Ora penso invece che il mondo...

(Today, however, I think that the world...)

Three Quick Snapshots of a Really Beautiful Enigma
for String Quartet/Ensemble and Two Pianos

Stephen Travis Pope, 10:00 minutes, 2006

Full Title

"Ora penso invece che il mondo sia un enigma benigno,
che la nostra follia rende terribile perchè pretende
di interpretarlo secondo la propria verità."

"Today, however, I think that the world is an enigma,
a benign enigma, however, which is only rendered terrible by
our folly of trying to interpret it according to some personal truth."

"Heute aber, denke ich, dass die Welt ein Rätsel ist, ein harmloses
Rätsel aber, das nur furchtbar gemacht wird durch unseren
Versuch, es nach einer eigenen Wahrheit zu interpretieren."

Umberto Eco, "Il pendolo di Foucault"
(*Foucault's Pendulum*)

Sections

Piano Intro - m. 1
Andante con brio - m. 7
Larghetto, cantabile - m. 106
Andante molto - m. 152
Reprise - m. 175

Dedicated to my parents Phil and Polly Pope,
and to my dear wife Barbara.

Written for the Minguet Quartet.
Premier: Cologne/Köln Germany, November, 2006

Santa Barbara, October, 2006

Program Notes

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When I was invited to write a piece for string quartet and electronics for a festival in Cologne marking the 50th anniversary of the first computer-composed music (a string quartet), the title of this piece, and its basic form, sprang immediately to mind. This is very rare for me. During the composition, I used the title to steer my decisions, and, as a result, what started out to be a complex and dynamic piece became ever simpler and more directly lovely. As I repeated "Ora penso invece che il mondo..." it came strongly into focus that the world-enigma in which we live is quite beautiful and accessible, even if we rarely understand its underlying mechanisms. This is the basis of the subtitle "Three Quick Snapshots of a Really Beautiful Enigma"; the piece's three movements are separate scenes or venues taking place at the same time all the time.

Ora penso invece che il mondo... is dedicated to my parents, Phil and Polly Pope (who taught me to see the world in many different ways), and to my dear wife Barbara.

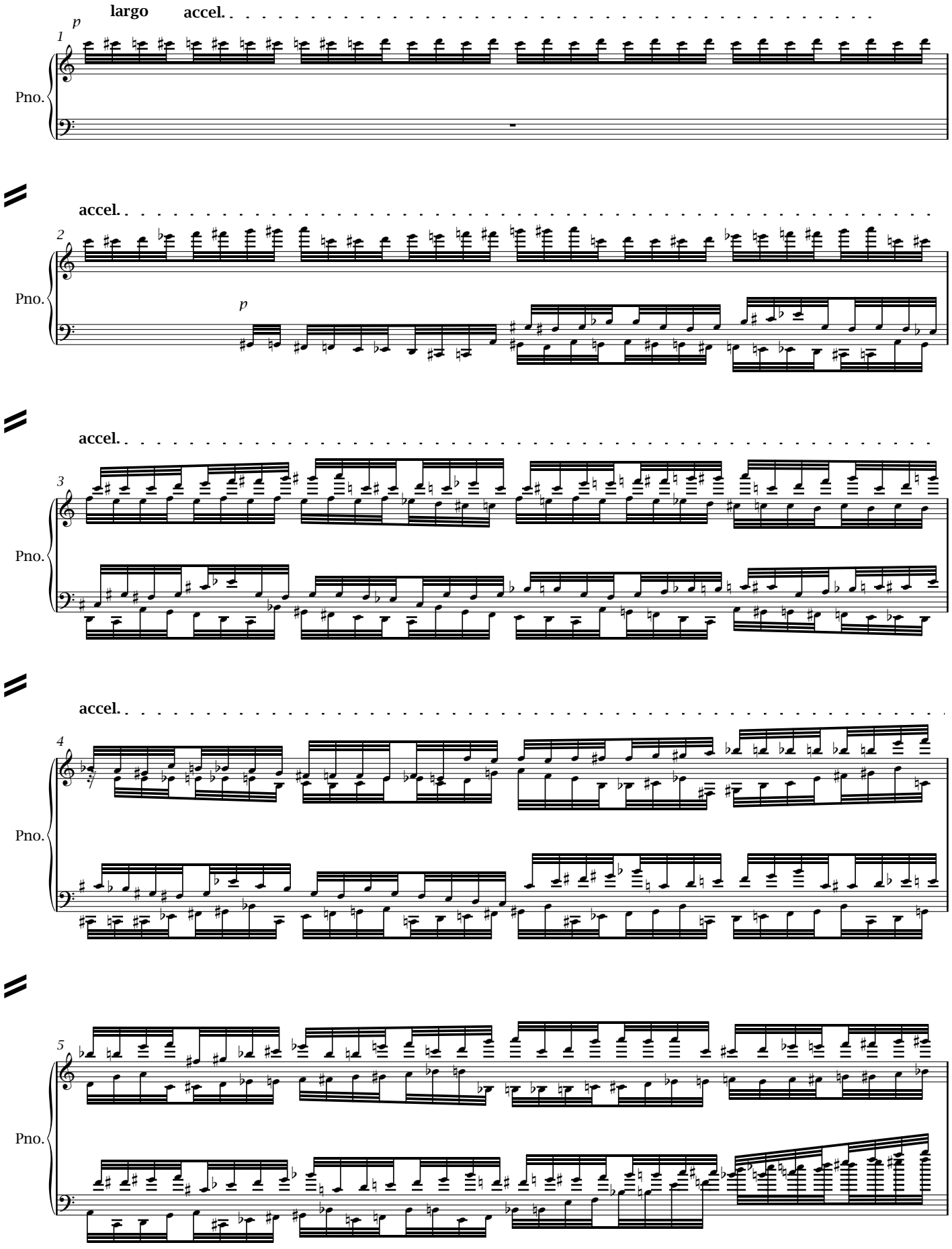
The piece opens with three episodes of minimalist rhythmic patterns that are deconstructed, leading to a bridge to the slow movement, a very beautiful song. The final movement opens with a contrapuntal development, but the players quickly decide to forego this and return to playing a variation of the slow pretty song.

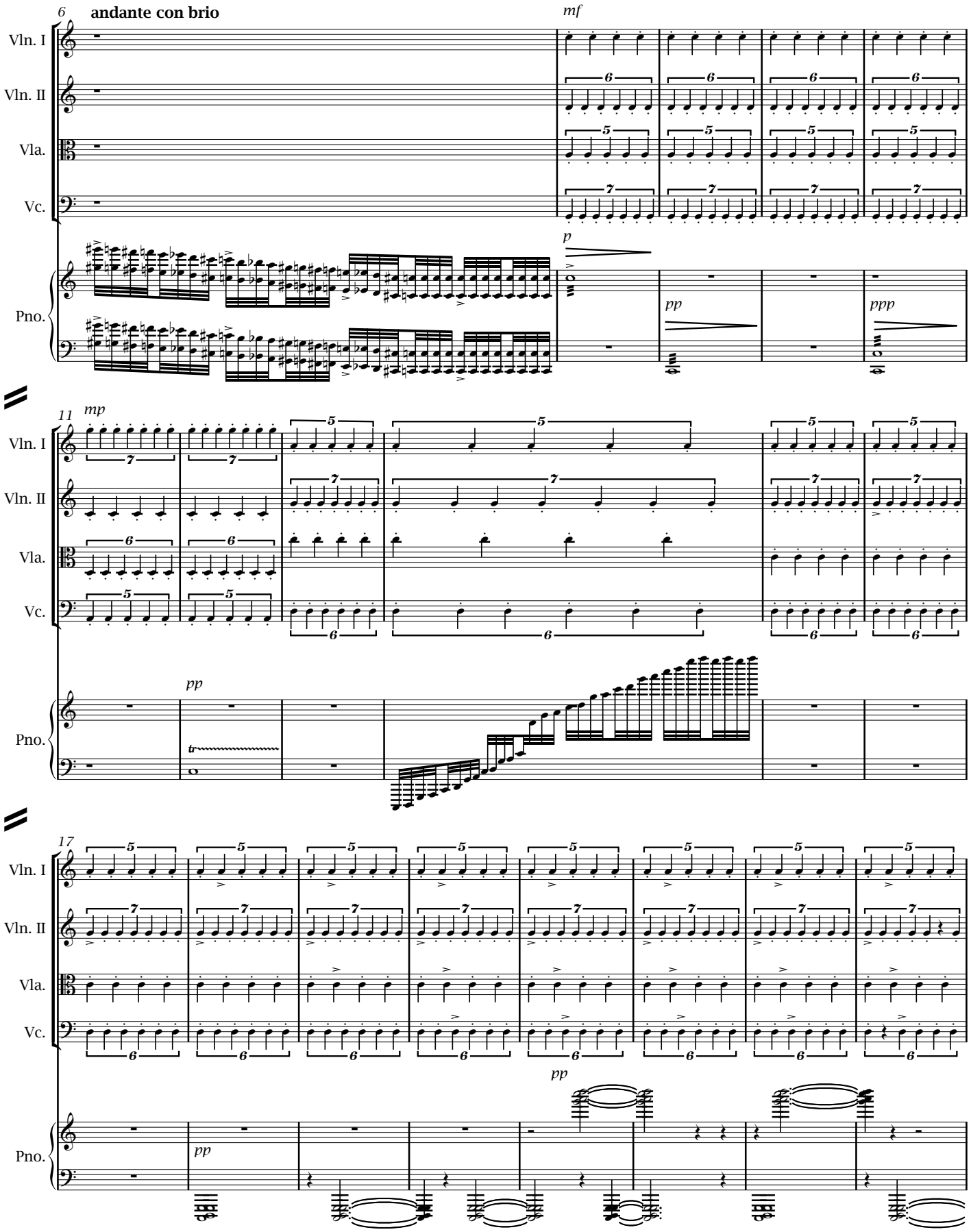
Performance Notes

"Ora penso invece che il mondo..." is scored for string quartet and two pianos.
The string parts can be performed by a quartet or larger string ensemble up to about 16 pieces.
The doubling and section splits left to the conductor.
The tromli in several sections (meas. 94ff and 121ff) are optional, and I have kept the dynamic markings to a minimum to encourage expressive performers and conductors.

The piano parts are unplayable by humans and it is intended that they be performed either by player pianos (such as a Yamaha Disklavier under MIDI control), or reproduced from a CD recording (available from the composer). This of course locks the tempi to the pianos. The second piano (meas. 175ff) is supposed to be off-stage (*in der Ferne*), but its part may be played to the first piano if two Disklaviers are not available.

Ora penso invece che il mondo...





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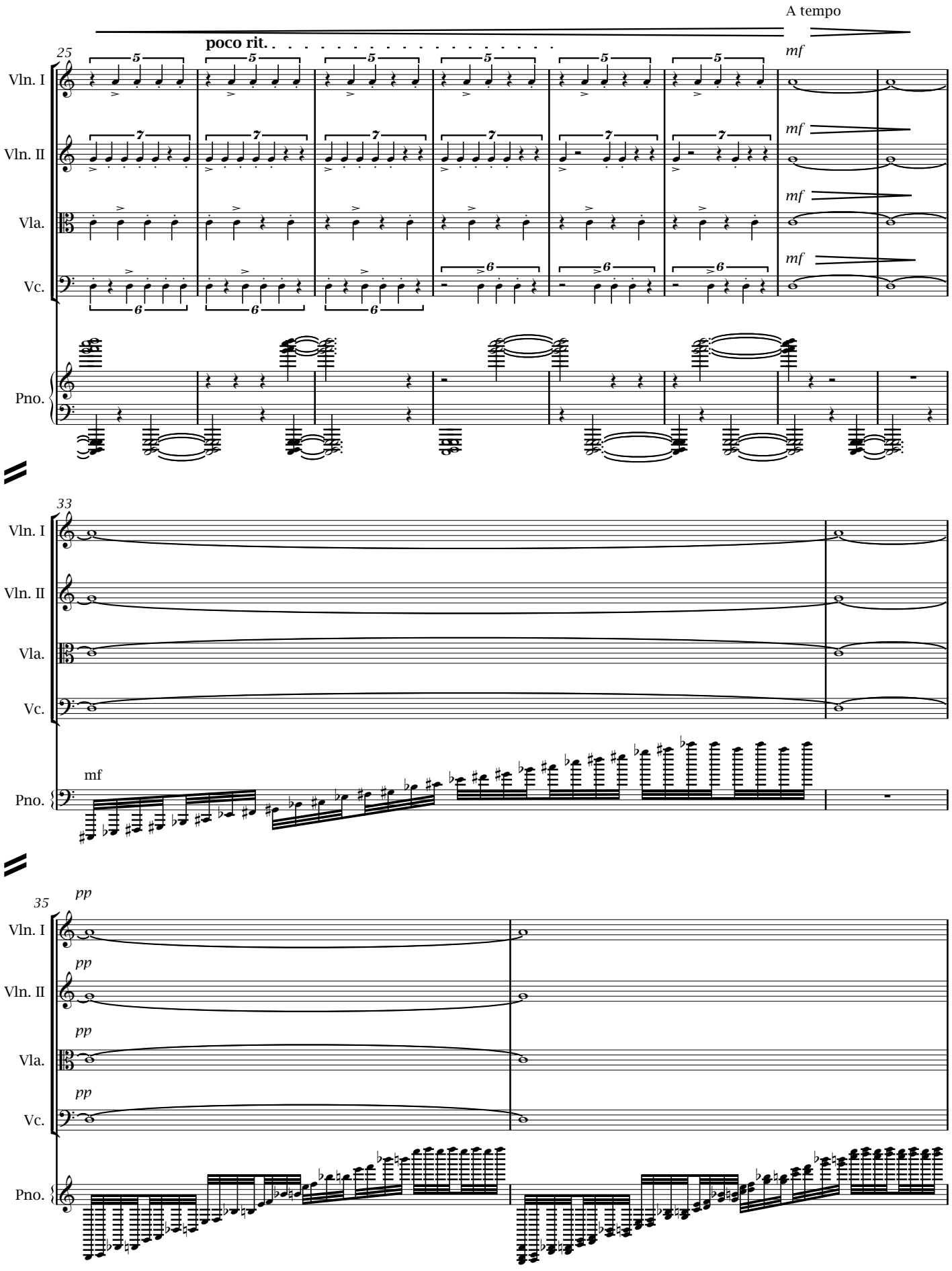

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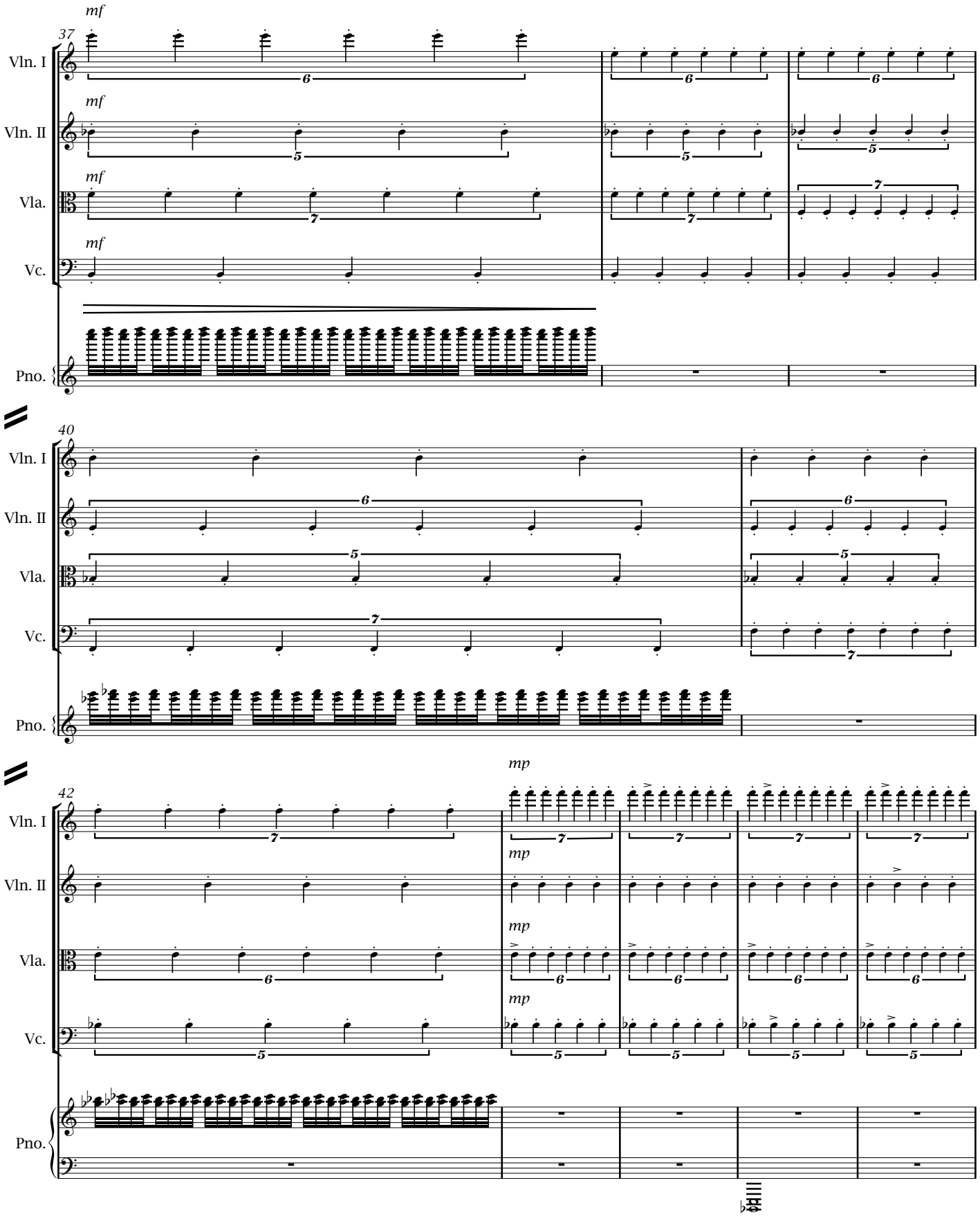

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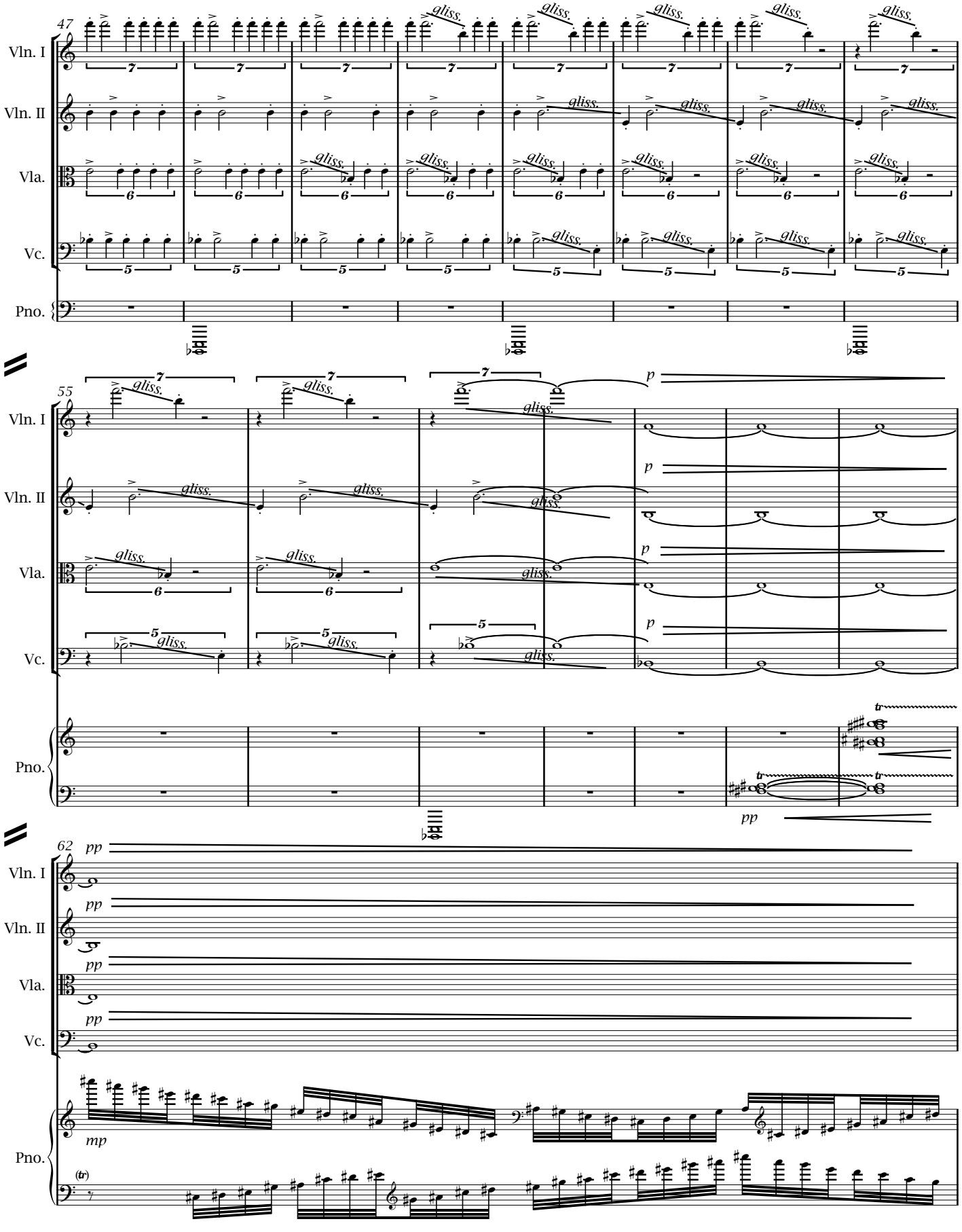

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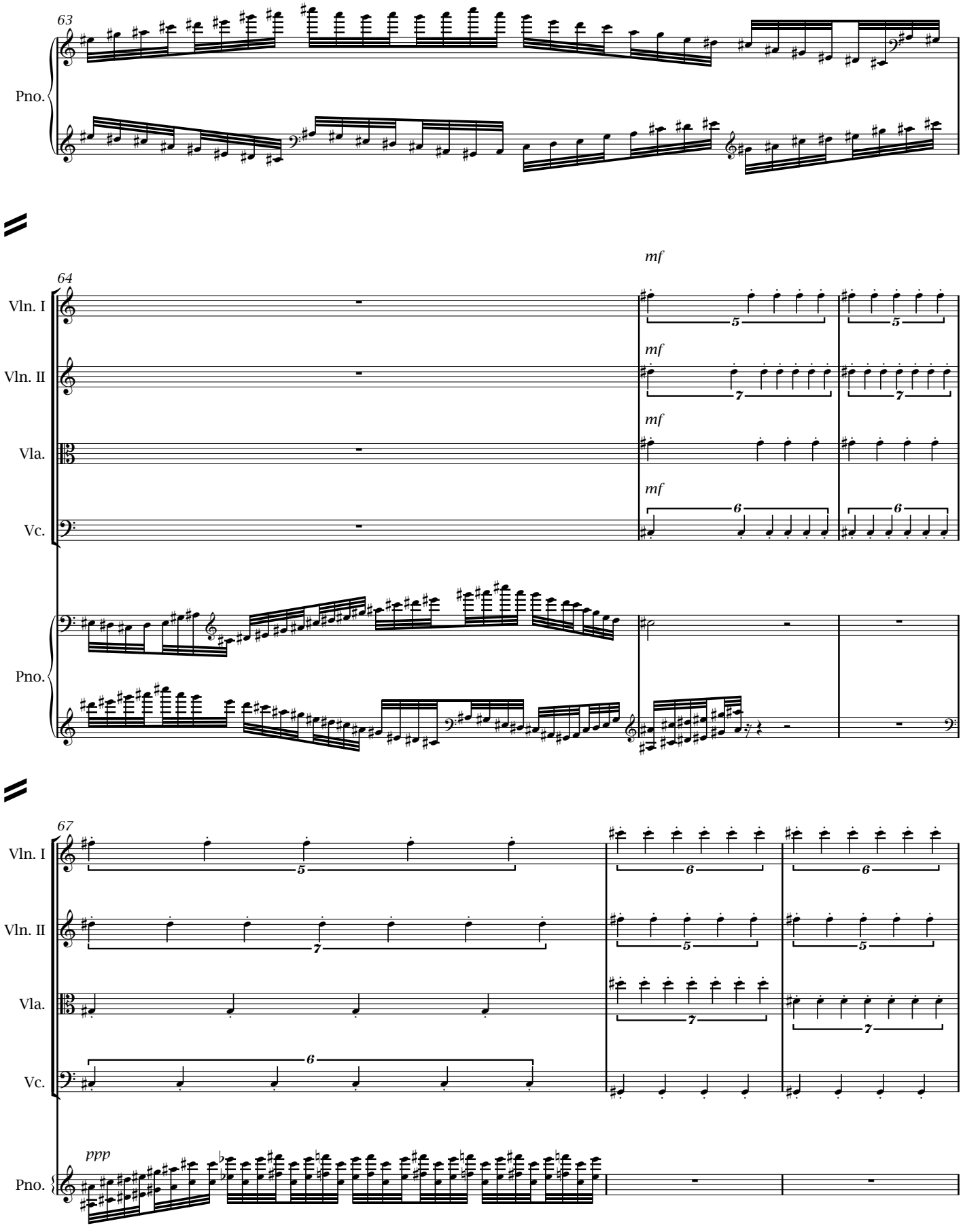

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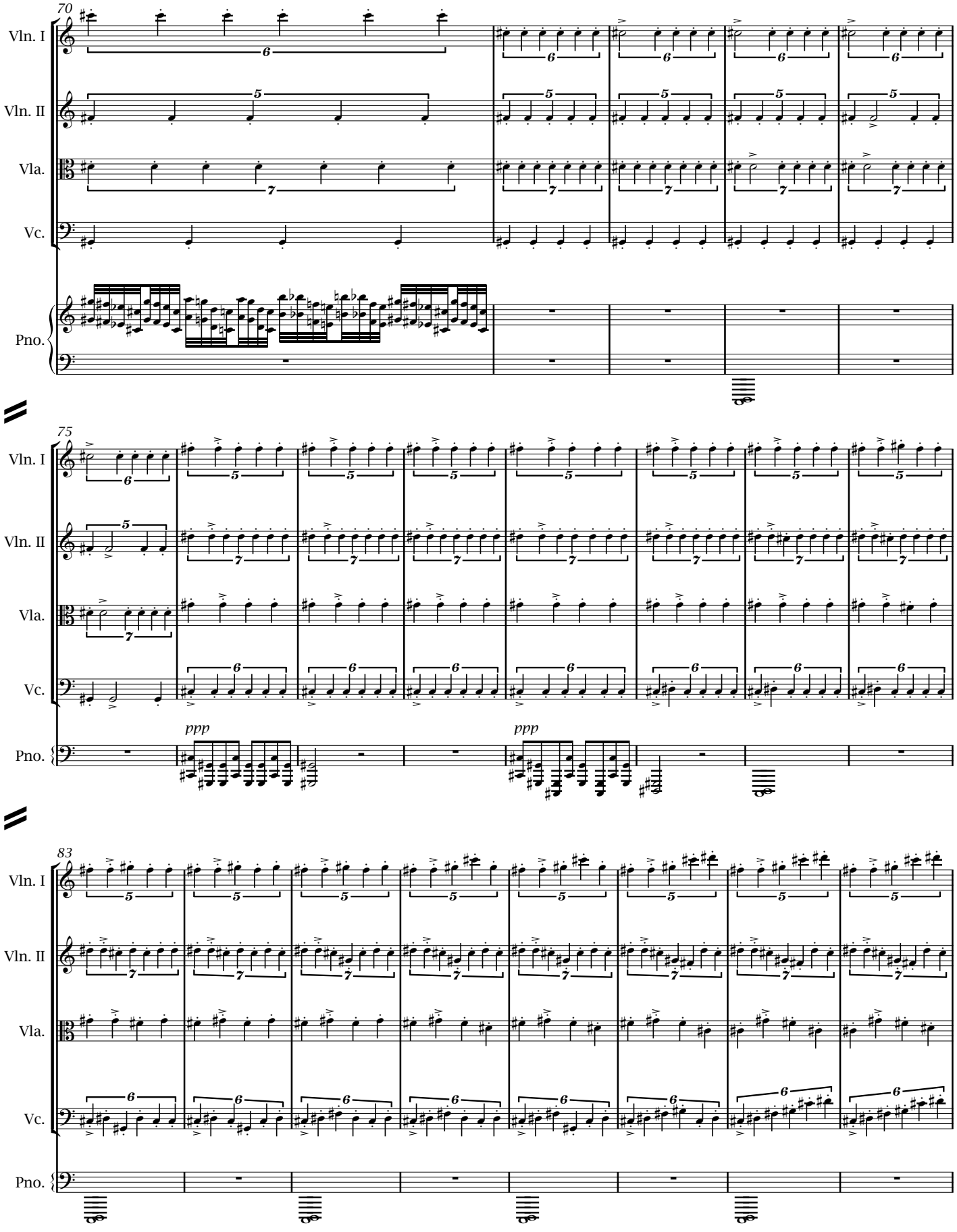

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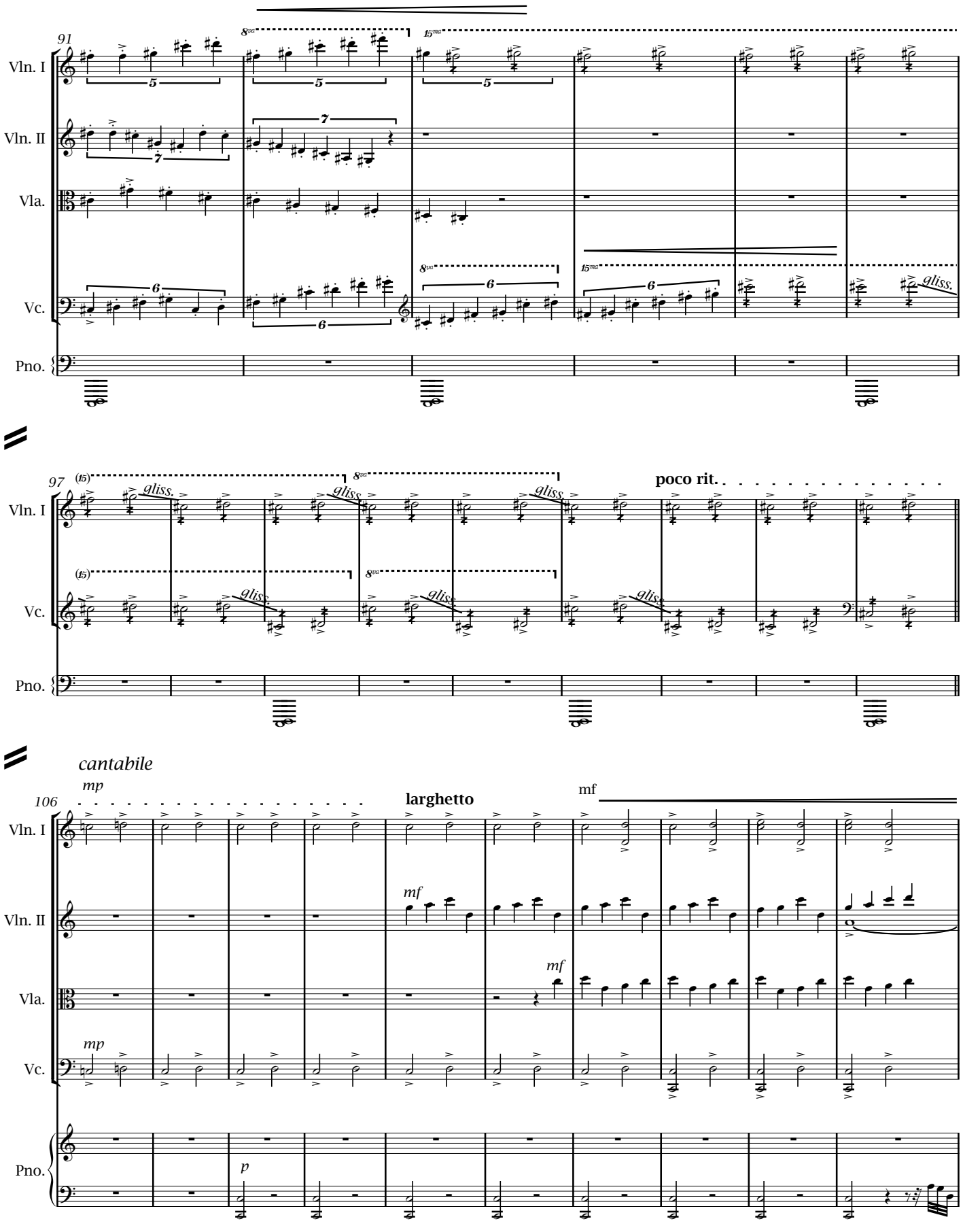

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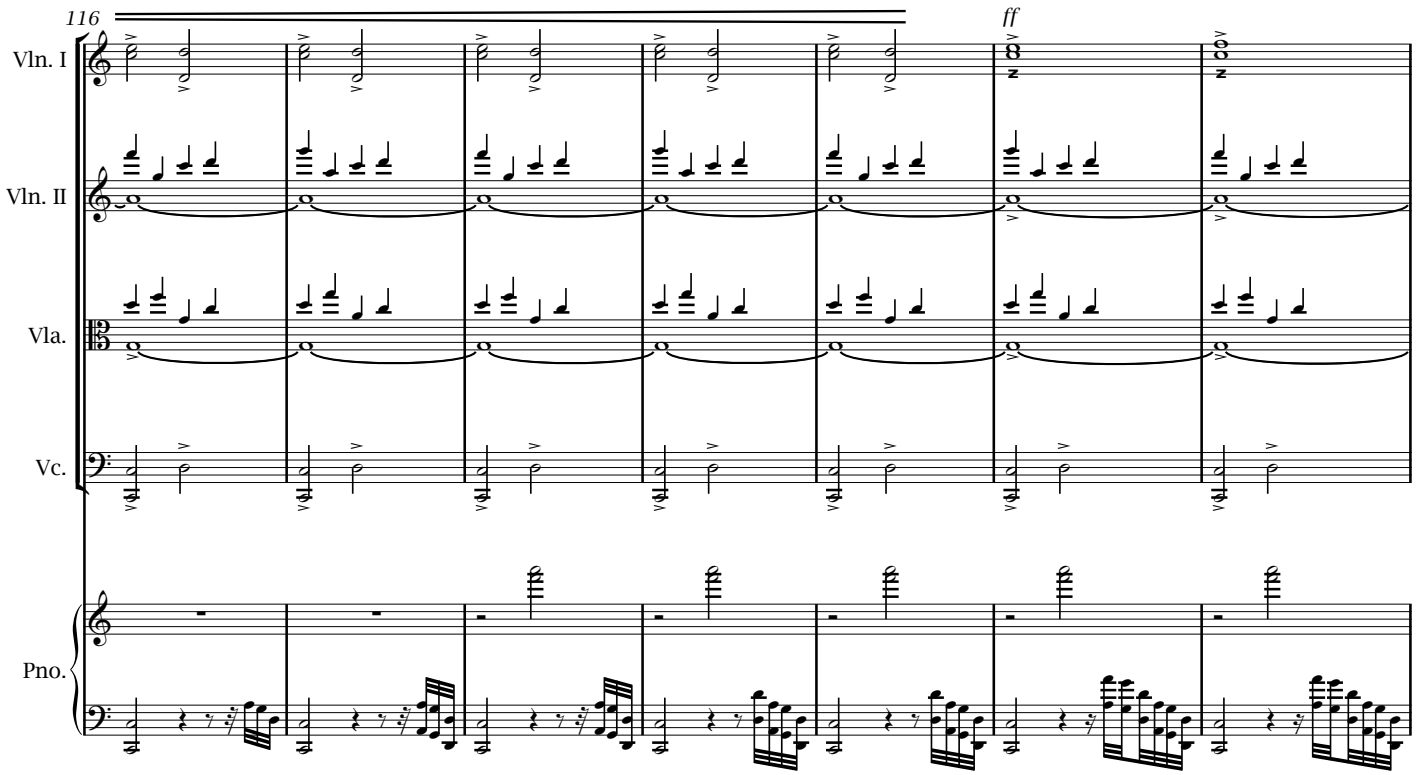

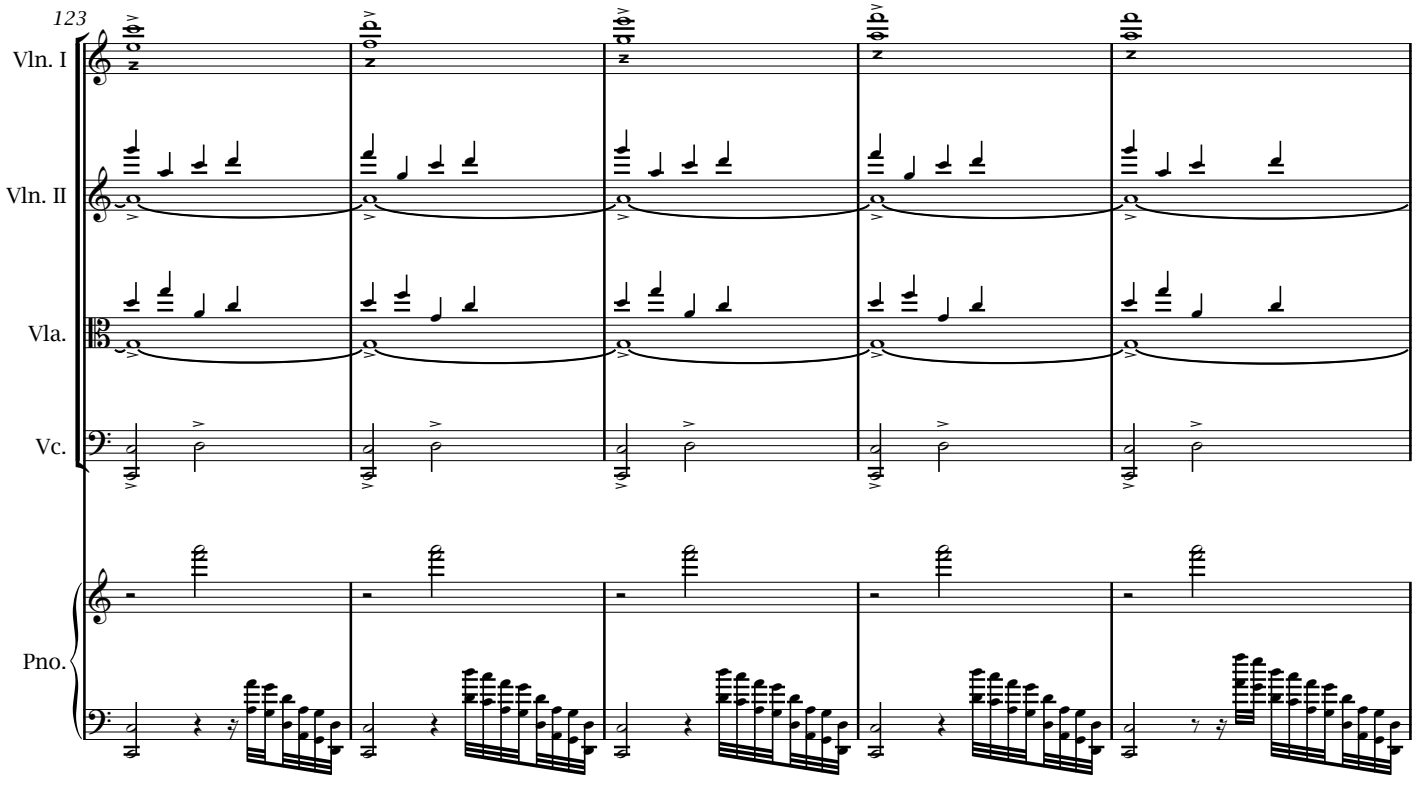

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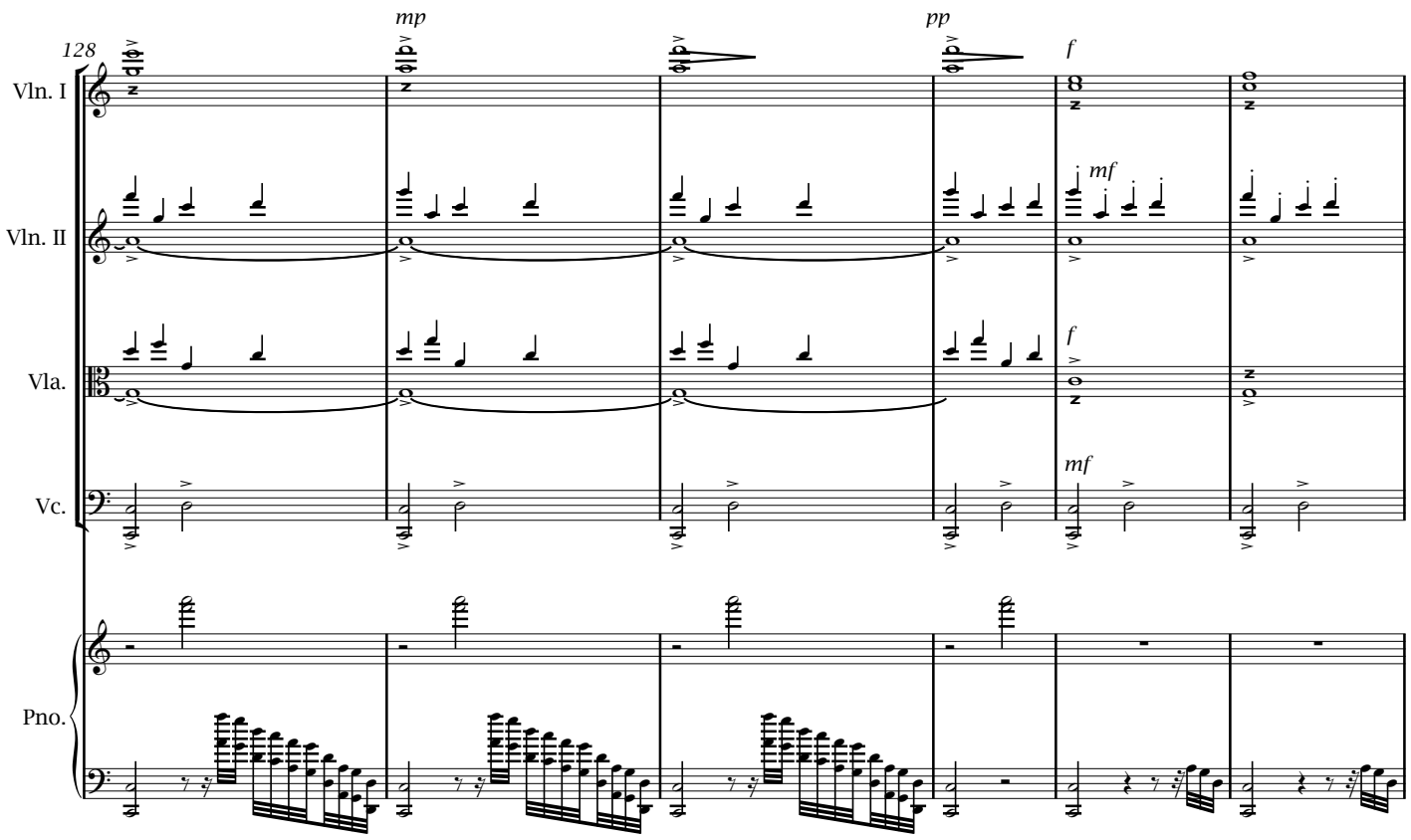

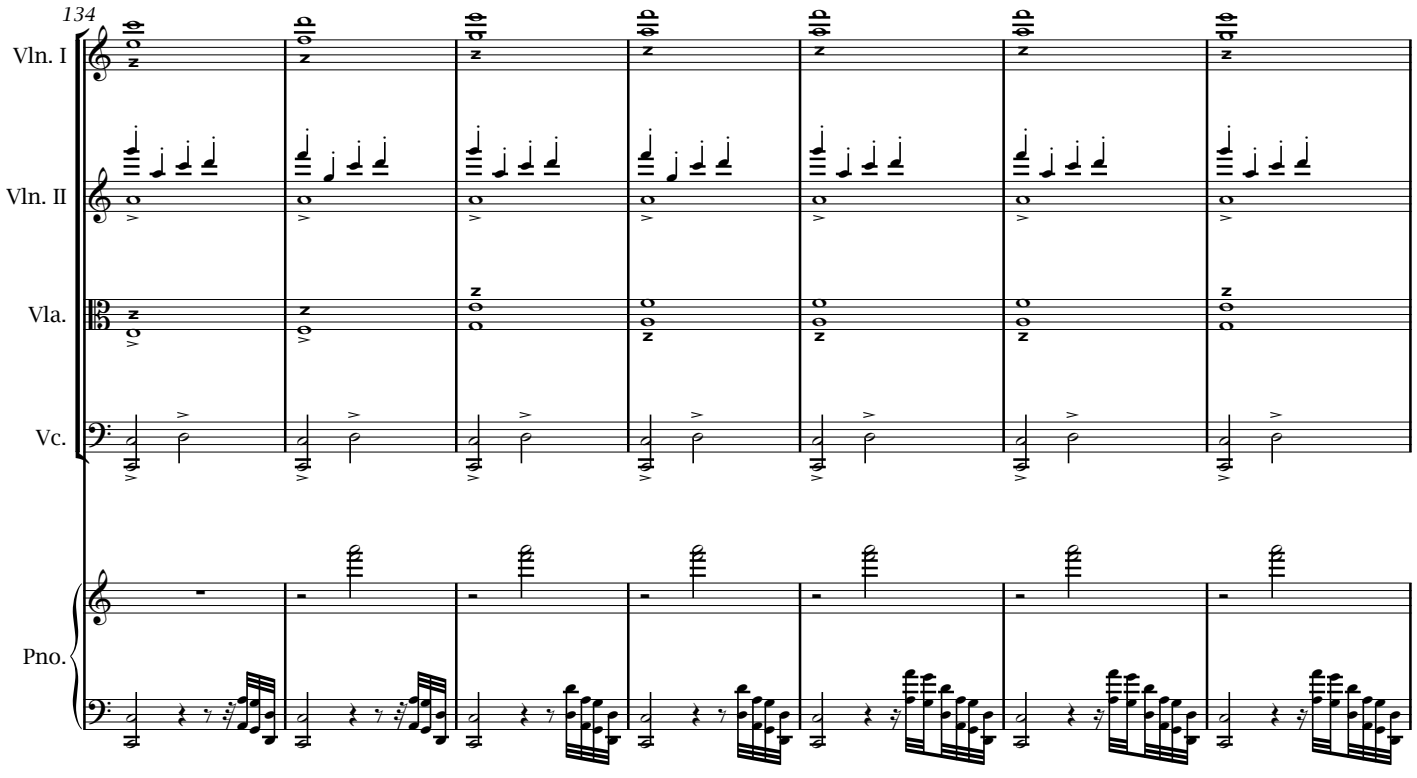

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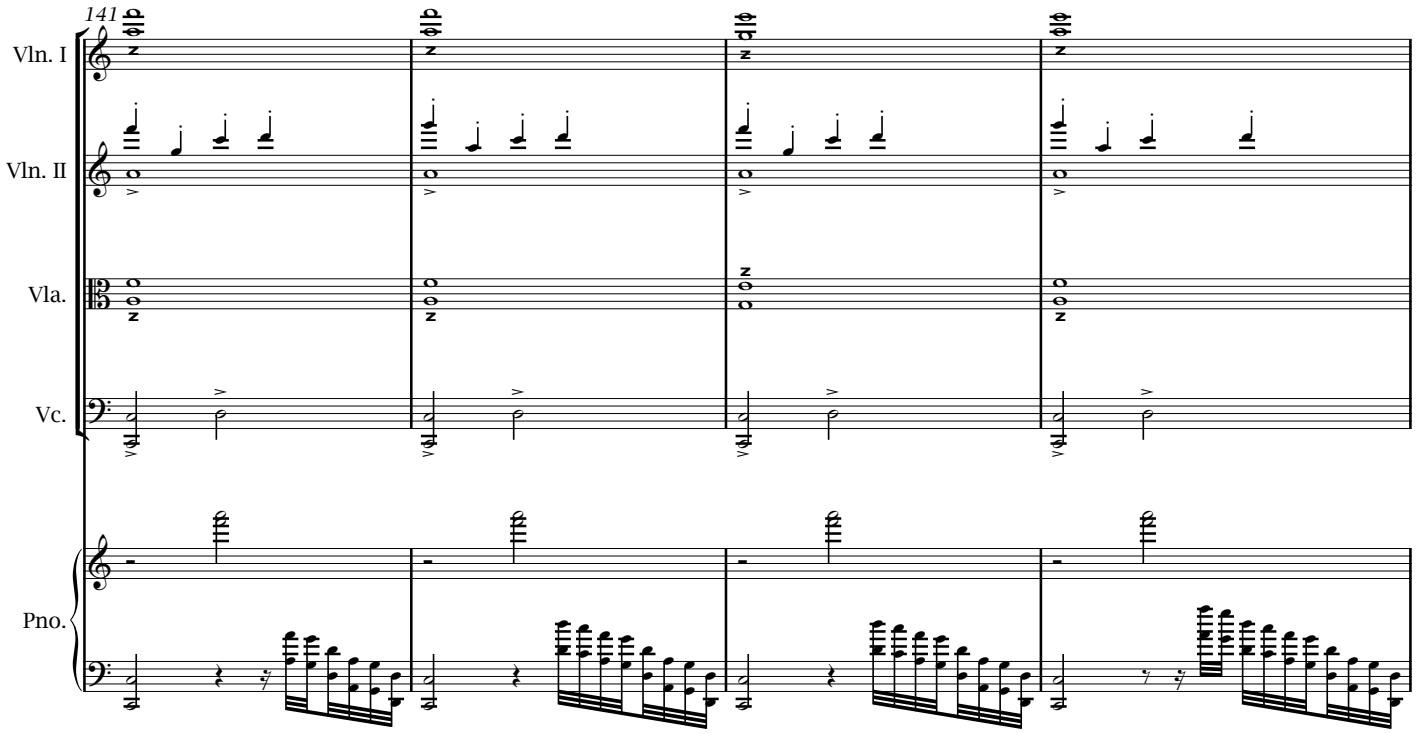

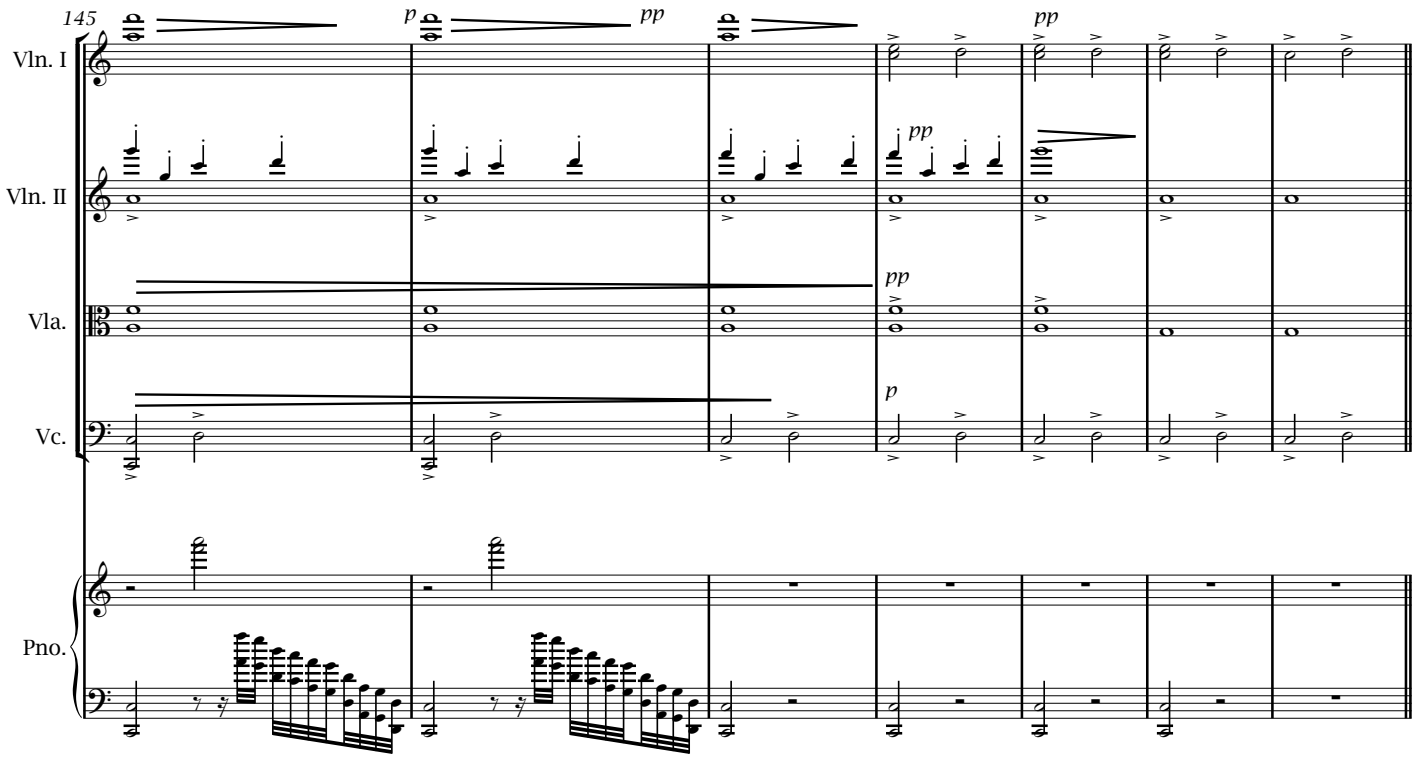

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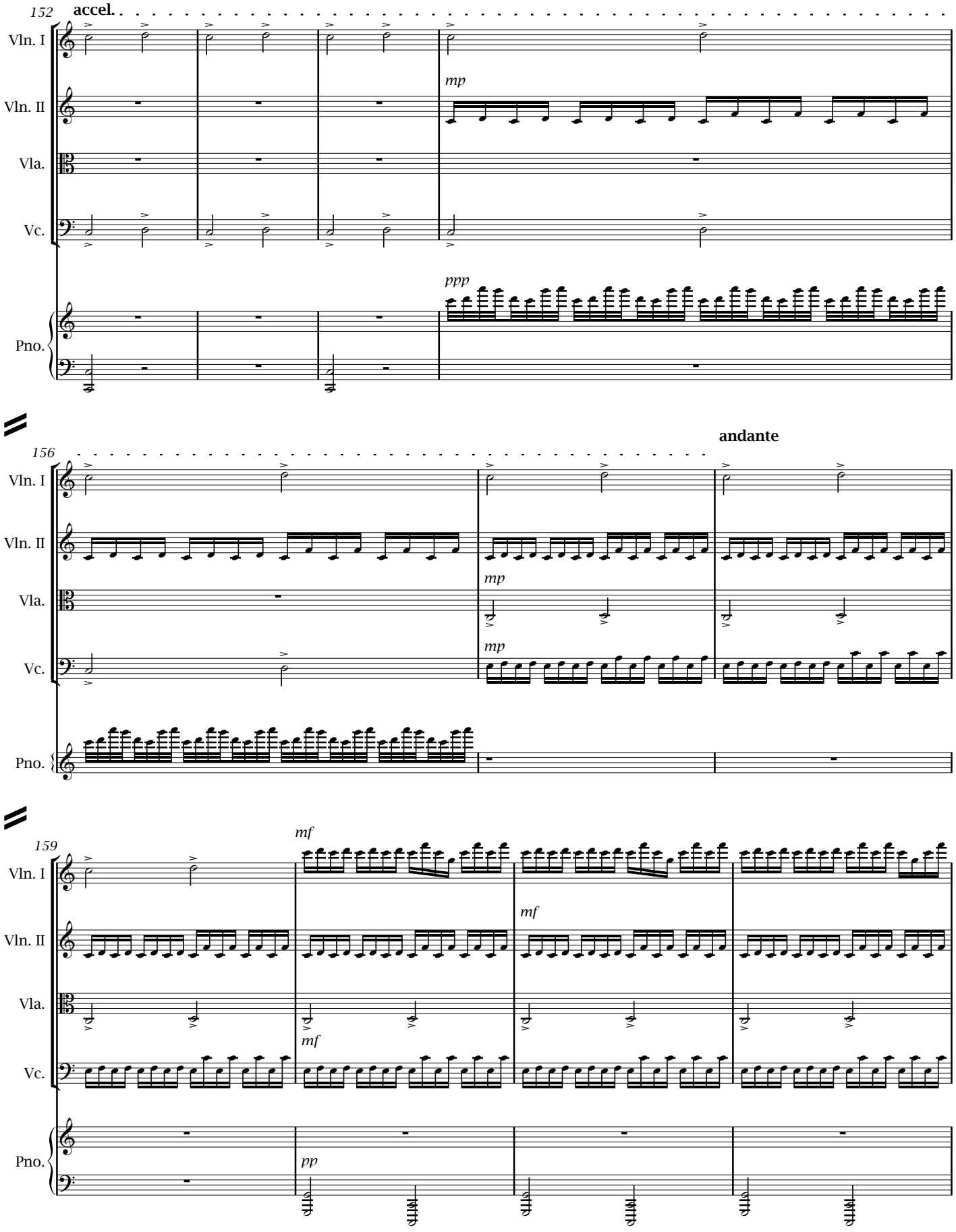

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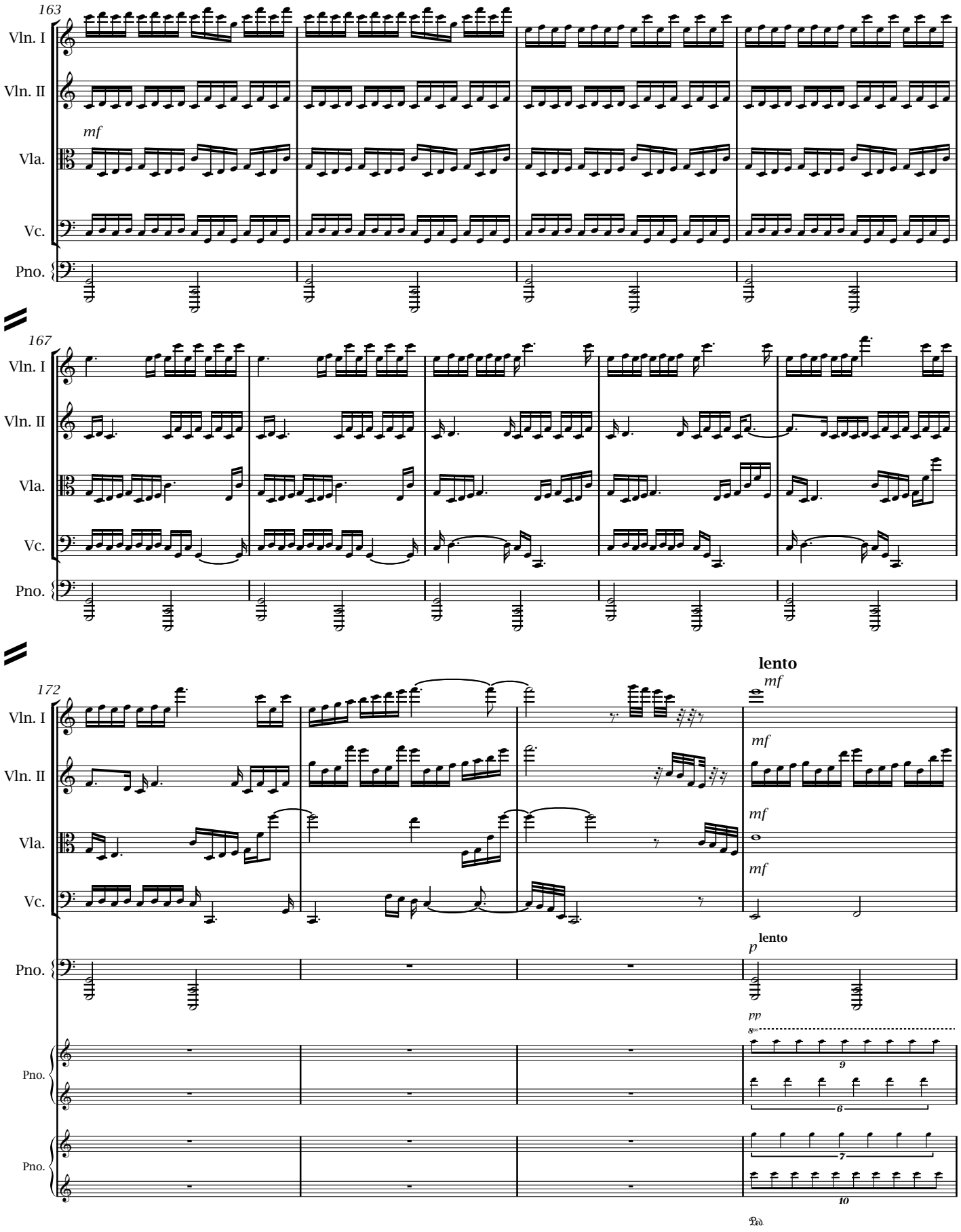

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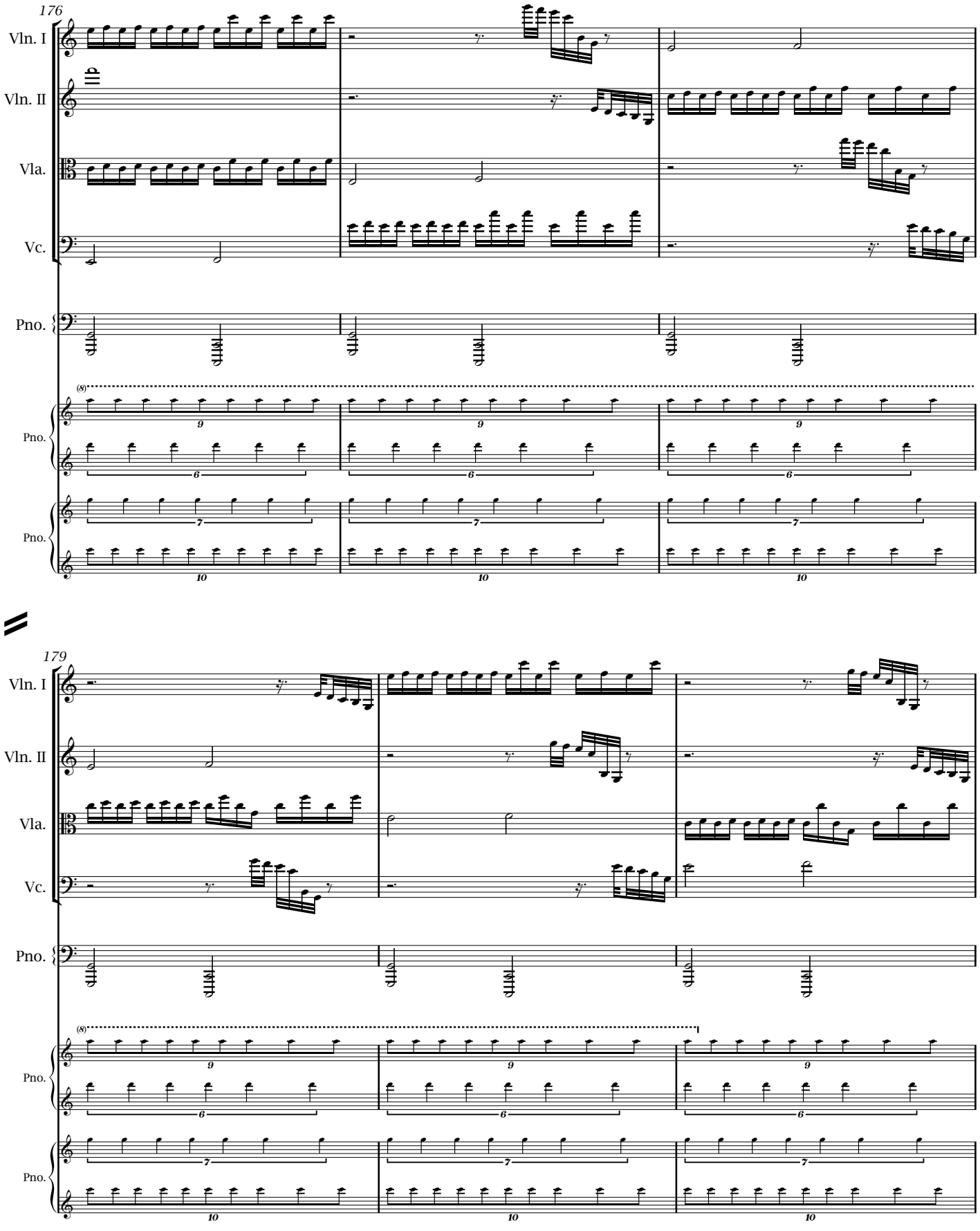

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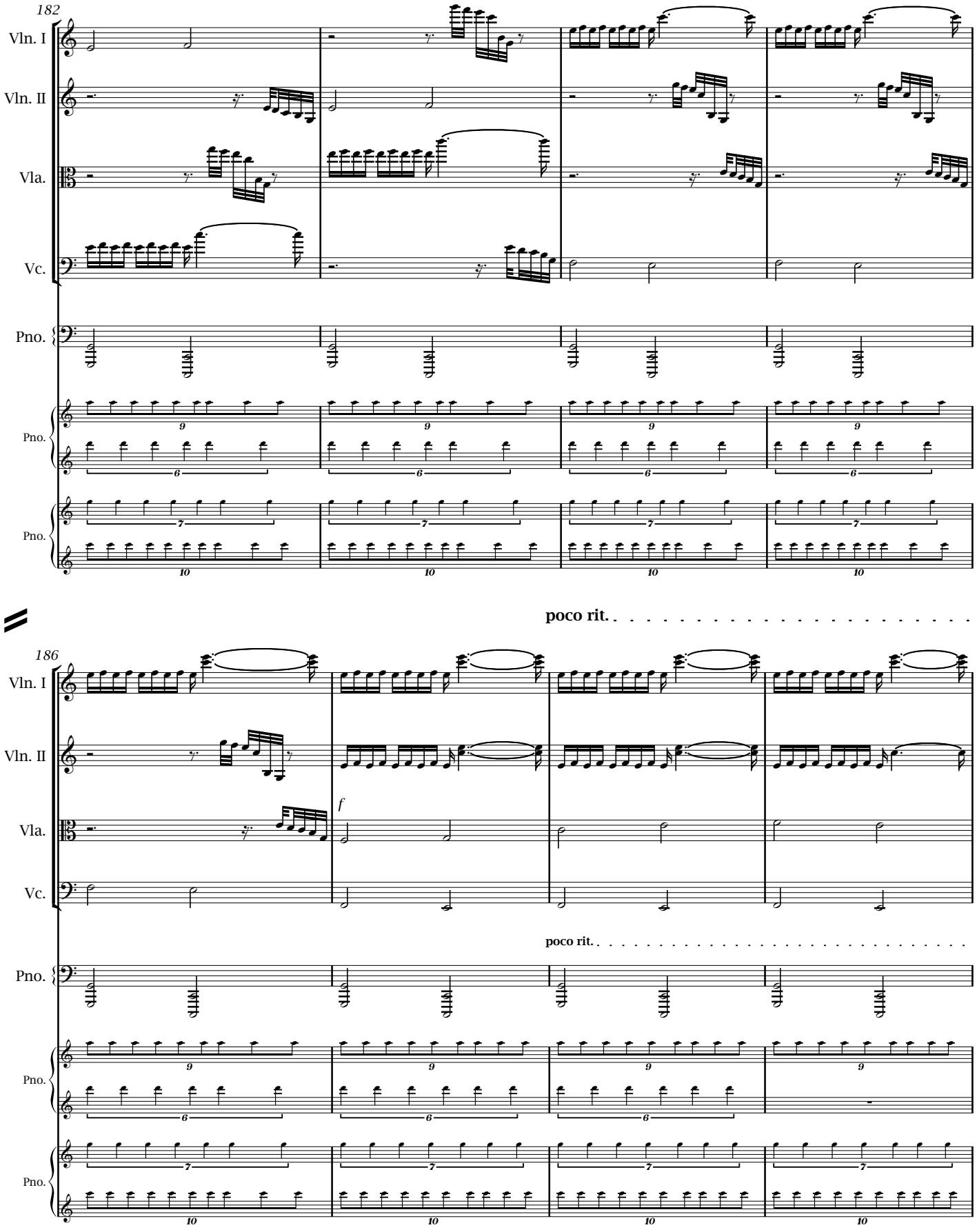

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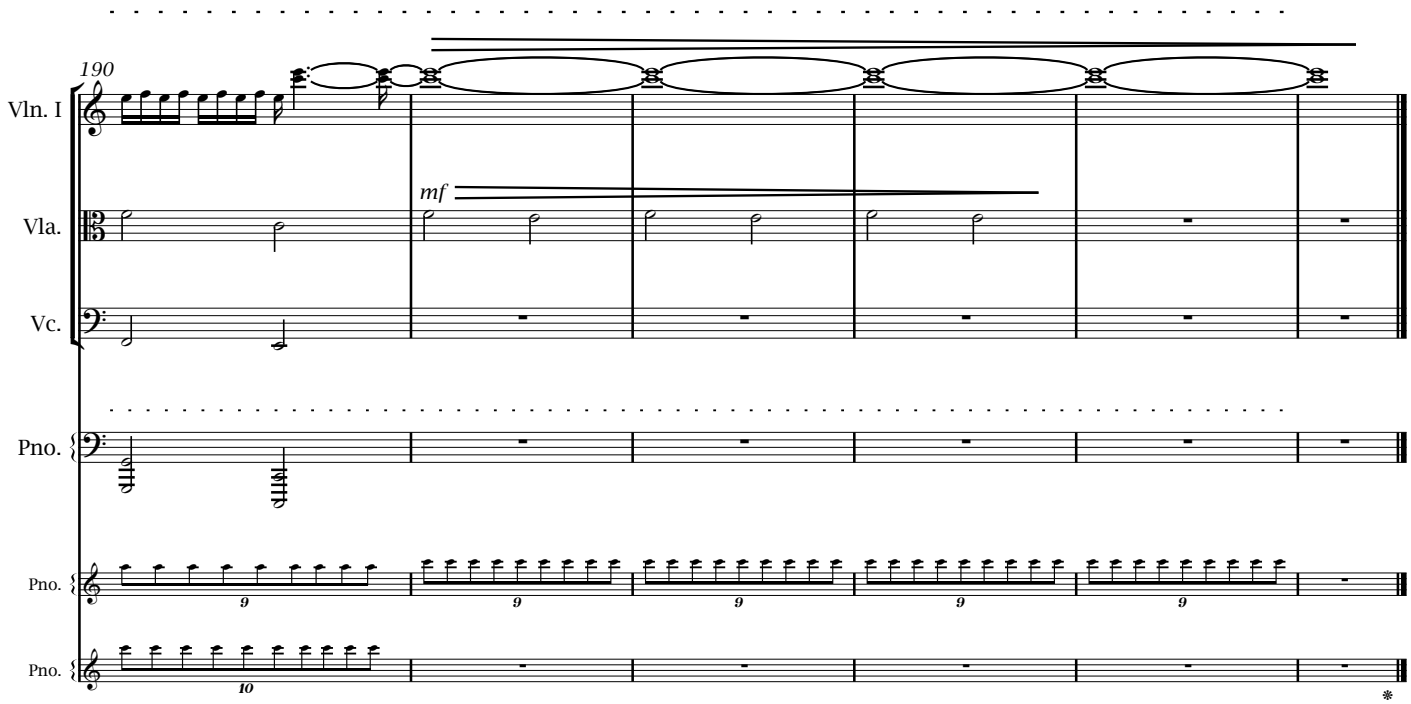

Stephen T. Pope
Santa Barbara
October, 2006

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