Jolyon Laycock

The Swan

for cello & 2 pianos
(after Camille Saint-Saens)

Commissioned by New Music in the South West (NMSW)
First performed by members of the Bristol Ensemble
7 September 2014 St. George's Bristol
as part of "A Modern Managerie"
promoted by New Music South West

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The Swan — Jolyon Laycock

There have been several famous swans in classical music. The earliest I know of is Orlando Gibbon's madrigal of 1612, "The Silver Swan". Gibbons perpetuates the myth that the swan is mute until the moment of her death but there is a satirical sting in her tail: "More Geese than Swans now live, more Fools than Wise." In Tchaikovsky's ballet "Swan Lake" (1877) the heroine Odette is a princess transformed into a swan by evil enchantment. Rivalry for the love of the handsome prince Siegfried between Odette as the white swan and her alter ego, Odile as the black swan, symbolises the conflict between good and evil, leading to the lover's suicide. The swan is almost always associated with death. Sibelius' tone-poem "The Swan of Tuonela" is based on a Suomi legend from the Finnish epic, the Kalevala. It tells of the Finnish hero Lemminkainen and his quest to slay the mystical swan which swims round Tuonela, the island of the dead. Sibelius's celebrated cor anglais solo is expressive of infinite sadness. Saint-Saëns' "Swan" too has become associated with death ever since the choreographer Fokine created the role of the dying swan for Anna Pavlova in the 1905 production of the *Carnival of the Animals* in St. Petersburg.

It is said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. My swan starts out with an almost exact imitation of the first few notes of Saint-Saëns' famous cello melody. By a happy coincidence one of the 6-note fractal sets I have been using in my music for several years follows very closely the contours of Saint-Saëns' theme. The texture of the 2-piano accompaniment, too, is closely modelled on Saint-Saëns. But my swan develops in an entirely different direction. As you listen imagine the swan rising majestically from the surface of the lake and taking to the air on its powerful pinions.

Jolyon Laycock was born in Bath in 1946 and studied for B.Mus and M.Phil in composition at the University of Nottingham. His composition teachers included Henri Pousseur and Cornelius Cardew. During the 1970s he pursued a freelance career as an experimental sound artist based at the Birmingham Arts Laboratory and Spectro Arts Workshop, Newcastle. In 1979 he took up the post of Music and Dance Co-ordinator at the Arnolfini in Bristol, running a programme of contemporary music and dance regarded as one of the most innovative outside London. In 1990 he took up the post of Concert Director at the University of Bath and at the newly opened Michael Tippett Centre at Bath Spa University College where he founded the award-winning concert series "Rainbow over Bath". He left the University of Bath in 2000 to concentrate on the completion of his book "A Changing Role for the Composer in Society" which earned him a Ph.D from York University. In 2004 he was appointed Senior Lecturer in Arts Management at Oxford Brookes University until 2010.

His compositions include orchestral, chamber music and choral music, a string quartet, music for solo piano and a growing body of songs. In 2012 he won the EPSS Jubilee Composers' Song Competition with his setting of Philip Larkin's poem *The North Ship*. This song later became the final movement of the song cycle *Dark Seas* for coloratura soprano, clarinet and piano which received its world premiere in May 2014 at the Lantern Colston Hall sung by Sarah Leonard with Mary Barrett, clarinet, and Stephen Gutman, piano.

The Swan

after Camille Saint-Saens

Andante cantabile ♩=72

Jolyon Laycock

Piano I

p

Violoncello

Andante cantabile ♩=72

mf

Piano II

p

4

sempre legato

Pno. I

Vc.

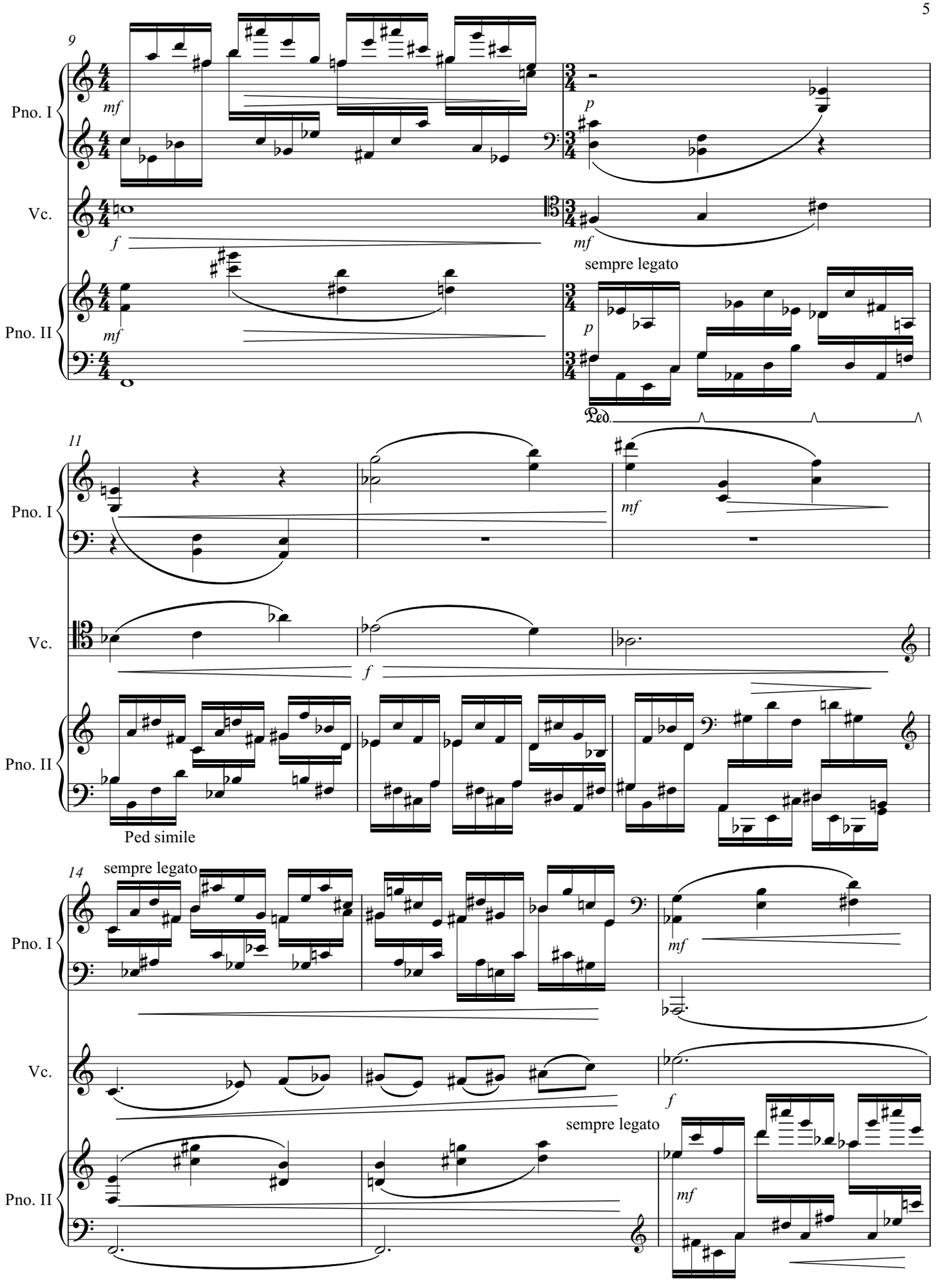
Pno. II

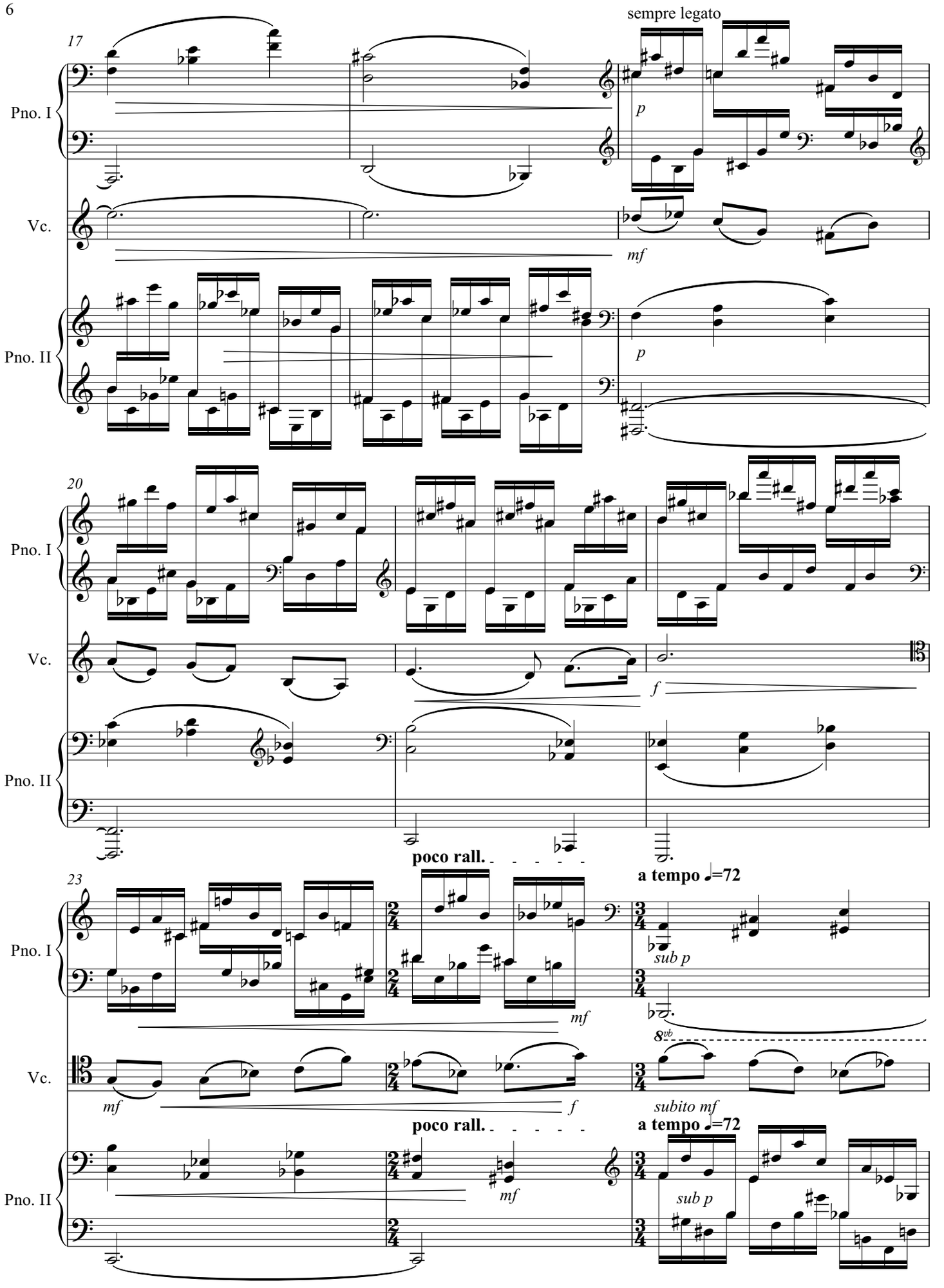
7

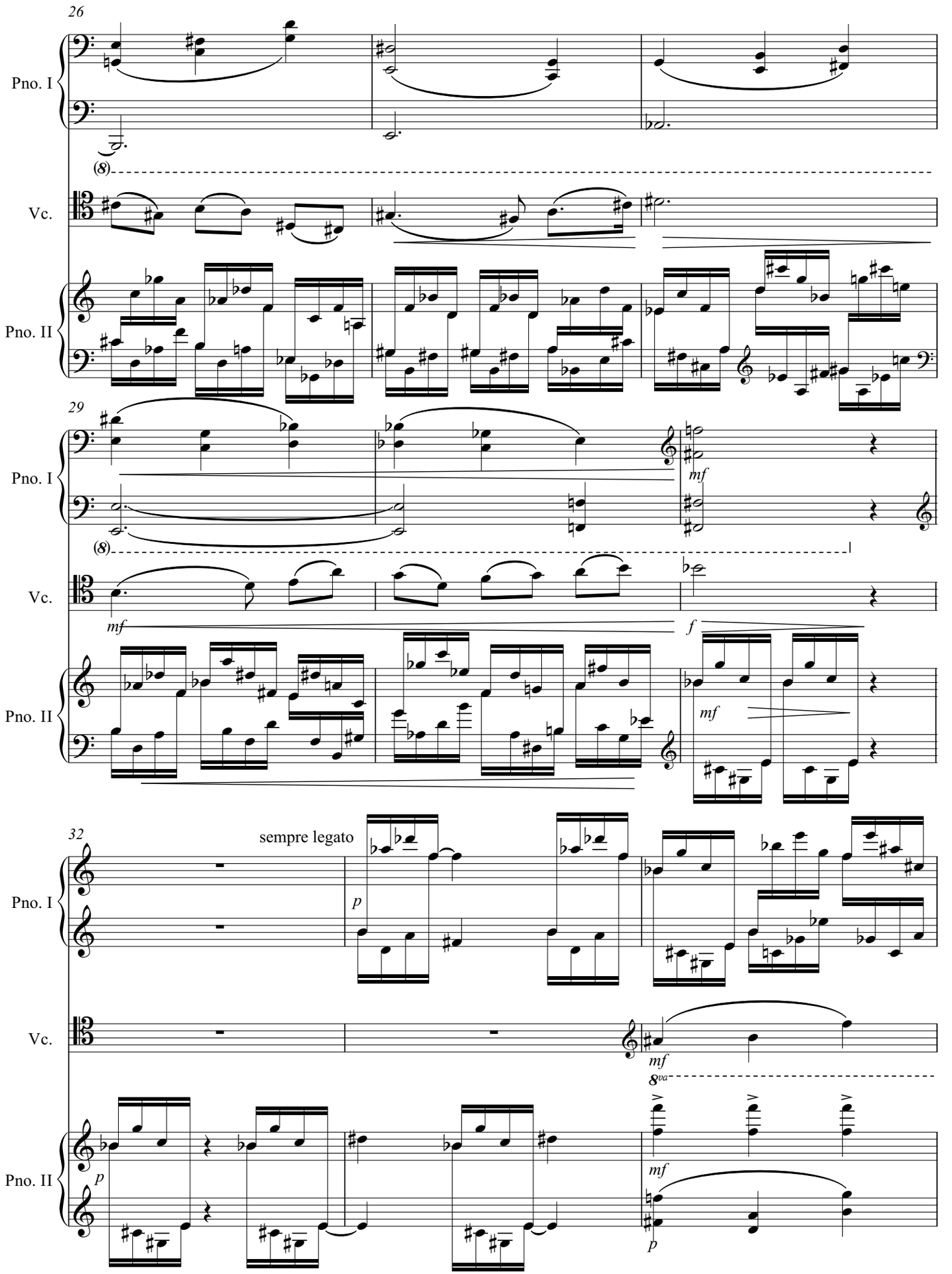
Pno. I

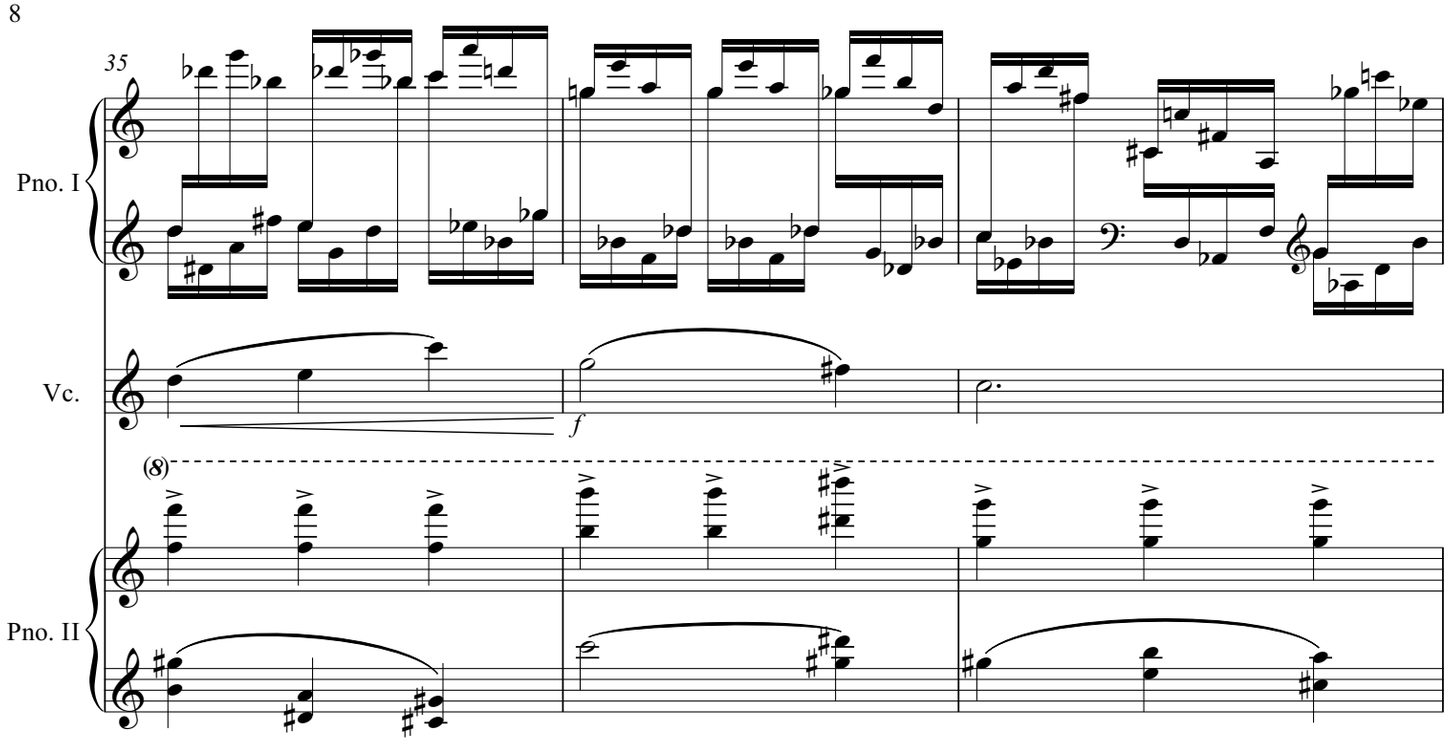
Vc.

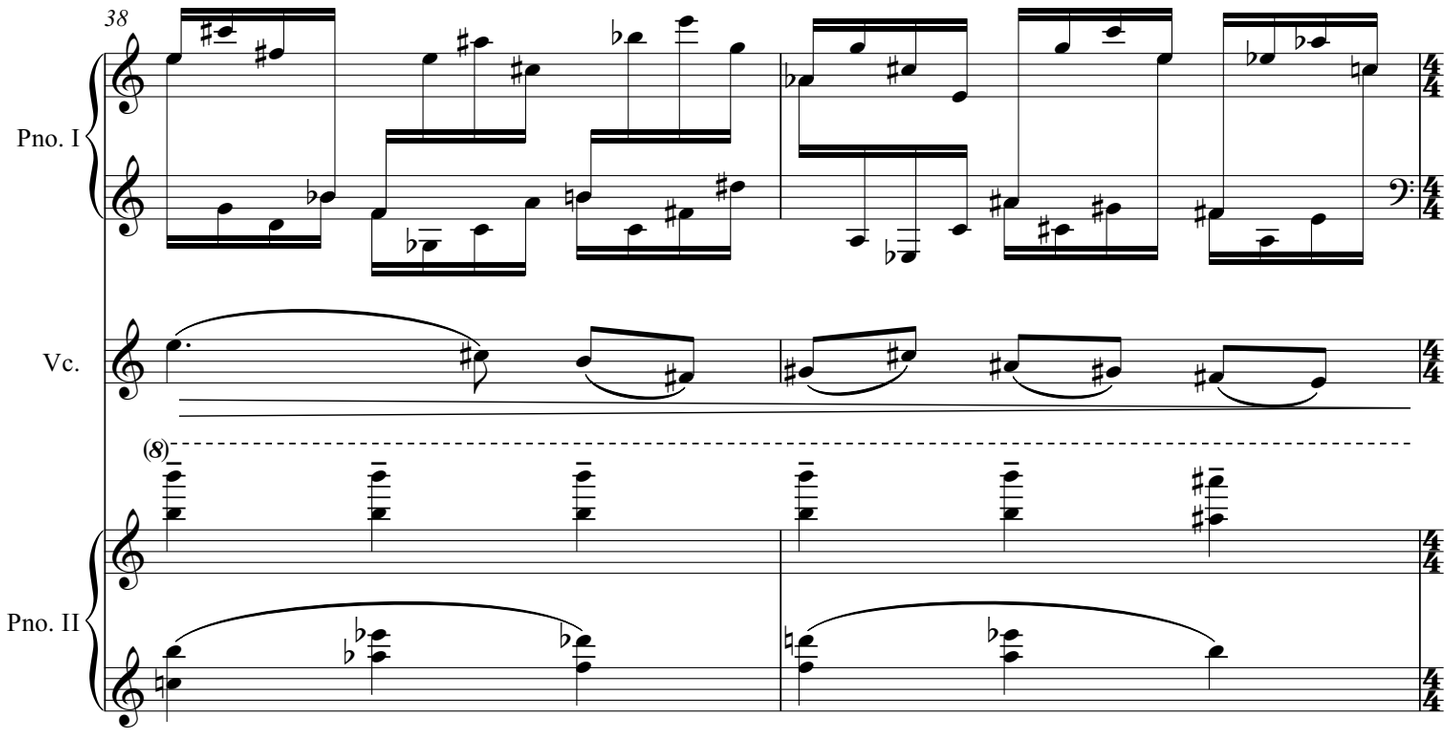
Pno. II

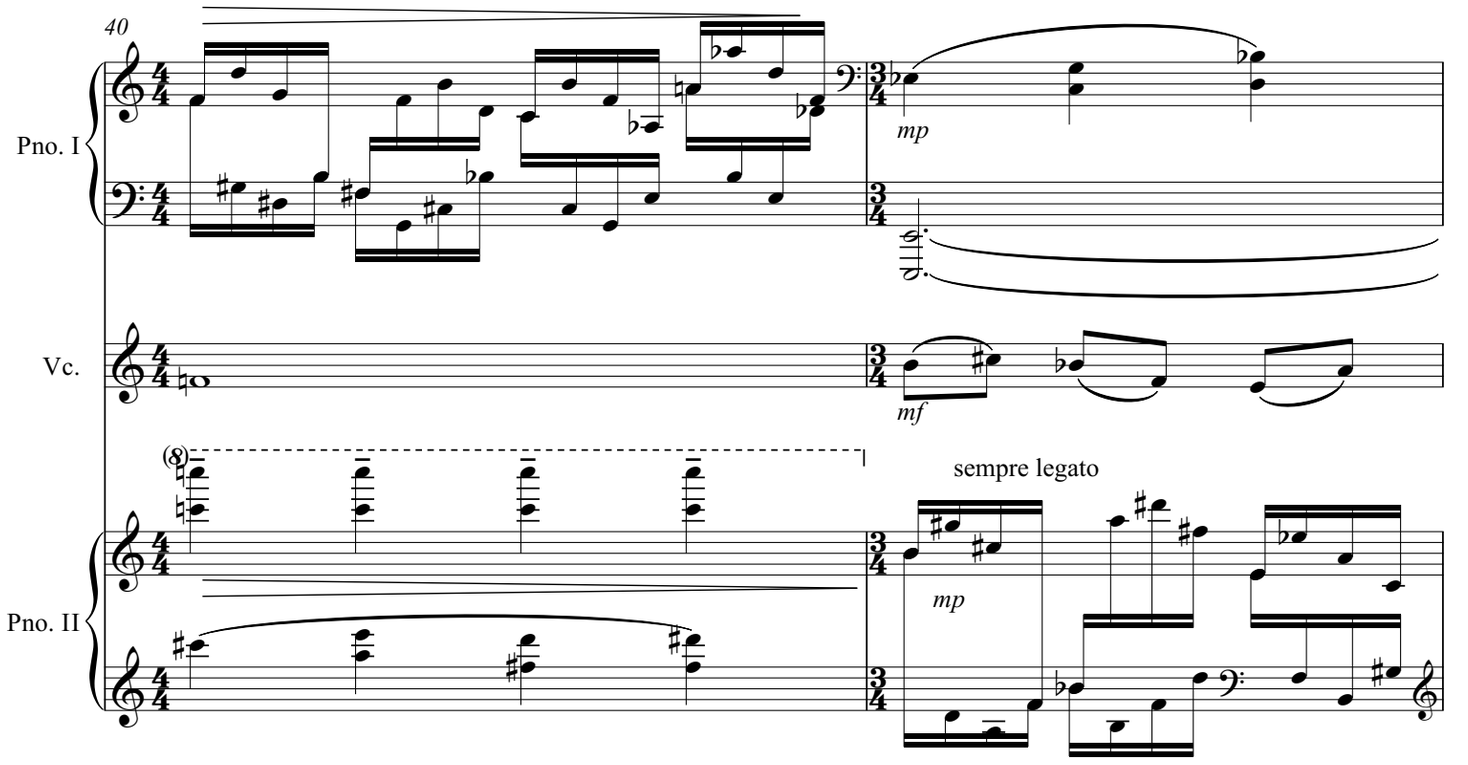

9
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
mf
f
p
mf
sempre legato
Ped.
11
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
mf
f
Ped simile
14
sempre legato
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
mf
f
sempre legato
mf

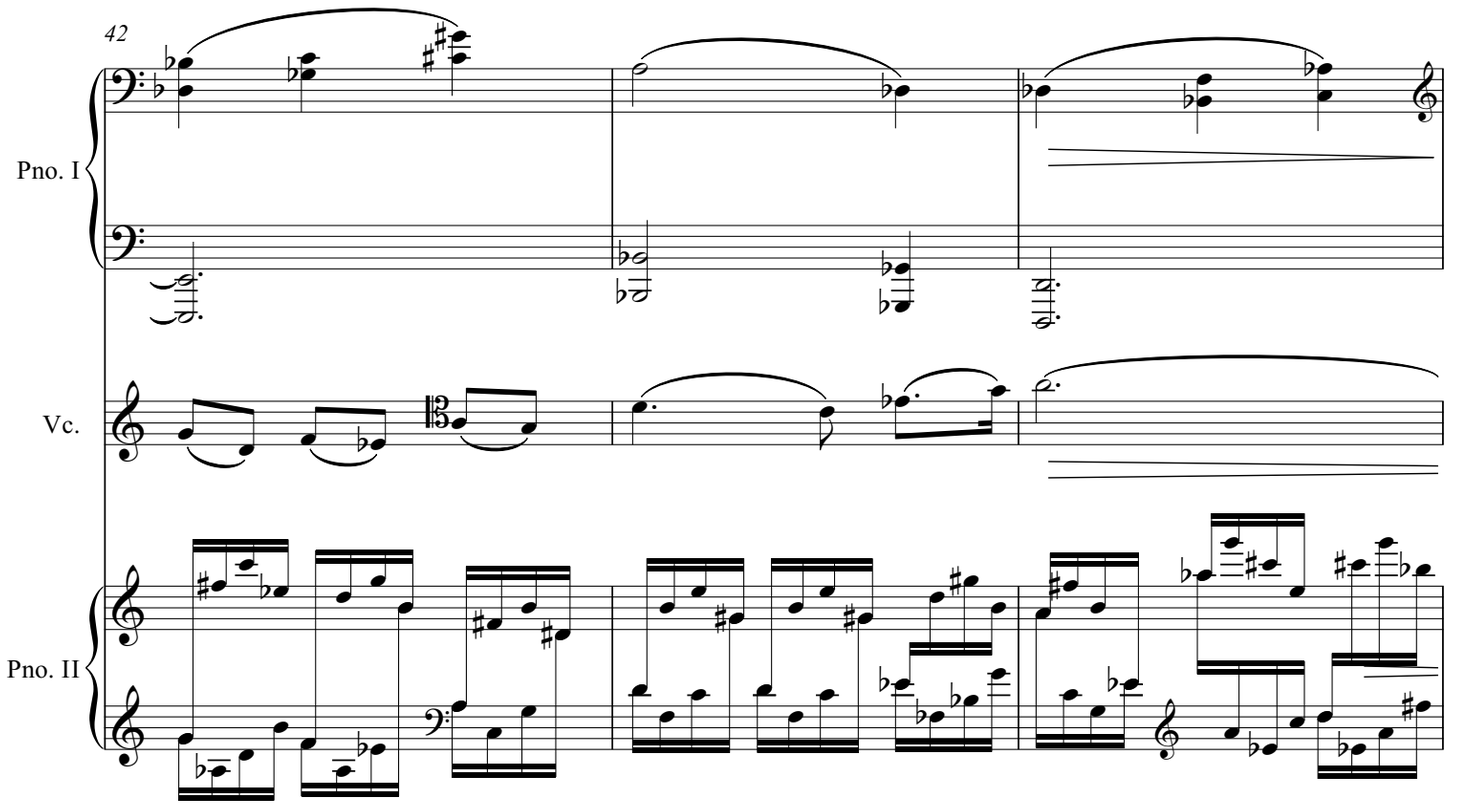

17
sempre legato
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
p
mf
p
20
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
f
poco rall.
a tempo ♩=72
23
Pno. I
sub p
mf
8vb
Vc.
mf
f
subito mf
poco rall.
a tempo ♩=72
Pno. II
mf
sub p

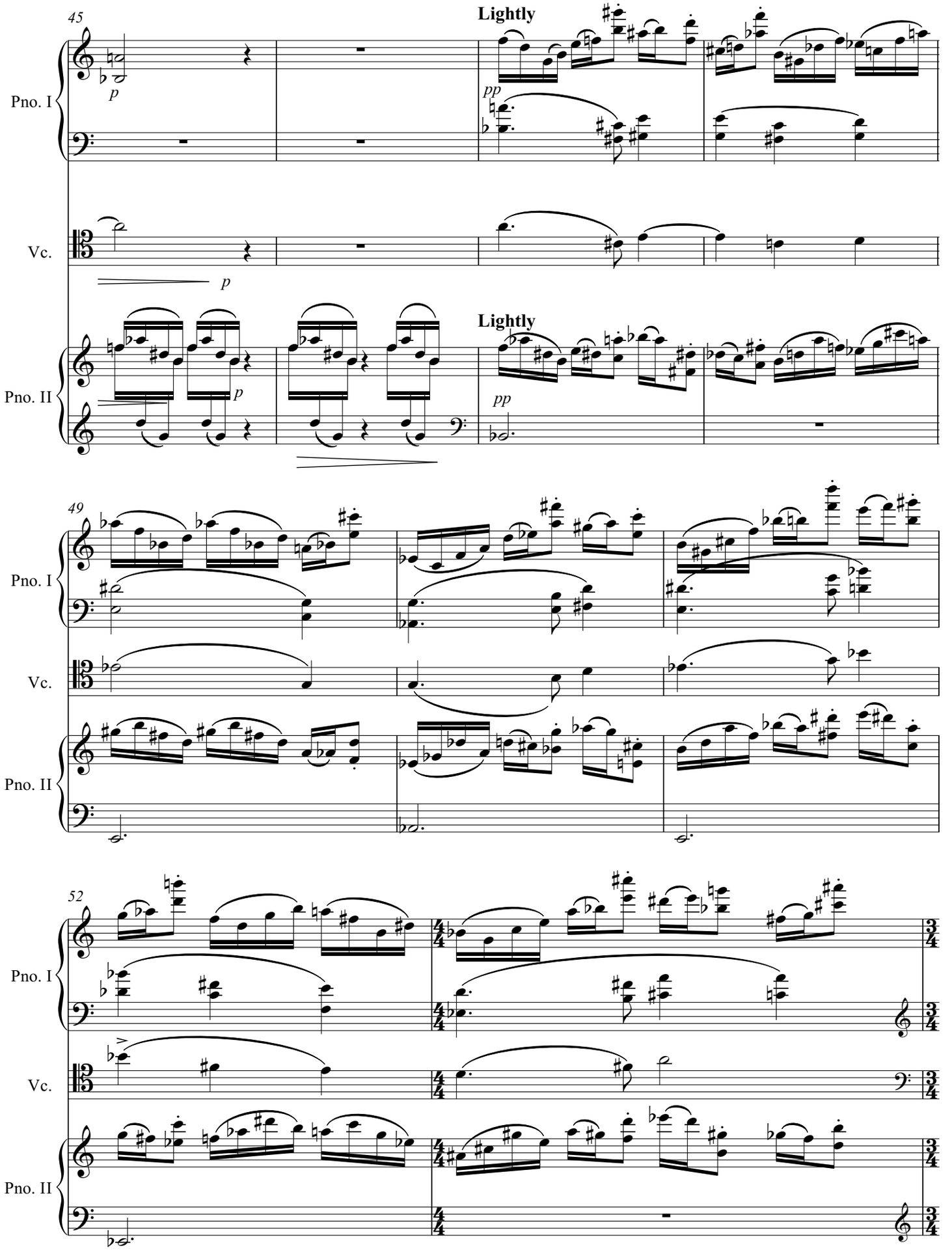

26
Pno. I
(8)
Vc.
Pno. II
29
Pno. I
mf
(8)
Vc.
mf
f
Pno. II
mf
32
sempre legato
Pno. I
p
Vc.
mf
8va
Pno. II
p
mf
p

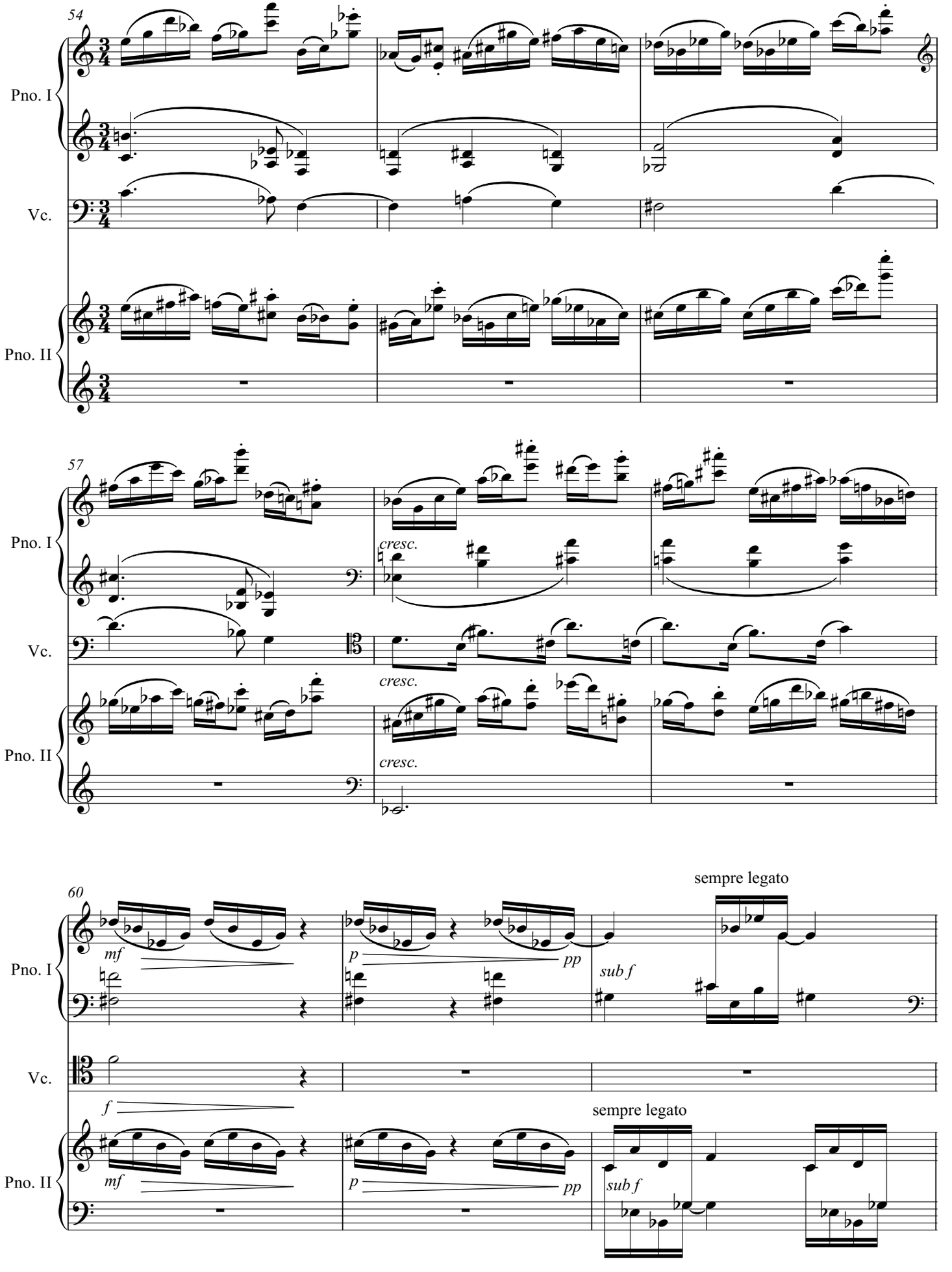

35
Pno. I
Vc.
f
(8)
Pno. II


38
Pno. I
Vc.
(8)
Pno. II


40
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
mp
mf
mp
sempre legato


42
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II


45
Lightly
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
49
52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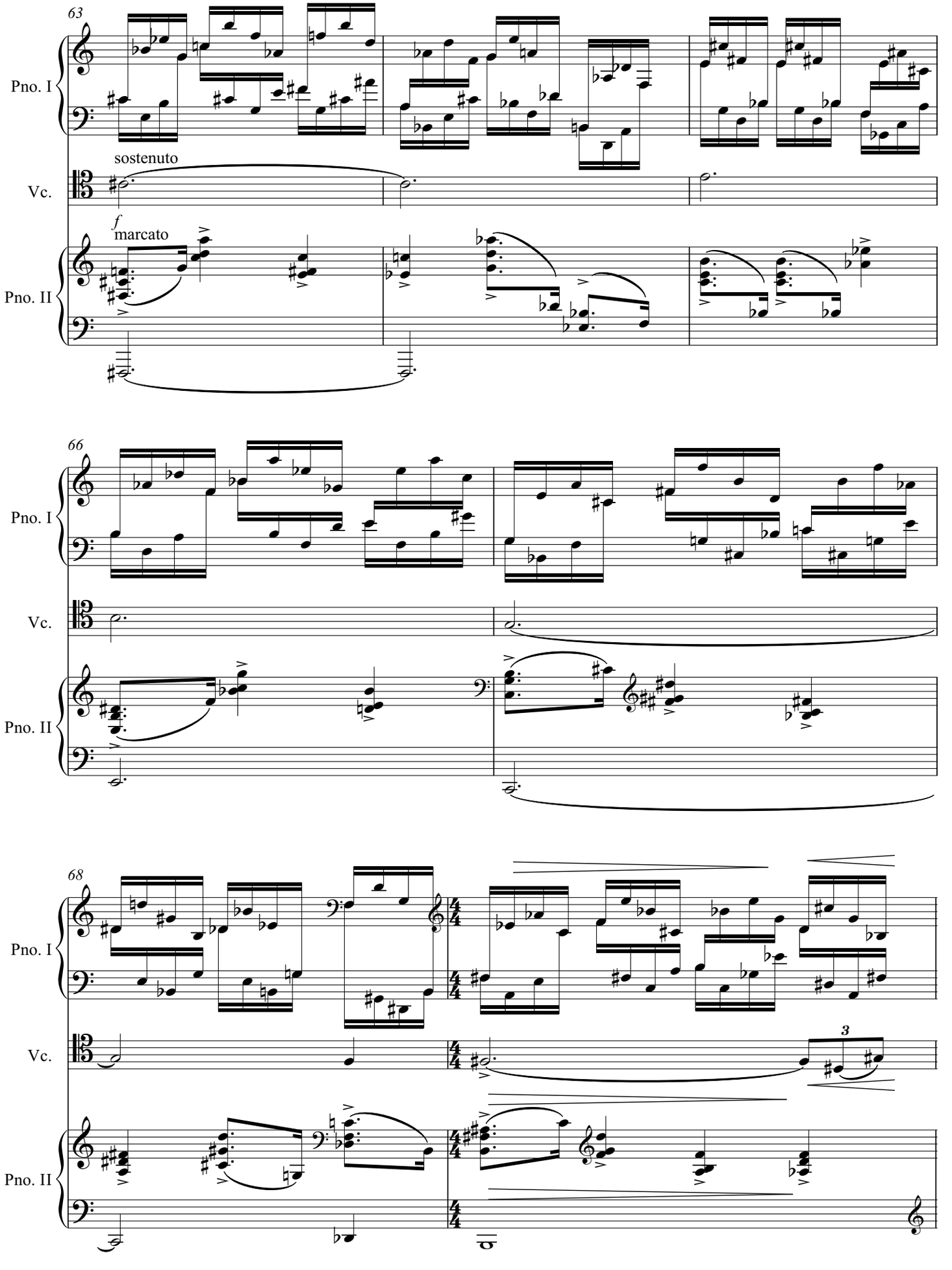
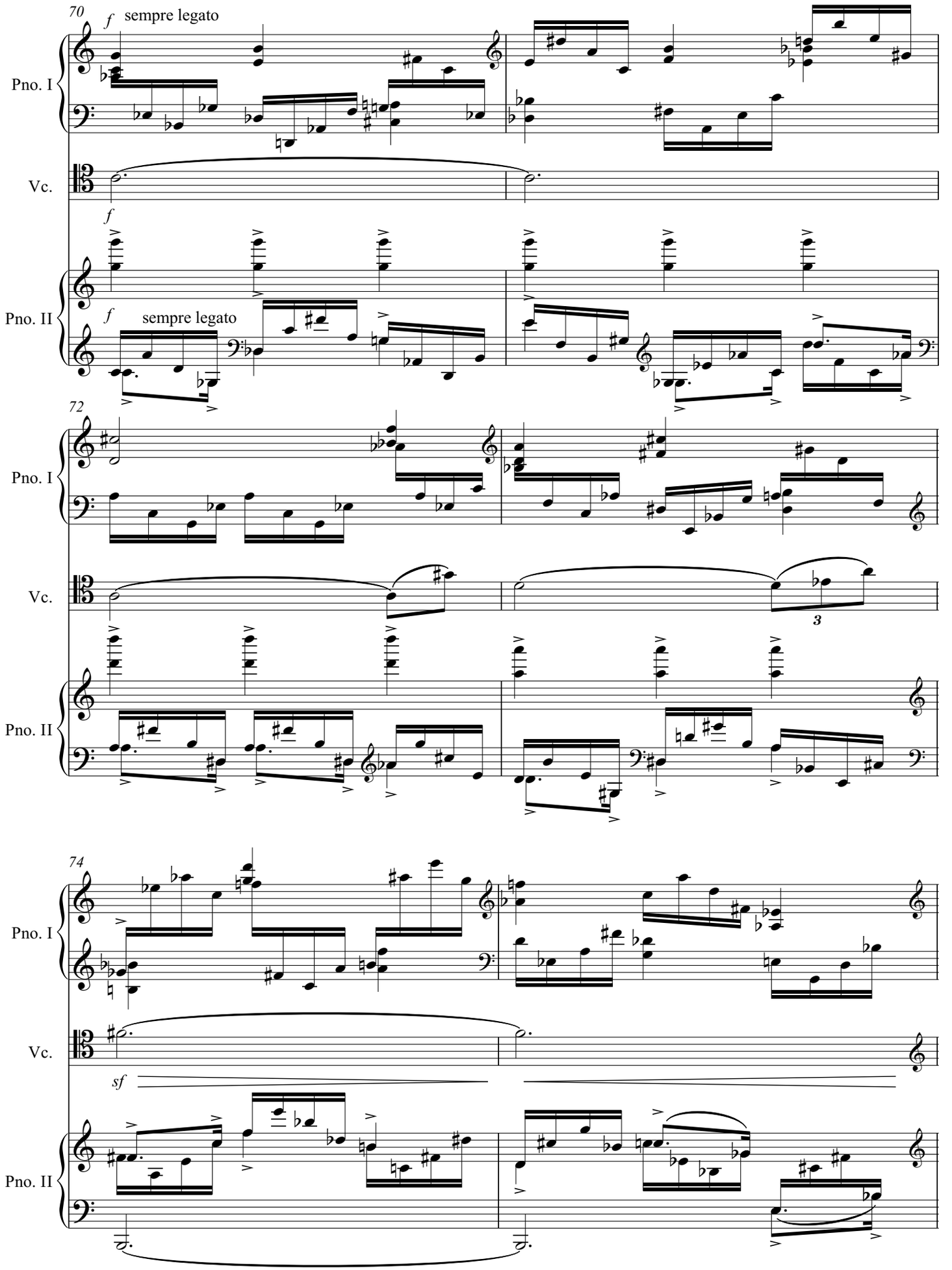
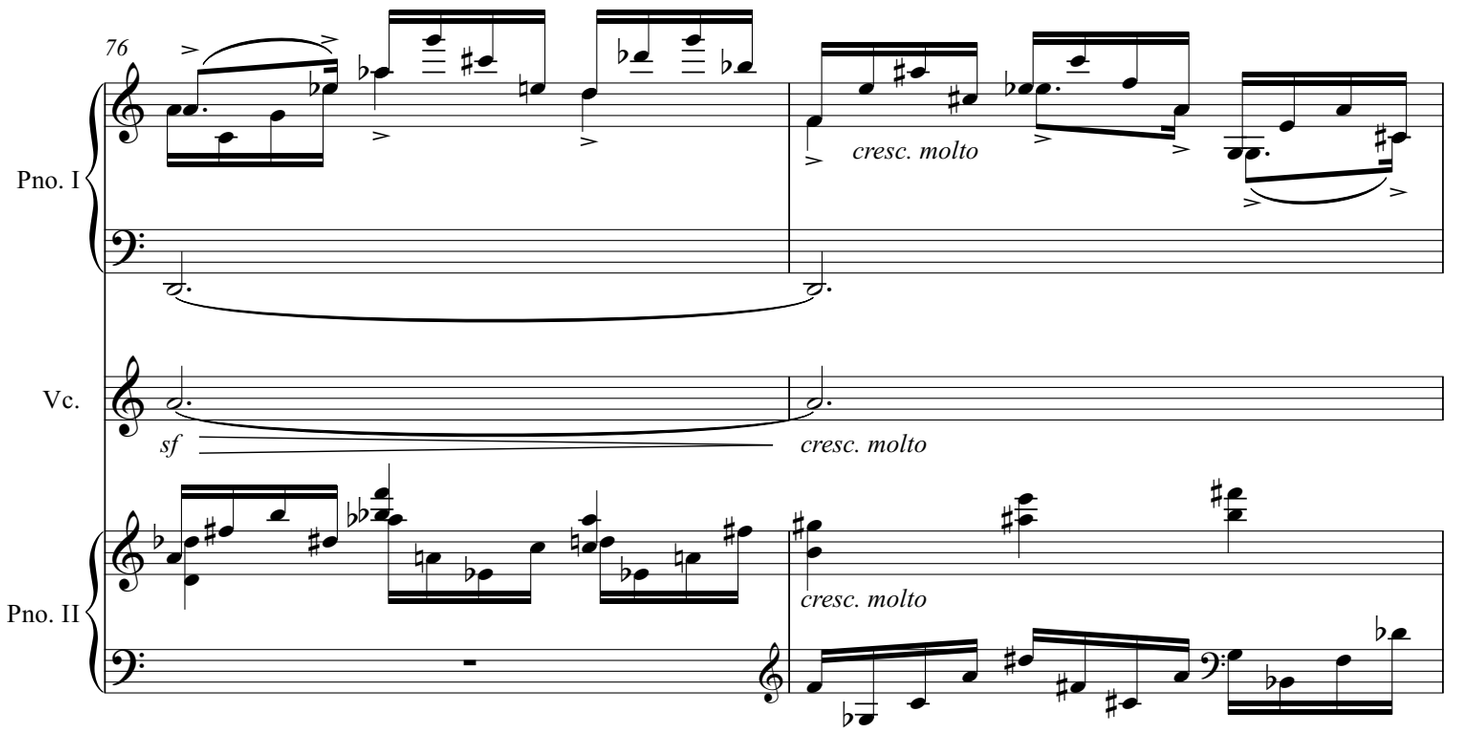
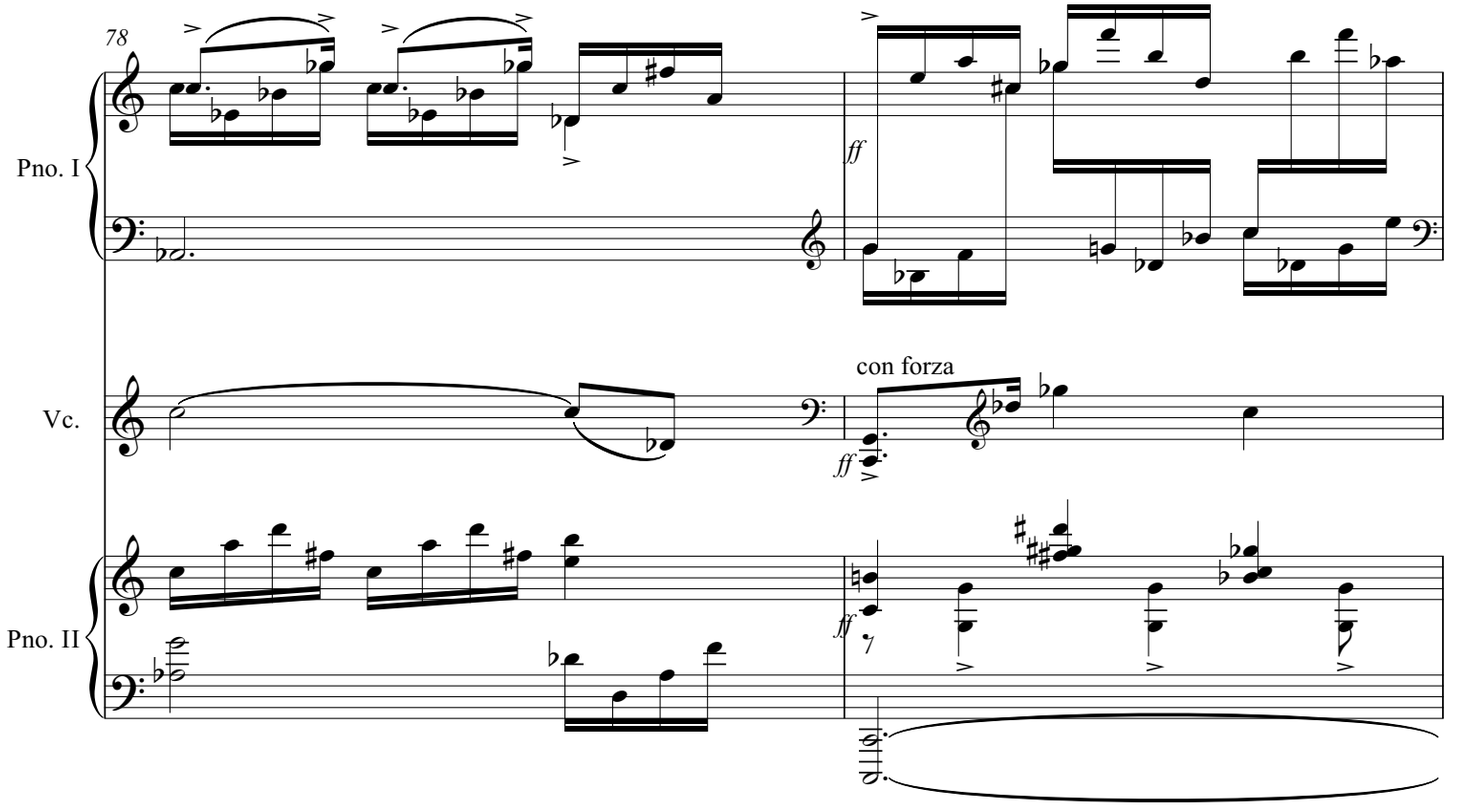
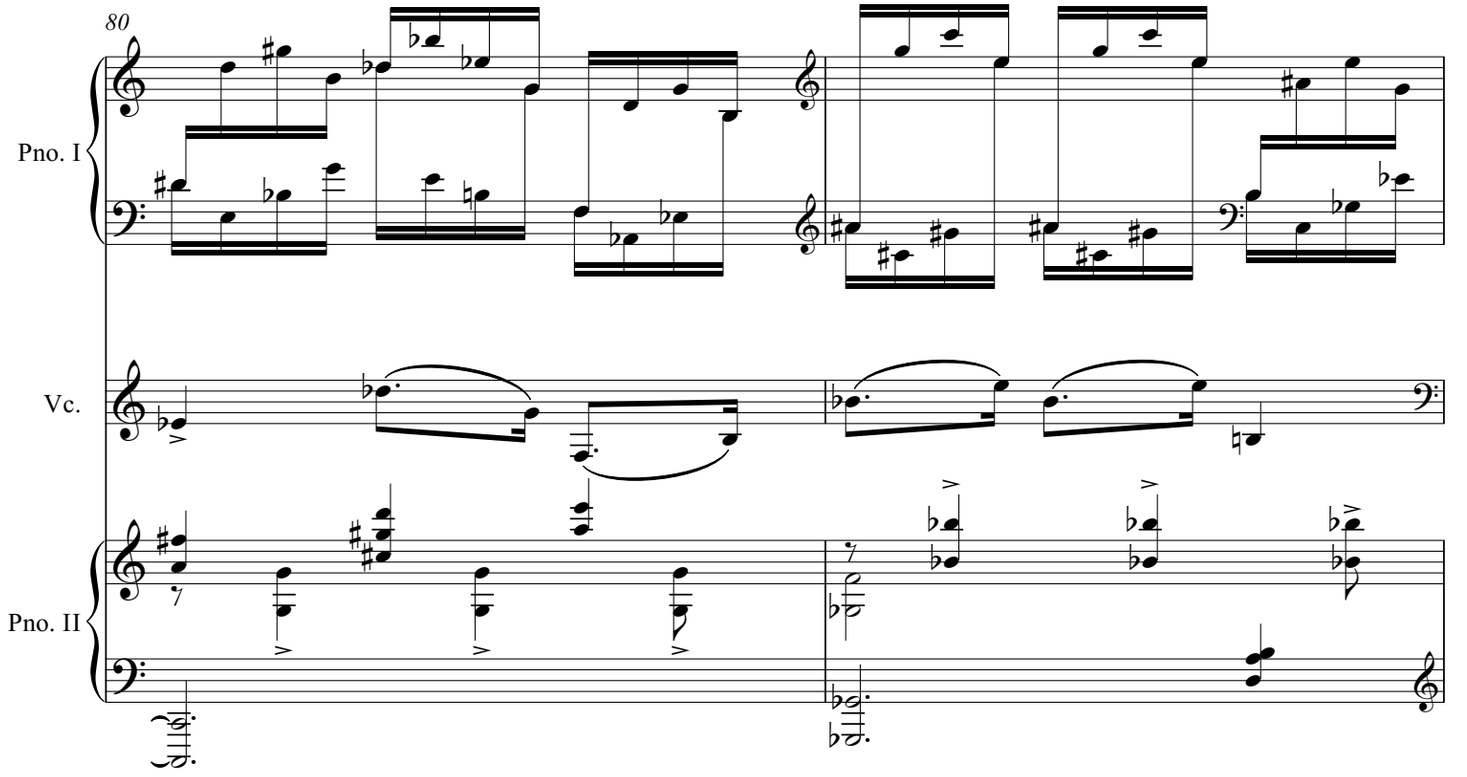
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
57
cresc.
60
mf
p
pp
sub f
sempre legato
f


63
Pno. I
sostenuto
Vc.
f
marcato
Pno. II
66
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
68
Pno. I
Vc.
3
Pno. II


70
f
sempre legato
Pno. I
Vc.
f
Pno. II
f
sempre legato
72
Pno. I
Vc.
3
Pno. II
74
Pno. I
Vc.
sf
Pno. II


76
Pno. I
cresc. molto
Vc.
sf
cresc. molto
Pno. II
cresc. molto


78
Pno. I
ff
Vc.
con forza
ff
Pno. II
ff
7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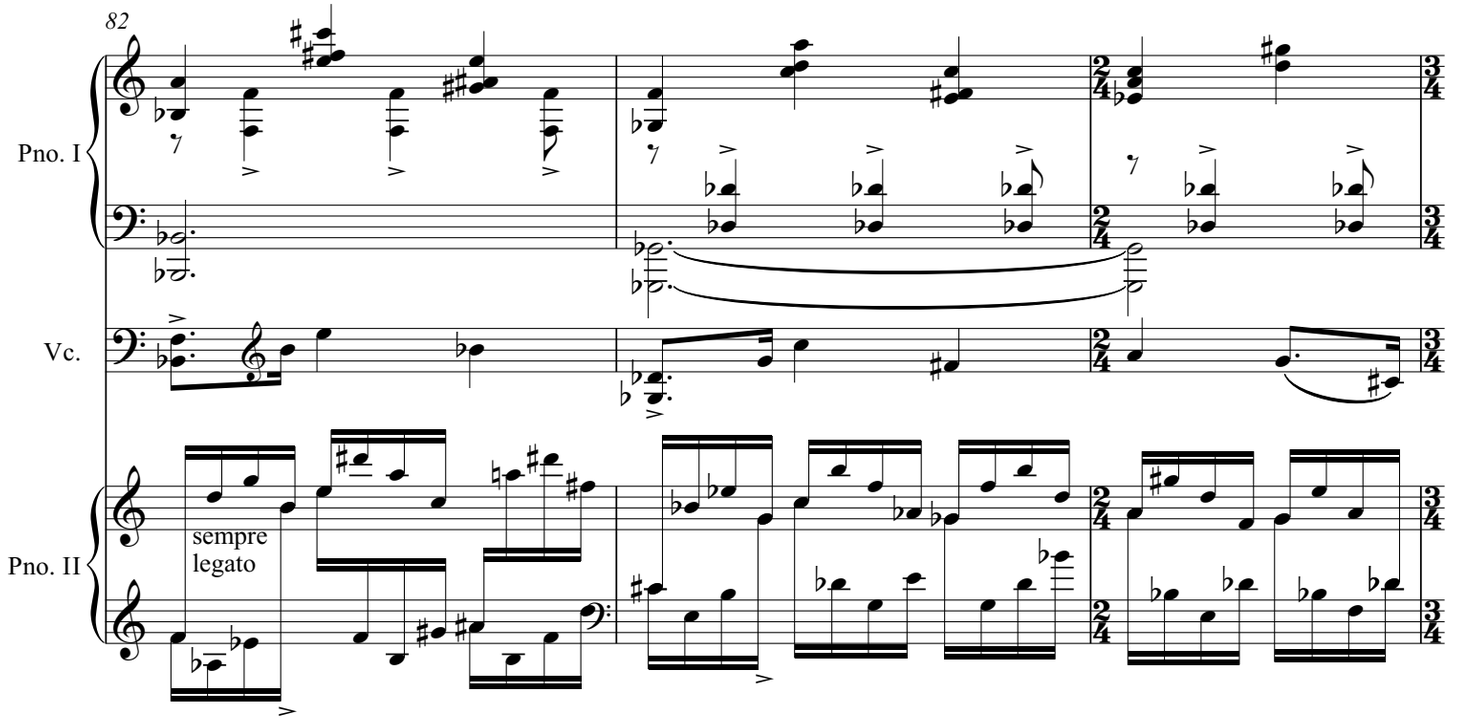
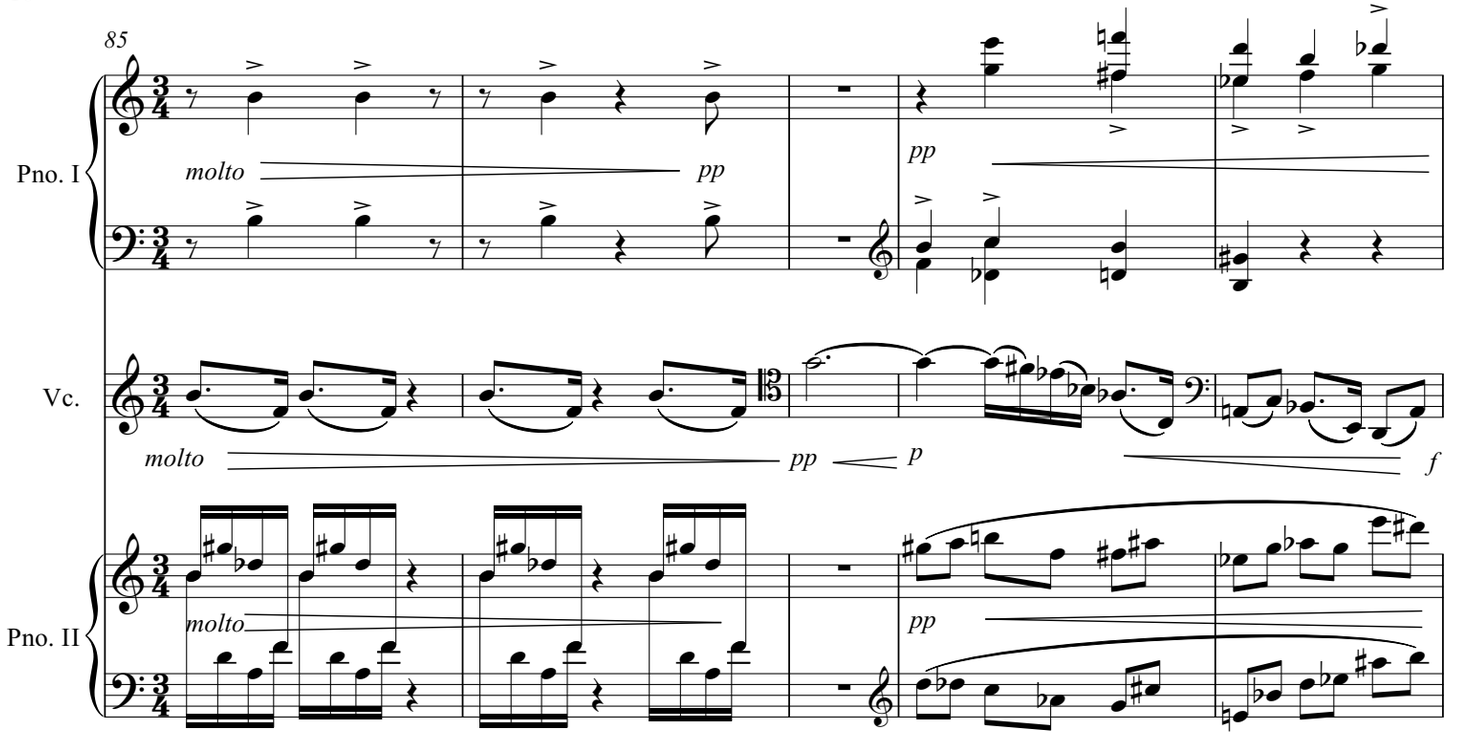
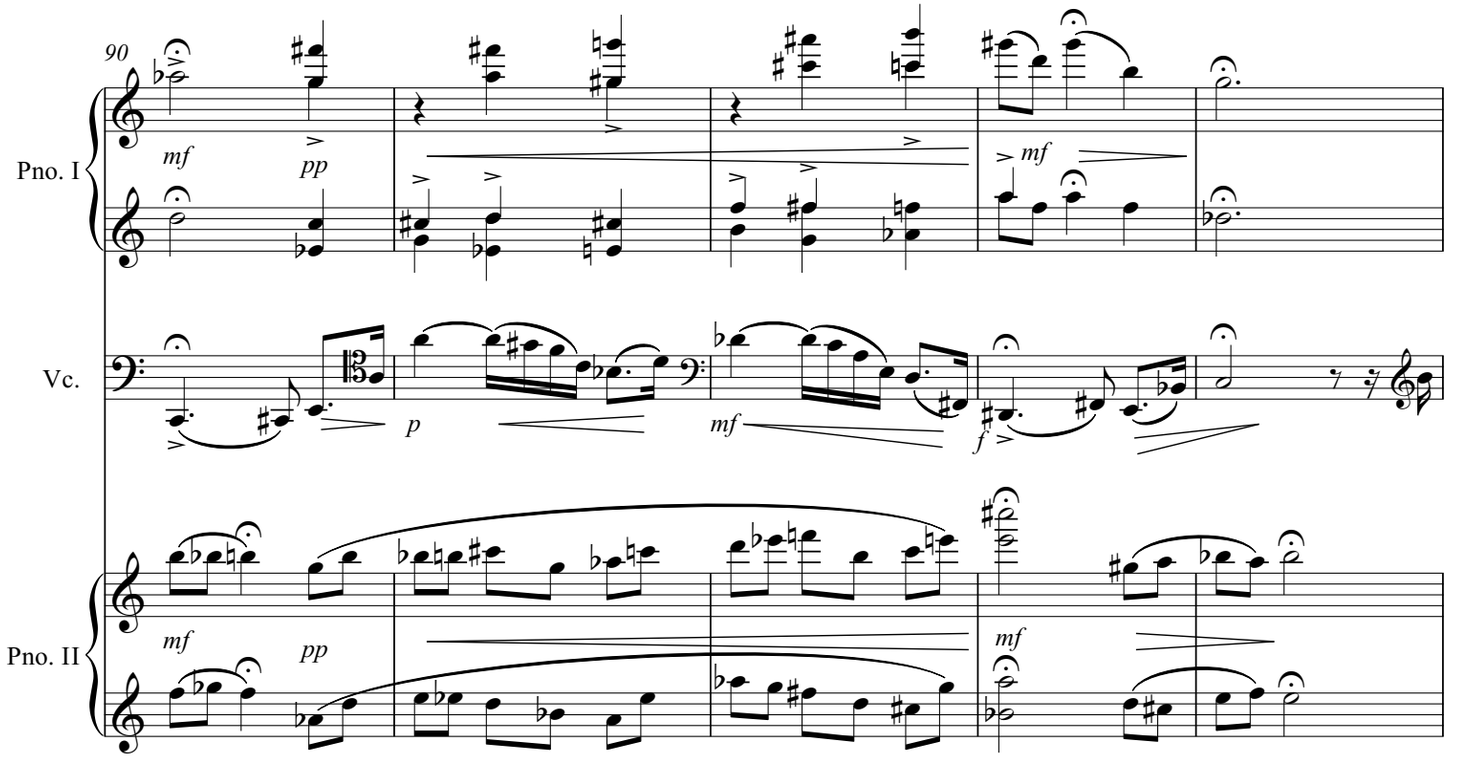
Vc.
Pno. II


82
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
sempre
legato


85
Pno. I
molto
pp
pp
Vc.
molto
pp
p
f
Pno. II
molto
pp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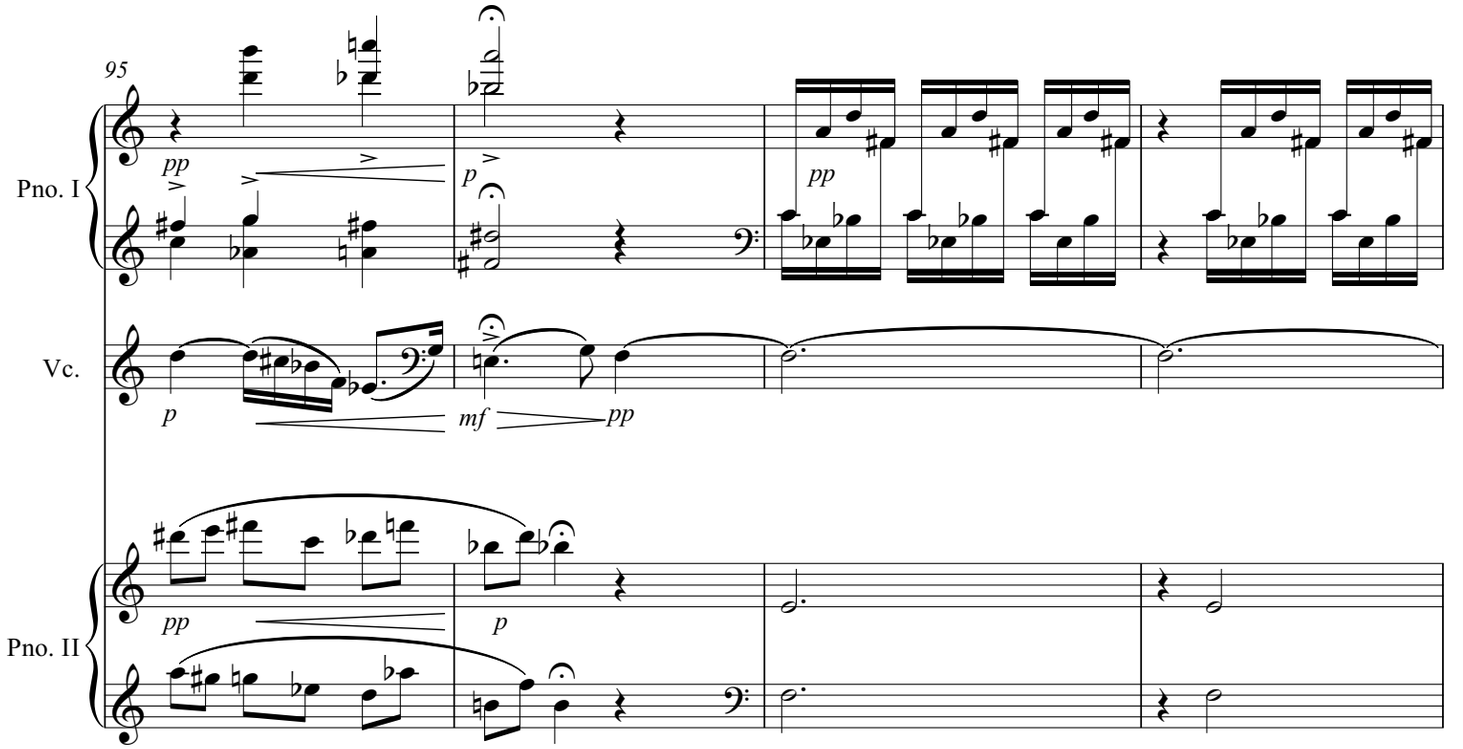
Pno. I
mf
pp
mf
Vc.
p
mf
f
Pno. II
mf
pp
mf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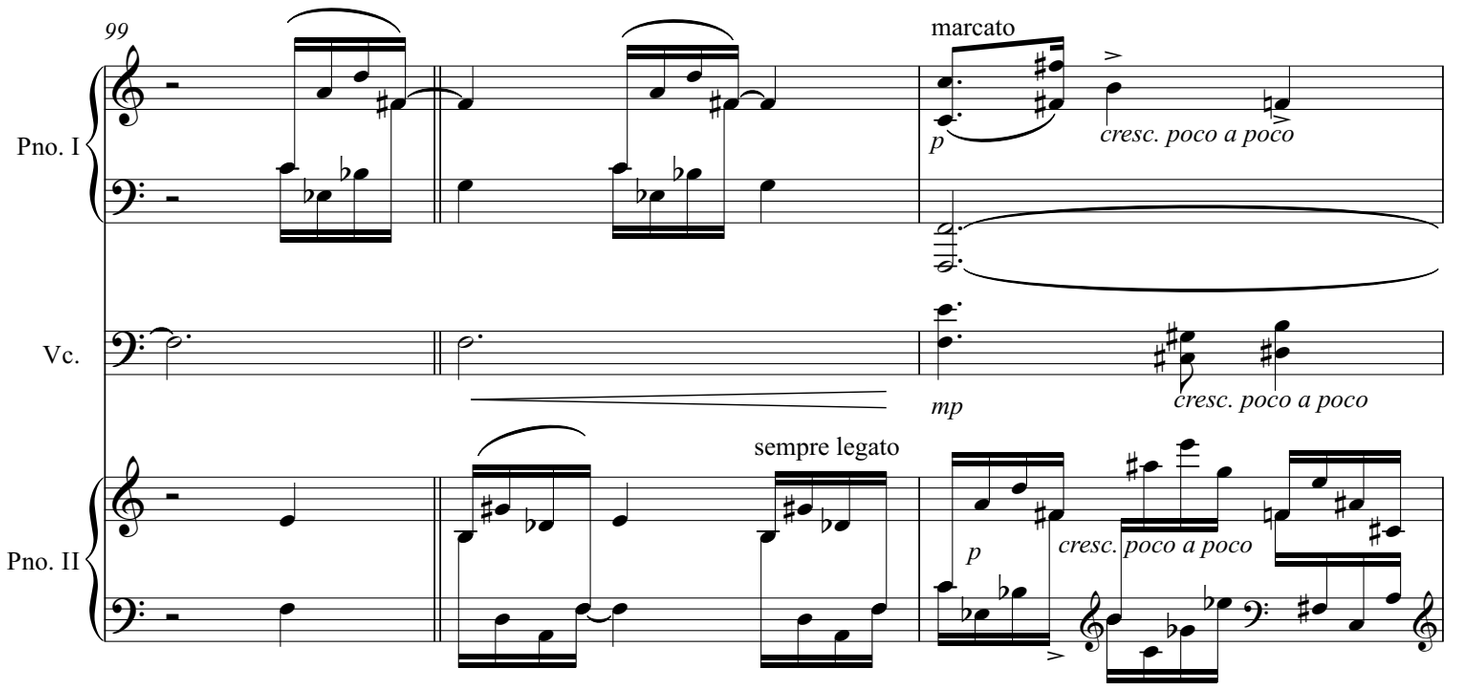
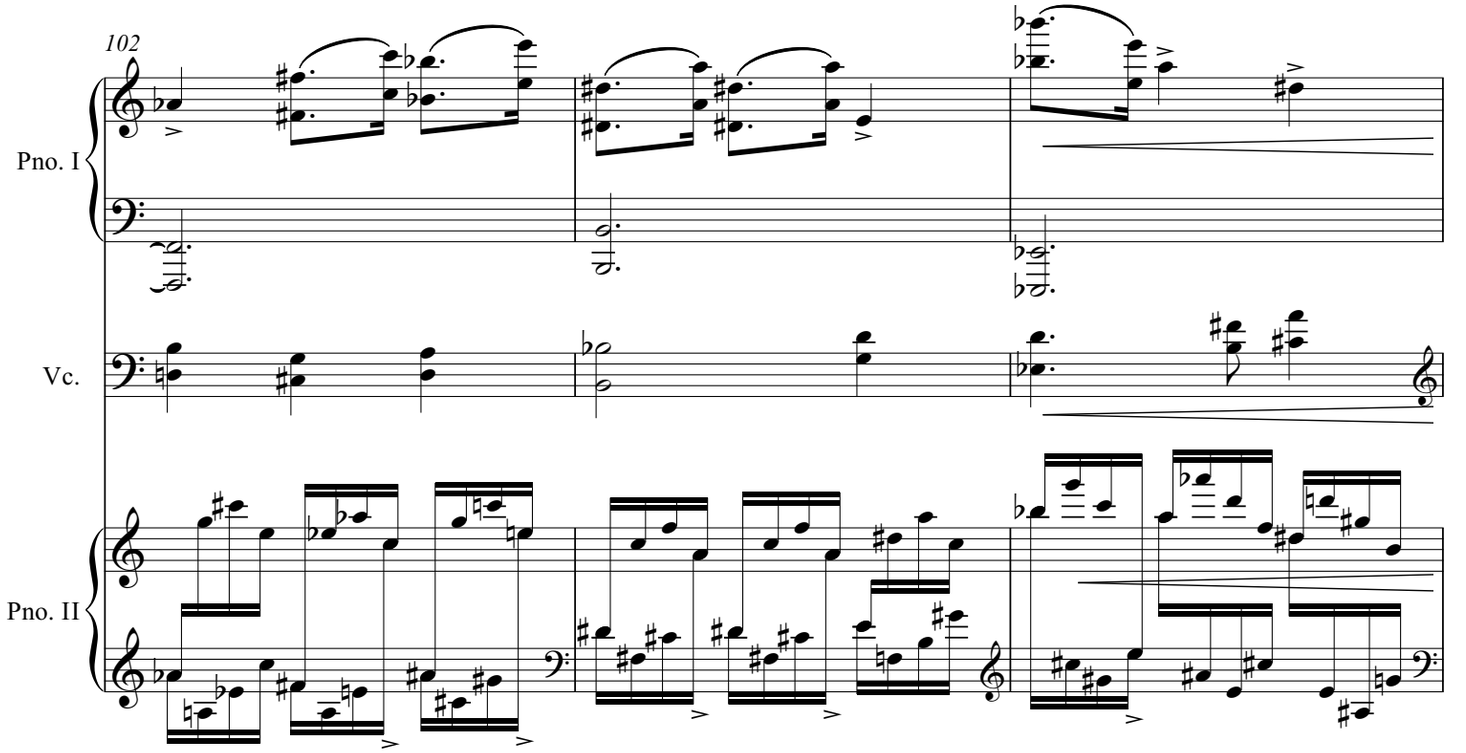
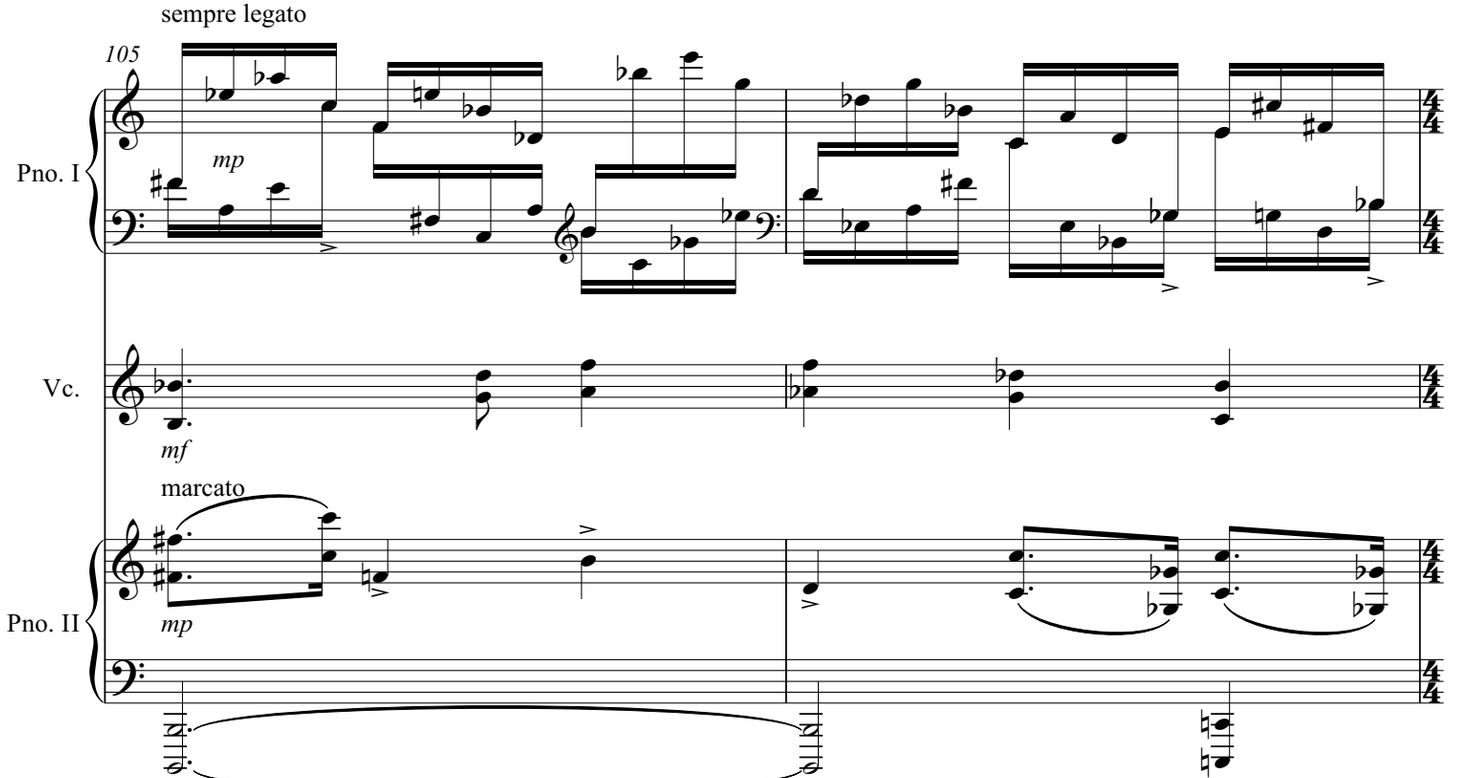
Vc.
Pno. II
pp
p
mf
pp


99
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
marcato
p
cresc. poco a poco
mp
cresc. poco a poco
sempre legato
p
cresc. poco a poco


102
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II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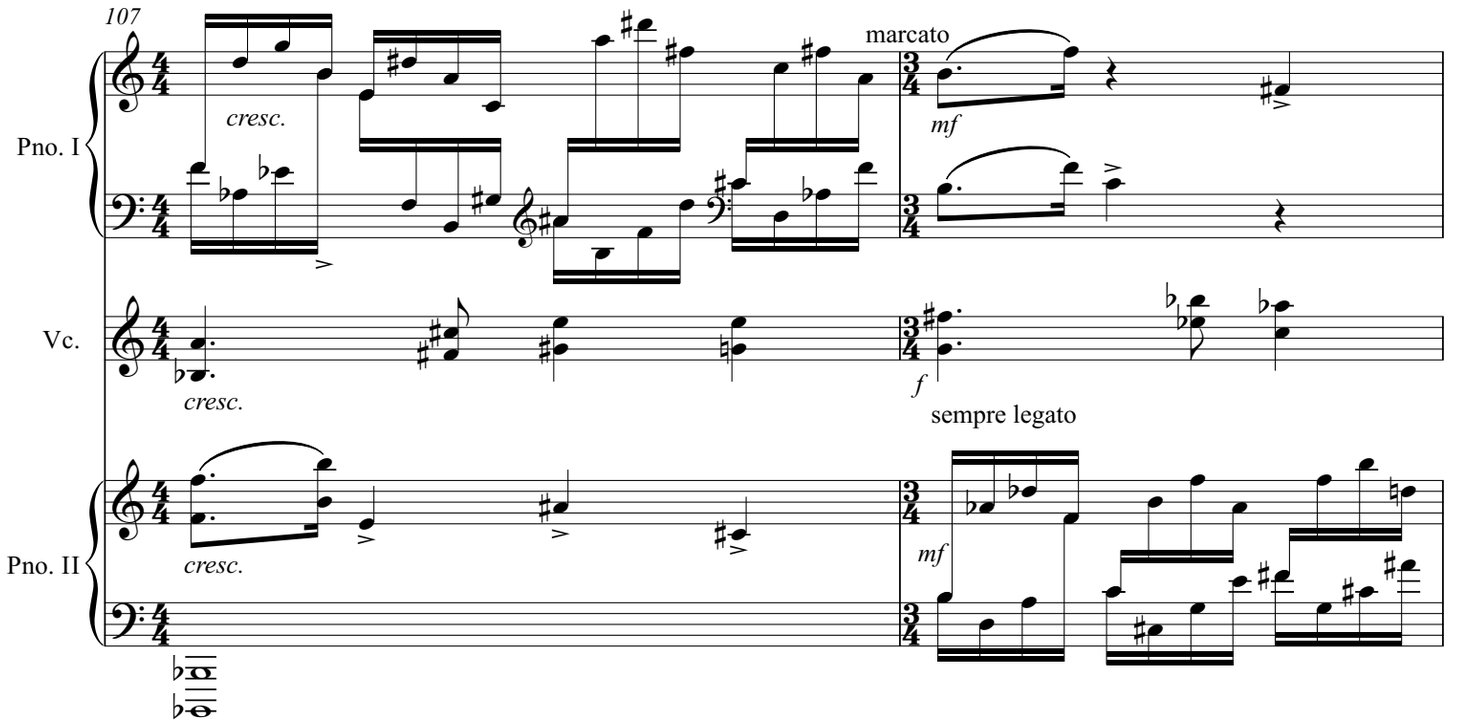
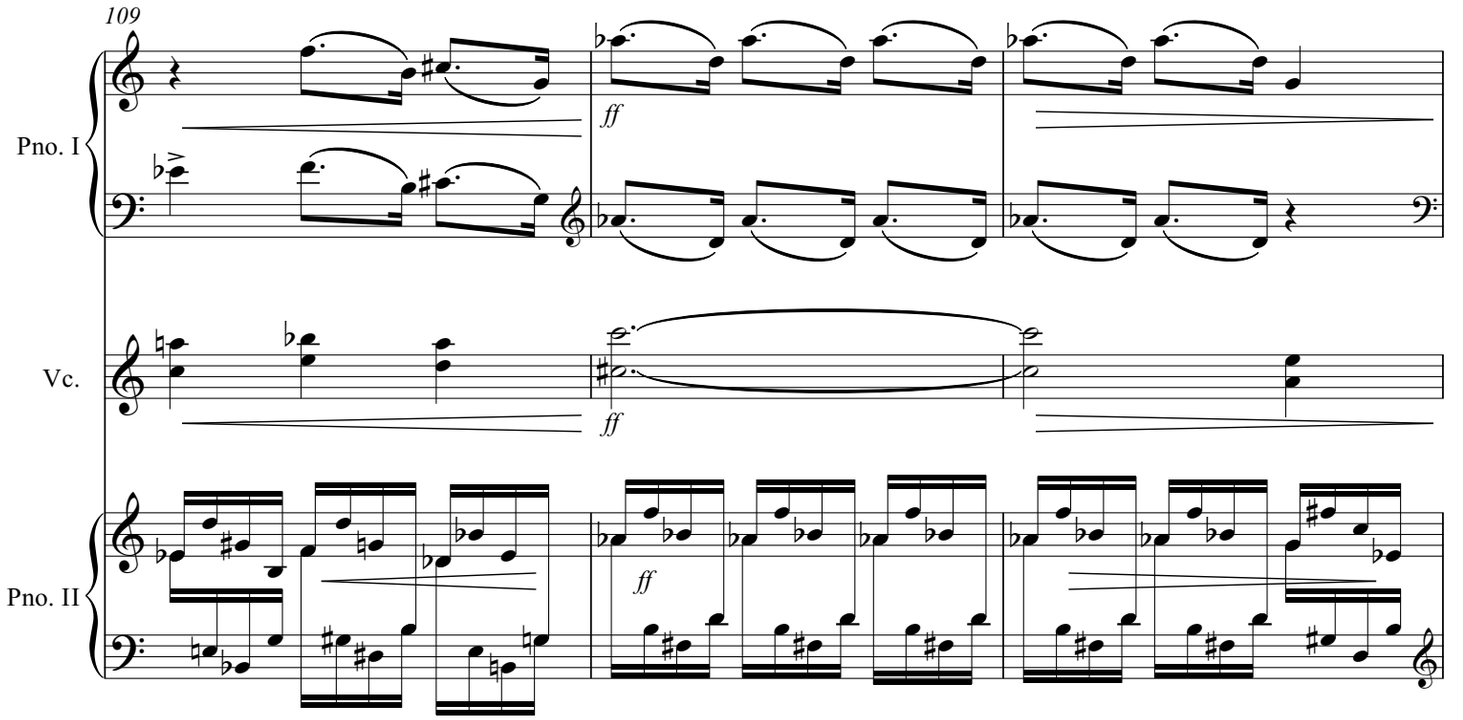
Pno. I
mp
Vc.
mf
marcato
Pno. II
mp


107
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
marcato
mf
f
sempre legato
mf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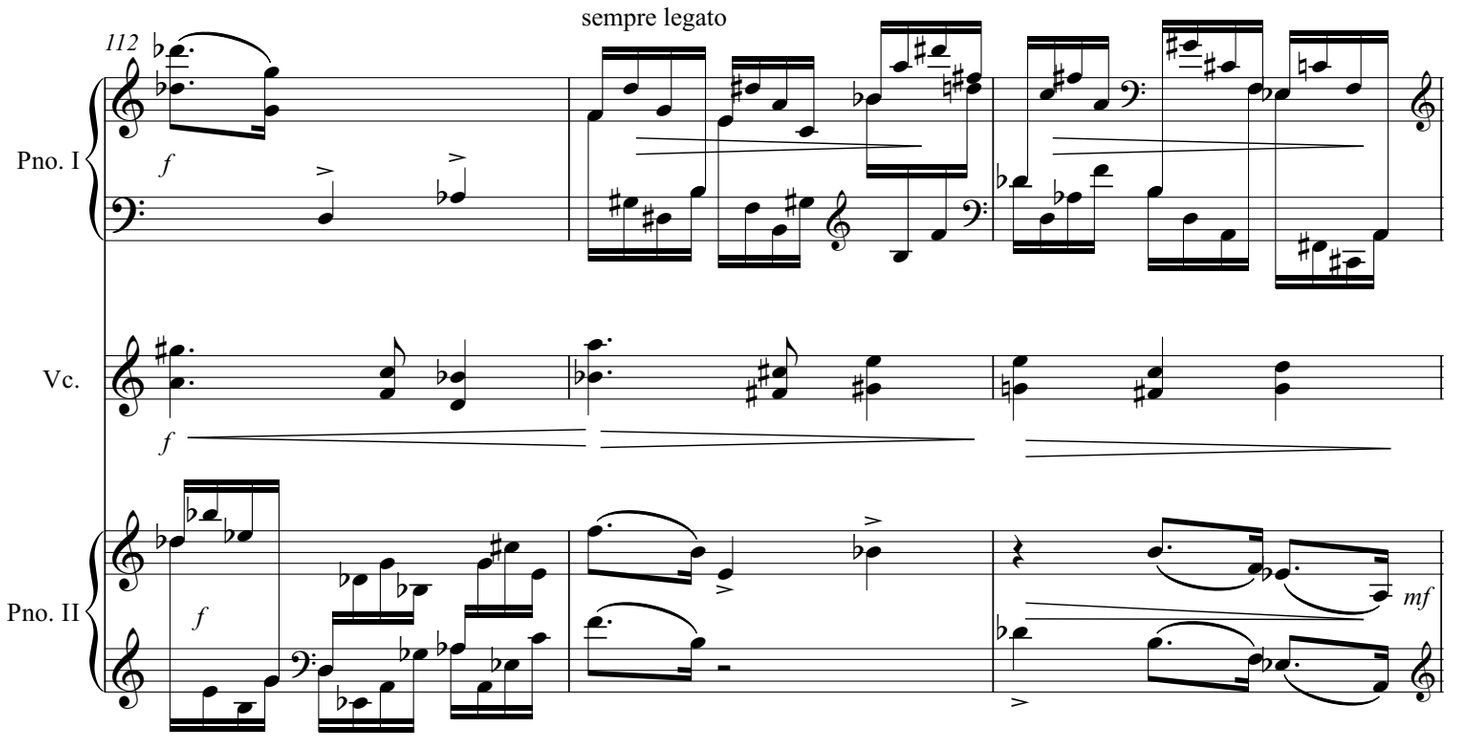
Pno. II
ff
ff
ff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sempre legato
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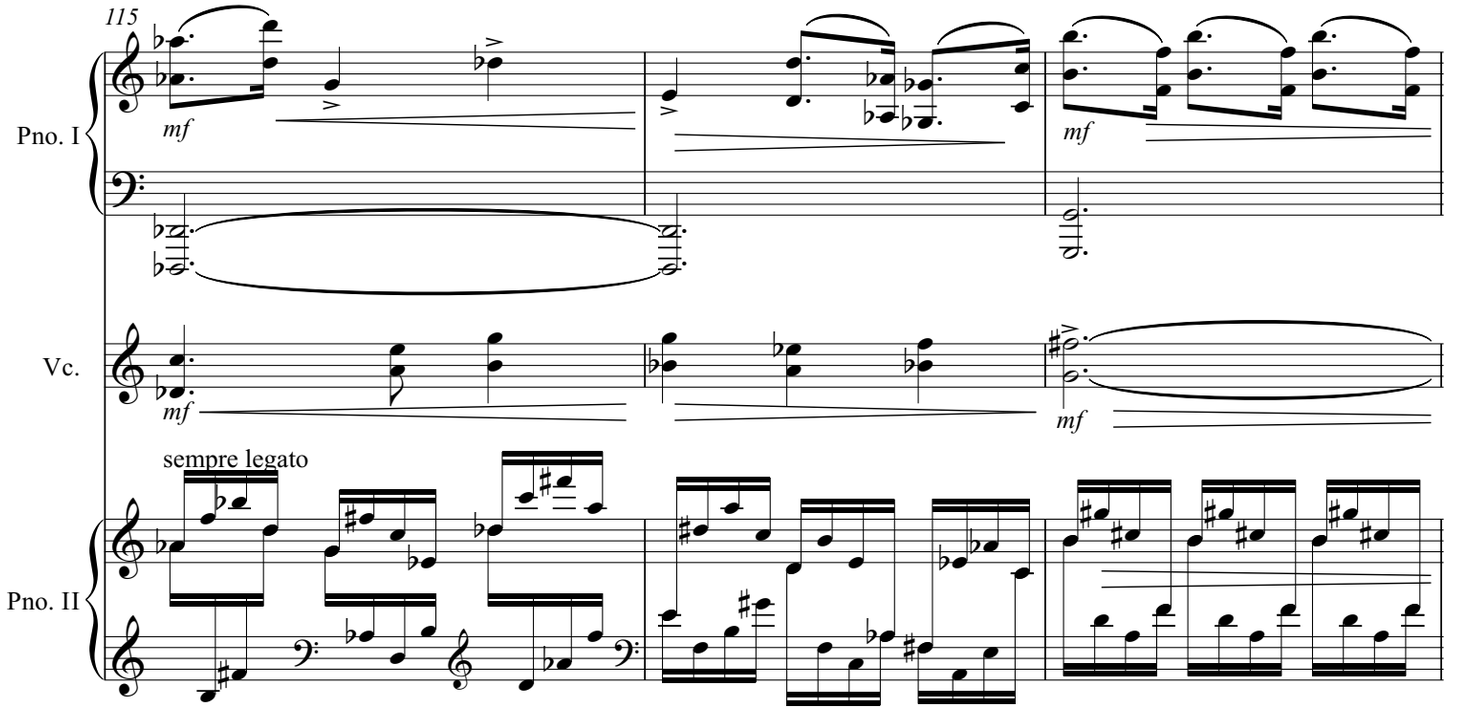
Pno. II
f
mf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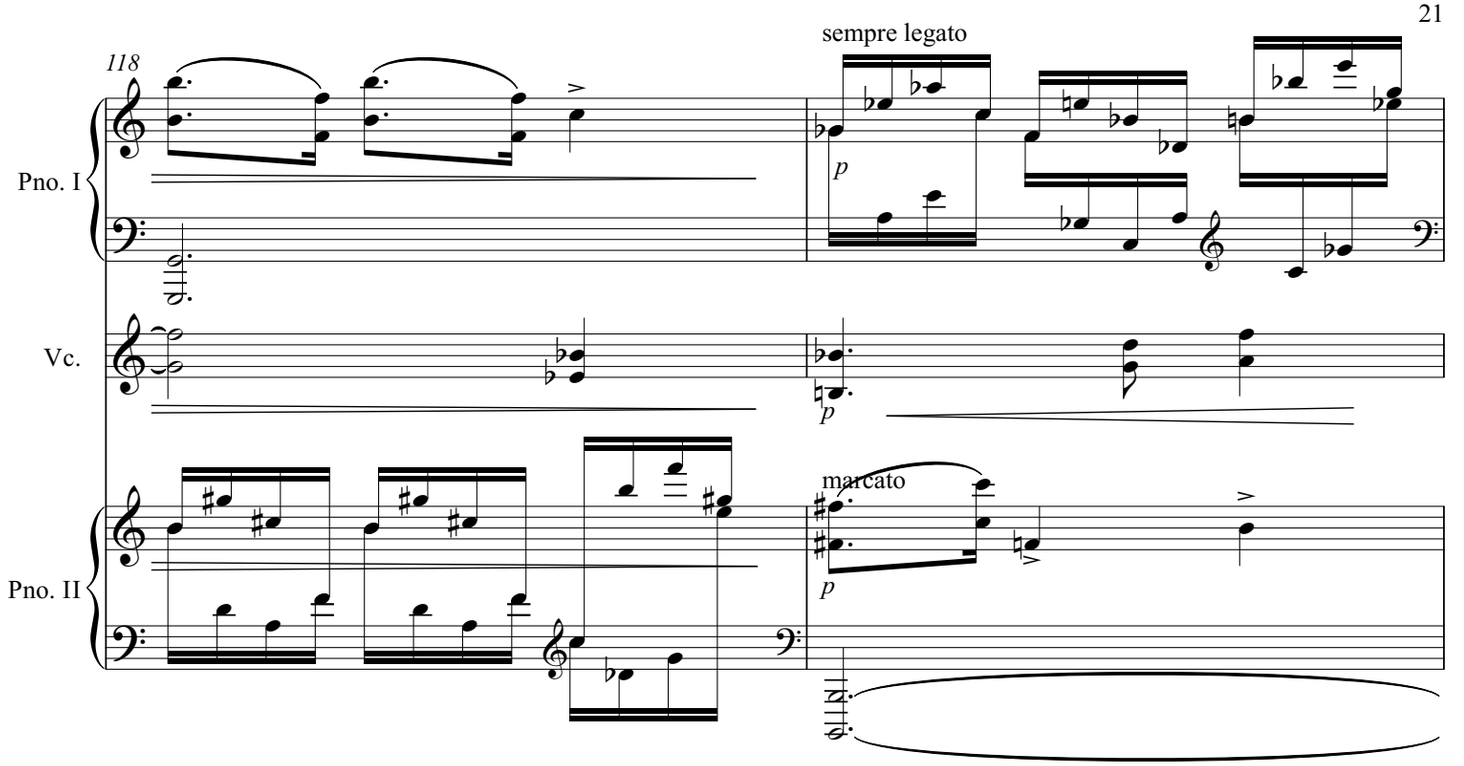
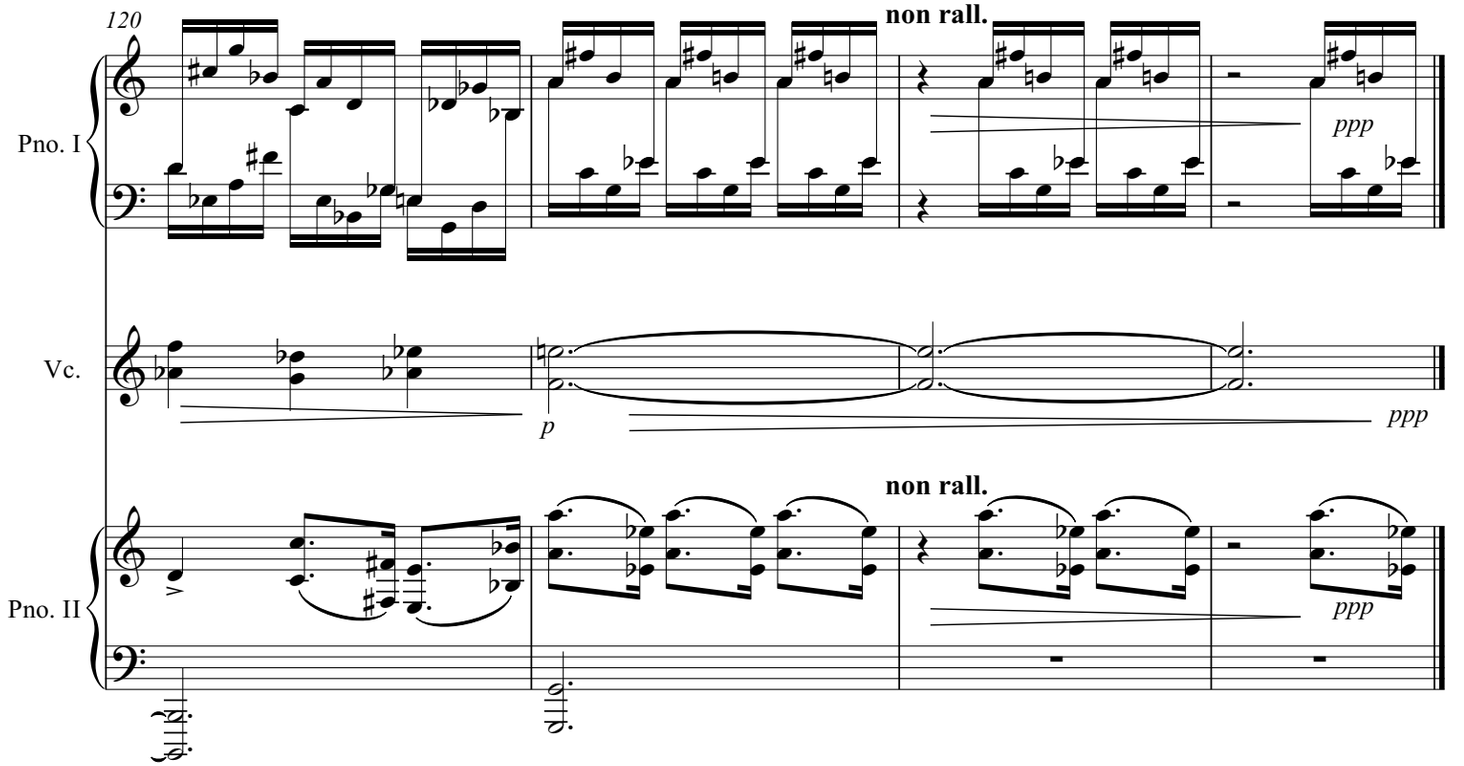
Vc.
Pno. II
mf
sempre legato


118
sempre legato
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
marcato


120
non rall.
Pno. I
Vc.
Pno. II
non rall.