Annotated by
Mason Kistler
July 21st – 23rd.

Piano Concerto No. 2

Op. 41

Dedicated to Ms. James ~~Dong Chenfeng~~

I caused this ... lol

— = Engraving Comments

— = Music Comments

TITLE

~~First Movement~~

[Transposed Score]

Just use a 1 or Numeral (I. II. III.) before the tempo or as a Subtitle.

[AUTHOR]
(birthyear)

* When you say "Flutes," "Oboes," or the plural form of the instrument names, you need to specify How Many performers are in the ensemble. Look up "Front Matter" to see the proper way to do this.

I. Allegro Maestoso

Flutes

Too many unisons. Spread out to fit Chord.

Oboes

Clarinets in B ♭

Bassoons

Horns in F

How Many?

Trumpets in B ♭

Timpani

1.

p cresc.

While a fancy gesture, the final chord in measure two is unstable. If played live, it will sound thin. Add a divisi line in the first Violin to stabilize the harmonic series.

Piano

Allegro Maestoso

NEEDS: G C♯

Separate rests

Violins 1

Violins 2

Beaming, and dotted notes MUST be done in a way to keep the Beats intact.

SEPARATE THE RESTS

Violas

Divisi?

Divisi?

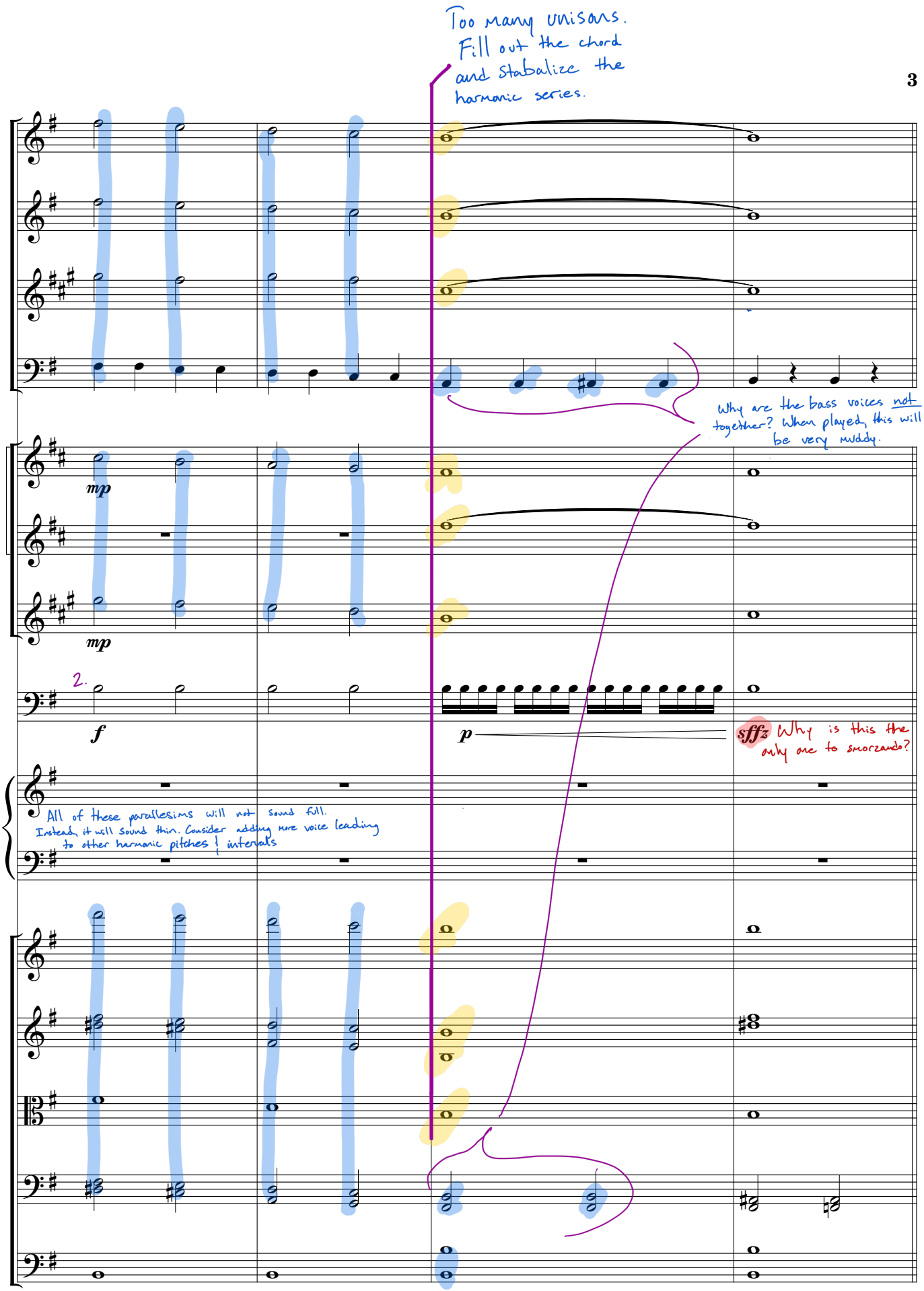
You must specify when Divisi occurs.

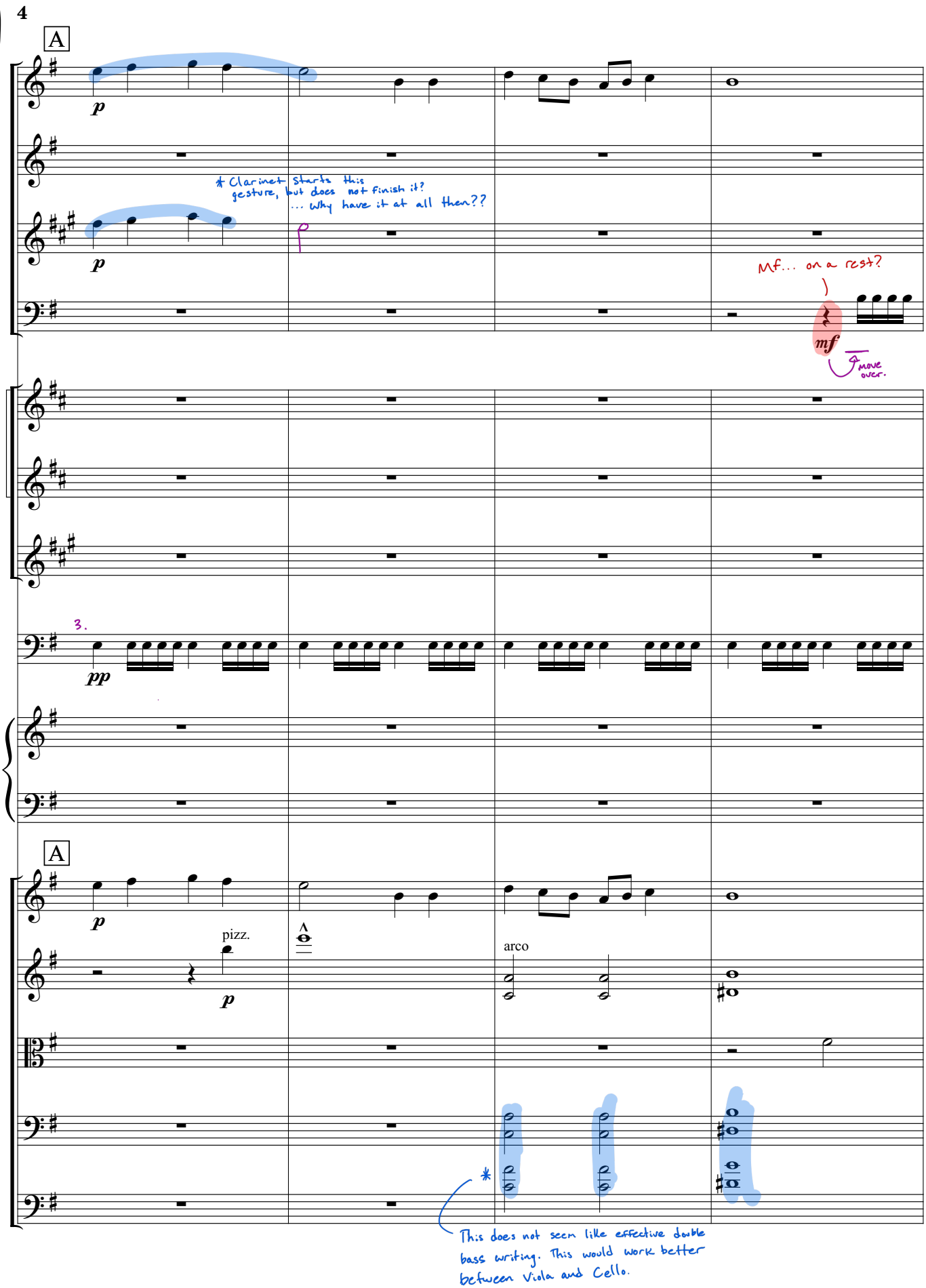
Violoncellos

USE THIS:

• This engraving may look too extra, however is beneficial for the performer to see the beats.

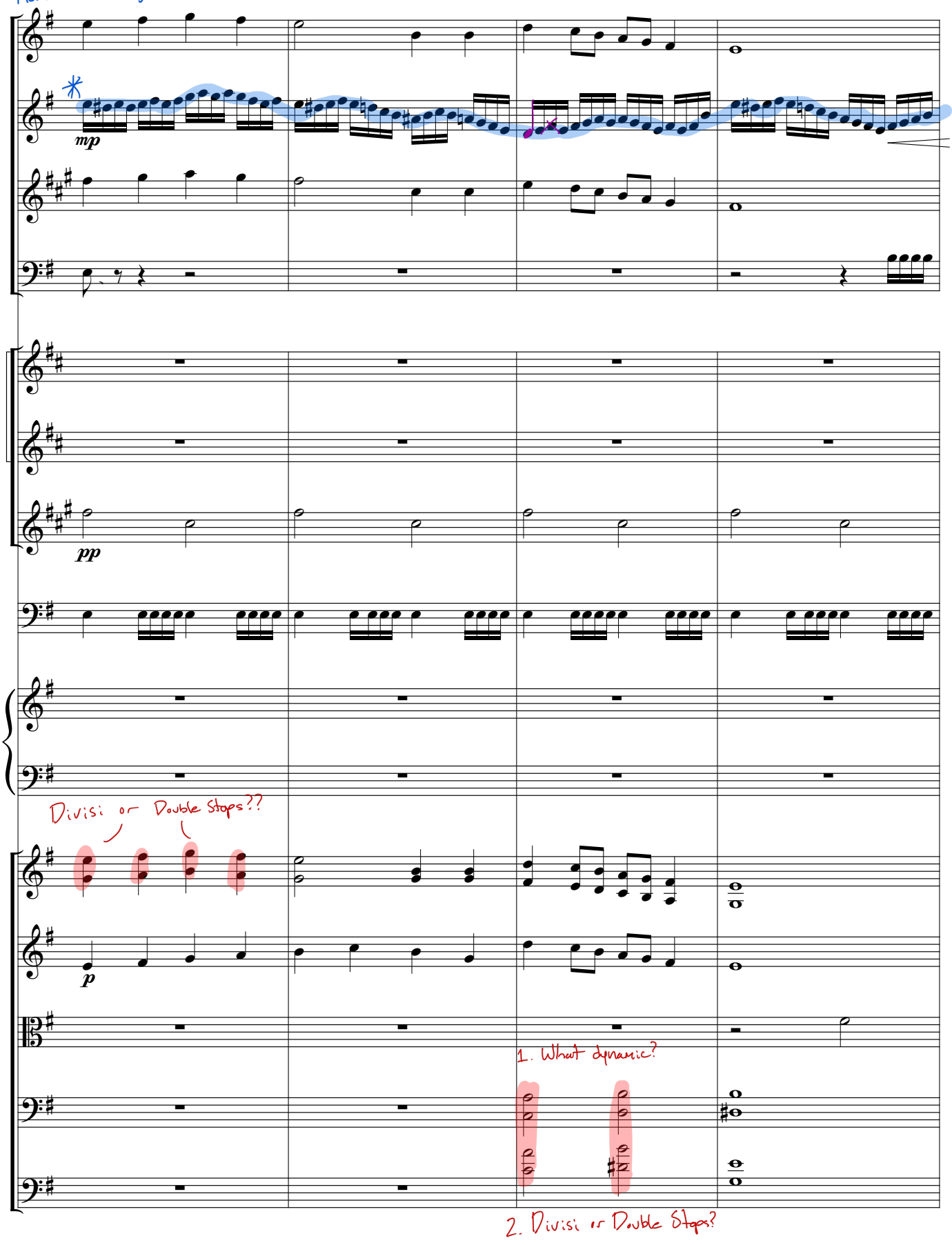
Contrabasses


Too many unisons. Fill out the chord and stabalize the harmonic series.
Why are the bass voices not together? When played, this will be very muddy.
mp
mp
2.
f
p
sffz Why is this the only one to smorzando?
All of these parallelisms will not sound full. Instead, it will sound thin. Consider adding more voice leading to other harmonic pitches & intervals


A
p
* Clarinet starts this gesture, but does not finish it? ... Why have it at all then??
p
Mf... on a rest?
mf
move over.
3.
pp
A
p
pizz.
p
arco
*
This does not seem like effective double bass writing. This would work better between Viola and Cello.

2.

*CAREFUL!!
The Oboe is a difficult instrument due to the Fingering system and more importantly, Air pressure. Oboes need room to breath on extensive passages due to back-pressure from the tiny Reed. Please amend slightly by adding room to breath.



3.

6

There's a distinction between individual and ensemble dynamics. While you may change dynamics for playback purposes in MuseScore, remind yourself that you are writing for an ensemble. Visually, there should be a clear distinction between your Melody and Accompaniment BEFORE dynamics. A conductor will balance the ensemble from there.

f

mf

mf ↓ Move over

mf

Dynamic?

mp

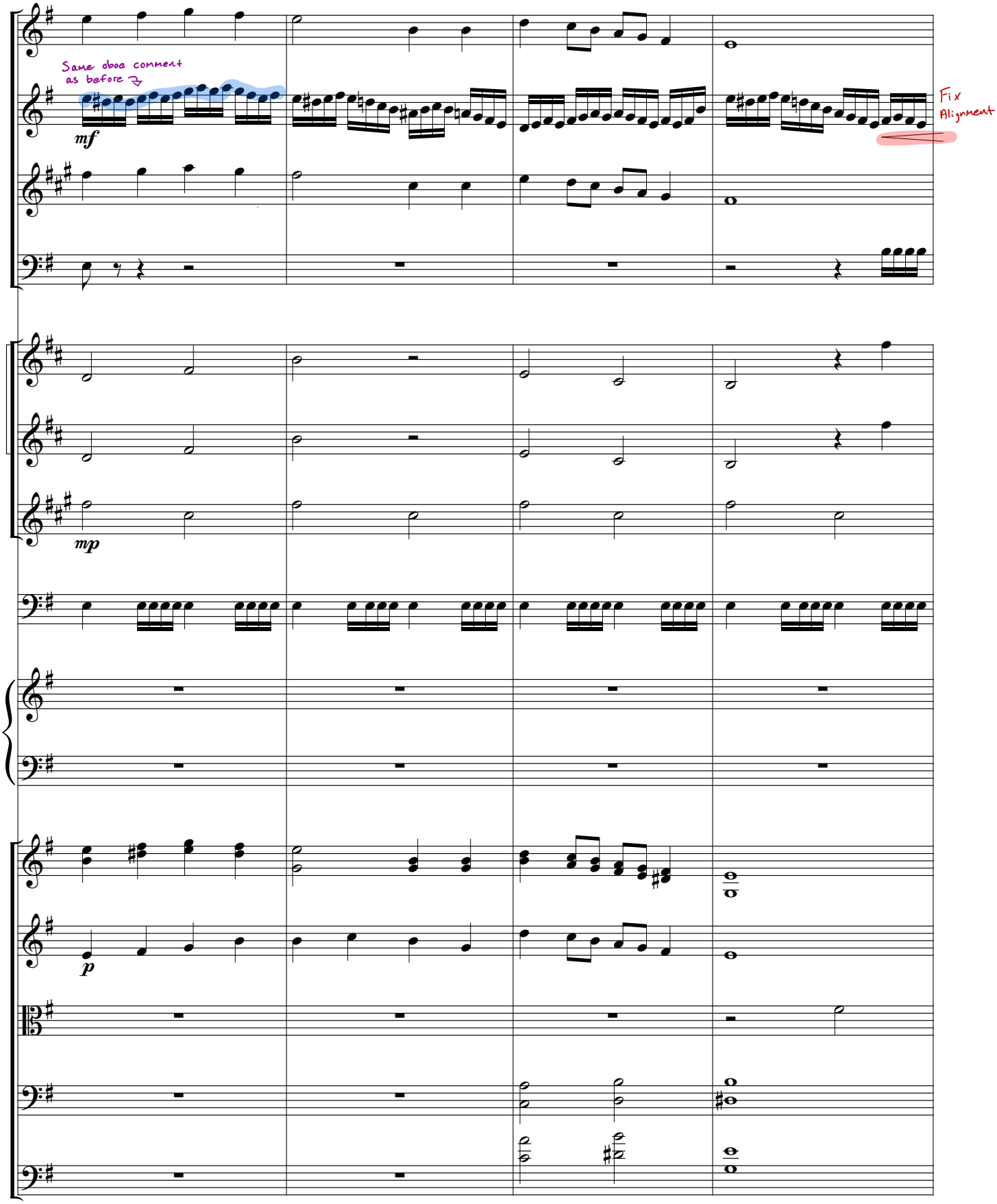
f

pizz.

f

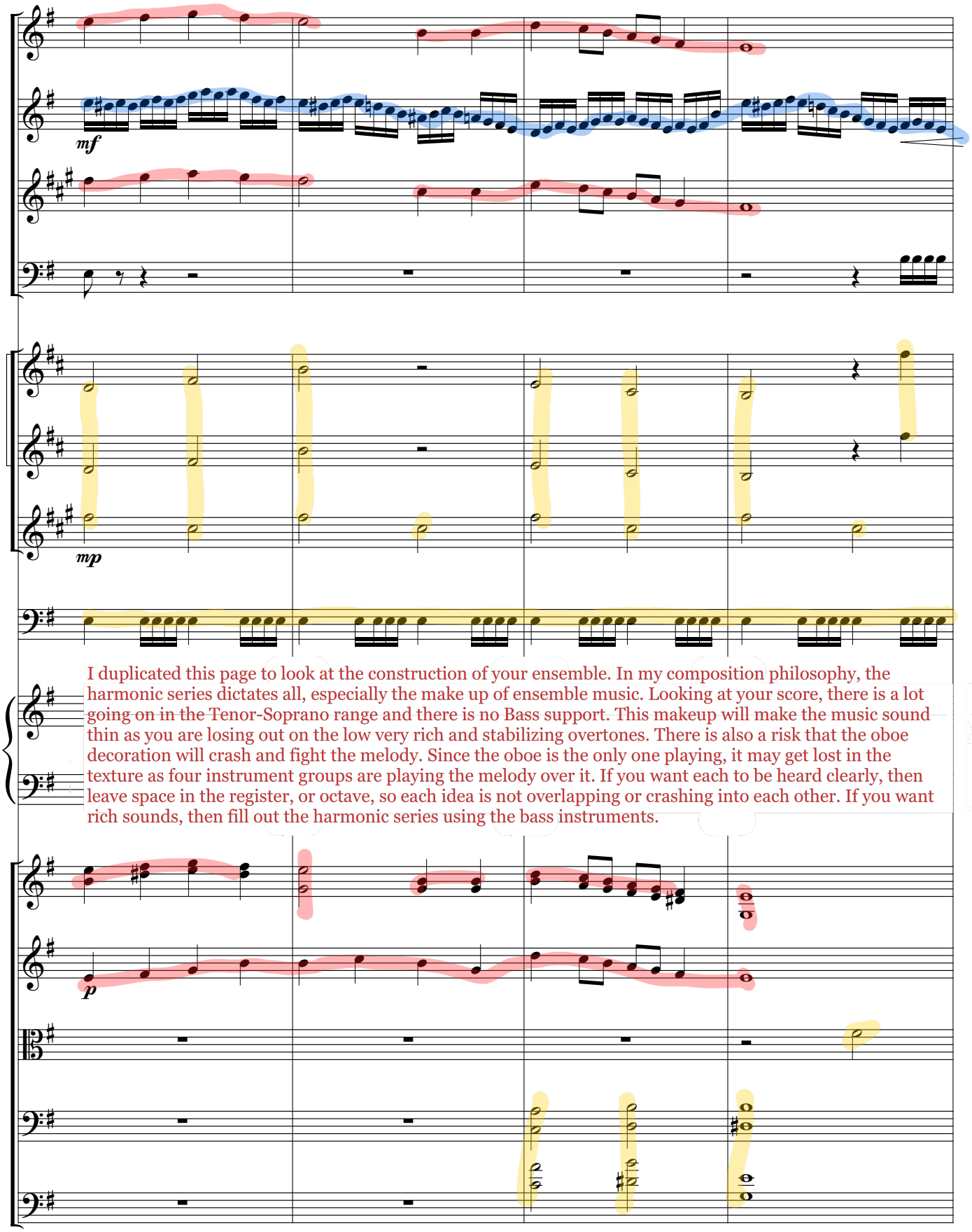
arco

4. You repeat the same 8-bar period twice over the last four pages. The melodic and harmonic content are identical. Consider adding more variation in the ensemble the second time.



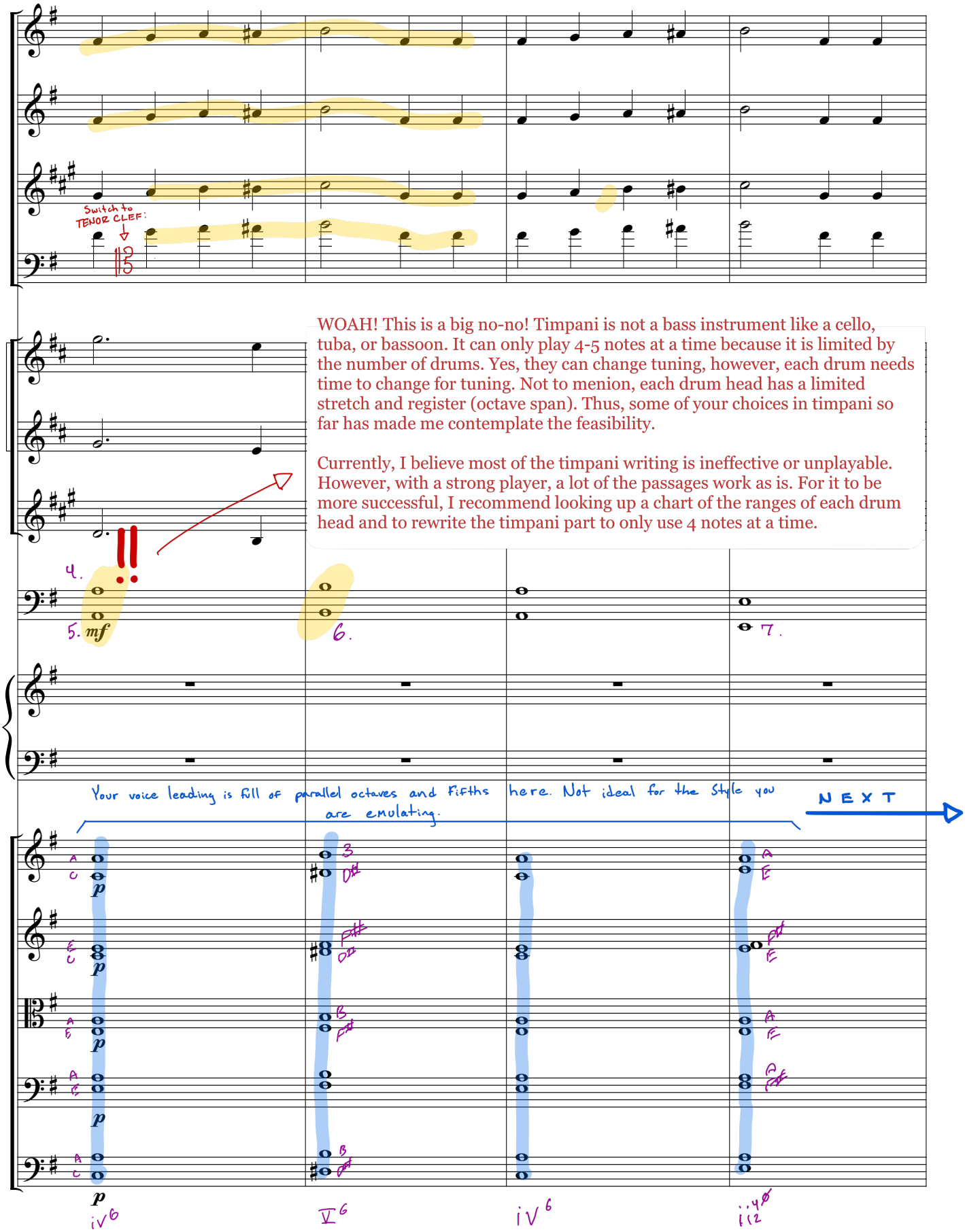
MELODY
Accompaniment
DECORATION

PAGE 7
Duplicate 7



I duplicated this page to look at the construction of your ensemble. In my composition philosophy, the harmonic series dictates all, especially the make up of ensemble music. Looking at your score, there is a lot going on in the Tenor-Soprano range and there is no Bass support. This makeup will make the music sound thin as you are losing out on the low very rich and stabilizing overtones. There is also a risk that the oboe decoration will crash and fight the melody. Since the oboe is the only one playing, it may get lost in the texture as four instrument groups are playing the melody over it. If you want each to be heard clearly, then leave space in the register, or octave, so each idea is not overlapping or crashing into each other. If you want rich sounds, then fill out the harmonic series using the bass instruments.

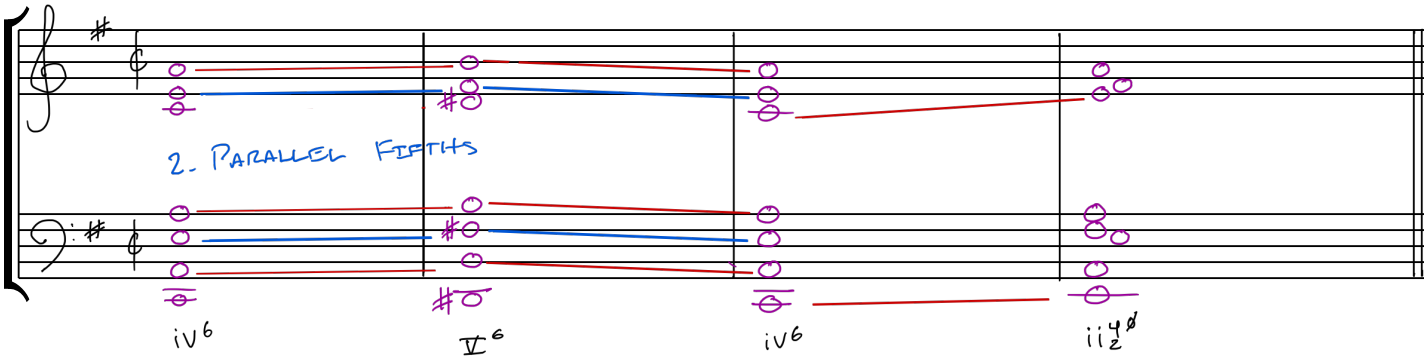
Too many unisons...



Your string writing on Page 8:

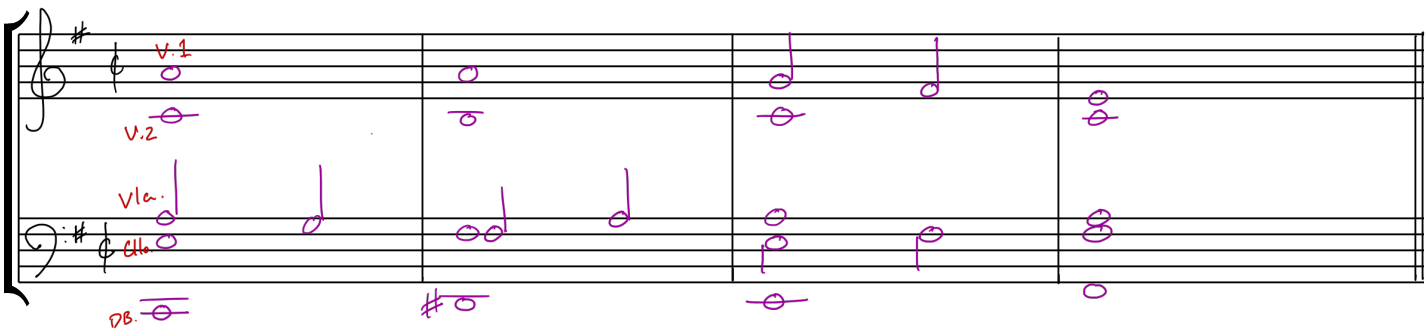
1. PARALLEL OCTAVES

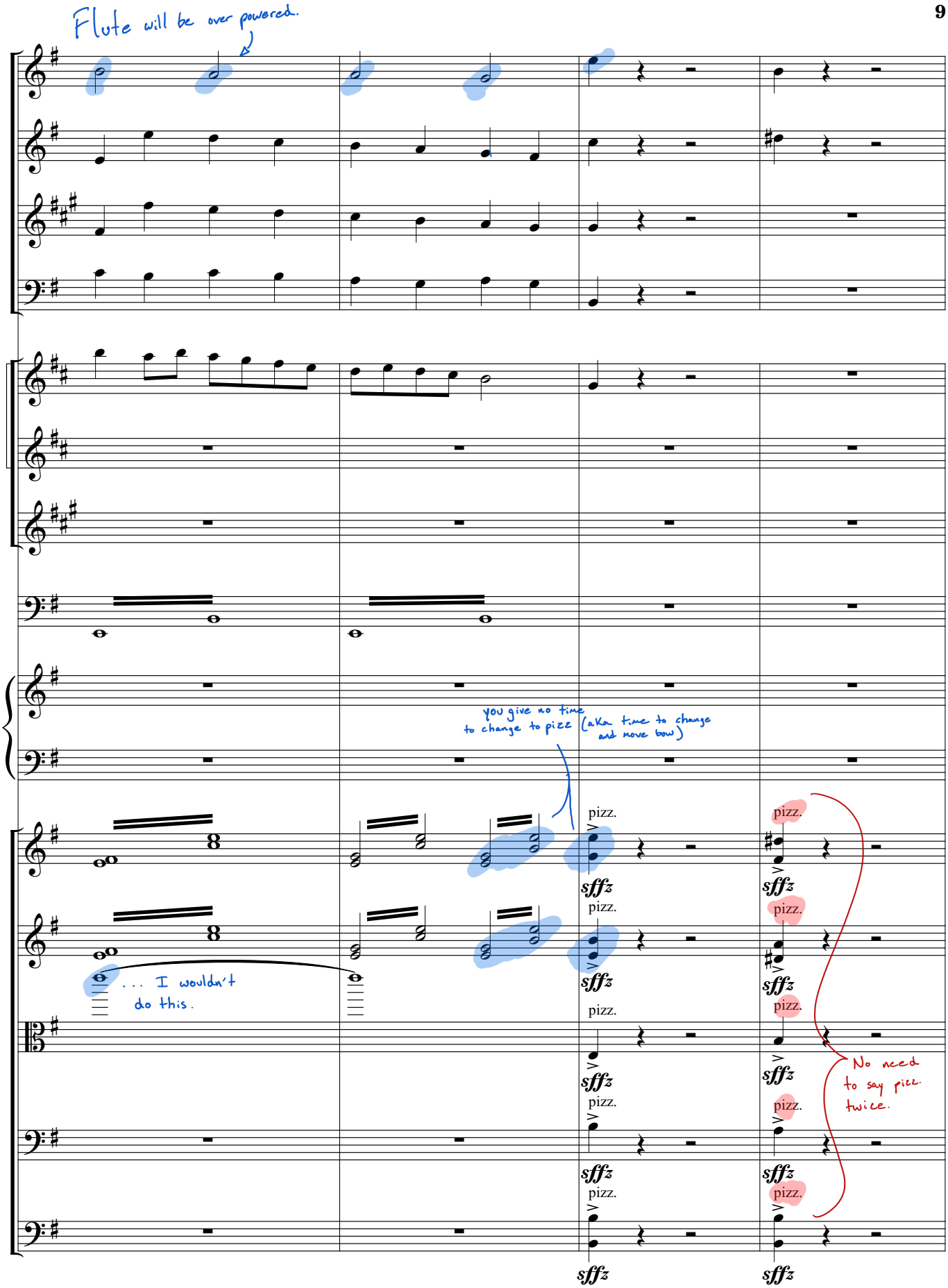
2. PARALLEL FIFTHS

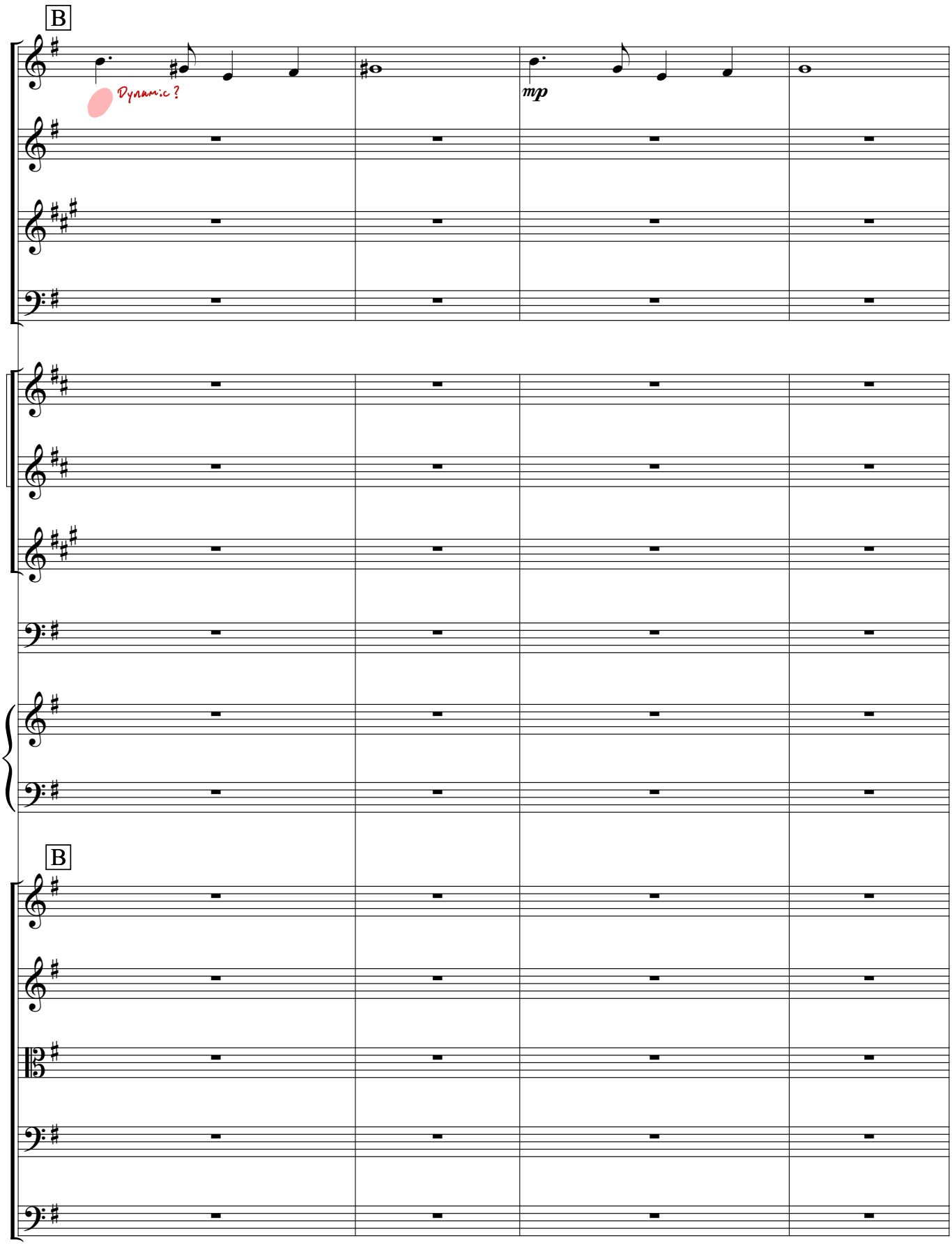


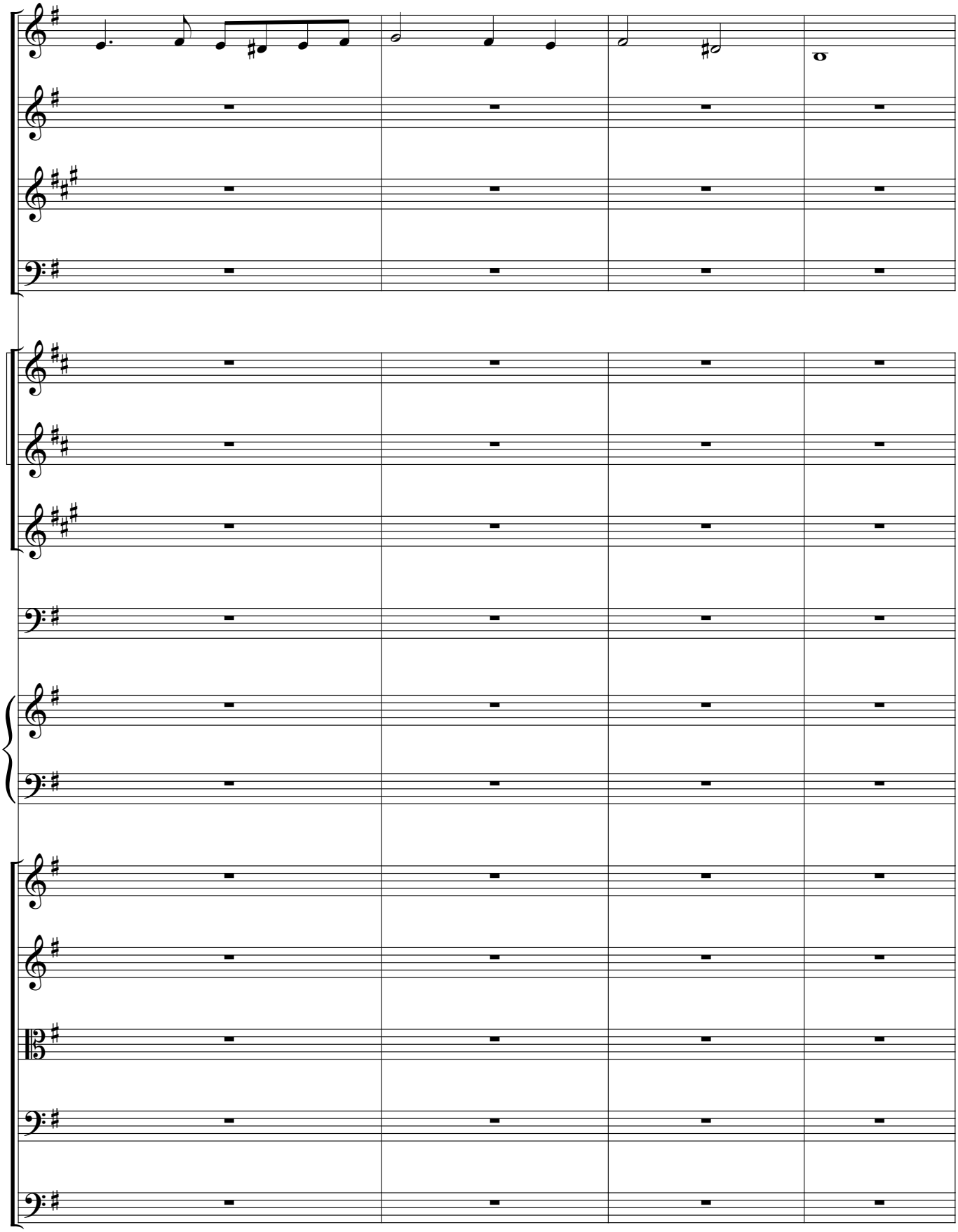
Voice leading tips:
1. Contrary > oblique > Parallel
2. Double: Octaves > Thirds > Fifths (Sevenths)
3. Non chord tones are okay!

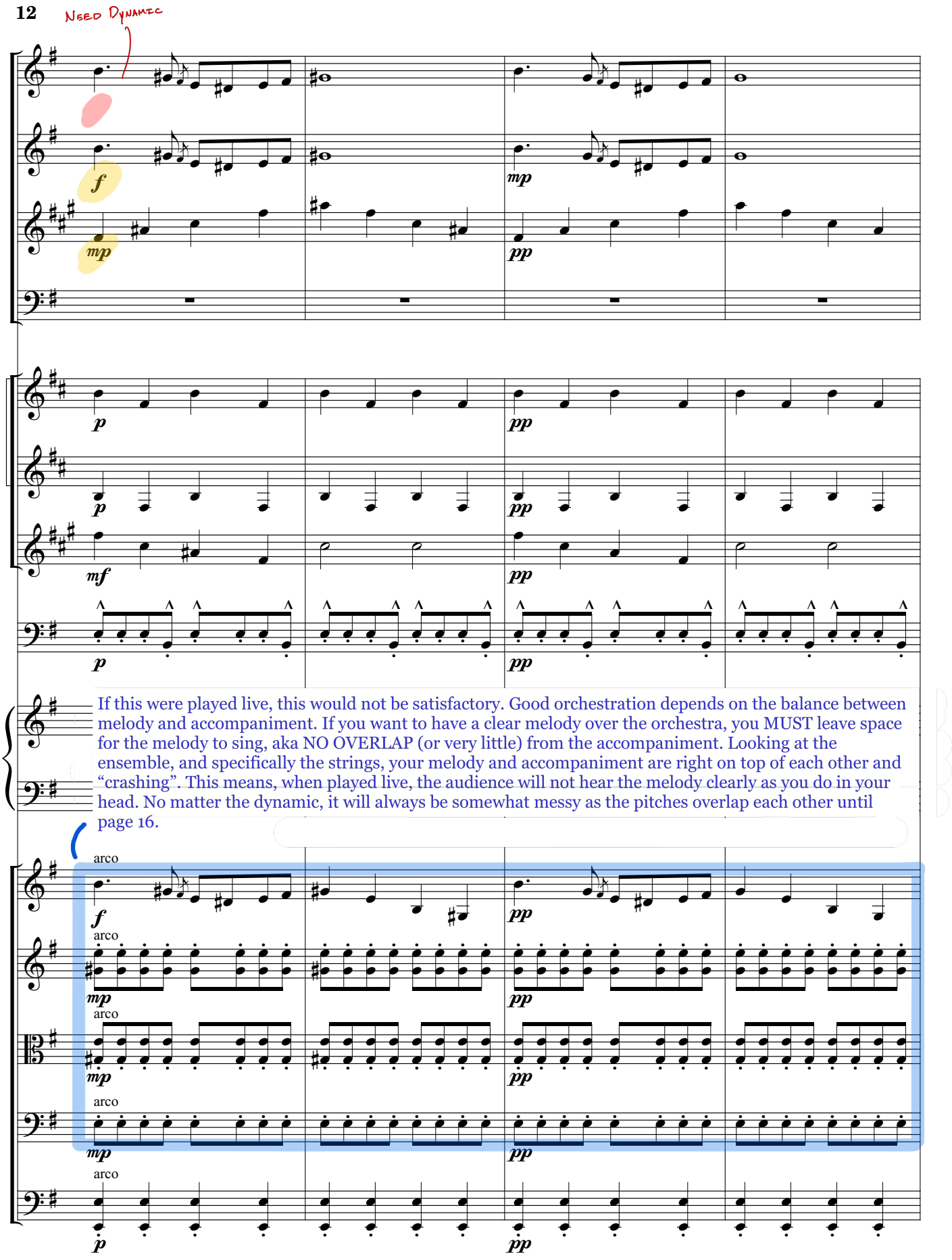
My suggestions: This way, each voice is instrumental and gets a unique purpose.

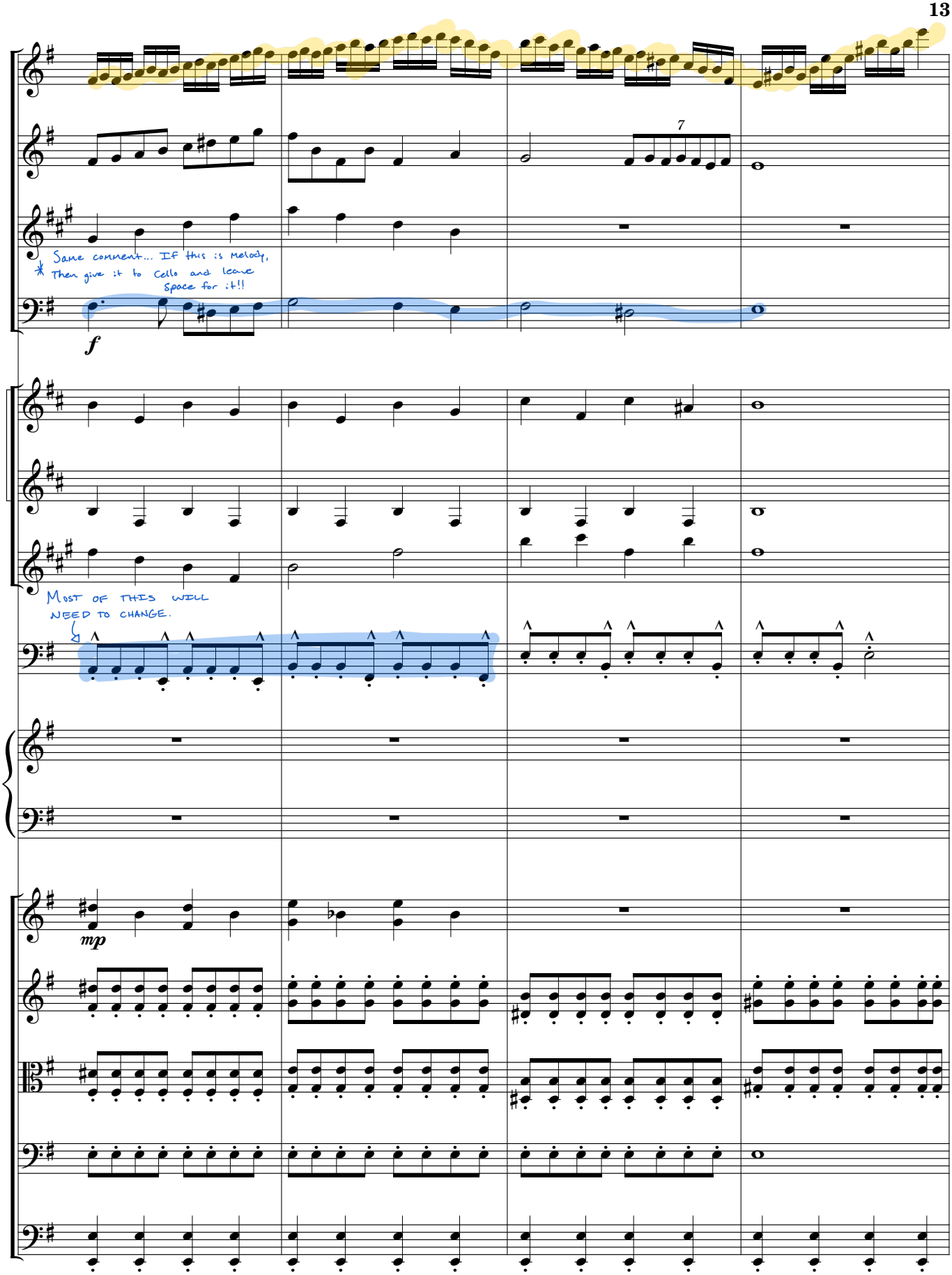


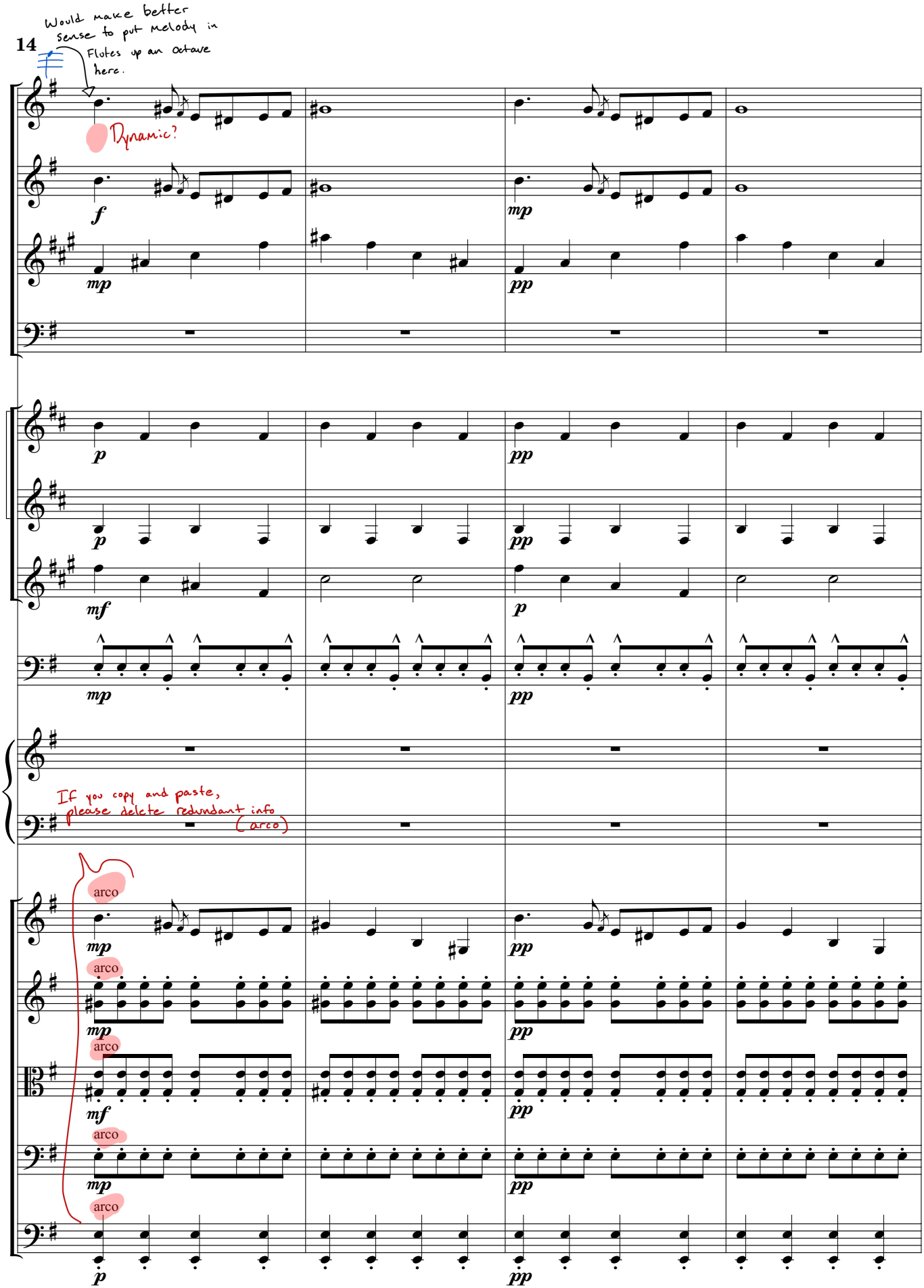

Flute will be over powered.
you give no time to change to pizz (aka time to change and move bow)
... I wouldn't do this.
pizz.
sffz
No need to say pizz. twice.


B
Dynamic?
mp
B

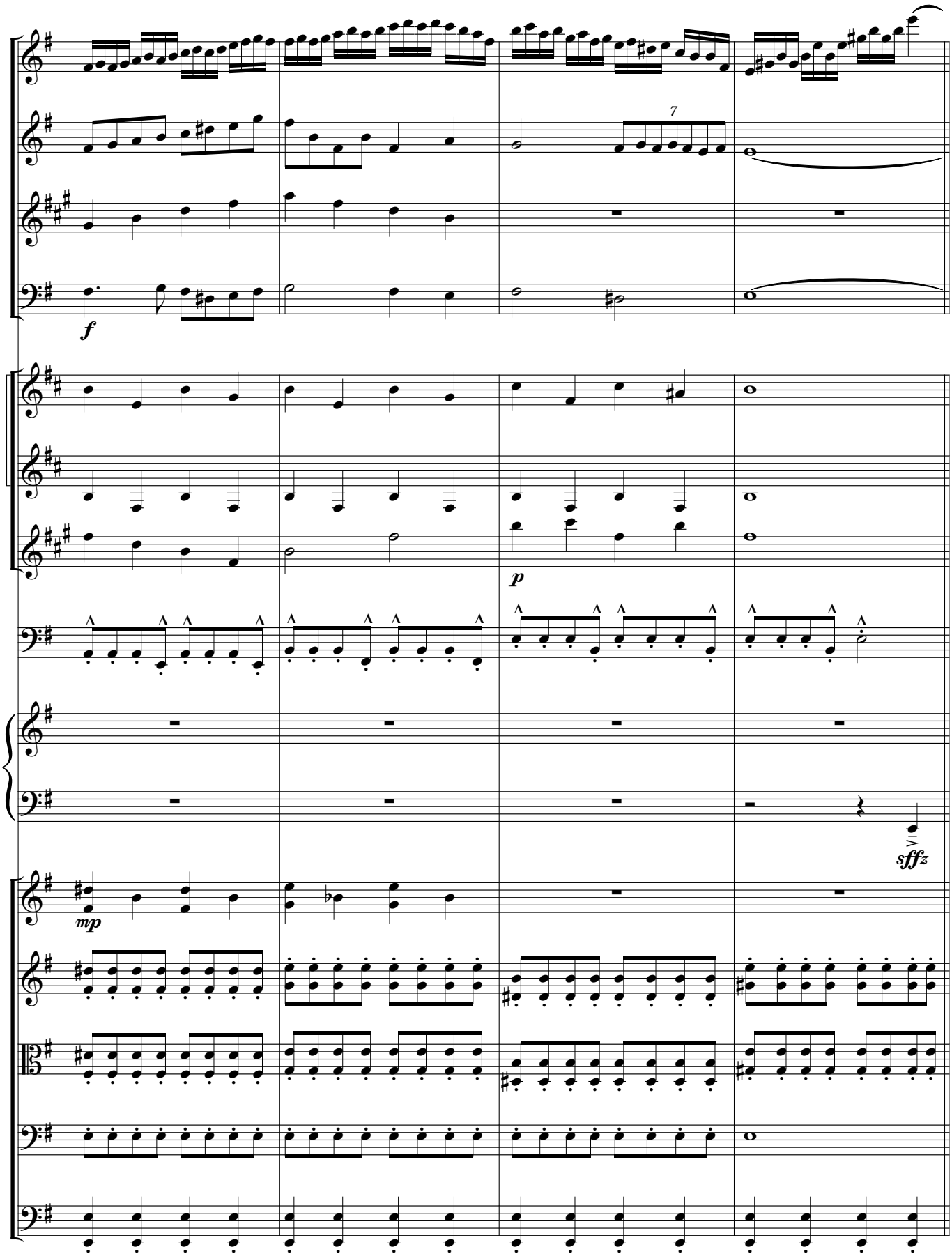


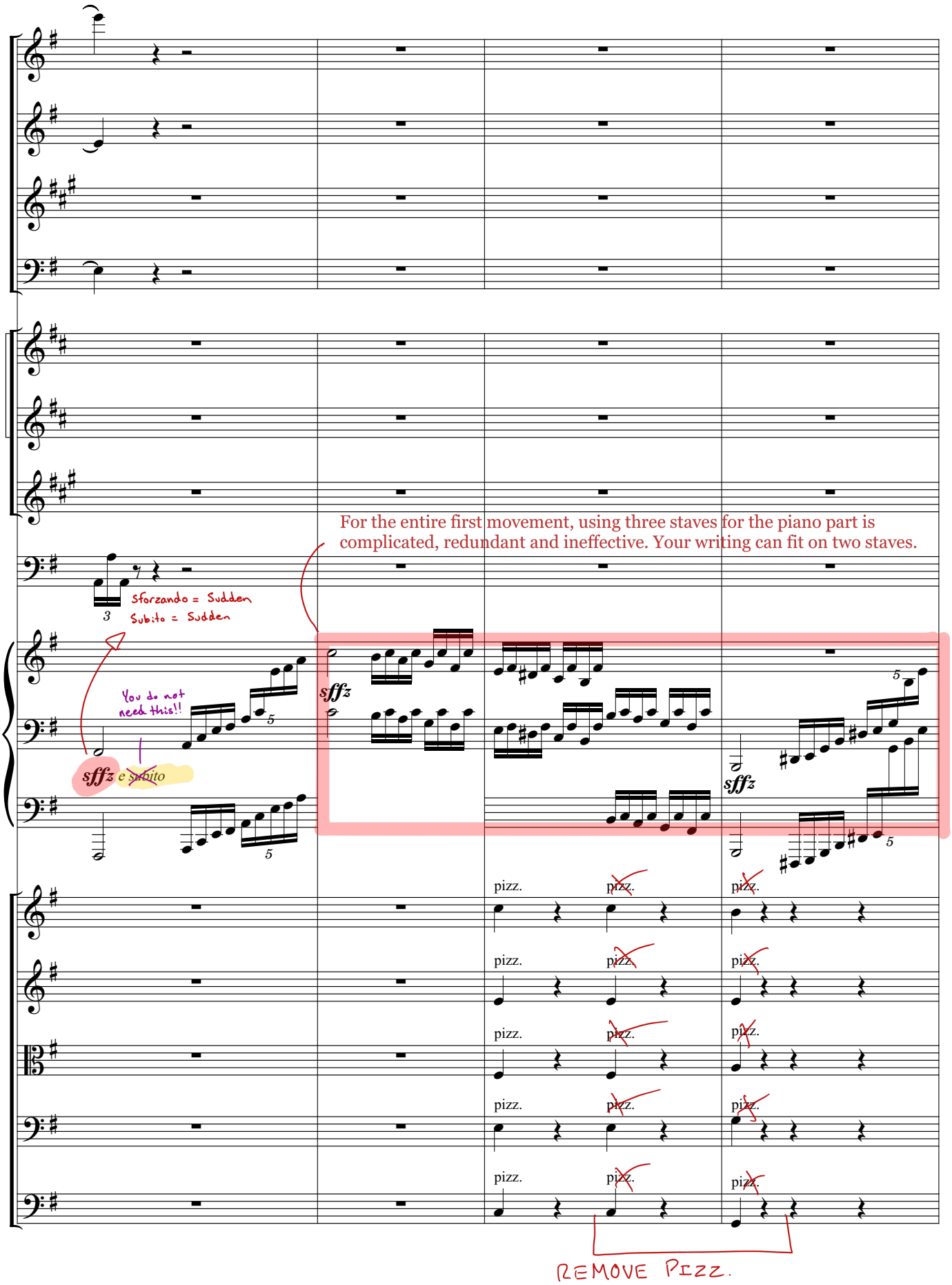

Need Dynamic
If this were played live, this would not be satisfactory. Good orchestration depends on the balance between melody and accompaniment. If you want to have a clear melody over the orchestra, you MUST leave space for the melody to sing, aka NO OVERLAP (or very little) from the accompaniment. Looking at the ensemble, and specifically the strings, your melody and accompaniment are right on top of each other and "crashing". This means, when played live, the audience will not hear the melody clearly as you do in your head. No matter the dynamic, it will always be somewhat messy as the pitches overlap each other until page 16.
arco
arco
arco
arco
arco


7
Same comment... If this is melody, Then give it to Cello and leave space for it!!
f
MOST OF THIS WILL NEED TO CHANGE.
mp

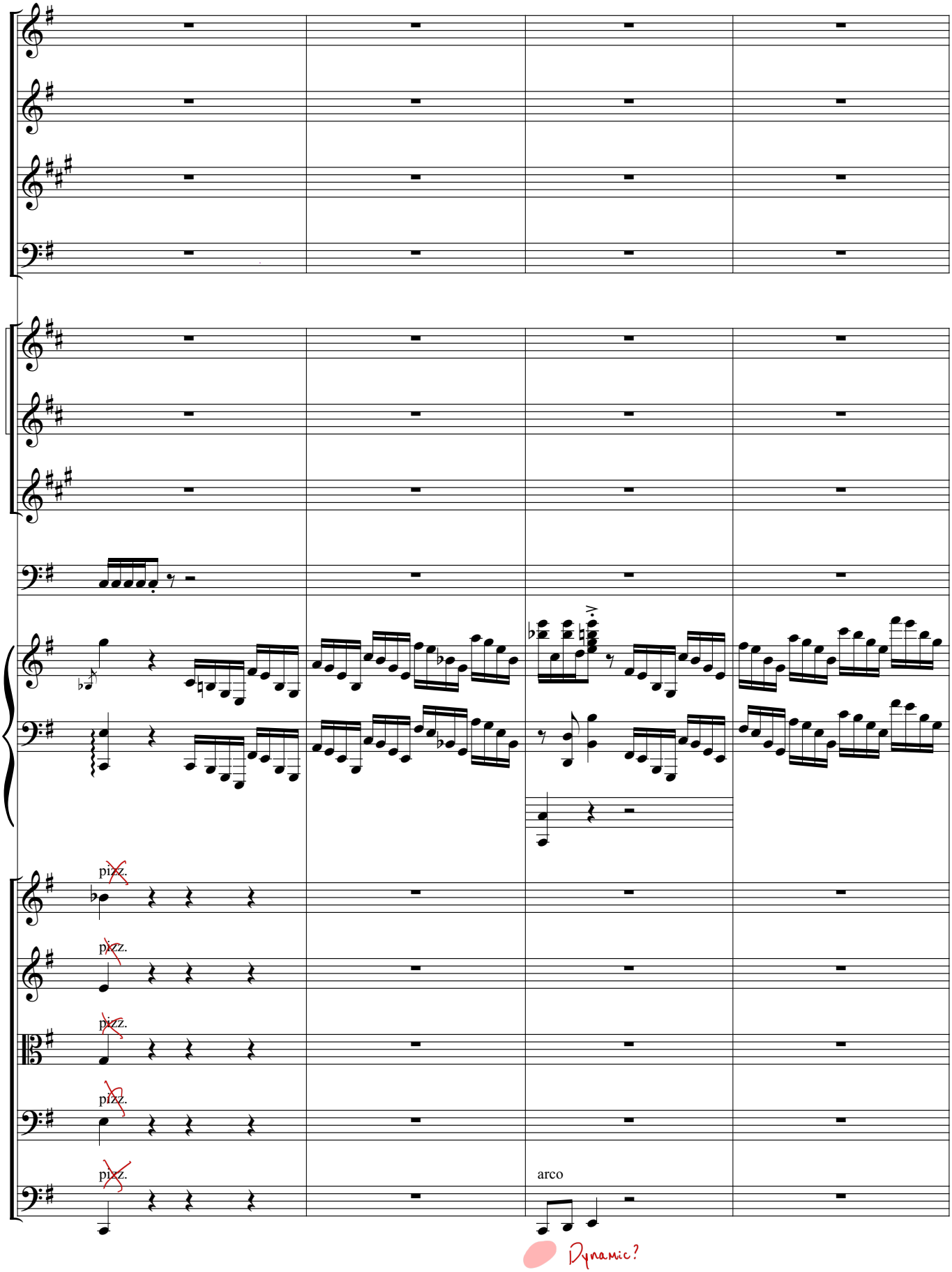

14
Would make better sense to put melody in Flutes up an octave here.
Dynamic?
If you copy and paste, please delete redundant info
(arco)
arco

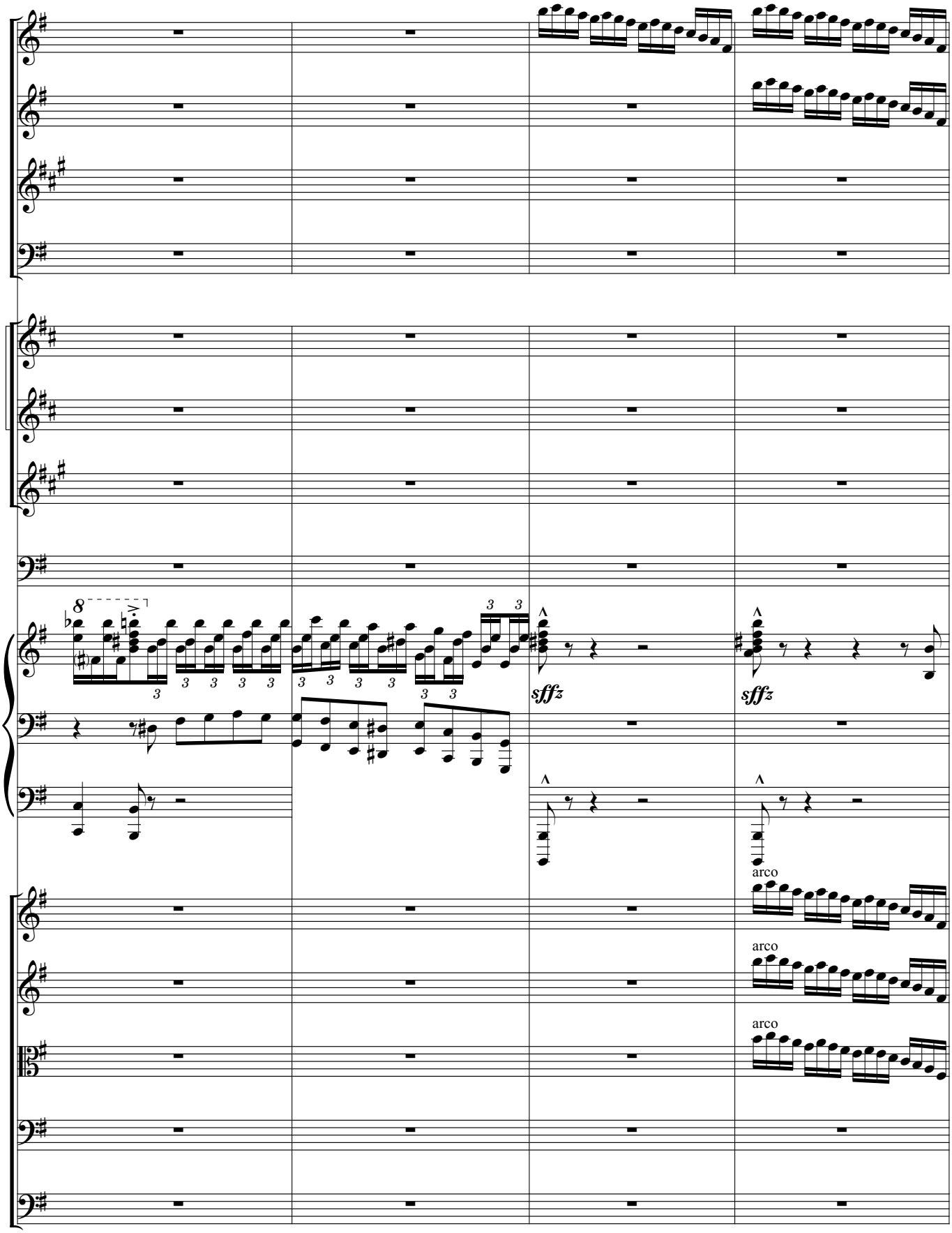
* SAME COMMENTS AS LAST 3 PAGES.

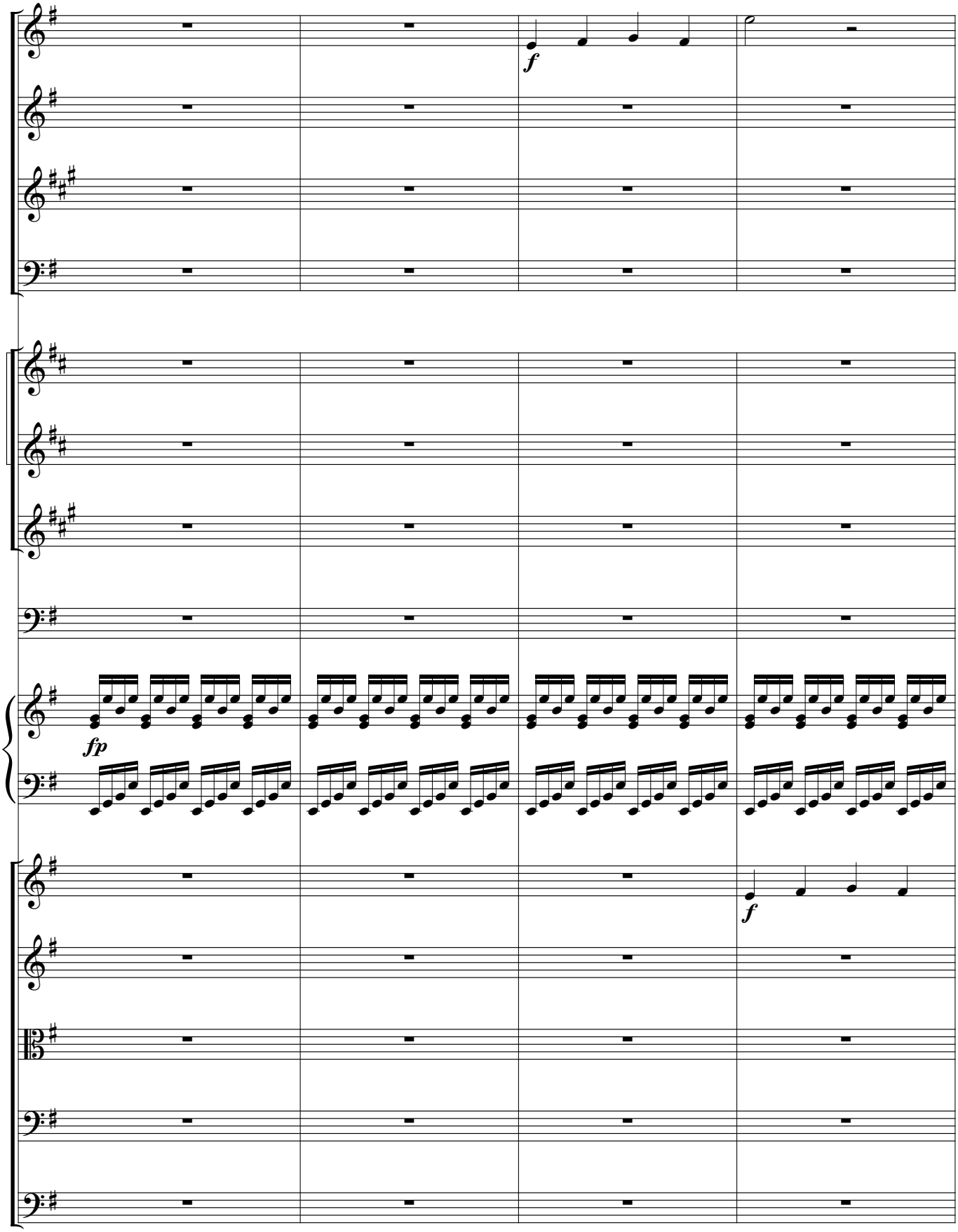


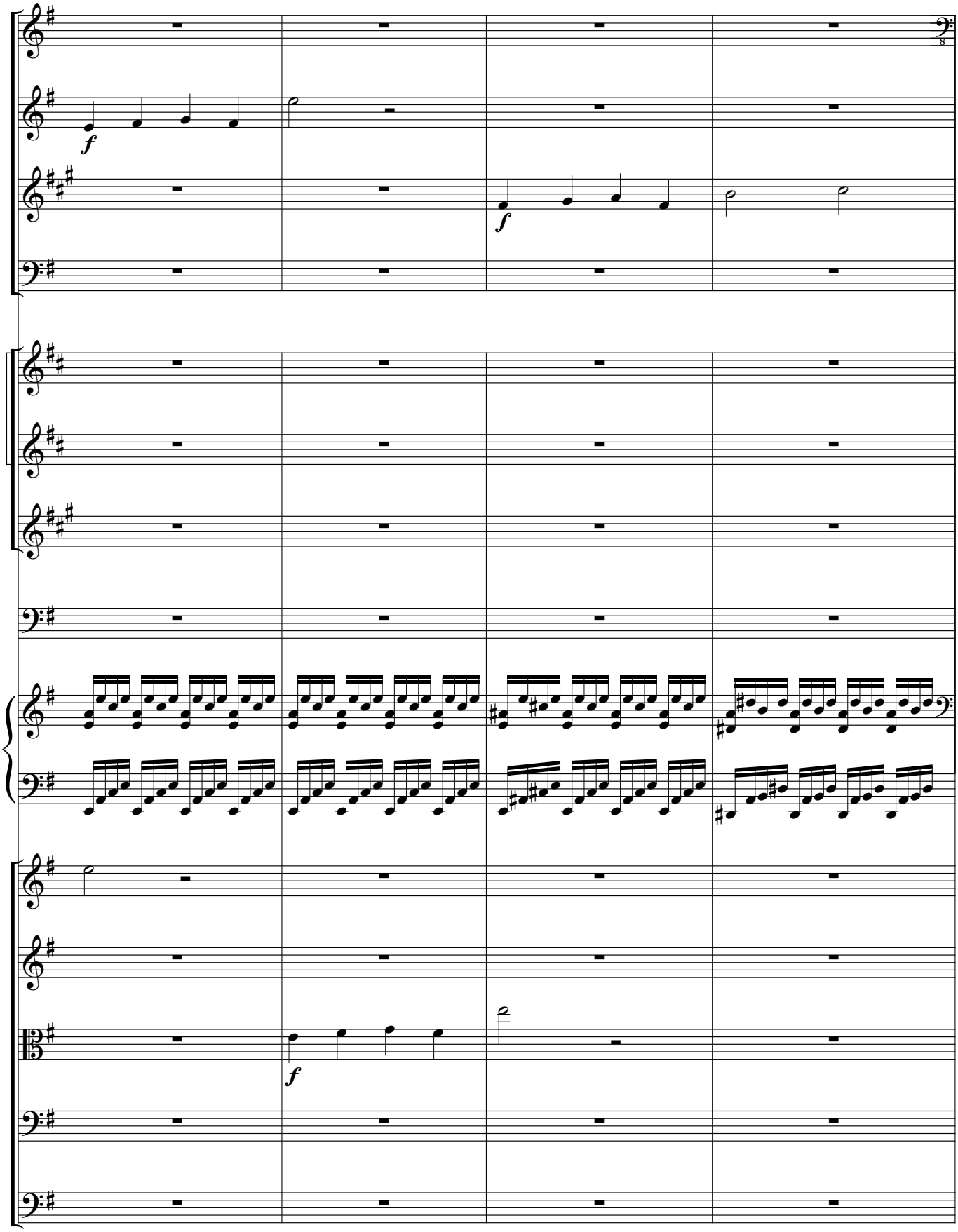

For the entire first movement, using three staves for the piano part is complicated, redundant and ineffective. Your writing can fit on two staves.
Sforzando = Sudden
Subito = Sudden
You do not need this!!
sffz
e subito
pizz.
REMOVE Pizz.

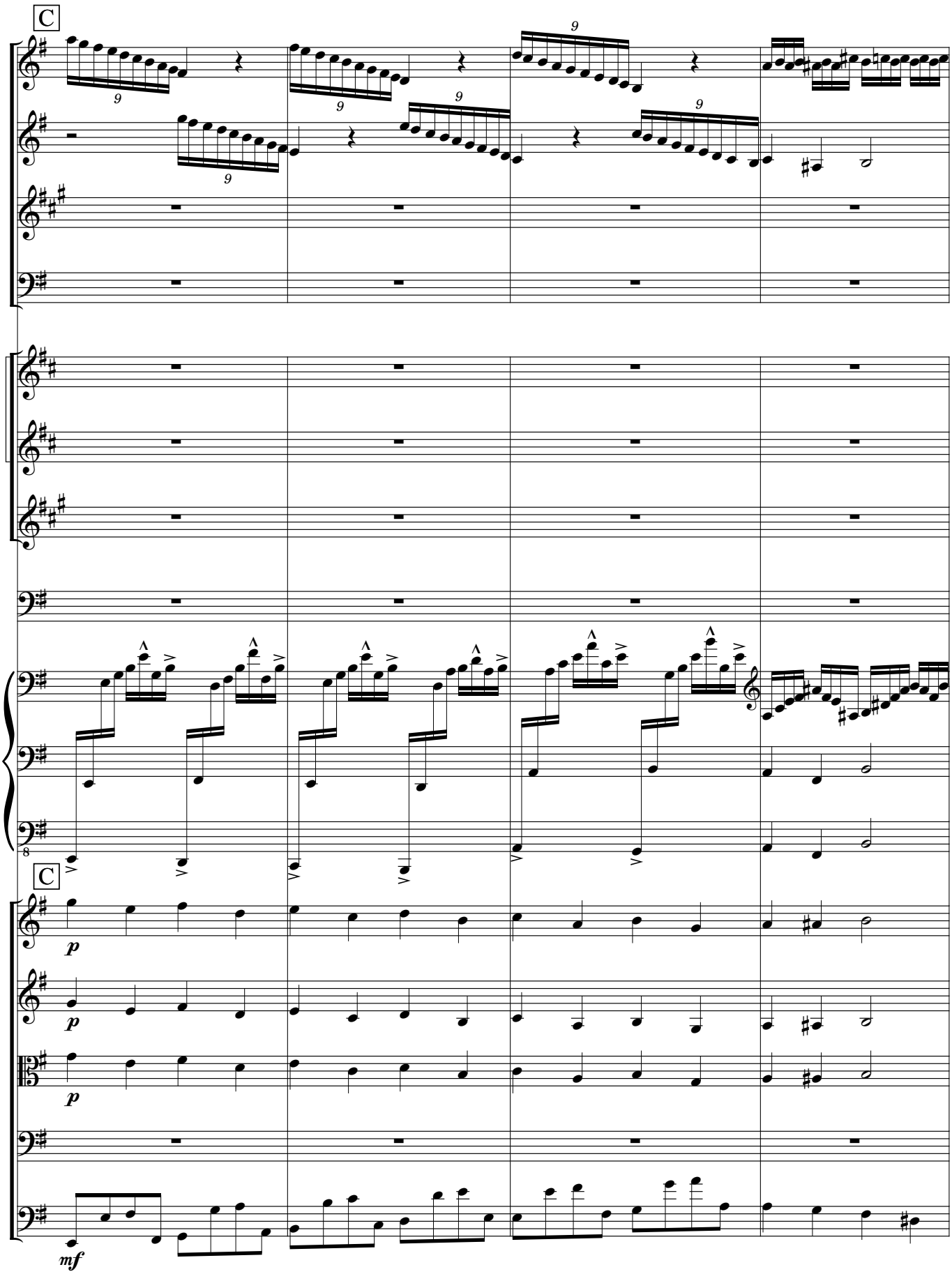
From here, I played the piano part. Go to the end of the first movement.

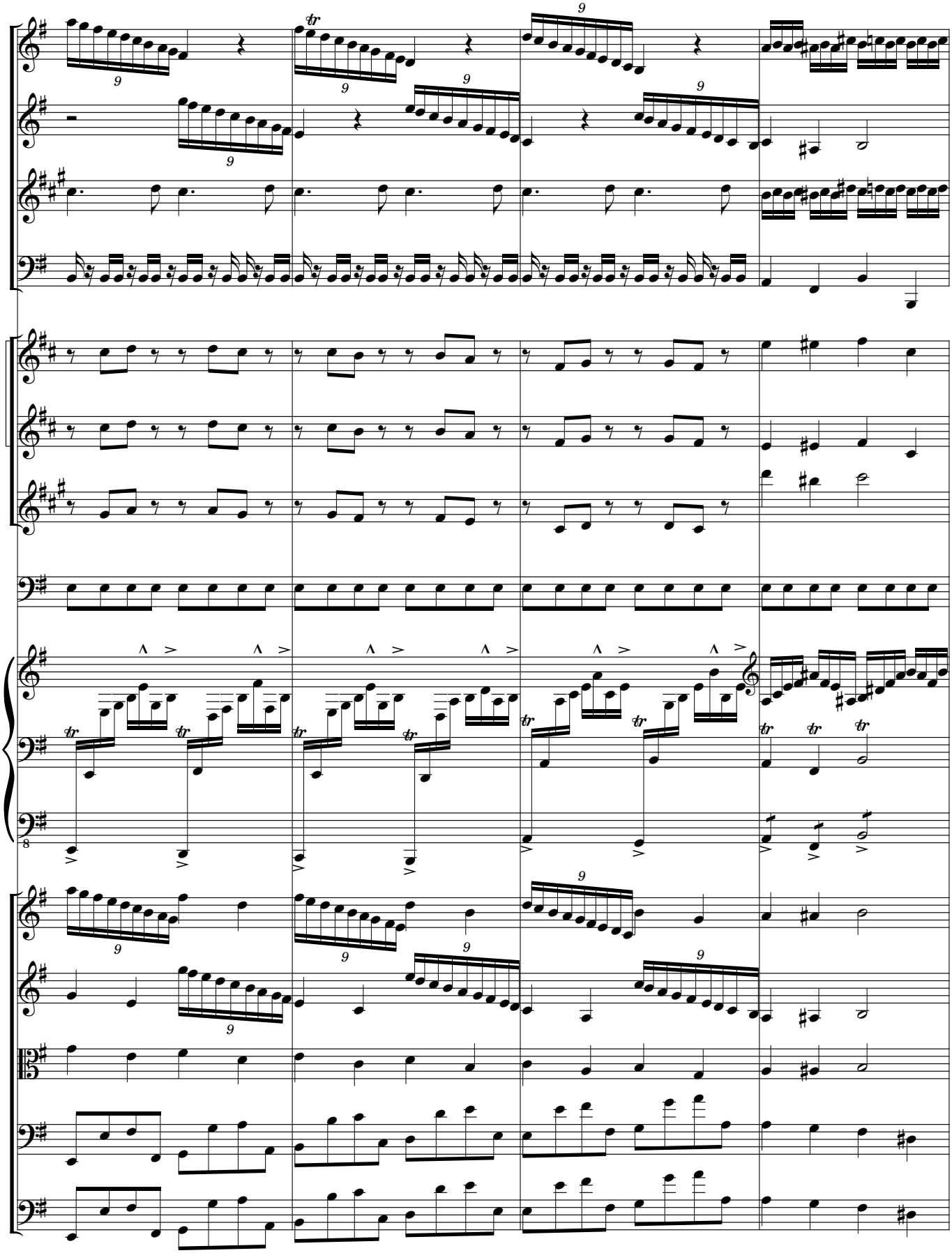


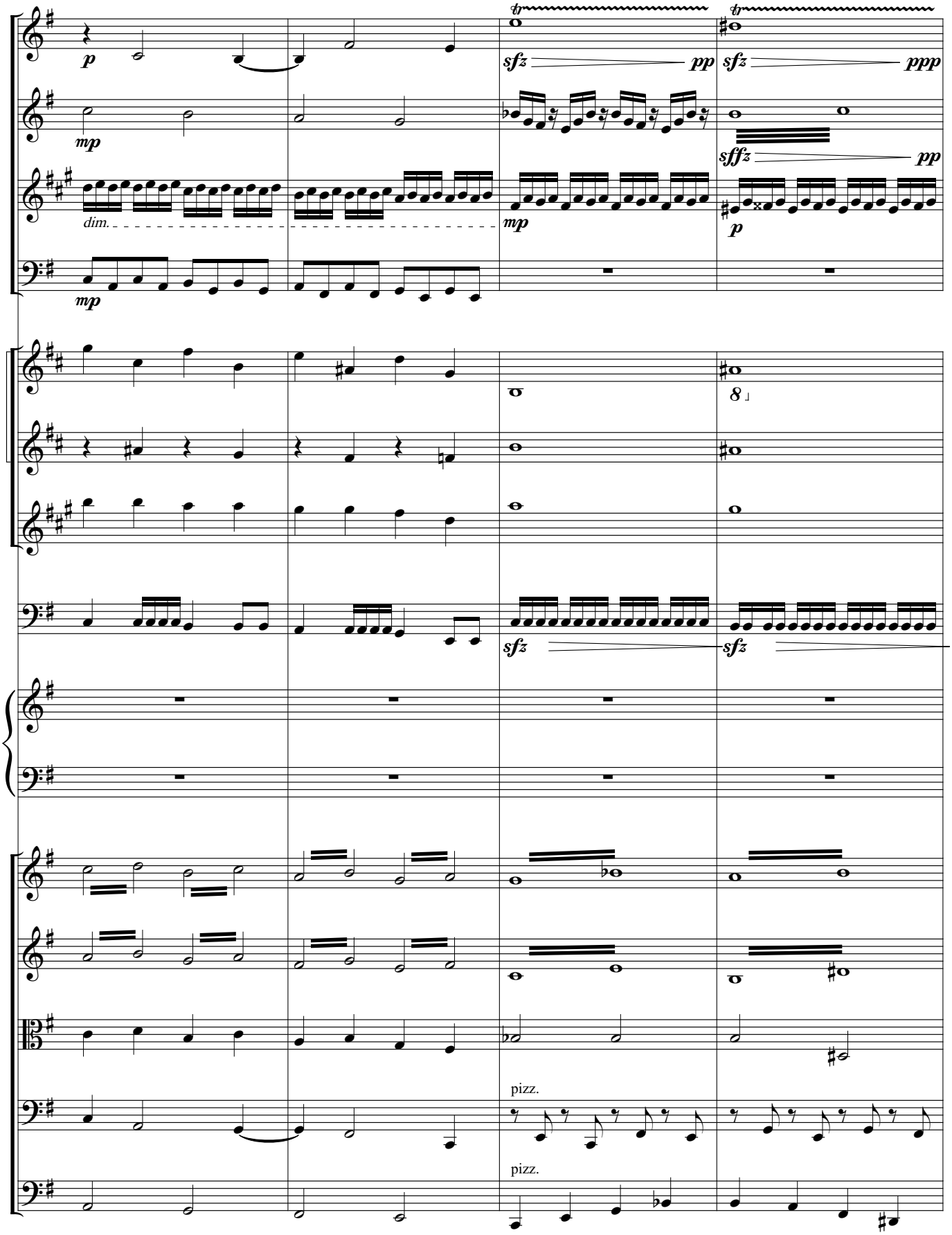

8
sffz
sffz
arco
arco
arco

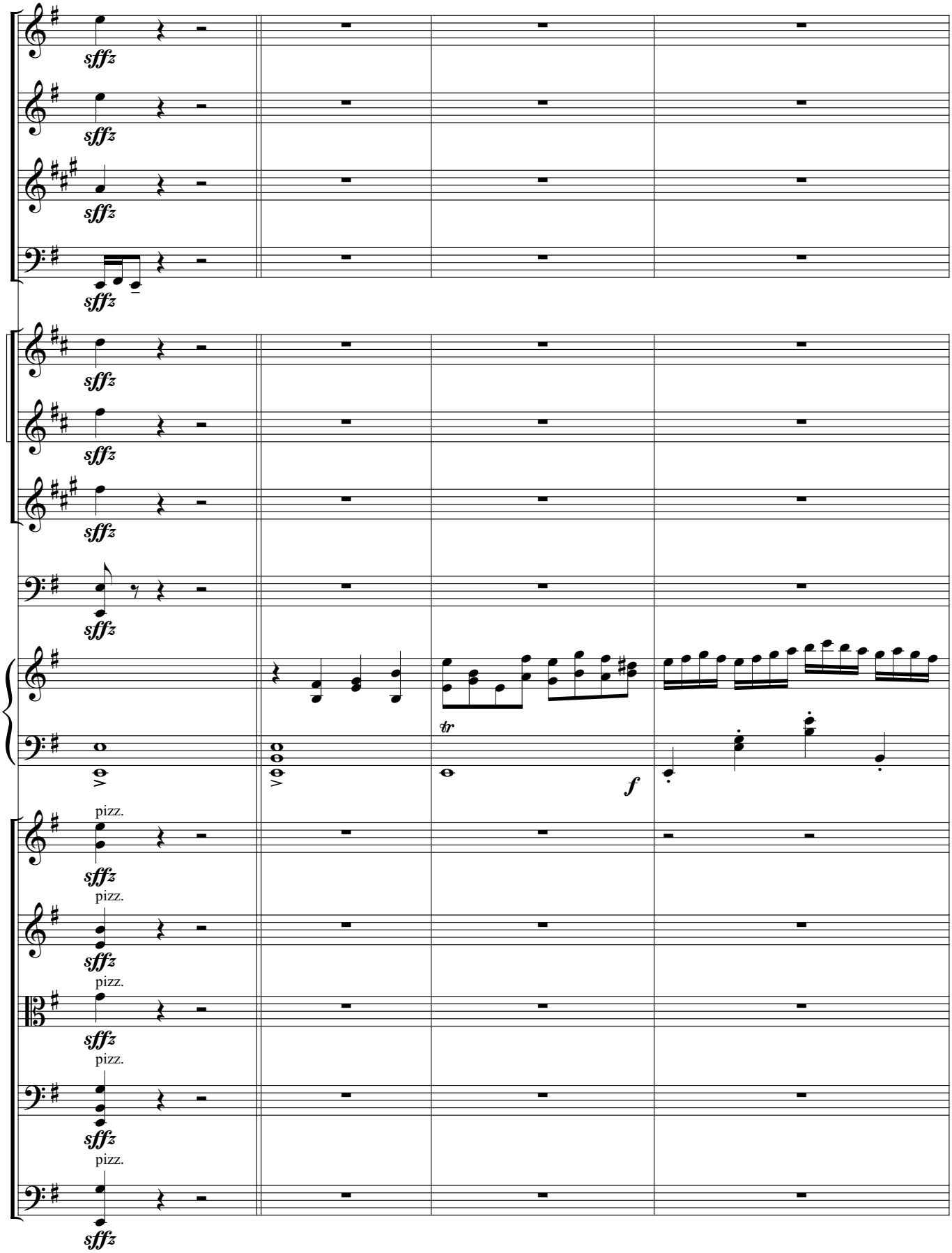

f
fp
f

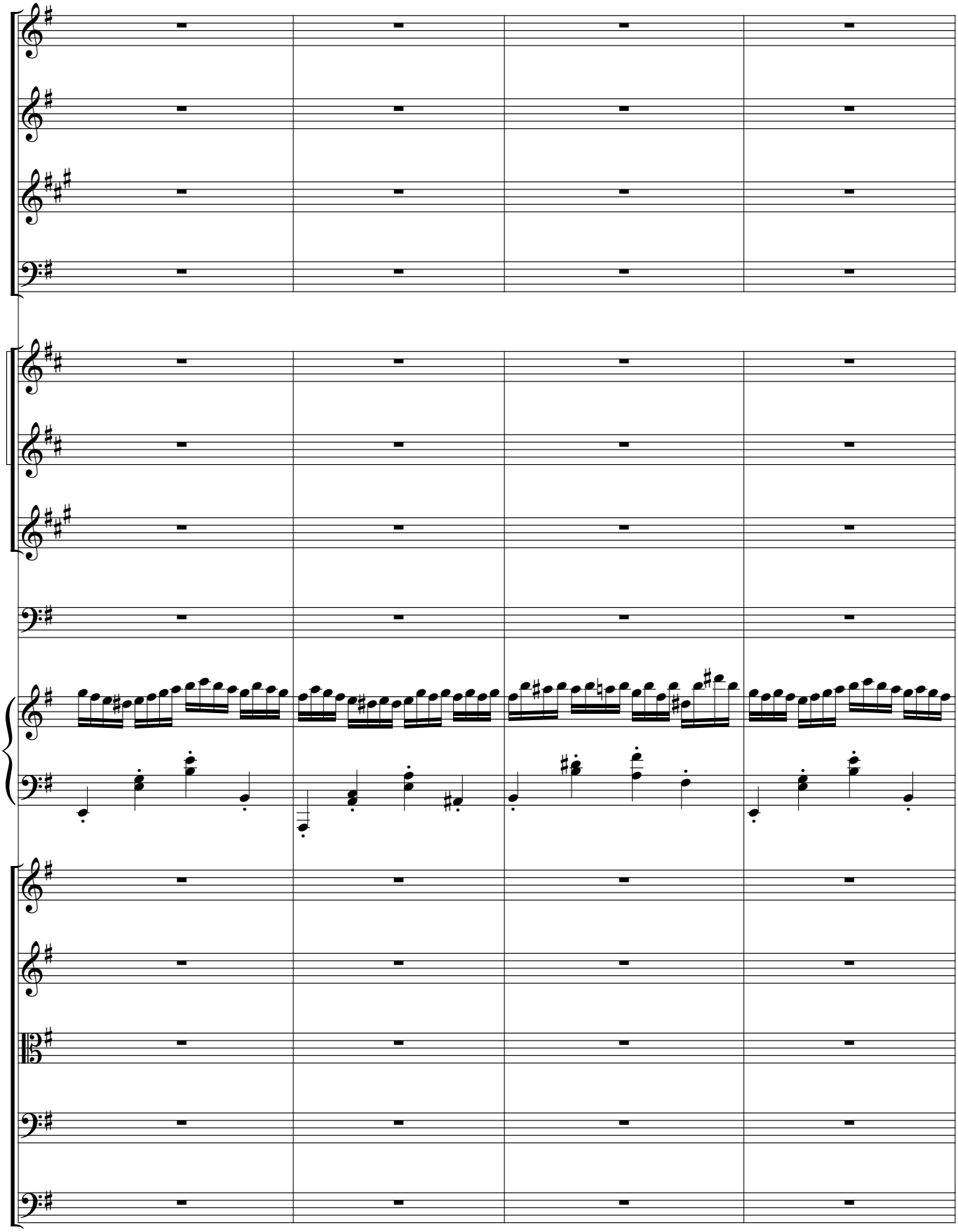

f
f
f

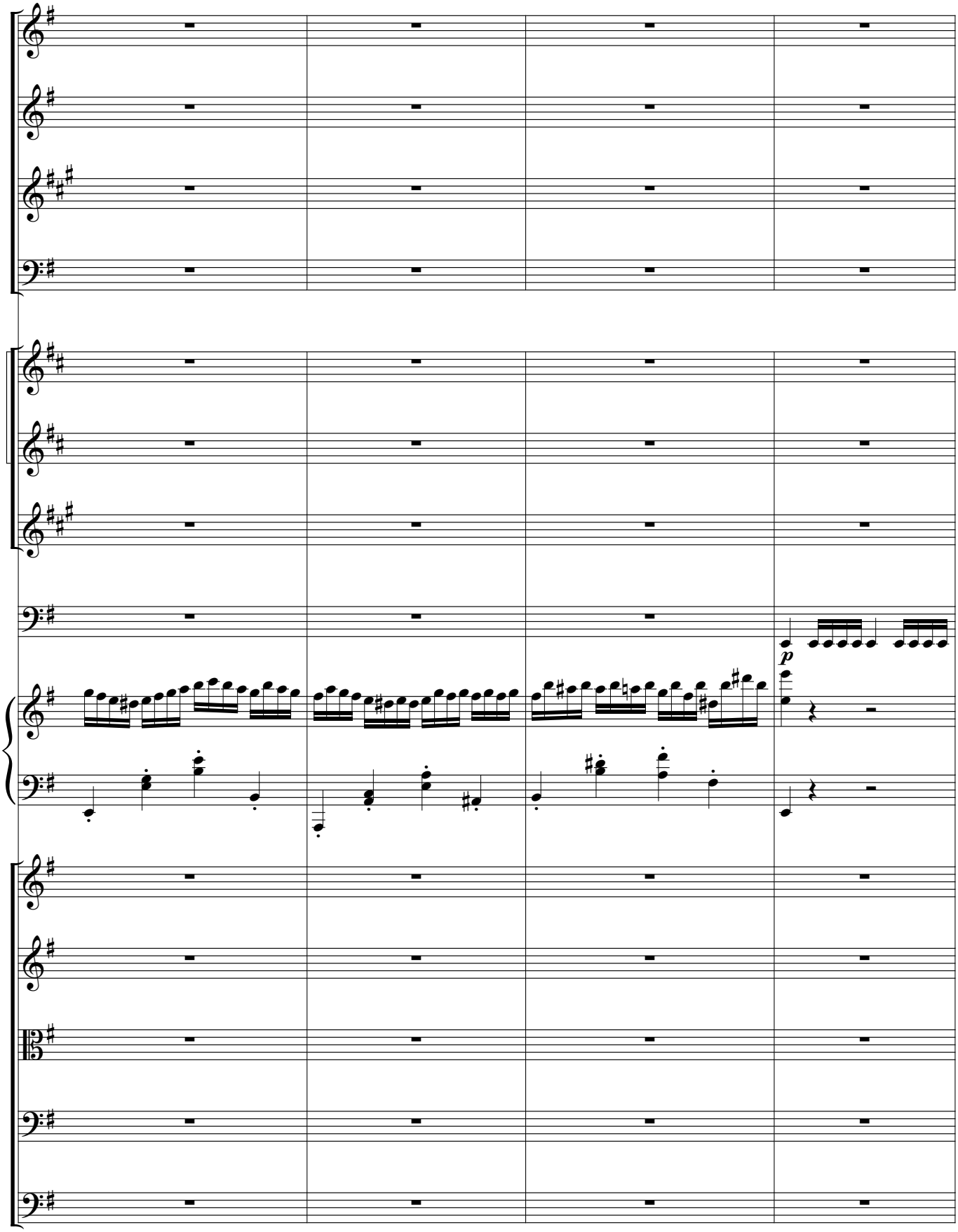

C
9
9
9
9
C
p
p
p
mf

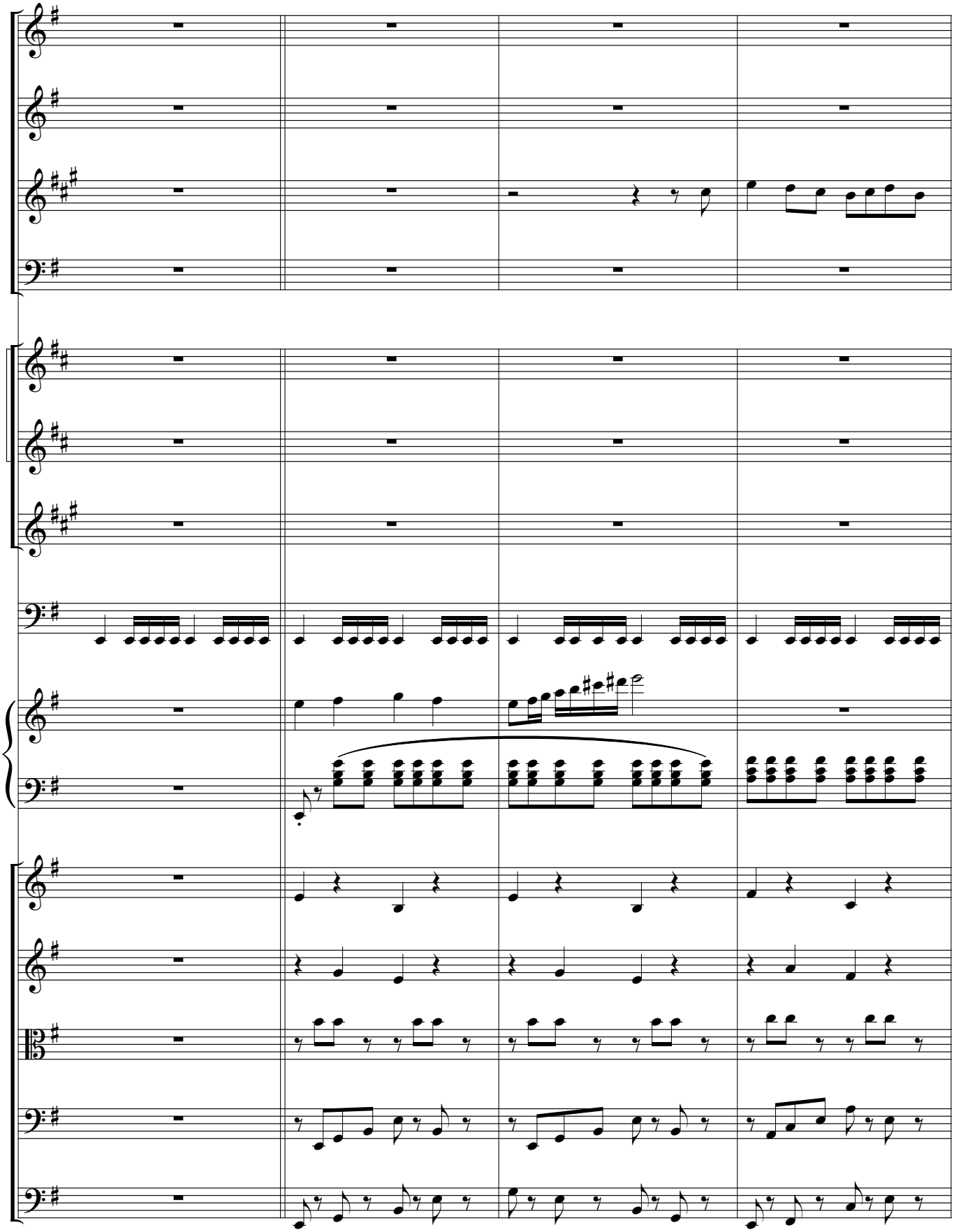


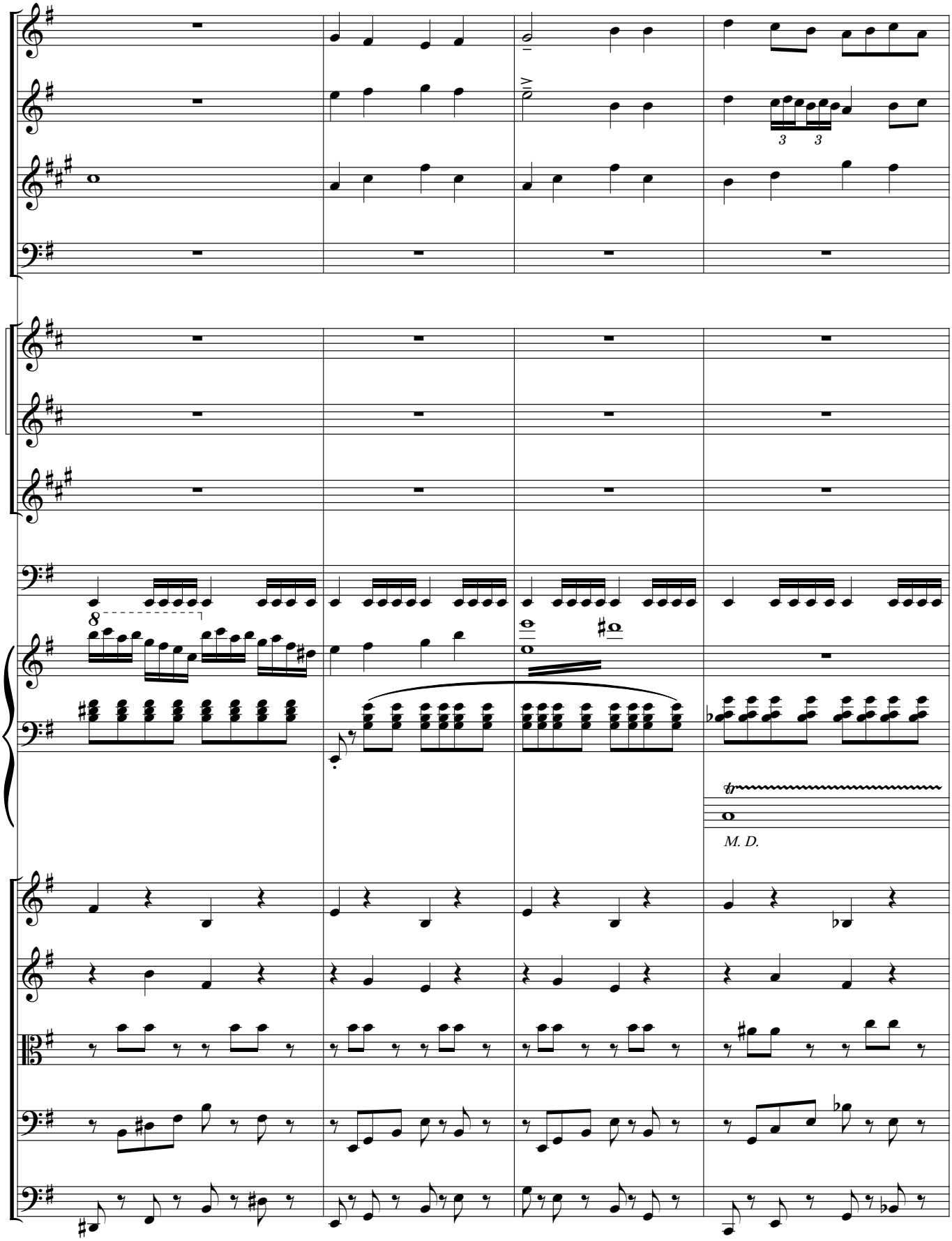

p
mp
dim.
mp
sfz
pp
sfz
ppp
sffz
pp
p
8
sfz
sfz
pizz.
pizz.

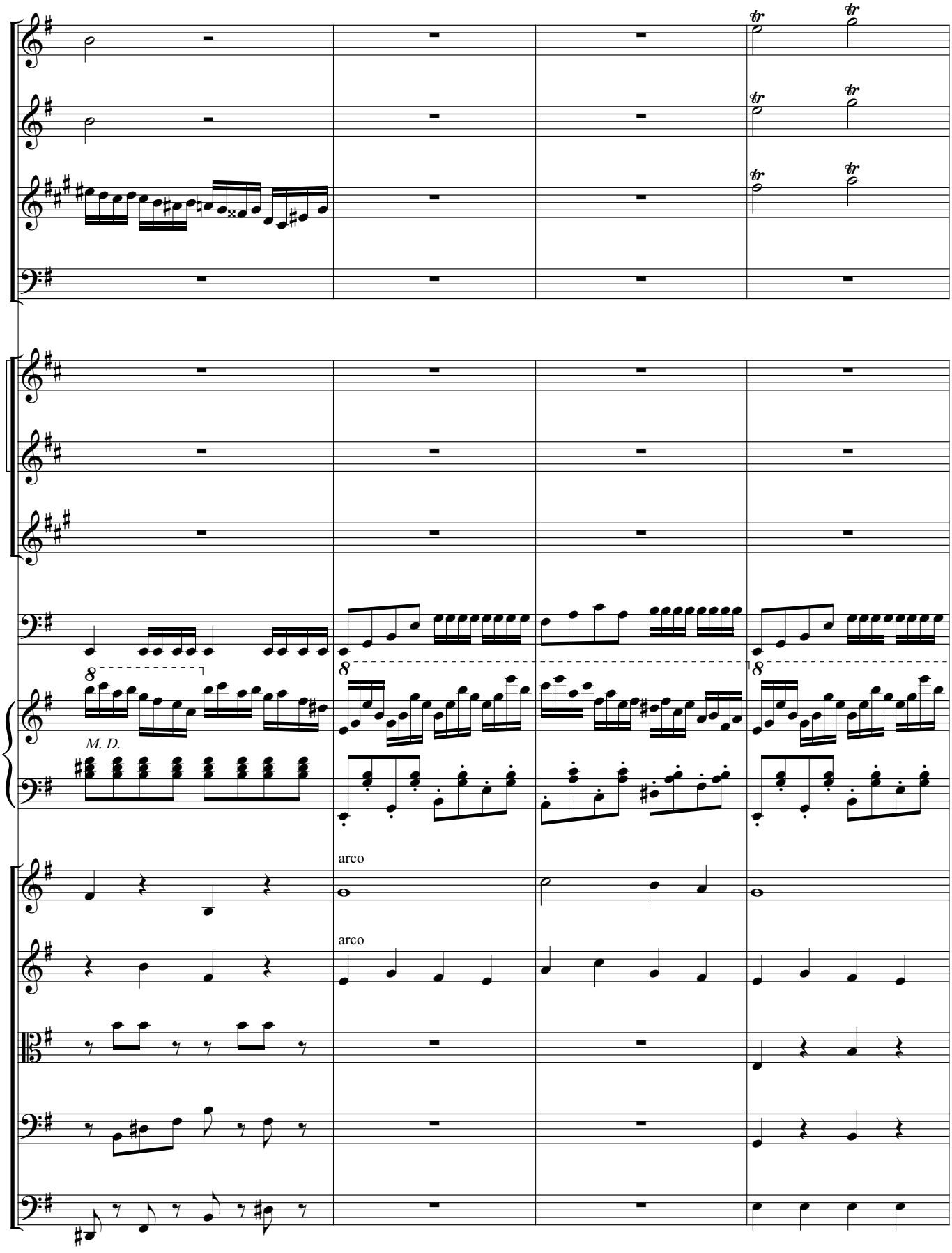

sffz
tr
f
pizz.

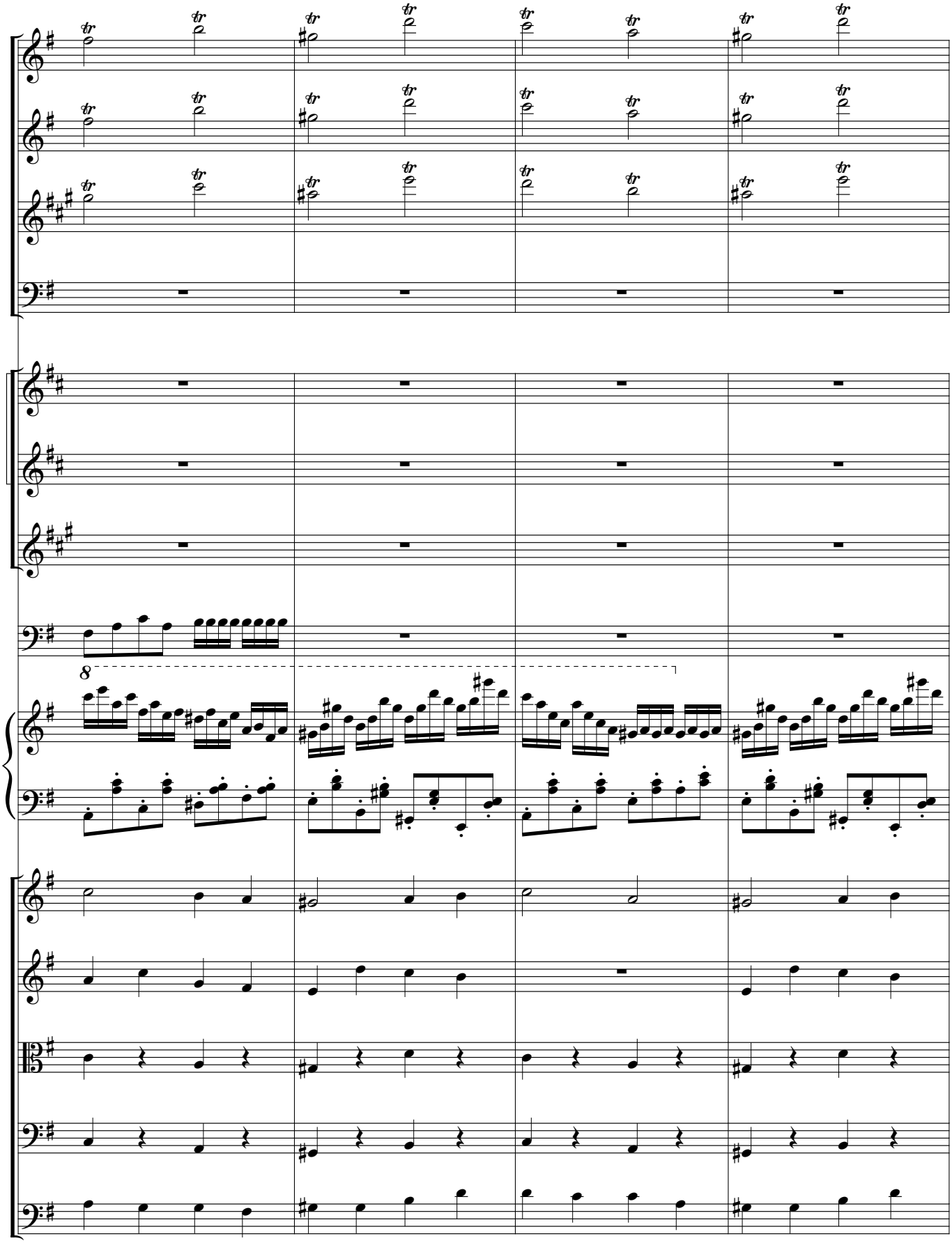


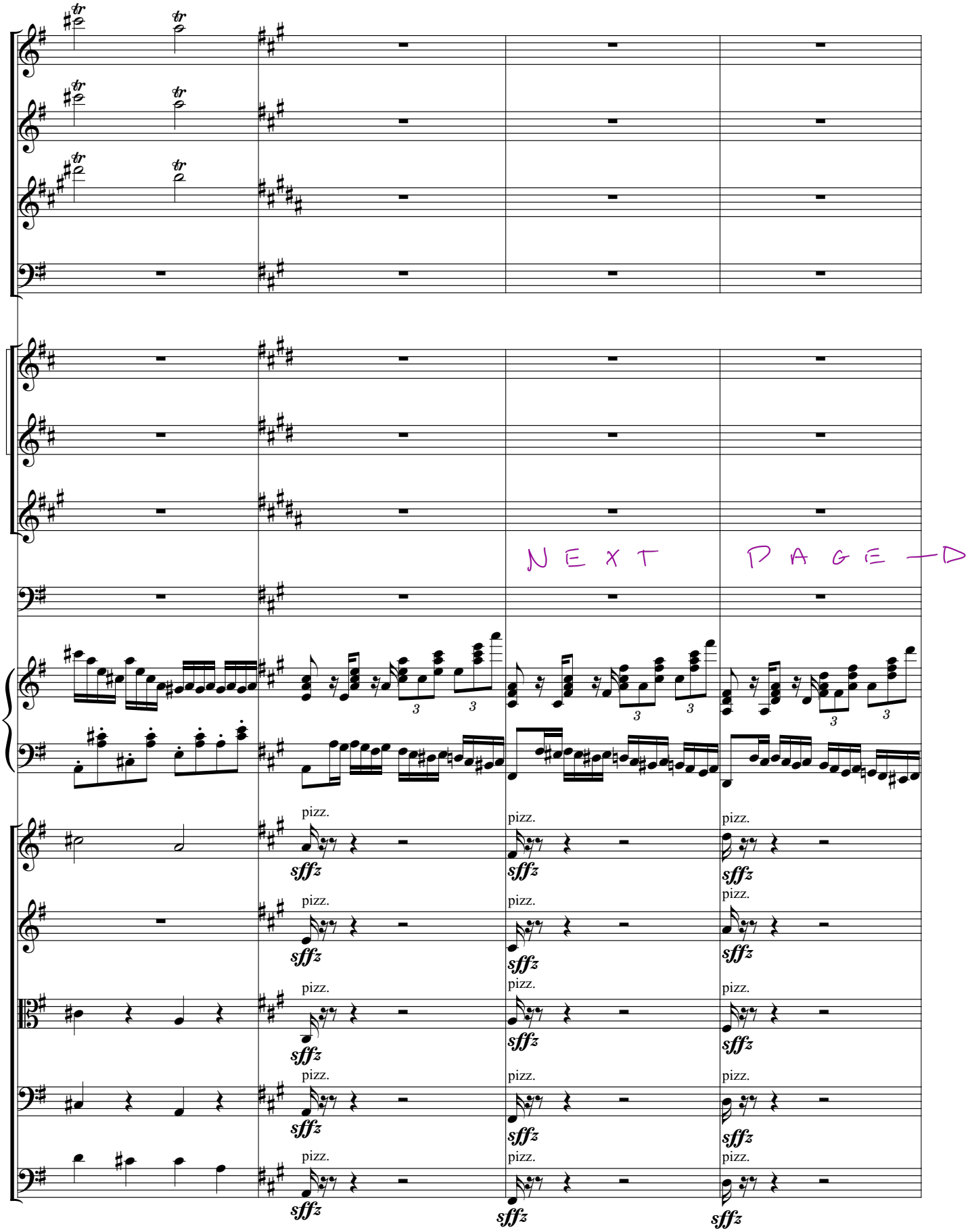

p




8
M. D.


M. D.
arco
arco




NEXT PAGE →
pizz.
sffz

NOTES:

I am writing this after I got to a few pages into the piano part. I decided to spend the week of July 20th to work on these annotations. Now, after taking three days to look over the first movement, I have reached a point where it is clear to me that the first movement has good ideas, but is limited or ineffective in execution. These written comments are here to serve as longer format of my thoughts:

First and foremost in engraving. I have briefly looked at the second and third movements by the time I have written this, and as I have seen in the first movement, you have various engraving mistakes from duplicate terms, redundant information, missing dynamics, misplaced dynamics, etc. To add, key performance information like slurs/phrase marks are missing. Slurs help strings with bowing and pianists for phrase understanding and wrist gestures.

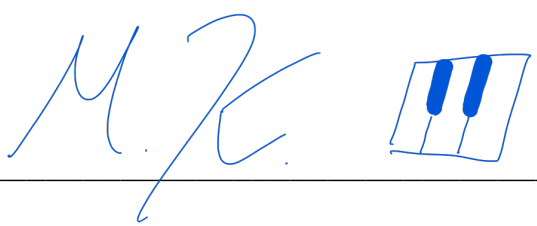
Secondly, and the topic I wish to take the most time on, is orchestration. You can refer to my comments on the previous pages, however, let me be explicit here. Orchestration is a concept that constantly undergoes change. With new instruments, styles, composers and cultures, there is no one defining technique for a universal orchestration. This said, there are trends we can study and practice to enhance our skills and one day, allow us to add to the understanding of orchestration. In this sense, I wish to share my understanding.

The term describes how we arrange, balance and establish instrumentation vertically. It is a covenant within ensemble music, however, it is not regulated solely to ensemble music as there are wonderful transcriptions from orchestral repertoire in solo instruments. When it comes to the orchestra, you must establish clarity between what is the melody, what is accompaniment, and what is textural. As a start, you should establish clear boundaries around the melody. What I mean is that the melody dominates the ensemble, and no other pitch from the accompaniment should overlap or occupy the same pitches/ space as the melody. It is a rather extreme example of good orchestration, and is not the end-all, be-all. In practice, when heard live, this example will let the audience hear the melody and accompaniment separately and hopefully, they don't realize there are separate parts working together.

If you do overlap the pitches from the accompaniment and melody, then the result will be a mess of sound to the audience. Even if you balance it by dynamics, the harmonic series will not care. If two unique passages occupying the same range of pitches play at the same time, the overtones and harmonic series will fight heavily and create a lot of sound waves. That result will be the deciding factor of what is heard clearly, or not. As a composer, it is our actions that will achieve said results.

With all of this mentioned, if you were to look at the first movement so far, I have pointed out some passages of overlapping texture. Things like the string writing around page 12, and the oboe decoration from the first statement of the melody. As they stand, they are examples of ineffective orchestration as more than likely, what you hear in your head will not be clear when played live. To fix this, reevaluate where you place passages in the ensemble. Your melody takes precedent and everything else should not overlap or control the melody. Move passages to a different octave, swap instruments or change the writing to fit a better contour. Lastly, if you think, or others think, that these comments do not matter because of this excuse, "I don't expect this to be performed anyway," then you are naive. Practical music is far stronger than theoretical music. Not in the sense of harmony or modern writing, but in the sense of orchestration and effective execution. I strongly encourage you to rethink how the music is written as I do not believe this concerto will ever be performed in its current state.

As my final topic, I want to focus on the piano. I have seen your works before and I have been critical of some of your piano writing in the past. This time, I decided to play/ sightread a large portion of the first movement. I found most of it rather okay to play, however, at the same time, a little uncormatable. Things like writing the same passage two octaves apart, using three staves, breaking patterns by one or more notes, etc. This said, in concerto writing, the piano should not be treated the same way you would a sonata or solo piece. It does not need to cover the entire range of the keyboard as you have an ensemble to do it. So, things like Alberti bass, or melody in the right hand, accompaniment in the left, does not always need to happen. The piano is also susceptible to being overpowered and weak by the ensemble due to the writing. A great example to look at and study is the Hummel 2nd Piano Concerto in A-minor. You can see in that concerto how Hummel balances the ensemble to be under the piano when accompaniment and how he uses the piano as decoration. His control is something to envy.

To end my thoughts as a whole. I did not have enough time to look at the other movements in depth. I hope these comments serve you well and I hope we can see an amended version later down the line. I would love the chance to engage once again as I can see this being performed; yet, not until some of these challenges are addressed. Good work!

Sincerely,