in Platonia

for bass clarinet and piano

Chris Dench

in Platonia

(2011/2024)

bass clarinet and piano

for Drew Gilchrist and Alex Raineri

"...time itself sometimes employs metaphor..."
from *Villa Stellar XXXV*, George Barker. Faber, London 1978.

What are we to make of *time*? Julian Barbour* believes that our perception of time as an arrow is an illusion; instead, he has posited a vast metaverse called *Platonia*, a configuration space that contains every possible permutation of every iota in the cosmos. In this unimaginably large landscape all *Nows*, conceivable and inconceivable, past and future, co-exist as point instants – 'reality-slices'. Each is complete with the mind-contents of every sentient being that inhabits them, and this provides the false perception of continuity.

Engraved score made by Andrew Bernard

Duration: ~25' —— © Chris Dench 2024

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* *The End of Time*, Julian Barbour. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1999.

Program note

"...time itself sometimes employs metaphor..."
from *Villa Stellar XXXV*, George Barker. Faber, London 1978.

What are we to make of *time*? Julian Barbour[1] believes that our perception of time as an arrow is an illusion; instead, he has posited a vast metaverse called *Platonia*, a configuration space that contains every possible permutation of every iota in the cosmos. In this unimaginably large landscape all *Nows*, conceivable and inconceivable, past and future, co-exist as point instants – 'reality-slices'. Each is complete with the mind-contents of every sentient being that inhabits them, and this provides the false perception of continuity. He calls these point instants *time capsules*, and I have borrowed this idea in the form of structurally-related but seemingly unconnected *vignettes*.

I began **in Platonia** shortly after moving from the Melbourne suburb of Flemington to near-rural Brown Hill in Ballarat. I was very struck by the contrast of sound levels, particularly once the sun went down, between rowdy Flemington and tranquil Ballarat, although as time went on I became increasingly aware that Brown Hill was not so much quiet as liminally frenetic with wildlife noises, a soundworld that has crept into some of **in Platonia**'s textures.

After having put it aside to complete more urgent projects, I resumed the score as part of my series of **Iso-étude** pieces, which are the annals of my sequestered creativity during lockdown and after. It was initially intended to be a piano piece, but I belatedly realised that it would work much better with a second, contrasting voice, and recast it as a duo for my friends Drew Gilchrist and Alex Raineri, bass clarinetist and pianist, respectively.

For some reason – where I wrote it? my being an extreme night-owl? – I came to envisage *Platonia* as a night-garden. The piece consists of eleven *time capsules*:

I Somnambulantly – **II** Ruminatively – **III** Sublunar Stride – **IV** Arborescent – **V** Echolalic – **VI** Starshadow –
VII Stridulatory – **VIII** Platonia – **IX** Rotating Voids – **X** Monofilaments – **XI** Now (is the only moment)[2]

In my musical metaphor the sections are loosely formal structures inhering in a boundless *Platonia* like pareidolic faces discerned in a cloud.

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[1] *The End of Time*, Julian Barbour. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1999.
[2] *sem n'hak kon*, in Romulan, apparently.

Performance notes

- Accidentals only apply to the notes they immediately precede.
- Tempi are somewhat abstract; players are encouraged to find a velocity that suits them. Gracenote notation is rigorous, all being notated as *in-time* graces.
- In this score:

  Accel(erando) means *gradually get faster*, with extension line
  Rall(entando) means *gradually get slower*, with extension line

  These have two forms: the first where the **accel/rall** terminates at a new tempo; and the second, where the **accel/rall** ends at a final rate chosen by the player, and a new tempo is given afterwards.

  Rit(enuto) means *a sudden holding back of tempo*, with extension line

  All only persist as long as the horizontal extension line indicates.

- **Dynamic profile**: there are **eleven** dynamic steps in this work:

  pppp—ppp—pp—p—mf—f—ff—fff—ffff

  There is no ***mp*** dynamic; ***mf*** is considered to be midway between ***p*** and ***f***. Occasionally a dynamic will have a **+** after it; this just indicates that the level should be subtly louder than the previous appearance of the same dynamic.

  Dynamics should be not be treated as a simple linear *soft →loud*: they function as variations in the *local* context.

- **Bass clarinet – microtones**: certain sections of this piece use a nominal 24-note octave. Quartertones need not be precisely tuned, but wherever possible they should be fingered. In those places where, for reasons of register, dynamic, or other consideration, the fingerings cannot be used, lipped ¼-tones will suffice, including unavoidable slight bendiness.
  Arrows added to top or bottom of any accidental indicate a transitional pitch between ¼ tones, e.g. ♯. These need not be precisely pitched, the effect is colouristic or incremental

Circled fingerings above a pulsed pitch indicate the use of alternative fingerings for the pitch (slight microtonal/timbral variations are welcome). They should be used in increasing order of deviation: ② being less in tune and more timbrally divergent than ①. When used as a group, the pitch *without* the superposed number is the standard fingering.

As is probably evident from the score, microtones function differently in different sections, sometimes harmonically, sometimes structurally, sometimes colouristically ...and sometimes are completely absent. Players should adapt their playing solutions to the local context, rather than seeking an overall microintervallic strategy.

- **Bass clarinet: fluttertongue** is indicated by FLZ. and 𝅘𝅥𝅯 or 𝅘𝅥𝅰 in the stem, and cancelled by ORD.. Rapidly repeated notes are always written out in full. The sign GR. means a similar flutter that comes from the throat, a "growl".

- **Bass clarinet**: the dagger notehead 𝅗𝅥> indicates slaptongue. The slaptongue action is considered to have an intrinsically brief duration; if the same pitch is to be extended the dagger will be tied to a normal notehead – do not retongue.

- **Bass clarinet**: MV indicates *molto vibrato*, and is cancelled by ORD.. The arrow prior to the indication shows a gradual transition to MV through the entire duration; a similar arrow after MV indicates a gradual return to ORD., normal vibrato. In the final section PV means *più* vibrato, that is, more than normal but less than MV.

- **Both players:** Emphases – are used to indicate either slight stresses or a hint of detaché, or both; context will be the guide. Hard attacks > are used to indicate pitches that need to be brought out – context will govern the extent to which these pitches need to be *martellato*.

- **Piano**: all pedal notations are **bare minima** – they show primarily where the harmony, and therefore continuity, changes. I imagine the player will pedal more frequently and subtly than I have indicated. Full pedal releases are indicated by gaps in the pedal line; all other releases are partial: semi-clearances, where the resonance does not entirely stop. A ½ indication below a pedal spike means that the semi-clear should be shallow, that more resonance should be retained. The use of the third pedal is flagged by P3, usually in conjunction with the *Ped.*, so left foot is preferable. *Una corda* is indicated by **u.c.** and a broken line indicating extension; it is cancelled by **t.c.**.

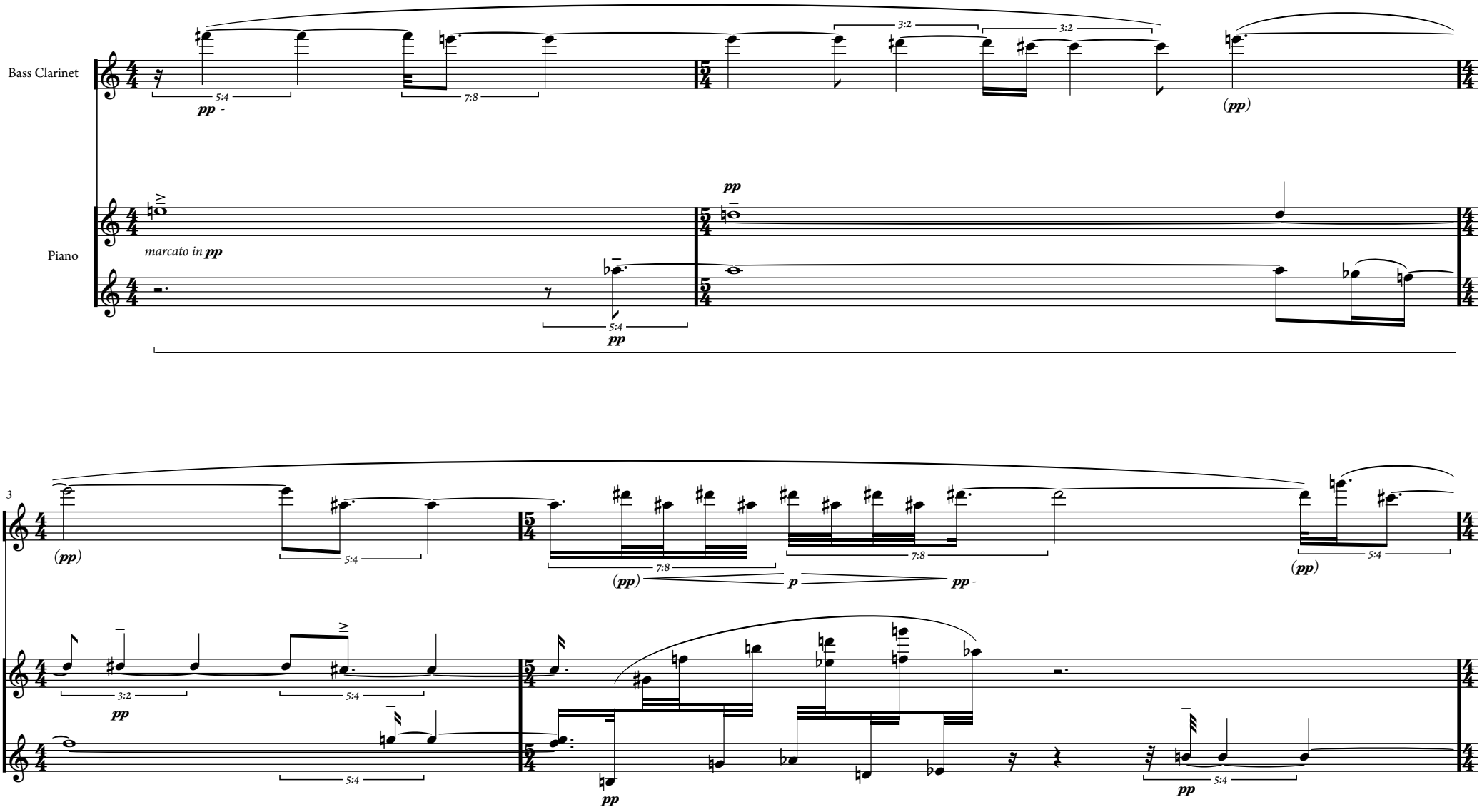
- **Piano**: a bass clef with an 8 beneath indicates that all the pitches in that stave are to be played an octave lower. This is cancelled by a normal bass clef. Similarly a treble clef with an 8 above indicates that all the pitches in that stave are to be played an octave higher, until cancelled by the normal clef.

in Platonia

Chris Dench (2024)

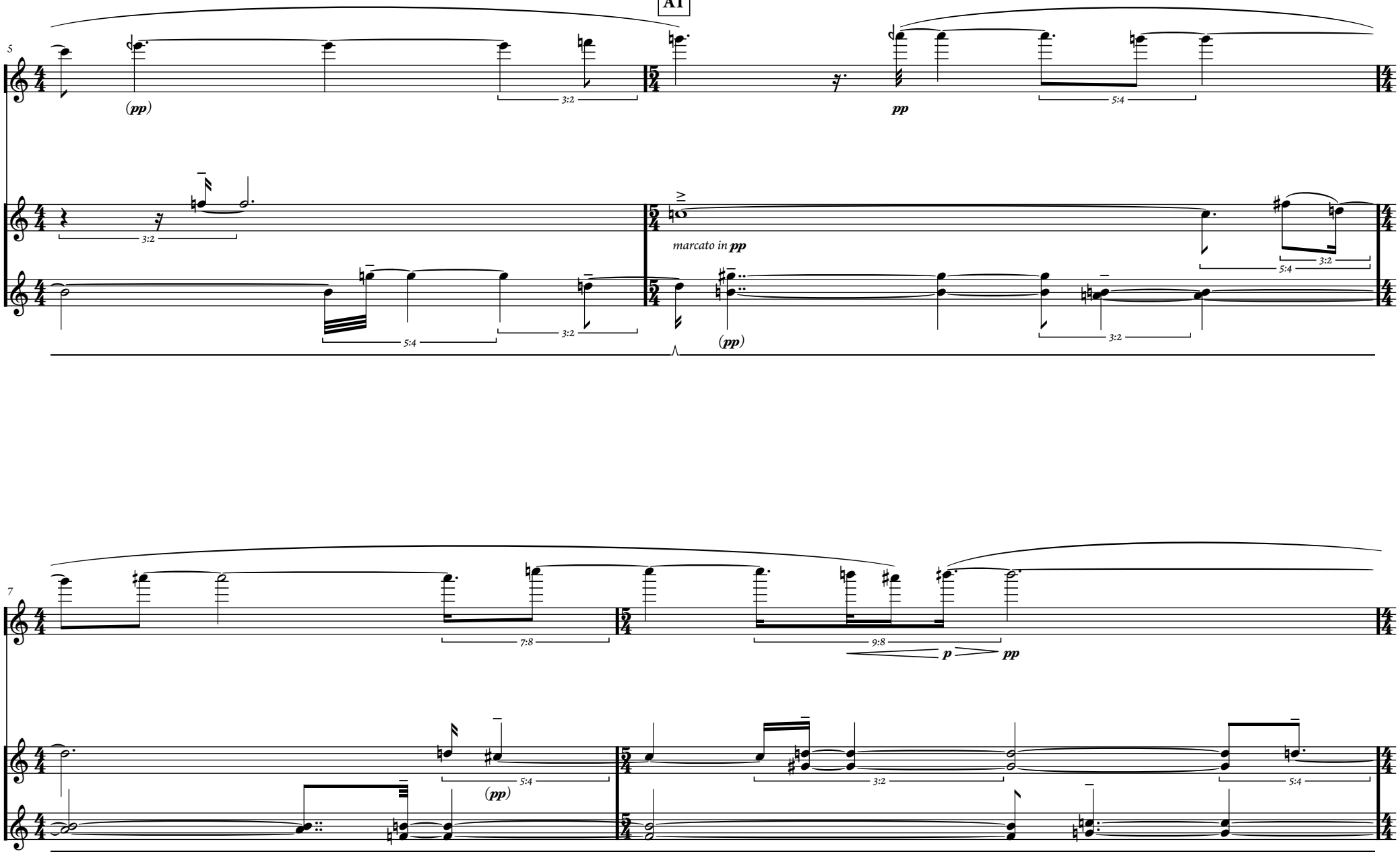
I somnambulantly

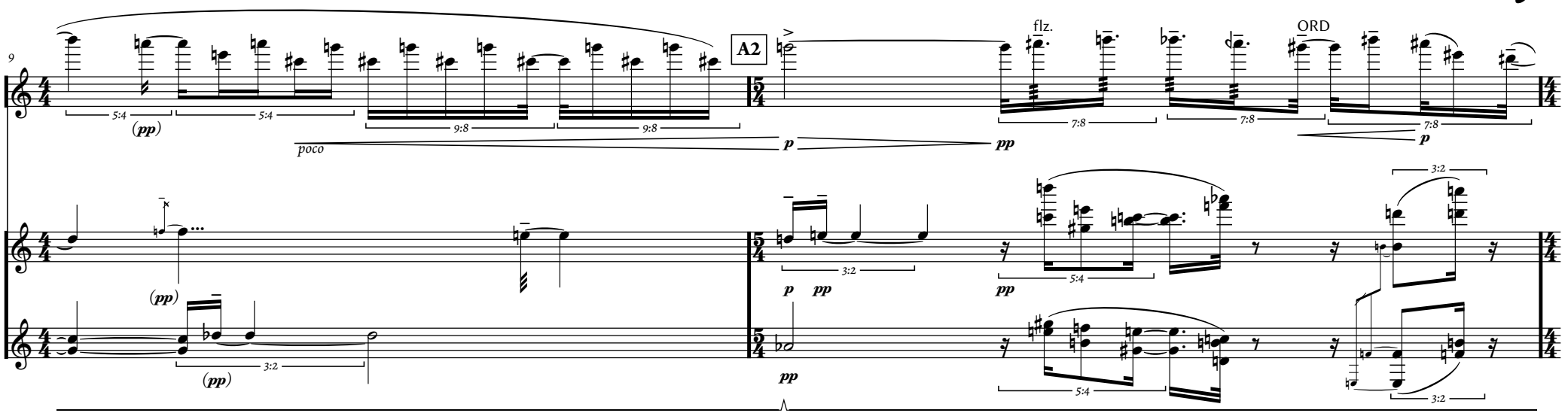
♩ = 66

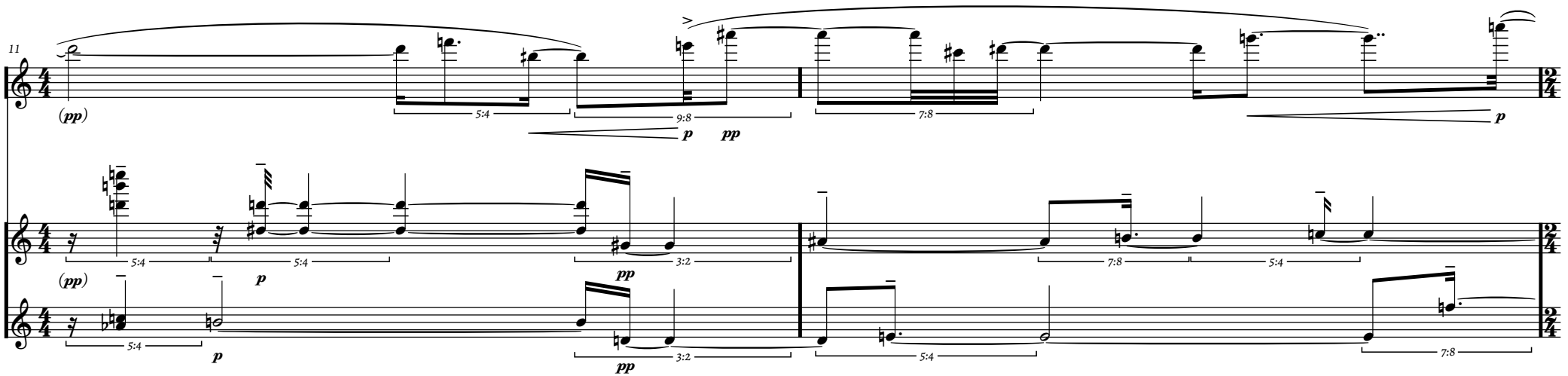


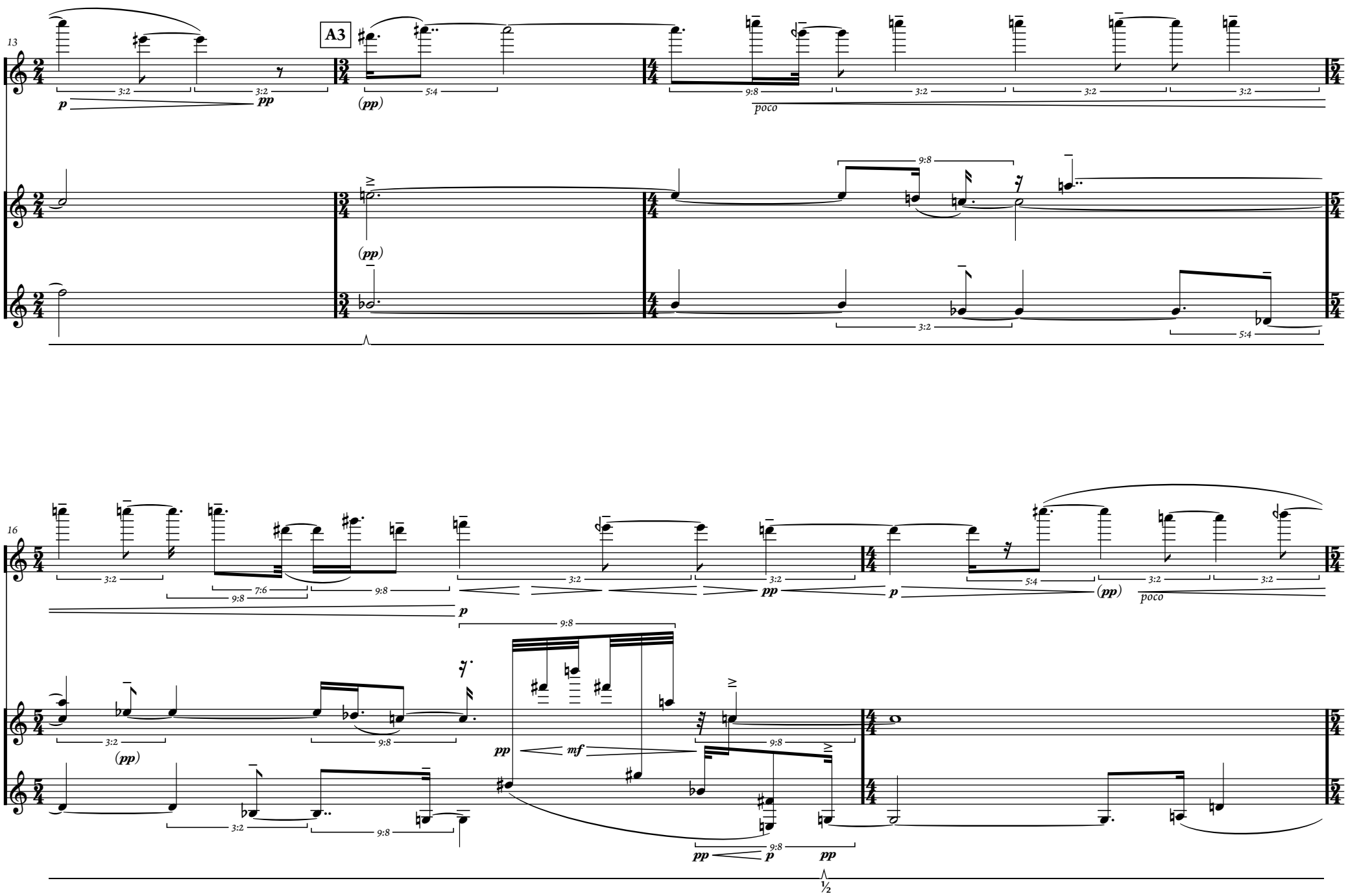
in Platonia

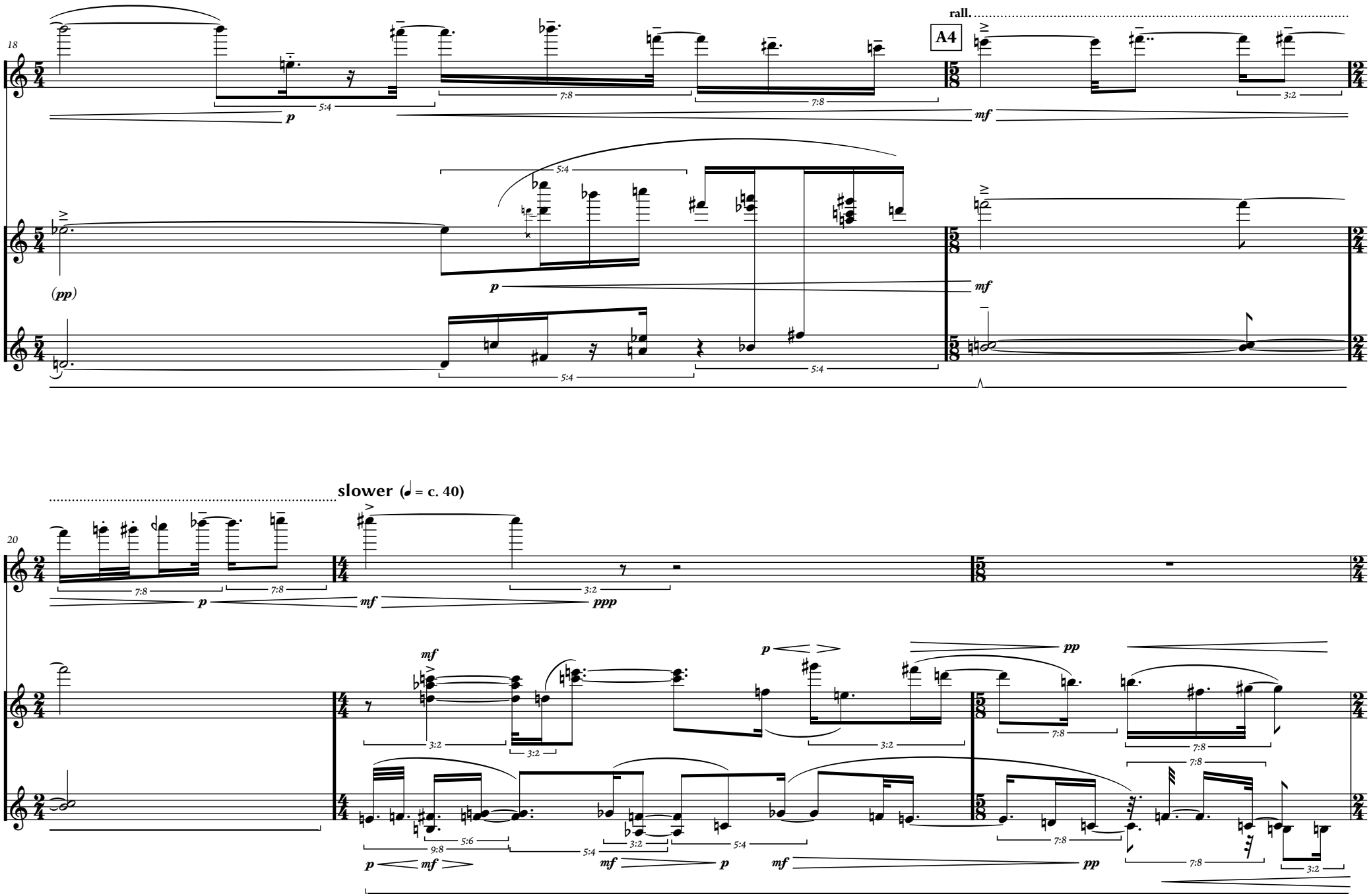
A1




9
A2
flz.
ORD
poco


11


13
A3
16
poco
poco


18
rall.
A4
(pp)
20
slower (♩ = c. 40)

A5 ♩ = 60 a tempo

Play 3 times

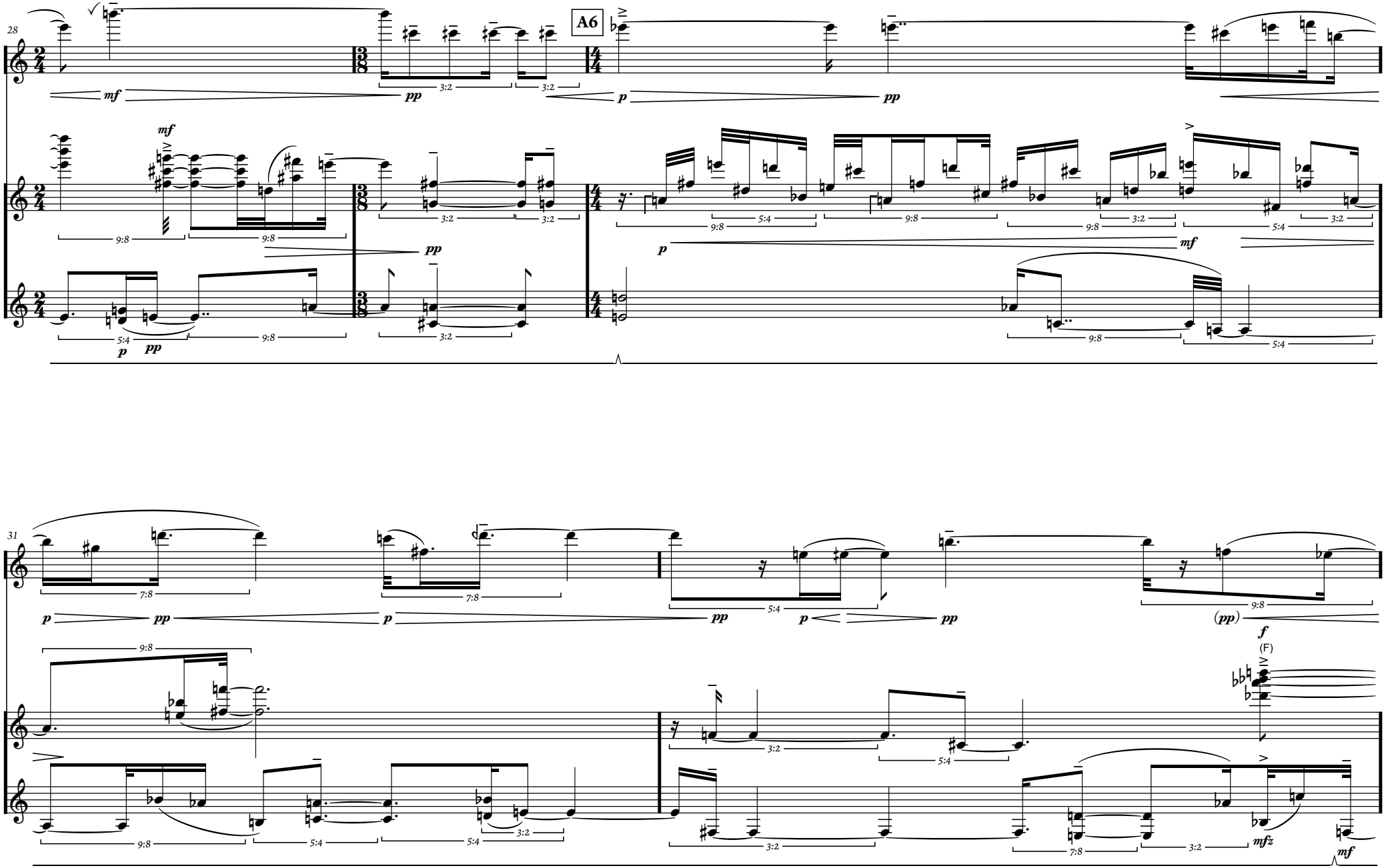
23

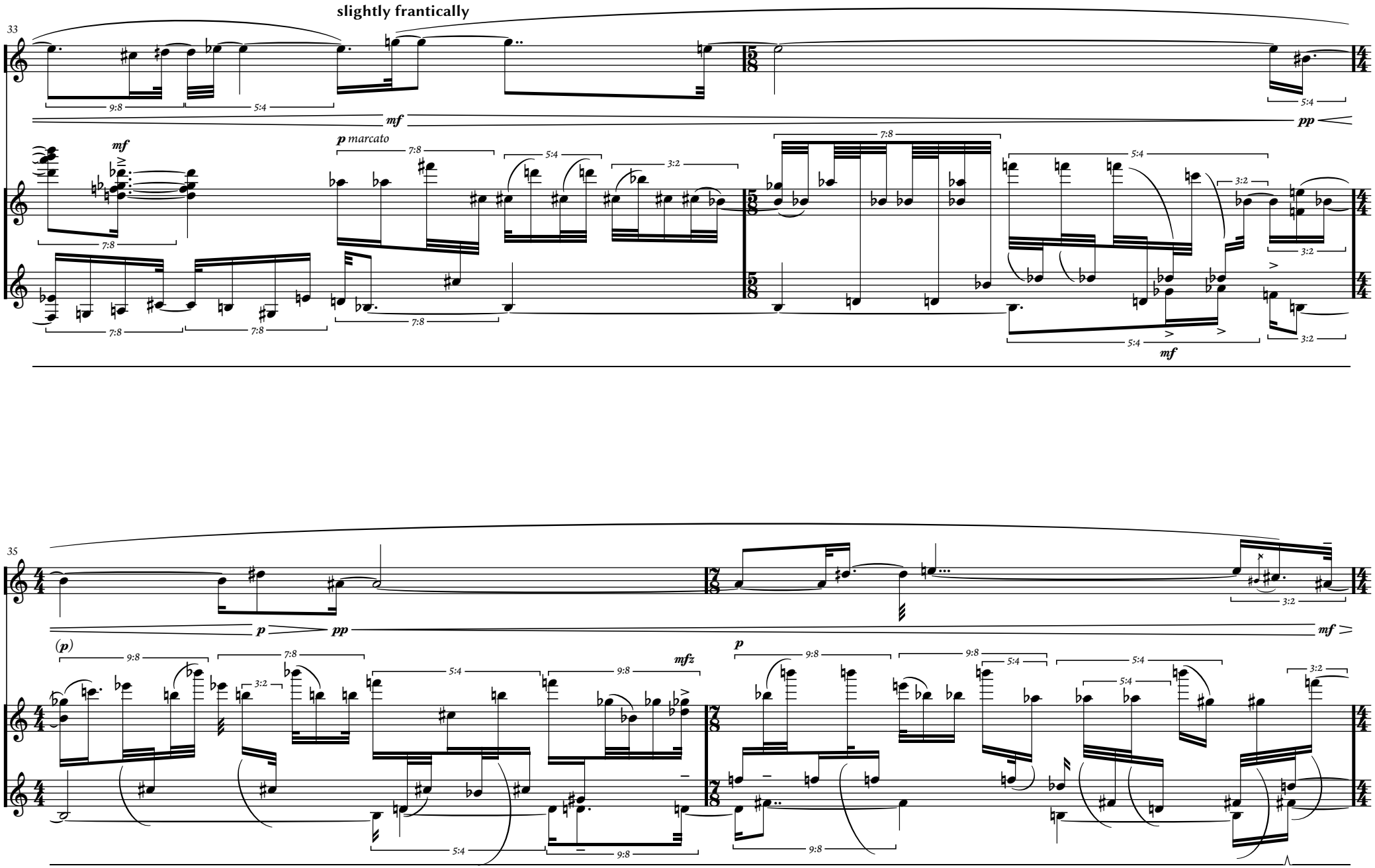
poco rall. .....

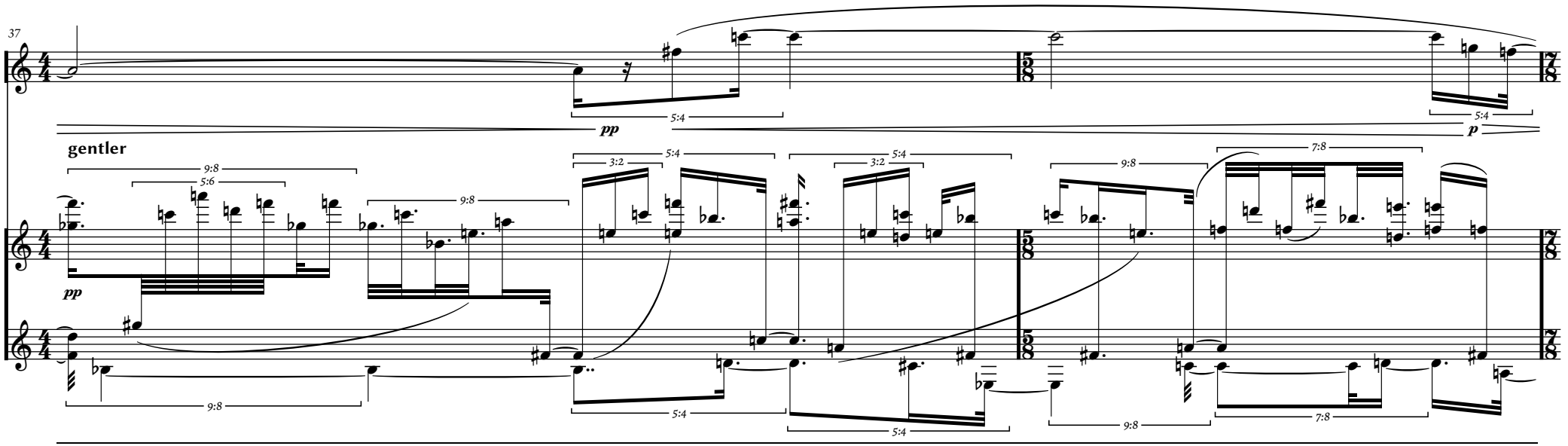
mf dim. .....

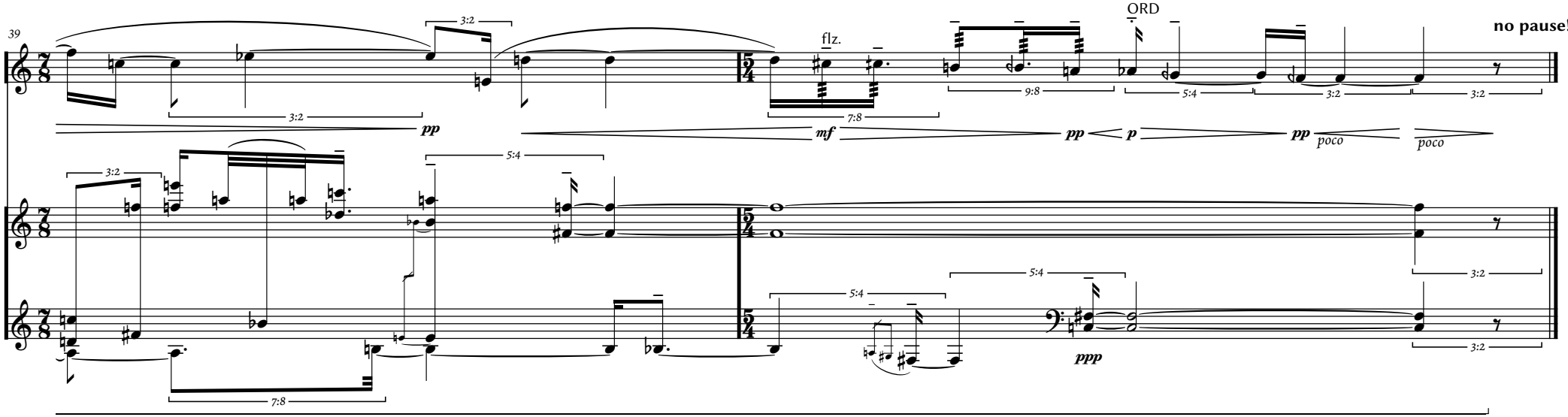
25

glitteringly

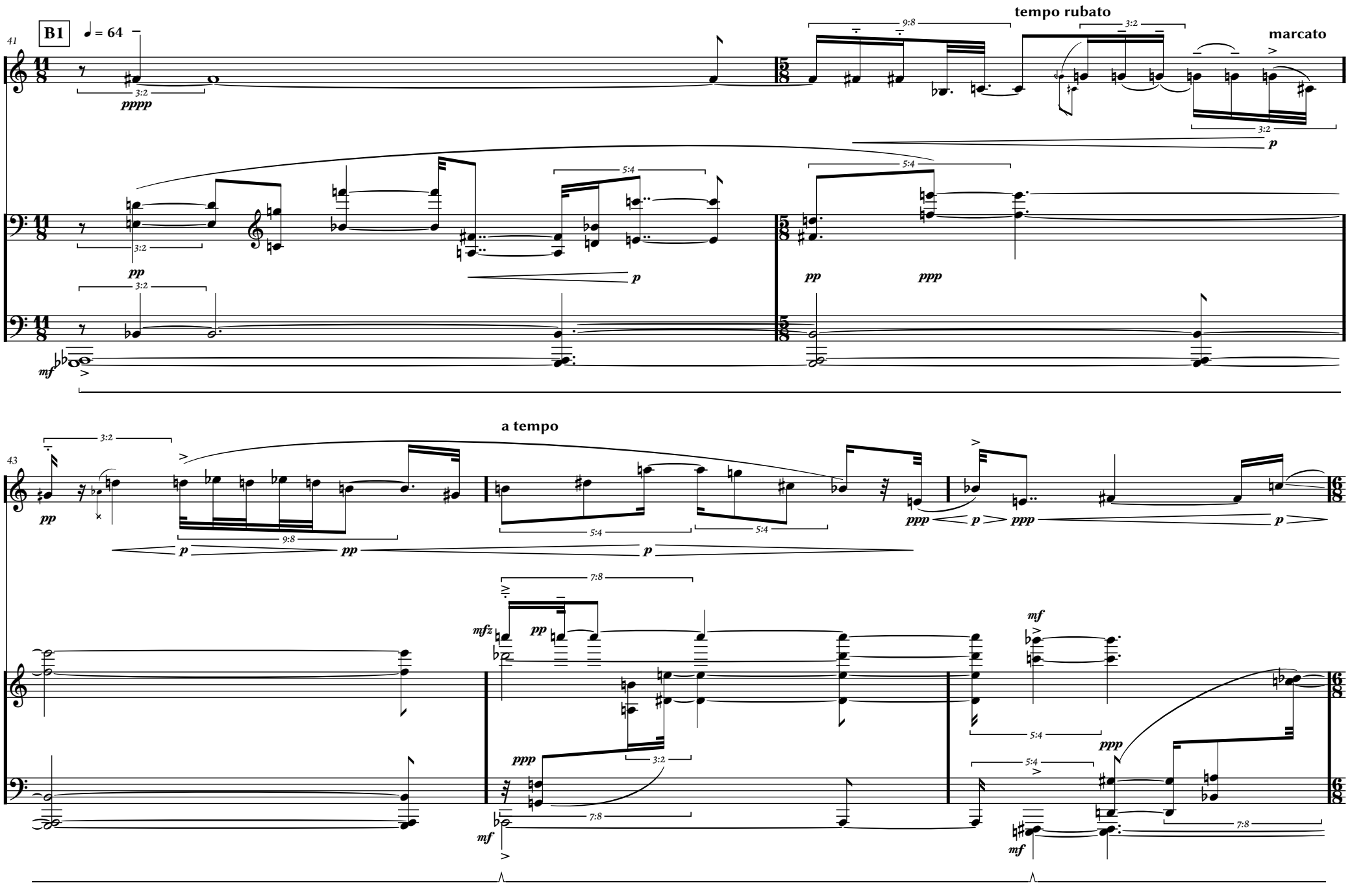

28
A6
31
(F)

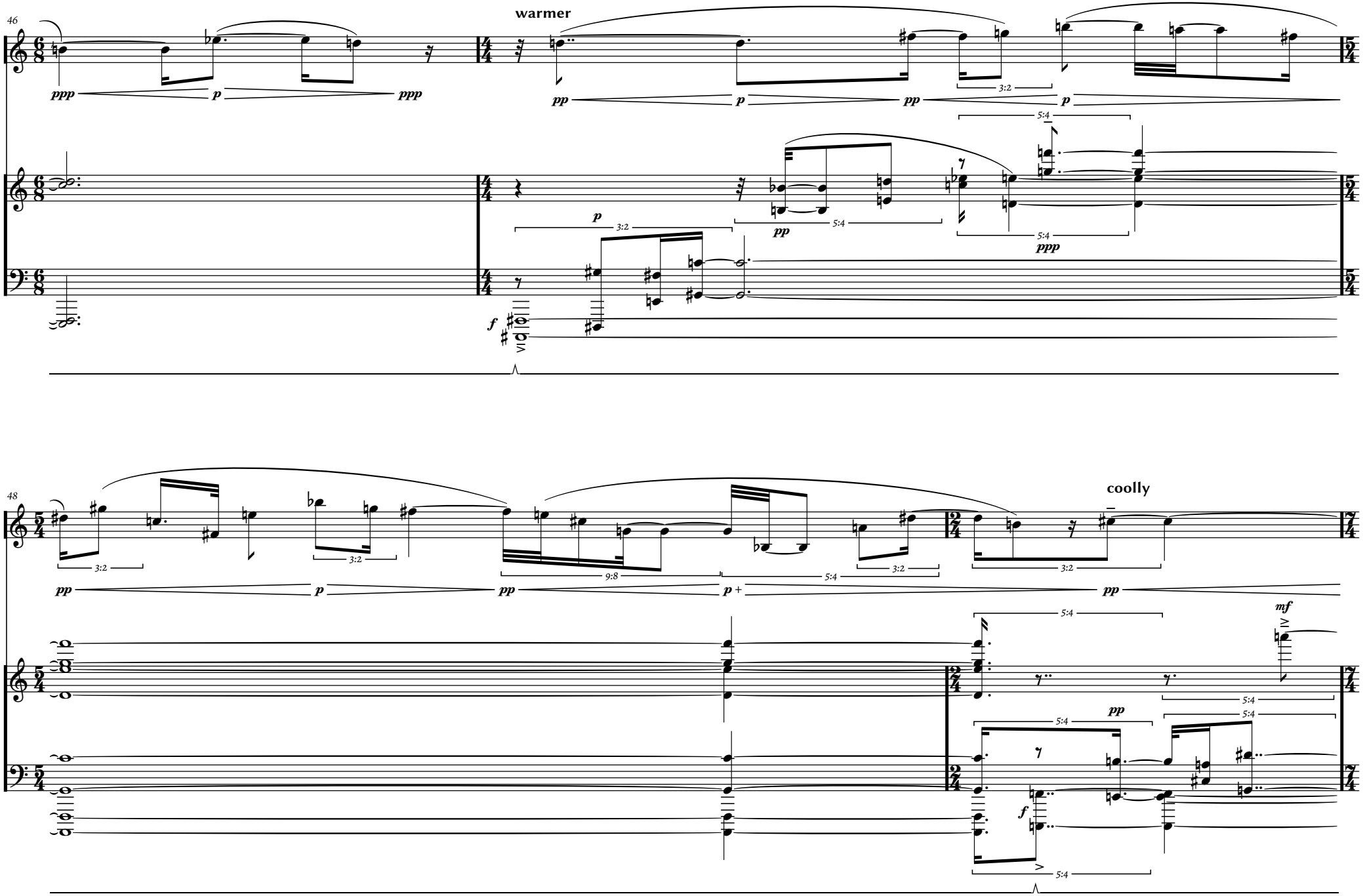

slightly frantically
33
mf
pp
mf
p marcato
35
(p)
p
pp
mf
mfz
p

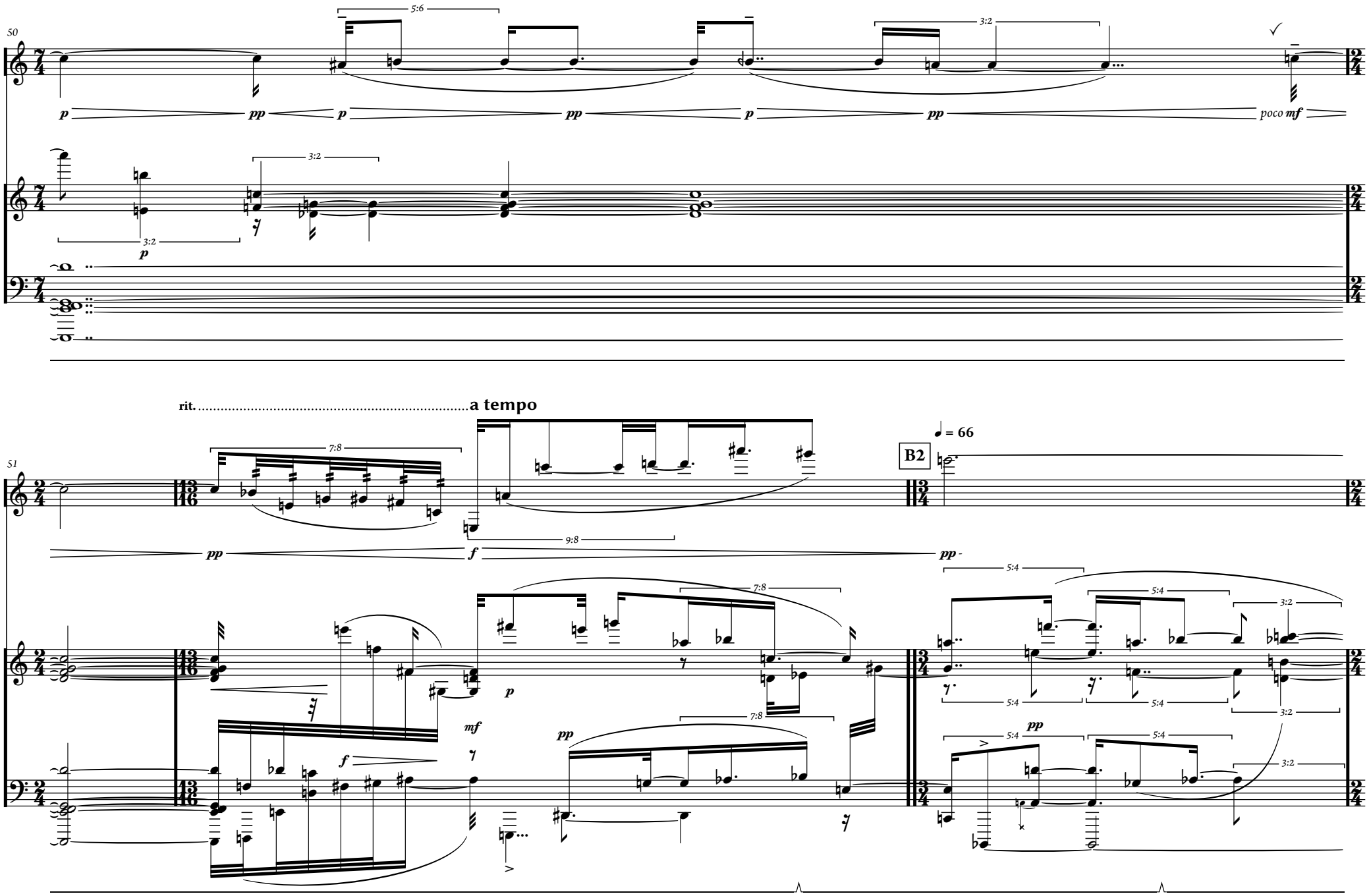

37
gentler
pp
p
9:8
5:6
5:4
3:2
7:8


39
flz.
ORD
no pause!
pp
mf
p
poco
ppp
3:2
5:4
7:8
9:8

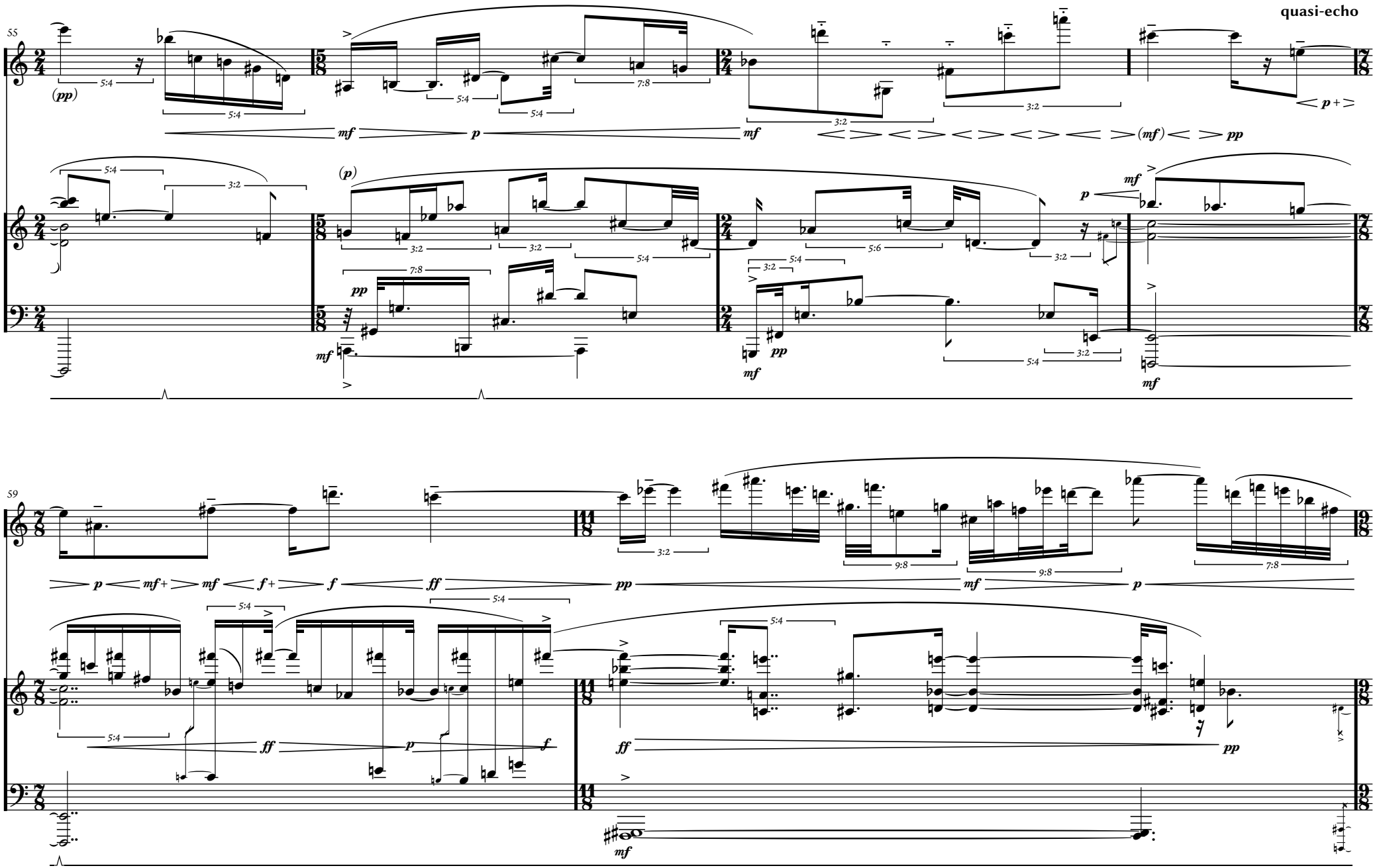
II ruminatively

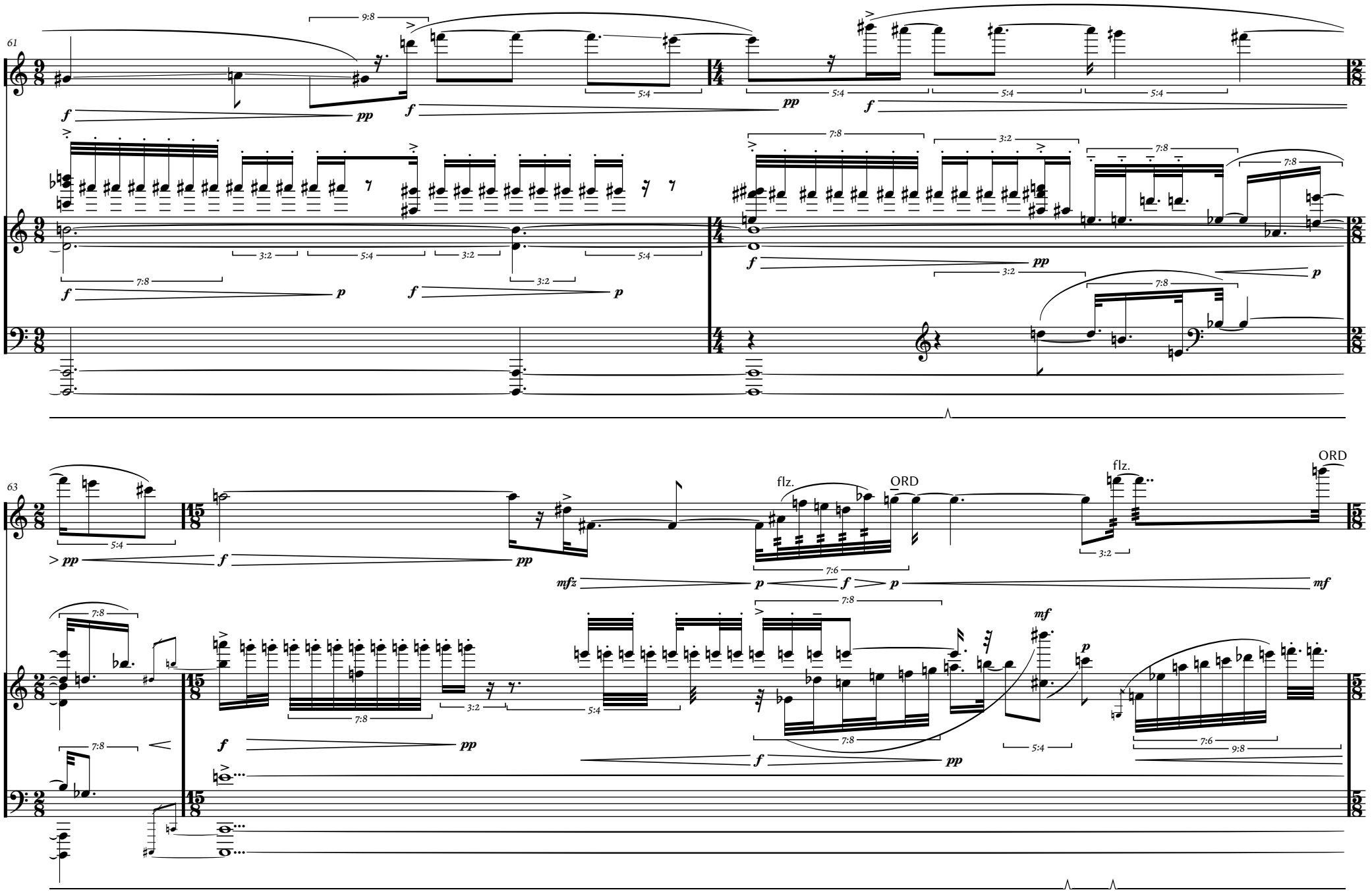



46
warmer
48
coolly

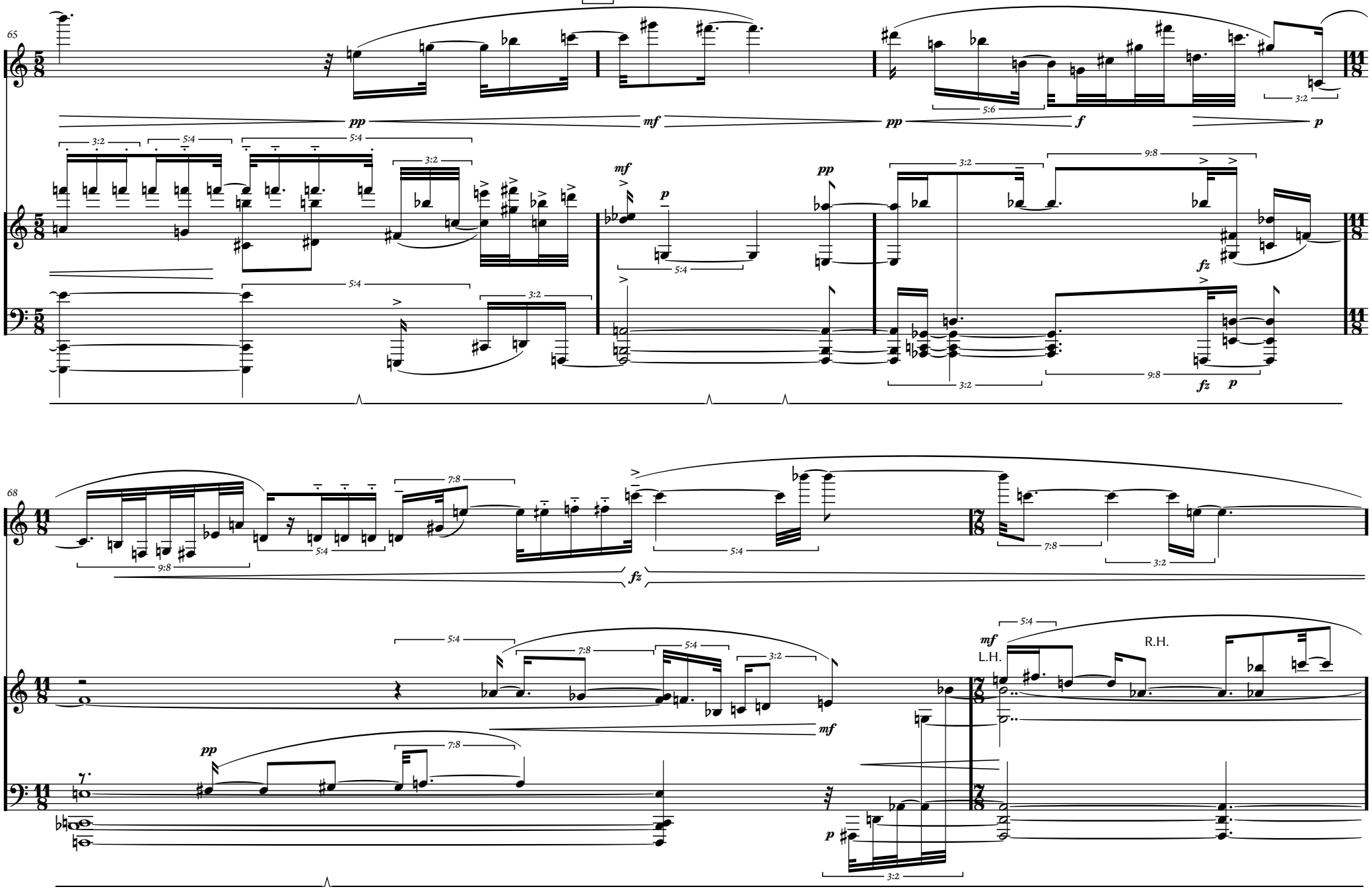

50
5:6
3:2
p
pp
p
pp
p
pp
poco mf
3:2
3:2
p
rit.
a tempo
51
7:8
9:8
pp
f
B2
♩ = 66
pp
5:4
7:8
p
mf
f
pp
7:8
5:4
5:4
3:2
5:4
5:4
3:2
pp
5:4
5:4
3:2

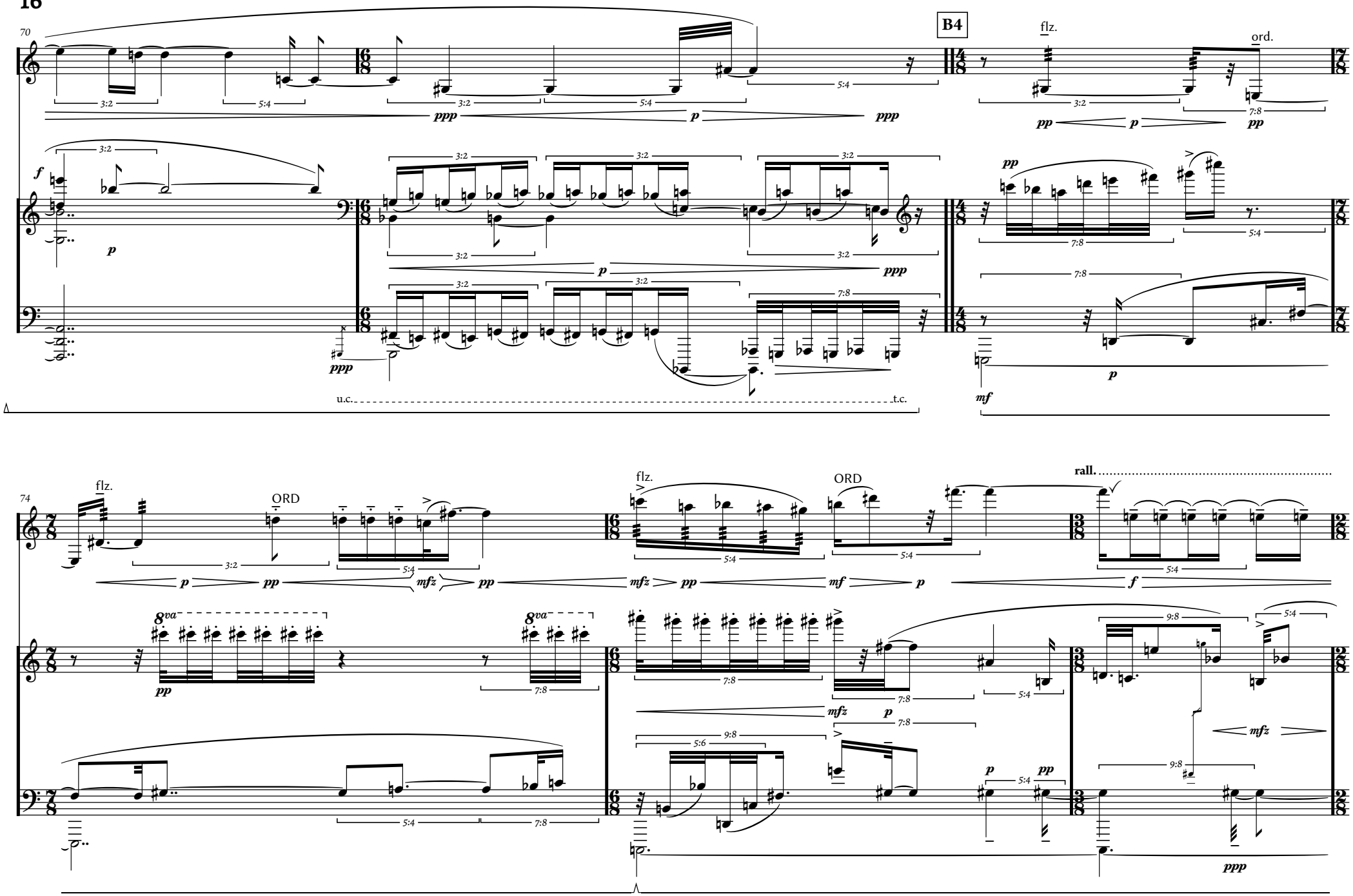
quasi-echo

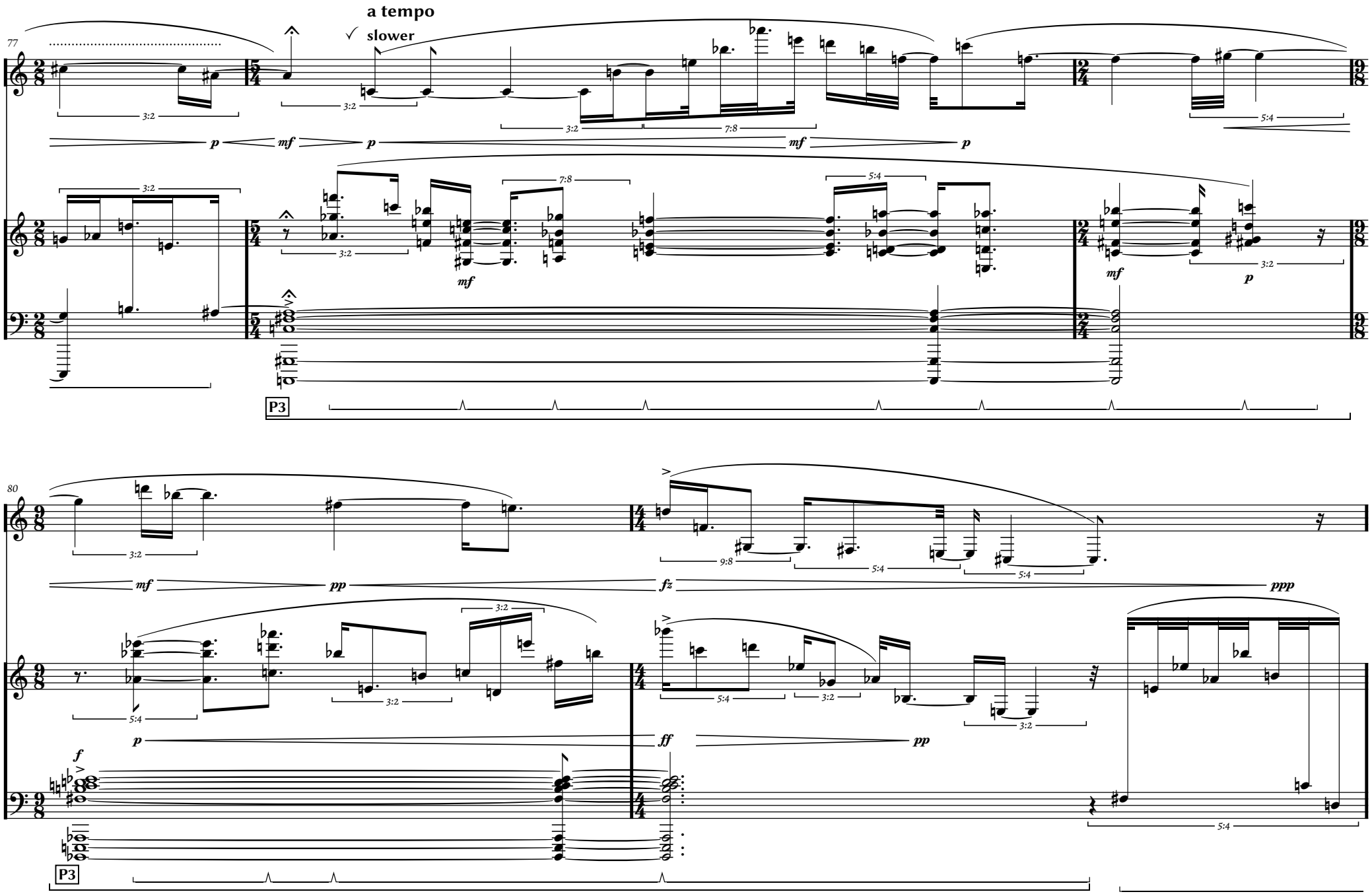


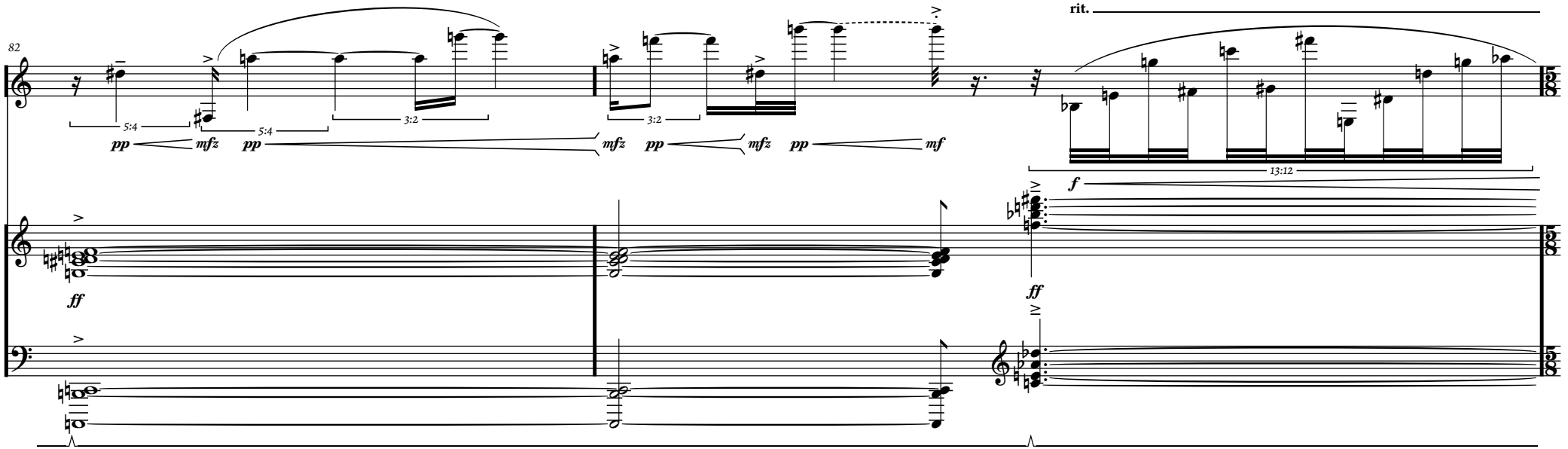

61
63
flz.
ORD
flz.
ORD

B3

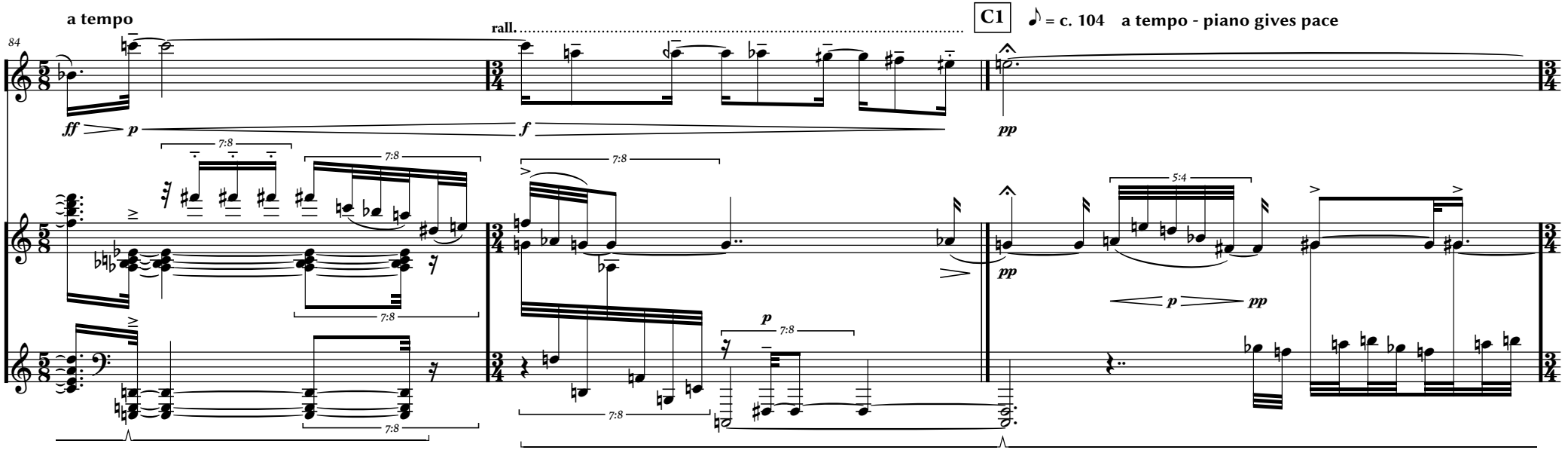


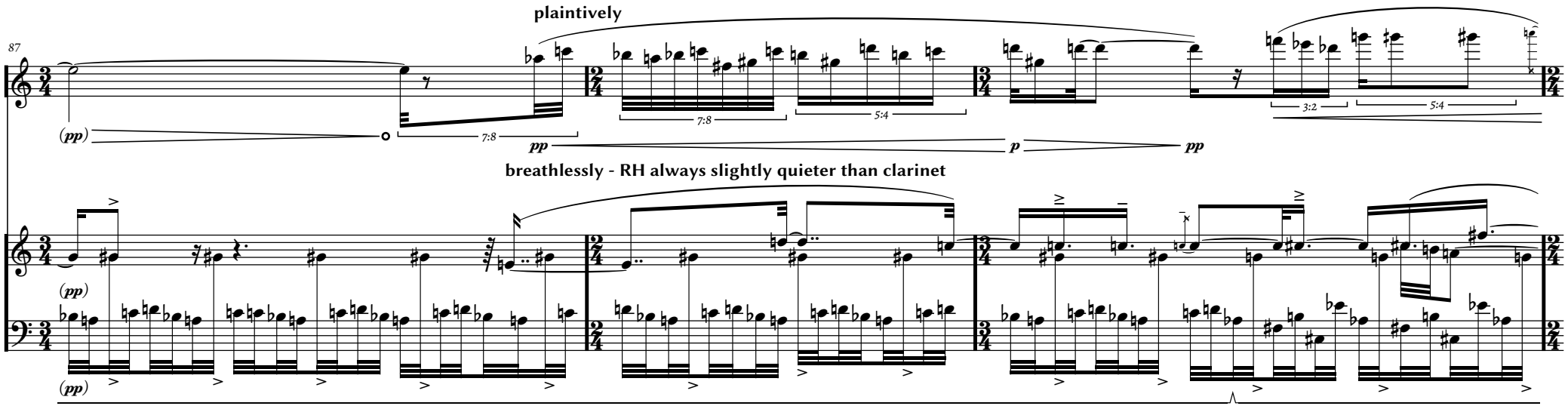

70
B4
flz.
ord.
u.c.
t.c.
74
flz.
ORD
flz.
ORD
rall.
8va
8va

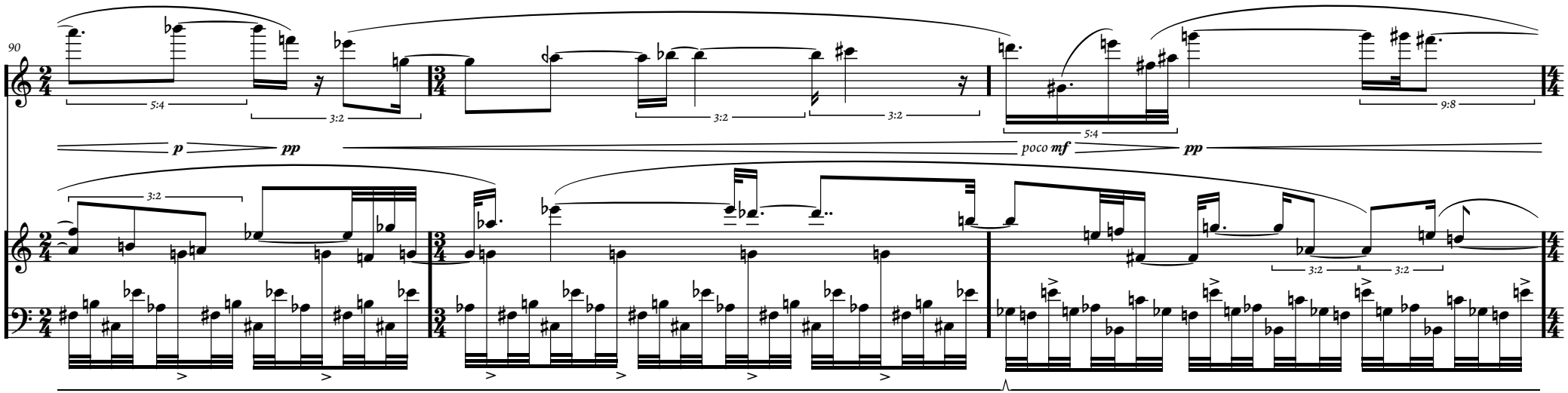

77
a tempo
slower
3:2
7:8
5:4
p
mf
P3
80
9:8
fz
ppp
ff
pp

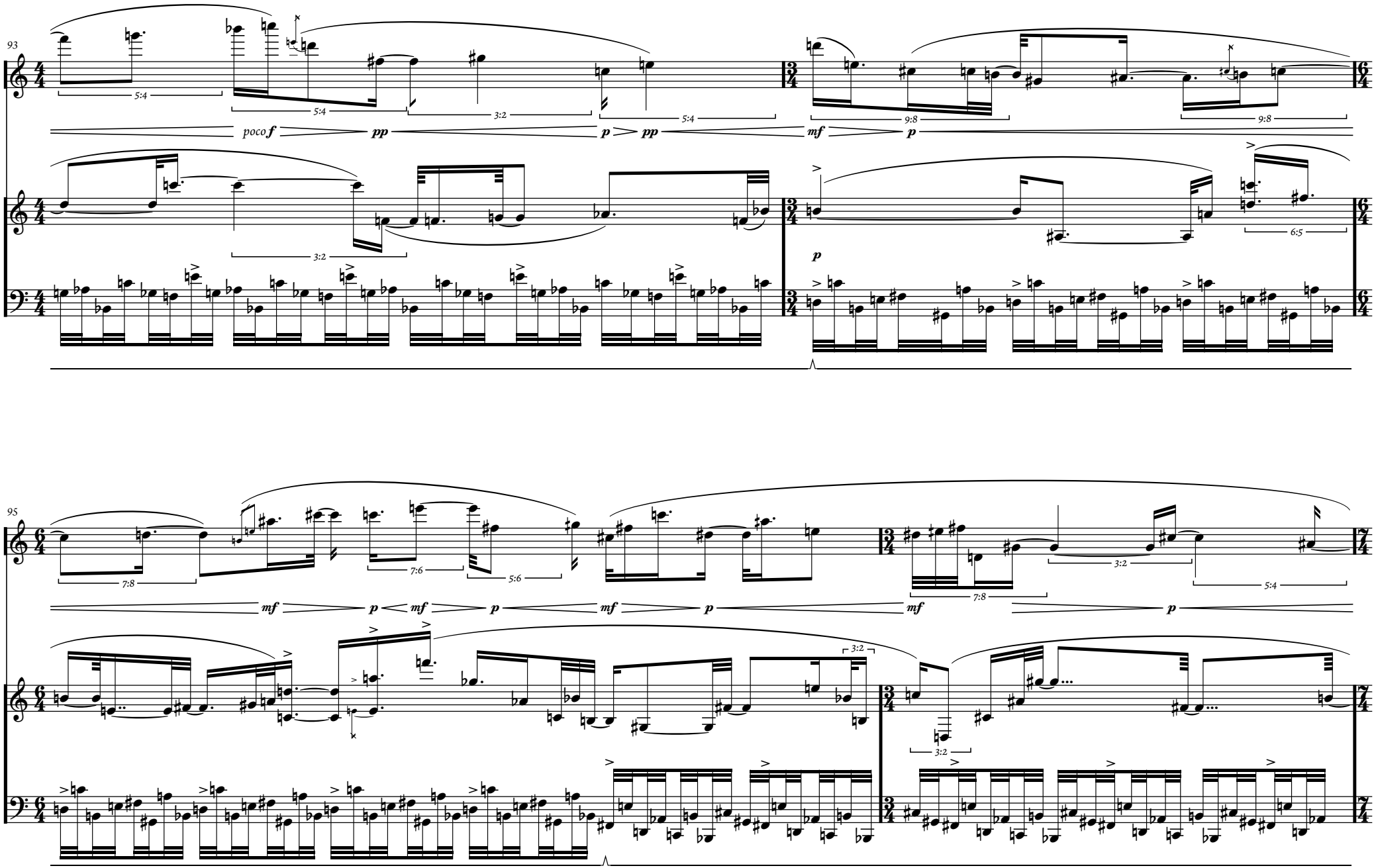


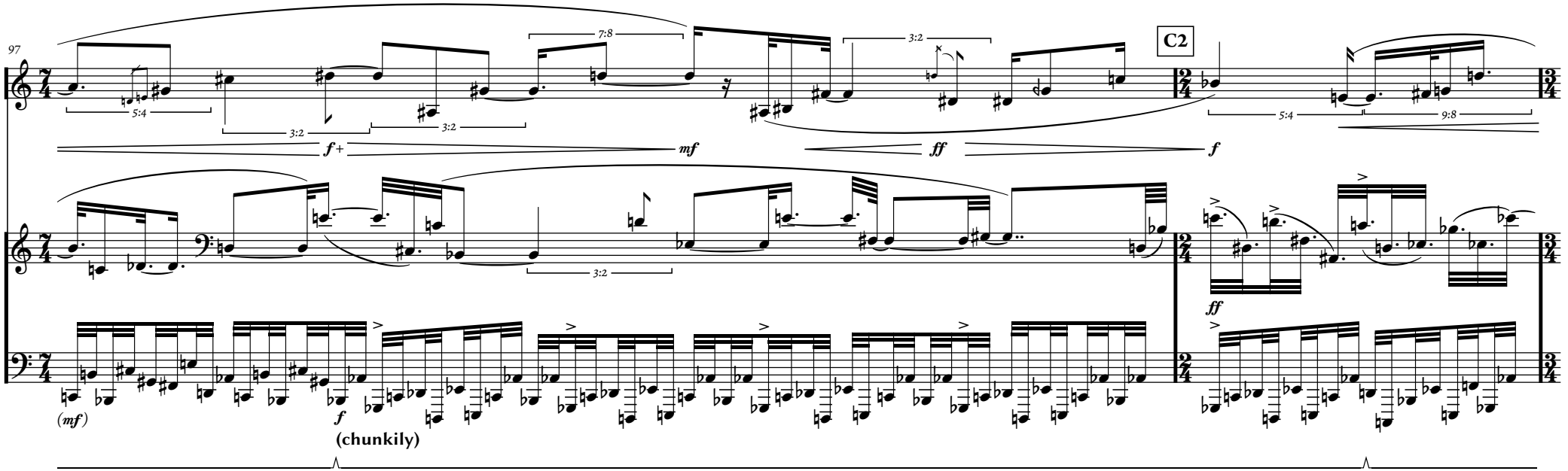
III sublunar stride

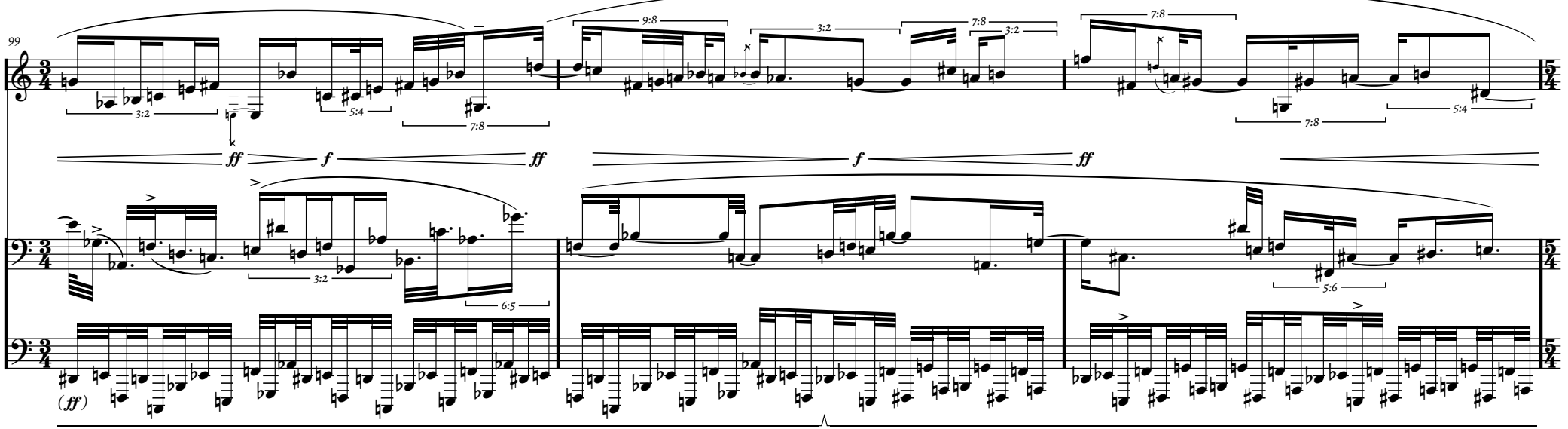


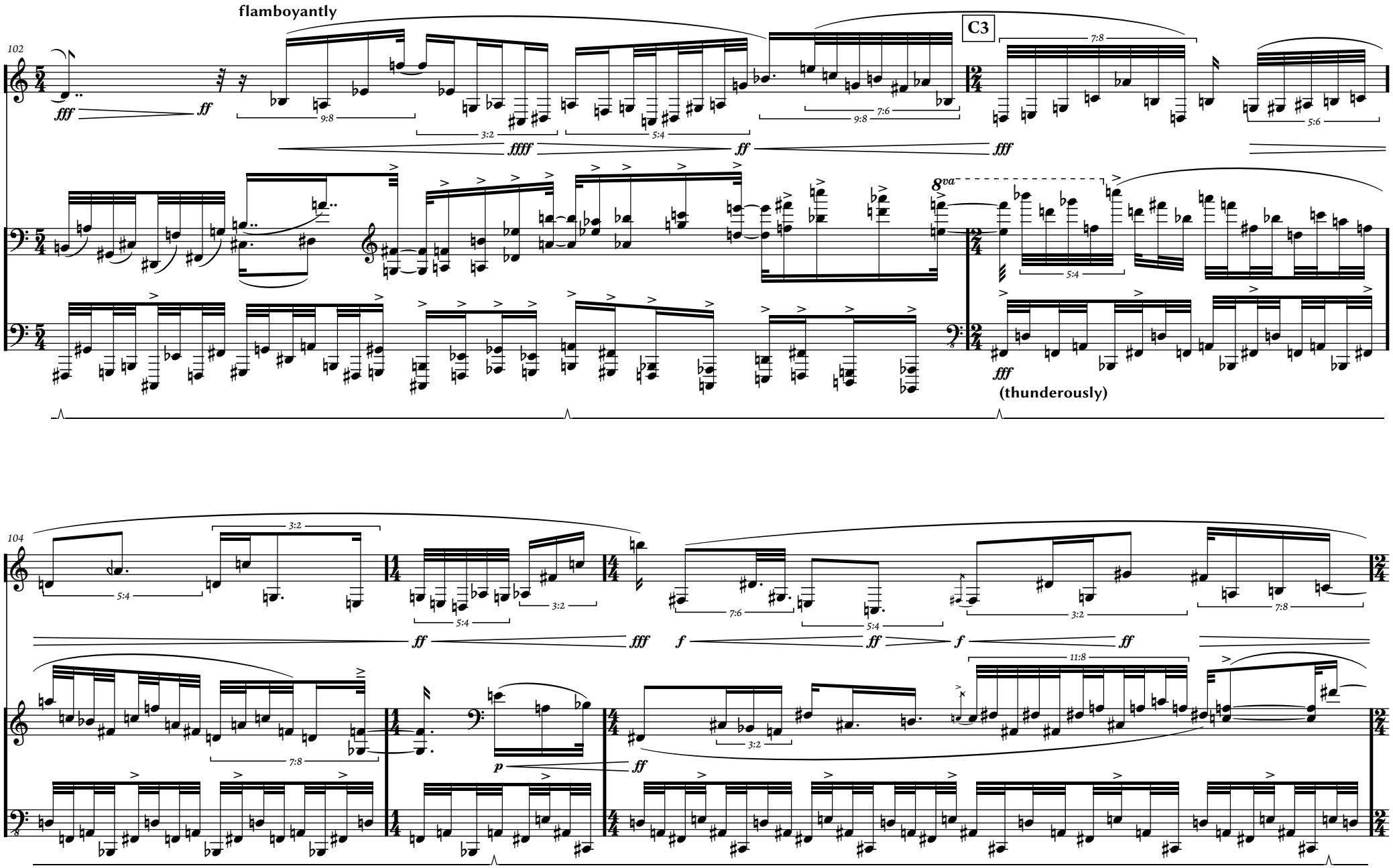

plaintively
87
(pp)
pp
p
pp
breathlessly - RH always slightly quieter than clarinet
(pp)
(pp)
7:8
7:8
5:4
3:2
5:4


90
p
pp
poco mf
pp
5:4
3:2
3:2
3:2
5:4
9:8
3:2
3:2
3:2


93
poco f
pp
p
pp
mf
p
95
mf
p
mf
p
mf
mf
p
p


97
C2
(mf)
f
(chunkily)
ff


99
(ff)


flamboyantly
102
C3
8va
(thunderously)
104

C4

107

mf poco f mf

fz

shrinkingly

mf

111

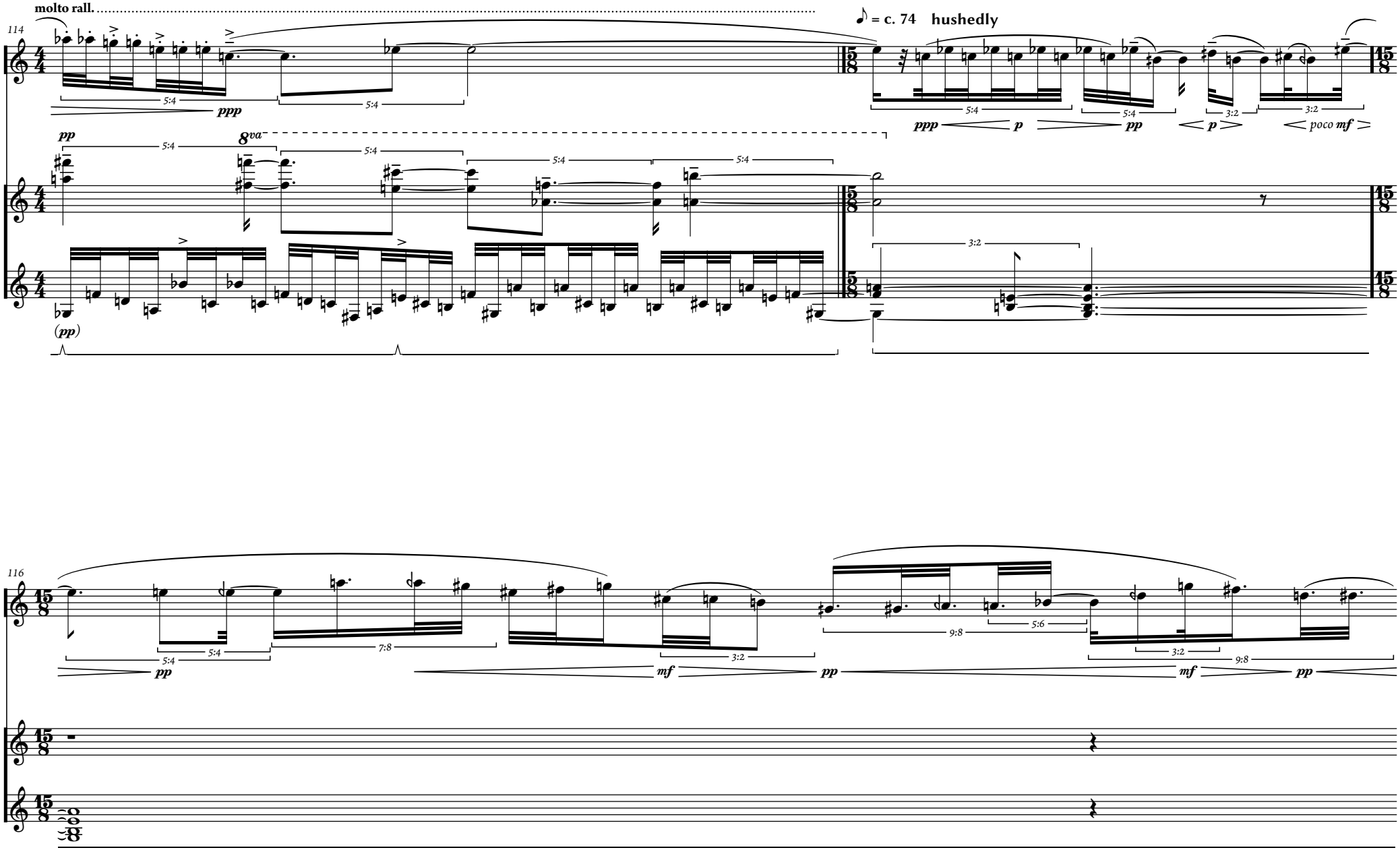
p mf p mf pp p

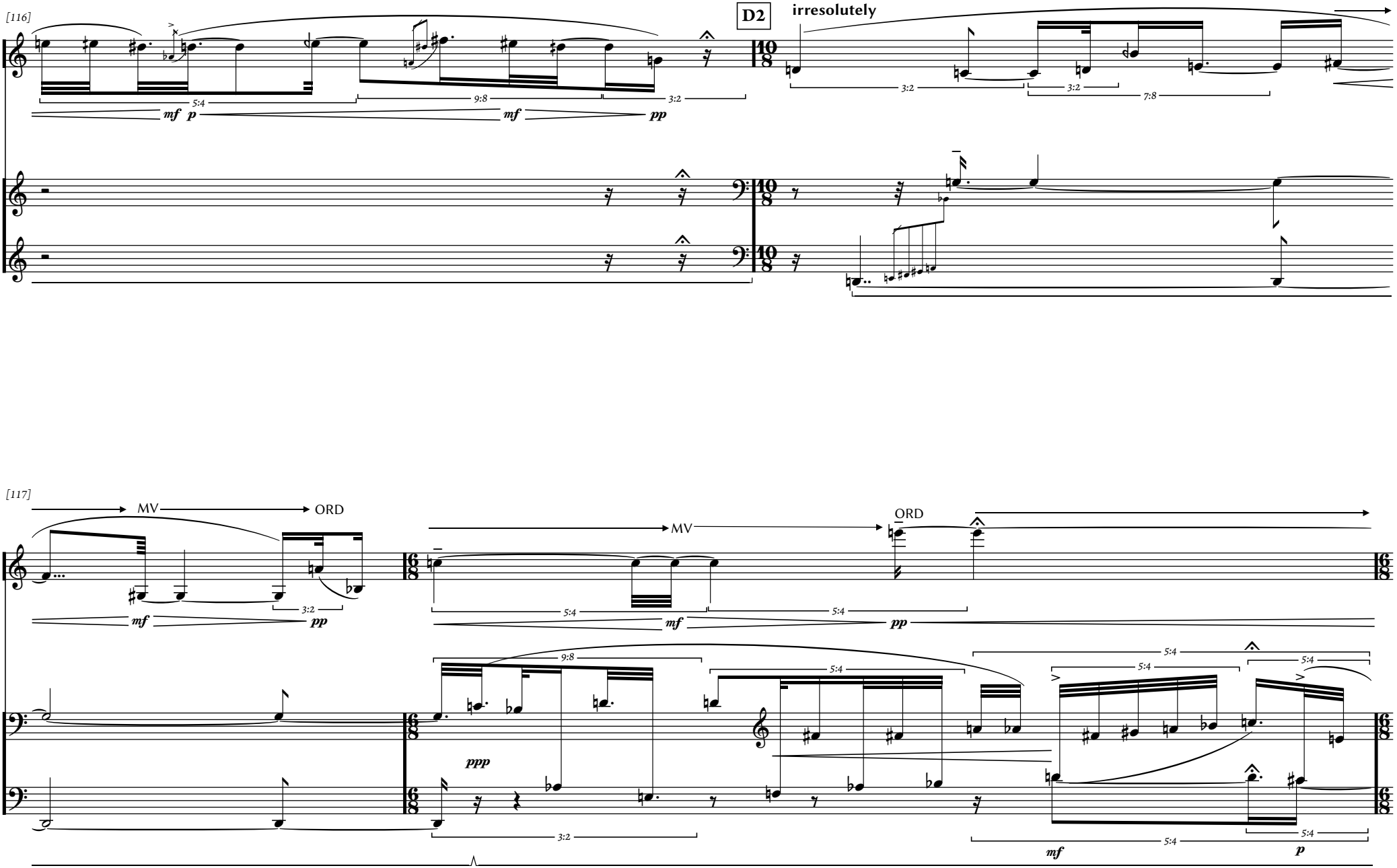
p

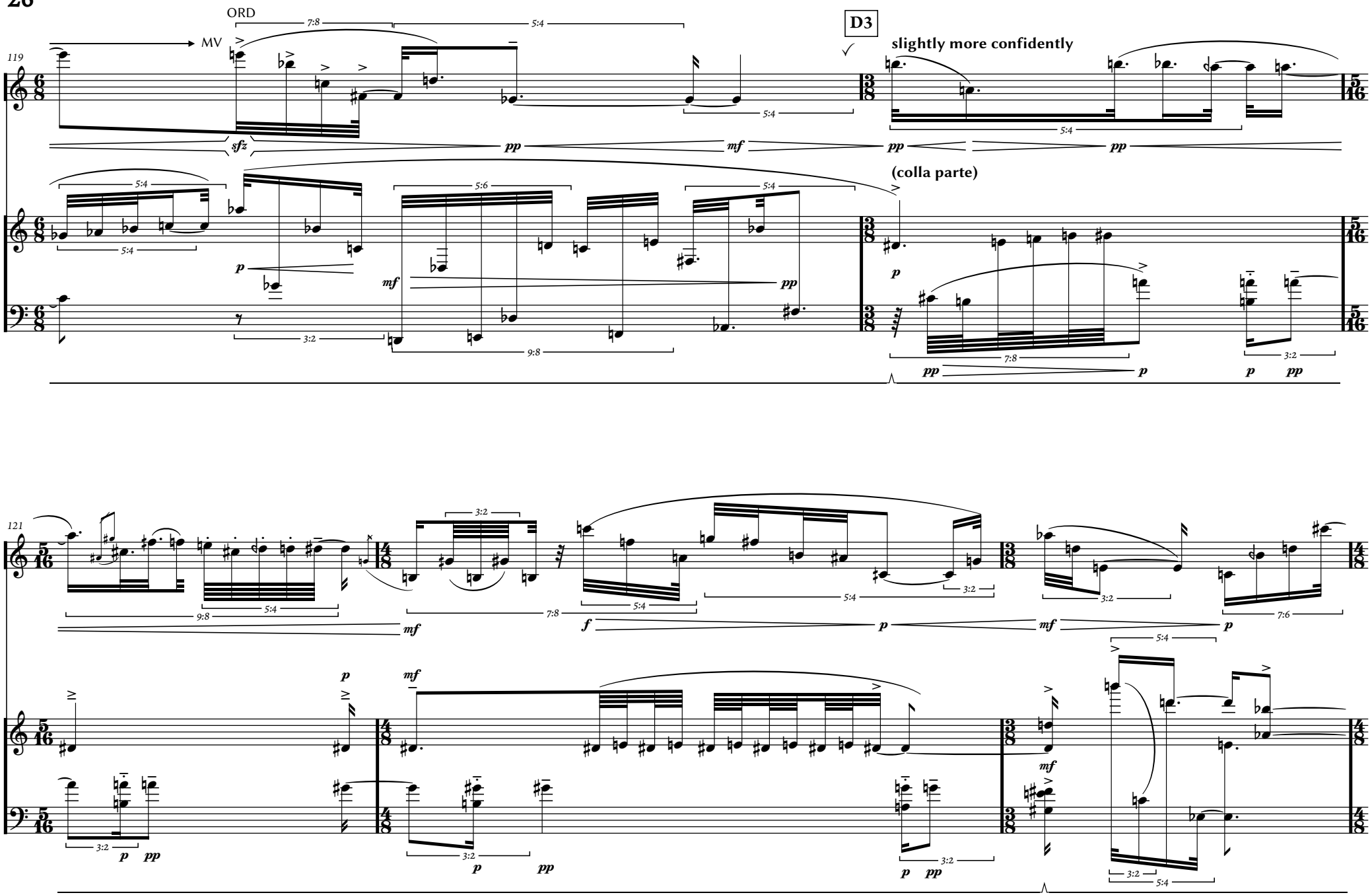
pp

D1

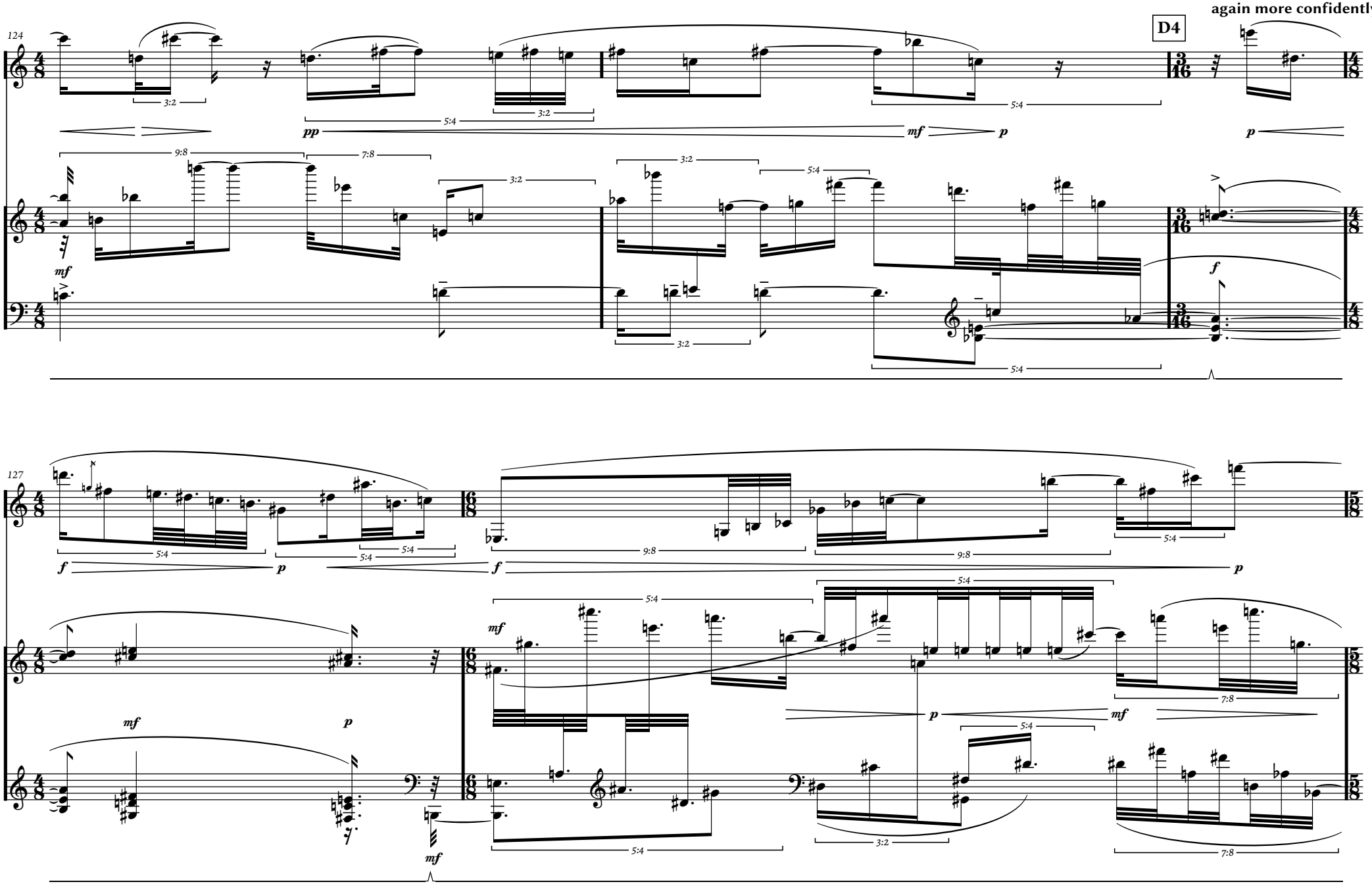
IV arborescent

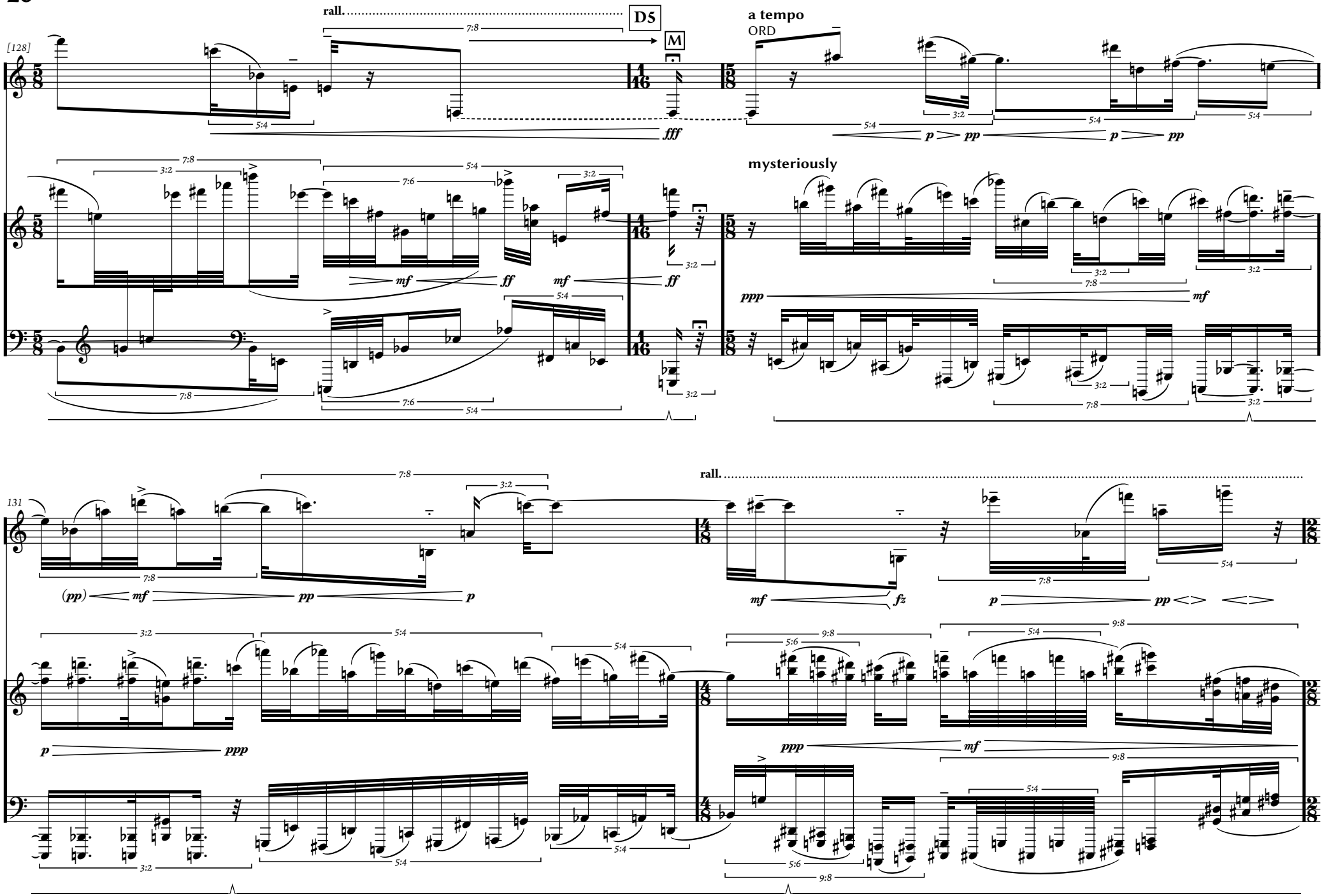


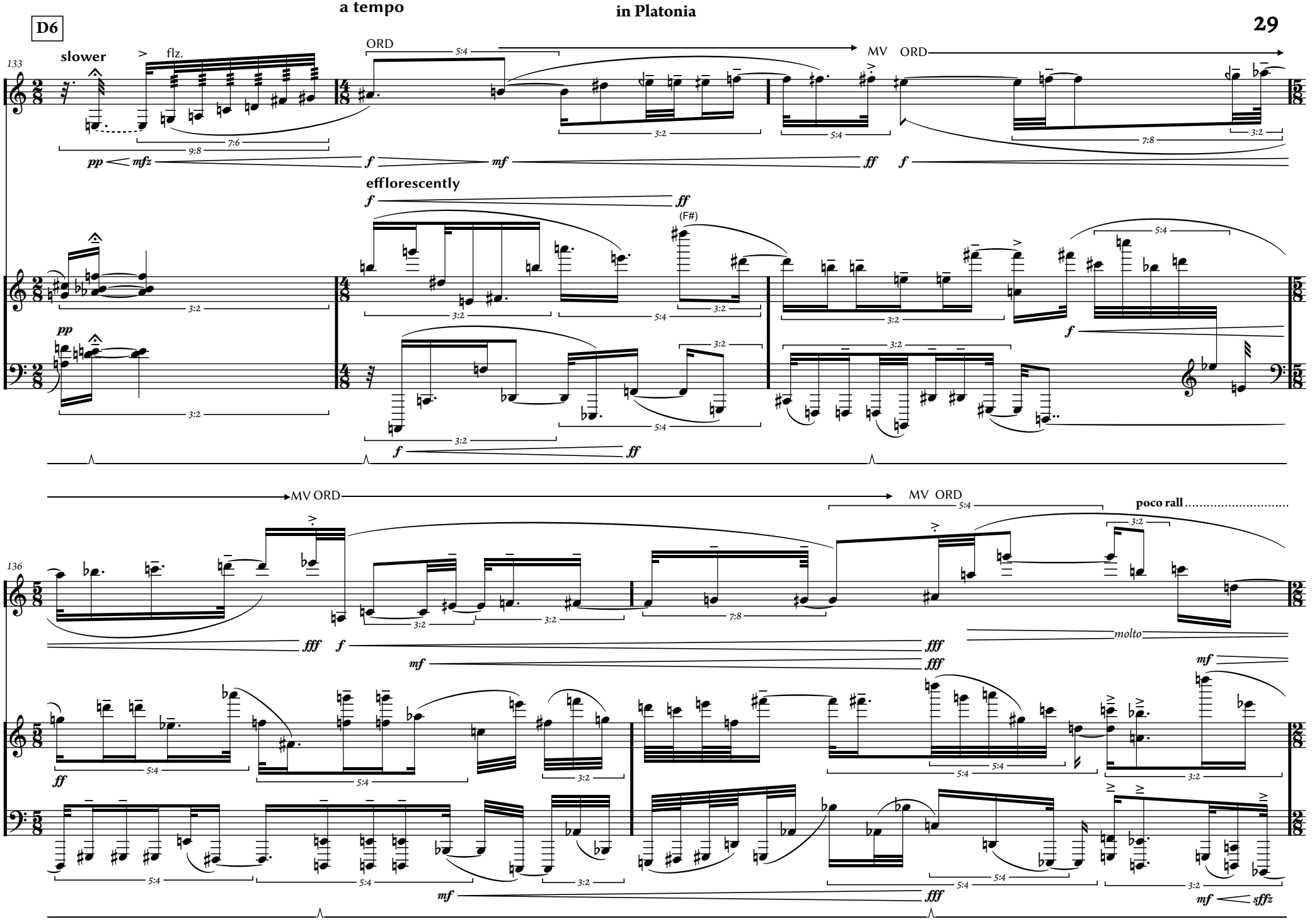

[116]
D2
irresolutely
5:4
9:8
3:2
mf
p
mf
pp
3:2
3:2
7:8
[117]
MV
ORD
MV
ORD
3:2
mf
pp
5:4
5:4
mf
pp
9:8
5:4
5:4
5:4
5:4
ppp
3:2
mf
5:4
p

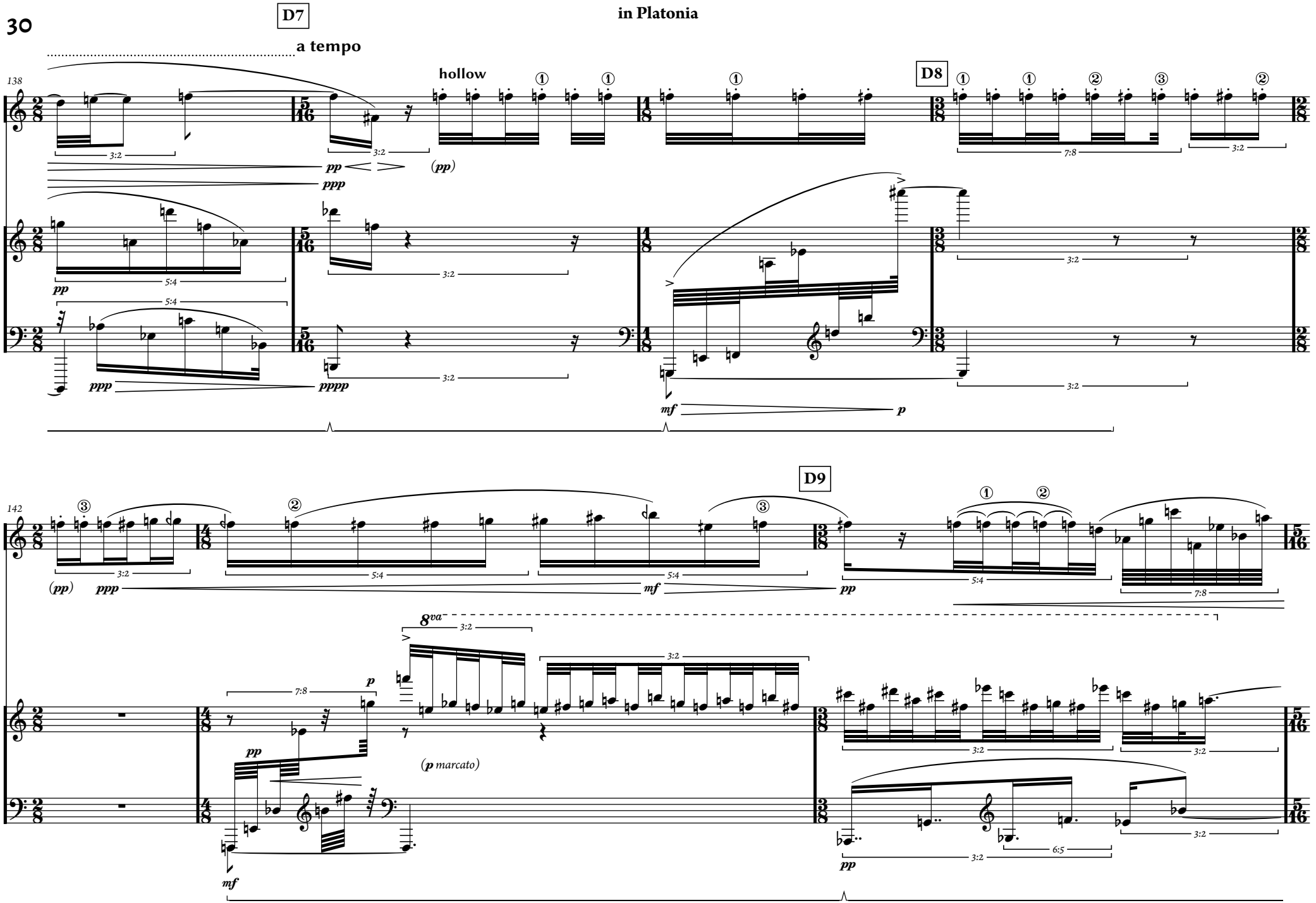

ORD
MV
119
D3
slightly more confidently
(colla parte)
121

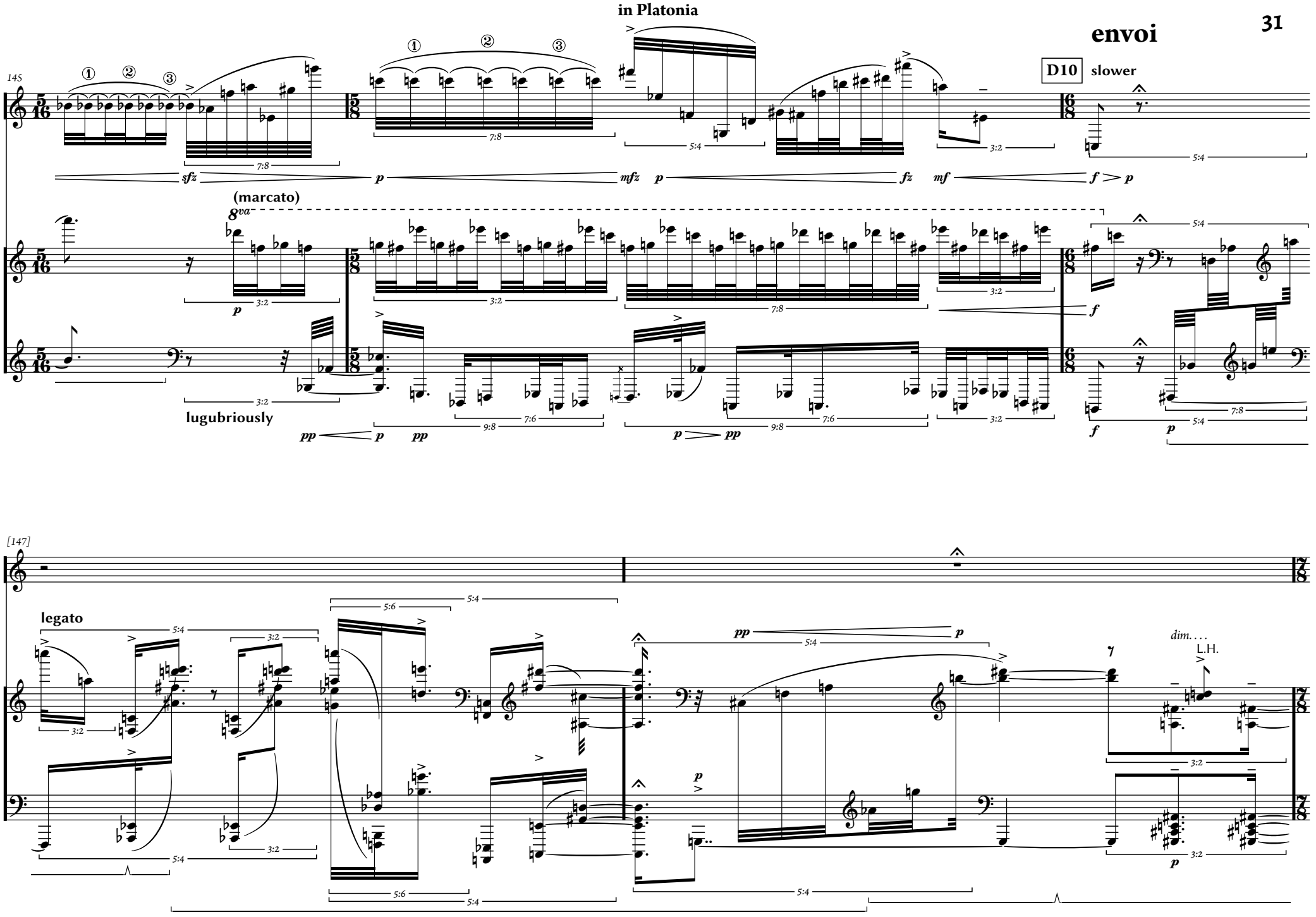
again more confidently



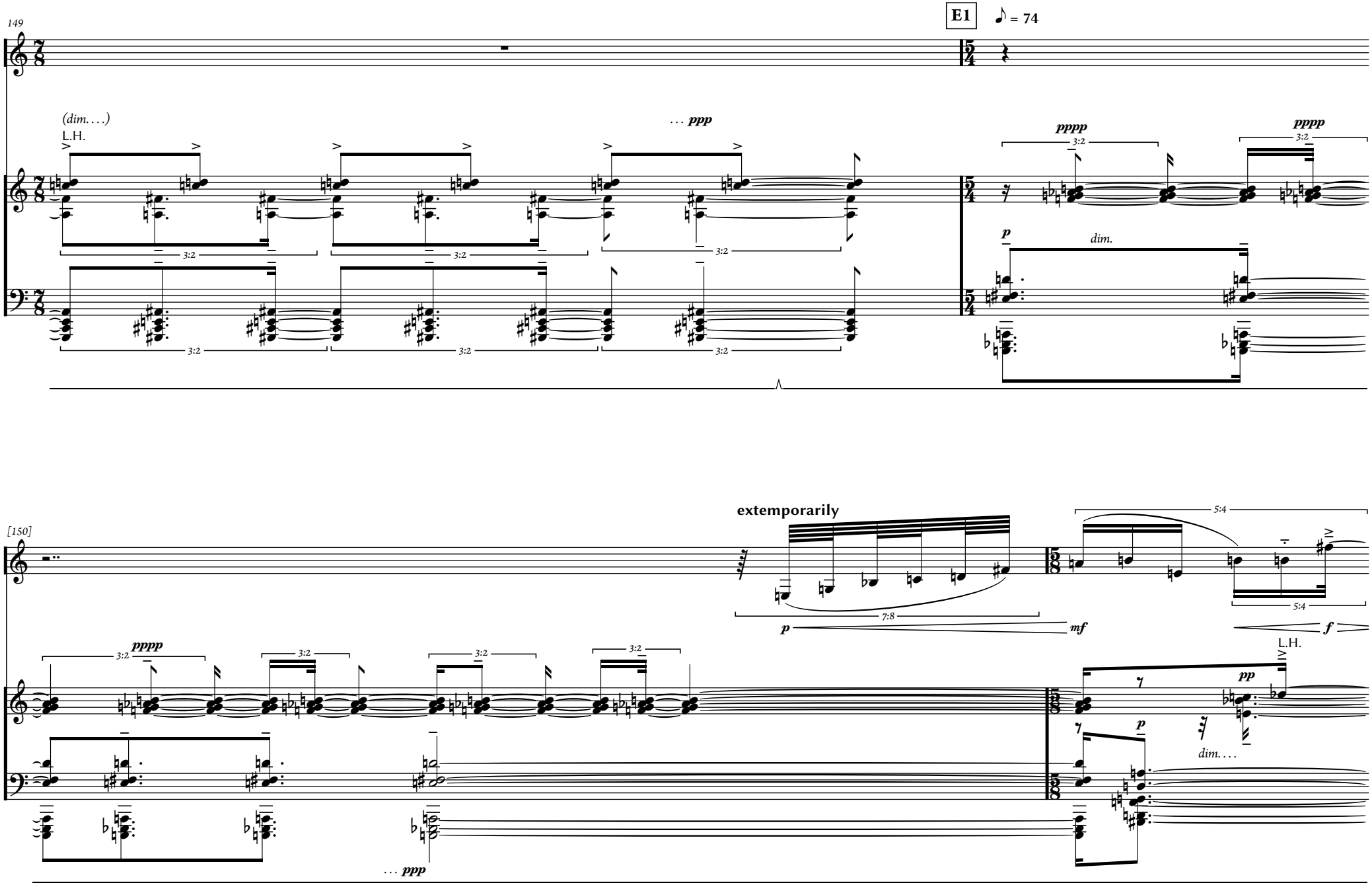

rall.
D5
M
a tempo
ORD
[128]
fff
p
pp
mysteriously
mf
ff
ppp
131
(pp)
fz
ppp

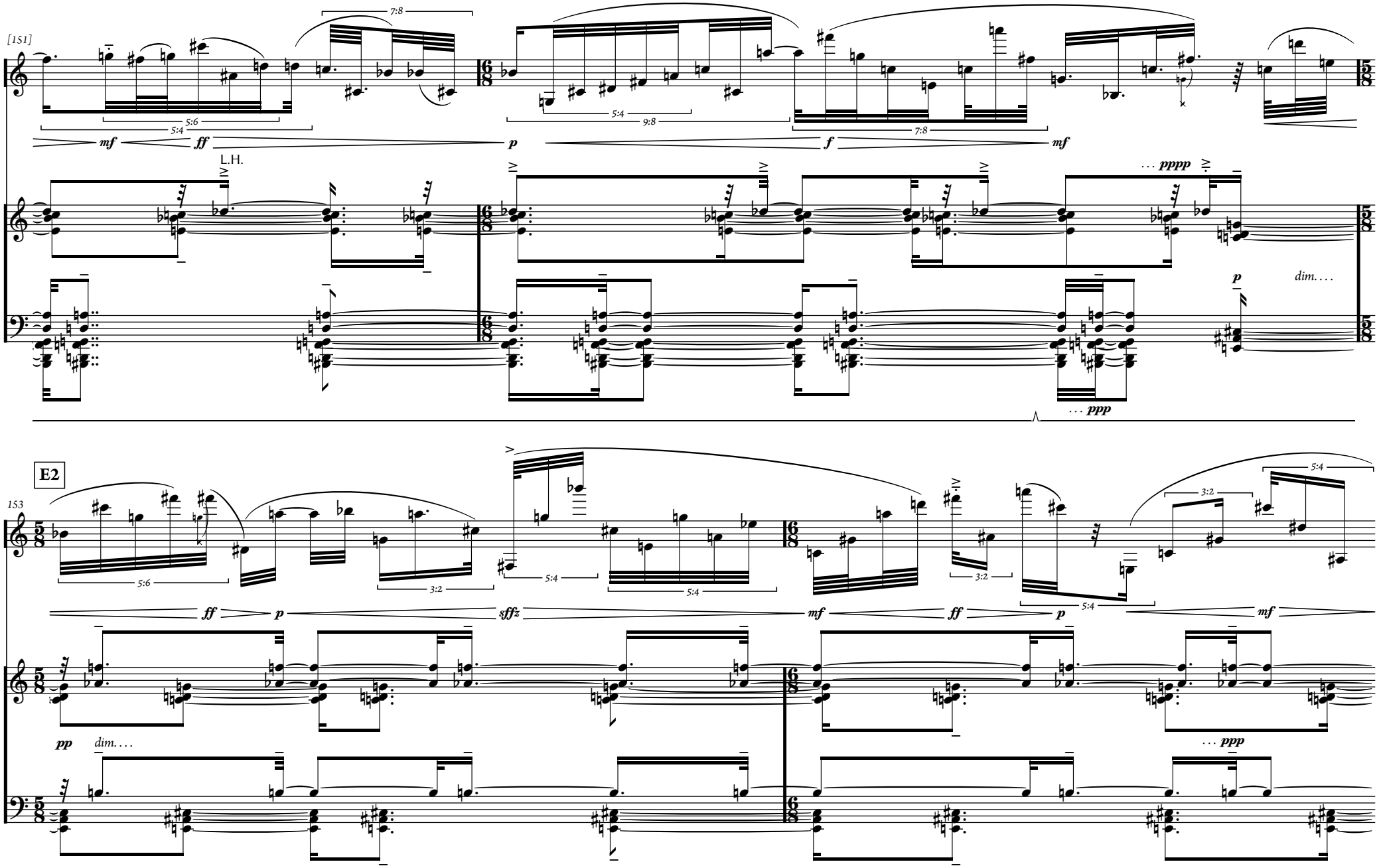

D6
slower
133
flz.
ORD
MV ORD
efflorescently
(F#)
MV ORD
MV ORD
poco rall
136
molto

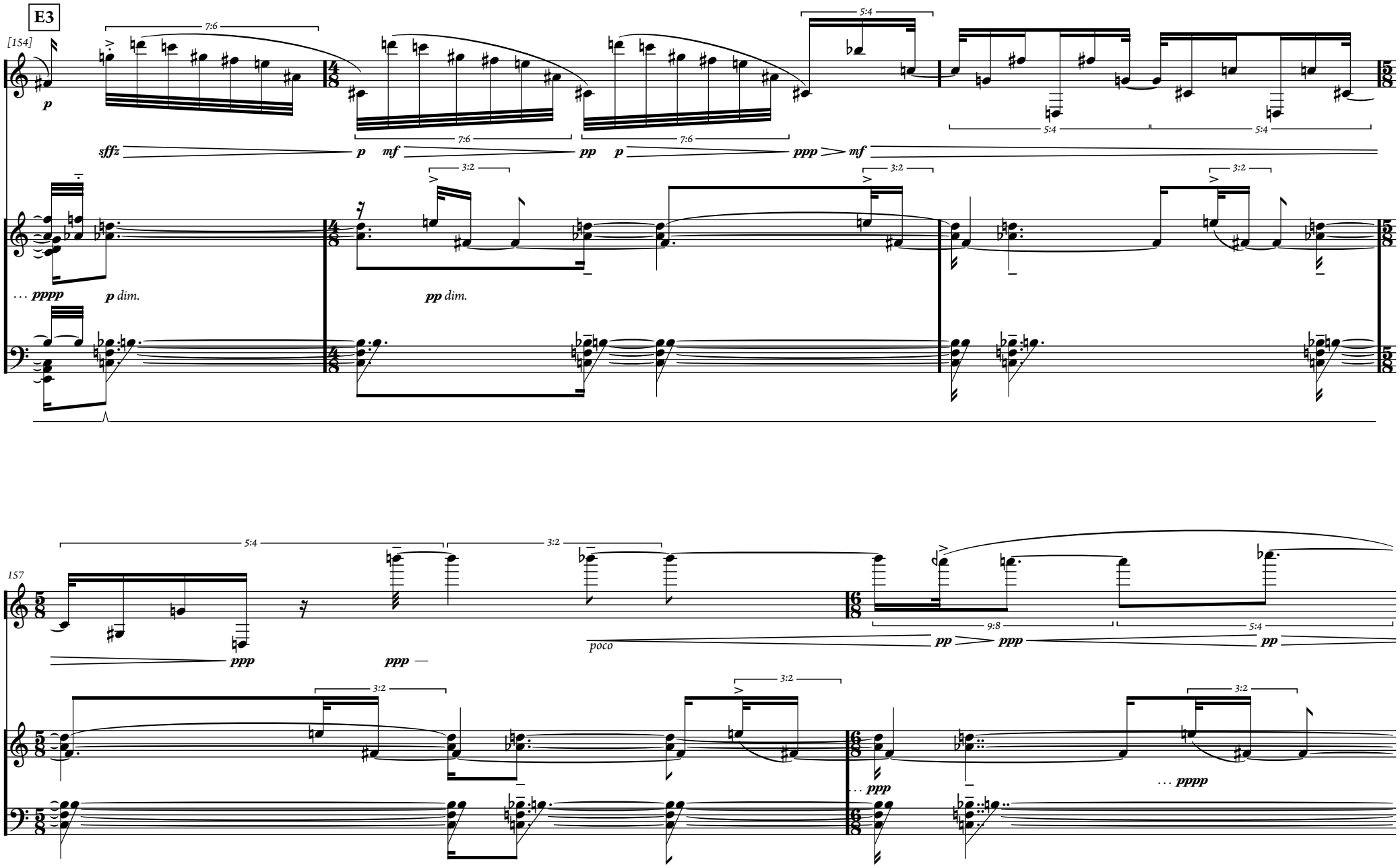

D7
a tempo
hollow
D8
D9
8va
(p marcato)

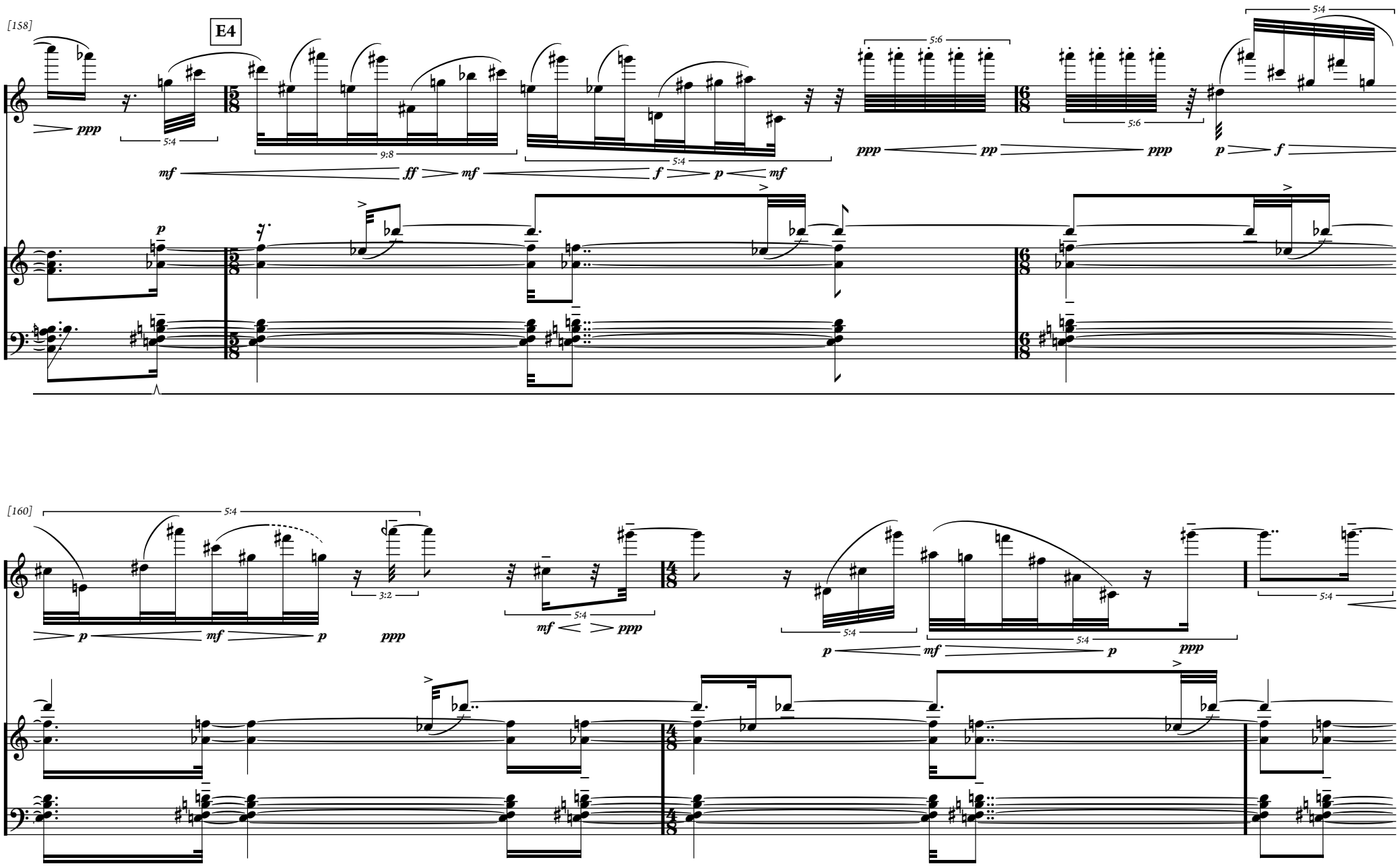

145
D10
slower
(marcato)
8va
lugubriously
[147]
legato
dim. . . .
L.H.

V echolalic


149
E1
♪ = 74
(dim. . . .)
L.H.
. . . ppp
pppp
3:2
p
dim.
[150]
extemporarily
7:8
mf
5:4
f
pp
dim. . . .


[151]
7:8
5:6
5:4
mf
ff
5:4
9:8
p
7:8
f
mf
L.H.
... pppp
p
dim. . . .
... ppp
E2
153
5:6
3:2
ff
p
5:4
5:4
sffz
3:2
mf
ff
p
5:4
3:2
5:4
mf
pp
dim. . . .
... ppp


E3
[154]
p
sffz
p
mf
pp
p
ppp
mf
pppp
p dim.
pp dim.
poco
pp
ppp
pp
ppp
ppp
ppp
pppp
7:6
5:4
3:2
9:8

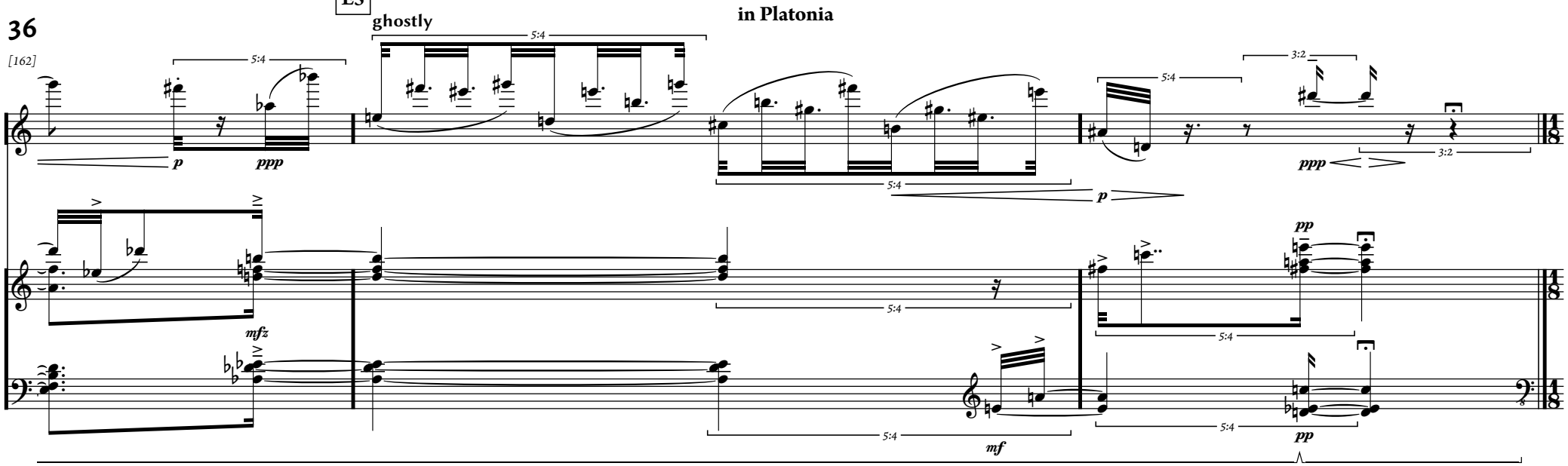

[158]
E4
ppp
5:4
mf
ff
mf
9:8
f
5:4
p
mf
5:6
ppp
pp
ppp
5:6
p
f
5:4
[160]
5:4
p
mf
p
3:2
ppp
mf
ppp
5:4
5:4
p
mf
5:4
p
ppp
5:4

[162]

E5

ghostly

in Platonia



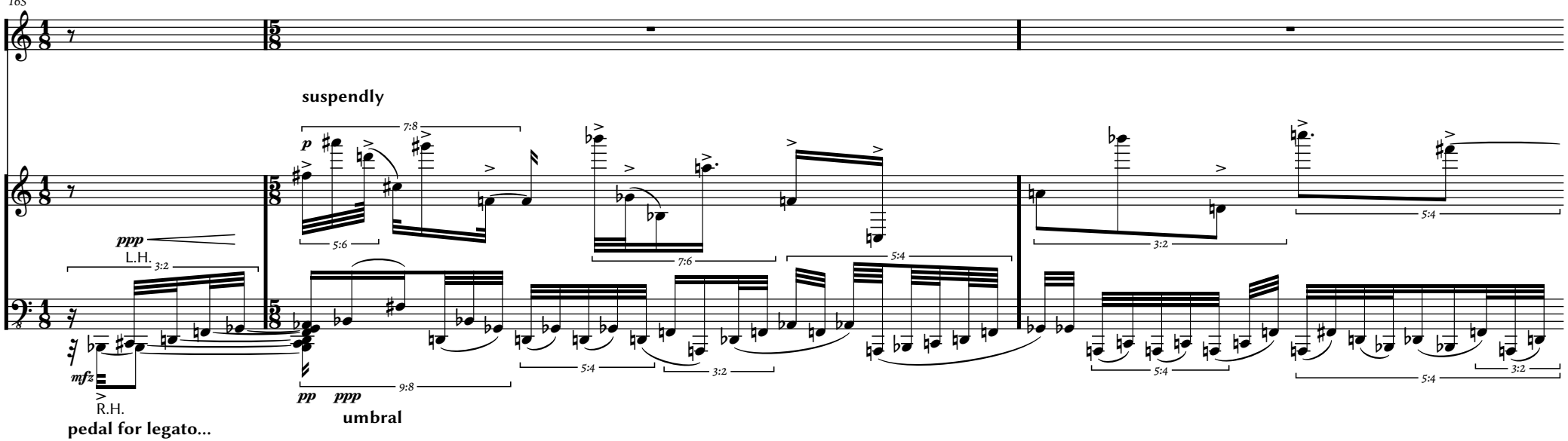
VI starshadow

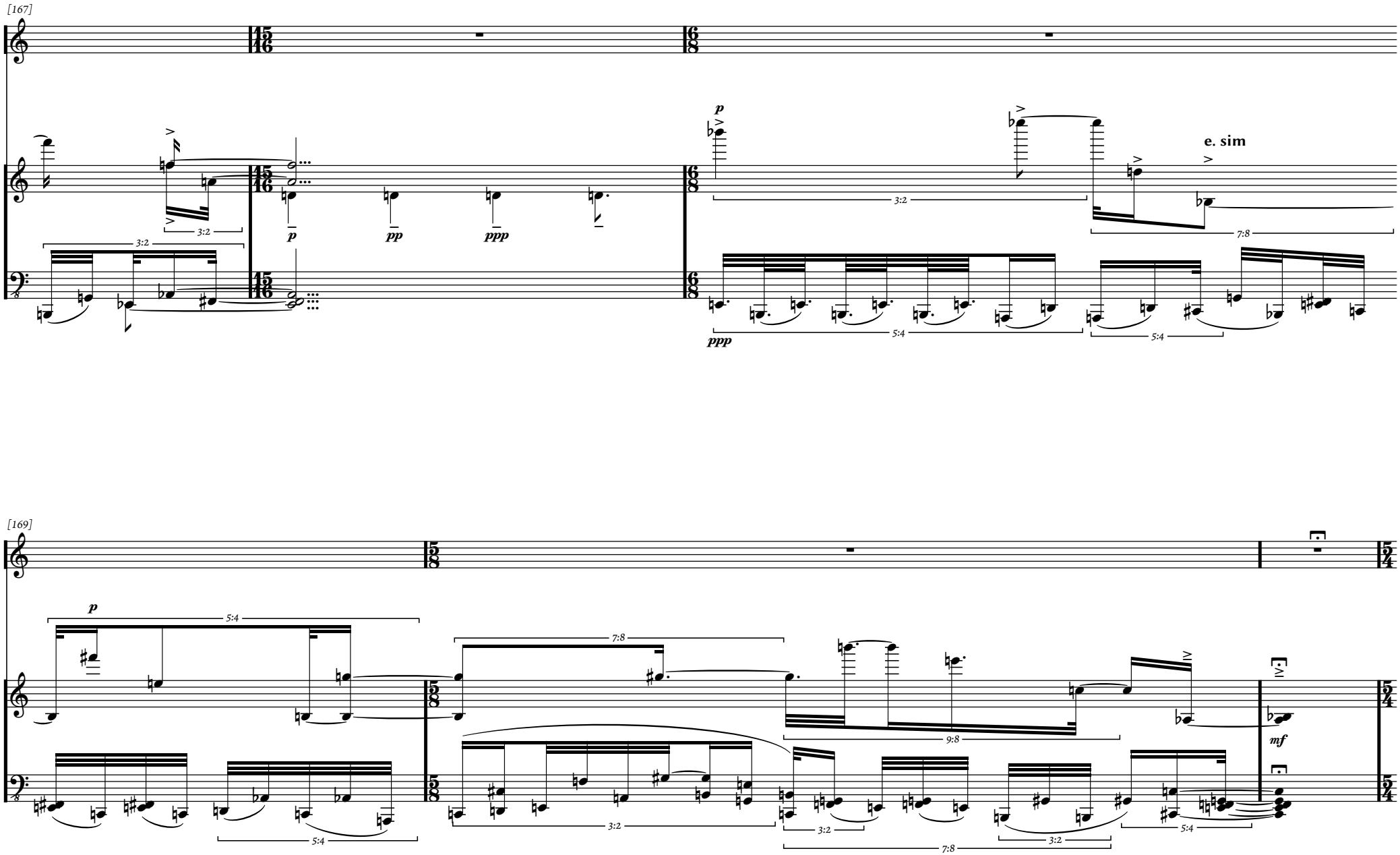
F

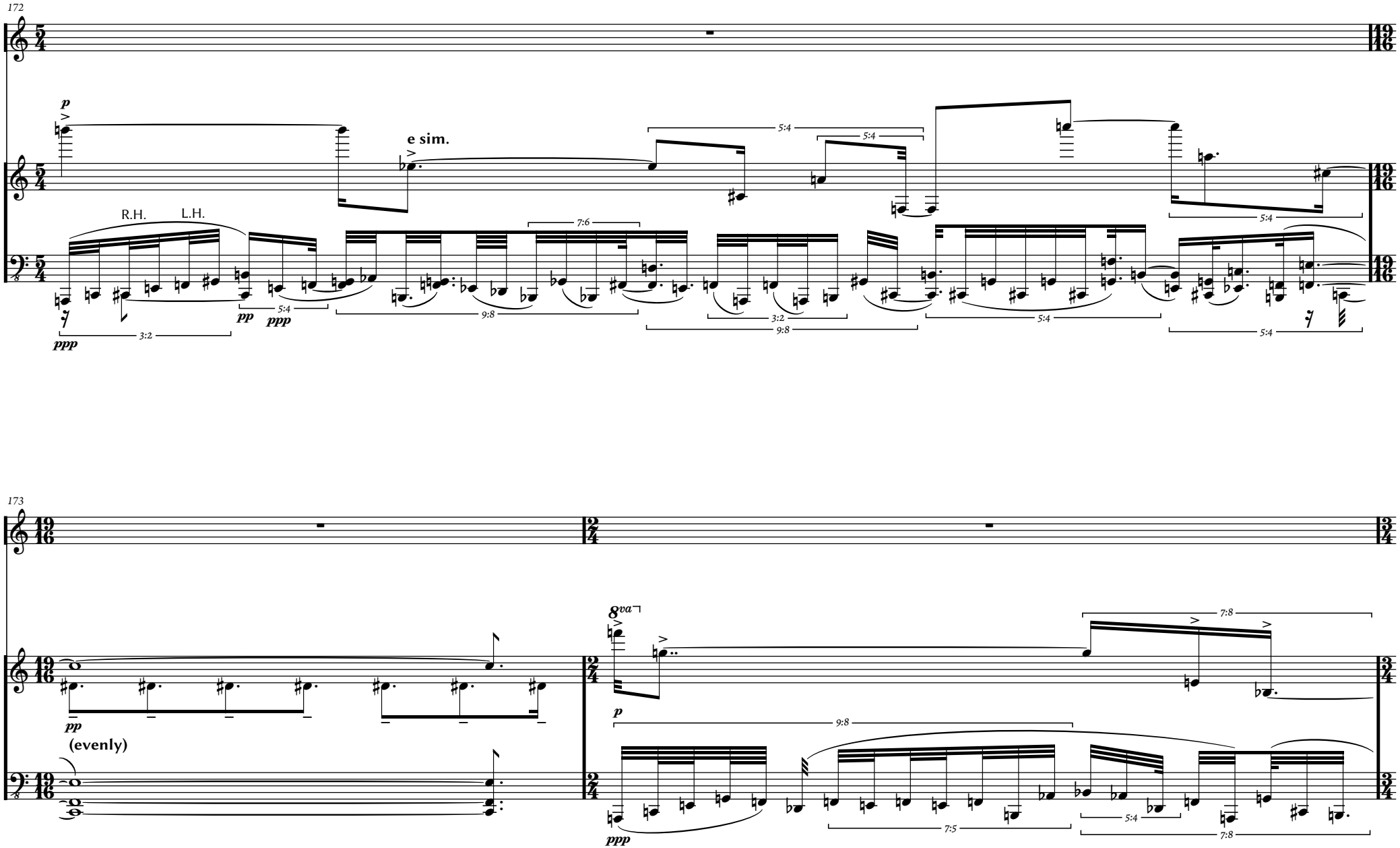
♪ = 75

165

suspendly




[167]
3:2
3:2
p
pp
ppp
p
3:2
e. sim
7:8
ppp
5:4
5:4
[169]
p
5:4
7:8
9:8
3:2
3:2
3:2
7:8
5:4
mf


172
p
e sim.
R.H.
L.H.
ppp
pp
173
(evenly)
8va
p
ppp

175

attacca VII

VII stridulatory

G1 ♩ = 60 fast & secco

178

flz.

ORD

P3

[180]

flz. ORD sim.

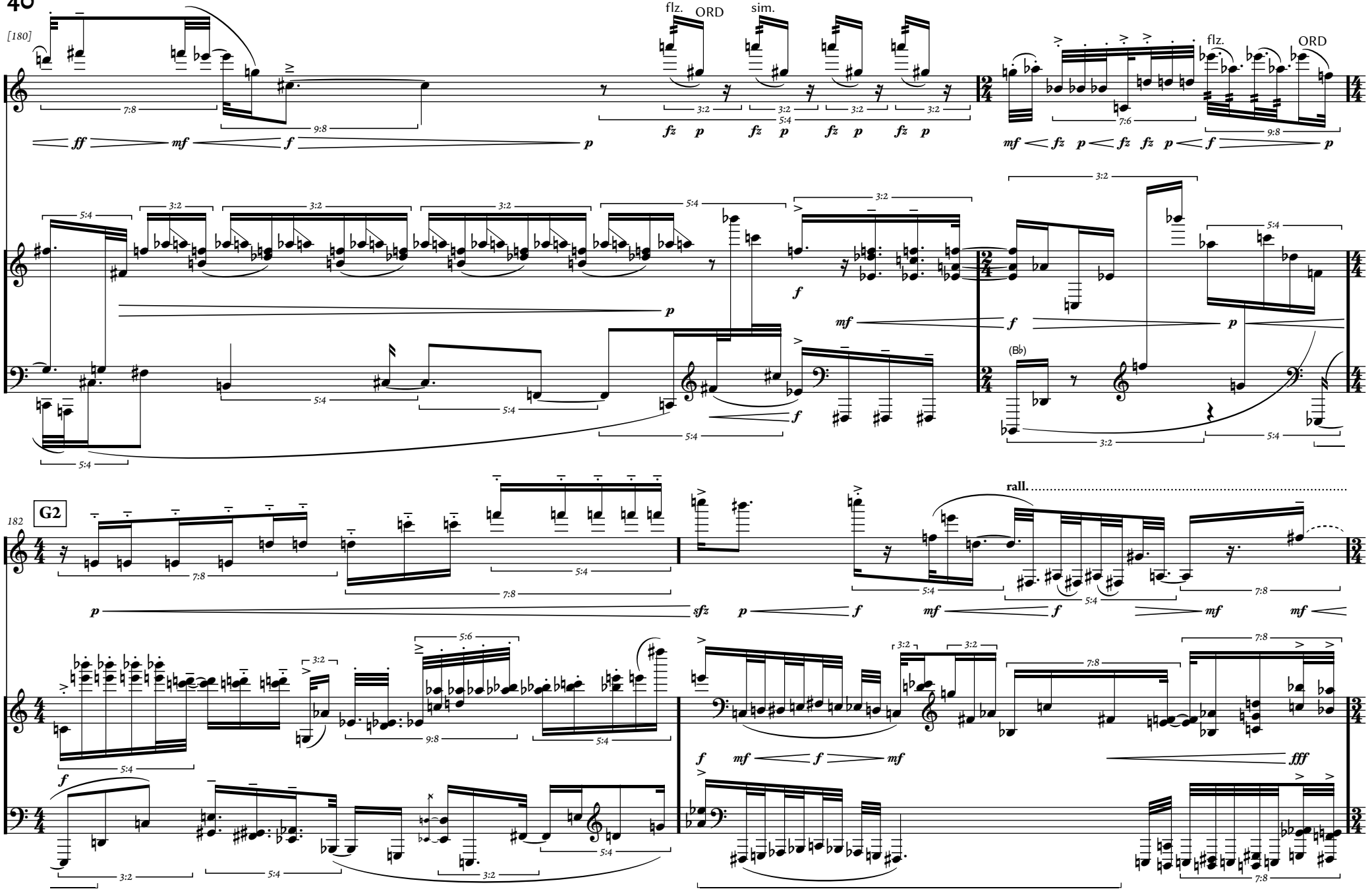
flz. ORD

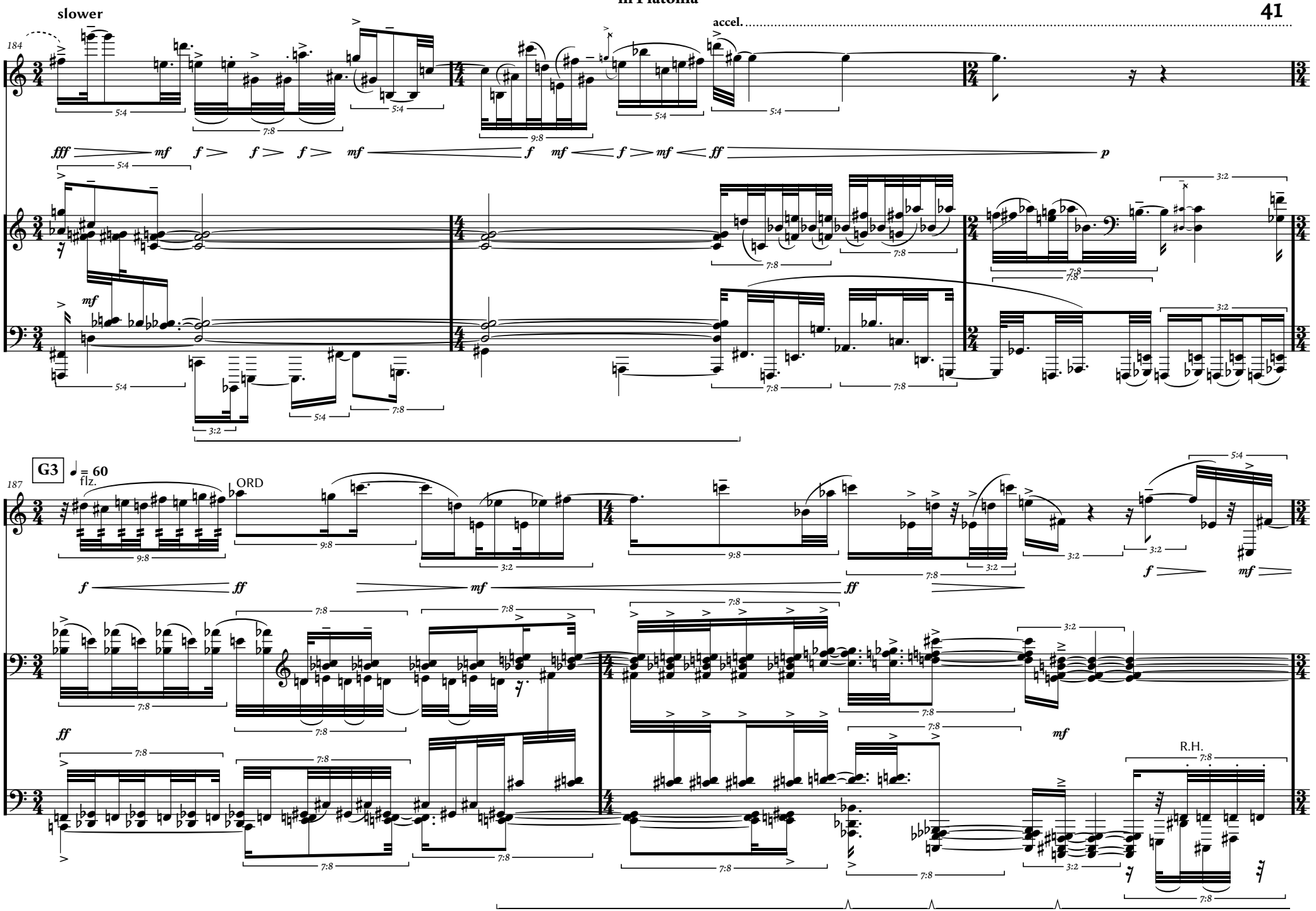
(Bb)

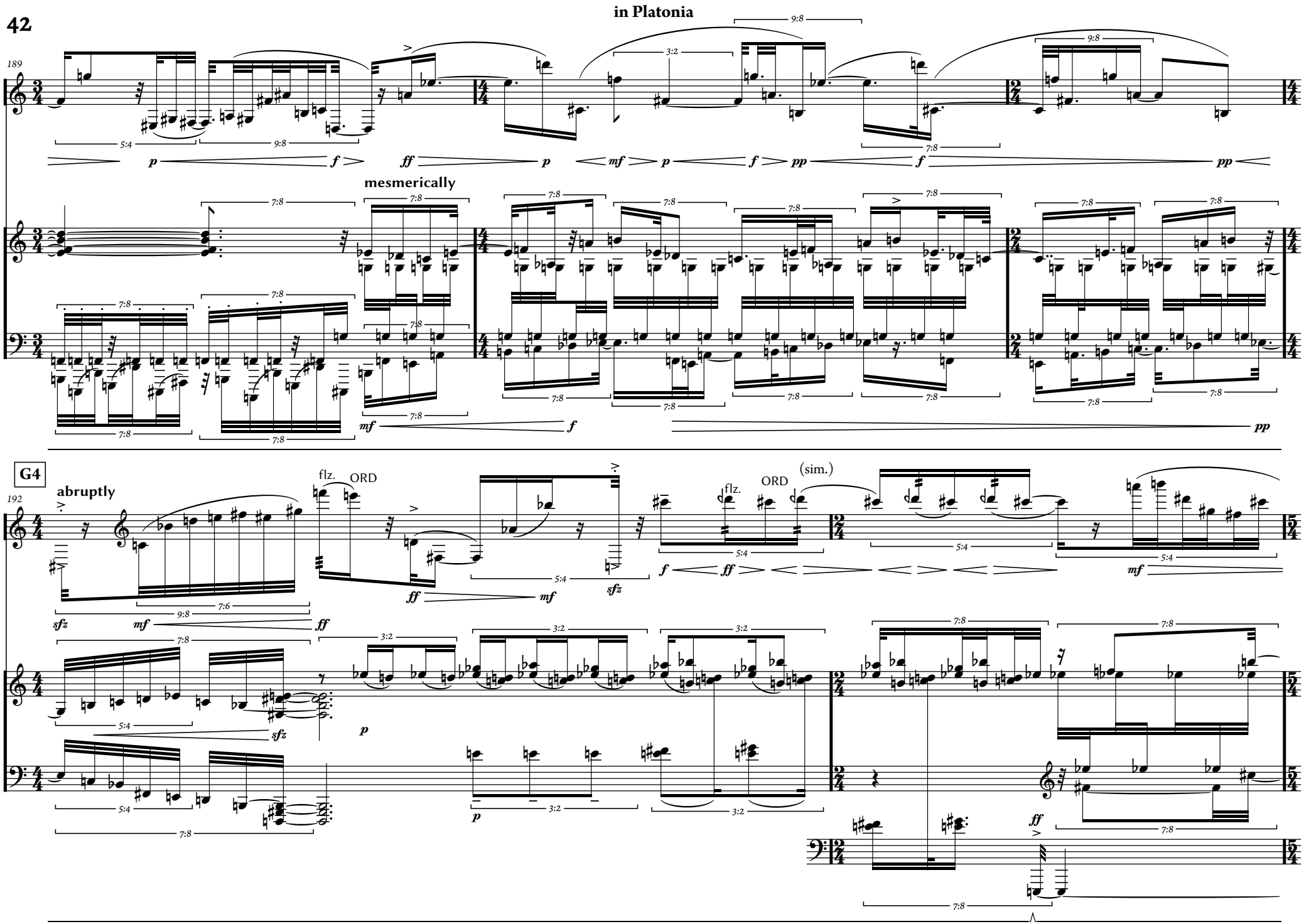
182

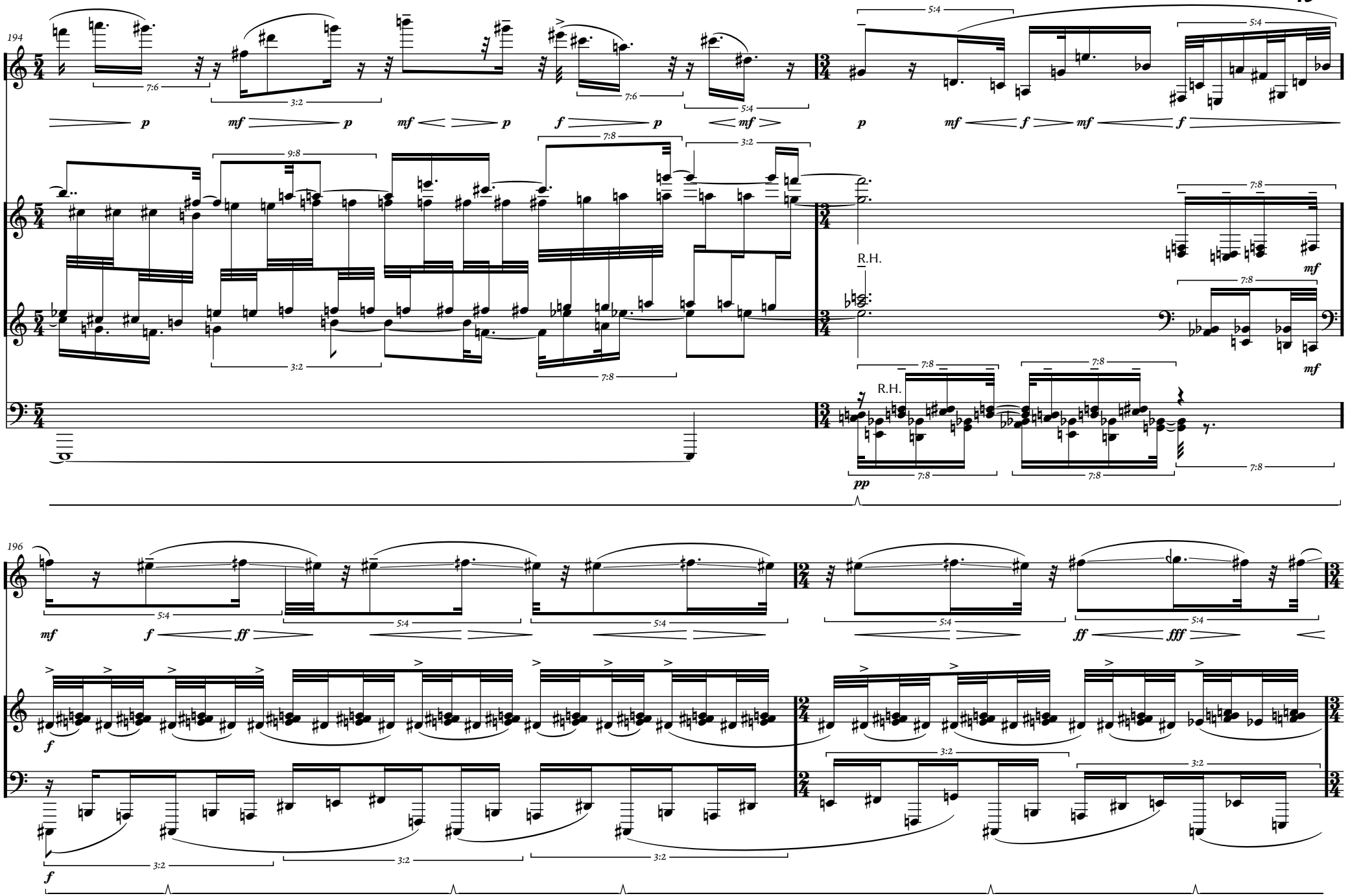
G2

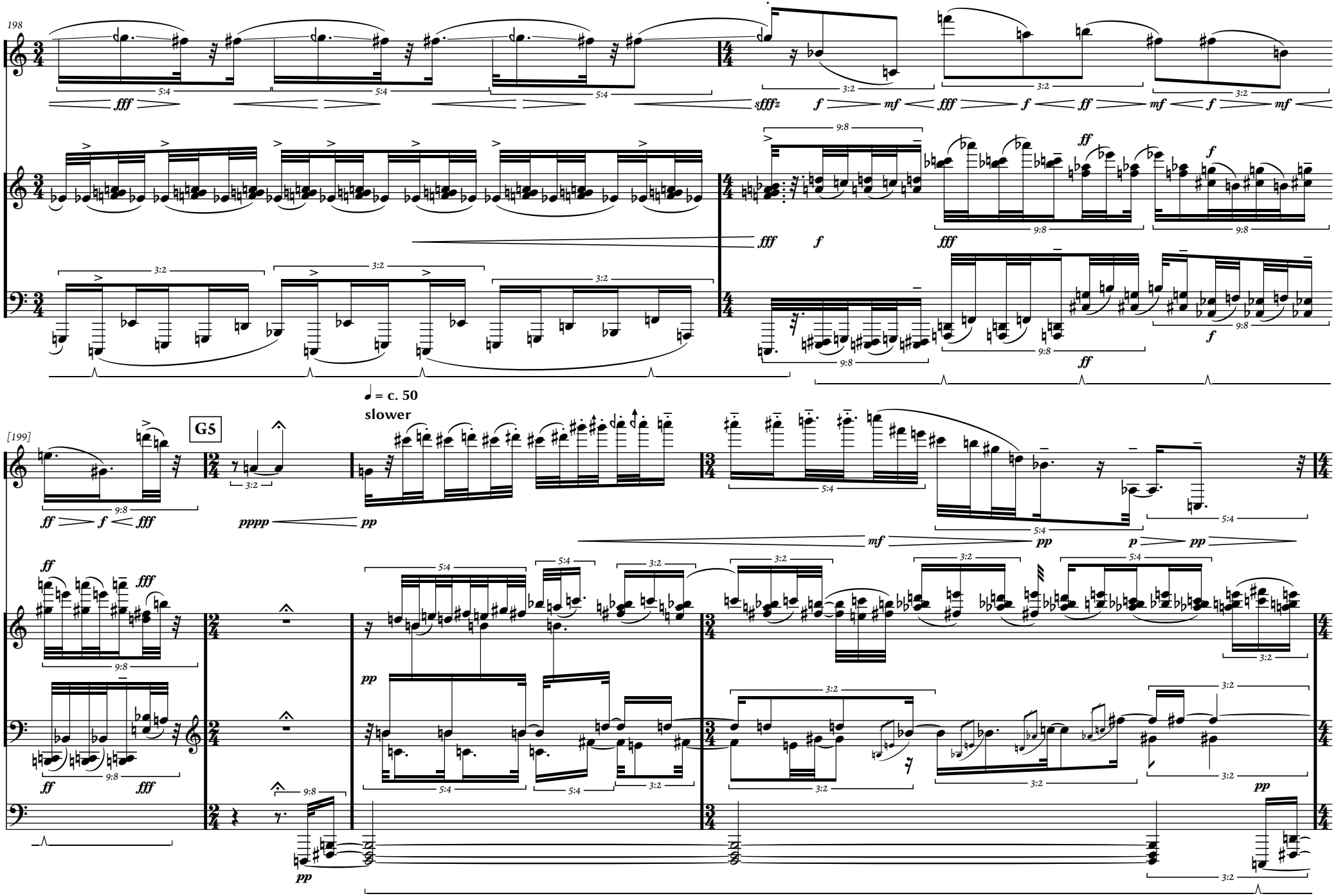
rall.

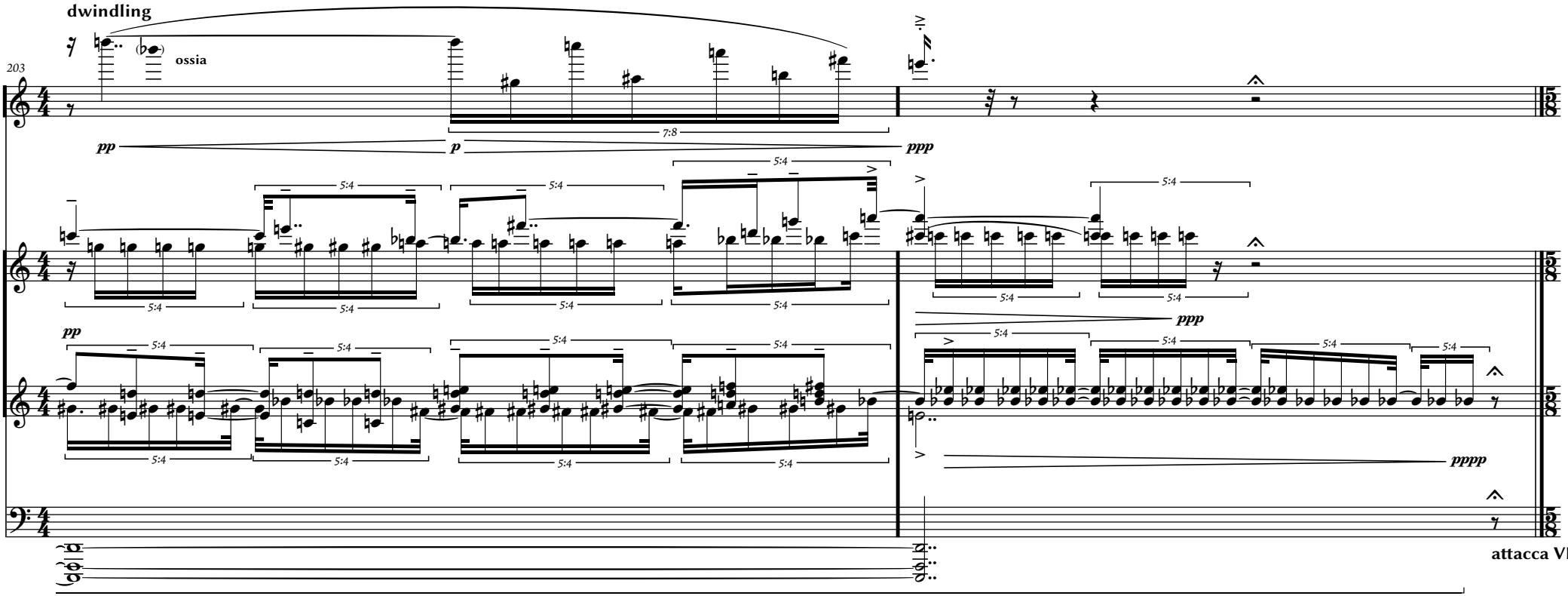



slower
accel.
184
G3
♩ = 60
fl z.
ORD
187
R.H.

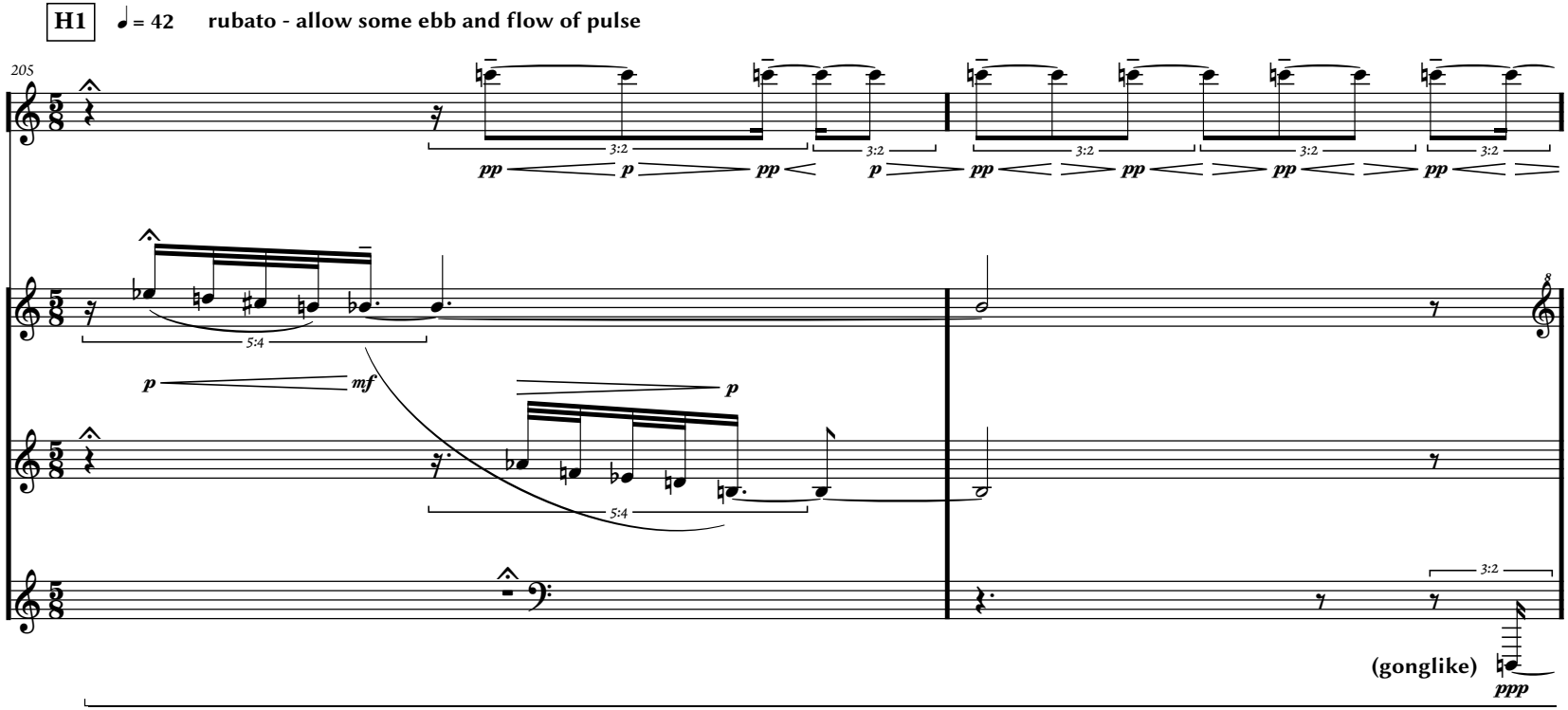

189
mesmerically
G4
abruptly
flz.
ORD
(sim.)
192

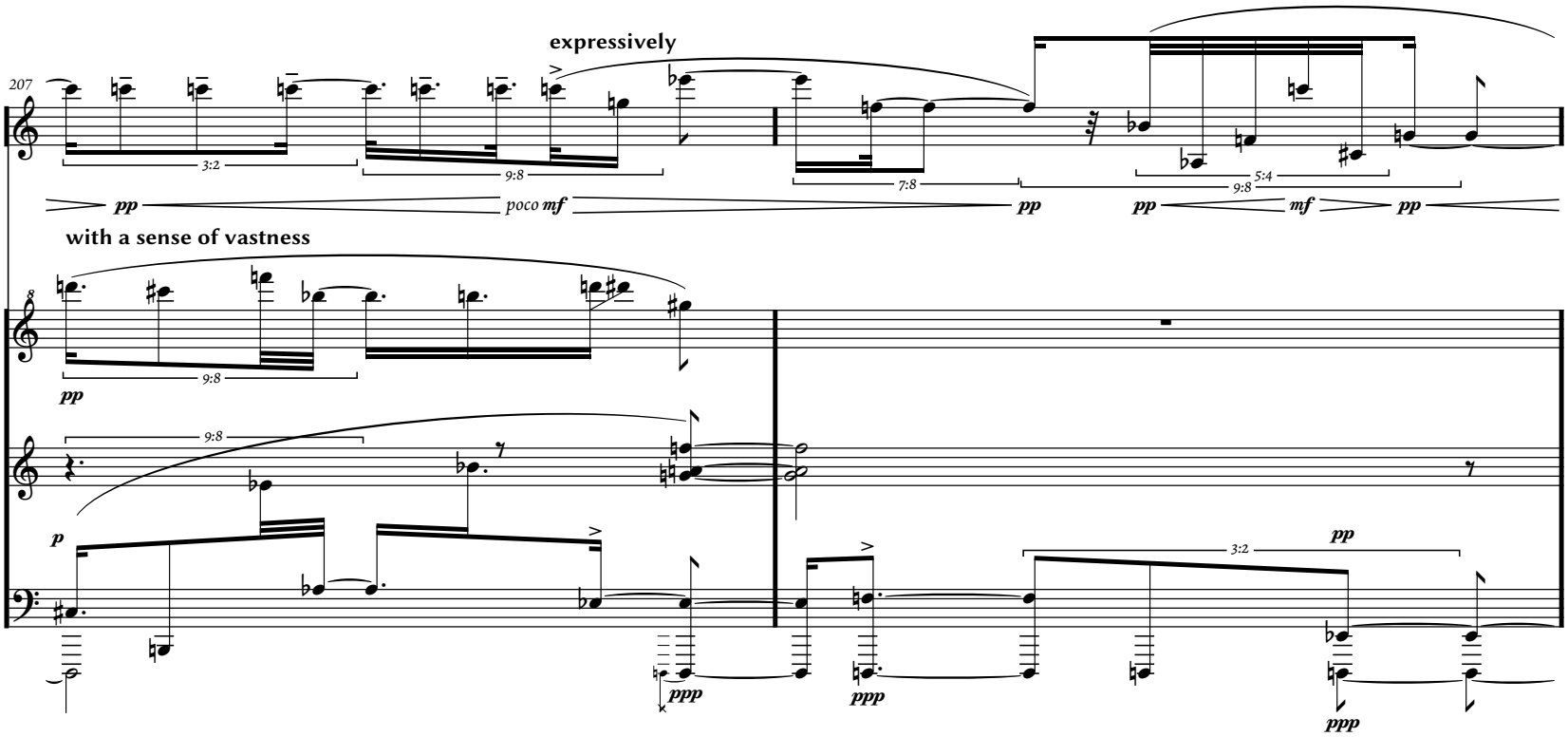

194
196
R.H.
R.H.

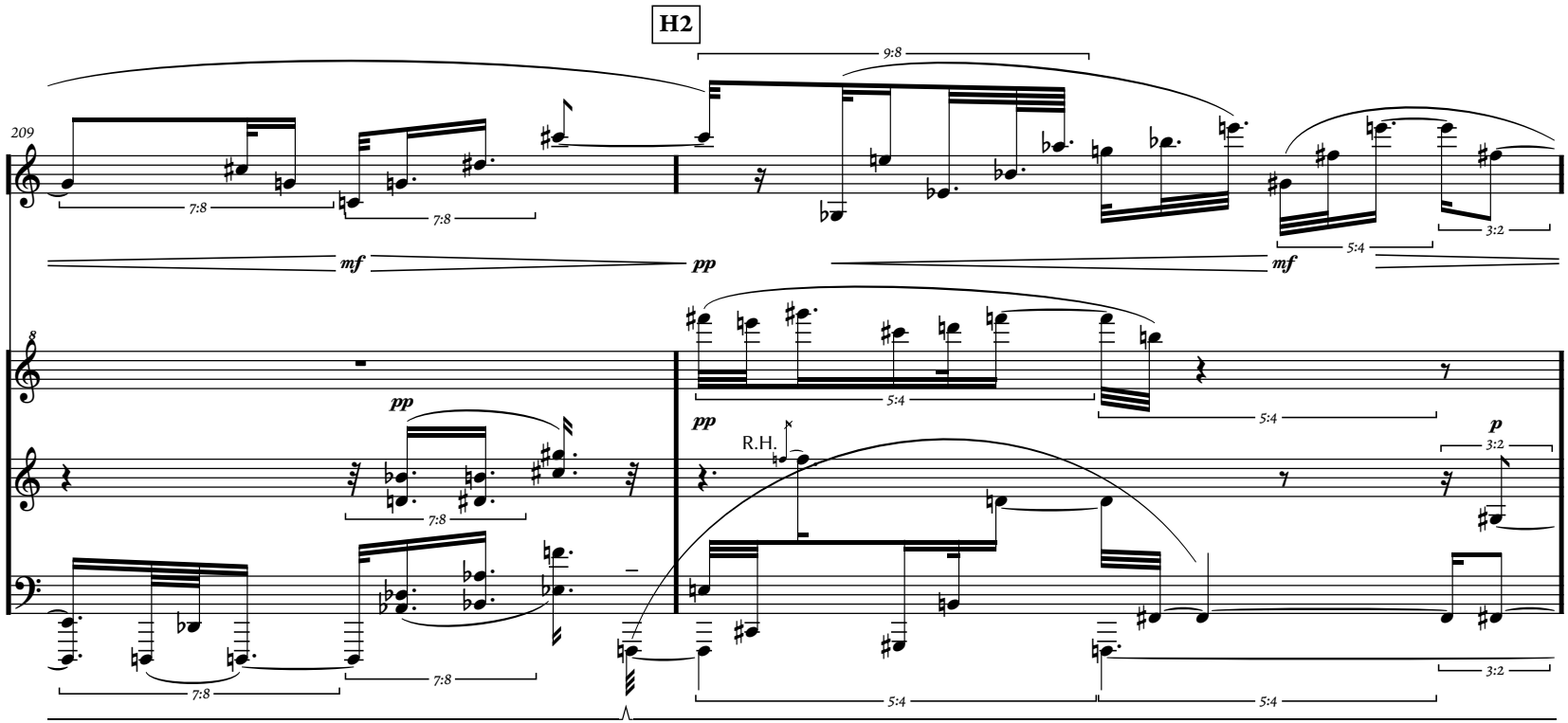

198
fff
sffz
f
mf
ff
[199]
G5
= c. 50
slower
pppp
pp
p

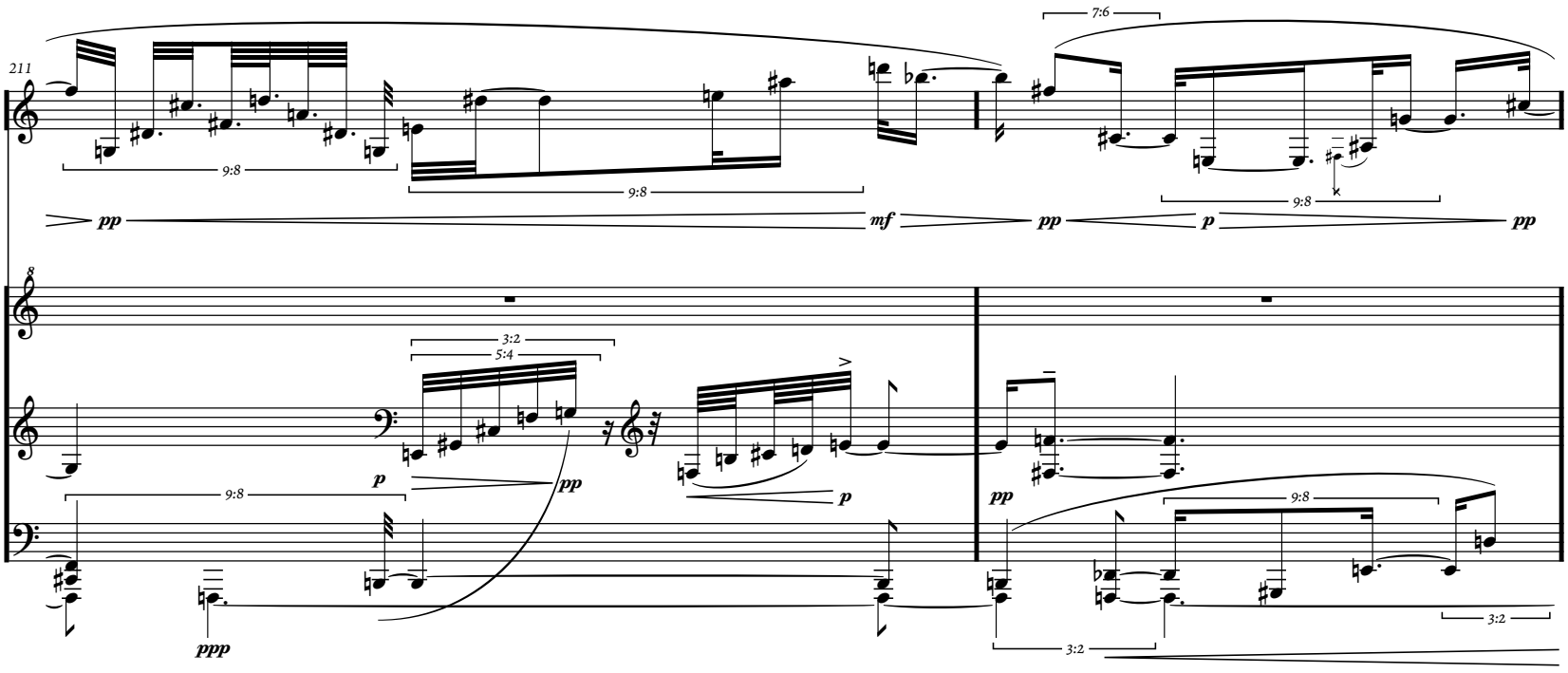

dwindling
203
ossia
pp
p
ppp
7:8
5:4
pp
ppp
pppp
attacca VIII

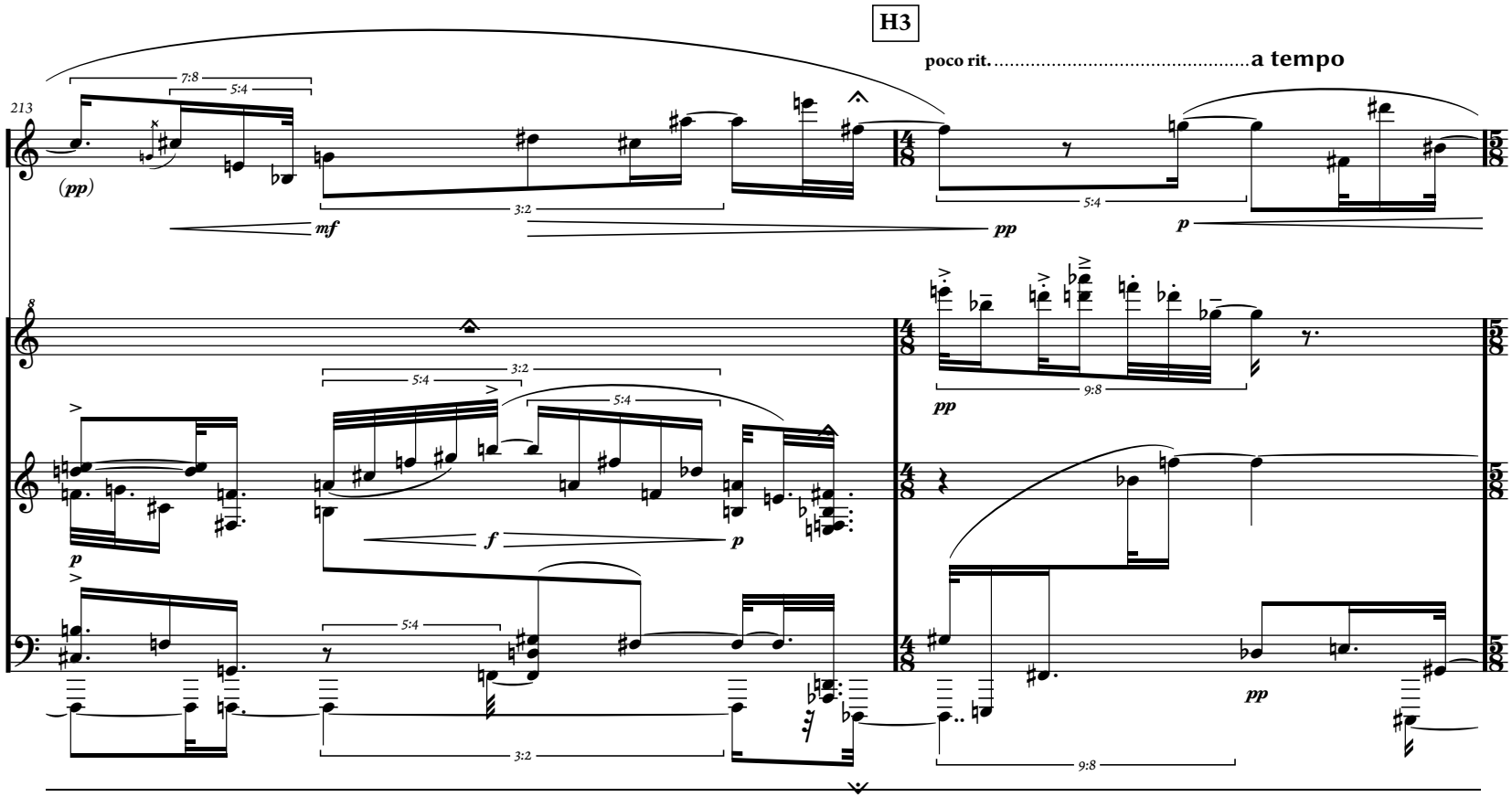
VIII Platonia

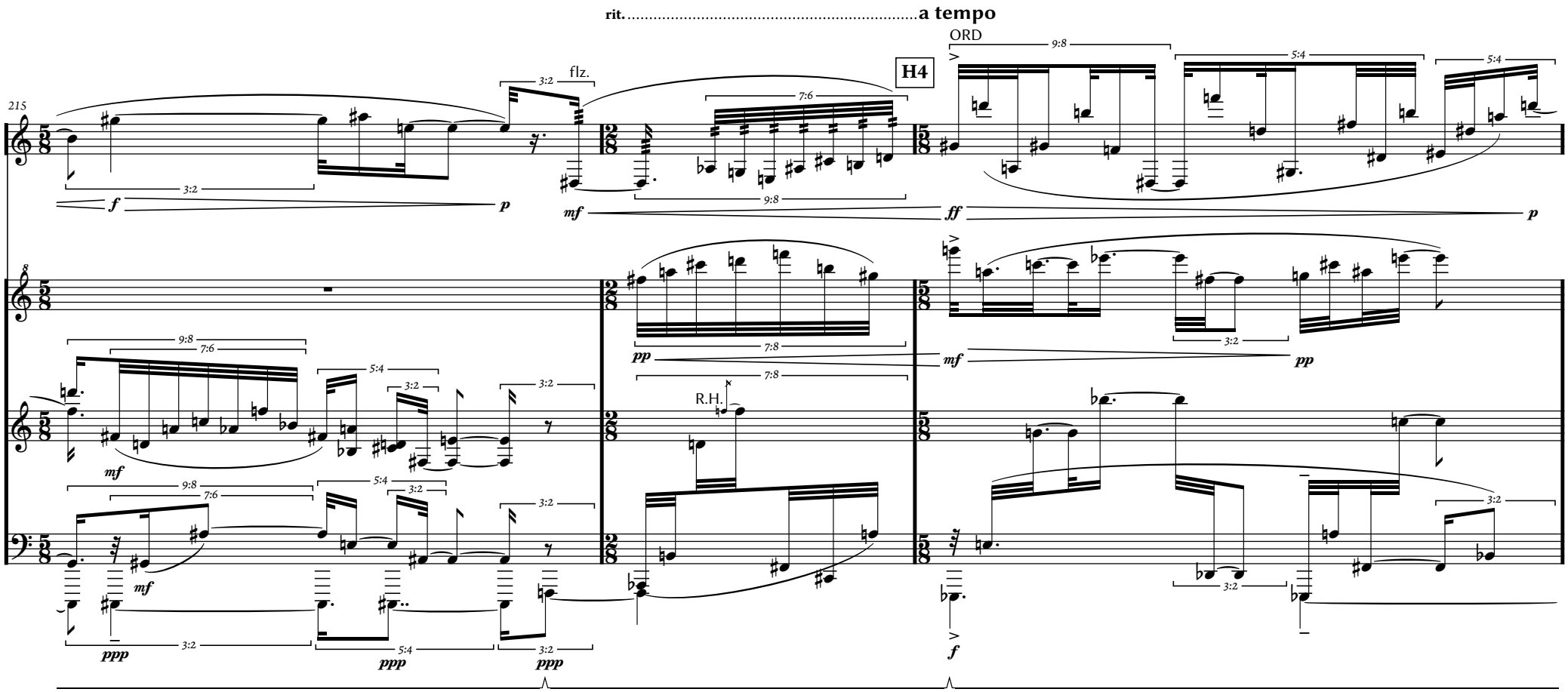


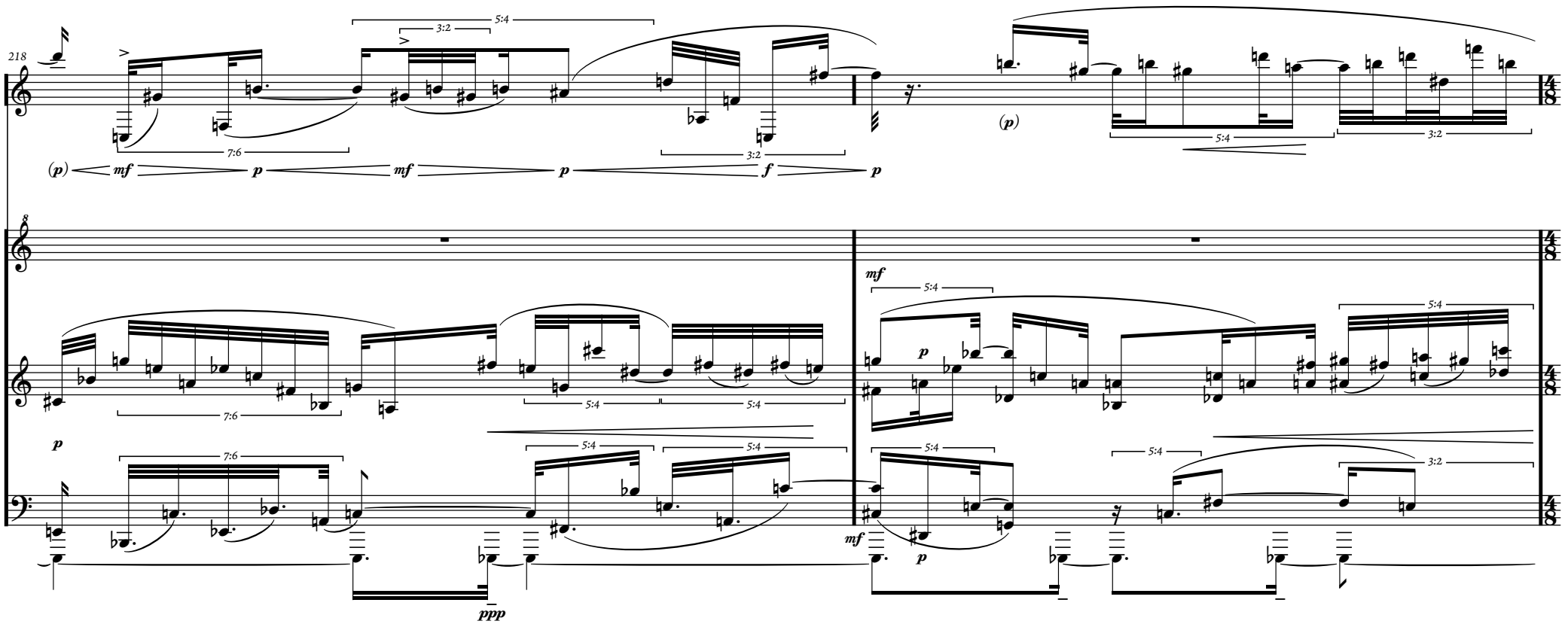

expressively
207
3:2
9:8
7:8
9:8
5:4
pp
poco mf
pp
pp
mf
pp
with a sense of vastness
8
9:8
pp
9:8
p
3:2
pp
ppp
ppp
ppp

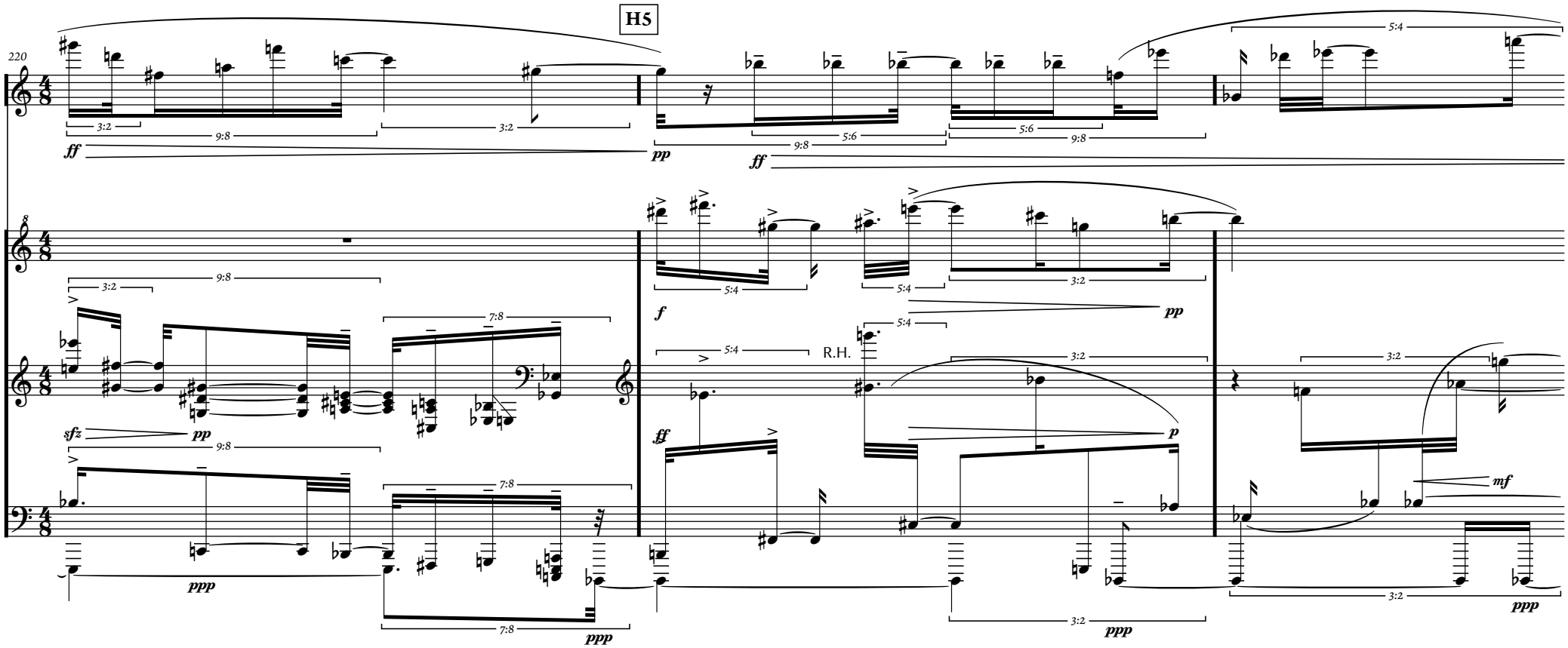

H2
209
9:8
7:8
7:8
mf
pp
mf
5:4
3:2
8
pp
5:4
5:4
pp
R.H.
p
3:2
7:8
7:8
7:8
3:2
5:4
5:4

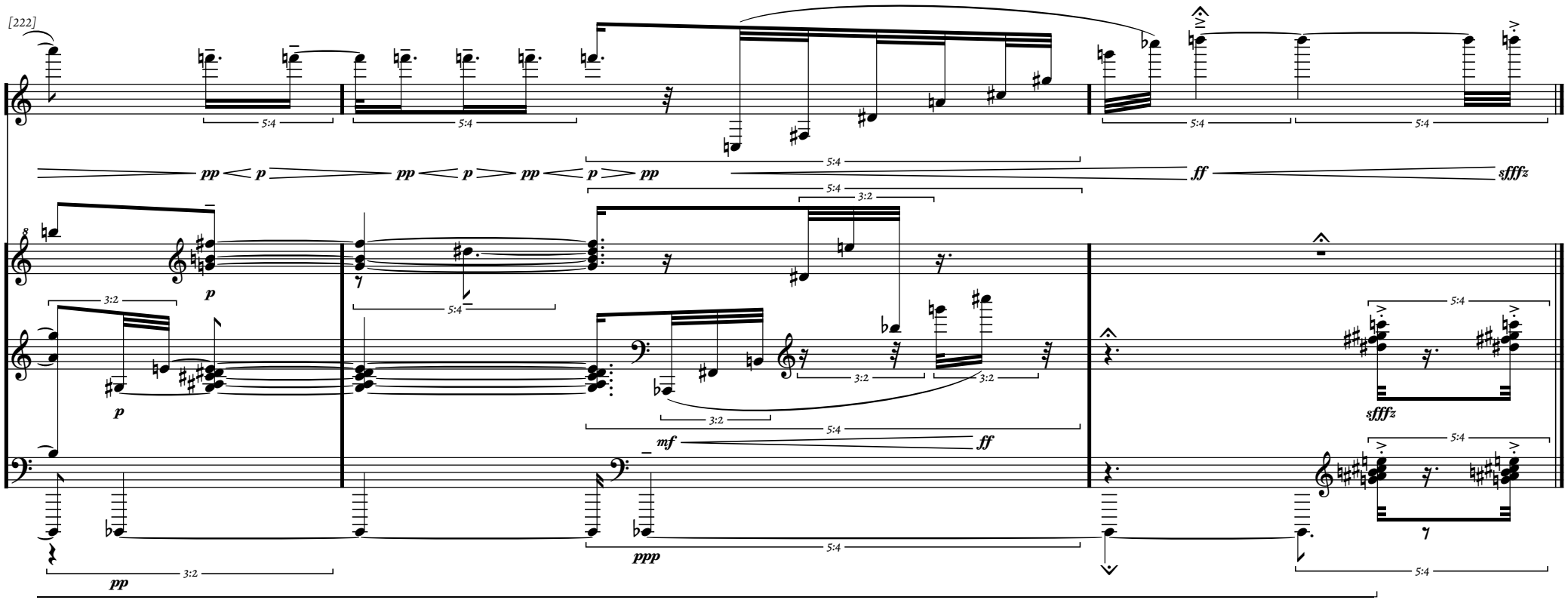

211
9:8
9:8
7:6
9:8
pp
mf
pp
p
pp
3:2
5:4
p
pp
p
9:8
ppp
pp
9:8
3:2
3:2

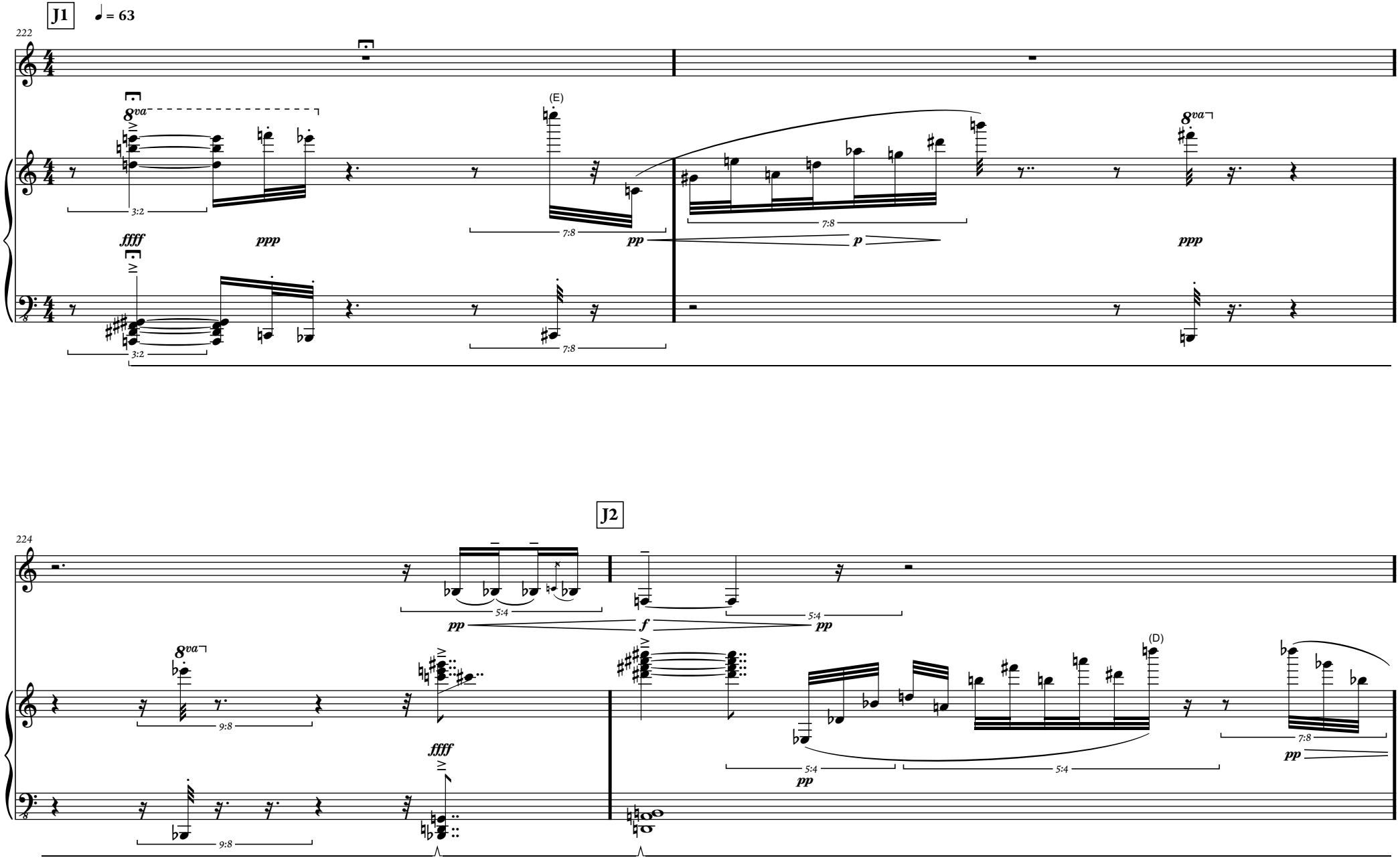

H3
poco rit.
a tempo
213
(pp)
7:8
5:4
3:2
mf
pp
p
9:8
f

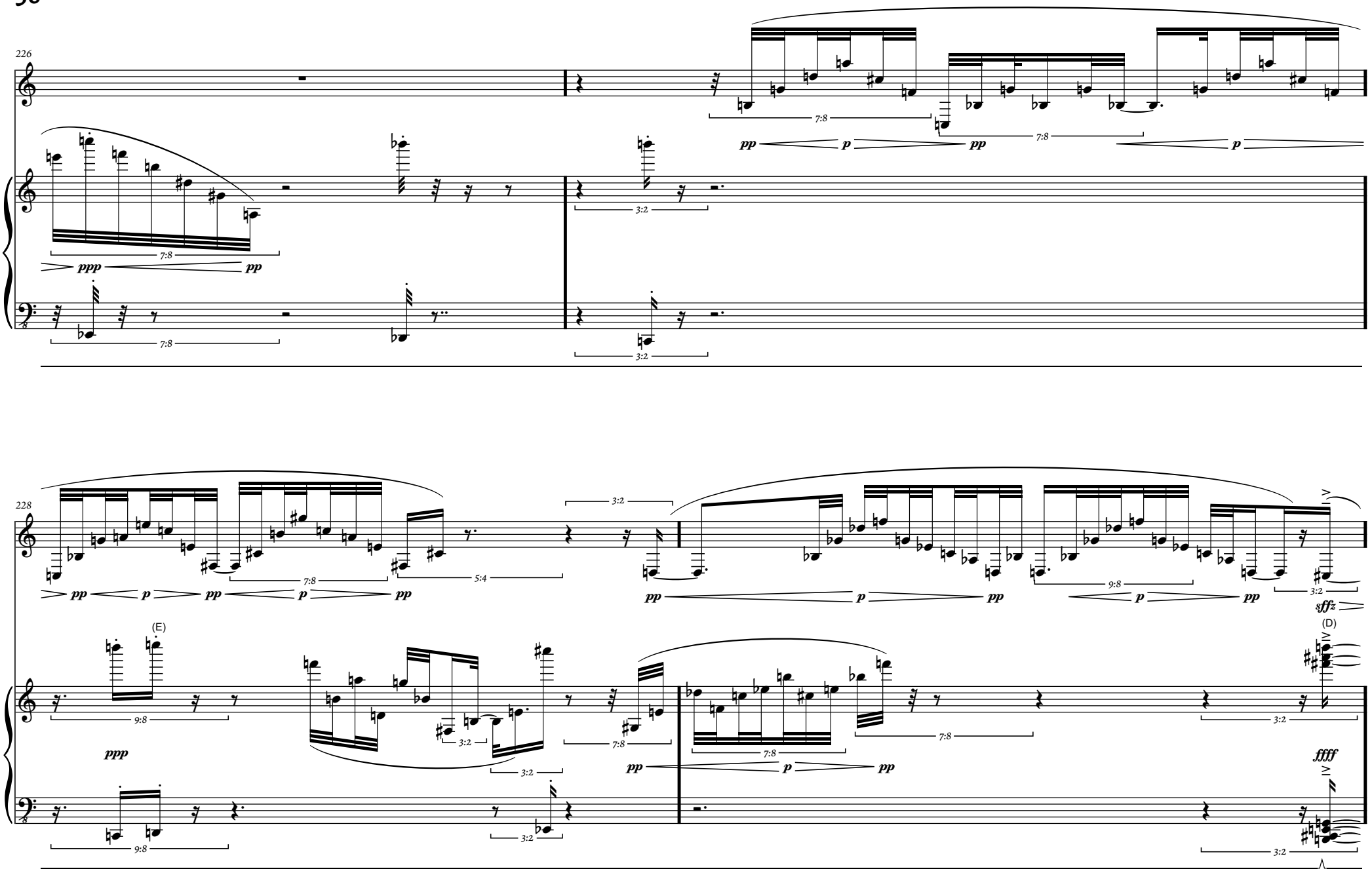

rit.
a tempo
215
H4
ORD
flz.
R.H.

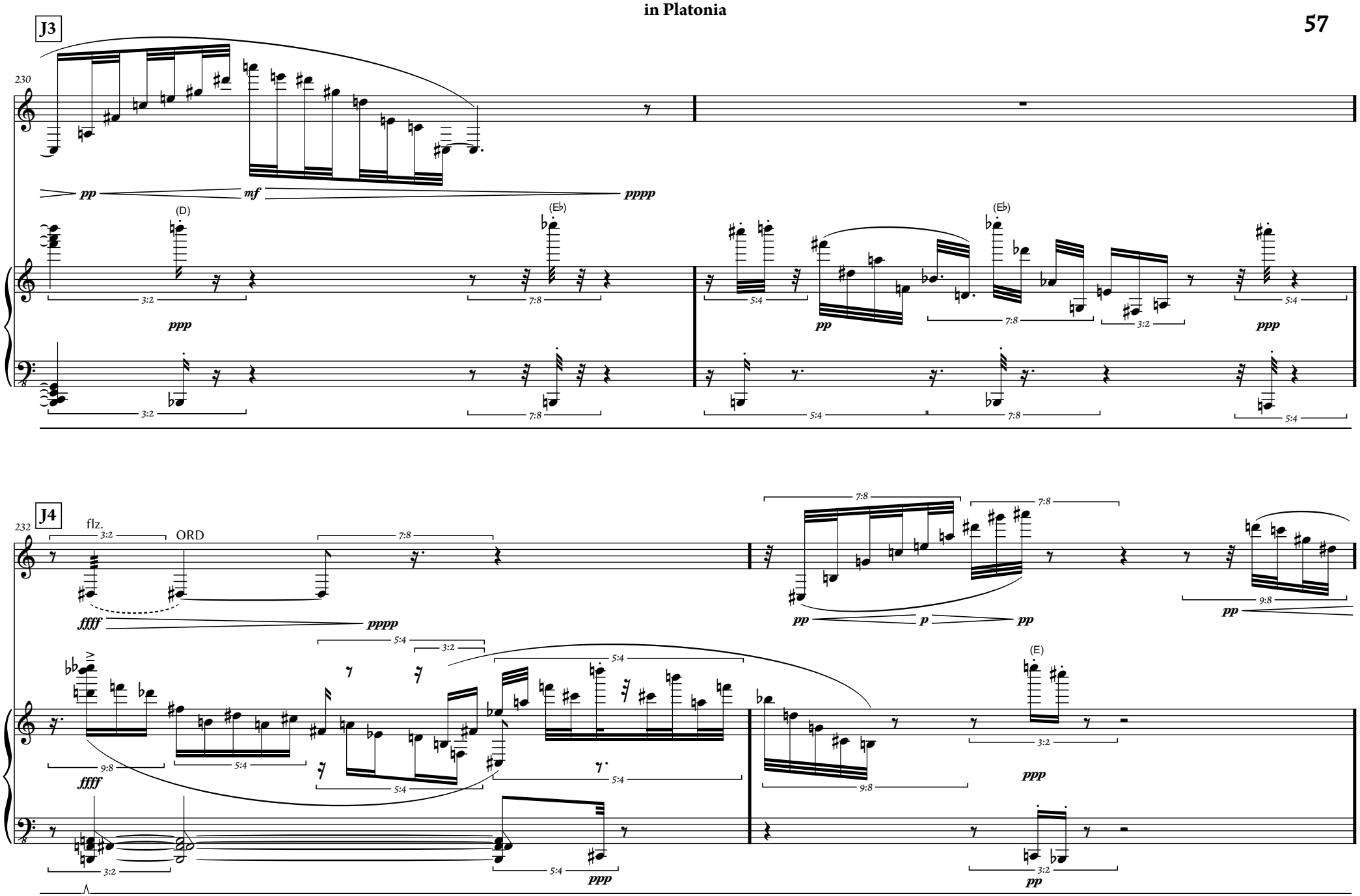

218
(p)
mf
p
mf
p
f
p
(p)
7:6
3:2
5:4
8
mf
p
ppp

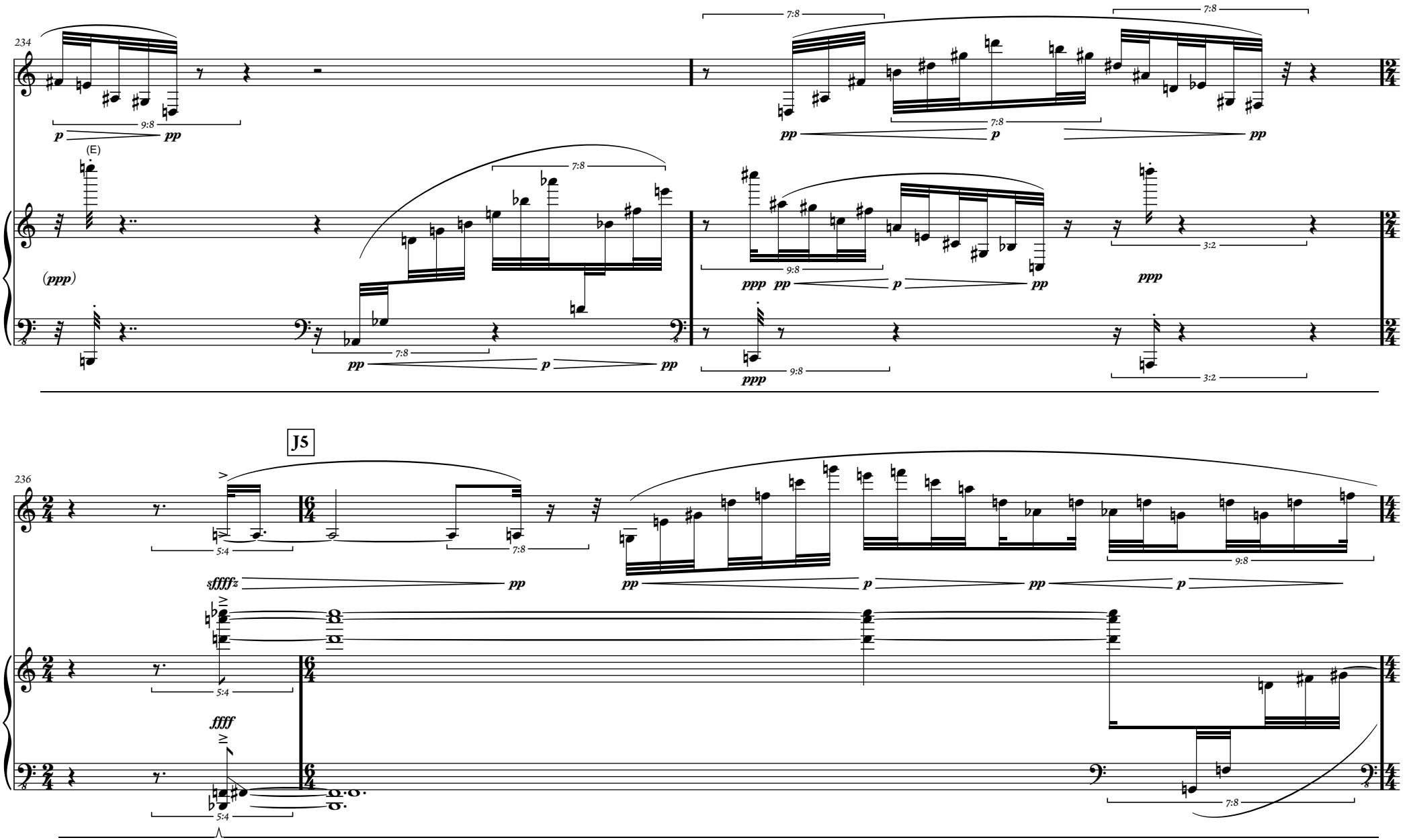

H5
220
ff
pp
ff
f
pp
sfz
pp
ff
p
R.H.
mf
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp

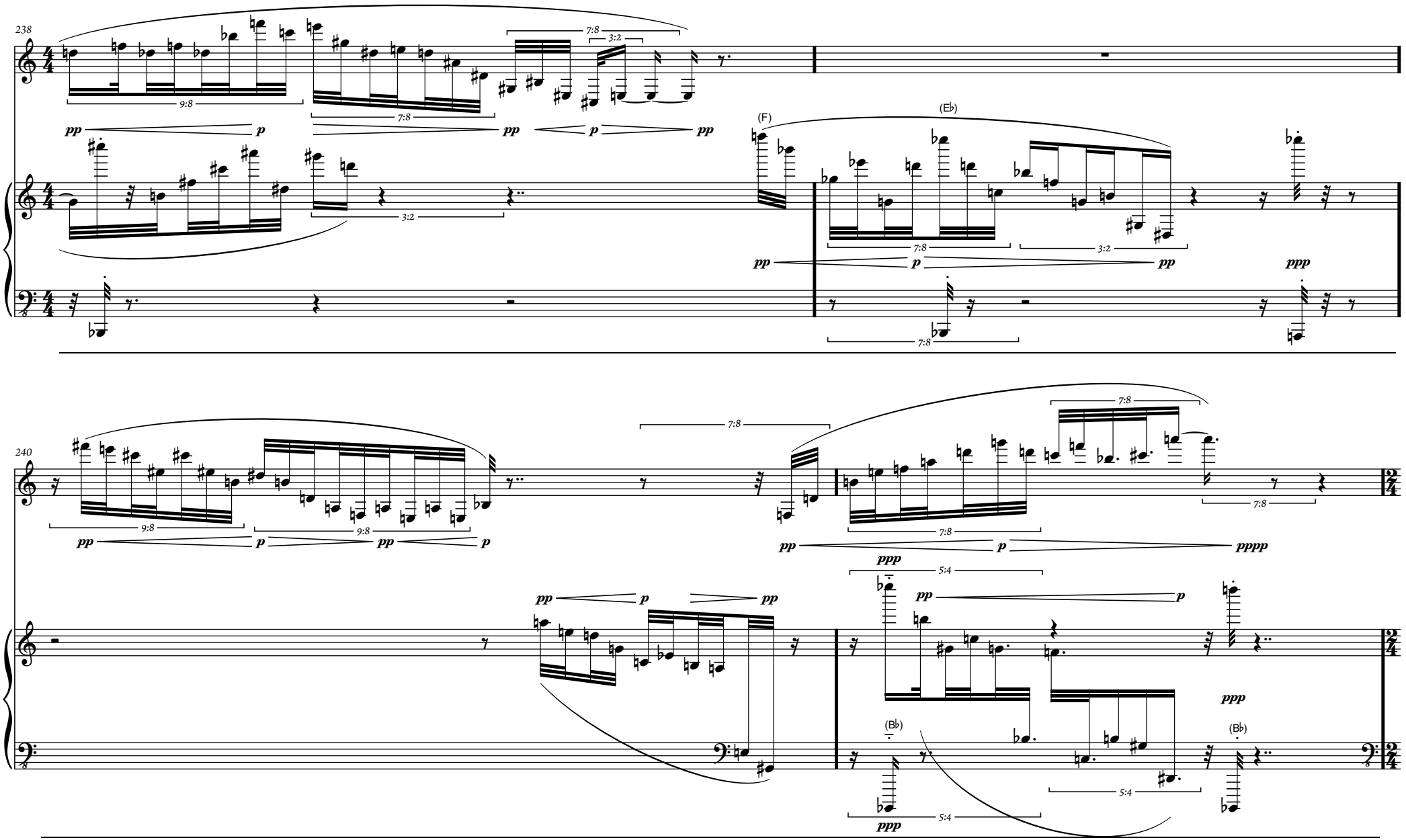

[222]
5:4
pp
p
ff
sfffz
3:2
mf
ppp

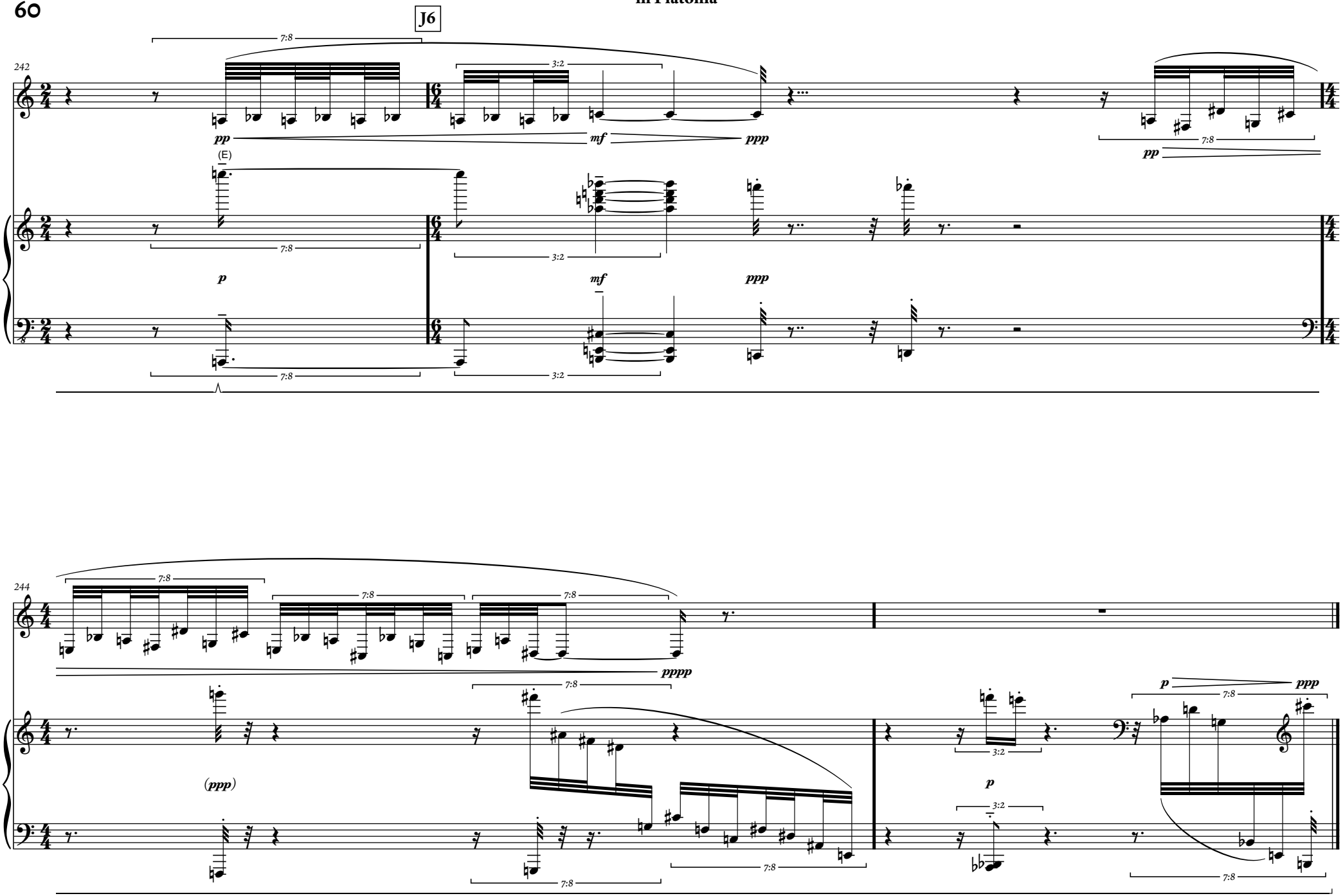

J1
♩ = 63
222
8va
(E)
3:2
7:8
ffff
ppp
pp
p
J2
224
9:8
5:4
f
(D)

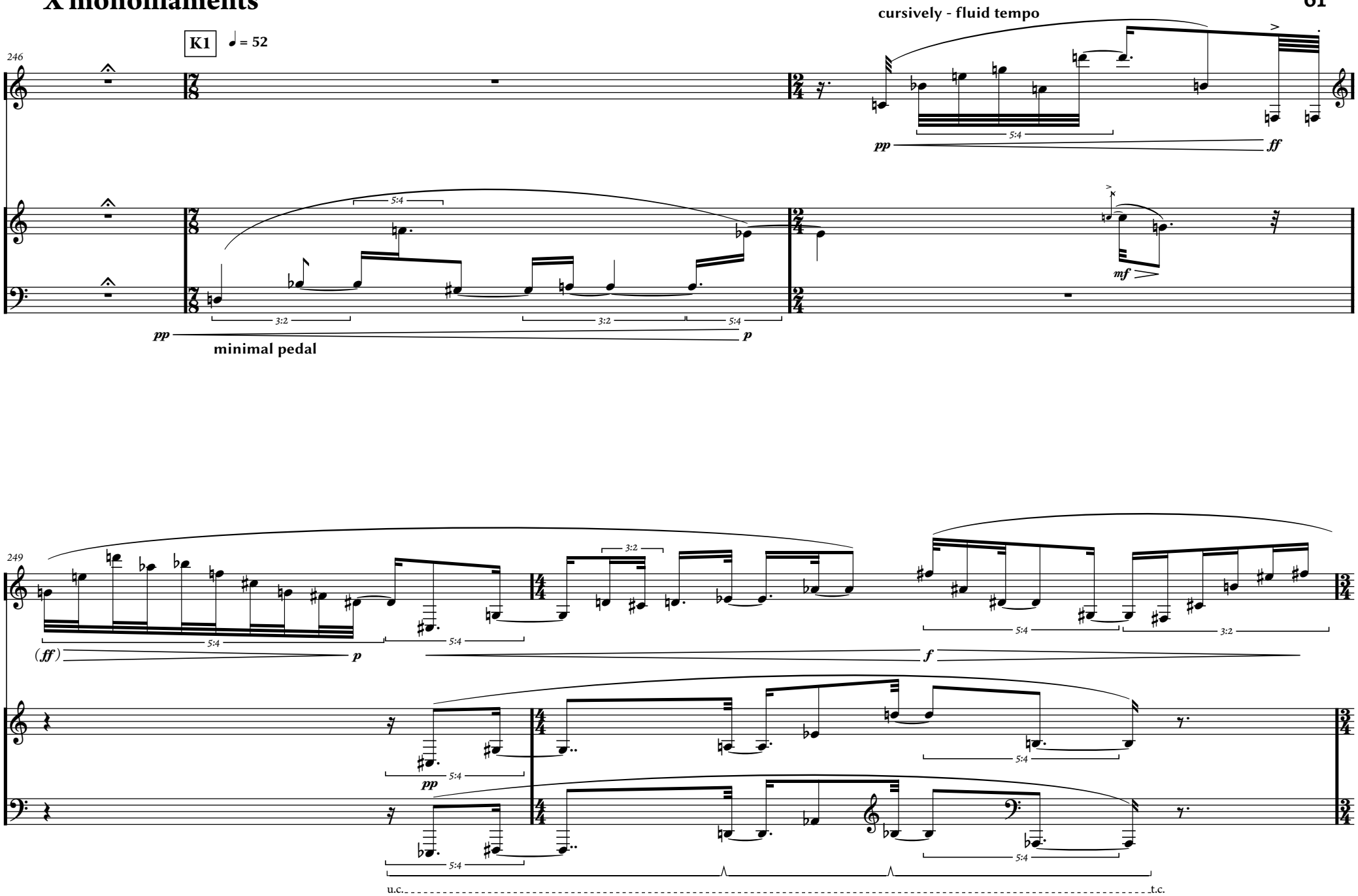

226
7:8
ppp
pp
7:8
3:2
pp
p
pp
7:8
p
3:2
228
pp
p
pp
p
pp
7:8
5:4
3:2
pp
p
pp
9:8
p
pp
3:2
sffz
(E)
9:8
ppp
3:2
3:2
7:8
pp
p
pp
7:8
7:8
(D)
3:2
ffff
9:8
3:2
3:2

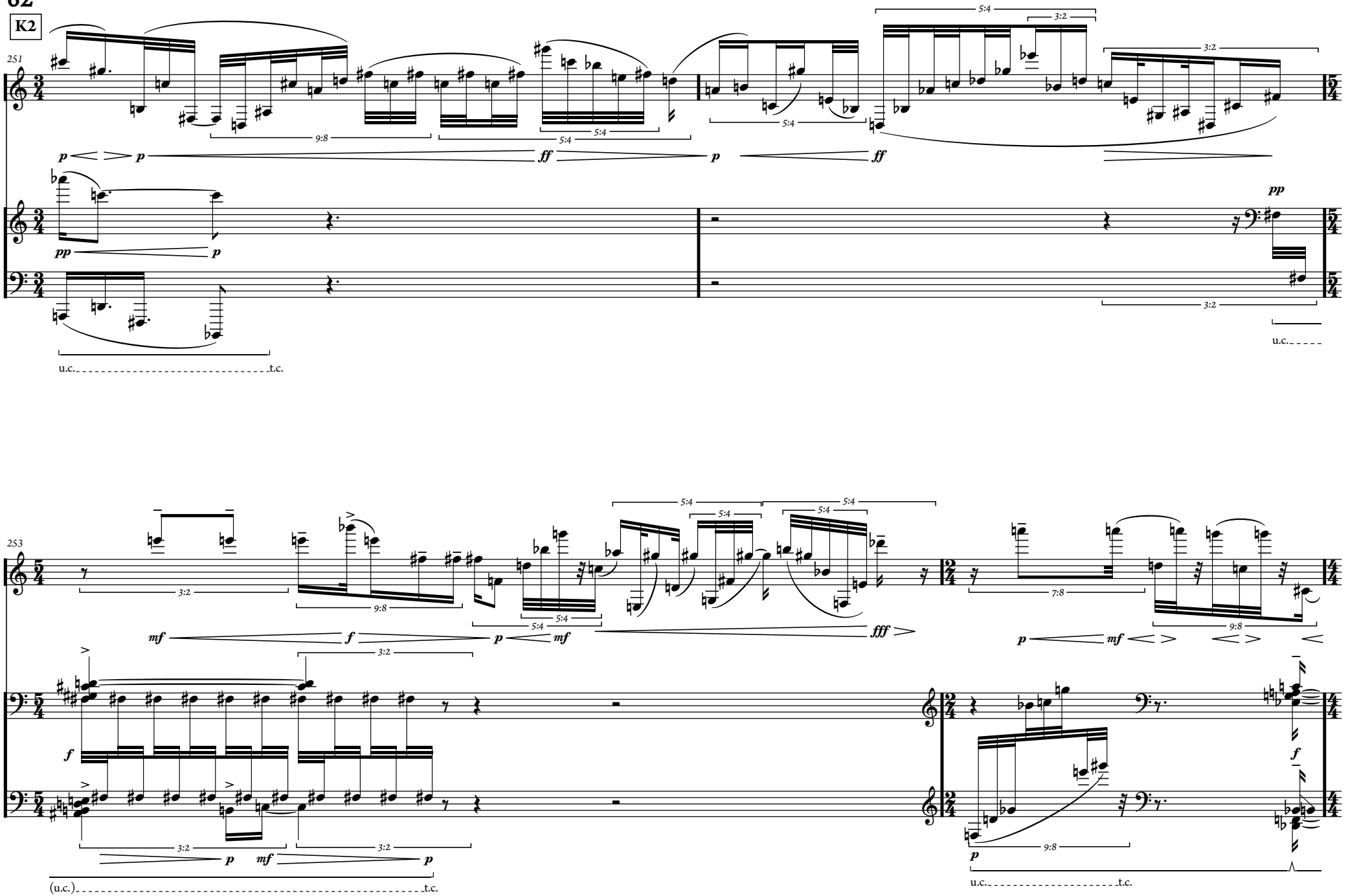

J3
230
pp
mf
pppp
(D)
(Eb)
ppp
J4
232
flz.
ORD
ffff
pppp
p
(E)

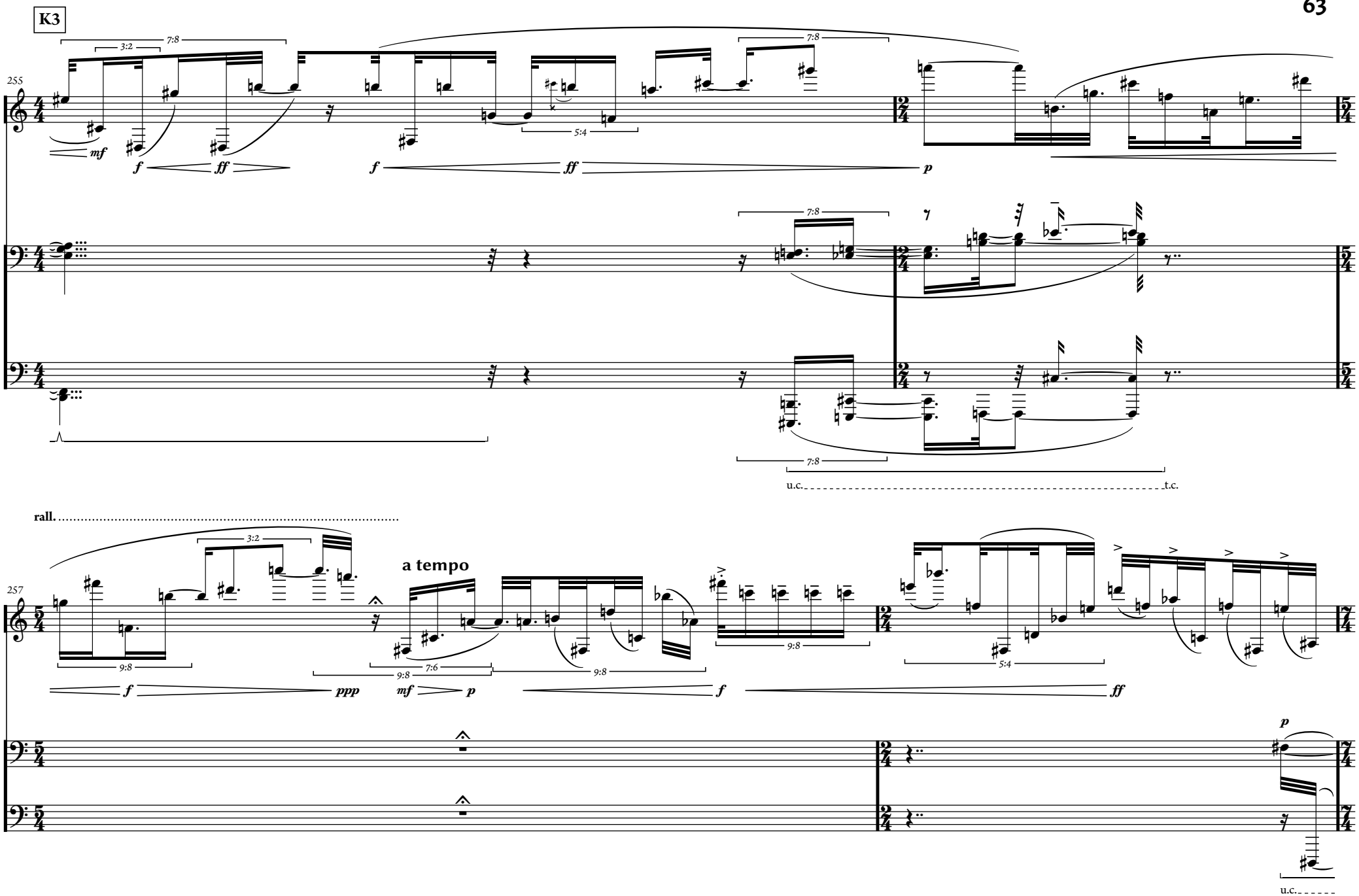

234
(E)
(ppp)
7:8
9:8
3:2
p
pp
ppp
J5
236
5:4
sfffffz
ffff

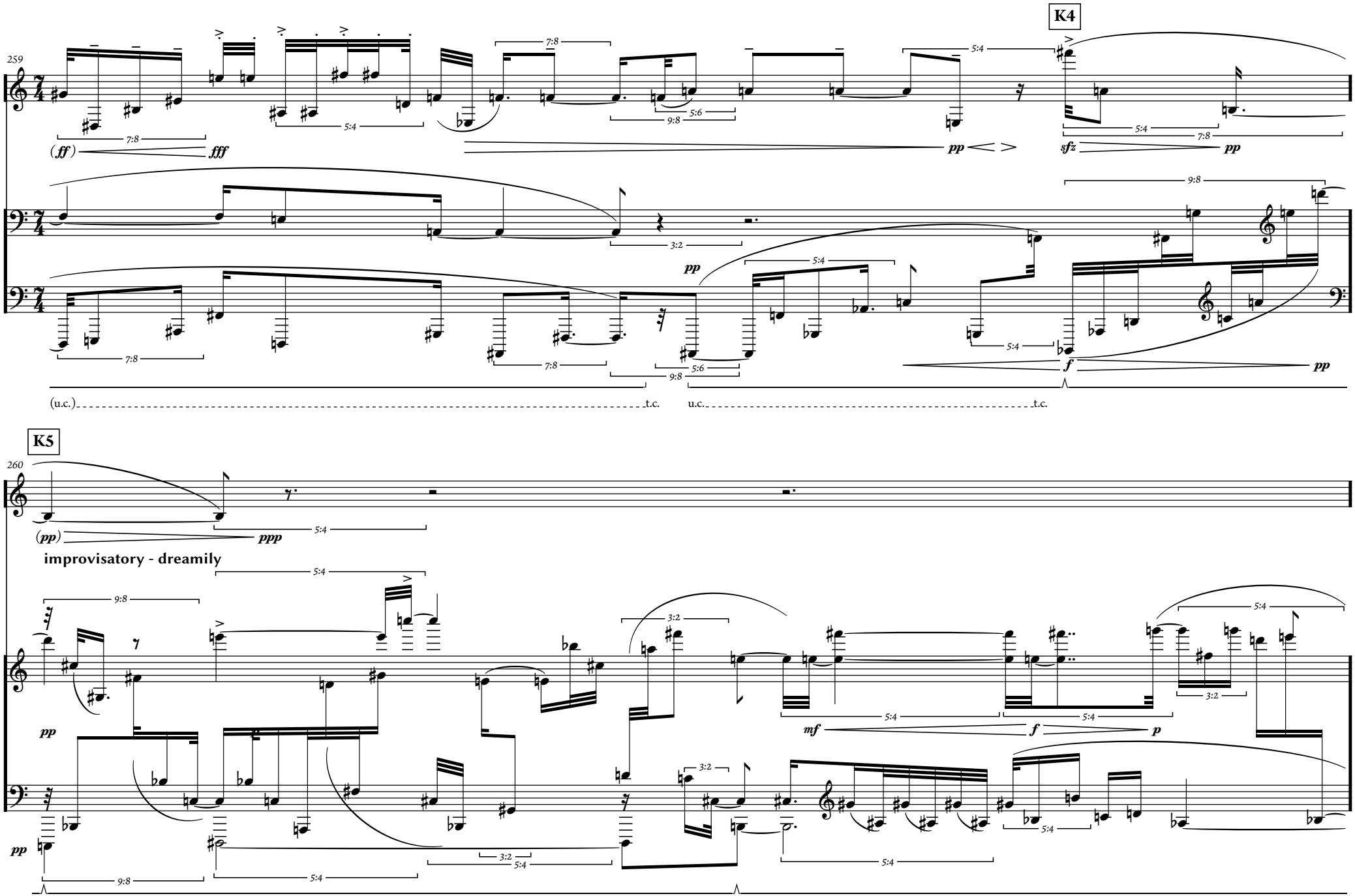

238
240
(F)
(E♭)
(B♭)
(B♭)
pp
p
ppp
pppp
9:8
7:8
3:2
5:4

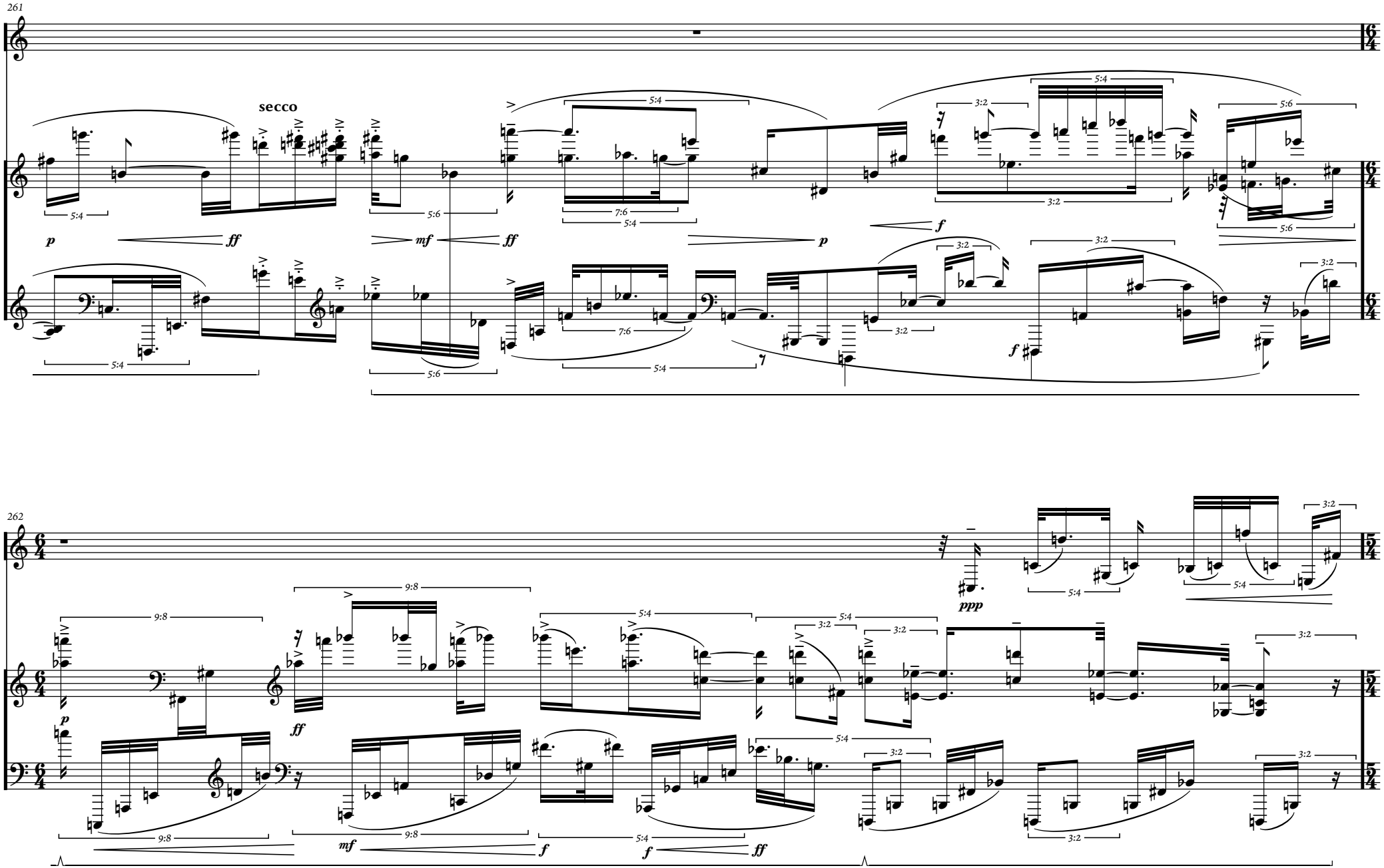

J6
242
(E)
244
7:8
3:2
pp
mf
ppp
p
pppp
(ppp)

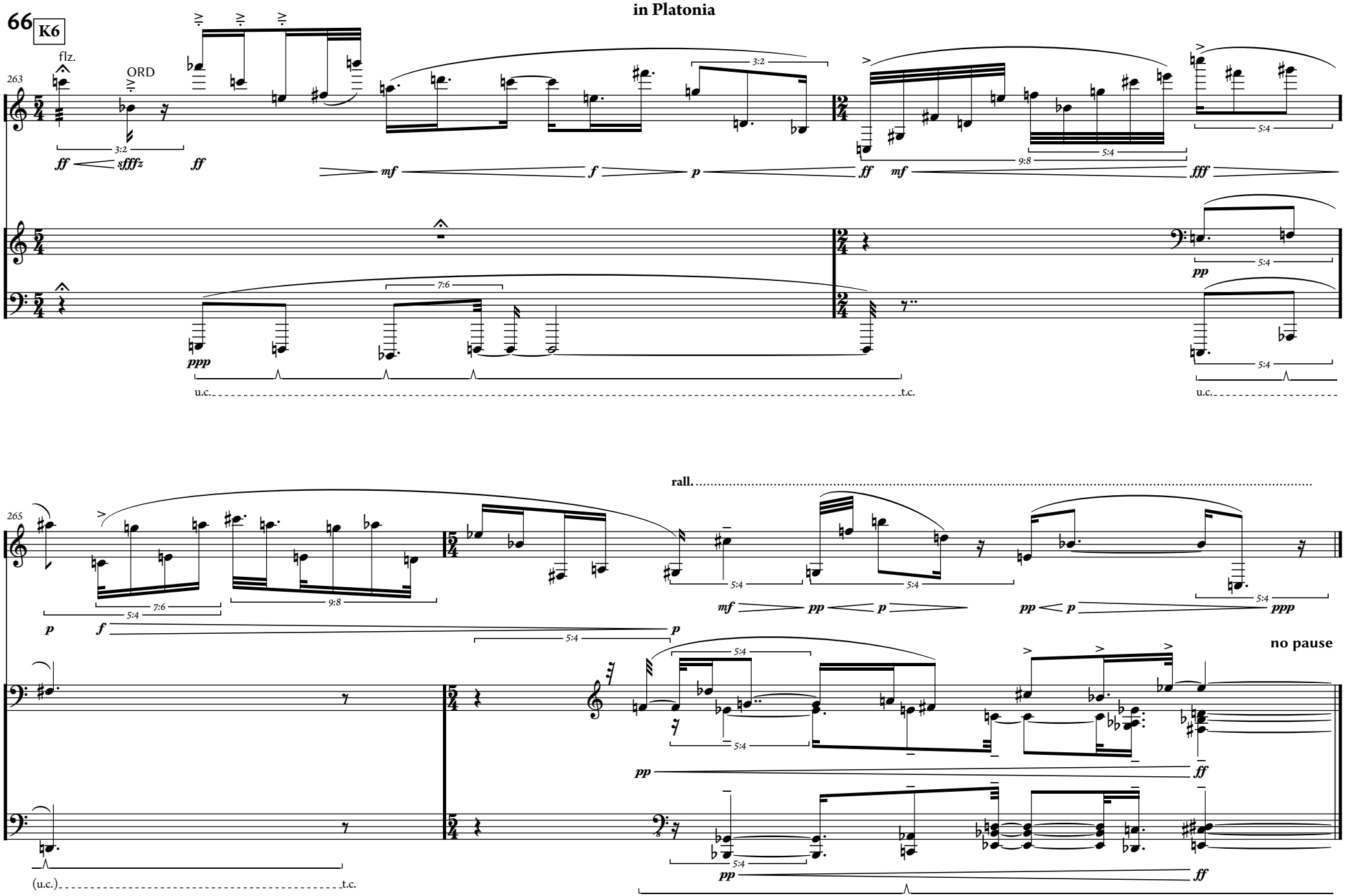

K1
♩ = 52
246
cursively - fluid tempo
5:4
pp
ff
3:2
3:2
5:4
pp
minimal pedal
p
mf
249
(ff)
5:4
p
5:4
3:2
f
5:4
3:2
pp
5:4
5:4
5:4
u.c.
t.c.


K2
251
253
u.c.
t.c.
(u.c.)


K3
255
3:2
7:8
5:4
mf
f
ff
p
u.c.
t.c.
rall.
257
a tempo
9:8
7:6
ppp
mf
u.c.

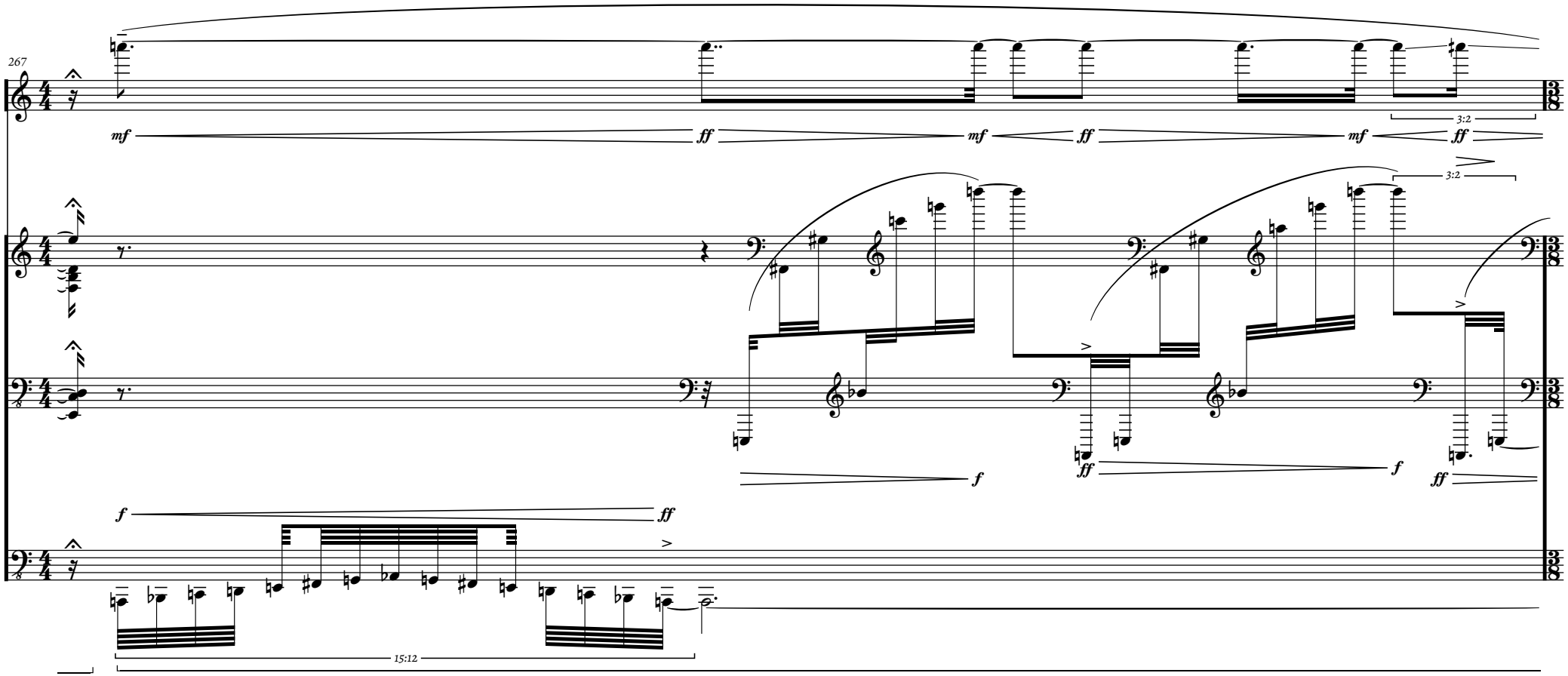

K4
259
(ff)
fff
pp
sfz
pp
pp
f
pp
(u.c.)
t.c.
u.c.
t.c.
K5
260
(pp)
ppp
improvisatory - dreamily
pp
mf
f
p
pp

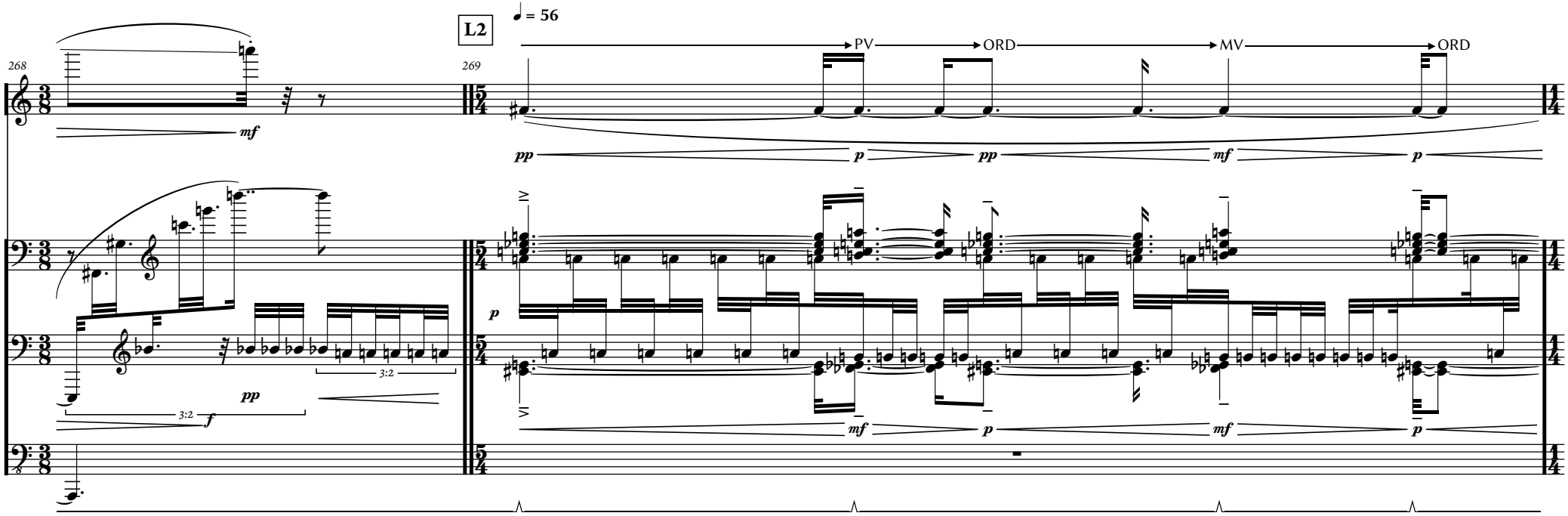

261
secco
262

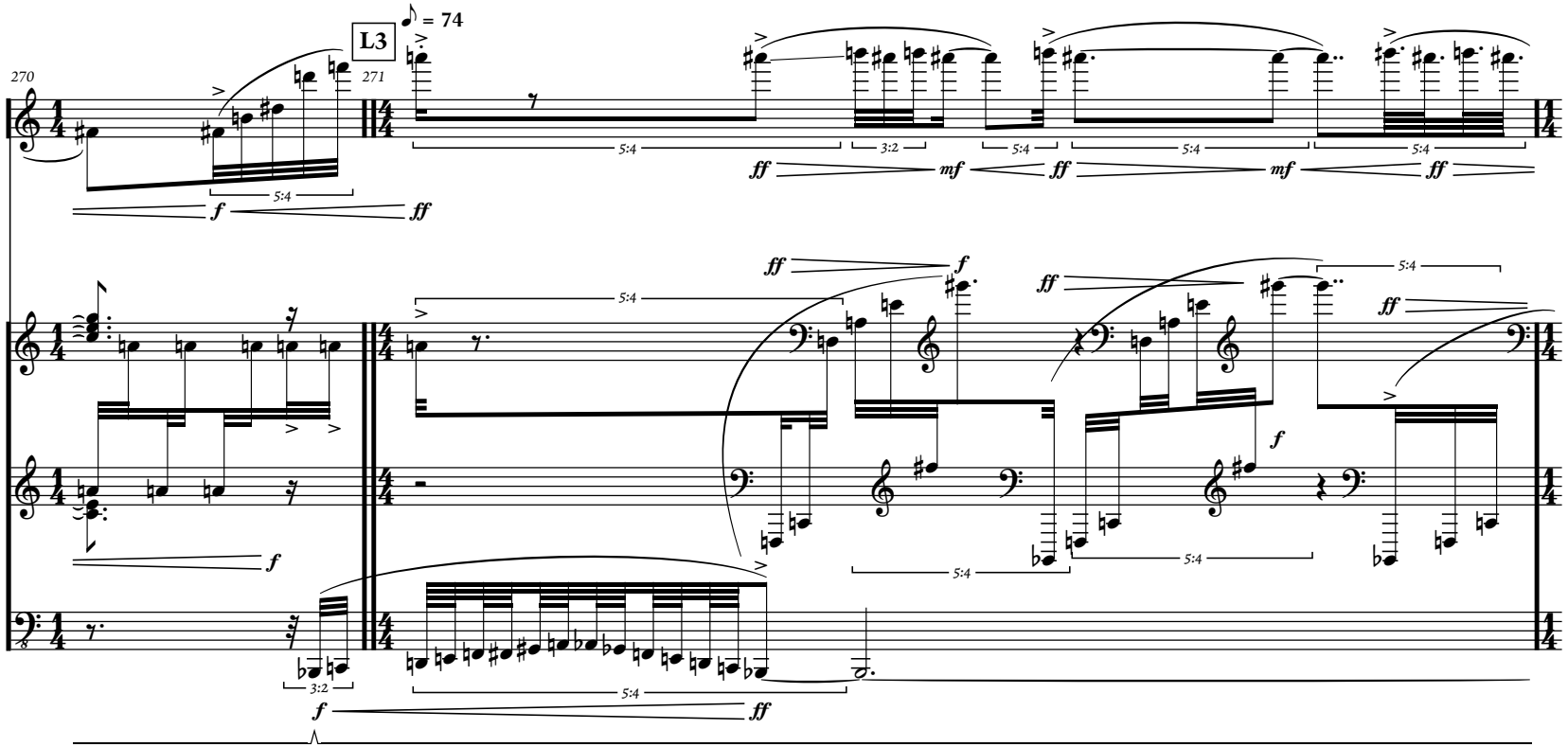

66
K6
263
flz.
ORD
3:2
ff
sffz
ff
mf
f
p
ff
mf
fff
9:8
5:4
7:6
ppp
pp
u.c.
t.c.
265
rall.
no pause
(u.c.)

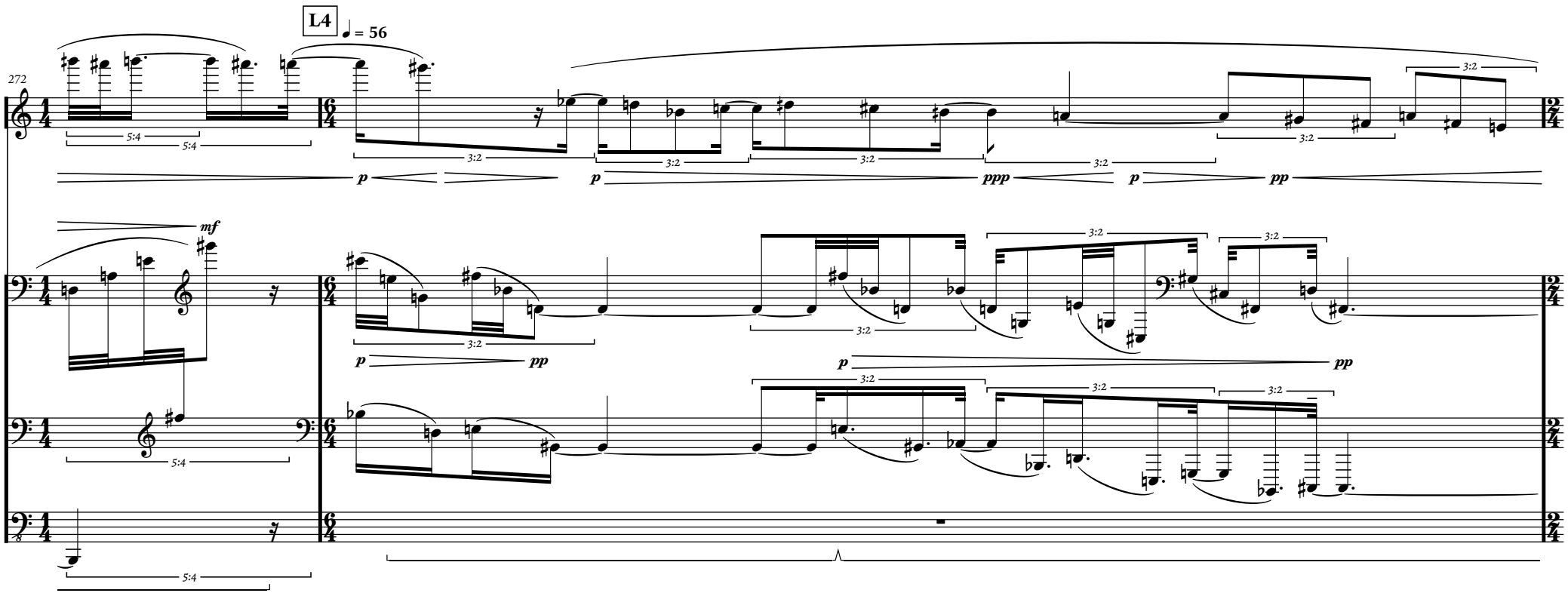
XI now (is the only moment)

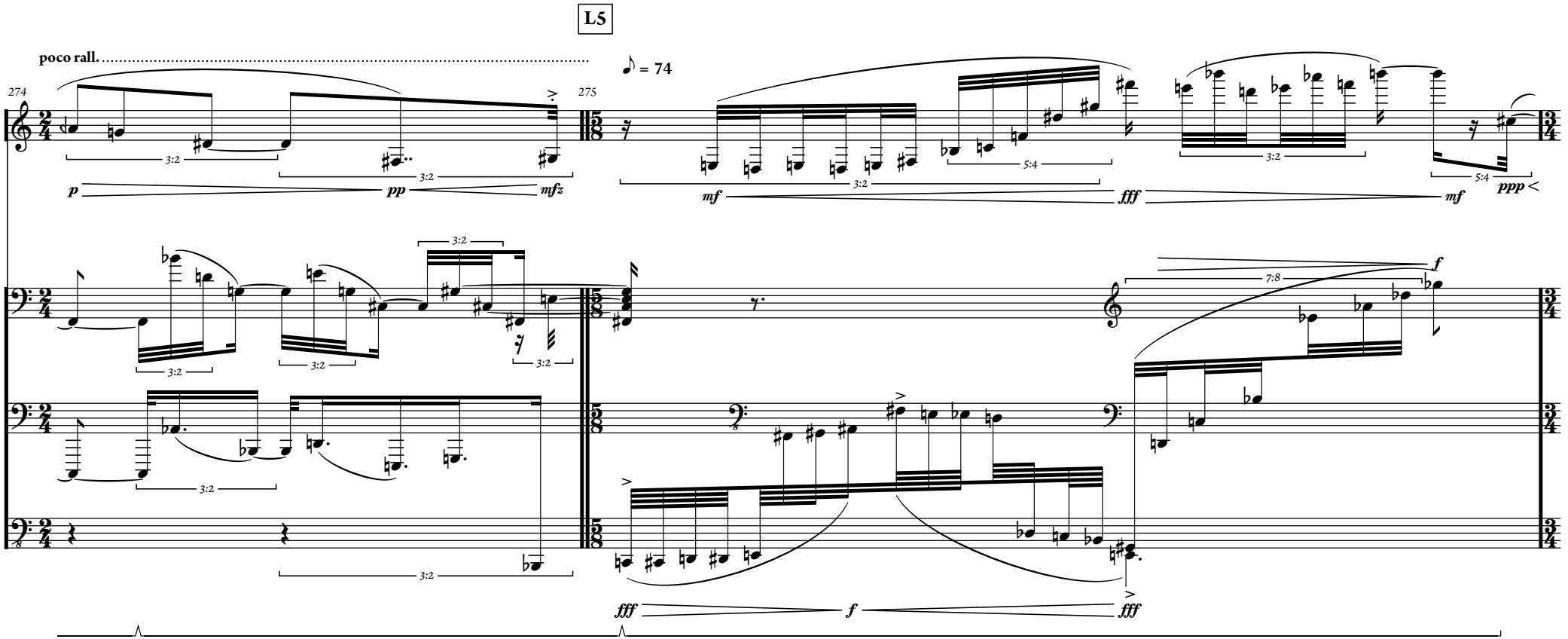
L1 ♪ = 74 eventlessly

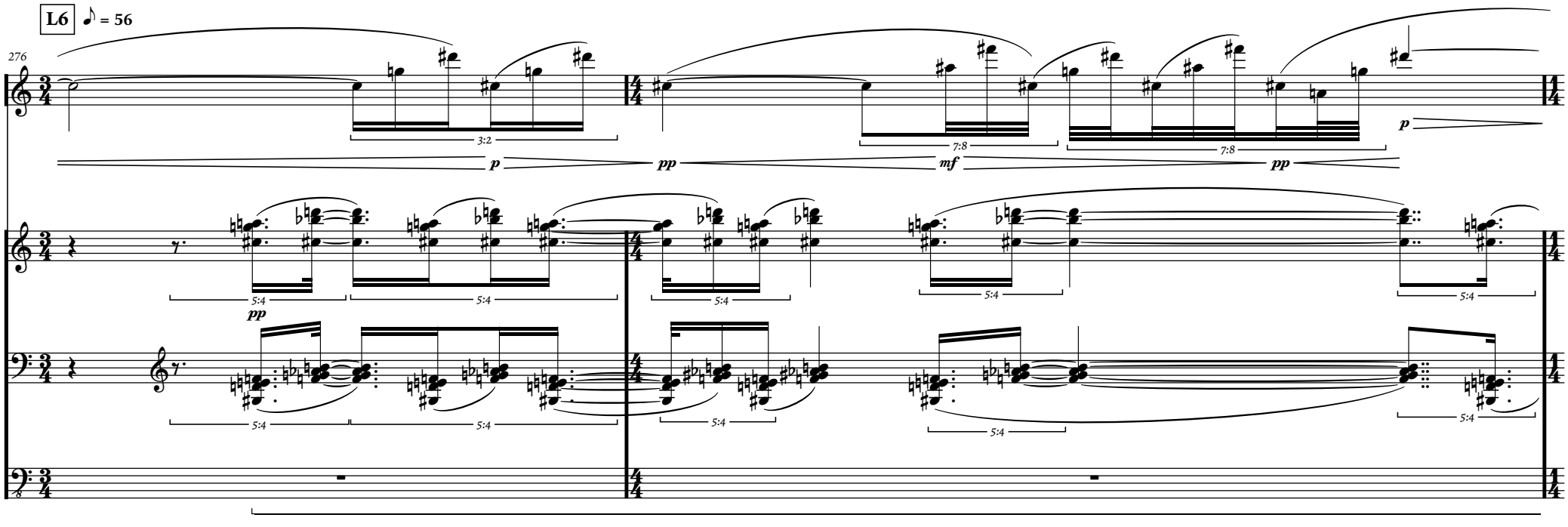


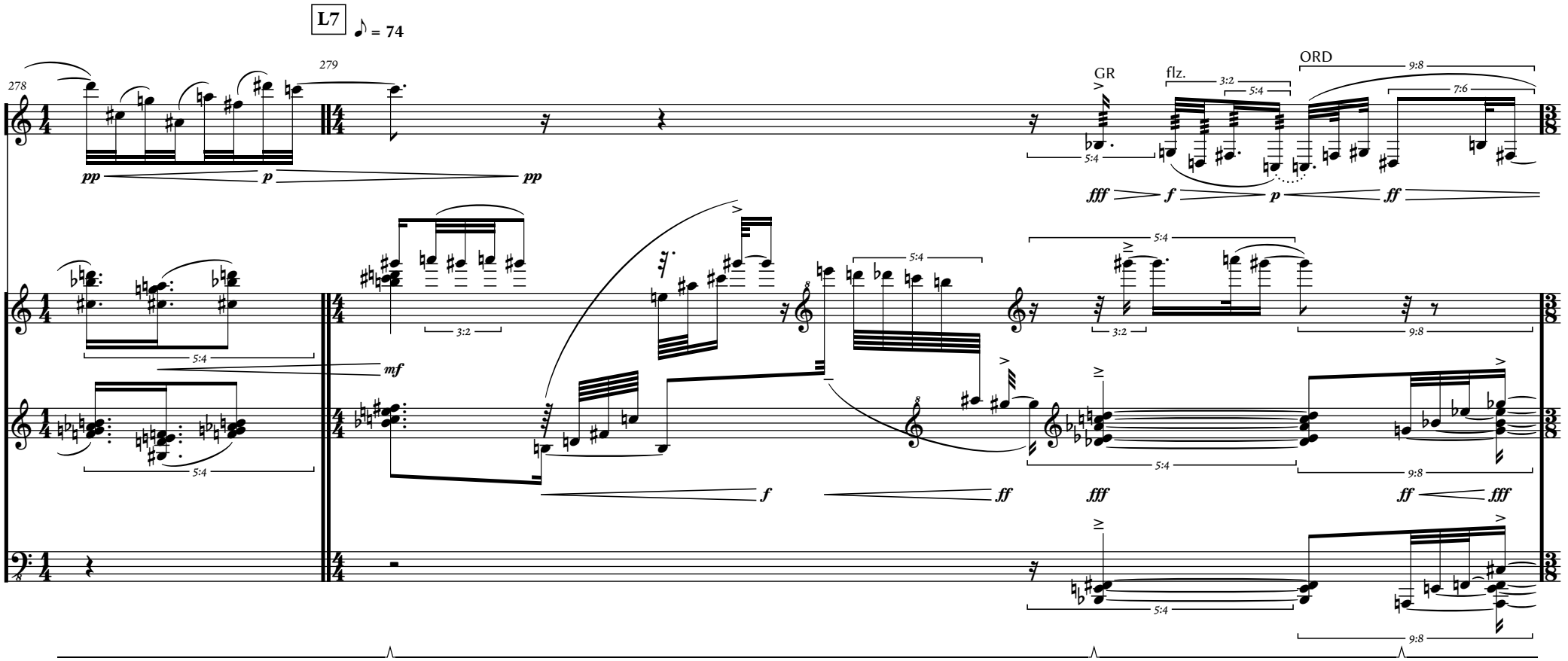

L2
♩ = 56
268
269
PV
ORD
MV
ORD
mf
pp
p
pp
mf
p
3:2
3:2
f
pp
mf
p
mf
p

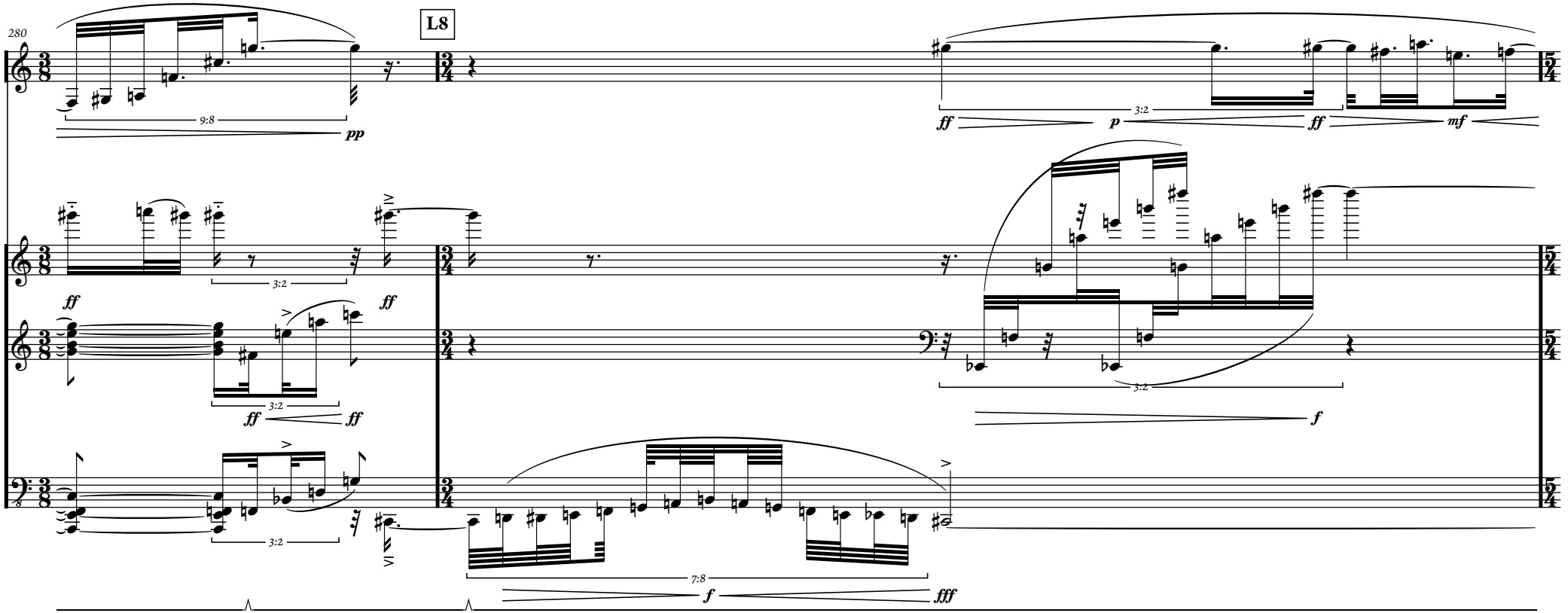

L3
♪ = 74
270
271
5:4
3:2
f
ff
mf

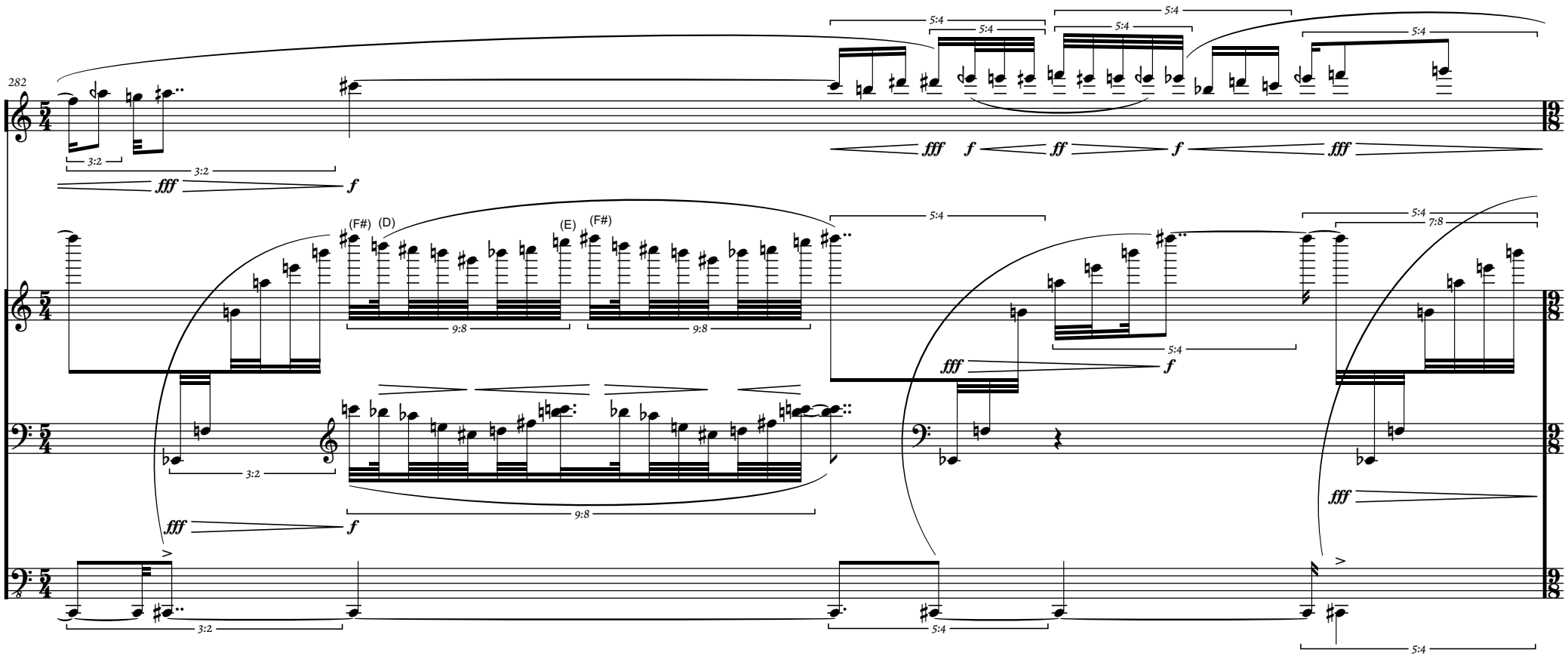

L4
♩ = 56
272
5:4
3:2
p
ppp
pp
mf

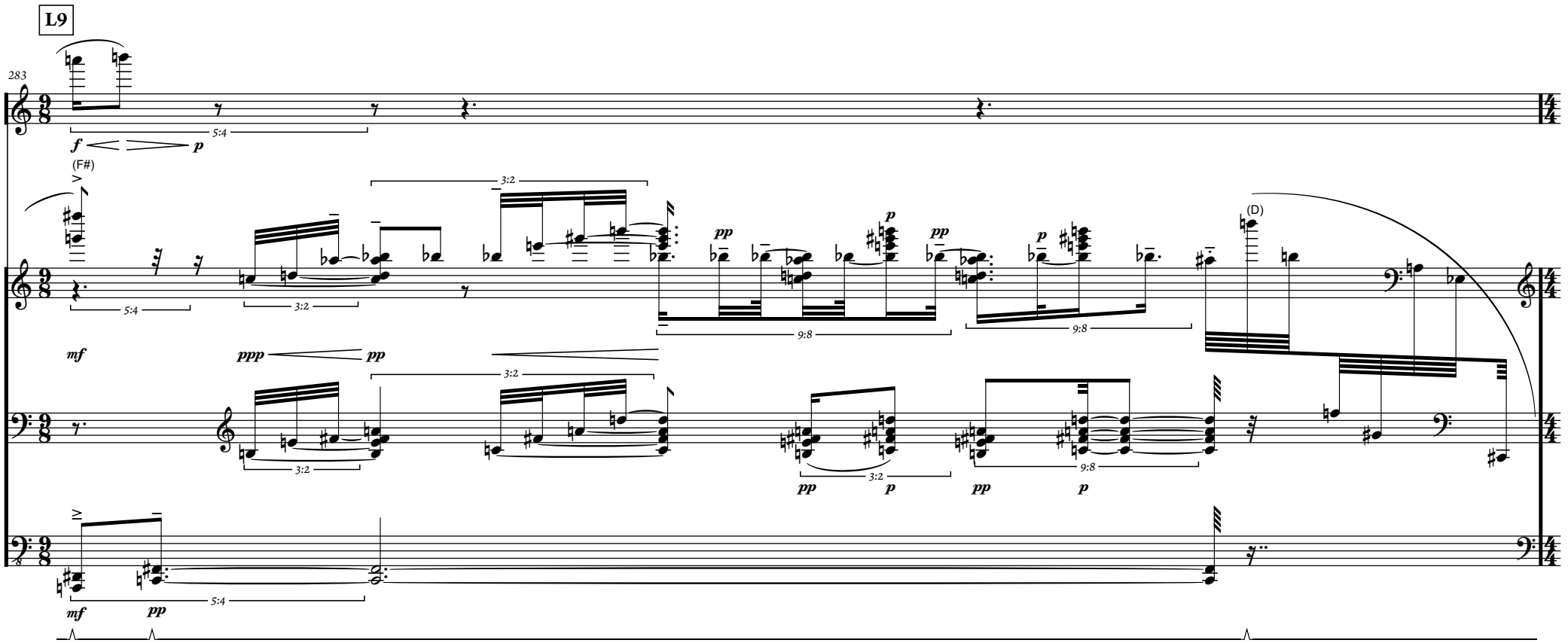

L5
poco rall.
274
275
♪ = 74
p
pp
mfz
mf
fff
mf
ppp
f
fff
f
fff
3:2
5:4
7:8

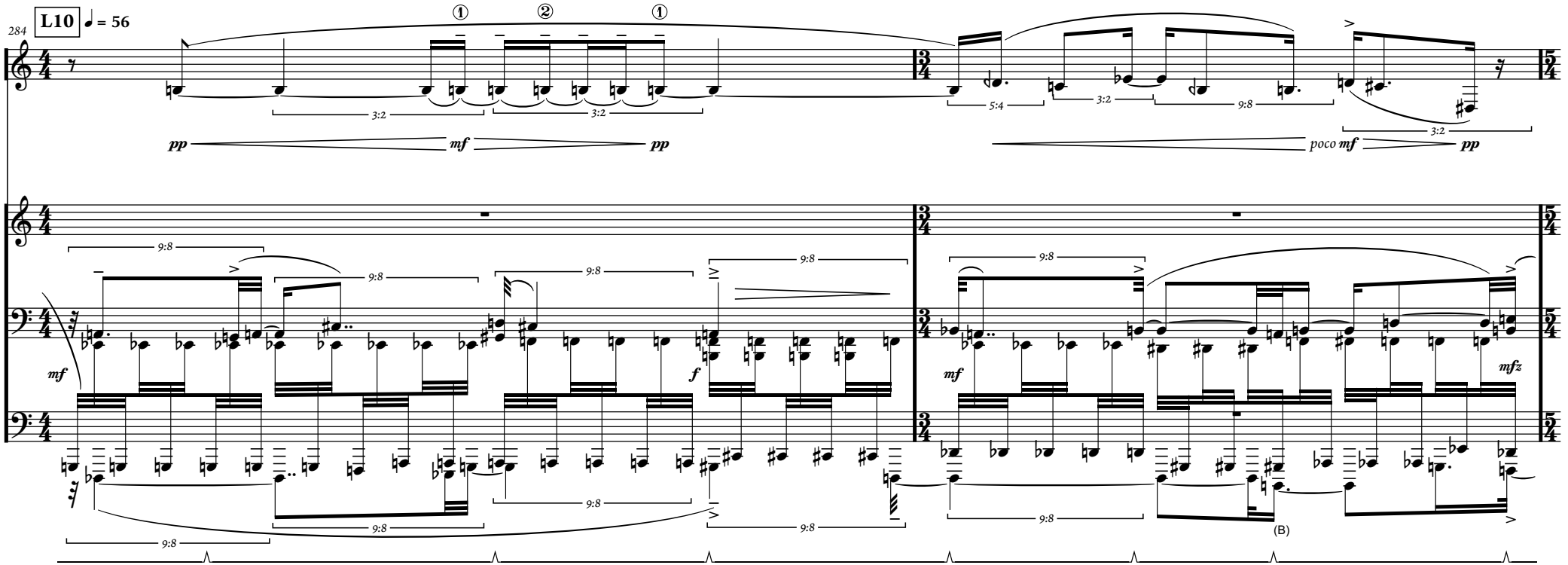

L6
♪ = 56
276
3:2
7:8
7:8
p
pp
mf
pp
p
5:4
5:4
5:4
5:4
5:4
pp
5:4
5:4
5:4
5:4
5:4

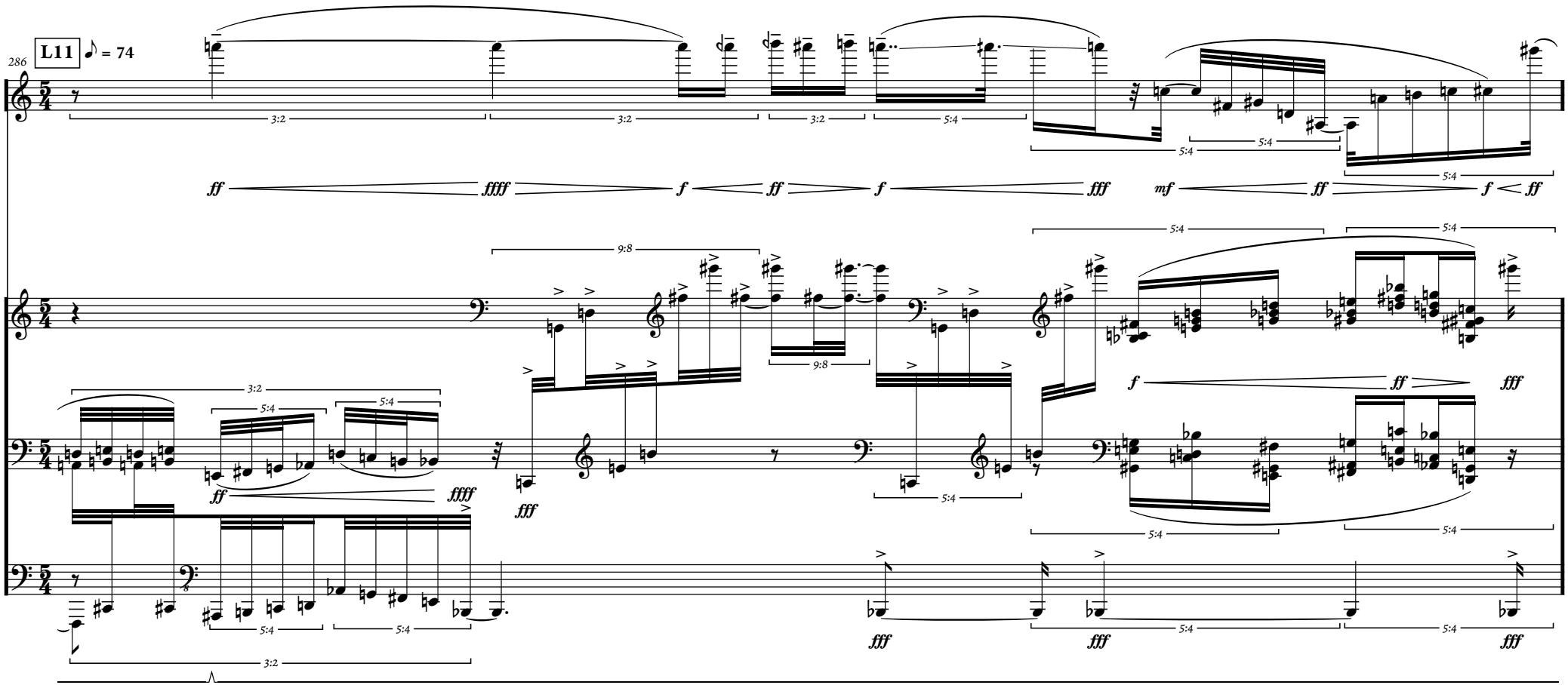

L7
♪ = 74
278
279
pp
p
pp
GR
flz.
ORD
fff
f
p
ff
mf
f
ff
fff
ff
fff
5:4
3:2
9:8
7:6

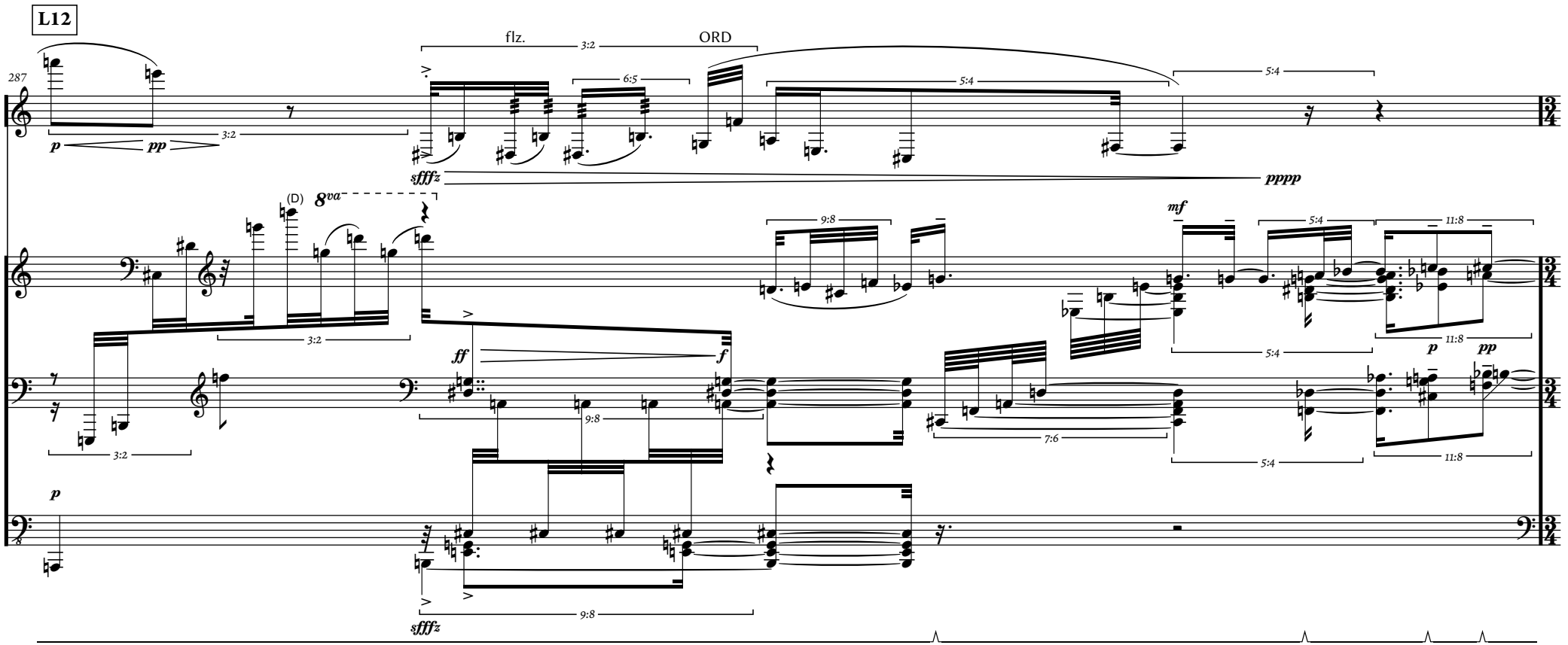

280
L8
9:8
pp
ff
3:2
p
mf
f
7:8
fff

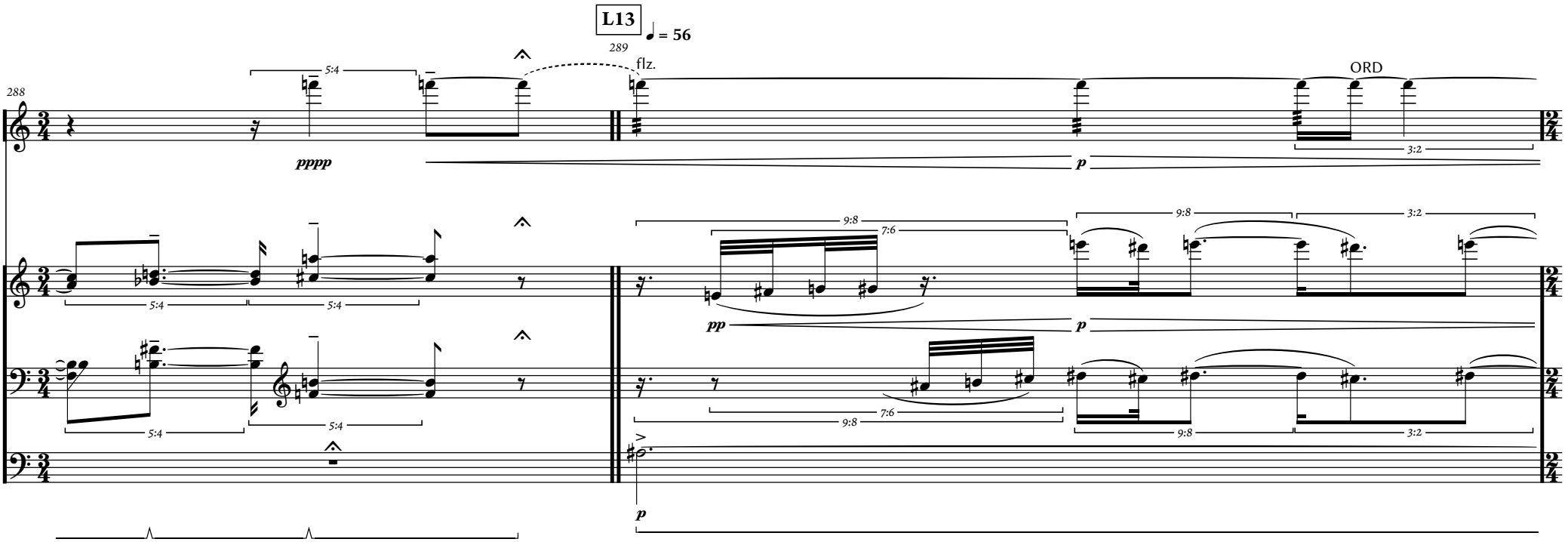

282
5:4
fff
f
ff
3:2
(F#)
(D)
(E)
9:8
7:8

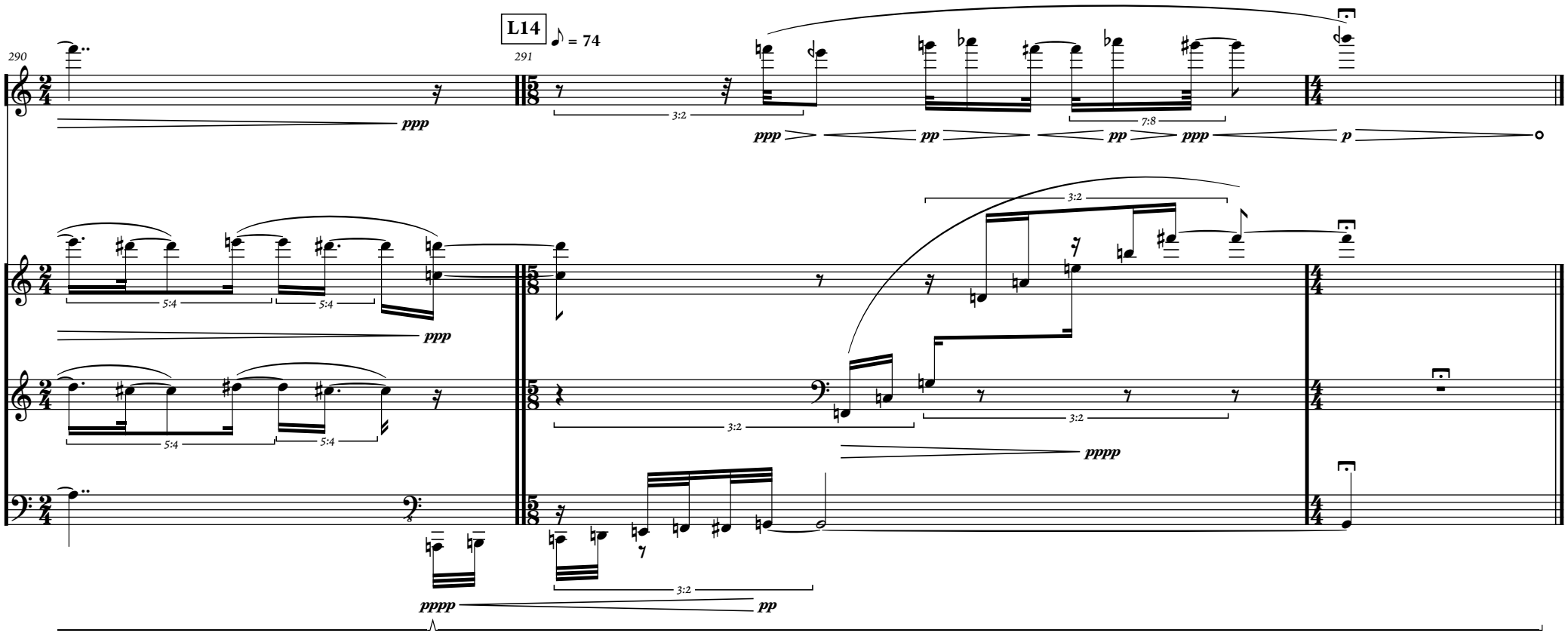

L9
283
(F#)
(D)
5:4
3:2
9:8
f
p
mf
ppp
pp


284
L10
♩ = 56
pp
mf
pp
poco mf
pp
mf
f
mf
mfz
(B)


286
L11
♪ = 74
3:2
5:4
9:8
ff
ffff
f
fff
mf
ff
fff


L12
287
flz.
ORD
3:2
6:5
5:4
p
pp
sfffz
pppp
(D)
8va
9:8
mf
11:8
ff
f
7:6


L13
289
♩ = 56
288
flz.
ORD
pppp
p
pp
5:4
9:8
7:6
3:2



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