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ROPE: AN ORIGINAL PIECE FOR STRING ORCHESTRA PLAYED CONCURRENTLY WITH ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S FILM

By

DOUGLAS W. ESPIE, Master of Music

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Music

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
May, 2020

ROPE: AN ORIGINAL PIECE FOR STRING ORCHESTRA PLAYED CONCURRENTLY WITH ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S FILM

By

DOUGLAS W. ESPIE, Master of Music

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Dean of Research and Graduate Programs

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an original piece of music designed to be performed concurrently with Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948). The film provides a canvas upon which a musically dominant multimedia experience is built. An accompanying analysis explains the variety of compositional techniques used, explaining their significance and how each deviates from a traditional film score. The objective of this work is to challenge the existing relationship between music and film, and add to the growing body of repertoire of live works featuring synchronized video, modeling example methods of live multimedia performance. In this exploration, the goal was not to be anti-cinematic, but to be extra-cinematic; that is, to go beyond the traditional practices while still employing them when desired.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

For over a century, filmmakers have used music as a component part to enhance the cinematic experience. Music provides support for silent films, is a focal point in animated musicals, and enhances the storytelling of epic science-fiction. Some film scores are even more recognizable and iconic than the films they represent. While not all filmmakers have neglected the impact music can have in a film, music is usually composed after the film is edited, with the objective of enhancing the filmmakers' vision.[1]

Despite the importance of music to the cinematic experience, this relationship between music and film had gone virtually unchallenged until rather recently. In a film score, music often fulfills a subservient role, enhancing but not dominating the audiovisual relationship. It has become more common for filmmakers to consider music during the filming of a movie, but rarely does the music take a superior role to the visual material, and the combining of existing video footage with live music is a new and developing technique.

---

[1] Richard Davis, *Complete Guide to Film Scoring: The Art and Business of Writing Music for Movies and TV* (Boston: Berklee Press, 1999), 77.

There is a much more storied history of combining prerecorded audio with live performance. A line can be traced through Karlheinz Stockhausen, Steve Reich, Alex Shapiro, and Jacob TV, all of whom have become significant names in the realm of electroacoustic art music. Their compositions set a precedent for multimedia musical experiences in a live setting, using prerecorded sounds and dialogue as elements of musical compositions.

There are also a number of composers who have experimented with including video as an aspect of live performance. One example is the piece *Up-close* by Michel Van der Aa, in which the relationship between the ensemble and film is frequently challenged.[2] Another notable composer is Charles Cornell, whose works take existing videos from the Internet and harmonize them. There are also software resources available for audio-visual performances, such as Muséik, which allow performers to synchronize film in a live setting by manipulating the playback speed of digital files.[3] Despite these innovations in composing and programming, a live performance in which music takes precedence over an entire pre-existing film is, to my knowledge, unprecedented.

The composition within this thesis serves to challenge the relationship between film and music as it is traditionally applied. It is to be played concurrently with Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rope* (1948). In order to fully contextualize the relationship between the

---

[2] Michel Van der Aa. *Up-close* (Boosey & Hawkes, 2010).

[3] Ion Concert Media, "Muséik," February 28, 2020.

composition and the film, a brief synopsis of the film's plot follows. *Rope* follows a sequence of events immediately subsequent to a murder. Friends Brandon and Phillip strangle their college friend David in what they consider a form of art. While Brandon hopes to make the evening more exciting by inviting several friends to a dinner party in the room with David's body, Phillip's lingering regret and fear of suspicion cause tension in their relationship. Brandon's former mentor, Rupert, notices Phillip's strange behavior throughout the party, and eventually discovers David's body.

Rope was chosen for two reasons: first, the film contains no score, which allows this piece to be performed alongside the film with its audio intact; and second, as the events of the film occur in real time, all of the character development happens onscreen, which directly influenced compositional techniques. While the role of music in a cinematic experience is dictated by plot and dialogue, this composition at times inverts this relationship, placing musical goals before those of the film. Some compositional techniques employed have their roots in traditional film scoring, while others are influenced by electroacoustic composers.

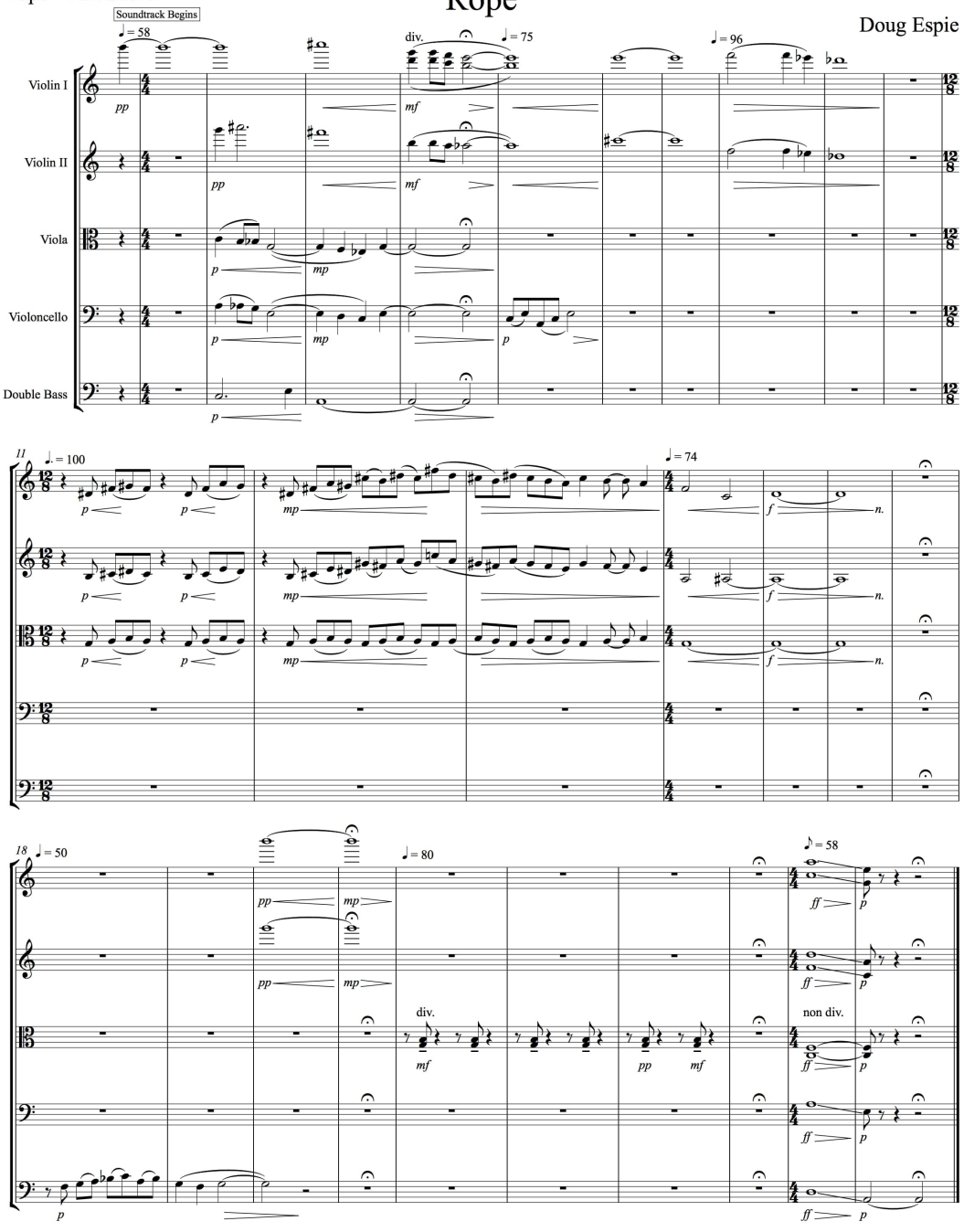
The composition within this thesis is not intended to serve as a masterwork example of this evolving approach to composition. Rather, it is an experiment echoing recent trends, exploring an ambiguous territory of multimedia presentation. During the viewing experience, there will likely be moments that feel incorrect or uncomfortable for audiences who view this as a film score. There are also bound to be moments in such a large work that are simply ineffective. The experiment itself is the objective, and the

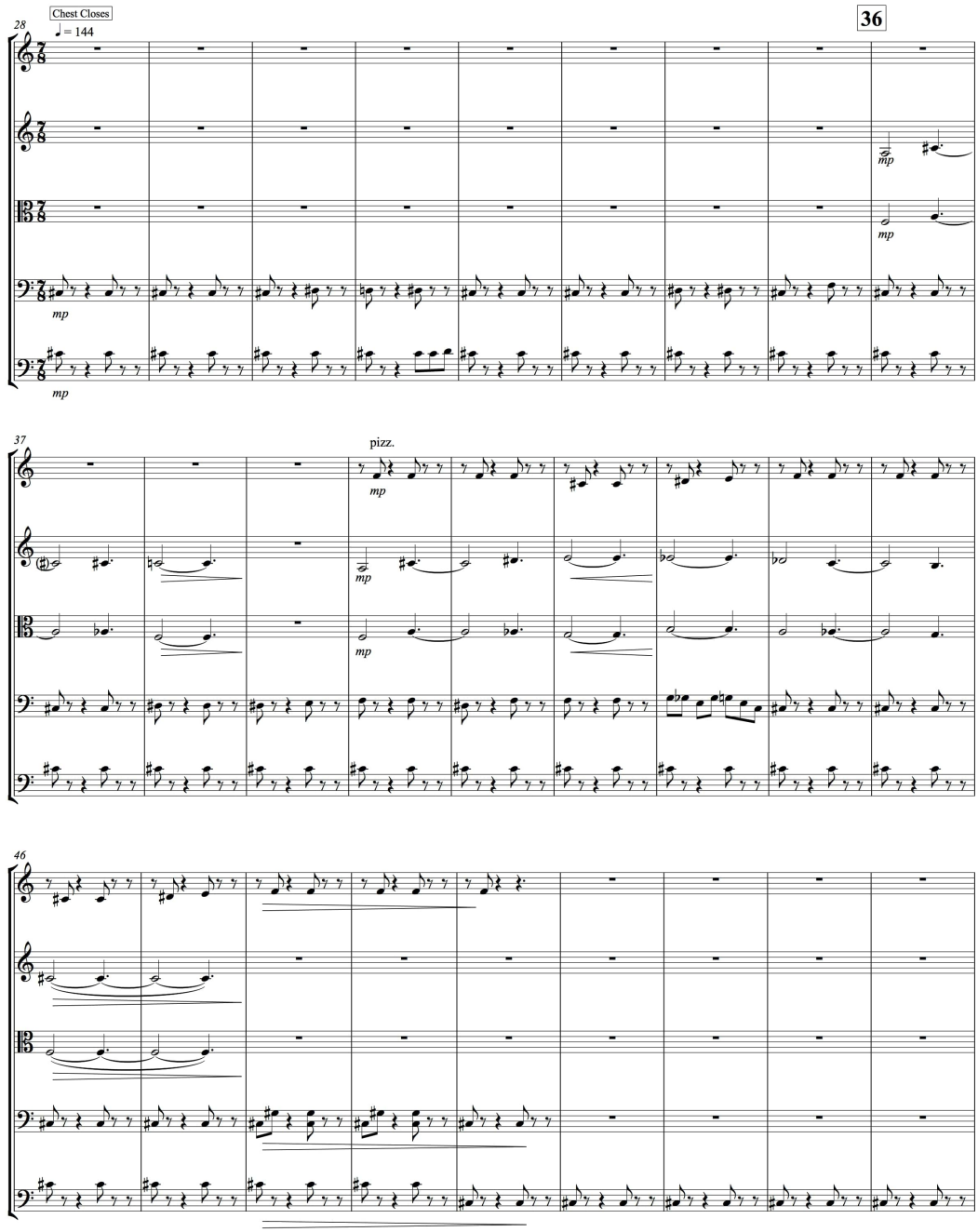
ambiguity of conventional and subversive techniques is intentional. Any discomfort with this approach marks this experiment, at least in part, a success.

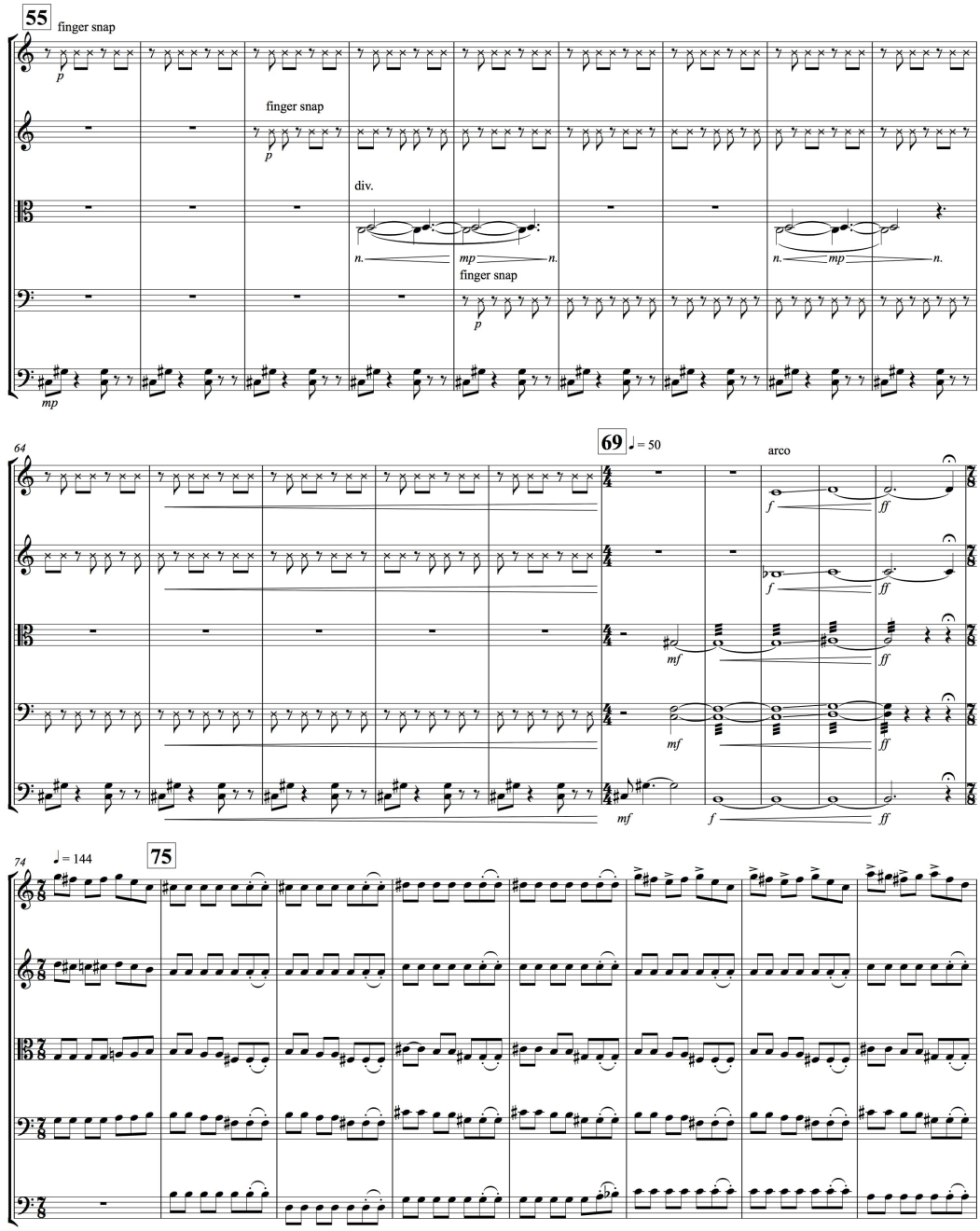
CHAPTER 2 – COMPOSITION

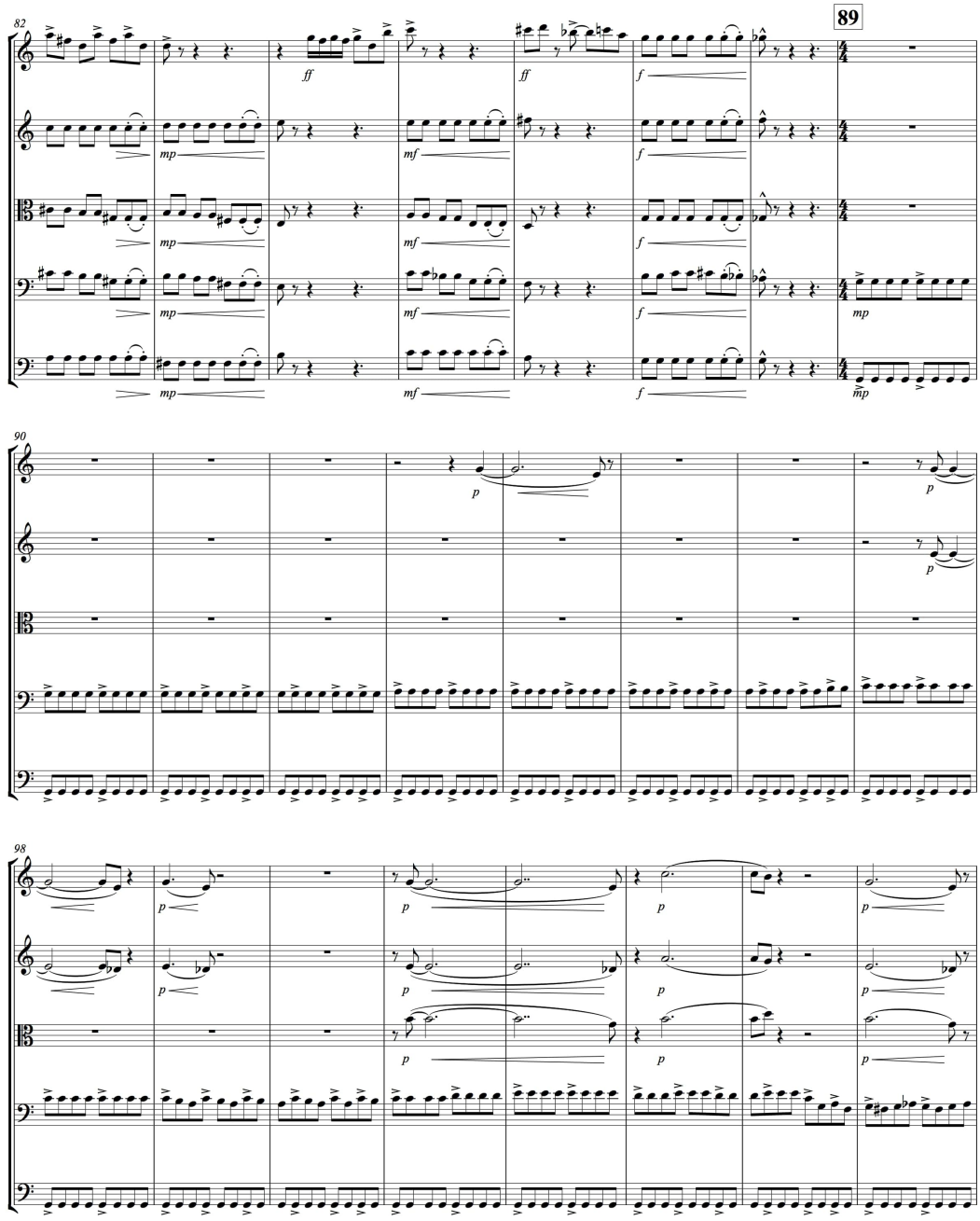
Rope

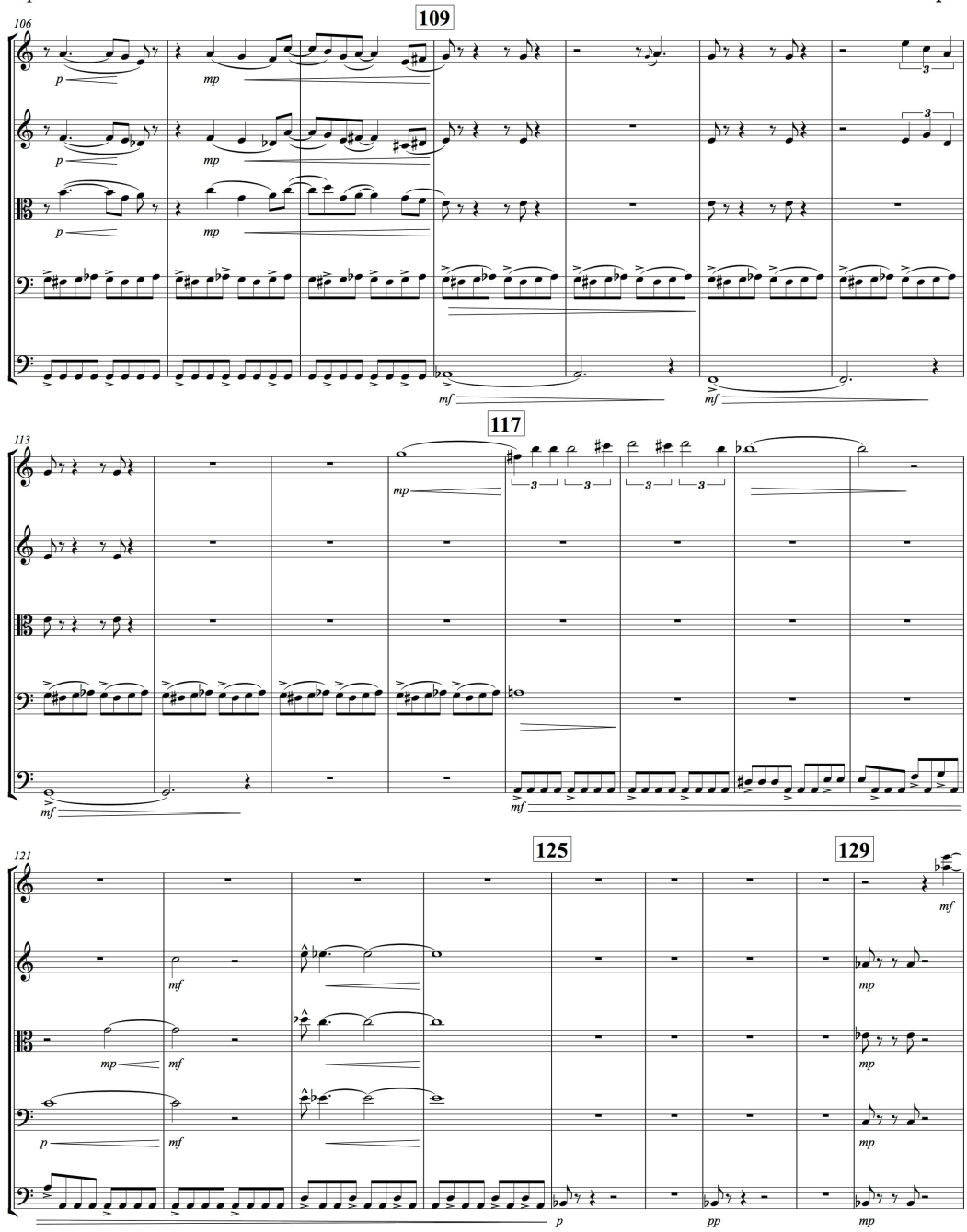
Doug Espie

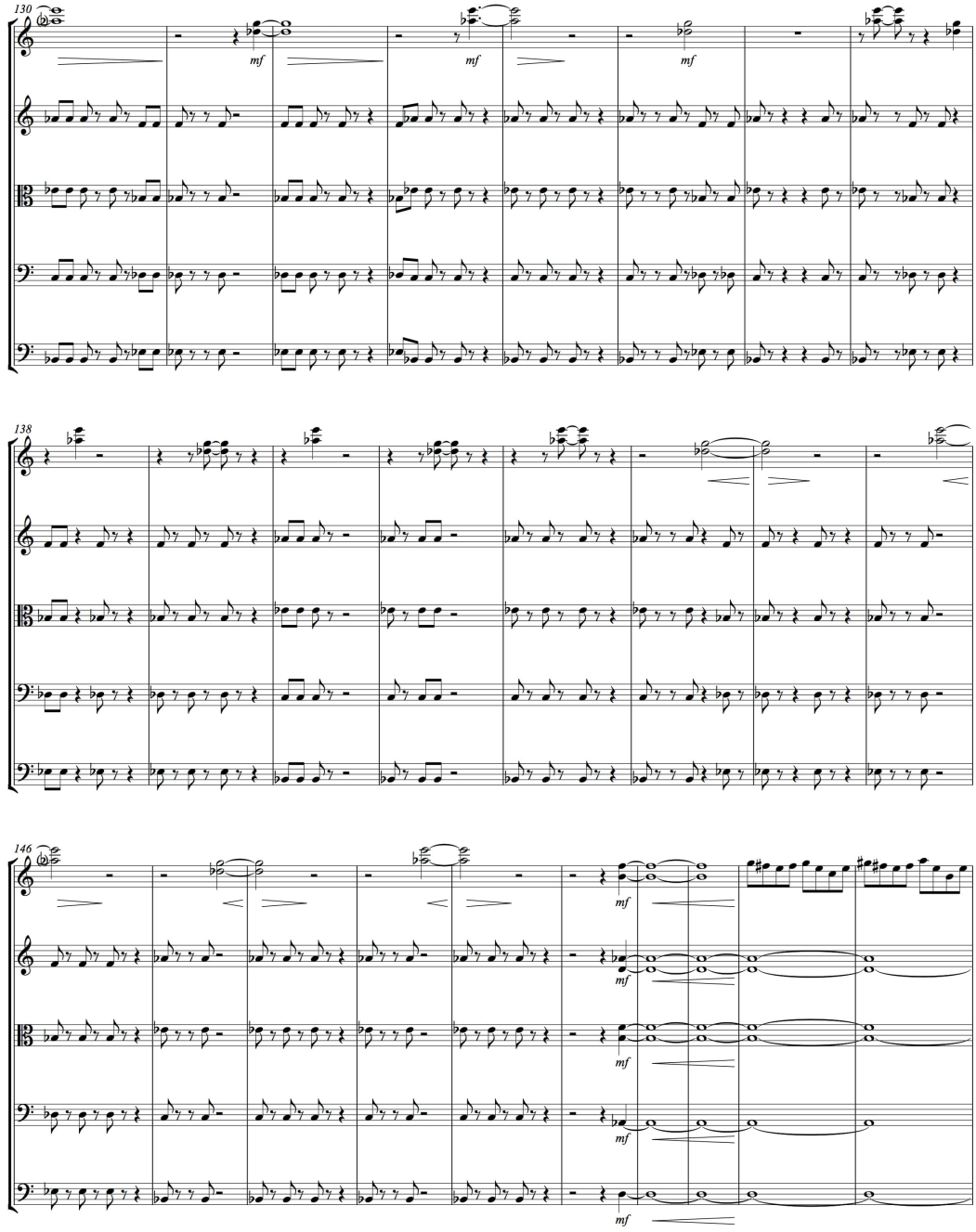


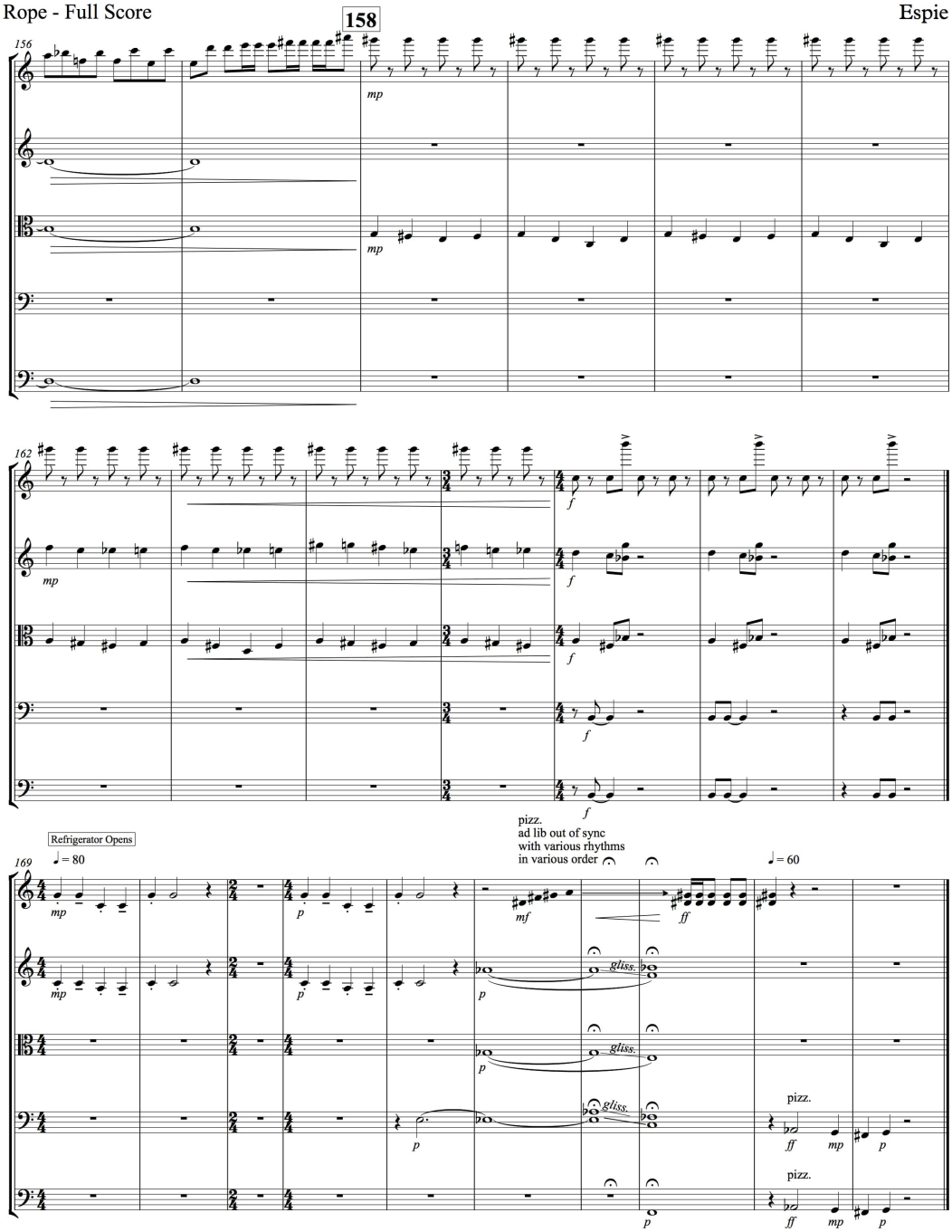

28
Chest Closes
♩ = 144
36
mp
mp
mp
mp
37
pizz.
mp
mp
mp
46

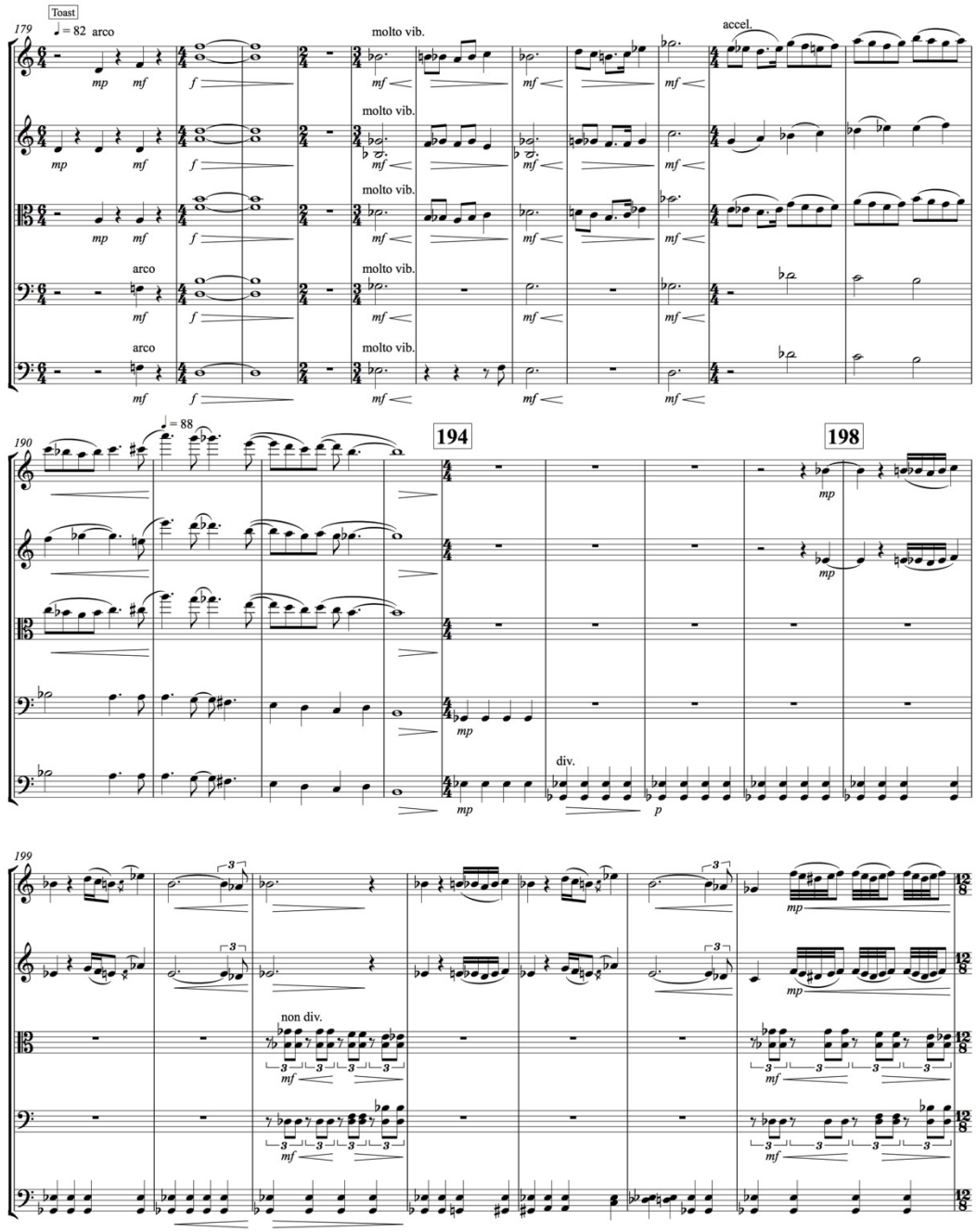

55
finger snap
p
finger snap
p
div.
n.
mp
n.
finger snap
p
mp
n.
mp
n.
64
69
♩ = 50
arco
f
ff
mf
ff
mf
ff
mf
f
ff
74
♩ = 144
75

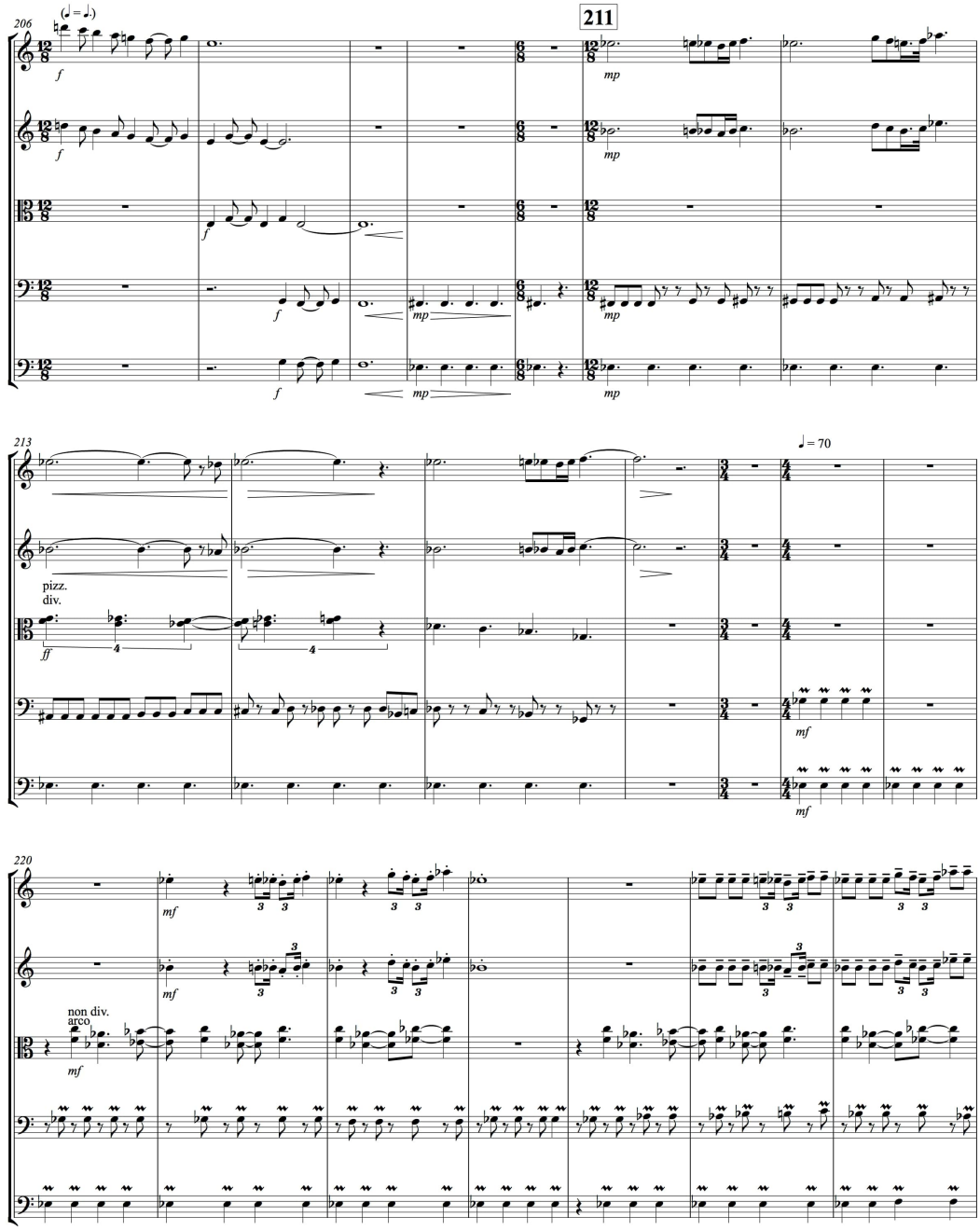

82
89
90
98

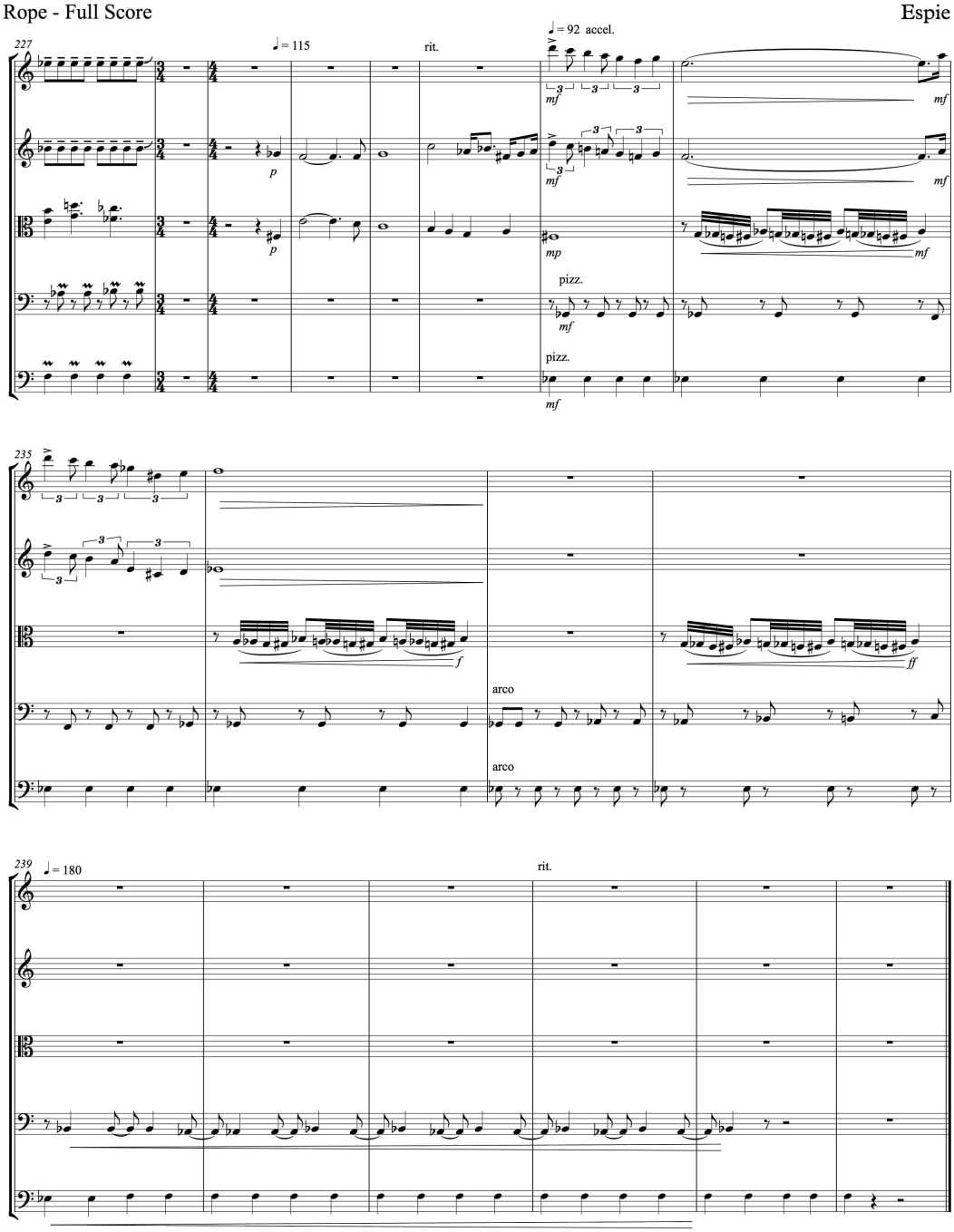

106
109
113
117
121
125
129

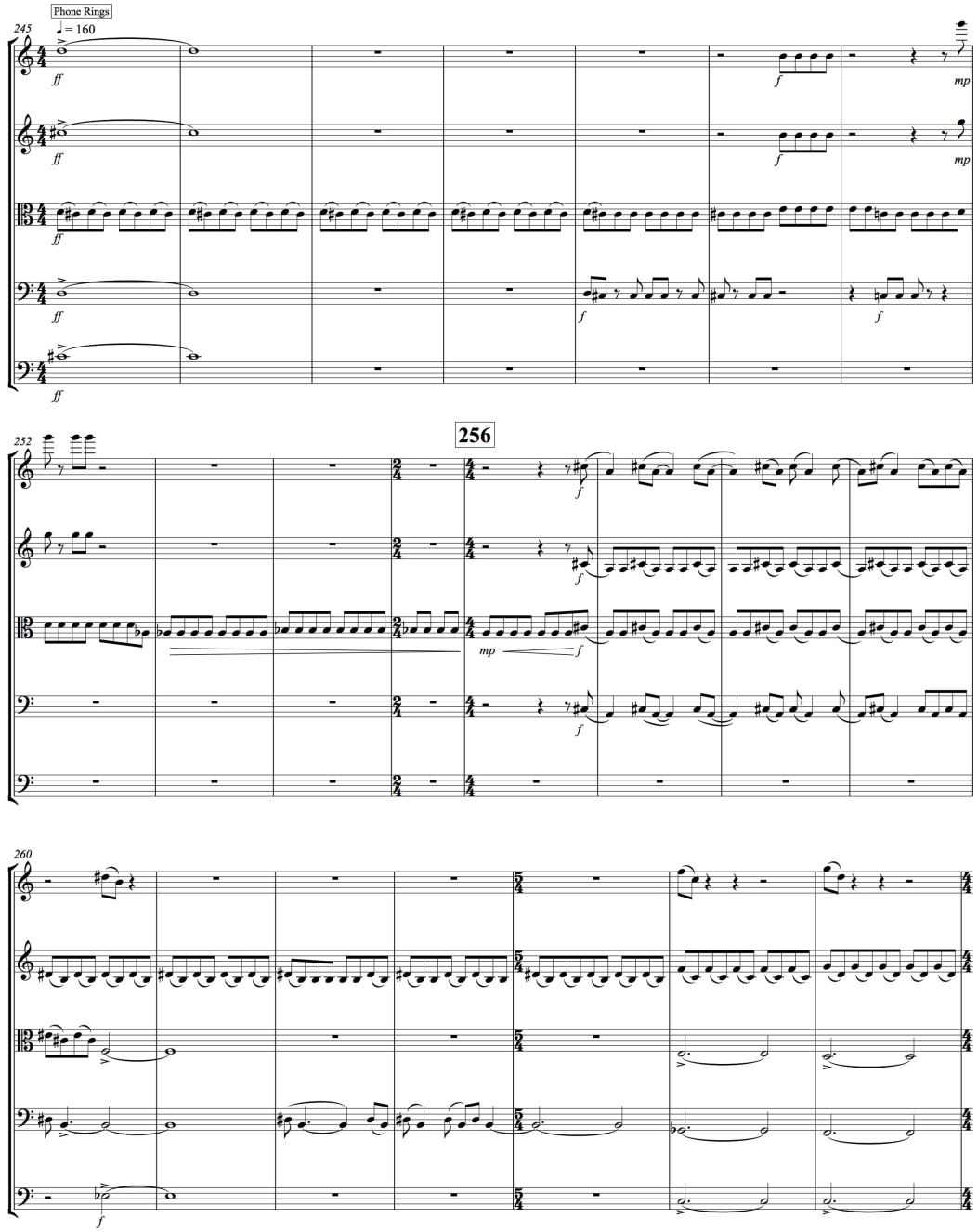

130
mf
mf
mf
138
146
mf
mf
mf
mf

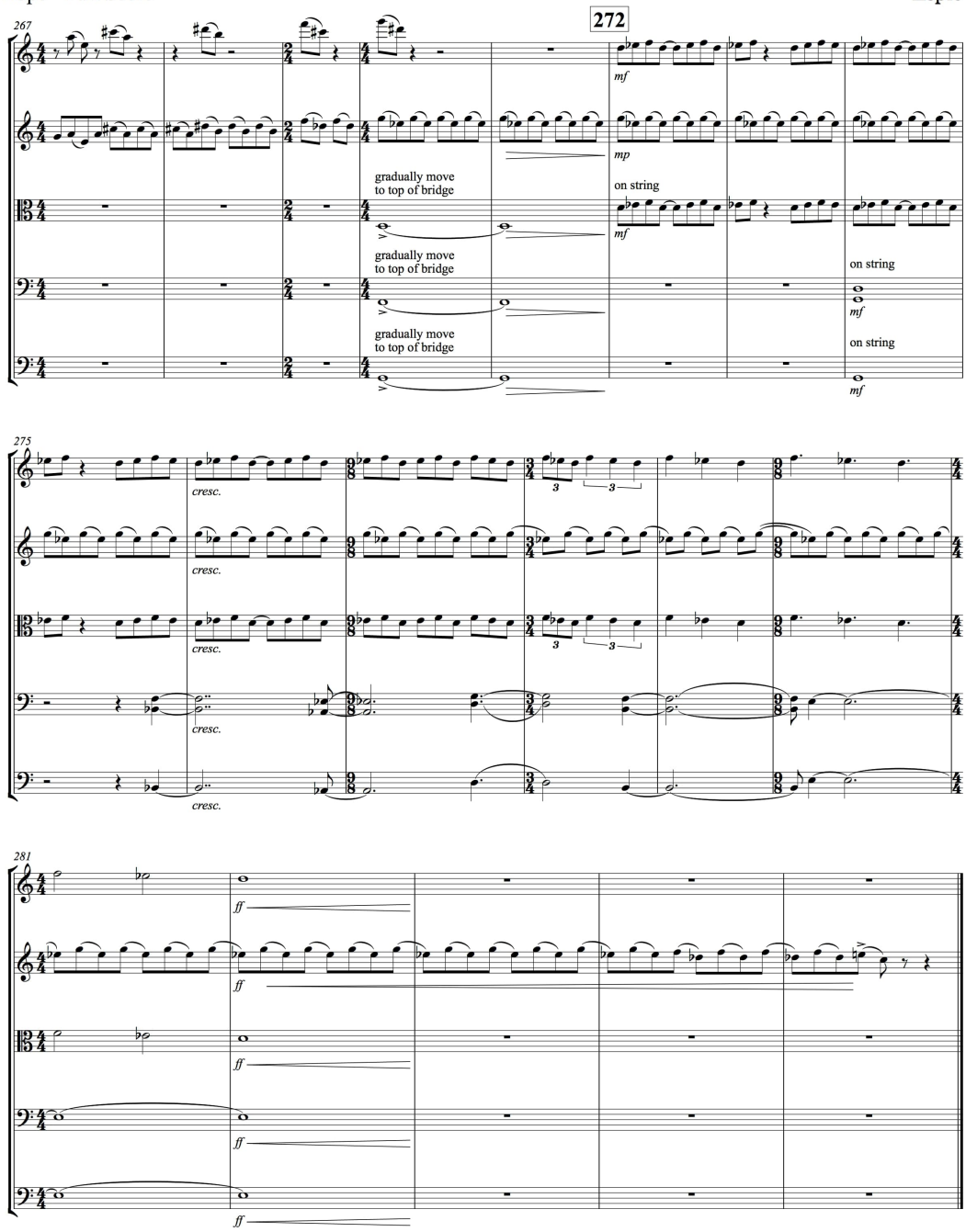

158
156
mp
mp
162
mp
f
f
f
f
Refrigerator Opens
169
♩= 80
mp
mp
p
p
mf
pizz.
ad lib out of sync
with various rhythms
in various order
ff
♩= 60
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
p
p
p
pizz.
pizz.
ff
mp
p
ff
mp
p
p

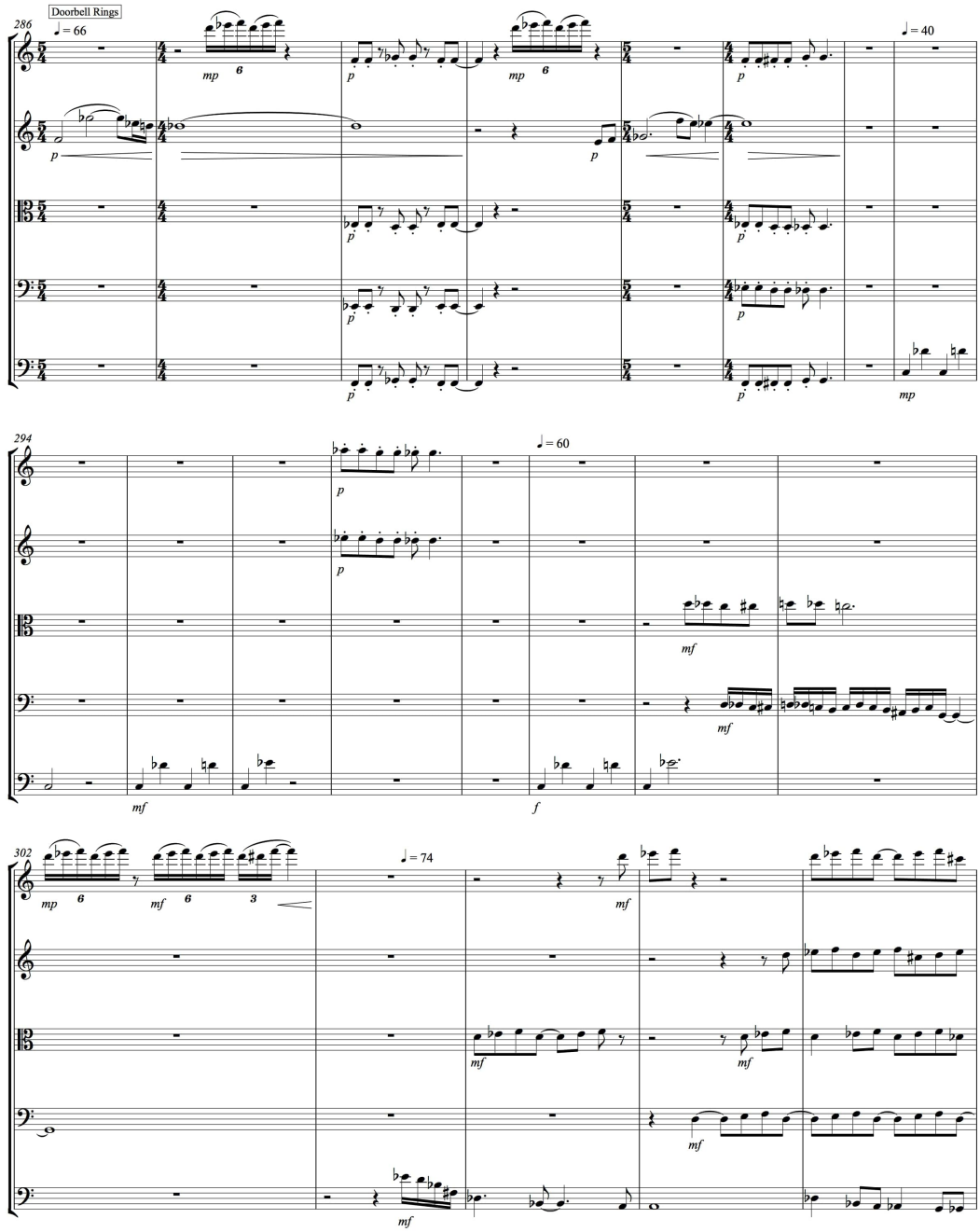

Toast
179
♩= 82
arco
molto vib.
accel.
190
♩= 88
194
198
div.
199
non div.

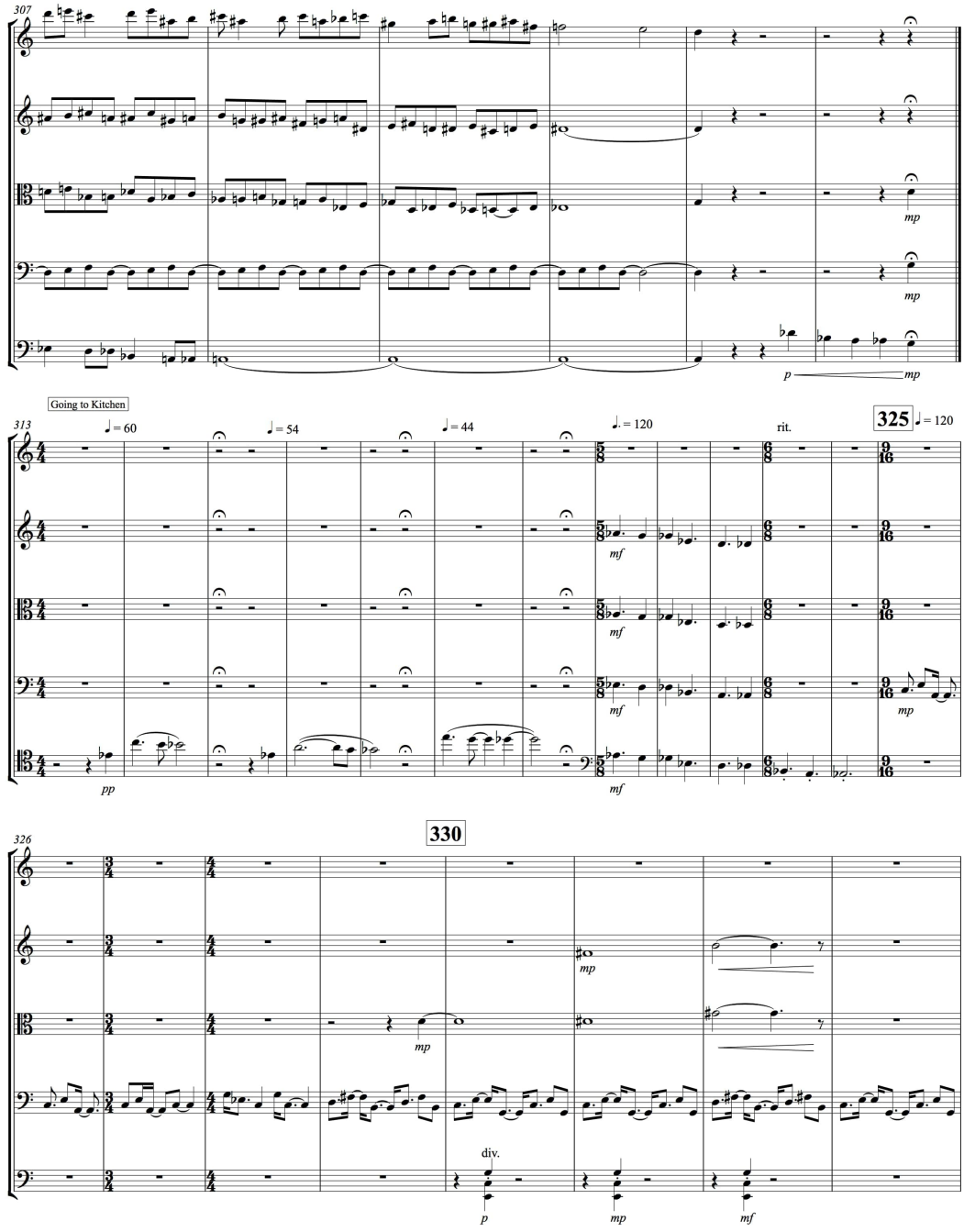

206
211
213
220
pizz.
div.
non div.
arco

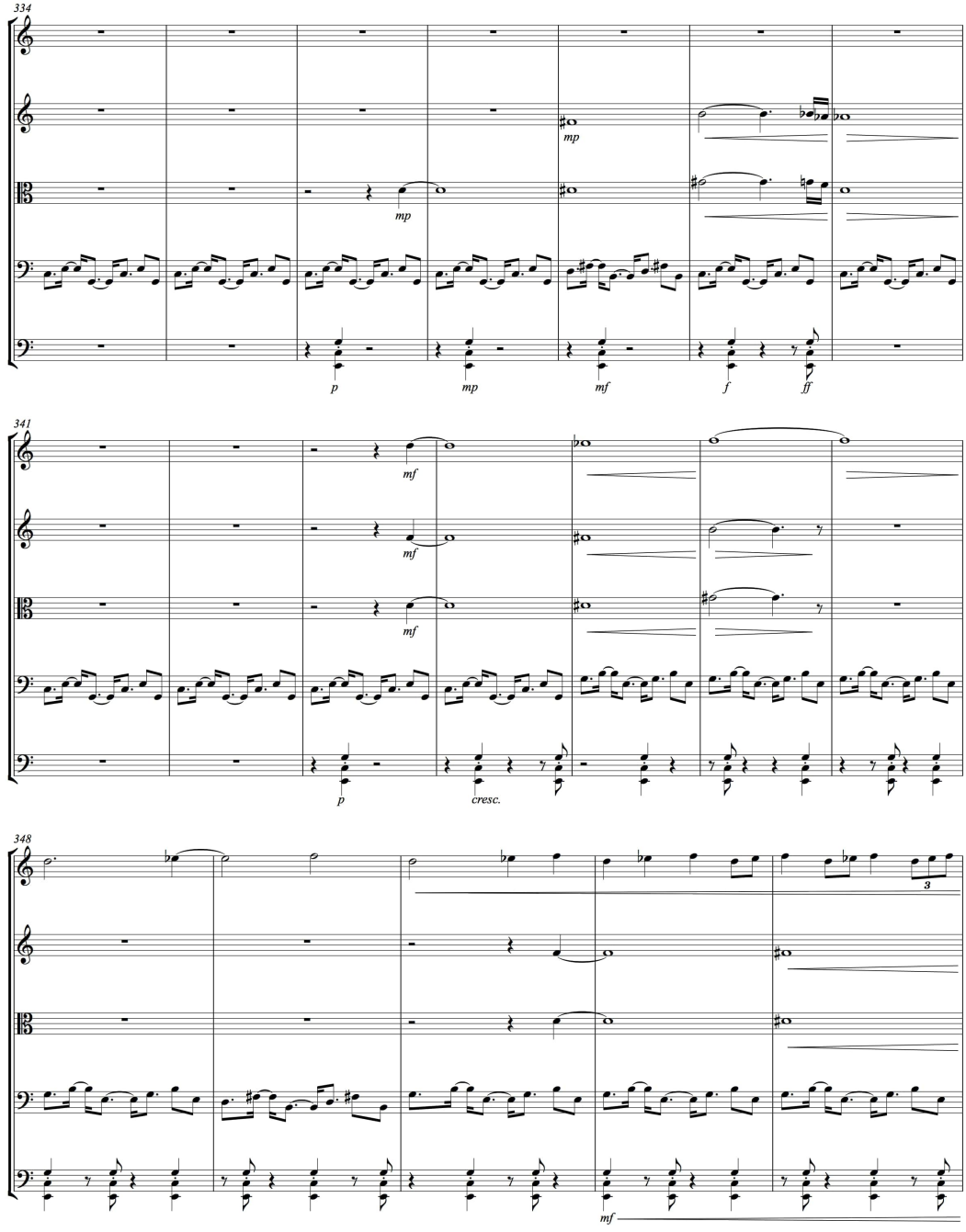

227
♩= 115
rit.
♩= 92 accel.
mf
p
mp
pizz.
235
f
ff
arco
239
♩= 180
rit.

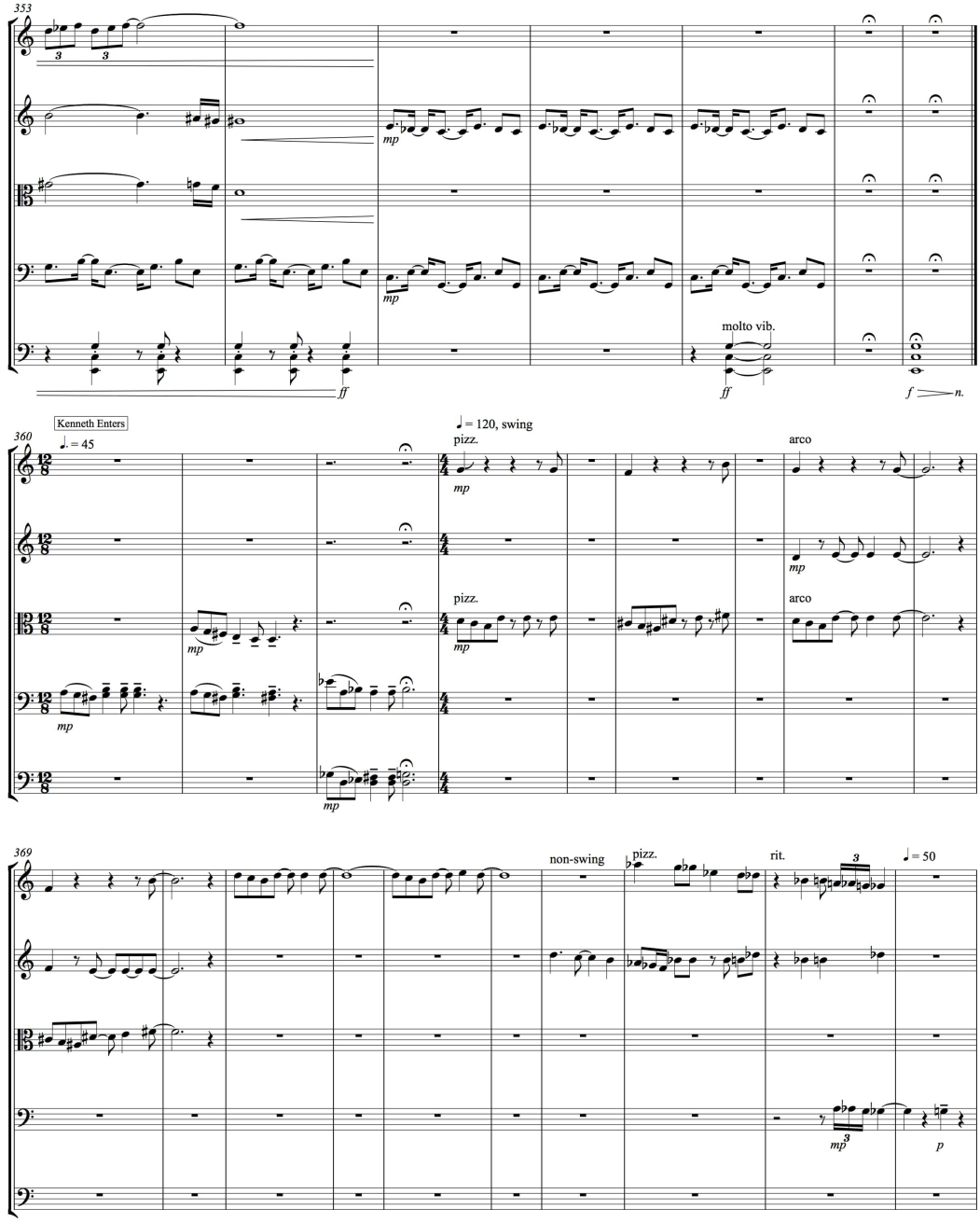

Phone Rings
245
♩ = 160
ff
f
mp
252
256
mp
260

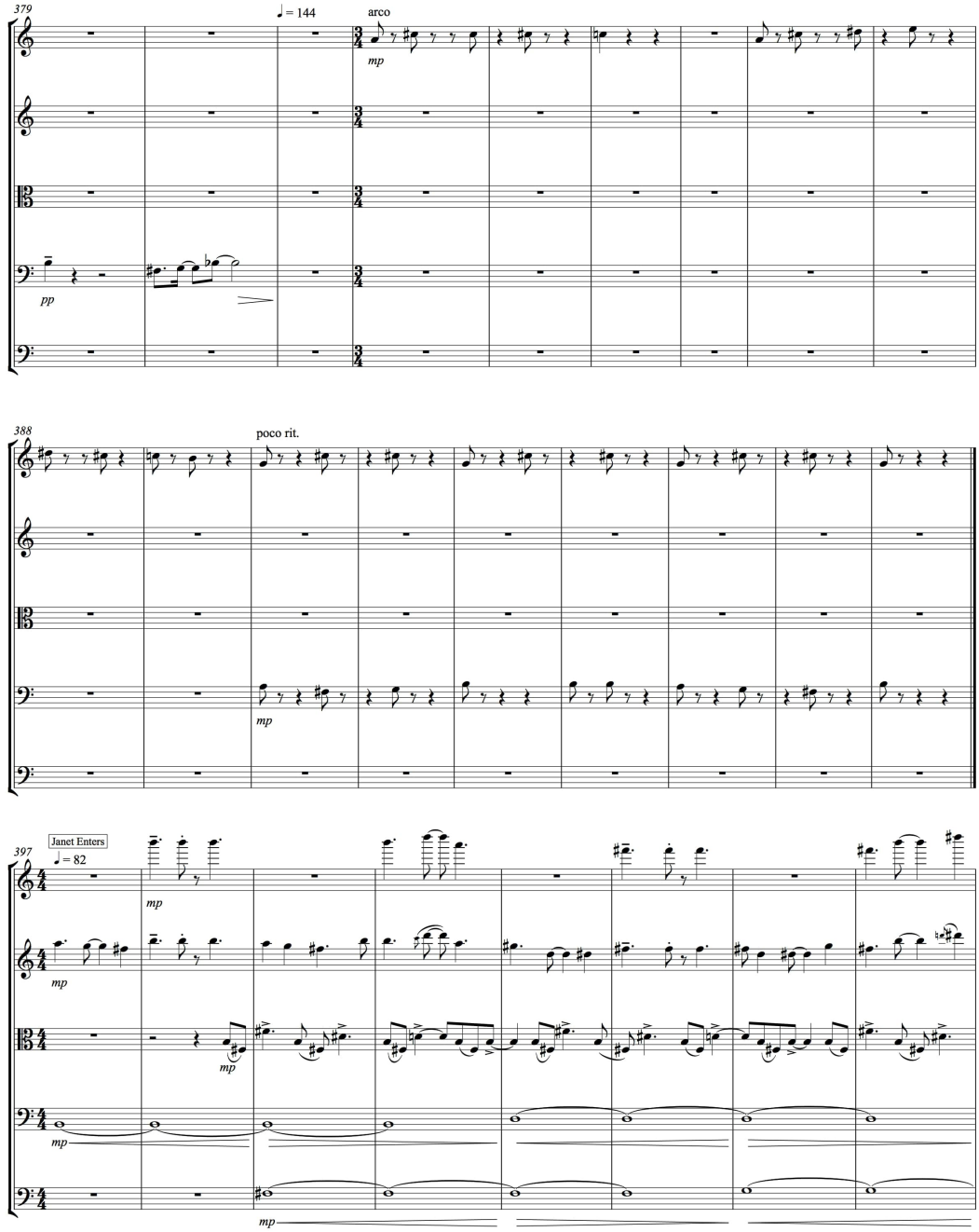

267
272
mf
mp
on string
gradually move
to top of bridge
mf
on string
mf
gradually move
to top of bridge
on string
mf
gradually move
to top of bridge
275
cresc.
281
ff

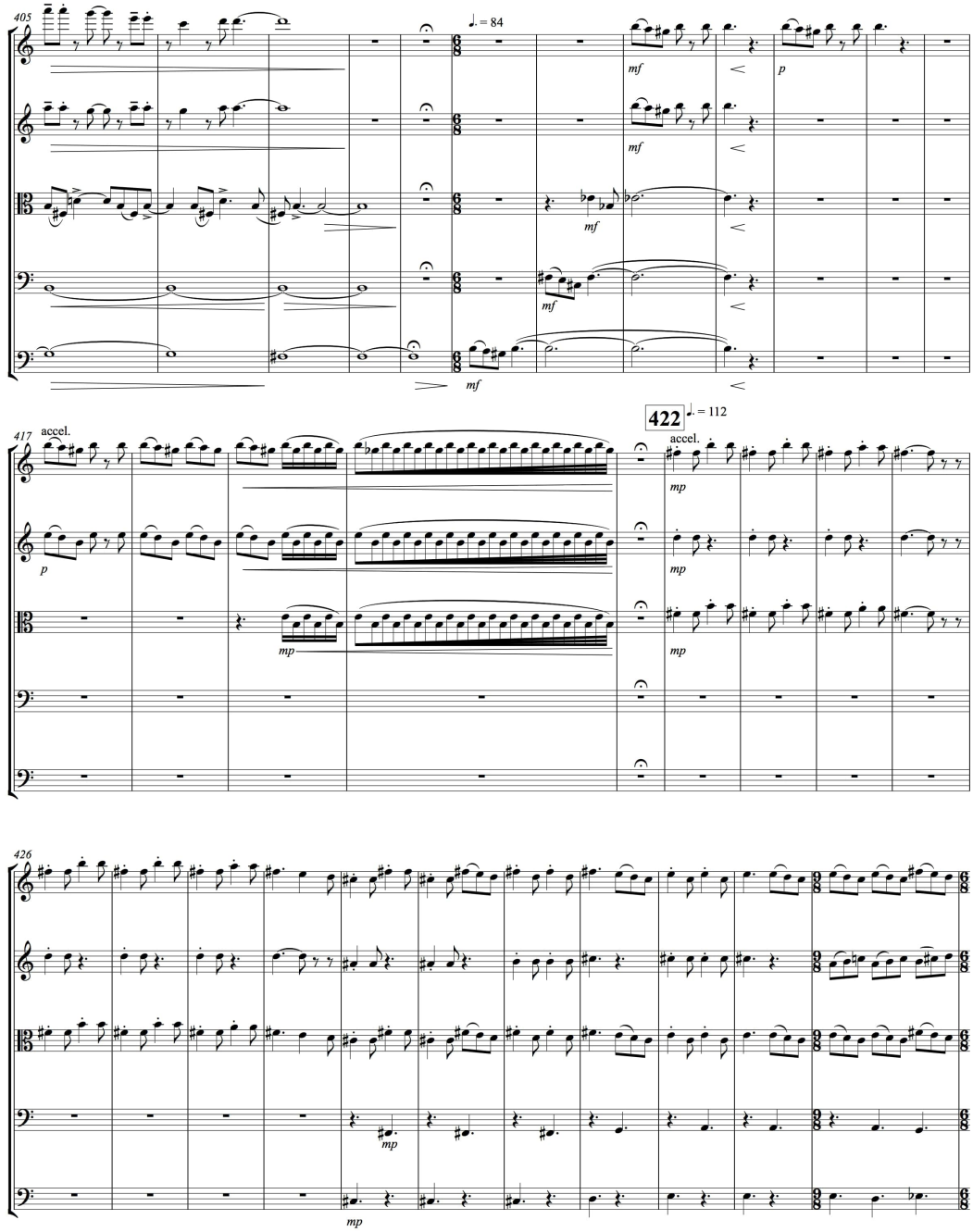

286
Doorbell Rings
♩ = 66
♩ = 40
294
♩ = 60
302
♩ = 74

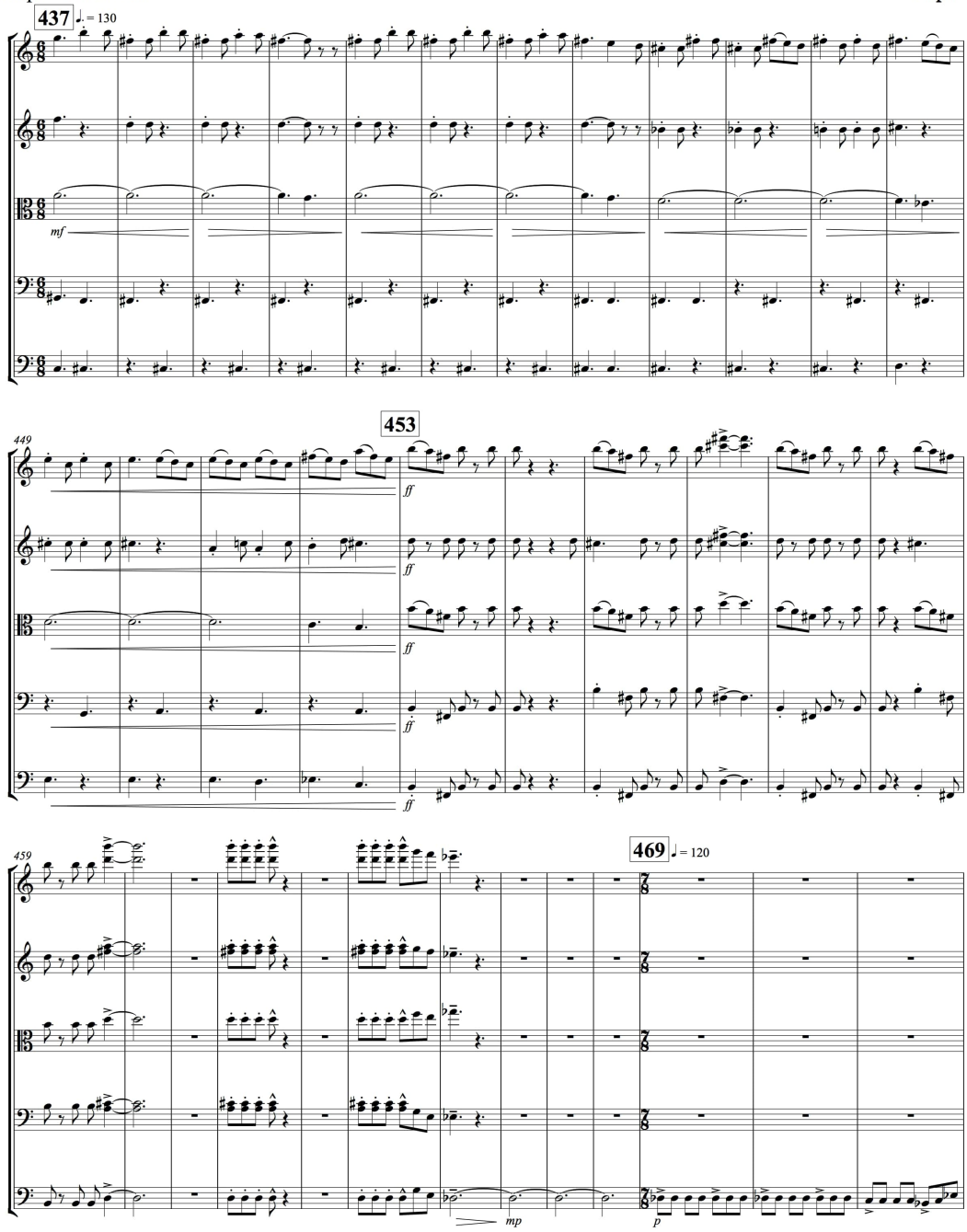

307
mp
mp
p
mp
Going to Kitchen
313
♩ = 60
♩ = 54
♩ = 44
♩. = 120
rit.
325
♩ = 120
mf
mf
mf
mp
pp
330
326
mp
mp
div.
p
mp
mf

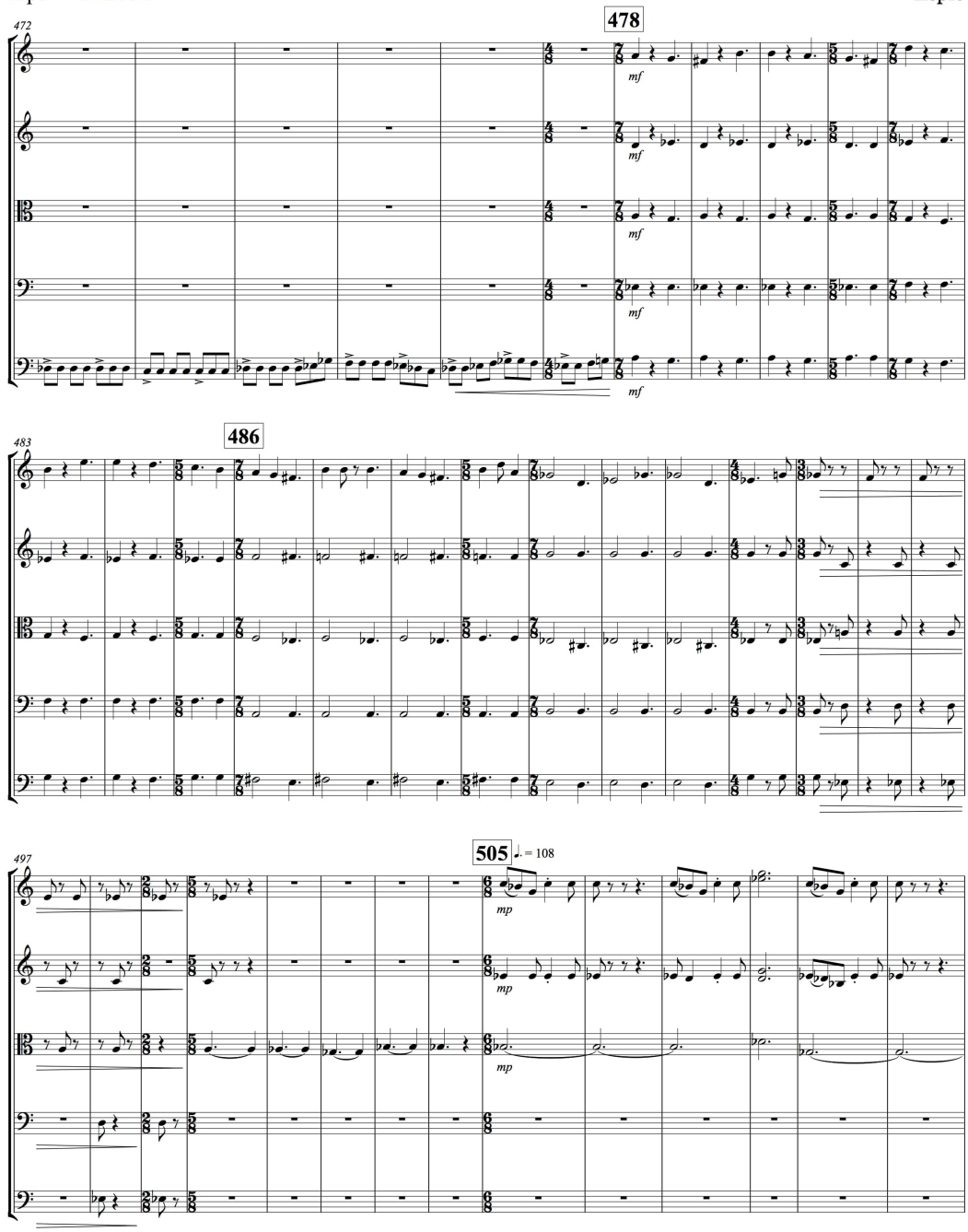

334
mp
mp
p
mp
mf
f
ff
341
mf
mf
mf
p
cresc.
348
3
mf

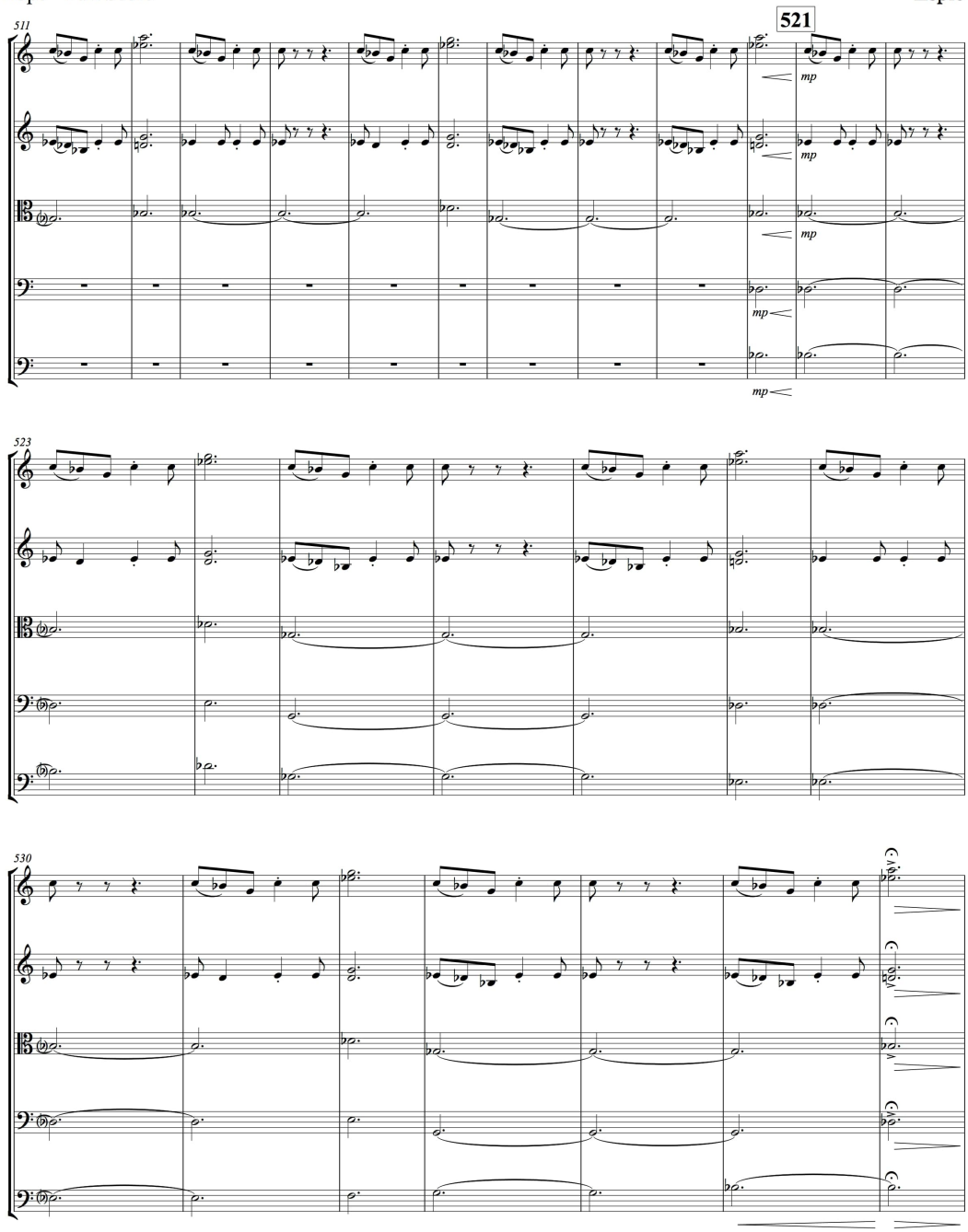

353
molto vib.
ff
f n.
360
Kenneth Enters
♩. = 45
♩ = 120, swing
pizz.
arco
mp
369
non-swing
pizz.
rit.
♩ = 50
mp
p

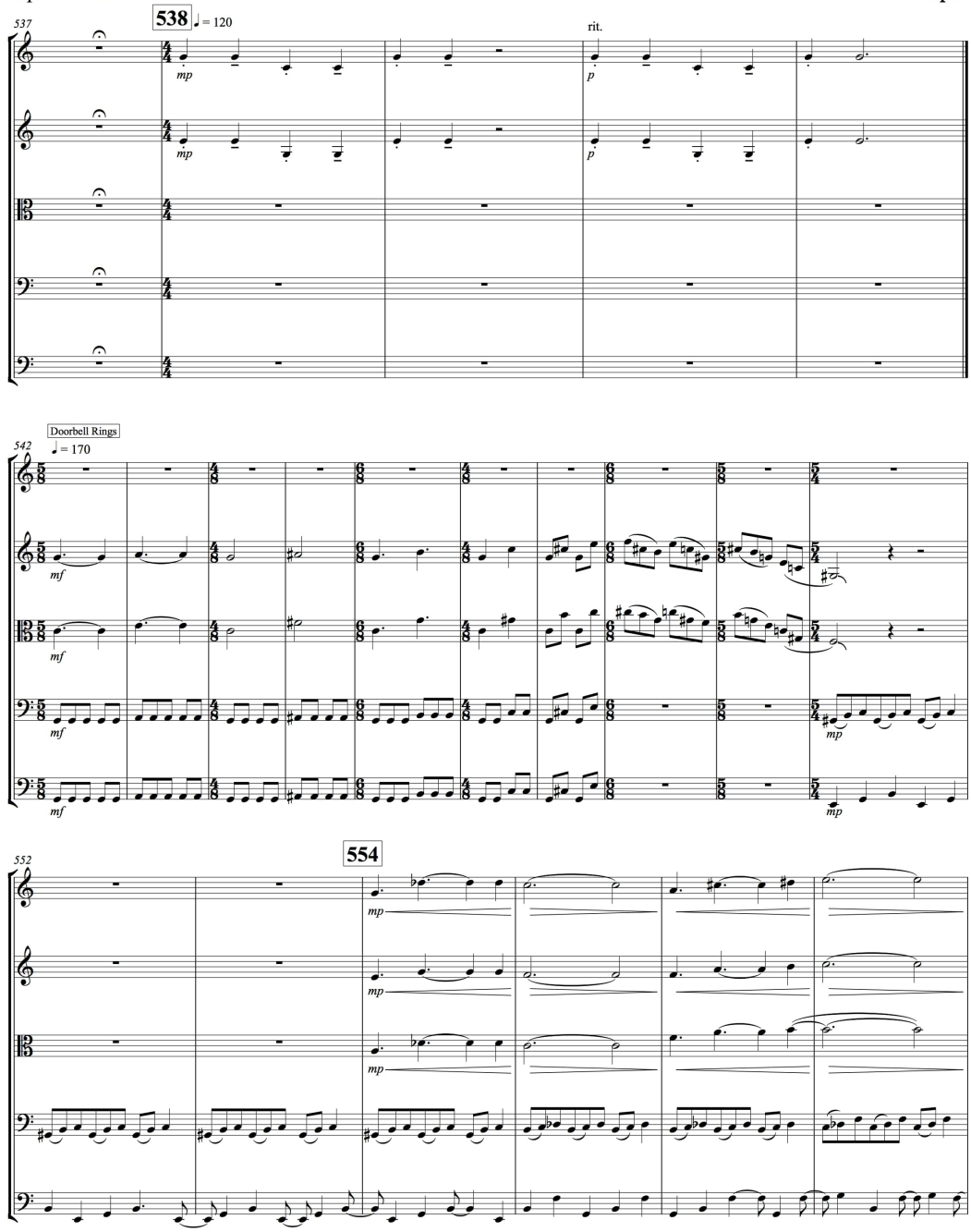

379
♩ = 144
arco
mp
pp
388
poco rit.
mp
397
Janet Enters
♩ = 82
mp
mp
mp
mp
mp

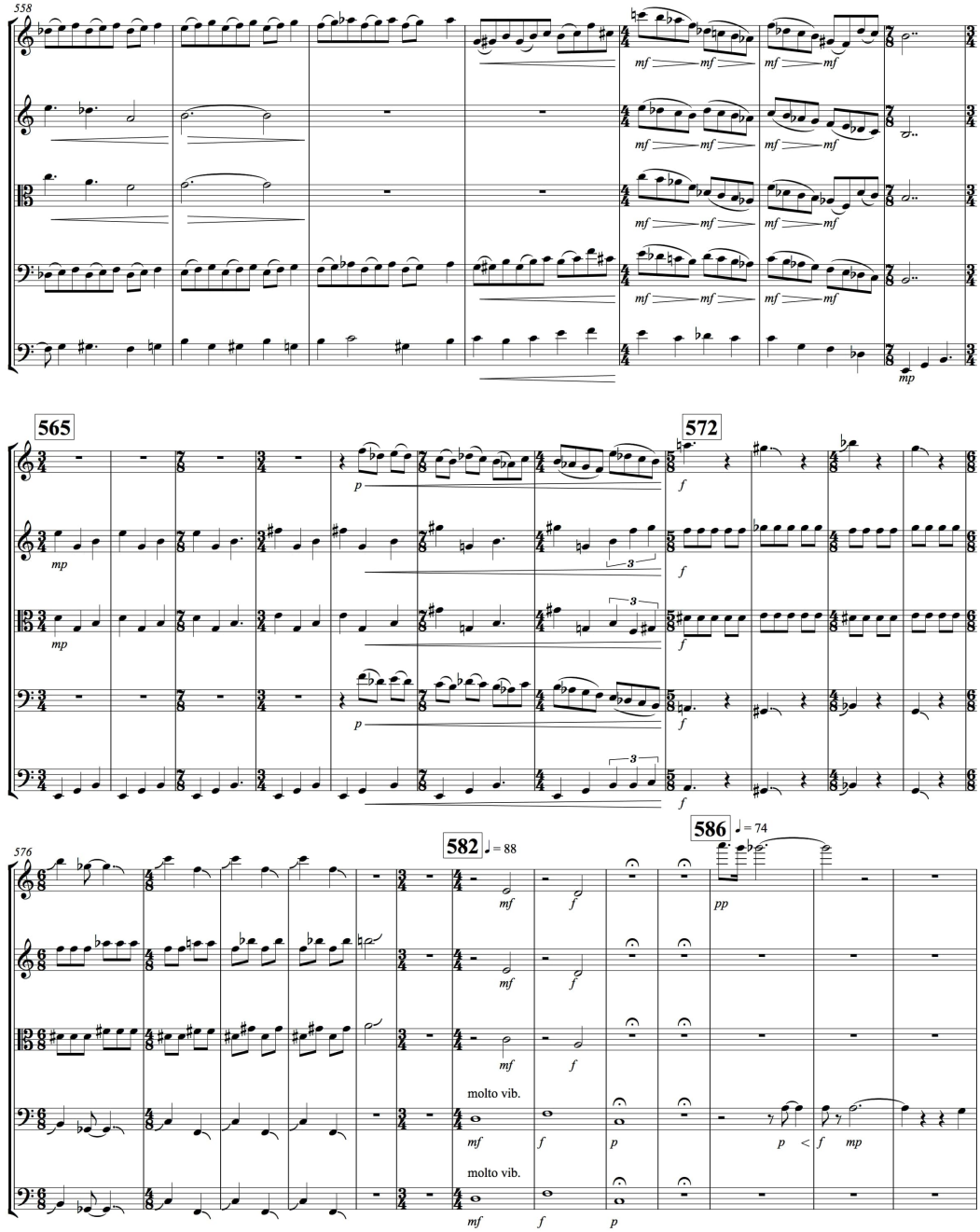

405
♩. = 84
mf
p
mf
mf
mf
mf
417
accel.
422
♩. = 112
accel.
mp
p
mp
mp
mp
426
mp
mp

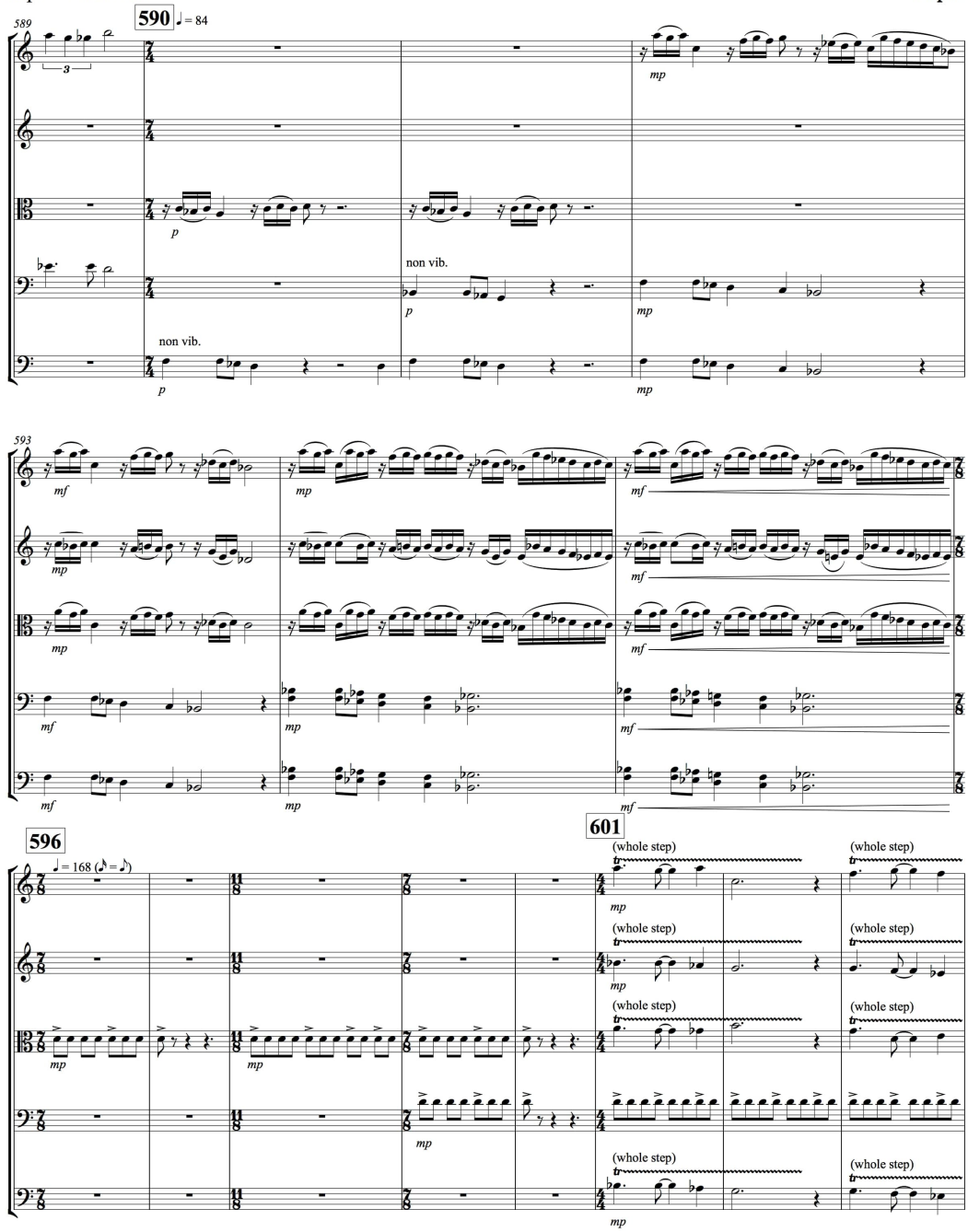

437
♩. = 130
mf
449
453
ff
459
469
♩ = 120
mp
p

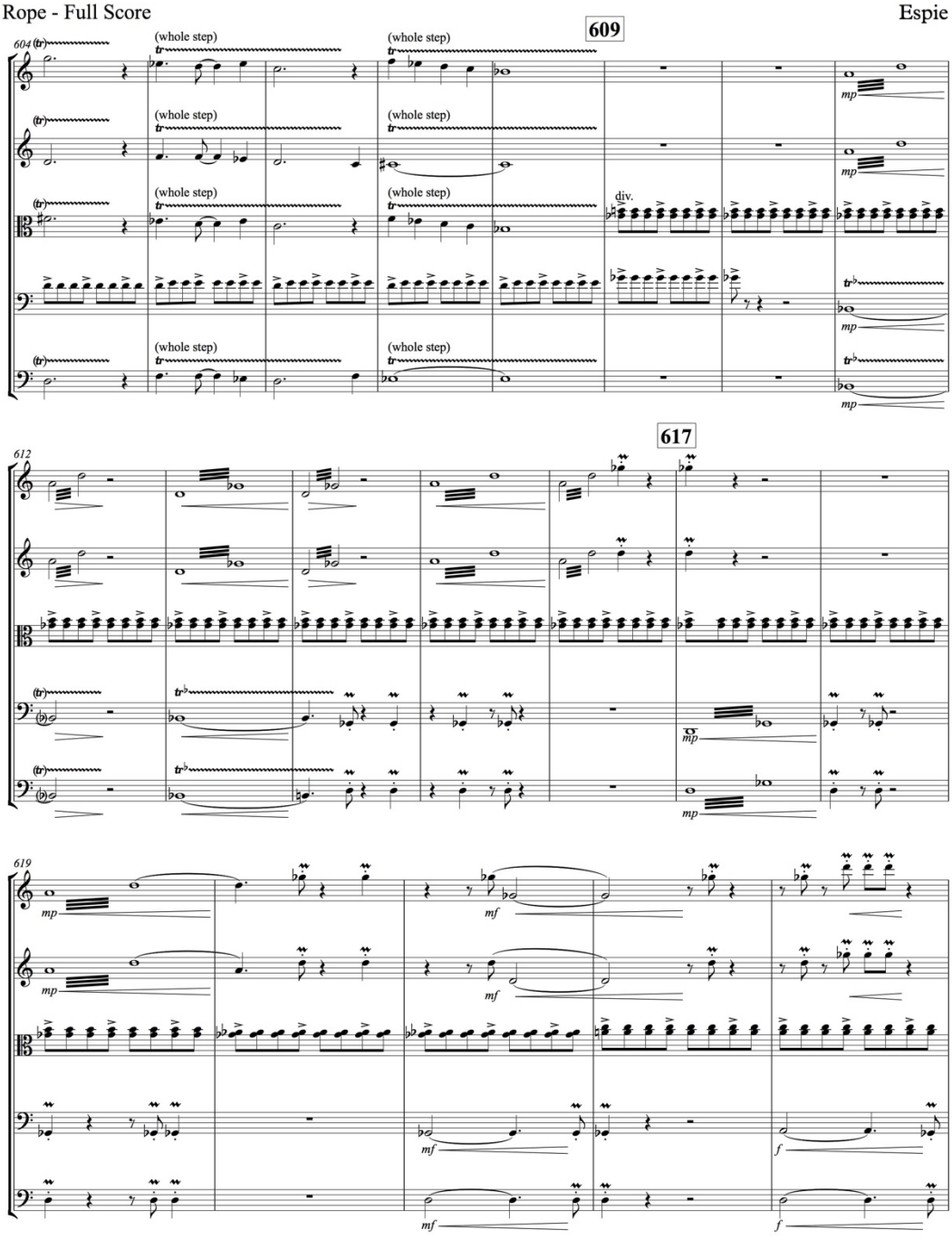

472
478
mf
483
486
497
505
♩. = 108
mp

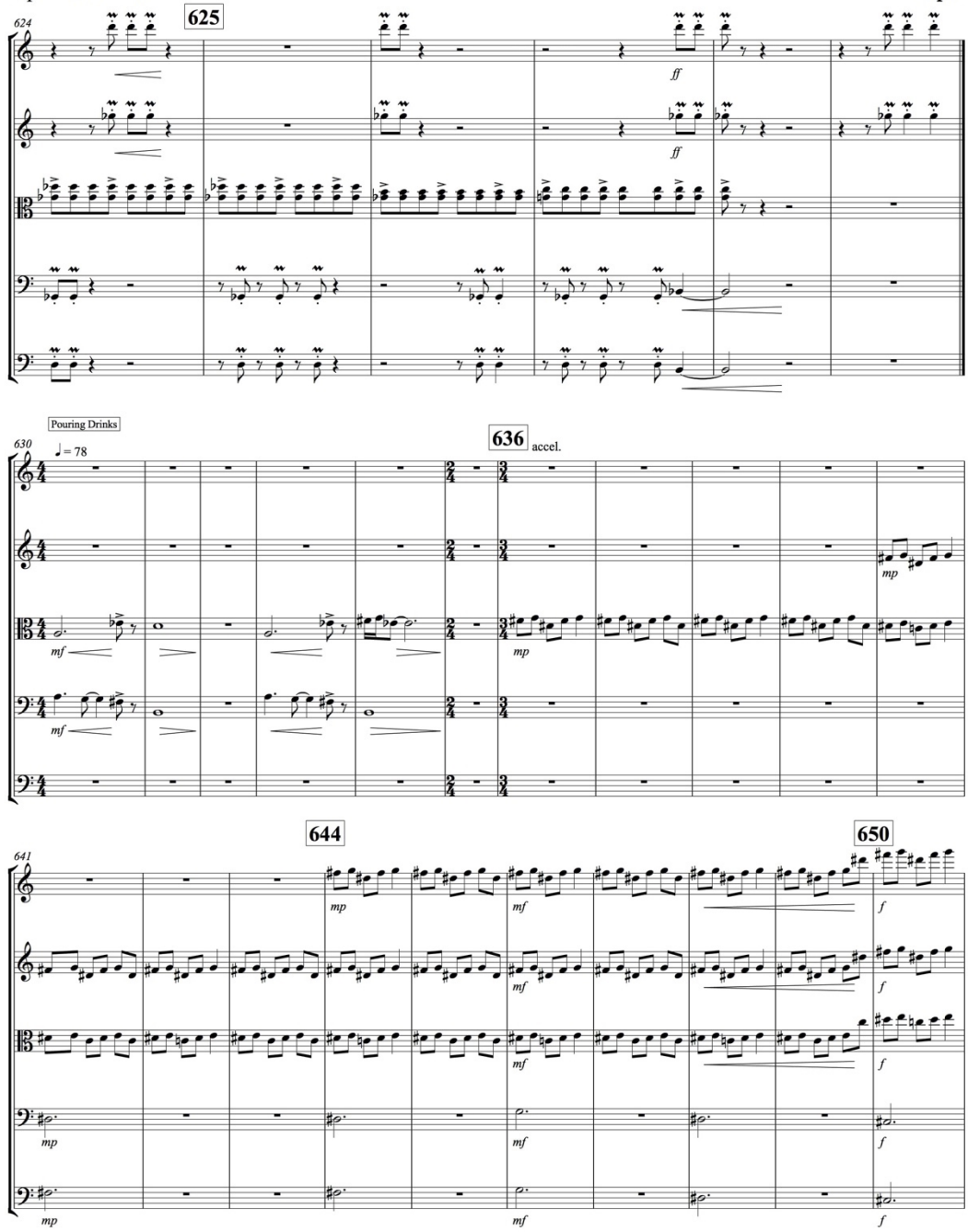

511
521
mp
mp
mp
mp
523
530
8va

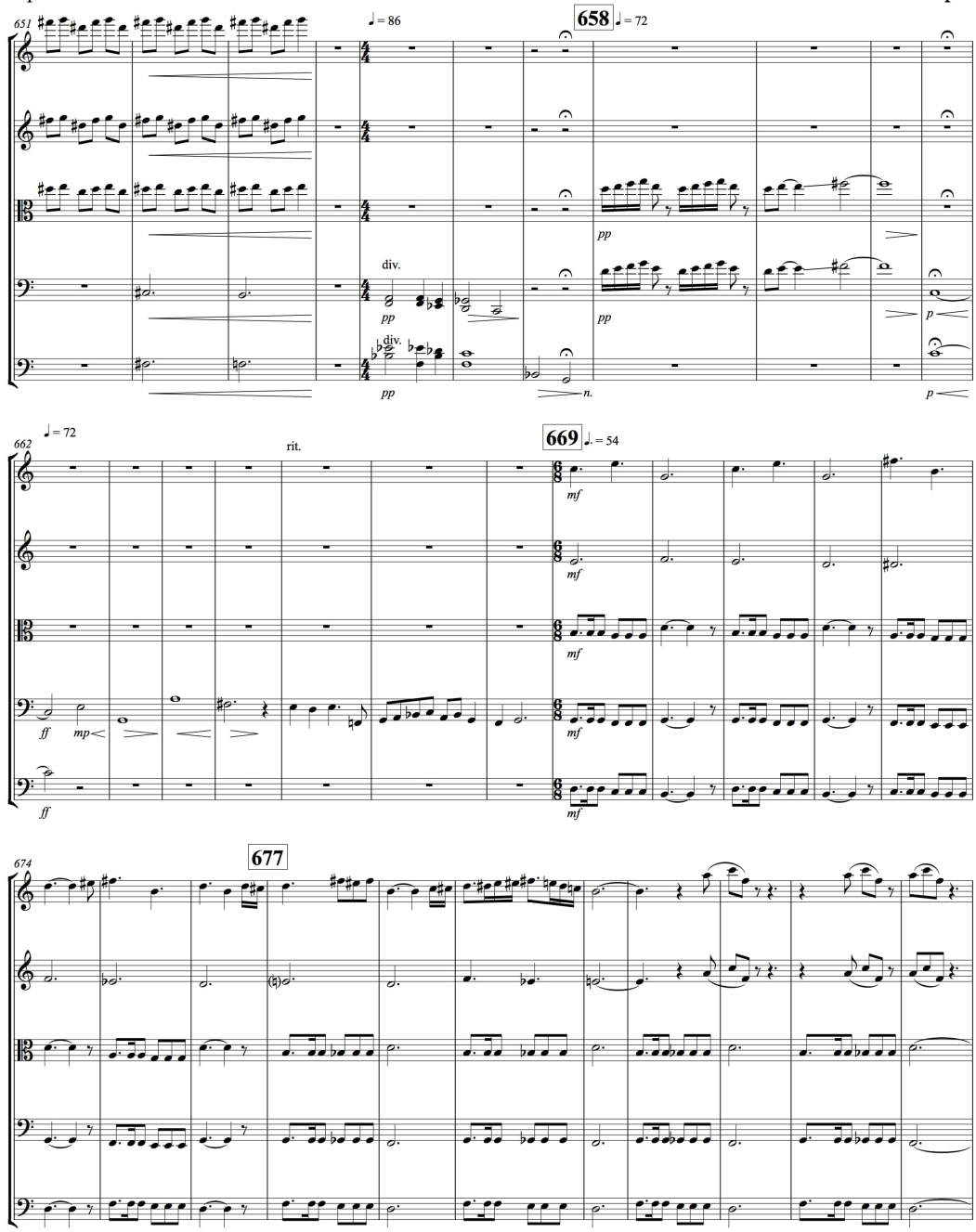

537
538
♩ = 120
mp
rit.
p
542
Doorbell Rings
♩ = 170
mf
mp
552
554

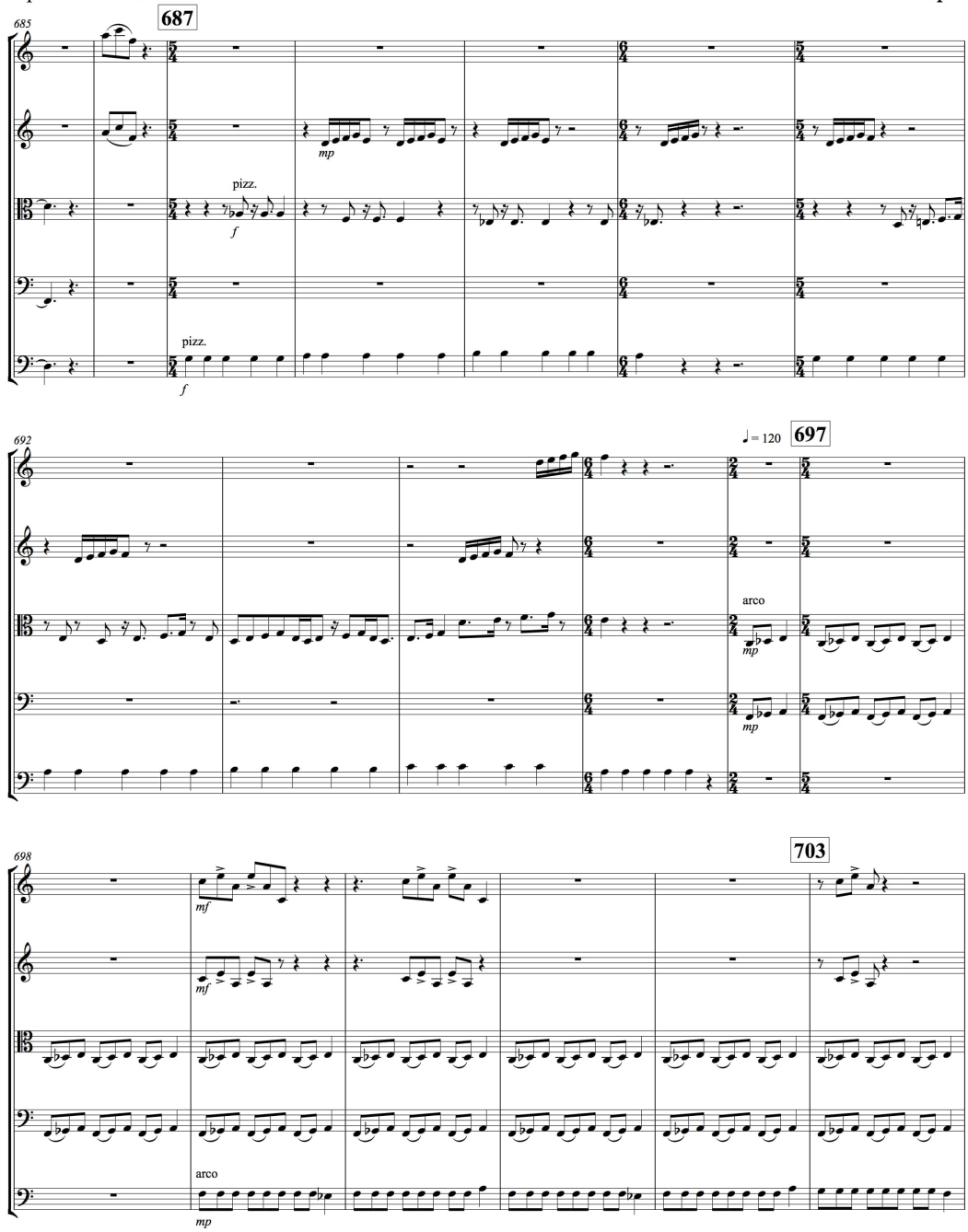

558
565
572
576
582
586
molto vib.
molto vib.

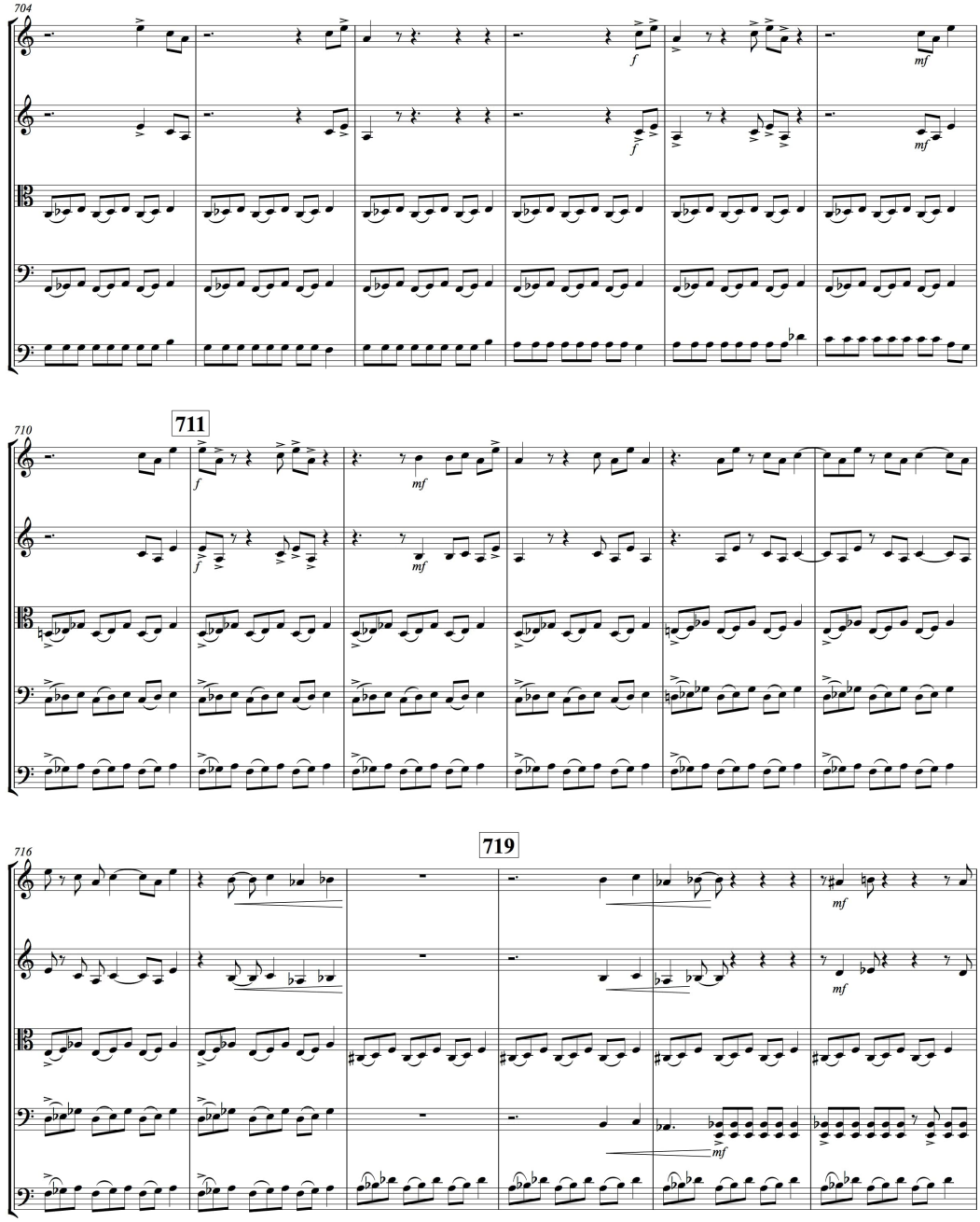

589
590
♩ = 84
non vib.
593
596
♩ = 168 (♪ = ♪)
601
(whole step)

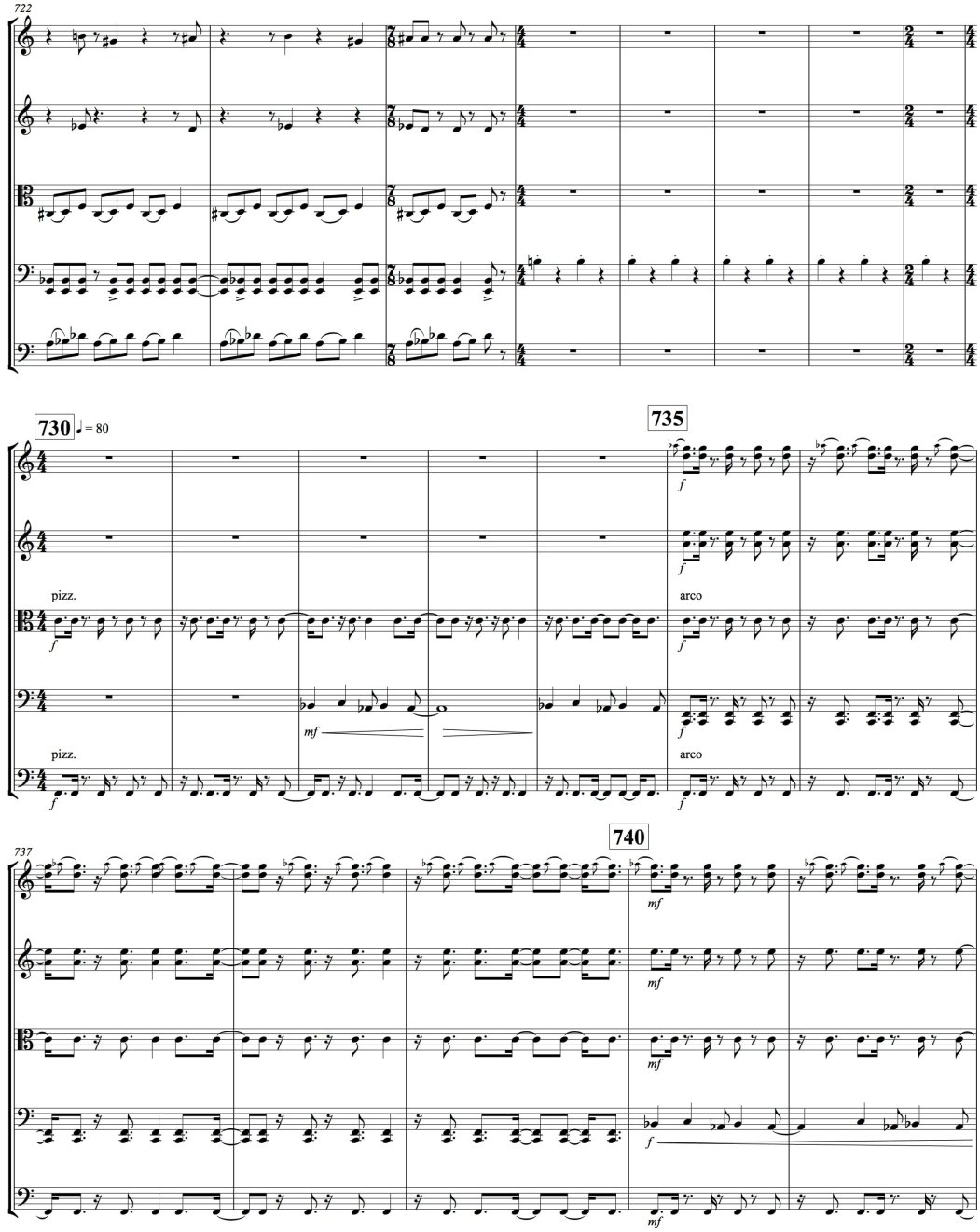

604
609
(whole step)
div.
612
617
619
mp
mf
f

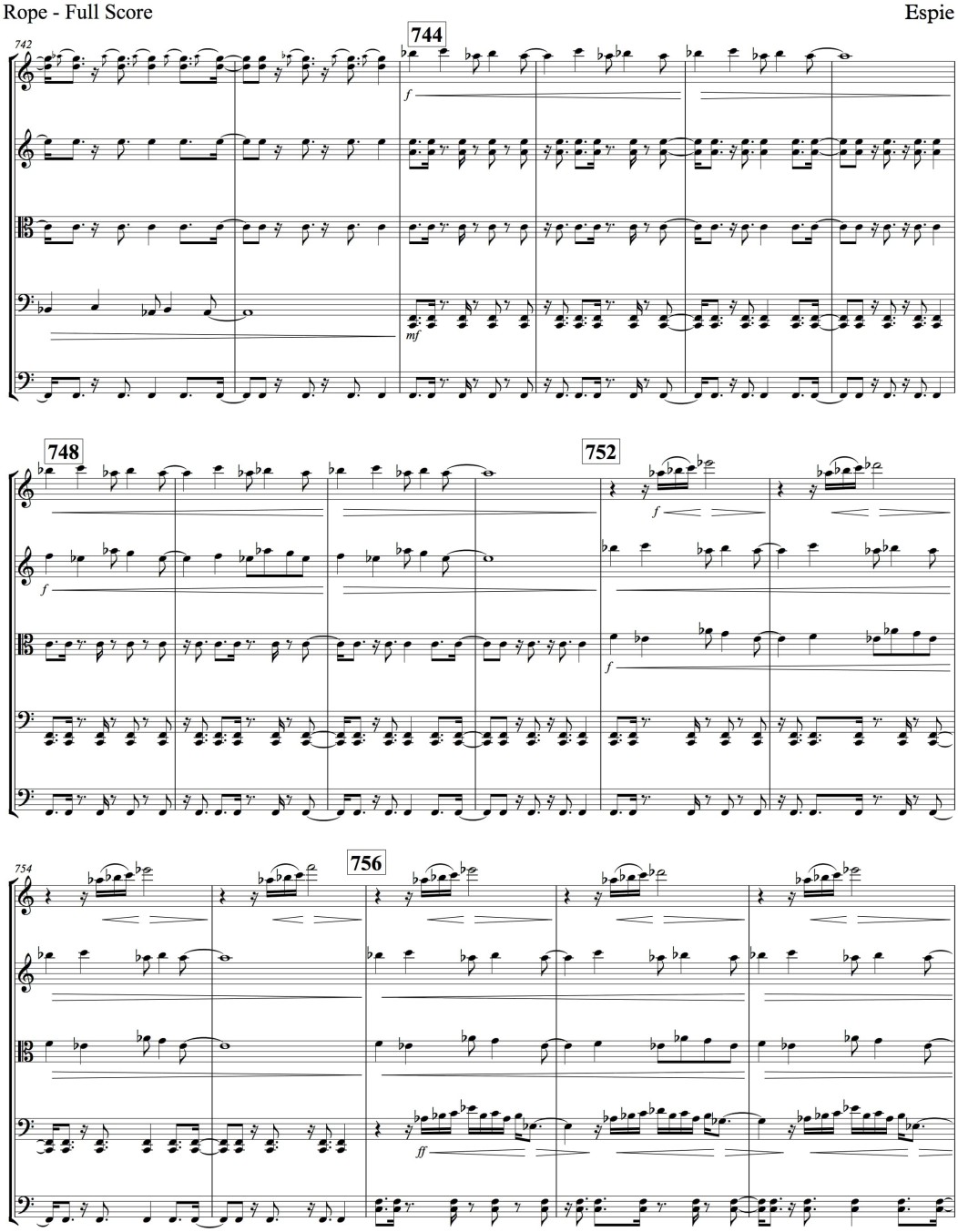

624
625
ff
ff
Pouring Drinks
630
♩ = 78
636 accel.
mf
mf
mp
mp
641
644
650
mp
mf
mf
mf
f
f
f
mp
mf
f
mp
mf
f

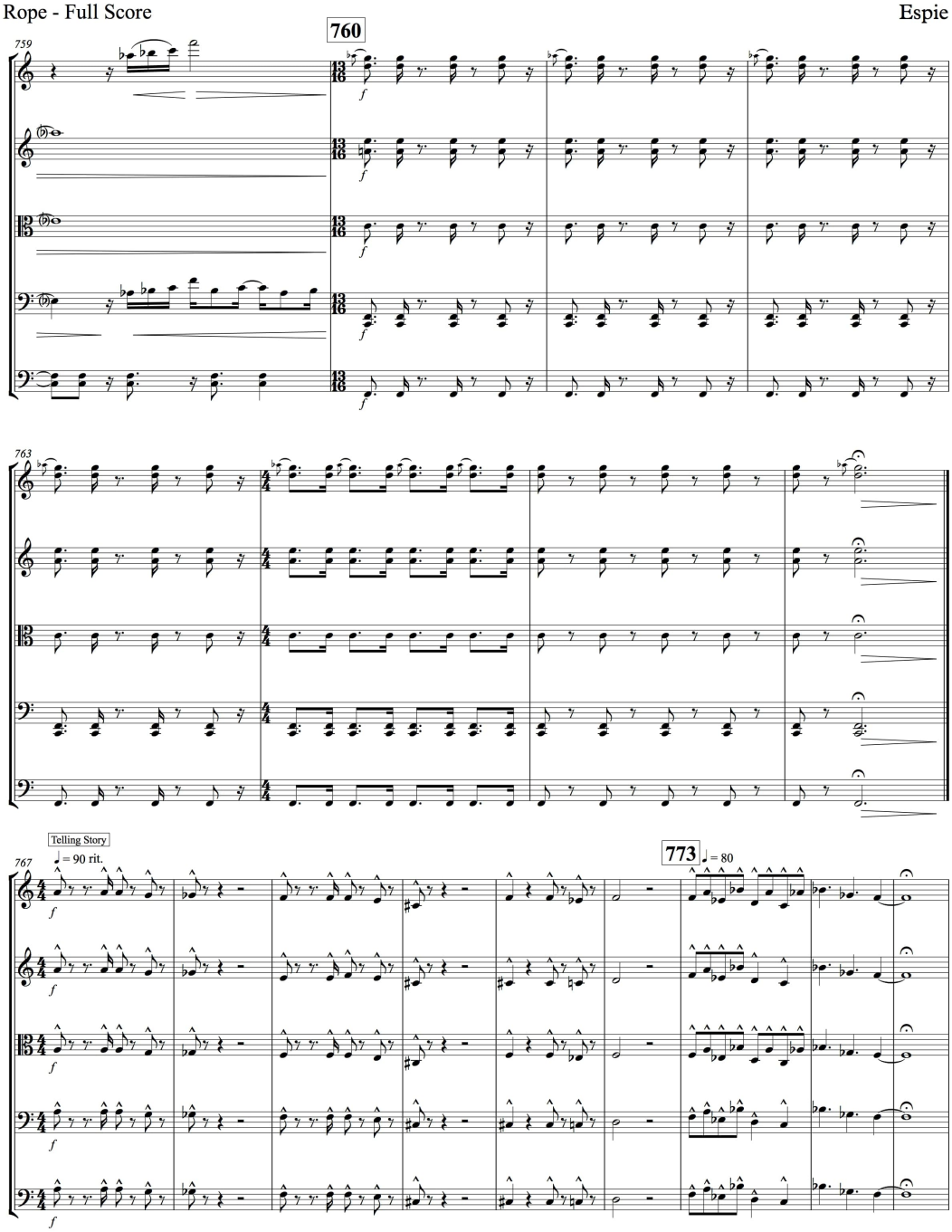

651
♩= 86
658
♩= 72
div.
pp
n.
662
♩= 72
rit.
669
♩. = 54
mf
ff
mp
674
677

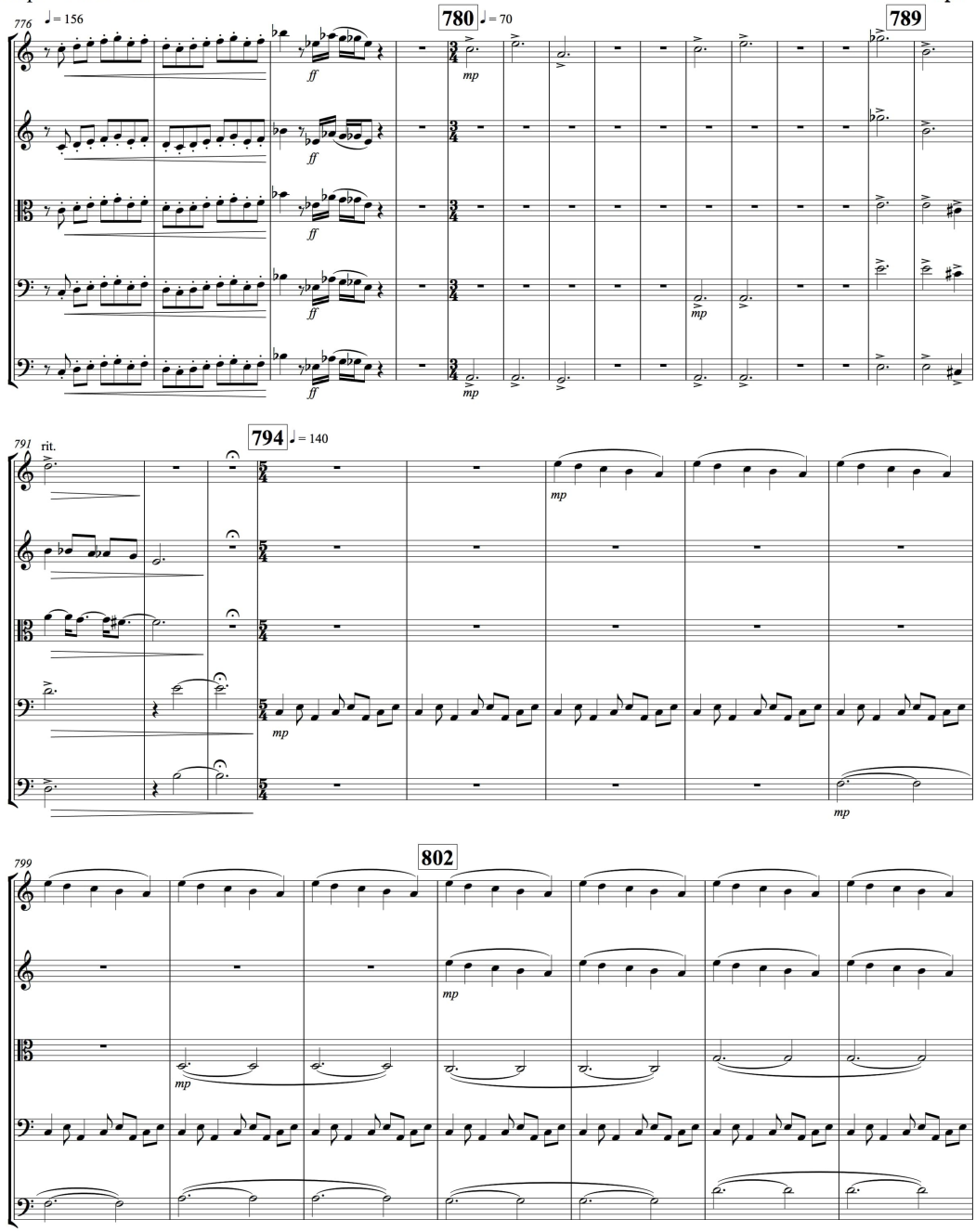

685
687
mp
pizz.
f
pizz.
f
692
♩= 120
697
arco
mp
mp
698
703
mf
mf
arco
mp

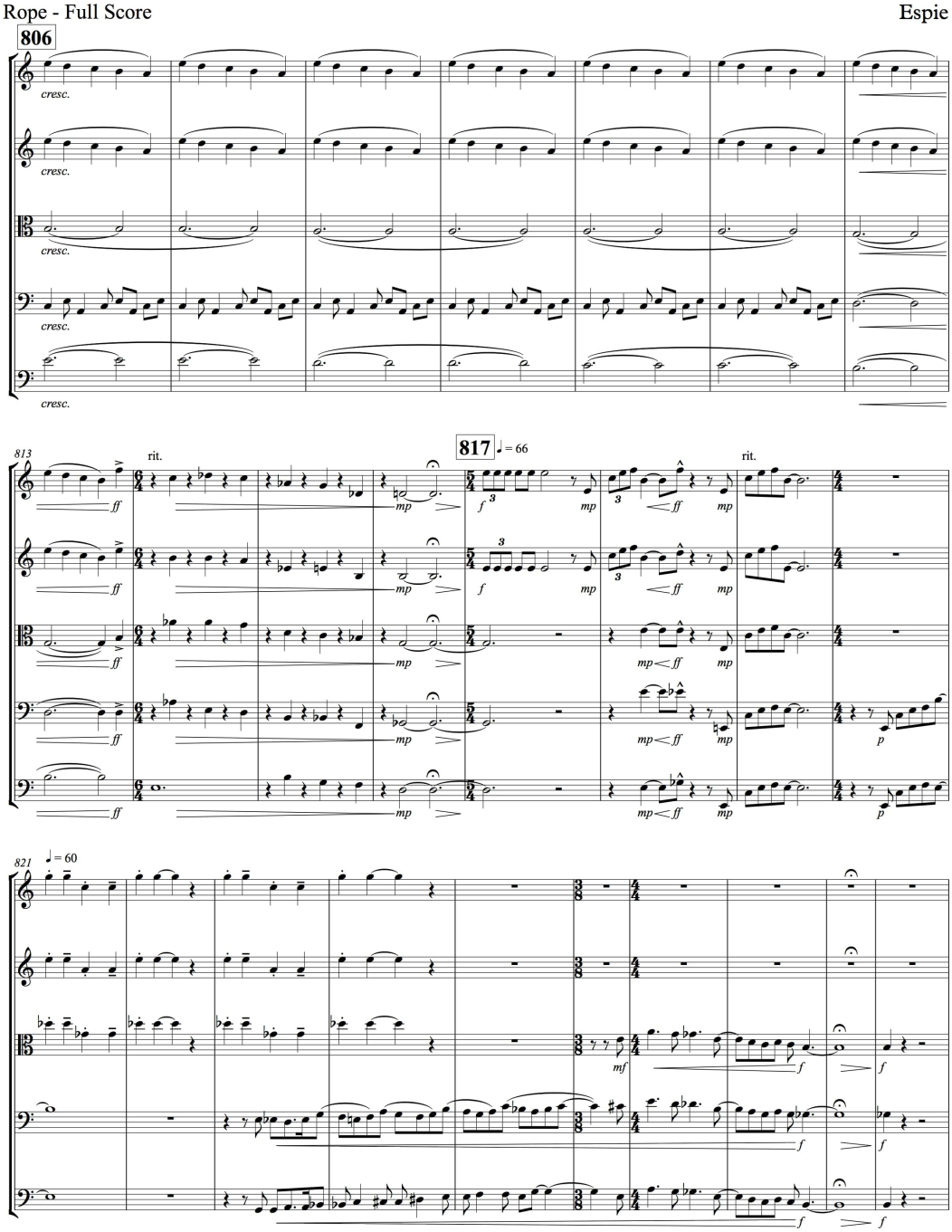

704
711
710
719
716

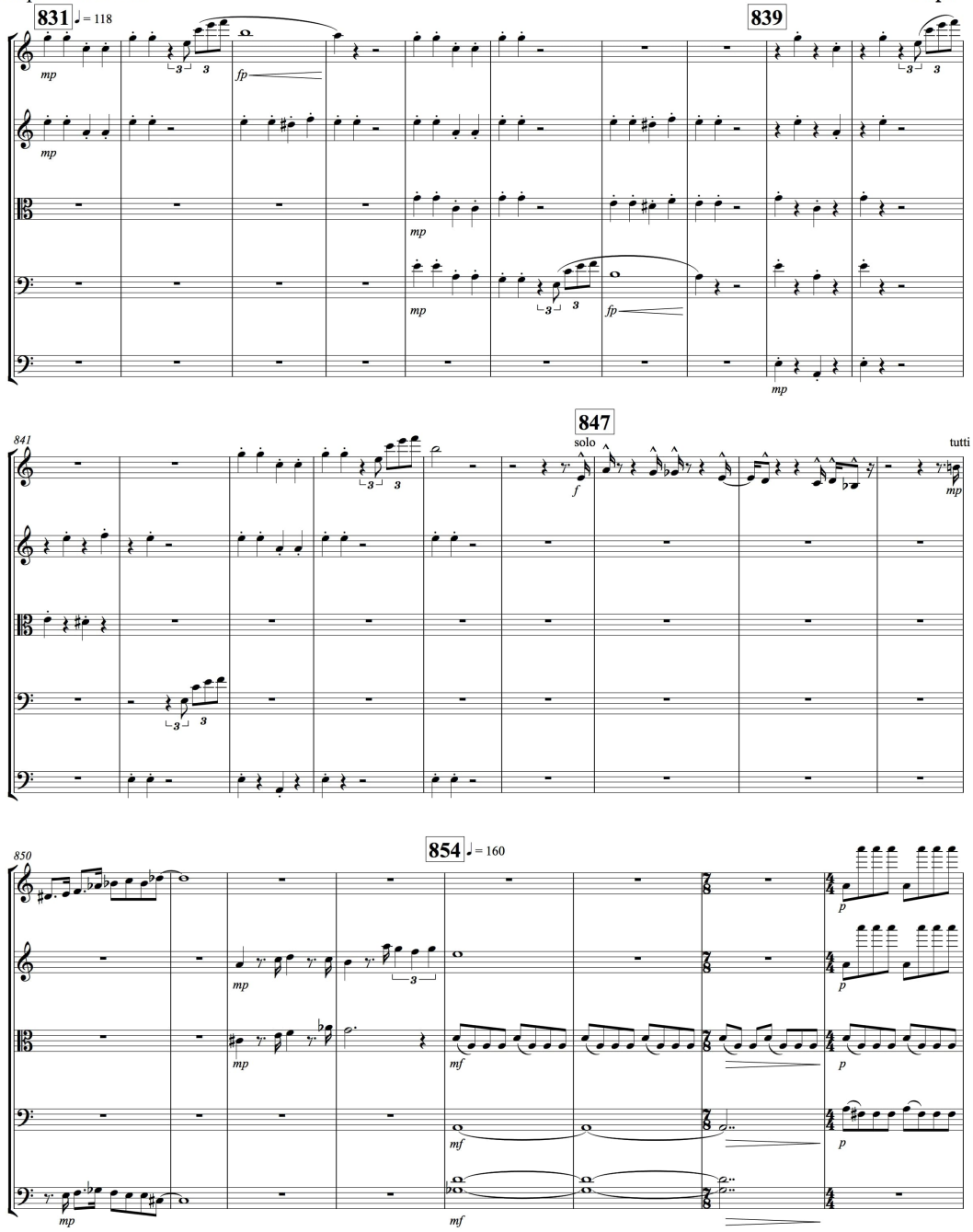

722
730
♩ = 80
735
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
737
740

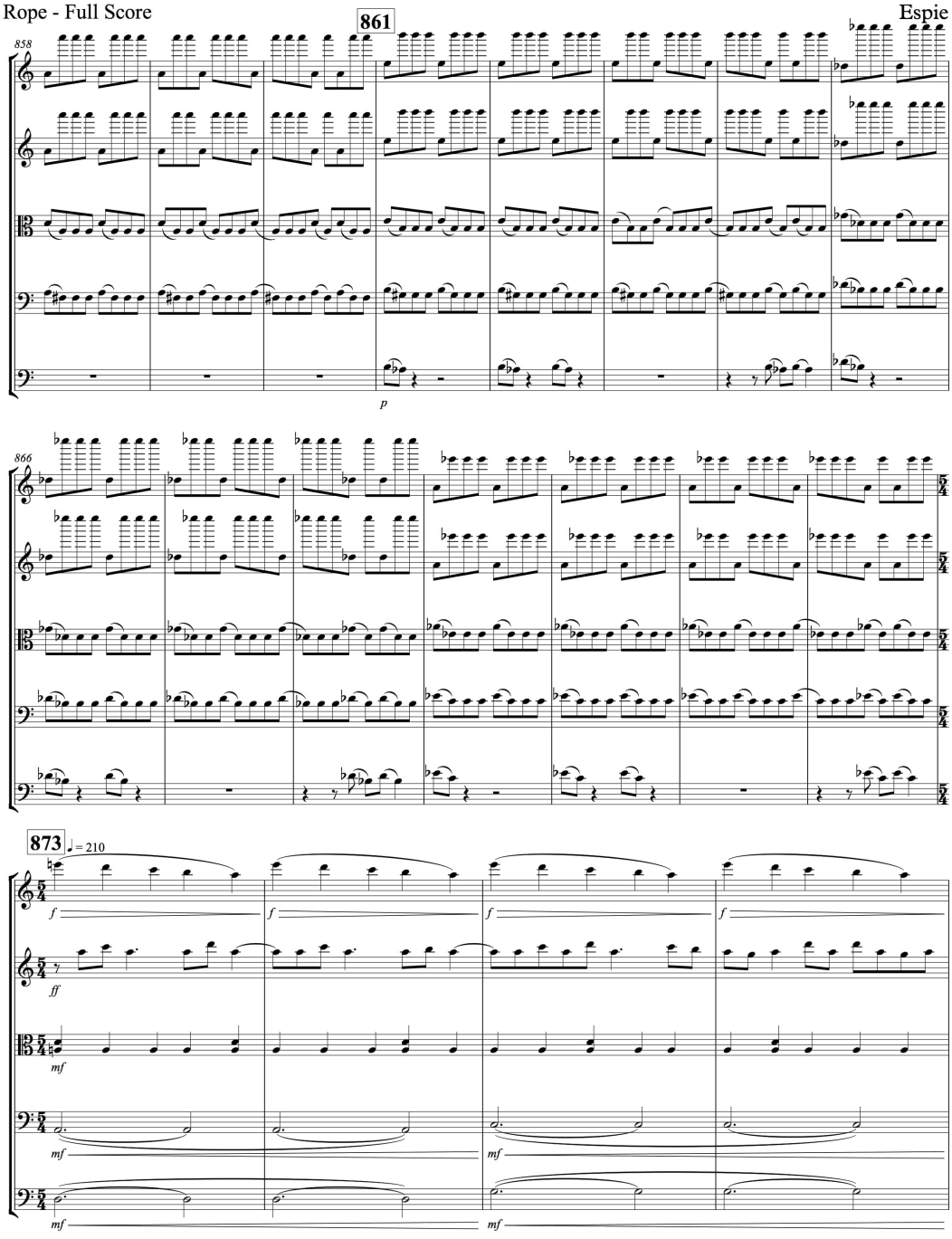

742
744
f
mf
748
752
f
f
f
754
756
ff

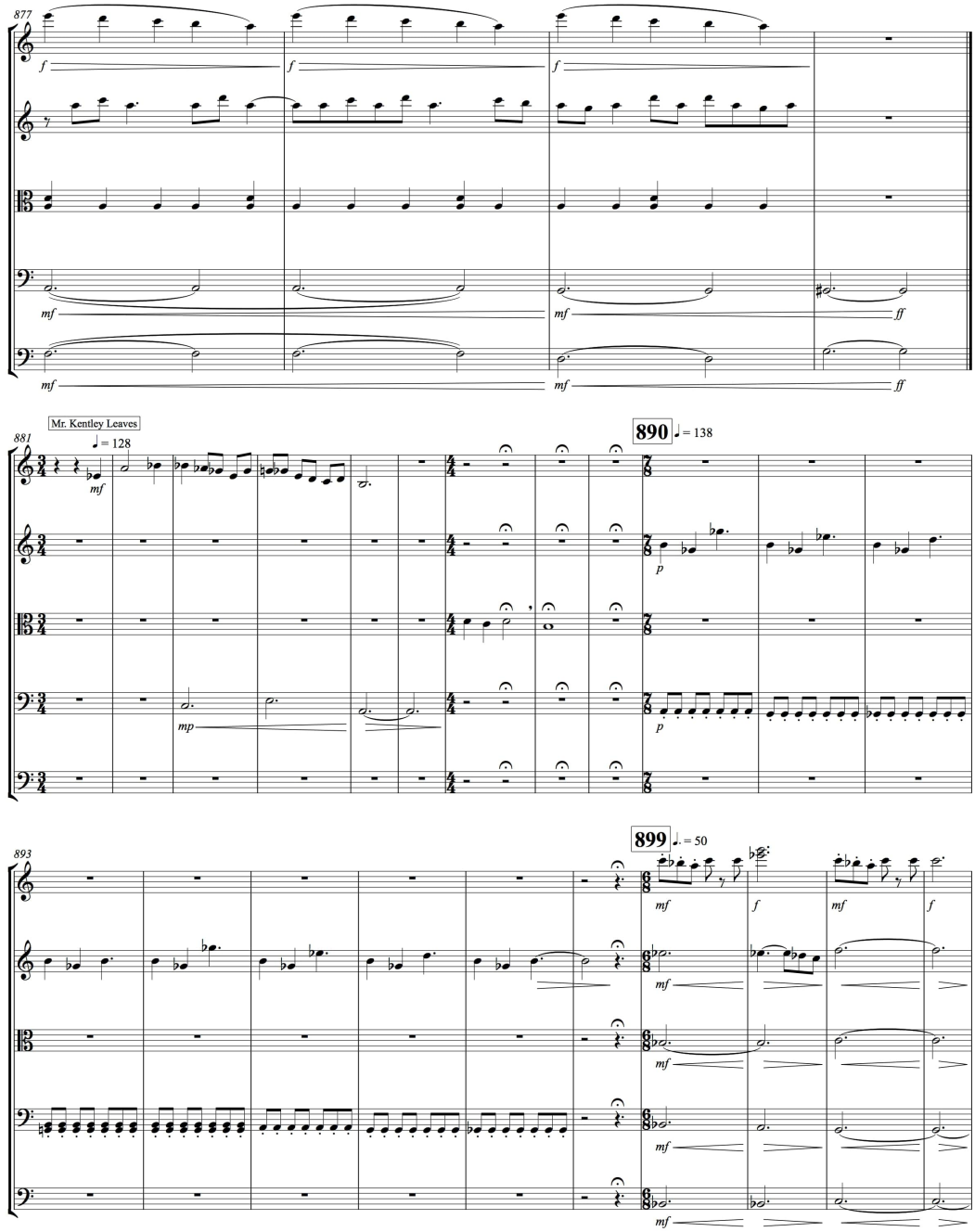

759
760
763
767
Telling Story
= 90 rit.
773
= 80

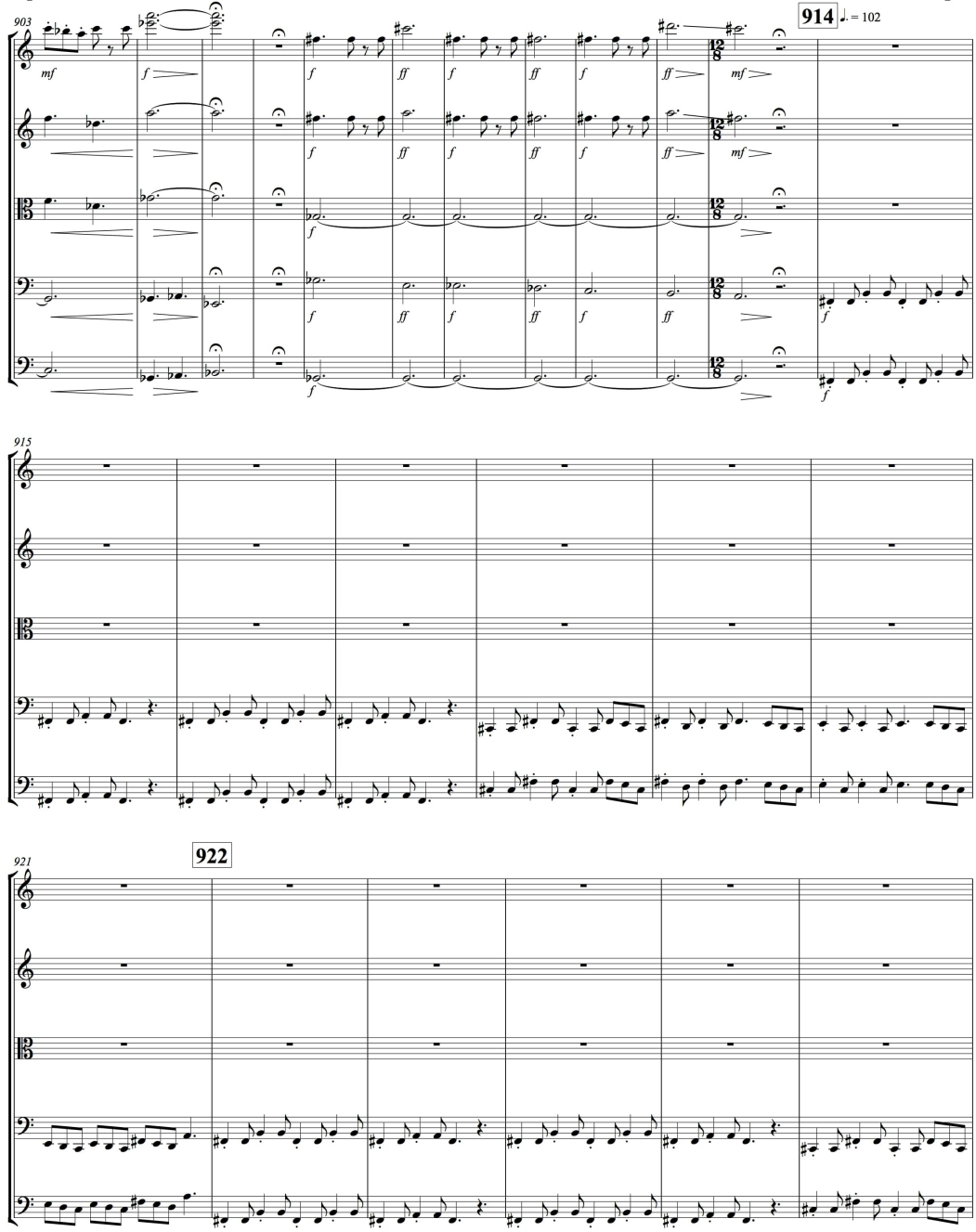

776
♩= 156
780
♩= 70
789
791
rit.
794
♩= 140
799
802
ff
mp

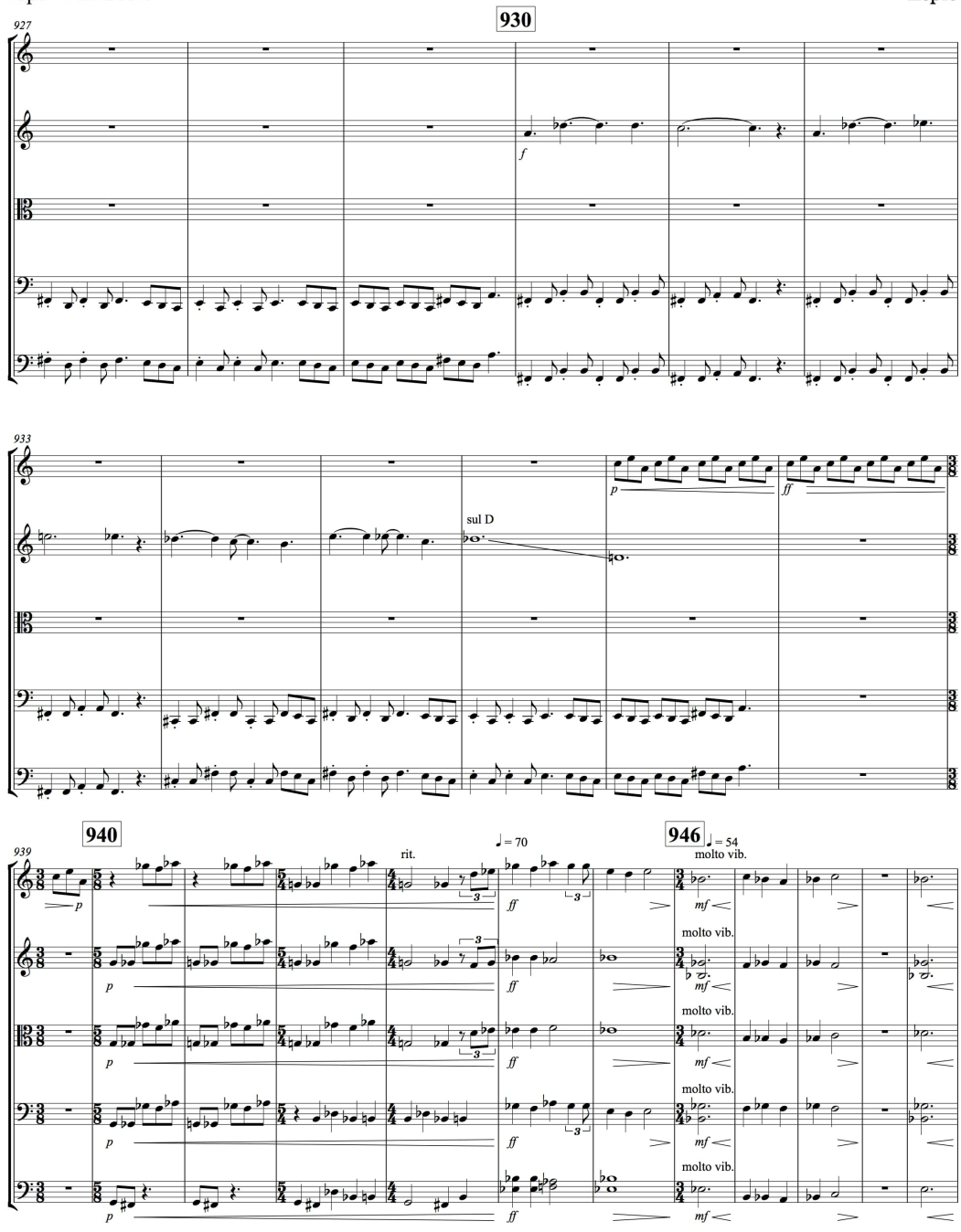

806
cresc.
813
rit.
817
♩ = 66
rit.
821
♩ = 60

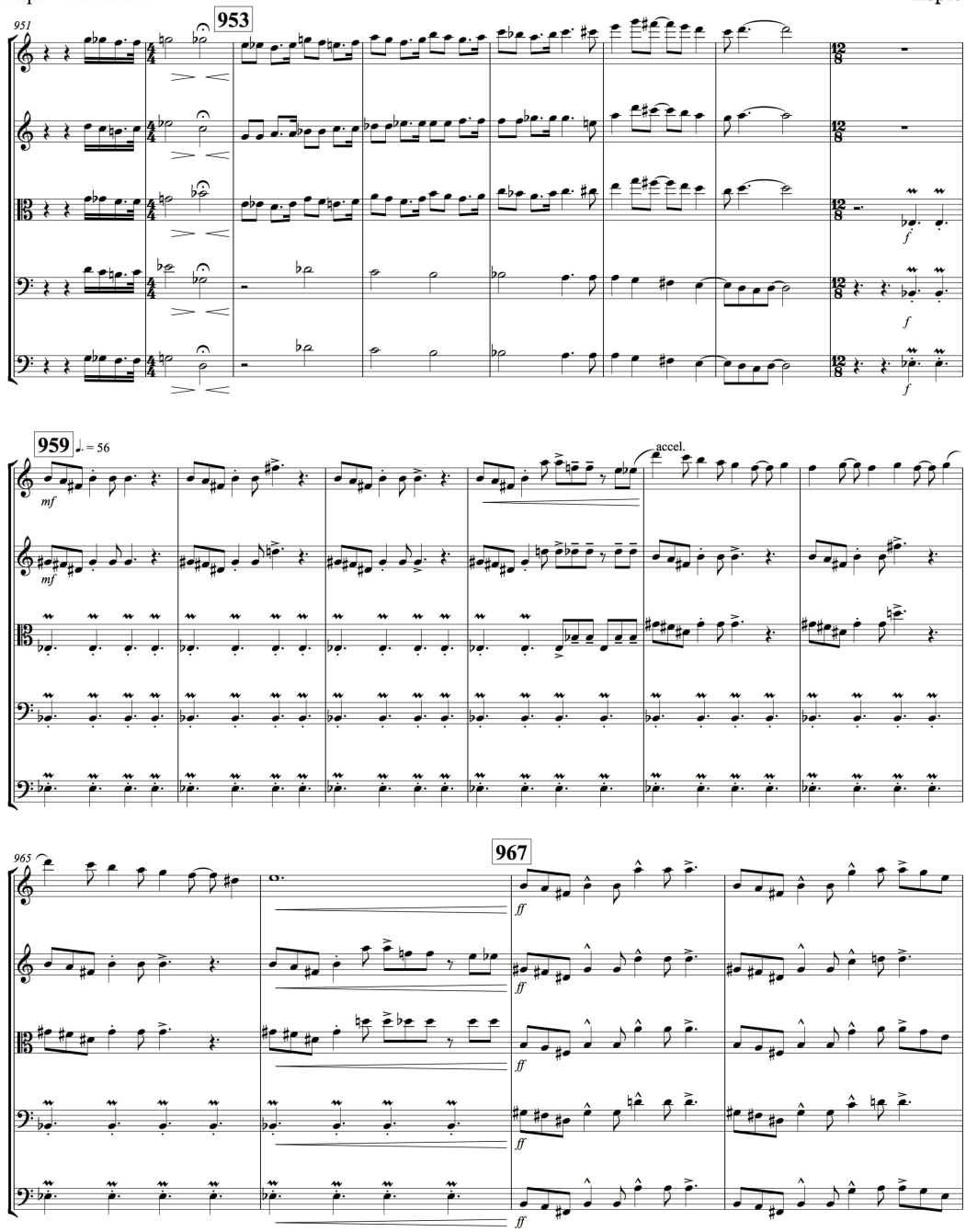

831
♩ = 118
839
841
847
solo
tutti
850
854
♩ = 160

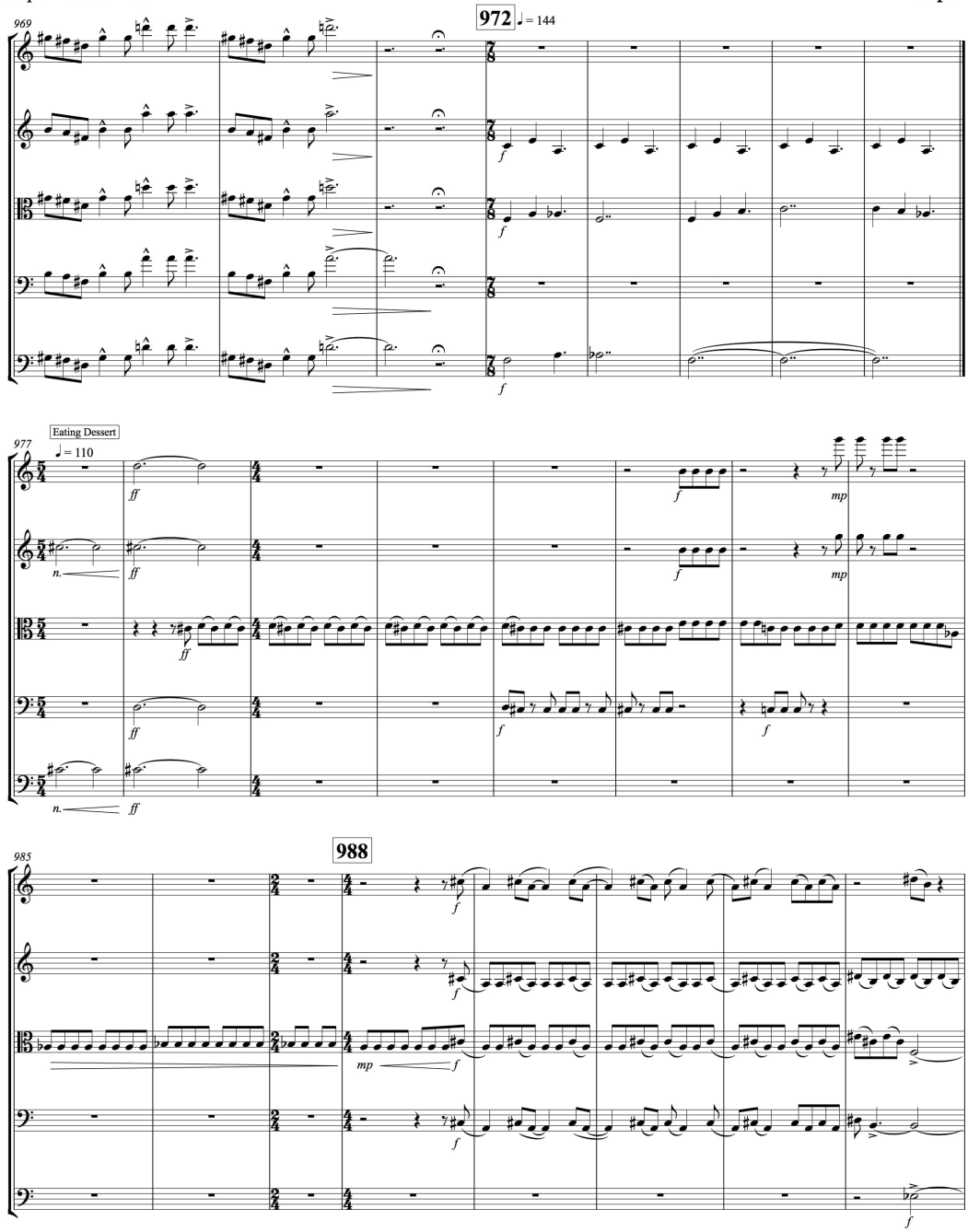

858
861
p
866
873
♩ = 210
f
ff
mf

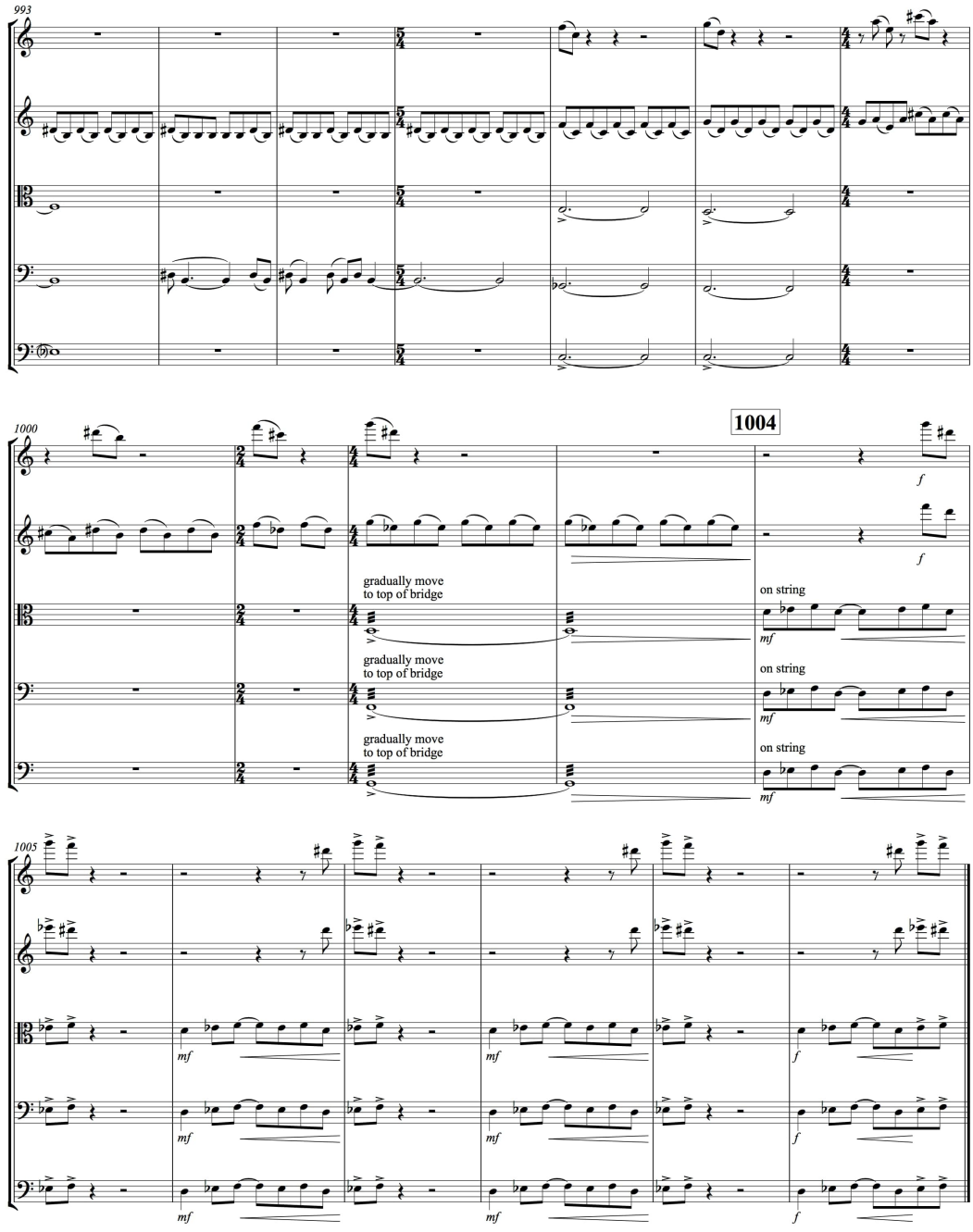

877
f
mf
ff
Mr. Kentley Leaves
881
= 128
mp
890
= 138
p
893
899
= 50

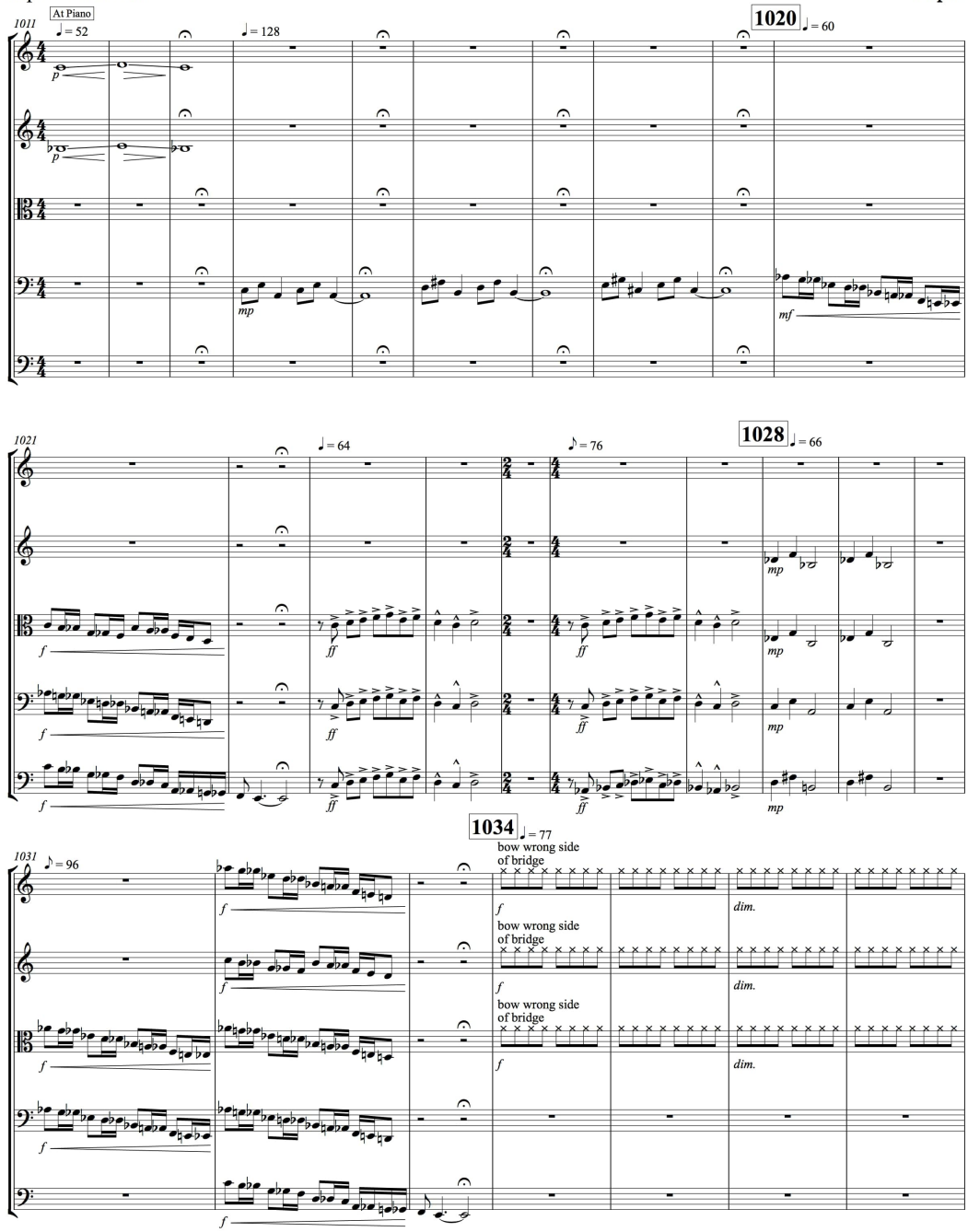

903
914
♩. = 102
915
921
922

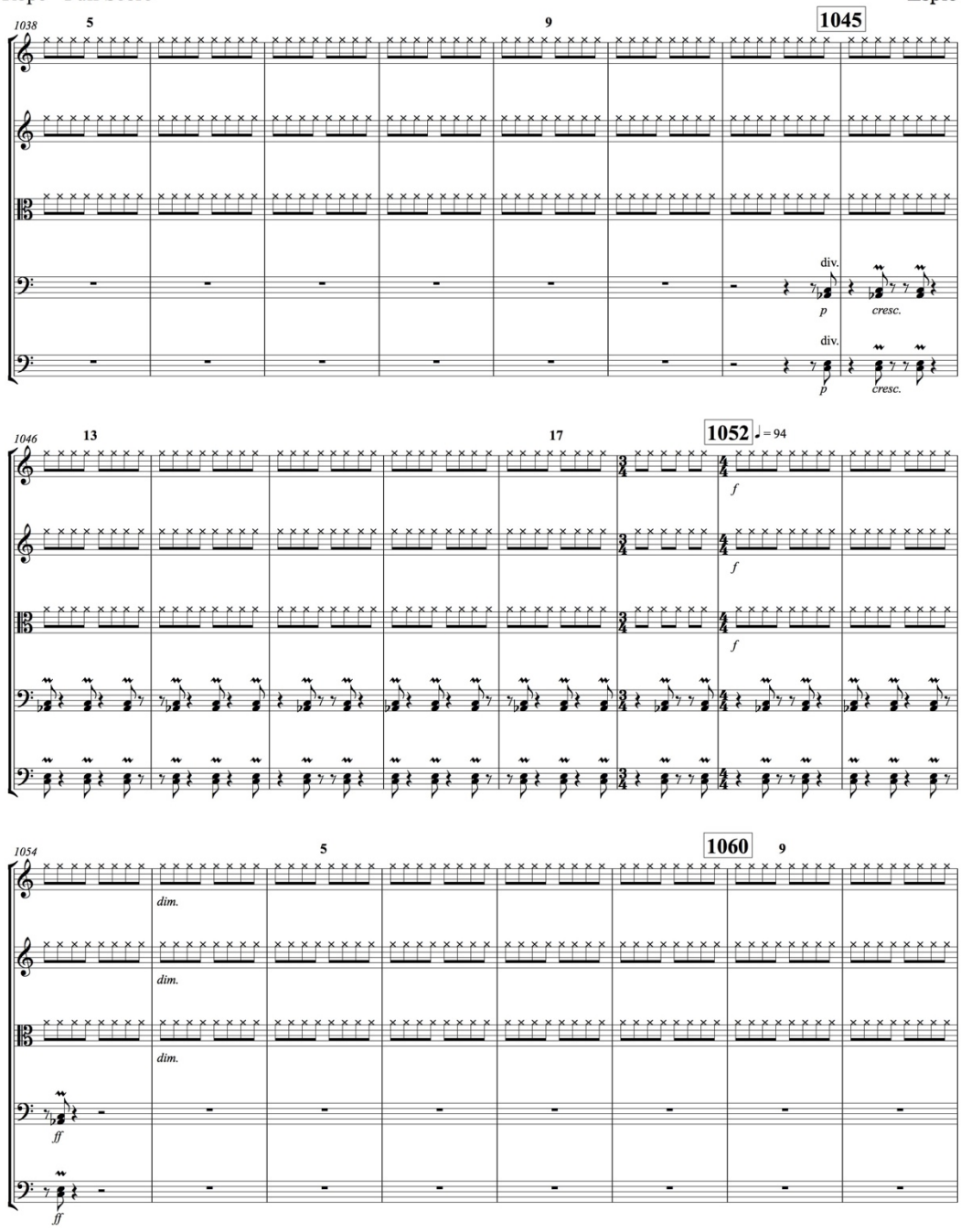

927
930
f
933
sul D
p
ff
939
940
rit.
♩= 70
946
♩= 54
molto vib.
p
ff
mf

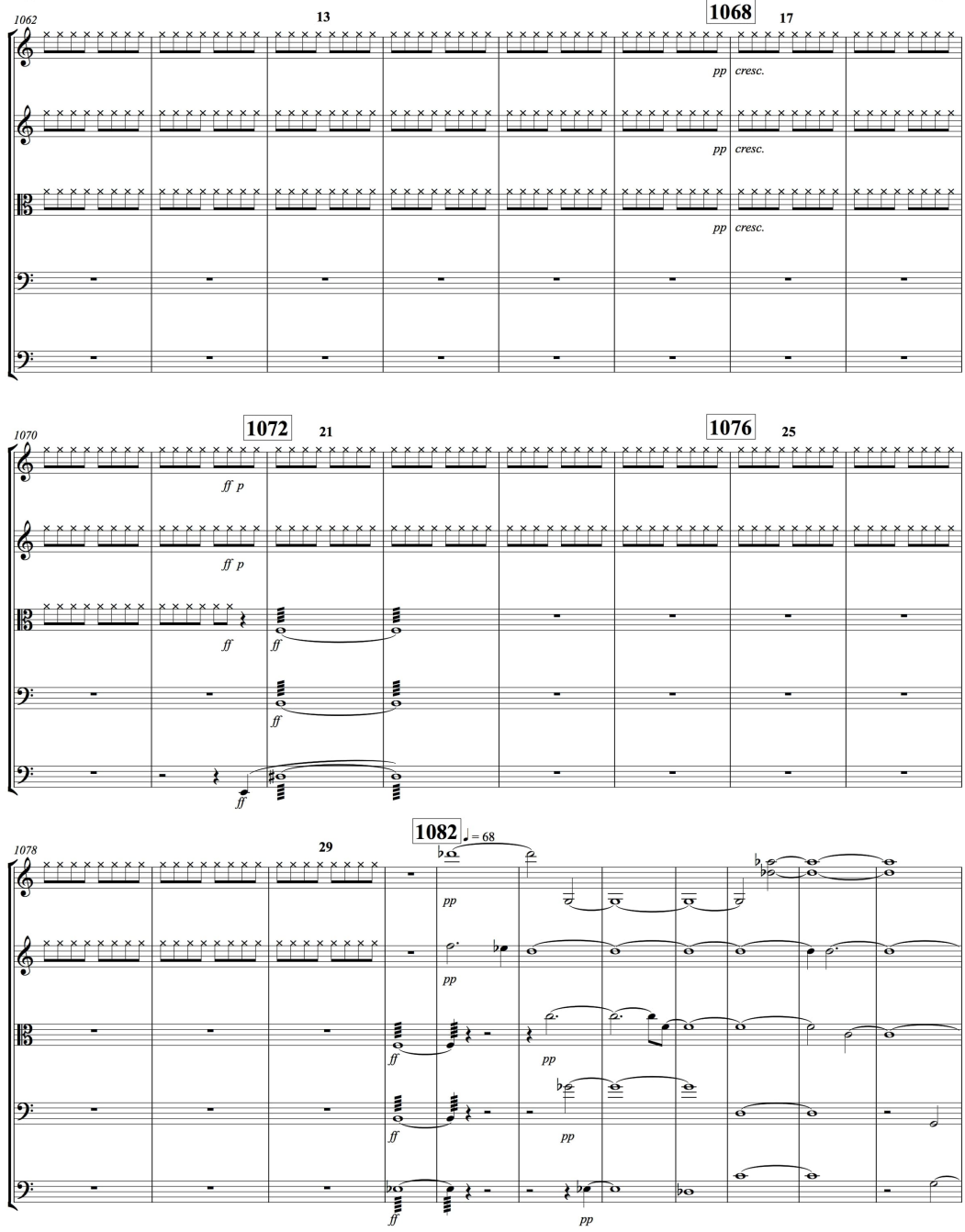

951
953
959
♩. = 56
mf
mf
accel.
965
967
ff
ff
ff
ff
ff

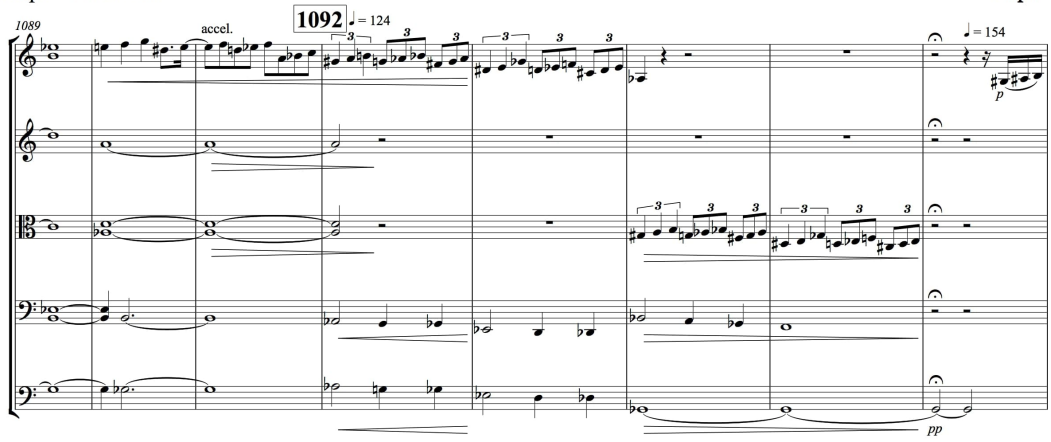

969
972
♩ = 144
977
Eating Dessert
♩ = 110
985
988

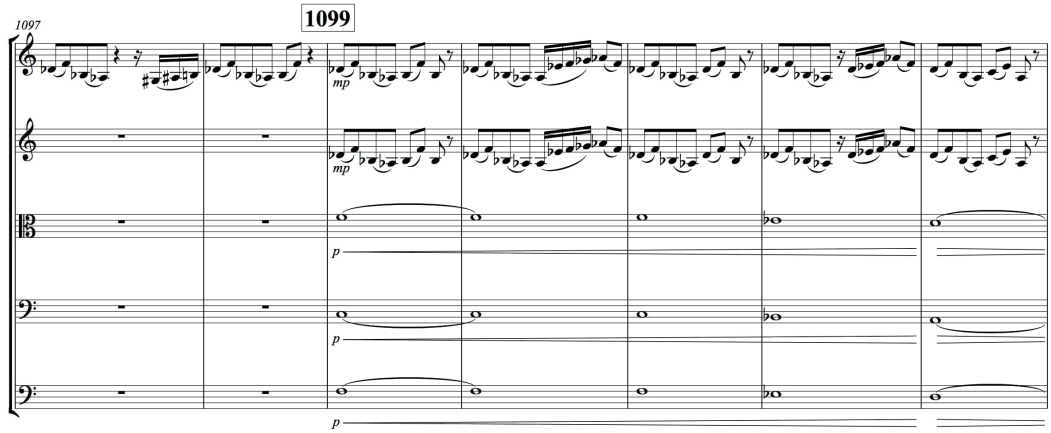

993
1000
1004
gradually move
to top of bridge
gradually move
to top of bridge
gradually move
to top of bridge
on string
on string
on string
1005

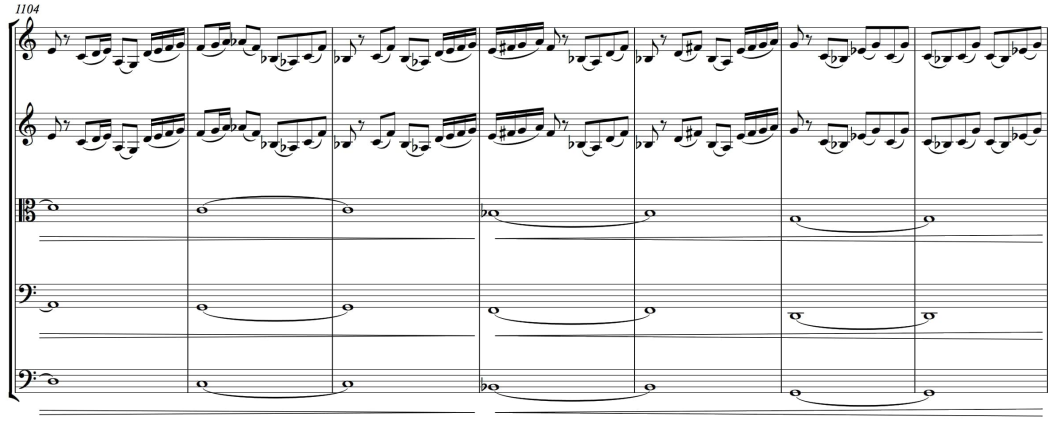

1011
At Piano
♩ = 52
♩ = 128
1020
♩ = 60
1021
♩ = 64
♪ = 76
1028
♩ = 66
1031
♪ = 96
1034
♩ = 77
bow wrong side of bridge
dim.

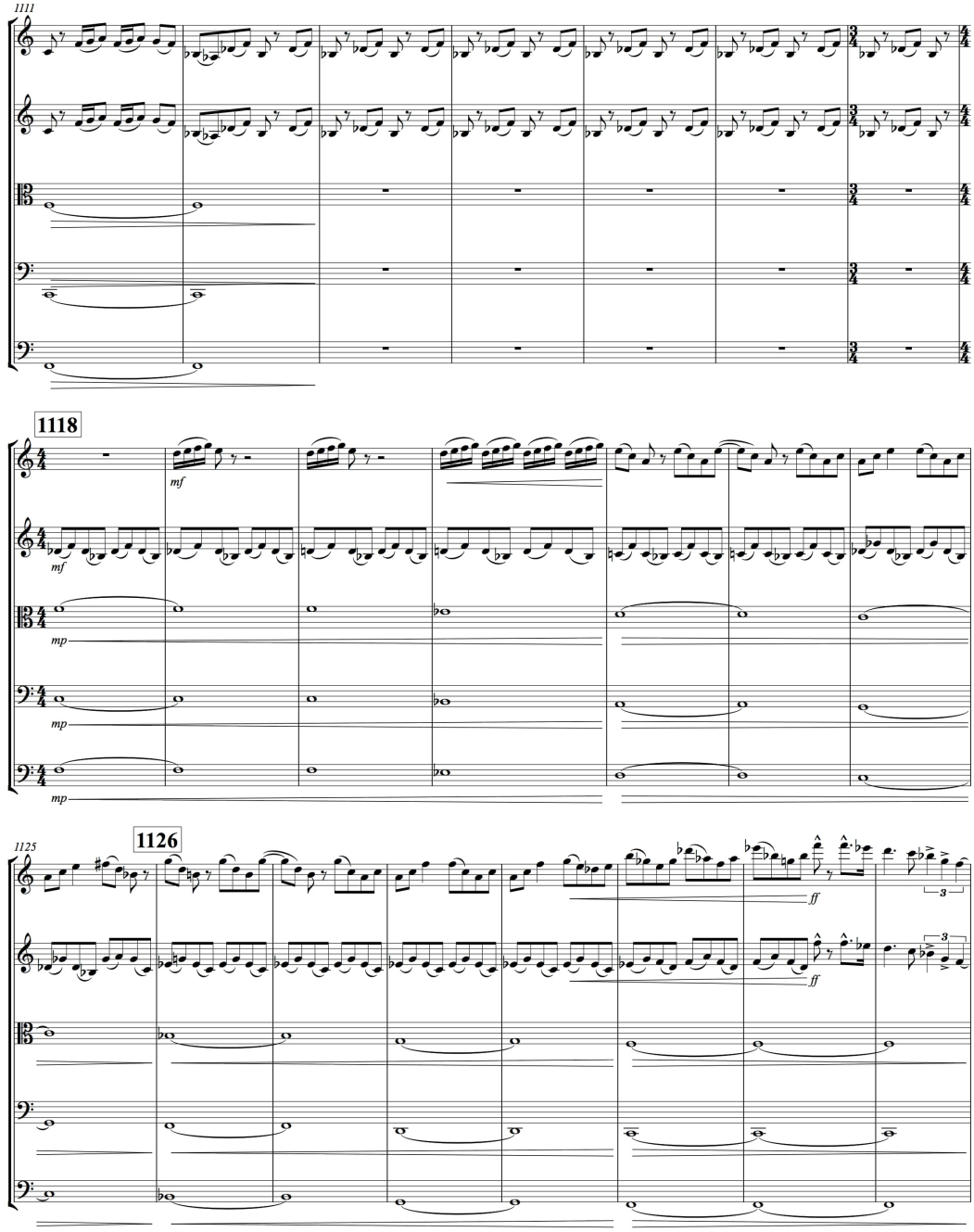

1038
5
9
1045
div.
p
cresc.
div.
p
cresc.
1046
13
17
1052
♩ = 94
f
f
f
1054
5
1060
9
dim.
dim.
dim.
ff
ff

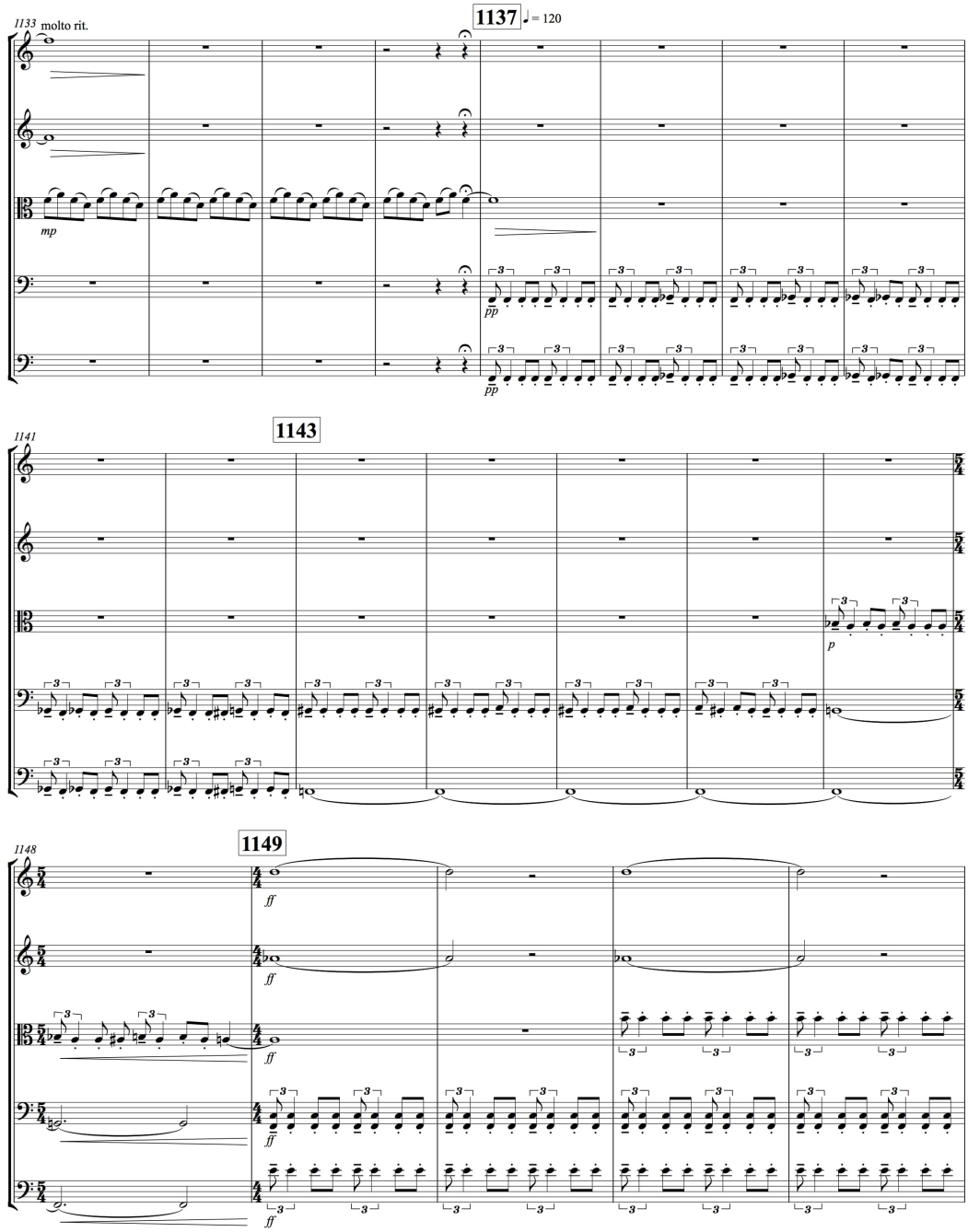

1062
13
1068
17
pp cresc.
pp cresc.
pp cresc.
1070
1072
21
1076
25
ff p
ff p
ff
ff
ff
ff
1078
29
1082
♩ = 68
pp
pp
ff
pp
ff
pp
ff
pp

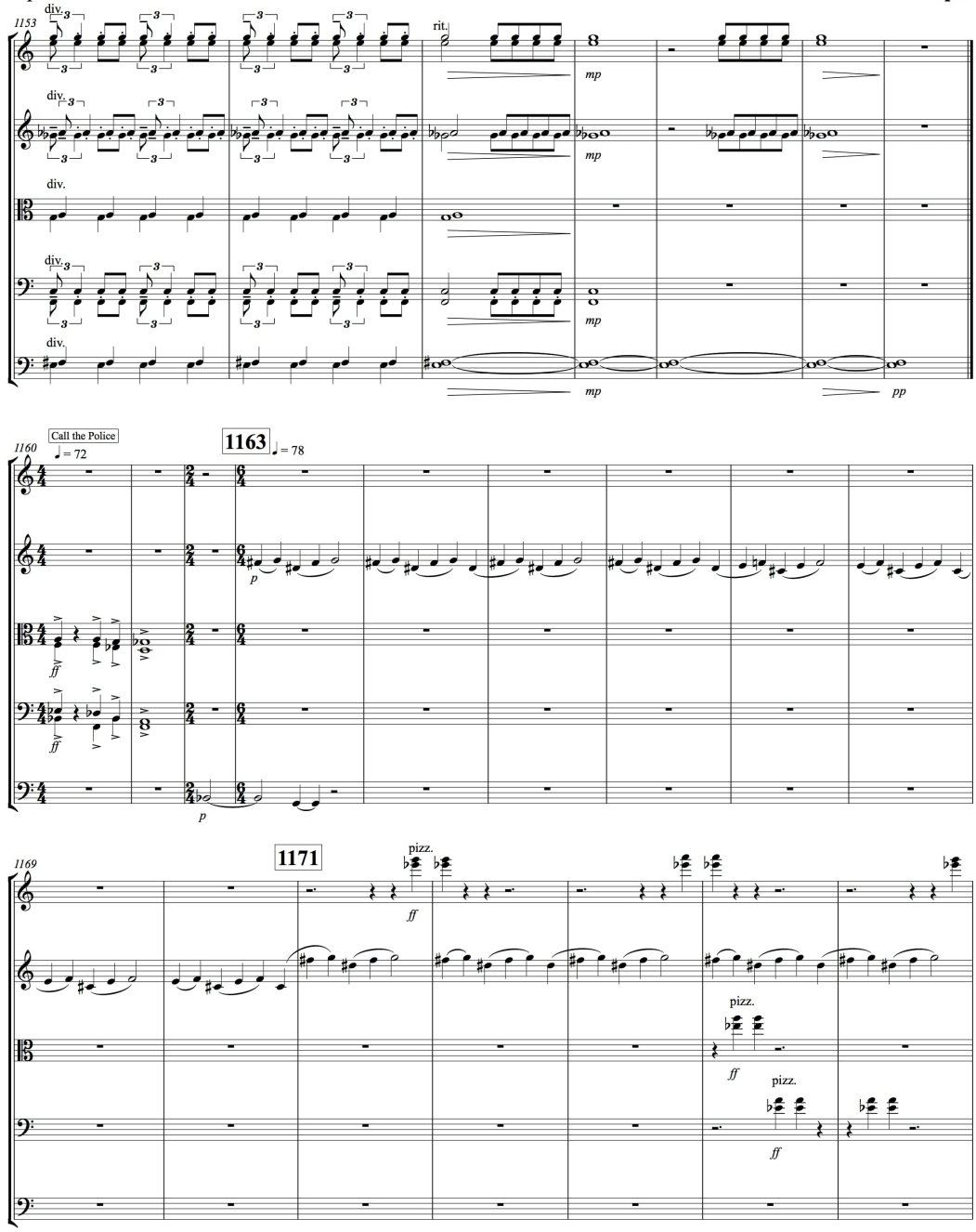

1089
accel.
1092
♩ = 124
♩ = 154
p
pp

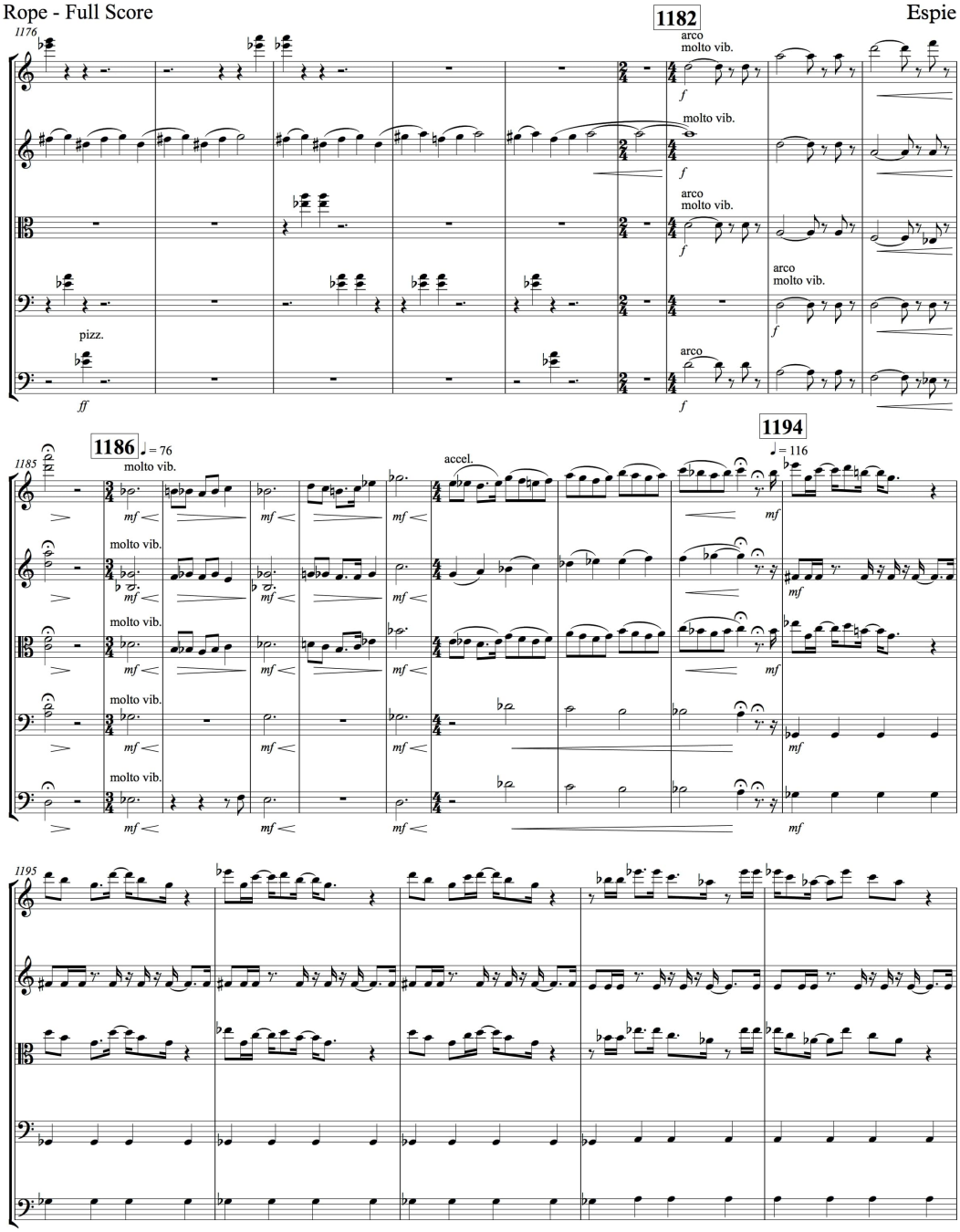

1097
1099
mp
mp
p
p
p

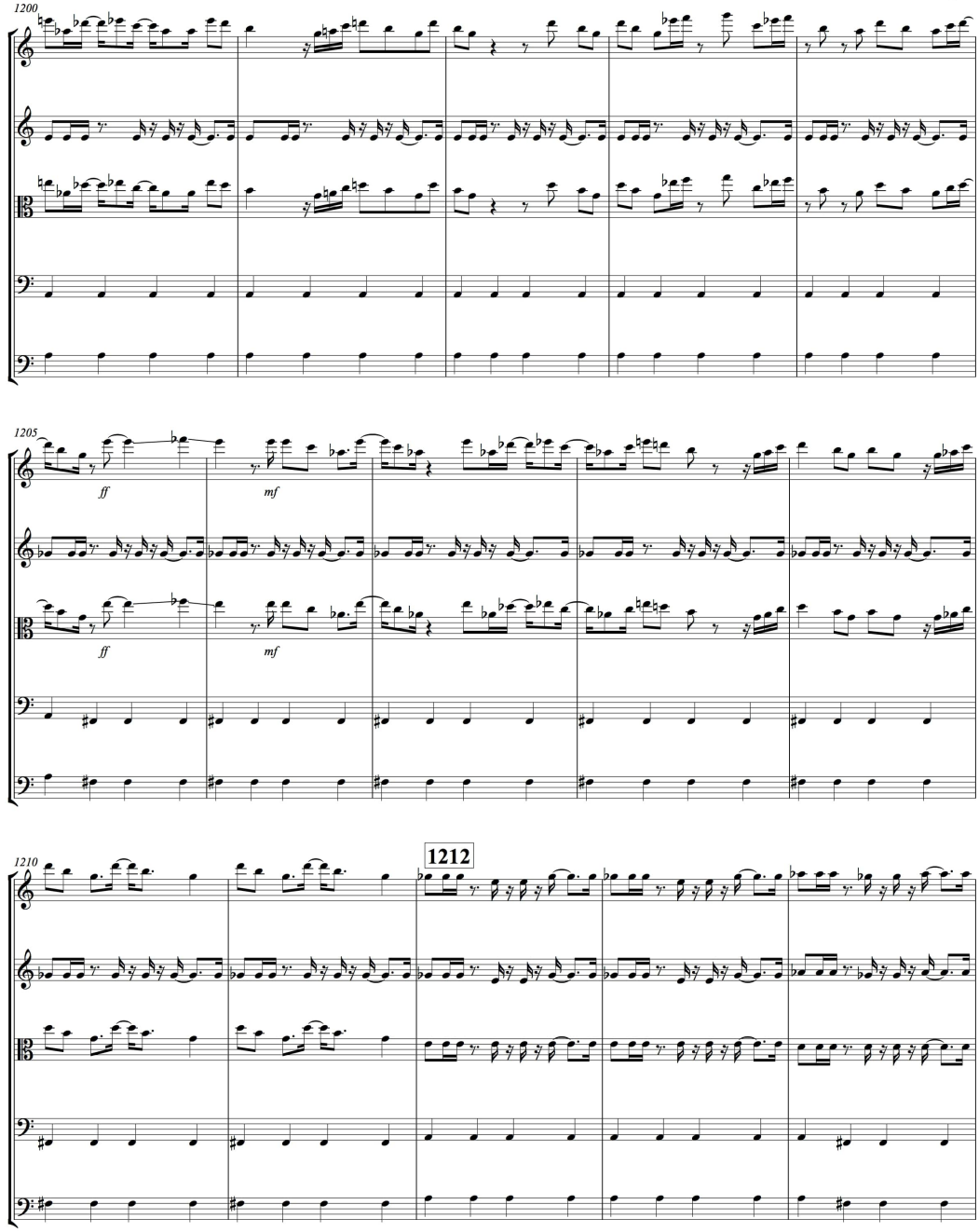

1104

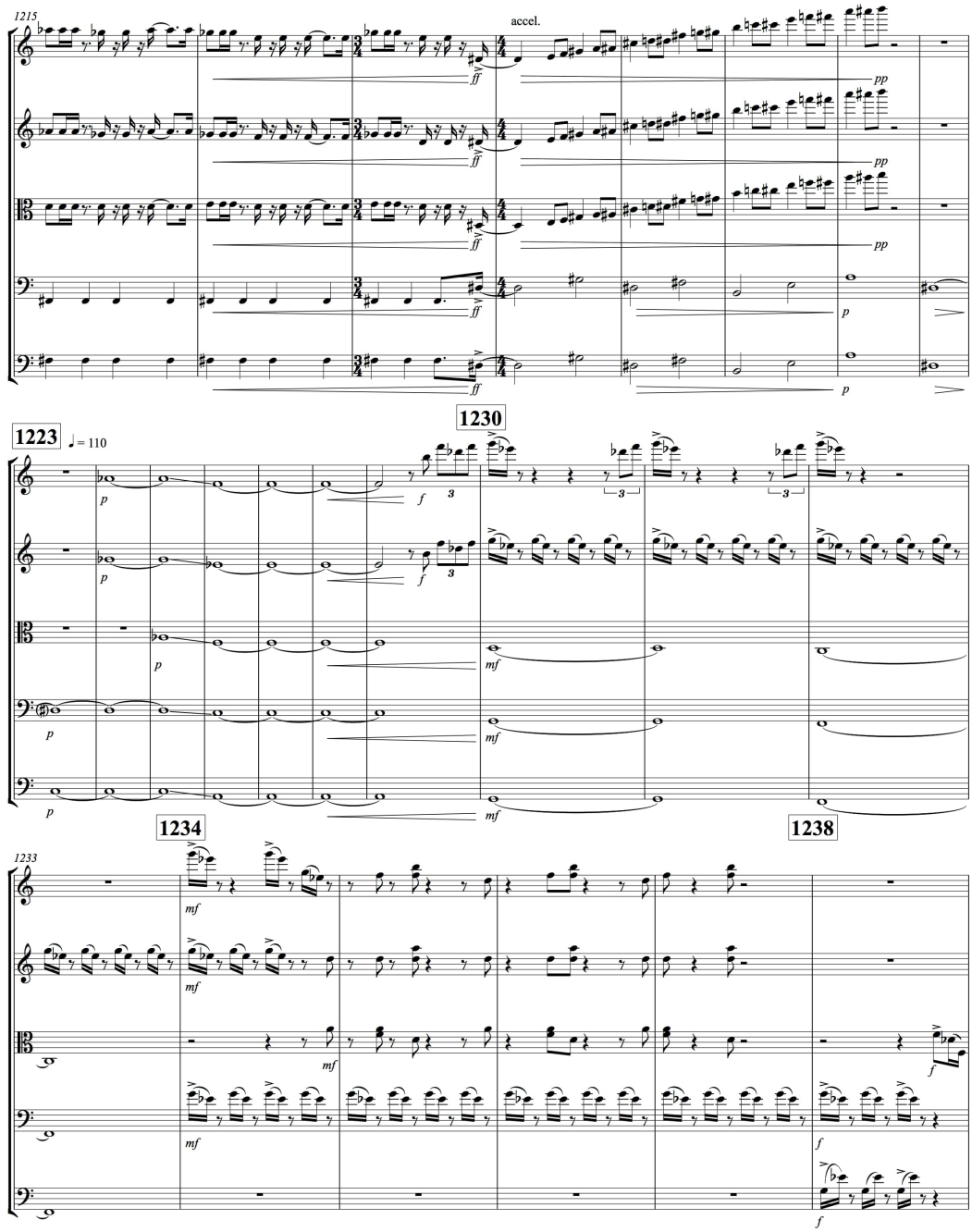

1111
1118
mf
mf
mp
mp
mp
1125
1126
ff
ff
3
3

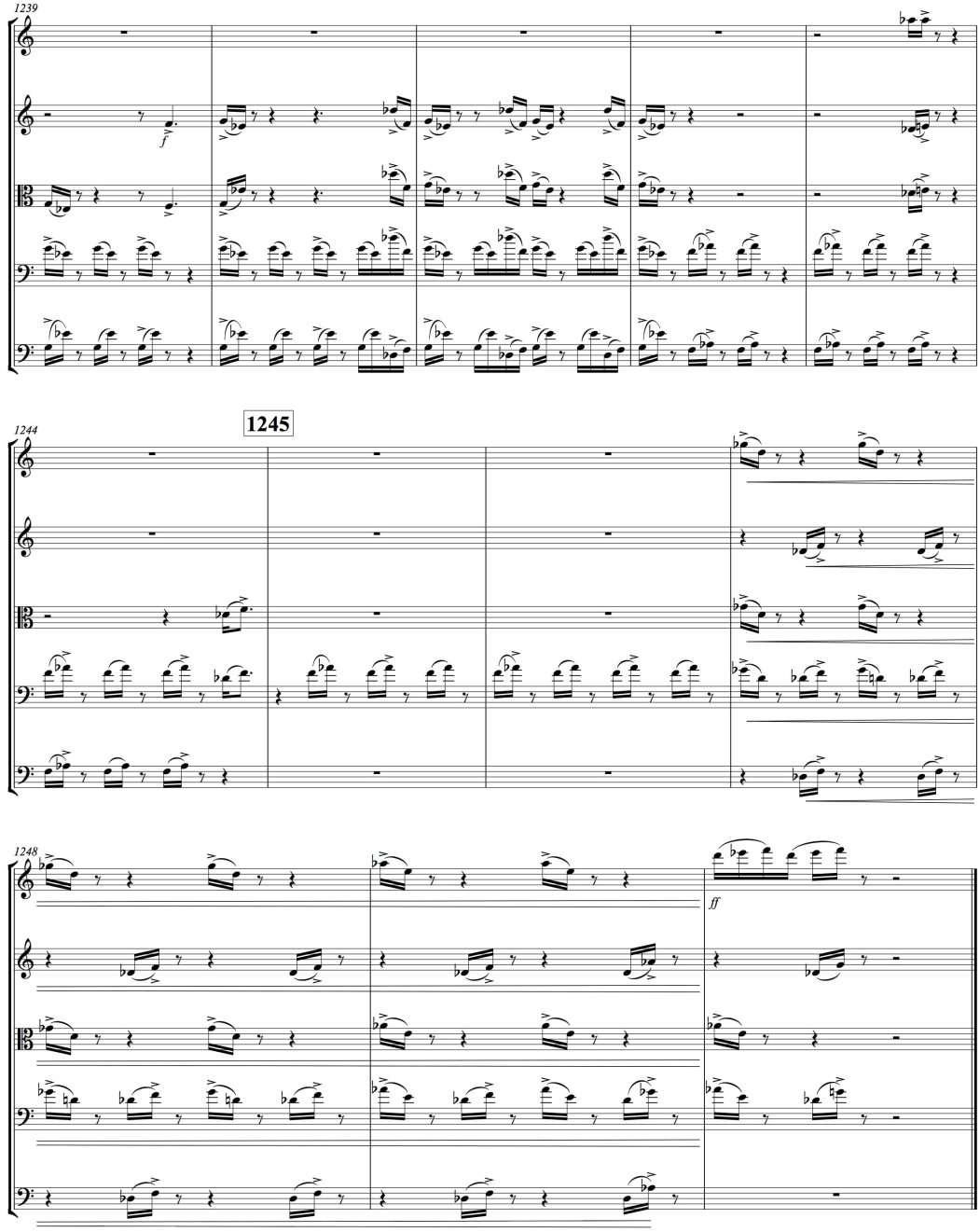

1133 molto rit.
1137
♩ = 120
mp
pp
1141
1143
p
1148
1149
ff

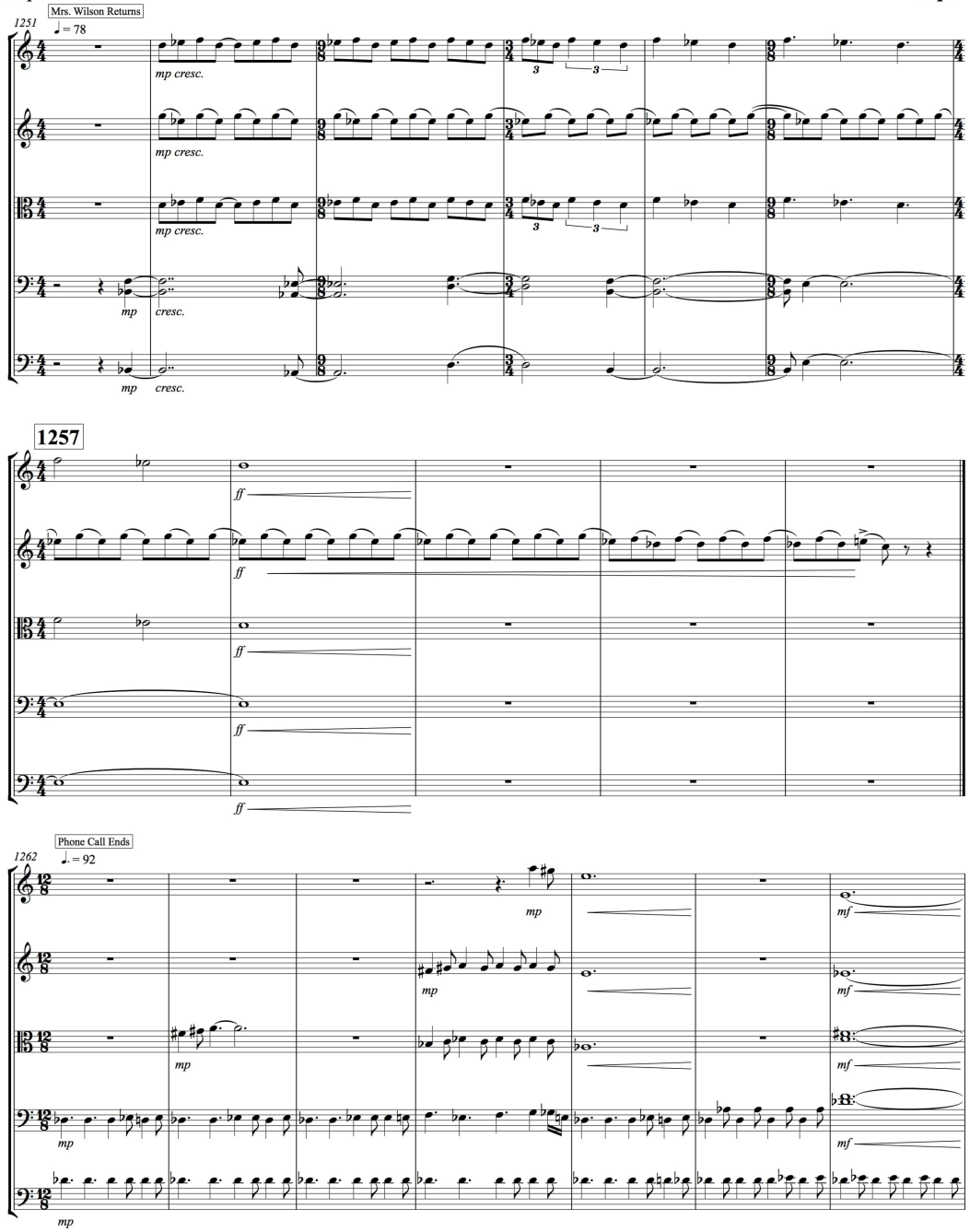

1153
div.
rit.
mp
pp
1160
Call the Police
♩ = 72
1163
♩ = 78
p
ff
1169
1171
pizz.

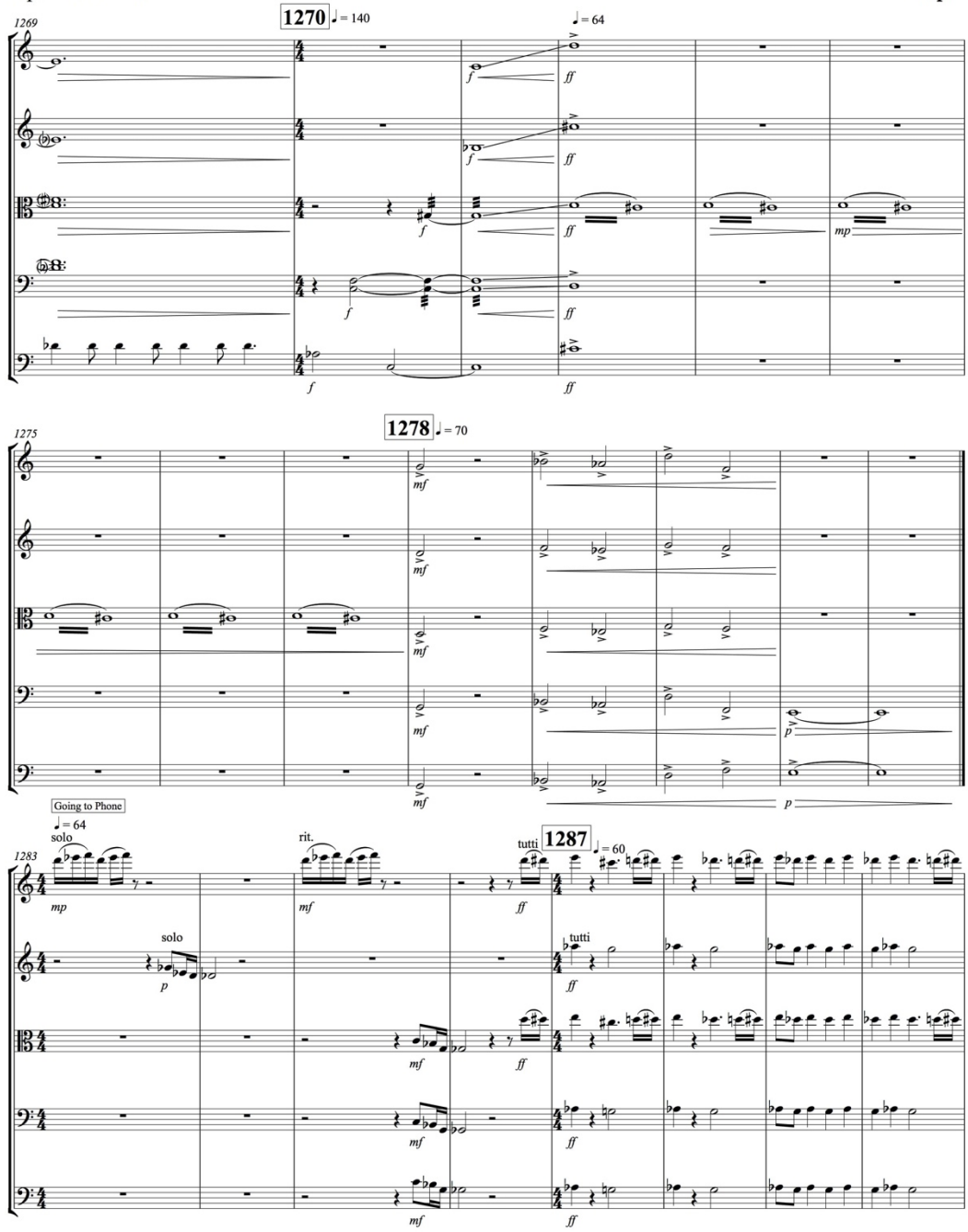

1176
1182
arco
molto vib.
molto vib.
arco
molto vib.
arco
molto vib.
pizz.
arco
1185
1186
♩ = 76
molto vib.
accel.
1194
♩ = 116
1195

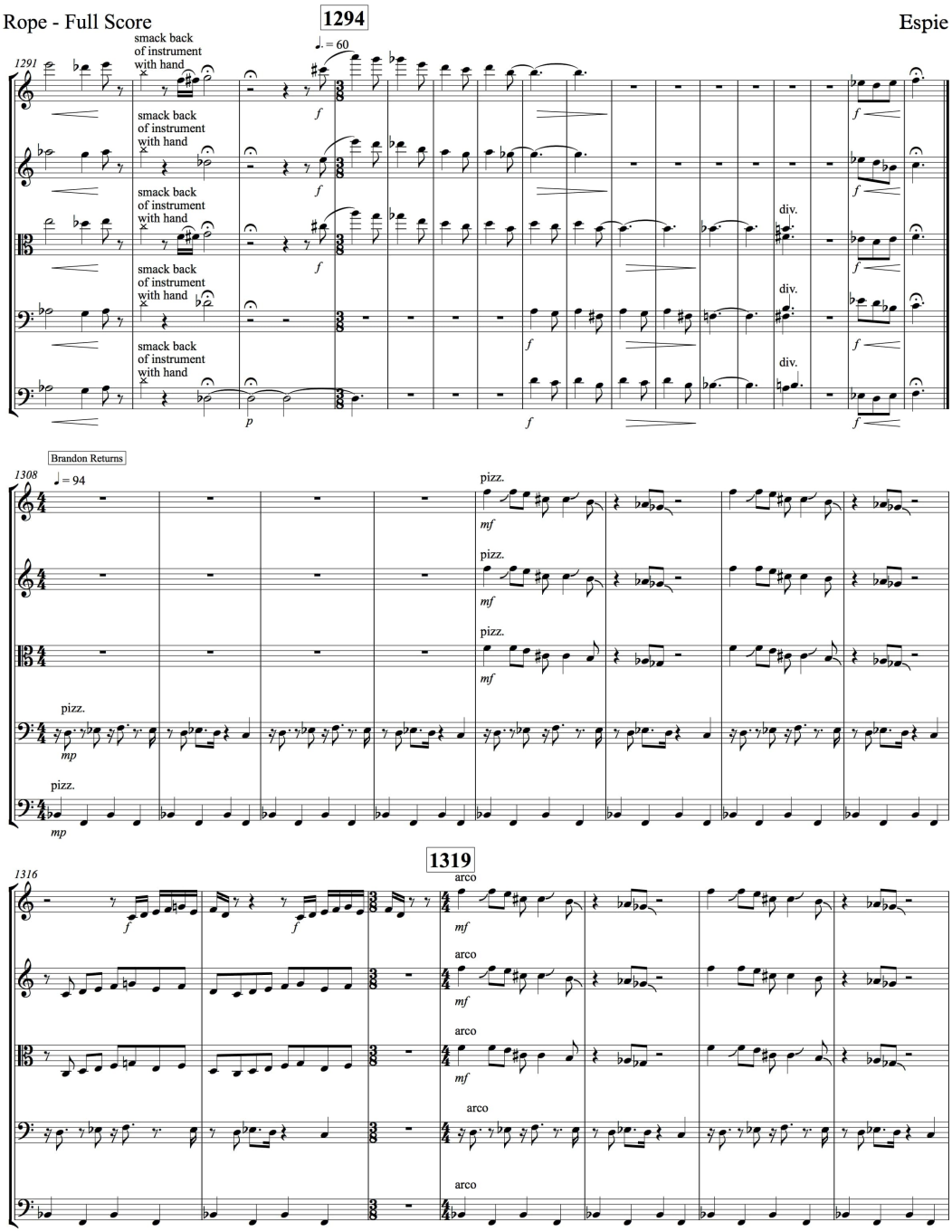

1200
1205
ff
mf
ff
mf
1210
1212

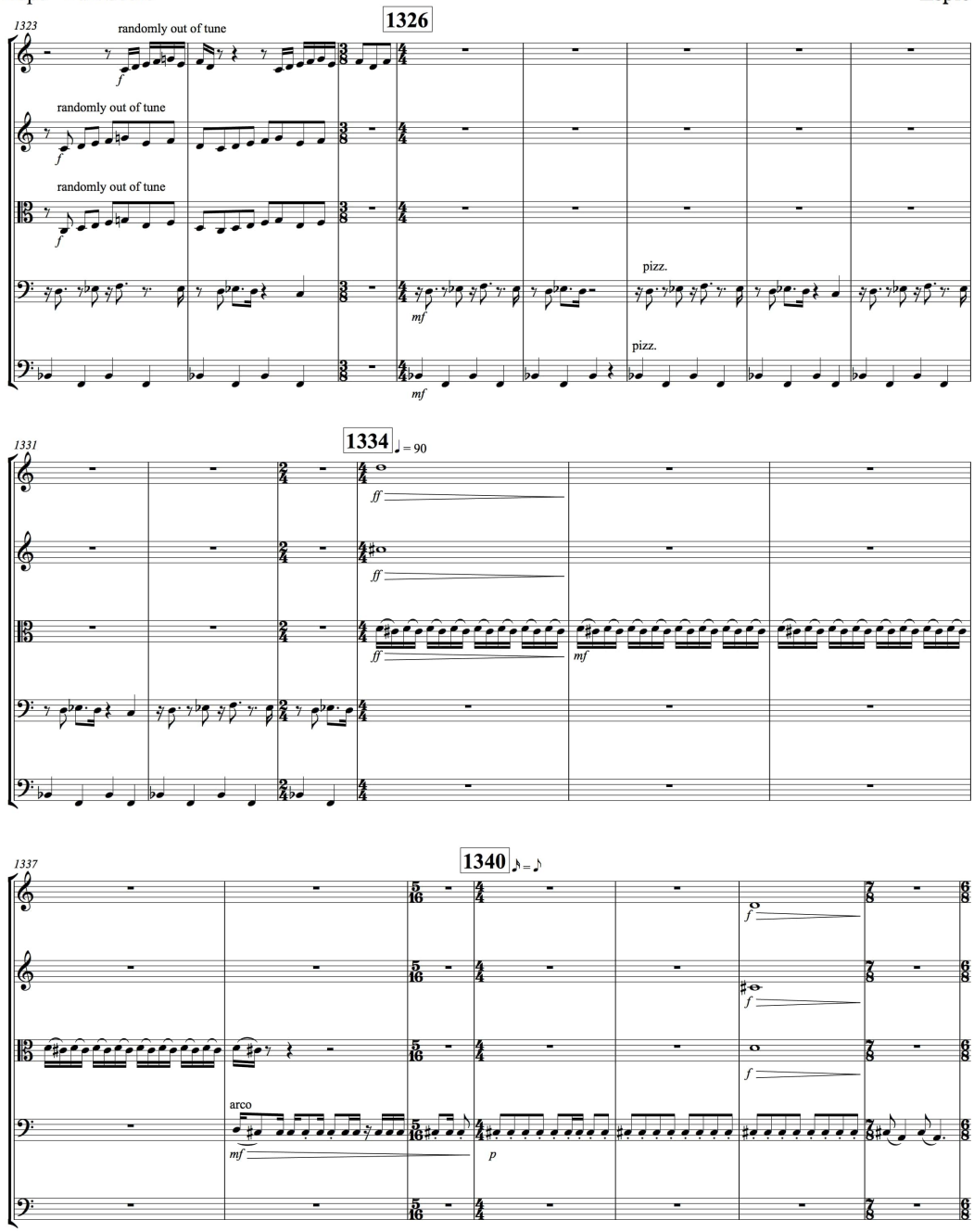

1215
accel.
1223
♩= 110
1230
1234
1238
1233

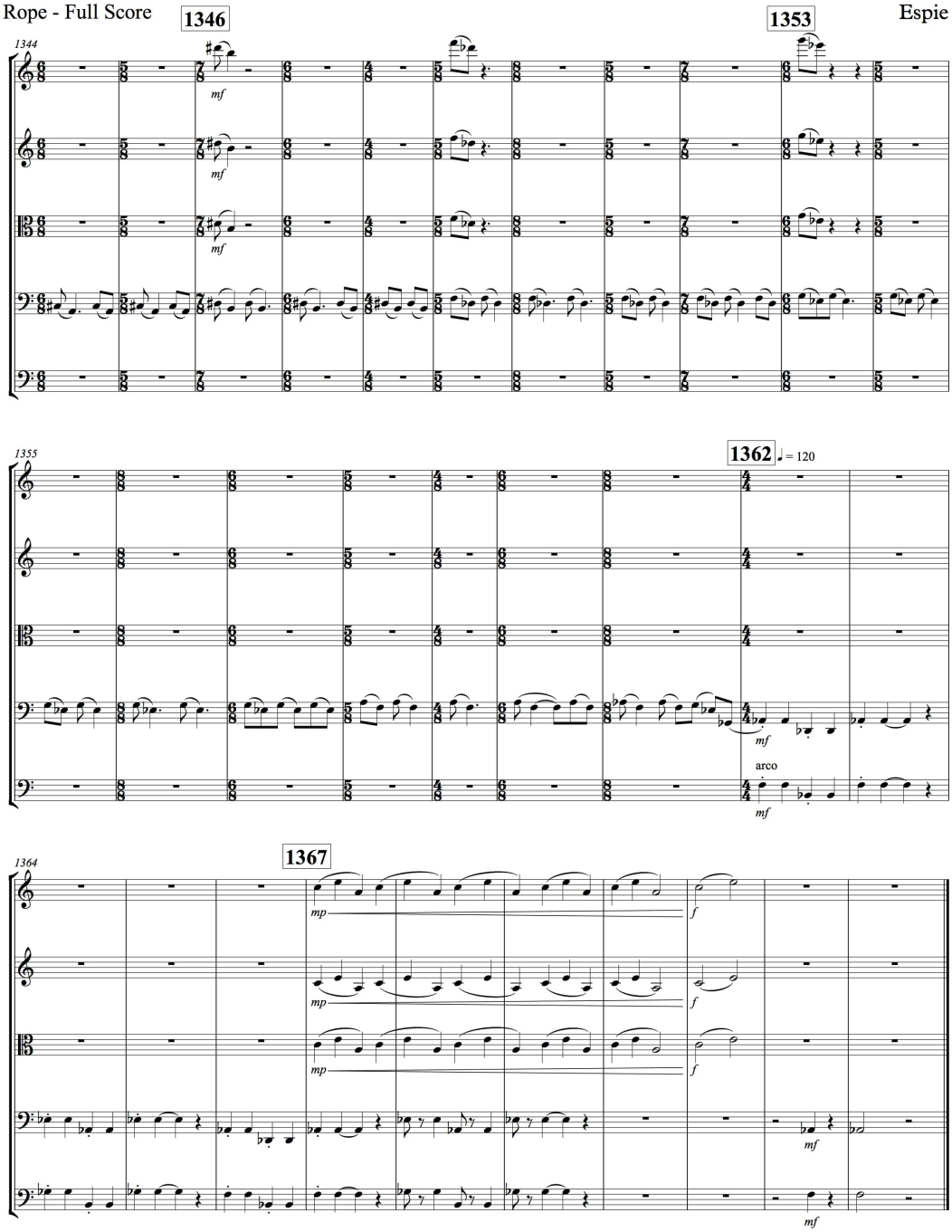

1239
f
1244
1245
1248
ff

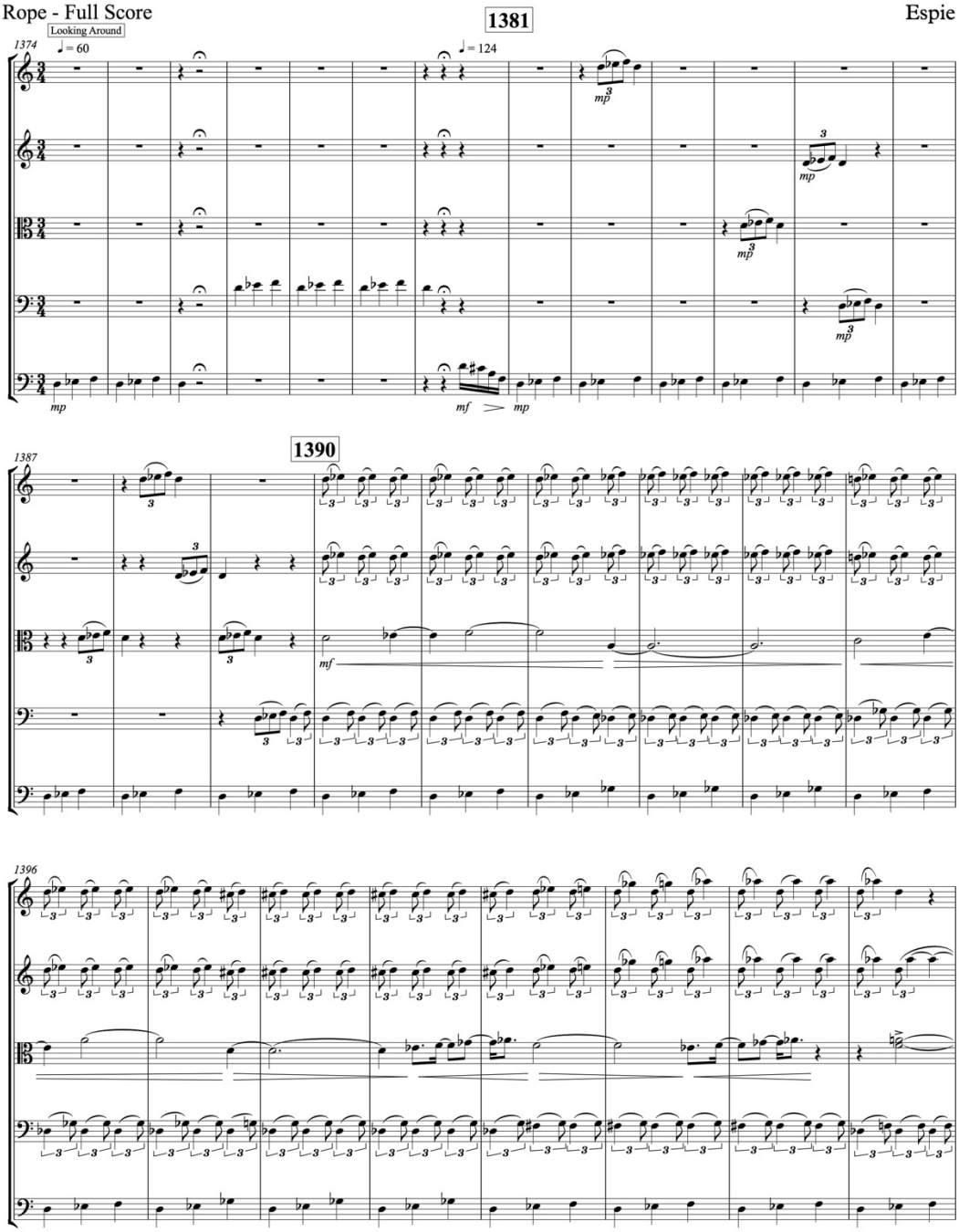

1251
Mrs. Wilson Returns
♩ = 78
mp cresc.
mp cresc.
mp cresc.
mp cresc.
mp cresc.
1257
ff
ff
ff
ff
ff
1262
Phone Call Ends
♩. = 92
mp
mp
mp
mp
mf
mf
mf
mf

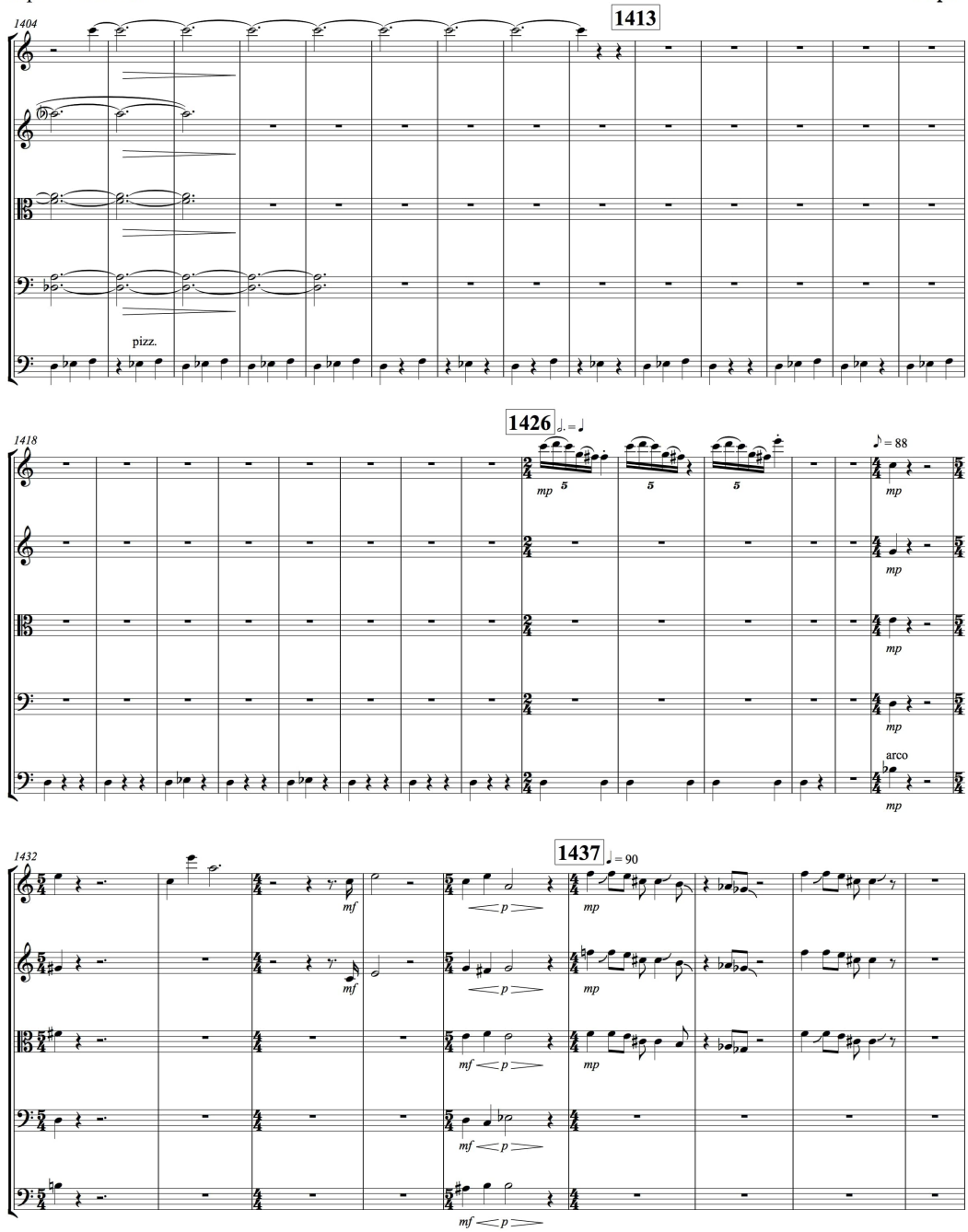

1269
1270
♩ = 140
♩ = 64
1275
1278
♩ = 70
Going to Phone
♩ = 64
solo
1283
rit.
tutti
1287
♩ = 60

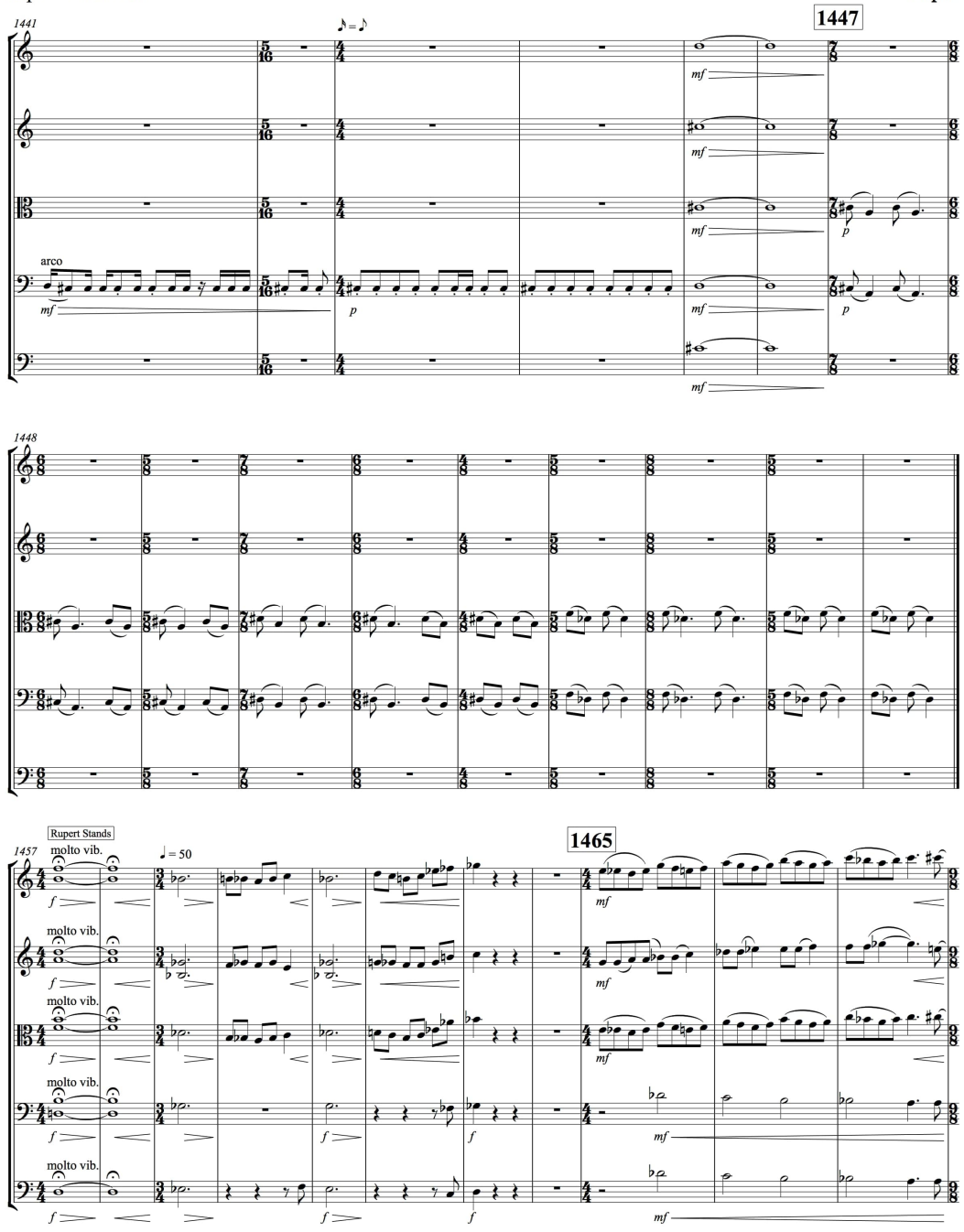

1294
1291
smack back of instrument with hand
♩. = 60
div.
Brandon Returns
1308
♩ = 94
pizz.
arco
1316
1319

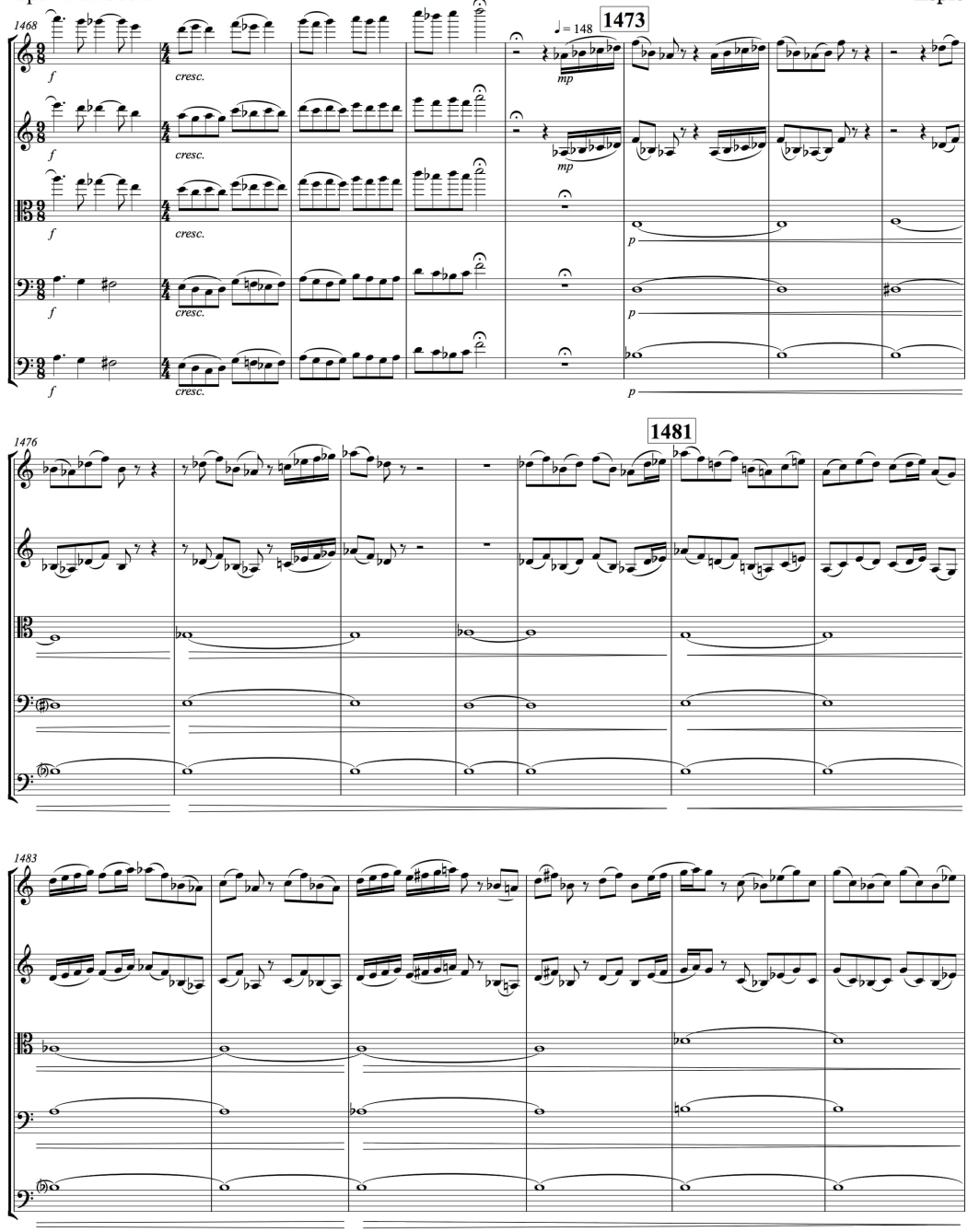

1323
randomly out of tune
randomly out of tune
randomly out of tune
1326
pizz.
pizz.
1331
1334
♩ = 90
1337
1340
♪ = ♪
arco

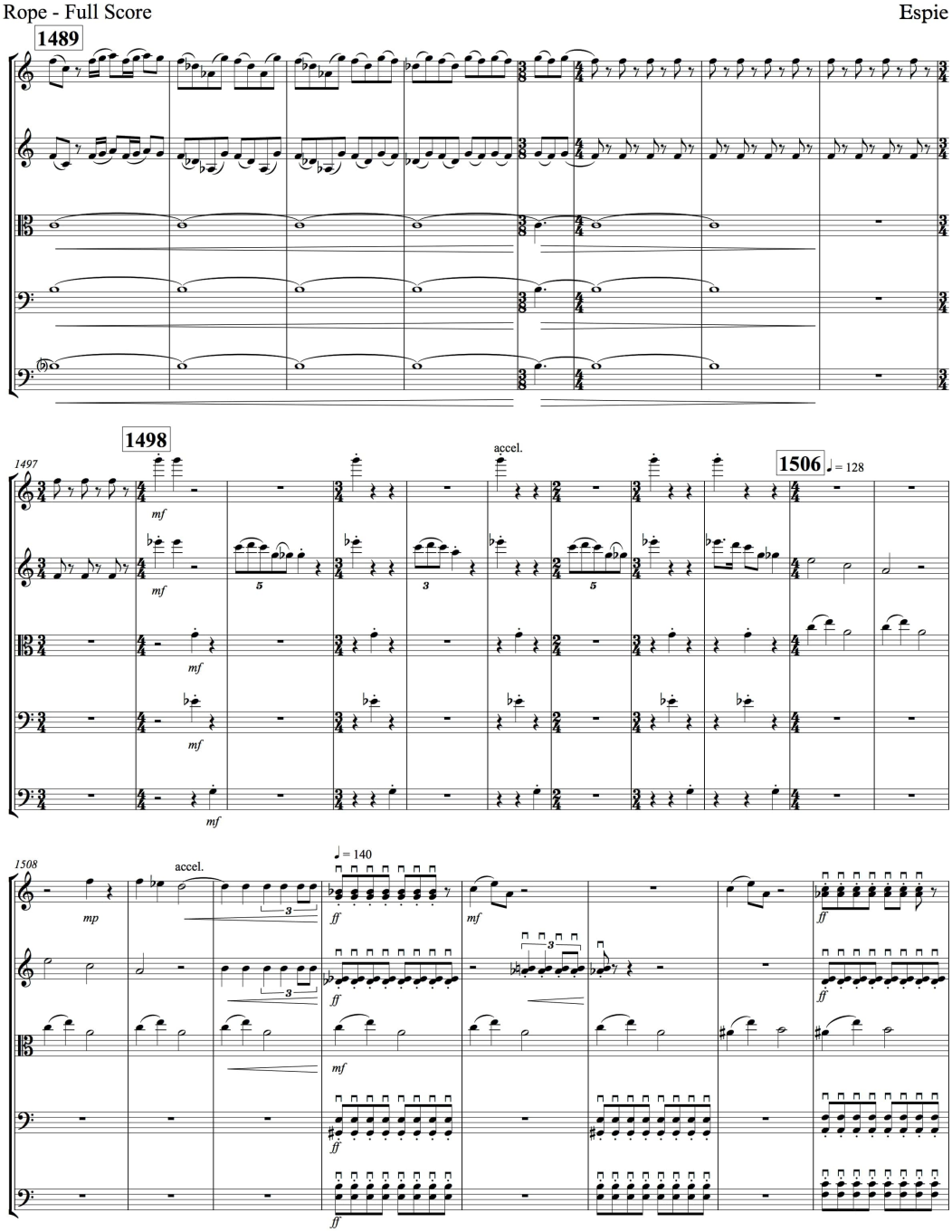

1346
1353
Espie
1344
mf
1355
1362
♩ = 120
arco
1364
1367
mp
f

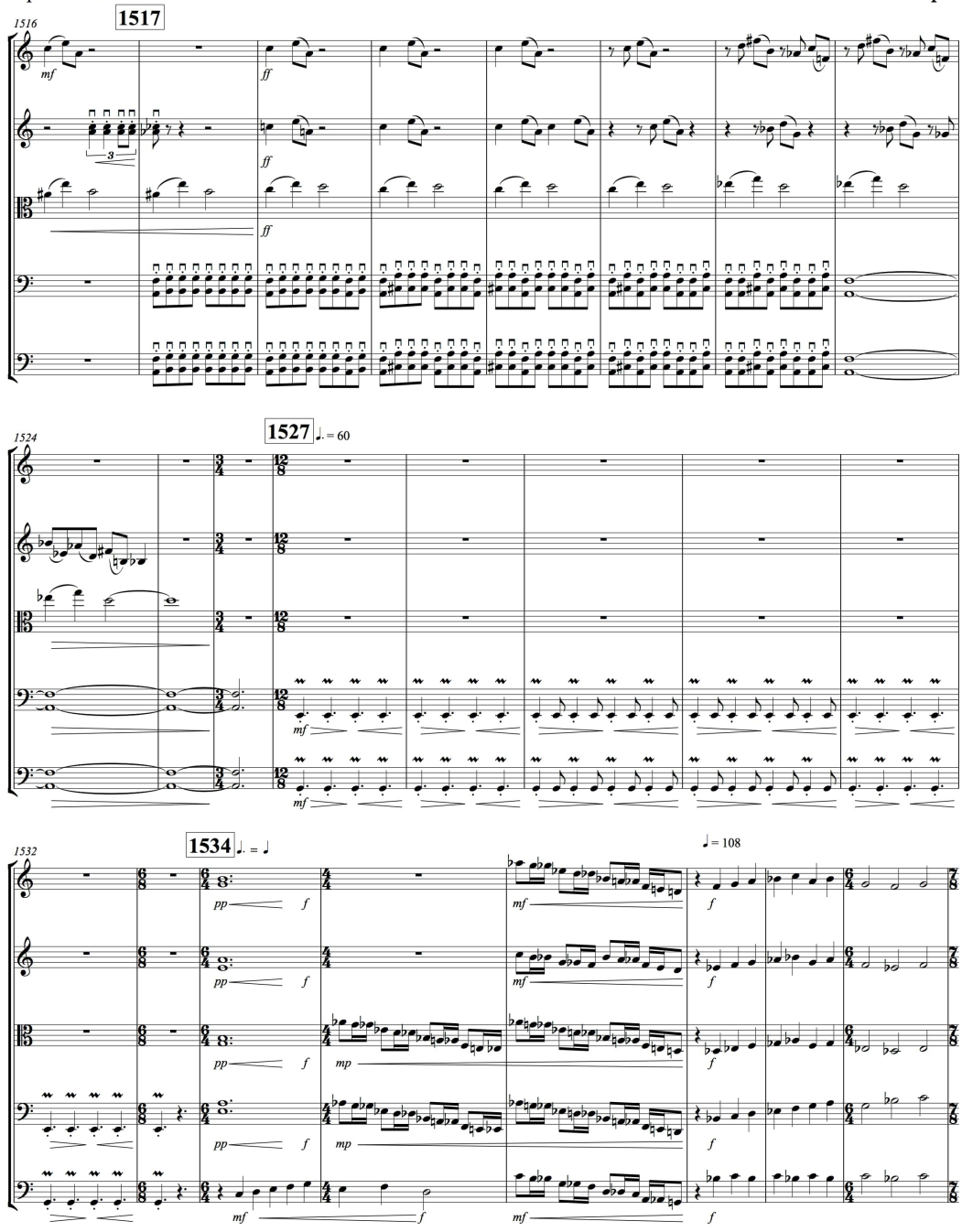

1374
Looking Around
♩ = 60
1381
♩ = 124
mp
mf
mp
1387
1390
mf
1396

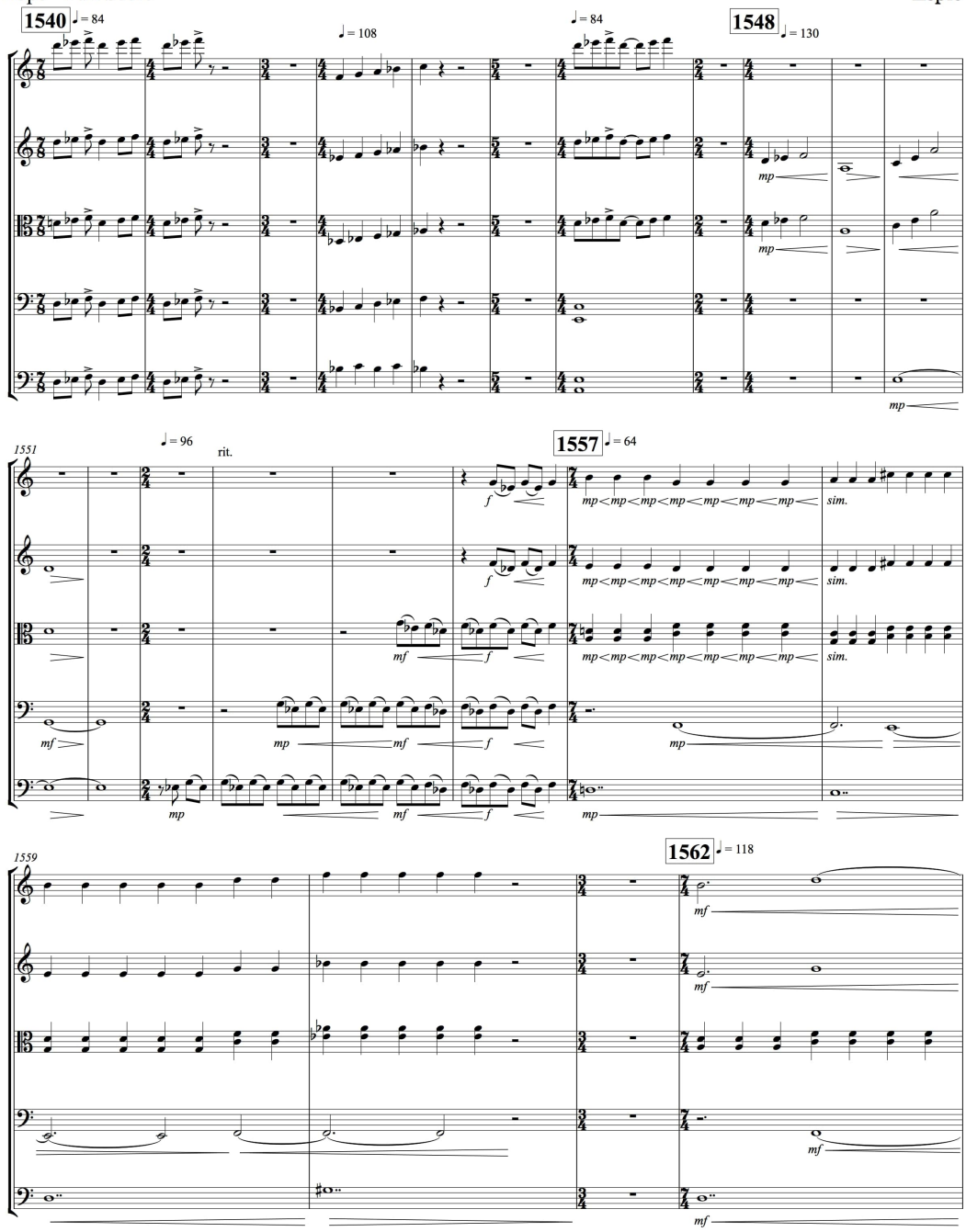

1404
1413
pizz.
1418
1426
mp
1432
1437
mf
p
arco

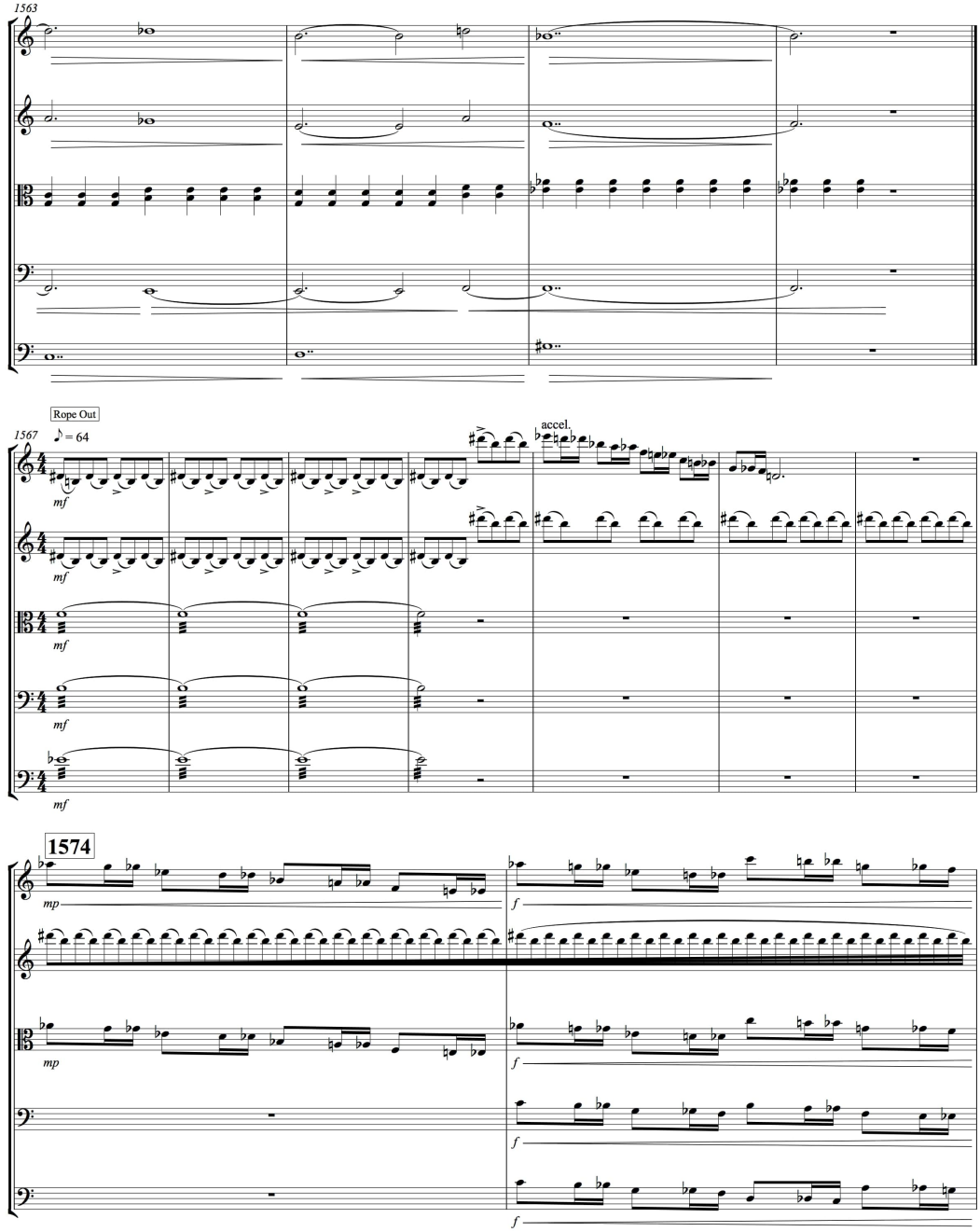

1441
1447
arco
1448
1457
Rupert Stands
molto vib.
1465

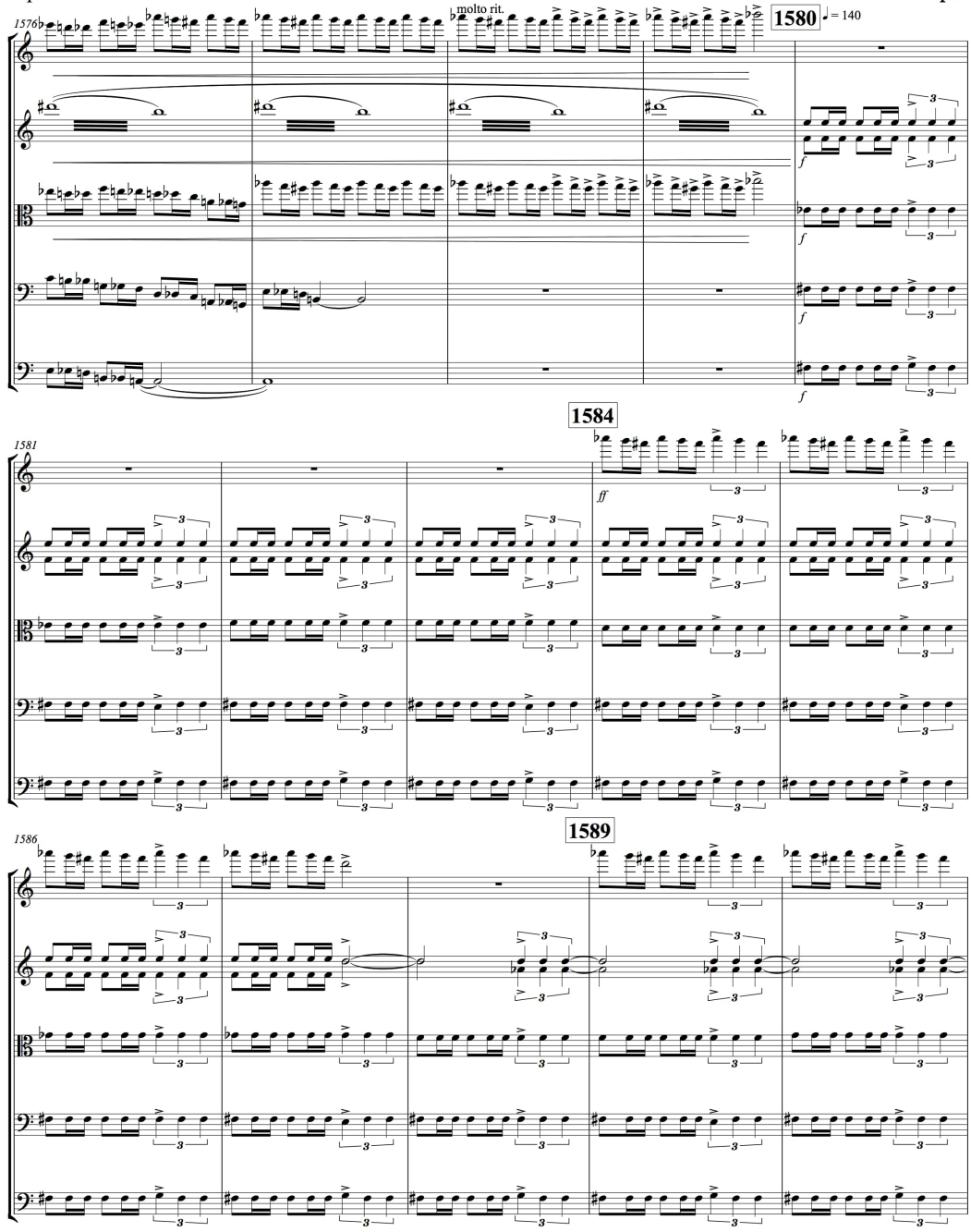

1468
1473
1476
1481
1483
cresc.
mp
p

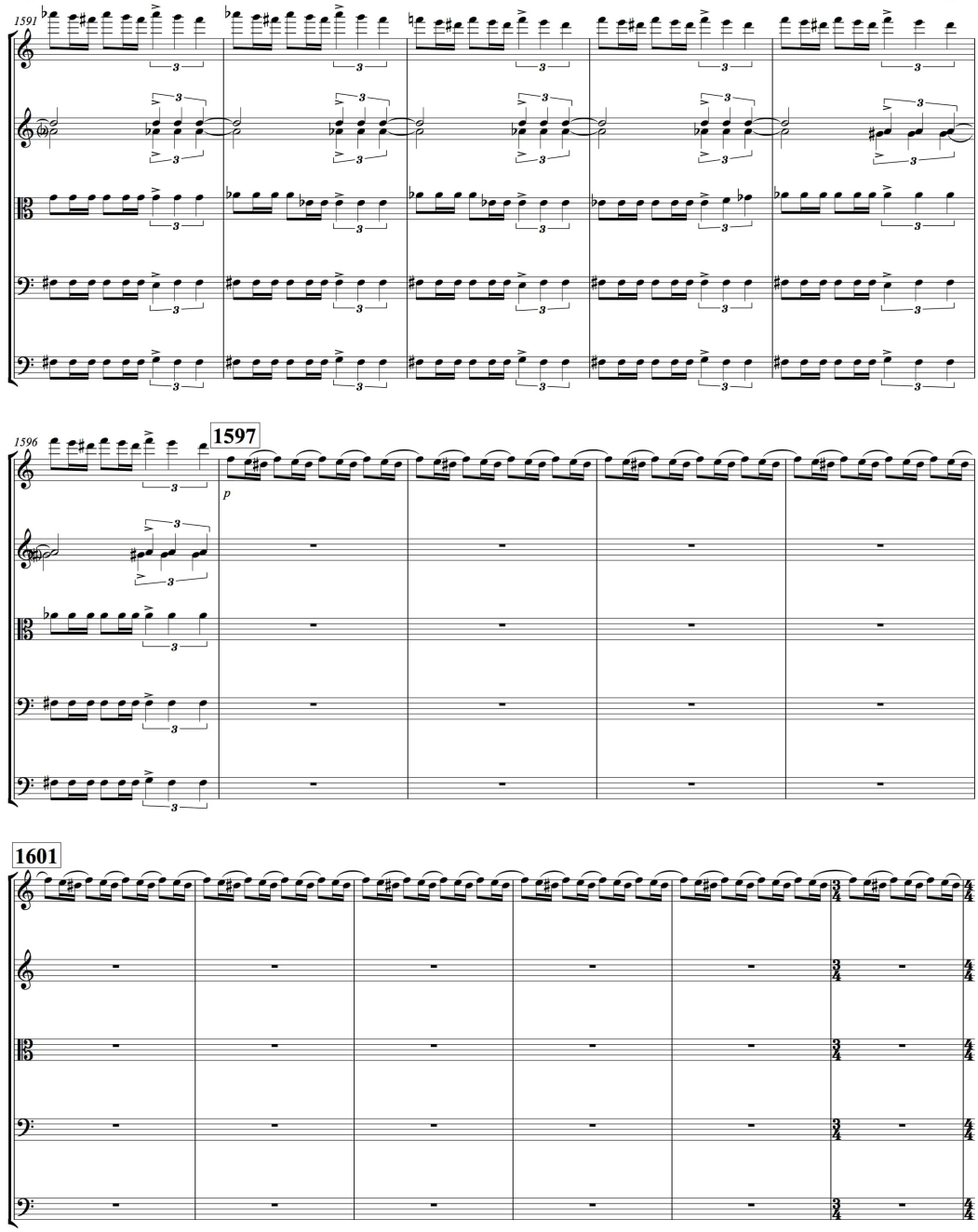

1489
1497
1498
accel.
1506
♩= 128
mf
1508
accel.
♩= 140
mp
ff

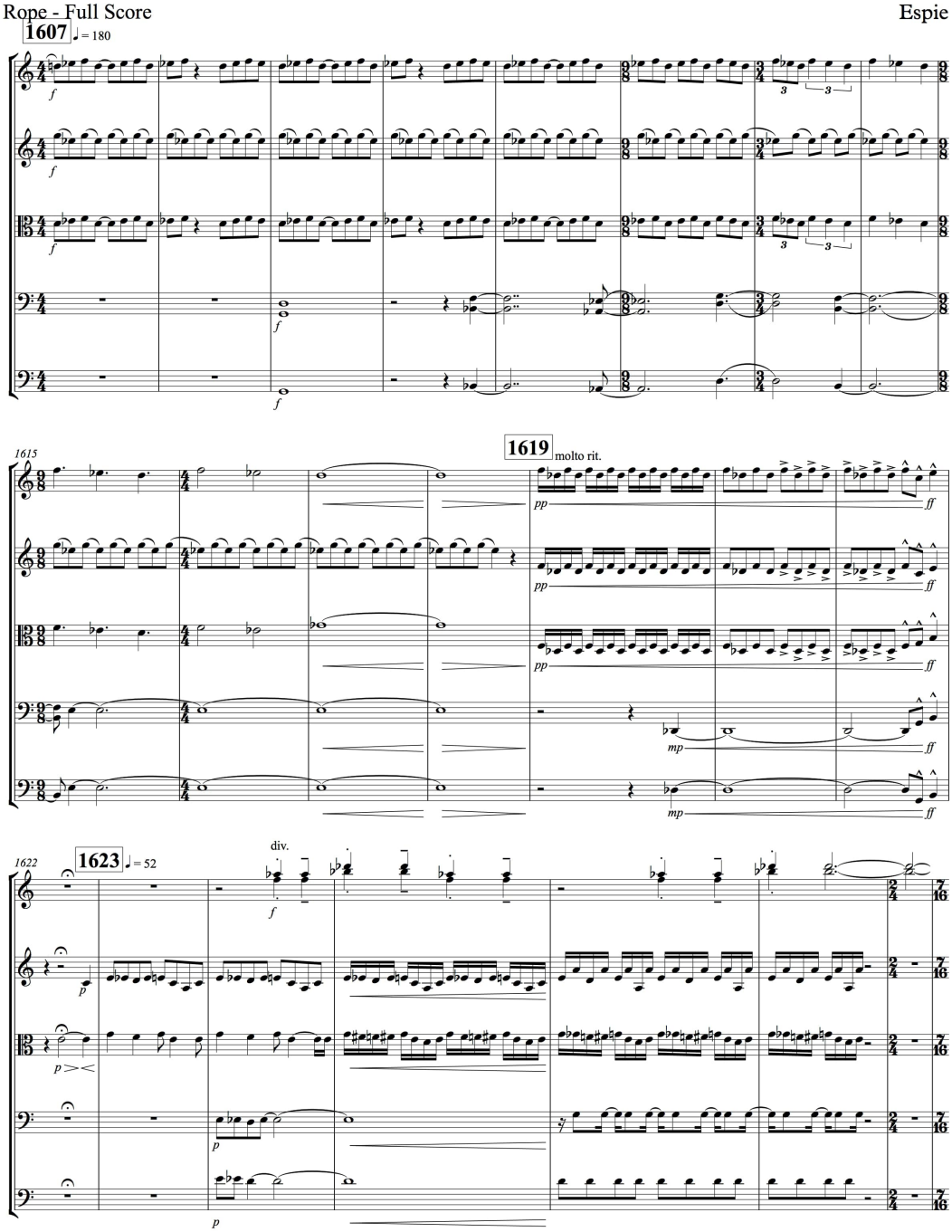

1516
1517
1524
1527
1532
1534
♩. = 60
♩. = ♩
♩ = 108

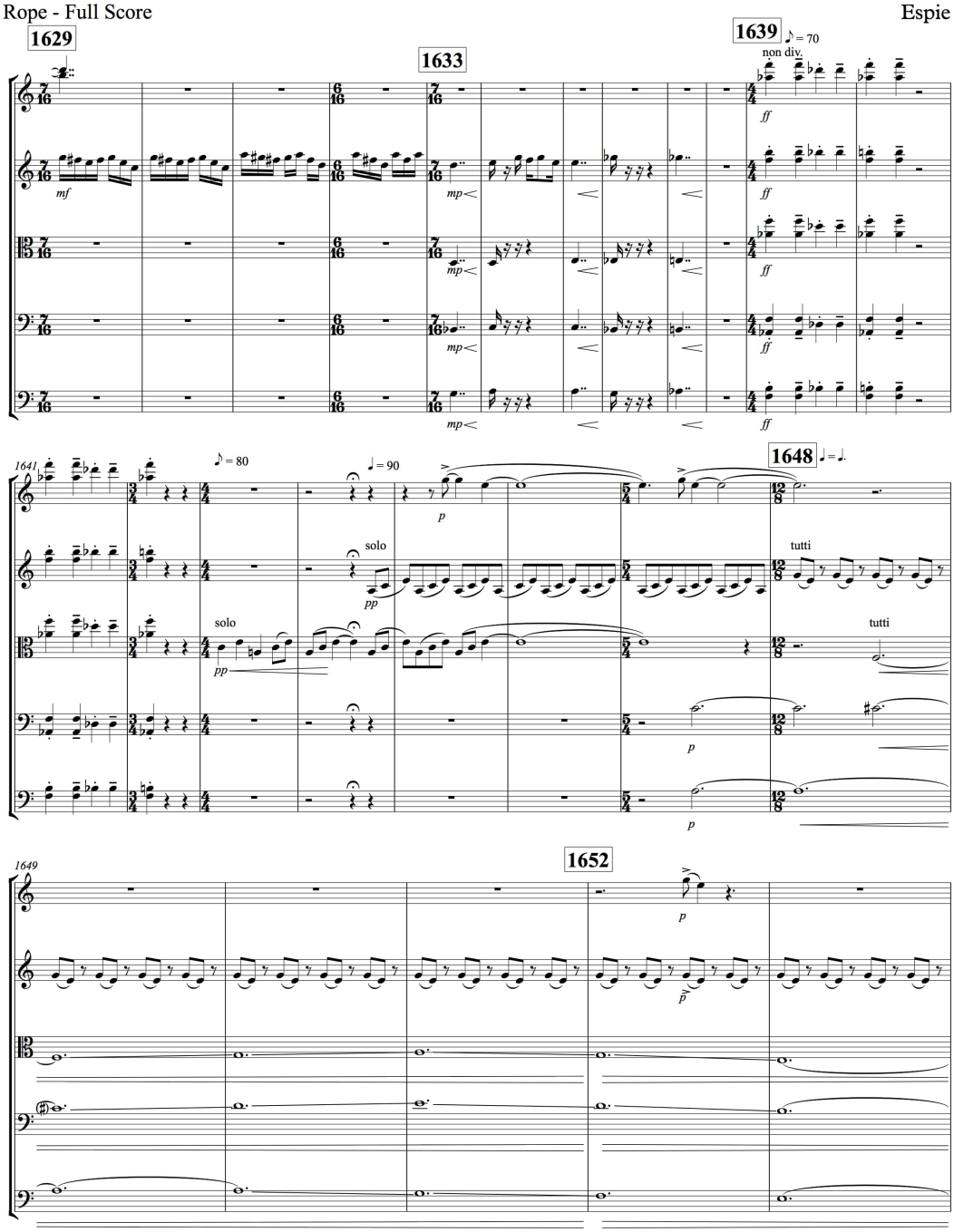

1540
1548
1551
1557
1559
1562
rit.
sim.

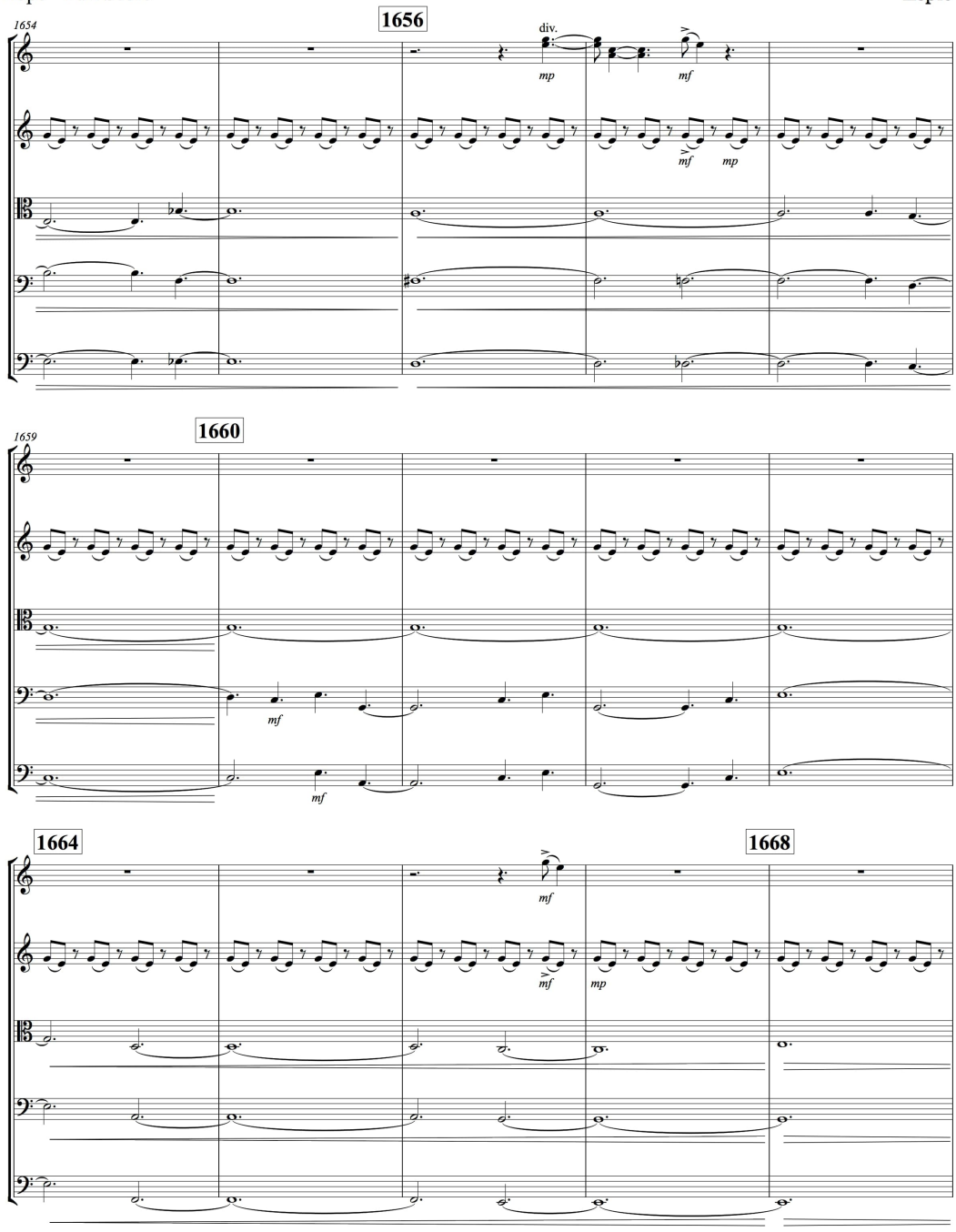

1563
Rope Out
1567
♪ = 64
accel.
mf
1574
mp
f


1576
molto rit.
1580
♩ = 140
f
1581
1584
ff
1586
1589


1591
1596
1597
p
1601


1607
♩ = 180
1615
1619
molto rit.
1622
1623
♩ = 52
div.


1629
1633
1639
♪ = 70
non div.
mf
mp
ff
1641
♪ = 80
♩ = 90
1648
♩ = ♩.
p
pp
solo
tutti
1649
1652


1654
1656
div.
mp
mf
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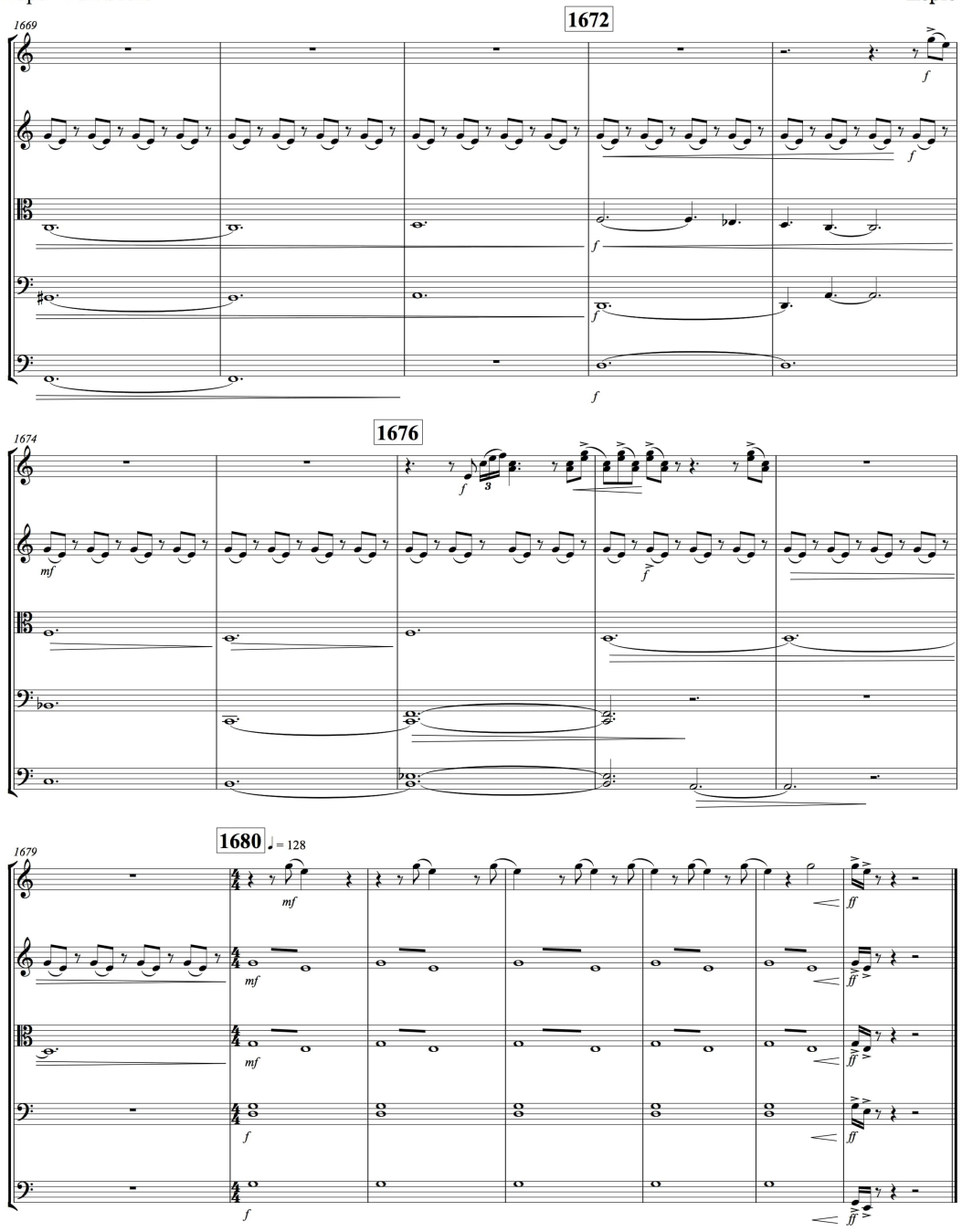
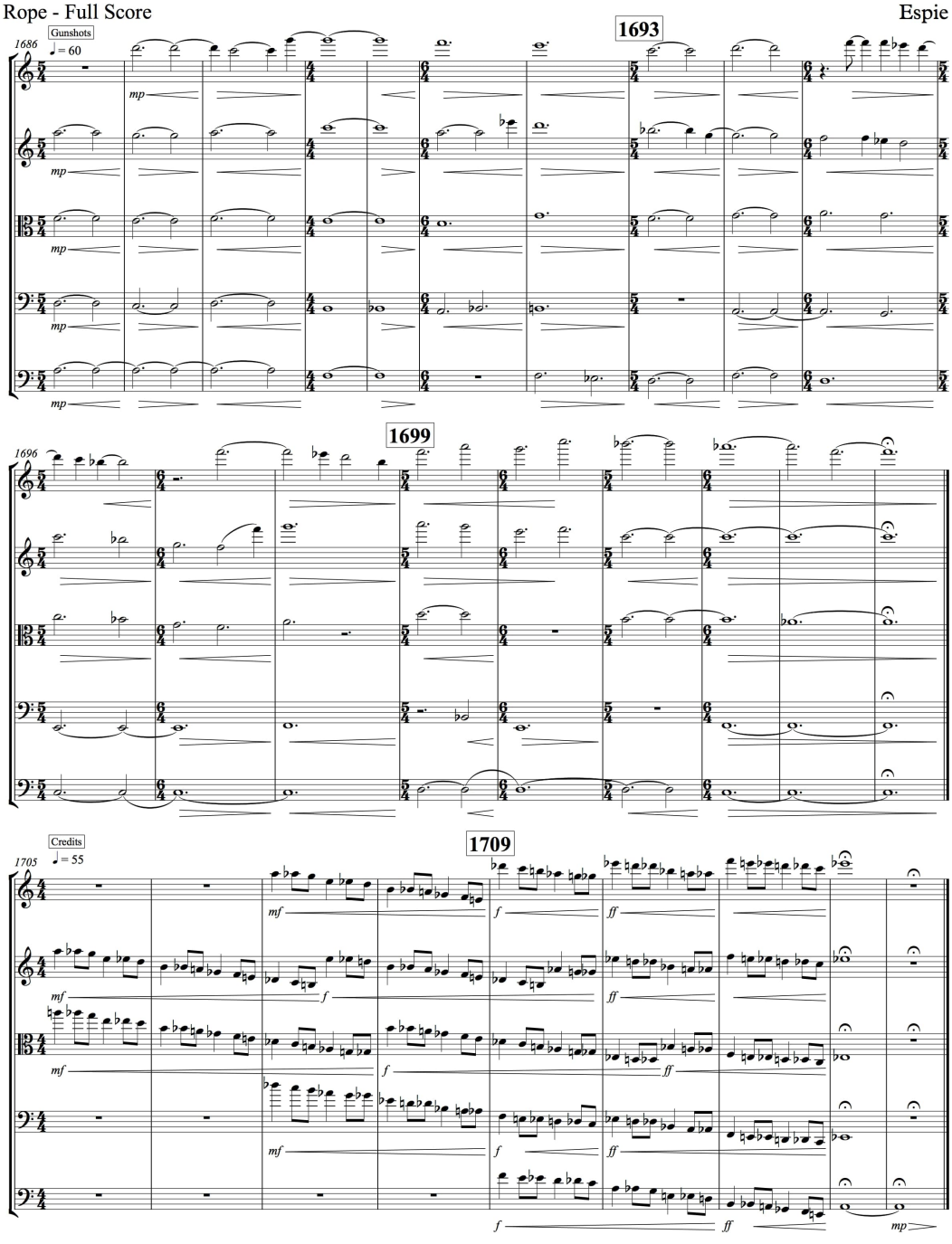

1669
1672
1674
1676
1679
1680
♩ = 128


1686
Gunshots
♩ = 60
1693
1696
1699
1705
Credits
♩ = 55
1709

CHAPTER 3 – EXEGESIS

Among the unique challenges of writing a multimedia piece for live performers and film, one of the greatest concerns was how to acclimate the audience to a non-cinematic relationship between visual and auditory material. Audiences are accustomed to a clear hierarchical relationship in which music serves the primacy of the visual material – supporting the dramatic needs of the story and staying carefully out of the way of dialogue and sound effects. My vision for this piece, however, was to explore different ways of combining these elements – sometimes placing music above dialogue, and sometimes pursuing musical goals extraneous to the plot of the film. Below, I explore a few of those techniques, including building on and juxtaposing with diegetic music, synchronizing with visual and audio material, utilizing themes and leitmotifs, intentionally convoluting dialogue.

Relationships with Diegetic Music

The diegetic music used in *Rope* is important to the development of the plot, and therefore requires a number of considerations for the composition process. There are two pieces of music that occur in the film: Francis Poulenc's *Mouvements Perpétuals*, Movement I, is played by Phillip at the piano several times;[4] and *I'm Looking Over a*

[4] Francis Poulenc. *Mouvements Perpétuals* (J. & W. Chester, Ltd., 1919).

Four Leaf Clover by The Three Suns plays on the radio.[5] Additionally, the title sequence of the film is a composition by David Buttolph based on the aforementioned Poulenc piece.[6]

In regard to Phillip's piano playing, this composition does not simply accompany the character, but provides contrast to the content of the piece, such as the overlapping of music in mm. 661-665 (27:20) [Figure 1].[7] Additionally, as Rupert walks into the room, mm. 666-668 continue the phrase of the Poulenc piece (27:27). A similar interruption occurs as Rupert bothers Phillip at the piano, and the low strings dramatically continue the phrase where Phillip leaves off (45:59) [Figure 2].

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[5] The Three Suns, "I'm Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover," track 1 on *I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover*, RCA Vector, 1948, compact disc.

[6] First issued on David Buttolph, *Rope – Main Titles*, with The City of Prague Philharmonic, conducted by Paul Bateman, Silva America SSD1045, 1995, compact disc.

[7] For clarity, references to points in the musical score will be listed as measures, and references to points in the film will be listed as parenthetical times.

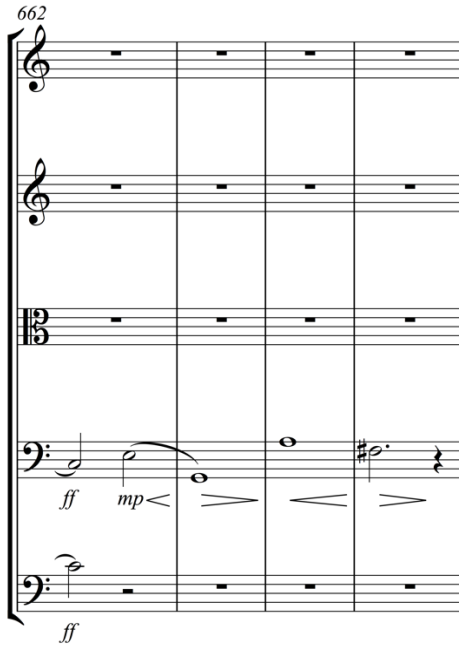

Figure 1 – Music overlapping the diegetic piano in mm. 662-665

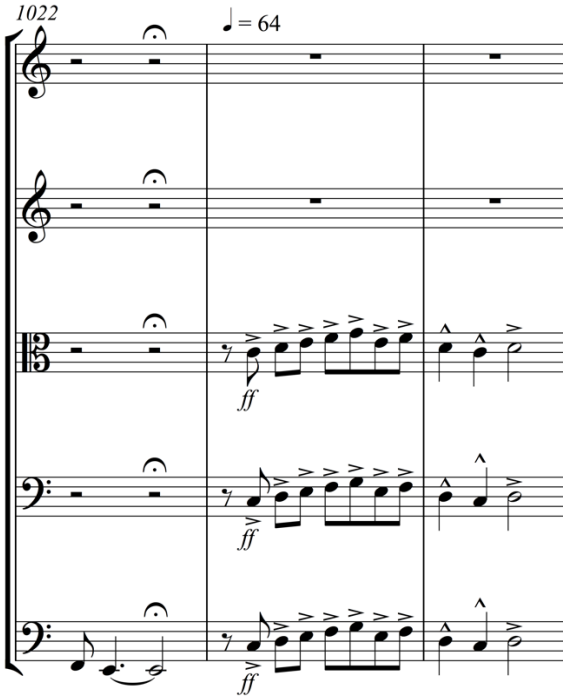

Figure 2 – Completing the piano phrase in mm. 1023-1024

This composition is also juxtaposed with the piano playing at times. While a traditional film score might allow the diegetic music to play out on its own, an objective of this composition is to challenge that technique. Phillip's progressive discomfort among the dinner guests influences his decision to return to the piano several times in the film. Rupert invades this privacy (45:00), first by turning on the light which Phillip refers to as a distraction. The glissandi in mm. 1013-1014 are intended to enhance the invasive nature of Rupert's distraction [Figure 3]. This also precedes the police siren (45:34) and references the opening of the blinds from earlier in the film (3:57). As Rupert begins to fiddle with the metronome (46:35), symbolic of his growing suspicion, this composition is designed to emphasize the distractive nature of the metronome being set at a different tempo than Phillip's playing [Figure 4].

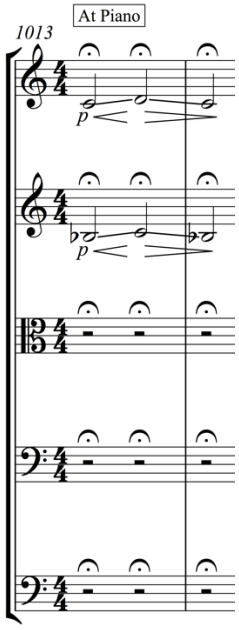

Figure 3 – Contrasting the diegetic piano in mm. 1013-1014

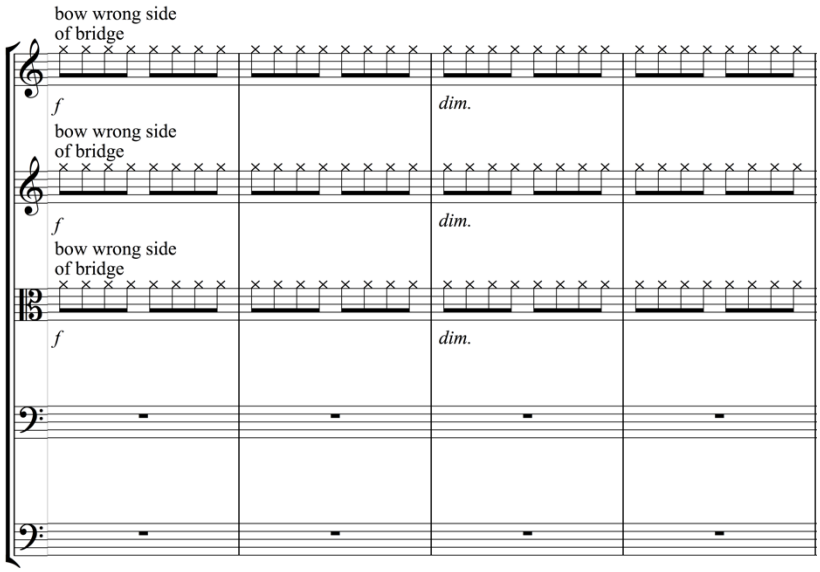

Figure 4 – Enhancing the off-tempo metronome beginning in m. 1034

Synchronization Techniques

A number of techniques employed in this composition rely on the synchronization of the string orchestra with the film. Though the synchronization of musical material with dialogue has been explored outside a film setting (such as in the works of Steve Reich and Michel Van der Aa), this technique has not, to my knowledge, been applied to a feature-length film, aside from the now-common practice of professional orchestras performing scores to classic movies live with a click track.[8] This composition also features additional uses of synchronicity with other sounds and visual cues in addition to voices.

[8] Such as in the CineConcerts concert series.

One specific compositional technique that influences several parts of this composition is speech-melody. This technique, famously used by Steve Reich, derives melodic elements from the inflection of the voice.[9] Regarding his piece *Different Trains*, Reich claimed that "the generation of all the musical ideas comes directly, audibly, from the documentary material."[10] The combination of musical material with the inflection of the voice became a guiding principle for the development of musical ideas in this composition.

An example of speech-melody occurs when Rupert first asks "Where is David?" (29:16), and the inflection of his voice is preceded by the violins leading to synchronicity in m. 707 [Figure 5]. Shortly following this, Rupert refers to Brandon's stories in prep school, specifically identifying "The Mistletoe Bough," which is also imitated starting in m. 717 (29:40) [Figure 6].

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[9] Steve Reich. *Different Trains* (Boosey & Hawkes, 1988).

[10] BBC. Steve Reich's *Different Trains* (2011).

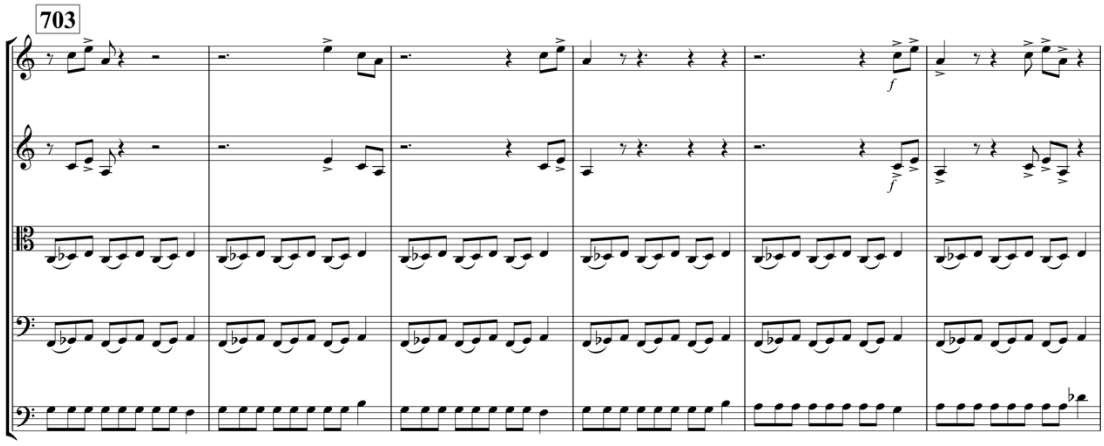

Figure 5 – Speech-melody mimicking the phrase “Where is David?” beginning in m. 707

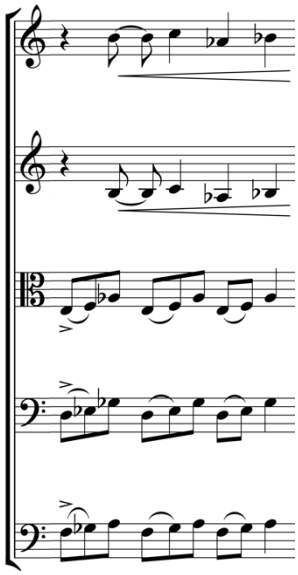

Figure 6 – Speech-melody mimicking the phrase “The Mistletoe Bough” in m. 717

A similar technique used in this composition is the emphasizing of inflection that does not adhere strictly to the melodic contour of voice. One example begins in m. 129, in which Phillip and Brandon discuss David’s body (5:50) [Figure 7]. Another example is from mm. 614-629, as Janet is speaking with Mr. Kentley about David (25:16) [Figure 8].

This occurs again as Phillip and Brandon discuss the success of the party (54:44) [Figure 9]. In both of these sections, the music is intended to drown out the language by overlapping each of the voices involved in the dialogue.

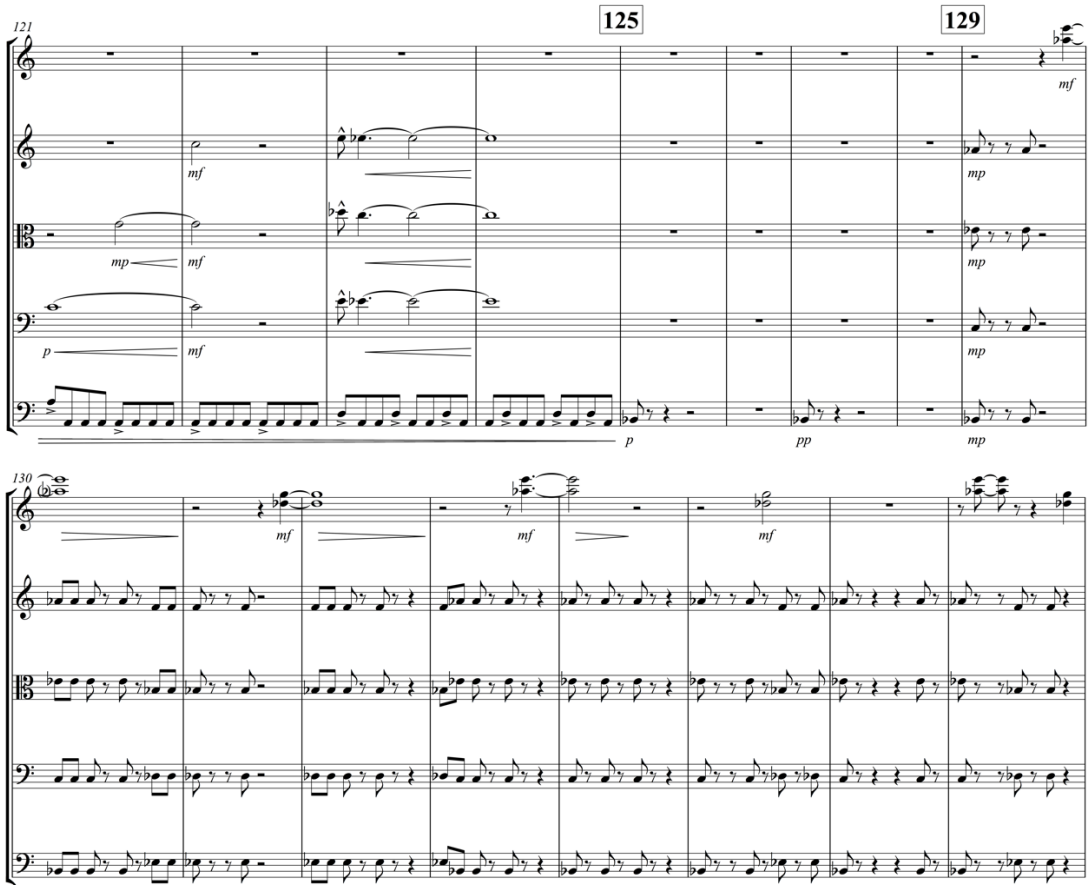

Figure 7 – Speech-melody mimicking conversation beginning in m. 129

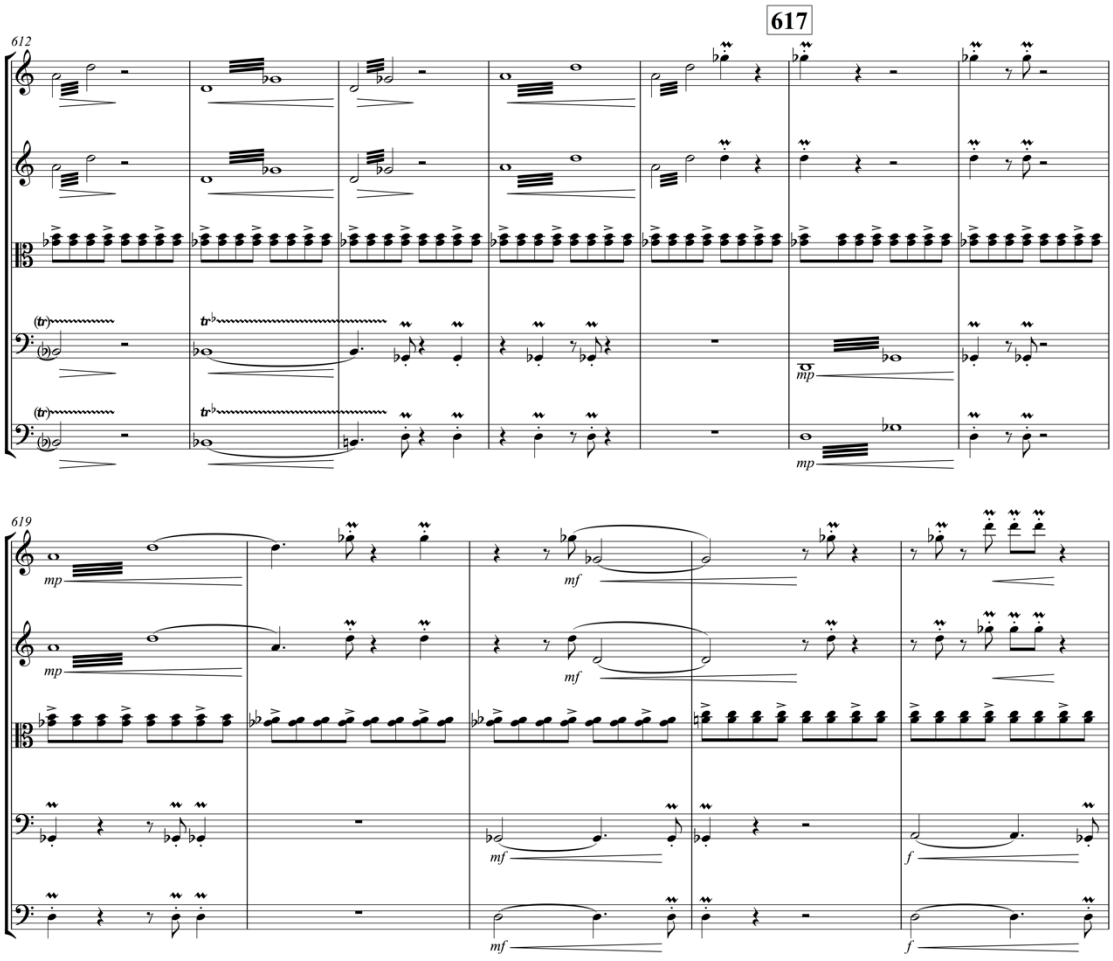

Figure 8 – Speech-melody mimicking conversation beginning in m. 614

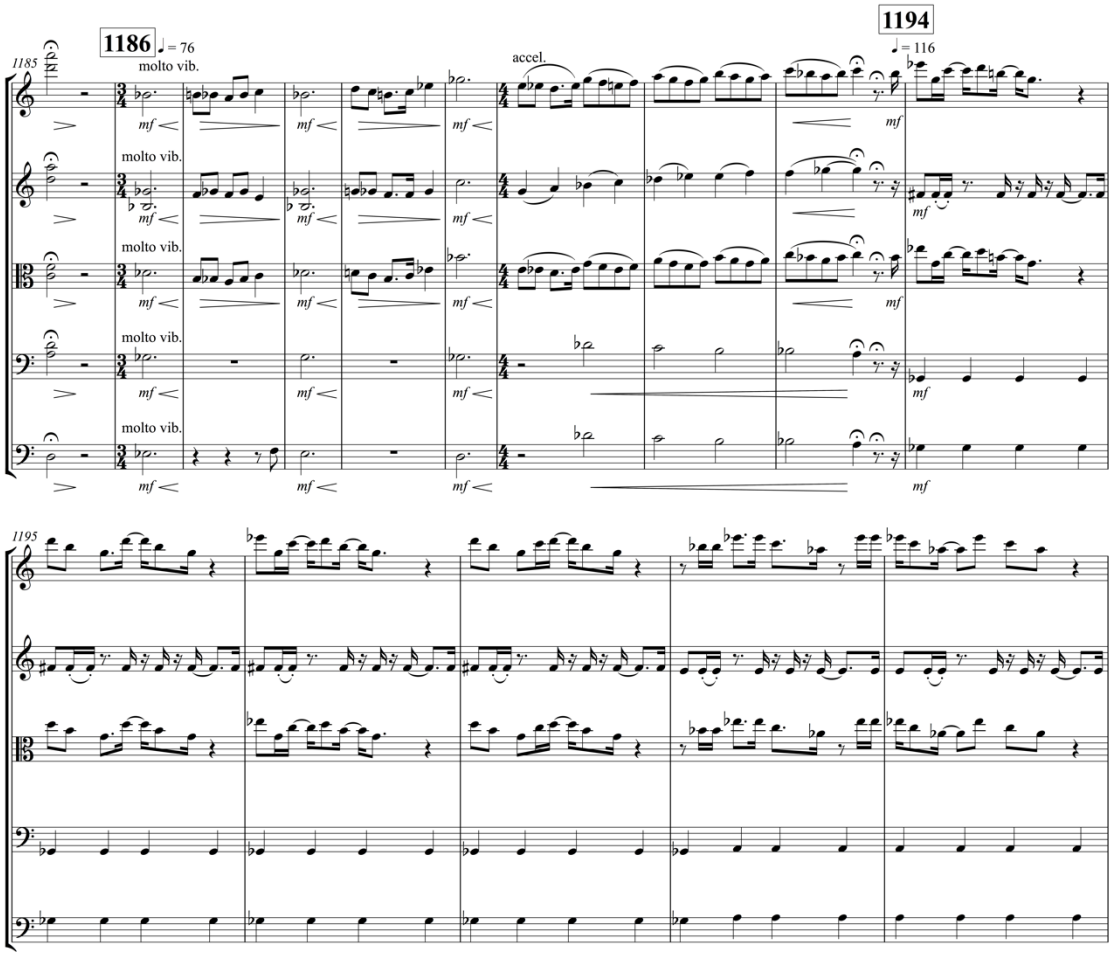

Figure 9 – Speech-melody mimicking conversation beginning in m. 1194

Melodic contour, tempi, and time signatures in this composition are often influenced by speech patterns as well. When Brandon says the phrase “tremendously exhilarated,” (8:54) the melodic contour derives from the inflection of the speech (mm. 191-193), and the responsive utterances from Phillip of “Uh,” and “I,” (9:00) provide the tempo of the resulting section [Figure 10]. The phrase “David wasn’t there?” is spoken by Mr. Kentley partway through the film (27:03), and while the violins play in tandem

with this phrase, the pitches are derived from the melodic content of the Poulenc étude [Figure 11]. This melodic figure is present throughout the following section, beginning when Brandon states, “I told you on the phone,” in conversation with Rupert (28:18) [Figure 12].

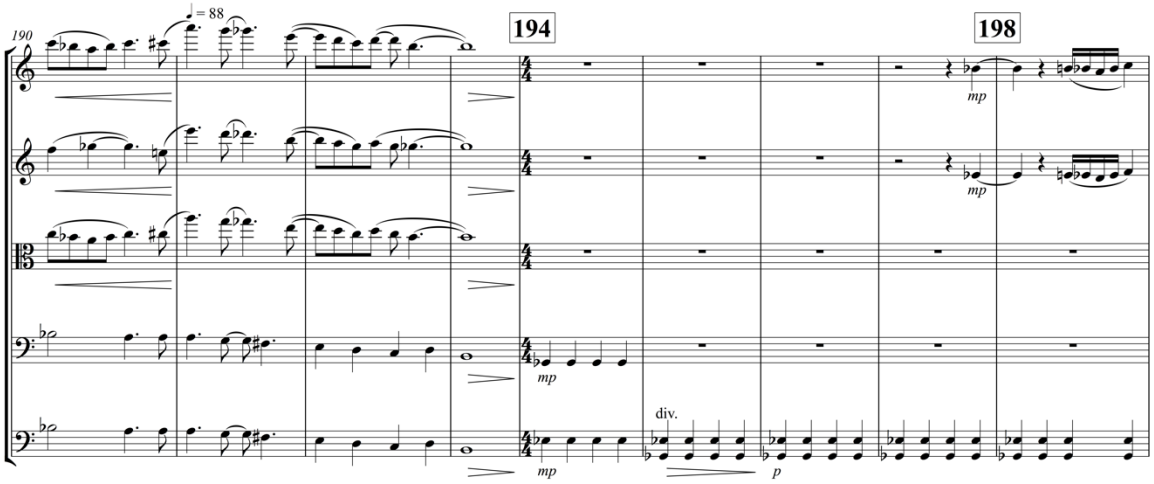

Figure 10 – Note duration mimicking speech beginning in m. 194

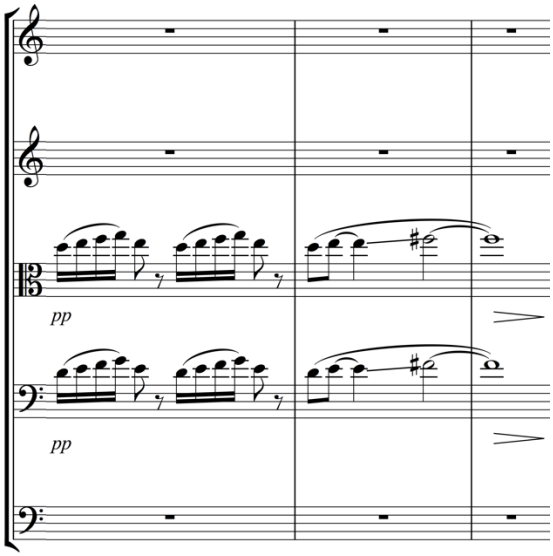

Figure 11 – Speech-melody mimicking the phrase “David wasn’t there?” in m. 658

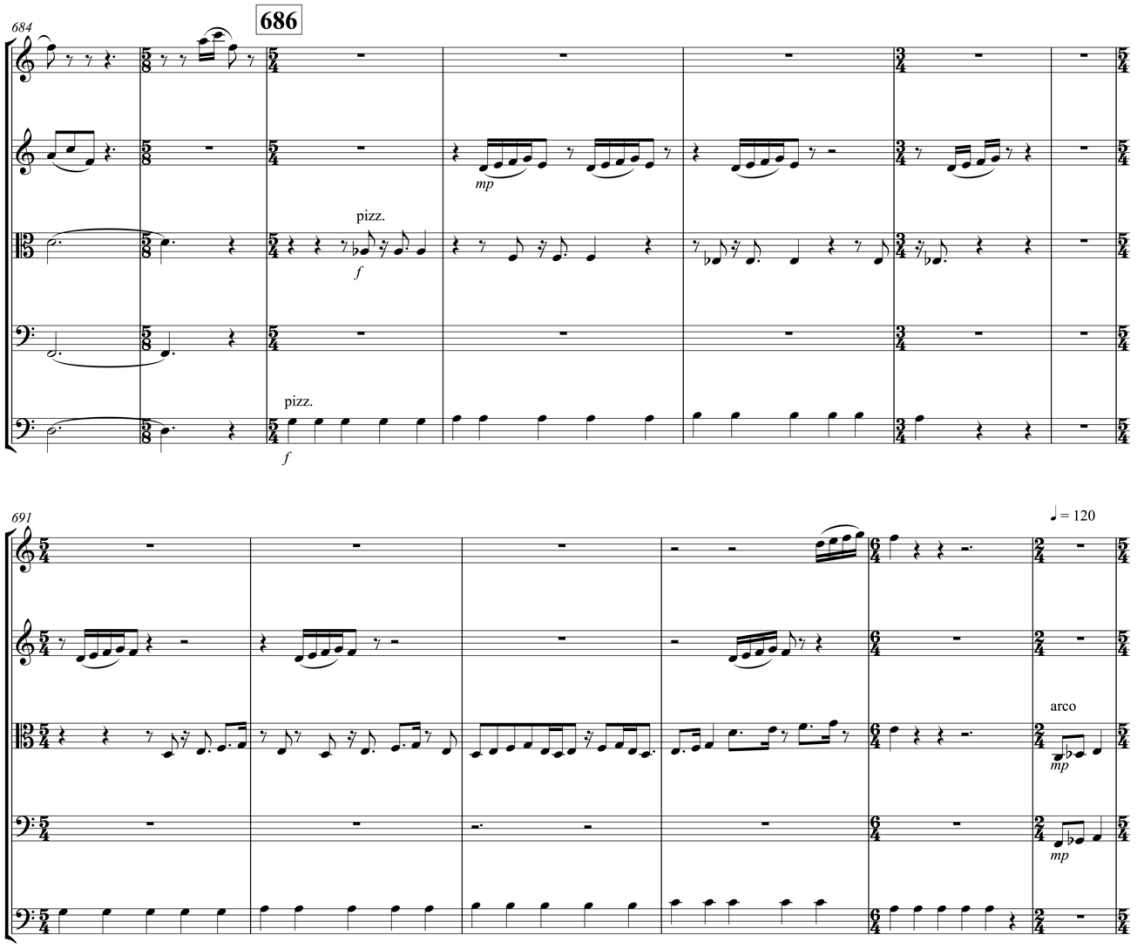

Figure 12 – Speech-melody mimicking the phrase “I told you on the phone” beginning in m. 687

Other instances of synchronization are influenced by sounds present in the film. For example, when Brandon lights his cigarette (3:35), the click of the lighter coincides with the finger snaps in m. 55 [Figure 13]. The popping of the champagne cork (8:02) coincides with the pizzicato chord in m. 177 [Figure 14]. The rings of the phone and doorbell are used to heighten suspense several times throughout the film, the first of which disrupts of Brandon and Phillip’s conversation, surprising the two characters

(11:46). The resulting section of music develops from an imitation of the ringing phone, introduced in m. 245 [Figure 15].

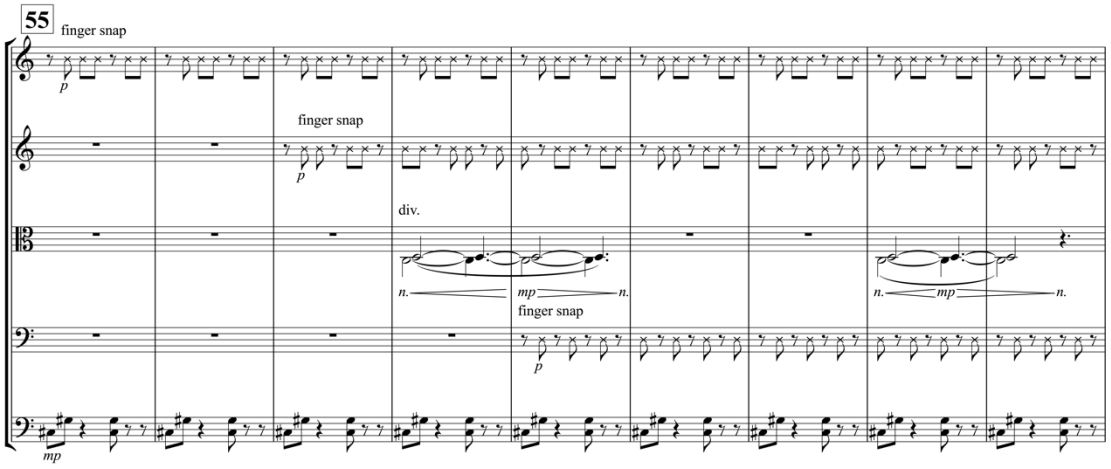

Figure 13 – Synchronization of first finger snap with cigarette lighter in m. 55

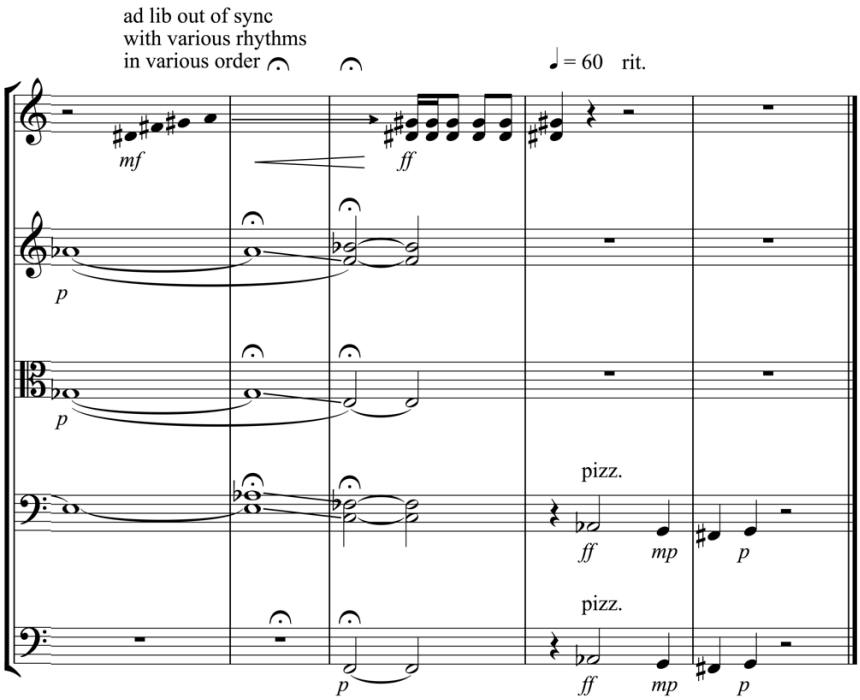

Figure 14 – Synchronization of final note with popping of champagne cork in m. 177

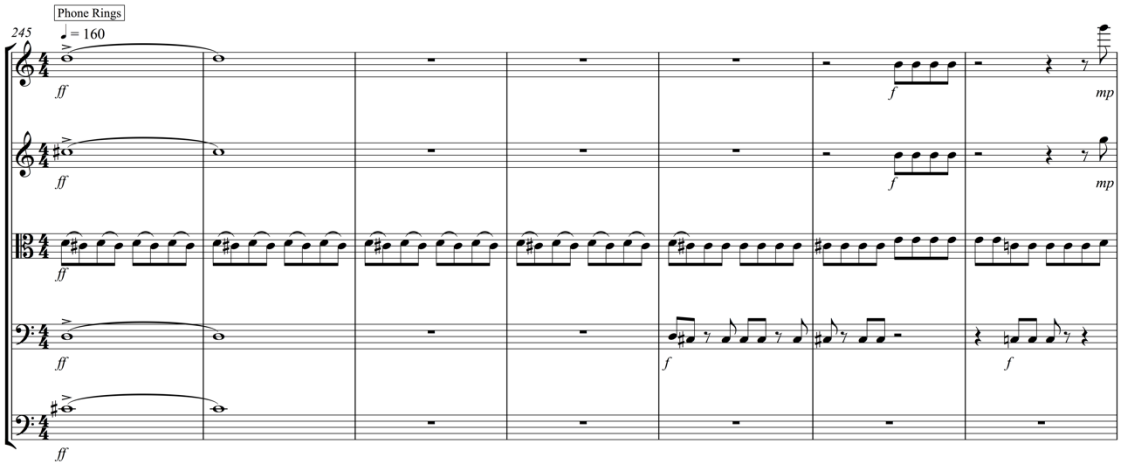

Figure 15 – Synchronization of chord entrance with ringing phone in m. 245

Some parts of this composition are synchronized with visual material presented in the film. Certain instances are similar to material that may be presented in a traditional film score: mm. 69-73 coincides with the opening of the blinds (3:57); Janet's entrance cues the beginning of the thematic material in m. 397 (19:07); and the shifting of Rupert's eyes coincide with the material in mm. 785 and 977 (33:14 and 43:19, respectively). However, there are sections that intentionally synchronize with visual cues that may not be reflected in a traditional score: Brandon exhaling smoke, represented by mm. 58-59 (3:38) [Figure 16]; the revelation of Phillip's broken glass (23:43); and Phillip's mute attempt to call for Brandon (44:13).

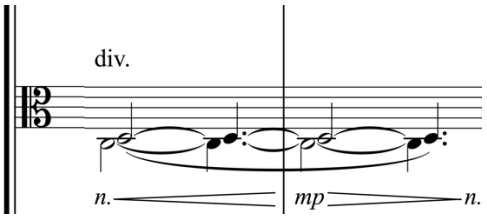

Figure 16 – Synchronization of viola entrance with exhalation of smoke in mm. 58-59

Theme and Leitmotif

Though the use of thematic material and leitmotif is not a novel practice in the preparation of a film score, these materials as utilized in this composition are derived from a variety of sources. Some represent characters' personalities and traits, much like a traditional film score, while others derive from characters' voices.

The Poulenc étude played by Phillip, *Trois Mouvements Perpétuals*, Movement I, serves as his theme in this composition.[11] As the film develops, the theme is presented in different ways to represent Phillip's character development. For example, when he begins to show signs of standing up to Brandon (55:33), the theme is presented in inversion [Figure 17]. Additionally, to represent the significant increase in Phillip's drunkenness, when the theme is presented in m. 1312, it is accompanied by an unstable rhythm and is intended to be perceived as out of tune (59:36) [Figure 18].

[11] Poulenc. *Mouvements Perpétuals*.

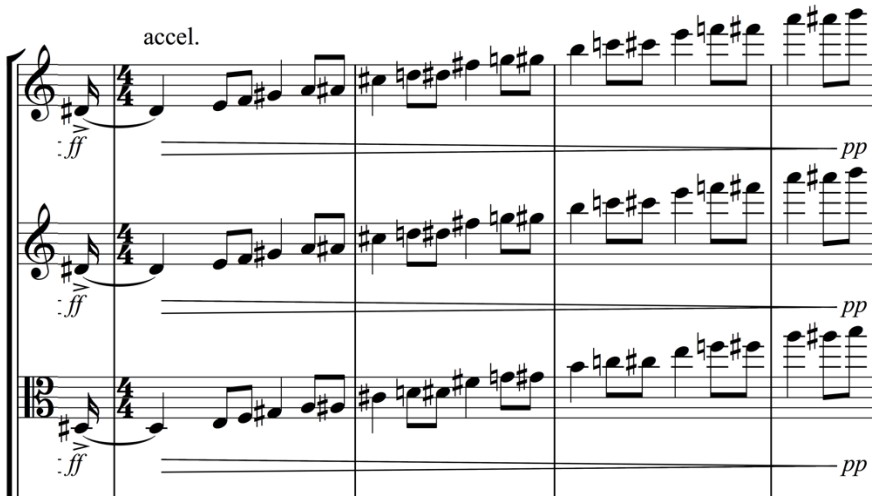

Figure 17 – “Phillip” theme inverted in mm. 1218-1221

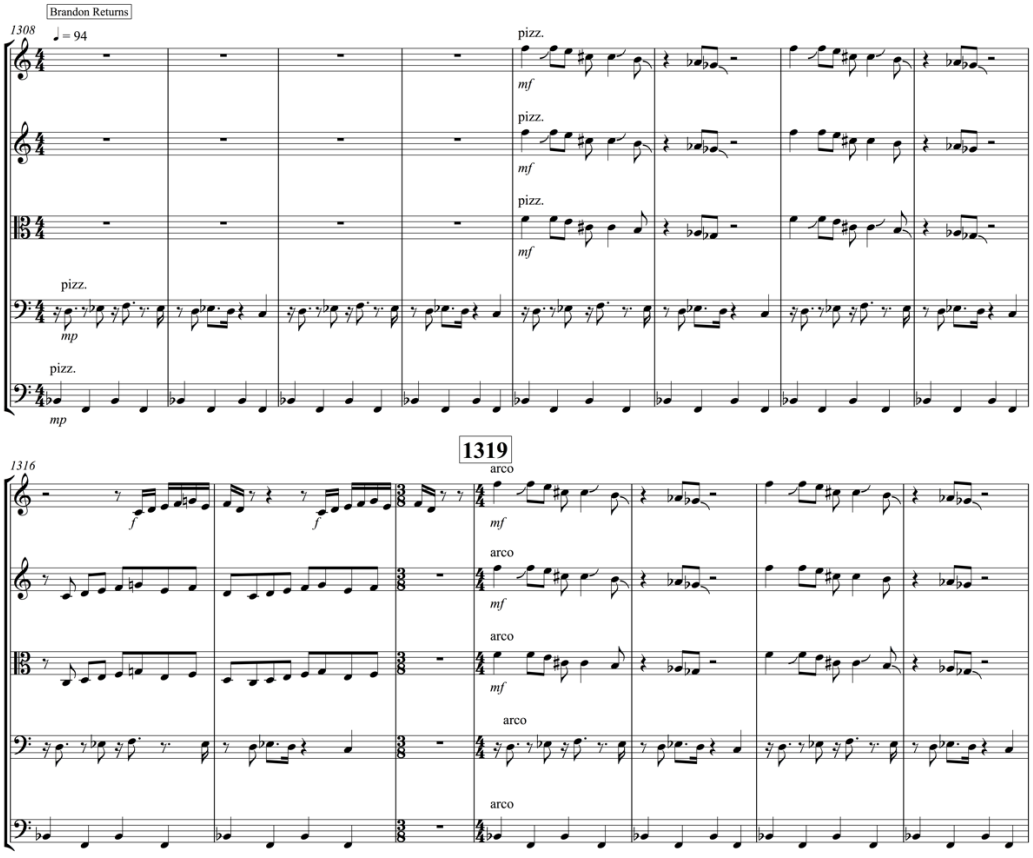

Figure 18 – “Phillip” theme after his increased drunkenness beginning in m. 1312

Several melodic and rhythmic motifs exist in this composition. The murder motif is presented when Brandon states, “The power to kill can be just as satisfying as the power to create,” (7:18) a phrase that represents his attitude throughout the dinner party [Figure 19]. This motif returns when Rupert is discussing justifiable homicide and Brandon leans in to hear his mentor echo his sentiment (35:06). When Rupert opens the chest to find David’s body, the motif is presented much more forcefully (1:11:28) [Figure 20].

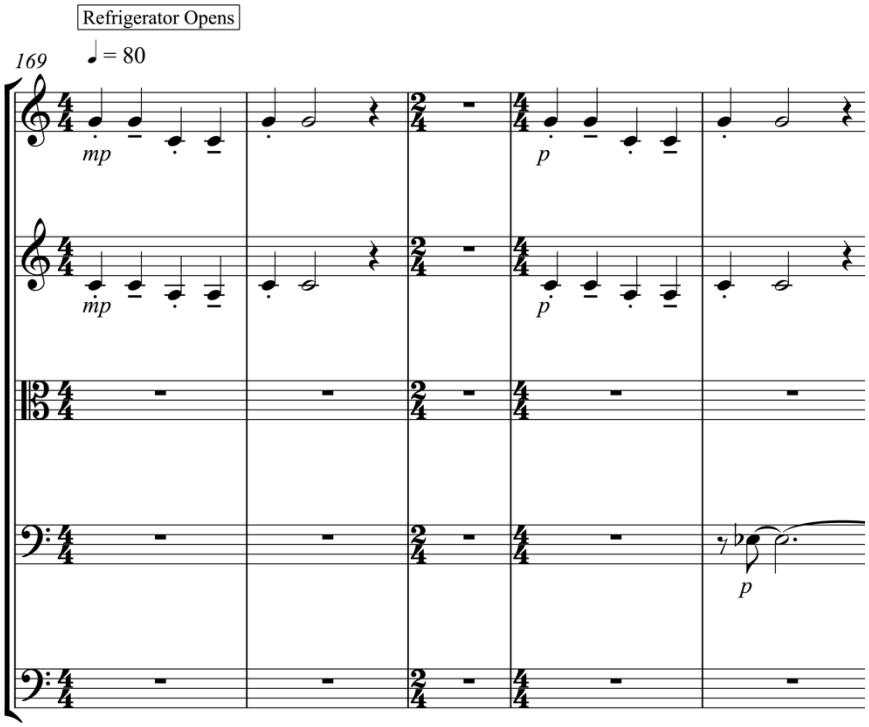

Figure 19 – “Murder” motif in mm. 169-170

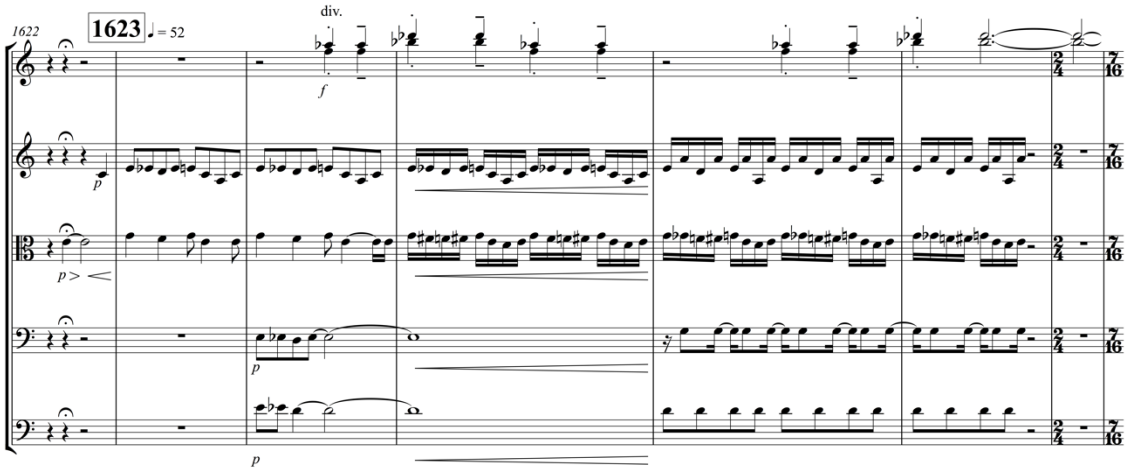

Figure 20 – “Murder” motif as Rupert discovers David’s body in mm. 1624-1625

Rupert’s vocal inflection directly informs his motif. When he tells Mrs. Wilson he is “just teasing” her, the three-note motif supports his delivery (28:55) [Figure 21]. Several times throughout the next section of the film, his delivery follows this same melodic contour, and this composition imitates the inflection (28:59, 29:10, 29:12). A dramatic occurrence of this motif, combined with the murder motif, takes place just before Rupert reveals his solving of the murder (1:01:12) [Figure 22].

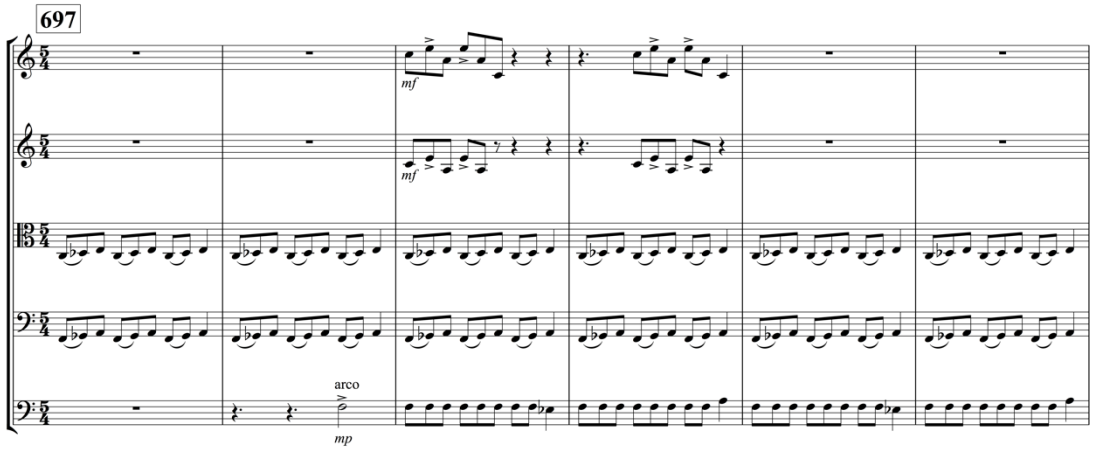

Figure 21 – “Rupert” motif in m. 699

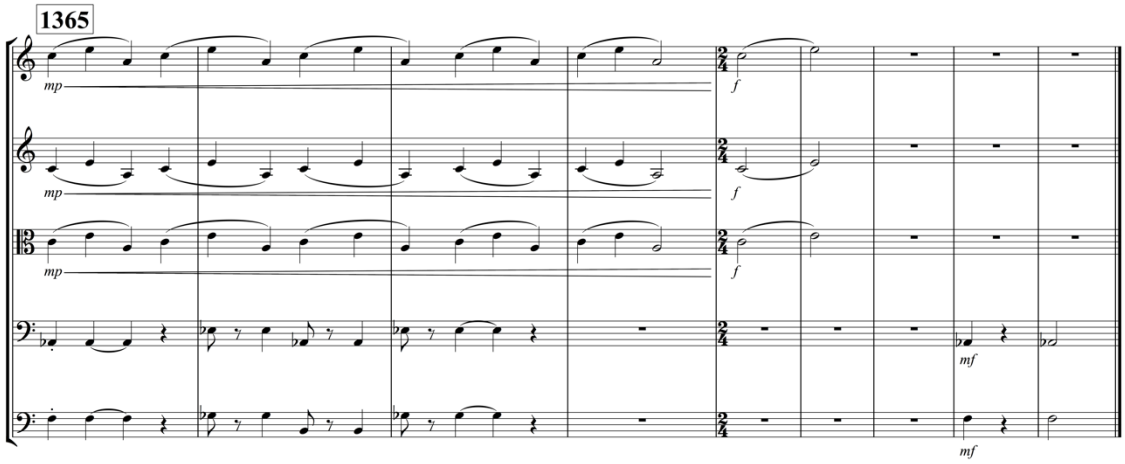

Figure 22 – “Rupert” motif in m. 1365

The motif developed from the previously discussed “tremendously exhilarated” quote represents Brandon throughout the composition. An example occurs in m. 847, during which Brandon reveals who he believes to be “privileged to commit murder” (36:15) [Figure 23]. As Mrs. Wilson presents Rupert with a hat that does not fit, and he

turns it over to reveal David's initials, the introduction to Brandon's exhilarated theme returns to once again reflect his flirting with detection (54:03).

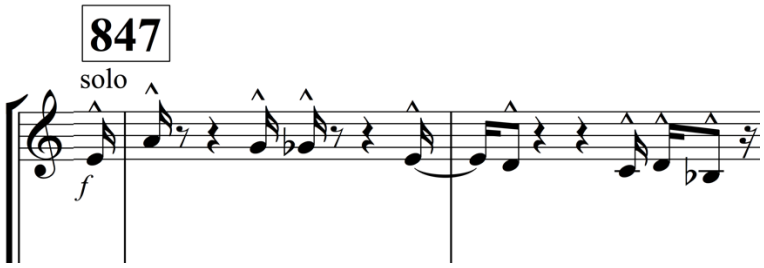

Figure 23 – "Exhilarated" motif in m. 847

When Brandon and Phillip are interrupted by the aforementioned phone, the following section introduces three motifs: one represents the rope, which is revealed as the camera pans down and it enters the frame [Figure 24]; one motif represents panic, emphasizing Phillip's cry for Brandon [Figure 25]; the third represents suspicion, and by extension Mrs. Wilson, the first character to notice the uncharacteristic behaviors of the two murderers [Figure 26].

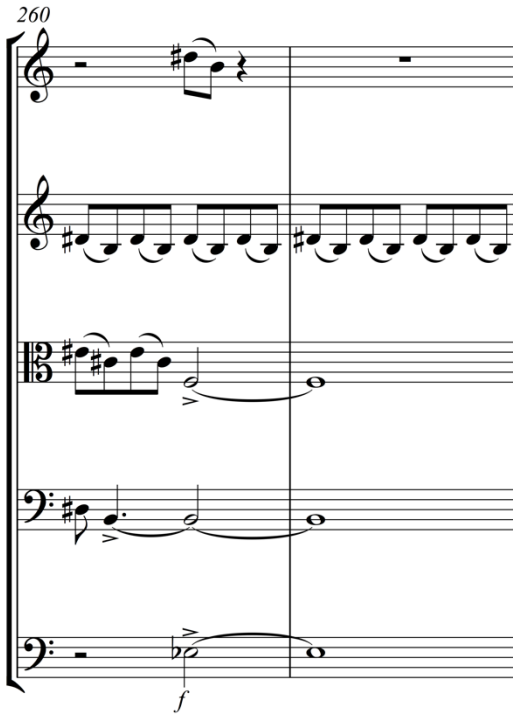

Figure 24 – “Rope” motif in m. 260

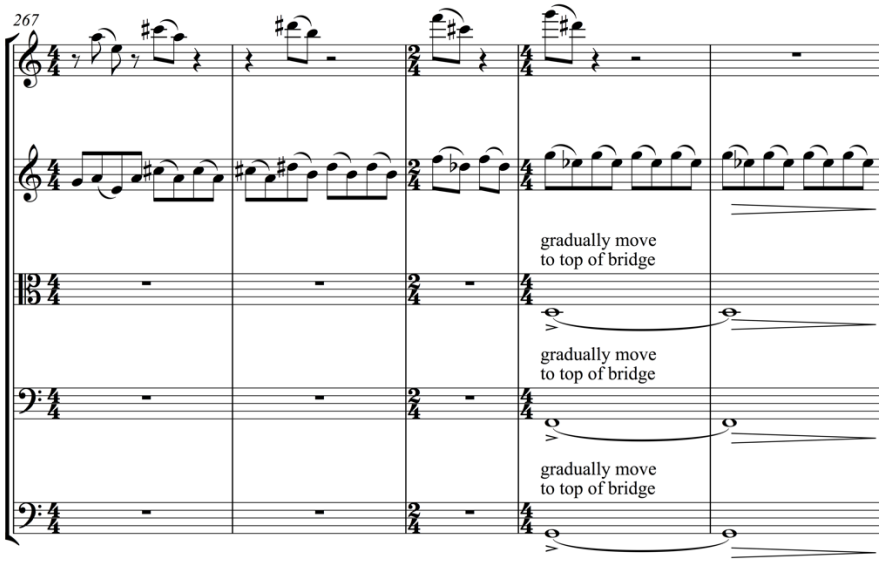

Figure 25 – “Panic” motif leading to m. 270

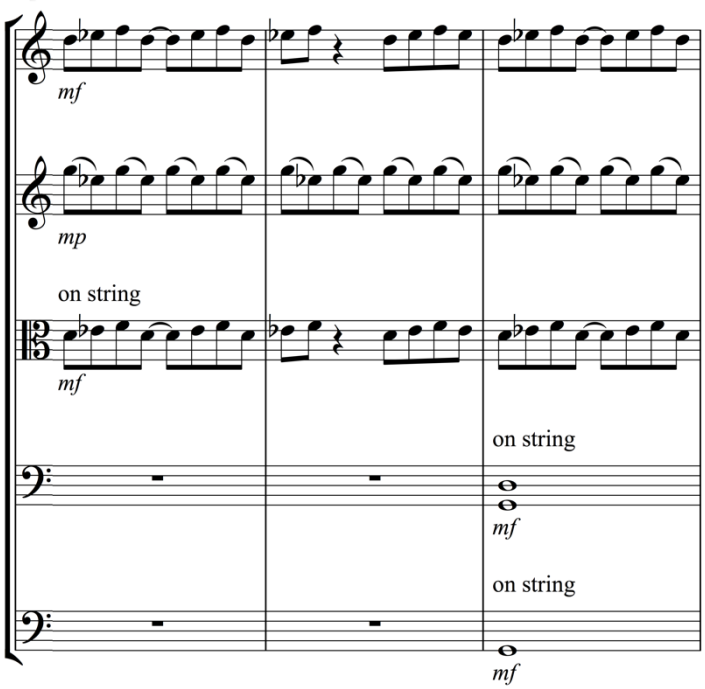

Figure 26 – “Suspicion” motif in mm. 272-273

The rope motif occurs in several places throughout the composition, coinciding with the presence of the murder weapon on screen. The first is when Phillip is observing the chest and notices the rope (12:22). The rope appears again as Brandon uses it to tie up the books for Mr. Kentley (48:27), and once more when Rupert removes the rope from his pocket (1:09:13).

The panic motif occurs when Phillip first shouts for Brandon, and is echoed several times throughout the film (12:19, 12:22). Rupert’s motif integrates with this panic motif when he says the character’s name in question (29:24) [Figure 27]. This motif is repeated alongside Rupert’s monologue, during which he calls the character by name several times (1:12:43).

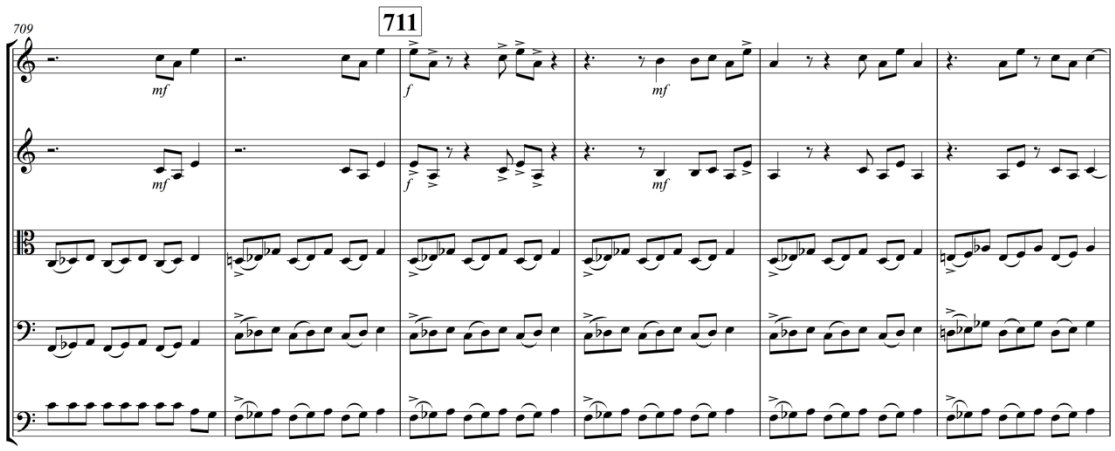

Figure 27 – Overlap of “Rupert” motif and “Panic” motif in m. 711

As Mrs. Wilson finally enters the apartment (13:08), the three-note suspicion motif coincides with her confusion at the behaviors of Brandon and Phillip [Figure 28]. This motif returns when Rupert and Mrs. Wilson have a private discussion (28:48) and when Rupert is questioning Phillip and Brandon, (49:35) [Figure 29]. A more dramatic occurrence of this is presented when Rupert begins to interrogate them leading to the climax of the film (1:02:07) [Figure 30].

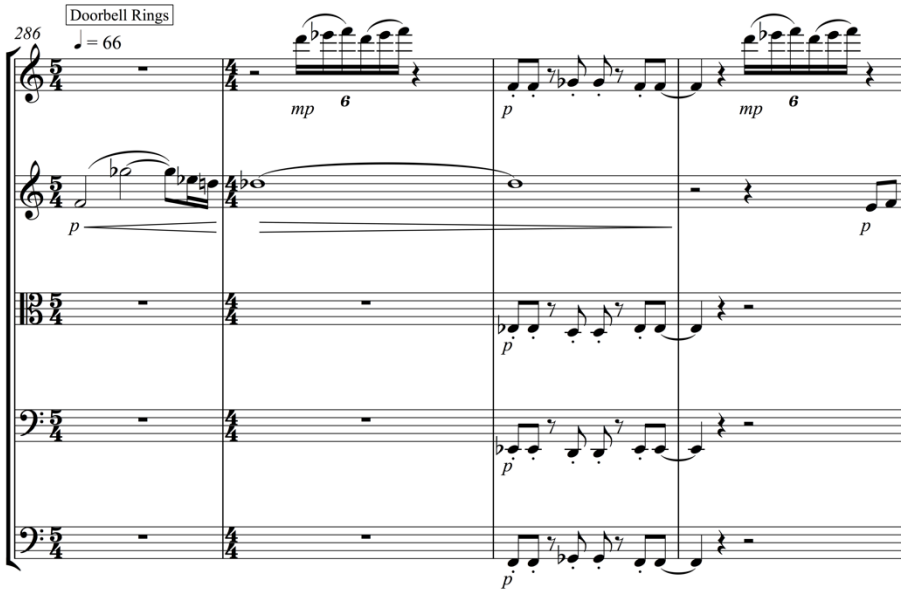

Figure 28 – “Suspicion” motif in m. 287 and m. 289

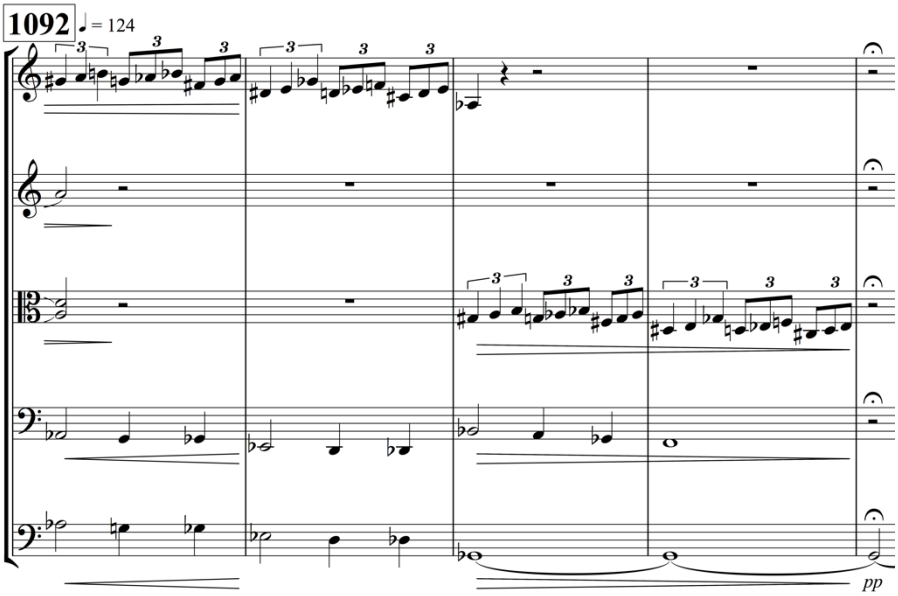

Figure 29 – “Suspicion” motif in mm. 1092-1095

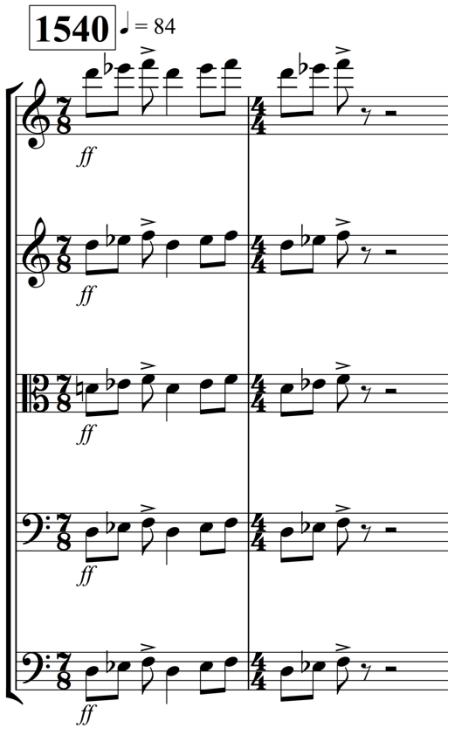

Figure 30 – “Suspicion” motif in mm. 1540-1541

The Janet and Kenneth relationship is significant in the film. Brandon is excited to add an element of danger to the party by encouraging Janet and Kenneth to explore their feelings with David out of the picture. The theme representing this relationship is first introduced when Kenneth arrives at the apartment (17:10) [Figure 31]. It returns when Janet enters the apartment (19:07) [Figure 32]. The full theme begins as the two characters interact (20:10) [Figure 33].

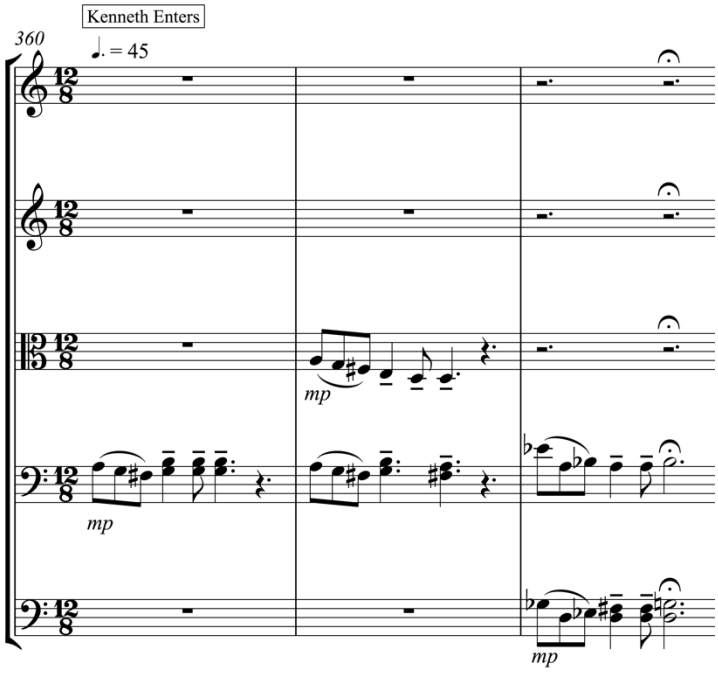

Figure 31 – “Janet and Kenneth” theme in mm. 360-362

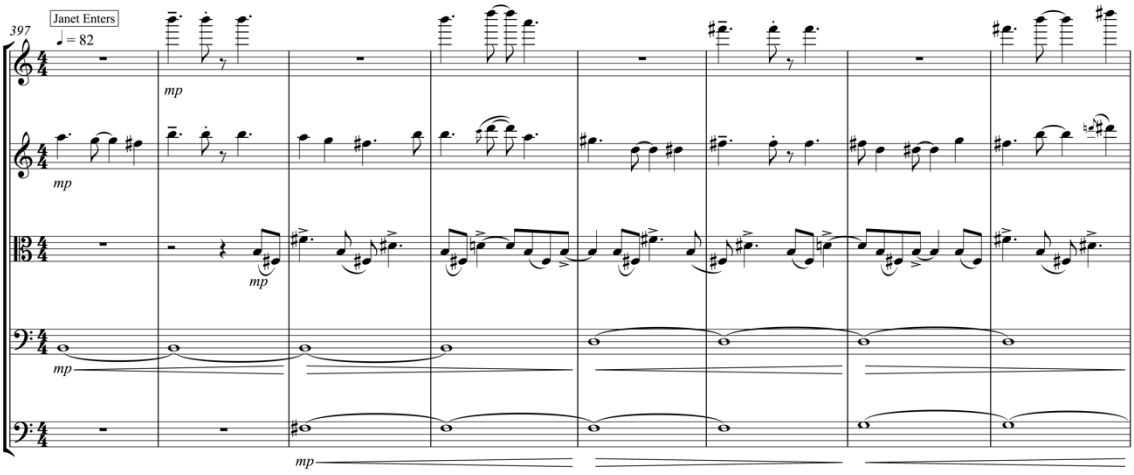

Figure 32 – “Janet and Kenneth” theme in mm. 397-404

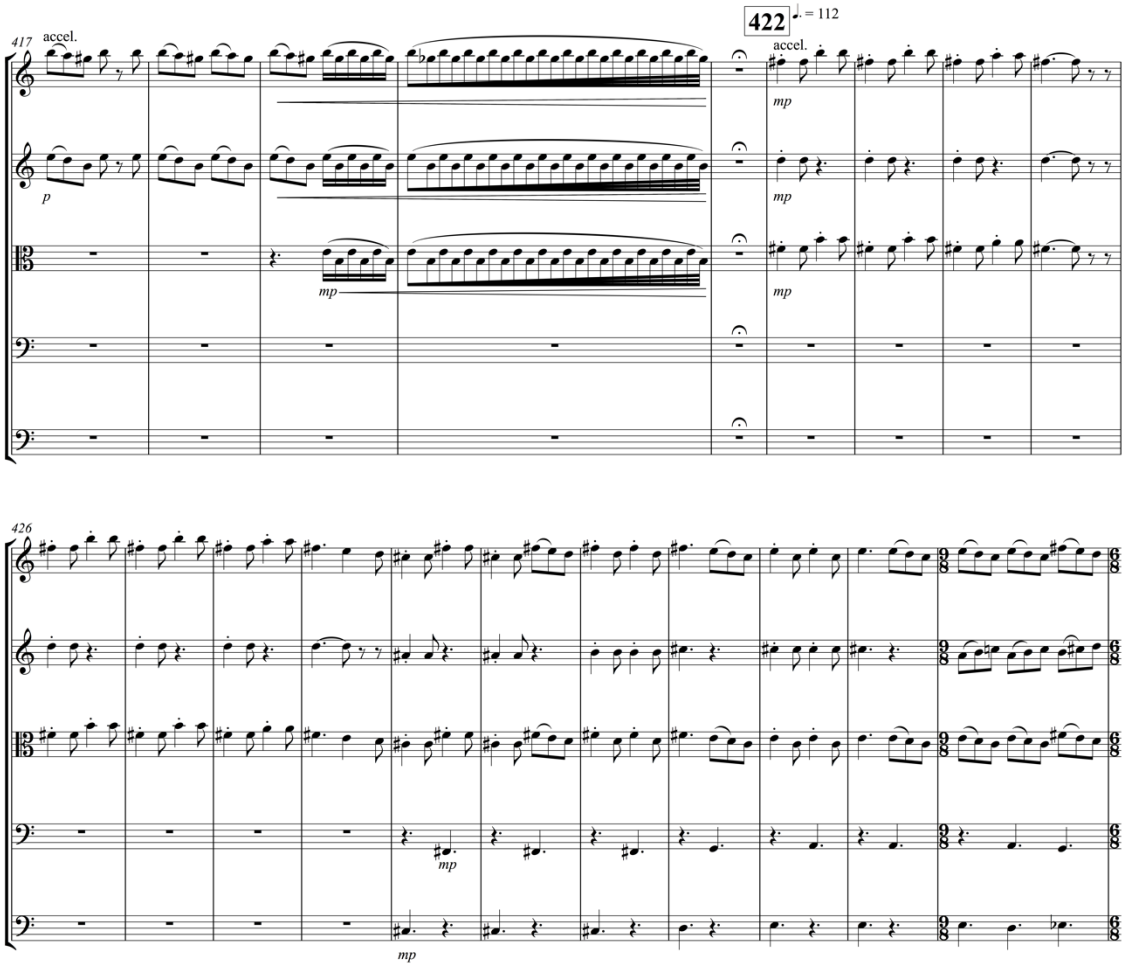

Figure 33 – “Janet and Kenneth” theme in full beginning at m. 422

There are also instances in the composition where themes and motifs of multiple characters overlap. For example, when Brandon and Janet have a private discussion in another room (21:01), Janet’s theme is presented in complex time to echo Brandon’s physical exhaustion after the murder (2:53) [Figure 34]. During Rupert’s conversation with Brandon immediately preceding his revelation that he has solved the murder, the

suspicion motif develops and is eventually overlapped by the “David wasn’t there?” figure in mm. 1399-1402 in the violas (1:02:35) [Figure 35].

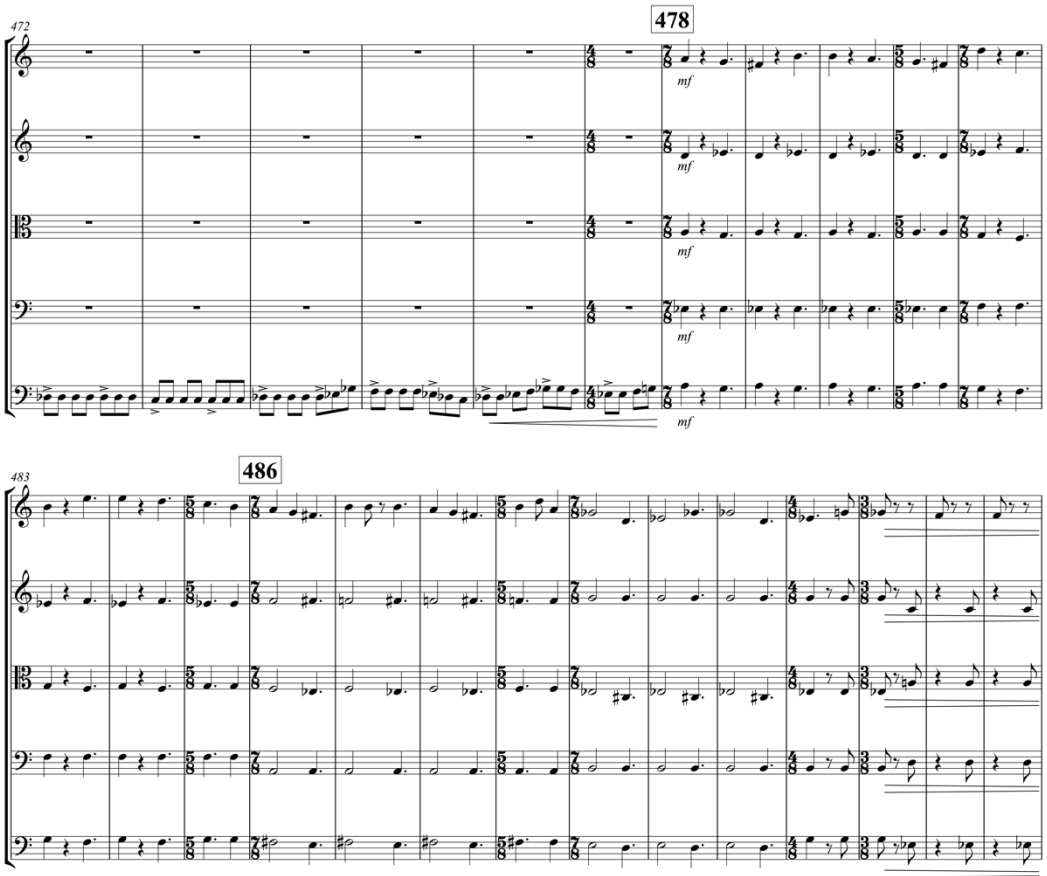

Figure 34 – “Janet and Kenneth” theme beginning in m. 478

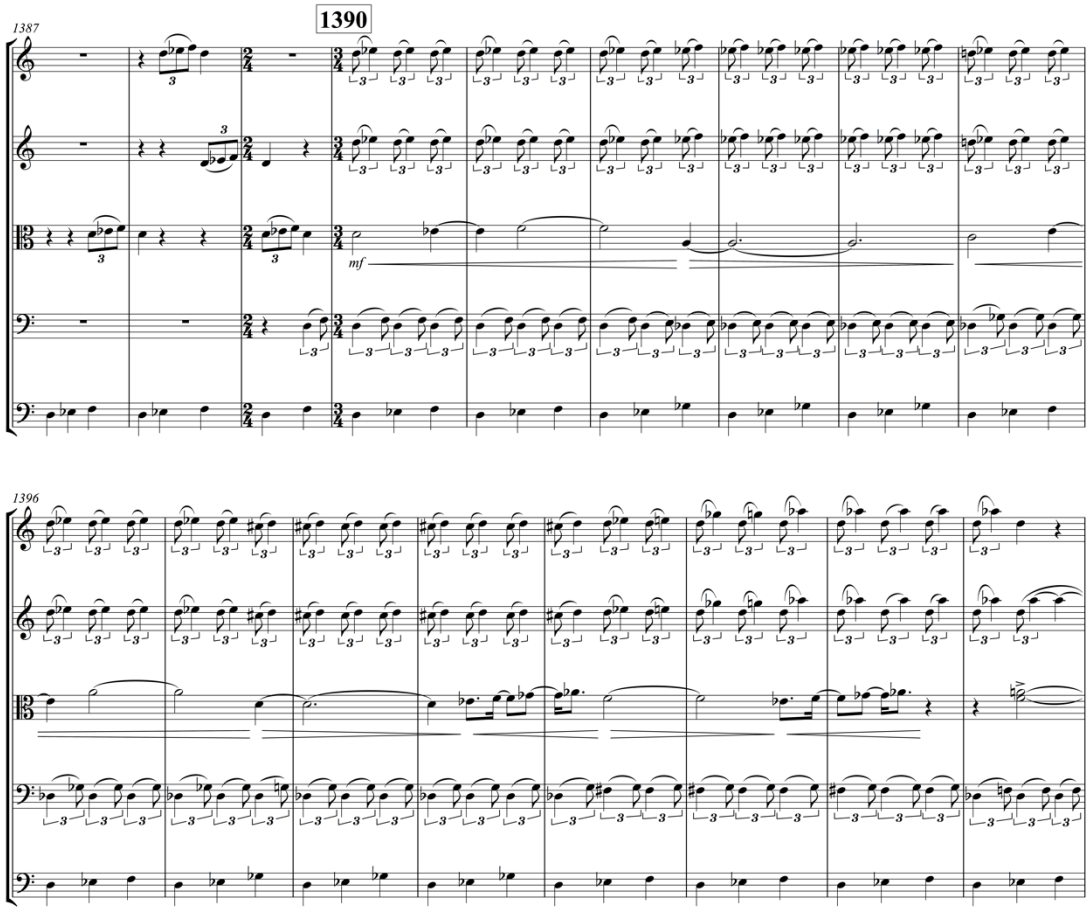

Figure 35 – “Suspicion” motif developing into “David wasn’t there?” figure in m. 1399

Intentional Dynamic Discord

A recurring consideration of the relationship between this composition and the accompanying film is the intentionality of dynamic choices. In many cases, the dialogue is enhanced by the music, as is common in a traditional film score. There are also sections of the music intended to stifle the dialogue, directly opposing the objective of a traditional film score. For example, the conversation between Rupert, Janet, and Mrs. Atwater is an extended period of dialogue that does not advance the plot (30:00). This

composition is designed to disregard this conversation, so the performance of the orchestra is neither synchronized nor supportive of the dialogue. Another example is after Rupert reveals the rope to Brandon and Phillip (1:09:15). Here, the emphasis is on the discovery of the murder weapon, and the dialogue is not important to hear. These instances invert the roles of dialogue and music, effectively presenting the video as a supplement to the composition.

There are also moments in the film where the dialogue is essential for the audience to comprehend the plot development. The objective of this composition is to allow these sections of the film to come across clearly. One example of this occurs just after Mr. Kentley expresses his distaste for the subject of murder (37:18). Rupert questions Brandon about his intentions of "do[ing] away with a few inferiors." The significance of this dialogue, another indication of Rupert's growing suspicion, requires the composition to get out of the way. Another notable example is Rupert's monologue after discovering David's body (1:12:42). This climactic moment sees Rupert revoke his support of justifiable homicide, calling into question the actions of his enthusiastic pupil. While the composition echoes the Brandon motif during this section of the film, it is at a significantly lower dynamic, allowing Rupert's speech to advance the plot.

It seems inevitable that many audiences will be more comfortable with the conventional scoring approaches I employed, and may feel that things are wrong in moments where music achieves primacy or otherwise disturbs the hierarchical balance of dramatic music. This is, in part, my goal. While the harmonic, stylistic, and rhythmic

language of film has shifted regularly over the decades, the visual-auditory balance of power in film has remained essentially unchallenged for nearly a hundred years. In creating a work with live performers and embracing a less limiting aesthetic, I am pleased that my piece creates something new for which there is essentially no defining genre or repertoire.

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VITA

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This thesis was typed by Douglas W. Espie