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# A performance edition of the Sonata for Trombone and Piano by Alec Wilder

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*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

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# A PERFORMANCE EDITION

# OF THE

# SONATA FOR TROMBONE AND PIANO

# BY ALEC WILDER

A Thesis Equivalent Project

Presented to the

Department of Music

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Mark M. Miller

July 1991

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TREATISE ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

| Name | Department |
| --- | --- |
| Paul R. Todd | Music |
| [signature] | Music |
| Glenn V. Vaughn, MD | Radiology |
| W Kenton Babb | Music |

Paul R. Todd
Chairman

July 30, 1991
Date

## ABSTRACT

This paper consists of a new performance edition of the Sonata for Trombone and Piano by Alec Wilder.

The five movements of the work are corrected for errors in the original manuscript publication, including inconsistent markings and notation and is presented in a printed format. This edition is based on the 1965 recording by John Swallow on Golden Crest Records, RE-7015, 1965. The recording was made with the composer present in the studio. This edition will make the performance of the piece more legible and consistent for the performer.

Table of Contents

Introduction . . . . . 1

Editorial Techniques . . . . . 3

Analysis of Editorial Changes. . . . . 7

Trombone Part of the New Edition . . . . . 13

Piano Score of the New Edition . . . . . 18

Conclusion . . . . . 44

Works Cited . . . . . 45

# Introduction

The Sonata for Trombone and Piano by Alec Wilder was written in 1961, and is one of the concert works for soloists, chamber ensembles, and orchestras which he began to write in the early 1950's (Zeltsman, et all, 3-4). The purpose of this treatise is to produce a new performance edition of the Sonata which corrects the inconsistencies with respect to its musical and notational elements. It is presented in a printed format which will improve legibility and consistency in performance. Errors in the original publication are corrected, and an impossible page turn in the fourth movement has been eliminated.

The work should not be confused with Wilder's Sonata for Bass Trombone and Piano. This composition became the subject of controversy when Gunther Schuller presented a new edited version of it with his publishing company Margun. Schuller's edition was critizied for changing the original intent of Wilder's composition (Knaub, 39-40).

Called an "American original" by Gunther Schuller in his article about Wilder in the New Groves Dictionary of American Music (525), Alexander Wilder was born in Rochester, New York on February 16, 1907. He studied composition at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester with Herbert Inch and Edward Royce.

After moving to New York City in the early 1930's,

Wilder began his musical career as a writer of popular songs and an arranger for many of the bands of the era. His music was performed by artists including Mildred Bailey, Cab Calloway, Bing Crosby, and, later, such performers as Harry James, Benny Goodman, Jimmy Dorsey, Judy Garland, and Frank Sinatra. His best-known songs in this period included "It's So Peaceful in the Country" (1941), "Who Can I Turn To?" (1942), "I'll Be Around" (1943), and "While We're Young" (1951).

Wilder changed the direction of his career in the early 1950's when he began to write chamber and orchestral music, opera, and solo works for most orchestral instruments (Schuller, 525). His works for the stage in this period included The Lowland Sea, Cumberland Fair, Miss Chicken Little, Kittiwake Island, and The Truth About Windmills. Orchestral works included concertos for saxophone, French horn; trumpet and tuba. It was also in this latter period of his life that he wrote two books, American Popular Song, The Great Innovators 1900-1950, which included analyses of songs by Jerome Kern, Vincent Youmans, George Gershwin, and Cole Porter; and Letters I Never Mailed, an insight to his life and career (Slonimsky,2498). Wilder died in Gainesville, Florida on December 24, 1980.

Slonimsky, in Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians describes the style of his art music as " . . . set in an affably melodious, hedonistic, and altogether

ingratiating manner"(2498). Schuller states that Wilder's style was a " . . . harmonic language alternating between French Impressionism and modal (often fugal) writing, and a preference for loosely linked suite forms" (525). Although jazz artists including Gerry Mulligan and Marian McPartland, along with classical musicians such as John Barrows, Bernard Garfield and Harvey Phillips performed and championed his music, Wilder's serious music style was largely rejected by most musical establishments during his life. (Schuller, 525).

The Sonata for Trombone and Piano was written at the suggestion of Harvey Phillips in 1961 (Phillips, 1). Known as an ardent supporter of Wilder and his music, he commissioned Wilder to write several works. In a telephone interview, Phillips, Distingushed Professor of Music at Indiana University, stated that the work was first performed by John Swallow, a member, along with Phillips, of the New York Brass Quintet at that time. Swallow, currently a member of the faculty at Yale University, later recorded the piece on Golden Crest records (RE 7015, 1965), with Harriet Wingreen on piano, and Wilder in attendance.

It is the intent of this paper to edit the Sonata for Trombone and Piano with a consistent approach to the presentation of its musical ideas in both form and content. The next chapter will discuss the techniques used to create this edition of the work.

## Editing Techniques

The copyright for Sonata for Trombone and Piano has been held by Clark F. Galehouse Publishing since 1964. The work is published in manuscript form and contains several errors and many inconsistencies. Figure 1, for example, is a phrase marking in measures 1 and 2 of Movement II which is not indicated in the recapitulation of the same motive in measures 30 and 31.

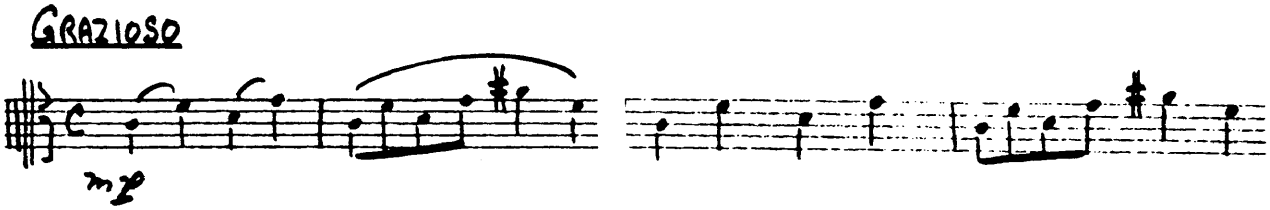



Fig. 1. Measures 1-2 and measures 30-31, Movement II.

The manuscript hand is of fair quality, however it is still difficult to read, particularly in the piano score, an example of which is shown in Figure 2.

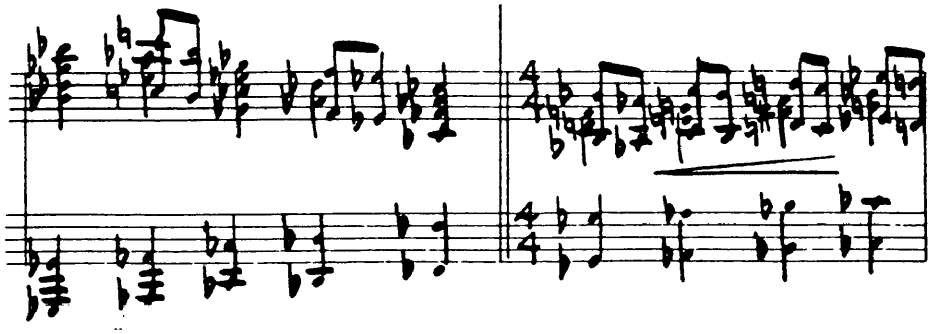


Fig. 2. Measures 33-34, Movement III.

A major concern for the performer of the Sonata is the inconsistent presentation of dynamics, phrase and articulation markings, and tempo changes. The third and fourth movements of the work do not give the performer a beginning dynamic level. The piano score of the original has few of the trombone score markings in its solo line, making it difficult for the pianist to understand what the soloist is trying to present.

John Swallow stated in a telephone interview that Wilder was present in the studio for his recording of the Sonata. In questioning Swallow about some of the inconsistensies of the work, he stated that this was typical of Wilder, and that the composer was more concerned about playing and feeling the music, and less concerned with labeling the mechanics (Swallow, 1). Swallow stated that he felt the recording was an accurate representation of Wilder's perception of the work. When asked if Swallow had any notation or working score of the composition, Swallow stated that a review of the recording would best produce a model from which to edit the work. Working from Swallow's suggestion, the recording has been used as a basis for editing the inconsistensies which occur in the score.

Basic guidelines in the editing of the Sonata were set down and followed in this treatise. All score notations in the original work have not been changed, even when the recording indicates a different interpretation. These

differences will be discussed later in the paper when specific corrections are presented for each movement. All new interpretive markings in the trombone part are indicated by an asterisk located directly to the left or above the new or edited marking. Interpretive markings exclusive to the piano score that are not related to changes in the trombone part are also indicated by an asterisk. Minor individual musical interpretations such as a slight *ritard* or *crescendo* by Swallow have not been included. Individual artistic reading has been left to each performer of the work.

Clark F. Galehouse Publishing has graciously approved and given permission for the author to produce this new edition of the Sonata. The author wishes to state that this new edition is for the sole purpose of scholarly study and the author's personal use. Clark F. Galehouse Publishing continues to hold the copyright on the original edition and now owns such title to this edition. Reproduction of this new edition in part or whole is strictly forbidden. Anyone interested in this new edition is directed to contact Clark F. Galehouse Publishing, Box 26, Cold Springs Harbor, New York, 11724, telephone 516-692-7063.

The new edition of the Sonata was processed on an Amiga 500 P computer using The Copyist Apprentice music notation program from Dr. T's Software, Inc. It was reproduced on an HP Laser Jet printer.

## Analysis of Editorial Changes

### Movement I

The first movement of the Sonata is marked quarter note equals approximately 60 and is in 4/4 meter with some 6/4 measures inserted into the movement. The movement is untitled, as are all movements in the piece.

A phrase marking has been added to measure 2, consistent with measure 47 which is a restatement of measure 2 and contains the phrase marking in the original manuscript.

A *poco ritard* has been added to beat 4 of measure 4 with a *piu mosso* in measure 5 and a metronome marking of quarter note equals 76. A *decrescendo* has been indicated for the first 3 beats of measure 5, and a *forte* placed before the original *decrescendo* marking on beat 5 of measure 5. A *mezzo forte* has been added to beat 1 of measure 6. These changes are based on the performance practice in the Swallow recording. This entire 3-measure sequence is repeated again in measures 18, 19, and 20 (the original contains the *mezzo forte* marking in measure 20), and measures 48, 49, and 50 (again, measure 50 of the the original contains the *mezzo forte* marking left off in measure 6).

A *Tempo I* has been added to measures 14, 28, 31, and

45. A *poco ritard* has been added to beats 3 and 4 of measure 44 in the piano score and indicated on the trombone part (which occurs during 2 measures of rest). These additions are based on the Swallow recording.

This movement also contains an error on the last note of measure 48, which should be a B-flat, not the natural as marked. This is confirmed in the piano score and the recording.

## Movement II

The second movement begins with a metronome marking of quarter note equals approximately 80, and a style marking of *grazioso*.

Analysis of the recording suggests a *crescendo-decrescendo* in measure 2. A *crescendo-decrescendo* marking has also been added to measures 15 and 31, which are restatements of the motive in measure 2. Phrase markings have been continued from measure 4 to beat 1 of measure 5. Other phrase markings added to this movement include: measure 5, beat 4 to measure 6, beat 4; measure 7, beat 4 1/2 to measure 8, beat 3; measure 8, beat 4 to measure 9, beat 4.

The opening two measures of the movement contain phrase markings between beats 1 and 2, beats 3 and 4, and beats 1 through 4 in measure 2. This same motive is repeated in measures 14-15 and measures 30-31, but do not contain the

phrase markings of the beginning two measures. The phrase markings have been added to these measures in this edition and are verified by the recording.

The original manuscript contains a rhythmic error in measure 32. To complete the 5/4 measure a dot is added to the half note at the end of the measure.

Based on the Swallow recording, breath marks have been added between measures 6 and 7, measures 15 and 16, measures 17 and 18, and measures 41 and 42. *Ritard* markings have been placed in measures 13, 24, and 29. Tempo markings have been placed at measures 25 and 30. *Crescendos* have been added in measures 33 and measures 40 through 42. Single note *tenuto* markings have been added in measures 7, 16, 17, 18, and 32.

## Movement III

This movement has a metronome marking of a quarter note equals approximately 144. The movement opens with no dynamic marking when the trombone enters, but analysis of the recording would suggest *mezzo forte* with a *crescendo* to *forte* in measure 6.

An interesting point of this movement is a *poco meno* marking which occurs in measure 10 of the manuscript but is not acknowledged in the recording. It is up to each individual performer as to interpretation of this passage.

This movement did not require as much detailed editing

as did the previous sections of the work. The most important change based on the Swallow recording is a *ritard* and *diminuendo* in measures 24, 25, and 26 which help the trombone part mesh rhythmically with the piano part here and in the restatement of this segment in measures 40, 41, and 42.

## Movement IV

This movement begins with a metronome marking of eighth note equals approximately 176. As in Movement III, this part of the Sonata does not have a dynamic marking at the first entrance of the trombone part, but analysis of the recording indicates *mezzo forte*.

An error occurs in measure 49 on the last eighth note. The original manuscript indicates a quarter note B-natural, but this should be an eighth note to make the measure metrically correct.

The recording indicates a *legato* style marking for the overall work, and has been inserted above measure 9. Dynamic markings have been added in measures 9, 19, and 48. *Crescendo* and *decrescendo* markings have been added in measures 17, 21, 28, 30, 35, and 39.

Important to the end of this movement are the *marcato* markings beginning in measure 67, and according to the Swallow recording they should be carried out through measure 70. This is indicated in the new edition.

## Movement V

This movement provides the soloist with a challenging *molto ritard* figure in measure 18, which is marked *meno* in measure 19. Examination of the recording indicates that the tempo at 19 should be a metronome marking of about 90, and has been entered into the new edition.

Important to the editing of this movement is a *decrescendo* in measure 29 and a slight tempo increase in measure 31.

The opening of the piece is marked *forte* but the recording suggests a *diminuendo* to *mezzo forte* in the second measure. This marking is included in the new edition but the performer may decide to continue at the *forte* level until measure 6, which contains a definite *decrescendo*. The decrease in the dynamic level in measure 2 may be an anomaly in the recording and the continuation of *forte* can musically be justified.

An *accelerando* has been added in measure 37 leading into the *Tempo primo* marking in measure 38 of the original manuscript. The recording suggests another *accelerando* in measure 50 on the last two beats of the measure leading to the end of the piece.

A breath mark is added in measure 35 based on the performance practice of the Swallow recording. Dynamic markings and phrases which appear in the beginning of the movement do not appear consistently in the restatement of

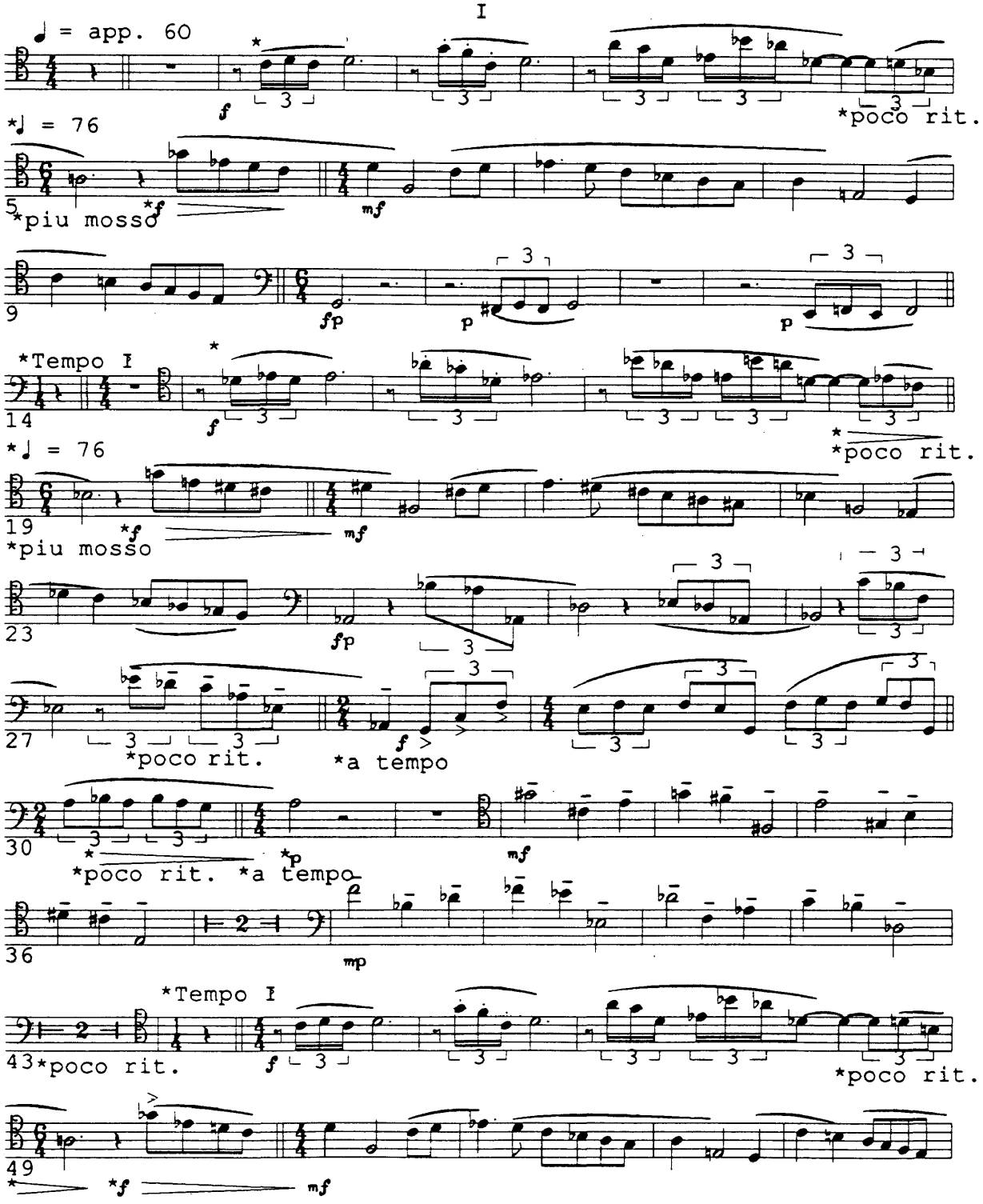
the same passages. These markings have been added to the movement, including a crescendo in measures 44-45, and measure 46, along with a phrase marking in measures 44-45.

TROMBONE

ALEC WILDER
edited by Mark Miller

# SONATA FOR TROMBONE AND PIANO

## I

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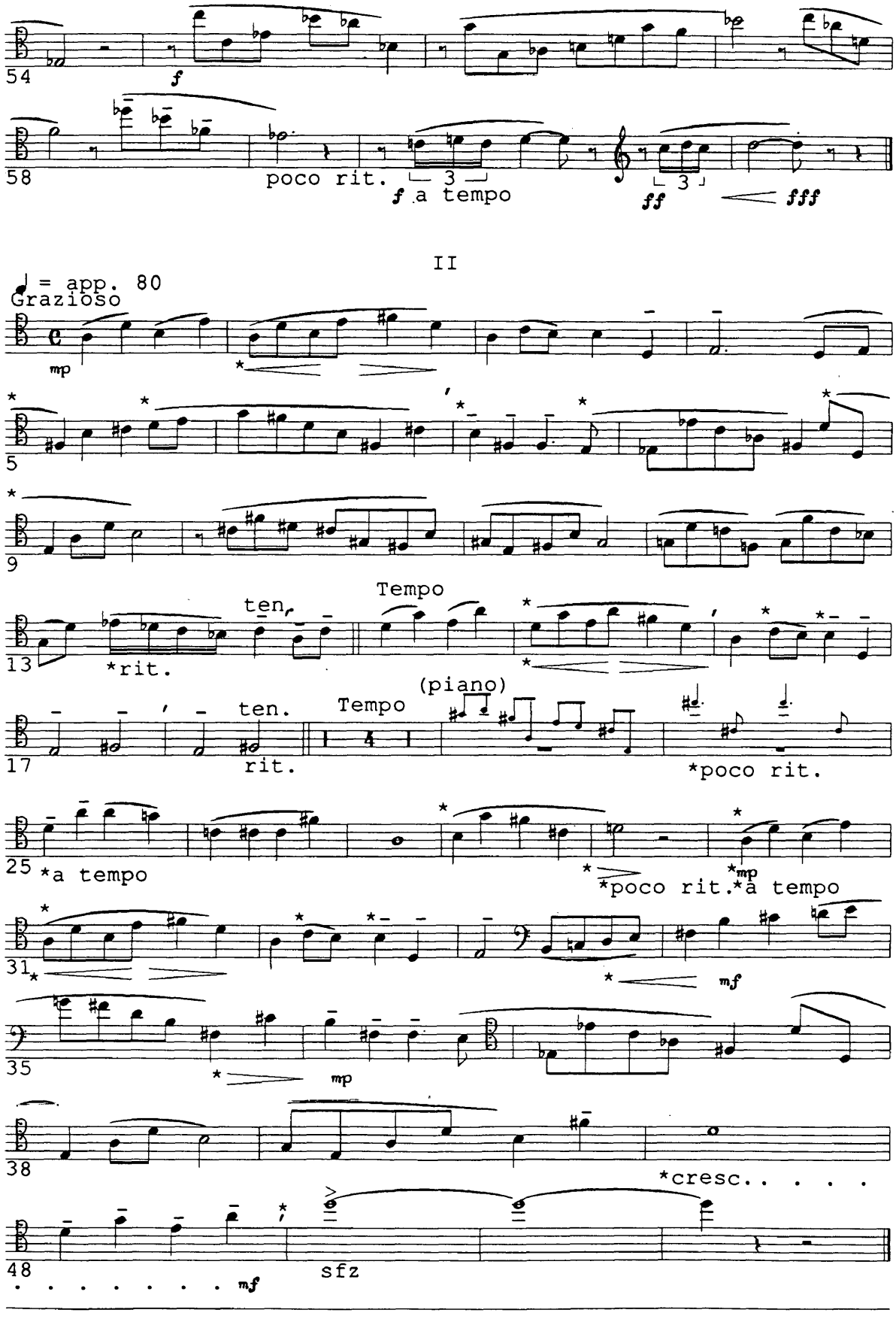
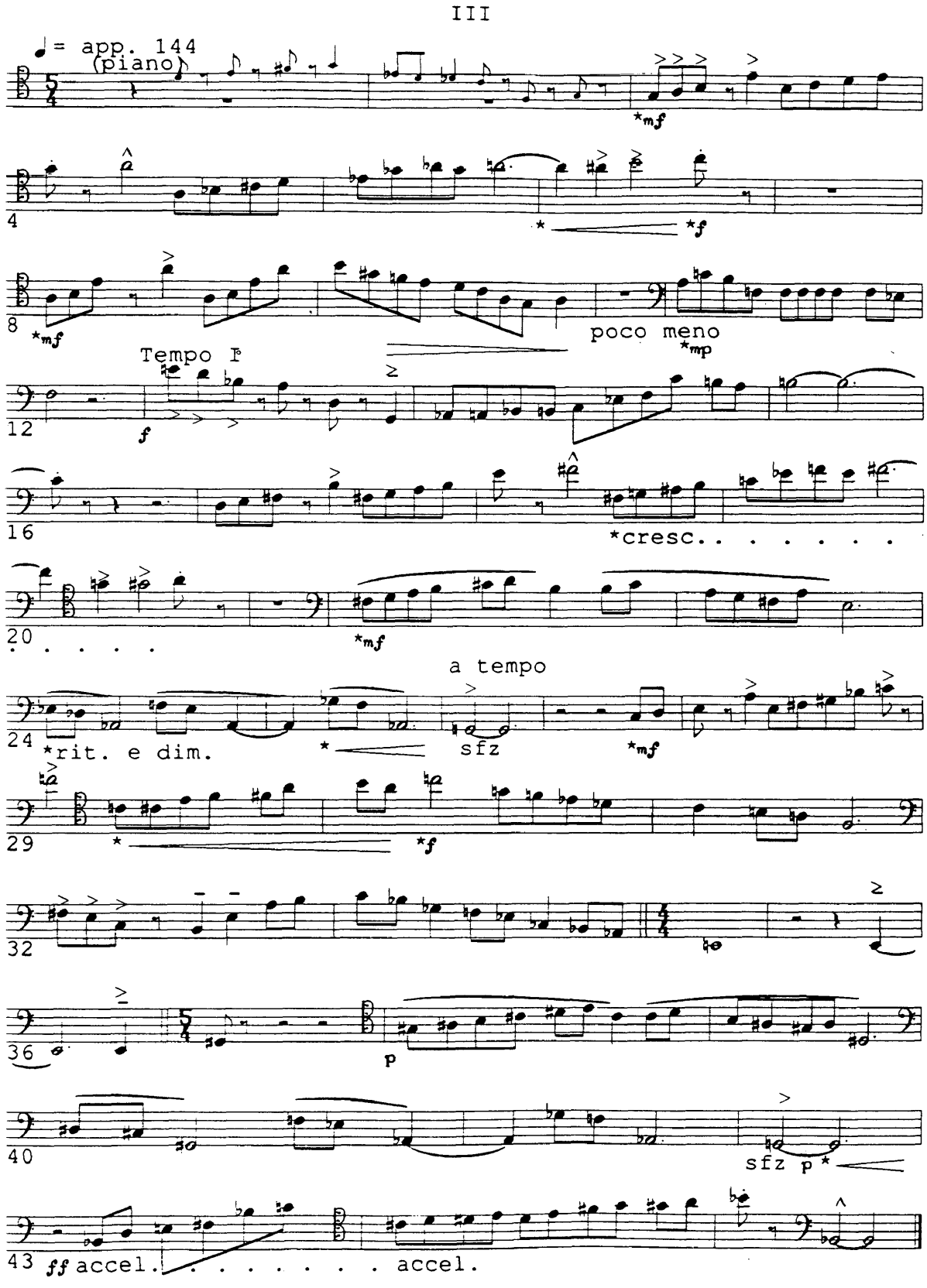
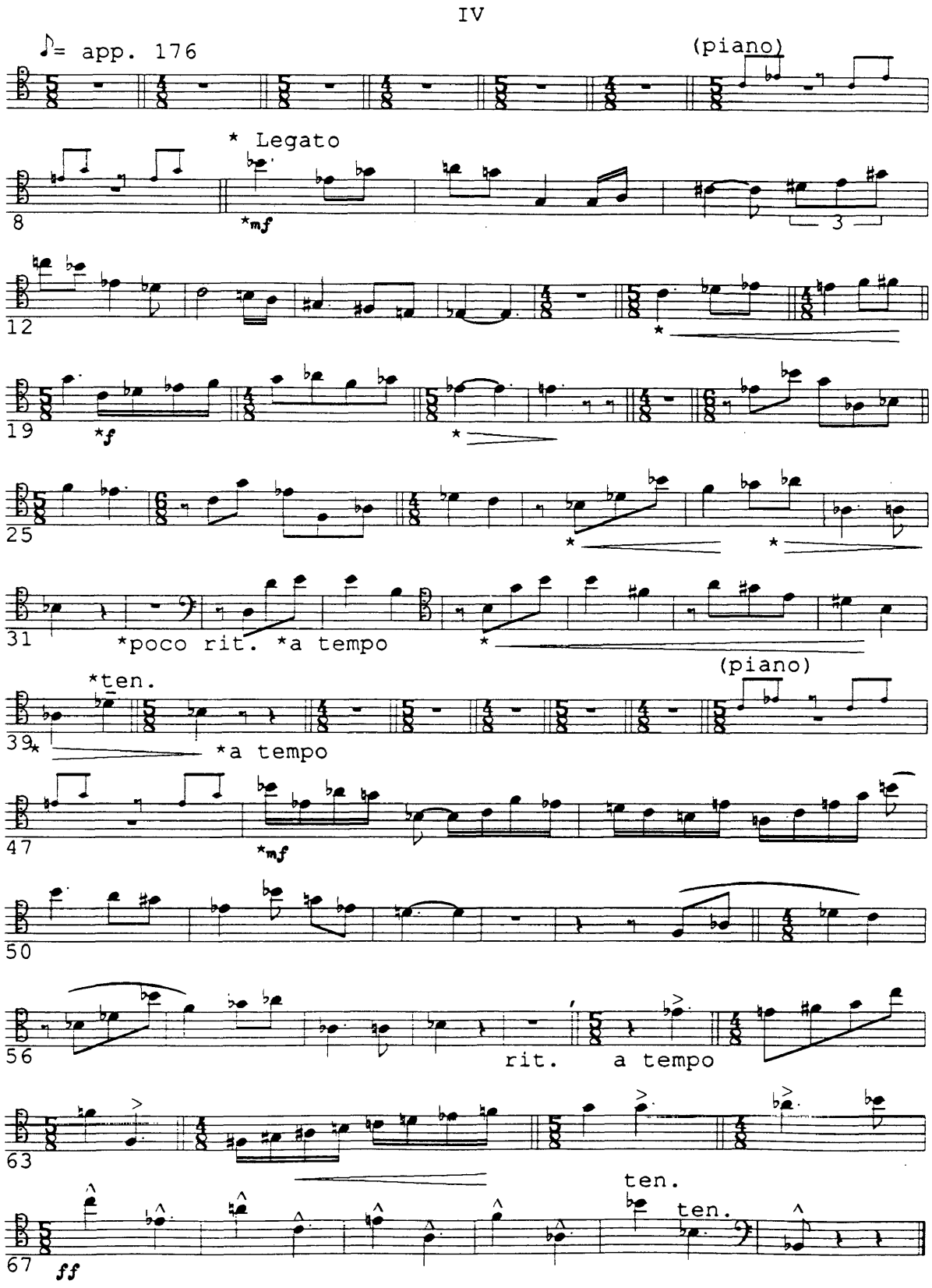
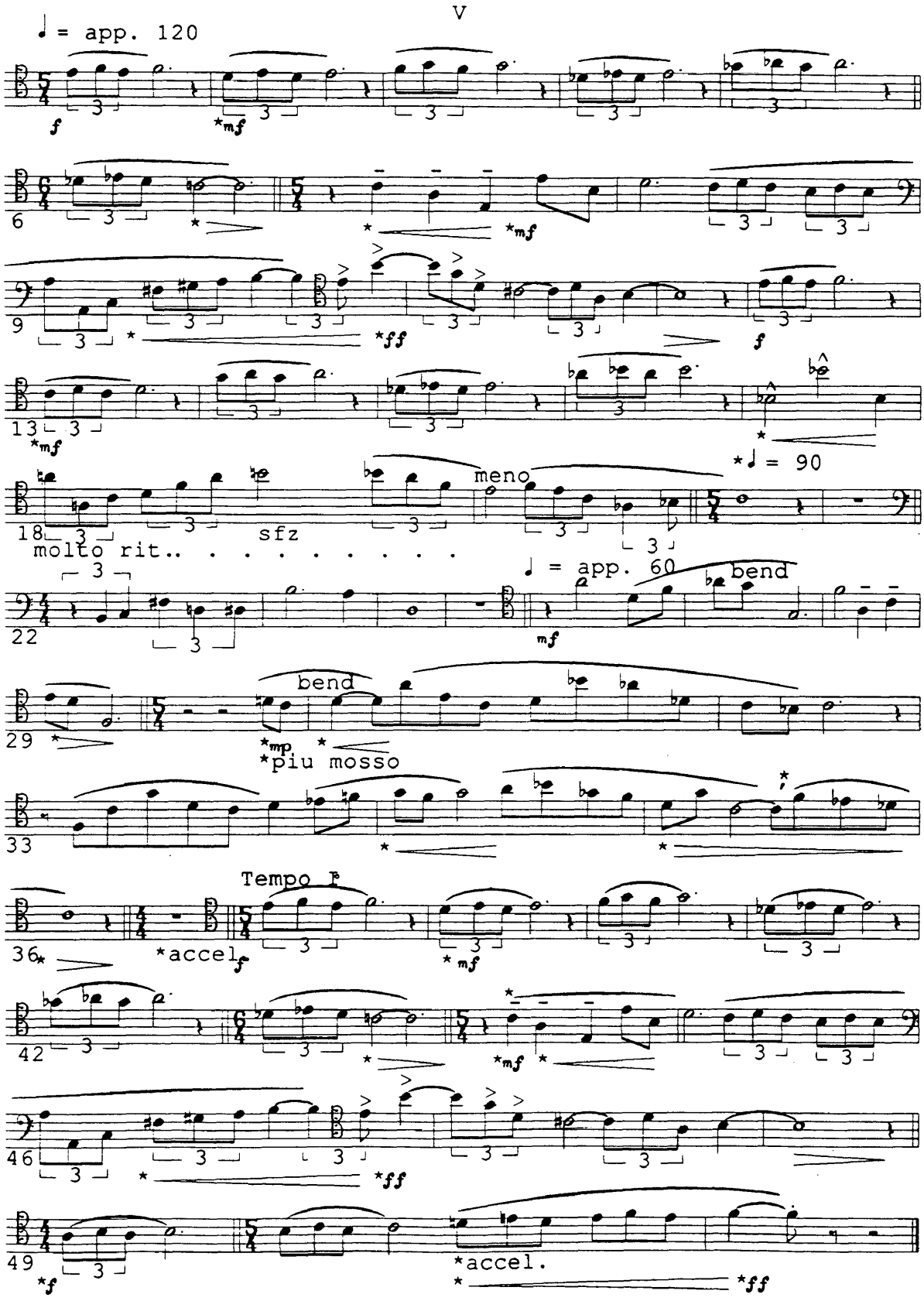

54
f
58
poco rit.
3
f a tempo
3
ff
fff
II
♩ = app. 80
Grazioso
mp
5
9
13
ten.
Tempo
*rit.
17
ten.
rit.
Tempo
(piano)
*poco rit.
25
*a tempo
*poco rit.
*mp
*a tempo
31
mf
35
mp
38
*cresc. . . . .
48
sfz
. . . . . mf


III
♩ = app. 144
(piano)
*mf
4
*f
8
*mf
poco meno
*mp
Tempo I°
12
f
16
*cresc. . . . . .
20
. . . . .
*mf
a tempo
24
*rit. e dim.
sfz
*mf
29
*f
32
36
p
40
sfz p
43
ff accel. . . . . accel.


IV
♪= app. 176
(piano)
* Legato
*mf
8
3
12
*
19
*f
*
25
*
*
31
*poco rit. *a tempo
*
(piano)
*ten.
39
*a tempo
47
*mf
50
56
rit. a tempo
63
ten.
ten.
67
ff

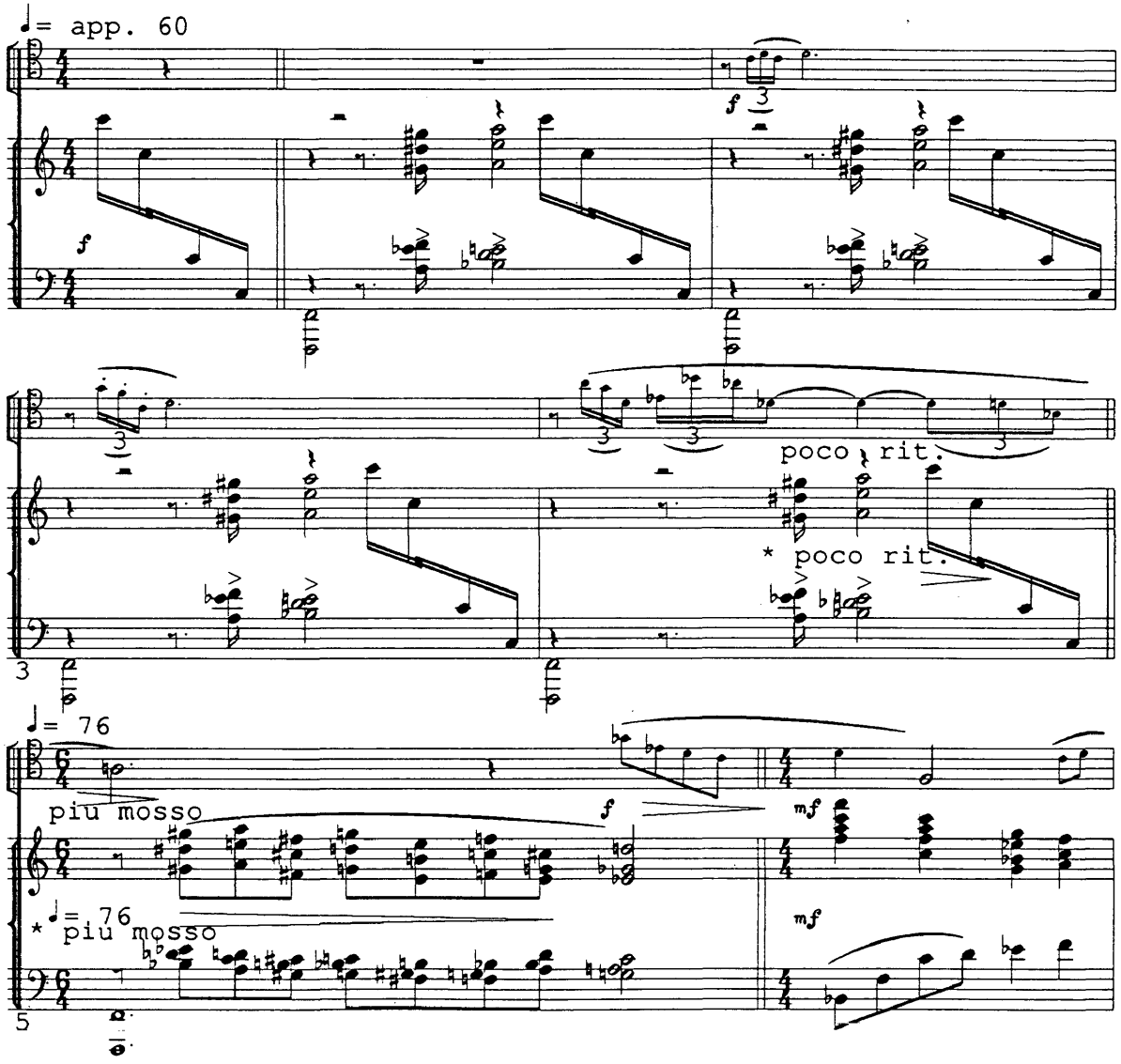

V
♩ = app. 120
f
*mf
6
*mf
9
*fff
f
13
*mf
18
sfz
meno
*♩ = 90
molto rit.. . . . . .
22
♩ = app. 60
bend
mf
29
bend
*mp
*piu mosso
33
36
*accel
f
Tempo I
*mf
42
*mf
46
*fff
49
*f
*accel.
*fff

PIANO

ALEC WILDER
Edited by Mark Miller

# SONATA FOR TROMBONE AND PIANO

## I

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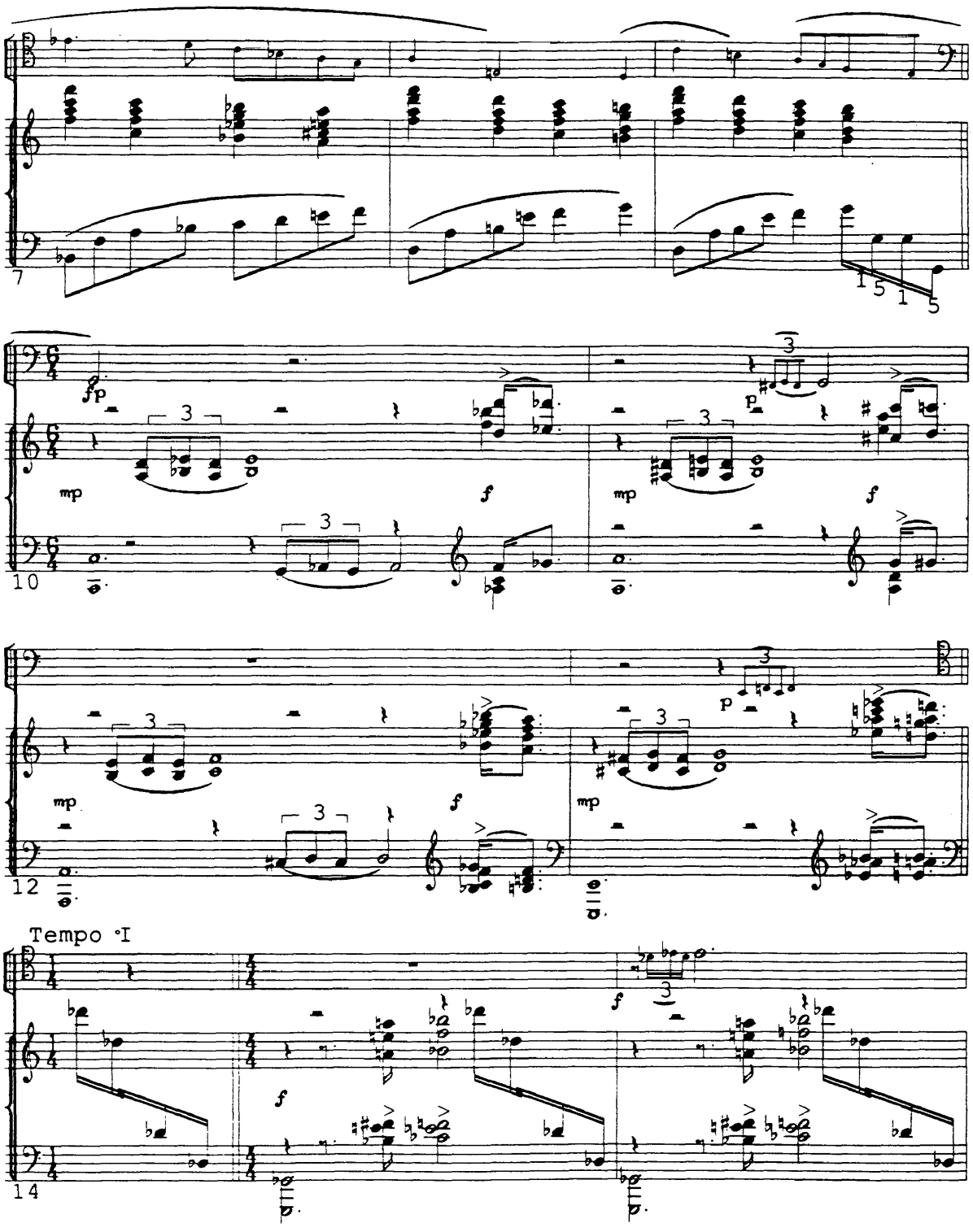
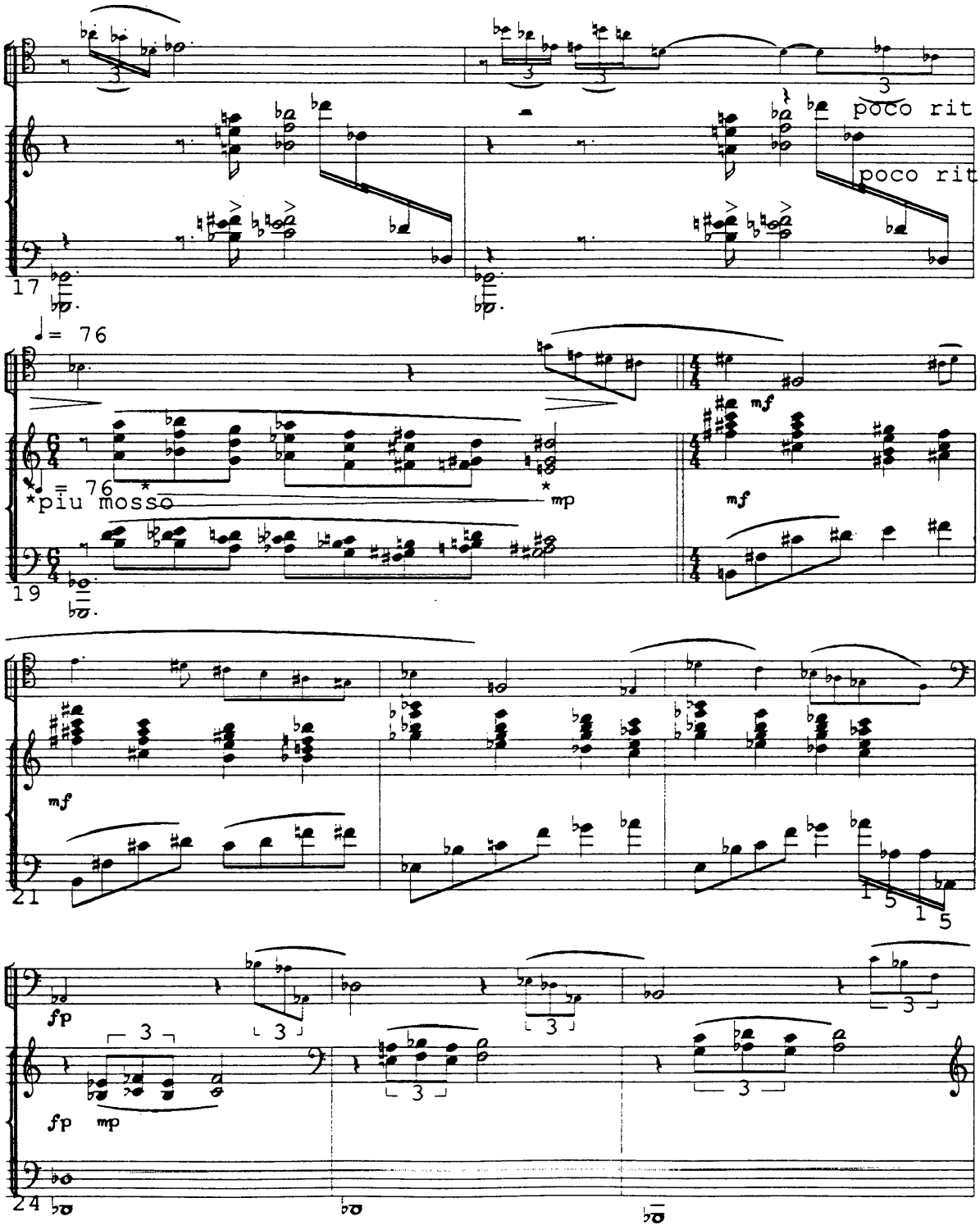
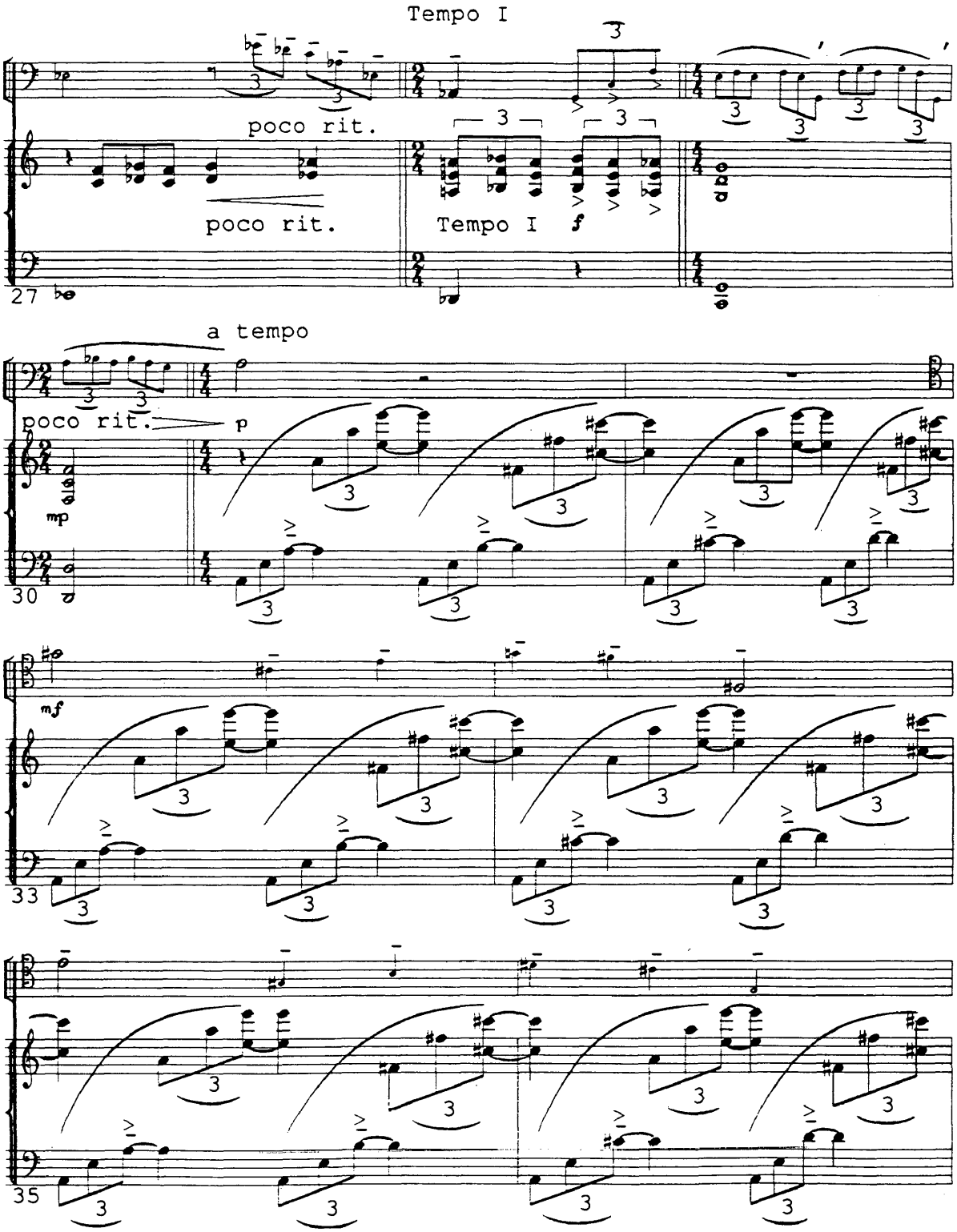
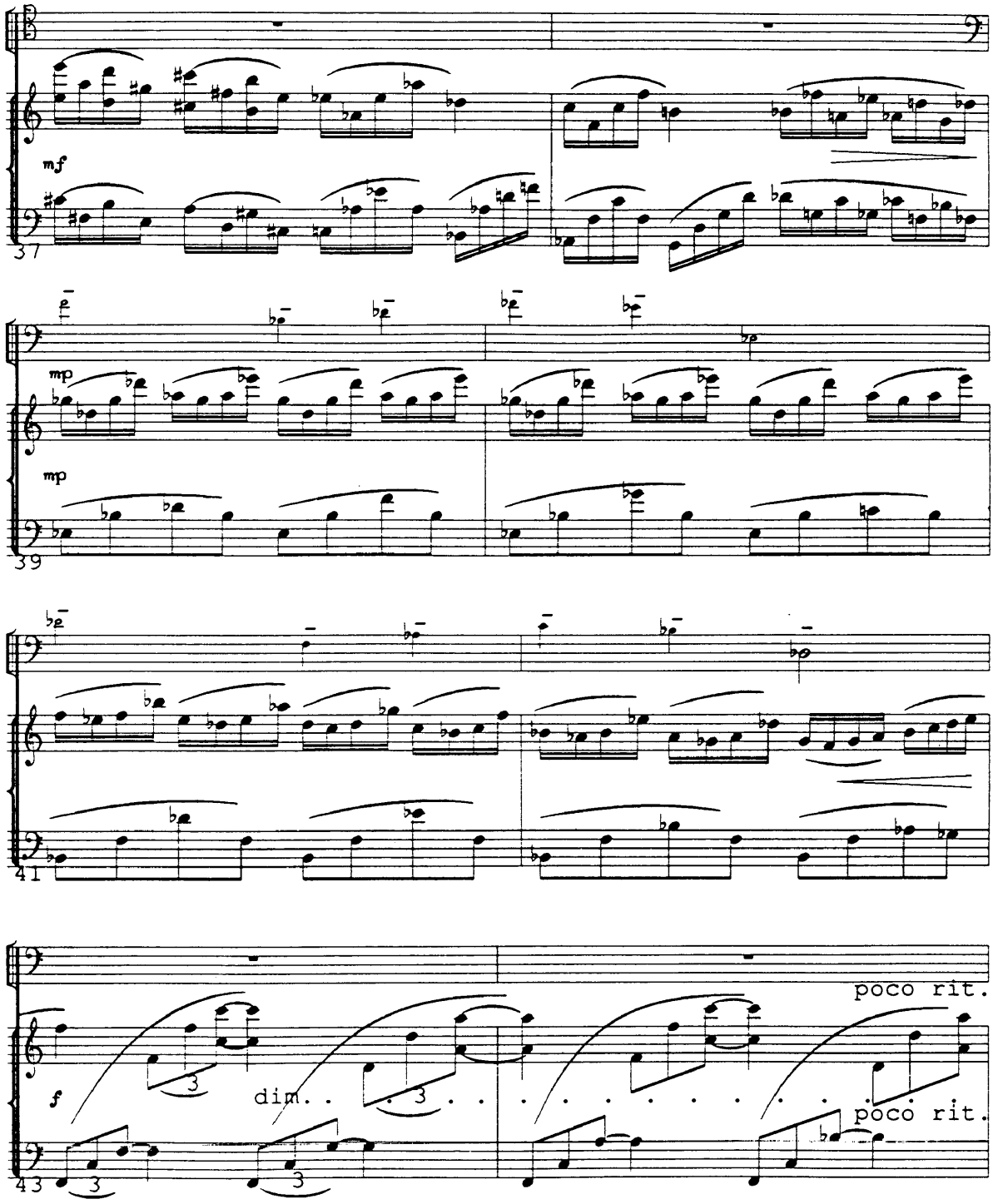
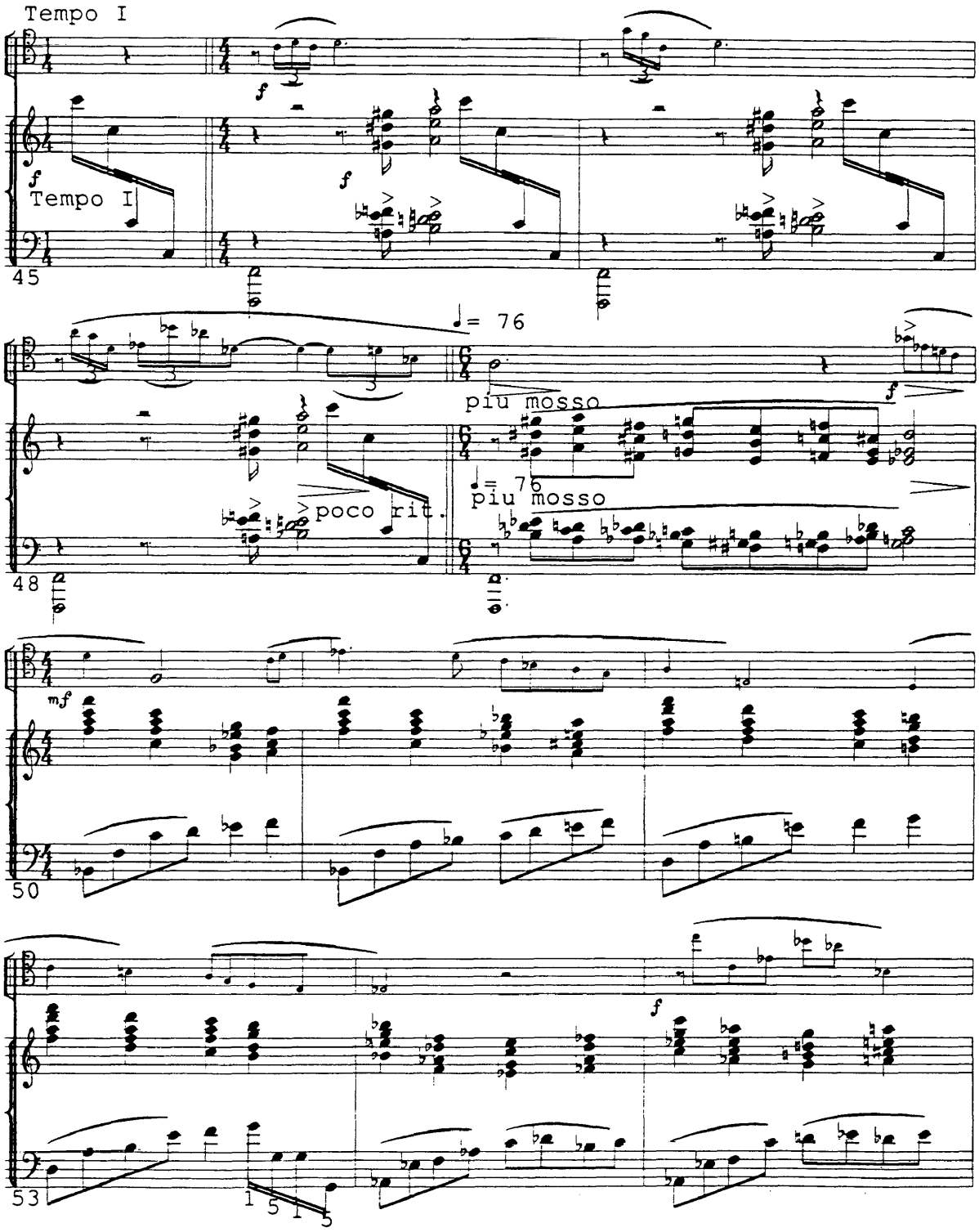
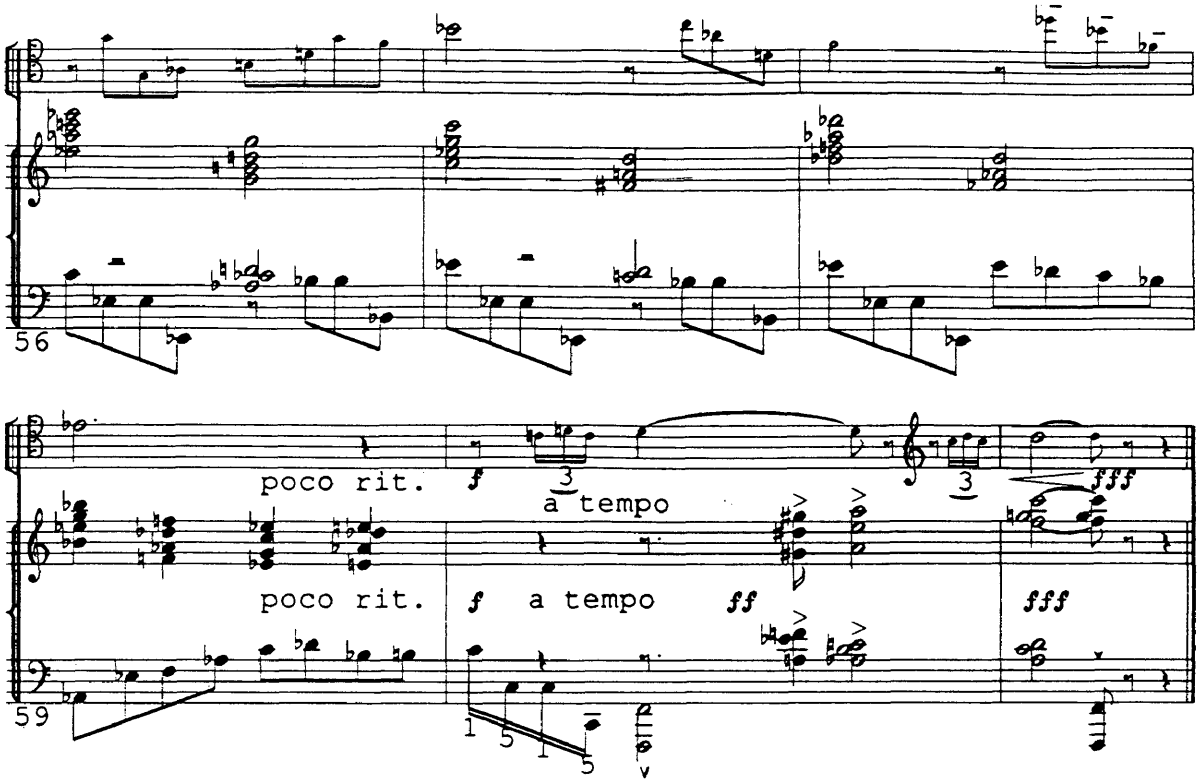

7
10
12
Tempo °I
14


poco rit.
poco rit.
17
♩= 76
*♩= 76
*piu mosso
mp
mf
mf
19
mf
21
fp
fp
mp
24

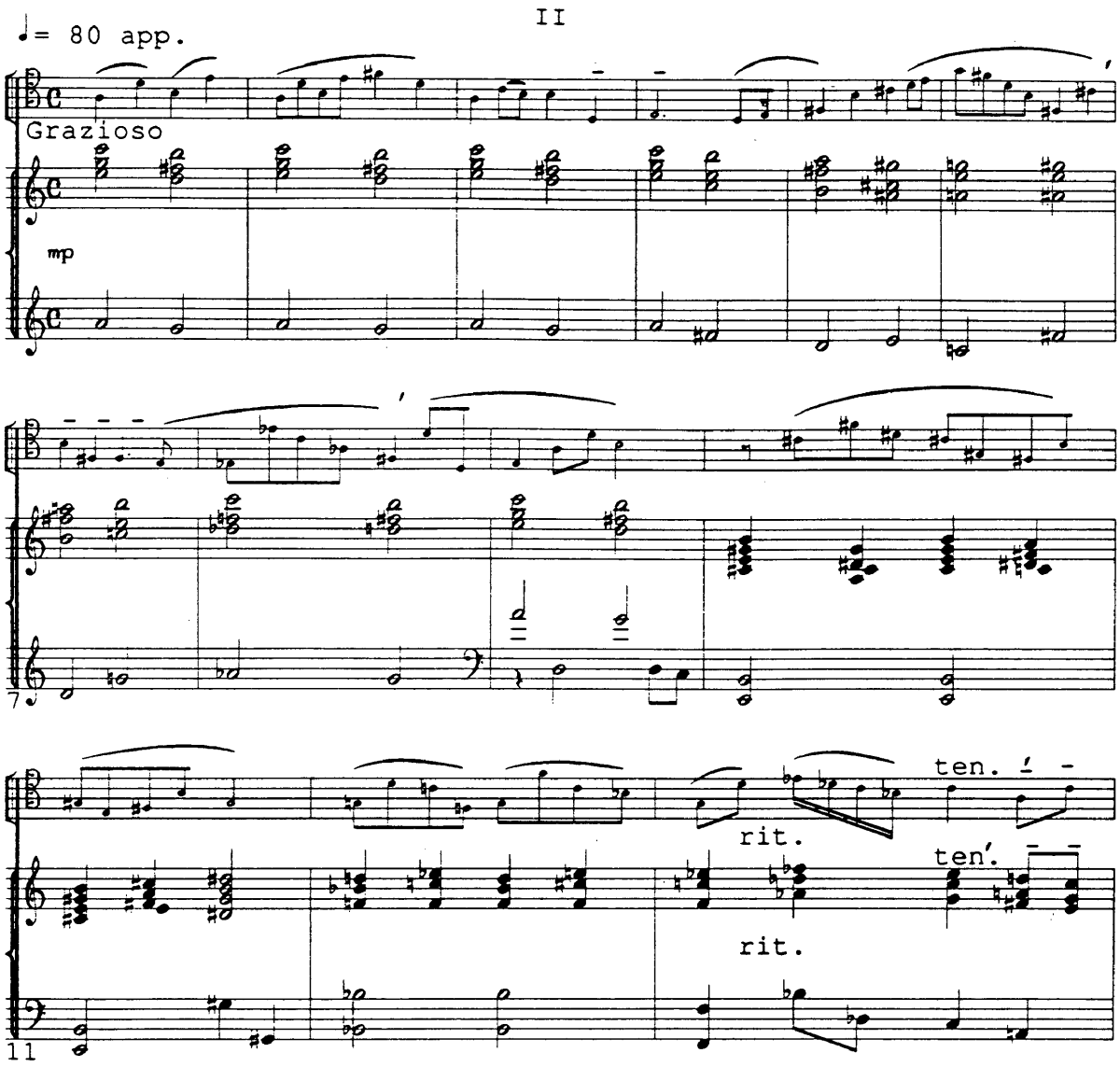

Tempo I
poco rit.
poco rit.
Tempo I
f
27
a tempo
poco rit.
p
mp
30
mf
33
35

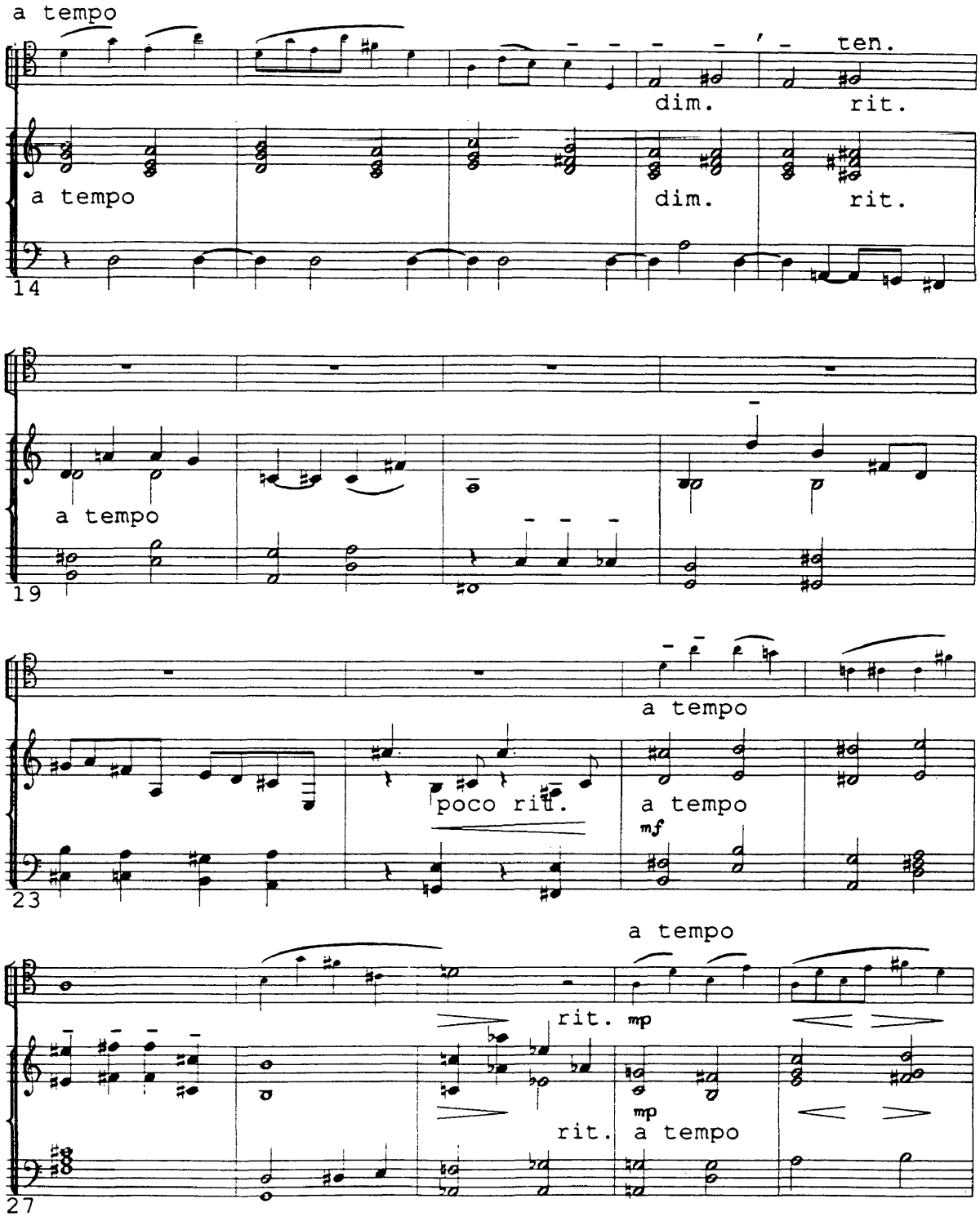

mf
37
mp
mp
39
41
f
dim. .
poco rit.
poco rit.
43

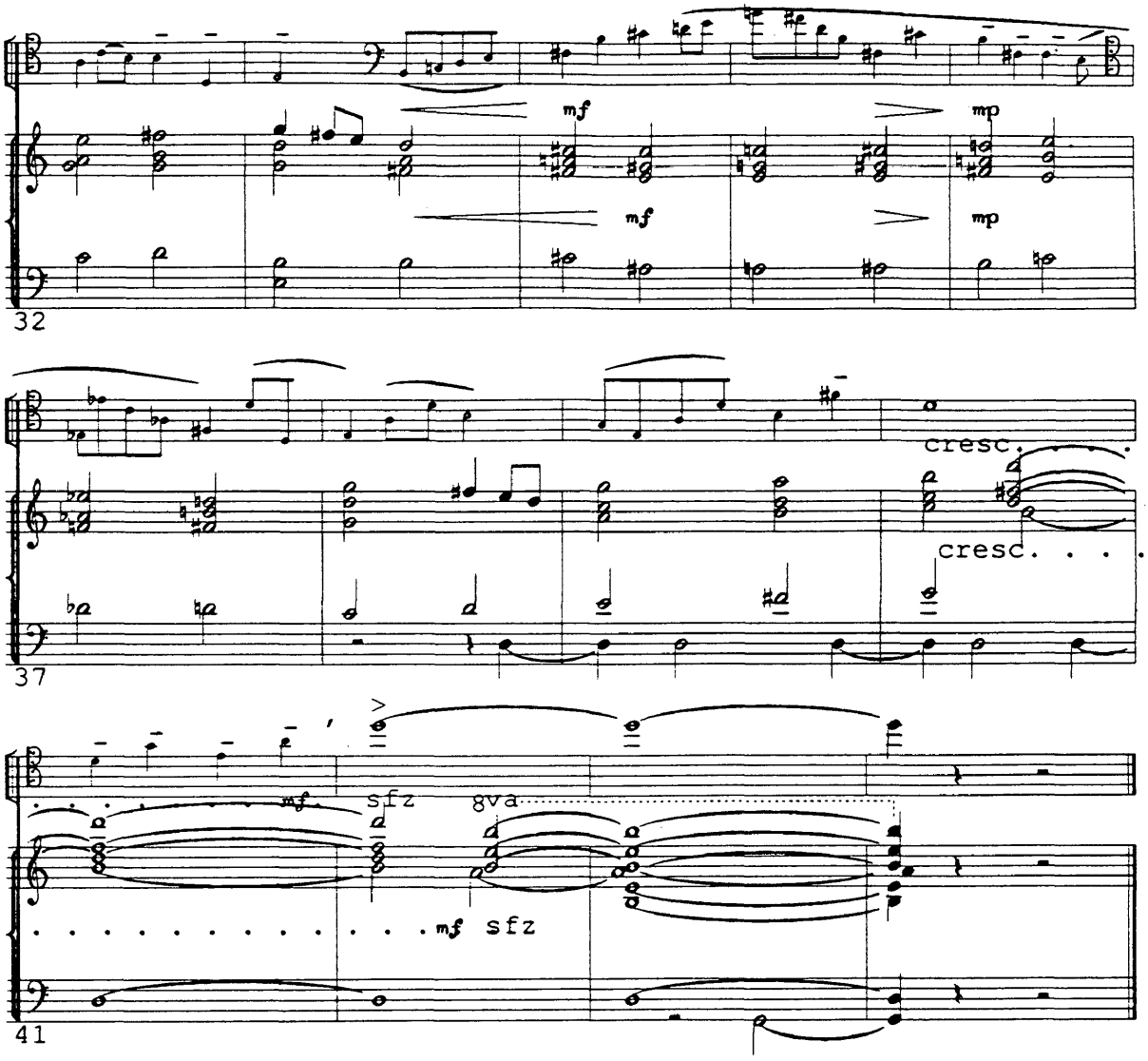

Tempo I
f
Tempo I
45
♩= 76
piu mosso
poco rit.
48
mf
50
f
53


56
poco rit.
f
a tempo
poco rit.
f
a tempo
ff
fff
59

II




a tempo
ten.
dim.
rit.
a tempo
dim.
rit.
14
a tempo
19
a tempo
poco rit.
a tempo
mf
23
a tempo
rit.
mp
mp
rit.
a tempo
27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mf
mp
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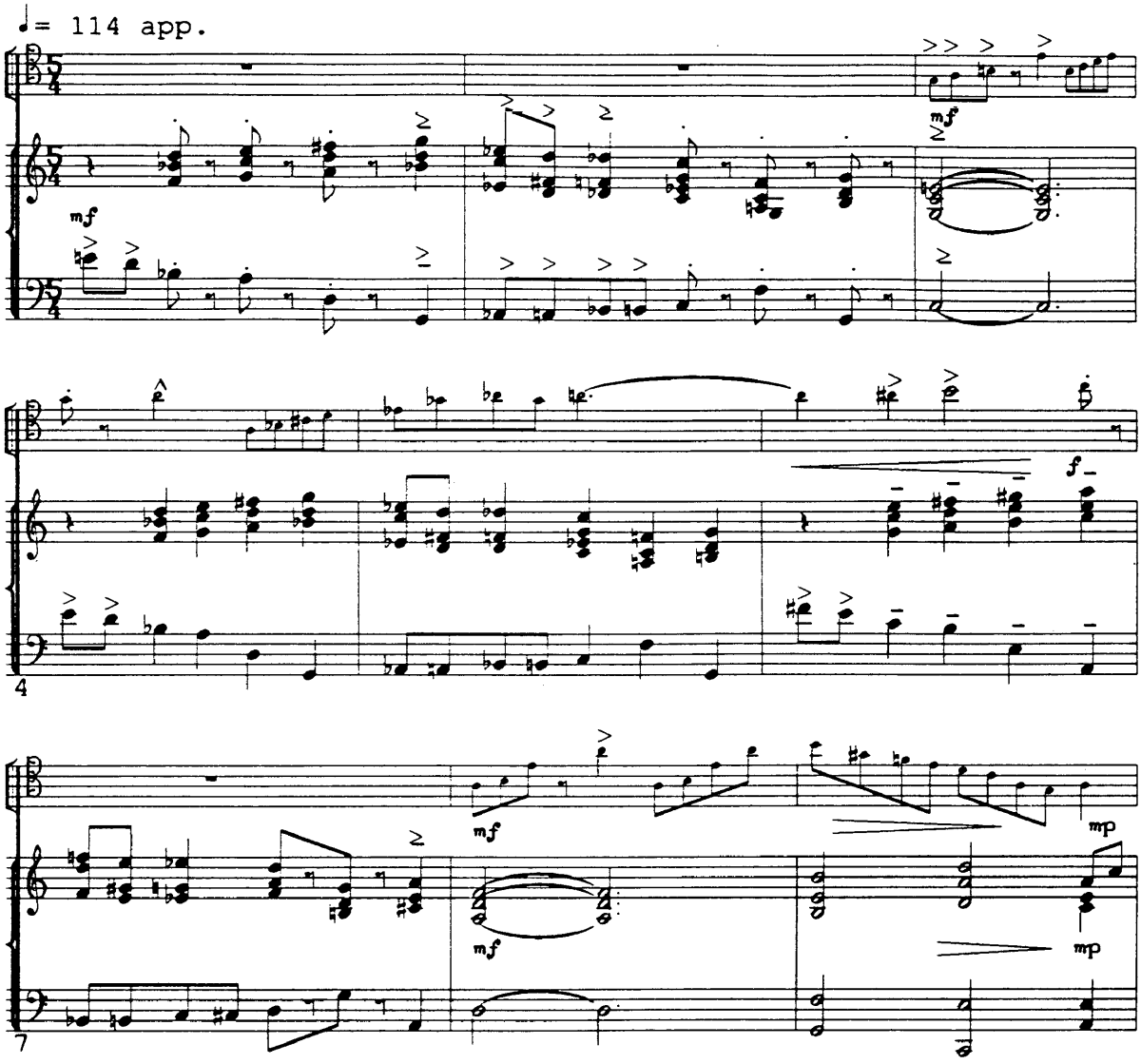
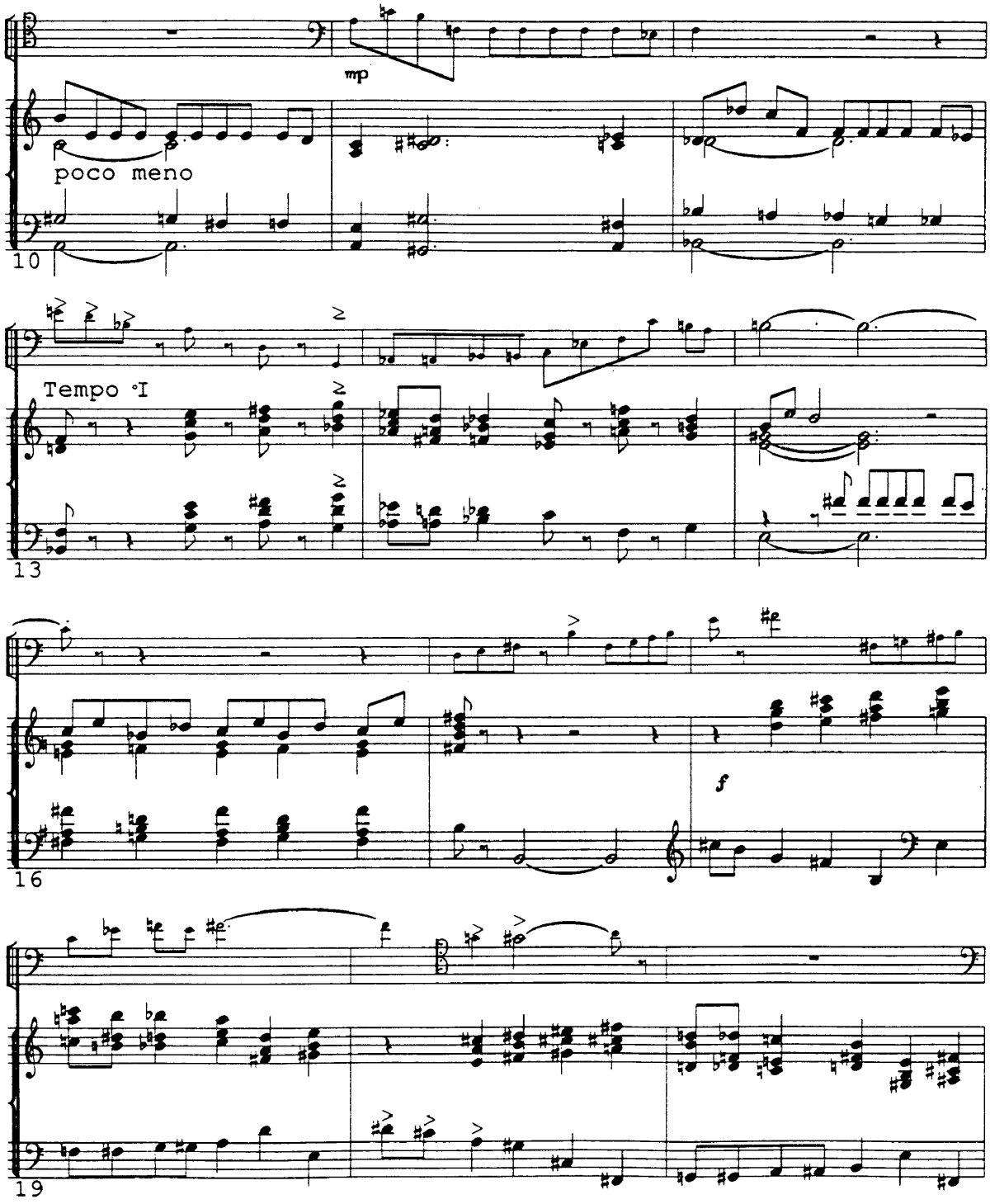
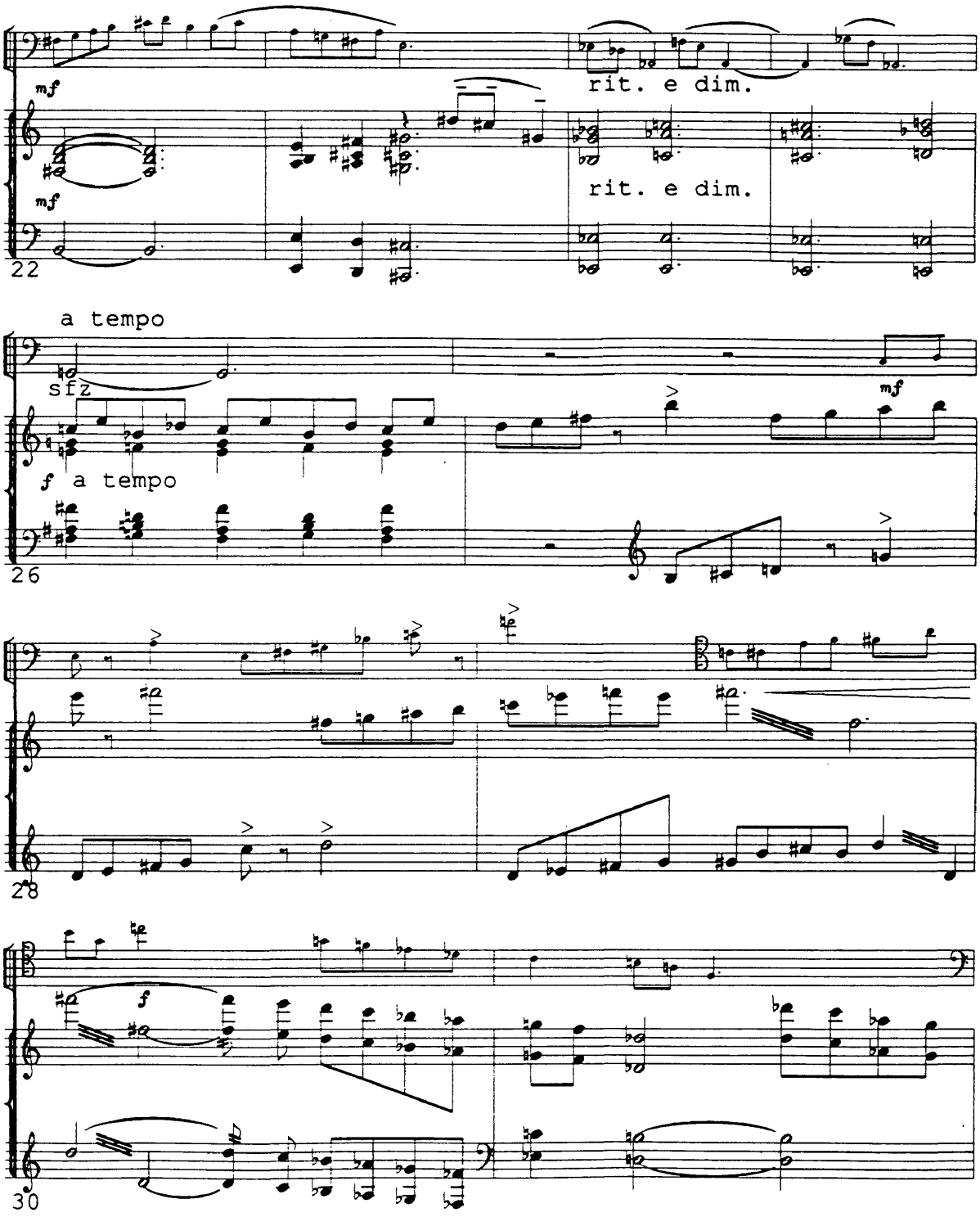
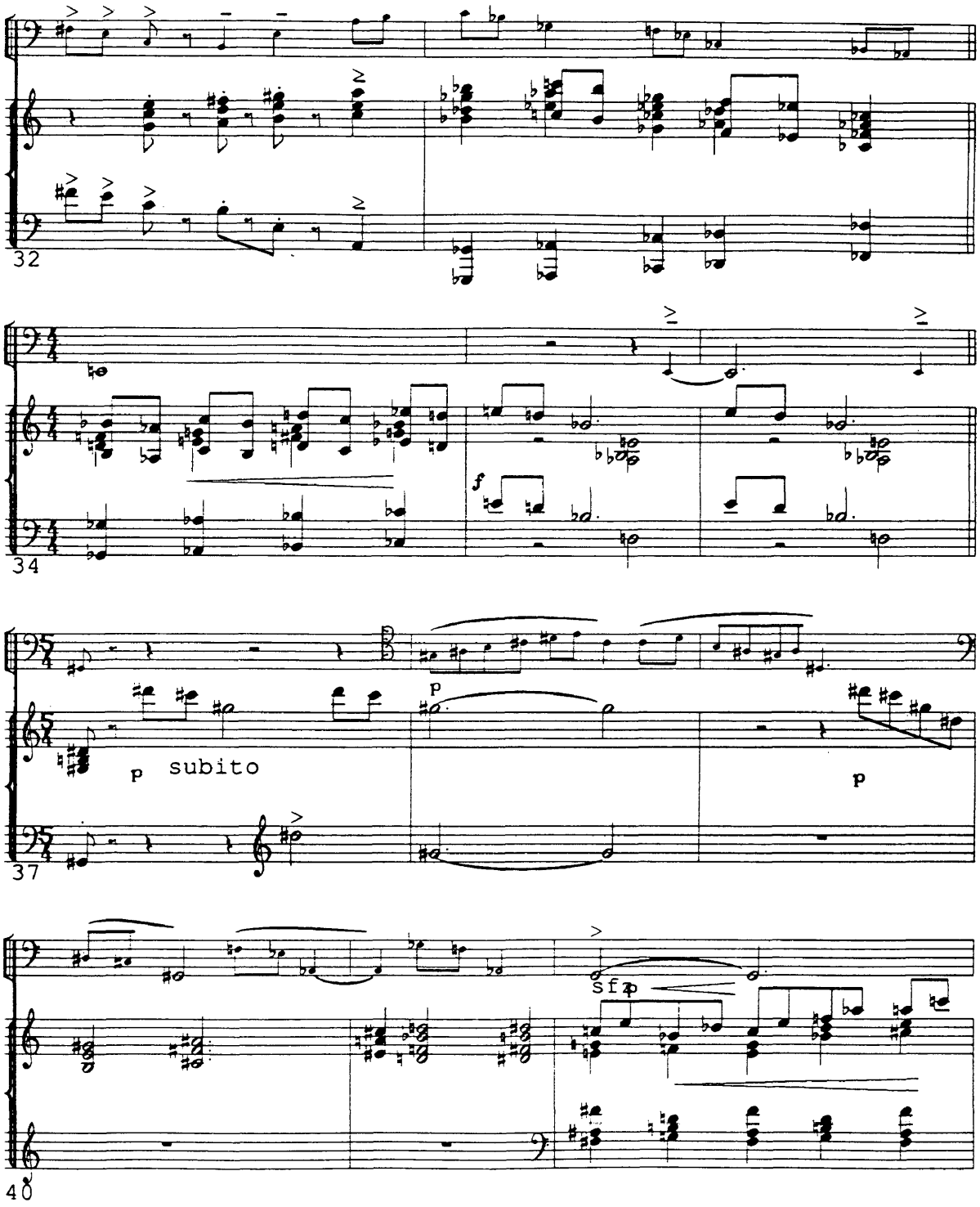
cresc.
cresc.
37
mf
sfz
8va
mf
sfz
41

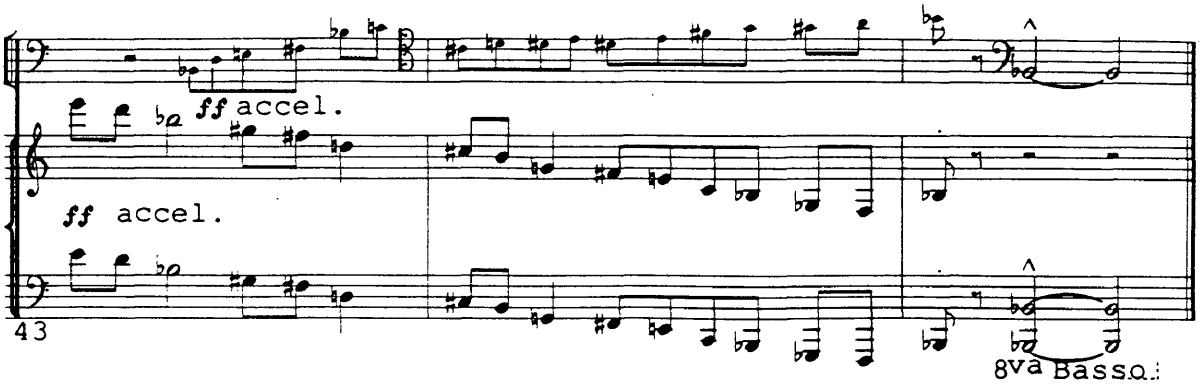
III



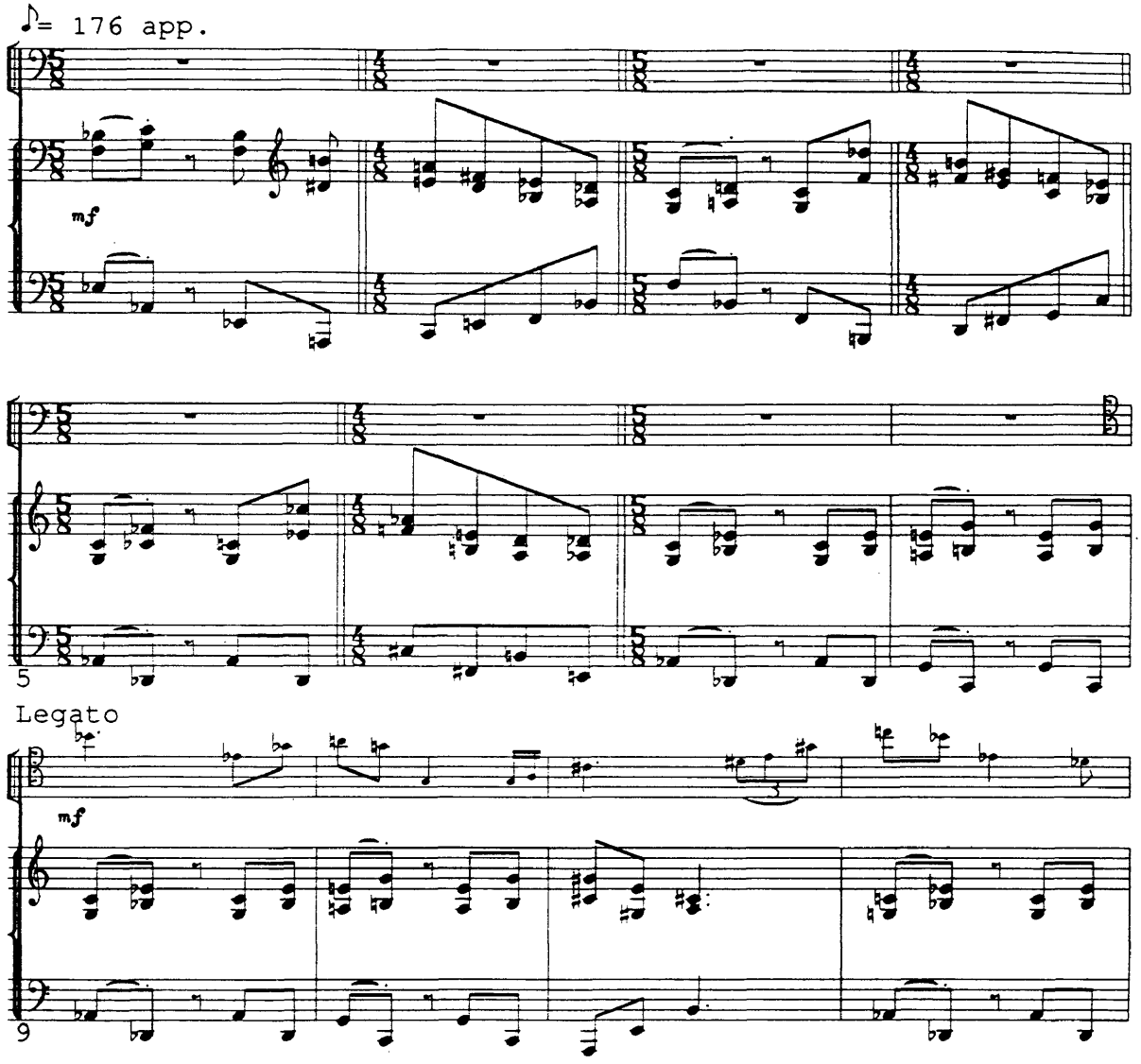

mp
poco meno
10
Tempo °I
13
f
16
19

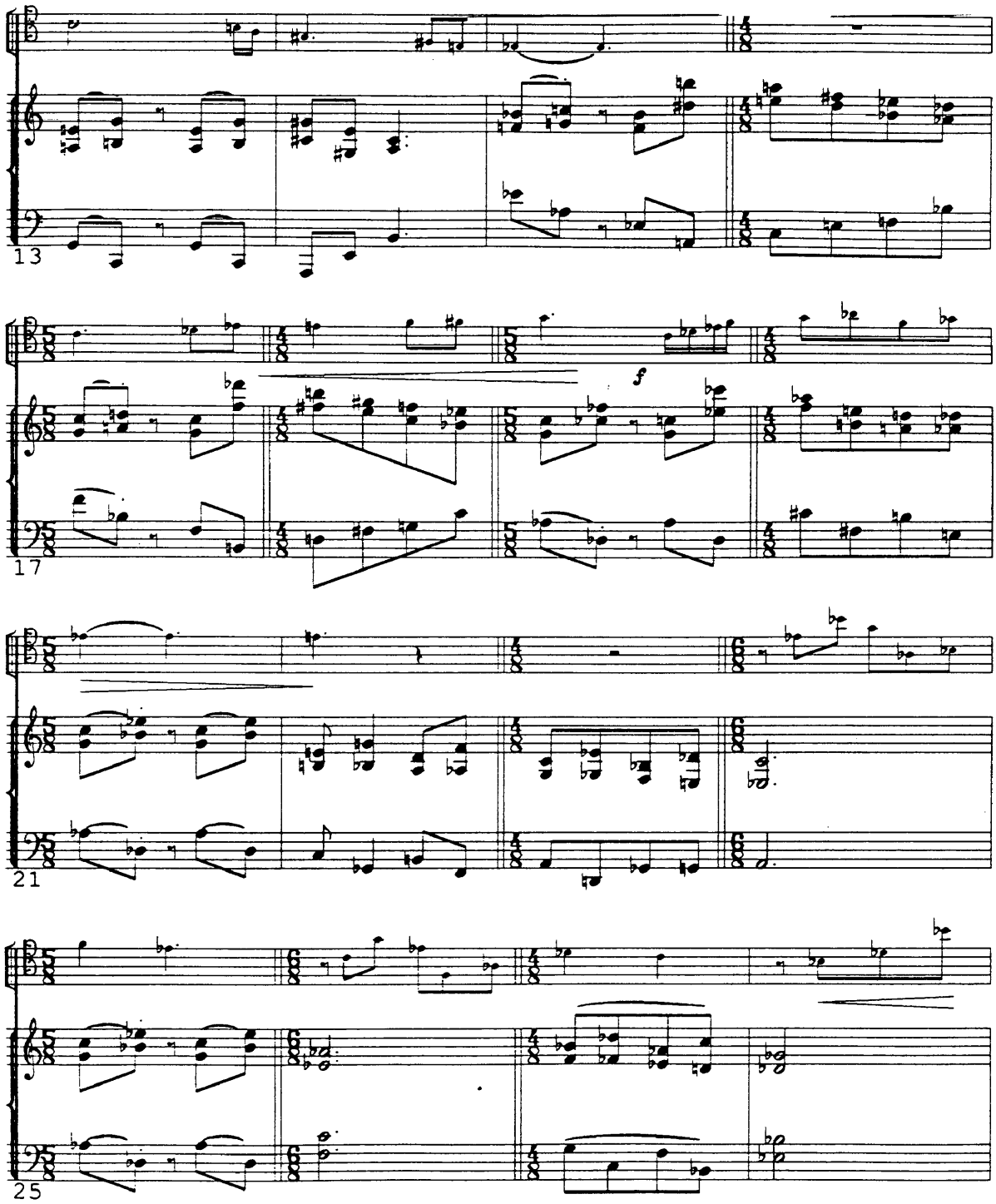

mf
rit. e dim.
mf
rit. e dim.
22
a tempo
sfz
mf
f a tempo
26
28
f
30

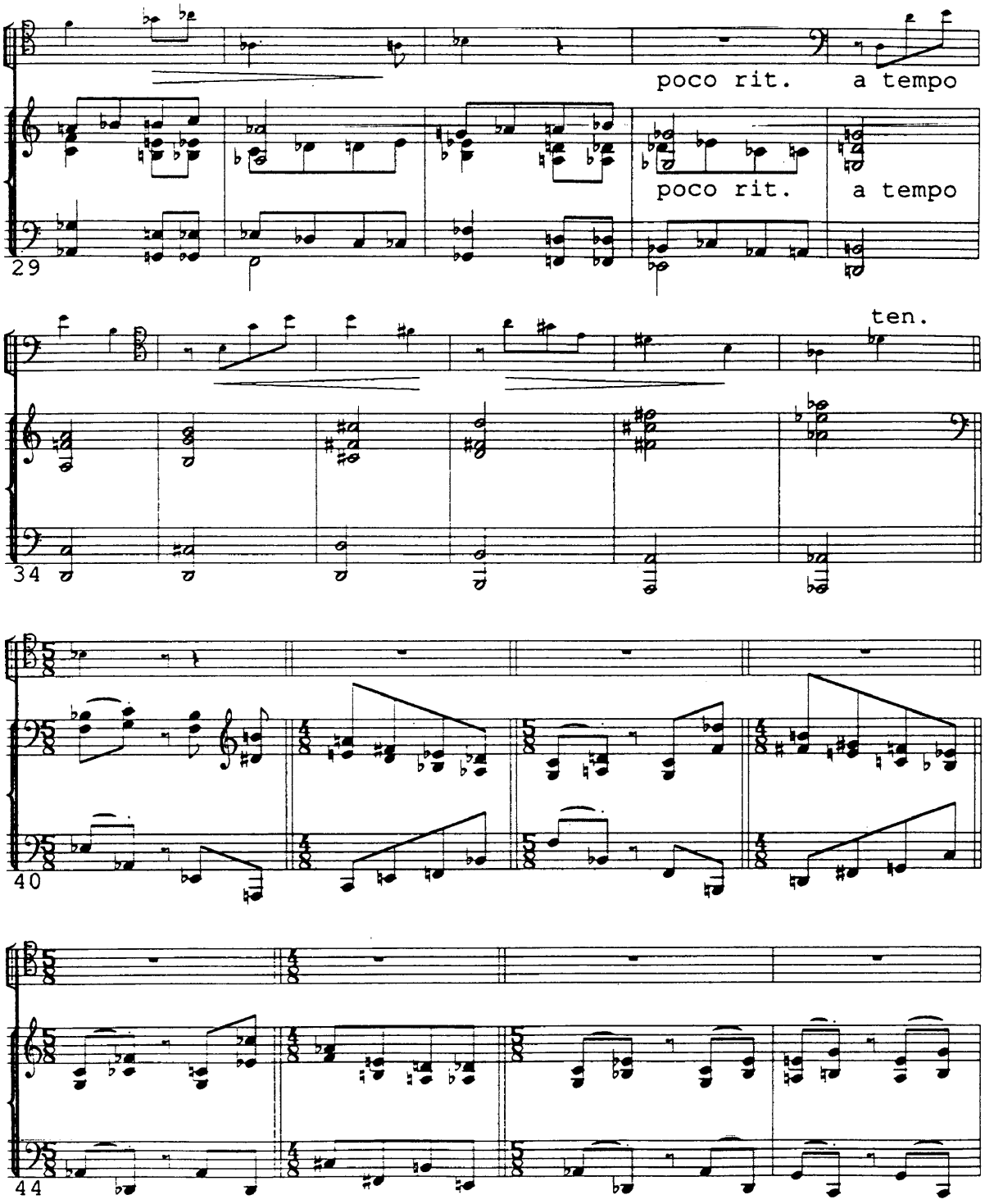

32
34
f
37
p
p subito
p
40
sfp

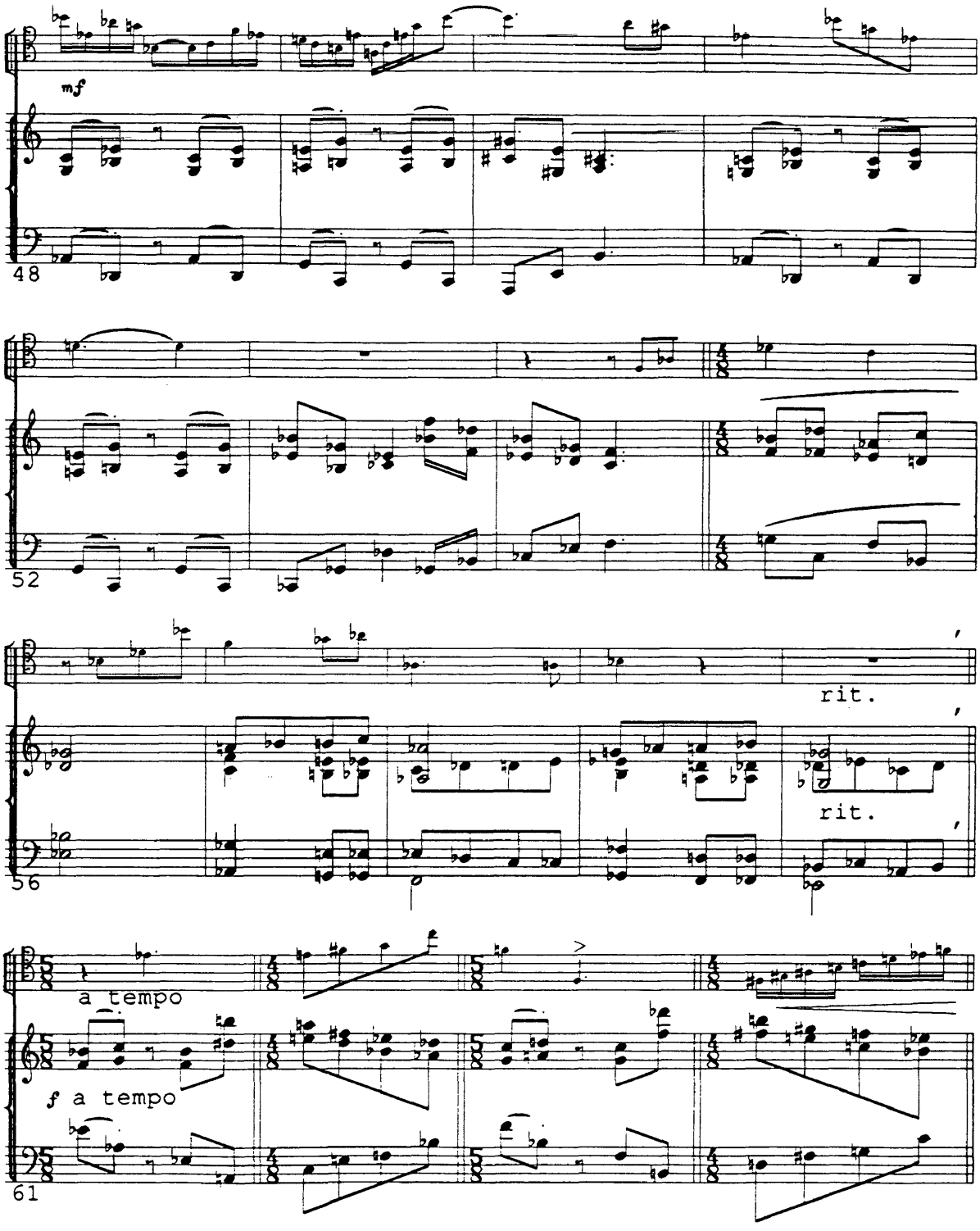

ff accel.
ff accel.
43
8va Basso

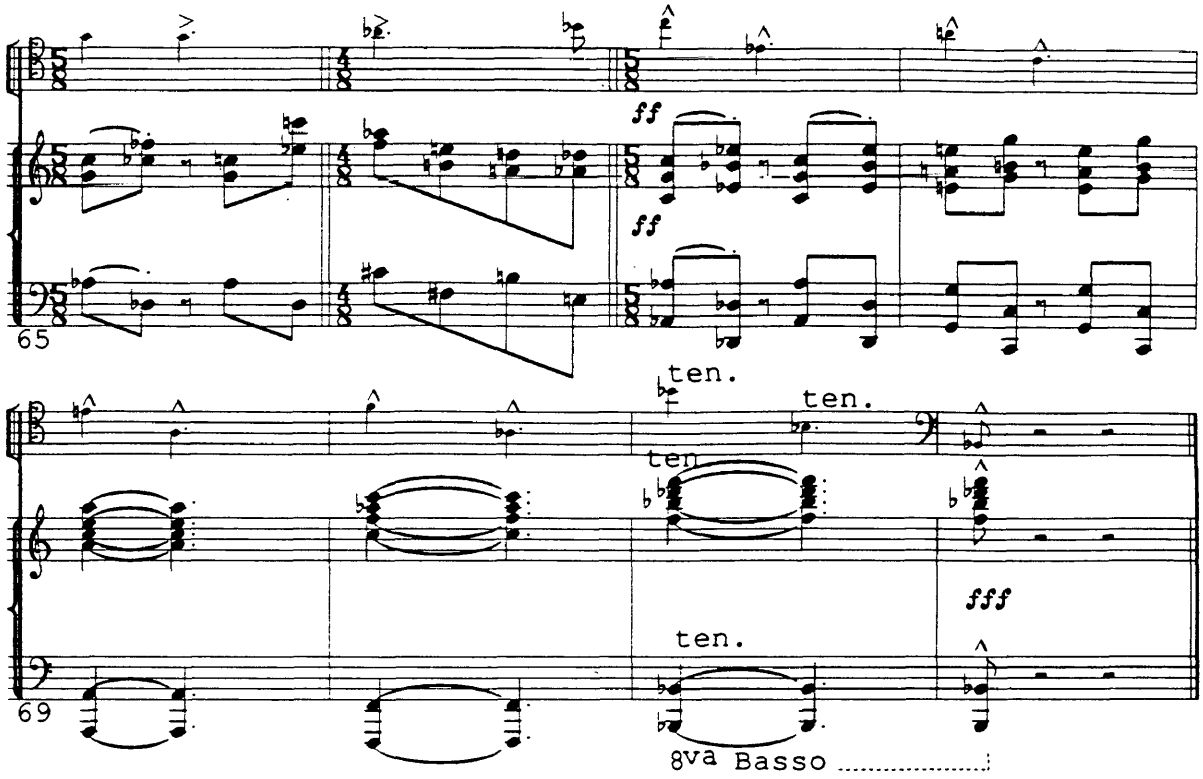
IV



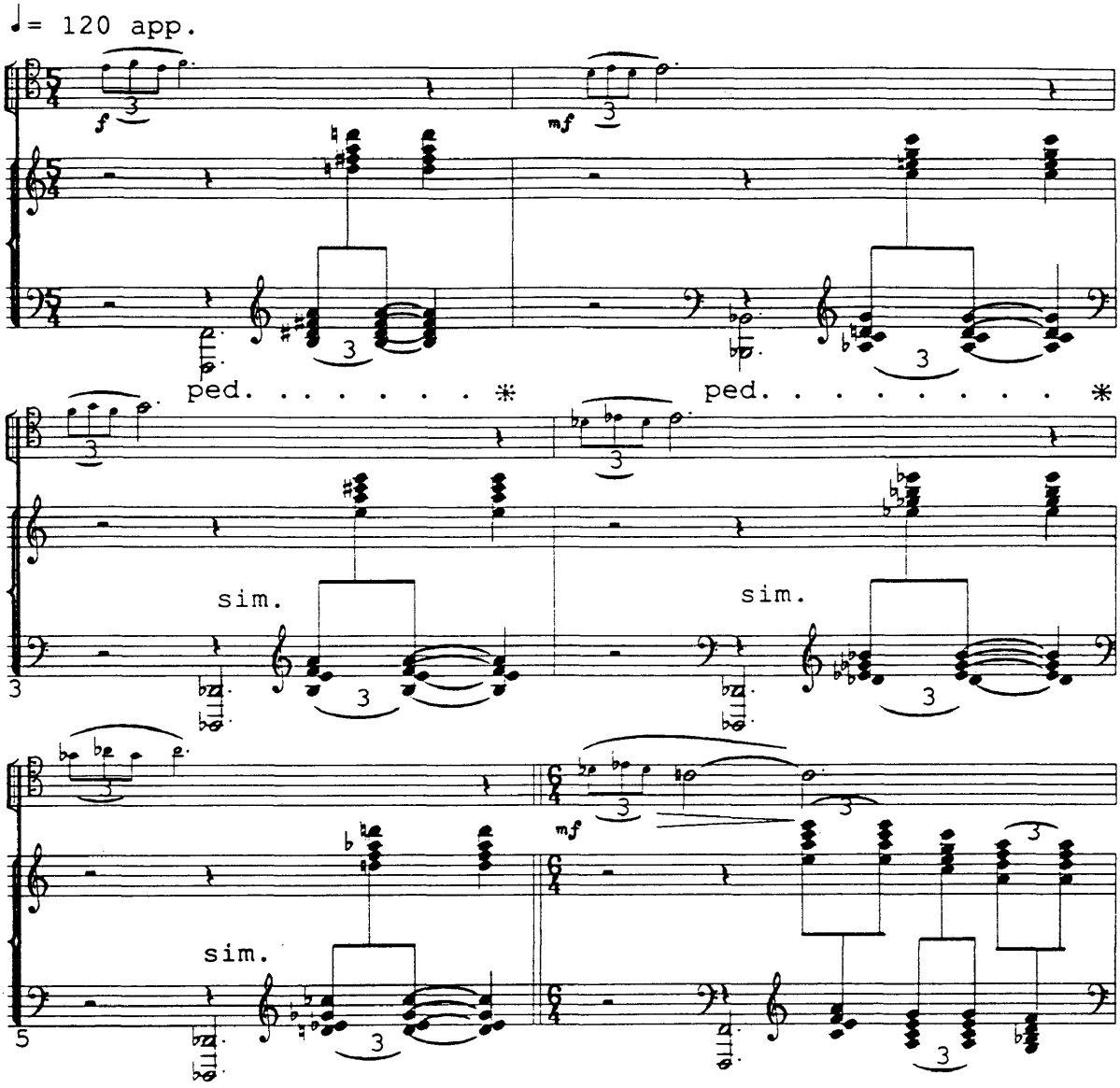

13
17
f
21
25

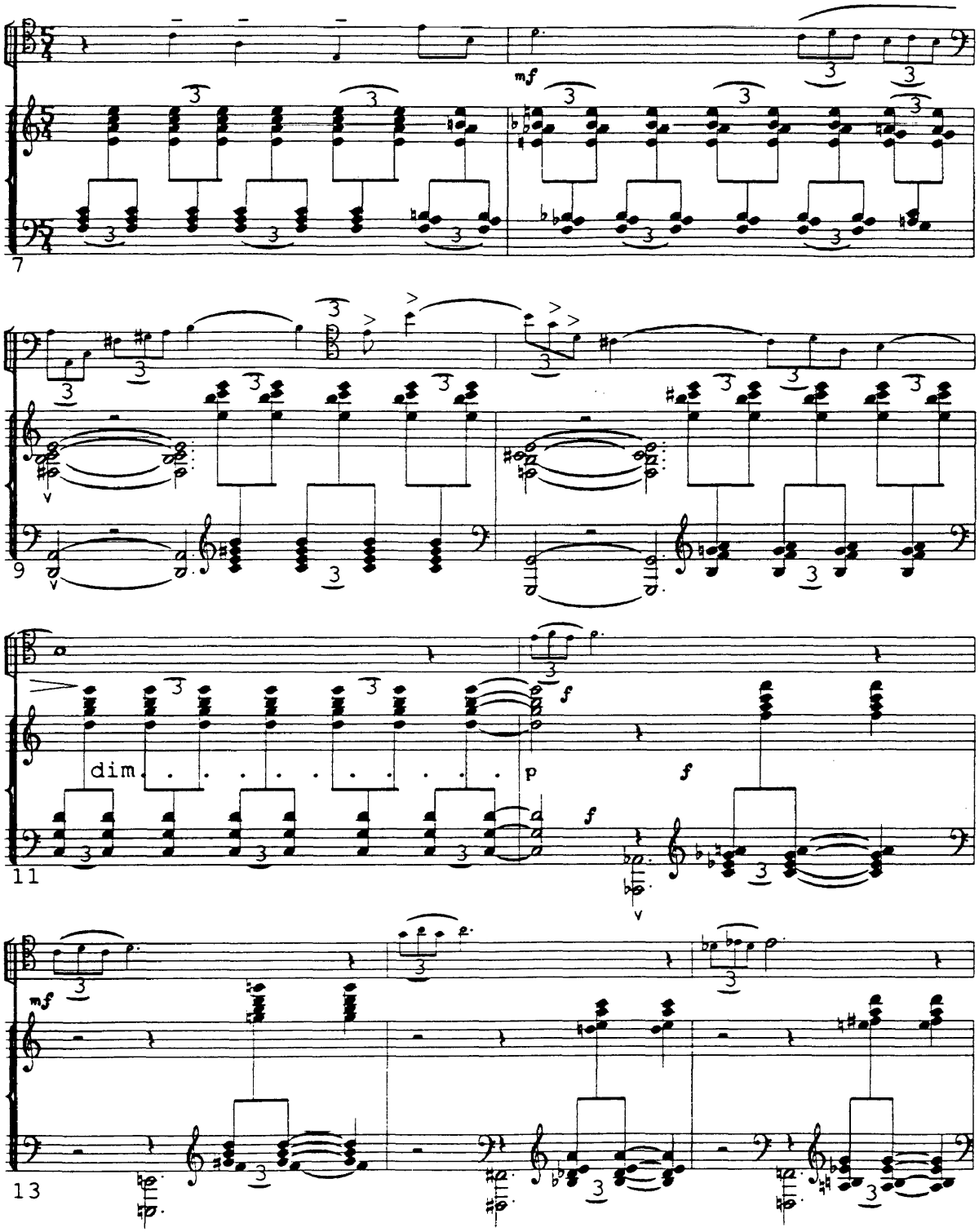

poco rit.
a tempo
poco rit.
a tempo
29
ten.
34
40
44

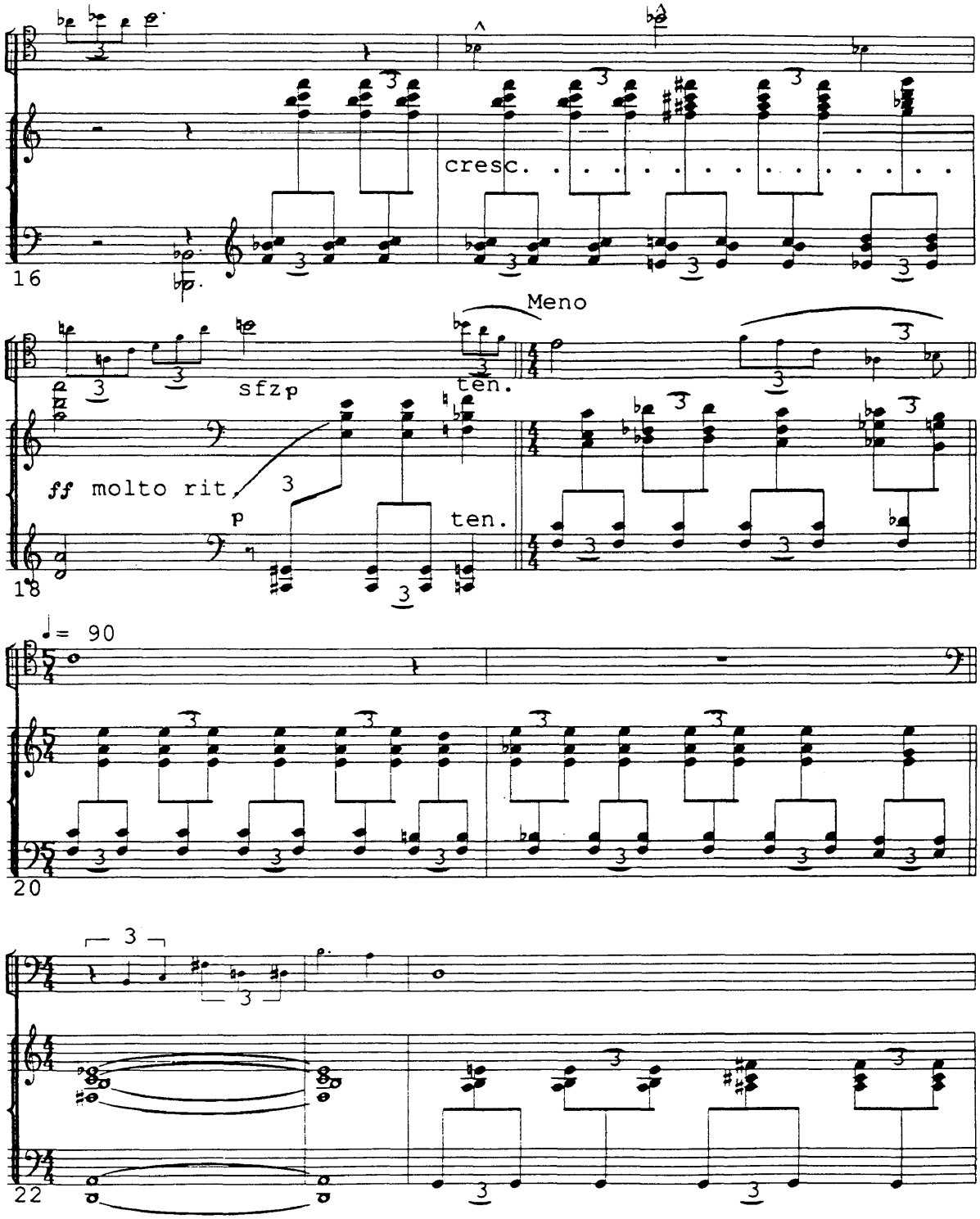

mf
48
52
rit.
rit.
56
a tempo
f a tempo
61

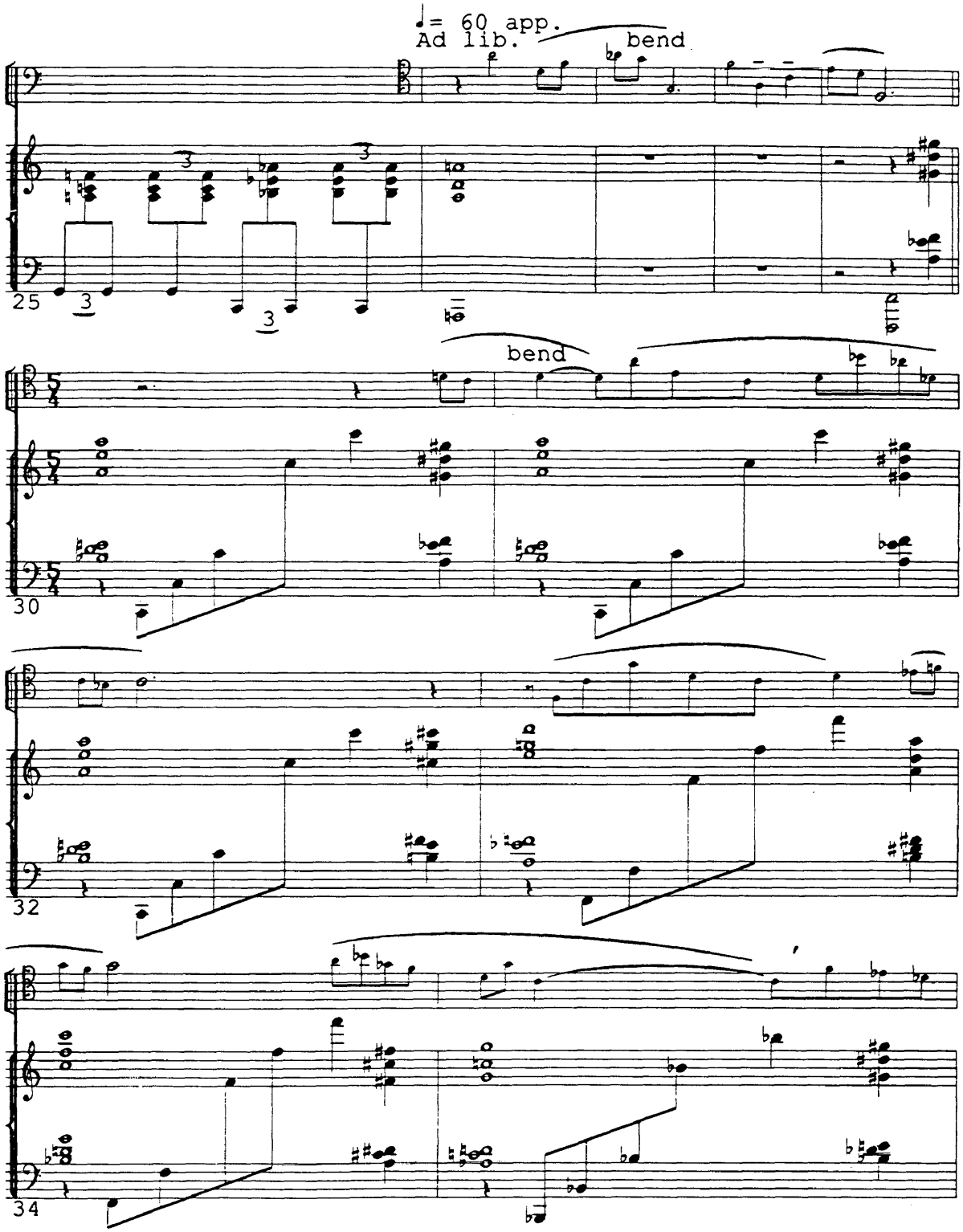

65
ff
ff
ten.
ten.
ten
ten.
fff
69
8va Basso

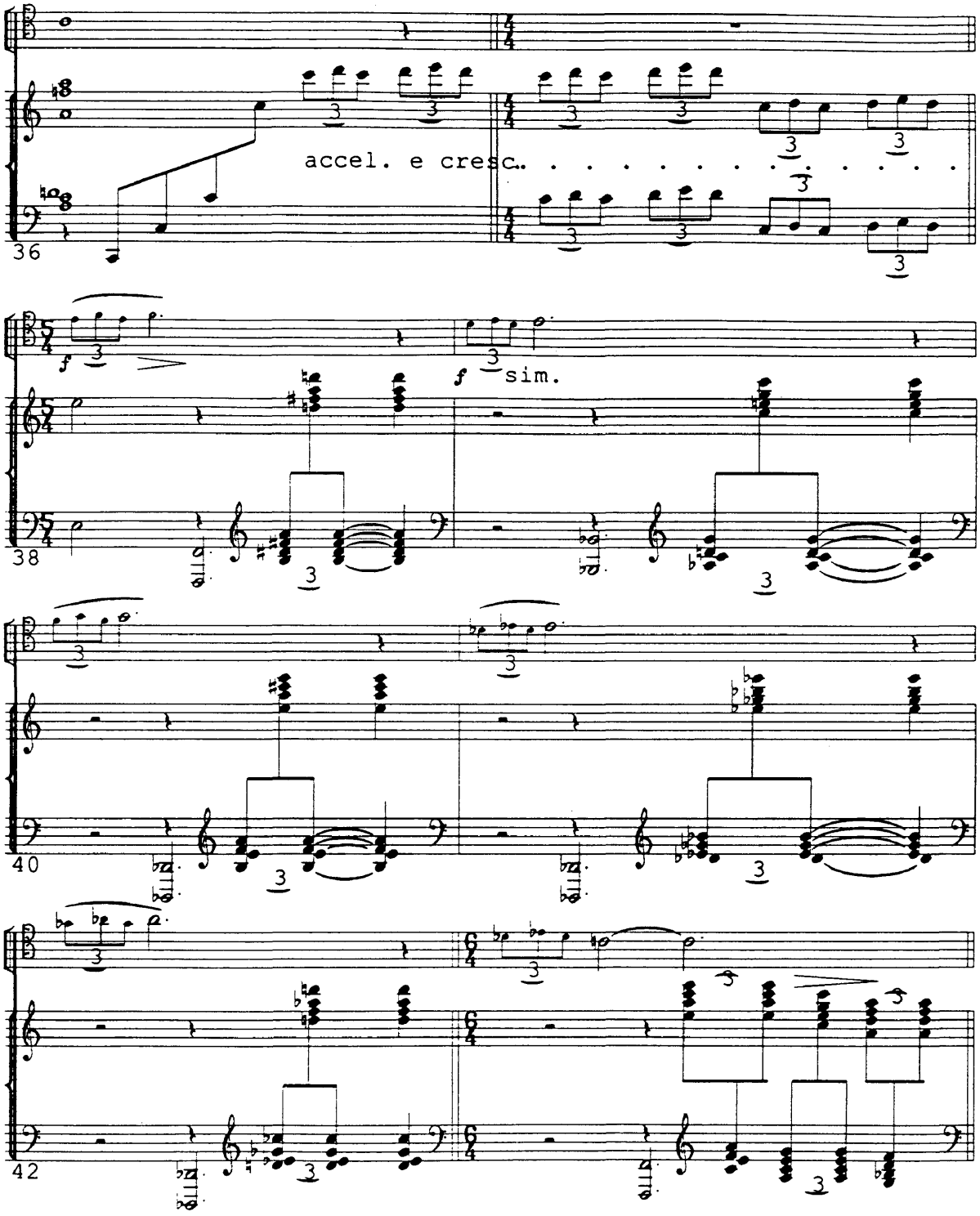
V

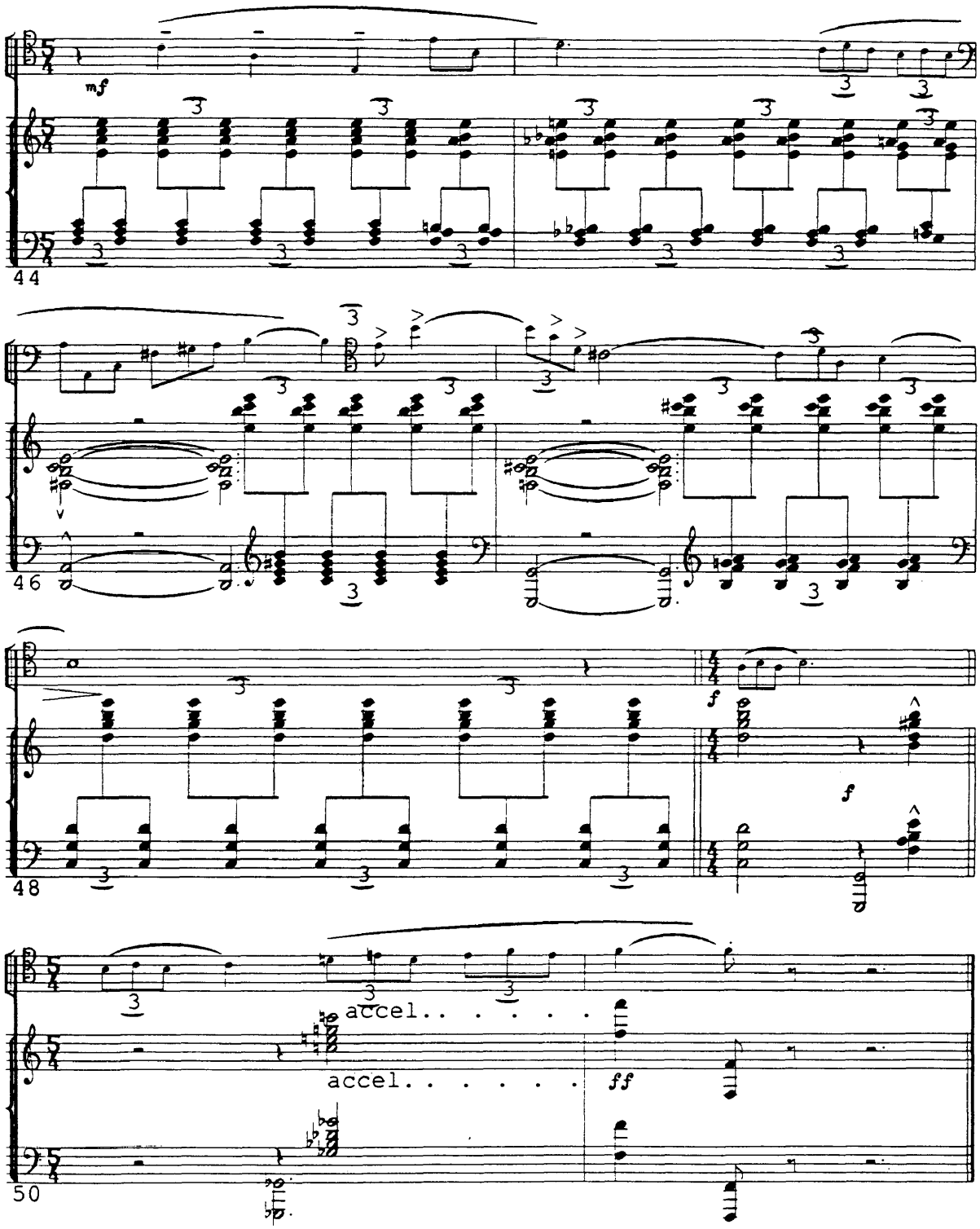



7
mf
9
11
dim.
p
f
13
mf


cresc.
16
Meno
sfzp
ten.
ff molto rit.
p
ten.
18
♩= 90
20
22


♩= 60 app.
Ad lib.
bend
25
bend
30
32
34


accel. e cresc.
sim.
36
38
40
42


mf
44
46
48
f
f
accel. . . . . .
accel. . . . . .
ff
50

# Conclusion

The Sonata for Trombone and Piano, by Alec Wilder, is an important part of contemporary trombone literature. The performance of the work since its publication in 1964 has been impeded by the manuscript copy of the Sonata and the inconsistensies in the presentation of the notation and markings in the 1964 publication. The errors and omissions cited in this study are in need of correction in a publicly available score.

The 1965 recording on Golden Crest records of the work by Swallow (and re-released in 1979) is no longer available in release. A new release or new recording of the Sonata would be of benefit to future performers of this work.

The purpose of this study, the creation of a new edition of the Sonata in a corrected and printed format, hopefully will benefit both the pianist and trombonist in producing an accurate and musical performance of the piece.

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