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String Quartet No. 1 "Lanterns"

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STRING QUARTET NO. 1 “LANTERNS”

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Music

in

The School of Music

by
Austin Alexander Franklin
B.M., Lamar University, 2016
May 2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the School of Music faculty at Louisiana State University, with specific thanks to my composition professor Dr. Mara Gibson for her knowledge and guidance throughout this process. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Jeffrey Perry and Dr. Jesse Allison for their insightful comments and encouragement. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their constant support throughout my graduate studies.

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STRING QUARTET NO. 1 “LANTERNS”

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II. CHORUS 21

VITA 39

ABSTRACT

String Quartet No. 1 “Lanterns” was inspired by a poem written by the American poet, novelist, and short story writer Stephen Crane entitled “Each Small Gleam was a Voice”. In my interpretation, this poem creates a world in which sight and sound are intrinsically linked, connected by our inability to perceive either independently from the other. Throughout the poem, Crane continuously creates a world in which sounds are only capable of being described through the use of color. One line in particular, “Little songs of carmine, violet, green, gold.”, is repeated several times throughout the poem. In “Lanterns” each of these colors describes a distinct musical element from which the work was created. The piece opens with carmine, or rather, a chord progression built entirely from minor 6th intervals that repeat after ever four chords. These chords control the harmonic language of the entire piece, sometimes rather obviously or aggressively, and at other times disguised and completely hidden from view. The color violet is the color of volume. This repeating sonic figure throughout the work is one that dynamically fades to its loudest point before fading out again. This is meant to represent a specific moment in the text, “a lantern voice”, in which you see the diffusions of light fading out on either side from its source. Green is the interval of a minor 3rd, which appears sparingly throughout the first movement only as a harmonic motif and then builds in intensity throughout the second movement to help create the final climax, from which the piece concludes. This color represents the “small glowing pebbles” line of the text. Lastly, gold is the sound of the major 2nd, which makes its appearance in the 2nd movement to create a more lyrical contrast in context of the work as a whole.

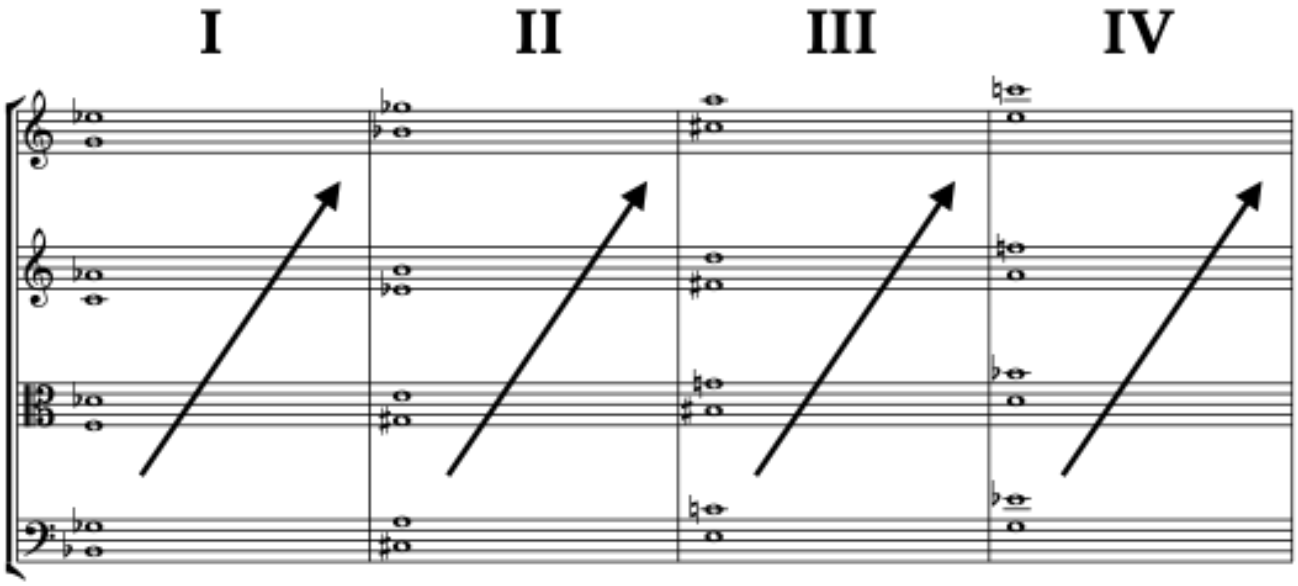
ANALYSIS

The formal structure of the work conforms to that of the poem, where each stanza represents each individual movement. The work is in two movements:

I. Blue Night
II. Chorus

A repeated line from the text, “In little songs of carmine, violet, green, gold” was used as the starting point from which musical material was based. Each of these colors are used to represent a dominant musical element in the work.

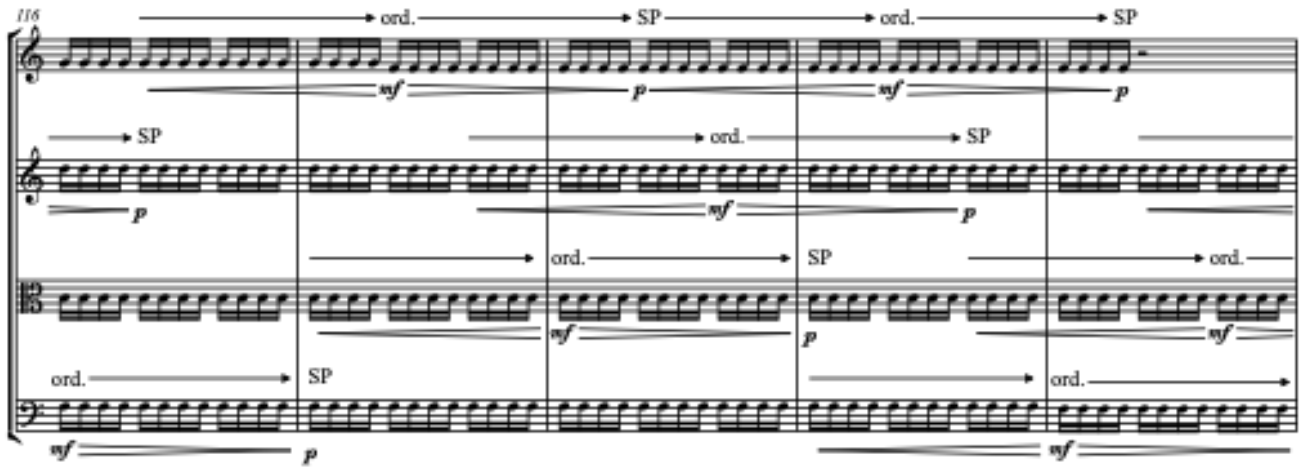
1. Carmine – A harmonic progression consisting of interlocking minor 6th intervals



These chords control the entire piece, sometimes rather aggressively and other times disguised and completely hidden from view. The progression is unique in that it is cyclical, returning to its starting pitches after four iterations. The root of the chord is transposed upwards by a minor 3rd yielding a repeated minor 6th between the bottom voice of the previous chord and the top voice of the next chord, as shown by the arrows above.

Another cycle can be derived from a variation of this pattern. Moving the root of each chord upwards by a major 3rd will yield three rotations before returning to its start and contain no repeated minor 6th intervals between chords. This variation is used only once during the piece on pp. 9-10 in the score as a point of departure away from the initial progression.

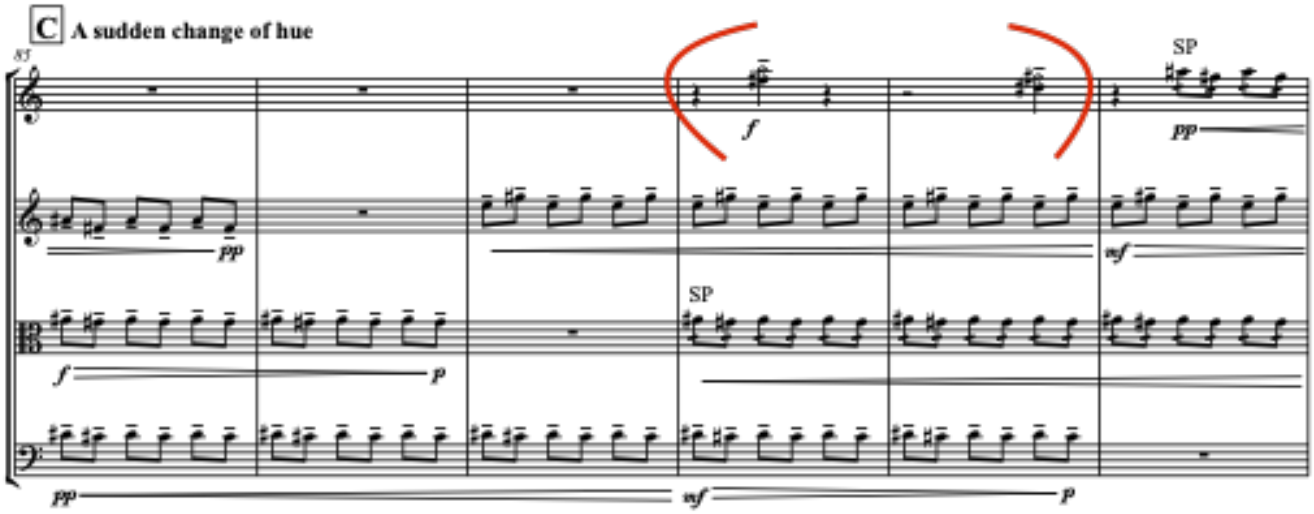
2. Violet – Dynamics



(pp. 8 in score)

Hairpins are used to create the impression of a "gleam", or a source of light. The idea was to create a texture that was always continuous (constant 16th or 8th notes) but also always changing and evolving. Placement of the bow on the instrument helps to exaggerate this effect.

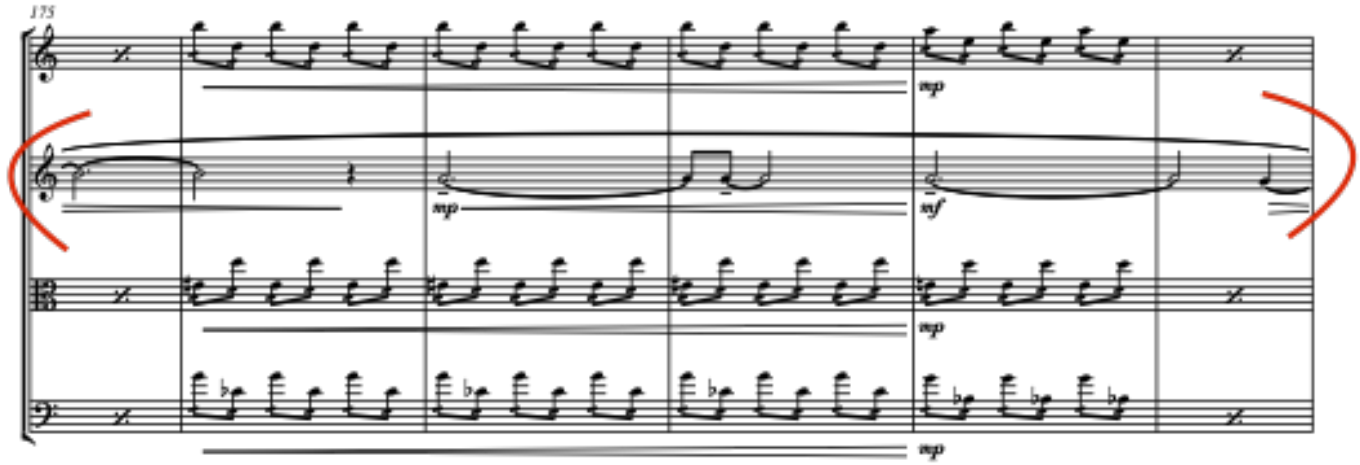
3. Green – Minor 3rd Interval



(pp. 21 in score)

This interval is used to represent the "Small glowing pebbles" line in the text. This interval appears outside of the texture and is always stated as either a harmonic or pizzicato.

4. Gold – Major 2nd Interval



(pp. 26 in score)

In contrast to the rest of the work, a major second is used to create a lyrical line. This line appears in only the second movement and bears no structural significance. It is used only as a point of contrast to the rest of the movement.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Ord.	ordinario (normal manner of playing)
⟶	Indicates a gradual change from one technique to another
SP	sul pont.
MSP	molto sul pont., as close to the bridge as possible without being directly on it
ST	sul tasto
OP	apply bow pressure to distort pitch, but not remove it completely

- Dynamics should be interpreted literally with the exception of the exact beginning and end of a cresc./dim., in which the sound between the players is audibly constant and ever changing. No entrances or exits should be noticeable.

- The "bow freely" indication at rehearsal letter D in movement I gives the player complete freedom with regards to bowing. However, the sound must be continuous and mostly uninterrupted.

- Repeats may be taken a greater or fewer number of time than indicated in the score but are required to be taken at least once. The piece in its entirety should not exceed 16' if taken multiple times.

- At the end of movement II, the multiple ritardandos are used as a way of smoothly transitioning to a note value of greater duration at the original tempo. The return of the original tempo does not need to be exact. More importantly, from rehearsal letter P to S the tempo should "feel" as though it is naturally slowing down.

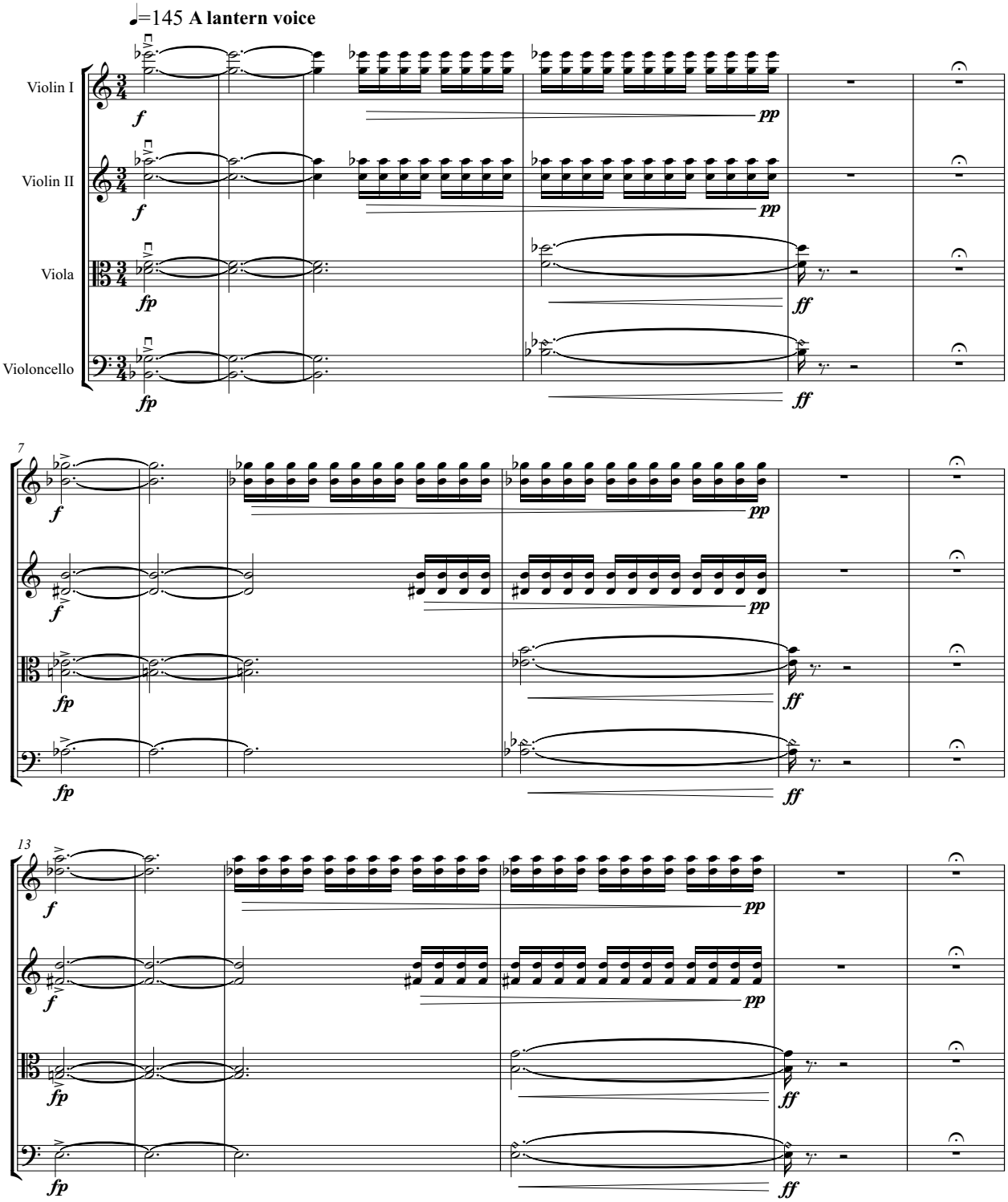
Duration: ca. 16'00"

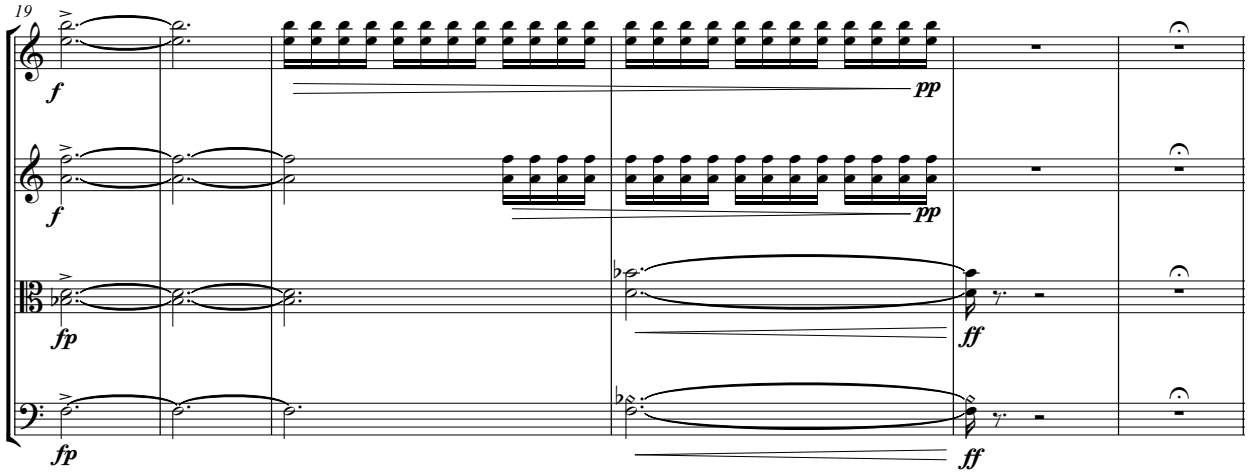
Score

String Quartet No. 1 "Lanterns"

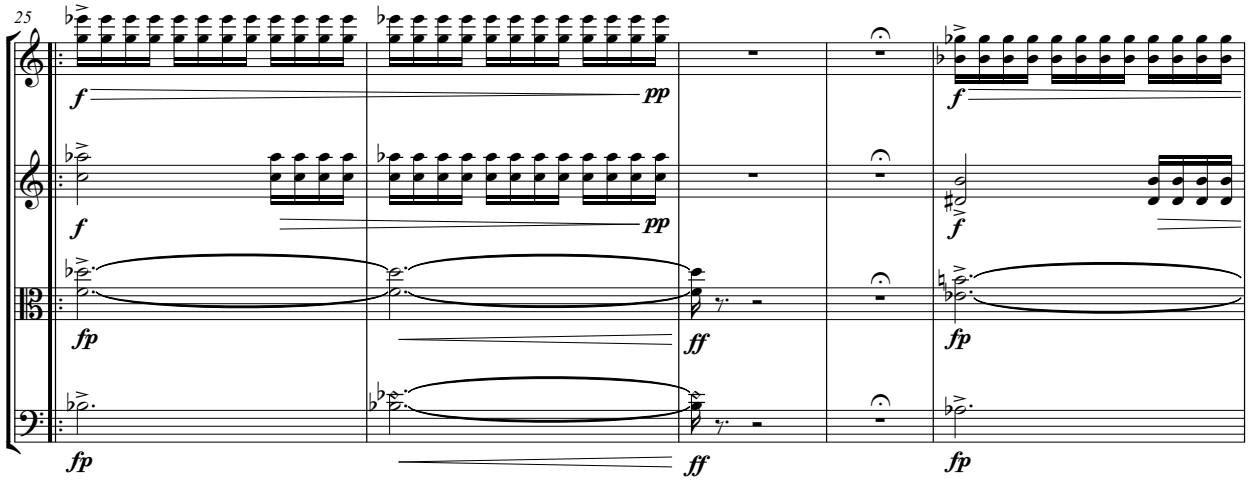
I. Blue Night

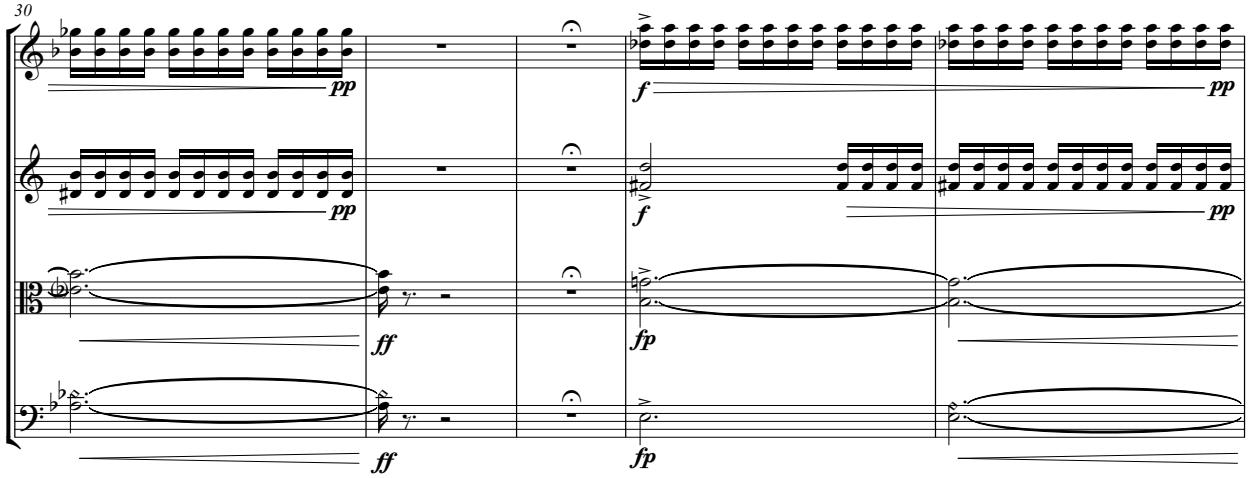
Austin Franklin

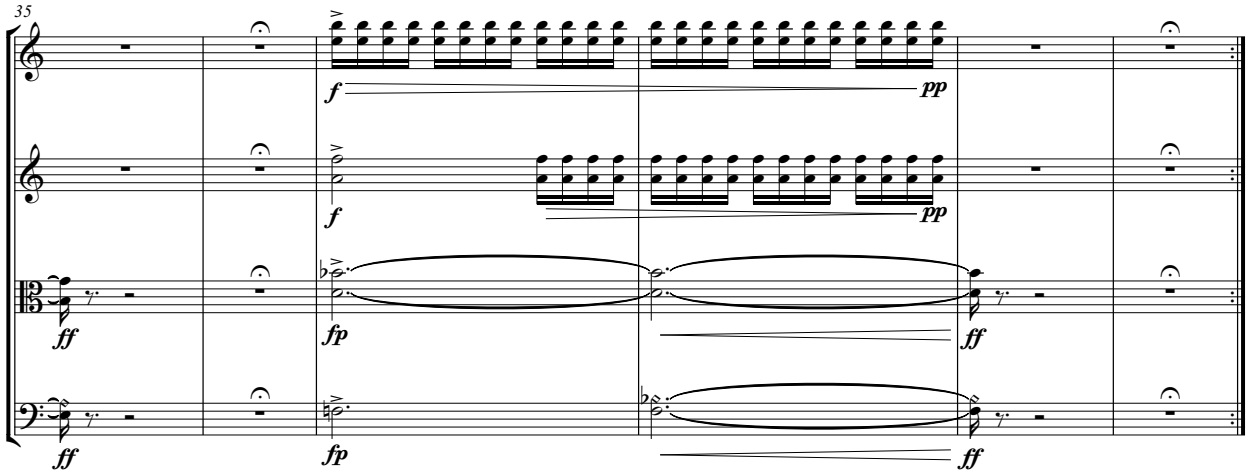




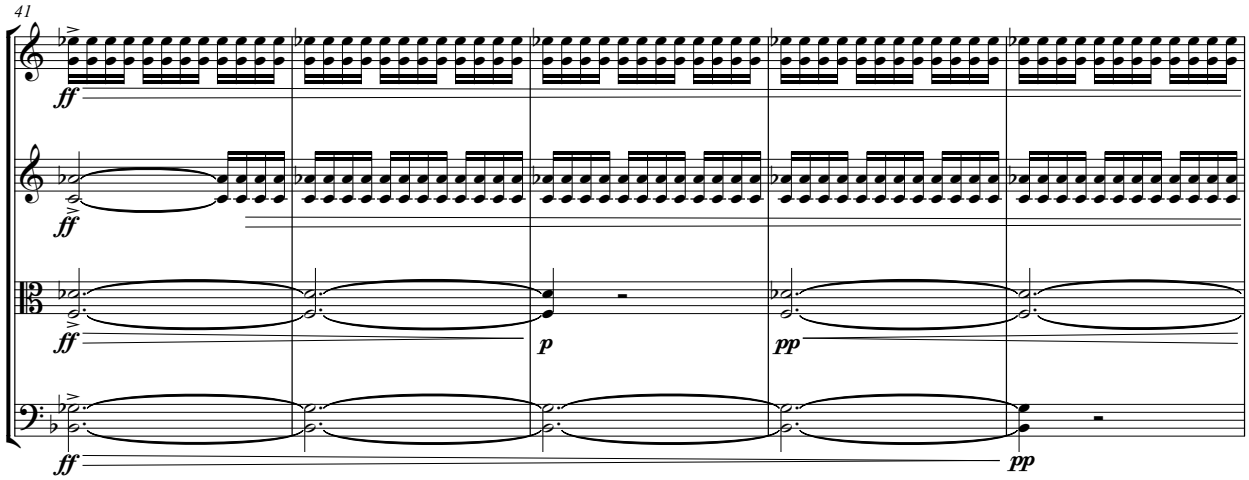
A repeat 2-5x and increase tempo upon repeat

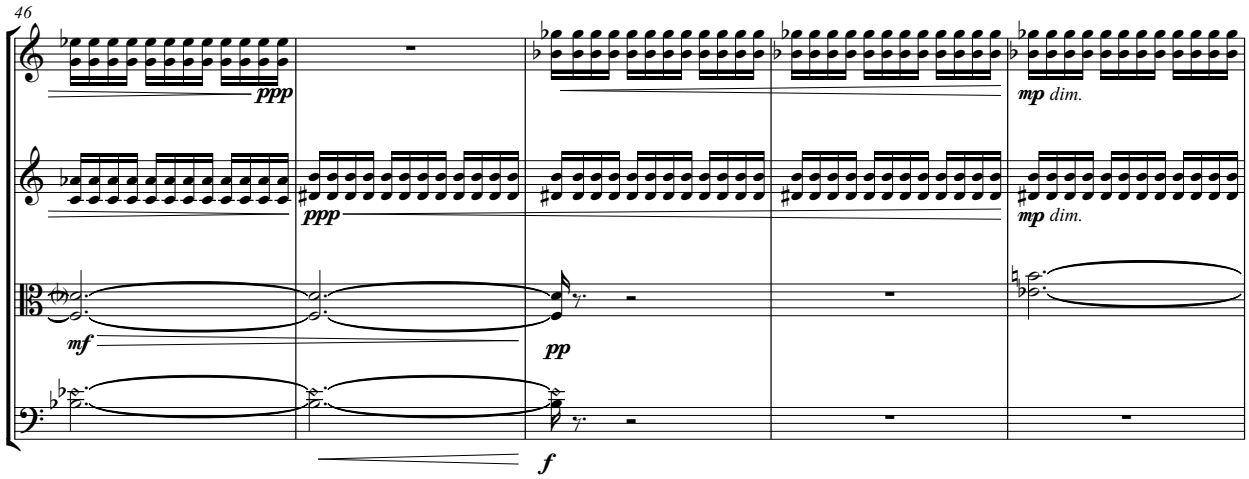


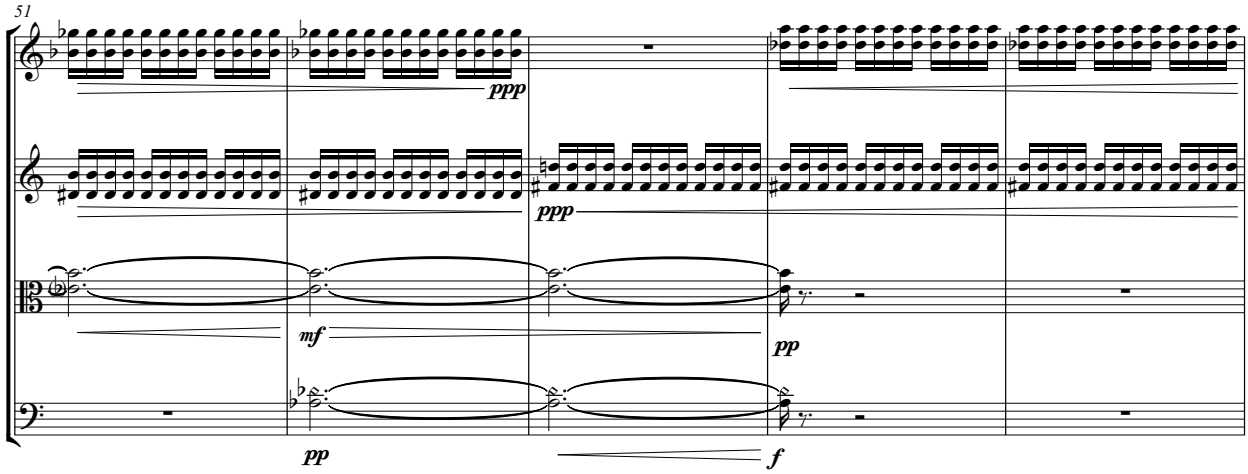


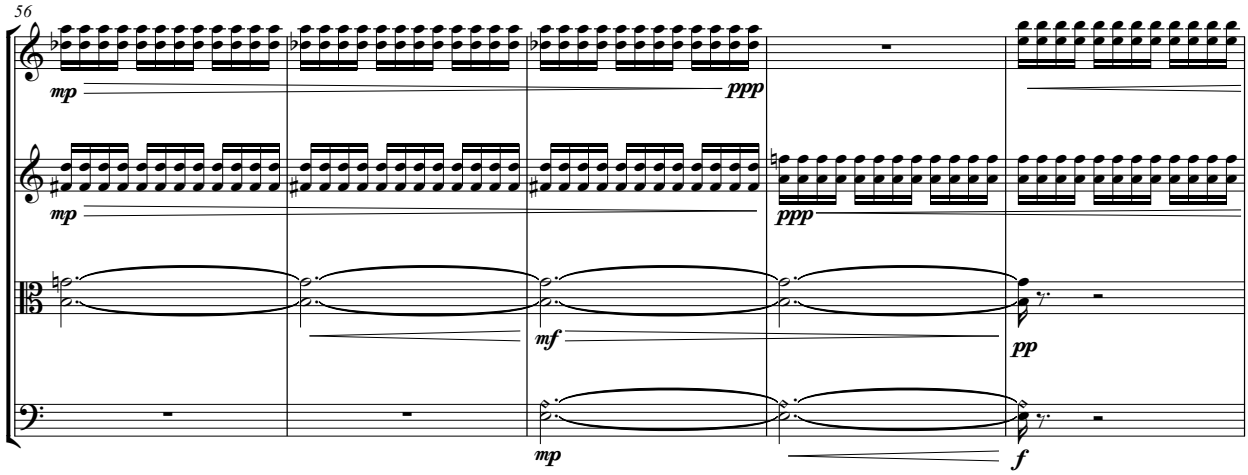


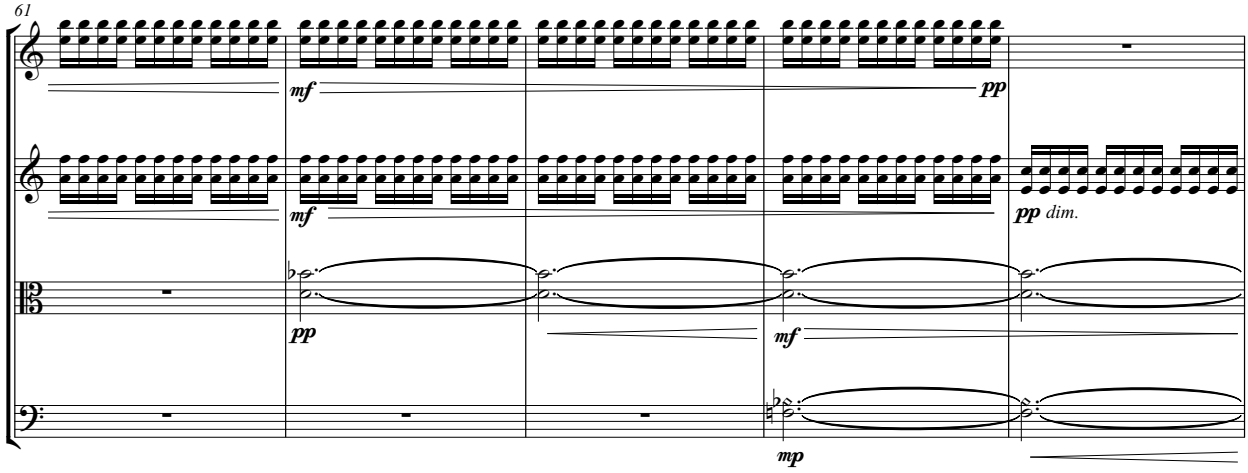
B **A chorus of colors**

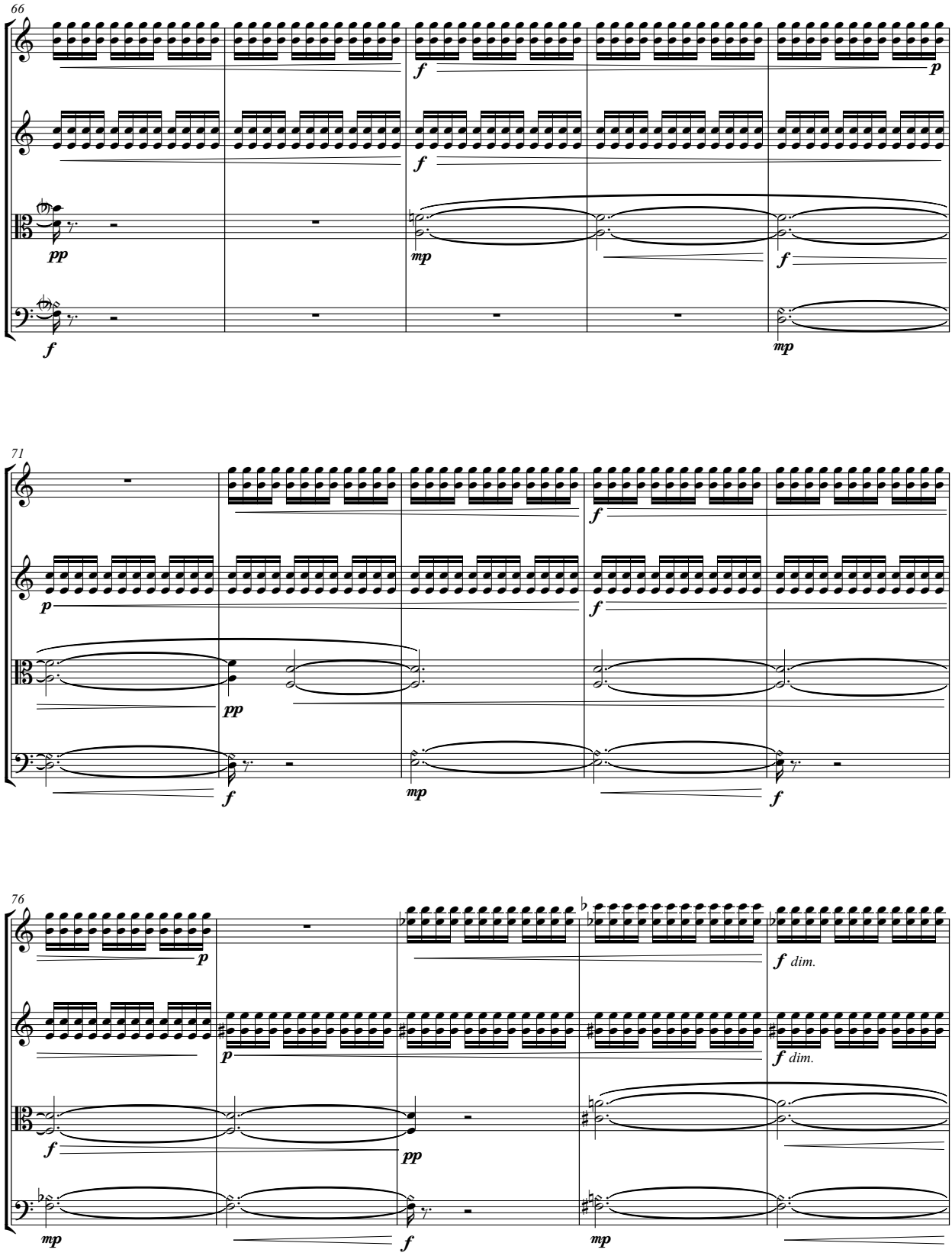


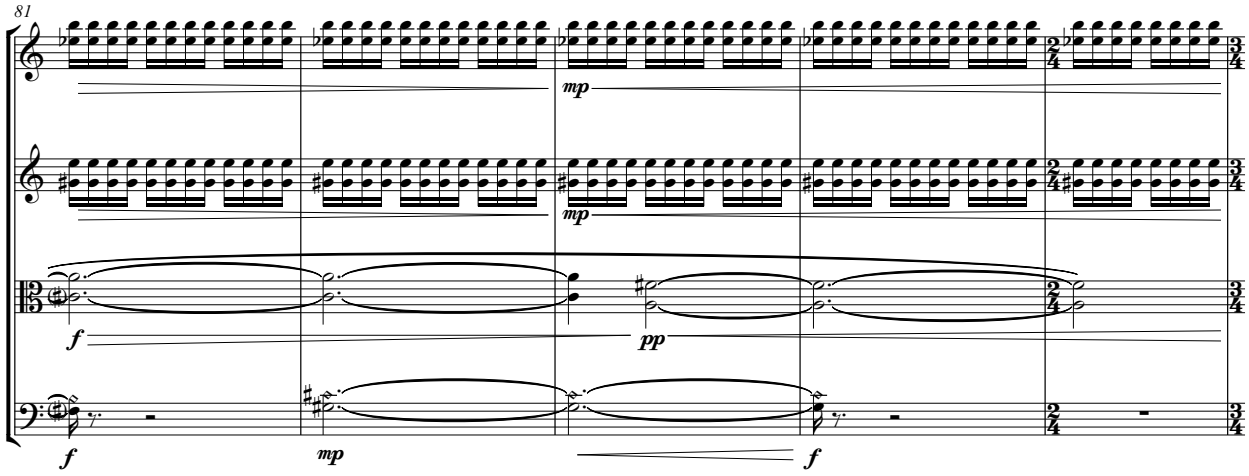


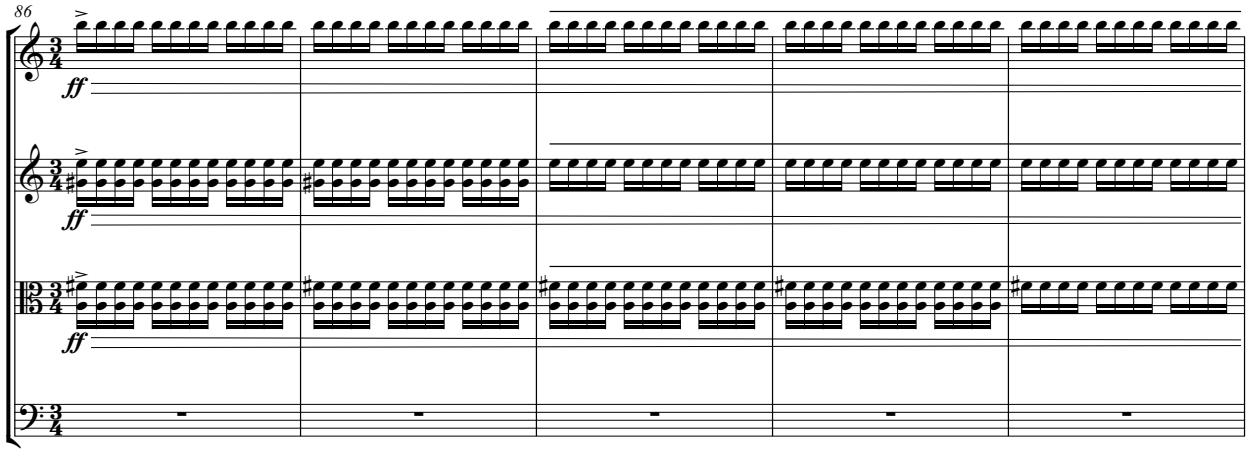

51
ppp
ppp
mf
pp
pp
f


56
mp
ppp
mp
ppp
mf
pp
mp
f

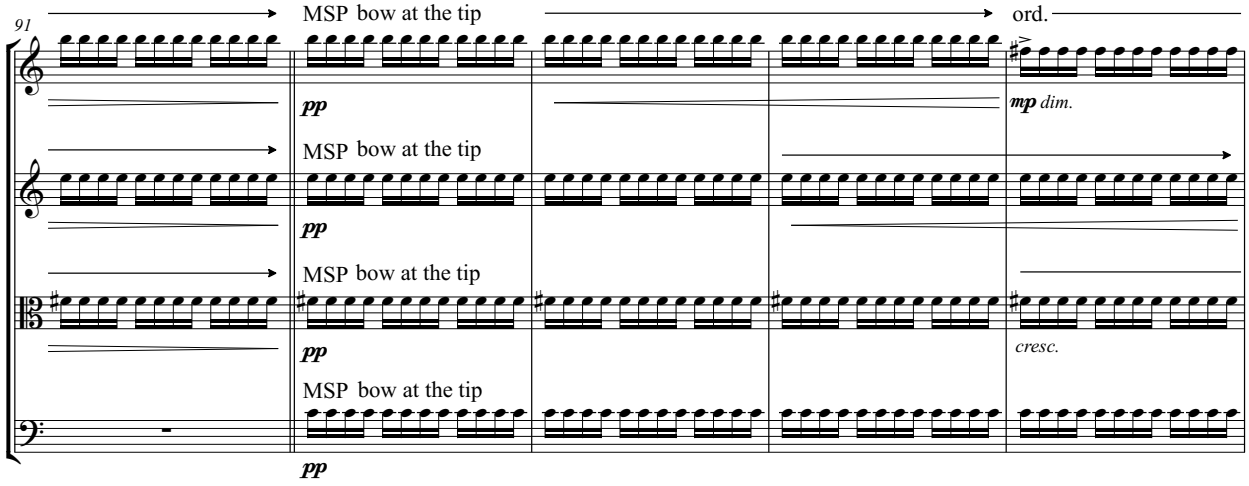

61
mf
pp
mf
pp dim.
pp
mf
mp

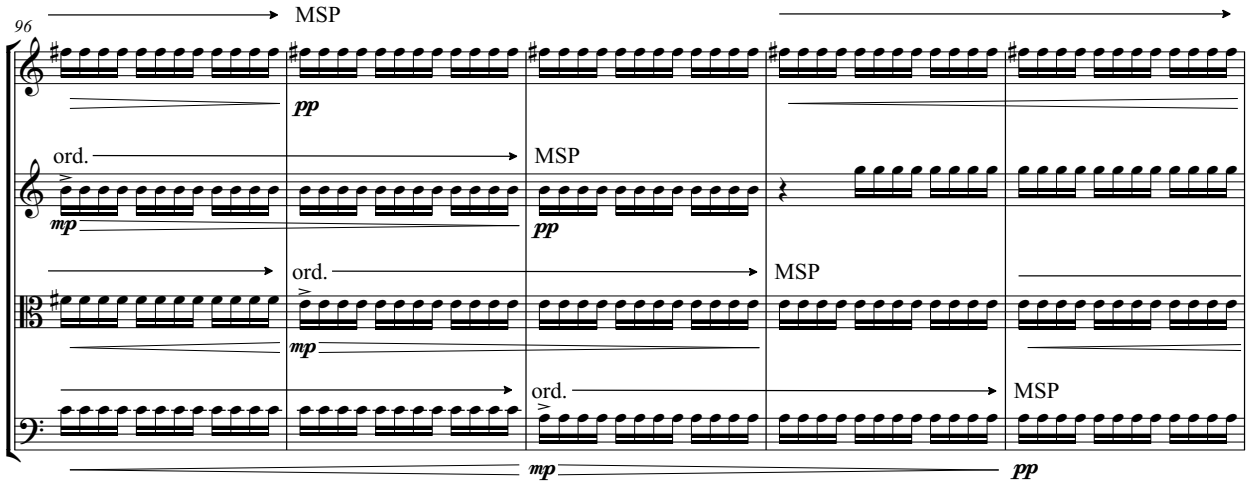

66
71
76
dim.
dim.

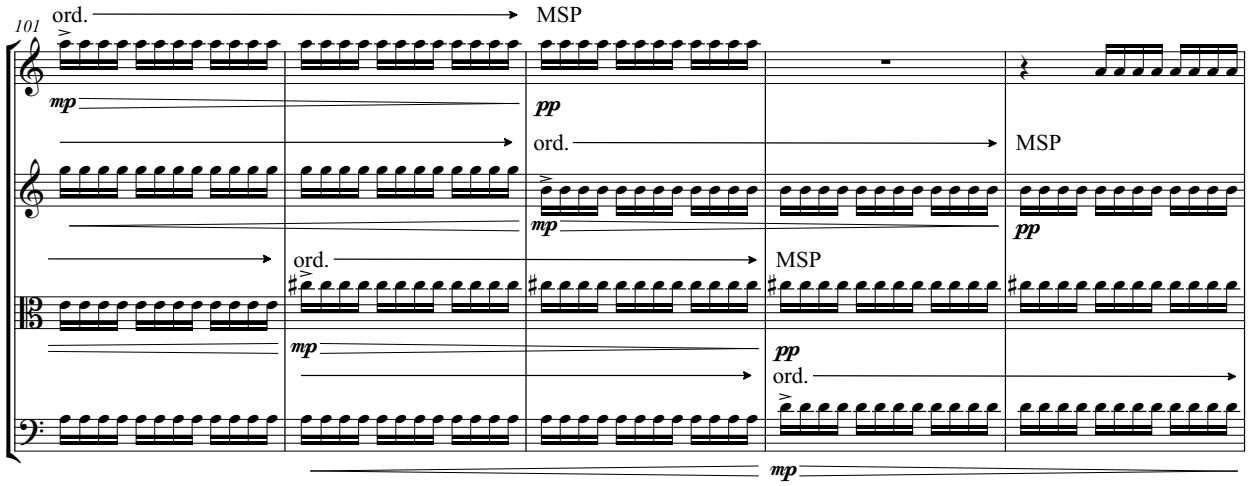




C **Reflections**




96
MSP
pp
ord.
MSP
mp
pp
ord.
MSP
mp
ord.
MSP
mp
pp


101
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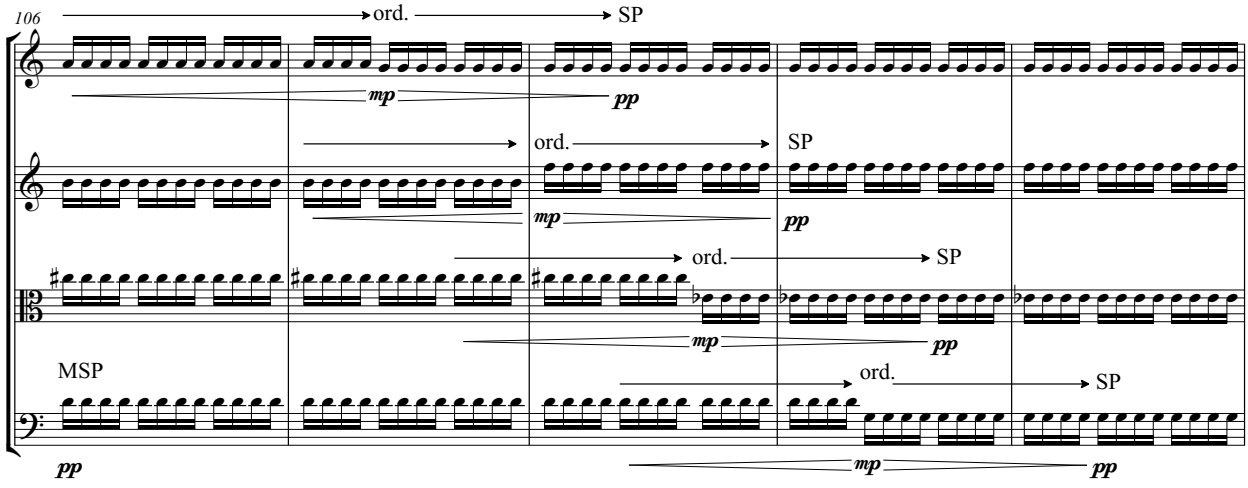
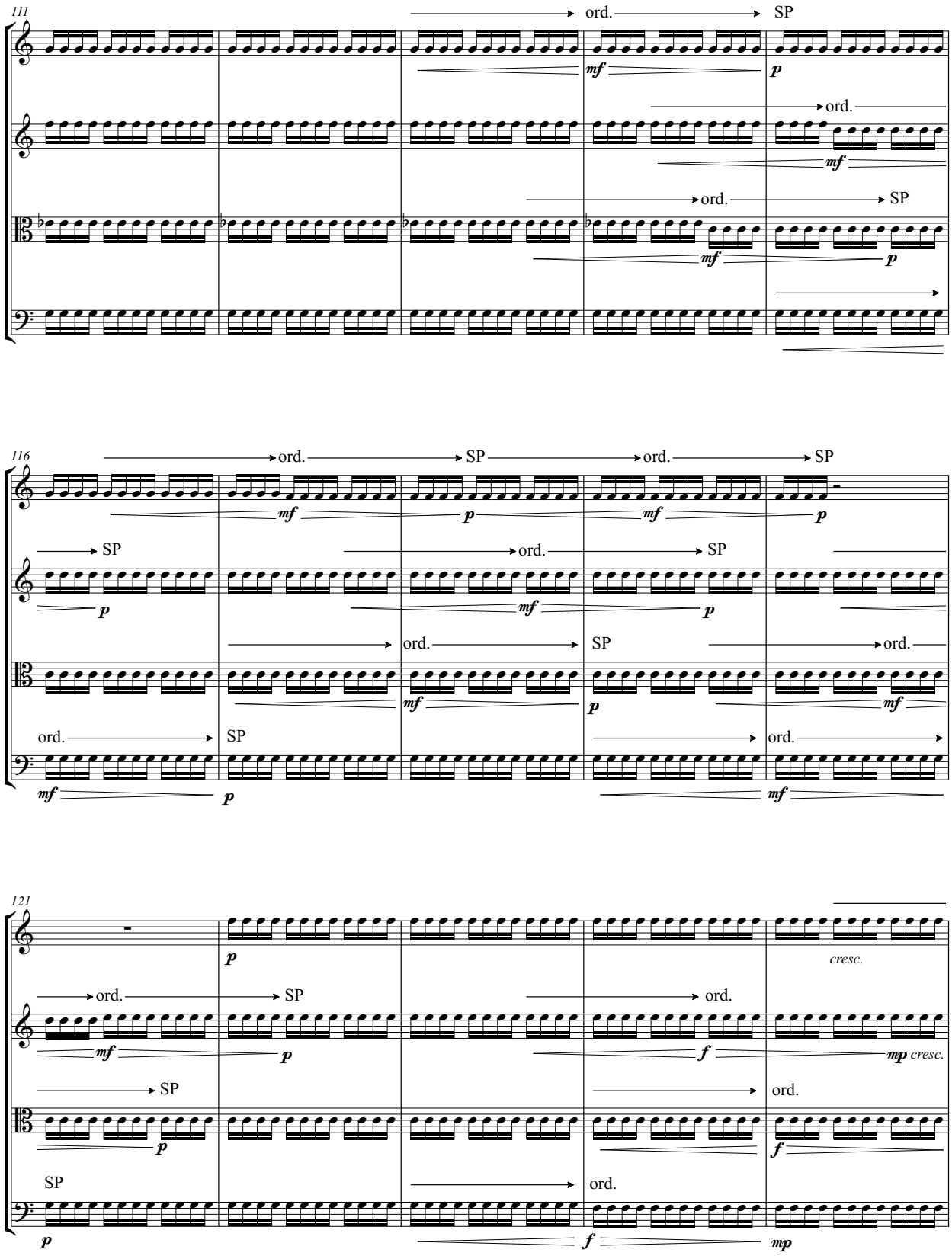
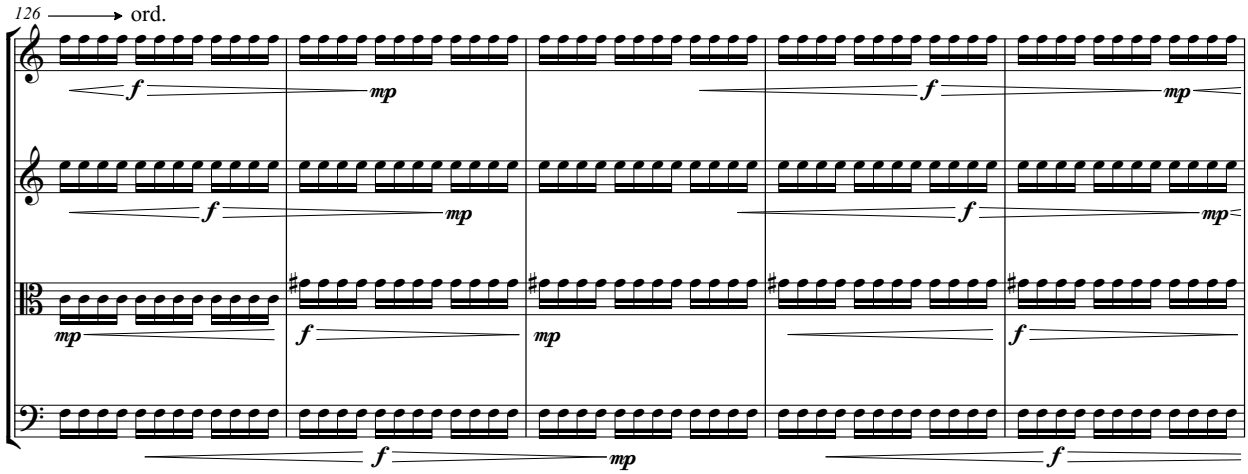
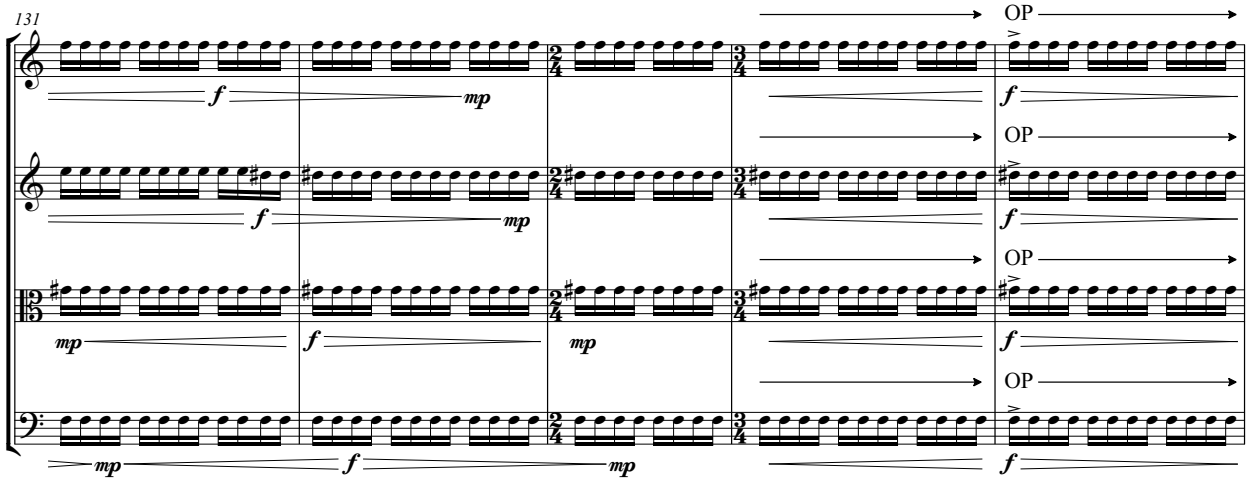
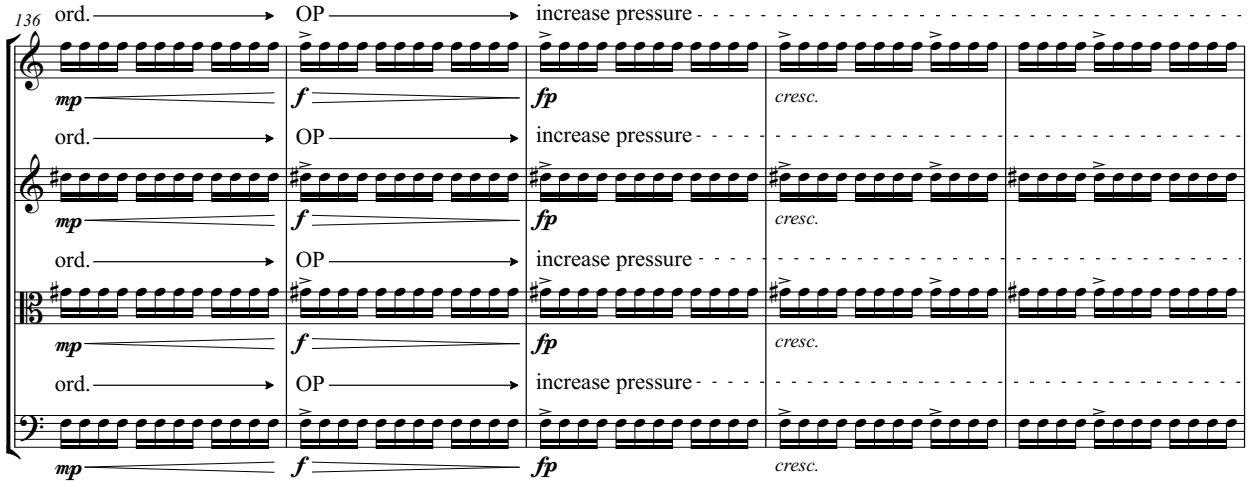
MSP
mp
pp
ord.
MSP
mp
pp
ord.
MSP
mp
pp
ord.
mp

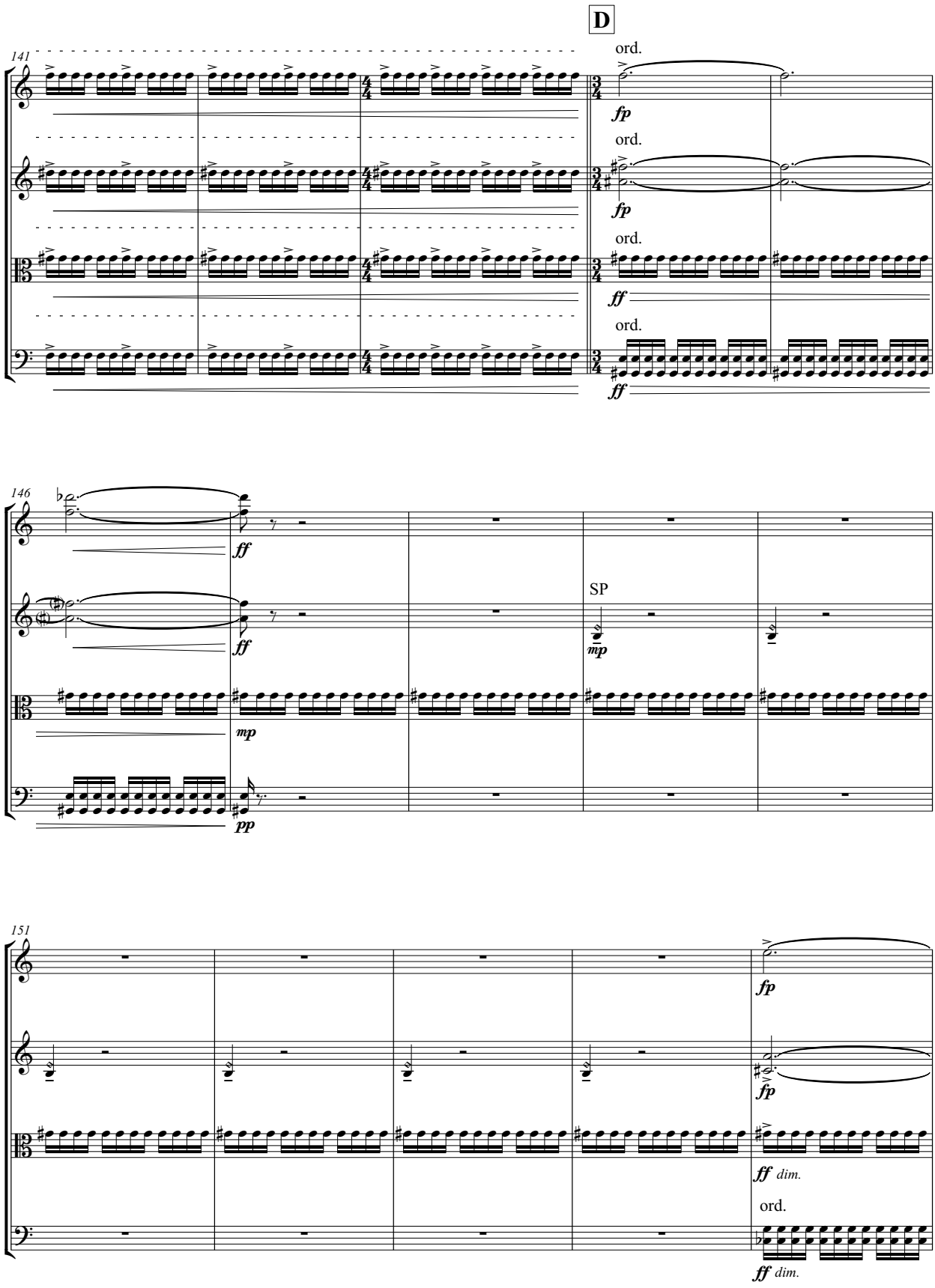

106
ord.
SP
mp
pp
ord.
SP
mp
pp
ord.
SP
mp
pp
MSP
ord.
SP
pp
mp
pp

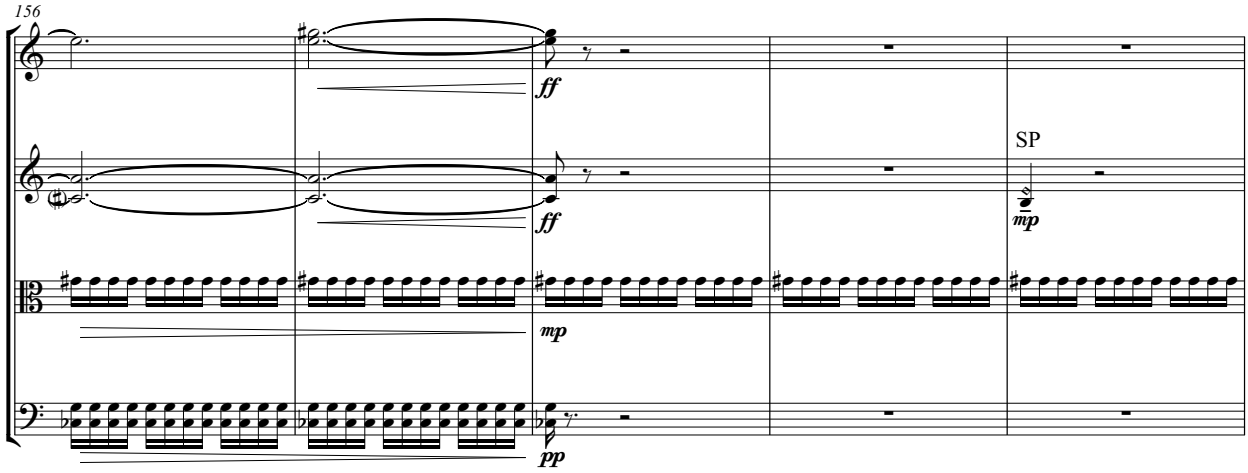

111
ord.
SP
mf
p
ord.
mf
ord.
SP
mf
p
116
ord.
SP
ord.
SP
mf
p
mf
p
SP
ord.
SP
ord.
mf
p
mf
ord.
SP
ord.
mf
p
mf
121
p
cresc.
ord.
SP
ord.
mf
p
f
mp cresc.
SP
ord.
p
f
SP
ord.
p
f
mp


126
ord.


131
OP


136
ord.
OP
increase pressure
cresc.


D
141
ord.
fp
ord.
fp
ord.
ff
ord.
ff
146
ff
ff
SP
mp
mp
pp
151
fp
fp
ff dim.
ord.
ff dim.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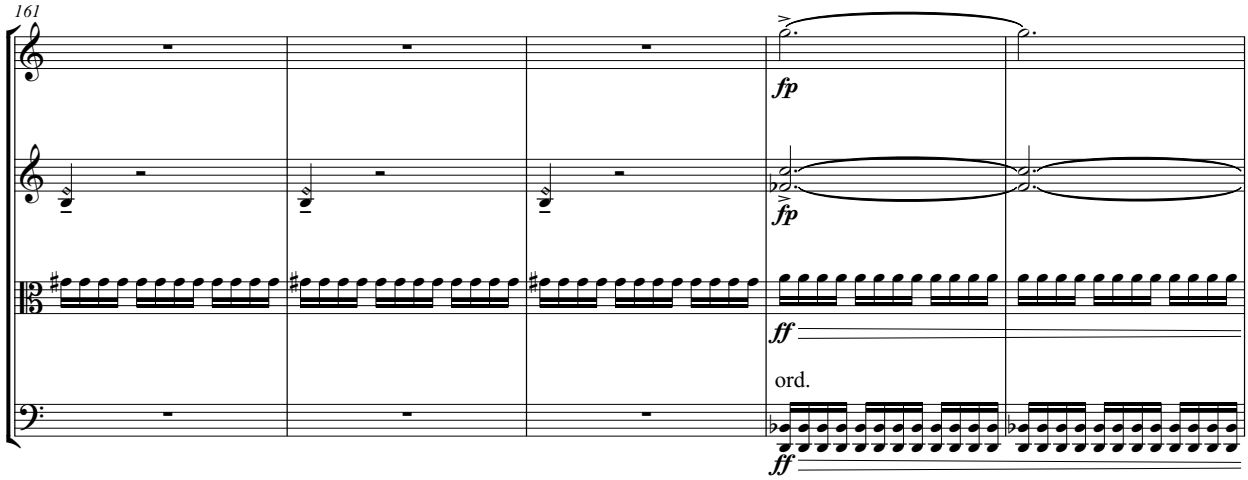
ff
SP
mp
mp
pp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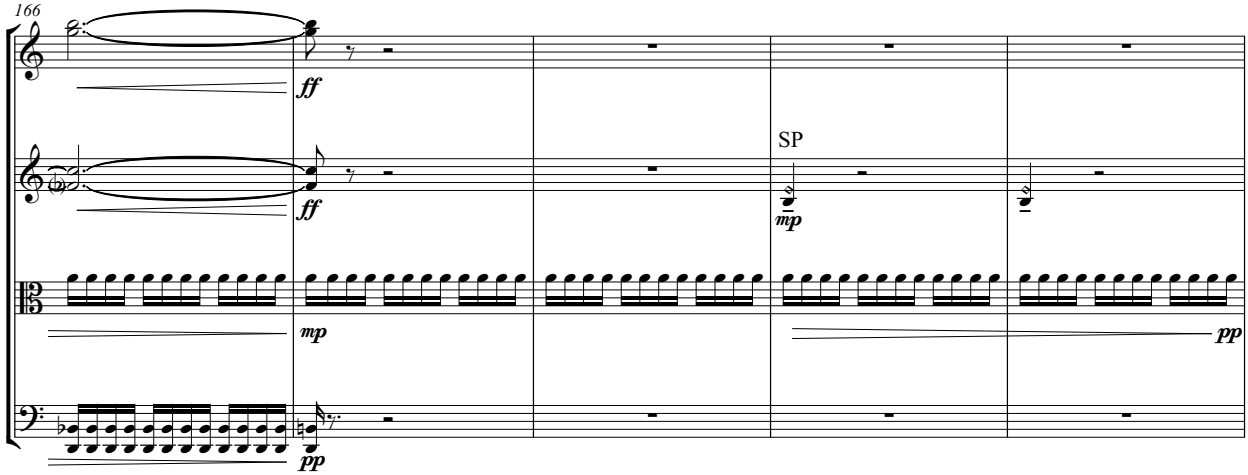
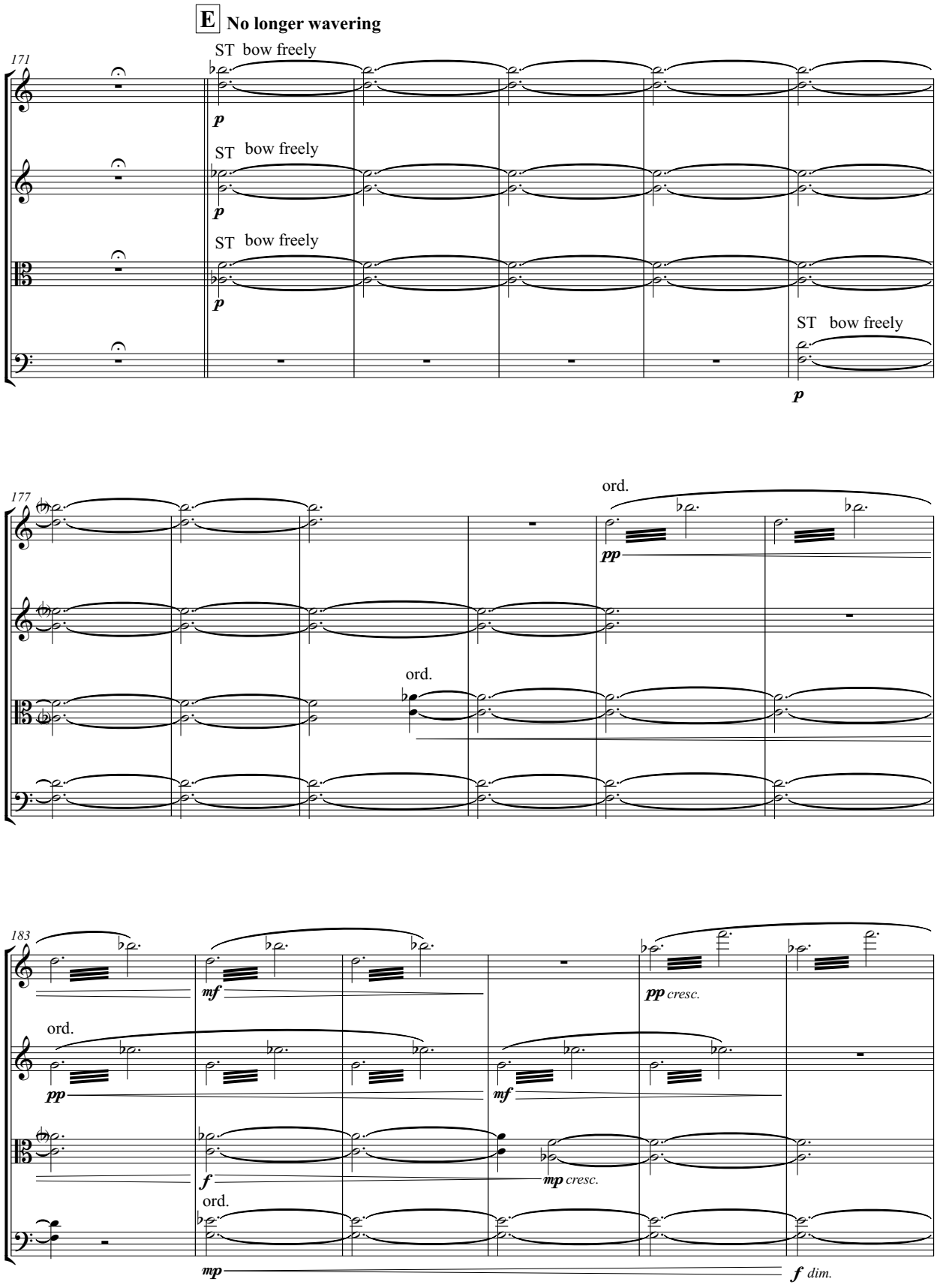
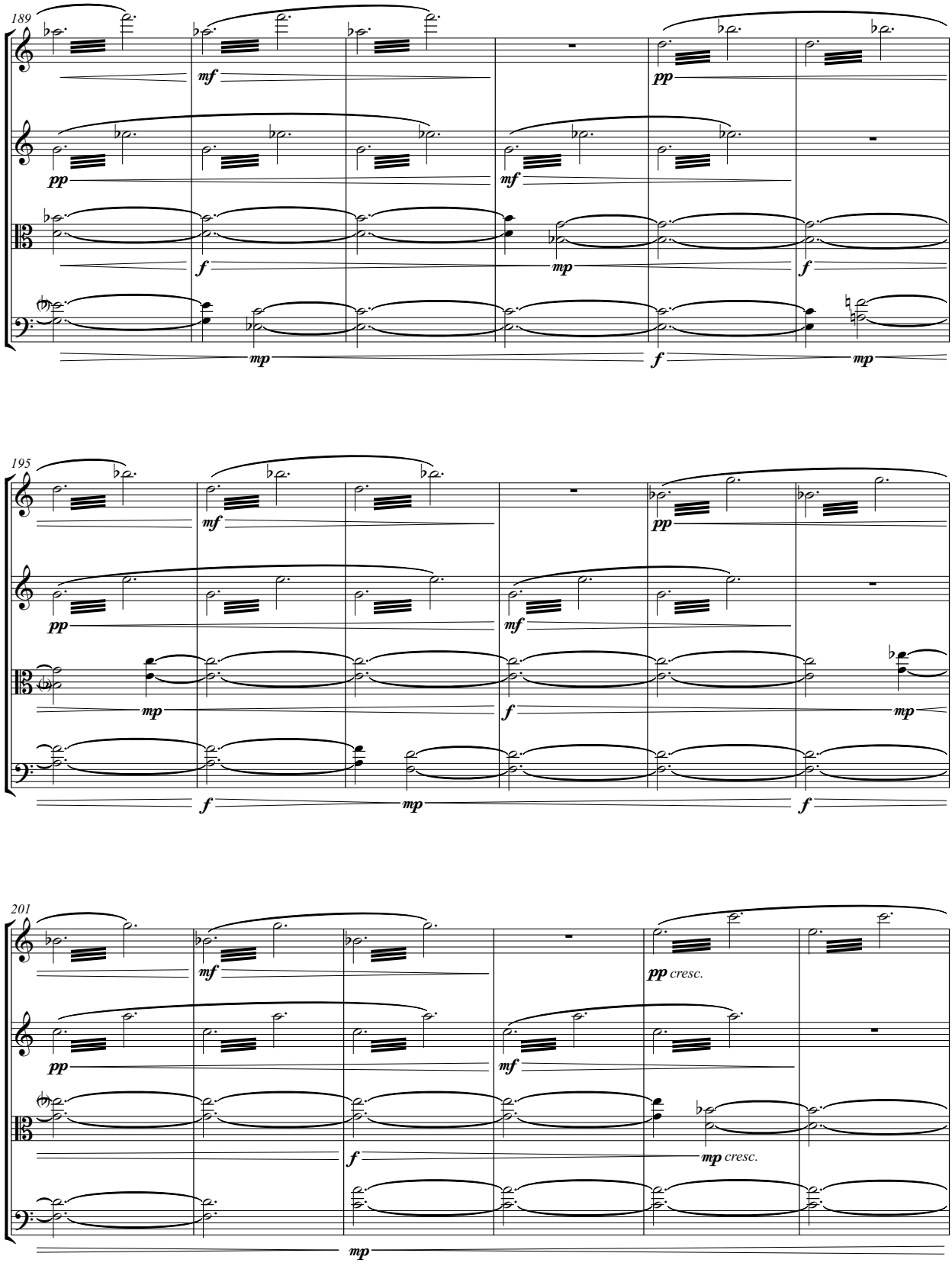
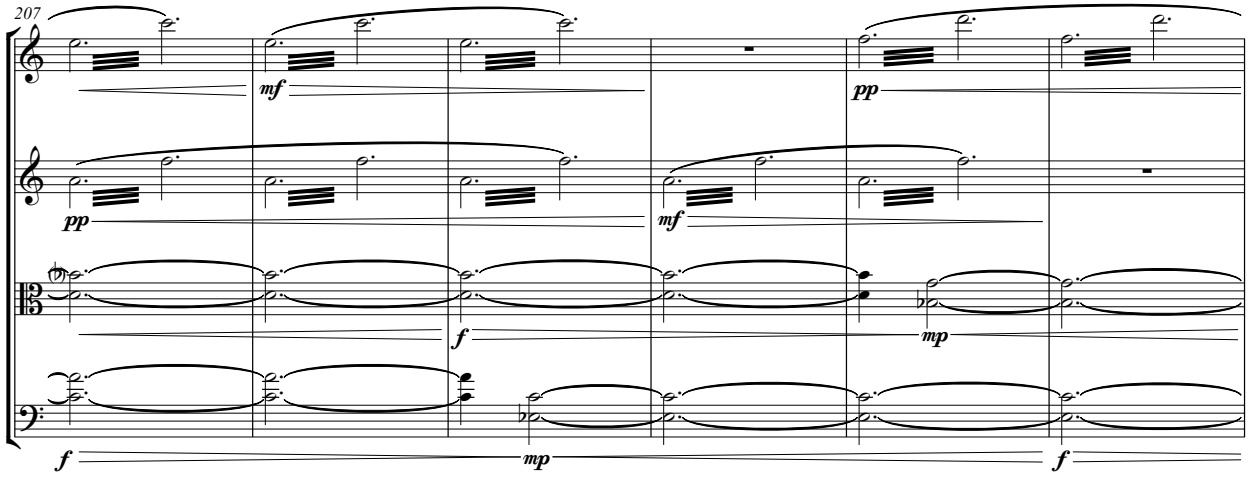
fp
ff
ord.
ff


166
ff
ff
SP
mp
mp
pp
pp


E No longer wavering
171
ST bow freely
p
ST bow freely
p
ST bow freely
p
ST bow freely
p
177
ord.
pp
ord.
183
mf
pp cresc.
ord.
pp
mf
f
mp cresc.
ord.
mp
f dim.


189
mf
pp
pp
mf
f
mp
f
mp
mp
f
195
mf
pp
pp
mf
mp
f
mp
f
mp
201
mf
pp
pp cresc.
mf
f
mp cresc.
mp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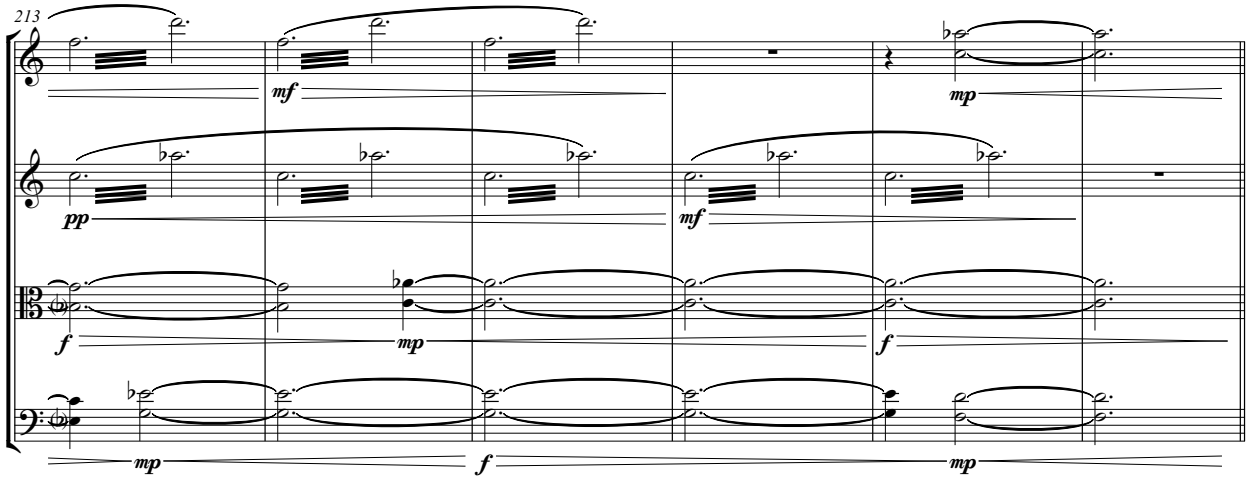
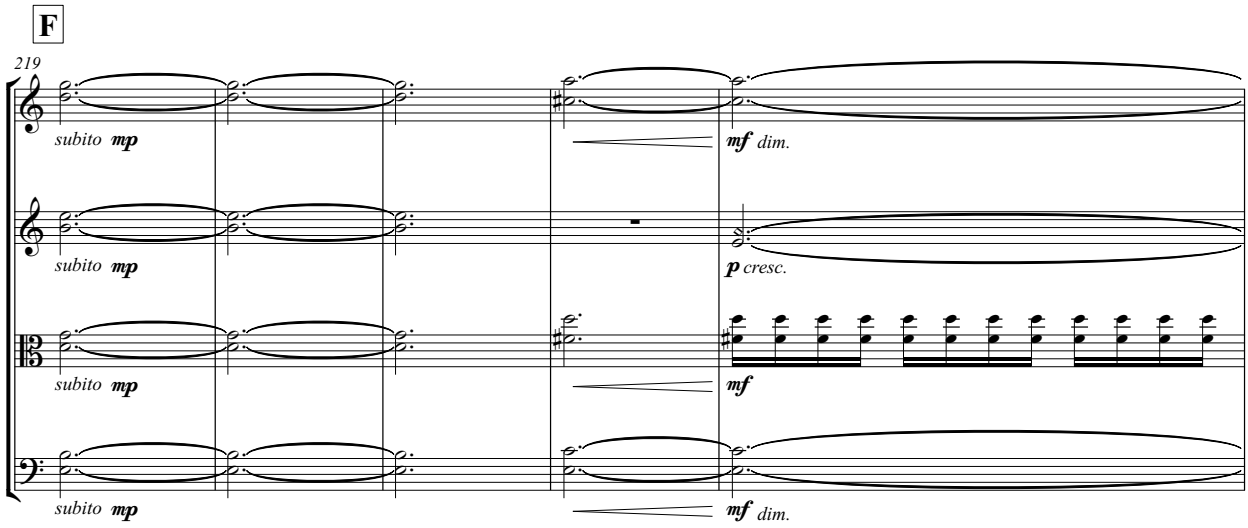
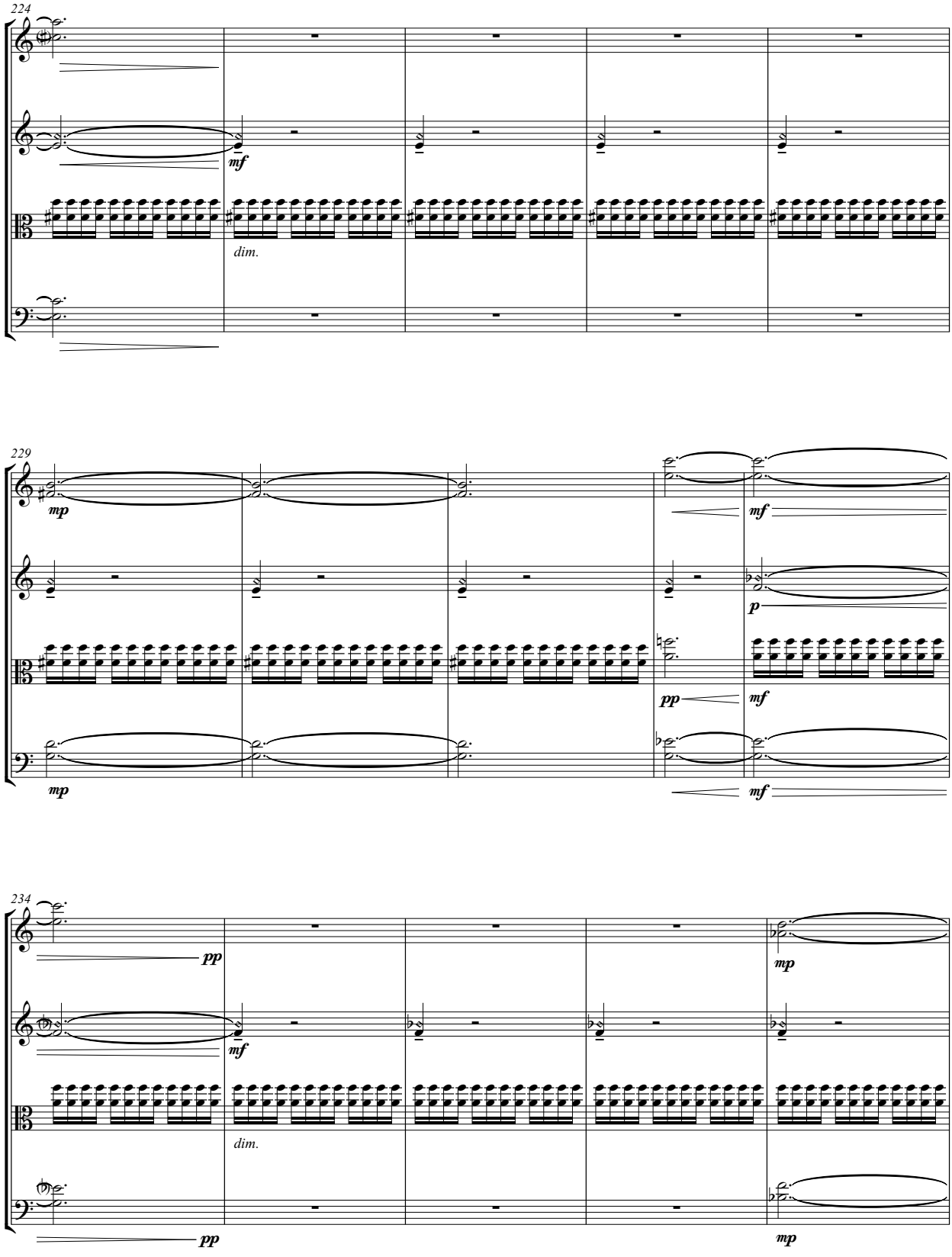
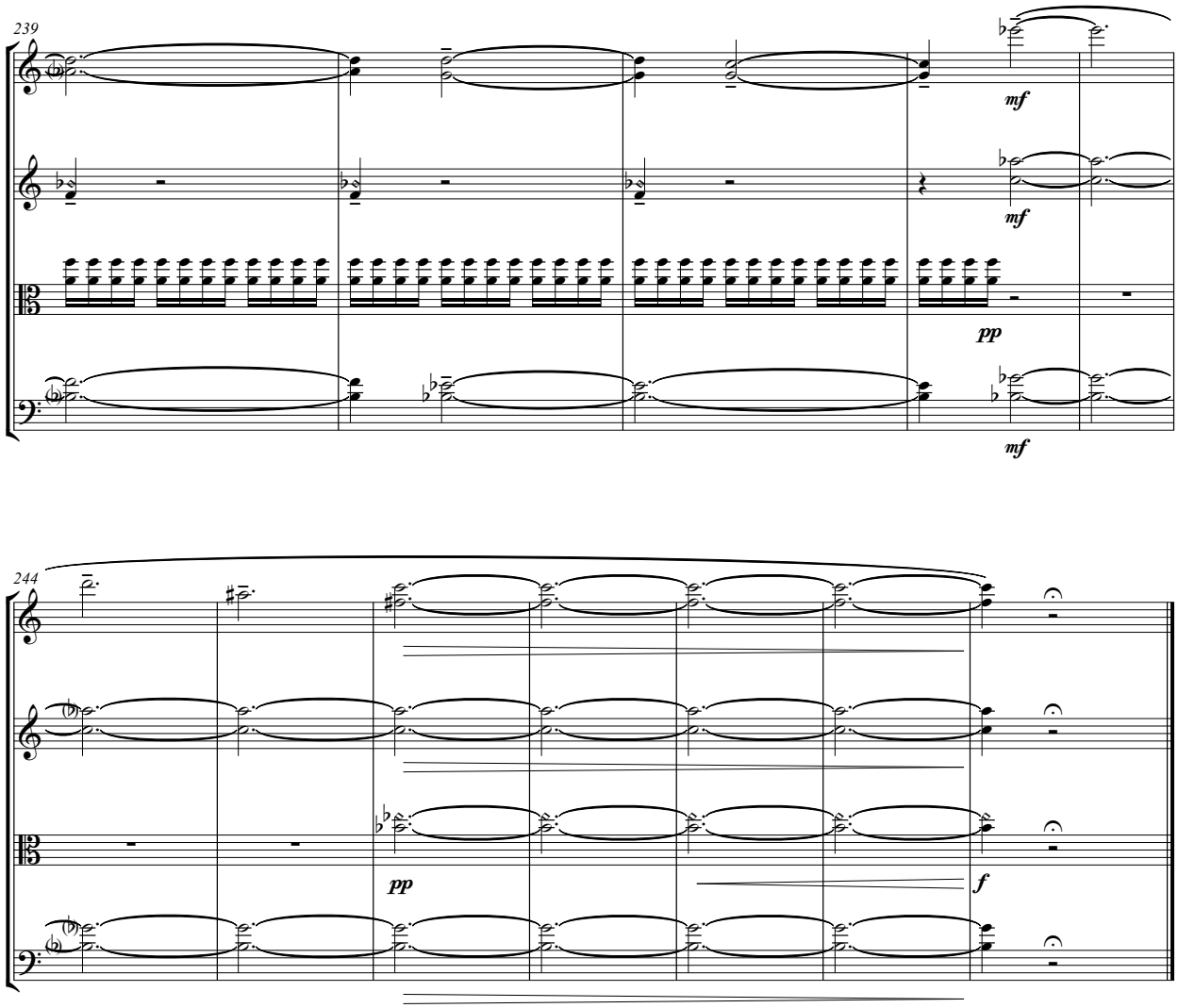
mf
pp
pp
mf
f
mp
f
mp
f

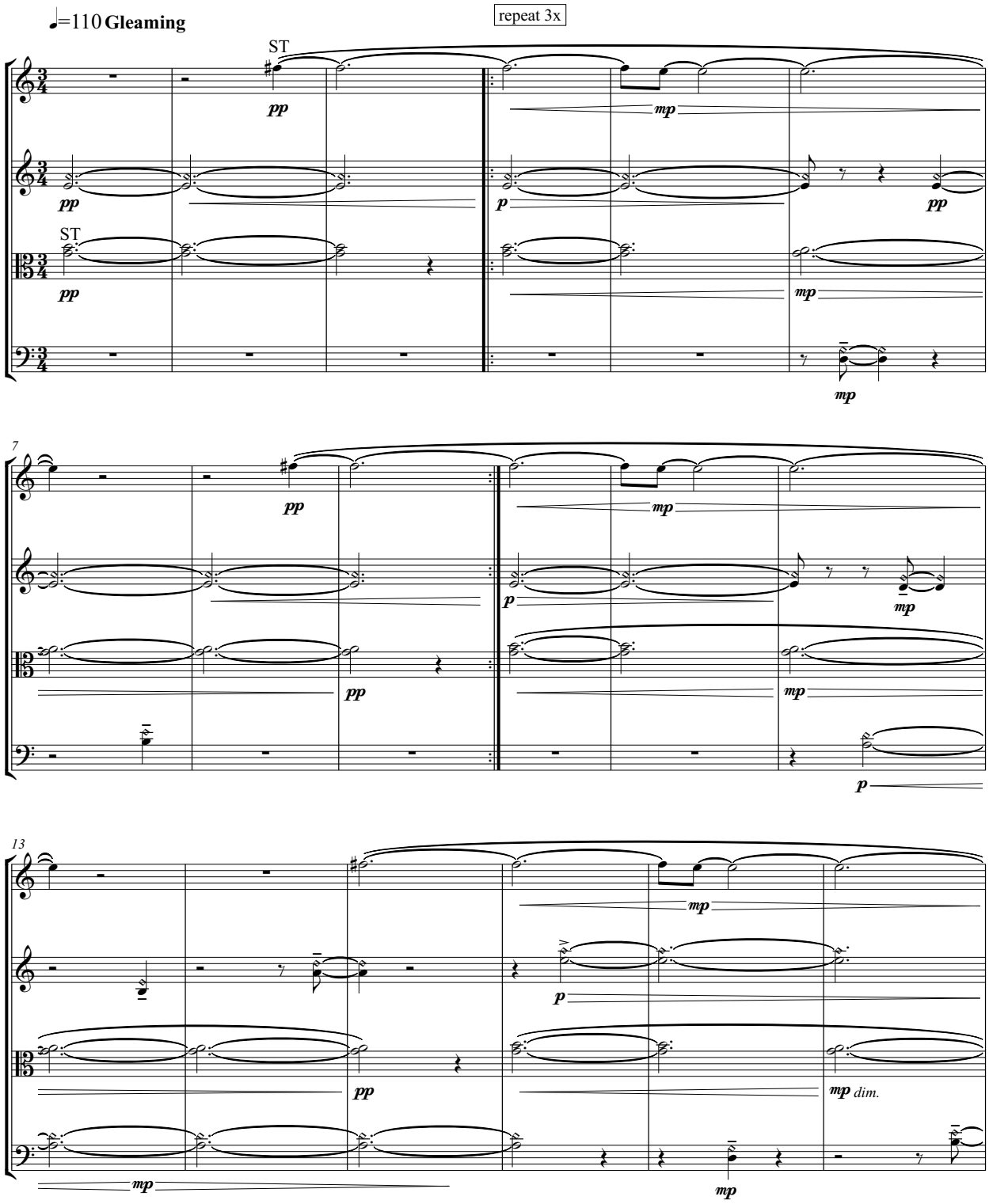

213
mf
mp
pp
mf
f
mp
f
mp
mp


F
219
subito mp
mf dim.
subito mp
p cresc.
subito mp
mf
subito mp
mf dim.

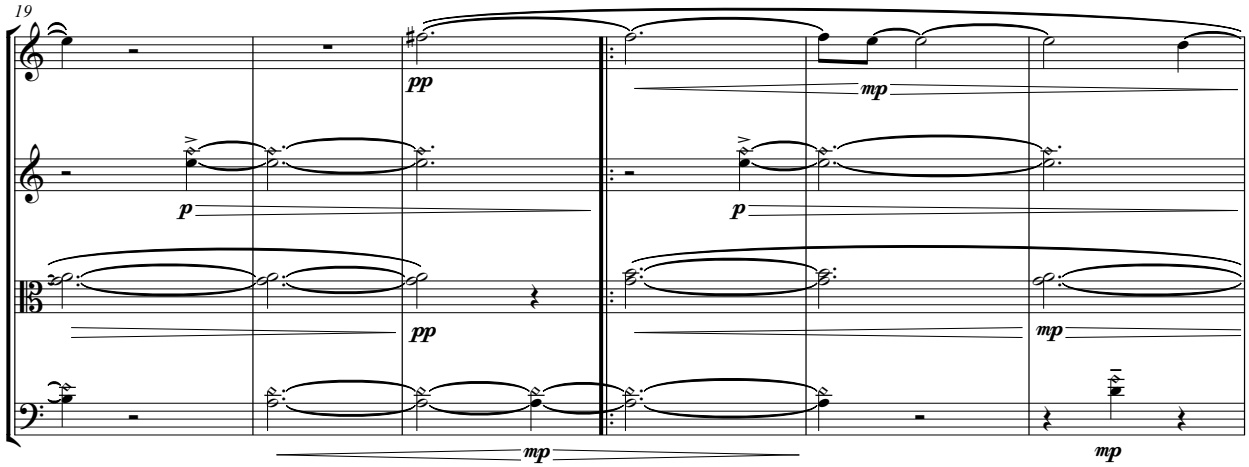

224
mf
dim.
229
mp
mf
p
pp
mf
mp
mf
234
pp
mf
dim.
mp
pp
mp


239
mf
mf
pp
mf
244
pp
f

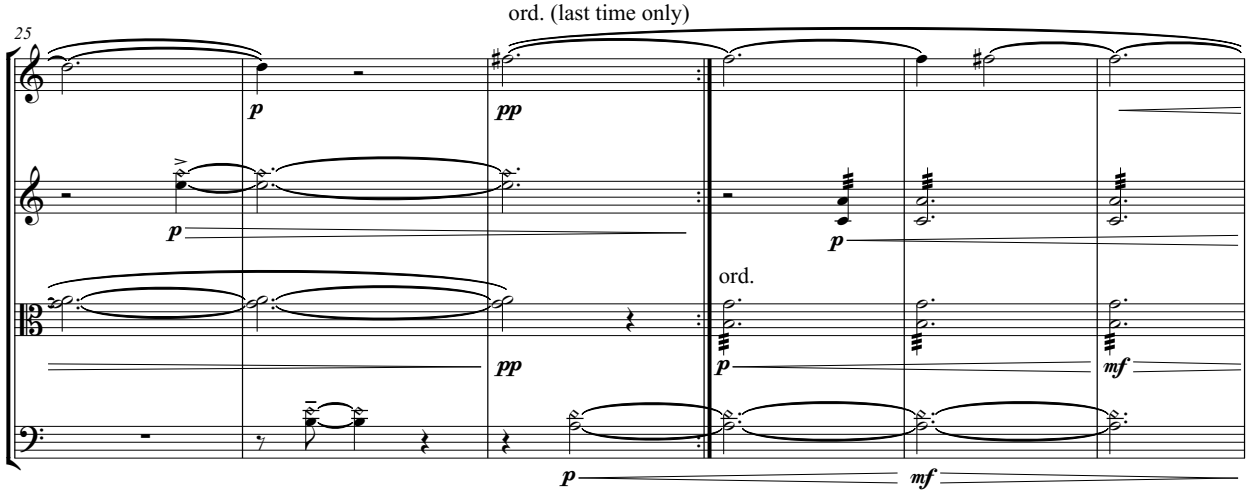
II. Chorus

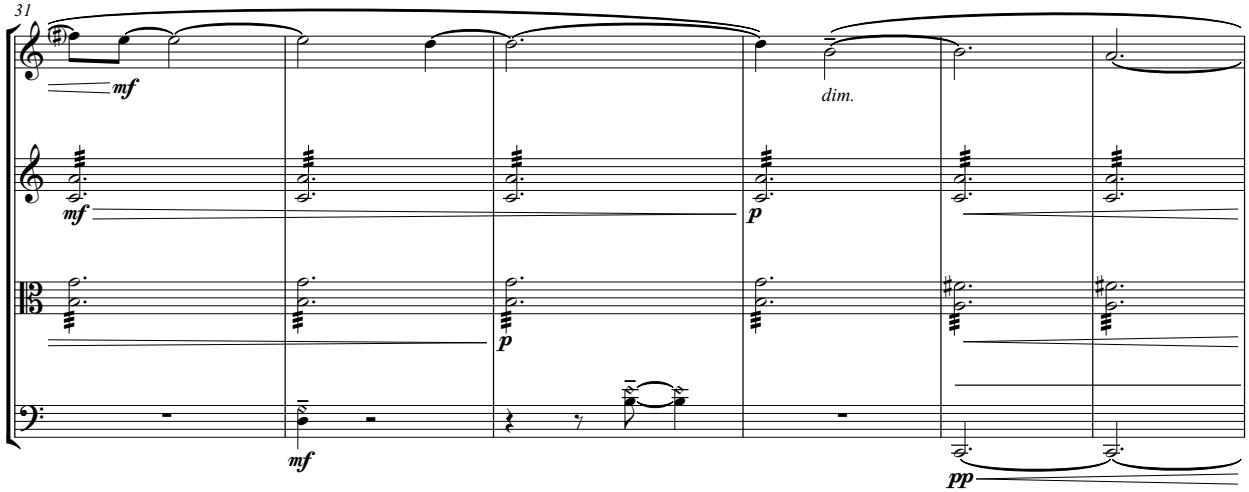


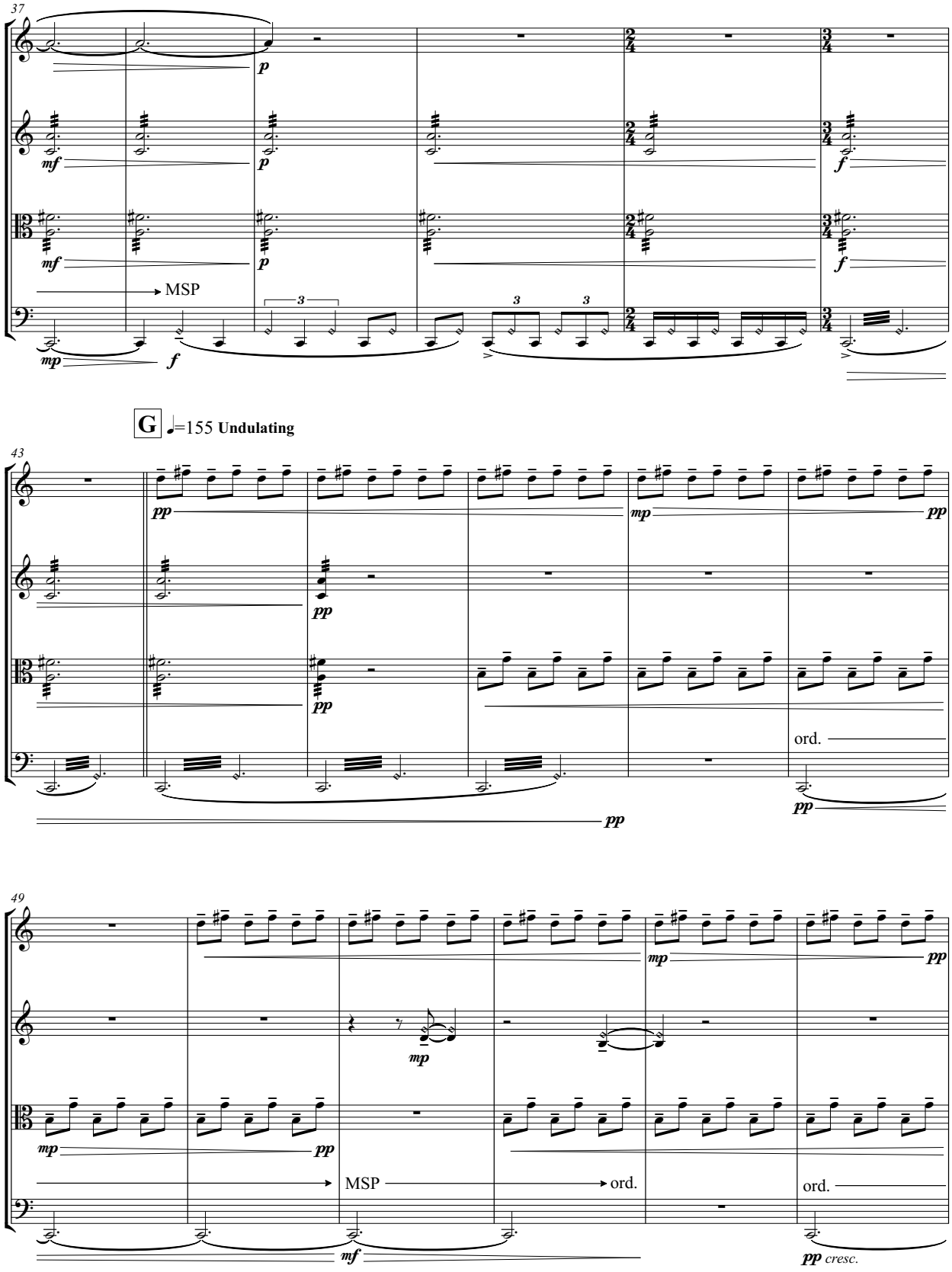
repeat 3x

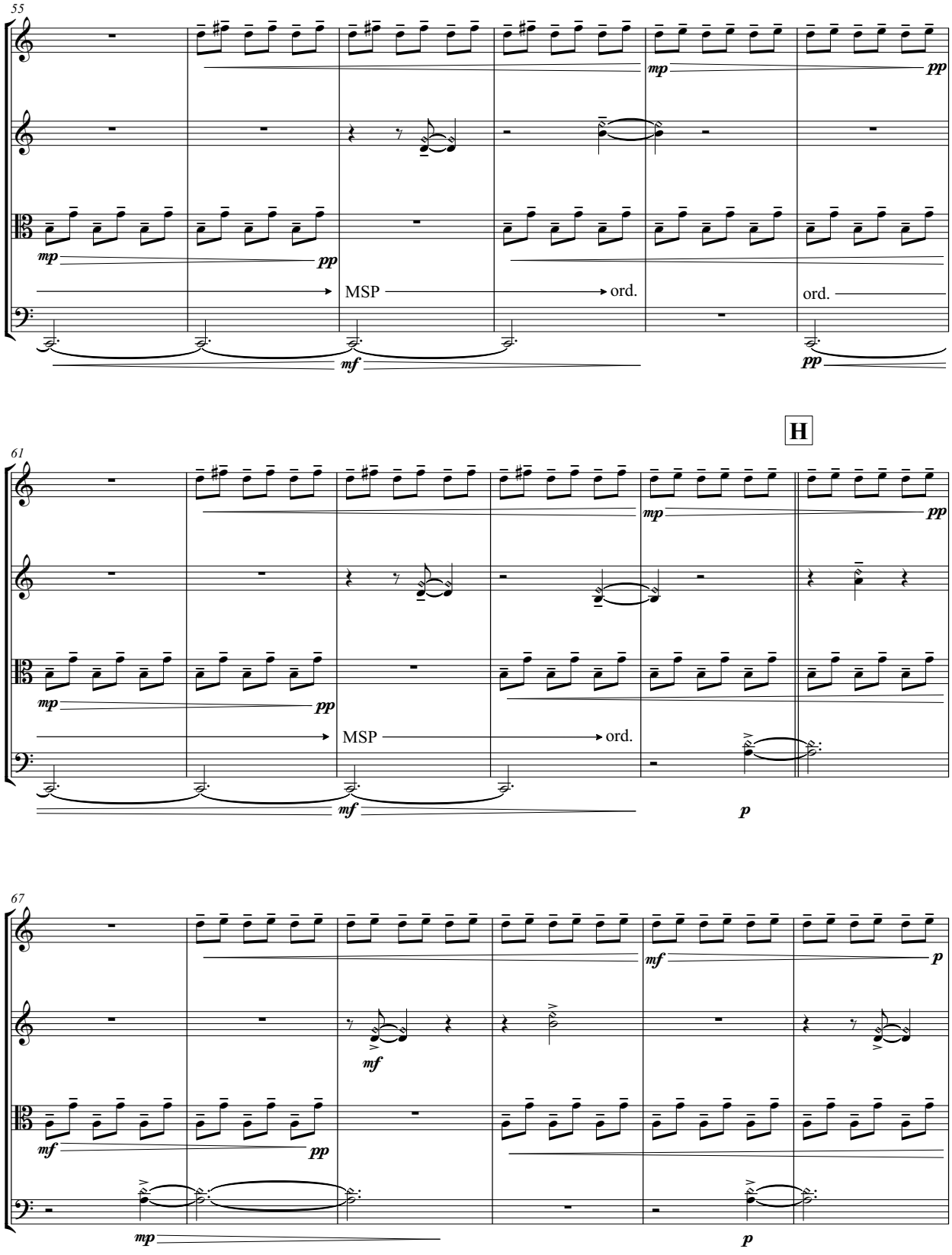


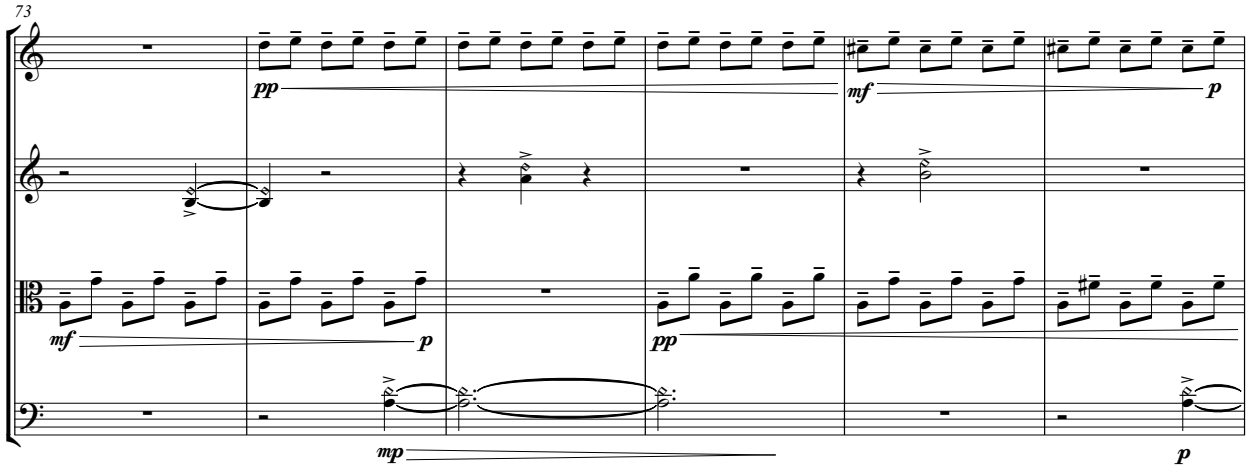
ord. (last time only)

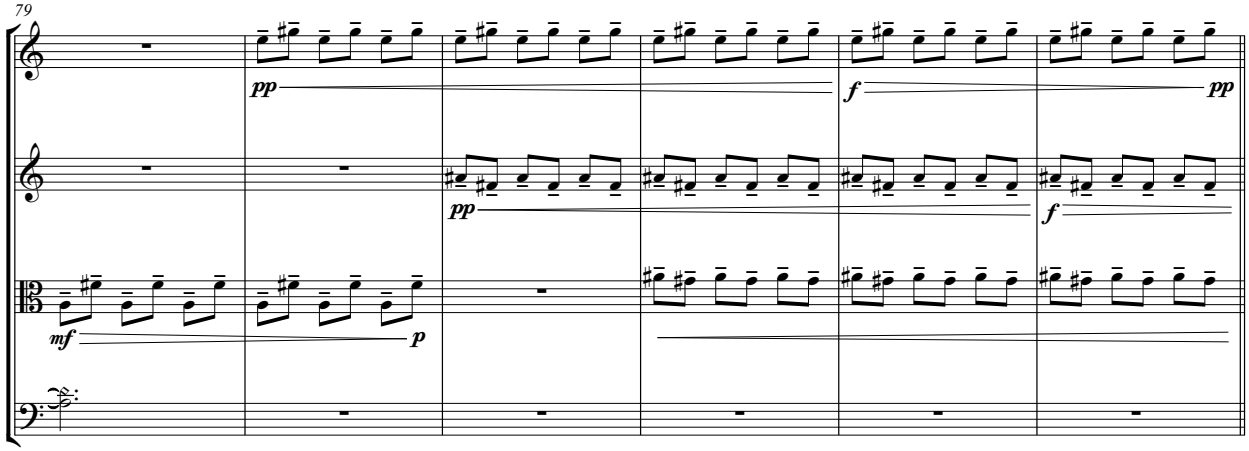


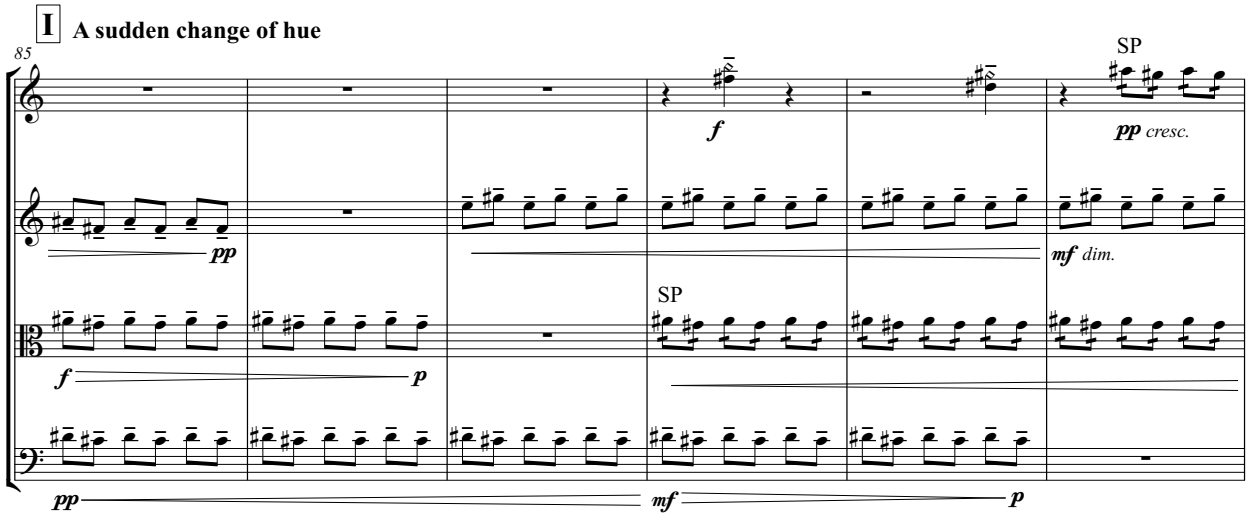


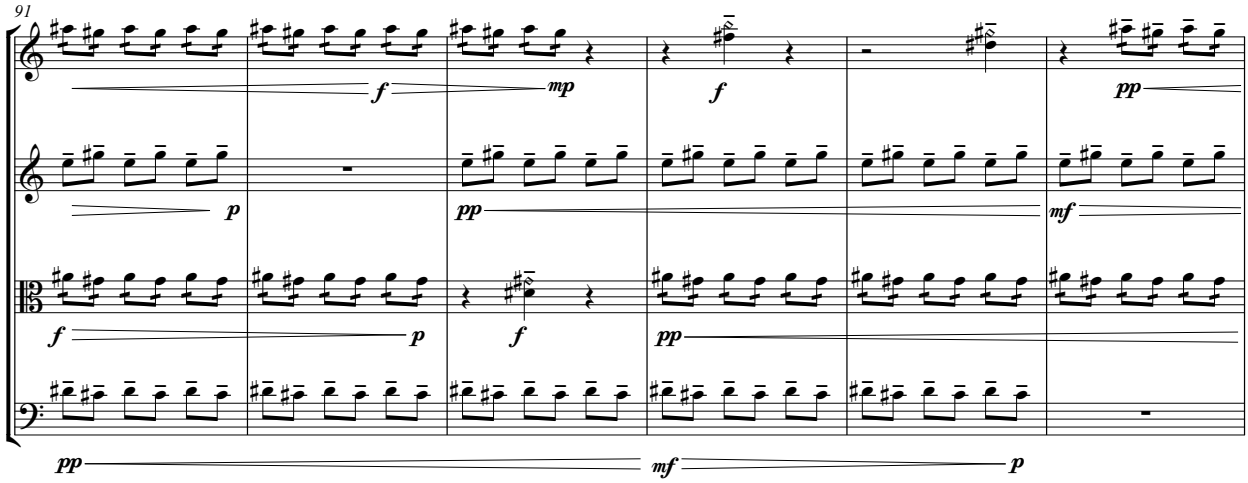

37
p
mf
p
f
mf
p
f
MSP
3
3
3
mp
f
G
♩=155 Undulating
43
pp
mp
pp
pp
pp
ord.
pp
pp
49
mp
pp
mp
mp
pp
MSP
ord.
ord.
mf
pp cresc.


55
mp
pp
MSP
ord.
ord.
mf
pp
H
61
mp
pp
MSP
ord.
mf
p
67
mf
p
mf
mf
pp
mp
p

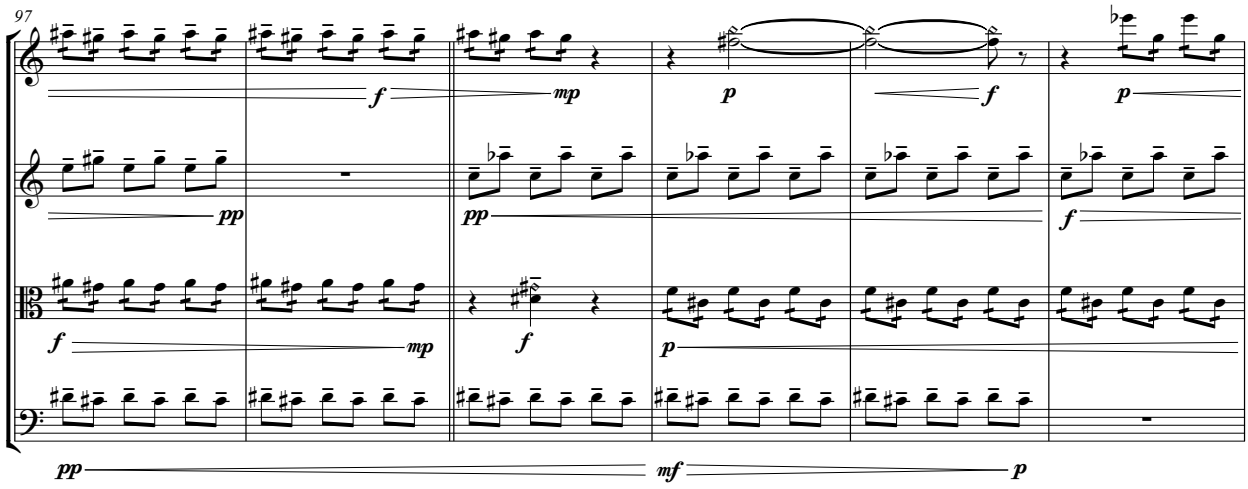

73
pp
mf
p
mf
p
mp
pp
p

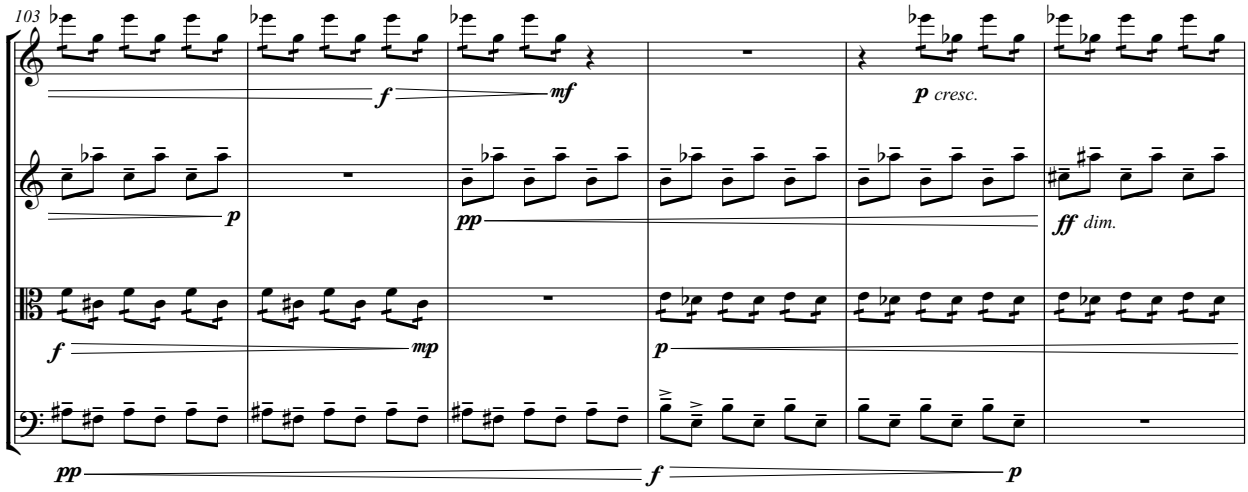

79
pp
mf
p
pp
pp
f
pp
f

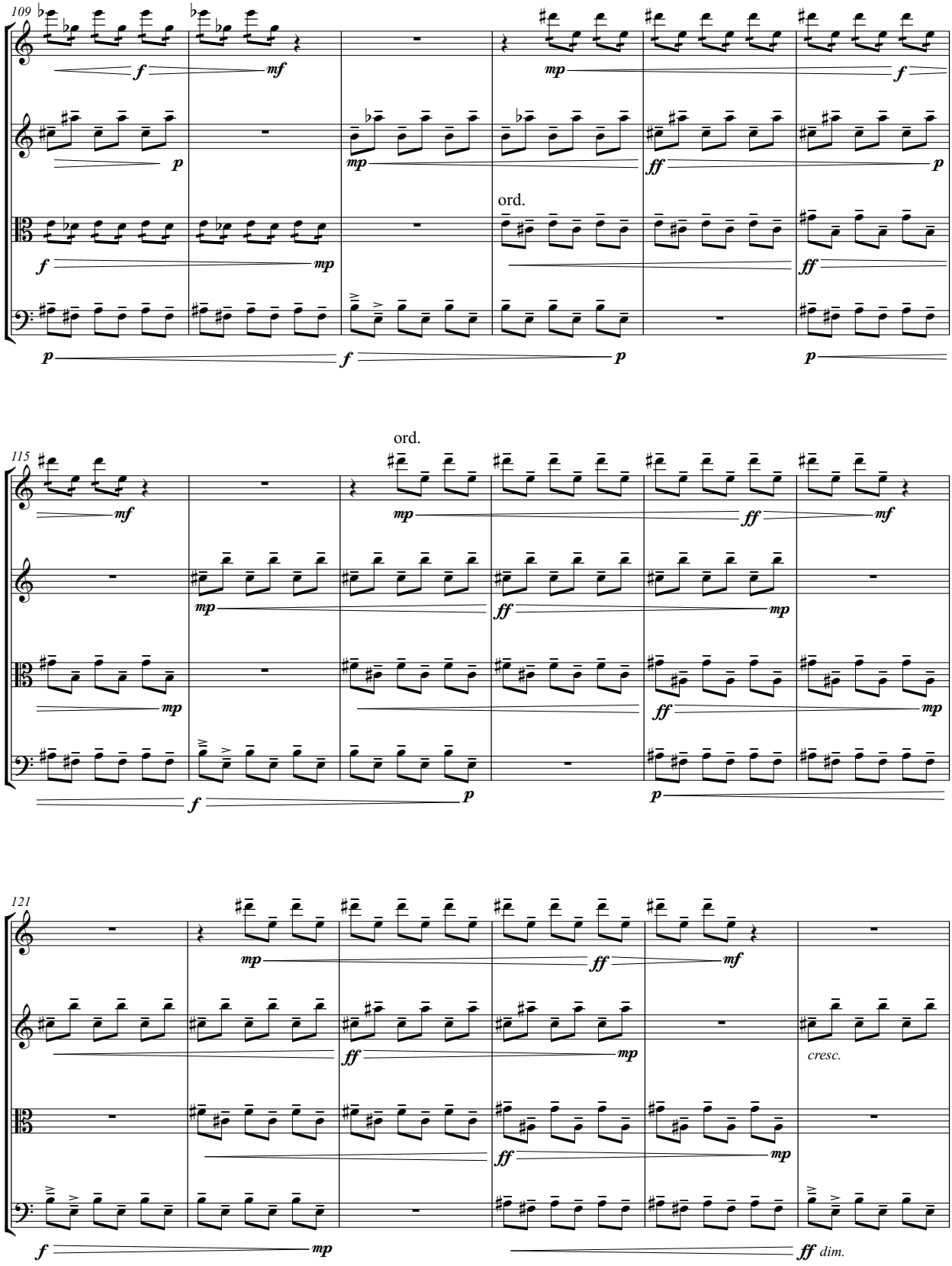

I
A sudden change of hue
85
pp
f
SP
pp cresc.
mf dim.
SP
f
p
pp
mf
p

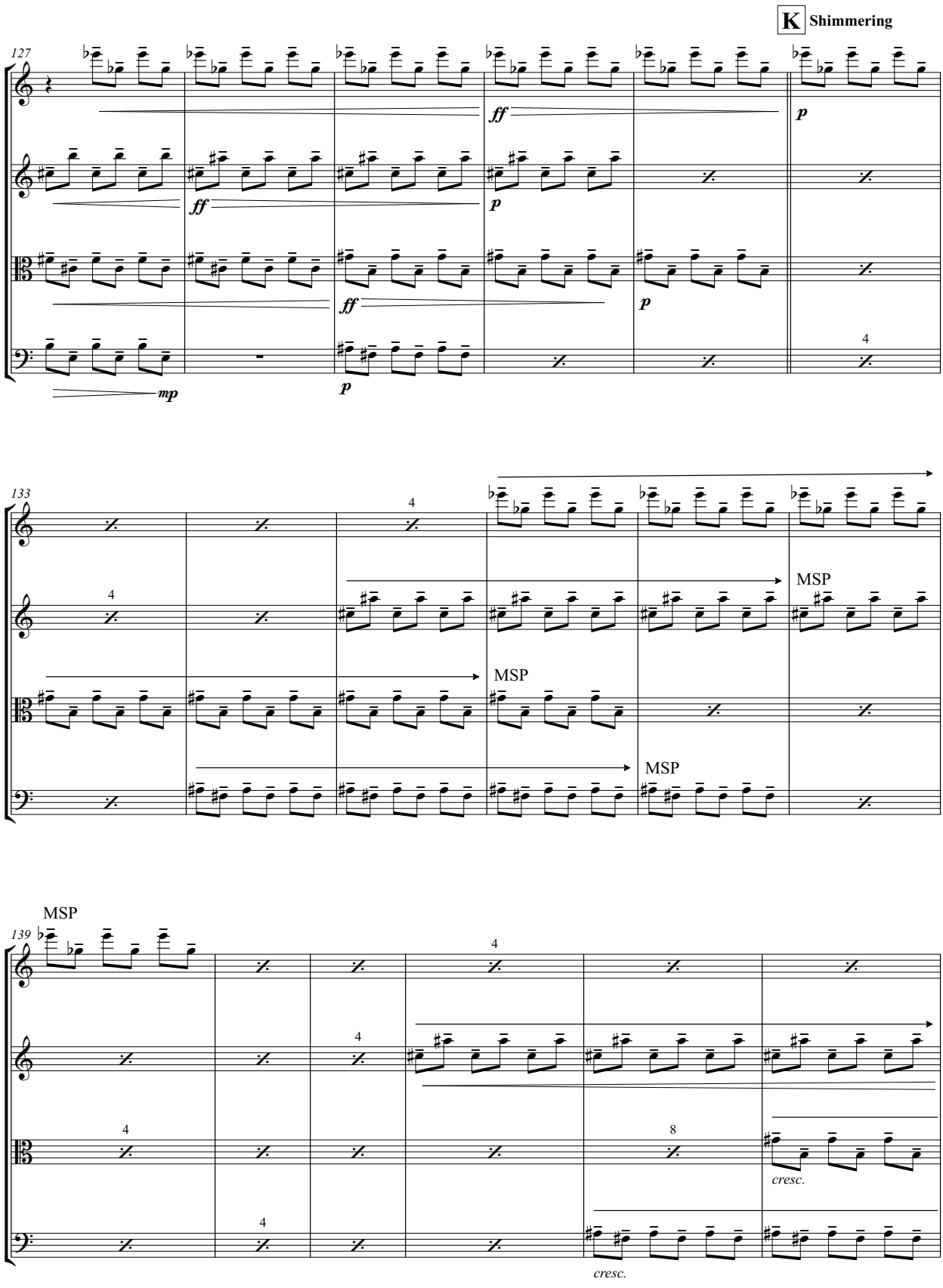

91
f
mp
f
pp
p
pp
mf
f
p
f
pp
pp
mf
p

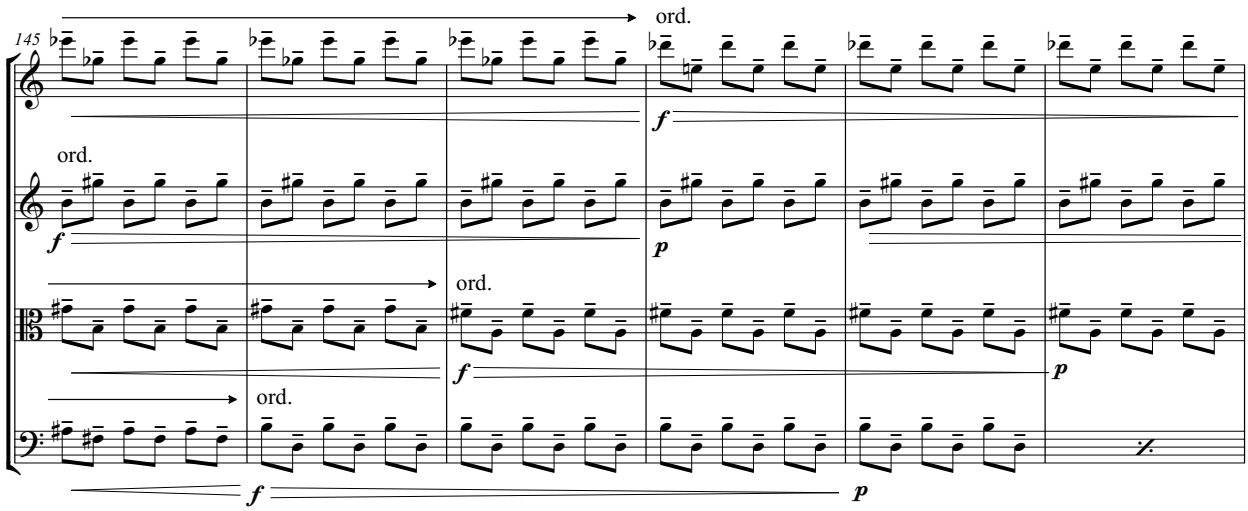
J **Strobing**

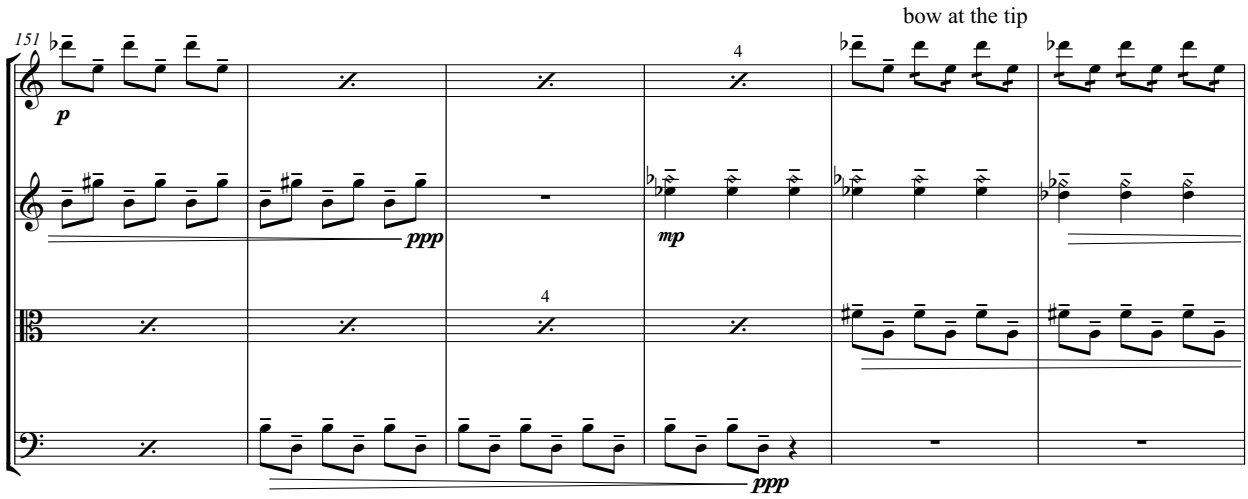

97
f
mp
p
f
p
pp
pp
f
mp
f
p
pp
mf
p


103
f
mf
p cresc.
p
pp
ff dim.
f
mp
p
pp
f
p

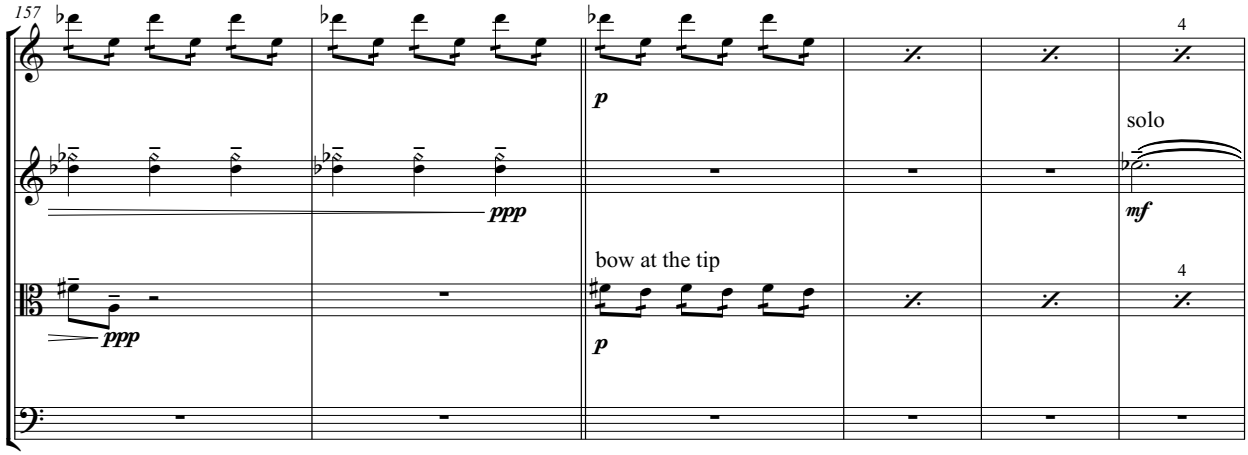

109
ord.
115
ord.
121
cresc.
dim.

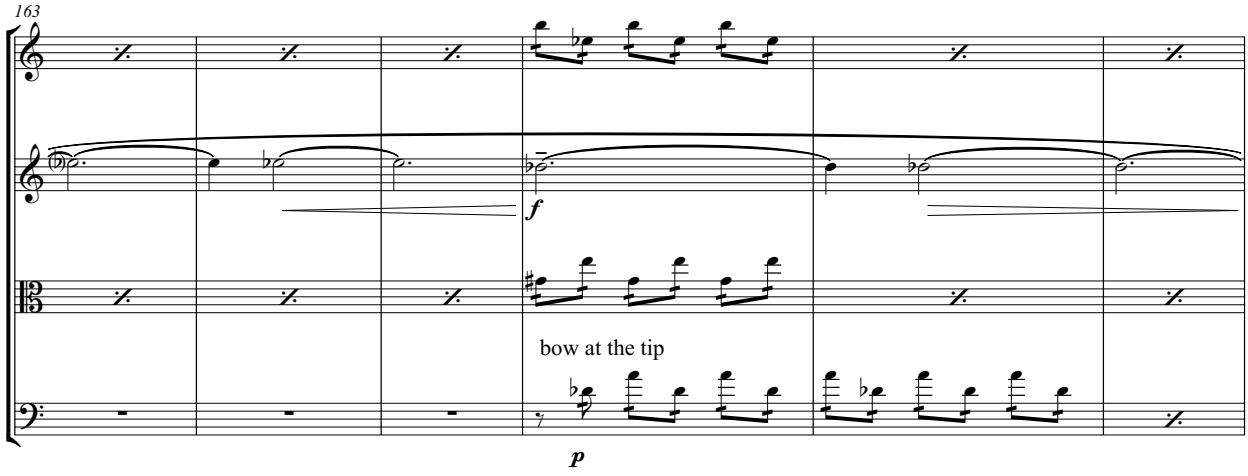

K Shimmering
127
ff
p
mp
133
MSP
139
cresc.

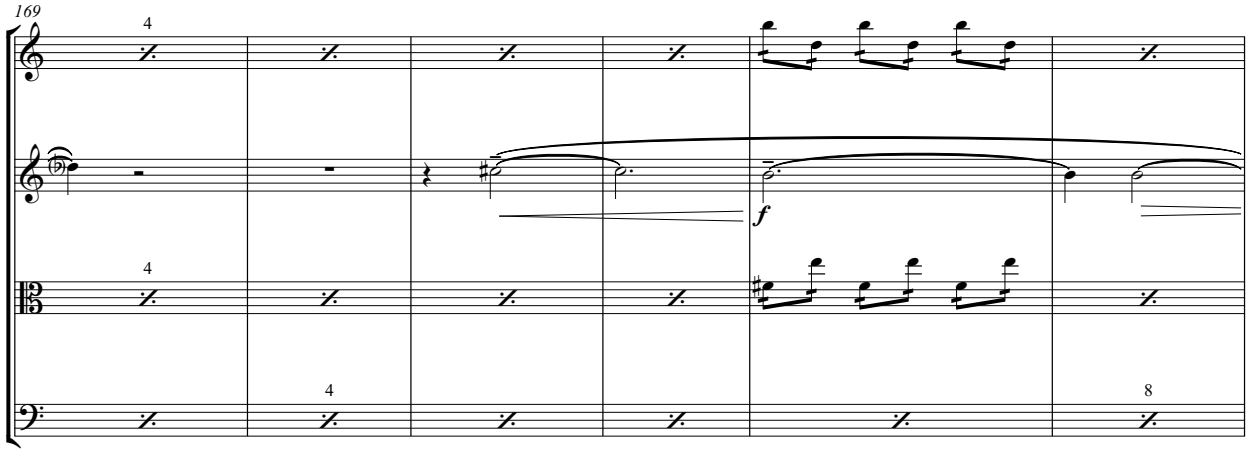


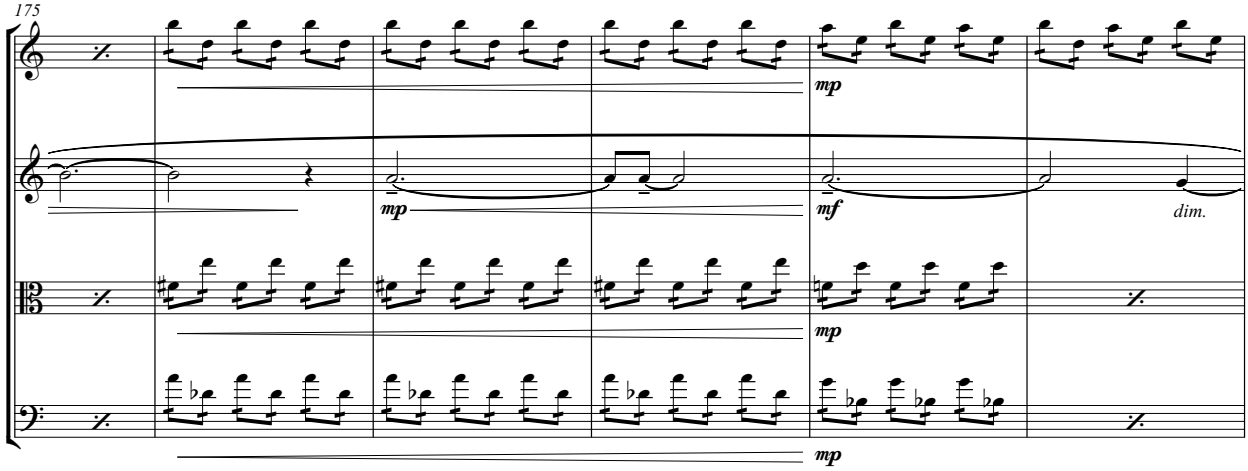


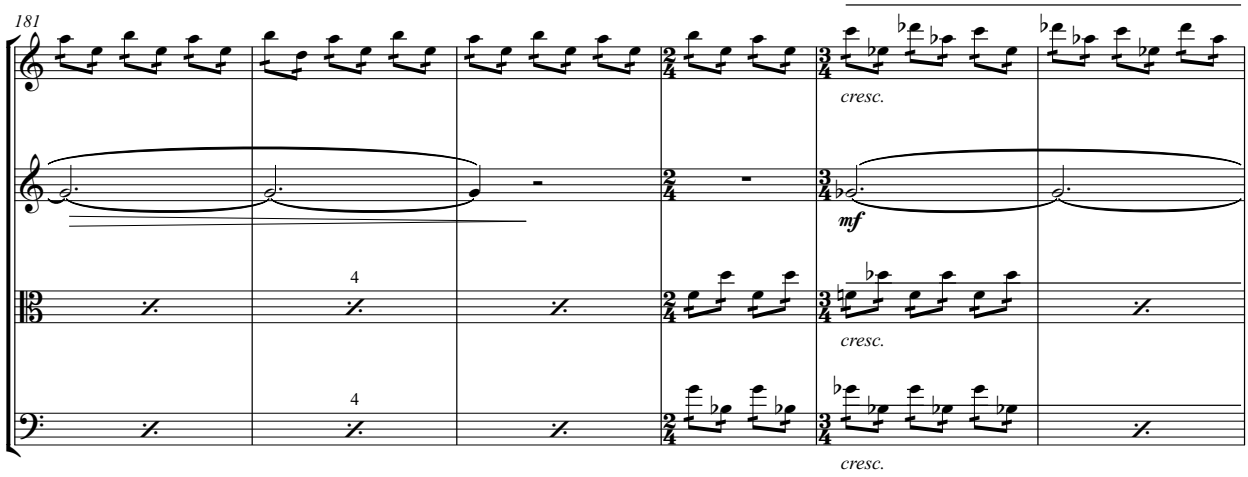
L **Brilliantly**

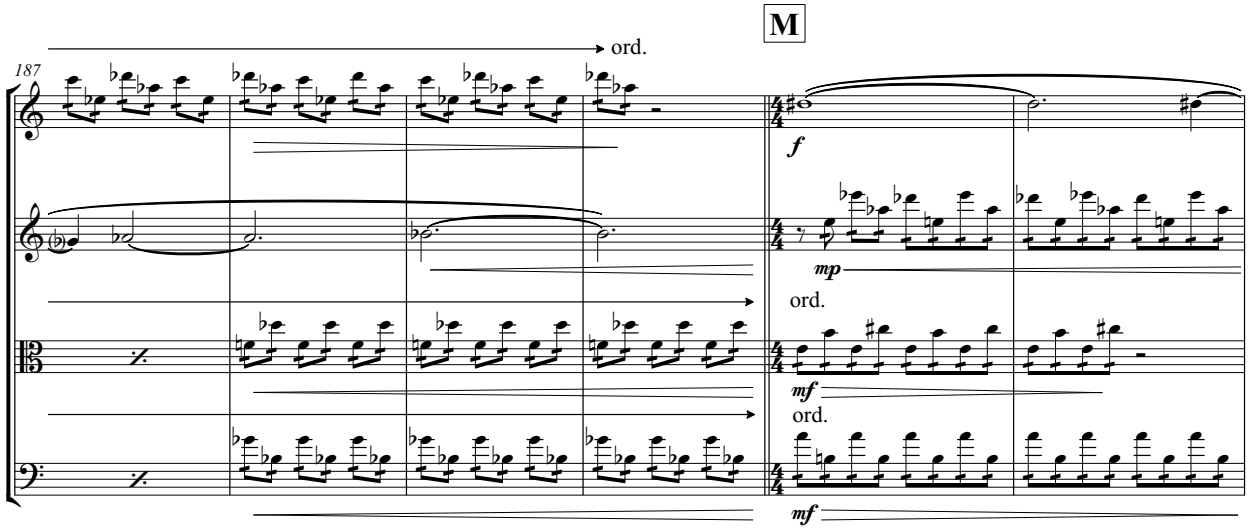


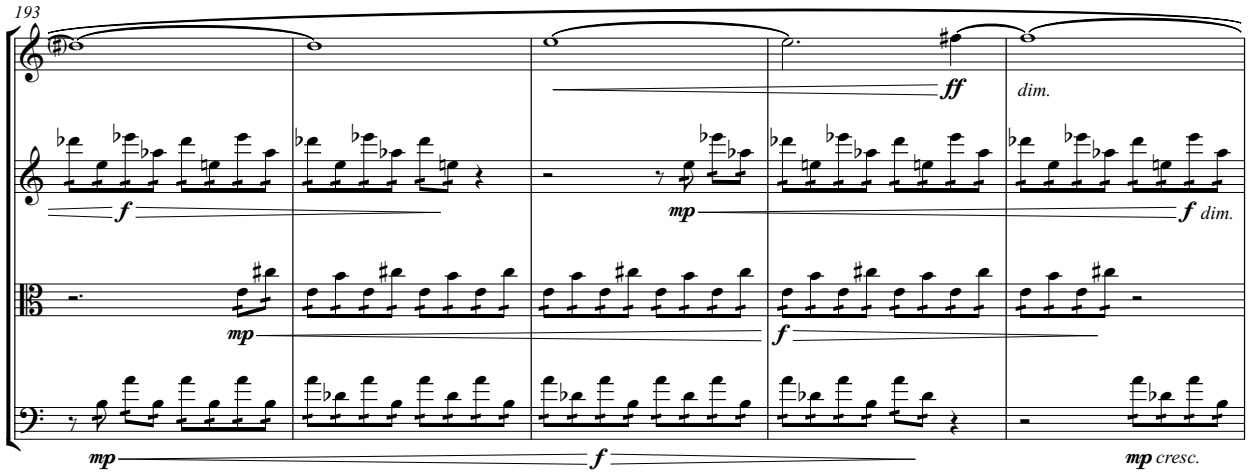

163
f
bow at the tip
p

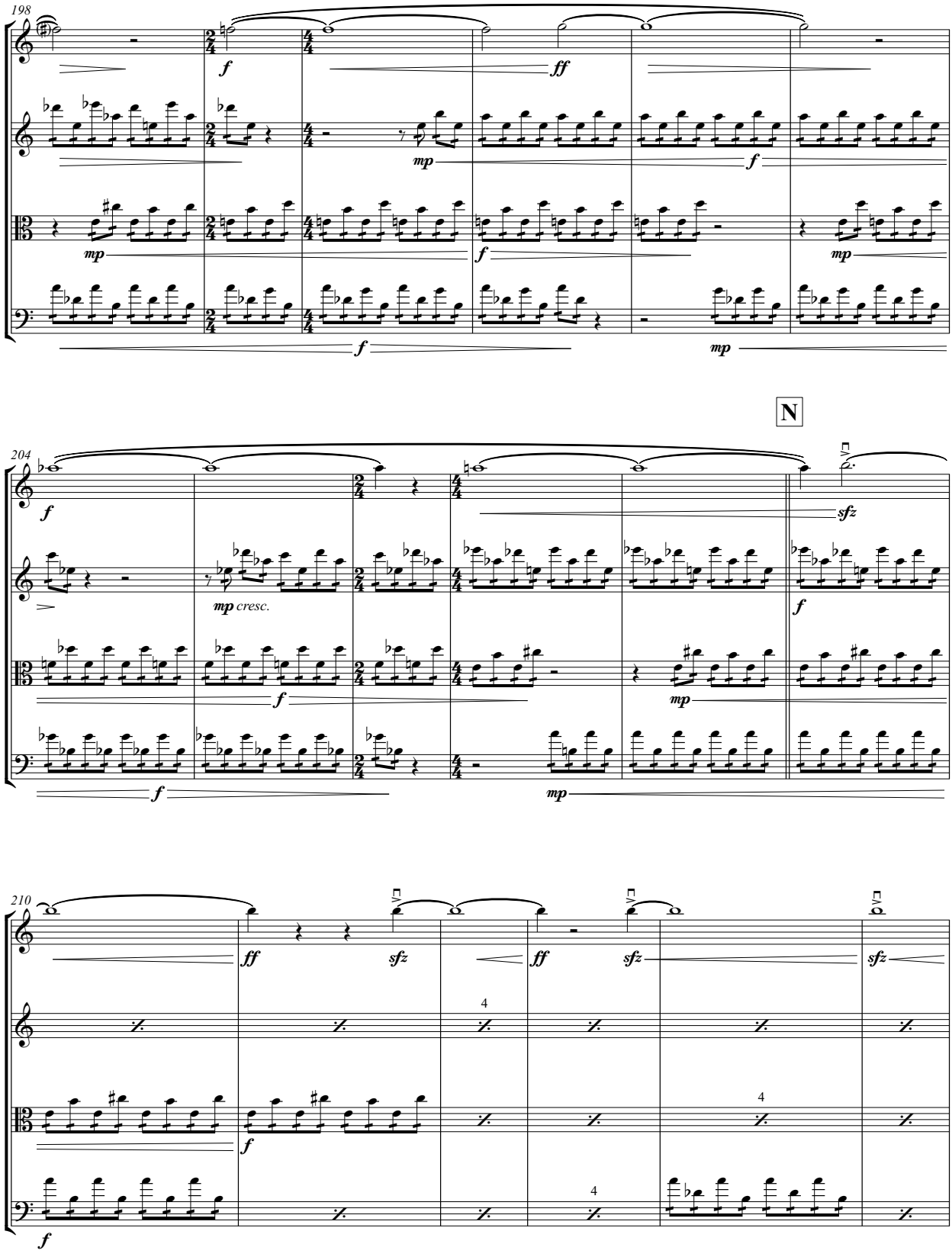

169
4
4
4
8
f

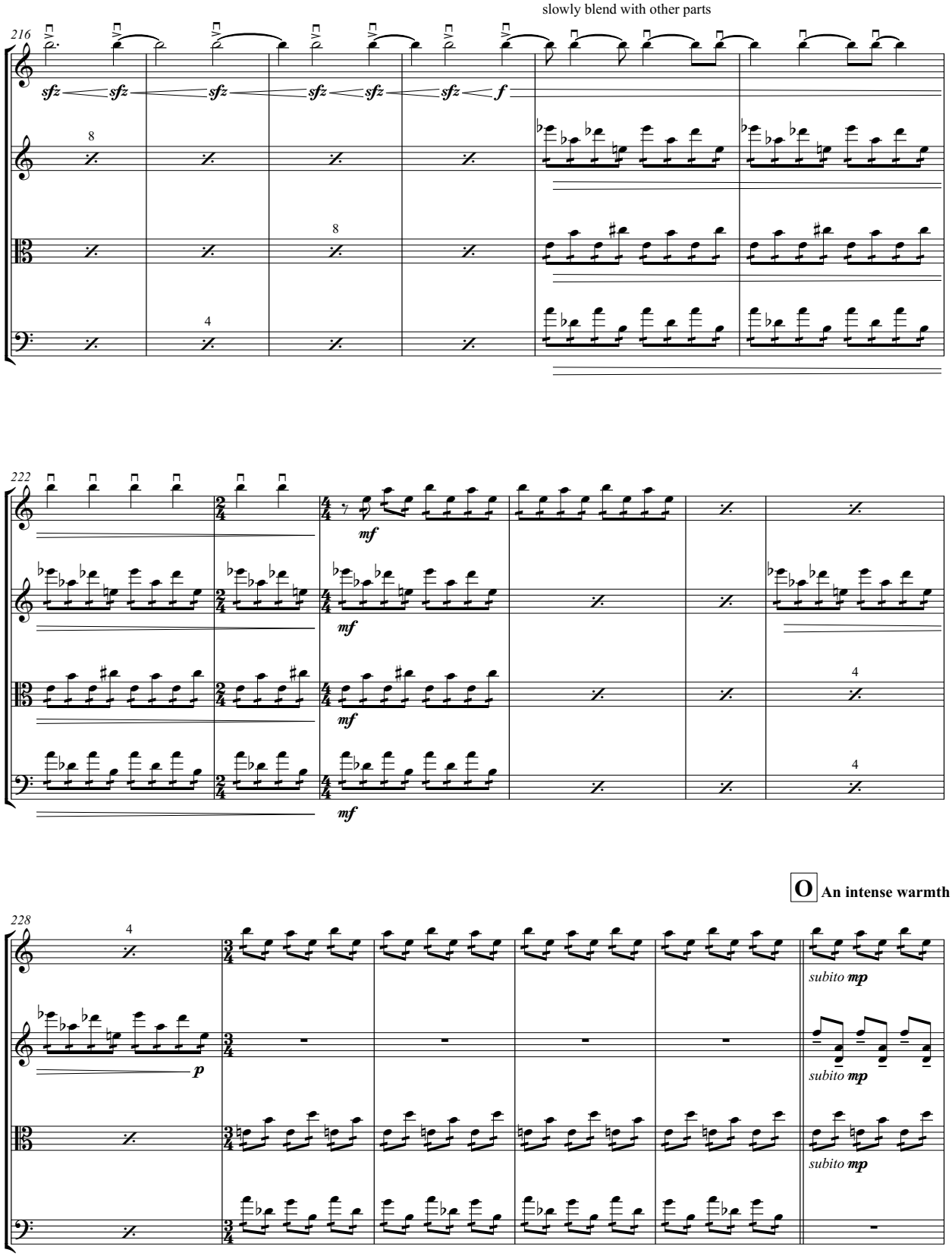

175
mp
mp
mf
dim.
mp
mp

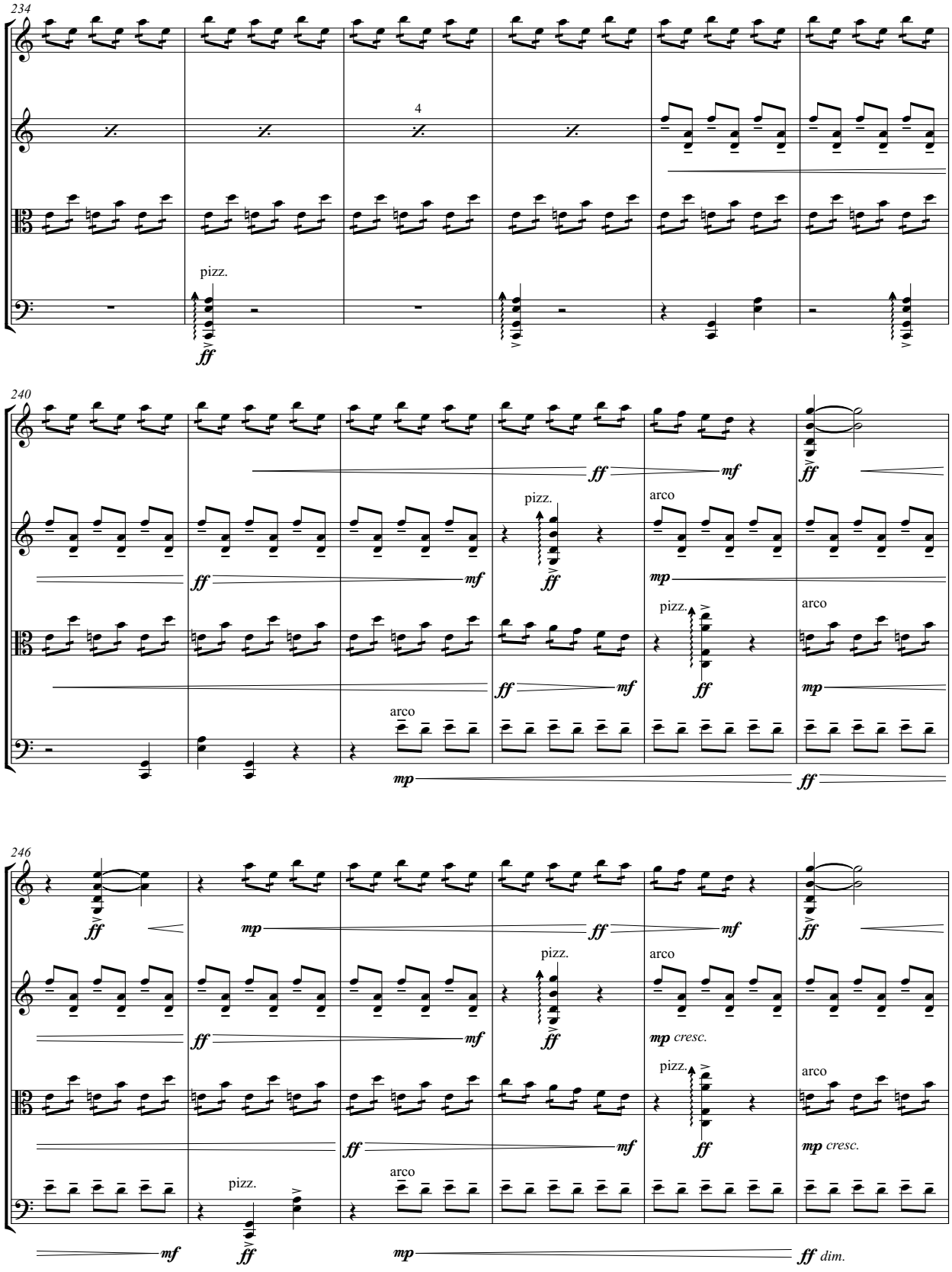

181
cresc.
mf
4
cresc.
4
cresc.

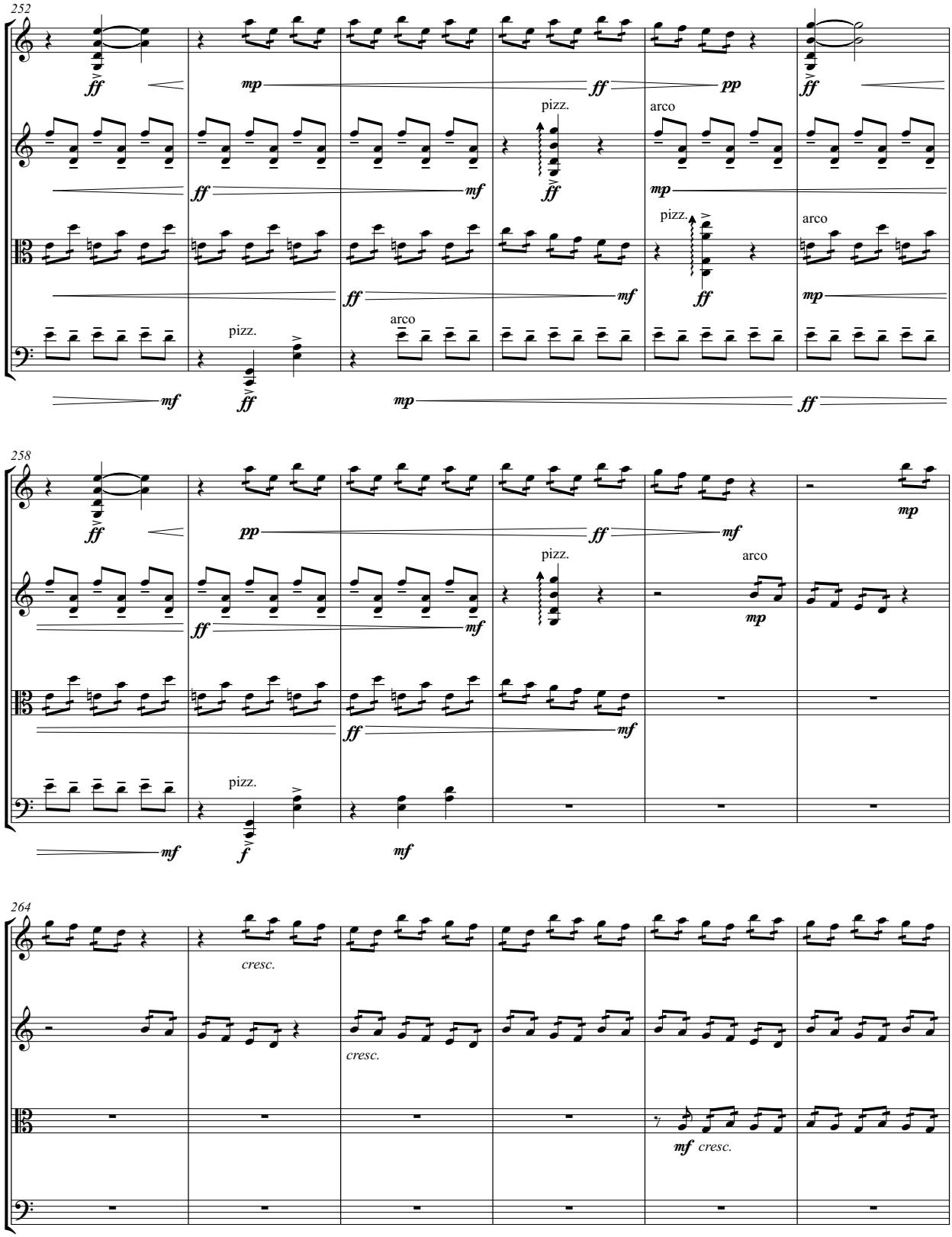

M
ord.
187
f
mp
ord.
mf
ord.
mf

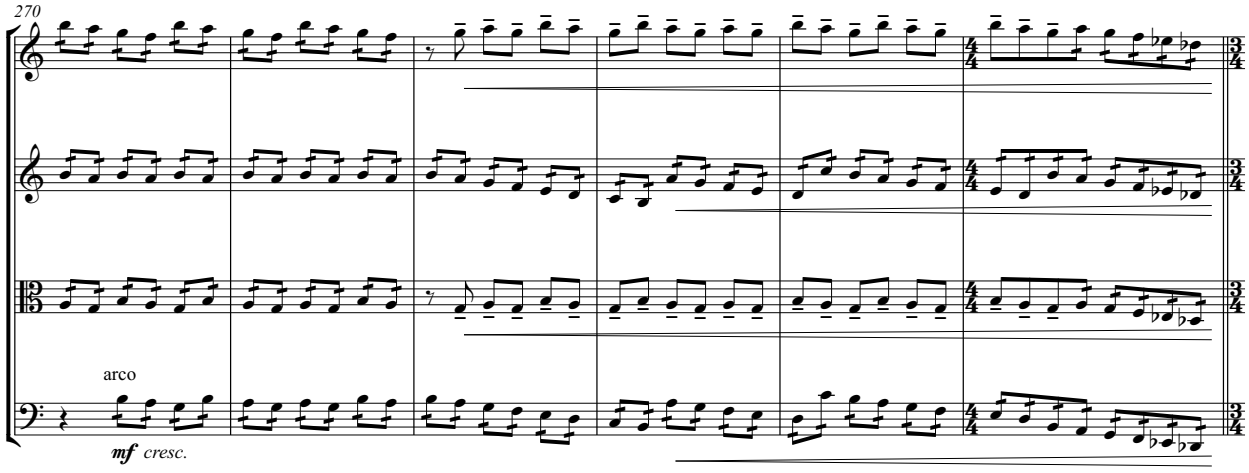

193
ff
dim.
f
mp
f dim.
mp
f
mp
f
mp cresc.


198
f
ff
mp
f
mp
f
mp
f
mp
N
204
f
sfz
mp cresc.
f
f
mp
mp
f
210
ff
sfz
ff
sfz
sfz
4
4
4
f
f

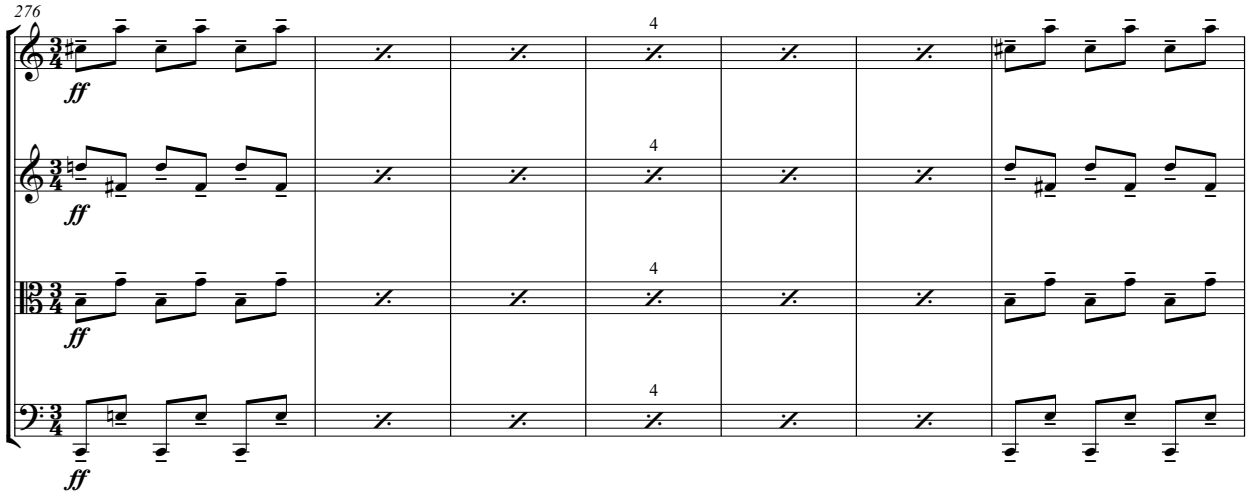

slowly blend with other parts
216
sfz
f
8
4
222
mf
4
O An intense warmth
228
p
subito mp

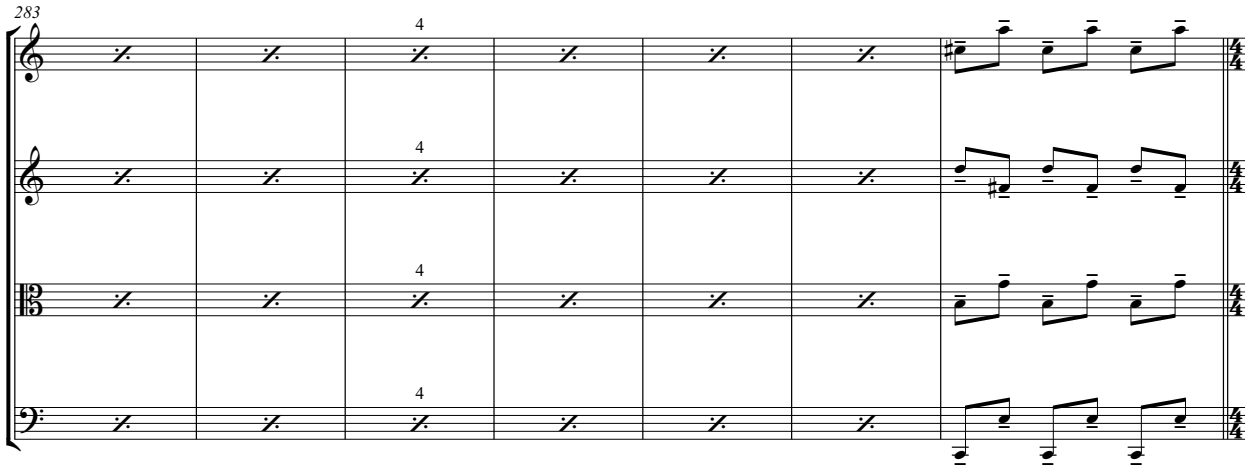

234
4
pizz.
ff
240
ff
mf
ff
pizz.
ff
arco
mp
pizz.
ff
arco
mp
arco
mp
ff
246
ff
mp
ff
mf
ff
pizz.
ff
arco
mp cresc.
pizz.
ff
arco
mp cresc.
ff
mf
arco
pizz.
ff
mp
ff dim.

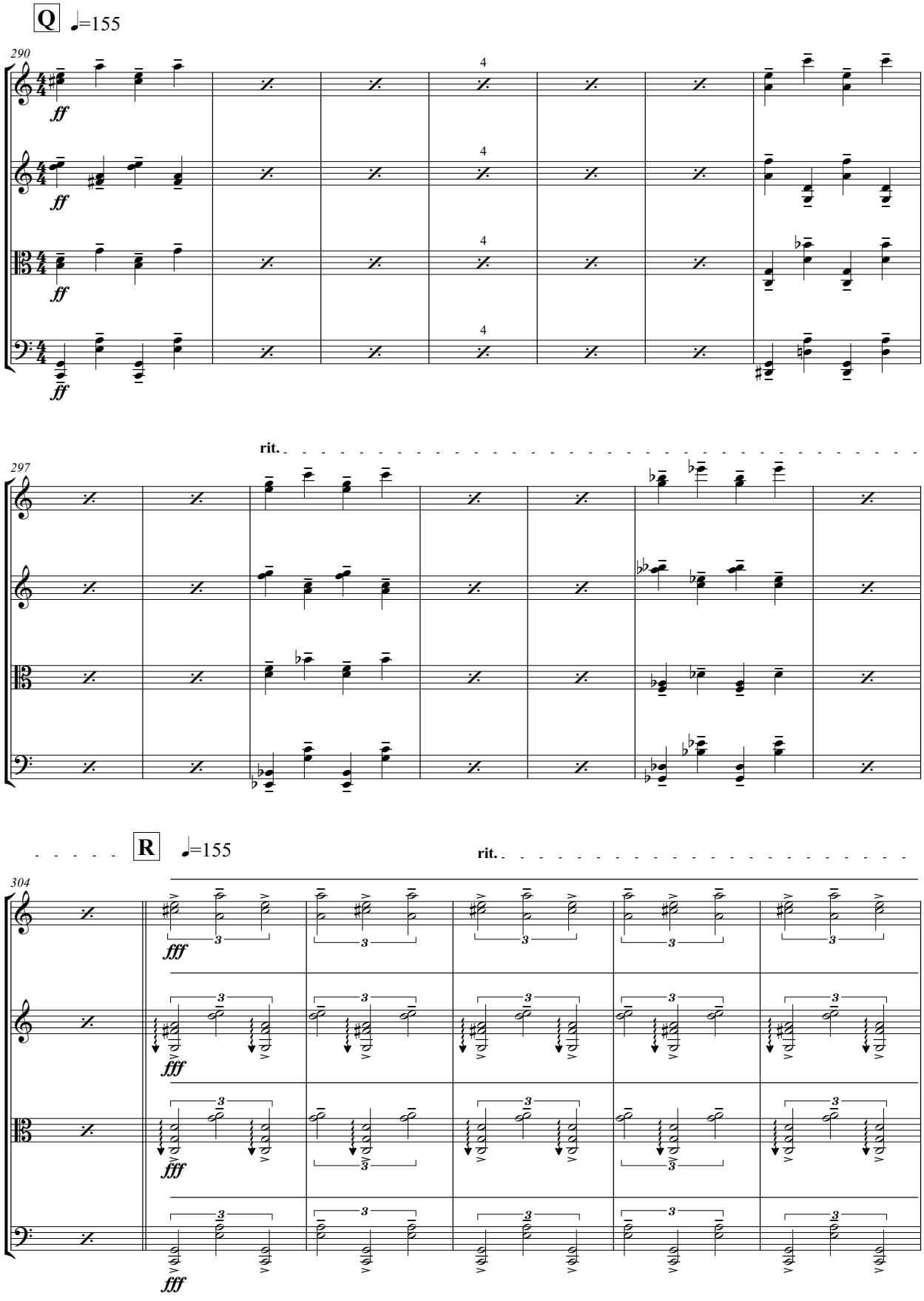

252
ff
mp
ff
pp
ff
pizz.
arco
ff
mf
ff
mp
pizz.
arco
ff
mf
mp
pizz.
arco
mf
ff
mp
ff
258
ff
pp
ff
mf
mp
pizz.
arco
ff
mf
mp
ff
mf
pizz.
mf
f
mf
264
cresc.
cresc.
mf cresc.



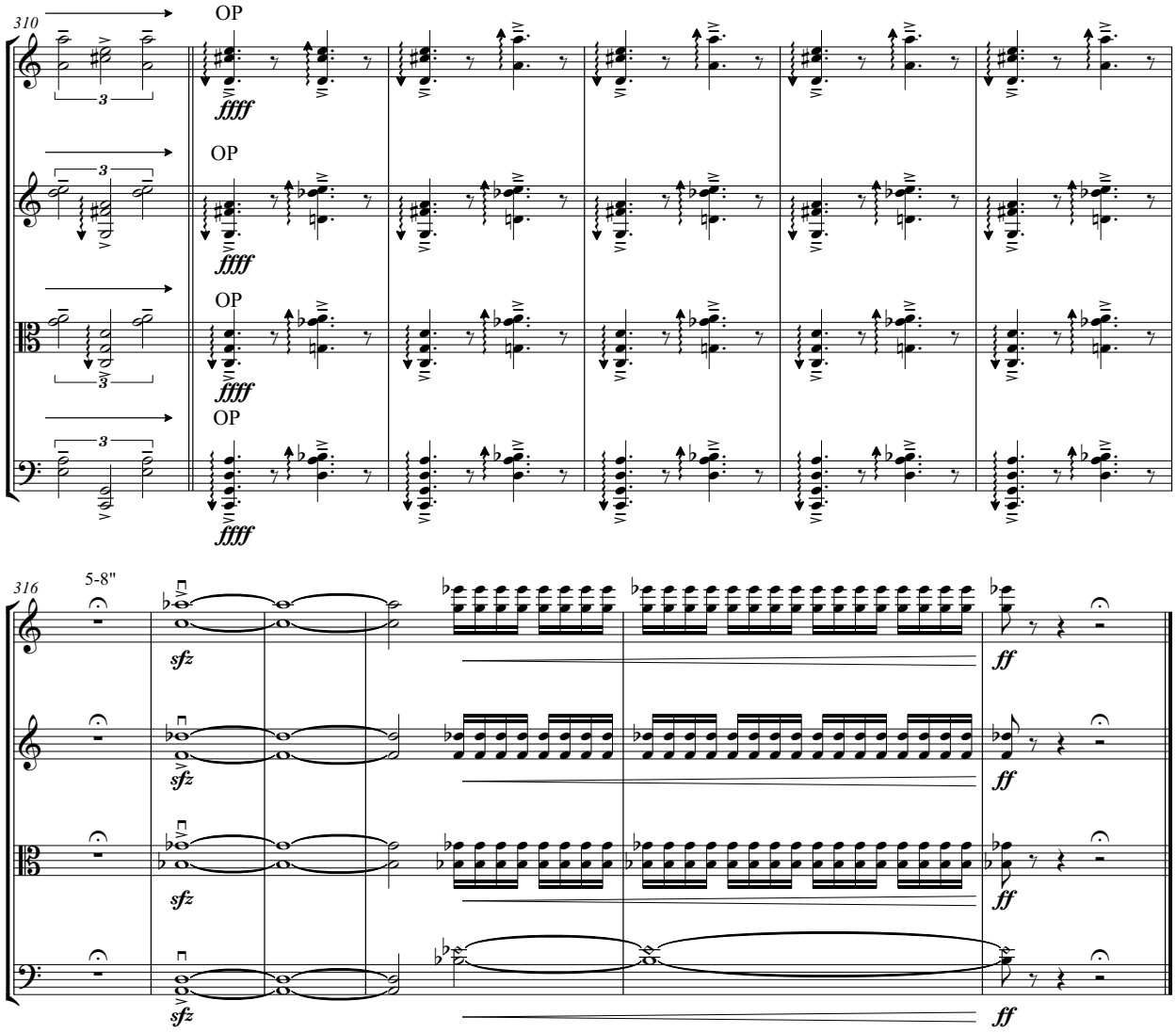
P **Blinding**






Q
♩=155
290
ff
4
rit.
297
R
♩=155
rit.
304
fff

S ♩=155



VITA

Austin Franklin received a Bachelor of Music degree from Lamar University. He is currently studying Music Composition under the supervision of Dr. Mara Gibson at Louisiana State University and serving as a graduate teaching assistant. Austin is a composer and sound artist based in Baton Rouge, LA. He has several pieces for percussion published through C-Alan Publications and is regularly performed throughout the United States. He is the recipient of several awards and commissions, including the Sound/Sight Art Collaboration, the First Annual LSU Composition Competition, CNME Call for Scores, and the Dead Resonance Call for Aleatoric Scores. His music has also been accepted to festivals and conferences such as the Red Stick FutureFest (2018), New Interfaces for Musical Expression (2019), Society of Composers Incorporated (2020), Alba Music Festival (2020), and Electric LaTex (2020). Austin is planning on receiving his masters degree in May 2020.