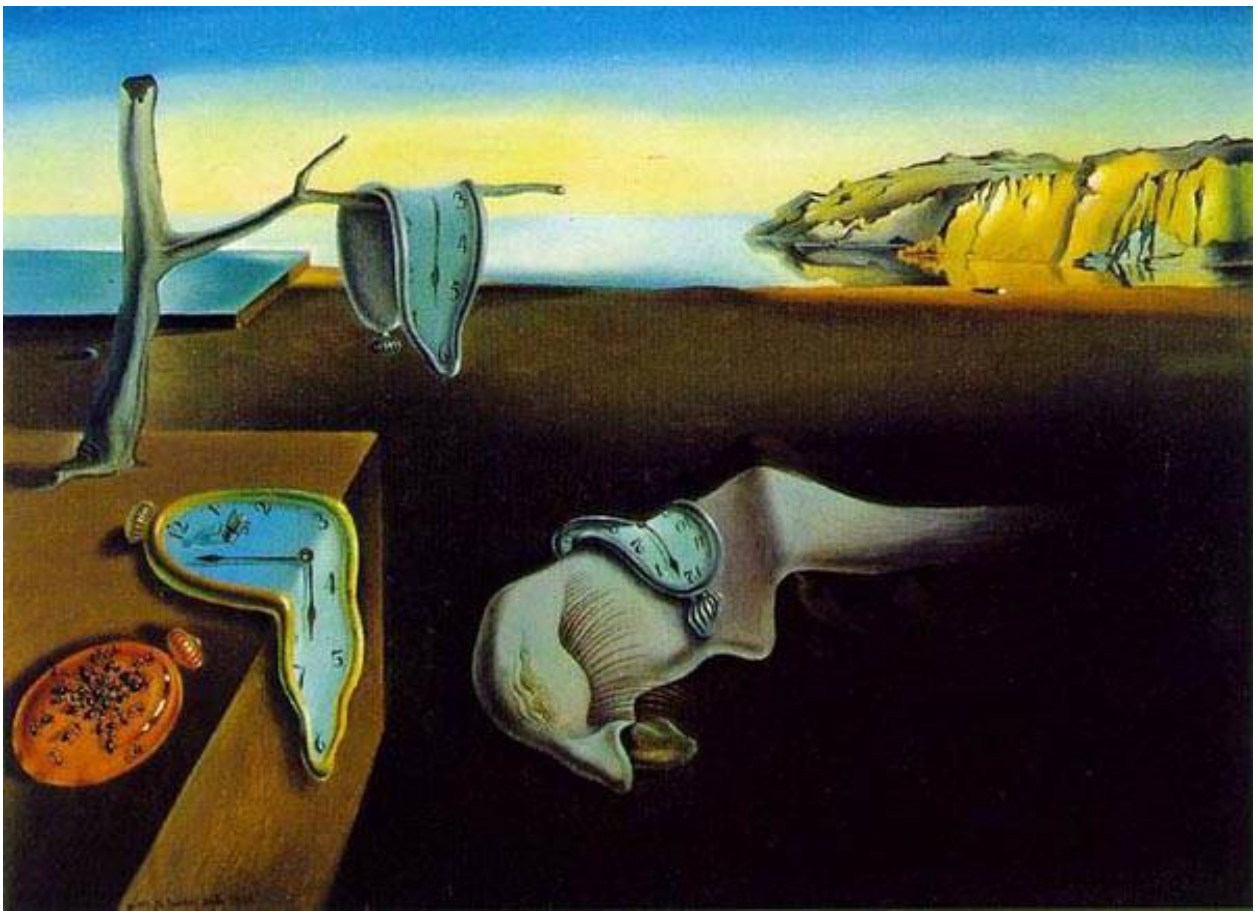
Jolyon Laycock

The Persistence of Memory

Sonata for violin and piano (2016)



Jolyon Laycock

The Persistence of Memory

Sonata for violin and piano (2016)

after Salvador Dali and Philip Larkin

First performed by Madeleine Mitchell and Geoffrey Poole at St. George's Bristol on St. Cecilia's Day, 22 November 2016

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The Persistence of Memory **Jolyon Laycock**
Sonata for violin and piano (2016)

Programme note:

The sonata takes its inspiration from two non-musical sources: one visual and the other literary. Its title comes from one of the most famous paintings of Salvador Dali. Painted in 1931, this surrealist masterpiece brings together a disturbing collection of dream-images including floppy clocks, a deserted beach, a shapeless monster, an infestation of ants, and distant sea cliffs, said to be a depiction of the Cap de Creus peninsula in Catalonia. Musically speaking the sonata takes the form of a set of 31 variations on the third song of "Dark Seas", my cycle of five poems by Philip Larkin, written in 2012 for the coloratura soprano Sarah Leonard. "Dark Seas" exploits Sarah Leonard's extraordinary vocal range from low G up to high D#. The third song is a setting of Larkin's poem "I am washed upon a rock". The unaccompanied violin solo that begins and ends the sonata, like the wordless lament of a lone human voice, is an exact transcription of the song's opening soprano melody.

As far as I know there is no connection between Dali's iconic surrealist masterpiece and Larkin's poem except a personal association of ideas of my own. The poem's protagonist is an innocent young woman who describes a succession of symbolic dream images including a ticking watch, the pitiless sun, a menacing cloud, a hovering bird holding a captive fish, a wedding ring, and a shore-line that retreats to expose a barren and desolate beach. The poem's surreal atmosphere and symbolic imagery reminded me of Dali's painting.

"The Persistence of Memory" uses musical devices which I call all-interval fractal sets. I discovered these six-note motives in 2010 and have used them in almost all of my compositions since then. The sonata is not a conventional set of variations on the song. Rather it extends the fractal processes of the song to create a sonata of six short linked movements of widely contrasting emotional character. The six sections of the first movement follow exactly the structure of the song, while the subsequent movements are expansions of it. The important feature of fractal processes is that the same structure is repeated at many different layers of a composition. The opening solo violin melody contains not only all the melodic material of the sonata at a microcosmic level but is also the source of its macrocosmic structural framework. The repetition of the opening violin solo which constitutes the final section of the 6th movement, like a persistent memory, is a logical outcome of the spiralling fractal process.

I am washed upon a Rock – Philip Larkin (1949)

I am washed upon a Rock
In an endless girding sea.
The sun is figured like a clock;
It turns and hangs at me.

My heart is ticking like the sun:
A lonely cloud drifts in the sky.
I dread its indecision.
If once it blocks the light, I die.

If I could make a single wish,
A bird might hover on the wing,
Within its beak a living fish,
And in the fish a wedding ring;

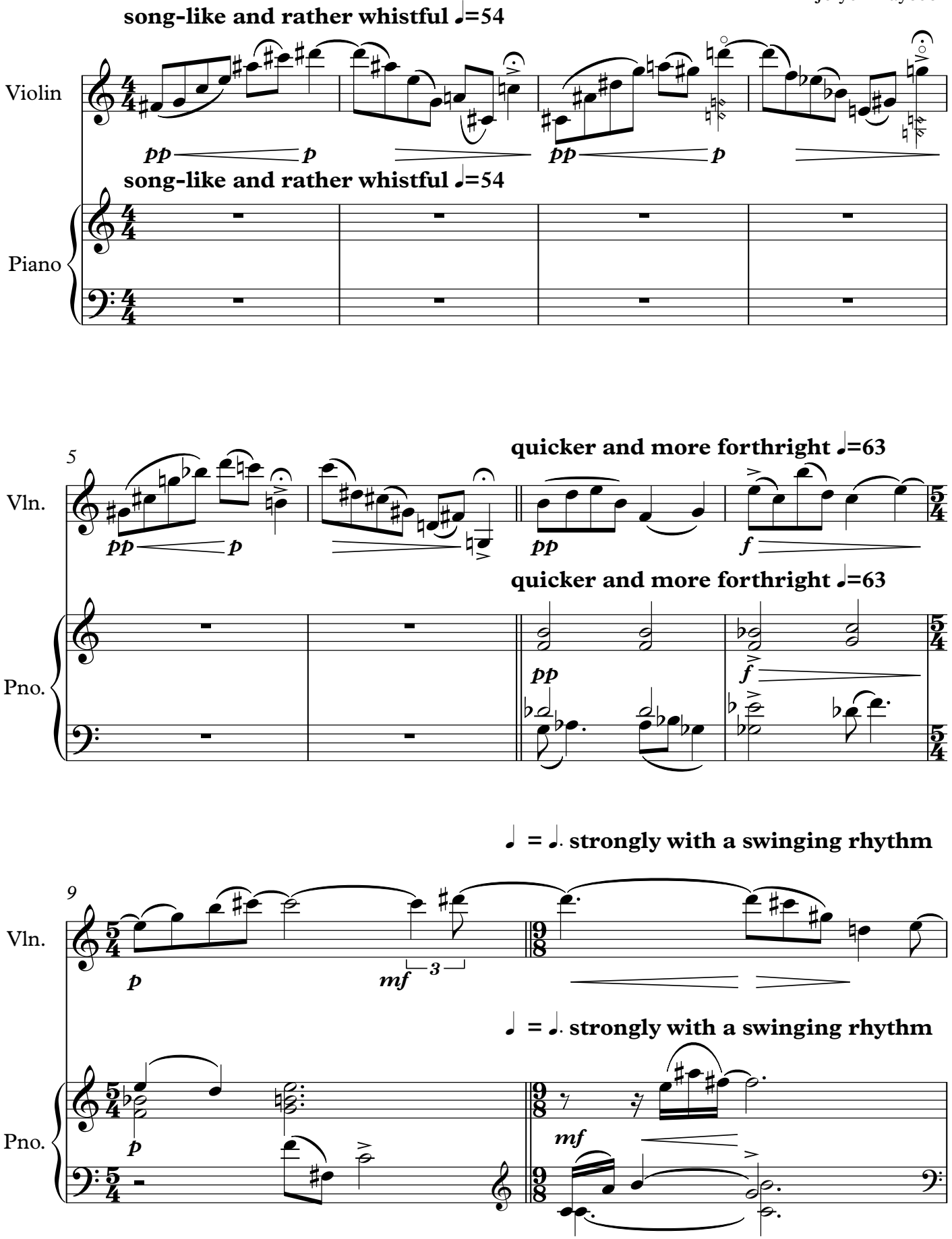
And when the ring was on my hand
The water would go down and shrink
To harmless mirrors on the sand.
But to wish is first to think,

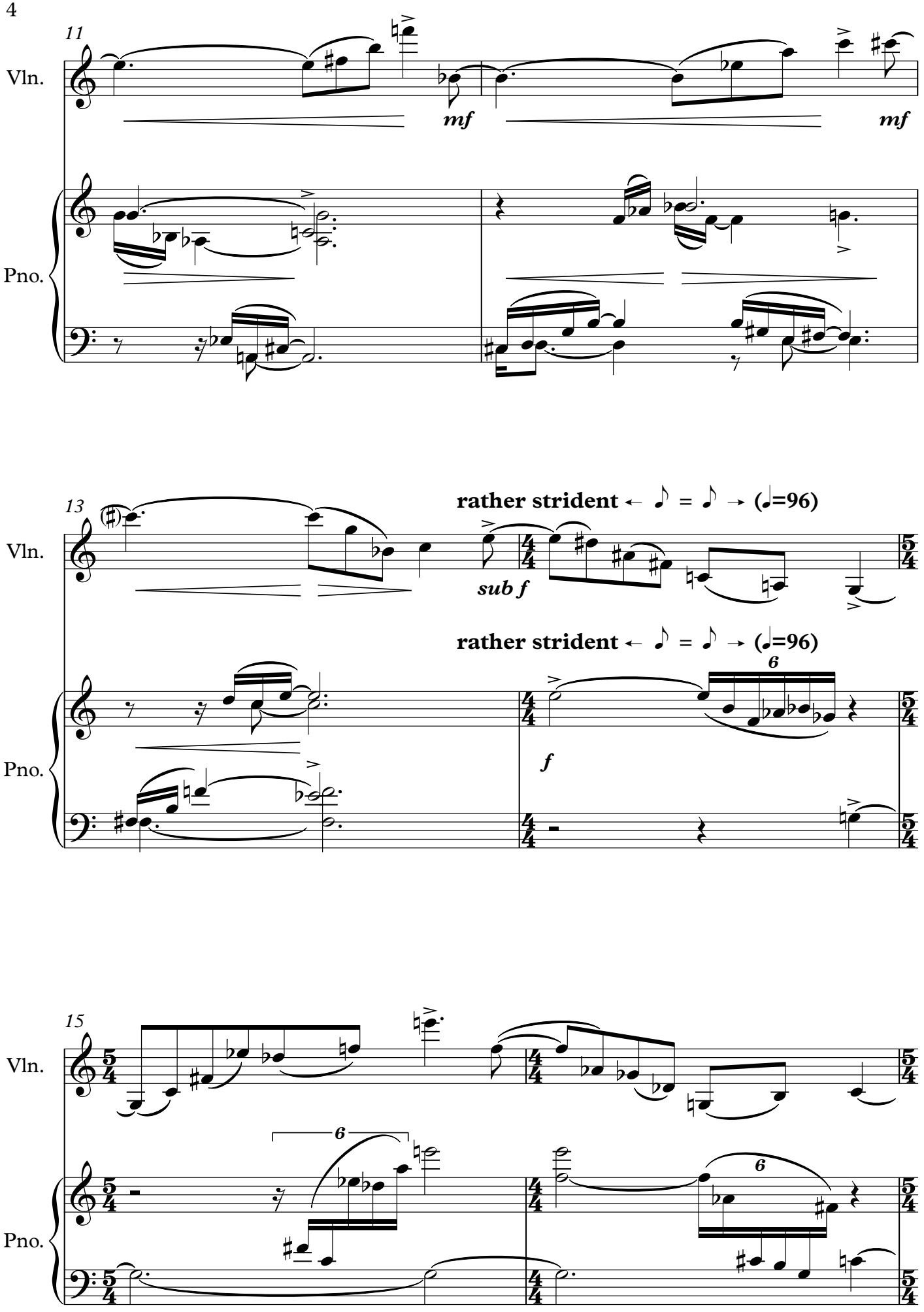
And to think is to be dumb,
And barren of a word to drop
That to a milder shore might come
And, years ahead, erect a crop.

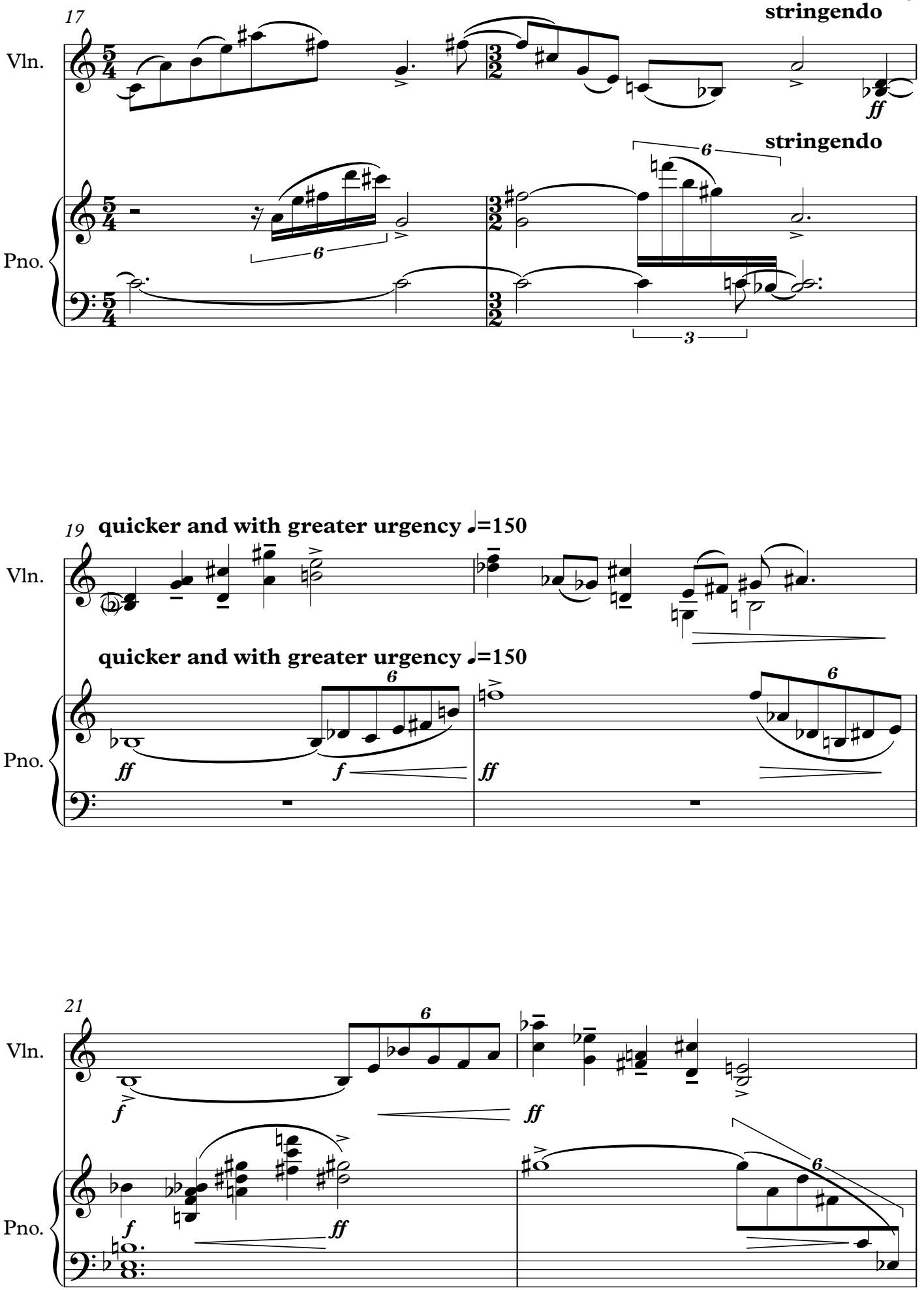
The Persistence of Memory

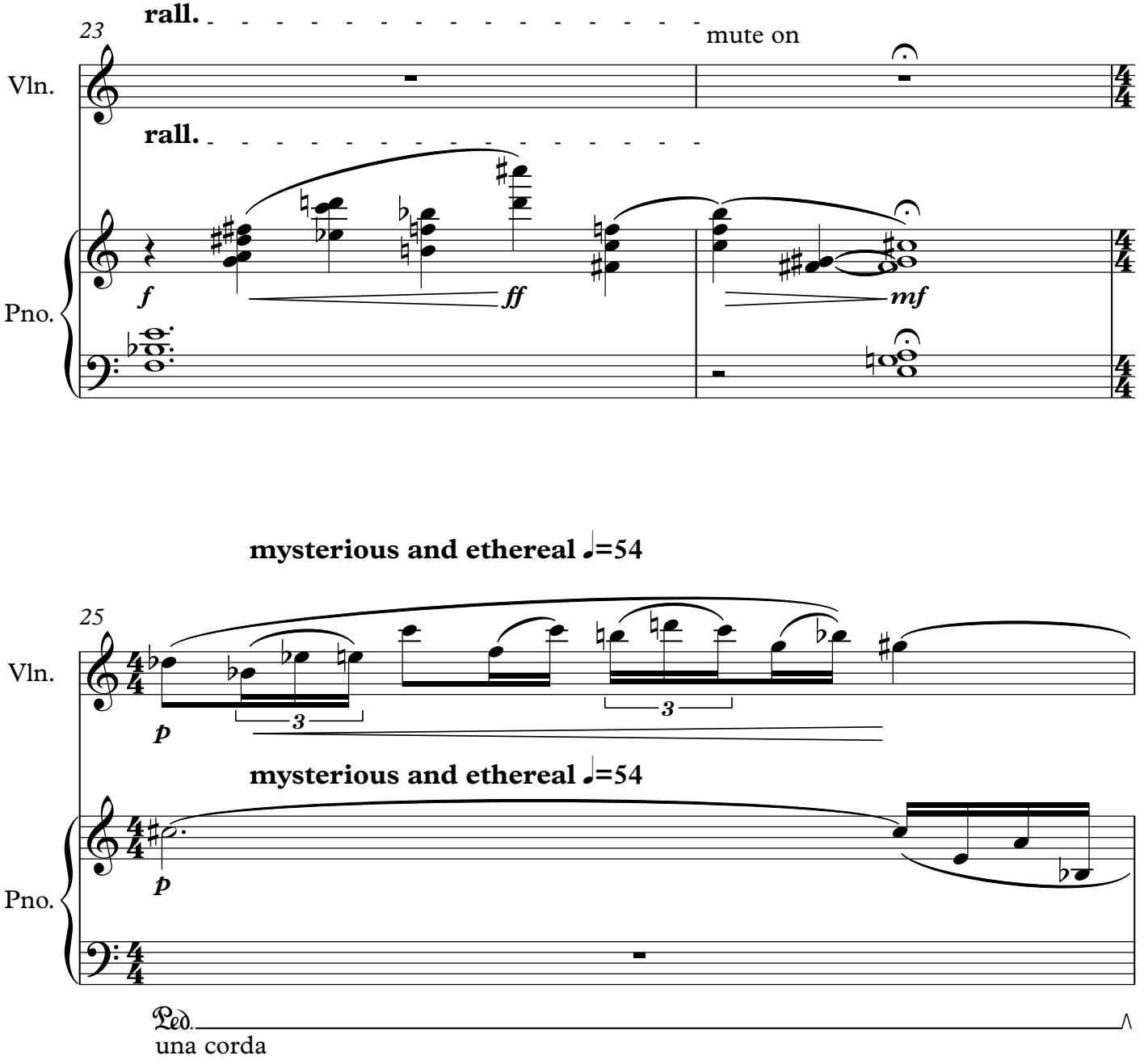
for violin and piano

Jolyon Laycock

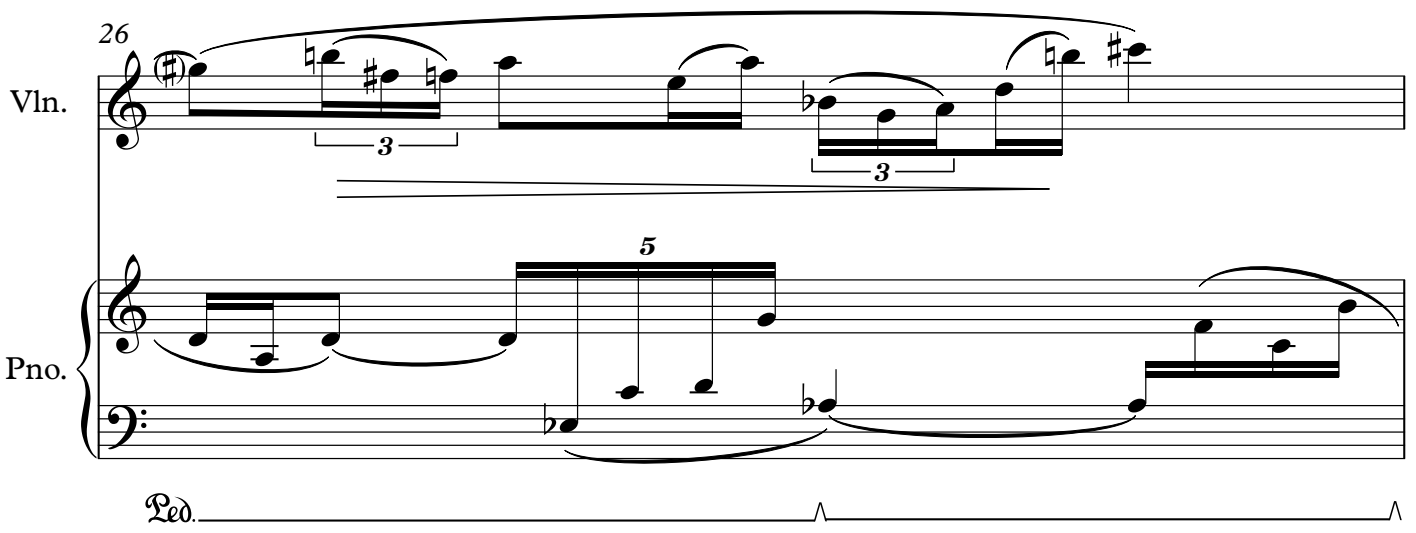


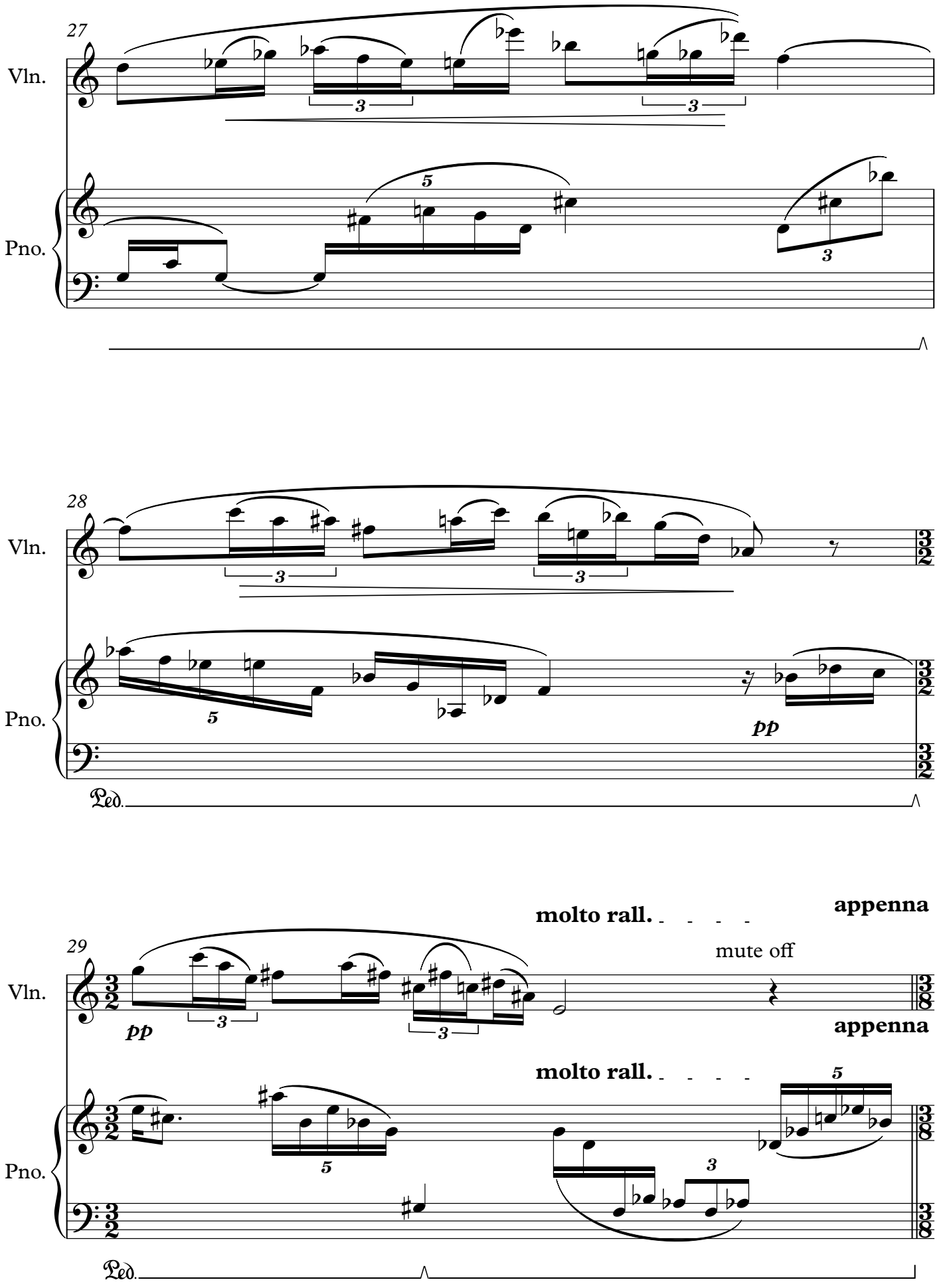

11
Vln.
mf
mf
Pno.
13
Vln.
rather strident ← ♪ = ♪ → (♩=96)
sub f
rather strident ← ♪ = ♪ → (♩=96)
6
f
Pno.
15
Vln.
6
6
Pno.

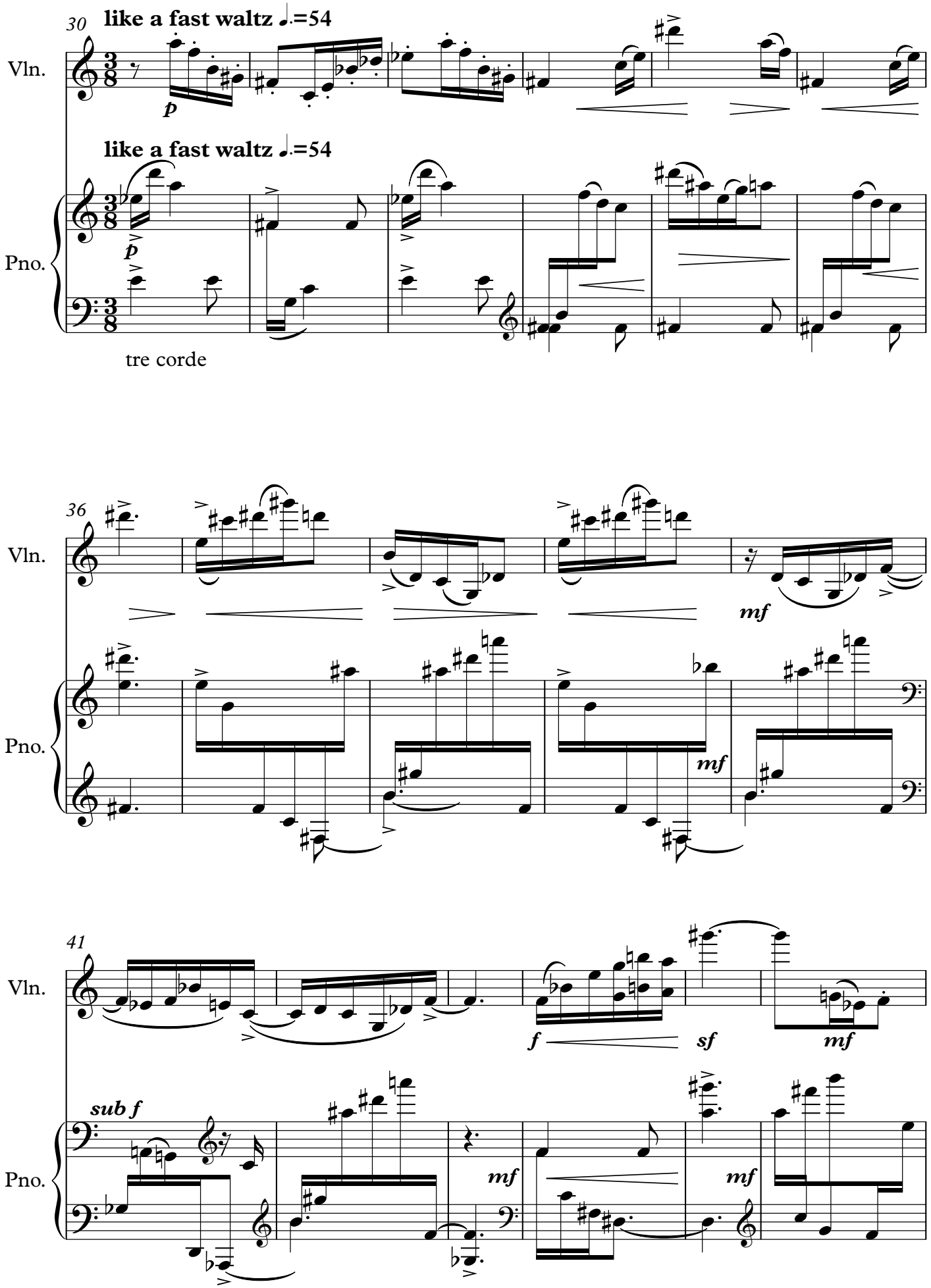

17
Vln.
Pno.
stringendo
ff
stringendo
6
6
3
19
quicker and with greater urgency ♩=150
quicker and with greater urgency ♩=150
ff
f
ff
6
6
21
f
ff
f
ff
6

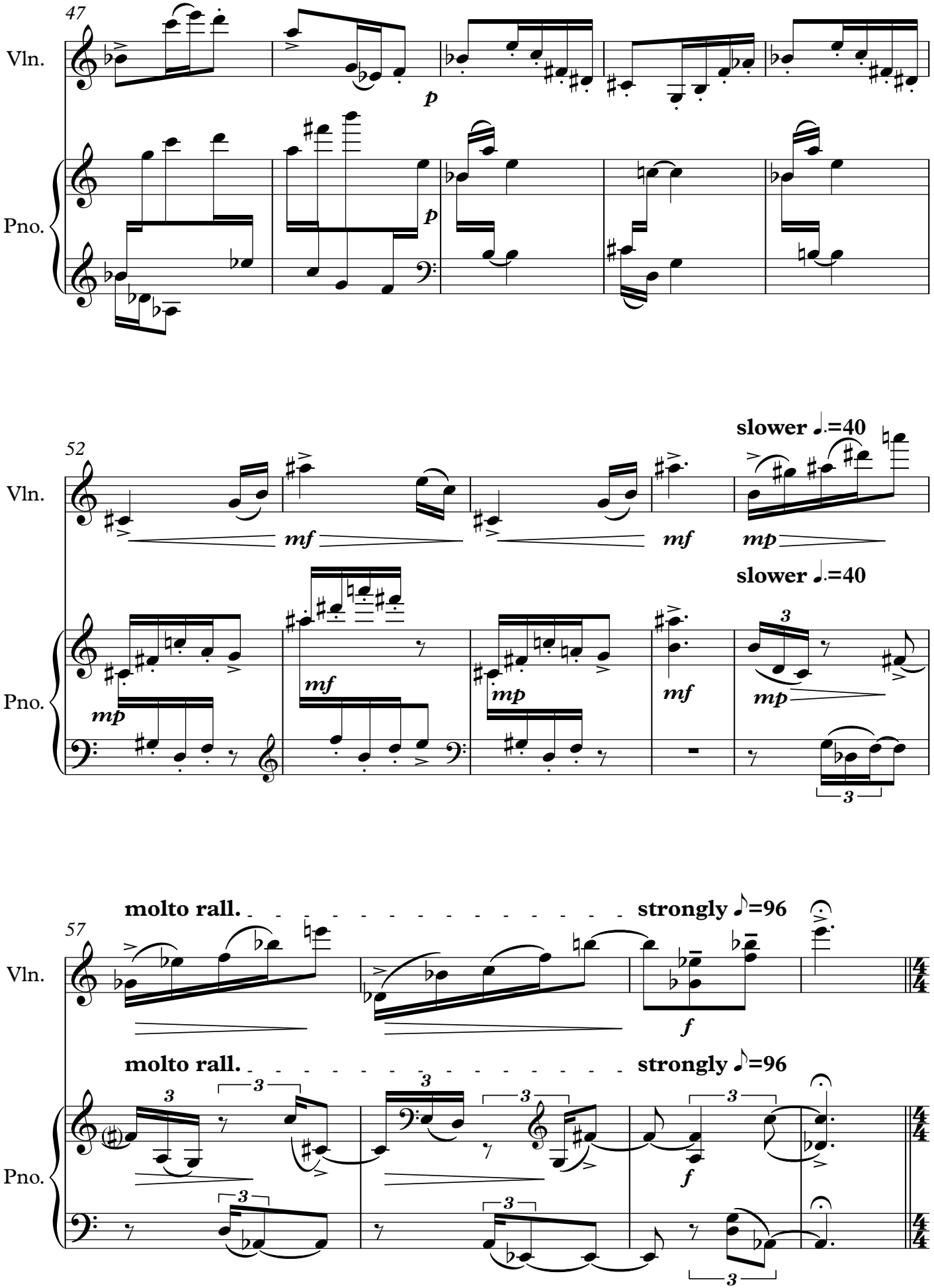

23
rall.
rall.
mute on
Vln.
Pno.
f
ff
mf

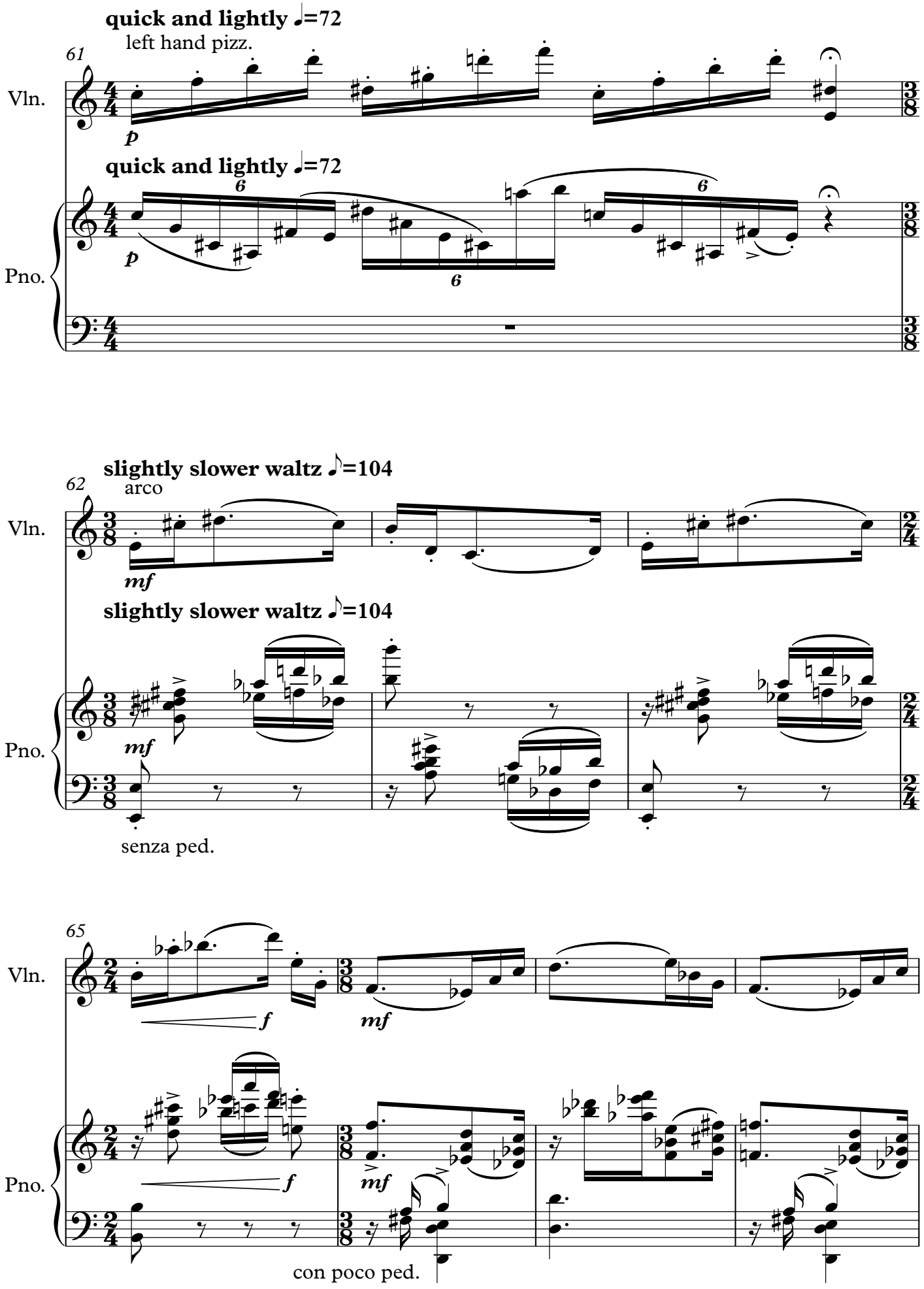
mysterious and ethereal ♩=54
25
Vln.
p
3
3
mysterious and ethereal ♩=54
Pno.
p
Ped.
una corda

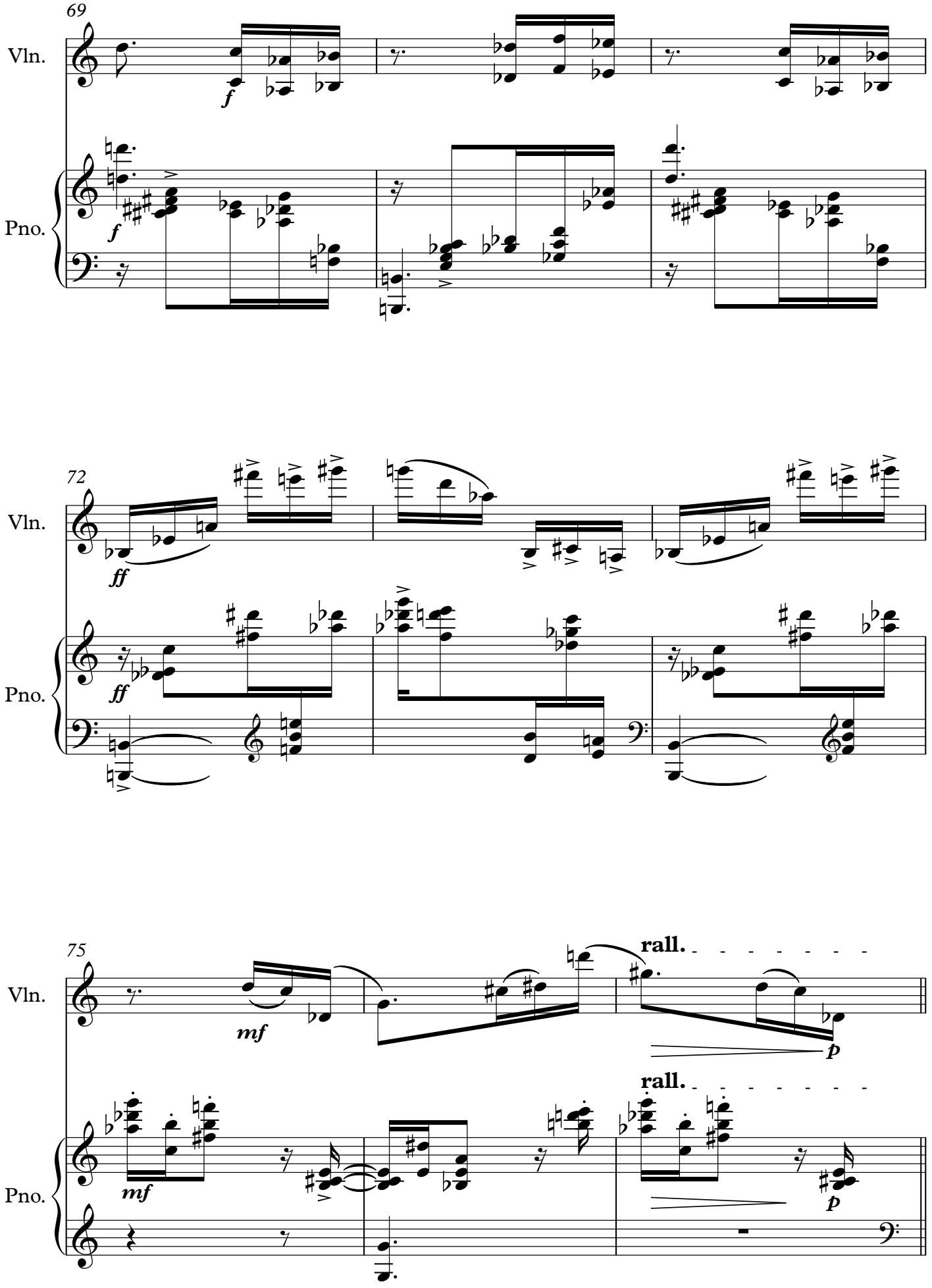

26
Vln.
3
3
5
Pno.
Ped.

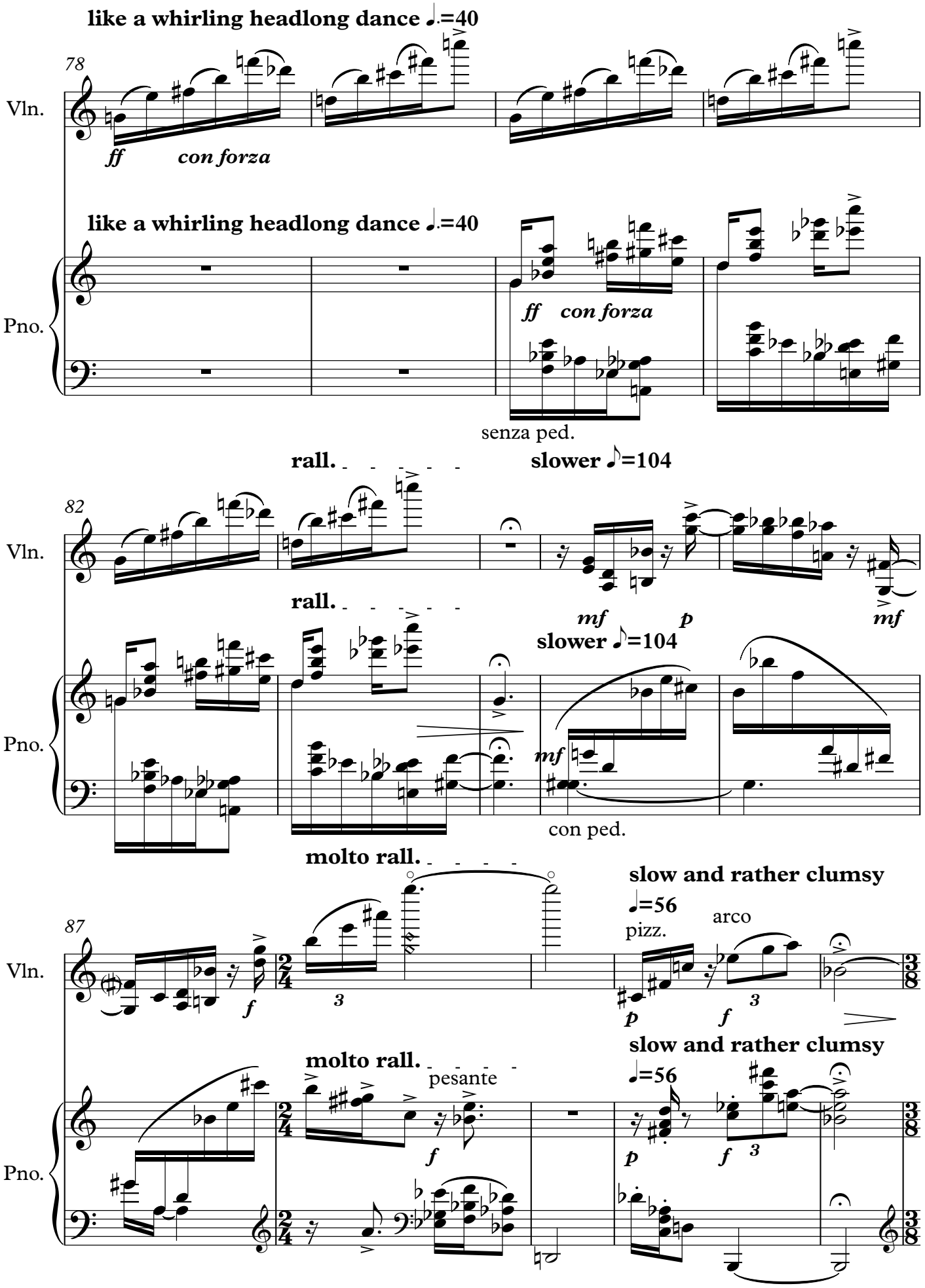

27
Vln.
Pno.
28
Vln.
Pno.
Ped.
molto rall.
appenna
29
mute off
Vln.
pp
molto rall.
appenna
Pno.
Ped.

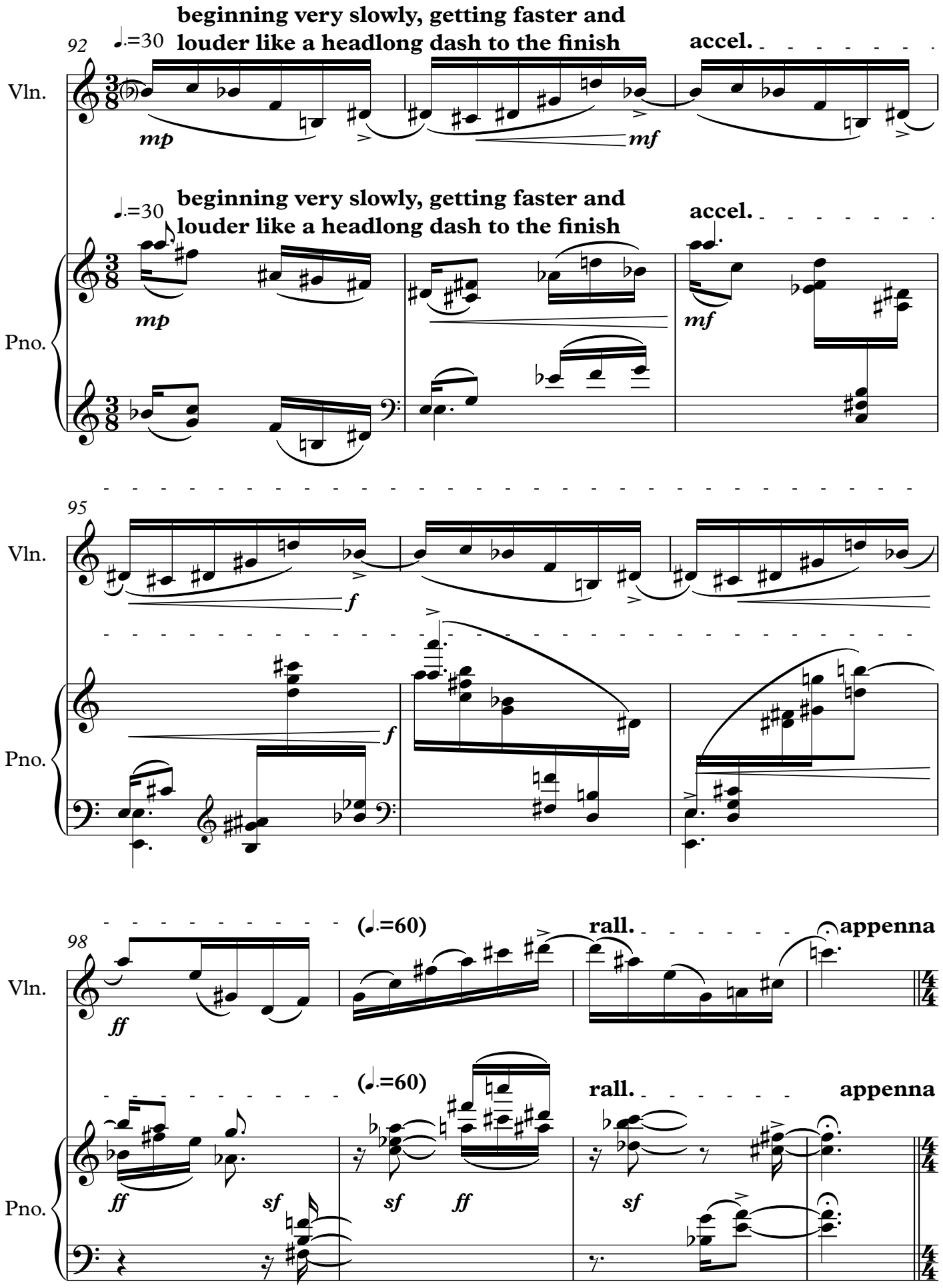

30
like a fast waltz ♩.=54
Vln.
p
like a fast waltz ♩.=54
Pno.
p
tre corde
36
Vln.
mf
Pno.
mf
41
Vln.
f
sf
mf
sub f
Pno.
mf
mf

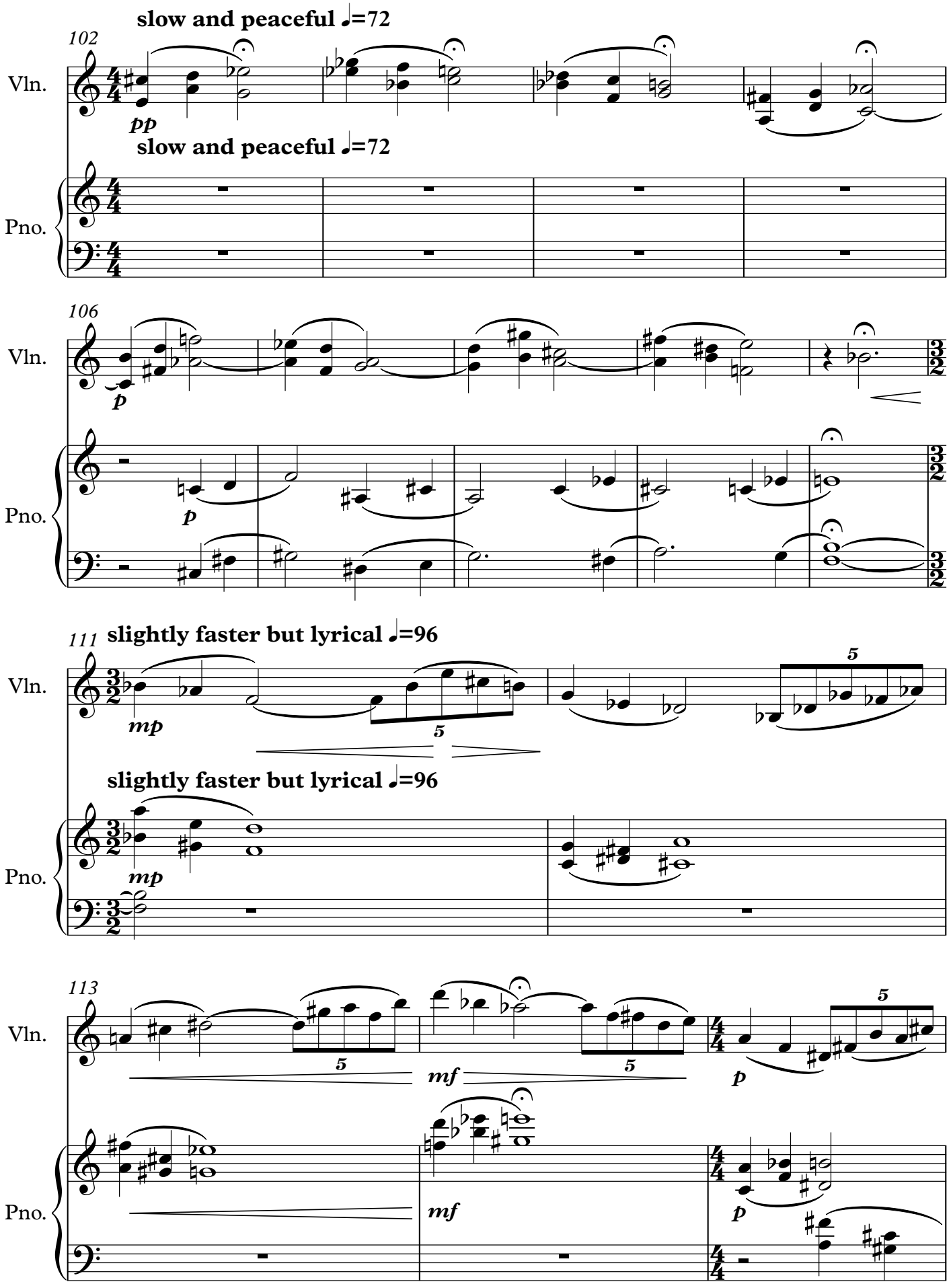

47
Vln.
Pno.
p
p
52
slower ♩.=40
mf
mf
mp
mp
mf
mf
mp
3
3
57
molto rall.
strongly ♪=96
f
molto rall.
strongly ♪=96
f
3

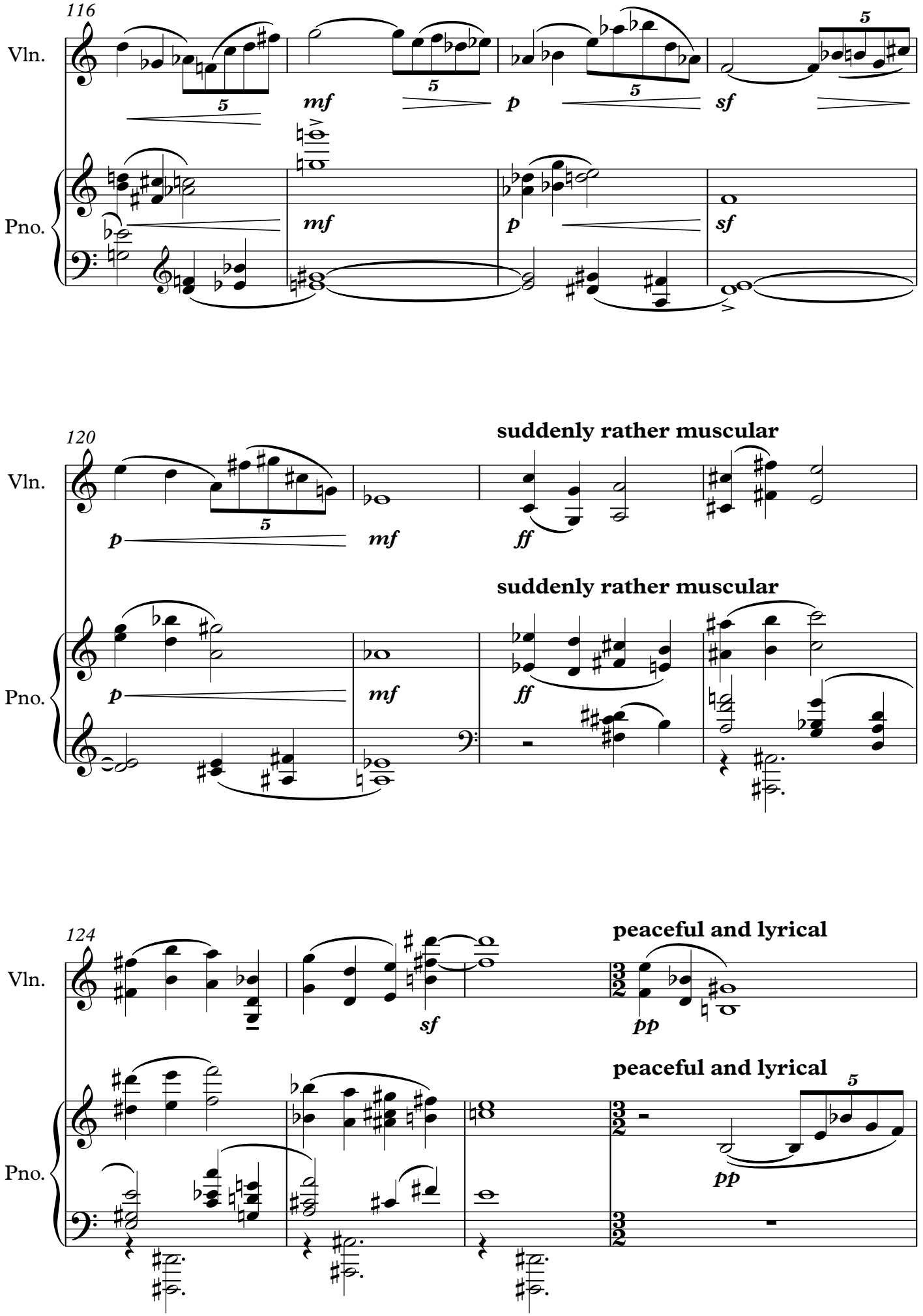

quick and lightly ♩=72
left hand pizz.
61
Vln.
p
quick and lightly ♩=72
Pno.
p
slightly slower waltz ♪=104
62
arco
Vln.
mf
slightly slower waltz ♪=104
Pno.
mf
senza ped.
65
Vln.
f
mf
Pno.
f
mf
con poco ped.

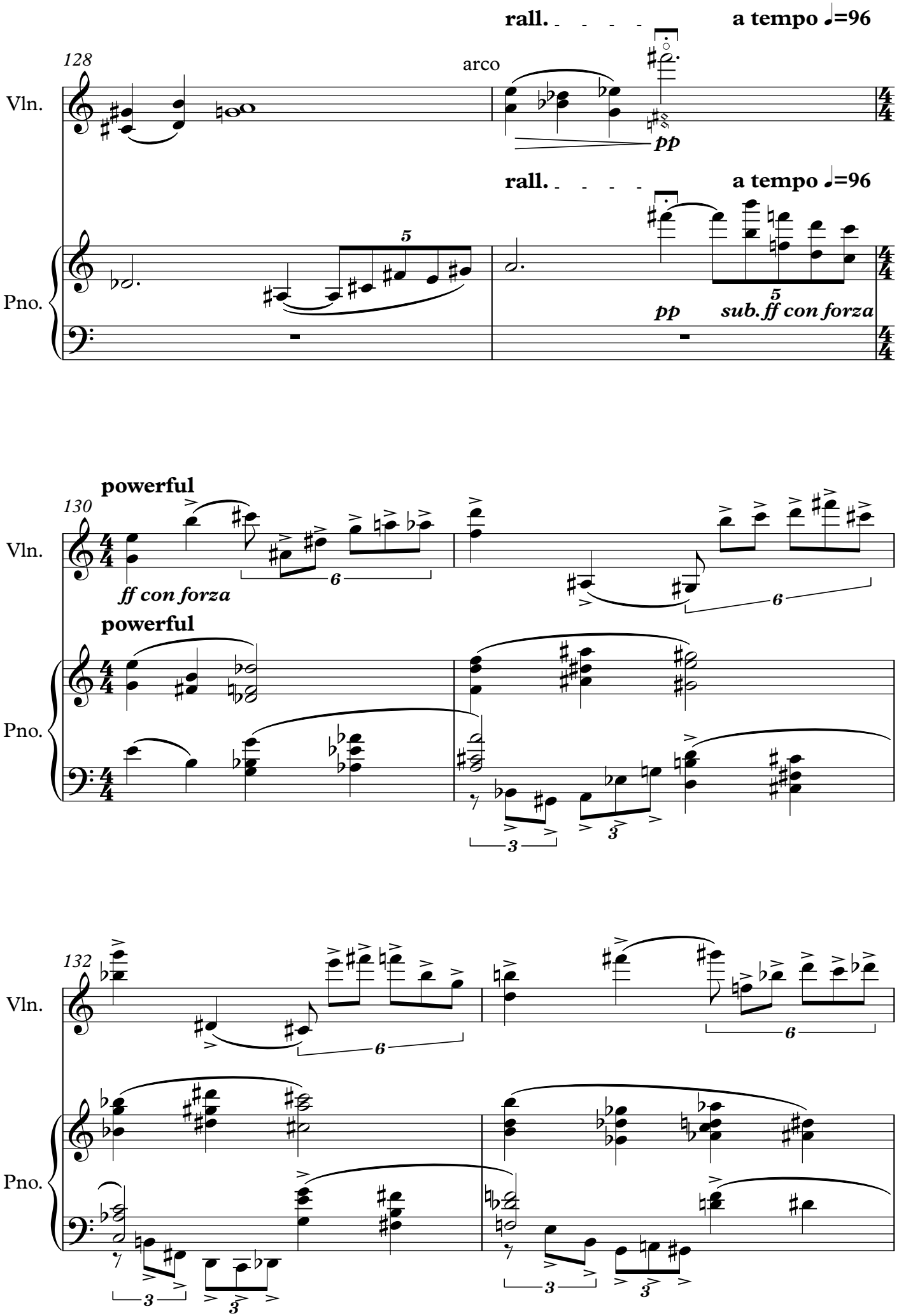

69
Vln.
Pno.
f
f
72
Vln.
Pno.
ff
ff
75
Vln.
Pno.
mf
mf
rall.
rall.
p
p

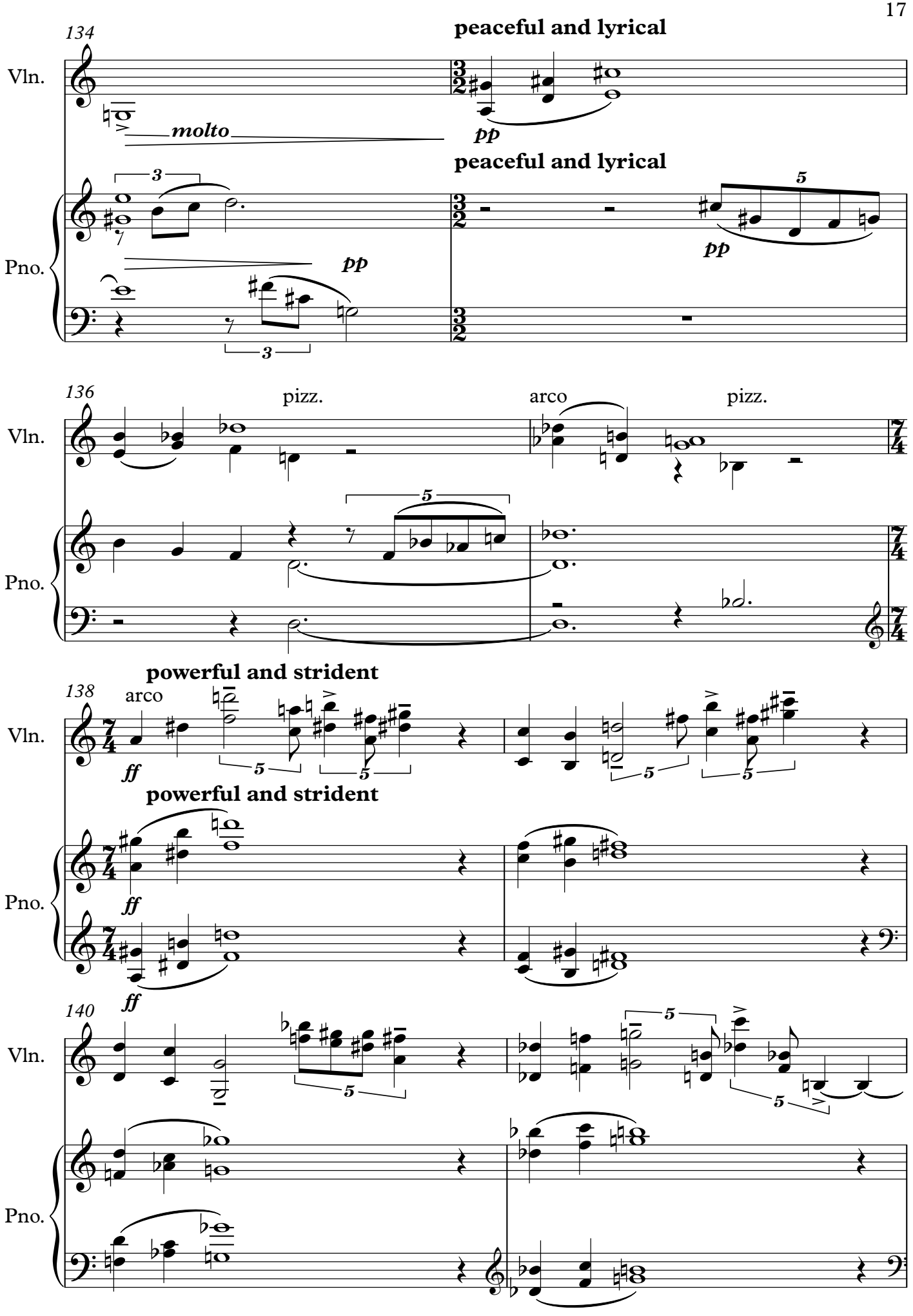

like a whirling headlong dance ♩.=40
78
Vln.
ff con forza
like a whirling headlong dance ♩.=40
Pno.
ff con forza
senza ped.
rall.
slower ♪=104
82
Vln.
rall.
mf
p
mf
slower ♪=104
Pno.
mf
con ped.
molto rall.
slow and rather clumsy
♩=56
87
Vln.
f
3
pizz.
arco
p
f
3
molto rall.
pesante
slow and rather clumsy
♩=56
Pno.
f
p
f
3

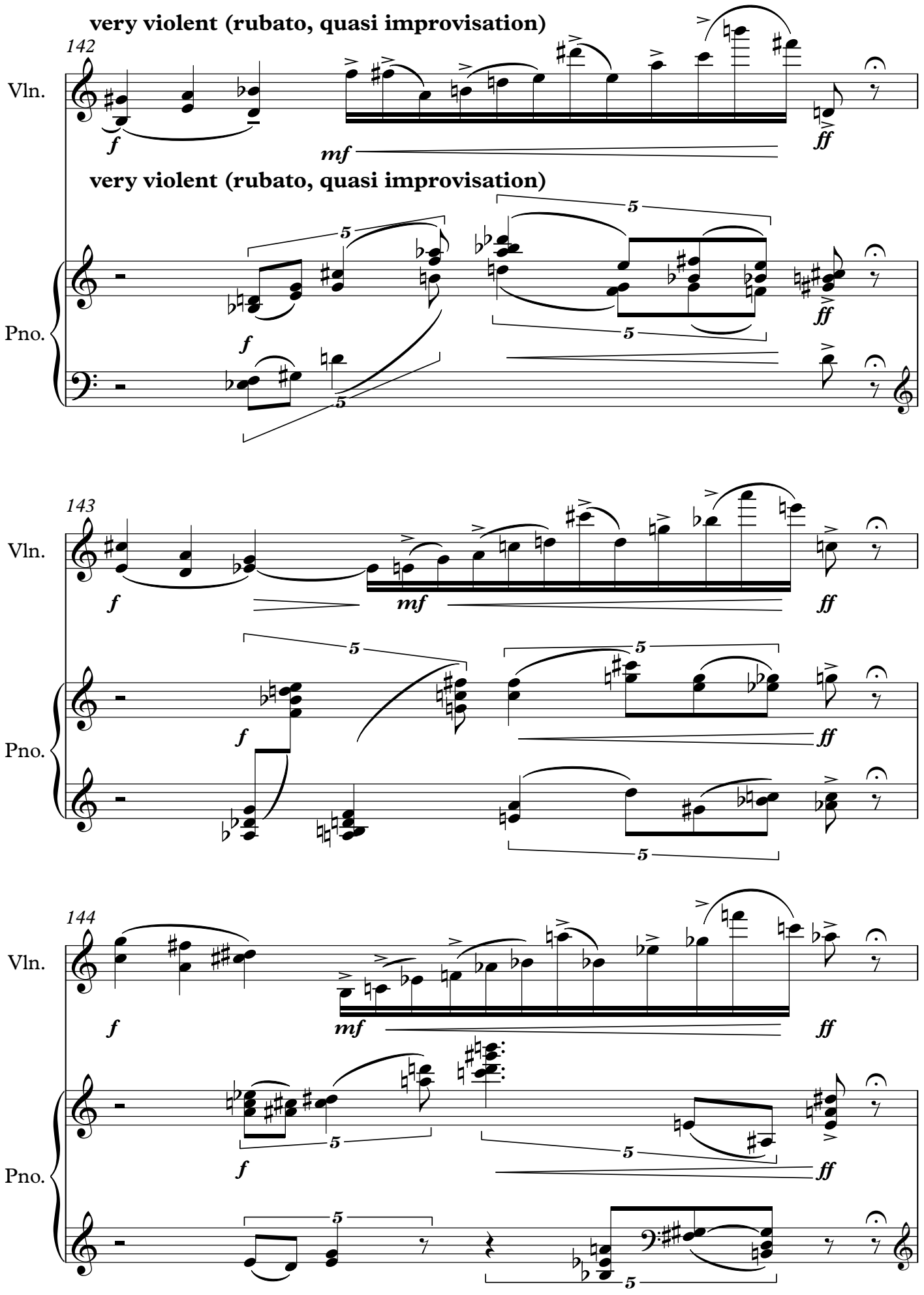

92
beginning very slowly, getting faster and louder like a headlong dash to the finish
accel.
Vln.
Pno.
95
98
(♩.=60)
rall.
appenna

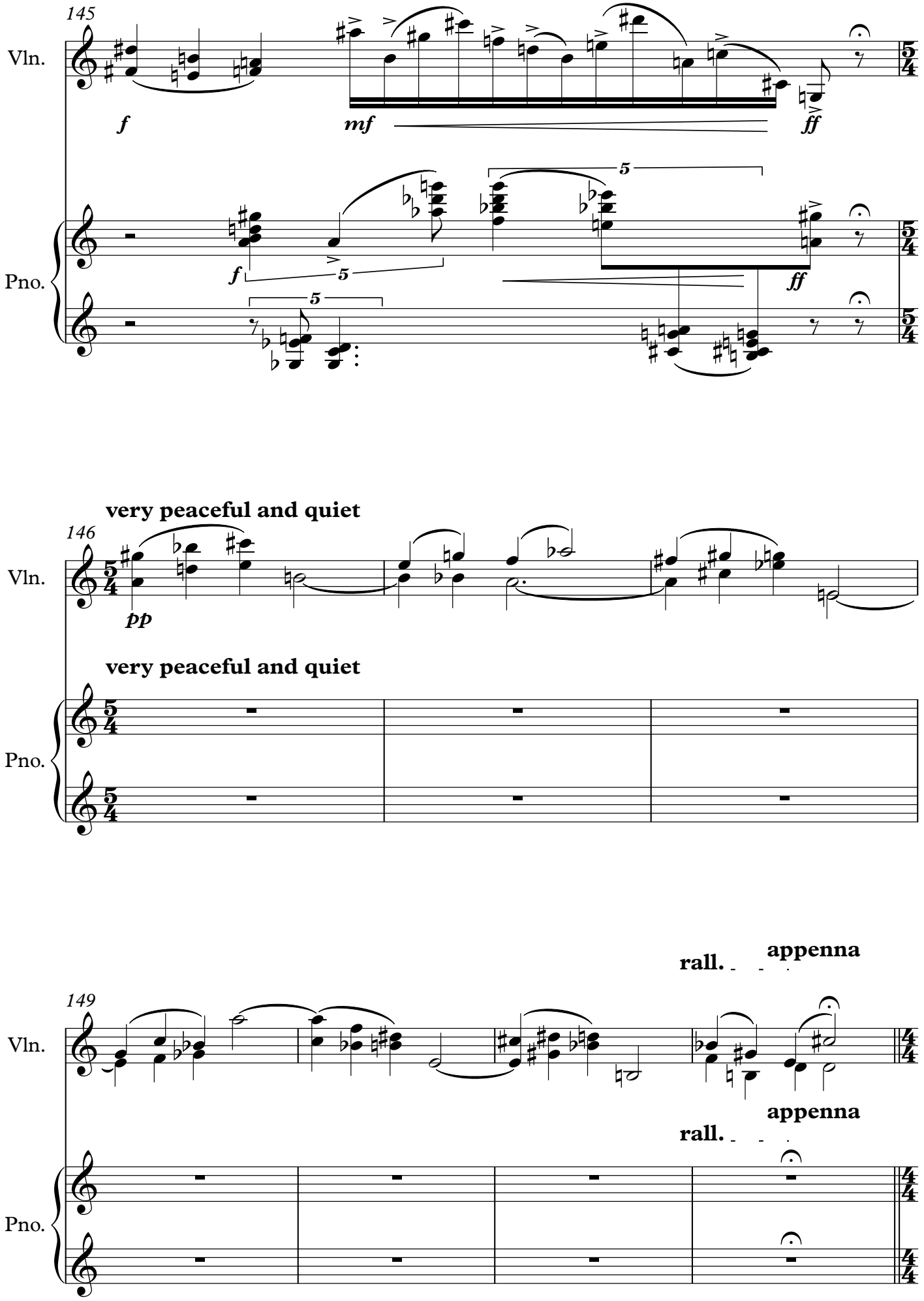

slow and peaceful ♩=72
102
Vln.
pp
slow and peaceful ♩=72
Pno.
106
Vln.
p
Pno.
p
111
slightly faster but lyrical ♩=96
Vln.
mp
5
5
slightly faster but lyrical ♩=96
Pno.
mp
113
Vln.
5
mf
5
p
5
Pno.
mf
p

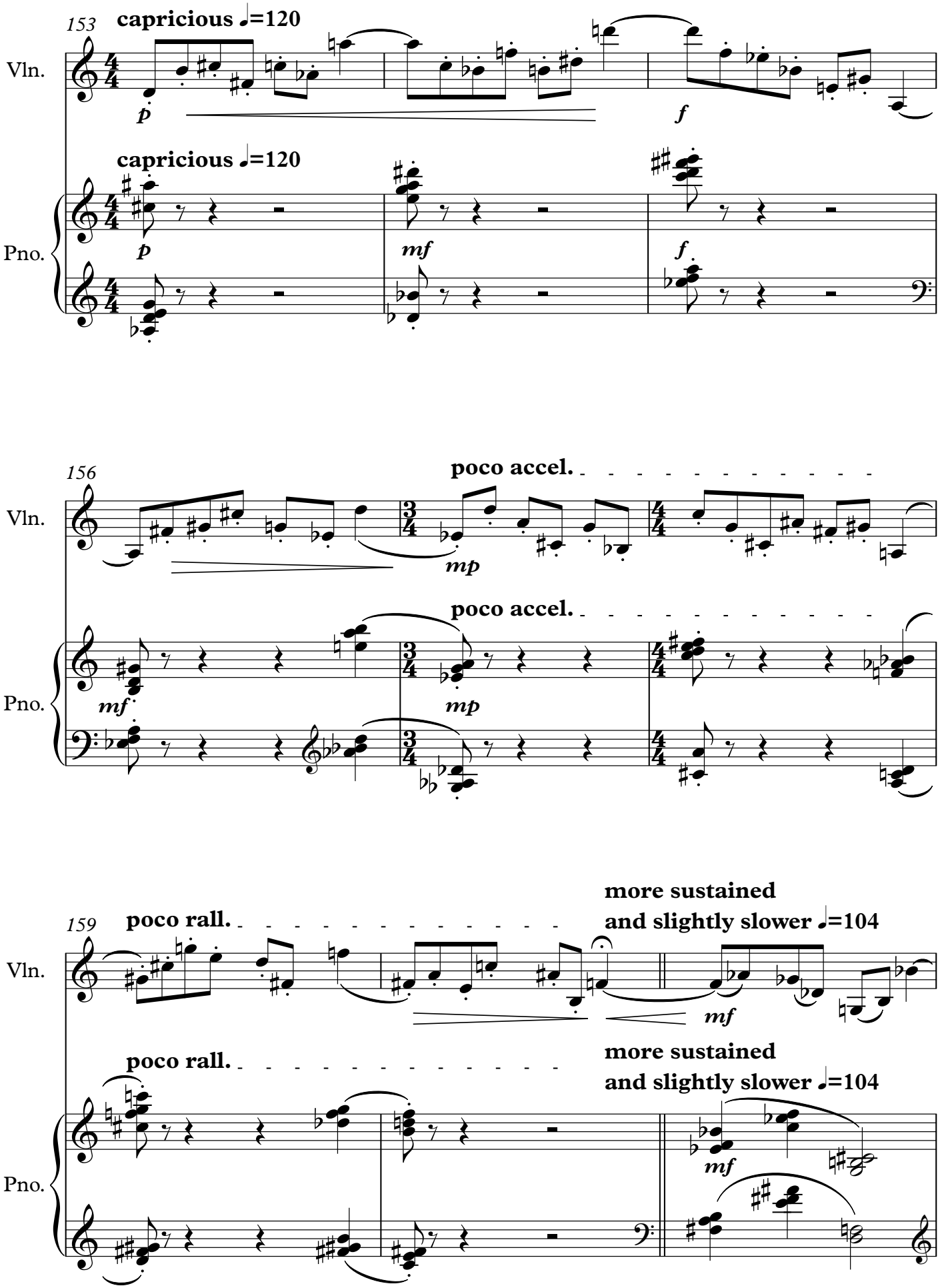

116
Vln.
Pno.
mf
p
sf
120
suddenly rather muscular
ff
124
peaceful and lyrical
pp

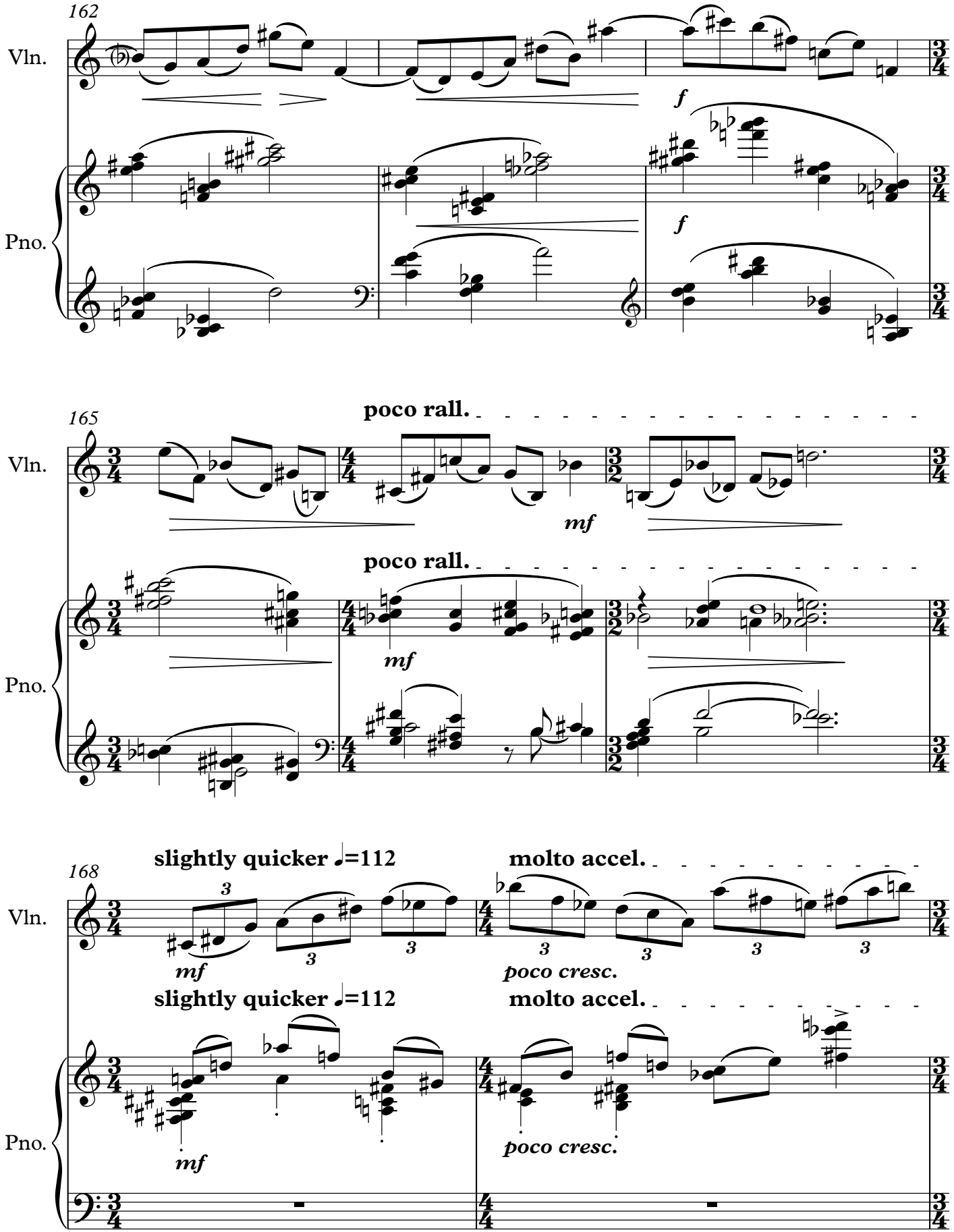

rall.
a tempo ♩=96
128
arco
Vln.
pp
rall.
a tempo ♩=96
Pno.
5
pp
sub. ff con forza
powerful
130
Vln.
ff con forza
6
powerful
Pno.
3
3
132
Vln.
6
6
Pno.
3
3
3
3

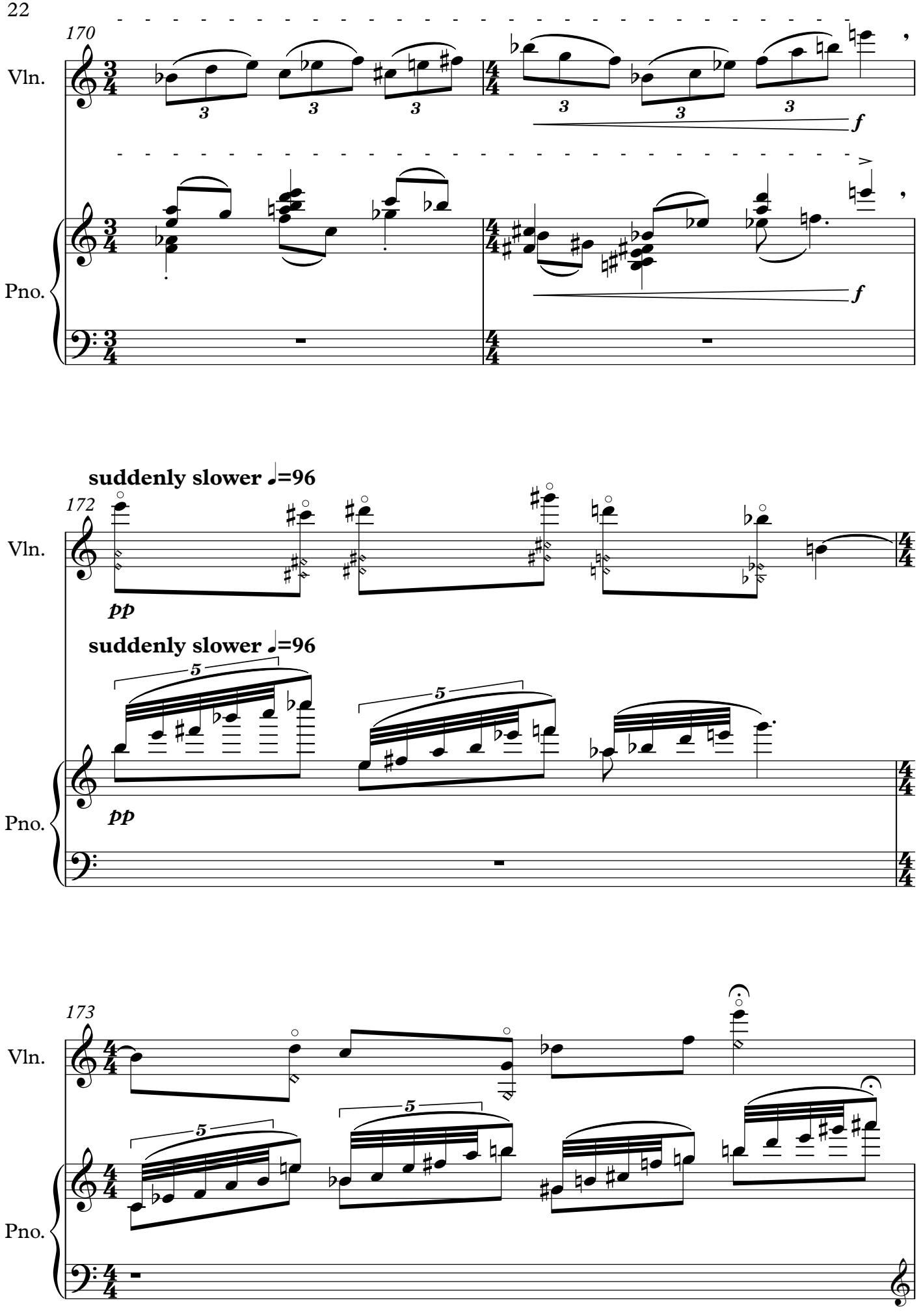

134
peaceful and lyrical
Vln.
molto
pp
peaceful and lyrical
Pno.
pp
136
pizz.
arco
pizz.
Vln.
Pno.
powerful and strident
138
arco
ff
Vln.
powerful and strident
Pno.
ff
ff
140
Vln.
Pno.

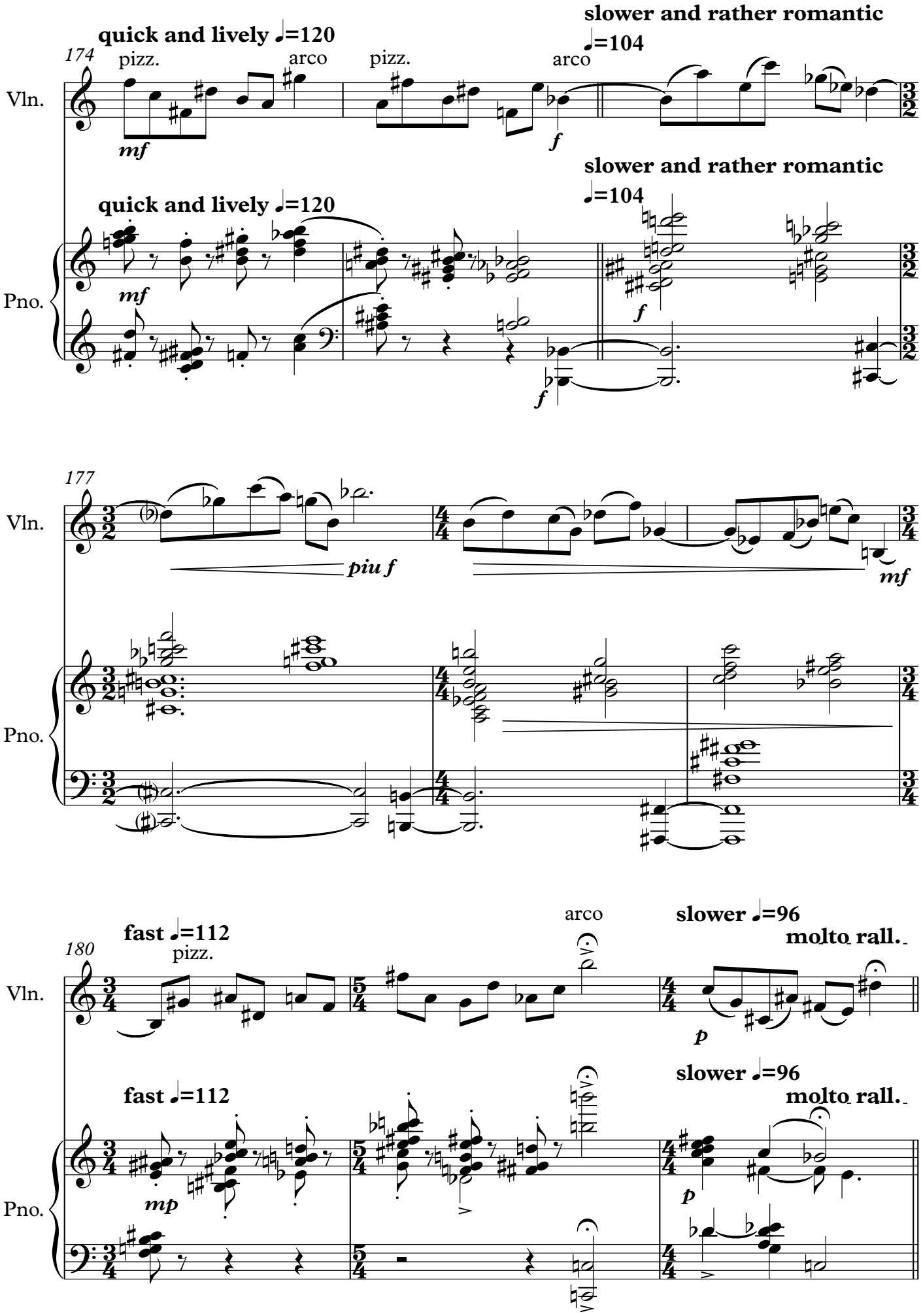

very violent (rubato, quasi improvisation)
142
Vln.
Pno.
very violent (rubato, quasi improvisation)
143
144

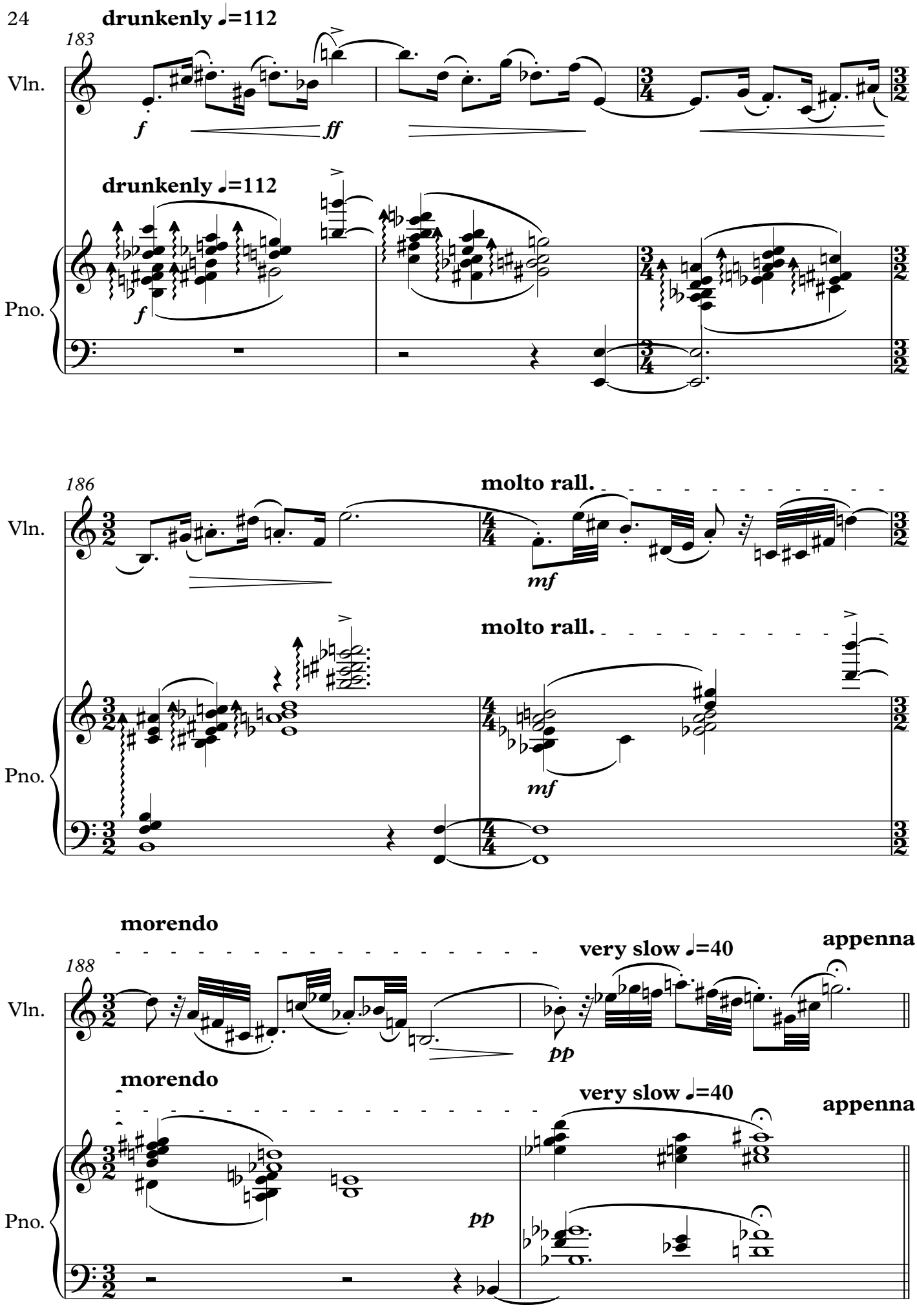

145
Vln.
Pno.
f
mf
ff
5
146
very peaceful and quiet
pp
149
rall.
appenna

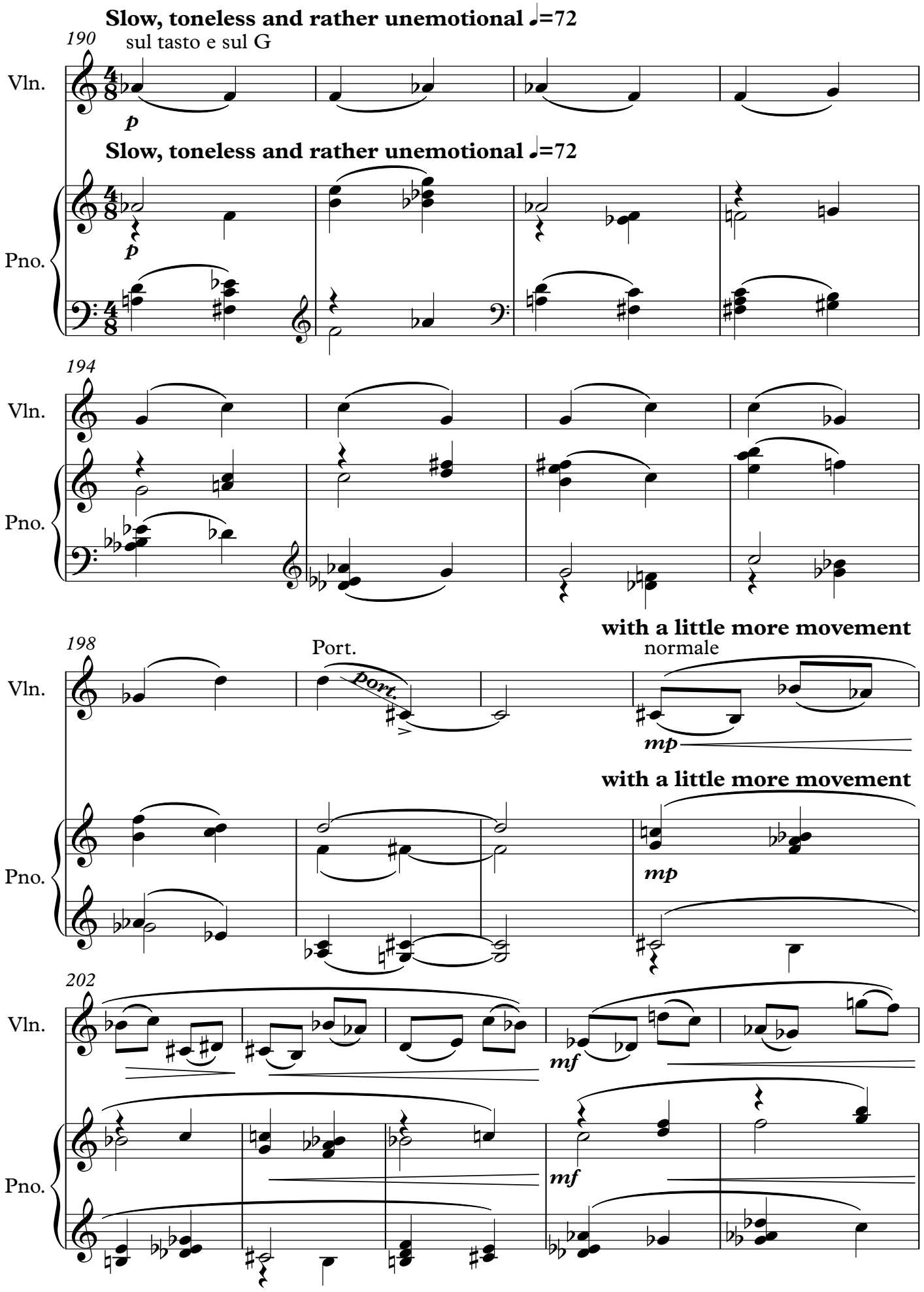

153
capricious ♩=120
Vln.
Pno.
p
f
mf
156
poco accel.
mp
159
poco rall.
more sustained
and slightly slower ♩=104

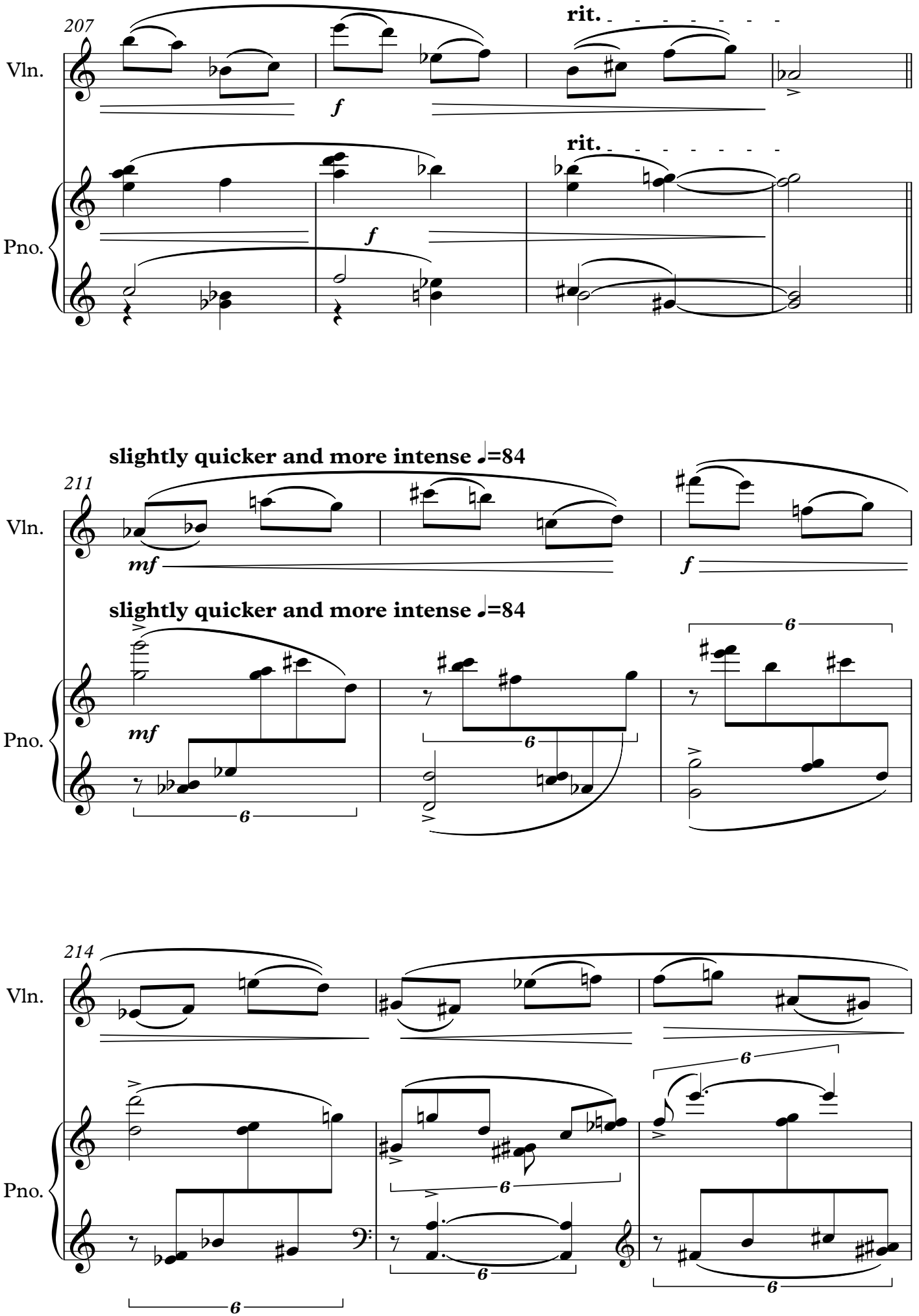

162
Vln.
Pno.
f
f
165
poco rall.
Vln.
mf
poco rall.
Pno.
mf
168
slightly quicker ♩=112
molto accel.
Vln.
mf
poco cresc.
slightly quicker ♩=112
molto accel.
Pno.
mf
poco cresc.

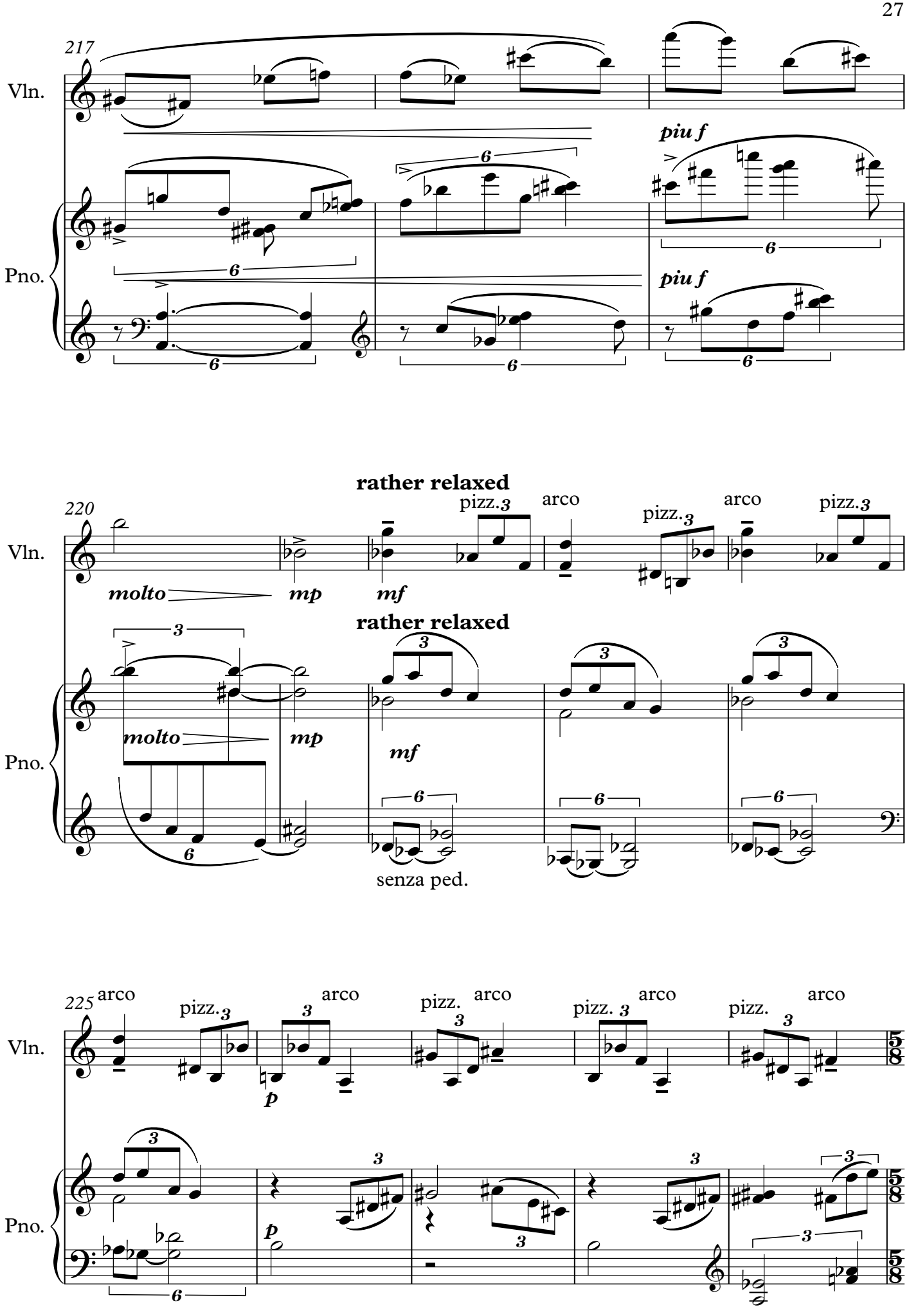

170
Vln.
Pno.
f
f
suddenly slower ♩=96
172
Vln.
pp
suddenly slower ♩=96
Pno.
pp
173
Vln.
Pno.

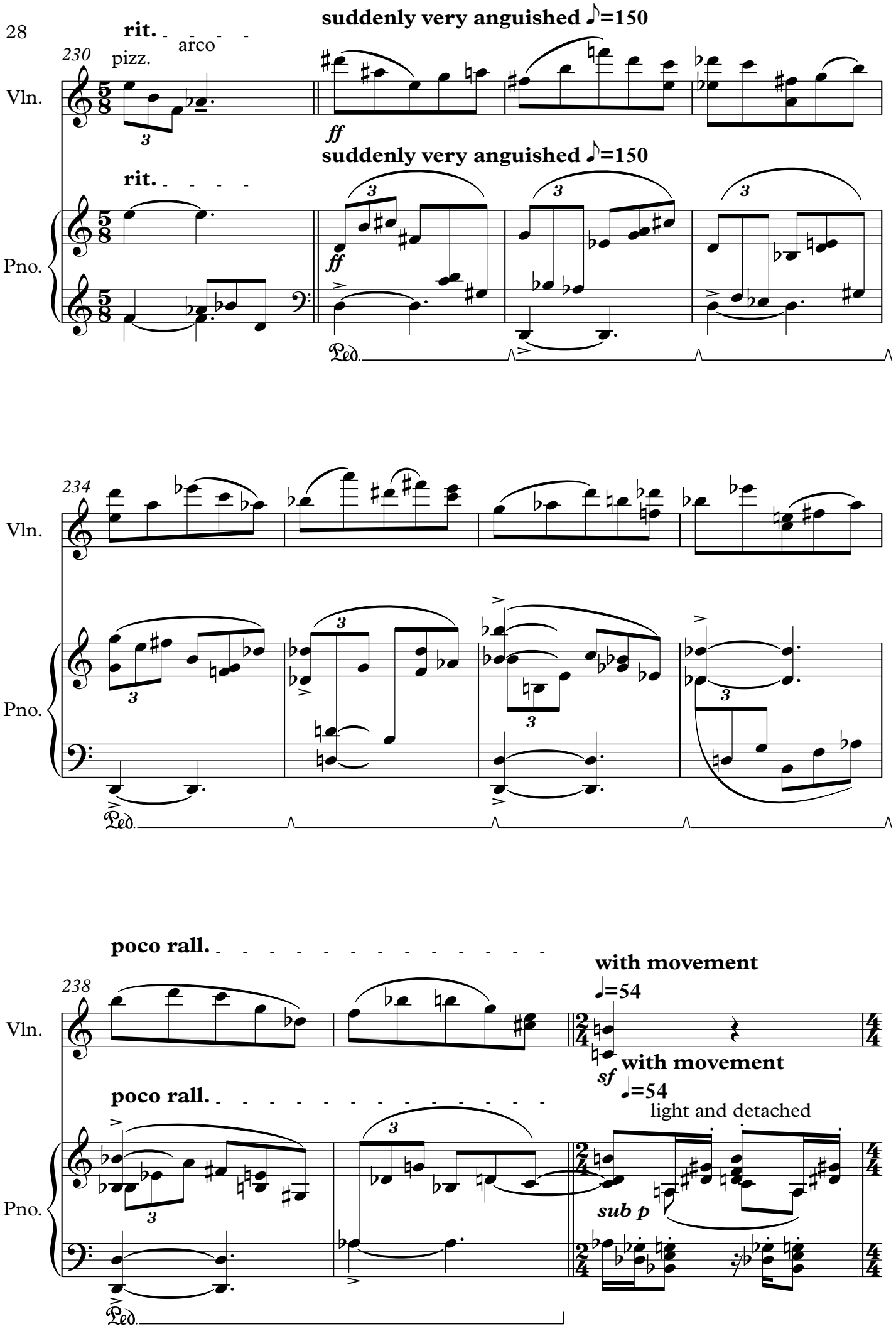

quick and lively ♩=120
174
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
slower and rather romantic
♩=104
Vln.
mf
f
quick and lively ♩=120
slower and rather romantic
♩=104
Pno.
mf
f
f
177
Vln.
piu f
mf
Pno.
fast ♩=112
180
pizz.
arco
slower ♩=96
molto rall.
Vln.
p
fast ♩=112
slower ♩=96
molto rall.
Pno.
mp
p

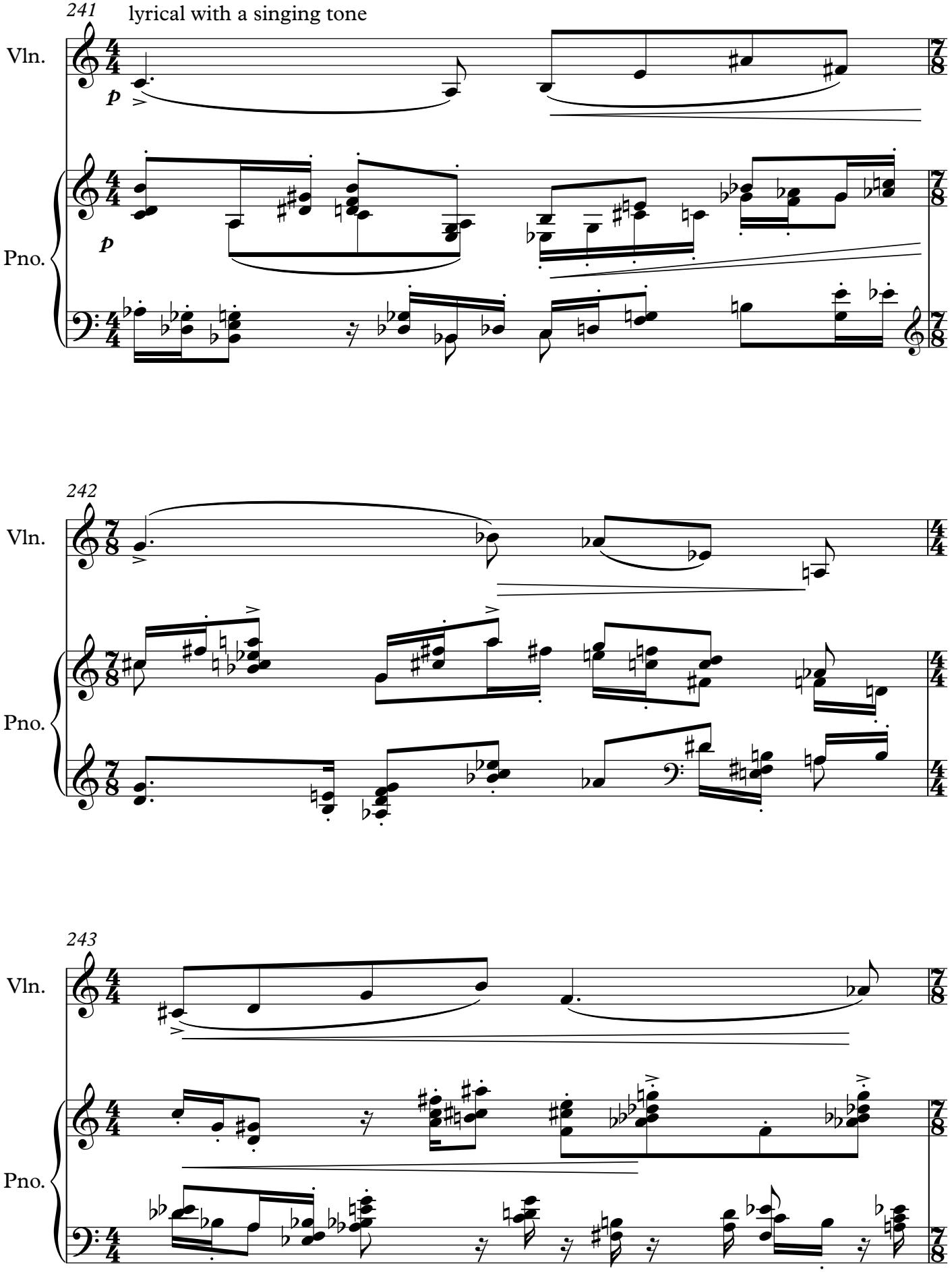

drunkenly ♩=112
183
Vln.
f
ff
drunkenly ♩=112
Pno.
f
186
molto rall.
Vln.
mf
molto rall.
Pno.
mf
morendo
very slow ♩=40
appenna
188
Vln.
pp
morendo
very slow ♩=40
appenna
Pno.
pp

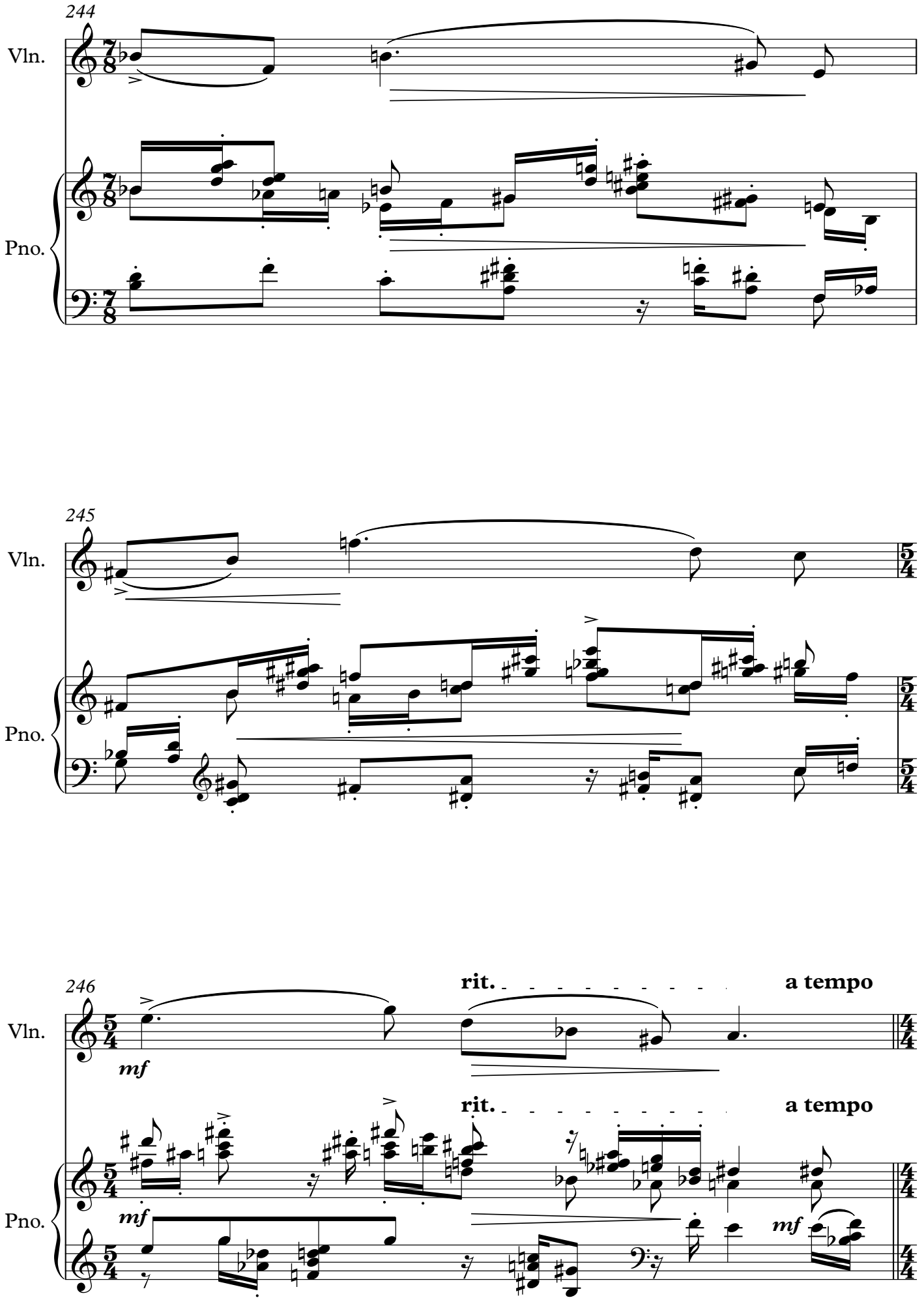

Slow, toneless and rather unemotional ♩=72
190
sul tasto e sul G
Vln.
p
Slow, toneless and rather unemotional ♩=72
Pno.
p
194
Vln.
Pno.
with a little more movement
198
Port.
normale
Vln.
port.
mp
with a little more movement
Pno.
mp
202
Vln.
mf
Pno.
mf

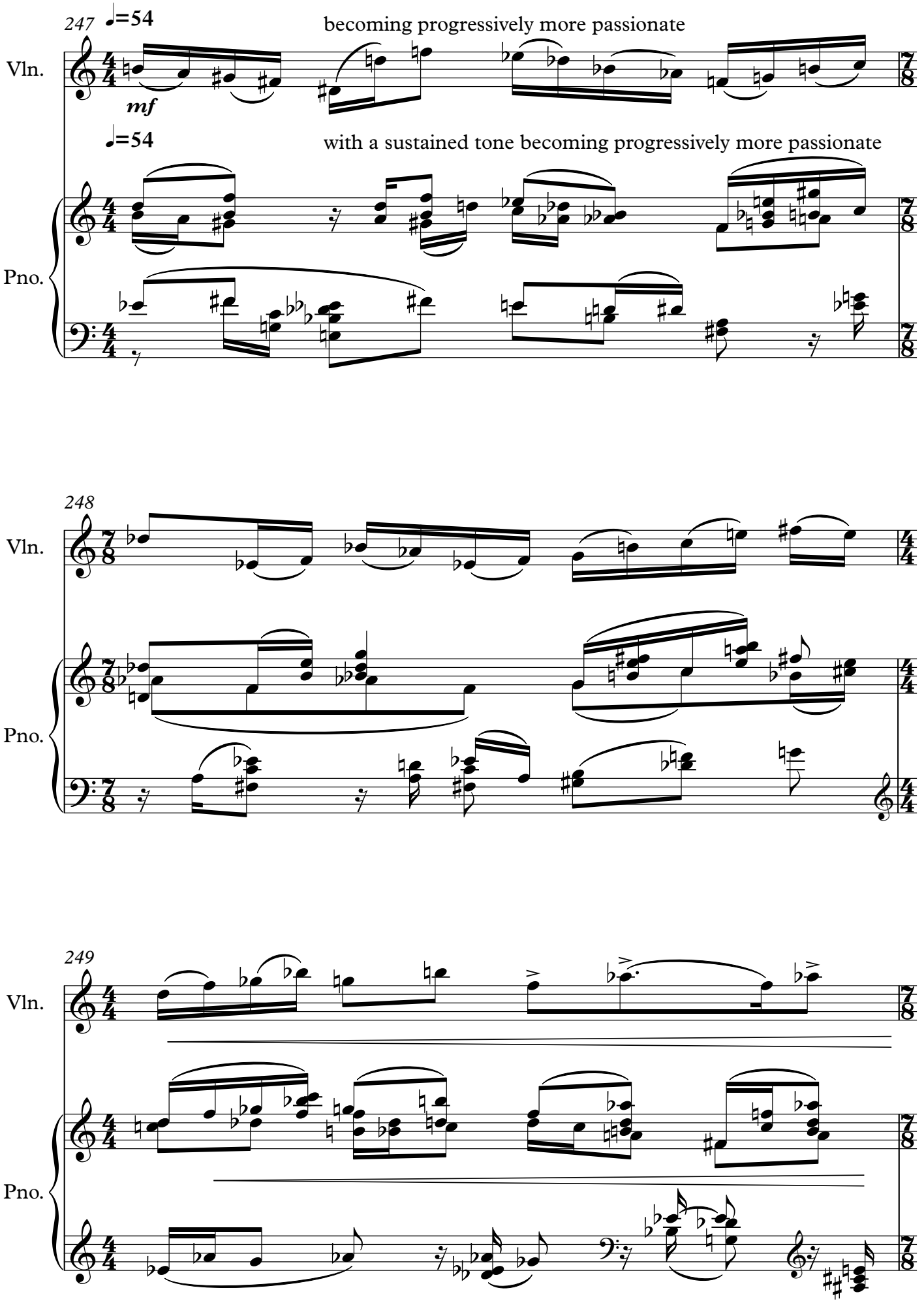

207
Vln.
Pno.
f
rit.
211
slightly quicker and more intense ♩=84
mf
214
6

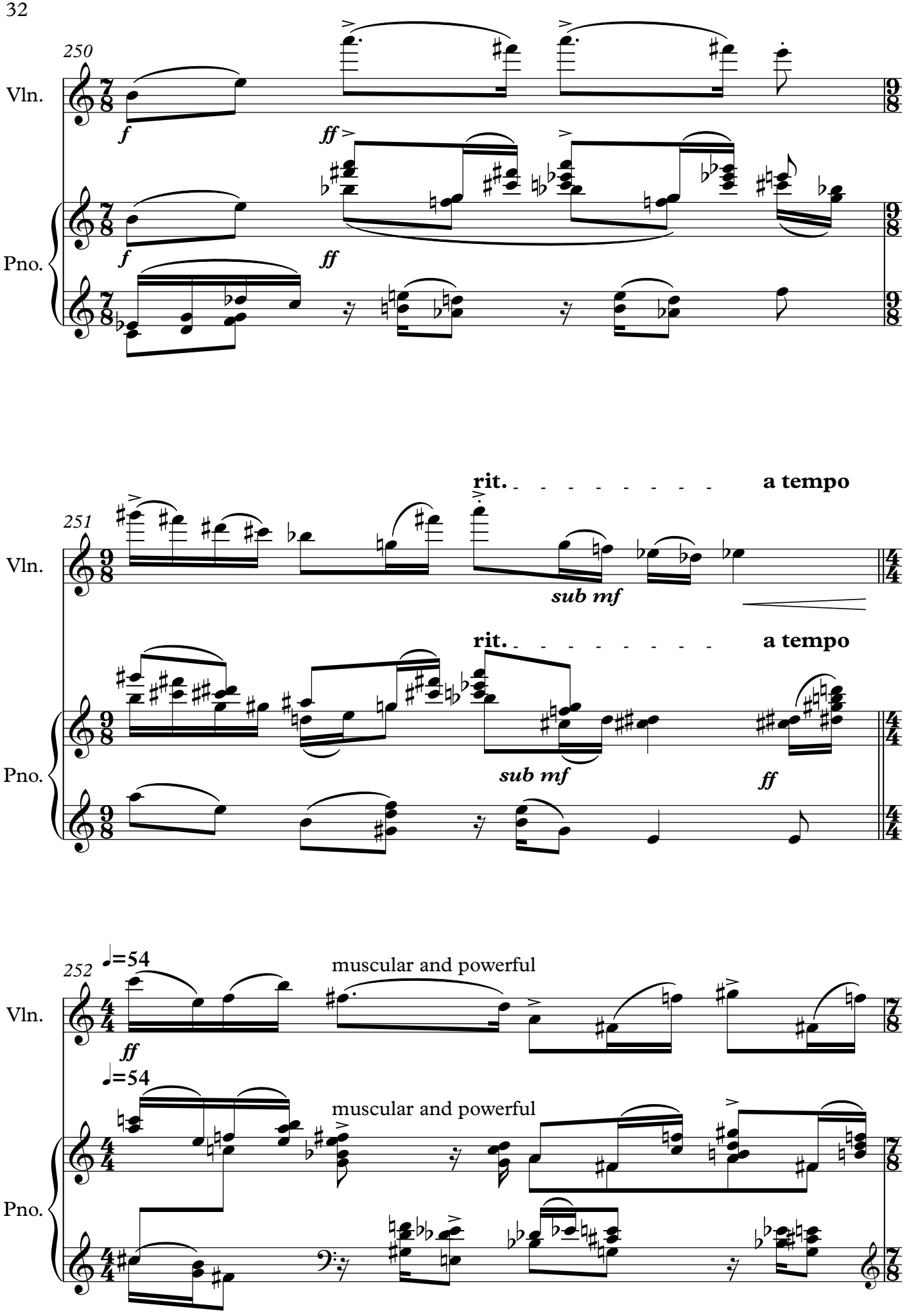

217
Vln.
Pno.
piu f
piu f
220
rather relaxed
molto
mp
mf
pizz.
arco
rather relaxed
senza ped.
225
arco
pizz.
p

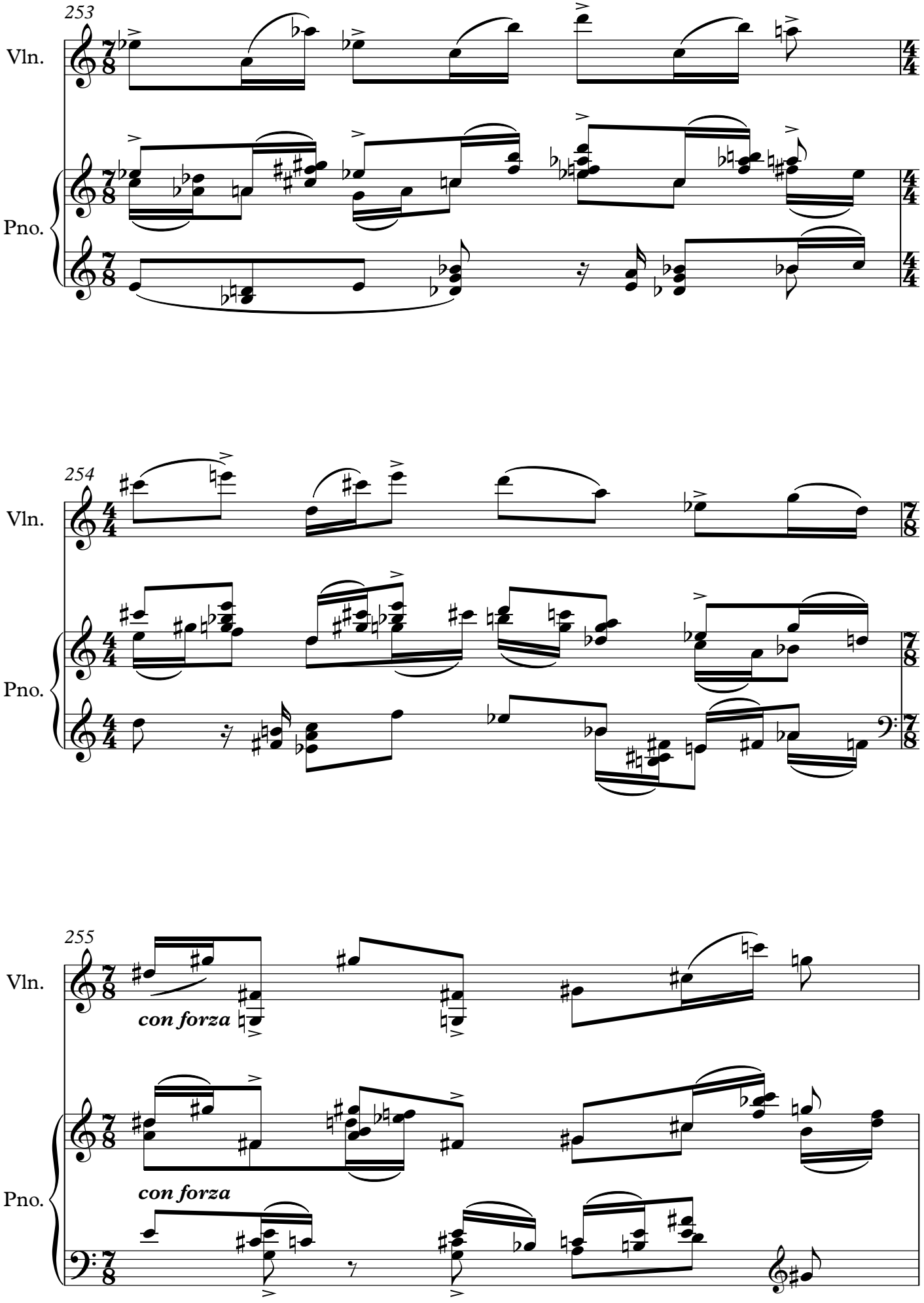

rit.
arco
230
pizz.
Vln.
suddenly very anguished ♪=150
ff
suddenly very anguished ♪=150
rit.
Pno.
ff
Ped.
234
Vln.
Pno.
Ped.
poco rall.
with movement
238
Vln.
♩=54
sf
with movement
poco rall.
♩=54
light and detached
Pno.
sub p
Ped.

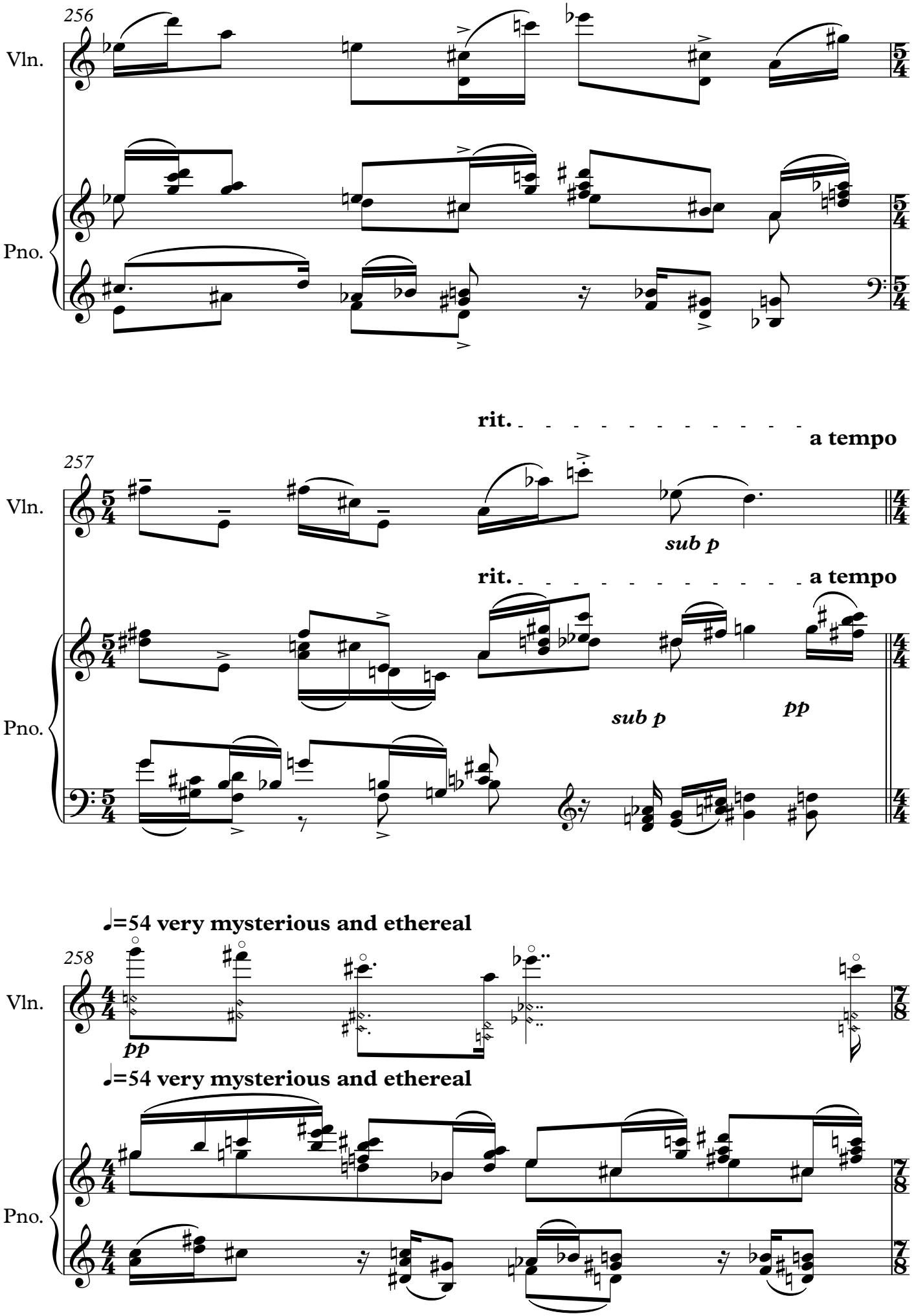

241
lyrical with a singing tone
Vln.
Pno.
242
Vln.
Pno.
243
Vln.
Pno.

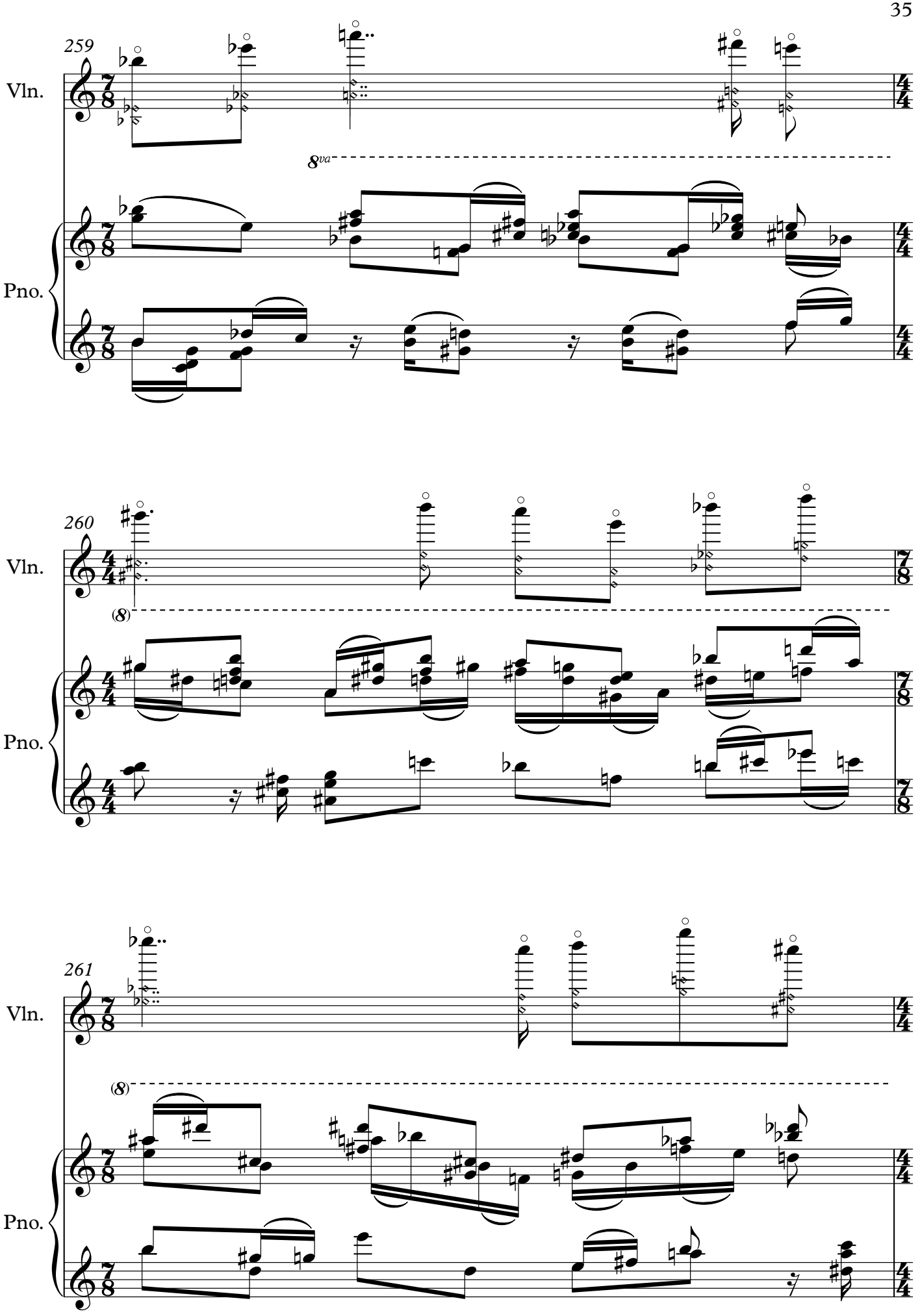

244
Vln.
Pno.
245
Vln.
Pno.
246
Vln.
Pno.
mf
rit.
a tempo
rit.
a tempo
mf
mf
mf

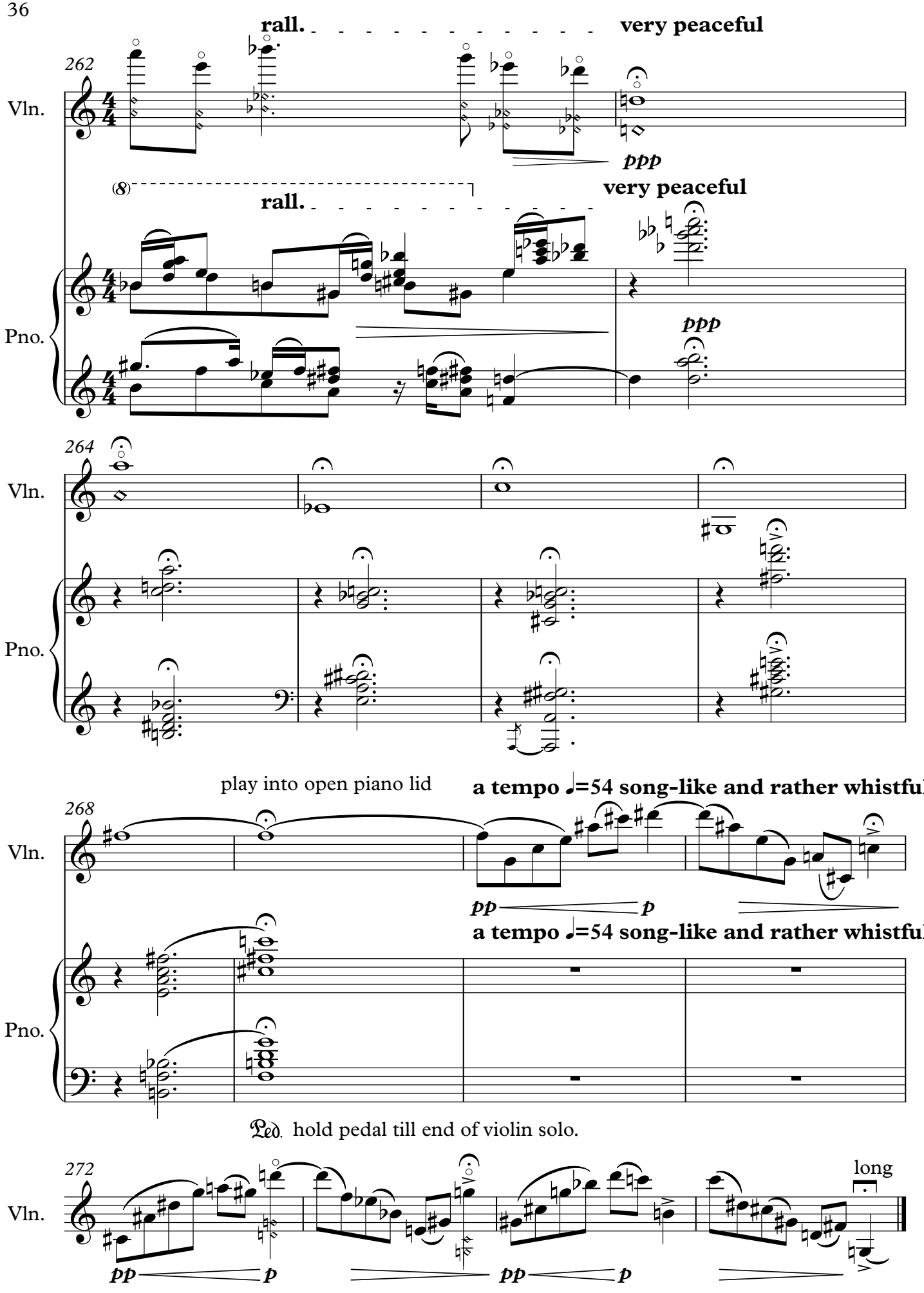

247
♩=54
becoming progressively more passionate
Vln.
mf
♩=54
with a sustained tone becoming progressively more passionate
Pno.
248
Vln.
Pno.
249
Vln.
Pno.


250
Vln.
Pno.
f
ff
251
rit.
a tempo
sub mf
252
♩=54
muscular and powerful


253
Vln.
Pno.
254
Vln.
Pno.
255
Vln.
con forza
Pno.
con forza


256
Vln.
Pno.
rit.
a tempo
257
sub p
sub p
pp
♩=54 very mysterious and ethereal
258
pp
♩=54 very mysterious and ethereal


259
Vln.
8va
Pno.
260
Vln.
(8)
Pno.
261
Vln.
(8)
Pno.


rall.
very peaceful
262
Vln.
ppp
(8)
rall.
very peaceful
Pno.
ppp
264
Vln.
Pno.
play into open piano lid
a tempo ♩=54 song-like and rather whistful
268
Vln.
pp
p
a tempo ♩=54 song-like and rather whistful
Pno.
Ped. hold pedal till end of violin solo.
272
Vln.
long
pp
p
pp
p

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 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)
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)
Trilithon for orchestra (begun 1968 – completed & revised 2015)
Three Shakespeare Sonnets for baritone and piano (2016)
Variations for oboe and piano (2017)

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 Inerval 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 an operatic libretto in blank verse based 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/