Sonnets of Apology: Motion and Reflection

a cantata on the poetry of Samuel Greenberg (1893-1917)

for

Soprano and Alto soloists

-with-

string quartet

and piano

by

Justin Henry Rubin

HARVEY MUSIC EDITIONS

Forward

I had never heard of Samuel Greenberg. I had been deeply involved with the works of Hart Crane, had set a number of his poems, and was even inspired to write purely instrumental compositions based on some of his fantastic imagery. It was through Crane that I stumbled upon Greenberg through his documented praise. I found myself remarkably engrossed with these terse works - their pure surrealist tone (which antedates the more famous movement begun after World War I) are imbued with an expressiveness that immediately penetrated my mind. My response was the composition of a set of songs for soprano, alto, and piano (*Loose Pages*), which were written in the Fall of 2000. They were endowed with a musical character to help convey more than simply the sentiments (if that is indeed possible!) of the texts of the Poet. His works are "orgies of supersensibility" (Louis Untermeyer, 1940) wherein "words… poured …forth with a wild, chaotic passion" (James Laughlin, 1939) and therefore a narrative structure would not have been a favorable choice of settings. Instead, I try to take a distinct, non-narrative musical point of view with them.

The only image of Greenberg I know is that of him at the time of his Bar Mitzvah; the dusty, dark synagogues of early 20th century New York instantaneously came to mind. The unison rhythmic, declamatory intonations of Jewish chant, the cascade of words as if a supplication, the propulsive nature of the poems themselves, the sinuous, fleeting emotions that characterize Greenberg's words, the intimate yet universal essence of his utterances, the quality of the voice of youth turned adult only to be cut down in premature death, the *speed* with which the texts were written - all of these factors contributed to my choice of sounds that surround my settings of his works. I returned to Greenberg with a cantata, choosing poems from his large collection of *Sonnets of Apology*. I revisit this collection once more, bringing ideas from the earlier song cycle together with my approach in the cantata settings.

Note: All misspellings from the original text have been preserved in their re-print (below), but some have been altered in the musical settings for ease of reading.

Motion

The vespers lie between sparkling lust that stirs in motives life!
No lance! but kindered thought can clomb unto its might
As flawless spirits sings within. that shapes its mystic dite
Pure harmony, the faith of lyre, must meet and vary in its choir
Hence the Plum with effulgence gently shimmers in its silky wind
Petted by health - o'er its sequestered sire
that o'er its depth doth flow - ne'er doth tire
The fawns of taste has left its shore
From Rome to England bore, the phase
That chased, vailed beauty's law!
No more shall chant thy verbal lore
But O thy minds lofty flight
that greets its nocturne, through diurnal light
Legends of charm, that glanced thy Path upon our door!

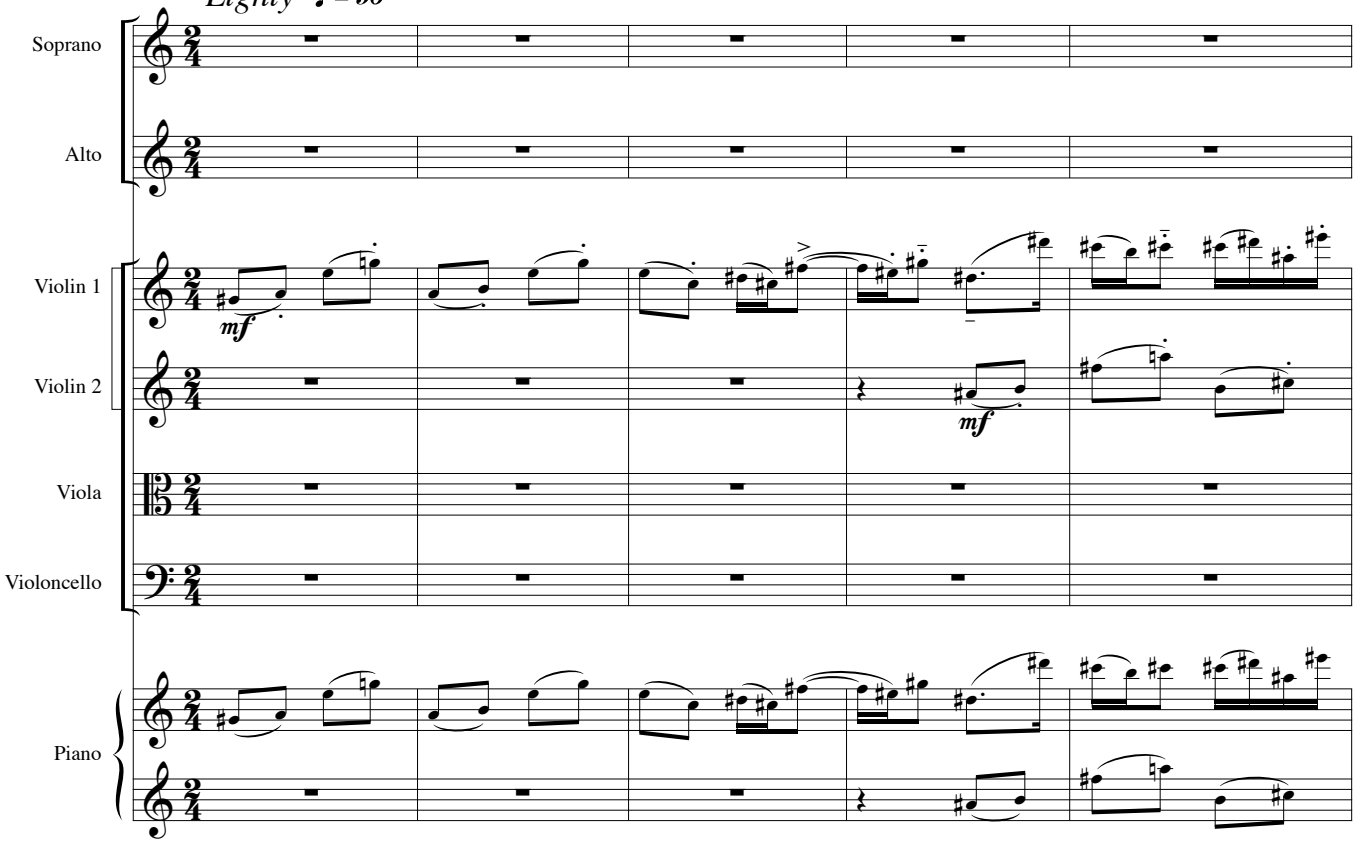
Reflection

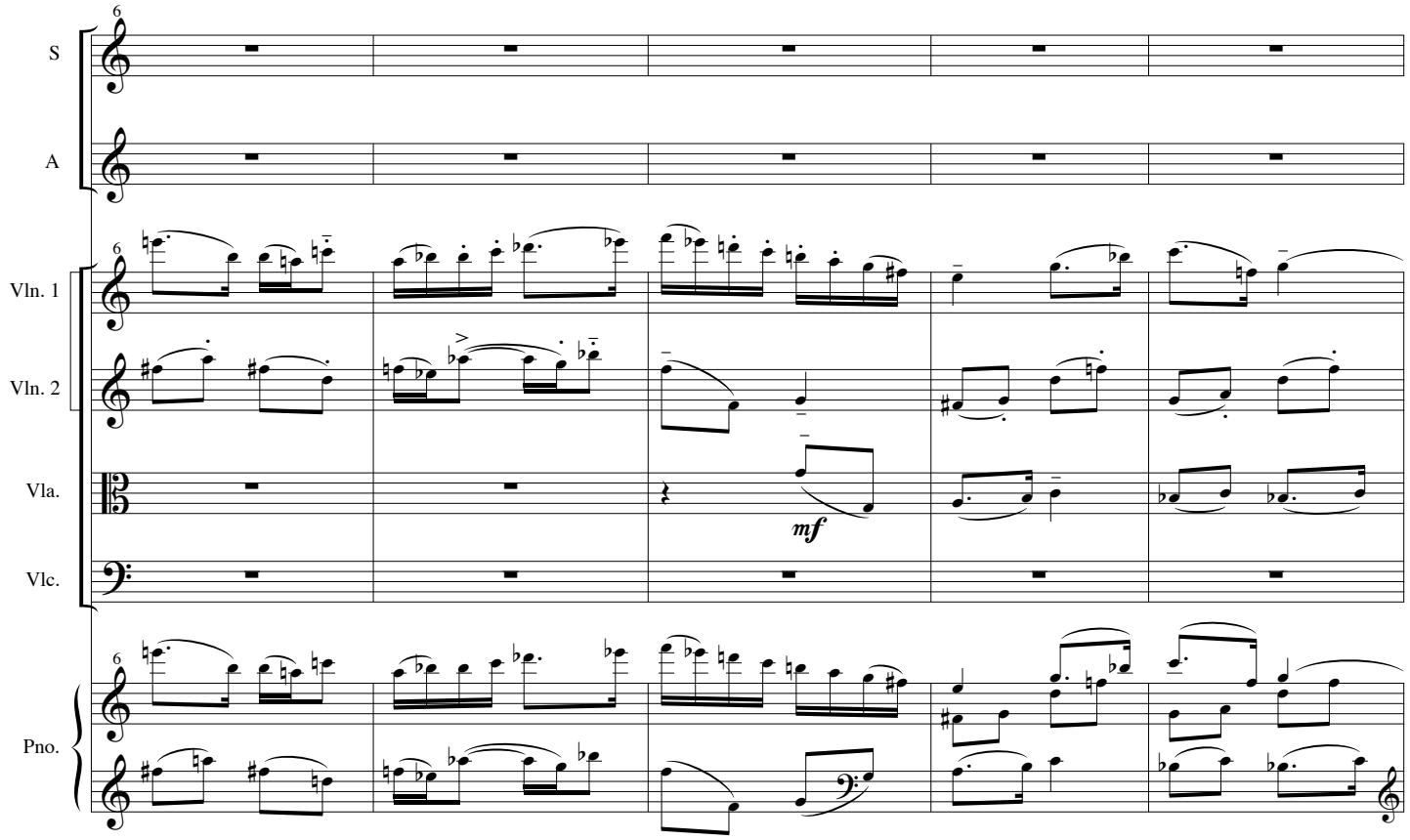
O all power sweet singing lyre
In my lonly self hath found complete
Content, and view of thy vast
Graceful - unfelt, - untold beauty
From my seat, I see chasms
Of spacious breathing forests
And heavens ocean wide
Of sinking quality, as clouds that
Force neath their shadows creat
Seems as if life's limit sorrows
After death - who shall inherit
Its eternal grande, and Breath
Eternities seat, O lord - thy
Promise of immortality is as thy everlasting growth

Sonnets of Apology:
Motion and Reflection

Music: Justin Henry Rubin
Text: Samuel Greenberg

Lighly ♩ = 90





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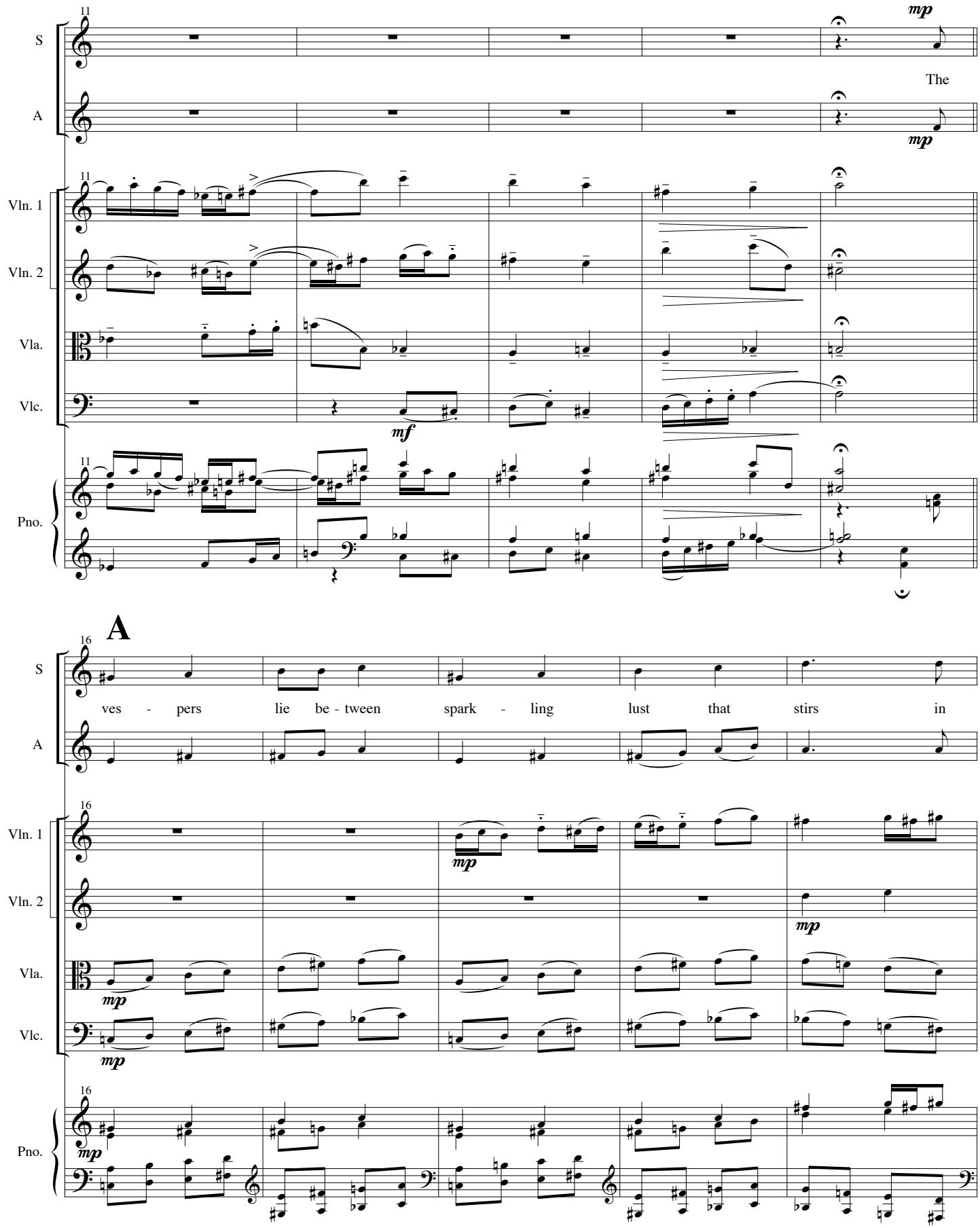
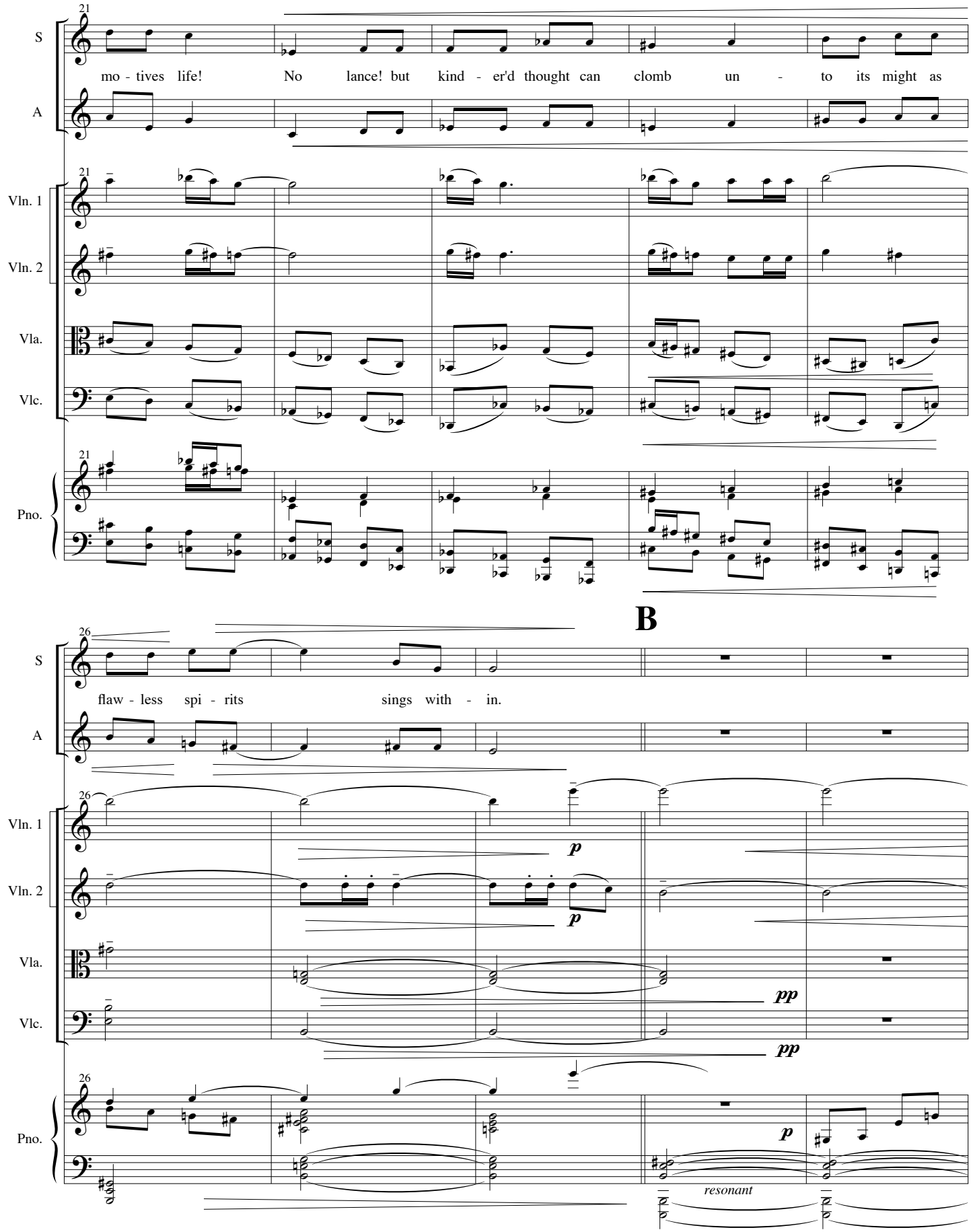
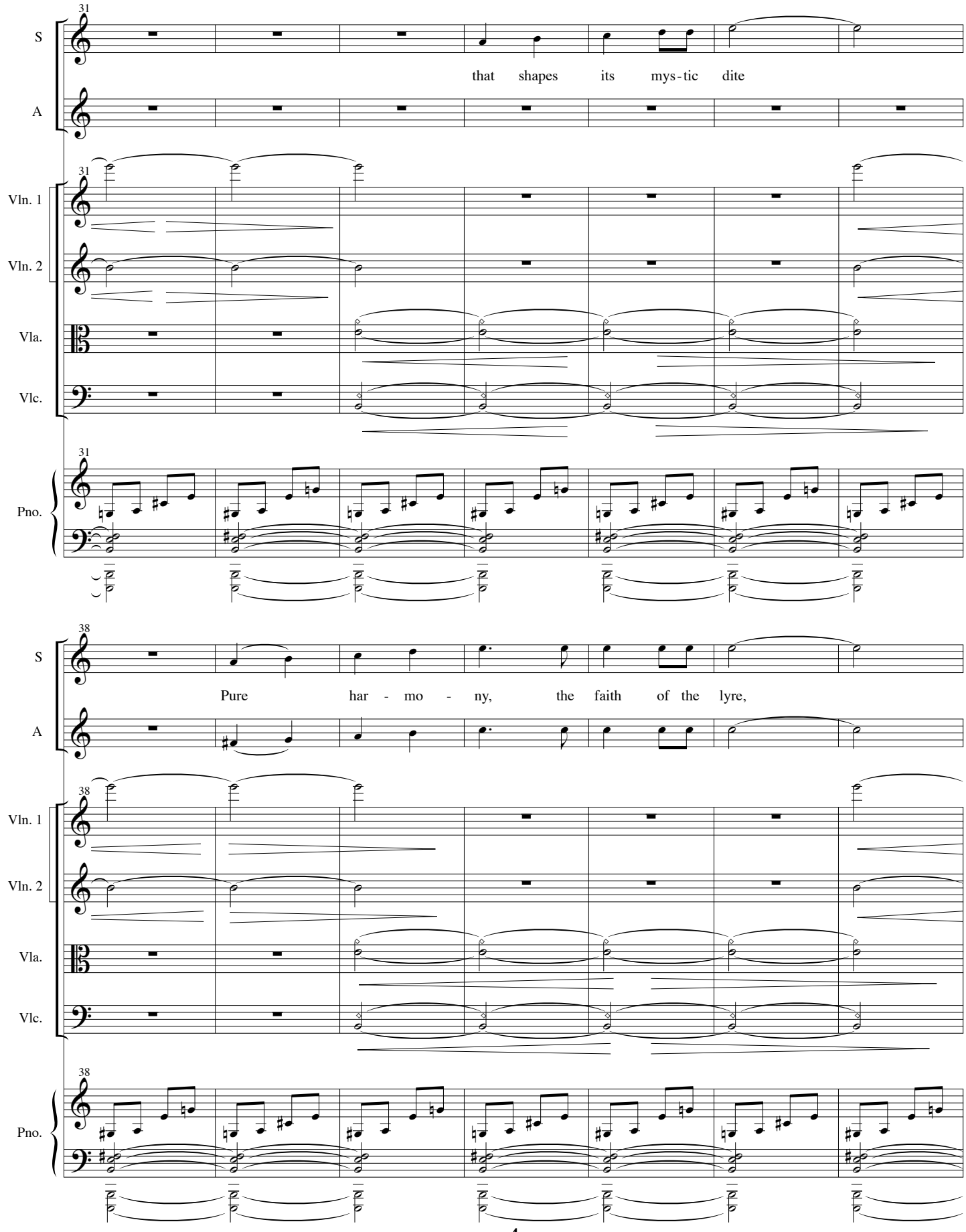
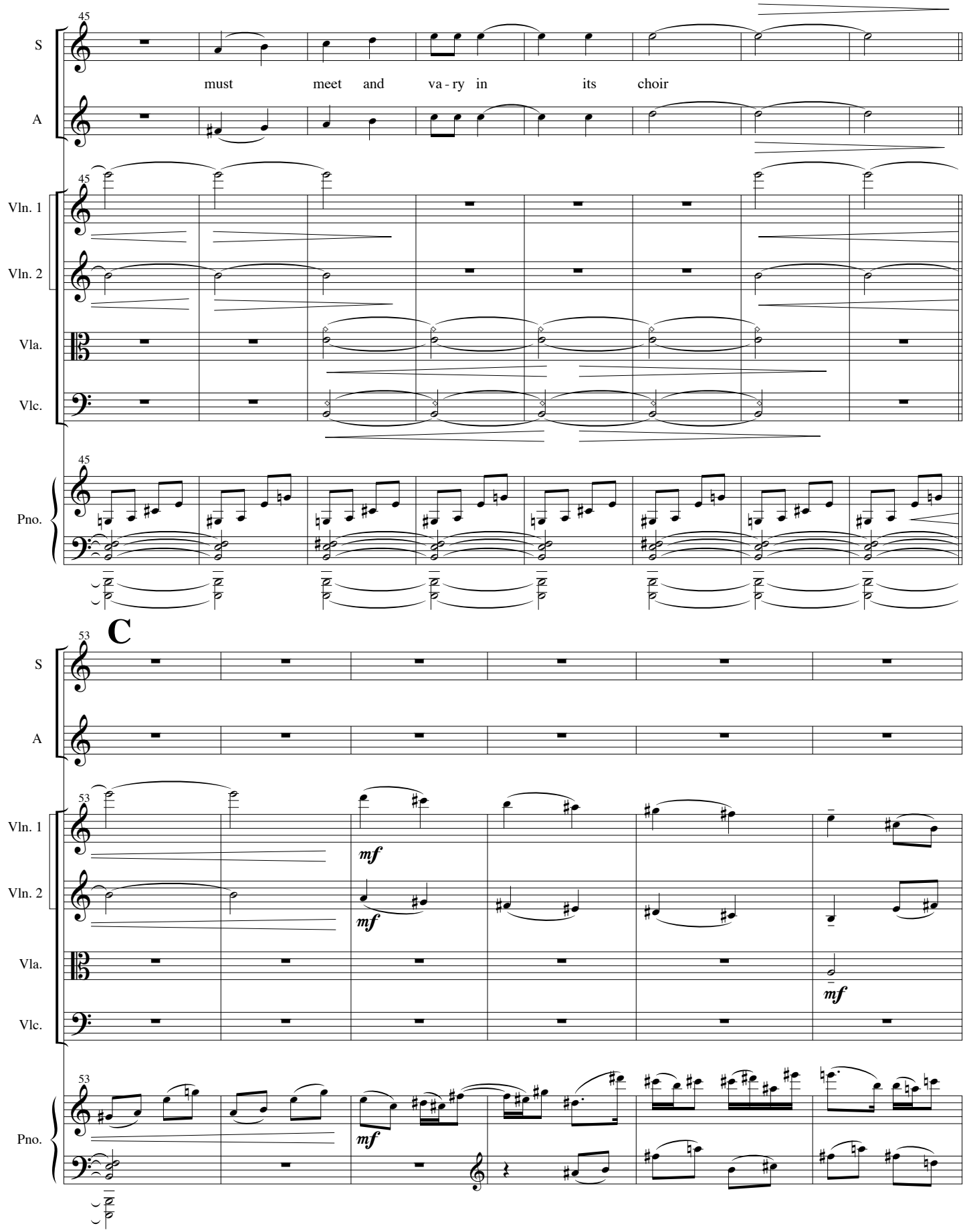
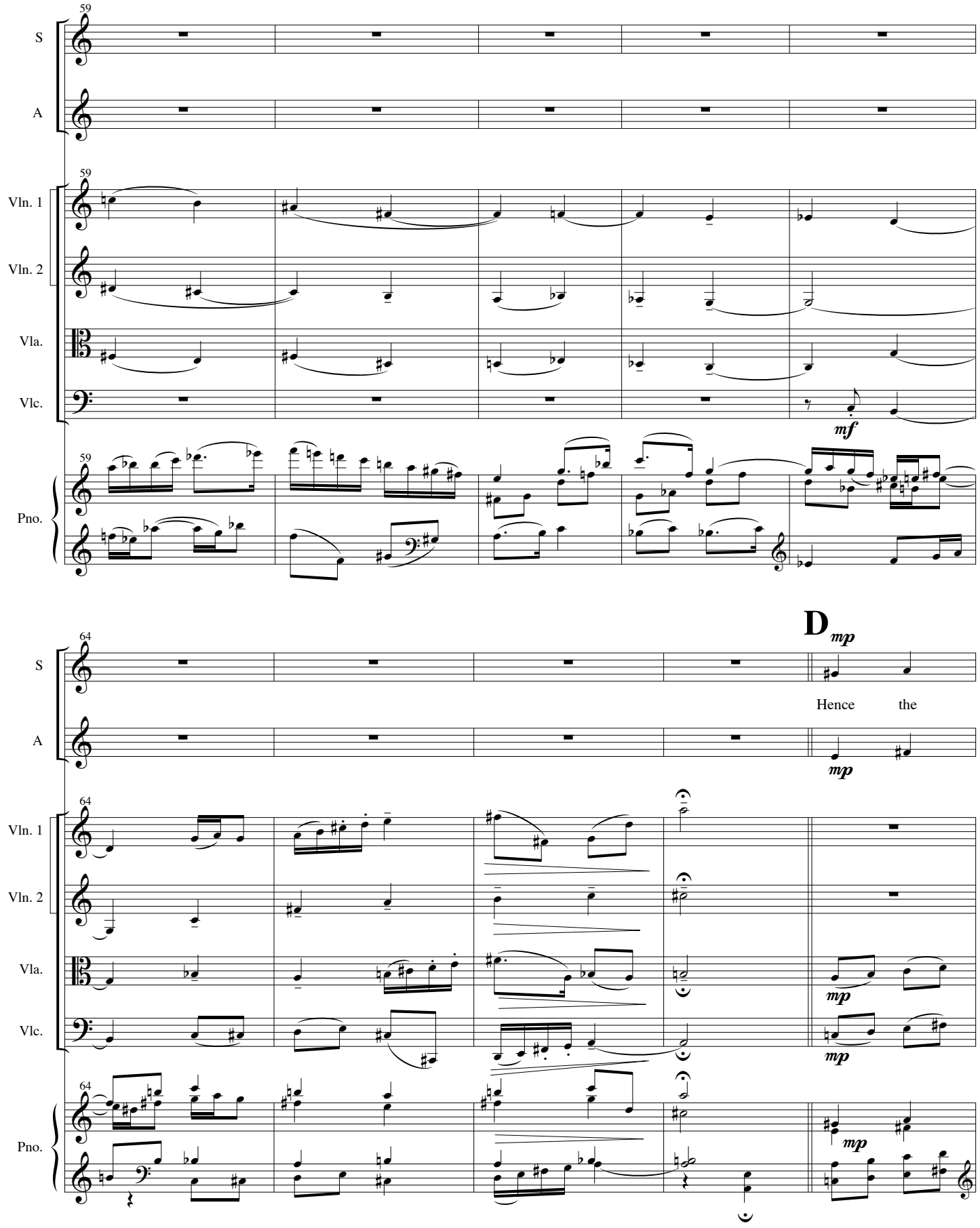
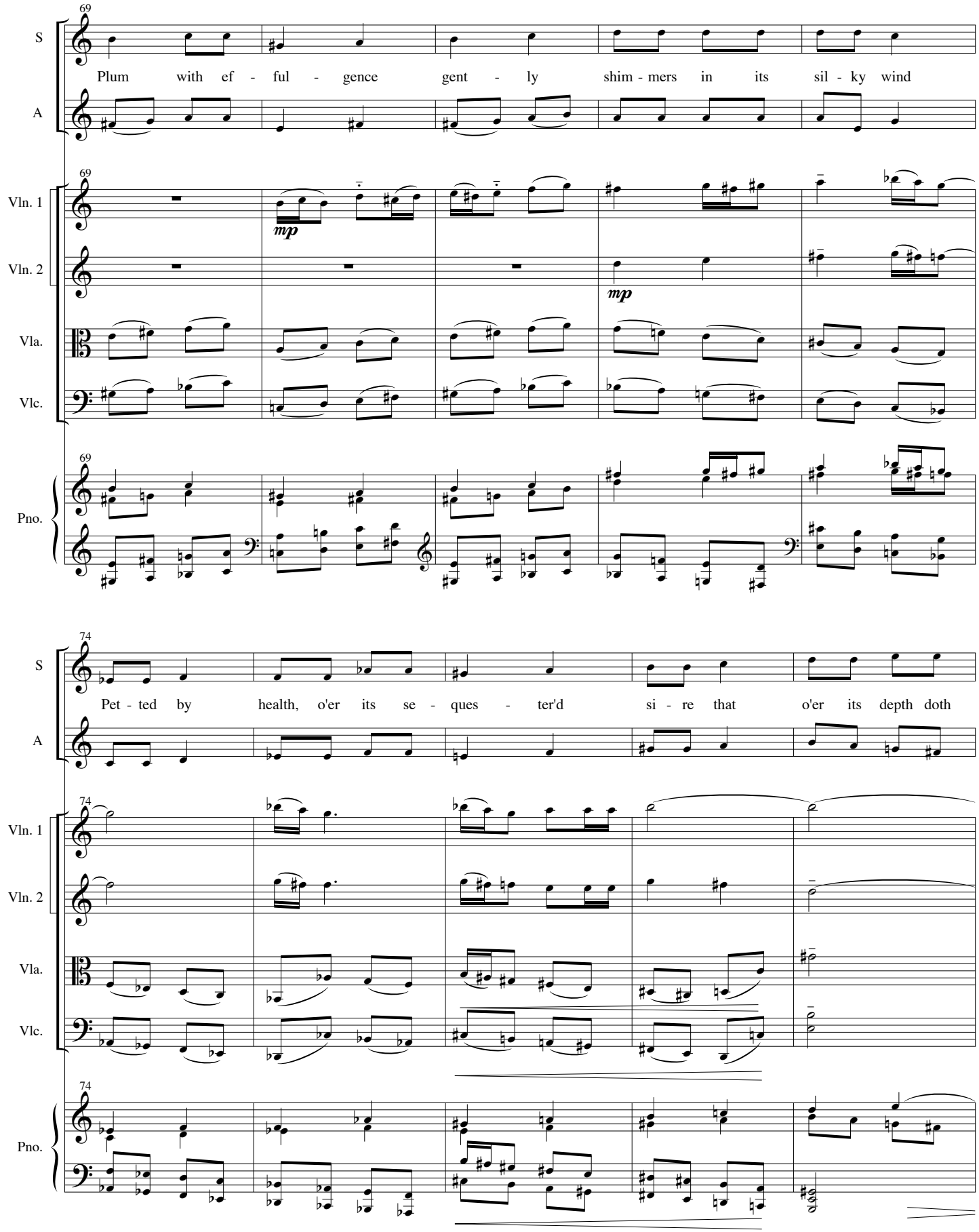

11
S
A
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
mp
The
mf
A
16
ves - pers lie be - tween spark - ling lust that stirs in

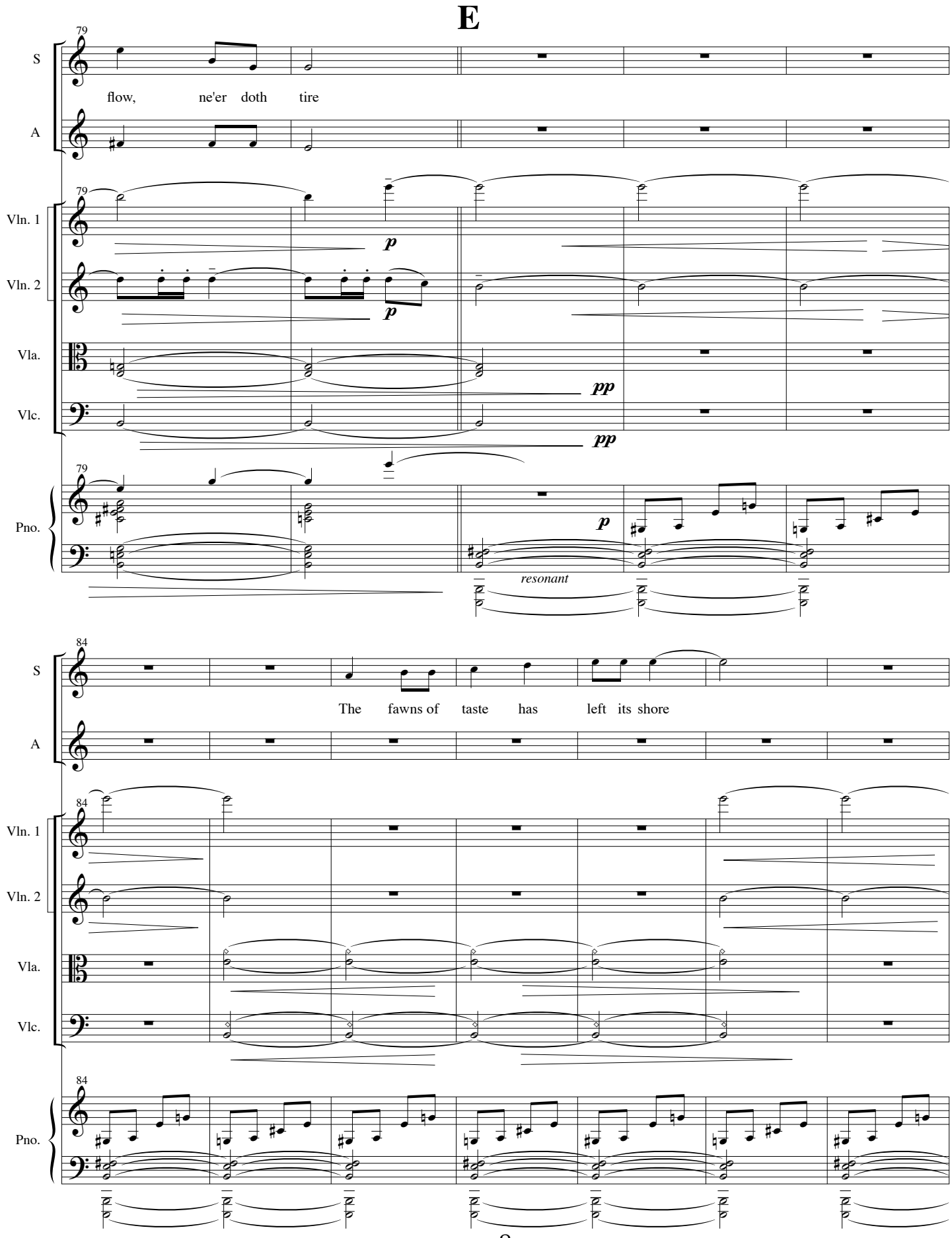

21
S
A
mo - tives life! No lance! but kind - er'd thought can clomb un - to its might as
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
B
26
flaw - less spi - rits sings with - in.
p
pp
resonant

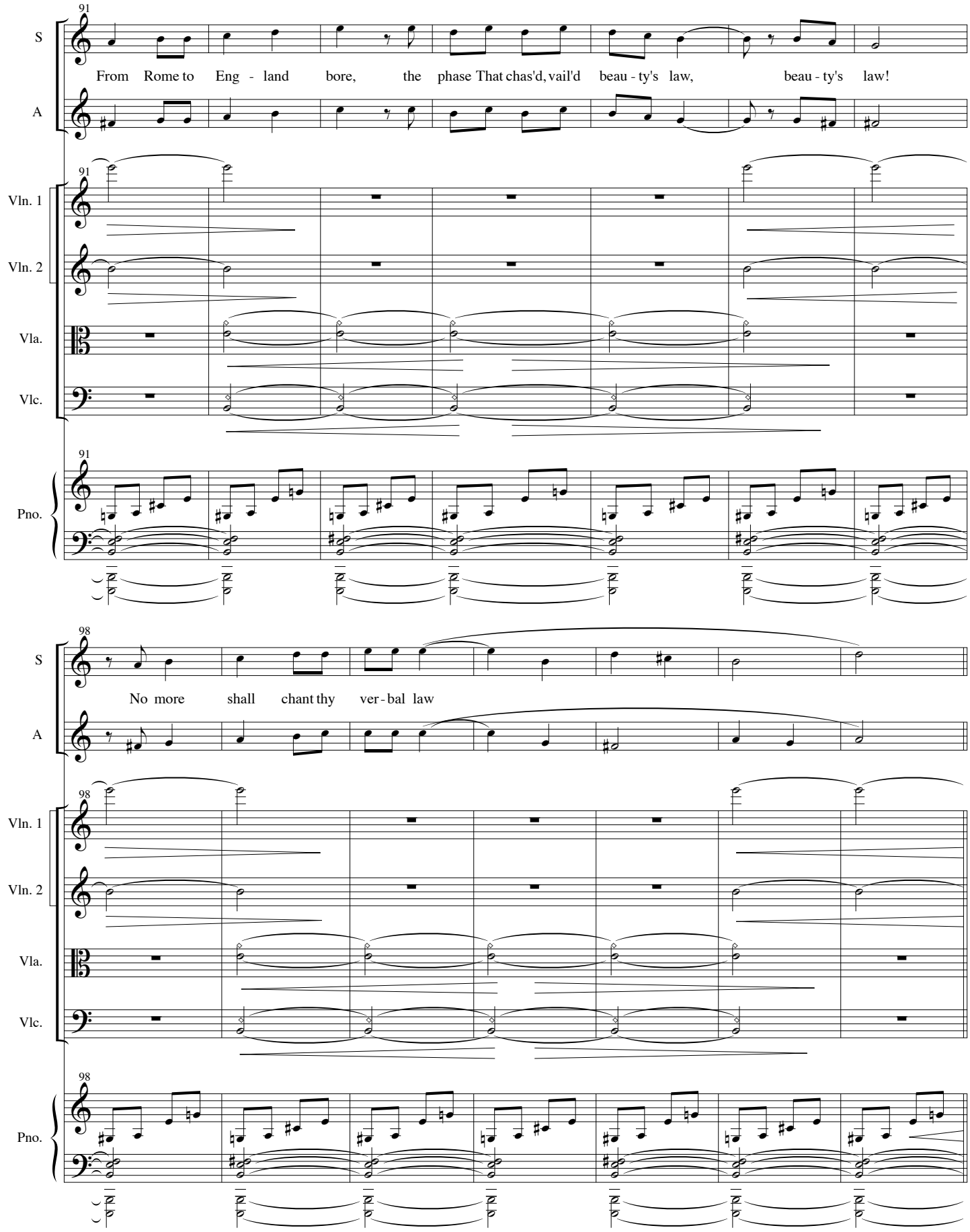

31
S
that shapes its mys-tic dite
A
31
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
31
Pno.
38
S
Pure har - mo - ny, the faith of the lyre,
A
38
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
38
Pno.

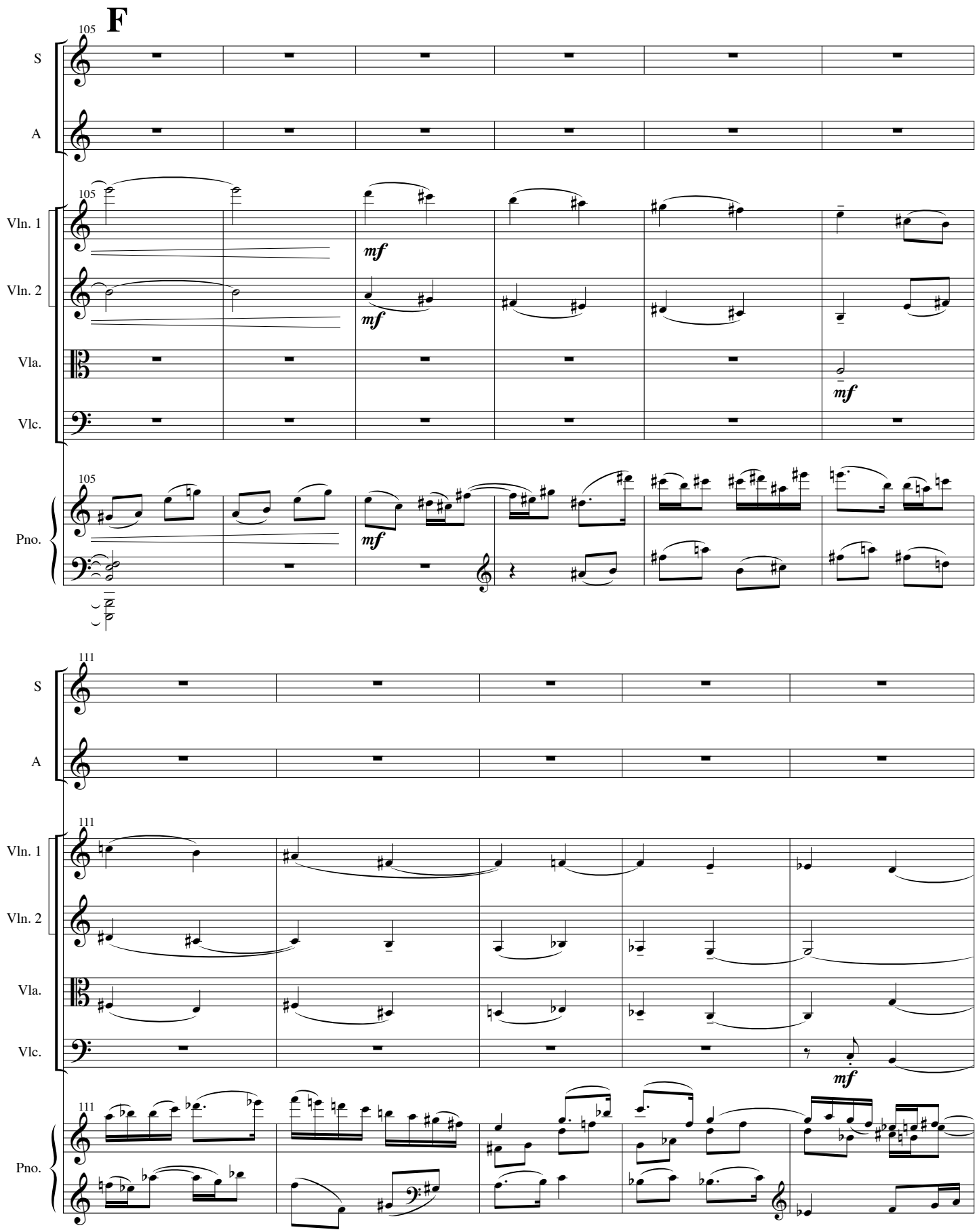

45
S
must meet and va - ry in its choir
A
45
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
45
Pno.
C
53
S
A
53
Vln. 1
mf
Vln. 2
mf
Vla.
mf
Vlc.
53
Pno.
mf

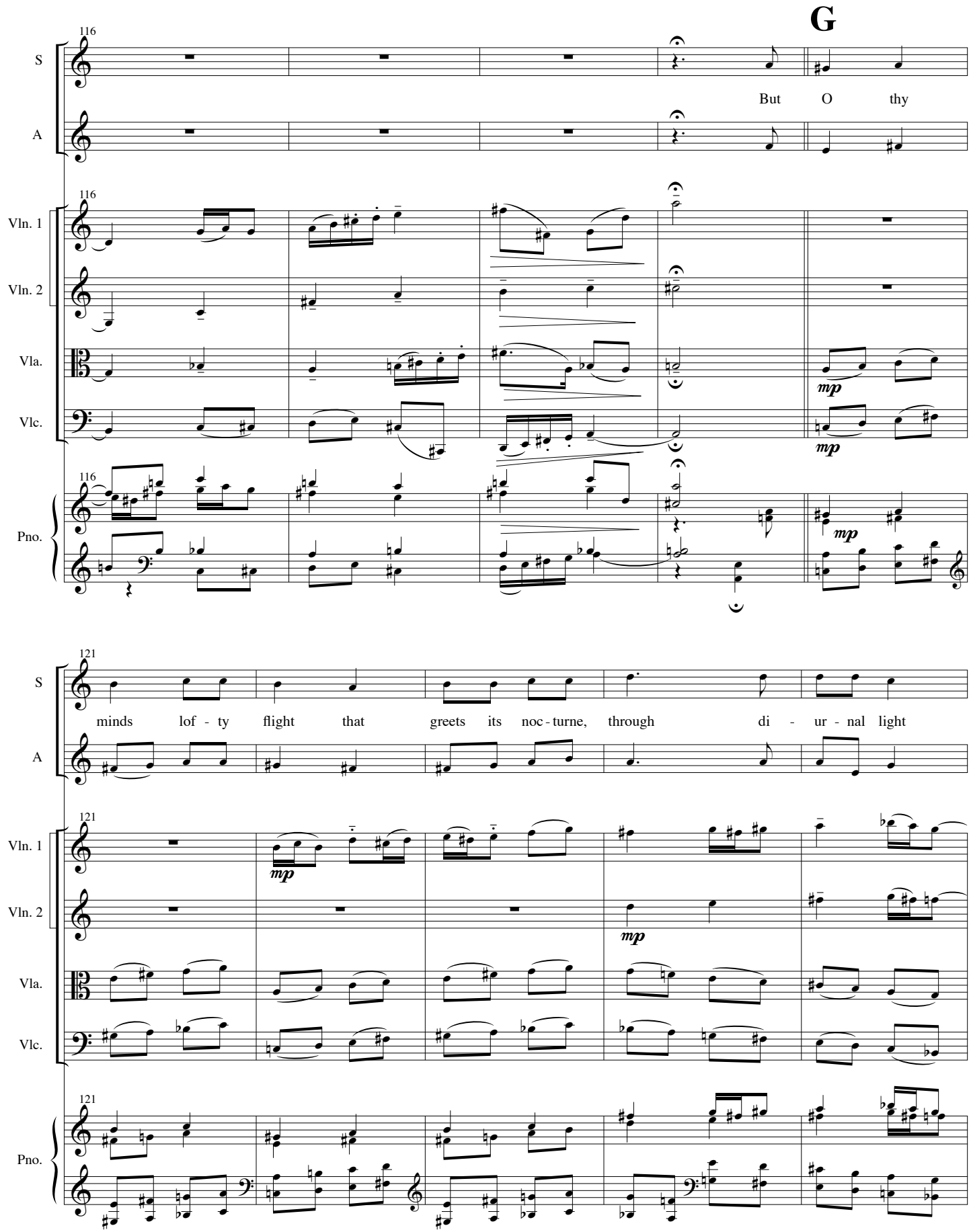

59
S
A
59
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
mf
59
Pno.
D
mp
64
S
Hence the
A
mp
64
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
mp
Vlc.
mp
64
Pno.
mp

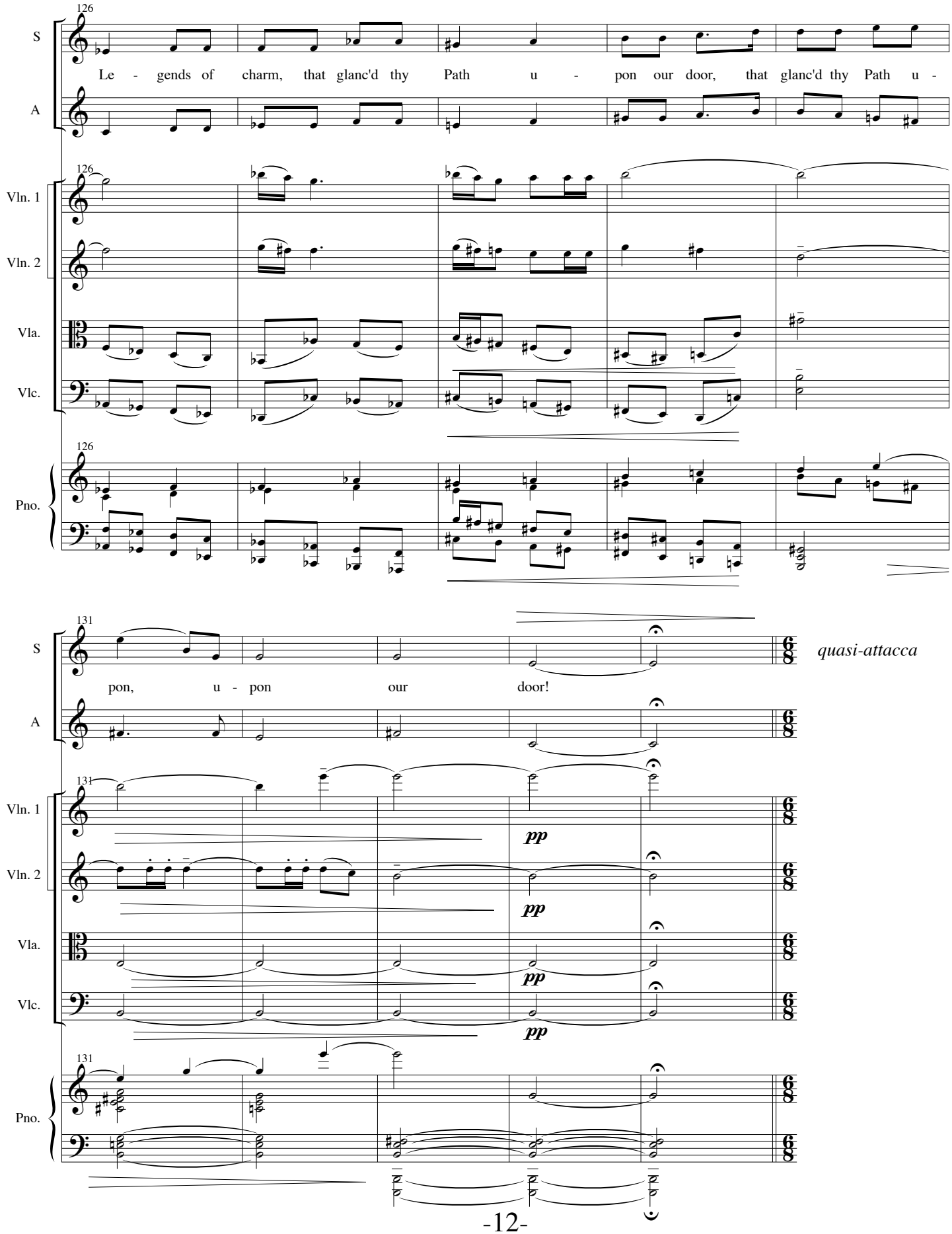

69
S
Plum with ef - ful - gence gent - ly shim - mers in its sil - ky wind
A
69
Vln. 1
mp
Vln. 2
mp
Vla.
Vlc.
69
Pno.
74
S
Pet - ted by health, o'er its se - ques - ter'd si - re that o'er its depth doth
A
74
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
74
Pno.


E
79
S
flow, ne'er doth tire
A
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
p
p
pp
pp
Pno.
p
resonant
84
S
The fawns of taste has left its shore
A
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.


91
S
From Rome to Eng - land bore, the phase That chas'd, vail'd beau - ty's law, beau - ty's law!
A
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
98
S
No more shall chant thy ver - bal law
A
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.


F
105
S
A
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
mf
111


G
116
S
A
But O thy
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
mp
121
minds lof - ty flight that greets its noc - turne, through di - ur - nal light


126
S
A
Le - gends of charm, that glanc'd thy Path u - pon our door, that glanc'd thy Path u -
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
131
pon, u - pon our door!
quasi-attacca
pp

H *Very slow and gentle*

136

S: O all po - wer sweet sing - ing ly - re In my

A

136

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

136 *esp.*

Pno. ***pp***

141

S: lone - ly self hath found com - plete, com - - - plete Con - tent, com -

A: lone - - - - - ly self hath found com - plete

141 *legato*

Vln. 1 ***pp*** *legato* sim.

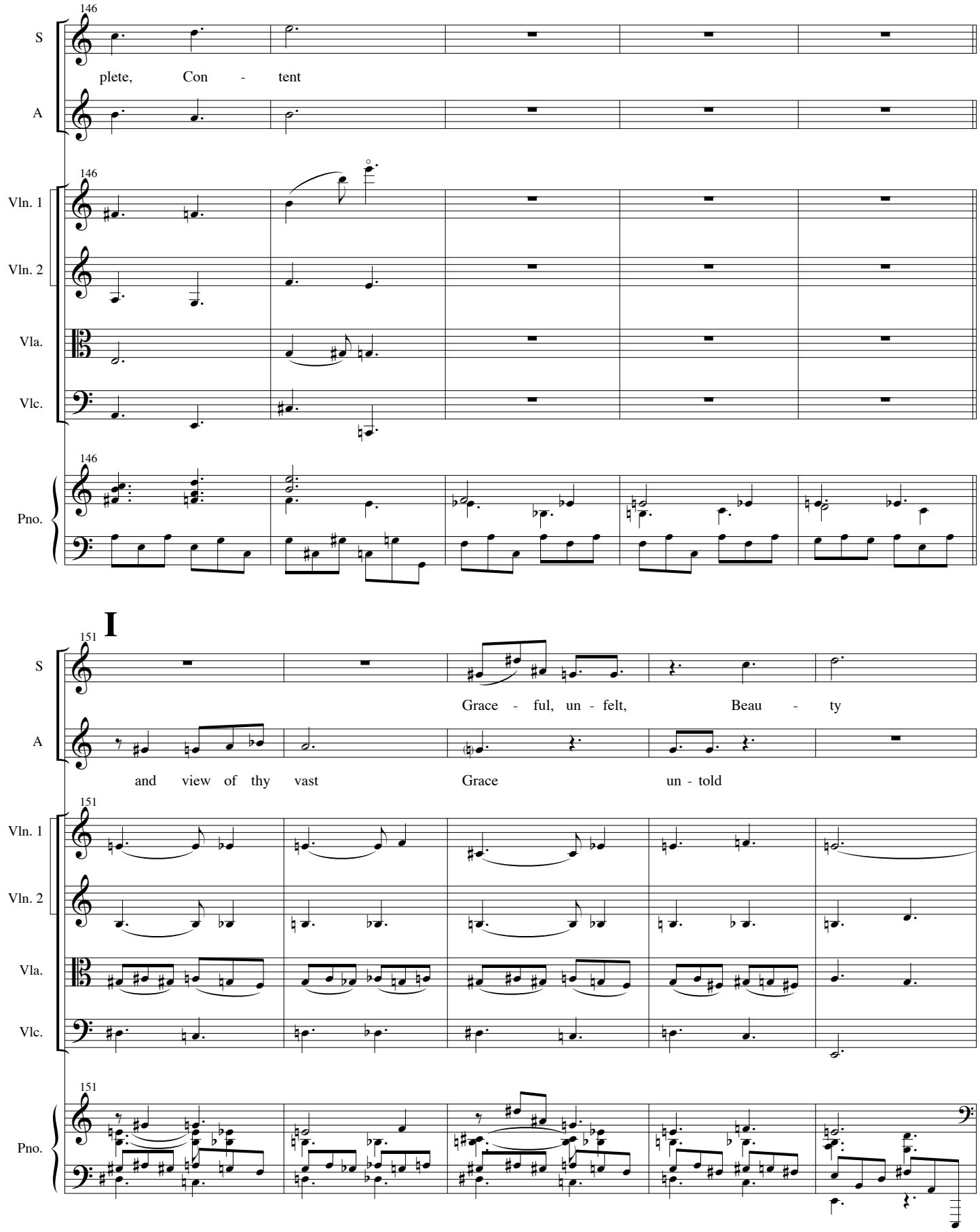
Vln. 2 ***pp*** *legato* sim.

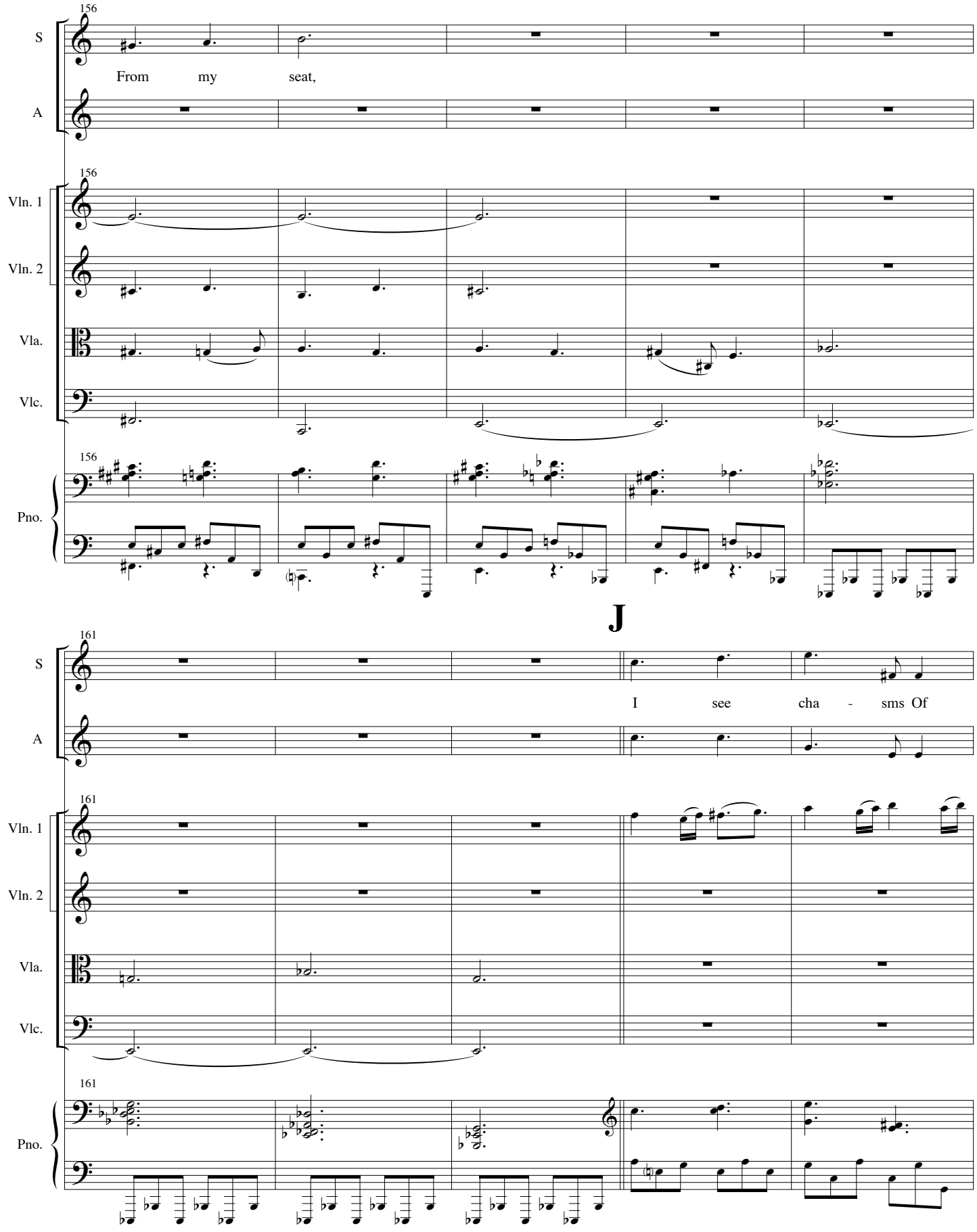
Vla. ***pp*** *legato* sim.

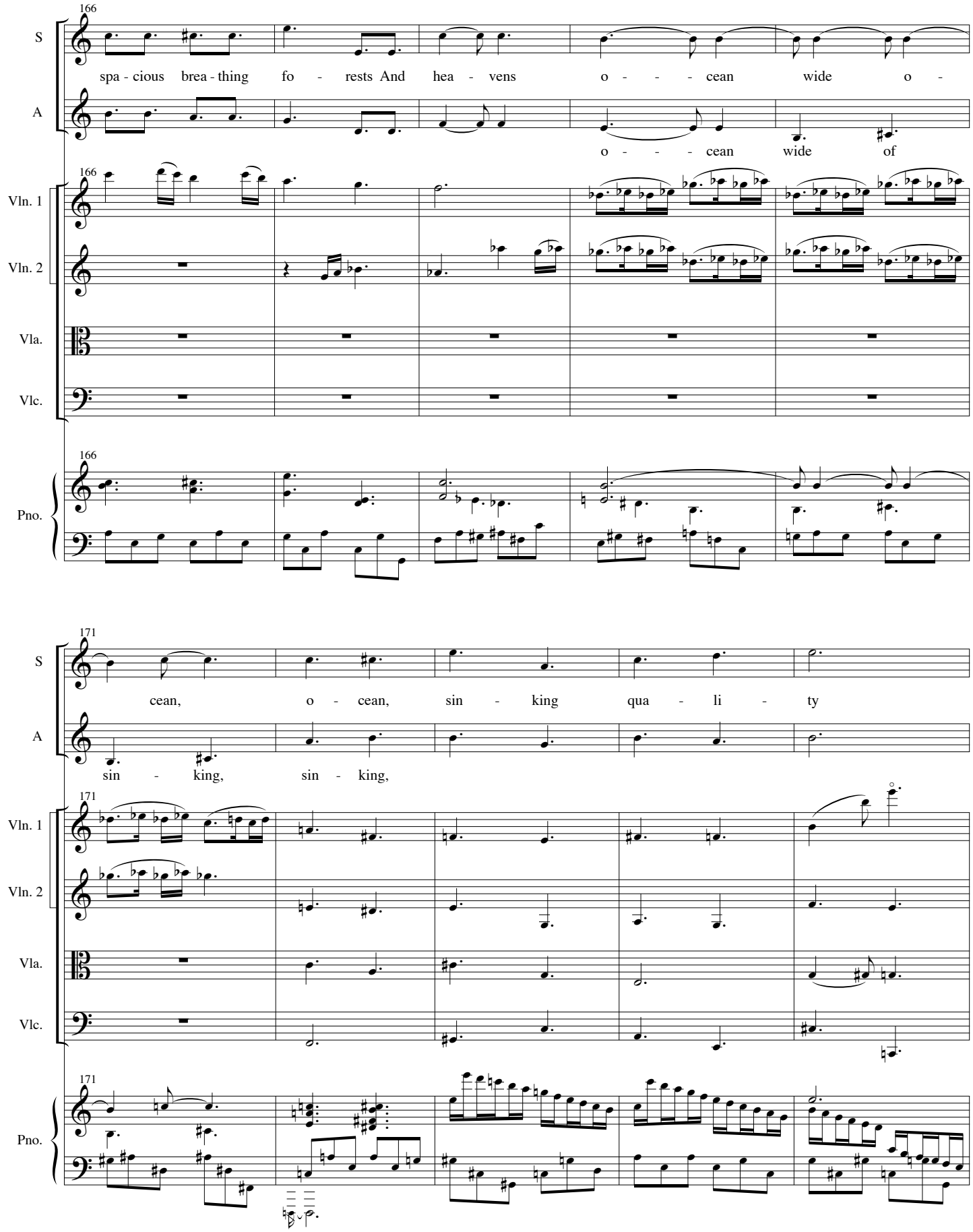
Vlc. ***pp*** sim.

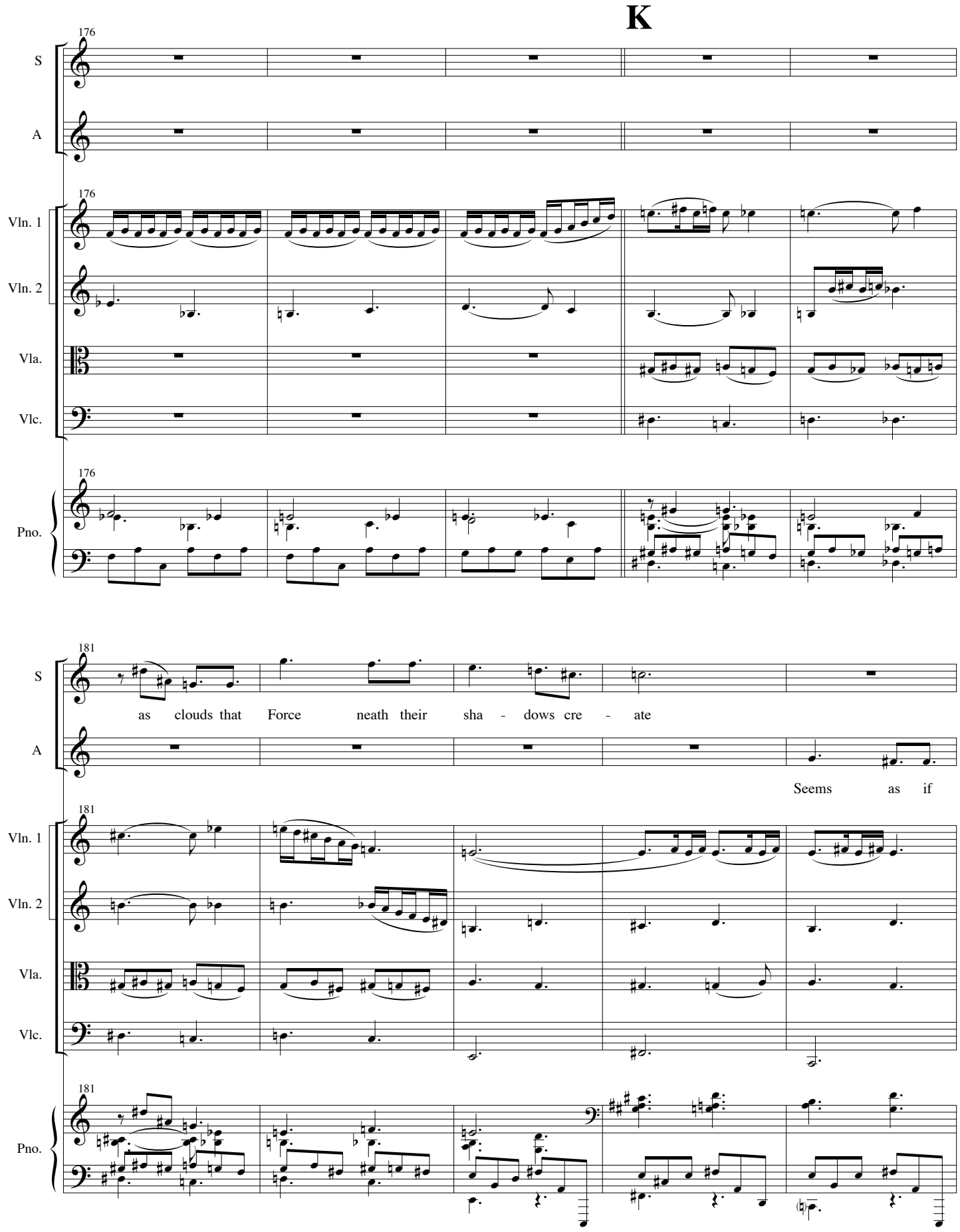
141

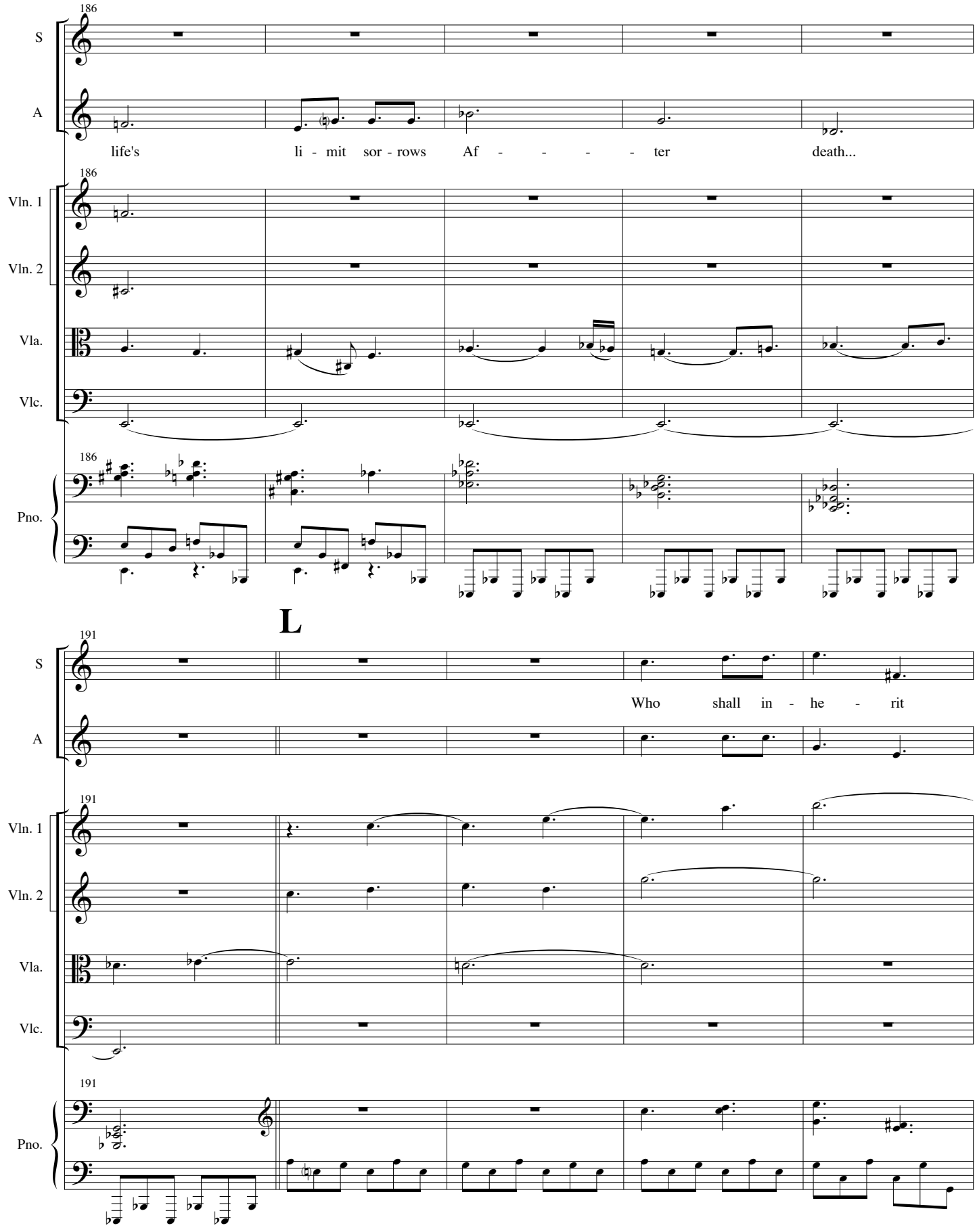
Pno.

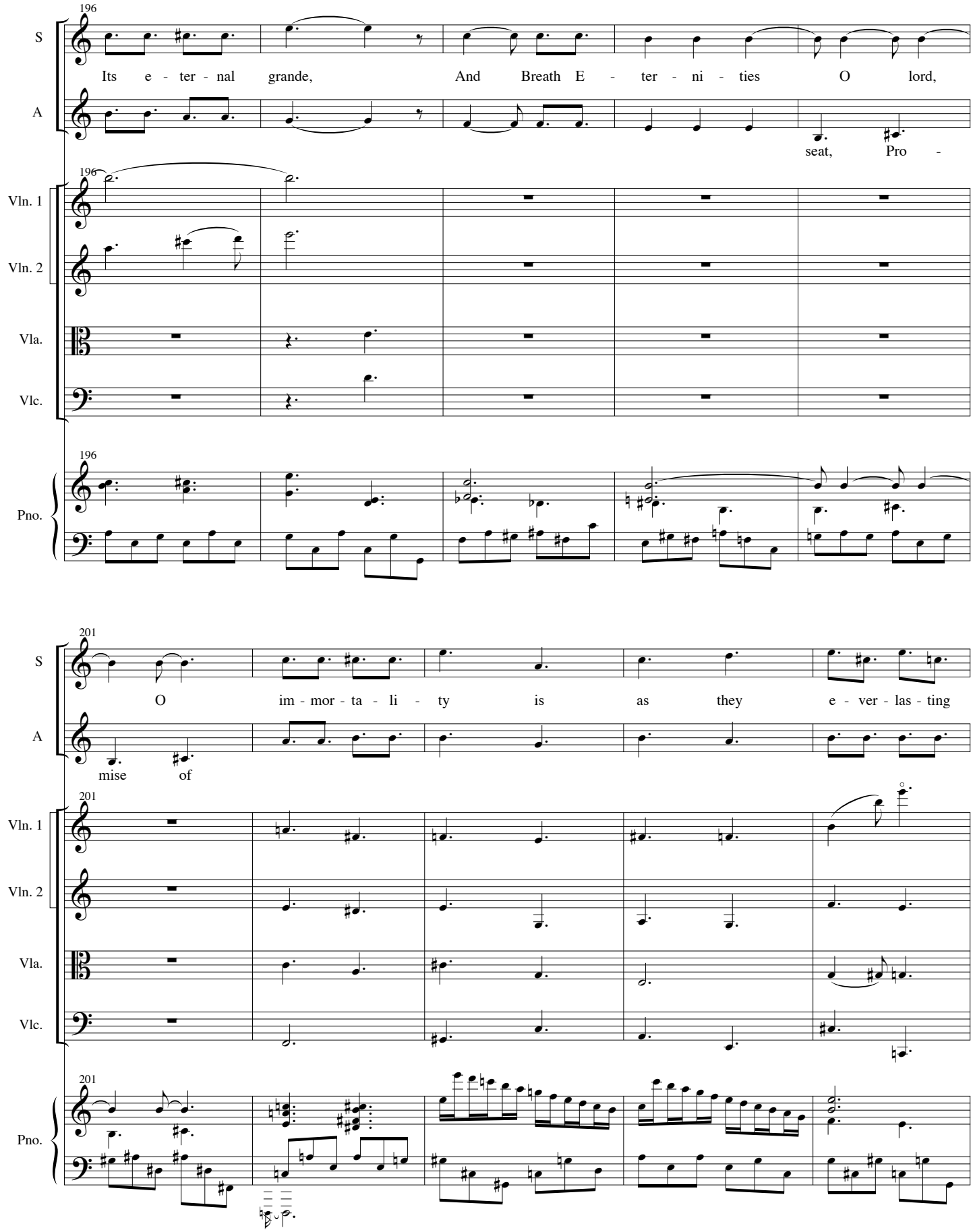

146
S
plete, Con - tent
A
146
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
146
Pno.
I
151
S
Grace - ful, un - felt, Beau - ty
A
and view of thy vast Grace un - told
151
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
151
Pno.

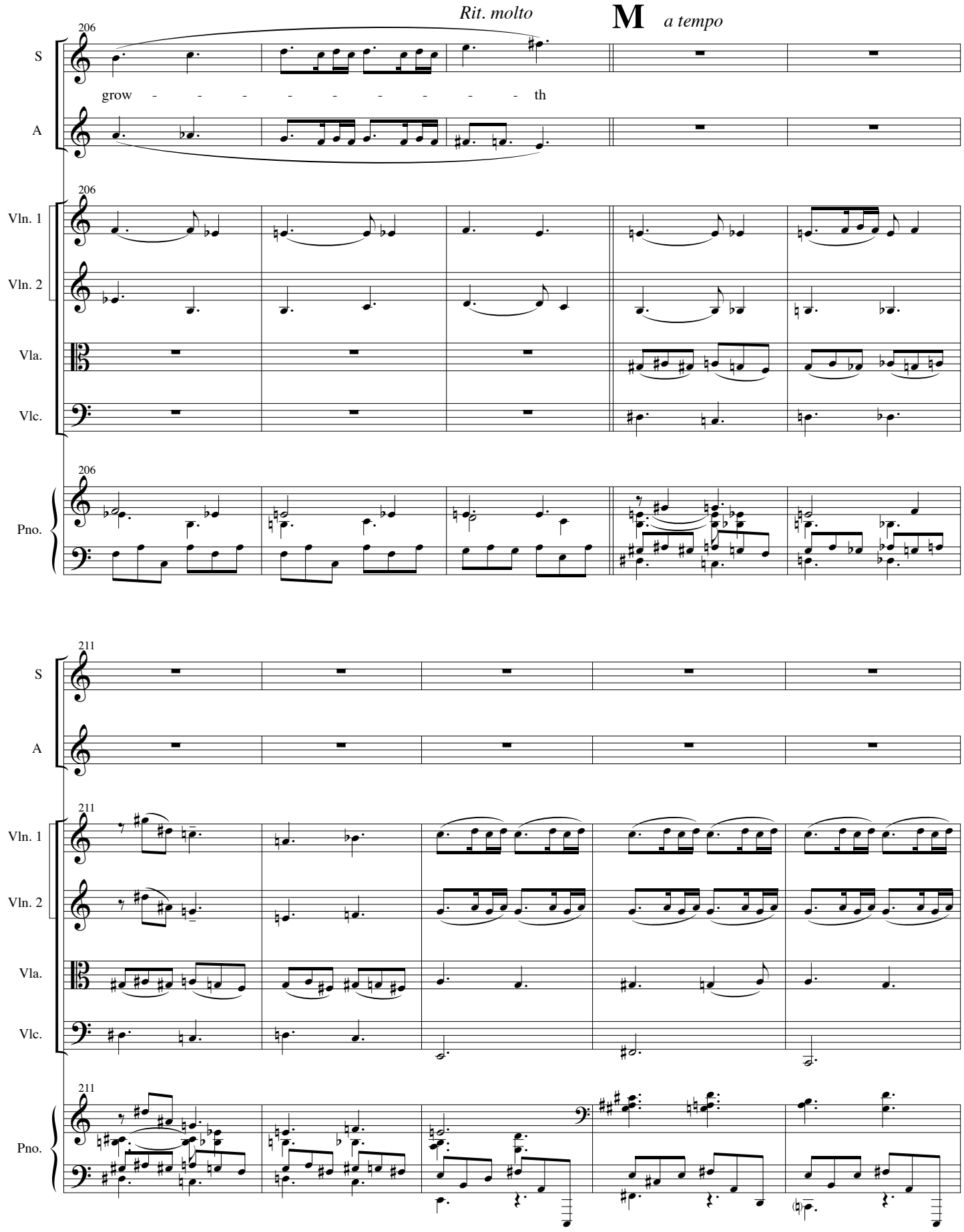

156
S
From my seat,
A
156
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
156
Pno.
J
161
S
I see cha - sms Of
A
161
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
161
Pno.

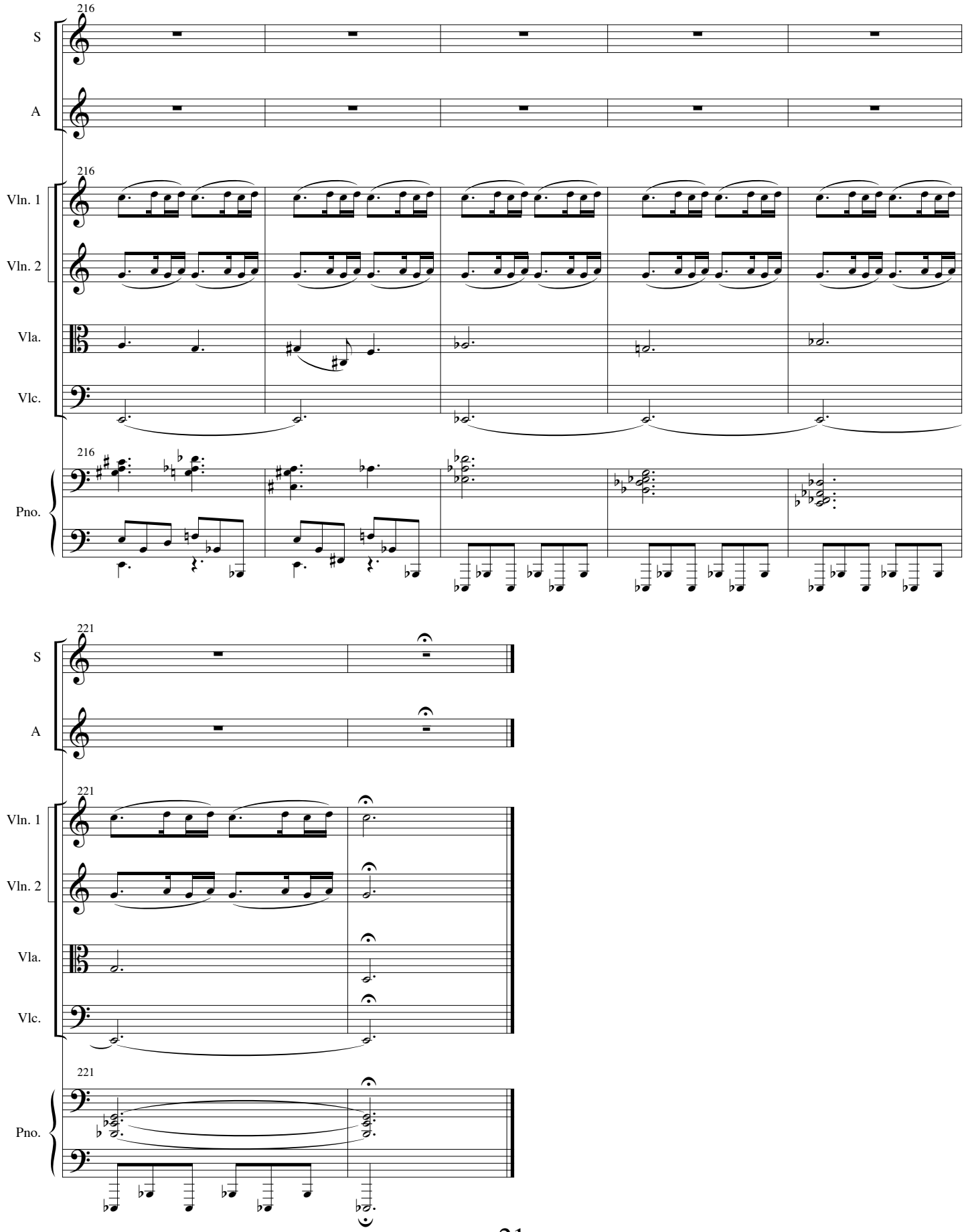

166
S
spa - cious brea - thing fo - rests And hea - vens o - - - cean wide o -
A
o - - - cean wide of
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
171
S
cean, o - cean, sin - king qua - li - ty
A
sin - king, sin - king,
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.


K
176
S
A
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
181
as clouds that Force neath their sha - dows cre - ate
Seems as if


186
S
A
life's li - mit sor - rows Af - - - - ter death...
186
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
186
Pno.
L
191
S
A
Who shall in - he - rit
191
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
191
Pno.


196
S
Its e - ter - nal grande,
And Breath E - ter - ni - ties
O lord,
A
seat, Pro -
196
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
196
Pno.
201
S
O im - mor - ta - li - ty is as they e - ver - las - ting
A
mise of
201
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
201
Pno.


Rit. molto
M
a tempo
206
S
grow - - - - - - - - - th
A
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
211

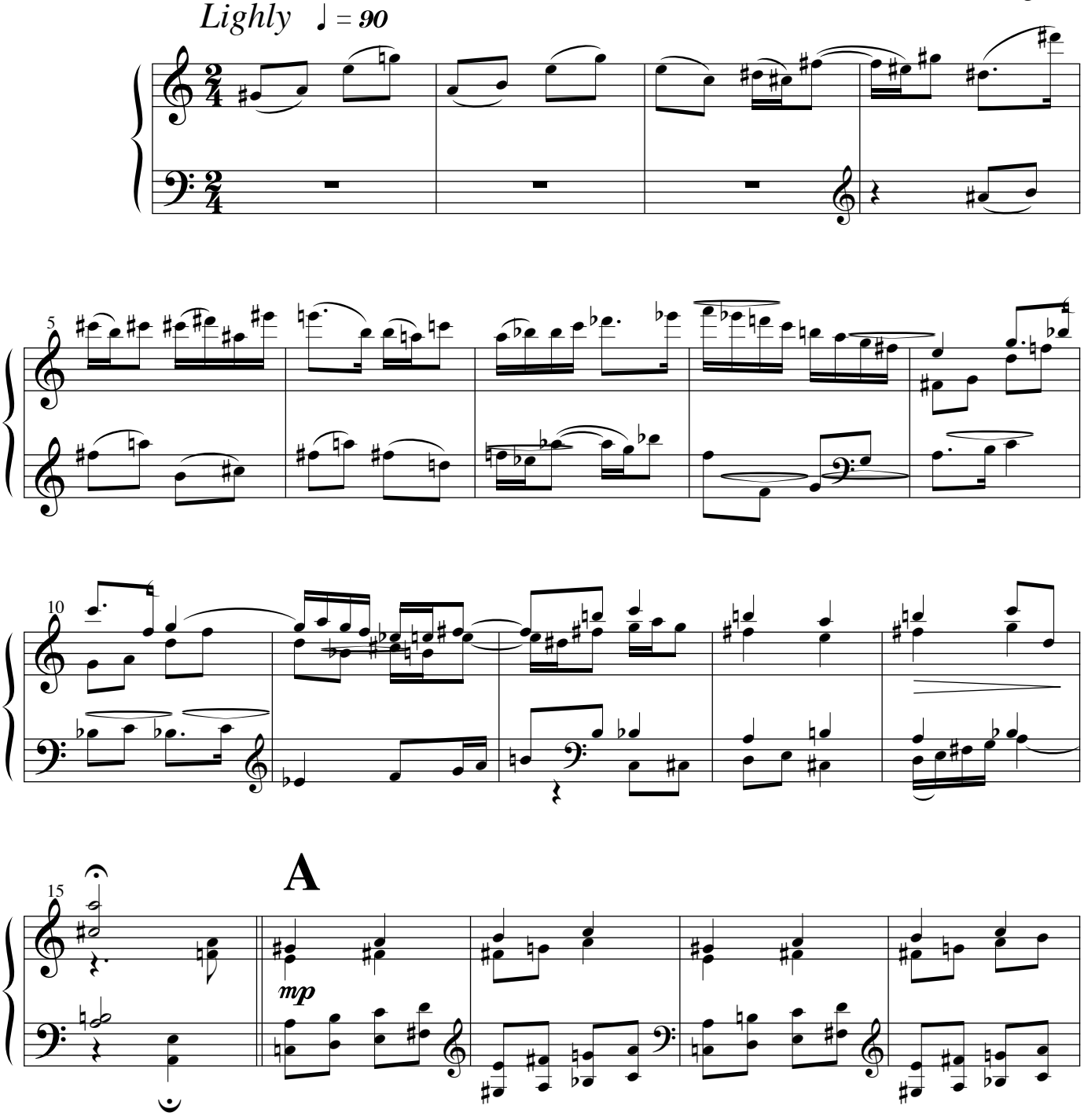

216
S
A
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.
221

Sonnets of Apology:
Motion and Reflection

Piano

Music: Justin Henry Rubin
Text: Samuel Greenberg

Lighly ♩ = 90



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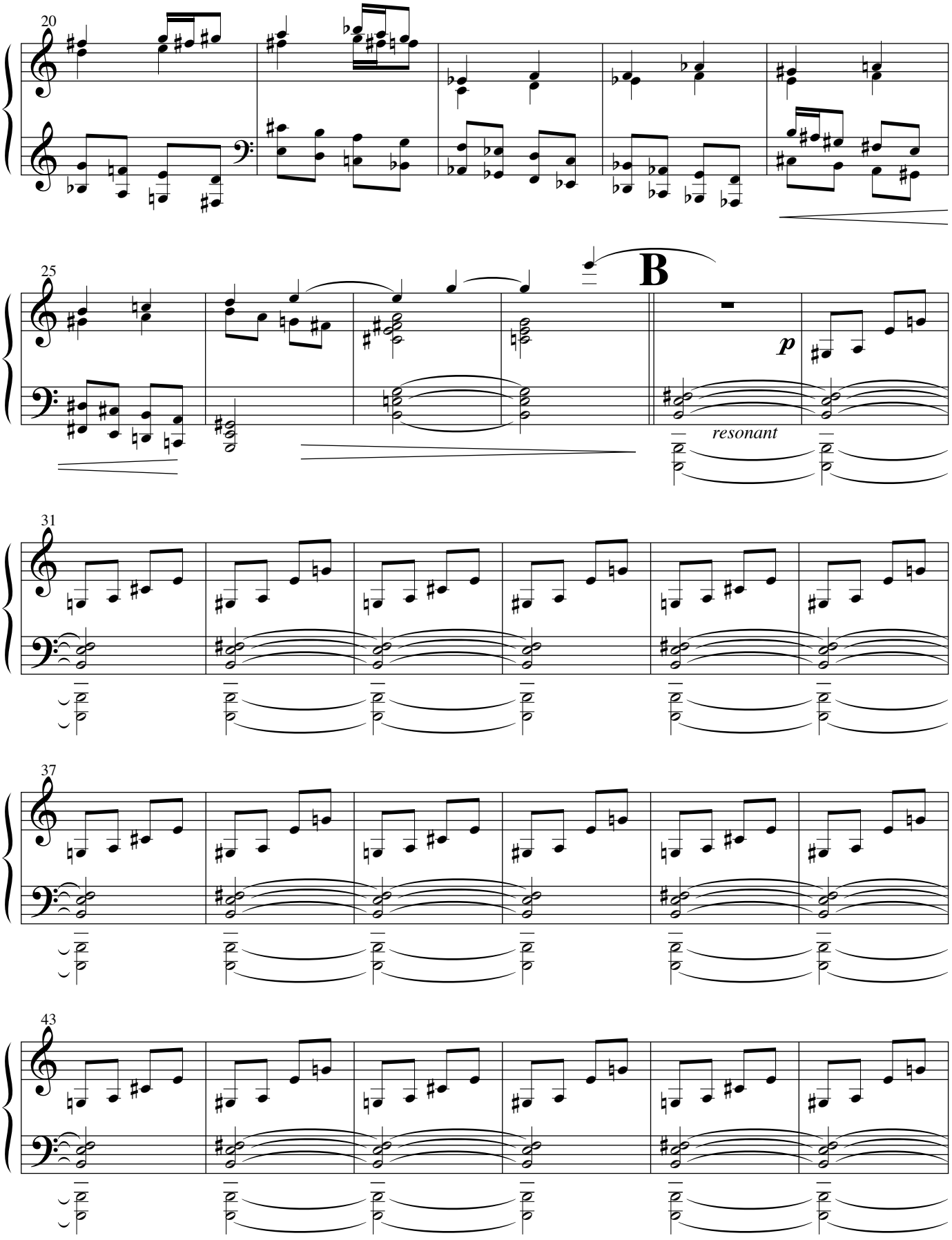
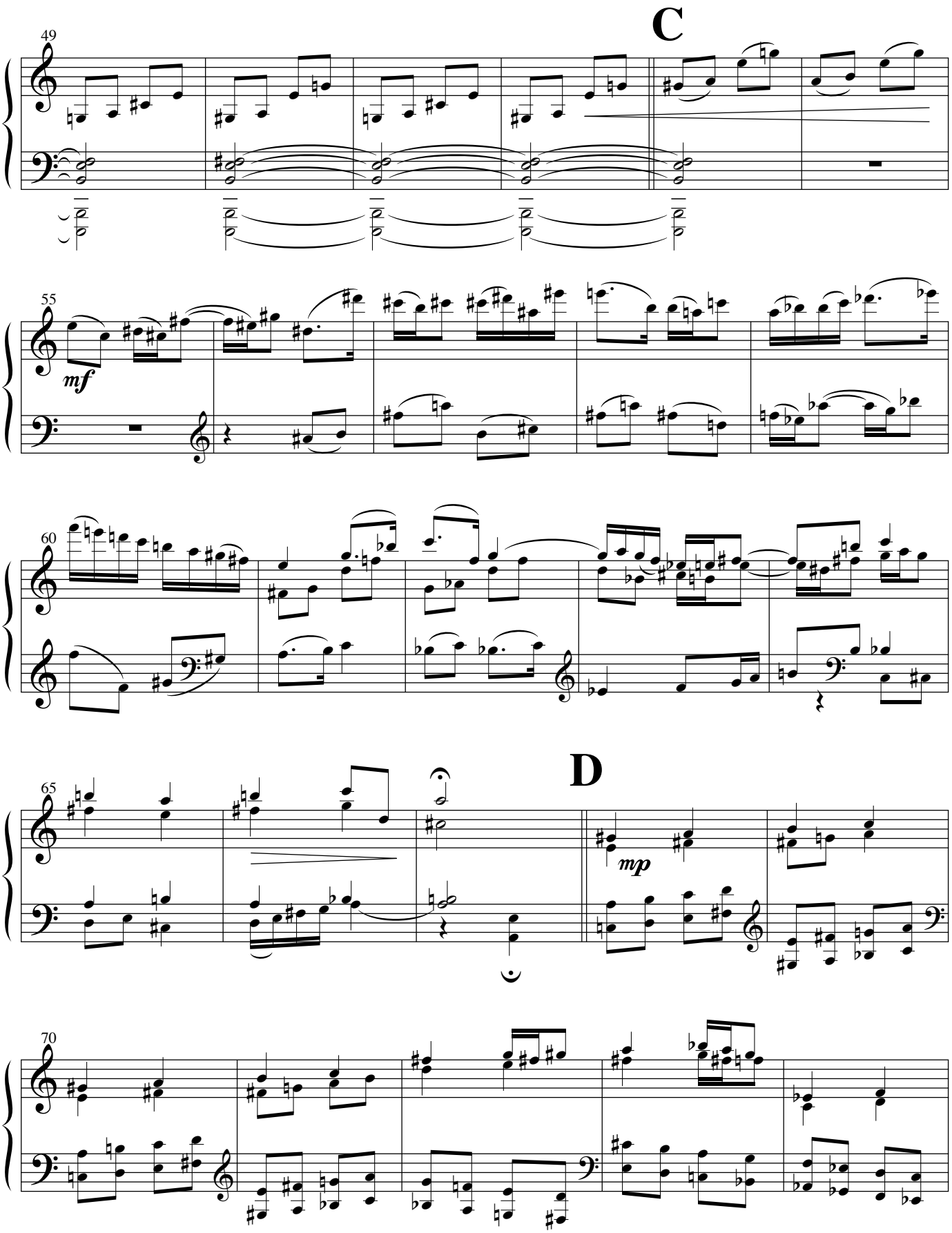
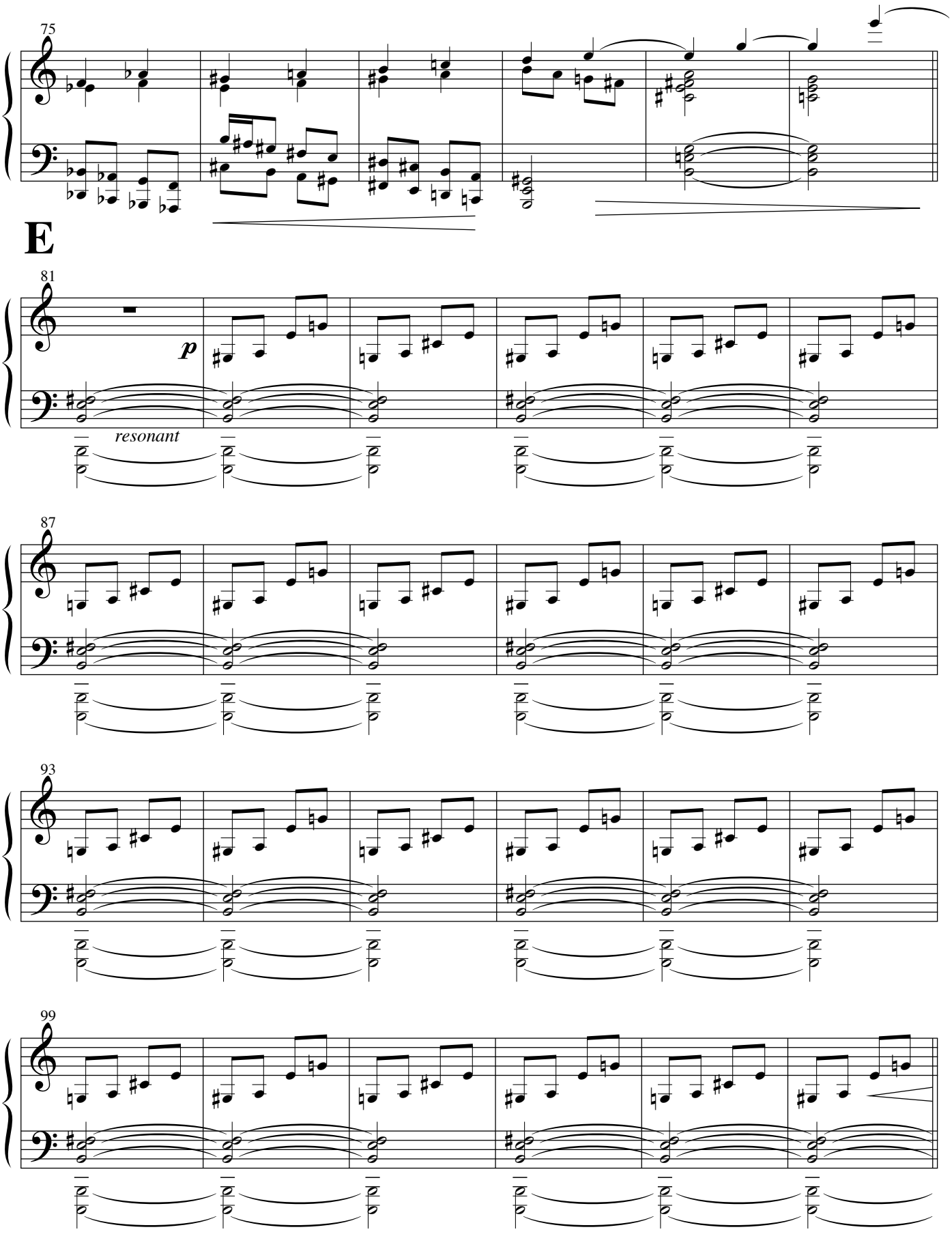
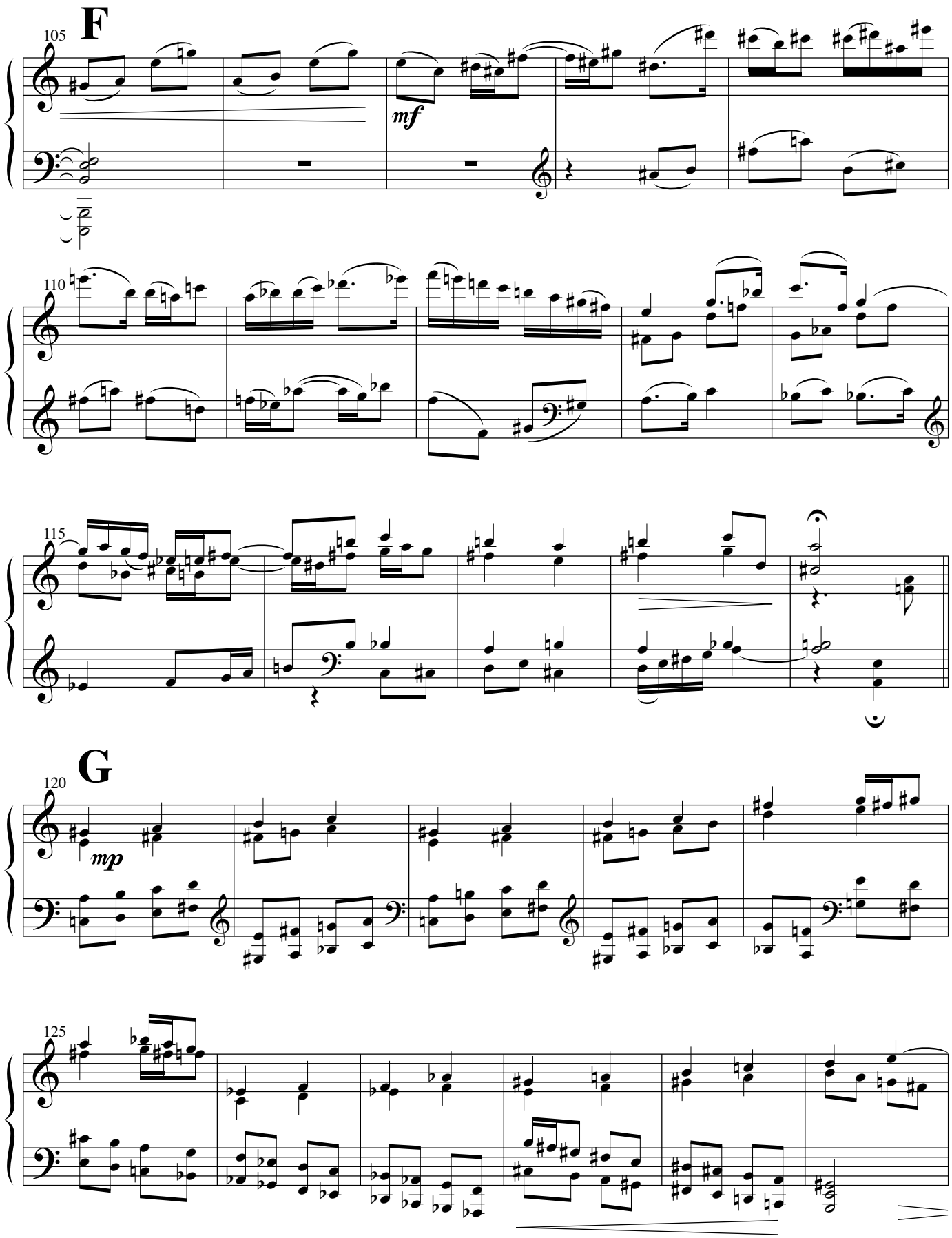
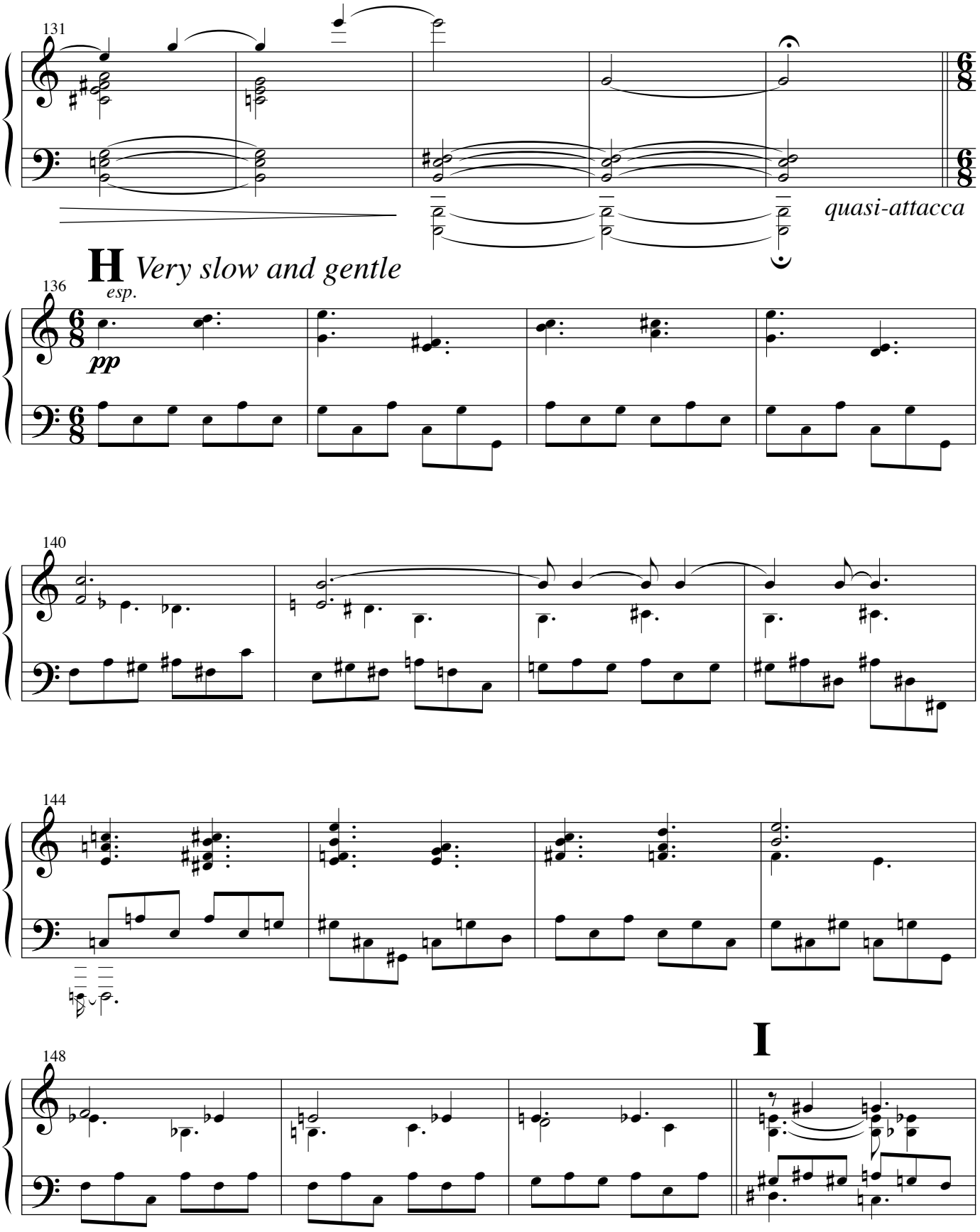
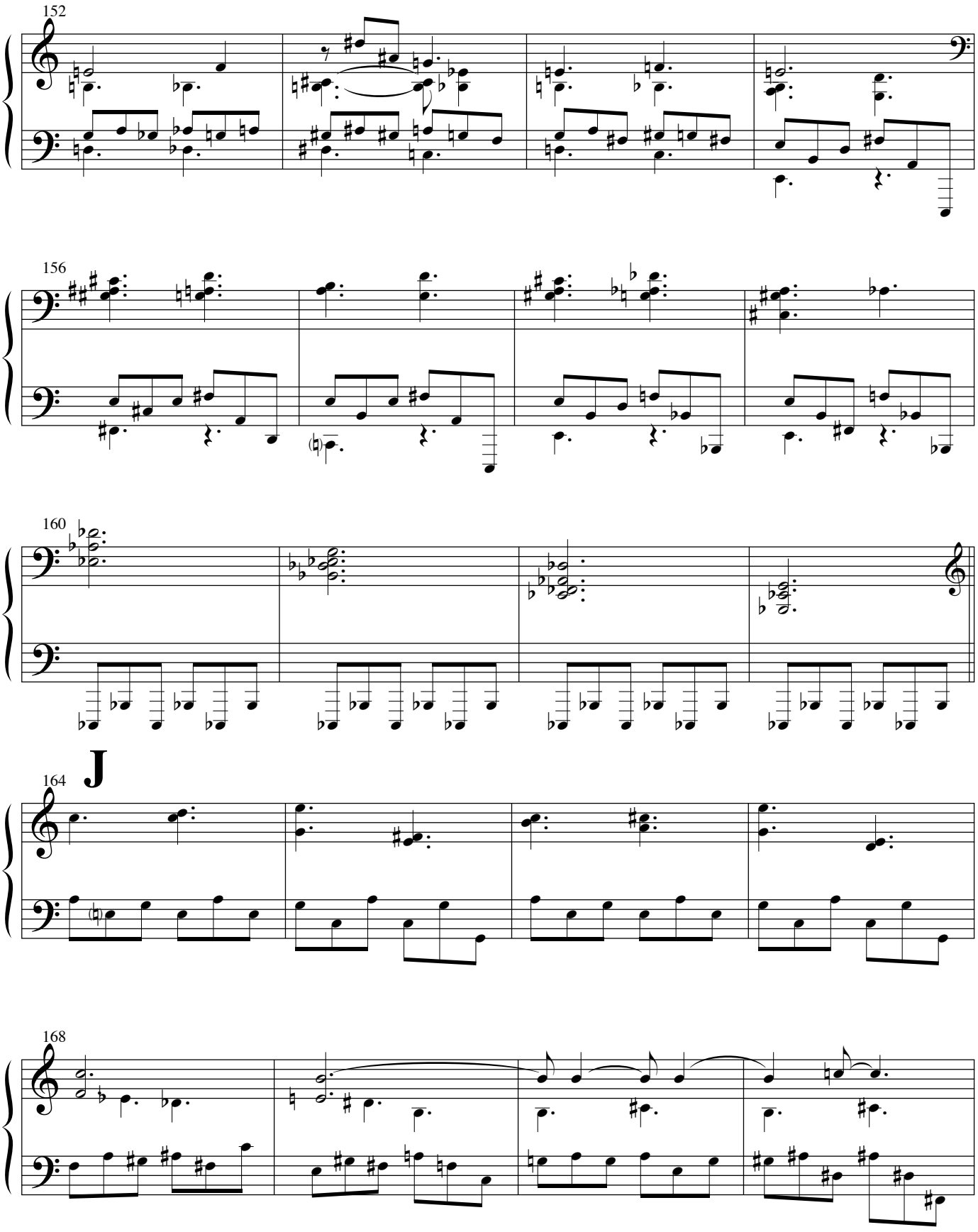

20
25
B
p
resonant
31
37
43

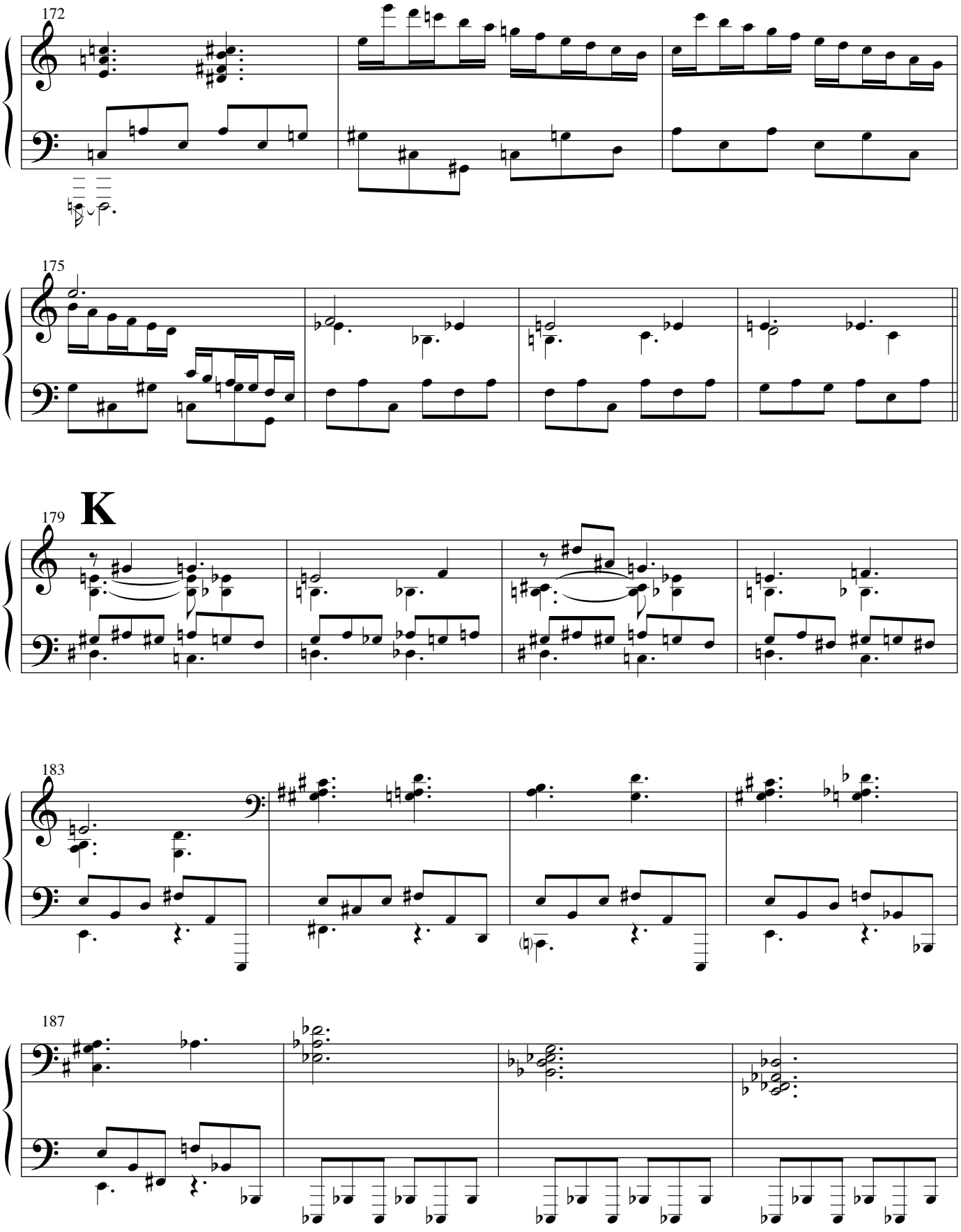

C
49
55
mf
60
D
65
mp
70

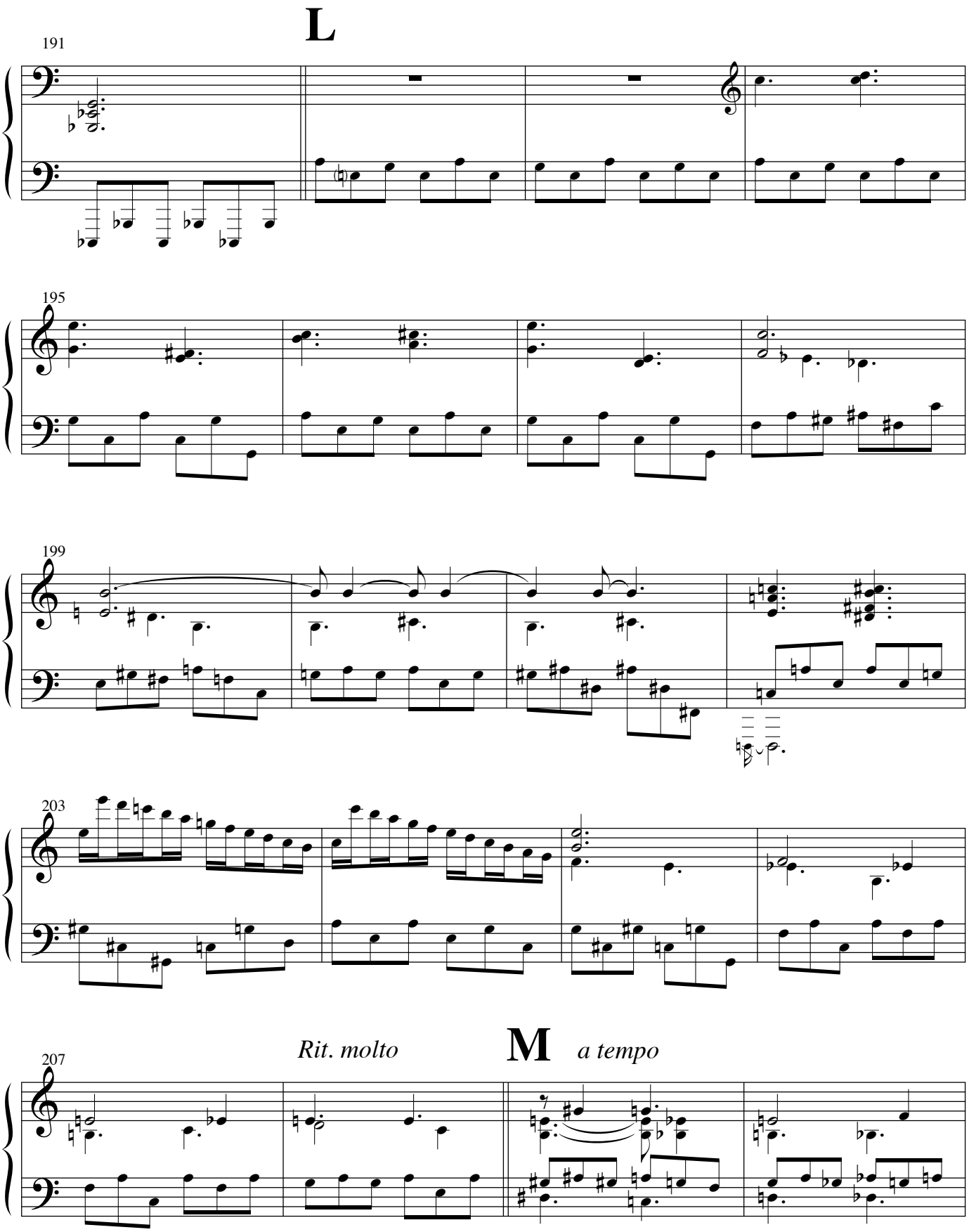

75
E
81
p
resonant
87
93
99

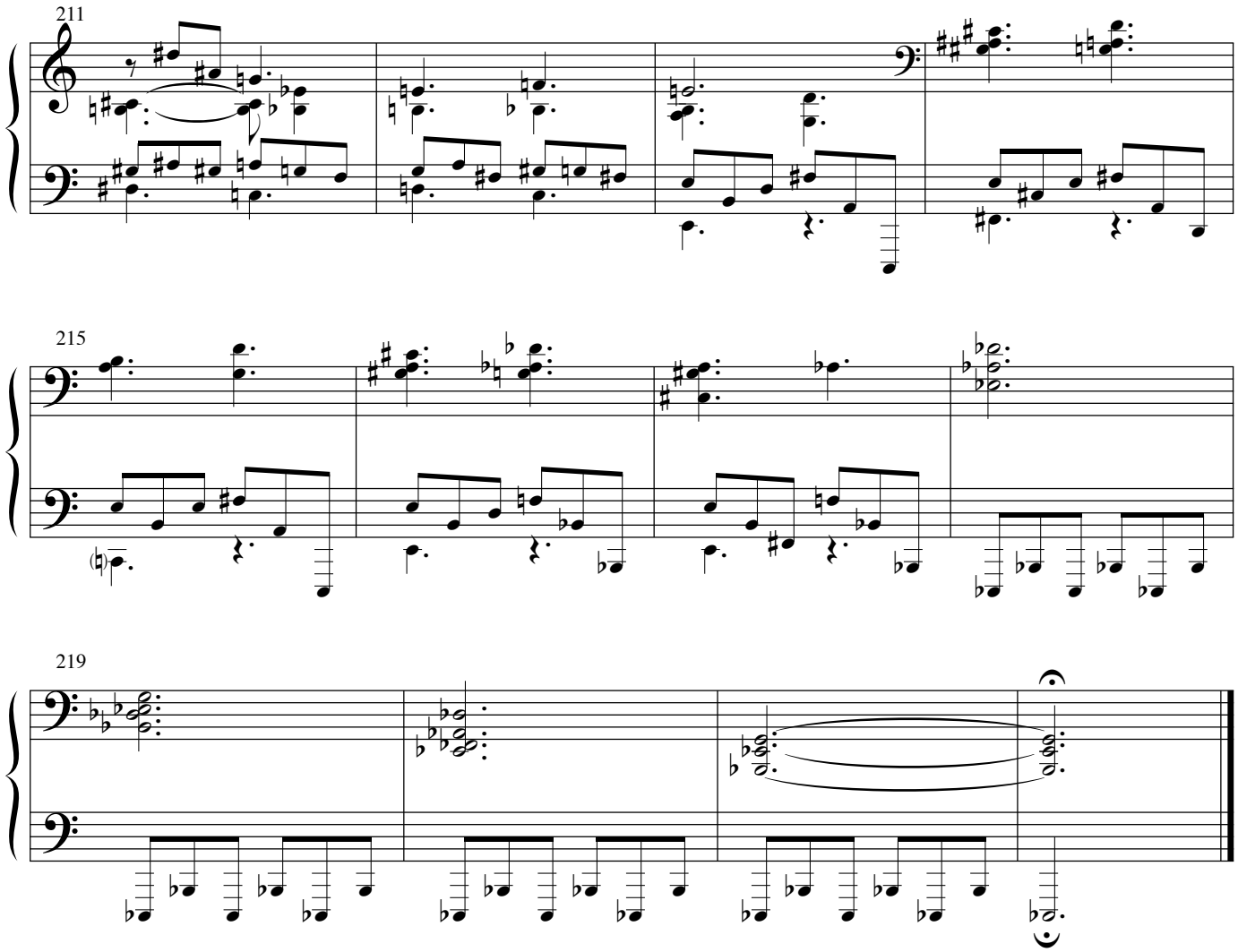

F
105
mf
110
115
G
120
mp
125


131
quasi-attacca
H
Very slow and gentle
esp.
136
pp
140
144
I
148


152
156
160
J
164
168


172
175
179
K
183
187

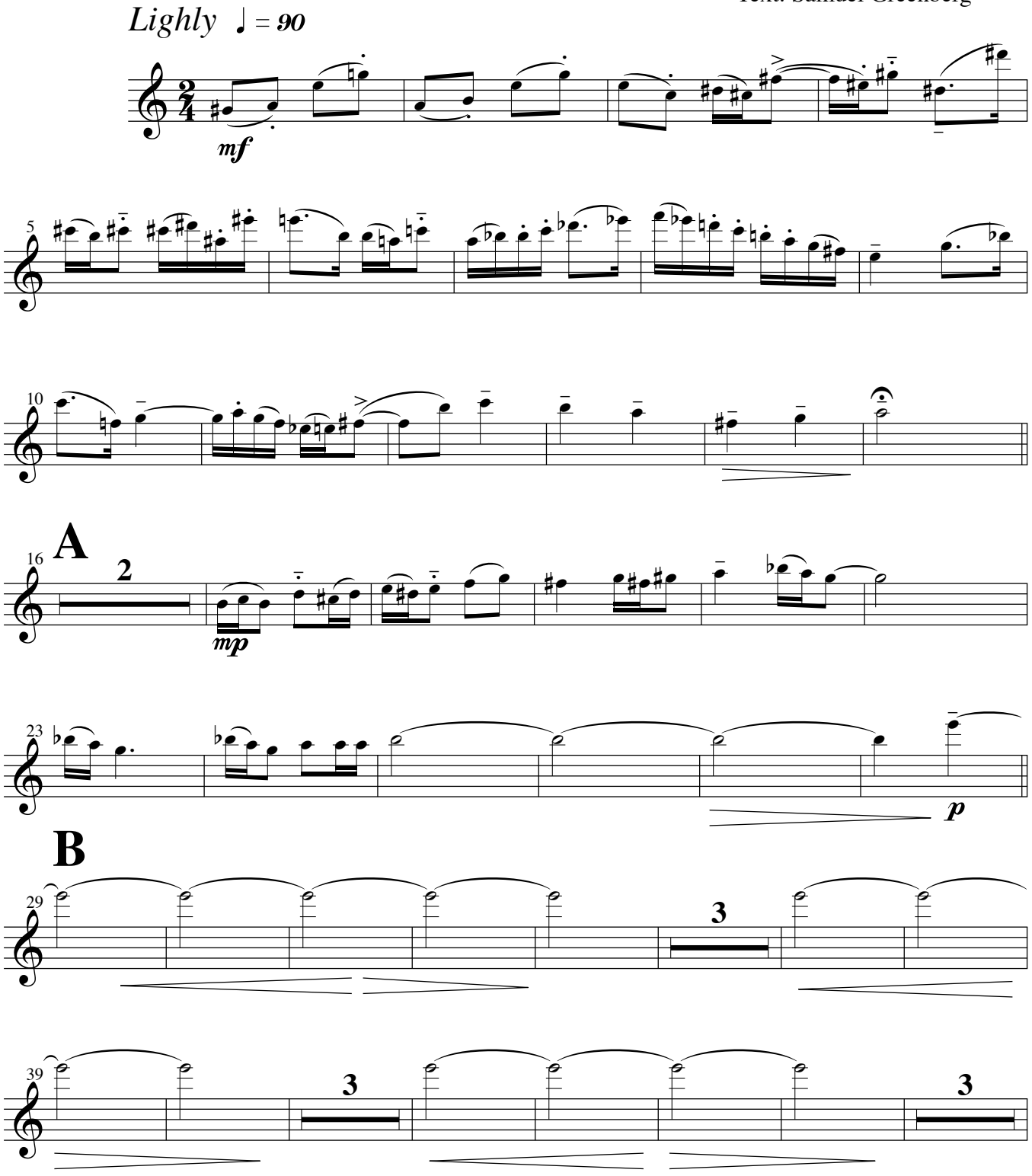

L
191
195
199
203
207
Rit. molto
M
a tempo


211
215
219

Sonnets of Apology:
Motion and Reflection

Violin 1

Music: Justin Henry Rubin
Text: Samuel Greenberg



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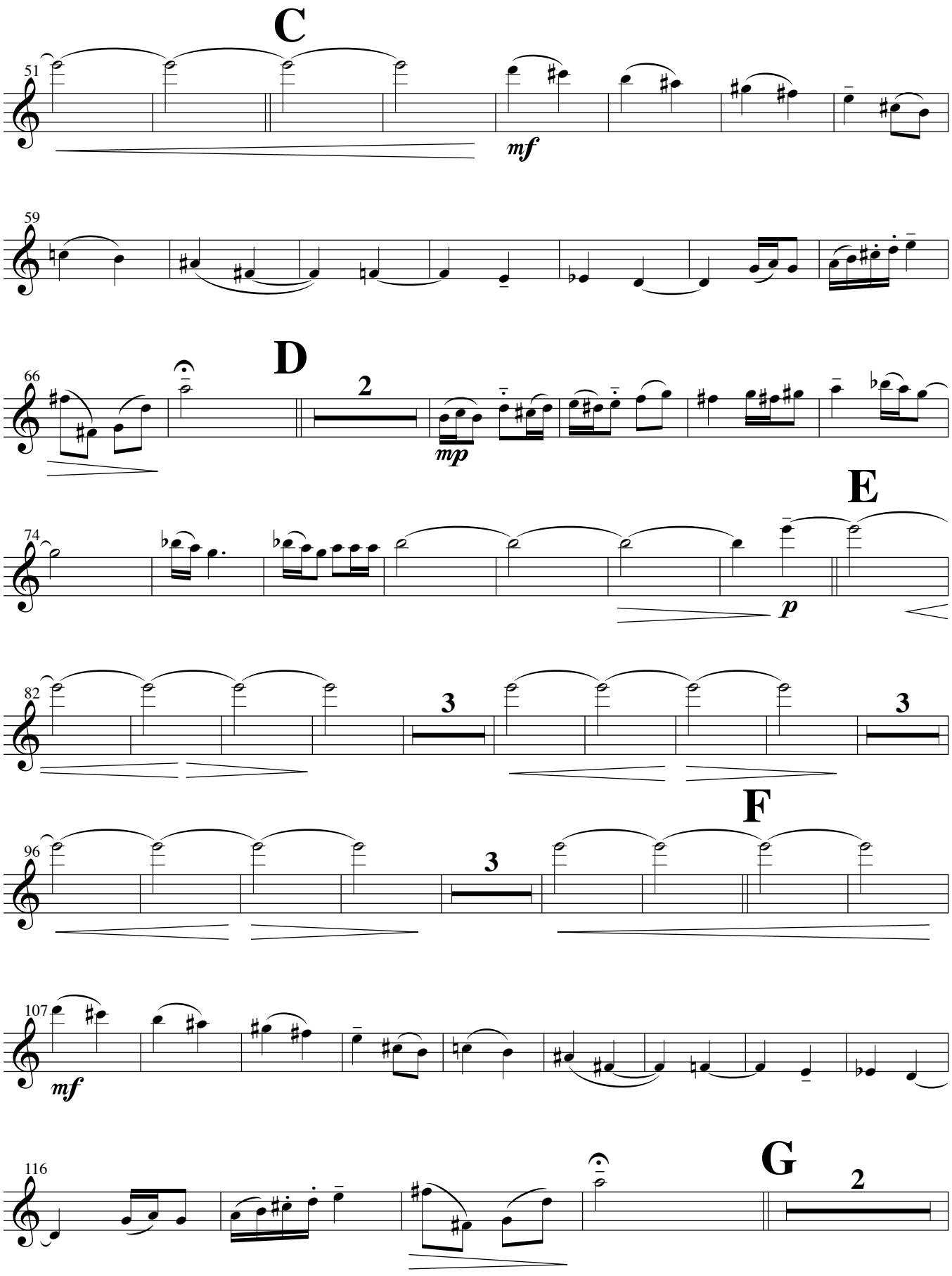
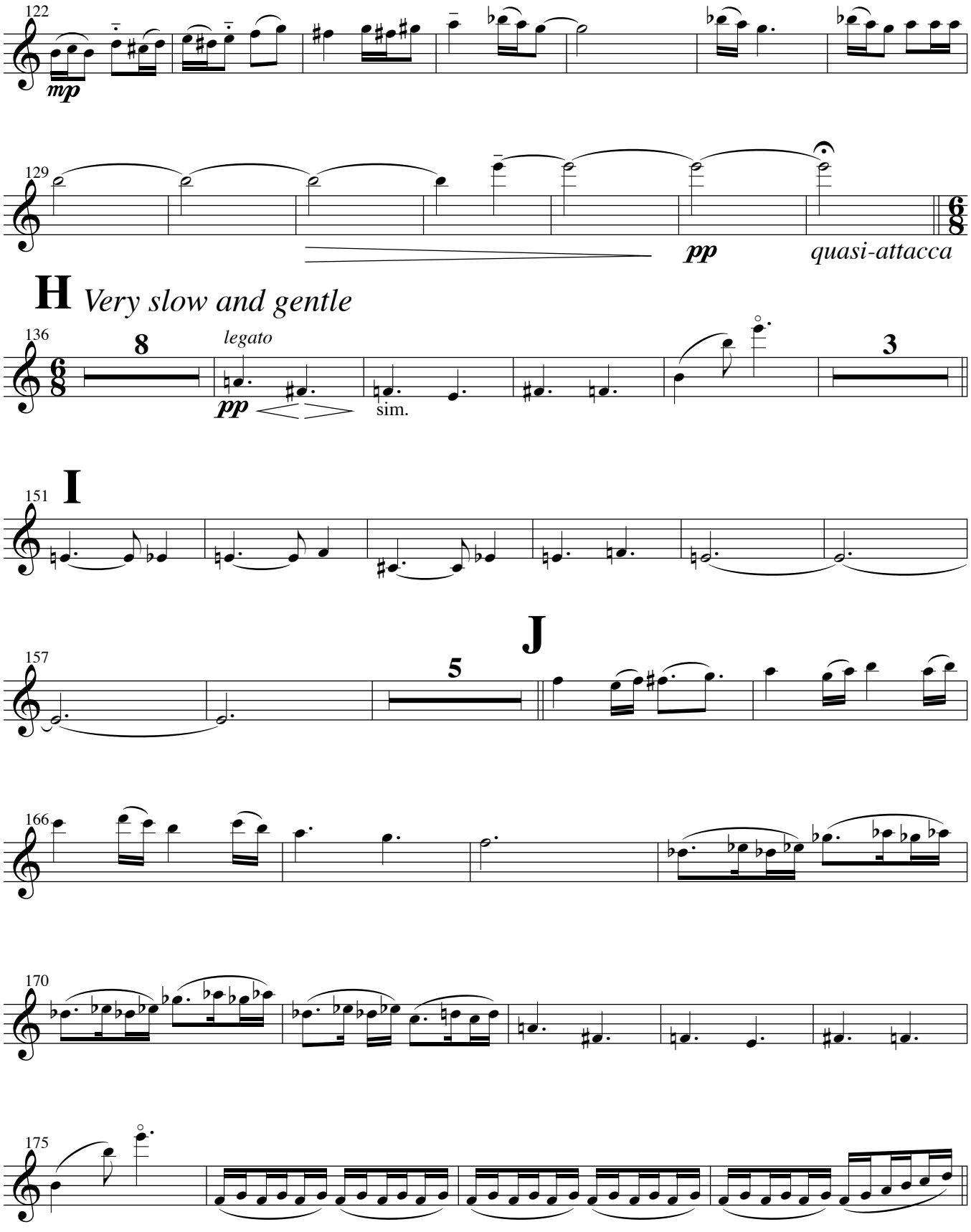
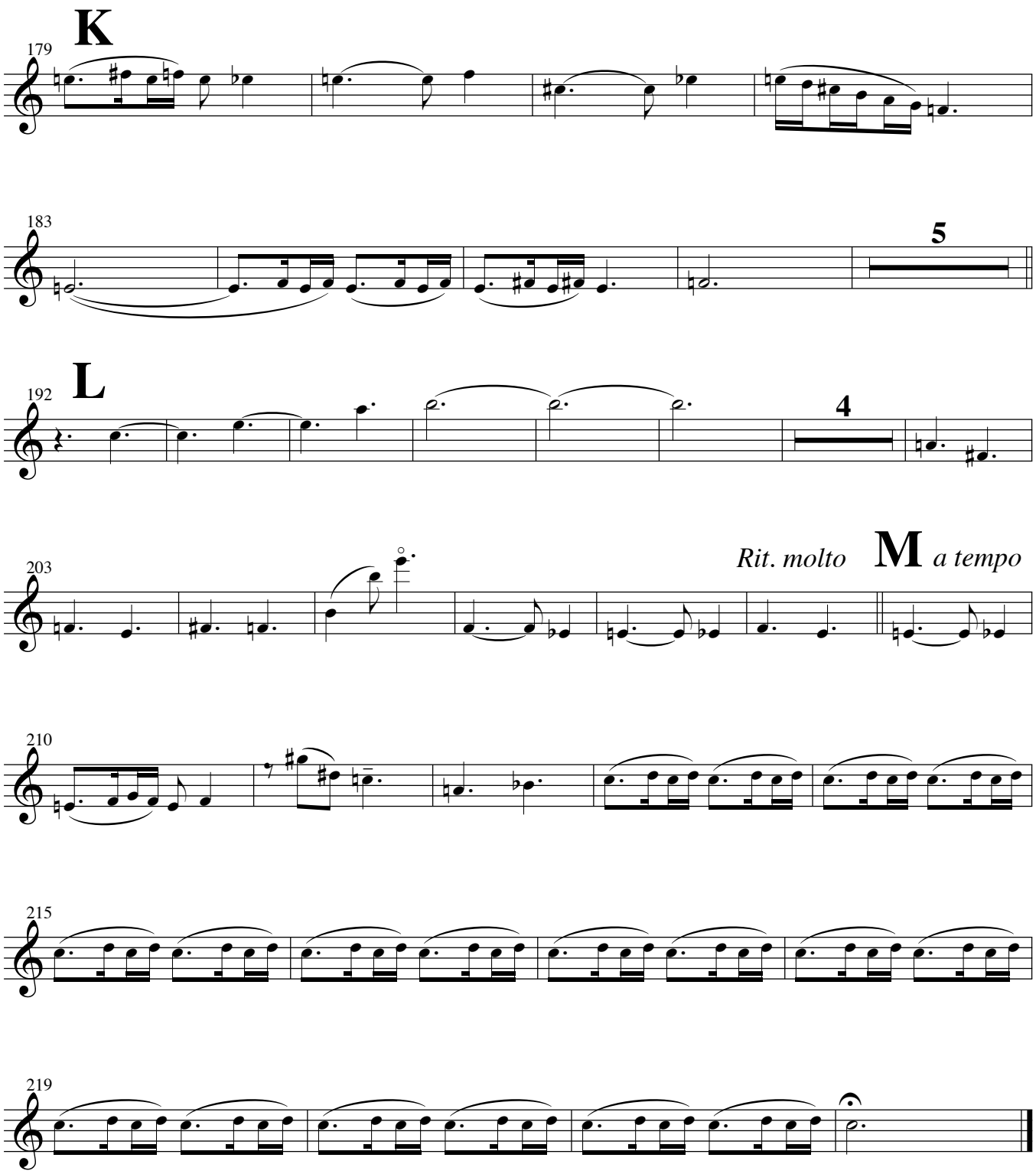

C
51
mf
59
D
66
2
mp
E
74
p
82
3
3
F
96
3
107
mf
116
G
2

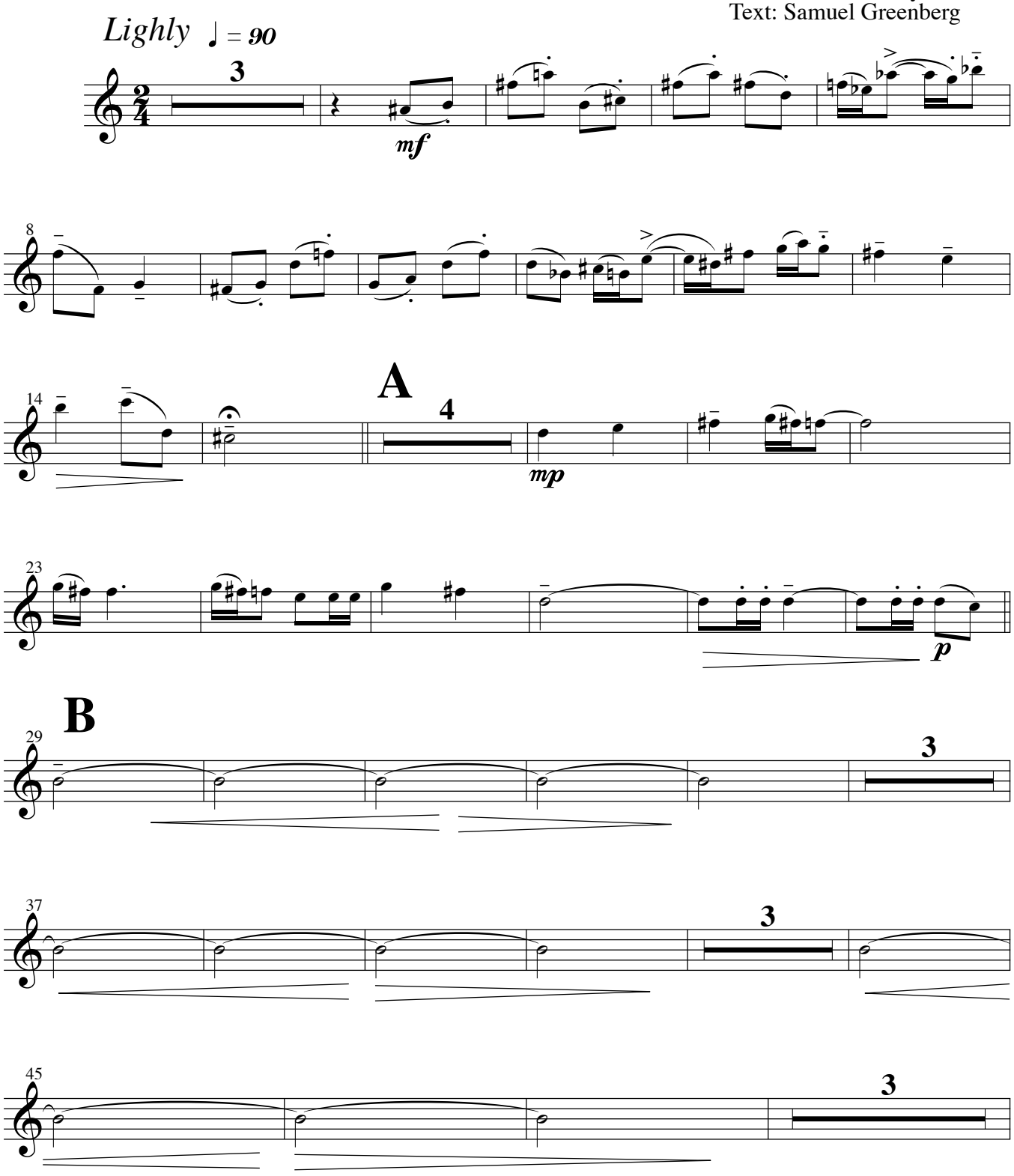

122
mp
129
pp
quasi-attacca
H Very slow and gentle
136
8
legato
pp
sim.
3
I
151
J
157
5
166
170
175


K
179
183
5
L
192
4
203
Rit. molto
M
a tempo
210
215
219

Sonnets of Apology:
Motion and Reflection

Violin 2

Music: Justin Henry Rubin
Text: Samuel Greenberg



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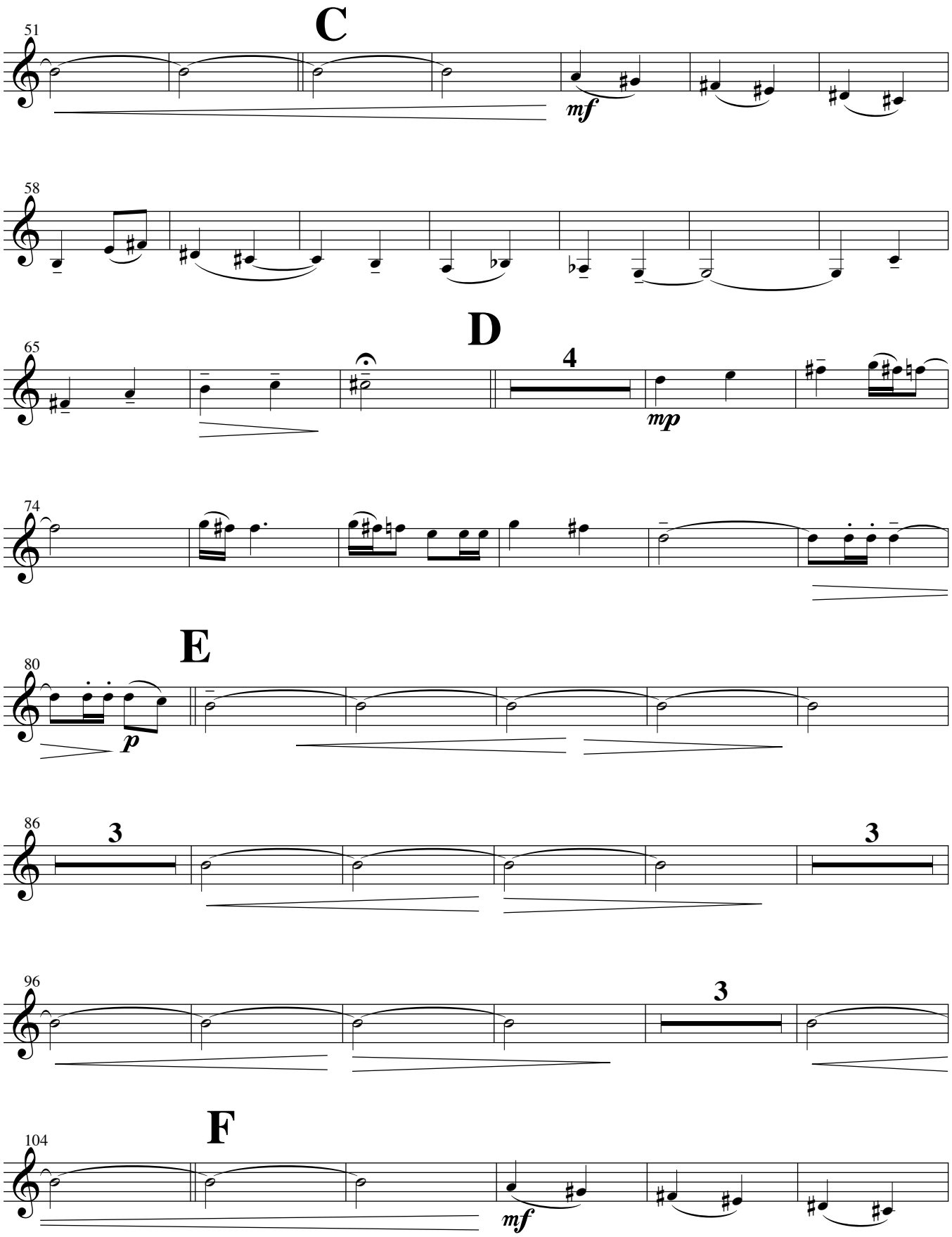
C
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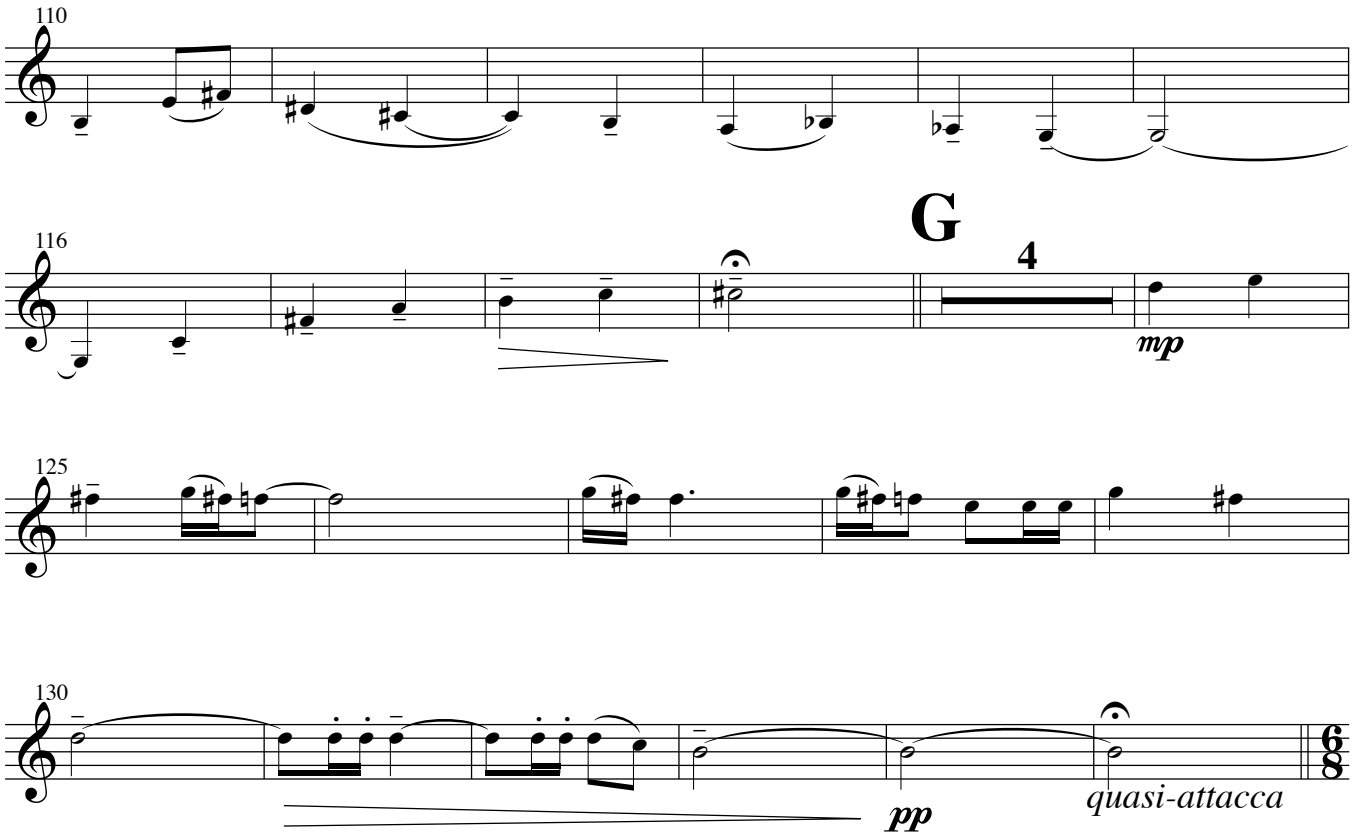
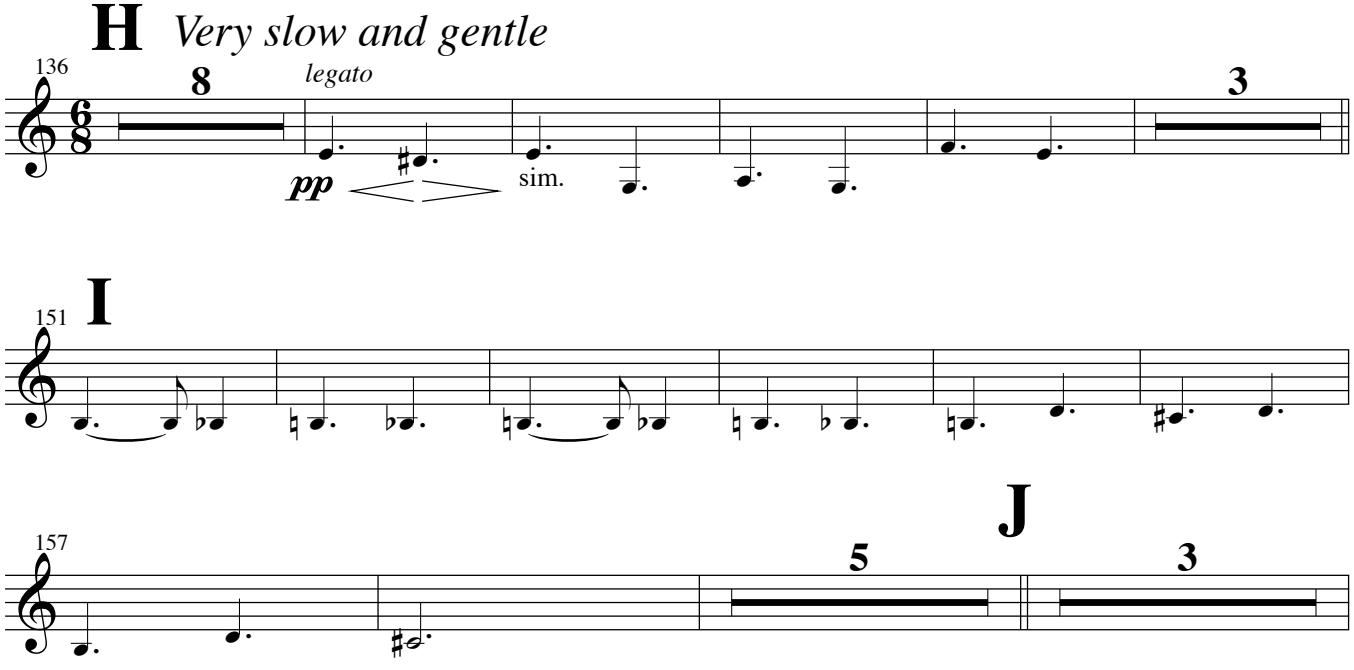
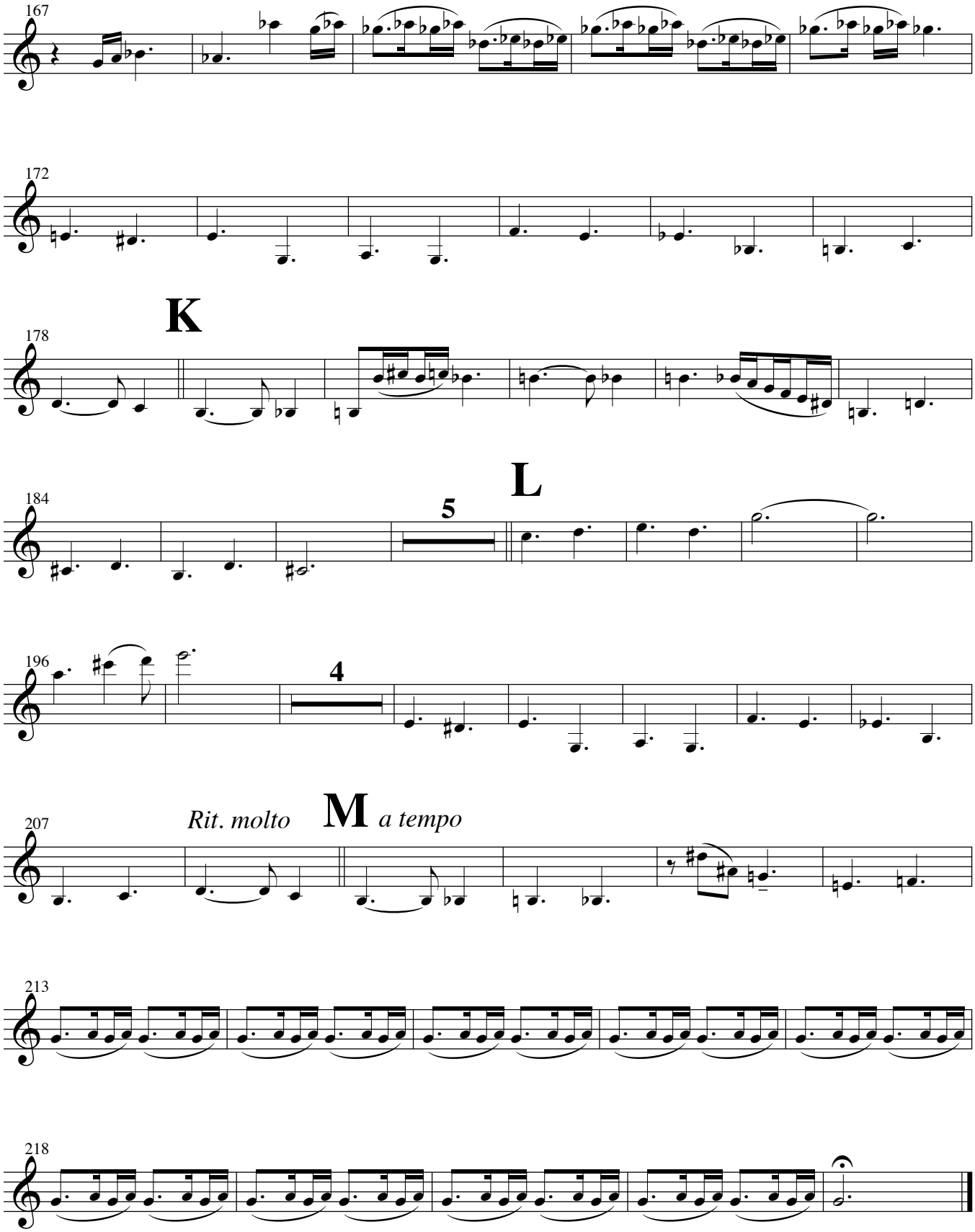
mf
58
D
65
4
mp
74
E
80
p
86
3
3
96
3
F
104
mf


110
116
G
4
mp
125
130
pp
quasi-attacca

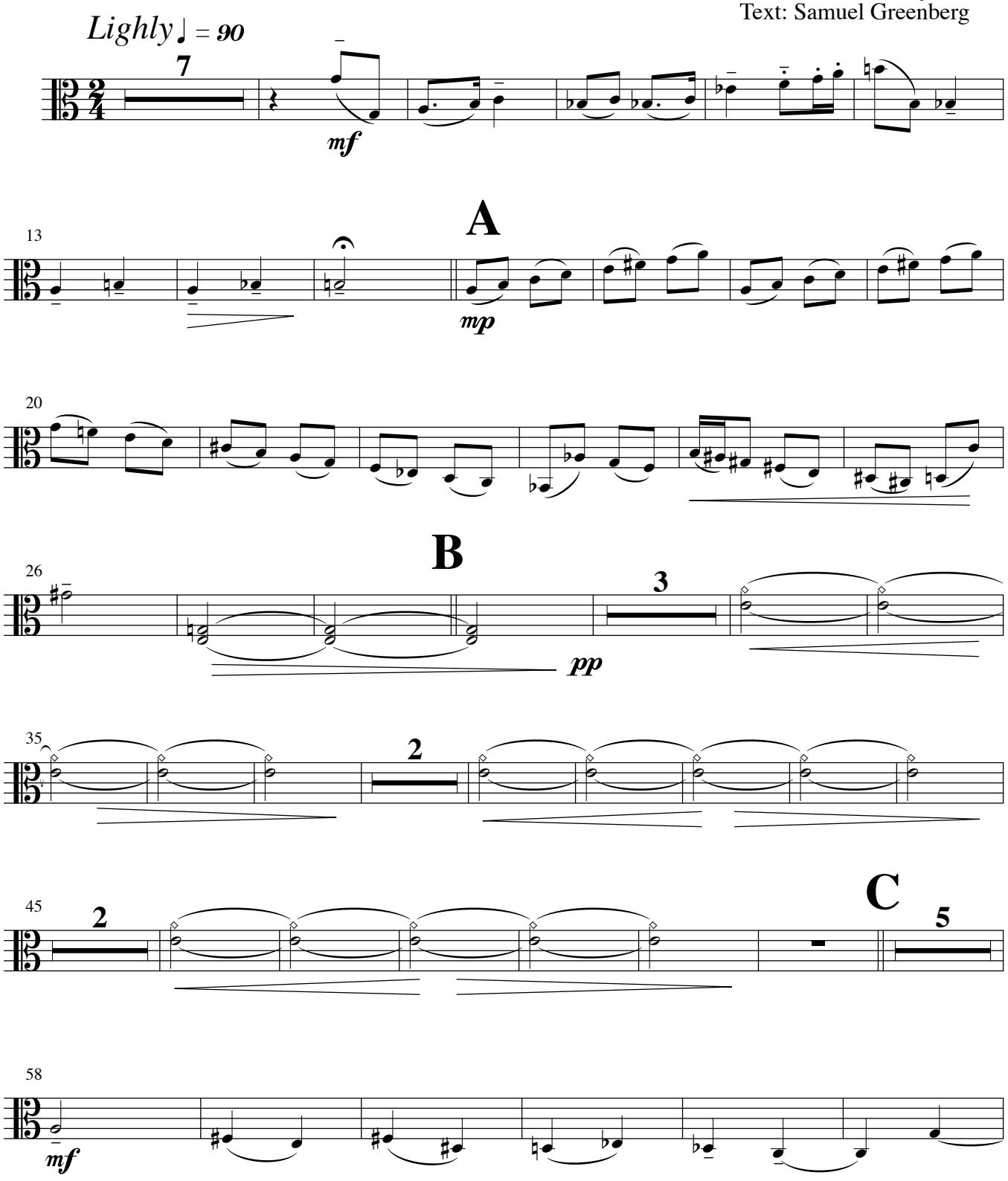

H
Very slow and gentle
136
8
legato
pp
sim.
3
151
I
157
J
5
3


167
172
K
178
184
5
L
196
4
207
Rit. molto
M a tempo
213
218

Sonnets of Apology:
Motion and Reflection

Viola

Music: Justin Henry Rubin
Text: Samuel Greenberg



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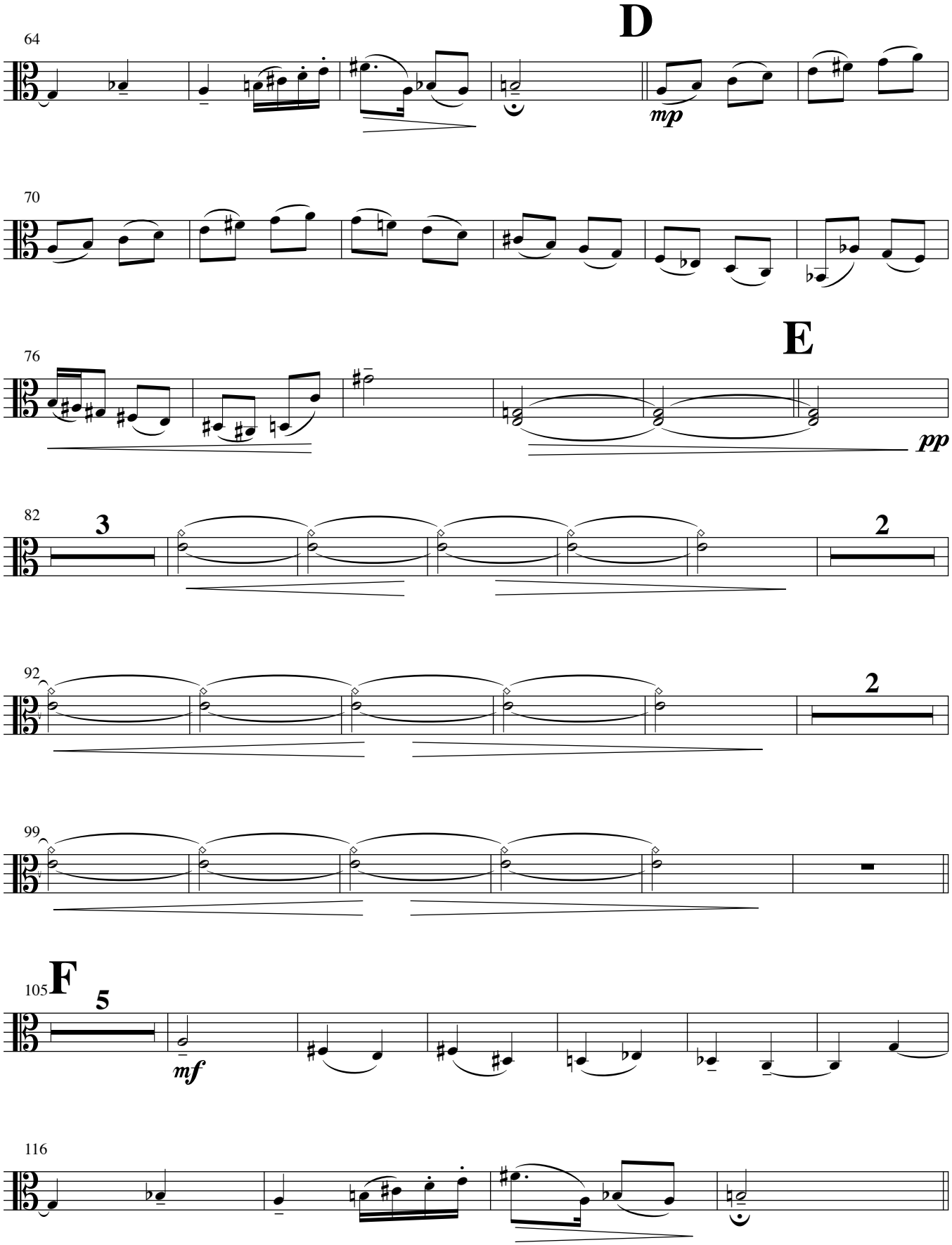
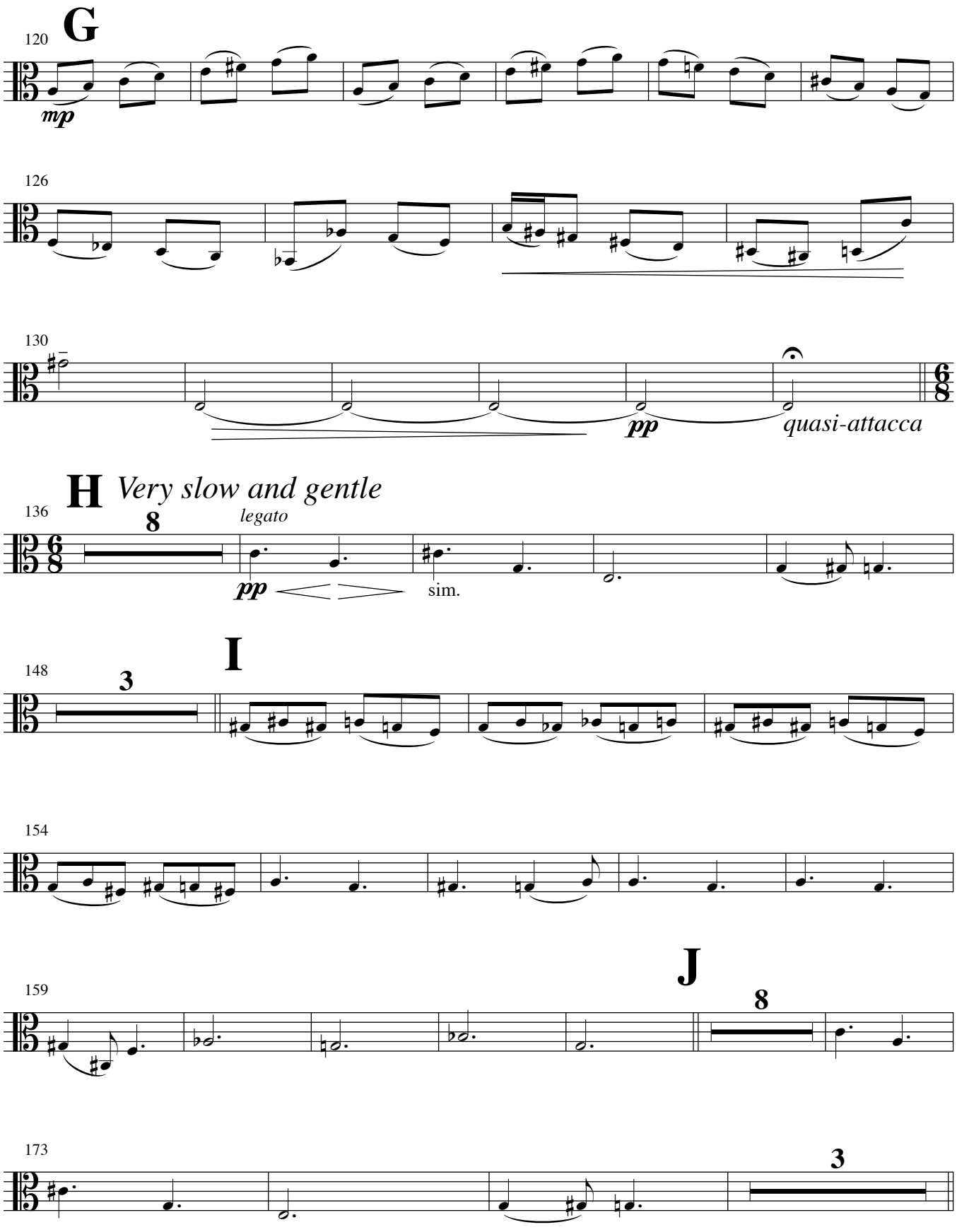
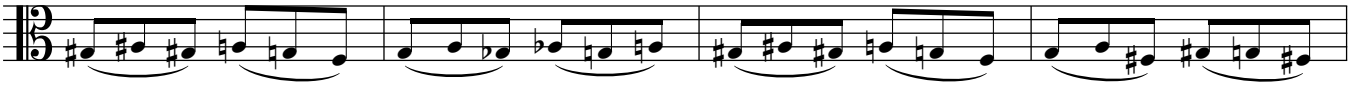

D
64
mp
70
E
76
pp
82
3
2
92
2
99
F
105
5
mf
116


G
120
mp
126
130
pp
quasi-attacca
H
Very slow and gentle
136
8
legato
pp
sim.
I
148
3
154
J
159
8
173
3

179 **K**



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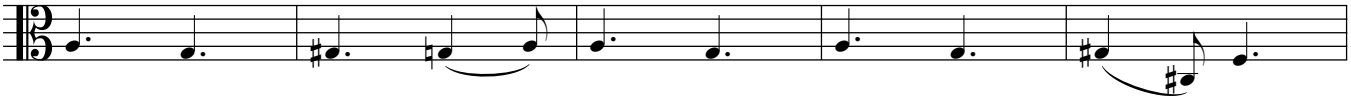
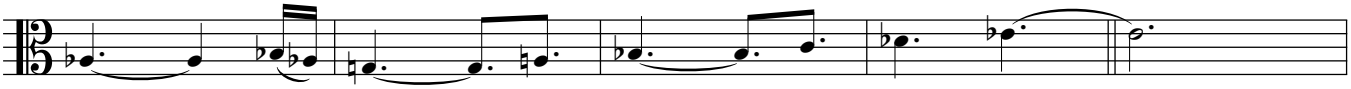


188 **L**



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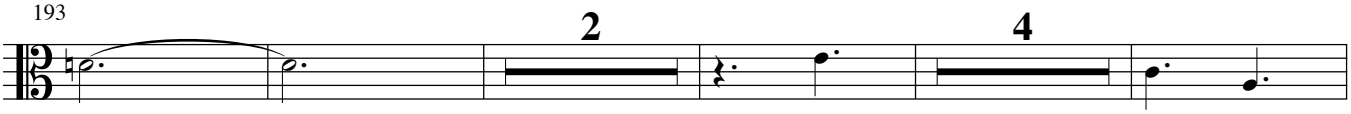
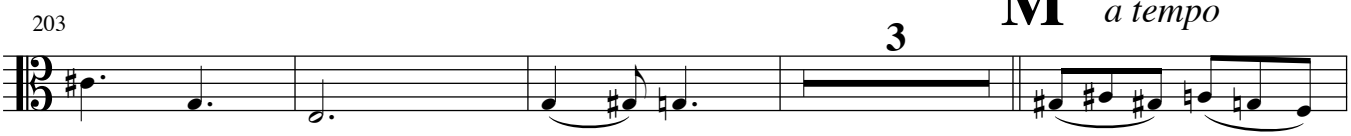


203 **M** *a tempo*



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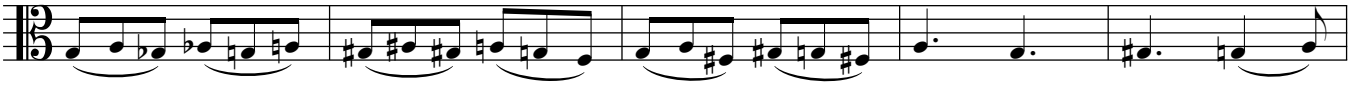

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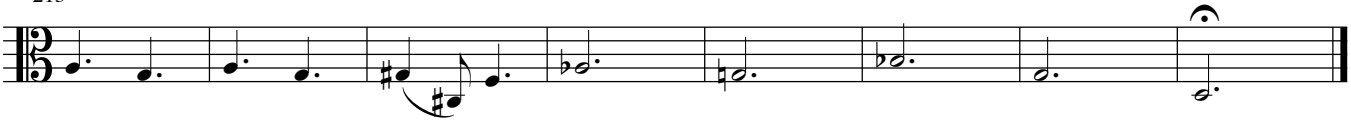
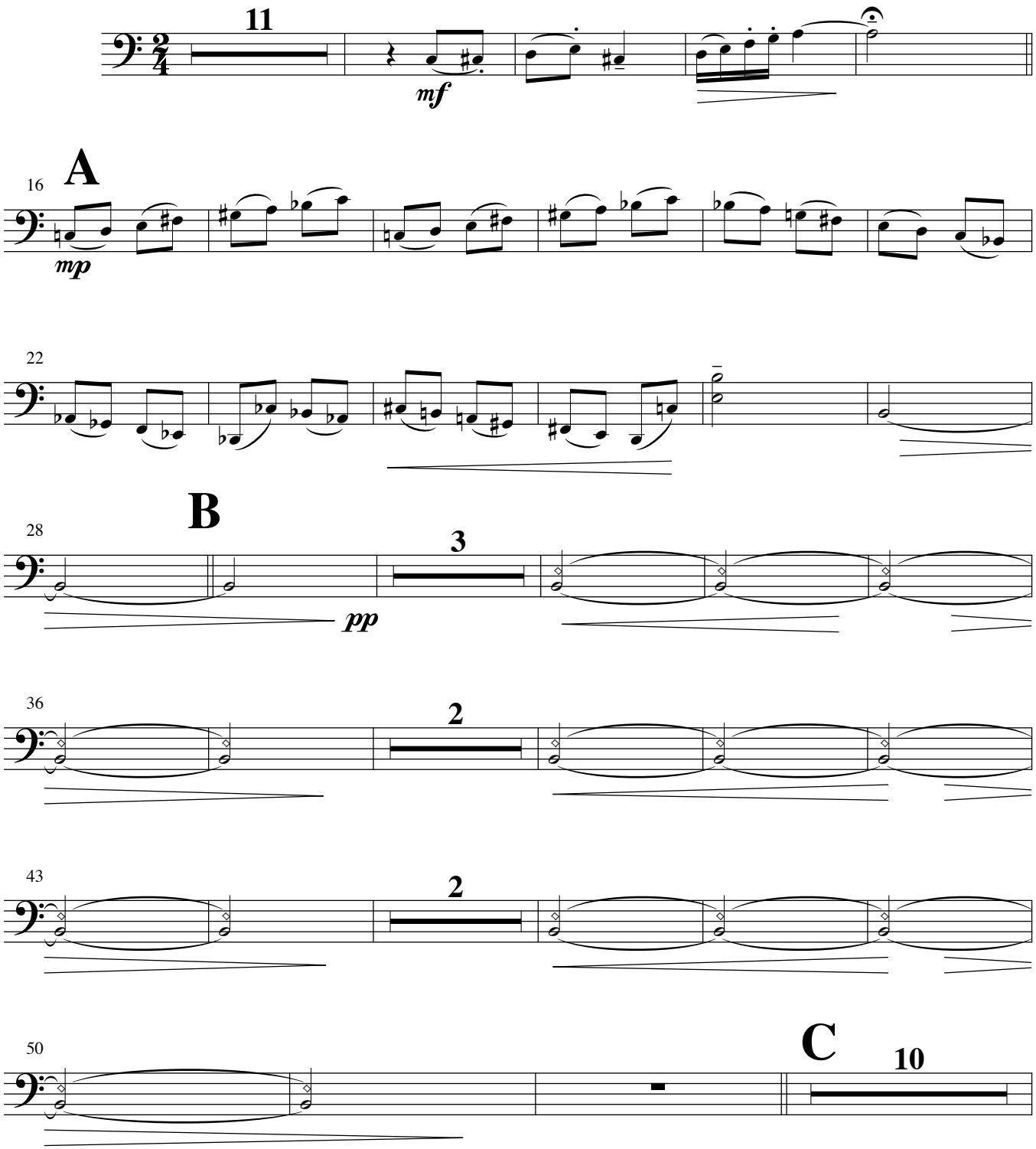


Sonnets of Apology:
Motion and Reflection

Violoncello

Music: Justin Henry Rubin
Text: Samuel Greenberg

Lighly ♩ = 90



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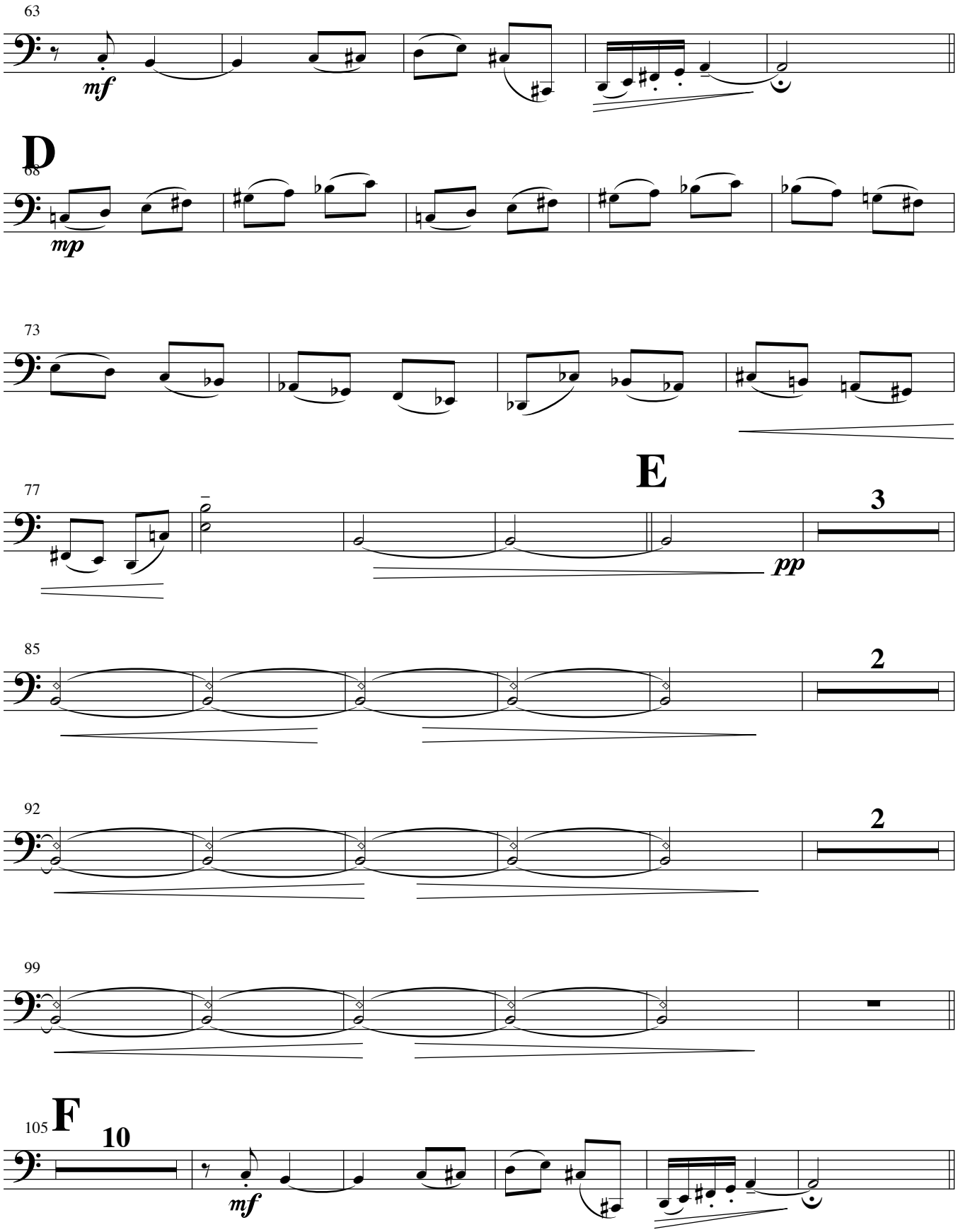
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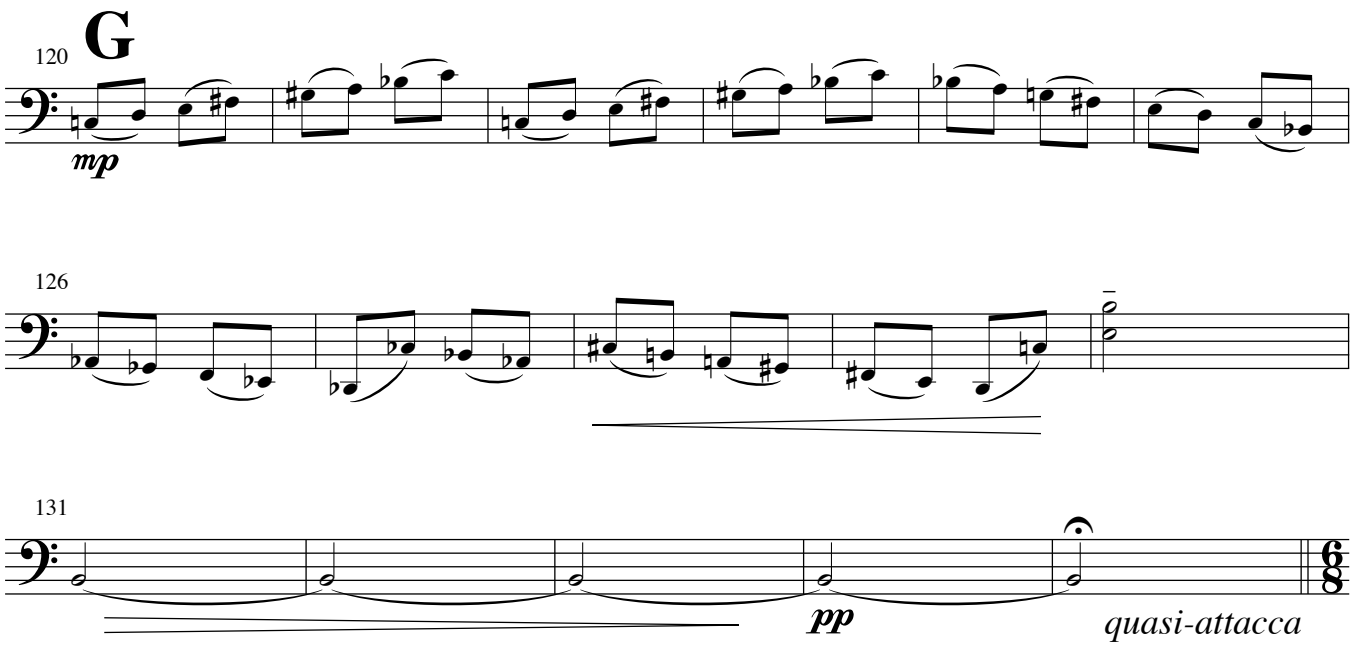
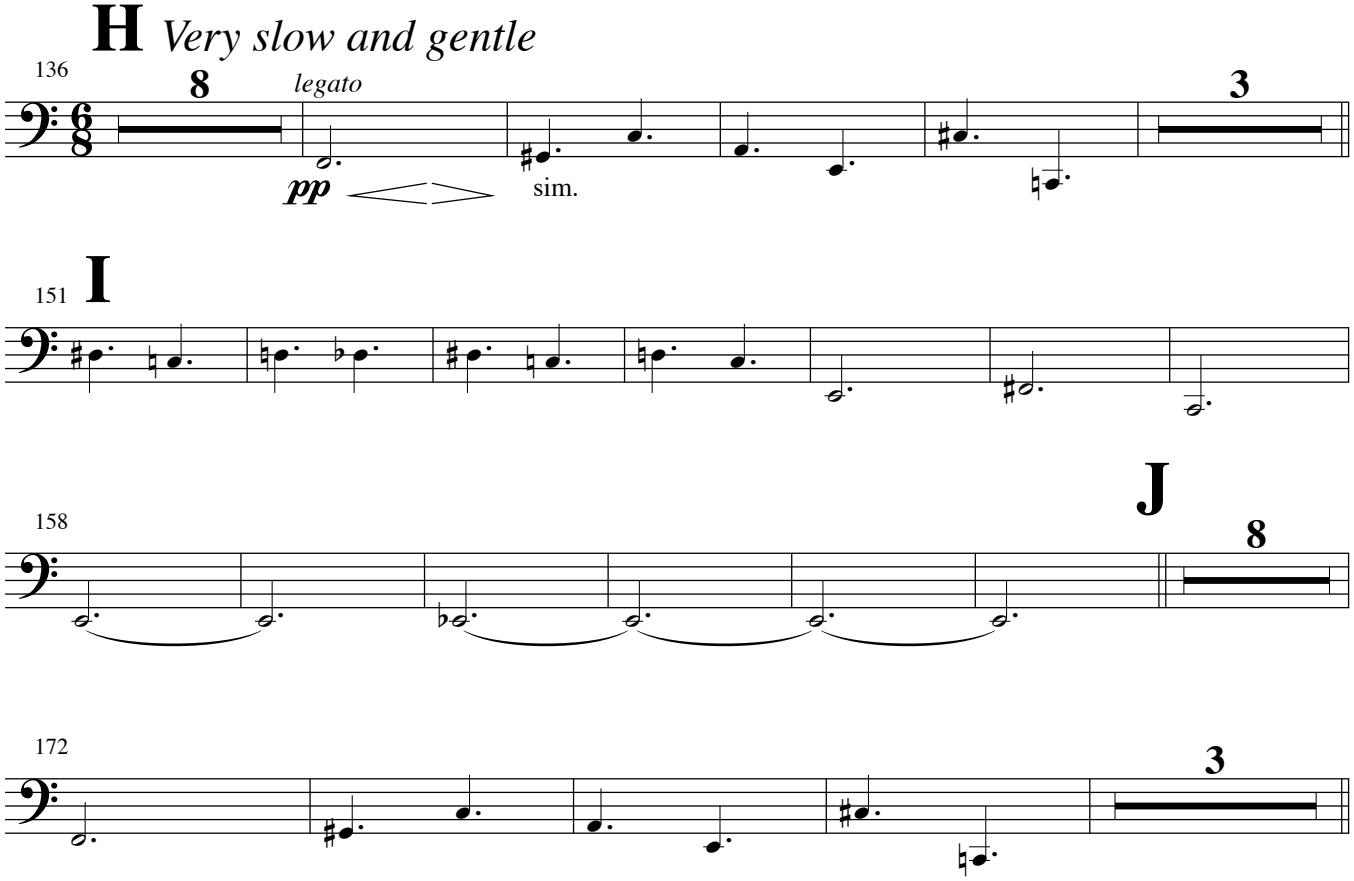
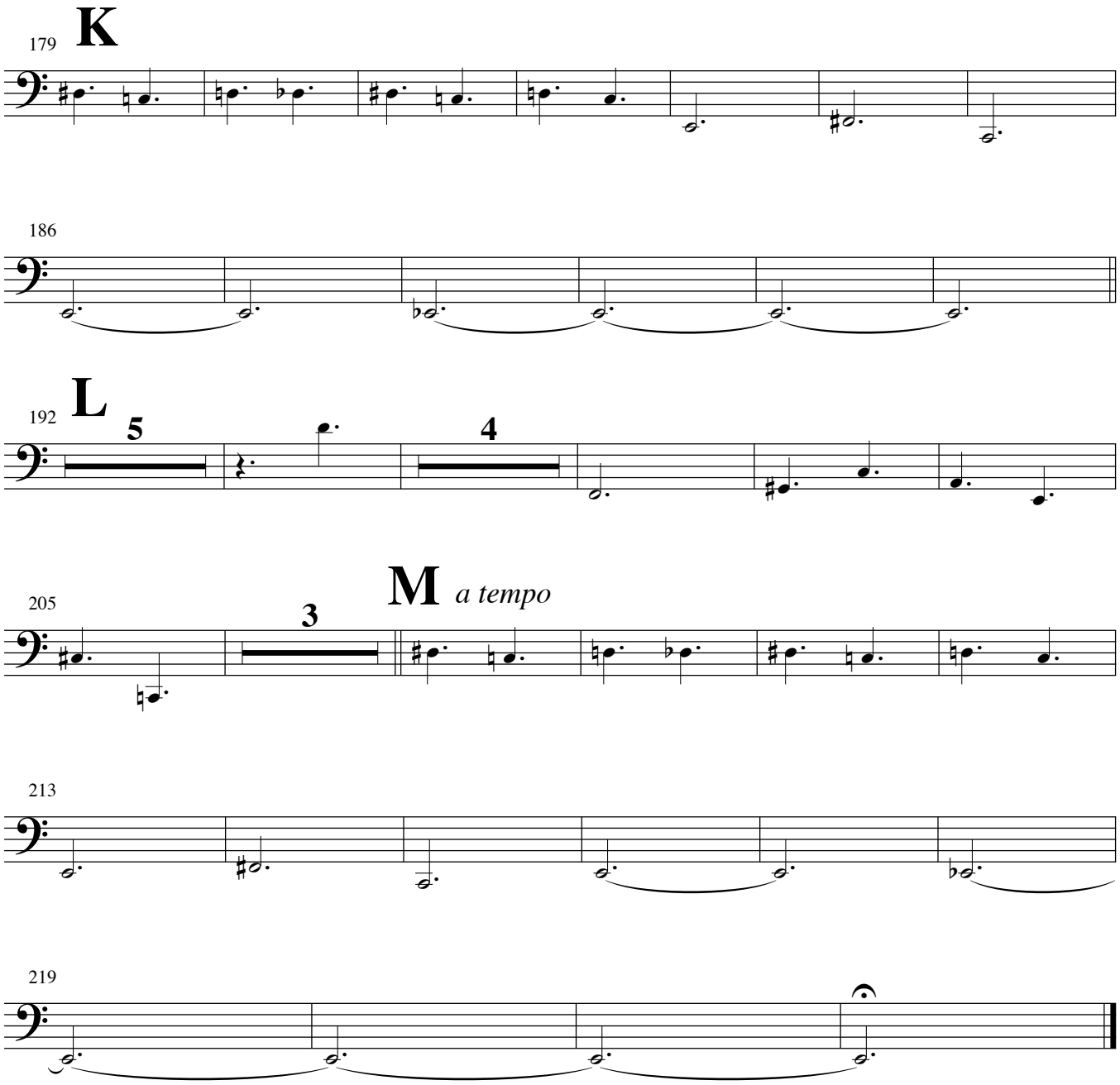
mf
D
68
mp
73
E
77
3
pp
85
2
92
2
99
F
105
10
mf


120
G
mp
126
131
pp
quasi-attacca


H Very slow and gentle
136
8
legato
pp
sim.
3
151
I
158
J
8
172
3


179
K
186
192
L
5
4
205
M
a tempo
3
213
219