Jolyon Laycock

In Bruton Town

Fantasia for double string orchestra
on a Somerset folksong
collected by Cecil Sharp

In Bruton Town - program note

My Fantasia on “Bruton Town” was written in 1987 while I was working on my community opera “Woden’s Dyke”. It is one of a number of works in which complex many-layered textures are created using contrapuntal devices set in a simple diatonic modal context.

“In Bruton Town” is a ballad collected by Cecil Sharp that tells the macabre story of a young farmer’s daughter who falls in love with her father’s servant boy. Her brothers, shocked by the perceived dishonour this will bring on the family, murder their sister’s lover and bury his body in the garden. The grief stricken girl vows to entomb herself in her lover’s grave. Cecil Sharp, in his notes on the song, sees in this a resemblance to Boccaccio’s “Isabella and the Pot of Basil” from the *Decameron*, and to John Keat’s poem of the same name. Sharp also draws attention to two other versions of the ballad: “Lord Burlington’s Sister” and “In Strawberry Town”.

In writing my Fantasia on the tune of “Bruton Town”, I have ignored this macabre scenario and have concentrated entirely on the remarkable musical qualities of the melody. It is striking in that it is in the Dorian mode and has alternating bars of 3/2 and 6/4 time giving it the rhythmic character of a baroque Courante of the kind found in the first and third French Suites of J.S. Bach. The tune is remarkable also for its contrapuntal potential. I have set the melody in Dorian E, that is to say with a key signature of two sharps, a very practical key for string instruments. The music is in Dorian E thoughout without modulation of any kind.

The form of the piece is that of a series of 11 connected variations framed by a short introduction and coda. The variations use the melody in different contrapuntal relationships. It appears in canon with its own inversion, in rythmic augmentation of both its original and inverted forms, and in the form of a quicker-moving embellished counter-subject. The fact that the original song has 10 verses is entirely coincidental. My Fantasia follows no programmatic narrative.

Jolyon Laycock

First performance by the the Herschel Ensemble
Conductor David Pettit. Leader Diana Cummings
Thursday 17 October 1991
University Hall, Bath
As part of the concert series "Rainbow over Bath"

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Jolyon Laycock - biography

Jolyon Laycock was born in Bath in 1946 and studied for B.Mus. under Ivor Keys and Arnold Whittall at the University of Nottingham. He went on the gain an M.Phil in composition. His composition teachers included Henri Pousseur, Cornelius Cardew and Roger Smalley. Later in life he studied for a Ph.D. at York University under Nicola Lefanu. During the 1970s he pursued a freelance career as an experimental sound artist based at the Birmingham Arts Laboratory and Spectro Arts Workshop, Newcastle. In 1979 he took up the post of Music and Dance Coordinator at the Arnolfini. In 1990 he became Concert Director at the University of Bath and at the Michael Tippett Centre at Bath Spa University where he founded the award-winning concert series Rainbow over Bath. He left the University in 2000 to complete his book *A Changing Role for the Composer in Society*. In 2004 he was appointed Senior Lecturer in Arts Management at Oxford Brookes University. He retired in 2010 and took on the chairmanship of Severnside Composers Alliance. In 2012 he won the EPSS Jubilee Song Competition with his setting of Philip Larkin's *The North Ship* which led to a collaboration with Sarah Leonard resulting in the composition of *Dark Seas*, a setting of five poems of Philip Larkin for coloratura soprano, clarinet and piano. In 2010 he discovered the compositional principle of all-interval fractal sets which has formed the theoretical basis of most his music since that date.

In Bruton Town - Text:

In Bruton Town there lived a farmer
Who had two sons and one daughter dear
By day and night they were contriving
To fill their parent's hearts with fear.

One told his secret to none other
But unto his brother this he said
"I think our servant courts our sister.
I think they have a mind to wed.

"If he our servant courts our sister
That made from such a shame shall have
I'll out an end to all their courtship
And send him silent to his grave."

A day of hunting was prepared
In thorny woods where briars grow
And there they did that man a murder
And in the brake his body threw.

"Now welcome home my dear young brothers
Our servant man is he behind?"
"We've left him where we've been a hunting
We've left him where no man can find."

She went to bed crying and lamenting
Lamenting for her own true love.
She slept. She dreamed. She saw him by her
All covered over in gore and blood.

"You rise up early to morrow morning
And straightway to the brake you know
And there you'll find my body lying
All covered over with gore and blood."

Then she rose early the very next morning
Unto the garden brake she went
And there she found her own dear jewel
All covered over in gore and blood.

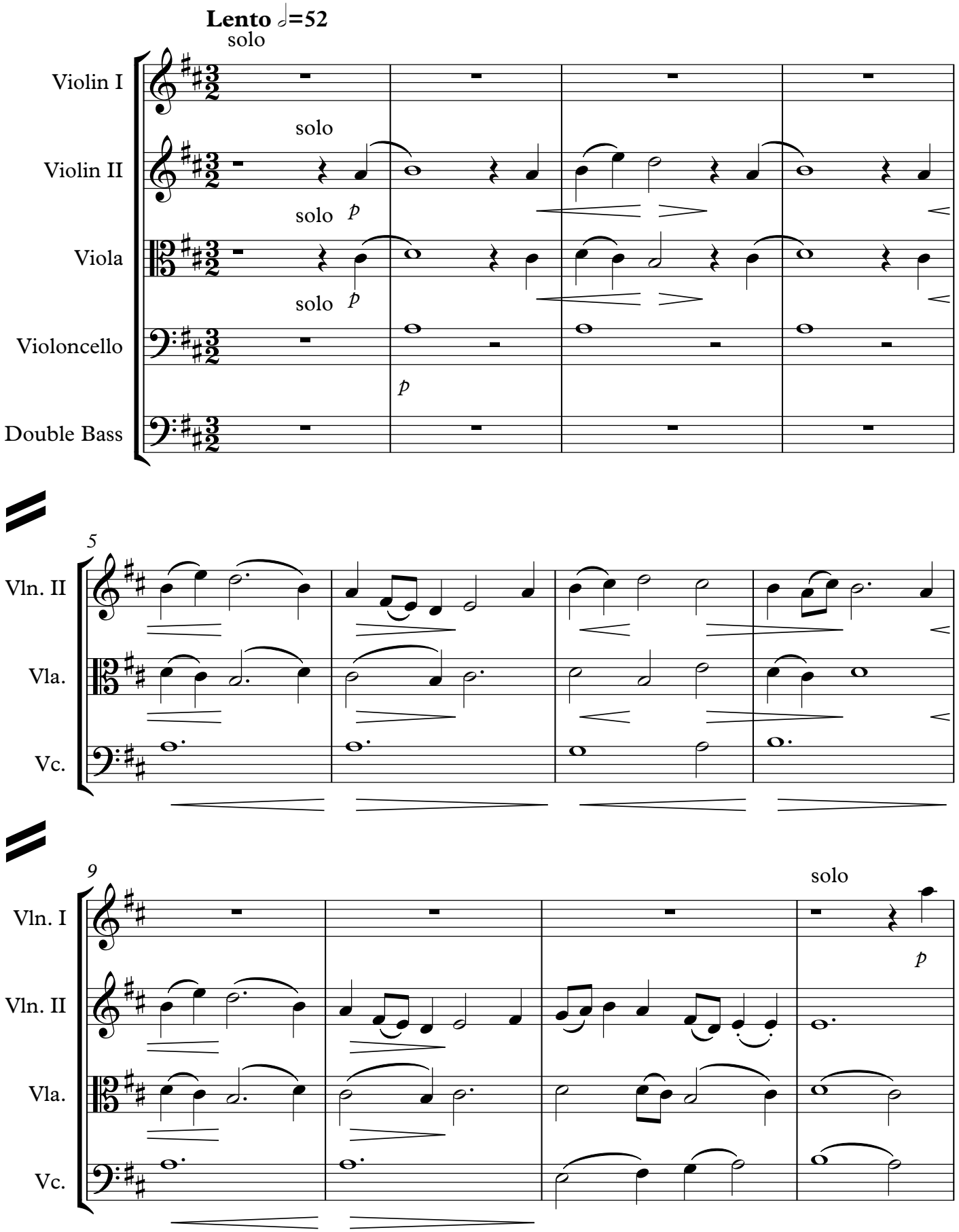
She took her kerchief from her pocket
And wiped his eyes though he was blind
"Because he was my own true lover
My own true lover and friend of mine.

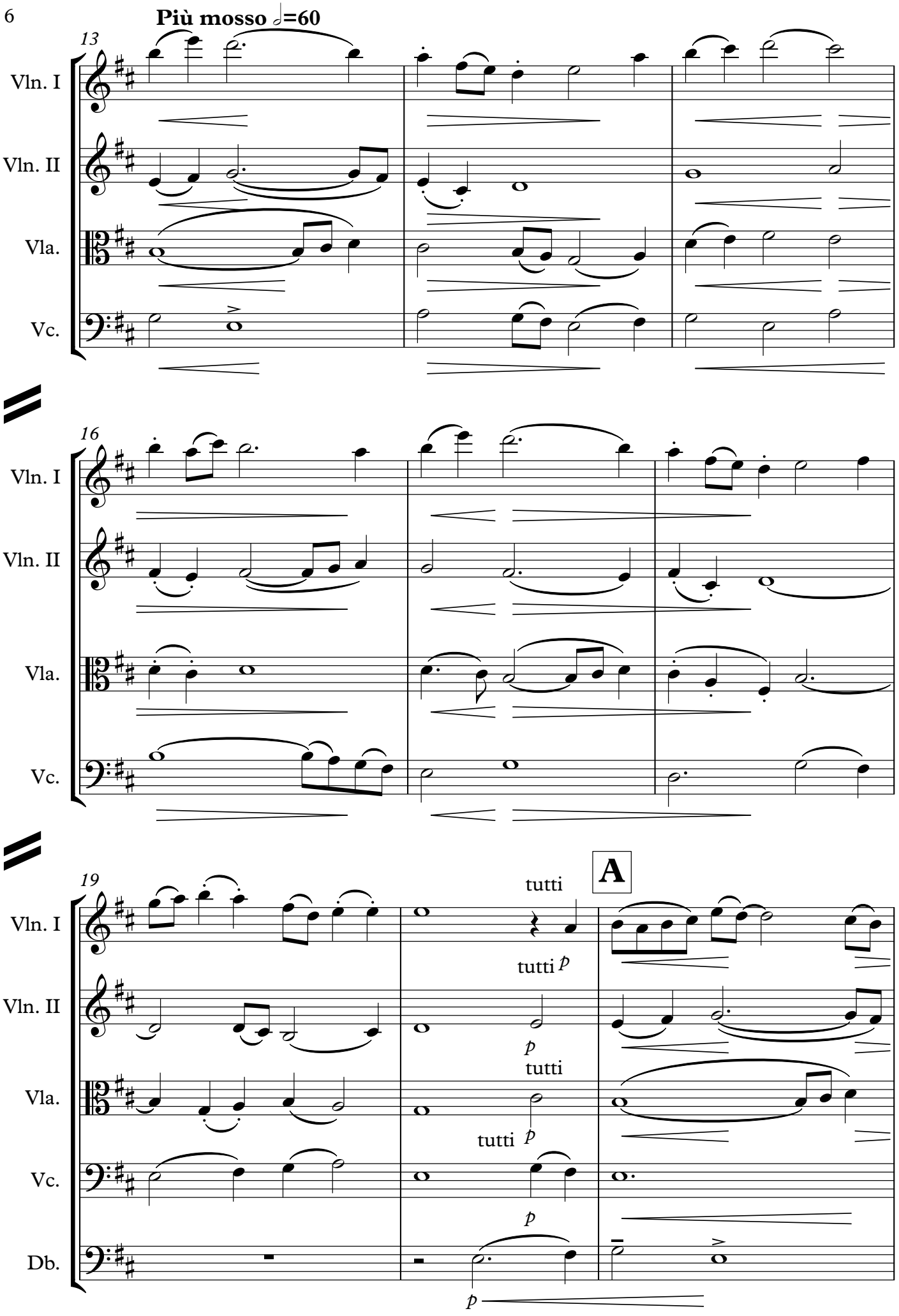
"And since my brothers have been so cruel
To take your tender sweet life away
One grave shall hold us both together
And a long with you in death I'll stay."

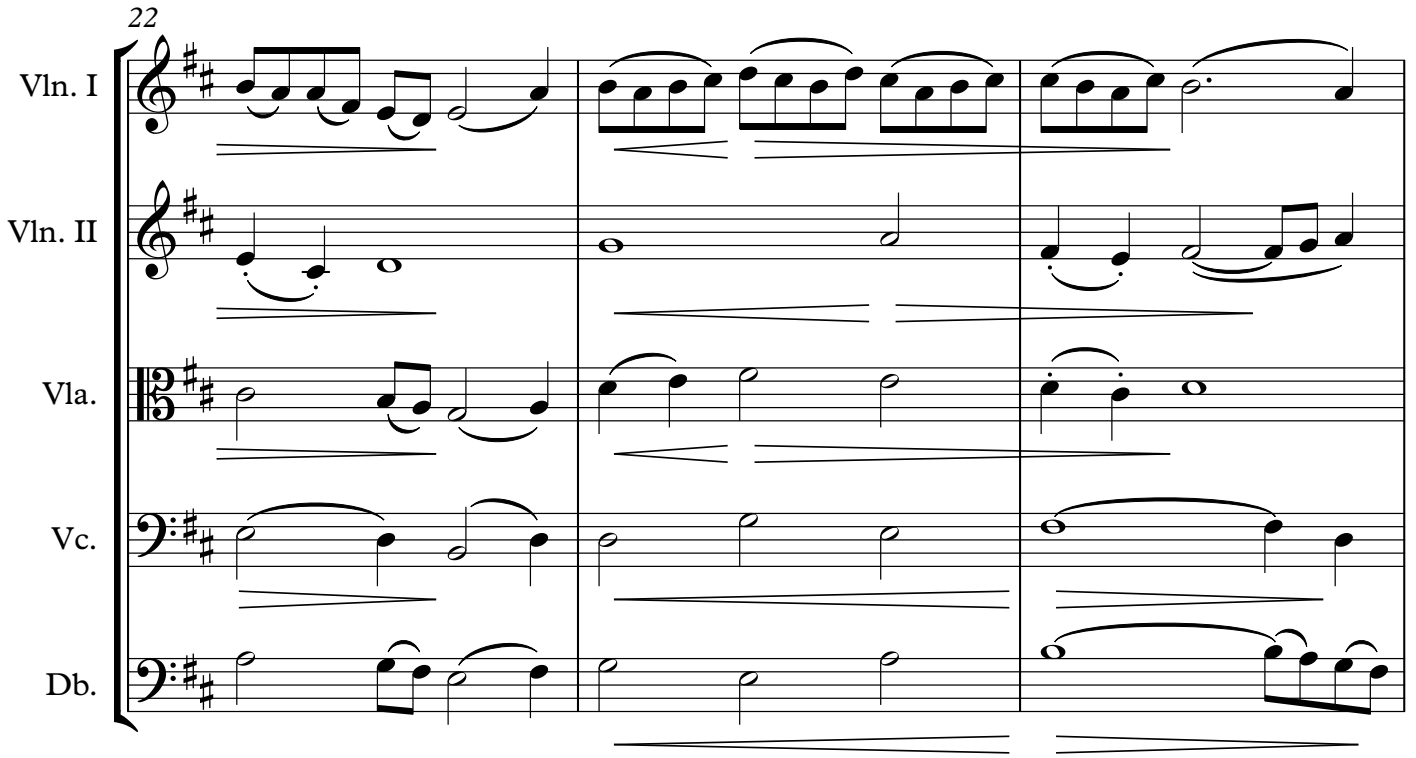
In Bruton Town

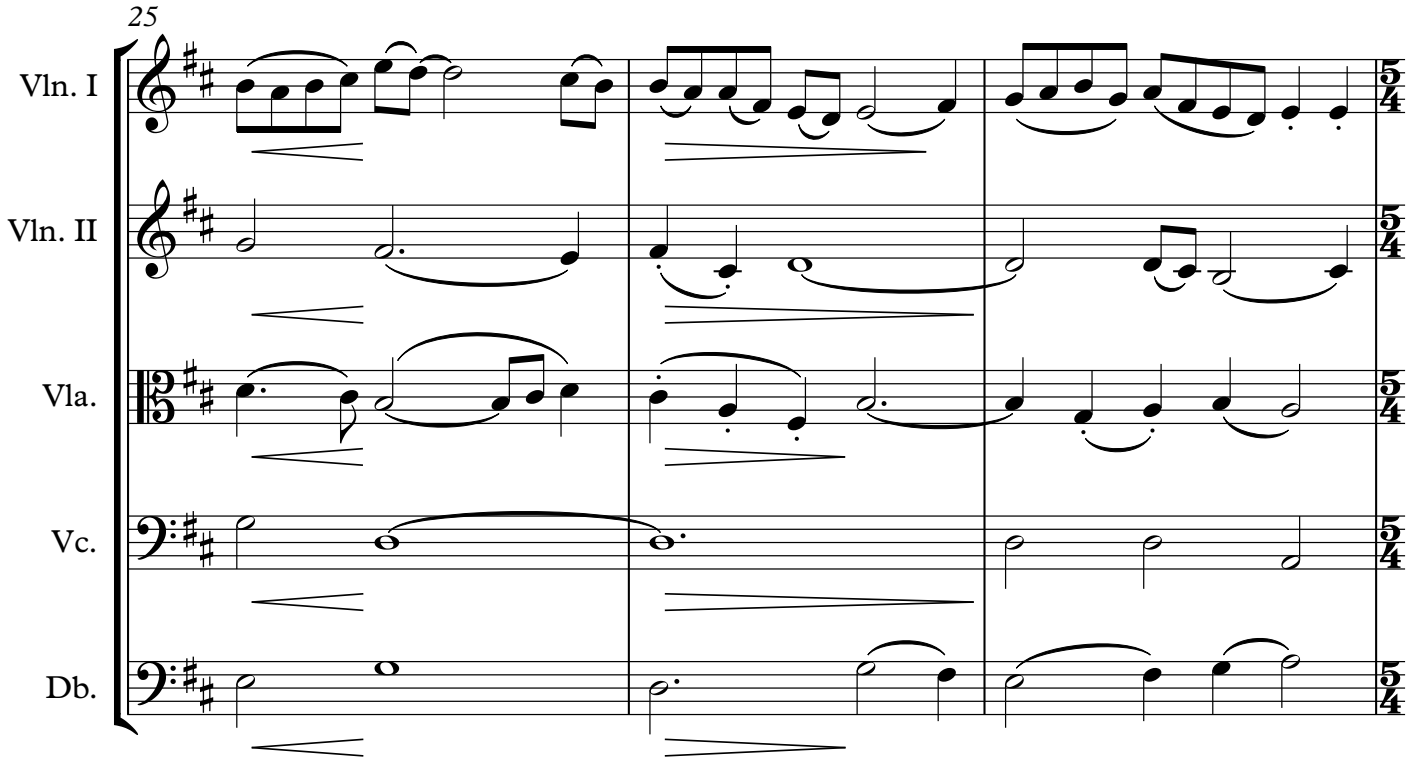
Fantasia for string orchestra
on a folk song collected by Cecil Sharp

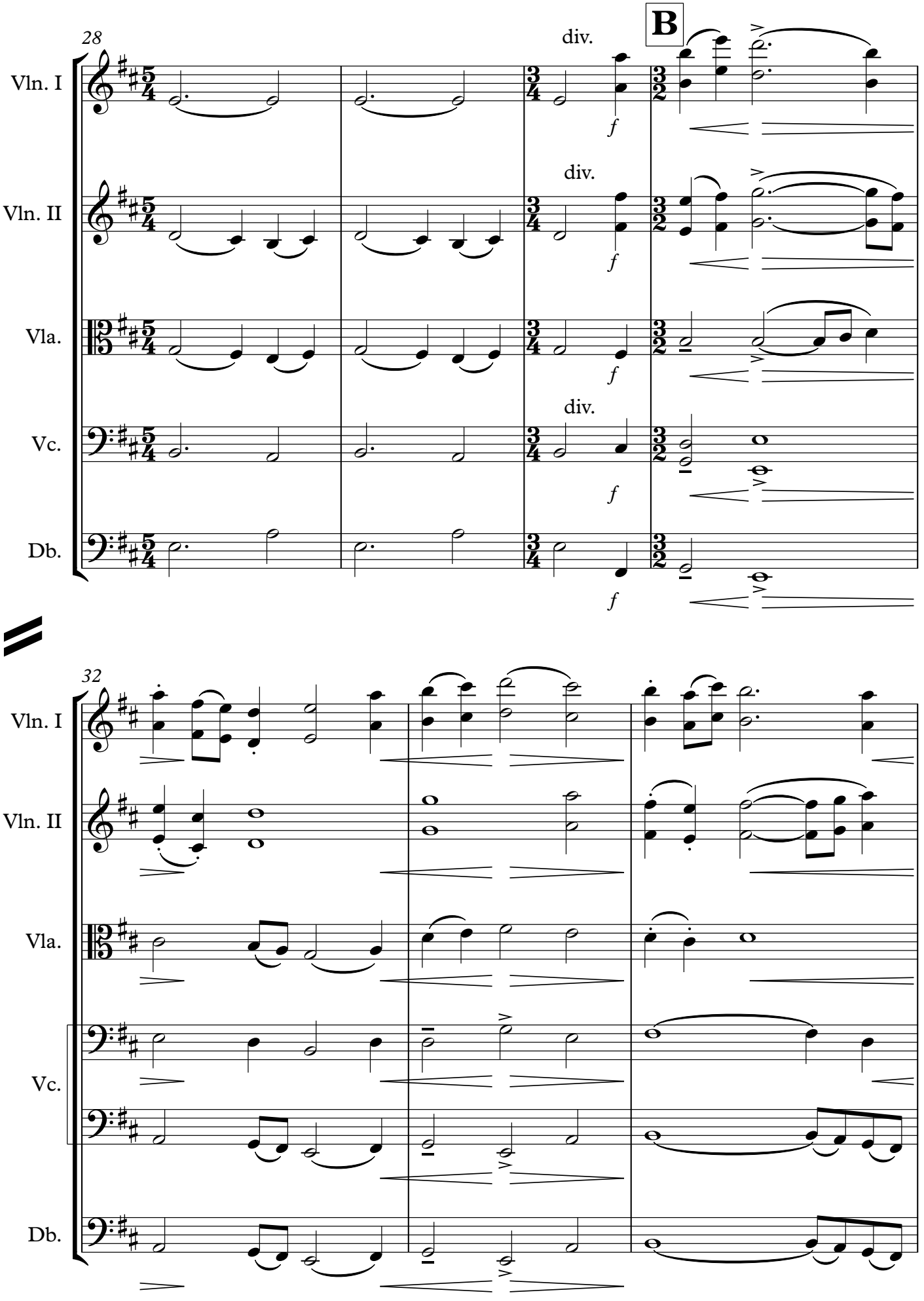
Jolyon Laycock

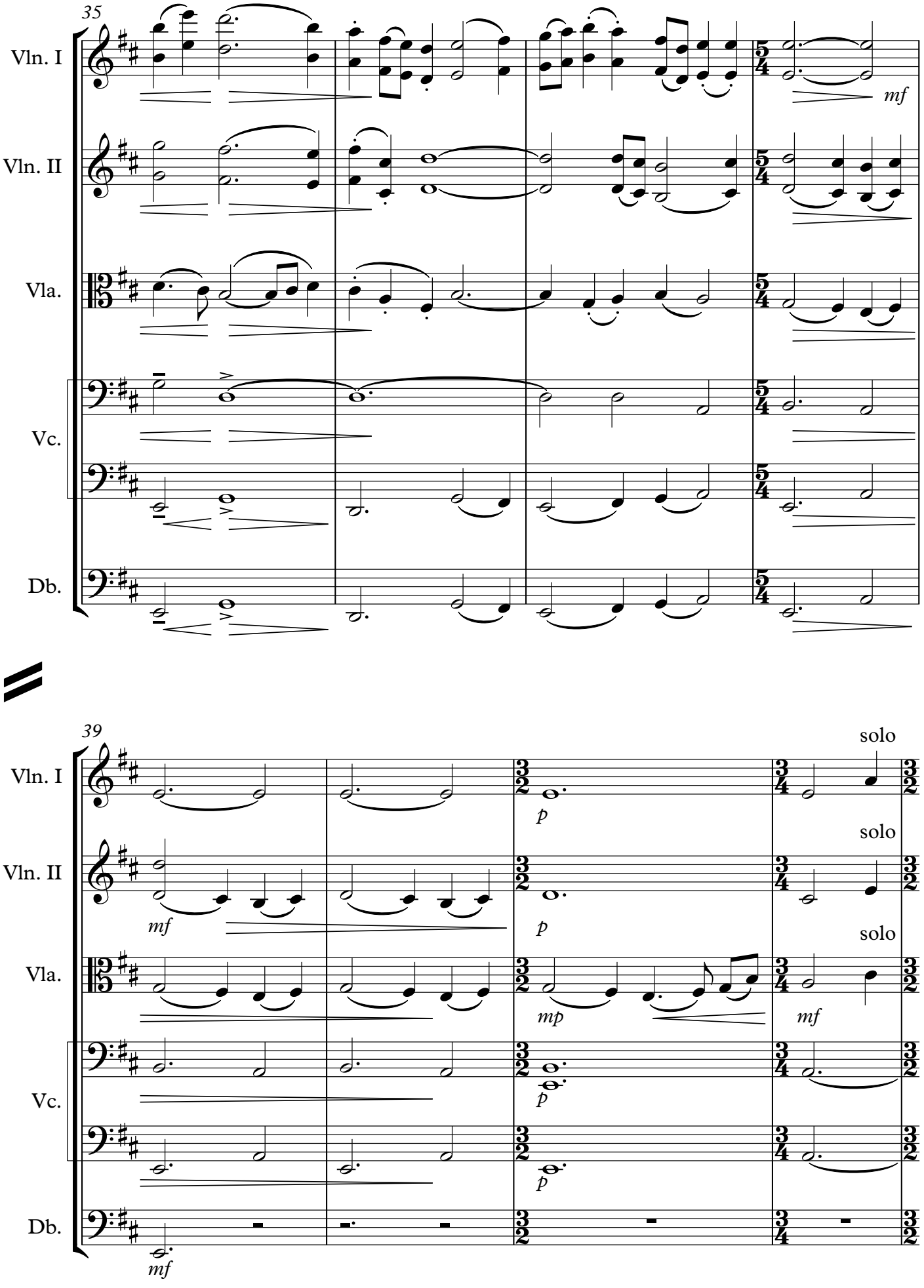


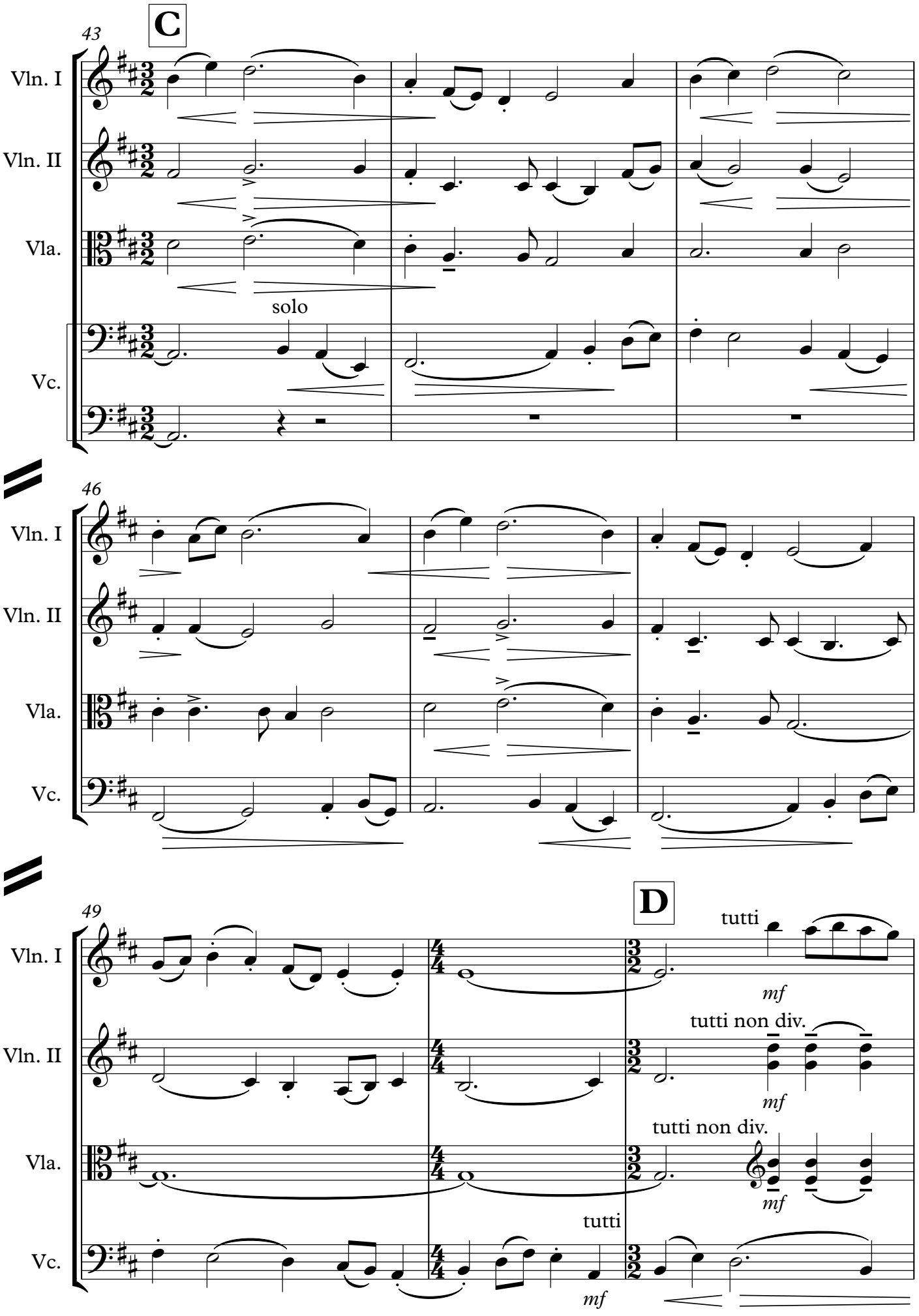

Più mosso ♩=60
13
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
16
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
19
A
tutti
tutti p
p
tutti
tutti p
p
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p

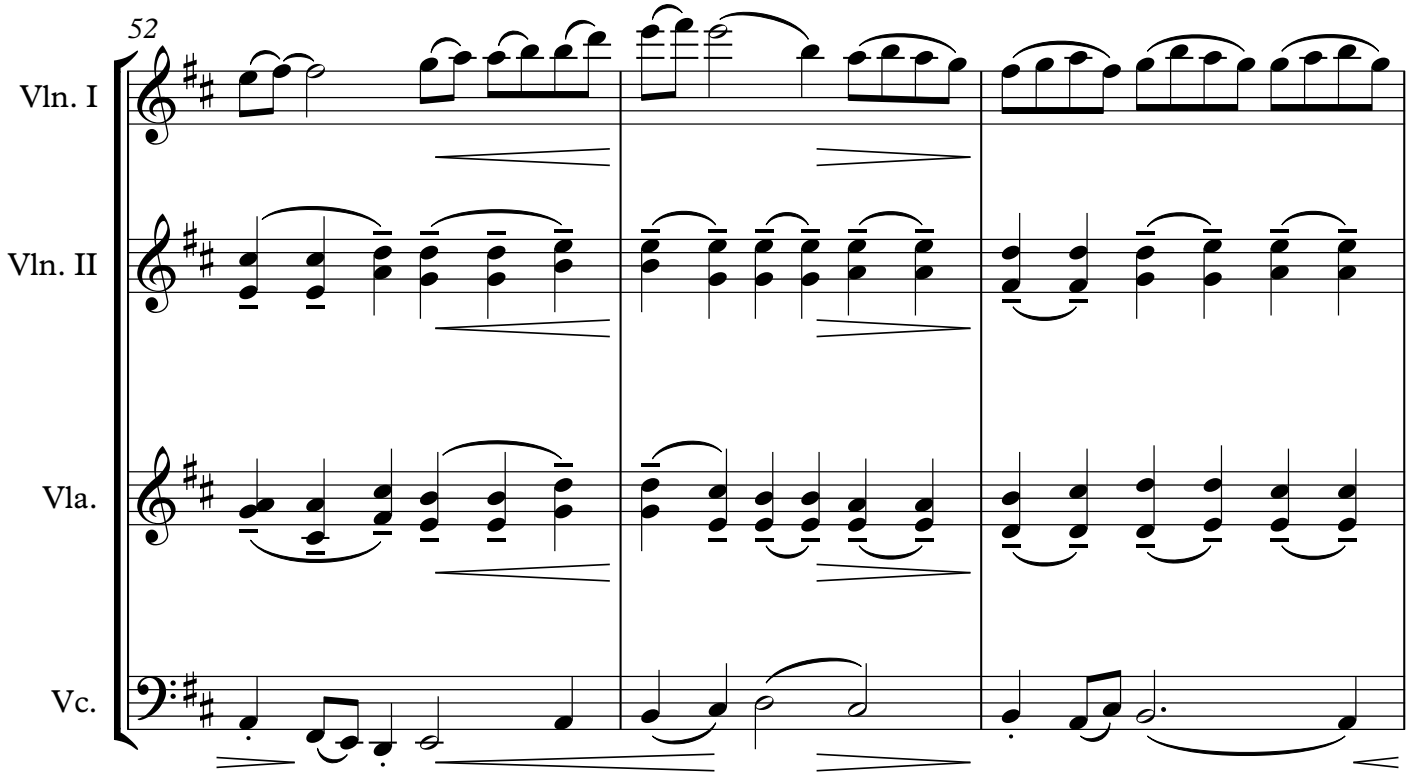

22
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

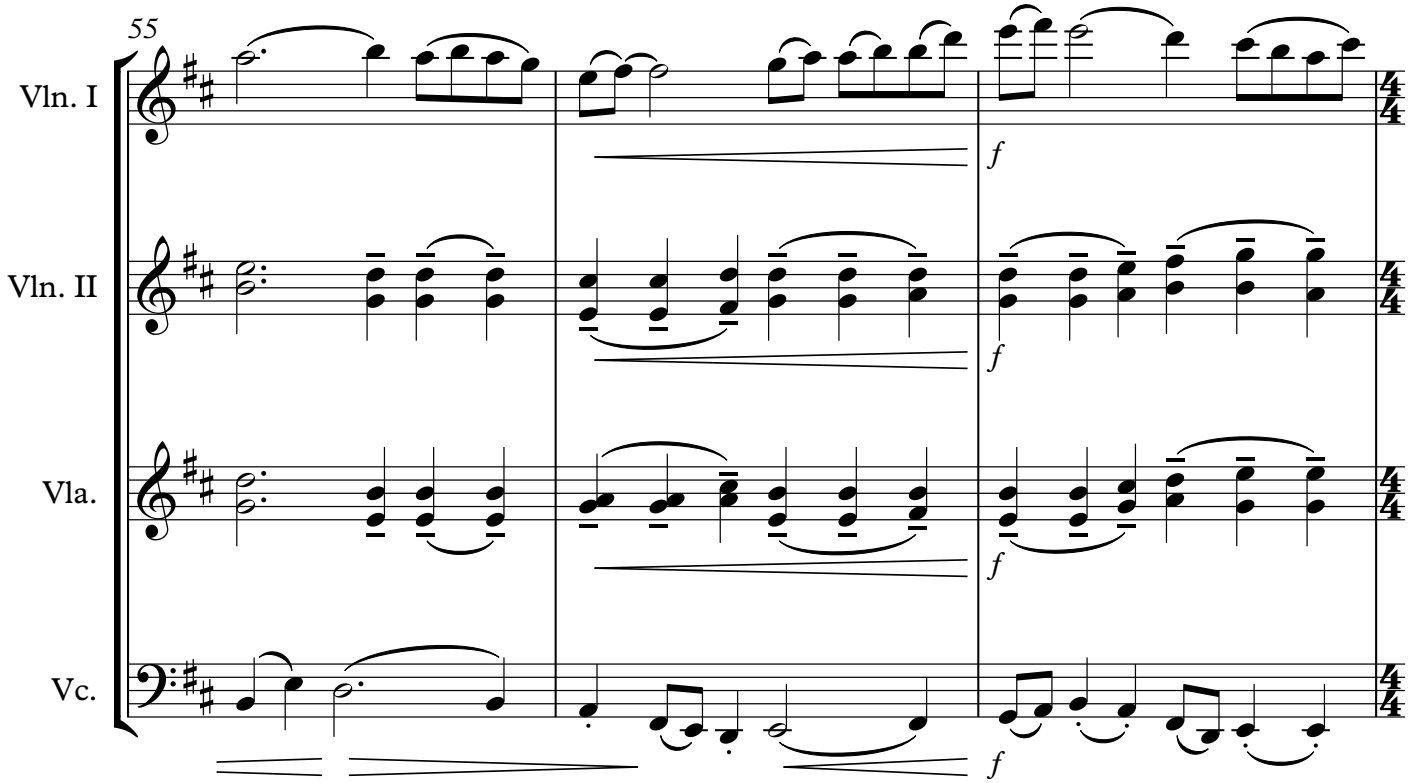

25
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
5
4

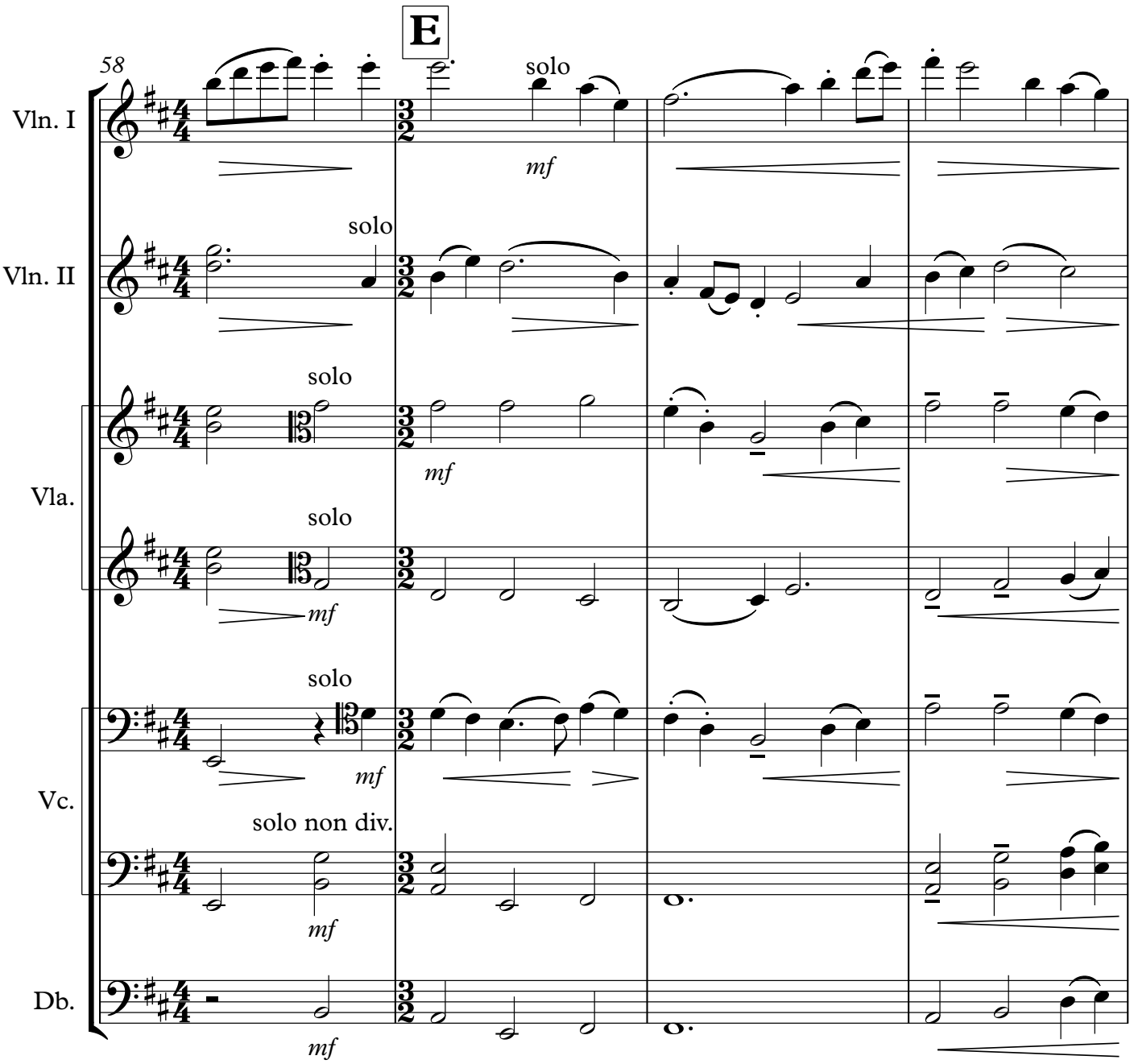

28
B
div.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
f
32

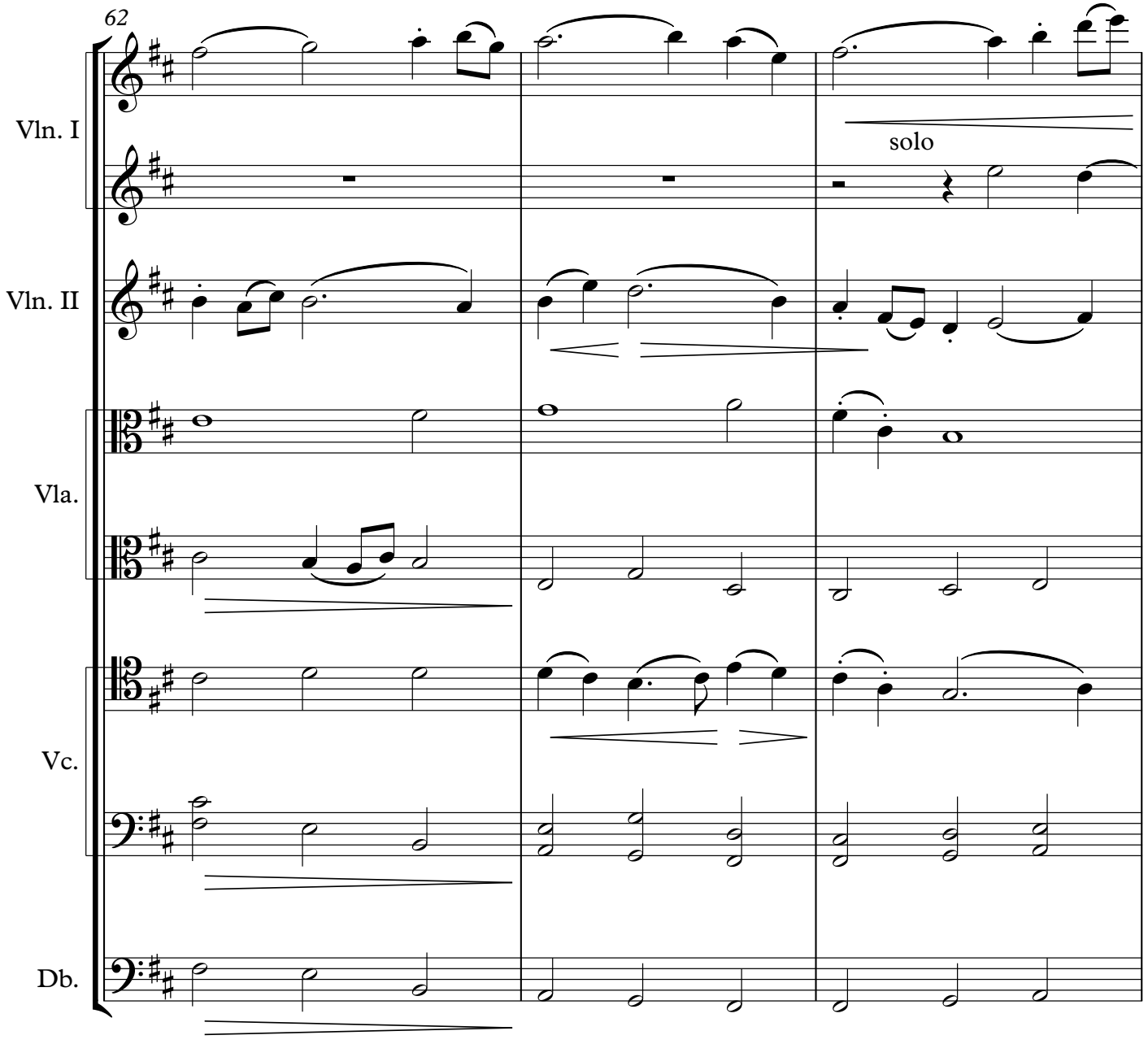

35
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mf
39
solo
solo
solo
p
mf
mp

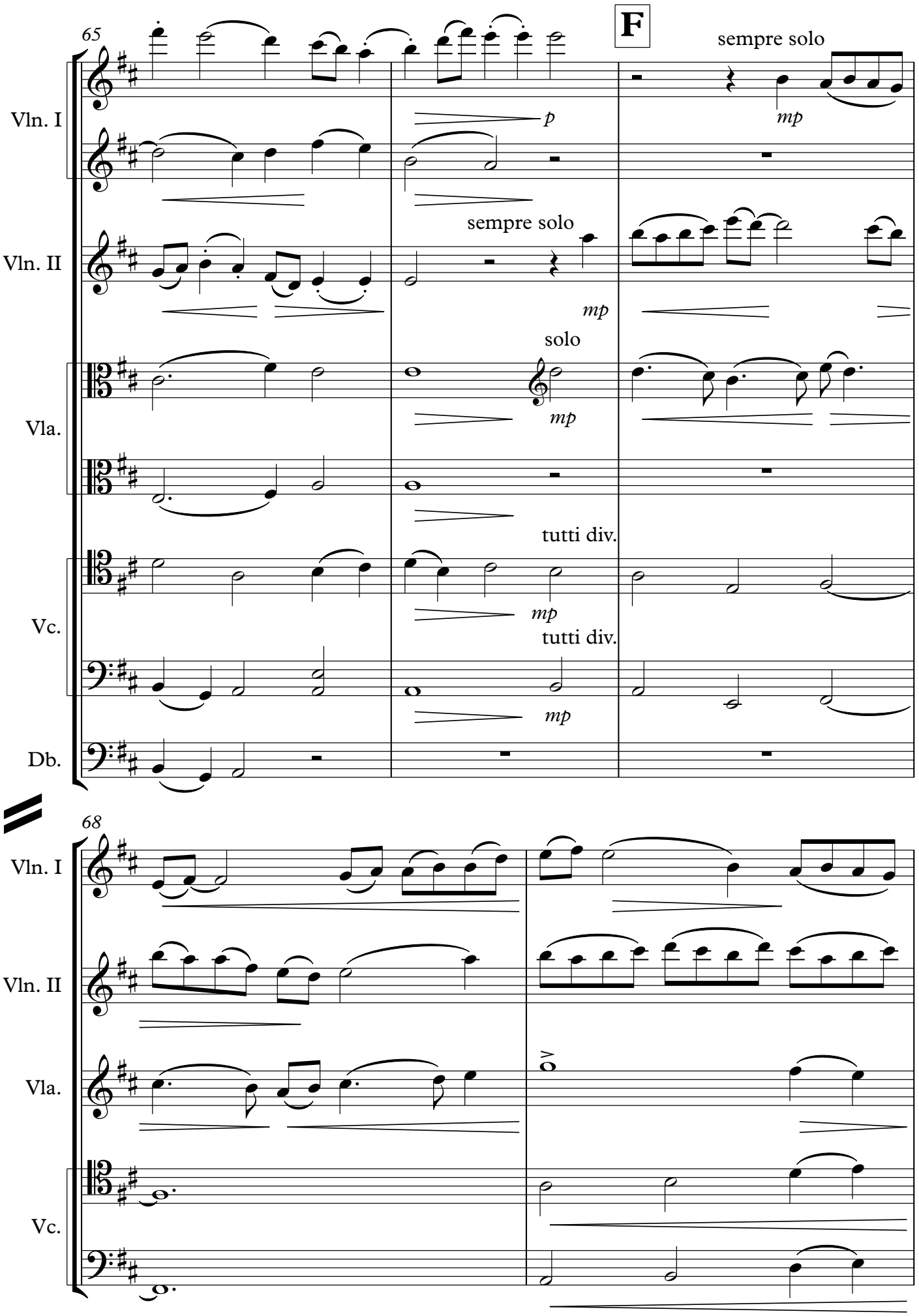

C
43
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
solo
Vc.
46
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
D
49
tutti
mf
Vln. I
tutti non div.
mf
Vln. II
tutti non div.
mf
Vla.
tutti
mf
Vc.

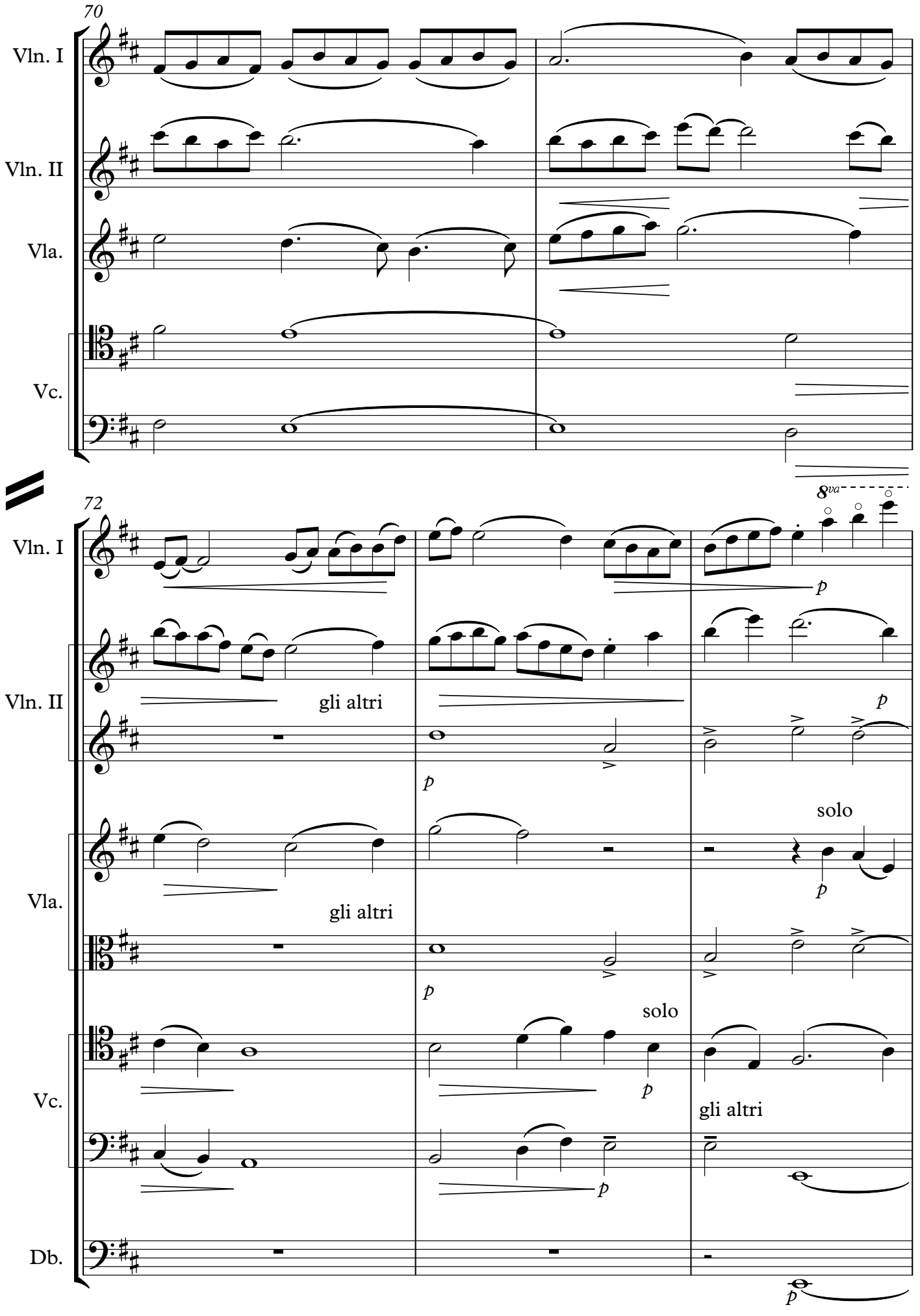

52
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

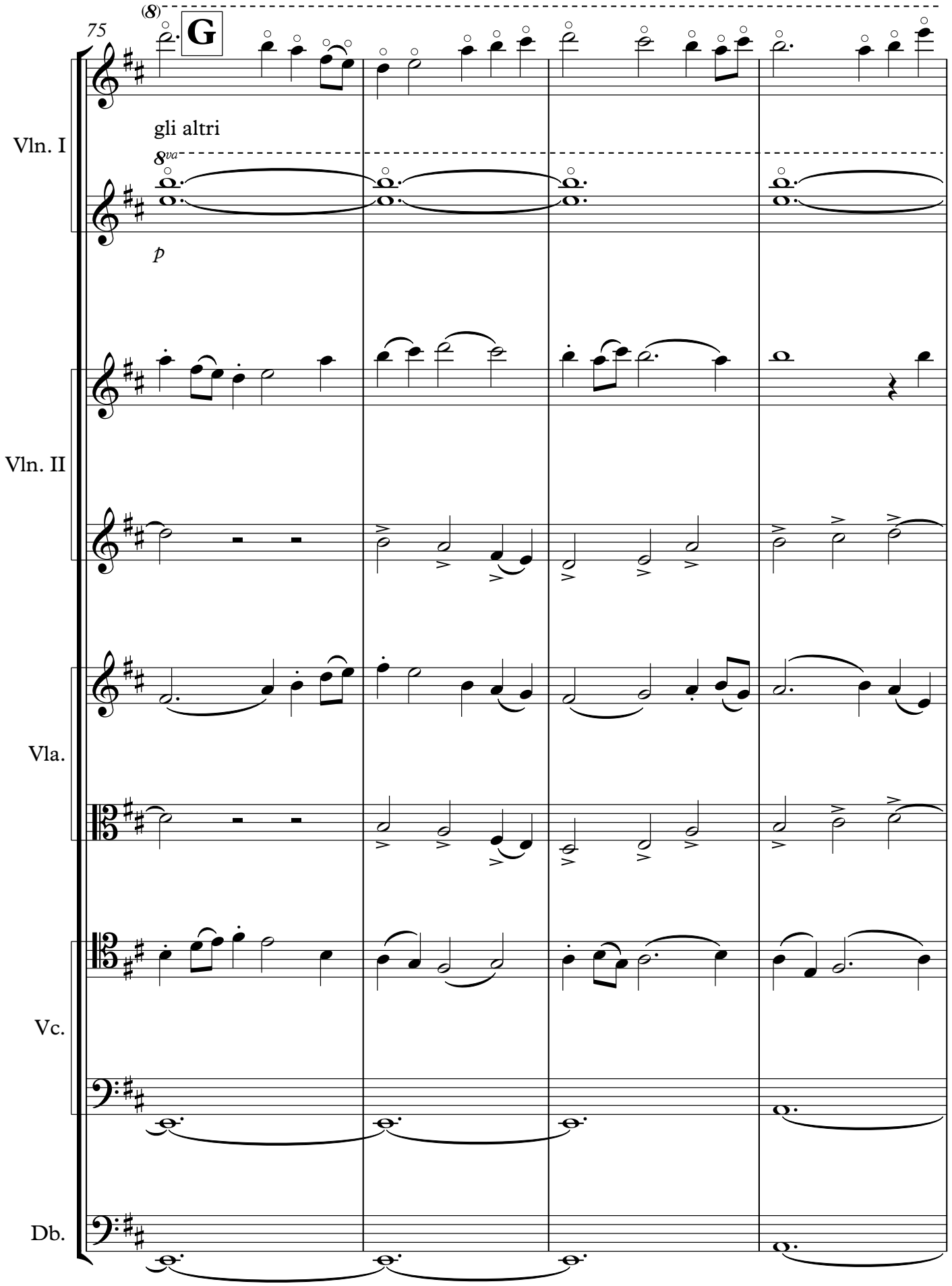

55
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
f
f
f
f
4/4
4/4
4/4
4/4

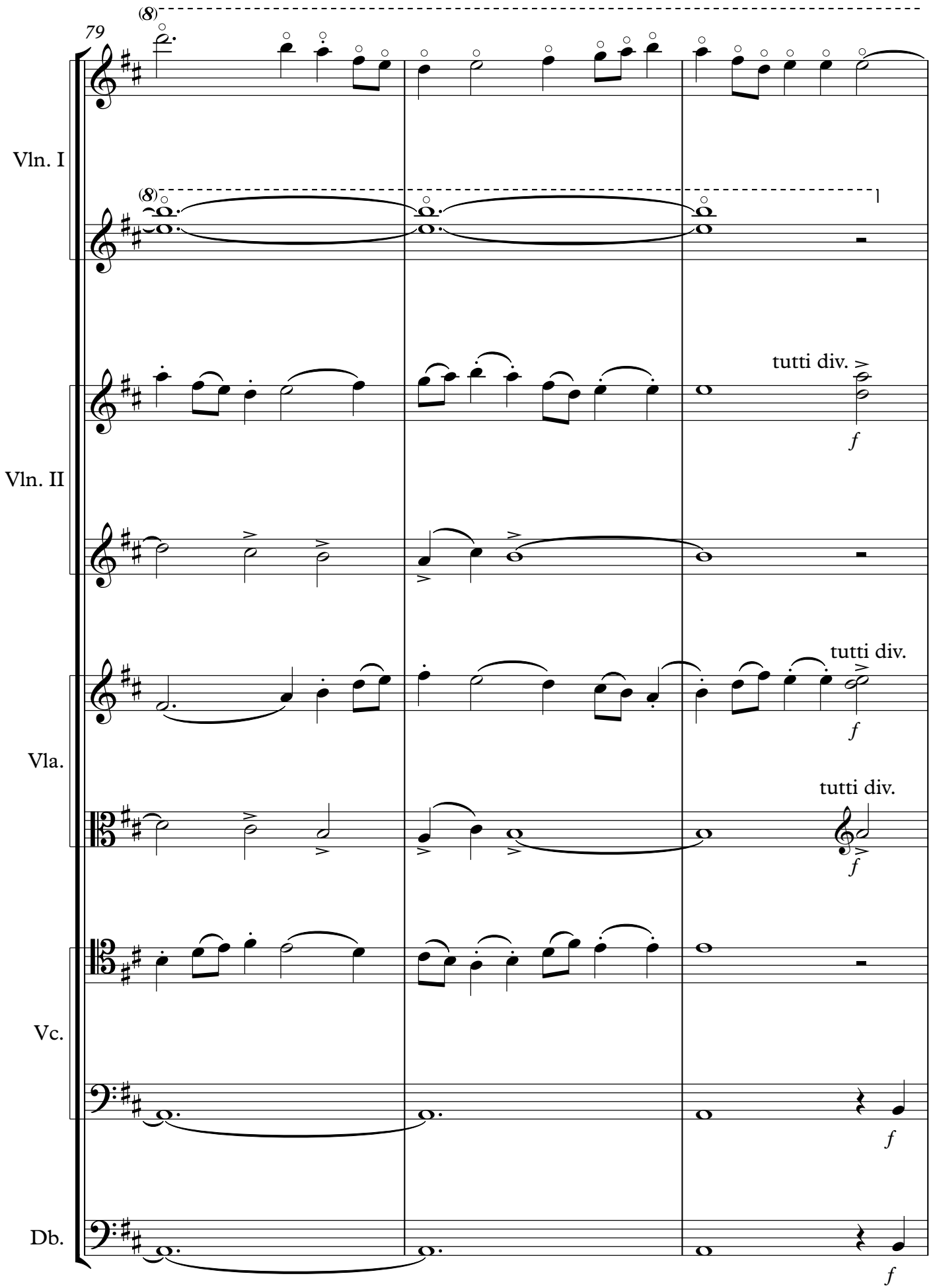

E
58
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
solo
solo non div.
mf

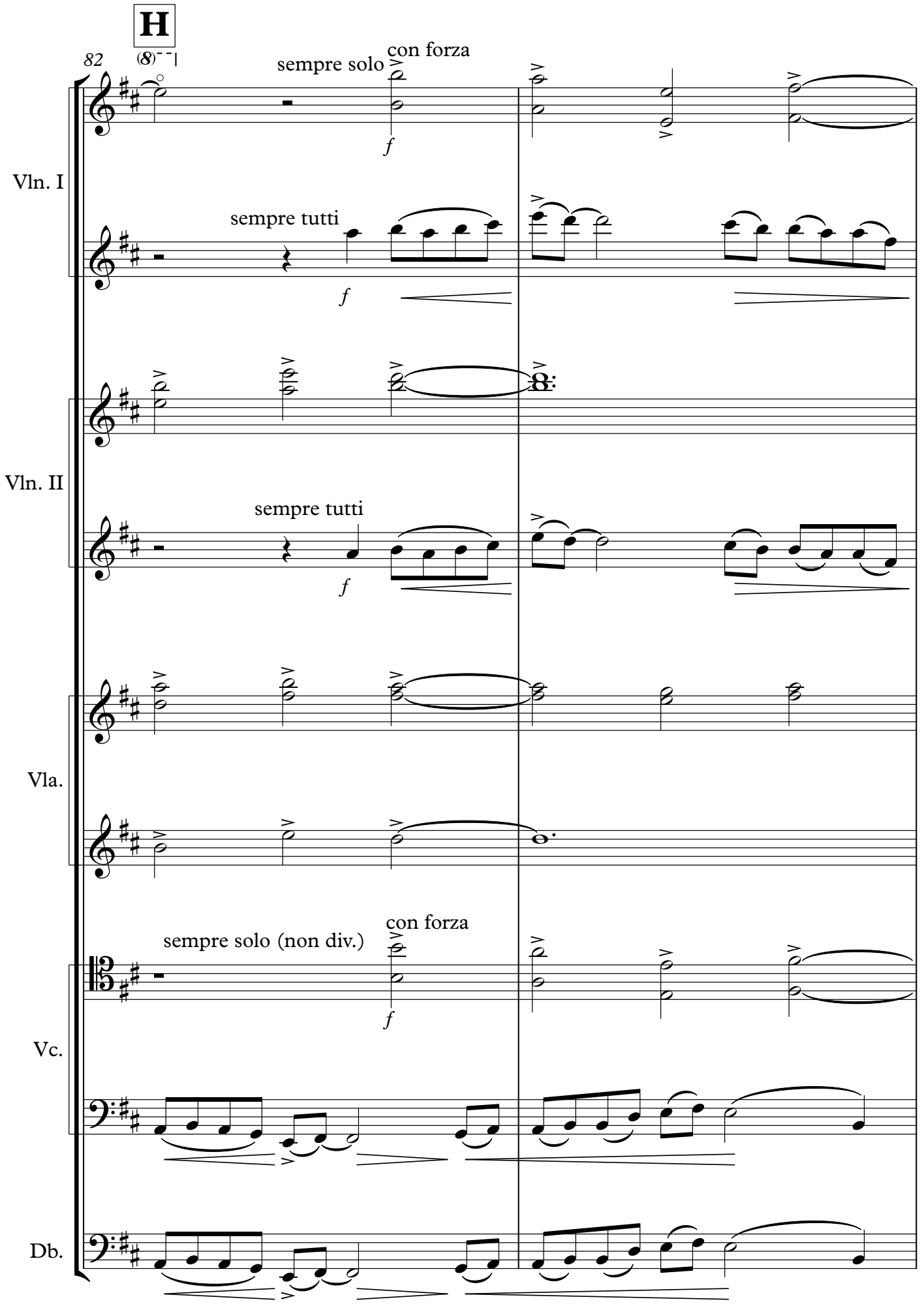

62
Vln. I
solo
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

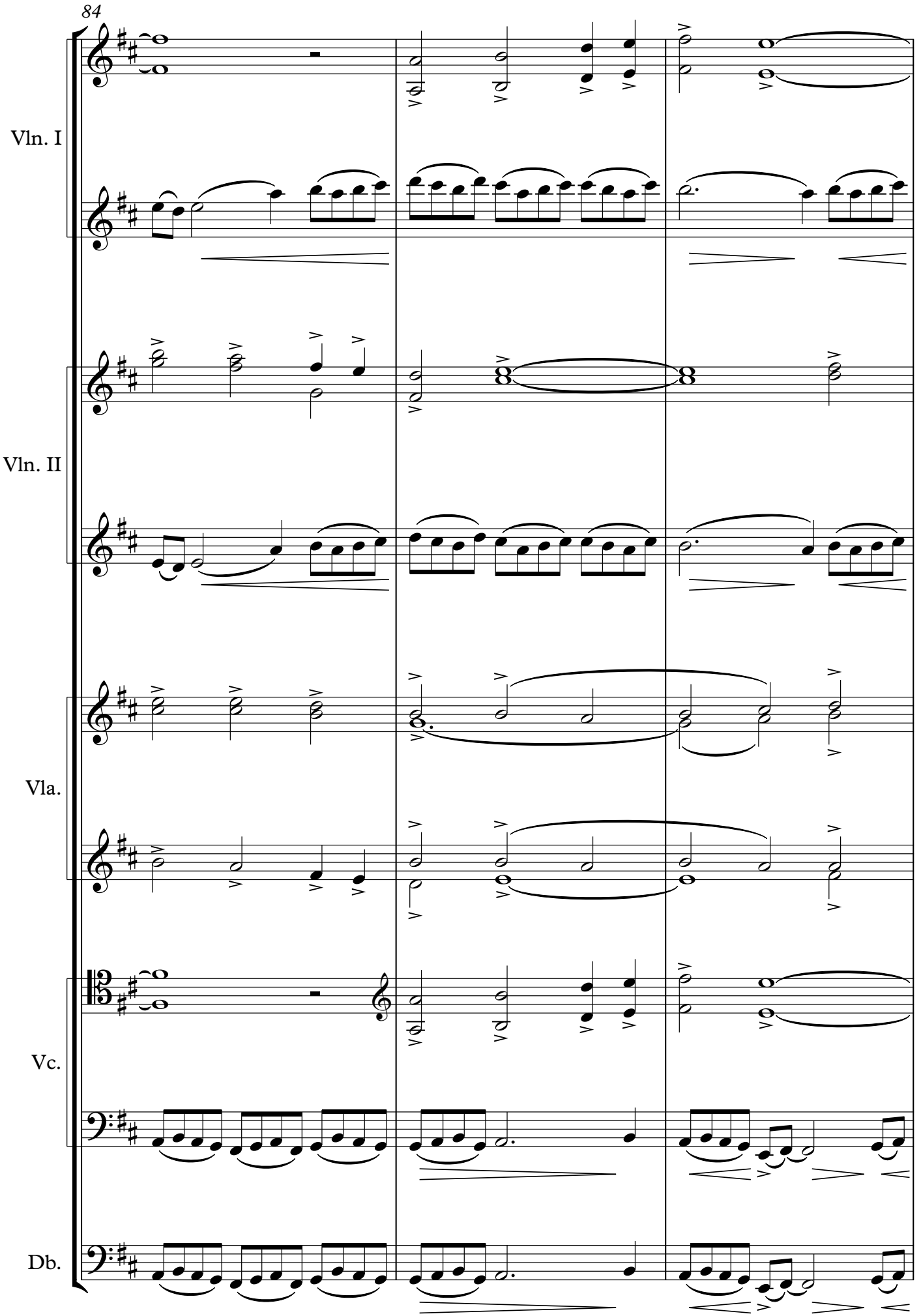

65
F
sempre solo
Vln. I
p
mp
sempre solo
Vln. II
mp
solo
Vla.
mp
tutti div.
Vc.
mp
tutti div.
Db.
mp
68
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

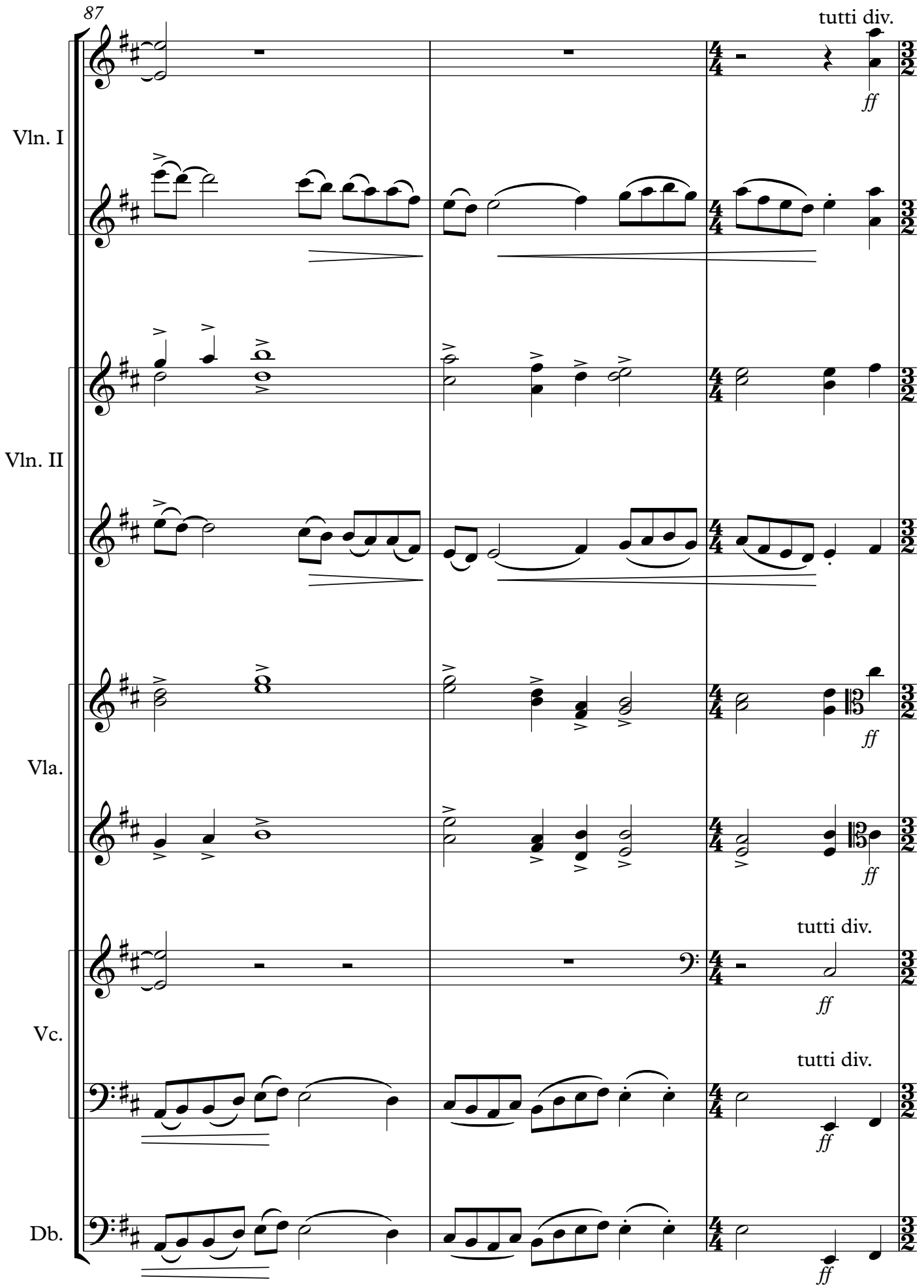

70
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
72
8va
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
p
gli altri
p
p
solo
gli altri
p
p
solo
p
gli altri
p
p

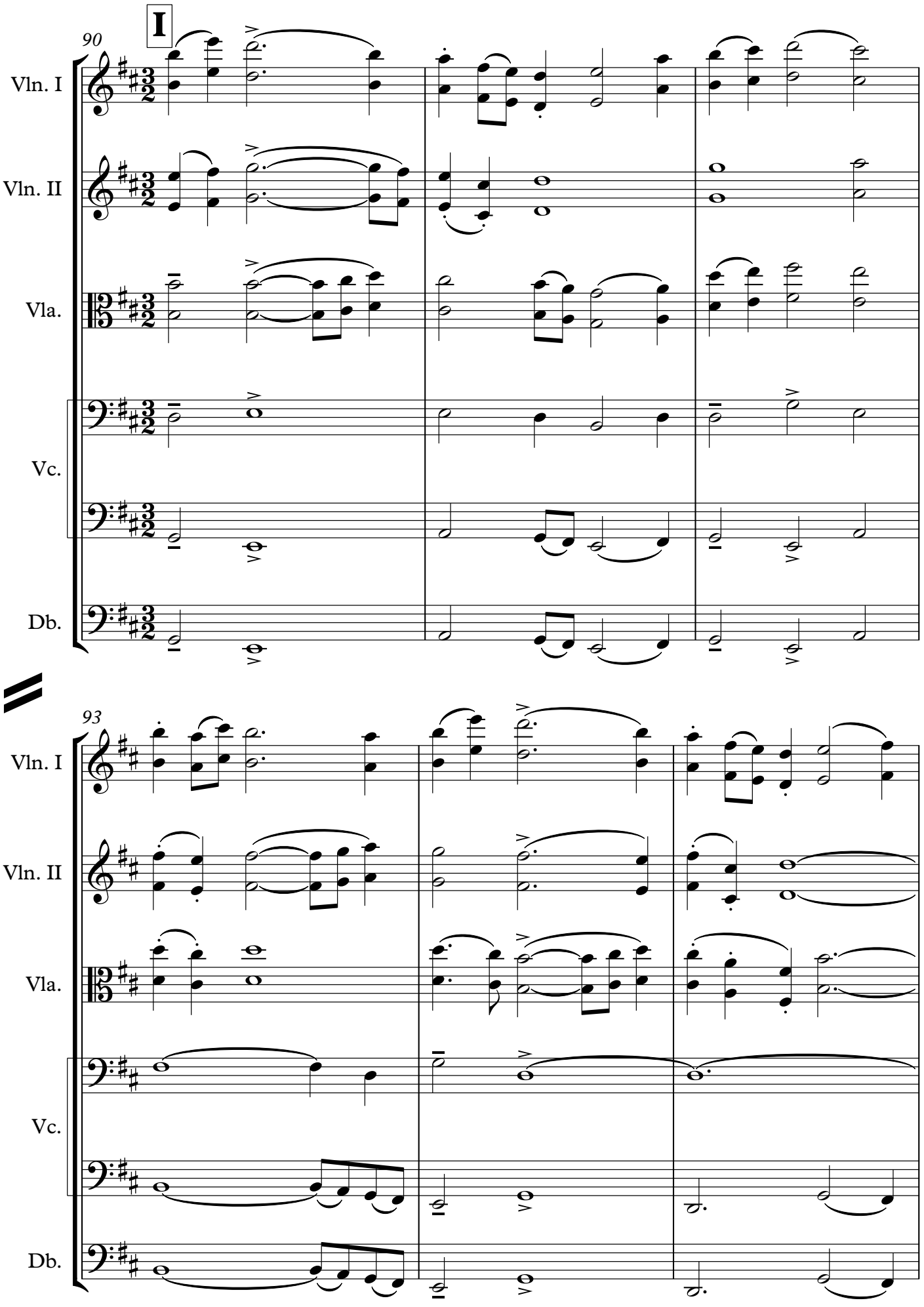

75
G
(8)
gli altri
8va
p
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

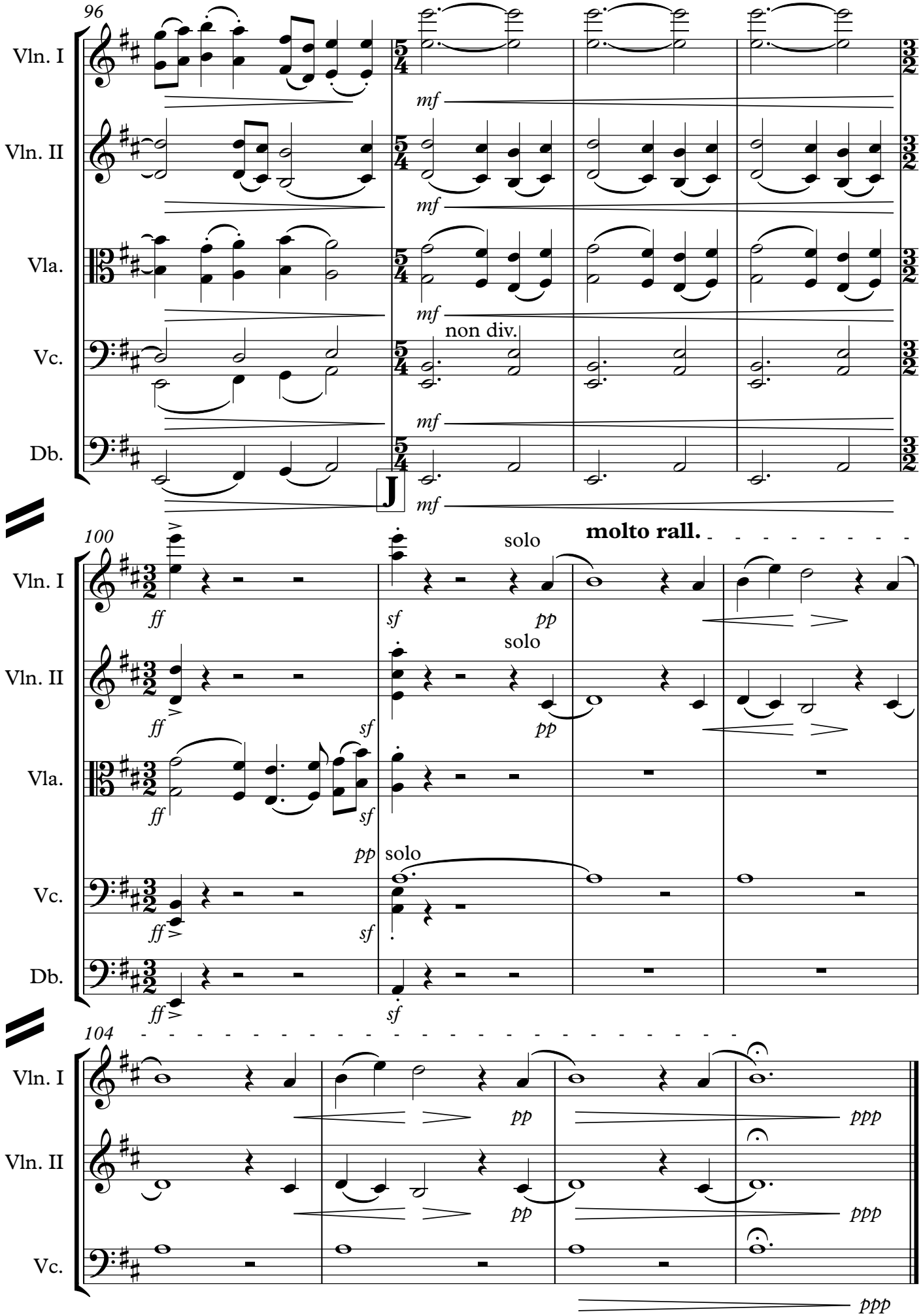

79
(8)
Vln. I
(8)
tutti div.
f
Vln. II
tutti div.
f
Vla.
tutti div.
f
Vc.
f
Db.
f


H
82
(8)
sempre solo
con forza
f
Vln. I
sempre tutti
f
Vln. II
sempre tutti
f
Vla.
sempre solo (non div.)
con forza
f
Vc.
Db.


84
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.


87
tutti div.
ff
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
tutti div.
ff
Vc.
tutti div.
ff
Db.
ff


I
90
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
93
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.


96
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.
mf
non div.
J
100
solo
molto rall.
ff
sf
pp
104
ppp

Music by Jolyon Laycock

Four Times Four for 16 actors/dancers/singers with electronics (1971)
Locations I, II, III, and IV - sound sculptures (1970 rev. 1973)
***Lattice* - for 12 solo strings and electronics** (1972 - Commissioned by the Barber Institute, University of Birmingham)
Pluramusic - electronic sound installation (1972-1977)
This Could Happen to You - participatory audio-visual installation (1974-1976)
Tyrannos - 12 audio-visual cycles on the myth of Oedipus (unfinished) - Earth Cycle, Moon Cycle, Uranus Cycle, Pluto Cycle, and Equinox Cycle first performed 1977
***Bladud* - a wordscape with music** - commissioned by Bathampton Primary School (1985)
Woden's Dyke - music-theatre for school and community performance based on the story of the Anglo-Saxon chieftain Ceawlin of Wessex. Commissioned by Wansdyke Arts Council (1987).
Hetty Pegler - music theatre piece commissioned by Prema Arts Centre, Uley, Gloucestershire (1988)
High Wood - solo oboe (1988)
In Bruton Town - Fantasia of a Somerset folk song for string orchestra (1988)
Seven Stars - Community opera based on Thomas Clarkson's investigations into the Bristol slave trade in 1787. Bristol City Commission.(1994)
A Dream of Flying - for clarinet, horn, bassoon, string trio, double bass and piano (1995).
Eadgar Cyning - settings for soloists, choir and orchestra in the original language of three poems from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle about the coronation and death of King Edgar at Bath. (1996).
***Un Tiento Rasguado* (homage to Joaquin Rodrigo)** junior competition test piece for the Bath International Guitar Festival 1996.
Sinfonietta for String Orchestra (1998) - revised and re-issued as ***Tetraktis*** (2014)
Mengjiang Weeping at the Wall - Music-theatre piece for soprano, choir, small ensemble, Chinese instruments and junior school children; Commissioned by the Corsham Festival (2002).
Die! A-One Sparrow for piano duet (2002)
Among Seven Hills Sinfonia Concertante for piano and orchestra (2009)
12 Landscape Studies for piano (1996-2010)
12 River Preludes for piano (2011)
6 Sonnets of Edna St.Vincent Millay for mezzo soprano and piano (2011)
3 Sonnets of Gerard Manley Hopkins for tenor or high baritone and piano (2012)
String Quartet (2012)
***An Entangled Bank* -** A setting for 8 part *a cappella* choir of the final paragraph of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin (2013).
Cantilena for solo cello and open score ensemble (2013)
The Ballad of Gogmagog an entertainment for baritone and small orchestra (2014)
Clarion Call for solo bass clarinet and open score ensemble (2014)
Dark Seas - 5 poems of Philip Larkin for coloratura soprano, clarinet and piano (2014)
***The Swan* - after Camille Saint-Saëns** for cello and two pianos (2014)
***Orbium Cœlestium* -** Cantata for mixed chorus, soloists and orchestra on a text by Nicholaus Copernicus
Trilithon for orchestra (begun 1968 – completed & revised 2015)
The Persistence of Memory - sonata for violin and piano after Salvador Dali and Phiolip Larkin (2016)
Three Shakespeare Sonnets for tenor or high baritone and piano (2016)
Latham Variations for oboe and piano (2017)
Mountains of the Mind 12 poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins for tenor or high baritone and piano (2018)

Theoretical writings:
A Changing Role for the Composer in Society
A Study of the Historical Background and Current Methodologies of Creative Music-Making
Peter Lang, European Academic Publishers, Switzerland (2005) http://www.peterlang.com/all/index.cfm
***All Interval Fractal Sets - a technical explanation* -** http://www.jolyonlaycock.uk/theoretical-writings

Poetry:
To Tolverne - a Riddle A poem inspired by the D-day museum at Tolverne, Cornwall (2001)
Berliner Schnauze A collection of poems in the form of an entertainment in words and music inspired by a visit to Berlin ten years after the fall of the Berlin wall (1999).
A Mendip Ploughing Match at Priddy and other Mendip poems
Estrildis operatic libretto in verse on a story from Geoffrey of Monmouth *The History of the Kings of Britain*.
Polonaise of Chopin declamation with piano accompaniment (2015)
For more details visit: http://www.jolyonlaycock.uk/