String Quartet 1

by

Karen Amrhein

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String Quartet 1

Despite its relative brevity, this quartet has had a rather long and sporadic genesis.

First conceived as a single-movement concert prelude, I began writing the *Ouverture* for my friend, violinist Nicholas Currie. The *Ouverture* — an exercise in rapidly shifting dynamics and textures — consists of a theme (or more precisely, a motive) and variations. The motive — an arpeggio built of a minor third, major second, major third, and minor third — appears first in variation in the opening bars, played by the first violin. After the introduction, the motive is served straight-up and subsequently reworked until the *Overture* climaxes at the coda, fusing a two-voice fugue with elements from the introduction.

The introspective *Rêverie* is primarily homophonic in its outer sections, with the opening Largo returning at the conclusion of the movement. This Largo dissolves within a plaintive melody stated first in stretto between the first violin and the viola, and then in a brief fugal passage.

The work concludes with *Rejouissance*, a Presto scherzo. It begins, pizzicato, with a line played in unison by all four strings. The line splits into counterpoint, then reunites. In the next section a rising and falling figure leads a contrapuntal game of bowing and plucking, followed by a bowed recapitulation (of sorts) of the opening. Next comes a third theme derived from the second, accentuated by percussive rolls in the cello and periodic pizzicato exclamations, before the opening returns, but with counterpoint. A short fugue succeeds, developed from the rising and falling figure of the second section, driving into an altered return to the third theme. The work climaxes with restatement and variation of the opening section, a nod to section two, and ends with a final pluck.

Each of these three movements has been revised, tightened, and expanded several times. Perhaps I'll continue to return to this quartet, for it seems to have gained a life of its own and will continue to evolve as long as I endulge it.

Karen Amrhein

(I later returned to the quartet, revising and expanding the *Ouverture,* and especially the *Rejouissance*, yet again (as that latter movement's paragraph reflects).

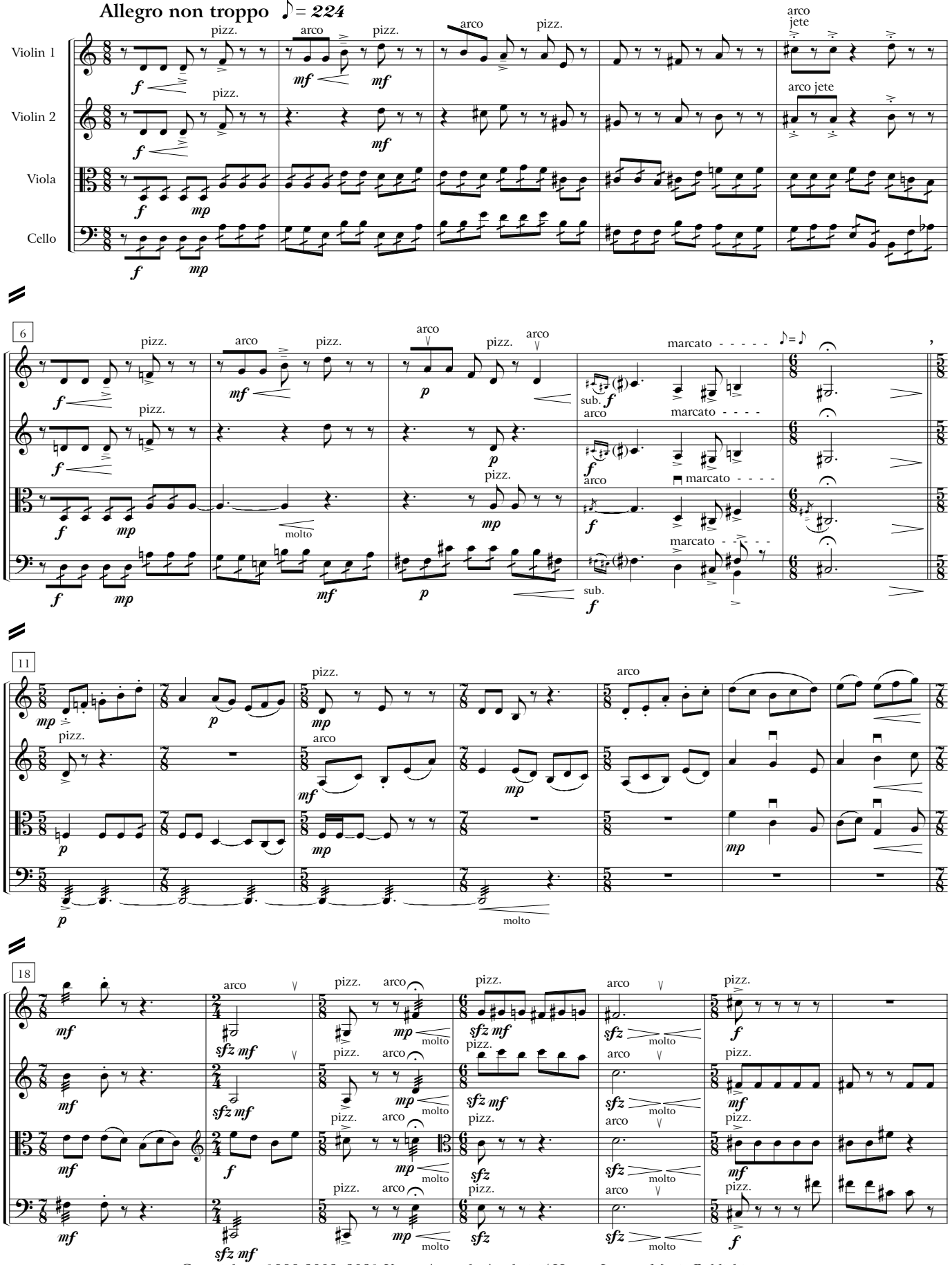
Total Timing: 11 to 12 Minutes

Ouverture: 4 Minutes

String Quartet 1
Ouverture

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)

Allegro non troppo ♪ = *224*



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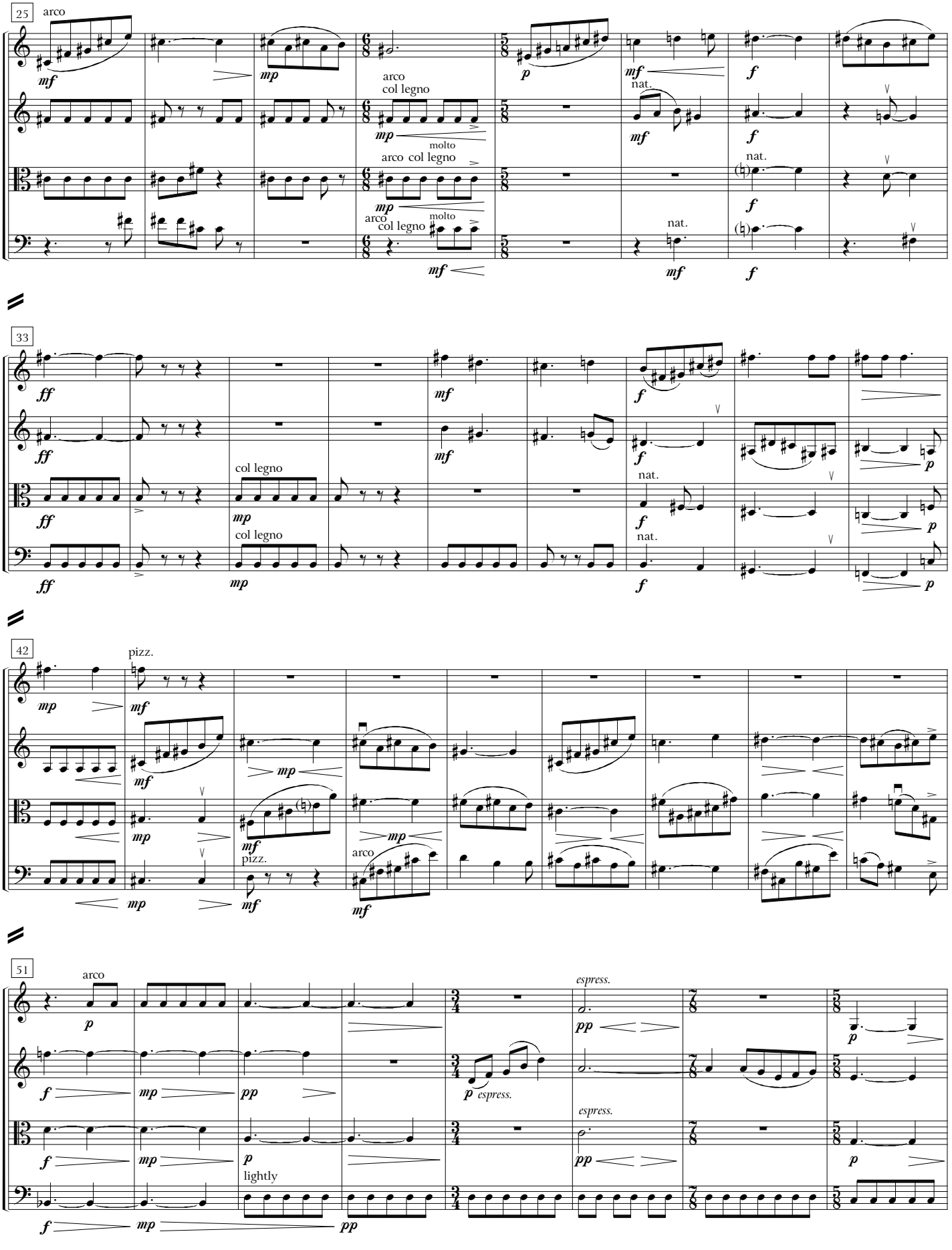
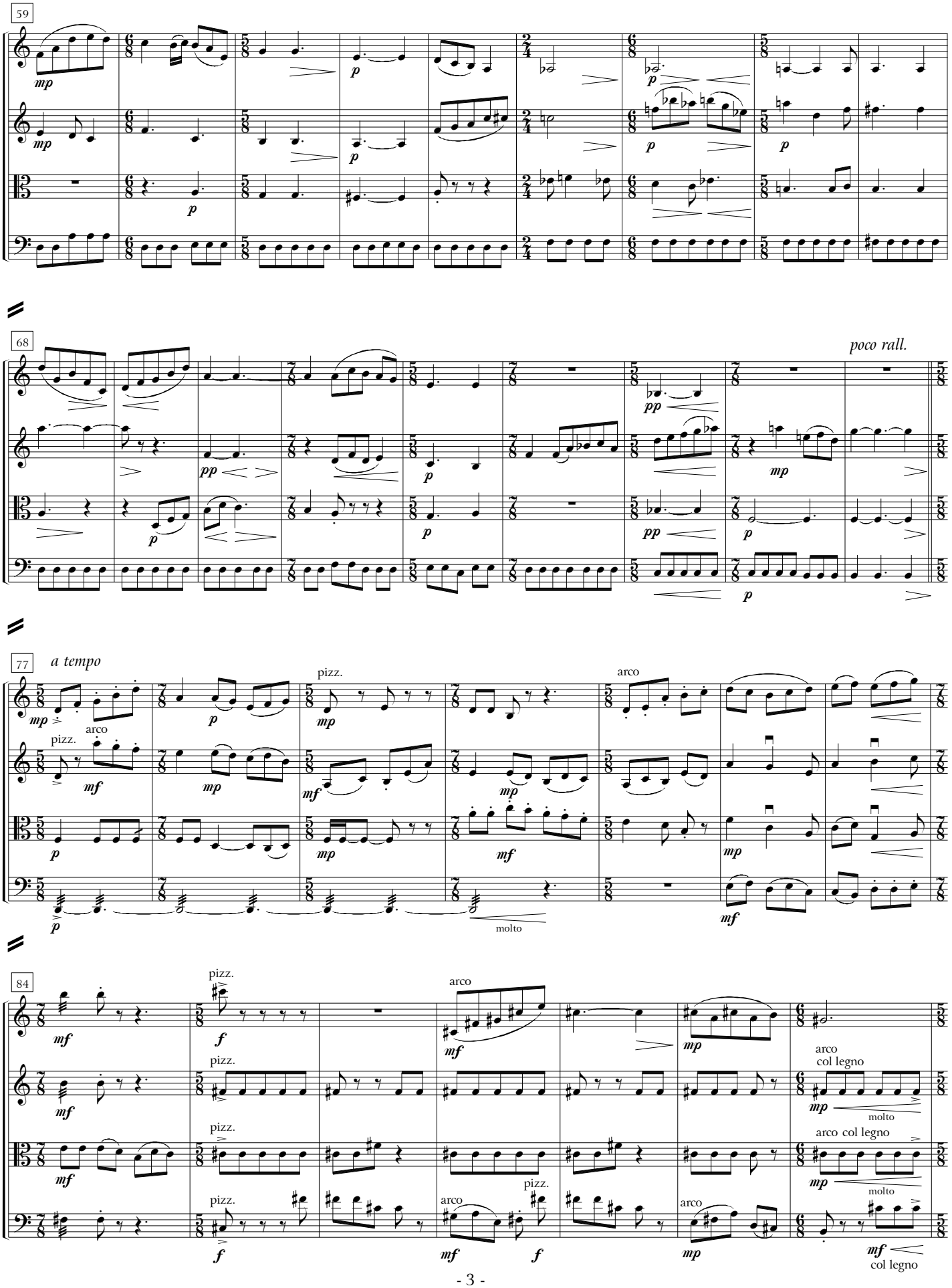
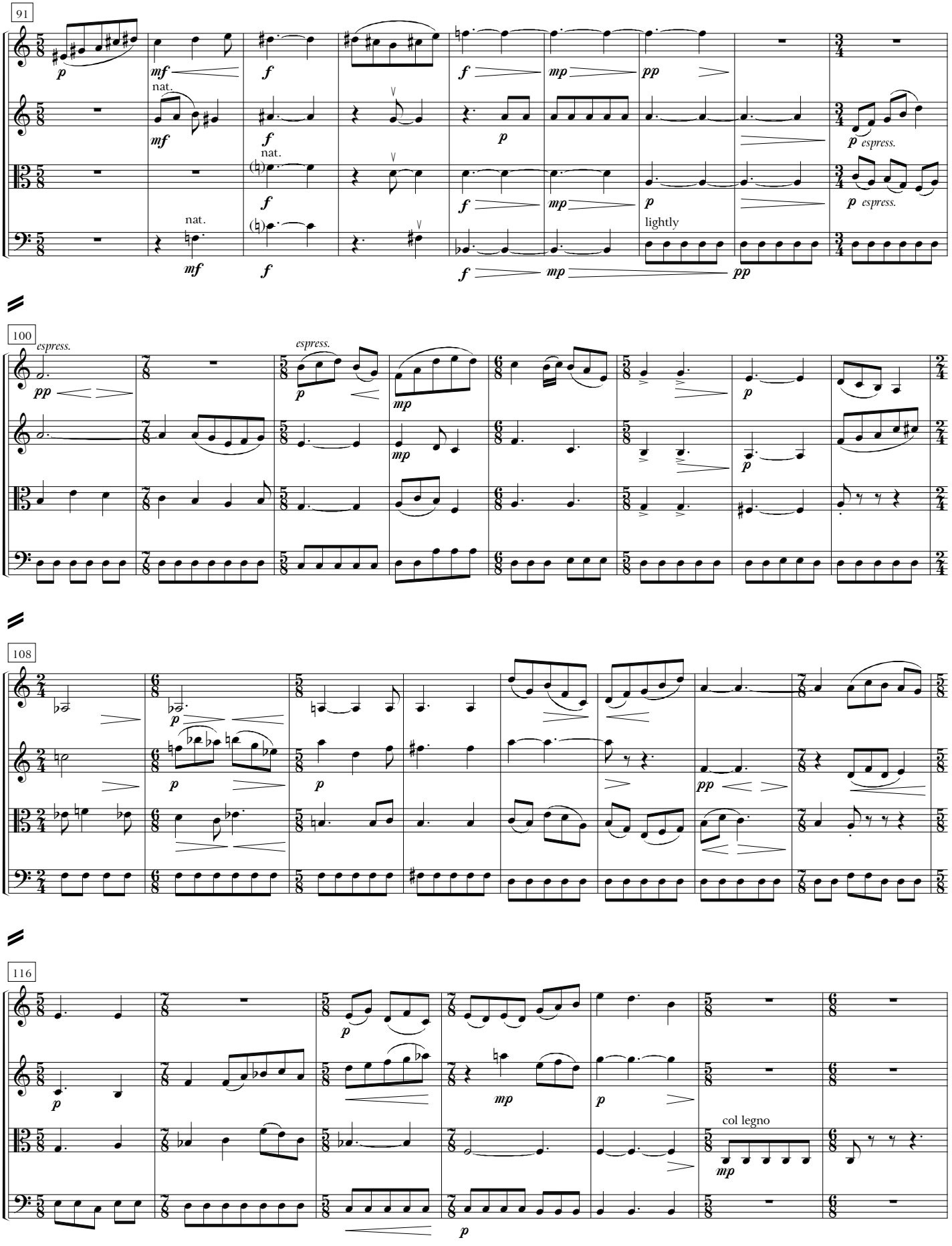
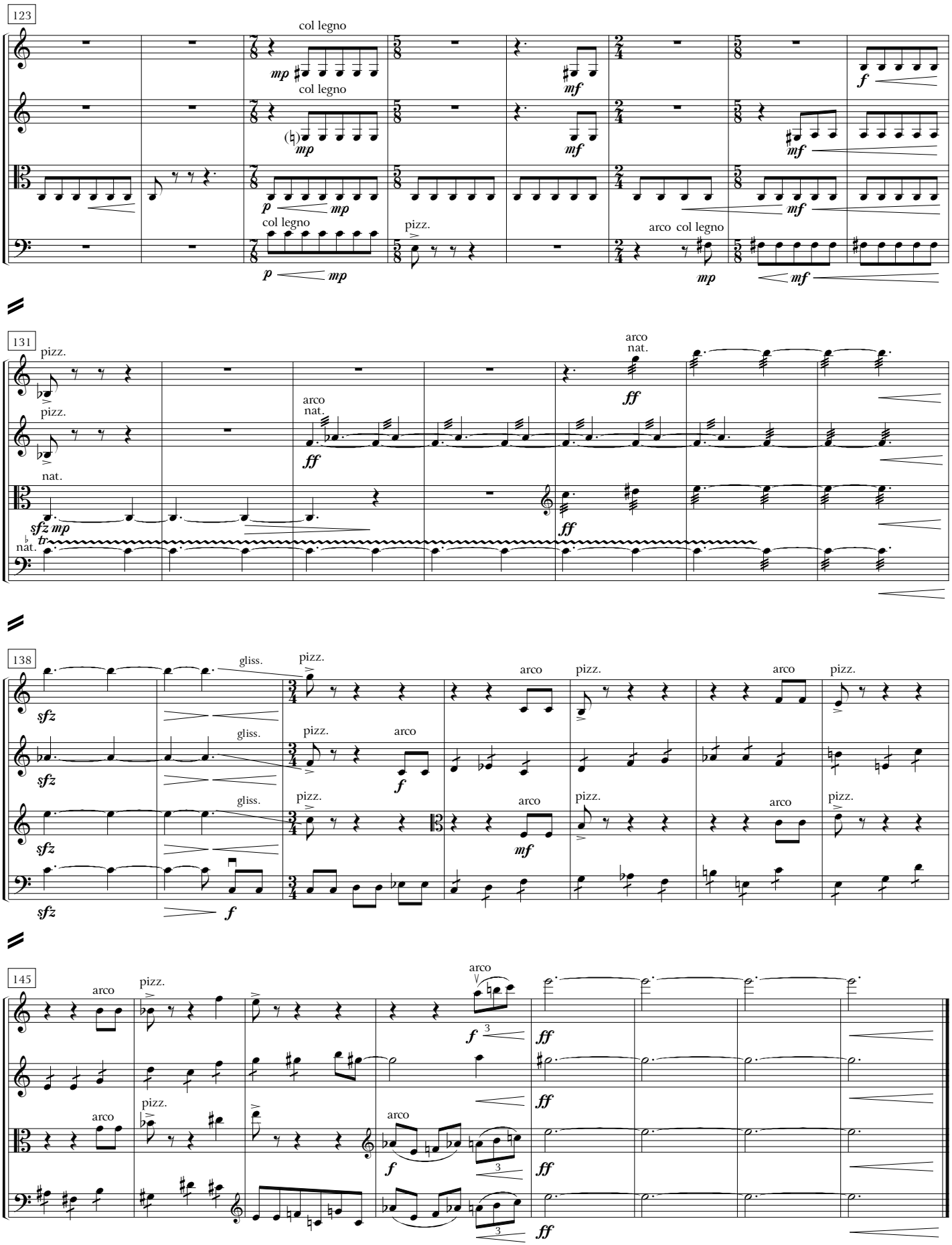

25
arco
arco
col legno
molto
arco col legno
arco
col legno
molto
nat.
nat.
nat.
33
col legno
col legno
nat.
nat.
42
pizz.
pizz.
arco
51
arco
espress.
espress.
espress.
lightly

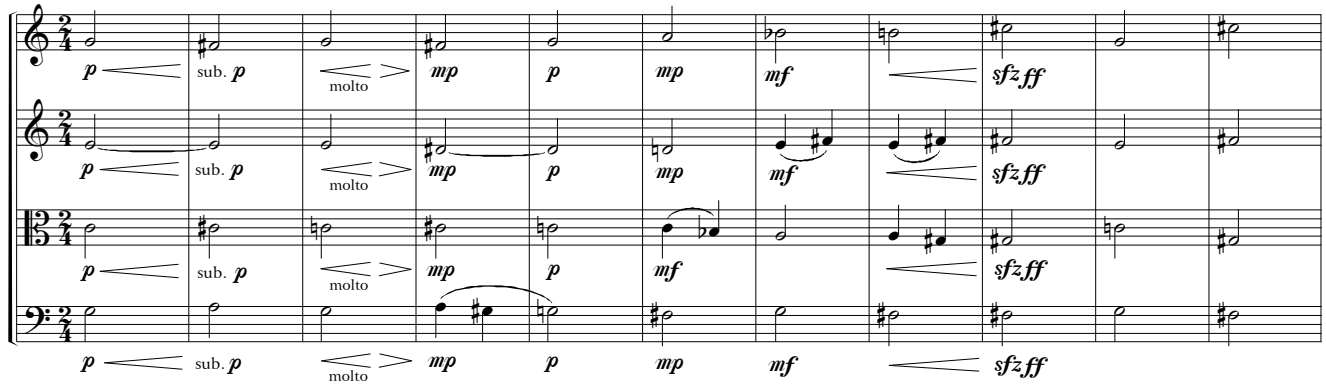

59
68
poco rall.
77
a tempo
84
pizz.
arco
molto
col legno
arco col legno


91
nat.
nat.
nat.
lightly
100
espress.
espress.
108
116
col legno


123
col legno
col legno
col legno
pizz.
arco col legno
131
pizz.
pizz.
nat.
arco
nat.
arco
nat.
138
gliss.
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
145
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco

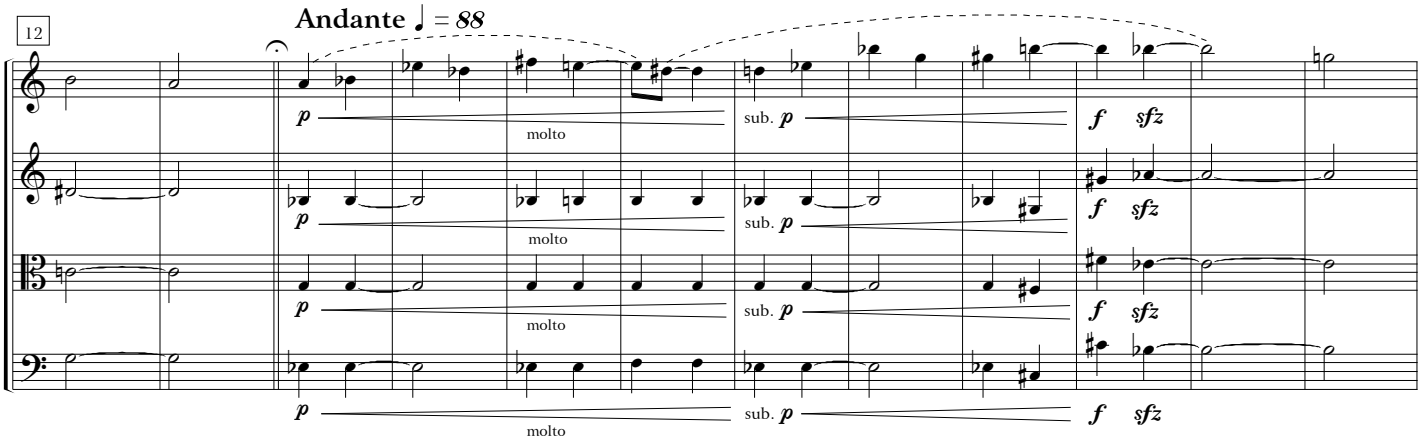
Rêverie

Largo ♩ = ***40*** **to** ***44***



12

Andante ♩ = ***88***



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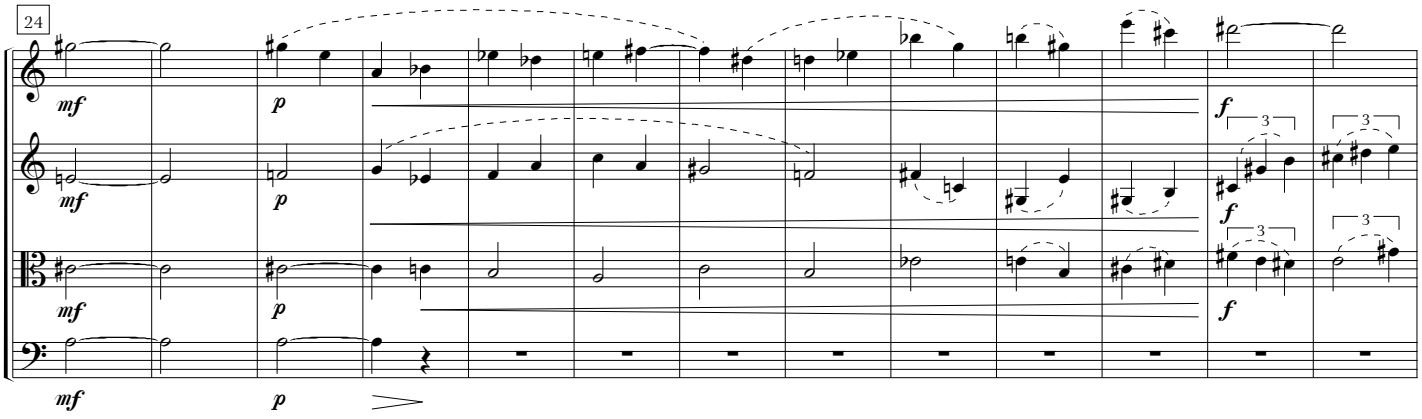

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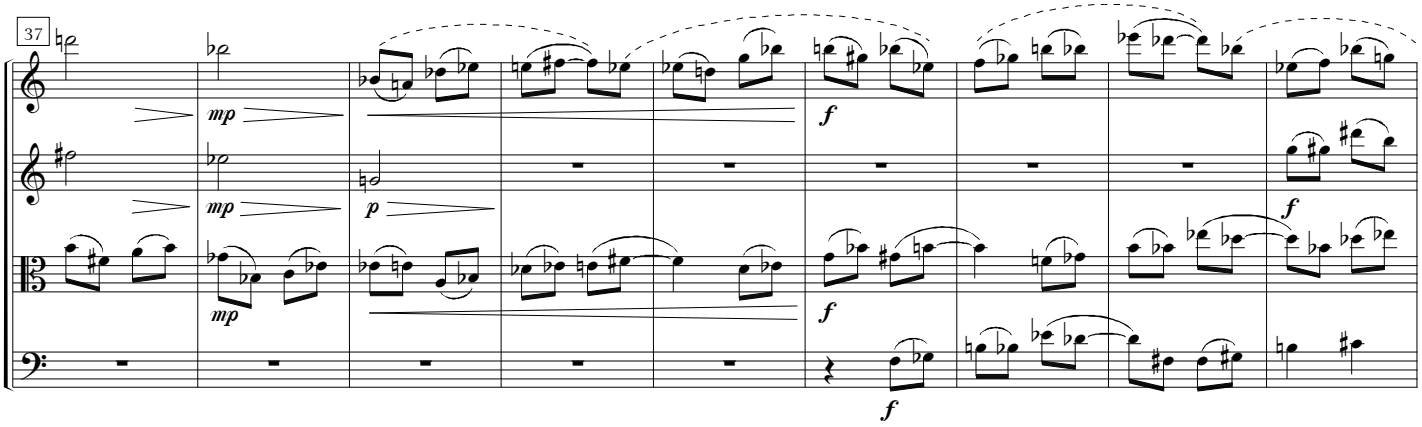
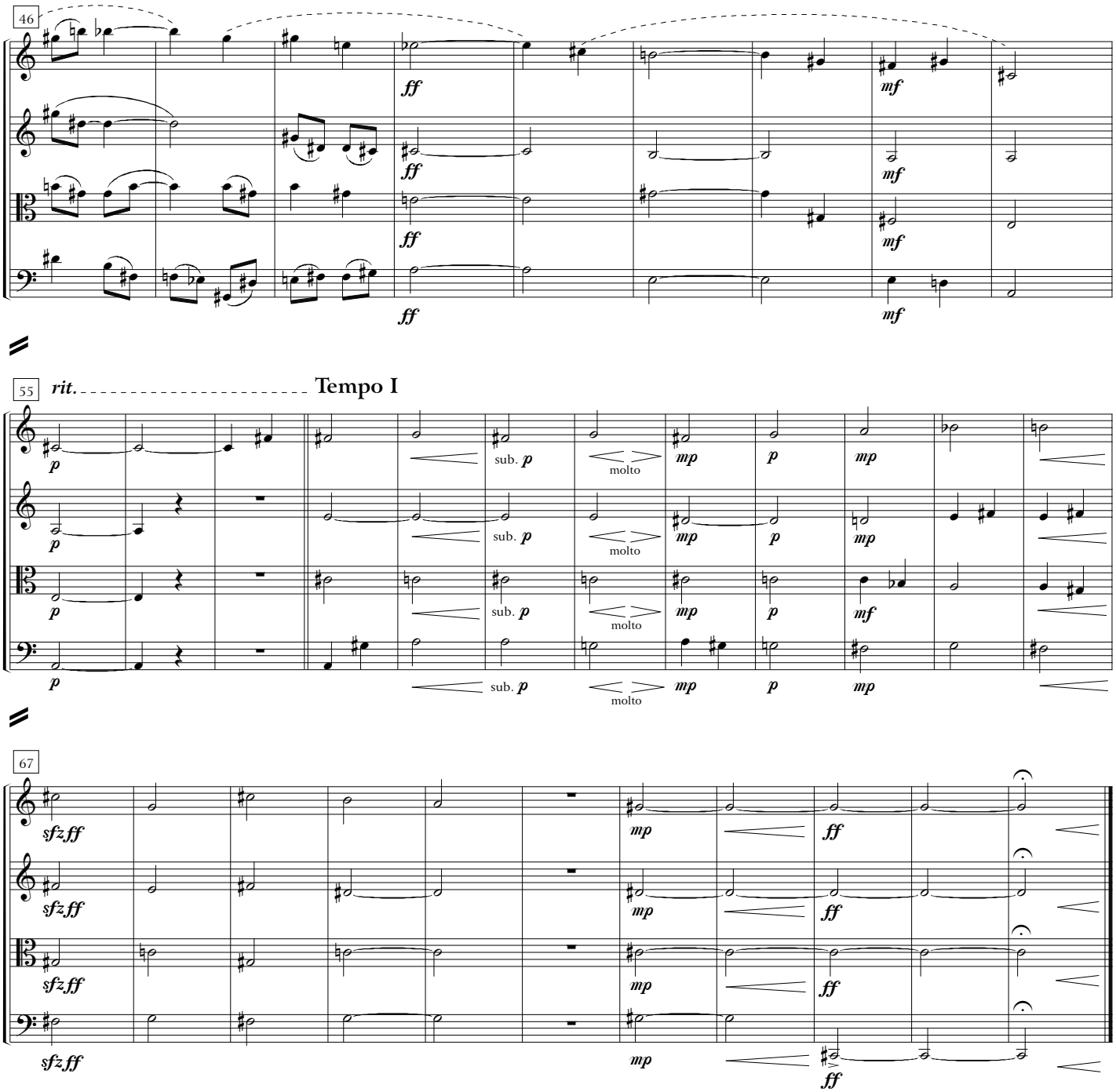
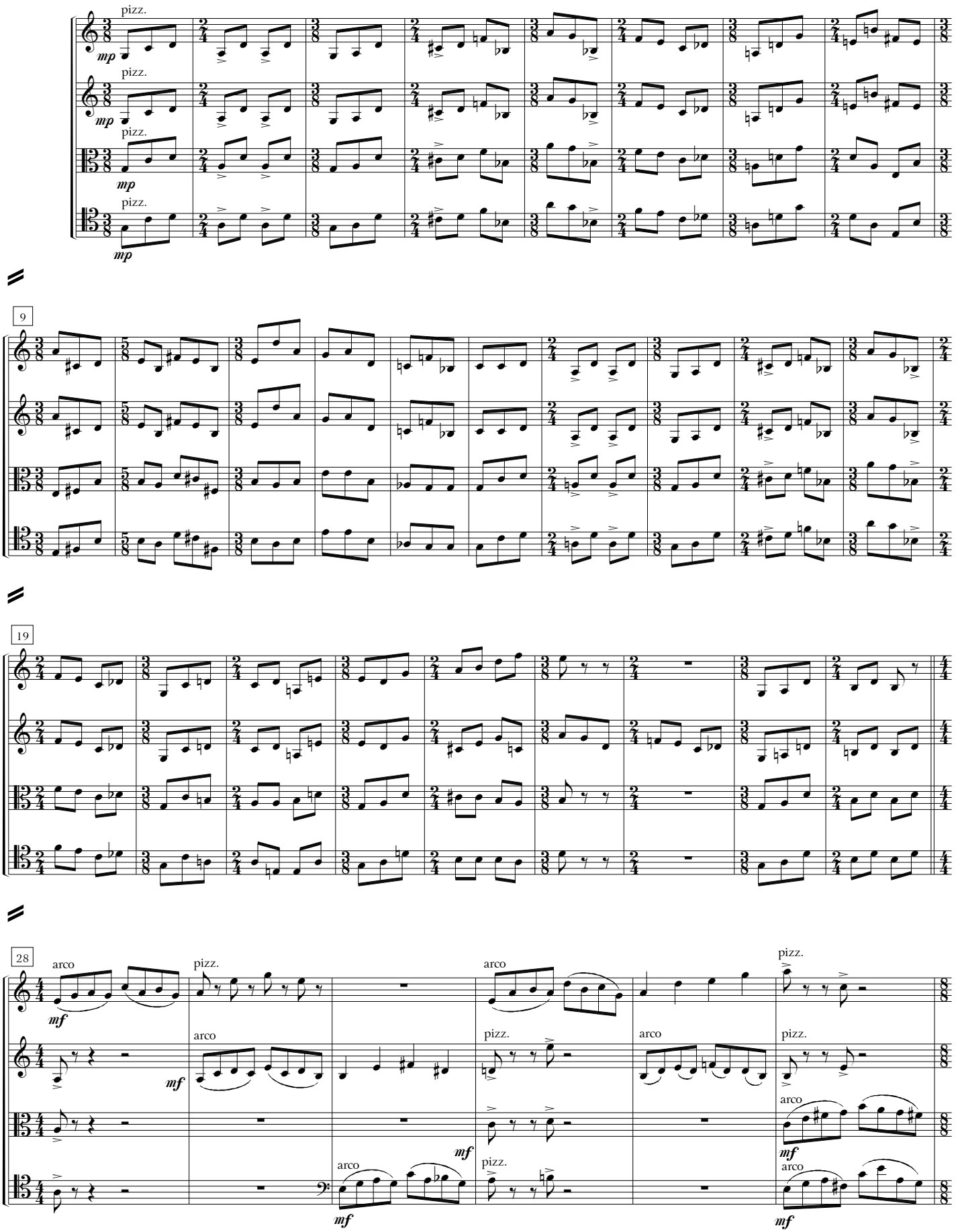
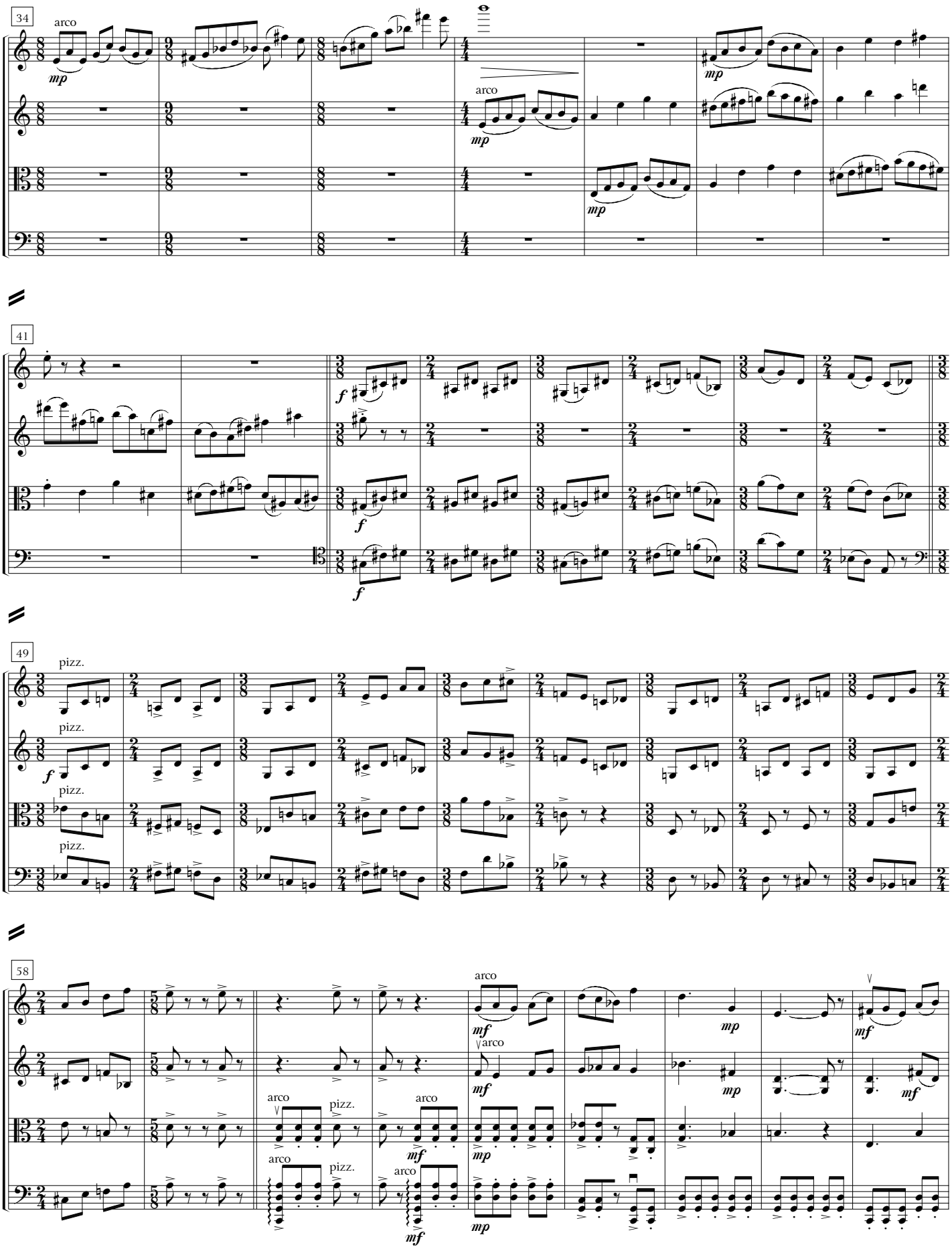


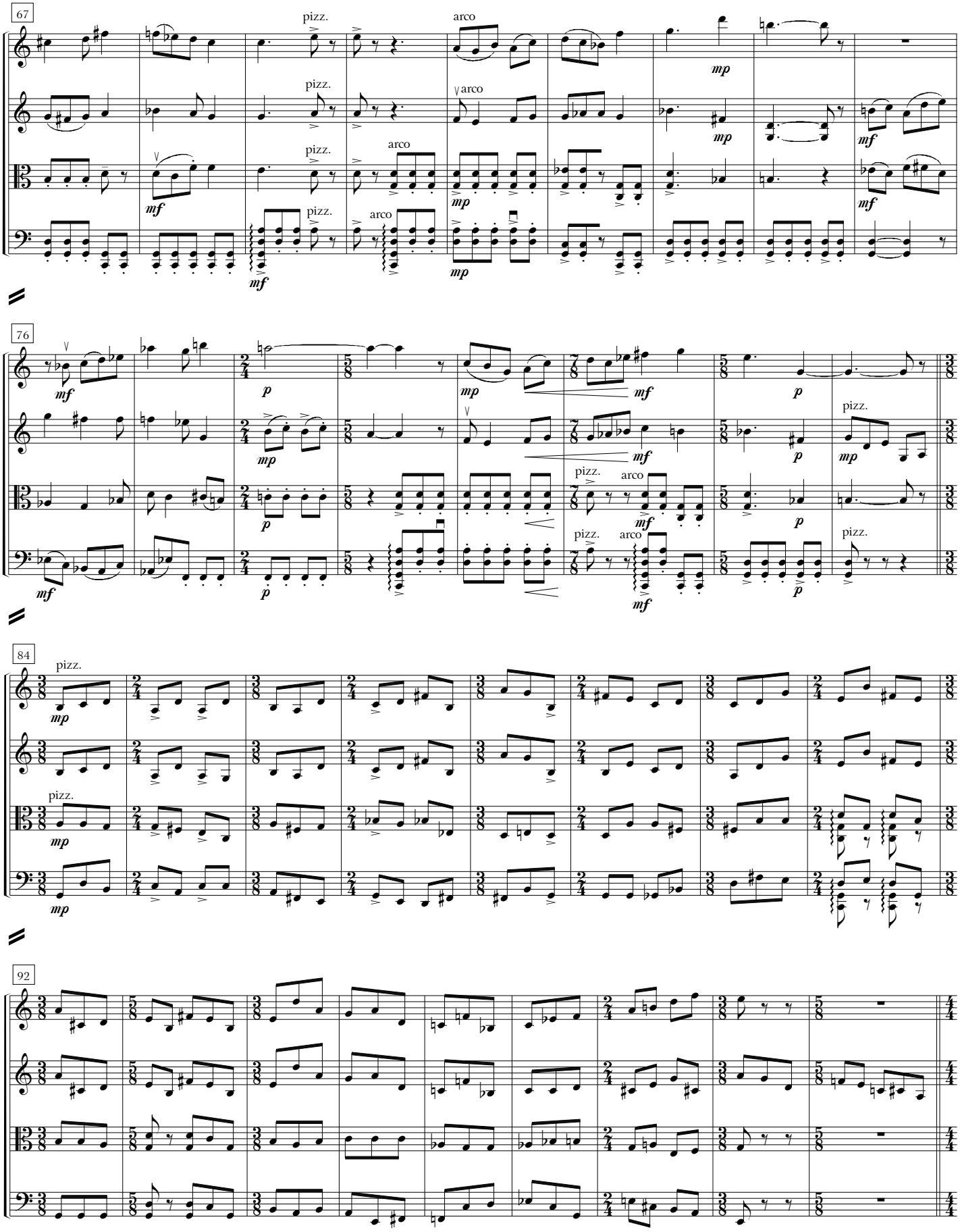

46
ff
mf
55
rit.
Tempo I
p
sub. p
molto
mp
67
sfzff

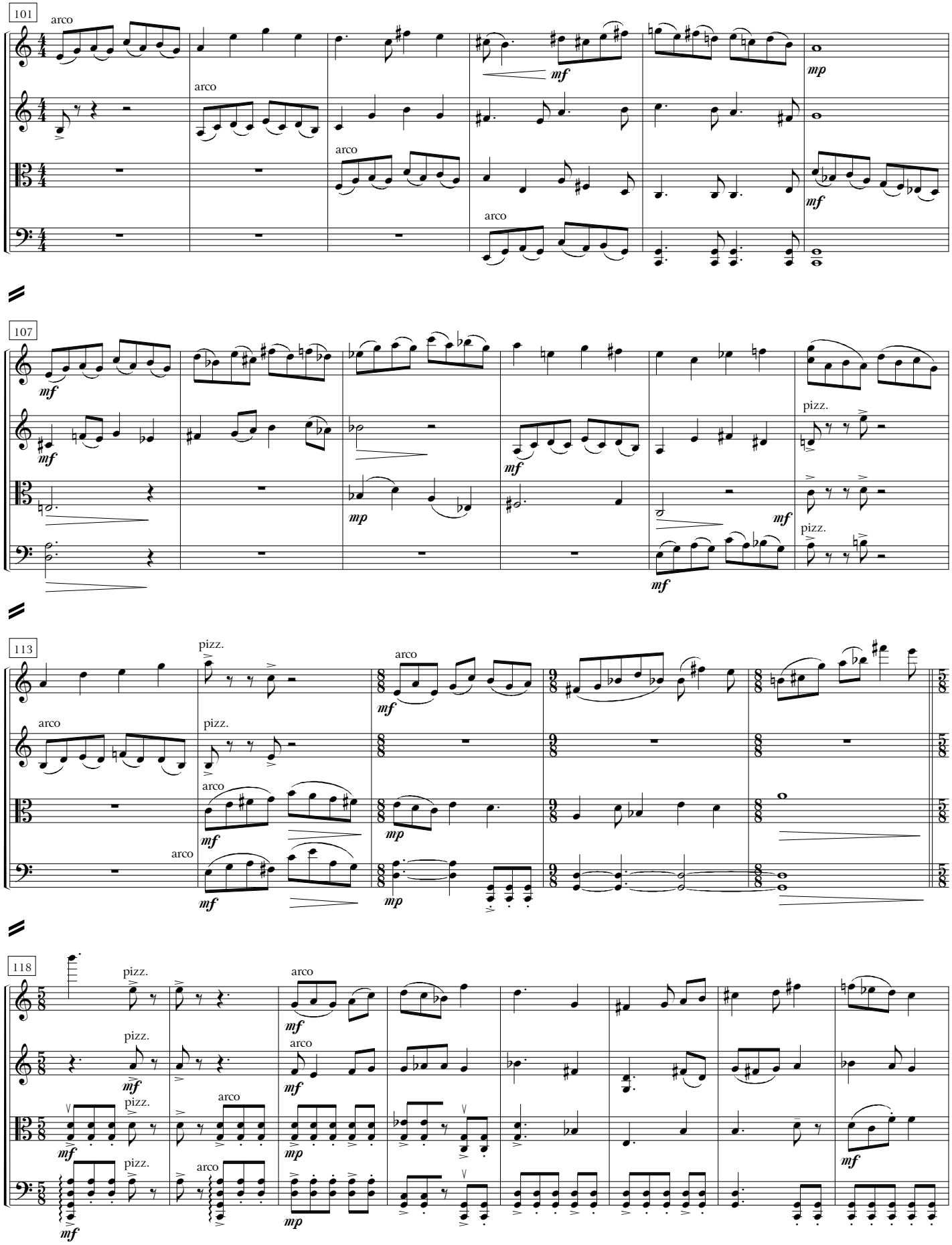
Rejouissance

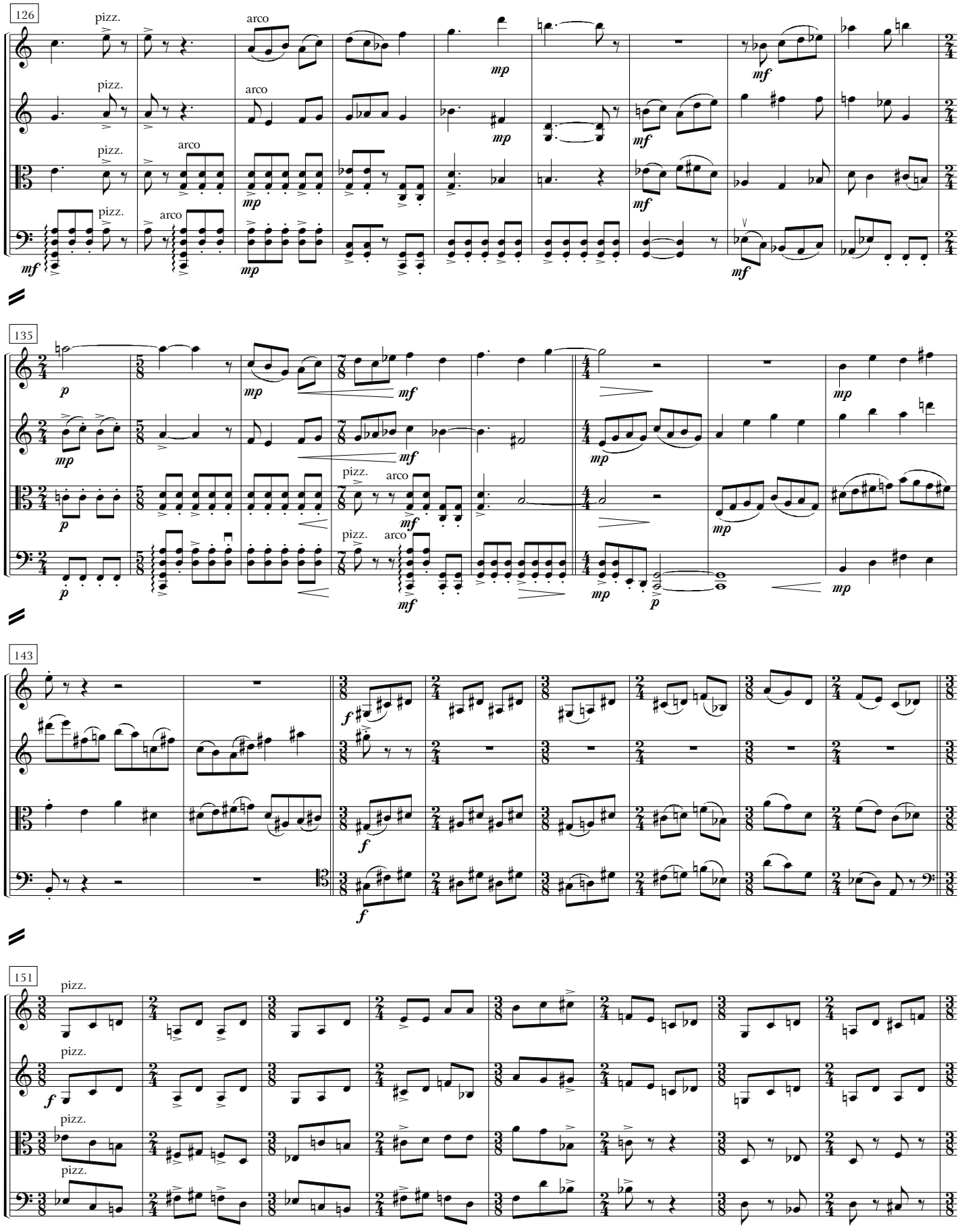
Presto ♩ = ***144***

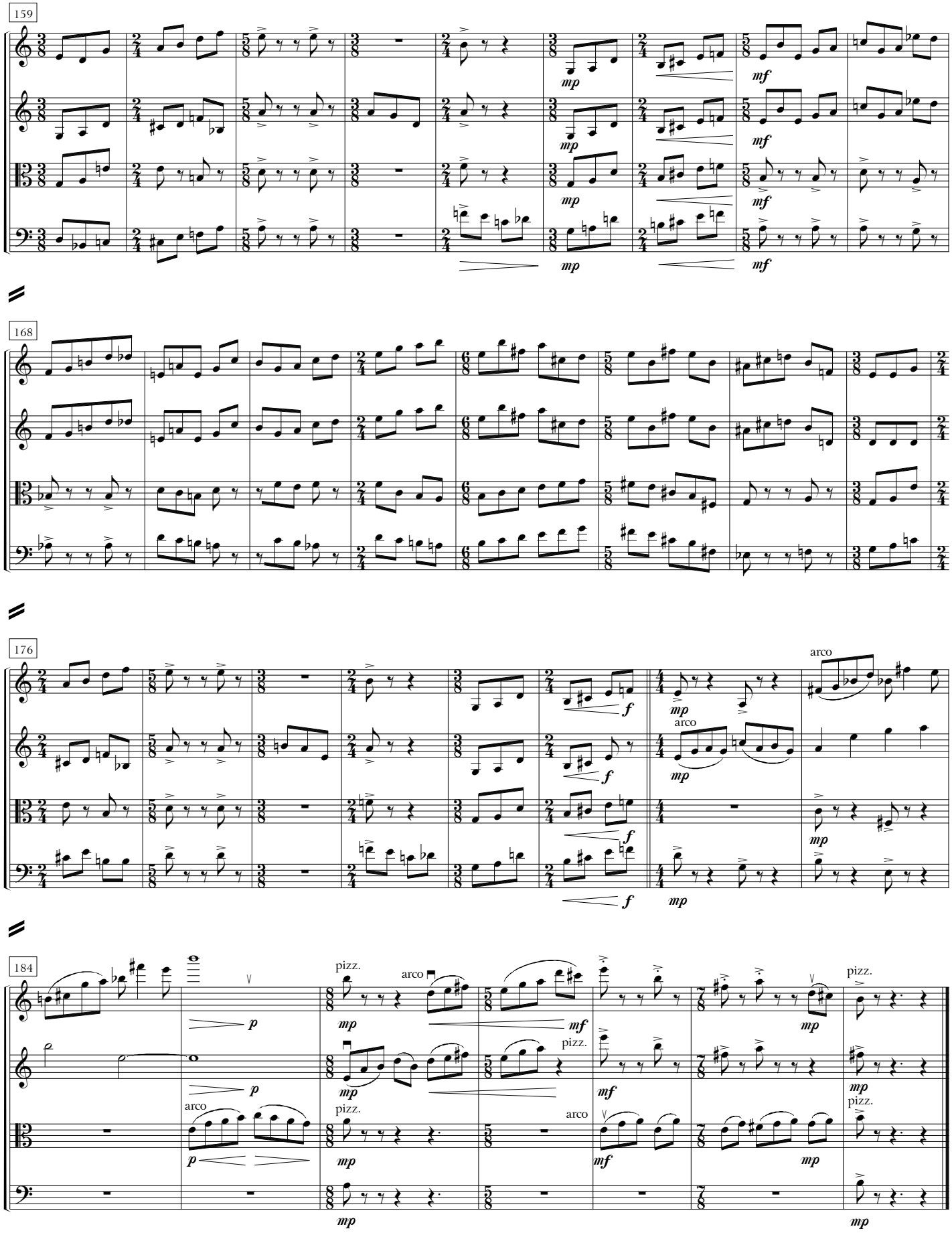



34
arco
mp
arco
mp
mp
mp
41
f
f
f
49
pizz.
pizz.
f
pizz.
pizz.
58
arco
mf
arco
mf
mp
mf
arco
pizz.
arco
mf
mp
arco
pizz.
arco
mf
mp


67
pizz.
arco
mp
mf
76
p
84
92


101
arco
arco
arco
arco
mf
mp
mf
107
mf
mf
mp
mf
mf
pizz.
pizz.
113
pizz.
arco
arco
arco
arco
mf
mf
mf
mp
mp
118
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
mf
mf
mf
mp
mp
mf


126
pizz.
arco
mp
mf
135
p
mp
mf
143
f
151
pizz.


159
168
176
184
arco
pizz.

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