A Quartet of Daydreams

For string quartet

Ian Percy

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Approximate Duration: 13-14 minutes

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2005/09
(Revised 2017)

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This single movement for string quartet was composed with primary pitch material flavoured by natural resonance theories and elements of the harmonic and sub-harmonic series during 2005/06. The piece was revised in 2009 and again during 2017 in preparation for performance of an abridged version. Initial work evolved from the planning for two entirely different pieces:

Melancholy Daydreams for solo piano (2004): A set of 4 movements subtitled: What, Where, When and Why. These generic questions (or daydreams) offer a variety of connotations. They can be perceived as interrogations or exclamations, passive or aggressive. This ambiguous extra-musical influence captured the imagination, inspiring conception of a meta-formula from which multiple pieces evolved.

Natural Resonance for string quartet (2004): A single movement dealing with the acoustic phenomenon of resonating natural resonance. Natural Resonance seems to describe the timbral characteristics of a string quartet quite accurately. It implies an organic phenomenon: acoustic vibration. It is as old as nature and is often discussed in relation to space and time, even the origins of the universe itself. It suggests the harmonic series, ancient organic resource and natural patterns. In literal terms, natural resonance refers to the additional sympathetic tones produced when sustained resonances vibrate against each other. These heterodyning frequencies can be produced above the pitches as combination tones (sum of the two frequencies), or as difference tones (the difference between the two).

Having allowed the idiomatic properties of the instrument to shape heterodyning frequencies and multiphonics within previous works, this quartet adopts a more considered and reproducible approach to the phenomenon of natural resonance as a compositional resource. The pitch of D is treated as the primary thought and all material is generated from and around it. The meta-formula for this quartet can be sub-divided into four forms:

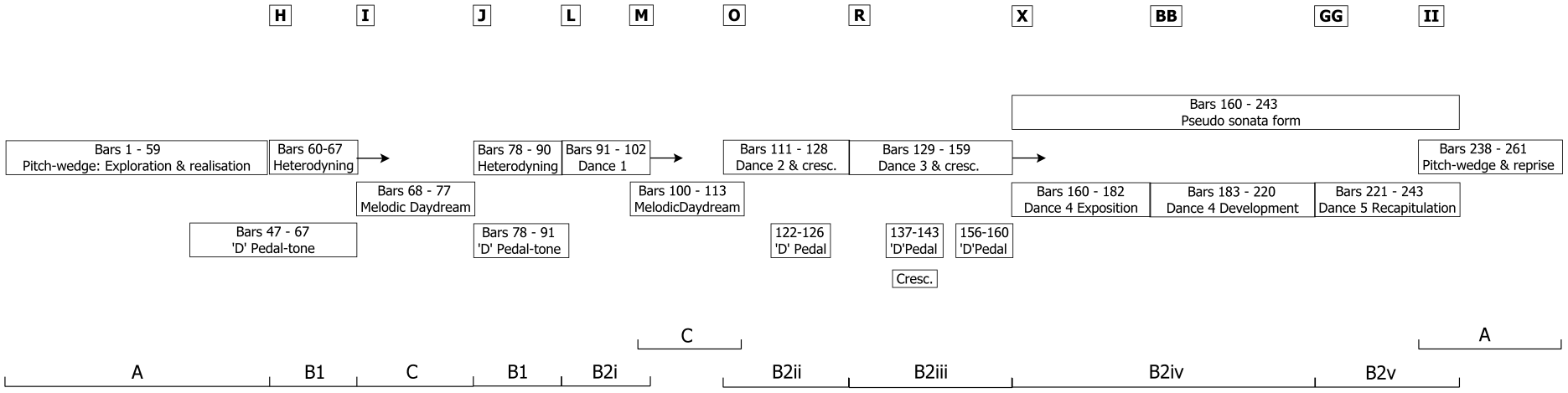
1. Chromatic pitch wedge around D
2. Modal cells
3. Whole-tone scales and chords
4. Heterodyning frequencies relative to pitch of D

Although a seemingly complex movement, it can be divided into a handful of compositional units:

1. Pitch wedge
2. Ostinato/pedal tone
3. Motivic gestures and resonance theories
4. Dance adaptations (mini sonata form)
5. Melodic daydreams (transitional passages/lyrical interludes)

As a guiding extra-musical influence, the composer considered the definition of a daydream as ‘a fantasy indulged in while one is awake’ and through analogy and metaphor, allowed this to influence the atmosphere, character, interaction, pacing, texture and rhythm of the writing as one aimed to compose an acoustic interpretation of the natural thought process: a collection of daydreams.

Quartet of Daydreams Form



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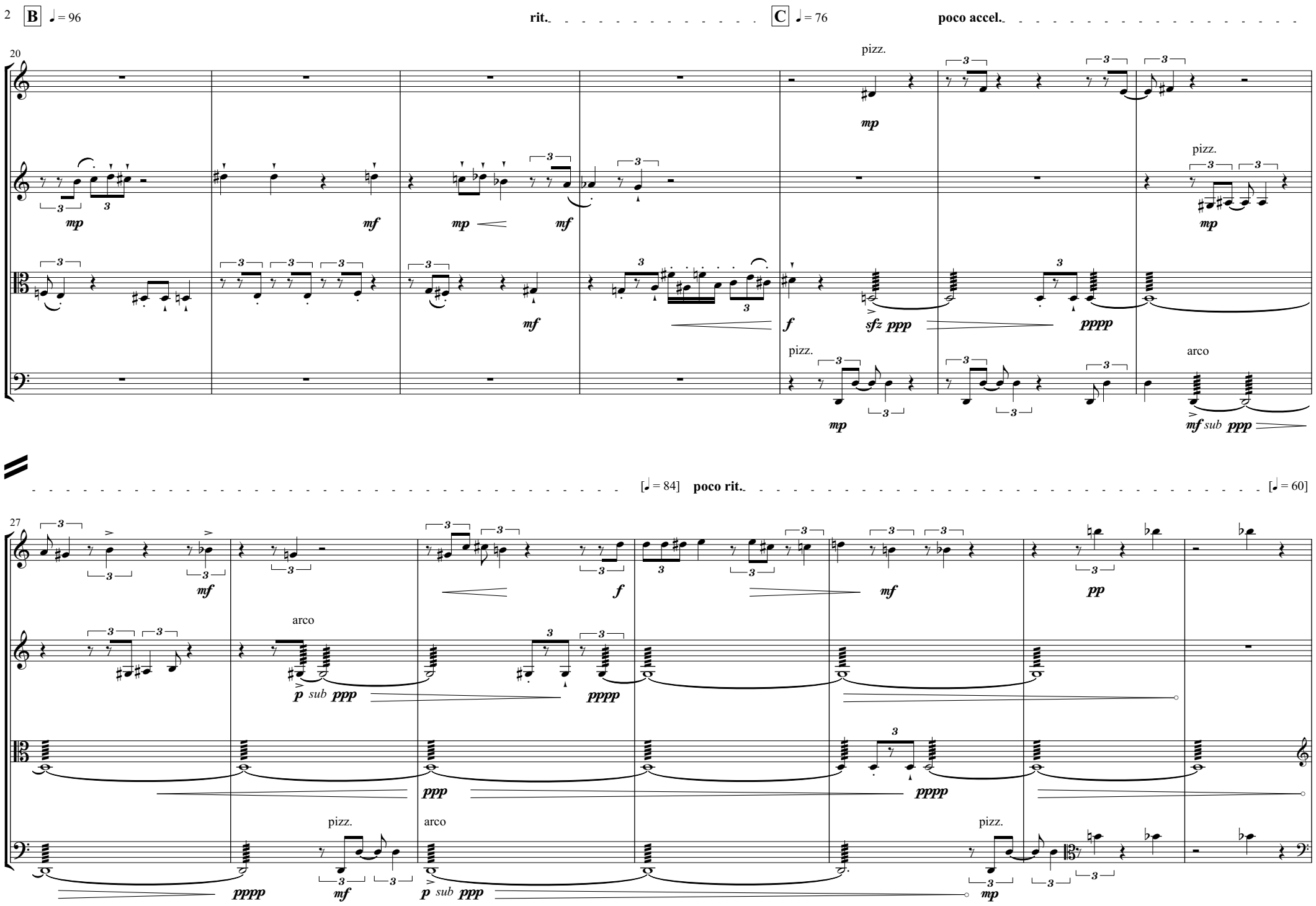

B
♩ = 96
rit.
C
♩ = 76
poco accel.
20
pizz.
mp
mf
mp
mf
mf
f
sfz ppp
pppp
pizz.
mp
pizz.
mp
arco
mf sub ppp
[♩ = 84]
poco rit.
[♩ = 60]
27
mf
f
mf
pp
arco
p sub ppp
pppp
ppp
pppp
pizz.
mf
arco
p sub ppp
pizz.
mp

D ♩ = 96 **... a communal debate within one mind ...**

poco rit.

34

arco

pizz.

flageolet tone

flageolet tones

[♩ = 60] **E** ♩ = 92 **... agreeing to disagree ...**

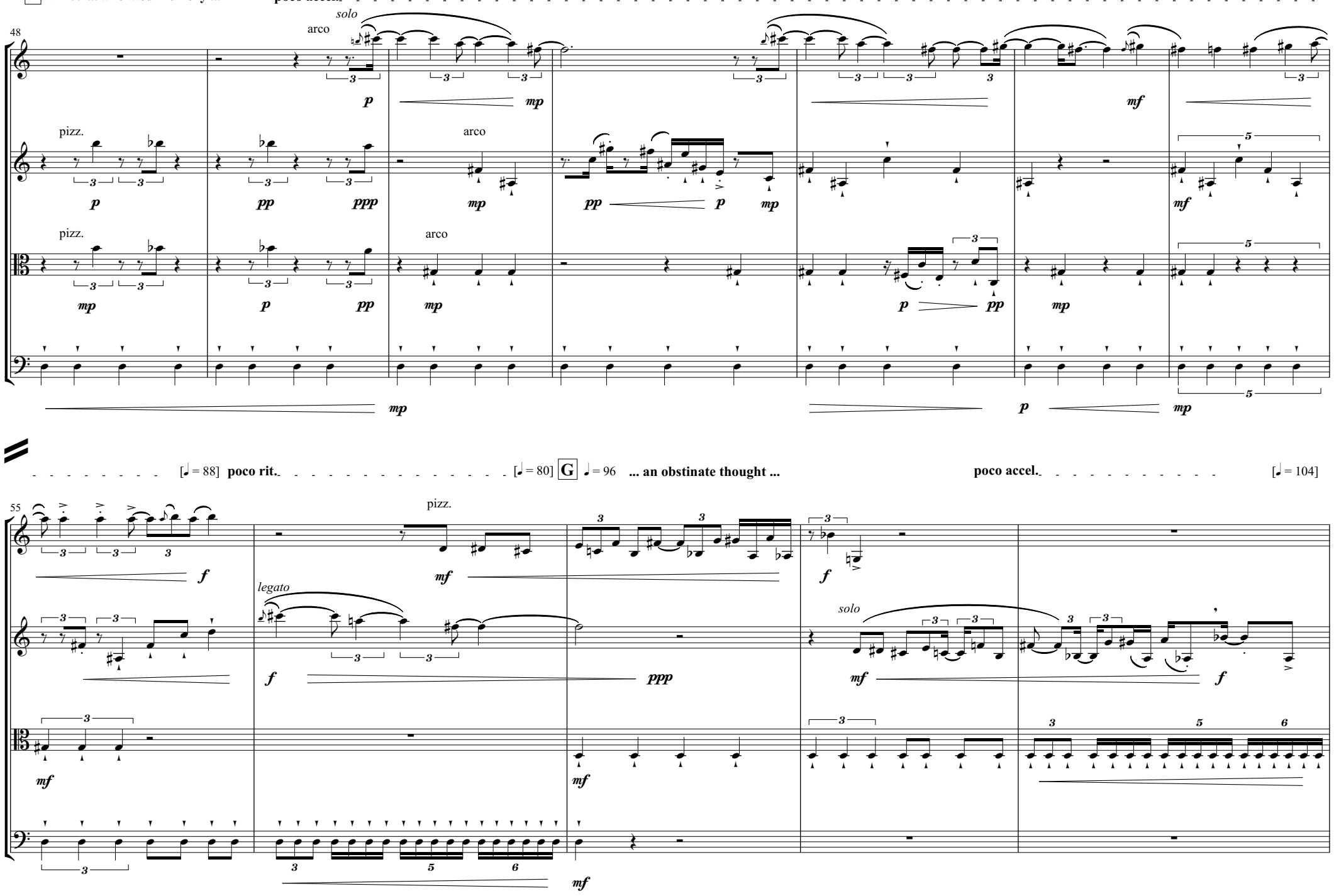
poco rit.

41

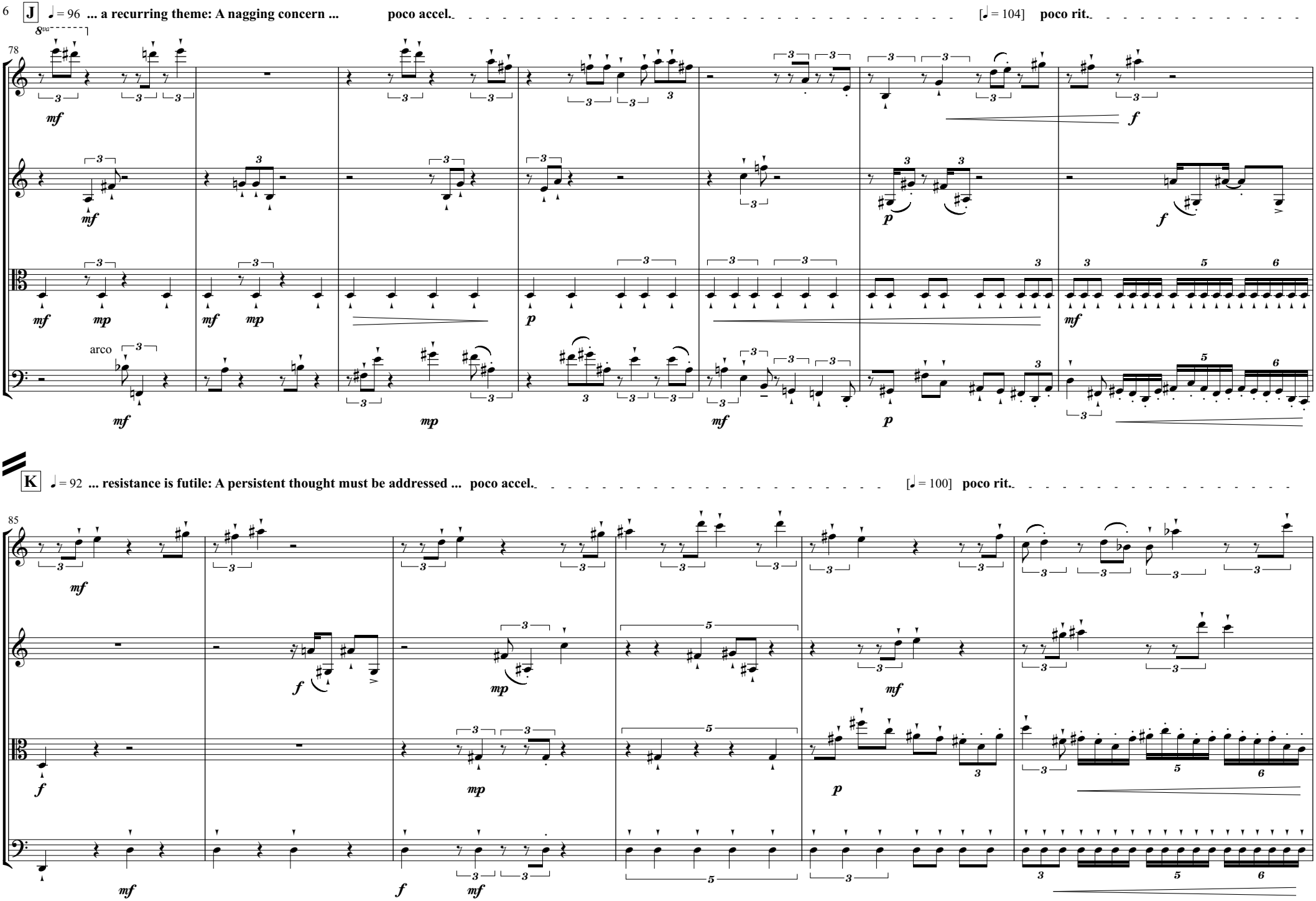
pizz.

arco

arco


F
♩ = 80 ... a related memory ...
poco accel.
48
solo
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
[♩ = 88] poco rit.
[♩ = 80]
G
♩ = 96 ... an obstinate thought ...
poco accel.
[♩ = 104]
55
pizz.
legato
solo

H ♩ = 96 ... a persistent thread ...
rit.
arco
legato
vib.
pizz.
arco
I ♩ = 60 ... a melancholy daydream ...
poco rit.
[♩ = 52]
flageolet tone
solo
legato
flageolet tone
solo
pizz.


J
♩ = 96 ... a recurring theme: A nagging concern ...
poco accel.
[♩ = 104] poco rit.
8va
78
arco
K
♩ = 92 ... resistance is futile: A persistent thought must be addressed ...
poco accel.
[♩ = 100] poco rit.
85

L ♩ = 92 **... reason and resolution ...** **poco accel.** [♩ = 96] **poco rit.** [♩ = 92]

91

pizz. arco

poco rit.

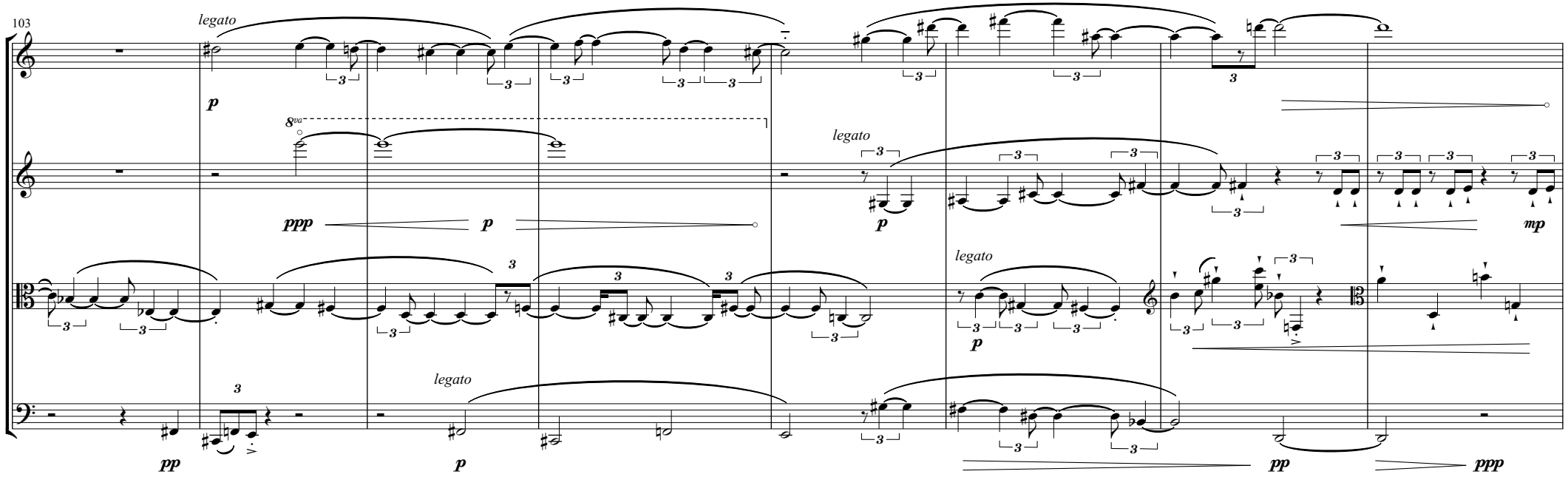
... a subconscious transition ...

M ♩ = 84 **poco rit.**

97

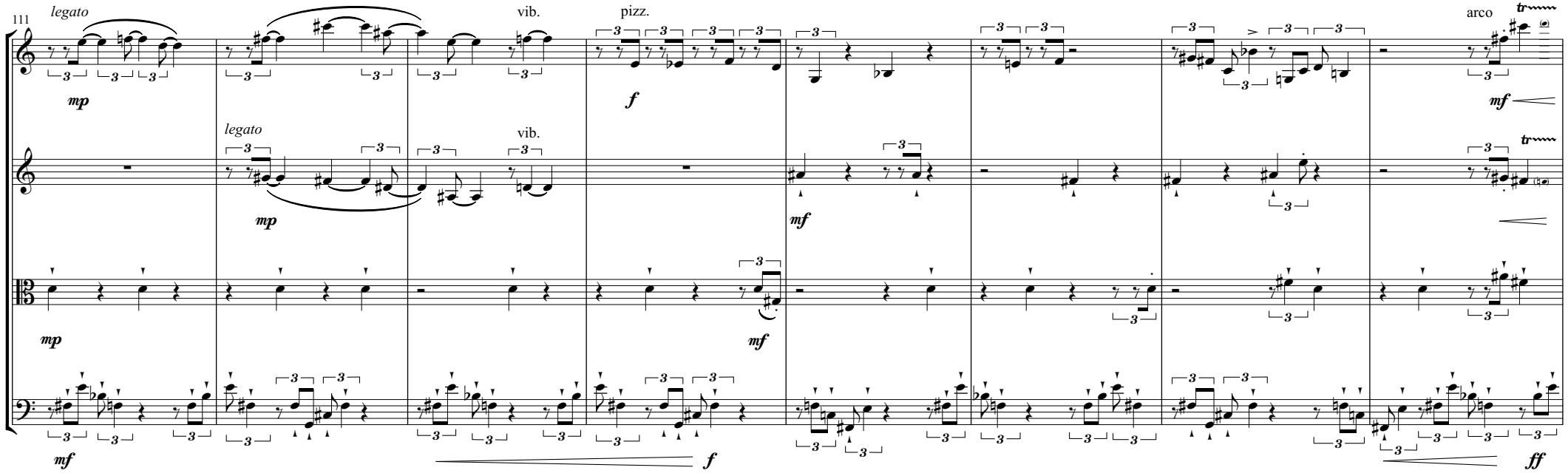
lyrical *legato* vib. *legato* vib. *solo*

N ♩ = 69 **... a sentimental recollection ...** **poco rit.** [♩ = 56] **accel.**

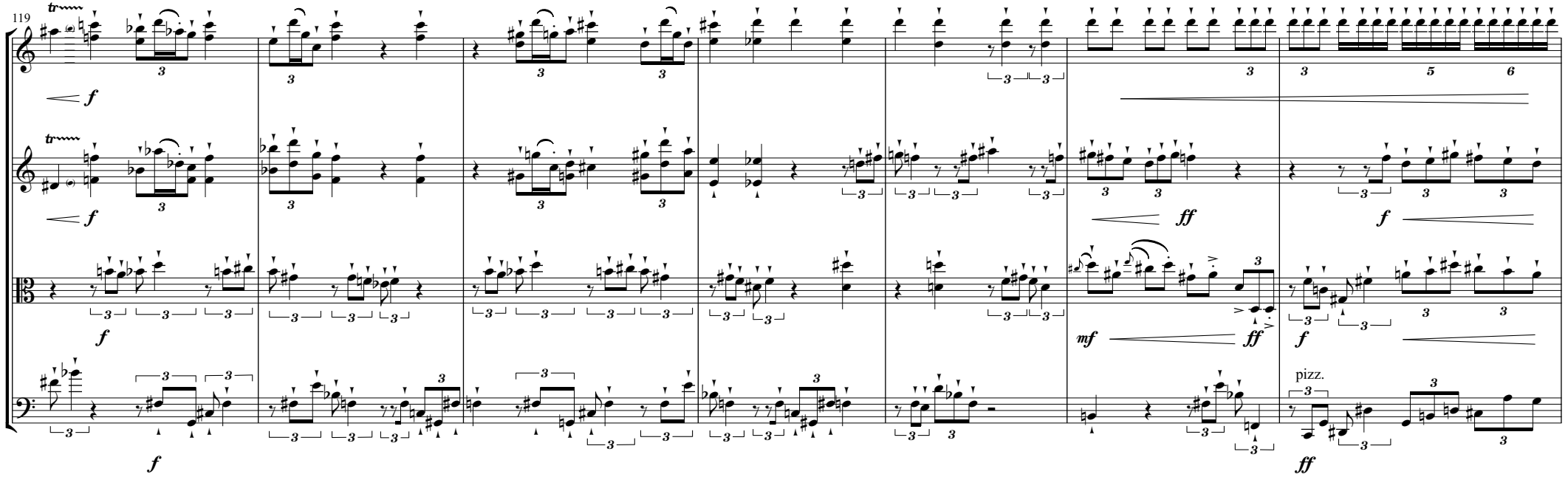


... all things considered: A dark possibility emerges ...

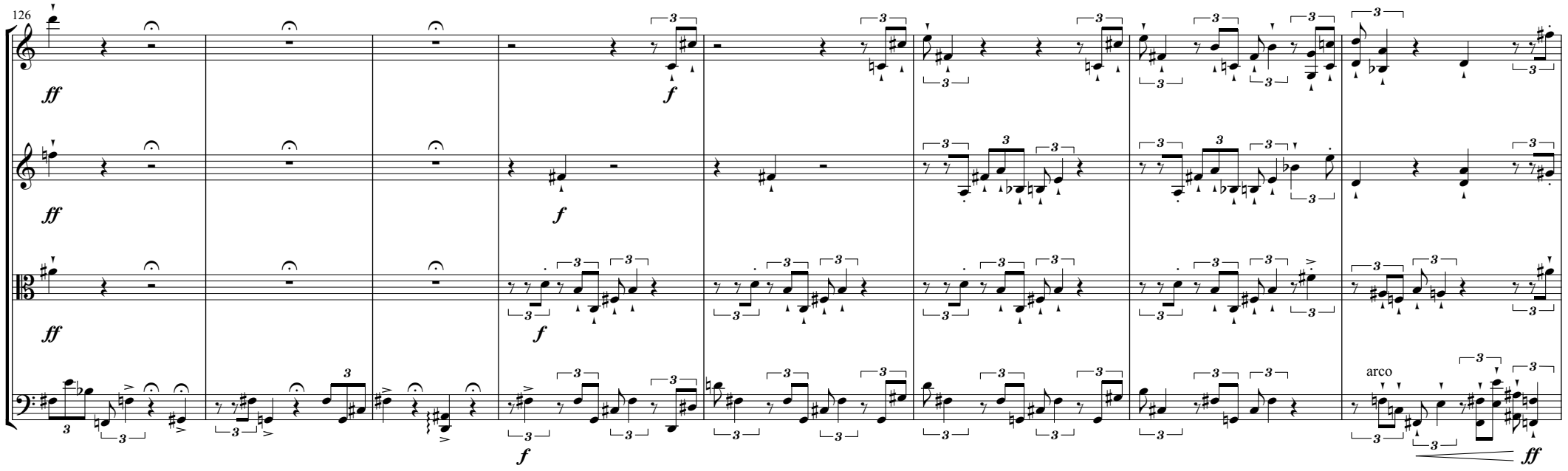
O ♩ = 84 **poco rit.** [♩ = 72] ♩ = 84 **poco accel.**



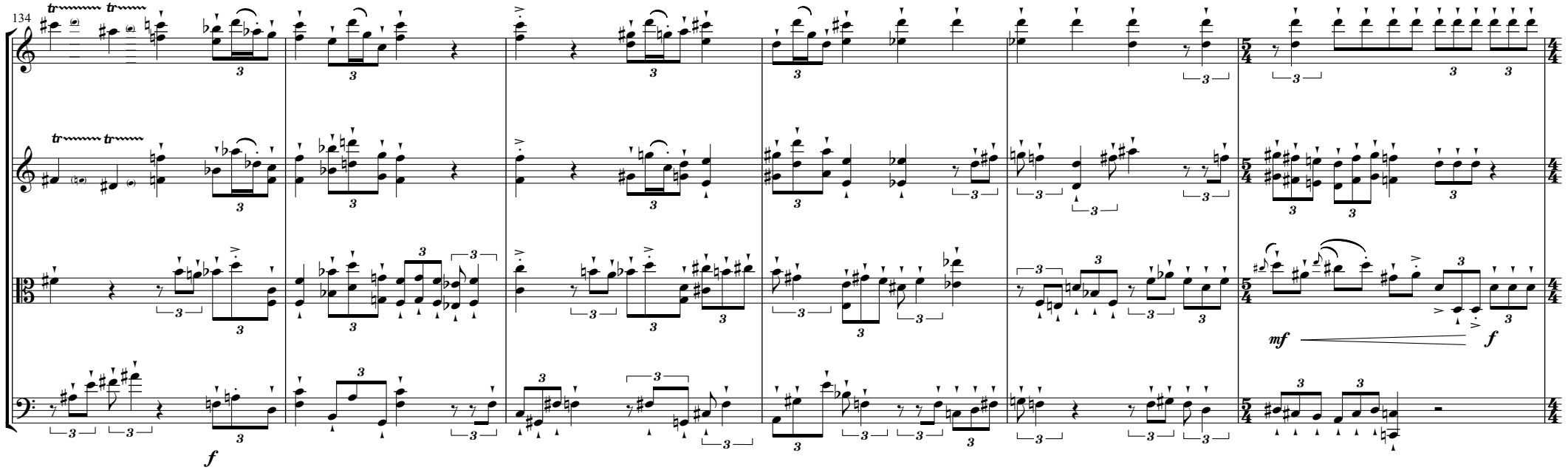
P ♩ = 96 **Exploring the imagined improbable... poco accel.** [♩ = 104]



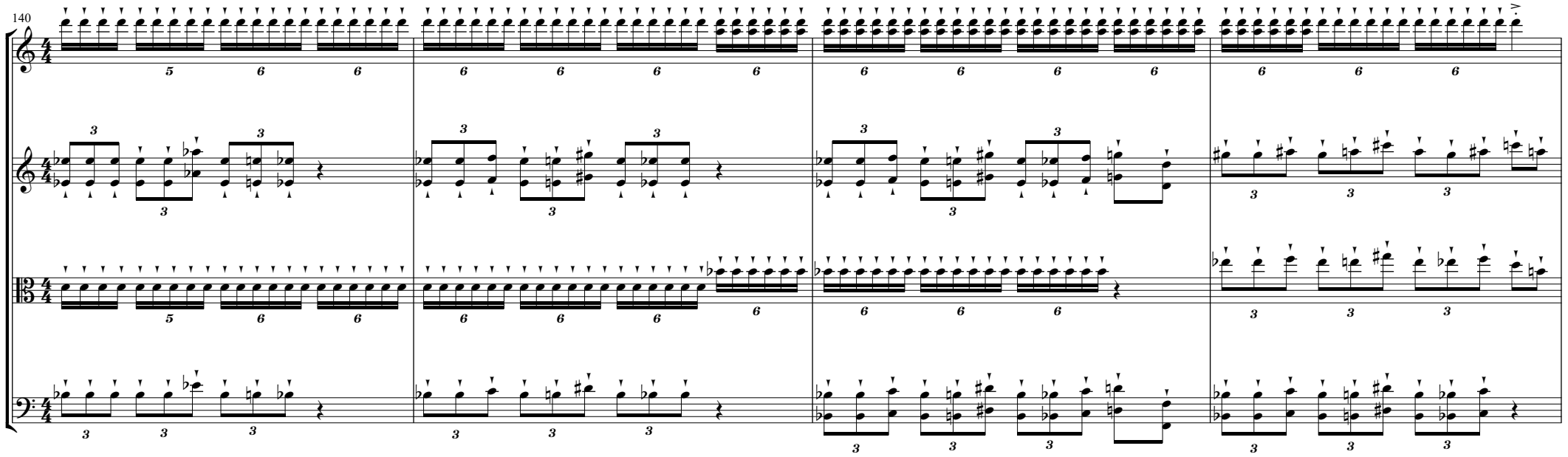
Q ♩ = 96 **... a deliberate interruption to negative momentum ...** **R** **... an uneasy compromise: An awkward dance between unwilling partners ...** **poco accel.**



S ♩ = 100 **... with determination and aggression ...** **poco accel.** [♩ = 108]

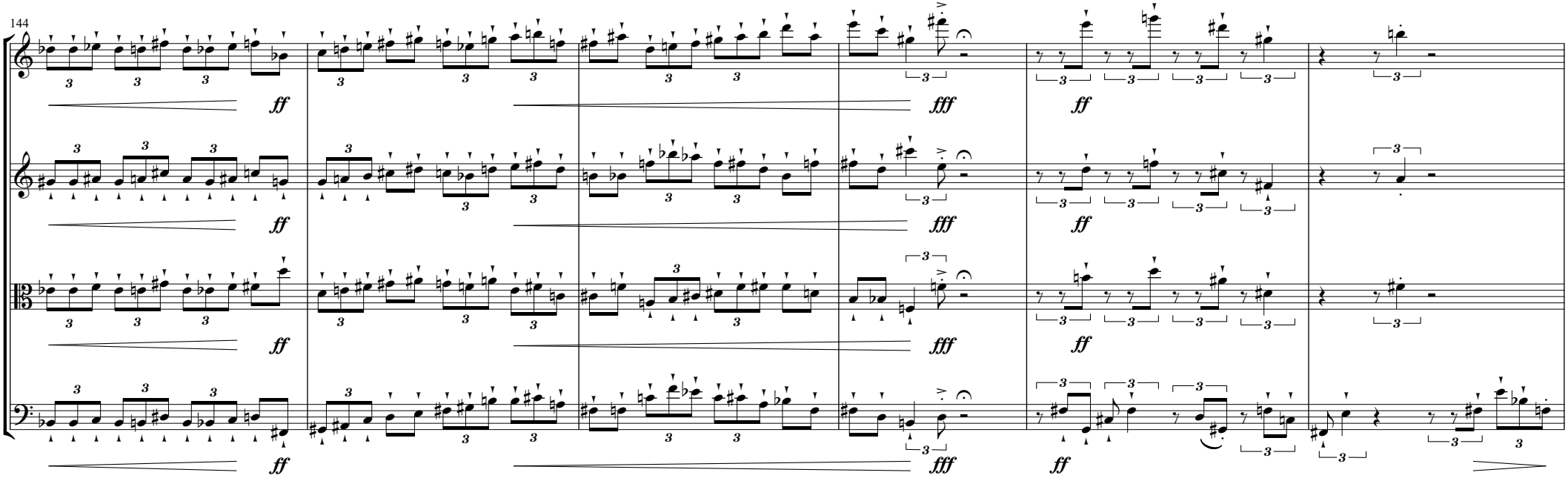


T ♩ = 100 **... a dark daydream ...** **poco accel.**



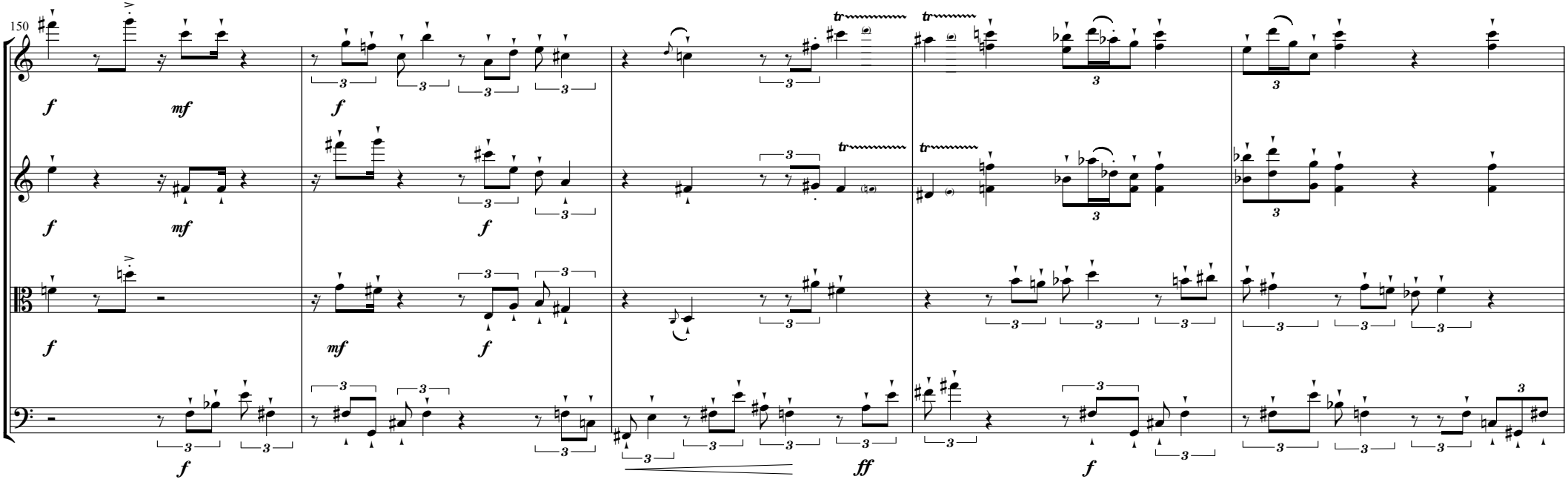
U ♩ = 104 **poco accel.** [♩ = 112] V ♩ = 96 **poco rit.** [♩ = 92]

144



poco accel. ♩ = 96 **poco accel.** W ♩ = 100 **... a final release of negative thought ...**

150



poco accel. [♩ = 104] poco rit.

155

pizz.

X ♩ = 96 ... with renewed optimism ... poco rit. [♩ = 92] ♩ = 96 poco rit. [♩ = 92] Y ♩ = 96 With positive energy ...

160

lyrical

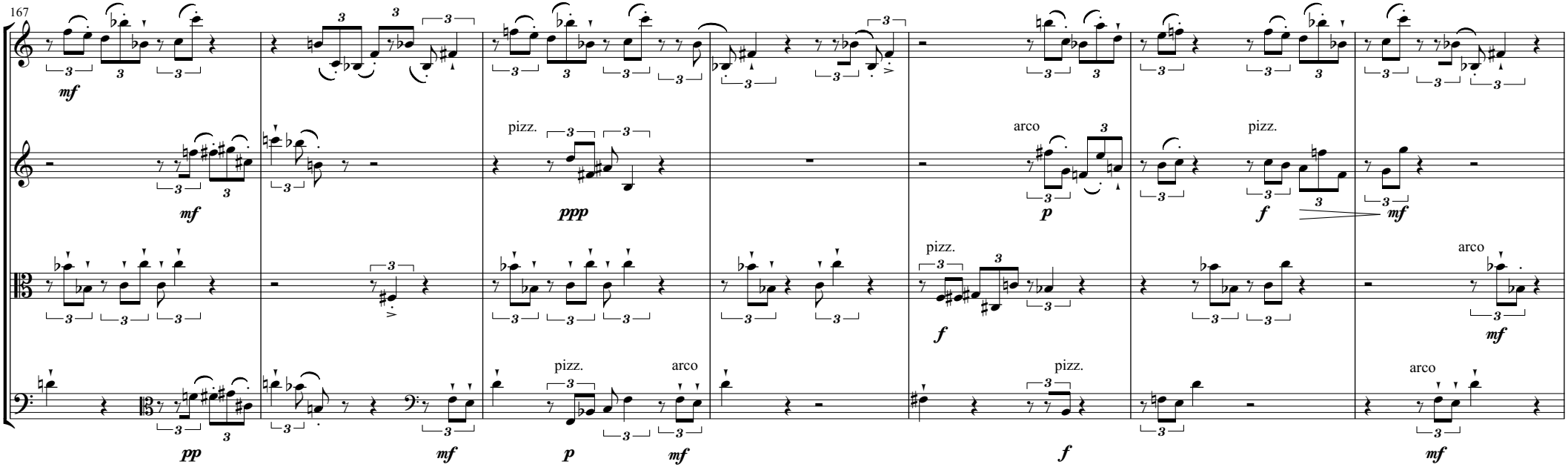
arco

pizz.

arco

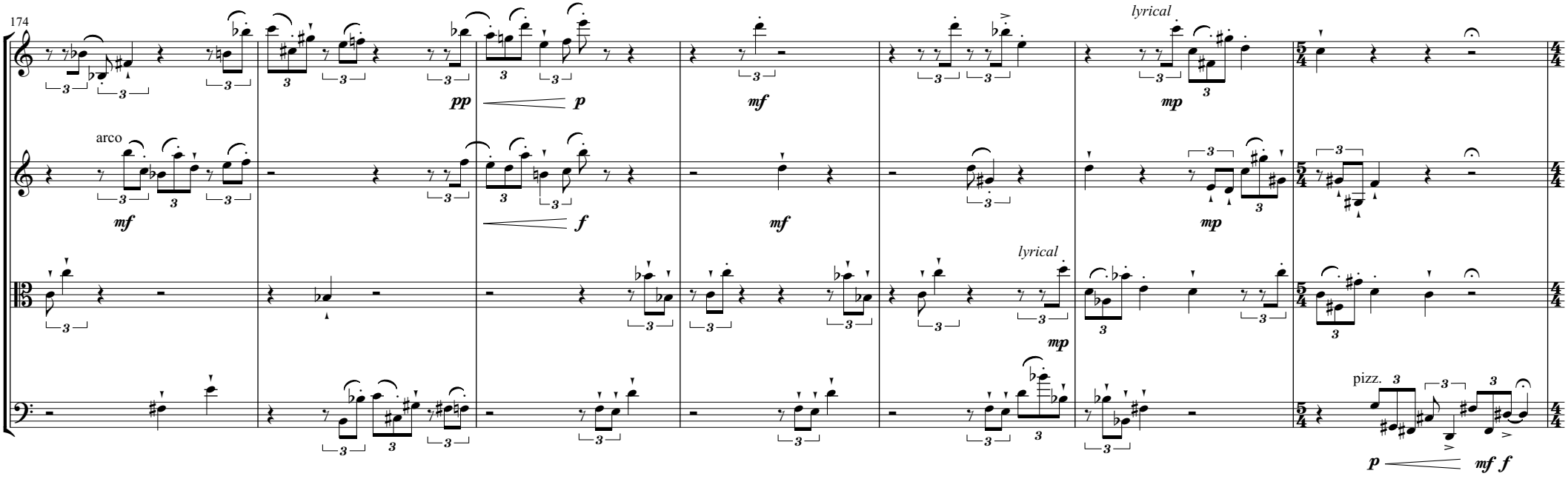
poco rit. [♩ = 88] **Z** ♩ = 96 poco rit. [♩ = 88]

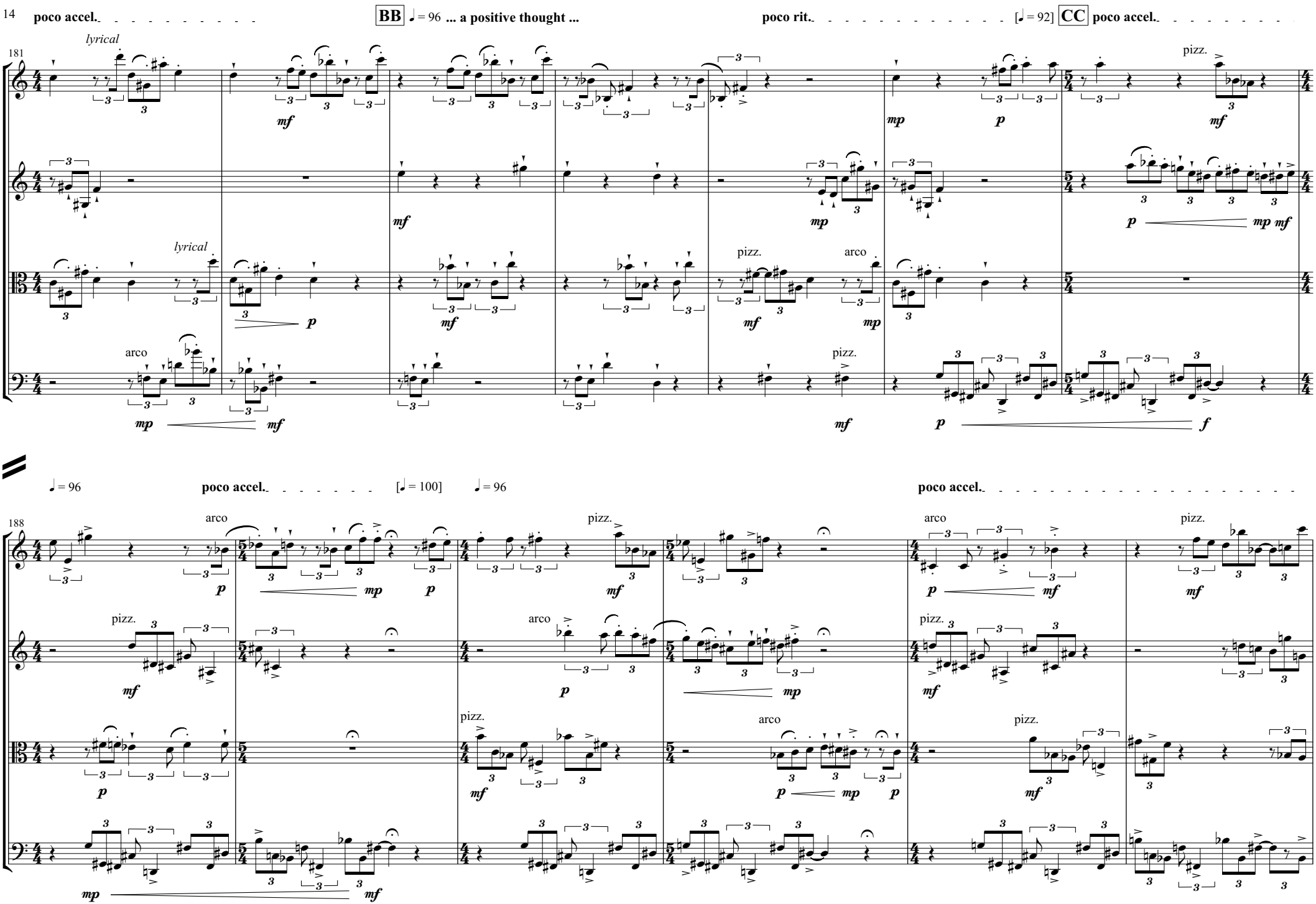
167



poco accel. **AA** ♩ = 96 **... repetition and consideration ...** poco rit. [♩ = 88]

174




poco accel.
BB ♩ = 96 ... a positive thought ...
poco rit.
[♩ = 92] CC poco accel.
181
lyrical
pizz.
arco
♩ = 96
poco accel.
[♩ = 100]
♩ = 96
poco accel.
188

DD ♩ = 104 **... a brief wave of positive energy ... poco rit.** ♩ = 96 **poco rit.**

194

arco

mf *f* *mf* *mp* *pp*

arco *lyrical*

f *mp* *p*

arco *lyrical*

ff *mp*

arco pizz.

ff *p* *mf f*

EE ♩ = 88 **... a loss of concentration ...** **poco accel.** [♩ = 92]

200

p *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

pizz. arco

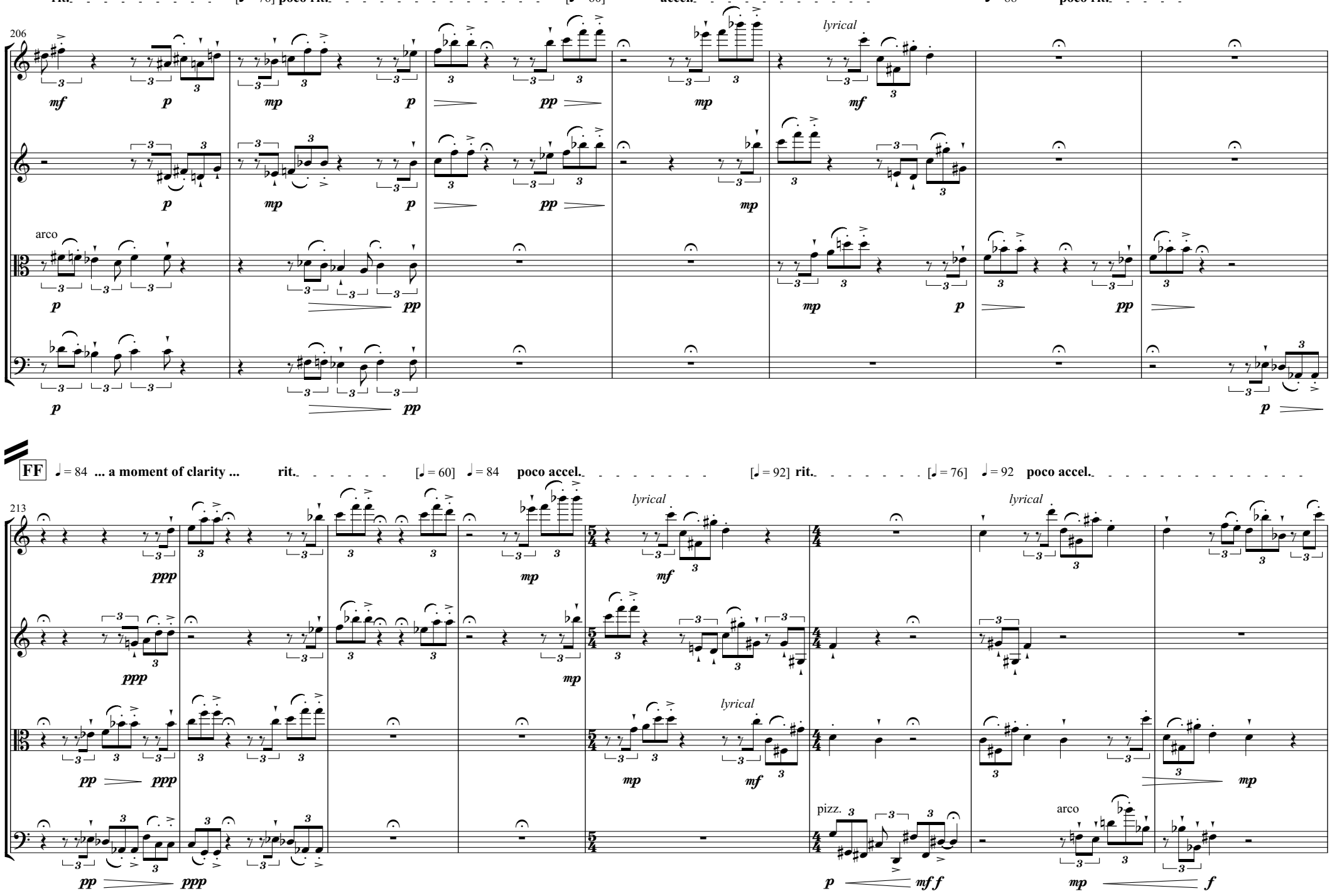
mp *p* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *mf*

pizz.

p *mp* *mf* *ppp* *p*

arco

p *pp* *ppp* *mp* *mf* *ppp* *mp* *mf*


rit.
[♩ = 76] poco rit.
[♩ = 60]
accel.
♩ = 88
poco rit.
206
lyrical
arco
FF
♩ = 84 ... a moment of clarity ...
rit.
[♩ = 60]
♩ = 84
poco accel.
[♩ = 92]
rit.
[♩ = 76]
♩ = 92
poco accel.
213
lyrical
pizz.
arco

GG ♩ = 96 **... recapitulation ...** **poco accel.** [♩ = 100] **poco rit.**

221

pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco

♩ = 92 **poco accel.** [♩ = 96] **poco rit.** [♩ = 88] **HH** ♩ = 96 **poco rit.**

228

arco pizz. arco pizz.

[♩. = 84] **poco rit.** [♩. = 76] **accel.** **II** ♩ = 92 **poco rit.** [♩ = 76]

234

p *pp* *ppp* *mp*

JJ ♩ = 88 **... one final consideration ...** **poco rit.** [♩. = 66]

241

mp *mf* pizz. *mf* *mp*

KK ♩ = 96 **... reprise ...**

rit. [♩ = 72] **LL** ♩ = 92

248

arco

mp *mf* *mp* *mf* *mf* *mp* *mf* *f*

poco rit. [♩ = 46]

255

mf *f* *mf* *p* *pp* *ppp*

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