Luis F. Laya

"ELEMENTS"

Little String Quartet

I. Earth
II. Wind
III. Water
IV. Fire

(2019)

String Quartet

- Violin I
- Violin II
- Viola
- Violoncello

Approximate Length: 11'45" ca.

Level of Instrumental Difficulty: ***Level A*** *(Intermediate)*

"Work composed for the Composition Competition Piero Farulli, Music is a Gift to Share, third edition 2019"

Motivations and Didactic Goals

As a composer and music instructor, I have been witnessing what seems a reality in the music curriculum in general. There's a gap in the instruction among the common practice, music between XVII and XIX centuries circa, and the music that begins to arise from the early XX century. That "new music", not so new now, gradually was changing paradigms that open the gate to a universe of expanding possibilities in the music composition ground. That common practice, in fact, doesn't disappear at all, by the contrary, it begins a merging process almost at the same time modern resources were appearing; old and new practices made fusion, and provide today's composers with an immense - wide spectrum of sonorities. That gap I mentioned can be seen in almost all areas of music instruction, and chamber music repertoire is not the exception. 20th and 21st-century repertoire are usually treated as advanced and left it for the final years of practice in many conservatories and music faculties. In the string quartets repertoire, which concerns us directly at this time, we can observe this kind of breach in between the study of classic-romantics masterworks as Beethoven and Schubert among many others, and those works of their homonyms Ravel, Shostakovich, Bartók, Schömberg and Lutoslawski, only for name those that come to my mind. I think is needed new works that cover the technique, structural, timbrical and harmonic breaches at a level that allow young interpreters at the early stages of their instruction to begin to feel more comfortable with modern works.

This is exactly the spot where I believe that "ELEMENTS", the work that I present to you now, can contribute to the progressive filling of that gap.
This string quartet, as the neo-classical work it is, combines the structure of classic-romantic four movements standard, with expanded tonal harmony, articulations, bowing techniques, and timbrical resources more usually encountered in 20th-century works. In fact, "ELEMENTS" allows the young player to, for example, understand the sonata form in a much shorter work than in Beethoven's with sonorities commonly find in more modern works and even cinematic music as well.

In the same vein, the four movements, each one named as one of the natural elements in western-culture, were structured in the traditional way: I. "Earth", is sonata form developed with an expanded tonal plan inspired in Bartók's systems; II. "Wind", a simple ABA lied with a barely static approach; III. "Water", is the *scherzo*, with its traditional trio section; and last but not least, IV. "Fire" is developed in the Rondo form with its own expansions of the tonal plan.

Continuing with the didactic subject, in each movement, there are technical difficulties carefully treated to be taken as appropriate challenges for the intermediate level interpreters, without becoming threats to their development process. Playing techniques as *pizzicato quasi chitarra*, both natural and artificial harmonics, and multiple stops are presented in a context that permits achievement without raising too much the psychoanalyst's bill! As a matter of fact, the *pizzicati quasi chitarra* that begins the first movement are made using open strings only doing it far more easy to play in combination with the subsequent section.

The first movement is also presented as a musical journey through different textures; rhythm changes, using of Latin American rhythms, and even a *Fugato* in the development. All of this to help in the growth of the young player knowledge.

The second movement, on the other hand, is simpler in its approach as it is a study of harmonics playing. There are natural and artificial harmonics, as well as harmonics *glissando* throughout this movement that creates a minimalistic-static background for the expressive melodies. I was thinking of including this movement in the piece because, in my experience, harmonics playing techniques are frequently underdeveloped by young players.

The third movement, the traditional *scherzo*, is taken from the second without continuity solution and was wrote in a similar way to a baroque-suite dance. It was thought to serve as a practice of the *leggiero* bowing techniques for the style, but in a different harmonic context in wich, frequent changes of harmonic areas could present a challenge.

Last but not least the fourth movement, which was structured as a Rondo form, present various didactic challenges to the players. Among them the use of Bartók (slap) pizzicato and the recurrent fast repeated bow. This last serves as an emotional motor since it causes the sensation of very high difficulty, but as the pitch changes are not so fast it is not really so hard to play. In section B, we have the repeated bow but in a soft-*espressivo* context that adds a new dimension to the resource. In the end, C section presents a new variation of the main theme from the first movement, this time presented as a "Joropo", a very fast traditional musical form from Venezuela. And at the end of the Coda, we return to the harmonics remembering the second movement sonorities.

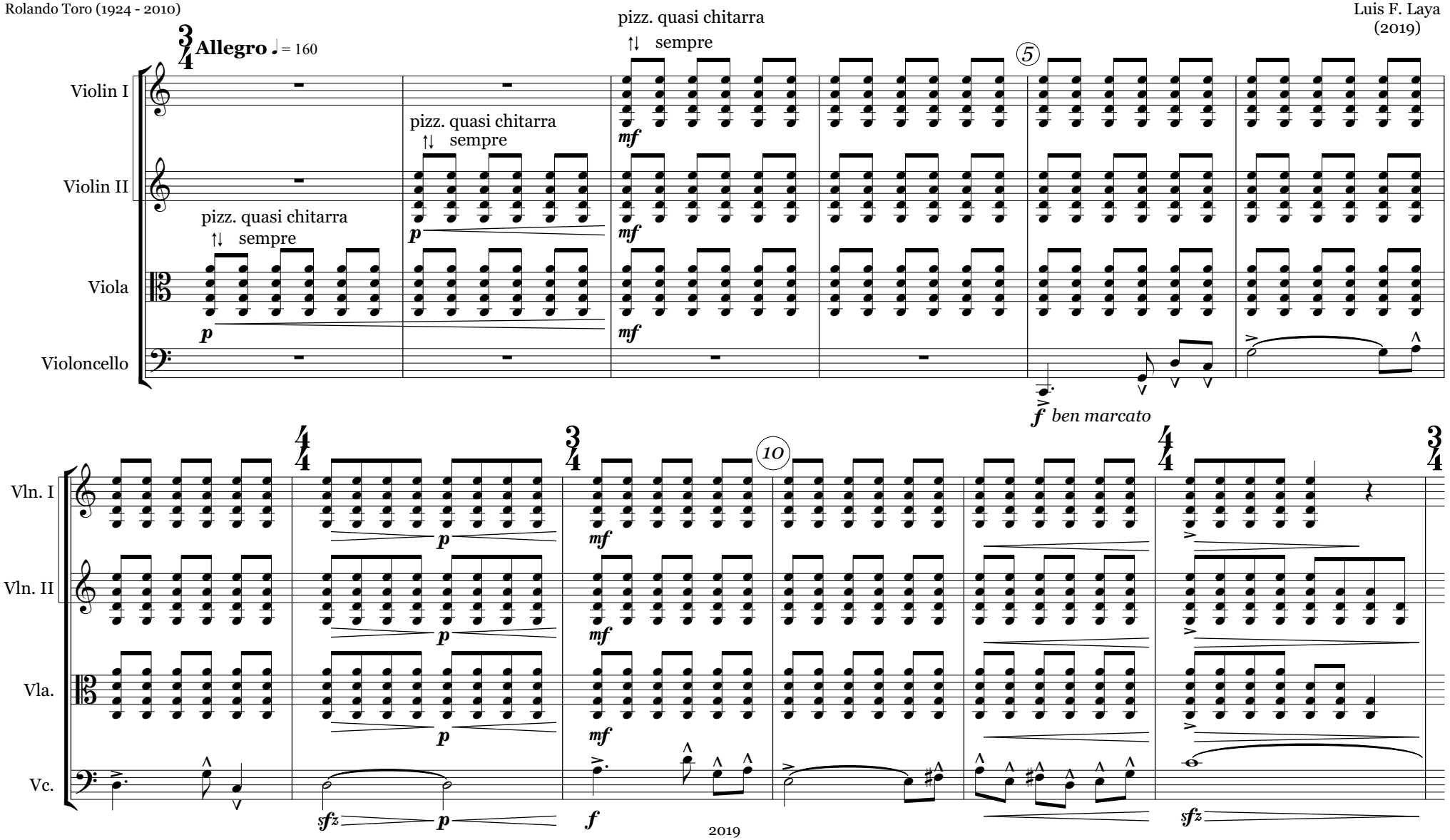
"I am the Earth
I am the Earth that receives the seed.
I am the kiss and the uterus,
I am the Earth and all the fruits.
I am the one who feeds and the one who is fed.(...)"

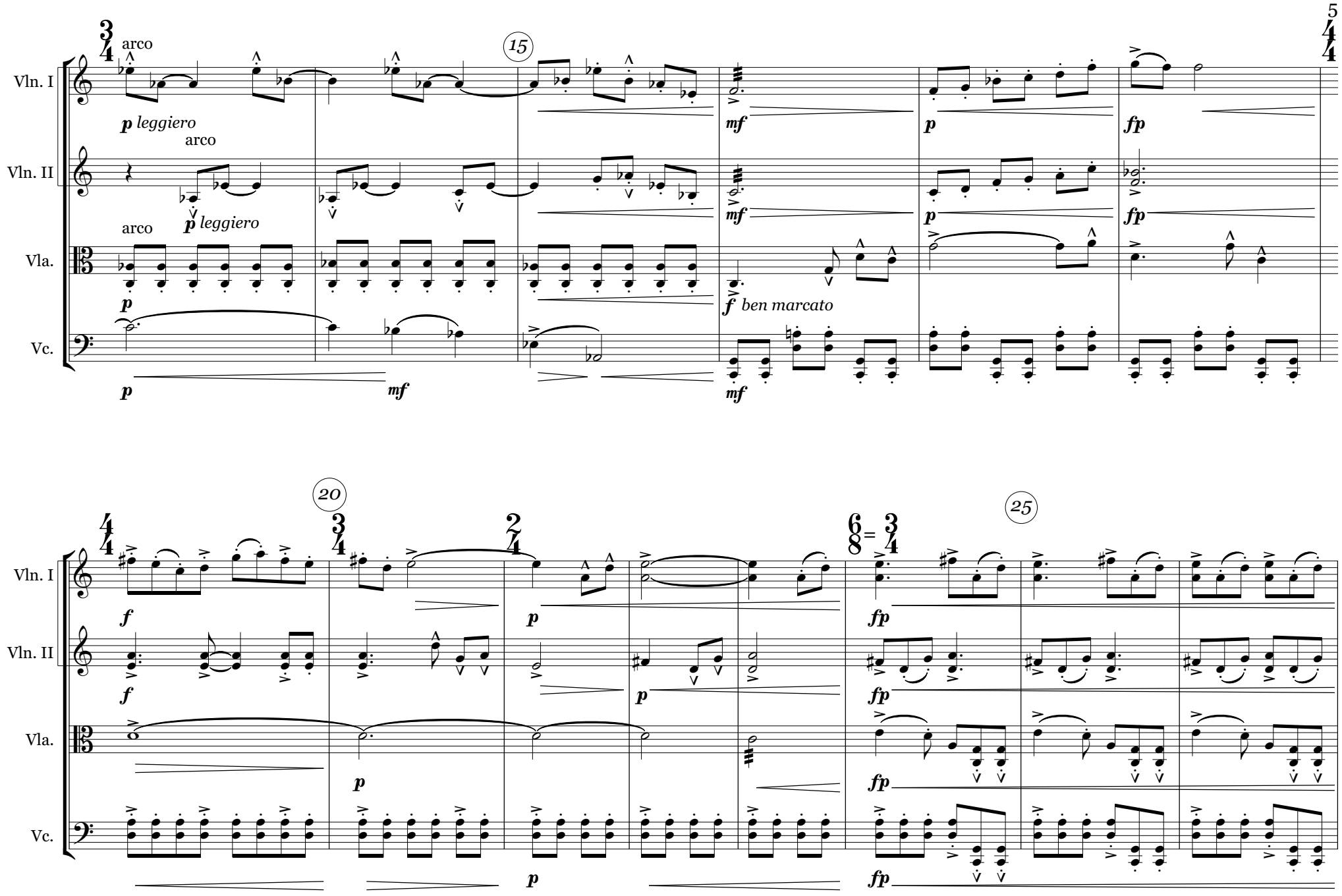
"ELEMENTS"

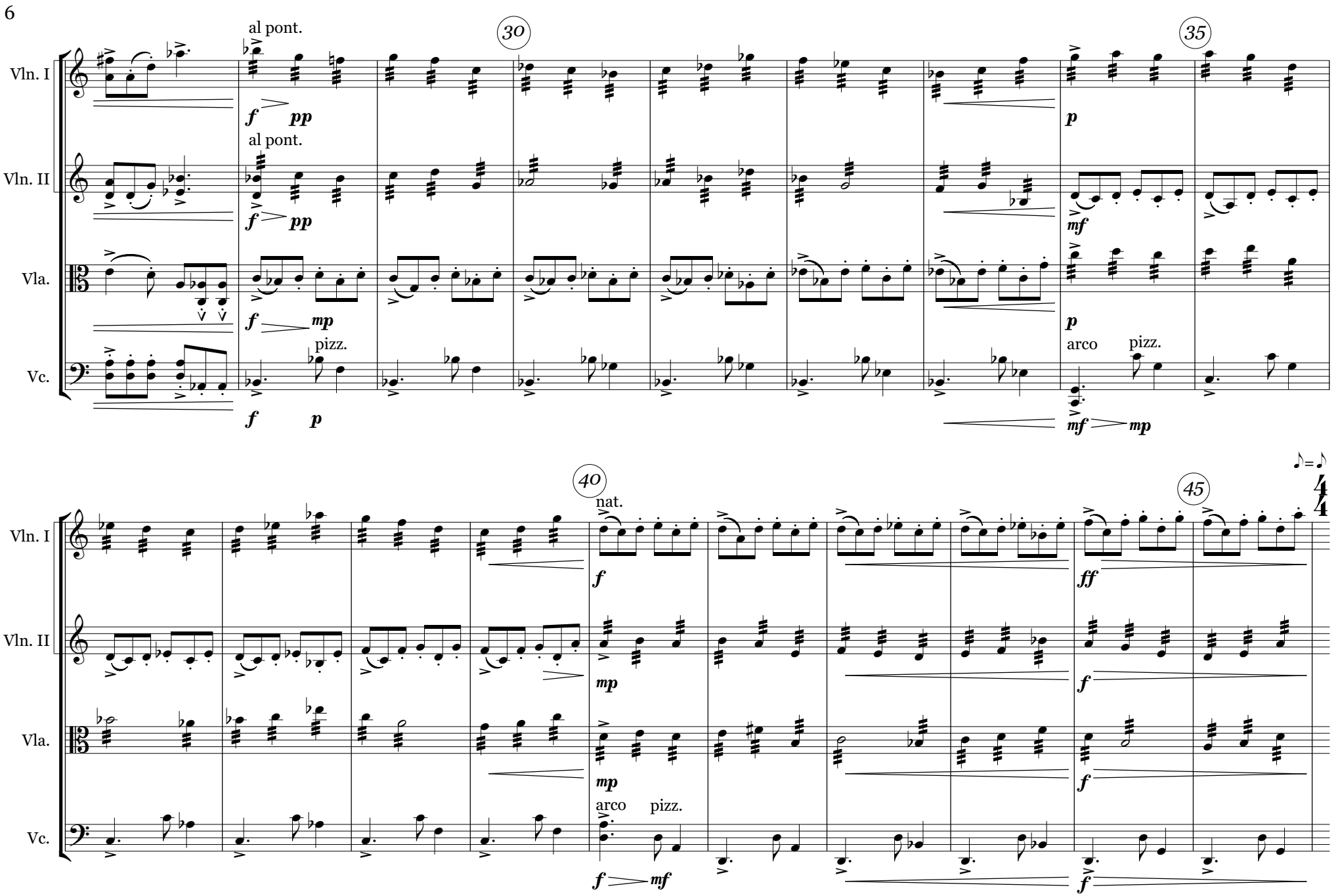
I. Earth

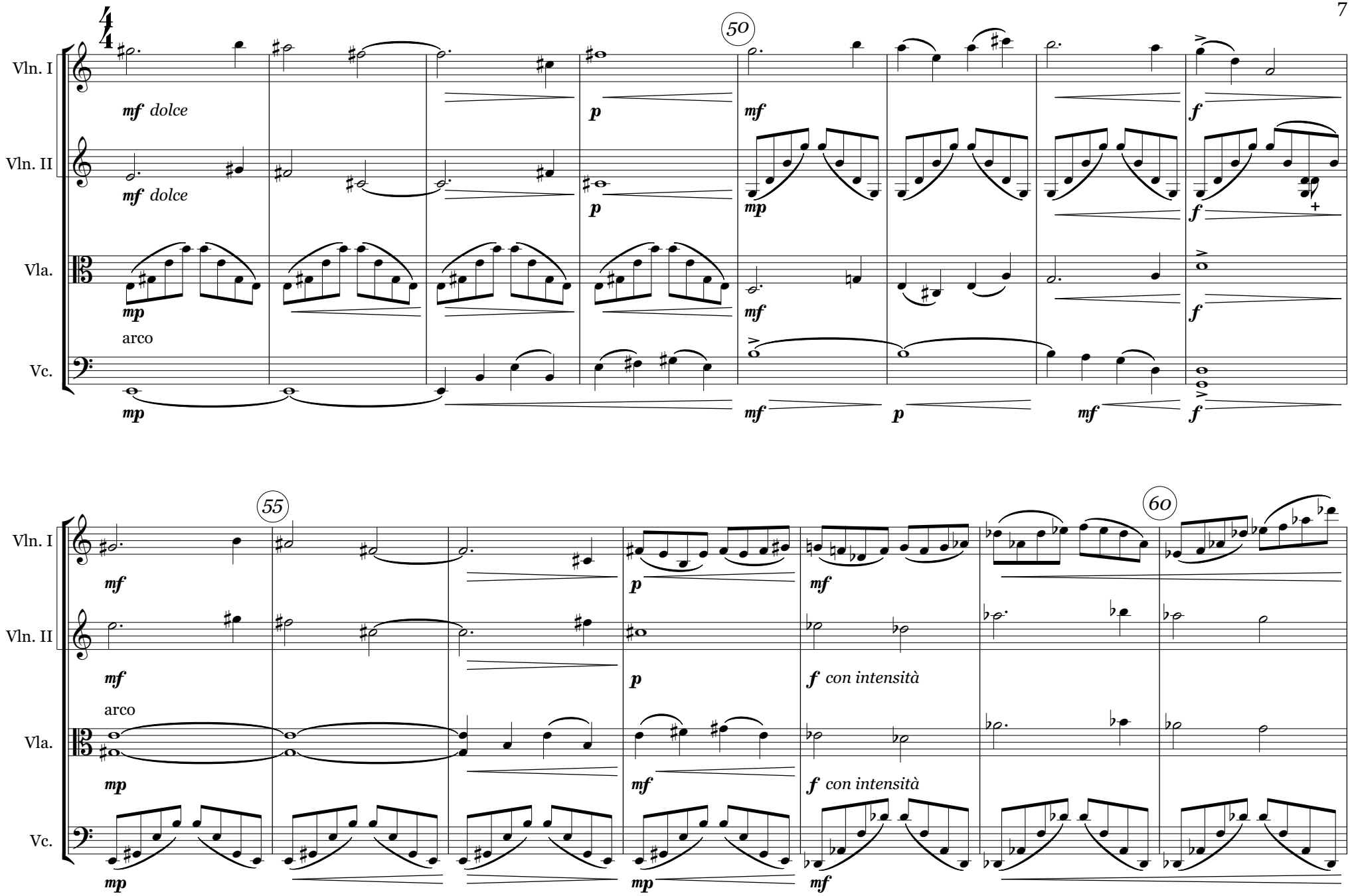
Rolando Toro (1924 - 2010)

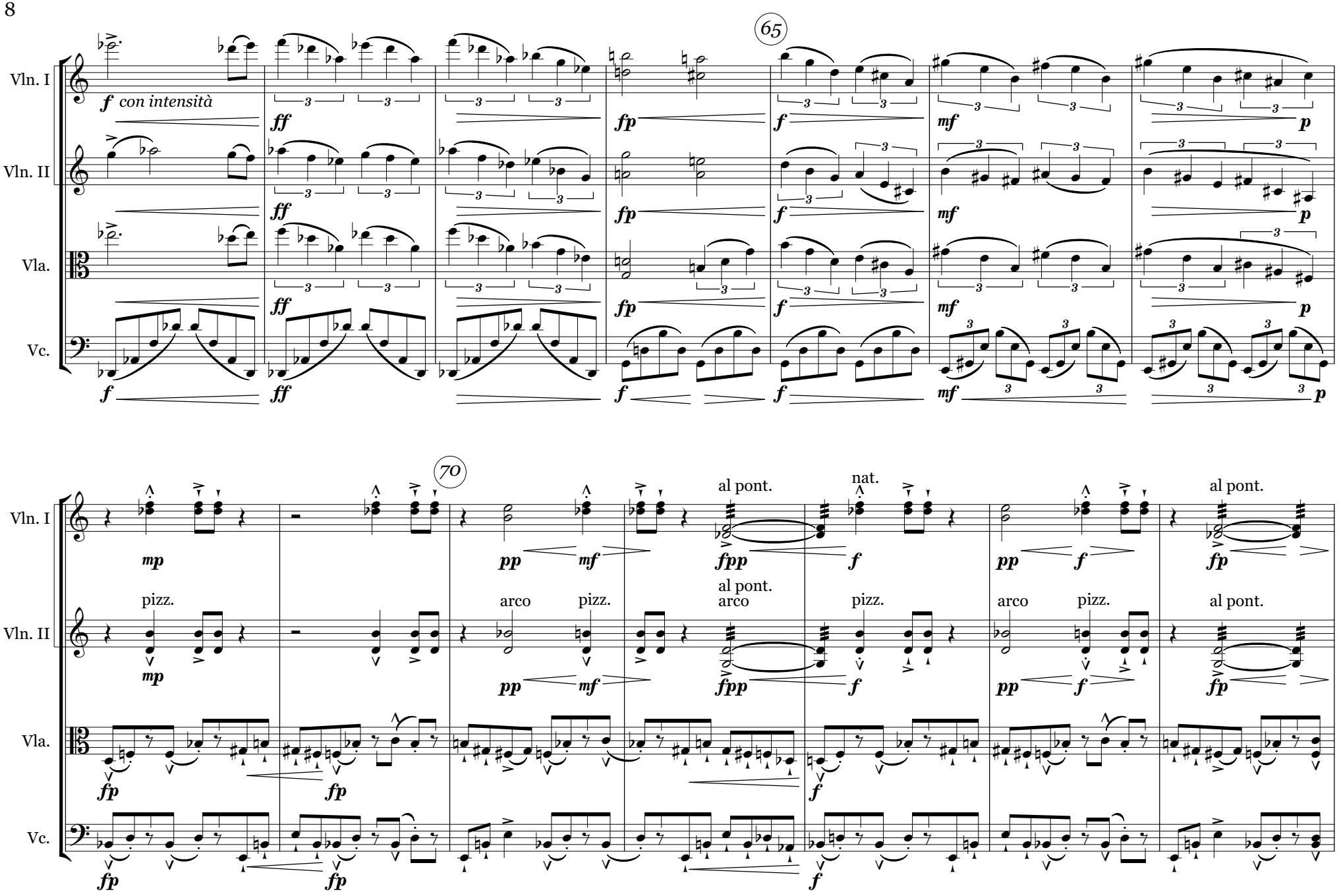
Luis F. Laya
(2019)

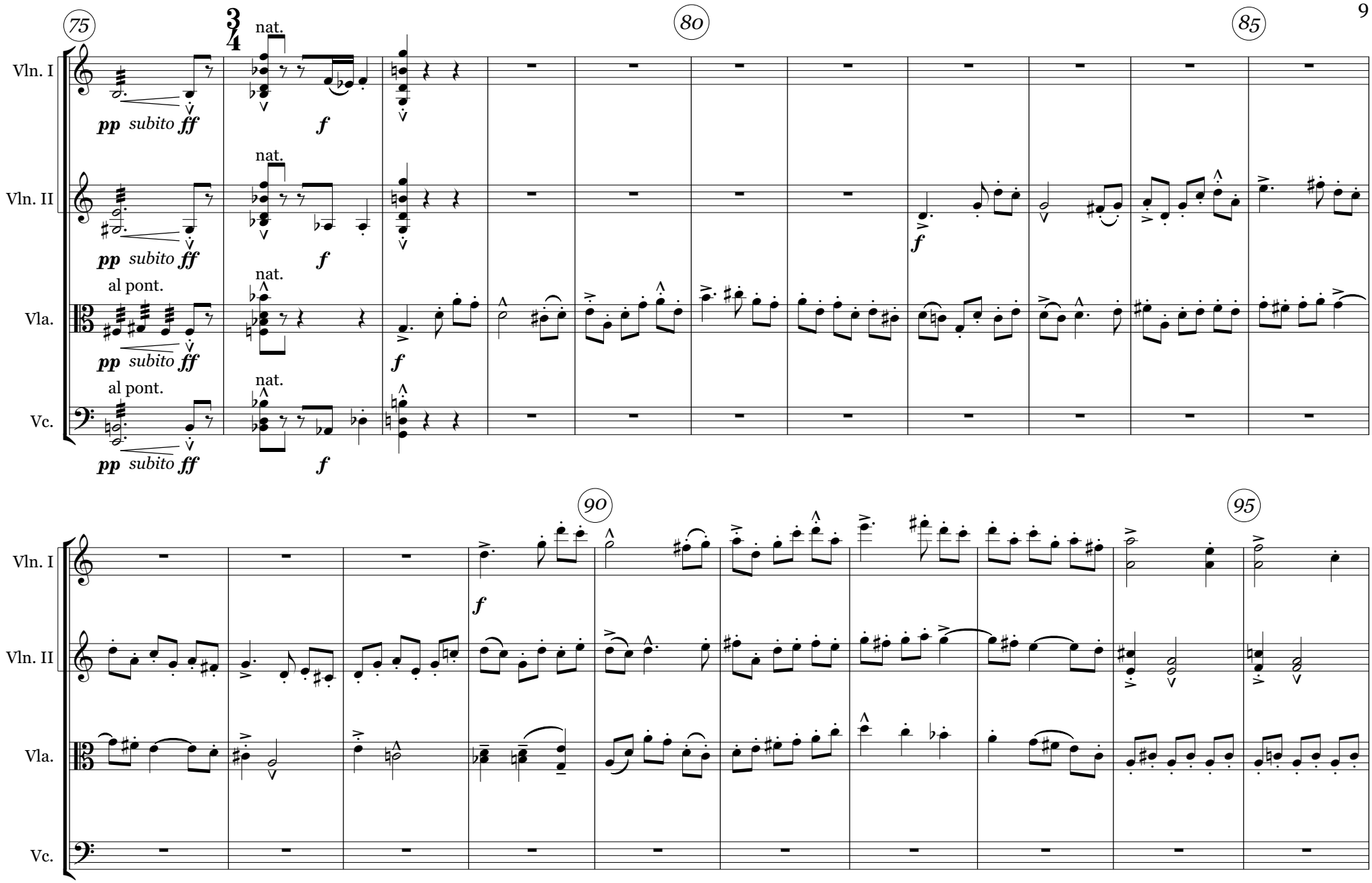


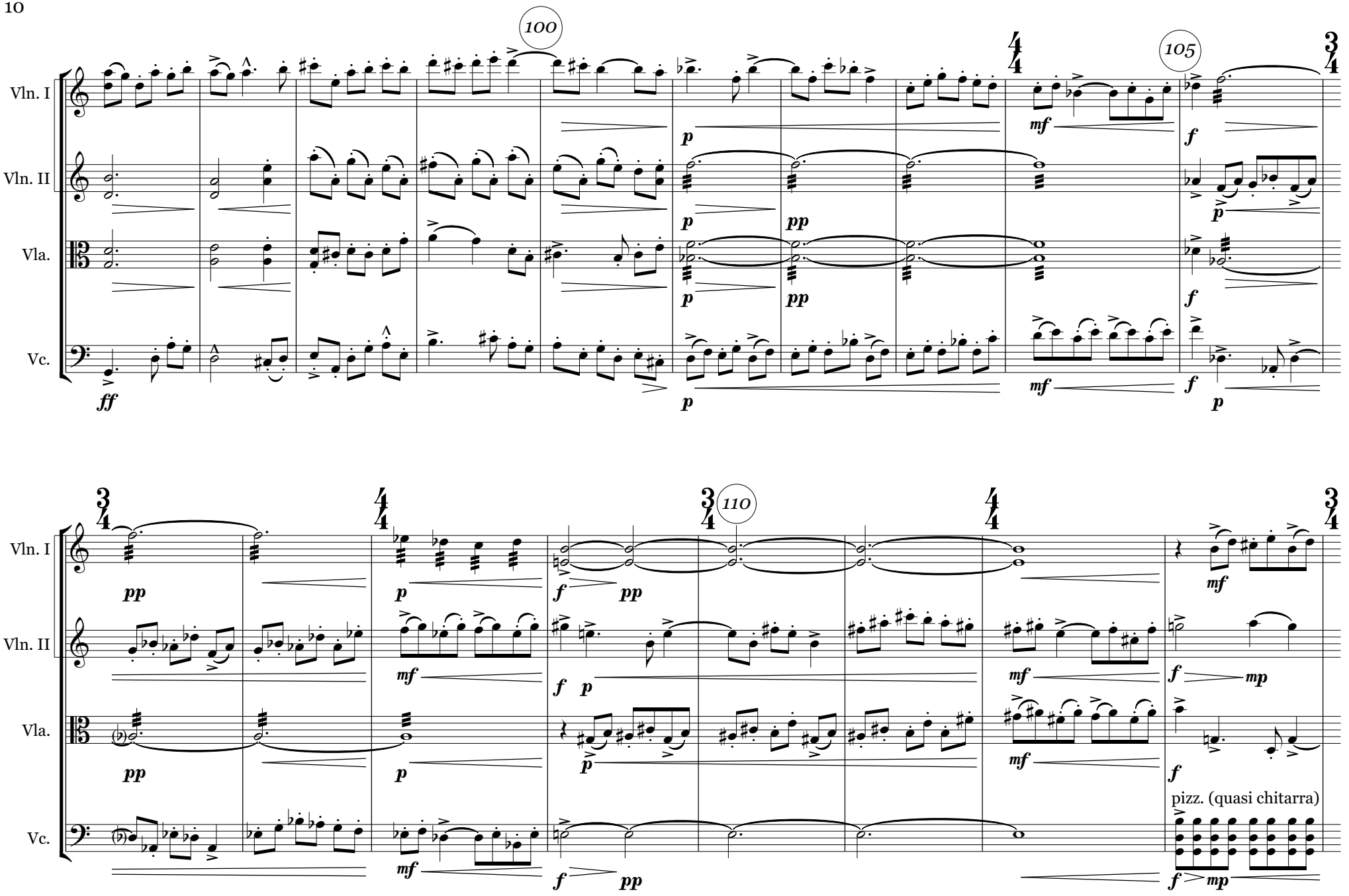

5
15
20
25
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
arco
p leggiero
mf
fp
f ben marcato
f
p

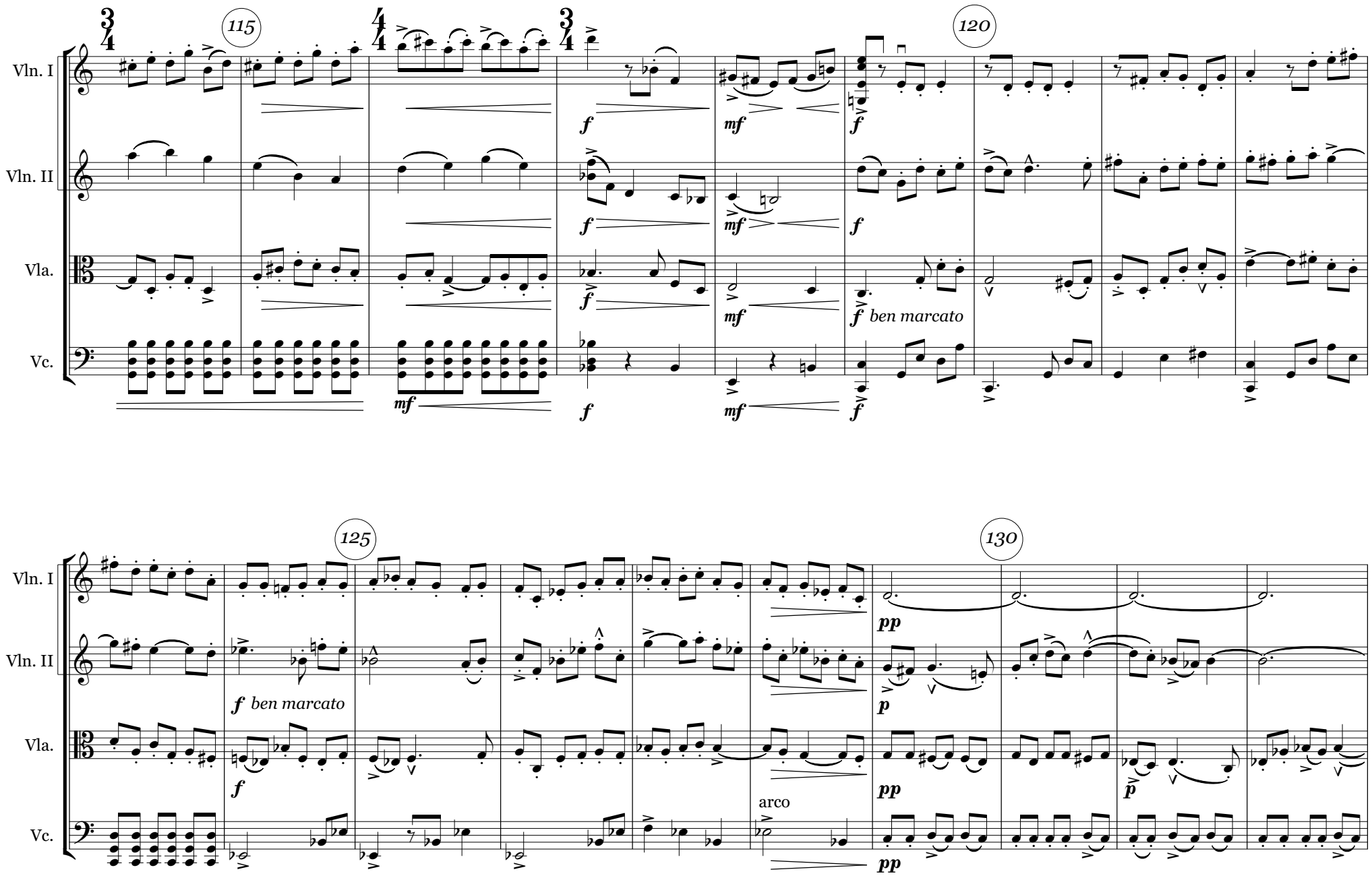

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
al pont.
30
35
pizz.
arco
40
nat.
45

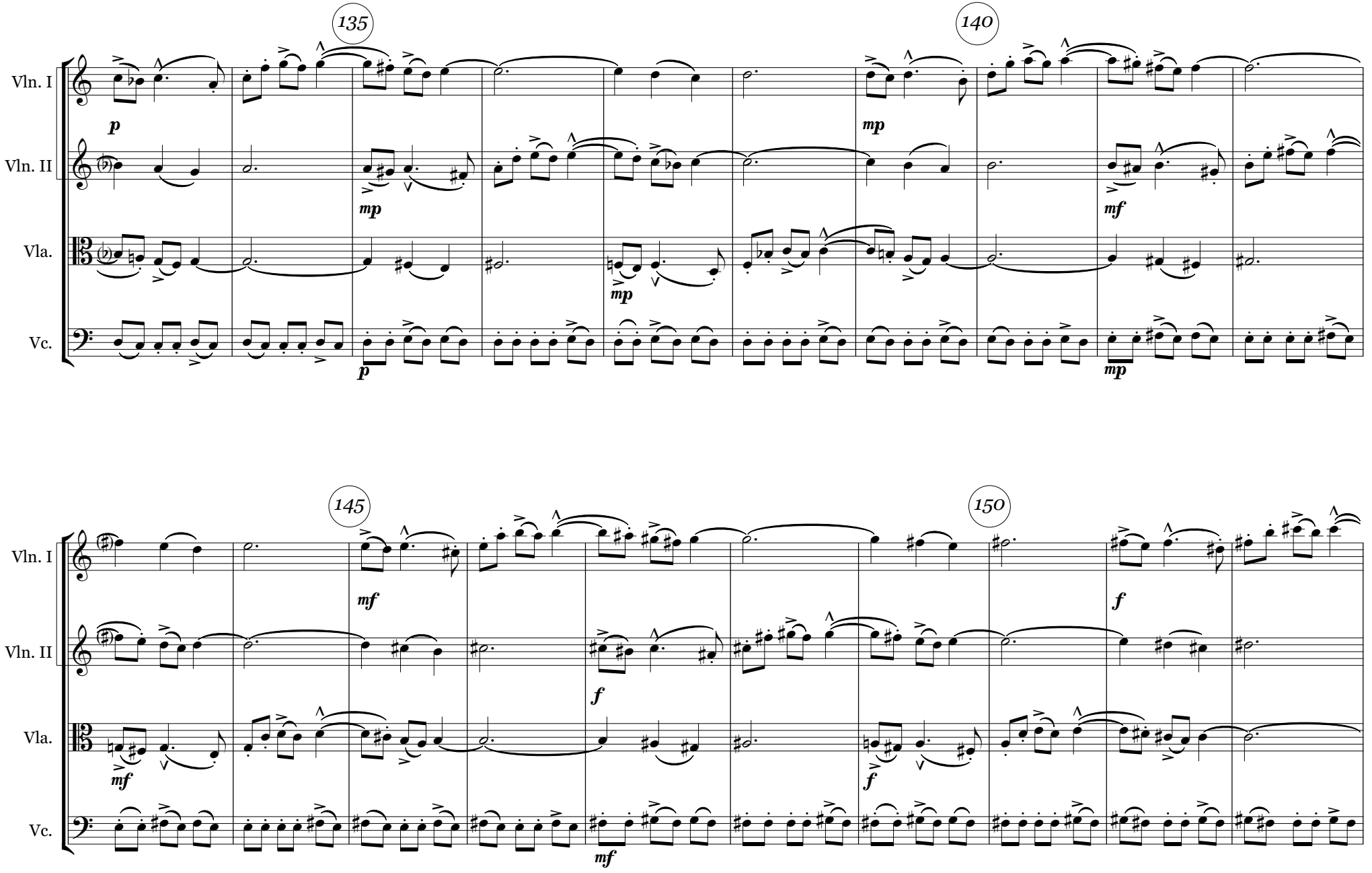

50
Vln. I
mf dolce
p
mf
f
Vln. II
mf dolce
p
mp
f
Vla.
mp
mf
f
arco
Vc.
mp
mf
p
mf
f
55
60
Vln. I
mf
p
mf
Vln. II
mf
p
f con intensità
arco
Vla.
mp
mf
f con intensità
Vc.
mp
mp
mf

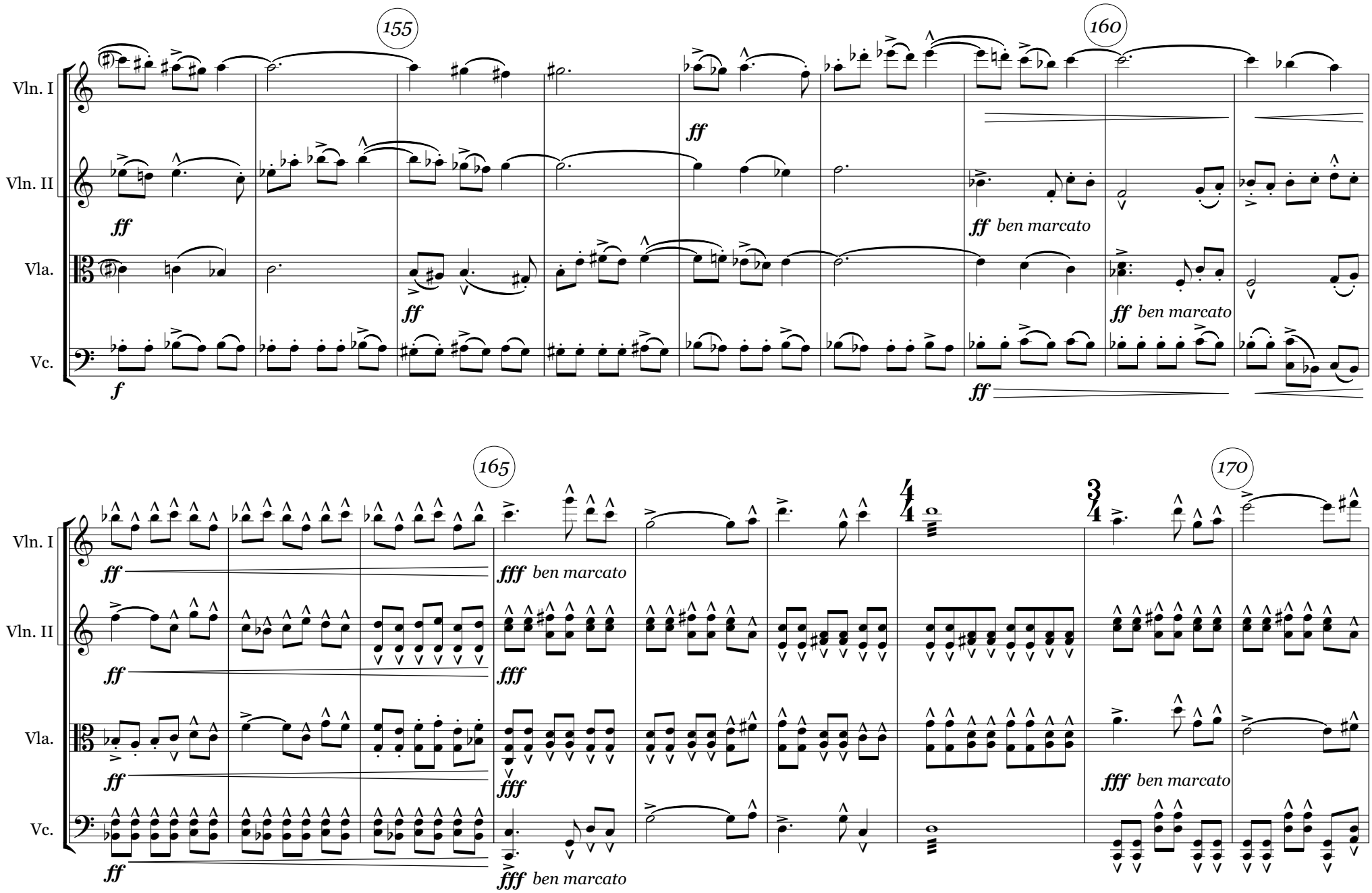

65
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
f con intensità
ff
fp
f
mf
p
70
mp
pp
mf
fpp
f
fp
pizz.
arco
al pont.
nat.

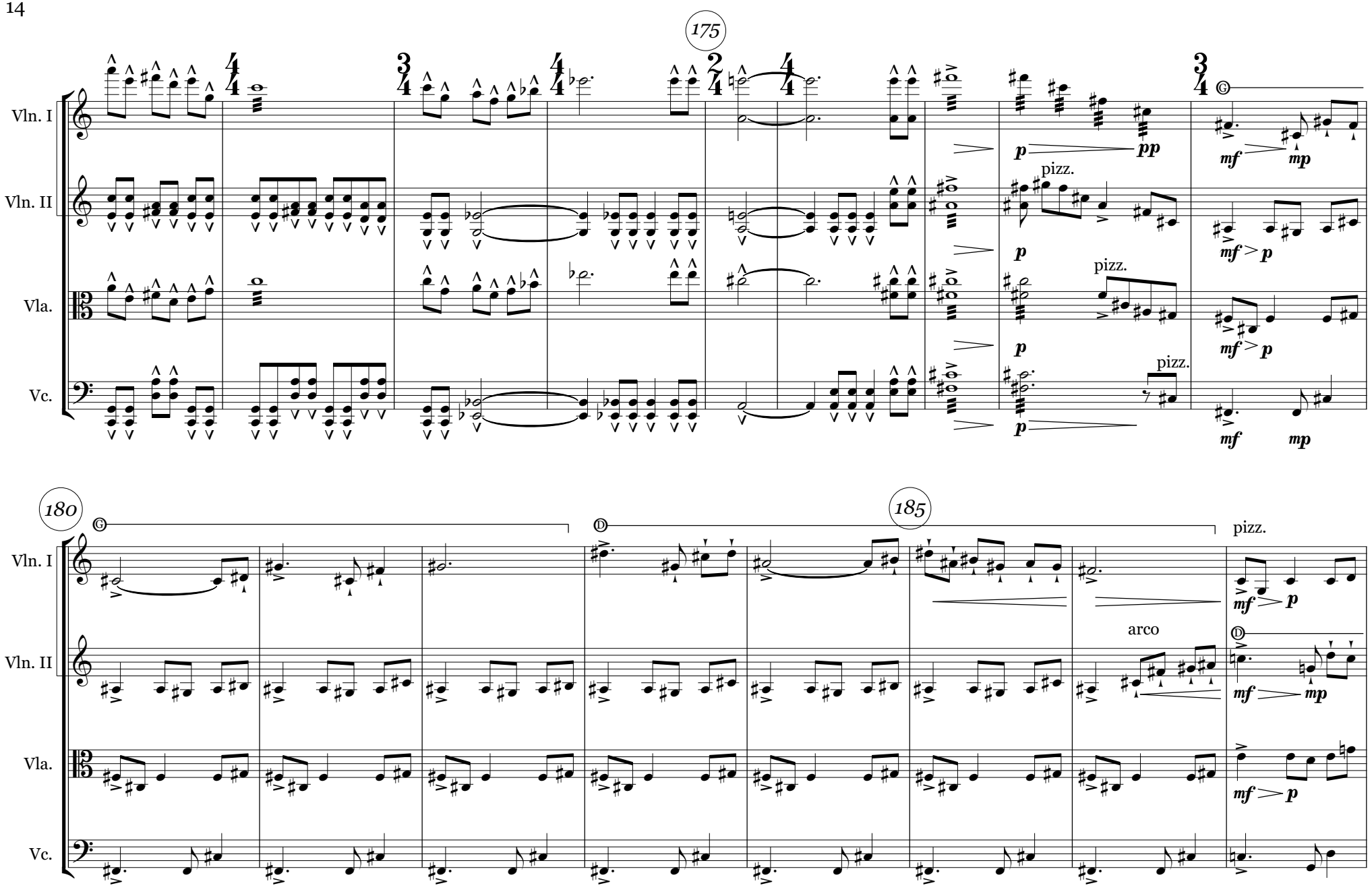

75
80
85
90
95
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
nat.
al pont.
pp subito ff
f

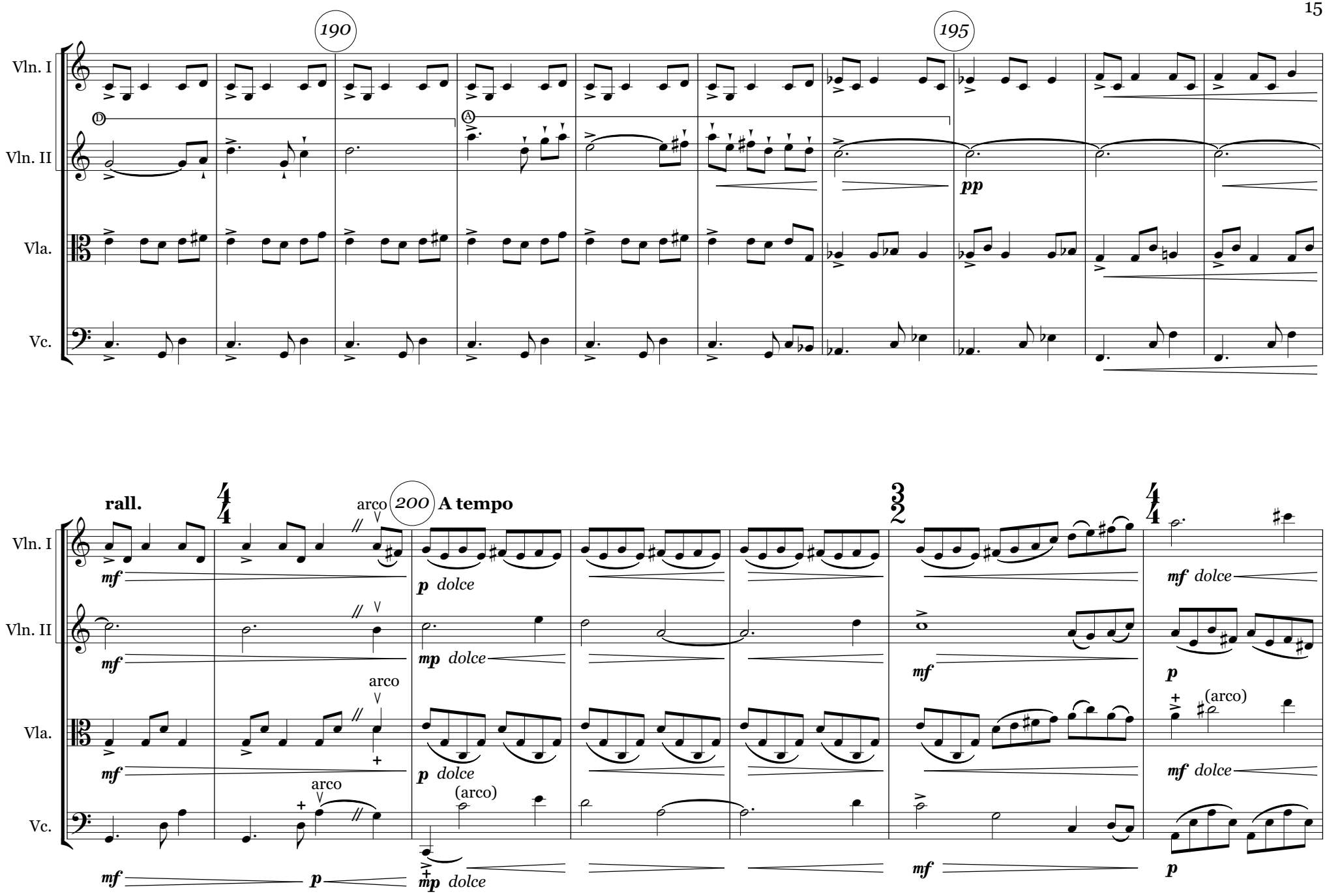

100
105
110
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pizz. (quasi chitarra)

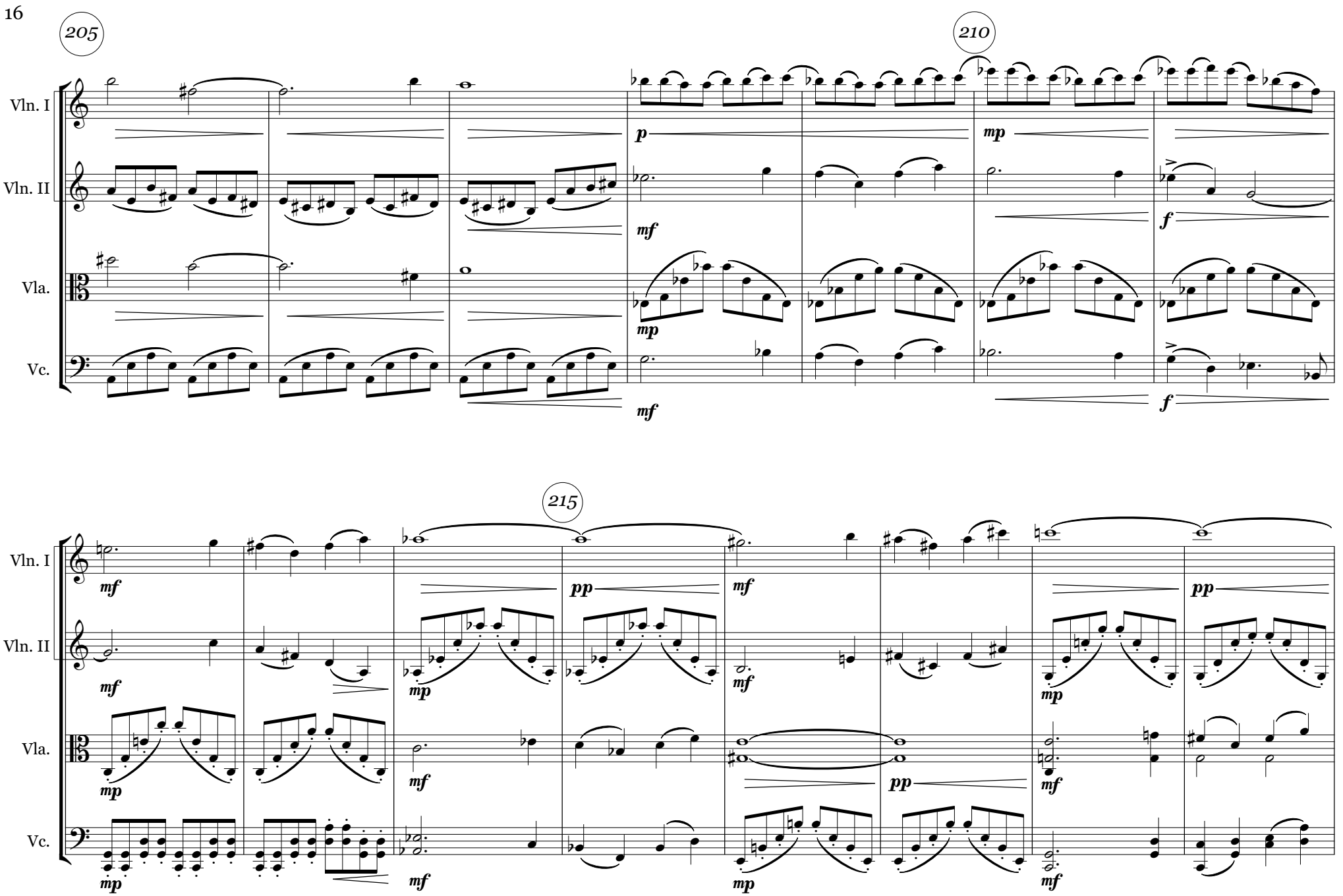

115
120
125
130
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
f
mf
ben marcato
pp
p
arco

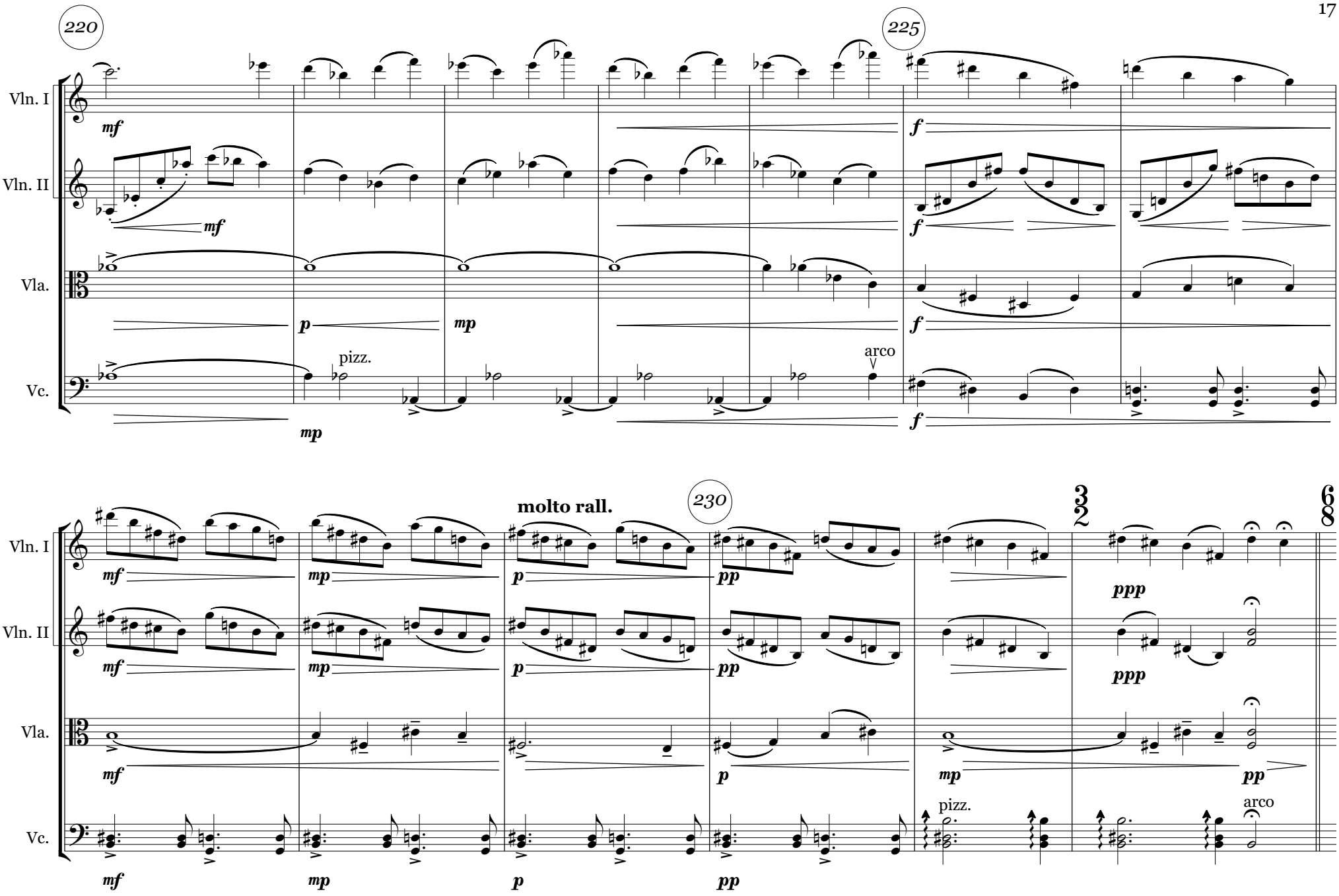

135
140
145
150
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
p
mp
mf
f

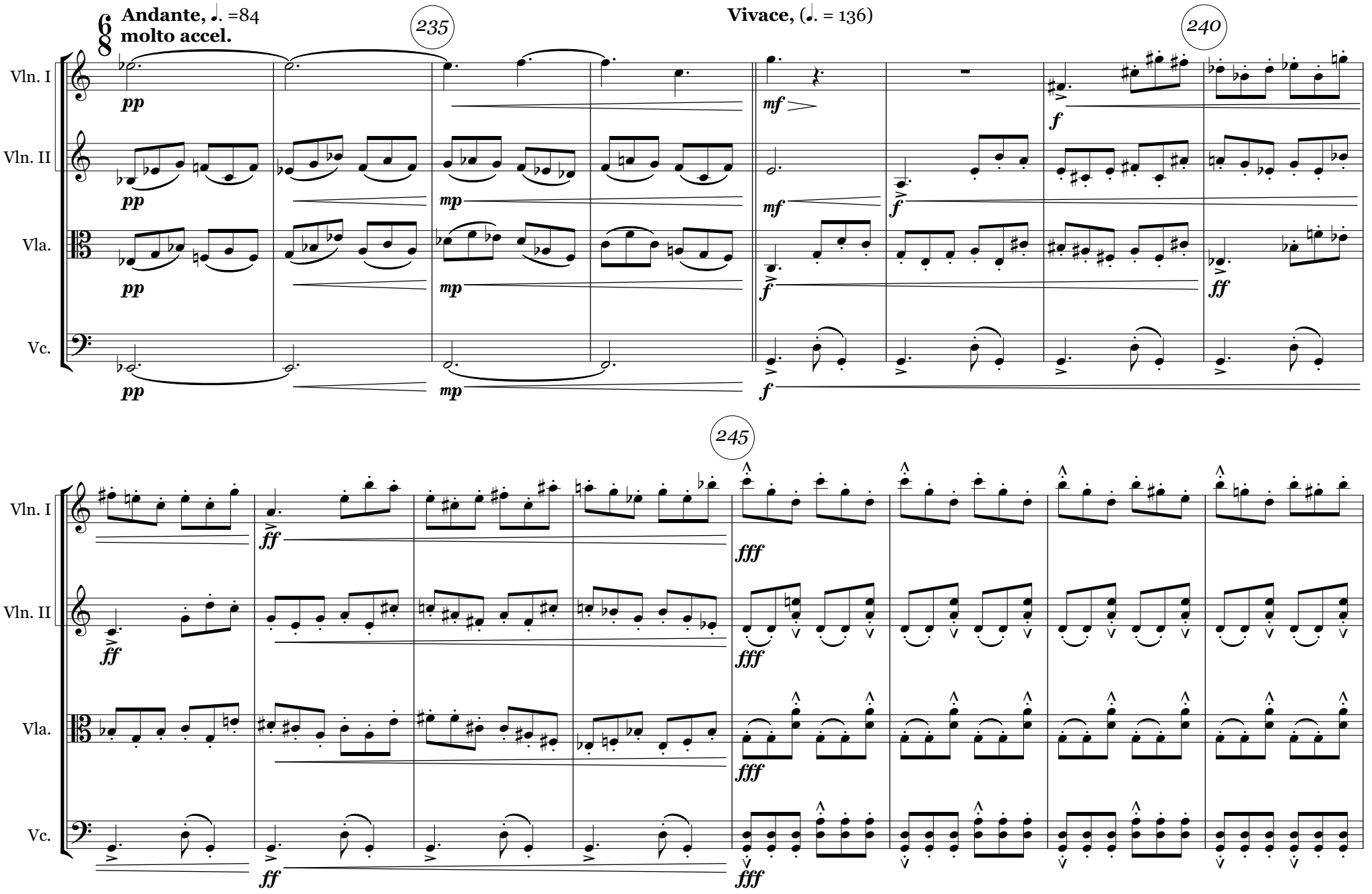

155
160
165
170
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
f
ff
ff ben marcato
fff ben marcato
4/4
3/4

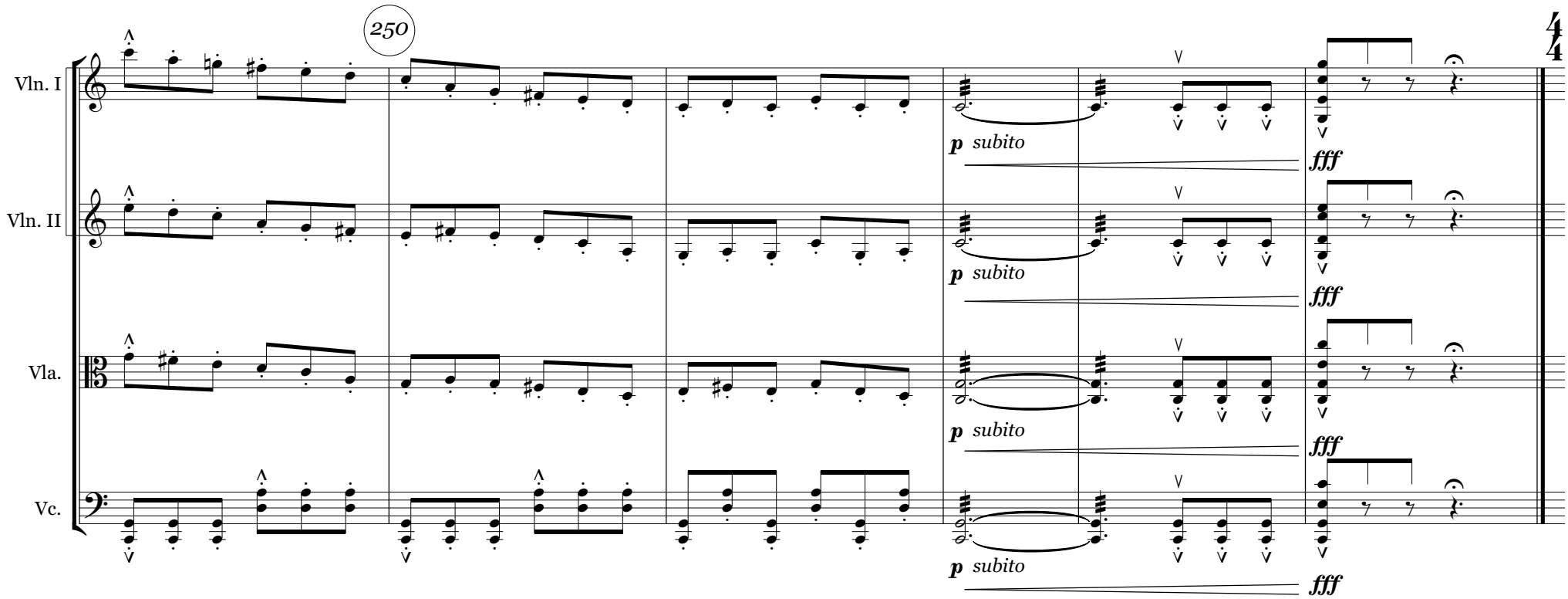

175
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pizz.
arco
180
185


190
195
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pp
rall.
arco
200
A tempo
mf
p dolce
mp dolce
(arco)
p


205
210
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
p
mf
mp
f
215
pp


220
225
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
mf
f
p
mp
pizz.
arco
molto rall.
230
pp
ppp
3/2
6/8

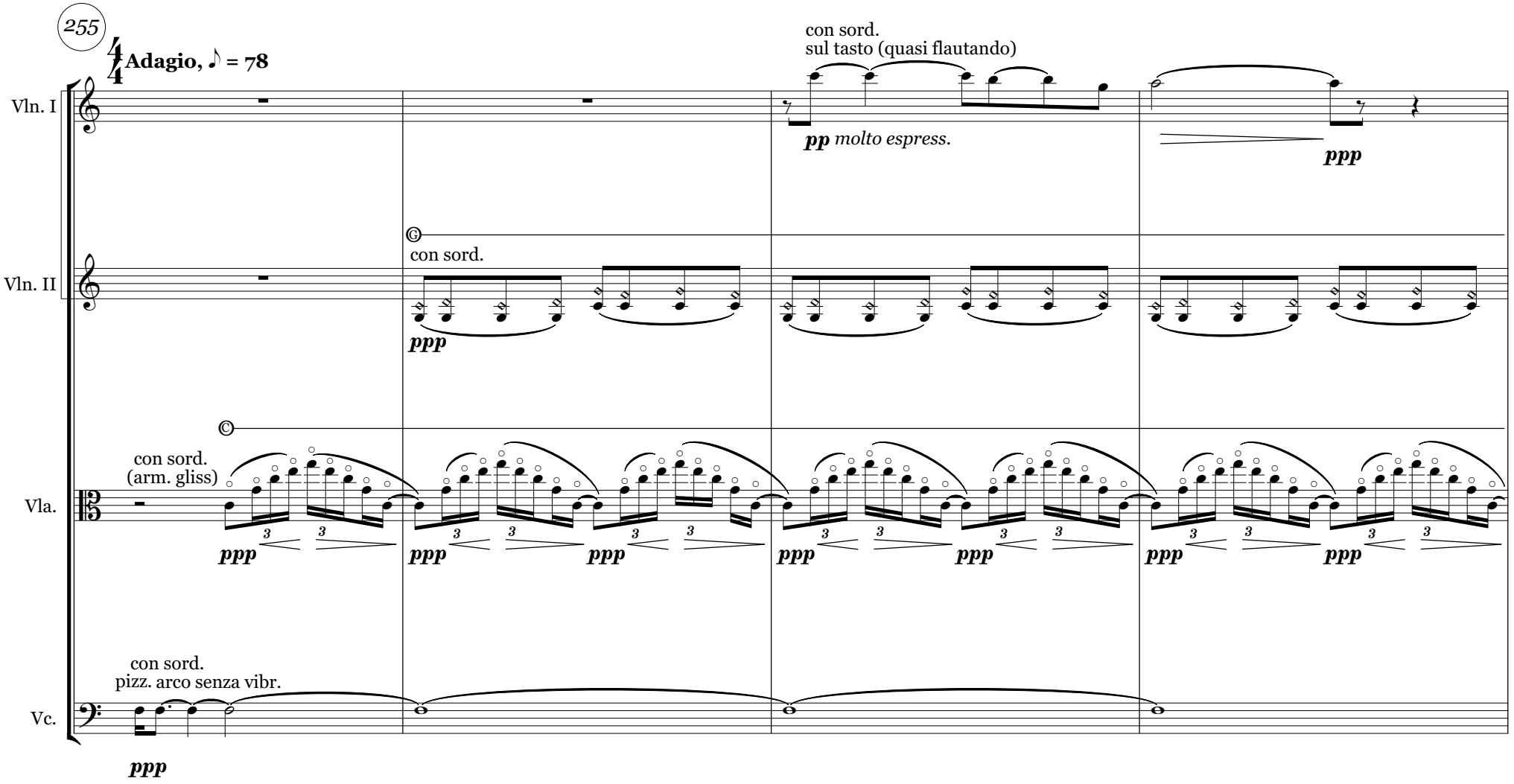

Andante, ♩. =84
molto accel.
235
Vivace, (♩. = 136)
240
245
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pp
mp
mf
f
ff
fff

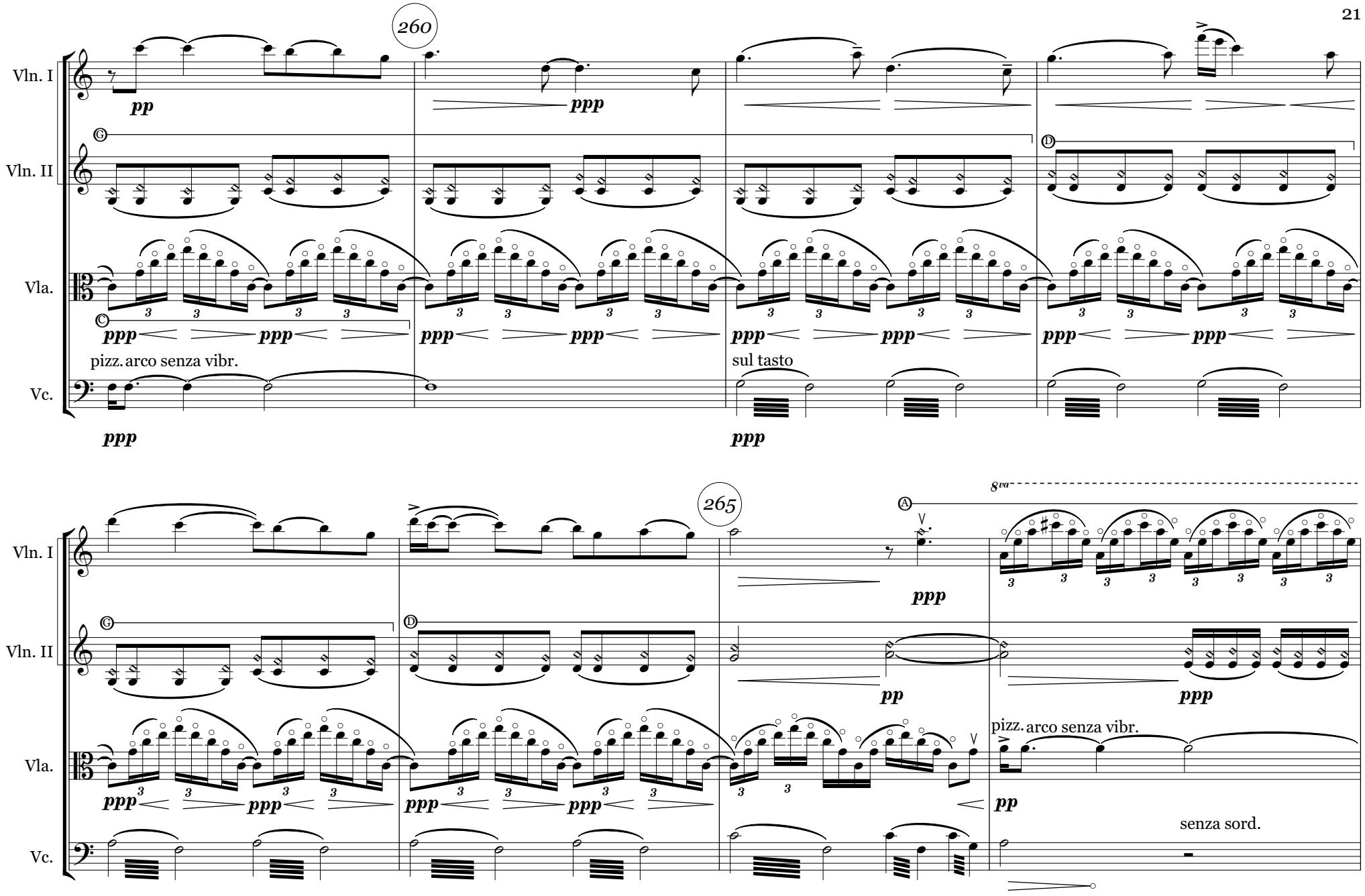

250
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
p subito
fff
4
4

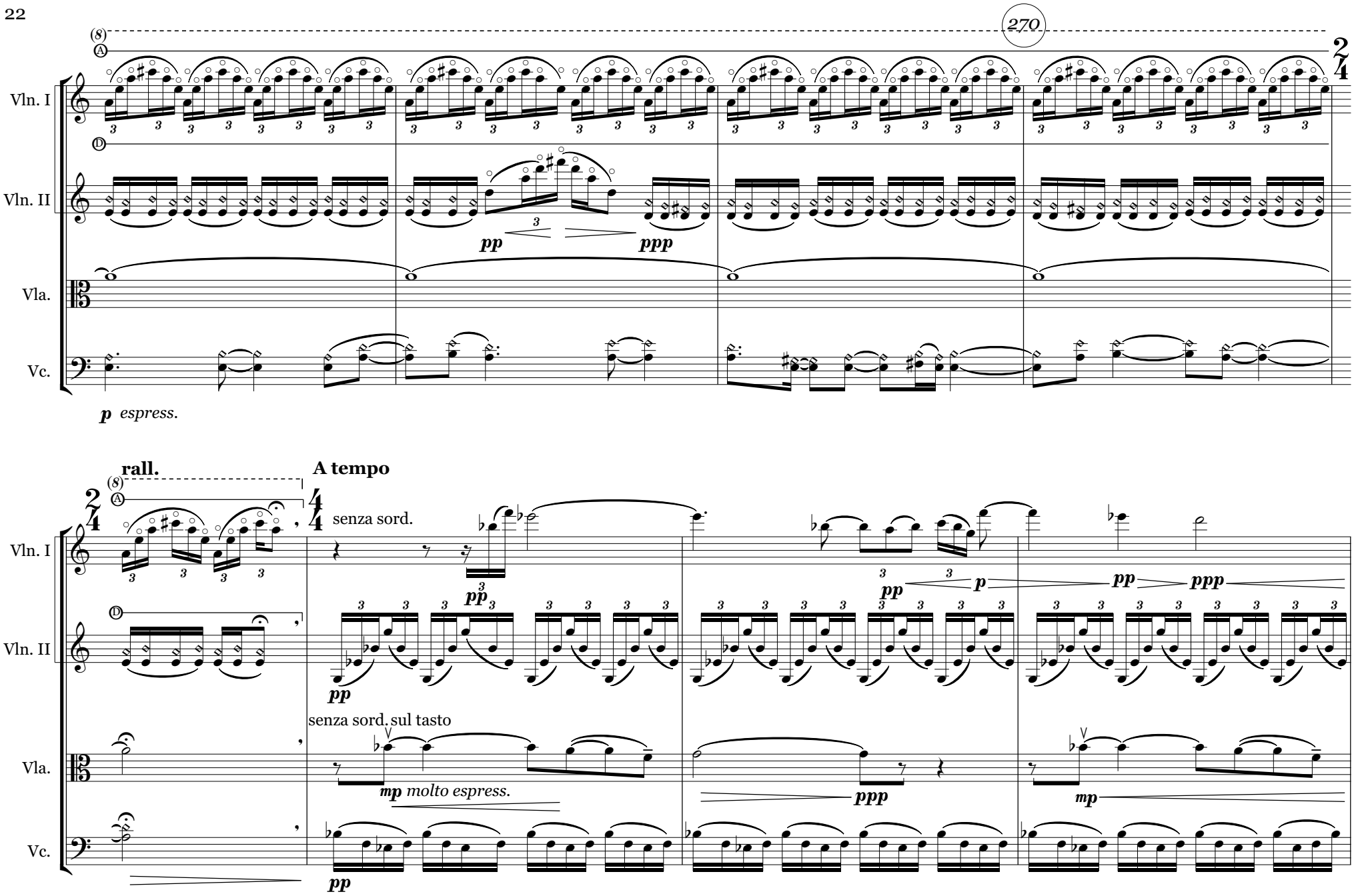
"I am the light wind that sustains the music;
I'm breathing
I am the wind sculptor of mountains.
I am the hurricane that is born from the eye of chaos.
I am the dream and the fantasy;
I am the Angel.
I am the breath of life."

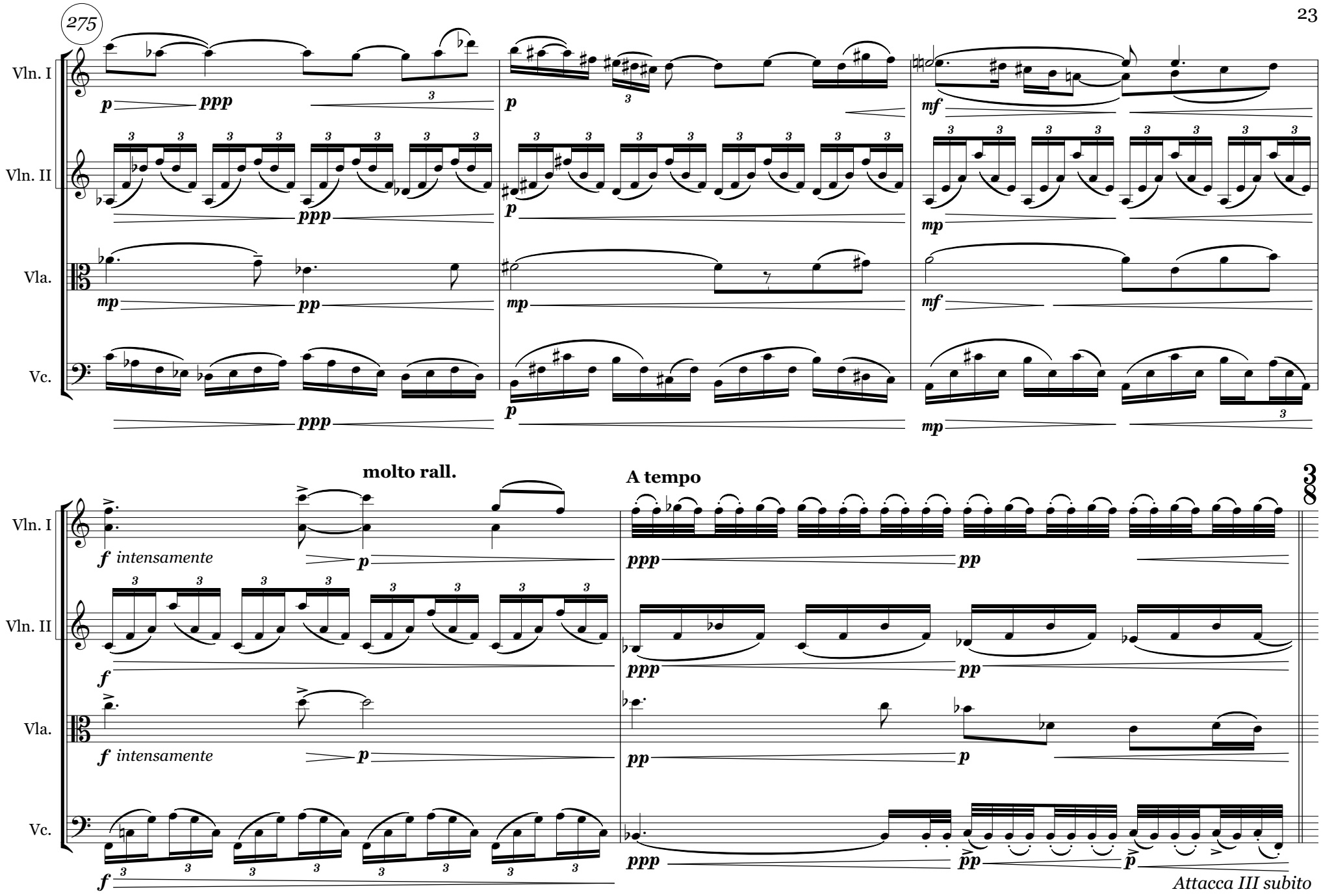
Rolando Toro (1924 - 2010)

II. Wind




260
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pp
ppp
pizz. arco senza vibr.
sul tasto
265
8va
senza sord.

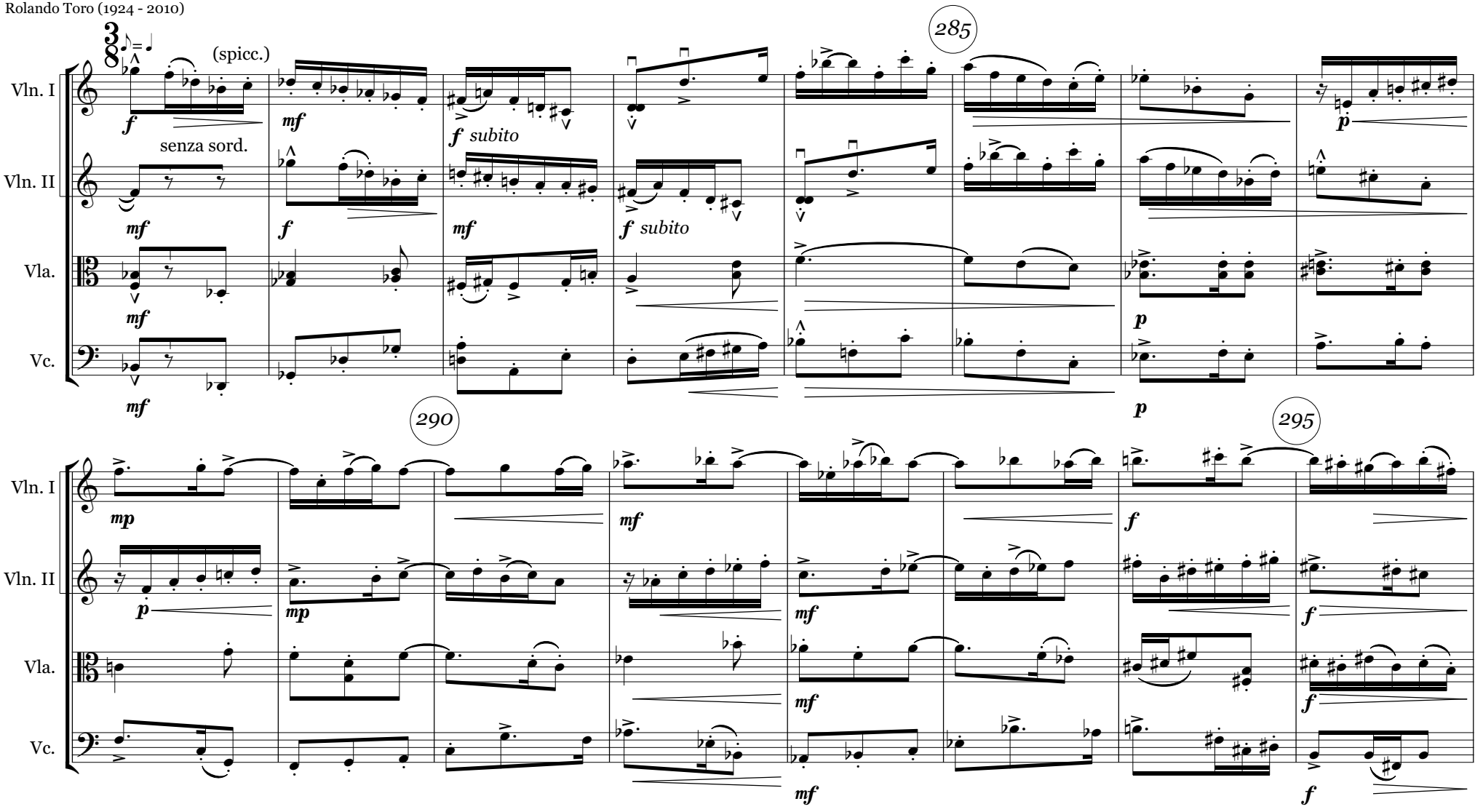

270
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
p espress.
pp
ppp
rall.
A tempo
senza sord.
senza sord. sul tasto
mp molto espress.
ppp
mp

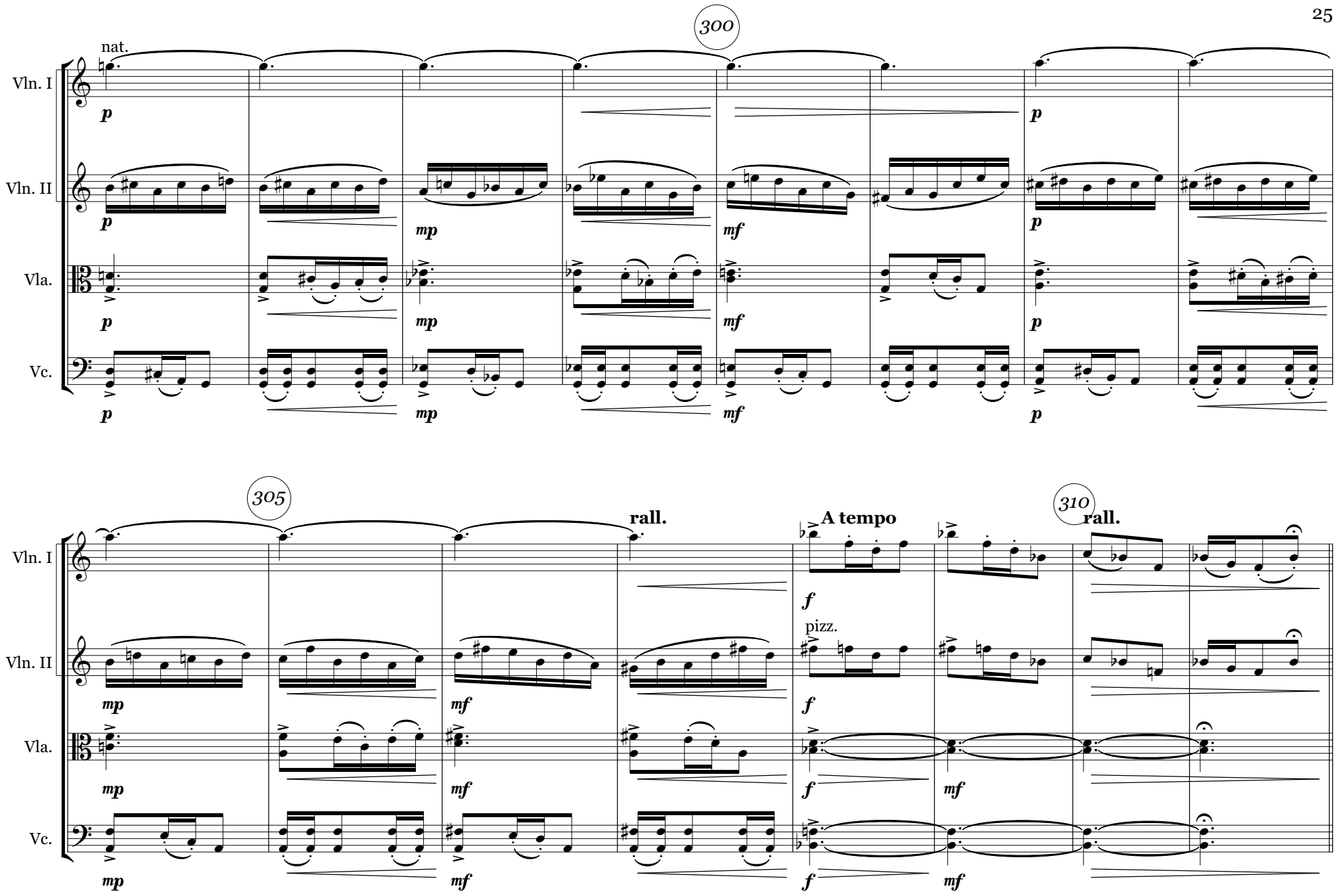

275
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
molto rall.
A tempo
Attacca III subito

"I am the Water
I am thirst
I am the water of purification
And the fertilizing water.
I am the solvent spirit.
I am the woman and the tears;
I am freedom that flows.
I am the sea without shorelines."

Rolando Toro (1924 - 2010)

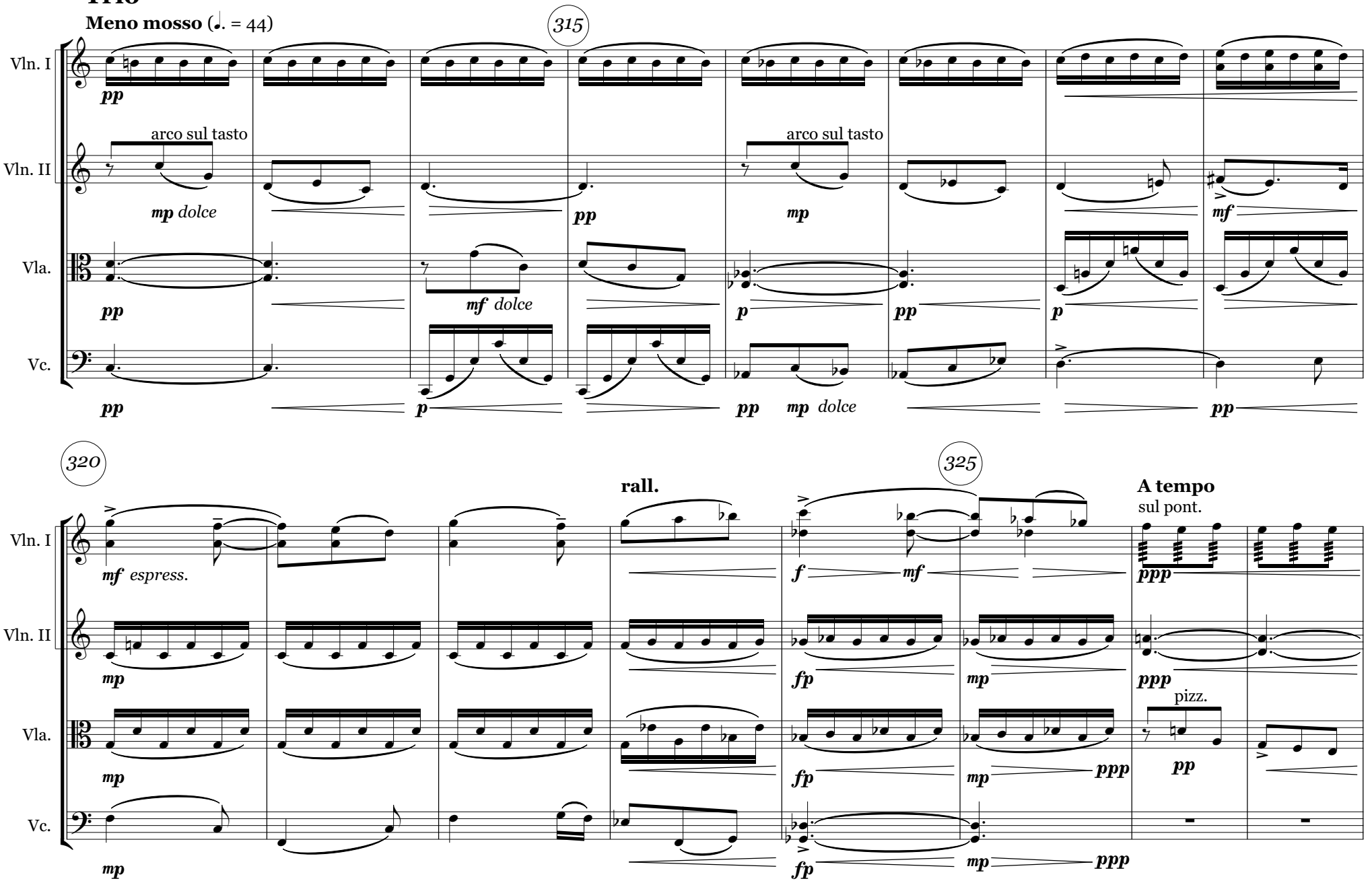
III. Water

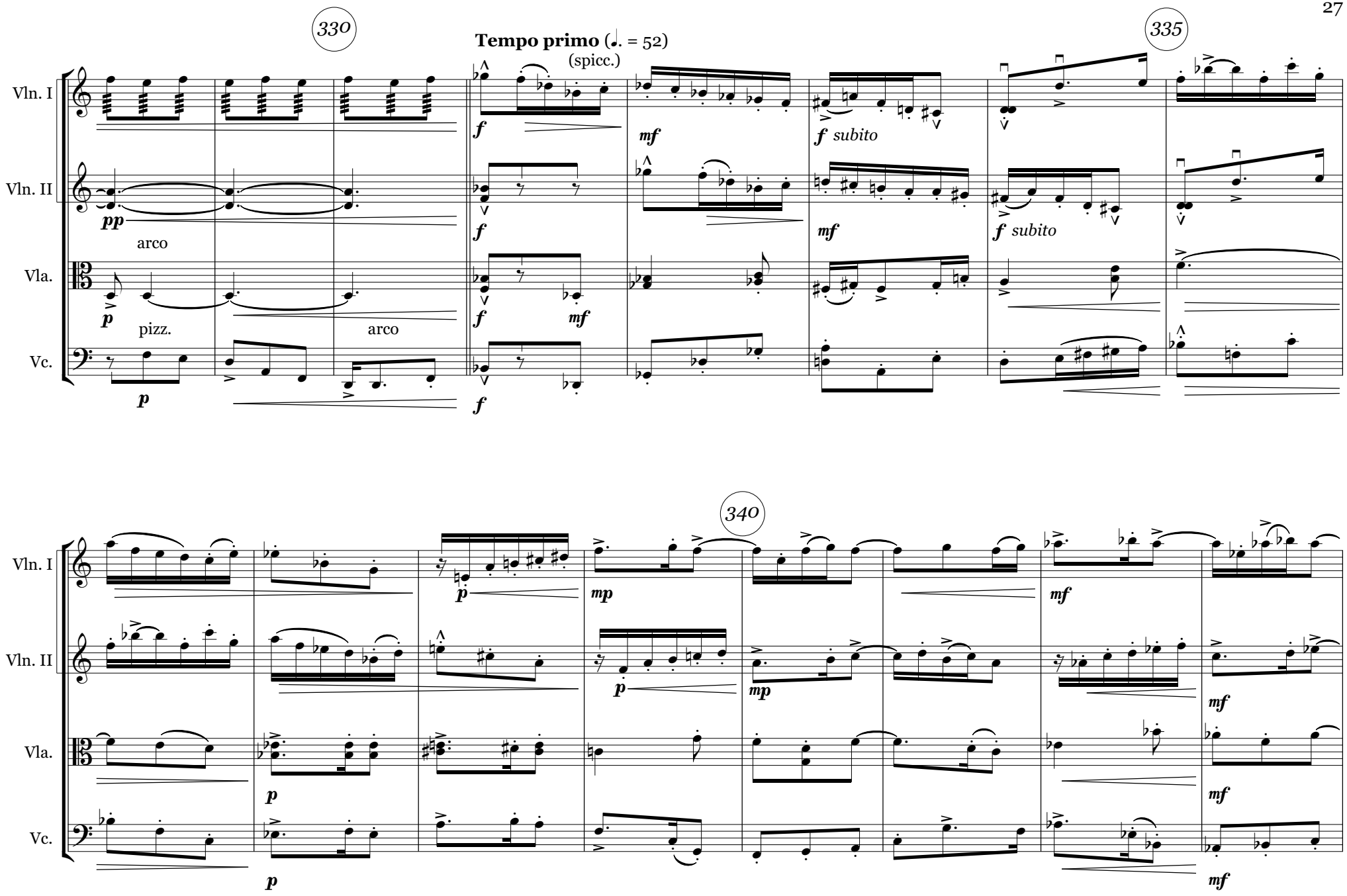


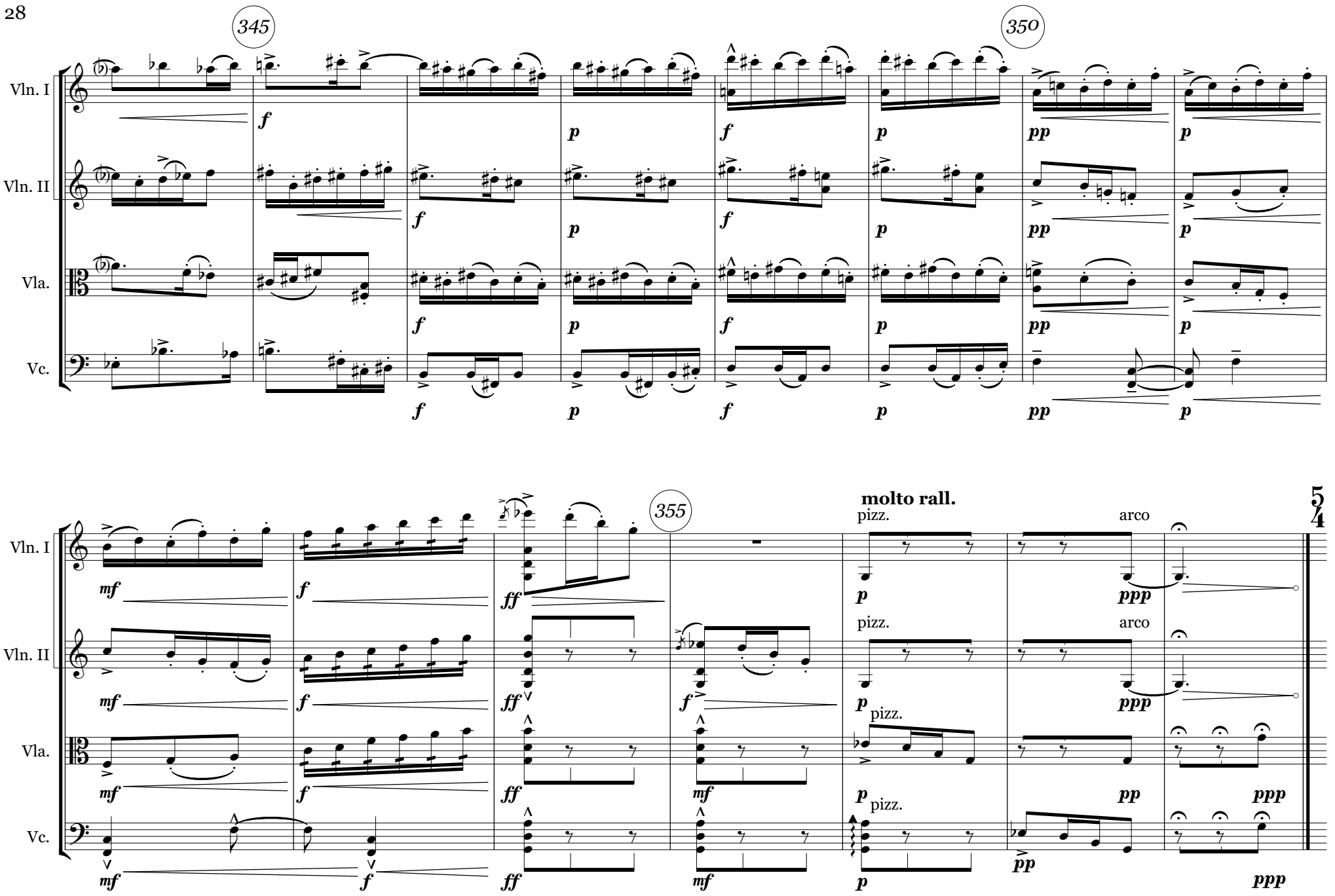

300
nat.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
p
mp
mf
305
rall.
A tempo
310
rall.
pizz.
f

Trio

Meno mosso (♩. = 44)



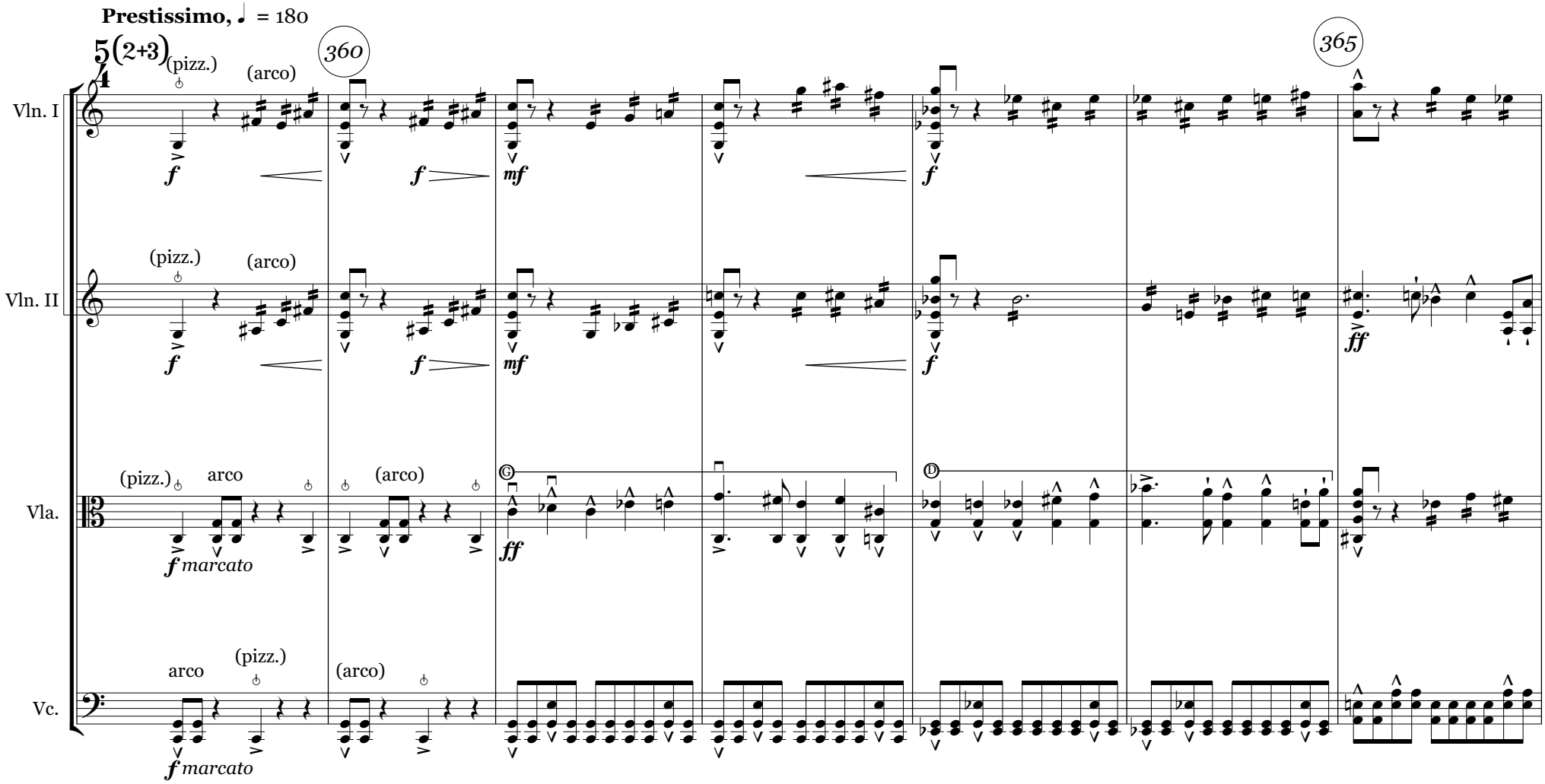

330
Tempo primo (♩. = 52)
(spicc.)
335
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
pp
arco
p
pizz.
arco
f
mf
f subito
mf
f subito
340
mp
mf

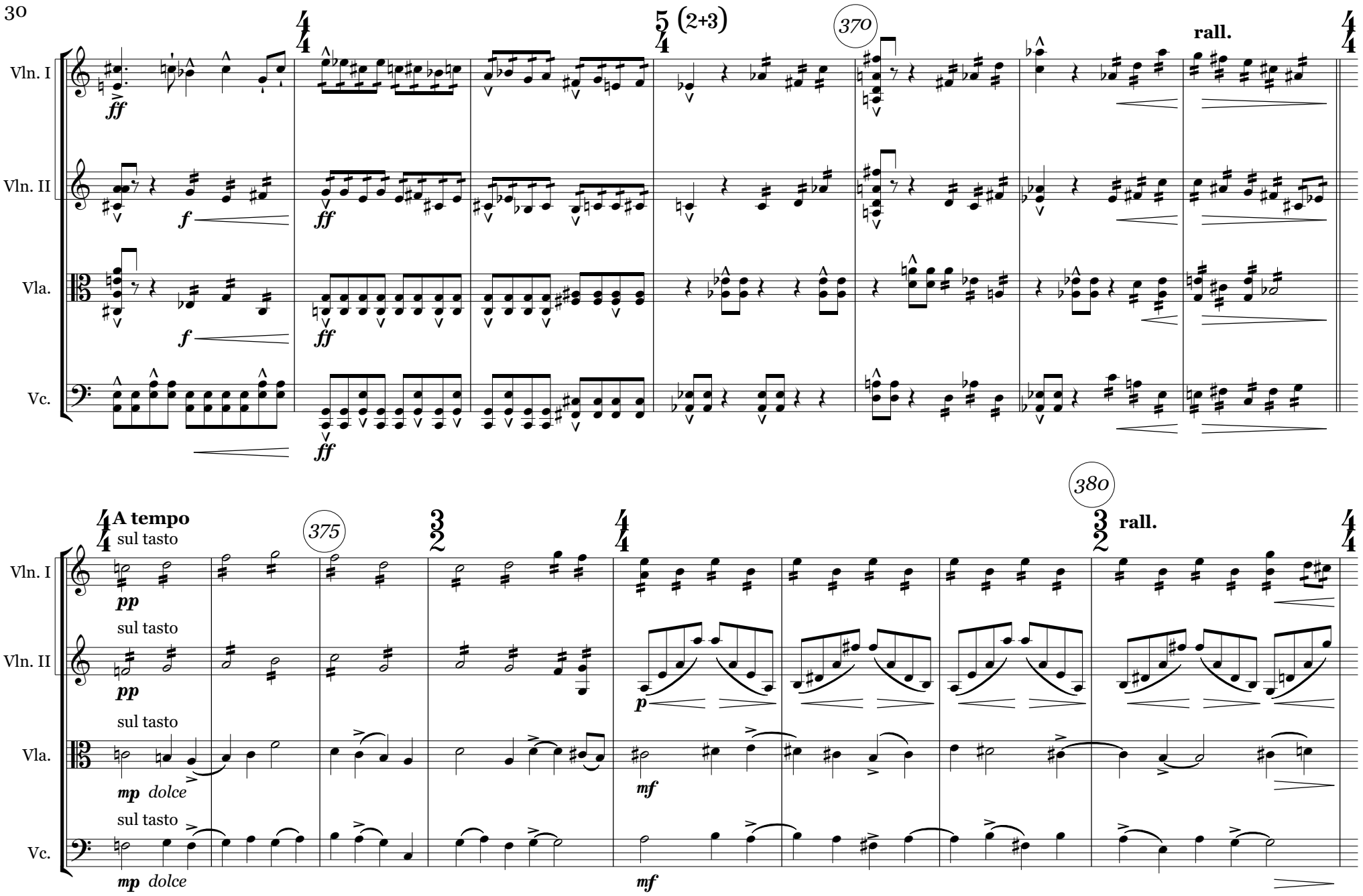

345
350
355
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
molto rall.
pizz.
arco
5/4

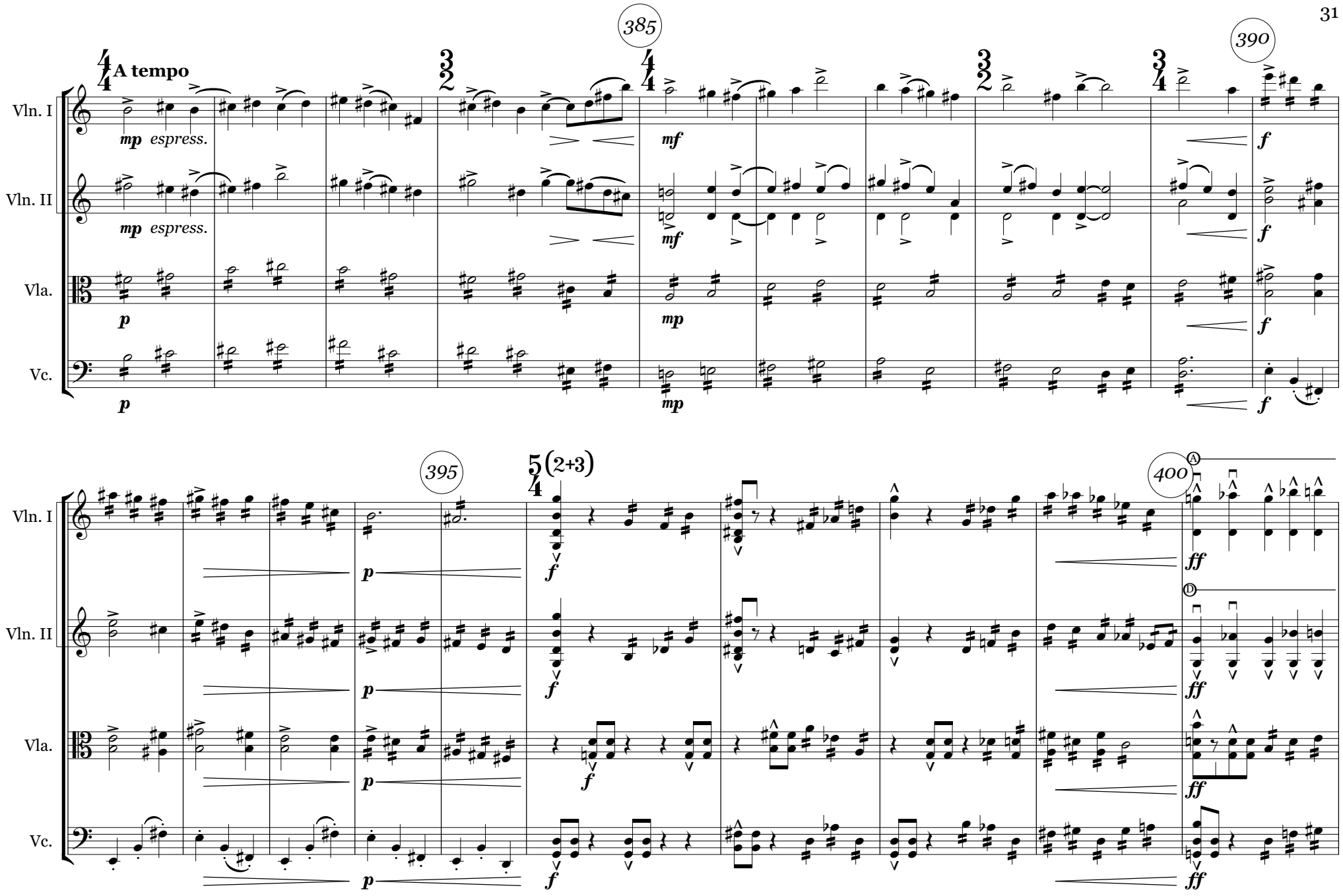
"I am the Fire
I am the fire that adheres.
I am the hug and the bonfires;
I am passion, love, and desire.
I am the blood and the sun god;
I am the light and the heat that is born in the gaze.
I am feverish tongues that rise up.
I am the burning"

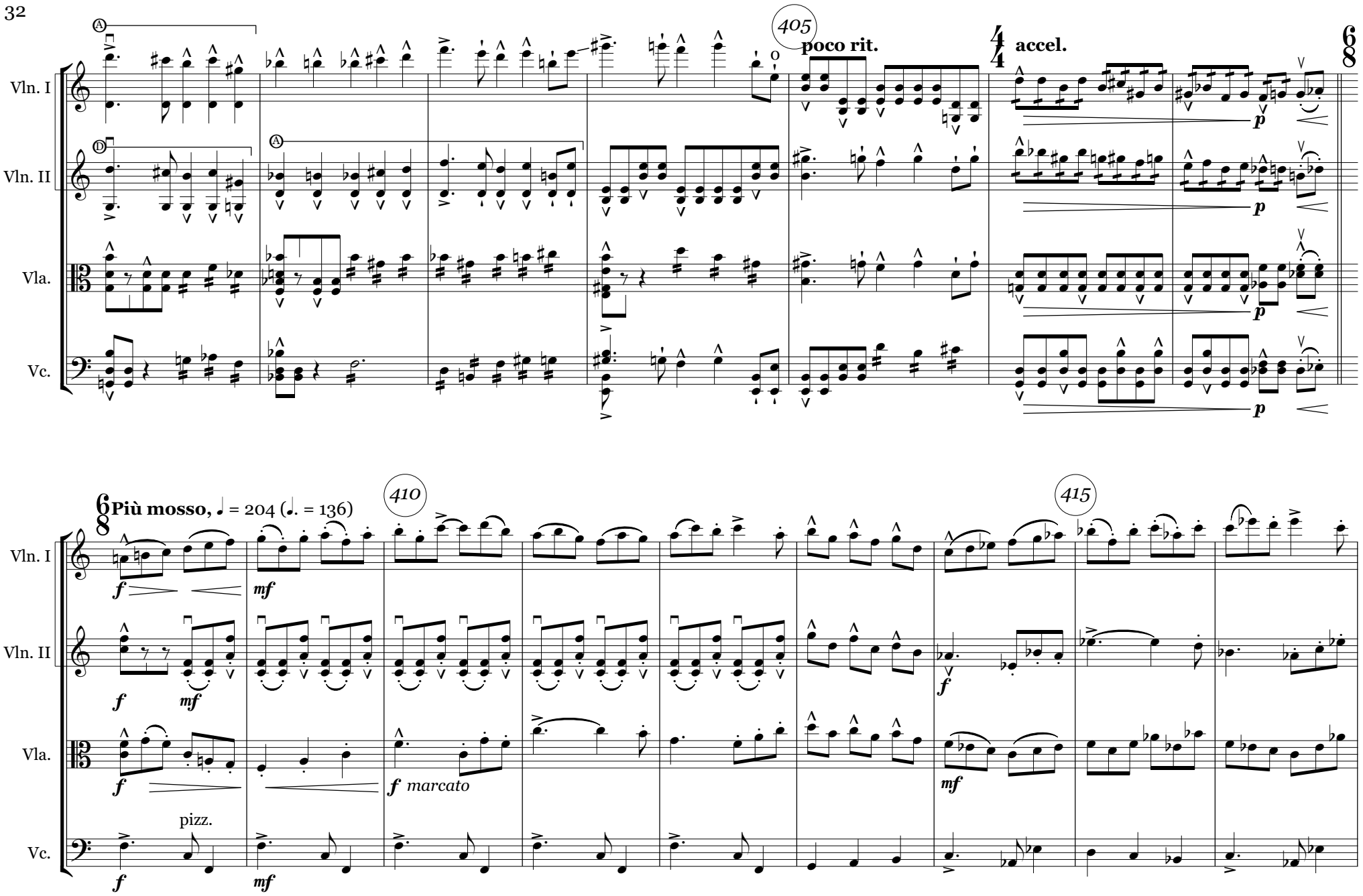
Rolando Toro (1924 - 2010)

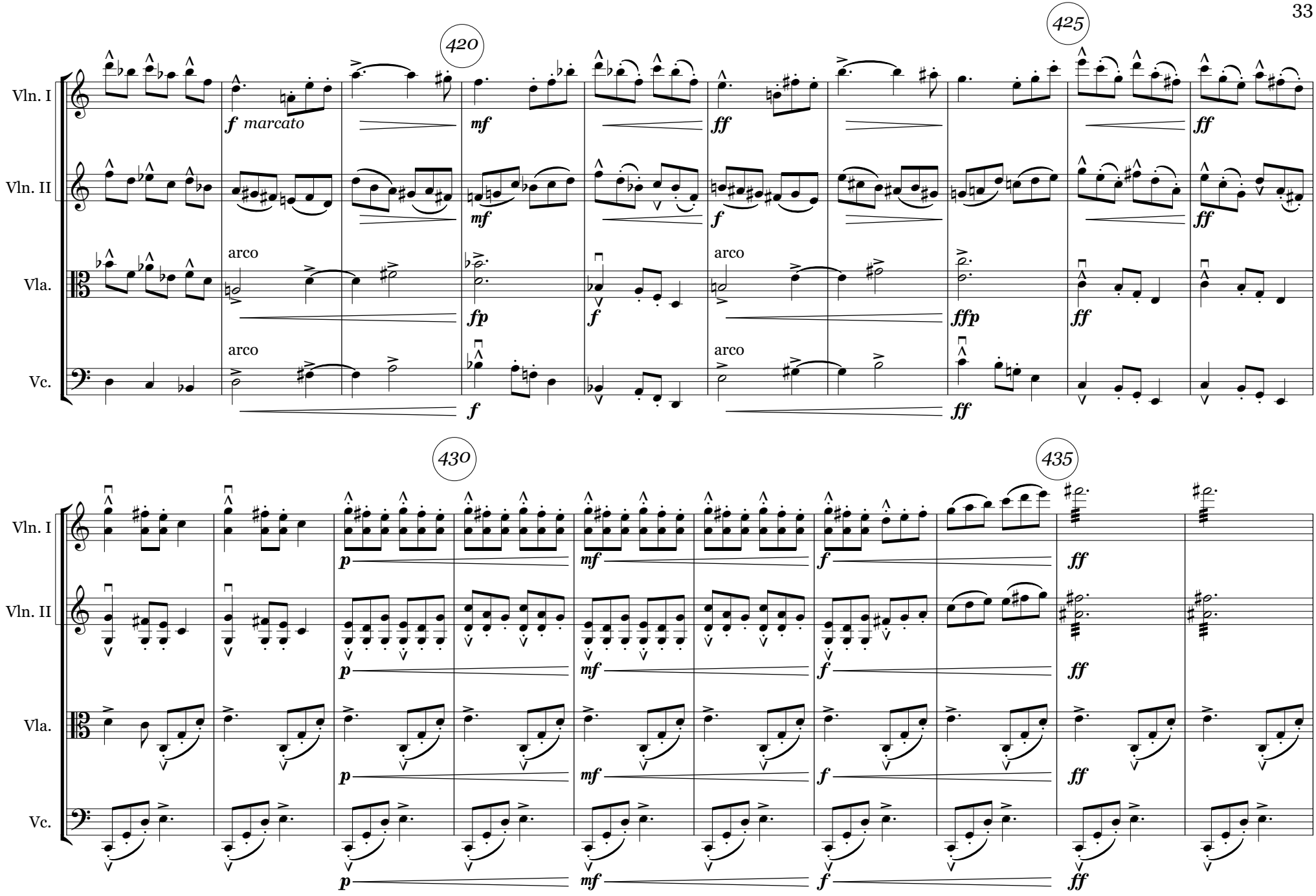
IV. Fire

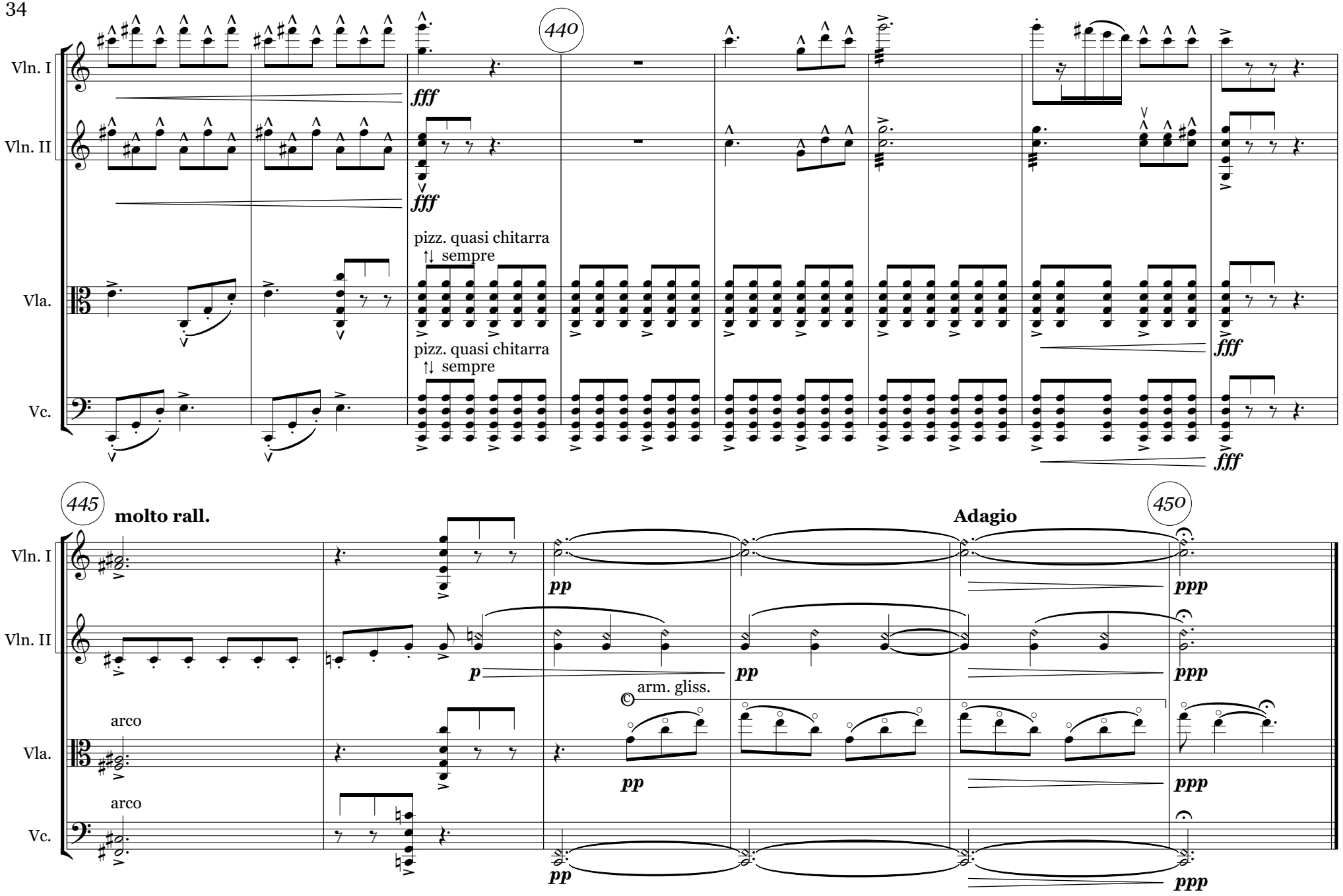



Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
(2+3)
370
rall.
ff
f
A tempo
sul tasto
375
380
pp
mp dolce
mf
p


385
390
A tempo
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
mp espress.
mf
f
p
mp
395
400
(2+3)
ff


405
poco rit.
accel.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Più mosso, ♩ = 204 (𝅗𝅥. = 136)
410
415
marcato
pizz.


420
425
430
435
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
f marcato
mf
ff
f
arco
fp
ffp
p


440
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
fff
pizz. quasi chitarra
↑↓ sempre
445
molto rall.
450
Adagio
p
pp
ppp
arco
arm. gliss.