Axegrinder

for String Quartet

Eric C. Honour, Jr.

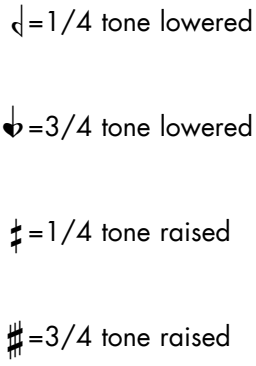
Axegrinder

for String Quartet

Performance Notes

1. In mm. 70-87, the violins are given a selection of pitches and a manner of performance and are asked to repeat this material at will throughout the section. The pitches may be used in any order, but only in the octave given. Each time the player selects a pitch, they should choose a tempo (from very slow to very fast) and play a stream of 5-11 eighth notes at that tempo. The violinist should then rest for 3-5 seconds, choose a new tempo and a different pitch, and repeat the process. It is not necessary for the violinists to use all the pitches and the two performers should make no attempt to coordinate tempos; the point is for each violinist to choose his or her tempo individually. All of this section should remain in the background, behind the viola solo, and the violist will cue the end of this section.
2. In mm. 70-87, the cellist is given a selection of pitches. The pitches may be used in any order, but only in the octave given. Each time the player selects a pitch, it should be played once, pizzicato. The cellist should then rest for 5-7 seconds, choose a different pitch, and repeat the process. It is not necessary for the cellist to use all the pitches. All of this section should remain in the background, behind the viola solo, and the violist will cue the end of this section.
3. In mm. 89-92, the performers have notes marked as open triangles. This notation asks for the players to scrub the marked strings near the frog of the bow, creating a very loud, very ugly scratch tone. Each player should scrub in a circular or figure-eight pattern, inserting random pulsations or accents into the sound.
4. Accidentals follow standard practice and last throughout the measure, in the given octave only. In some cases, courtesy accidentals are given within the measure as an aid to the player.
5. The viola solo in mm. 70-87 uses microtones. Notation conventions for the microtones are given at right.

Microtonal notation:



Program Notes

Like many of my pieces, *Axegrinder* began as a title incorporating a play on words, instead of a purely musical idea. Musicians will immediately recognize the word "axe" as slang for "instrument," especially string instruments. Likewise, the opening sounds of the piece not only remind me of the sound of a blade being ground on a whetstone but could be heard as grinding the instruments themselves. Beyond that, the idea of "having an axe to grind," or of being obsessed with a certain idea, informed my choice of material, which is very limited. The entire work, with the exception of the extended viola solo – perhaps a person trapped in conversation with an axegrinder – is derived in one way or another from the opening sonority. *Axegrinder* the piece is basically ternary in form, with the opening section spinning out of control into the contrasting B section (the viola solo). The work then returns to the opening material and revs up the whetstone on the way to the conclusion.

Eric C. Honour Jr. (b. 1970) is recognized as both a composer and saxophonist. He is currently an associate professor of music and director of the music technology program at Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, Missouri. He earned the doctorate in music composition at Northwestern University. His composition teachers have included Jay Alan Yim, M. William Karlins, Stephen Syverud, John Anthony Lennon, and Budd Udell. He has studied saxophone with Frederick Hemke, Jonathan Helton, and Kandace Brooks. Honour was a finalist in the 1997 and 1999 ASCAP Morton Gould Awards to Young Composers competitions and won the Region V (West) division of the 1999 Society of Composers, Inc. Young Composers Contest. He has performed and lectured at regional and national conferences of the Society of Composers, North American Saxophone Alliance, and College Music Society. His compositions have been performed across the United States, in London, and in Italy.

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Duration ca. 5:15

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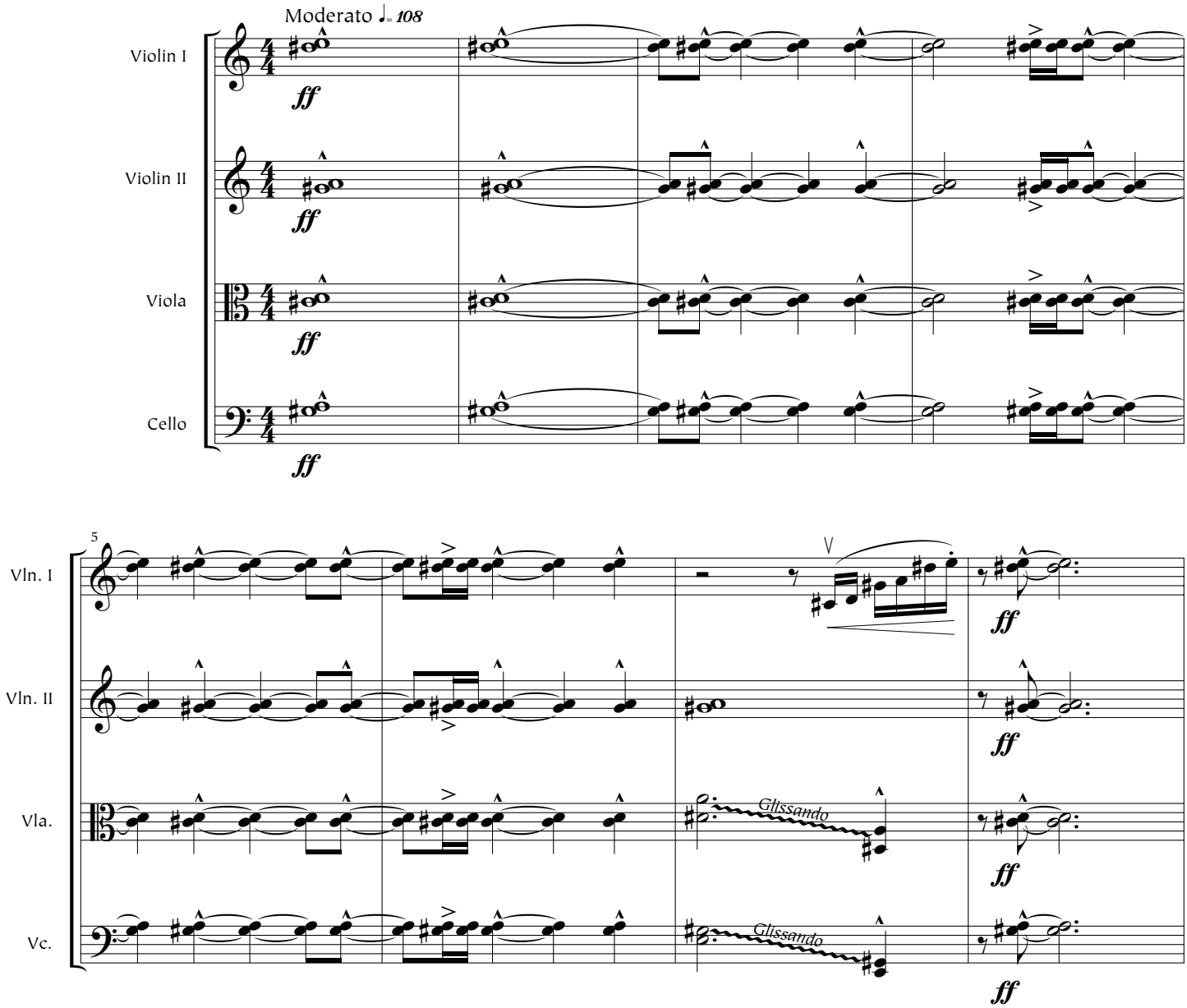

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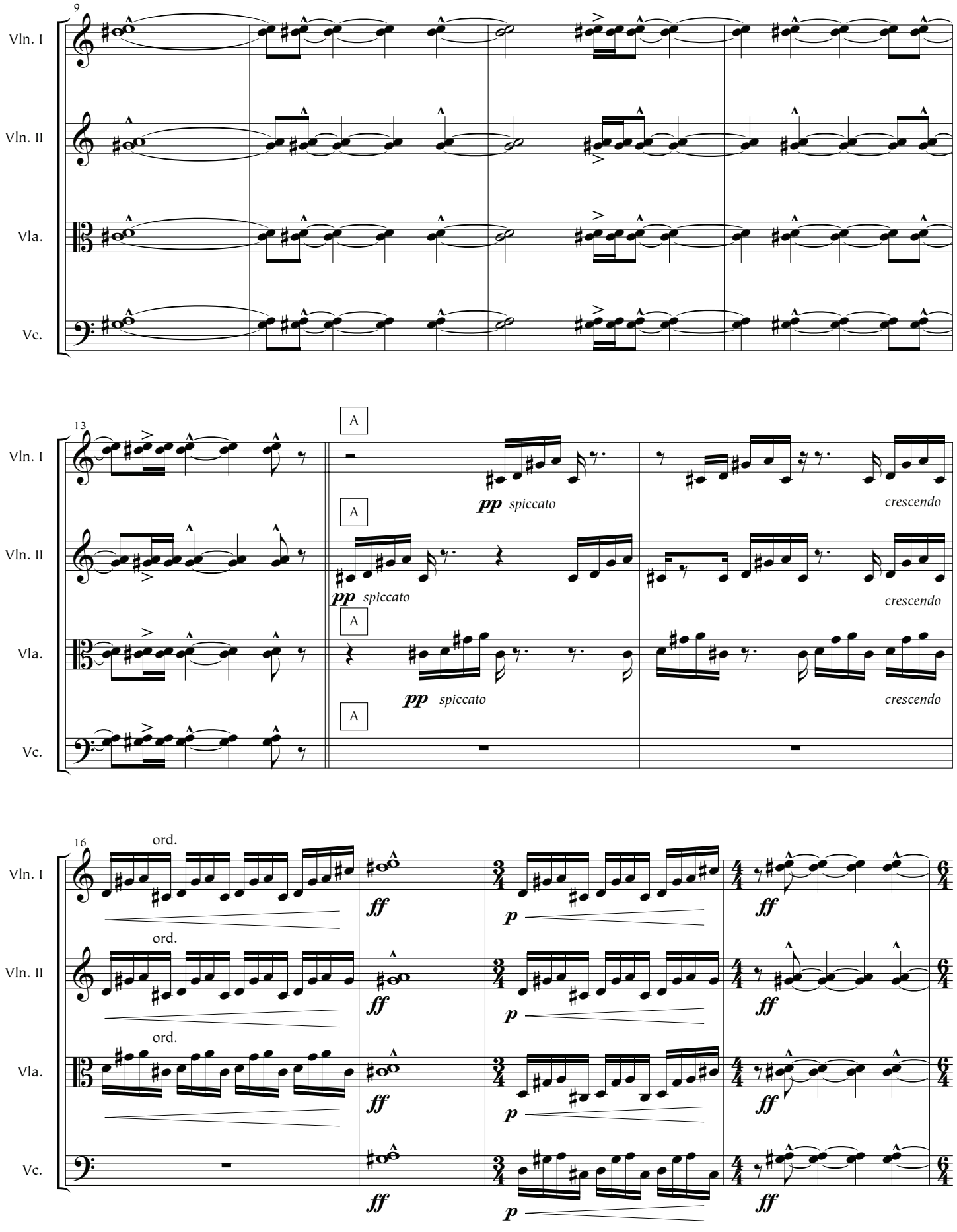
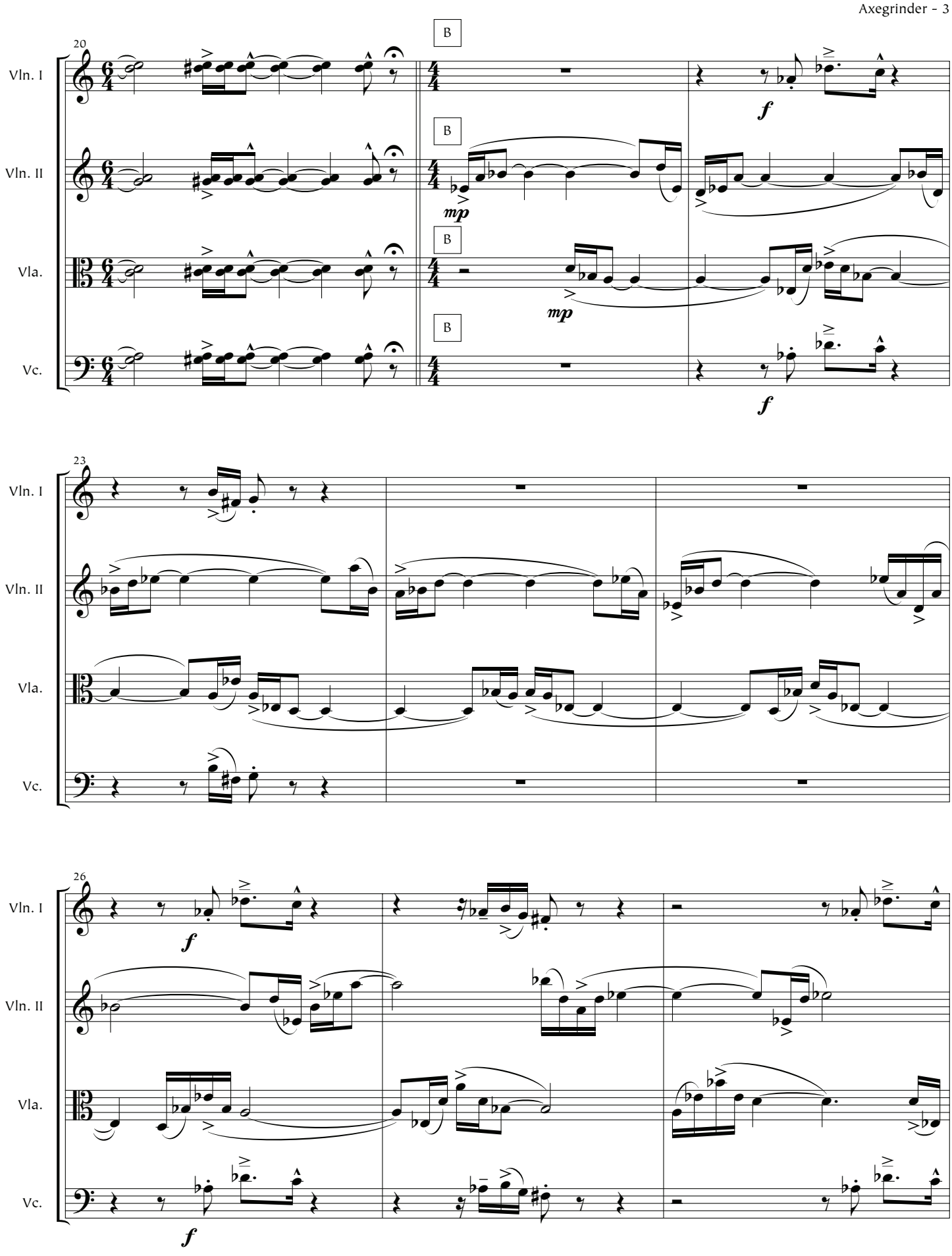
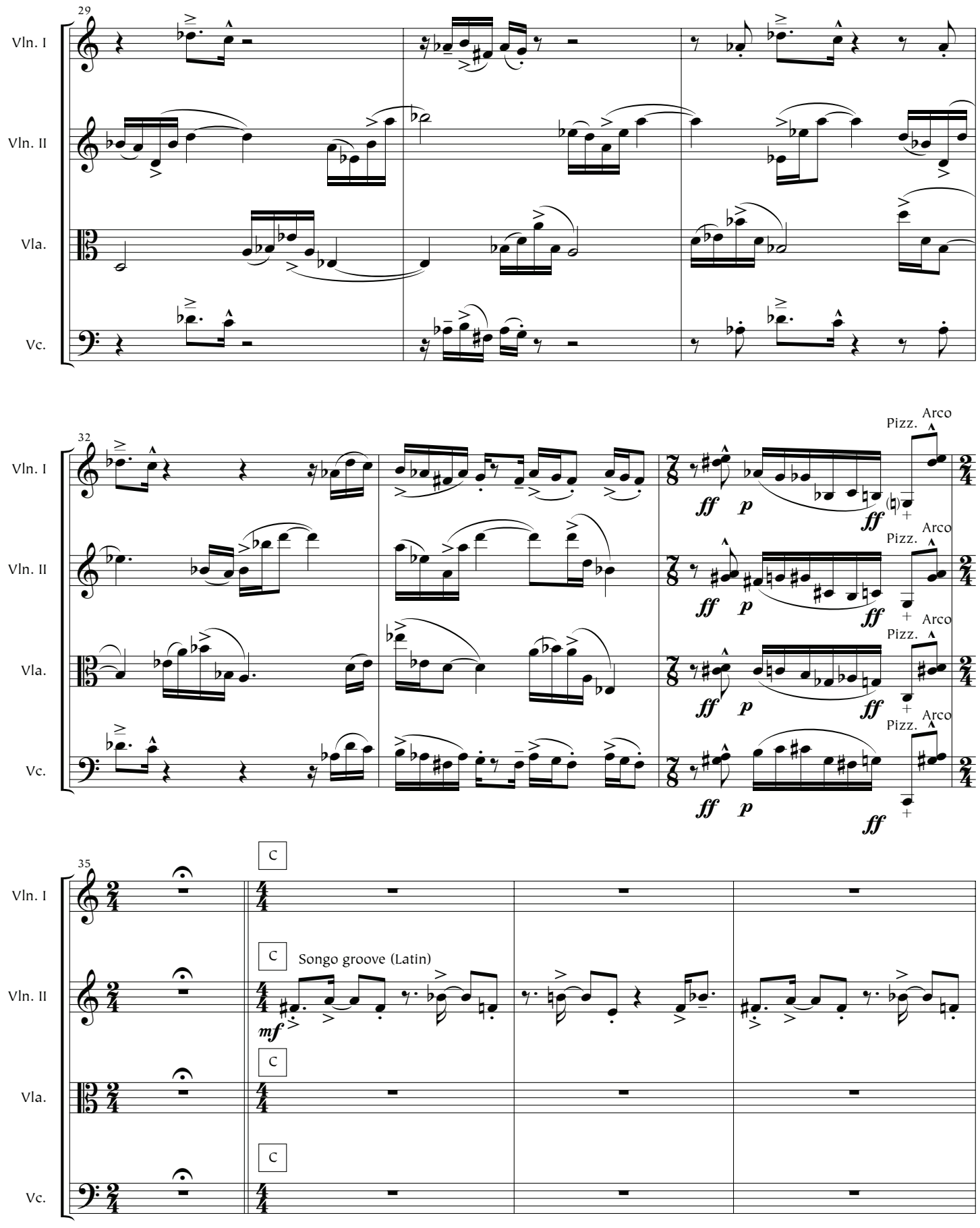
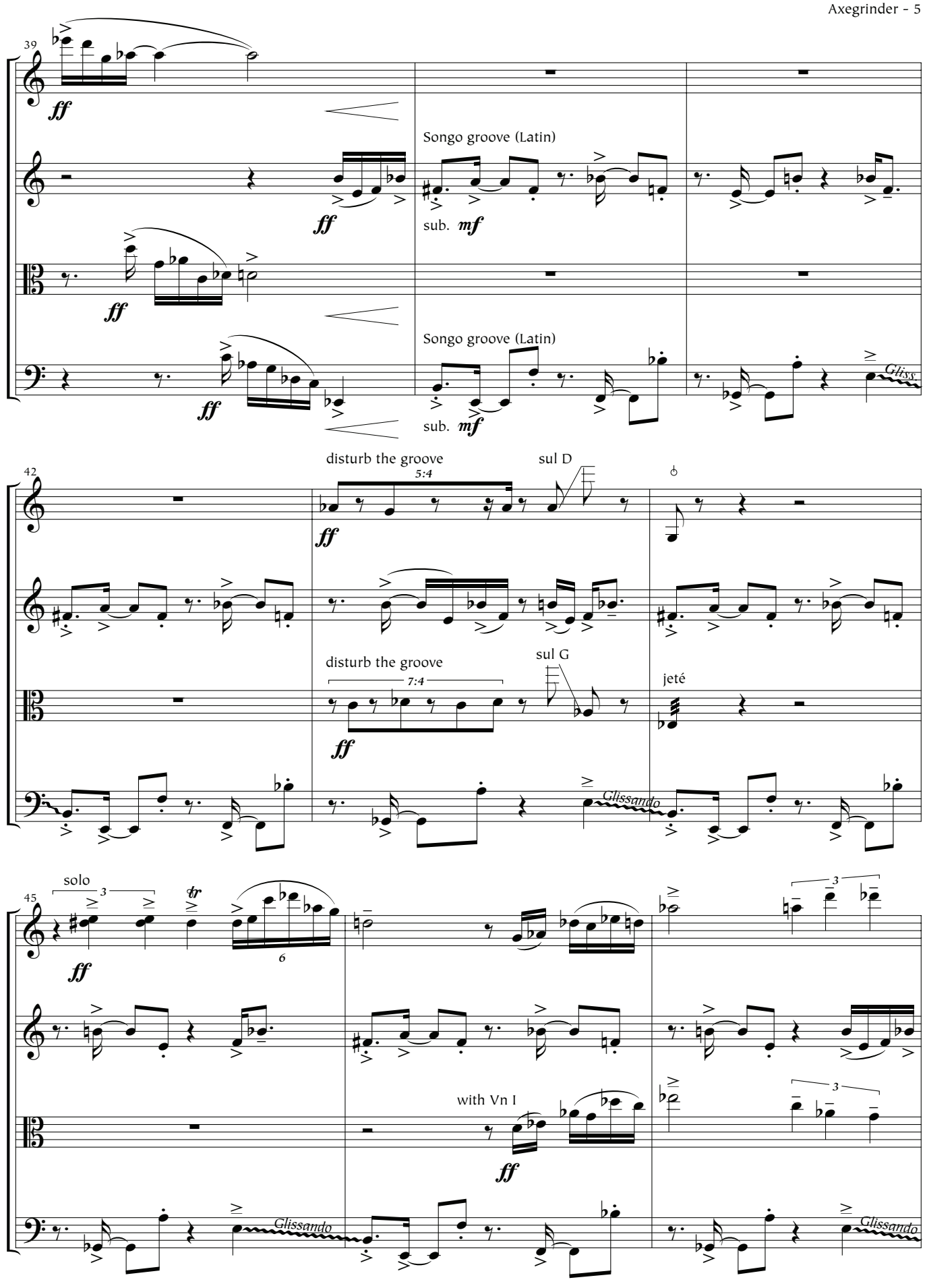
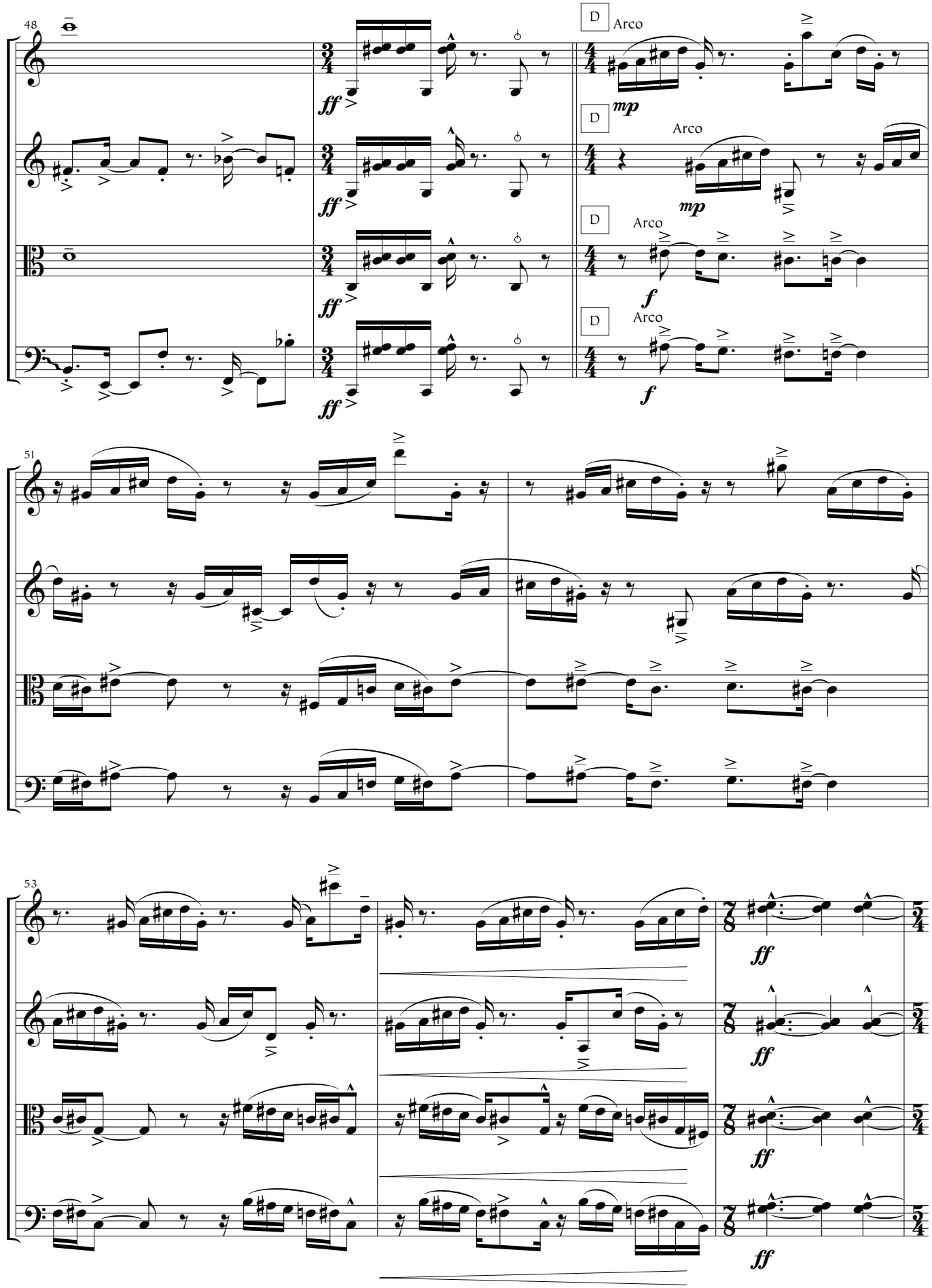
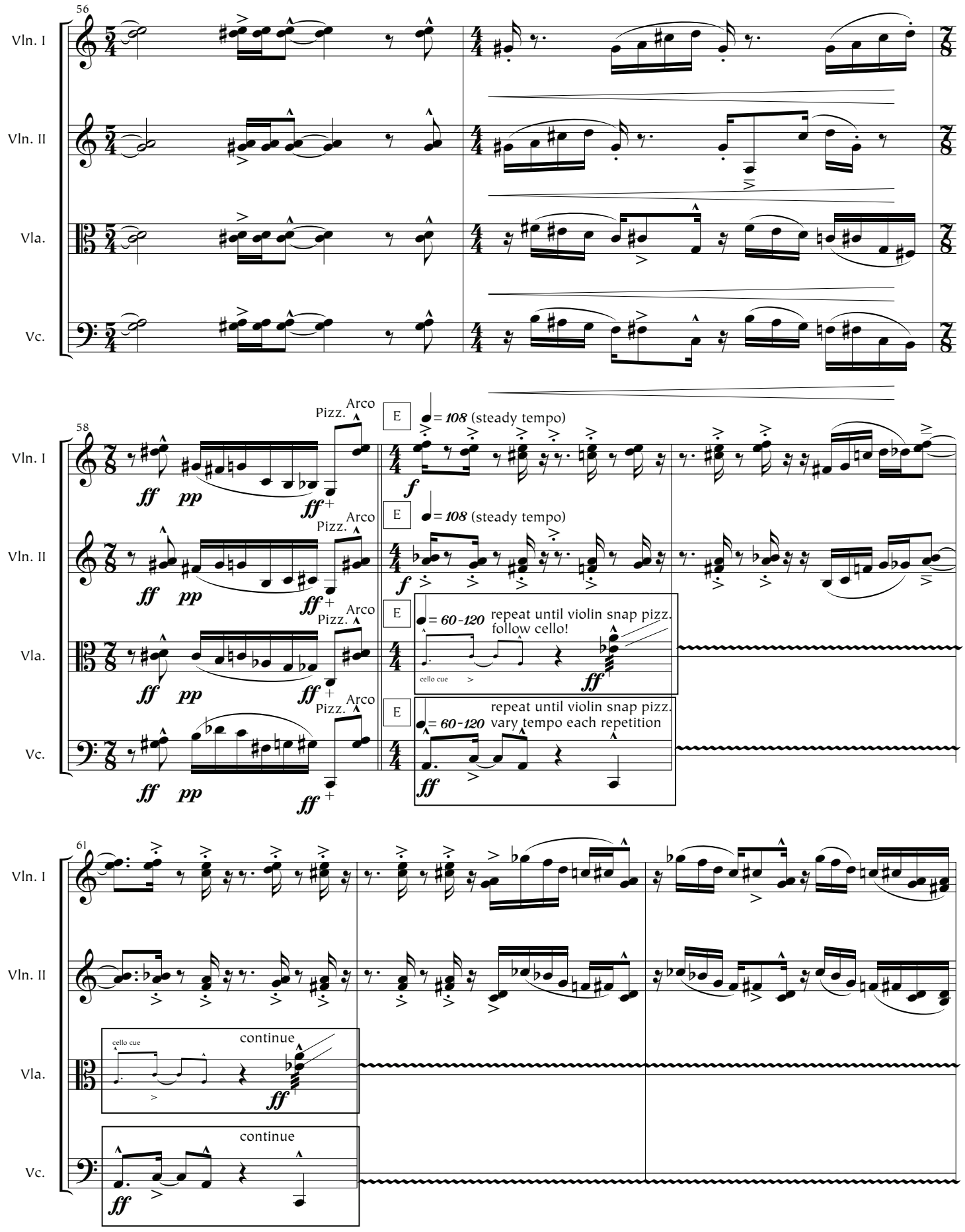

9
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
13
A
pp spiccato
crescendo
16
ord.
ff
p

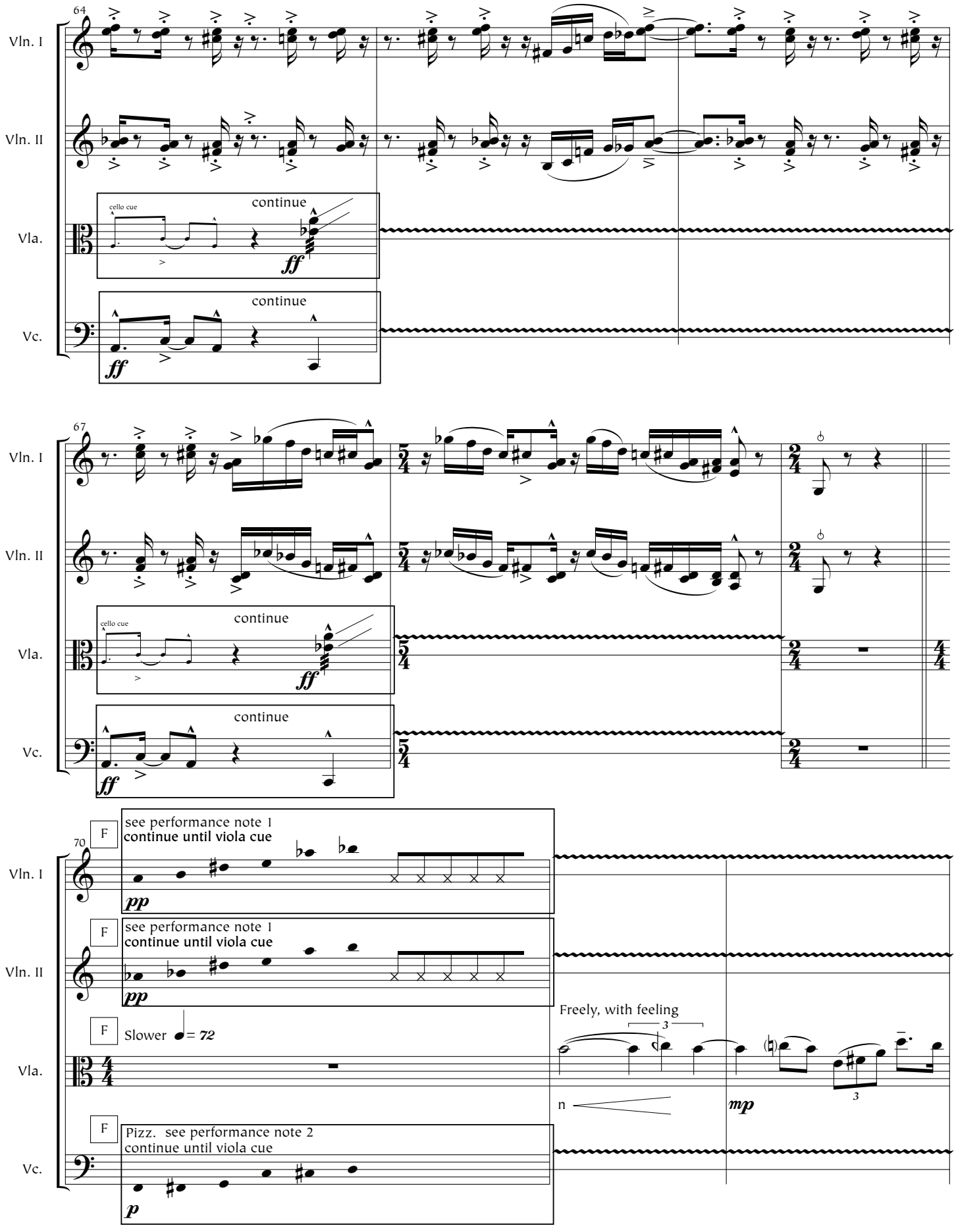

20
B
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
f
mp
23
26

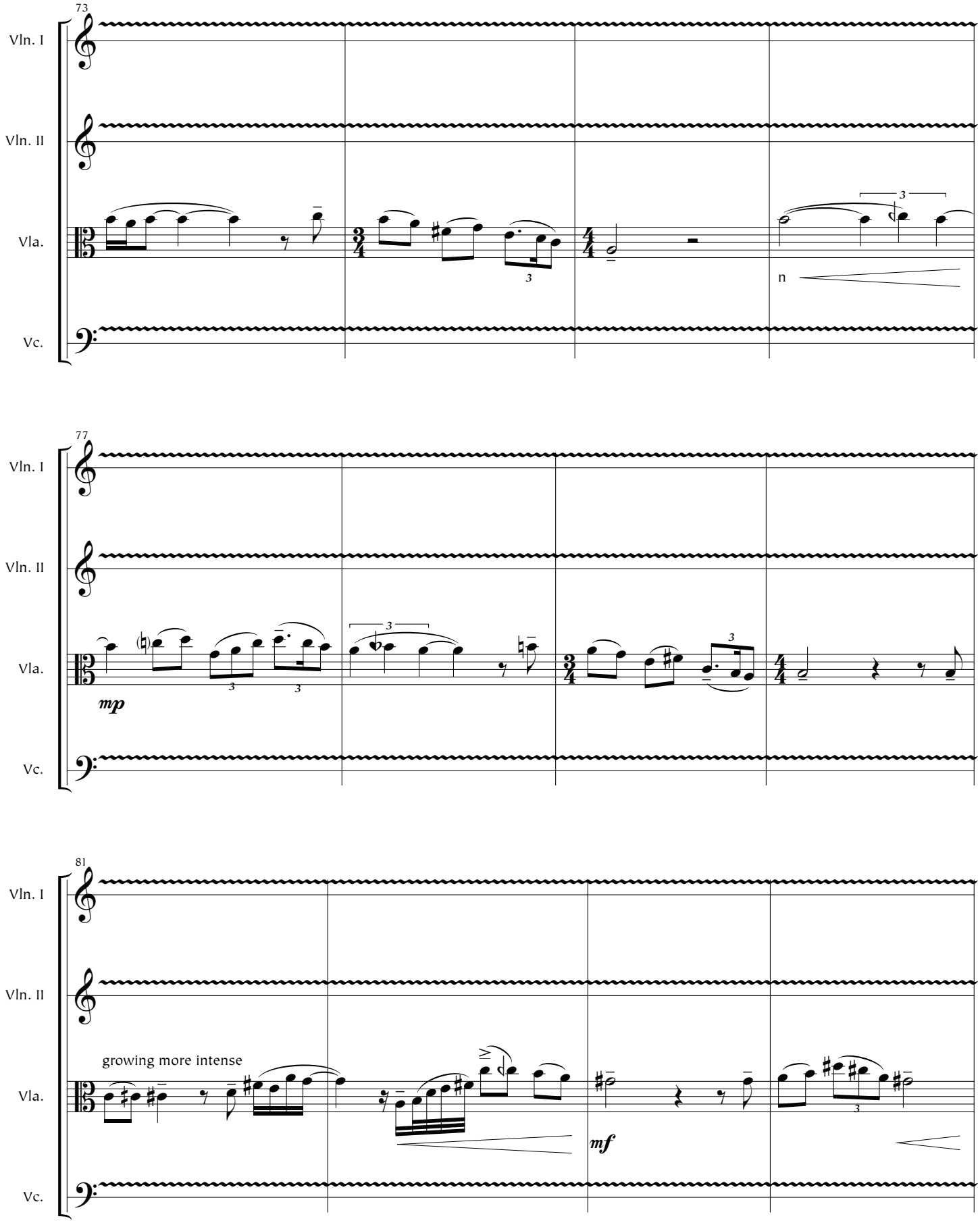

29
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
32
Pizz.
Arco
ff
p
35
C
Songo groove (Latin)
mf

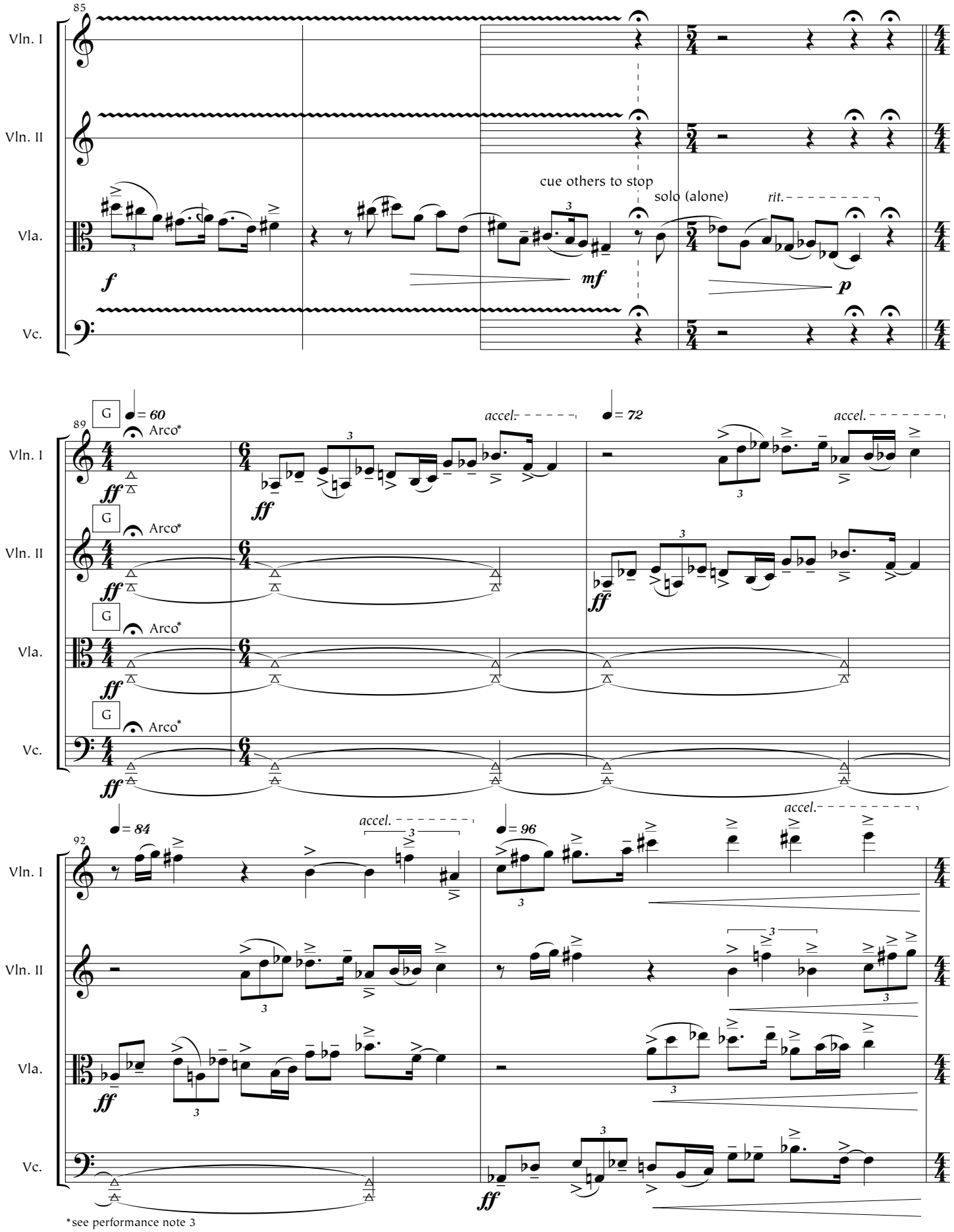

39
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
ff
Songo groove (Latin)
sub. mf
Songo groove (Latin)
sub. mf
Gliss
42
disturb the groove
5:4
sul D
disturb the groove
7:4
sul G
jeté
Glissando
45
solo
3
tr
6
with Vn I
Glissando
Glissando

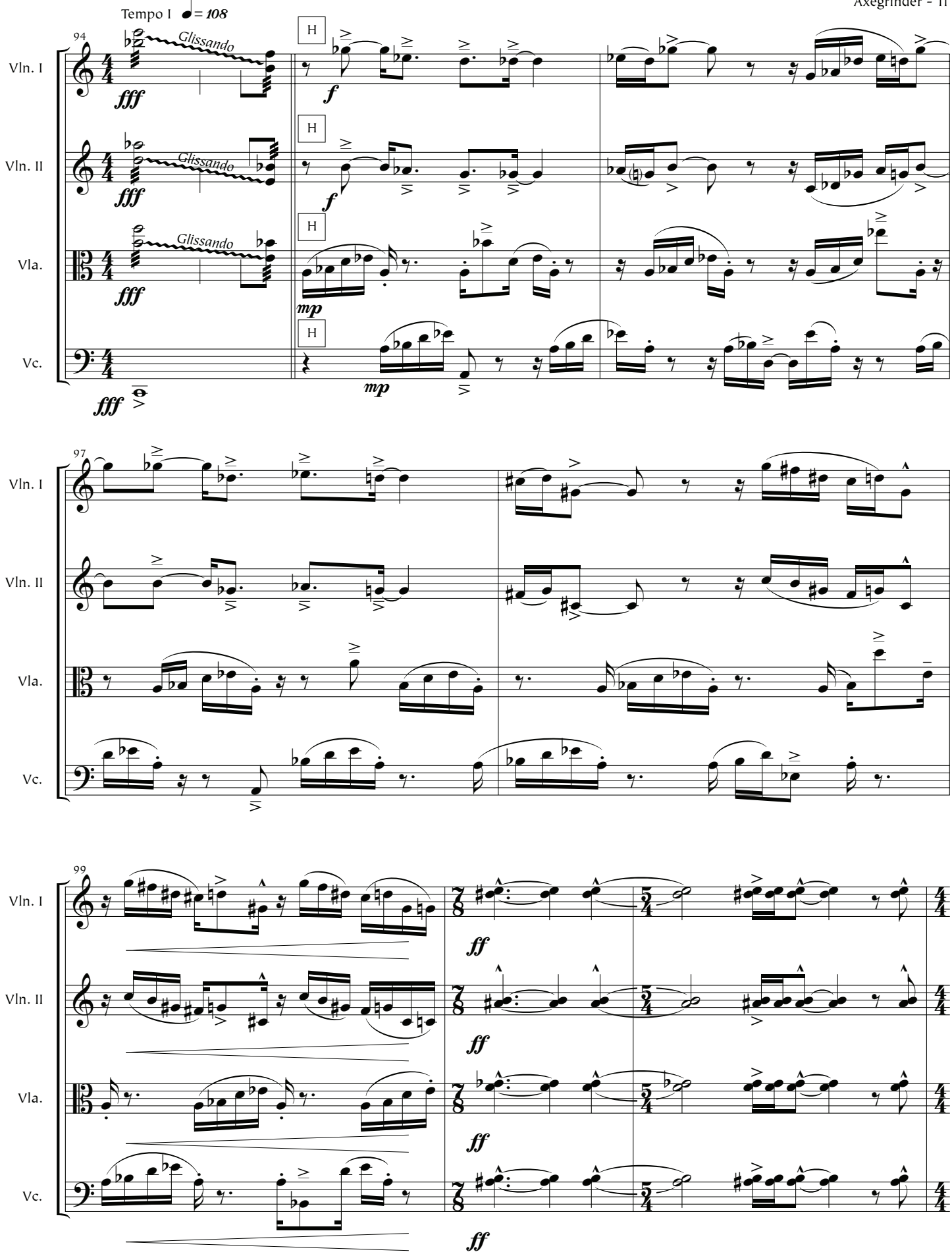

48
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
D
Arco
ff
mp
f
51
53

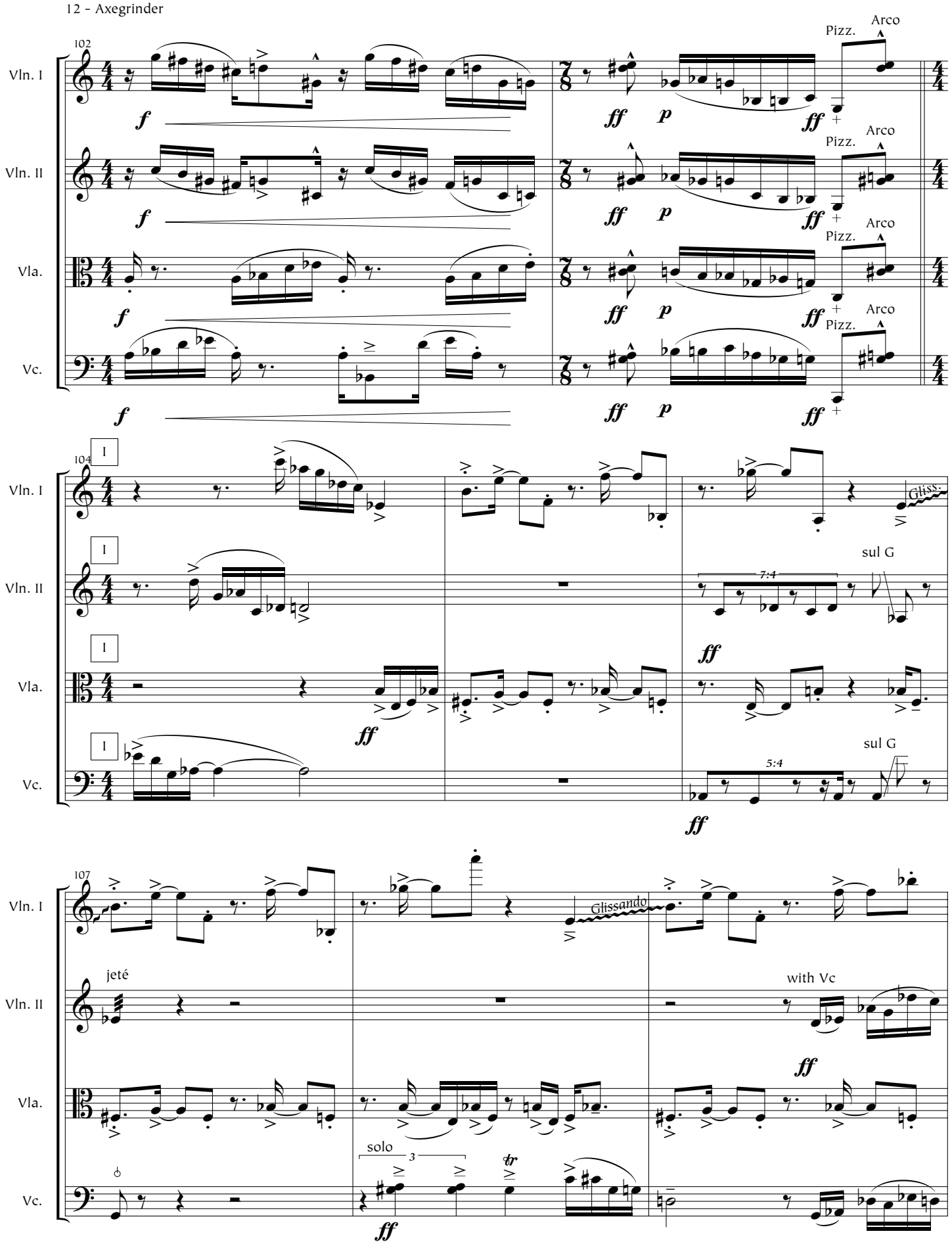

56
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
58
Pizz.
Arco
E
= 108 (steady tempo)
ff
pp
f
= 60-120
repeat until violin snap pizz.
follow cello!
cello cue
repeat until violin snap pizz.
vary tempo each repetition
61
continue

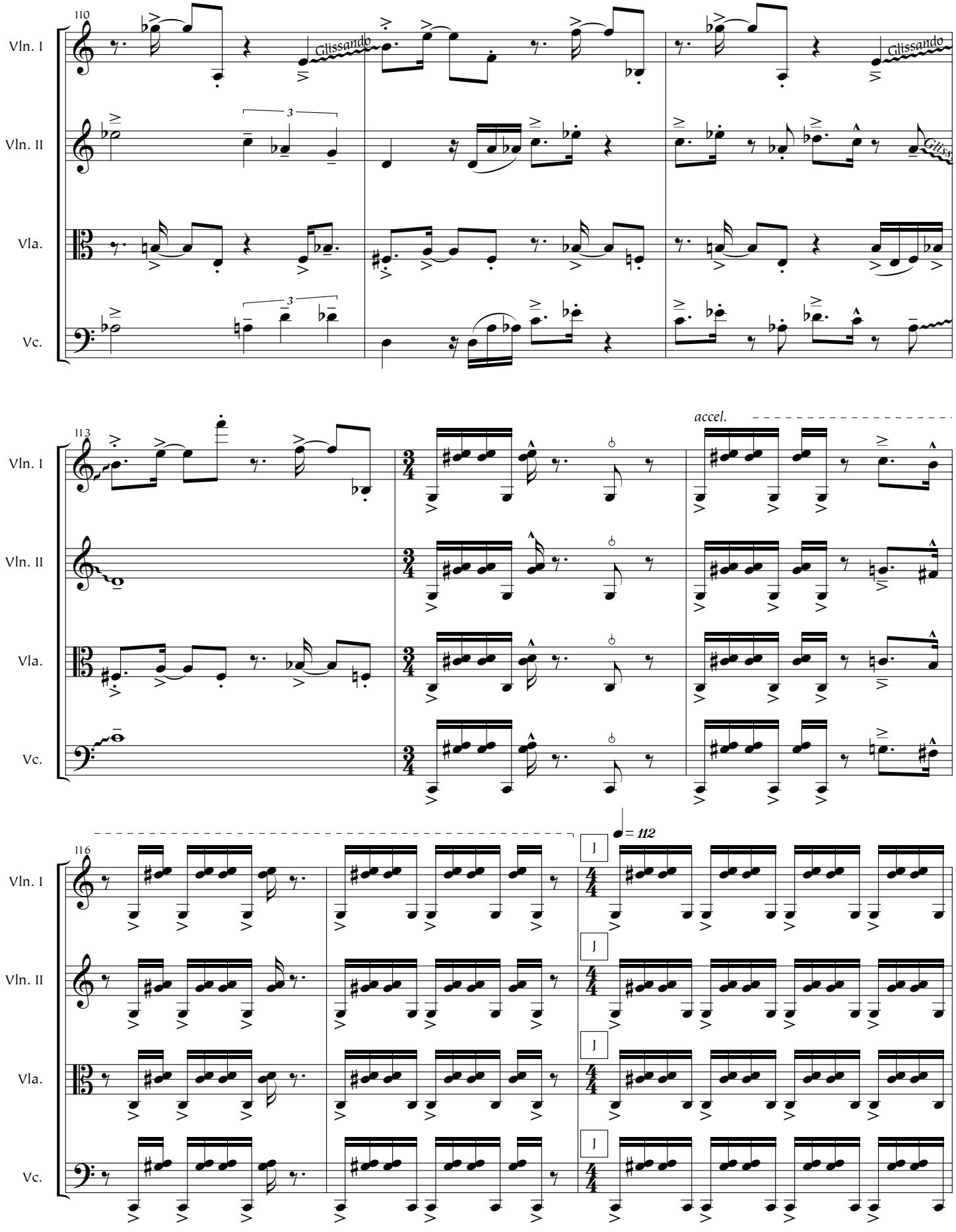

64
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
cello cue
continue
ff
67
70
F
see performance note 1
continue until viola cue
pp
Slower ♩= 72
Freely, with feeling
mp
Pizz. see performance note 2
p

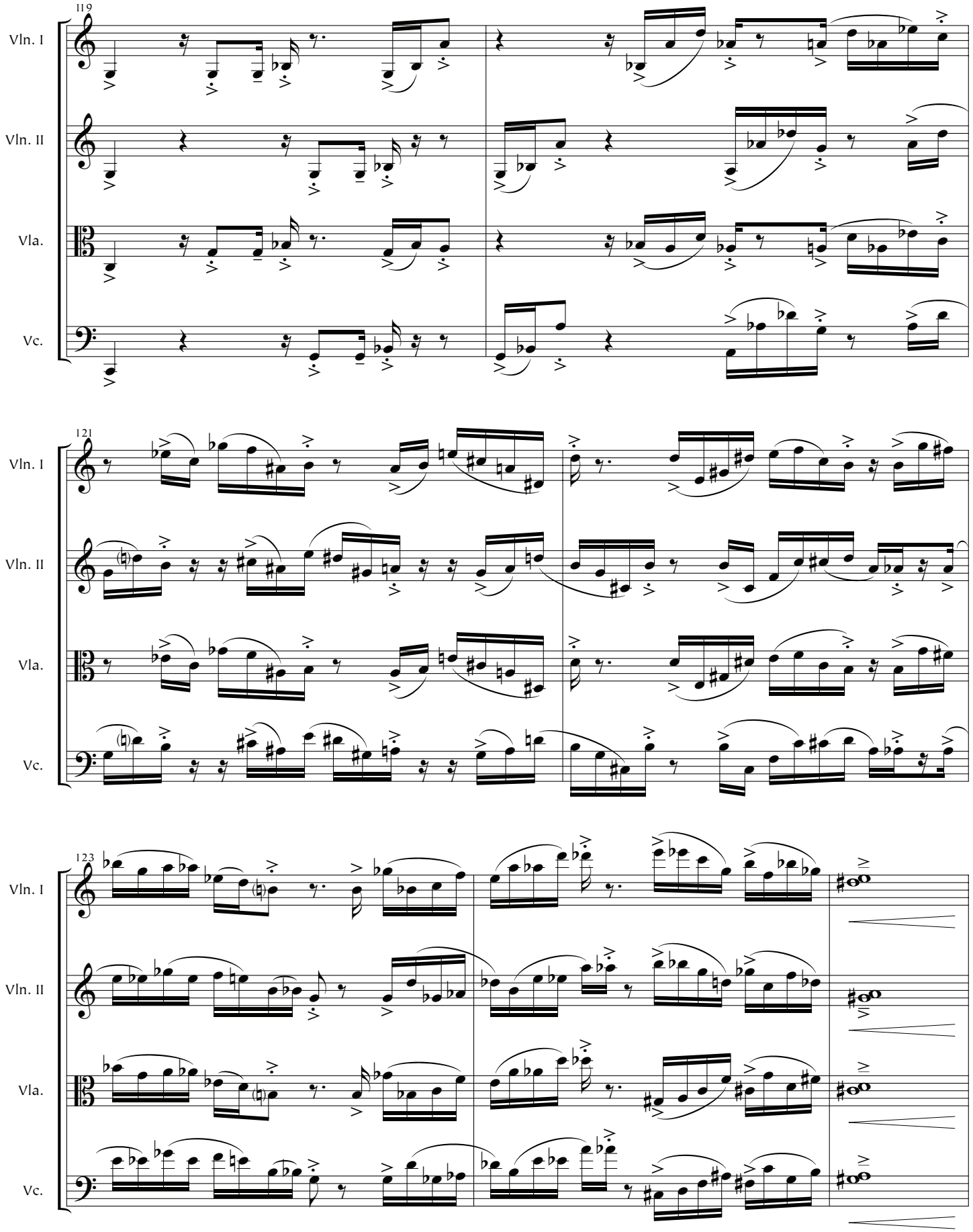

73
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
n
77
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
mp
Vc.
81
Vln. I
Vln. II
growing more intense
Vla.
mf
Vc.

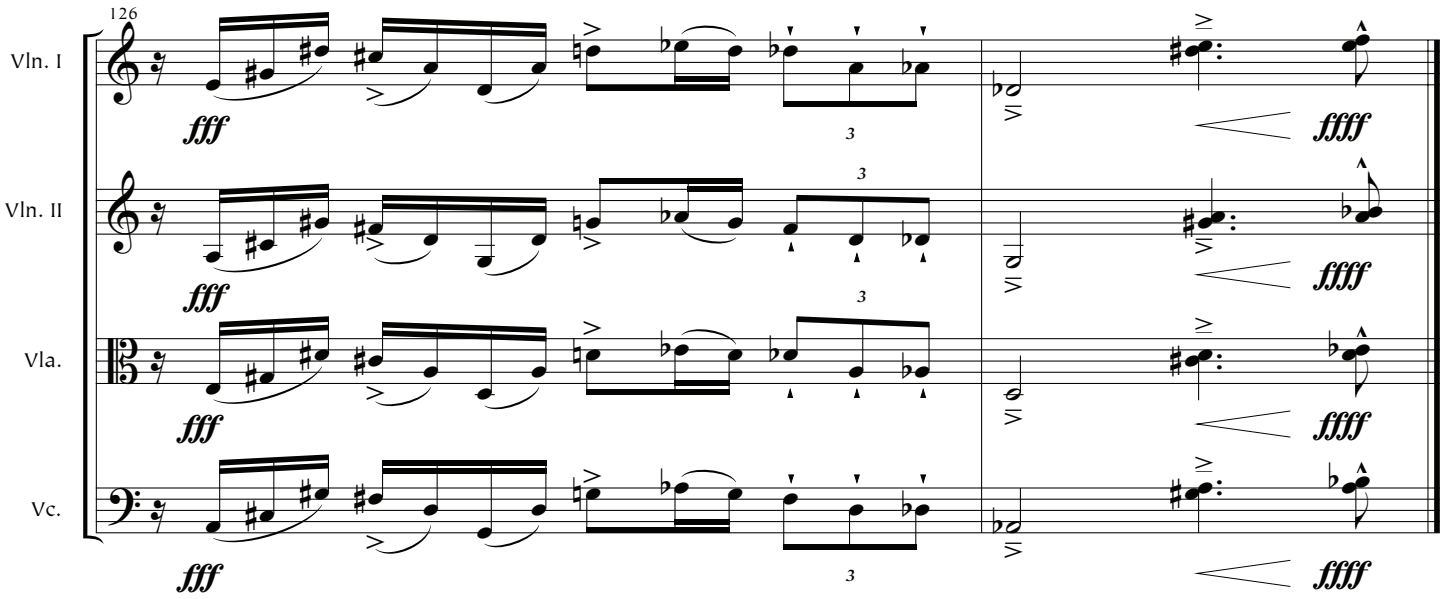

85
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
cue others to stop
solo (alone)
rit.
f
mf
p
89
G
= 60
Arco*
accel.
= 72
ff
92
= 84
= 96
*see performance note 3


Tempo I ♩= 108
94
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Glissando
fff
H
f
mp
97
99
ff


102
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Pizz.
Arco
104
I
Glissando
sul G
7:4
5:4
107
jeté
Glissando
with Vc
solo
3
tr


110
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Glissando
Glissando
Gliss
3
3
113
accel.
116
♩= 112


119
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
121
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
123
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.



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Lee's Summit, MO USA