Four Stills on Evaporation
in thirty-one fragments

for string quartet

Aaron Gervais

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Duration: approx. 9'00

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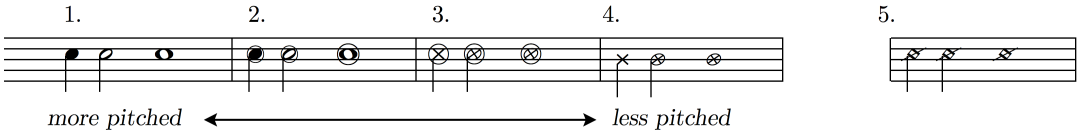
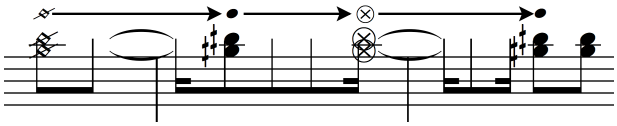
December 2006

Quartertone Notation:

Other Notation:



1. Regular playing technique.
2. Increase bow pressure slightly in order to create a gritty tone, but without completely obscuring the pitch of the written note.
3. Increase bow pressure greatly in order to create a scratchy and largely non-pitched tone, with only the faintest hint of the written note.
4. A percussive non-pitched sound. For each instance, the technique will be described directly in the score.
5. Touch the string as if playing a harmonic, but do not adjust bow or finger position to make the harmonic come out. In fact, it is preferable if the performer adjusts the bow and finger positions to *avoid* creating a pure harmonic sound. The result should be a muddled unstable sonority, or bow noise.



In the above example, the performer should change gradually from one technique to the other. The headless stems underneath the arrows represent a continuation of the same pitch while the technique is changing.

- **Dynamic markings** in quotations (e.g. *"fff"*) represent the effort to be exerted while employing a non-conventional technique. They do not give any indication of the volume of the sound.
- **Wavy lines** above the staff in mm.165–170 indicate changes in vibrato. The default mode of playing throughout is senza vibrato.
- **Sharp jagged lines** in the staff, moving up and down, are rapid unmeasured glissandos of approximately a sixth, played as quickly as possible. These should begin and end at the notated starting pitch(es), but the pitch(es) of the outer extremity need not be exact. Furthermore, as employed at mm.1–6 and 39–47, this technique is unlikely to produce a highly pitched sound. The performers should use the written noteheads as a kind of tablature for finger position instead of as an indication of the desired pitch.
- ord. – this refers *only* to the placement of the bow, and does not cancel techniques like pizzicato or col legno.
- S.T. – sul tasto
- S.P. – sul ponticello, fairly close to the bridge so that some of the upper partials become prominent.
- p.S.P. – poco sul ponticello, only somewhat sharper in tone than ordinario, without emphasizing the upper partials of the sound unduly.
- C.L.T./C.L.B. – col legno tratto, col legno battuto; canceled by the indication *crini*
- C.+L. – crini e legno; turn the bow sideways and play with both the hairs and the wood.

All other non-standard notation is explained in the score.

Interpretational Issues:

- **Page turning** has been used as a compositional element, and it is therefore important that the performers turn pages only where indicated. The individual sheets of the parts should not be bound; they should be slid from right to left on the stand, producing an audible noise.
- **Empty measures** containing text but no notes or rests are not in tempo and should be performed as quickly as possible, *attacca*. When an approximate time value in seconds is given over the measure, the measure should last approximately that length.
- **Foot shuffling** at several points in the piece should be performed by placing sheets of paper under the players' feet, producing an audible rubbing noise. For the forte passages, the performers should slide both feet back and forth. For the mezzo passages, the performers should use a smaller foot motion, such as a twisting of the ankle.

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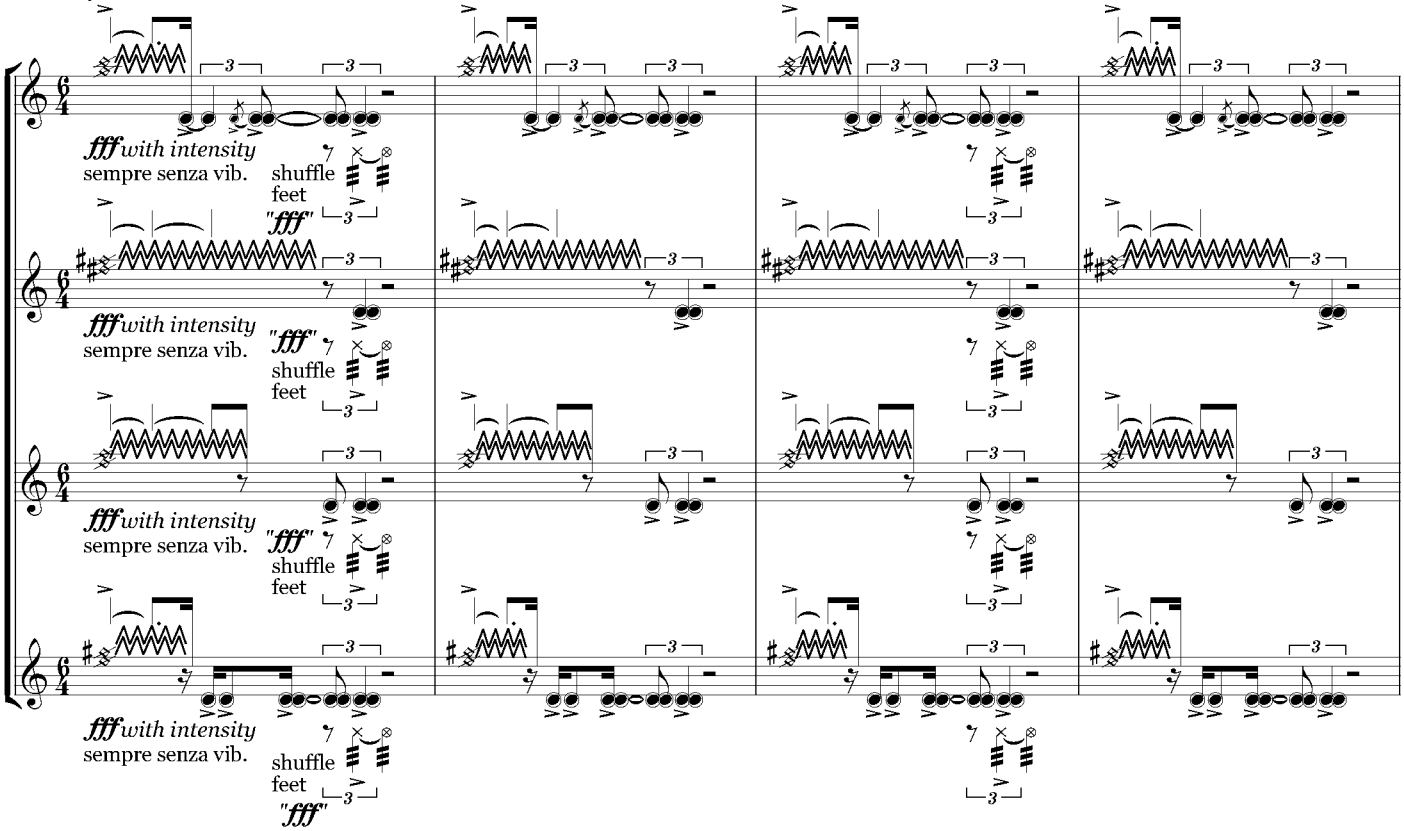
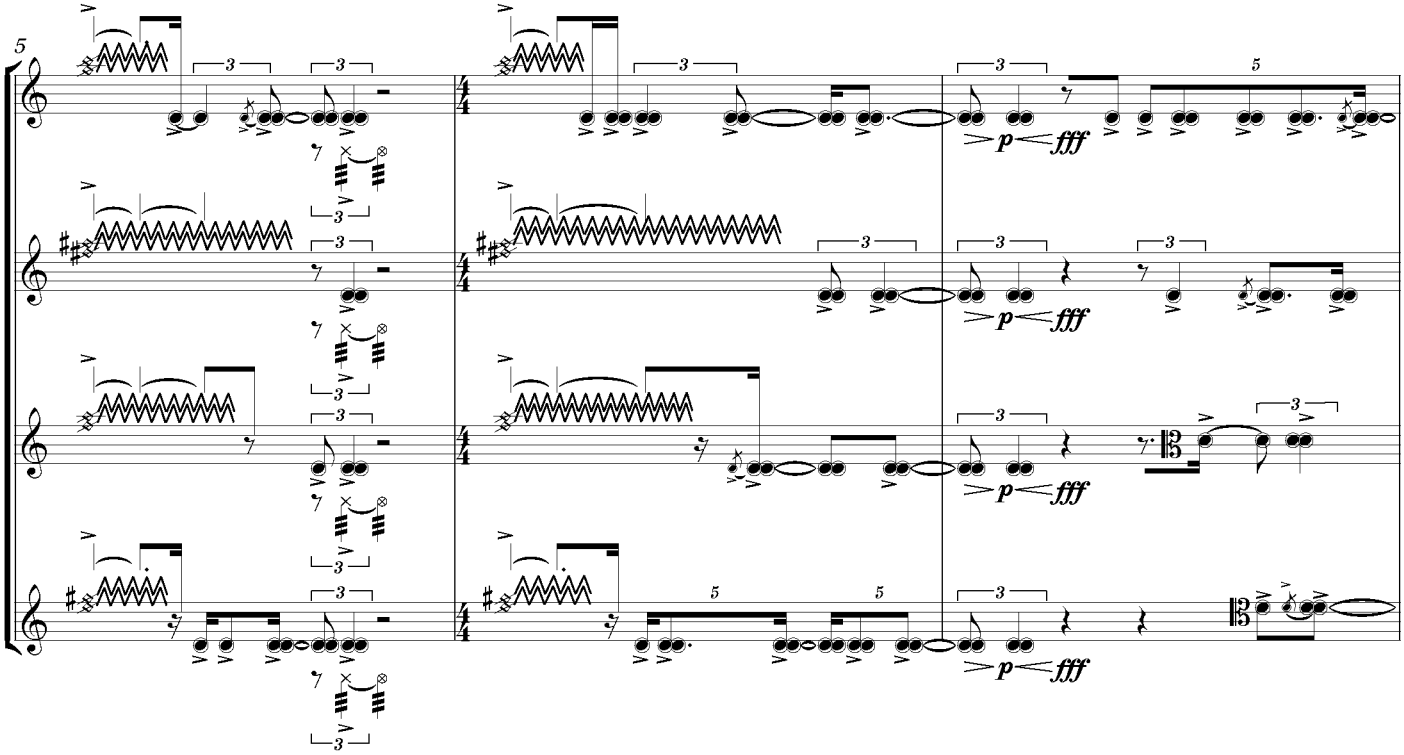
Fairly fast ♩ = 126





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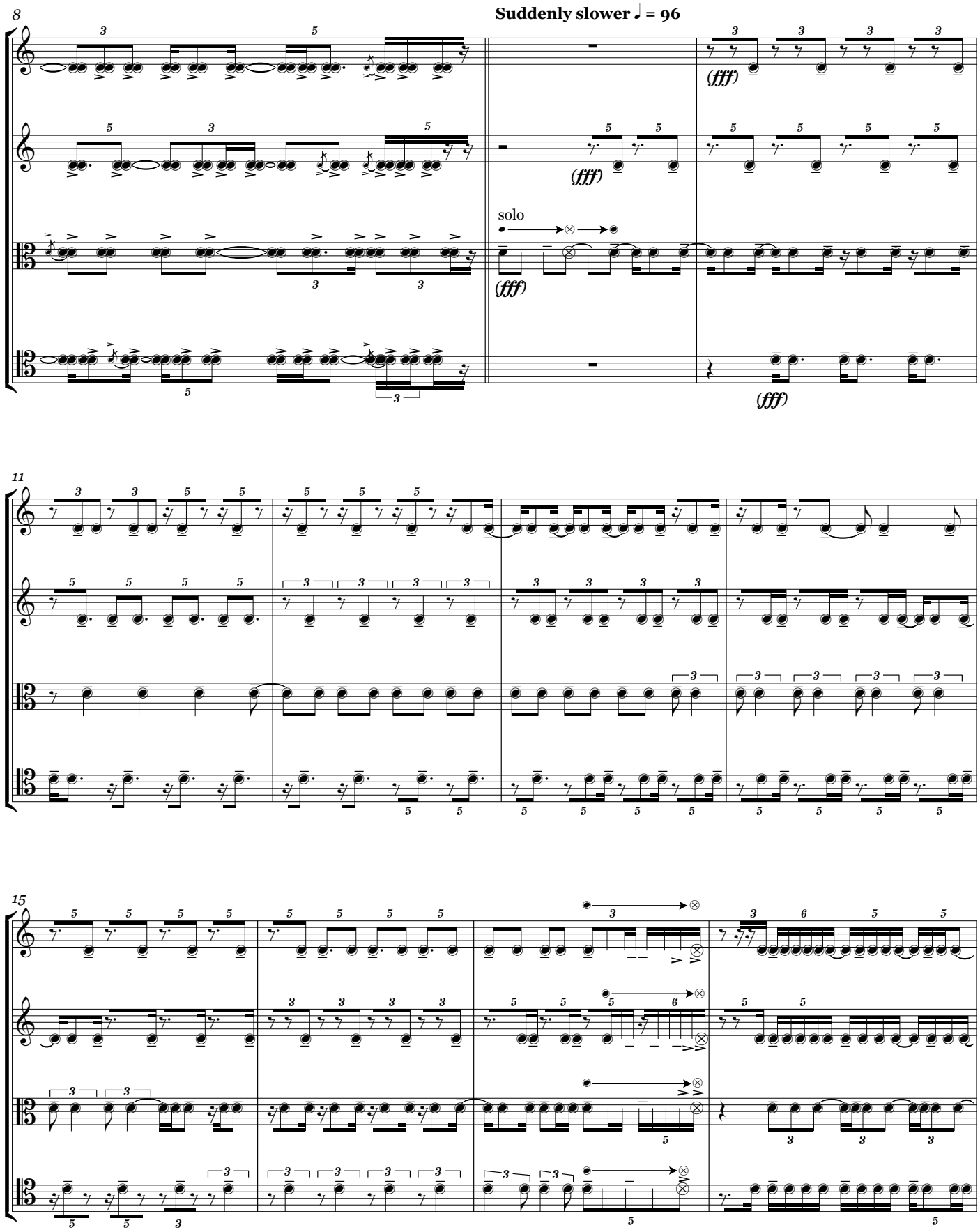
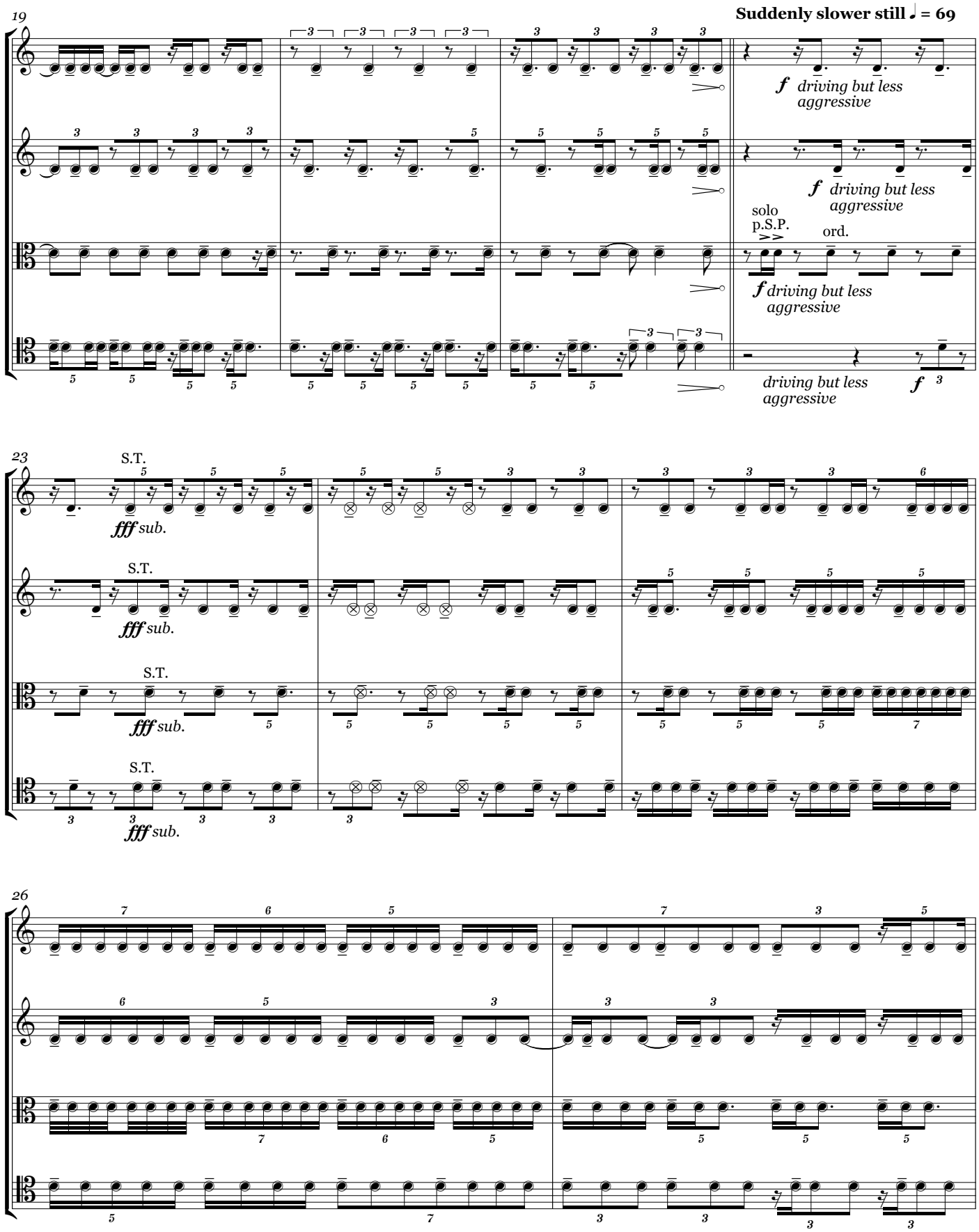
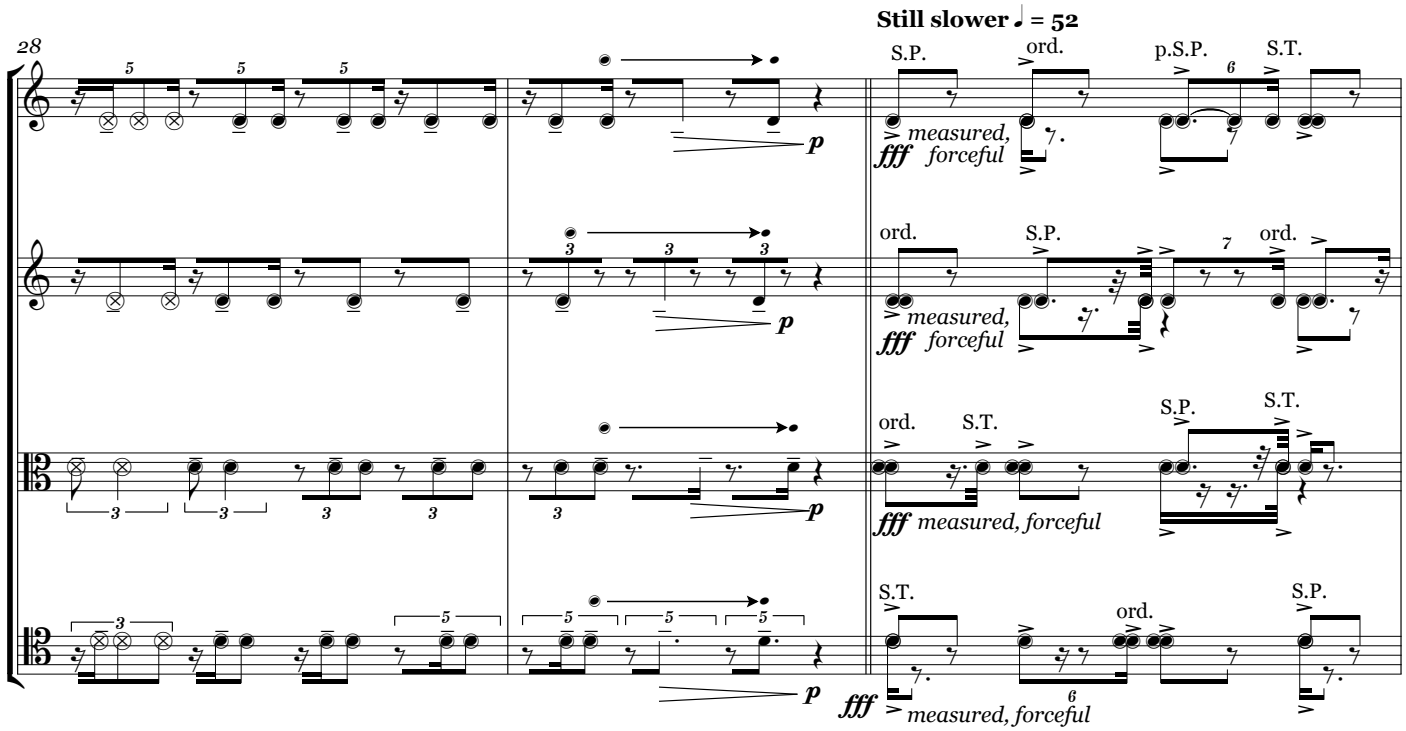
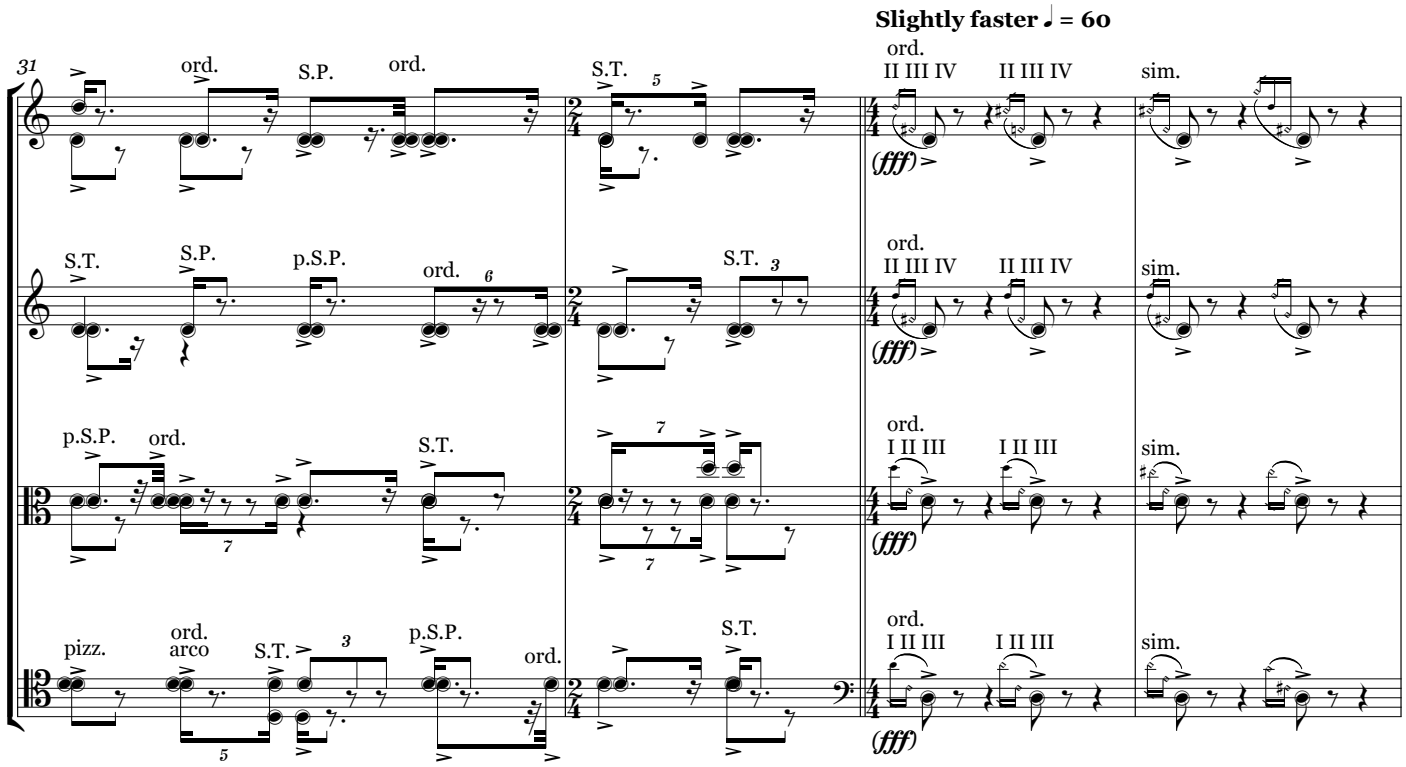
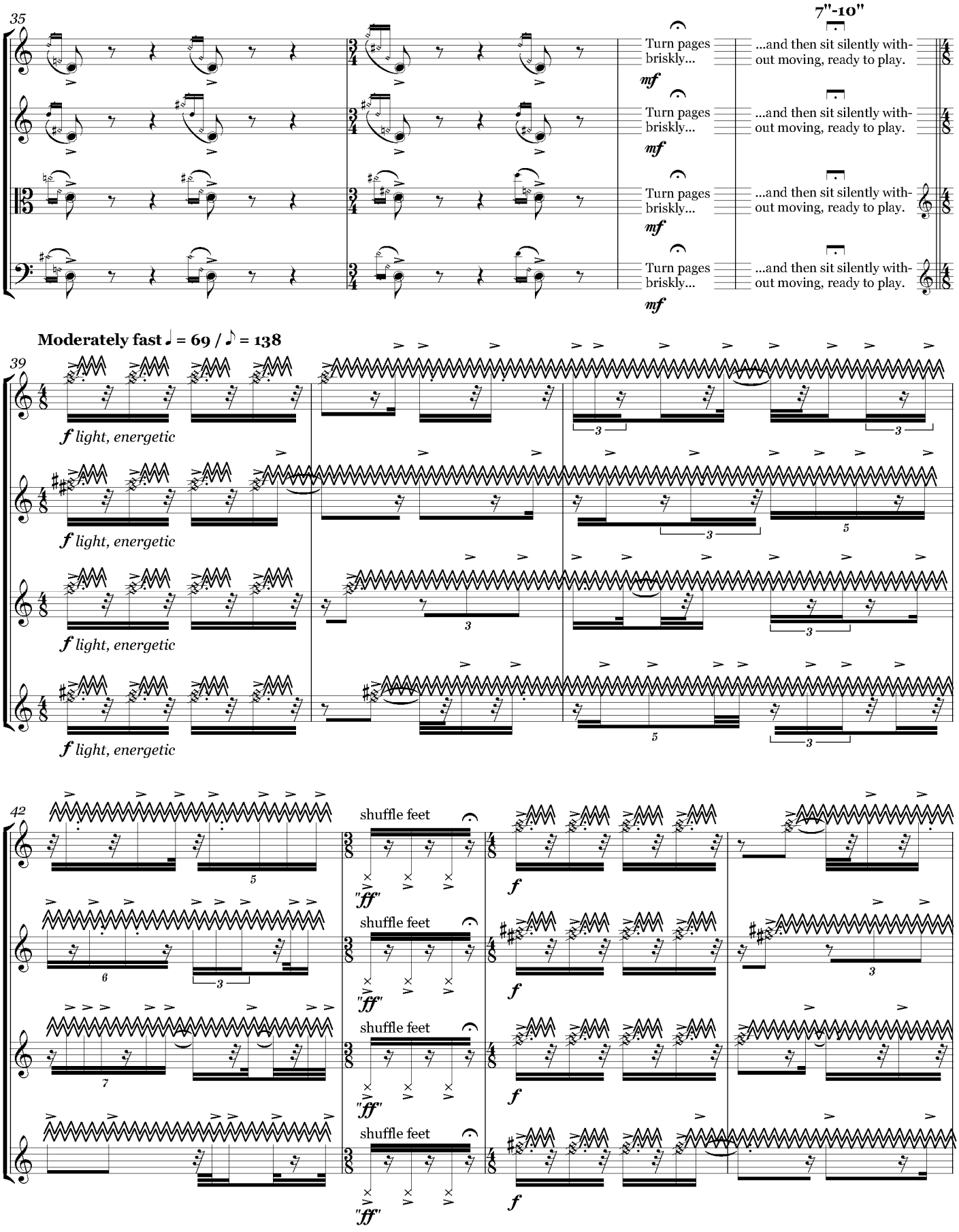
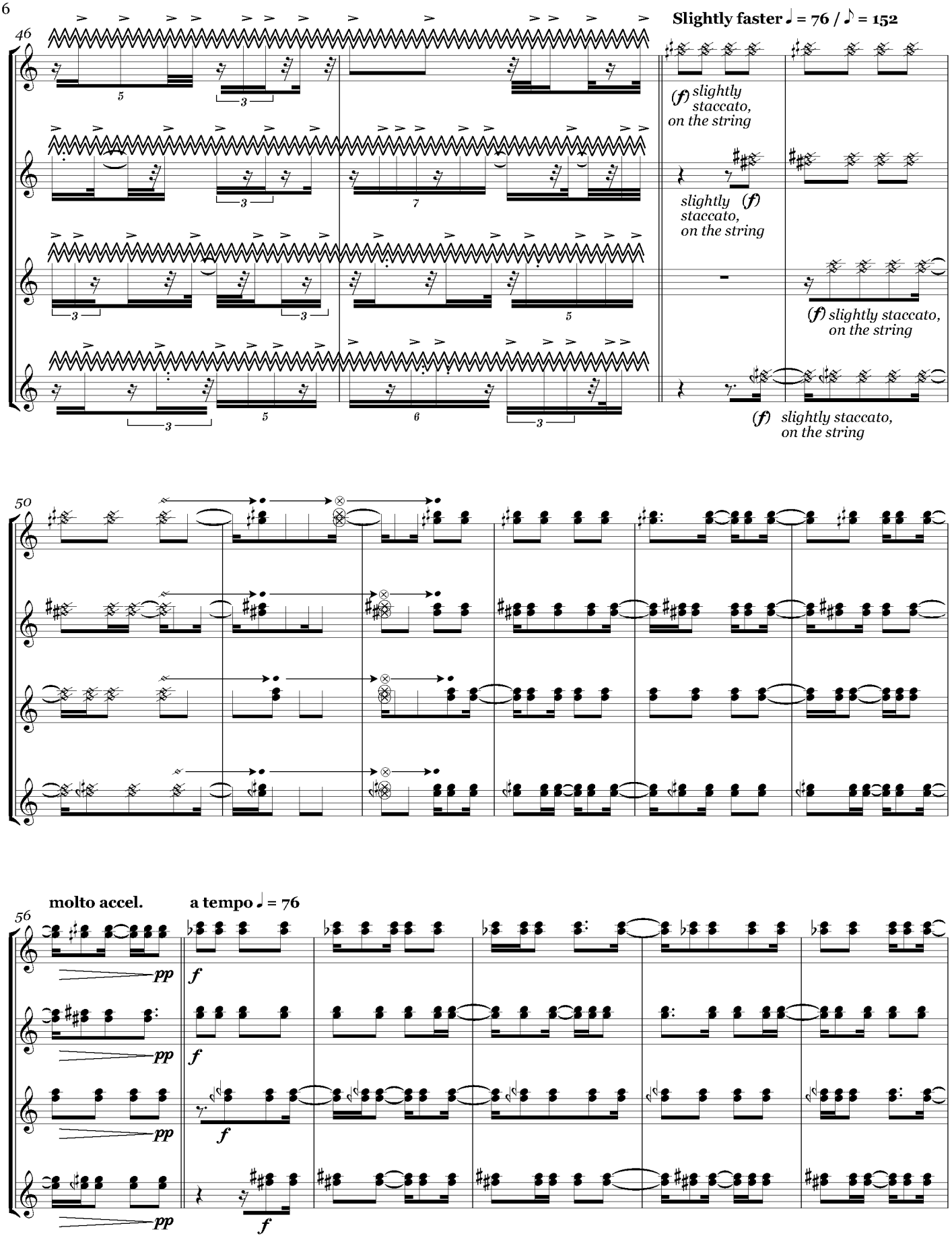

8
Suddenly slower ♩ = 96
(fff)
solo
11
15

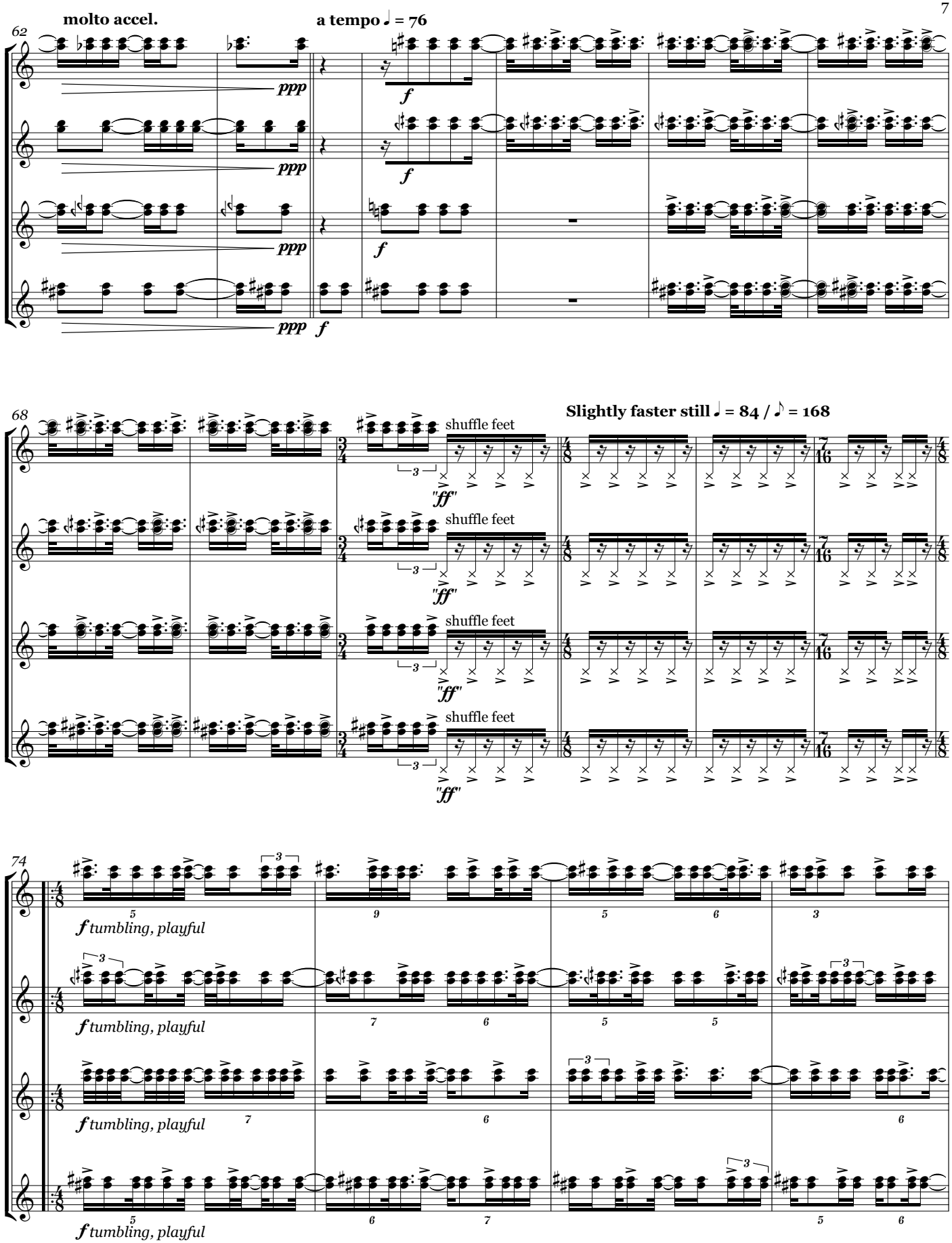

19
Suddenly slower still ♩ = 69
f driving but less aggressive
f driving but less aggressive
solo
p.S.P.
ord.
f driving but less aggressive
driving but less aggressive
f
23
S.T.
fff sub.
S.T.
fff sub.
S.T.
fff sub.
S.T.
fff sub.
26

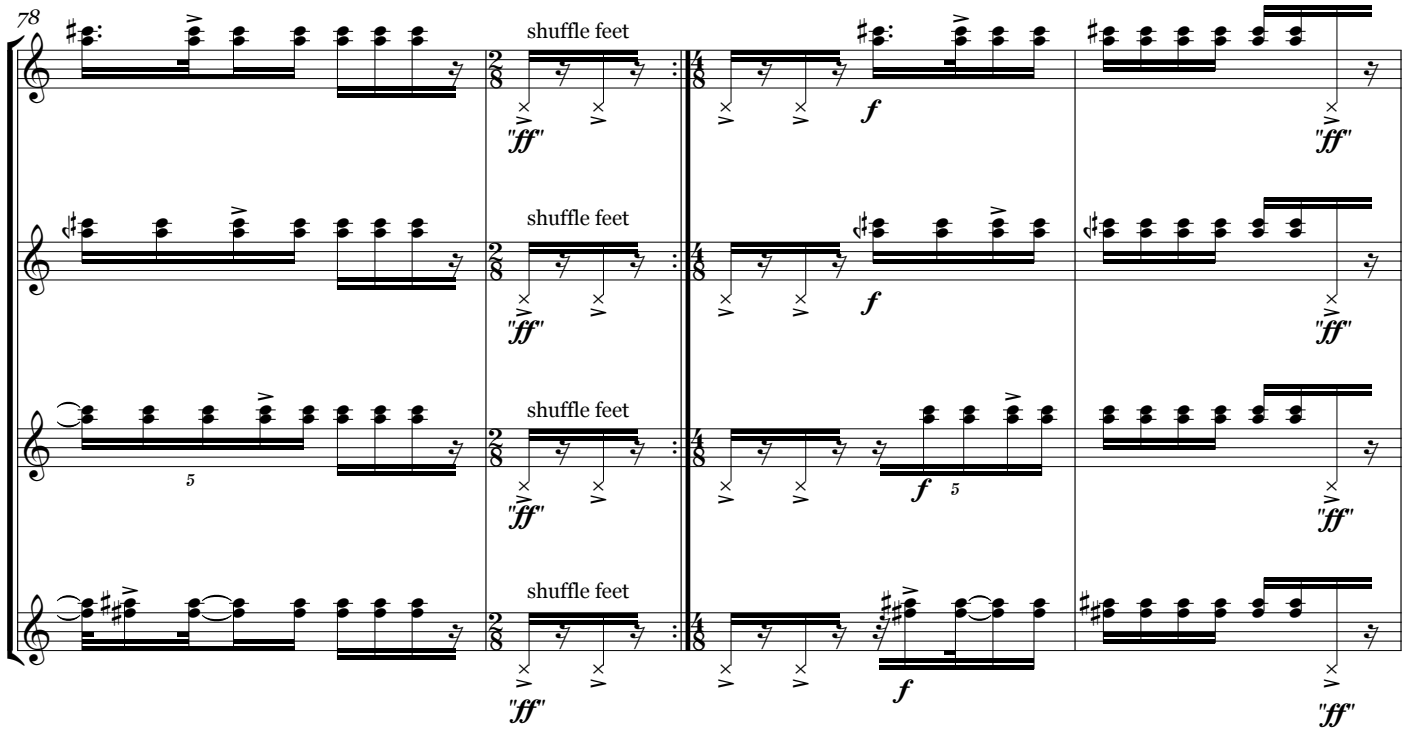

Still slower ♩ = 52
28
S.P.
ord.
p.S.P.
S.T.
measured, forceful
fff
p
measured, forceful
measured, forceful
measured, forceful

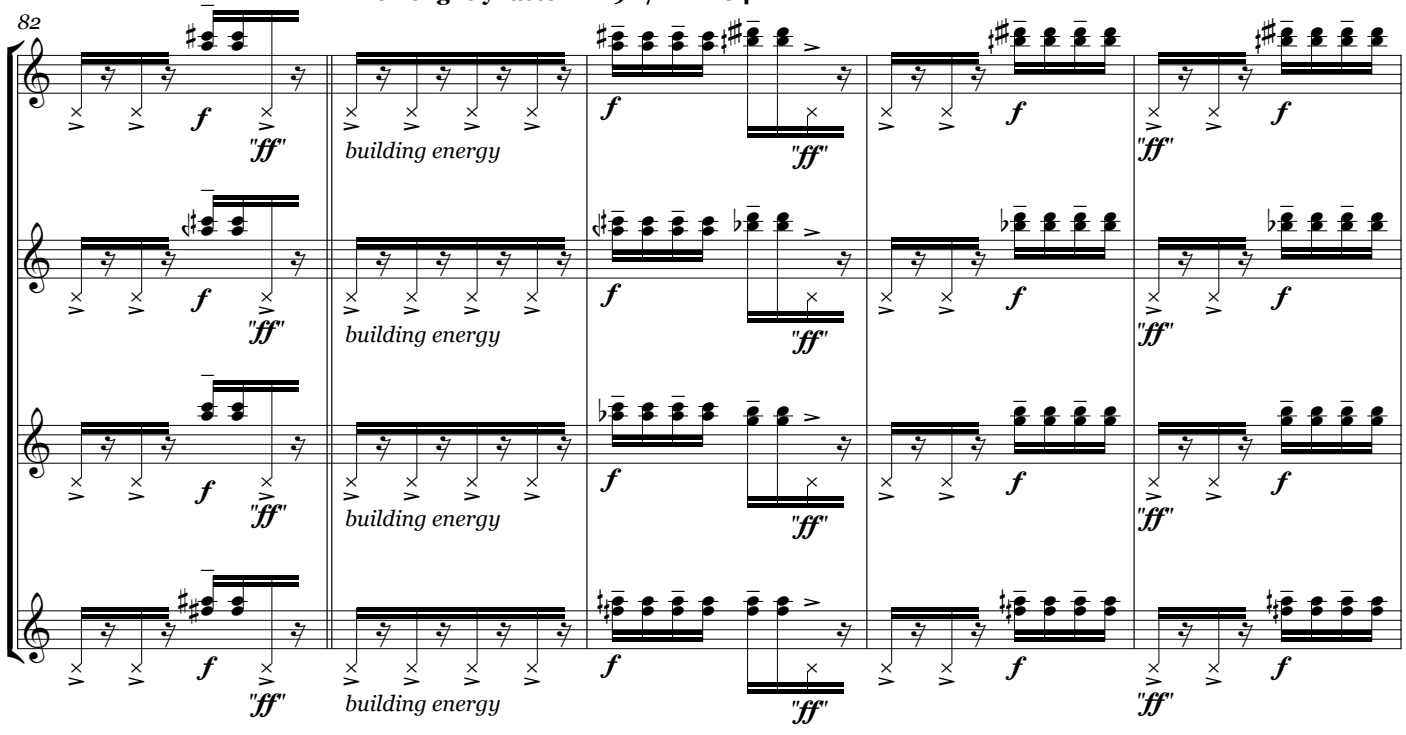

Slightly faster ♩ = 60
31
ord.
S.P.
S.T.
p.S.P.
pizz.
arco
II III IV
I II III
sim.
(fff)

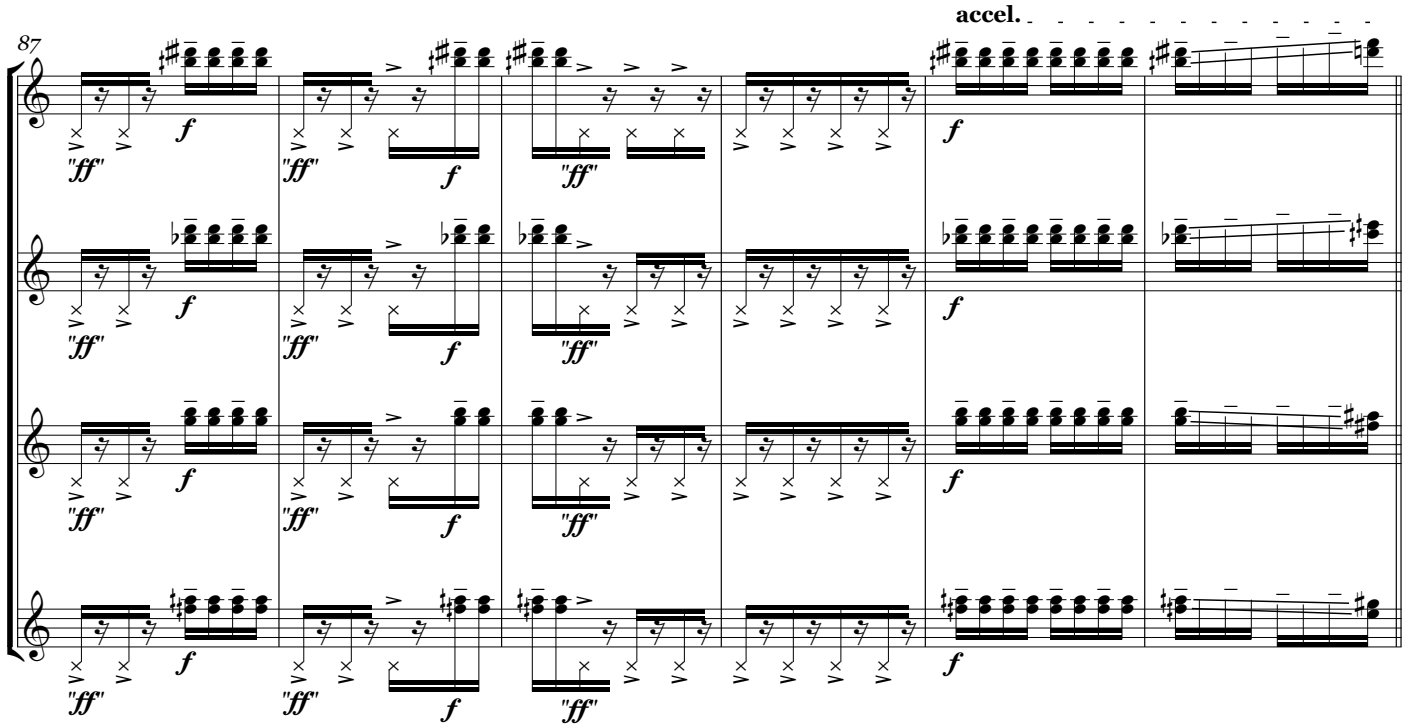

35
7"-10"
Turn pages briskly...
...and then sit silently without moving, ready to play.
mf
Moderately fast ♩ = 69 / ♪ = 138
39
f light, energetic
42
shuffle feet
"ff"
f

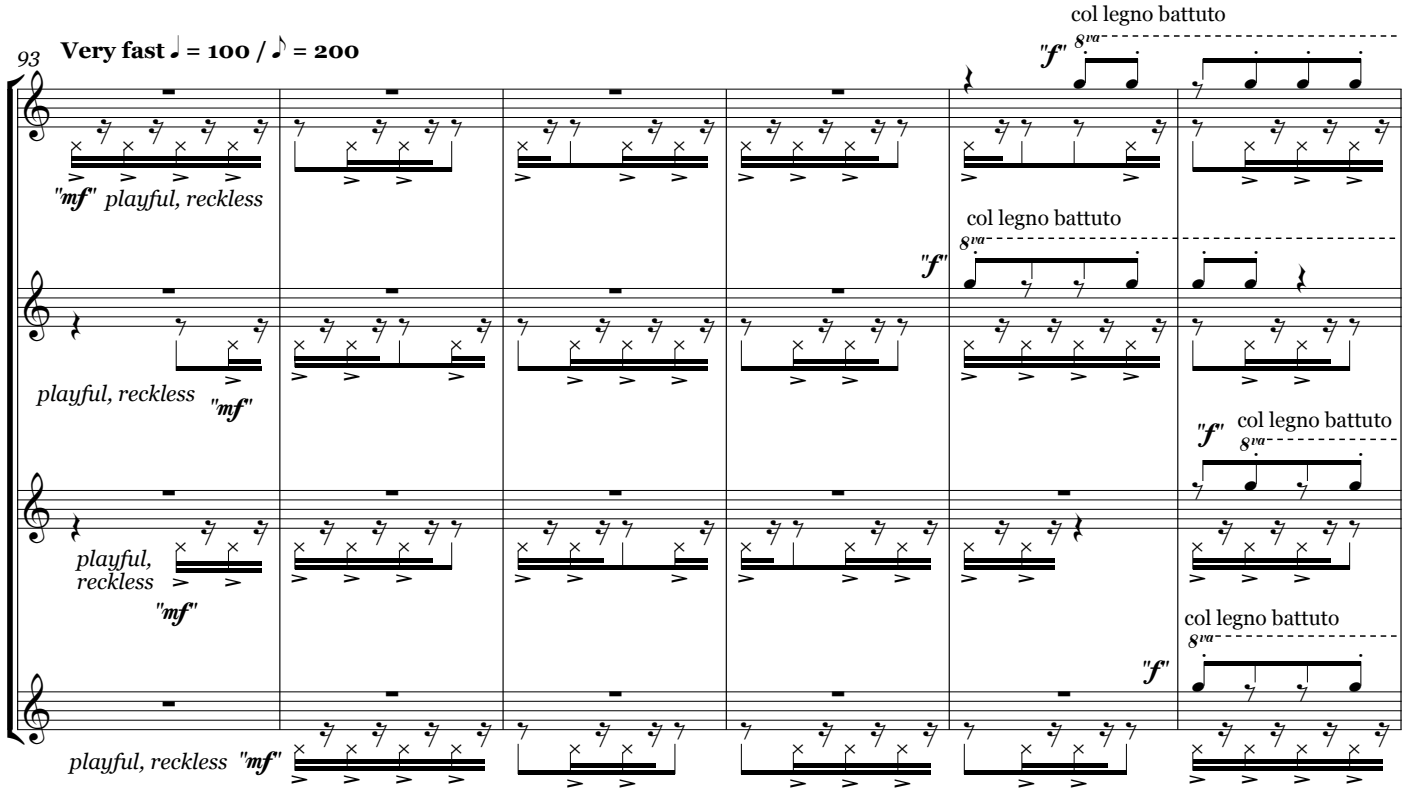

46
Slightly faster ♩ = 76 / ♪ = 152
(f) slightly staccato, on the string
slightly staccato, on the string (f)
(f) slightly staccato, on the string
(f) slightly staccato, on the string
50
molto accel.
a tempo ♩ = 76
56
pp
f

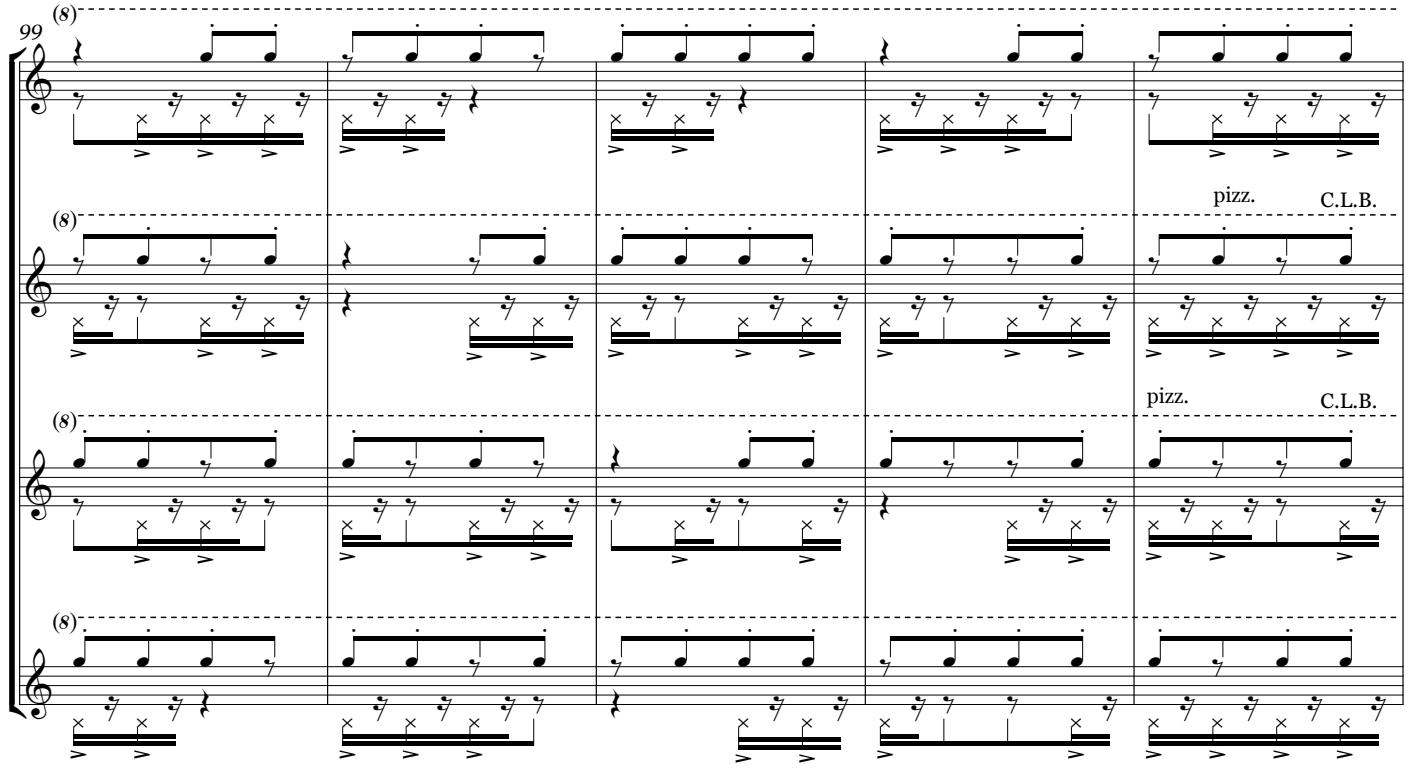

molto accel.
a tempo ♩ = 76
62
ppp
f
68
Slightly faster still ♩ = 84 / ♪ = 168
shuffle feet
"ff"
74
f tumbling, playful

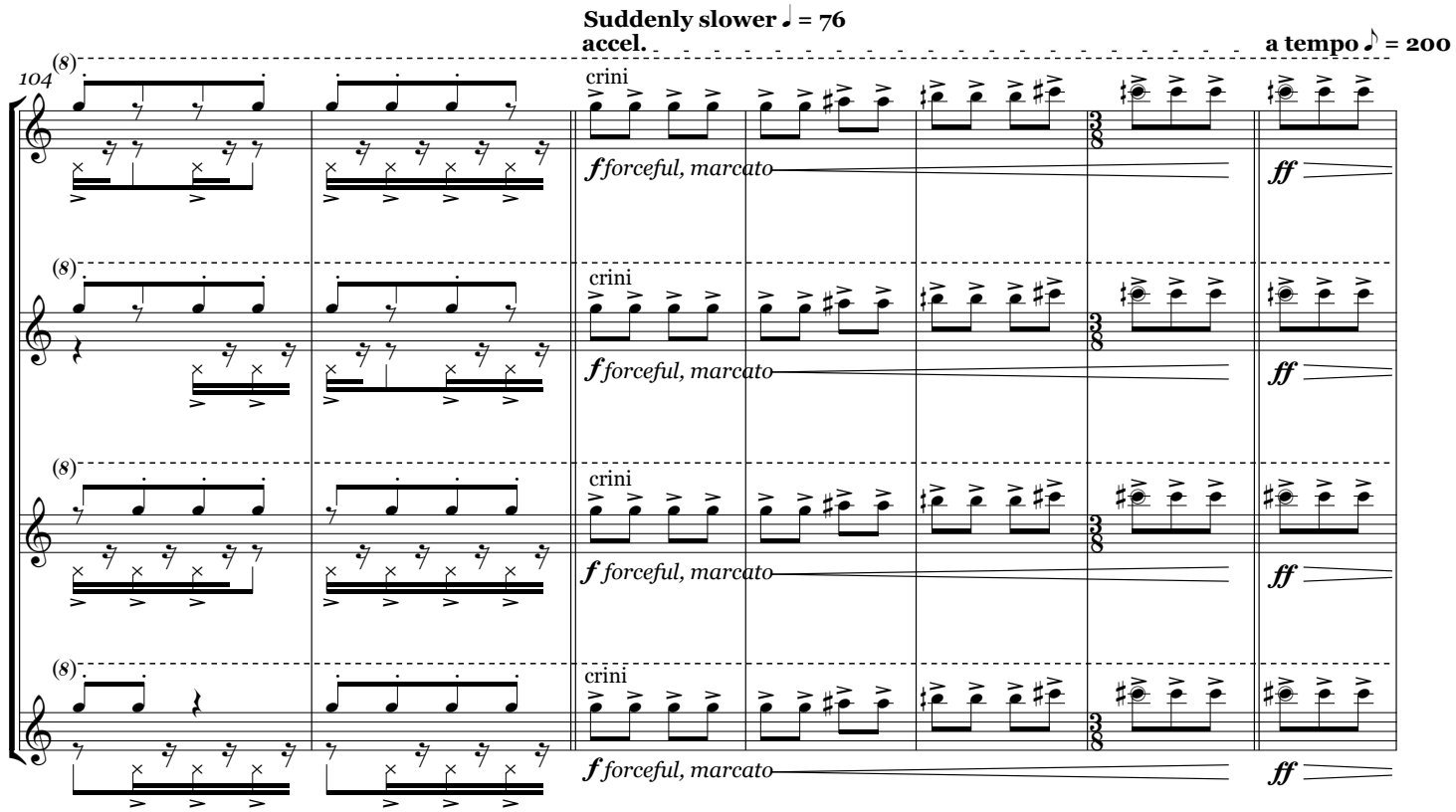

78
shuffle feet
shuffle feet
shuffle feet
shuffle feet

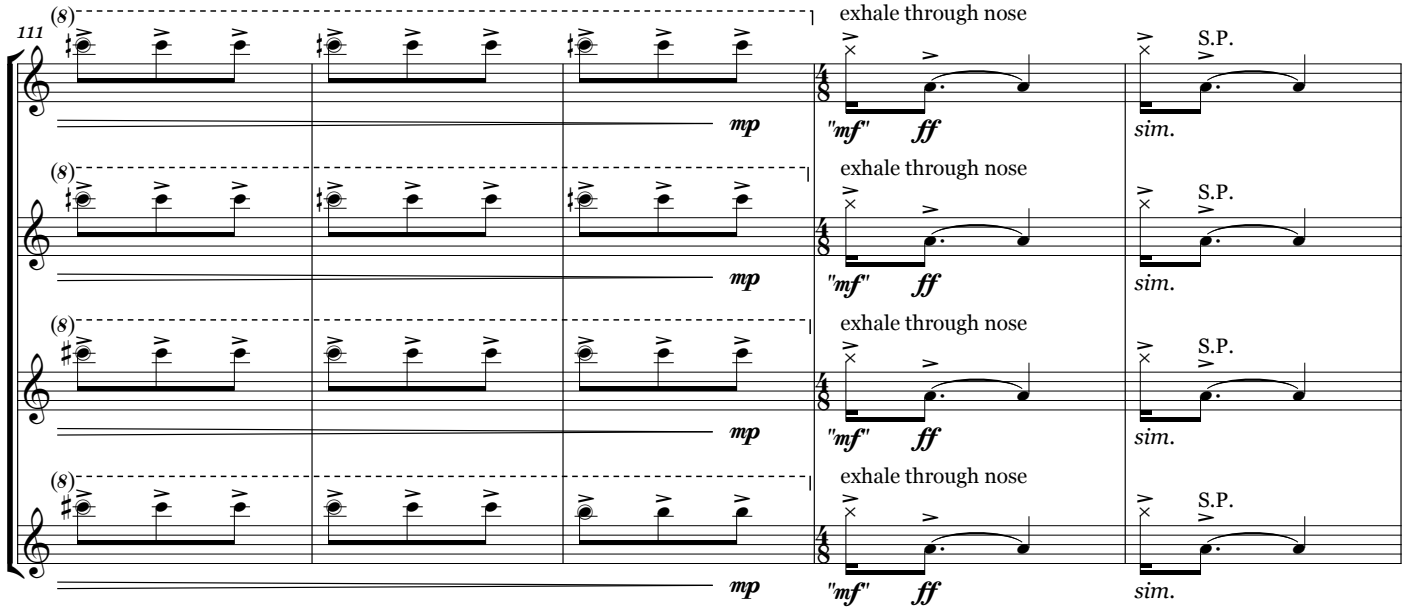

Even slightly faster ♩ = 92 / ♪ = 184
82
building energy
building energy
building energy
building energy

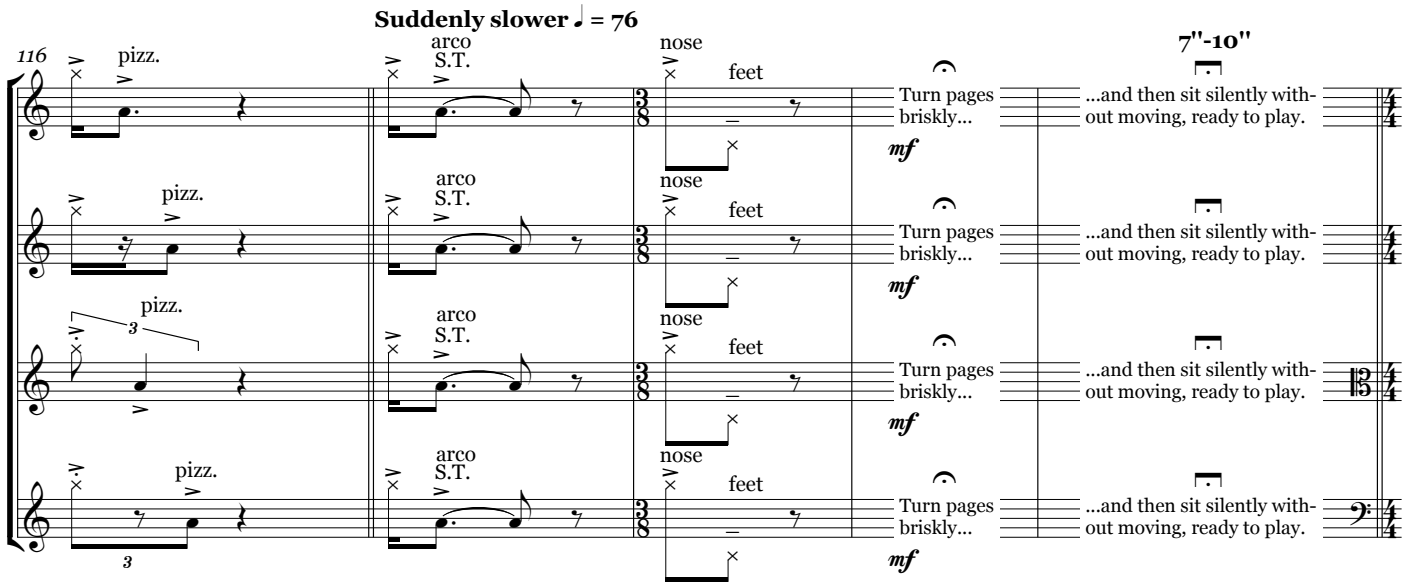

87
accel.
"ff"
f

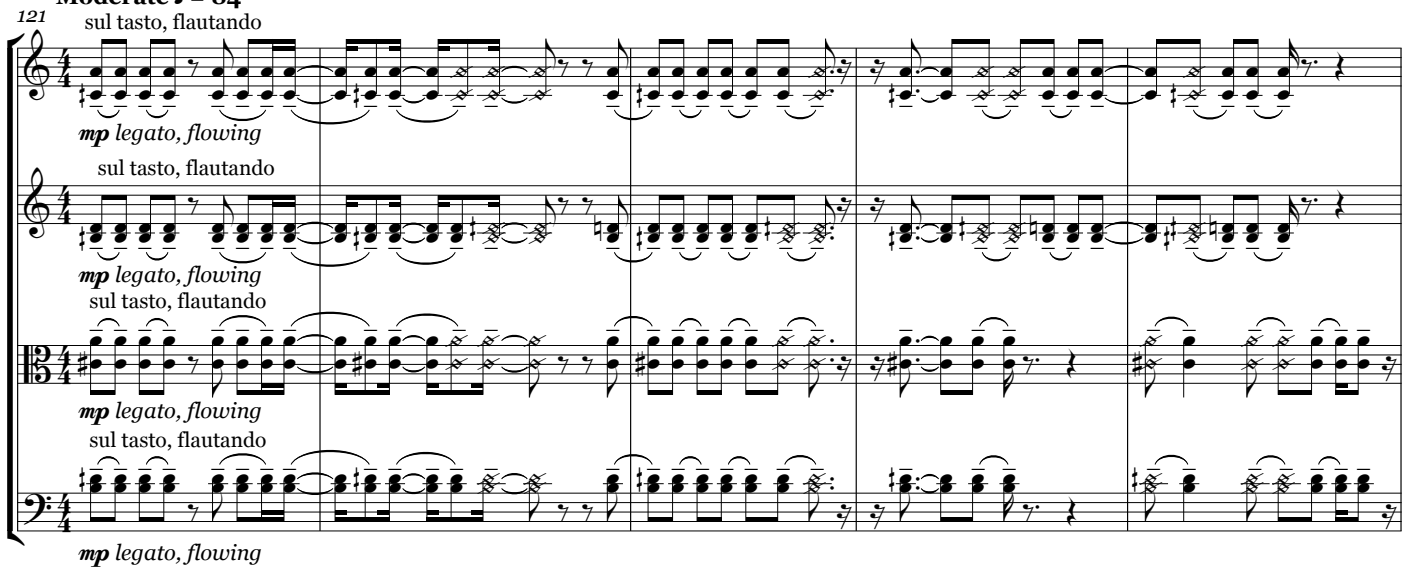

93
Very fast ♩ = 100 / ♪ = 200
"mf" playful, reckless
col legno battuto
8va
"f"

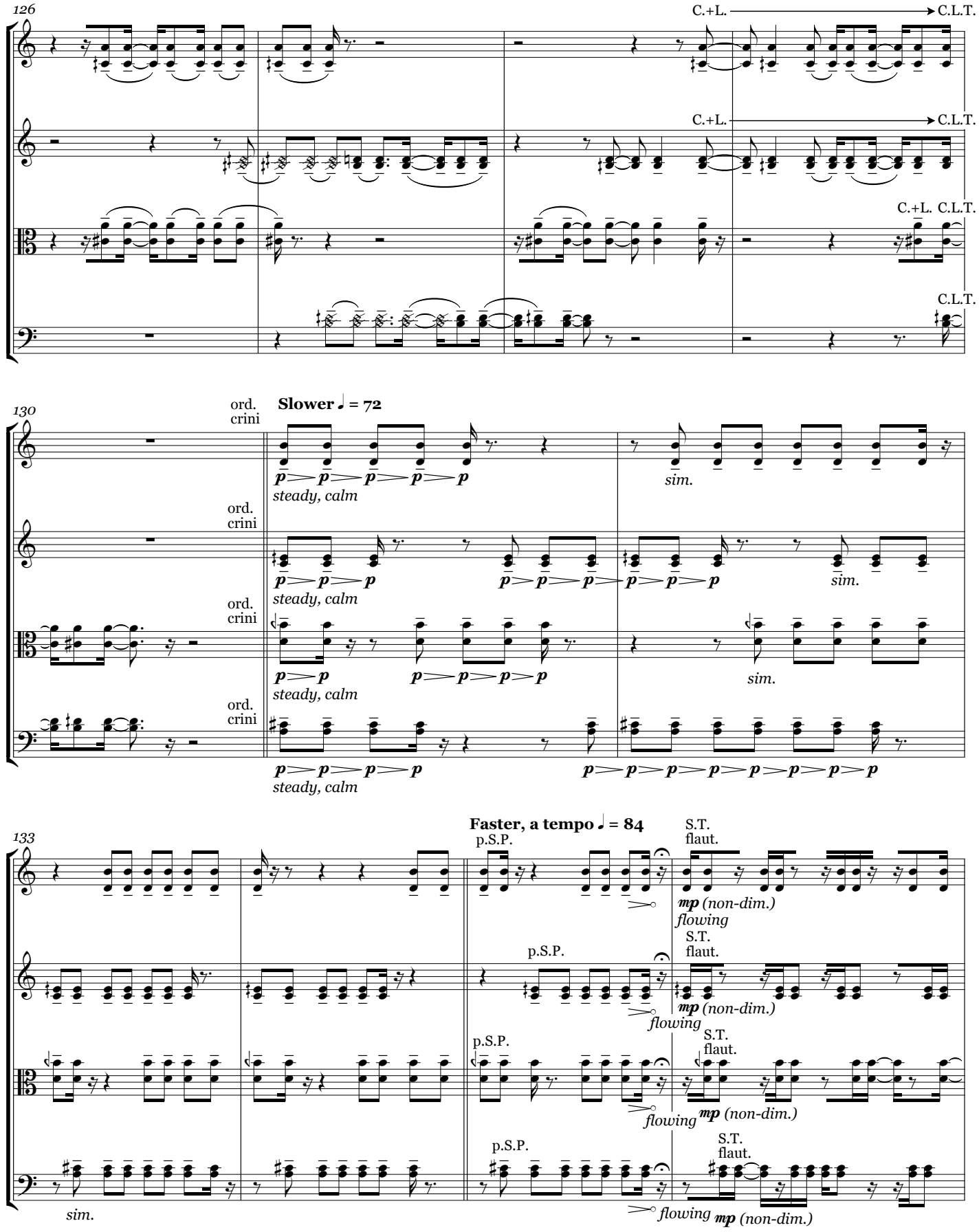

99
(8)
pizz.
C.L.B.
pizz.
C.L.B.

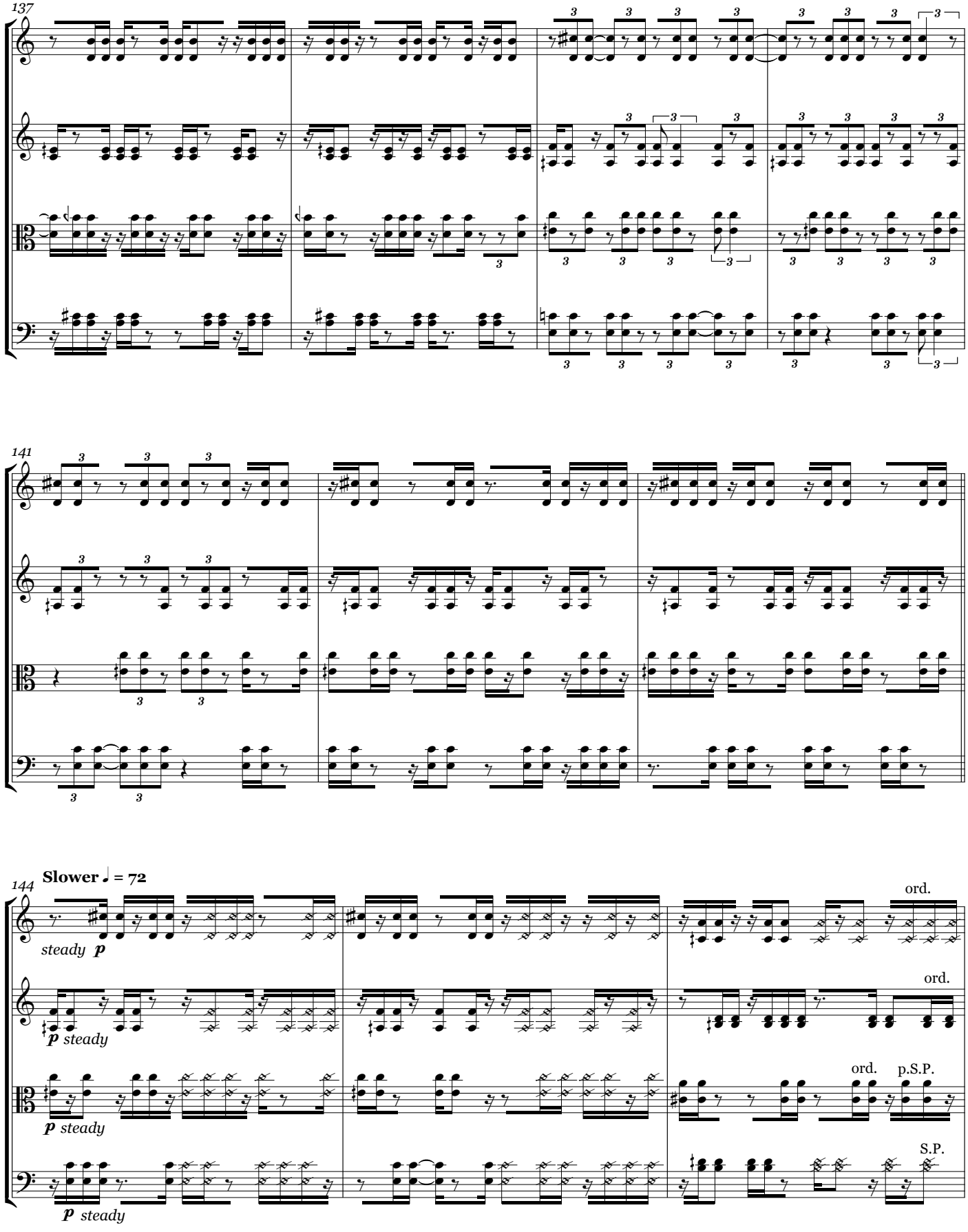

Suddenly slower ♩ = 76
accel.
a tempo ♪ = 200
104
(8)
crini
f forceful, marcato
ff

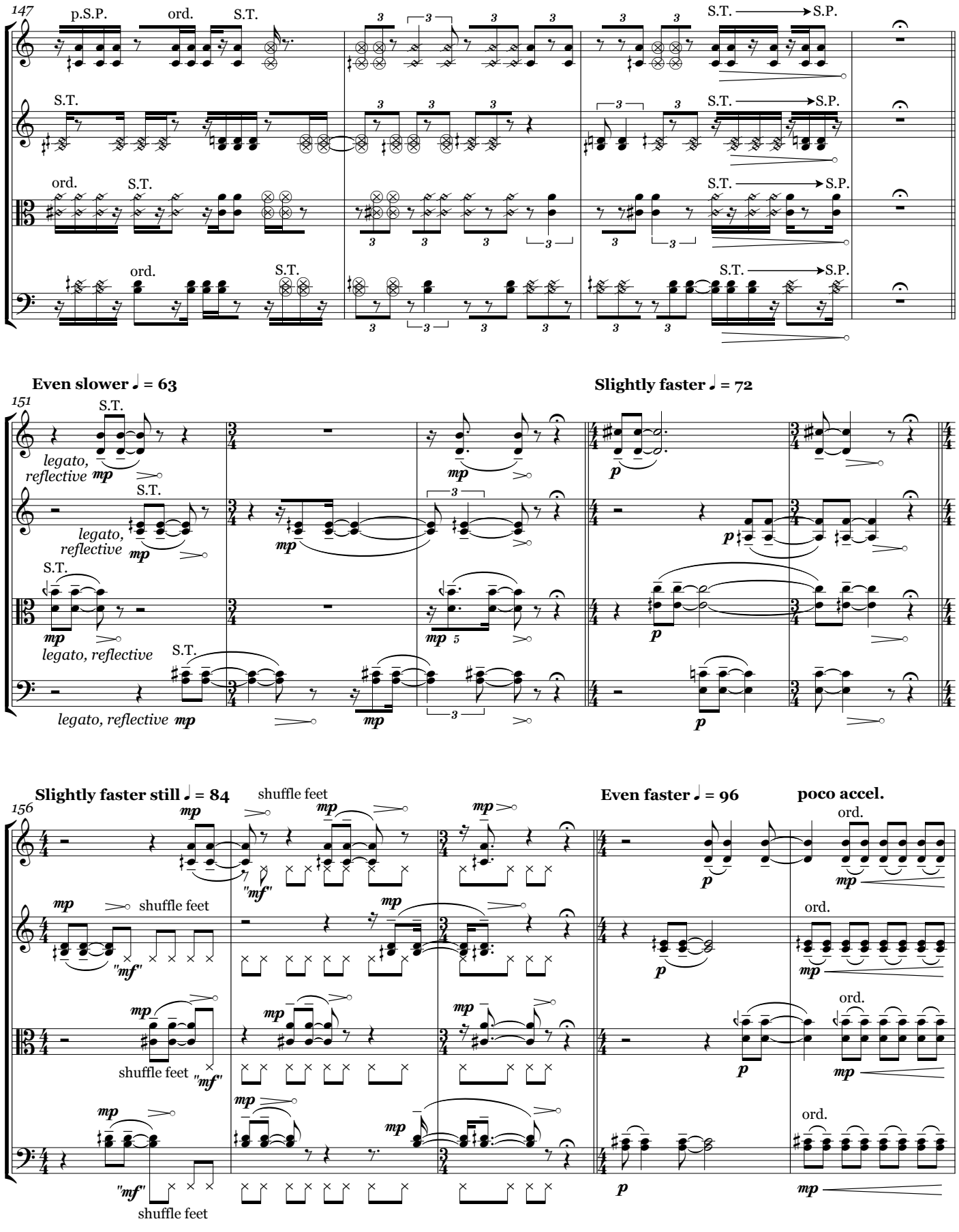

111
(8)
mp
exhale through nose
"mf"
ff
S.P.
sim.

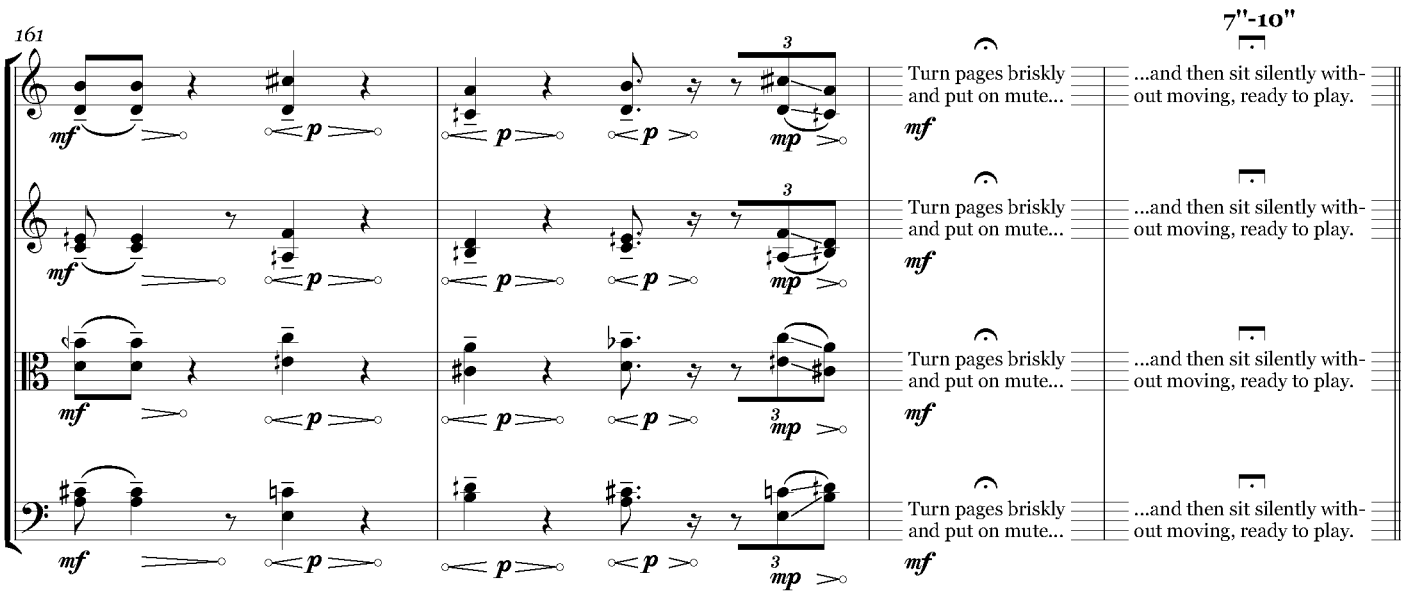

Suddenly slower ♩ = 76
116
pizz.
arco
S.T.
nose
feet
Turn pages briskly...
mf
7"-10"
...and then sit silently without moving, ready to play.

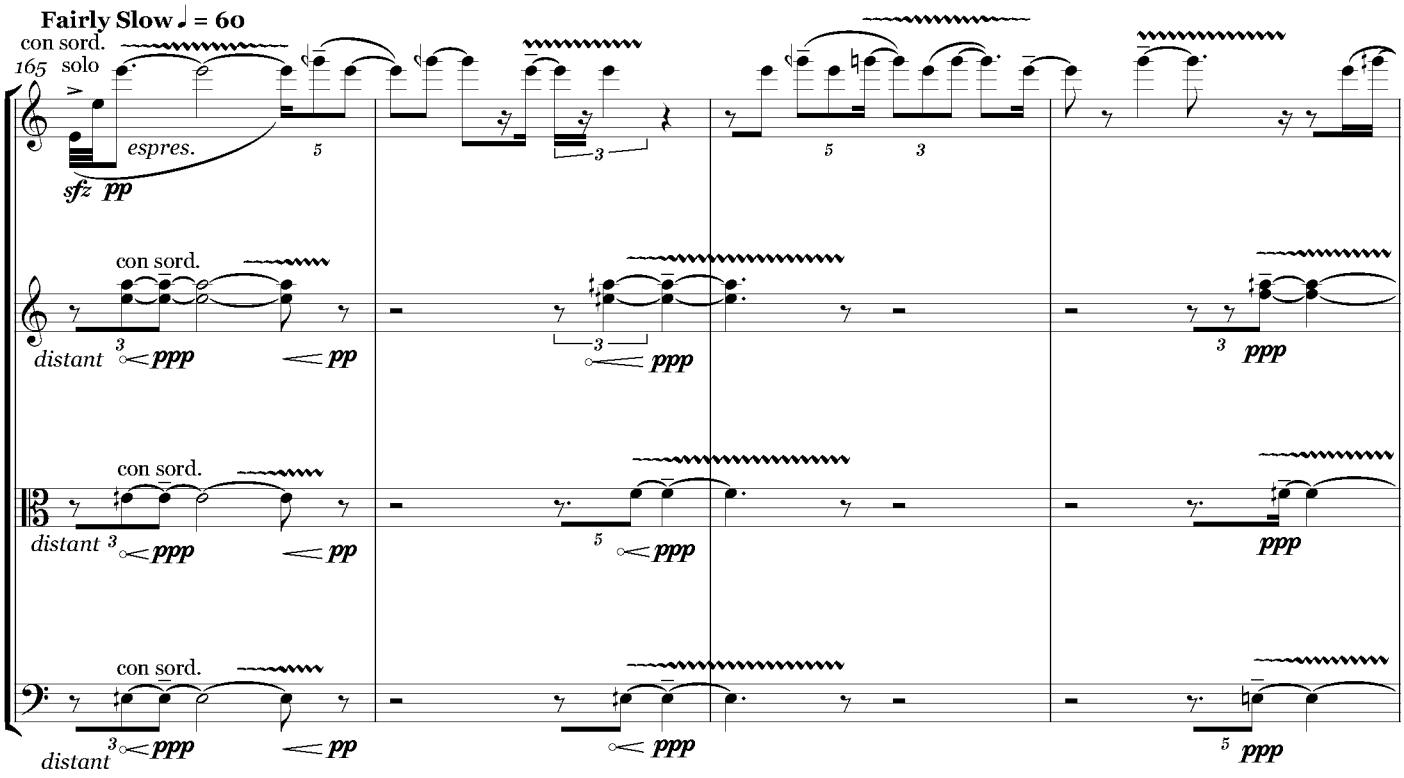

Moderate ♩ = 84
121
sul tasto, flautando
mp legato, flowing

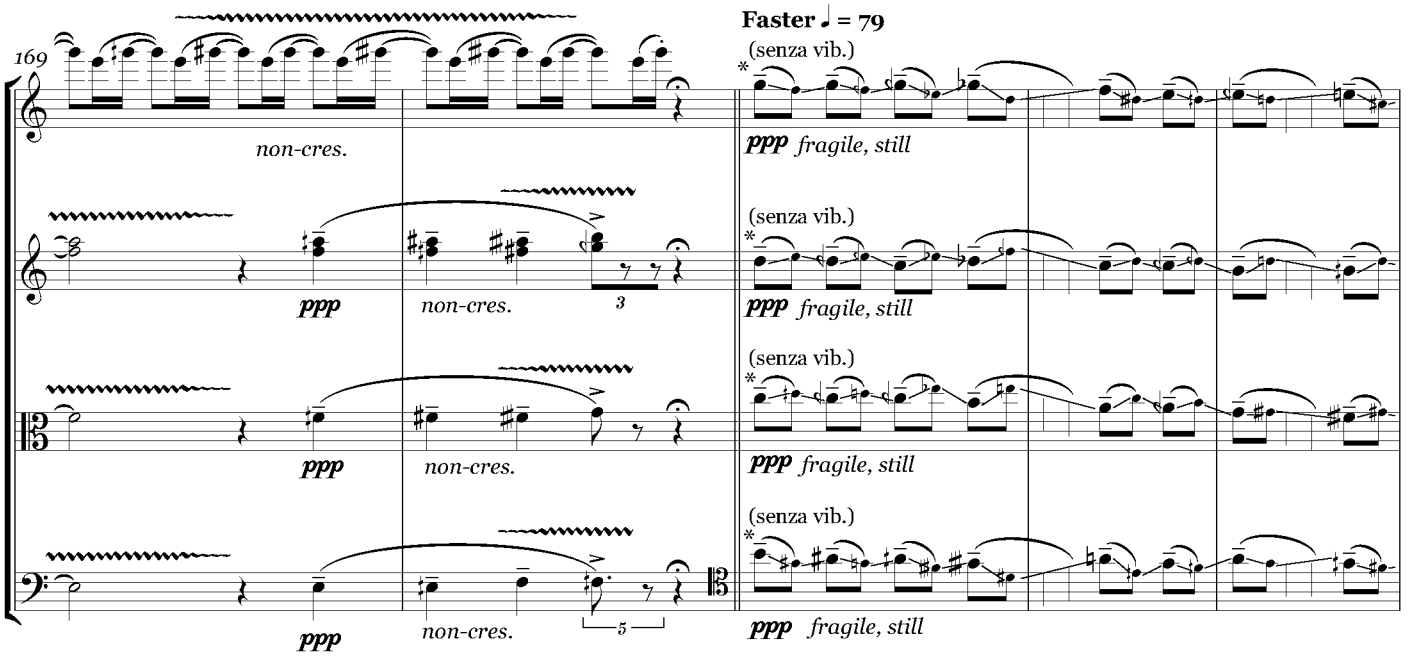

126
C.+L.
C.L.T.
130
ord. crini
Slower ♩ = 72
p
steady, calm
sim.
133
Faster, a tempo ♩ = 84
p.S.P.
S.T. flaut.
mp (non-dim.)
flowing

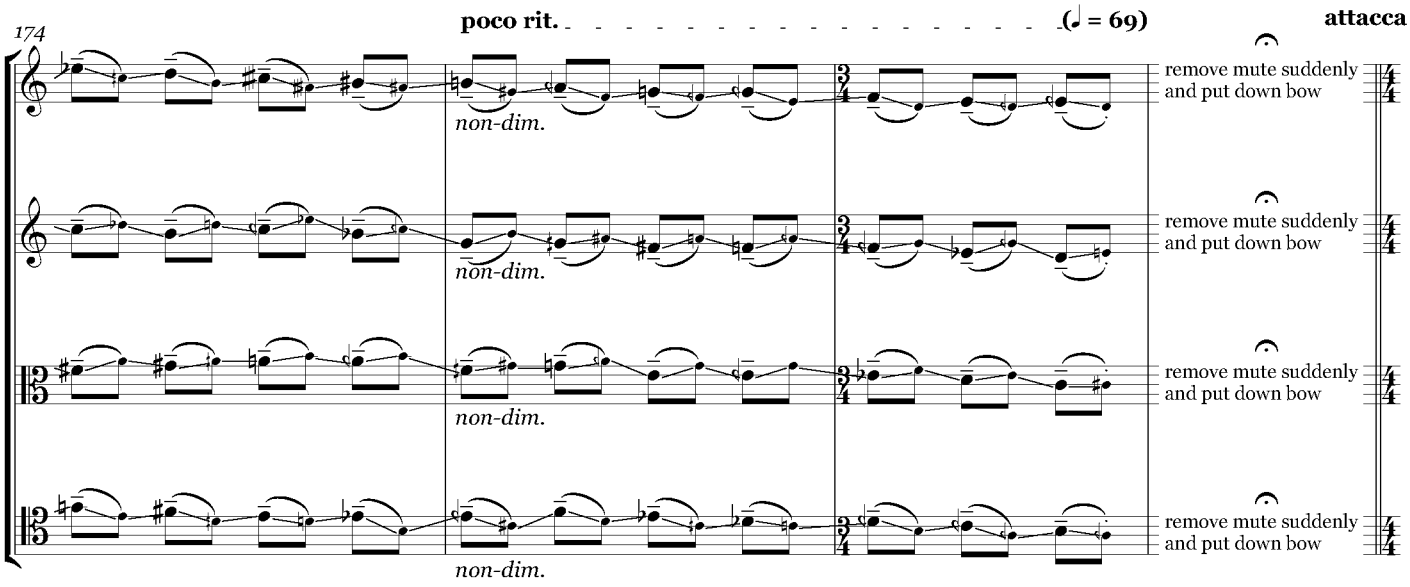

137
141
144
Slower ♩ = 72
steady p
p steady
p steady
p steady
ord.
ord.
ord.
p.S.P.
S.P.


147
p.S.P.
ord.
S.T.
S.T. → S.P.
151
Even slower ♩ = 63
Slightly faster ♩ = 72
legato, reflective
mp
p
156
Slightly faster still ♩ = 84
shuffle feet
"mf"
Even faster ♩ = 96
poco accel.
ord.


161
7"-10"
Turn pages briskly and put on mute...
...and then sit silently without moving, ready to play.
mf
p
mp

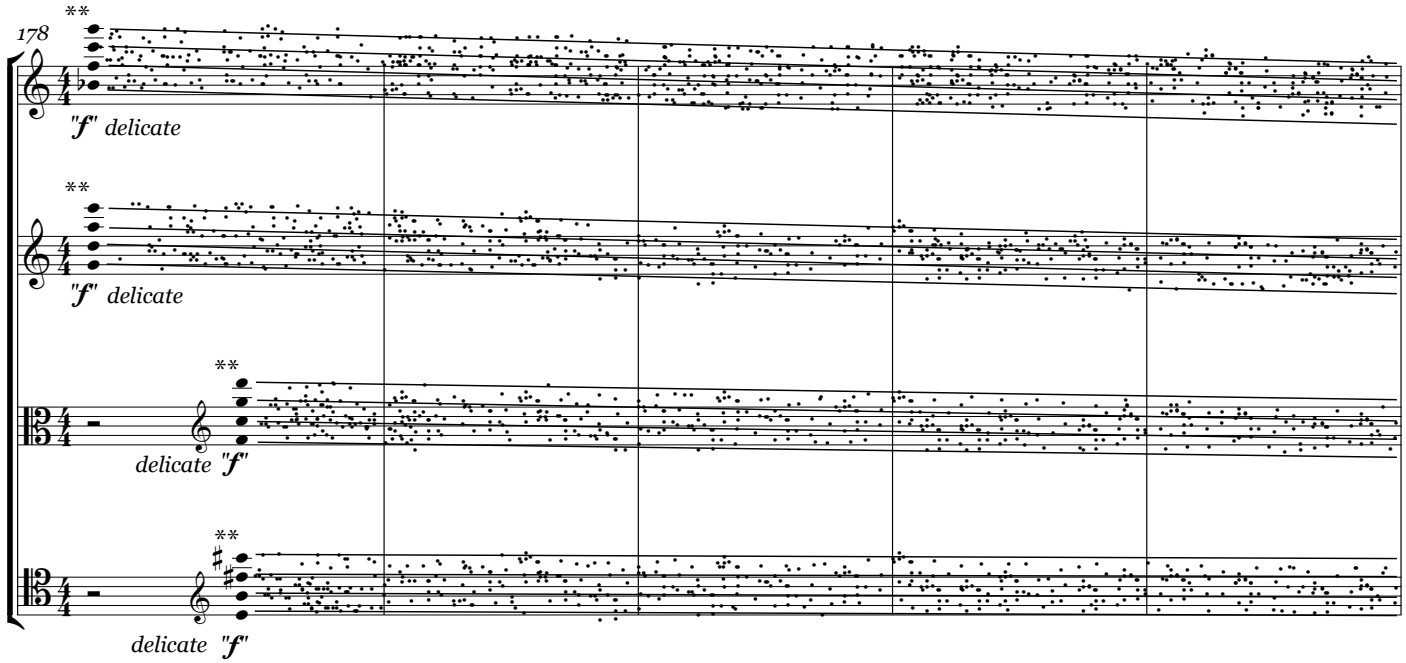

Fairly Slow ♩ = 60
con sord.
165 solo
espres.
sfz pp
con sord.
distant
ppp
pp
con sord.
distant
ppp
pp
con sord.
distant
ppp
pp
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp

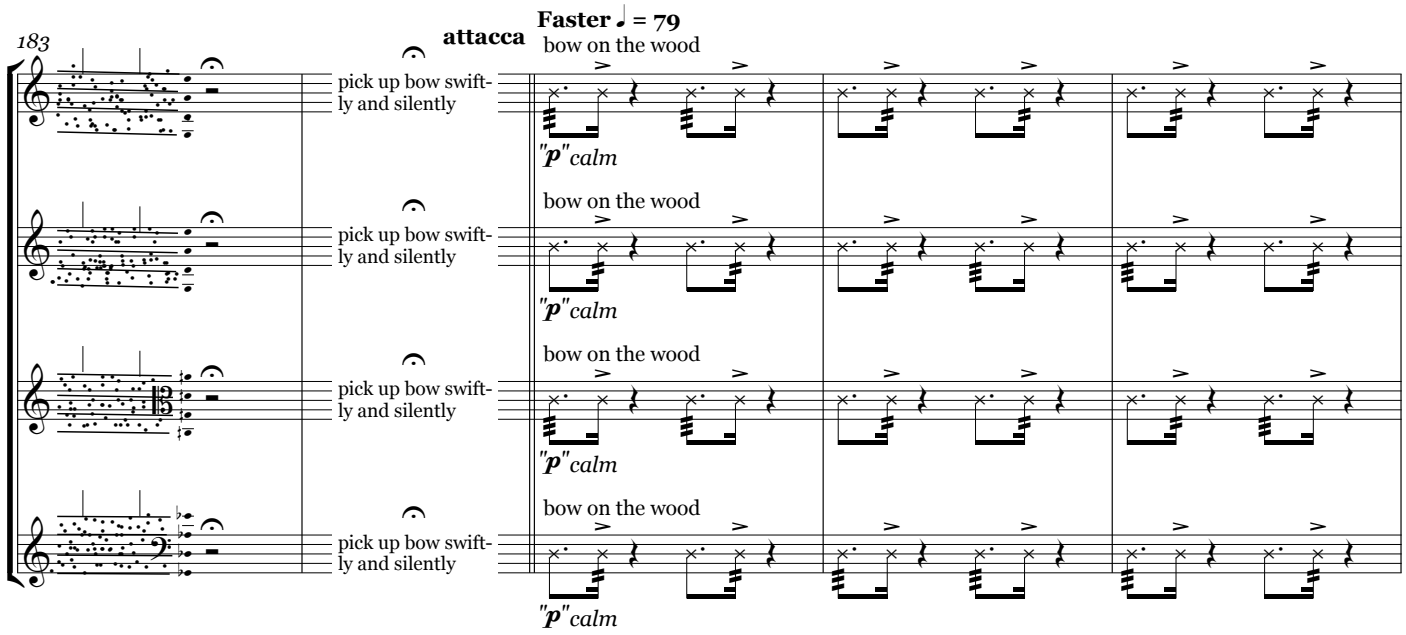




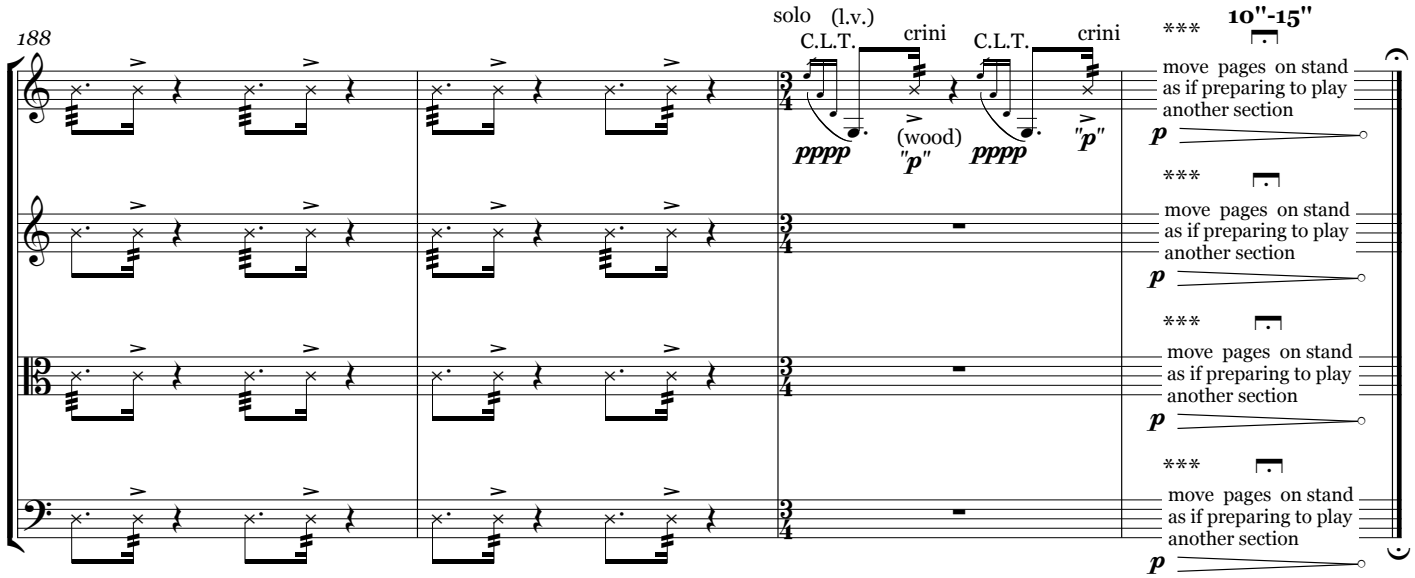
* Hold the sonority of each normal-sized notehead for a split second before proceeding with the glissando. Use the small noteheads only as markers for when to change direction. The aural effect should be that of a series of sonorities in quarter notes, but with a glissando trailing each sonority.

Slower, a tempo ♩ = 60





** Rapidly tap all four strings, one at a time, with the fingers of the right hand near the end of the fingerboard. Tap in random patterns, as quickly and arrythmically as possible. The left hand slowly glissandos downward, changing the pitch. Try to maintain tuning appromixately, but perfect intonation is not necessary for the effect.



*** Try to make the sound of the page turns as normal as possible. Over the course of the 10"-15", gradually decrease the frequency and speed of the page turns, as if the sheets were almost in place for an imaginary next section. This "diminuendo" continues until silence.