W. Jay Sydeman

Two Pieces for Cello Quartet

for Four Cellos

(c. 1991-2)

Arts Aeternum

1st mvt: The inspiration for this piece remains a mystery. It is a great combination and this movement takes full advantage of the lyric and harmonic capabilities of this group. If four cellists happened to be hanging about, I can't imagine them having a better time.

2nd mvt: Having written a lyric movement for four celli, it would appear incumbent on the composer to write a matching virtuoso movement. Voila! This one puts the performers through their paces, both in keeping a very tight rhythmic ensemble and playing a bunch of notes quickly and accurately. It has the capability of leaving an audience breathless, but a fair amount of rehearsal might be required to accomplish that. Anything less than the required tempo and very crisp playing will result in a sort of mushy pea soup which we all (especially the composer) might find somewhat indigestible.

– W. Jay Sydeman, September 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. Adagio – circa 2:30
II. Allegro – circa 2:45

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Edited and engraved by Rick Shinozaki (Albany, CA), consulting with the composer.

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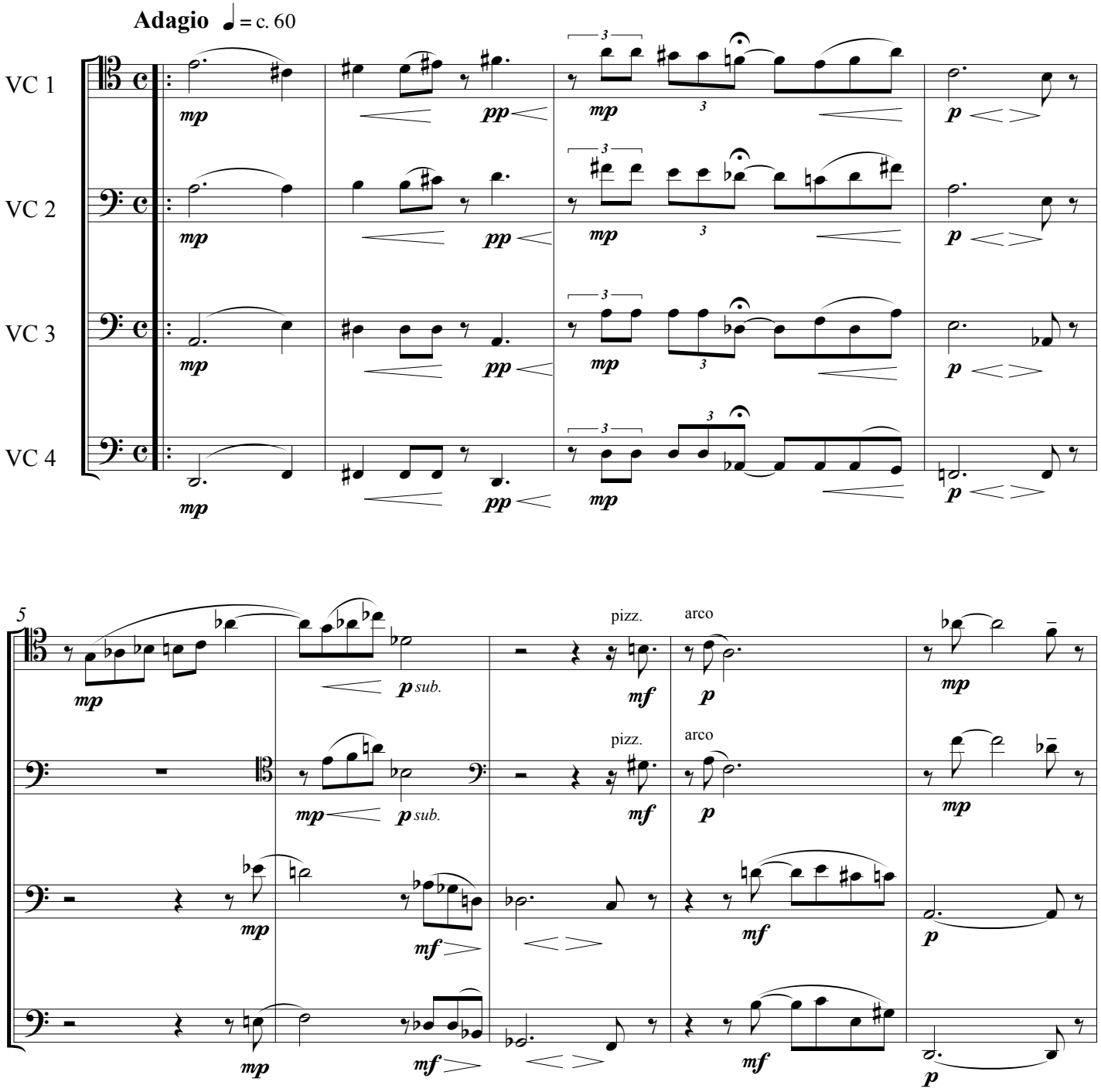
for Four Cellos

W. Jay Sydeman
(February, 1991)

I.



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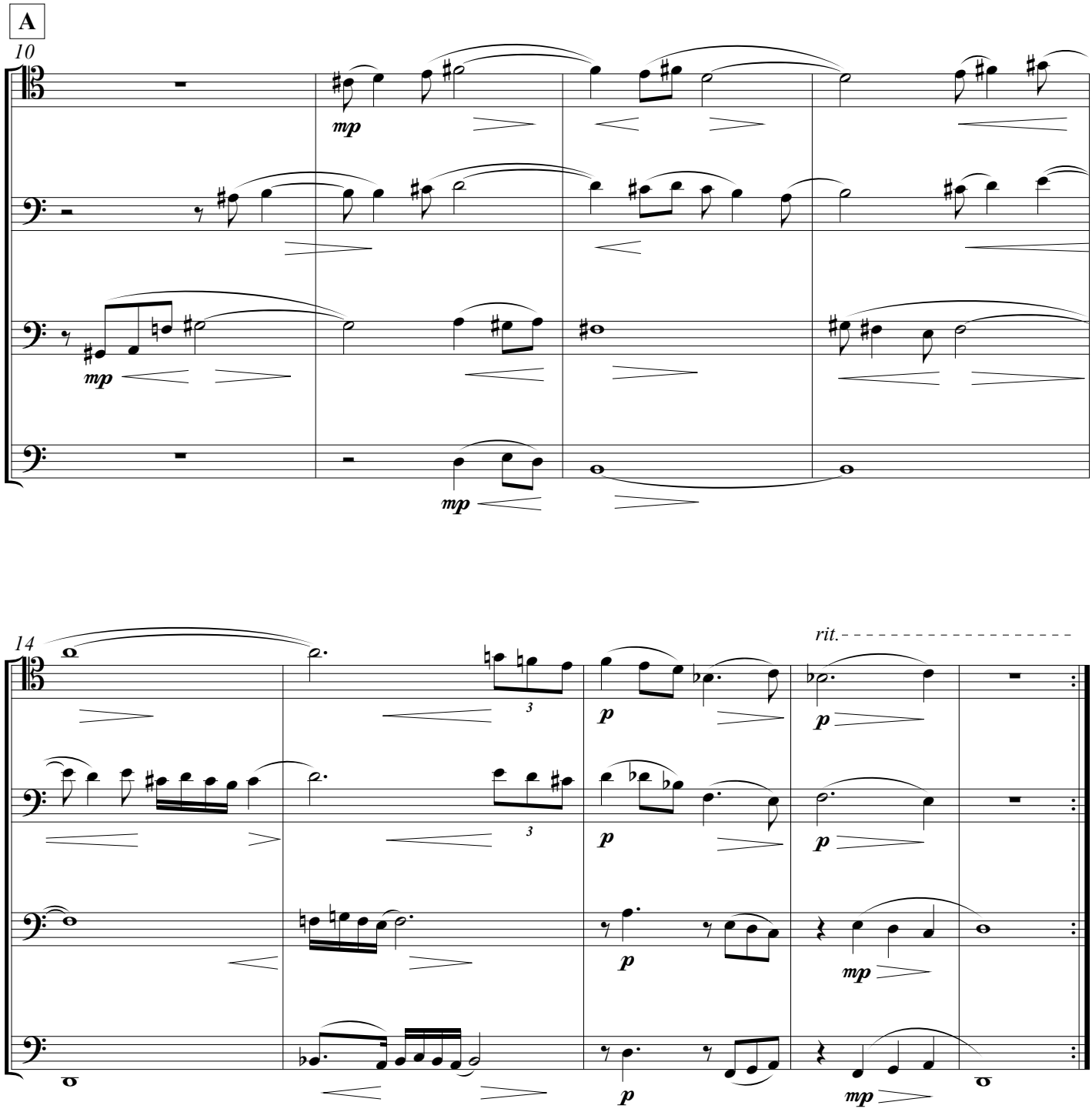
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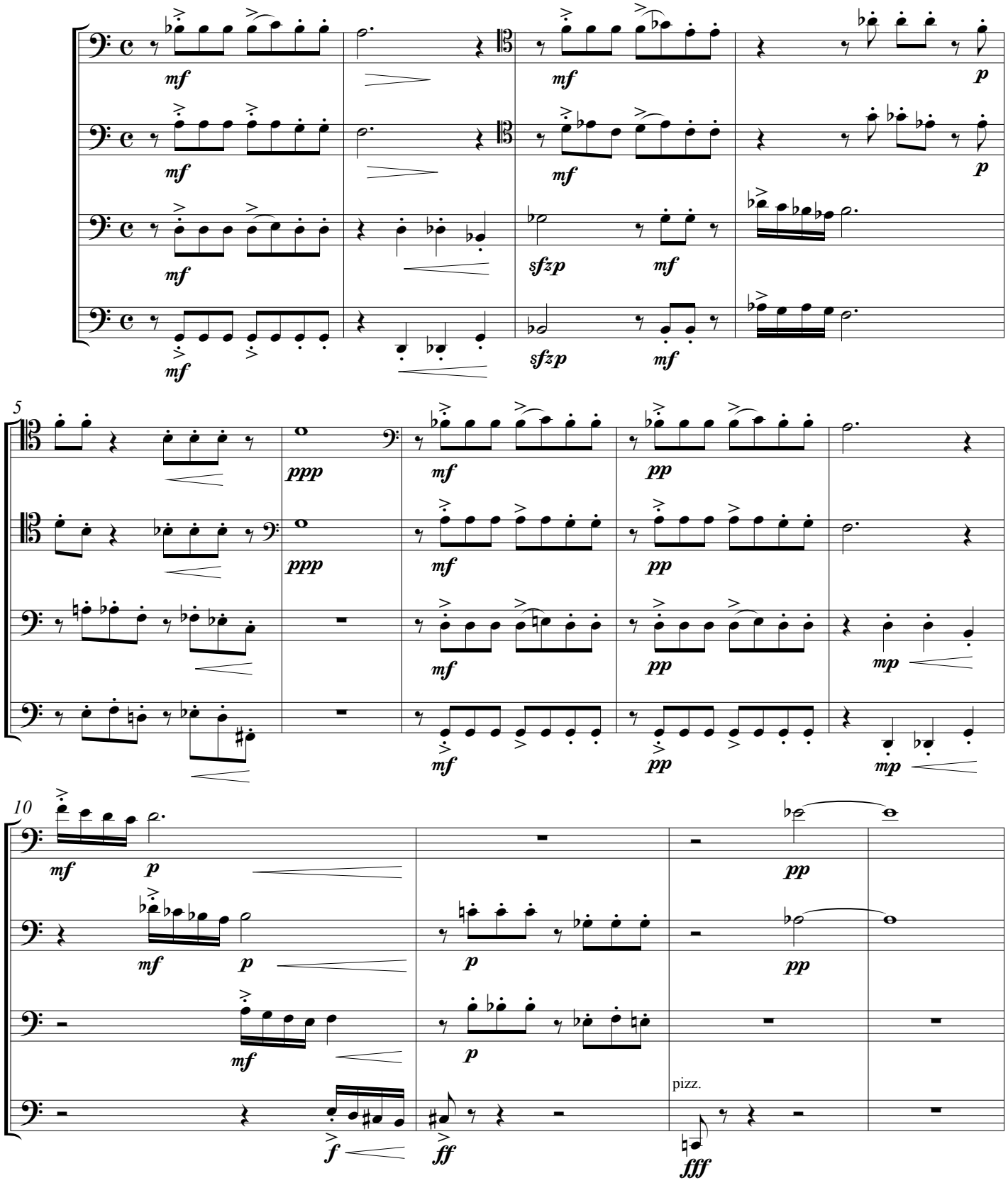
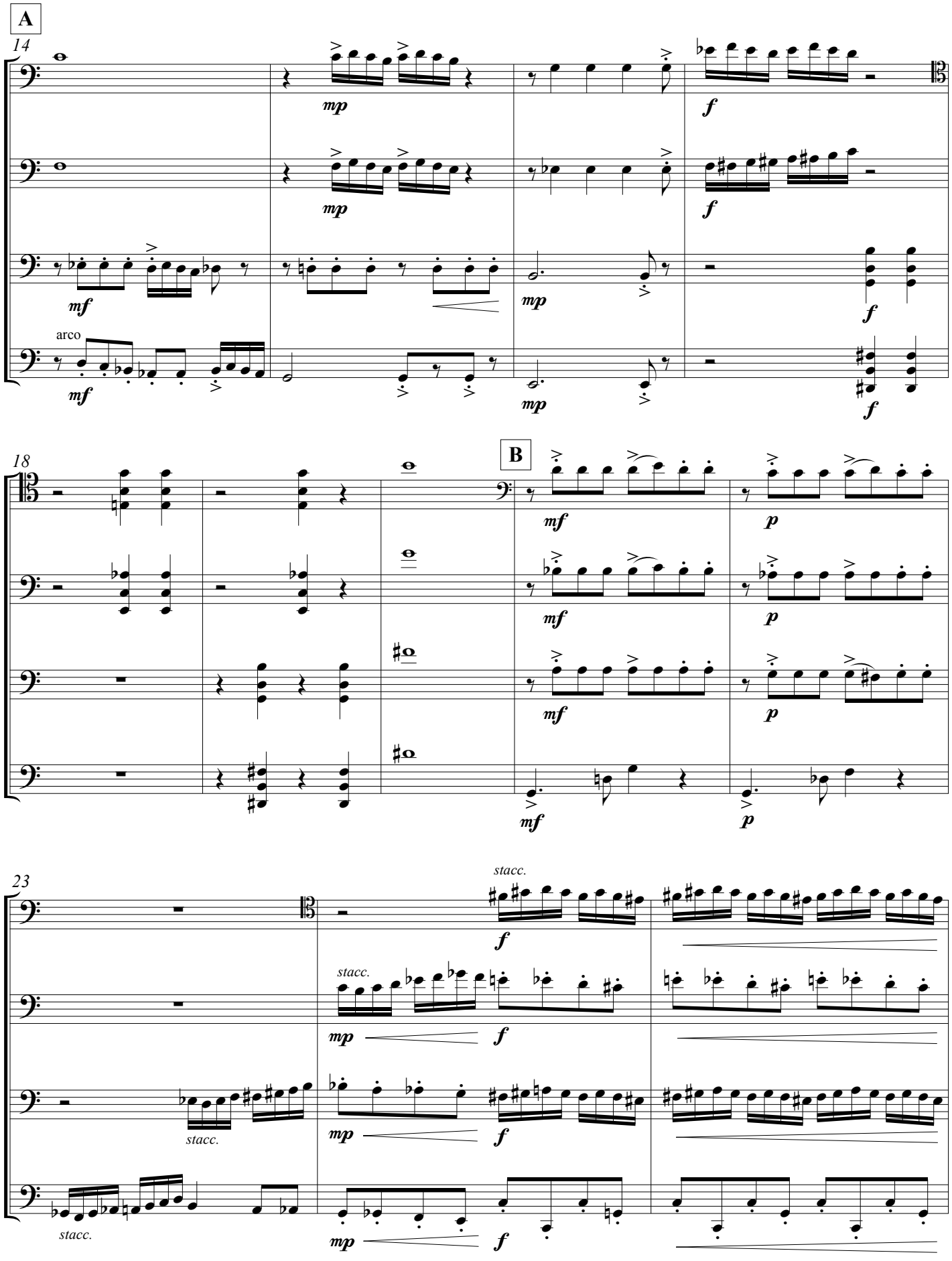
II.

(c. 1992)

Allegro ♩ = c. 138

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23
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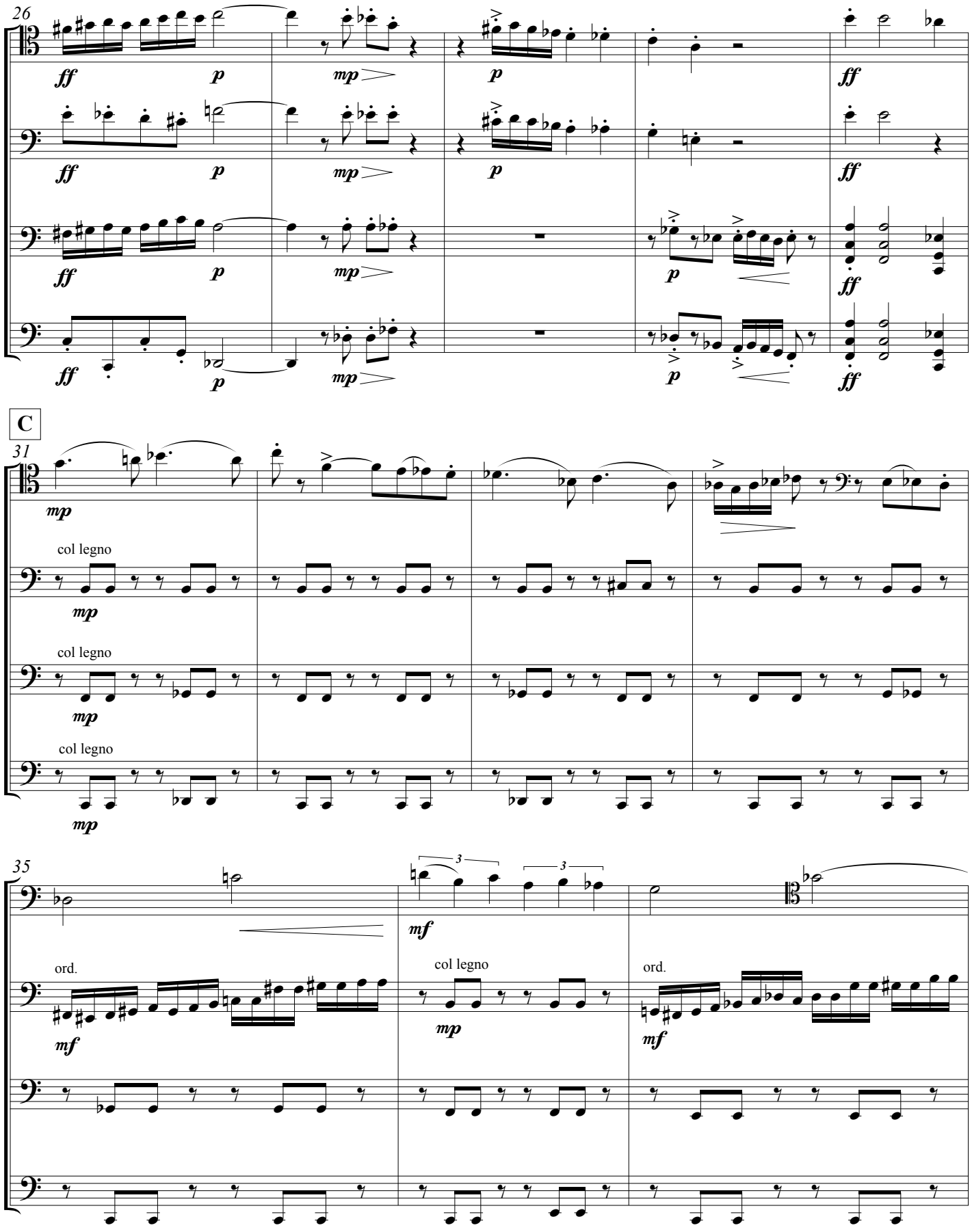
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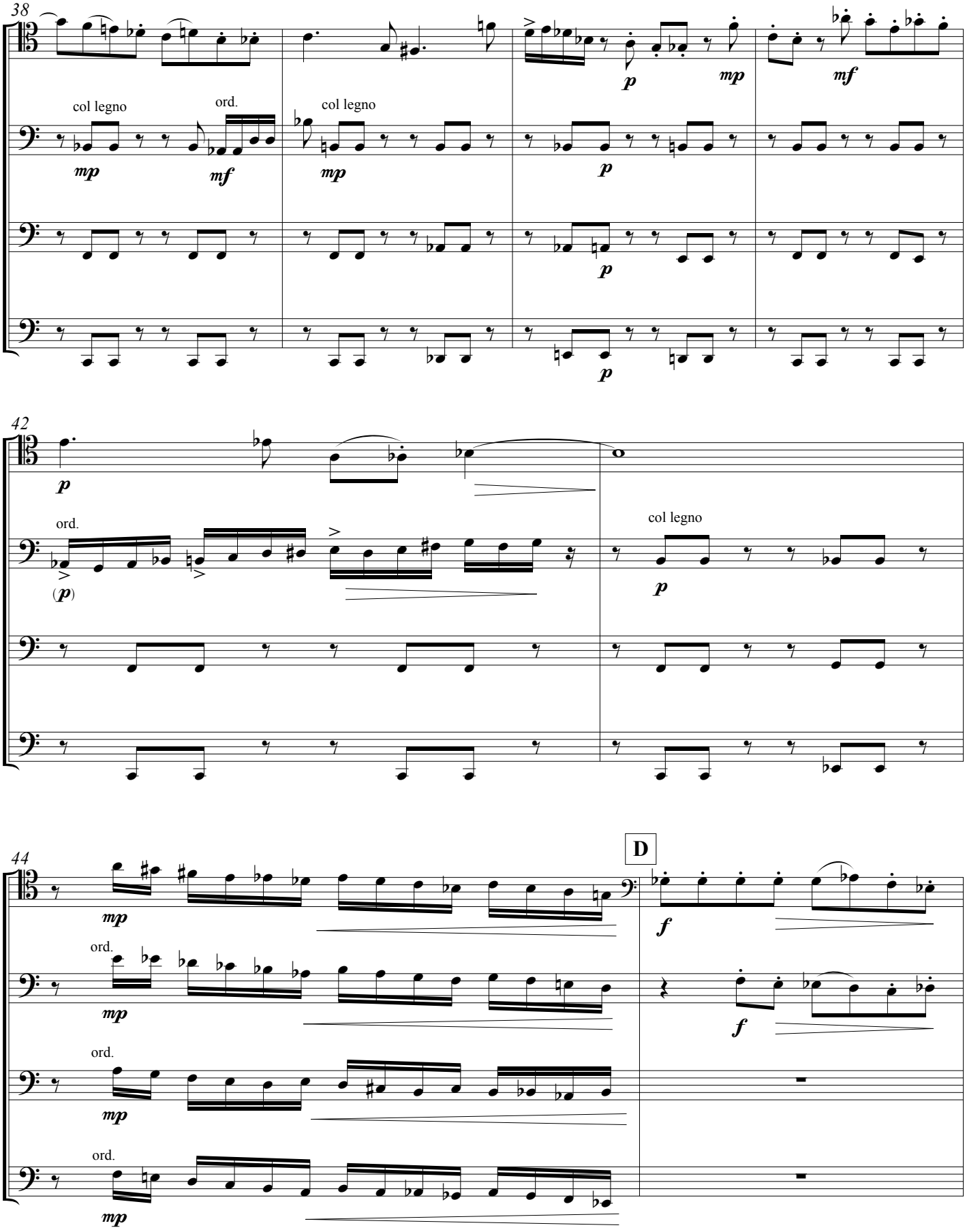
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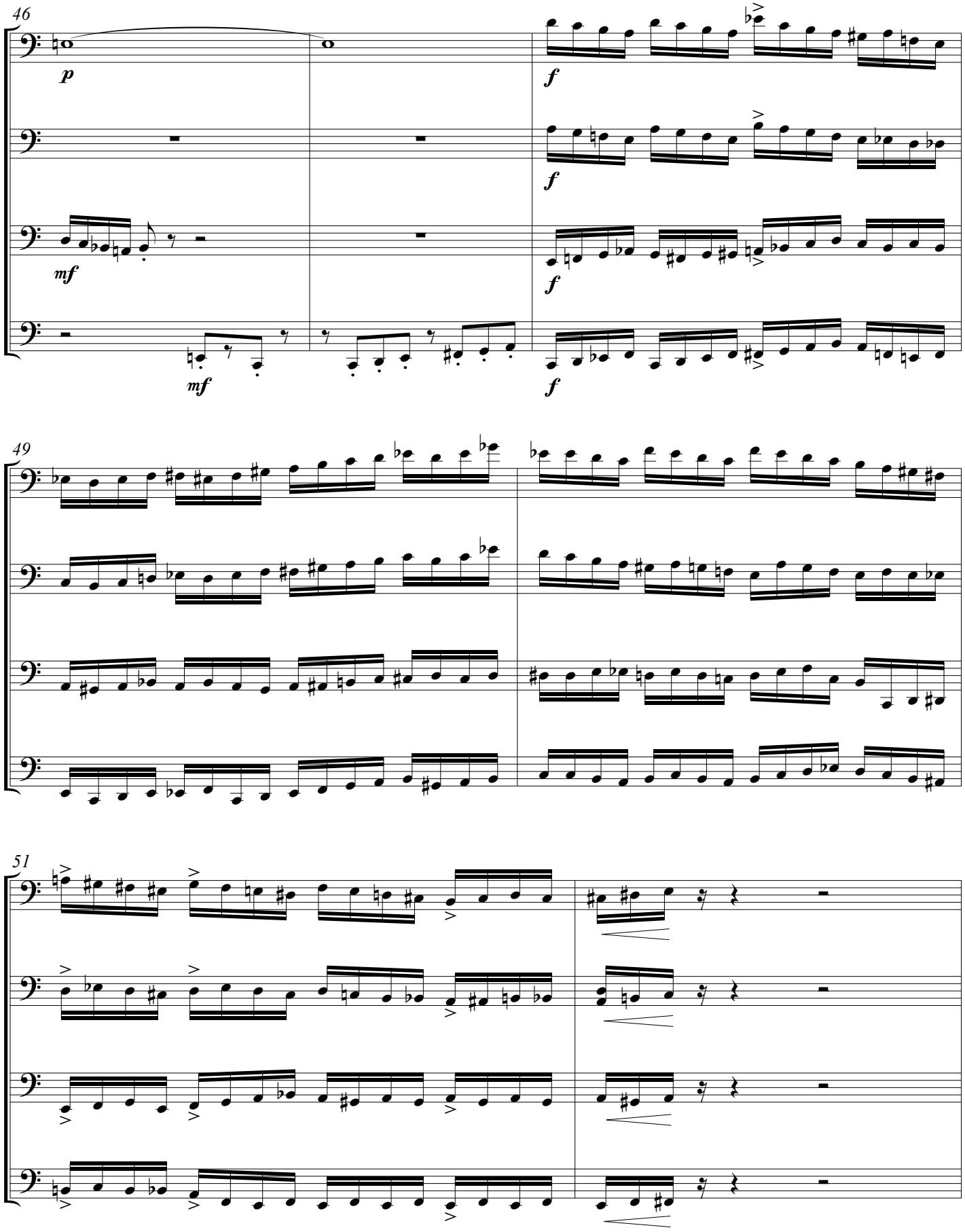
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f
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f
mf
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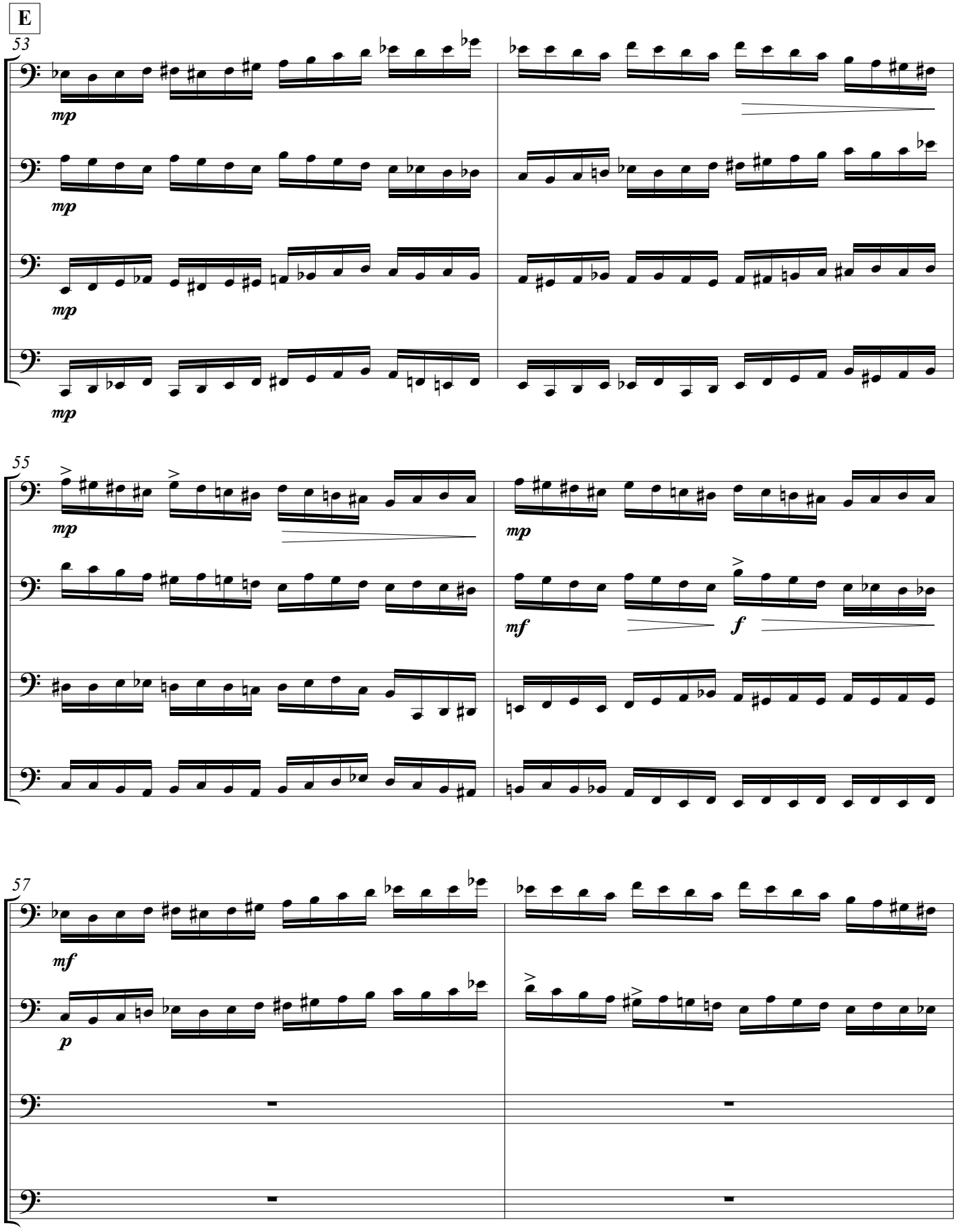
49
51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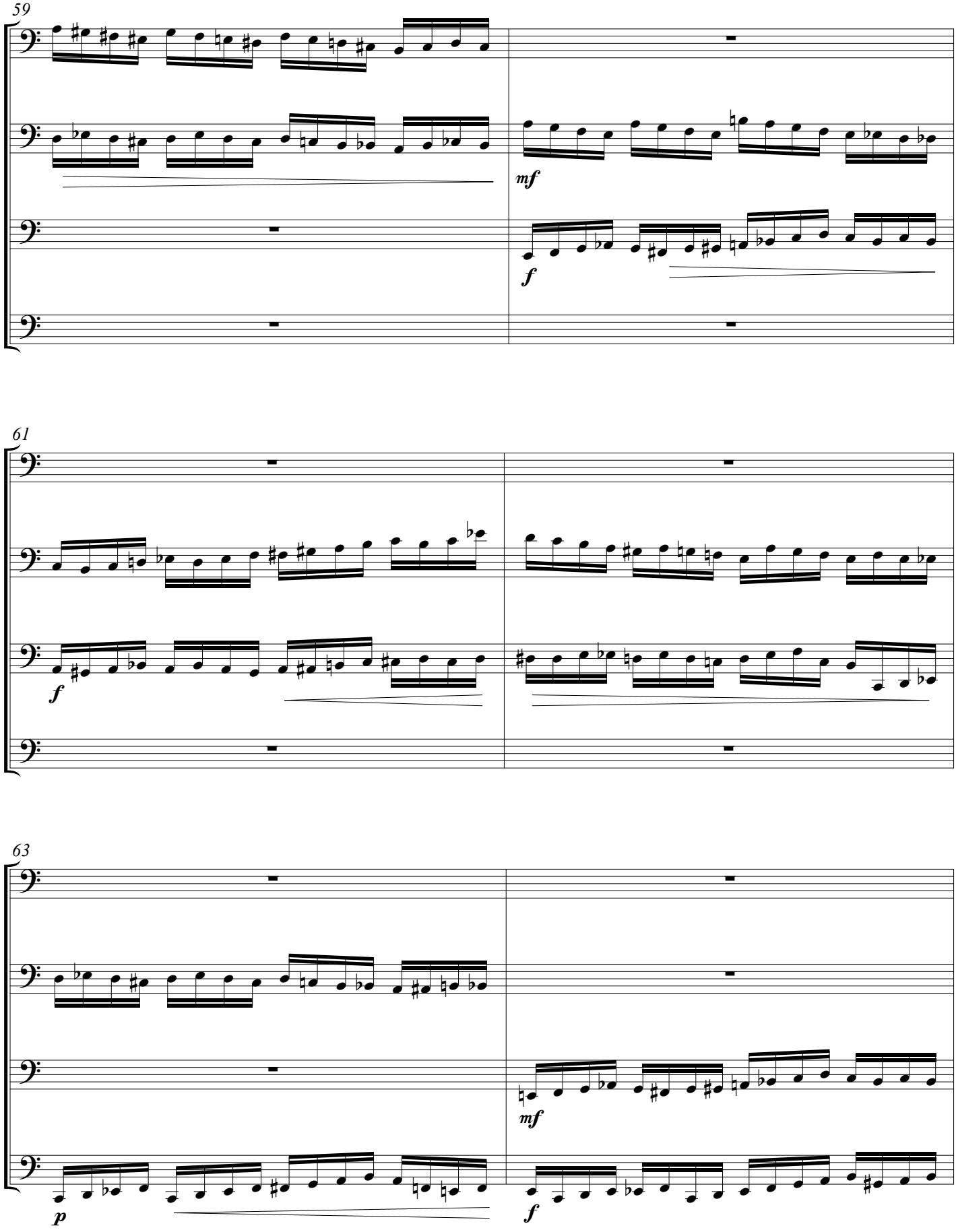
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61
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63
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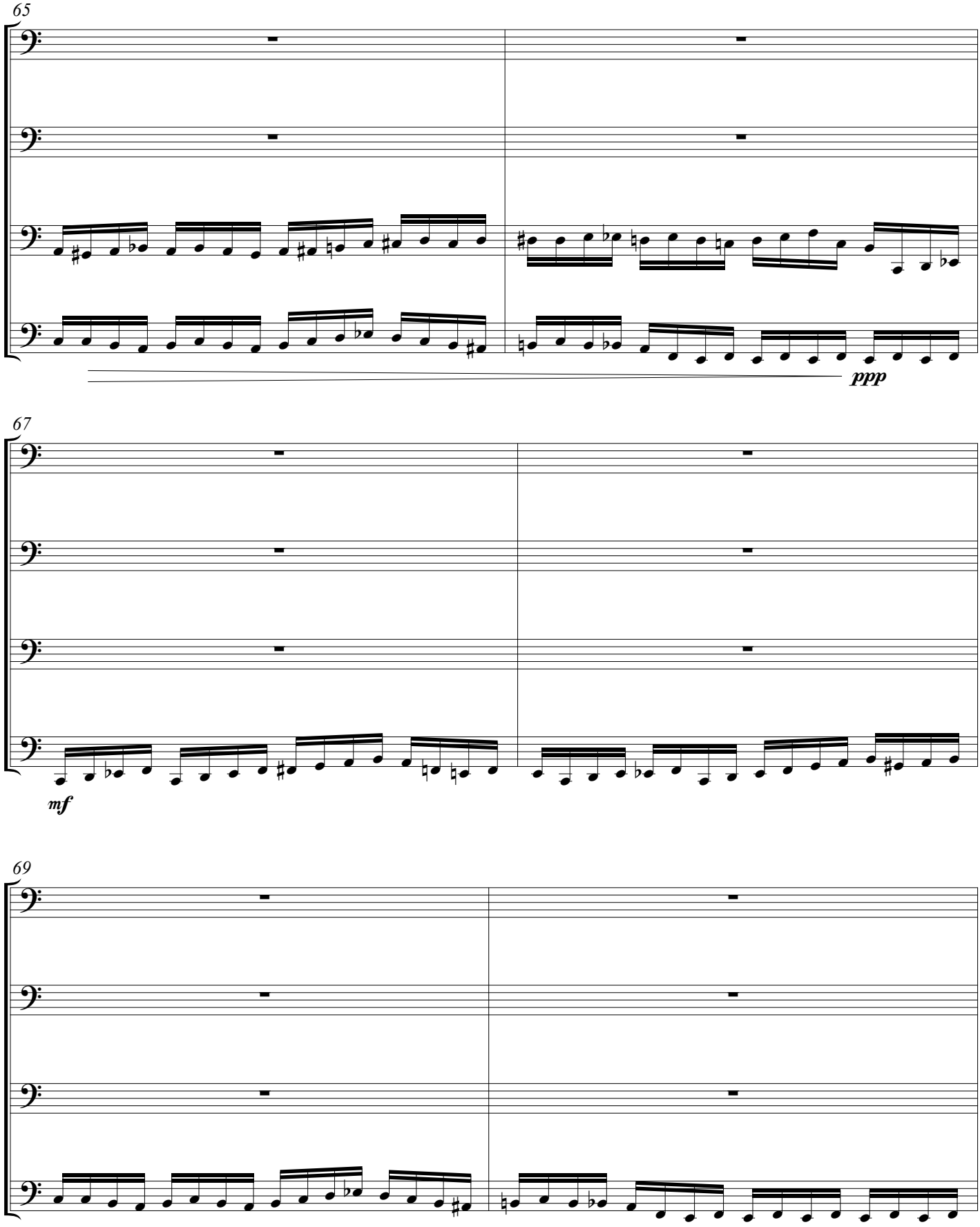
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67
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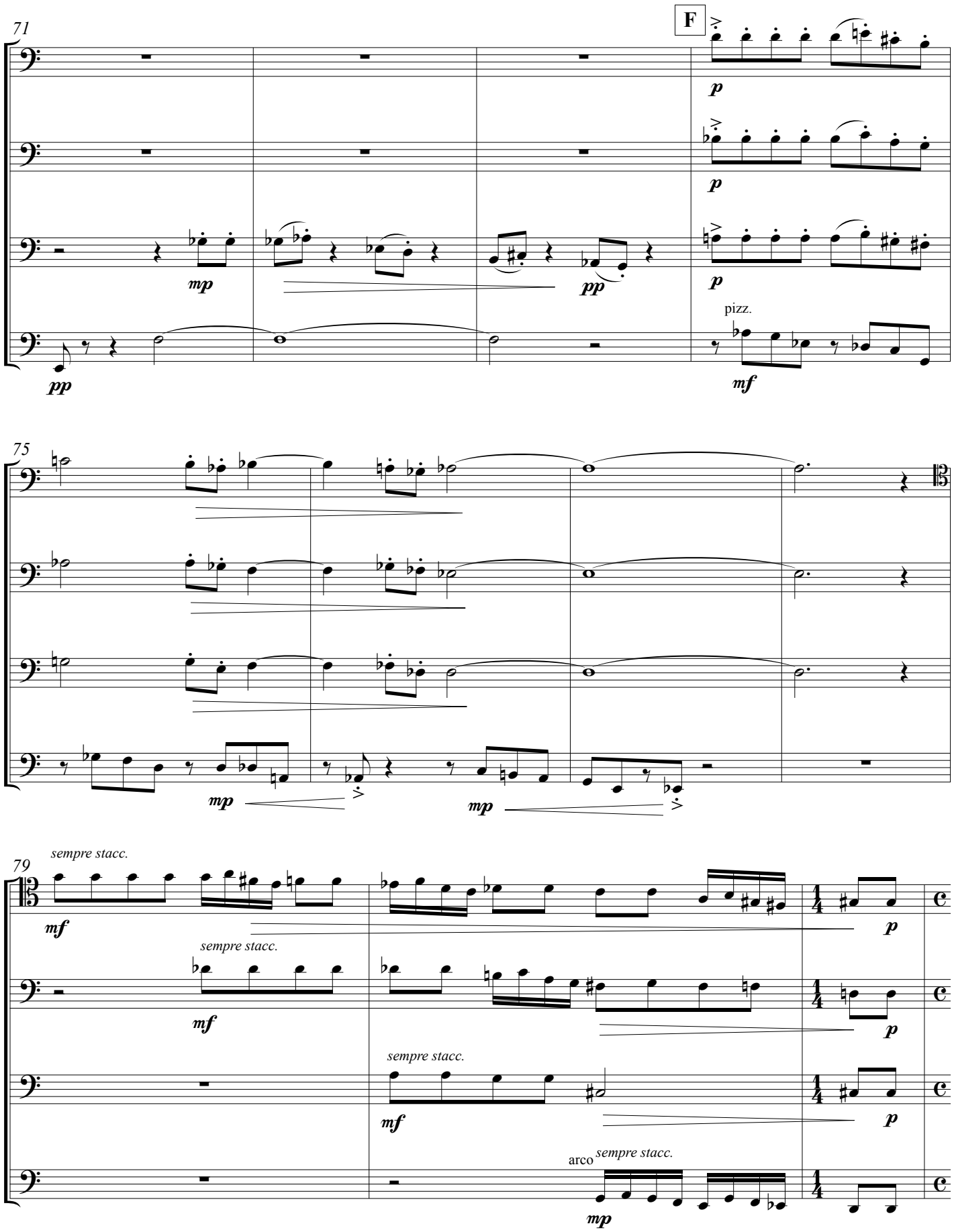
69


71
F
p
p
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pp
p
pp
pizz.
mf
75
mp
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79
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mf
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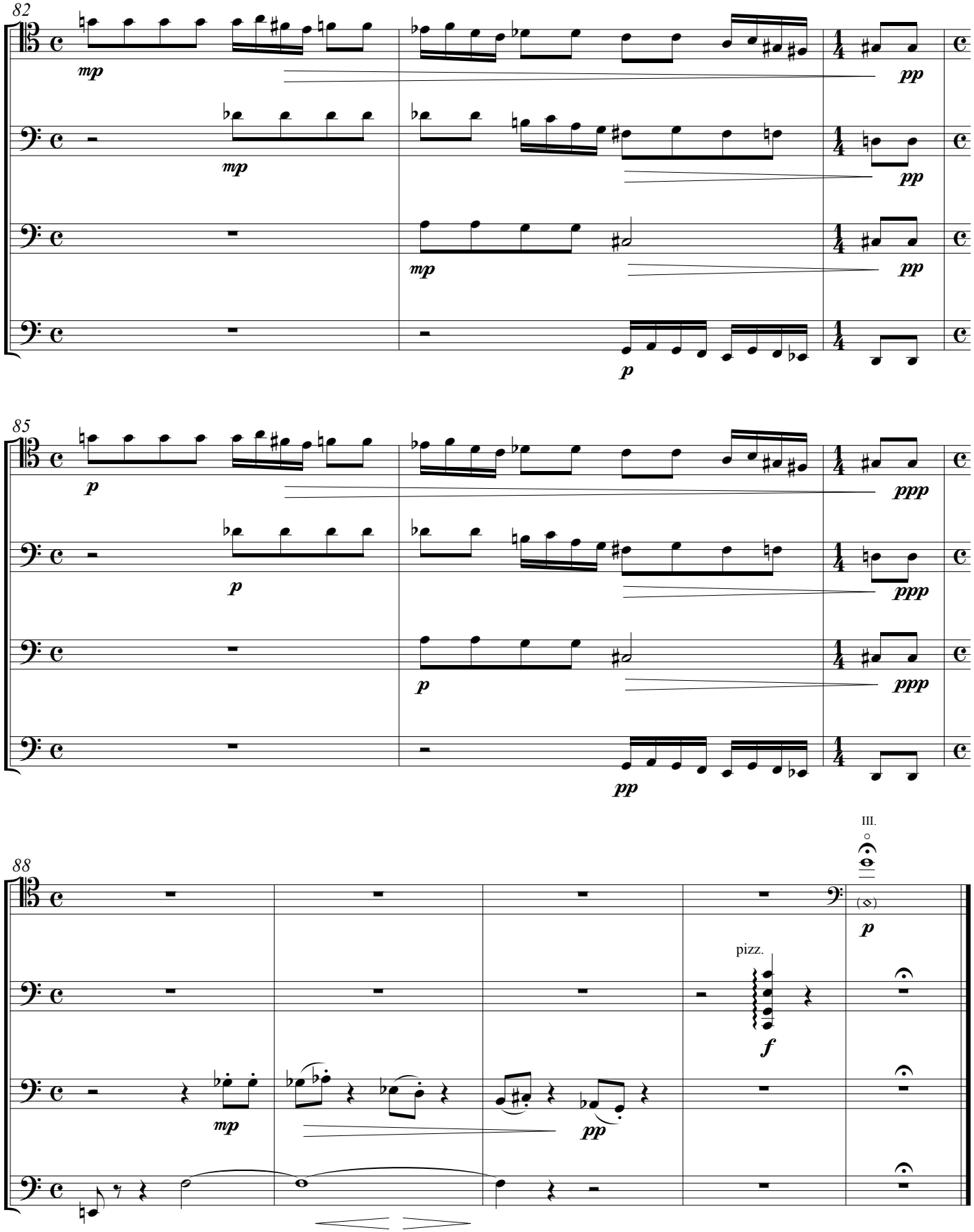
mf
p
sempre stacc.
mf
p
arco
sempre stacc.
mp


82
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mp
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p
pp
pp
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85
p
p
p
pp
ppp
ppp
ppp
88
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III.
(∞)
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f