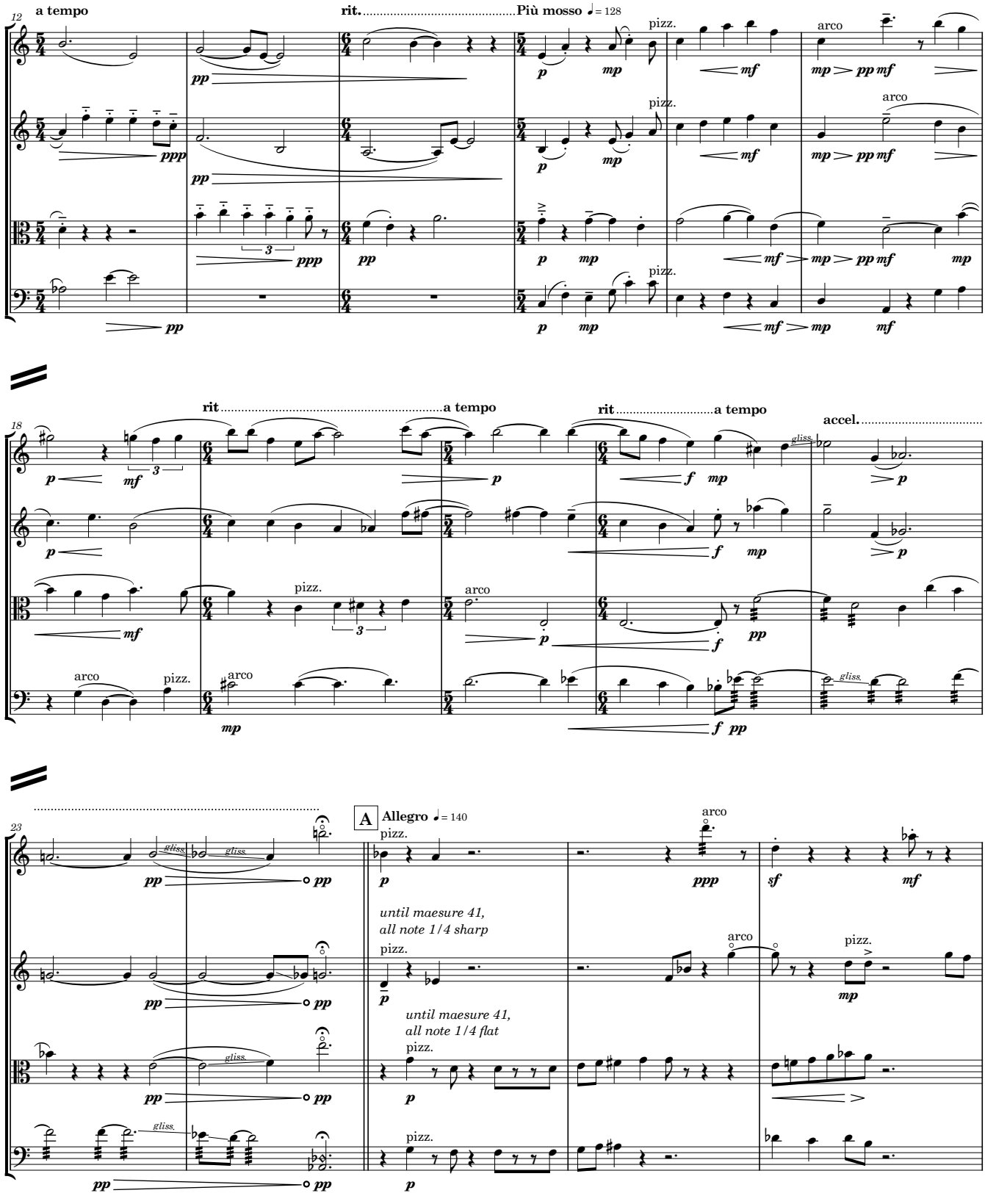

104
ord.

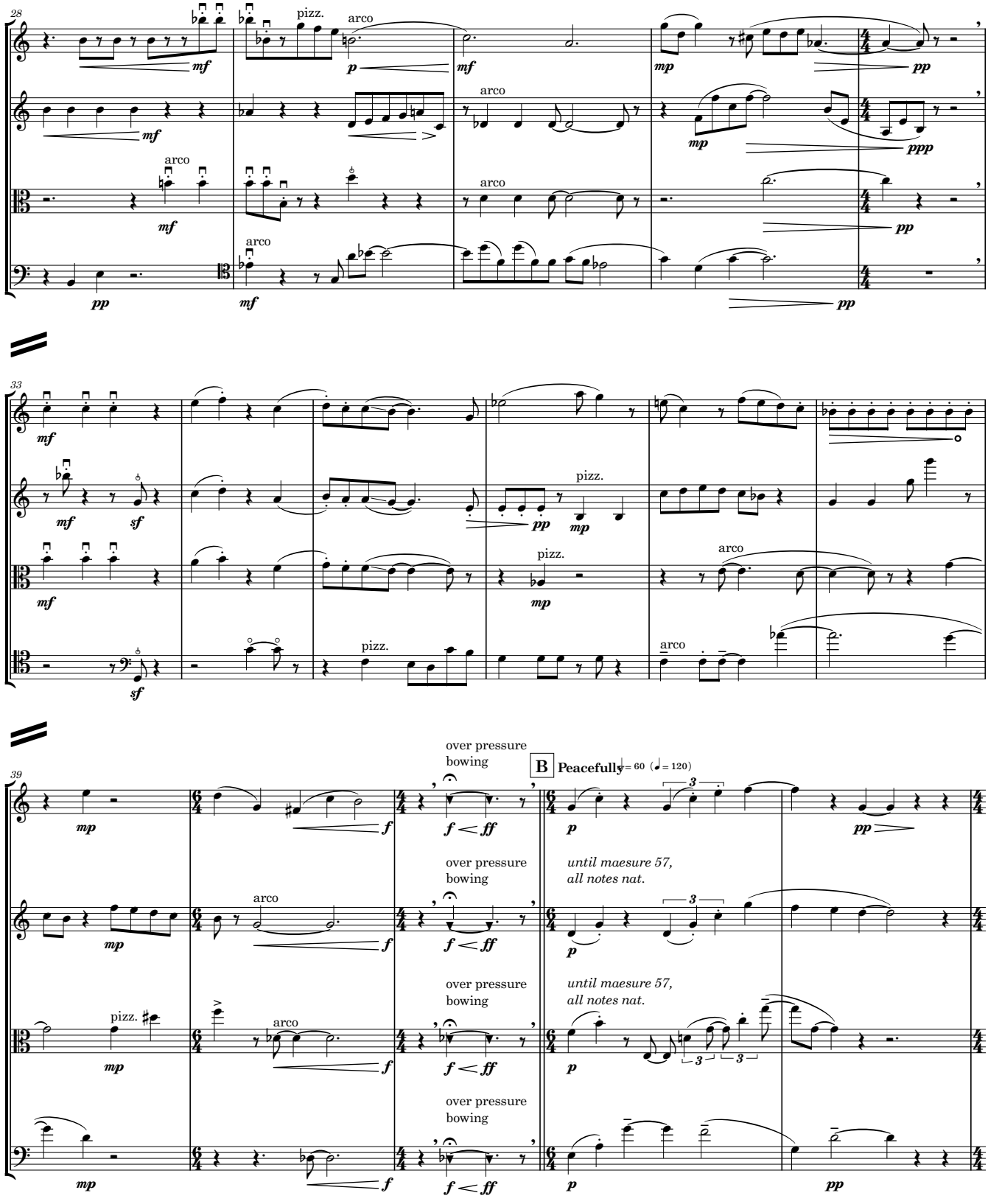

111
(♩ = 144)
119
non vib.
non vib.
non vib.
125
rubato
molto rit.
meno

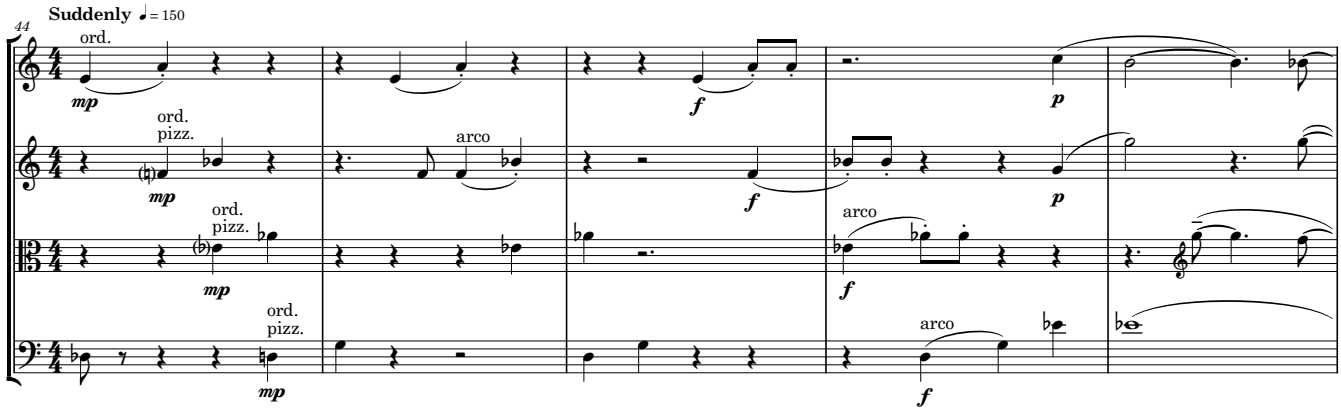


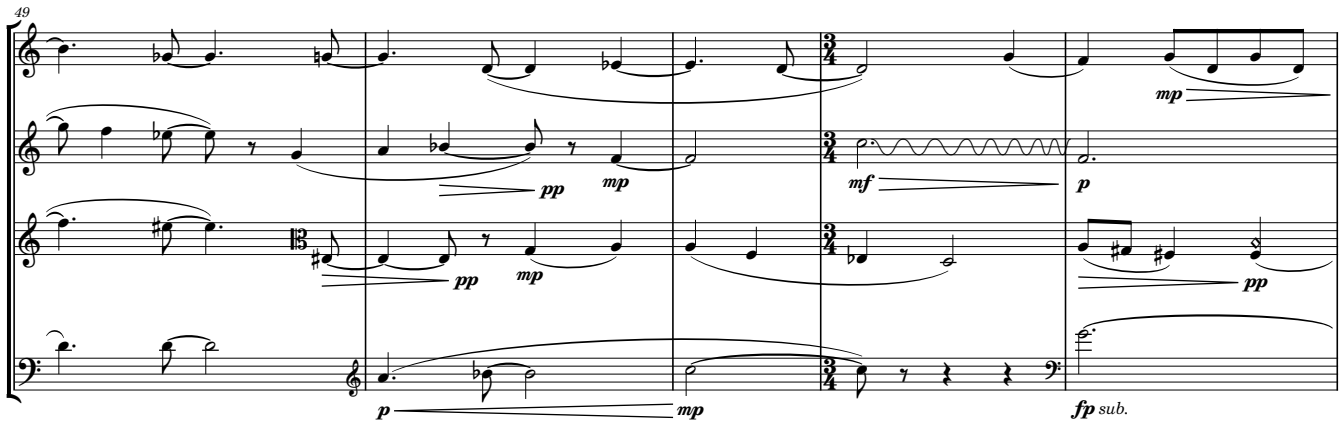
3. Microtonality

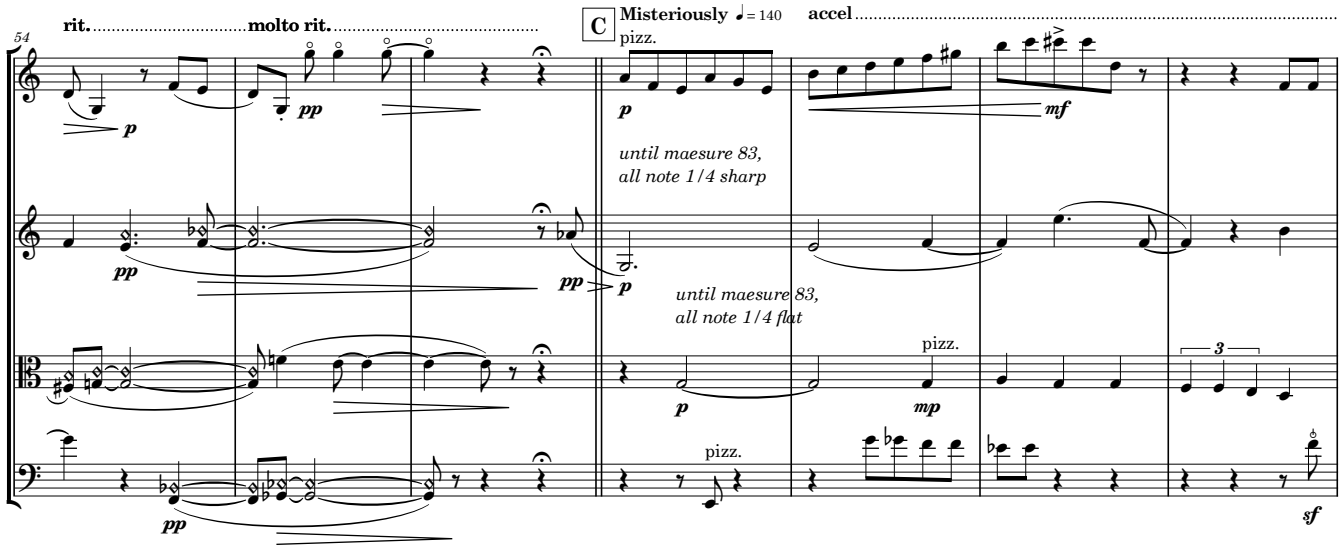


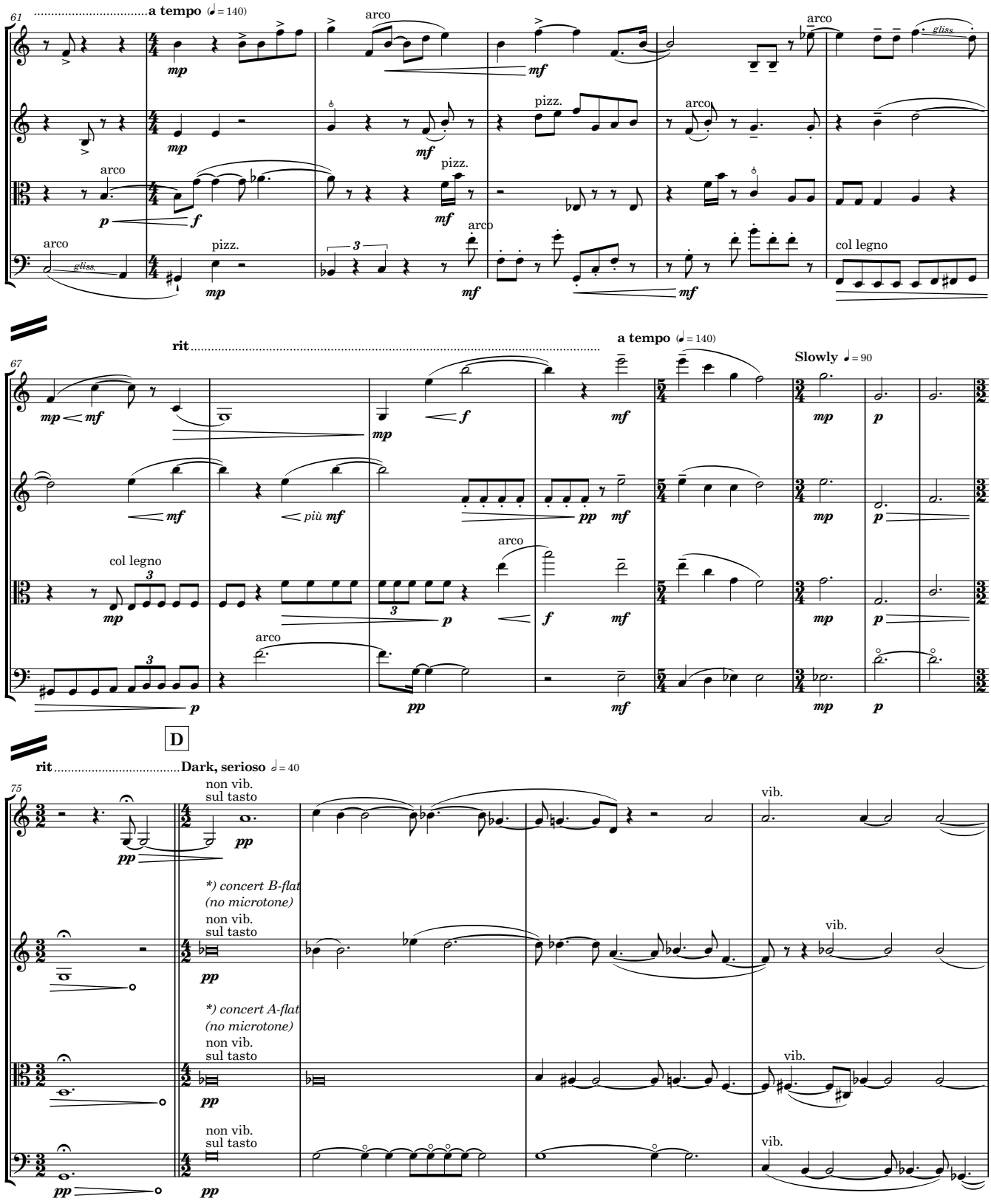

12
a tempo
rit.
Più mosso ♩= 128
pizz.
arco
18
rit
a tempo
rit
a tempo
accel.
gliss.
23
A
Allegro ♩= 140
until maesure 41,
all note 1/4 sharp
until maesure 41,
all note 1/4 flat

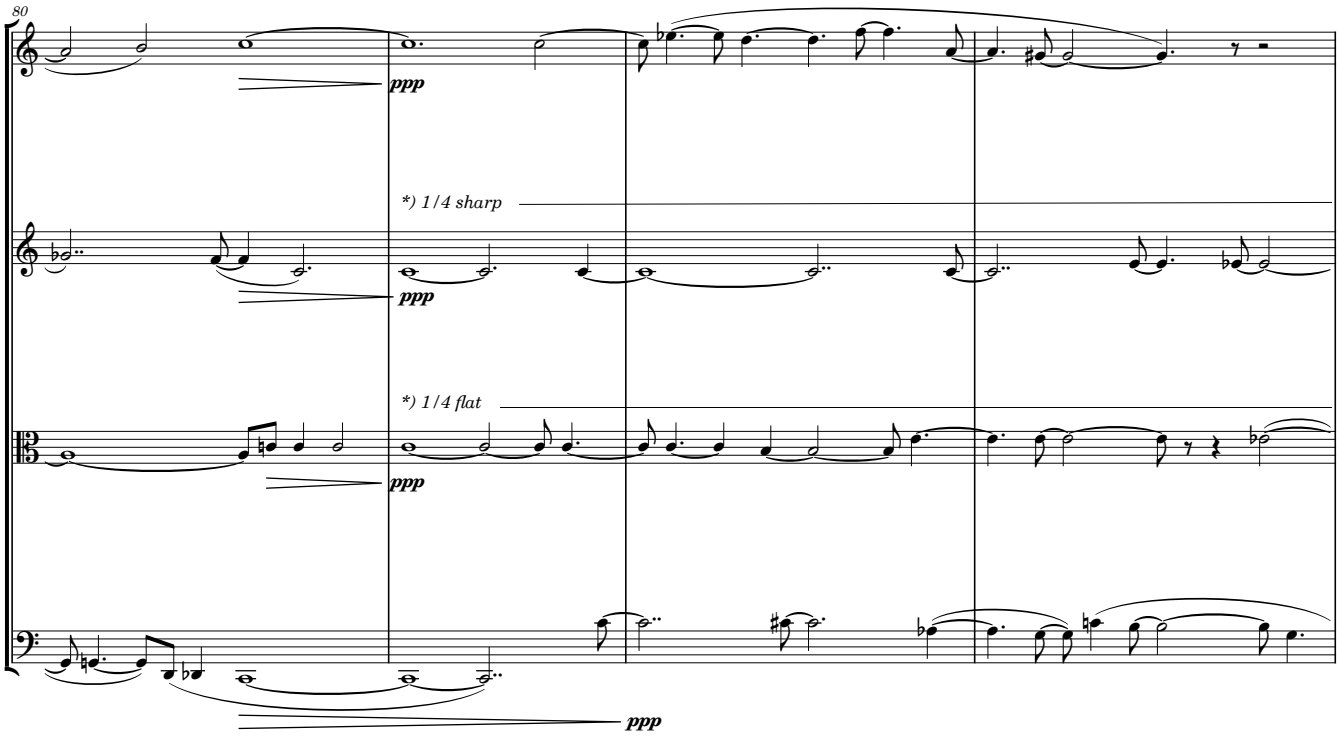

28
pizz.
arco
33
pizz.
39
over pressure bowing
B
Peacefully
= 60 (= 120)
until maesure 57, all notes nat.

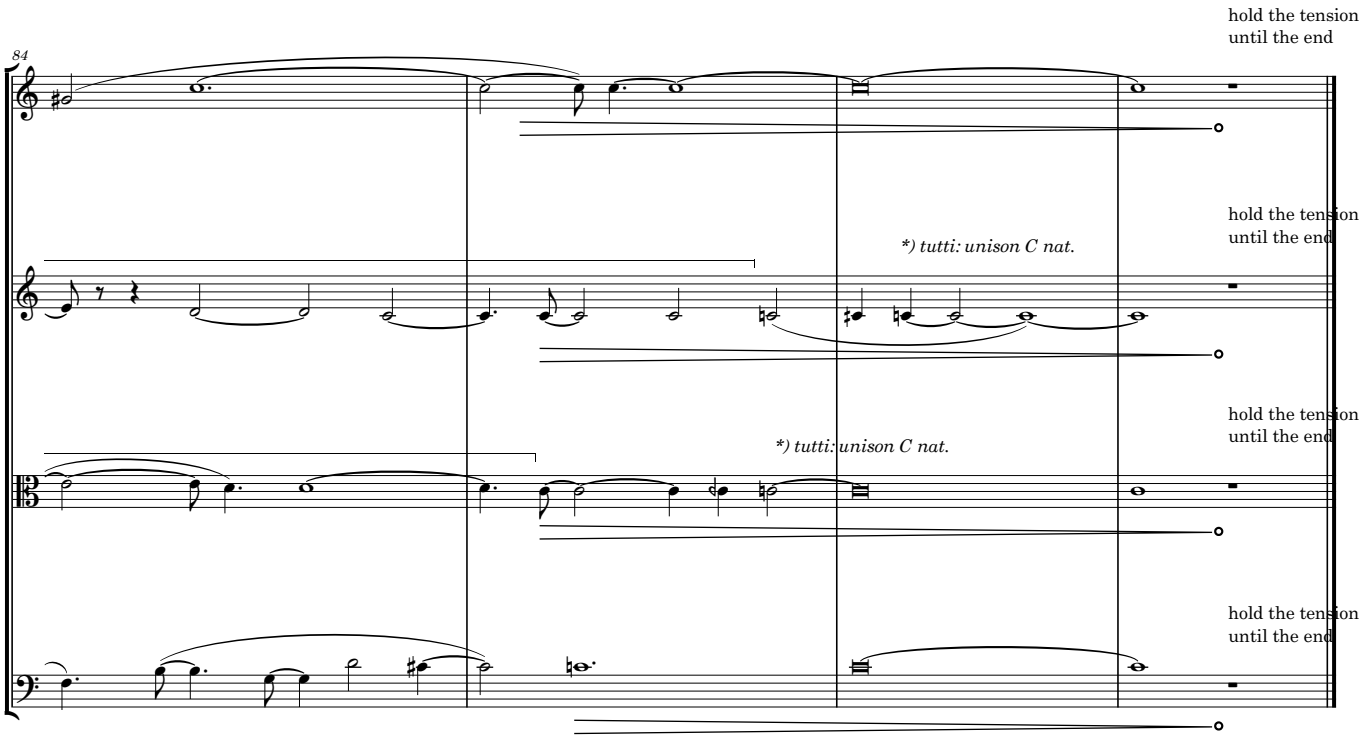

44
Suddenly ♩= 150
ord.
mp
ord.
pizz.
mp
arco
f
p
ord.
pizz.
mp
arco
f
p
ord.
pizz.
mp
arco
f


49
mp
pp
mp
mf
p
pp
p
mp
fp sub.


54
rit.
molto rit.
C
Misteriously ♩= 140
accel
pizz.
p
mf
until maesure 83,
all note 1/4 sharp
pp
pp
p
until maesure 83,
all note 1/4 flat
pizz.
p
mp
3
pizz.
pp
sf


61
a tempo (♩= 140)
arco
pizz.
gliss.
col legno
67
rit
a tempo (♩= 140)
Slowly ♩= 90
più mf
D
rit
Dark, serioso 𝅗𝅥= 40
75
non vib.
sul tasto
vib.
*) concert B-flat
(no microtone)
*) concert A-flat
(no microtone)


80
ppp
*) 1/4 sharp
ppp
*) 1/4 flat
ppp
ppp


84
hold the tension
until the end
hold the tension
until the end
*) tutti: unison C nat.
hold the tension
until the end
*) tutti: unison C nat.
hold the tension
until the end