W. Jay Sydeman

Quartet

for Flute, Violin, Viola and Cello

(c. 1997)

Arts Aeternum

I played the viola in my *Flute Quartet* (the premiere), which immediately tells us this is not a virtuoso piece (at least not the viola part). If it was in German, the first movement might be marked *gemütlichkeit* (which is roughly translated as "pleasant"). That is, the thematic material and general tonal language are somewhat familiar. What perhaps is more unique is the way the tunes are passed about contrapuntally, which, modestly I could describe as quite charming (which I believe is slightly north of "pleasant").

Not so the second movement, which is (of all things) a passacaglia in the great tradition (at least the first section). It does wander off into new thematic land for a bit, or better said, the passacaglia intervals are taken up by the upper instruments somewhat playfully... actually as preparation for the rollicking third movement.

Rollicking it is, with 16th-notes sparks flying from instrument to instrument in a language seemingly tonal but slipping off into some bizarre directions. It requires very accurate rhythmic performance, close attention to dynamics, and considerable "chops" (viola part excluded, *naturellement*). With a proper combination of these elements, it sounds quite exciting, even breathtaking… that is (I repeat), with each element performed with great accuracy and precision (if you don't pay too much attention to the viola...).

– 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. Slow March – circa 1:30
II. Lento – circa 3:15
III. Allegro – circa 3:00

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

Score

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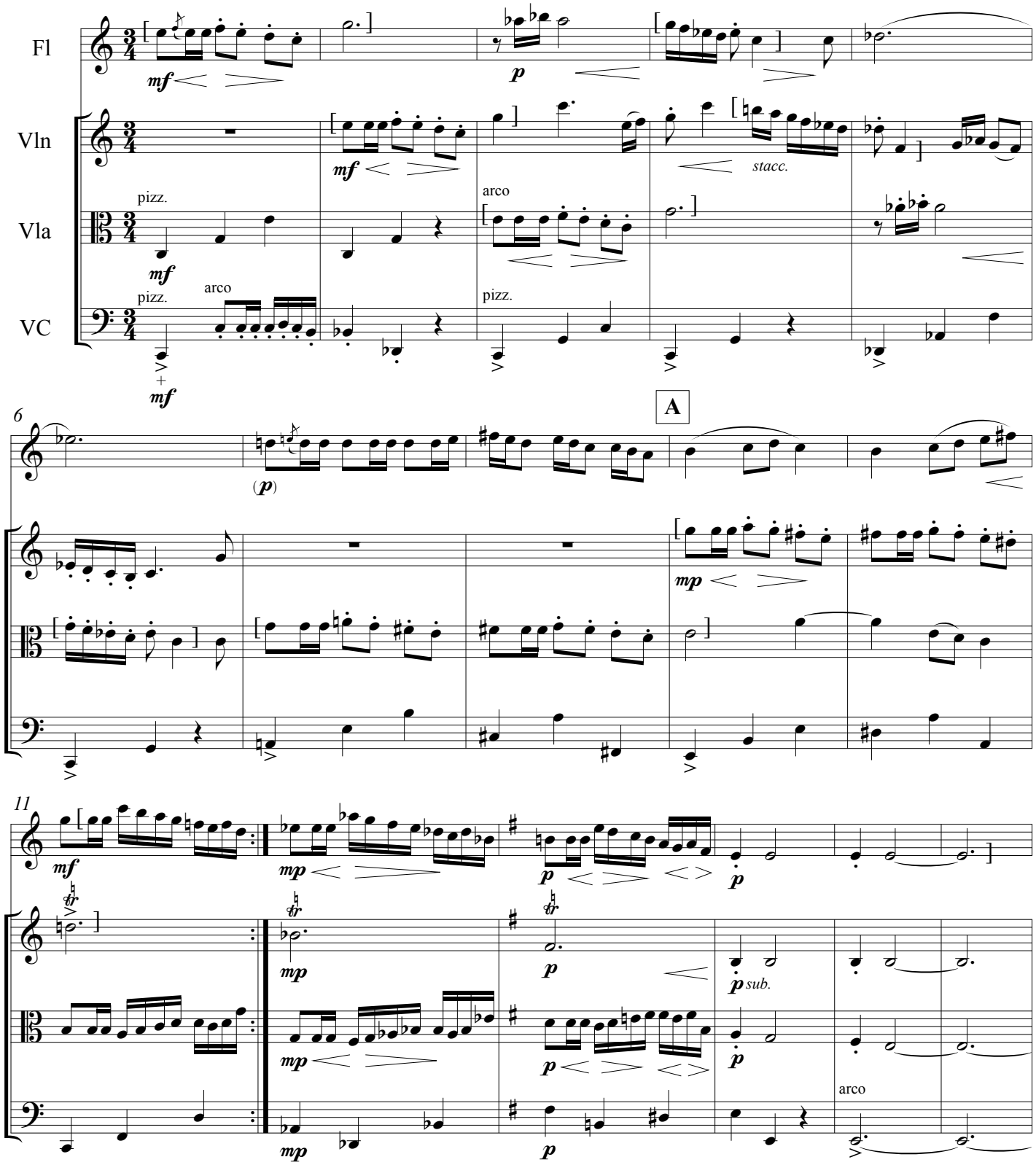
(c. 1997)

I.

Note: Brackets denote primary voice

Slow March ♩ = c. 108



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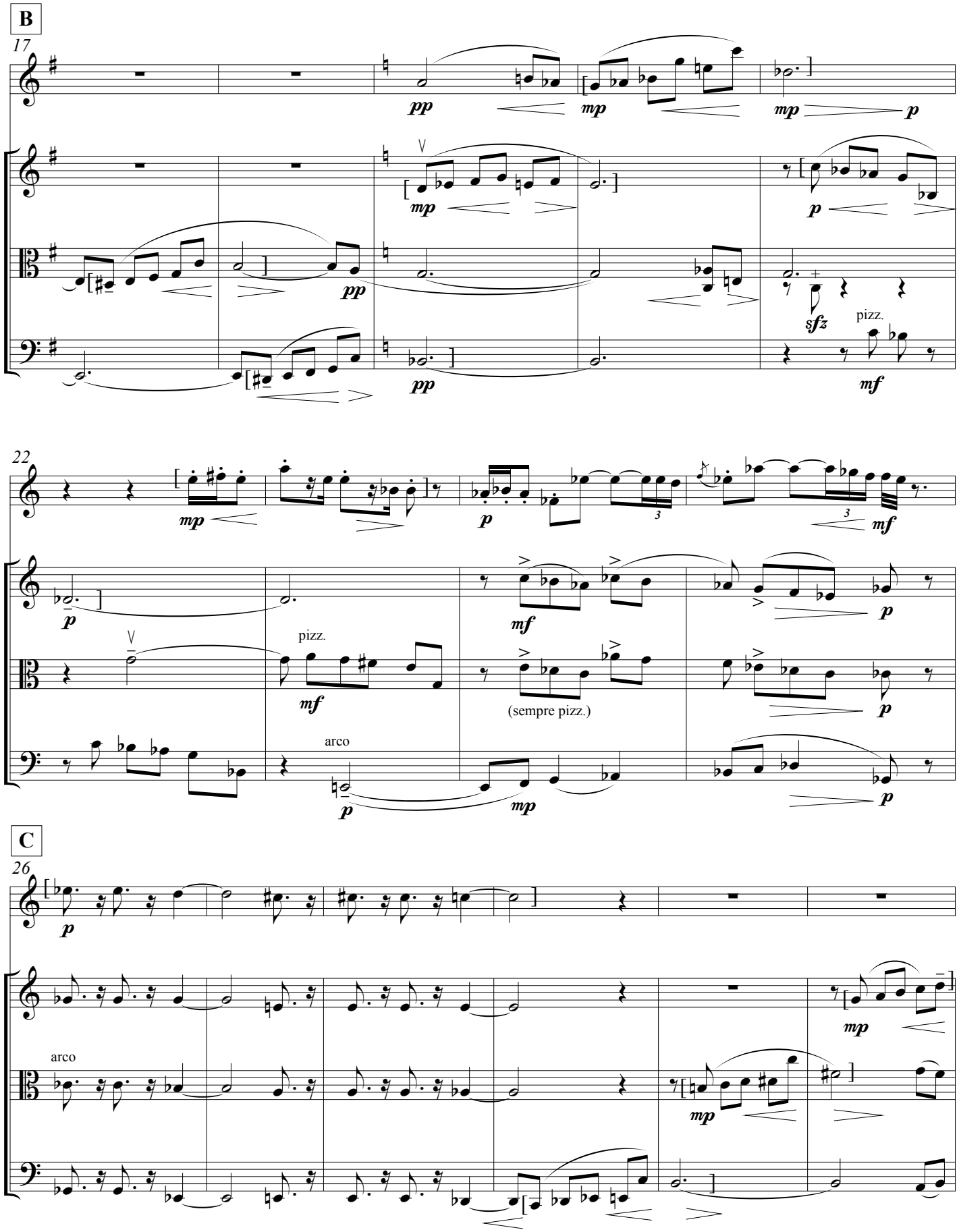
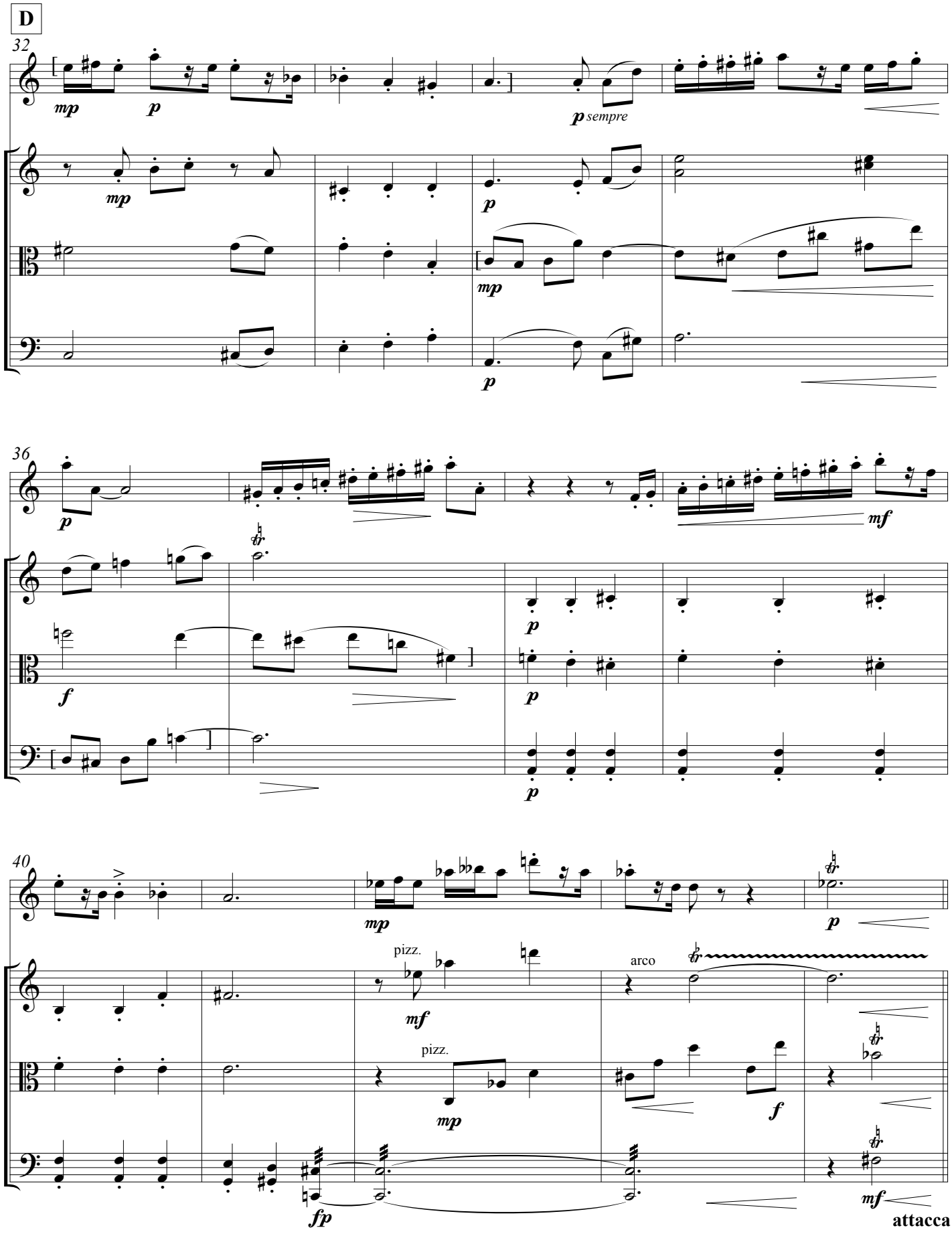
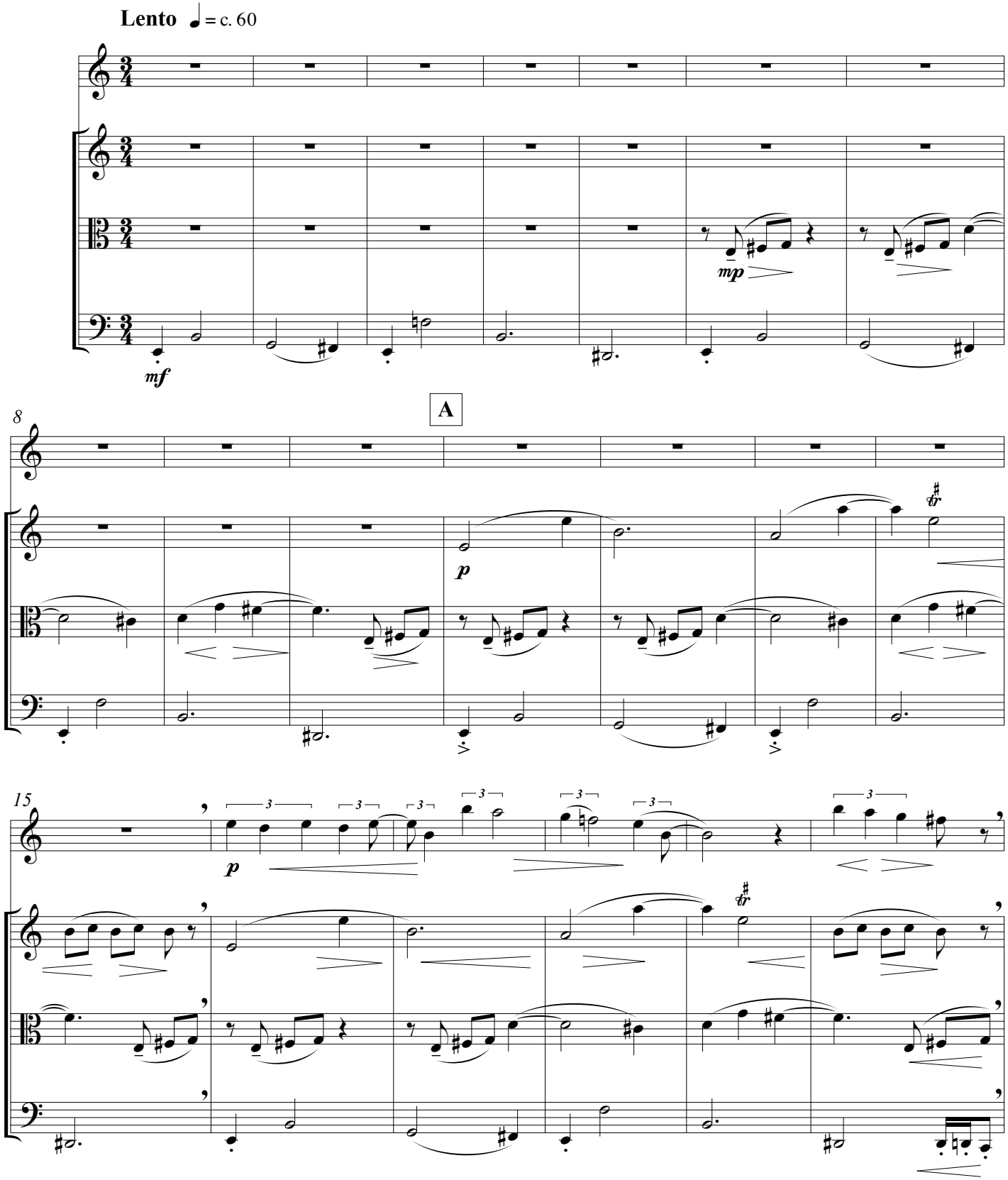
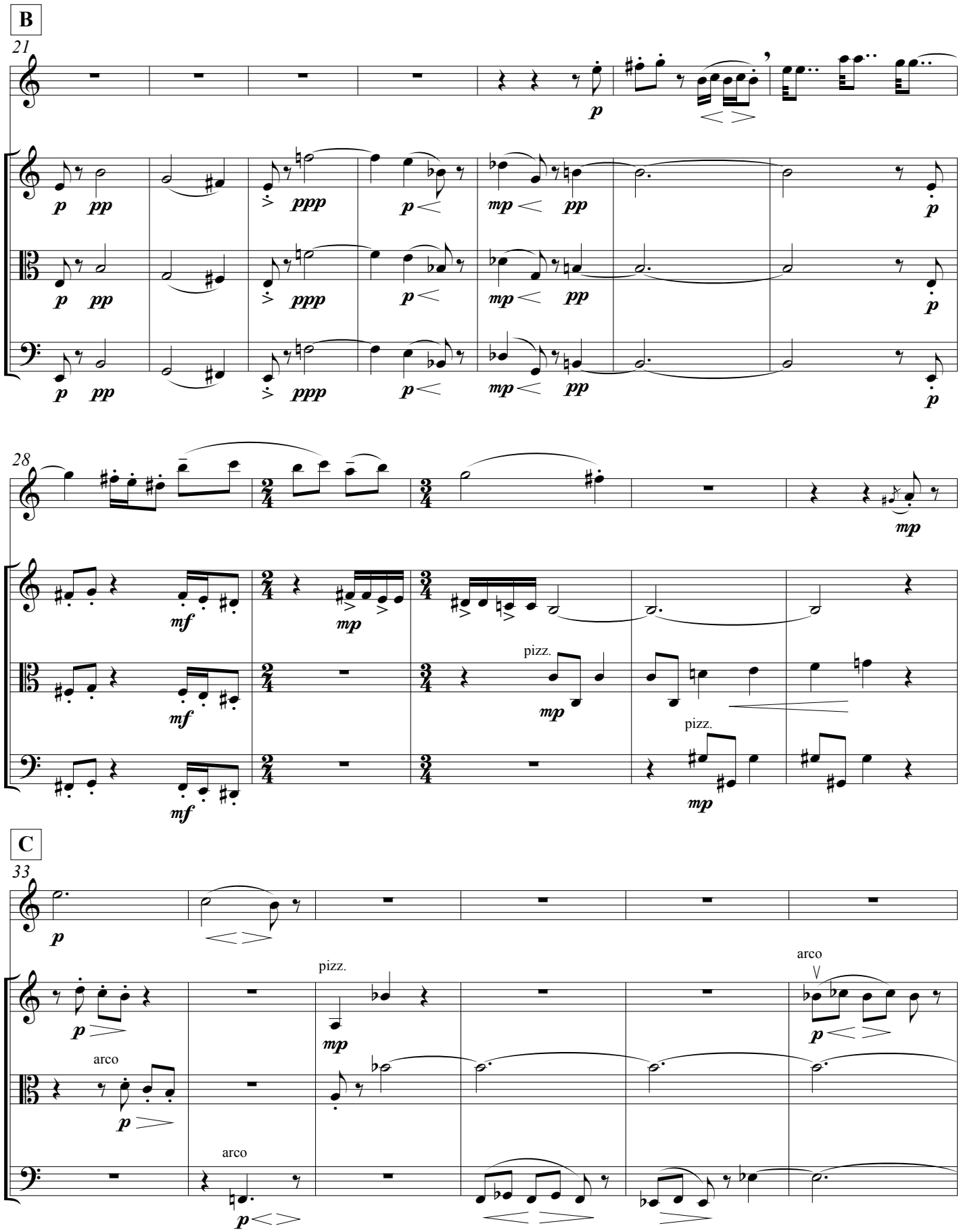
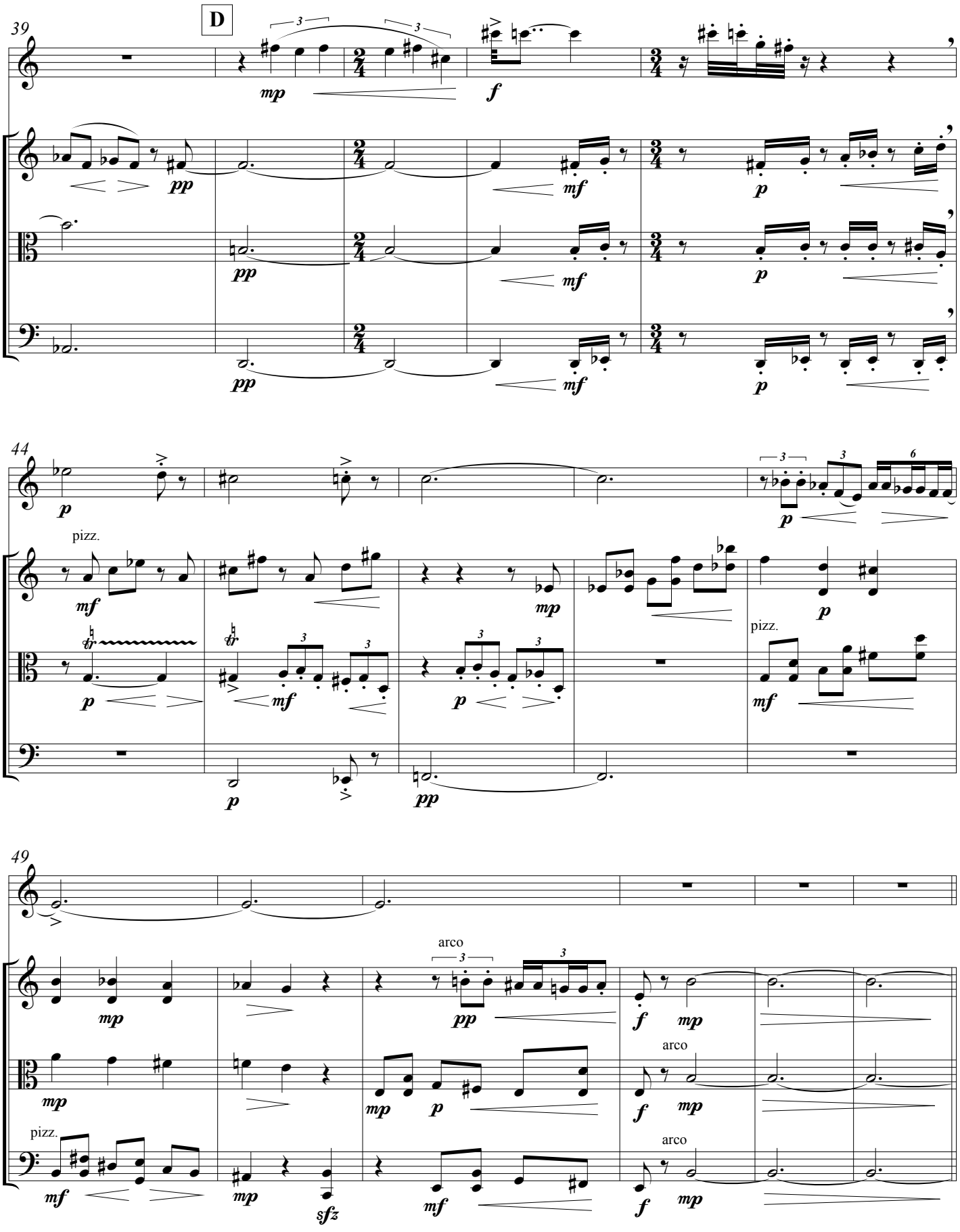

B
17
pp
mp
mp
p
mp
p
pp
sfz
pizz.
pp
mf
22
mp
p
3
3
mf
p
pizz.
mf
mf
p
(sempre pizz.)
arco
p
mp
p
C
26
p
arco
mp
mp

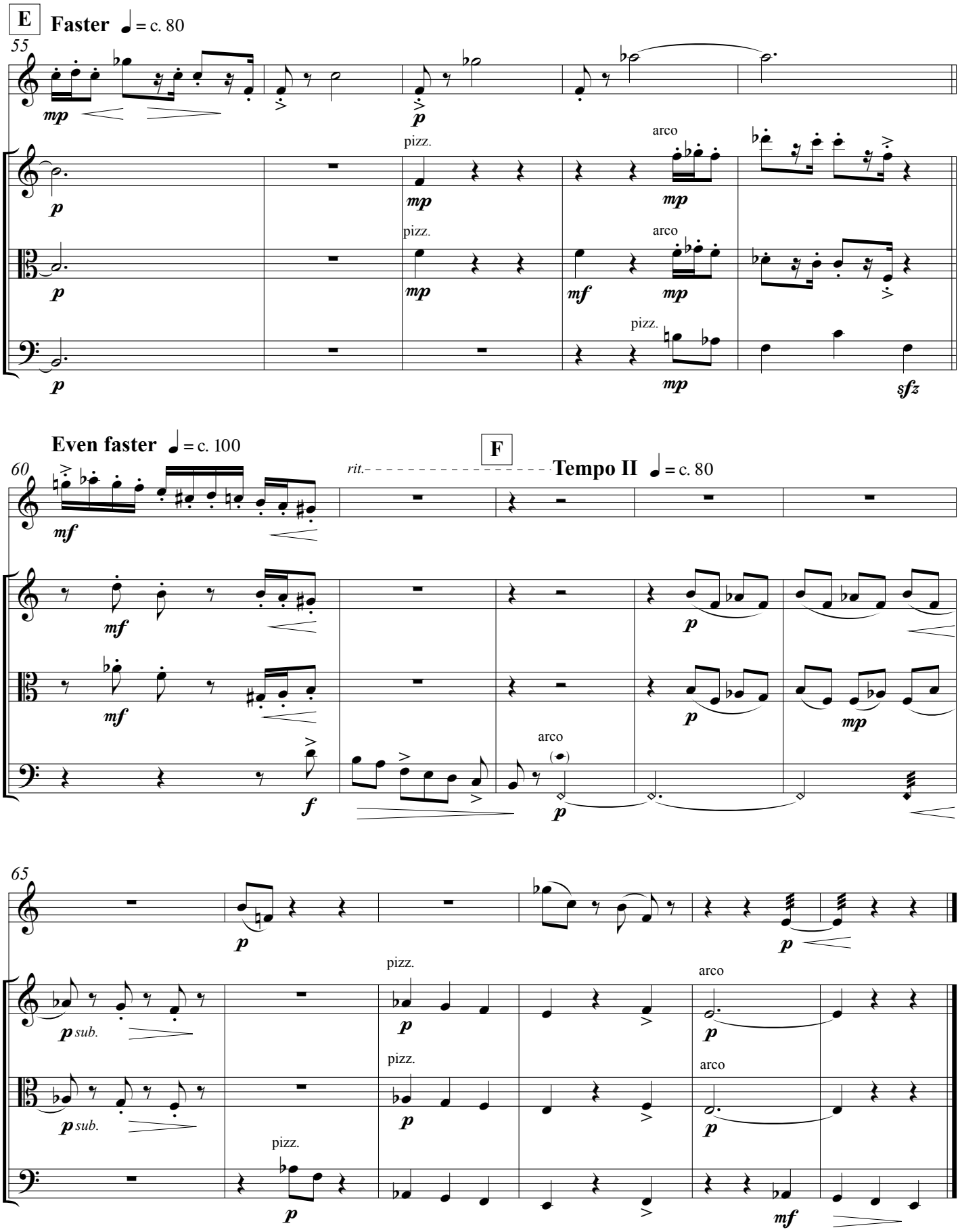

D
32
mp
p
p sempre
mp
p
mp
p
36
p
mf
f
p
p
p
40
mp
p
pizz.
mf
arco
pizz.
mp
f
fp
mf
attacca

II.

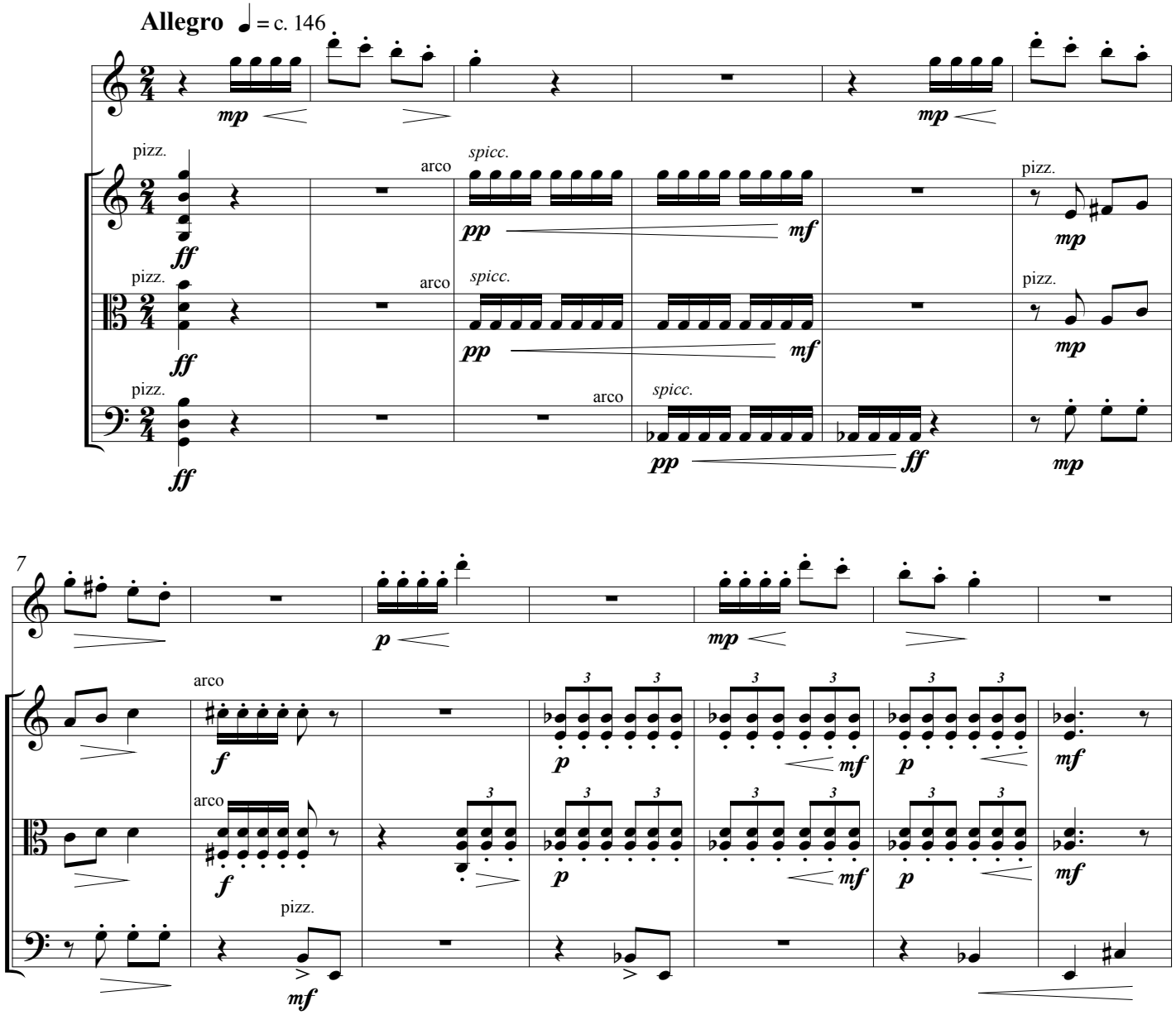


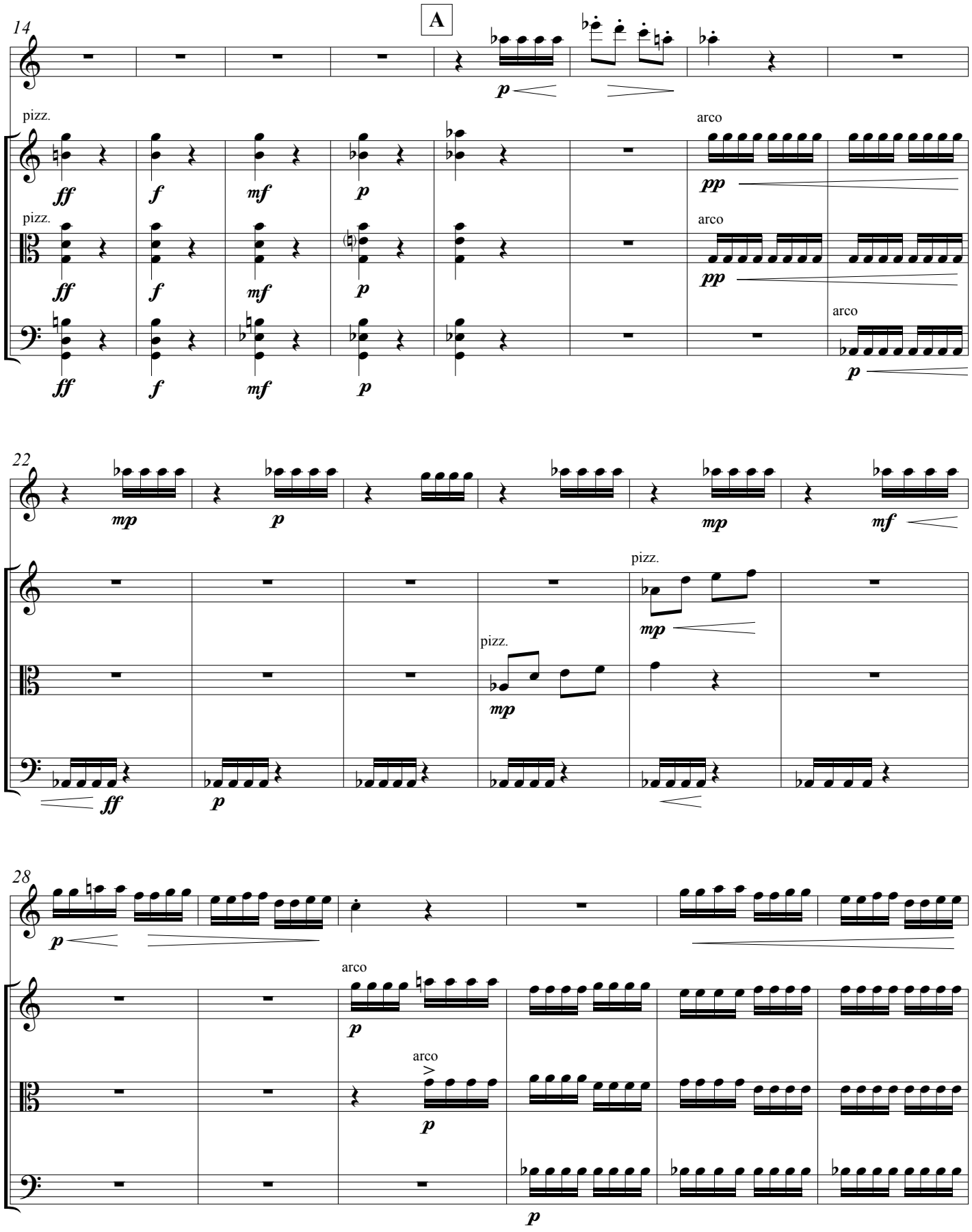

B
21
p
pp
ppp
mp
28
mf
pizz.
C
33
arco

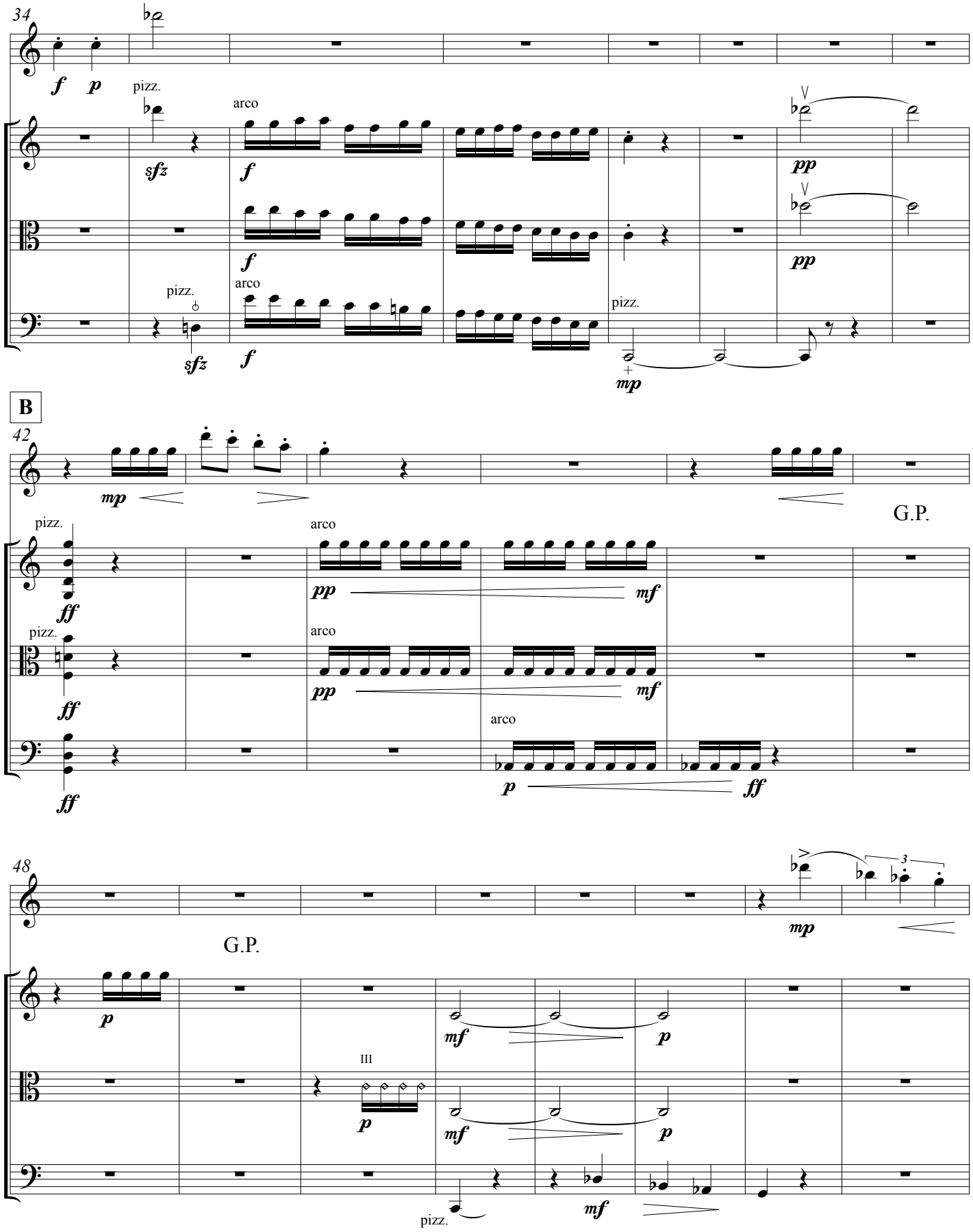

39
D
44
49
pizz.
arco

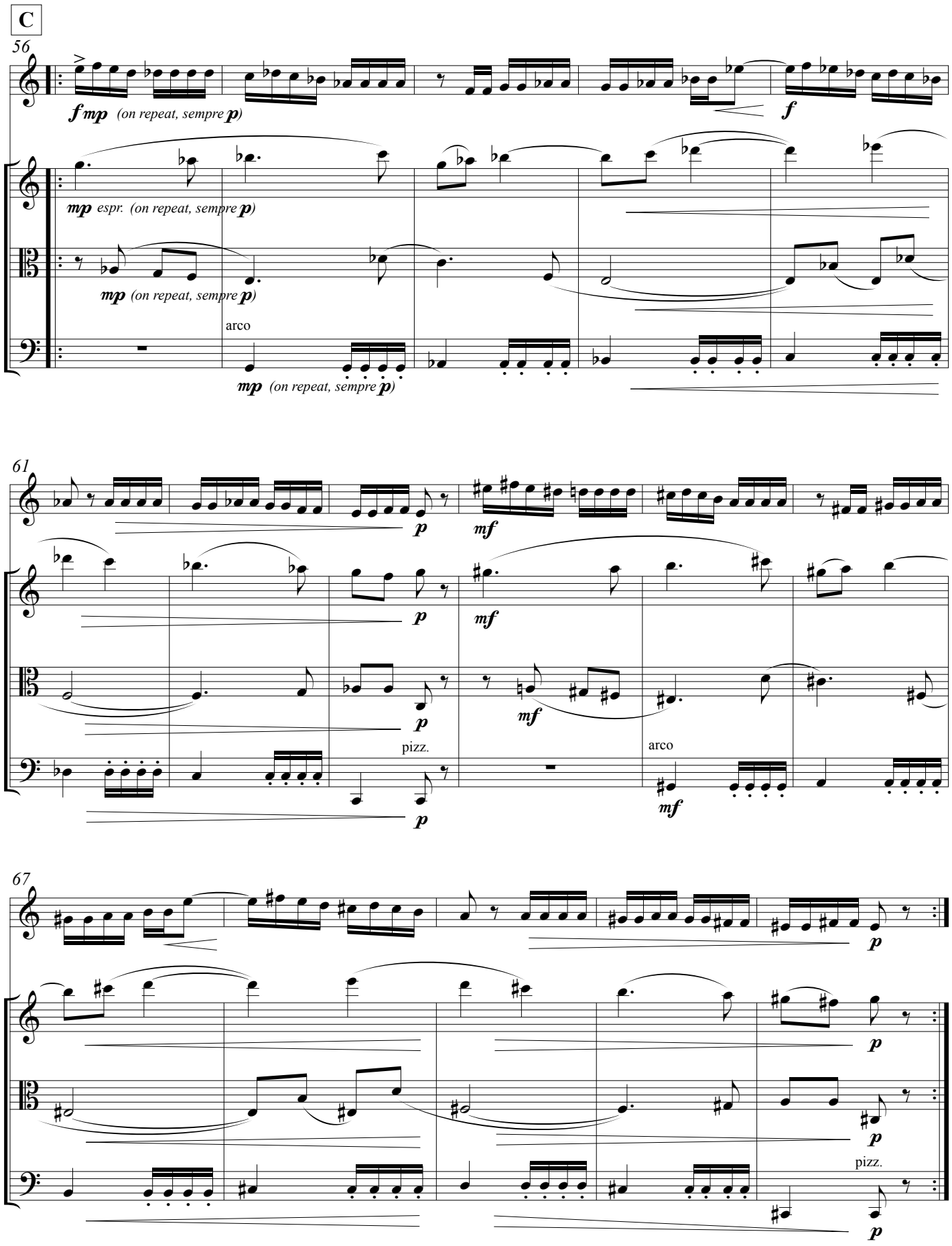

E
Faster ♩ = c. 80
55
pizz.
arco
Even faster ♩ = c. 100
60
rit.
F
Tempo II ♩ = c. 80
65
sub.

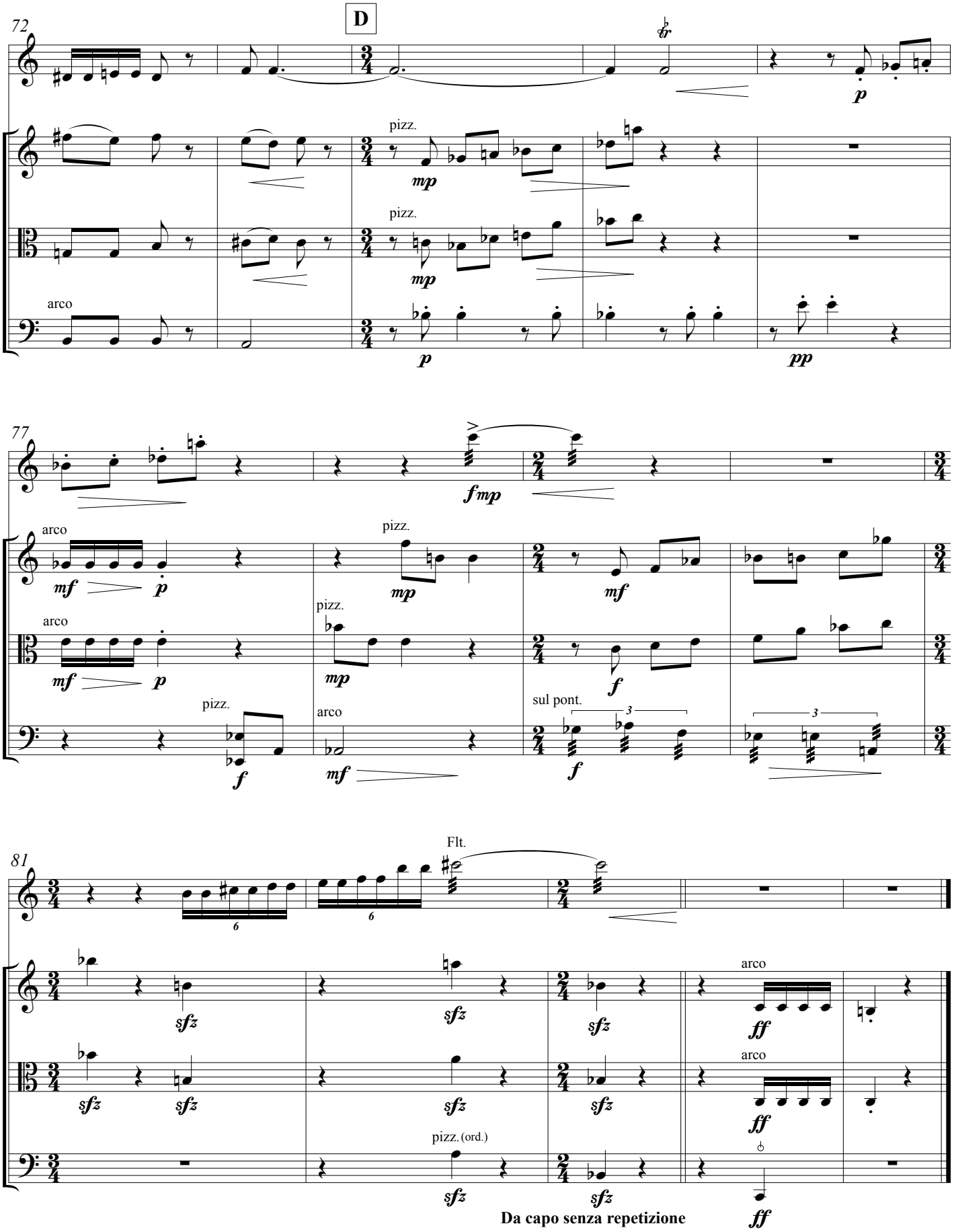
III.




14
A
pizz.
arco
22
pizz.
28
arco


34
f
p
pizz.
sfz
arco
f
pp
pizz.
sfz
arco
f
pizz.
mp
B
42
mp
G.P.
pizz.
ff
arco
pp
mf
pizz.
ff
arco
pp
mf
arco
p
ff
48
mp
3
G.P.
p
mf
p
III
p
mf
p
pizz.
mf


C
56
f mp (on repeat, sempre p)
f
mp espr. (on repeat, sempre p)
mp (on repeat, sempre p)
arco
mp (on repeat, sempre p)
61
p
mf
p
mf
p
pizz.
arco
mf
p
67
p
p
p
pizz.
p


72
D
pizz.
mp
pizz.
mp
arco
p
pp
77
fmp
arco
mf
p
pizz.
mp
mf
arco
mf
p
pizz.
mp
f
pizz.
f
arco
mf
sul pont.
3
f
3
81
Flt.
6
6
sfz
sfz
sfz
arco
ff
sfz
sfz
sfz
arco
ff
pizz. (ord.)
sfz
sfz
ff
Da capo senza repetizione