June 5, 2022

Alexander Wu

SCORE

Rework:
Variations on a Theme by Monk

for string quartet

Duration: c. 8′

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Program Note

The theme on which the variations are based comes from a lesser-played jazz standard titled “Work” by the great jazz pianist Thelonious Monk. Somewhat unusually, Monk only ever recorded it once, which was released in a 1956 compilation album *Thelonious Monk and Sonny Rollins*. Although Monk seemed to have canned the tune, the more I played and improvised on it, the more I became enchanted by its eccentric melody, colorful harmony, and unpredictable rhythm. Inspired by both Monk’s interpretation and my own improvisational practice, I felt compelled to further develop and transform these improvisatory ideas in a different setting, and this string quartet became a perfect space for my explorations. The four variations in this piece allude to and sometimes break musical archetypes of the past. The outer two, titled “Head In” and “Head Out,” pay homage to the forms commonly found in bebop and free jazz; the inner two, titled “Passacaglia” and “Fugue,” follow and extend the Baroque forms.

Performance Notes

All BPM markings are approximate.
The accuracy of metric modulations should take precedence over the exact BPM.

All grace notes should be played on the beat.

Overpressure.

□ Normal pressure.

Ricochet.

pp. 10–12 (var. 4) An arrow indicates a cue, and a dotted line indicates a coordinated entry. Try not to coordinate when an arrow or dotted line is not present.

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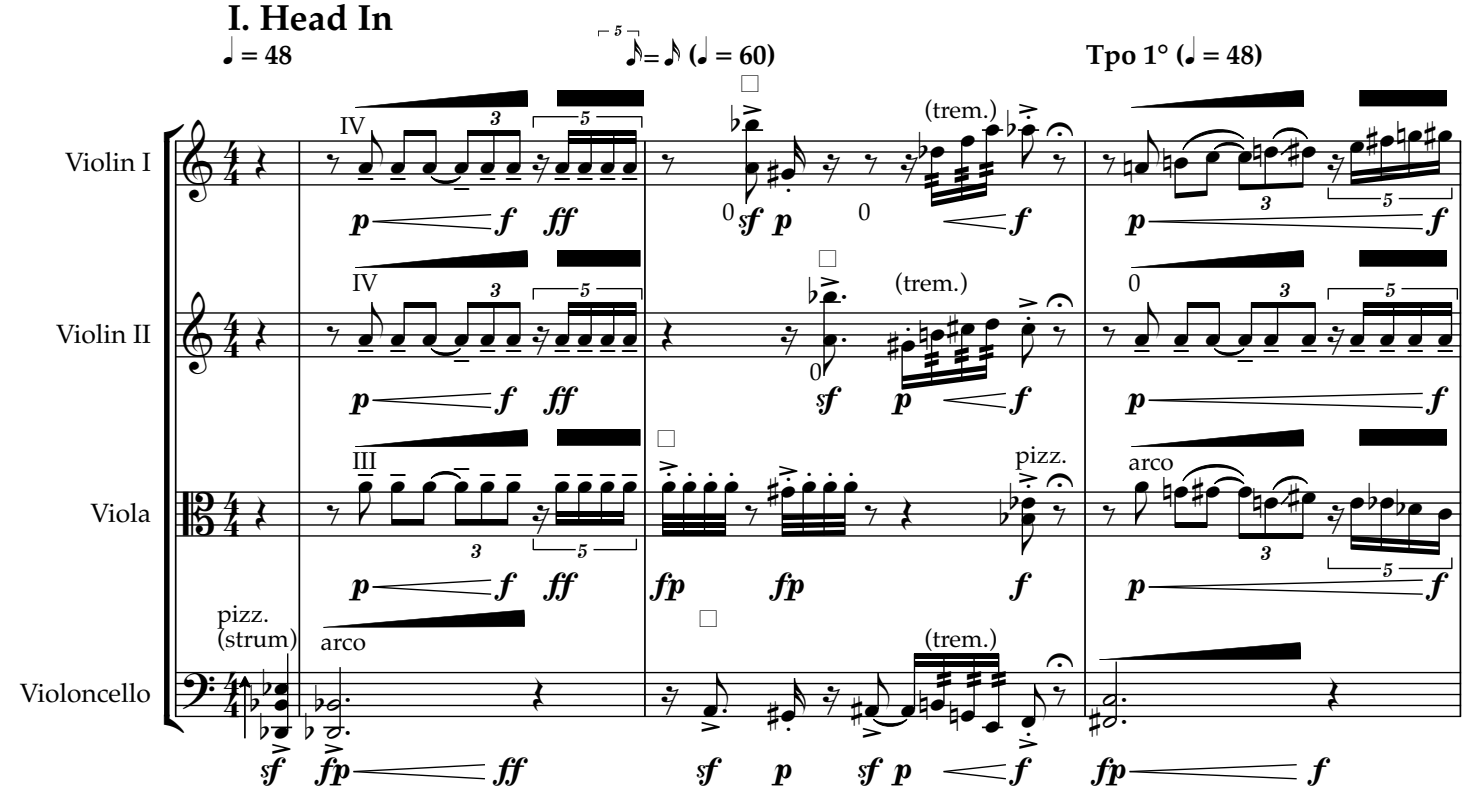
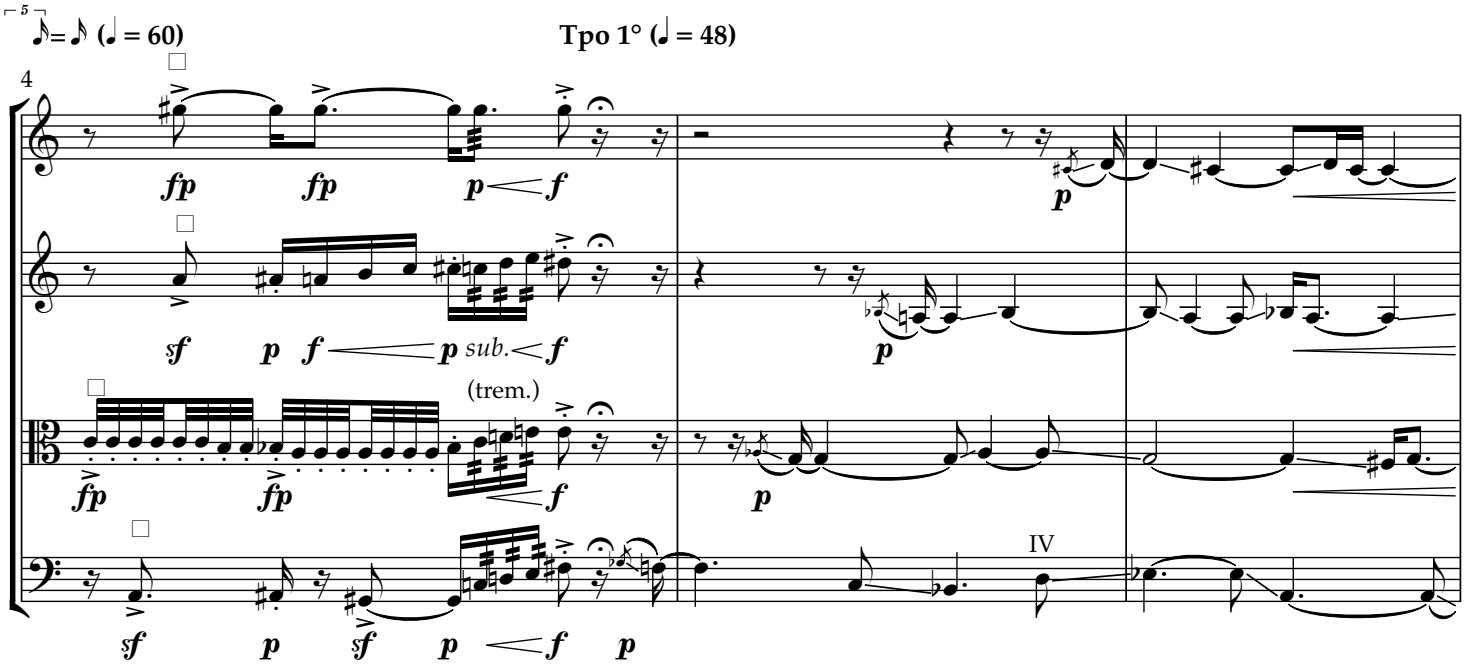
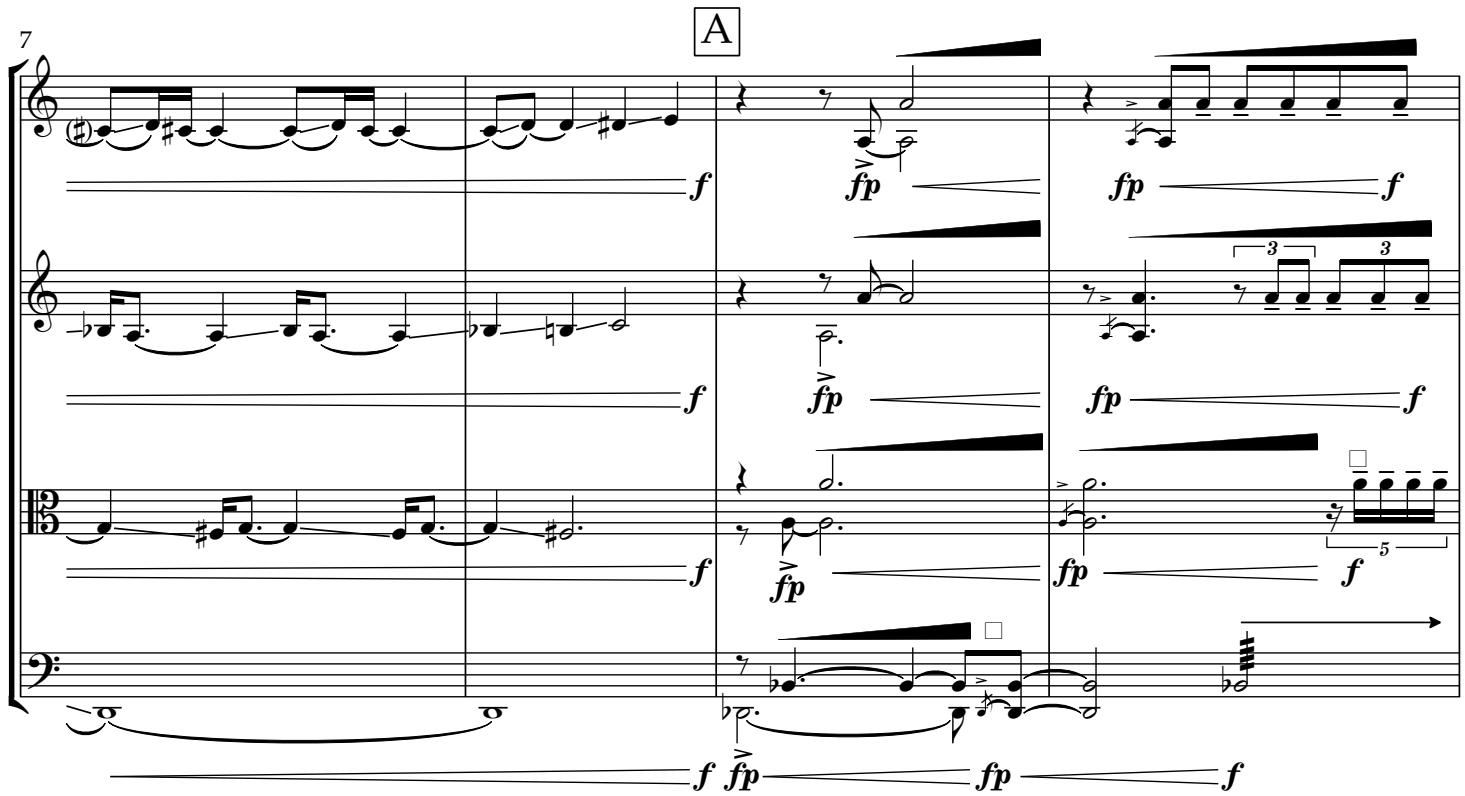
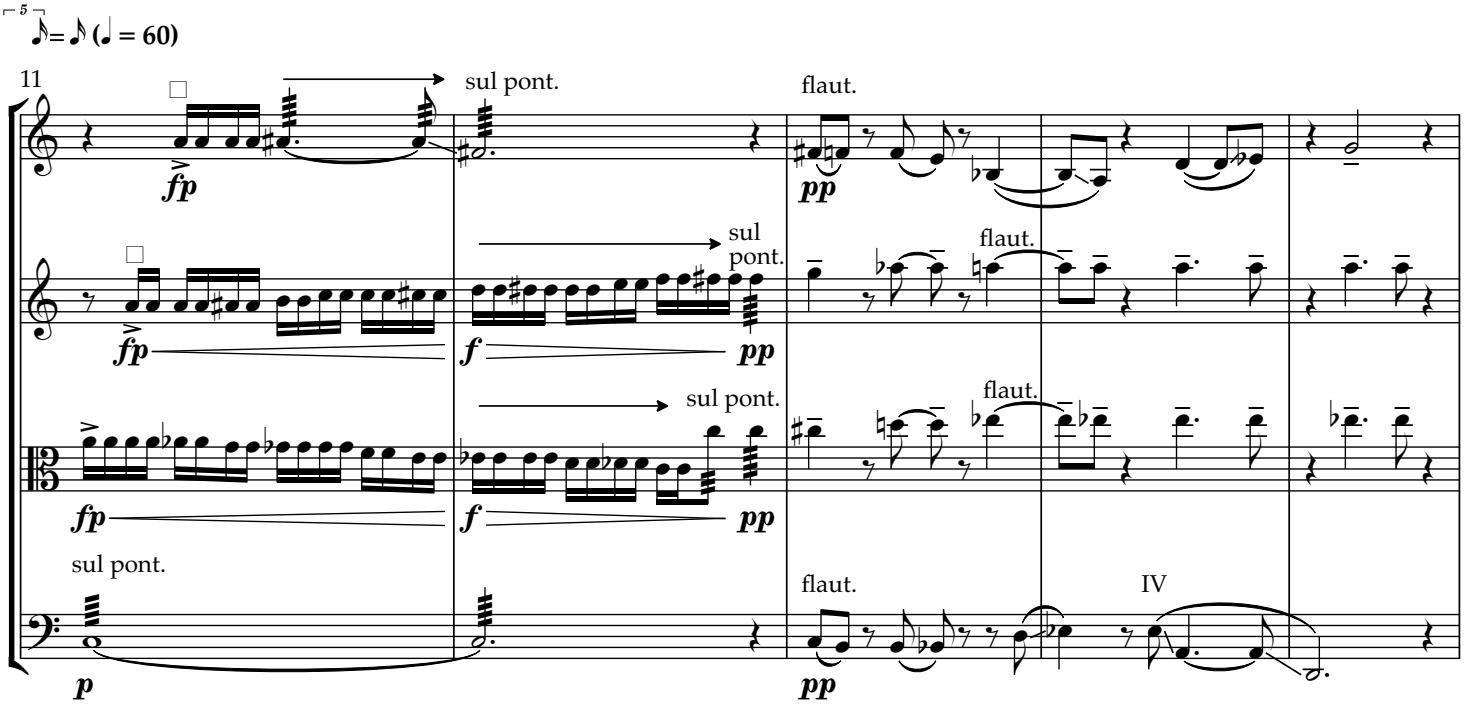
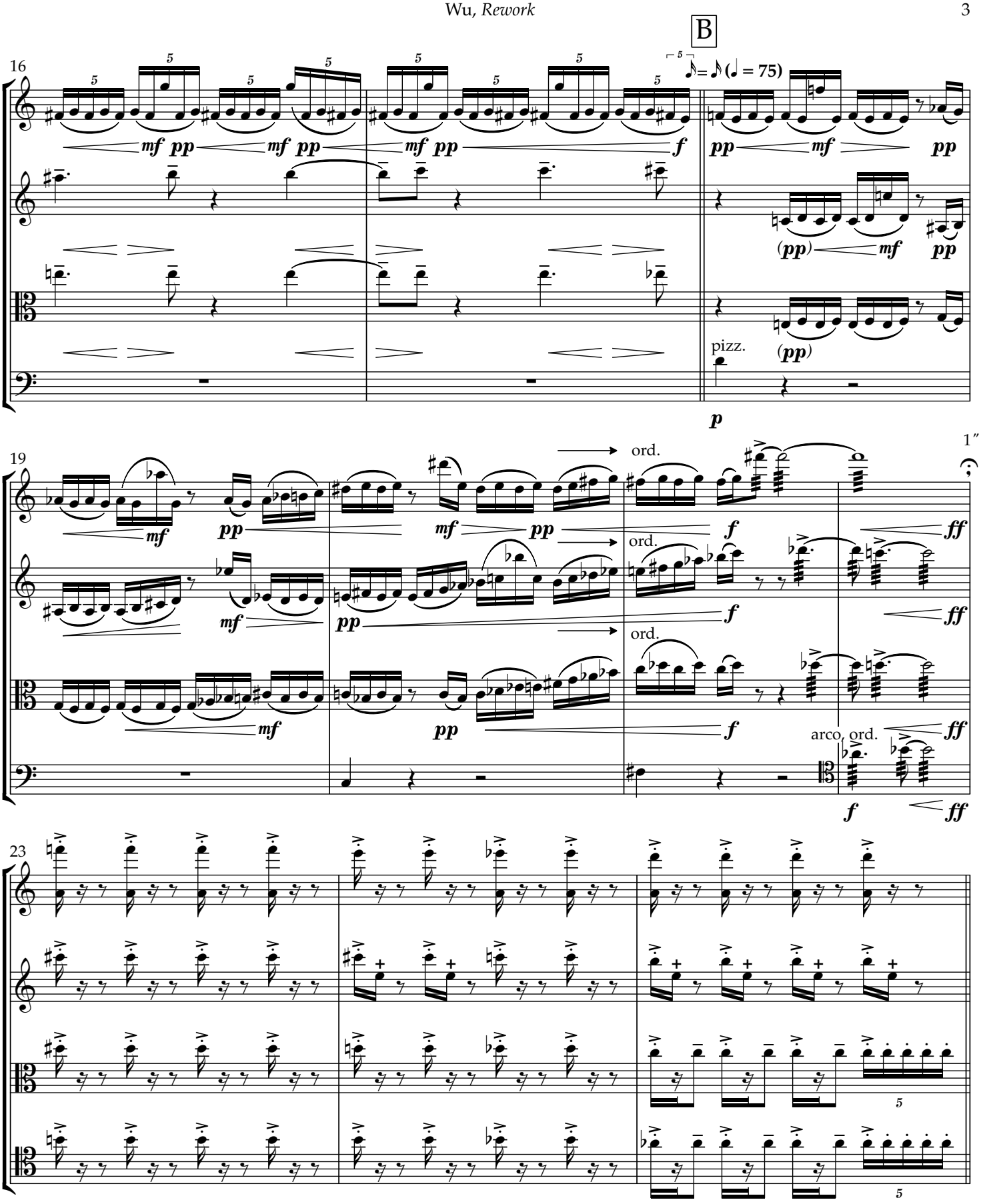
I. Head In

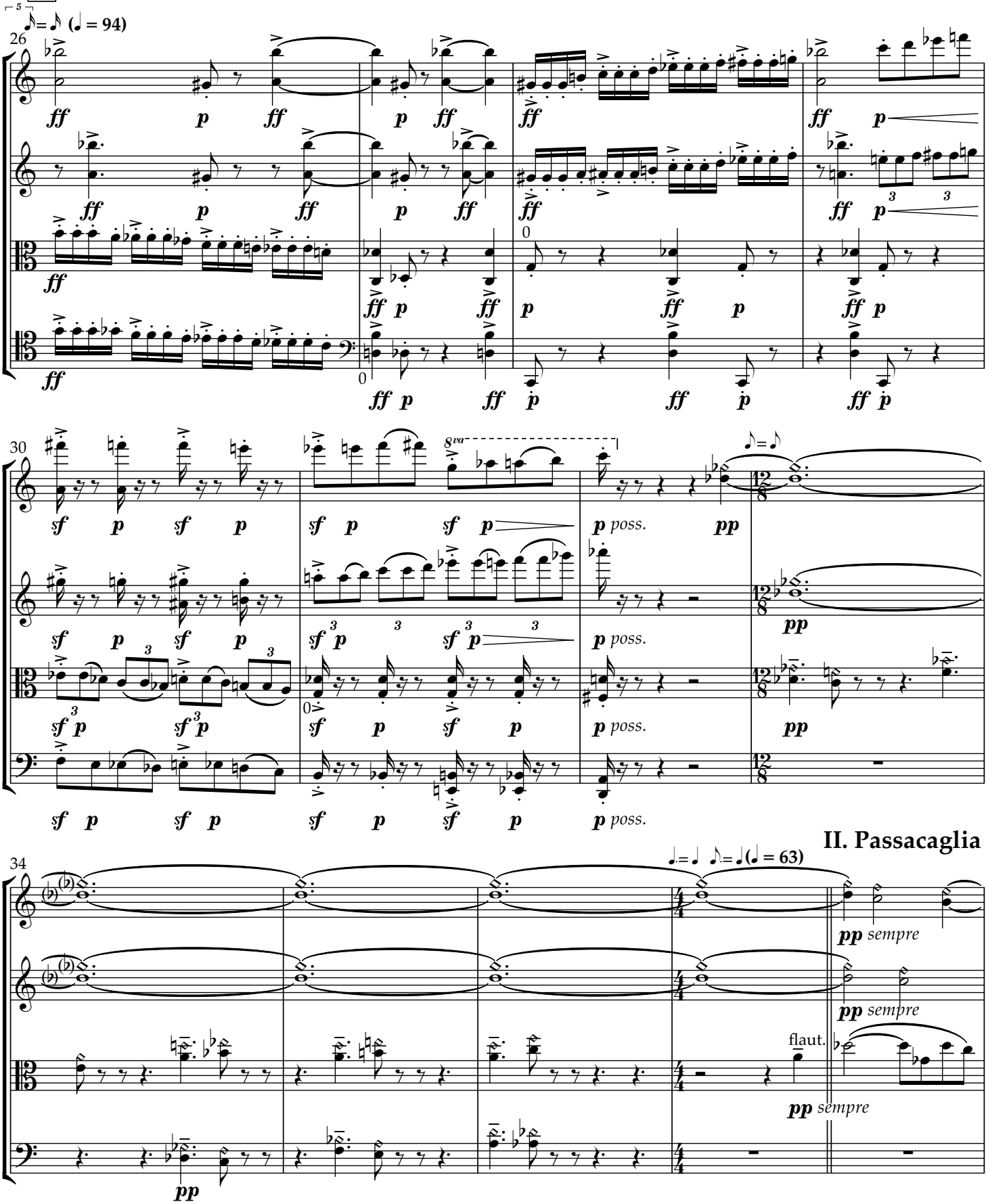


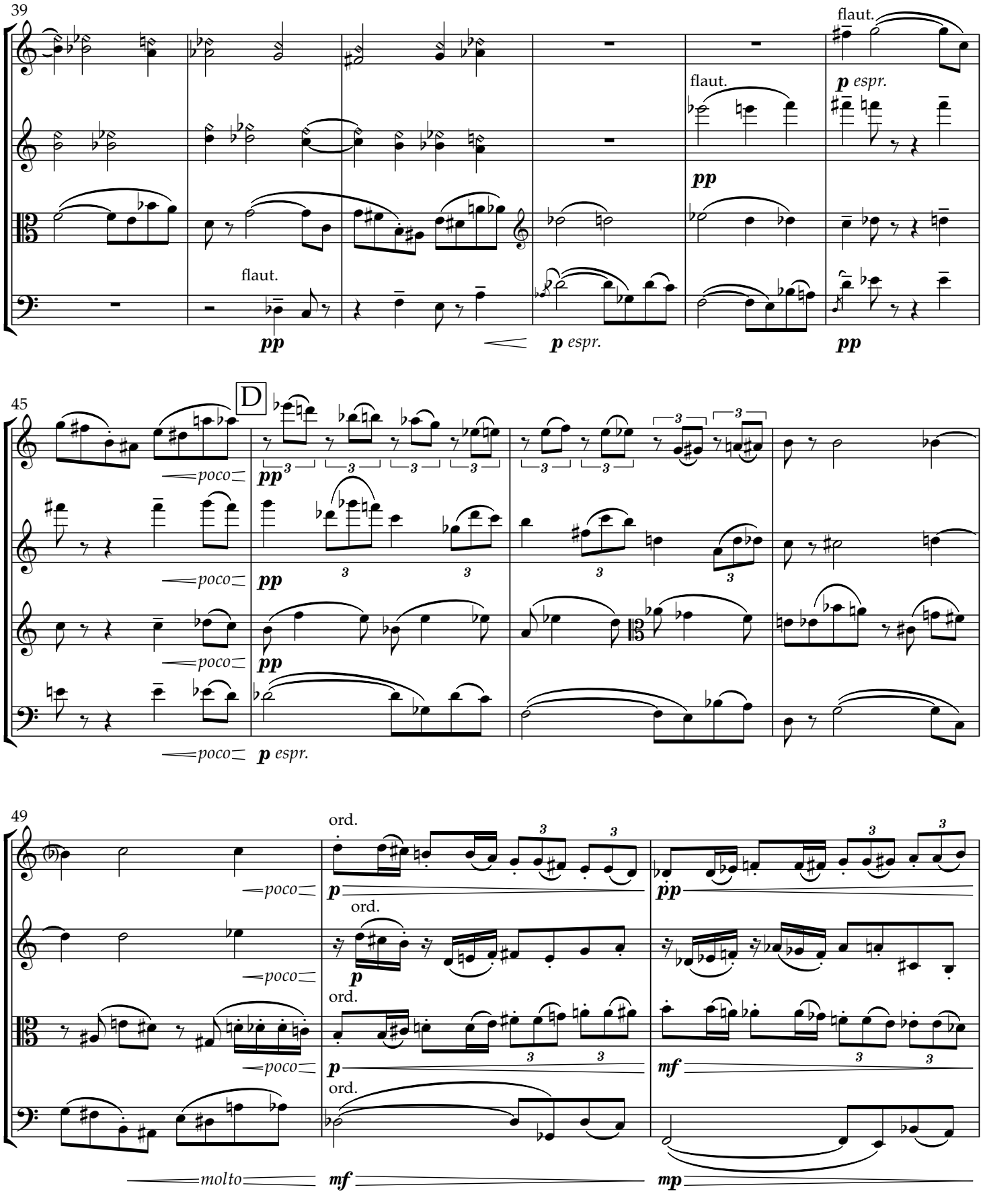


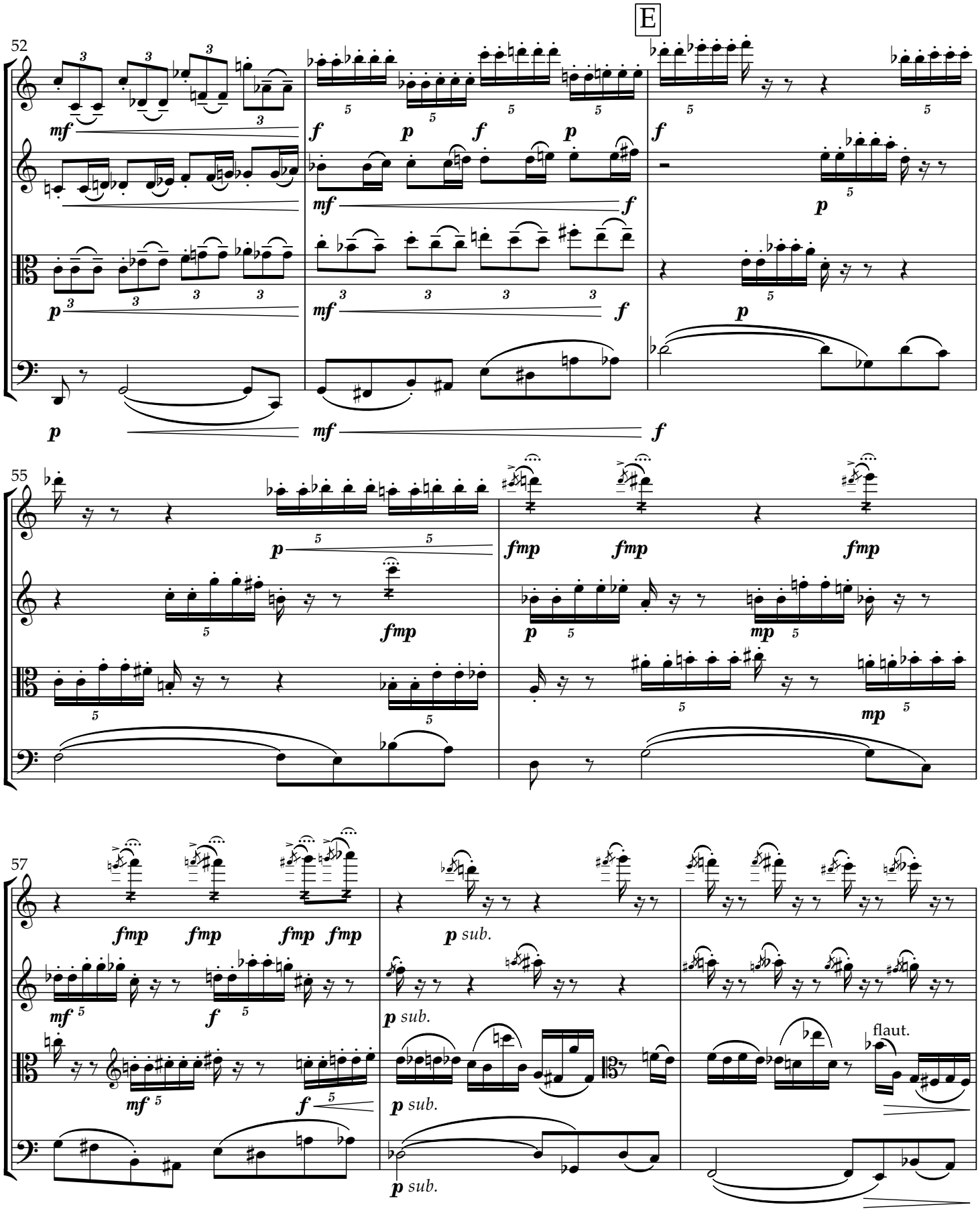

7
A
f
fp
fp
f
3
3
5


5
♪= ♪ (♩ = 60)
11
sul pont.
flaut.
pp
sul pont.
flaut.
sul pont.
flaut.
sul pont.
flaut.
IV
p

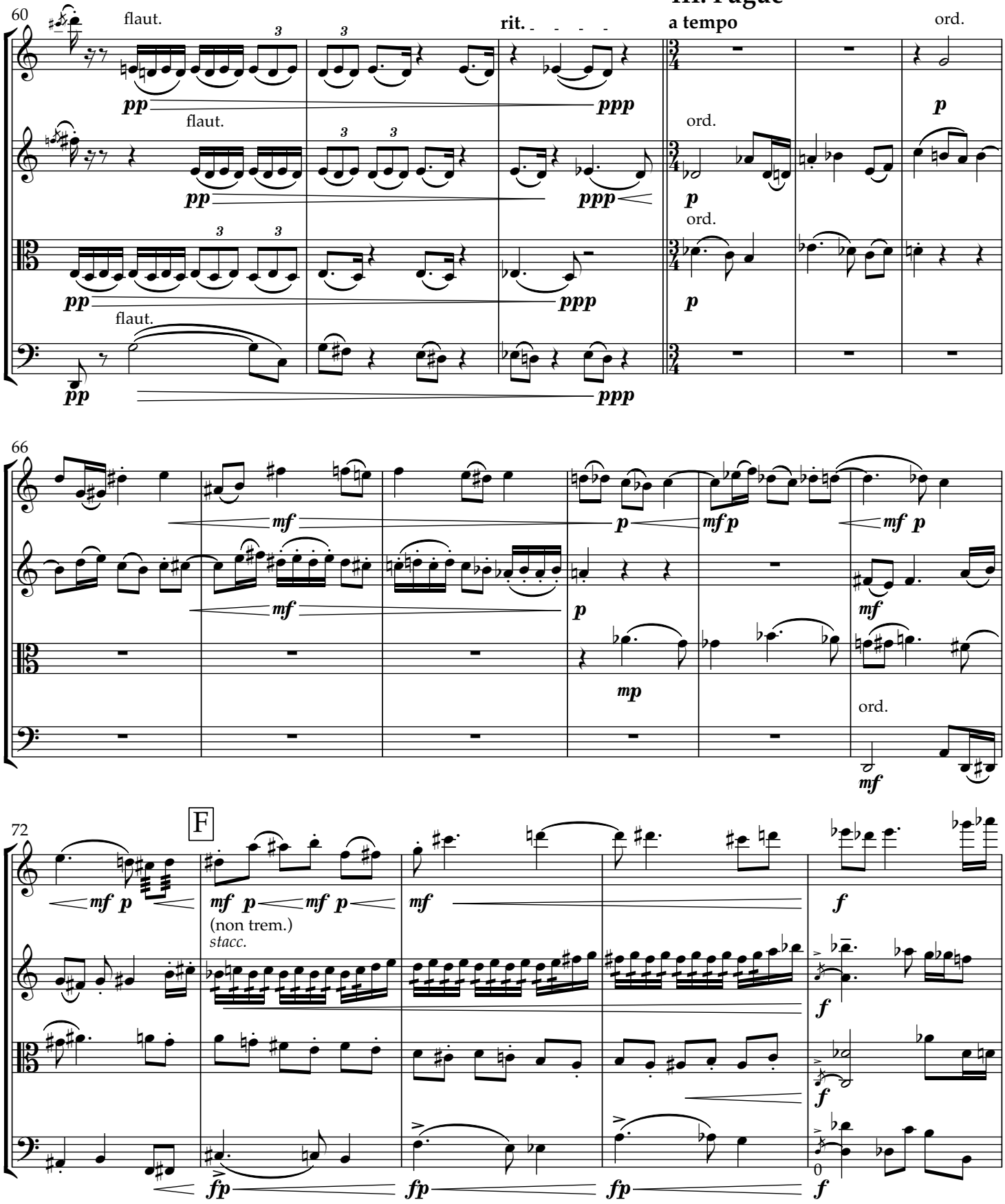

B
16
= (♩ = 75)
mf pp
mf pp
mf pp
f
pp
mf
pp
(pp)
mf
pp
pizz.
(pp)
p
19
1″
ord.
mf
pp
mf
pp
f
ff
ord.
mf
pp
f
ff
ord.
mf
pp
f
ff
arco, ord.
f
ff
23
5
5

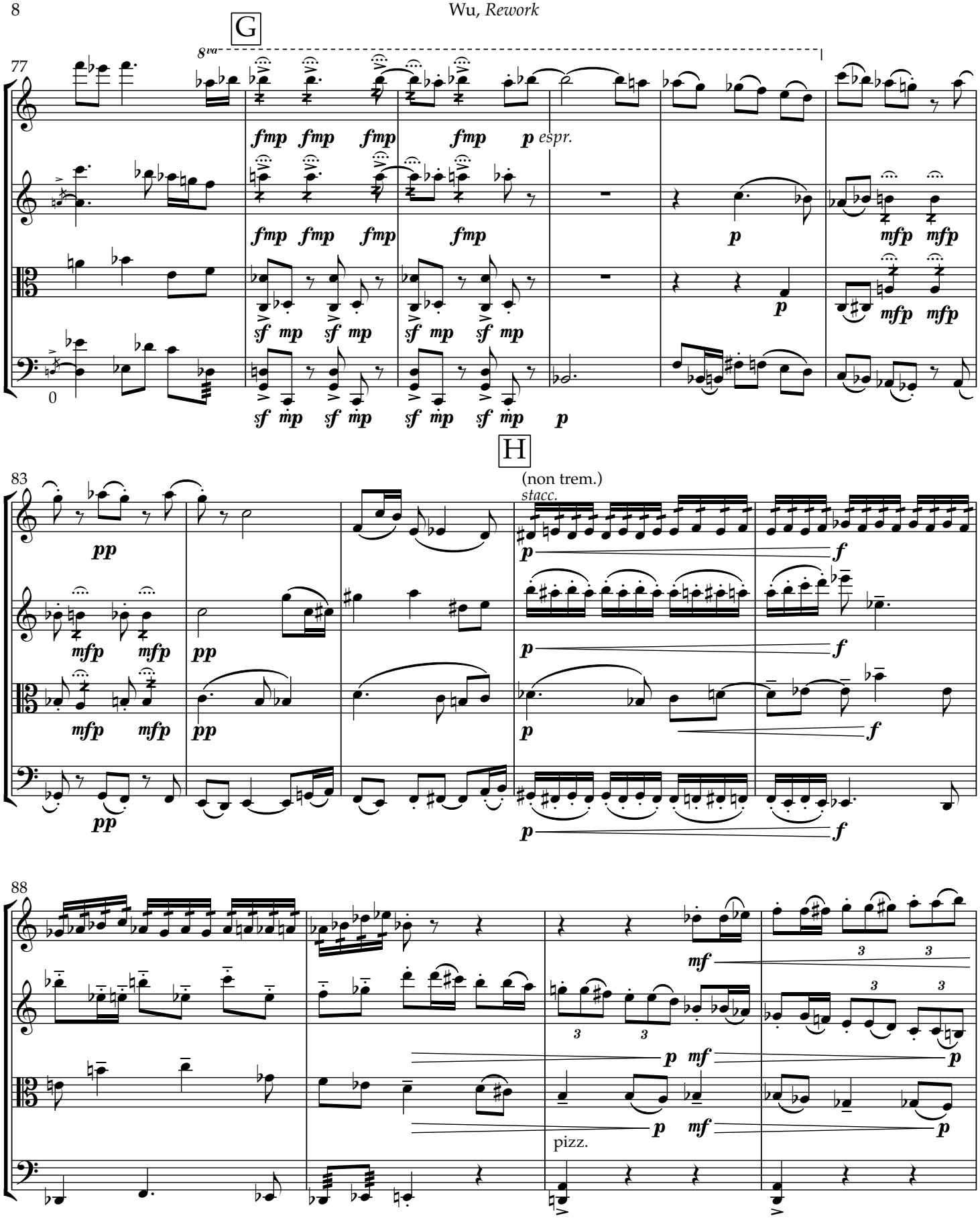

(♩ = 94)
8va
poss.
II. Passacaglia
(♩ = 63)
sempre
flaut.

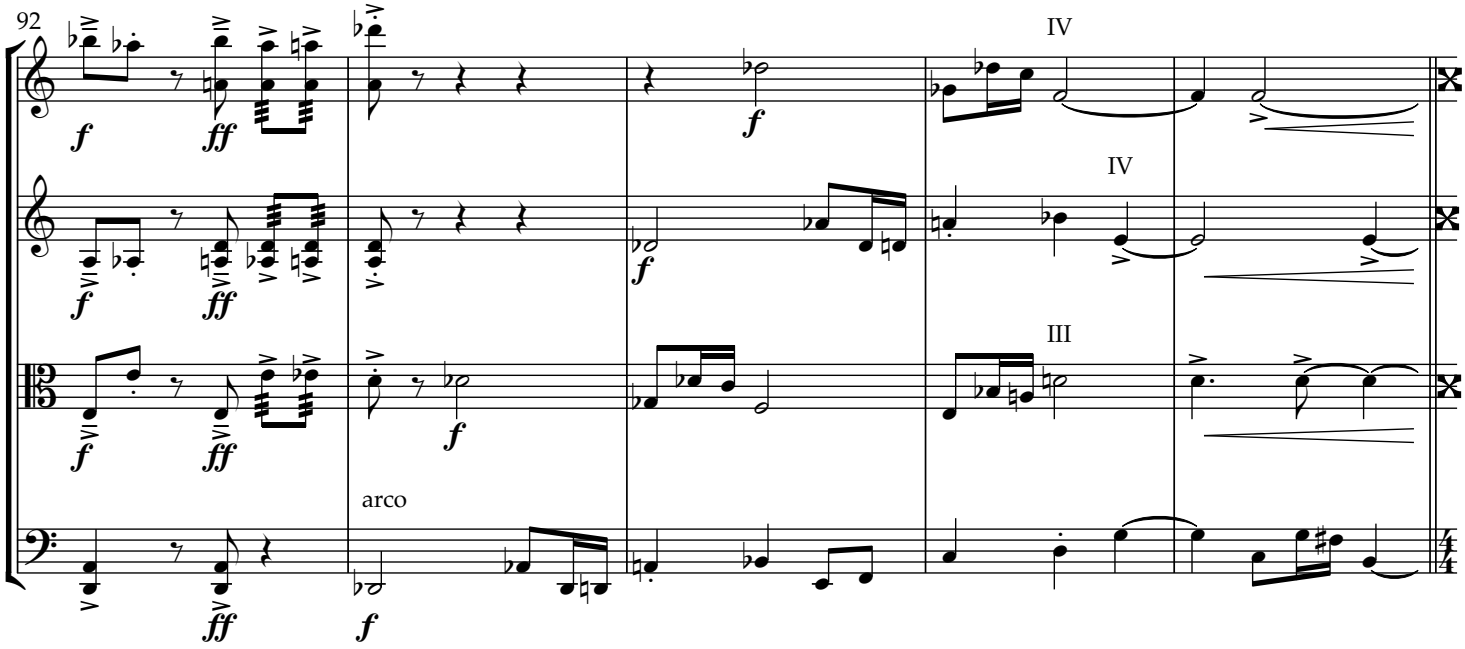

39
flaut.
flaut.
flaut.
pp
p espr.
pp
pp
p espr.
45
D
poco
pp
poco
pp
poco
pp
poco
p espr.
49
ord.
poco
p
ord.
poco
p
ord.
poco
p
ord.
molto
mf
pp
mf
mp


E
52
55
57
flaut.

III. Fugue

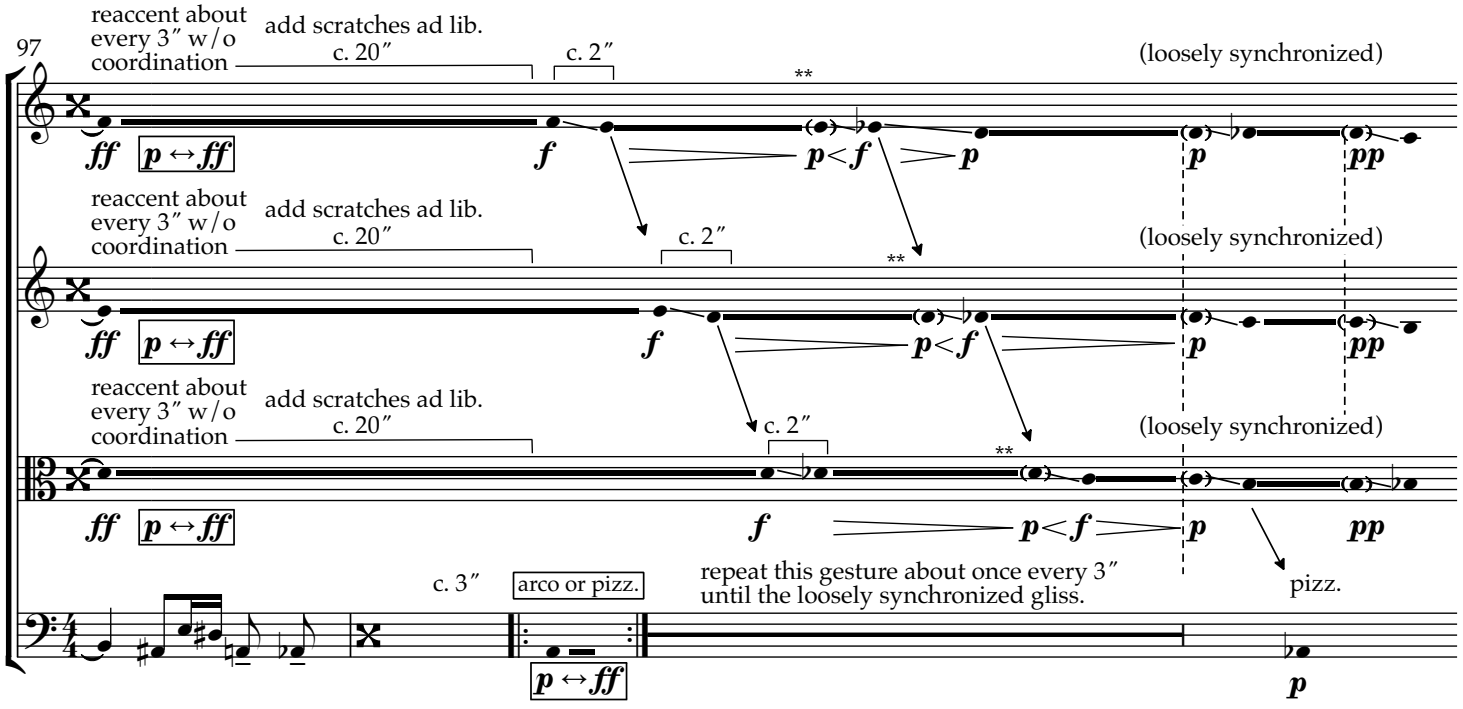

60
flaut.
rit.
a tempo
ord.
pp
ppp
p
66
mf
mf p
mp
72
F
(non trem.)
stacc.
fp
f
0


G
77
8va
fmp fmp fmp fmp p espr.
fmp fmp fmp fmp
p
mfp mfp
sf mp sf mp sf mp sf mp
sf mp sf mp sf mp sf mp p
H
83
(non trem.)
stacc.
pp
mfp mfp
p f
88
mf
3
p mf
pizz.



IV. Head Out

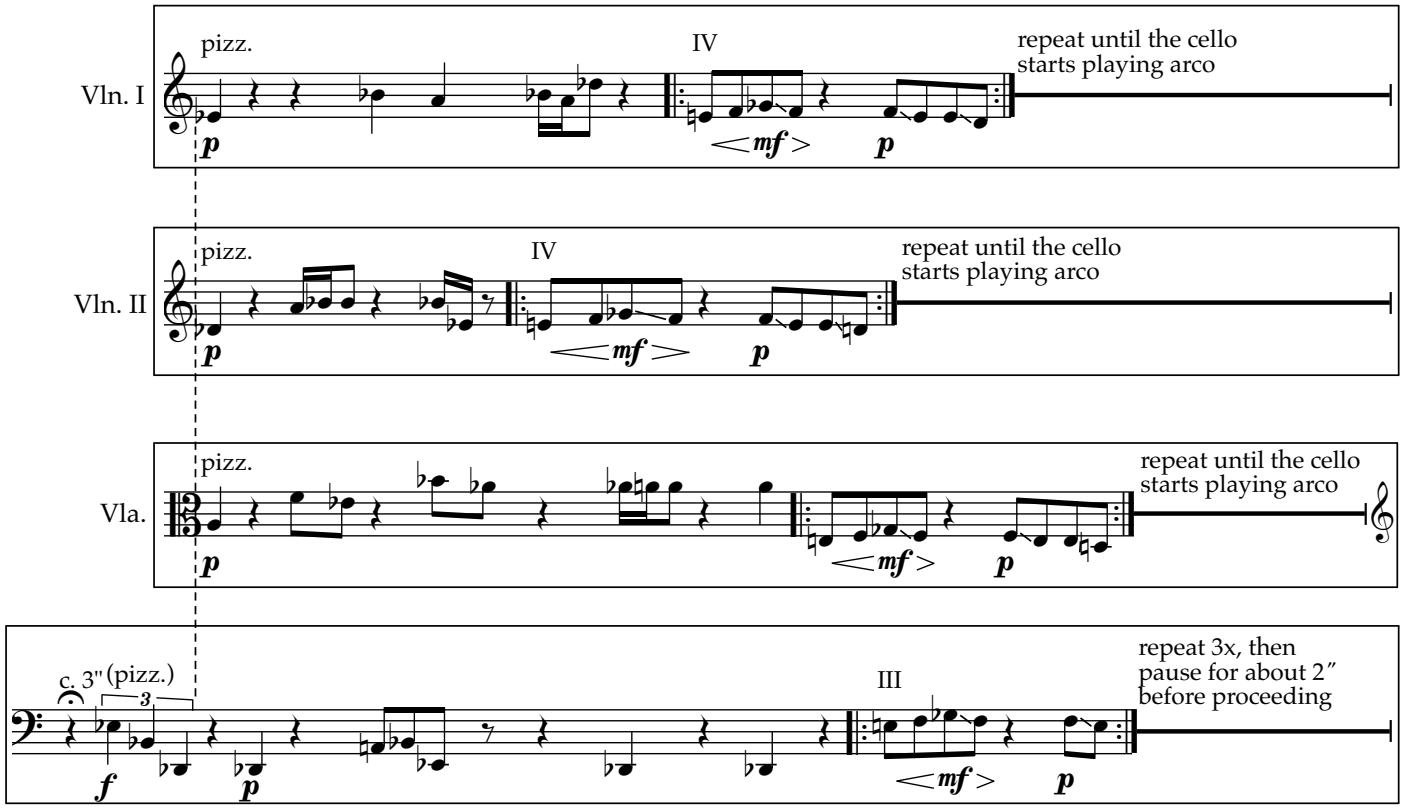
Senza misura*



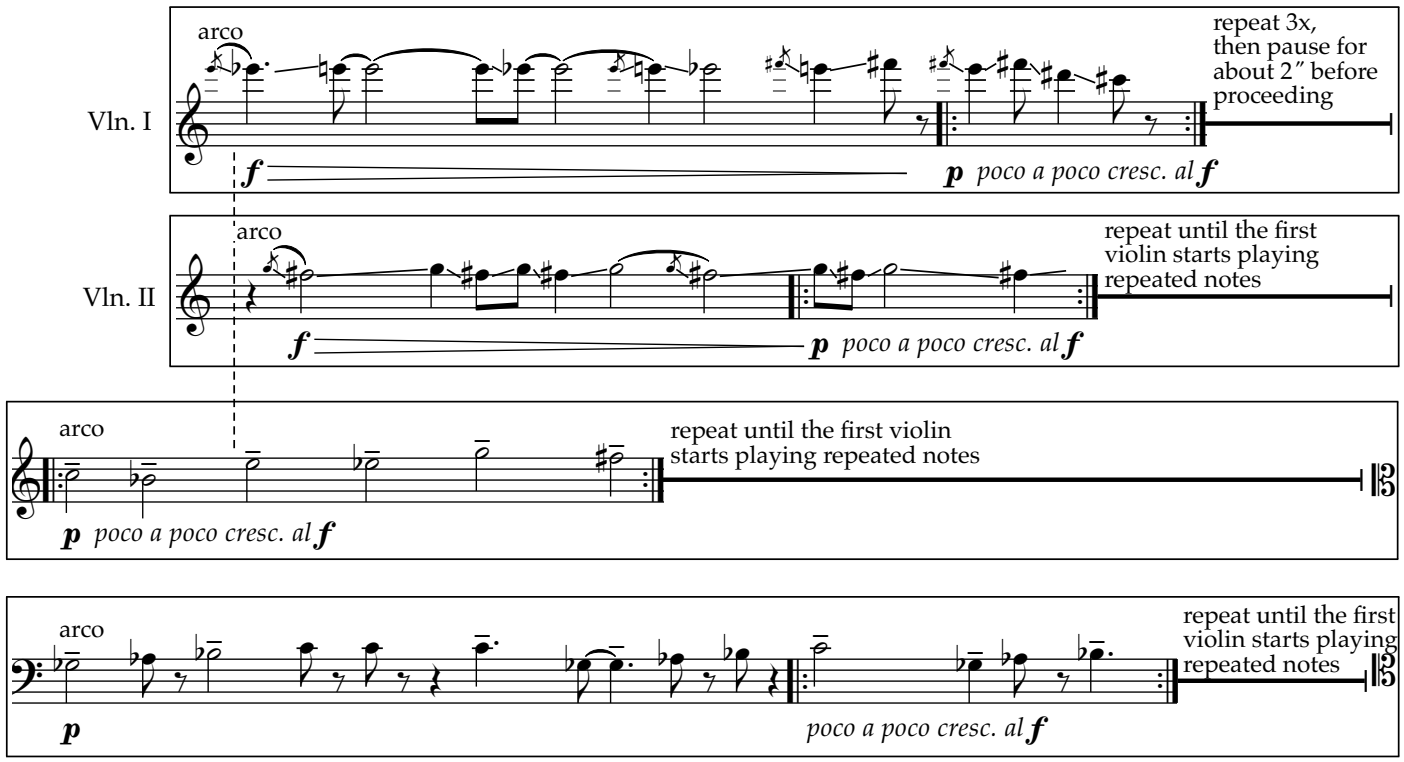
* The cello is still in tempo for another bar.

** Do not re-articulate the notes in parentheses

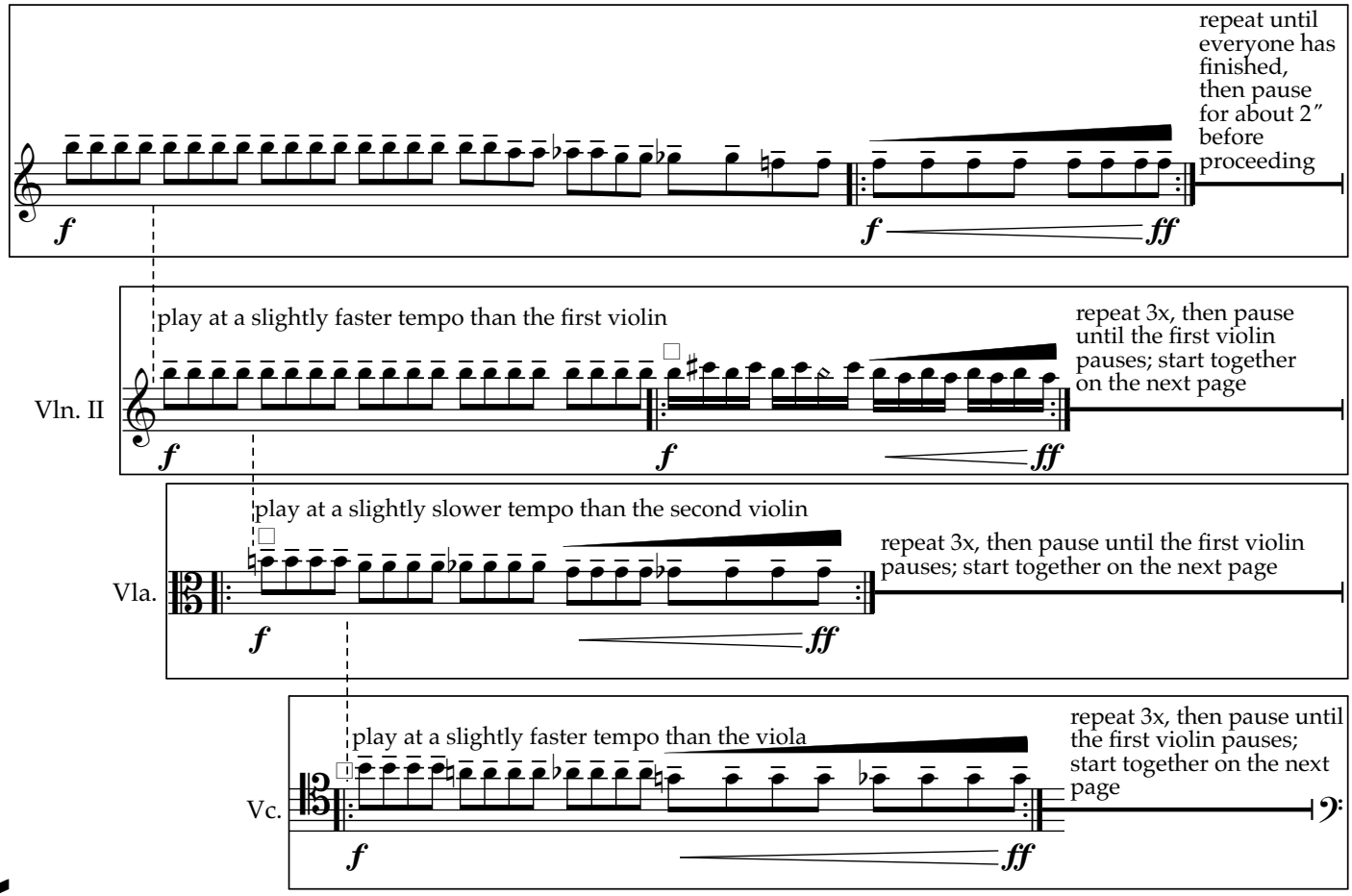
98 **Rubato, slow and hesitant**



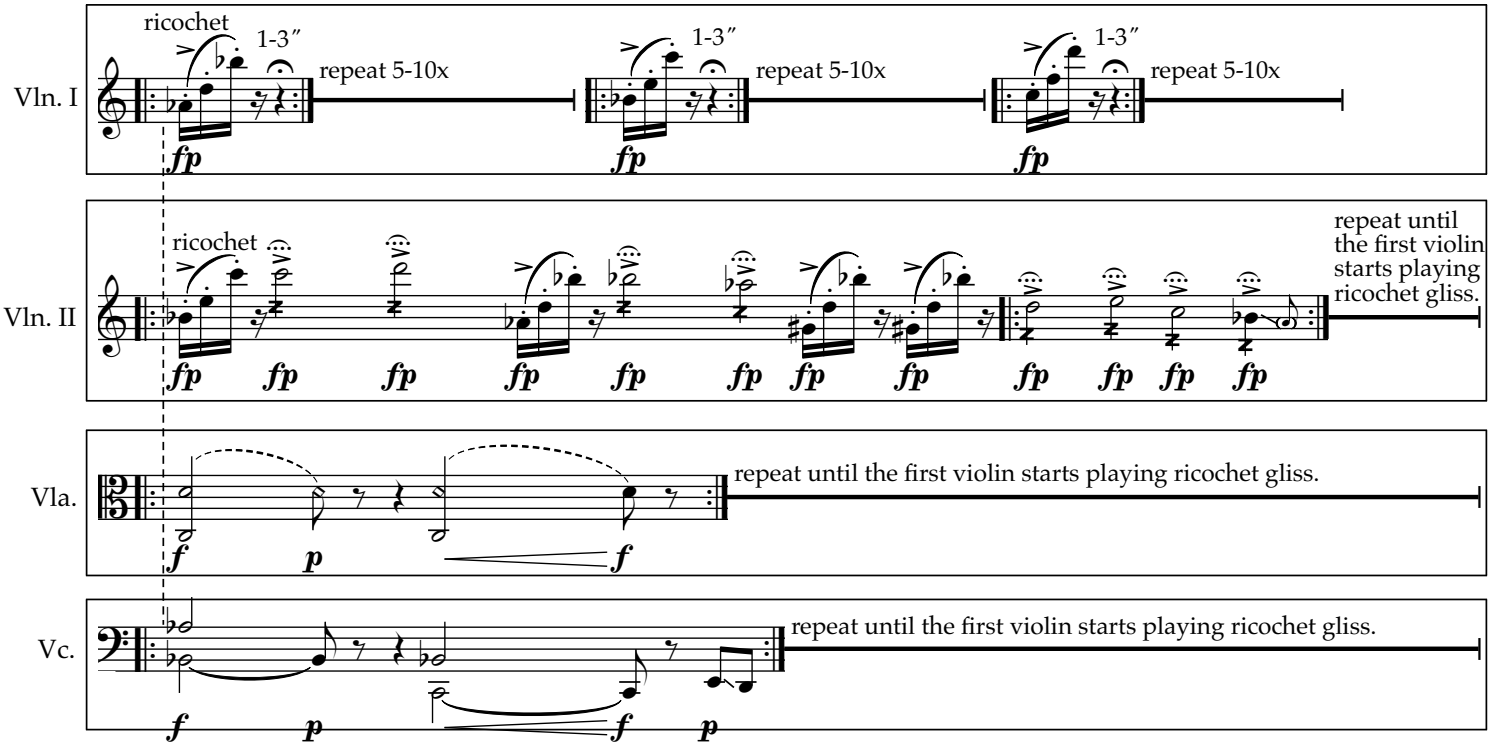
99



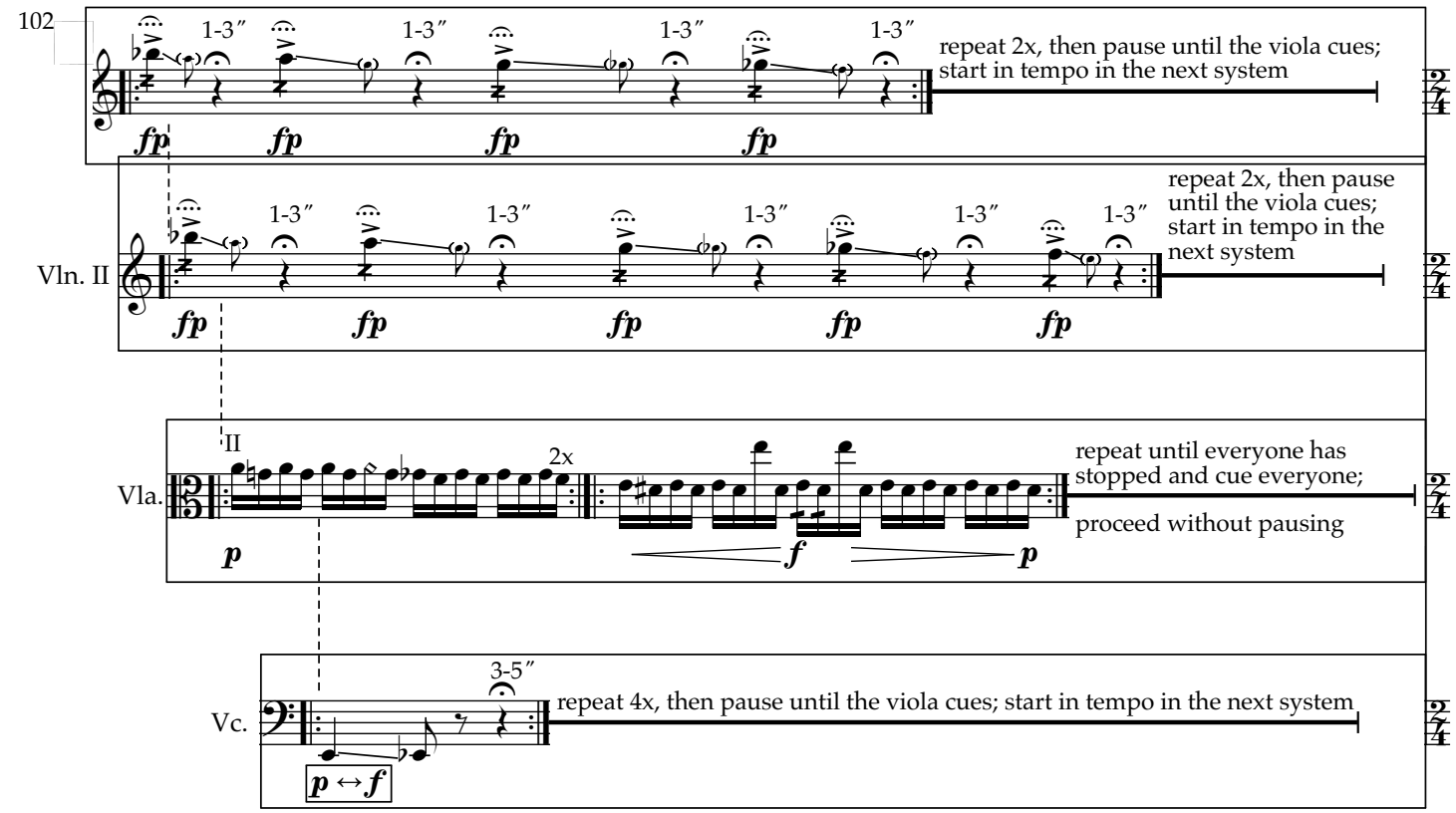
100 **Unwavering, each following their own steady tempo**

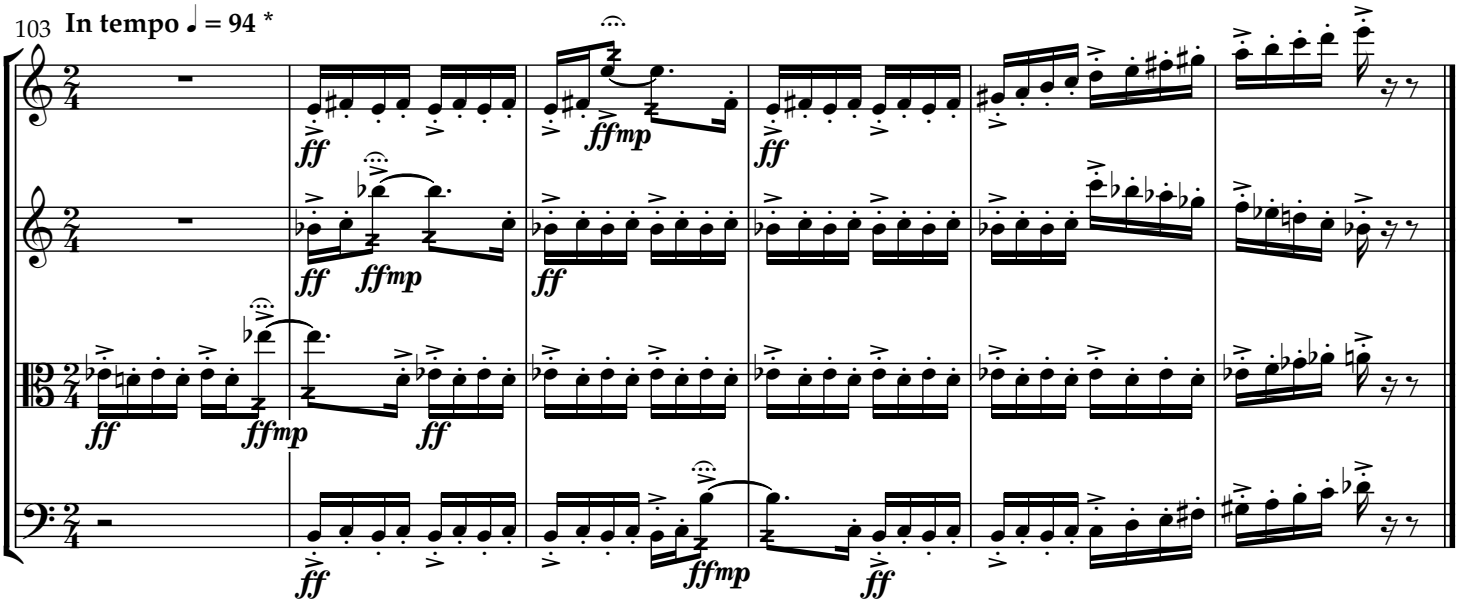


101 **Rubato, changing the tempo semi-frequently**



Slow, each following their own steady tempo





* The tempo here should be around the same as the tempo at rehearsal letter B.