Béla Bartók

Hungarian Folk Tunes

(From "For Children" for piano)

Book 1

Transcribed for String Quartet

by Alan Bonds

FOR CHILDREN BOOK I (1909)

The two books of Béla Bartók's *For Children* are part of a long continuous tradition of special pieces composed for young pianists. They are the product of Bartók's first forays into Hungarian and Slovakian folk music and his interest in setting them for a variety of purposes. At about the same time Bartók completed the *Hungarian Folk Songs* for voice & piano and his publisher Károly Rozsnyai sensed the popular appeal of piano pieces in the same style.

Significantly, Bártok also finished the *Bagatelles* and the *10 Easy Pieces* at the same time, but the publisher Rozsavölgy didn't want anything quite so experimental or modern (especially as in the *Bagatelles*). In a letter to Bartók he says:

> "I wish to emphasize that it would be better if the rules of classical harmony would be even more strictly observed without any modernization than in the ones already published. I should not like to see a new trend in the undertaking but rather the beaten track on which you can continue working from time to time…"

Szelényi observes that this was simply a reflection of the conservatism of the time. However, within these strictures, Bartók was determined to set his folk melodies in a manner which reflected their modality. He wished to move beyond the clichéd diatonic accompaniments common at this time. Of the 40 Hungarian pieces, (36 of which were his own transcriptions), 14 are major-minor, 16 are modal, 5 are pentatonic and 5 are polymodal. Of the 40 Slovakian tunes, 13 are major-minor, 12 are modal, one is pentatonic and 13 are bi-modal.

In a lecture, Bartók said:

> "It is always important, however, that the musical mantle in which we dress the melody should be related to the character of the melody as well as the musical traits openly or disguisedly inherent in the melody. In other words, so that the melody and every addition to it should create the impression of being an organic entity."

Given the constraints of the publisher (including that they should be for the pre-octave student pianist's hand) Bartok's solutions are masterly.

FOR CHILDREN BOOK I (1909)

The Slovakian collection (Book 2) are decidely more adventurous and probably came later.

The reason they work so beautifully for strings is that the part-writing is so elegant. I found that it was very rarely necessary to disturb the beautiful voice-leading, and only a few needed transposing to a 'string-friendly' key. Repetition of phrases (esp. in the Hungarian collection) allowed for dialogue between string parts, making them true chamber music. The only figurations which caused concern were the Alberti accompaniments, which never sound as good on strings.

The tune of the *Swinherd's Dance* (No. 40) which Szigeti transcribed so virtuosically, and which Bartók himself transcribed for full orchestra in the *Hungarian Pictures* (1931, has also been set here an octave lower, but sounds wonderful at the original pitch if the 1st violinist can manage it.

Bartók was obviously proud of these pieces because he frequently performed small suites from them, and often used them as little encores. He returned to them in the last year of his life and revised them for Boosey & Hawkes.

Kodály continued to champion *For Children* for the whole of his life, arguing for their inclusion in the new Hungarian music curriculum.

Obviously the *Mikrokosmos* later eclipsed these pieces, seeing as they comprise an almost complete curriculum for piano and offer a superb insight into Bartók's more mature and adventurous compositional techniques of the 20's and 30's. However *For Children* should not be overlooked as an important insight into the later style and especially the compositional skill involved in setting tunes within specific constraints.

This version for strings could be the beginning of a voyage of discovery for the string player which culminates in the duos, string quartets and the works for string orchestra and full orchestra. Naturally one should start with the *44 Duos*, but to facilitate this journey I have also arranged the *Roumanian Colinda*, the *Transylvanian Dances*, the *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs*, the *Petite Suite*, the *Roumanian Dances* and a large number of the *Mikrokosmos* for strinq quartet and string orchestra. It is hoped that string players will approach the later works in the same natural and methodical way as pianists.

To absorb the idiom, especially the natural inflections, I thoroughly recommend listening to the excellent recordings by famous Hungarian pianists (including Bartók himself).

This is particularly so regarding the *parlando rubato* style. Bartók never plays them metronomically. Even better, modern technology now permits hearing the original singers and players in Bartók's own field recordings.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

These pieces have been specially layed out for a quartet to be able to study them from the full score. Because they are fairly short they are ideal cases for study from the score, a practice I wish was more common in student ensembles. It is even more valuable in the *parlando rubato* songs in which the melodist is invited to play freely and spontaneously. In some cases it will be necessary to photocopy a third page to avoid a page turn. Parts are only necessary to perform a few of the longer ones.

In order to see Bartok's original phrasings in the piano version, they have been retained and bowings overlayed. Every care has been taken to preserve the natural song or dance accentuations, usually taking strong beats on down bows and weak beats on up bows in the traditional way. Bartok's hierarchy of accentuations is very clear and has been faithfully retained.

Likewise Bartók's articulations are always very clear and have been scrupulously retained. Only a few are specifically pianistic and require interpretation.

A few fingerings have been suggested, mostly to restrain players from using too sophisticated an approach, and sometimes to deliberatly encourage the use of open strings in the dances.

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September 2006
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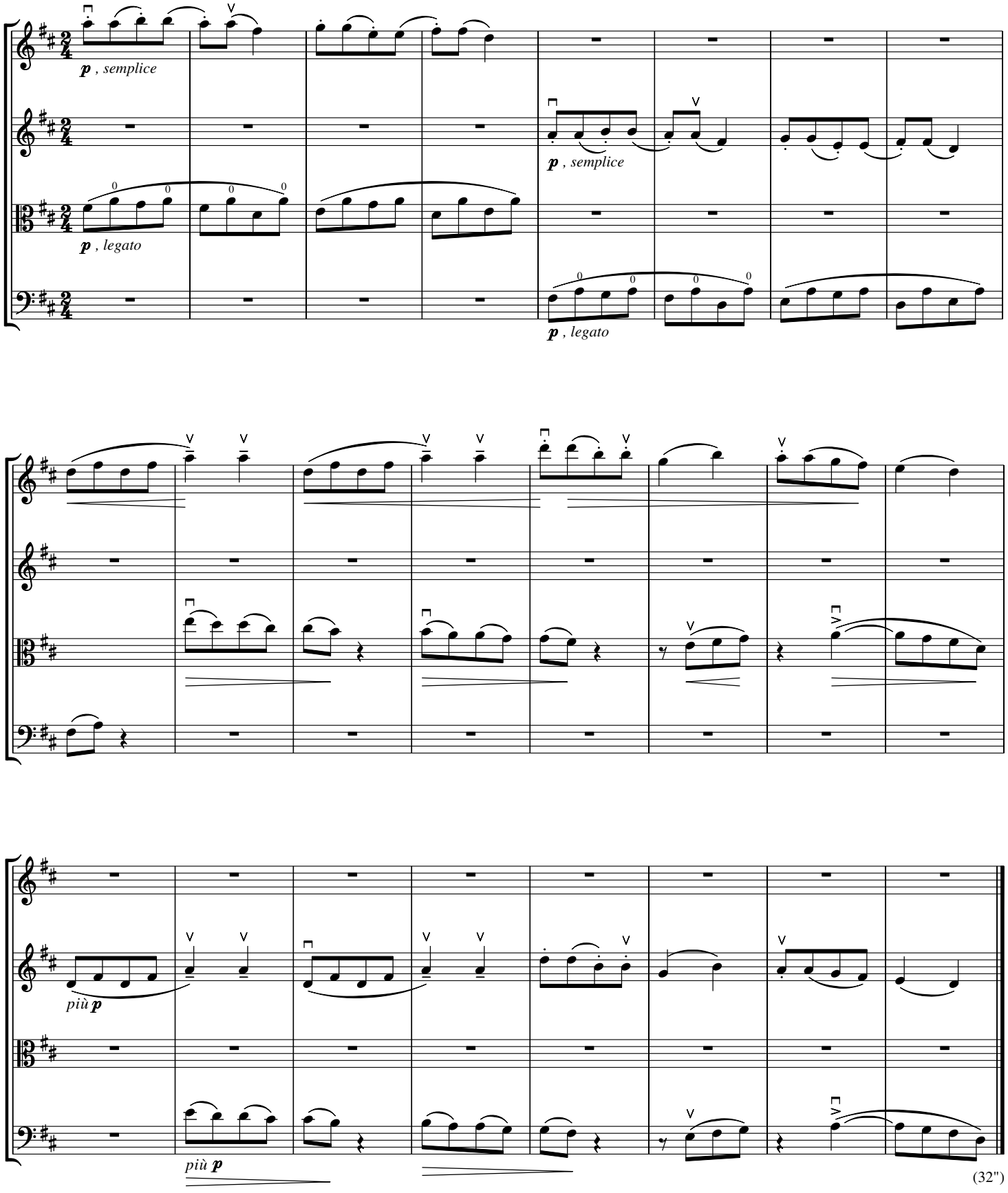
Volume I Index (1947)

1. *Játszó gyermekek* (Children at Play). Allegro
2. *Gyermekdal* (Children's Song). Andante
3. Quasi adagio
4. *Párnatánc* (Pillow Dance). Allegro
5. *Játék* (Play). Allegretto
6. *Balkéztanulmány* (Study for the Left Hand). Allegro
7. *Játékdal* (Play Song). Andante grazioso
8. *Gyermekjáték (*Children's Game). Allegretto
9. *Dal* (Song). Adagio
10. *Gyermektánc* (Children's Dance). Allegro molto
11. Lento
12. Allegro
13. *Ballada* (Ballad). Andante
14. Allegretto
15. Allegro moderato
16. *Régi magyar dallam* (Old Hungarian Tune). Andante rubato
17. *Körtánc* (Round Dance). Lento
18. *Katonadal* (Soldier's Song). Andante non troppo
19. Allegretto
20. *Bordal* (Drinking Song). Allegro
21. Allegro robusto
22. Allegretto
23. *Táncdal* (Dance Song). Allegro grazioso
24. Andante sostenuto
25. Parlando
26. Moderato
27. *Tréfa* (Jest). Allegramente
28. *Kórusdal* (Choral). Andante
29. *Ötfokú dallam* (Pentatonic Tune). Allegro scherzando
30. *Gúnydal* (Jeering Song). Allegro ironico
31. *Allegro tranquillo* — attacca
32. Andante
33. Allegro non troppo
34. Allegretto
35. Con moto
36. *Részegek nótája* (Drunkard's Song). Vivace
37. *Kanásznóta* (Swine-herd's Song). Allegro
38. *Regös ének* (Winter Solstice Song). Molto vivace
39. Allegro moderato
40. *Kanásztánc* (Swine-herd's Dance). Allegro vivace

41. Allegro
42. Andante
43. Allegretto
44. *Lakodalmas* (Wedding Song). Andante
45. *Változatok* (Variations). Molto andante — A tempo — A tempo — L'istesso tempo
46. *I. Körtánc* (Round Dance I). Allegro
47. *Bánat (*Sorrow). Andante
48. *Táncdal* (Dance). Allegro non troppo
49. *II. Körtánc* (Round Dance II). Andante
50. *Temetésre szól az ének* (Funeral Song). Largo
51. Lento — attacca
52. Andante rubato — attacca
53. Allegro
54. Moderato
55. *I. Dudanóta* (Bagpipe I). Molto tranquillo
56. *Panasz* (Lament). Lento
57. Andante
58. *Gúnydal* (Teasing Song). Sostenuto
59. *Románc* (Romance). Assai lento
60. *Kerget dzés* (Game of Tag). Presto
61. *Tréfa* (Pleasantry). Allegro moderato
62. *Duhajkodó* (Revelry). Molto allegro
63. Andante tranquillo - attacca
64. Andante
65. Scherzando. Allegretto
66. *Furulyaszó* (Peasant's Flute). Andante, molto rubato
67. *Még egy tréfa* (Pleasantry II). Allegro
68. Andante, molto rubato
69. *Kánon* (Canon). Allegro non troppo
70. *Szól a duda* (Bagpipe II). Vivace
71. *Betyárnóta* (The Highway Robber). Allegro
72. Pesante
73. Andante tranquillo
74. *Búcsú* (Farewell). Adagio
75. *Ballada* (Ballad). Moderato
76. -
77. *Rapszódia* (Rhapsody). Parlando, molto rubato
78. *Siratóének* (Dirge). Lento
79. *Halotti ének* (Mourning Song). Lento

1. Children at Play

Allegro, ♩ = 92

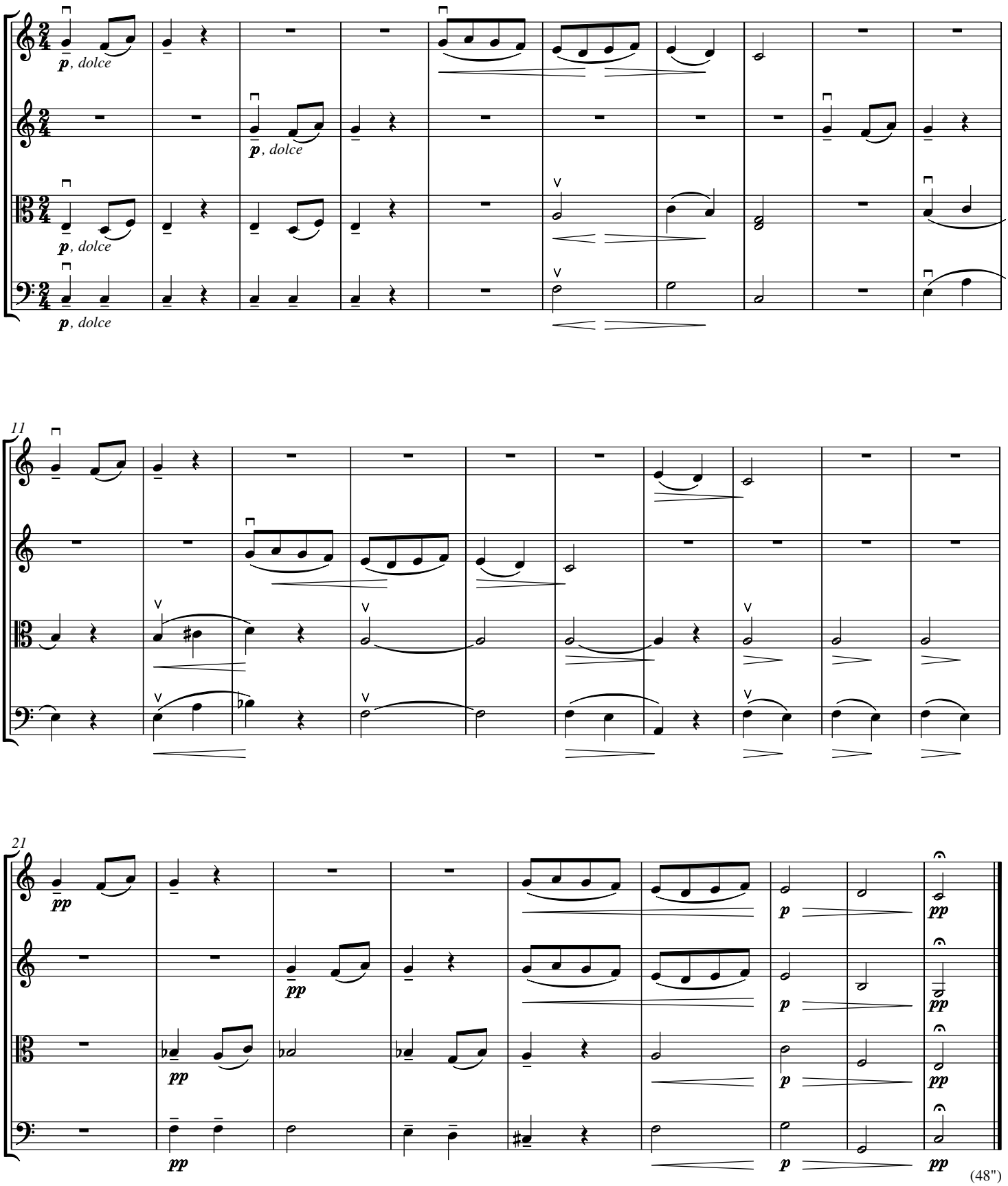


(32")

2. Children's Song

Springtime

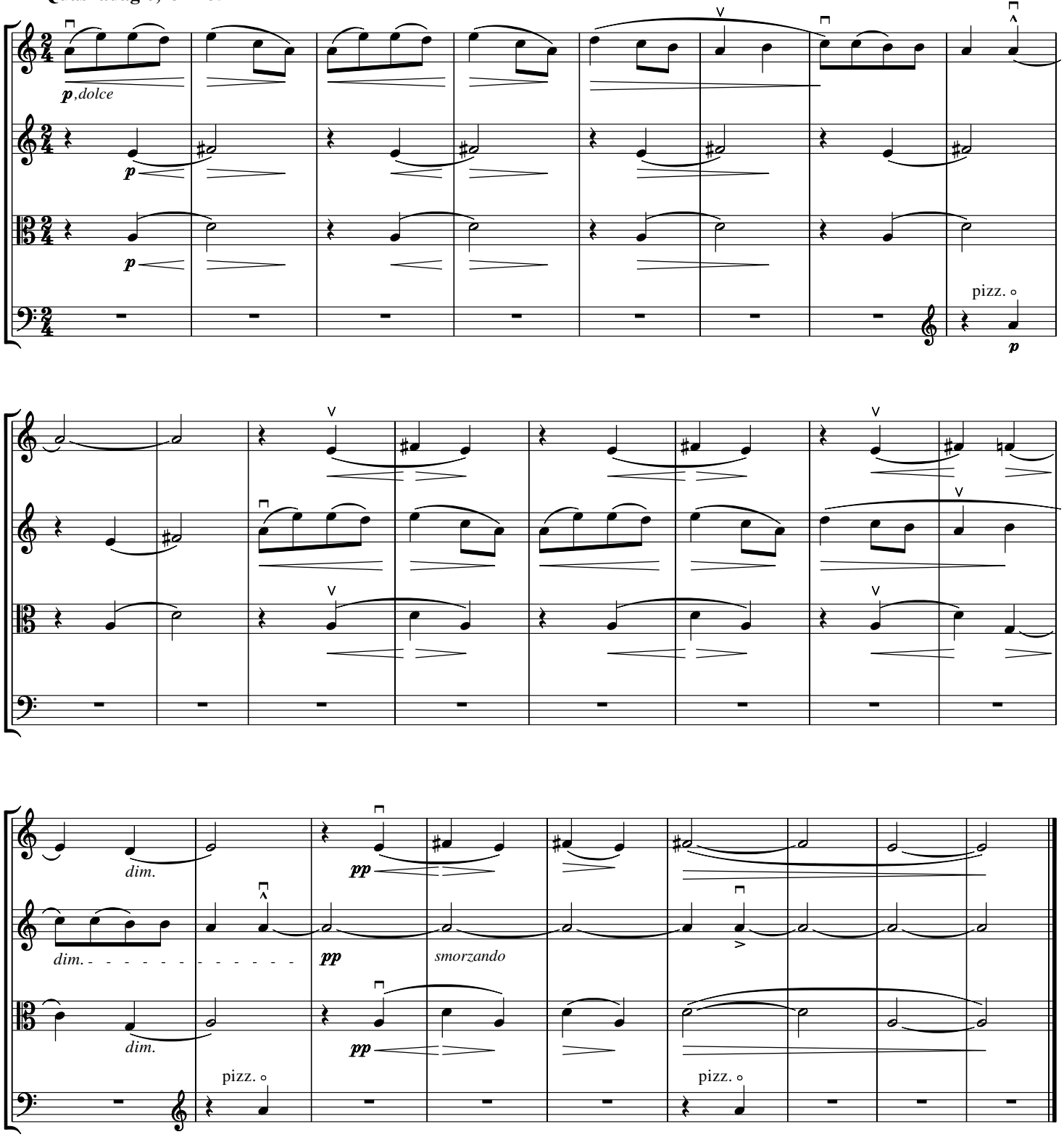
Andante, ♩ = 74



3. Lament

Folksong

Quasi adagio, ♩ = 65



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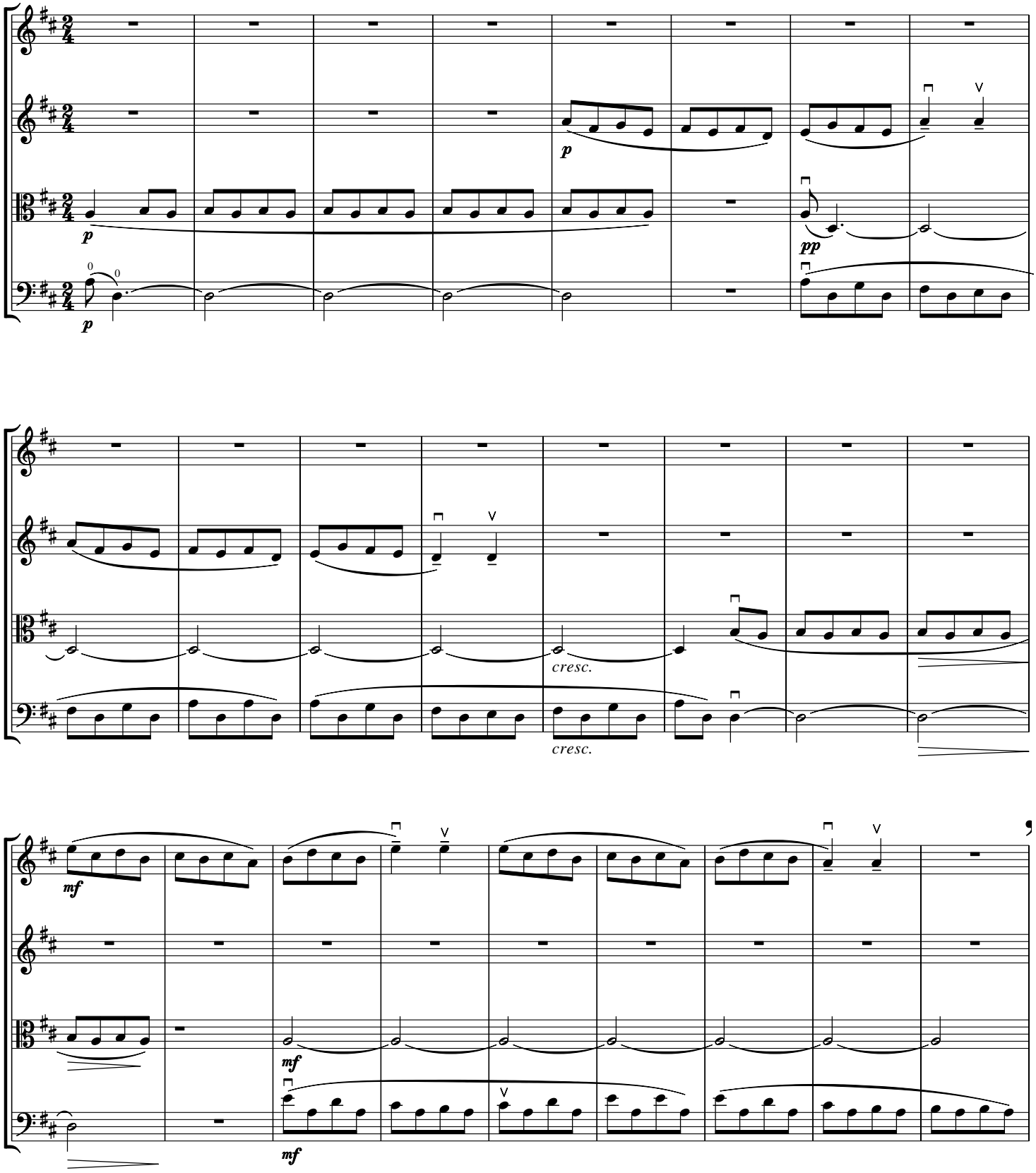
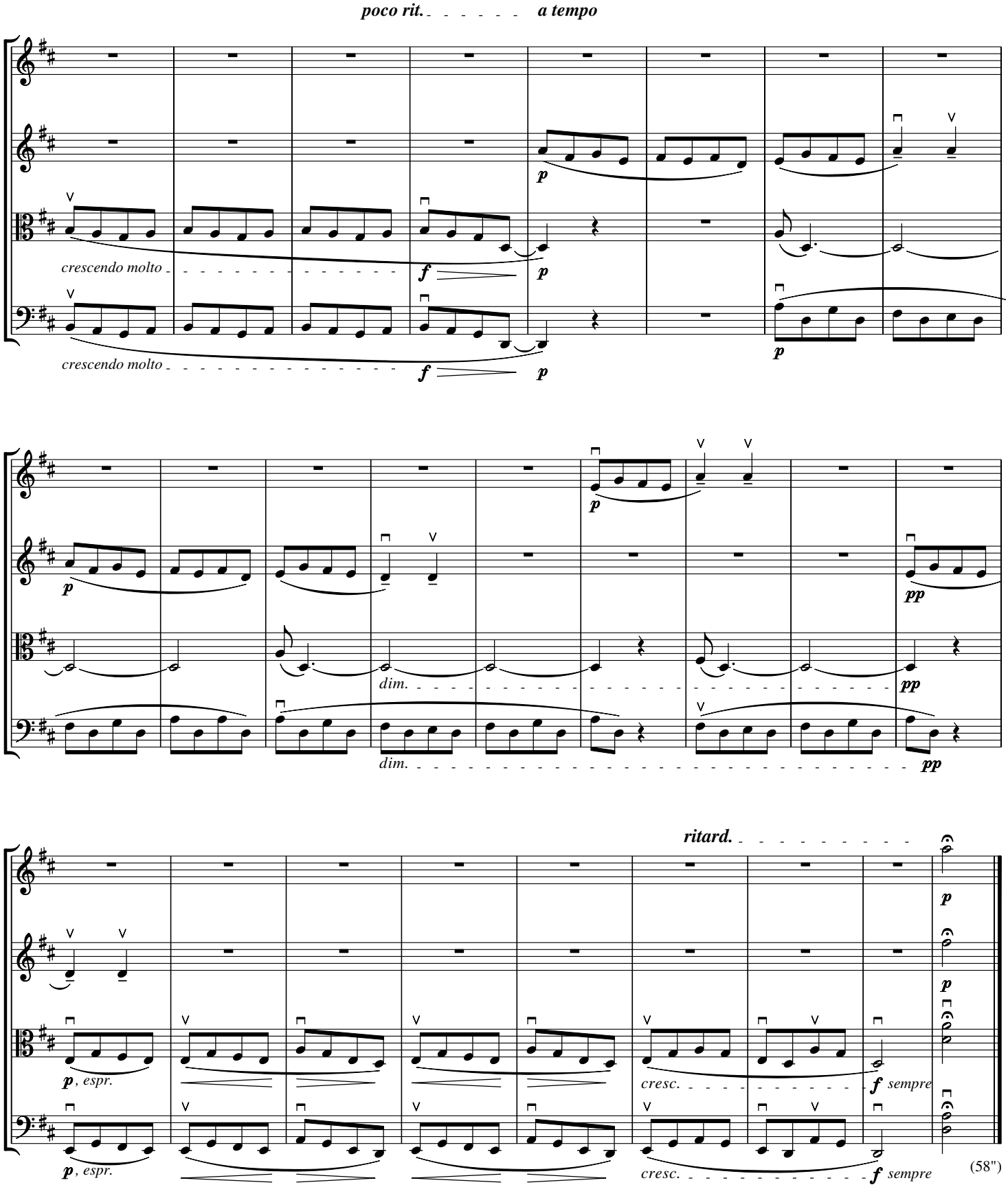
4. Pillow Dance

Handkerchief Dance

Allegro, ♩ = 120

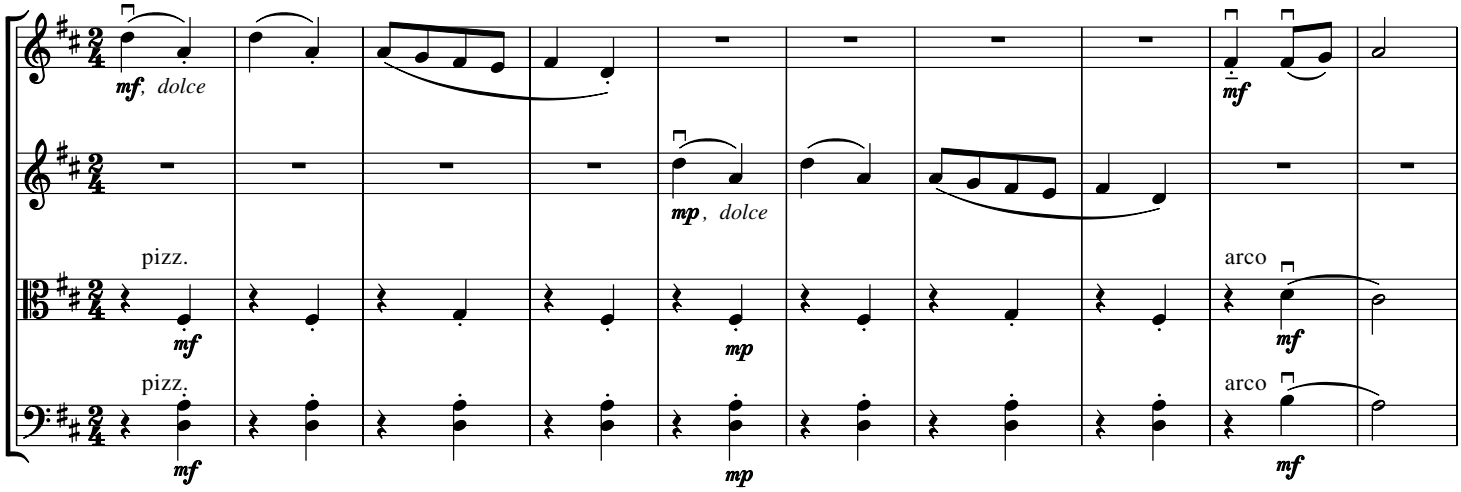


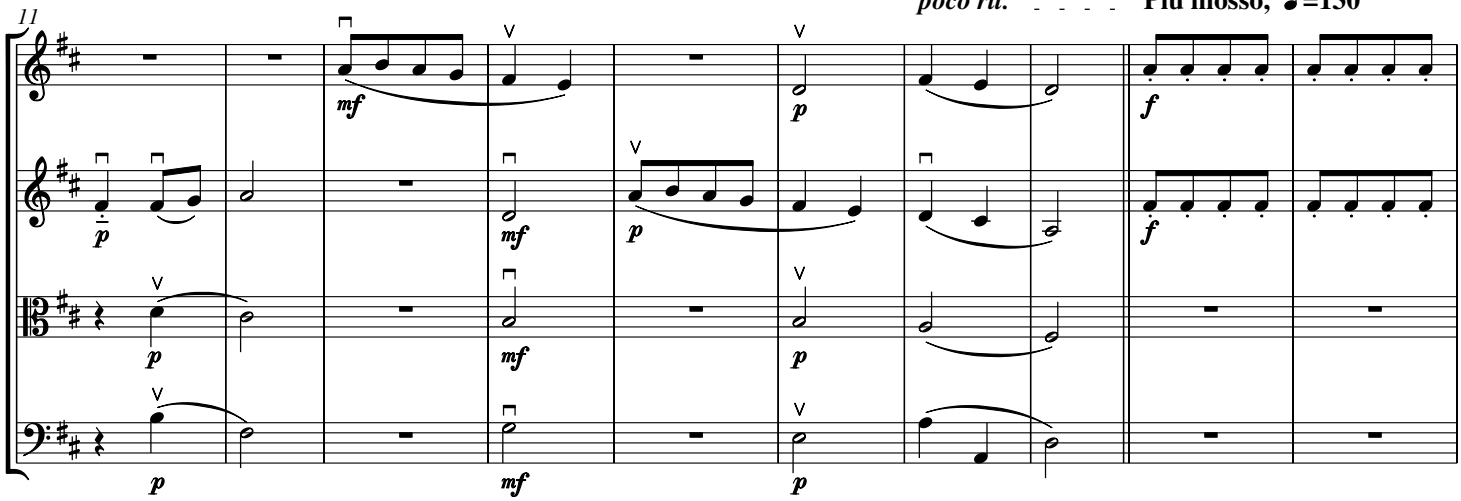

poco rit.
a tempo
crescendo molto
crescendo molto
dim.
dim.
ritard.
p, espr.
p, espr.
cresc.
cresc.
f sempre
f sempre
(58")

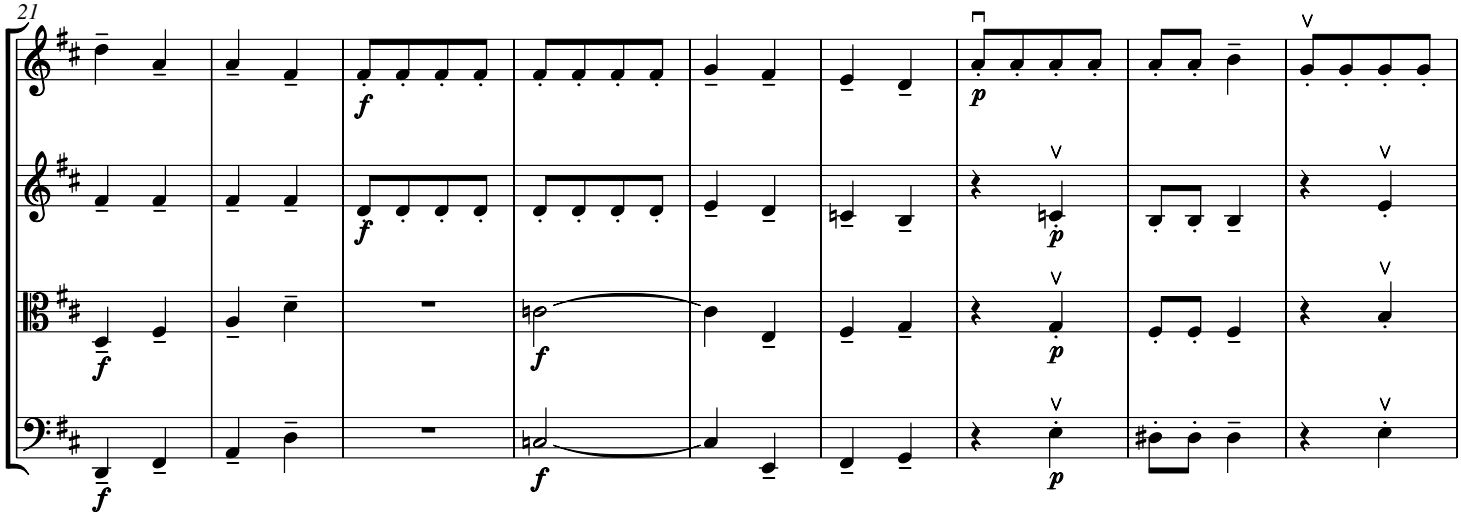
5. Playsong

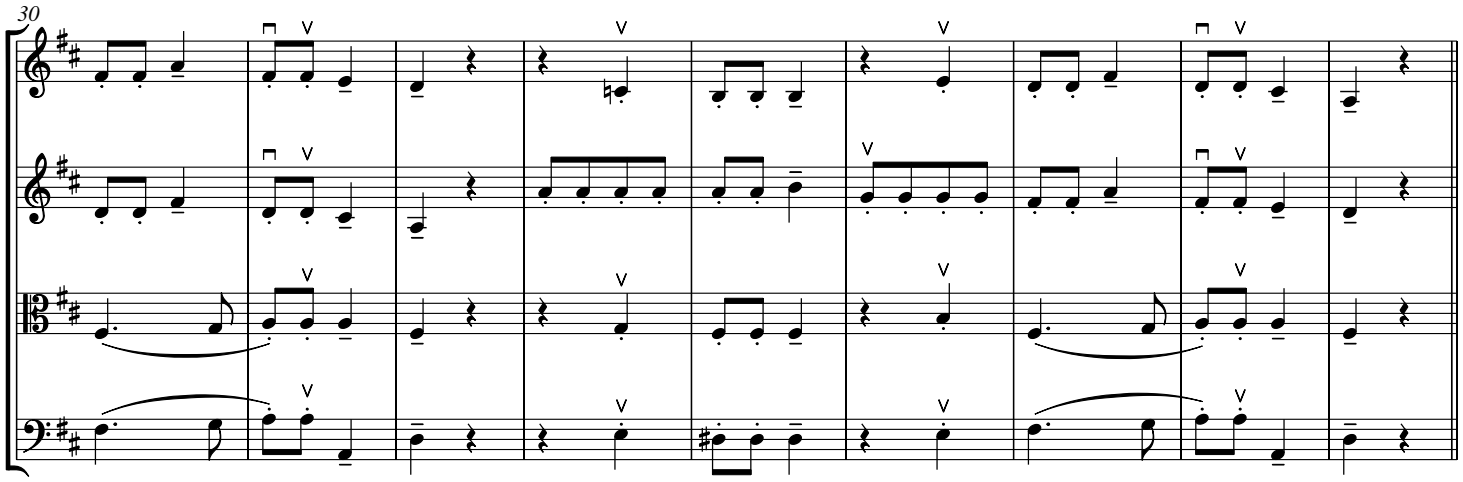
Kitty, Kitty, you've got a pretty daughter

Allegretto, ♩ = 106

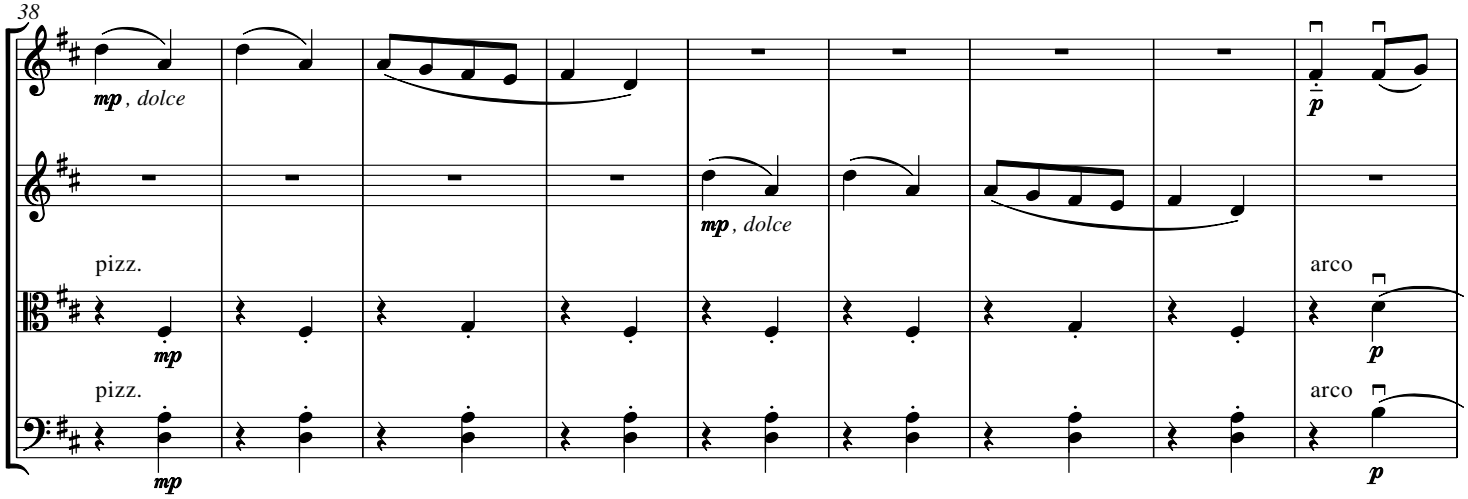


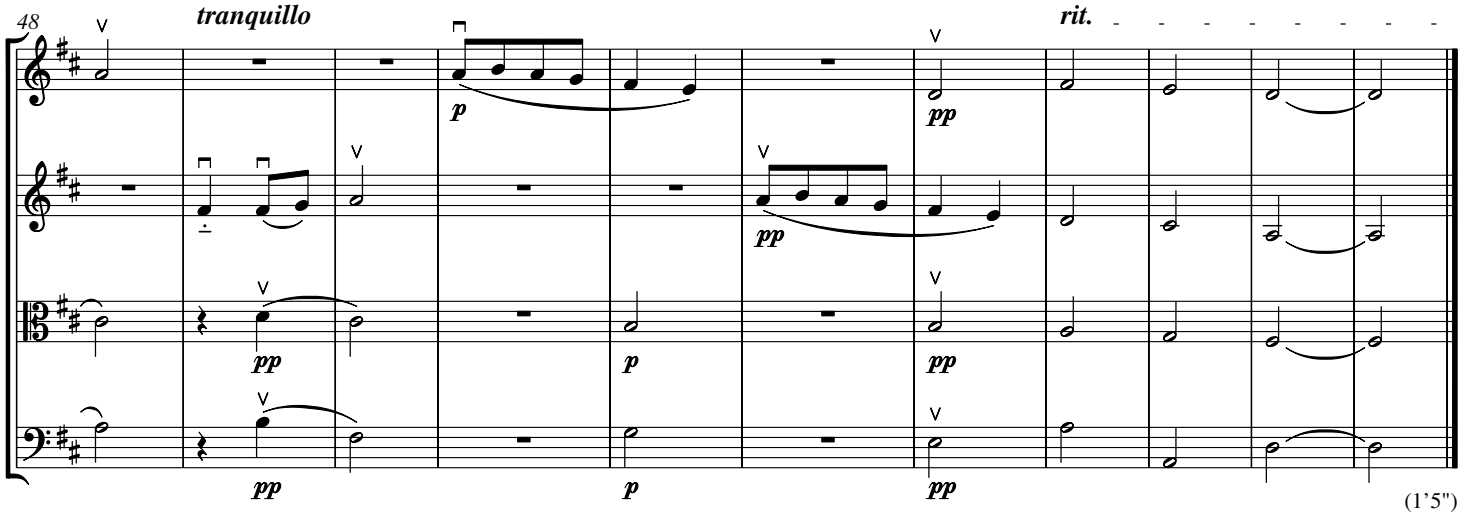





30

Tempo I.


38
mp, dolce
mp, dolce
p
pizz.
mp
arco
p
pizz.
mp
arco
p

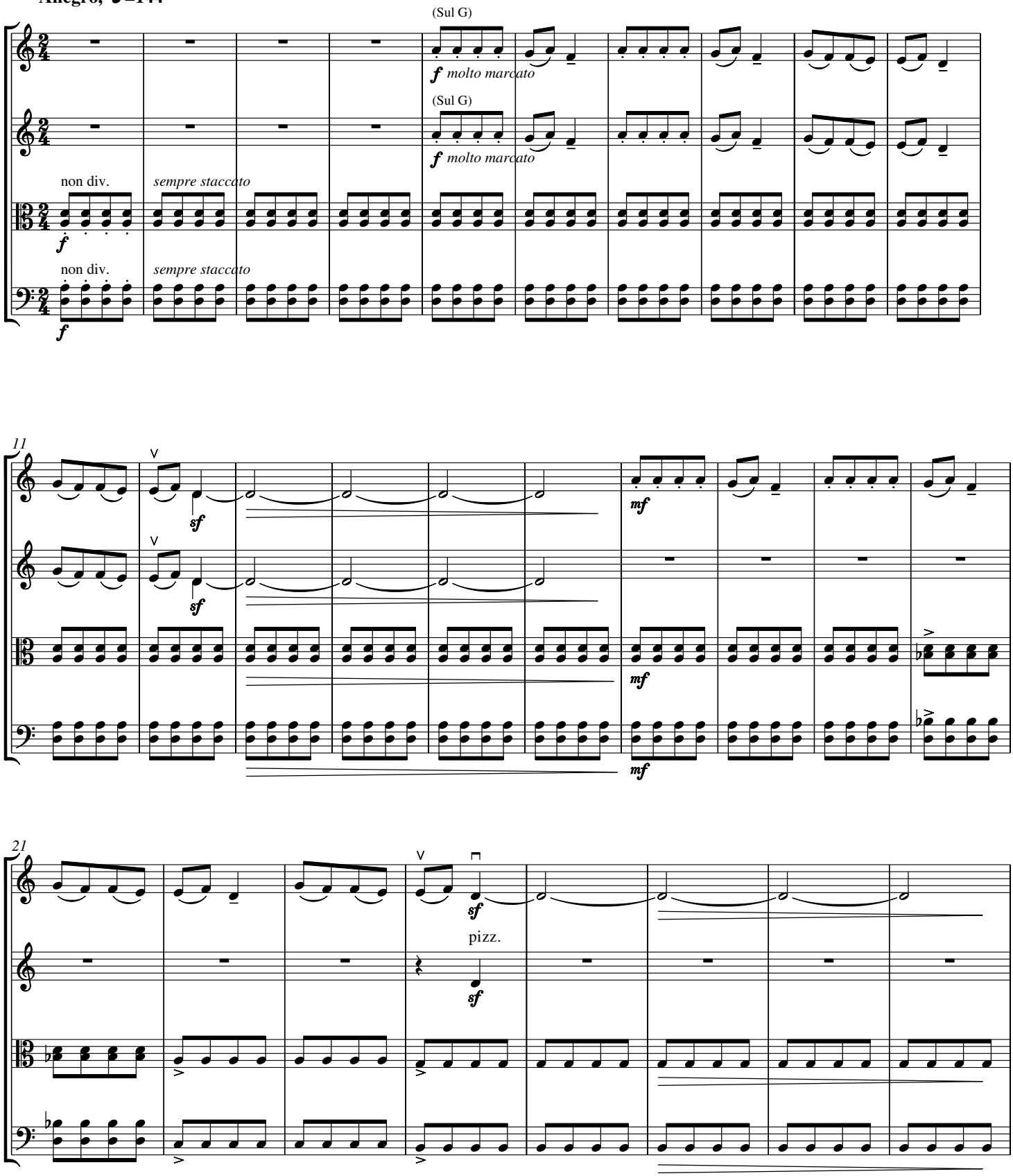

48
tranquillo
rit.
p
pp
pp
pp
p
pp
p
pp

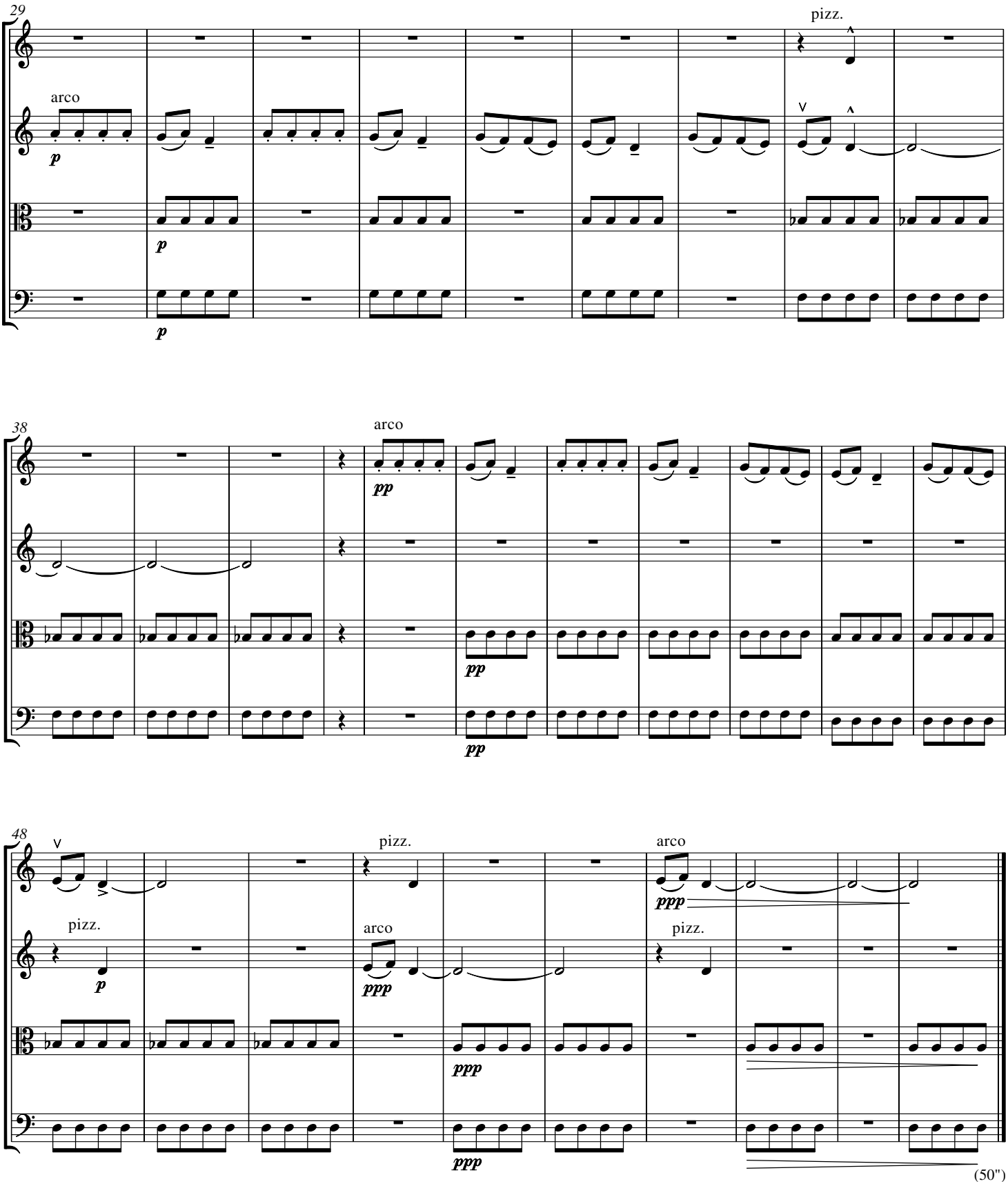
(1'5")

6. Folk Dance

Tralalala Tulipan

Allegro, ♩=144

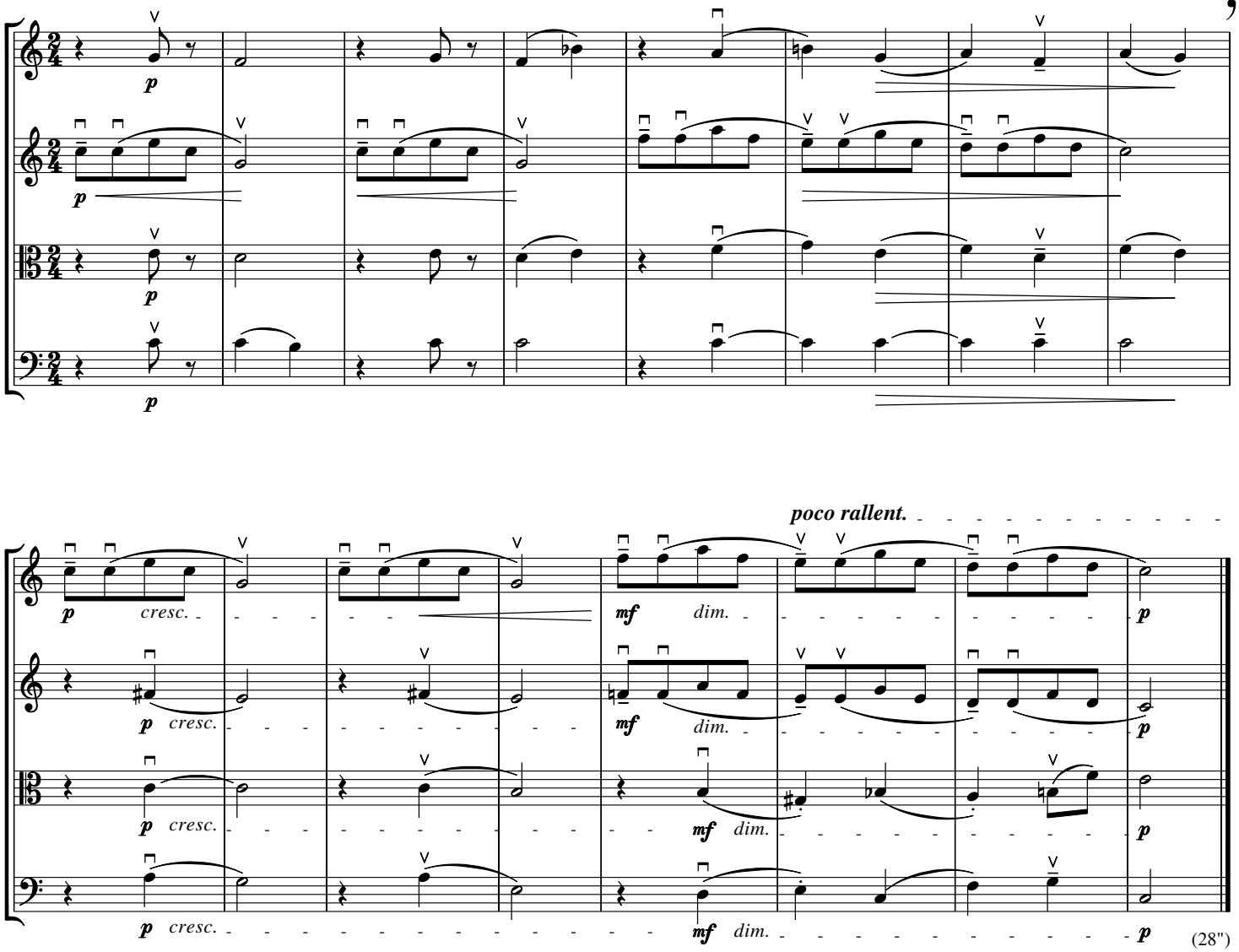



29
arco
p
p
p
pizz.
38
arco
pp
pp
pp
48
pizz.
p
arco
ppp
pizz.
ppp
ppp
arco
ppp
pizz.
(50")

7. Play Song

Sewing Song

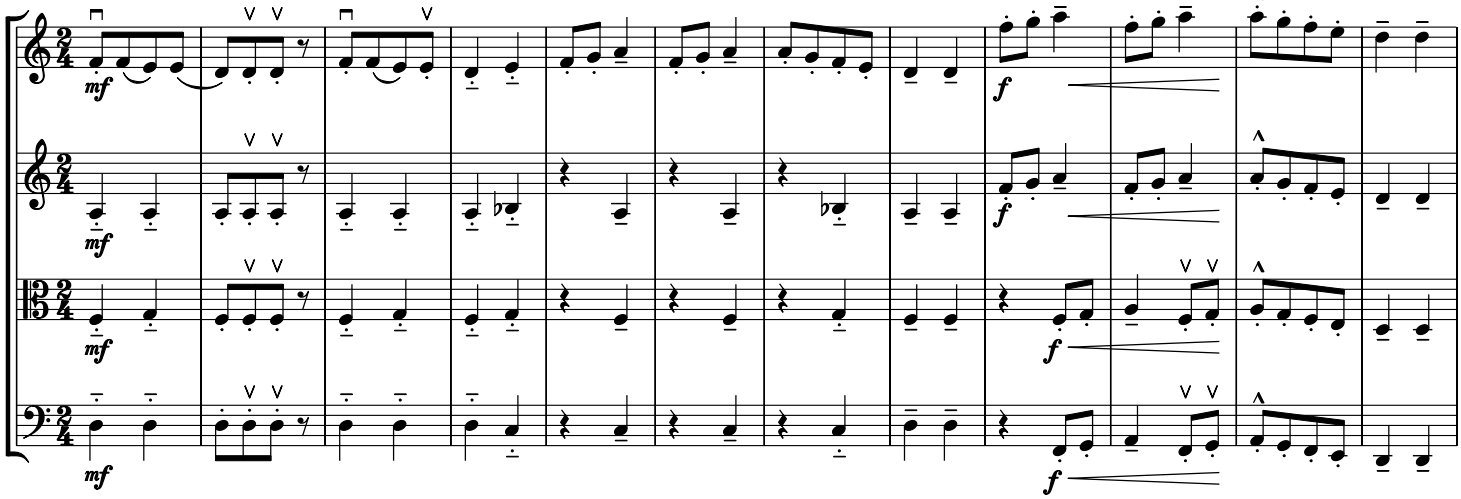
Andante grazioso, ♩=74



8. Game of Forfeits

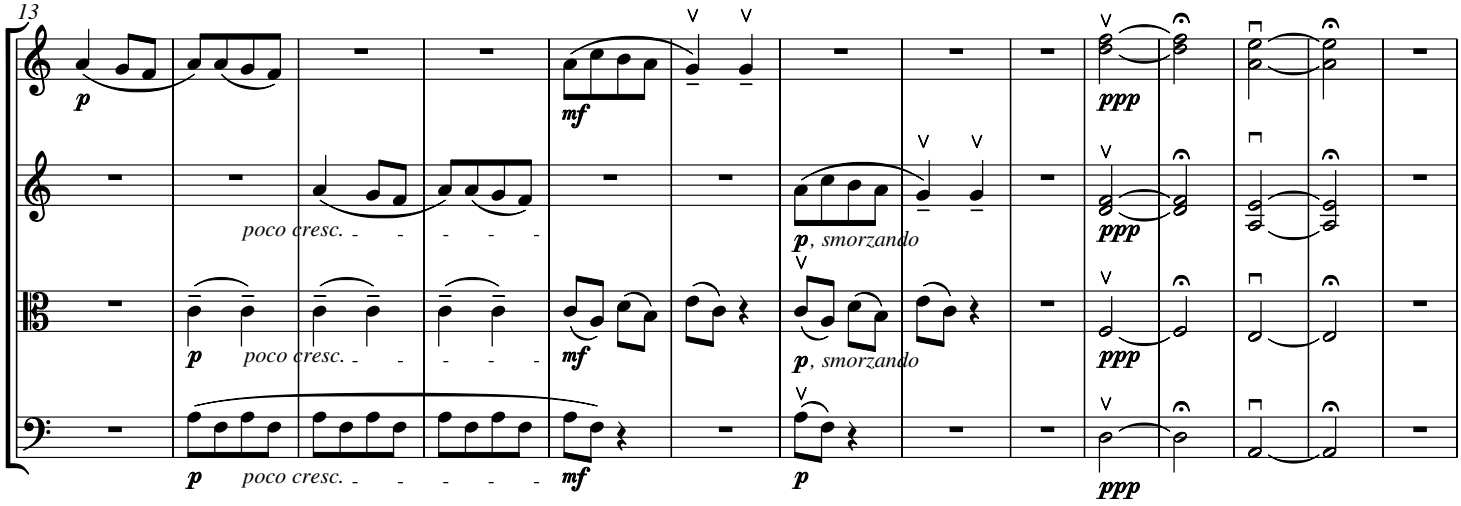
Enchanted Dance

Allegretto, ♩ = 120



13

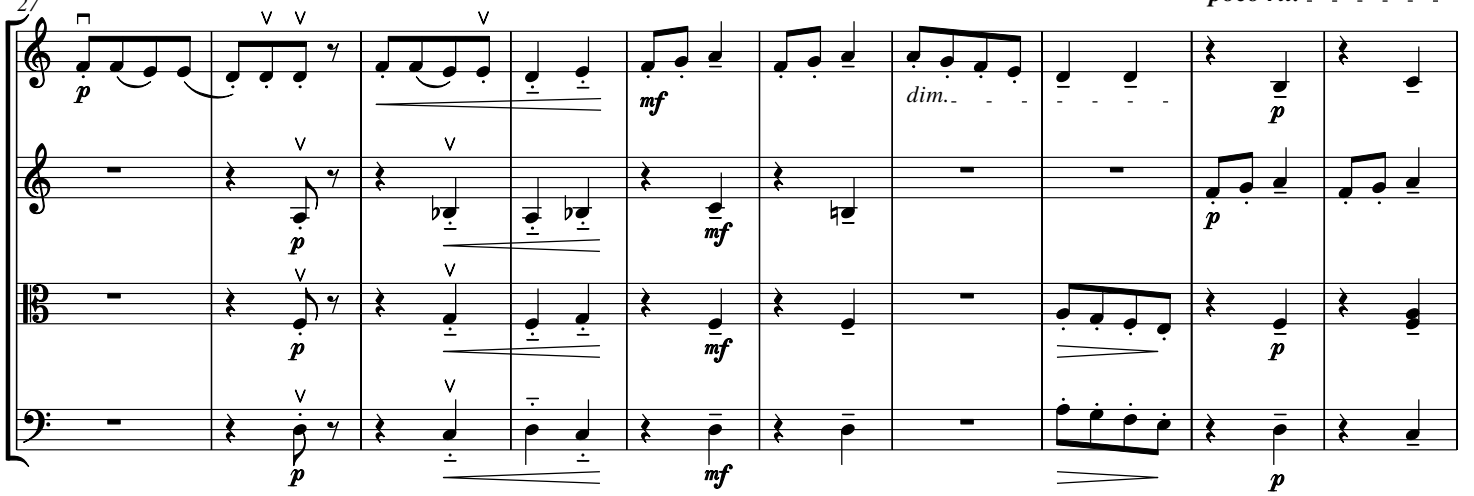
Adagio

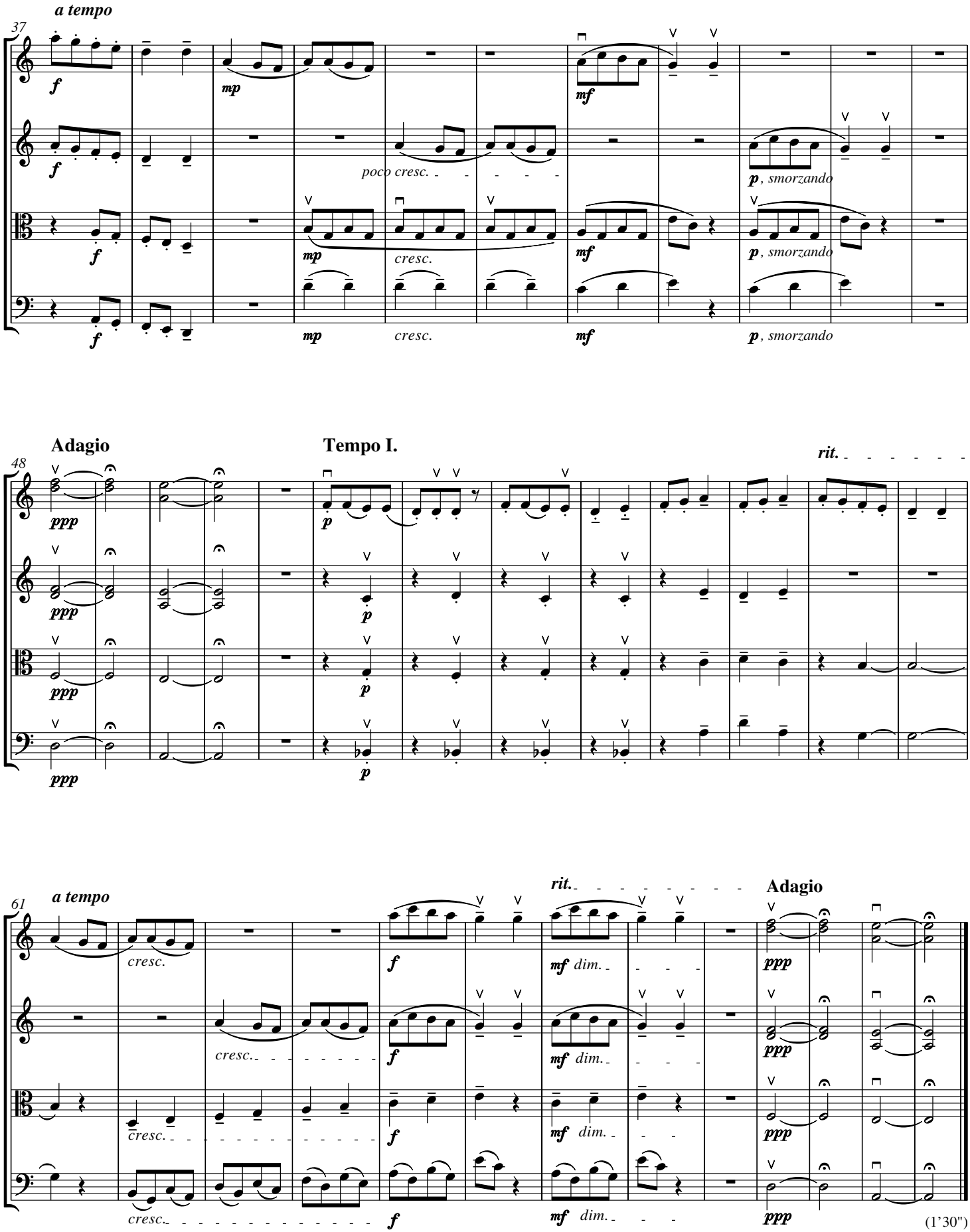


Tempo I.

27

poco rit.



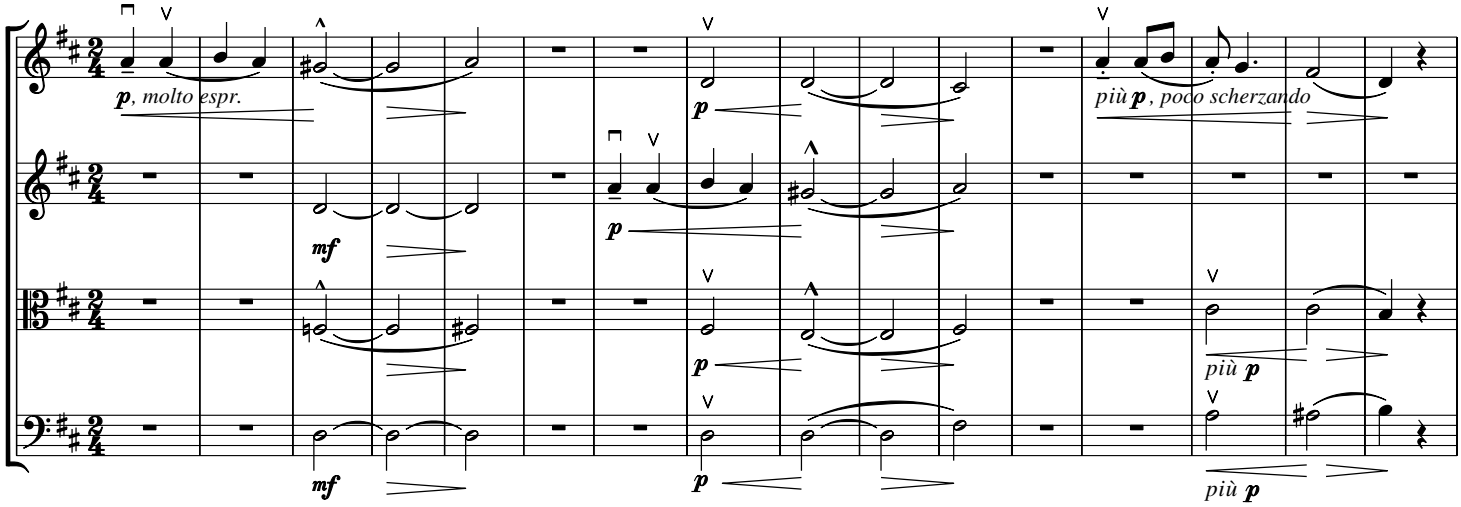

a tempo
37
f
mp
mf
poco cresc.
p, smorzando
cresc.
Adagio
Tempo I.
rit.
48
ppp
p
a tempo
61
cresc.
dim.
(1'30")

9. Song

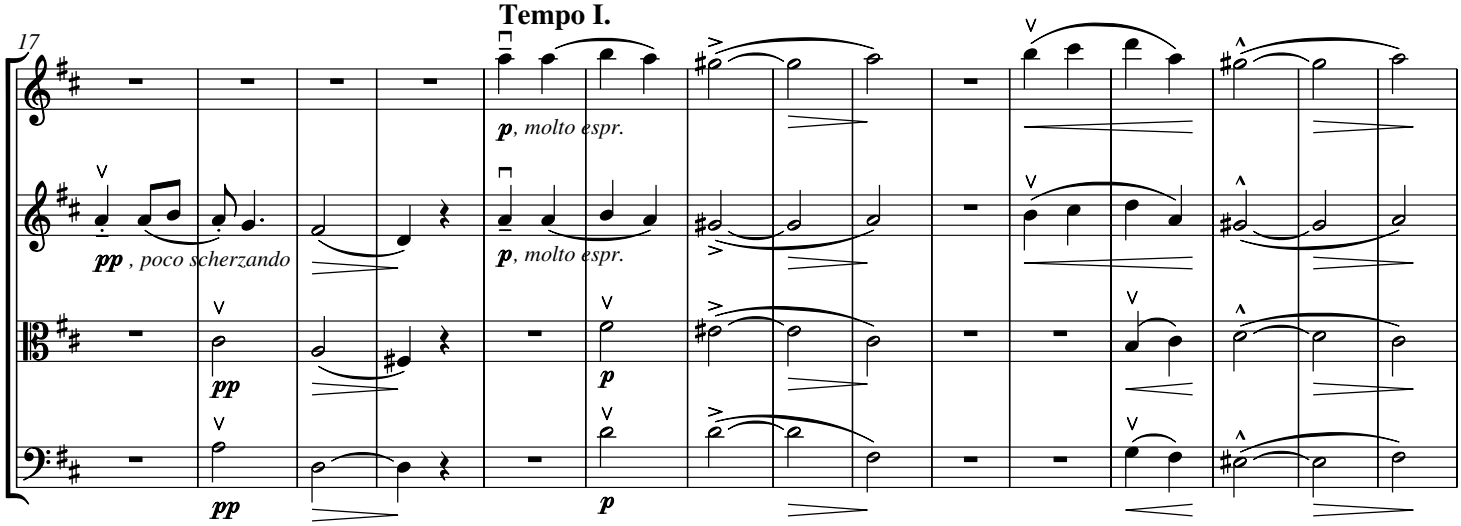
White Lilies

Adagio, ♩ = 84

Poco più vivo, ♩=112

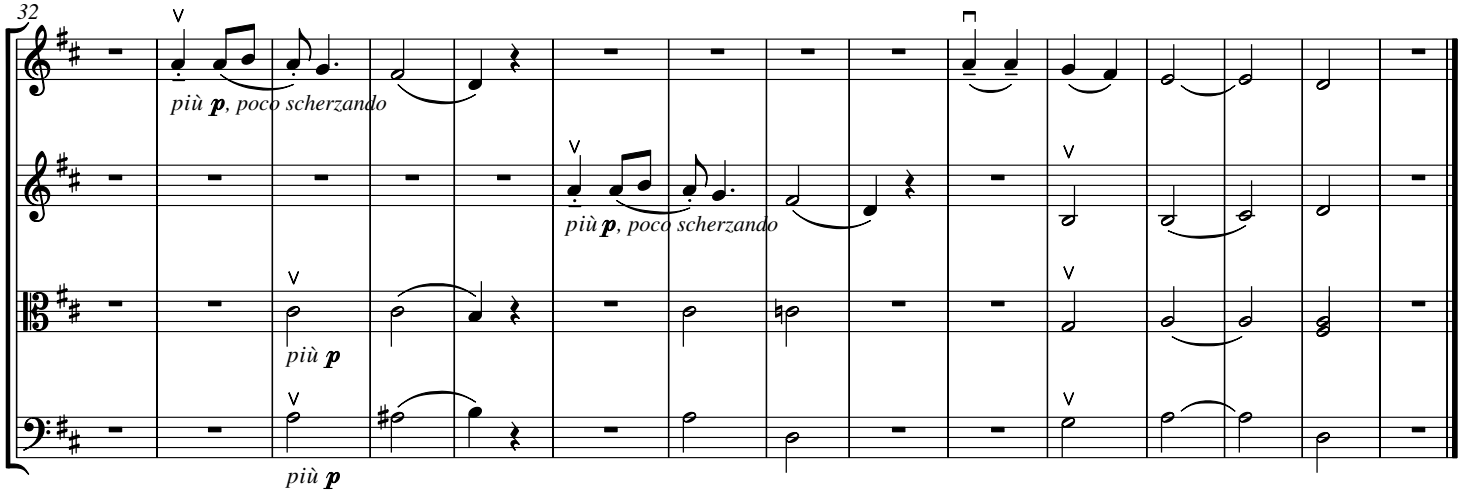


Tempo I.



Poco più vivo

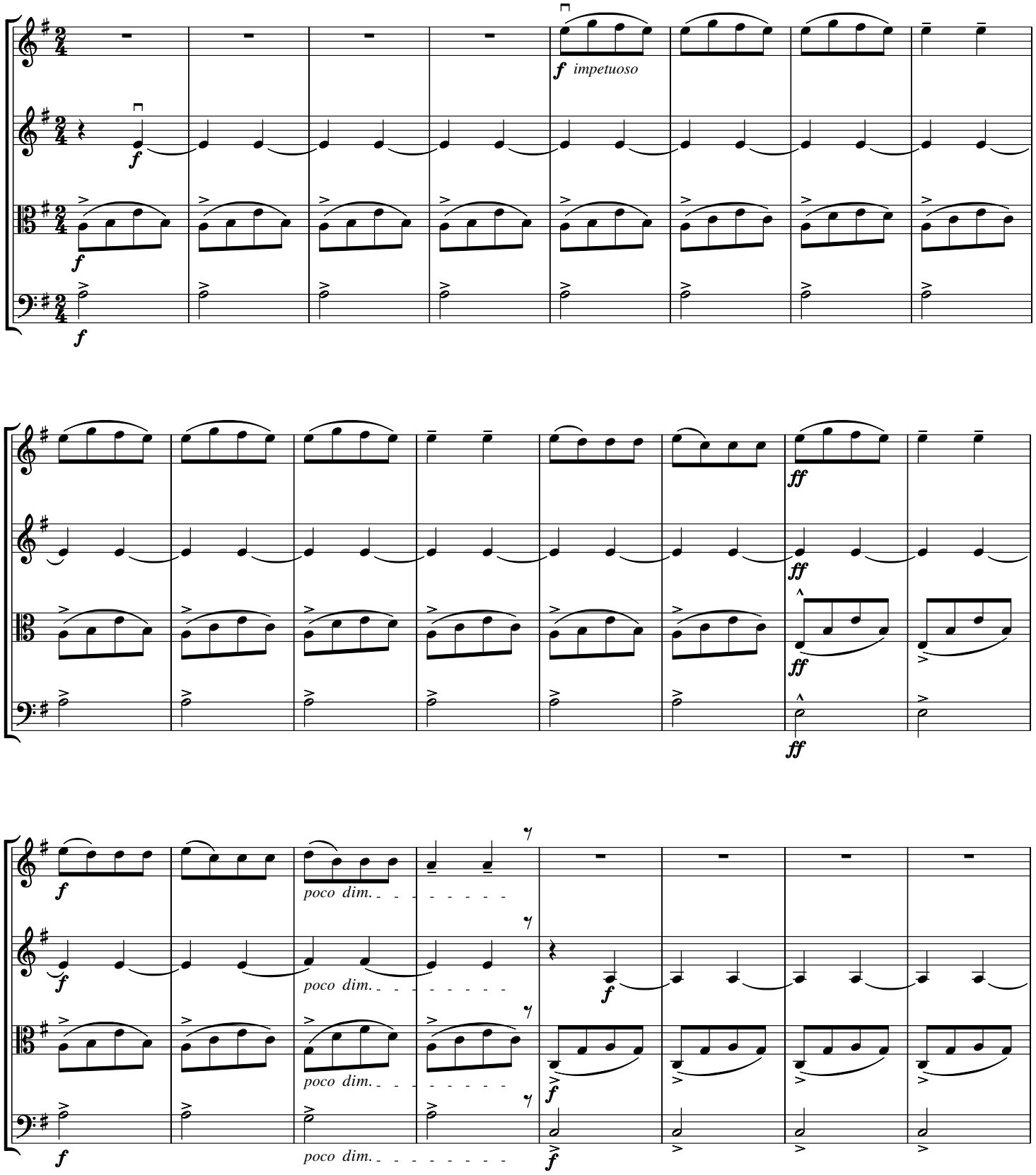
Tempo I.

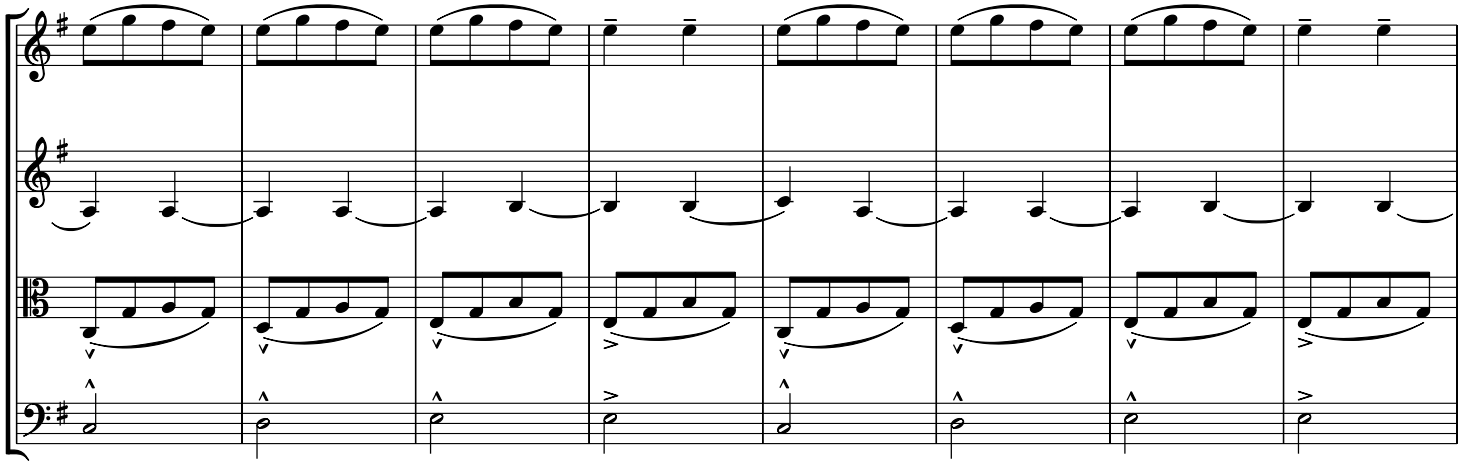


10. Clog Dance

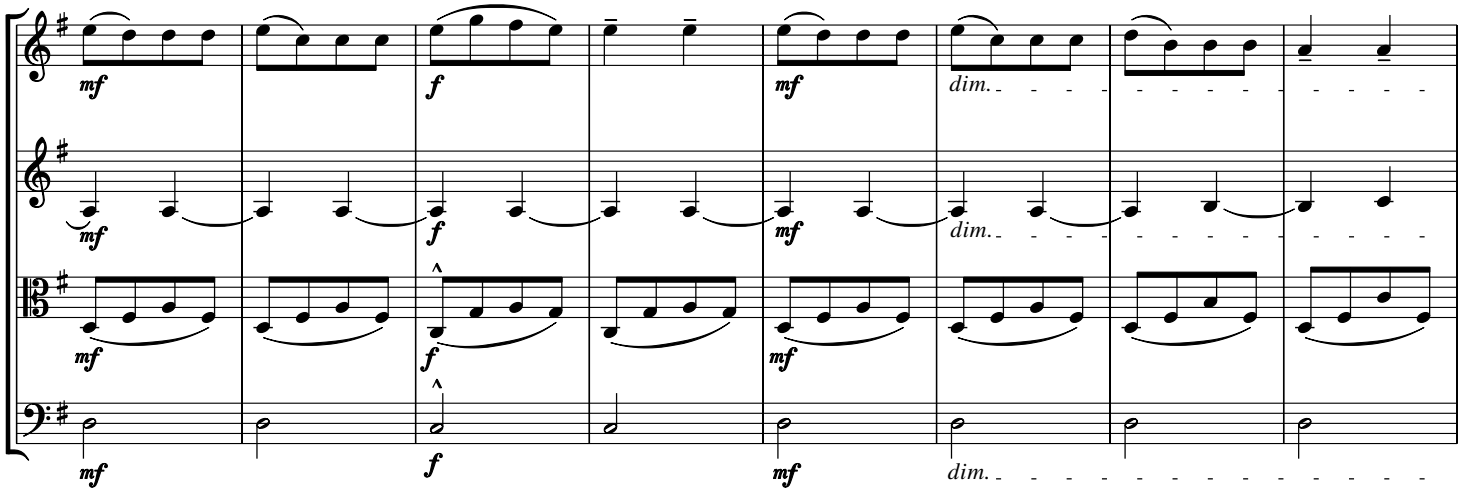
Rainy Weather

Allegro molto, ♩ = 160

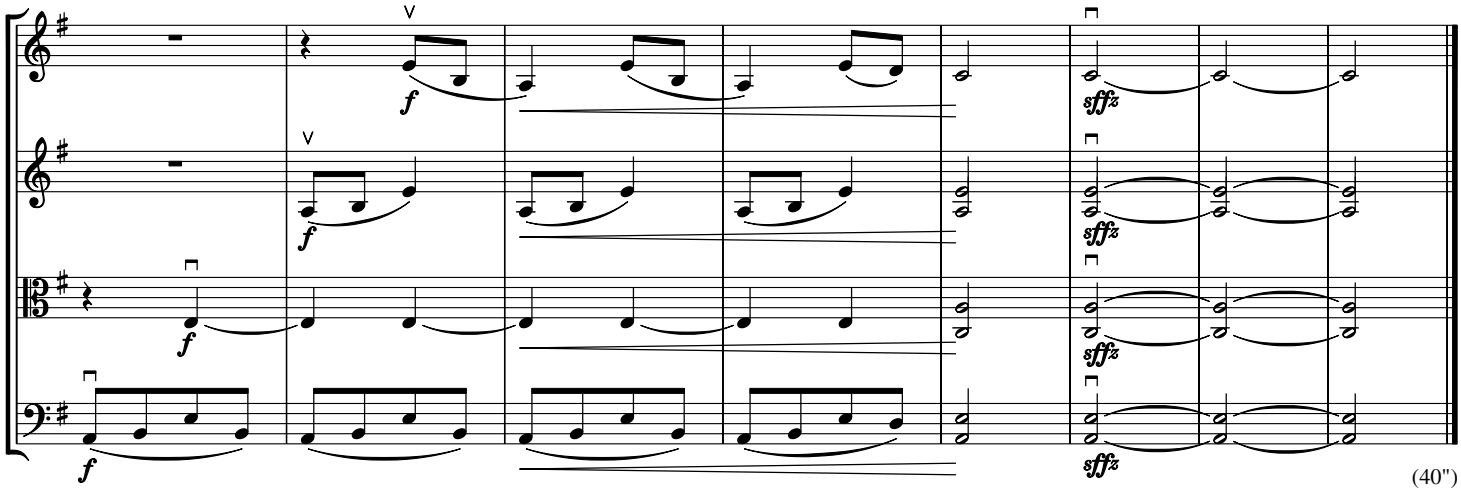




poco ritardando



a tempo

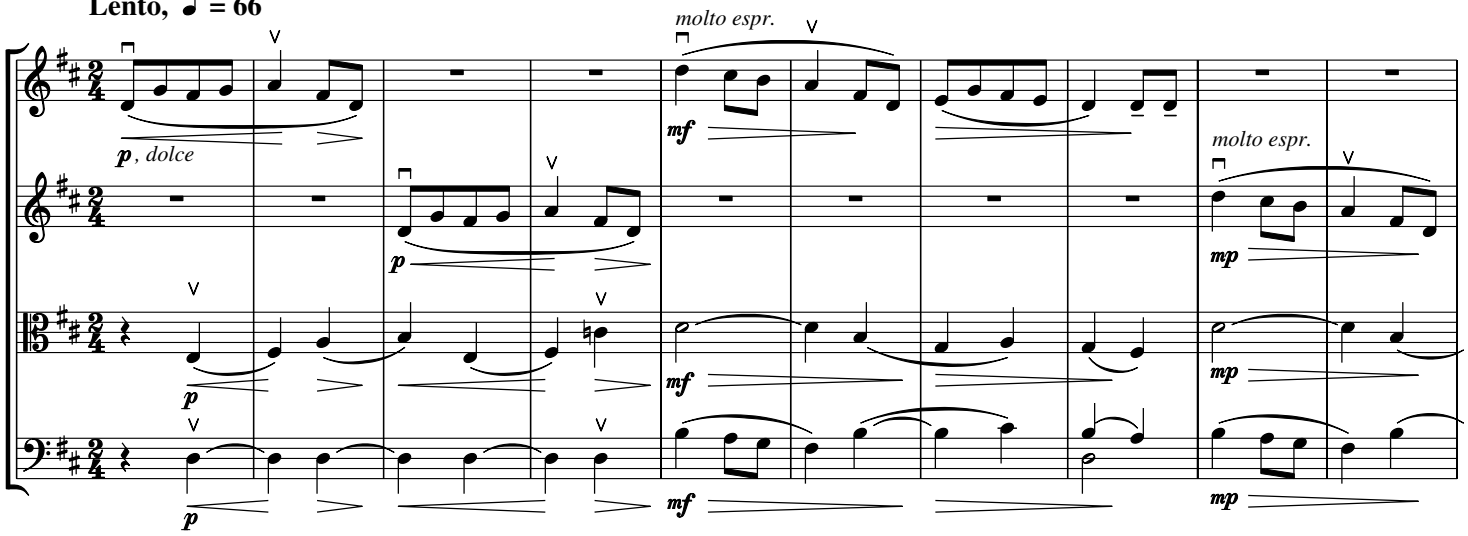


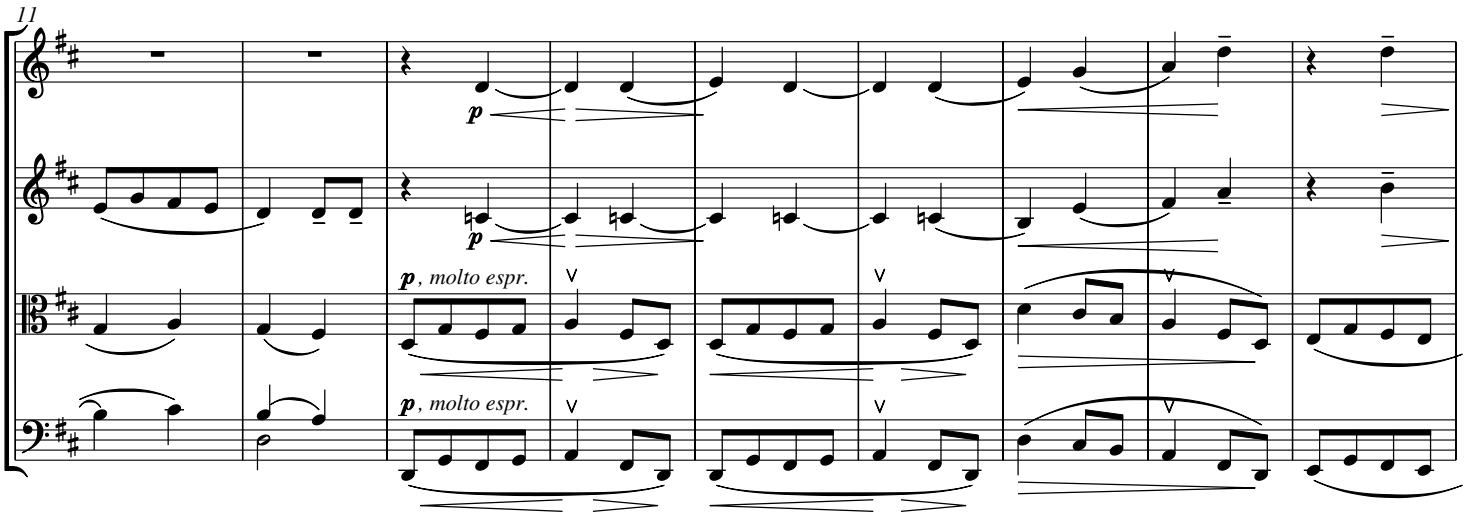
(40")

11. Twilight Tale

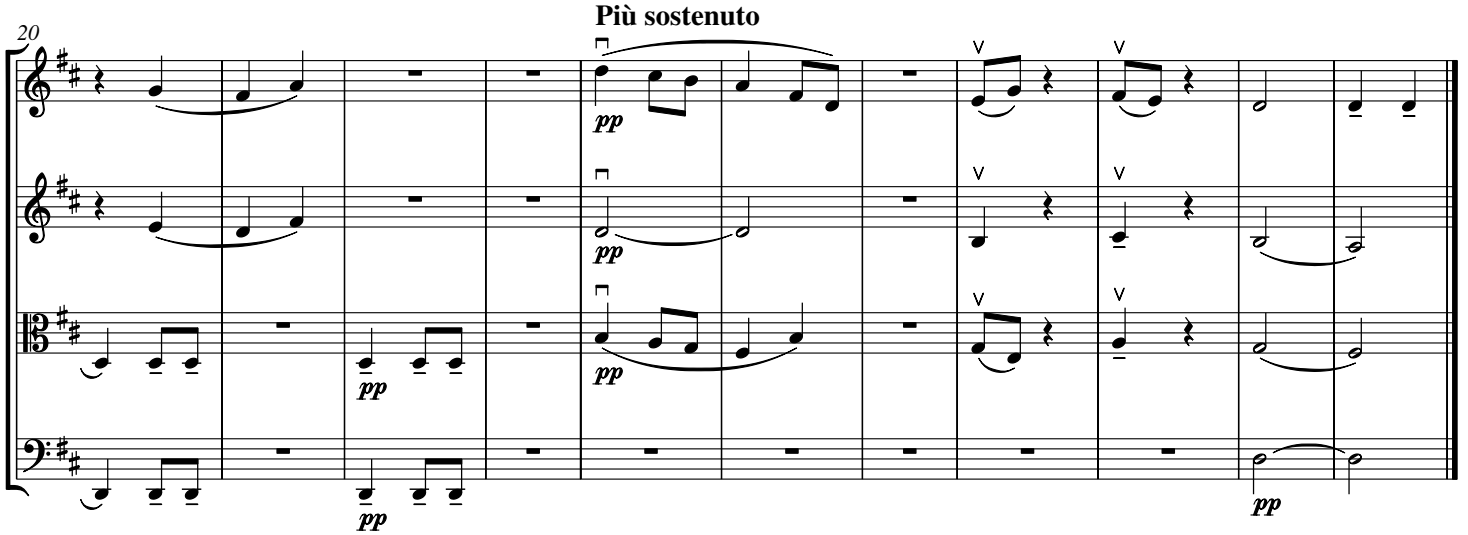
Where Have You Gone?

Lento, ♩ = 66





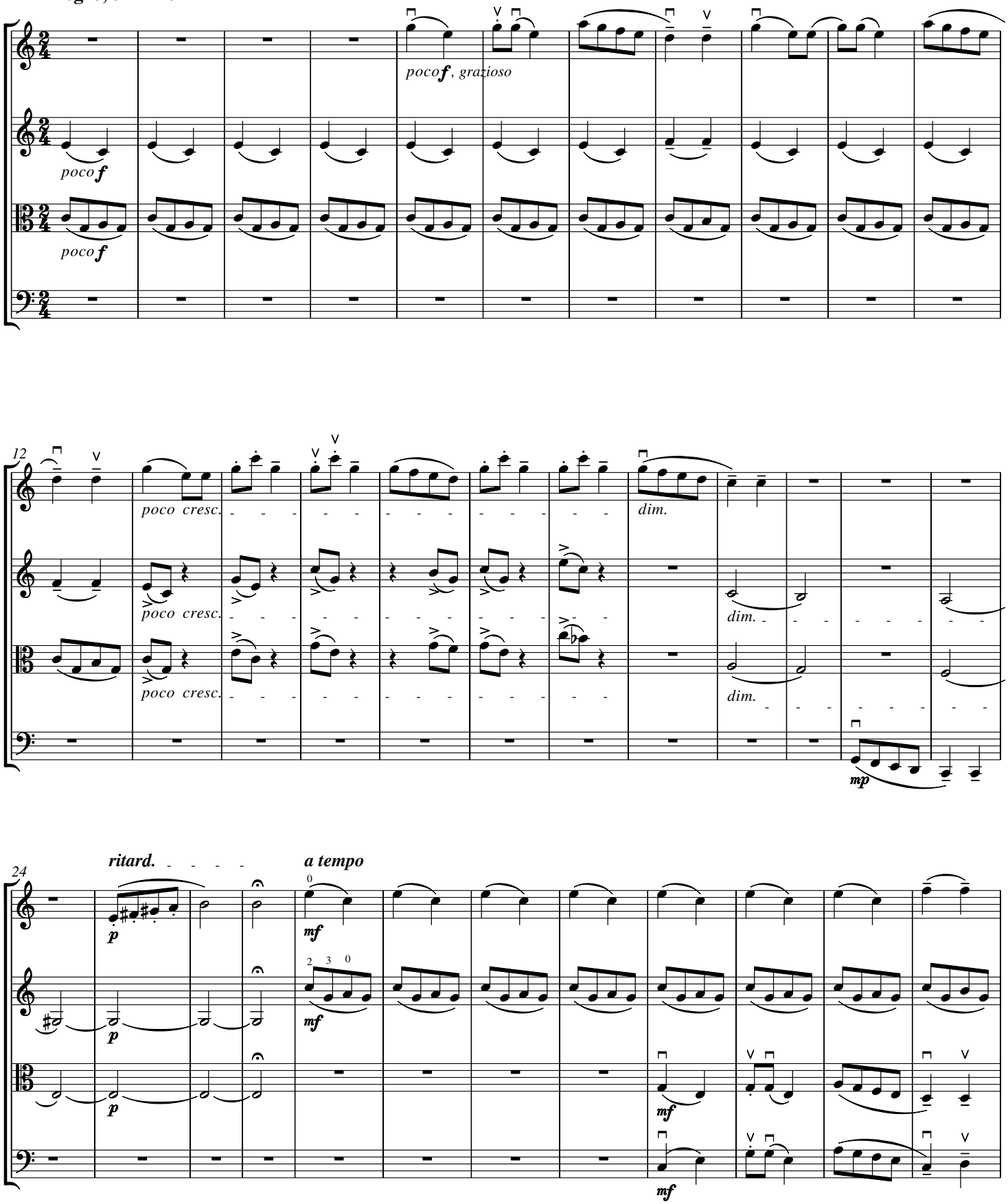
Più sostenuto

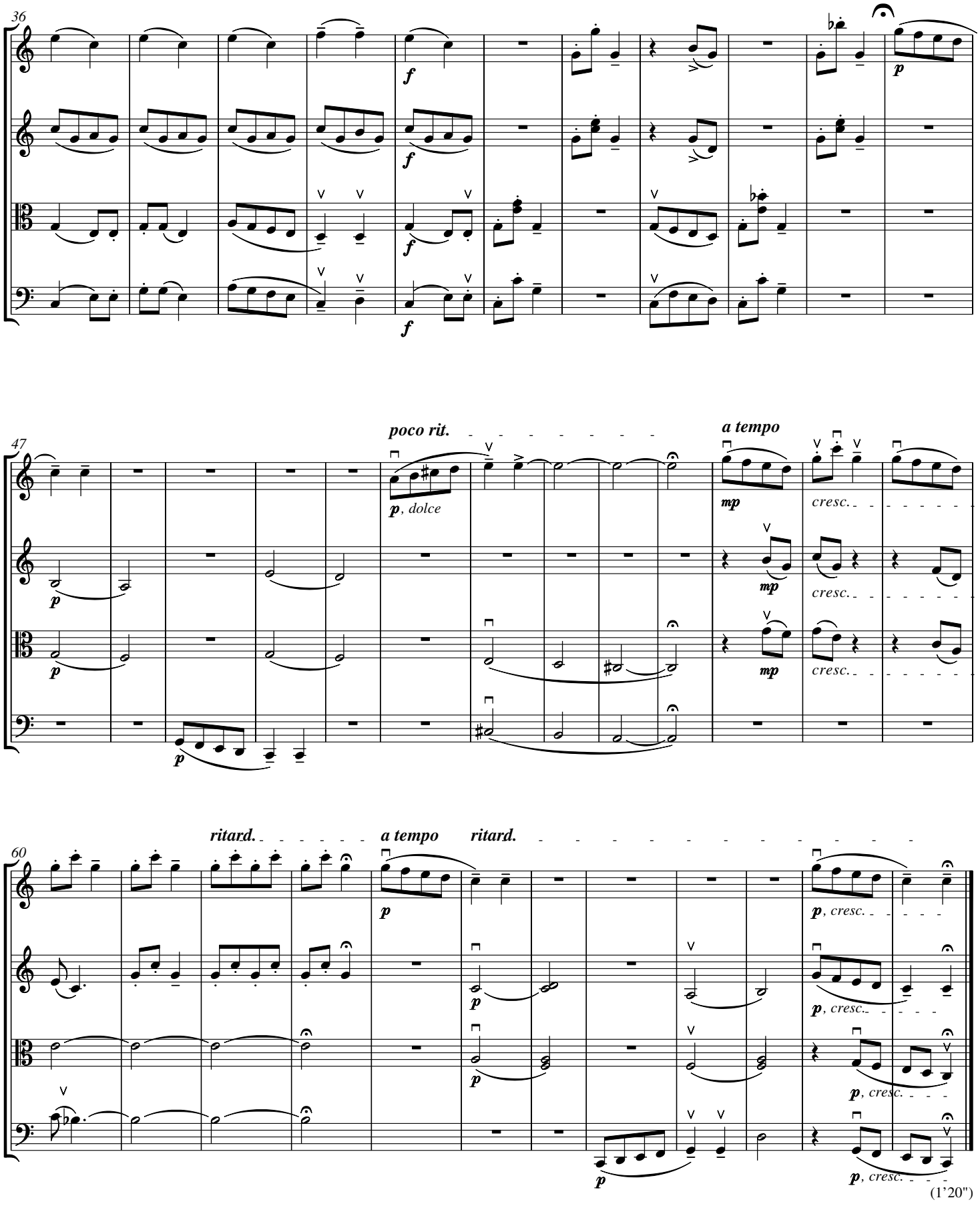


12. Playsong

Spinning Song

Allegro, ♩ = 126

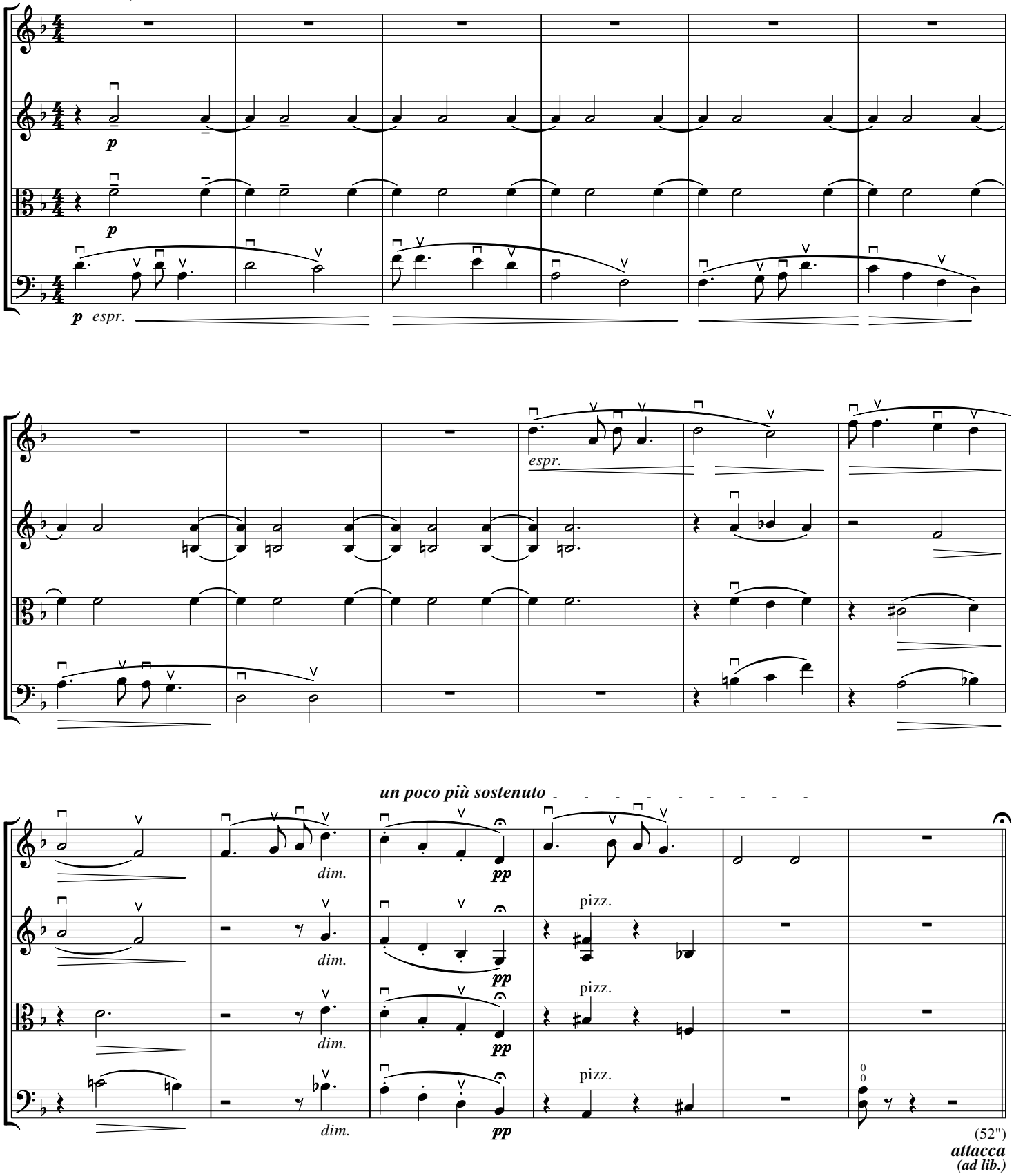



36
f
f
f
f
p
47
poco rit.
a tempo
p, dolce
mp
cresc.
p
mp
cresc.
p
mp
cresc.
p
60
ritard.
a tempo
ritard.
p
p
p, cresc.
p
p, cresc.
p
p, cresc.
p
p, cresc.
(1'20")

13. Ballad

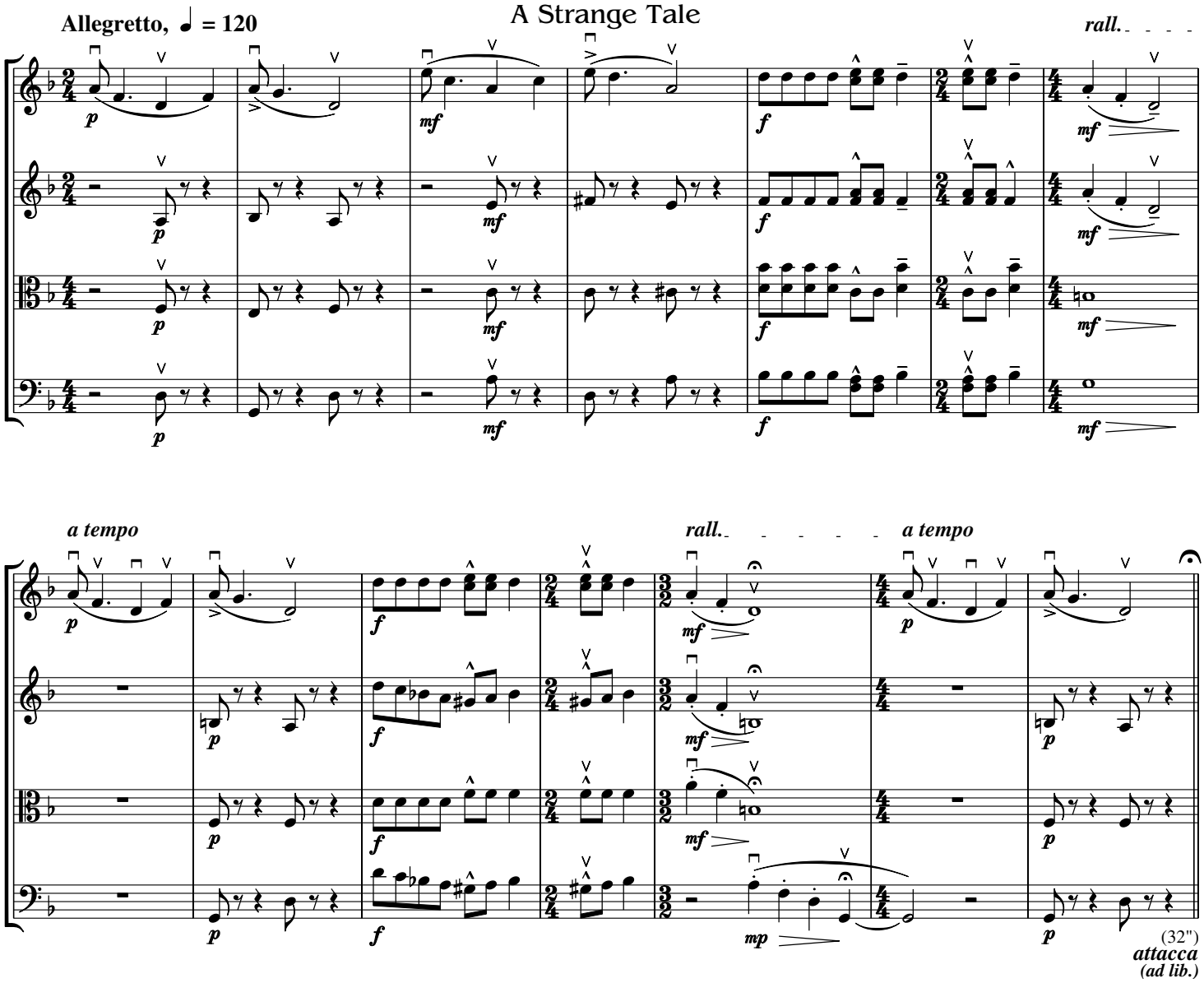
The Poor Lad

Andante, ♩ = 100



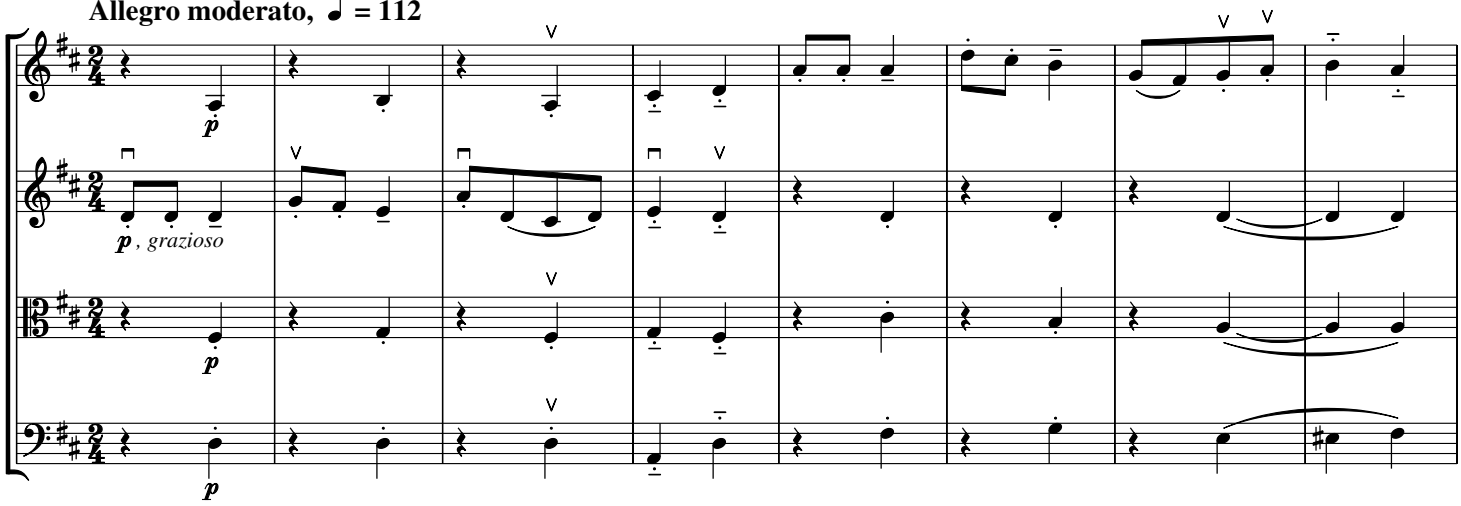
14.

A Strange Tale

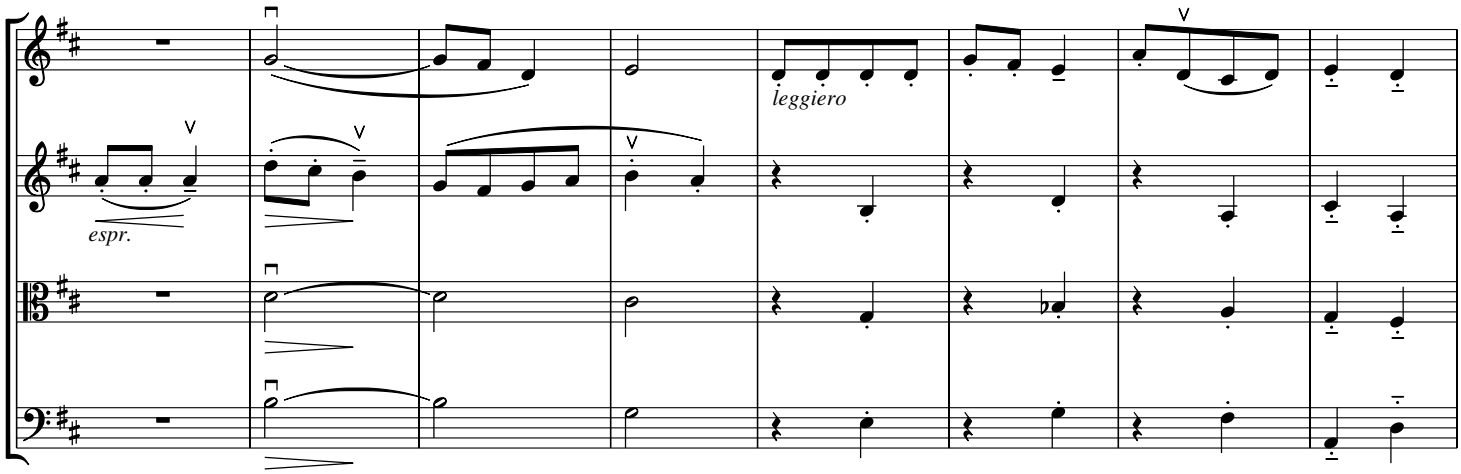


15
My Street

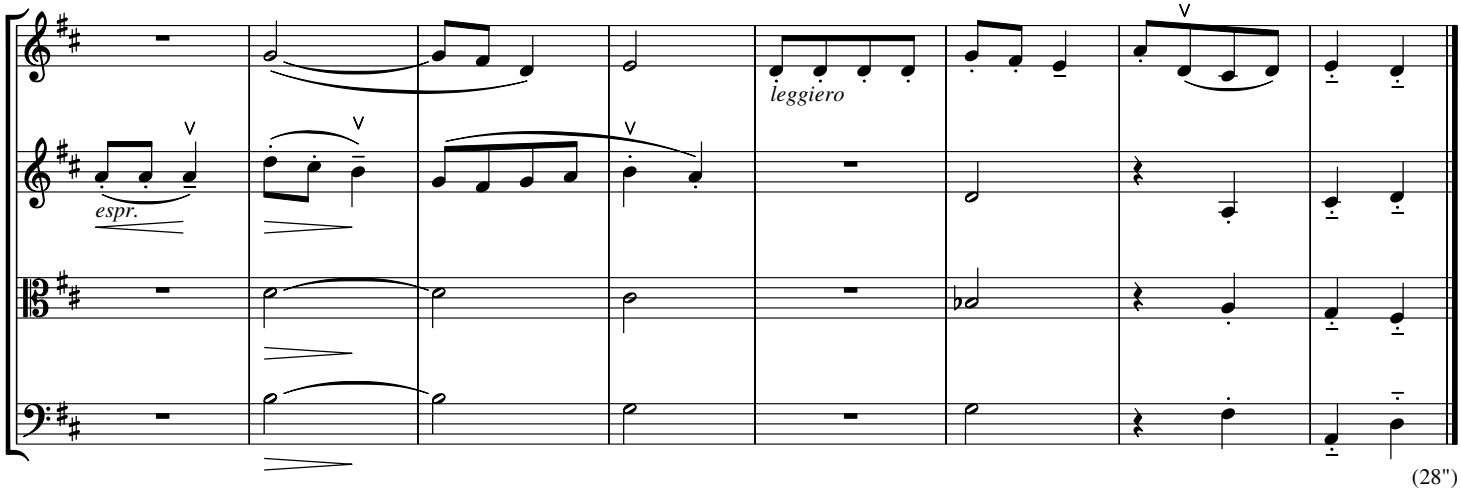
Allegro moderato, ♩ **= 112**



Sostenuto *ritard.* **Tempo I.**



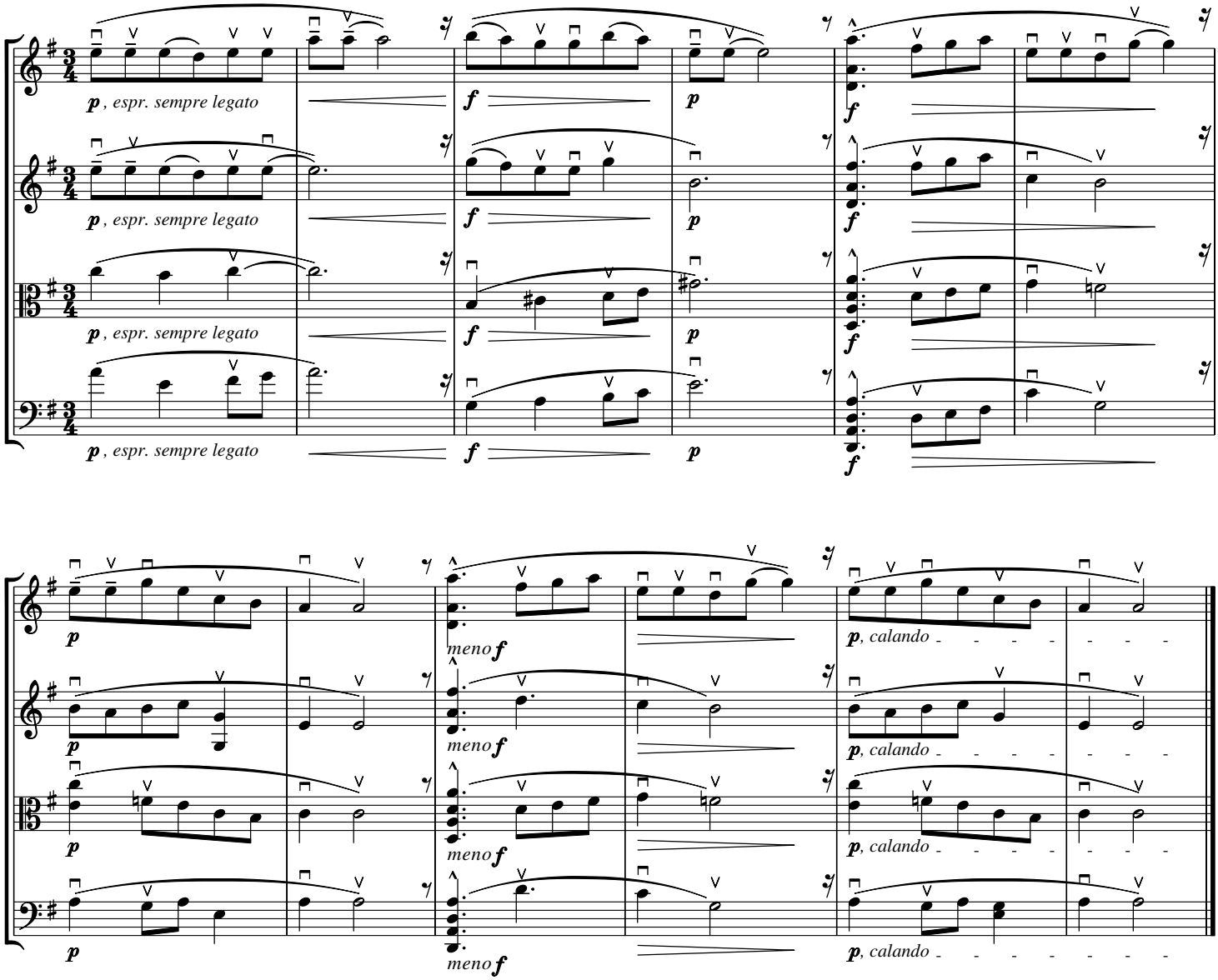
Sostenuto *ritard.* **Tempo I.**



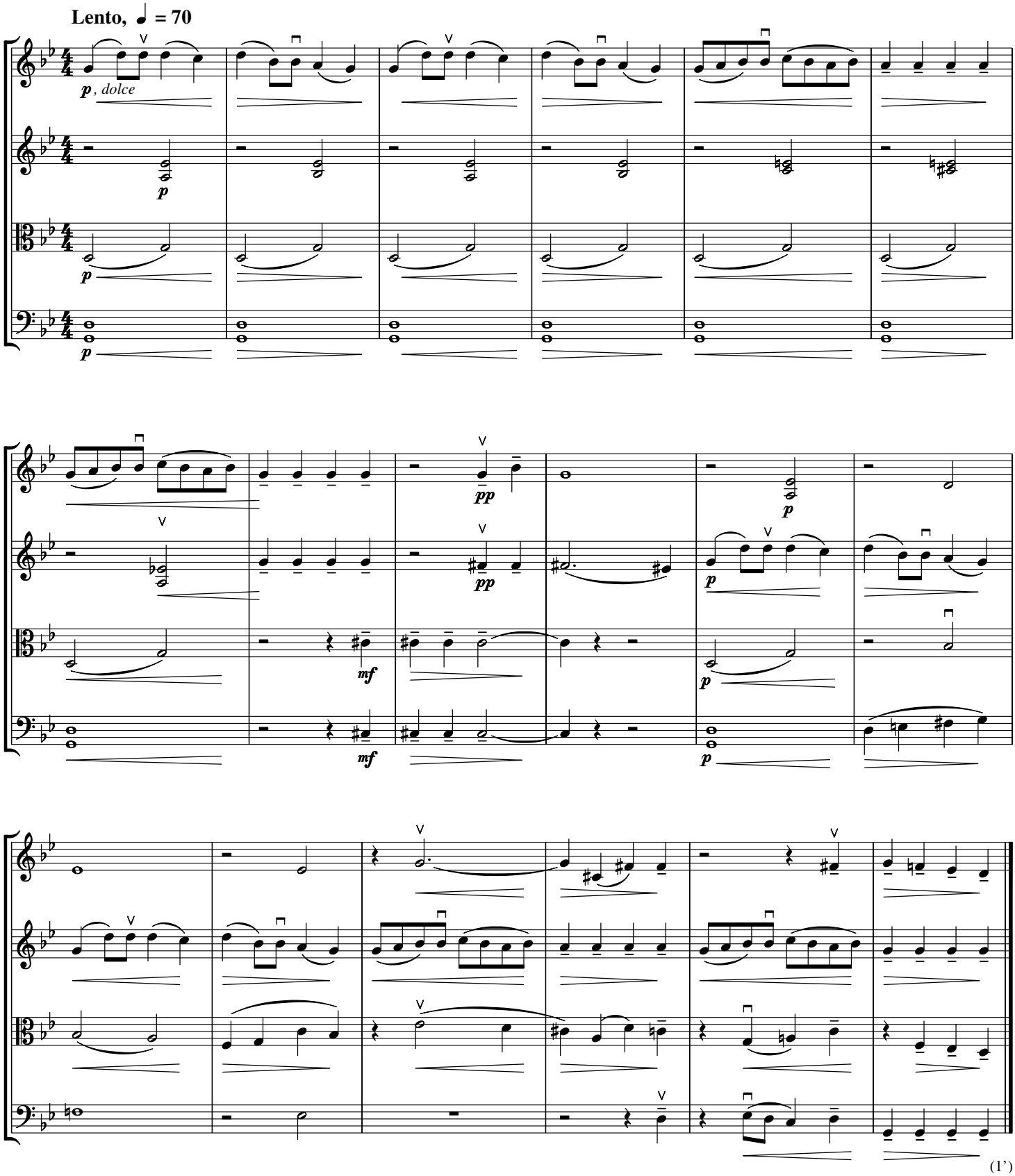
(28")

16. Old Hungarian Tune

Andante rubato, ♩ = 70

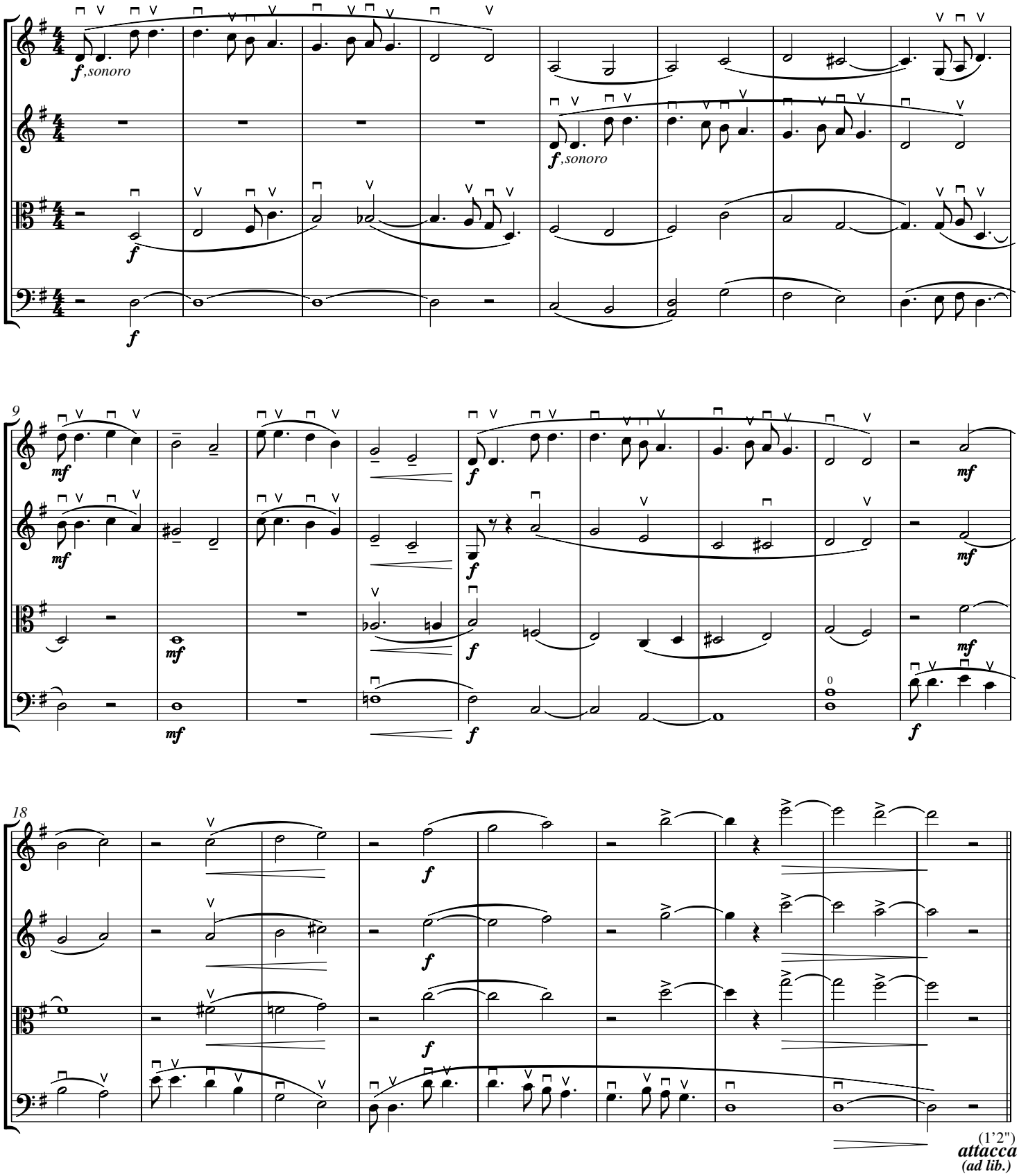


17. Round Dance



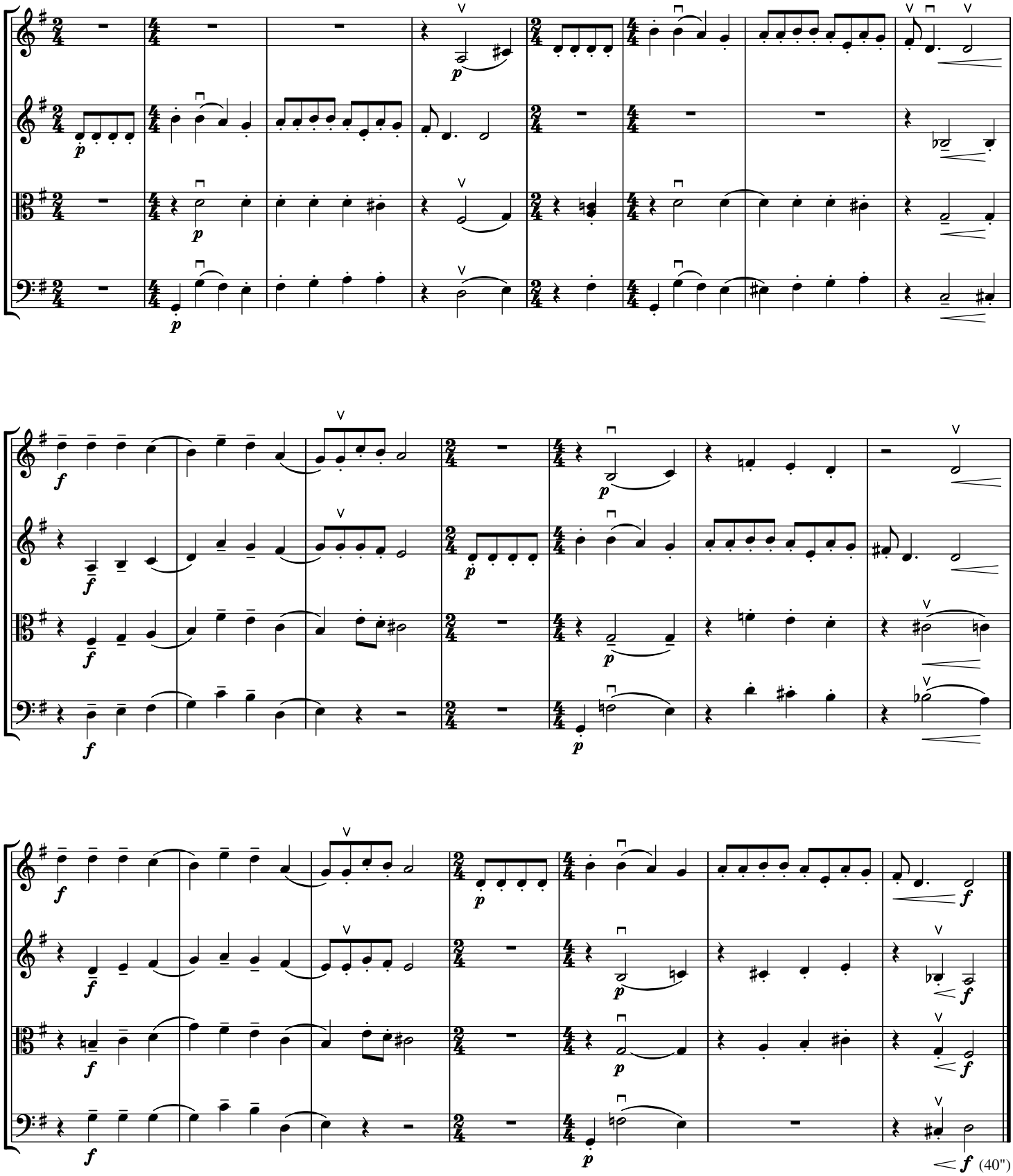
18. Soldier's Song

Andante non troppo, ♩ = 100



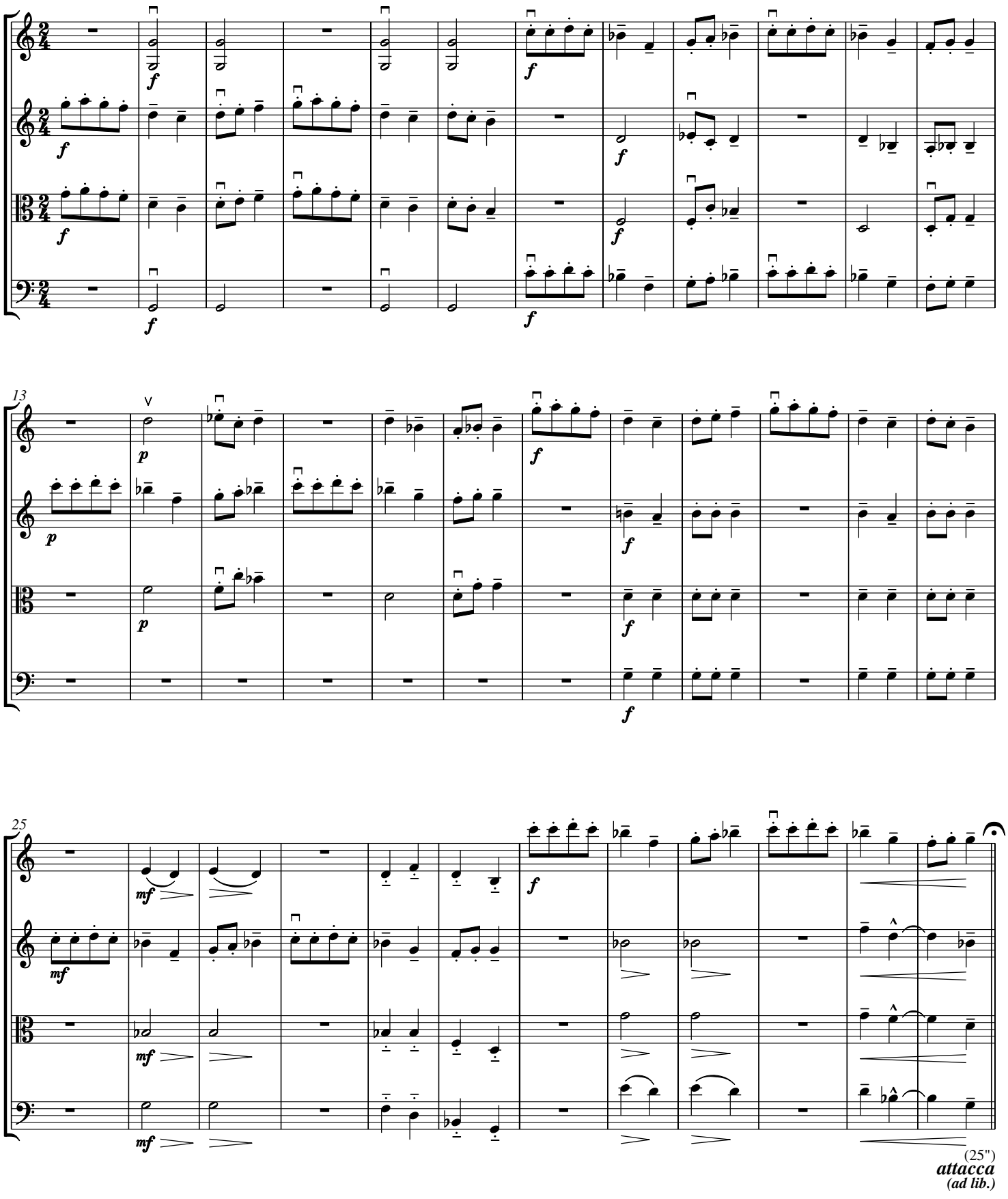
19.

Allegretto, ♩ = 126



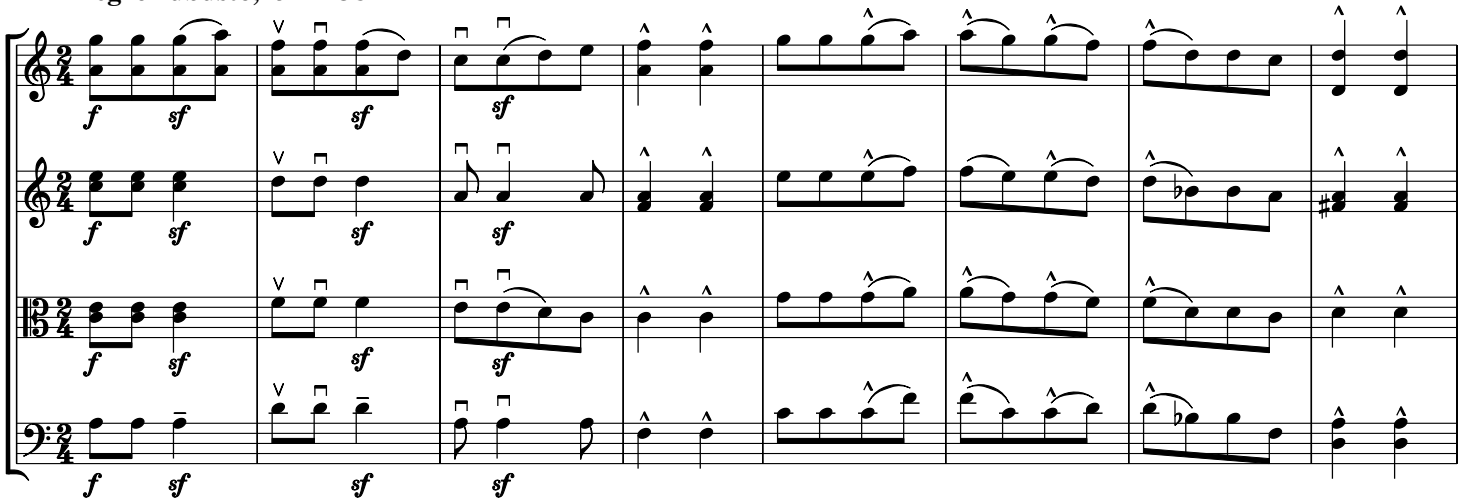
20. Drinking Song

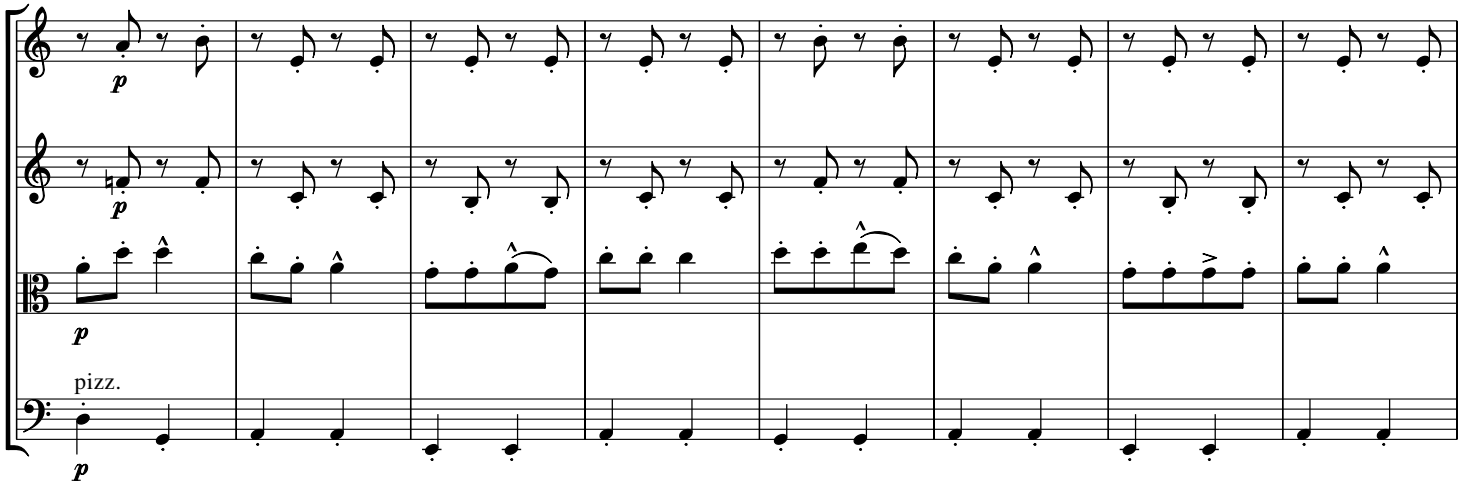
Allegro, ♩=126

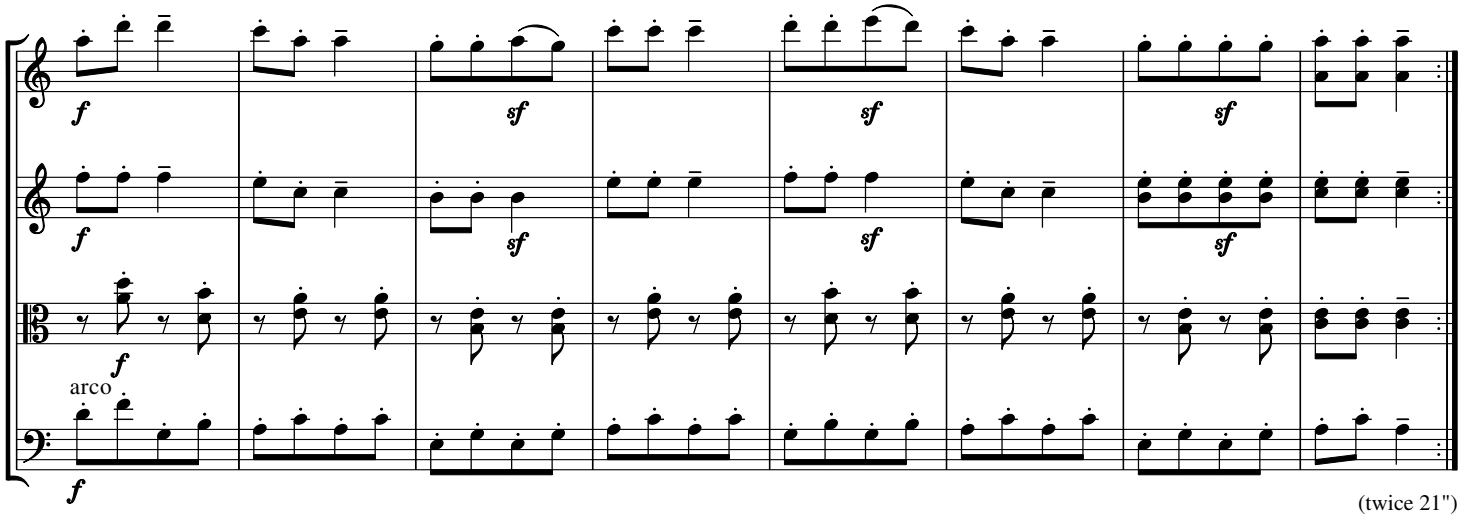


21.

Allegro rubusto, ♩ = 138



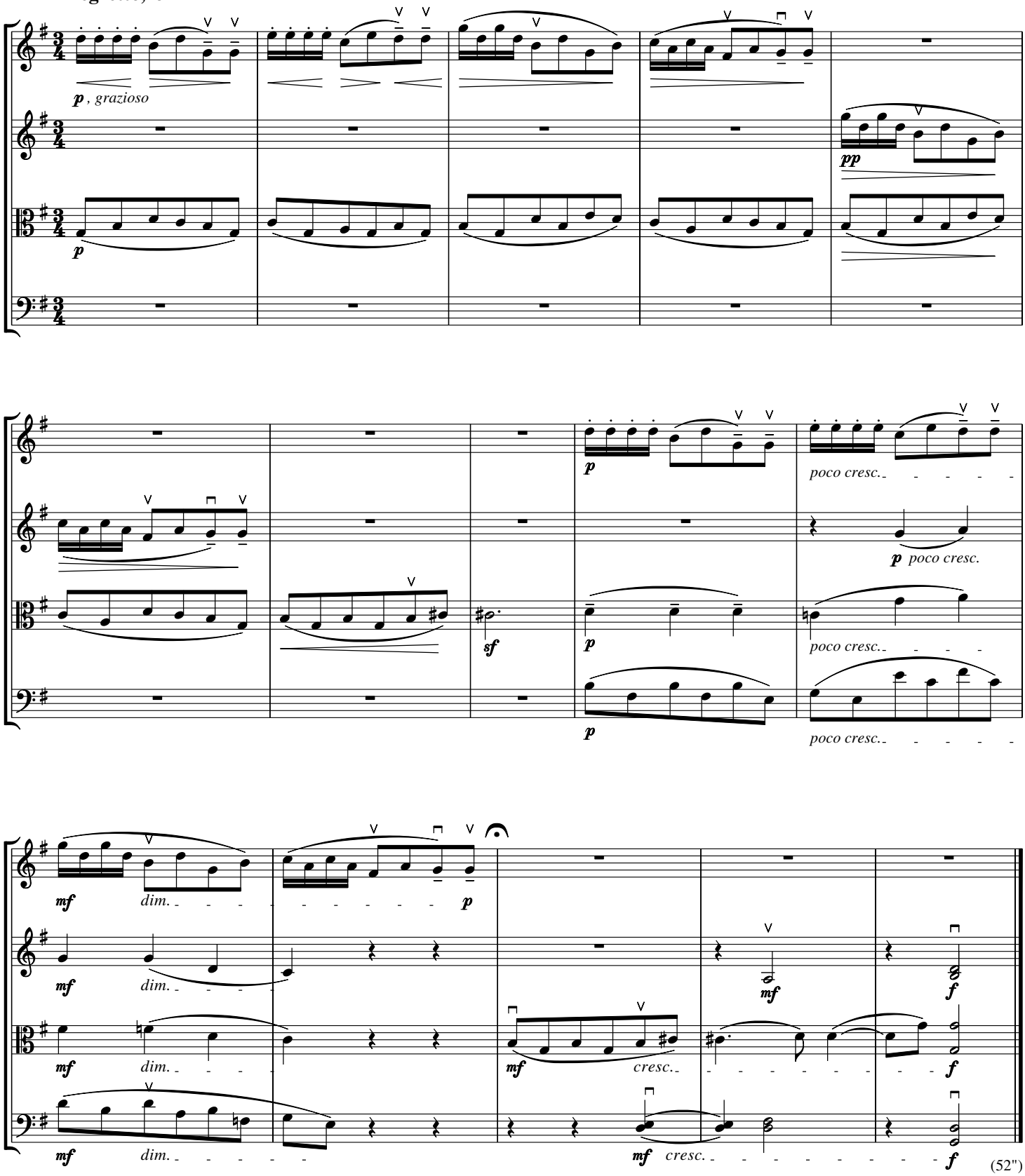




(twice 21")

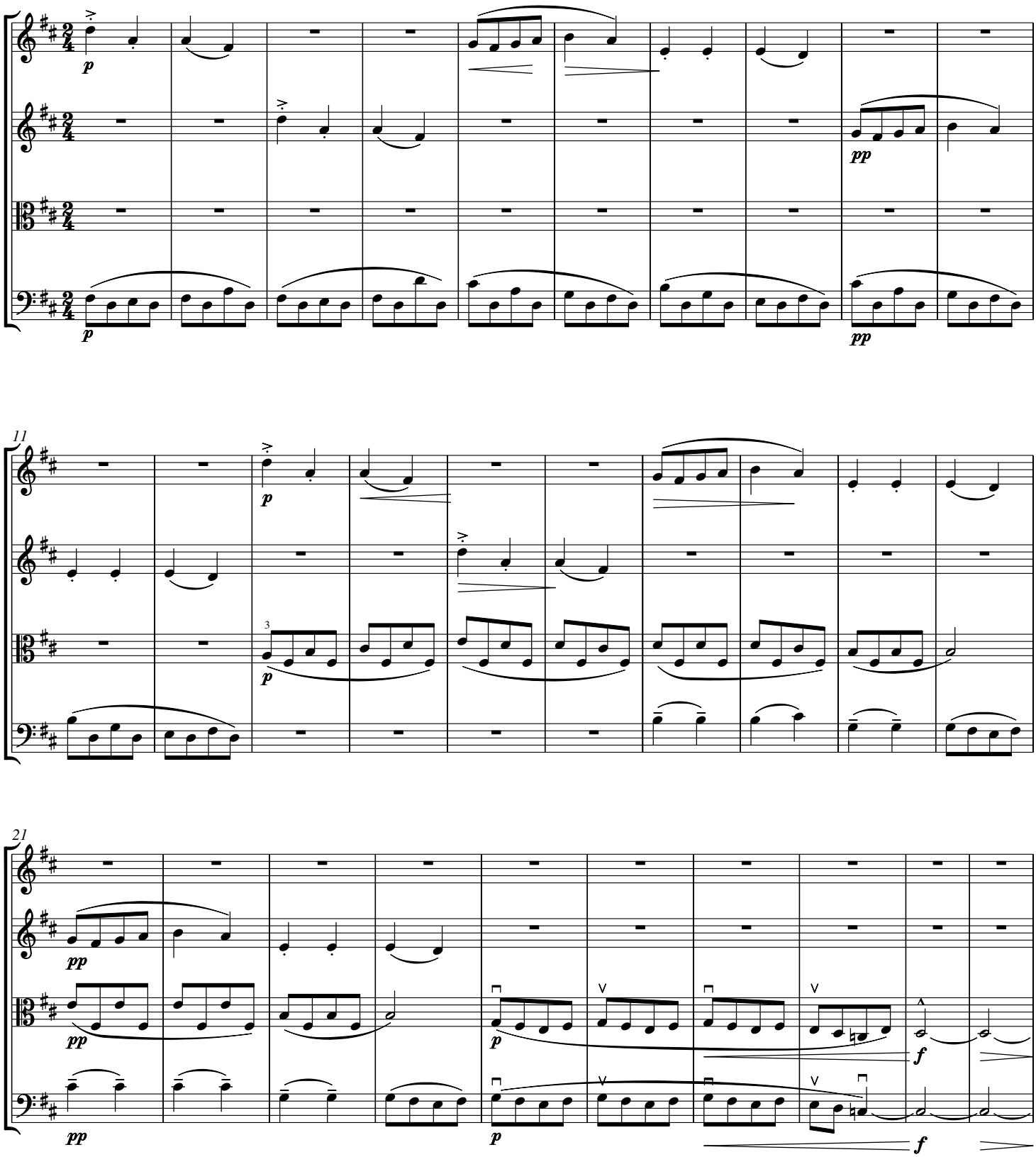
22.

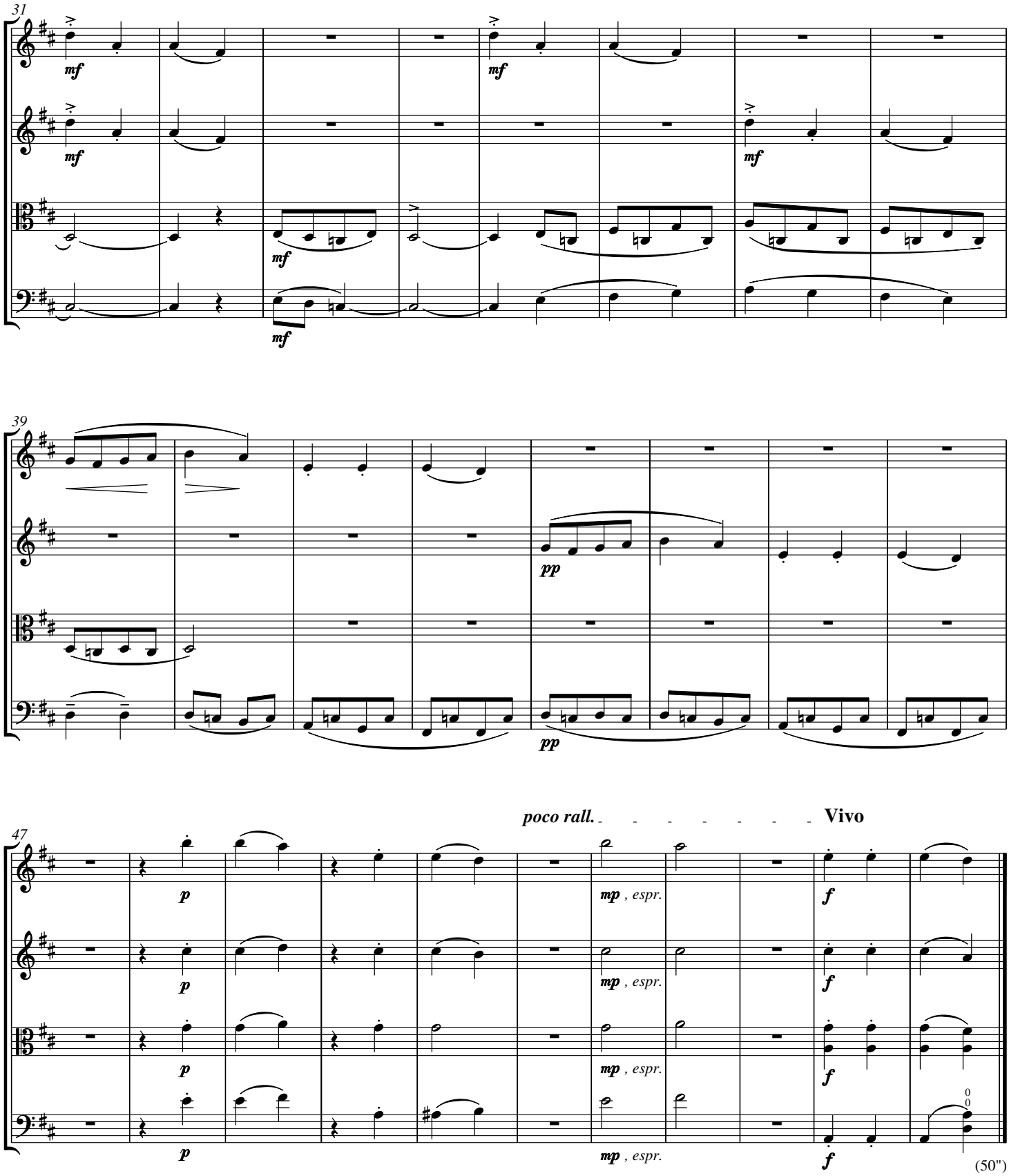
Allegretto, ♩ = 114



23. Dance Song

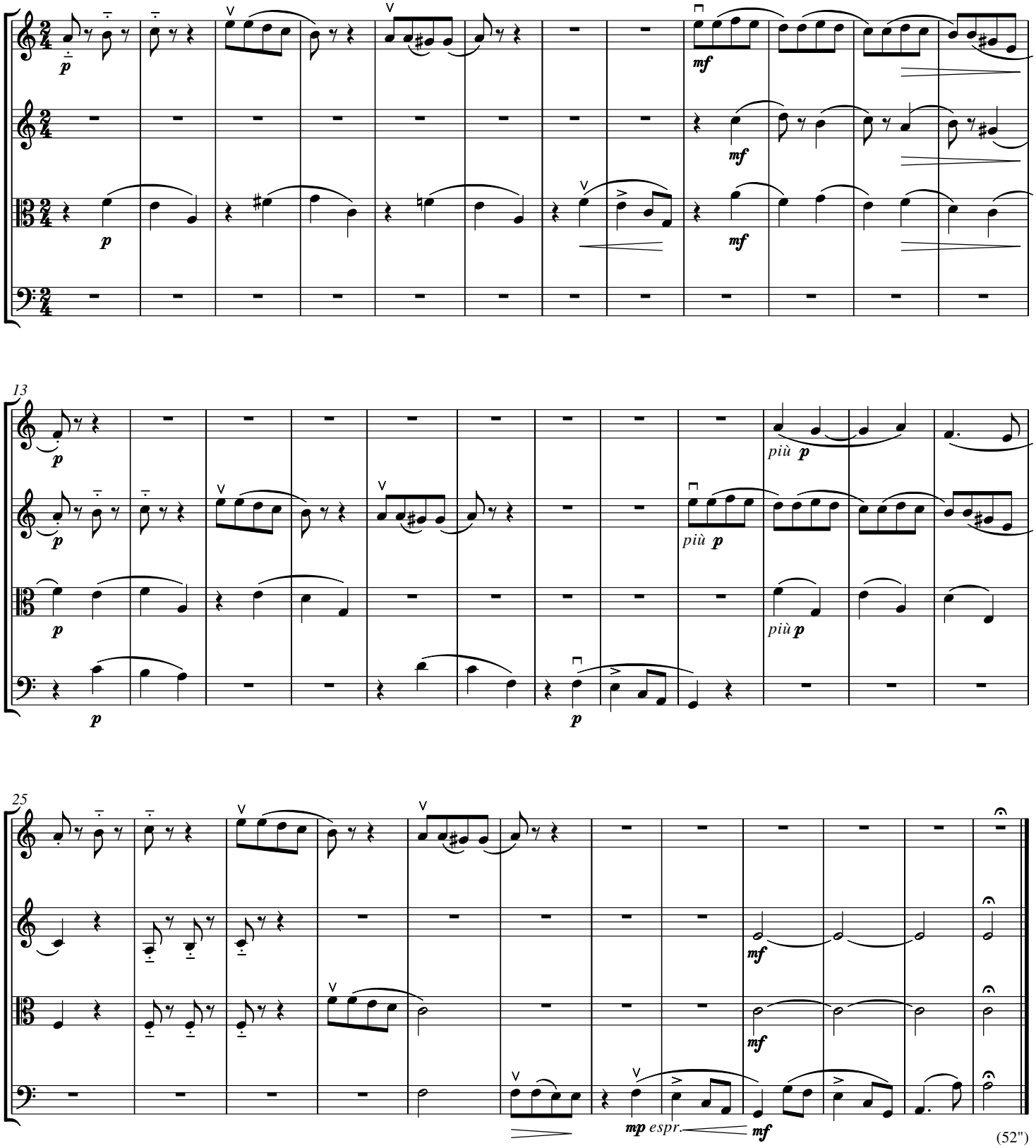
Allegro grazioso, ♩ = 152




31
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf
39
pp
pp
poco rall.
Vivo
47
p
p
p
p
mp , espr.
mp , espr.
mp , espr.
mp , espr.
f
f
f
f
(50")

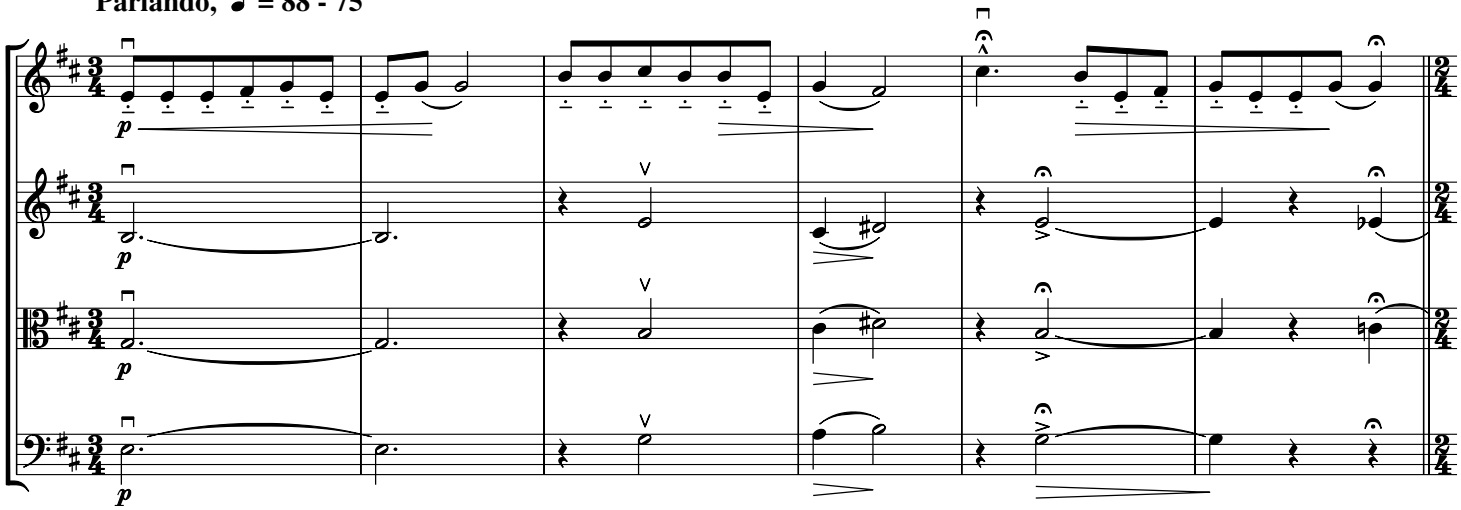
24.

Andante sostenuto, ♩ = 79

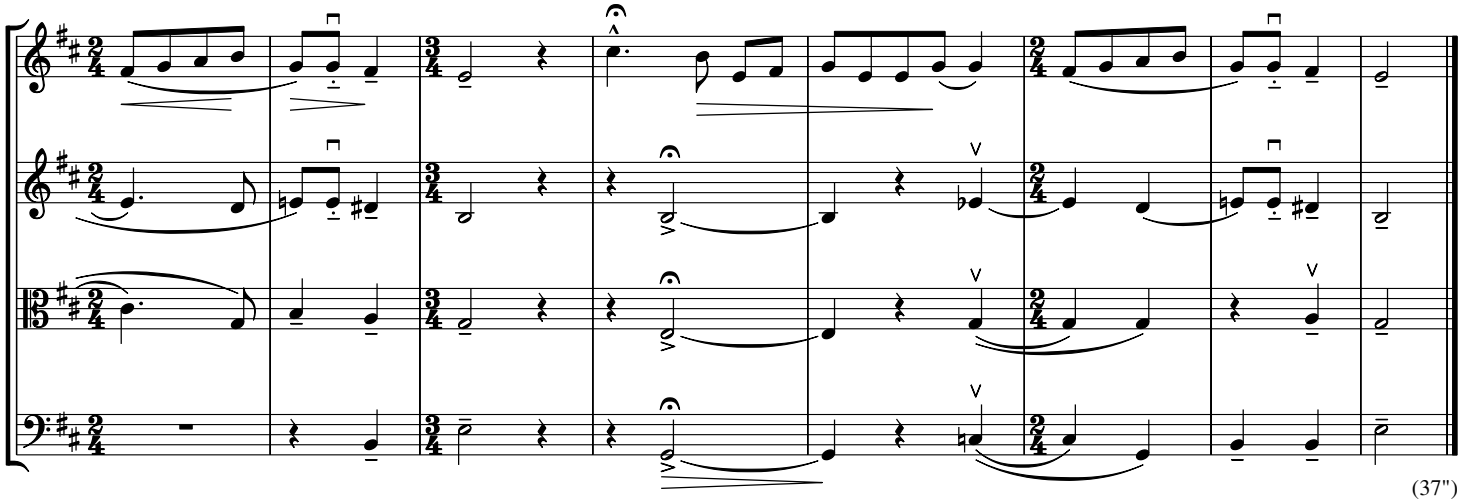


25.

Parlando, ♩ = 88 - 75



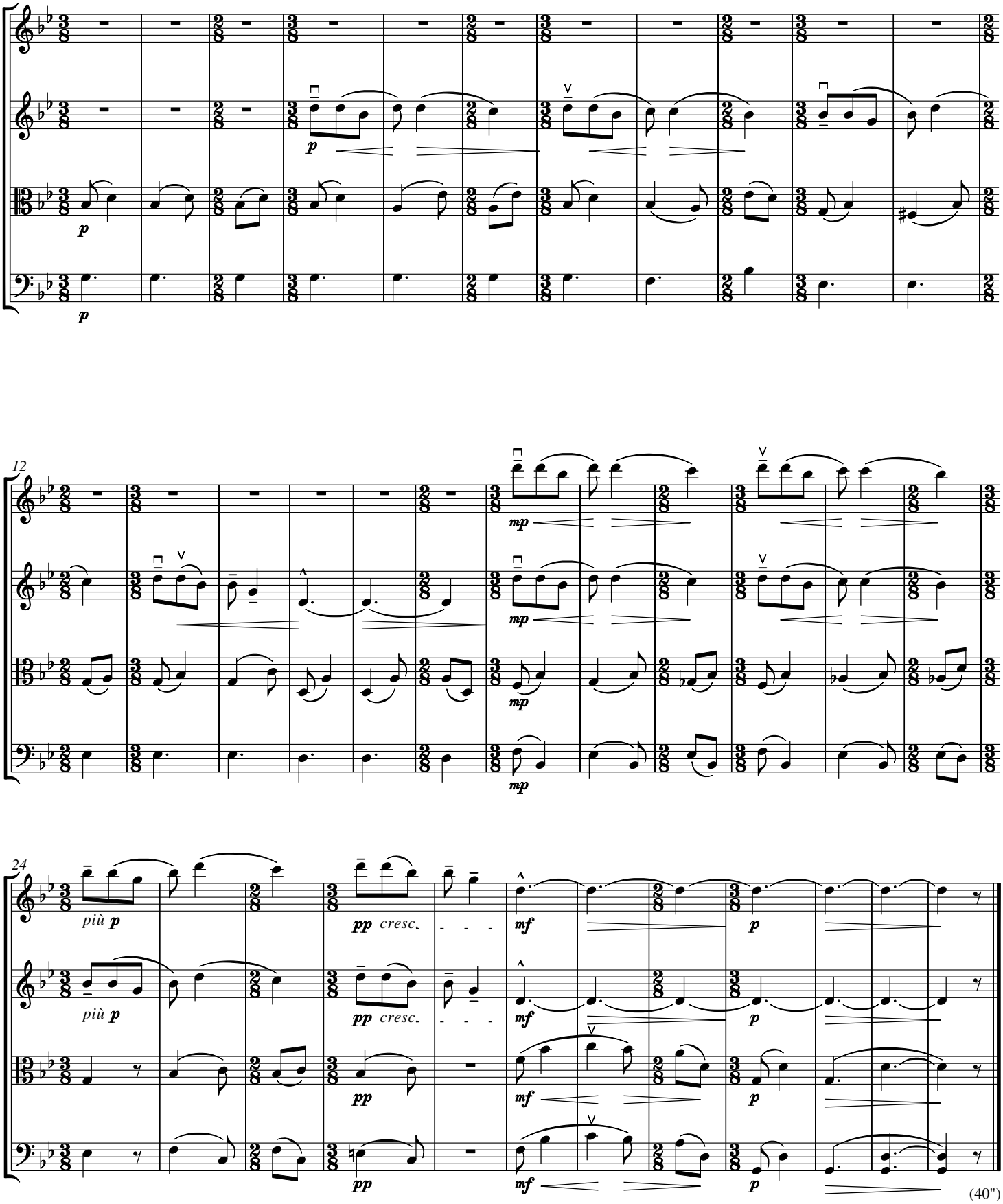
poco rall.



(37")

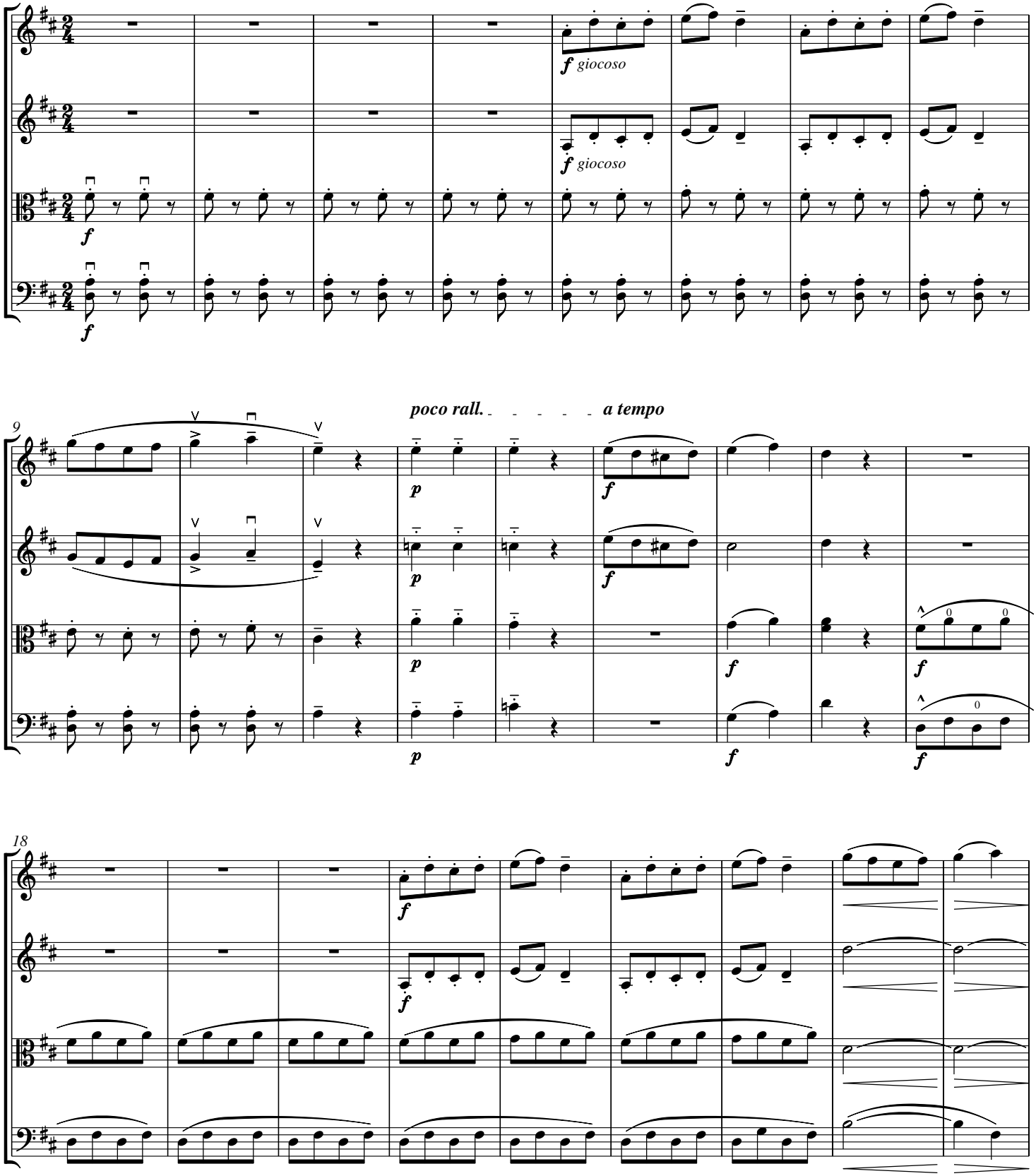
26. Fairy Tale

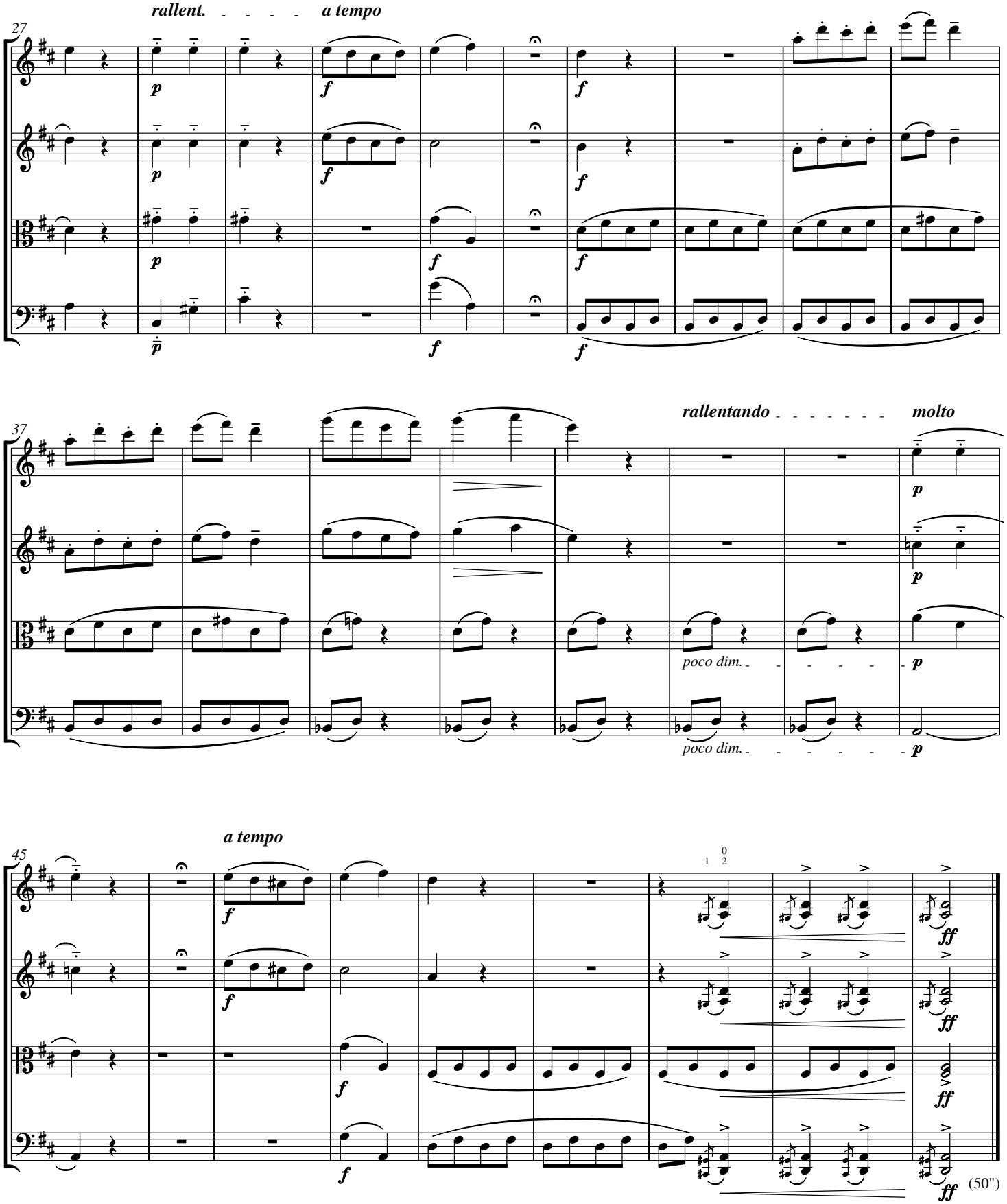
Moderato, ♩ = 150



27. Jest

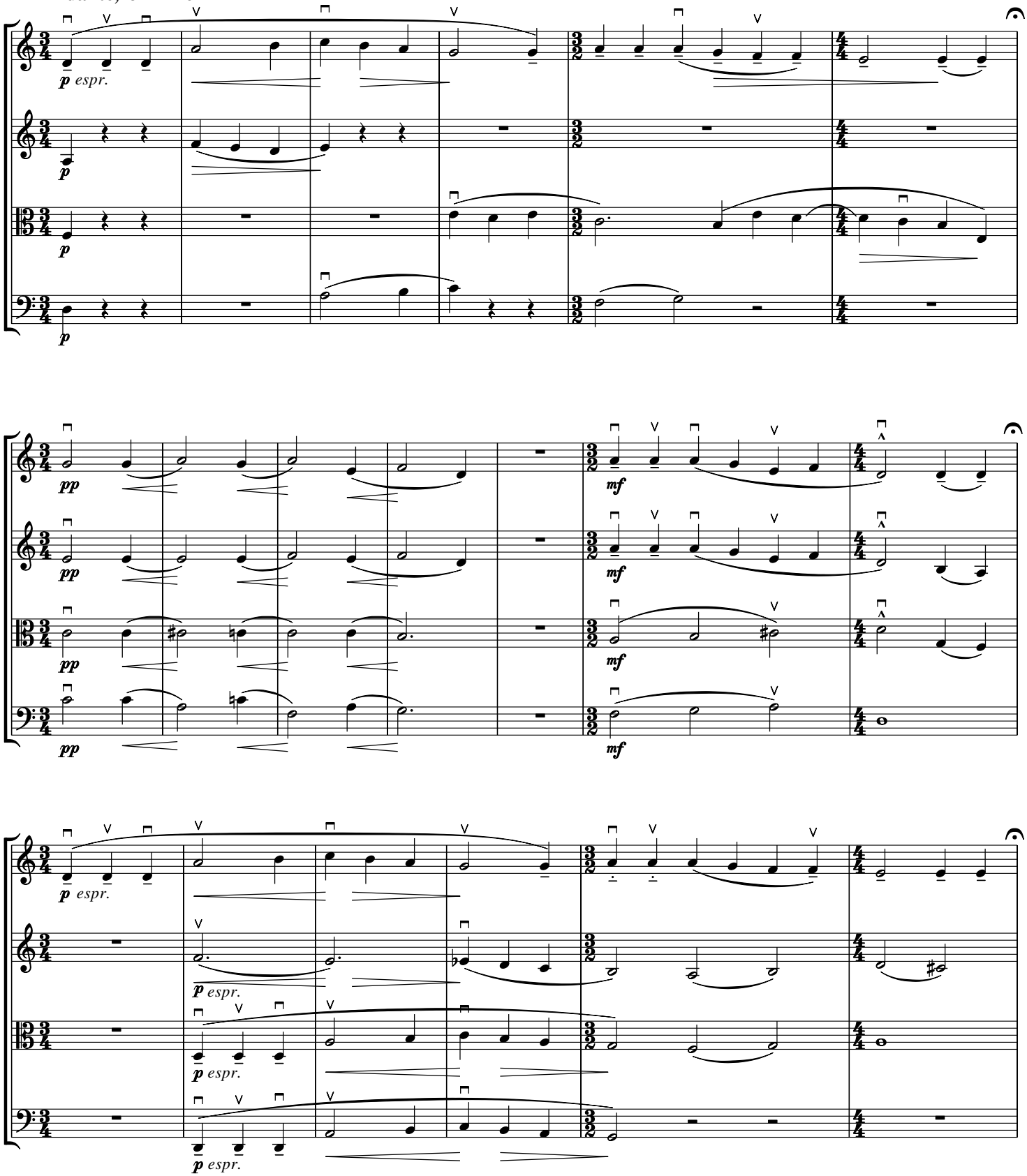
Allegramente

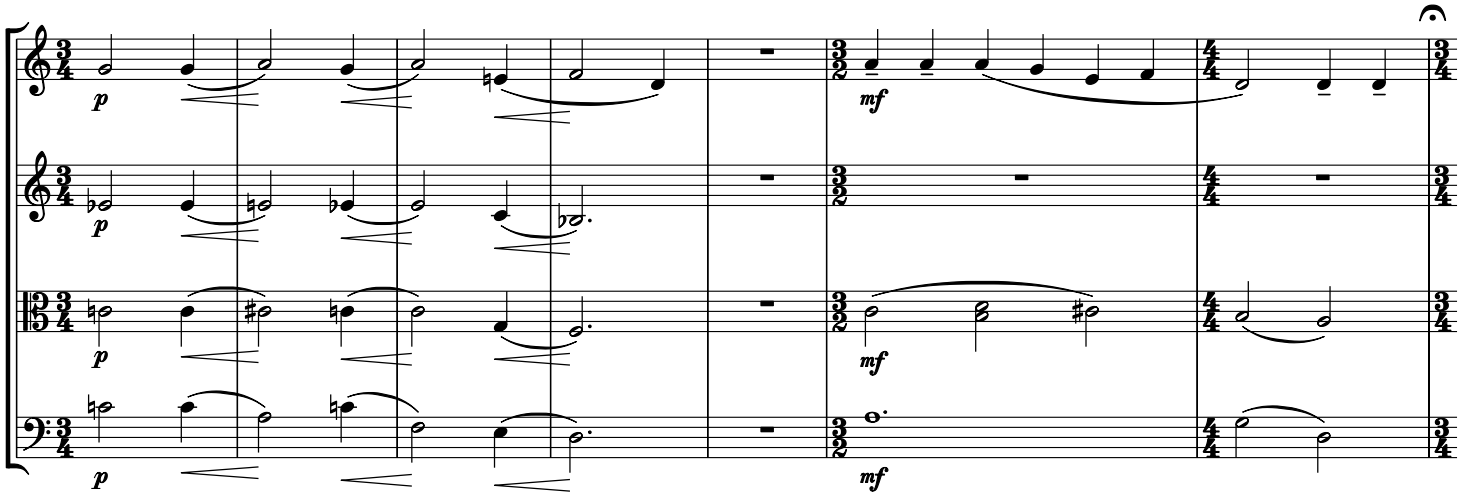


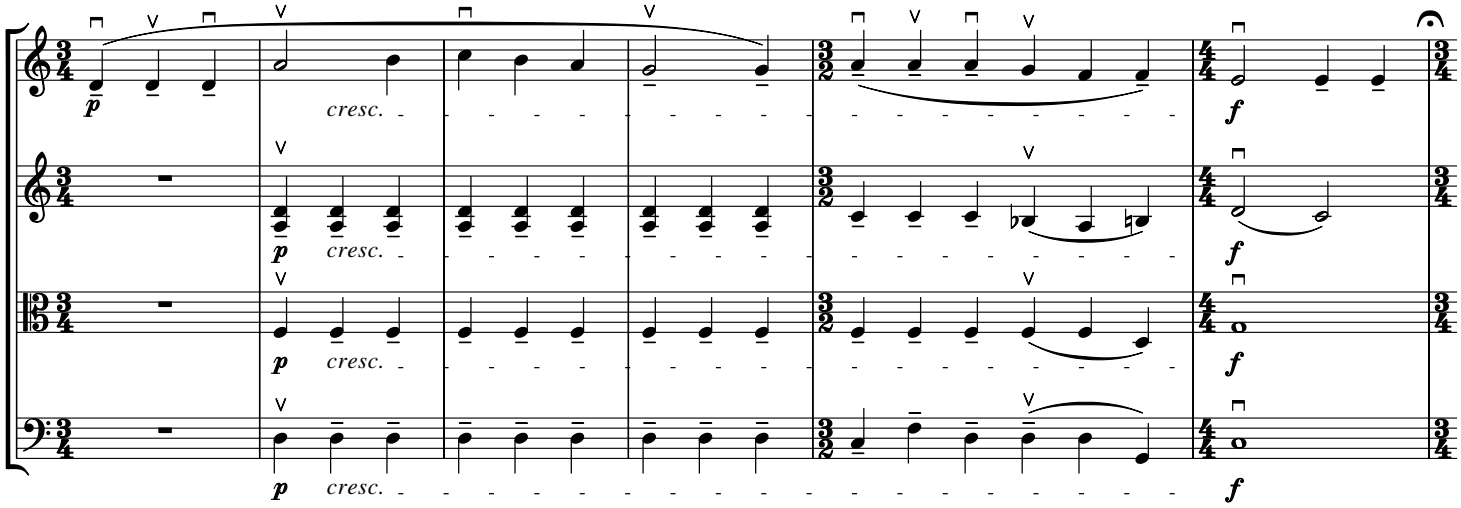

27
rallent.
a tempo
37
rallentando
molto
poco dim.
poco dim.
45
a tempo
(50")

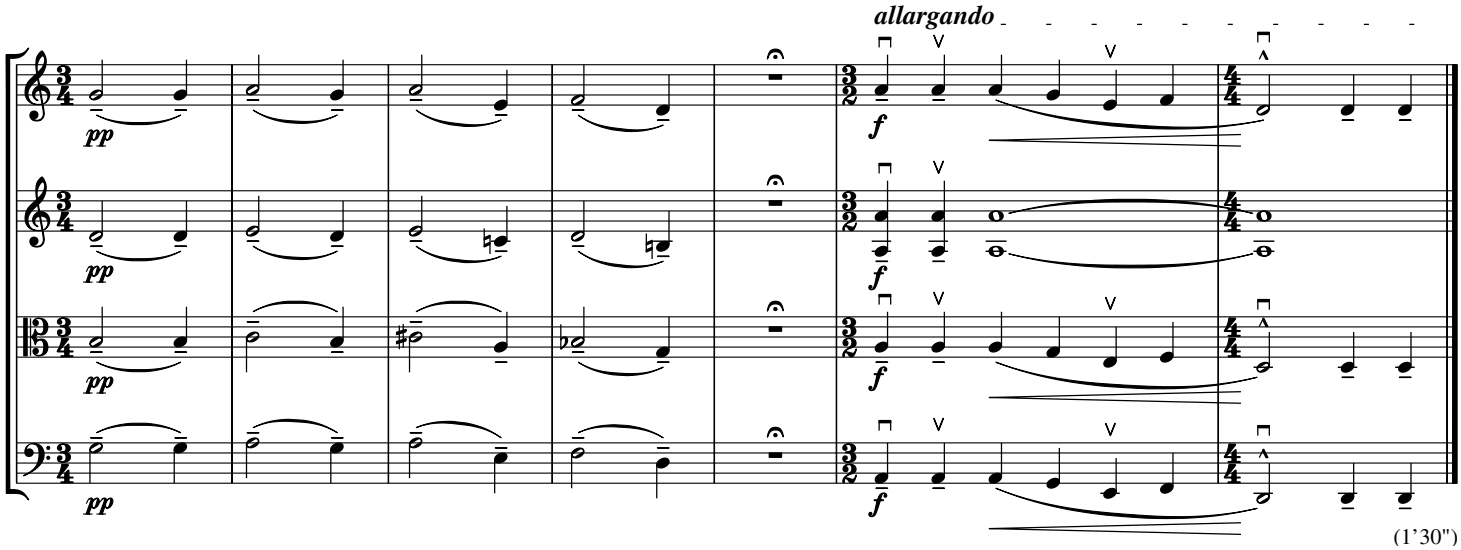
28. Chorale

Andante, ♩ = 116





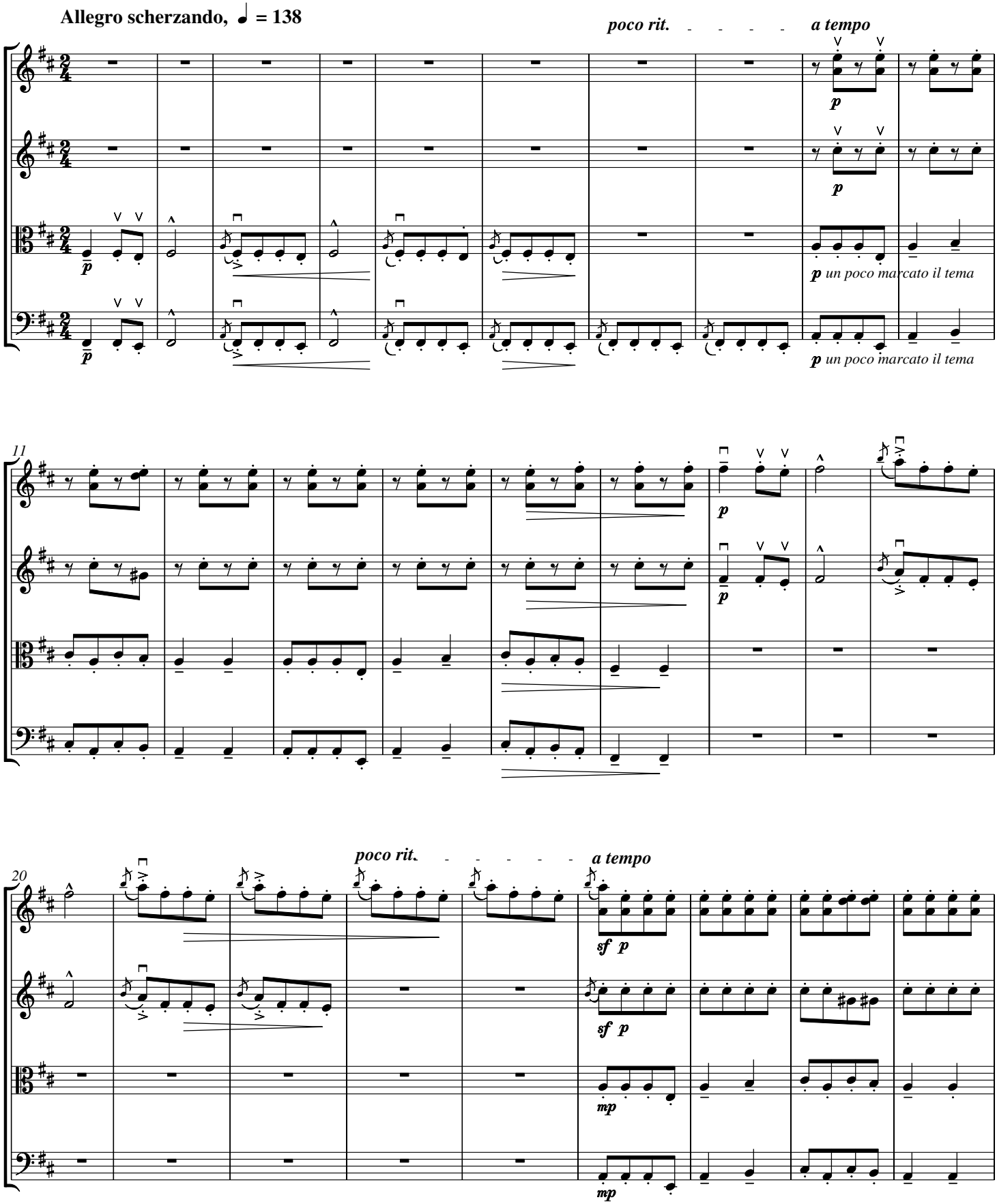


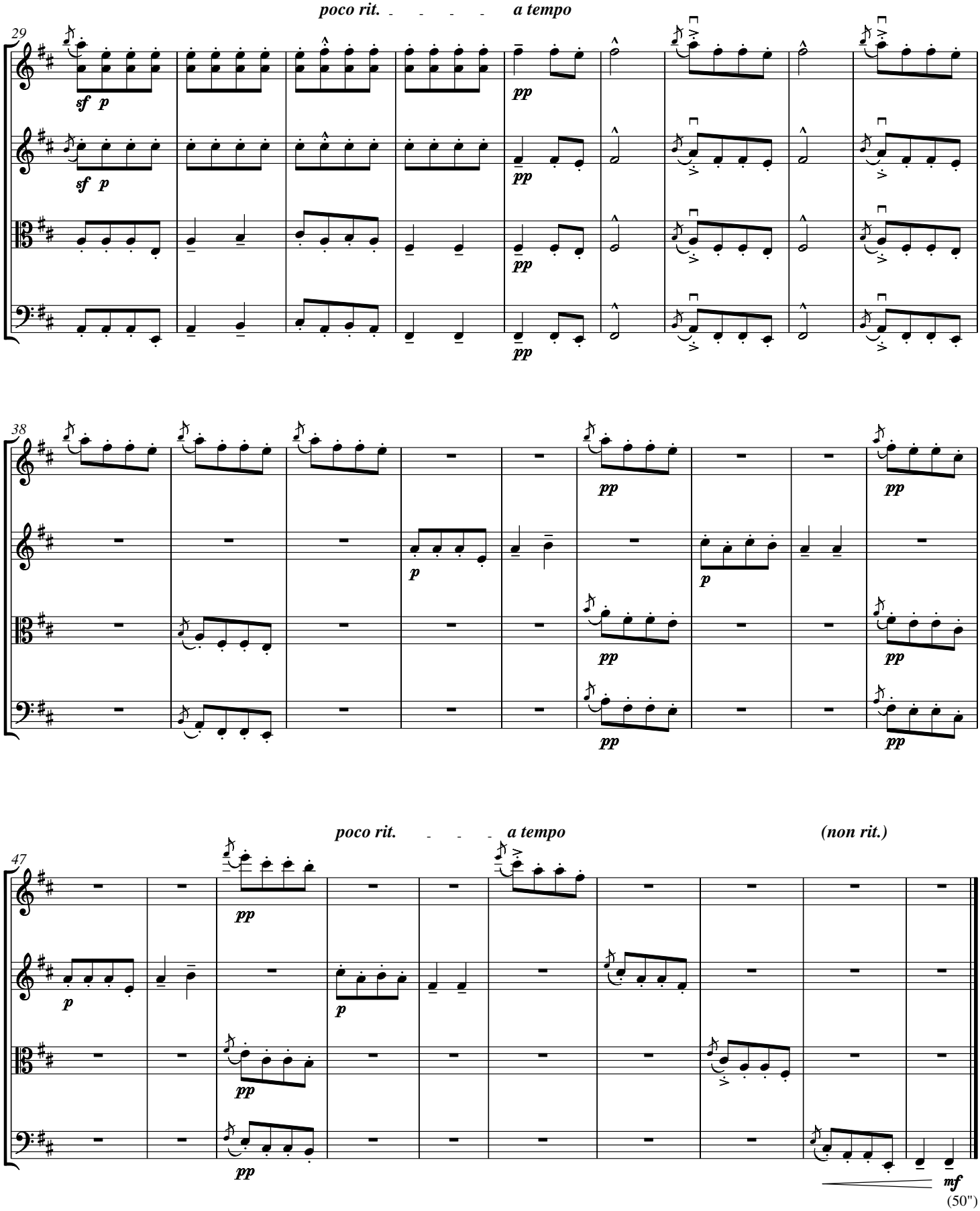


(1'30")

29. Pentatonic Tune

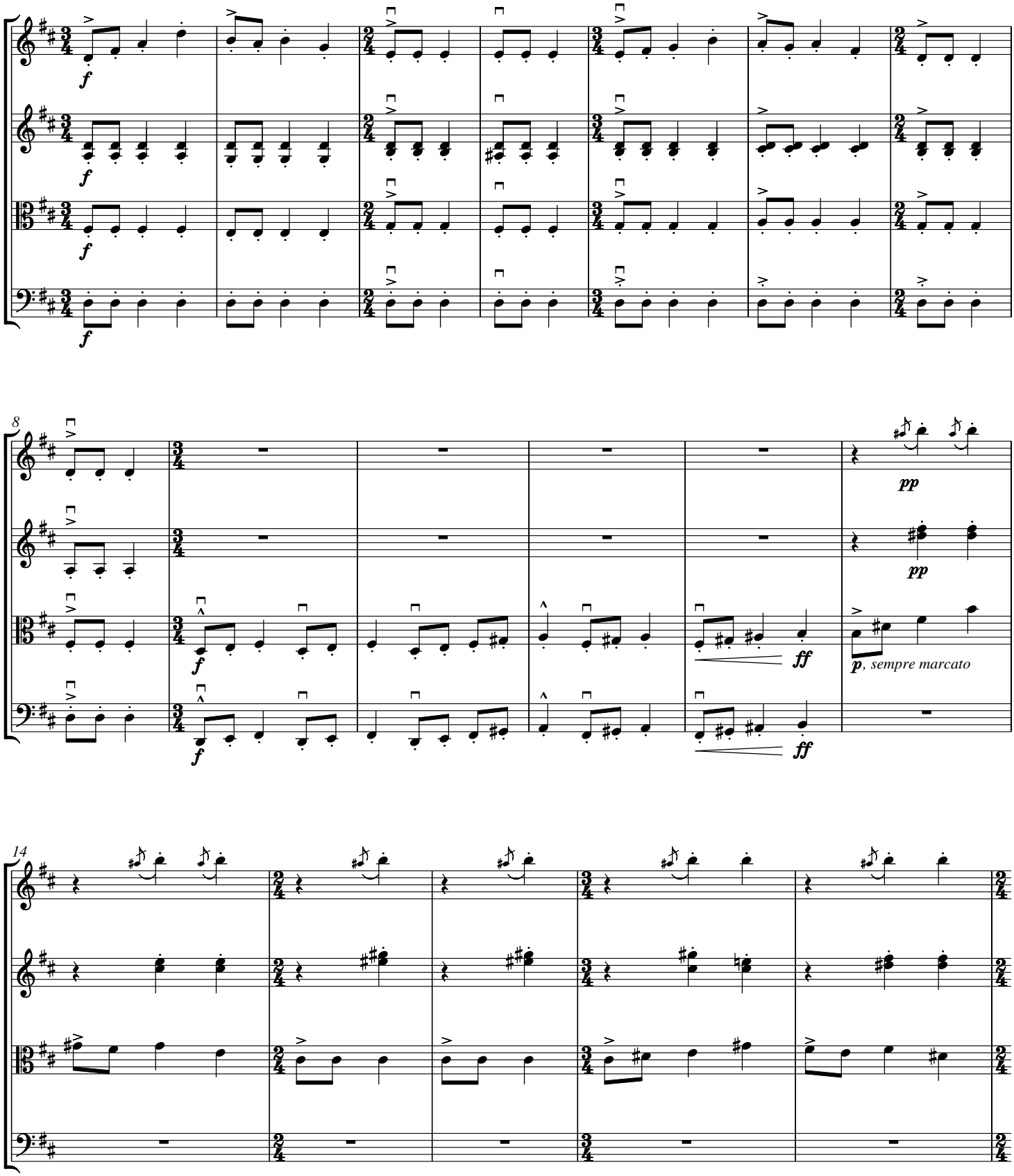
Allegro scherzando, ♩ = 138

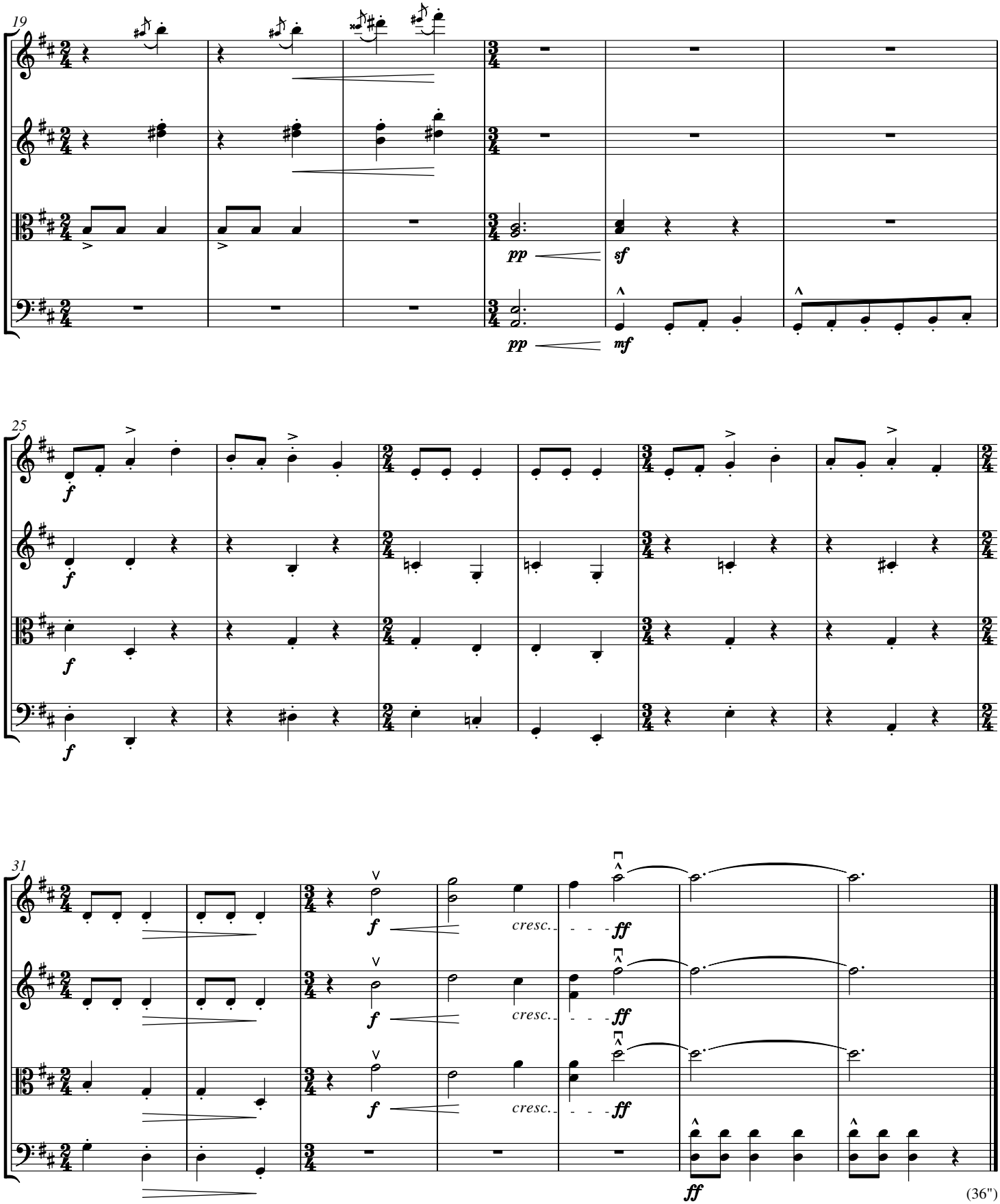



poco rit.
a tempo
29
sf p
pp
38
p
pp
poco rit.
a tempo
(non rit.)
47
mf
(50")

30. Jeering Song

Allegro ironico, ♩ = 160

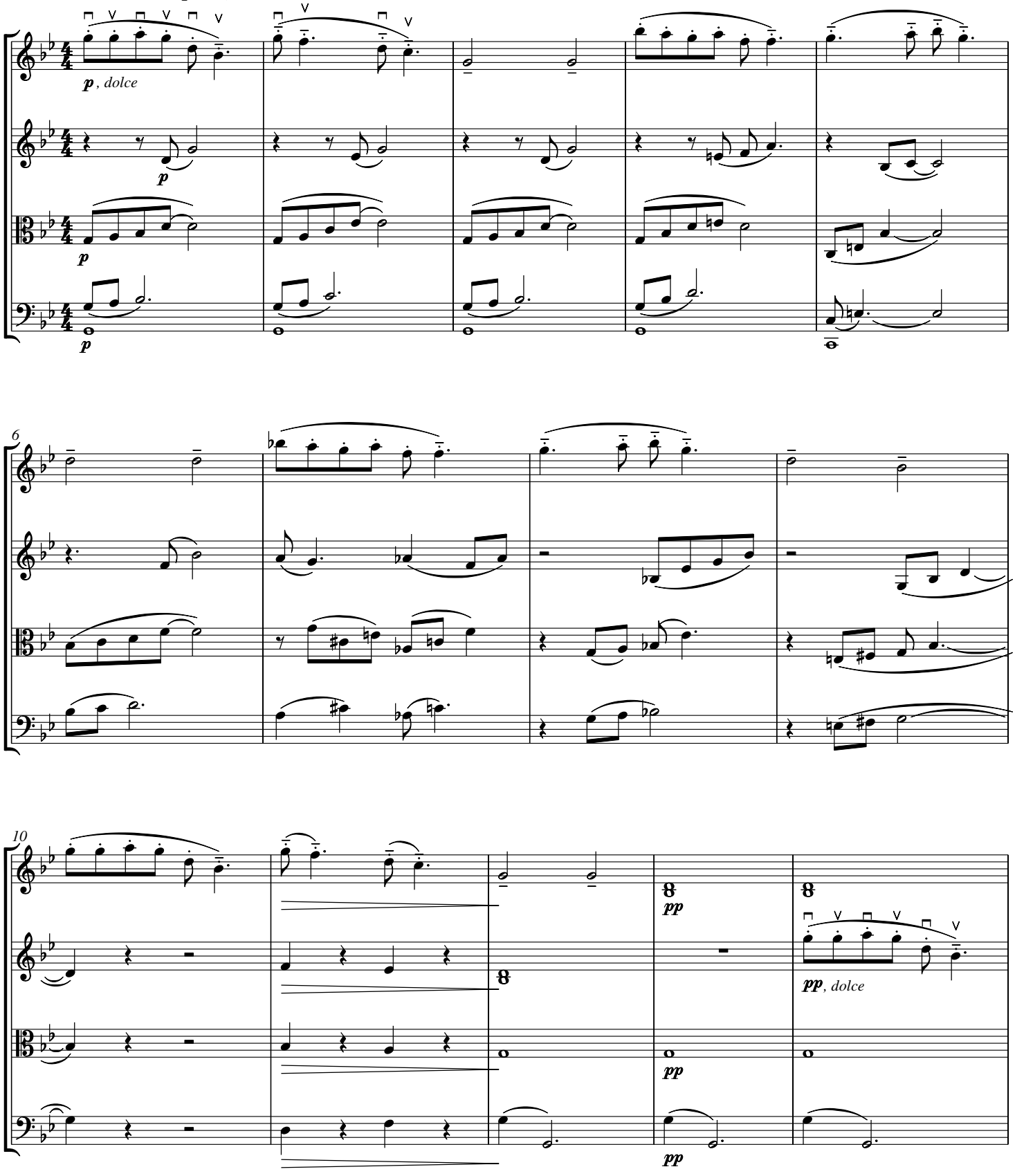


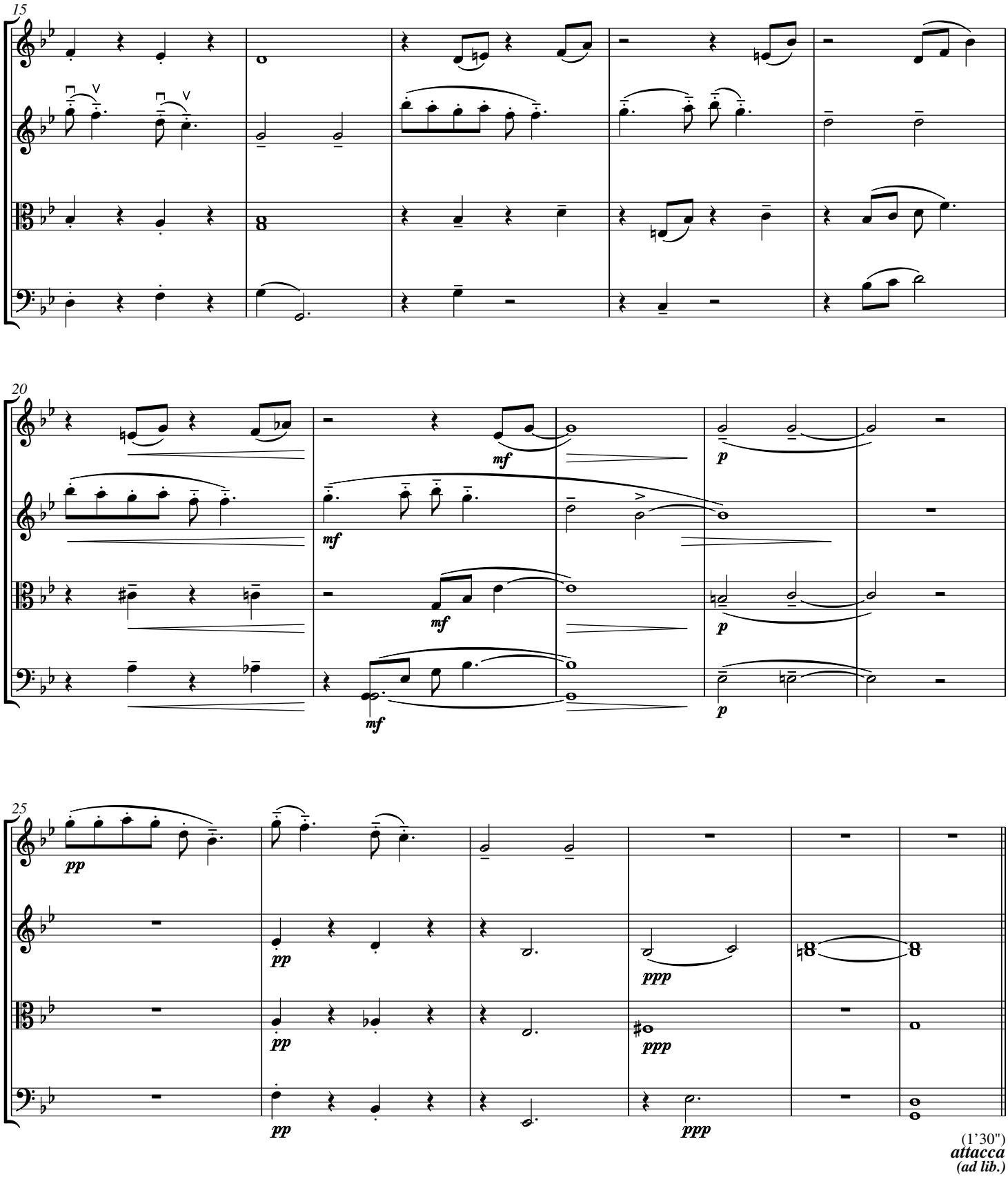


(36")

31.

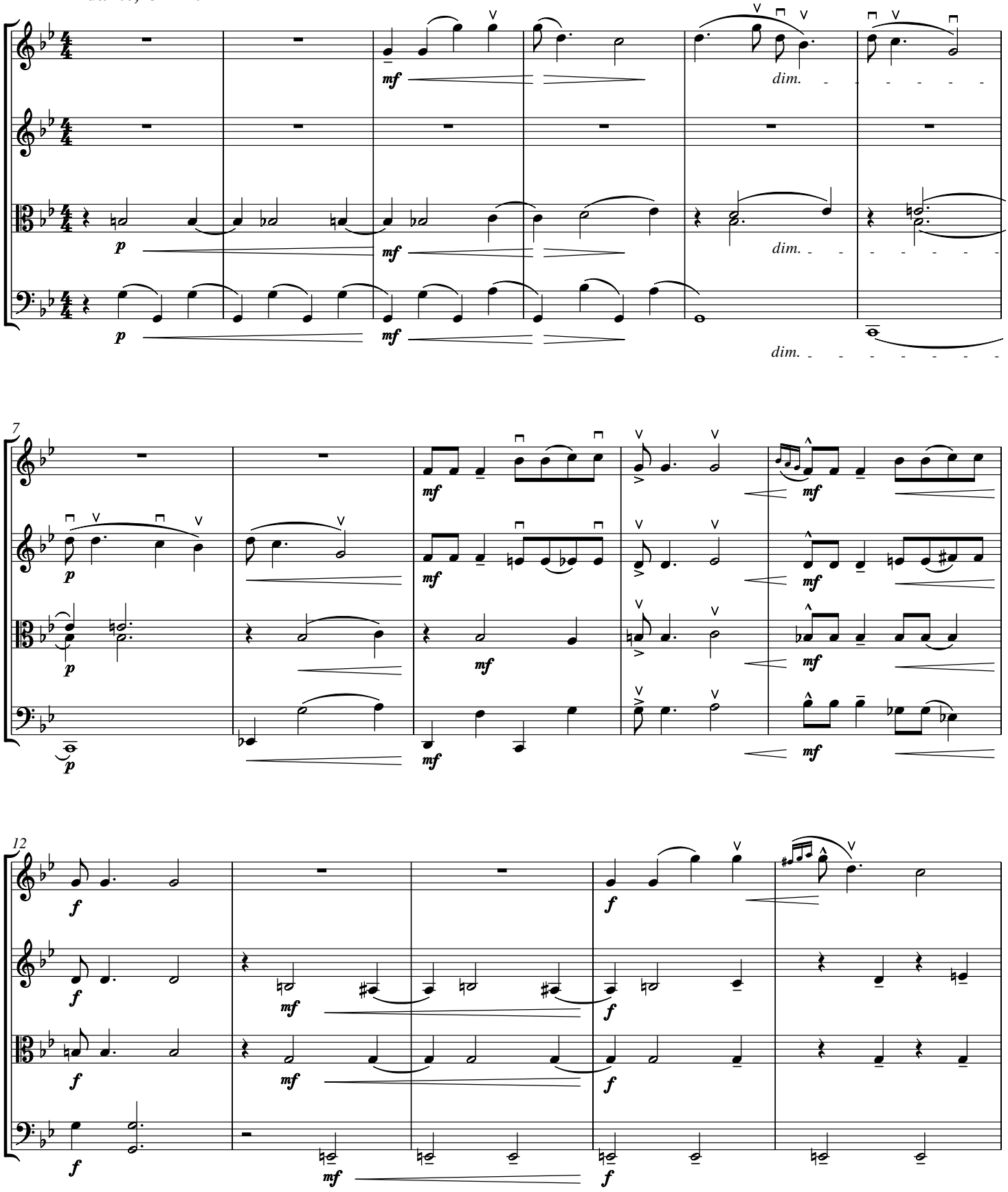
Andante tranquillo, ♩ = 88

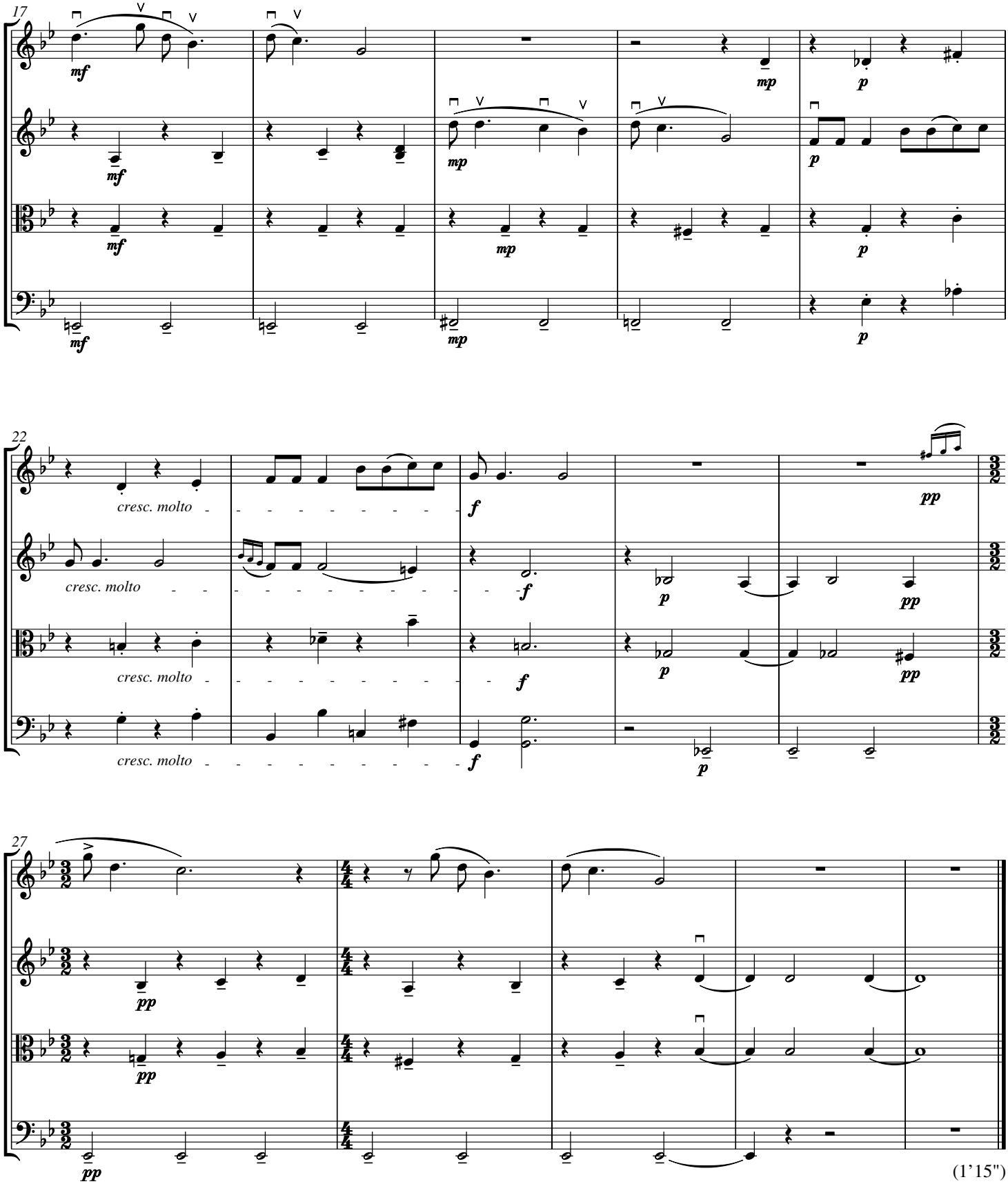



15
20
mf
mf
mf
p
p
p
25
pp
pp
pp
pp
ppp
ppp
ppp
(1'30")
attacca
(ad lib.)

32.

Andante, ♩ = 104

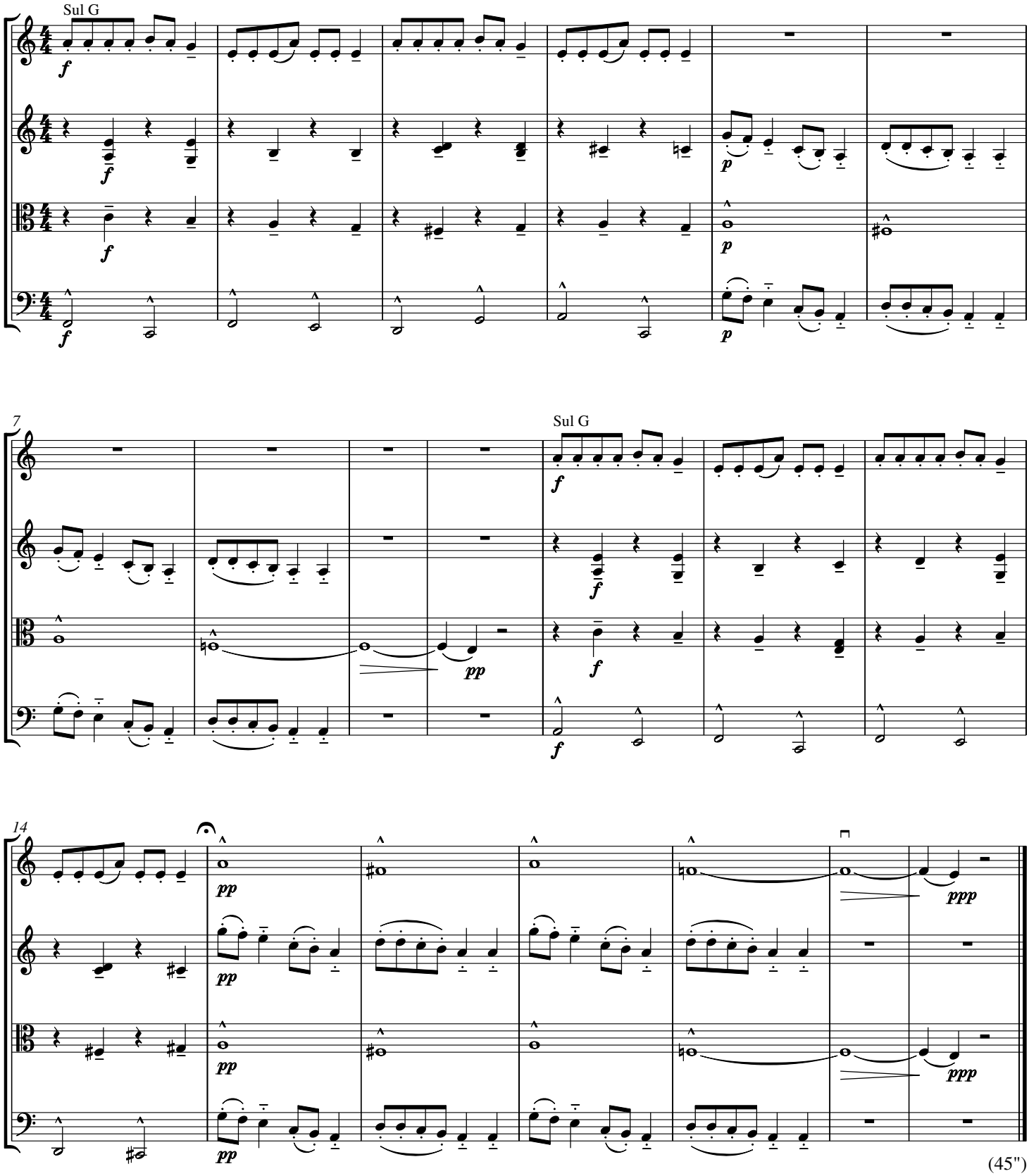



17
mf
mf
mf
mf
mp
mp
mp
p
p
p
p
22
cresc. molto
cresc. molto
cresc. molto
f
f
f
f
p
p
p
pp
pp
pp
27
pp
pp
pp

(1'15")

33.

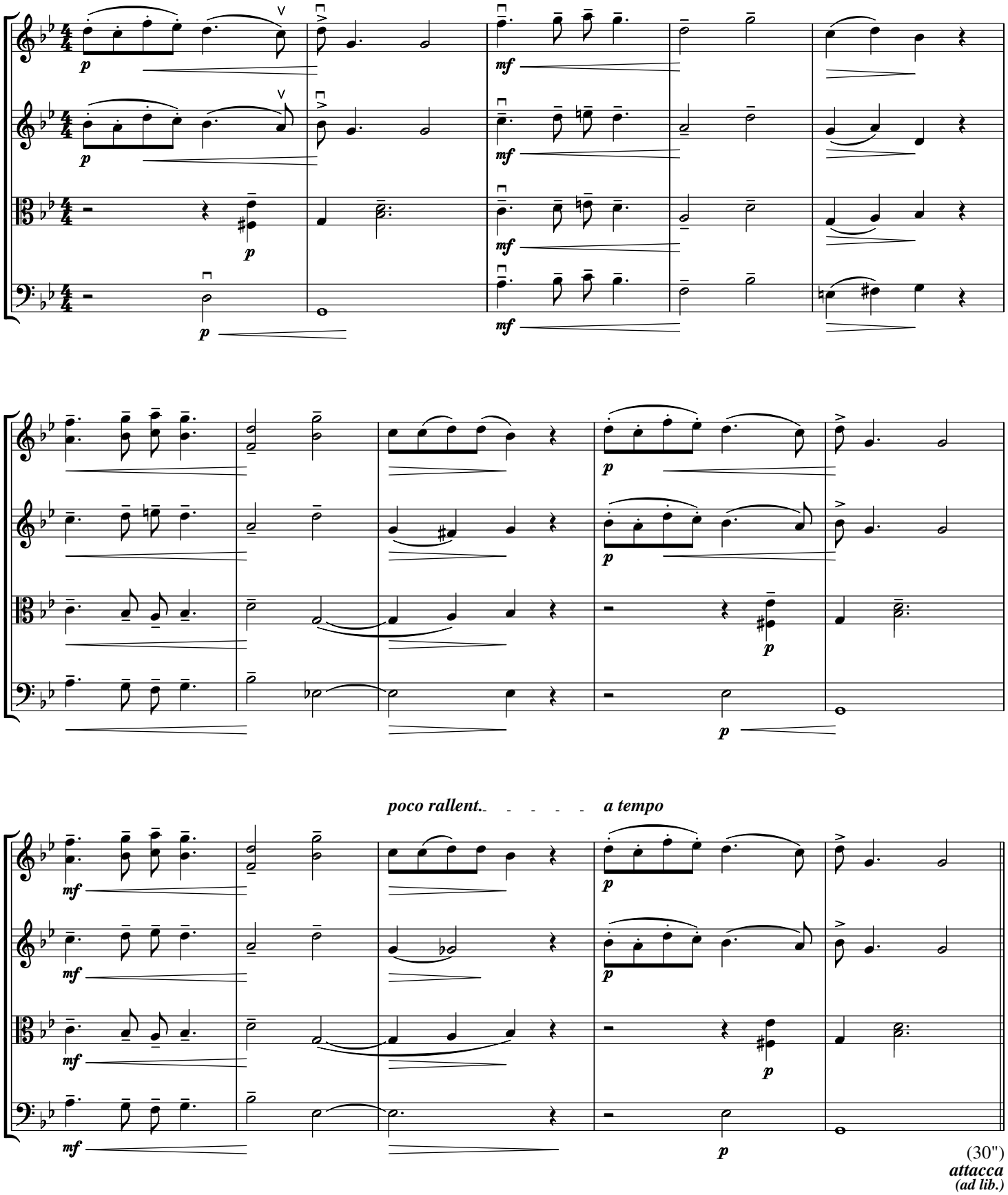
Allegro non troppo, ♩ = 104



(45")

34.

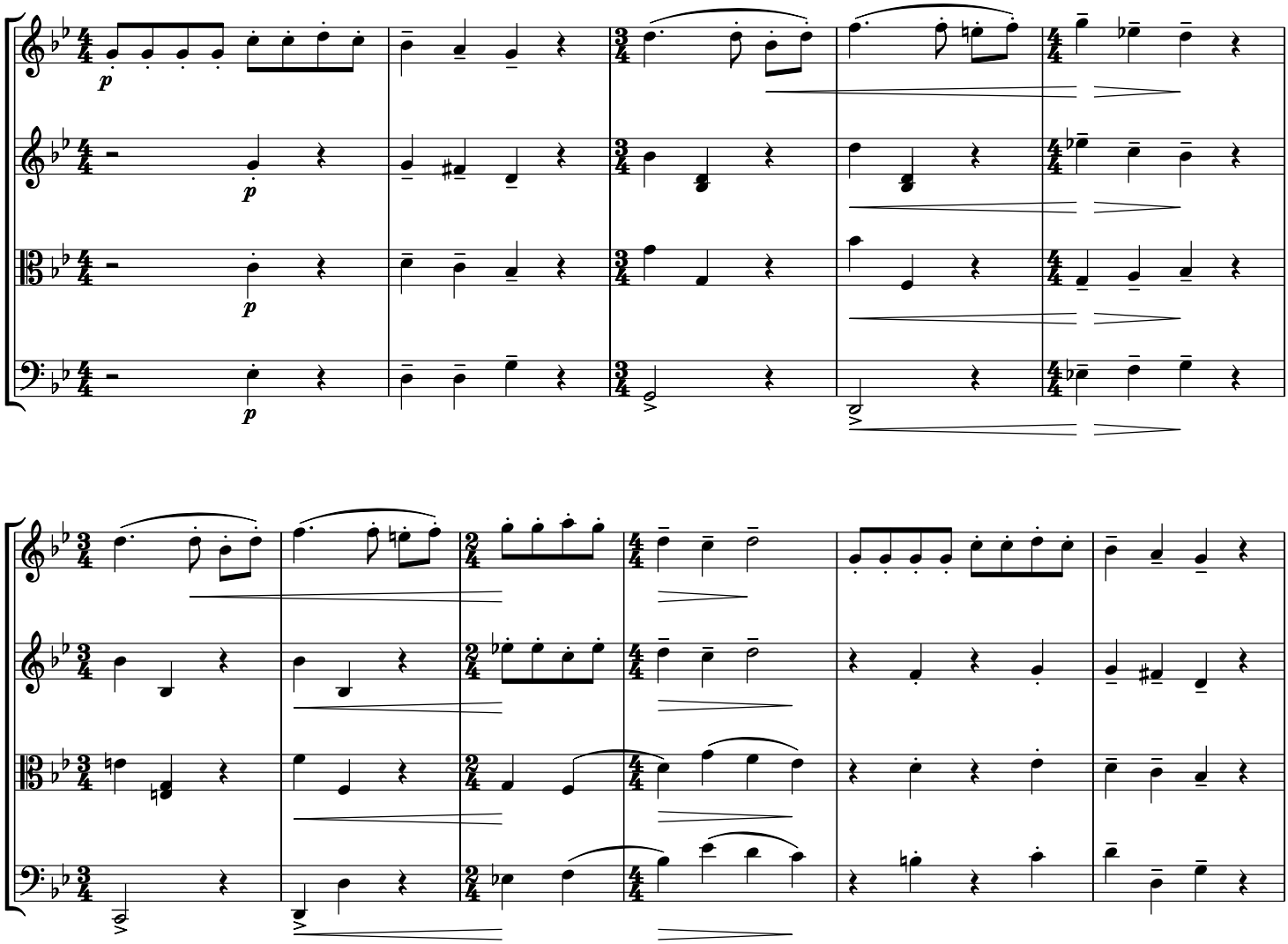
Allegretto, ♩=126



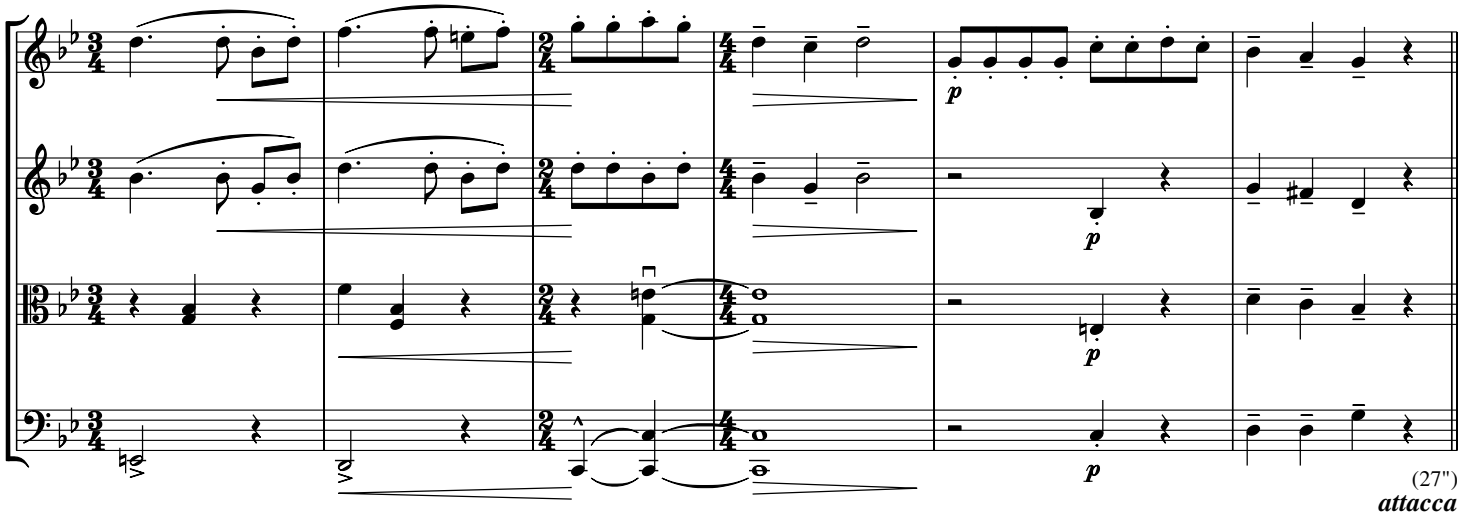
(30")
attacca
(ad lib.)

35.

Con moto, ♩ = 138



poco rall. - - - - - - *a tempo*



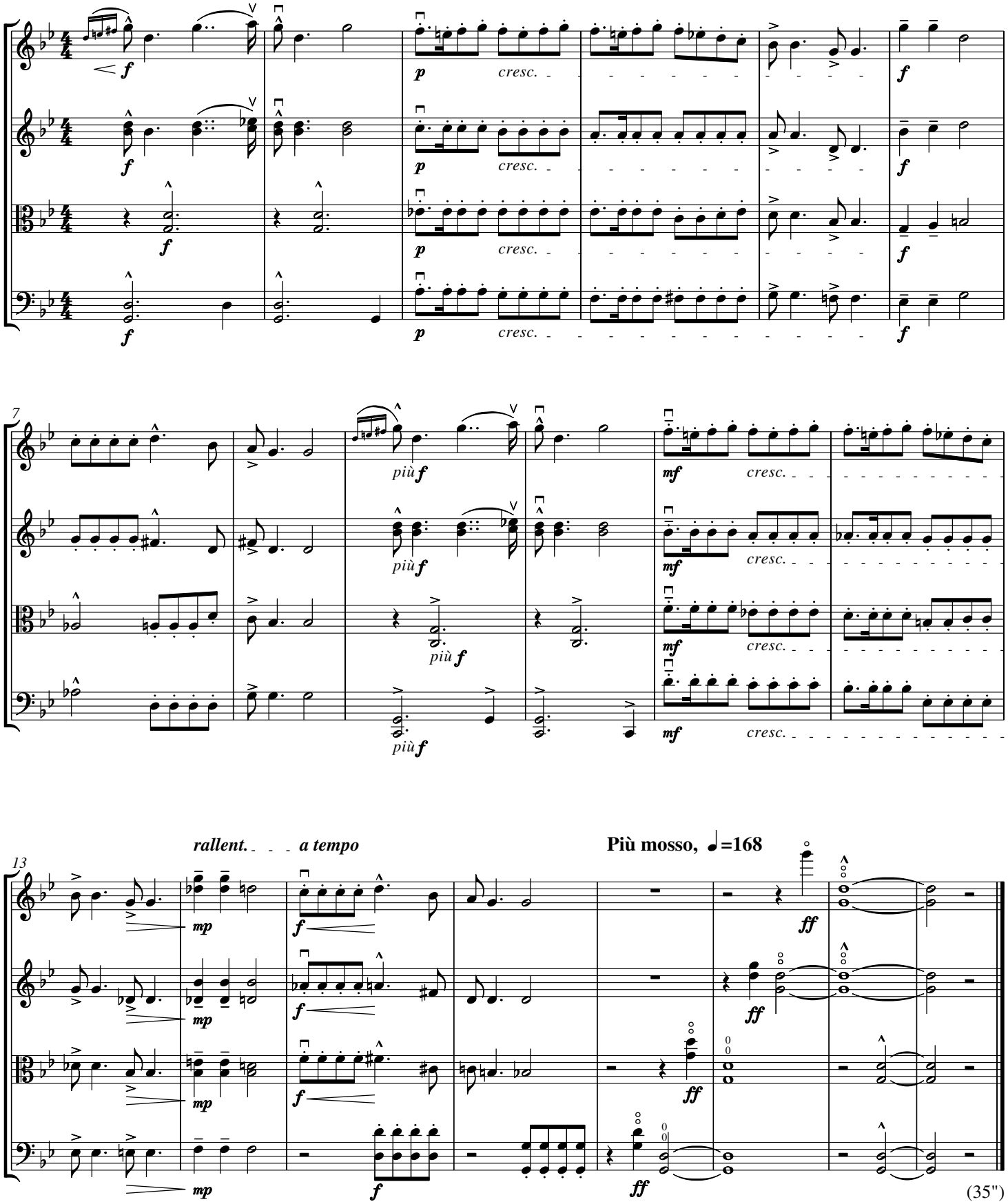
(27")

attacca

(ad lib.)

36. Drunkard's Song

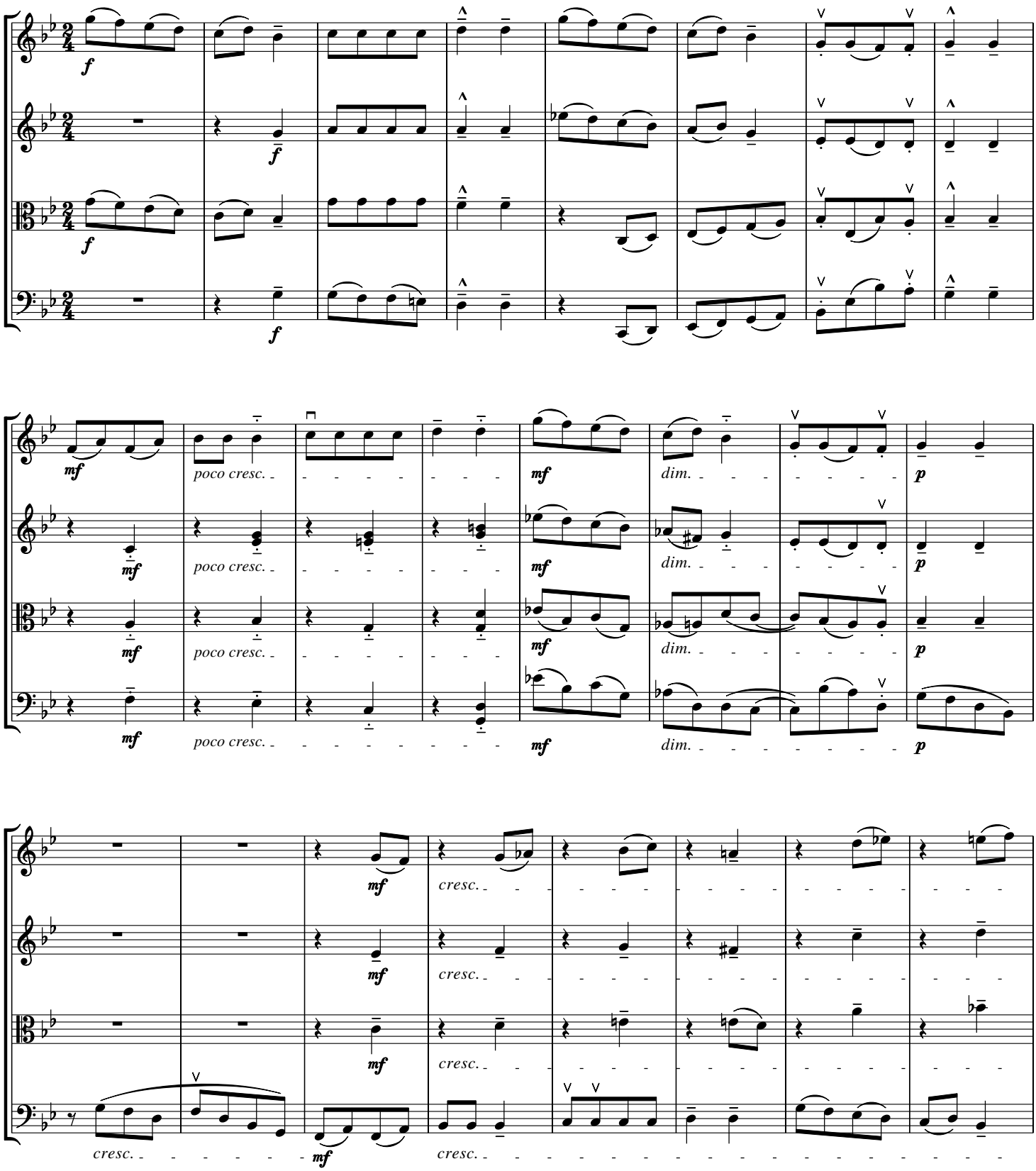
Vivace, ♩ = 144



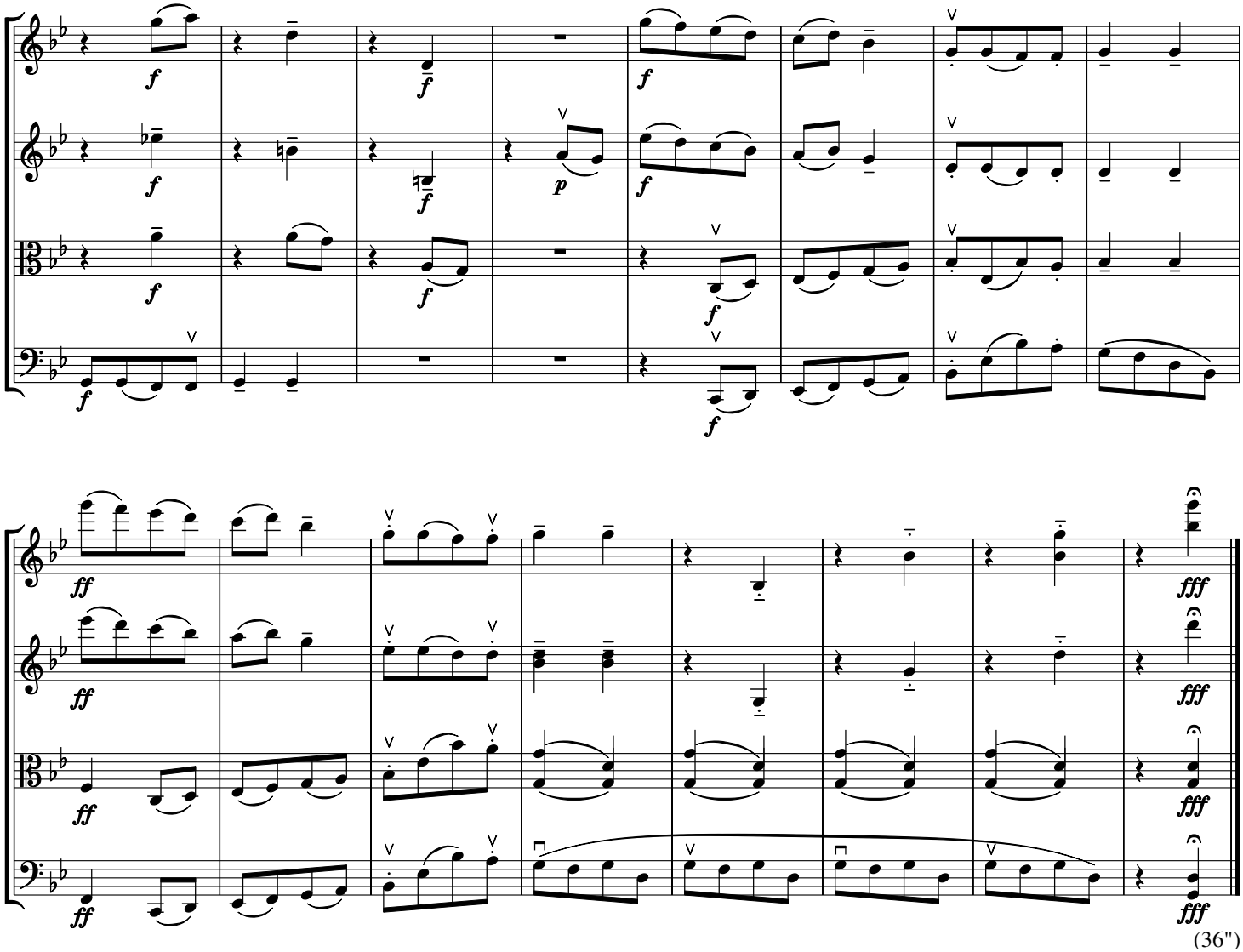
(35")

37. Swine-herd's Song

Allegro, ♩ = 132



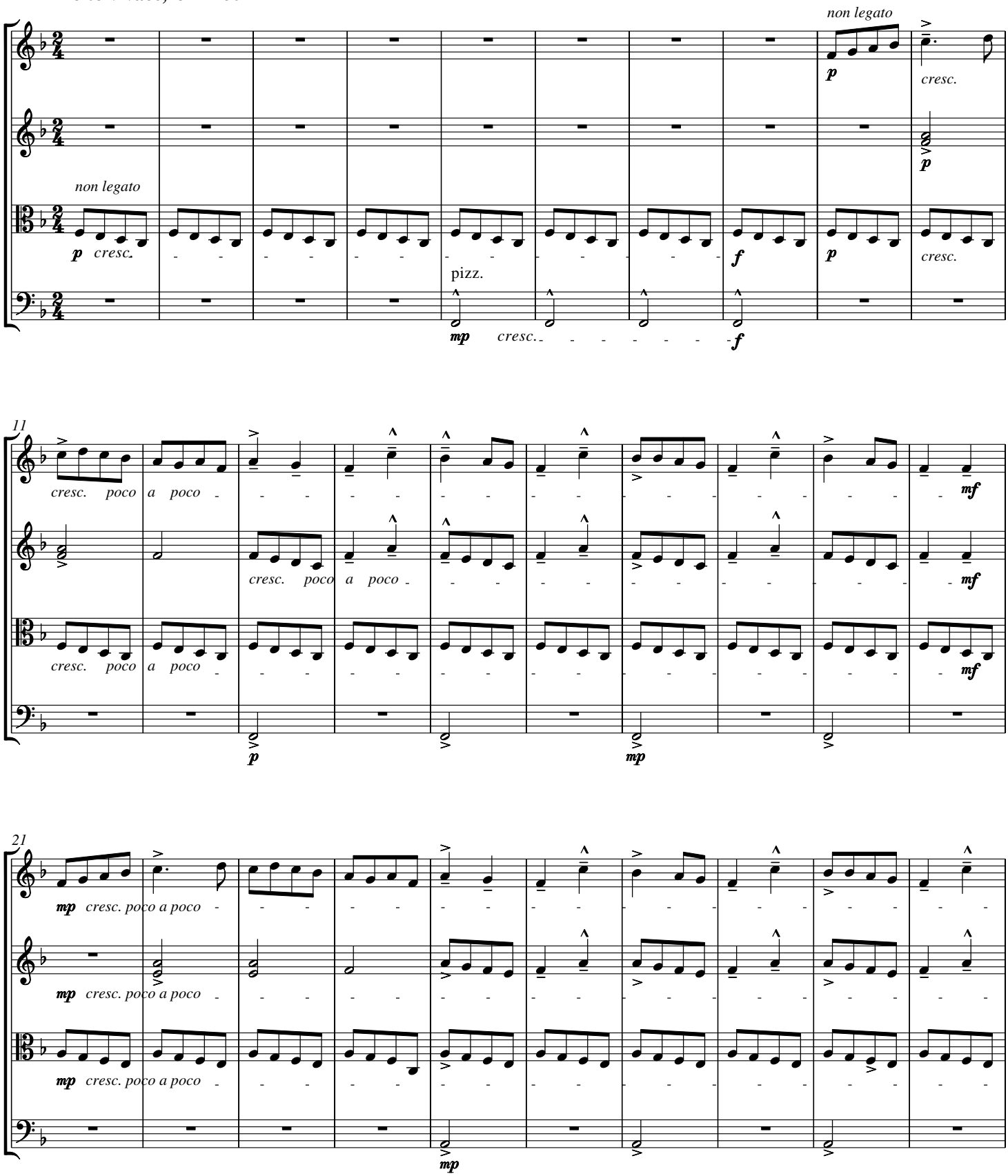
Più vivo, ♩=152

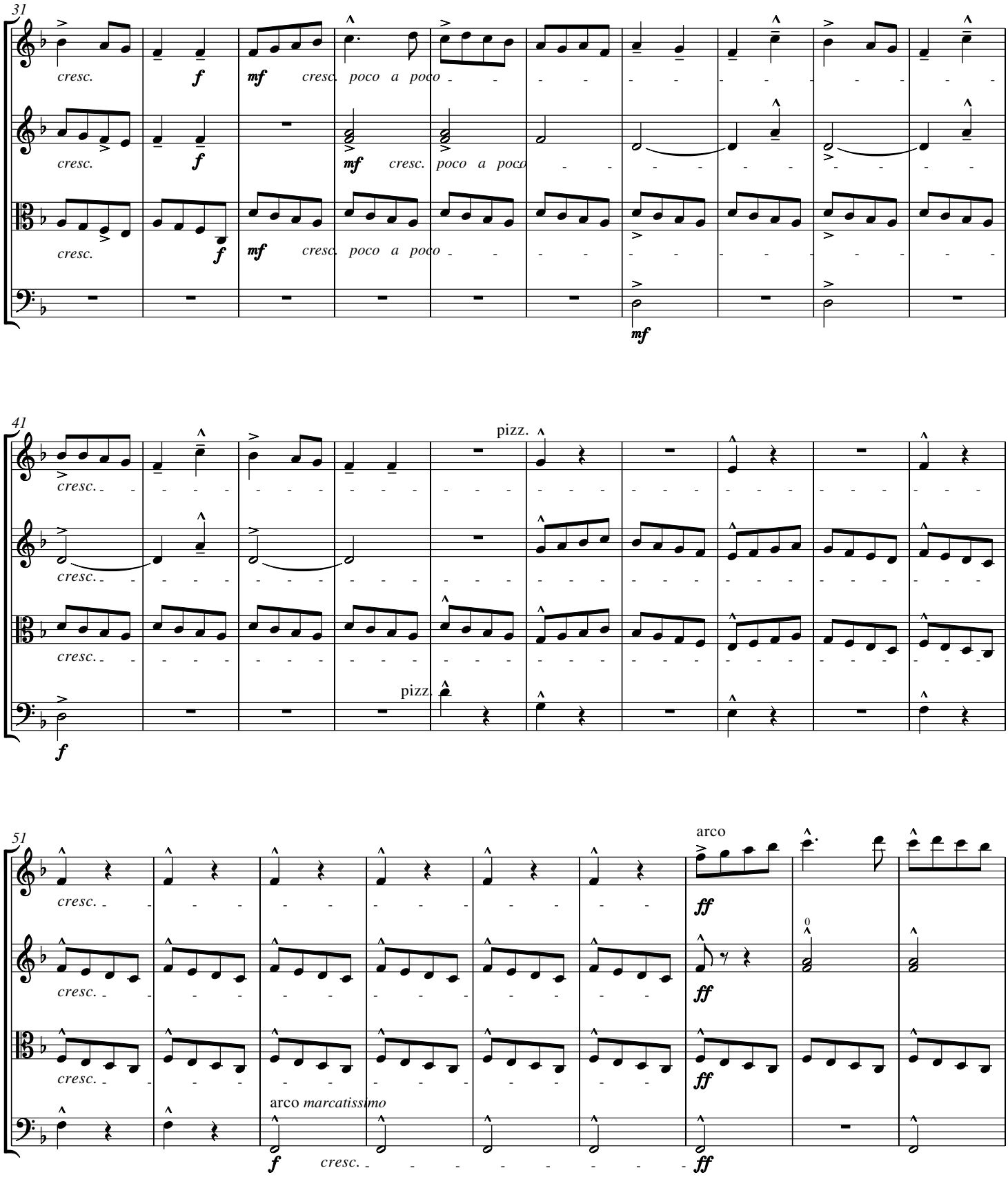


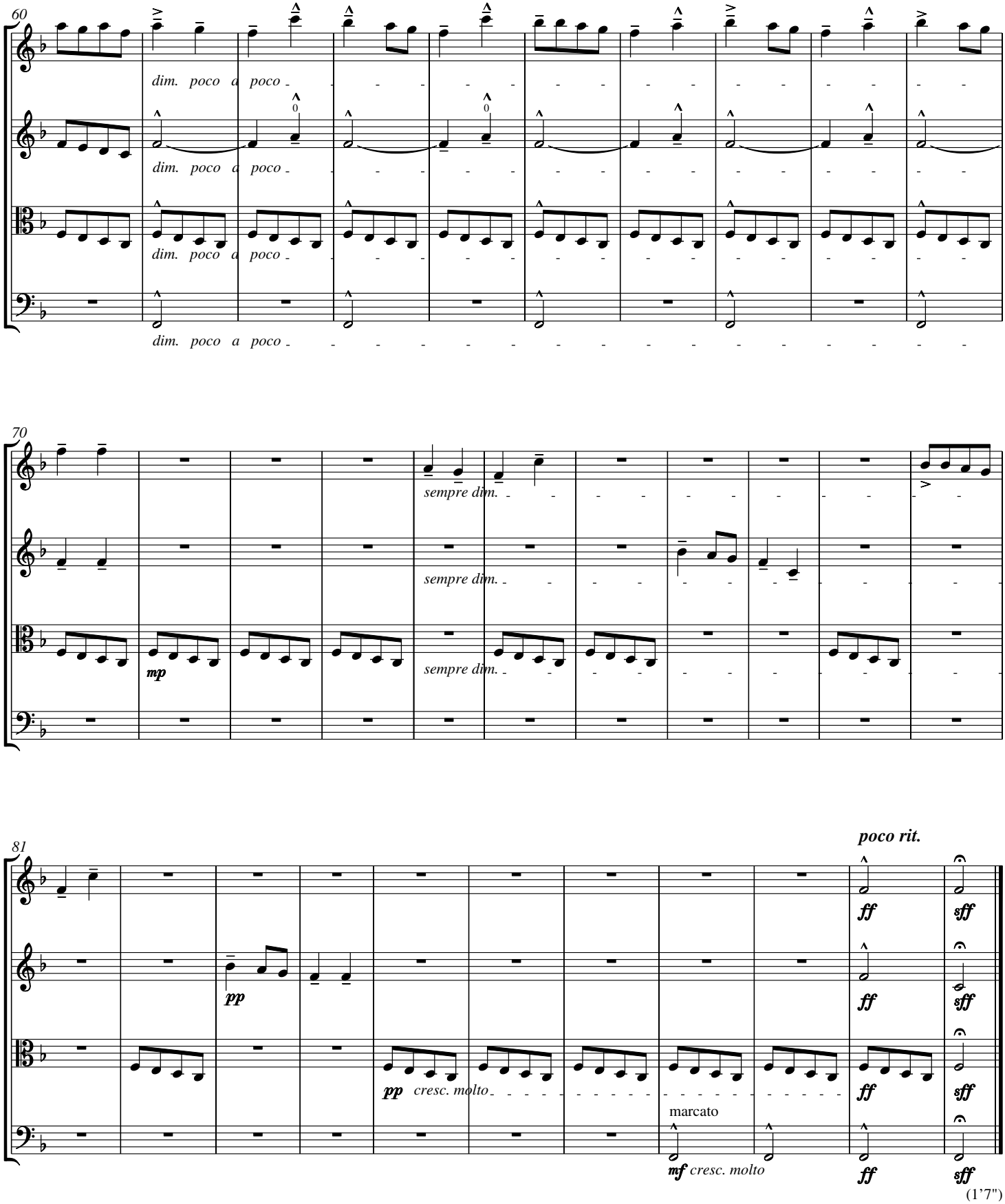
(36")

38. Winter Solstice Song

Molto vivace, ♩ = 160

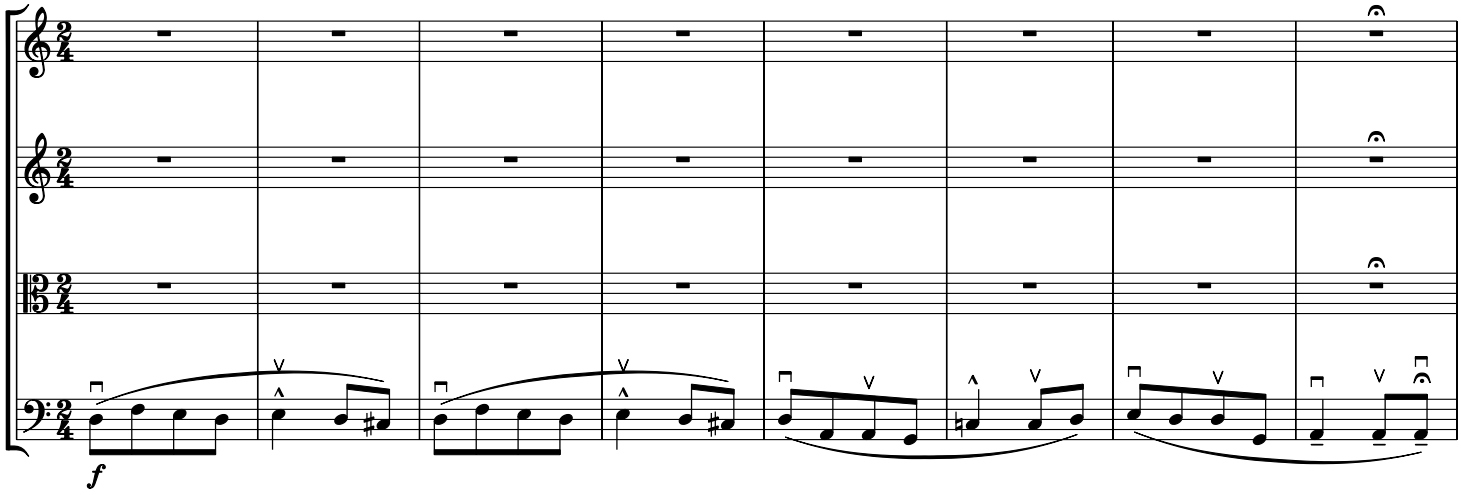


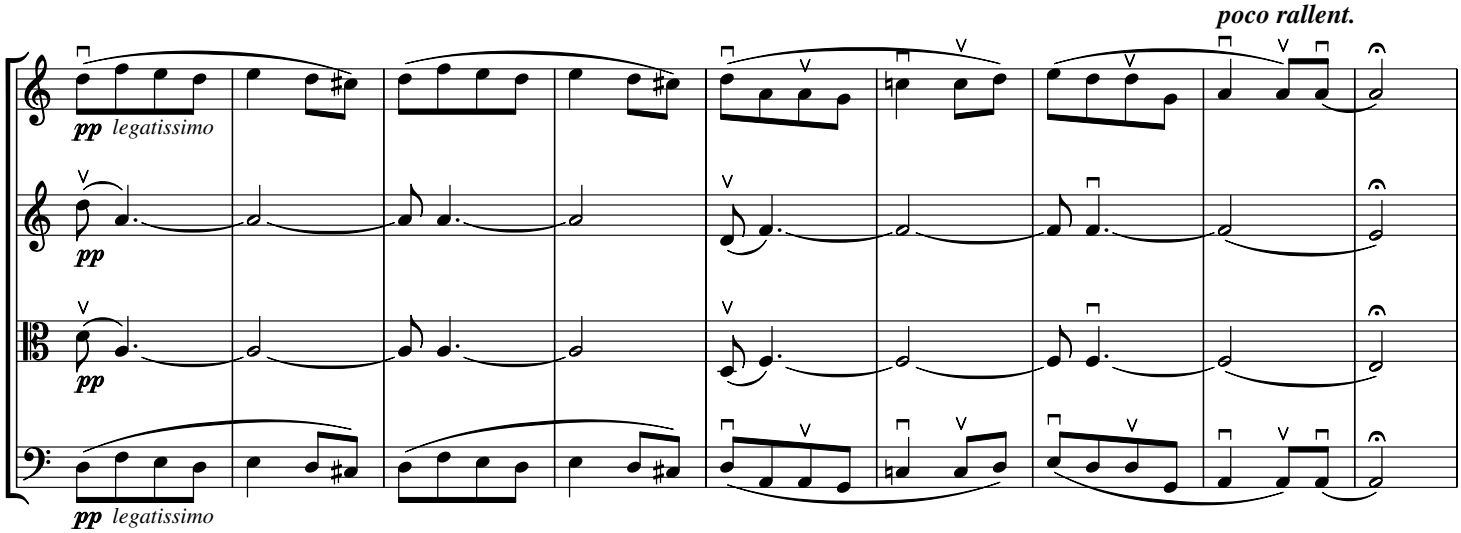

31
cresc.
f
mf
cresc. poco a poco
41
pizz.
51
arco
ff
arco marcatissimo


60
dim. poco a poco
dim. poco a poco
dim. poco a poco
dim. poco a poco
70
sempre dim.
sempre dim.
sempre dim.
mp
81
poco rit.
pp
pp cresc. molto
marcato
mf cresc. molto
ff
sff
(1'7")

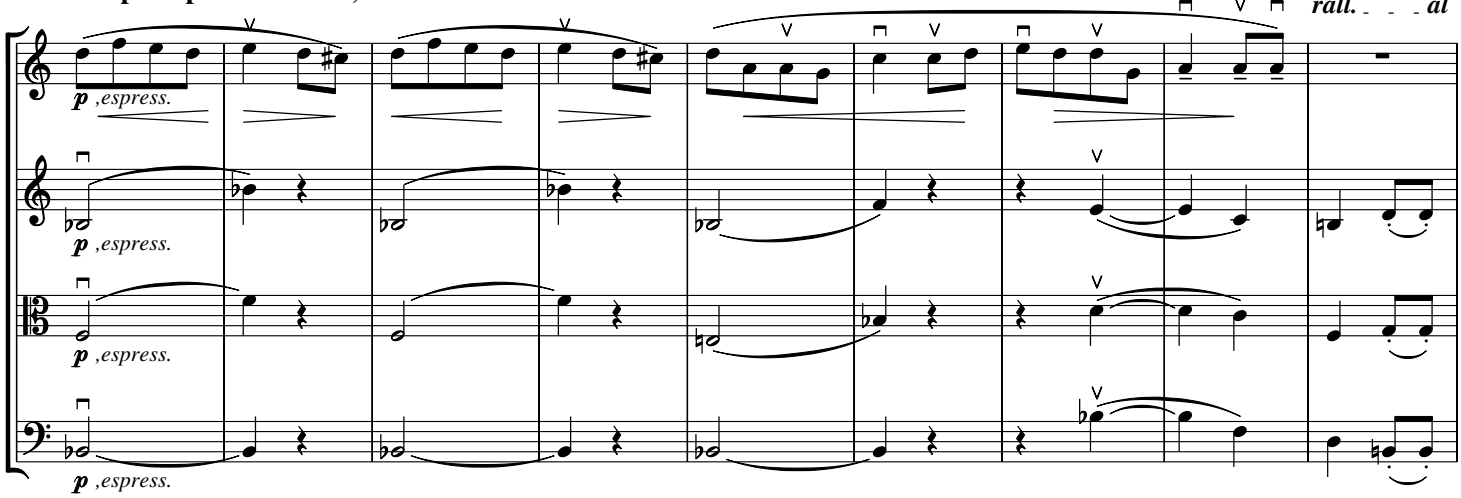
39.

Allegro moderato, ♩ = 84

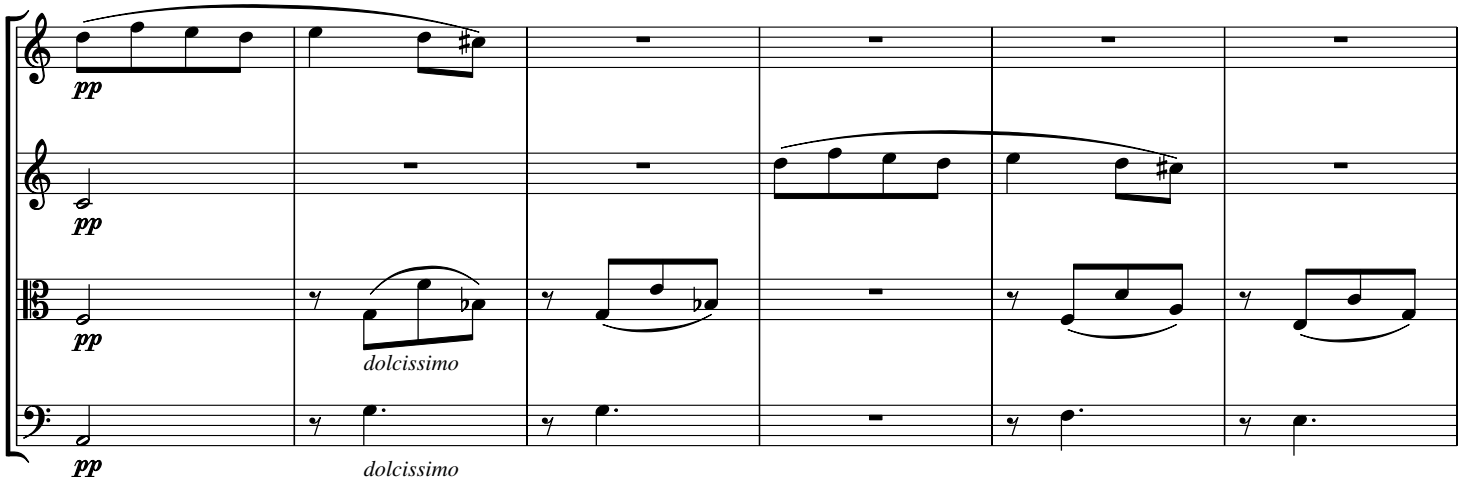


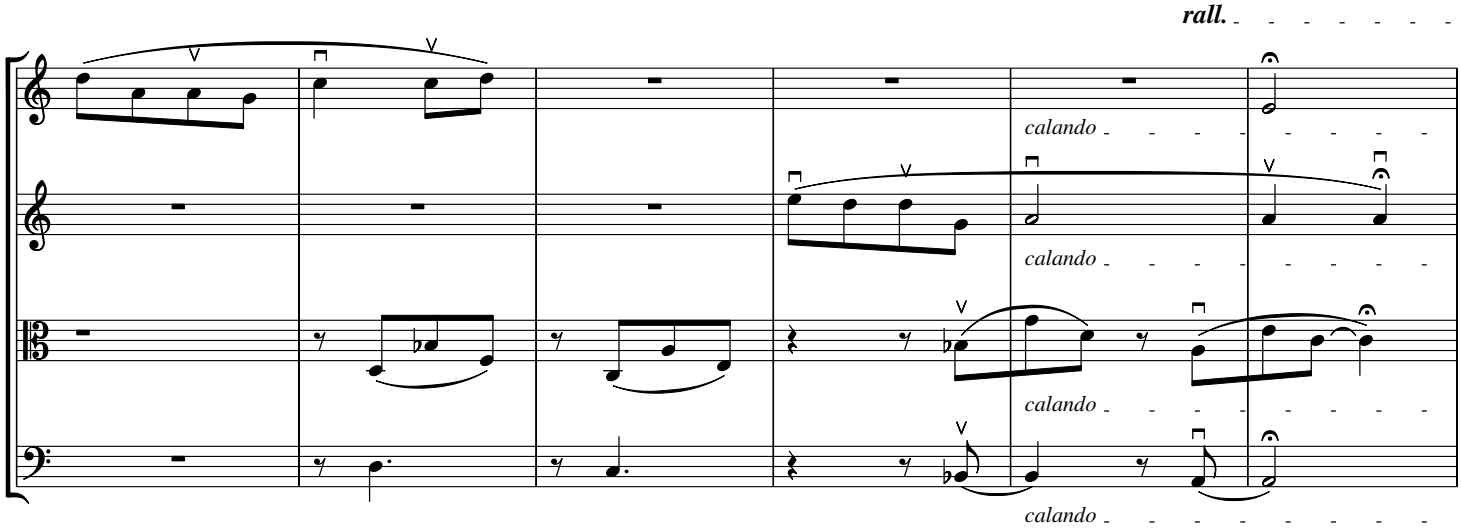


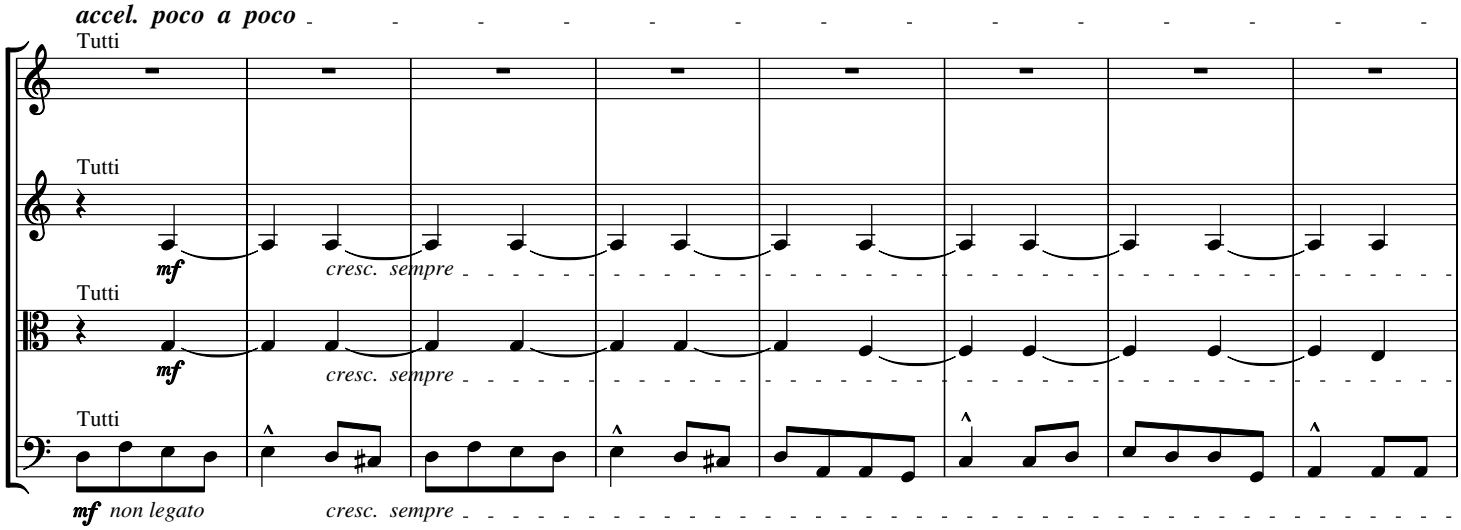
Un poco più moderato, ♩=76

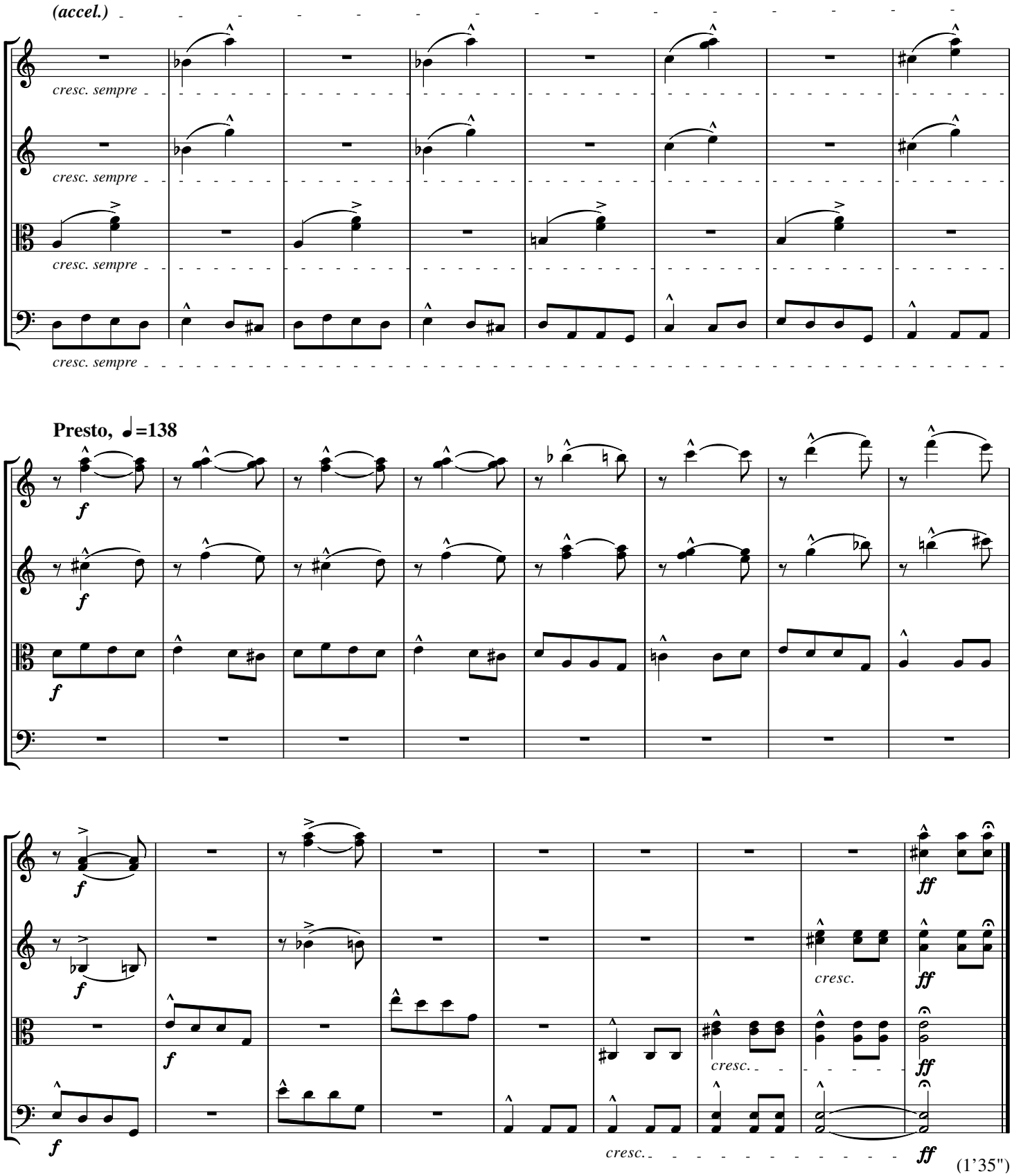


Lento, ♩=70


pp
pp
pp
dolcissimo
pp
dolcissimo

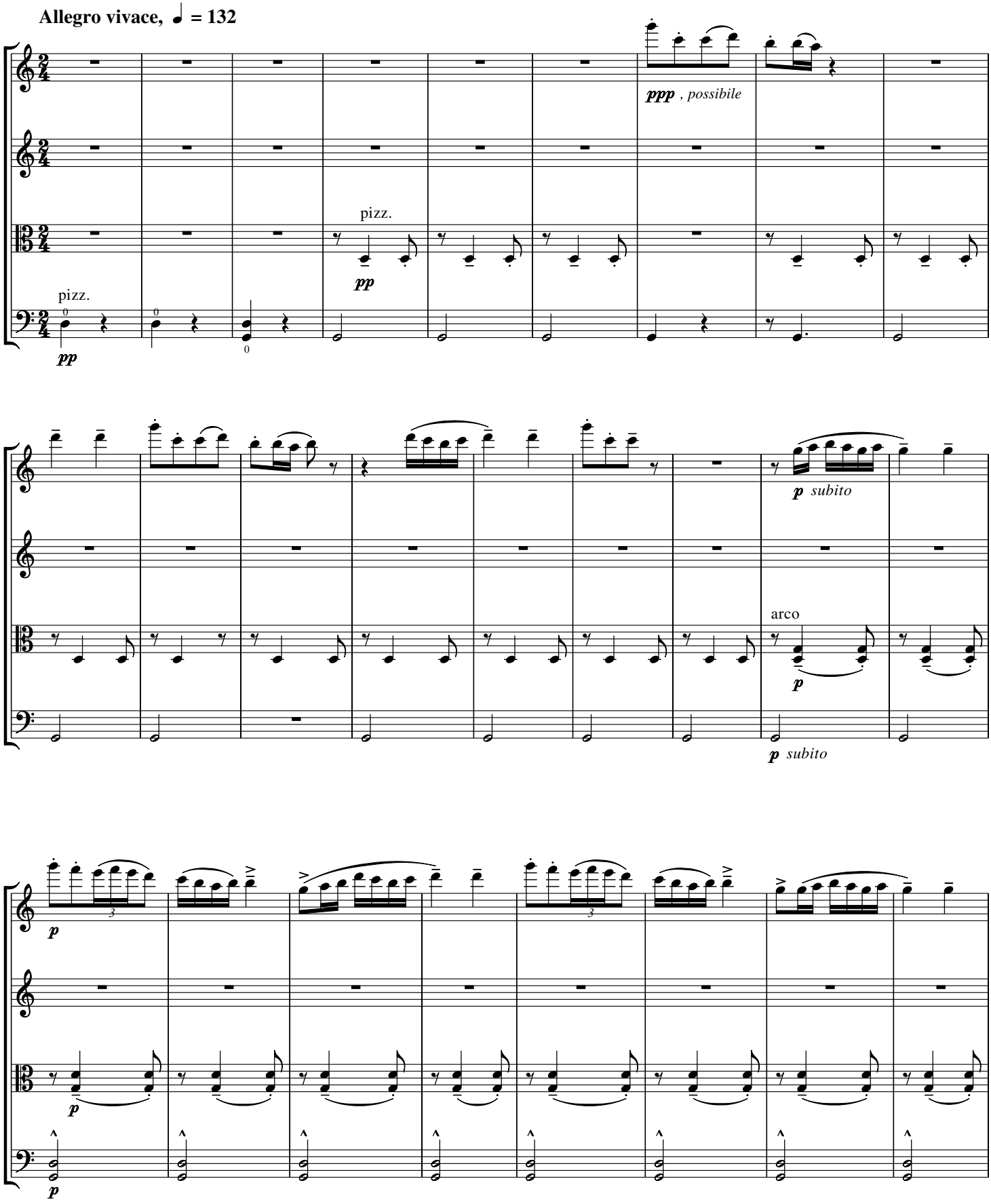

rall.
calando
calando
calando
calando

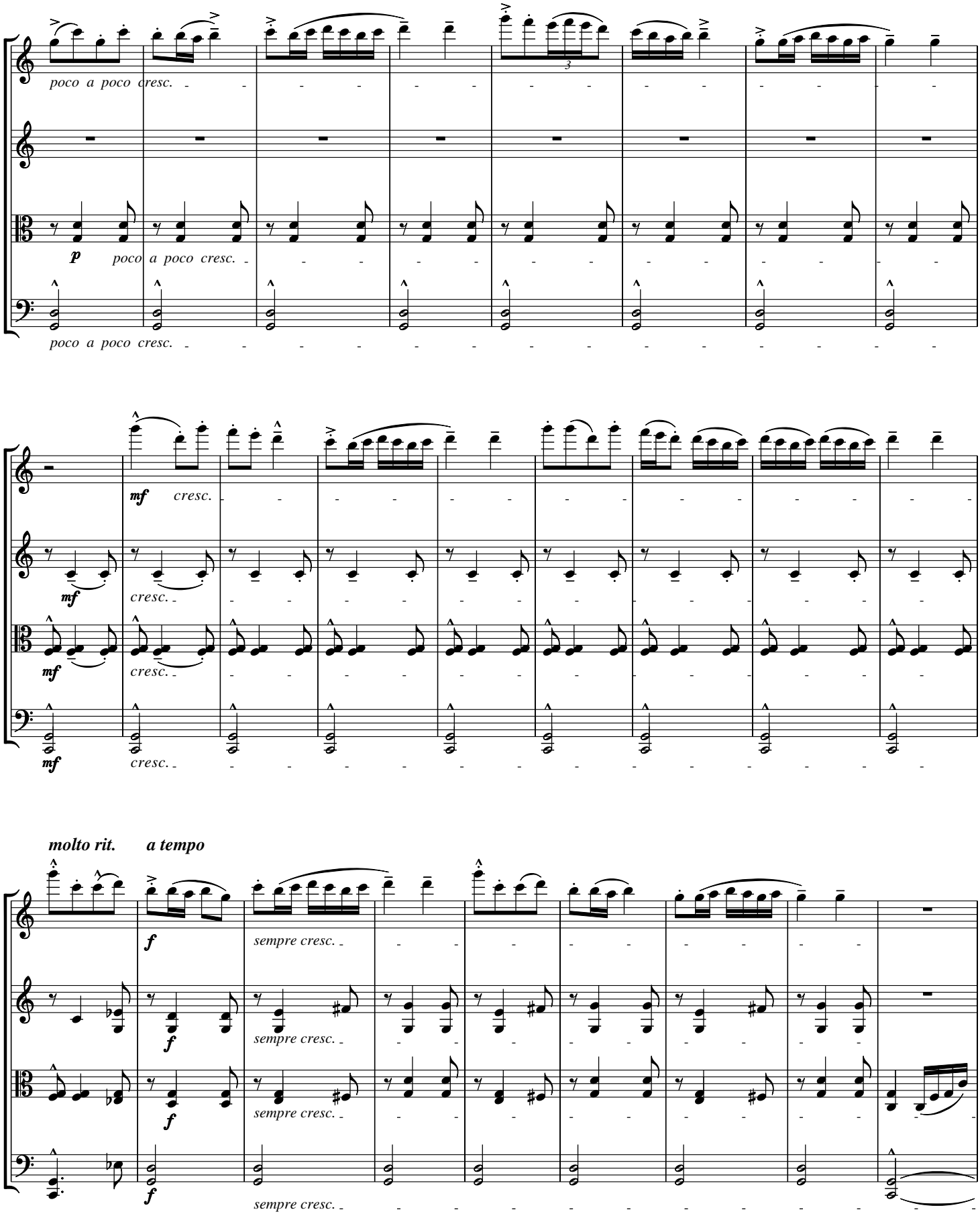

accel. poco a poco
Tutti
Tutti
mf
cresc. sempre
Tutti
mf
cresc. sempre
Tutti
mf non legato
cresc. sempre

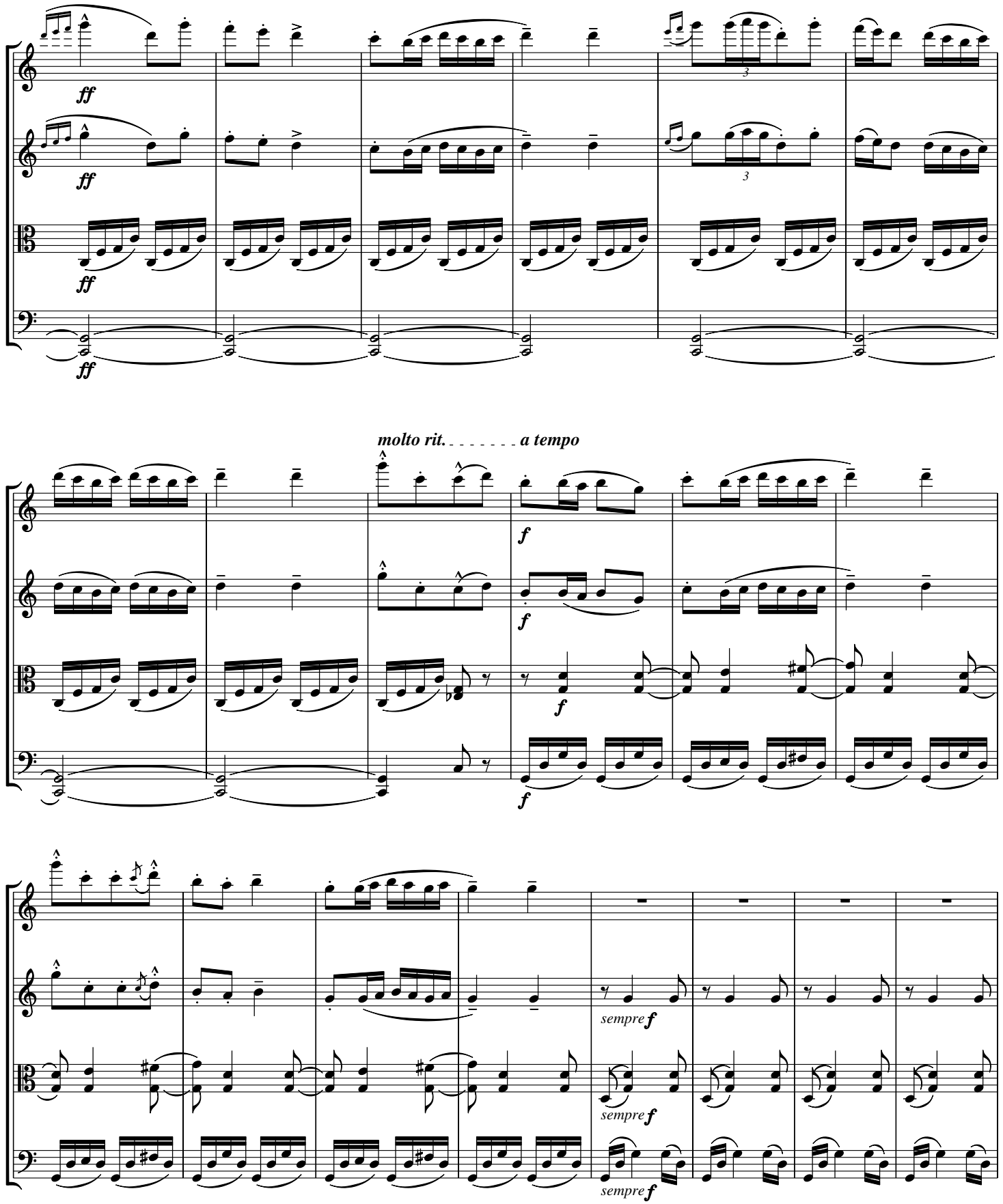

(accel.)
cresc. sempre
cresc. sempre
cresc. sempre
cresc. sempre
Presto, ♩=138
f
f
f
f
f
f
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
ff
ff
ff
ff
(1'35")

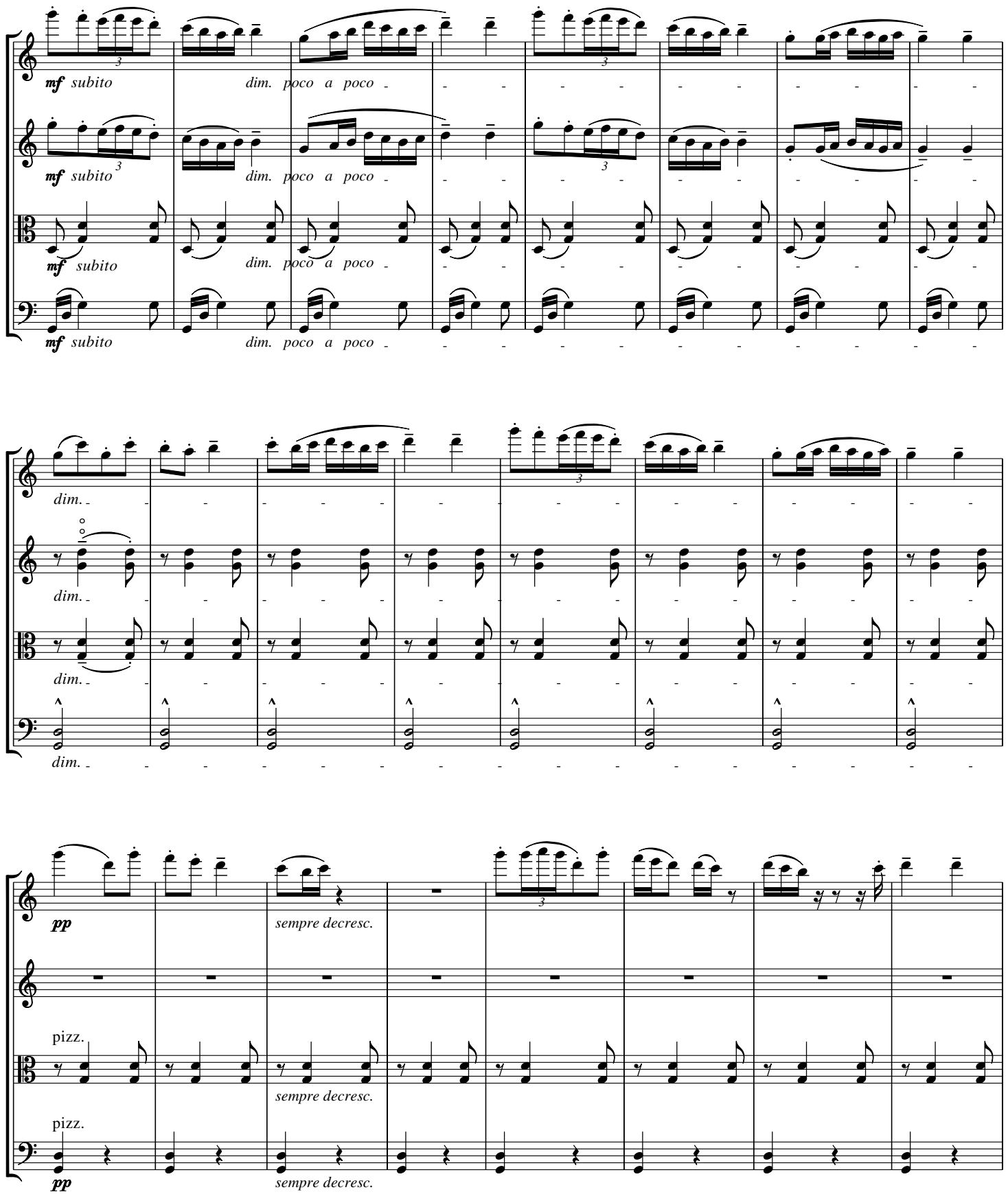
40. Swine-herd's Dance

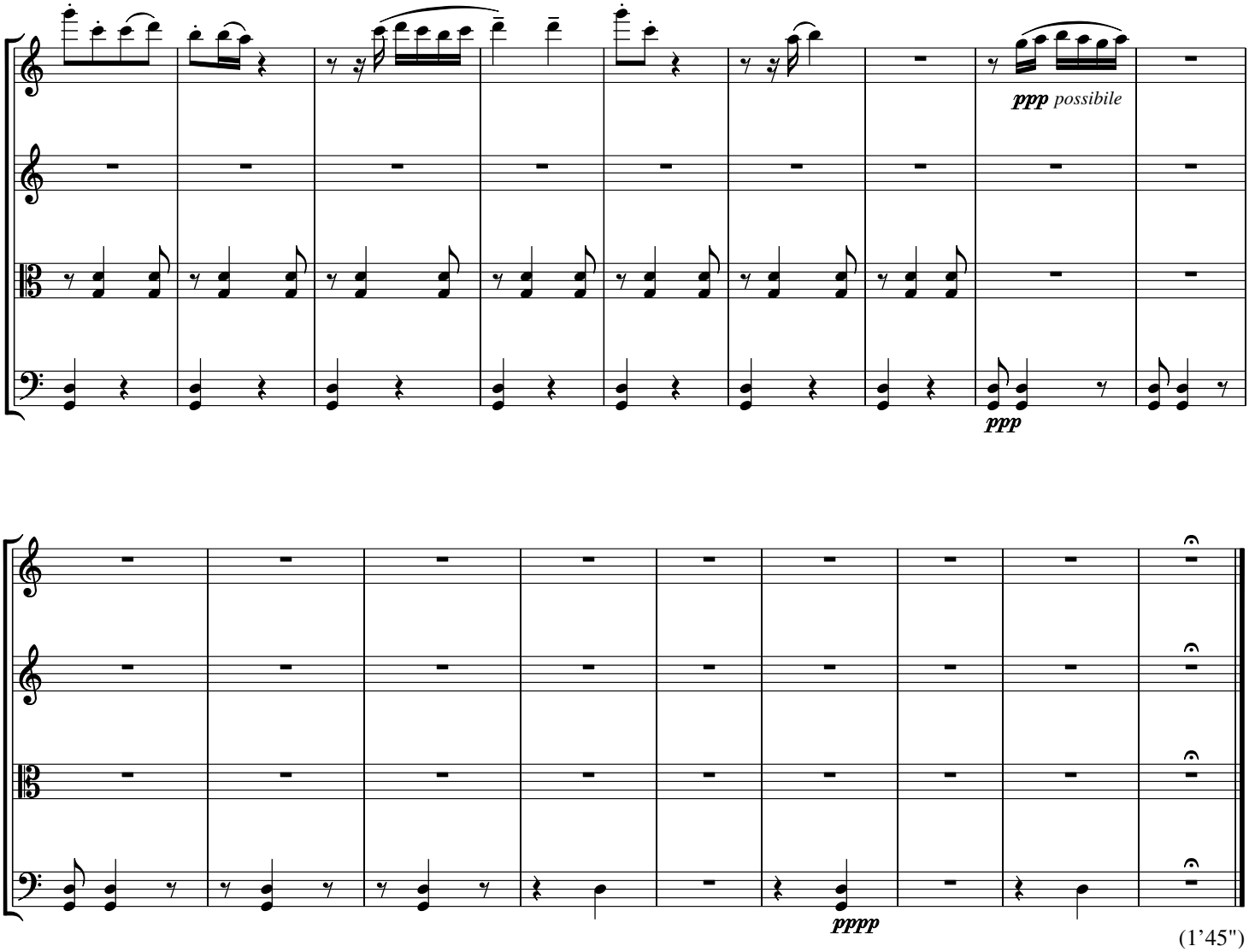
Allegro vivace, ♩ = 132




poco a poco cresc.
p
poco a poco cresc.
poco a poco cresc.
mf
cresc.
mf
cresc.
mf
cresc.
mf
cresc.
molto rit.
a tempo
f
sempre cresc.
f
sempre cresc.
f
sempre cresc.
f
sempre cresc.


ff
ff
ff
ff
molto rit. . . . . a tempo
f
f
f
f
sempre f
sempre f
sempre f


mf subito
dim. poco a poco
mf subito
dim. poco a poco
mf subito
dim. poco a poco
mf subito
dim. poco a poco
dim.
dim.
dim.
dim.
pp
sempre decresc.
pizz.
sempre decresc.
pizz.
pp
sempre decresc.



(1’45")