W. Jay Sydeman

Variations

for Viola and Bassoon

(1955)

Arts Aeturnum Productions

An early work from the 50's. Very straightforward (compositionally) as a theme with three variations, based on the 12-tone method. I lost interest in this technique, although the New York press tended to put me in that box (in a good way).

It is technically demanding and tricky to keep the ensemble together rhythmically, but I believe well worth the effort. I am not sure whether there is another duo in the repertoire for this combination, except, perhaps another one I wrote 40 years later.

– W. Jay Sydeman, April 2011 & March 2012

W. Jay Sydeman's life mirrors the breadth and variety of his music. Born in New York in 1928 and educated at Manhattan's Mannes School of Music, he quickly became one of the most sought-after and honored composers of his generation, receiving commissions from such prestigious groups as the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Tanglewood Music Center, and the Boston Symphony, which premiered his orchestral work in memory of John F. Kennedy in 1966. "Sydeman uses a whole battery of far out techniques," wrote the New York Times, "but he has an uncanny ability to throw in the whole avant-garde machinery as if it were the simplest, most normal way of making music in the world ... More than many of his colleagues, he seems to know what will sound well, and he works for some remarkably attractive, pure textures. His sounds seem to grow from a physical sense of exactly what material is right."

In 1970, after a heady period that included awards from the National institute of Arts and Letters, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Library of Congress, Sydeman left New York – and composition – to begin a journey of personal and artistic exploration.

"Around 1980," he has written, "I returned to composition – at first a large number of choral works which reconnected me to the source of all music – the human voice. Out of this new lyric impulse have evolved all of my works since that time – more romantic, more accessible. I create music for the musician."

– Howard Hersh,
Artistic Director of "Music Now"

Sydeman is part of a composers' group in Nevada City annually producing the "Wet Ink Festival of New Music." He now lives in Mendocino and hosts a bi-weekly program on KZYX, "The Mind of a Composer", 10 am to noon on Mondays, introducing and commenting on contemporary music.

Duration: circa 4:30

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Edited and engraved by Rick Shinozaki (Albany, CA) in consultation & collaboration with the composer.

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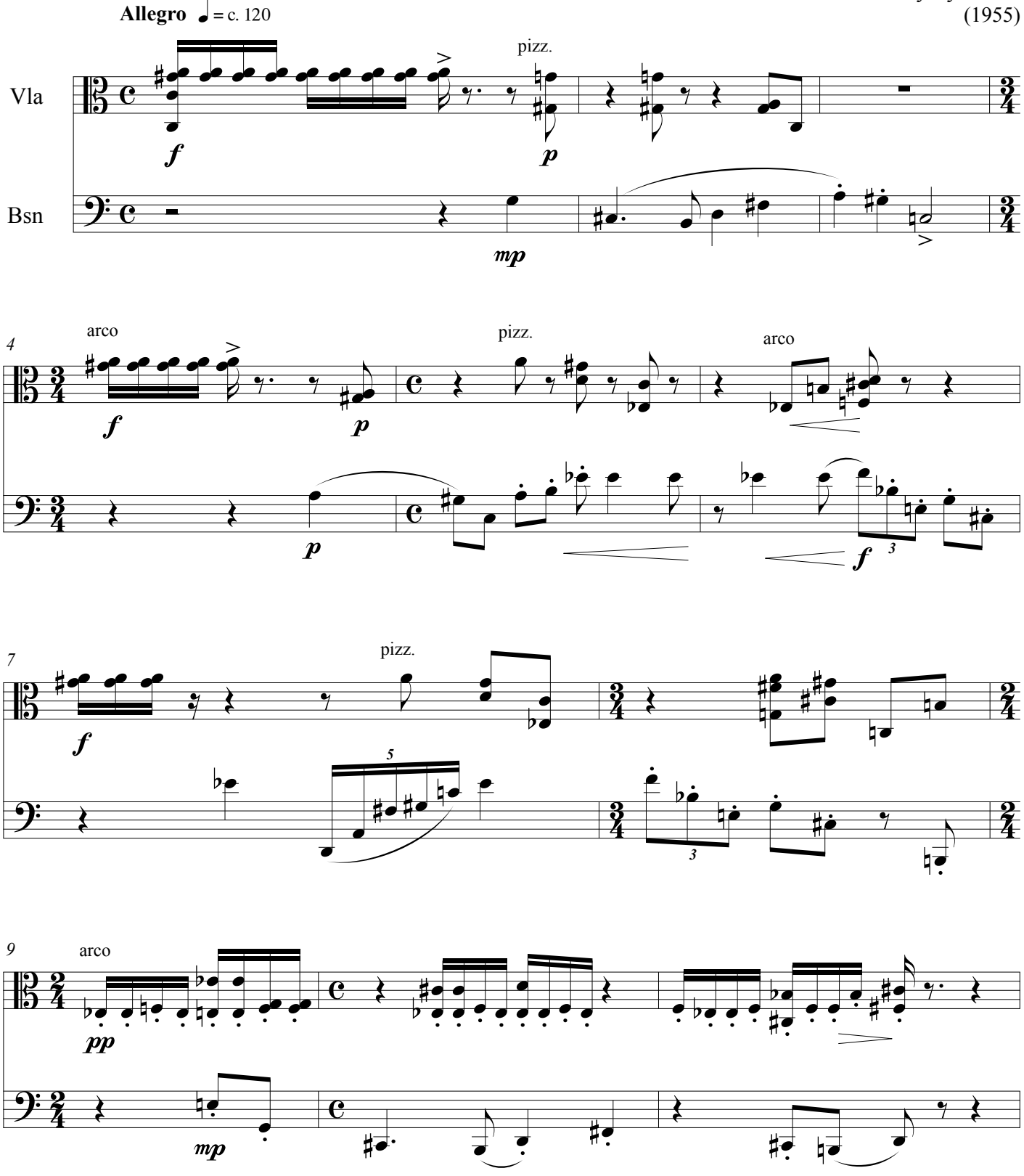
(1955)



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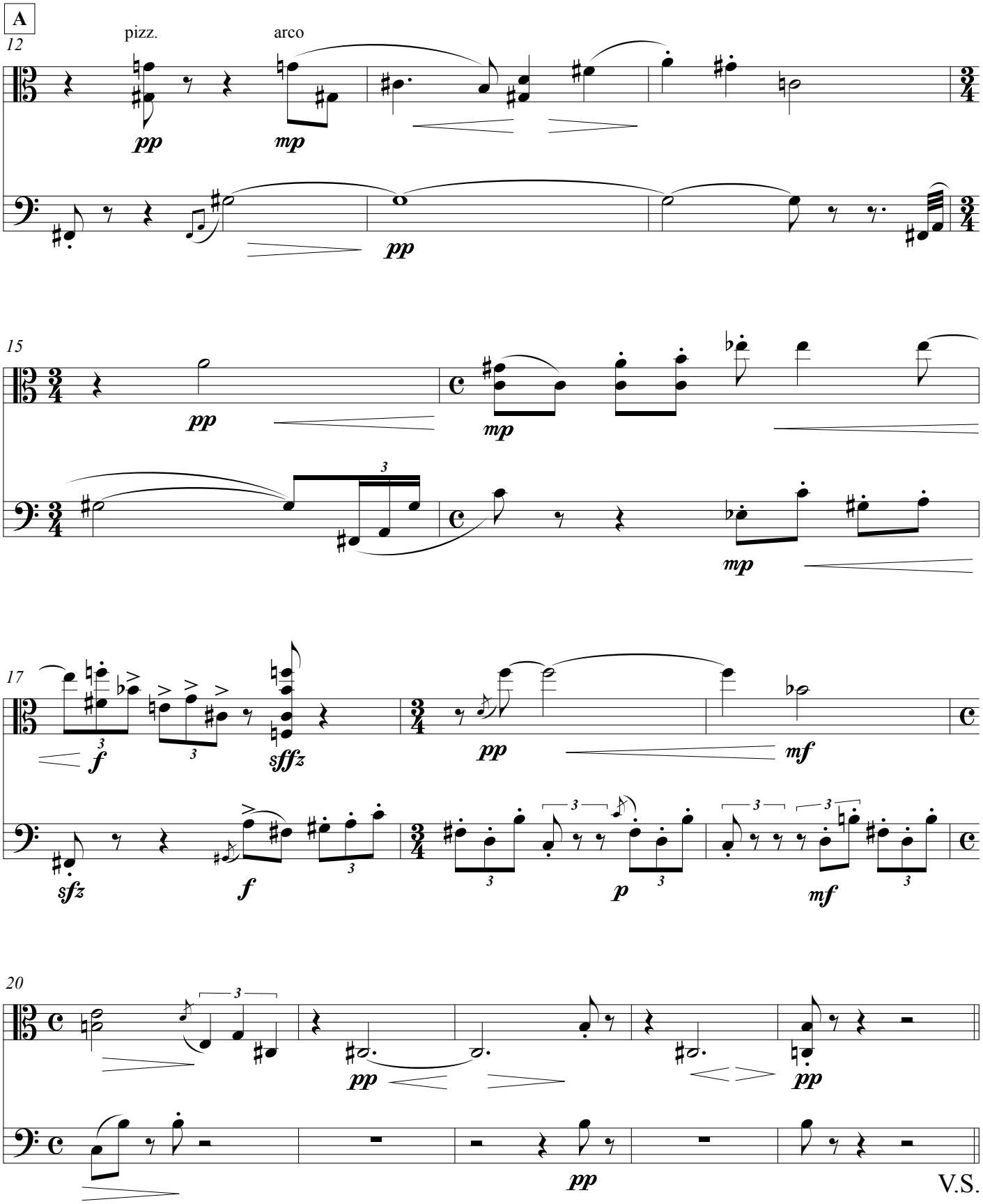
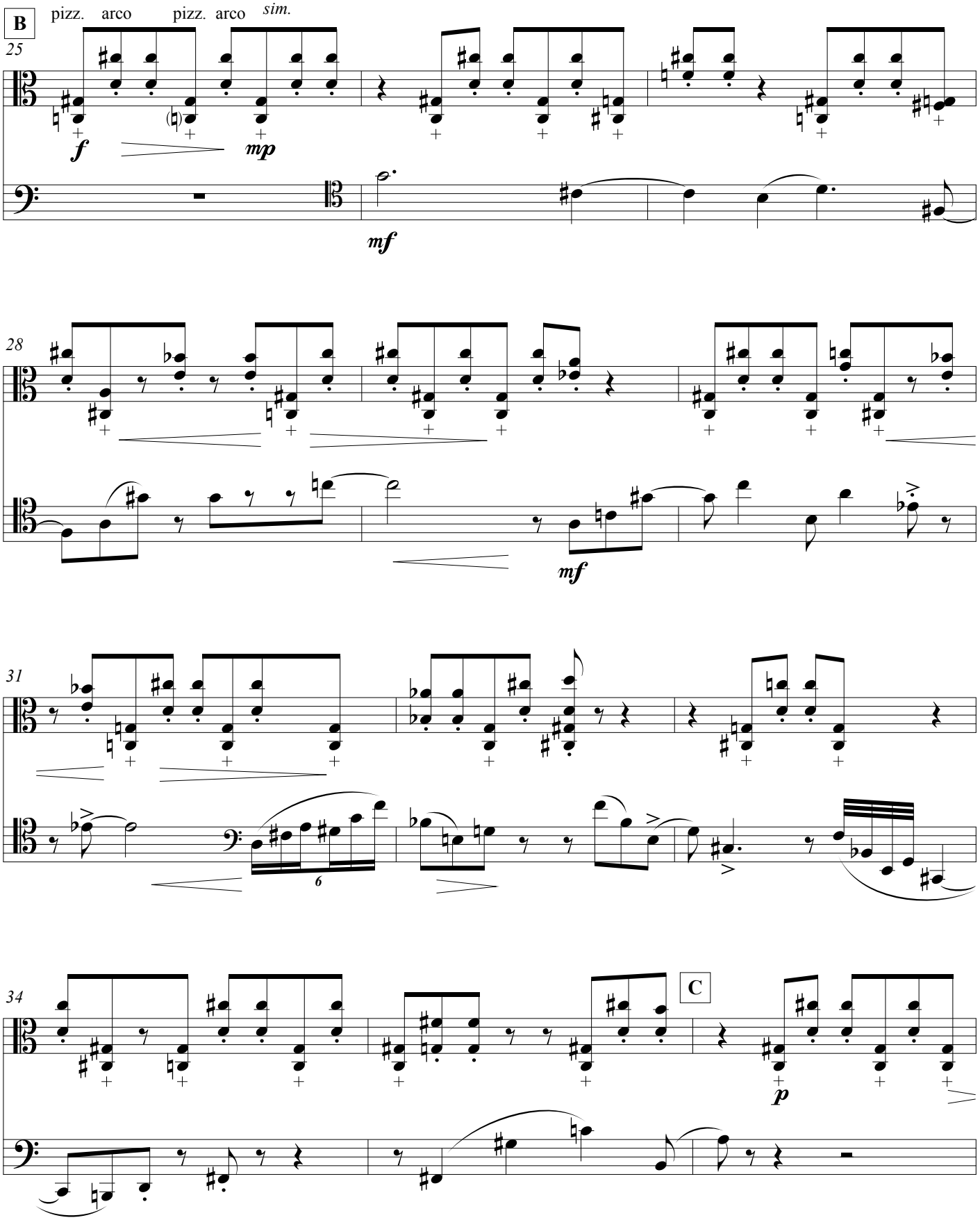
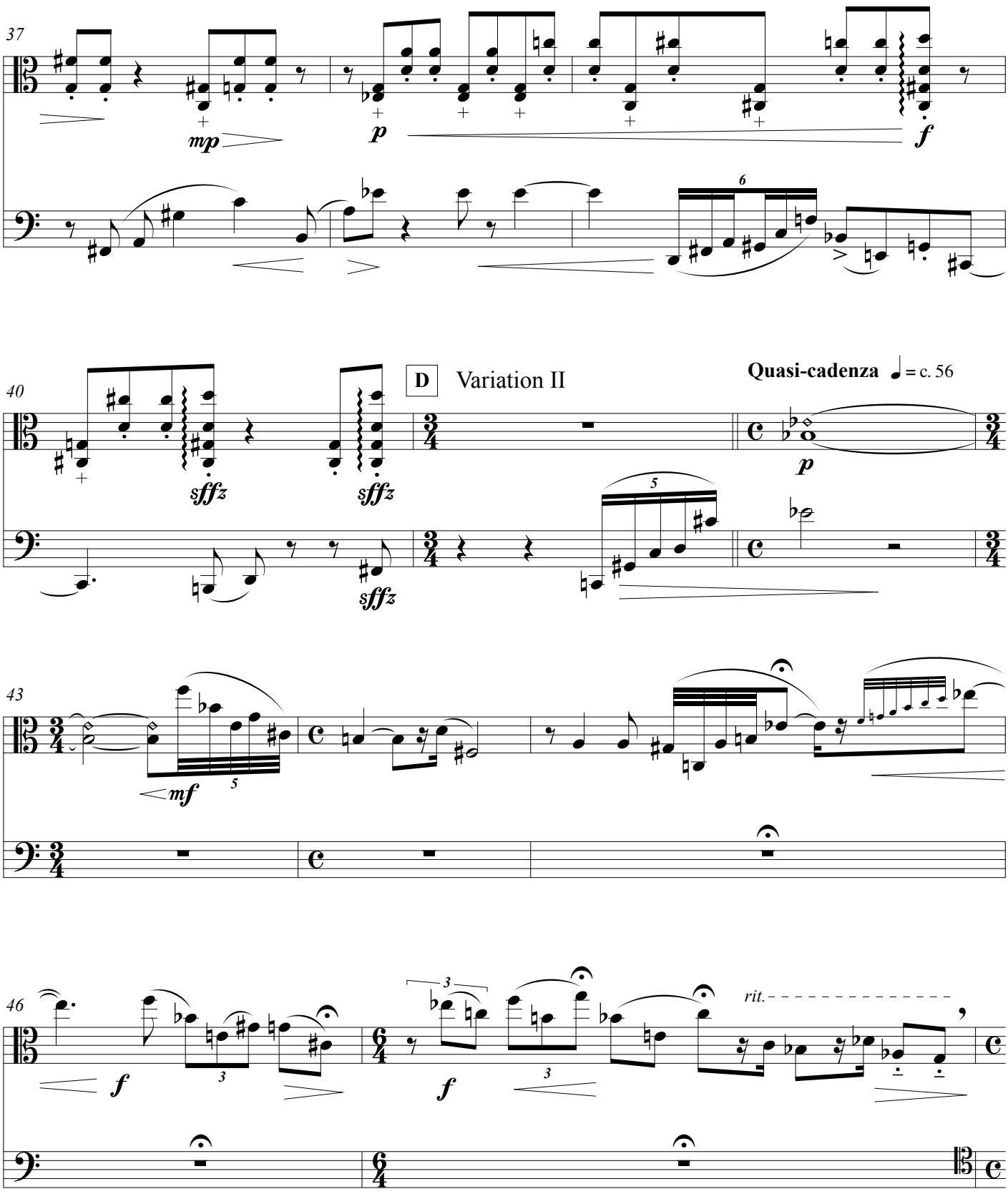

A
12
pizz.
arco
pp
mp
pp
15
pp
mp
mp
17
f
sffz
pp
mf
sfz
f
p
mf
20
pp
pp
V.S.

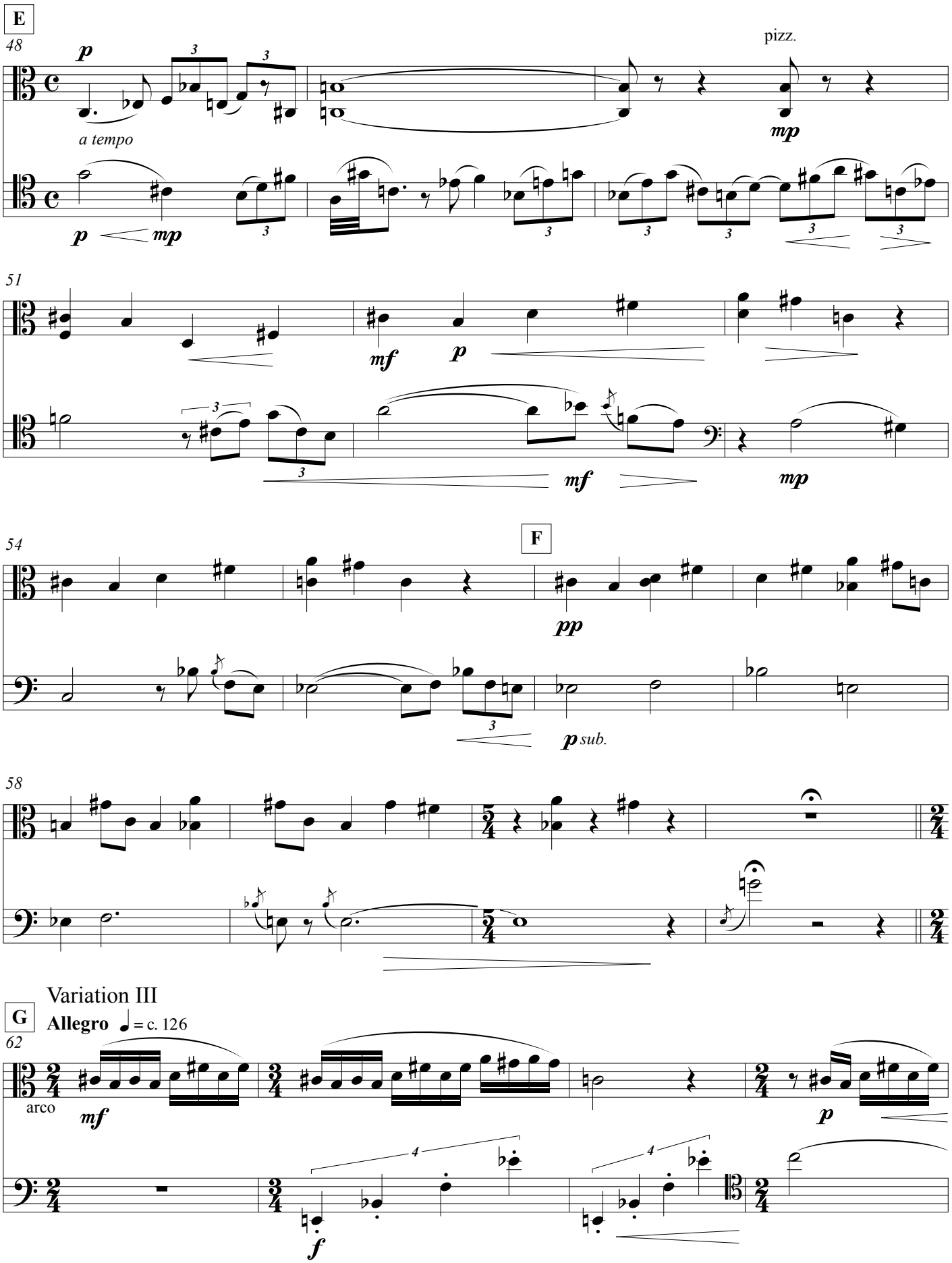
Variation I

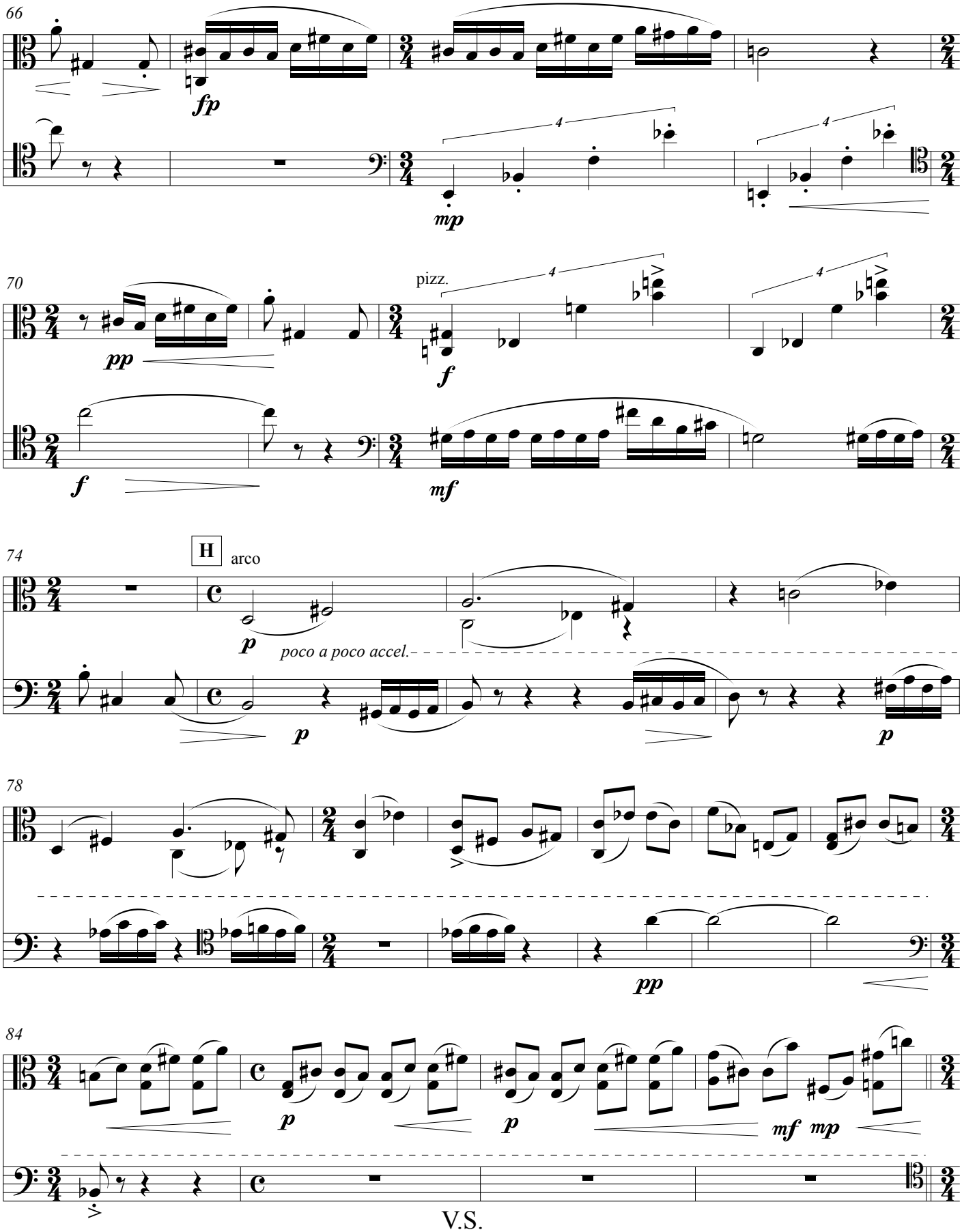
Moderato ♩ = c. 112




37
mp
p
f
6
40
sffz
sffz
sffz
D
Variation II
Quasi-cadenza
= c. 56
p
5
43
mf
5
46
f
3
f
3
rit.

V.S.


E
48
p
a tempo
pizz.
mp
p
mp
51
mf
p
mf
mp
F
54
pp
p sub.
58
G
Variation III
Allegro ♩ = c. 126
62
arco
mf
p
f


66
fp
mp
70
pp
pizz.
f
f
mf
74
H
arco
p
poco a poco accel.
p
p
78
pp
84
p
p
mf mp

V.S.

I **Più mosso** ♩ = c. 152

88

mf

ff

92 **Poco più mosso** ♩ = c. 160

mp

ff *fp*

mp

pp

J

95

p

mp

mp

99

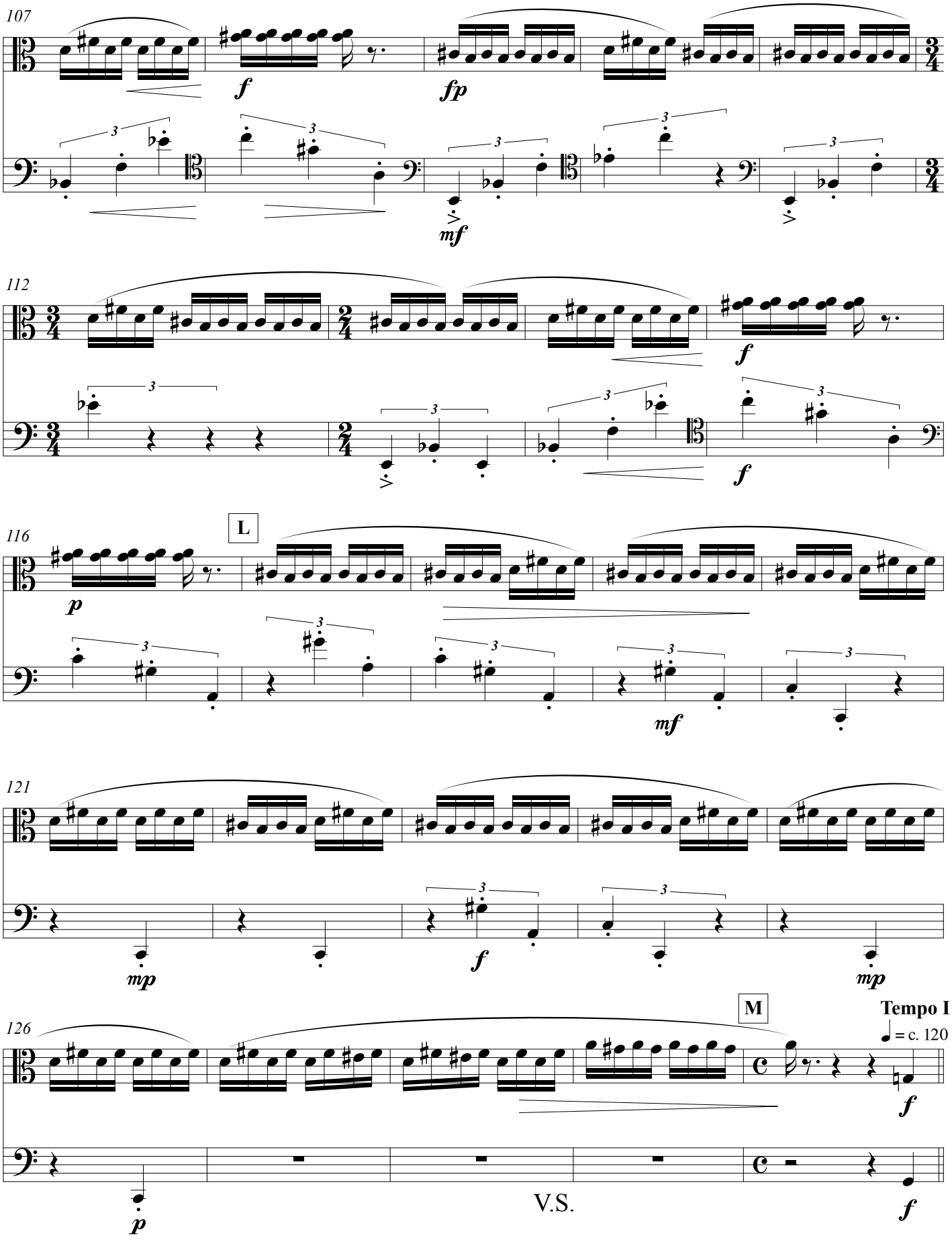
accel.

K **Presto** ♩ = c. 168

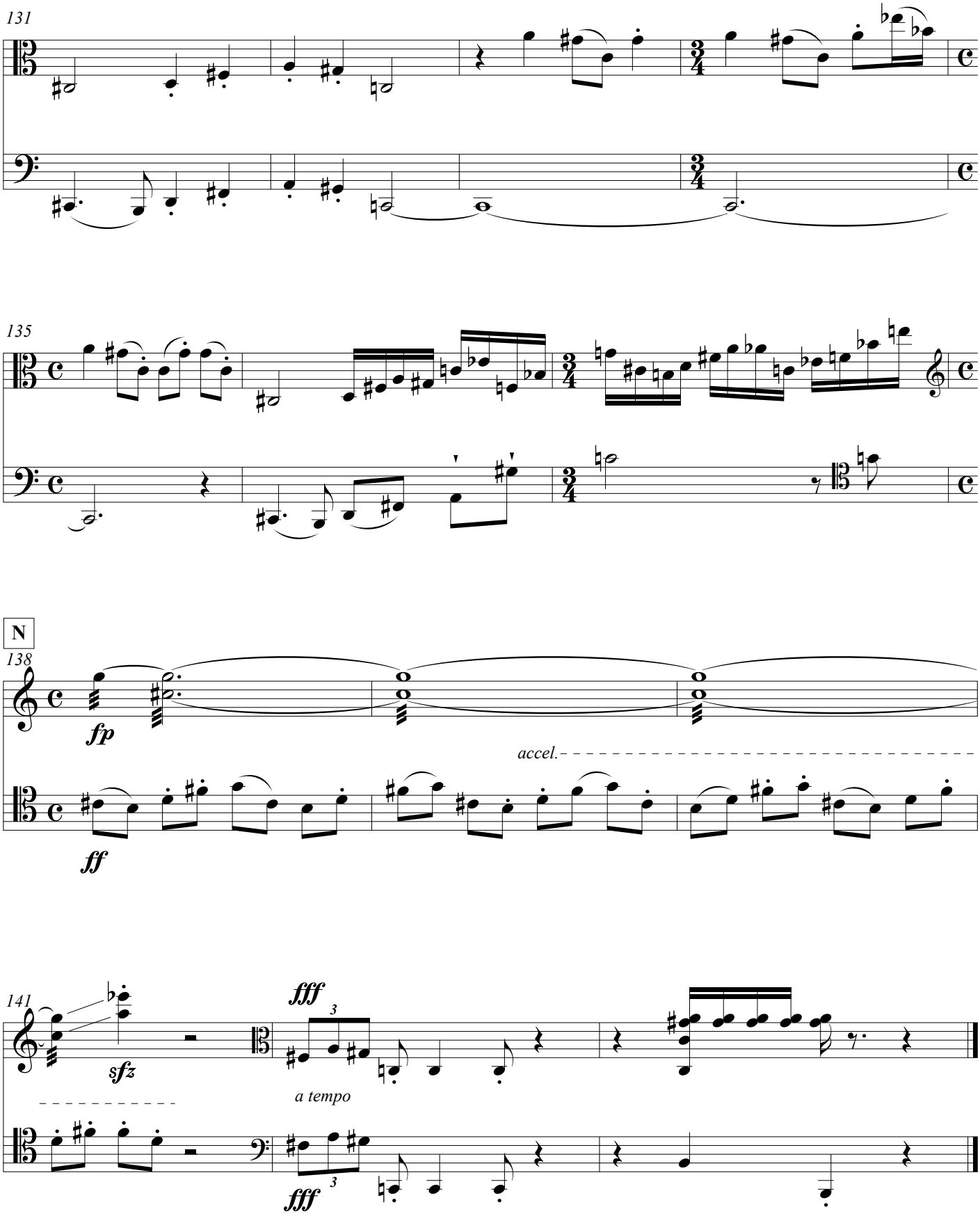
102

fp

mf



V.S.


131
135
N
138
fp
ff
accel.
141
sfz
fff
a tempo
fff