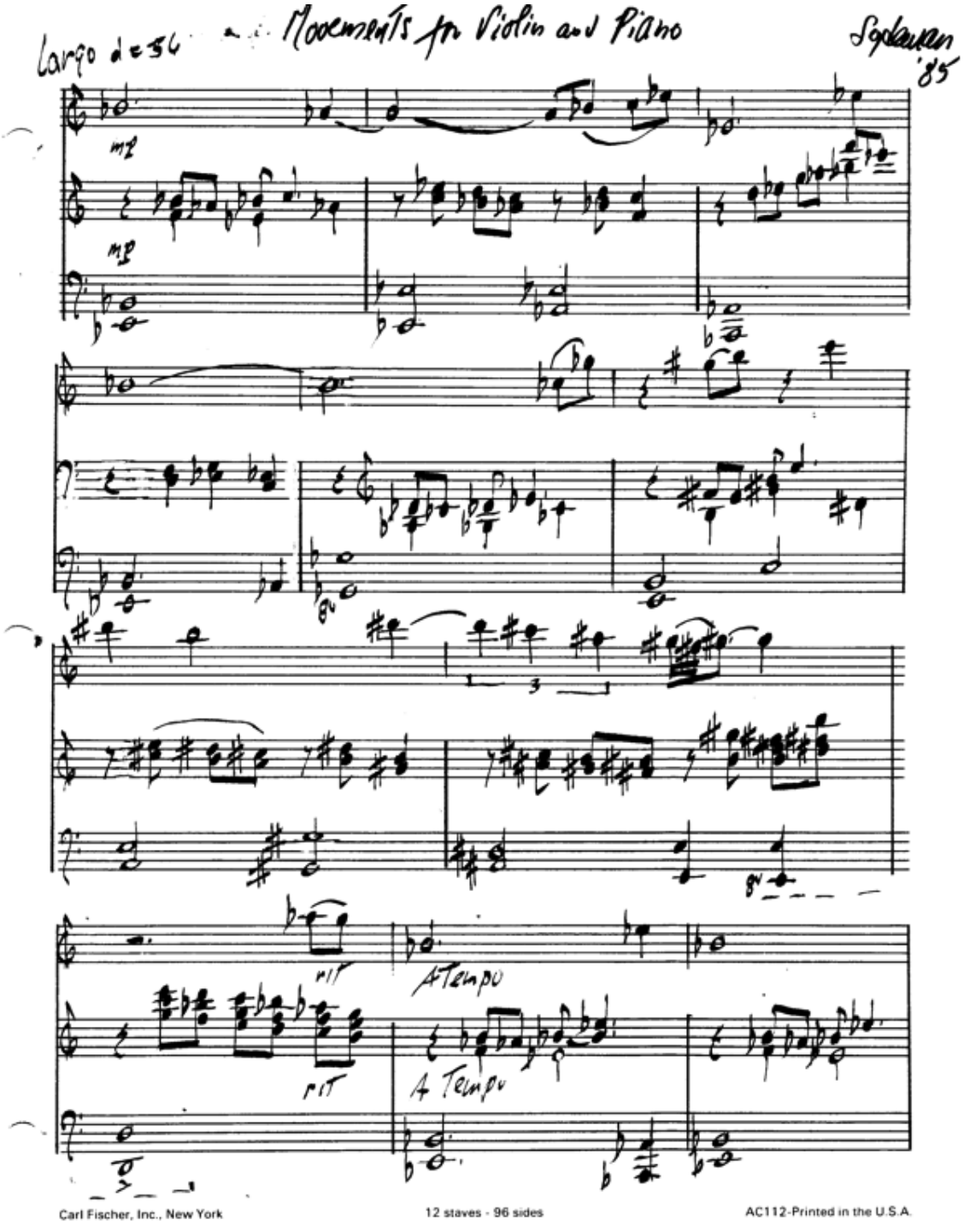
W. Jay Sydeman

Sonata No. 4 “Athena”

for Violin and Piano

(1985)

Arts Aeturnum Productions



First page of manuscript

The violinist Athena Norcia of Berkeley fame asked me to write this piece. She was clear that she loved Copland, the blues and Prokofiev. This was extremely felicitous as I shared her enthusiasms. It is therefore not surprising that the different movements reflect our shared passions – perhaps the piece could be construed as triple homage. In any event it seems to get played around town, which should indicate that our tastes are borderline universal. Well, actually it gets played around a fairly large town, as the last performance I recall was in the town of Enschede in Holland. Incidentally, the Blues movement is my particular favorite.

Upon reviewing the original handwritten manuscript, I can only extol Athena for having plowed through it, and give my editor Rick Shinozaki plaudits for creating a truly legible version. Speaking of plaudits, I find the Coplandesque first movement really quite lovely, with the more rhythmic second movement a nice contrast (all quite tonal and straightforward). In the Blues, the piano plays a repeated figure while the violin gets real bluesy above it. The fourth movement has a fluffy (like clouds speeding by) quality which makes it all come out alright in the end.

– W. Jay Sydeman, July 2012

W. Jay Sydeman's life mirrors the breadth and variety of his music. Born in New York in 1928 and educated at Manhattan's Mannes School of Music, he quickly became one of the most sought-after and honored composers of his generation, receiving commissions from such prestigious groups as the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Tanglewood Music Center, and the Boston Symphony, which premiered his orchestral work in memory of John F. Kennedy in 1966. "Sydeman uses a whole battery of far out techniques," wrote the New York Times, "but he has an uncanny ability to throw in the whole avant-garde machinery as if it were the simplest, most normal way of making music in the world ... More than many of his colleagues, he seems to know what will sound well, and he works for some remarkably attractive, pure textures. His sounds seem to grow from a physical sense of exactly what material is right."

In 1970, after a heady period that included awards from the National institute of Arts and Letters, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Library of Congress, Sydeman left New York – and composition – to begin a journey of personal and artistic exploration.

"Around 1980," he has written, "I returned to composition – at first a large number of choral works which reconnected me to the source of all music – the human voice. Out of this new lyric impulse have evolved all of my works since that time – more romantic, more accessible. I create music for the musician."

– Howard Hersh,
Artistic Director of "Music Now"

Sydeman is part of a composers' group in Nevada City annually producing the "Wet Ink Festival of New Music." He now lives in Mendocino and hosts a bi-weekly program on KZYX, "The Mind of a Composer", 10 am to noon on Mondays, introducing and commenting on contemporary music.

Duration:
I. Largo – circa 3:45
II. Allegro – circa 2:15
III. Blues. Andante – circa 3:45
IV. Moving I – circa 2:00
V. Moving II – circa 1:00

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Edited and engraved by Rick Shinozaki (Albany, CA) in consultation & collaboration with the composer.

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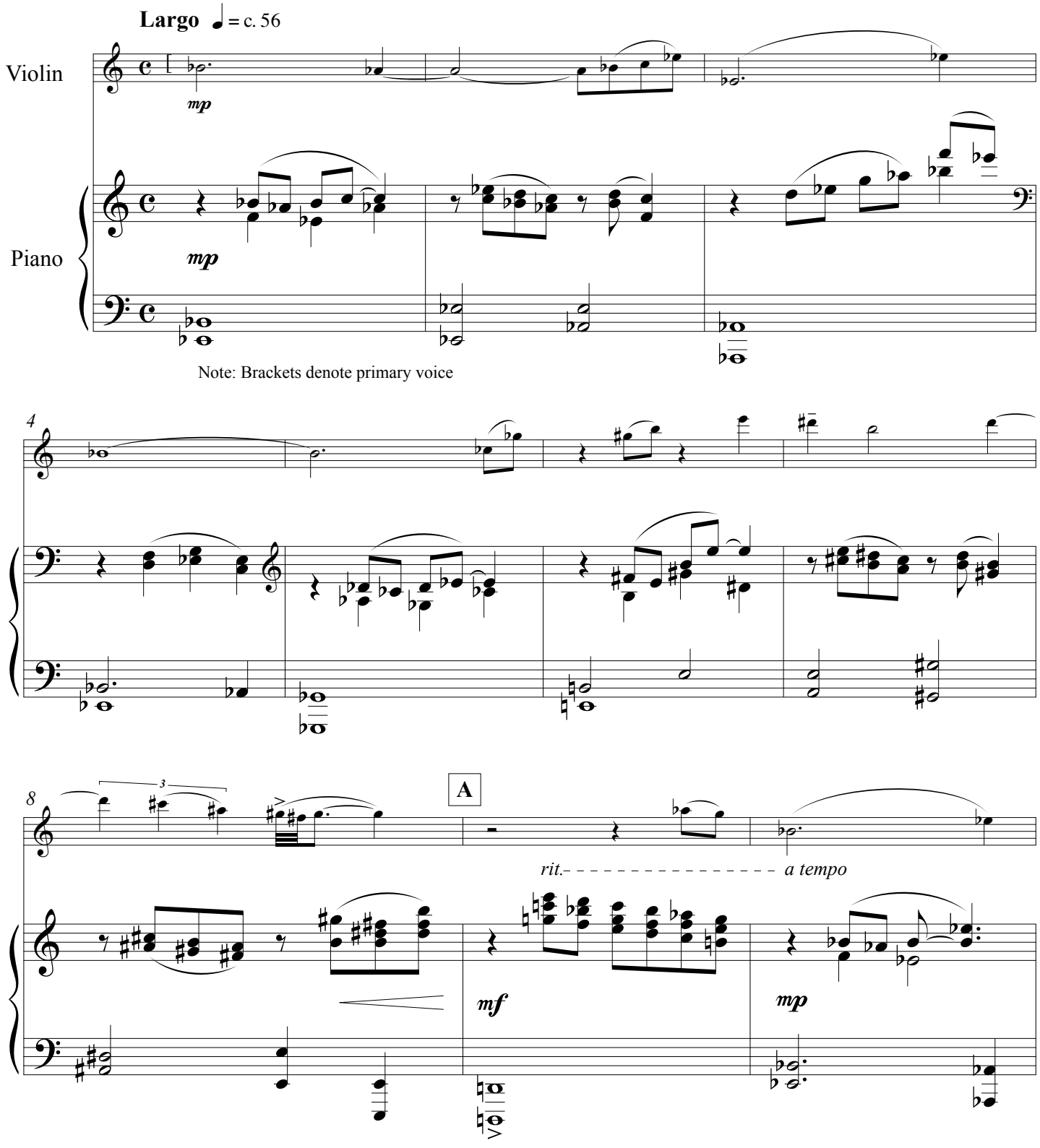
for Violin and Piano

I.

W. Jay Sydeman
(1985)



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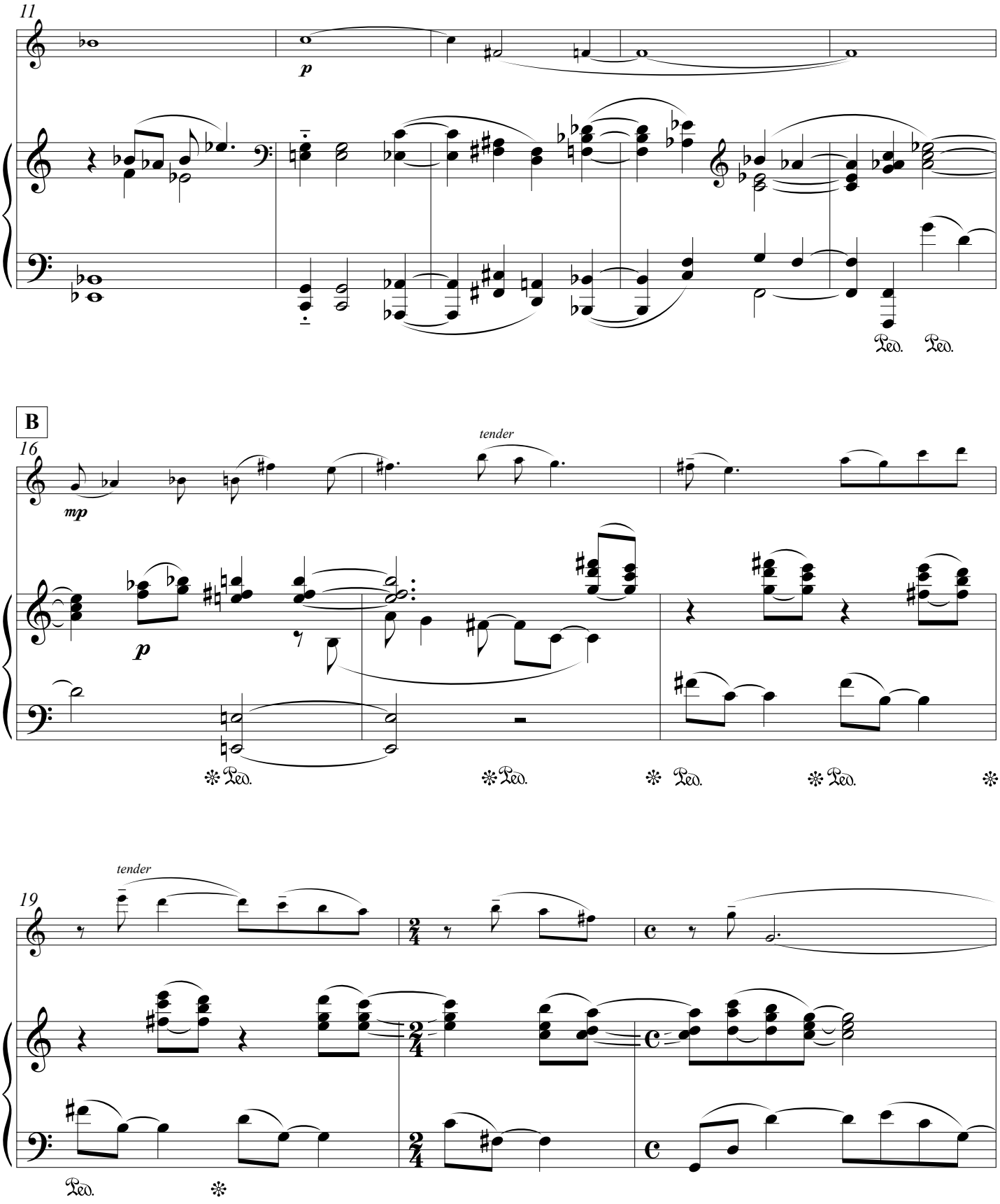
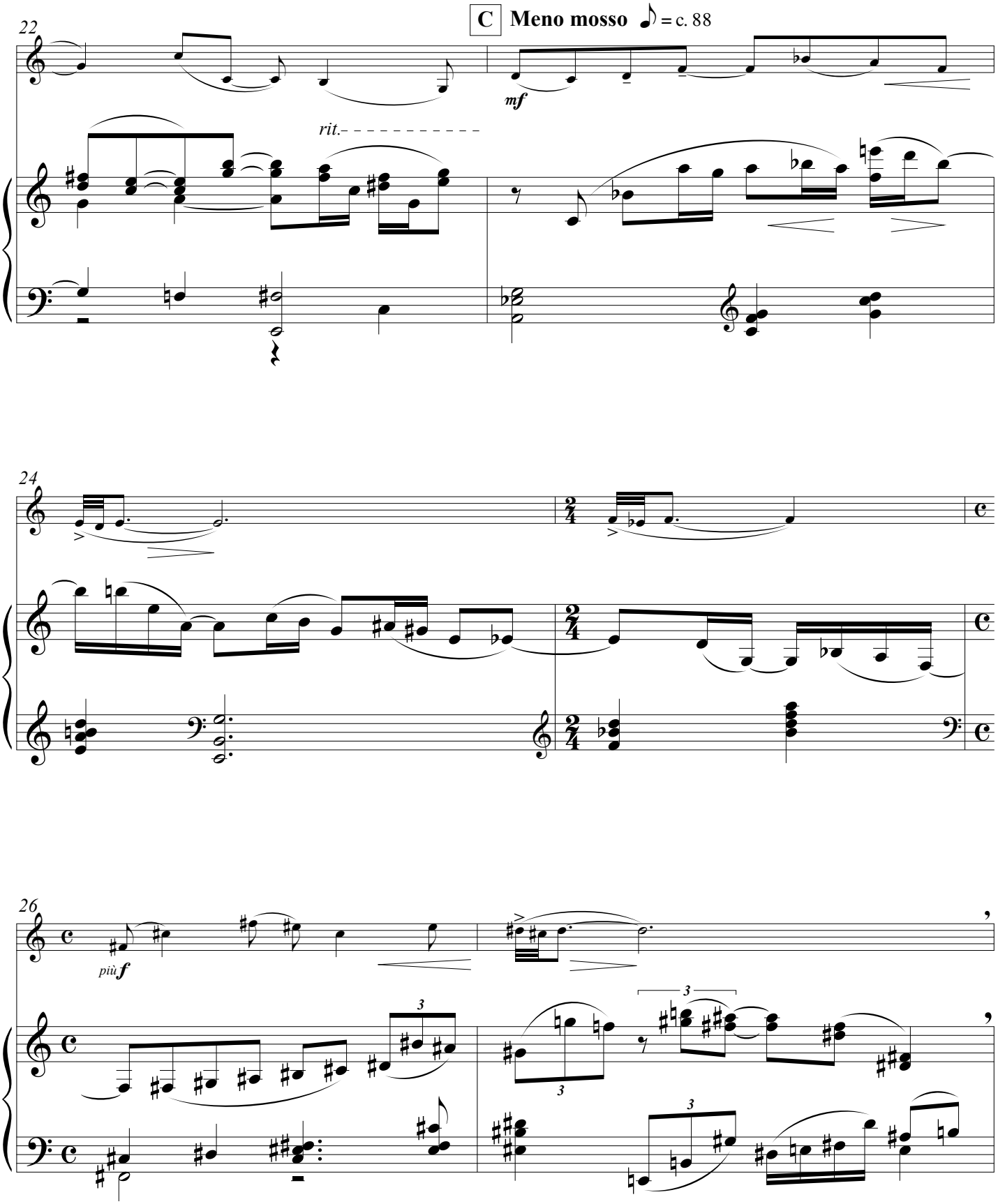
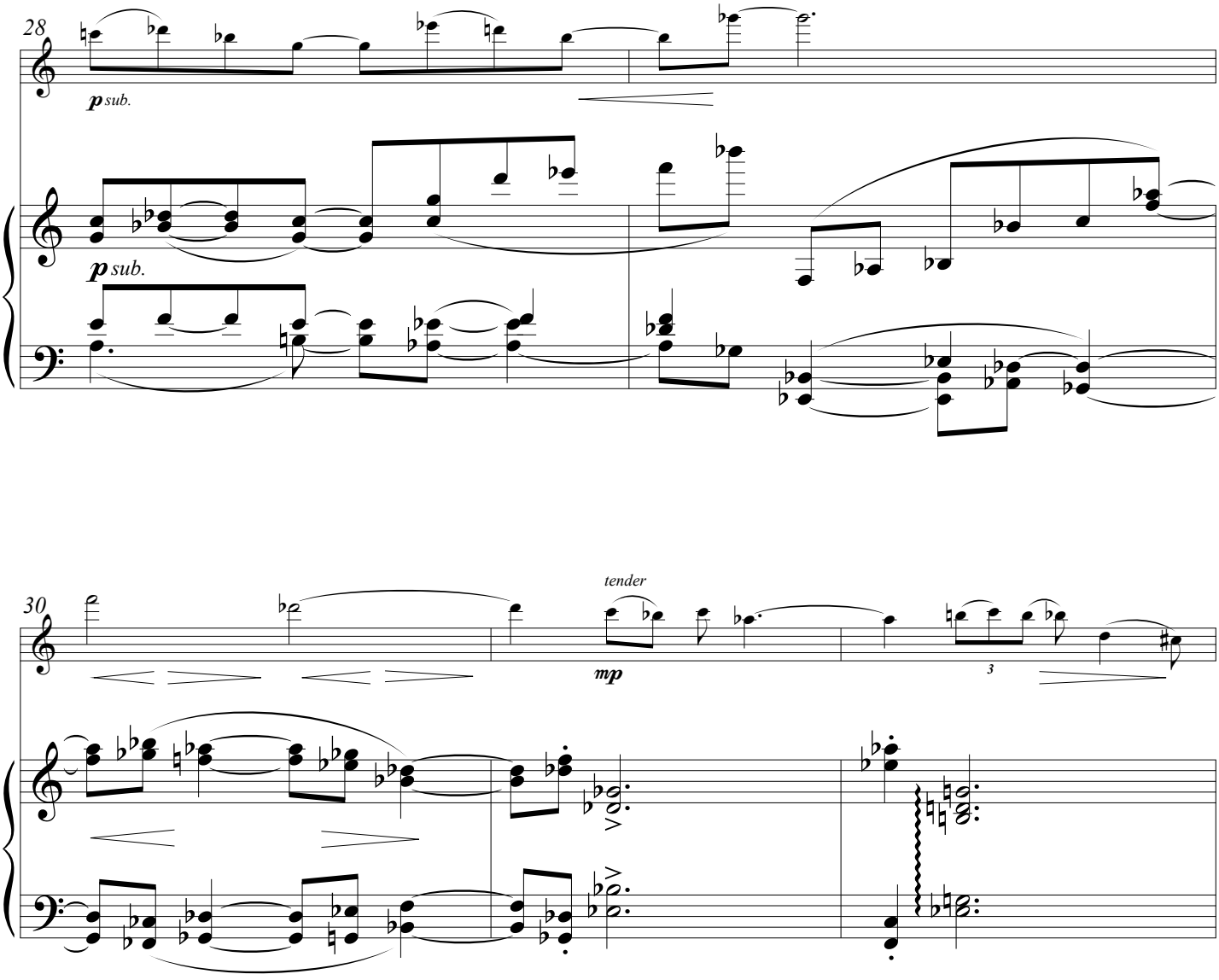
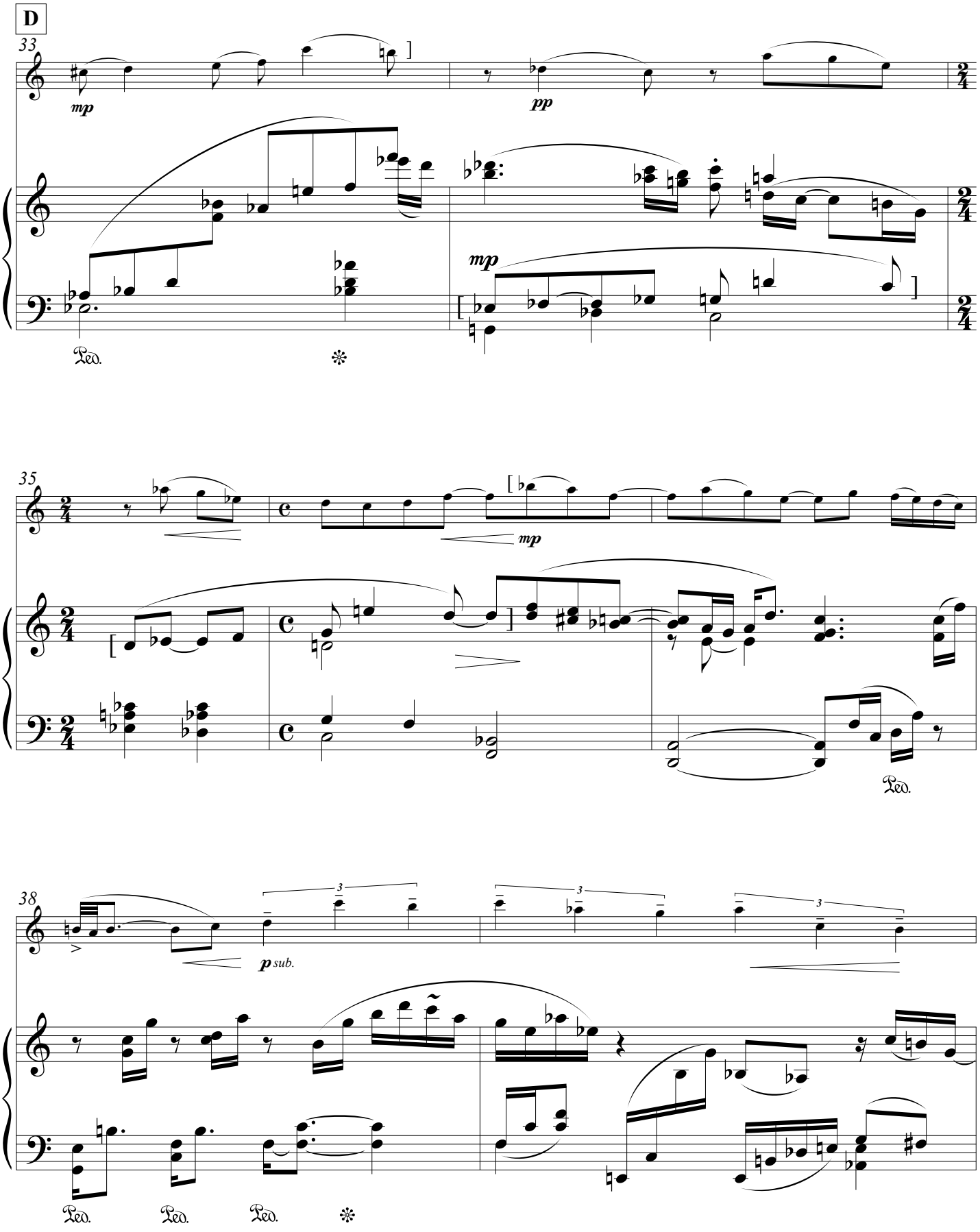
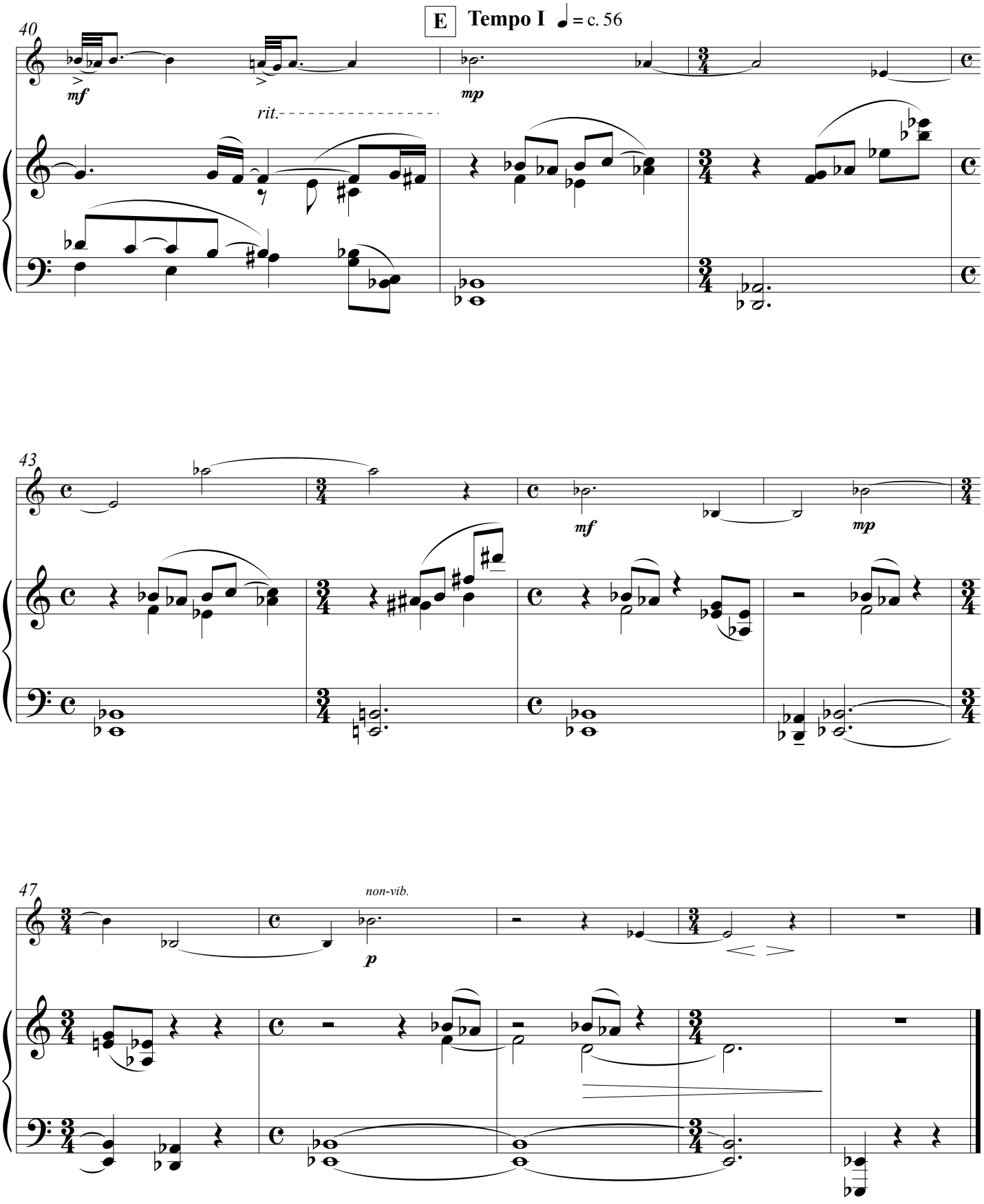

11
p
Ped. Ped.
B
16
tender
mp
p
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.
tender
19
Ped.

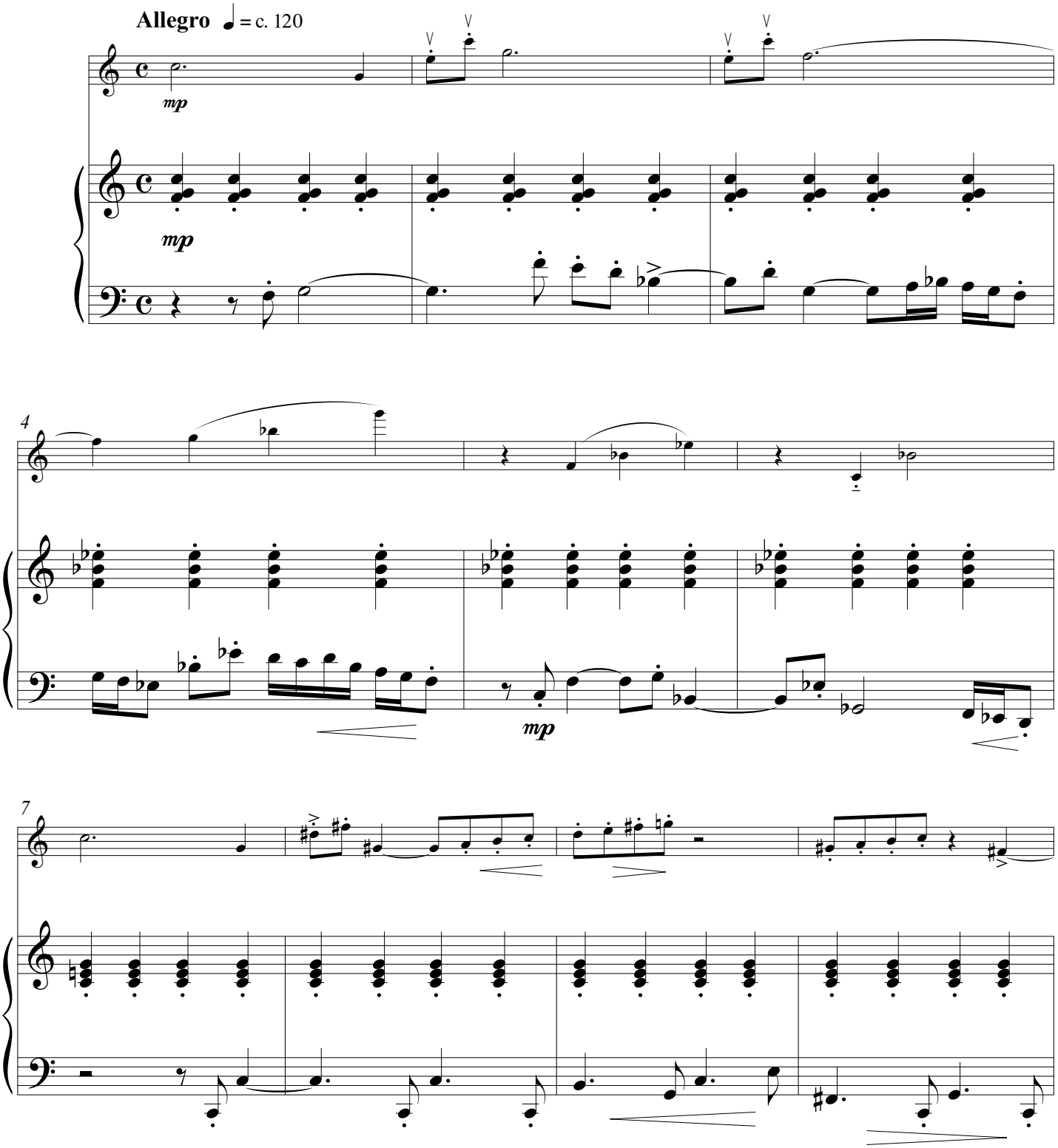

22
C
Meno mosso
= c. 88
mf
rit.
24
26
più f
3
3
3
3

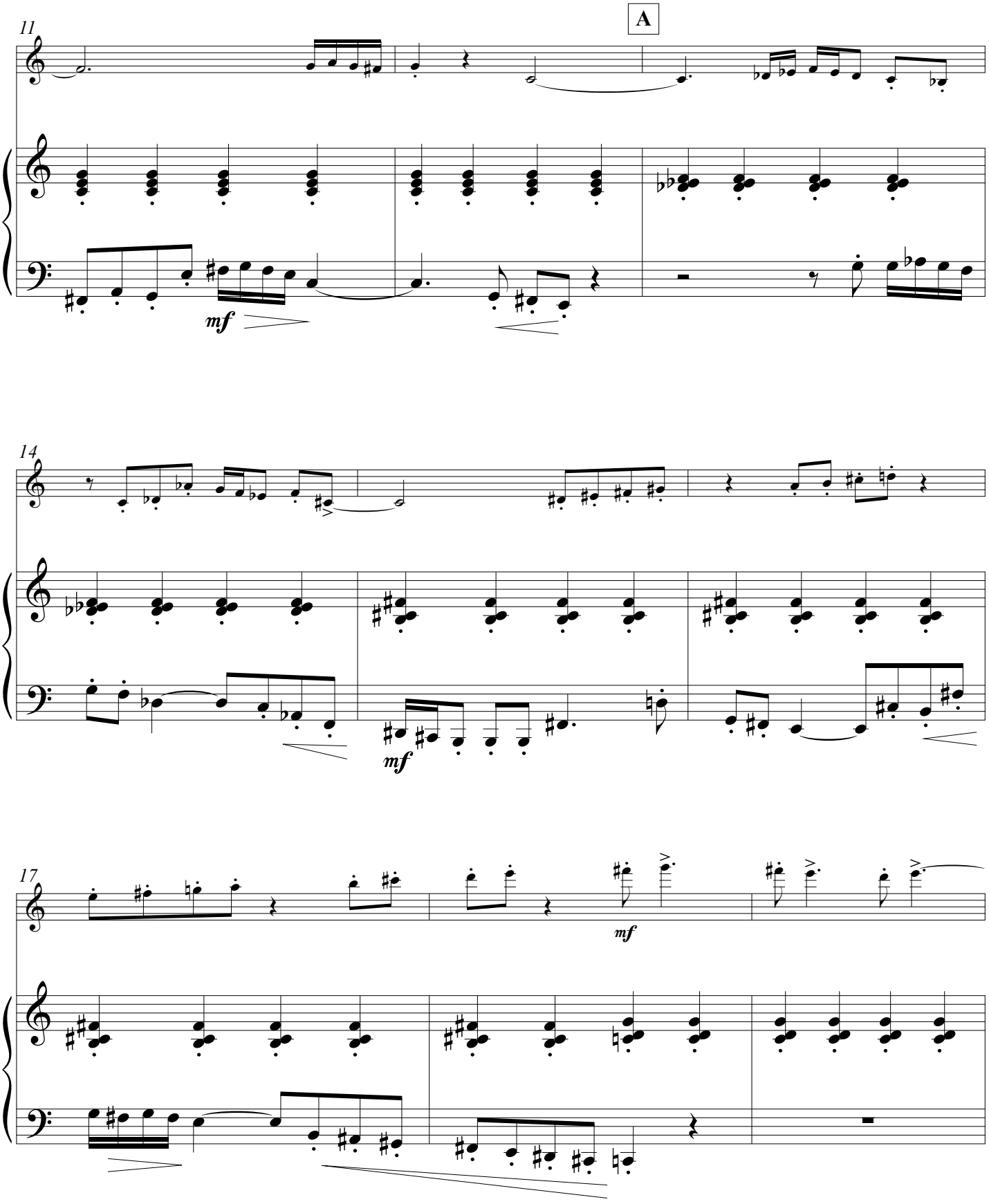

28
p sub.
p sub.
30
tender
mp
3

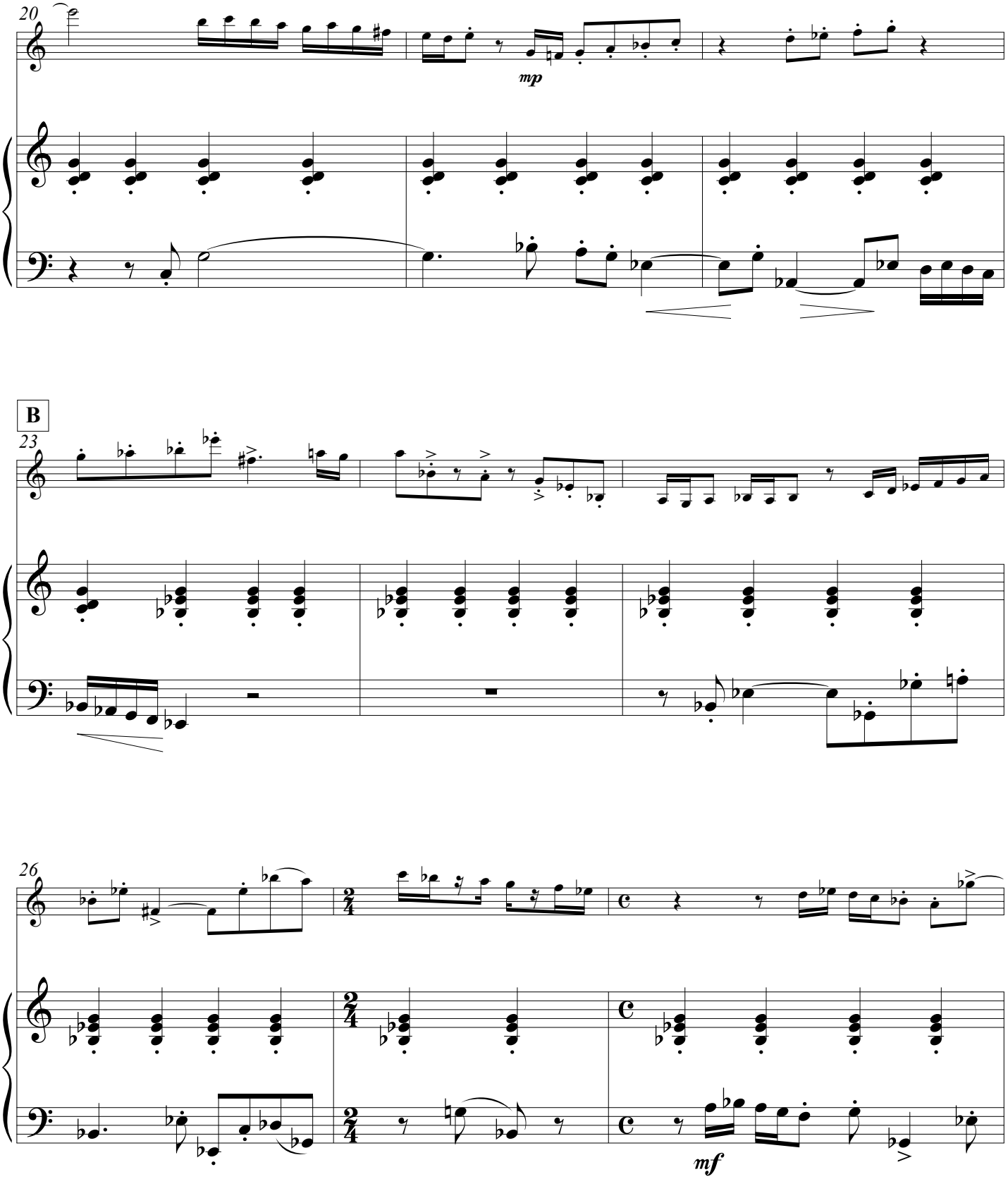

D
33
mp
pp
mp
Ped.
35
mp
Ped.
38
p sub.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

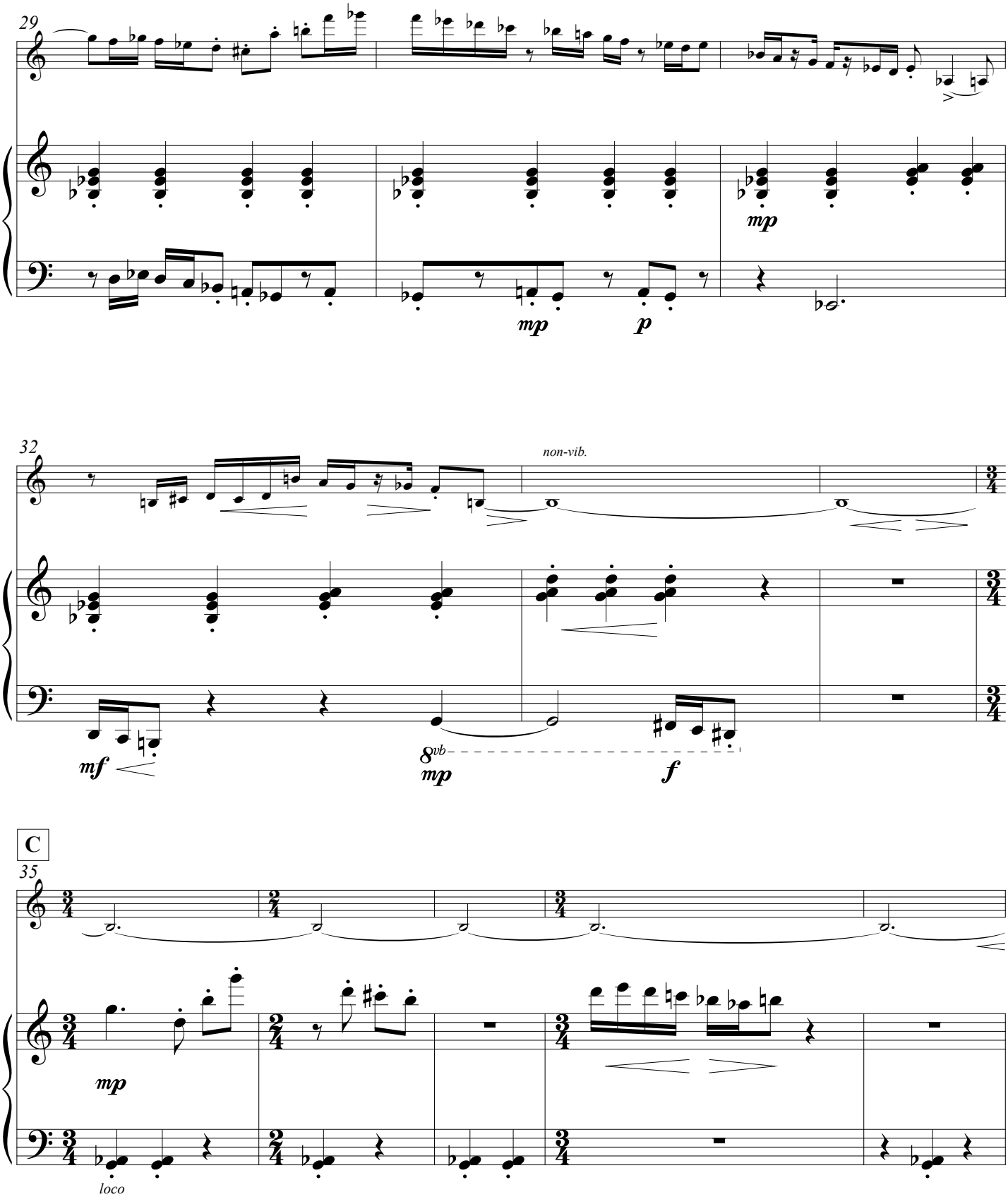

E
Tempo I
= c. 56
40
mf
mp
rit.
43
mf
mp
47
non-vib.
p

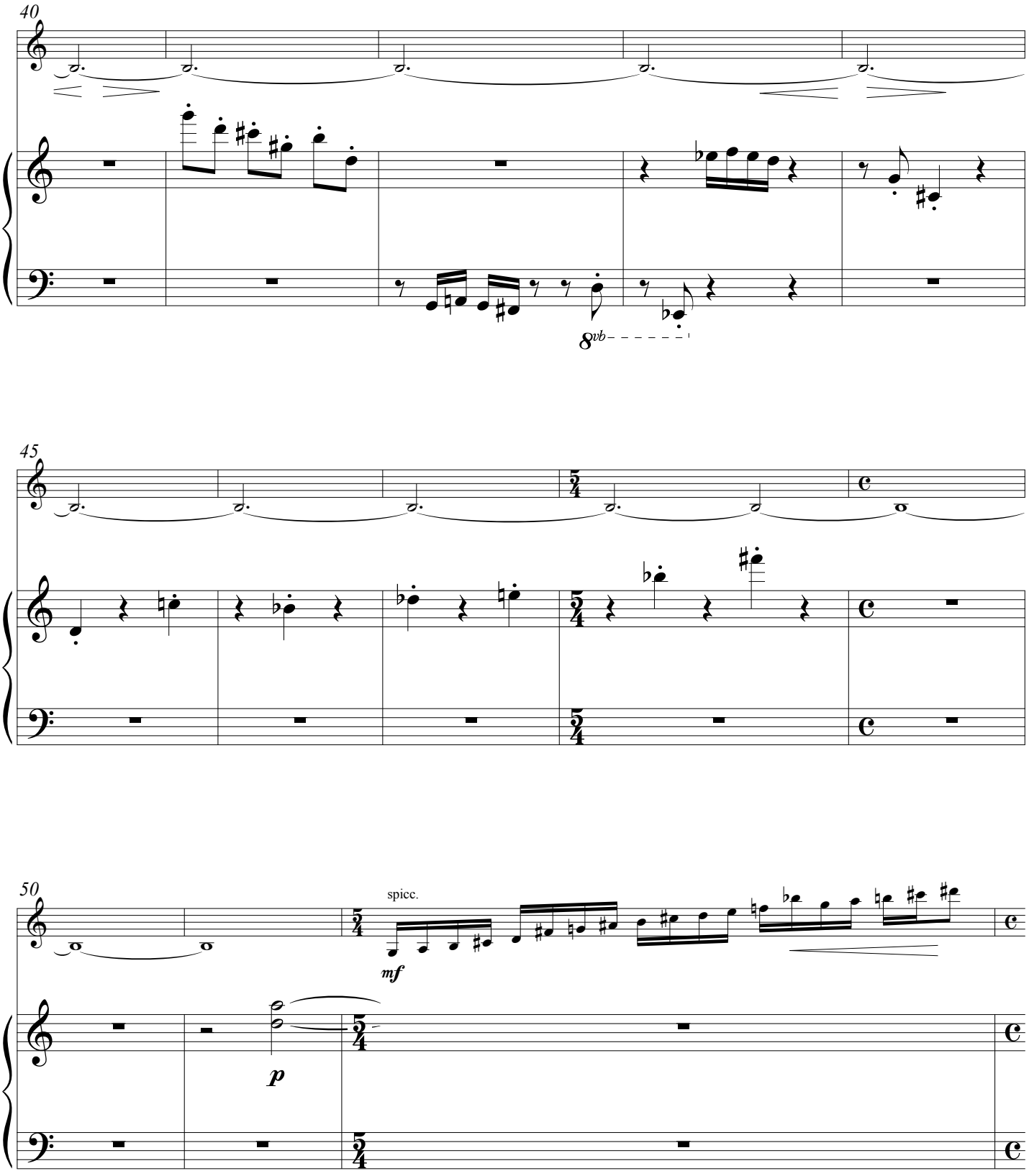
II.

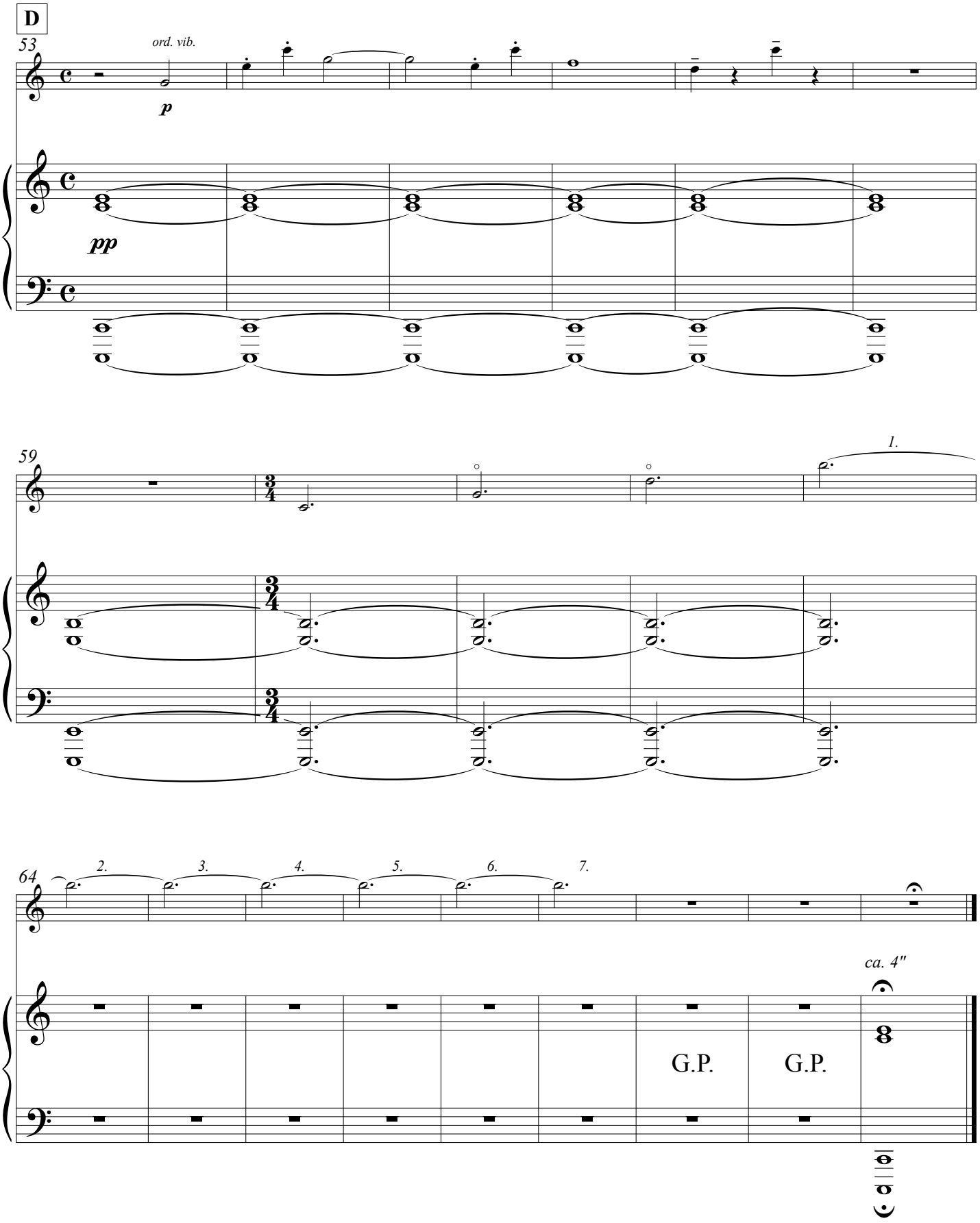



11
A
mf
14
mf
17
mf

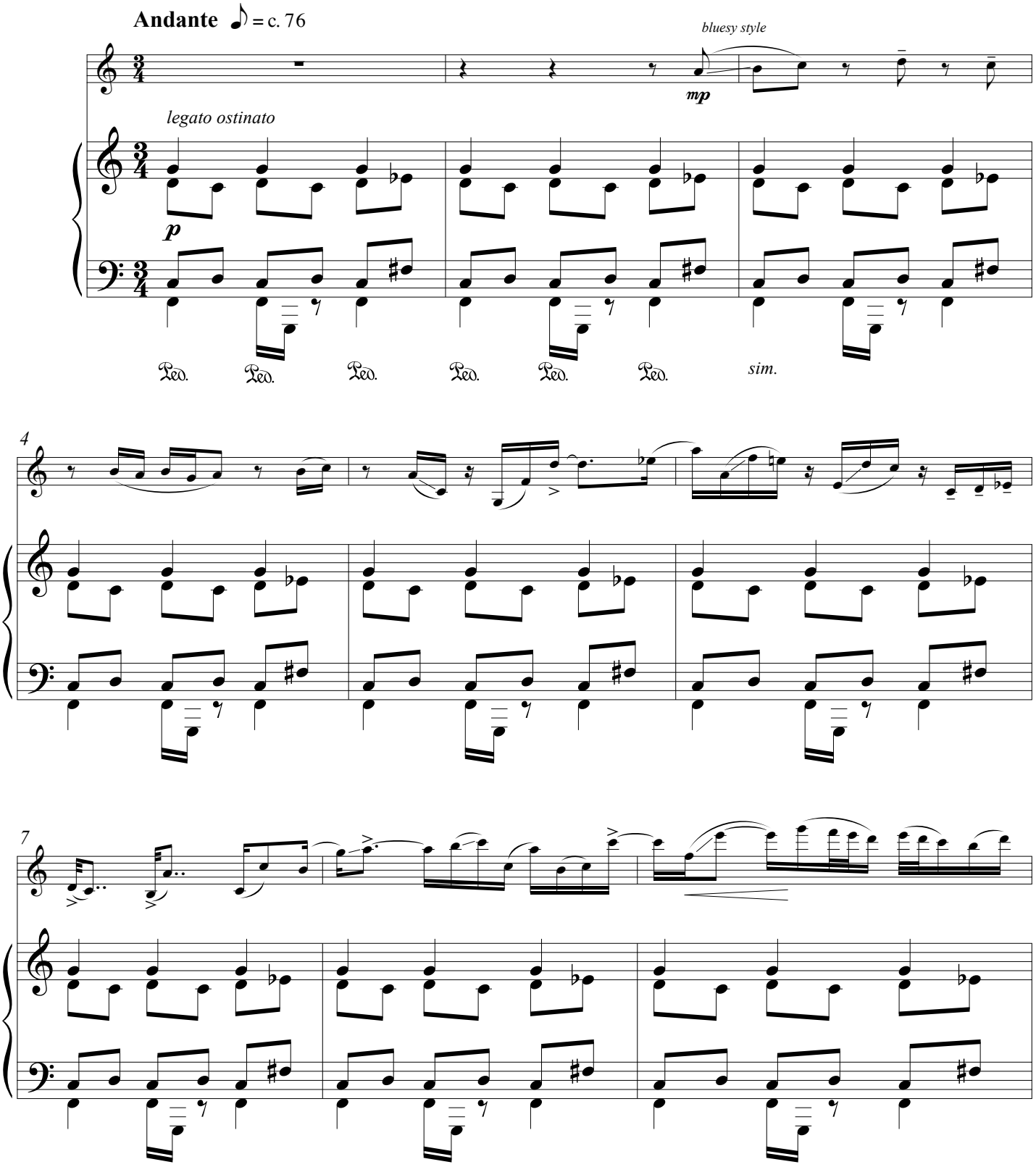

20
mp
B
23
26
mf

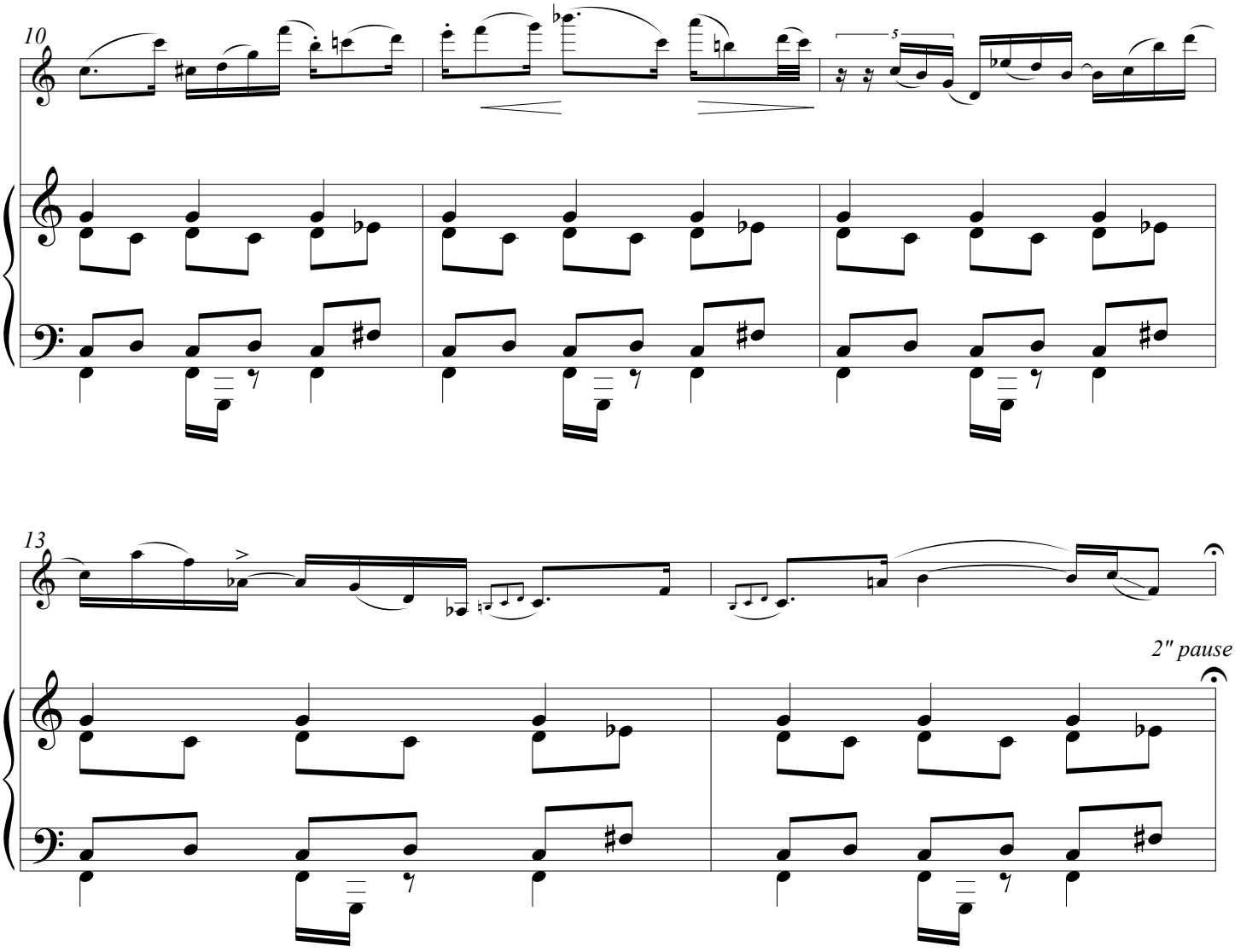

29
mp
mp
p
32
non-vib.
mf
8vb
mp
f
C
35
mp
loco

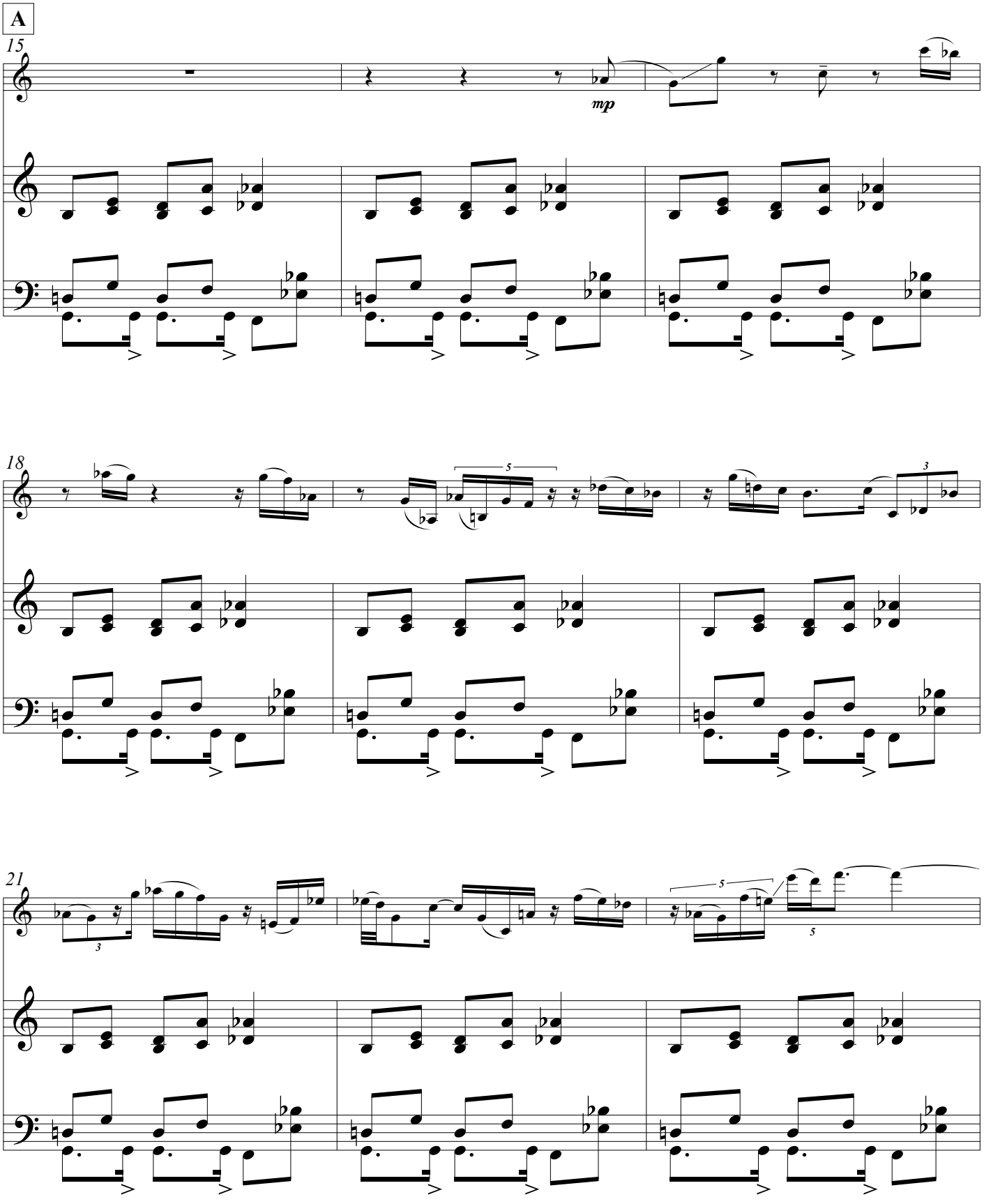

40
8vb
45
50
spicc.
mf
p

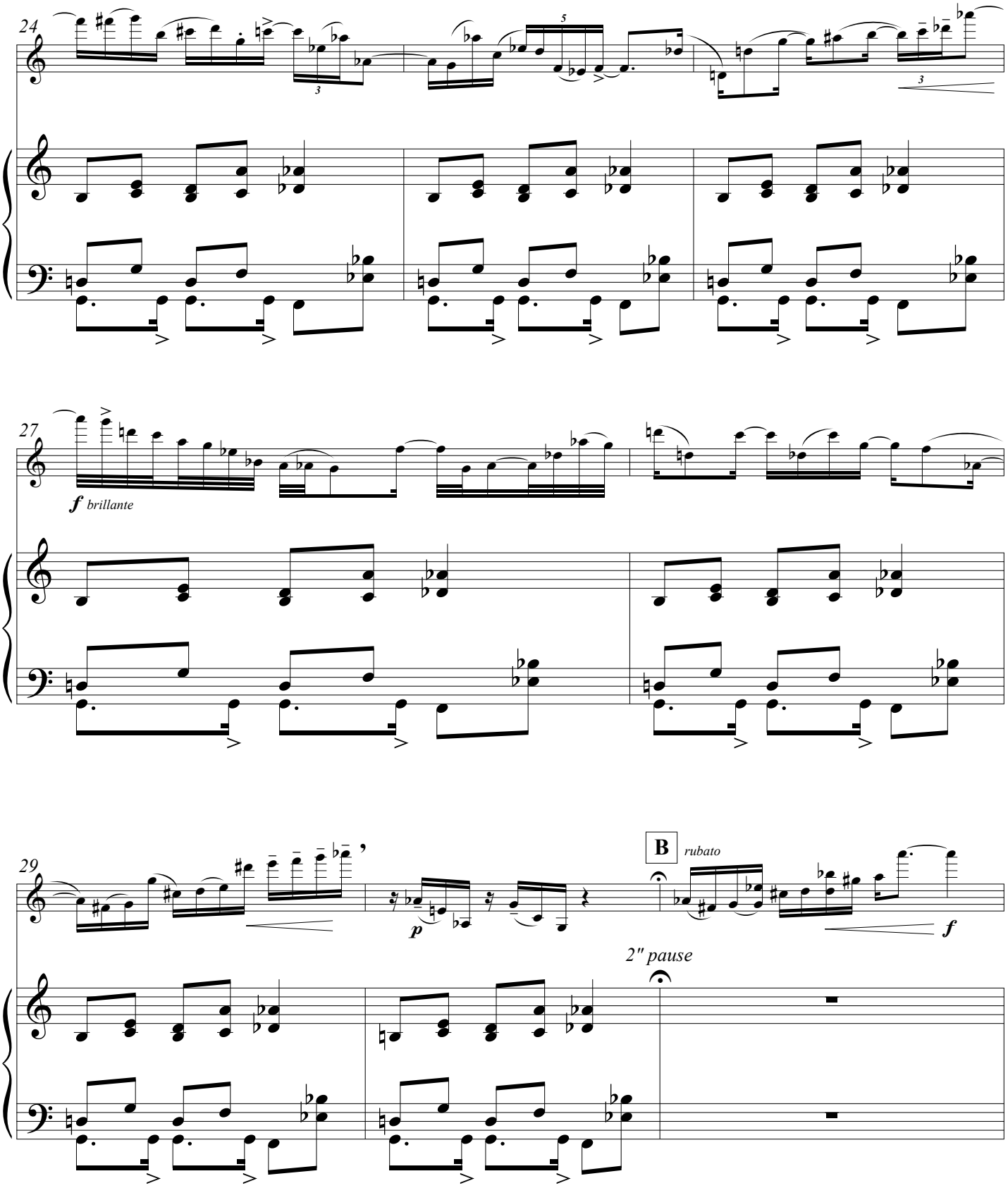

D
53
ord. vib.
p
pp
59
1.
64
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
ca. 4"
G.P.
G.P.

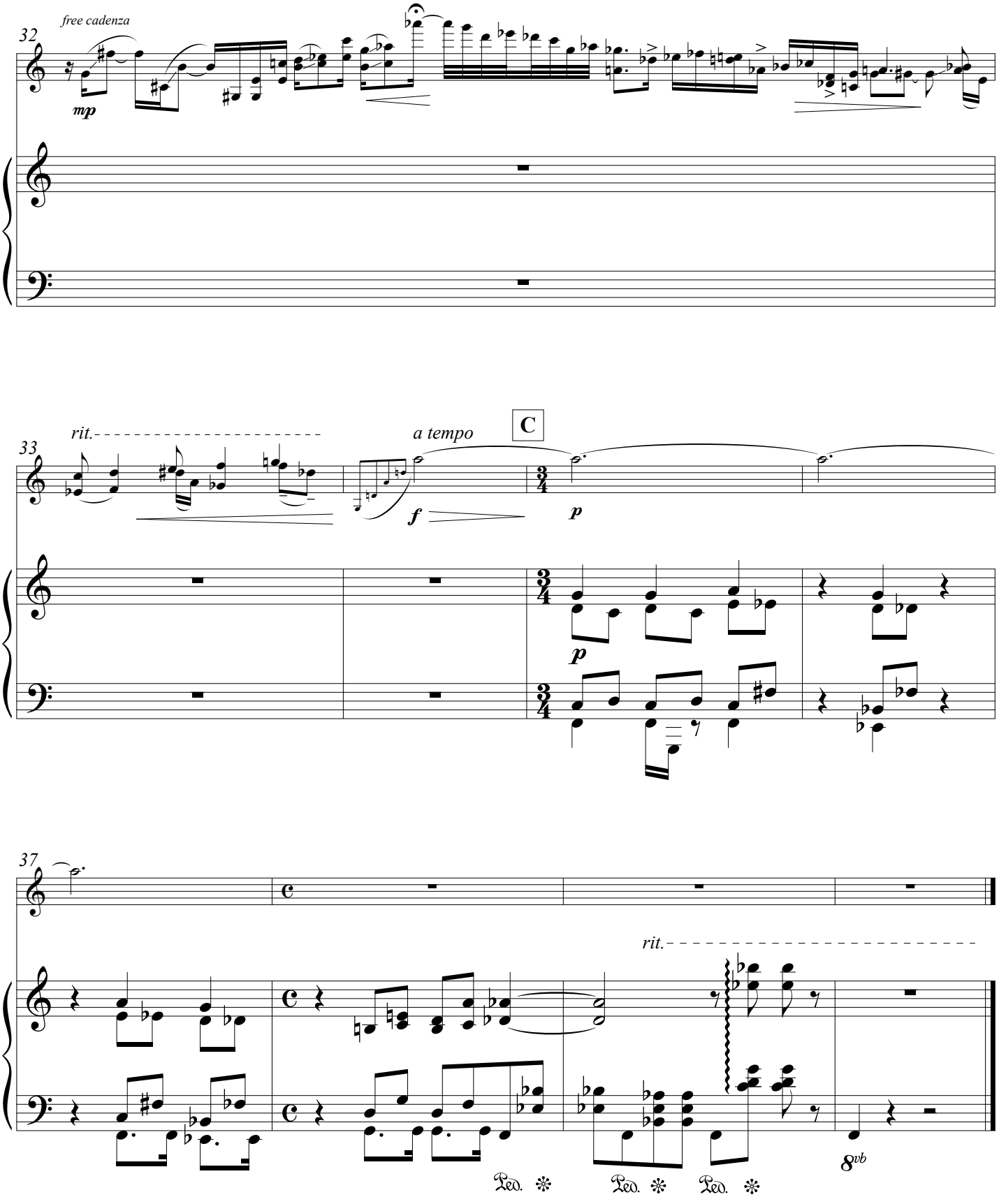
III. Blues


Andante ♪ = c. 76
bluesy style
mp
legato ostinato
p
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
sim.
4
7


10
5
13
2" pause


A
15
mp
18
21


24
27
f brillante
29
p
B
rubato
f
2" pause


free cadenza
32
mp
33
rit.
a tempo
C
f
p
p
37
rit.
8vb
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

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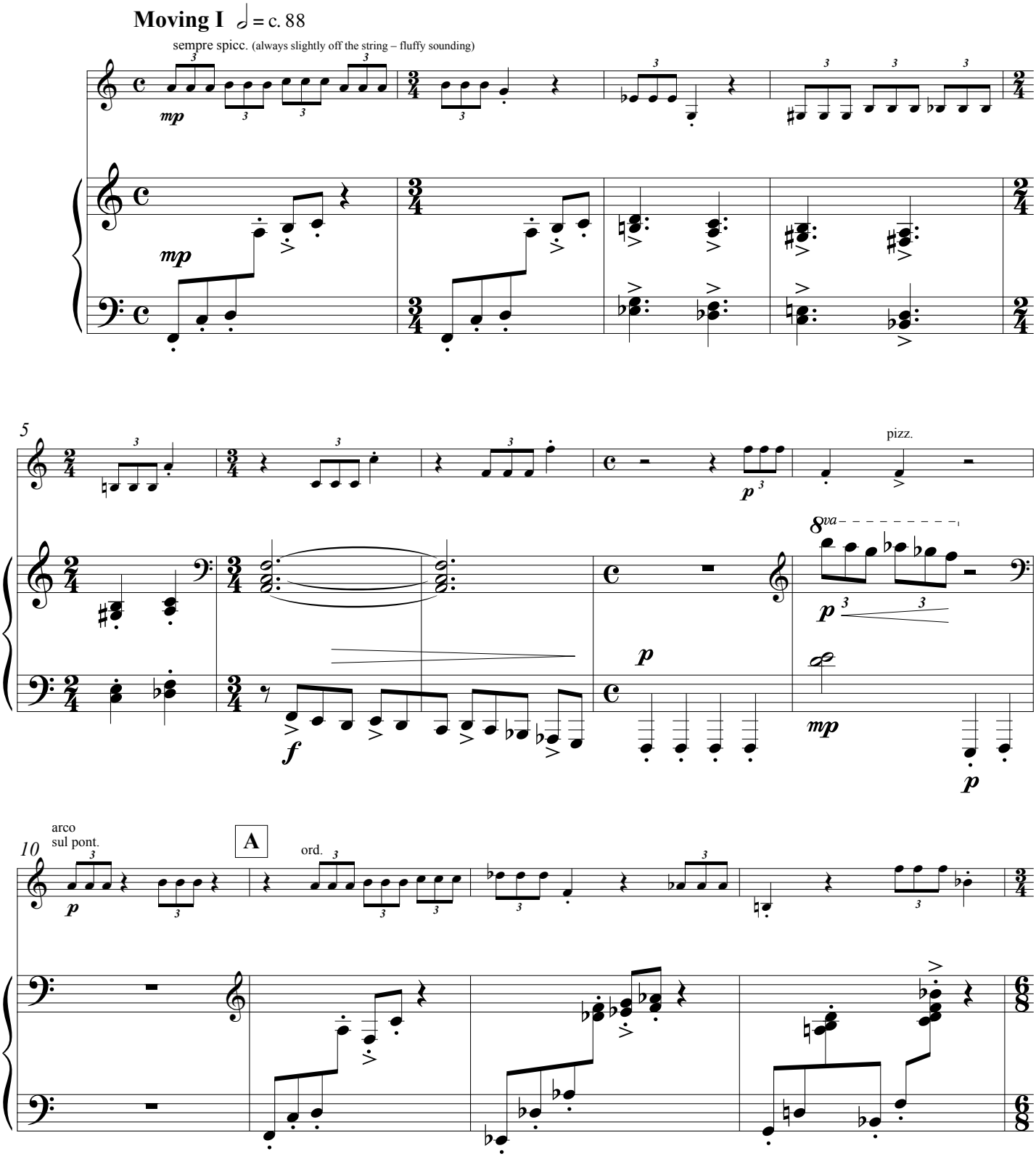
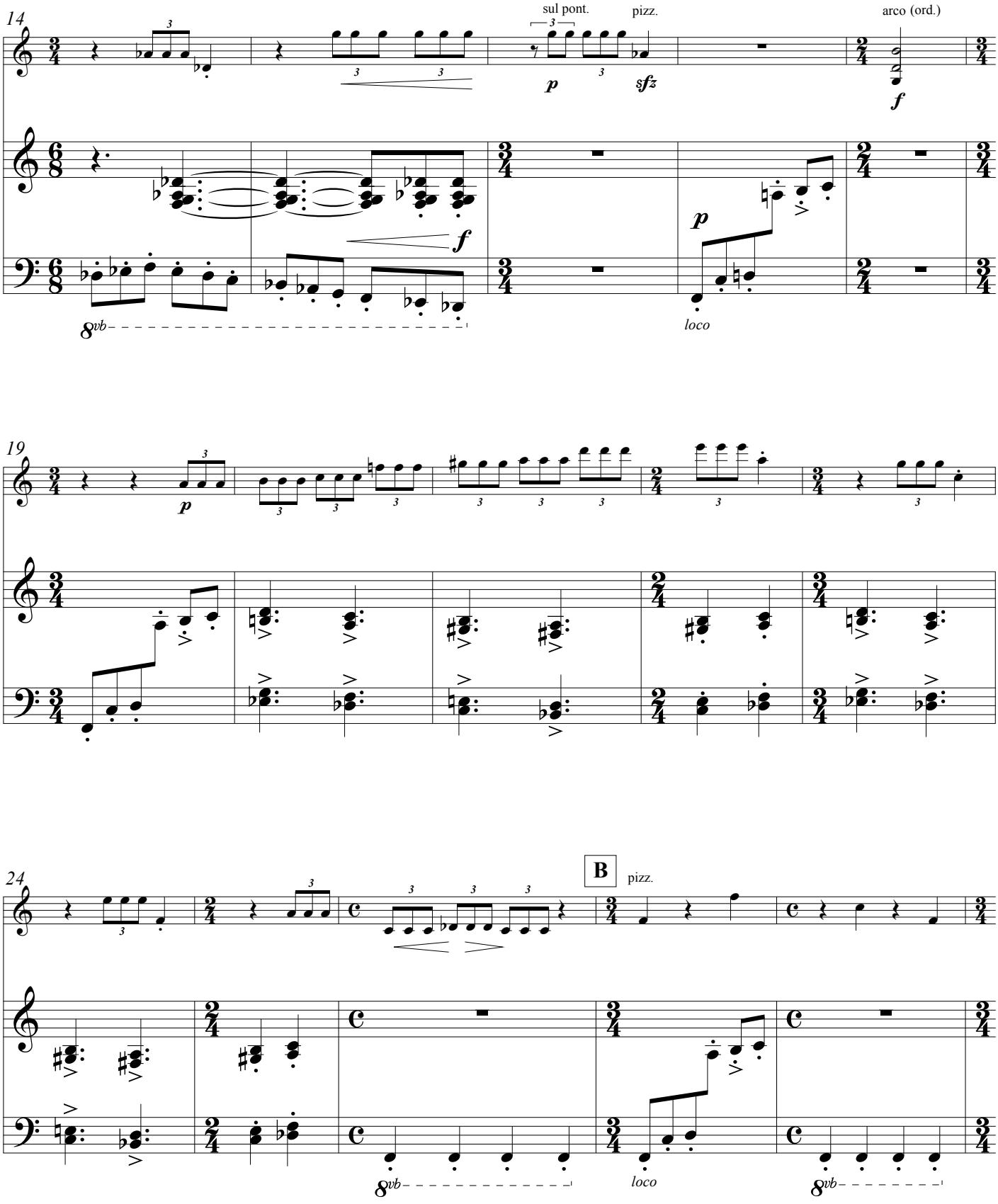
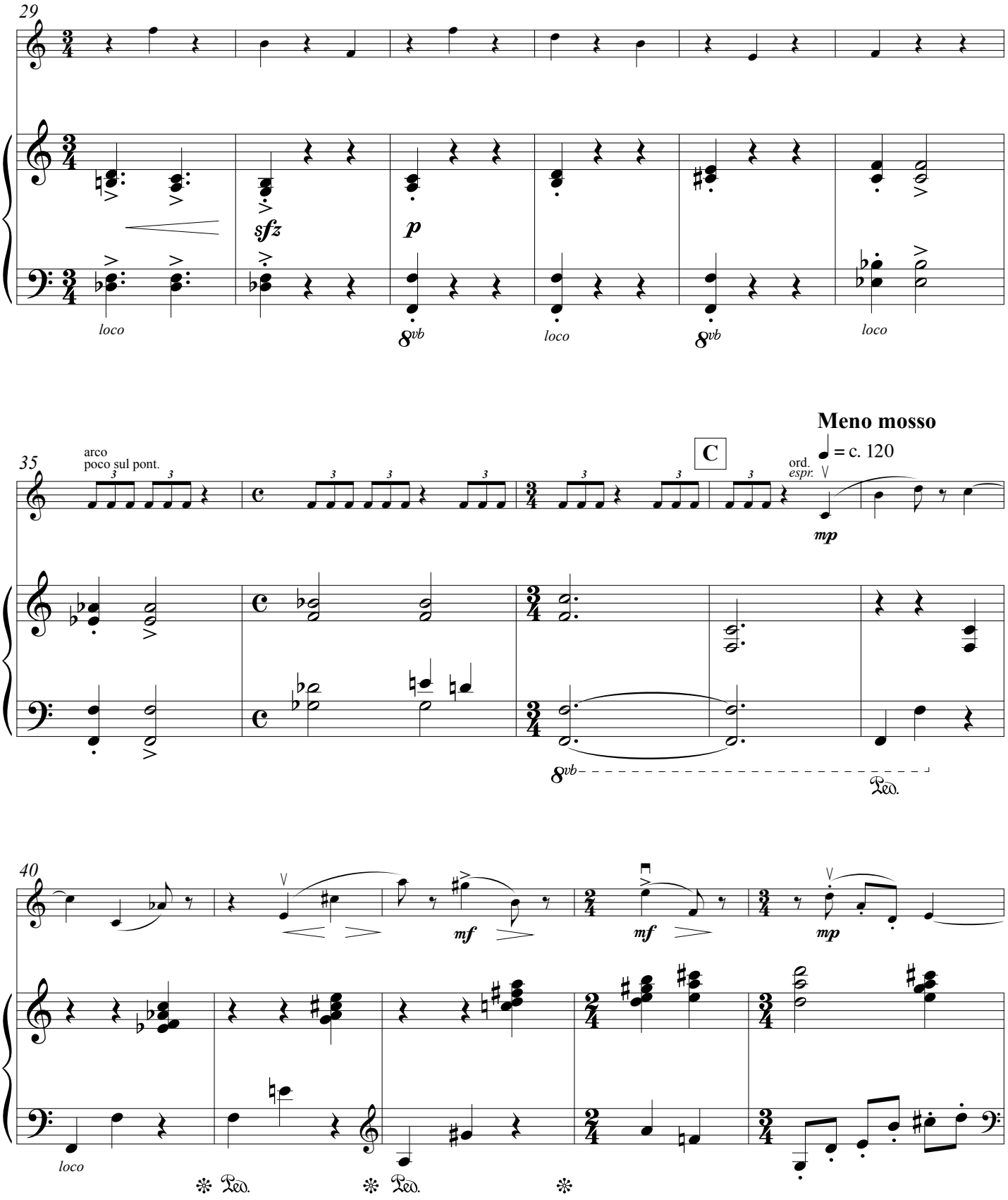
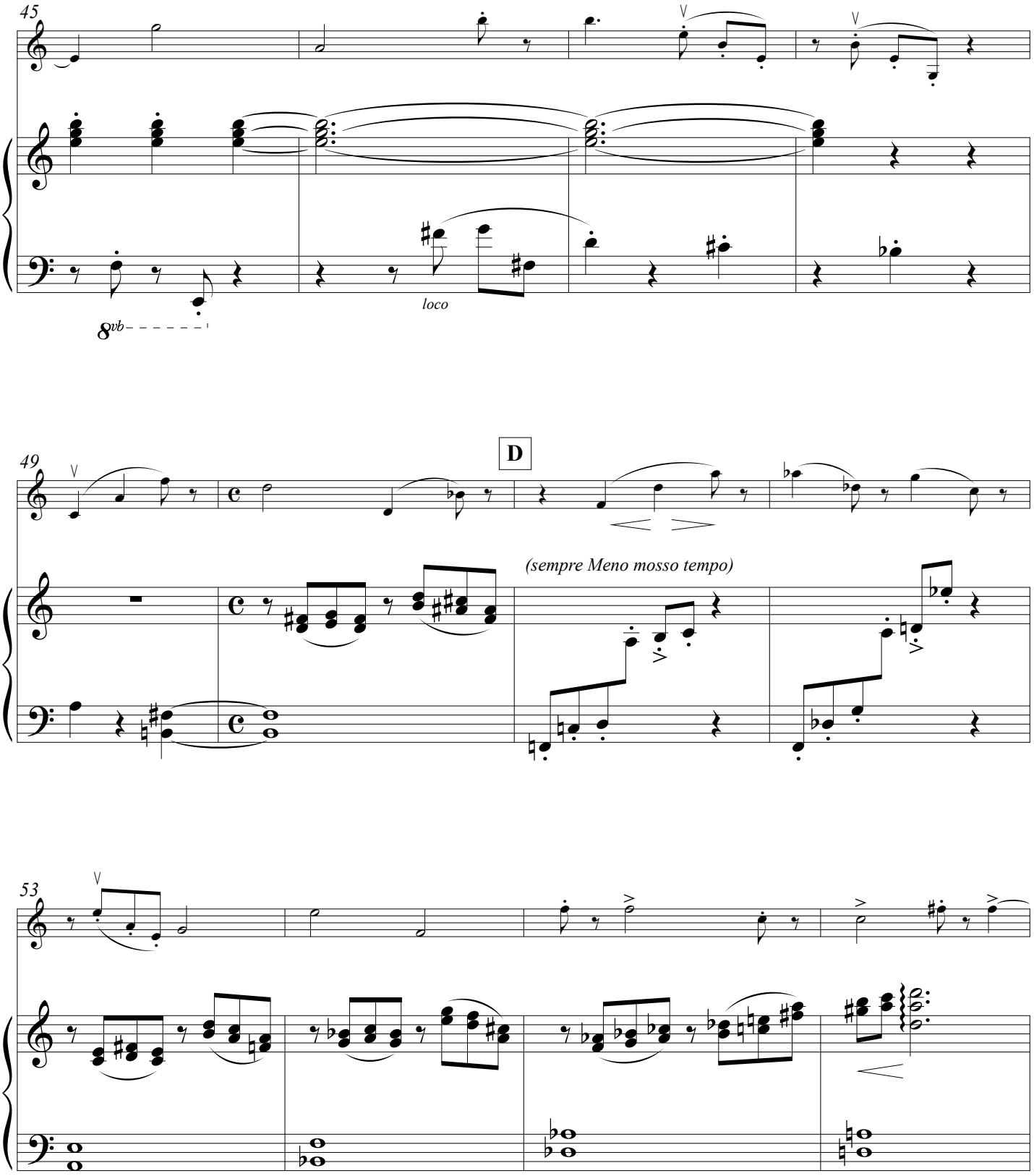
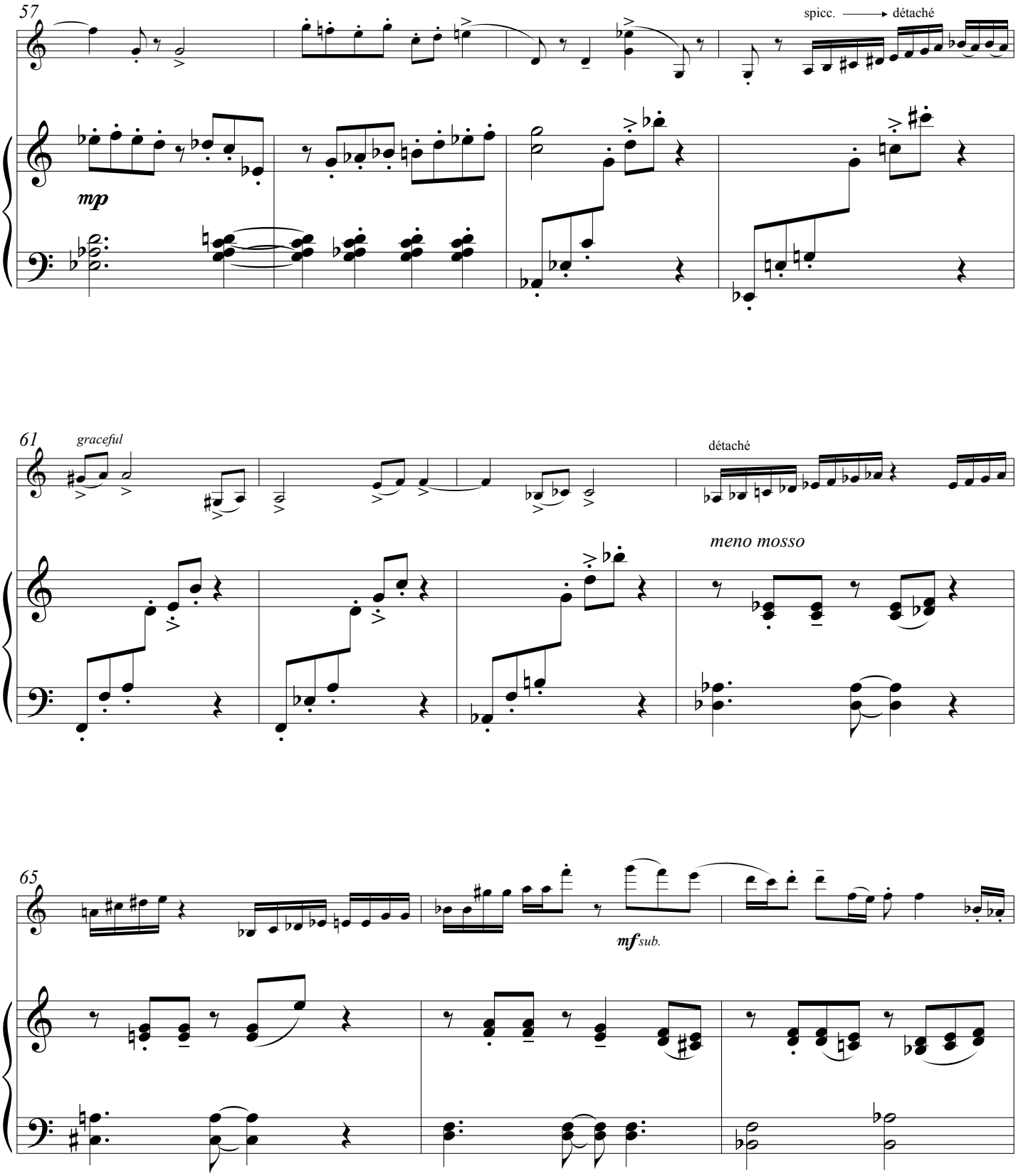
IV.

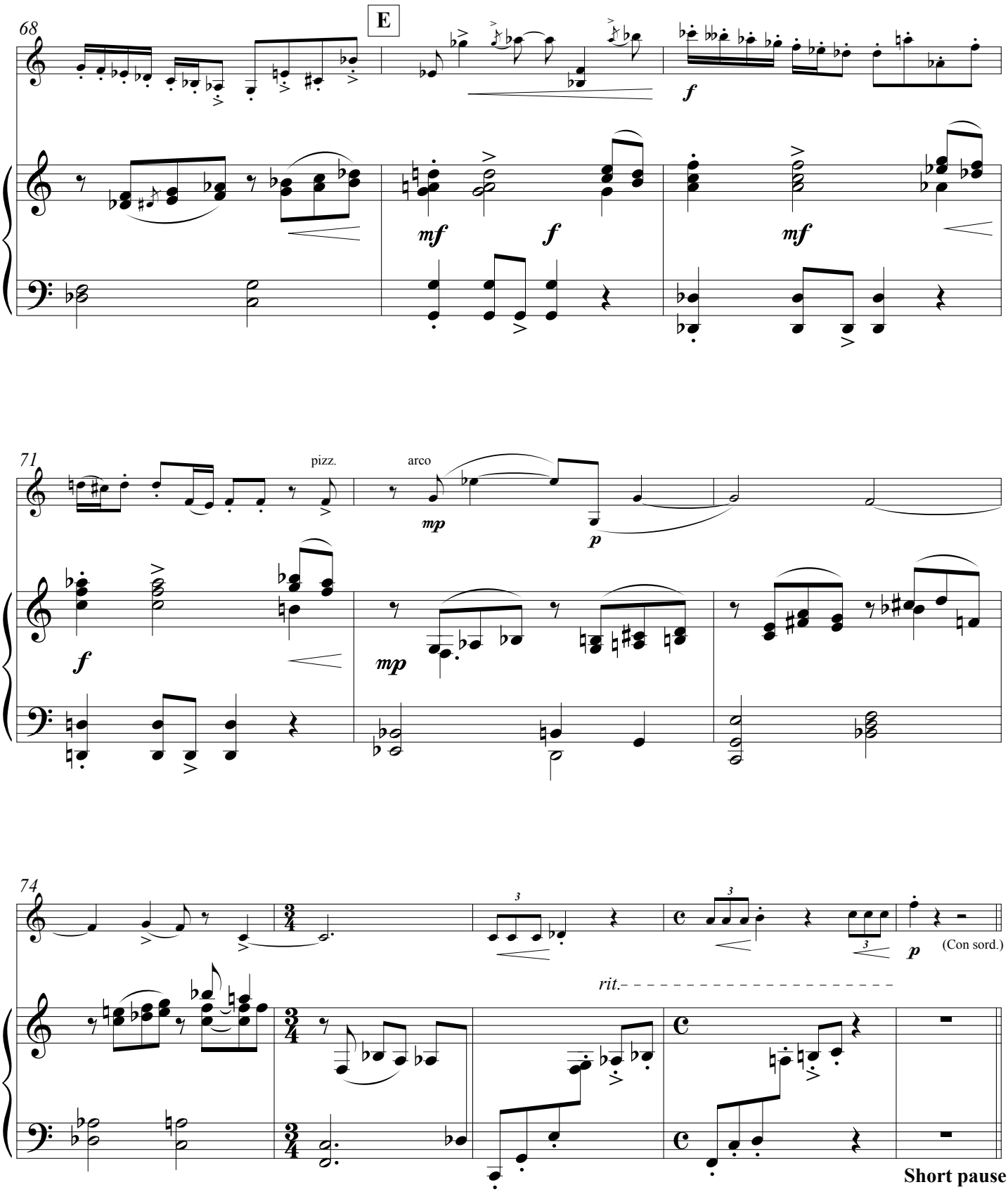

Moving I ♩ = c. 88
sempre spicc. (always slightly off the string – fluffy sounding)
mp
5
pizz.
8va
p
f
mp
10
arco
sul pont.
A
ord.


14
sul pont.
pizz.
arco (ord.)
p
sfz
f
f
p
8vb
loco
19
p
24
B
pizz.
8vb
loco
8vb

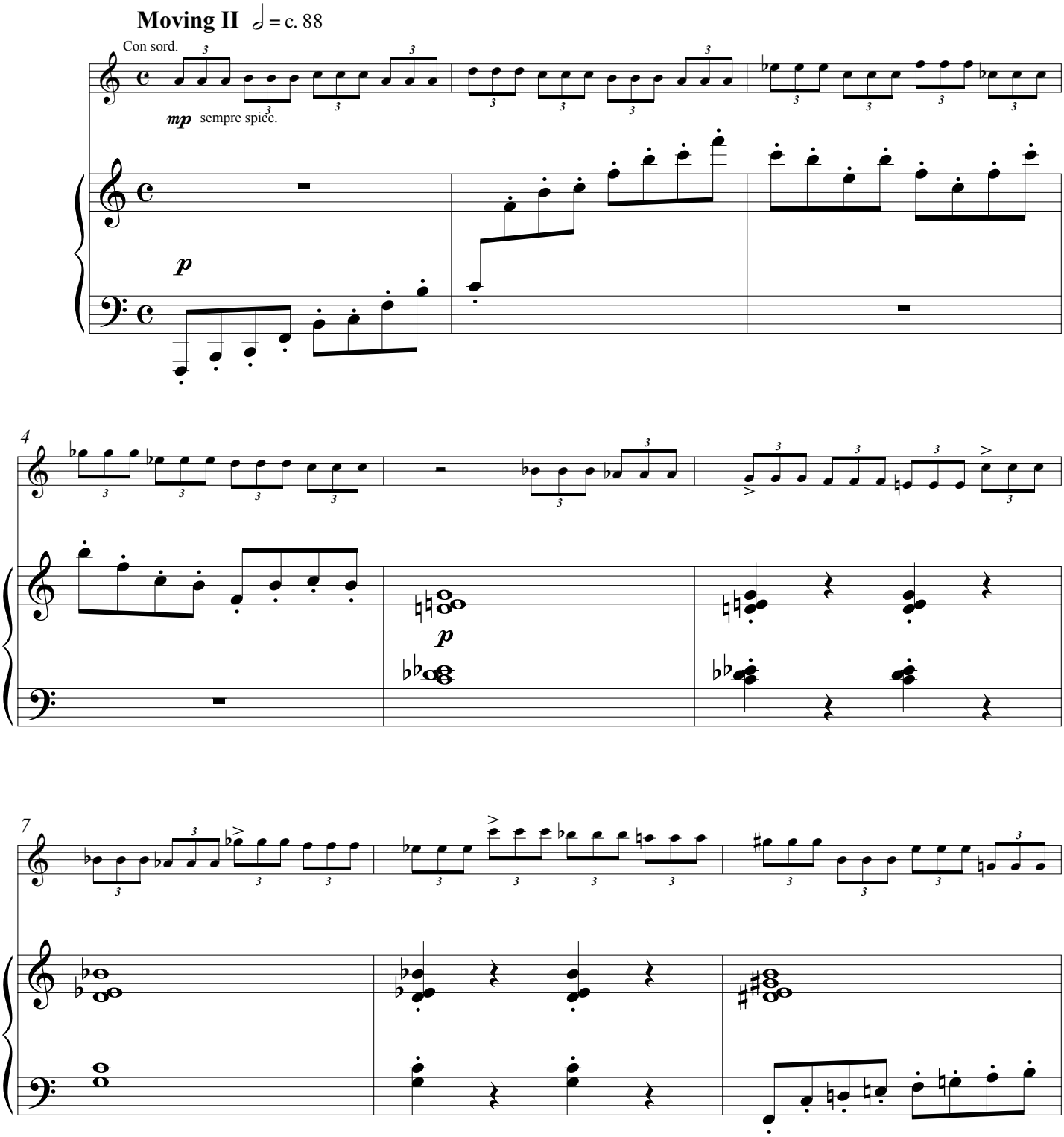

29
sfz
p
loco
8vb
loco
8vb
loco
35
arco
poco sul pont.
C
Meno mosso
= c. 120
ord.
espr.
mp
8vb
Ped.
40
mf
mf
mp
loco
Ped.
Ped.

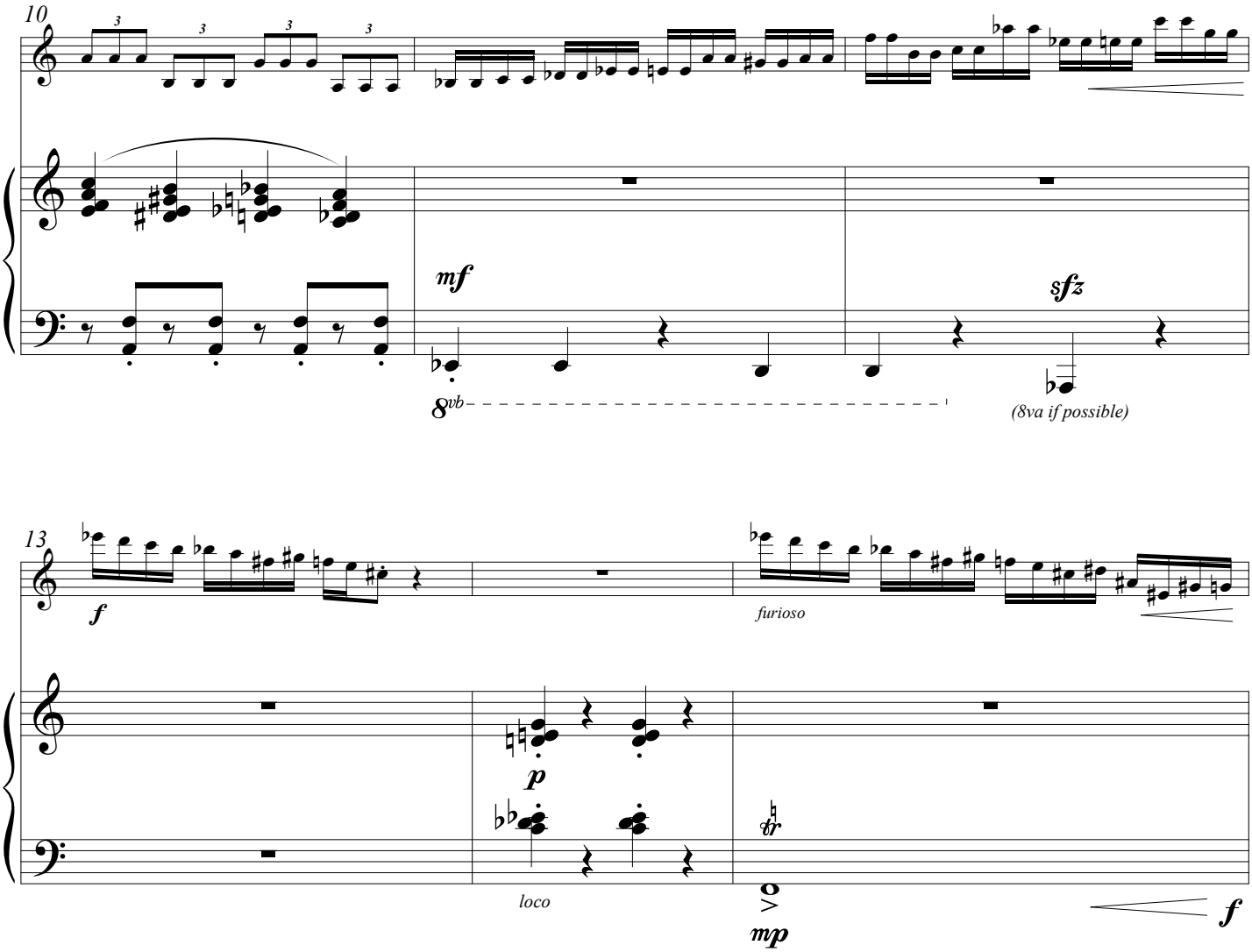

45
8vb
loco
49
D
(sempre Meno mosso tempo)
53

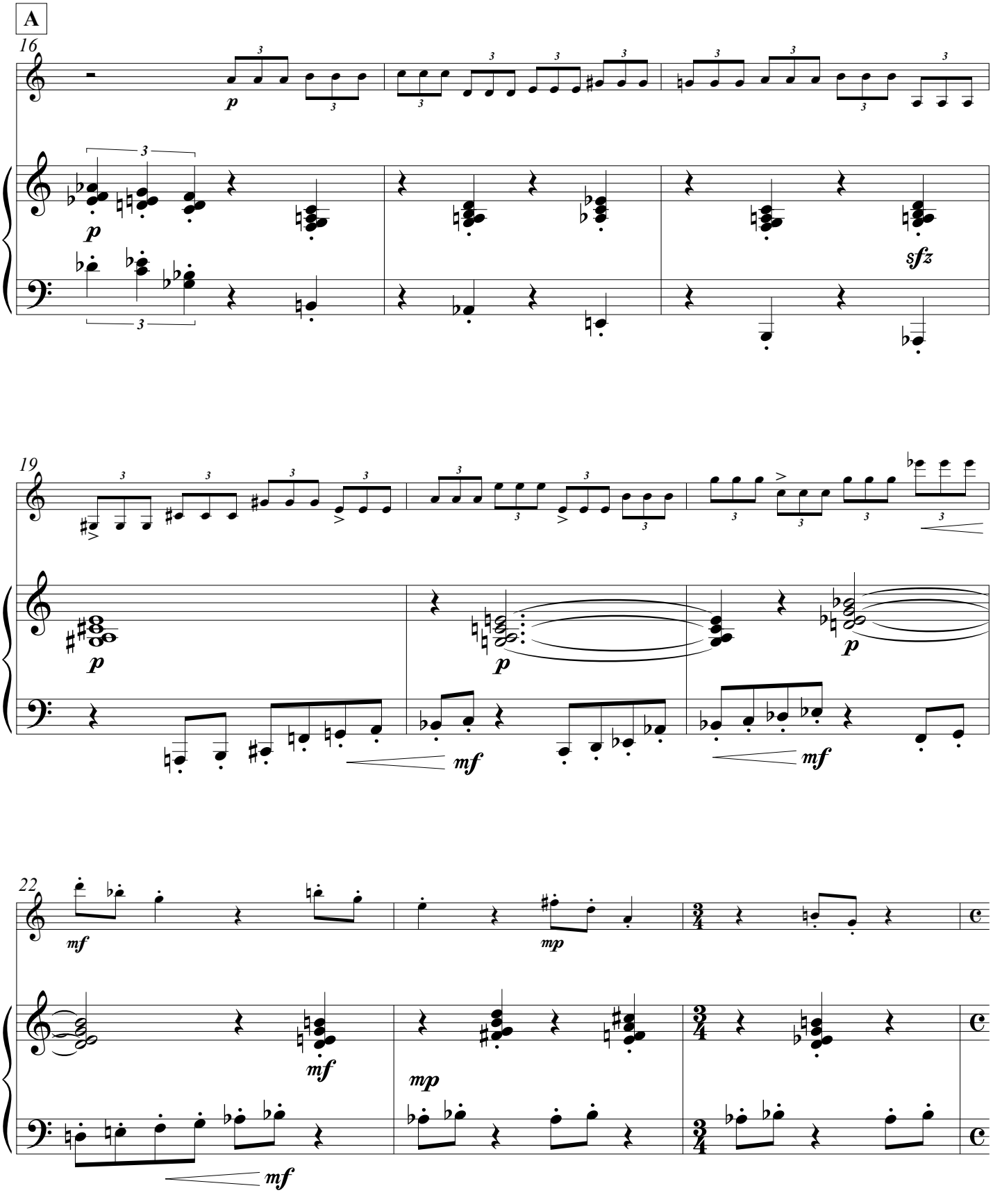

57
spicc.
détaché
mp
61
graceful
détaché
meno mosso
65
mf sub.

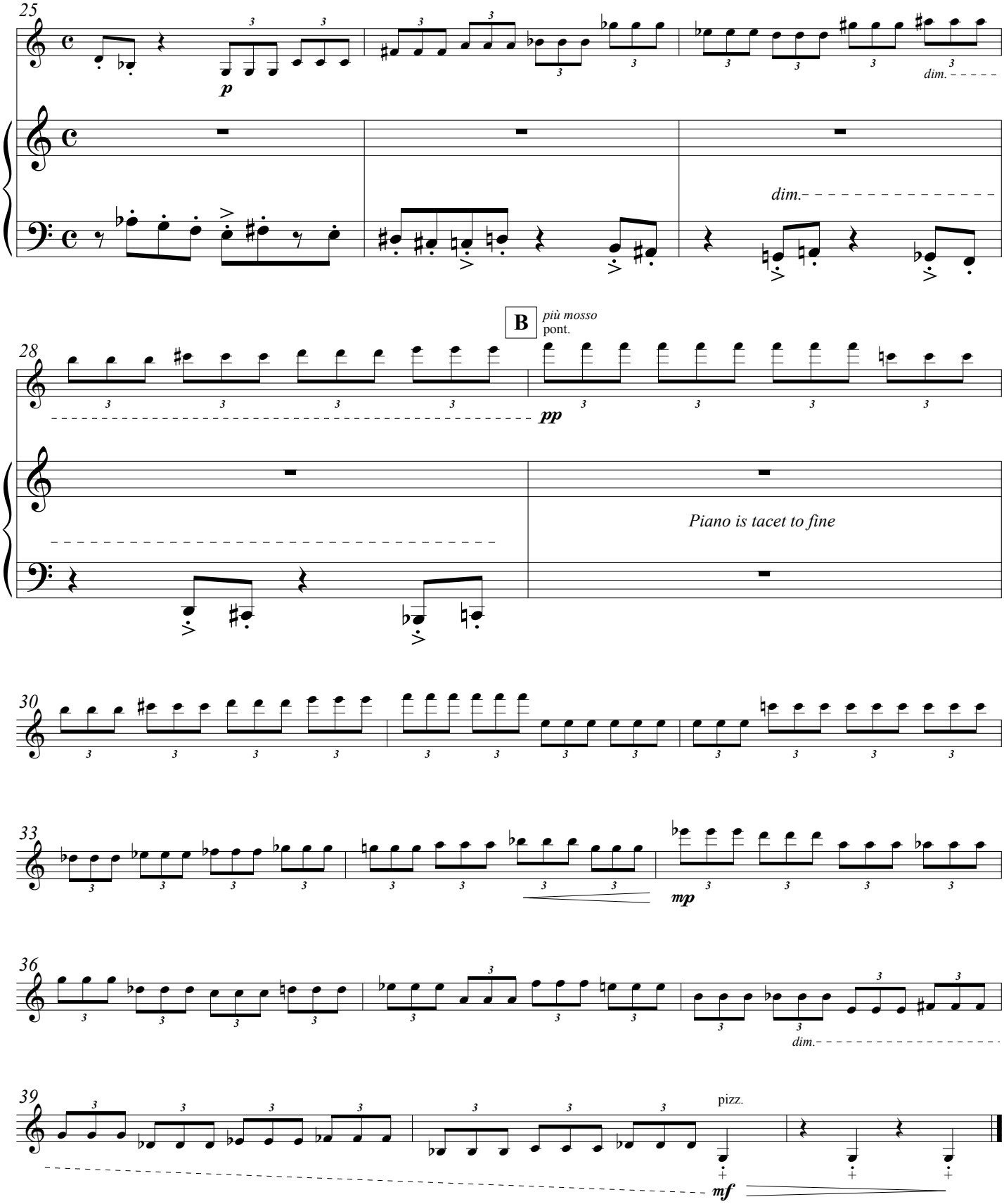

68
E
f
mf
f
mf
71
pizz.
arco
mp
p
f
mp
74
3
3
3
p
(Con sord.)
rit.
Short pause

V.




10
mf
sfz
8vb
(8va if possible)
13
f
furioso
p
loco
tr
mp
f


A
16
p
sfz
19
p
mf
22
mf
mp


25
p
dim.
dim.
B
più mosso
pont.
28
pp
Piano is tacet to fine
30
33
mp
36
dim.
39
pizz.
mf