Aloys Fleischmann

Poet in the Suburbs

(Thomas Kinsella)

SATB Choir

IMPRESSUM

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Grand Parade, Cork, Republic of Ireland, 2016
in collaboration with the Fleischmann family and Dr Séamas de Barra

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Typeset by Críostóir Ó Loingsigh

Scan of the published score:

aloysfleischmann.ie

There too: the complete Fleischmann compositions
and Fleischmann family contact details

The MS score of the work is lost;
the typesetting was done from the published score

Note

Poet in the Suburbs was written in 1974 in celebration of the 21st Cork International Choral Festival, of which Fleischmann was director – it was not a commission for the Festival Seminar, as is erroneously stated in the score published by Oxford University Press in 1976. The composition was performed by the BBC Northern Singers under Stephen Wilkinson, to whom it is dedicated.

The work is a setting of the *Prologue* to Thomas Kinsella's 1962 collection *Downstream*, a series of unsentimental reflections on the nature of the creative imagination. (The title *Poet in the Suburbs* is Fleischmann's own.) Kinsella begins by contrasting the stereotypical image of the poet – 'I wonder whether one expects / Flowing tie or expert sex / Or even absentmindedness / Of poets any longer' – with the modern reality, and he delineates the everyday suburban life likely to be the contemporary poet's milieu. But poetic inspiration can make its appearance, suddenly and unsought even amidst suburban banalities. The poem culminates in an ironic and deflating portrayal of the frustrations attendant upon artistic creation, as the poet's 'bored menagerie' of personal qualities emerges to help and to hinder the creative act:

Energy,
Blinking, only half awake,
Gives its tiny frame a shake;
Fouling itself, a giantess,
The bloodshot bulk of Laziness
Obscures the vision; Discipline
Limps after them with jutting chin,
Bleeding badly from the calf:
Old jaws-of-Death gives laugh for laugh
With Error as they amble past,

Finally and terrifyingly,

And there as usual, lying last,
Helped along by blind Routine,
Futility flogs a tambourine…

This is surely an unusual choice of poem for choral setting. There are few opportunities for suitable word repetition without either misrepresenting the prosaic tone of the language or destroying the witty import of the poem by retarding its delivery. Only when the poet's sudden and unexpected moment of inspiration is depicted – 'The sunlight flickers once / Upon the massive shafts of Babylon' – does Fleischmann repeat phrases from the text. At this point it is entirely appropriate to do so, however, as he dramatises the unexpected intrusion of poetic inspiration into the course of the poet's humdrum daily routine. Otherwise the words are set to single melodic lines that are supported by parodistic accompaniment patterns. These are sung to nonsense syllables frequently suggested by the text itself. Apart from 'Fol-de-di-di-li Rol-de-di-di-li' and 'la la la', a reference to the morning train is accompanied by 'Hum, chum, chum, chum', for example, 'the weekly trance at mass' by a line reminiscent of plainchant, and 'Humming as I catch the bus / Something by Sibelius' by a quotation from *Tapiola* (the same one, incidentally, that Bax uses in his Sixth Symphony). This approach is entirely successful. Not only does it allow him exactly the right kind of light touch but, most importantly, it allows the text to be heard clearly, which is essential if the work is to make its proper point. It also affords continually changing textural interest, and the piece is organised around the succession of these texturally differentiated sections. The climax at the end, on frantic repetitions of syllables derived form the word 'tambourine', is not only a vivid illustration of the menacing final lines it is also an almost unique example in Fleischmann's work of recourse to aleatoric technique.

(Séamas de Barra, *Aloys Fleischmann*, Field Day Publications, Dublin 2006 pp 140–142)

Duration: 5 ¾ minutes

Song without words:

The Fleischmann family is grateful to Oxford University Press for permission to reproduce the work.

The poet, however, does not wish to have the words of his poem reproduced on the internet, so they have been removed. A copy of the work with text can be purchased from Oxford University Press, address below; it is available in Cork City Music Library, the National Library of Ireland, the British Library and the Bavarian State Library in Munich.

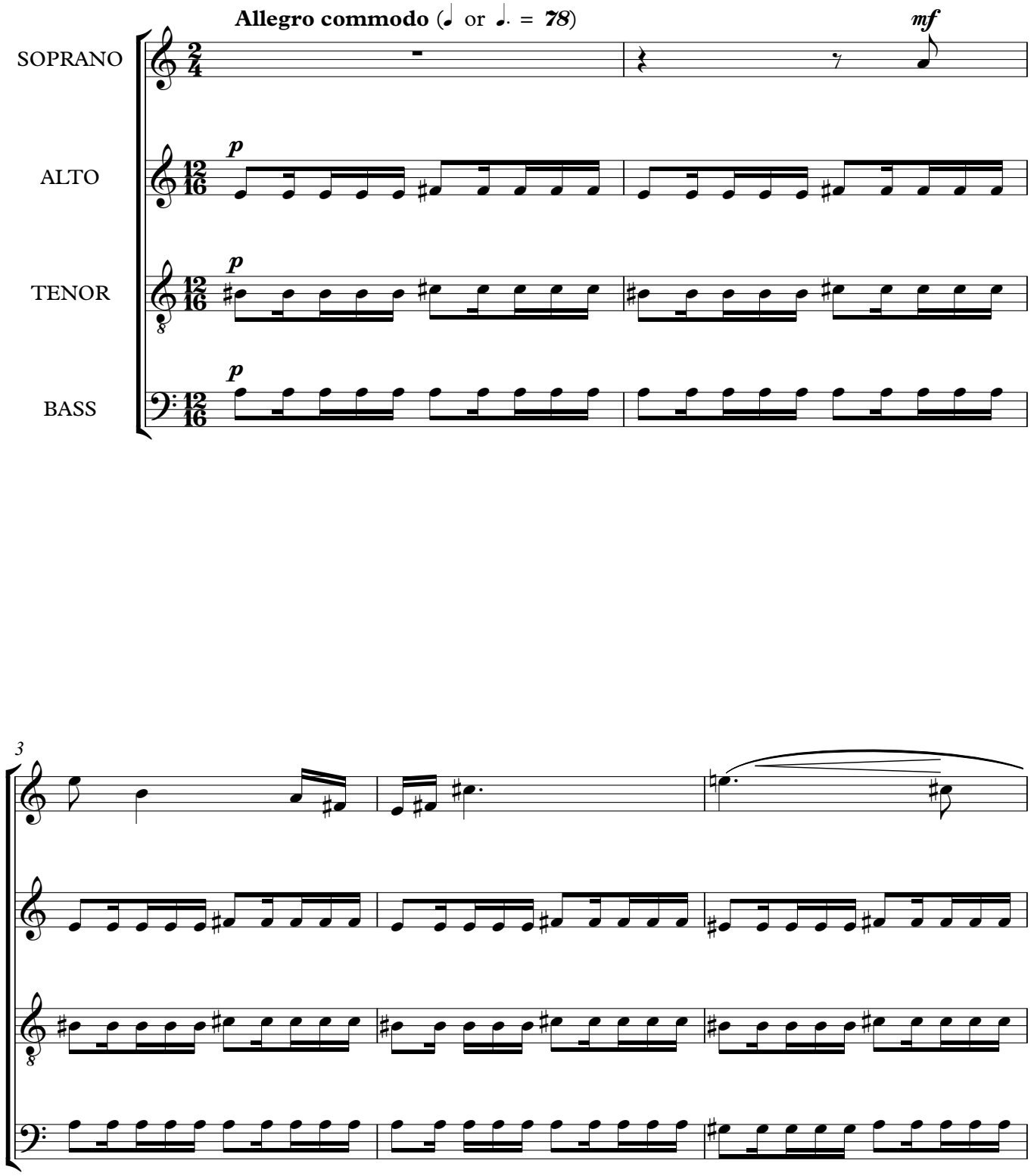
Cork City Library, the Contemporary Music Centre of Ireland, and the family can provide a digital version of the work with text.

Oxford Music Archive Service
Available from
Banks Music Publications
The Old Forge
Sand Hutton, York, YO4 1LB
ISBN 0 19 336108 6

Composed for the Cork International Choral Festival 1975 and dedicated to Stephen Wilkinson and the B.B.C. Northern Singers.

Poet in the Suburbs

Music: Aloys Fleischmann



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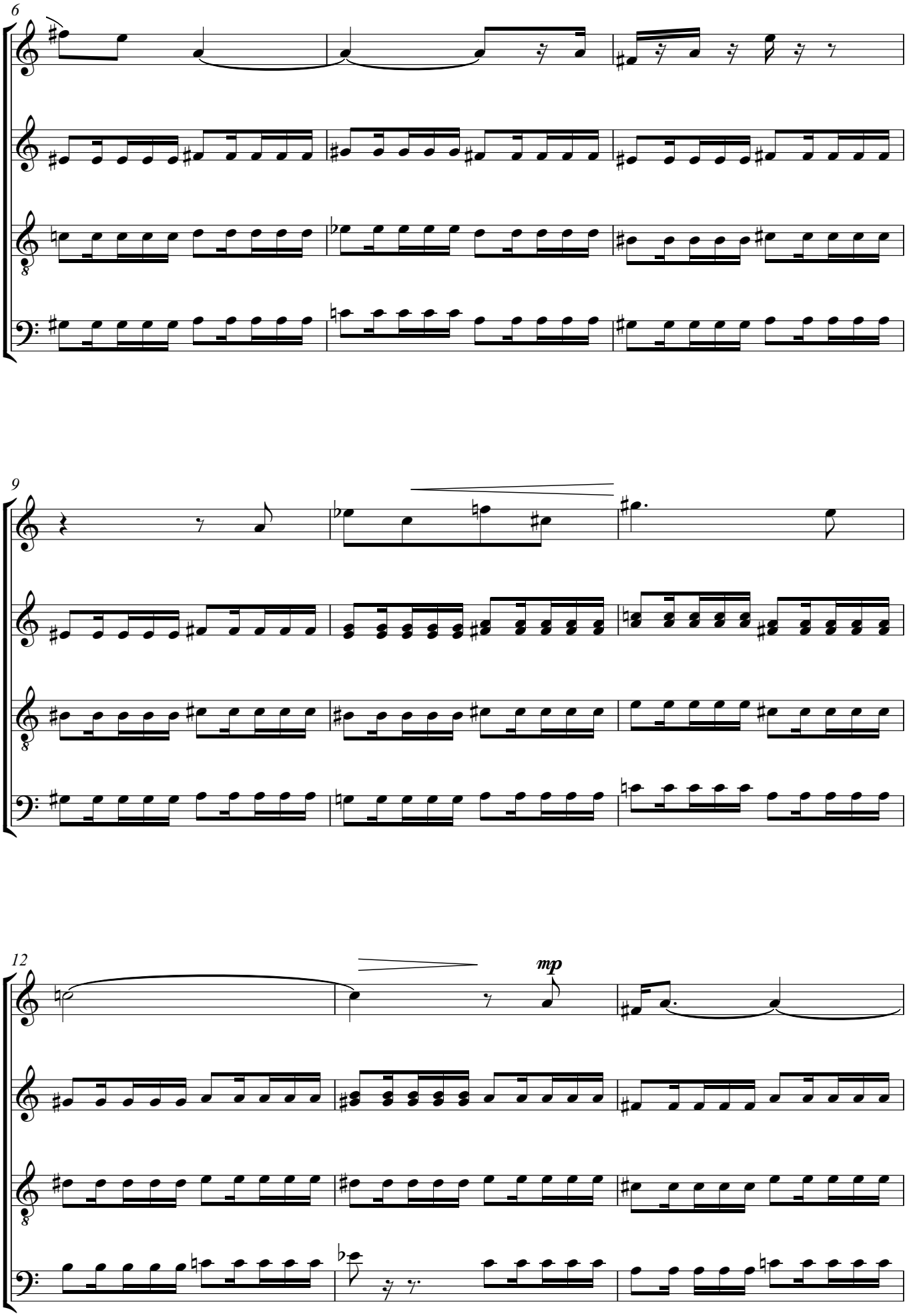
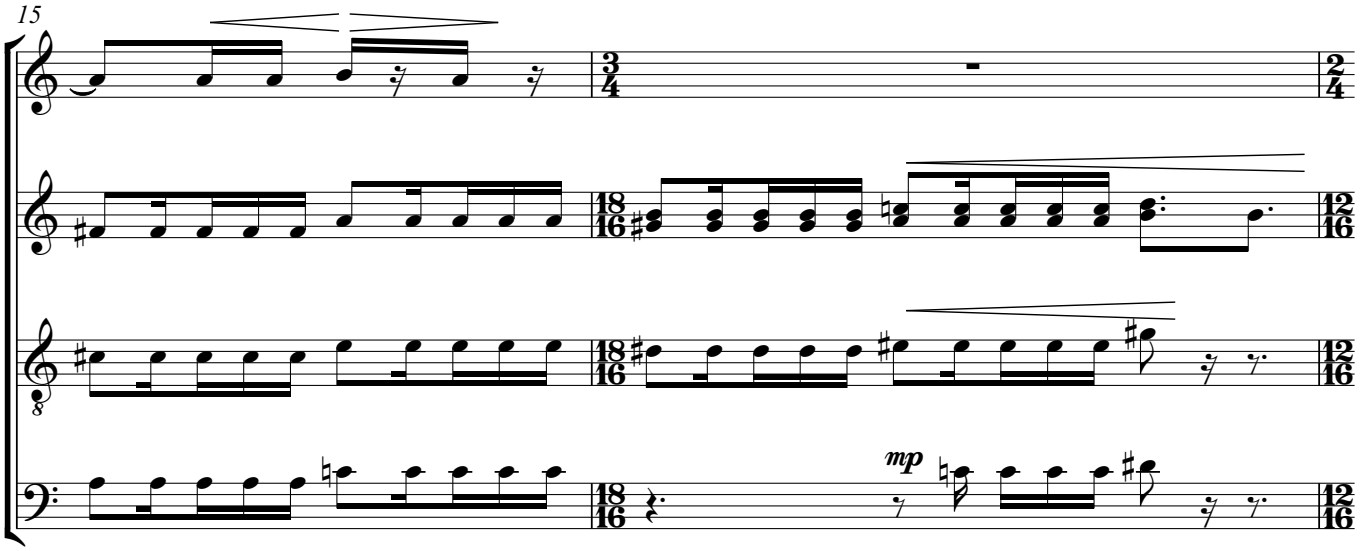
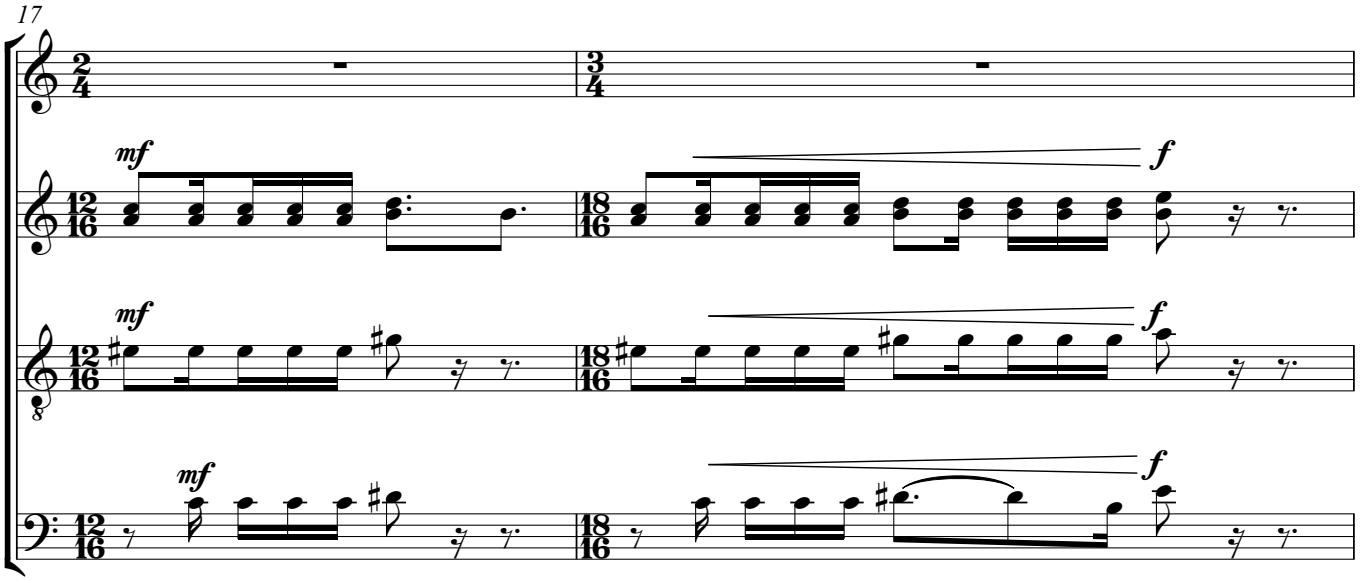
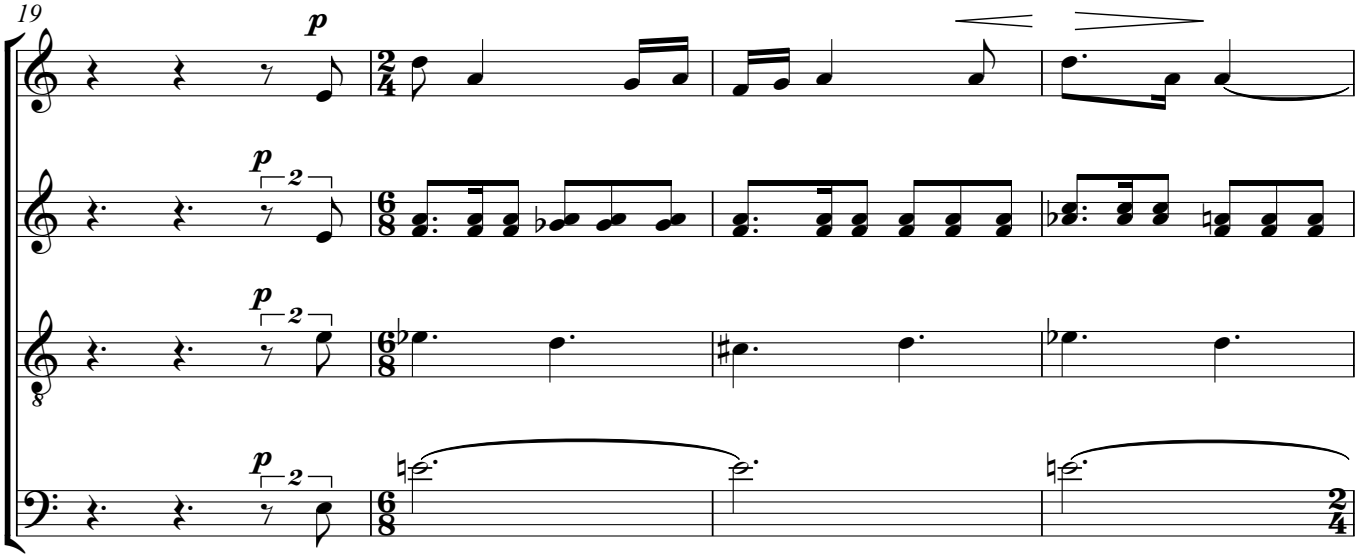
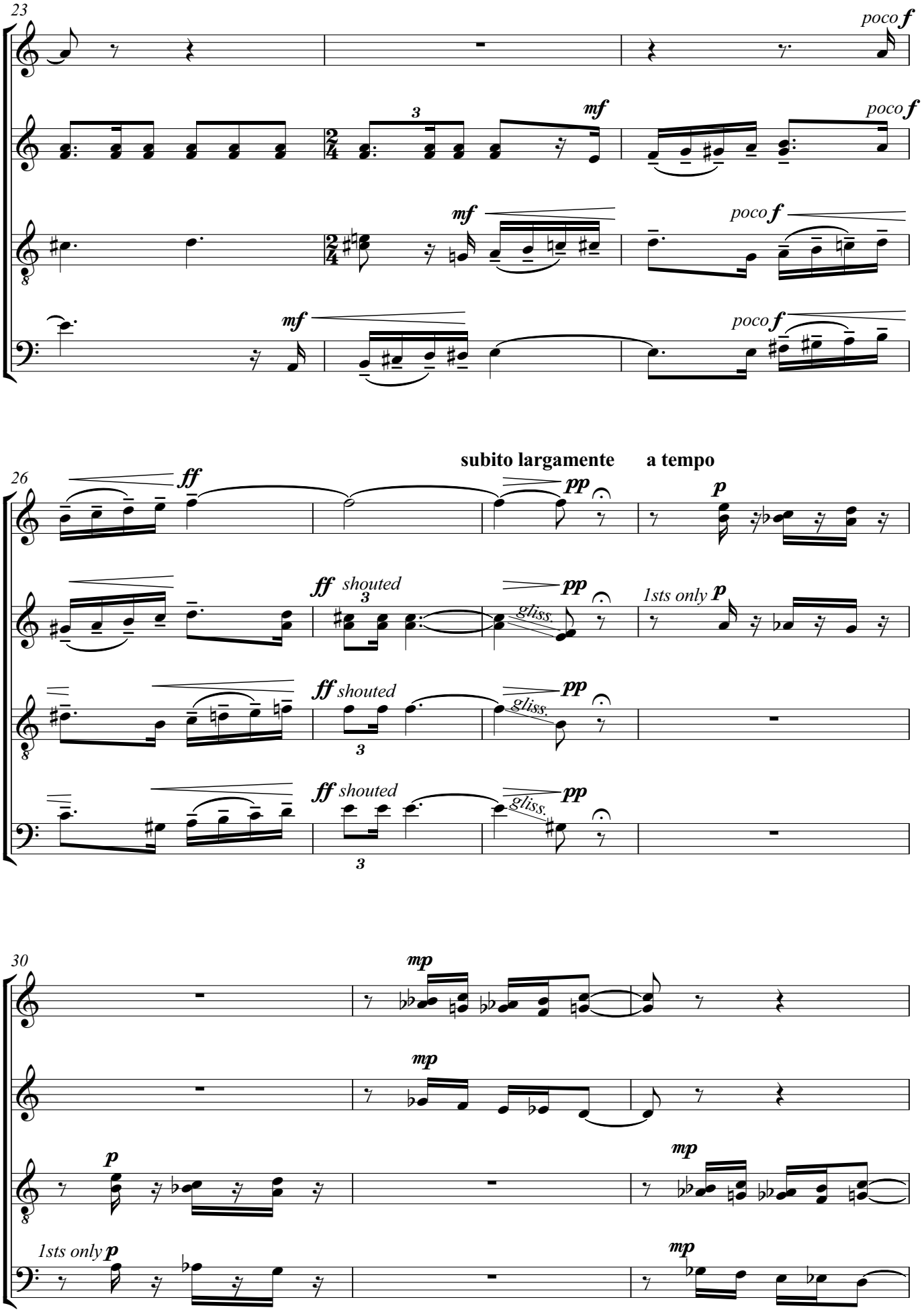
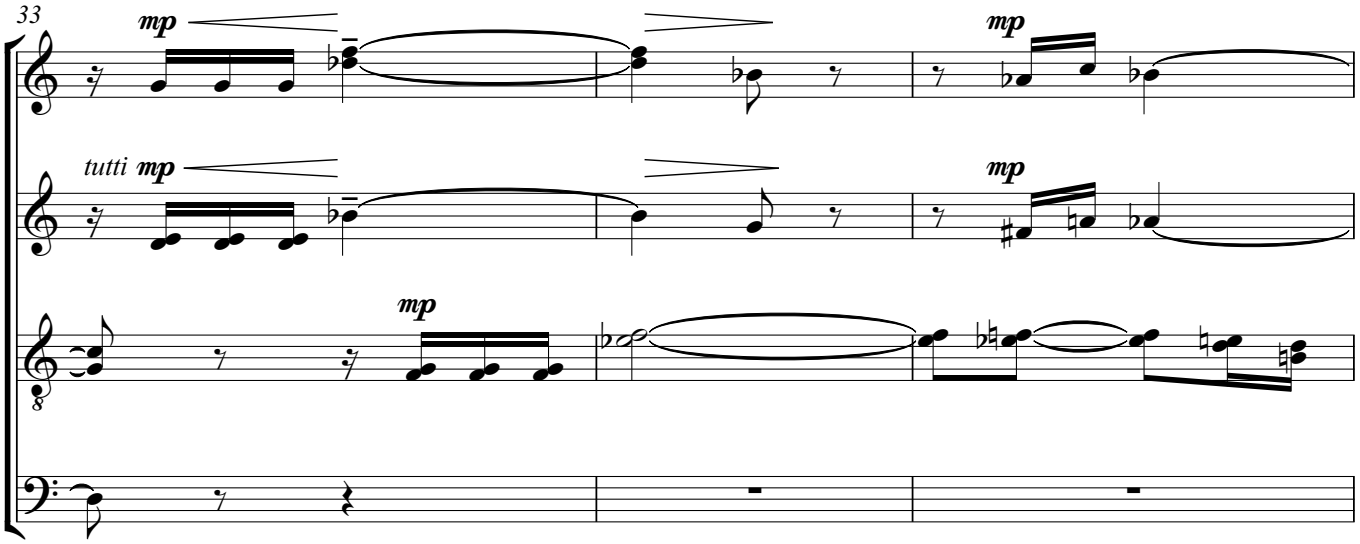

6
9
12
mp

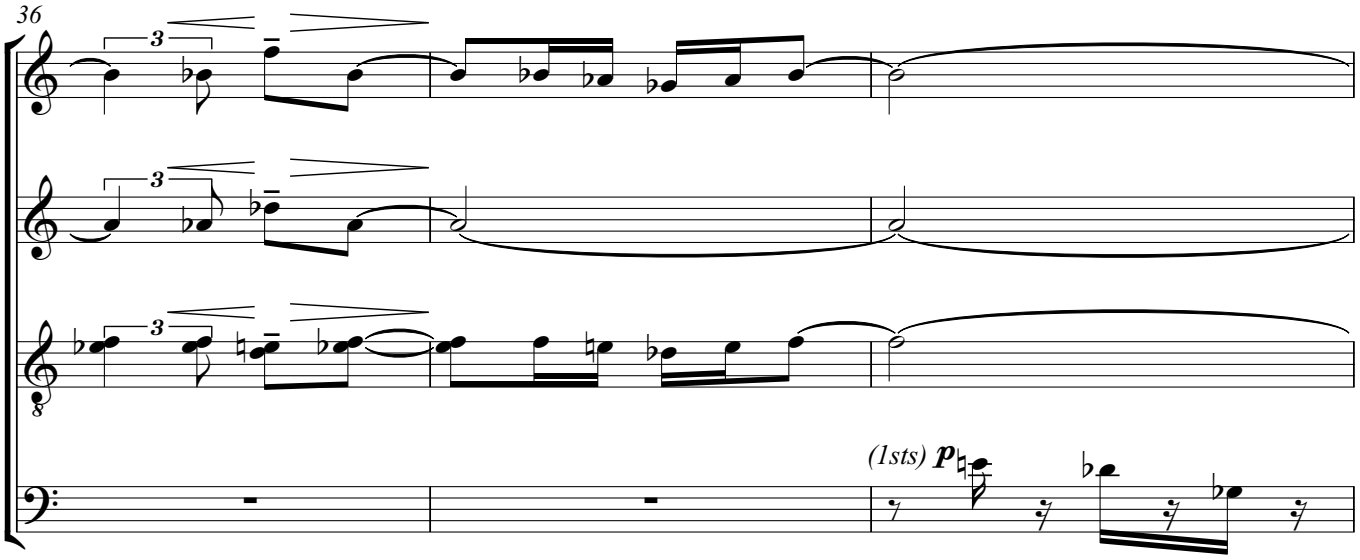

15
mp

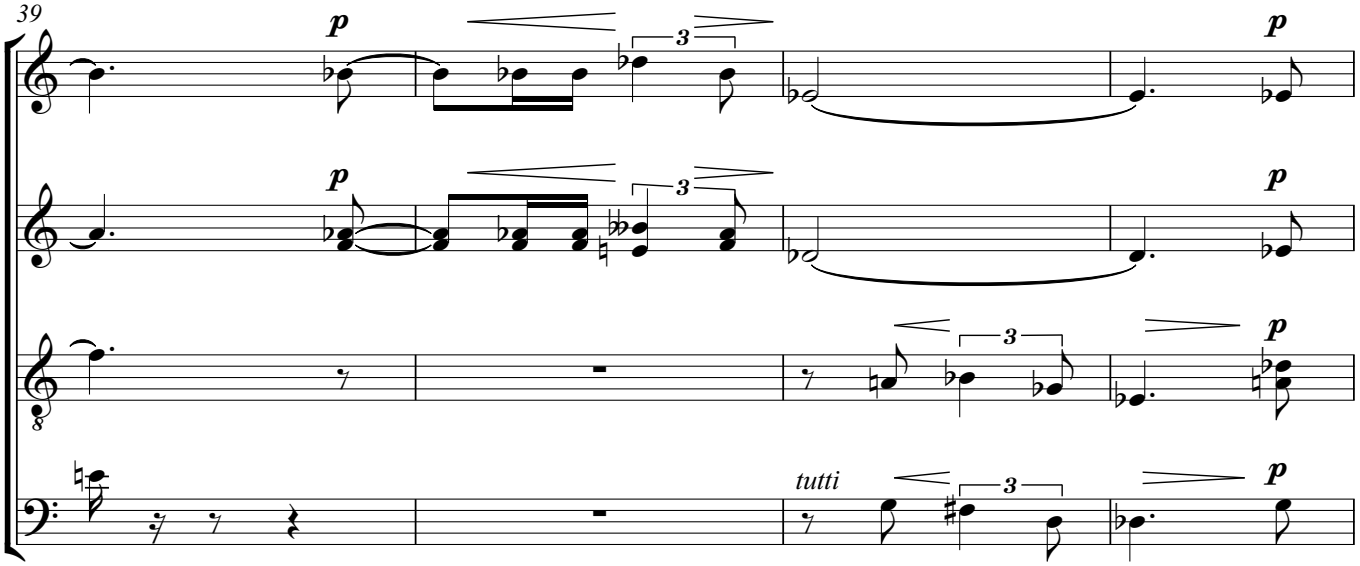

17
mf
f
mf
f
mf
f

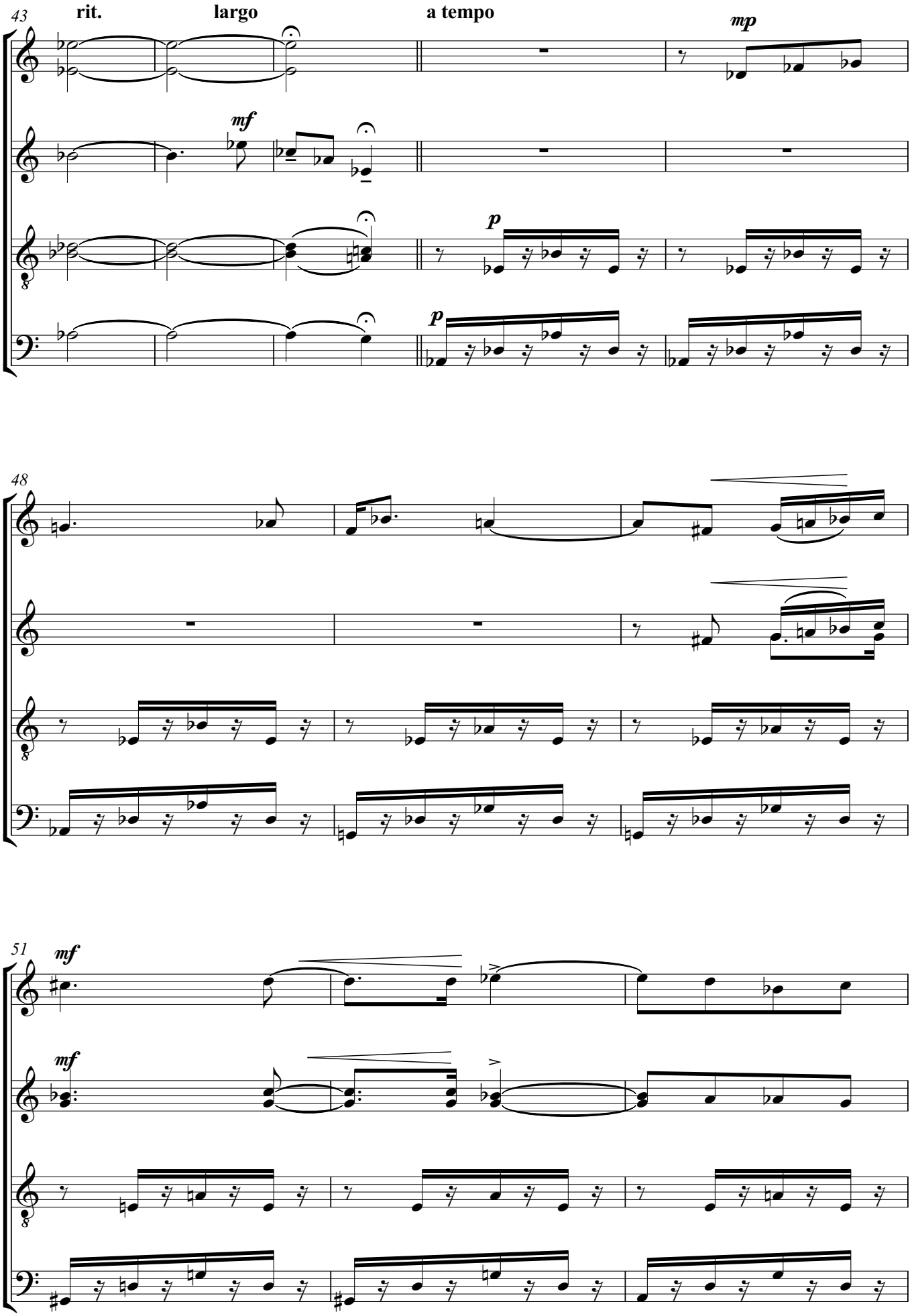

19
p
p
2
p
2
p
2

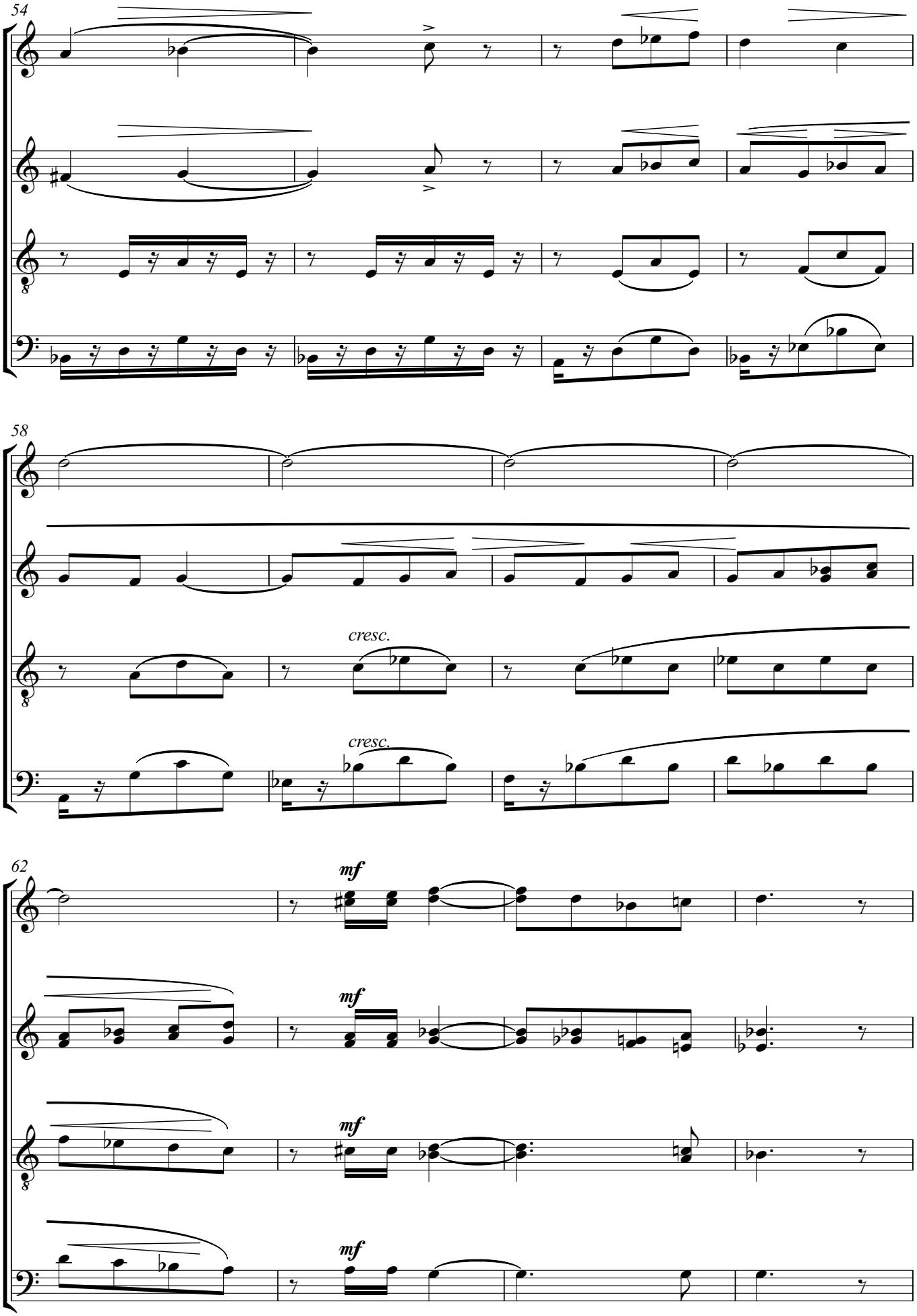

23
poco f
mf
poco f
mf
poco f
mf
poco f
26
ff
subito largamente
pp
a tempo
p
ff shouted
pp
gliss.
1sts only p
ff shouted
pp
gliss.
ff shouted
pp
gliss.
30
mp
mp
p
mp
1sts only p
mp

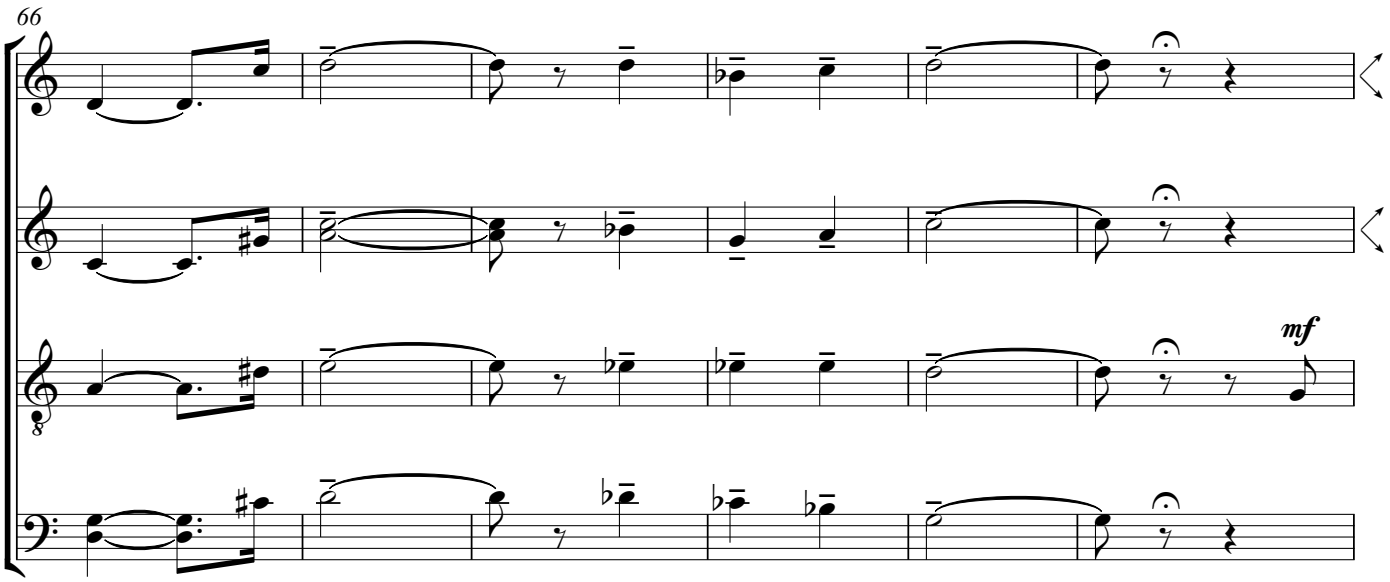

33
mp
mp
tutti mp
mp
mp

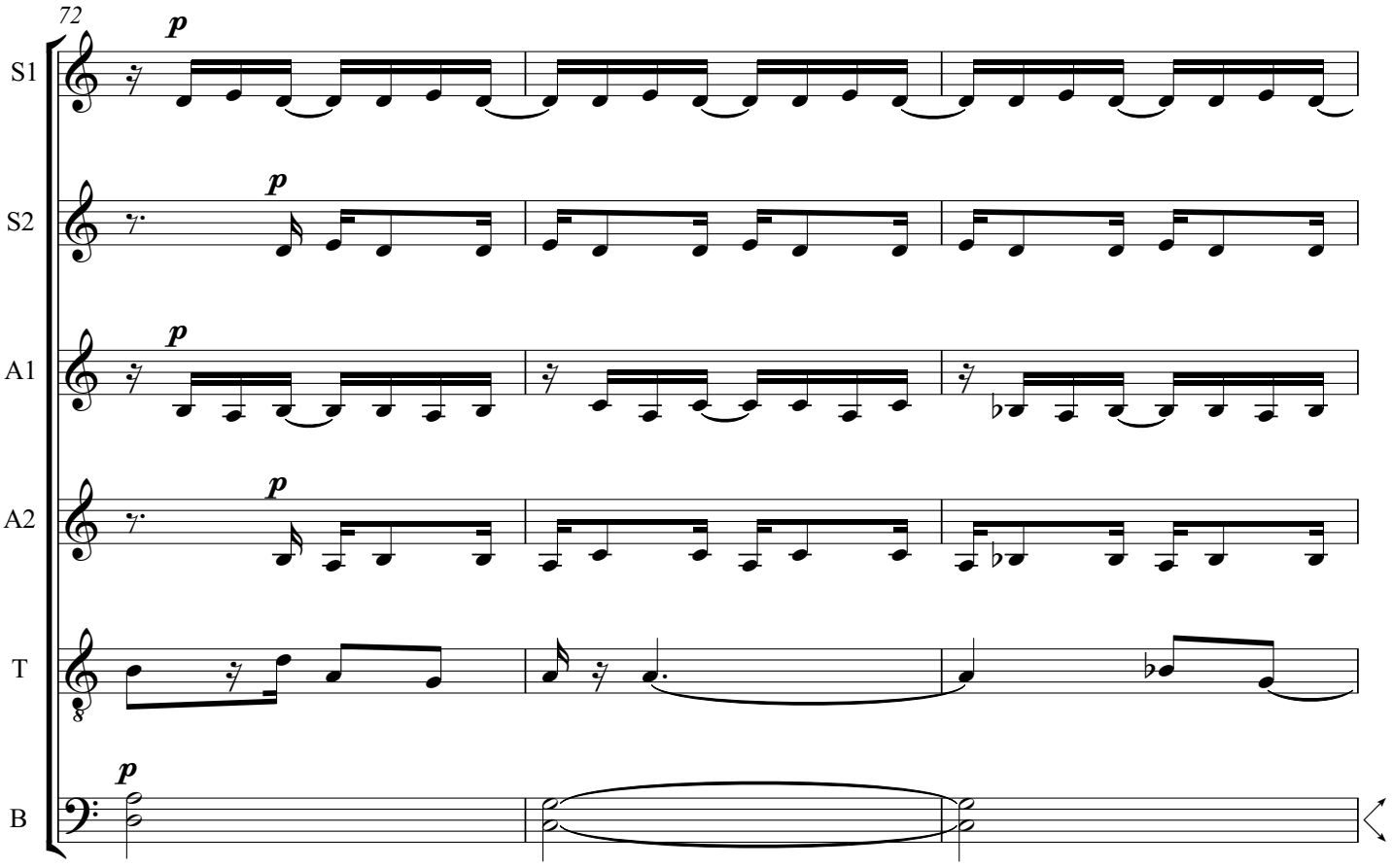

36
3
3
3
(1sts) p

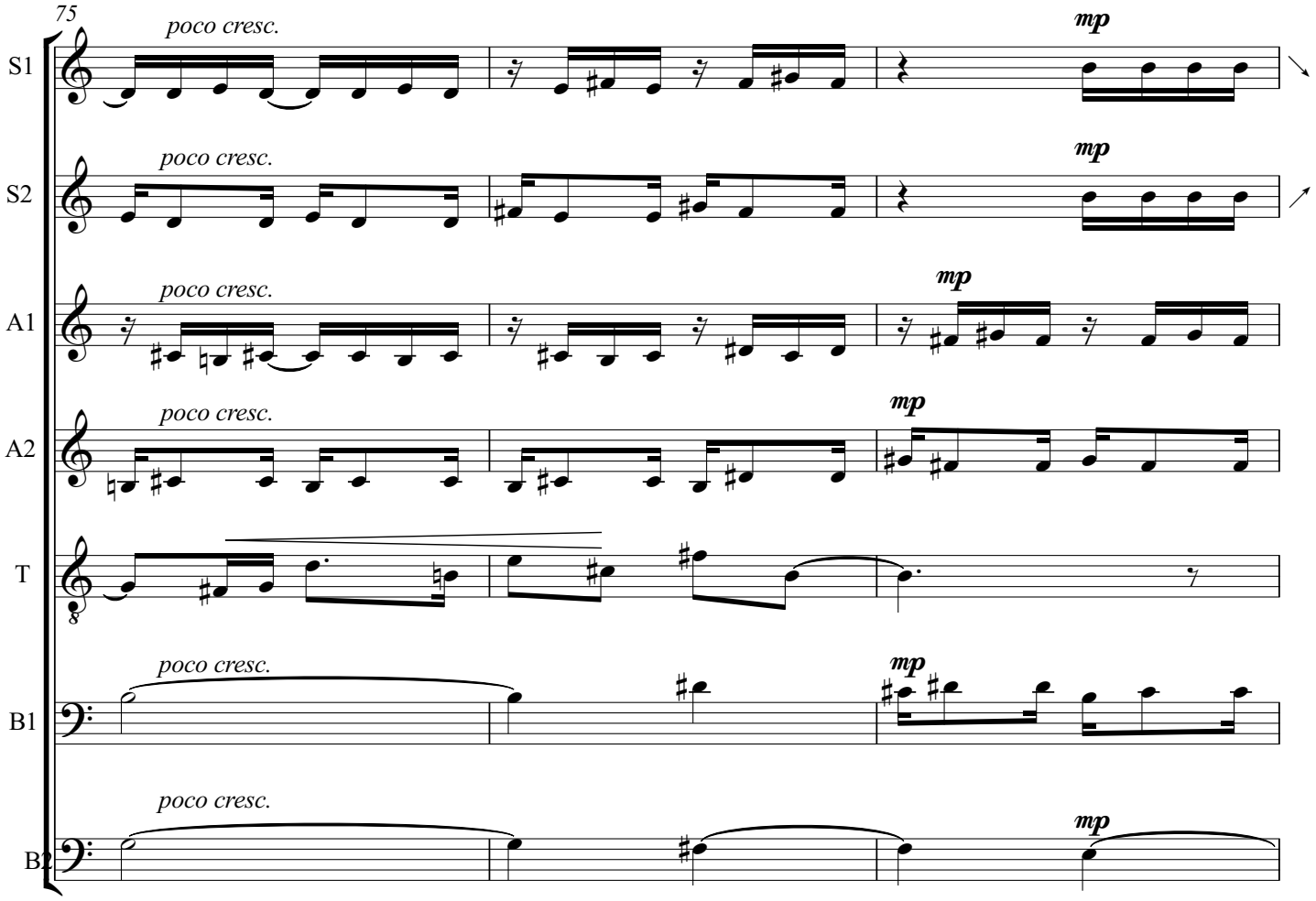

39
p
3
p
p
3
p
3
p
tutti
3
p

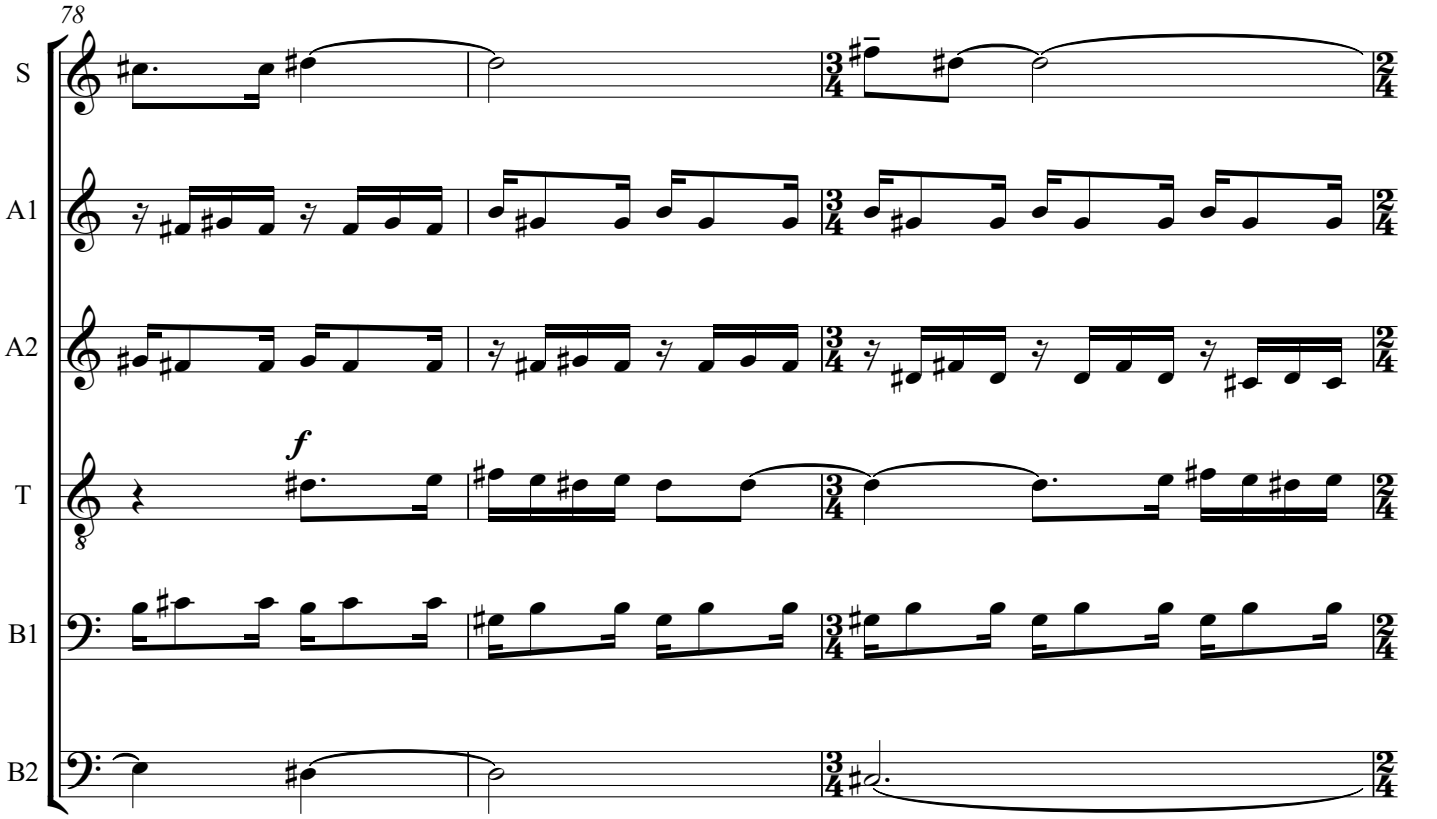

43
rit.
largo
a tempo
mp
mf
p
p
48
51
mf
mf

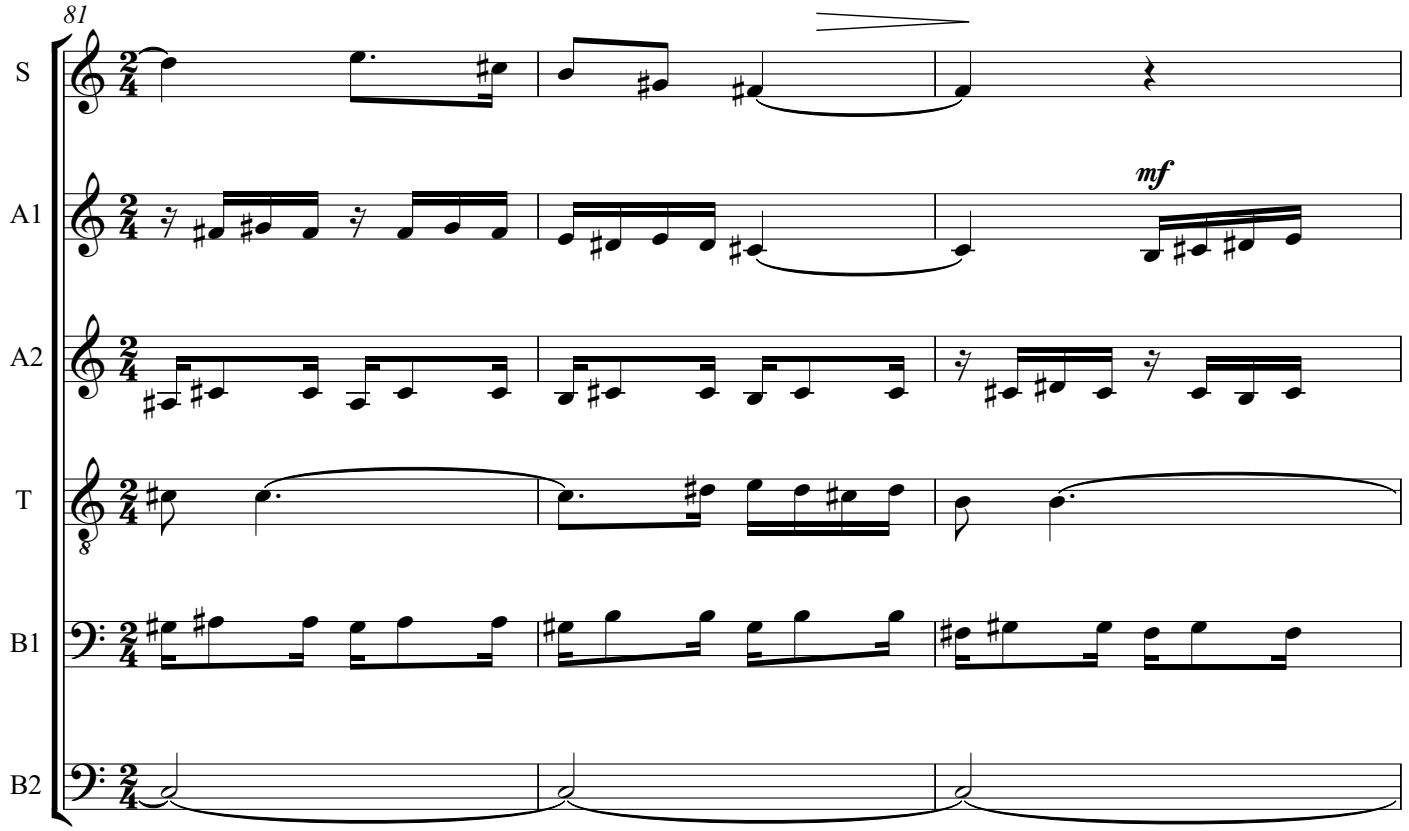

54
58
cresc.
cresc.
62
mf
mf
mf
mf


66
mf

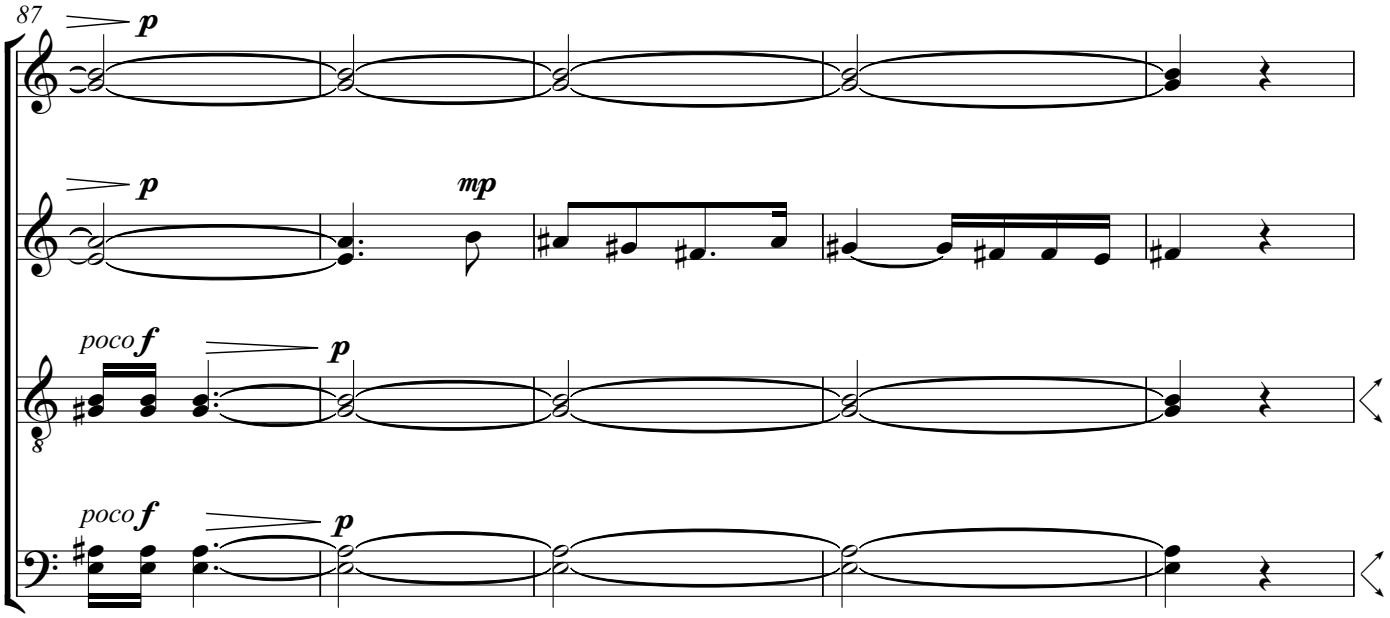

72
S1
S2
A1
A2
T
B
p

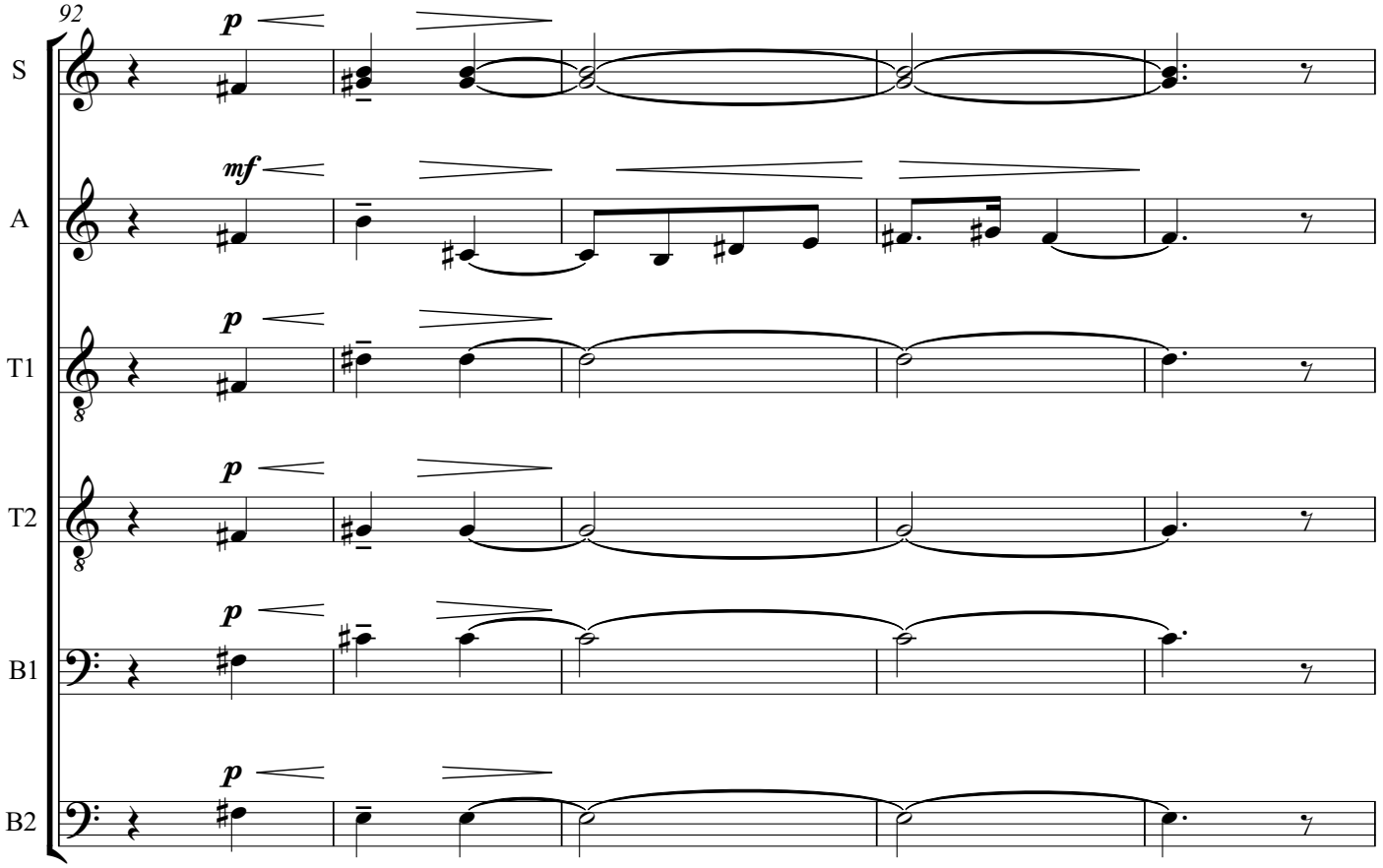

75
S1
S2
A1
A2
T
B1
B2
poco cresc.
mp

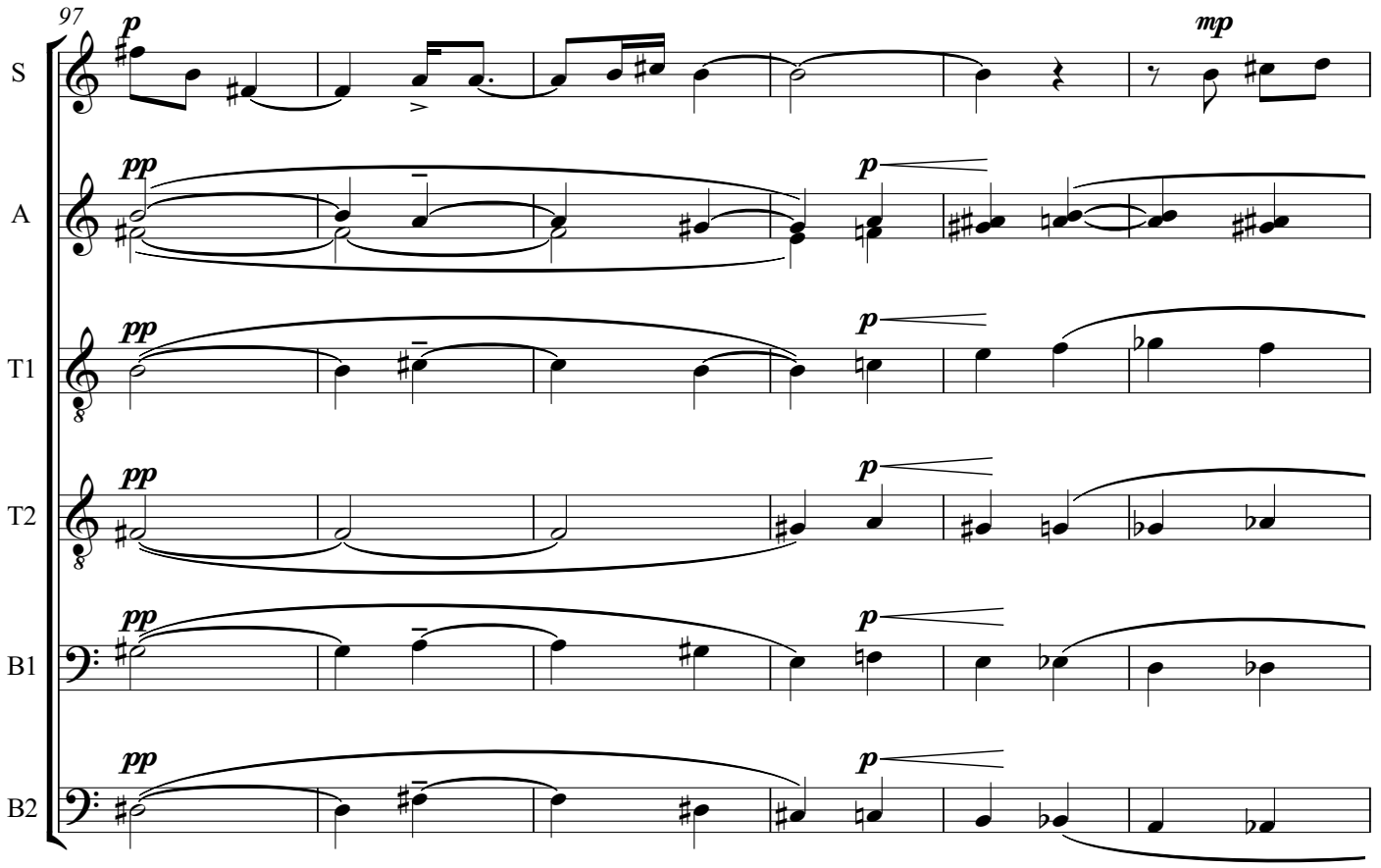

78
S
A1
A2
T
B1
B2
f

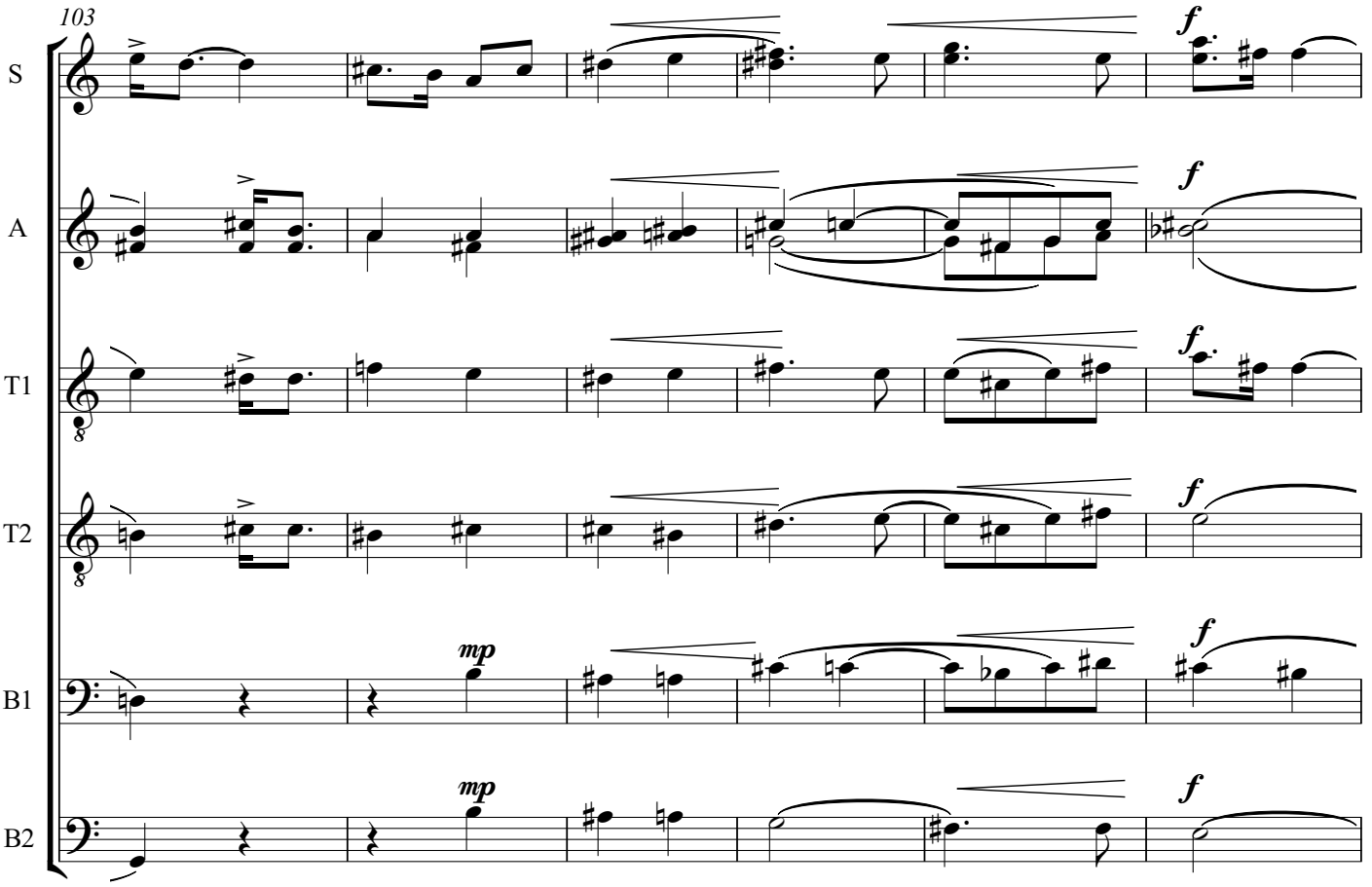

81
S
A1
A2
T
B1
B2
mf

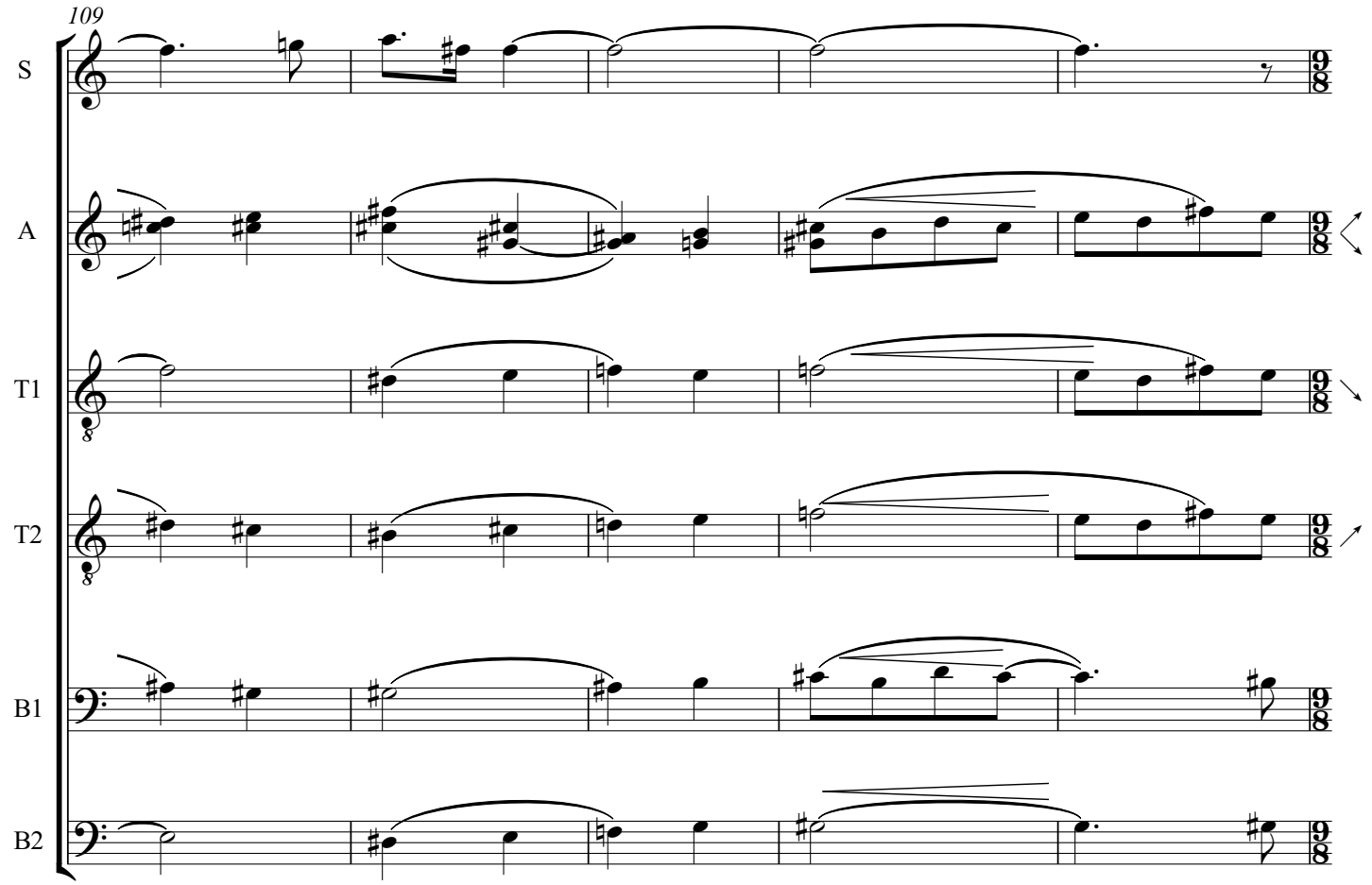
84
S
A1
A2
T
B1
B2
poco f
poco f
poco f

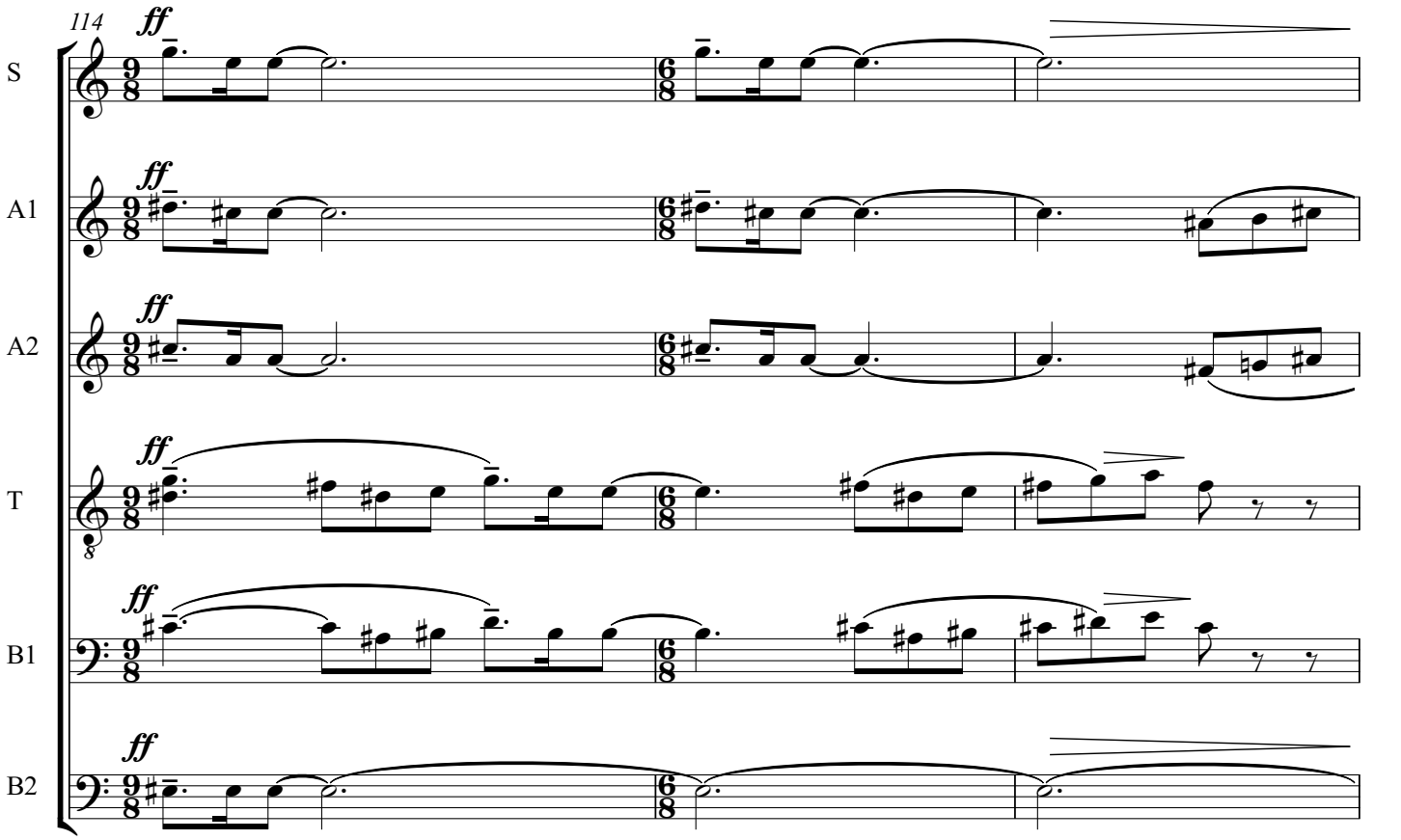

87
p
p
mp
poco f
p
poco f
p


92
S
p
A
mf
T1
p
T2
p
B1
p
B2
p


97
S
A
T1
T2
B1
B2
p
mp
pp
p
pp
p
pp
p
pp
p
pp
p


103
S
A
T1
T2
B1
B2
f
f
f
f
mp
f
mp
f


109
S
A
T1
T2
B1
B2


114
ff
S
A1
A2
T
B1
B2

Poco rit.

117

S

A1

A2

T

B1

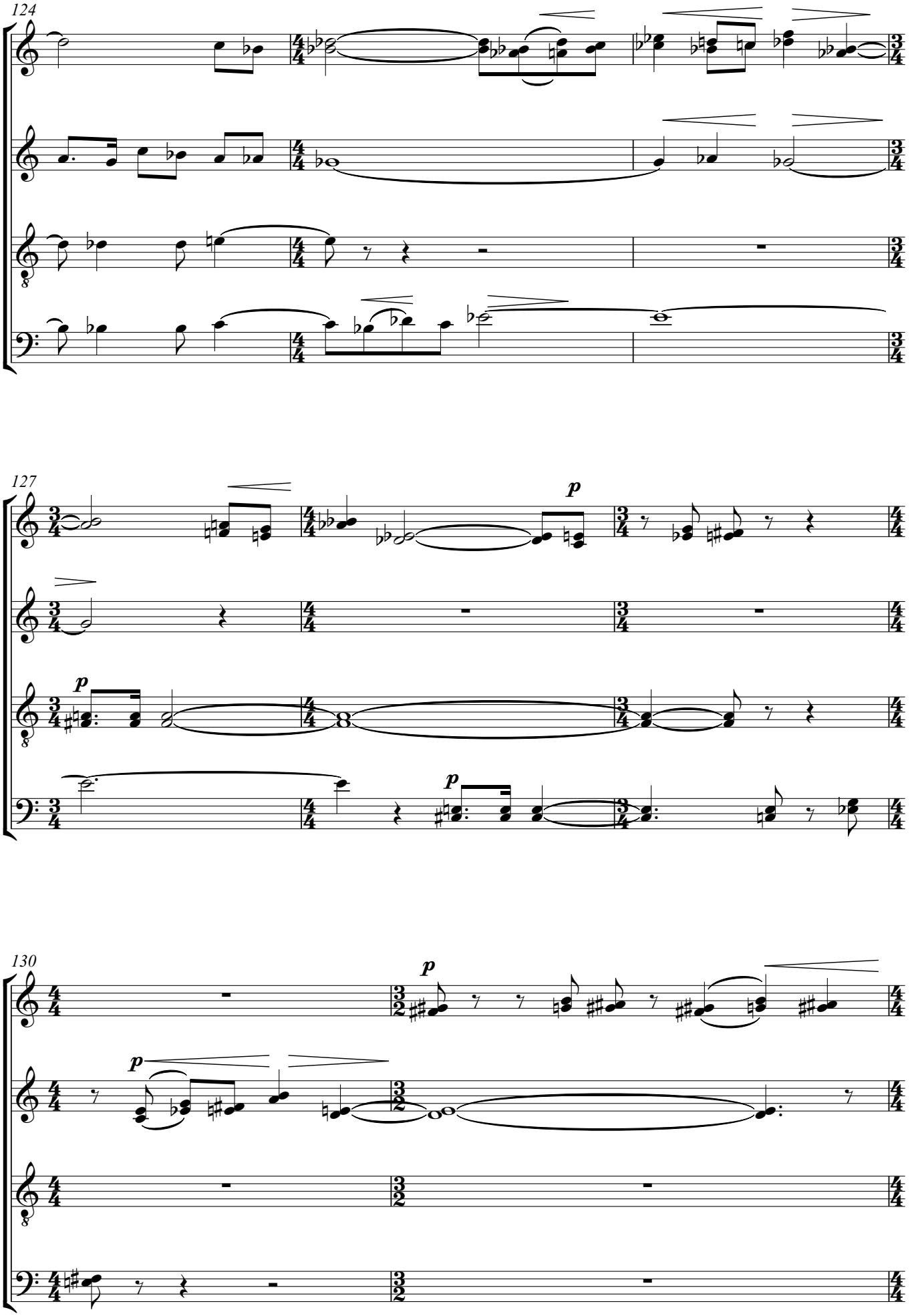
B2

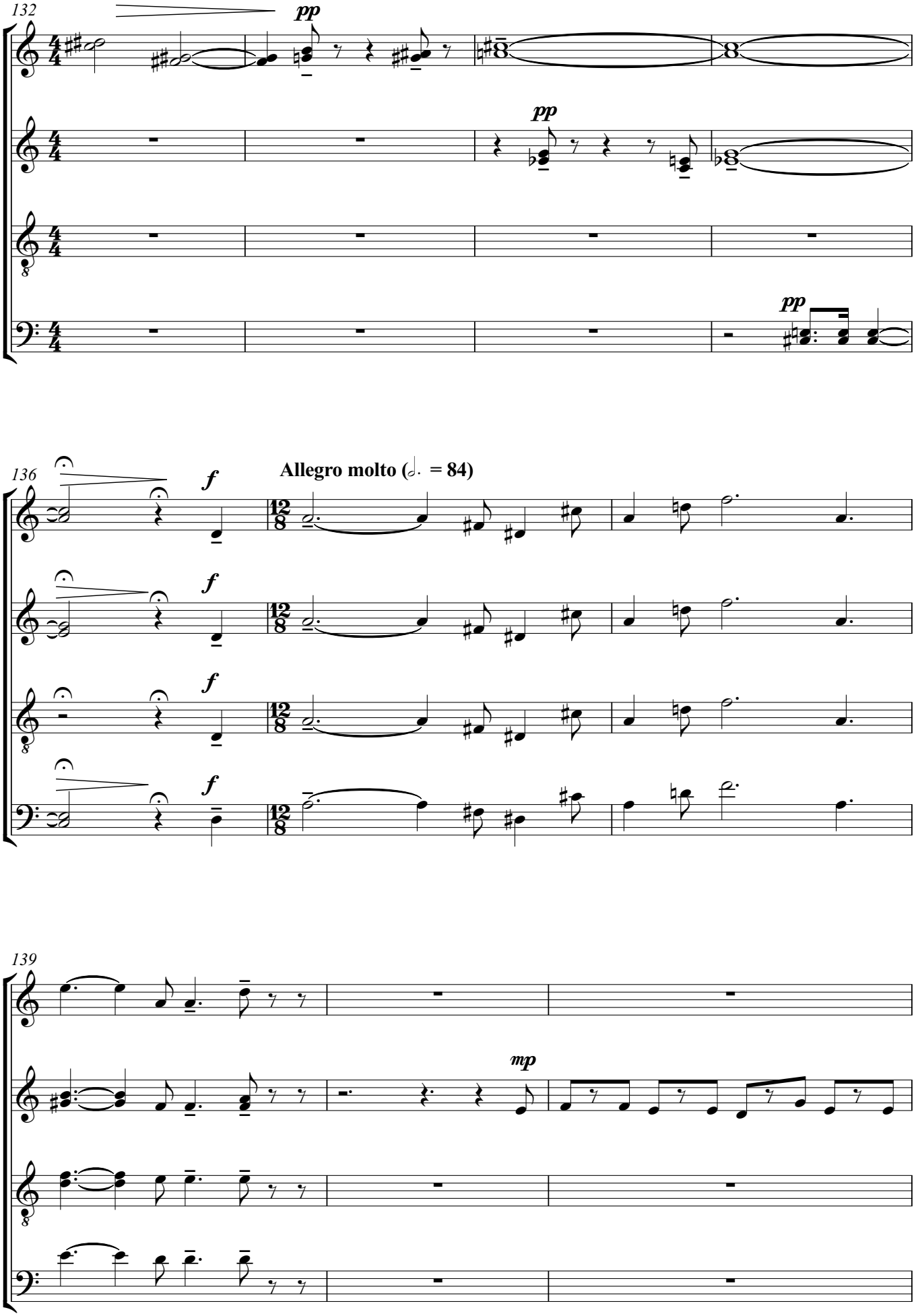
mf *mp* *p* *pp*

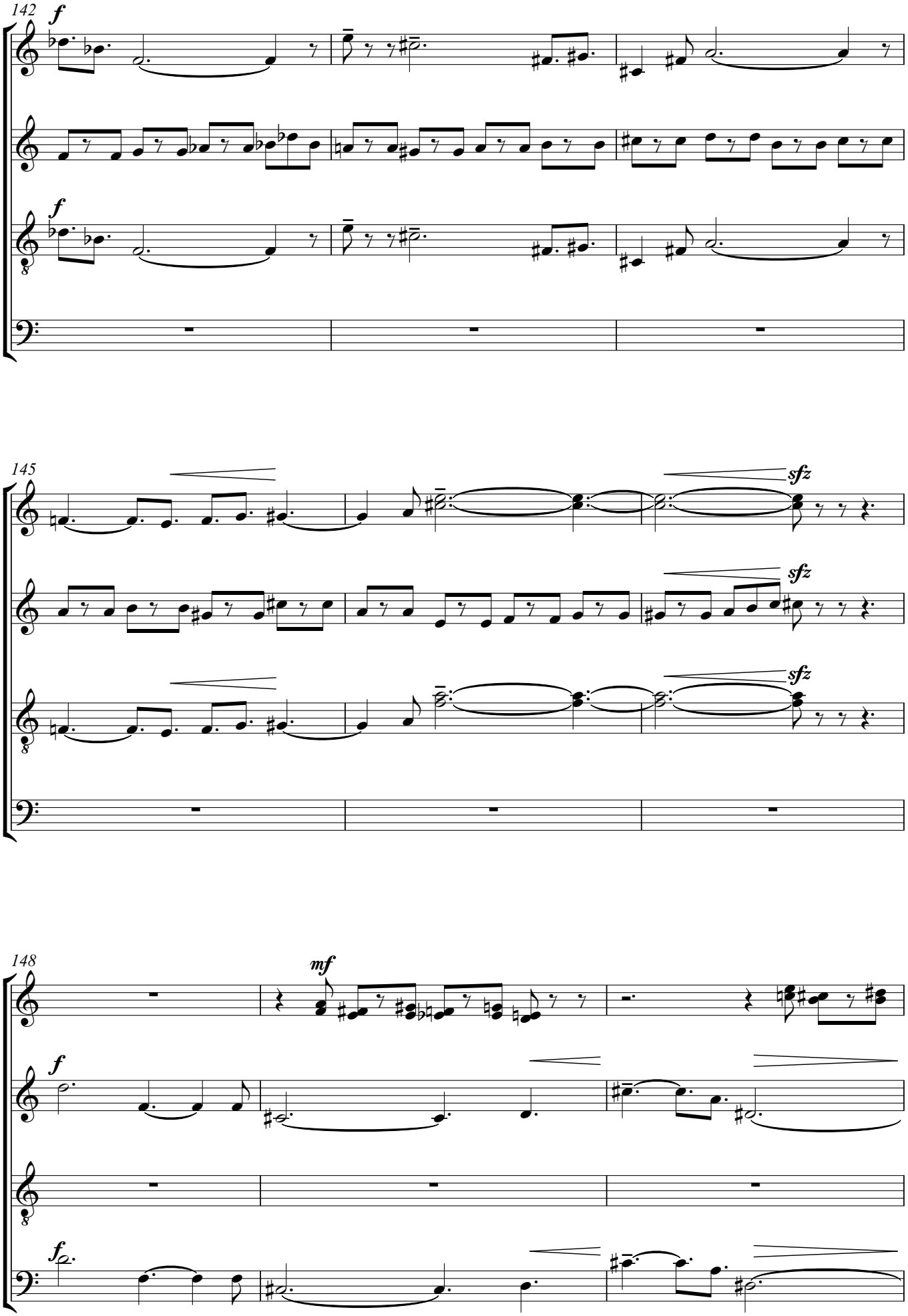
121

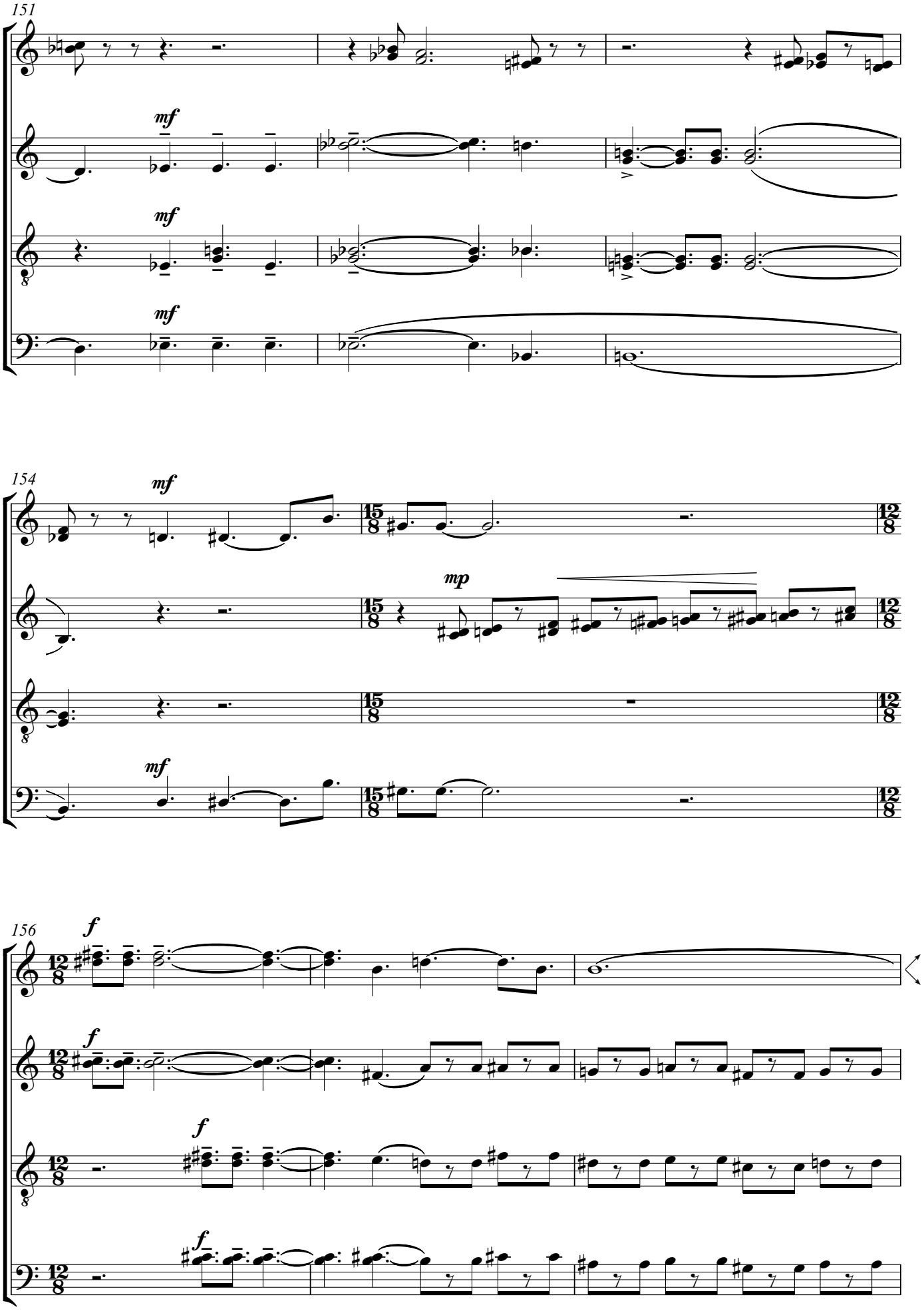
Allegro moderato (𝅗𝅥=96)

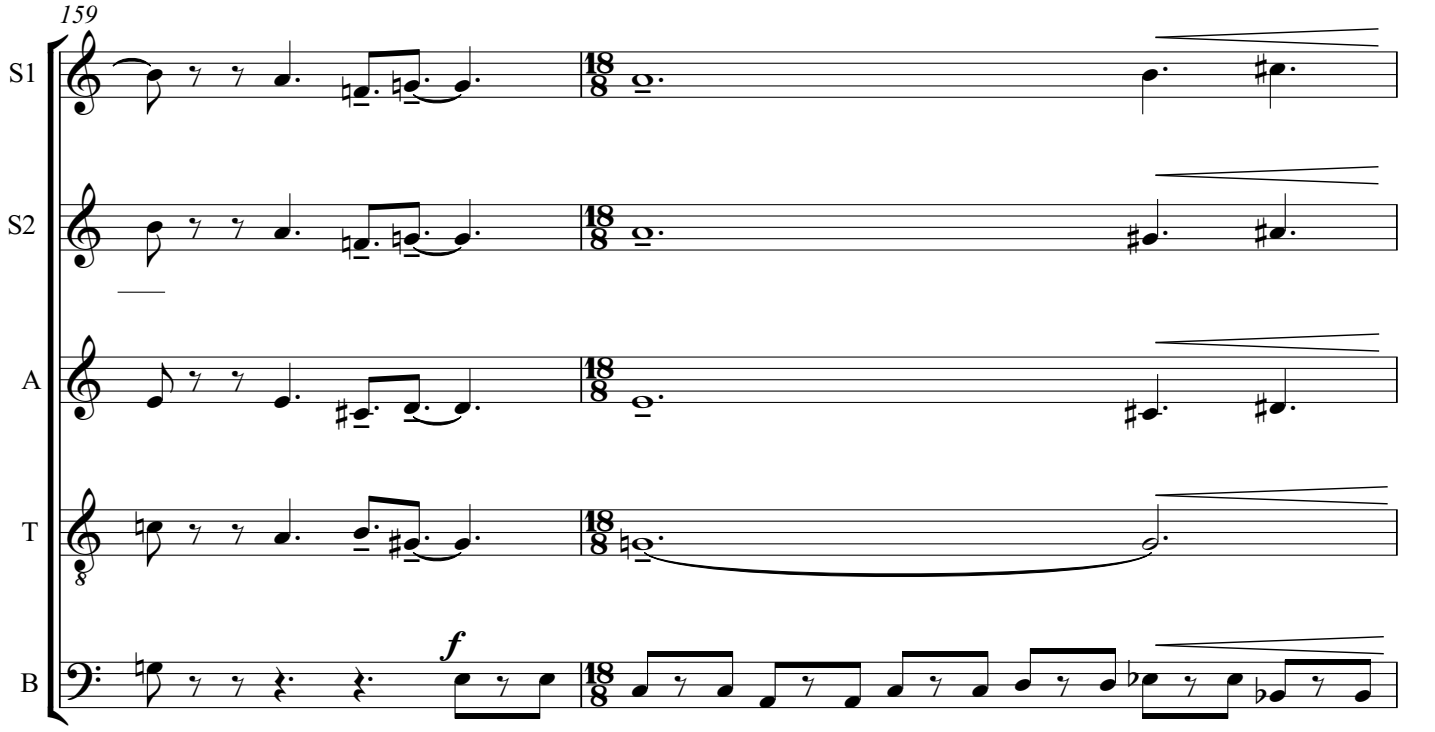
p

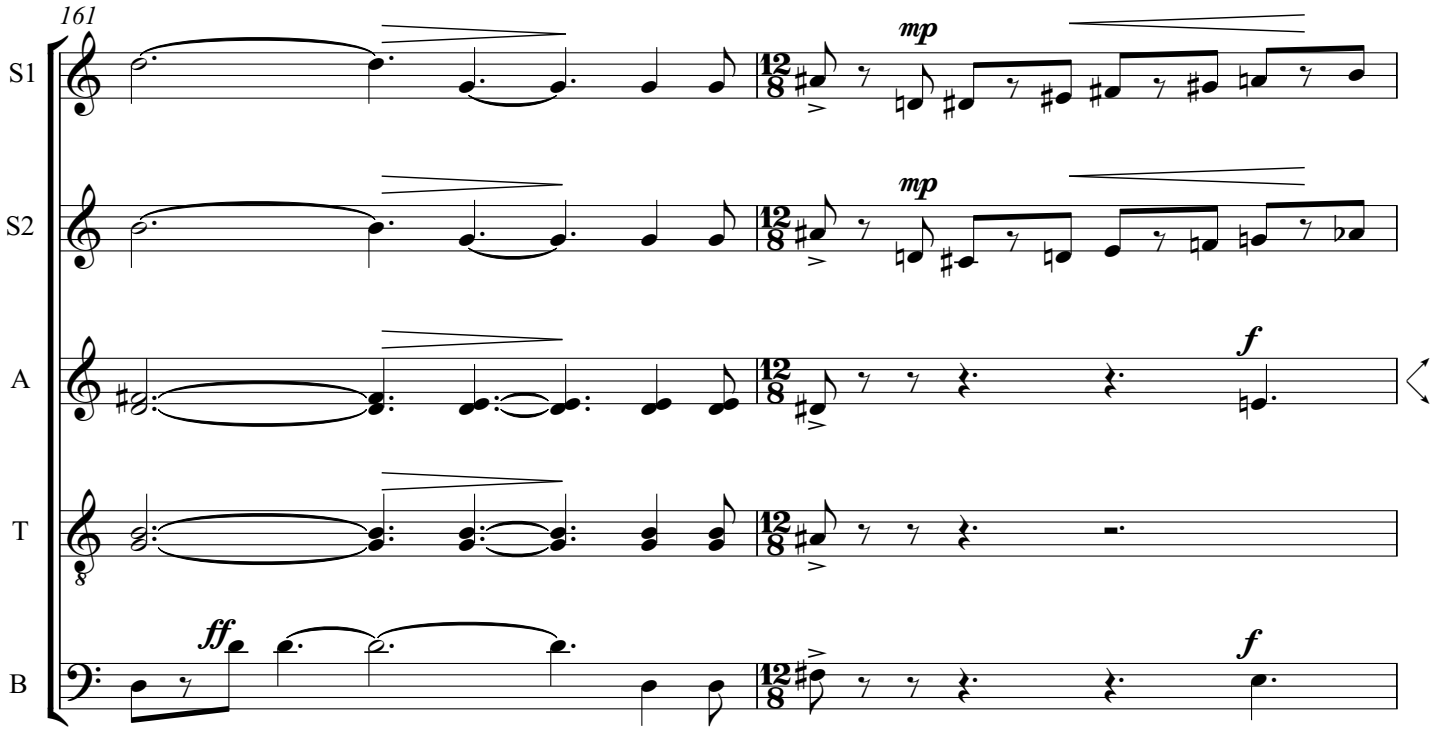

124
127
p
p
p
130
p
p

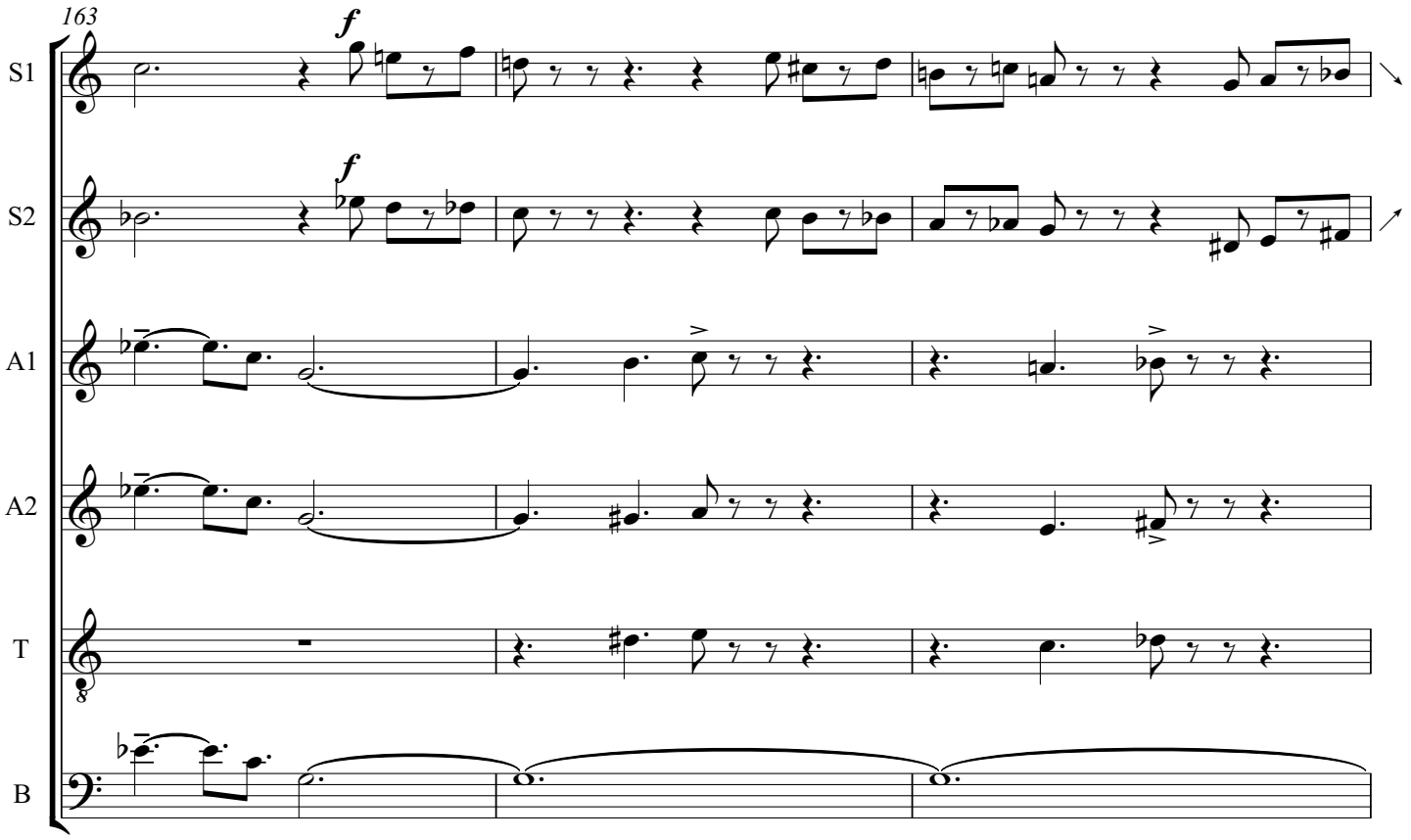

132
pp
pp
pp
136
f
Allegro molto (𝅗𝅥. = 84)
f
f
f
139
mp

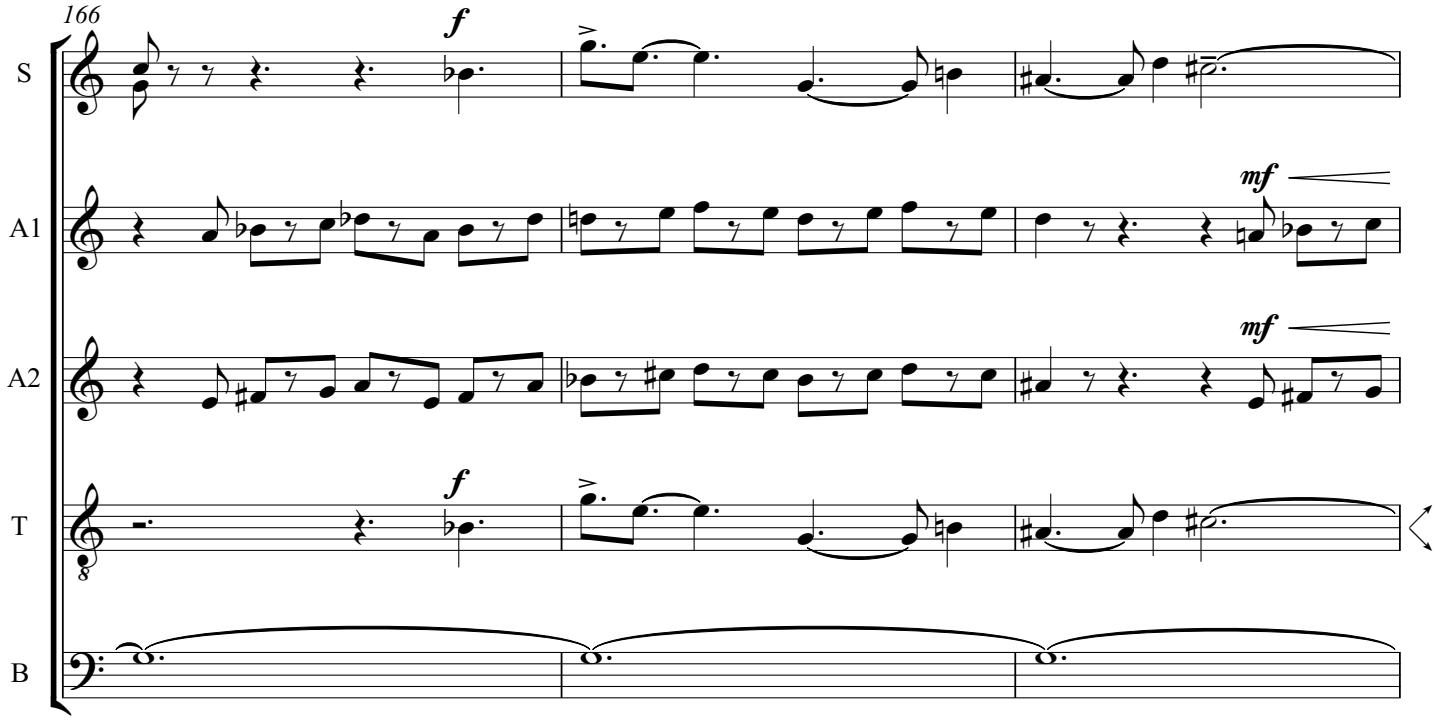

142
f
f
145
sfz
sfz
sfz
148
mf
f
f

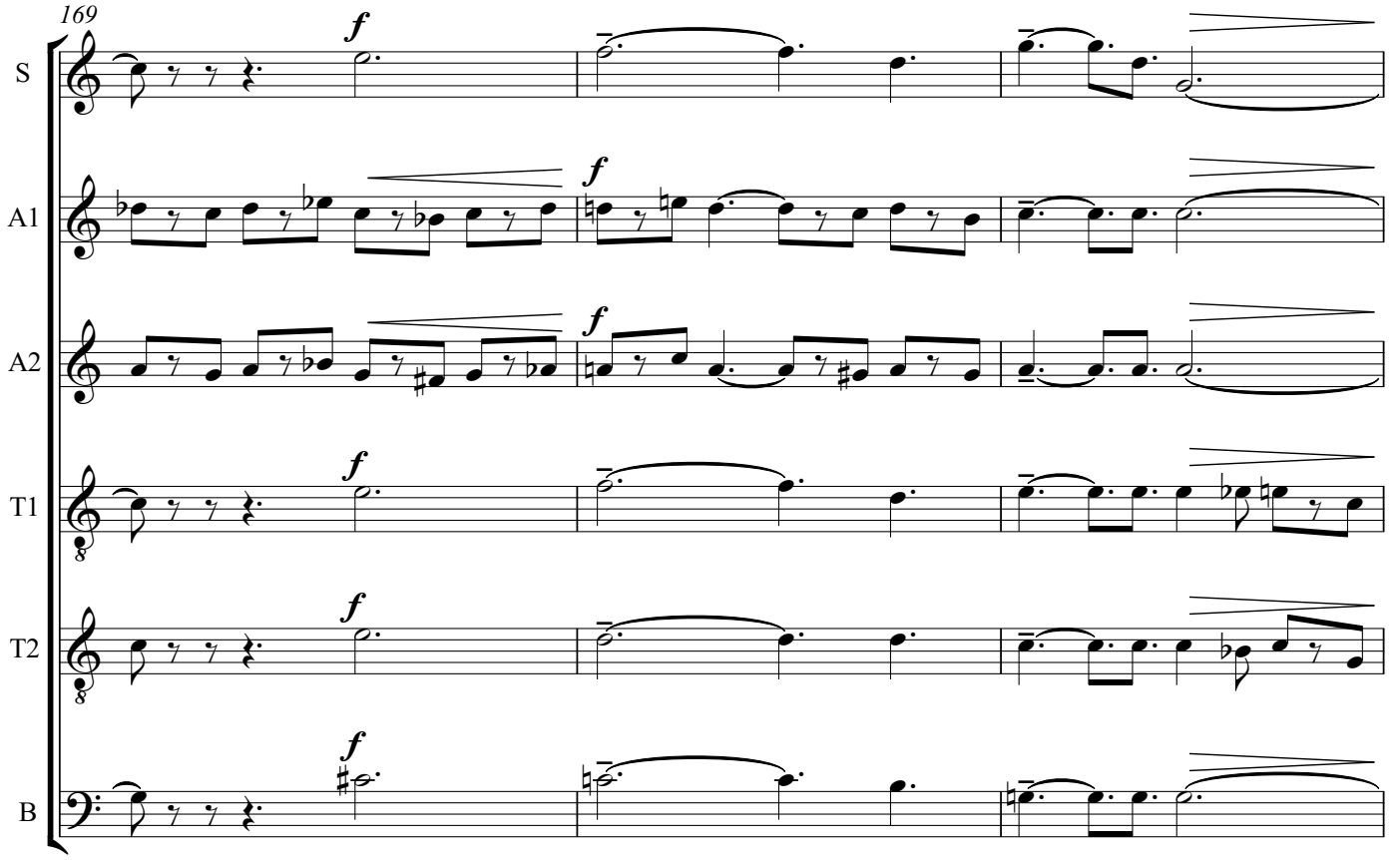

151
mf
mf
mf
154
mf
mp
mf
156
f
f
f
f

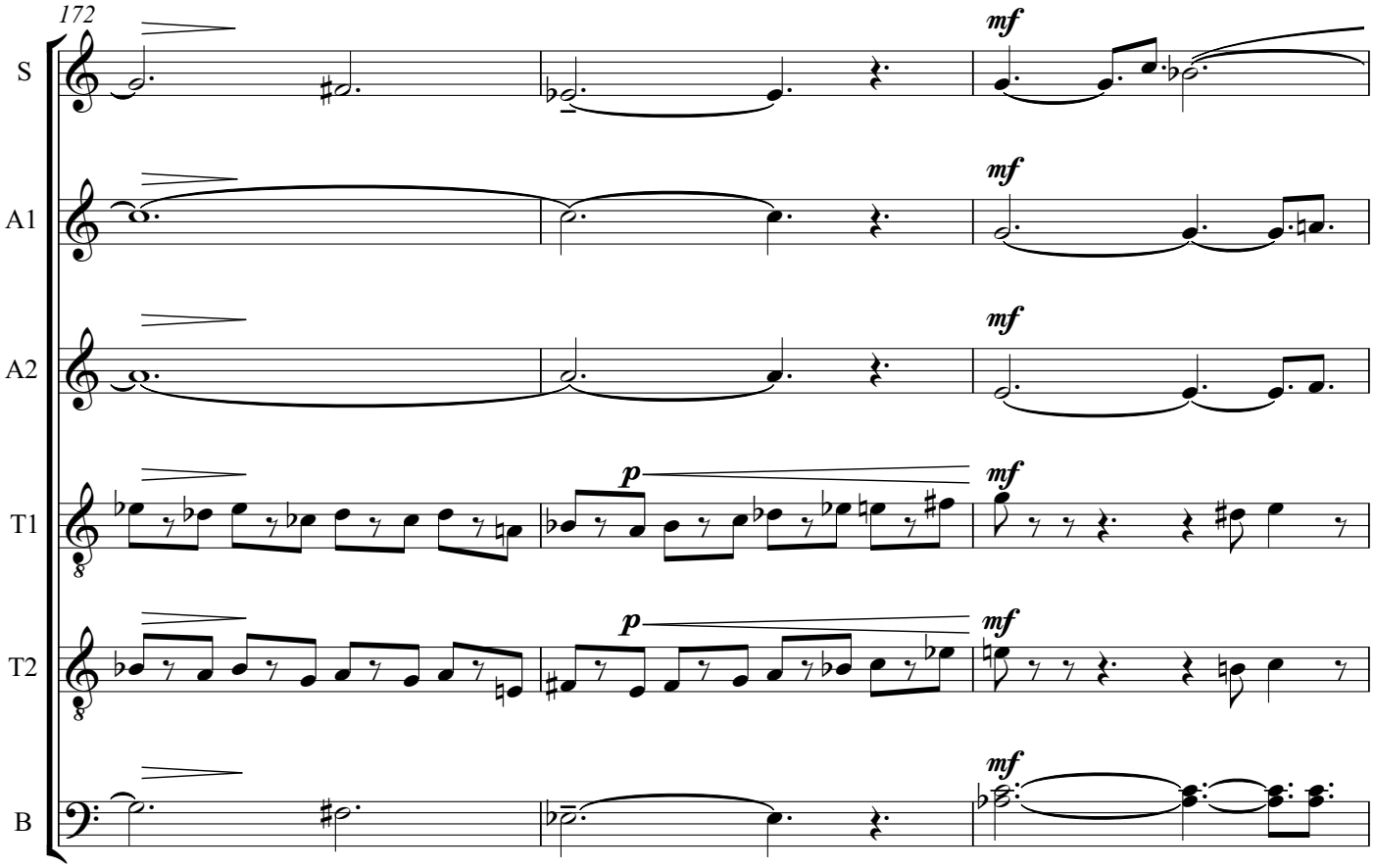

159
S1
S2
A
T
B
f

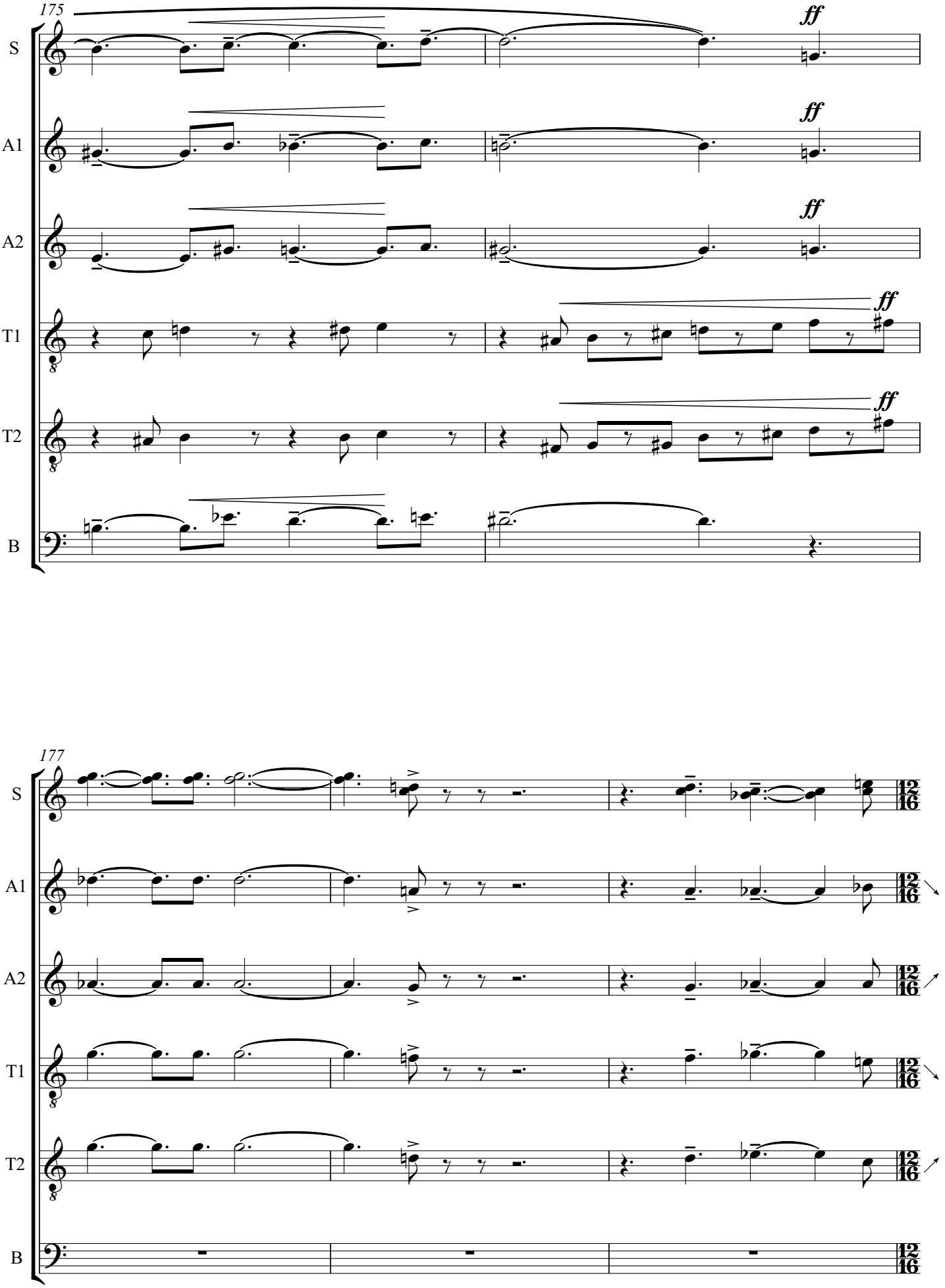

161
S1
S2
A
T
B
mp
mp
f
ff
f

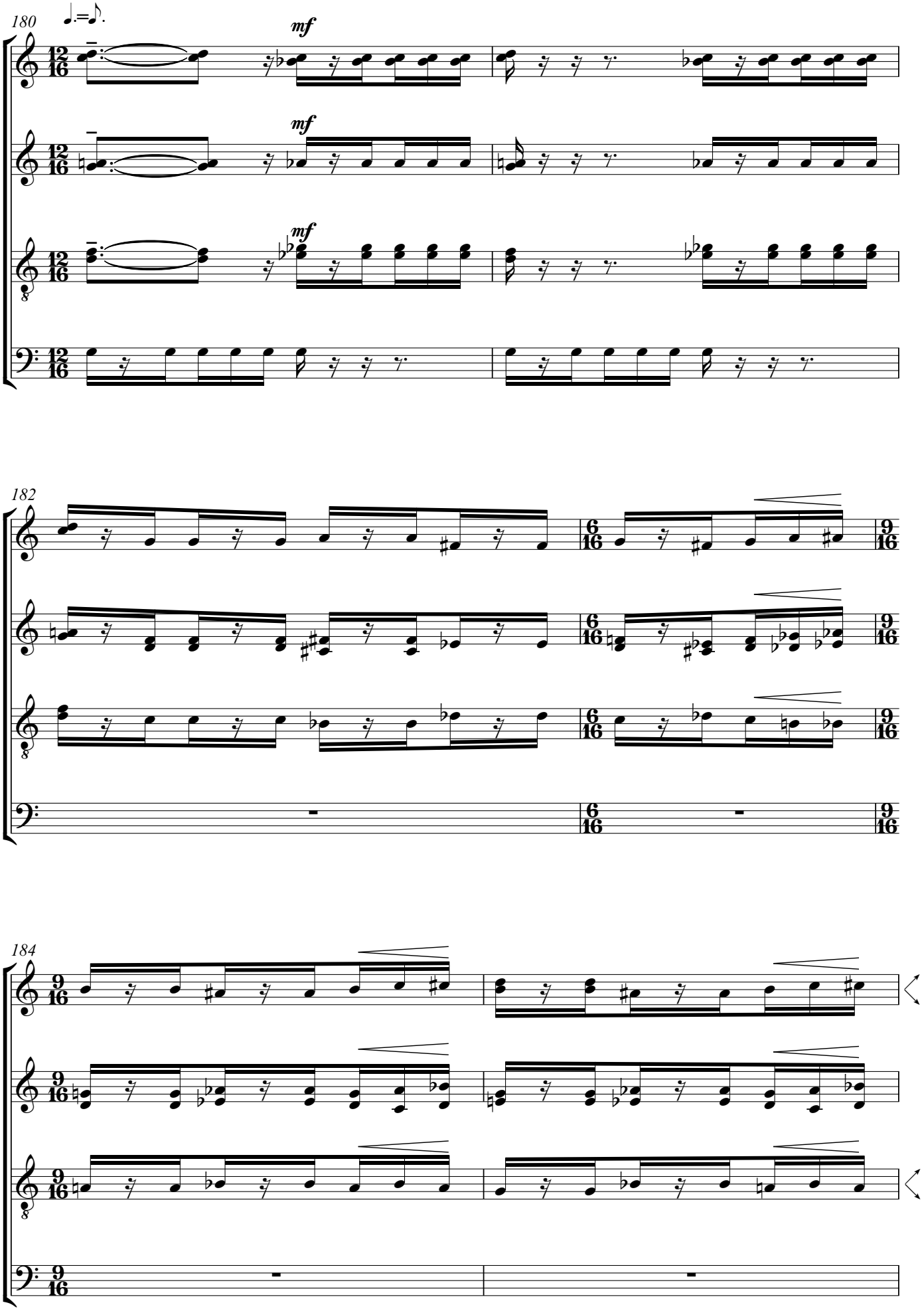

163
S1
S2
A1
A2
T
B
f
f


166
S
A1
A2
T
B
f
f
mf
mf


169
S
A1
A2
T1
T2
B
f


172
S
A1
A2
T1
T2
B
p
mf


175
S
A1
A2
T1
T2
B
ff
177


180
mf
mf
mf
182
184

(7"-9") **Strepitoso**

186

S1 — *f* — *ad lib.* — *sempre crescendo*

S2 — *f* — *ad lib.* — *sempre crescendo*

A — *f* — *etc. ad lib.* — *sempre crescendo*

T1 — *f* — *etc. ad lib.* — *sempre crescendo*

T2 — *f* — *ad lib.* — *sempre crescendo*

B — *f* — *ad lib.* — *sempre crescendo*

187

S1 — *ff*

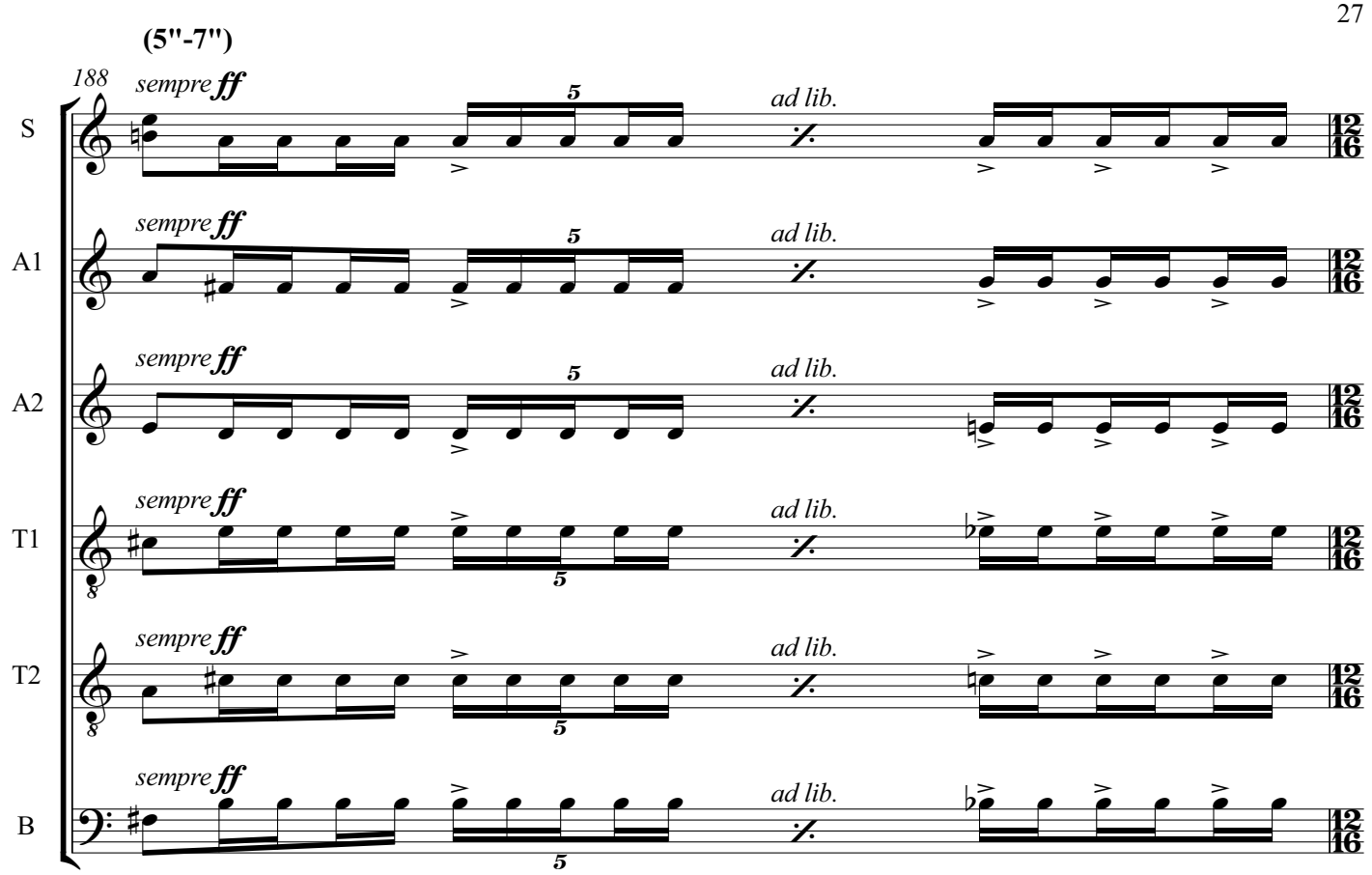
S2 — *ff*

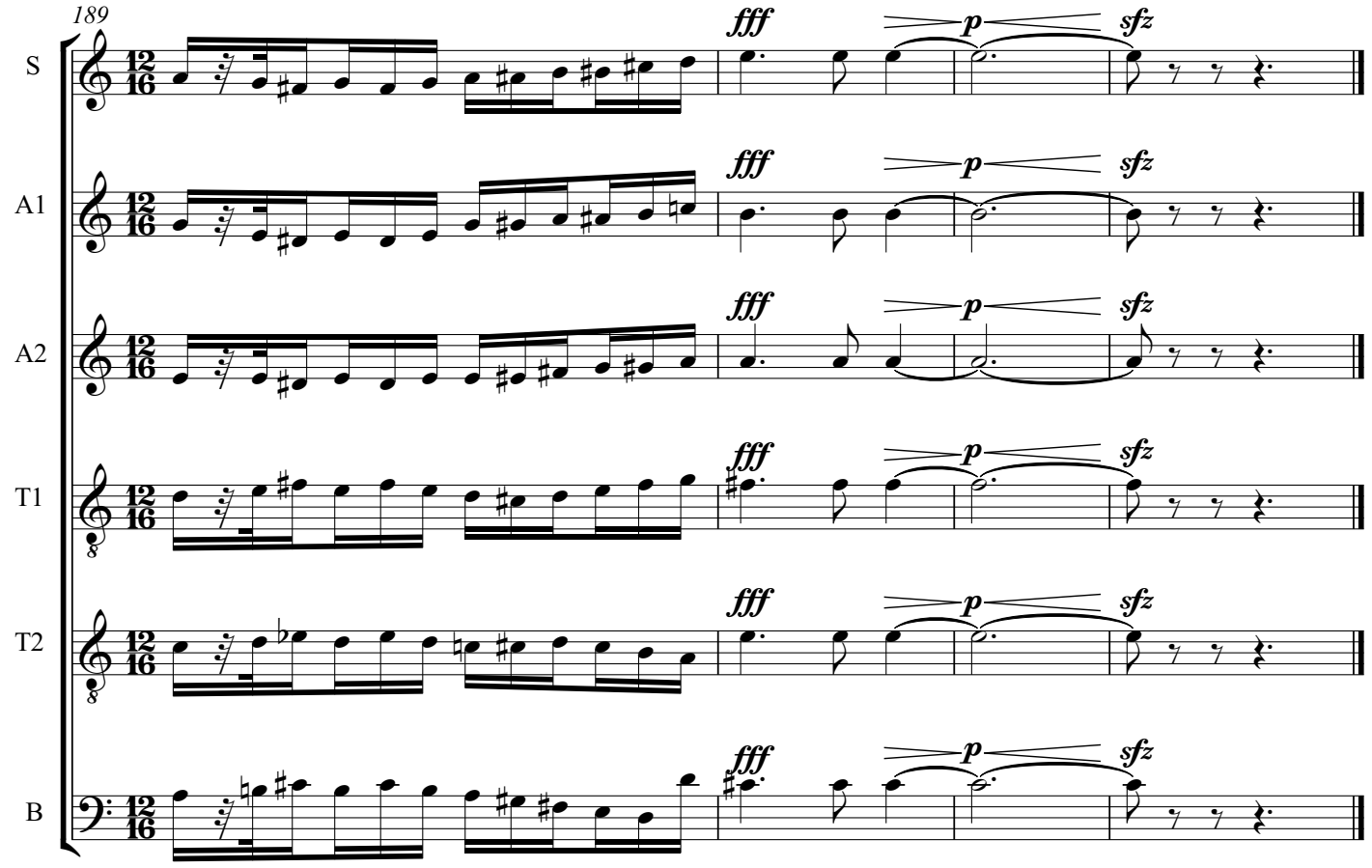
A — *ff*

T1 — *ff*

T2 — *ff*

B — *ff*


(5"-7")
188
S
A1
A2
T1
T2
B
sempre ff
ad lib.
5
12/16


189
S
A1
A2
T1
T2
B
fff
p
sfz
12/16