Continuoso Cycles 1

For string orchestra and harpsichord

Ian Percy

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[Inflections of Antiquity]

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2015

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… And then they noticed the light …

Duration ca. 5 minutes

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It was a delight when *Gli Archi del Cherubino* agreed to perform a new piece composed specifically for them at the Liverpool Hope University *Cornerstone Arts Festival 2015*. Along with friend and colleague (violinist-musicologist) Dr Alberto Sanna, the composer had been involved in a recording project with the orchestra during the scorching summer of 2015 in L'Aquila, Italy and had thoroughly enjoyed the visit, their company and the musical memories retained.

Respectful of the repertoire usually performed by the orchestra, this piece was composed upon a sequence of consonant chords, which expand at each iteration (triad – tetrachord – pentachord – hexachord) to introduce the first six pitches of the cycle of fourths: C – F – B^b – E^b – A^b – D^b. Although the score was initially realised entirely in A^b, the expanding harmony creates pseudo-modulation through the keys of F, B^b, E^b and A^b, whilst blurring the sense of 'home tonic' by rotating phrase resolutions through the modes of the parent scale (producing notation devoid of accidentals).

Once composed, the score was transposed up a semi-tone in order to take advantage of the open strings of the instruments and the increased acoustic resonance that brings from the orchestra. Transposing the score to A eliminated the need to retune the harpsichord before performance.

Building chords upon the whole-tone and perfect-fourth intervals (instead of the largely triadic harmony the ensemble is used to) shaped modal and consonant phrases sympathetic to their usual repertoire, whilst producing original music that is clearly a product of the twenty-first century. The resolution to (and prominence of) the home-tone heard in the final stages of the movement caused initial concern for the composer but seemed appropriate within the context of the subtitle for the work: *Inflections of Antiquity*. The final resolution of the movement to C Phrygian mode is far more in keeping with the contemporary setting of the score as a whole and how the references to antique compositional form and structure are contemporised within the harmonic and rhythmic motion of the combined collective.

The concept of the writing is to present a reductive modal language, which references (inflects) a retrospective soundworld wrapped within a contemporary (or timeless) musical form that looks forwards into the twenty-first century through exploring cycles of pitch-patterns reminiscent of mid 20th century modernism, cycles of gradual process reminiscent of post-modern minimalism and pseudo modulations via modal motion (rather than tonal motion) reminiscent of post-minimalist simplicity, therefore avoiding literal emulation, or the dreaded pastiche.

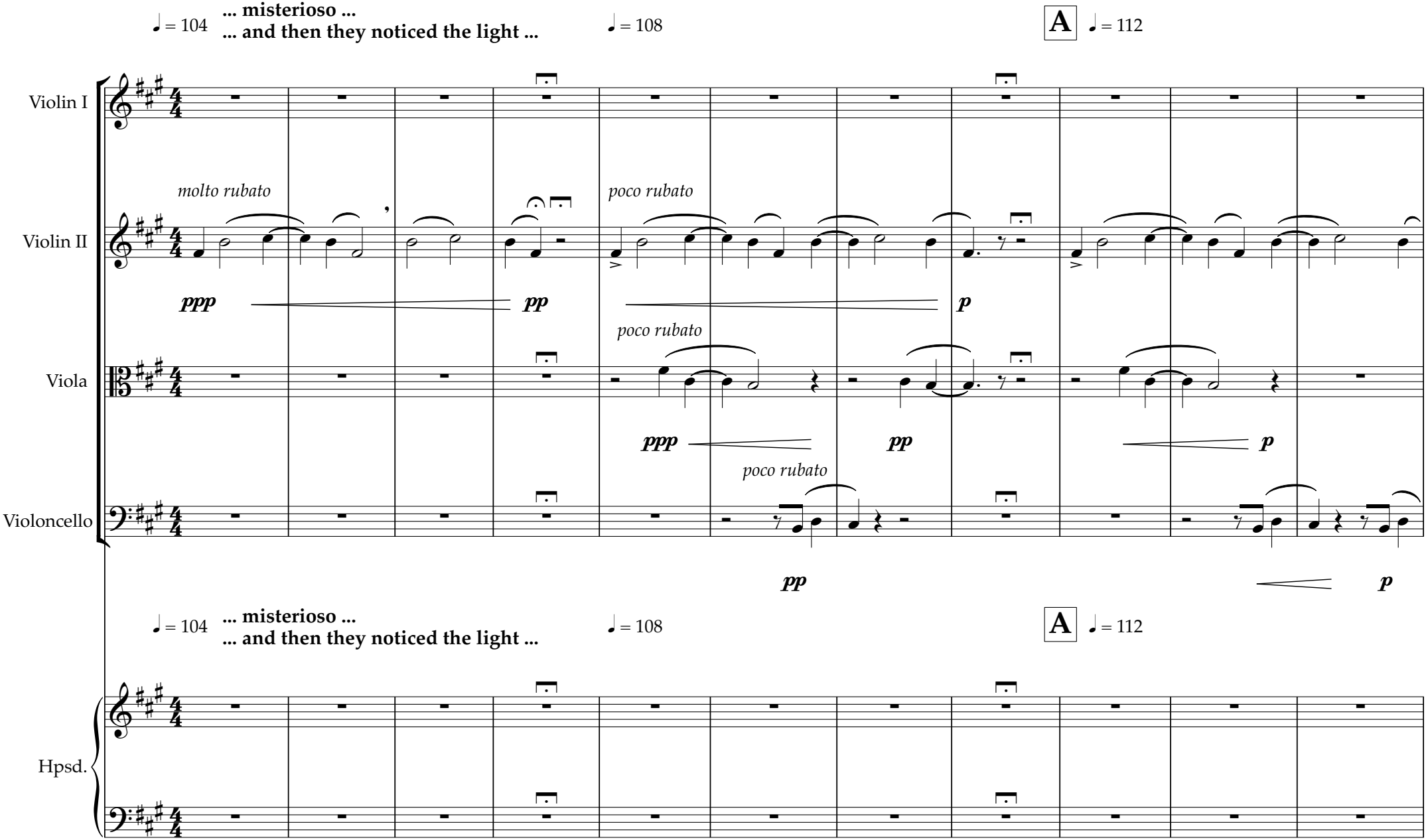
Continuoso Cycles 1 can be described as reductive, retrospective and minimal music of relative simplicity. The cycle explores the concept of modal pseudo-modulation within tonal stasis.

Continuoso Cycles 1

(Inflections of Antiquity)

for string orchestra and harpsichord

Ian Percy



B **... with increasing intensity ...**

12

poco rubato

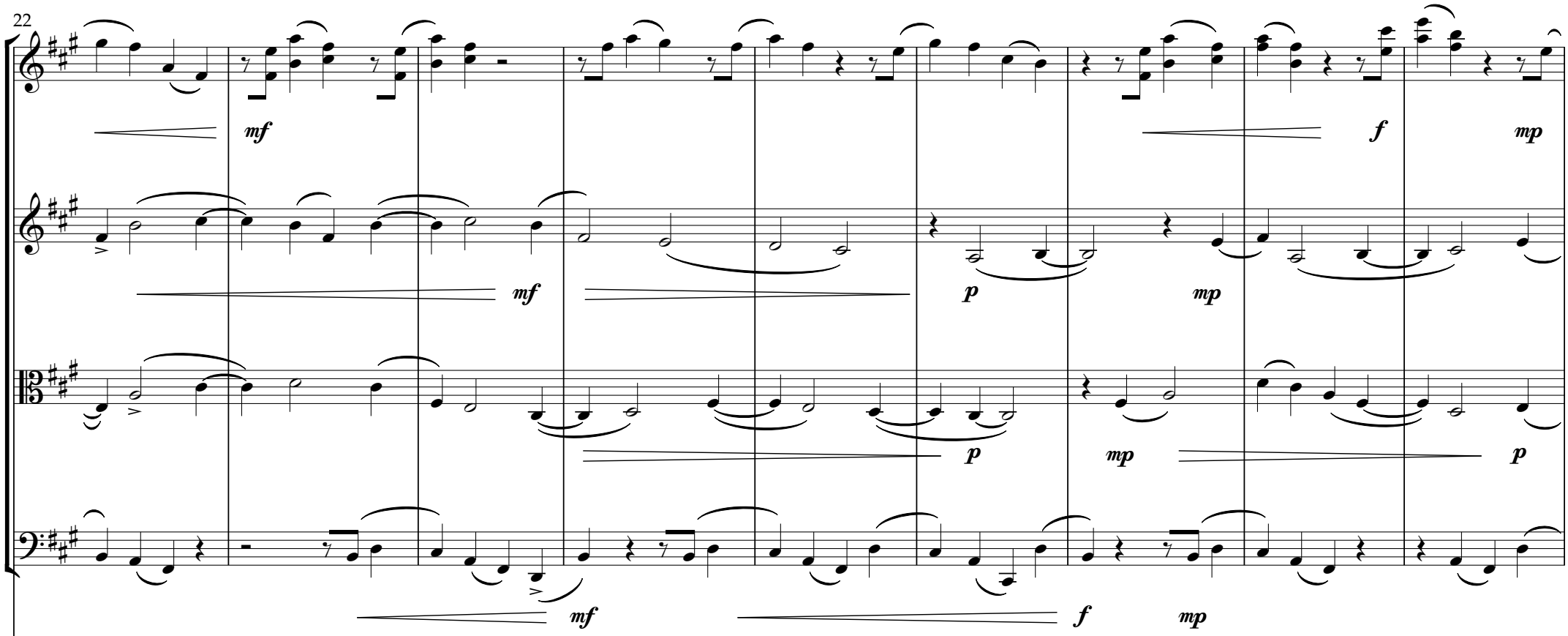
pp *p* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp*

B **... with increasing intensity ...**

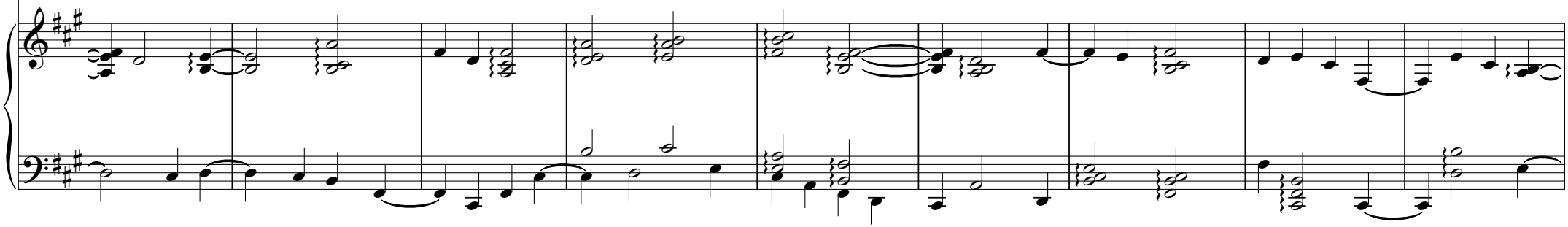
embellish, expand, reduce and extemporise ad. lib.

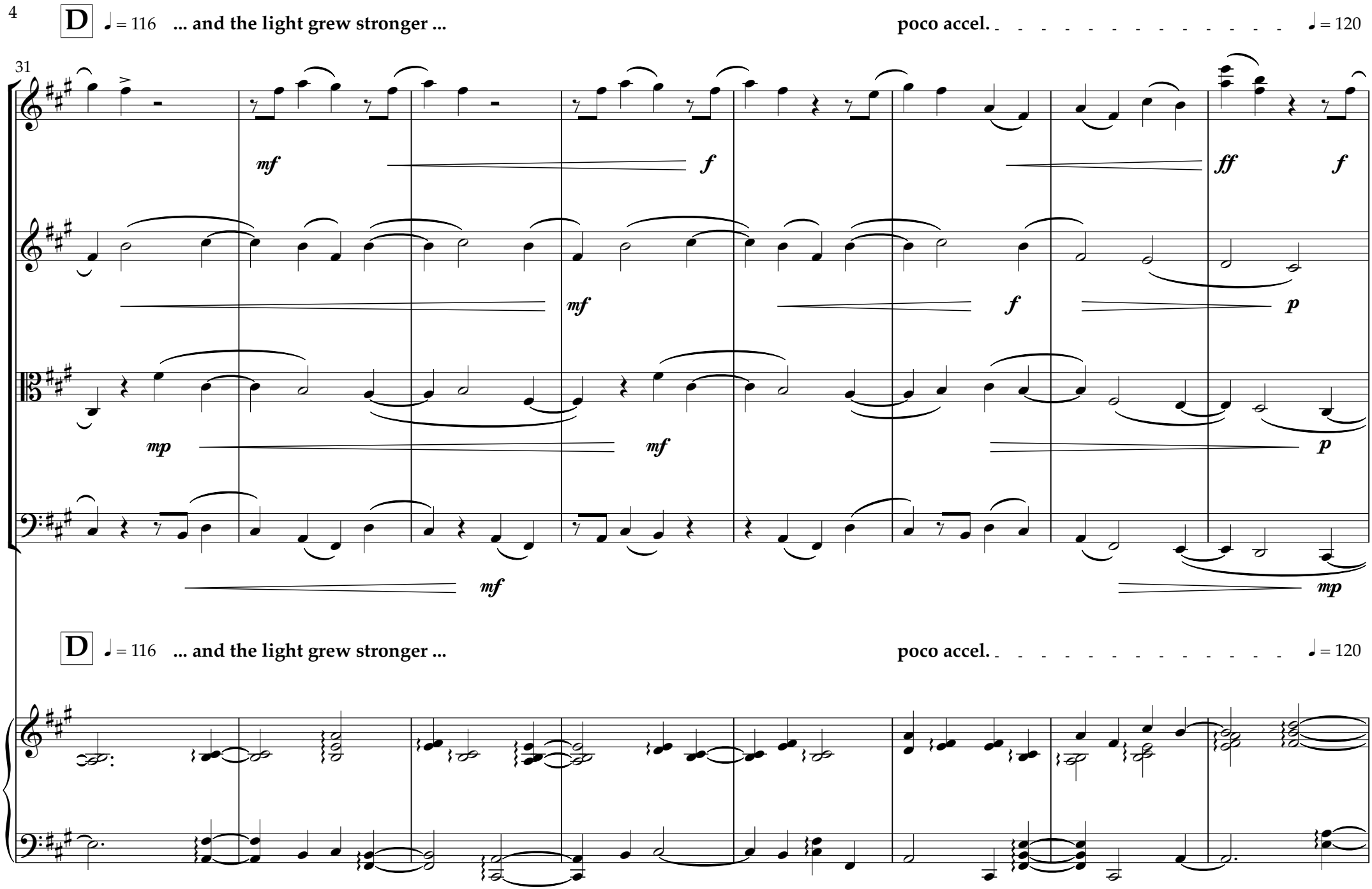
C ... in cycles of momentum and release ... poco accel.

22



C ... in cycles of momentum and release ... poco accel.




D
♩ = 116
... and the light grew stronger ...
poco accel.
♩ = 120
31
mf
f
ff
f
mf
f
p
mp
mf
p
mf
mp
D
♩ = 116
... and the light grew stronger ...
poco accel.
♩ = 120

poco accel. [♩ = 126]

39

mf *f* *ff* *fff*

mf *f* *mp*

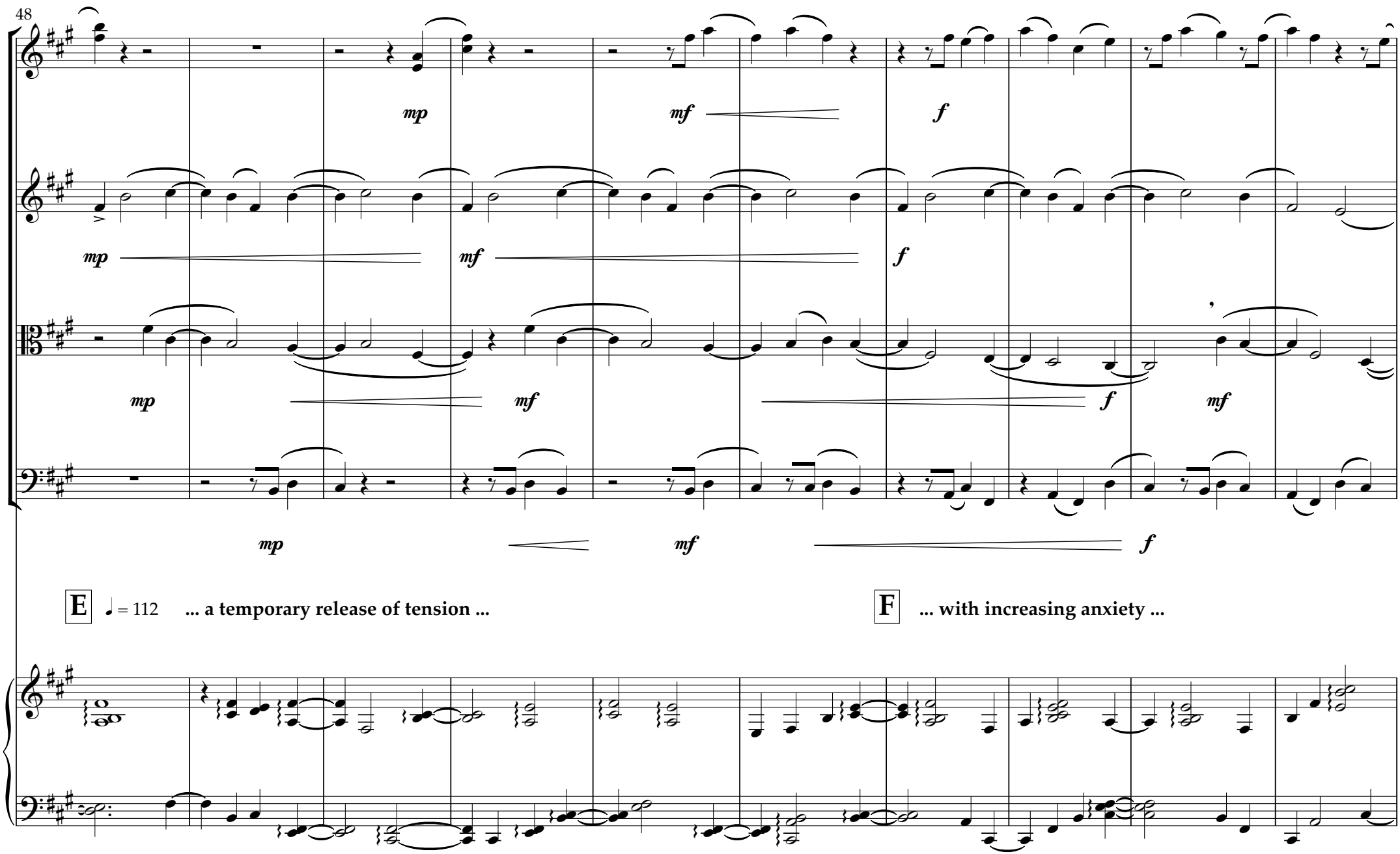
f *mp*

mf *f* *ff*

poco accel. [♩ = 126]

E ♩ = 112 **... a temporary release of tension ...**

F **... with increasing anxiety ...**

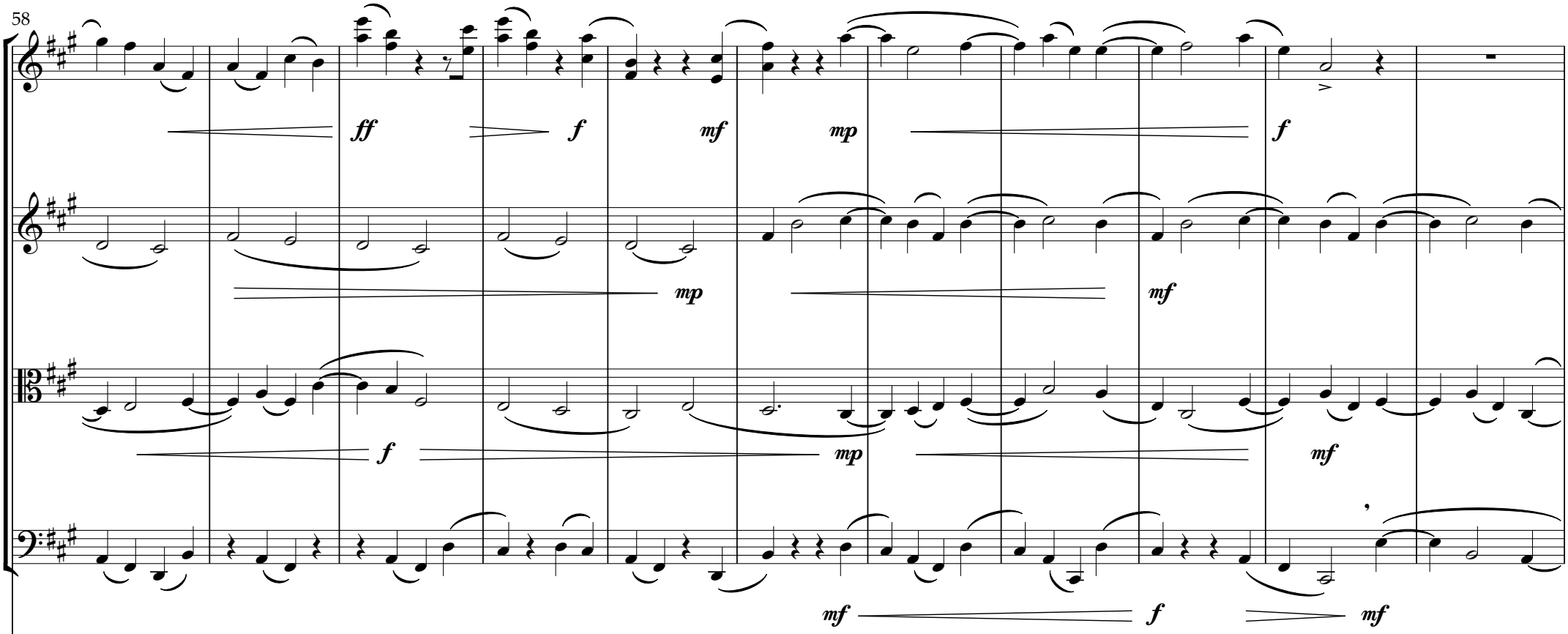


E ♩ = 112 **... a temporary release of tension ...**

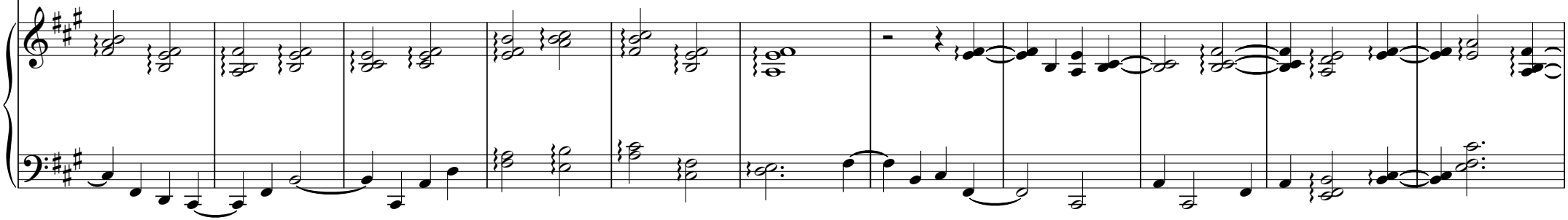
F **... with increasing anxiety ...**

poco accel. [♩ = 120] G ♩ = 112 ... sometimes we just have to 'let it go' (and go with it) ...

58



poco accel. [♩ = 120] G ♩ = 112 ... sometimes we just have to 'let it go' (and go with it) ...



H **... in consonant counterpoint and confident continuum ...** **poco accel.**

69

mf *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

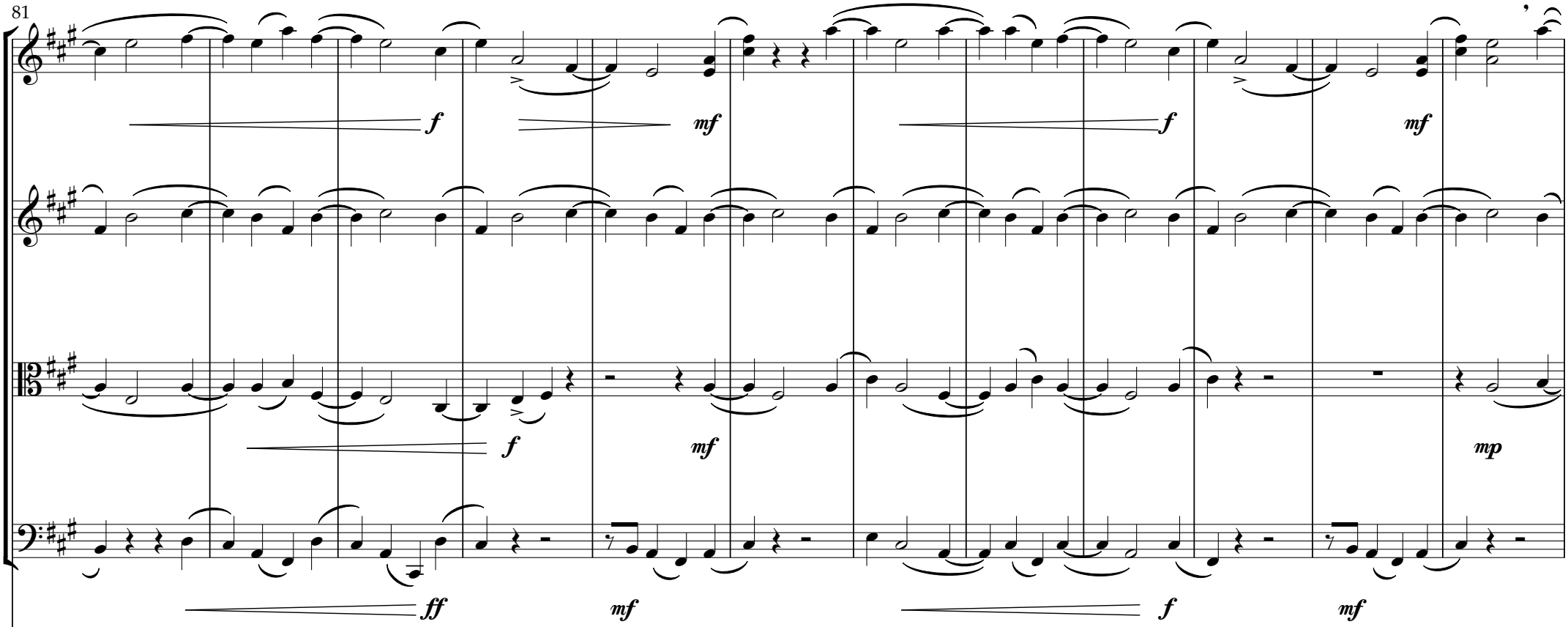
f *mf* *f*

H **... in consonant counterpoint and confident continuum ...** **poco accel.**

♩ = 116

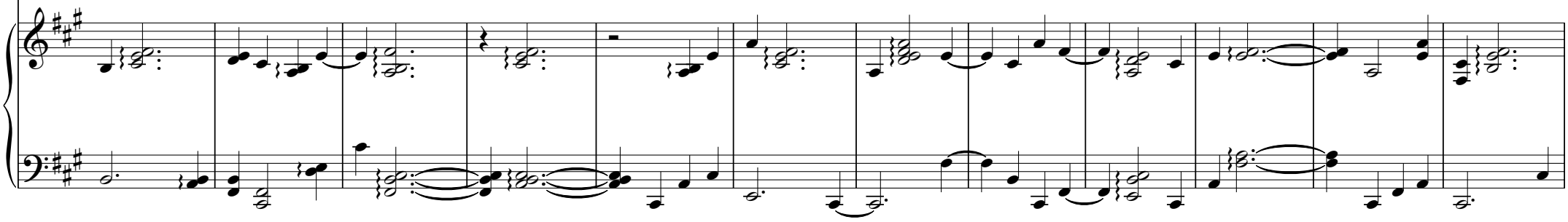
I **... chorus and continuum ...**

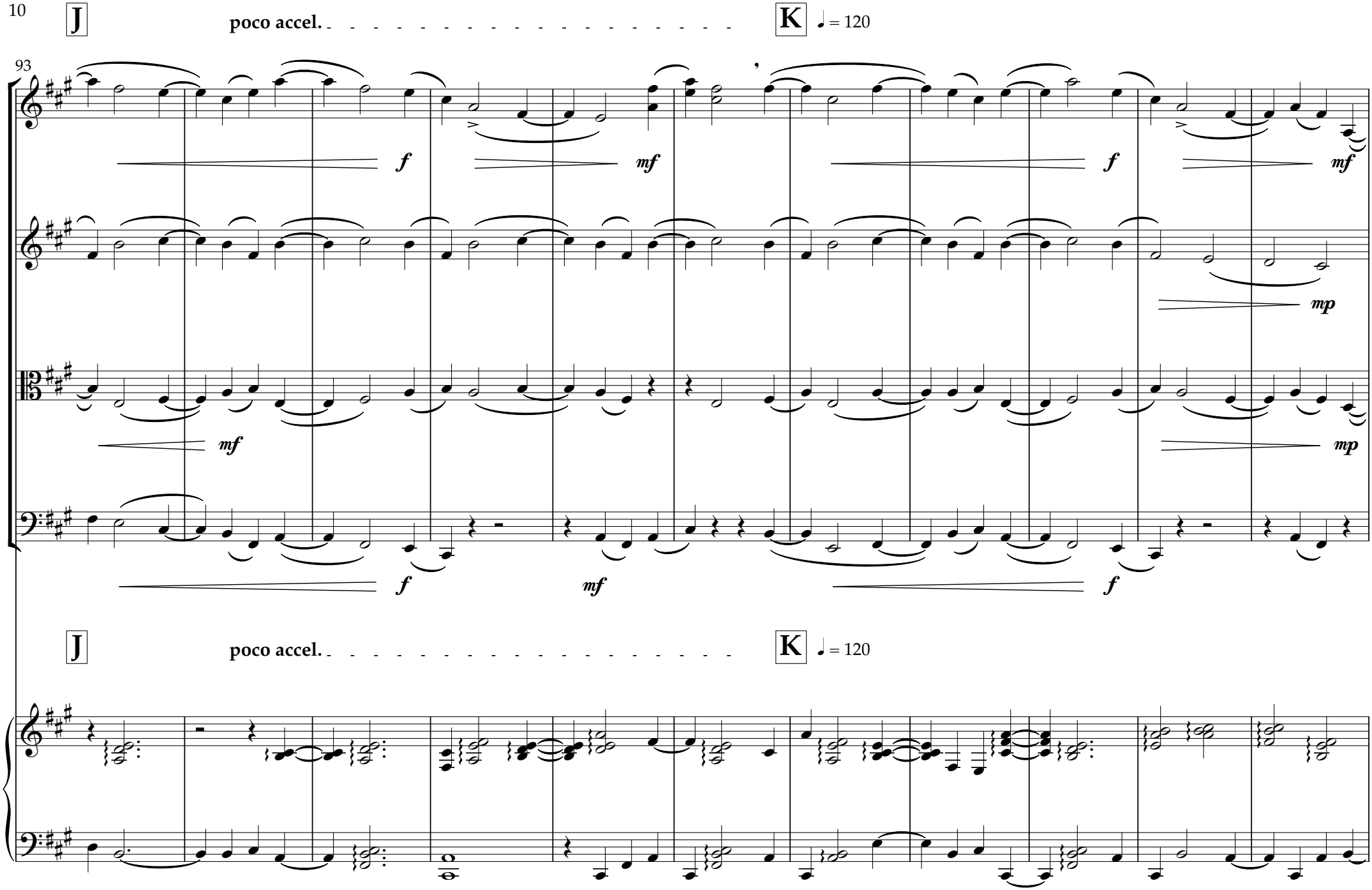
81

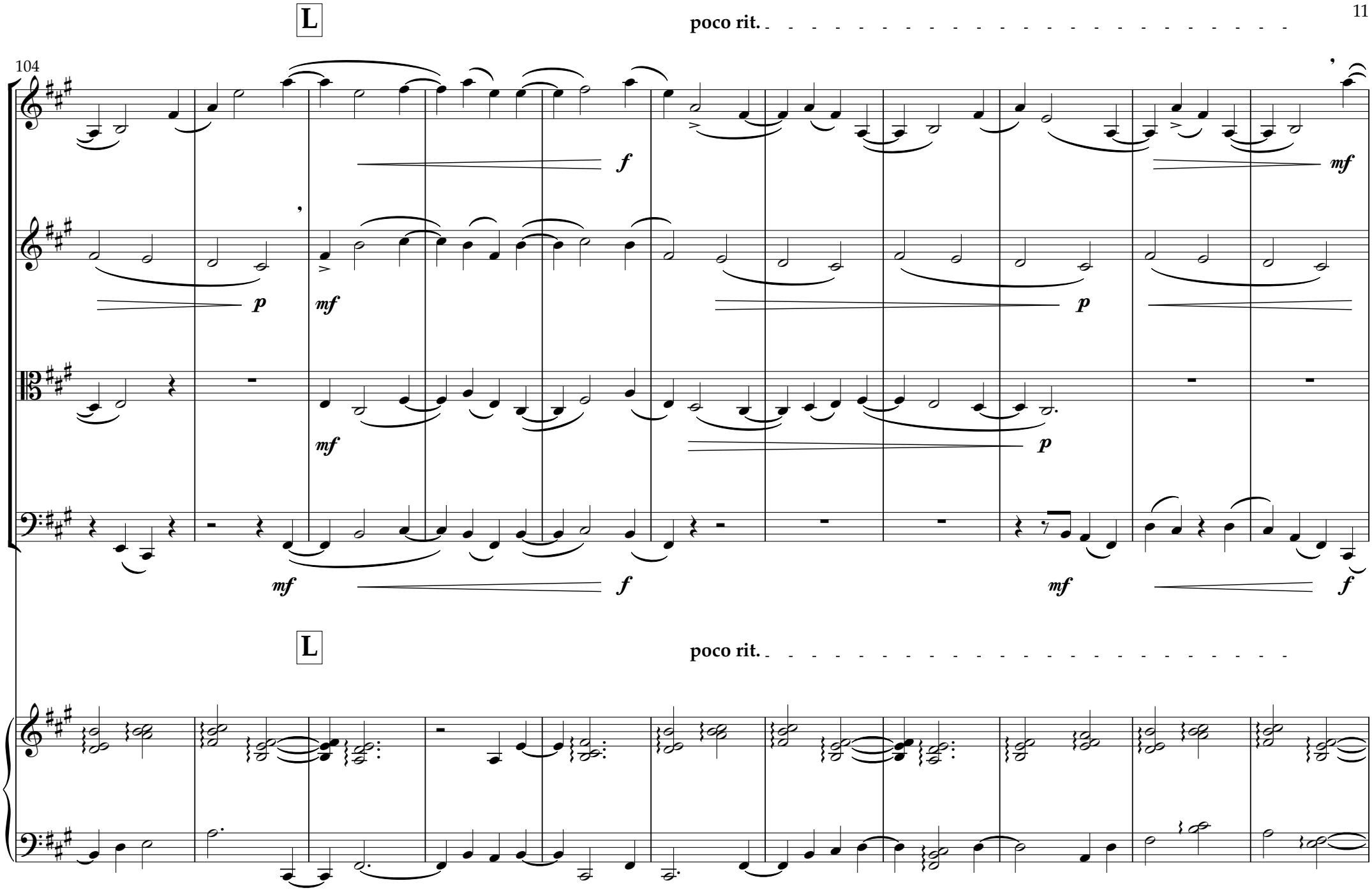


♩ = 116

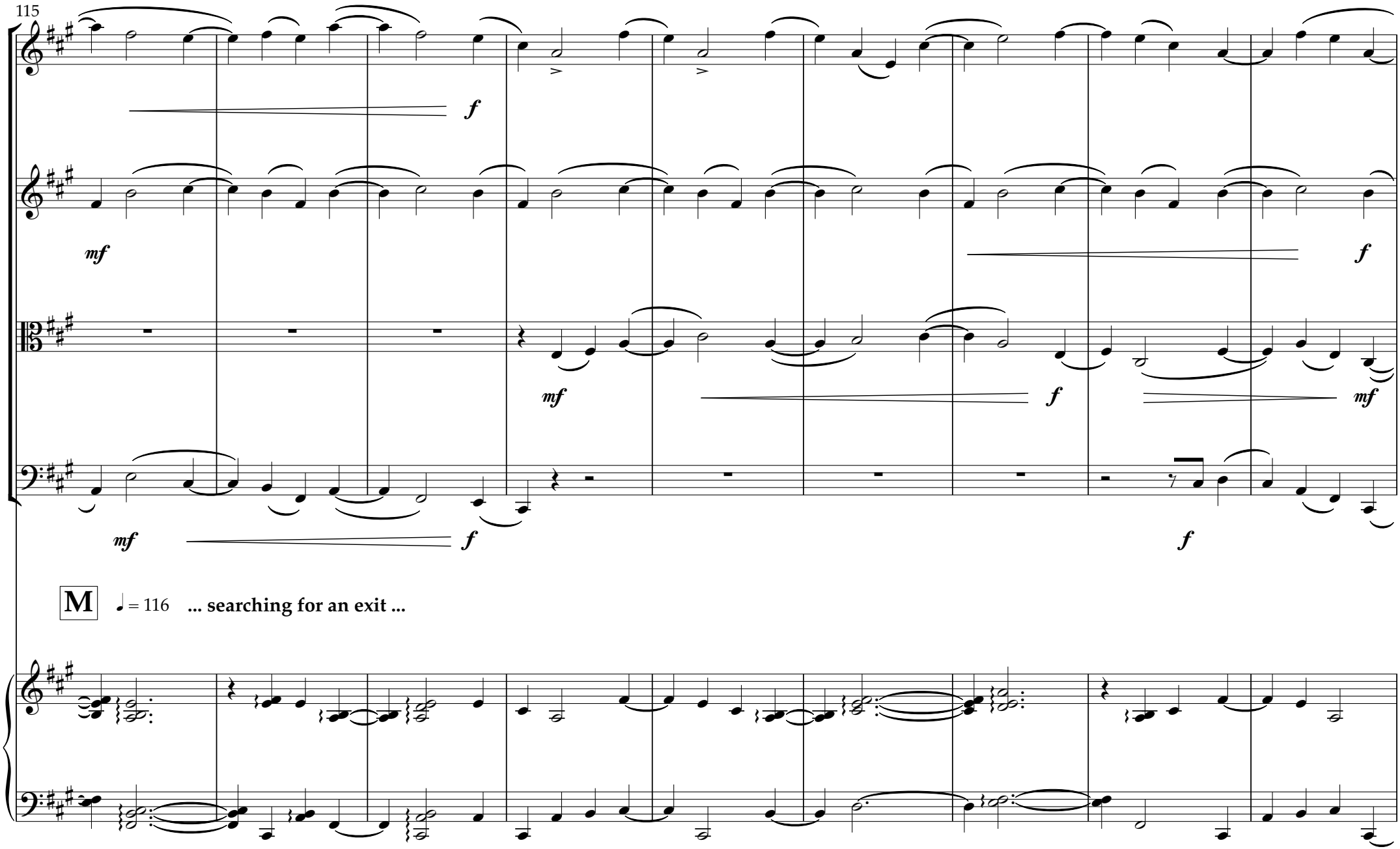
I **... chorus and continuum ...**



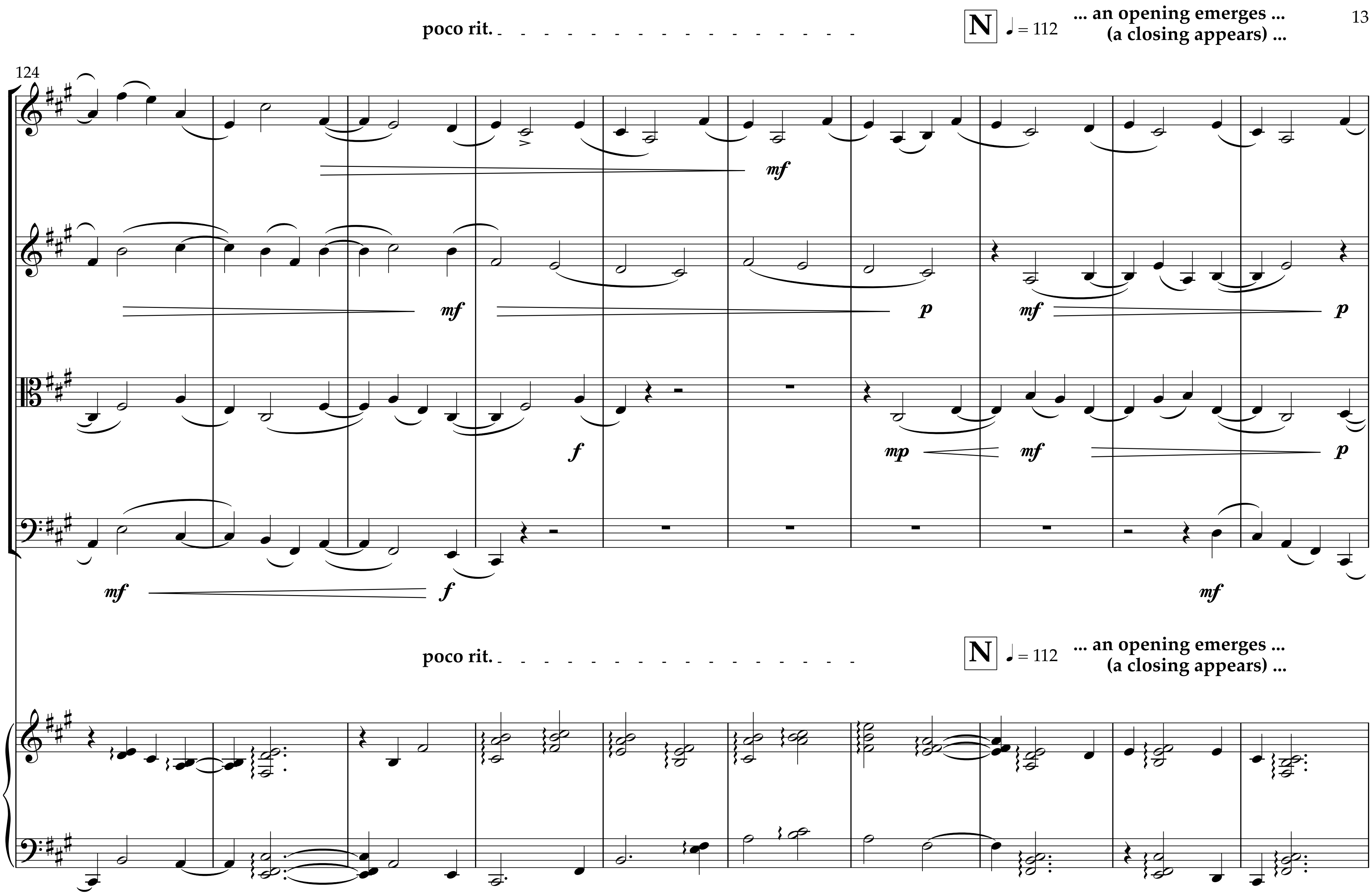

J
poco accel.
K
♩ = 120
93
f
mf
f
mf
mp
mf
mp
f
mf
f
J
poco accel.
K
♩ = 120


L
poco rit.
104
f
mf
p
mf
p
mf
mf
f
mf
f
L
poco rit.

M ♩ = 116 **... searching for an exit ...**



M ♩ = 116 **... searching for an exit ...**



poco rit.
N
♩ = 112
... an opening emerges ...
(a closing appears) ...
124
mf
mf
p
mf
p
f
mp
mf
p
mf
f
mf
poco rit.
N
♩ = 112
... an opening emerges ...
(a closing appears) ...

134

O poco rit. ♩ = 96

p pp ppp

p pp pp ppp

pp p pp

pizz. molto rubato

p mp p pp ppp

O poco rit. ♩ = 96

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