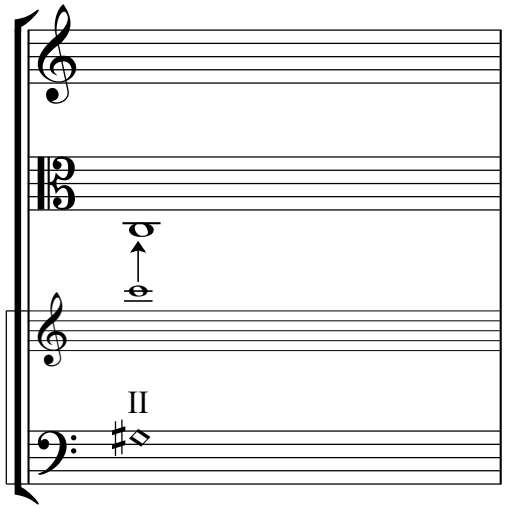
Noah Kahrs

Two Counterpoints

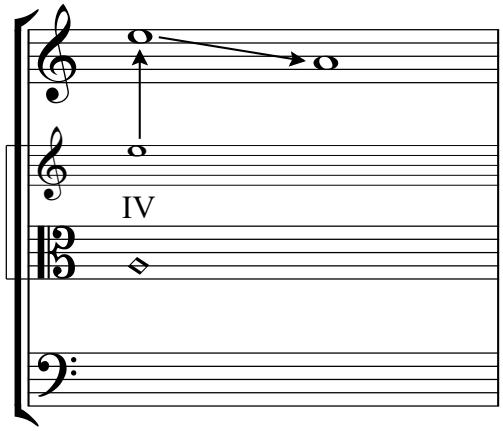
for piano quartet

Tuning Instructions



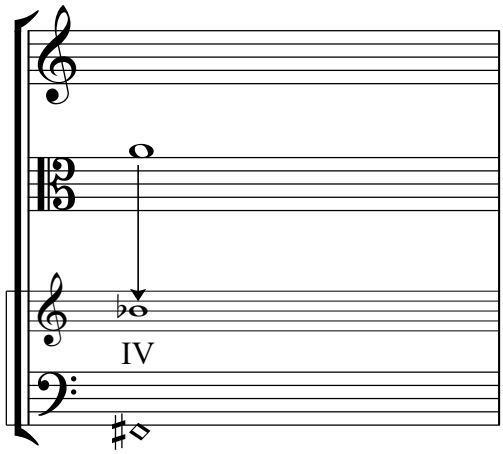
1. The following strings should be tuned ordinarily:
   Violin: D,G
   Viola: A,D,G
   Cello: A,D,G

2. Tune the viola C string to sound exactly three octaves below a seventh partial harmonic (sounding high C) on the cello D string.
   The viola C string will be approx. 30 cents flat.



3. Tune the violin E string to sound in unison with a fifth partial harmonic (sounding E) on the just-retuned viola C string.
   The violin E string will be approx. 45 cents flat.

4. Tune the violin A string down a normal fifth from the just-returned violin E string.
   The violin A string will be approx. 45 cents flat.



5. Lower the cello C string so that the 7th partial harmonic (sounding B-flat) is in tune with the ordinarily-turned viola A string (or with the piano A).
   The cello C string will be approx. 70 cents flat.

Other Performance Notes

Dashed slurs represent phrase marks that are not necessarily played legato.

Piano harmonics are notated as follows: the bottom note, with an x-notehead, indicates which key on the piano is played, and the top note, with a diamond notehead, shows the sounding pitch.

Natural harmonics beyond the second partial are notated with diamond noteheads at the appropriate node on the fingerboard; the string is indicated by a roman numeral. Sounding pitches are sometimes included for clarity in parentheses. Second partial ("touch octave") harmonics are notated conventionally.

All notes on retuned strings are either open strings or natural harmonics, with the exception of mm. 30-31 of mvt. 2 in the viola. All notes on retuned strings are notated as played, not as sounding, again with the exception of mm. 30-31 of mvt. 2 in the viola.

Some harmonics require two nodes to be touched on the same string to obtain a particularly high partial, such as m. 91 of mvt. 1 and mm. 46, 66 of mvt. 2 in the cello part. Note that in the cello part, mm. 72-75 of mvt. 2 alternate between these high harmonics and actual double-stop harmonics on two separate strings; a harmonic with two nodes on one string is indicated with one stem and one string indicated; two harmonics on separate strings have two stems and two strings indicated.

Open strings and harmonics sometimes have **ties leading into rests**, which mean to let the string ring freely.

Over the course of the **second movement**, a melodic line is stated and consistently repeated in augmentation, but woven between instruments. This primary line is indicated by **thick brackets above a passage**. This line (as indicated by brackets) should be brought out, as indicated by a *Hauptstimme* in twelve-tone music.

Program Notes

This work began as an isolated melody, which is never stated in its entirety but which serves as the source of all material in the first movement. Each of the five distinct sections of the first movement deals with a different fragment of the melody. The movement is further motivated by its tuning, which is in turn also derived from this melody; the tuning sets up just intonation against the equal-tempered piano, allowing the thirds and sevenths of the melody to be heard in several colliding intonations.

The second movement further develops this tuning system through repetition of a new melody shaped to the tuning system's nuances. With each statement of the melodic line, the rhythm is elongated in a different proportion and the pitch content becomes richer: it is stated first as a rhythm without notes attached, and eventually with the full microtonal potential of all retuned strings, each repetition slowly adding to the realm of pitches. Whereas the first movement uses all available notes for one very elongated statement of the melody, the second movement starts with few notes and adds more notes with each repetition.

Once these aspects of the form were set up, the compositional process was more fluid; each section was composed freely by ear within the constraints described above, and the boundaries between sections are occasionally somewhat blurred.

The first movement, "Inventions," was premiered on July 2nd, 2015 at Big Barn in Putney, VT by Jin Young Yoon, Cara Pogossian, Noah Koh, and Nadia Azzi, coached by Ari Isaacman-Beck. A revised version was premiered on February 7th, 2016 at Fulton Recital Hall in Chicago, IL by Clara Lyon, Doyle Armbrust, Russel Rolen, and Ann Yi.

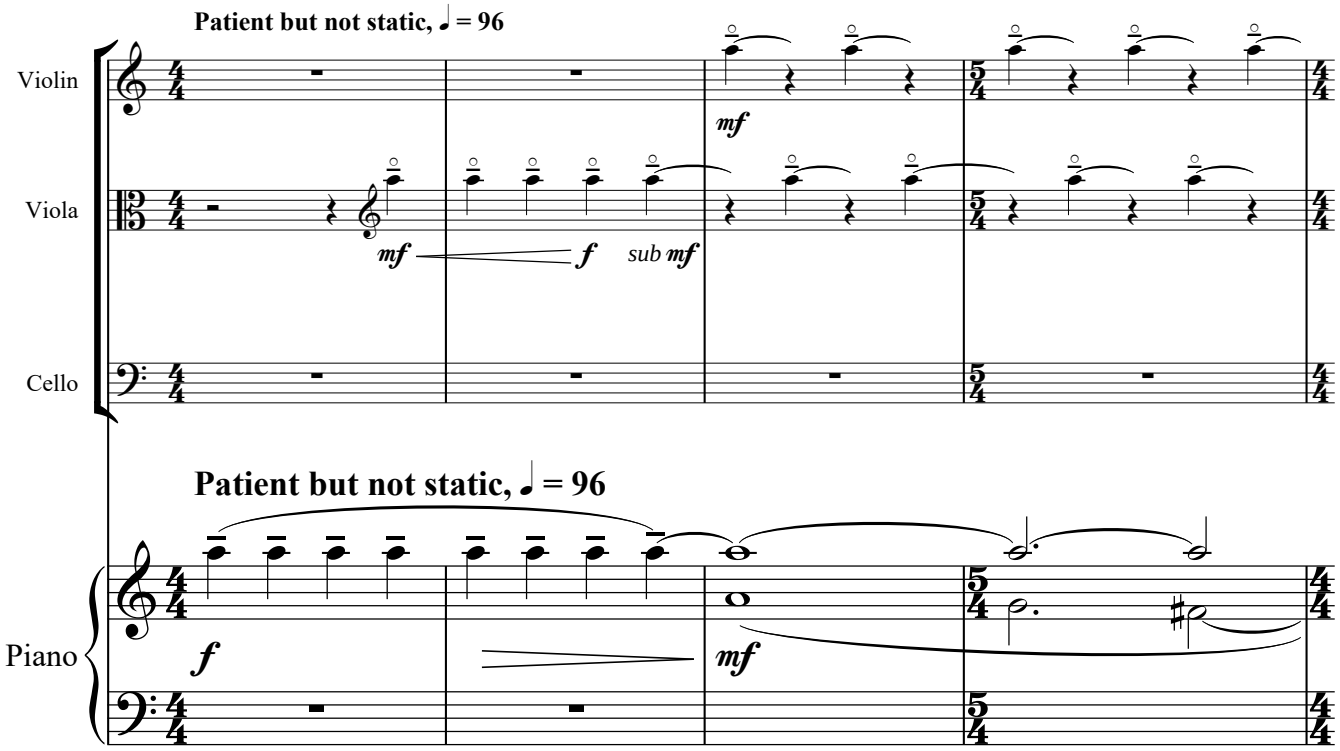
The second movement, "Isorhythms," was premiered on June 22nd, 2016 at the Dublin School Auditorium in Dublin, NH by Hanna Hurwitz, Victor Lowrie, Mariel Roberts, and Steven Beck.

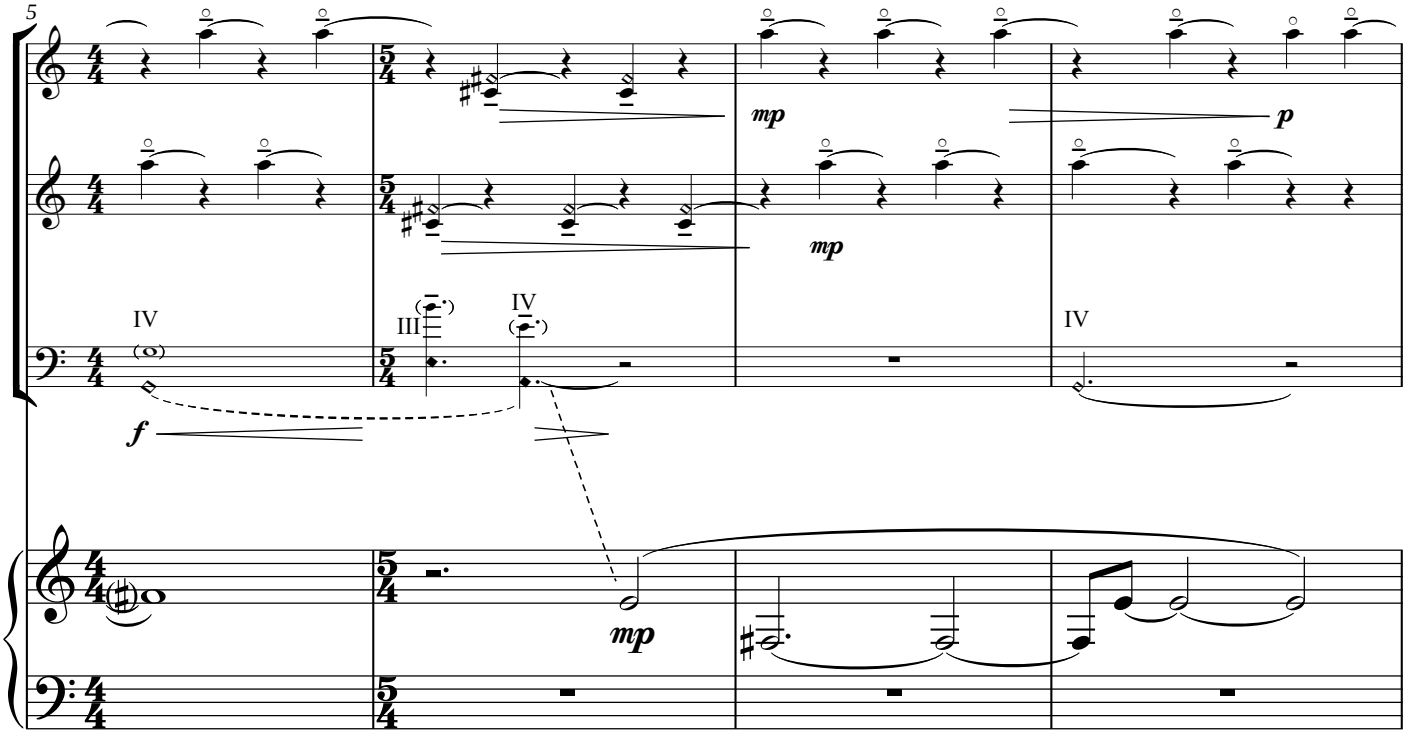
The full piece was premiered on November 21st, 2017 at Hatch Recital Hall in Rochester, NY by Shannon Leigh Reilly Steigerward, Sam Edwards, Rachel Rice, and Sean William Calhoun, conducted by Edo Frenkel.

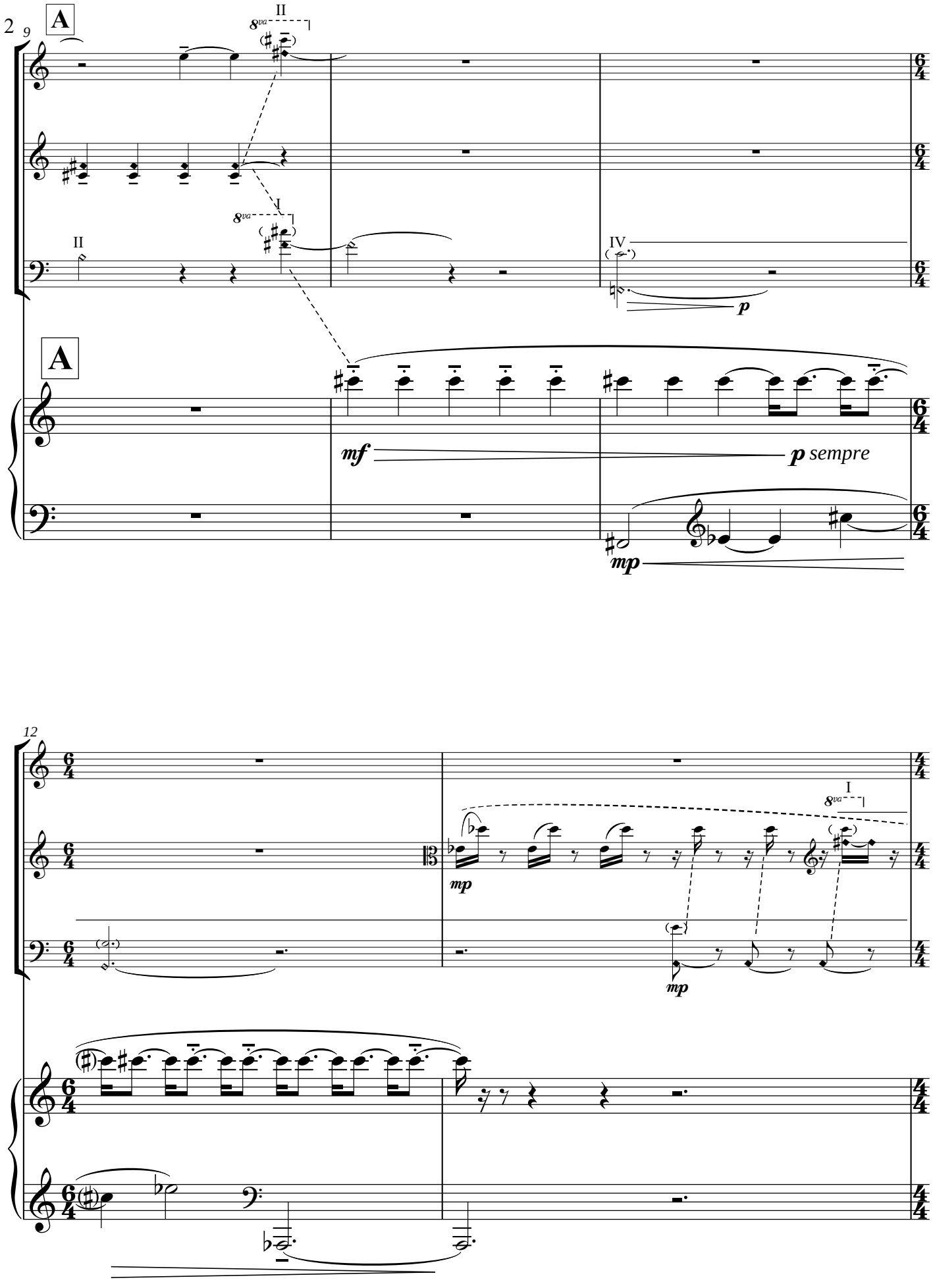
Two Counterpoints

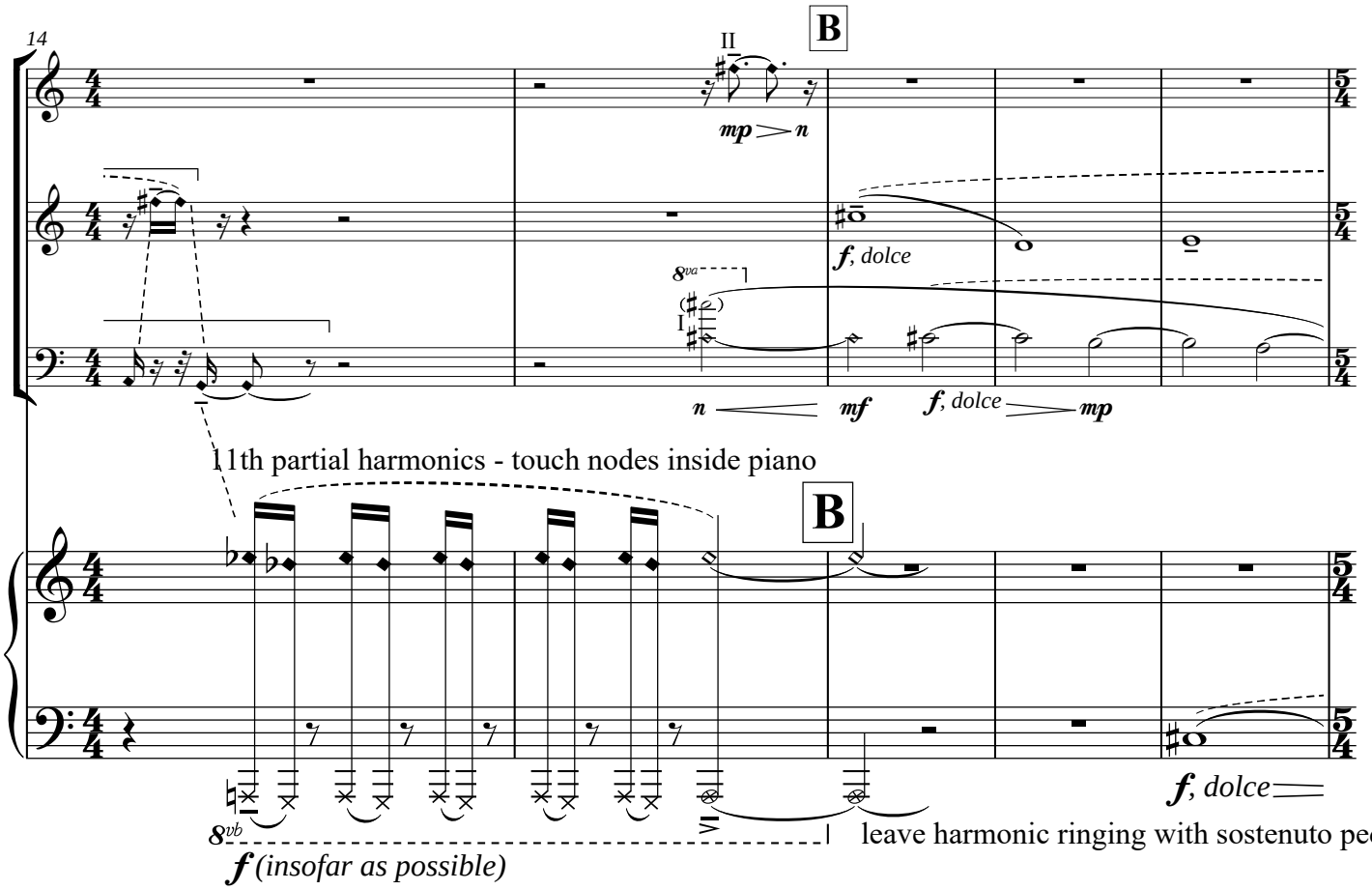
I. Inventions

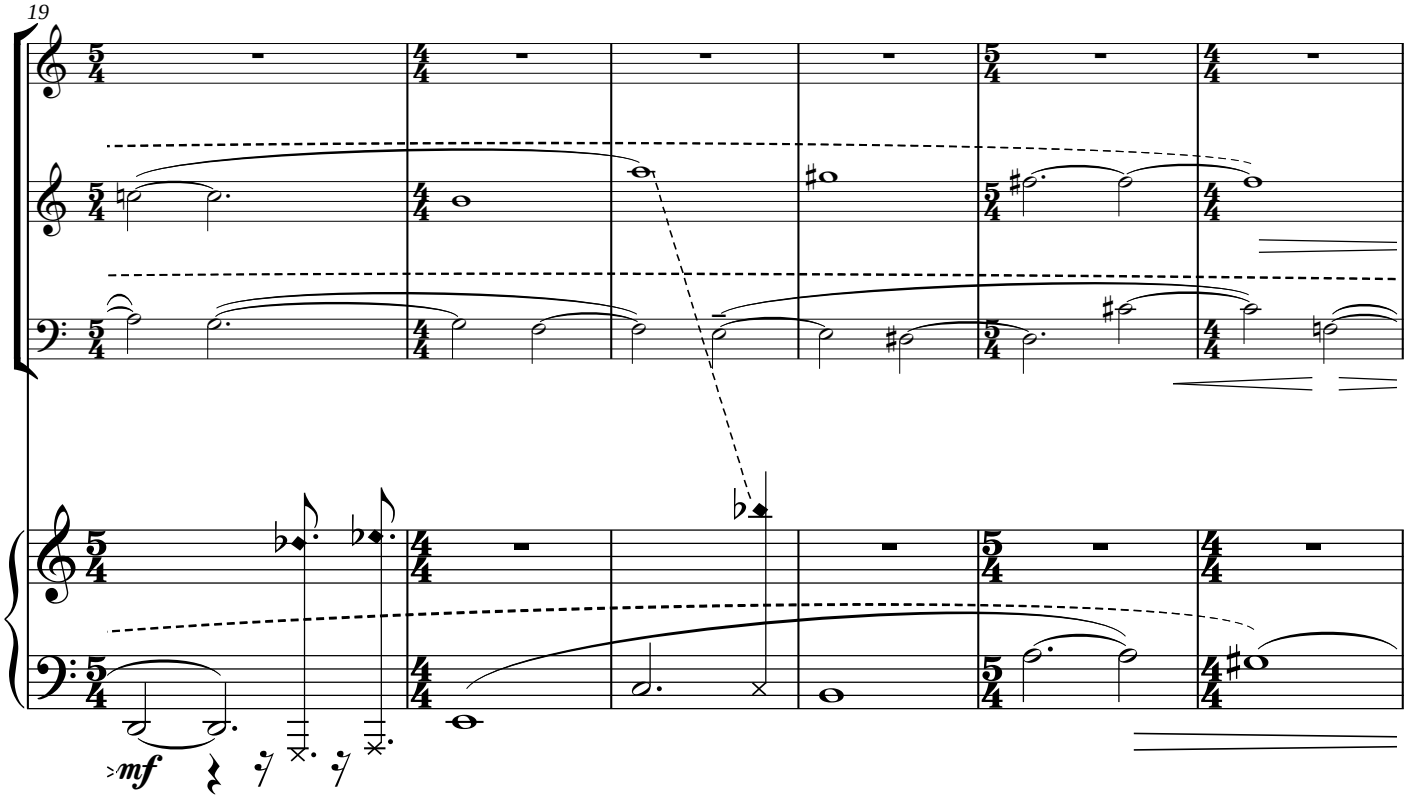
Noah Kahrs

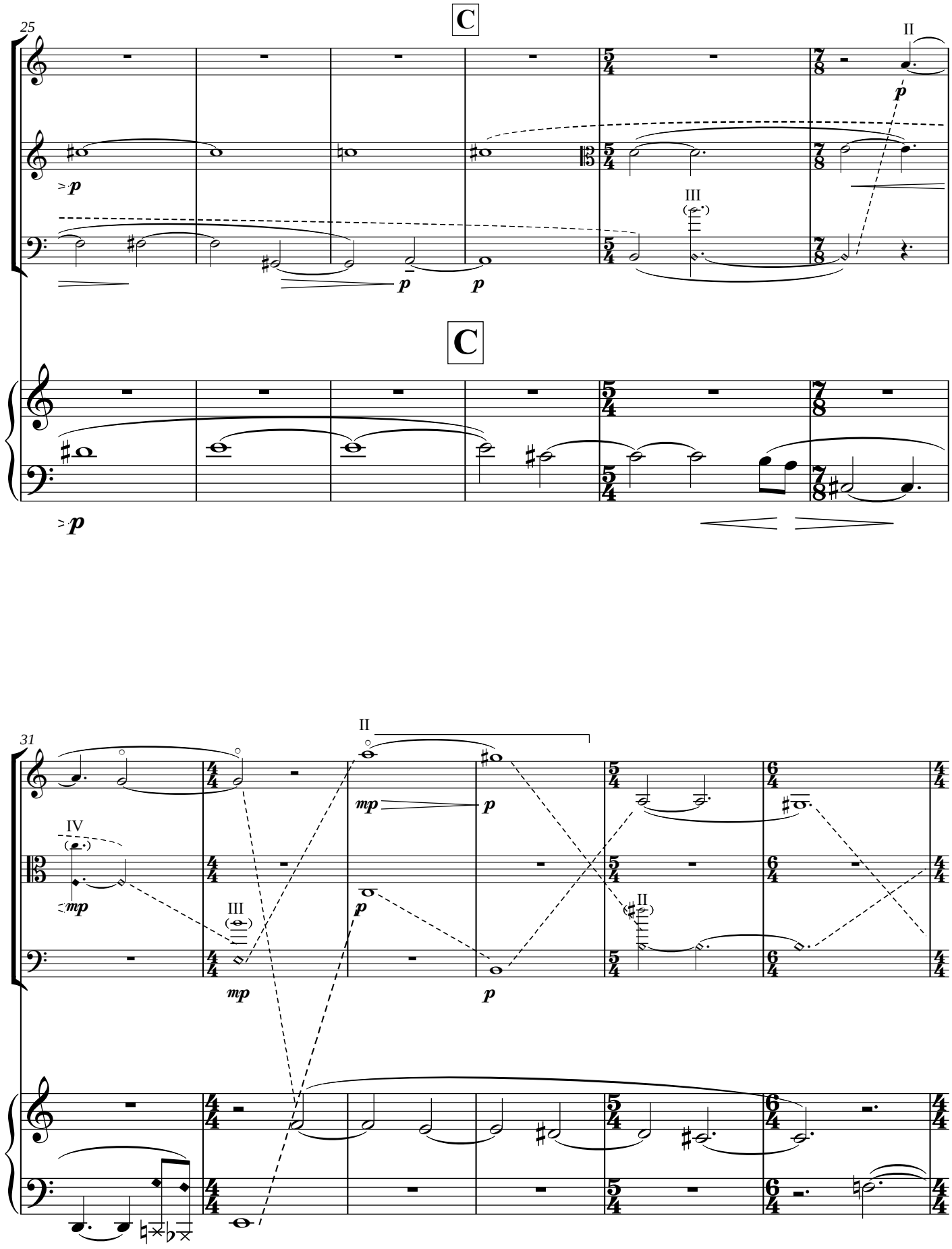


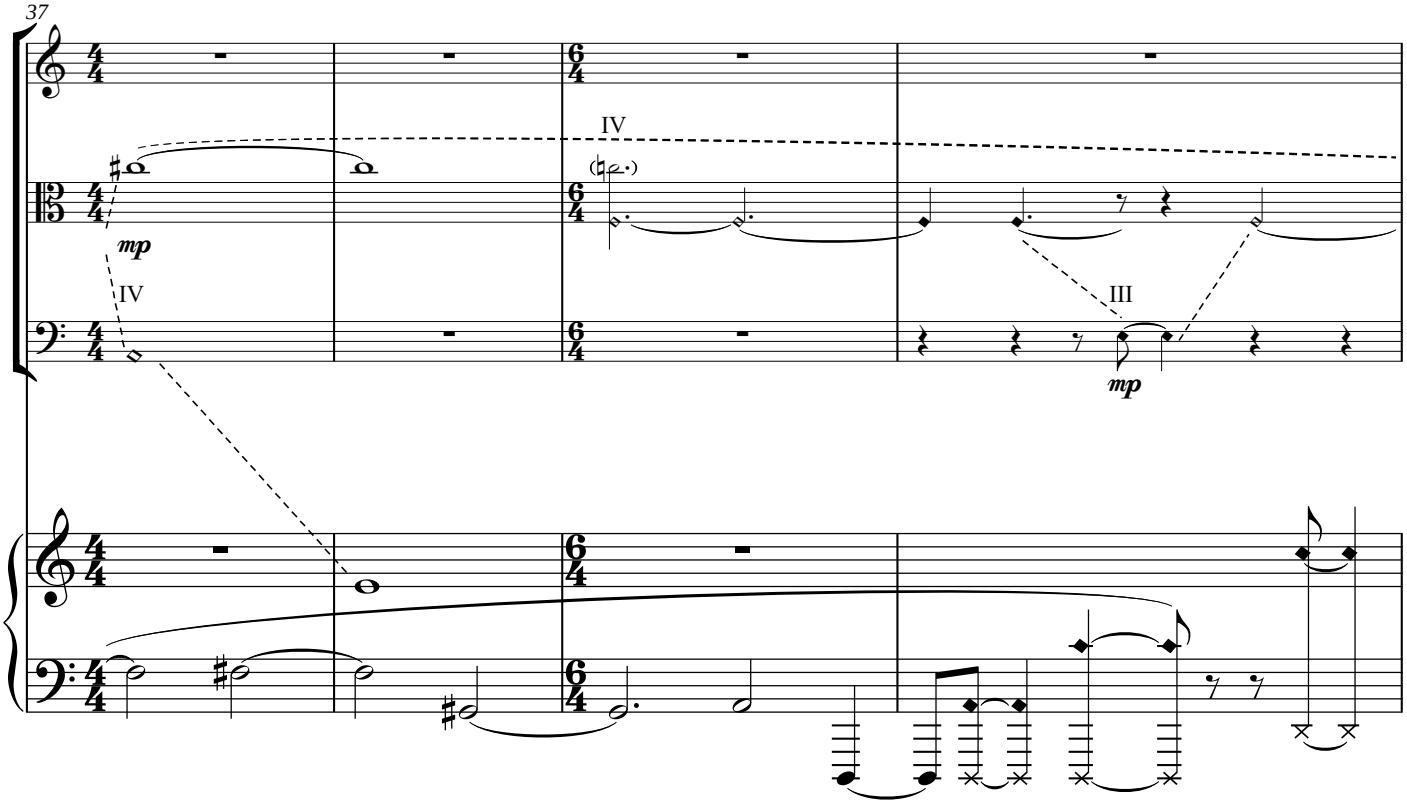


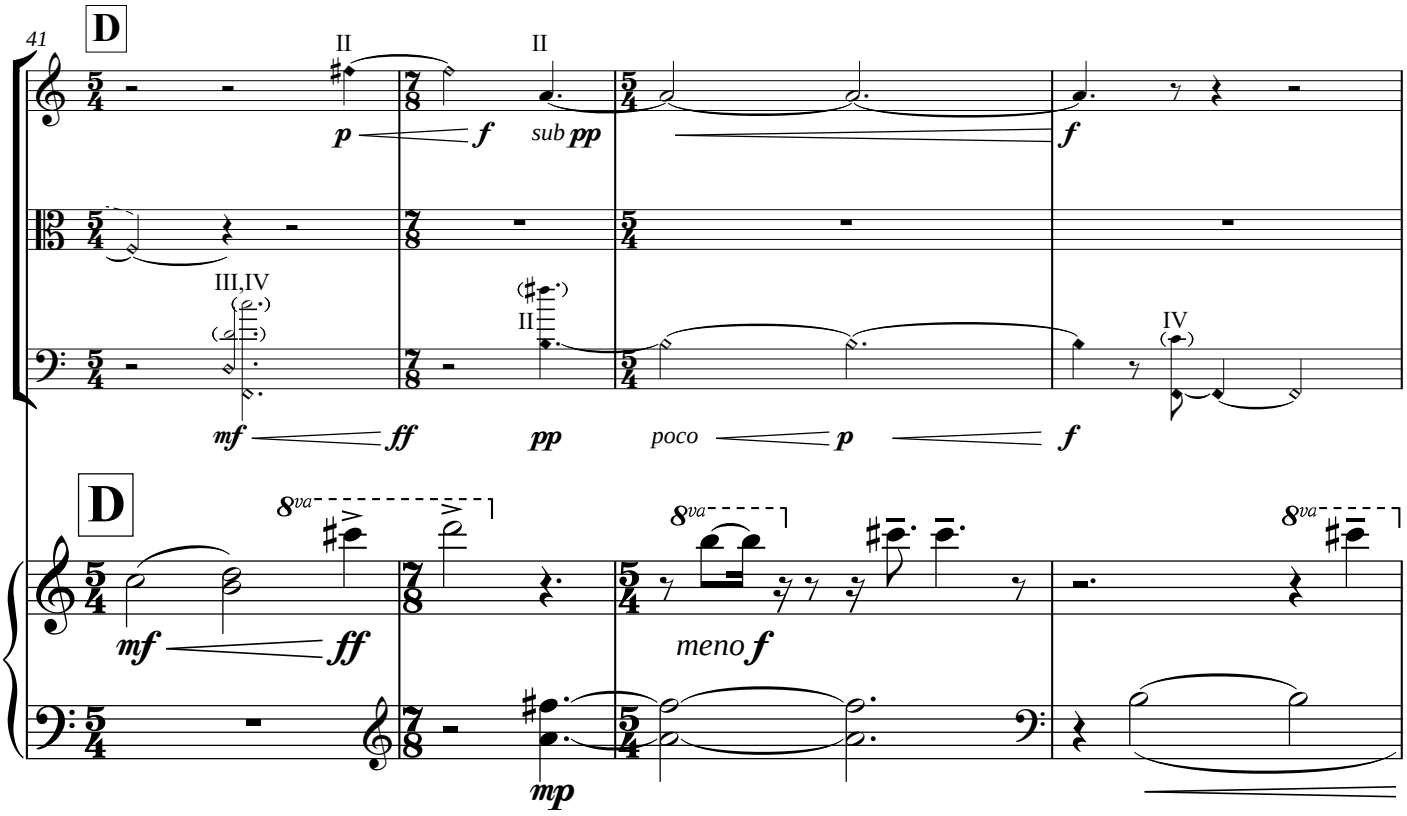

2
9
A
II
8va
I
II
IV
p
A
mf
p sempre
mp
12
I
8va
mp
mp

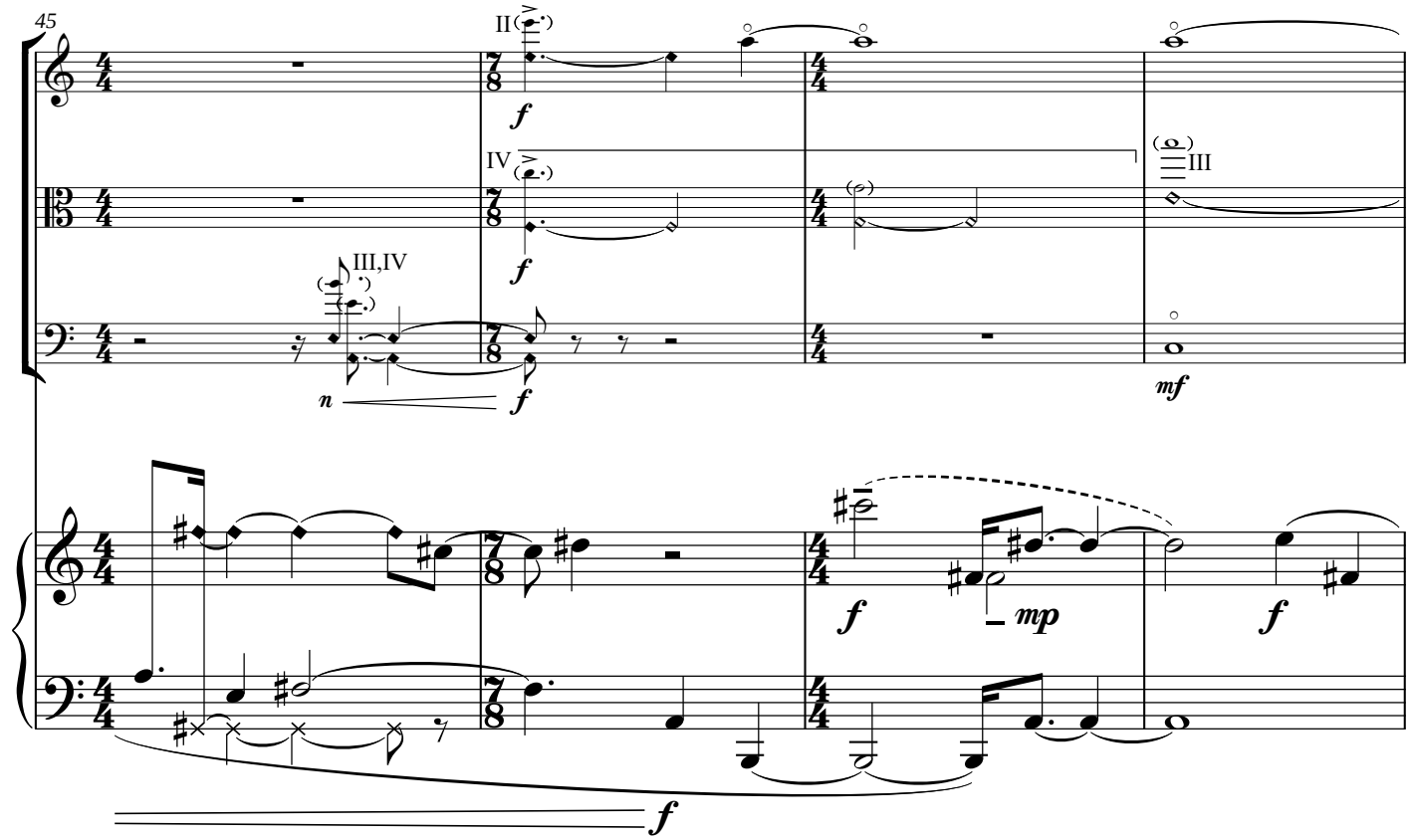

14
B
II
mp
n
f, dolce
8va
I
n
mf
f, dolce
mp
11th partial harmonics - touch nodes inside piano
B
8vb
f (insofar as possible)
f, dolce
leave harmonic ringing with sostenuto pedal

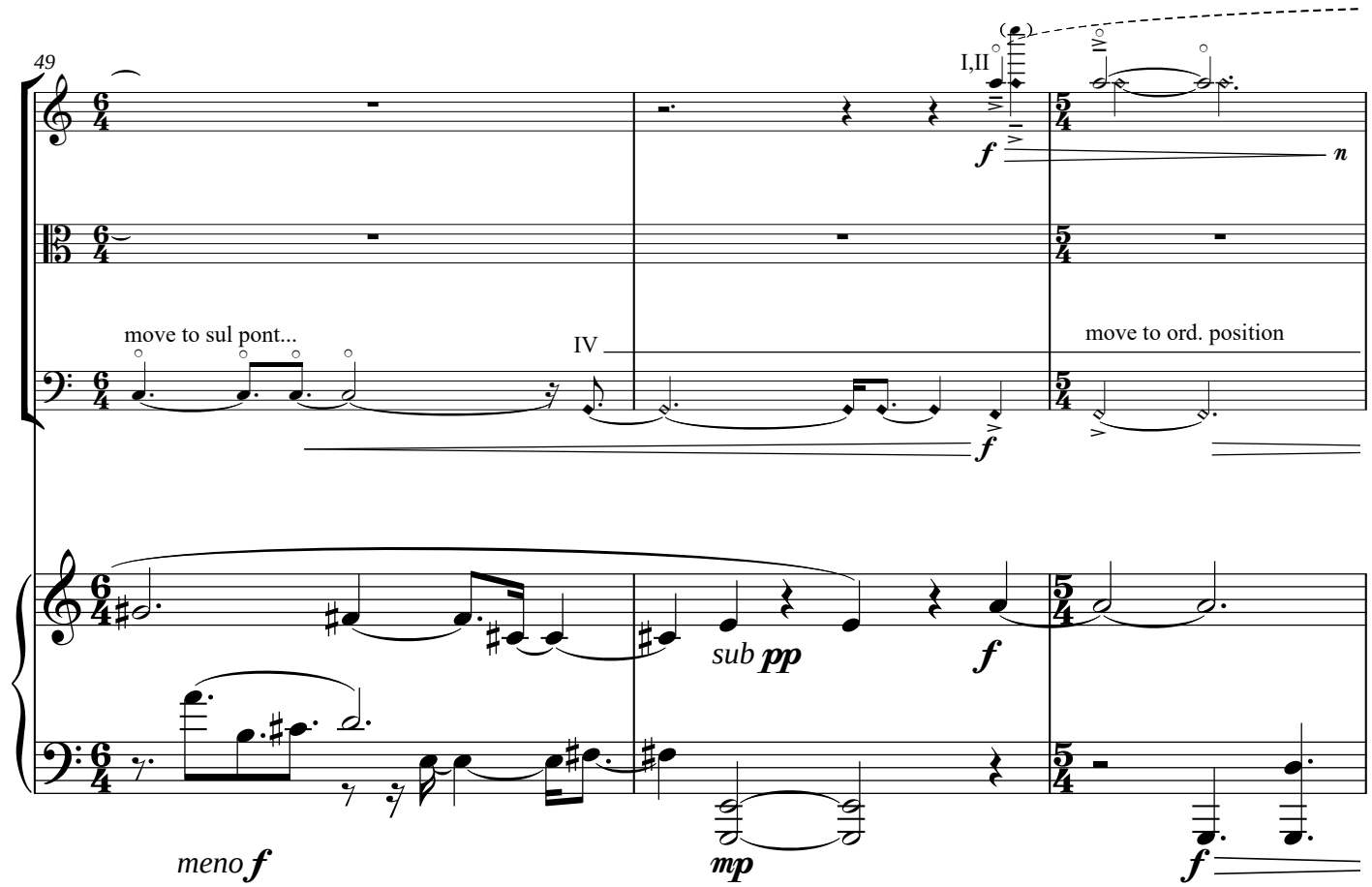

19
mf

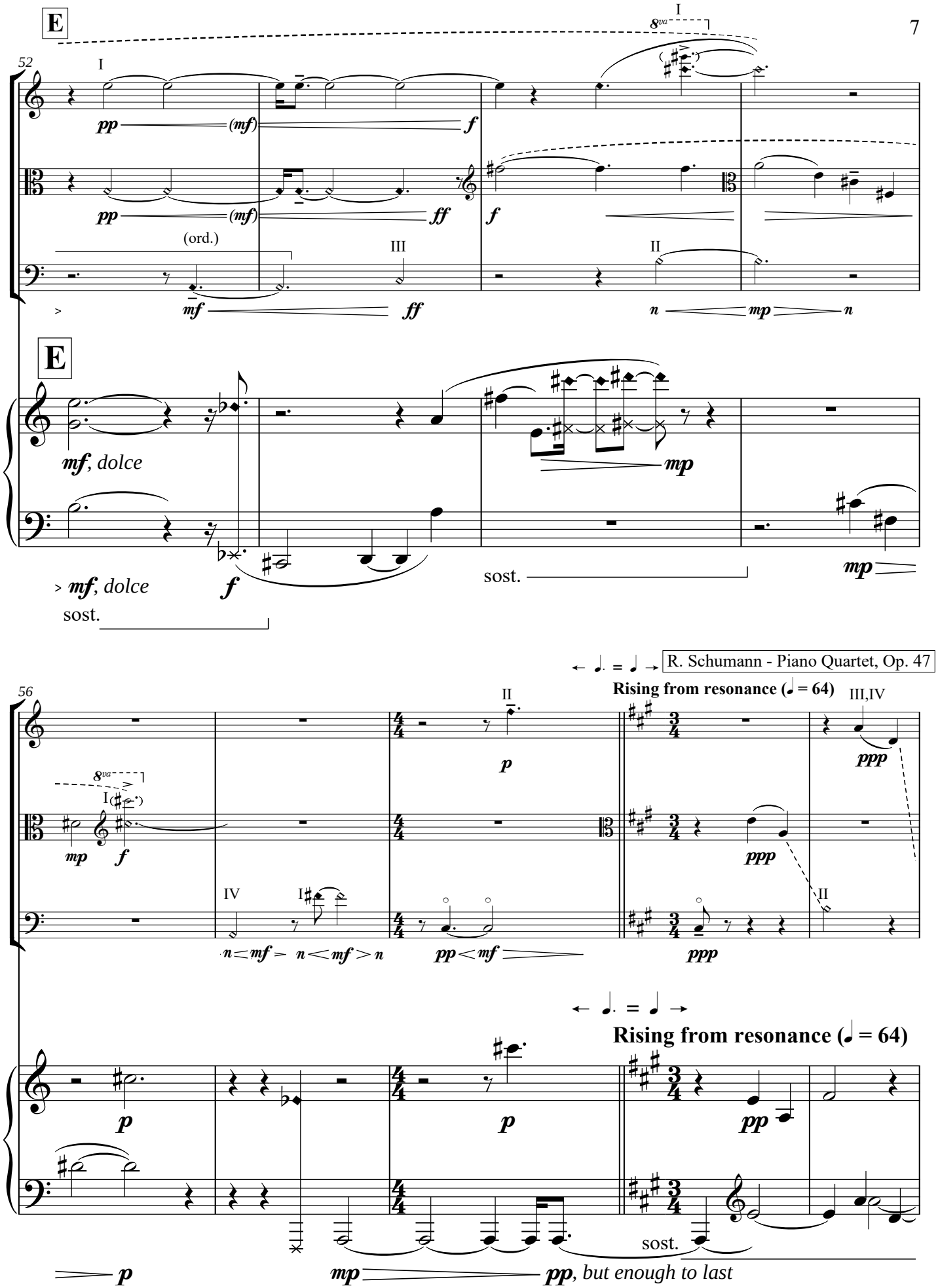

25
C
II
III
C
31
II
IV
III
II

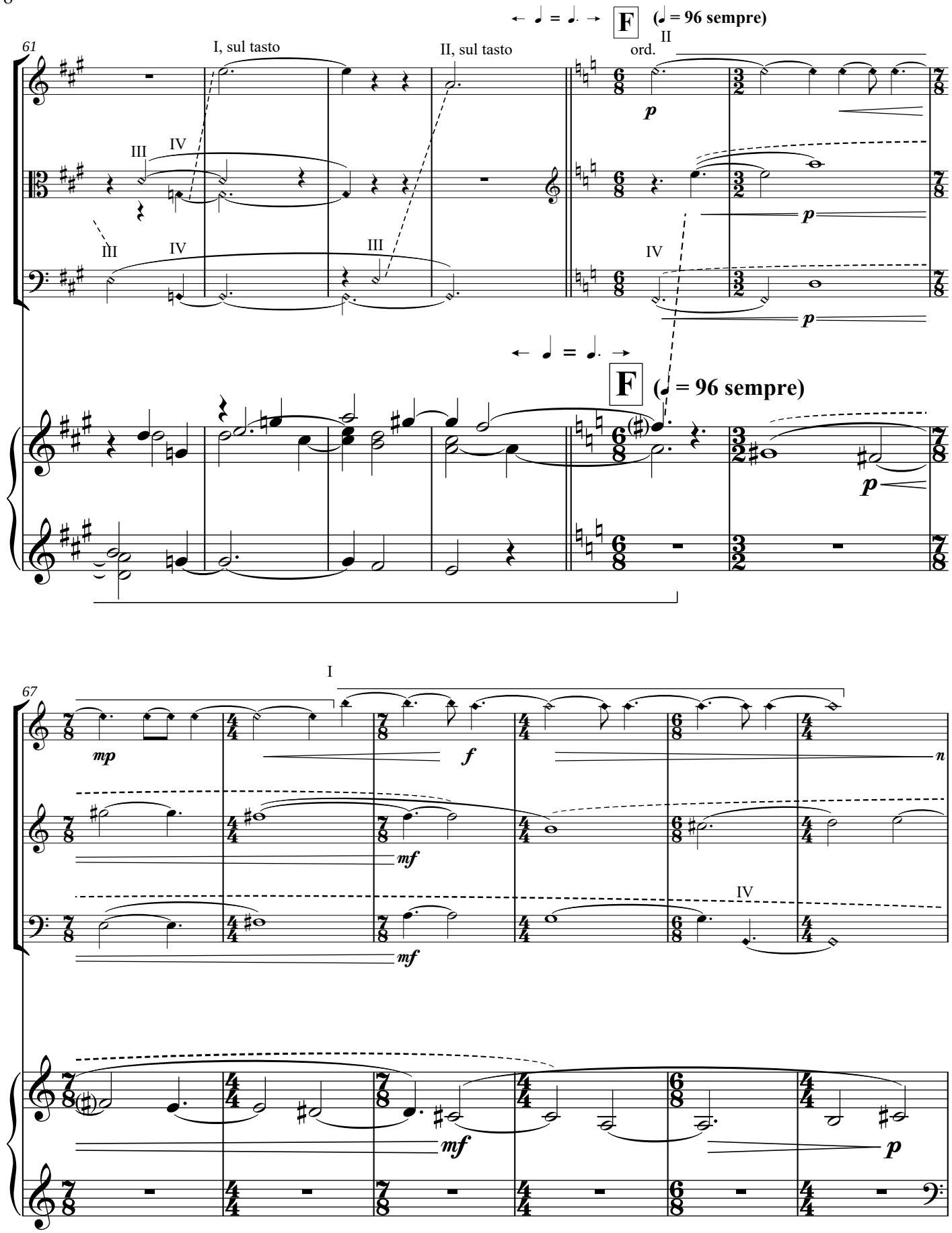

37
IV
mp
IV
III
mp

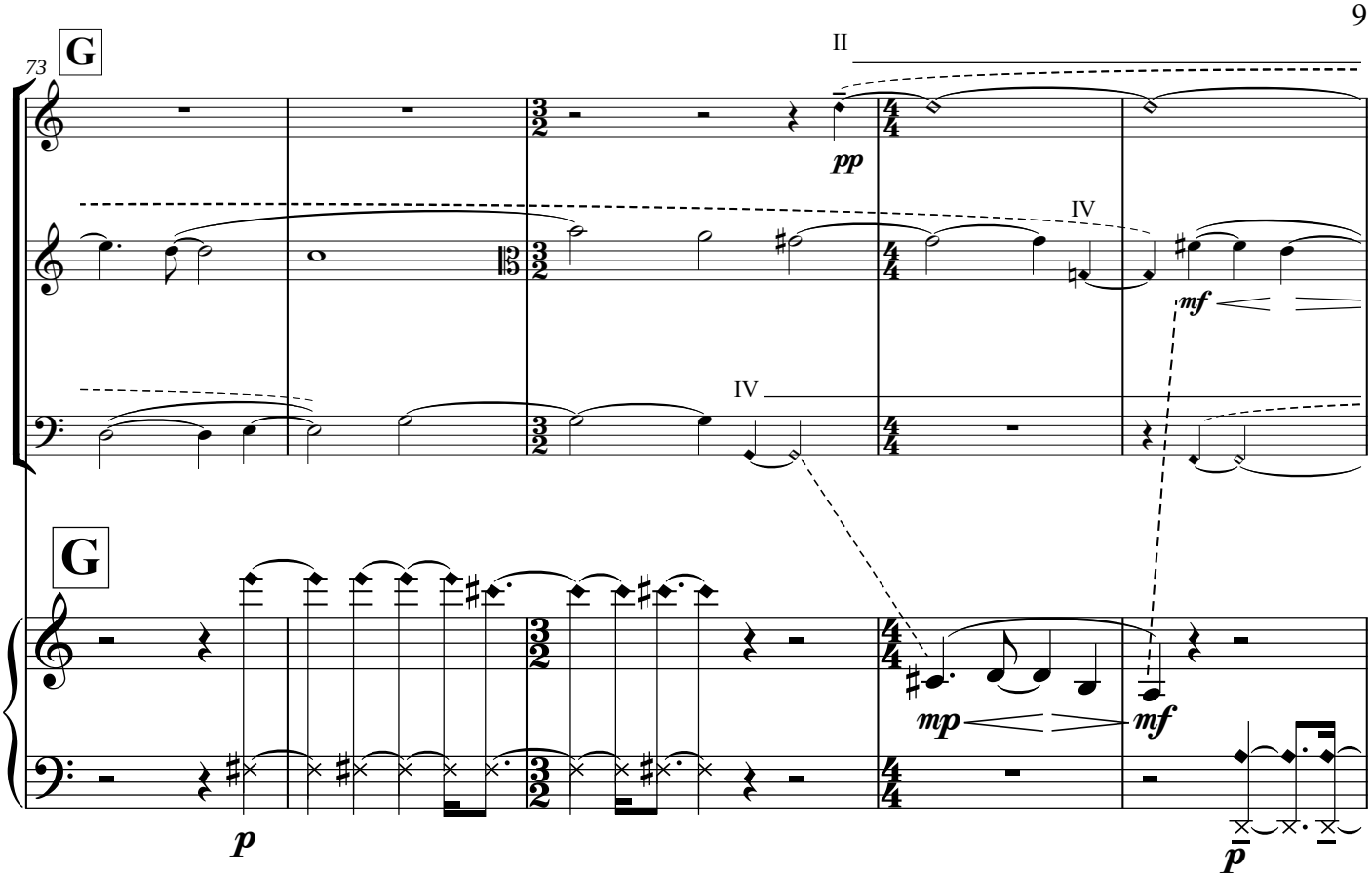

41
D
II
II
p
f
sub pp
f
III,IV
II
IV
mf
ff
pp
poco
p
f
D
8va
8va
8va
mf
ff
meno f
mp

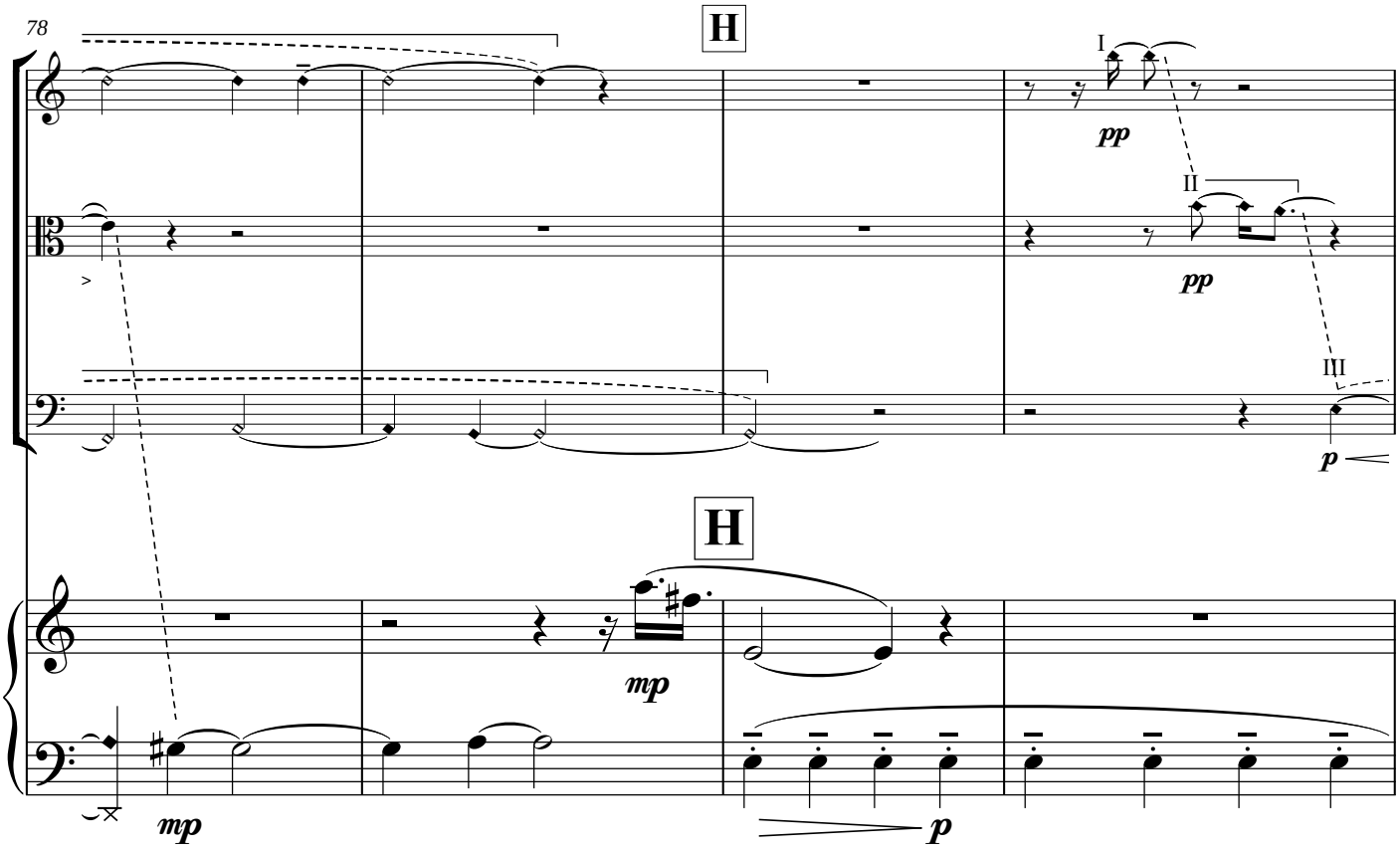

45
II
IV
III
III,IV
n
f
mf
mp

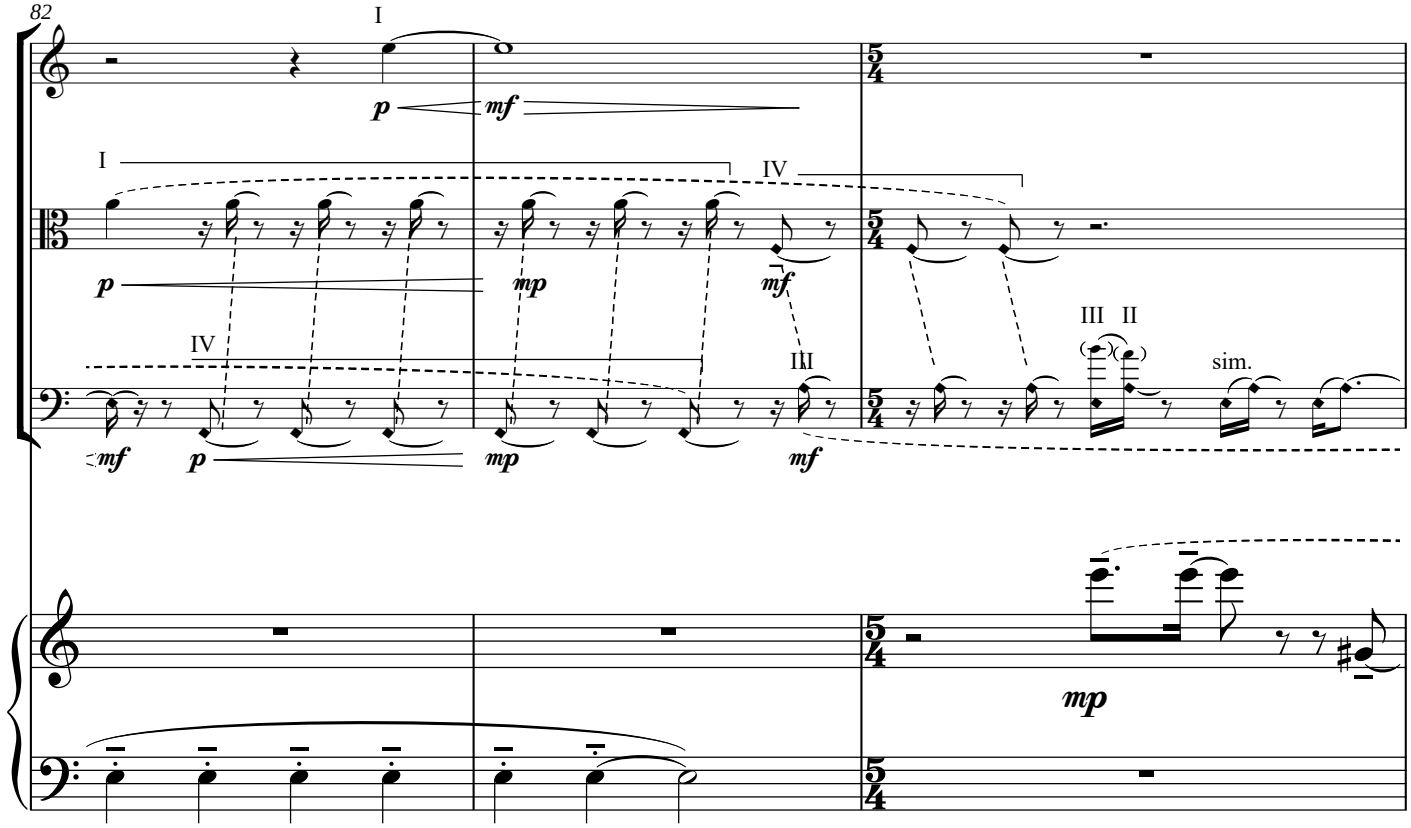

49
I,II
IV
n
move to sul pont...
move to ord. position
sub pp
meno f
mp

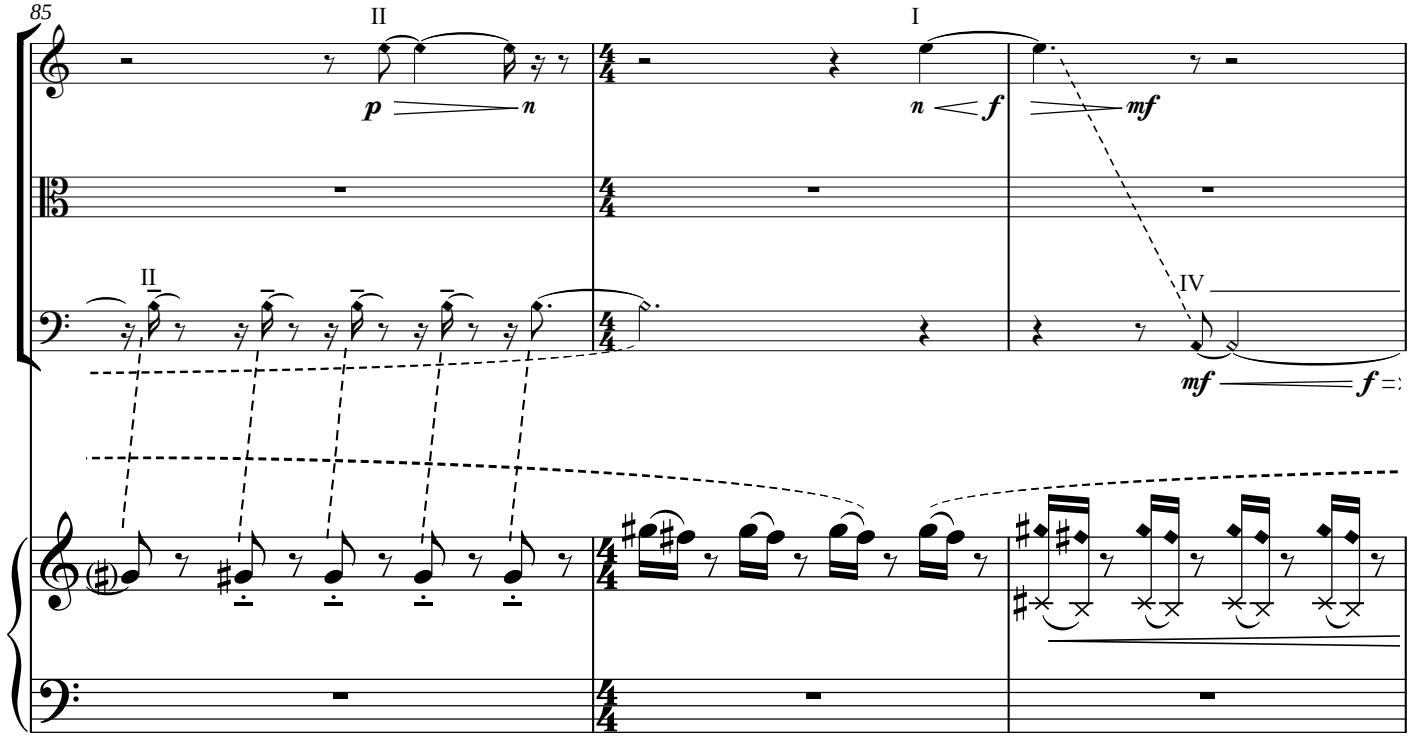

E
52
I
8va
pp
(mf)
f
ff
(ord.)
III
II
mf
n
mp
E
mf, dolce
sost.
56
R. Schumann - Piano Quartet, Op. 47
Rising from resonance (♩ = 64)
III,IV
IV
p
ppp
pp, but enough to last

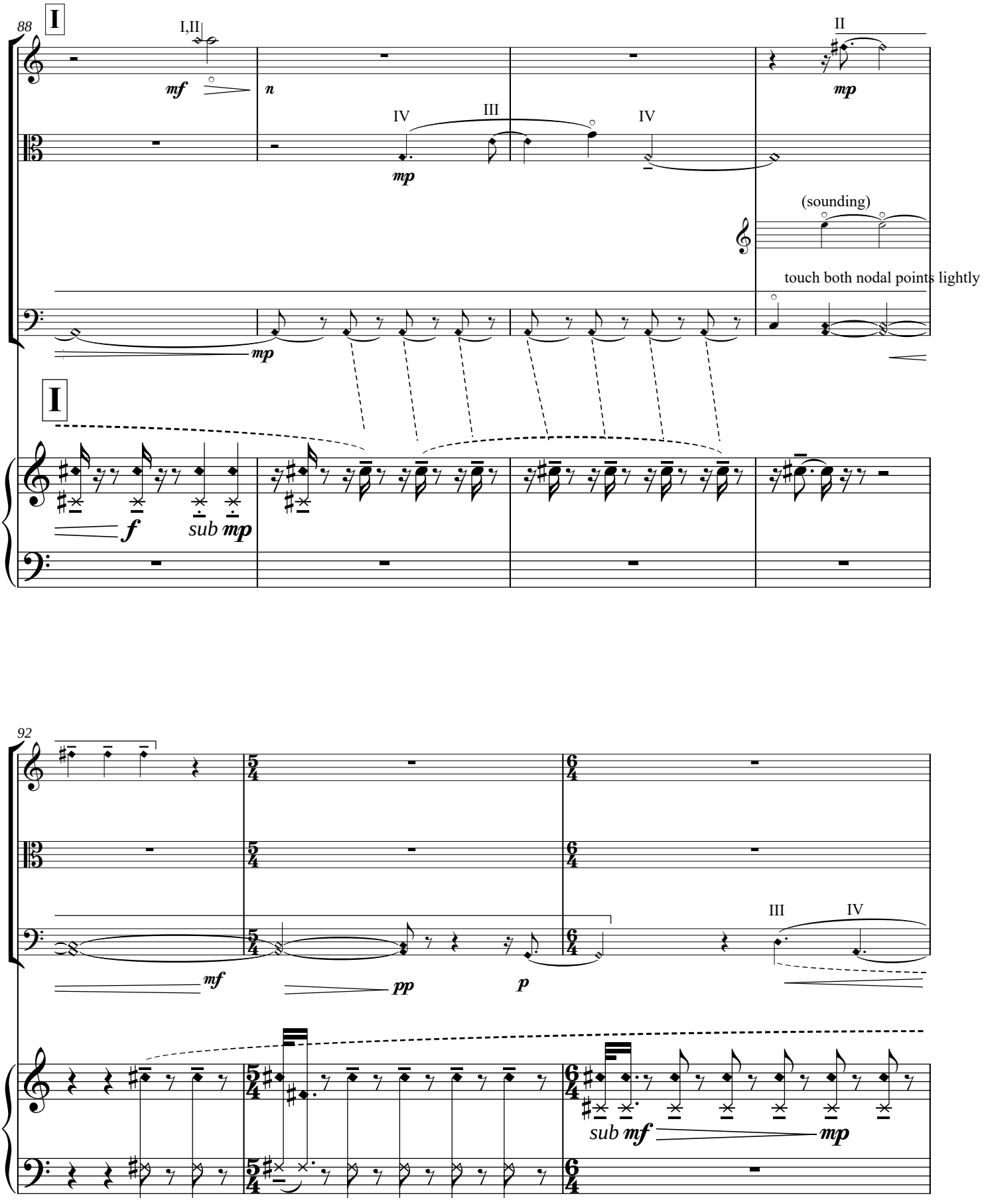

61
I, sul tasto
II, sul tasto
F
(♩ = 96 sempre)
ord.
II
III
IV
p
67
I
mp
f
n
mf
IV

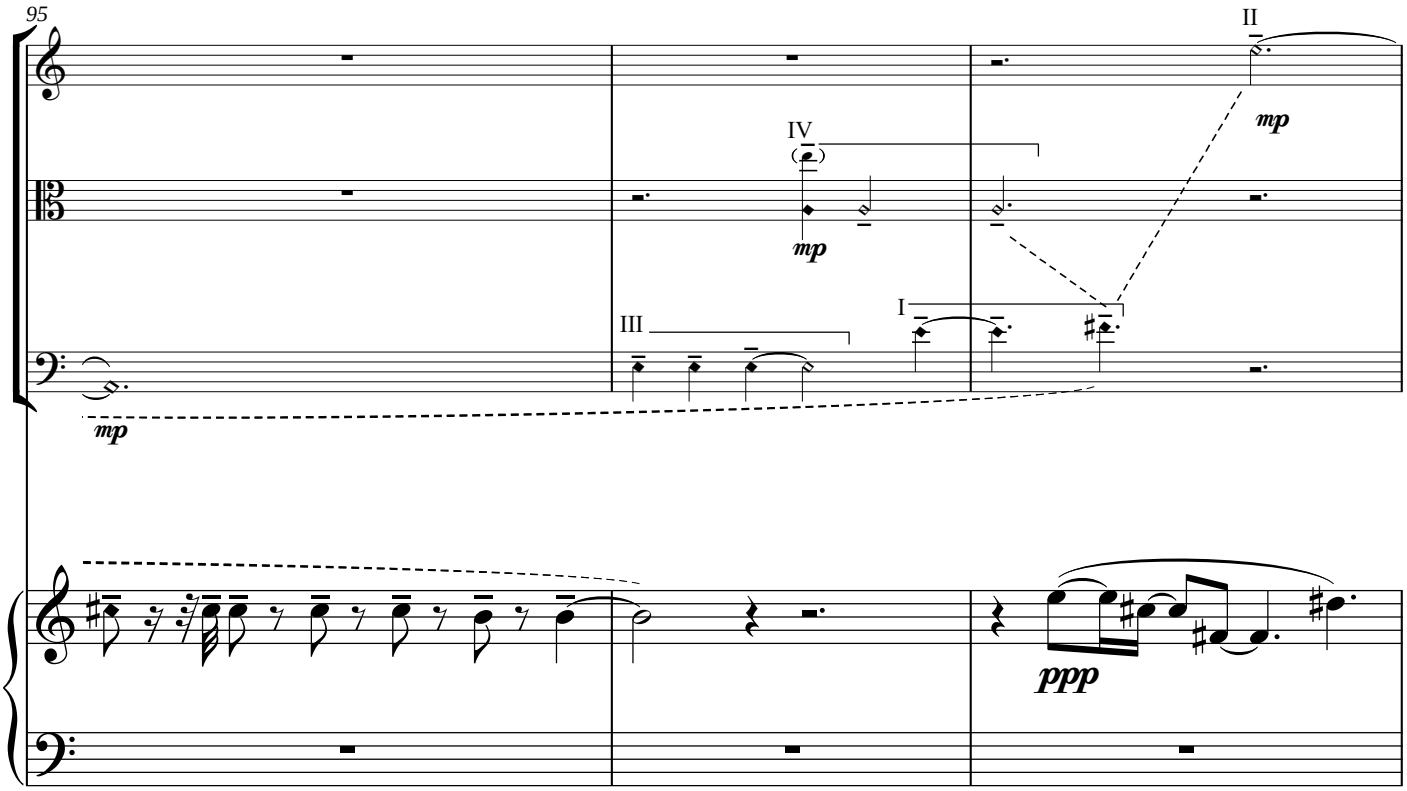

73
G
II
IV
IV
G
pp
mf
mp
mf
p
p

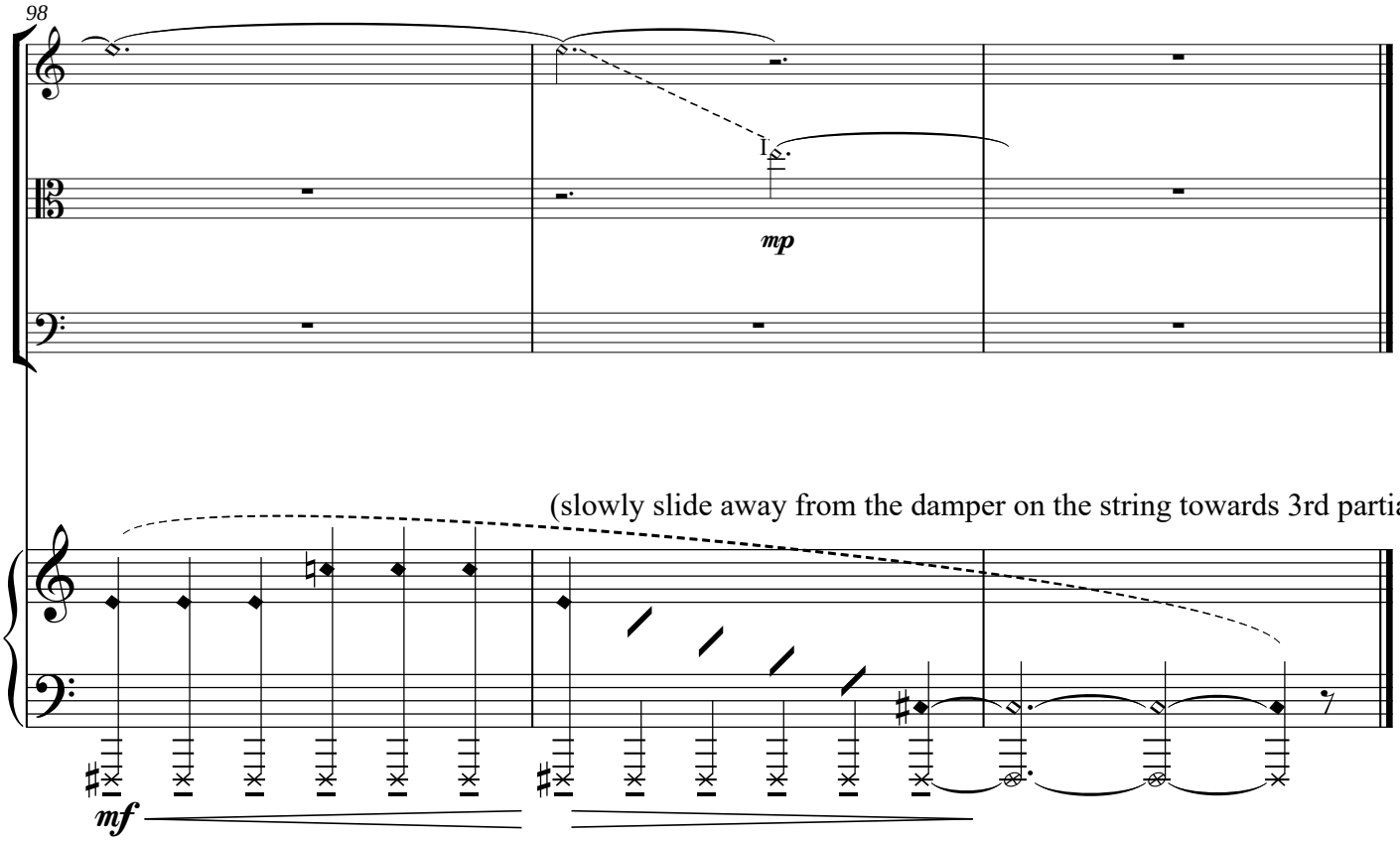

78
H
I
II
III
pp
pp
p
H
mp
mp
p


82
I
p
mf
I
IV
p
mp
mf
IV
III
mf
p
mp
mf
III II
sim.
mp

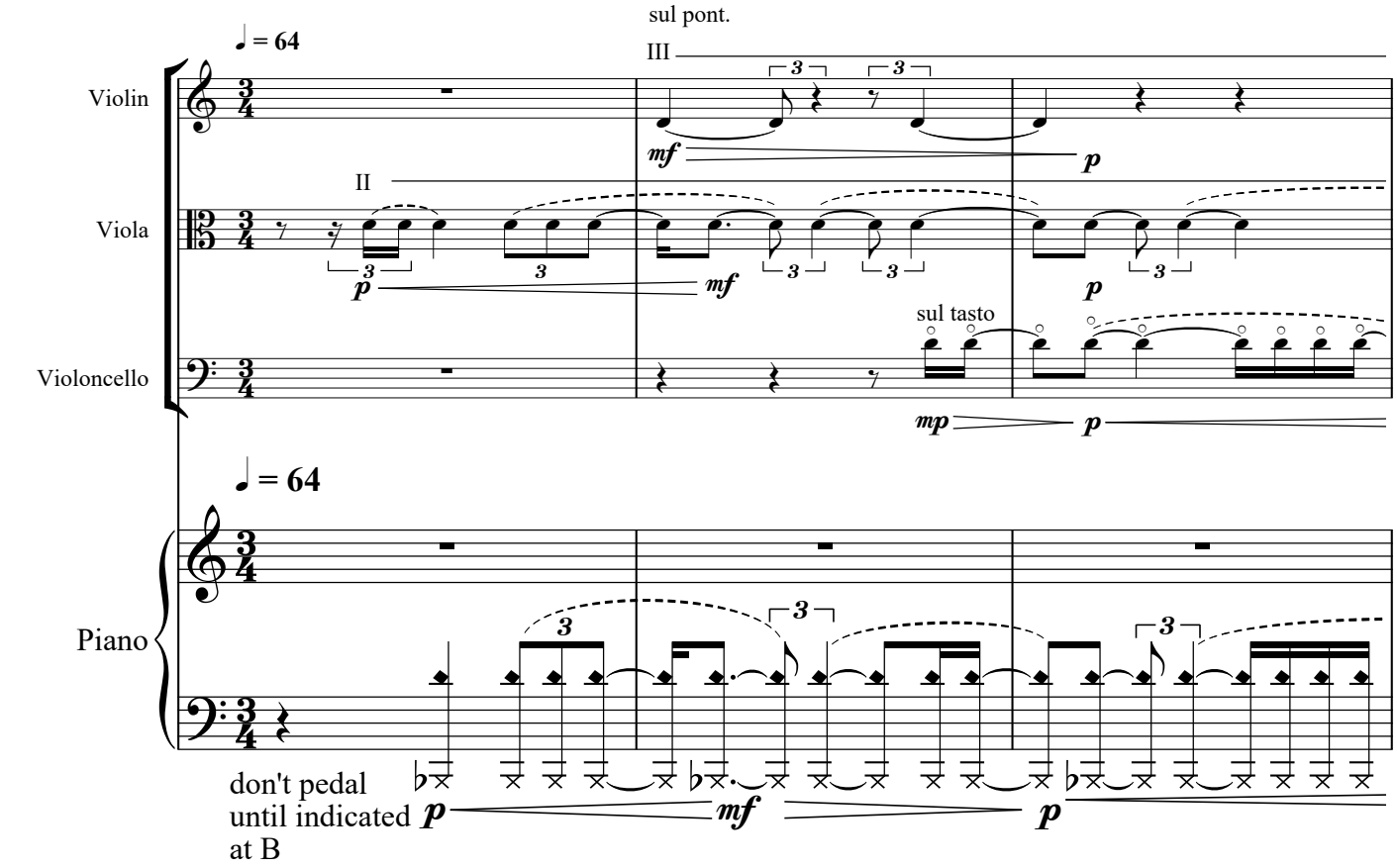

85
II
p
n
I
n
f
mf
II
IV
mf
f

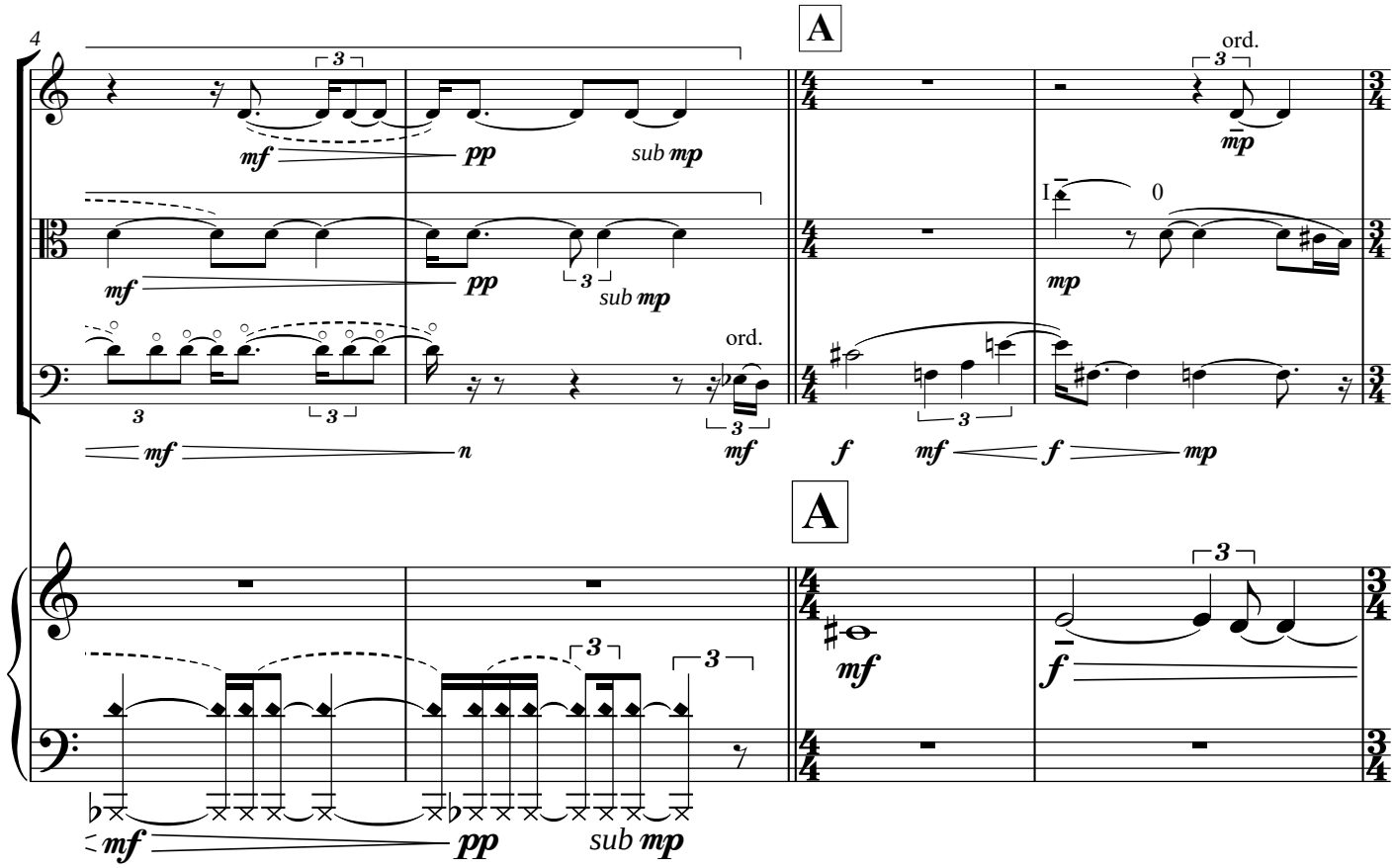

88
I
I,II
mf
n
IV
III
mp
IV
II
mp
(sounding)
touch both nodal points lightly
mp
I
f
sub mp
92
mf
pp
p
III
IV
sub mf
mp

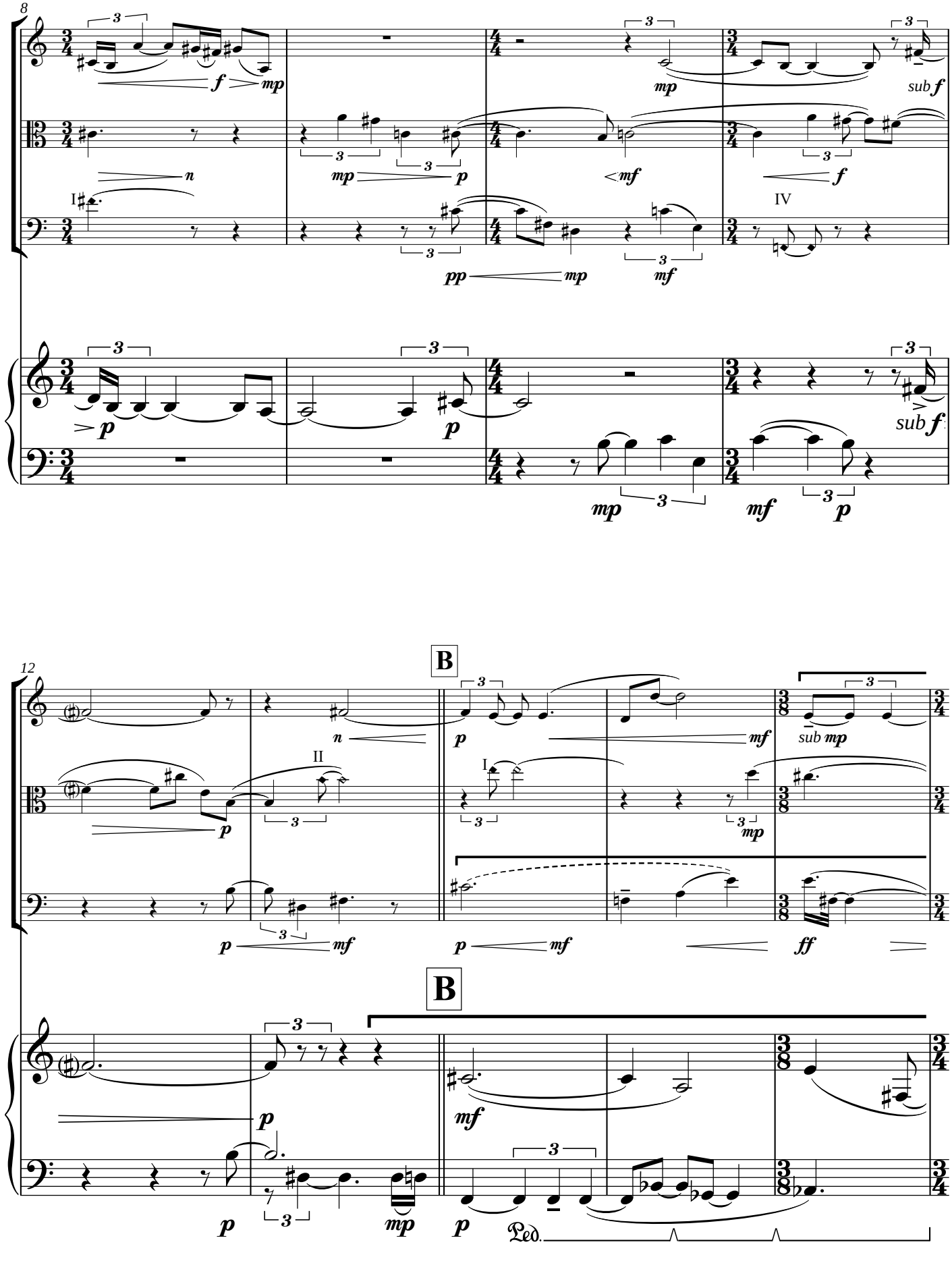

95
II
mp
IV
mp
III
I
mp
ppp

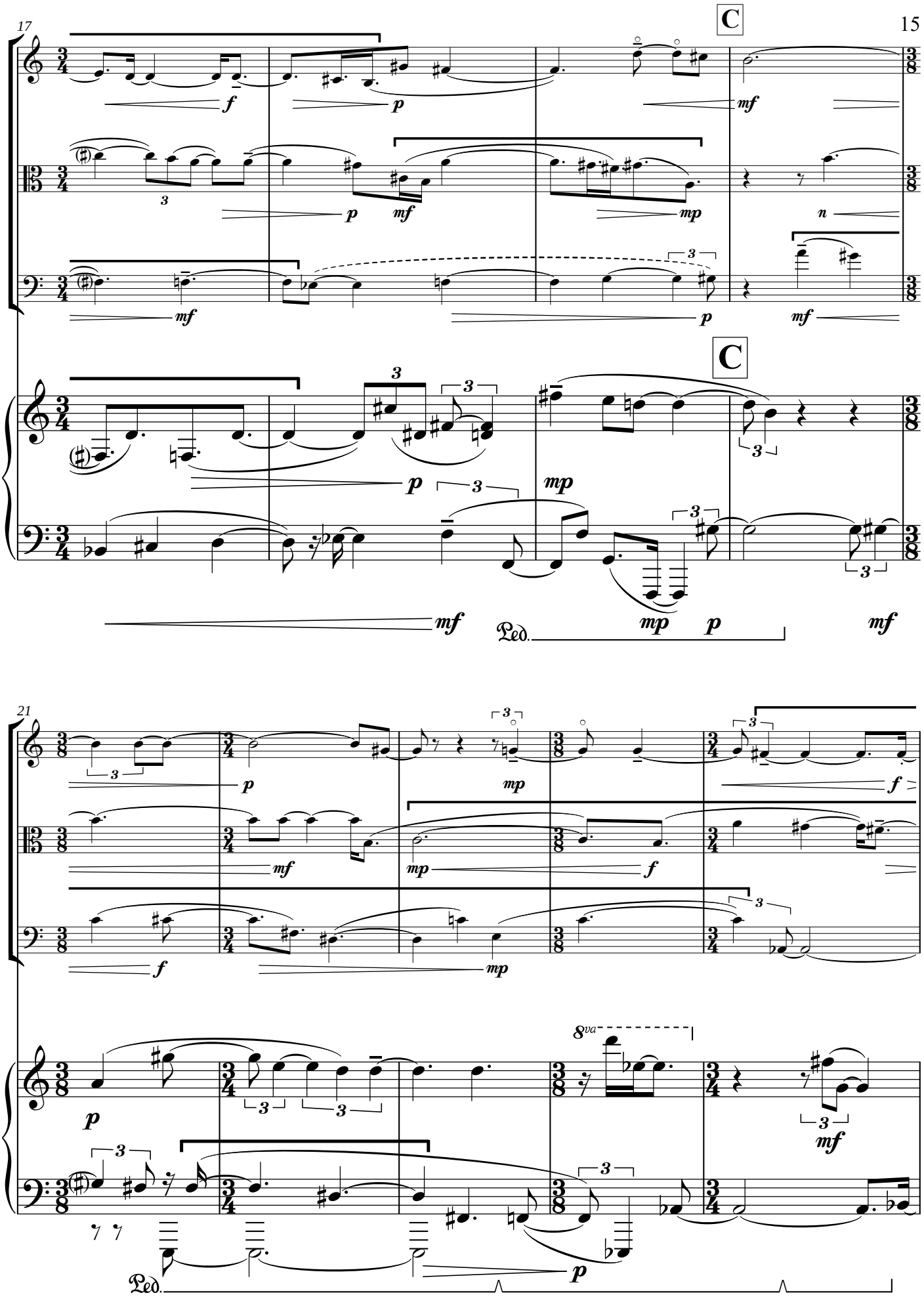

98
I
mp
(slowly slide away from the damper on the string towards 3rd partial)
mf

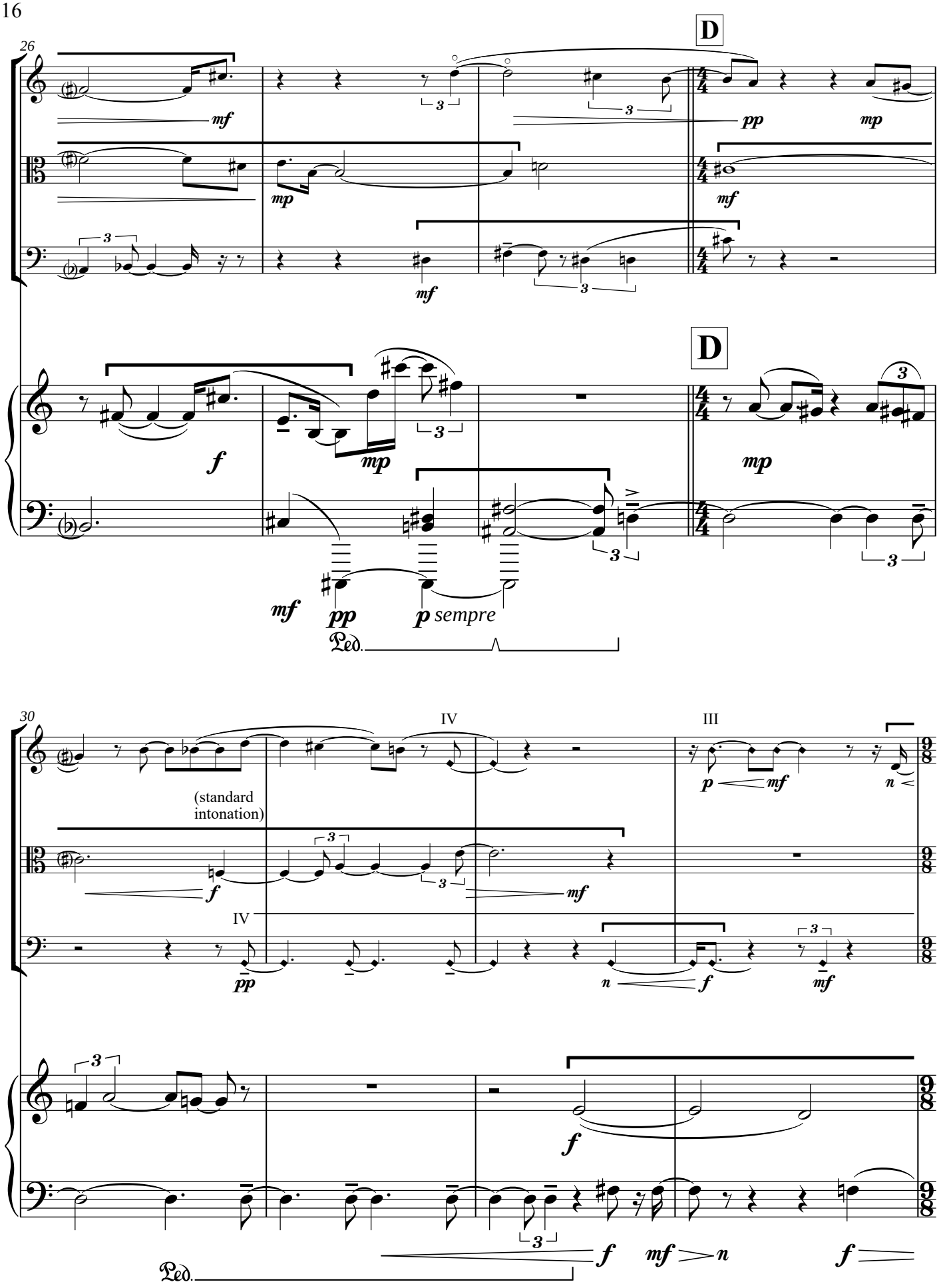
II. Isorhythms

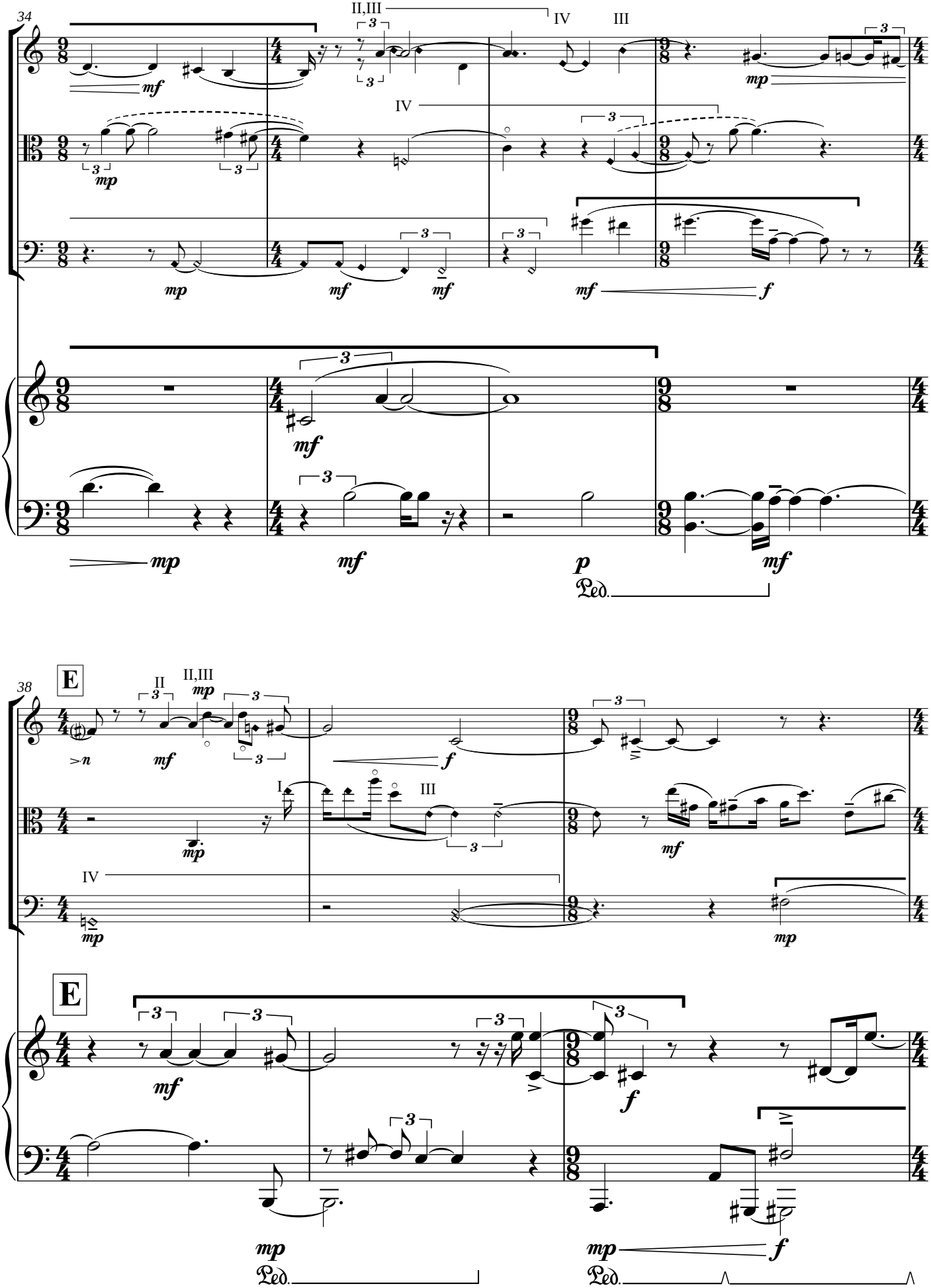


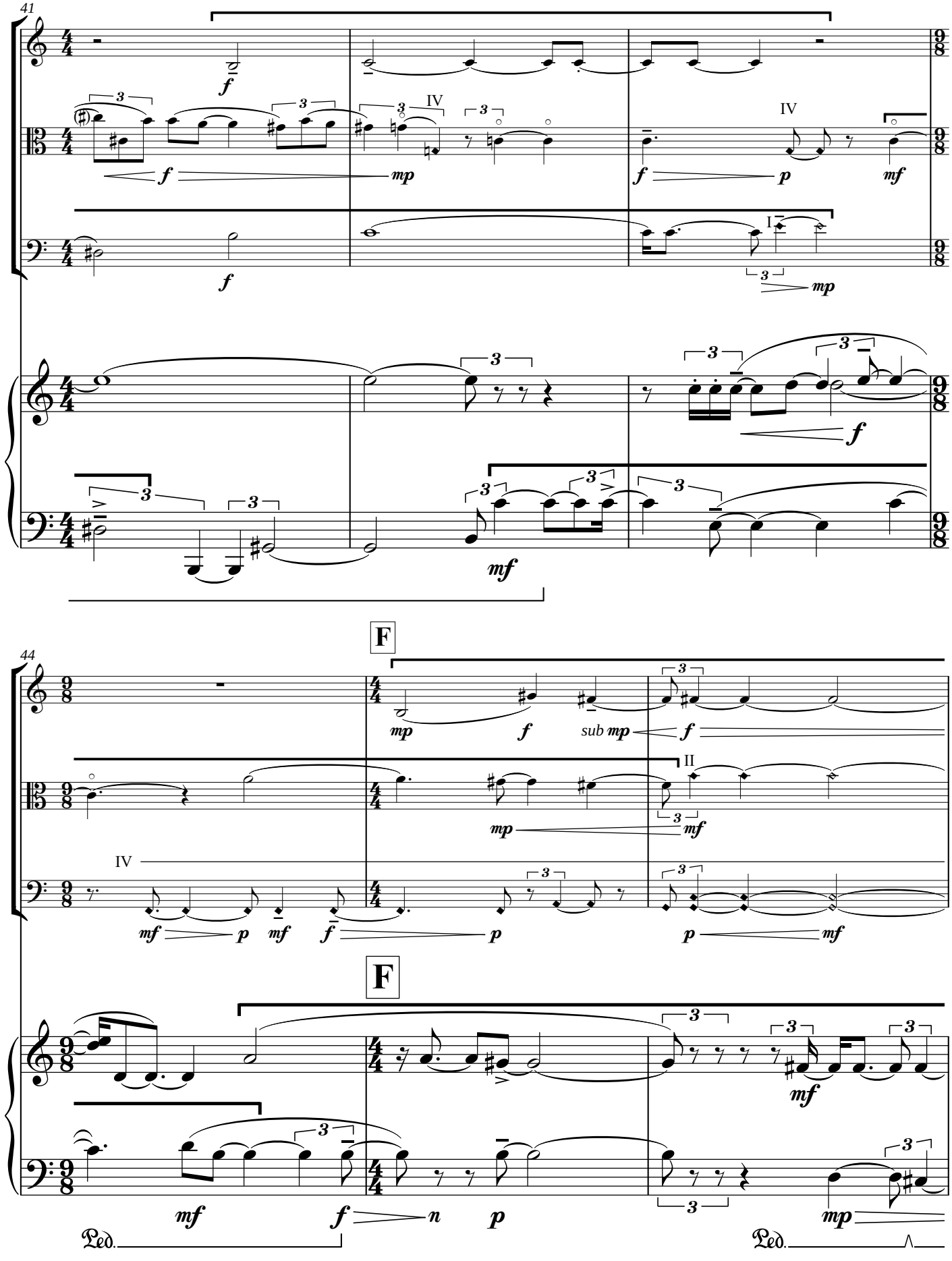


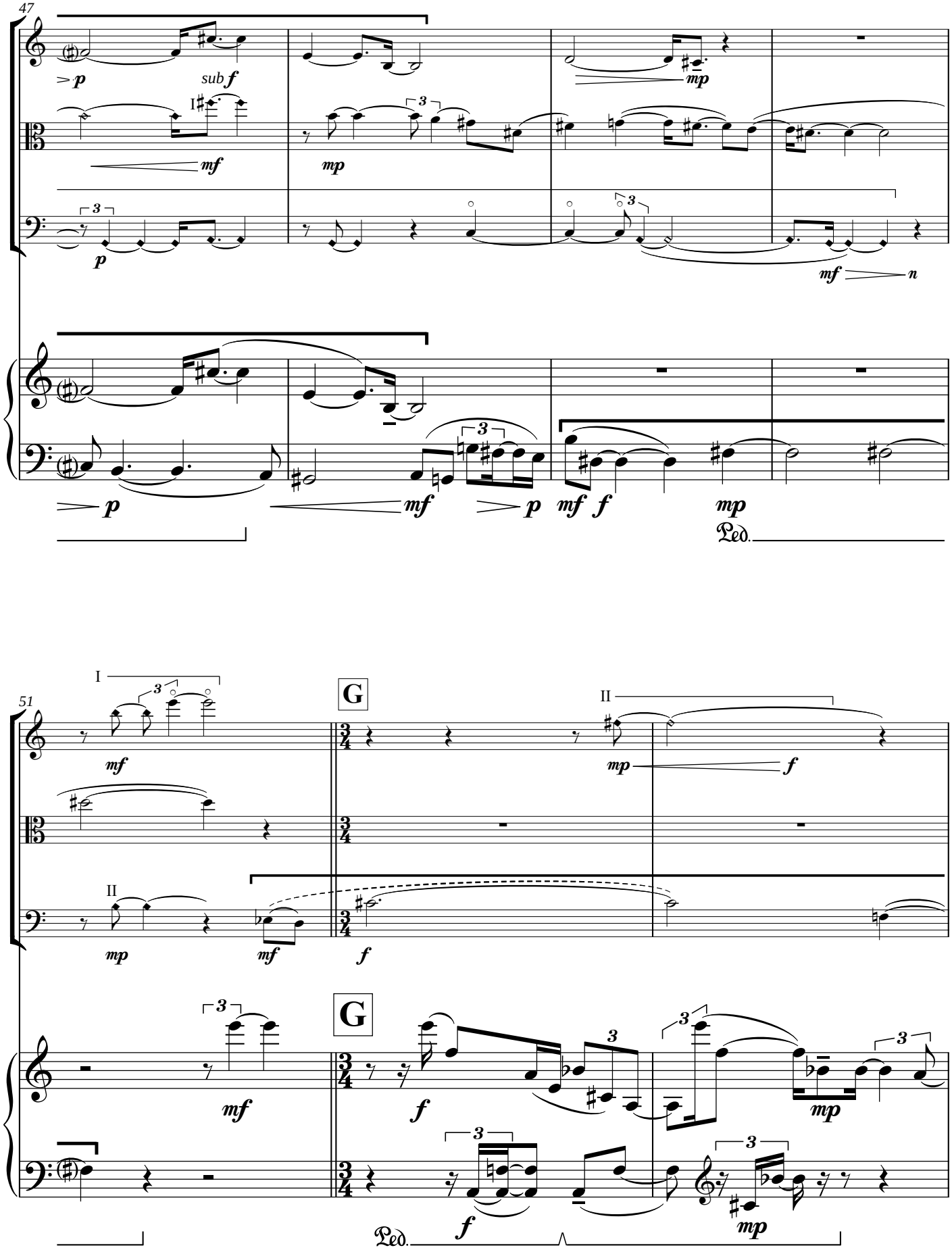

8
12
B
B
Ped.

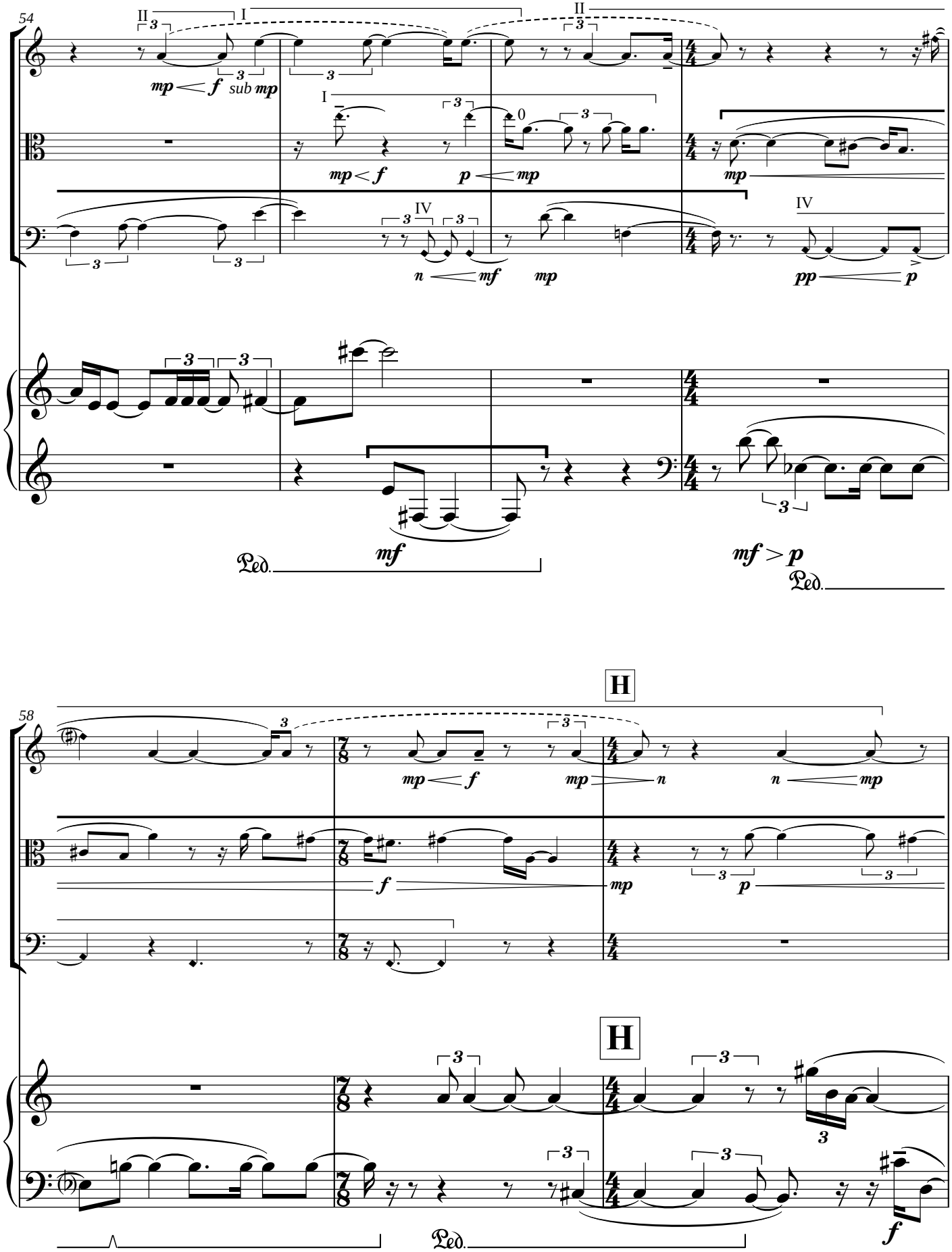

17
C
C
21
8va
Ped.
Ped.

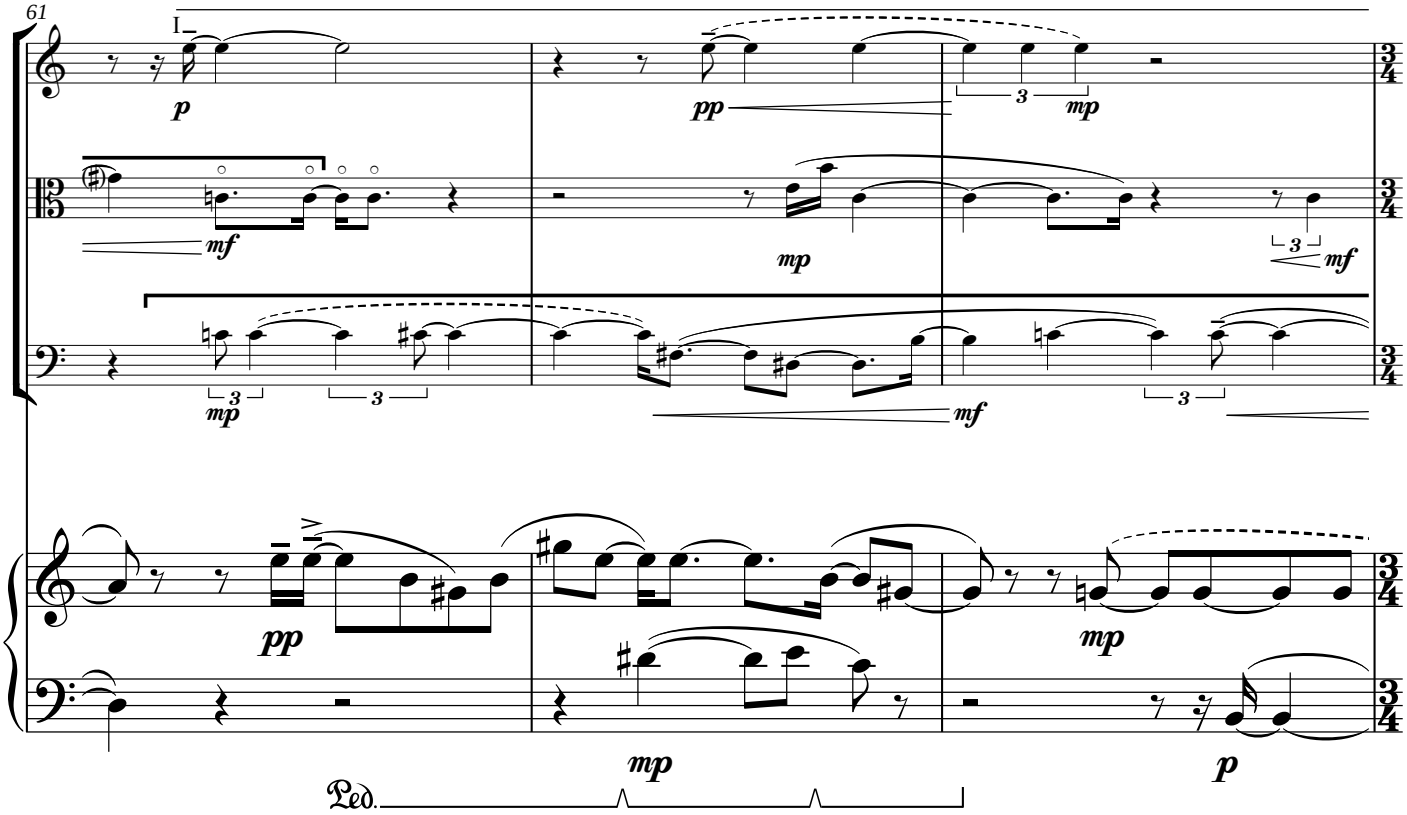

26
D
mf
mp
pp
mp
mf
mf
D
f
mp
mp
mf
pp
p sempre
Ped.
30
IV
III
(standard
intonation)
p
mf
n
f
mf
IV
pp
n
f
mf
f
f
mf
n
f
Ped.

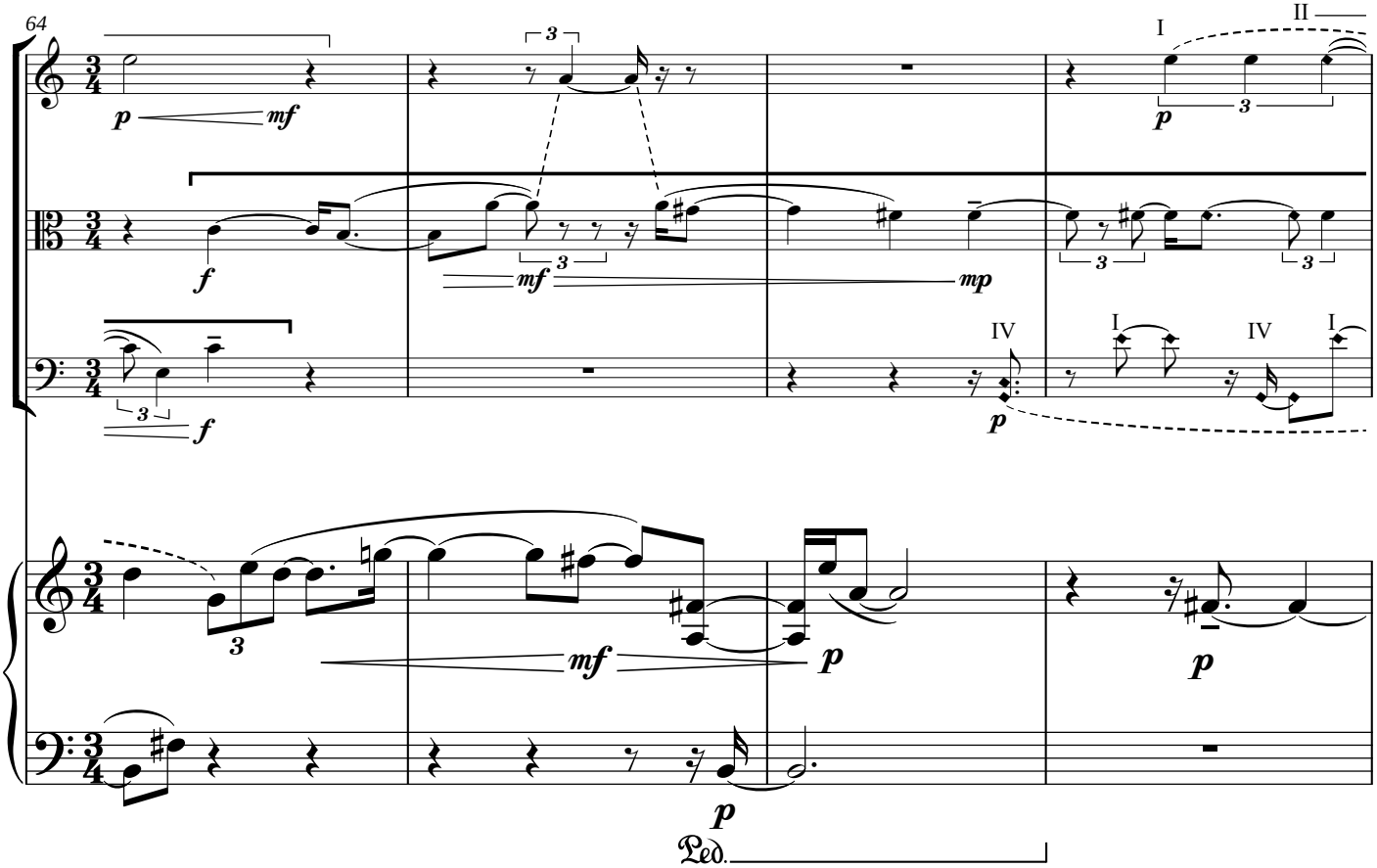

34
II,III
IV
III
IV
mf
mp
mf
mf
mf
f
mf
mp
mf
p
mf
Ped.
38
E
II
II,III
mp
mf
f
I
III
mf
IV
mp
mp
E
mf
f
mp
mp
f
Ped.
Ped.

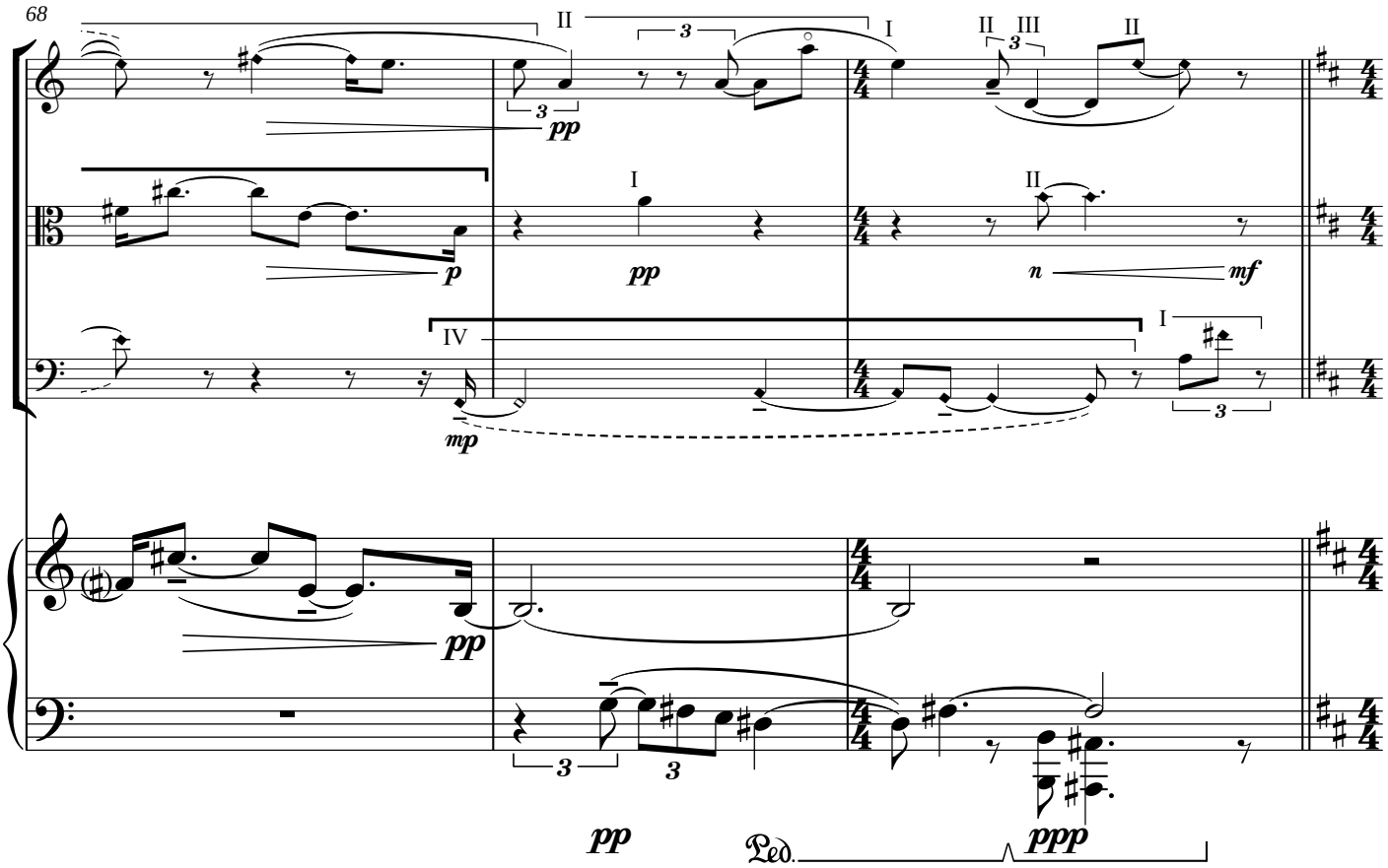

41
44
F
F
IV
II
I
Ped.
Ped.

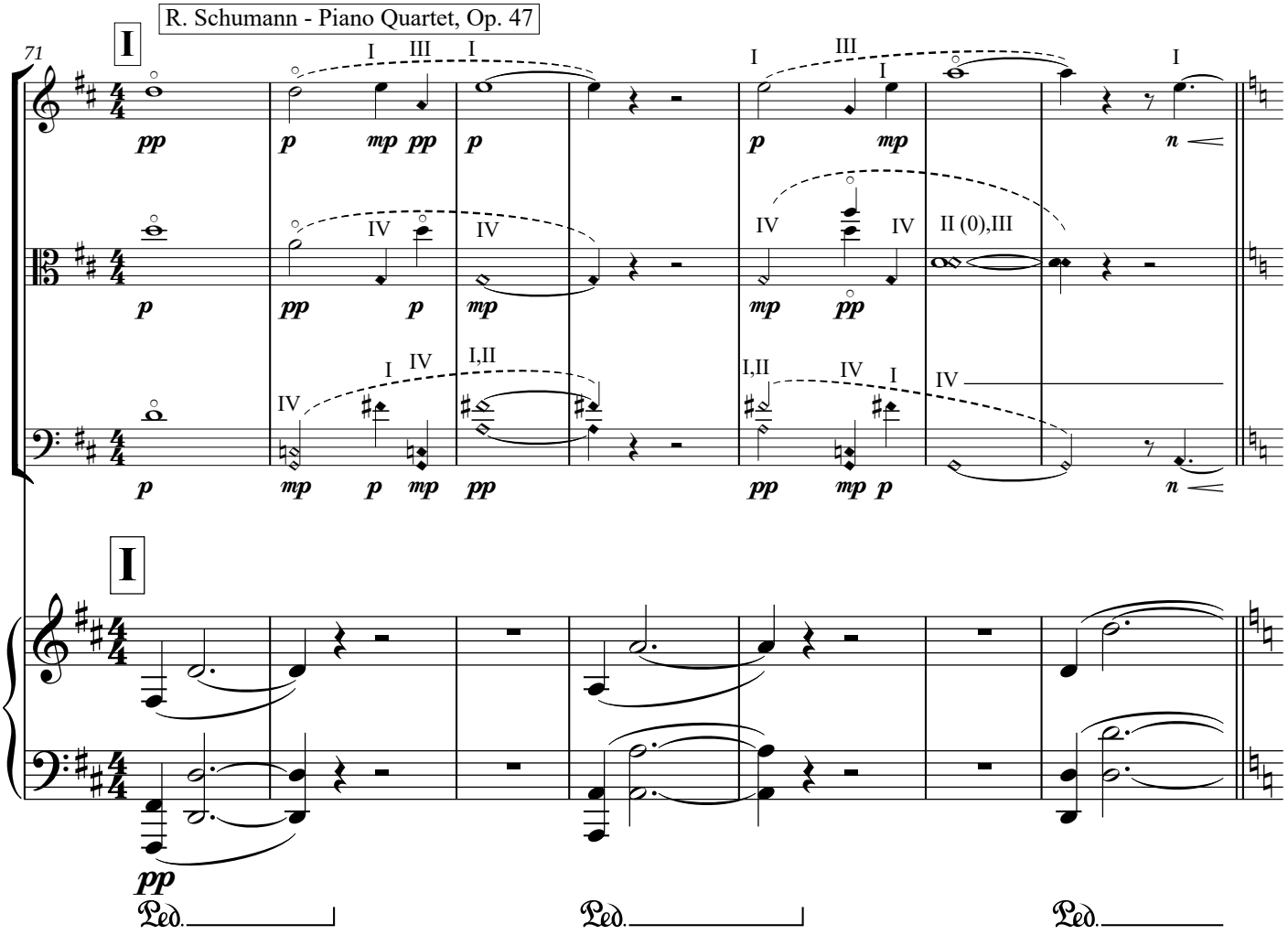

47
sub f
I
mf
mp
p
mf n
p
mf
p
mf f
mp
Ped.
51
I
mf
G
II
mp
f
II
mp
mf
f
G
mf
f
mp
f
mp
Ped.

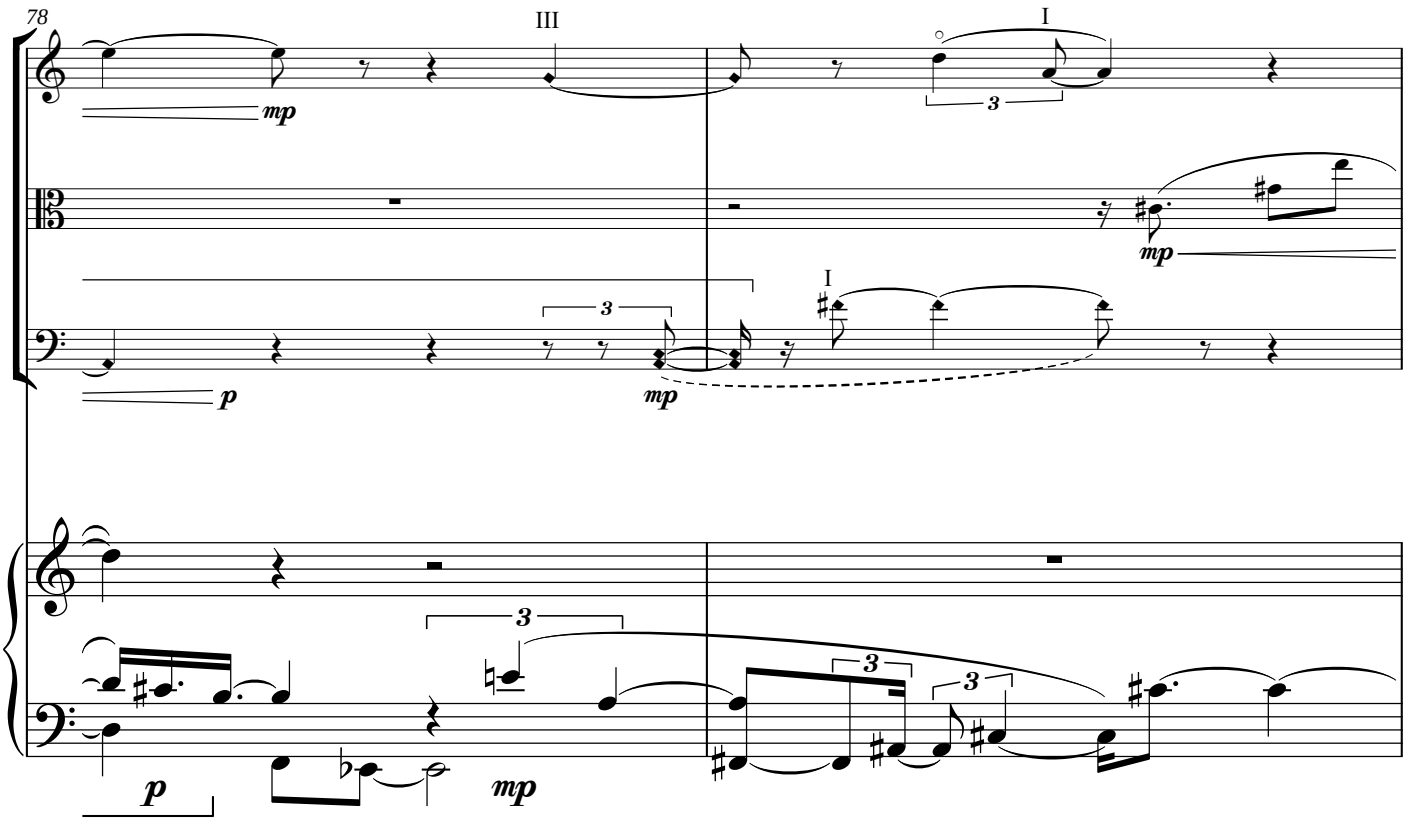

54
II
I
mp
f
sub mp
mp
f
p
mp
mp
IV
n
mf
mp
pp
p
mf
mf > p
Ped.
Ped.
58
H
mp
f
mp
n
n
mp
f
mp
p
H
f
Ped.

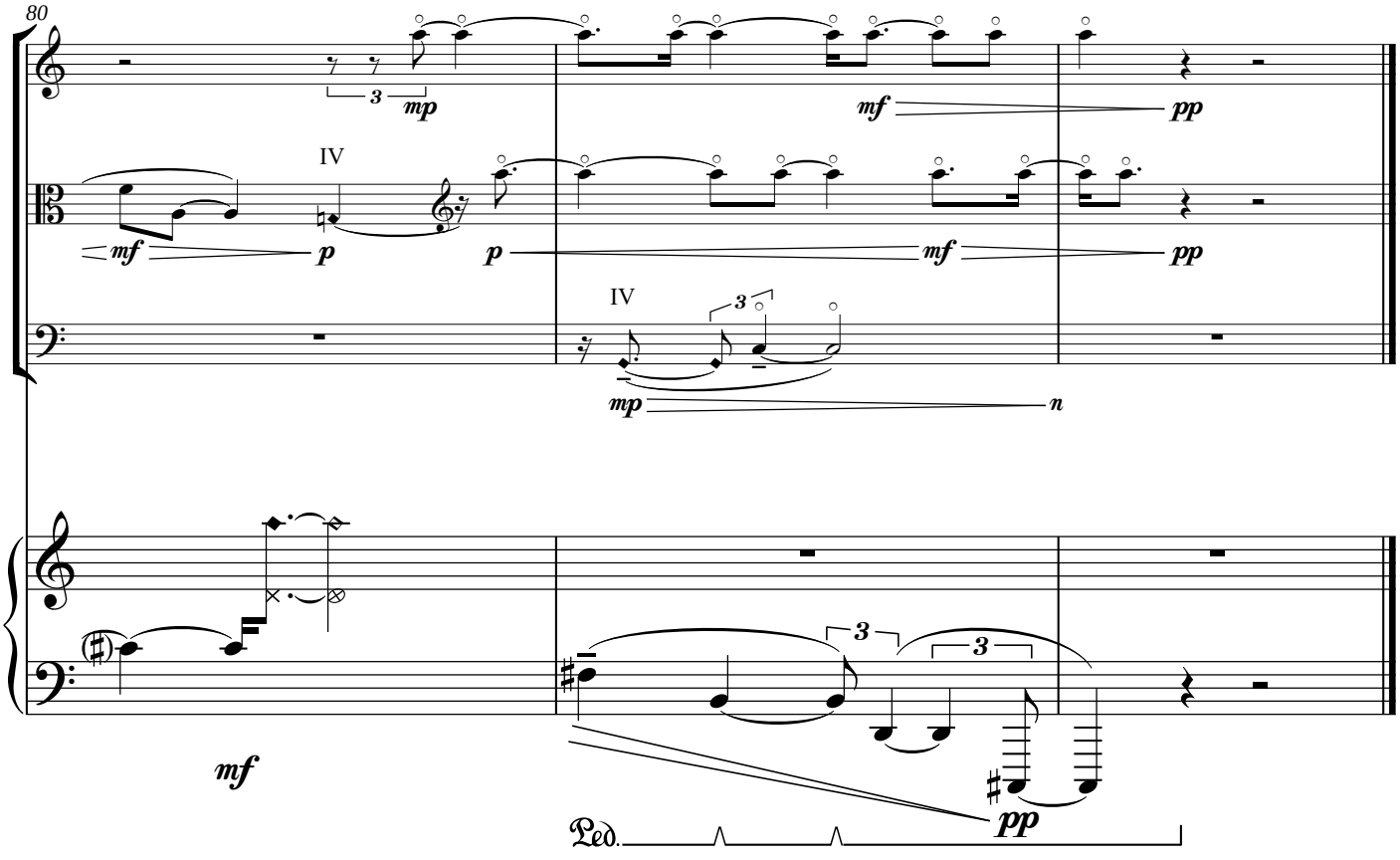

61
I
p
pp
3
mp
mf
mp
3
mf
3
mp
3
mf
pp
mp
mp
p
Ped.


64
3
p
mf
I
II
p
3
f
3
mf
3
mp
3
3
IV
I
IV
I
3
f
p
3
mf
p
p
p
Ped.


68
II
I
II III
II
I
II
IV
I
pp
p
mp
n
mf
ppp
Ped.


71
I
I III I
III
II (0),III
I,II
IV
pp
p
mp
n
Ped.


78
III
I
mp
3
I
p
mp
p
mp


80
mp
mf
pp
IV
mf
p
p
mf
pp
IV
mp
n
mf
pp
Ped.