Commissioned by the Iridium Saxophone Quartet

SAXOPHONE QUARTET No. 3

Ben Stonaker

2011

Saxophone Quartet No. 3 was commissioned by the Iridium Saxophone Quartet to be performed on tour in Puerto Rico in October 2011. The work is in three distinct sections, using a traditional fast-slow-fast design, with no pauses in between. The initial tempo between each of the continuous movements remains constant. Each note-value's speed remains the same, but the grouping becomes different. The first section groups the sixteenth-notes into 3's, indicating the dotted sixteenth-note is 144 bpm. The second section uses the half-note for the pulse (54 bpm) and the third section the quarter note (108 bpm). Other groupings that are found along the way are the eighth note (216 bpm) and the dotted quarter-note (72 bpm).

The structure of the piece was developed according to Fibonacci numbers (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, and 55). The total duration is around 12 minutes, where the first section is 4 minutes (1+1+2), the second is 3 minutes, and the final section is 5 minutes. The opening of the work uses the sequence to control the thematic material. The gesture is introduced in one measure, and then extended to two measures… then 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, and 55. Each repetition is different in some way and after these 10 processes are heard, the material repeats once again, but does not complete the cycle. The performers may notice that the meter changes cause the sequence to not seem to add up precisely; however, the calculations were made based on the entire opening movement barred in 10/16 so the length of each section would adhere to the Fibonacci sequence.

The second movement begins without a break and opens with long tones using various speeds of vibrato (or no vibrato at all). This section provides a brief moment for the performers and listeners to clear their ears from all the previous rapid movement and energy, holding them in anticipation for the unusually dense harmonies that ensue. The harmonies are linked to Fibonacci by way of making use of seconds, thirds, fifths, and octaves both vertically and horizontally, but were not composed exclusively using the sequence. A short solo section introduces what seems to be the key of G-sharp minor, followed immediately by a chorale setting using same, tightly grouped harmonies from before. This is briefly interrupted by the main gesture from the first movement (twice as slow) and ends with another iteration of the G-sharp minor solo section and a recap of the opening of the second movement.

The third movement starts around the Golden Ratio (but is actually anti-climactic) and builds on the major second until four consecutive whole-steps are heard simultaneously. The rhythmic gestures start to overlap at different times and build tension until arriving at a section that sounds a bit like a polka. The speed is increased dramatically until the material from the first movement is introduced almost at the same speed, but now in a different meter. The piece ends with ascending scales, played as quickly as possible, up to a soprano saxophone growl and right into the final three notes.

Duration: 12 minutes

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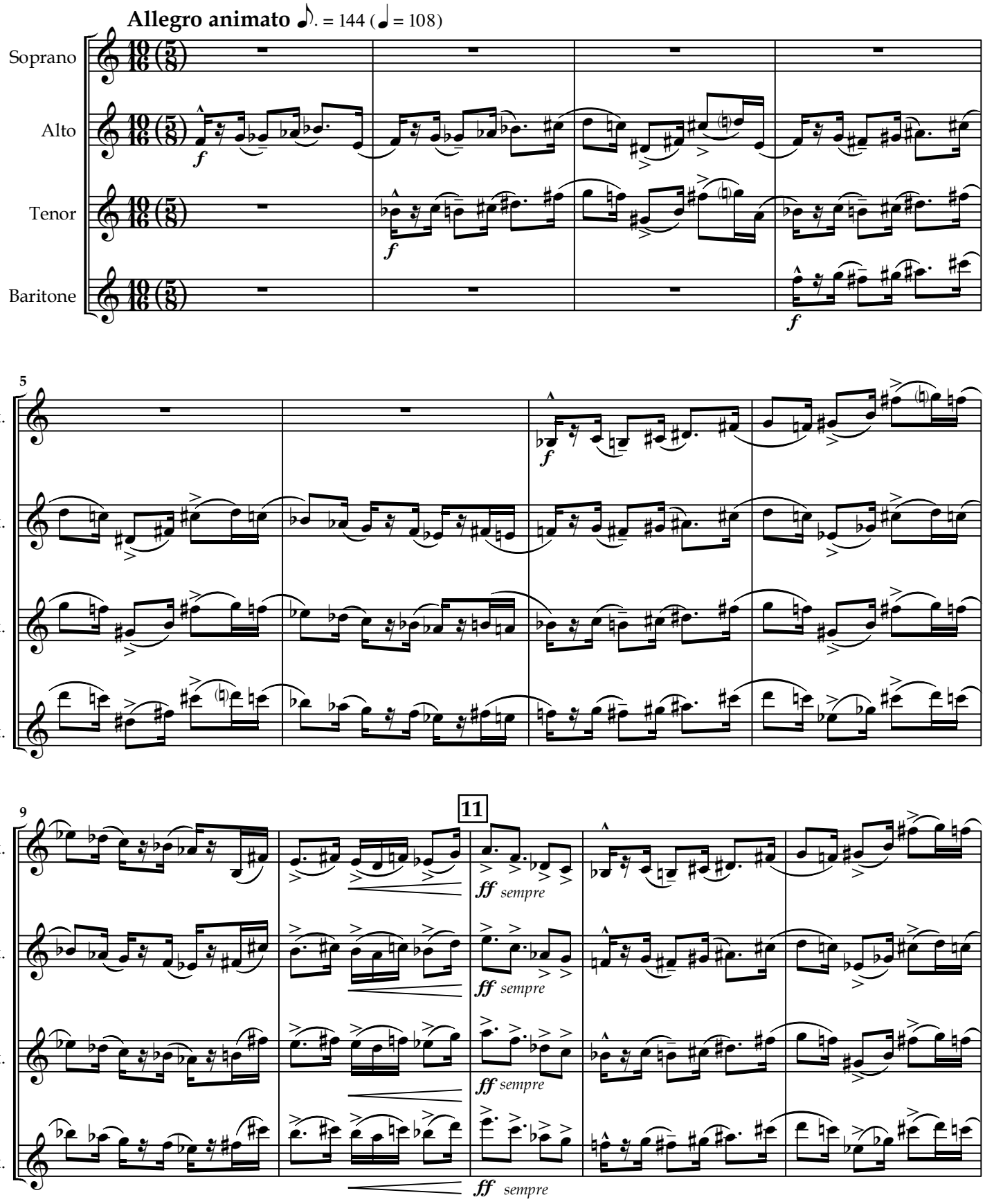
Score

SAXOPHONE QUARTET NO. 3

Ben Stonaker



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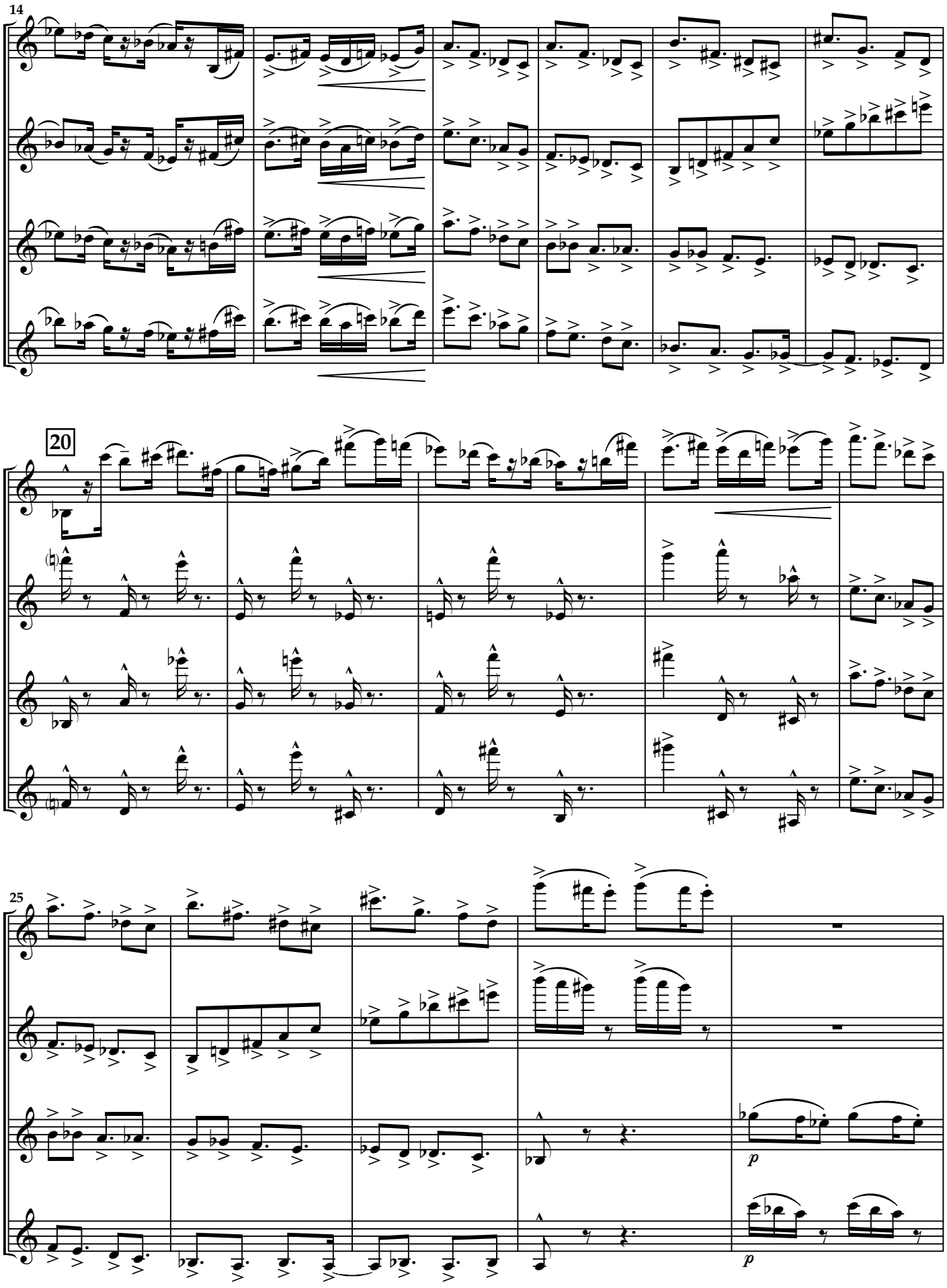
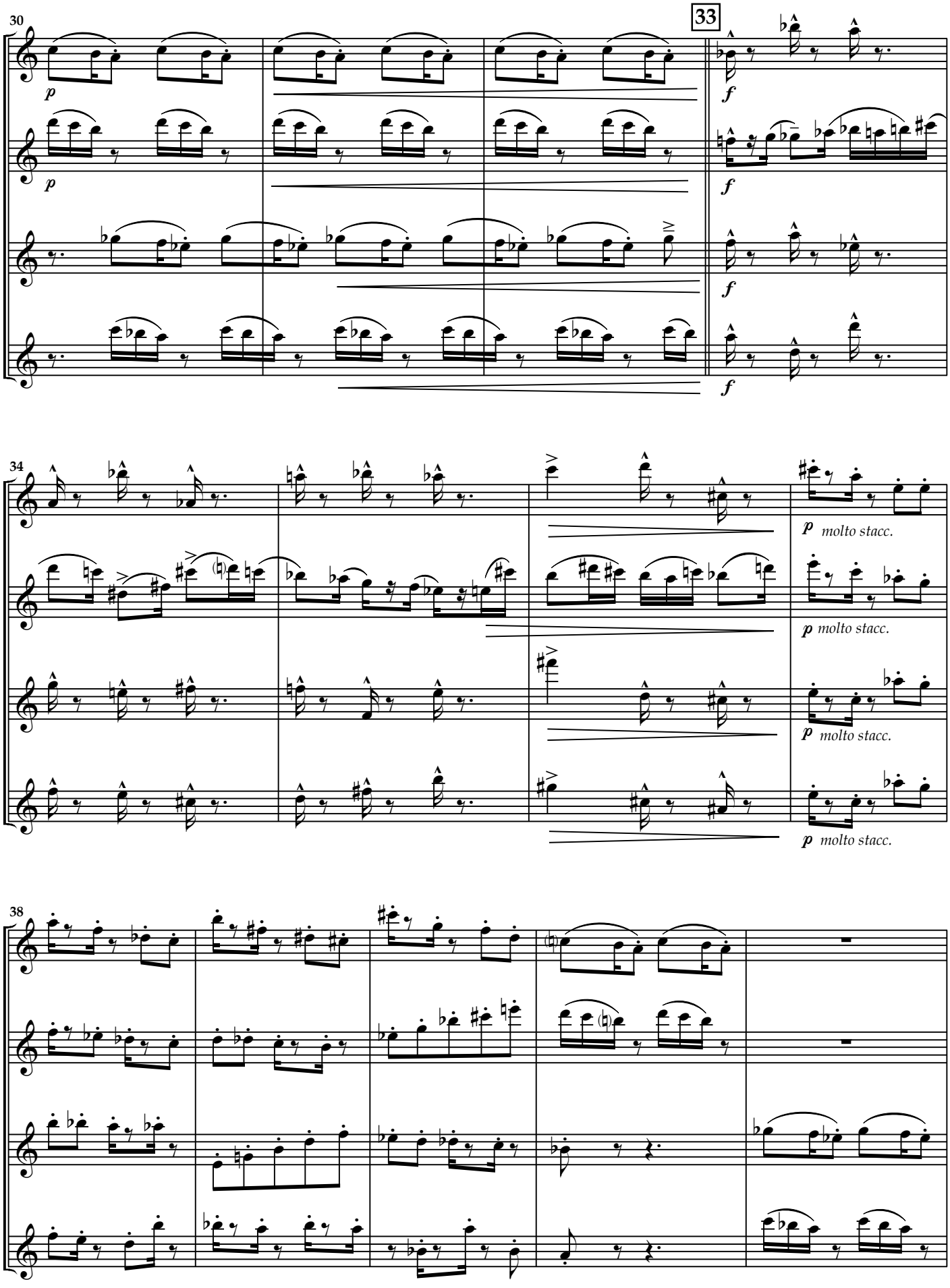
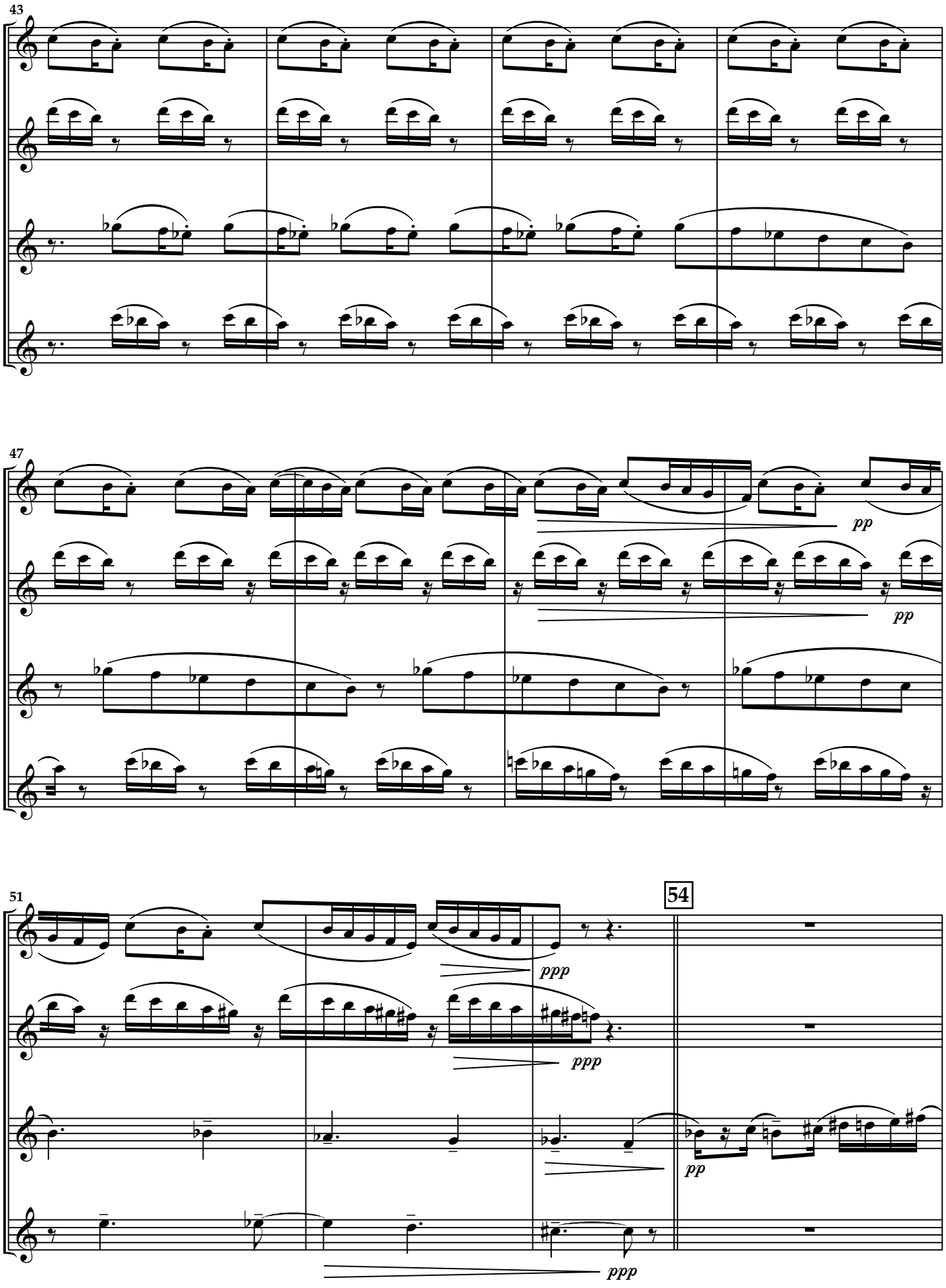
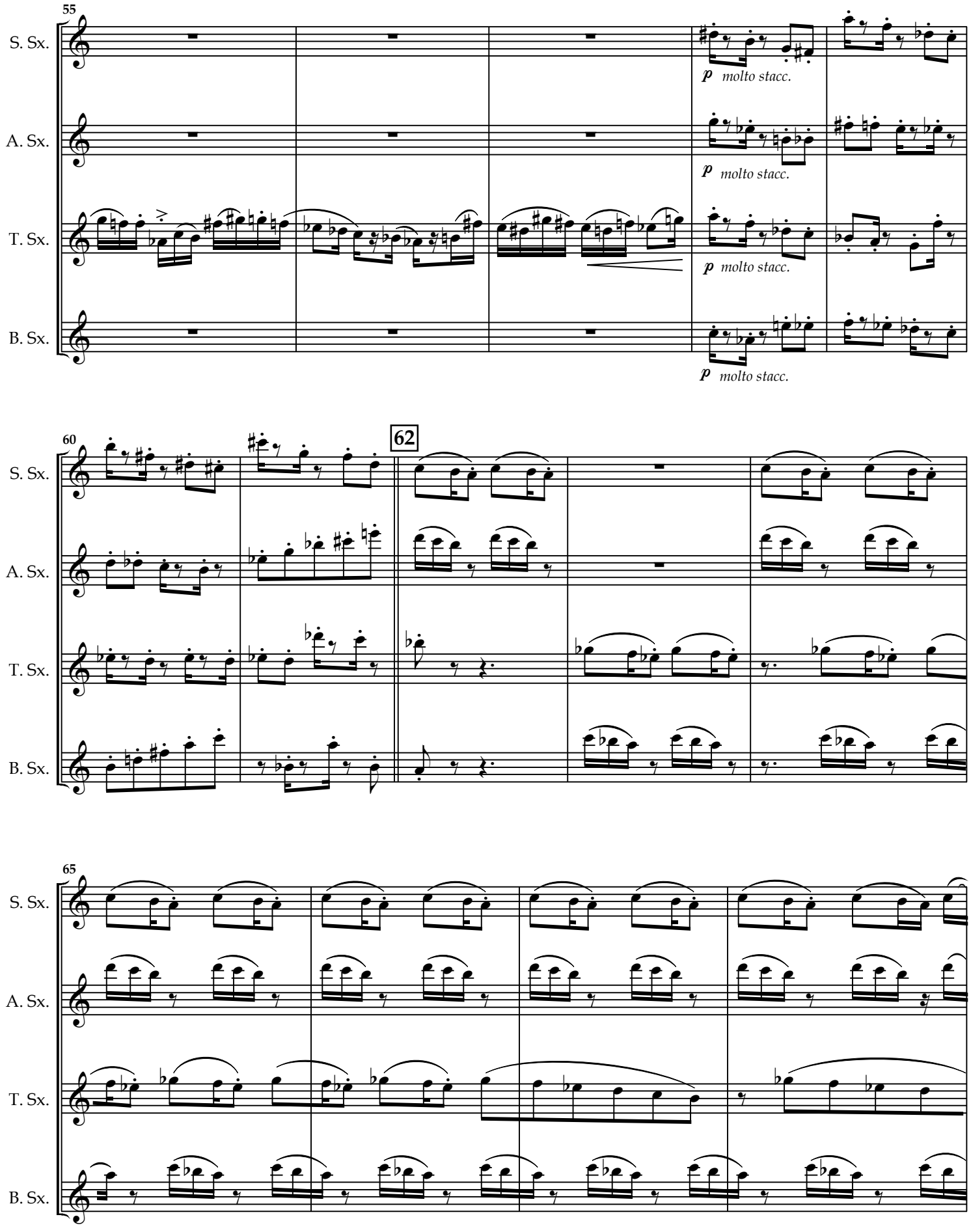
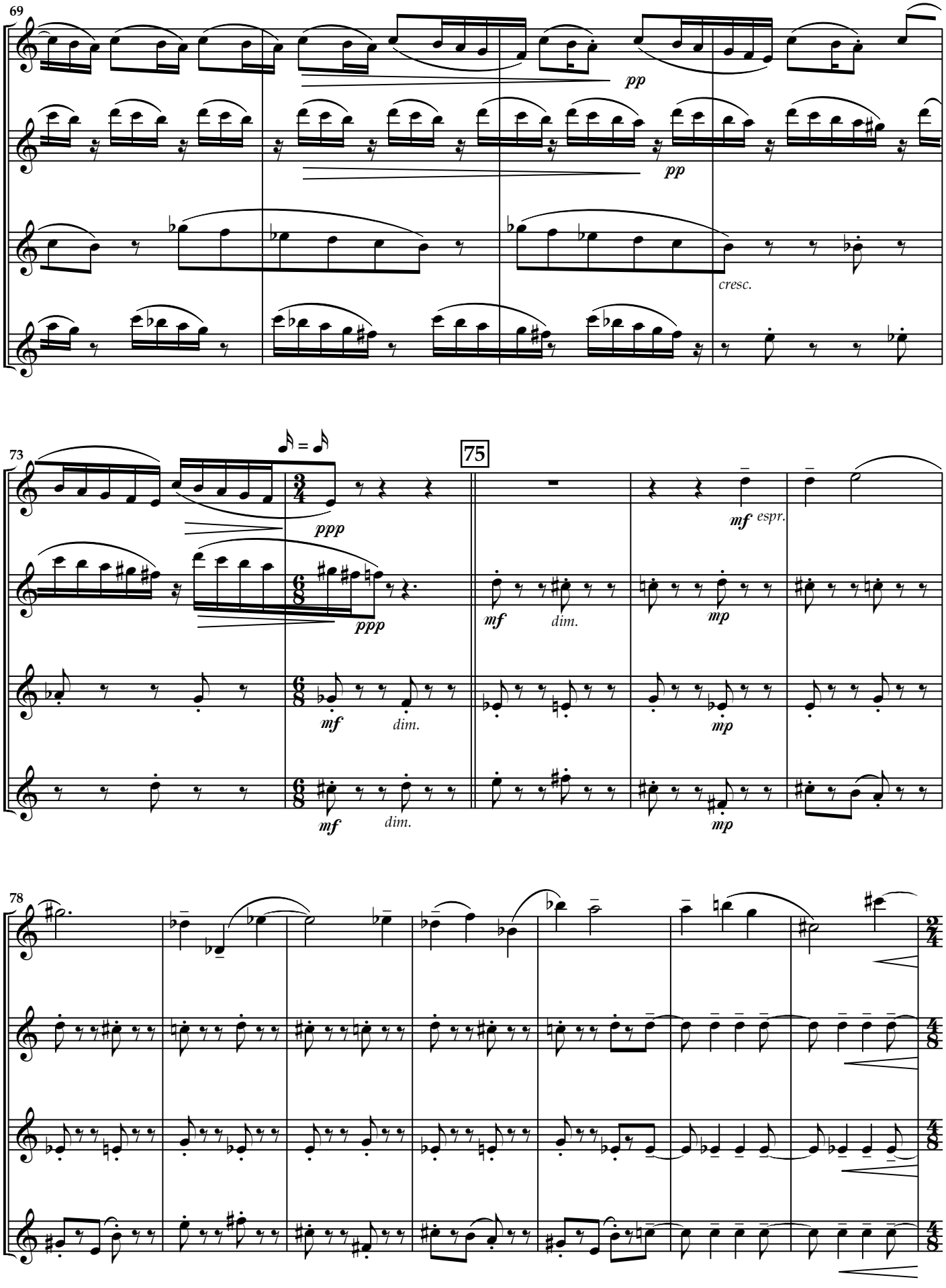
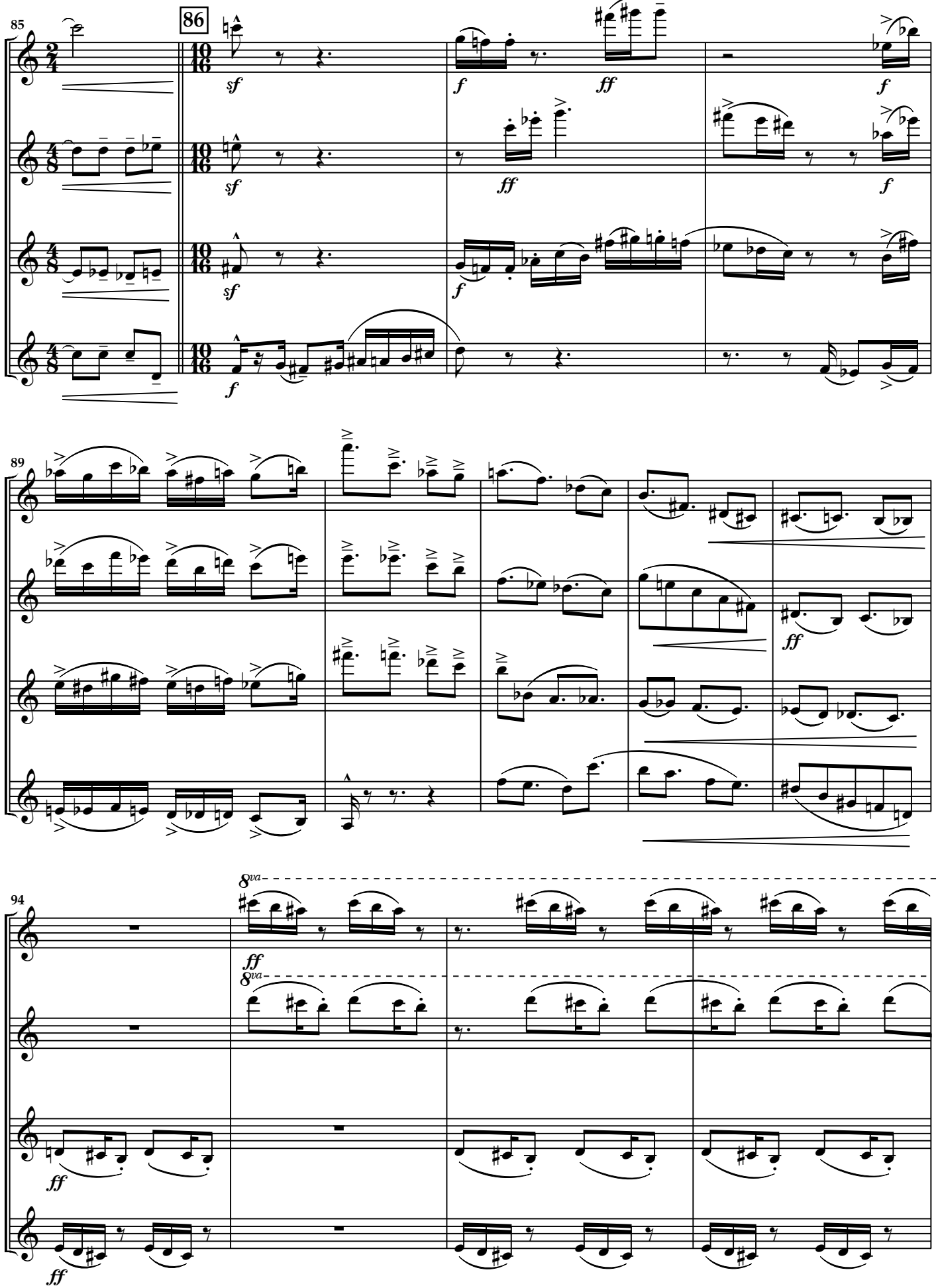

14
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
20
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
25
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
p
p

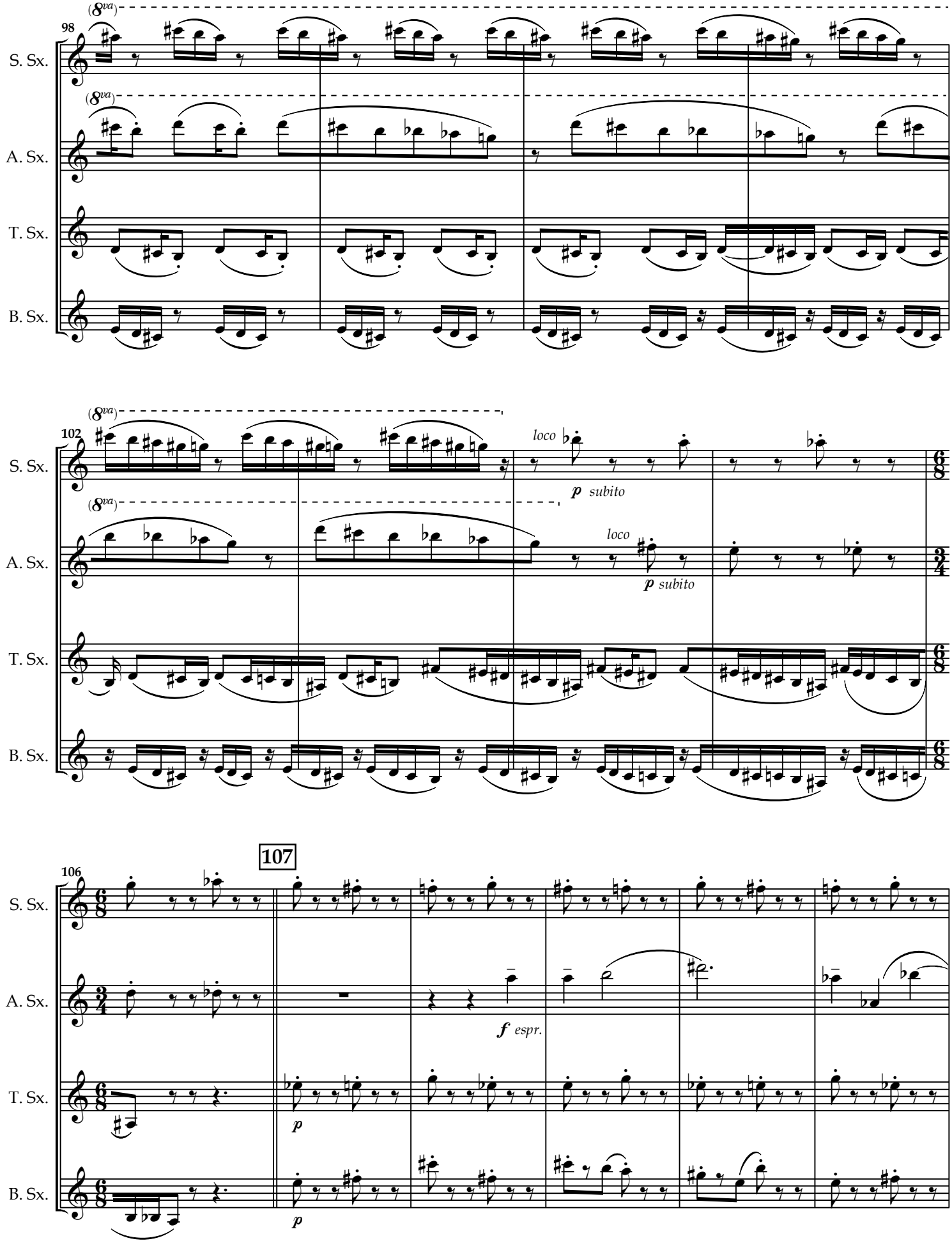

30
33
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
p
f
34
p molto stacc.
38

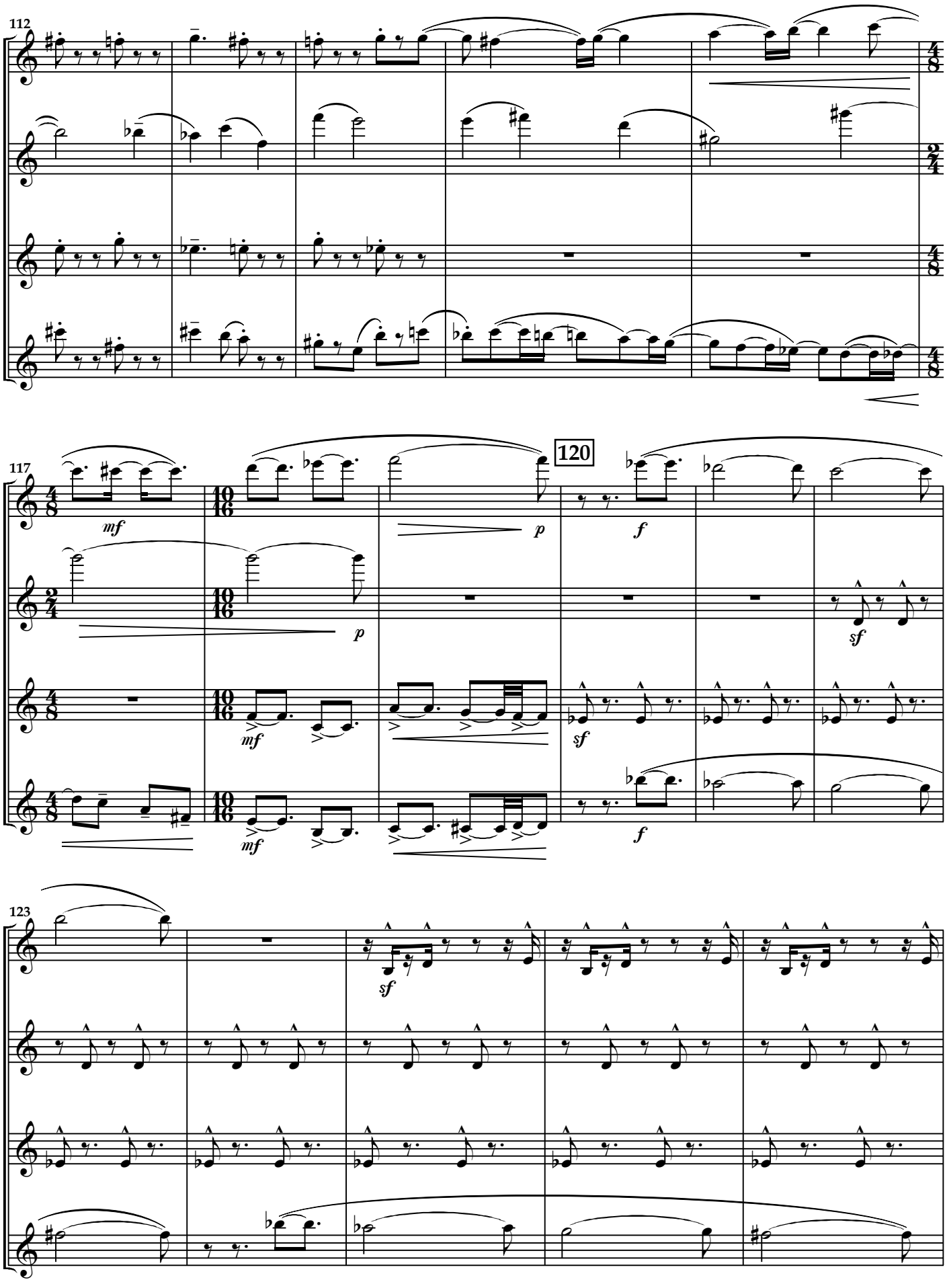

43
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
47
pp
pp
51
54
ppp
ppp
pp
ppp

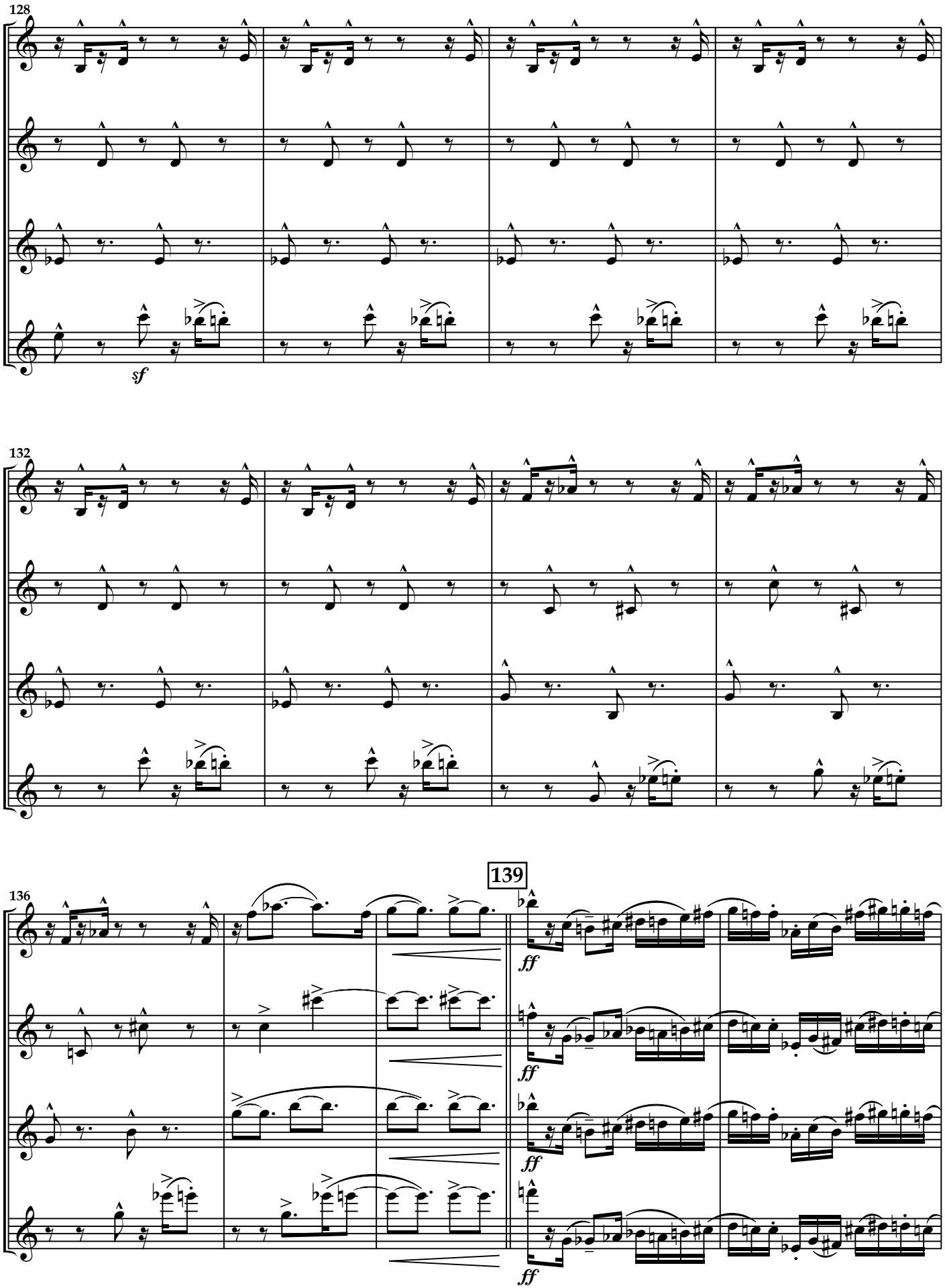

55
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
p molto stacc.
p molto stacc.
p molto stacc.
p molto stacc.
60
62
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
65
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.

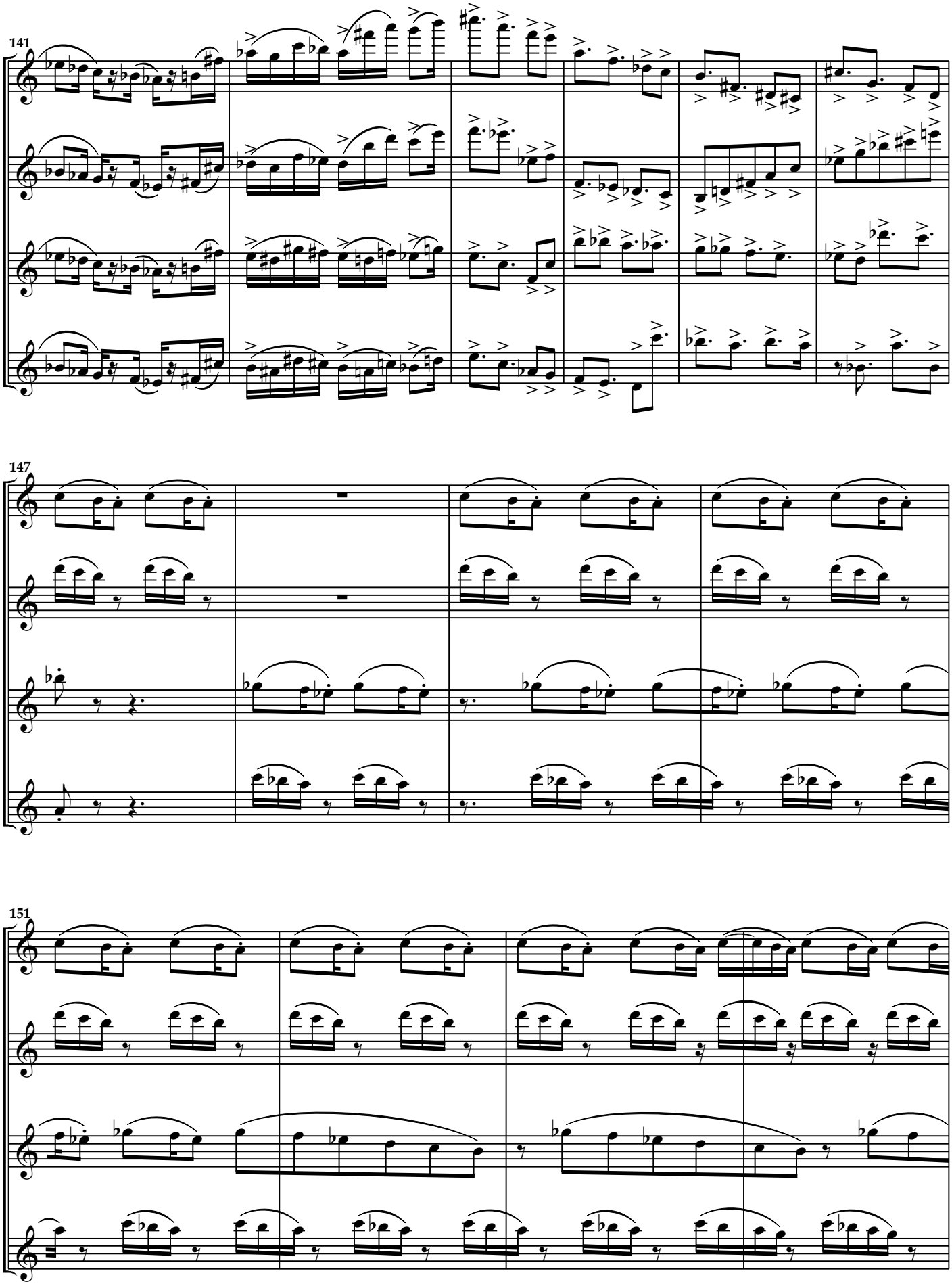

69
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
pp
pp
cresc.
73
75
ppp
ppp
mf
dim.
mf
dim.
mf espr.
mp
mp
mp
78

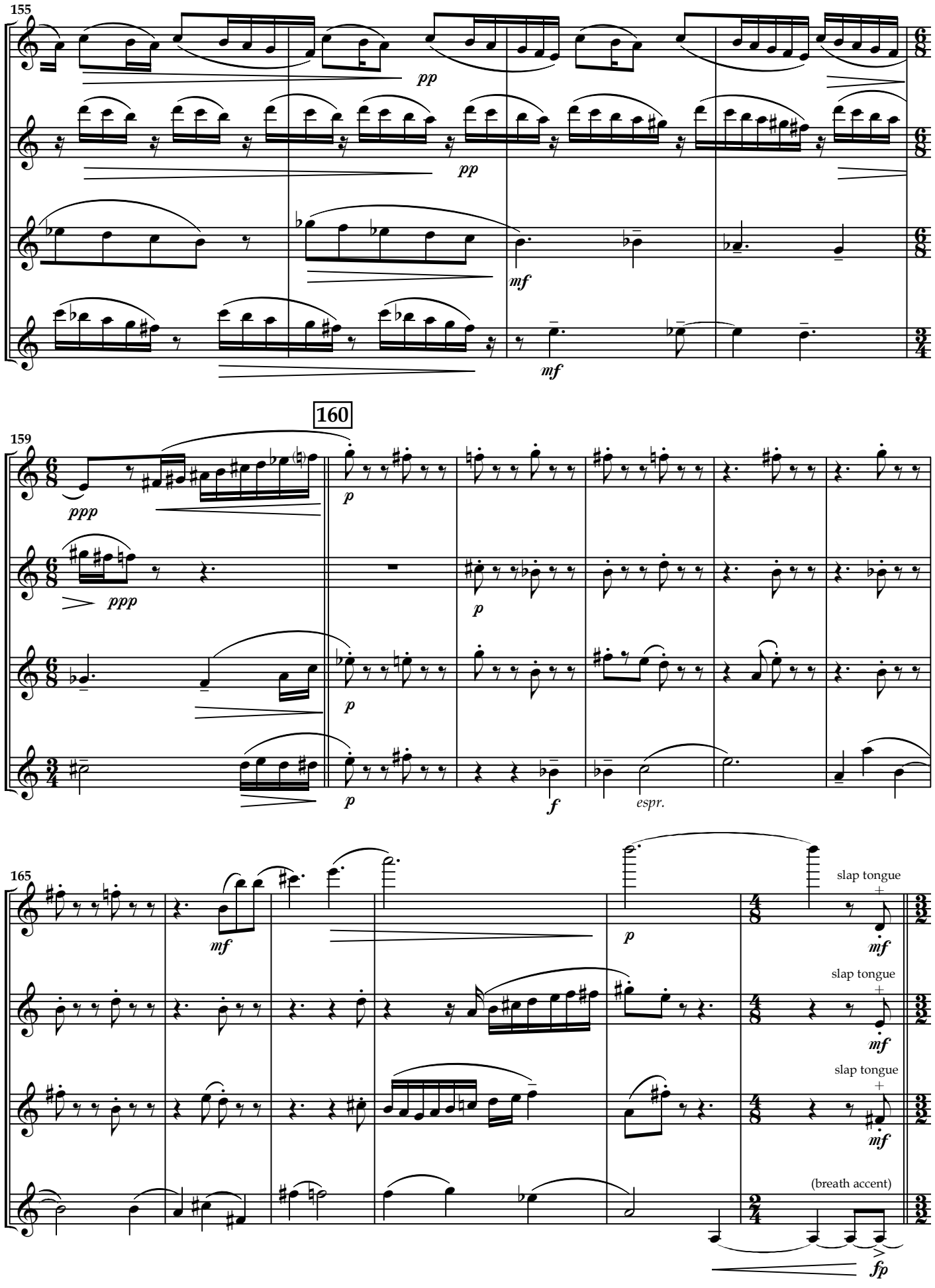

85
86
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
sf
f
ff
89
ff
94
8va
ff

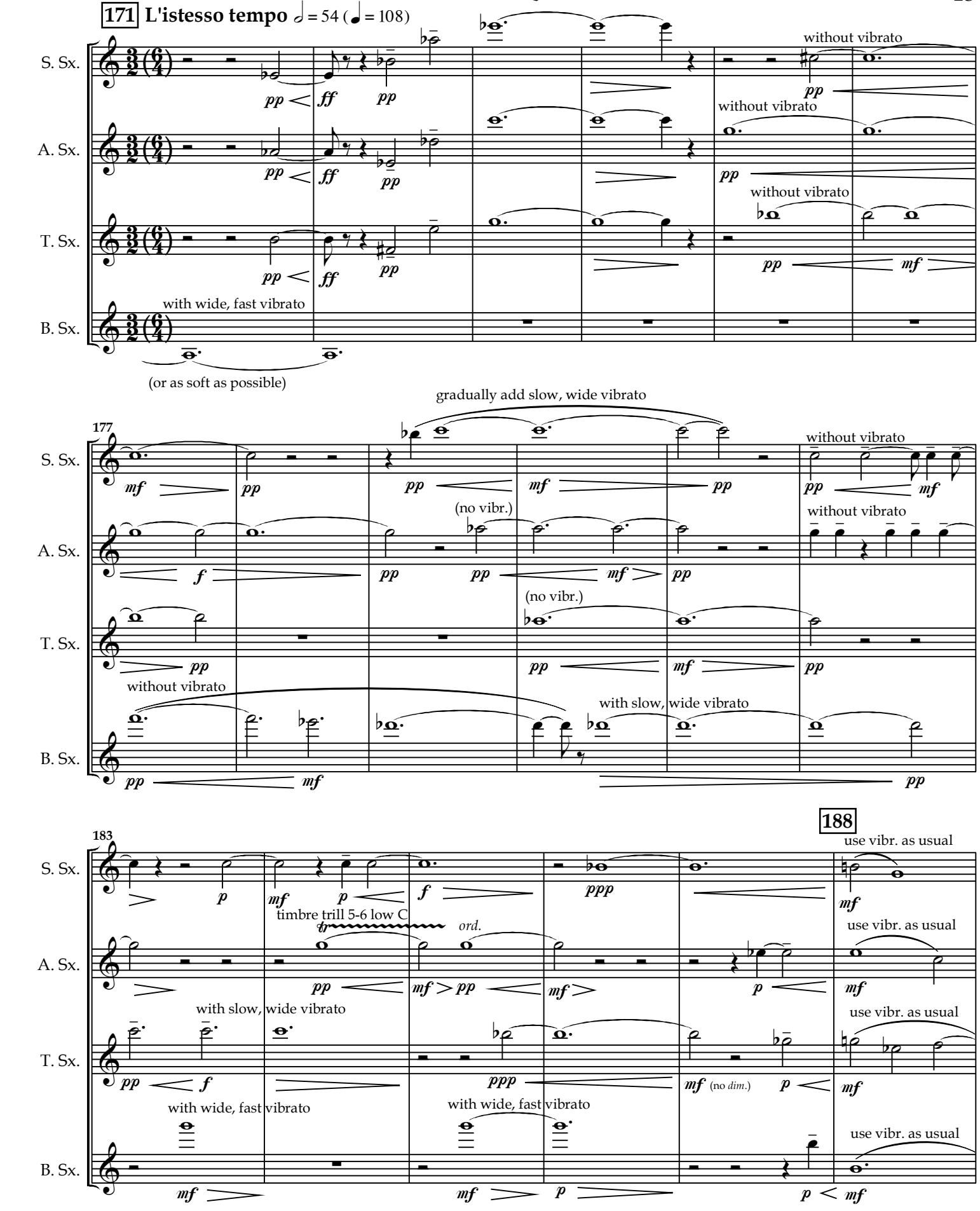

98
(8va)
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
102
loco
p subito
6/8
3/4
106
107
f espr.
p

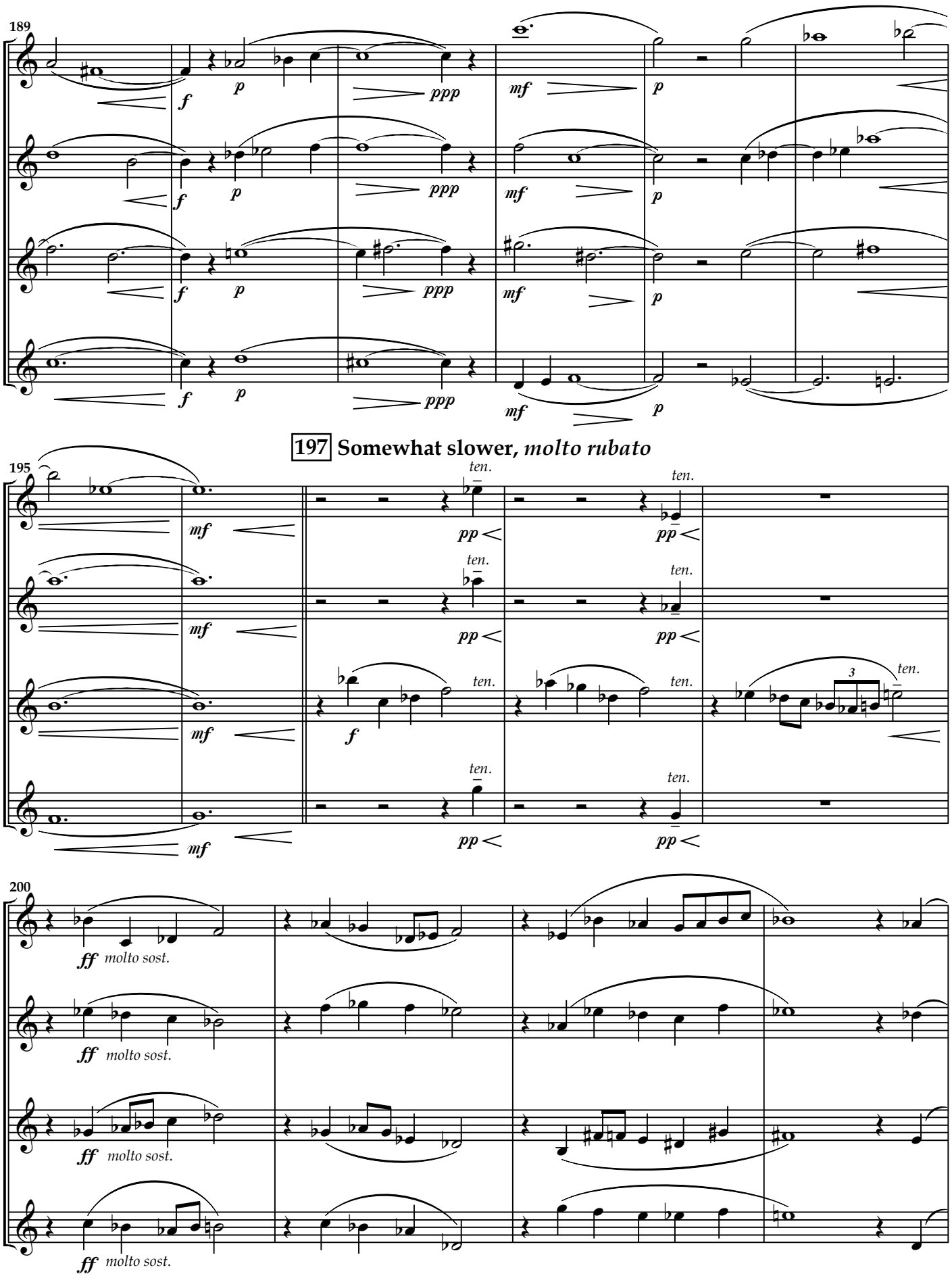

112
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
117
120
123
mf
p
f
sf


128
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
sf
132
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
136
139
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
ff
ff
ff
ff

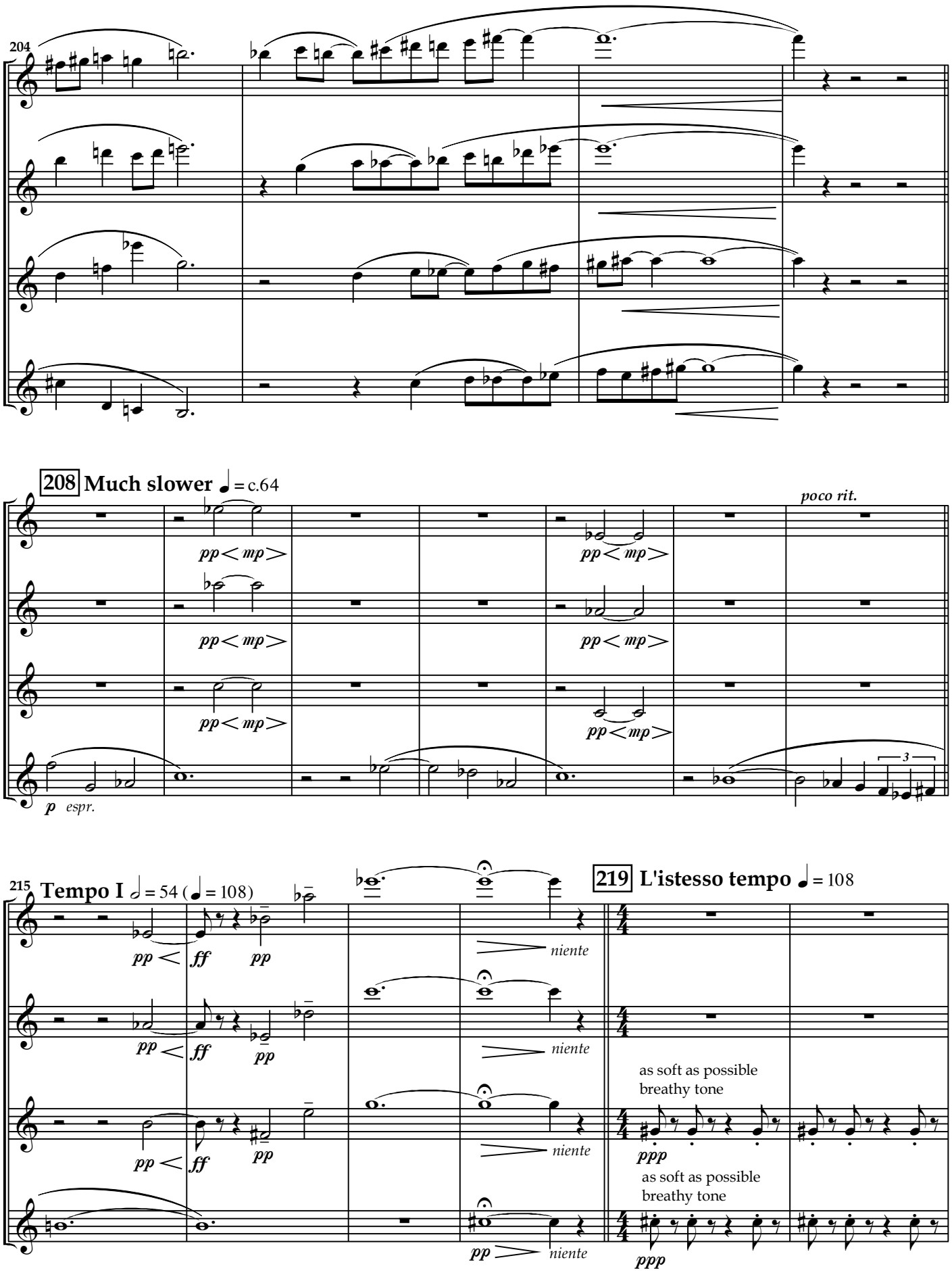

141
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
147
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
151
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.

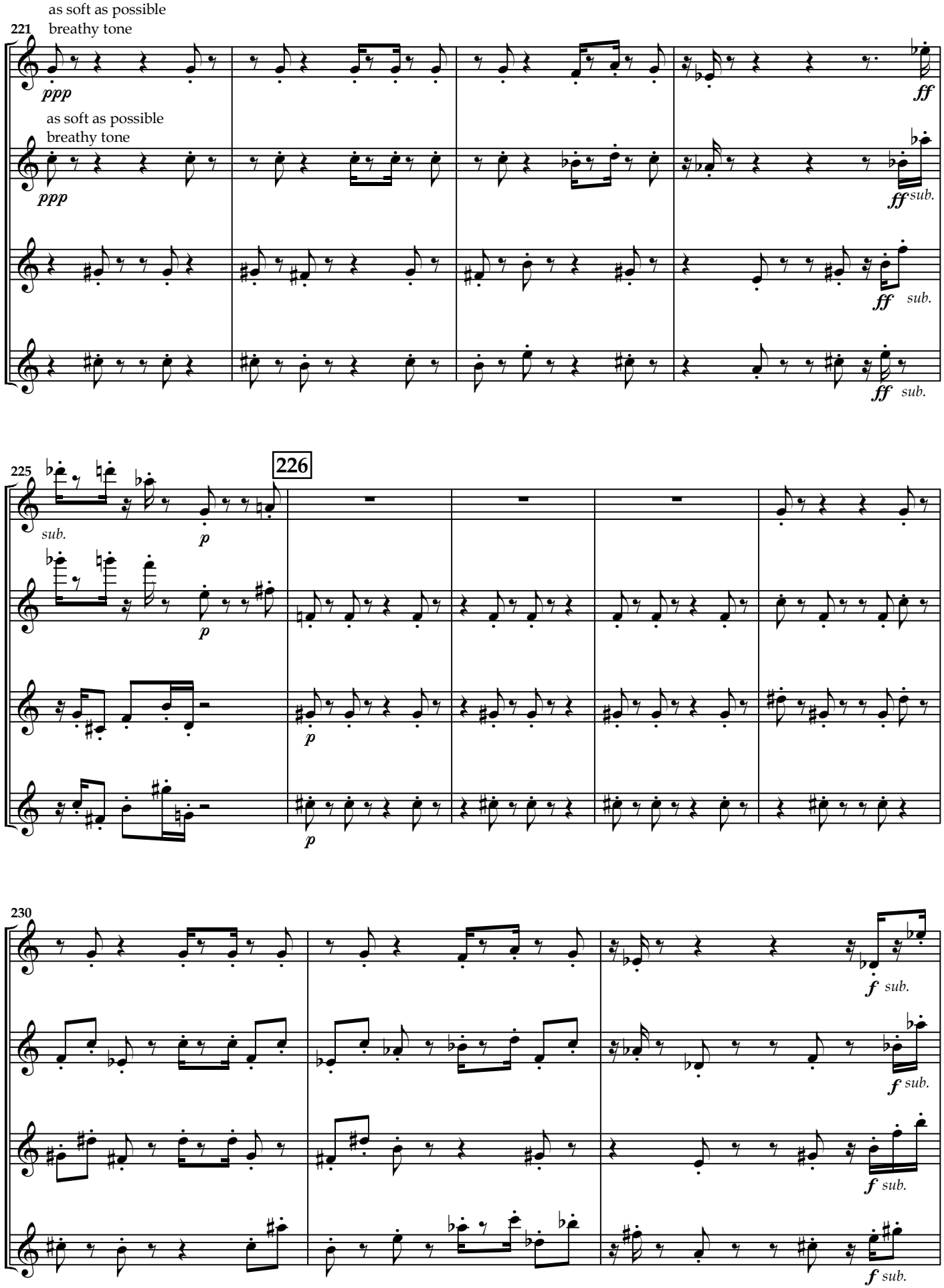

155
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
pp
pp
mf
mf
160
159
ppp
ppp
p
p
p
p
f
espr.
165
mf
p
slap tongue
mf
slap tongue
mf
slap tongue
mf
(breath accent)
fp

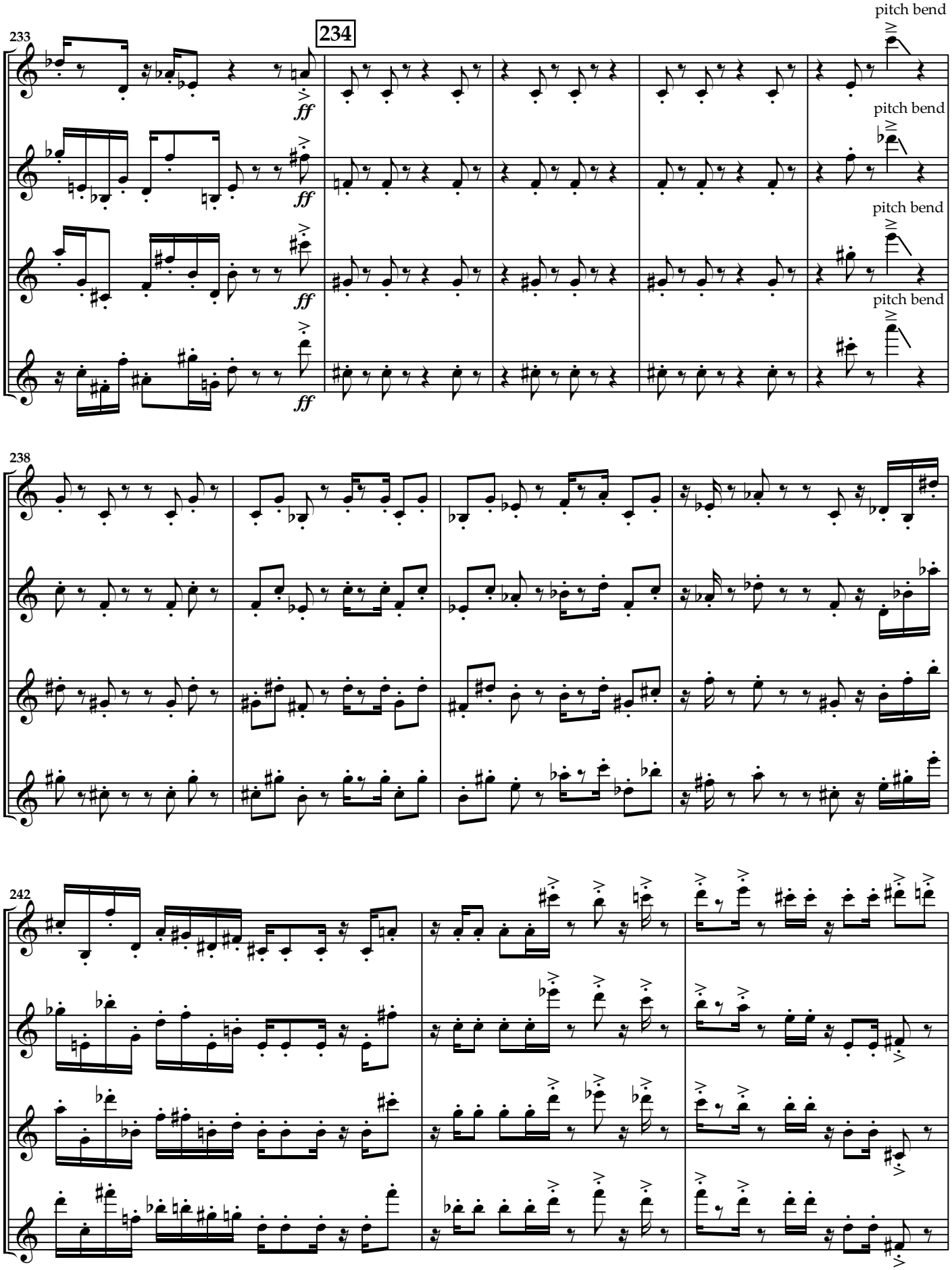

171 L'istesso tempo 𝅗𝅥 = 54 (♩ = 108)
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
without vibrato
with wide, fast vibrato
(or as soft as possible)
177
gradually add slow, wide vibrato
(no vibr.)
with slow, wide vibrato
183
188
use vibr. as usual
timbre trill 5-6 low C
ord.
with wide, fast vibrato
(no dim.)

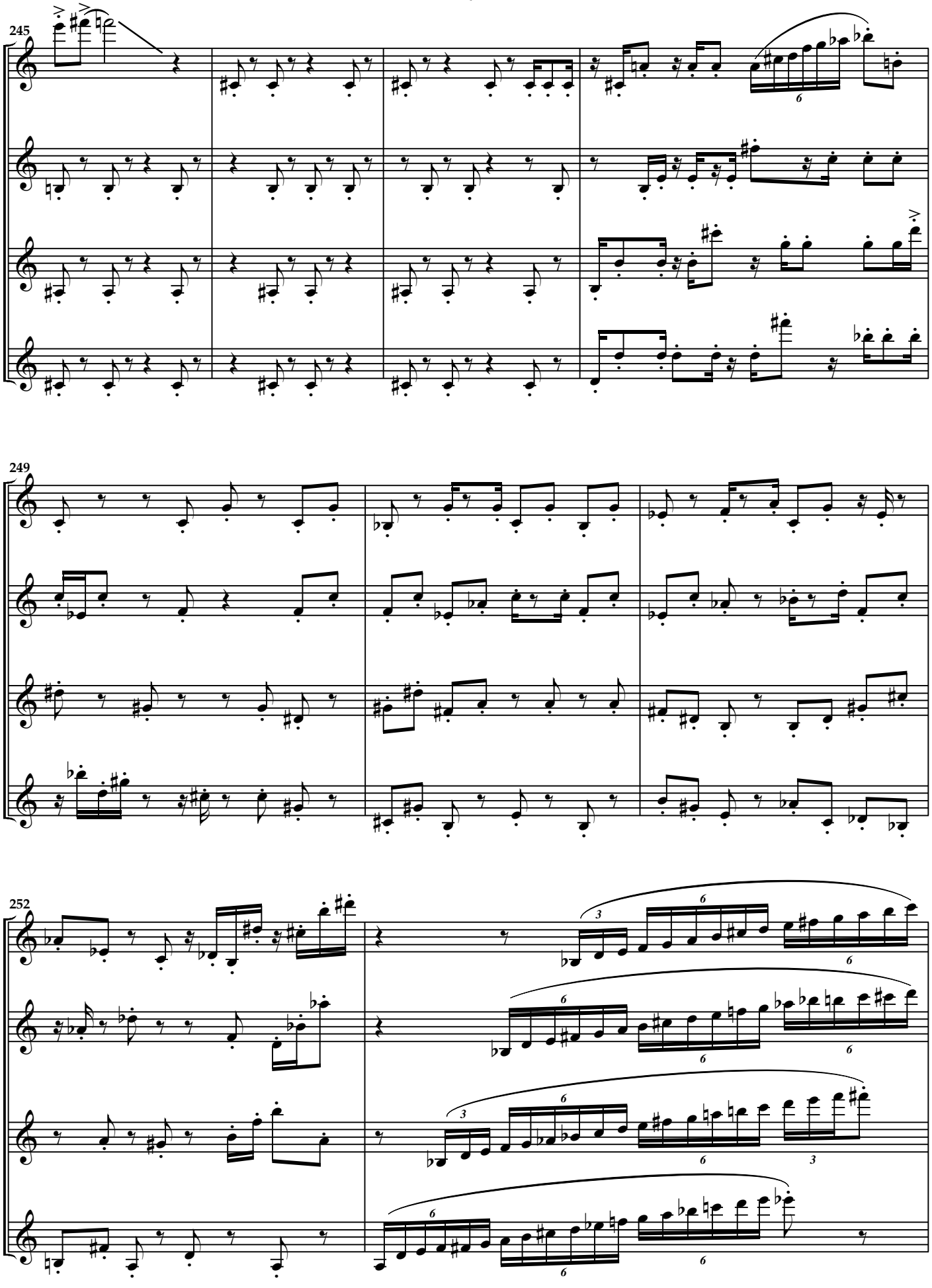


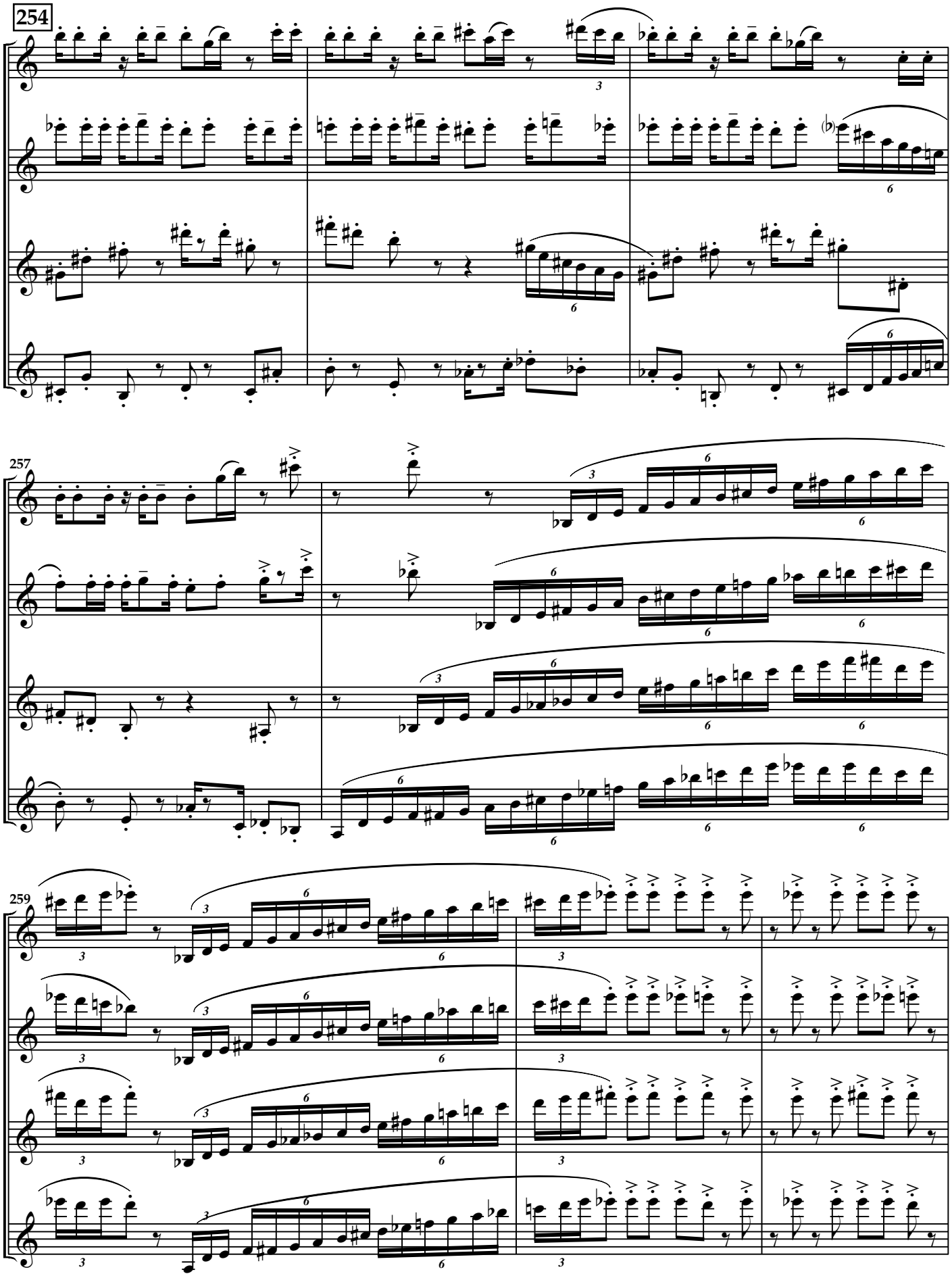
Ten. markings indicate the last beat(s) of mm. 196-198 should be held much longer, but not quite long enough to be considered a fermata.

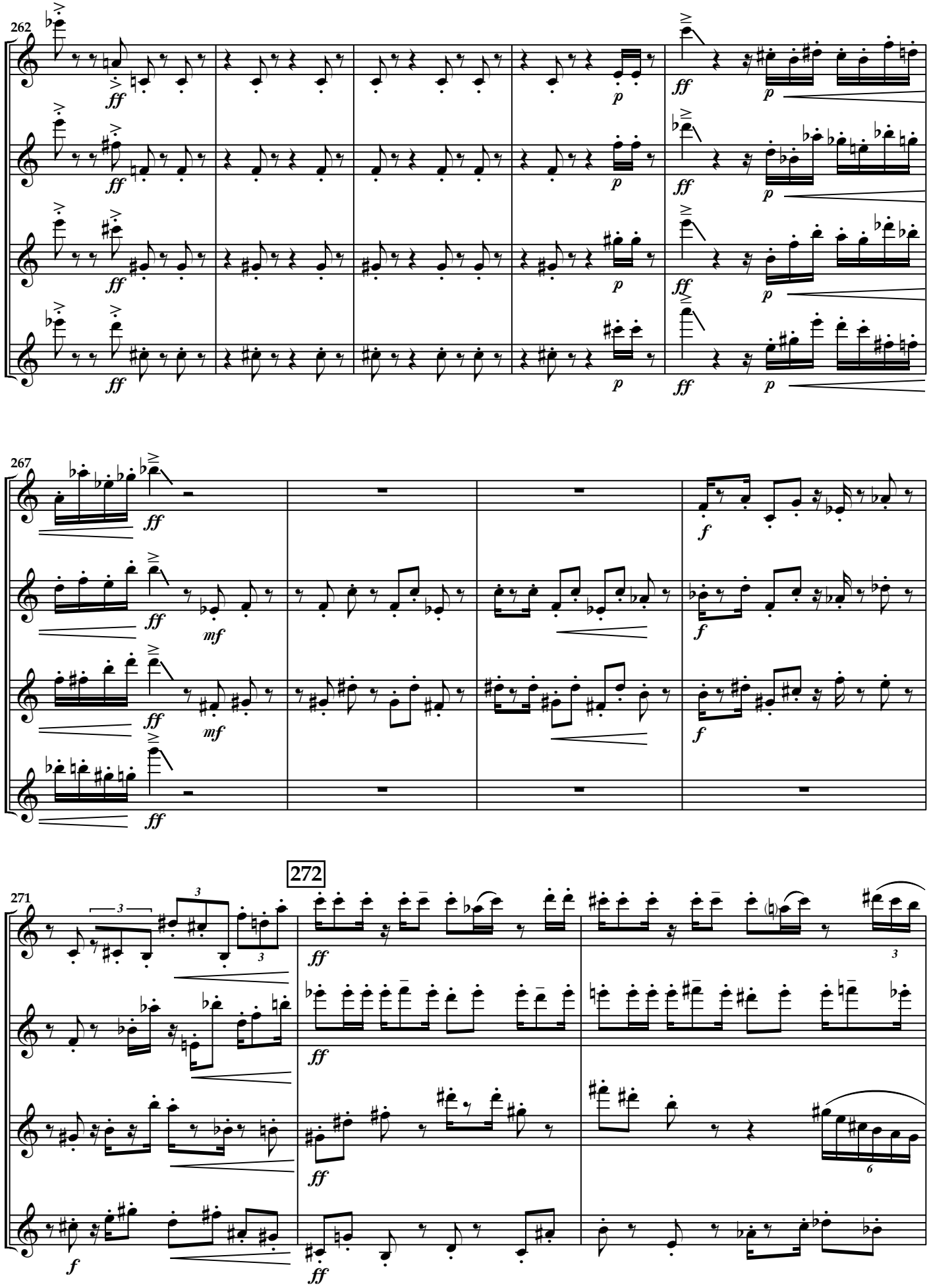

204
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
208 Much slower ♩ = c.64
poco rit.
pp < mp >
p espr.
3
215 Tempo I 𝅗𝅥 = 54 (♩ = 108)
pp < ff pp
niente
219 L'istesso tempo ♩ = 108
4/4
as soft as possible
breathy tone
ppp

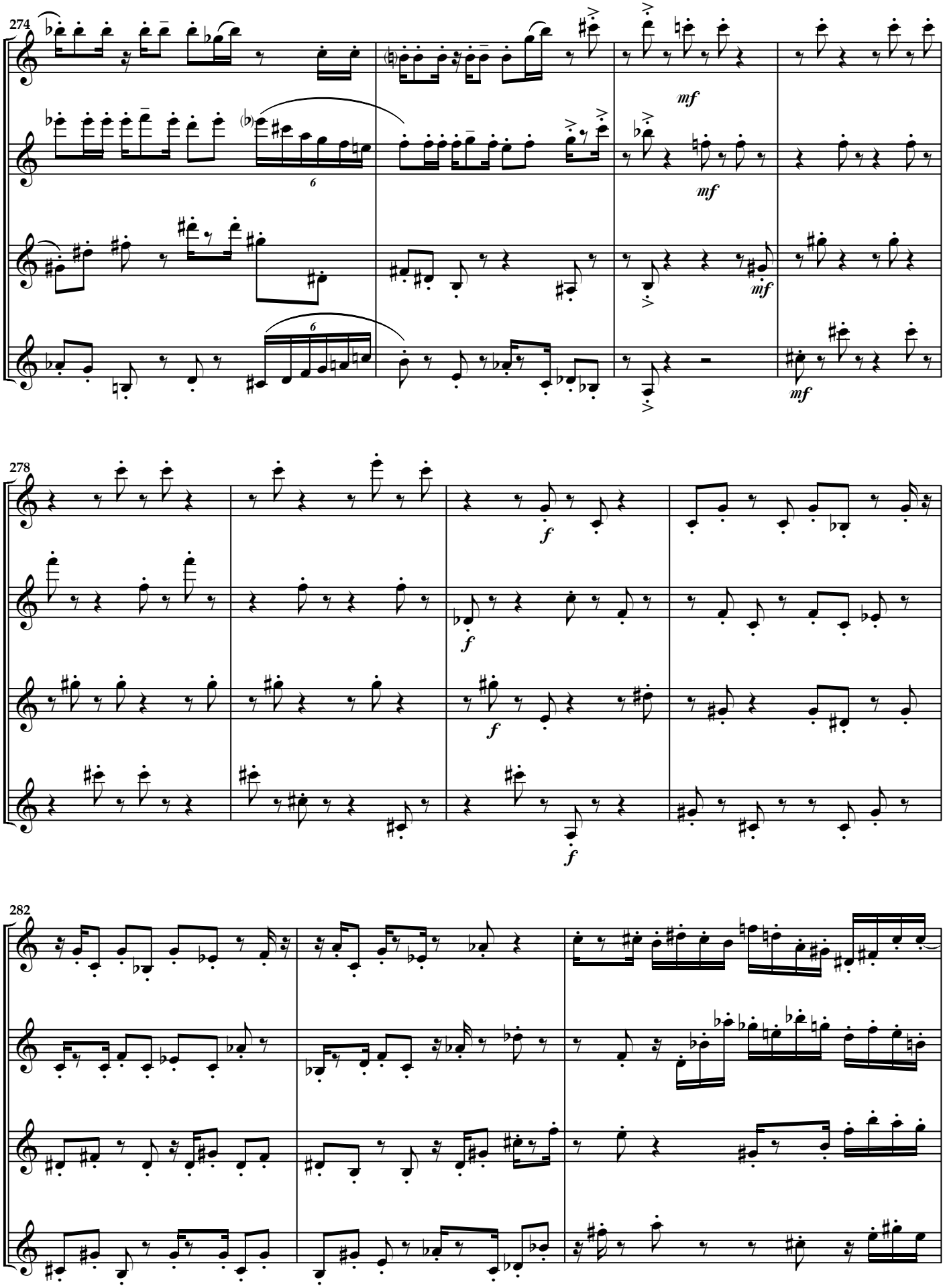

221
as soft as possible
breathy tone
S. Sx.
ppp
ff
as soft as possible
breathy tone
A. Sx.
ppp
ff sub.
T. Sx.
ff sub.
B. Sx.
ff sub.
225
226
S. Sx.
sub.
p
A. Sx.
p
T. Sx.
p
B. Sx.
p
230
S. Sx.
f sub.
A. Sx.
f sub.
T. Sx.
f sub.
B. Sx.
f sub.

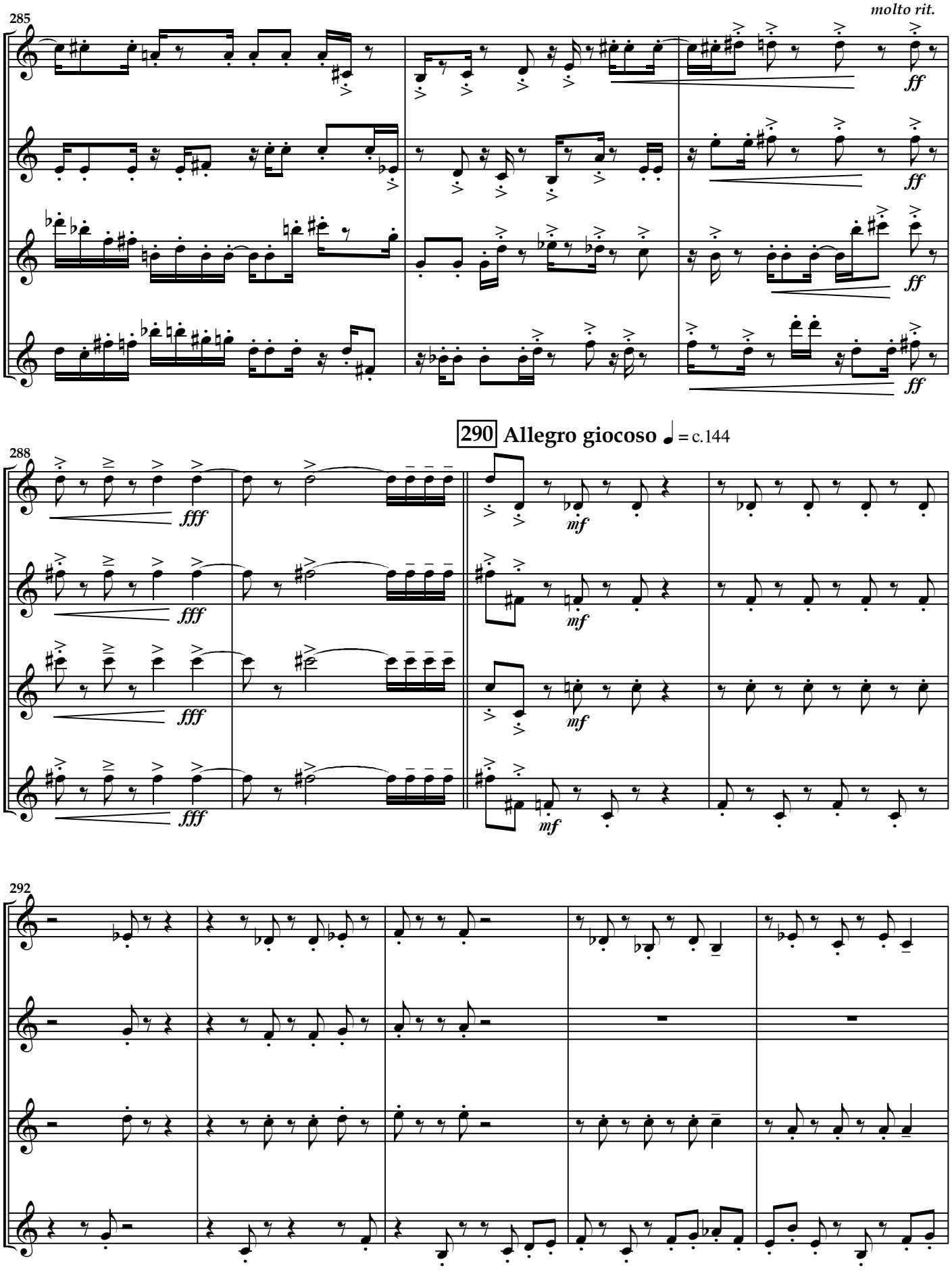

233
234
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
ff
pitch bend
238
242

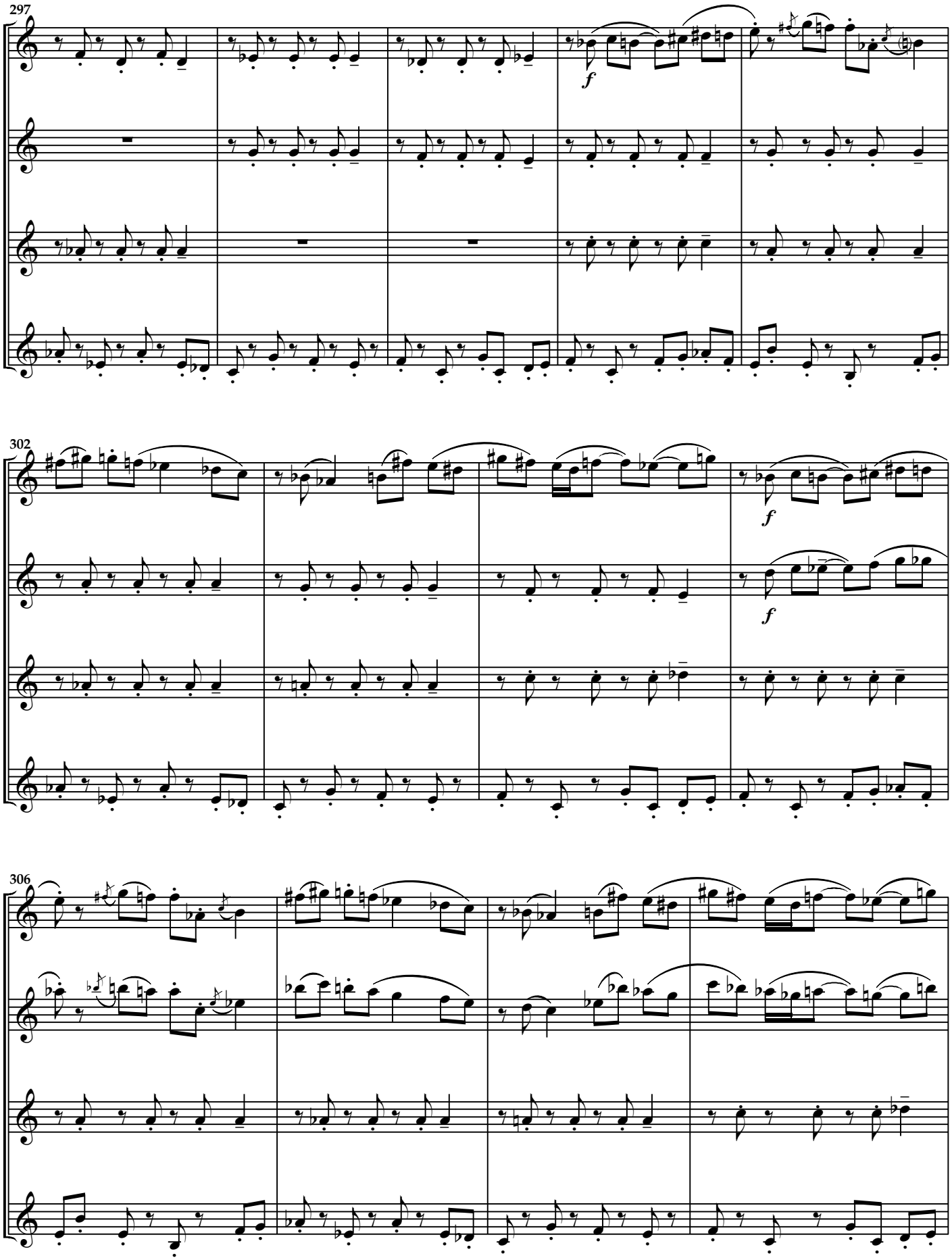

245
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
249
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
252
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.

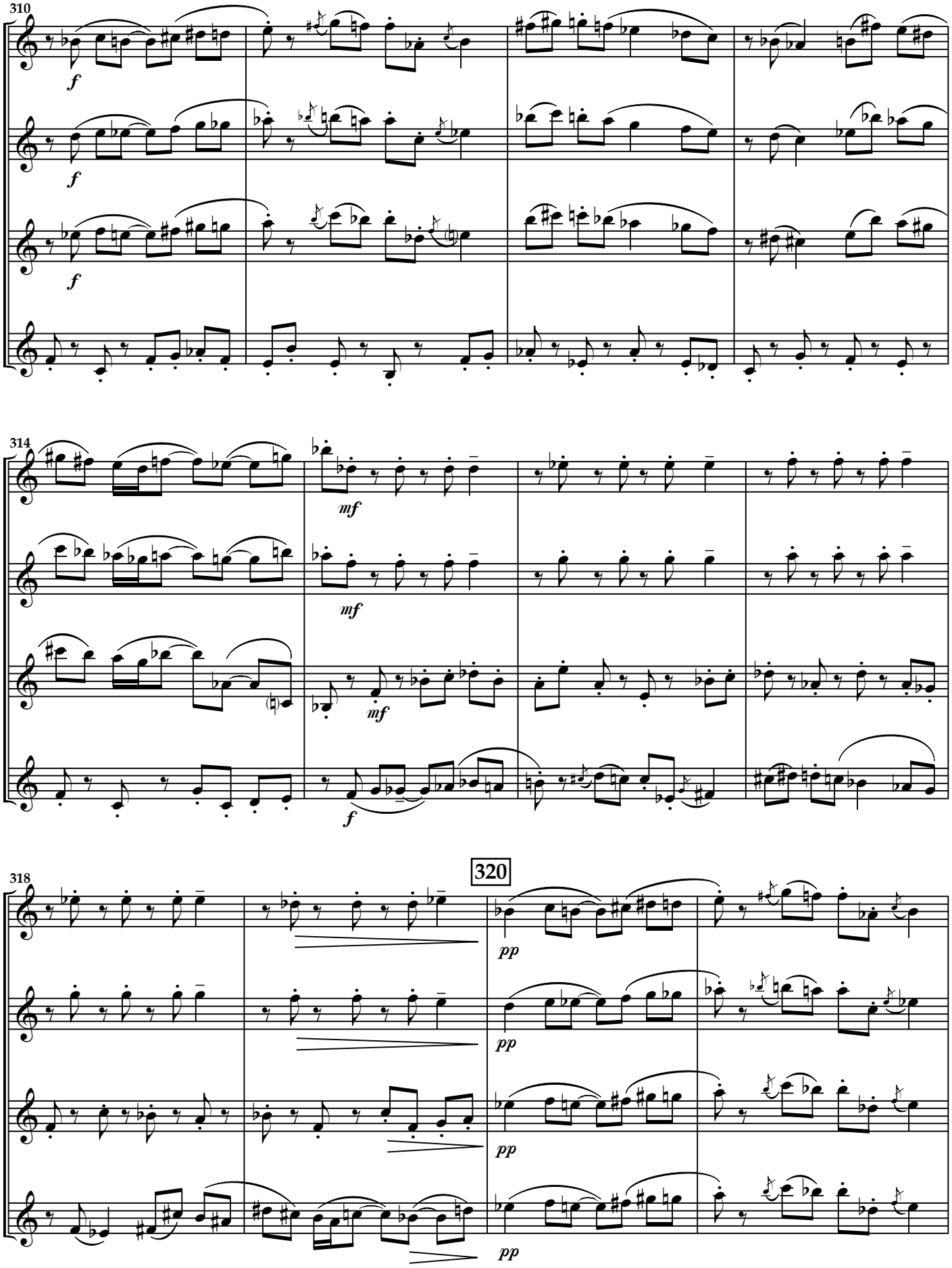

254
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
257
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
259
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.

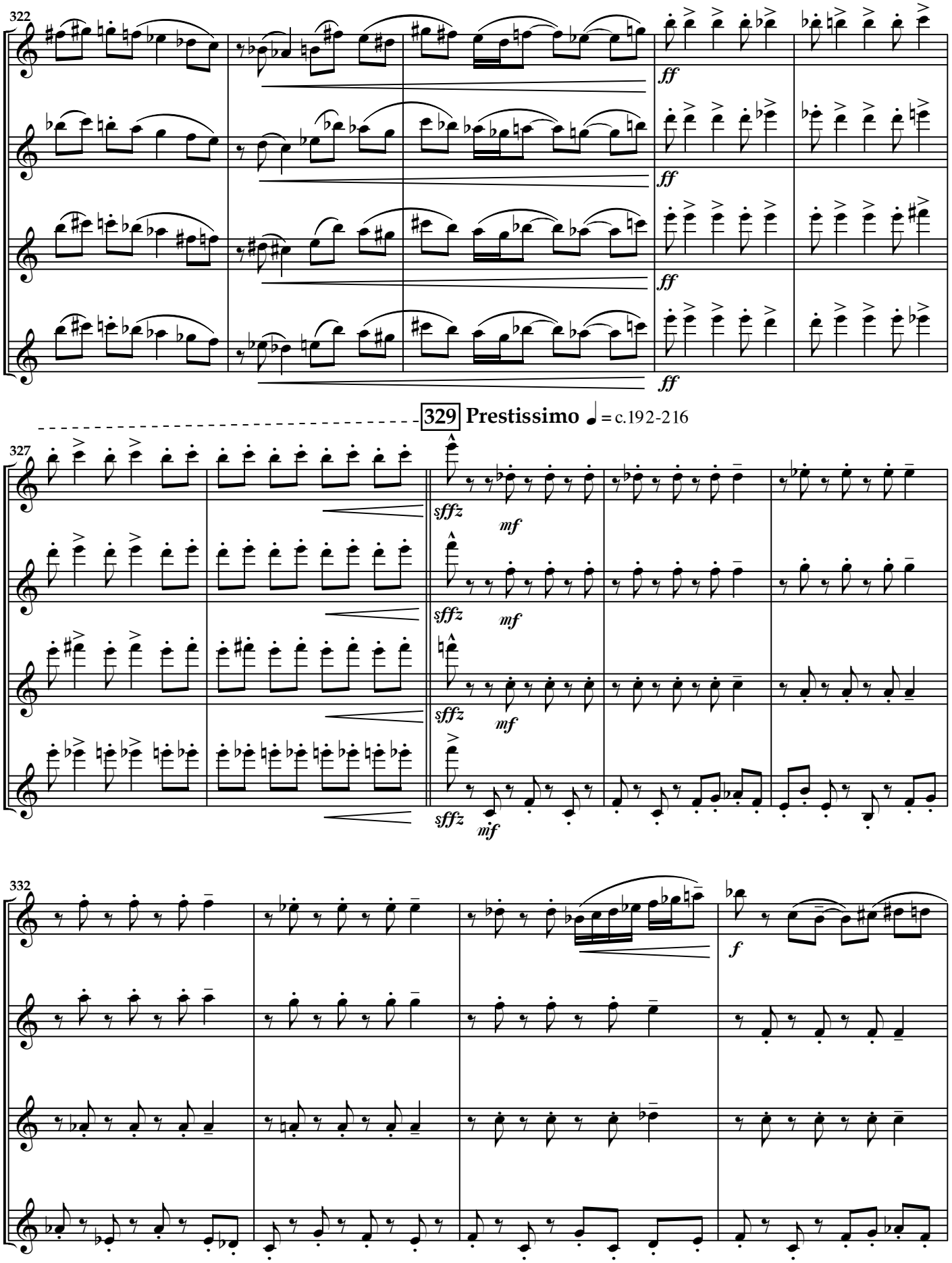

262
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
267
272
271

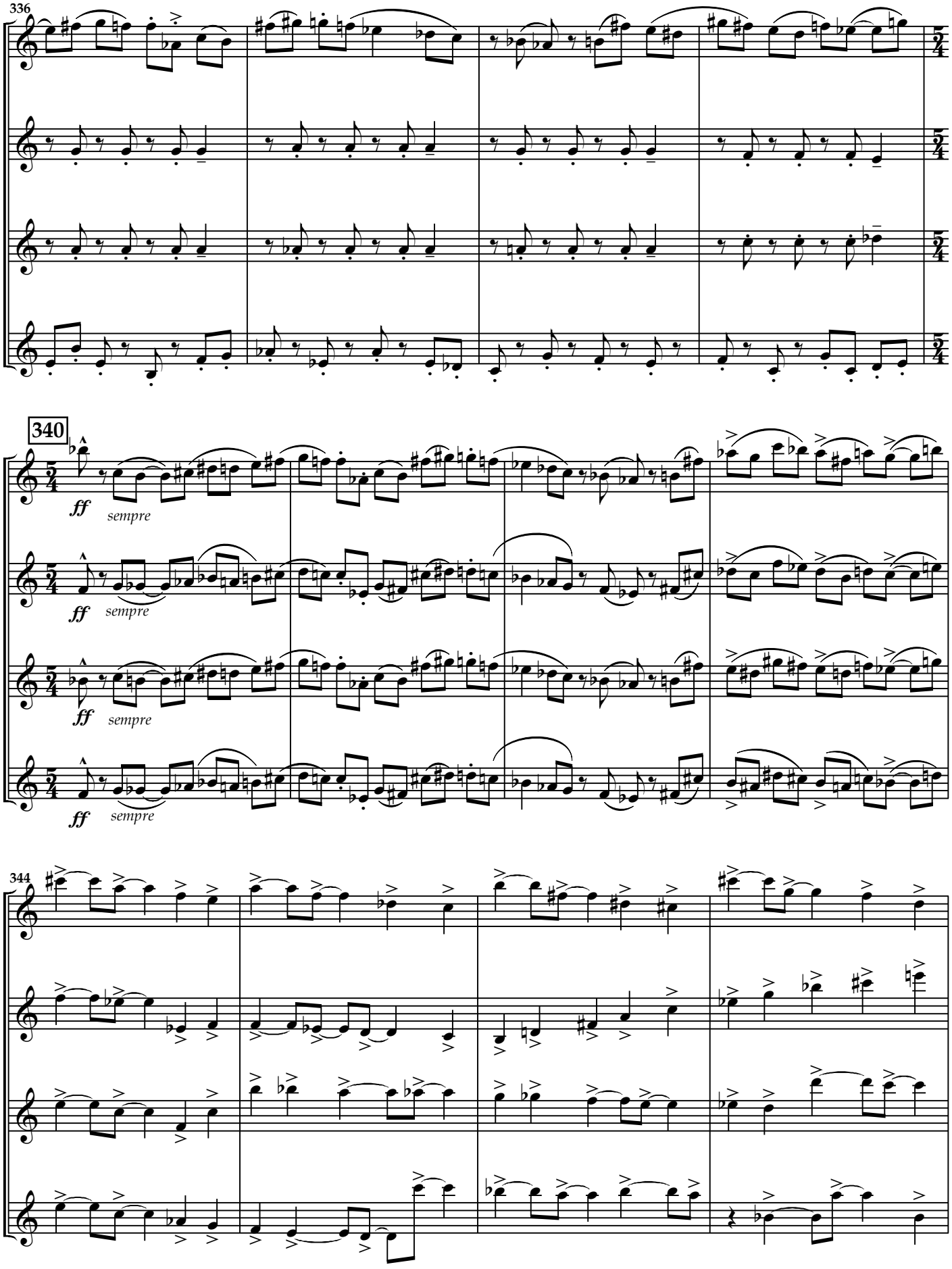

274
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
mf
278
f
282

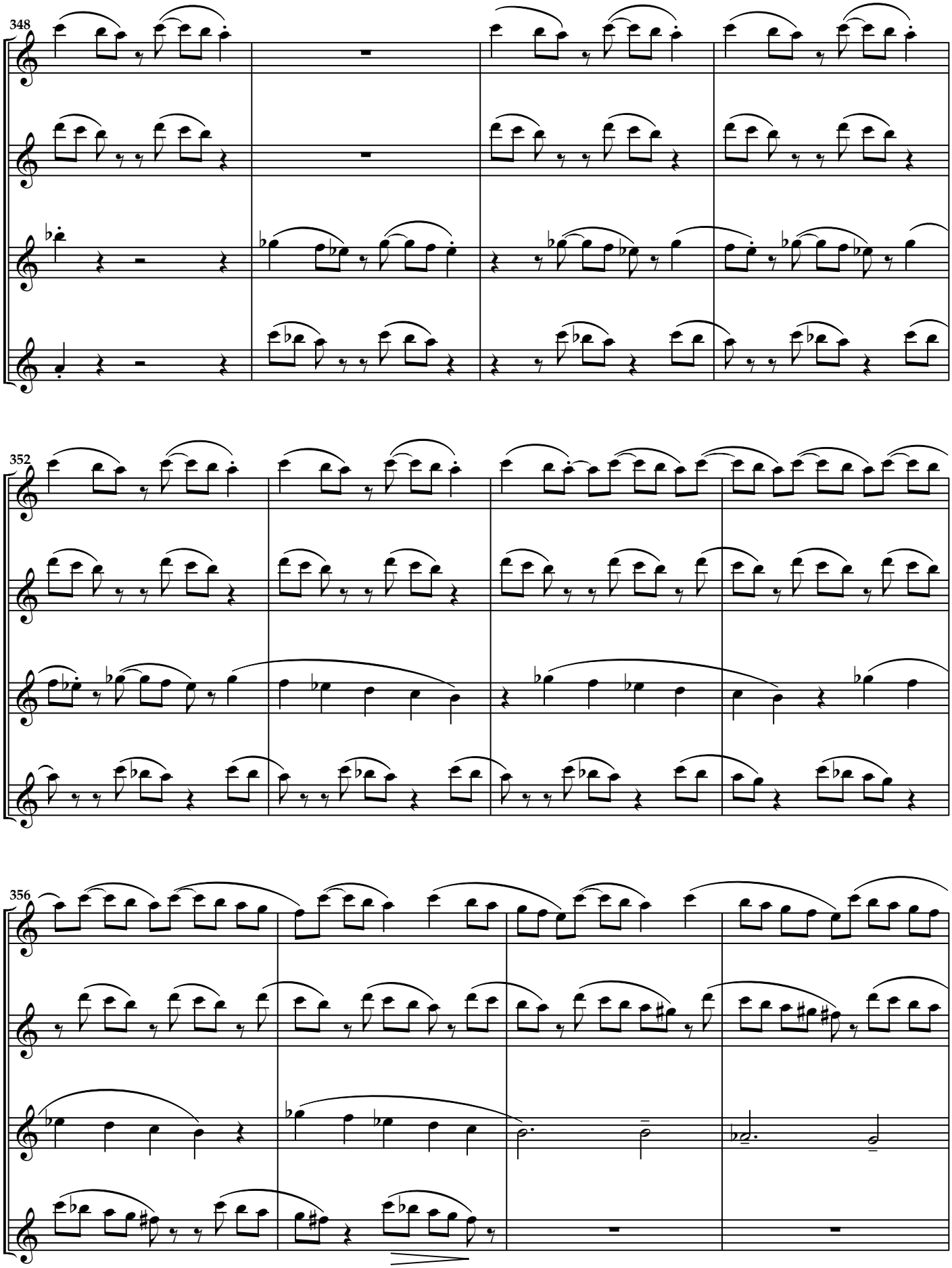

285
molto rit.
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
ff
288
290 Allegro giocoso ♩ = c.144
fff
mf
292

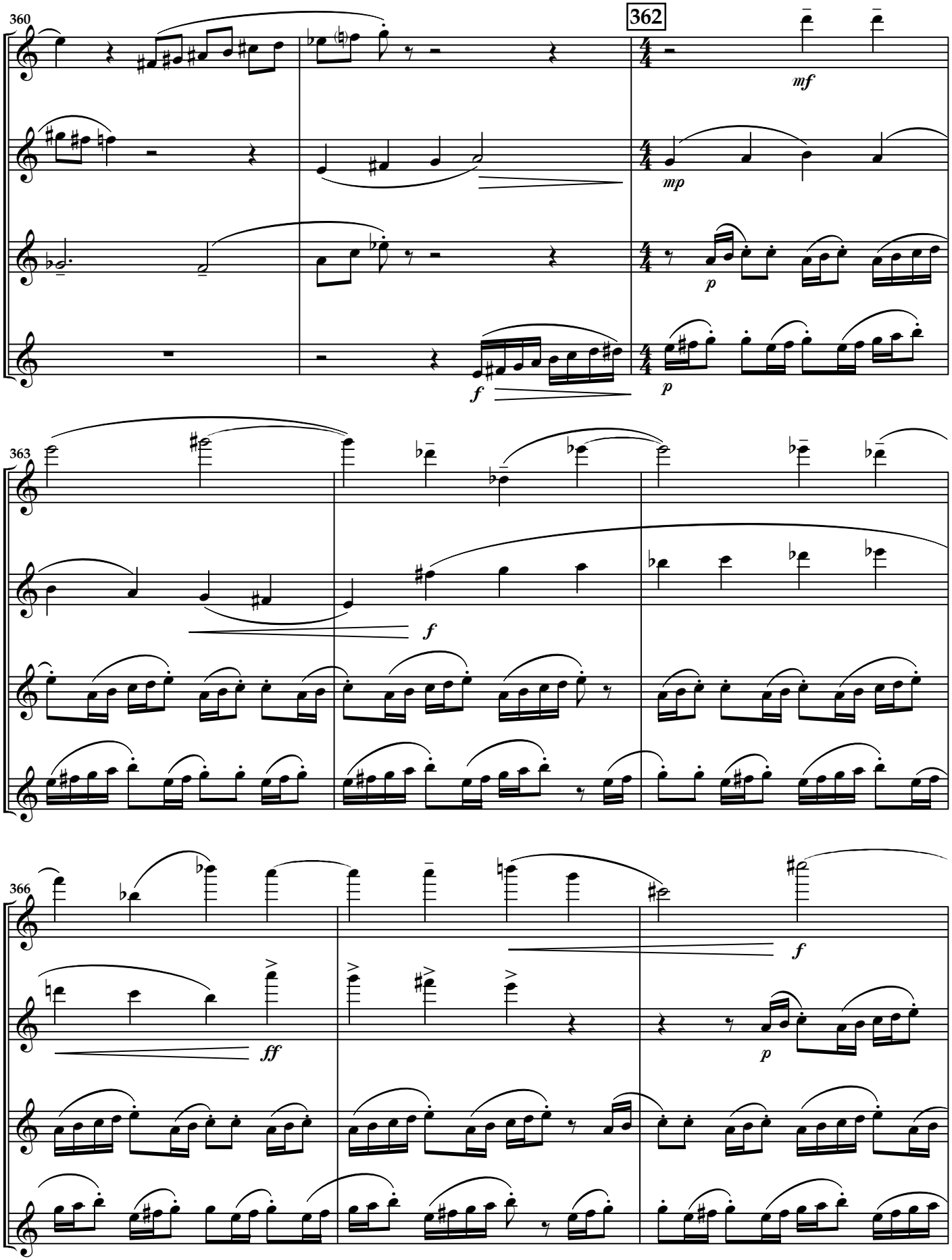

297
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
f
302
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
f
f
306
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.

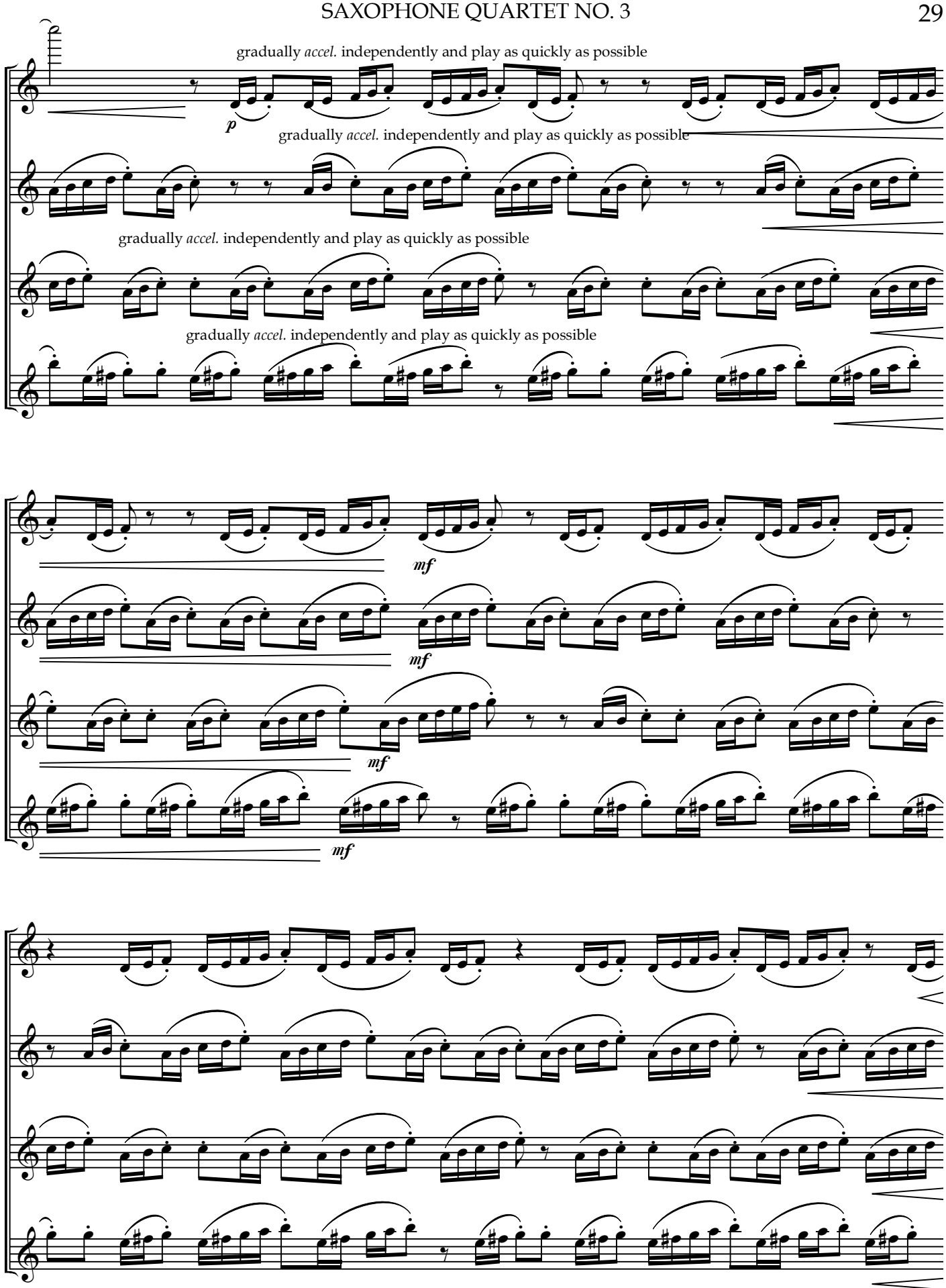

310
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
f
314
mf
318
320
pp


accel.
322
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
ff
329 Prestissimo ♩ = c.192-216
327
sffz
mf
mif
332
f

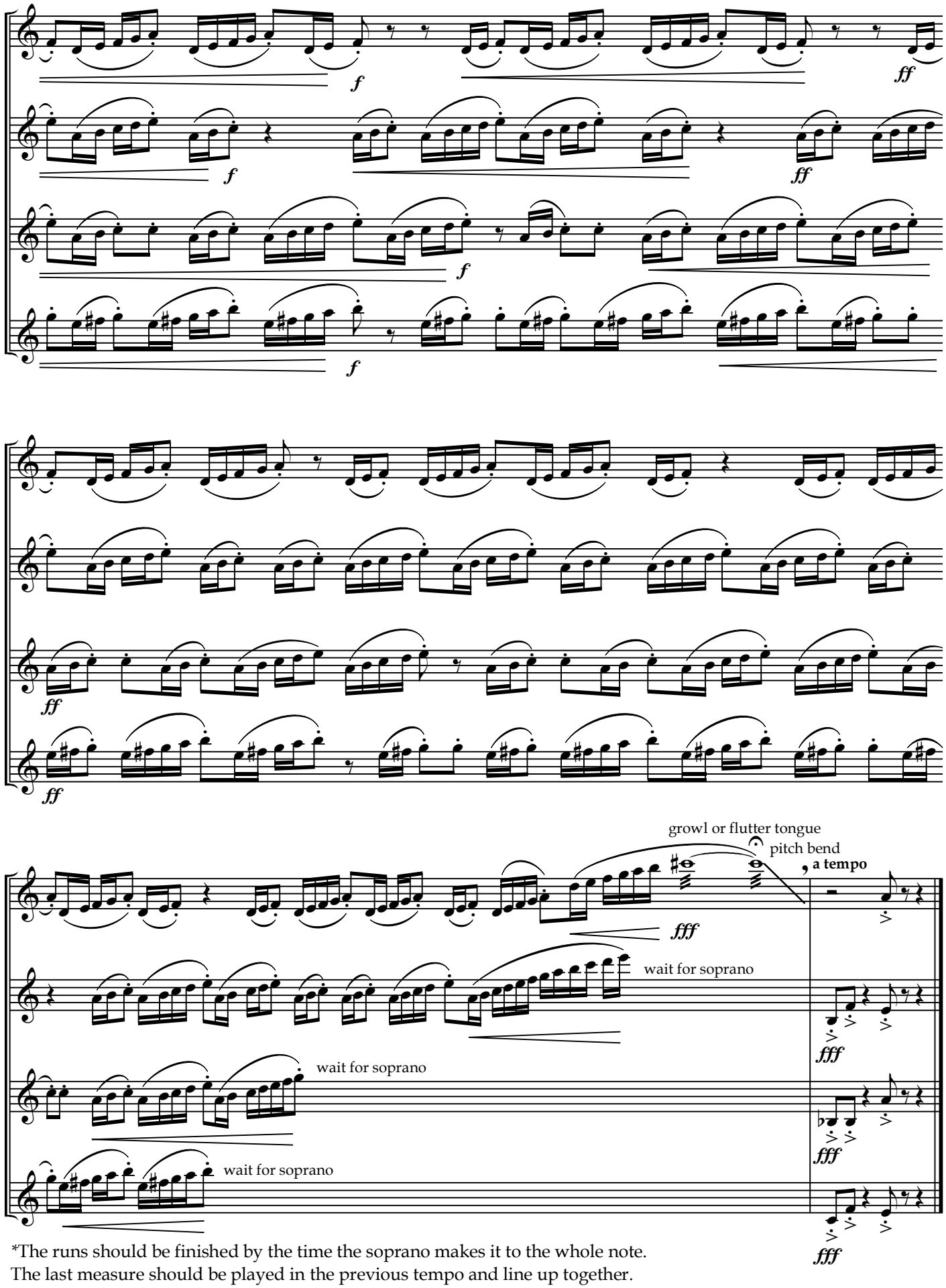

336
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
340
ff
sempre
344


348
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
352
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
356
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.


360
362
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
mf
mp
p
f
p
363
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
f
366
S. Sx.
A. Sx.
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
ff
f
p



*Barlines have been ommited for the final section of the piece to show that the performers should independently accelerate and play the runs as fast as possible.



*The runs should be finished by the time the soprano makes it to the whole note.
The last measure should be played in the previous tempo and line up together.