Full Score

"To build means to contend with
the void, to hypnotise space"

Камень
Stone

A Discourse for Violin and String Trio

Peter Dyson
2003

From “Stone” by Osip Mandelstam
No 28 Stanza 1 - 1912

Я вздрагиваю от холода *I am trembling with cold -*
Мне хочется онеметь *I want to become dumb!*
А в небе танцует золото *But the sky dances with gold -*
Приказывает мне петь *It orders me to sing.*

?Copyright Gosizdat (State Publishing House) 1923
English translation by Robert Tracy
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Staging Suggestion:

The first violin should be placed separated from the other three instruments by a low dry stone wall as shown below. (Alternatively this could be a single large symbolic stone, as a fifth player.) If lighting arrangements permit, the stone(s) should be lit with one or two spotlights. If downward spots are used on each of the players, the focus of the effect should be that more light falls on the stone, The background would need to be dark and gloomy, so that there are visible pools of light. The effect should look purposeful and not silly! If circumstances of performance permit, Violin I should move whilst playing the long sustained note from Bar 295 and be seated in the empty chair next to Violin II by the end of this note, ready for the Grave. At Bar 370 Violin I should move back across the stage to the point of the wall (point x) and stand playing facing the other players (back to audience), turning round to face the audience in Bar 380. Violin II should stand and move forward for Bar 378. Viola should stand and move forward for Bar 381. Violoncello should stand on and move forward on completion of final note.

STONES STONES STONES STONES STONES

(Gap in wall)

S
T
O
N
E
S

Viola Violoncello

(Empty Chair) Violin II Violin I

(point x)

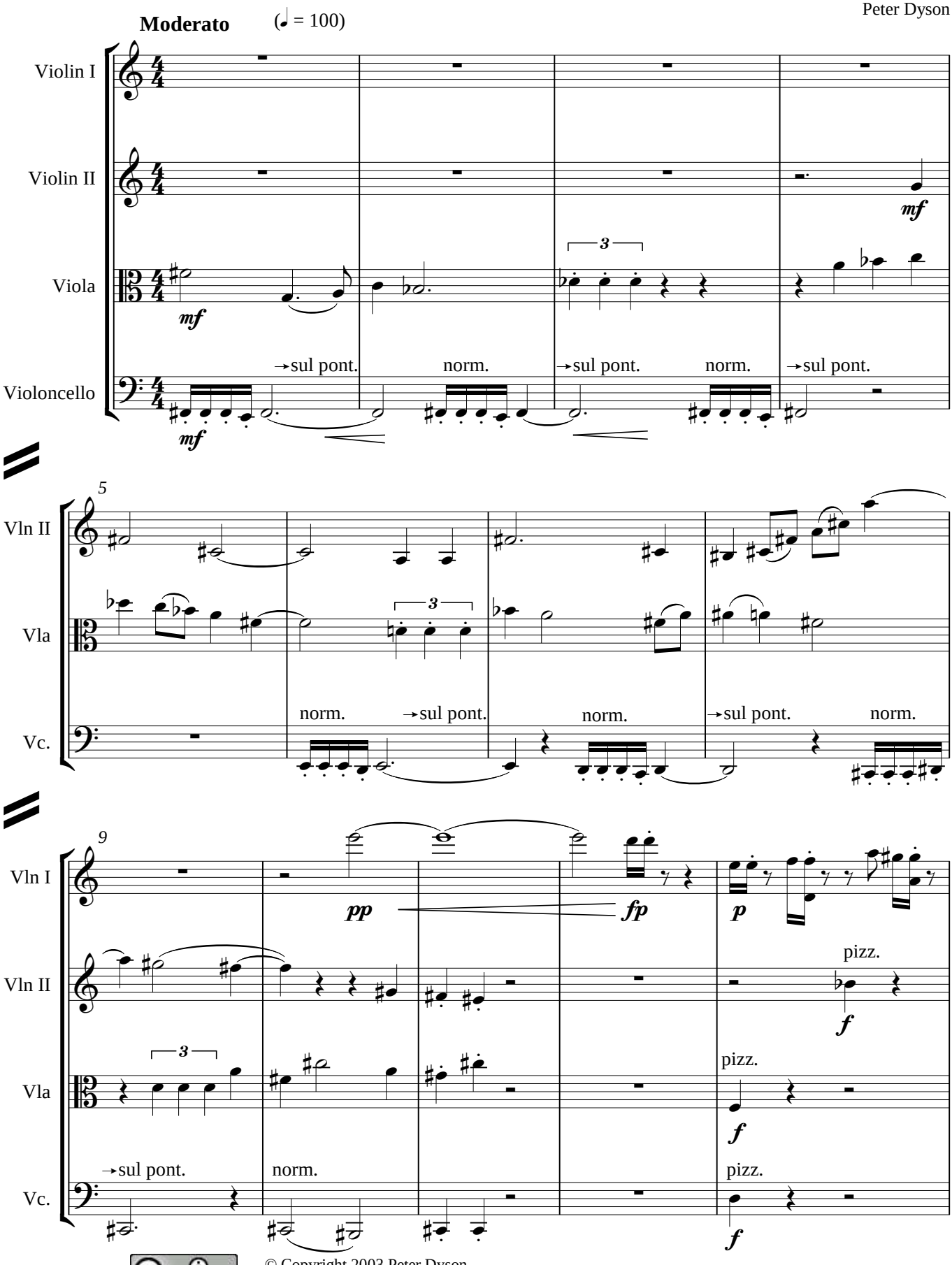
(Footnote: At the first performance in Grinton Parish Church on June 5th 2003 by the Fitzwilliam String Quartet, a recorded pre-performance talk was played whilst the wall was built.)

for the Fitzwilliam Quartet

КАМЕНЬ (Stone)

A Discourse for Violin and String Trio

Peter Dyson



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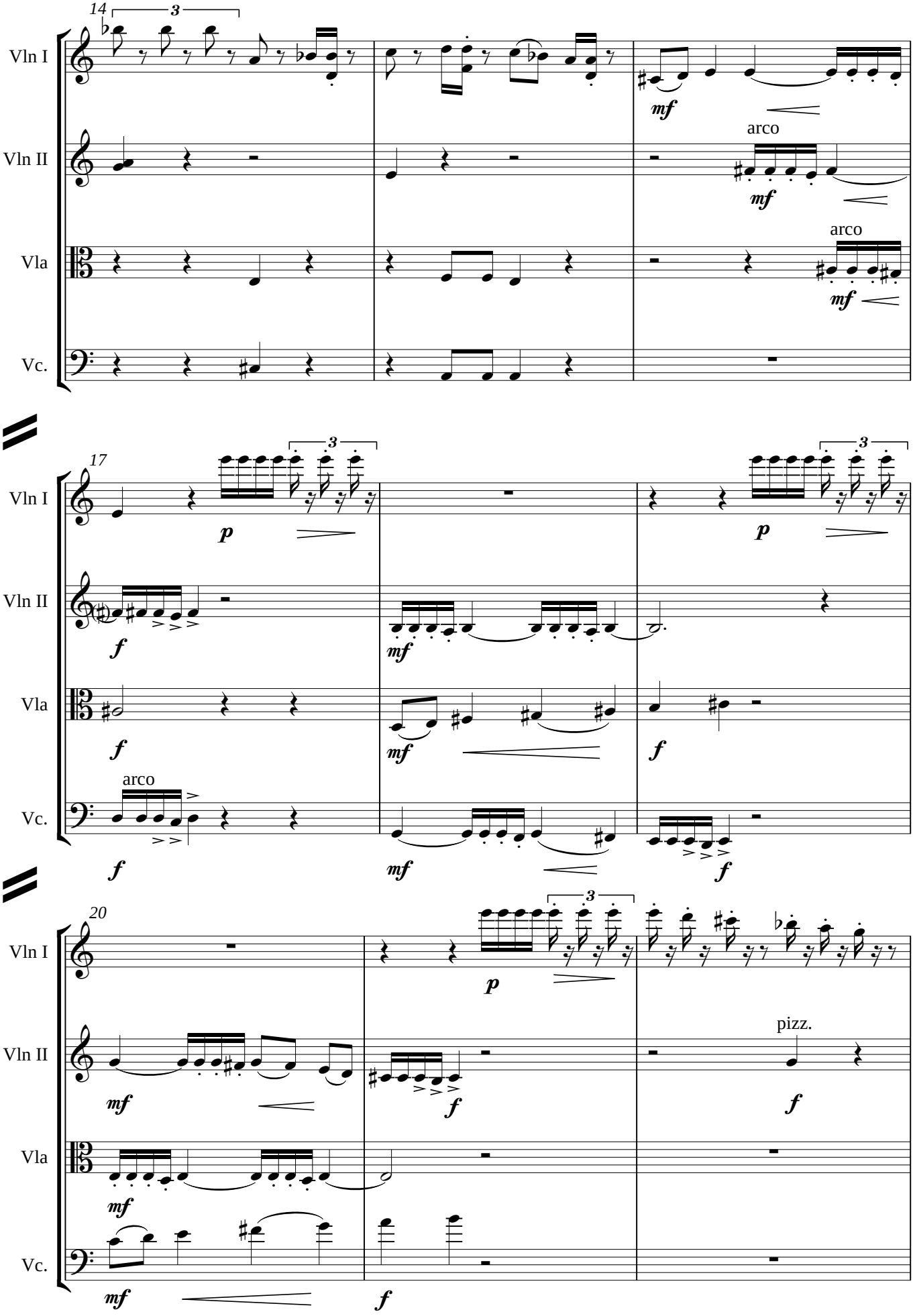
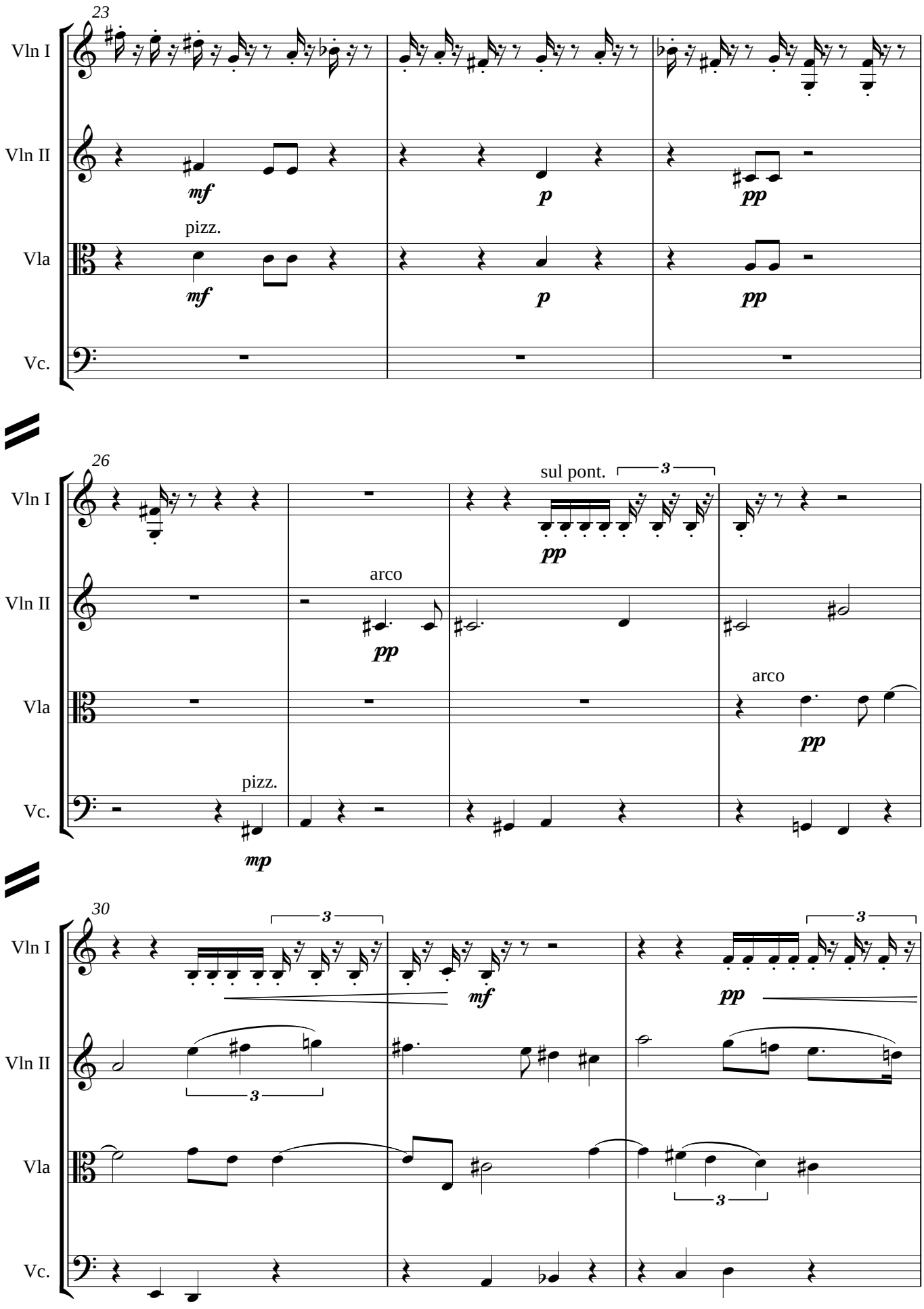
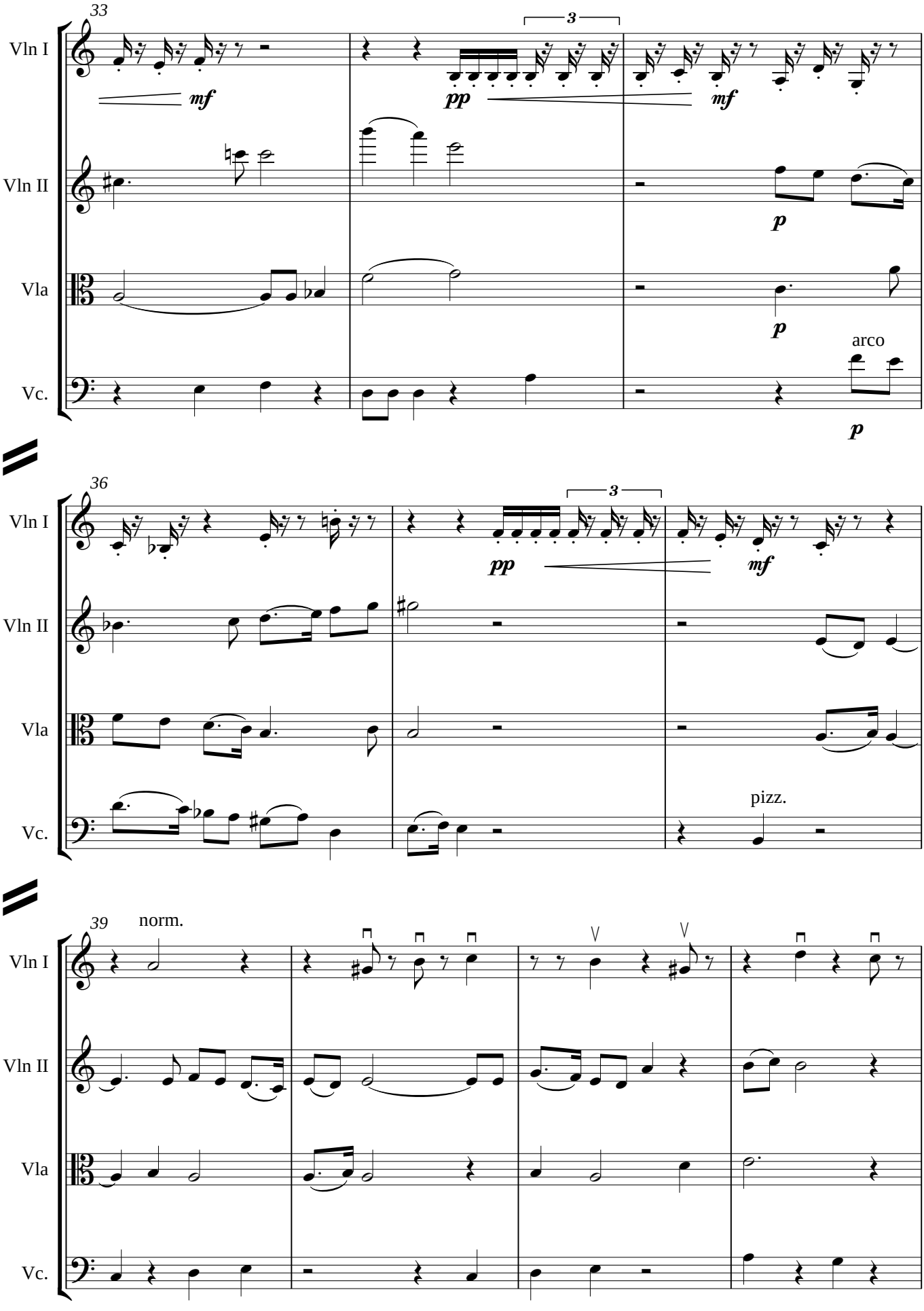
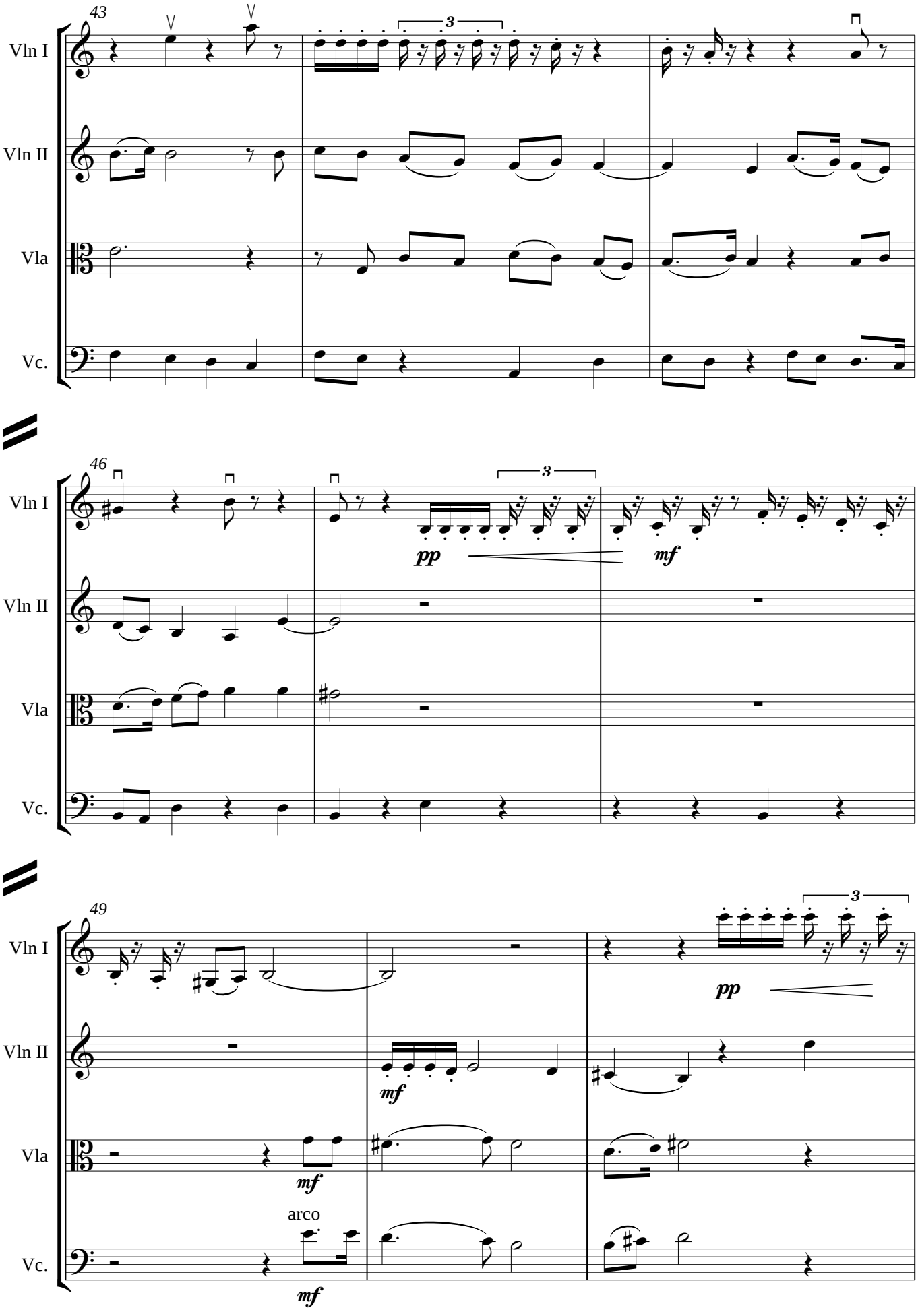
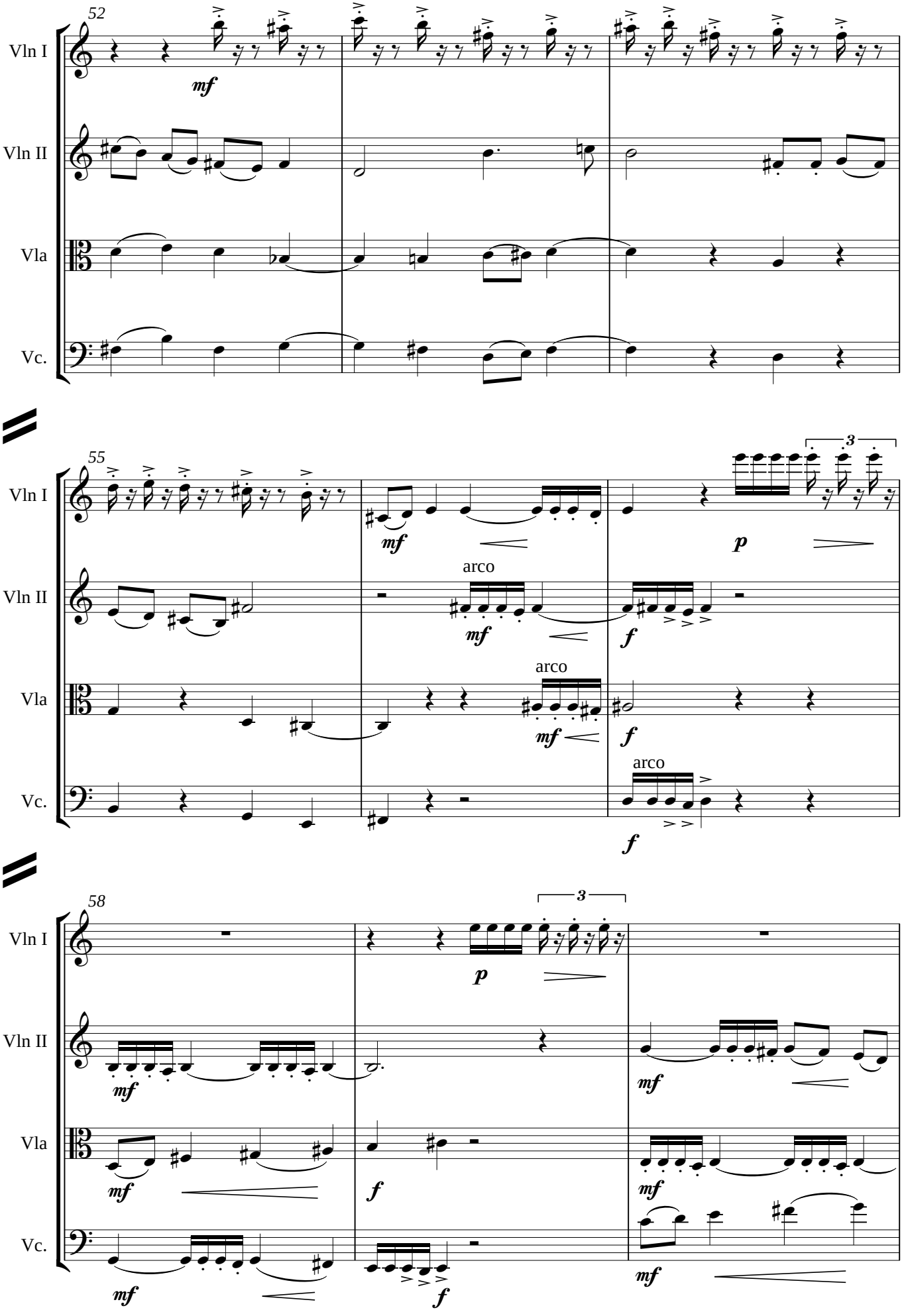
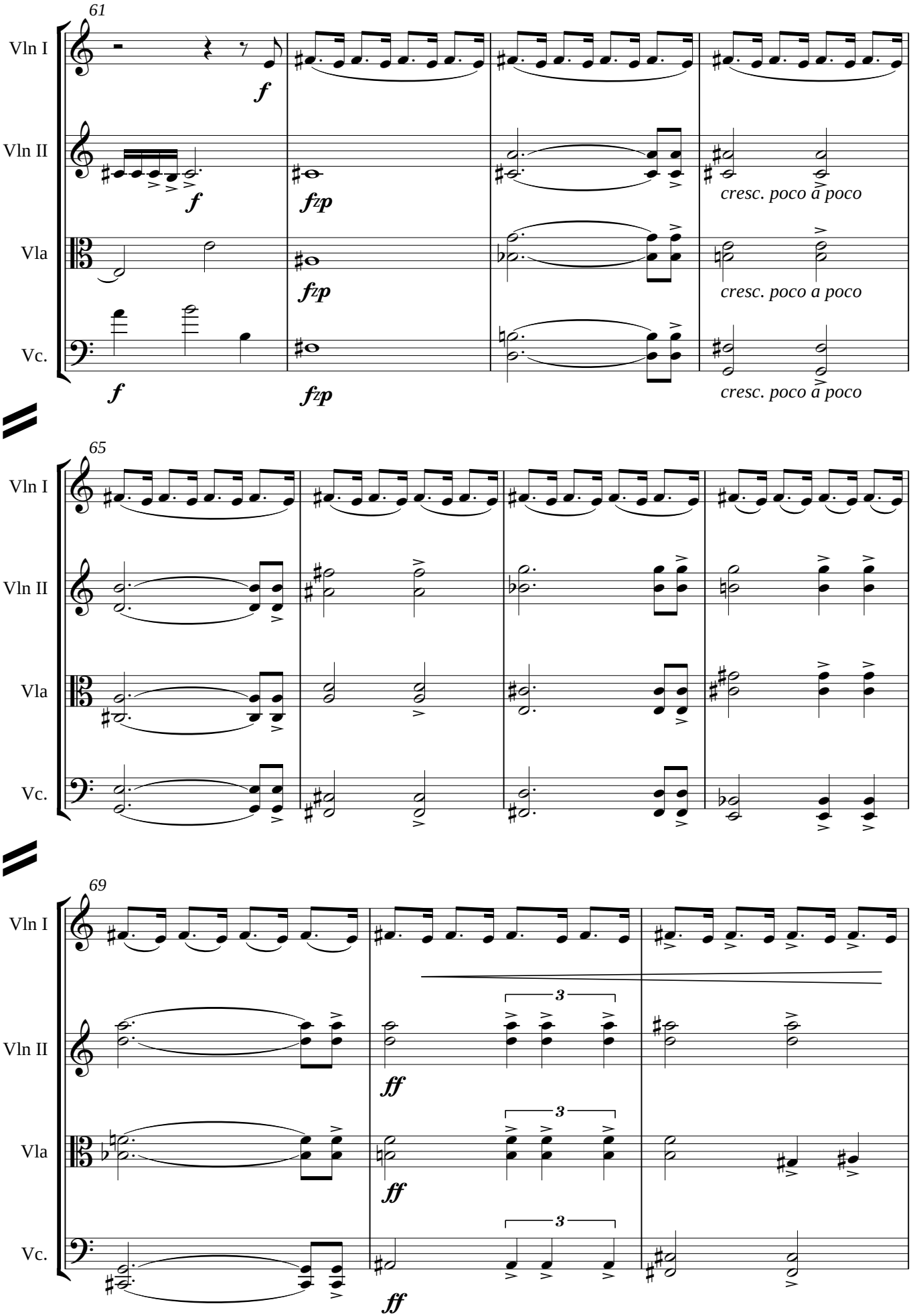

14
3
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
arco
arco
17
3
p
f
mf
arco
20
pizz.

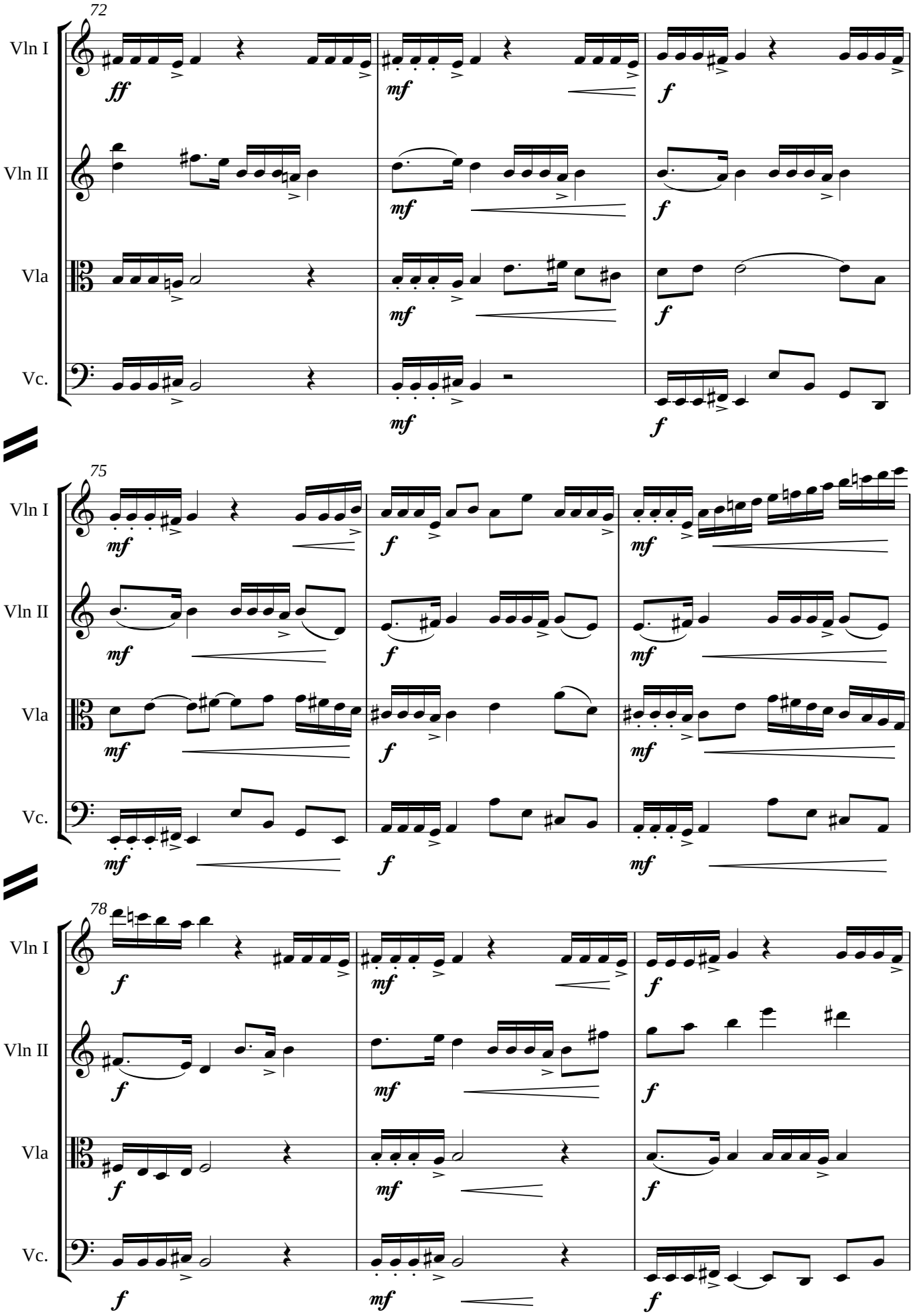

23
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
p
pp
pizz.
26
sul pont.
3
arco
mp
30
mf

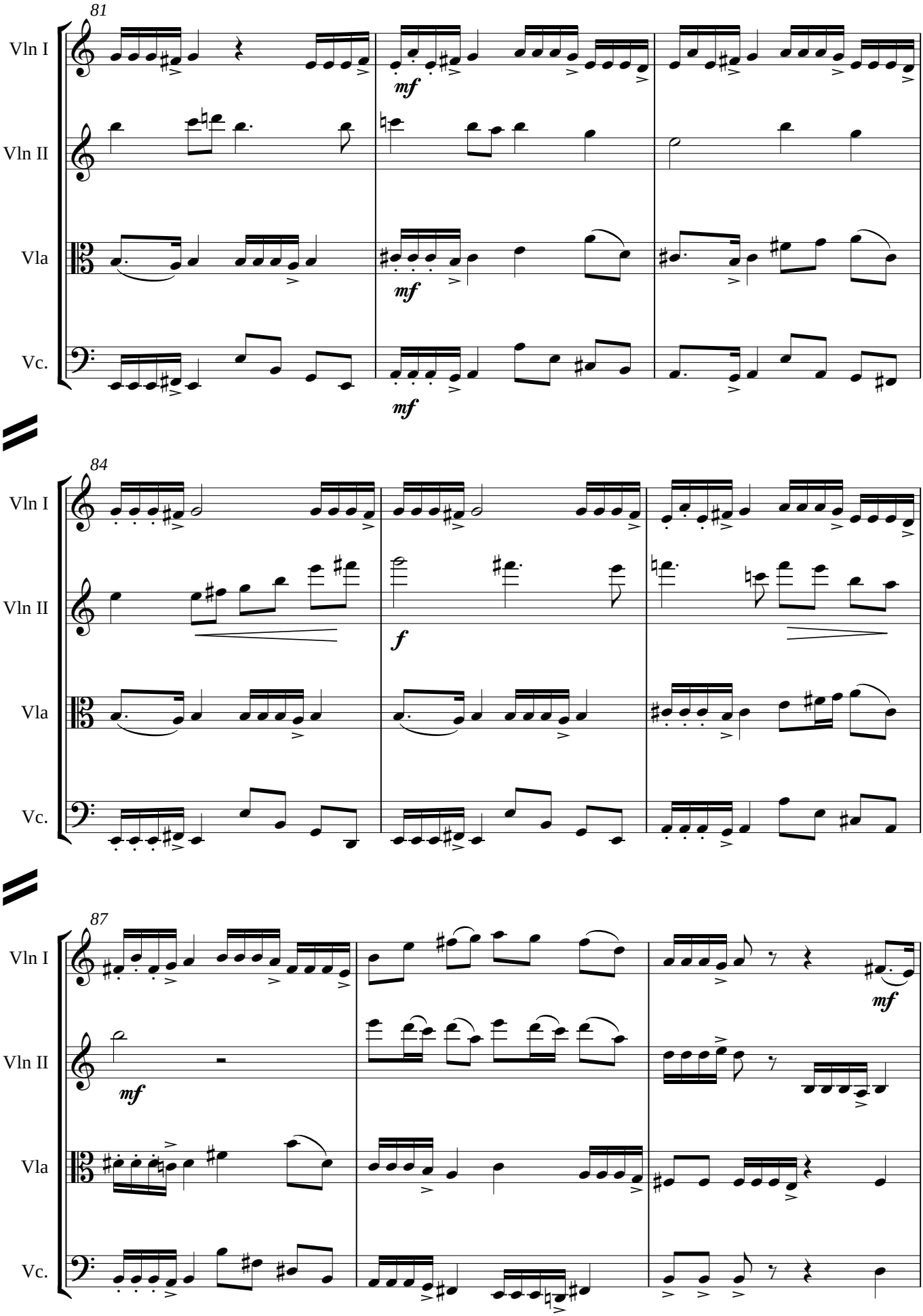

33
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
3
pp
mf
p
p
arco
p
36
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
3
pp
mf
pizz.
39
norm.
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.

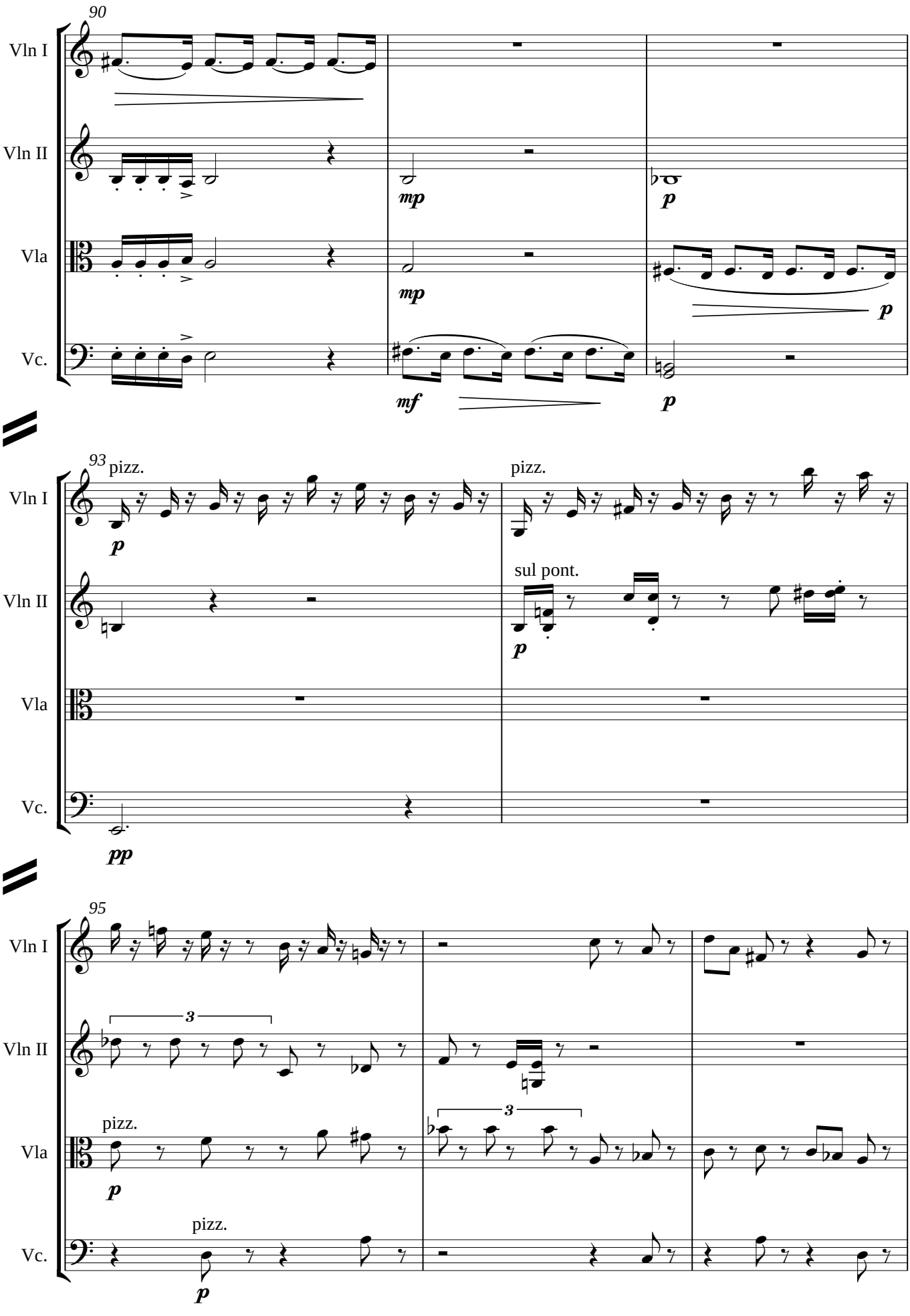

43
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
3
46
pp
mf
49
arco

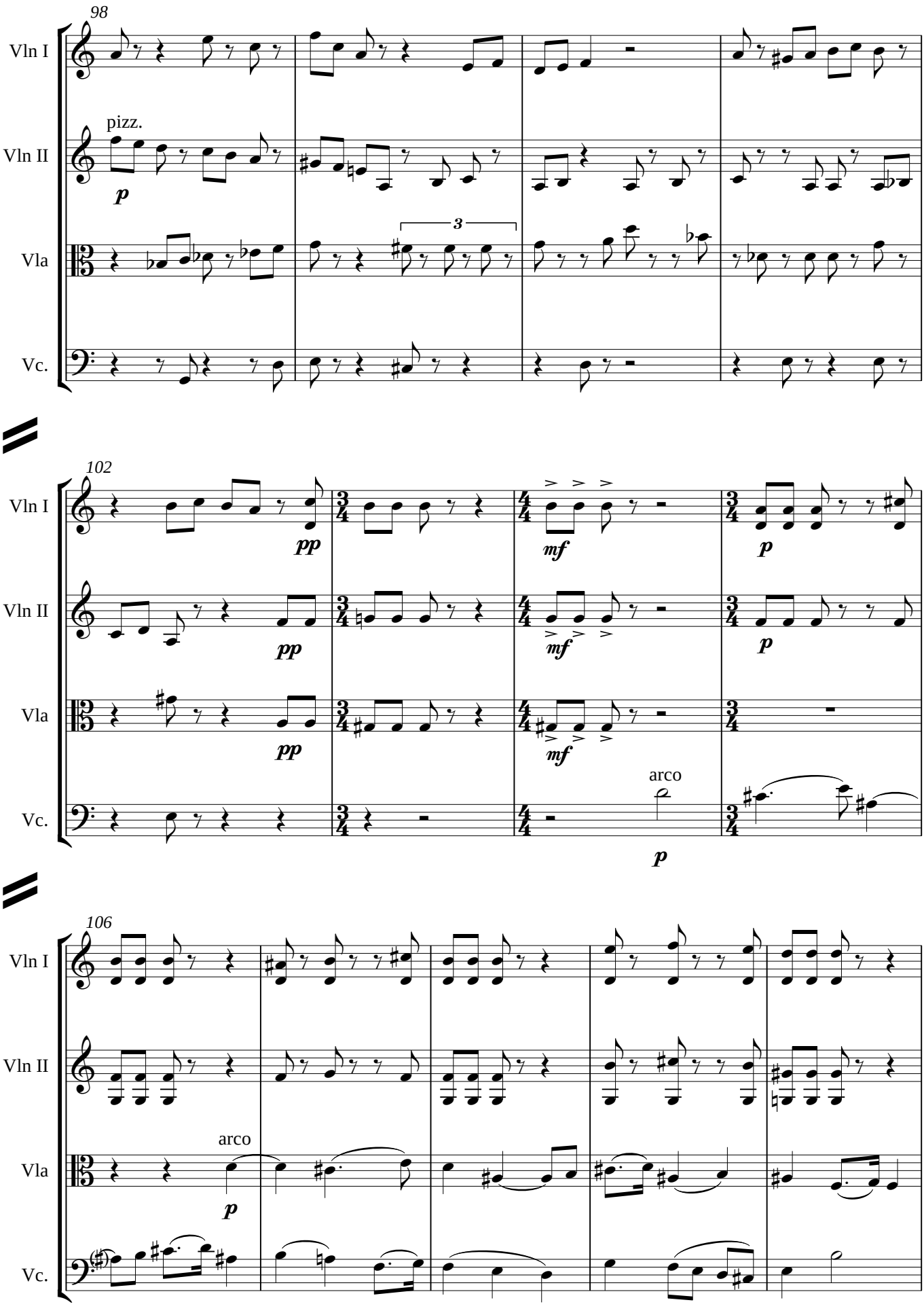

52
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
55
p
arco
f
58

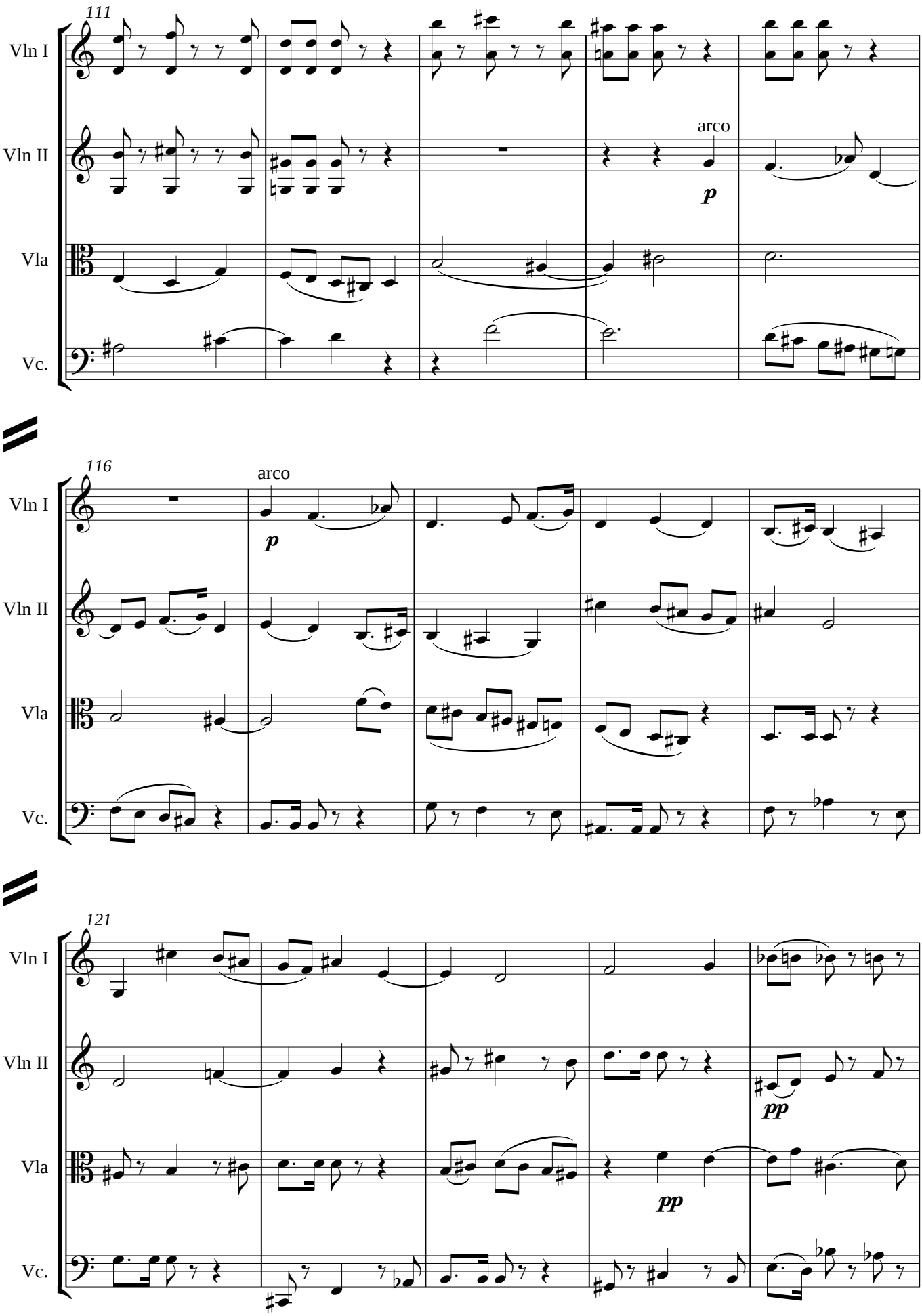

61
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
f
fzp
cresc. poco a poco
65
69
3
ff

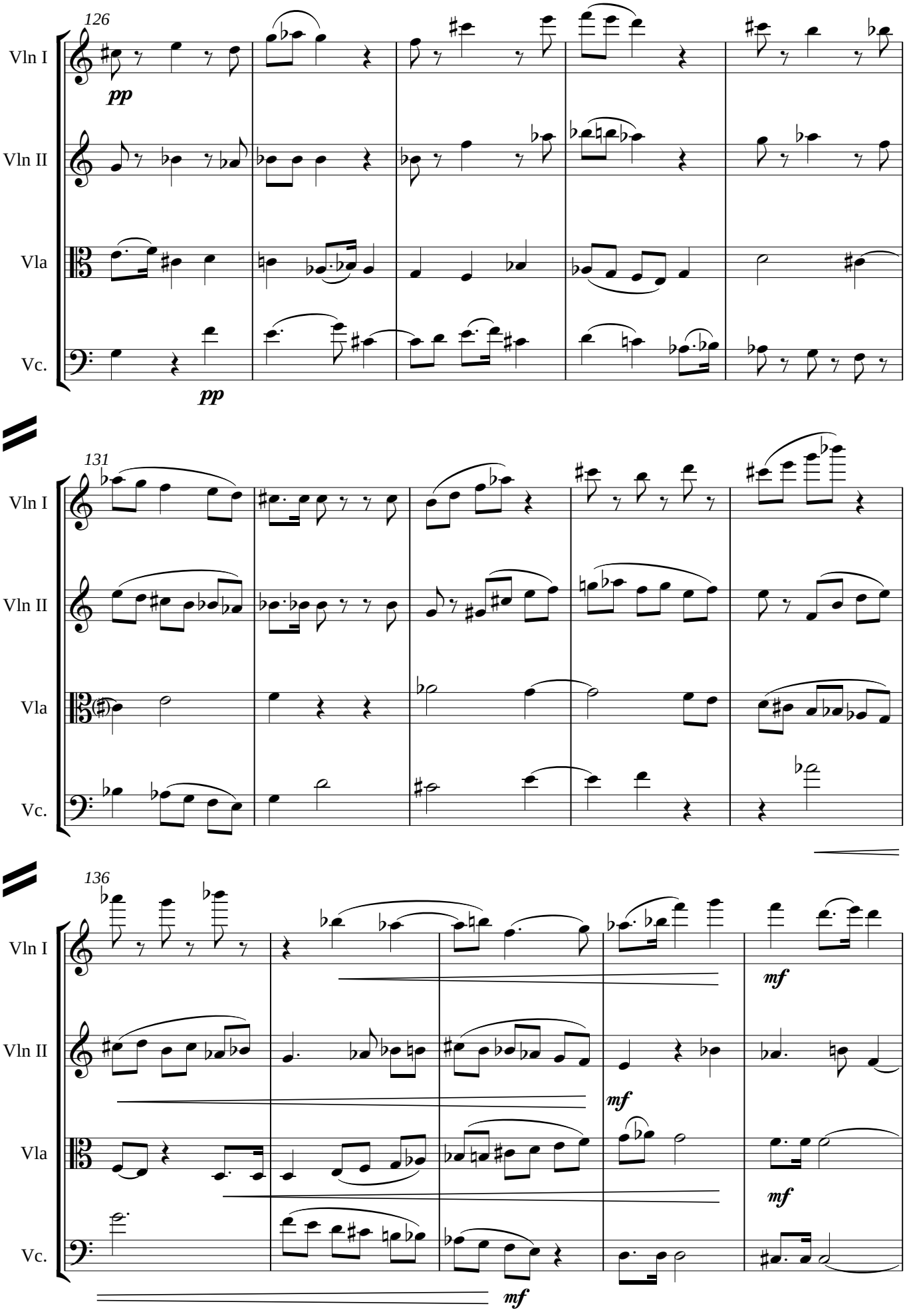

72
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
ff
mf
f
75
78

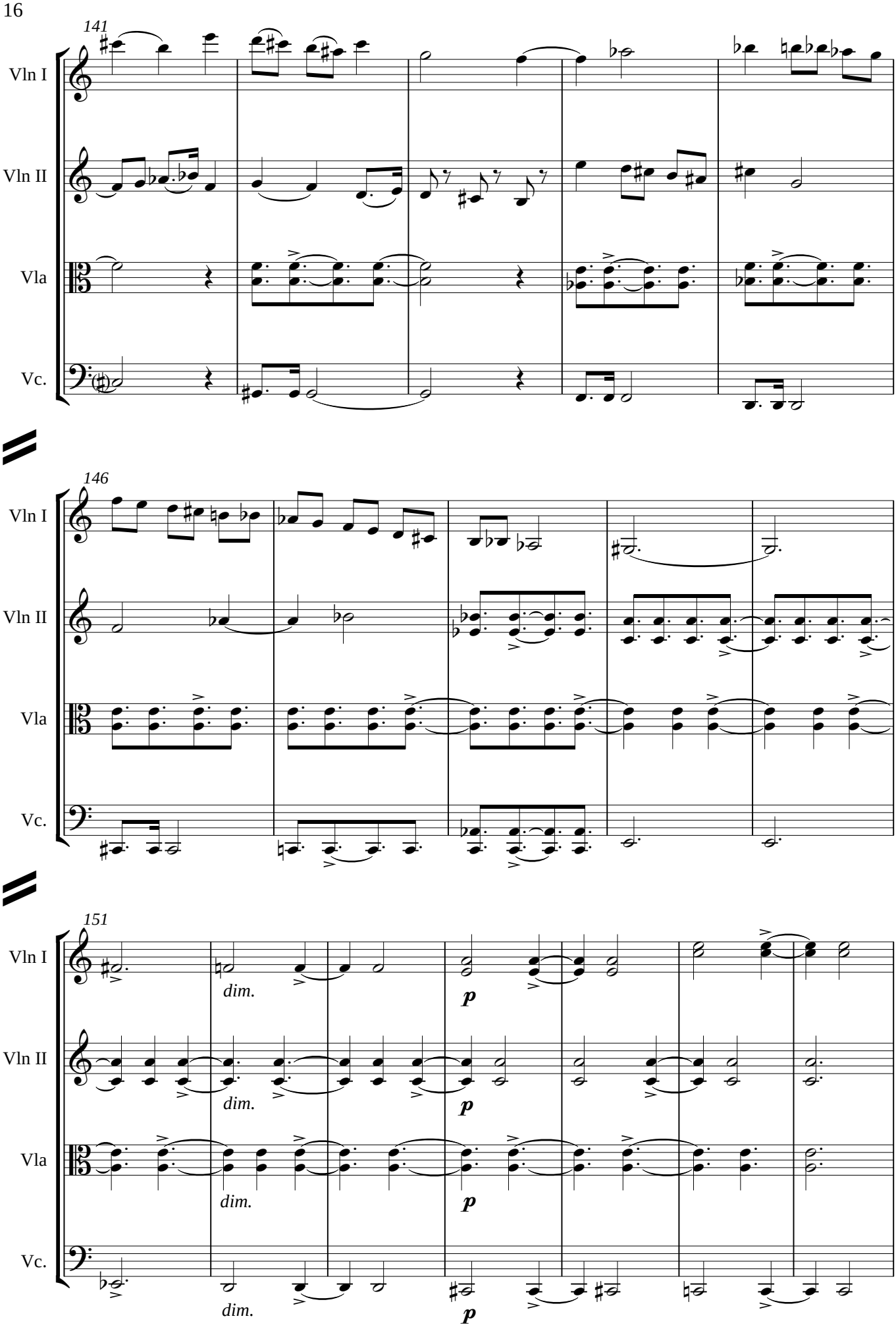

81
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
mf
mf
84
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
f
87
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
mf

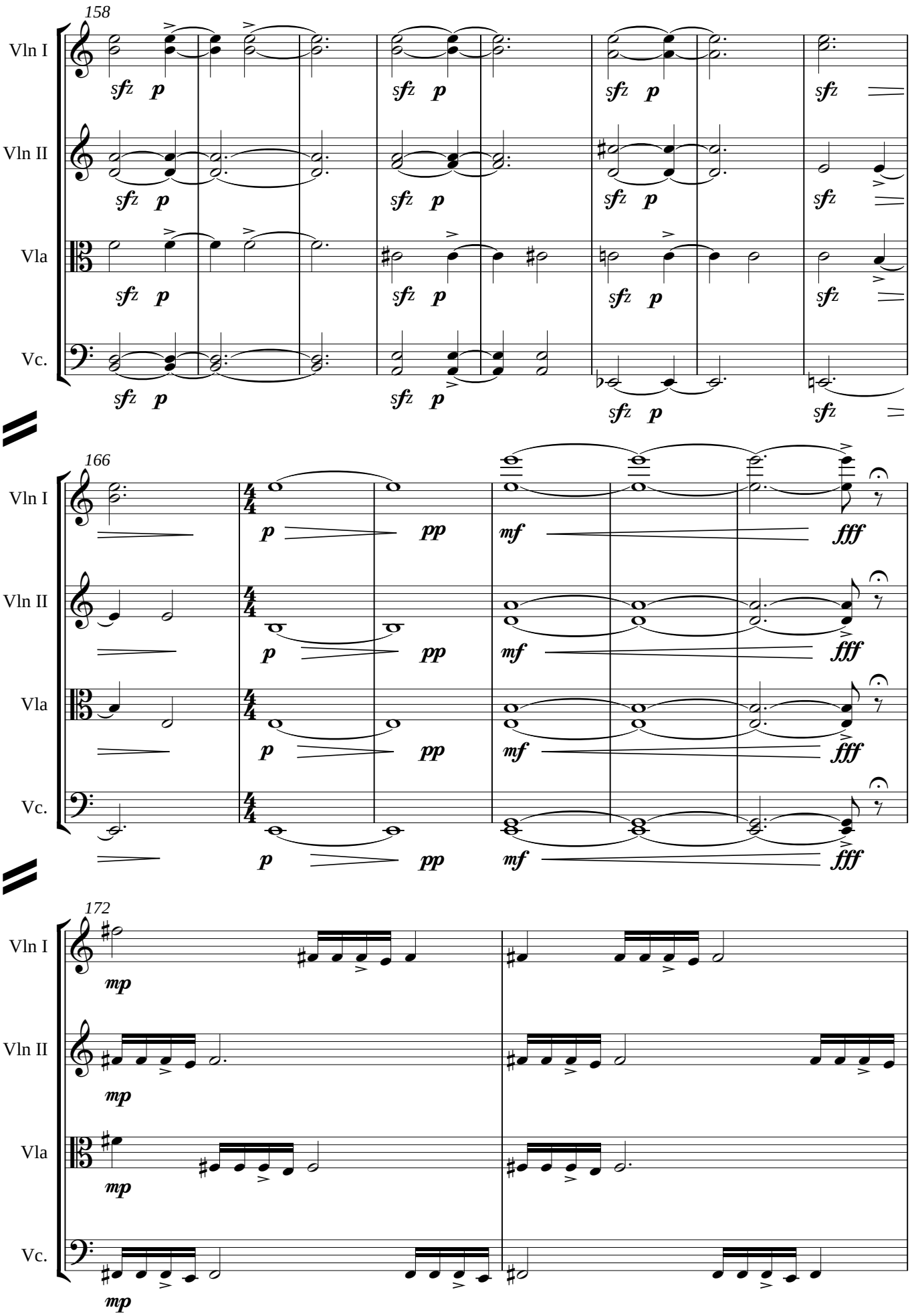

90
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mp
p
mf
93
pizz.
sul pont.
pp
95
3
pizz.

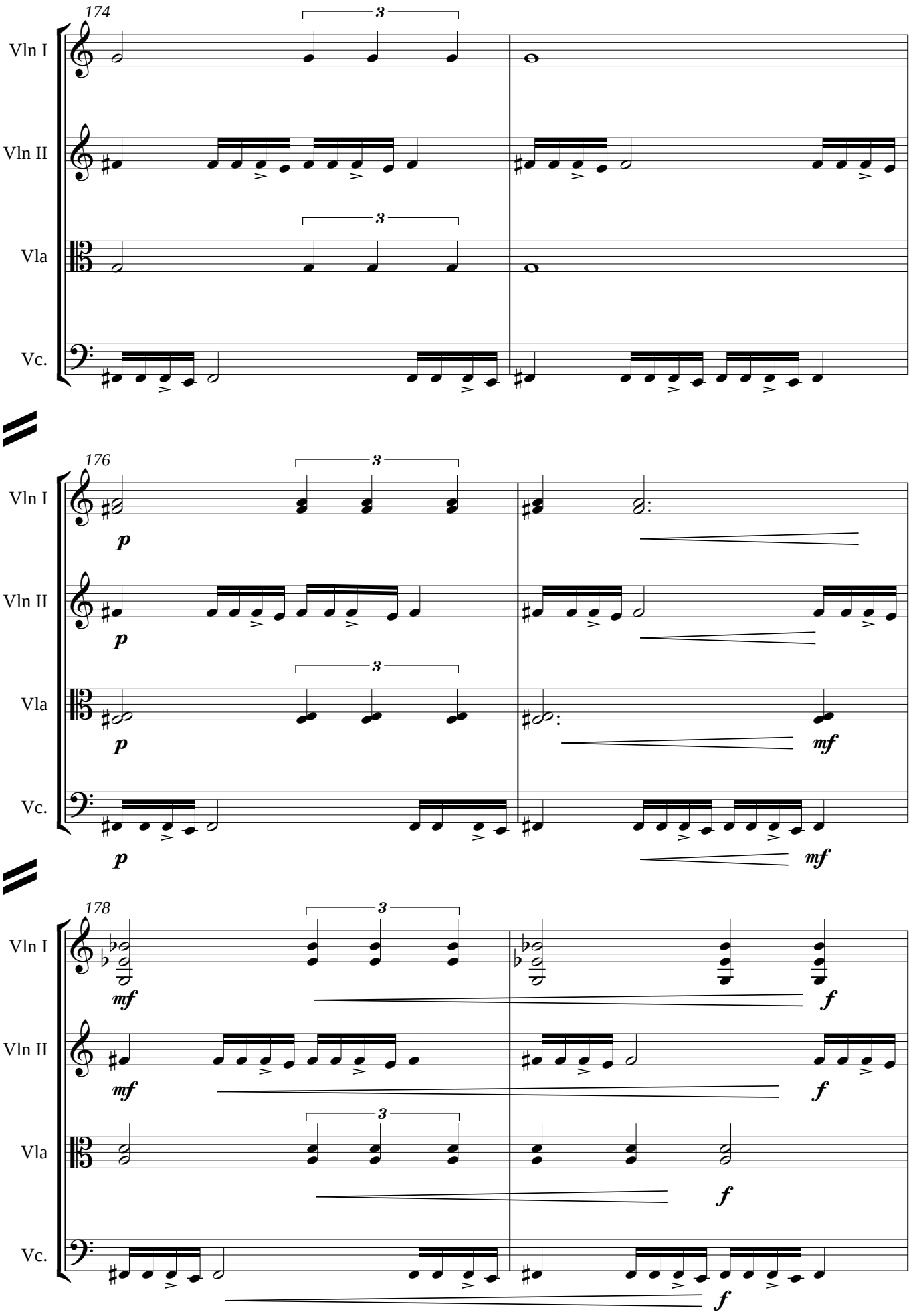

98
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
pizz.
p
3
102
pp
mf
p
arco
106
arco

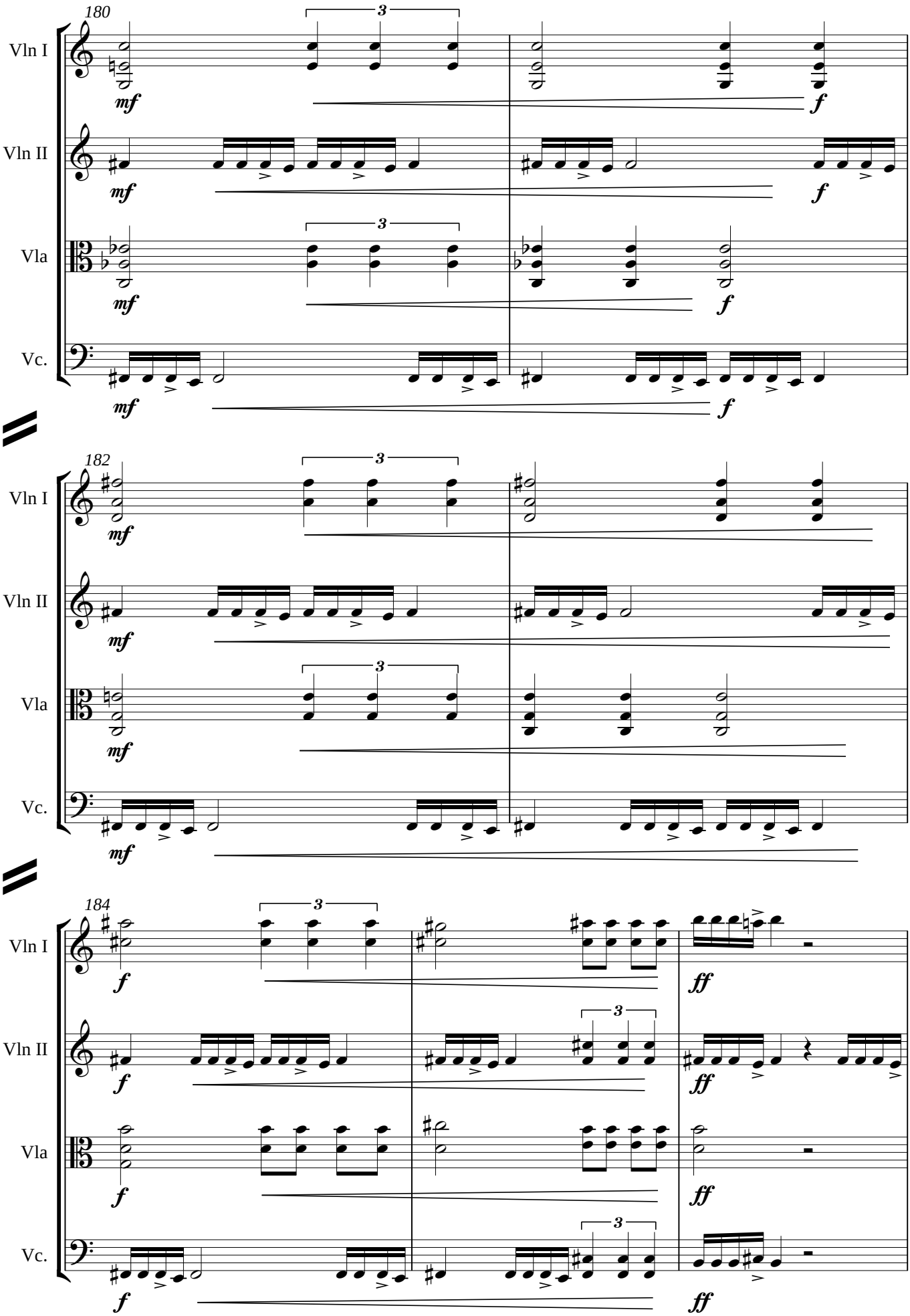

111
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
arco
p
116
arco
p
121
pp
pp

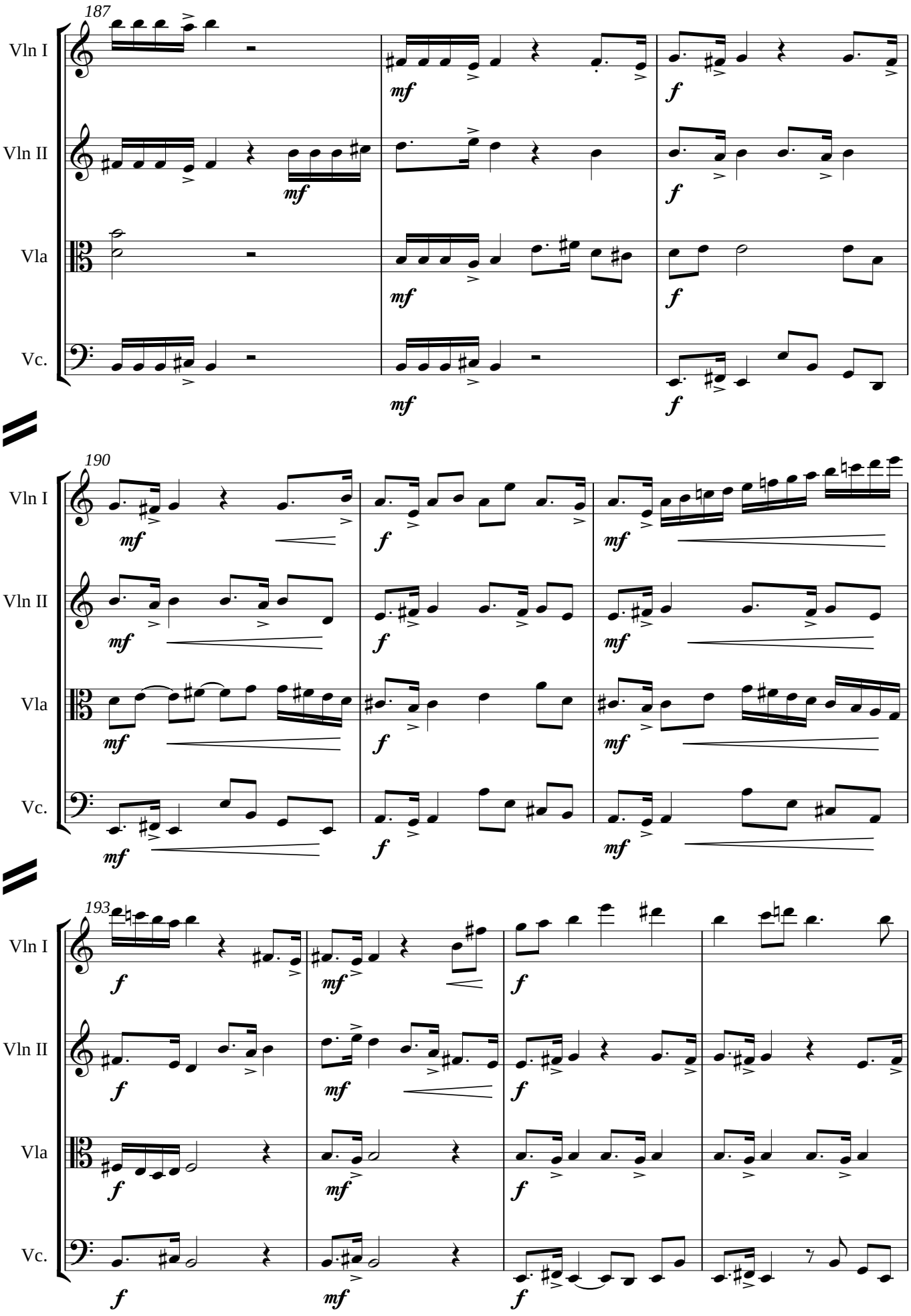

126
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
pp
pp
131
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
136
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf

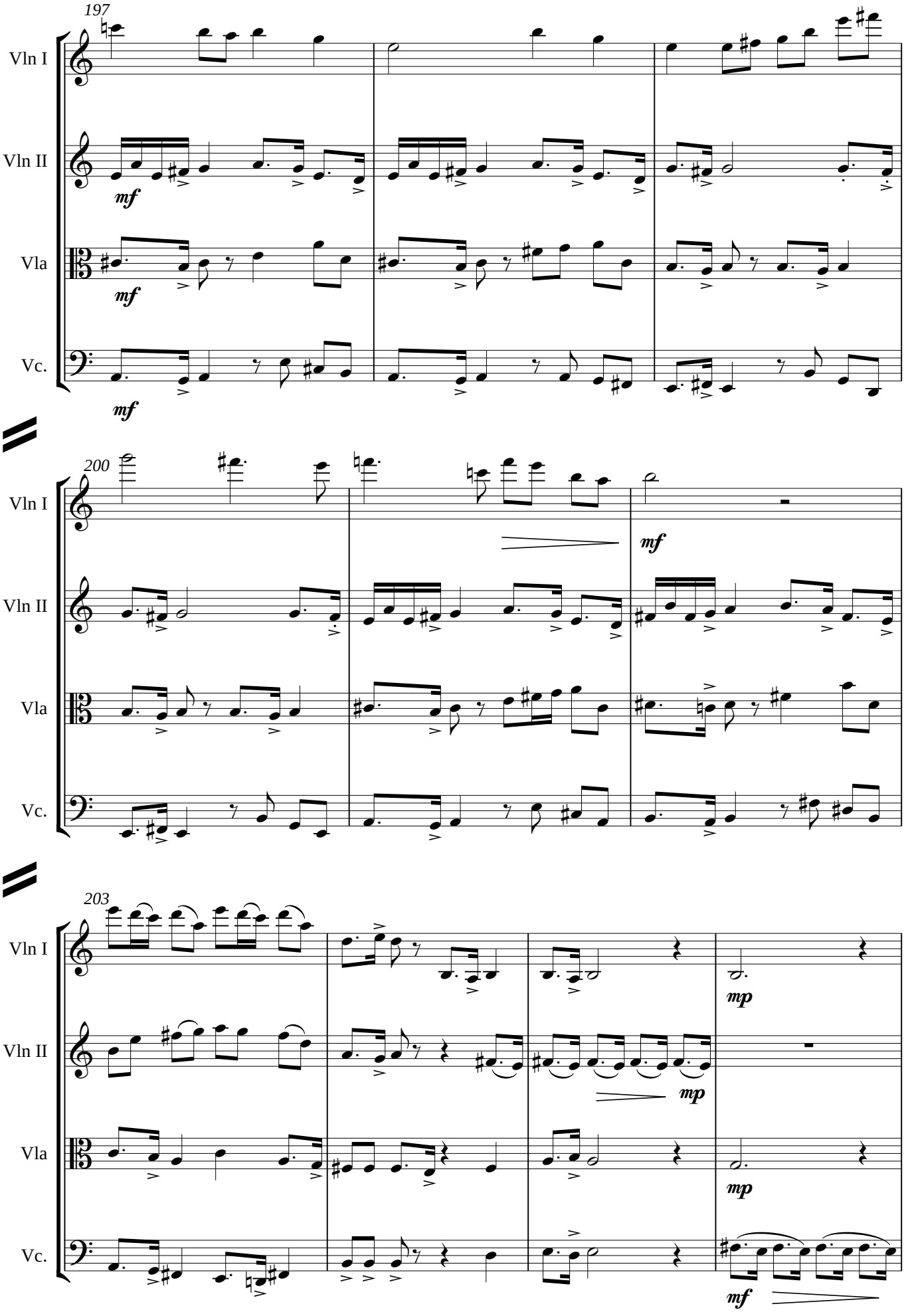

141
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
146
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
151
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
dim.
p
dim.
p
dim.
p
dim.
p

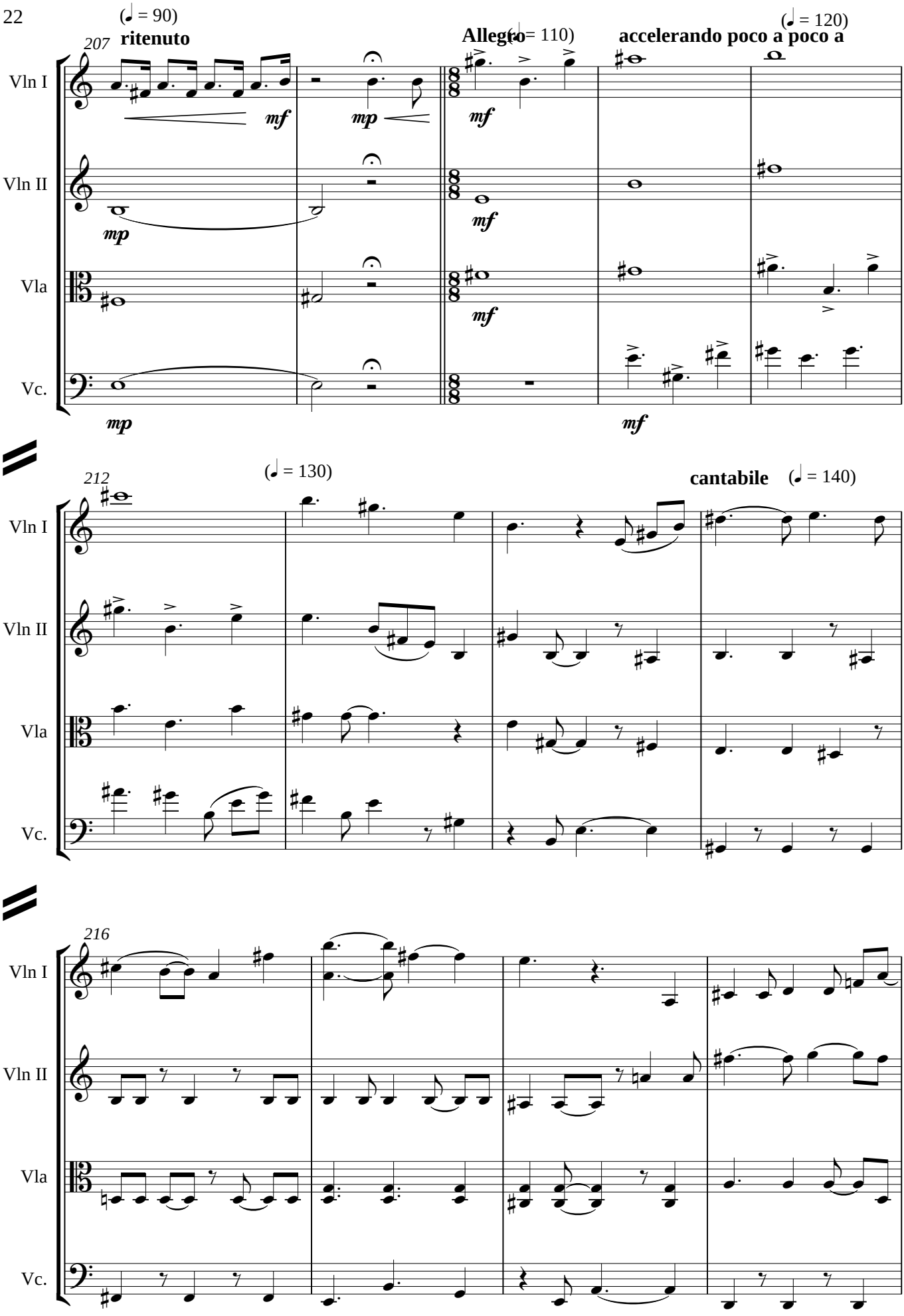

158
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
sfz p
166
p pp mf fff
172
mp

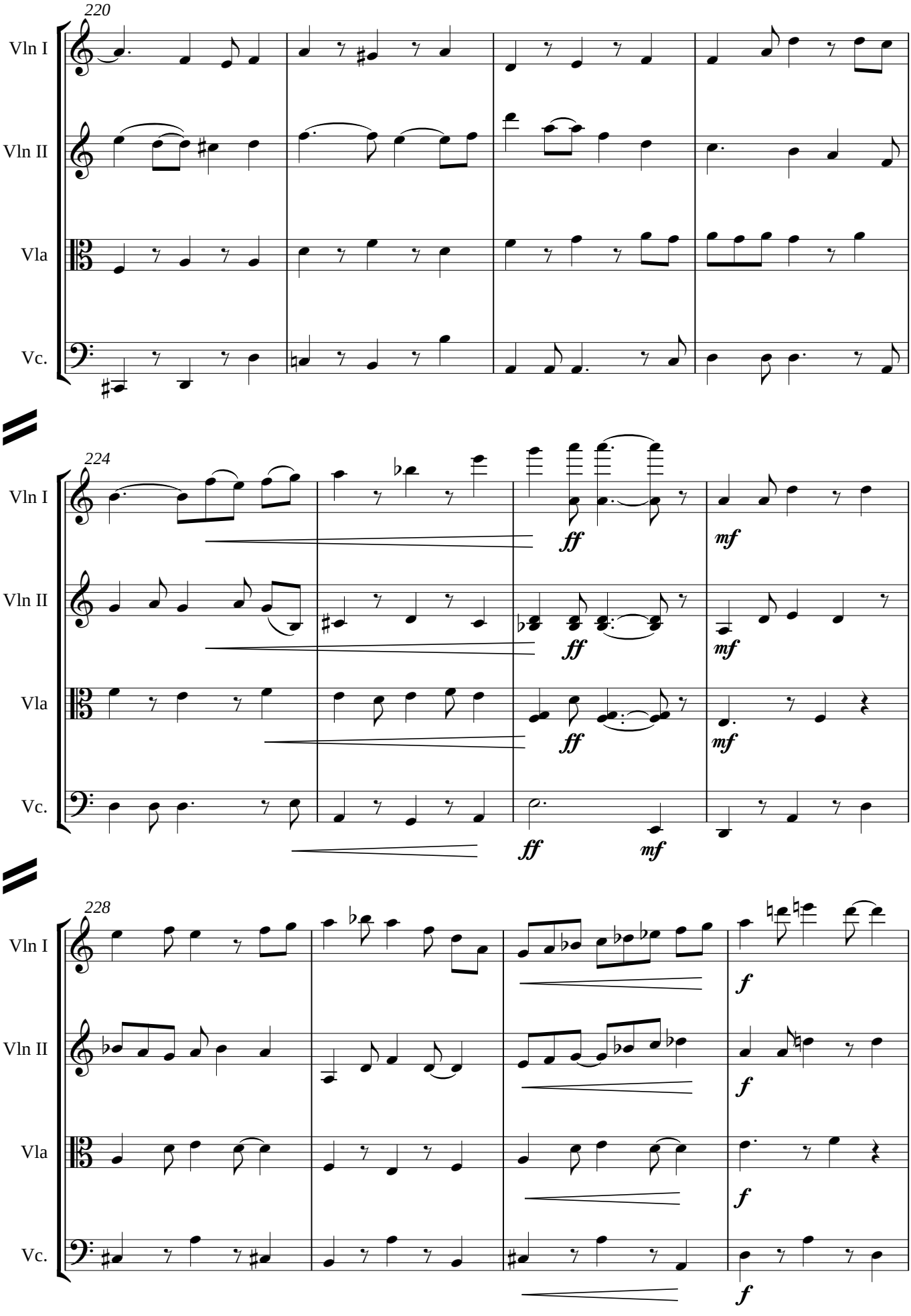

174
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
3
176
p
mf
178
mf
f

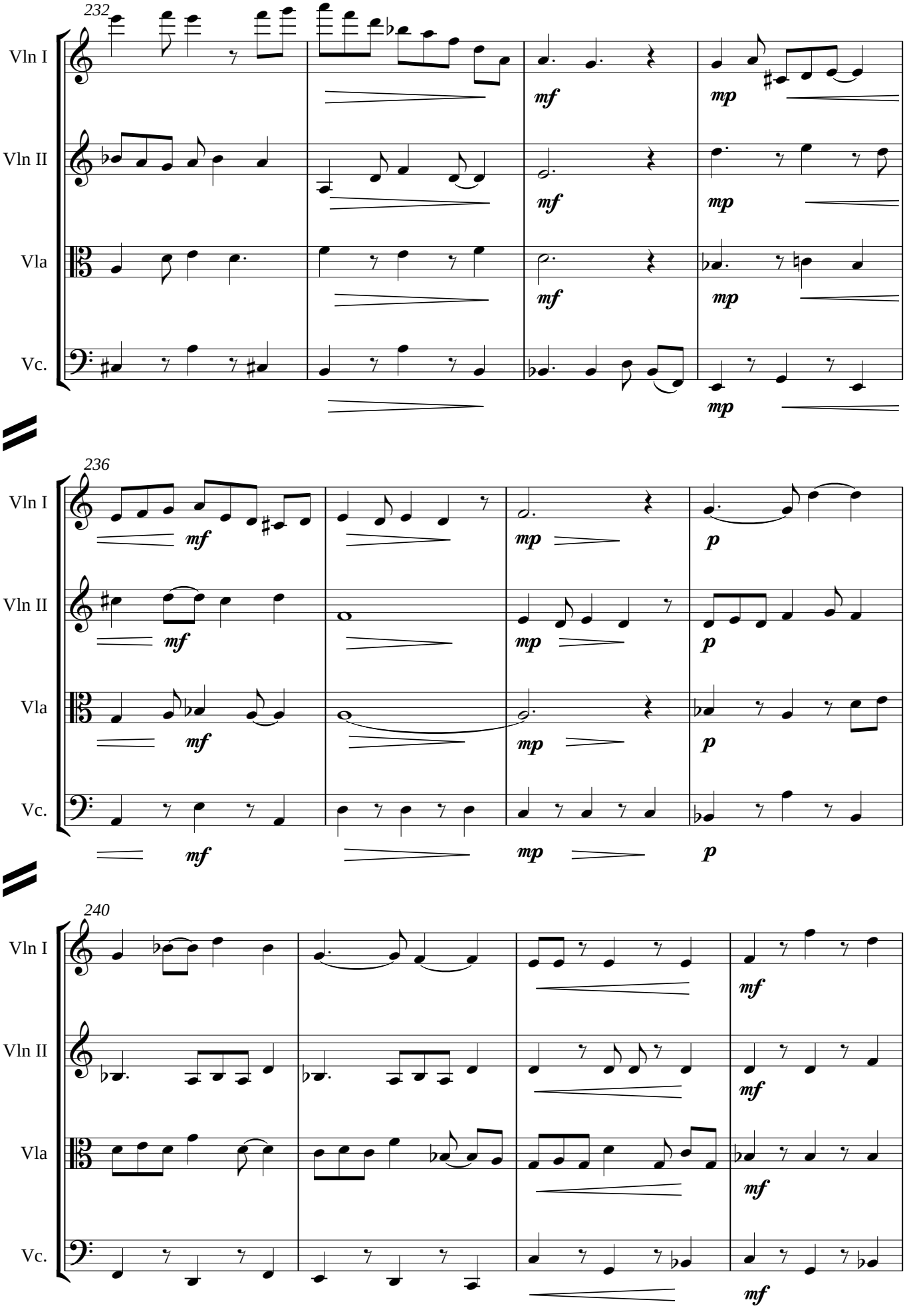

180
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
f
182
184
ff
3

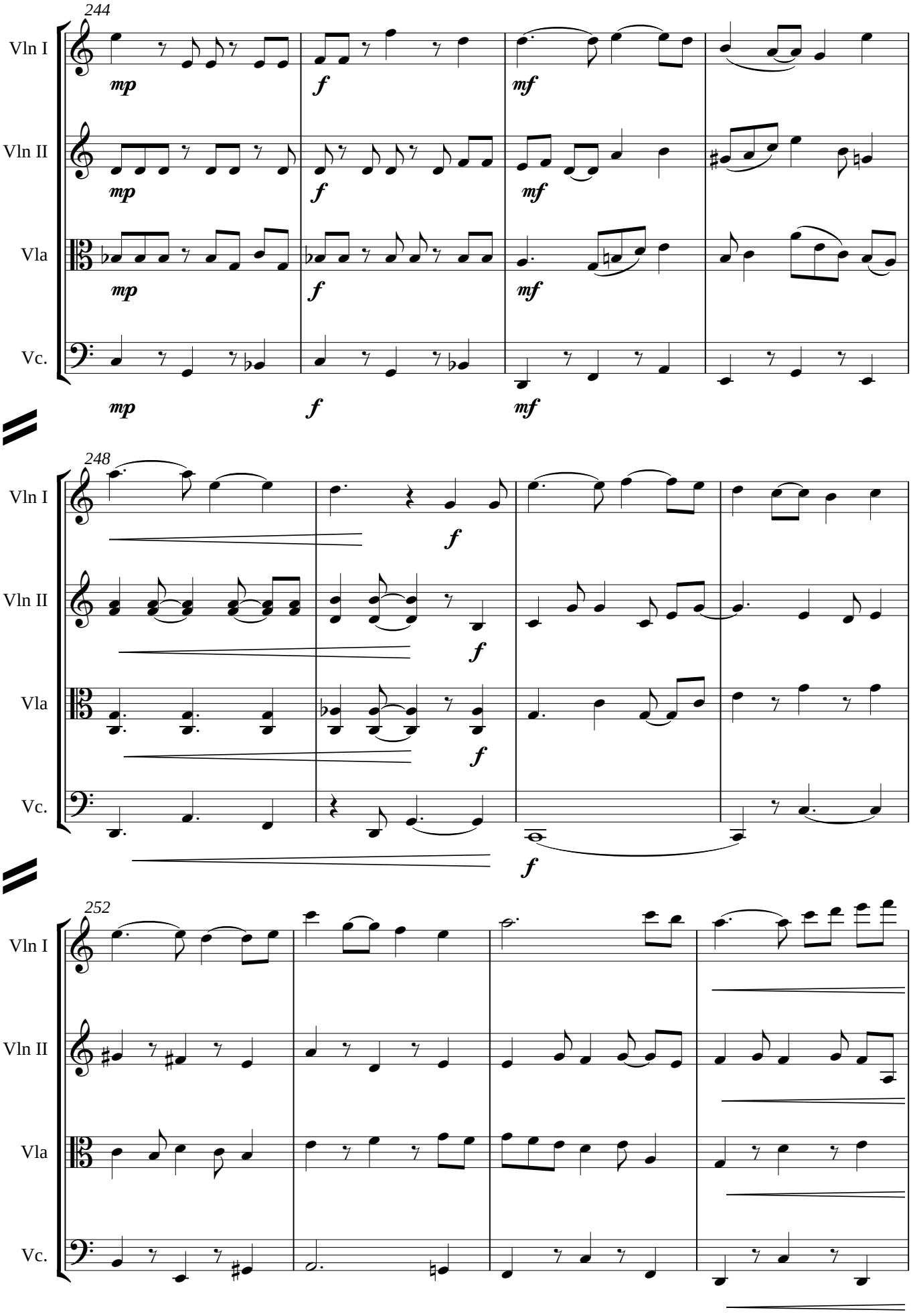

187
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
f
190
193

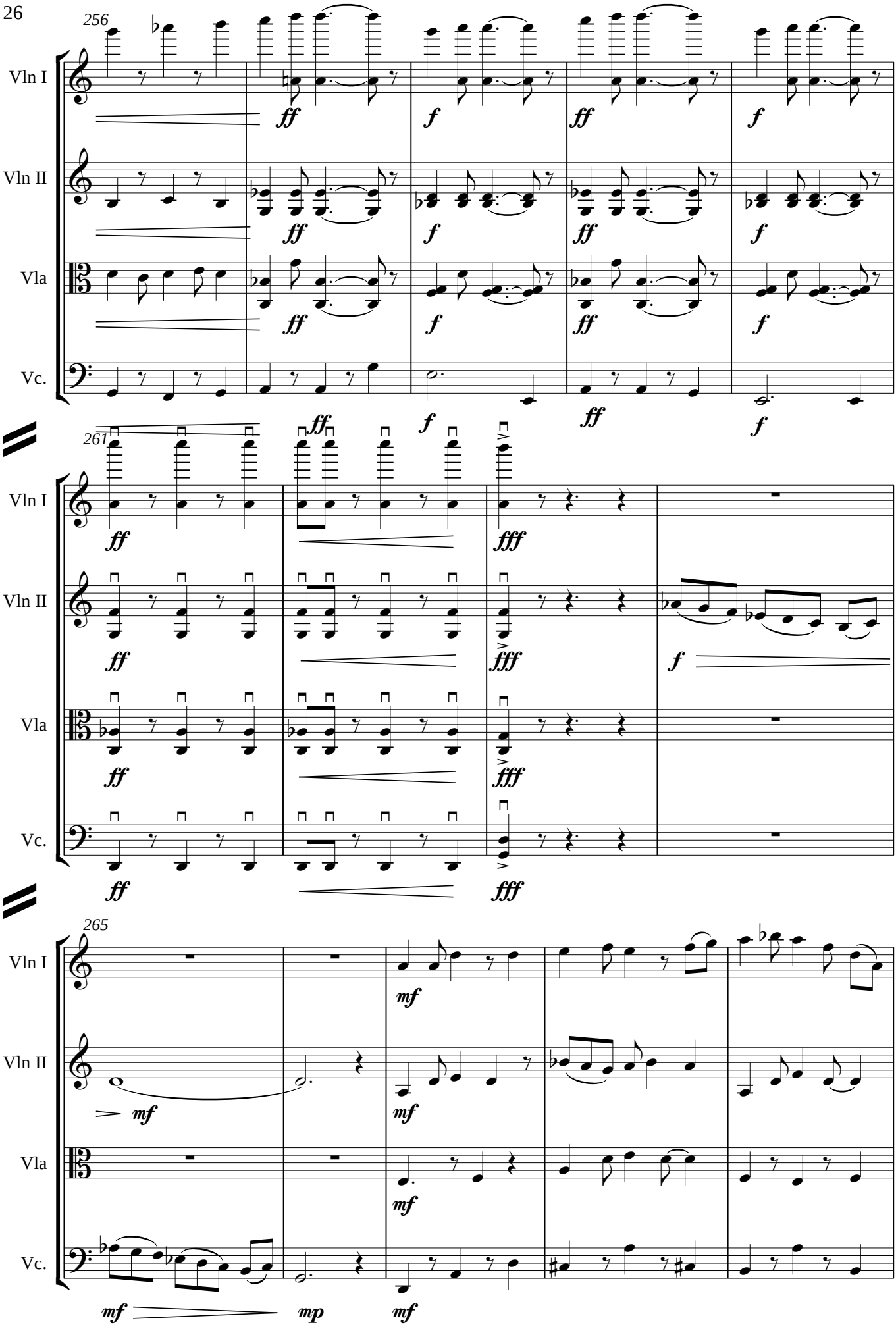

197
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
200
mf
203
mp
mf

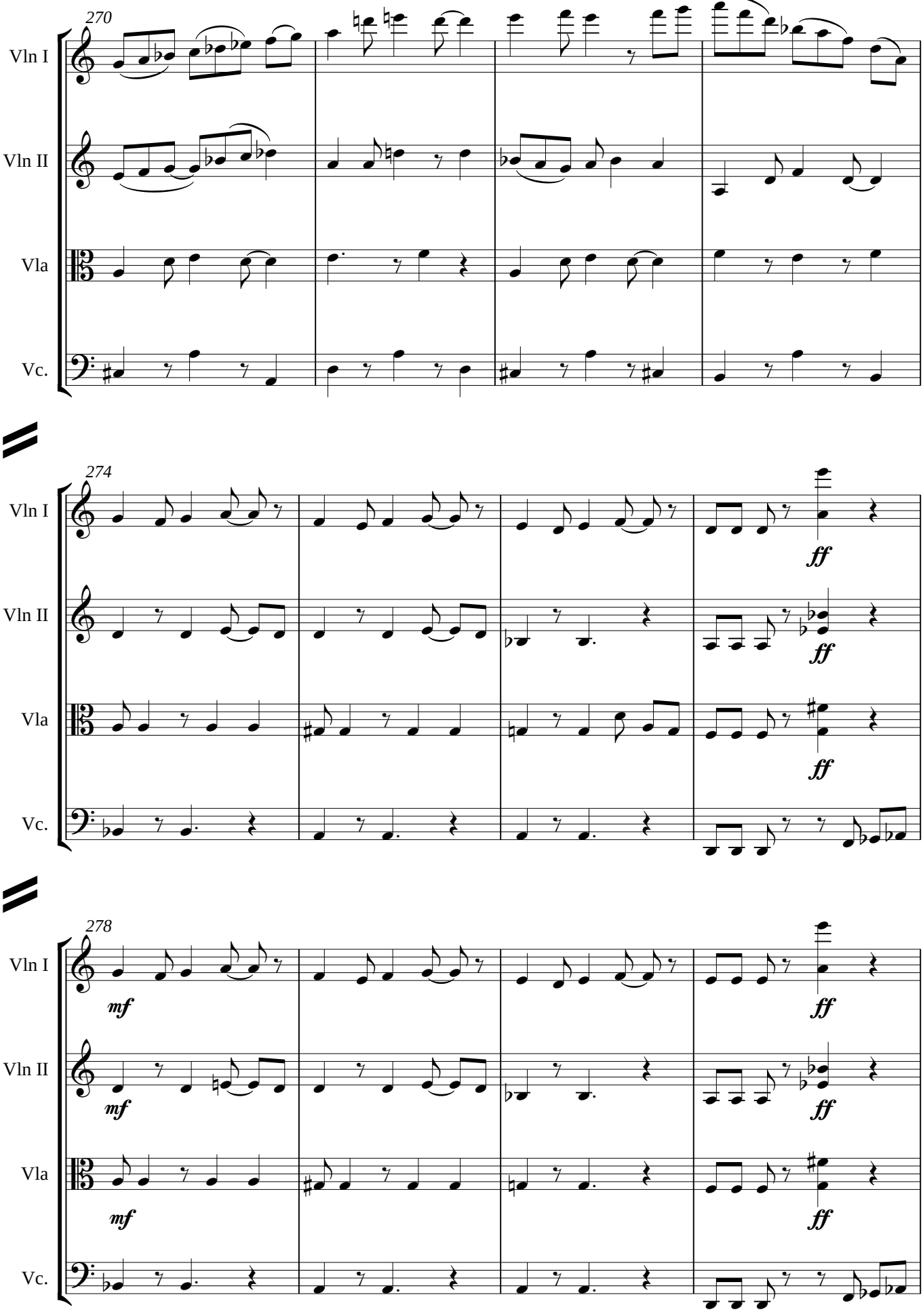

(♩ = 90)
ritenuto
207
Allegro
(♩ = 110)
accelerando poco a poco a
(♩ = 120)
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
mp
212
(♩ = 130)
cantabile
(♩ = 140)
216

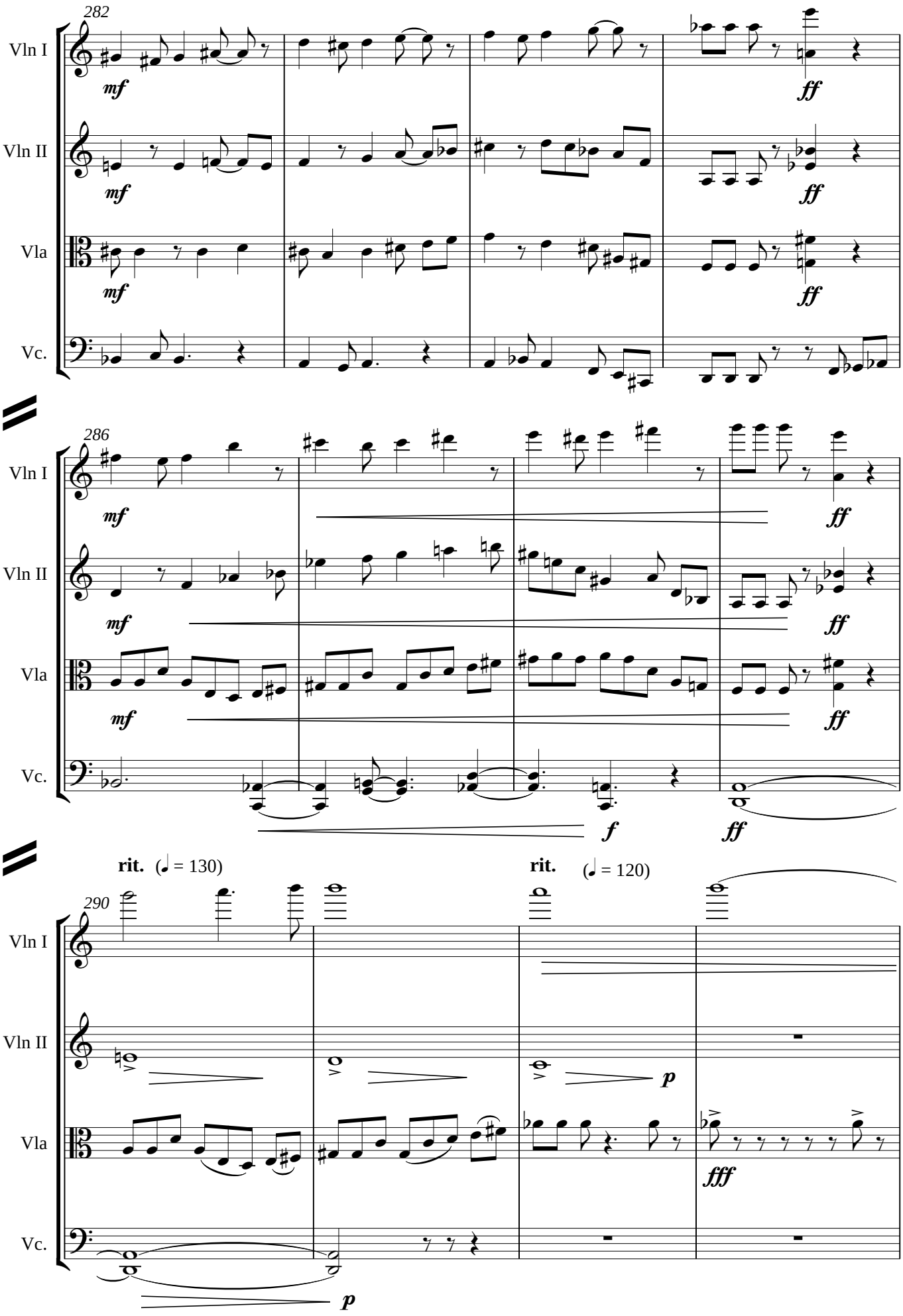

220
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
224
ff
mf
228
f

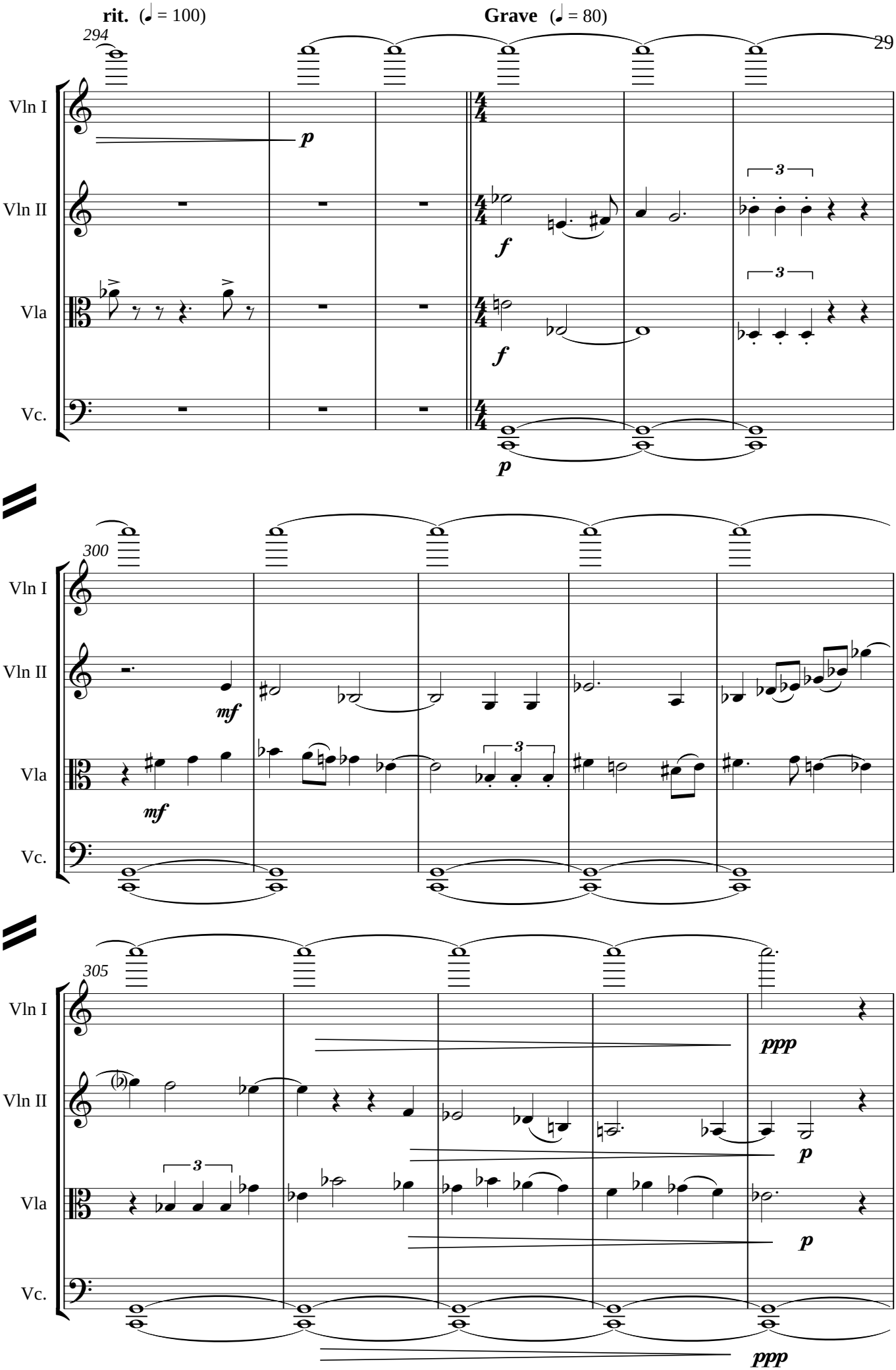

232
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
mp
236
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
mp
p
240
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf

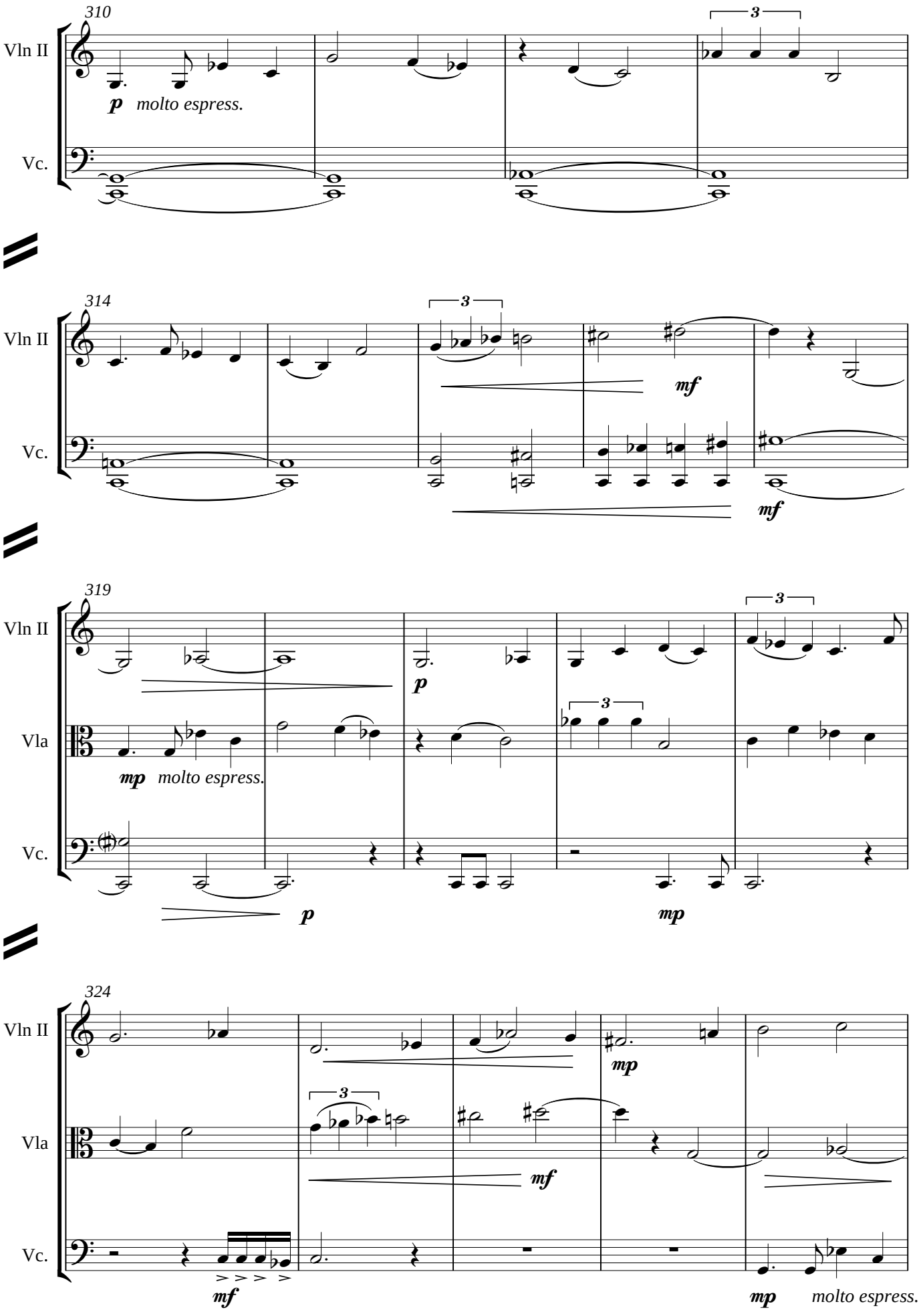

244
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mp
f
mf
248
252

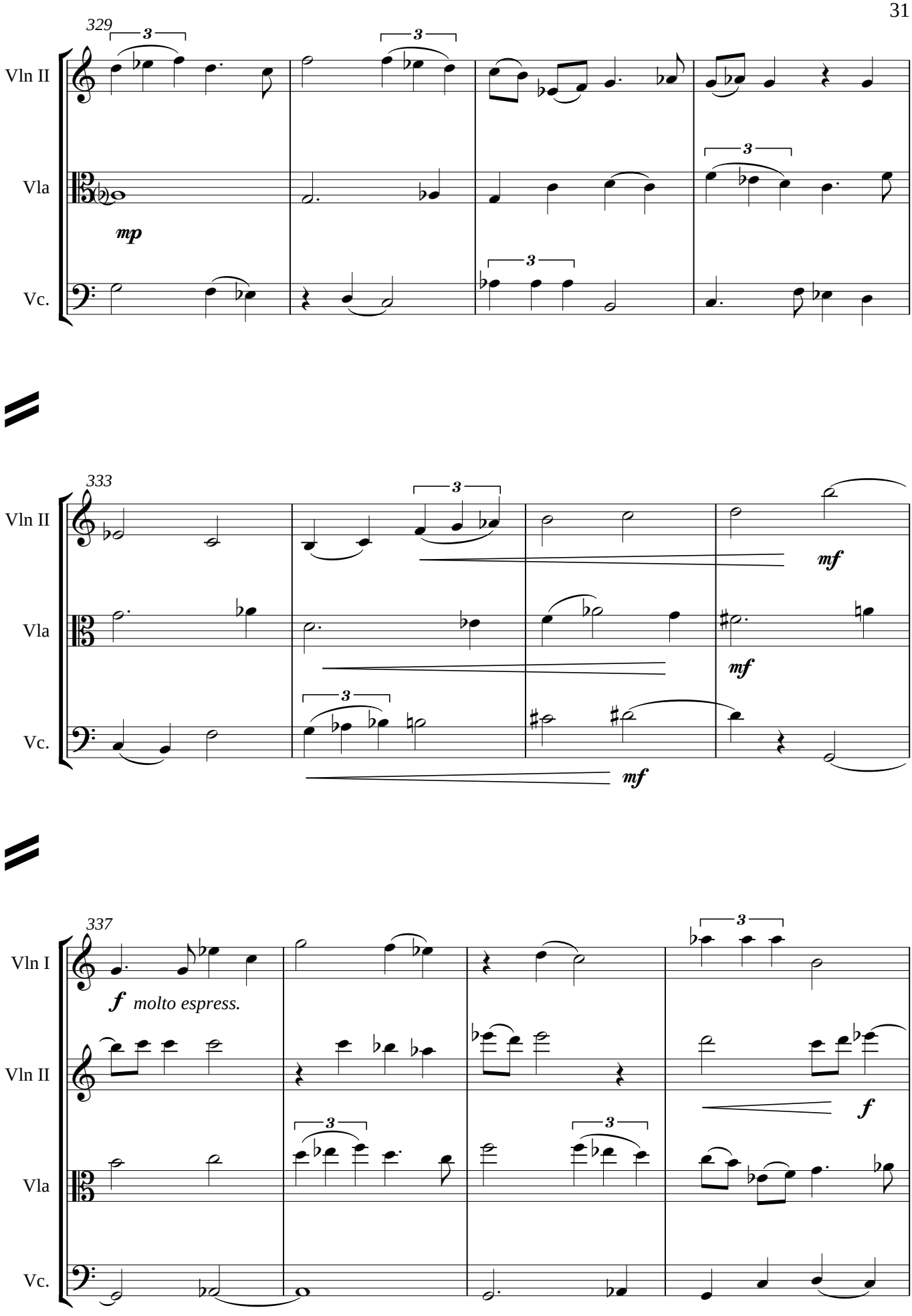

256
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
ff
f
261
fff
265
mf
mp

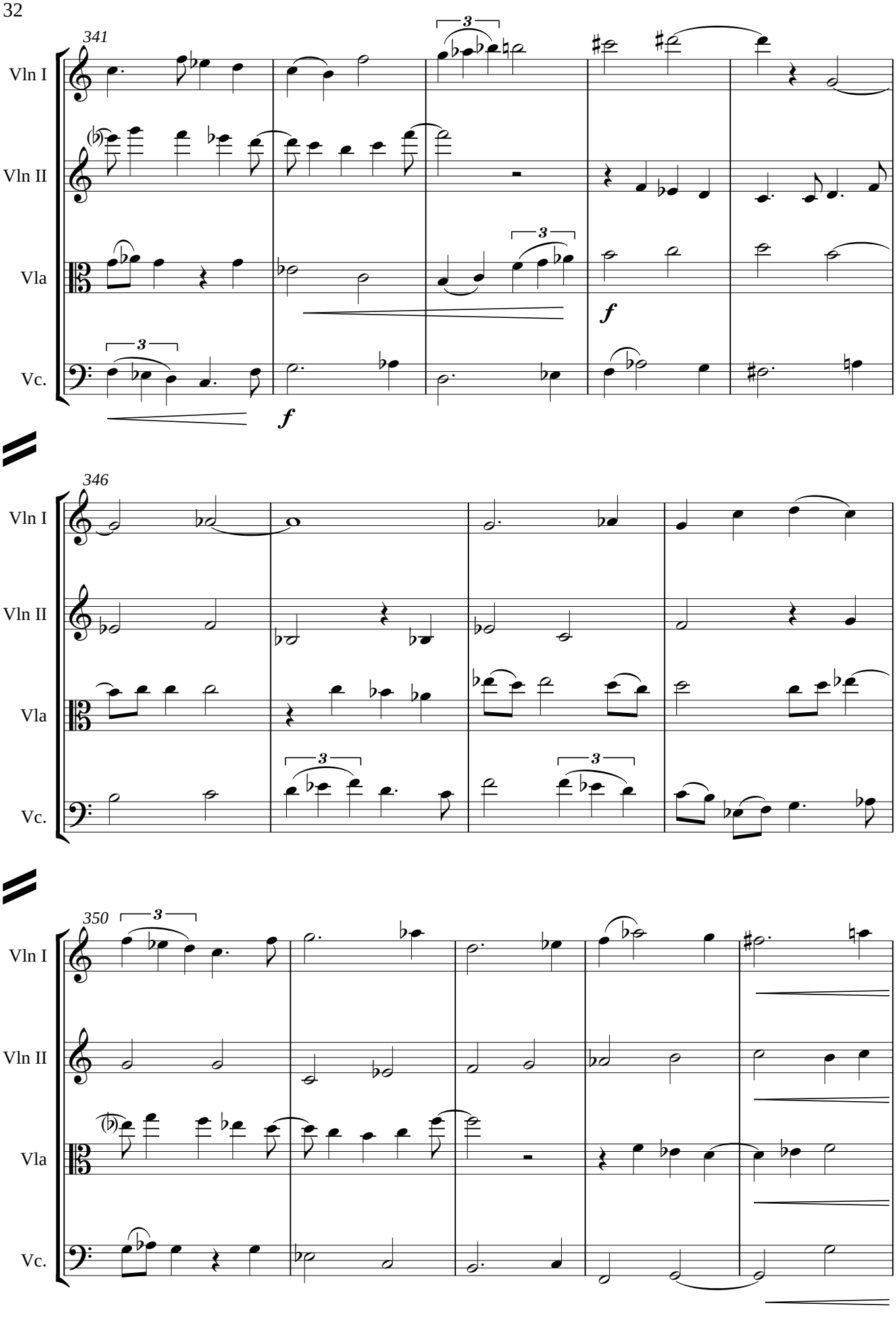

270
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
274
ff
mf

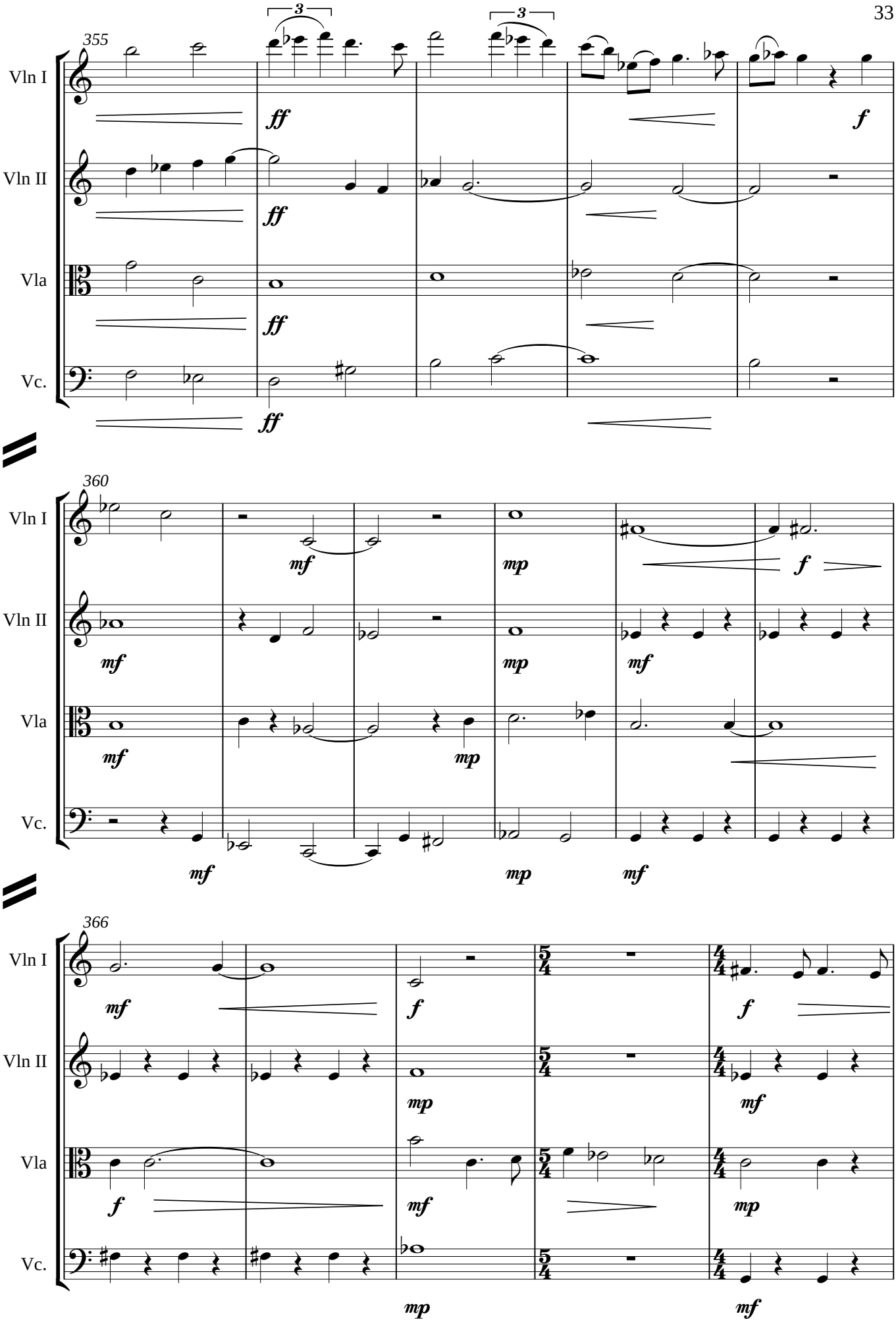

282
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
ff
286
f
ff
rit. (♩ = 130)
rit. (♩ = 120)
290
p
fff

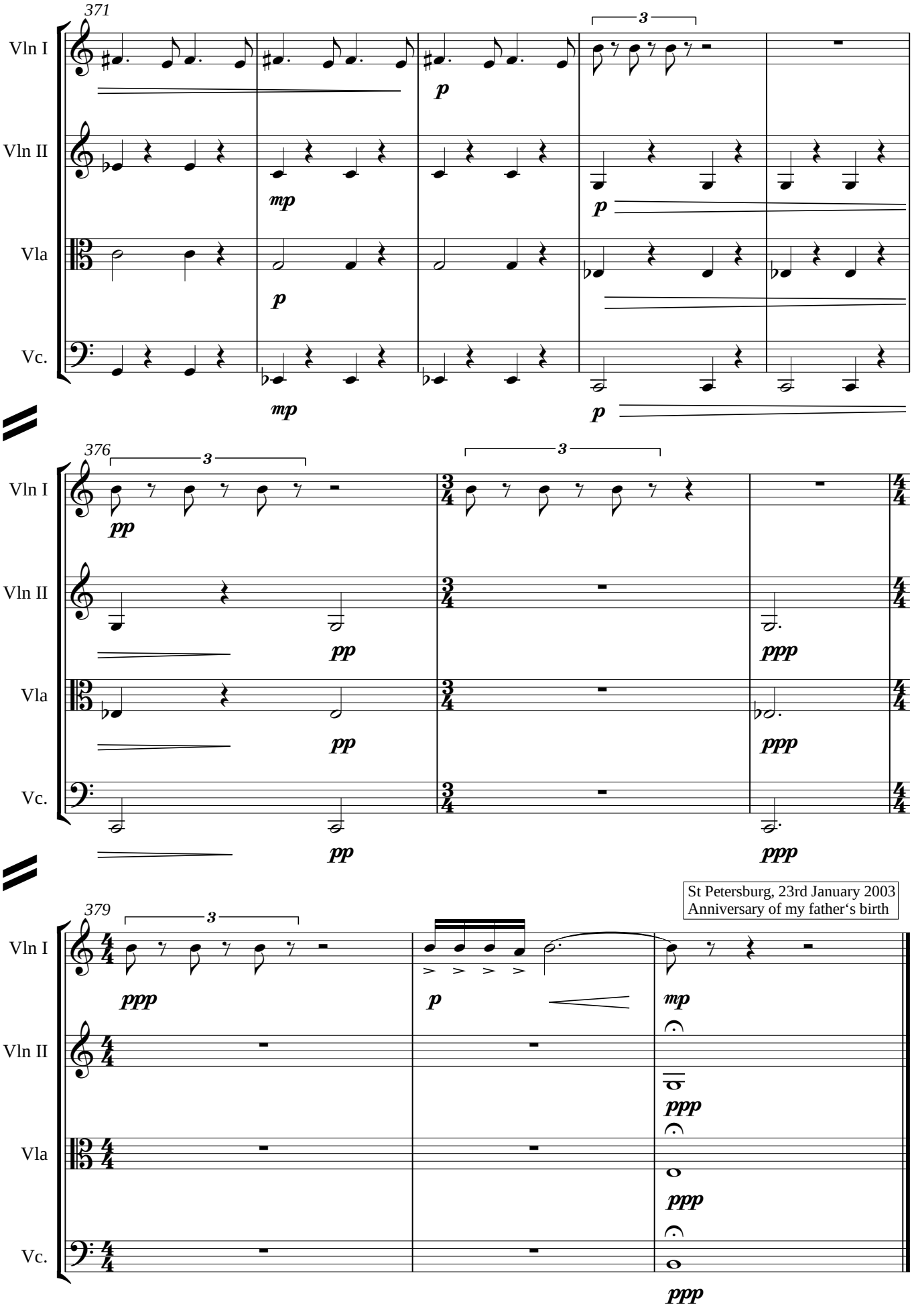

rit. (♩ = 100)
Grave (♩ = 80)
294
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
p
f
3
300
mf
305
ppp


310
Vln II
Vc.
p molto espress.
3
314
Vln II
Vc.
3
mf
mf
319
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
p
3
mp molto espress.
3
p
mp
324
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mp
3
mf
mf
mp molto espress.


329
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mp
333
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
mf
mf
mf
337
Vln I
f molto espress.
Vln II
f
Vla
Vc.


341
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
3
f
346
350


355
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
ff
f
360
mf
mp
366
5/4
4/4


371
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc.
3
p
mp
p
mp
p
376
3
3
pp
pp
pp
pp
ppp
ppp
ppp
379
3
ppp
p
mp
ppp
ppp
ppp
St Petersburg, 23rd January 2003
Anniversary of my father‘s birth

Short Programme Note:
"Stone"

Peter Dyson was born in Huddersfield in Yorkshire in 1949. He came to live in St Petersburg in 1996 in order to study with Boris Ivanovich Tishchenko at the State Conservatory of Music.

"Stone" was Osip Mandelstam's first book of poetry, For him, "stone" was an active not passive word. It was the basic building material that might be picked up anywhere; a stone that a mason could use to build. A building is made out of stone, a poem is made out of words and not out of ideas or its subject matter. The word thirsts to participate in a poem, for the poem is a new mode of existence, a challenge to the void of silence and nothingness, just as the stone thirsts to participate in the soaring vault that supports a roof or tower where only emptiness had been. To build means to contend with the void, to hypnotize space.

Peter Dyson has written the following about Stone.

"In breaking silence with sound, I have sought to apply this basic Mandelstamian architectural attitude. The "stones" are my building blocks of sound and motives. Stone dominates the landscape of my childhood for I am a Yorkshireman from the West Riding, where man has sought to delineate the Pennines, the backbone of England, with dry stone walls. Stone dominates the landscape of my new home, St Petersburg, where man has sought to delineate the Neva delta with granite.

"Stone" is conceived out of the first stanza of Mandelstam's Poem No 28 written in 1912. It is a discourse for Violin and String Trio for the former is isolated from the other three. It is in one movement, albeit falling into three sections. The "stones" develop out of themselves and change as they are used. It departs from the emotional lineage of the poem by ending with a soliloquy, acknowledging Mandelstam's fate as one of the many victims of the repression."

"Stone" was written for the Fitzwilliam Quartet and was first performed by them at the Swaledale Festival 2003.

Longer Programme Note:
"Stone"

Osip Mandelstam (pronounced Mandelshtam) did not believe that biographical notes about artists were of much importance. Whilst I share that view, nevertheless, I will record a few details for those not familiar with his life and poetry.

He was born in 1891 in Warsaw, then under Russian rule, and died in a prison transit camp near Vladivostok, probably in 1938. He was a symbolist poet from the Silver Age and with Akhmatova, Gumilyov and Gordodesty, was a member of the Acmeist group, They shared a commitment to the Western culture traditionally associated with St Petersburg and sought clarity and precision in poetry. Many of Mandelstam's poems are about this strange city built by Peter the Great as his window to the West. You have to come and see it in its moods to understand fully.

"Stone" was Osip Mandelstam's first book of poetry, published in 1913 as a 36 page pamphlet. He enlarged it to 92 pages in the 1916 edition, to 98 pages in 1923, and included it in his Collected poems in 1928. Thus it can be misleading for the reader to search among these poems for a foreshadowing of events that were to occur to Mandelstam in later years. It is a trap I readily fall into, for I find it impossible to ignore his fate as a victim of Stalinism.

Like thousands of other Russians during the catastrophic period of upheaval and change in Russia, he was a wanderer and refugee. He met and unofficially married Nadezhda Yakovlenva Khazina in Kiev in 1919, and it is this extraordinary woman we must thank for the survival of two hundred poems written after 1930. All of Mandelstam's papers were confiscated during his arrest in 1934 and now form part of the KGB's literary archive. Nadezhda memorised them, made copies and hid them. She survived the Stalin era, and she wrote a remarkable account of her life, published in English as Hope Against Hope and Hope Abandoned (Harvill Press). He was rehabilitated in 1956 and his poems were published in an edition intended for sale abroad in 1974.

For Osip Mandelstam the word "stone" was an active not passive word. Stone was the basic building material that might be picked up anywhere; a stone that a mason could use to build. A building is made out of stone; a poem is made out of words and not out of ideas or its subject matter. The word thirsts to participate in a poem, for the poem is a new mode of existence, a challenge to the void of silence and nothingness, just as the stone thirsts to participate in the soaring vault that supports a roof or tower where only emptiness had been. To build means to contend with the void, to hypnotize space. (I paraphrase Professor Robert Tracy who is also quoting Mandelstam; in his introduction to the English translation of Stone published by Harvill Press in 1991)

It is this architectural Mandelstamian attitude that I have sought to follow in writing this String Quartet. It is a discourse for Violin and String Trio for the former is isolated from the other three, seeking to belong, perhaps? The "stones" are my building blocks of sound and motives. They dominate the landscape of my childhood for I am a Yorkshireman from the West Riding, where man has sought to delineate the Pennines with dry stone walls, and nature has worn and exposed them at the most fantastical in Brimham Rocks. I spent my mid-childhood in Kirkby Malzeard in Wensleydale and my "college years" in Grassington in Wharfedale. Above Grassington there is an old drover's road going nowhere. There, I found a place to sit and read. There, nothing of the 20th, or the 19th Century for that matter, could be seen or heard, and only the stone ruins of 18th Century lead mining remained interrupting into the horizon: enough to make you want to be come dumb in awe at such a wonderful unspoilt place. The wind blew, unhindered by trees across this landscape and the sound of curlews and lapwings was borne on it. I could walk and skip for miles under this immense sky. But you will hear much of the 20th Century for I am a child of my times.

This quartet is conceived in one movement, albeit falling into three sections. The "stones" develop out of themselves and change as they are used. It departs from the emotional lineage of the poem by ending with a soliloquy, but that is a consequence of living surrounded by the history of St Petersburg and not in the Dales! Thus, you may read what you wish into this piece for I am a Yorkshireman living in Russia and much struck by both.