Athanasia Kontou
2021

CANCELLED

for string quartet

NOTE ON THE MUSIC

A bit over a year ago, on 12th March 2020, I had the pleasure of listening to the Ligeti Quartet live. That was in a gig at the SoundsLikeTHIS festival in Leeds, where a premiere of a vocal work of mine was in a set which was headlining the quartet's performance. It was just a few days before the first national lockdown, when everything in the UK was seemingly still "normal", but some events had been cancelled as the pandemic's shadow was growing. With this threat hovering in the air (quite literally!), before the ensemble's amazing performance, Patrick, (or maybe it was Richard, I am not sure) jokingly said "Welcome to the last concert ever!"

This joke made an impression on me, and soon proved to be surprisingly prophetic, as the very next day I fell ill with COVID-19. Whilst I was in isolation, we went into lockdown and the rest is history. So, this concert in Leeds was indeed the last concert I went to in the pre-pandemic world, and for this reason I remember it very fondly. What has followed, none of us artists, I think, is fond of; cancellation upon cancellation, postponements until further notice, empty diaries, financial uncertainty...

This personal anecdote in combination with the frustrating situation gave me the idea for this piece, written especially the Ligeti Quartet's WORKOUT! scheme. CANCELLED is a set of five miniatures about cancellation, and how it can be translated into music.

In each one of the miniatures, the concept of cancellation is dealt with in different ways. In the first introductory movement, cancellation presents itself in the sound, but also in the notation, with the sweeping gestures across the full range of the ensemble forming X shapes in the score. Throughout the second movement, the viola player moves their bow diagonally from left to right and vice versa, while playing soft, non-pitch material. This results into crosses being formed visually this time. The third movement is an Aria gone wrong, cancelled out by its own accompaniment. The pointilistic fourth movement slowly loses its energy and dies away. In the last movement, an insistent machine-like repetition gets succeeded by a detuned jazz tune.

CANCELLED was composed between January-March 2021, in Kozani, Greece.

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PERFORMANCE NOTES

Abbreviations

vib = vibrato
sp = sul ponticello
st = sul tasto
ord = ordinary bow position

All other instructions can be found in the score.

If you have any questions, please contact me at athanasiakontou95@gmail.com.

DURATION

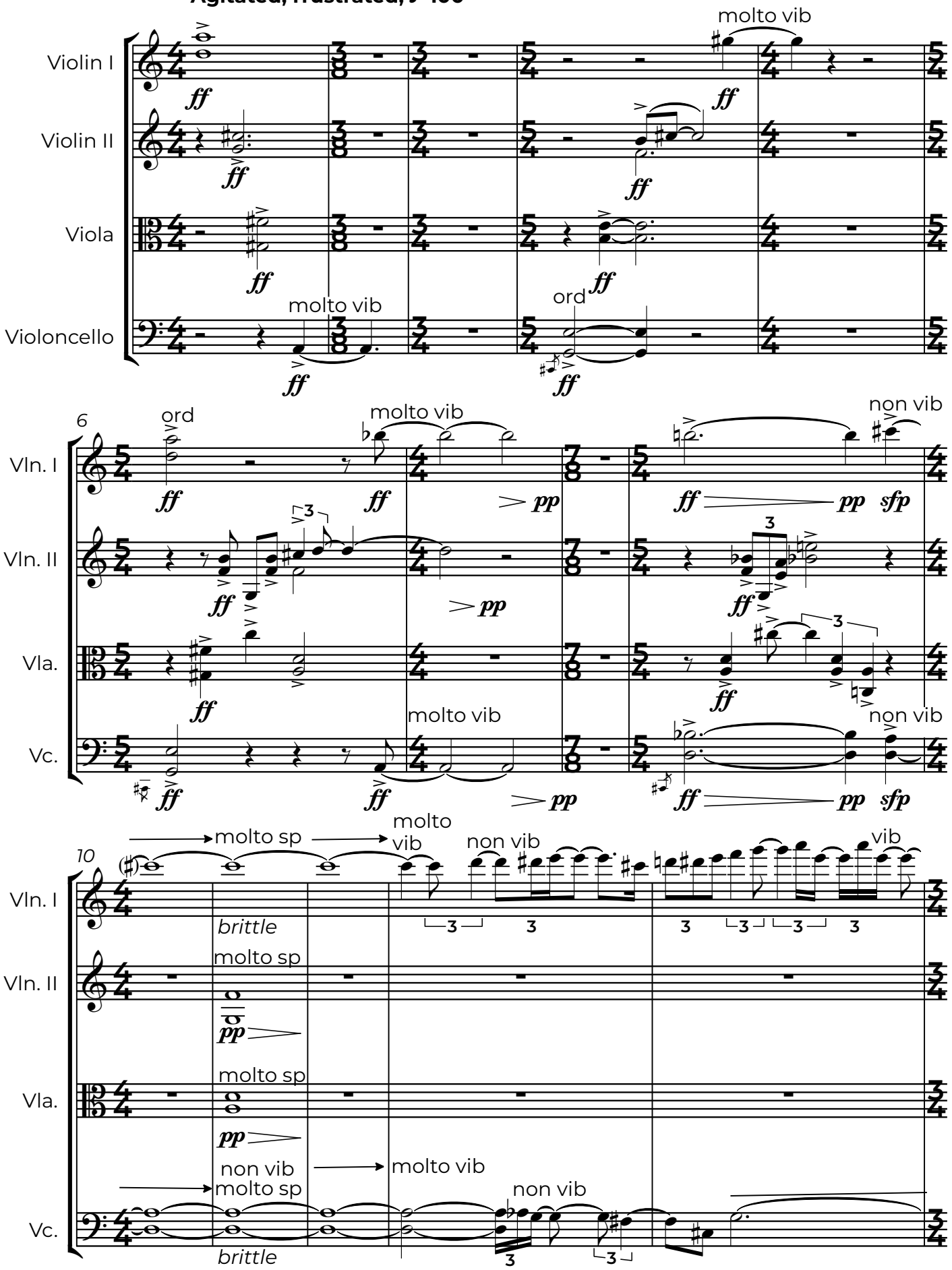
ca. 6'

CANCELLED

for the Ligeti Quartet

Athanasia Kontou

Agitated, frustrated, ♩=100



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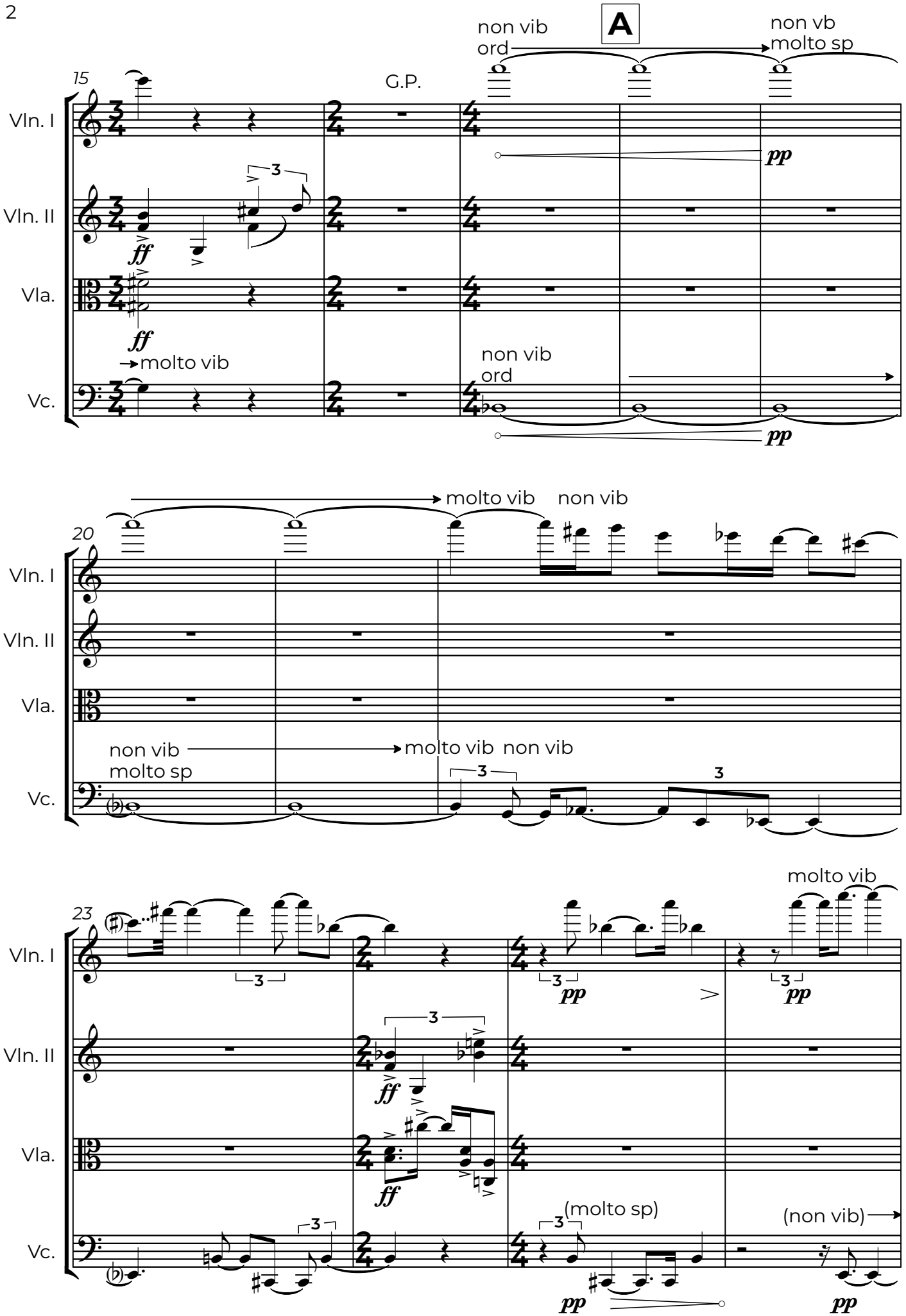

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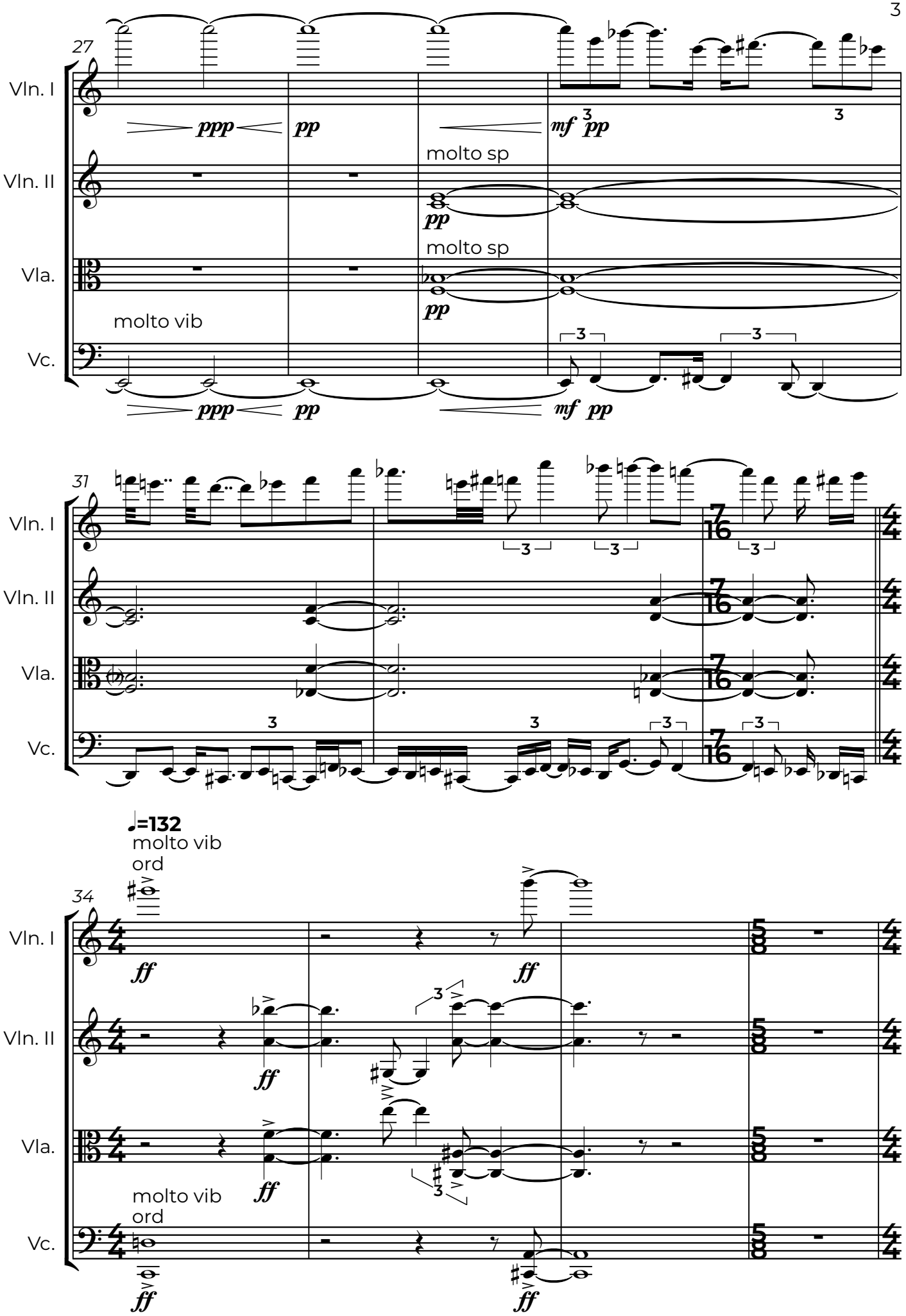

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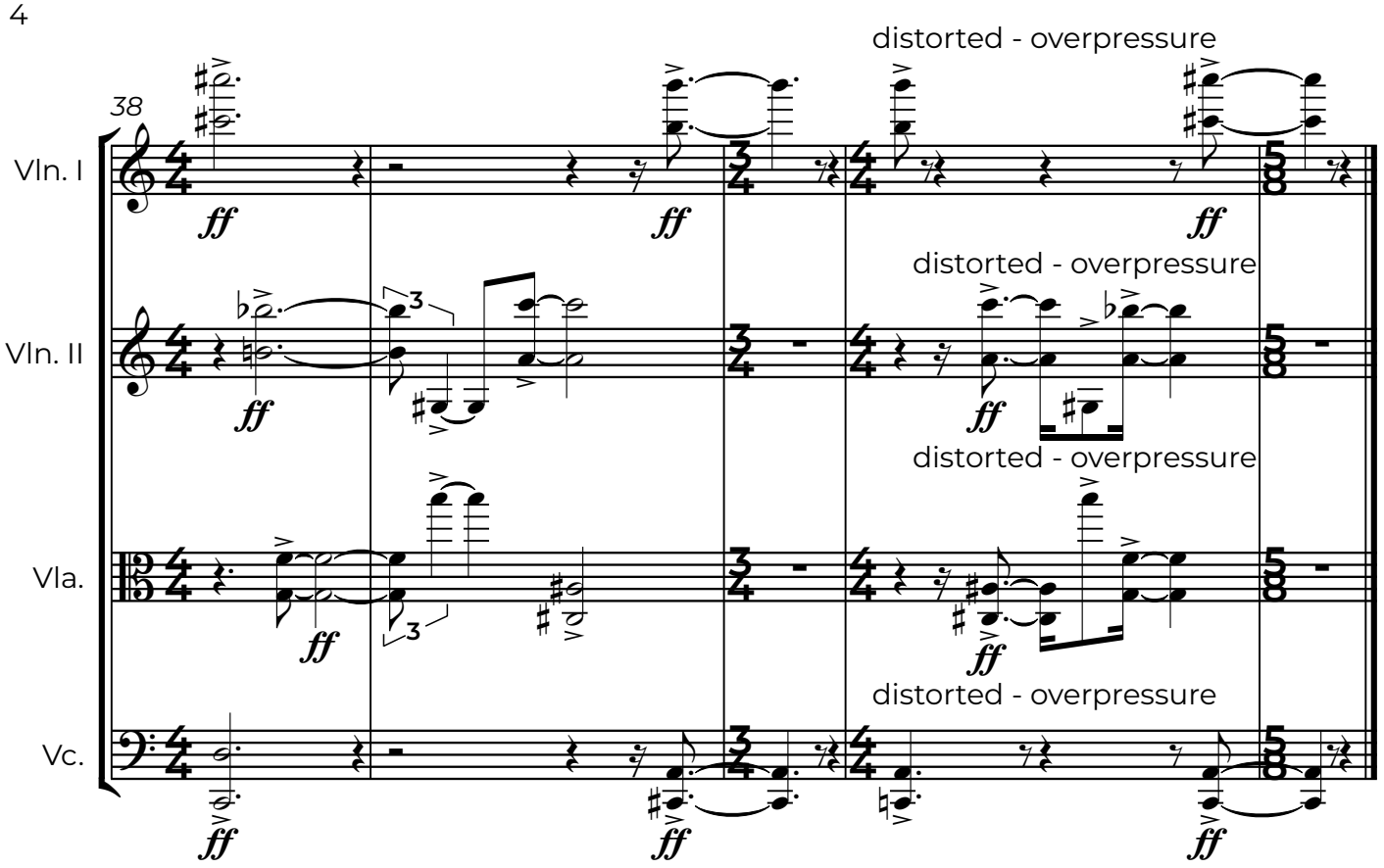

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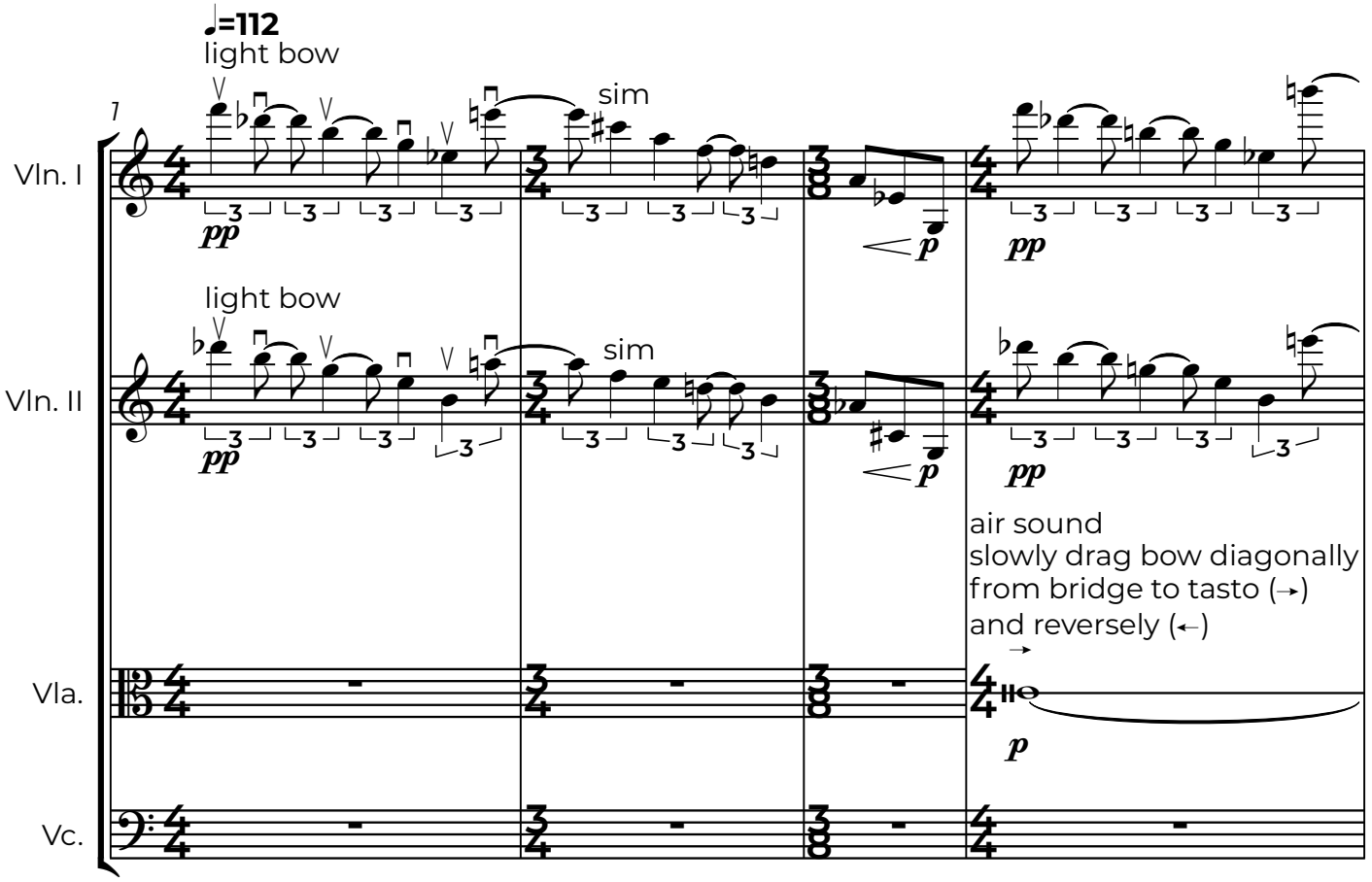

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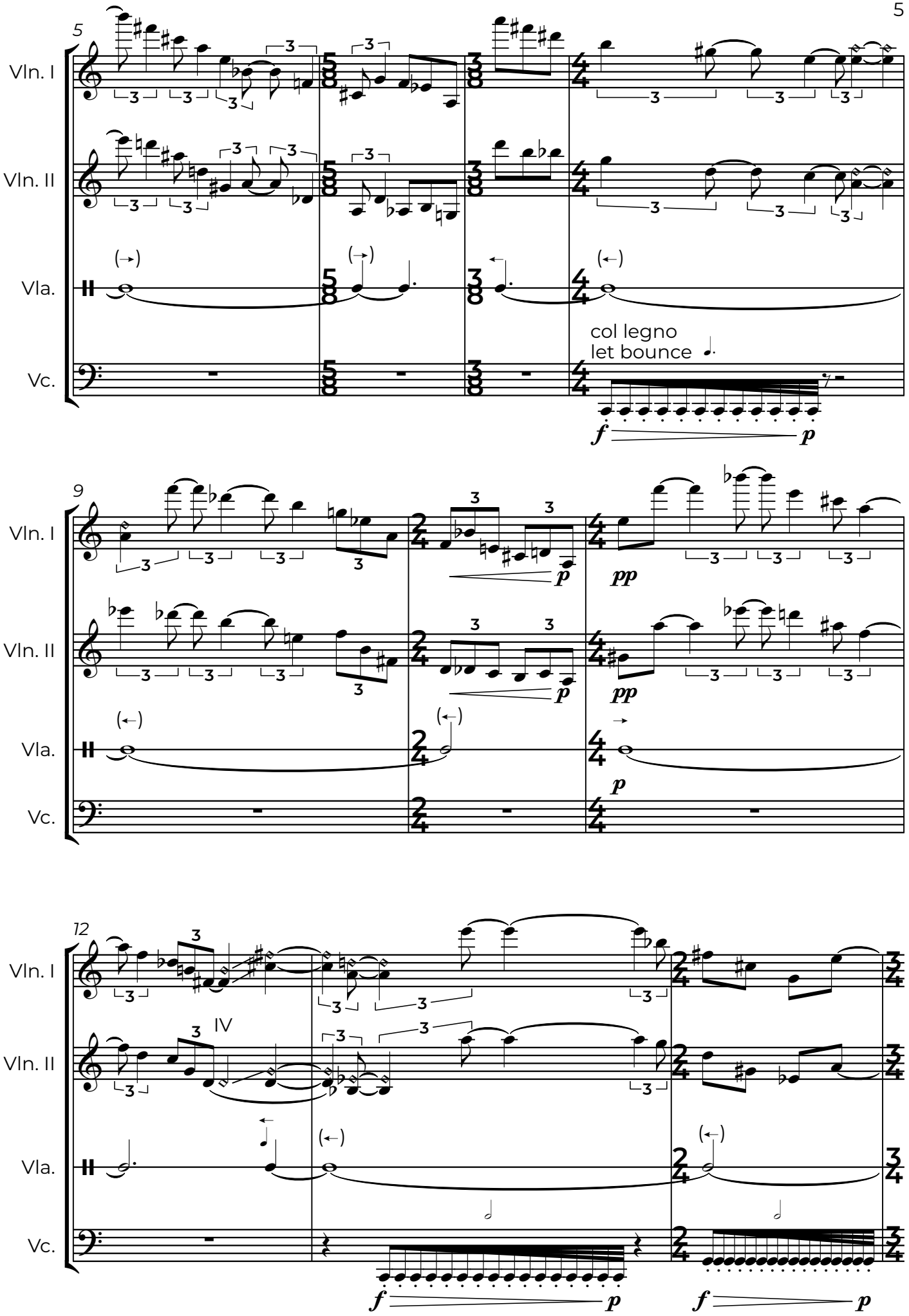

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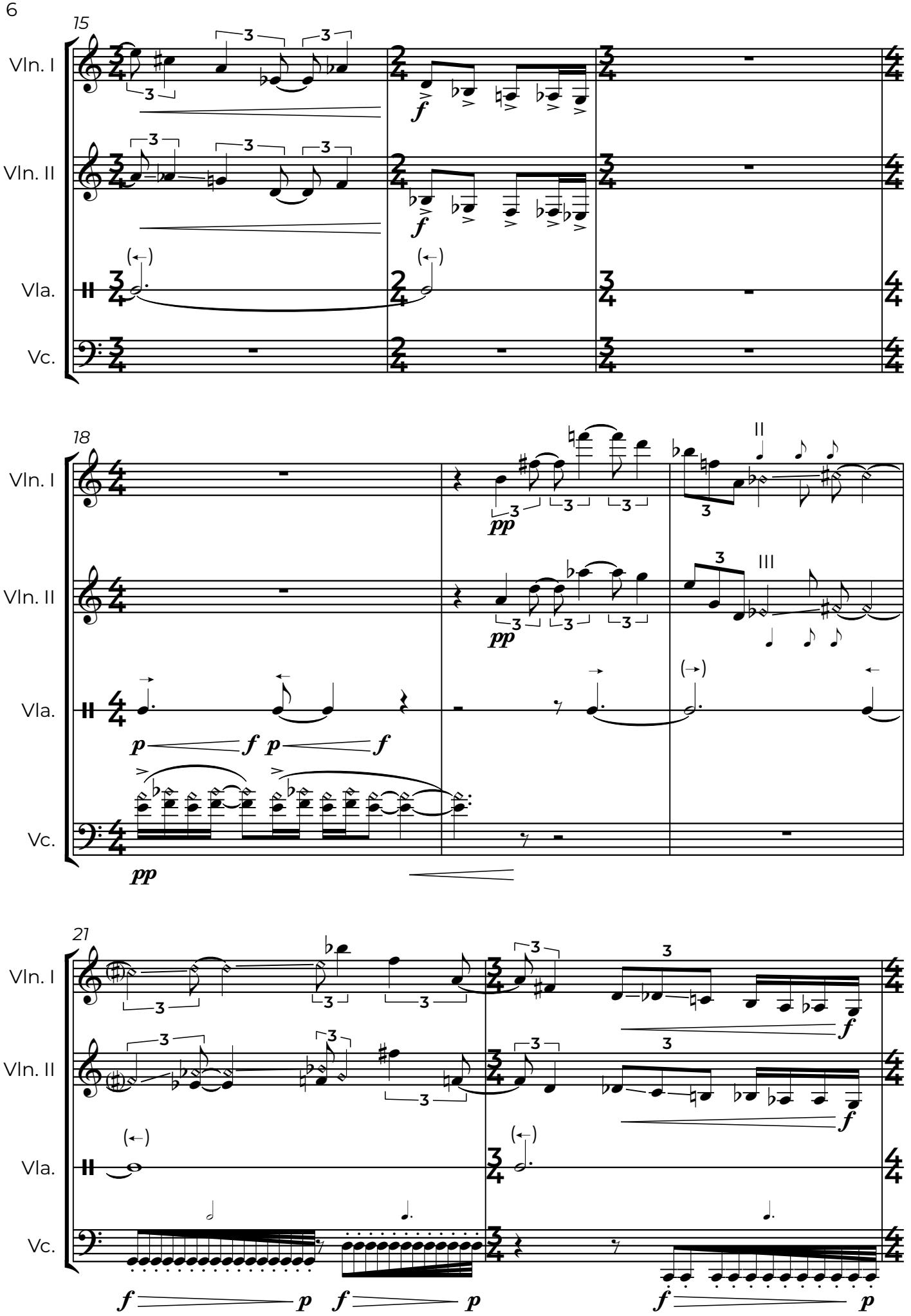

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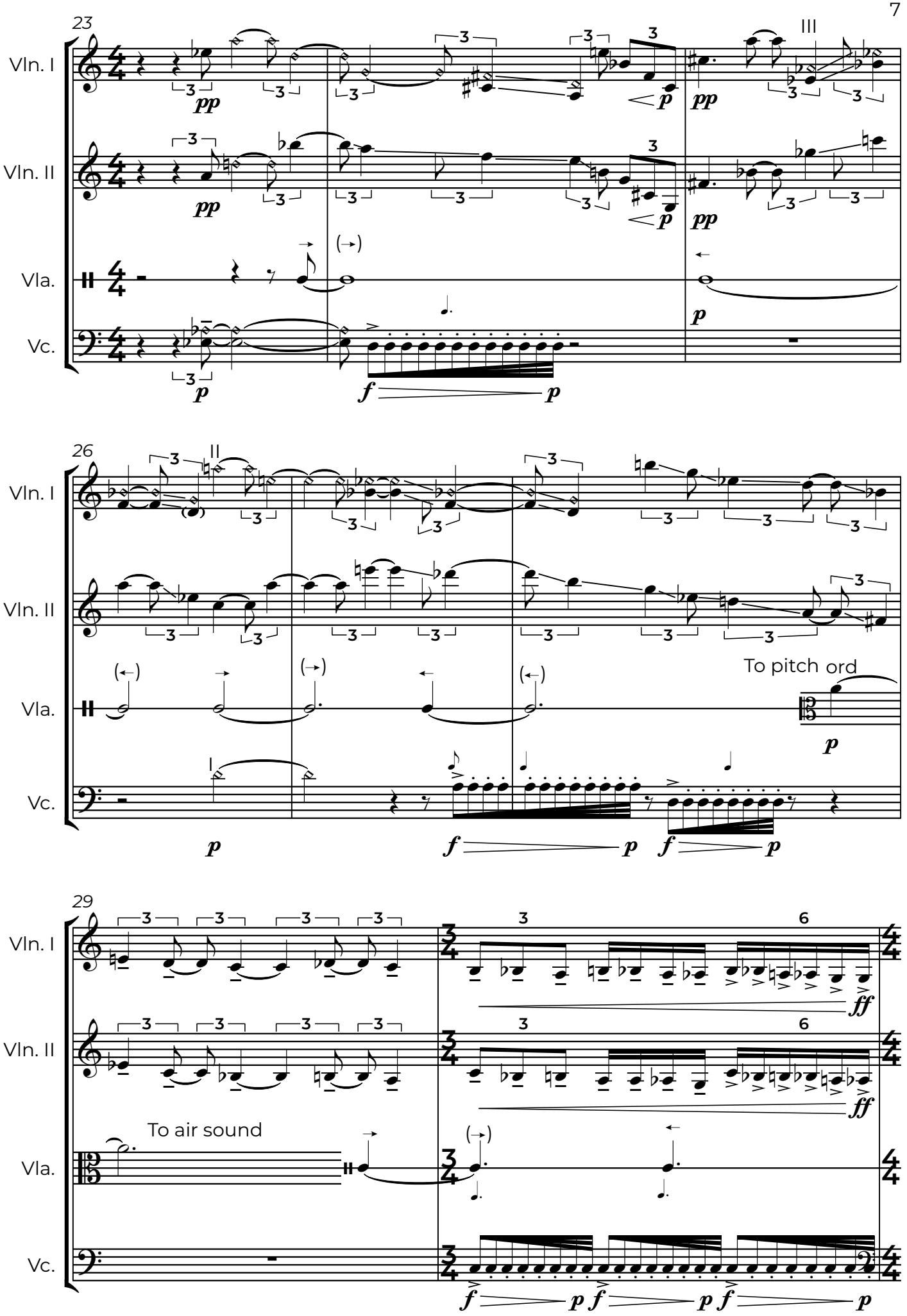

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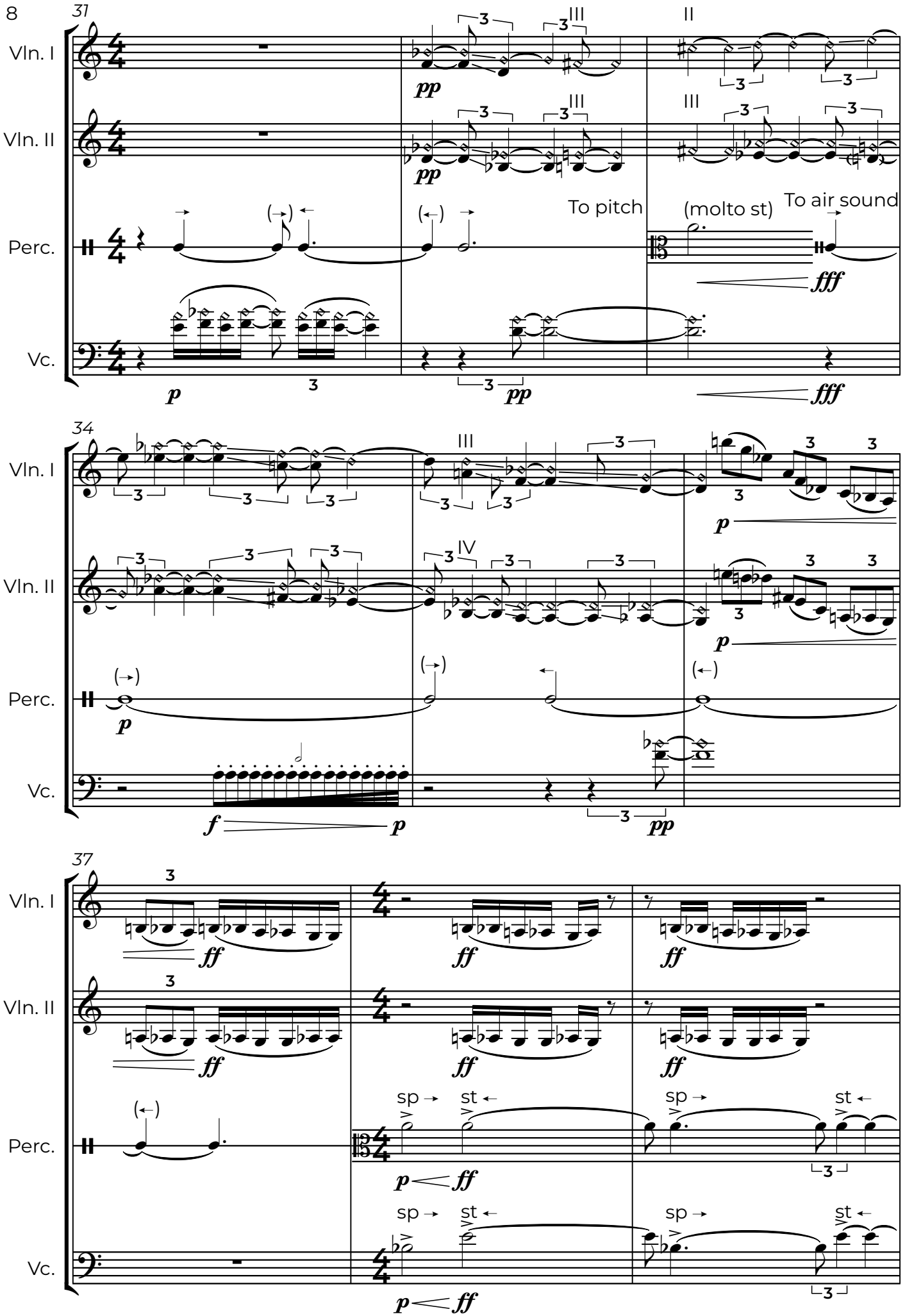

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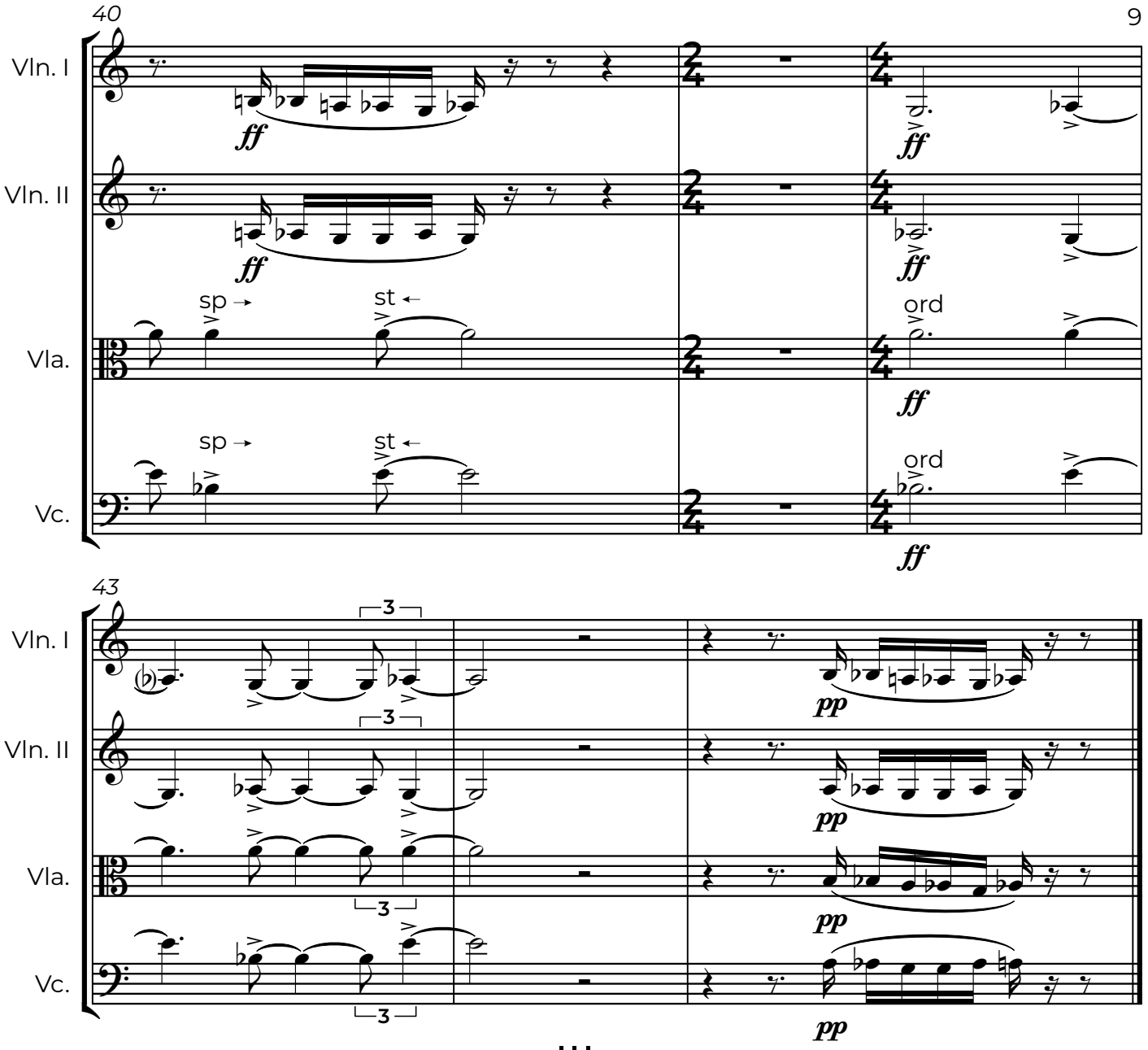

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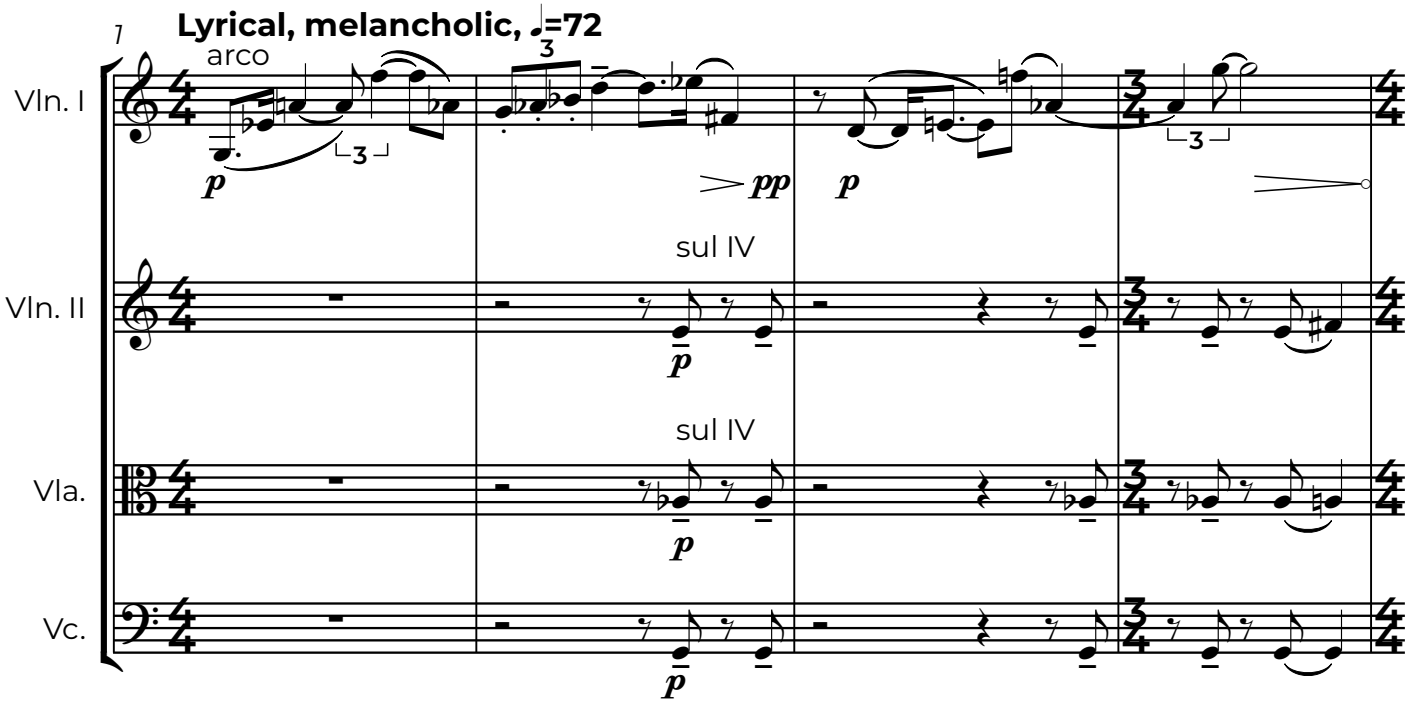

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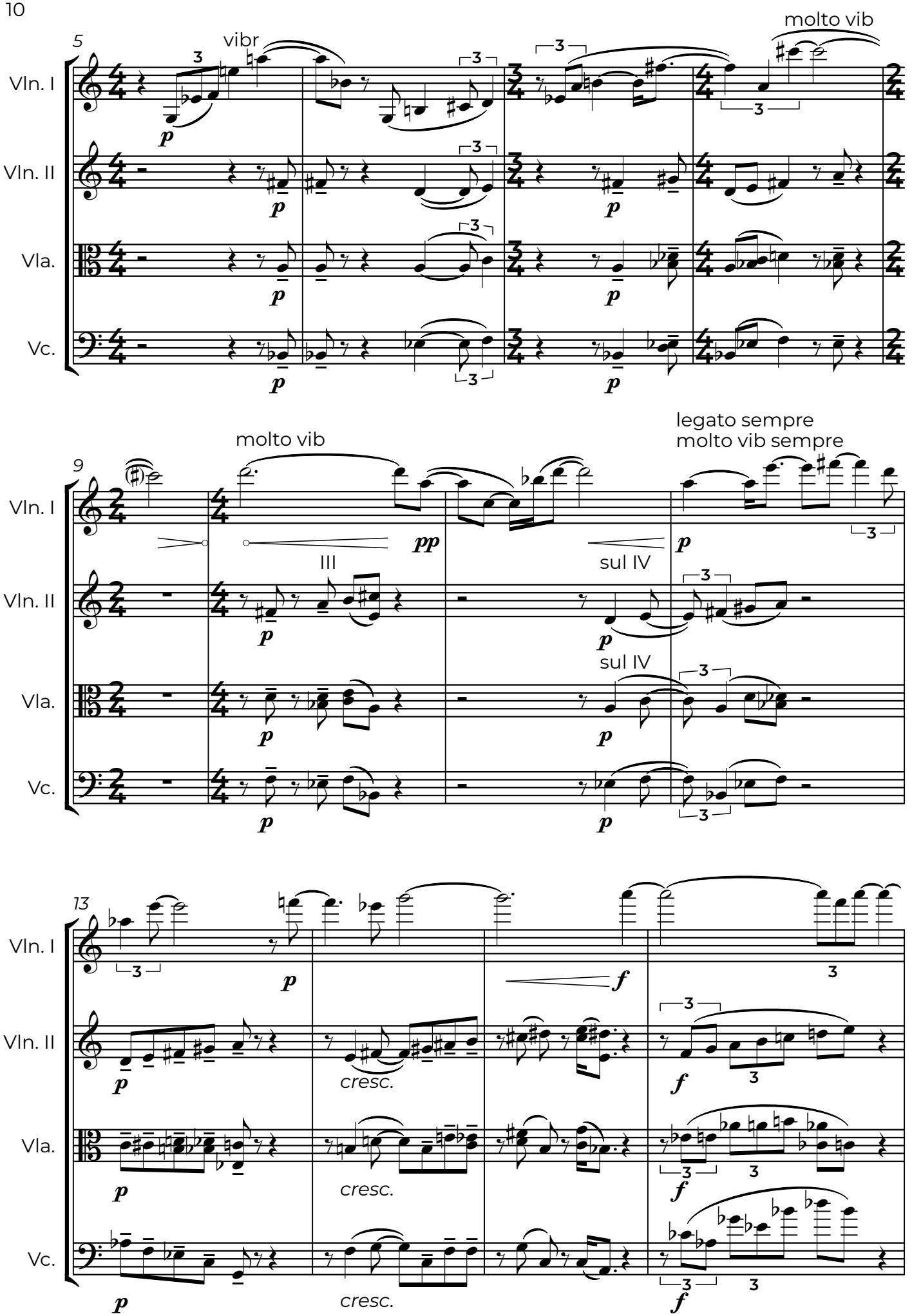

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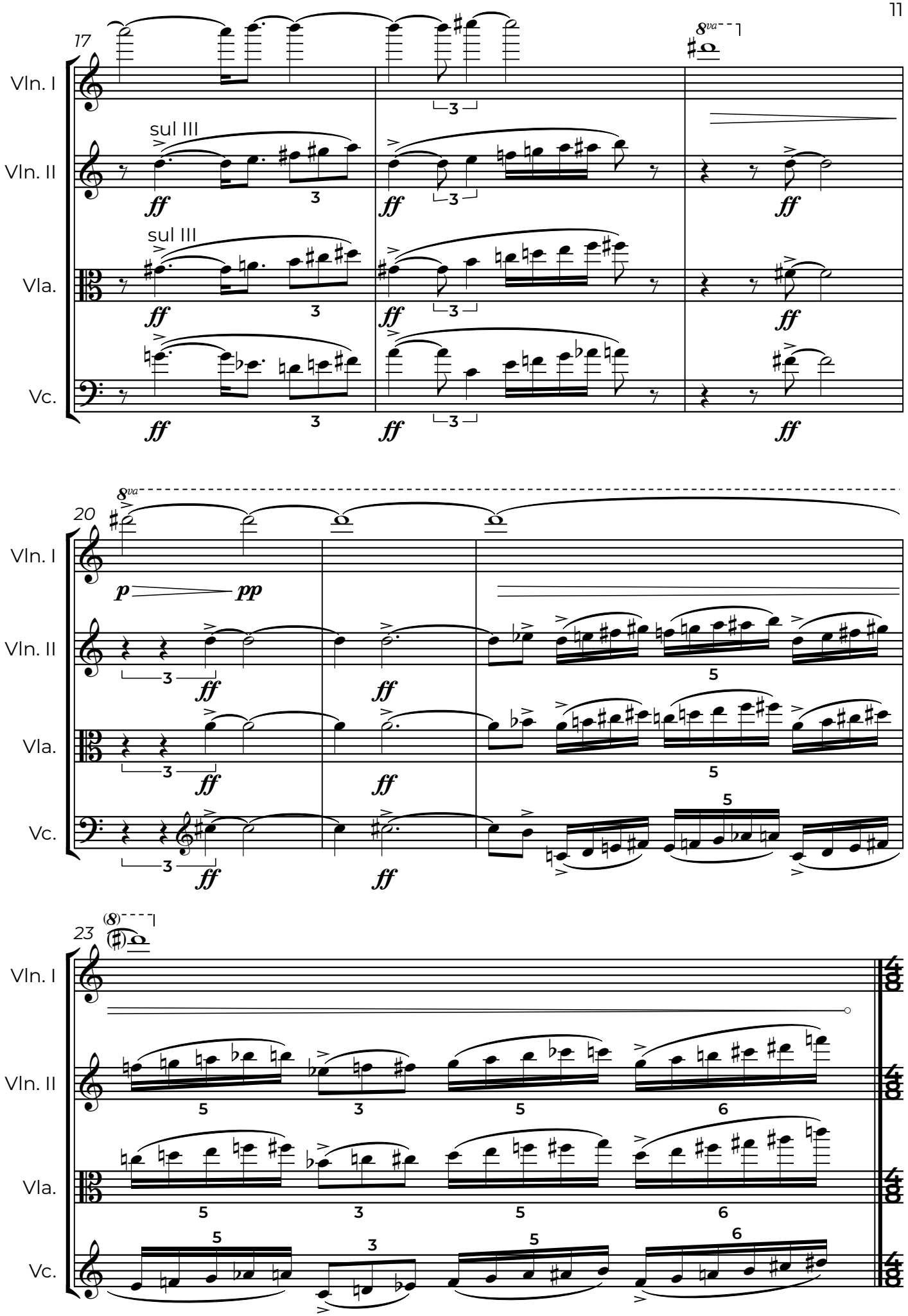

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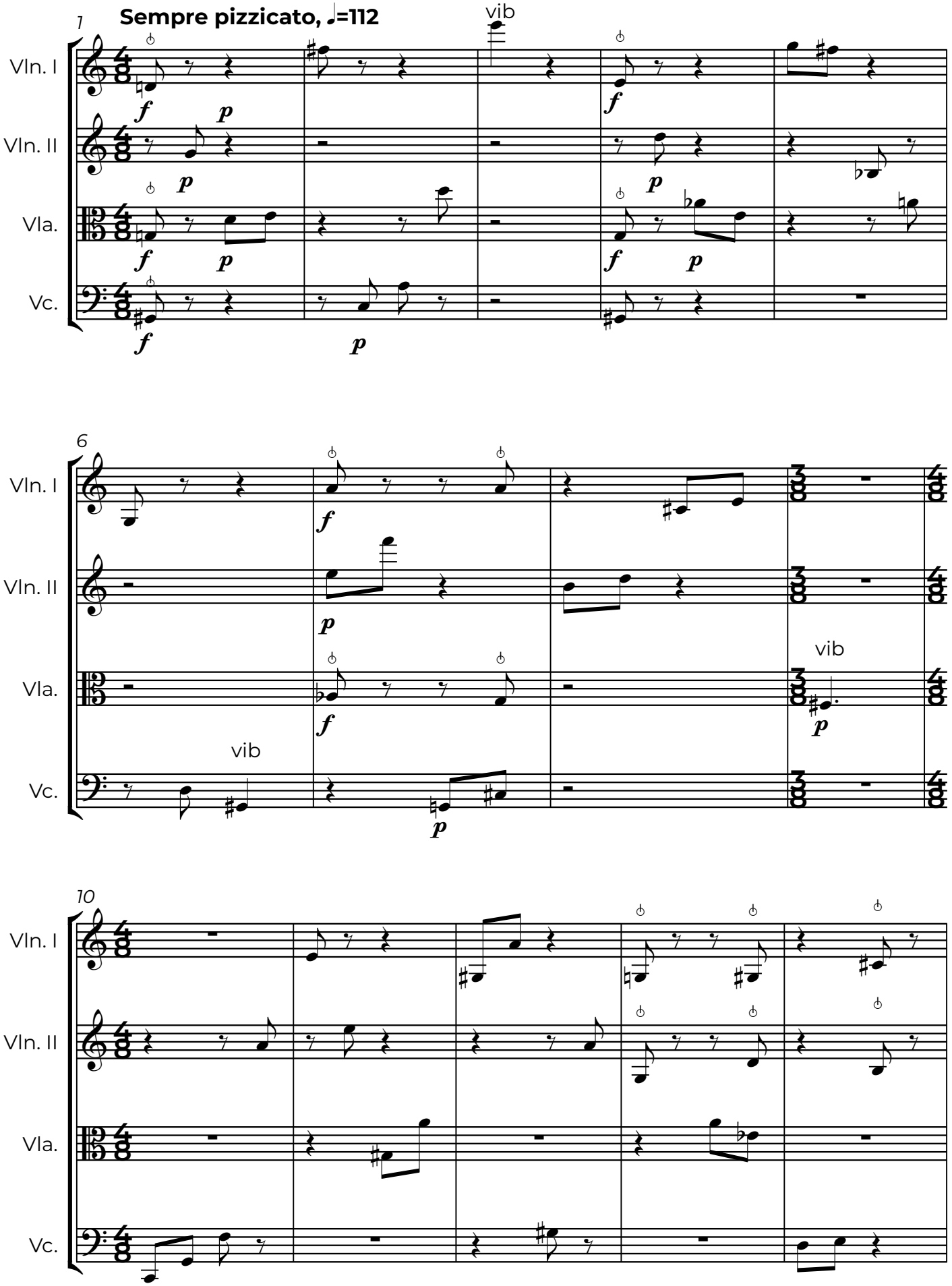

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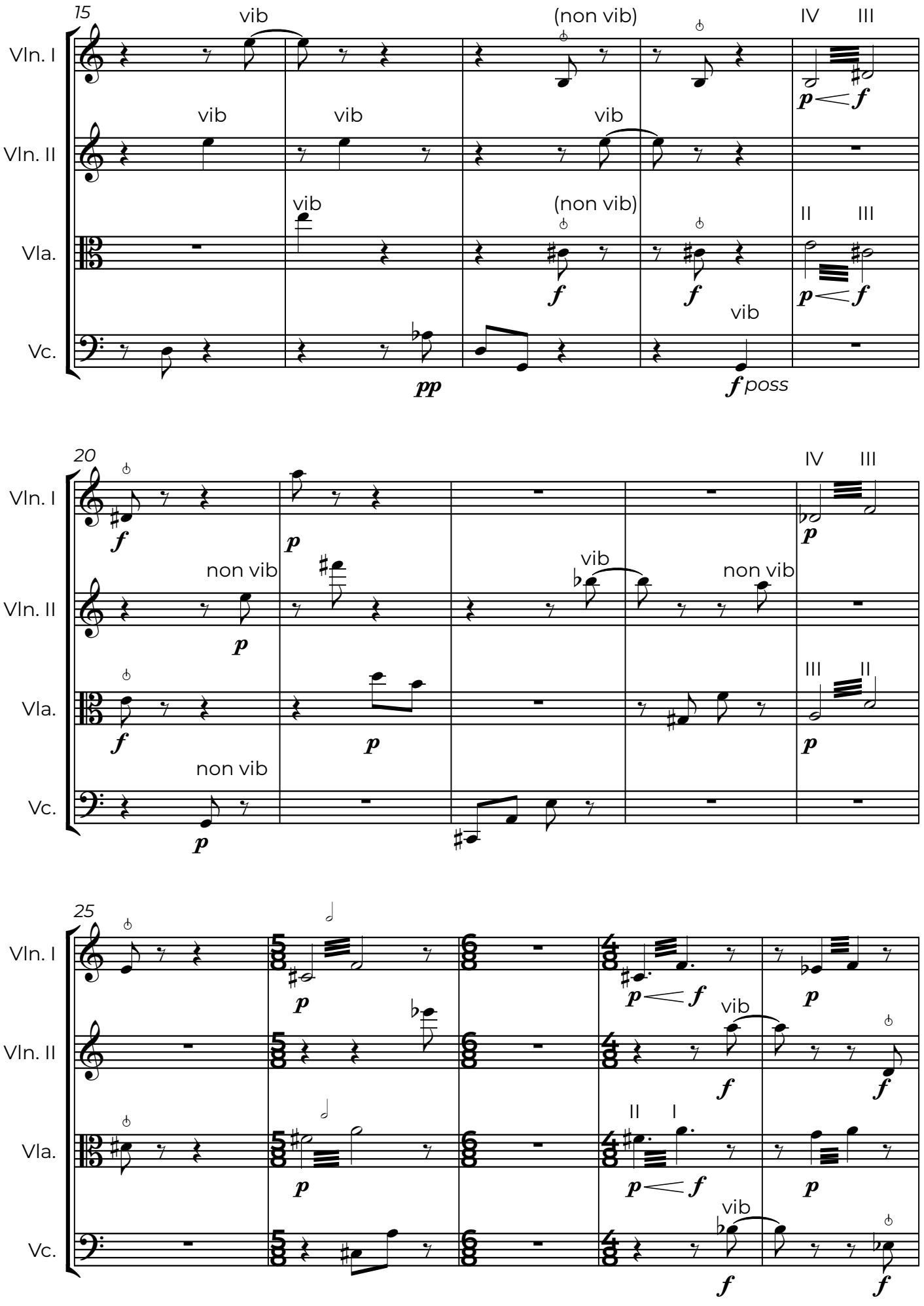

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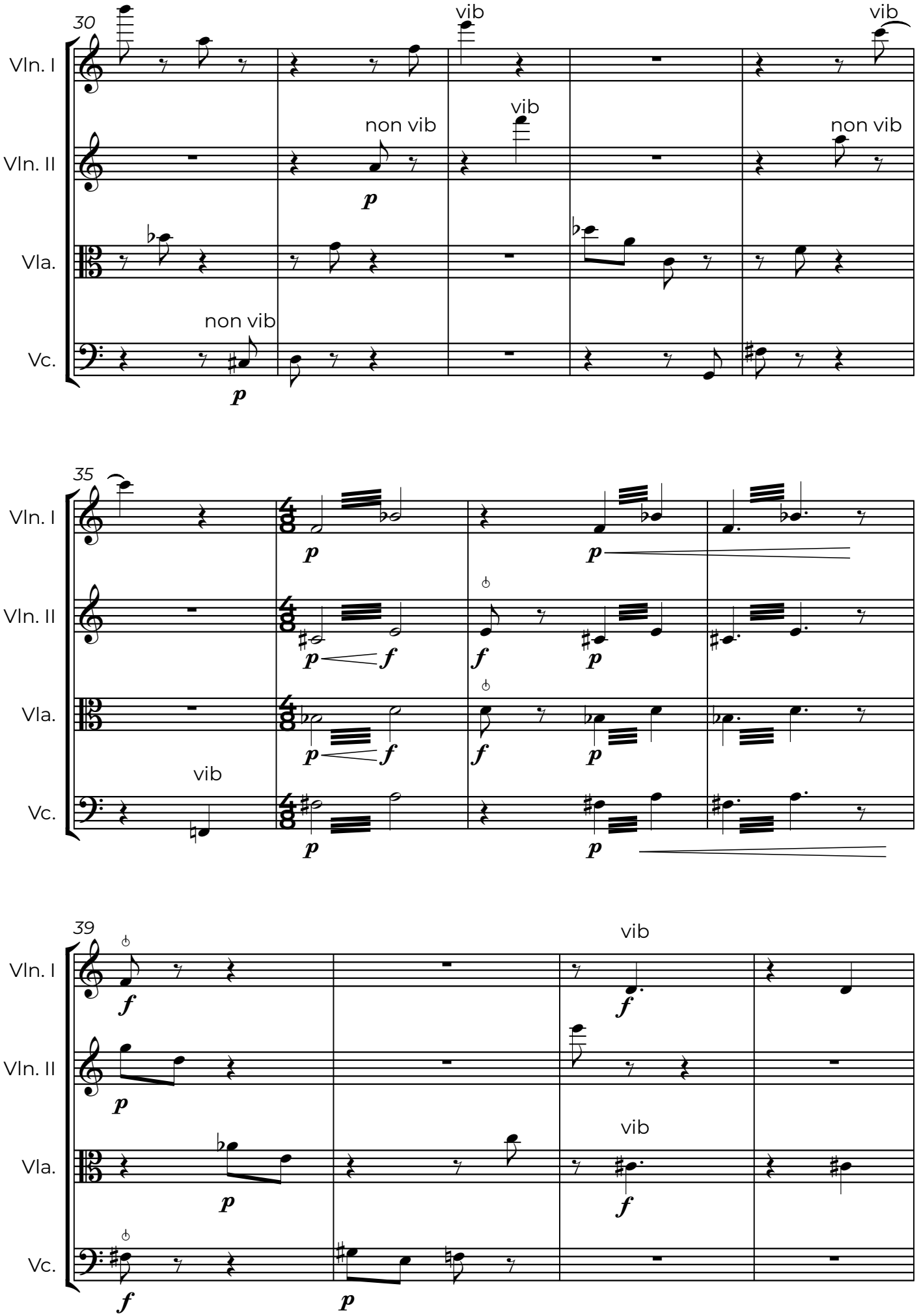

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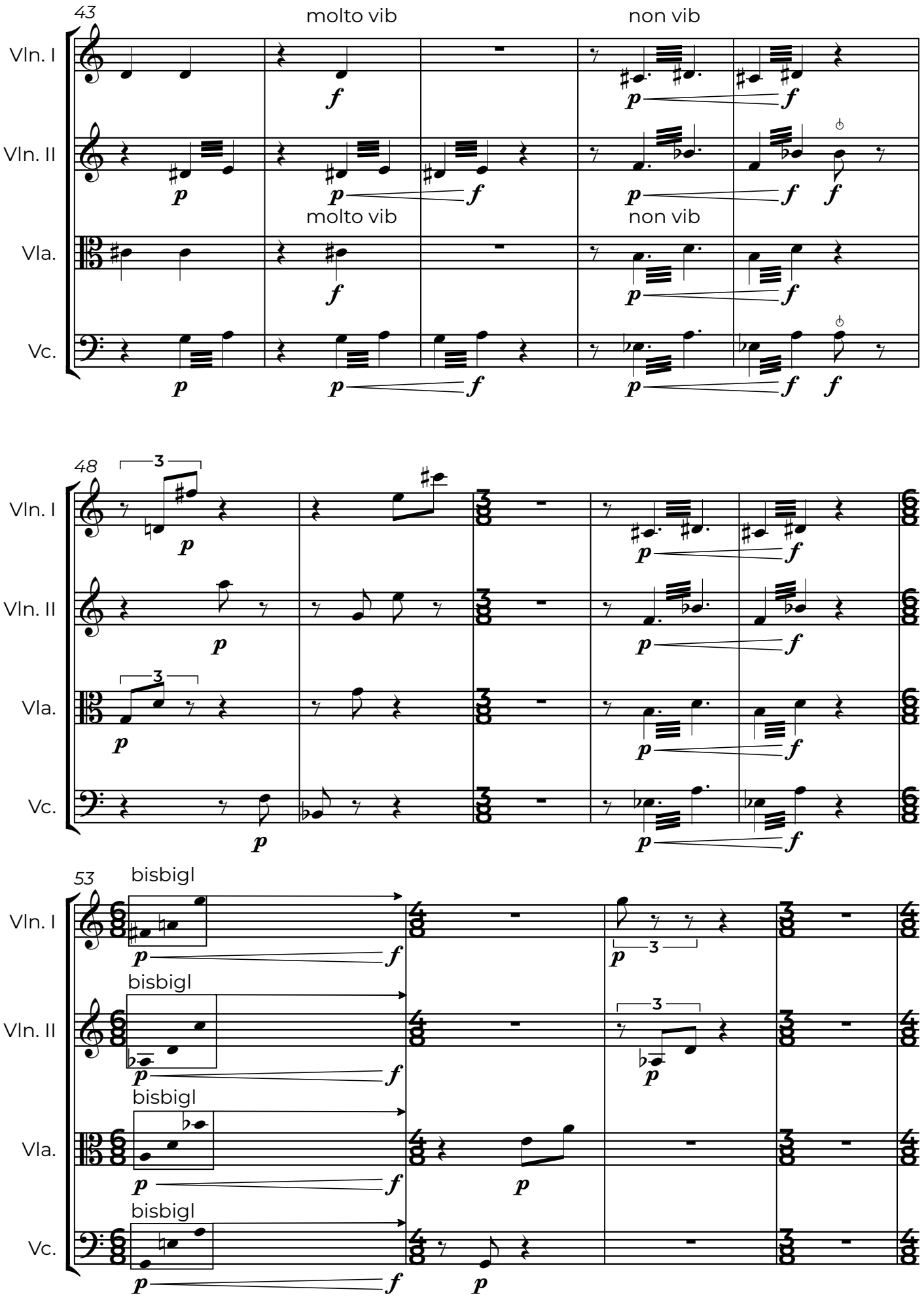

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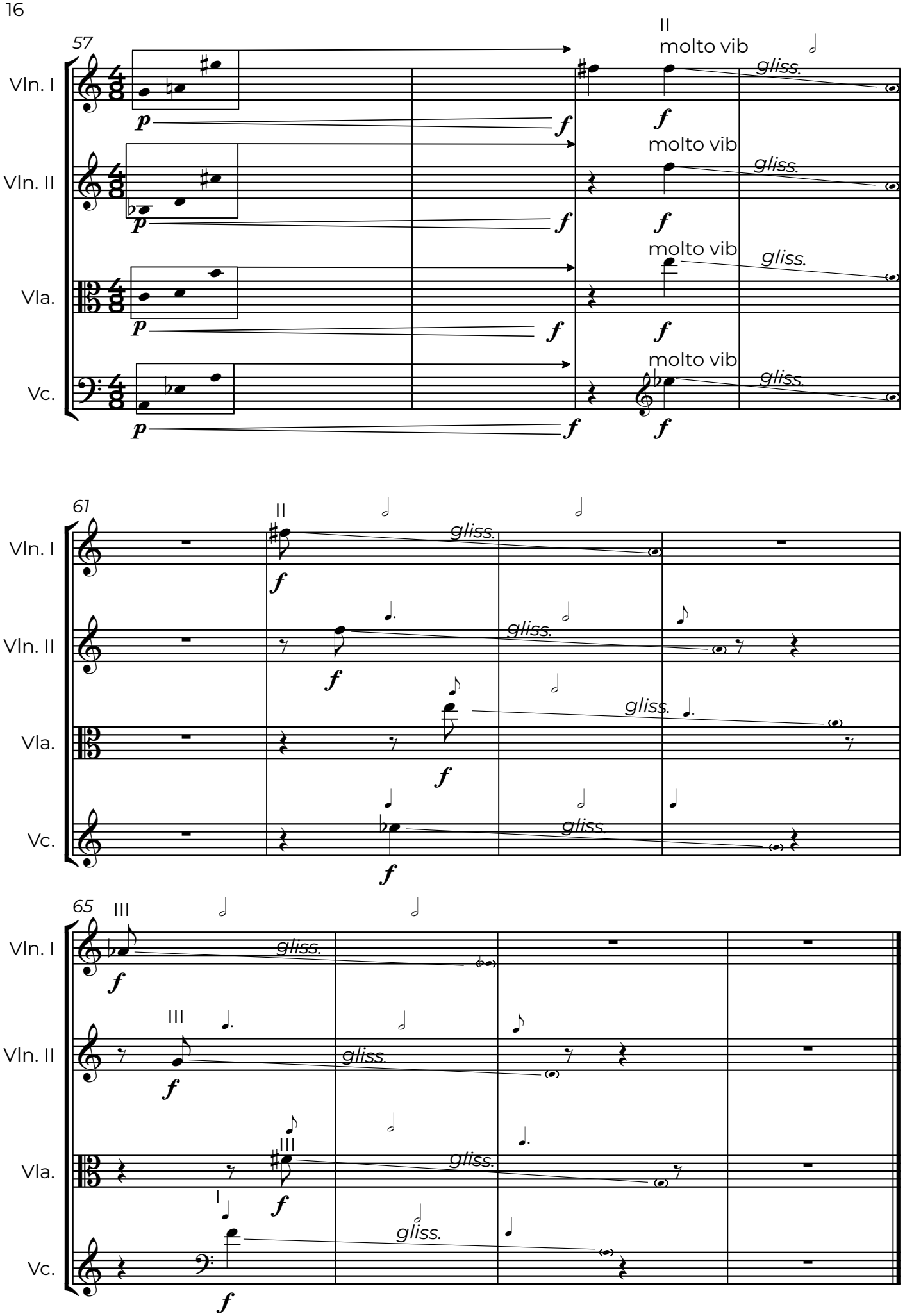

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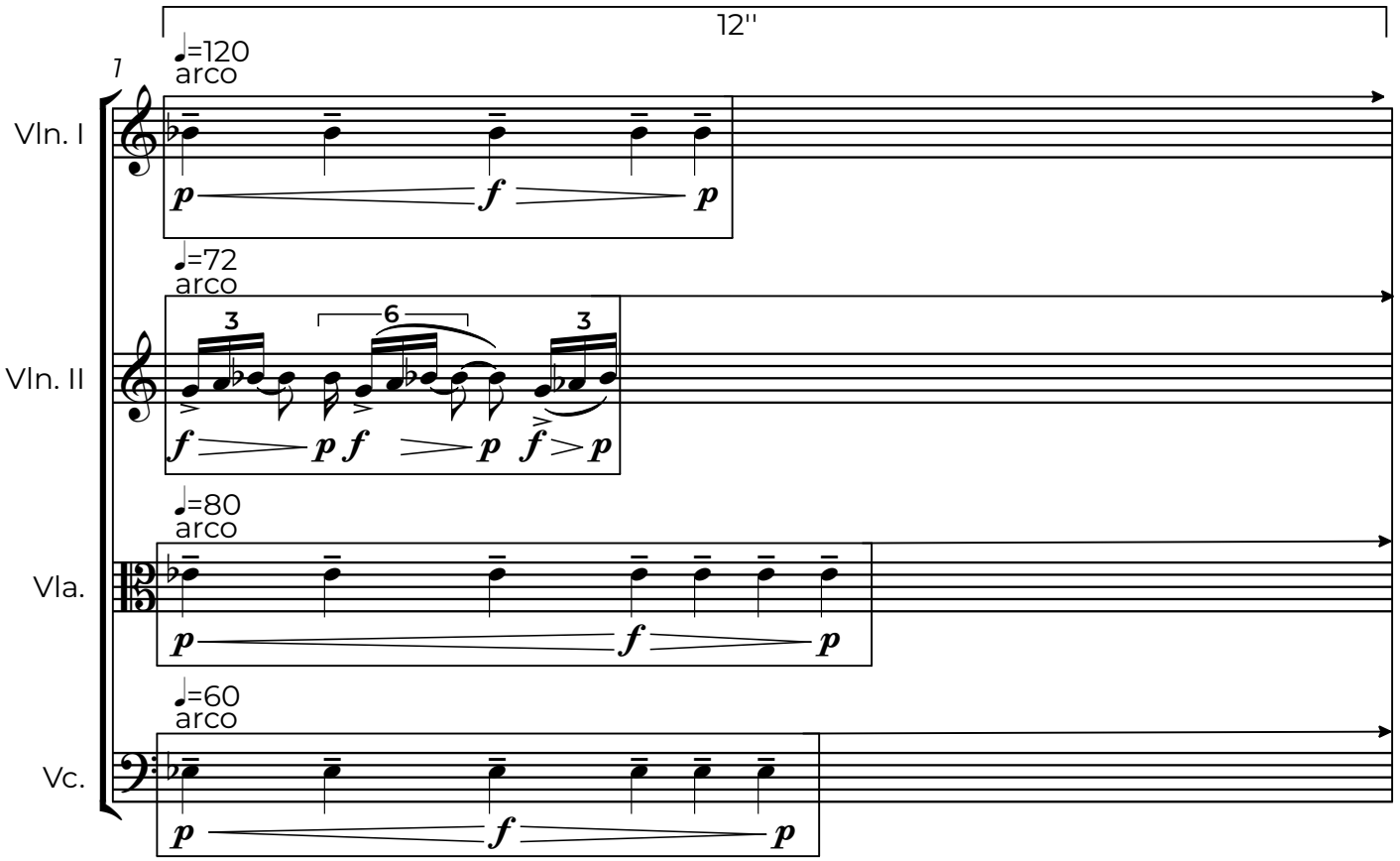
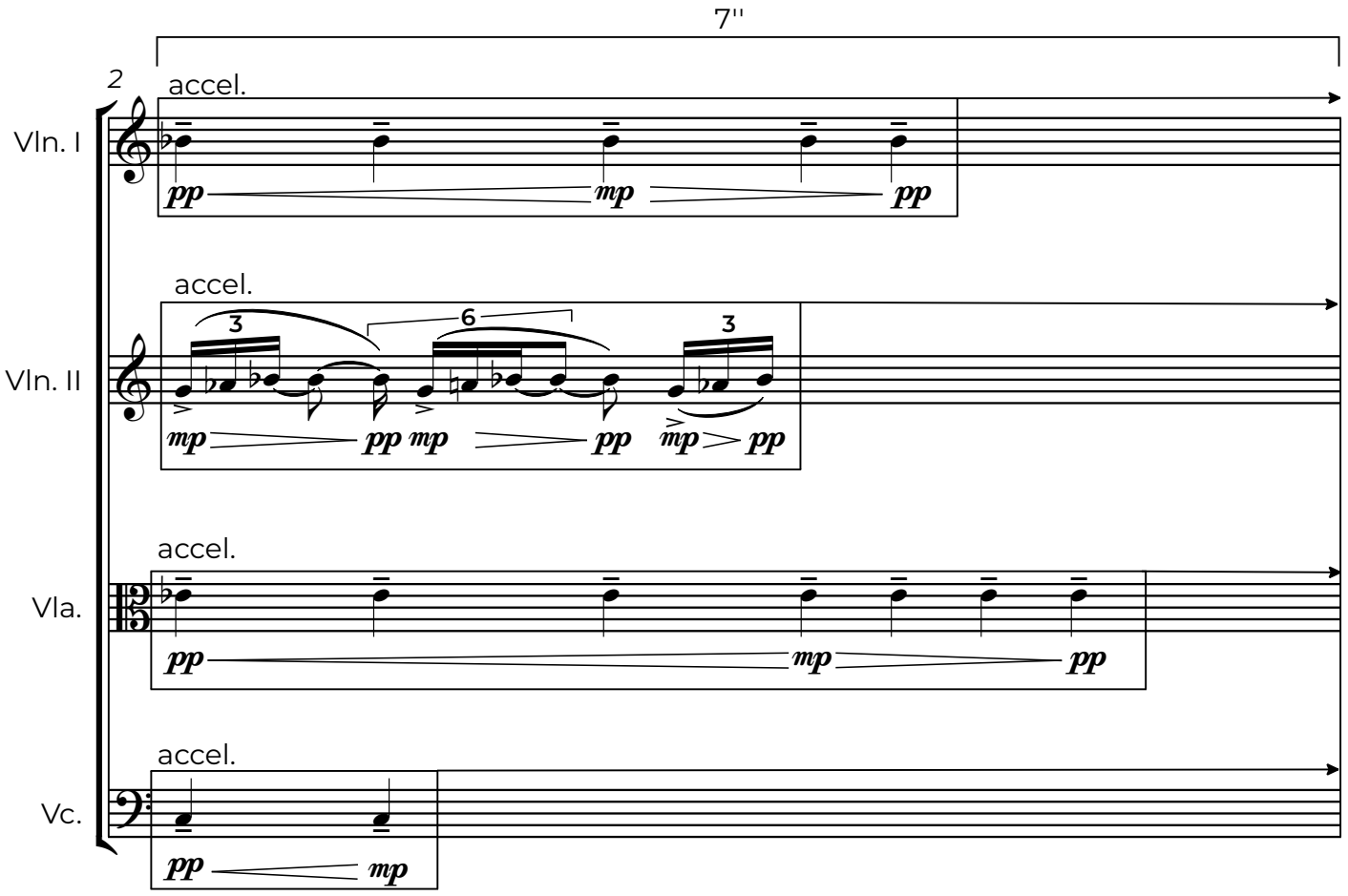
V

Mechanic, with energy





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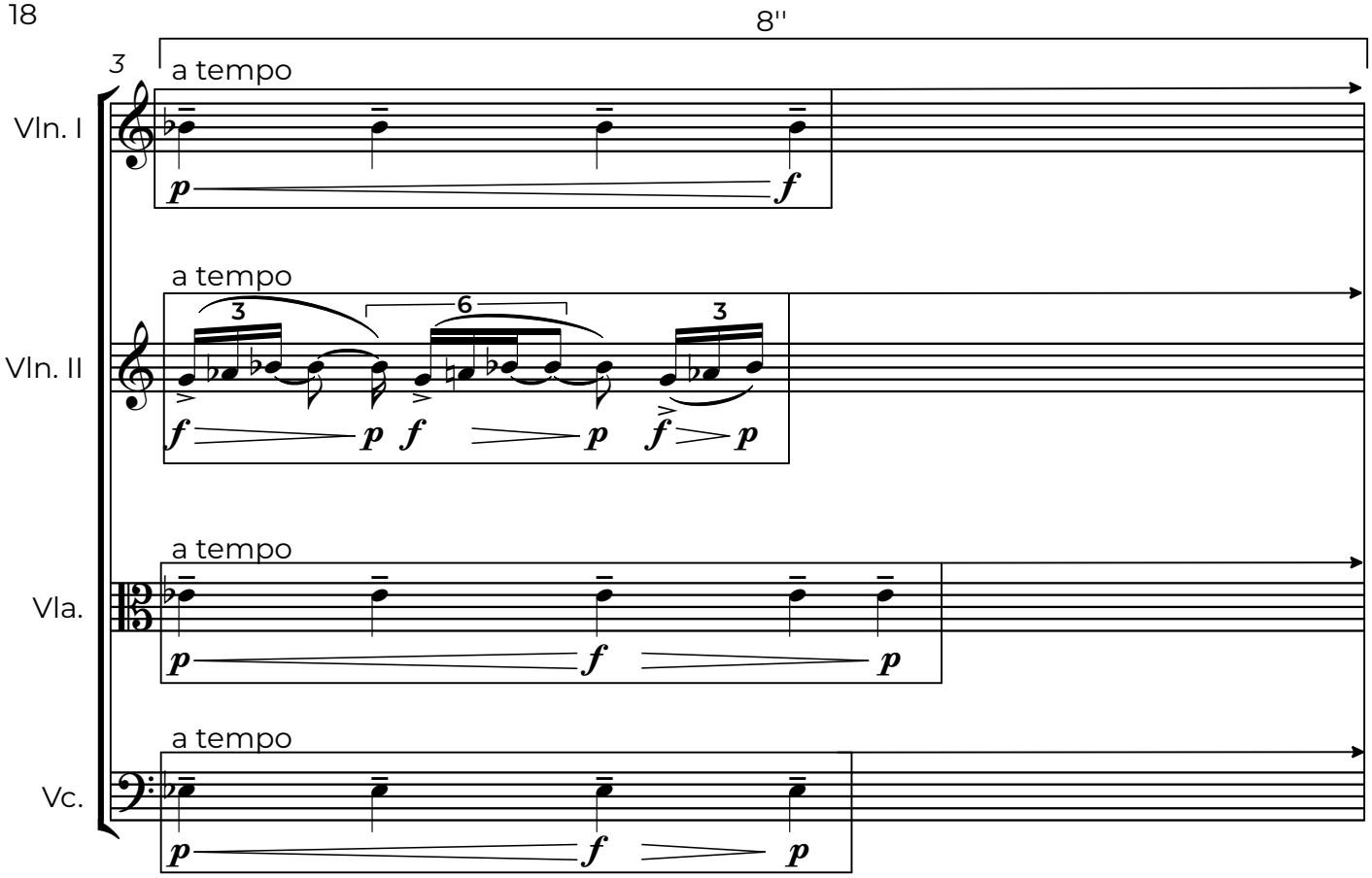

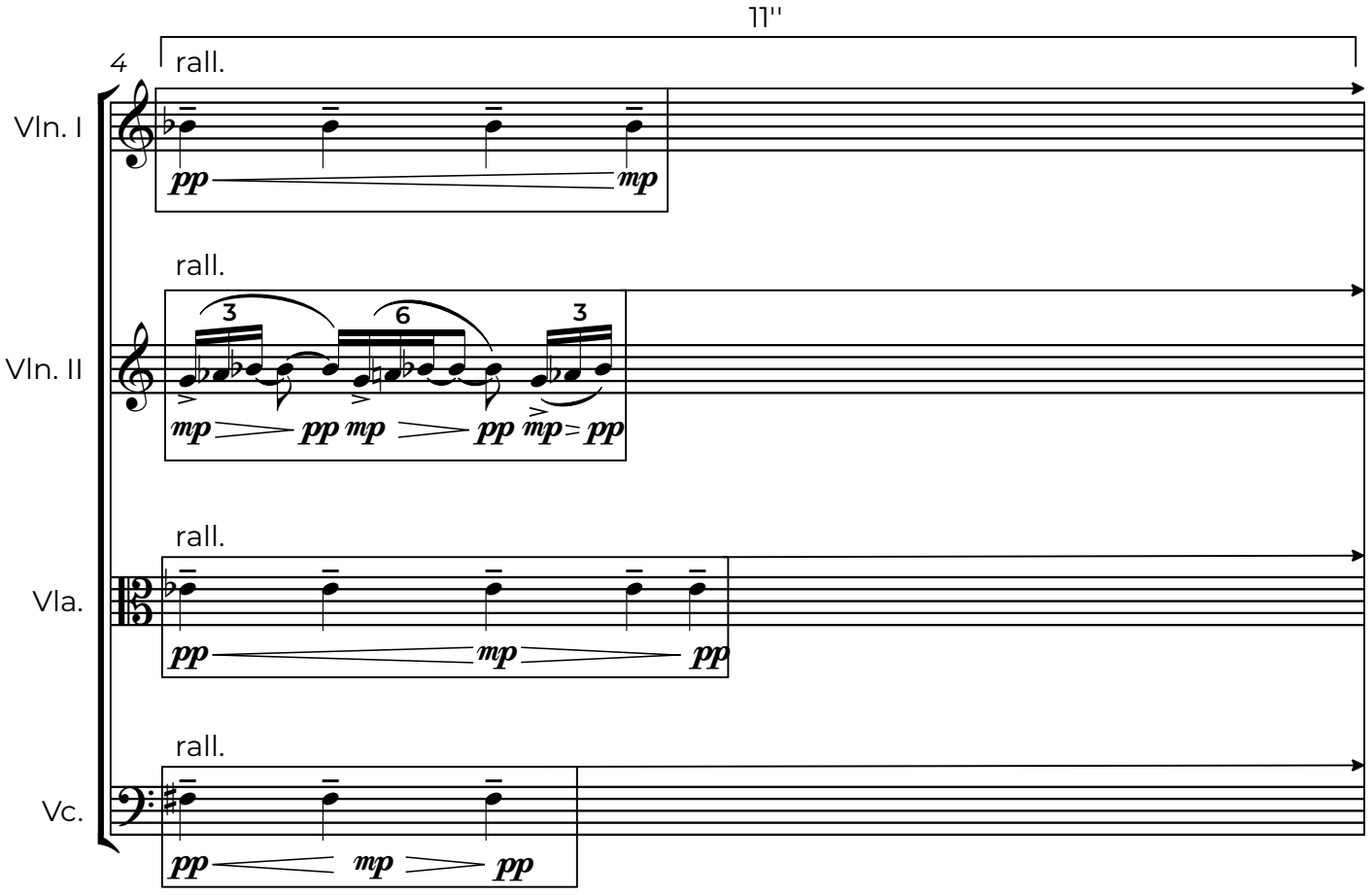

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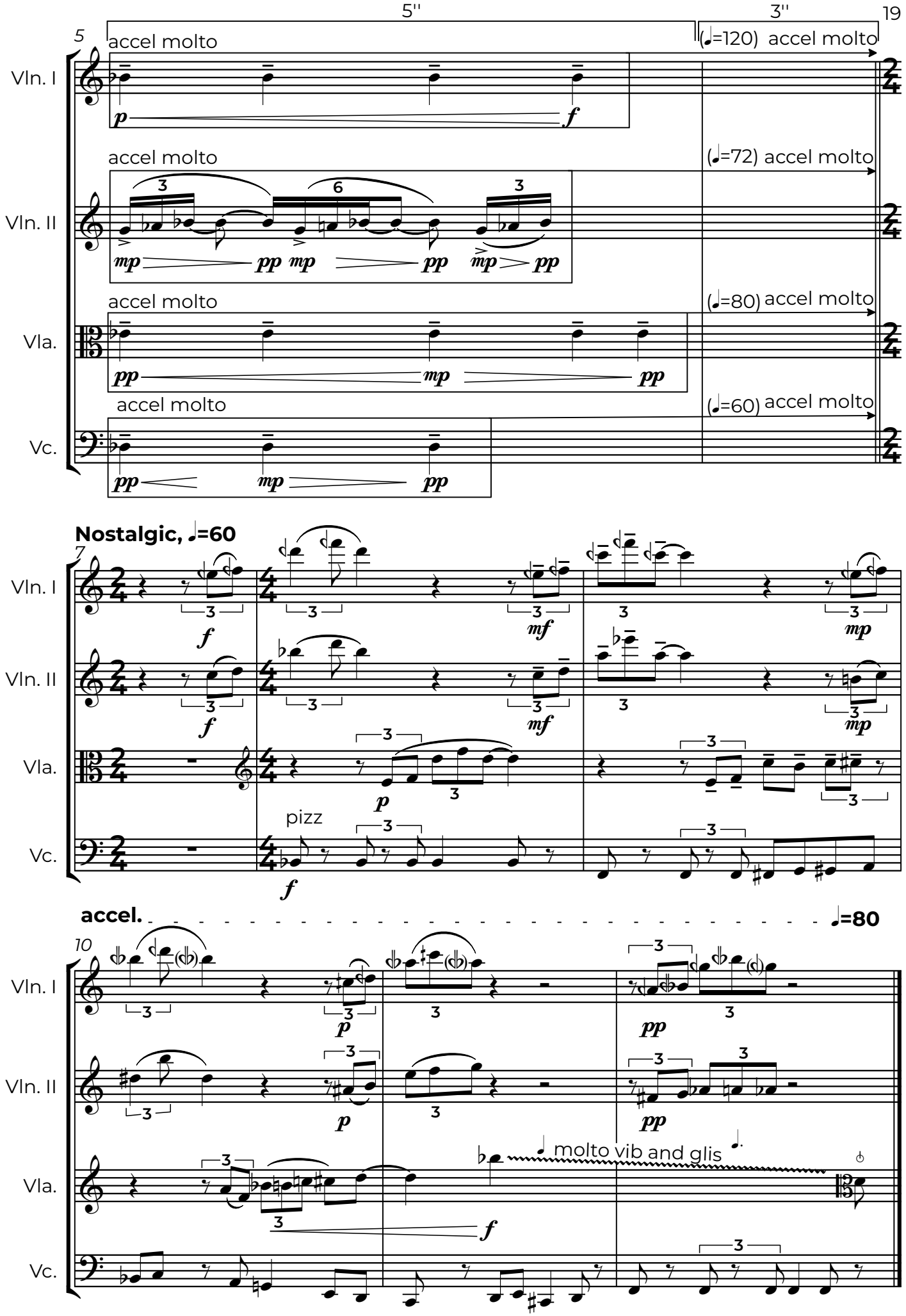

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