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Suite: for Woodwind Quintet

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Abstract

The suite for woodwind quintet includes an array of different dances and contrapuntal forms. The first movement is a sarabande with strict five-part contrapuntal writing as a nineteenth century approach to chromatic harmony is explored. The second movement is a four-voice fugue in the locrian mode which also adheres to strict rules of counterpoint in the context of more contemporary harmony. The harmonies are structured in a way to outline the spooky and unresolved characteristic sound of the locrian mode. The fugue's development consists of the subject and its three countersubjects in the context of techniques such as stretto, augmentation, etc. The fugue's approach to conclusion consists of a four-part stretto with subject entries occurring in the respective keys that the fugue's development explored. The third movement is a mazurka with a more baroque approach to harmony, where different parts of contrapuntal melodic lines are played by alternating instruments. The fourth movement is a baroque-styled four-voice ricercare that includes two different expositions followed by a development, where the subjects and countersubjects from both expositions are combined in contexts of stretto, augmentation, etc. The final movement is a fast waltz that uses a nineteenth century chromatic harmonic foundation while keeping a striking contrapuntal texture with a similar orchestration approach as in the mazurka. The suite is composed to explore strict contrapuntal bases in both more traditional and contemporary fugal environments in addition to three distinct triple-meter dances that include both baroque and nineteenth century chromatic harmonic approaches.

Introduction

Counterpoint is an aspect of music that has fascinated me for years. In my view, "counterpoint" is the art of composing multiple independent melodies that are to be played simultaneously. My approach is, in many ways, consistent with Fux's teachings. His book on counterpoint was one of the first music theory texts that I read, and his contrapuntal approach resonated with me. For example, among the many (if not all) aspects with which I agree is his avoidance of parallel perfect consonances since, for example, a set of multiple octaves between two different voices are perceived almost as a collection of unisons due to the perfect alignment of overtone components. This would make the voices lack independence and the overall music less interesting.

I grew up listening to composers that range from the baroque period (Bach, Scarlatti, etc.) to the romantic (Bruckner, Strauss, etc.) where there was an extreme emphasis on the contrapuntal realization of melodic lines. When growing up with this music, I realized that a well pronounced contrapuntal texture allows for the possibility of combining totally different melodies with strong harmonic progressions. In a sense, I am not particularly a fan of the concept of a melody with an accompaniment since I feel multiple melodies, which have their own direction and personality, better enhance the musical experience (rather than using directionless notes to bolster one melody). I believe that every aspect of music needs to be interesting and move somewhere while developing the maximum amount of material as efficiently as possible. Therefore, counterpoint is a tool that can bolster and make many different styles of music from different time periods more interesting.

Another approach, of which I am fond, for a composer to keep music interesting is the use of a fast harmonic rhythm (where the harmony constantly changes extremely quickly). I find that lingering on one harmony for an extended period can be uninteresting to a listener who may tire of hearing the same tonality without movement somewhere. In addition, to expand the approach of constantly changing harmonies that always move somewhere, I believe it may be boring for the listener when a harmony recurs shortly after its first introduction. This view is in part inspired by the philosophies reflected in the 12-tone system. One of the concerns that the pioneers of the 12-tone system had was that having recuring tonal centers that are placed too close to each other may be too repetitive. Hence, the 12-tone system is designed to have the recurrence of a tonal center occur as far away as possible from its original introduction. I am personally a big fan of 12-tone music and have composed some small works that incorporate different techniques in the field of serialism. Of course, although my approach of having the same harmony not recur for a decent period is not as "extreme" as some systems where there is a creation of matrices that specify the order of harmonies (let alone the specifying of a strict order of tones), my approach still calls for the priority of providing the listener with constantly changing and new material.

The risk of having constantly fast changes in harmony (with recurrences of the harmonies not occurring for at least a long time) is that the listener could start to feel that the music moves in random harmonic directions, that have no organization, which may result in a sense of monotony. To combat this, I believe that there need to be variations and developments of previously seen harmonic progressions so that the listener would recognize and appreciate the trajectories of the harmonies. The way variations and developments of a harmonic progression could be achieved is, later, having a, for example, similar progression transposed to circulating around a different key with substituting some chords with others that function similarly to the originals, adding embellishing chords, etc. These sorts of processes organize the harmonic directions that this fast-changing music undergoes.

To explore the many musical possibilities that a contrapuntal texture over fast changing harmonies (where each harmony does not usually recur for at least a long time) provides, I decided to compose a suite for woodwind quintet with its movements reflecting different styles of music that range from baroque characteristics to more modern characteristics. The suite consists of a sarabande, a fugue in locrian, a mazurka, a ricercare, and a waltz. The three forms of dances (the sarbande, mazurka, and waltz) were chosen because, although they are all in a triple meter, they have accents in alternating places. The sarabande form calls for there to be stress on the second beat, mazurkas tend to have accenting that alternates between the second and third beats (in this suite's mazurka the accenting is usually on the third), and a waltz calls for the first beat to be stressed. This array of dances explores the different effects that result from accenting each one of the beats of the 3/4 time signature. In between each of these dances is a fugal movement, the one in locrian using an almost contemporary approach to harmony (fitting since the locrian mode was not often used in, for example, more traditional baroque forms due to its unresolved nature, and more contemporary harmony provides possibilities for resolutions to the "unstable" locrian mode) and the ricercare being in the traditional baroque style.

I believe the woodwind quintet is a great chamber group to play contrapuntal music since the differently designed instruments result in each melodic line having its own color. I structured the suite such that every movement is faster than the previous one since the constant increase in tempo accustoms the participant as fast-changing harmonies and counterpoint are encountered at accelerating rates. I explore compositional techniques from strict chorale-part writing to orchestrations where every few notes of melodic lines are played by alternating instruments. Hence, this quintet explores the approach of using a strong contrapuntal texture over a fast-moving harmonic foundation in different environments, musical styles, and compositional techniques.

Sarabande

The first movement is a sarabande which is designed to introduce the foundational elements upon which the rest of the suite is built. This movement makes use of strict five-part chorale-type writing for the realization of the contrapuntal baroque dance over fast moving

nineteenth century-type chromatic harmonic progressions. Because all the suite's movements have fast harmonic rhythms in these extremely contrapuntal contexts within environments that use striking harmonic progressions, this first movement is essential for introducing elements that will be used later in the suite.

This sarabande follows a traditional "AB" form where the "B" section has two parts and when both the "A" section and each of the two parts of the "B" section are eight bars long. This movement also lays the groundwork for the types of harmonic progressions that are used in later movements. An example of a type of harmonic progression that is used throughout the other movements occurs in the opening modulation from B minor to E-flat major (measures 1-3). After the music starts with a B minor sonority, a G minor chord follows, which is followed by its Neapolitan (this acts as a pivot). After this, a dominant seventh of E-flat major occurs before its resolution. Modulation with Neapolitan chords as pivots is an essential aspect of every movement of this suite, and this is one of the ways I foreshadow the extensive use of this technique. In the five-voice texture, I decided to keep the B-flat, from the G minor harmony, held through the Neapolitan of G minor (as the added ninth) to the dominant of E-flat major followed by the resolution, as a sort of common tone (or as sort of a pedal point).

If fast-moving harmonic progressions that have unexpected twists, like the one just discussed, were to keep occurring, the music risks sounding random with a disorganized harmonic direction. To combat this, I opted for referencing and developing harmonic ideas that have occurred earlier. An example of this (and to continue discussing the importance of the previously discussed modulation throughout the whole quintet) is when I transition to the first part of the "B" section (measures 9-11) which starts off in D-sharp minor. I perform a similar modulation to the one with which the "A" section starts (as discussed; measures 1-3) except, rather than following the D-sharp minor sonority with a B minor harmony (the chromatic submediant, as would be expected when relating to the modulation in measures 1-3), I use an F-sharp minor harmony (the chromatic mediant), then use its Neapolitan as a pivot to the dominant seventh of D major where, at its resolution, the modulation completes. This modulation is almost identical to the modulation in measures 1-3, with the only difference being that the chromatic mediant was used instead of the original chromatic submediant, which results in an extension and development of this harmonic concept. The flute's melody is also strikingly similar in measures 1-3 and in 9-11, which only extends the developmental nature of the modulation with the chromatic mediant. This version of the modulation especially worked nicely in the movement's context because I did not want to introduce a B minor sonority again (which is chromatically submediant to D-sharp minor) because the movement starts in B minor, and I want to take the listener on a journey where there is an exploration of distant harmonies so that, when there is finally a resolution in the home key at the end, the listener would feel a massive sense of relief. In fact, I joke with the listener (musical humor is also a key aspect of the other movements) in these measures 9-11 where the melody, if not harmonized, would seem to have an extremely strong B minor characteristic. However, the harmony never touches B minor,

while the melodic hinting is intended to keep the listener on his toes in anticipation of the big resolution that will come at some point. This is another technique that I use in other movements of the quintet, where I make use of a melody that, if standing alone, would seem to be strongly related to a particular tonal center, when the actual harmonies do not relate to that appeared tonal center at all.

Another example of a harmonic idea that I developed is the dominant seventh resolving to a III instead of the i (another nuance including a mediant relationship). This concept first shows up in measures 4-6 where, after the discussed modulation to E-flat major, I use a D half-diminished chord, as a pivot, which is followed by a dominant seventh of C minor. The twist is that instead of completing the modulation to C minor, I surprisingly move to an E major chord. This is of course striking (I include a C-natural as an appoggiatura to a B-natural as a sort of trickery, since the resolution to the C is expected, but not in this context where it is a dissonance) and the music for a second seems to take on a confusing direction with this unresolved sound. However, following this surprise, I chromatically move to a C-sharp half-diminished chord before finally establishing C minor. In this harmonic progression, the striking E major chord and the half-diminished chords have a B natural (the leading tone of C minor) as one of their building blocks. These two exotic chords just act as sort of passing decorative nuances that extend the leading tone's pull from the dominant seventh to its striking resolution that occurs later than expected (as a surprise to the listener). This concept is later developed in measures 17-19 where I create the appearance of modulating from B-flat major to C minor. After the B-flat major sonority, I use an E-flat major chord as a pivot before a dominant seventh of C minor. This time, instead of moving to an E major chord, I use the dominant seventh of A minor before I resolve it (and I end at the chromatic submediant of C minor). This emphasizes the fact that a particular harmonic idea can move in multiple different directions. This also is a foreshadowing of the resolving of a dominant chord to a mediant in later movements.

Another example of a distinctive modulatory technique that I use is the incorporation of an altered version of a French augmented sixth chord (in measures 7 and 12 as examples). This version of the French augmented sixth essentially could be built by picking a tone and, except for the tone a whole step above the picked tone, playing the next five pitches that ascend through the whole-tone scale from the chosen tone. This chord, throughout the movement, is approached through common tones and is realized with the two tendency tones resolving as they would in a regular French augmented sixth chord where there is a choice of resolving the tone the major third above the note the chord is built from down a whole step or a half step. Resolving down a whole step creates a half-diminished chord with the doubled third, which is ideal for five-part writing, when resolving down a half step creates a minor seventh chord. This is a foreshadowing of the rest of the suite because there are memorable uses of French augmented sixth chords in every movement, including another instance of this exact version of the chord.

Apart from this sarabande laying out these and many other examples of nineteenth century-type chromatic harmony and compositional processes that are demonstrated in other

movements, it also has its different sections start on extremely distant keys, which is a concept that occurs in the other dance movements. This is reflected with the "A" section starting in B minor, the first half of the "B" section starting in D-sharp minor, and the "B" section's second half starting in B-flat major. I wanted the different sections to use distant keys since this expands on my idea of the listener experiencing a journey where the movement's starting key would be almost forgotten, and not anticipated, until the end with a resolution to the home tonality in the context of the movements' strongest cadence (consistent with how I concluded the sarabande, with the whole movements strongest cadence, in B major (using the picardy third)).

Fuga Locriana

The second movement is a fugue in F-sharp locrian. The fugue starts off with the French horn playing the same note as its last note in the Sarabande. This creates, in a sense, a smooth transition between the movements (although none of the movements are attacked immediately after its previous, I make sure to incorporate some sort of musical transition between all movements of this quintet). In any case, this fugue, like in the sarabande, borrows a baroque form of music while, although having a strong contrapuntal foundation, using compositional techniques that are not consistent with the baroque period. This fugue takes the sarabande's approach to harmony a step further with a more contemporary foundation where it is possible to resolve to the locrian mode. The fugue is in four voices and includes a flute/oboe doubling for playing the soprano voice, the clarinet for the alto voice, the French horn for the tenor voice, and the bassoon for the bass voice. The tenor voice is the first to play the subject, followed by the bass, then the soprano, and finally the alto. After the tenor completes playing the subject, while the bass takes over playing the subject, the tenor plays a countersubject that is also developed throughout the movement. When the soprano takes over playing the subject, the bass plays the countersubject that the tenor just played while the tenor plays another important countersubject. As expected, when the alto starts to play the subject, the soprano plays the first countersubject, the bass plays the second countersubject, and the tenor plays a new, and this exposition's final, countersubject.

When composing this, to determine what the subject should be, I created a few candidate subjects and chose one where, from it, a stretto in four parts could be developed. The stretto, of the chosen subject, could only be contrapuntally justified in the case of the first entry starting in F-sharp locrian, the second entry in A locrian, the third in B locrian, and the last one in D locrian. For this reason, I made sure that the development of the fugue explored the keys in the order reflected in the stretto. The fugue's countersubjects were designed to both provide contrapuntal justification when introduced in the exposition and to occur in counterpoint to different forms of stretti of the subject that were going to be used throughout the fugue's development.

Of course, since a triad built from the root of the locrian mode is the unstable diminished chord, the music would seem to have a strong tendency to resolve to the ionian mode (since a

triad built from the ionian mode's root is a stable major chord). To combat this tendency, I made sure that all resolutions and major/minor triads would occur in contexts that are less stable and significant than the final resolution which consists of the fugue ending on the striking fortissimo locrian chord with the soprano voice playing the highest note in the whole movement. In addition, due to the shape of the subject, an interesting aspect of the stretti used in the fugue is that augmented triads often result. Augmented triads are dissonant and, I believe, less stable than locrian triads, which allows for relatively stronger resolutions in locrian.

An example of weakening the establishing effect of the music, so that the later resolution in locian would be stronger, occurs in measure 25 where I have a dominant seventh of G major on a strong beat and resolve to an E minor seventh on the weak beat. In this scenario, I mix a regular resolution and a deceptive motion to keep the listener unaware of what tonal center will follow. This resolution to the seventh chord also follows a collection of unstable and dissonant harmonies that include, starting from measure 23, an augmented chord, a minor seventh sonority, and a French augmented sixth chord. The confusing resolution in measure 25 still gives the listener a sense of establishment, only when compared to this previous material, while not being as striking as the big locrian ending of the movement.

Another example of weakening the establishing nature of resolutions occurs in measure 30, where I have a dominant seventh chord of A minor (and, at first glance, it would seem I am modulating in that direction). I, however, decide to resolve to C major, the mediant (also referencing the use of mediant relationships in the sarabande), on the weak beat. Again, these elements of the resolution make it not as striking as the big locrian chord that soon follows. What is interesting about the context of this mediant resolution is that before it (measure 29), there is an E minor sonority on a weak beat which is followed by its Neapolitan on a strong beat. This, at around the conclusion of the fugue, is to reference the striking entry of the fourth voice in the exposition (measures 5-6) where there is an E minor harmony on a weak beat and an F major harmony on the strong beat (such harmonic referencing when developing thematic material reflects a common technique used in the two fugal movements of this quintet). The interesting effect of using a heavy F major chord in measure 29 is that, despite there not being a major chord for quite some time, this chord does not seem particularly established due to its Neapolitan predominant nature. The following discussed resolution in measure 30 only adds to the effect of the music not feeling 100% resolved and looking to move to another direction.

The first developmental entries of the thematic material, measures 10-12, start in F-sharp locrian and include a stretto where the subject, its augmentation by two times, the inverted first countersubject, and the third countersubject augmented by two times occur at the same time. The next developmental moment of the fugue (measures 13-16), which starts in A locrian, includes a two-part stretto of the subject, the first countersubject right-side-up, and the augmented inverted subject. Following this, the subject appears in the soprano in B locrian, after which the tenor also follows with the subject in stretto during the second and the inverted third counter subjects (measures 18-20). The next developmental thematic material entry area

(measures 21-24), which is surrounded by a D locrian sonority, includes a two-part stretto of the inverted subject as its right-side-up augmentation in combination with the second countersubject occur. All these subject entries lead to the four-part stretto of the subject (measures 25-28) where the keys that the fugue modulated to are reflected. After this stretto, the music becomes more and more intense in the approach to the conclusion of the movement with the soprano climbing to the mentioned high climactic register. The bassoon plays the subject one last time (the last note of the bassoon's statement of the subject is part of the final chord of the movement) against the high soprano voice while establishing an F-sharp locrian chord (or diminished chord) to conclude the movement.

Mazurka

When considering that the second movement ends on a diminished chord built on F-sharp, the chord's C-natural can be respelled as a B-sharp which is the leading tone to C-sharp, and, hence, allows for a nice transition to the third movement, which consists of a mazurka in C-sharp minor. I even made sure that the mazurka starts on the C-sharp neighboring the C-natural of the final chord of the previous movement. In total contrast to the nineteenth century-type chromatic harmony in the sarabande, let alone the more unconventional harmony in the locrian fugue, the third movement's mazurka uses a more baroque approach to harmony.

The mazurka is in the context of an "A, B, A'" form where both the "A" and the "B" sections are each twenty-four measures long. To contrast with the "A" section's start in C-sharp minor, I modulated to C major to start the "B" section. C-sharp minor is then again established in the "A'" section, which is about half the length of the full "A," which is concluded with some additional final cadential material.

The process for writing this mazurka was coming up with two contrapuntal melodic lines consistent with the feel and the rhythm of this type of dance (often with a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note on the first beat of a measure with accents alternating between the second and, in this case, mostly third beats). With the two main melodies, and resulting harmonies, established, I decided to have different instruments alternate between playing the melodic lines. As one instrument would take over another playing the melody, the instrument taken over would usually either drop out, play another counterpoint with, for example, motives that are consistent with the mazurka's characteristics, or play the other melodic line. Essentially, every few notes of both melodic lines are being orchestrated differently through alternations of instruments in the context of additional free counterpoint.

For example, in measures 1-3, the clarinet plays one of the two main melodic lines which is followed by the clarinet dropping out while the bassoon (in its high register), enters and continues the melody. As this is occurring, the flute, in measures 1-2, plays the second melodic line and is continued by the oboe in measure 3. What is nice about the way the clarinet drops while the oboe enters is that the clarinet's ending of the first melodic line dovetails the entrance of the oboe for its statement of the continuation of the second melodic line. This all occurs over

a free counterpoint in the French horn to add to the contrapuntal texture. The whole mazurka incorporates this approach to orchestration which does call for often high bassoon and French horn parts to continue melodic lines of the higher woodwinds. I, with such a constantly changing approach to orchestration, wanted to experiment with the concept of creating a sort of colorful atmosphere in which these different melodies live. In other words, I, for example, would use a lot of clarinet, flute, and high bassoon parts that arpeggiate the harmonies as the more lyrical French horn or oboe play a more conjunct melody. An example of this occurs between measures 5 and 6 where the clarinet arpeggiates with fast notes as the French horn plays a more conjunct melody. This creates a glittery atmosphere in which the lyrical French horn melody lives.

Despite this movement not incorporating "textbook" chorale-style counterpoint due to the changing of instruments in the middle of melodies, the more disjunct melodies and arpeggiations that call for things like leaps to dissonances, etc., contrapuntal concepts such as the avoidance of parallel perfect consonances between voices are still applied. Despite there still being a solid contrapuntal background behind the atmospheric melodic arpeggiations, their main function is to add the colorful background to the music.

The mazurka, although exploring a more baroque approach to harmony, incorporates harmonic elements that have been seen in the two previous movements. An example of one of the harmonic concepts in this movement that is consistent with the sarabande occurs from measures 43-45. I move from an E minor sonority to a C minor harmony, then to its Neapolitan as a pivot, and finally to the dominant seventh of A-flat major. This is the exact same, although transposed, chord progression seen in the sarabande from measures 1-3. The only twist in the mazurka's context is that the dominant seventh of A-flat major is then treated as a German augmented sixth chord to modulate to G minor instead of the dominant resolving in A-flat major (as one would anticipate when seeing the similarity with the sarabande). Despite the harmonic approach of this movement being overall baroque, there are still hints of more nineteenth century-type chromatic harmony (like in this example). This combined with the more unconventional approach to orchestration allows for this mazurka to stand somewhere in between the more contemporary style of the locrian fugue and a pure baroque style which will be demonstrated later in the quintet.

This mazurka also builds off concepts laid in the two previous movements. For example, in measures 18-19, I include a G minor sonority which is followed by its Neapolitan which is used as a pivot for, after a dominant seventh of B-flat minor, a final resolution to B-flat minor which results in three flats added to the key signature. This expands the concept of using the Neapolitan as a pivot, and this exact modulation will be used later in the quintet. Also, another use of the memorable French augmented sixth chord is introduced. In the second measure of the second ending of the "A" section, I use what appears to be a dominant seventh of C-sharp minor. However, I flatten the fifth which creates a French augmented sixth chord, whereafter I resolve the tendency tones G-sharp and F-sharp to create a dominant (I add the seventh through the following melodic context) of C major before a cadential resolution.

Overall, the mazurka functions to introduce baroque harmonic concepts and build on previously used harmonic progressions in a context of a more unconventional approach to orchestration (especially contrasting the more chorale-type writing in the previous two movements). Each of the movements, so far, have their own styles, are totally different, and explore counterpoint under conditions of there being a fast harmonic rhythm. Unlike the other movements, this mazurka has a soft ending (concluding with a cadence in C-sharp major; another demonstration of a picardy third of the starting key ending), and this is because the area of the "A'" section from which the final cadential material is added is quite soft and calm. Not only does it make sense to end softly, but this also provides a nice contrast with the loud endings of the other movements.

Ricercare

The Mazurka's overall baroque approach to harmony foreshadowed the content of the next movement. Out of all the movements in the whole suite, the ricercare of the fourth movement is the most complex. The ricercare, in contrast to the locrian fugue, is a strict baroque fugal work that combines traditional counterpoint, a baroque approach to chromatic harmony, and extensive thematic development. Like in the locrian fugue, this ricercare includes a flute/oboe doubling for playing the soprano voice (for most of the movement), the clarinet for the alto voice, the French horn for the tenor voice, and the bassoon for the bass voice. The movement in F-sharp minor (perfect key to start since the previous movement ended with a C-sharp major chord (the dominant of F-sharp minor)) starts with a fugal exposition with the alto playing the subject, followed by the soprano, then the bass, and finally the tenor. After the alto completes playing the subject, while the soprano takes over playing the subject, the alto plays a countersubject that is also developed throughout the movement. When the bass takes over playing the subject, the soprano plays the countersubject that the alto just played while the alto plays the second and another important countersubject. As expected, when the tenor drops in to play the subject, the bass plays the first countersubject, the soprano plays the second countersubject, and the alto plays a new, and this exposition's final, countersubject. The exposition closes with a deceptive cadence (measure 14). I believe that it is important for fugal expositions to include as many themes as there are voices because more thematic material leads to less repetitive and more interesting music with many additional possibilities and directions of thematic development. The exposition ends with a deceptive cadence (measure 14), which is something that I liked about this exposition's ending because ending with a cadential point signals to the listener that the thematic material is established and that it is time for its development.

I wanted to develop the thematic material in the surrounding keys. I first wanted to have an entry of thematic material in B minor. To modulate, I used the Neapolitan of C-sharp minor (I am in this key because, naturally, the fourth subject entry of the exposition occurred in C-sharp minor) as a pivot and, through a dominant seventh, B minor was quickly established (measures 15-17). This exact modulation will be important later. The B minor entry (measures 18-22)

includes a stretto of the subject by the alto and tenor as the soprano plays the first countersubject while the bass plays the second countersubject. In the developmental subject entries, I like to incorporate an extreme amount of chromatic harmony to explore the different environments in which the thematic material can live. For example, in the B minor entry, the version of the subject played by the tenor starts off as expected and includes a G-natural in its first phrase (a note you would expect in B minor), yet then, through harmonic justification, I use a G-sharp (measure 21) in the subject's statement's second phrase. There are many other accidental shifts, and the whole entry is modulatory where what results is a return to F-sharp minor (measure 23). All subject entries throughout the whole ricercare include such twists. In any case, next I modulate to D major (measure 24), and this is the first time a major key is established. Immediately after, I include an F-sharp minor sonority, as a pivot, which is followed by a dominant seventh of A major (where a modulation and resolution to A major is expected). However, I treat the dominant seventh as a German augmented sixth chord and I cadence to G-sharp minor (measure 27) where, immediately after, I have my next entry of thematic material.

The entry includes a stretto where the tenor plays the inverted subject, the alto plays the subject right-side-up, and the bass plays the third countersubject under a dominant pedal point in the soprano (measures 27-32). This area of development is an excellent example of the use of modal mixture, delayed resolutions, and common-tone embellishments that are seen later in the ricercare. In measures 28-30, I borrow chords from G-sharp major. In measure 29, I do hint at a dominant chord which would appear to want to resolve back to G-sharp minor, yet in measure 30, after some passing chords, I use a French augmented sixth chord built on the note D-sharp. This is striking since there is no resolution to G-sharp minor yet, and the pull to the chord only is stronger with, one could argue, another version of the dominant chord (this French sixth could be analyzed as a dominant seventh with the flattened fifth). I then return to a more, when compared to the previous dominant sonorities, pronounced and heavy (with the soprano voice, as it plays a false entry of the subject, outlining the dominant chord in the high register) regular dominant seventh of G-sharp minor which has the appearance of providing the last significant moment before the expected resolution. However, to expand my trickery to the listener, I include a common-tone embellishment with another, and different to the previous, French augmented sixth chord (measures 30-32). Only then, after the restatement of the dominant seventh, is there a resolution to G-sharp minor (measure 33). The humorous aspect of this part of the ricercare is that I kept making it seem that the harmonies will eventually resolve, yet they would always move in a different and unexpected direction, and just when the listener is about to give up and to stop expecting the resolution, the resolution occurs. This passage also is striking because two different French augmented sixth chords are used to embellish and strengthen the dominant sonority, especially after the chromatic harmony rollercoaster with the modal mixture that occurred earlier.

After this example of the extreme chromatic harmony that is used throughout the ricercare, there is a modulation to C-sharp minor where a stretto, including the subject right-side-

up, its augmentation, and the inverted subject taking place over a tonic pedal tone in the bass (measures 38-44), begins. I included a modal mixture in measure 40 where I borrow an A-sharp minor sonority (from C-sharp major) before a dominant of C-sharp minor followed by its resolution (measures 41-42). This is the perfect lead up to a four-part stretto of the subject where the subject entries occur in the same voices, in the same order, and in the same keys as they did in the exposition (measures 47-52). This seemingly is an approach to the conclusion of the ricercare due to the reflective nature of this stretto and the anticipation of a cadence in F-sharp minor. However, with me being still in C-sharp minor, I again modulated to B minor (measures 53-55) through the earlier mentioned modulation (through C-sharp minor's Neapolitan as a pivot followed by a dominant seventh of B minor). This continues the stretto's reference to the exposition since this modulation follows both the exposition and the stretto. This is just one of the examples of harmonic consistencies and developments that are used throughout the whole ricercare. An imperfect authentic cadence occurs in B minor (in the process of a false entry of the subject) to conclude the development of the sole first subject and its countersubjects.

Just when one would think that the ricercare concluded in the wrong key (not in the starting F-sharp minor), there is a twist. The twist is that the B in the bass (from the cadence) is the first note of a new subject (measure 55), and its exposition begins. After the bass completes playing the new subject, the tenor takes over playing the subject while the bass plays a countersubject which includes a false entry of the first subject as a reference to the previously developed thematic material. Next, the alto takes over in playing the subject as the tenor plays the first countersubject while the bass plays a second countersubject. The second countersubject is a portion of the first subject's first countersubject (also as a reference to previous thematic material). Finally, the soprano plays the subject as the bass plays a third countersubject, the tenor plays the inversion of the second countersubject, and the alto plays the first countersubject. The exposition ends with an imperfect authentic cadence (measure 68) which, as discussed before, signals to the listener that new thematic material has been established and that it is now time for its development (the exact thematic material from the first exposition will not reappear for the next 41 measures after this cadence and this area of the ricercare will solely focus on developing the second subject and its countersubjects).

I decided to have this fugal development explore keys that have not been visited yet. After a modulation to G major (measure 70), I include a stretto with the inverted subject and the subject right-side-up when the inverted first and second countersubjects are being played (measure 71-76). I here, like in the sarabande, have thematic material that, if standing alone, would sound as if in a strikingly different key than what the harmonies suggest. Through a common tone embellishment from measures 71-72 in the bass, the inverted subject starts off with the notes of the G minor scale, while the harmonies make the music sound like it is in the G major area.

I then modulate to C major (measure 78) as a four-part stretto of the subject starts that includes it being played in four different speeds (the soprano plays the inversion twice as slow,

the alto plays the inversion four times as fast, the tenor plays the inversion at the original speed, and the bass plays the subject right-side-up twice as fast). As the soprano's statement of the augmented subject is coming to an end, I modulate to A minor (measure 83) where, shortly after, I include an entry of thematic material that consists of the inverted subject, the right-side-up subject in diminution by four times, the third countersubject, and the second countersubject (measures 84-88). By measure 87, this contrapuntal thematic development modulates to E minor, where, in the middle of a following episode, I introduce the inverted retrograde of the subject (measures 88-91). This is a good example of how I incorporate thematic material in episodes throughout the whole ricercare. I either have false entries, variations of the themes, etc. in a simpler context, often with one of the four voices dropped or with less striking harmonic progressions. This is to give the listener a break from the more intense developmental contrapuntal labyrinths. In this episode, I include a modal mixture by borrowing C-sharp minor from E major (measure 90) before a deceptive resolution to C major. Borrowing the submediant chord from the parallel major is something that has been seen already a few times, most strikingly in the already mentioned measures 41-42 (quite an important area of the ricercare). A humorous and, one could say, relevant aspect of this episode is that, in measure 90, the first four notes of the tenor voice outline a French augmented sixth chord. This results in an unusual melodic pattern of notes, so the listener would humorously recall the other striking uses of French augmented sixth chords from earlier (maybe even from what was seen in the whole quintet so far).

The deceptive resolution in measure 92 marks the beginning of another important thematic moment with a stretto that includes the subject, its inversion, the second countersubject, and a dominant pedal tone in the tenor voice (measures 92-96). Following this, after a modulation to A major (measure 98), the music slows down and becomes darker (I even dropped the oboe from doubling the flute so that the soprano voice would not be as intense in this calmer area). The alto (measures 97-100) states the inverted subject where its last note occurs, at the end of the ritardando, on a diminished chord that is the beginning of an area of the ricercare that uses notes that are no faster, in duration, than half notes.

Starting on the resolution of this diminished chord, the soprano voice starts to state the retrograde of the subject (the oboe returns to doubling the flute to intensify this thematic material), with the first note an octave lower than it would be expected to be, as the alto plays a rhythmically altered variation of the inverted retrograde of the subject. As these variations of the subject are in the process of concluding, a stretto begins where the subject entries occur in the same voices, in the same order, and in the same keys as they did in the exposition. As the stretto is in the process of concluding, the music accelerates (until it reaches its original tempo at measure 108), and the inverted first subject (all the way from the first exposition) finally appears again, in inversion, in F-sharp minor. This is paired with the second subject, the first subject's first countersubject, and the second subject's first countersubject (measures 109-113). This entry of thematic material reflects the concept of there being two different two-voiced ricercari

occurring at the same time. I first developed the first subject, then the second subject (as well as all their countersubjects), and now it is time to put those two subjects with their developmental countersubjects together.

The next entry of thematic material occurs after a modulation to C-sharp minor where the second subject, a two-part stretto of the first subject, and the first subject's third countersubject occur at the same time (measures 115-120). This entry is followed by a G-sharp minor entry where the inverted second subject augmented by two times, the second subject in diminution by four times, the second subject's third countersubject, and the first subject occur at the same time (measures 122-127).

Soon after the previously discussed entry, in measure 130, I modulate to D-sharp minor. With this being one of the furthest visited points from the home key throughout the whole ricercare, I wanted to emphasize this moment by using an inverted double two-part stretto for both subjects. In other words, starting from the modulatory resolution to D-sharp minor to measure 135, I have the first and second subject taking place at the same time as both of their inversions in stretto. At this point, I felt that it was time to start the process of returning to F-sharp minor (the home key which was not visited for a while). I decided to modulate and return to G-sharp minor where the second subject's inverted first countersubject is played during entries of the second subject in diminution by two times, the first subject, and the first subject's second countersubject (measures 137-142).

At this point, all the proposed countersubjects in both expositions (all subjects and countersubjects) have been stated in different contrapuntal combinations with both subjects. Now, I decided to take some time to focus on developing only the two subjects at the same time. To approach F-sharp minor I decided to modulate to C-sharp minor (measure 143) which occurs at the exact beginning of a double stretto where both subjects occur during which another variation of them is played at a different speed. In other words, the first subject occurs while its augmented inverted self is being stated as the inverted second subject and its right-side-up self in diminution by four times are being played at the same time (this figure concludes at measure 149).

After this C-sharp minor entry's stretto, it only would be natural that there would be an even more memorable stretto in F-sharp minor whereafter the ricercare would come to an end. My original idea was to have a double two-part stretto of both the first subject right-side-up and the second subject's inversion in F-sharp minor. The only issue was that my sketches and calculations showed that this stretto was not possible. However, after I thought more about this possibility, I found that this stretto works well in major. Hence, I decided to modulate and include this stretto in F-sharp major. I used a modulation that references a common modulatory progression that, as discussed, is seen throughout the mazurka where the dominant seventh's fifth is flattened to create a French augmented sixth chord. In this context, from measures 150-152, I include a dominant seventh of C-sharp minor, I then flatten the fifth of the chord to create

a French augmented sixth, I treat the B-sharp and the D-natural as tendency tones to create a C-sharp major chord (I, in the context of the following continuation of the melodies, included the seventh of the chord as well), which is the dominant of F-sharp major. Because this happened in a major key (when most of the subject entries in this ricercare happened in minor), the discussed stretto (from measures 153-157) really stands out. However, the issue that I had was that I needed the big moment of the ricercare to be around the return to F-sharp minor (not major), and this stretto's remembrance needed to be surpassed. After checking my sketches, I realized that the last F-sharp minor entry of thematic material (the first entry where both subjects were present), could be inverted. I decided to use this possibility in F-sharp minor, and I modulated there by moving to D-sharp minor, using its Neapolitan as a pivot, and resolving a dominant seventh of F-sharp minor (measures 159-160; this references the modulation in measures 18-19 of the mazurka). The inverted figure designed to be used in this return to F-sharp minor includes the first subject, its inverted first countersubject, the inverted second subject, and its inverted first countersubject (measures 162-166). For the listener, this inverted figure of the previous F-sharp minor thematic material entry establishes a strong return to the home F-sharp minor key. At this point, all that is needed to be done is to establish an extremely strong cadence to conclude the ricercare. The issue was that the whole movement was already so chaotic that there would be nothing memorable about a simple cadence. I purposefully made sure that there were no perfect authentic cadences throughout the whole movement so that a perfect authentic cadence in the end would distinguish itself for the listener. Still though, even a sole perfect authentic cadence would not be more memorable than all the stretti that were demonstrated earlier. For this reason, I started a process to smoothly separate the doubled instruments into playing different voices so that I could cadence memorably with five (and not four) voices. After a stretto including a false entry of the first subject's first countersubject and its inverted retrograde (this figure, from measures 166-168, is important due to its foreshadowing of the ending of the ricercare), I decided to have the oboe take over playing the alto voice, and the clarinet and French horn to double the tenor voice in measure 171. This sudden change in orchestration does not seem too sudden because there was no point in the whole ricercare where, with the bass dropped, the tenor had such a high part to play (this alone would distract from this sudden change in orchestration). The tenor is justified in suddenly playing that high because the tenor's leap to the high B in measure 171 is part of a statement of the second subject in retrograde with the first three notes being played an octave lower than its last two note (this version of the subject allows for good spacing between the alto and tenor voices). As a final statement (measures 171-173) of the retrograde of second subject, in diminution and stated by the alto voice (although the last note is not held for the expected duration), concludes, the bassoon suddenly drops back in with a dominant pedal point. The French horn leaves doubling the clarinet in the tenor voice (the bassoon's addition distracts from this sudden change in orchestration) and doubles the bassoon's pedal point an octave higher. The listener still would think of there being four voices, and that there is just an addition of a regular octave doubling. Only in the penultimate measure, do the bassoon and French horn part ways and play different voices, which completes the smooth

transition to adding a fifth voice for the grand final ending. As this is occurring, the alto voice, in measures 174-176, plays the false entry of the first subject's first countersubject that was seen in the mentioned retrograde stretto from measures 166-168 (now the importance of that stretto is clear; for introducing the final thematic nuance that the ricercare proposes). This helps explain the positioning of the ending since the last note of the alto line's statement of the false entry of the countersubject is at the point of the final cadence. The final perfect authentic cadence (with the picardy third through a suspension), in five voices, is the most memorable part of the ricercare due to the large range the five voices cover with the extra layer in the contrapuntal texture.

My process for composing this massive ricercare included experimenting and designing subjects and countersubjects so that both expositions are contrapuntally justified and so that there are four-part stretti of both subjects which allow for the subject entries to occur in the same voices, in the same order, and in the same keys as they did in the subjects' expositions (great for referencing the exposition after a long development of a subject). Also, I made sure that augmentation stretti of both subjects were possible as well as each countersubject being able to work with its subject in stretto and in different combinations of both subjects occurring at the same time. Through some sketching, I was able to work out the subjects, countersubjects, and the already discussed different combinations of themes and in what transpositions and orders would they be best for the process of development and instrument ranges.

Walzer

After the massive and dark ricercare, I decided to compose a fast waltz, for the fifth and final movement, where, due to my approach of incorporating fast harmonic rhythm, the music, despite using a nineteenth century chromatic harmonic approach (like in the sarabande), sounds almost atonal and sort of insane. The waltz can be viewed as the final statement after the increasing intensity throughout all the previous movements. Behind the insanity of this movement, there are final reflections of many of the elements used throughout all the previous movements.

This movement, like in the mazurka, follows an "A, B, A'" form where both the "A" and the "B" sections are each 24 measures long. The "A" section starts off in E minor, the "B" section is established through a modulation to D-sharp minor. E minor is finally established again in the "A'" section, that is about half the length of the full "A," which is concluded with some additional final cadential material.

My method for composing this waltz was, like in the mazurka, coming up with two contrapuntal melodic lines that, by themselves, have strong waltz-like characteristics (like often having the first beat always having the strongest attack while the third beat's attack is shorter than the second's). With the two main melodies, and resulting harmonies, established, I decided to have different instruments alternate between playing the melodic lines. As one instrument would take over another playing the melody, the instrument taken over would usually either drop

out, play another counterpoint with, for example, motives that are consistent with the waltz's characteristics, or play the other main melodic line. Essentially, every few notes of both melodic lines are being orchestrated differently through alternations of instruments and additional free counterpoint. The orchestration, like in the mazurka, also includes arpeggiated and fast-moving glittery runs as more lyrical melodic lines (still with a striking contrapuntal foundation) are played for the atmospheric effect discussed in the context of the mazurka. However, it is almost as if, when compared to the mazurka, everything is amplified in the waltz's orchestration. There are many more fast moving arpeggiated melodies, instruments drastically changing ranges more often, etc.

The first four measures of the waltz are an excellent example of emphasizing my overall compositional approach. The pickup to the first measure, played by the clarinet, is the first note of the first melodic line. I should also mention that the pickup note (B-natural) hints at being a dominant of E minor. This also allows for an interesting musical transition from the previous movement since the final chord of the ricercare was an F-sharp major chord, the dominant of the dominant of E minor. In any case, the first melodic line is picked up by the oboe in the first measure, then it returns to the clarinet in the second measure after which it is picked up by the flute during the third beat of the measure. The oboe then, again, takes over playing the melody while the flute plays a sort of variation of a standard waltz bass in its high register. The melody consists of a recurring shape that consists of four eighth notes and dispersing the sequences of the shape between different instruments through which an interesting dialogue is created. As this is occurring, the bassoon, in measure 1, plays the second melodic line after which the French horn takes over playing it for a few measures. As all the instruments complete playing their part in the set melodic lines, they all switch to playing free counterpoint.

Apart from the orchestration, in reference to the mazurka, the waltz provides a final statement of some of the harmonic aspects of the earlier movements. For example, measure 34 shows an instance of the discussed version of the French augmented sixth chord with the added note that was used in, for example, measures 7 and 12 in the sarabande, where it resolves to a half-diminished chord. The French augmented sixth chord is also used, from measures 12-13, in the same way as it was first introduced in the mazurka and then in the ricercare where a dominant seventh is followed by a French augmented sixth chord by having the dominant seventh's fifth flattened. From measures 7-11, an F-sharp minor sonority is first followed by a D minor harmony, then its Neapolitan, and then the dominant seventh of B-flat major before the resolution. Again, this is the example of the modulation with using the chromatic submediant's Neapolitan as a pivot to modulate to a key that adds five flats to the key signature. This was seen in the sarabande in the discussed measures 1-3, and in the mazurka from measures 43-45 (although the dominant chord in that context was treated as a German augmented sixth chord instead). These are just some of the many examples of how this last movement summarizes the harmonic processes of the other movements.

To keep the waltz feel throughout the movement, I would make sure that at least one instrument plays a tongued and accented note on the first beat while often scattering staccato quarter notes on the third beats. The waltz never seems to run out of steam, and I decided to end the waltz suddenly without any ritardando or fermata on the last note (unlike in all the other movements). This is because slowing down in any way would affect the "insane" nature of the waltz. The sudden ending to the waltz (ending by cadencing to the picardy third of the starting key) and to the whole quintet is quite humorous since it comes quite unexpectedly after a decently long suite that kept increasing in intensity. It is almost as if the intensity just hit a brick wall and it is the end of time.

Suite

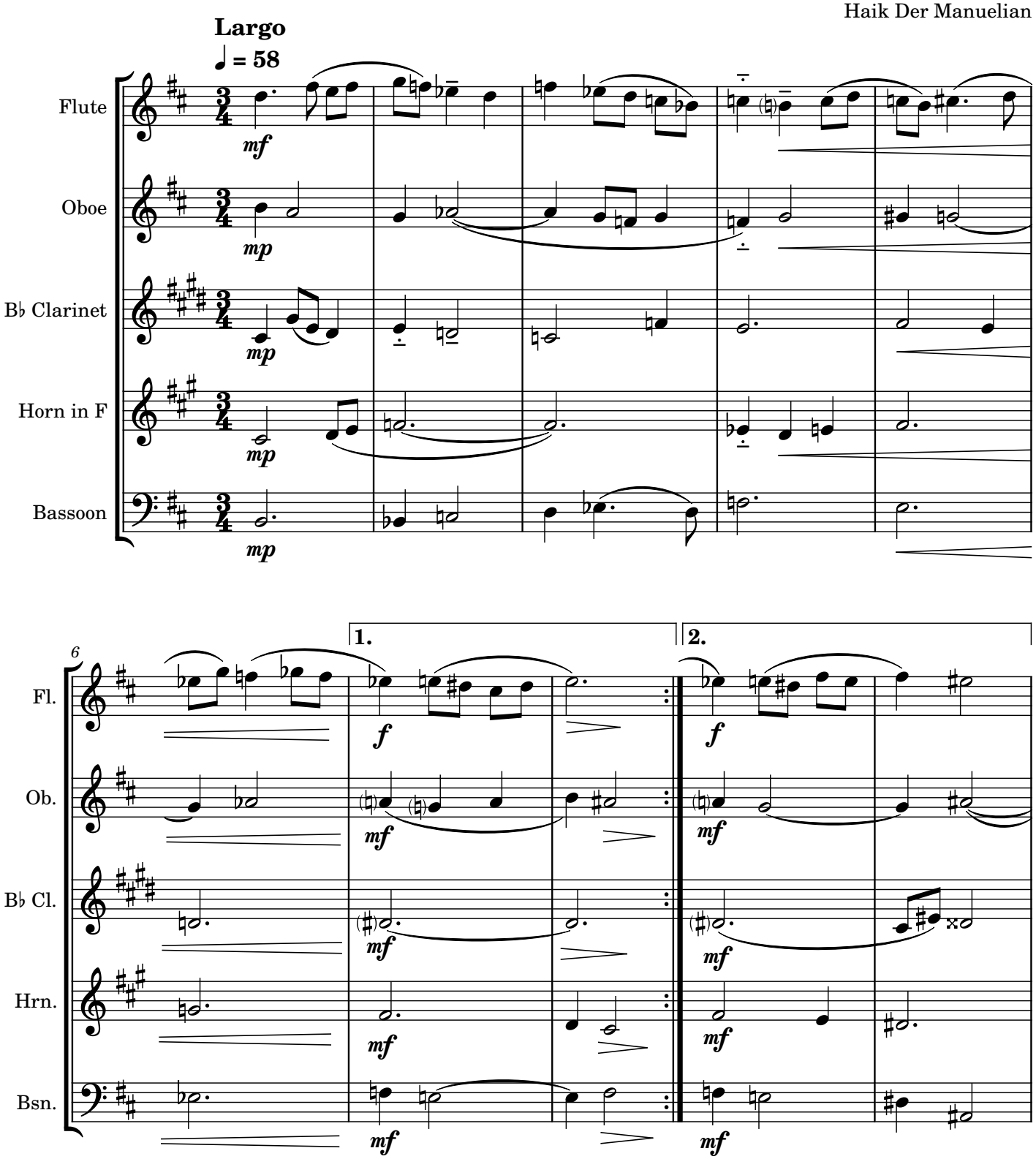
for Woodwind Quintet (2022)

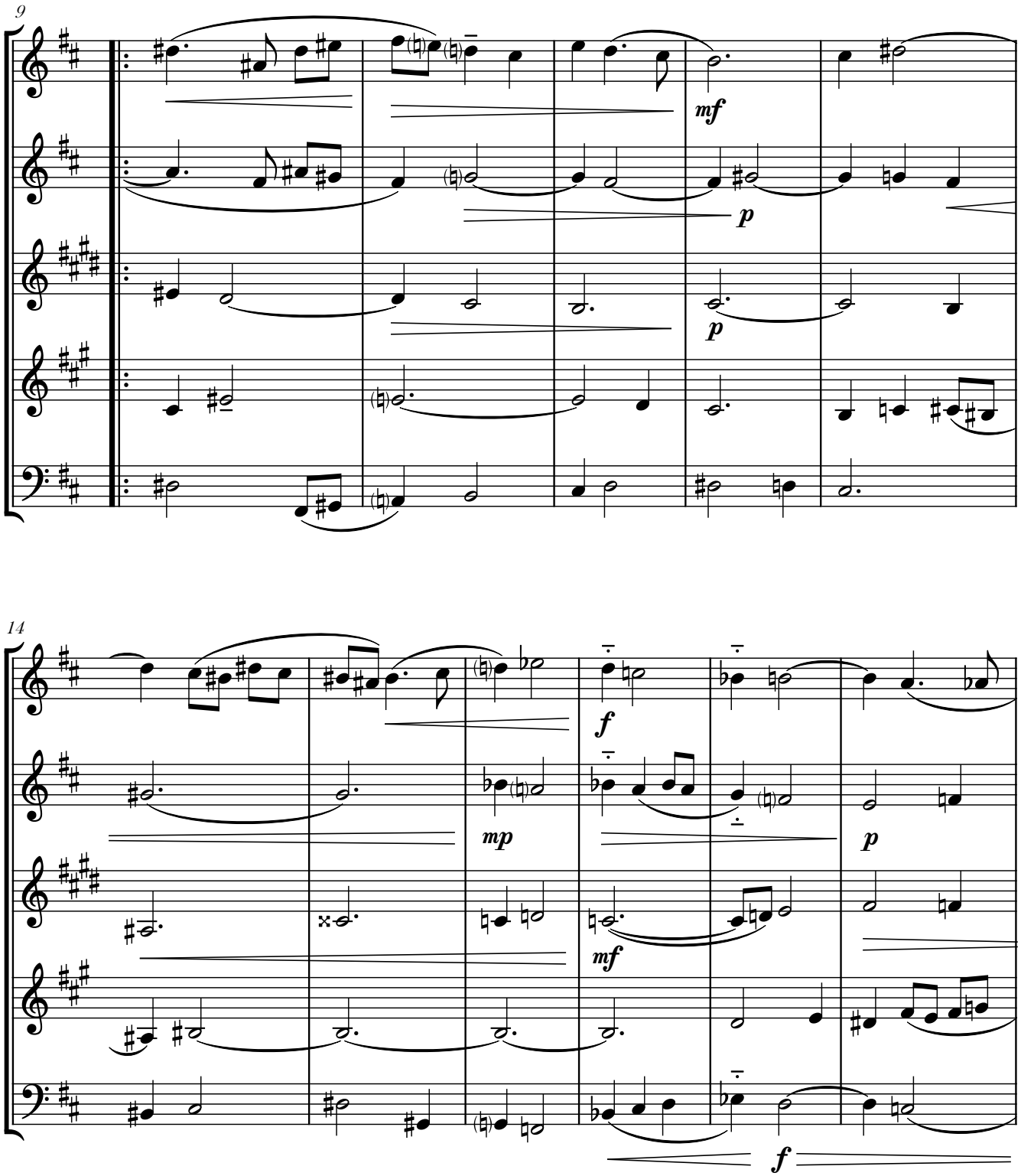
Haik Der Manuelian

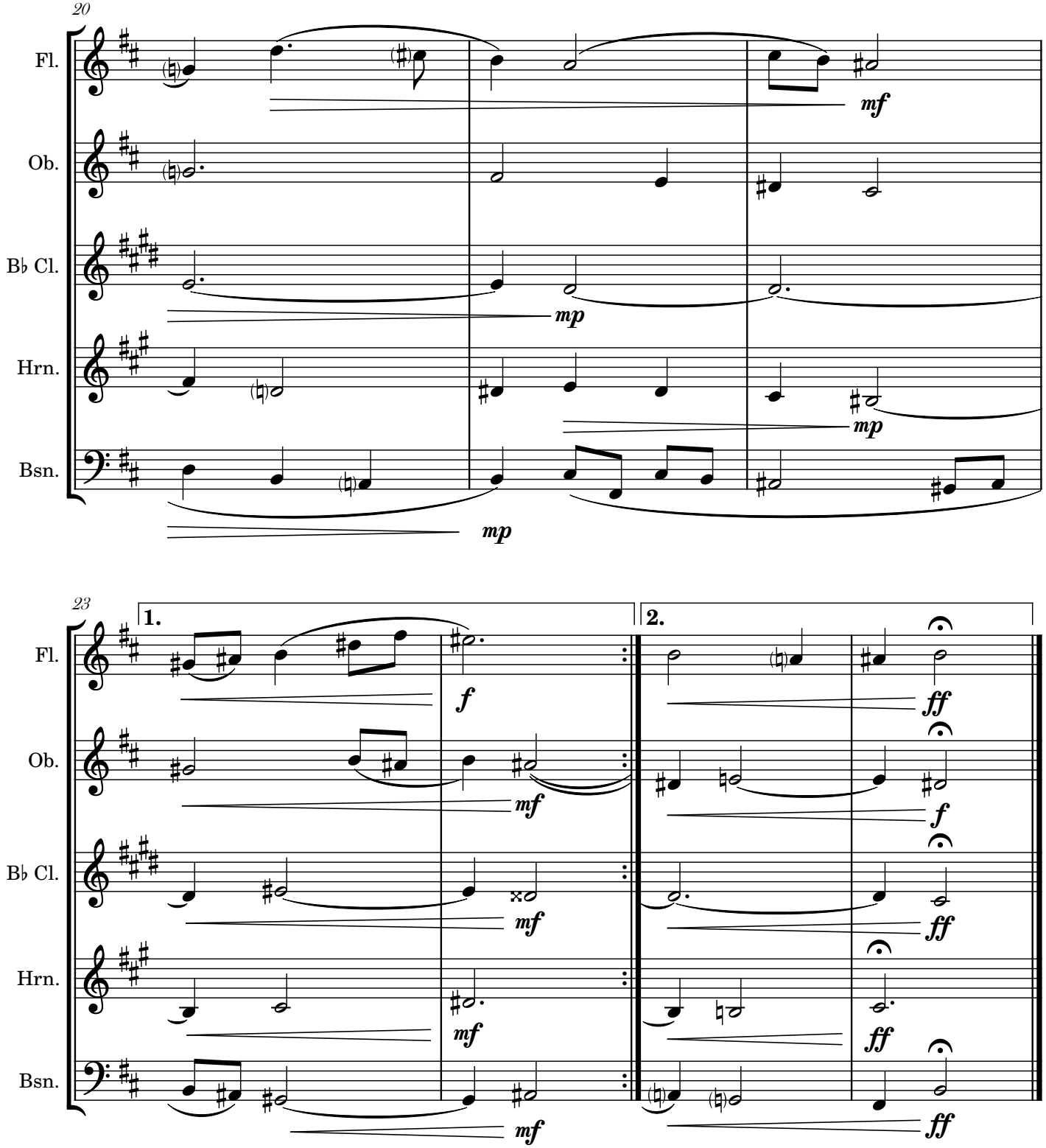
Suite

I. Sarabande

Haik Der Manuelian



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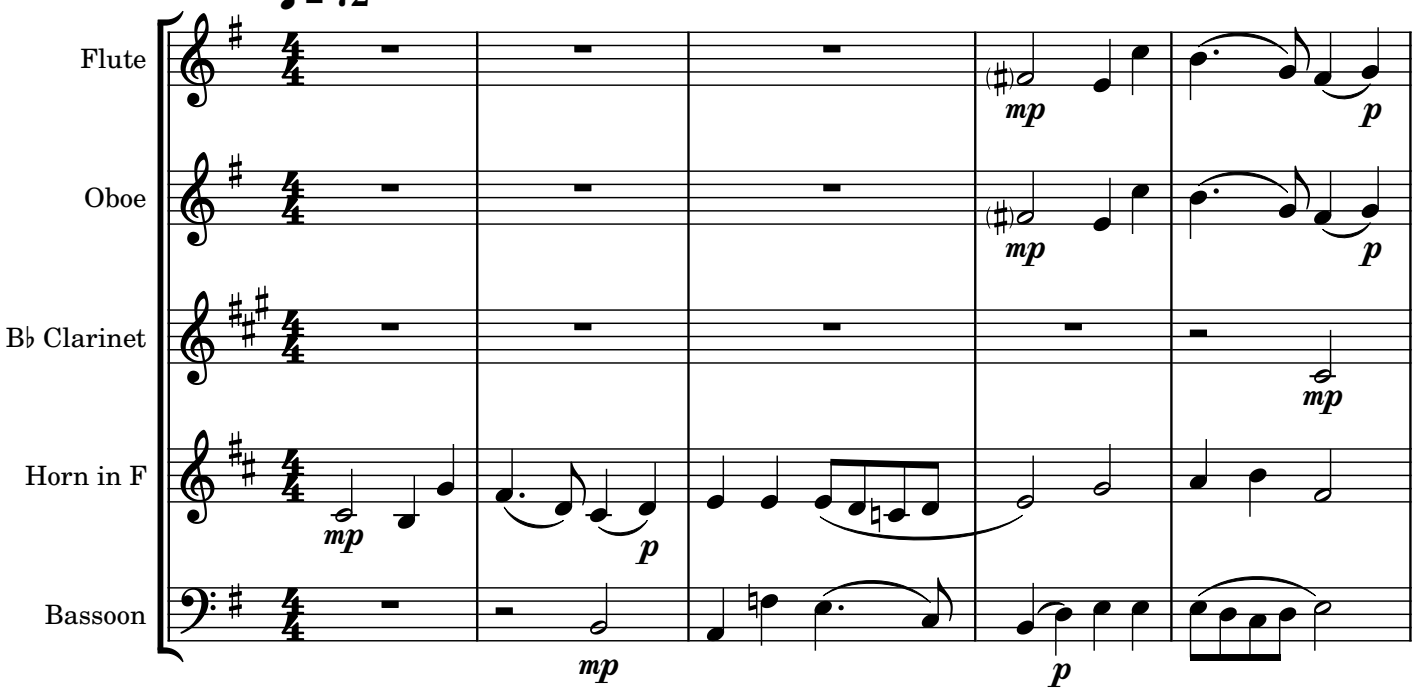
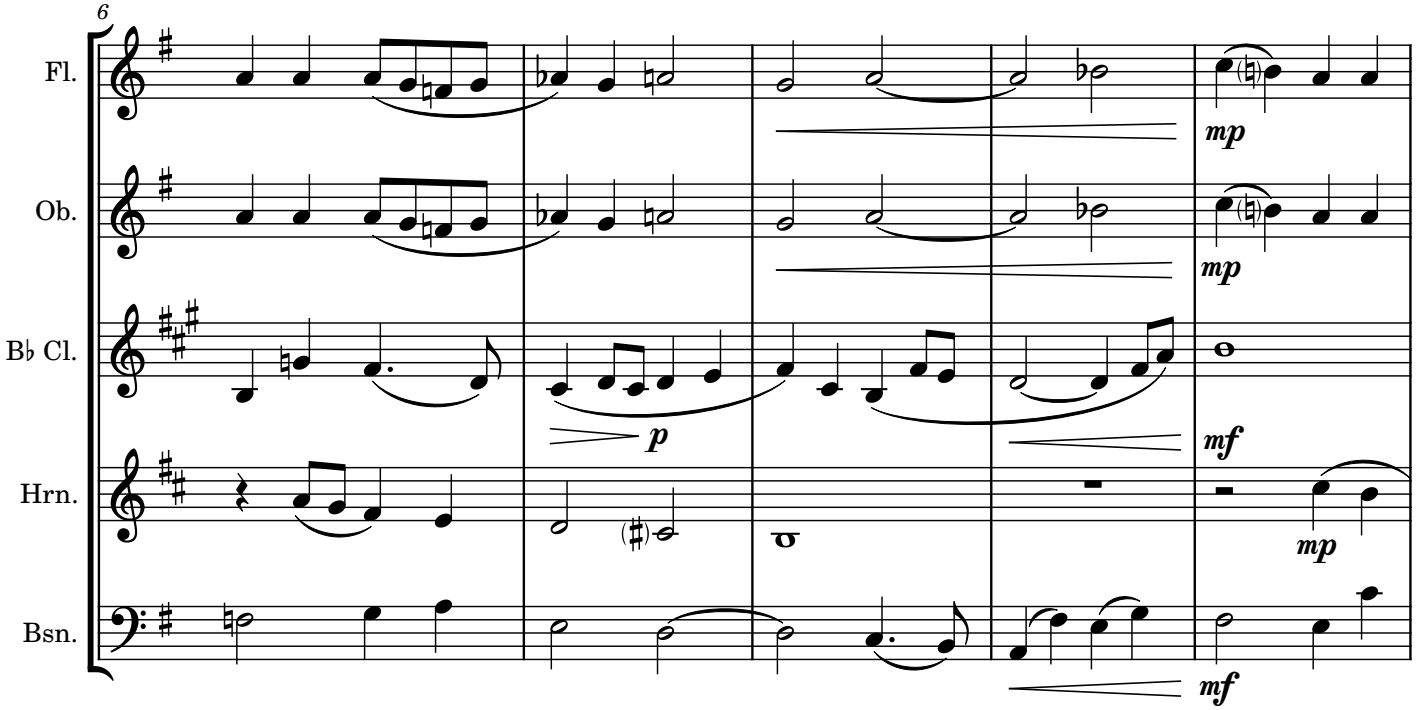
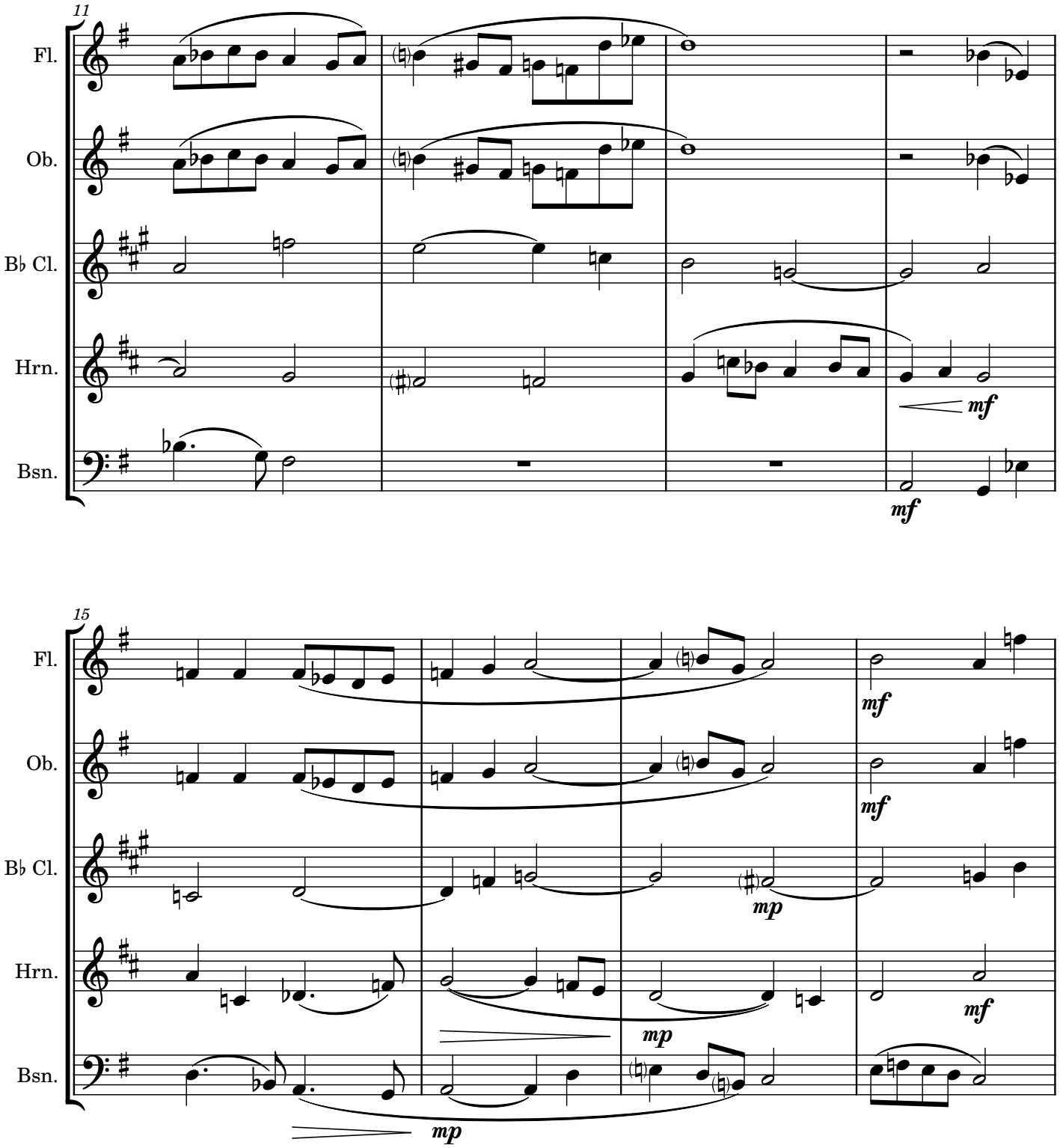
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mf
mp
mp
mp
23
1.
2.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
f
mf
mf
mf
mf
ff
f
ff
ff
ff

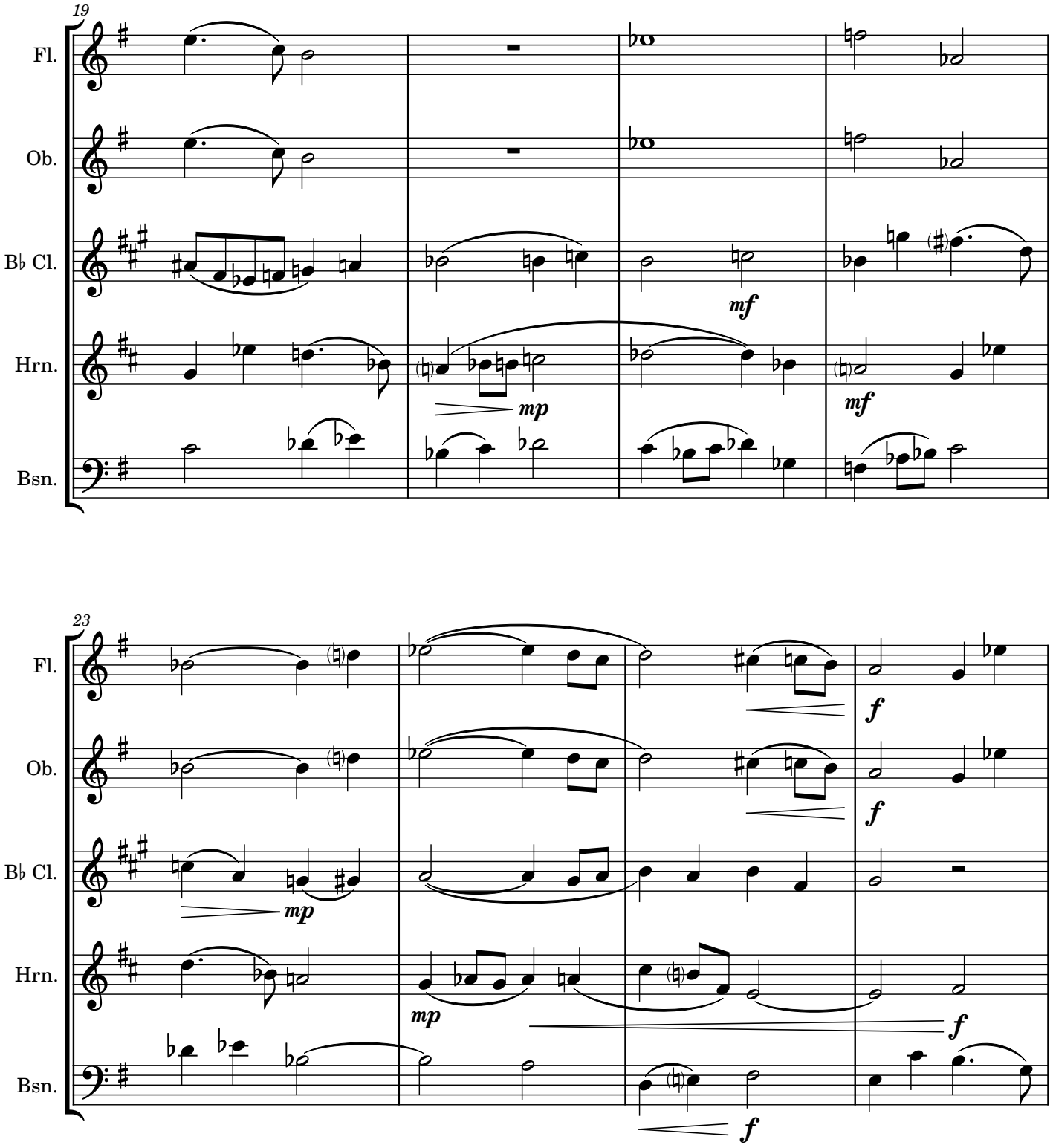
II. Fuga Locriana

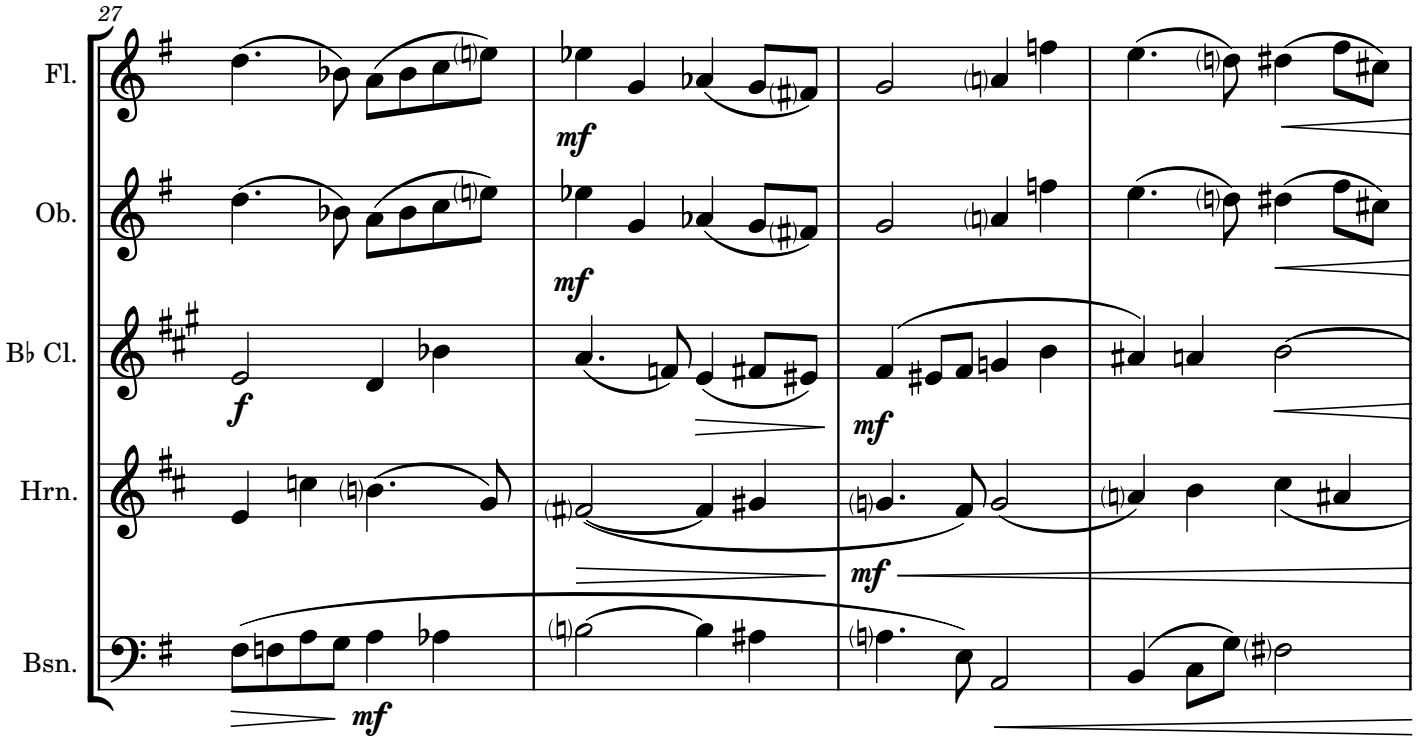
Andante
♩ = 72

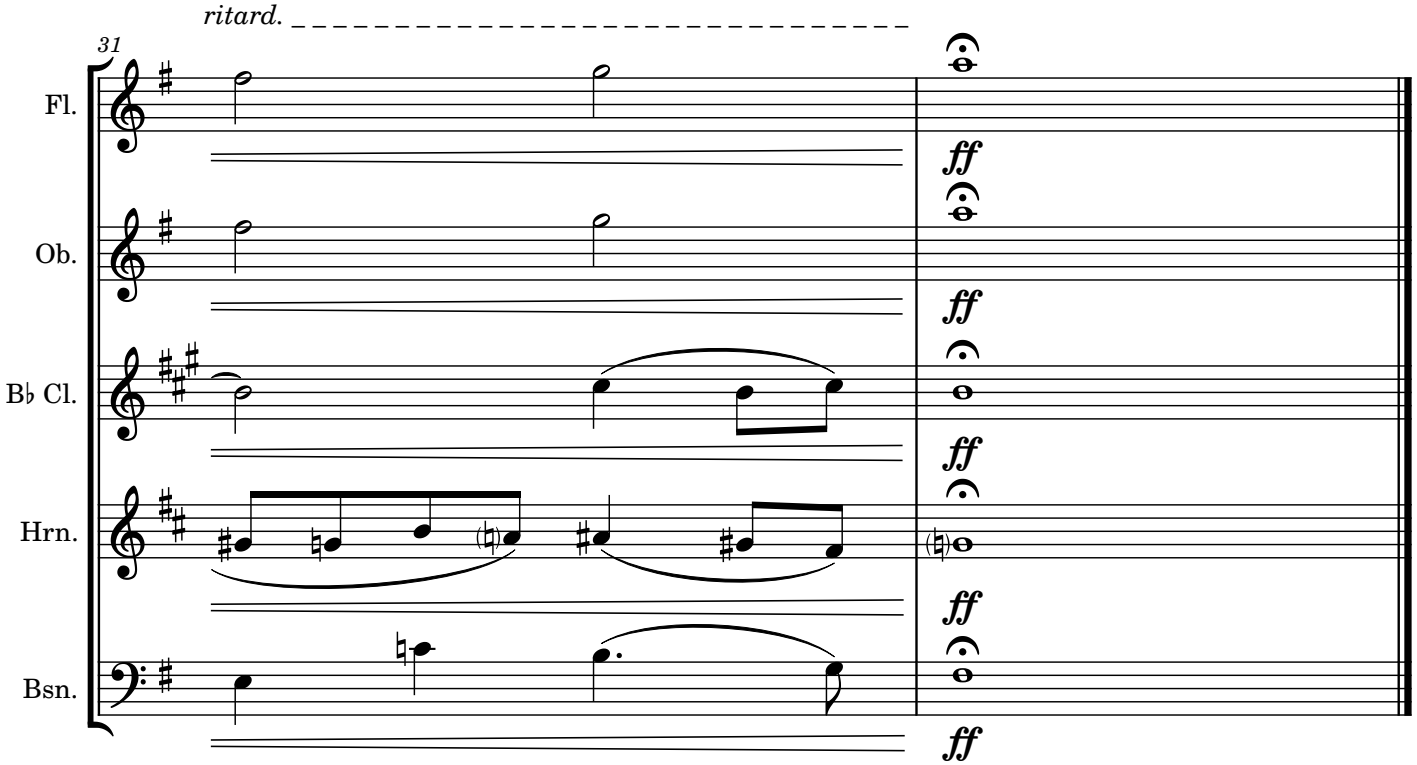




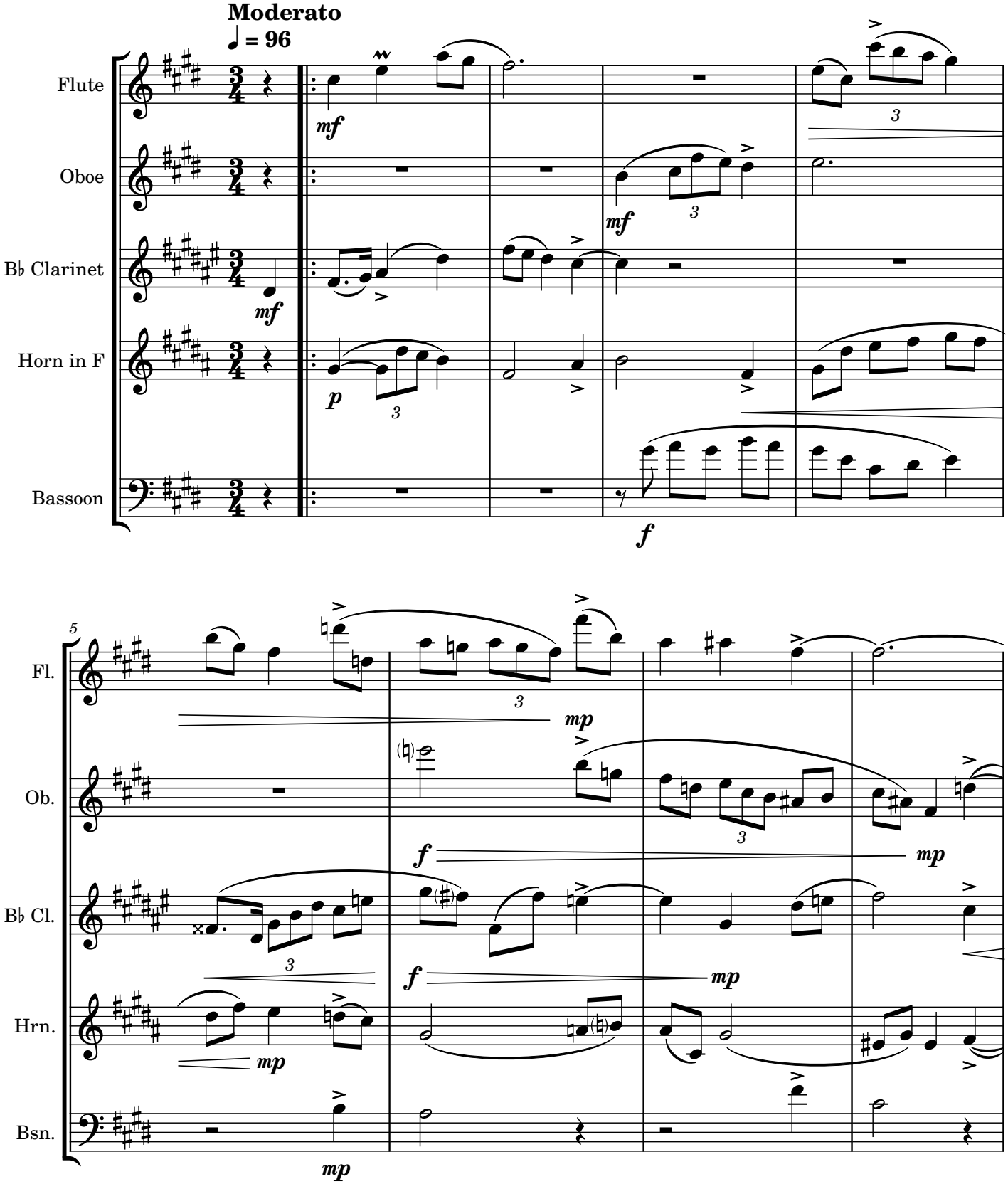


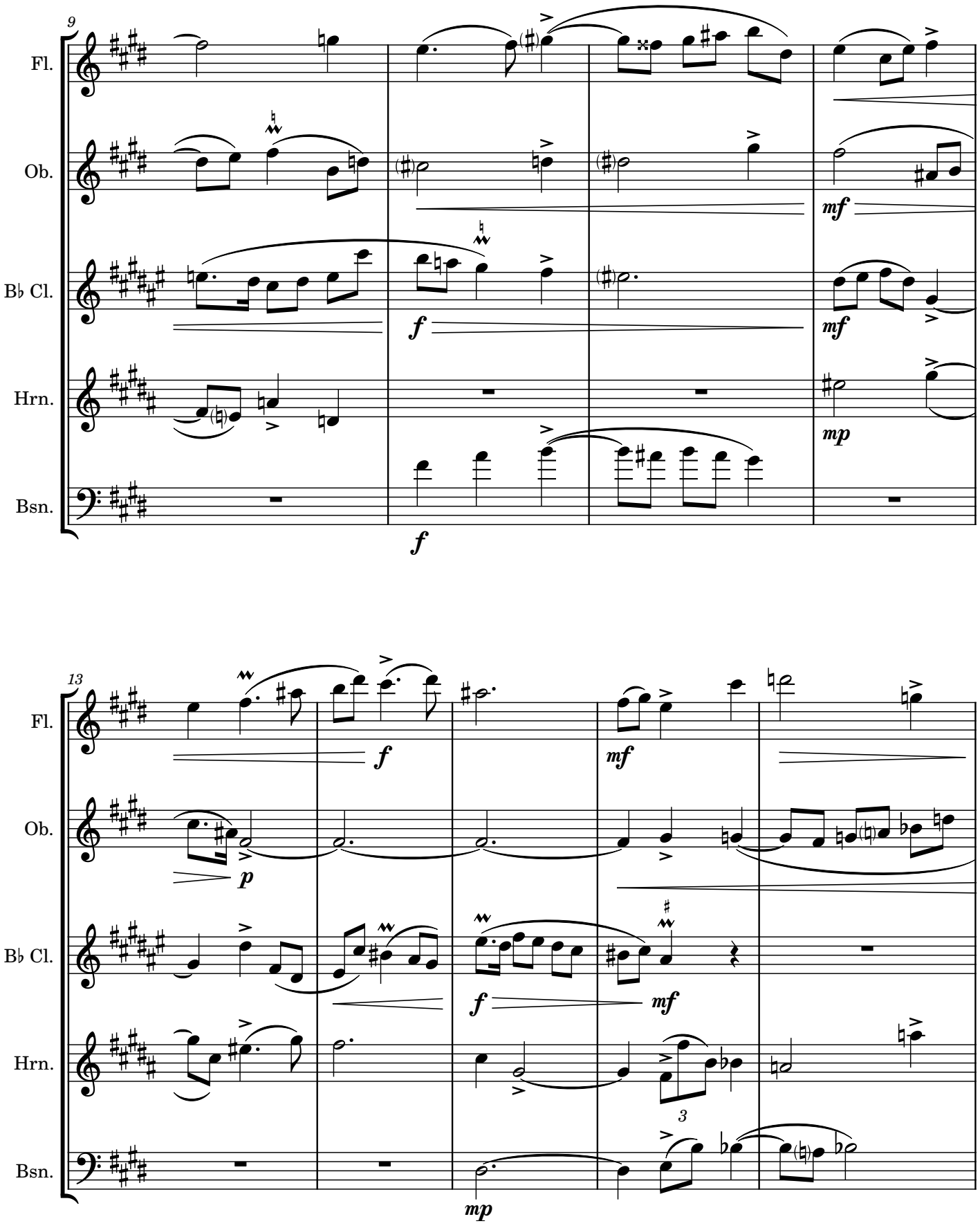


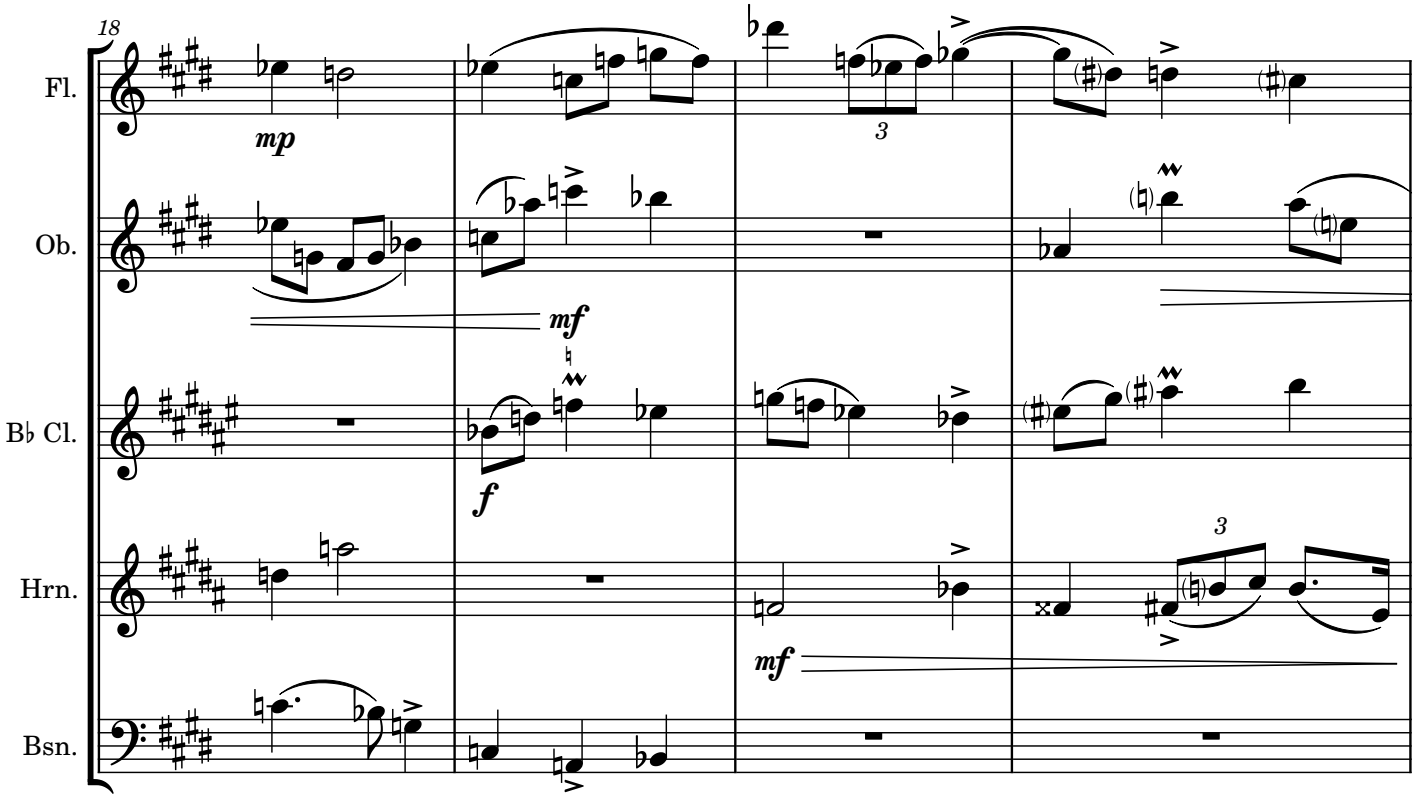

27
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mf
mf
f
mf
mf
mf


ritard.
31
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
ff
ff
ff
ff
ff

III. Mazurka



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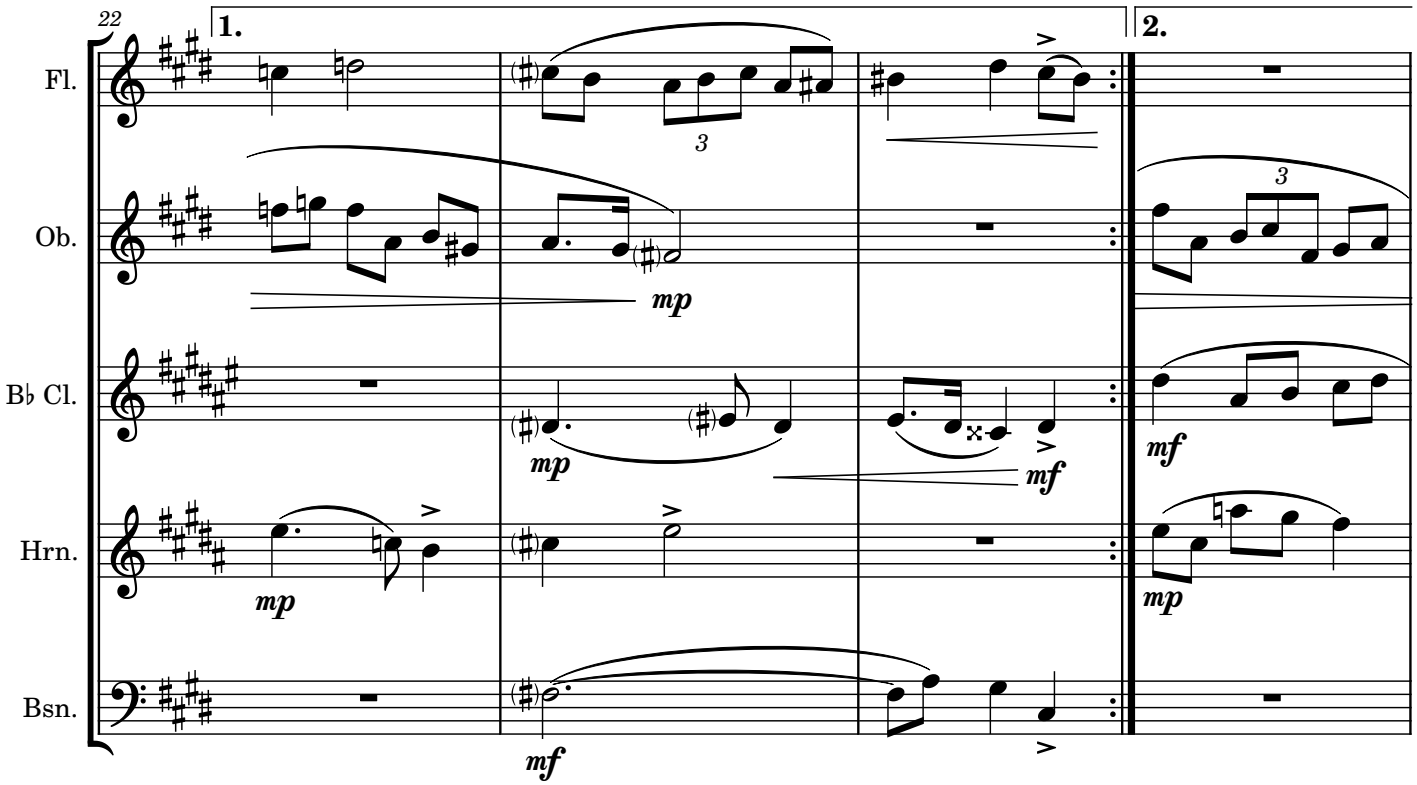
Bsn.
mp
mf
f
mf
3
3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2.
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Ob.
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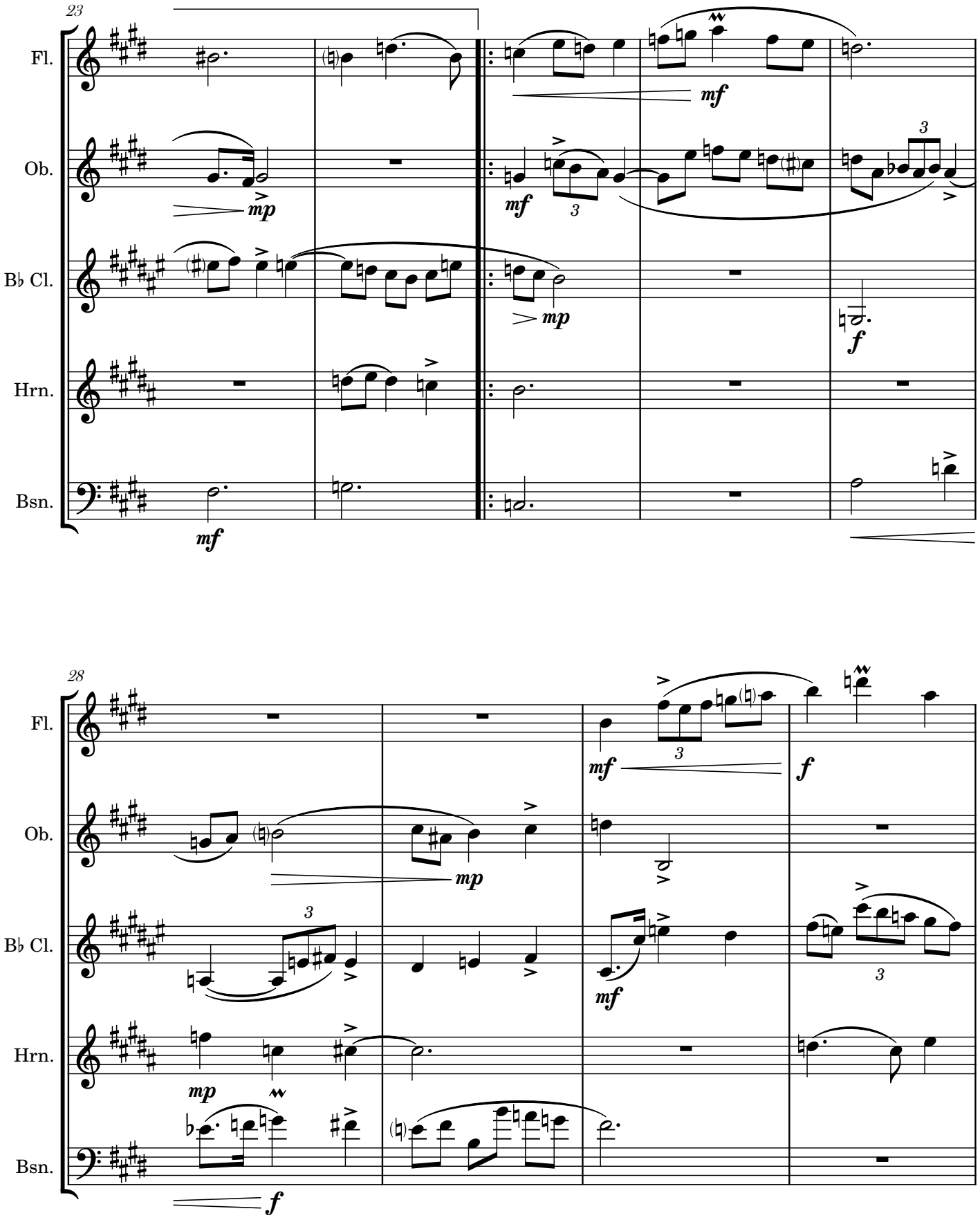
Hrn.
Bsn.
mp
mp
mf
mp
mf
mf
3
3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Fl.
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Hrn.
Bsn.
mf
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mf
mp
mf
f
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Bsn.
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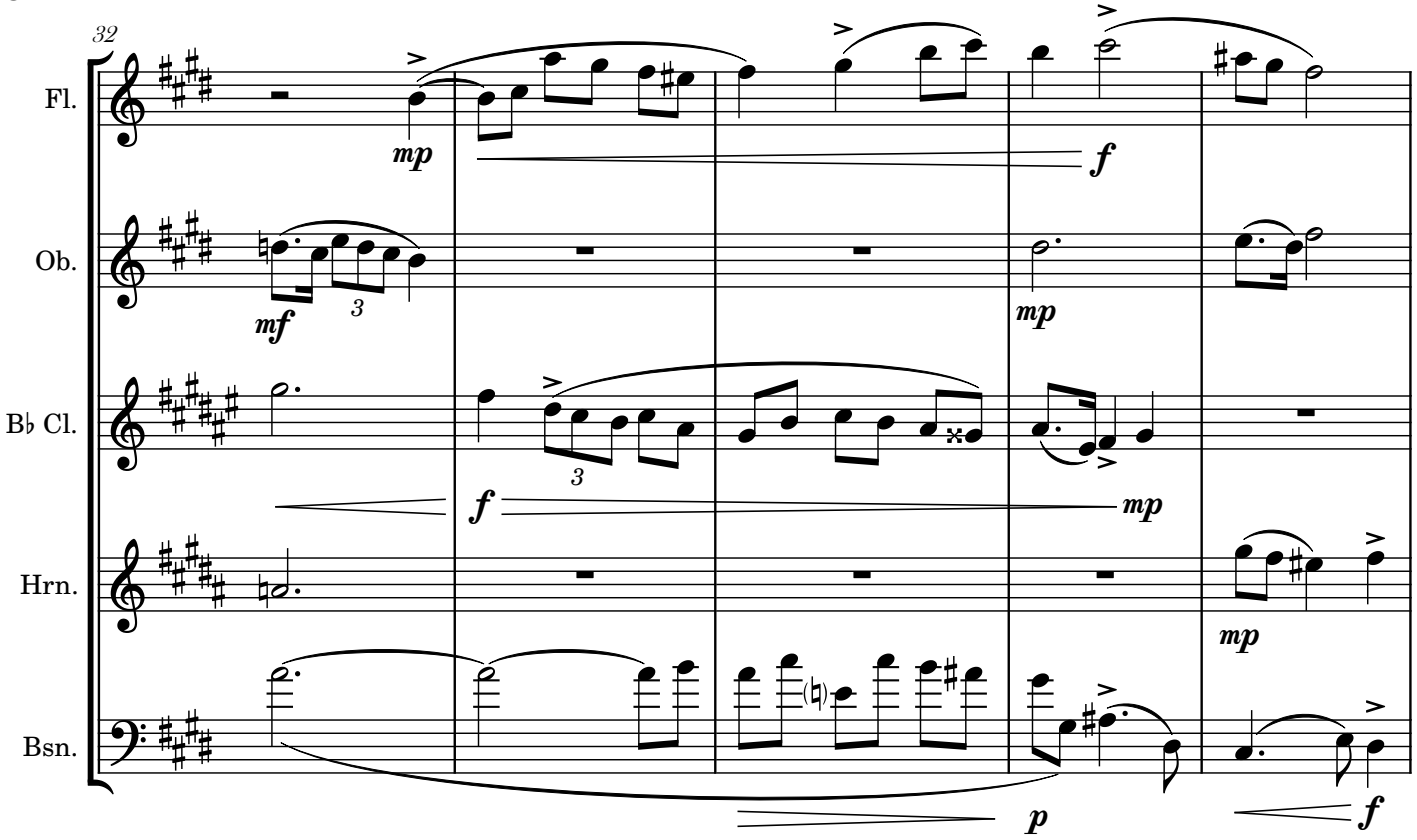
f
mp
mp
mf
f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mf
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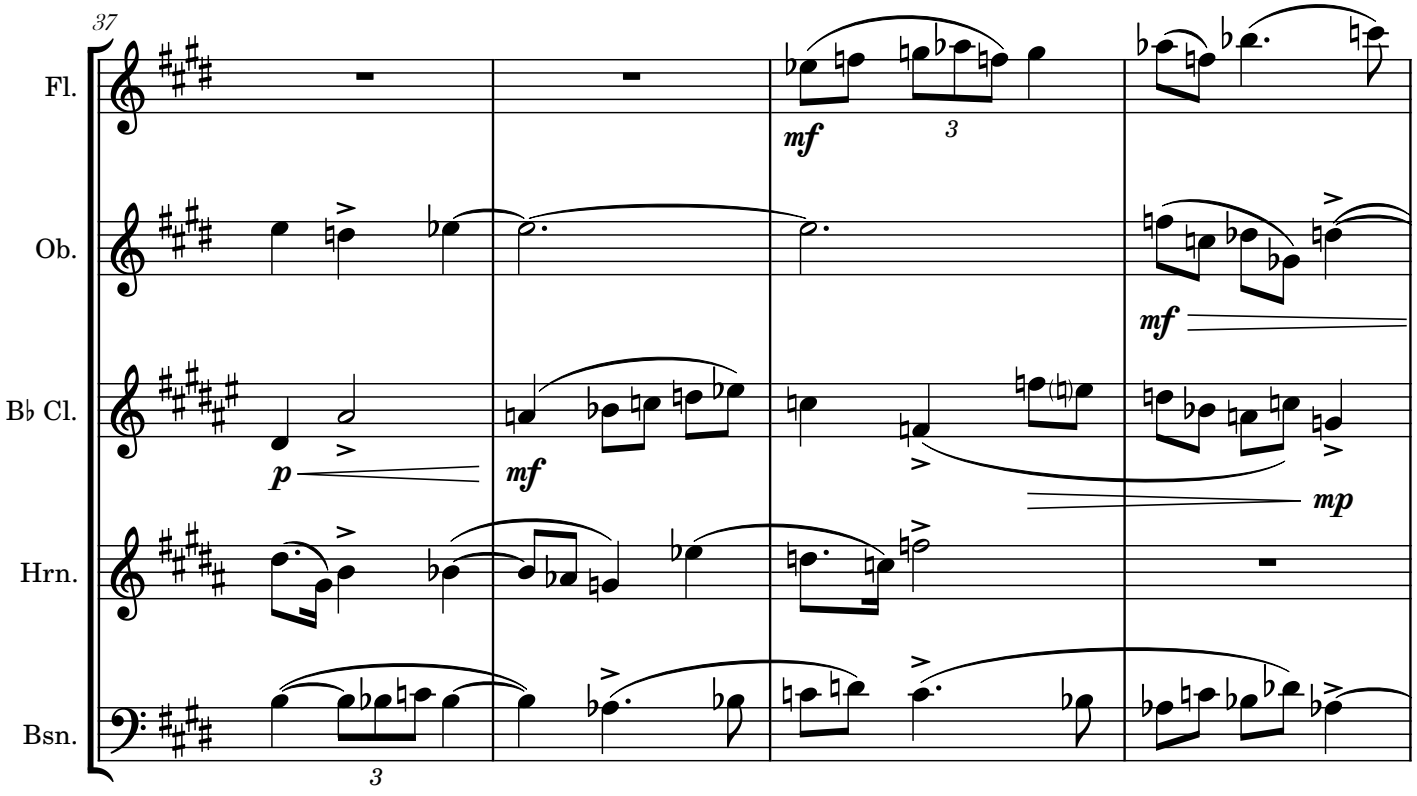
p
f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Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
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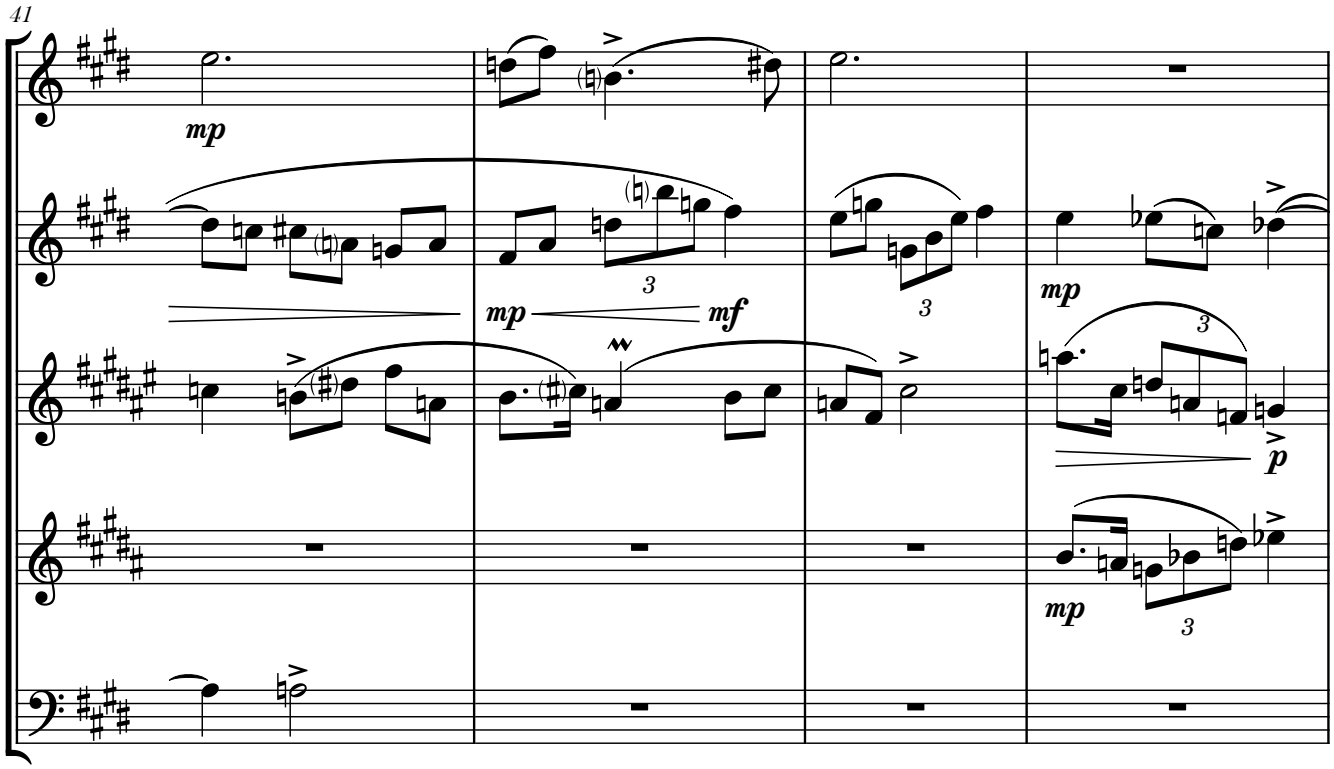
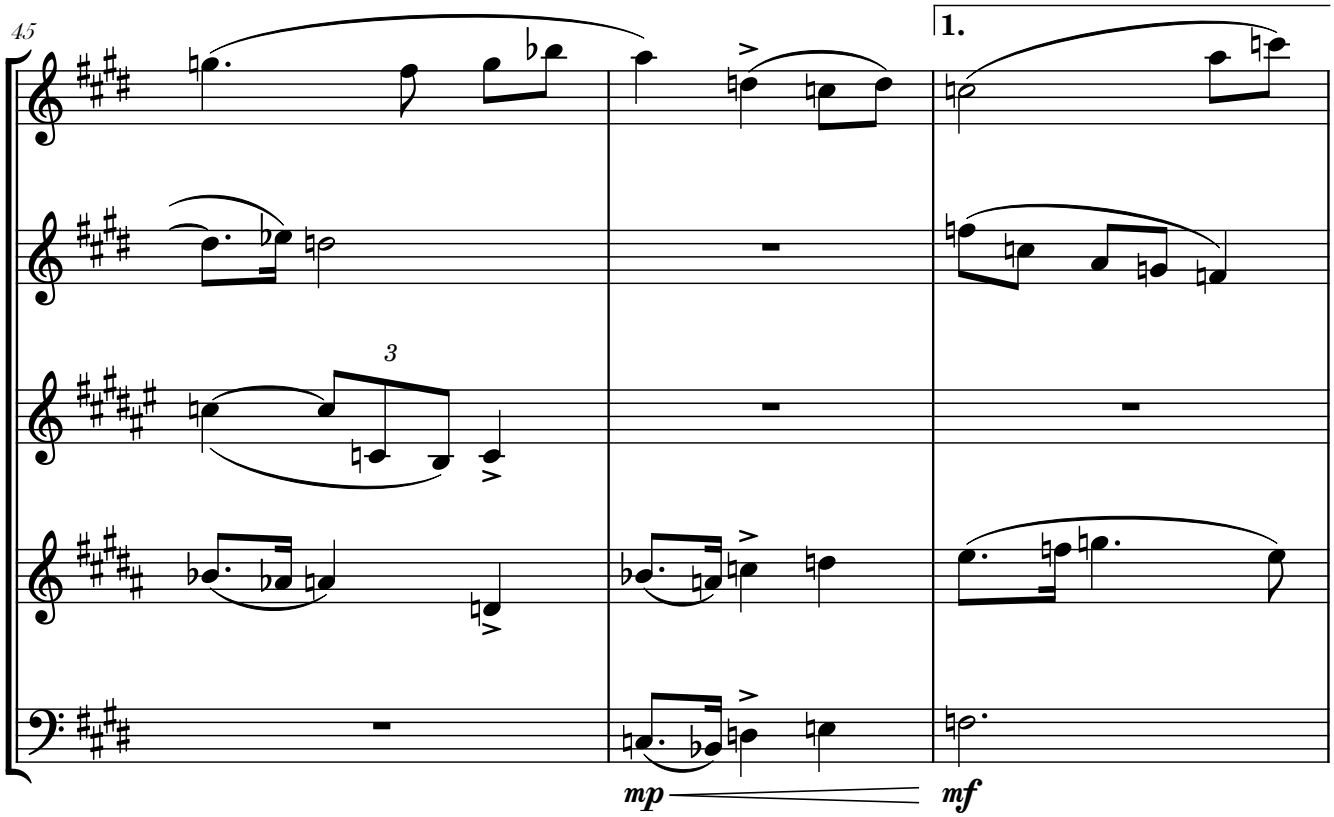
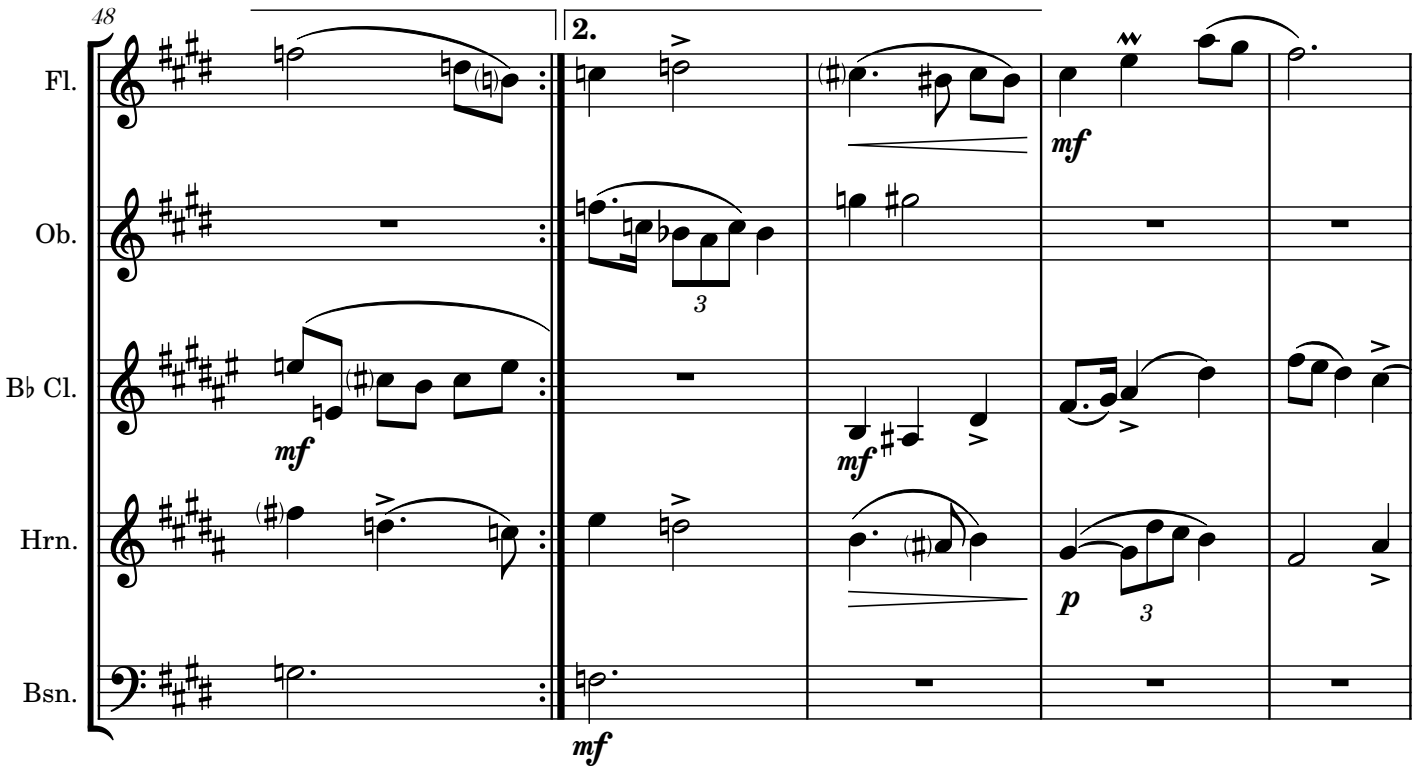
mf
p
mf
mp
3



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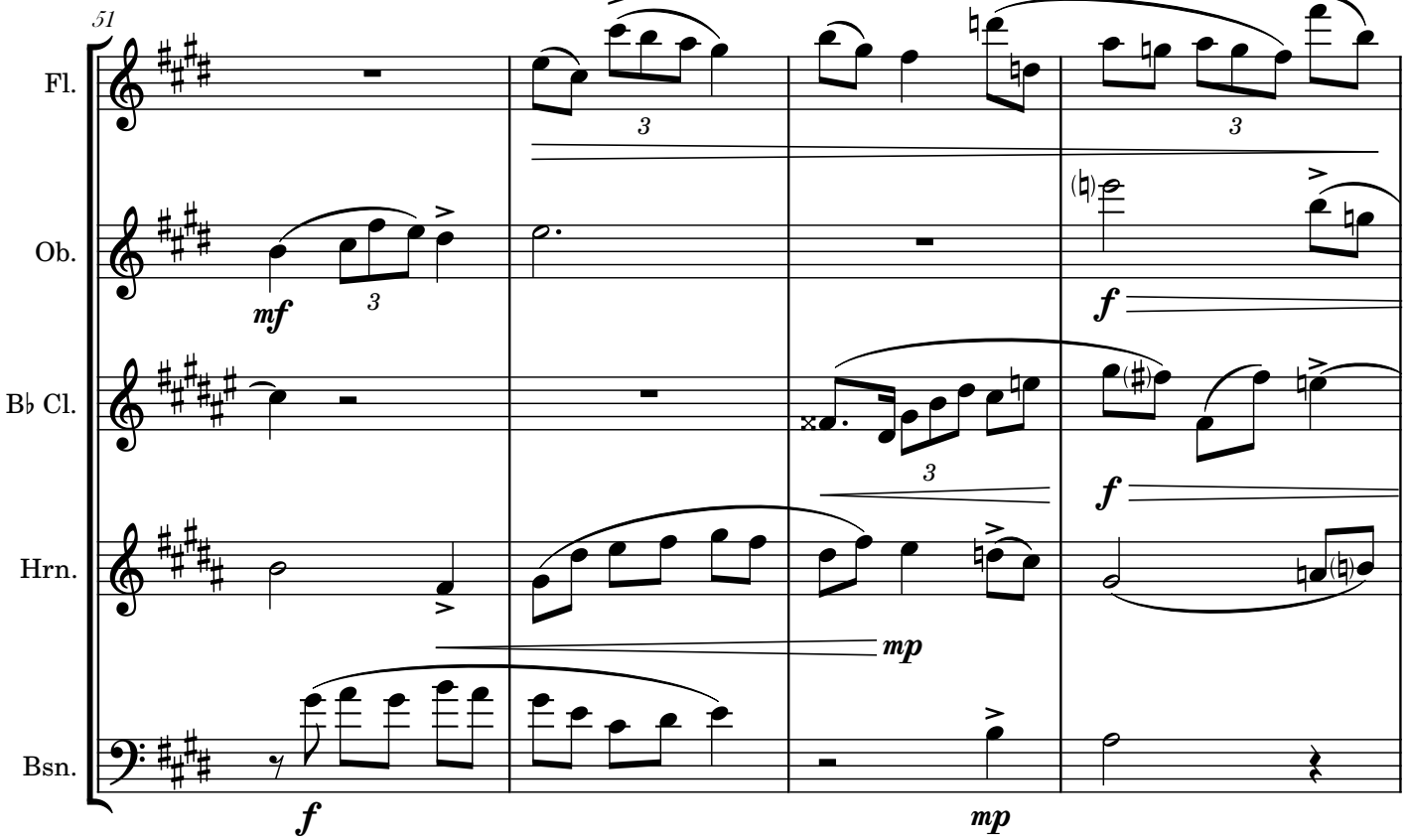
2.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mf
mf
mf
mf
p
3
3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Ob.
B♭ Cl.
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Bsn.
mf
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f
mp
f
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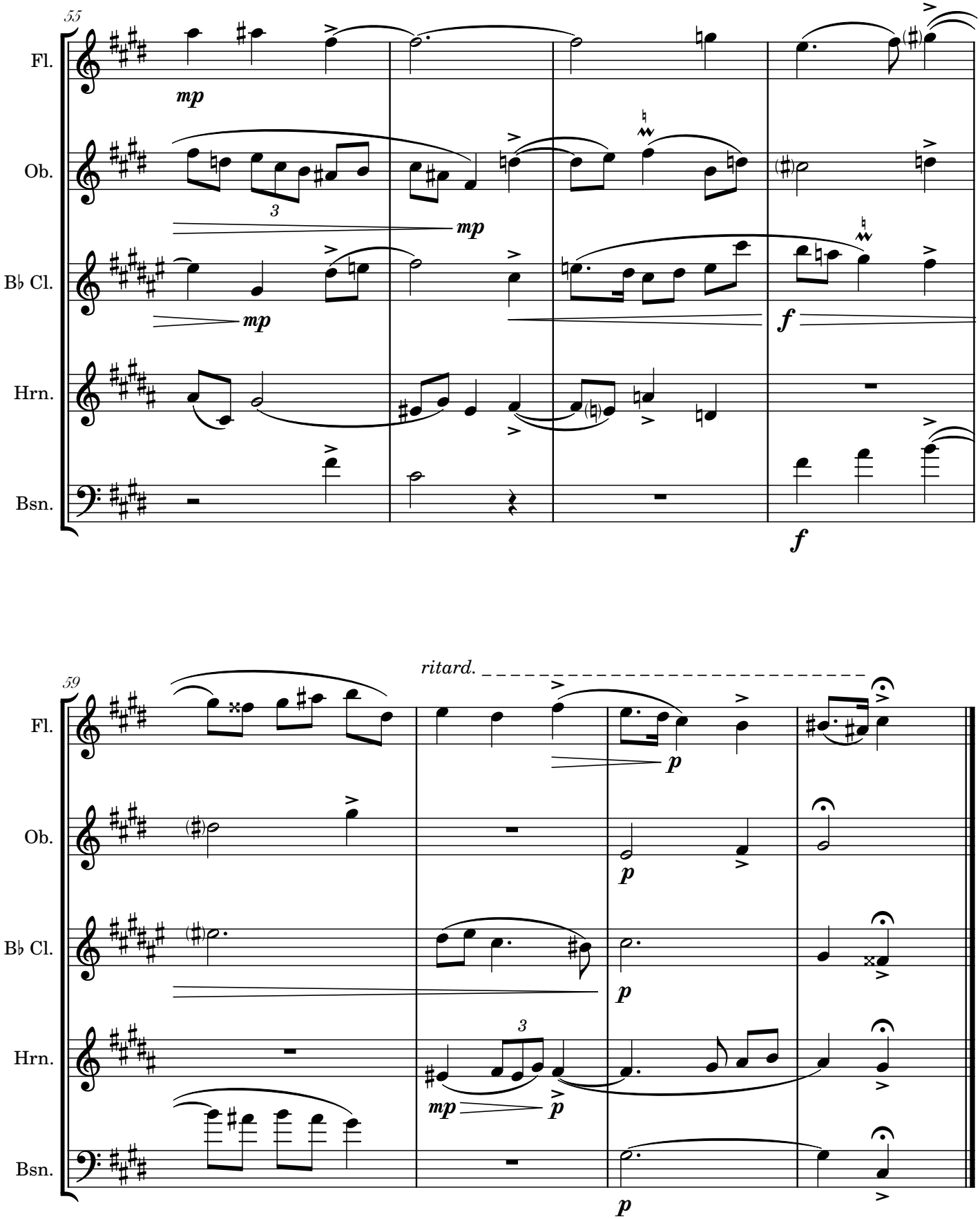
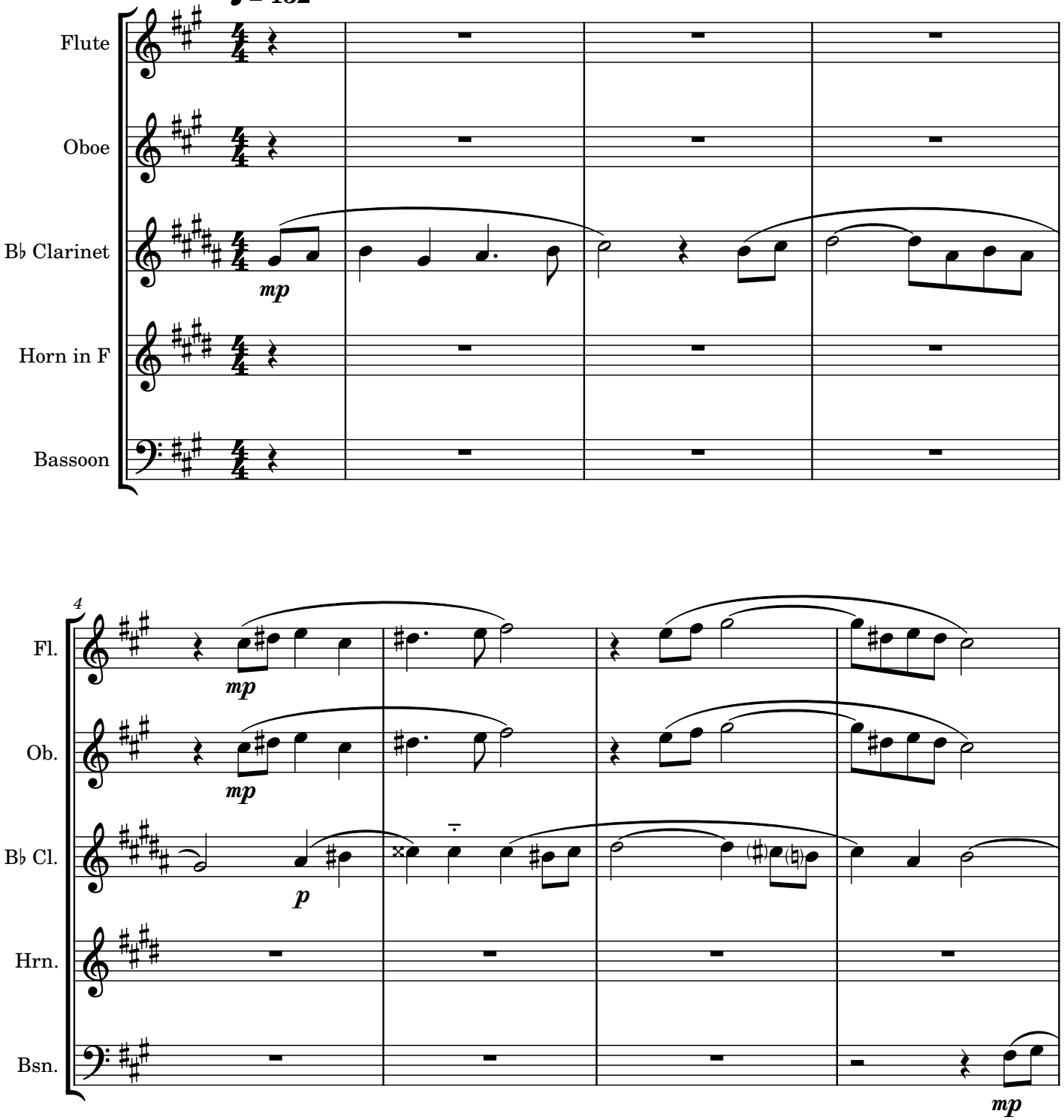
3
3
3
3

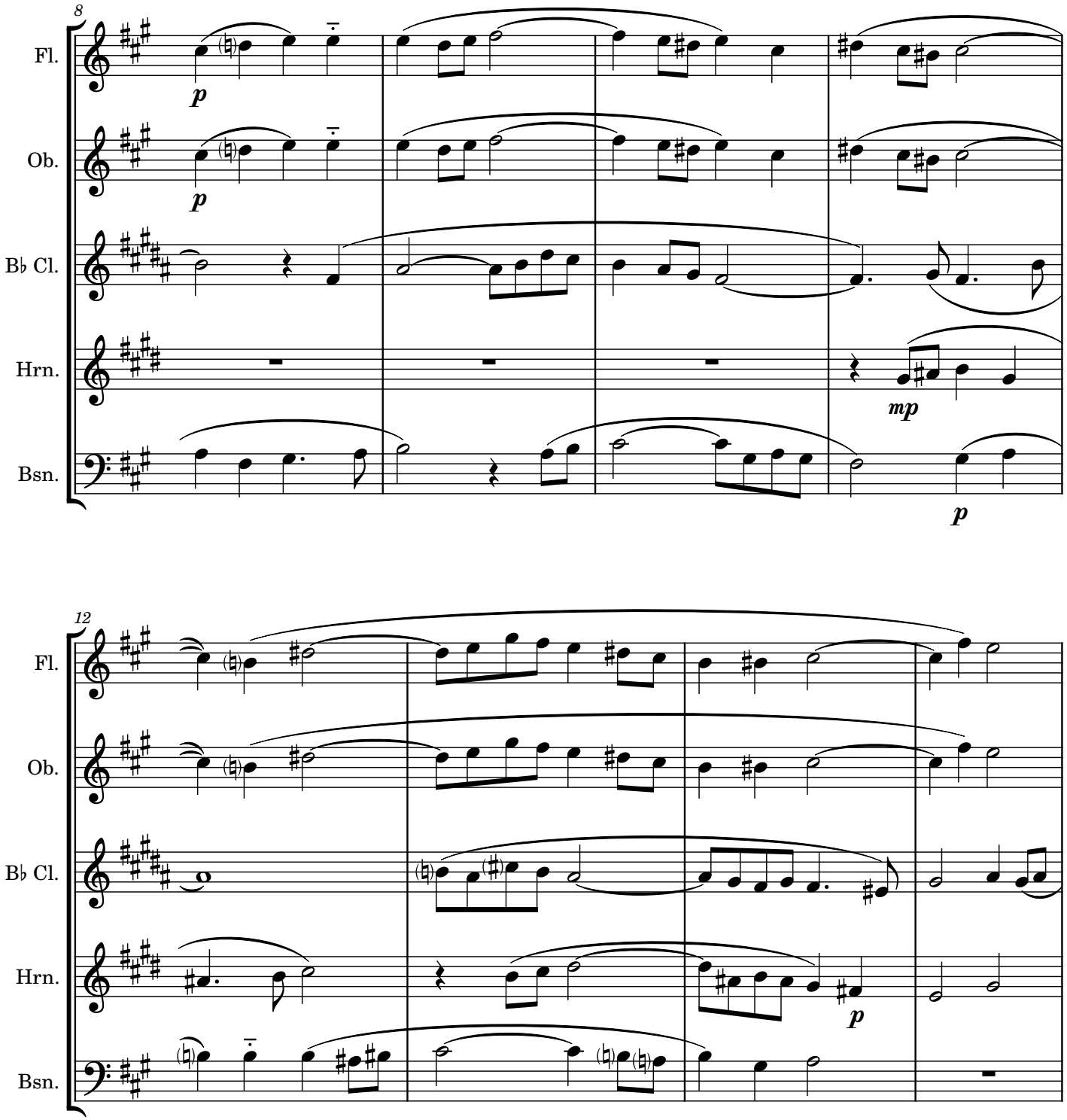


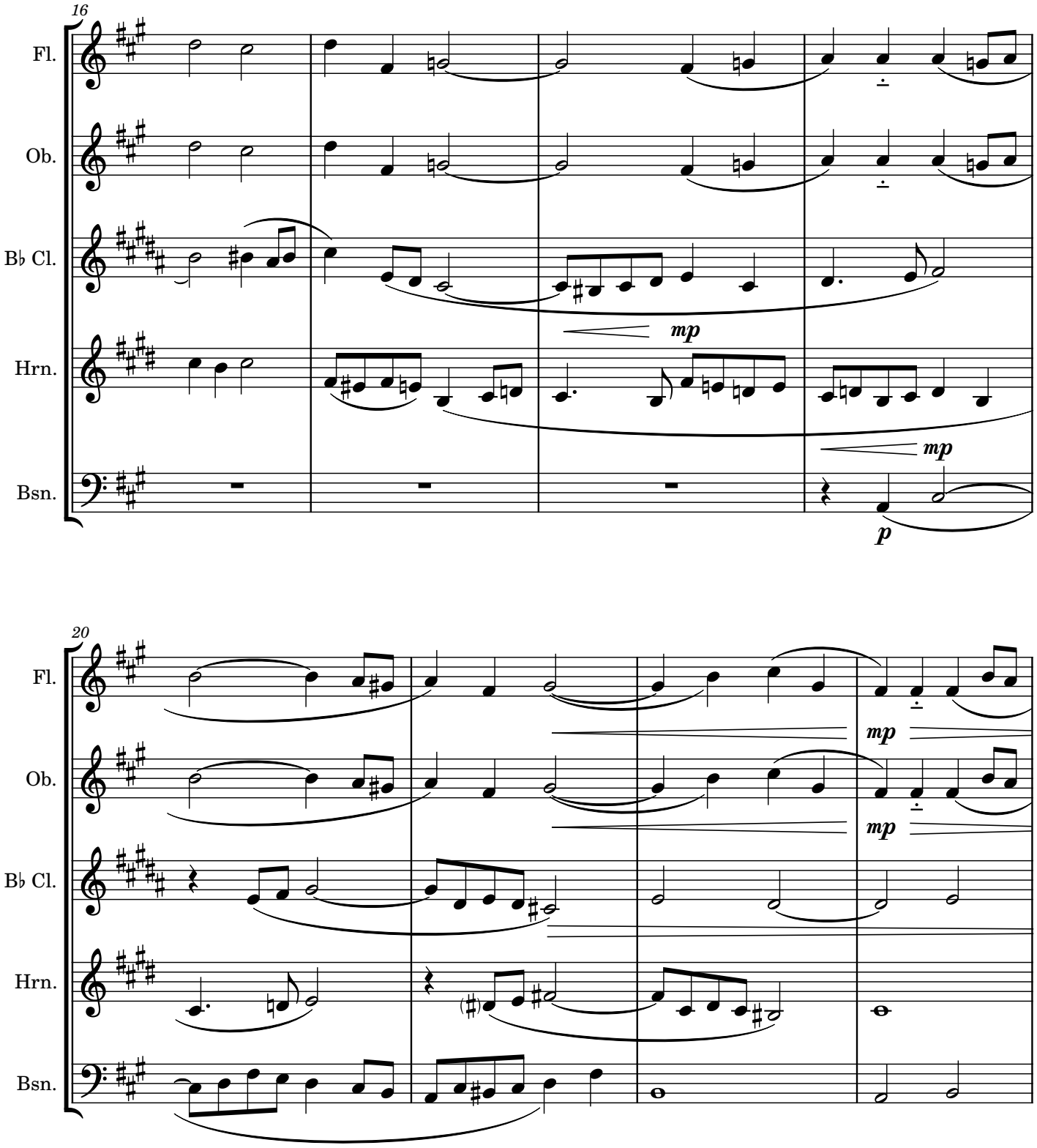
IV. Ricercare

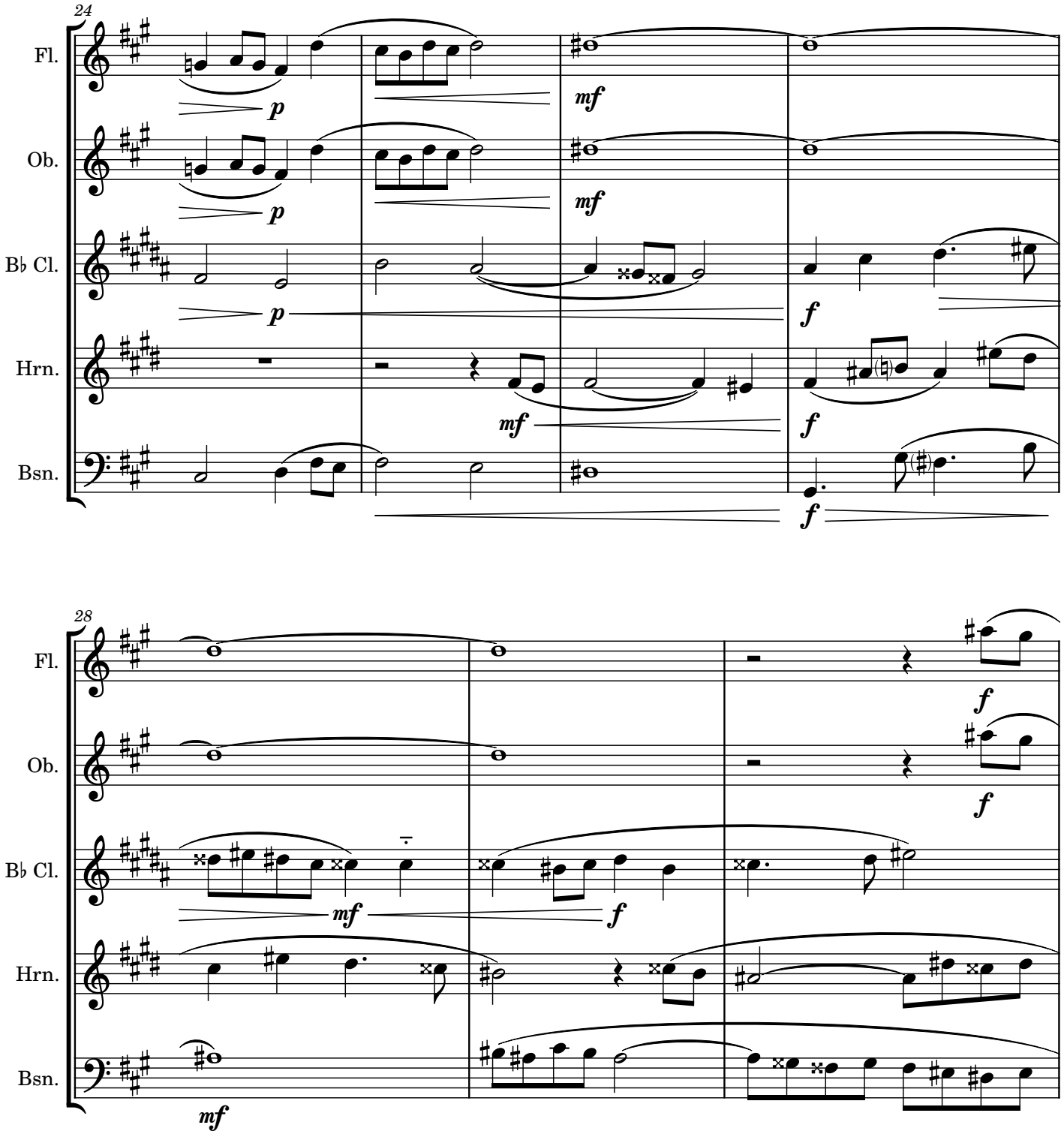
Allegro

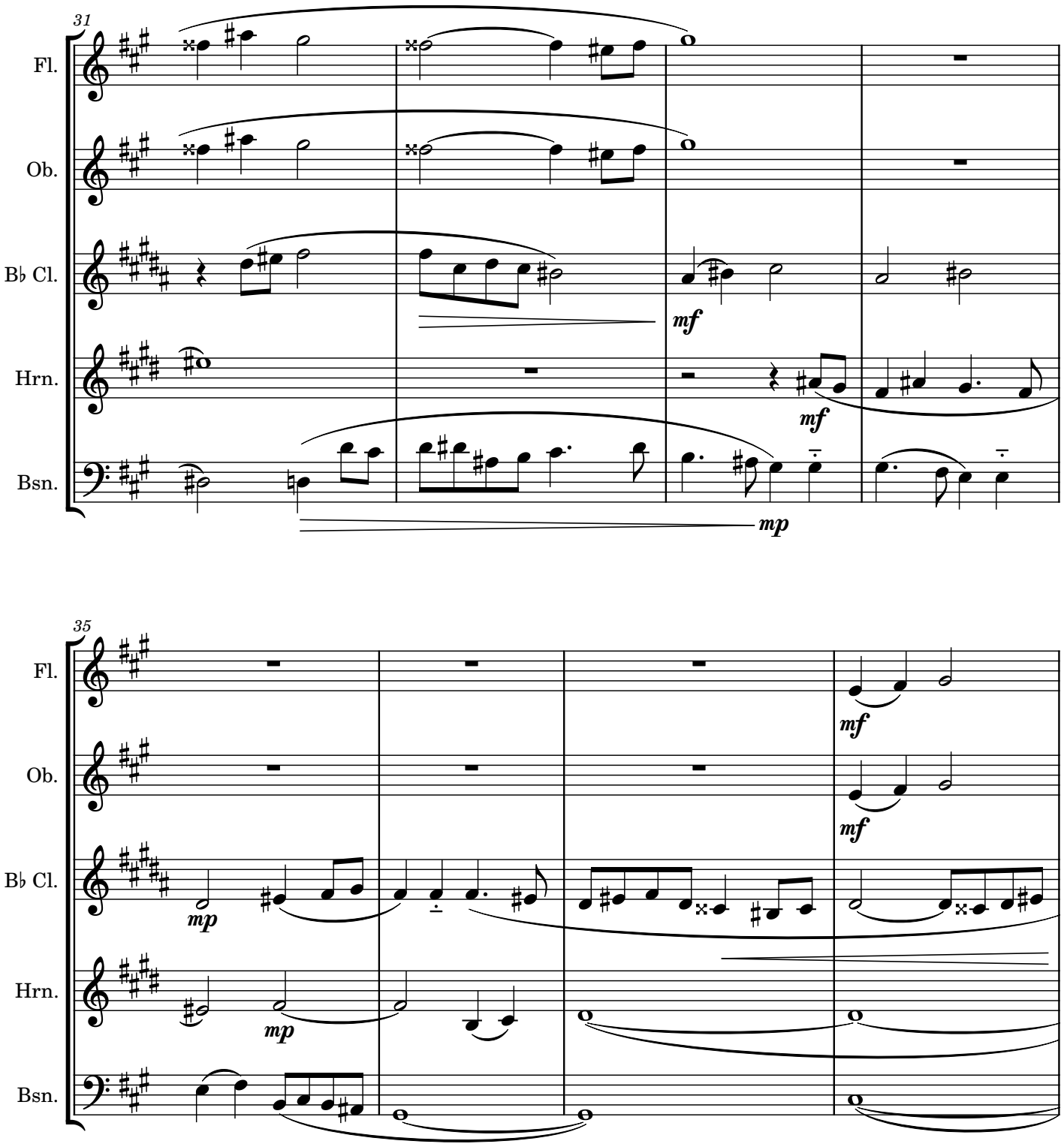
♩ = 132

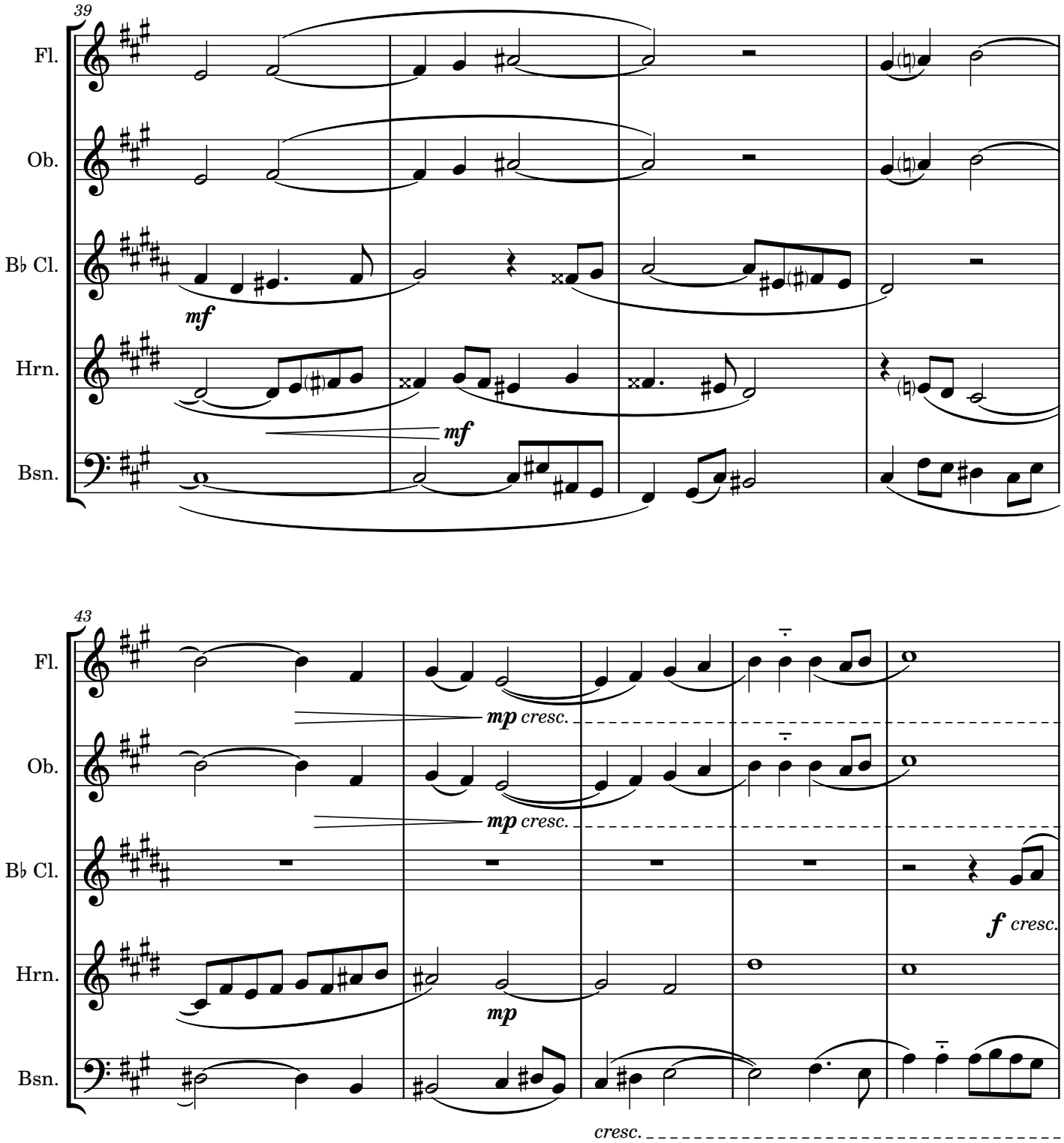


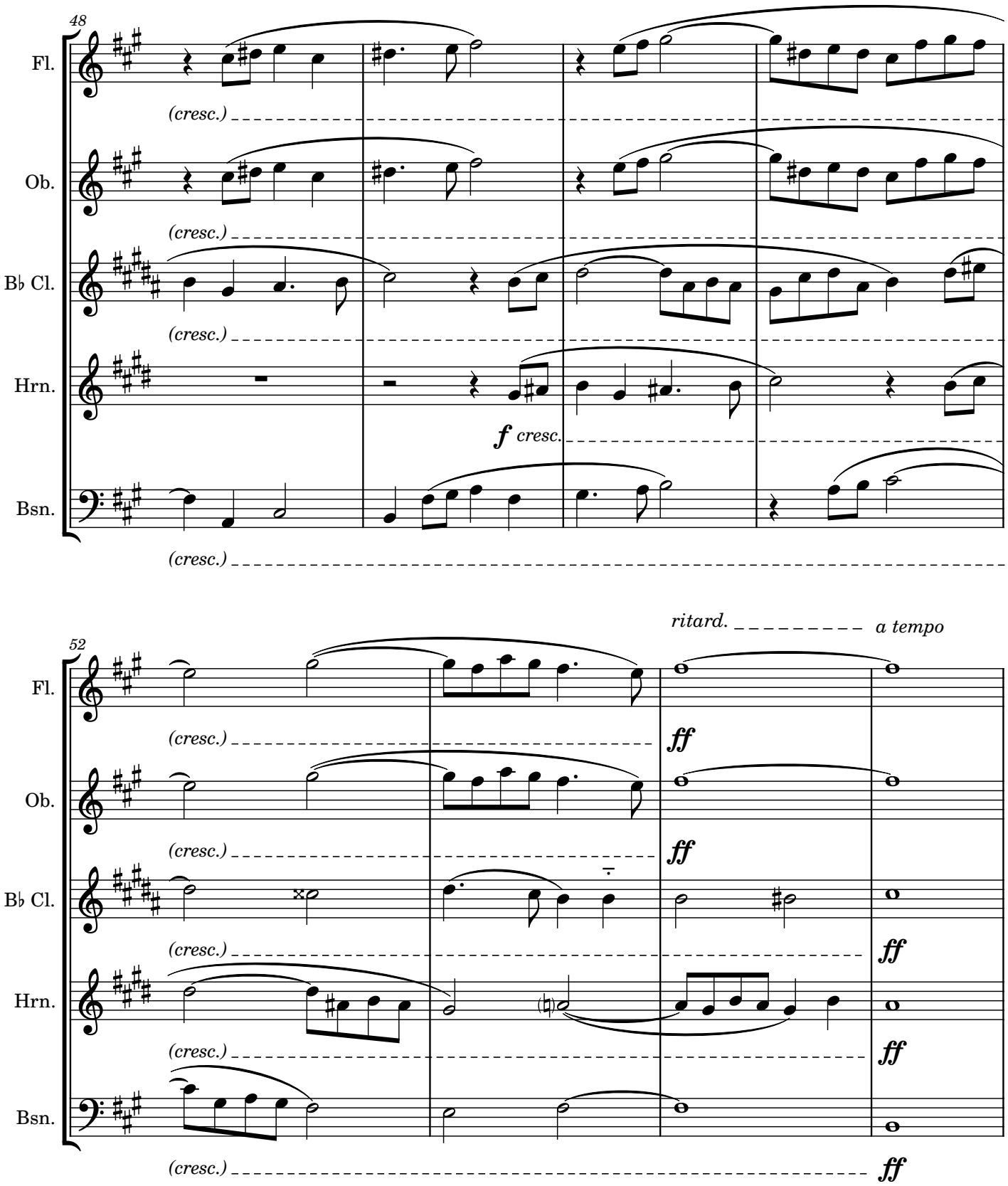


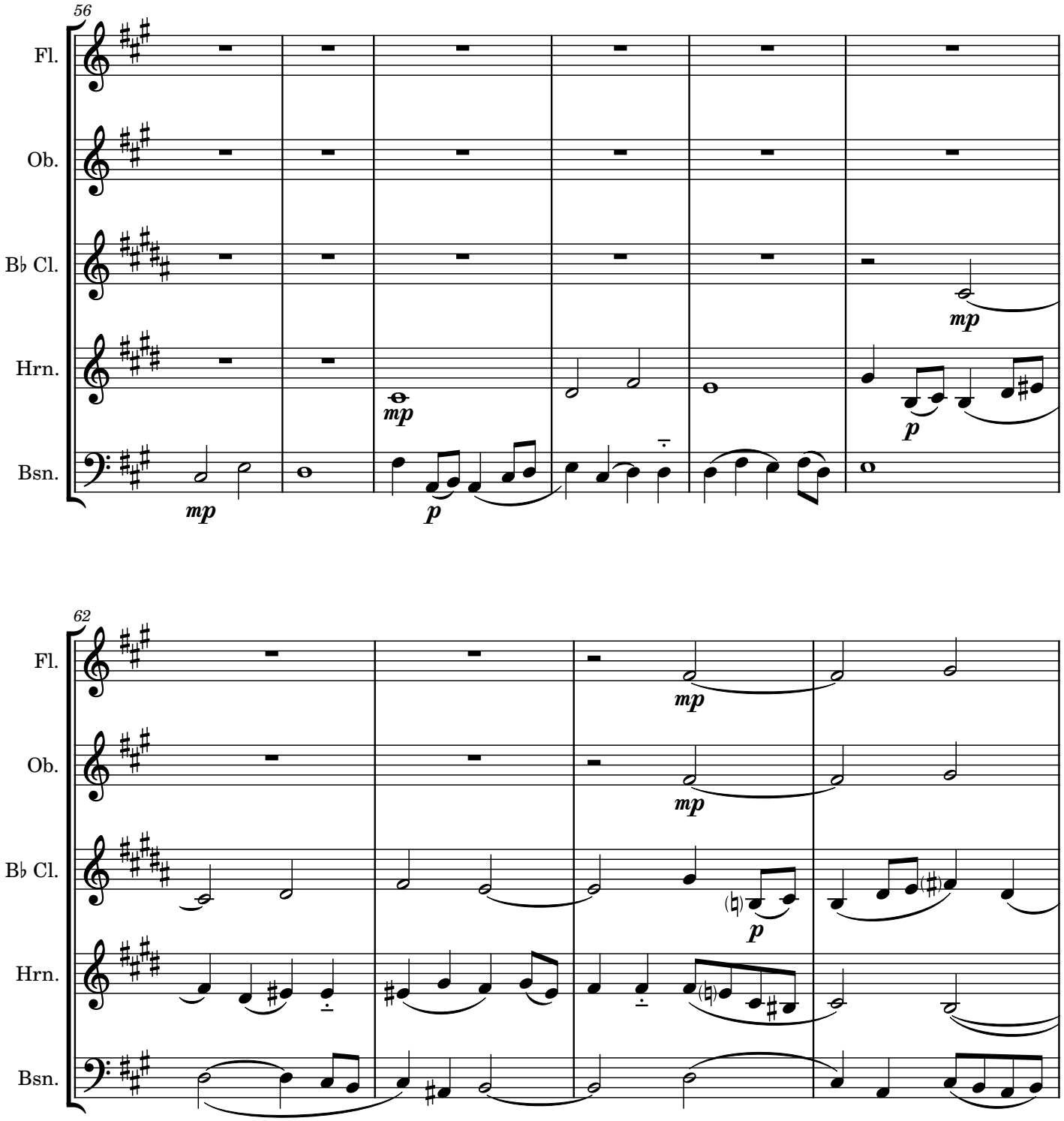


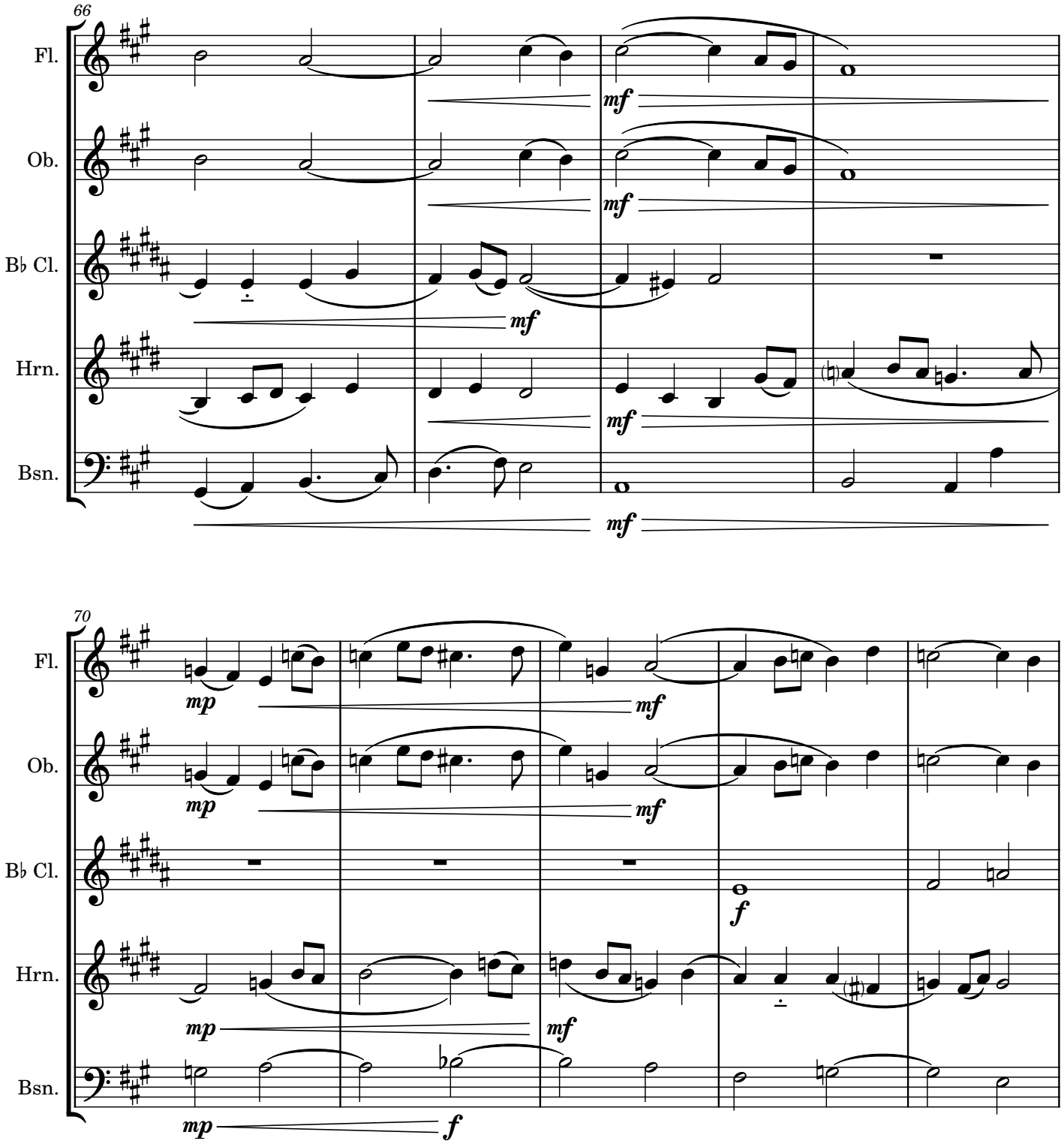


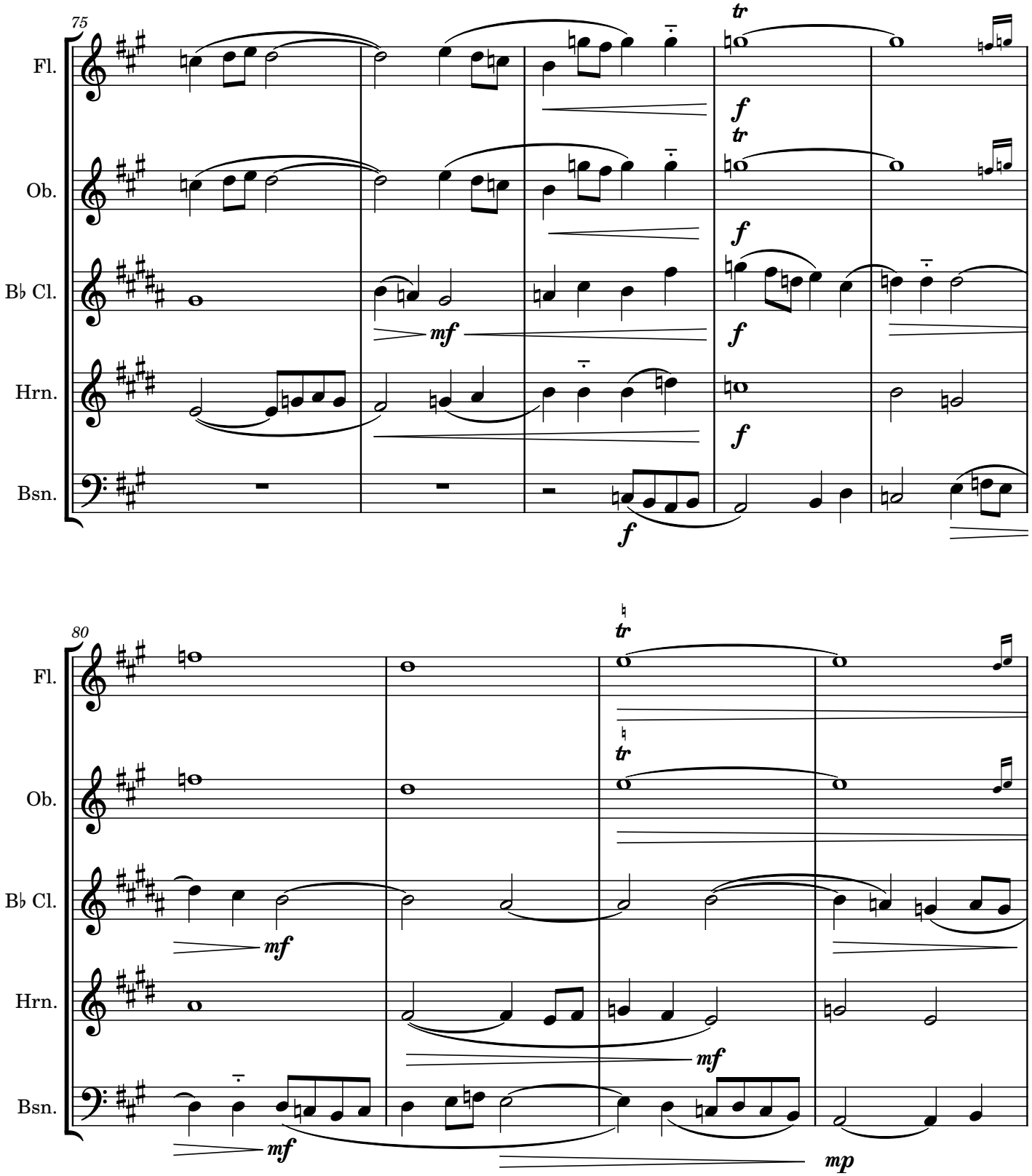


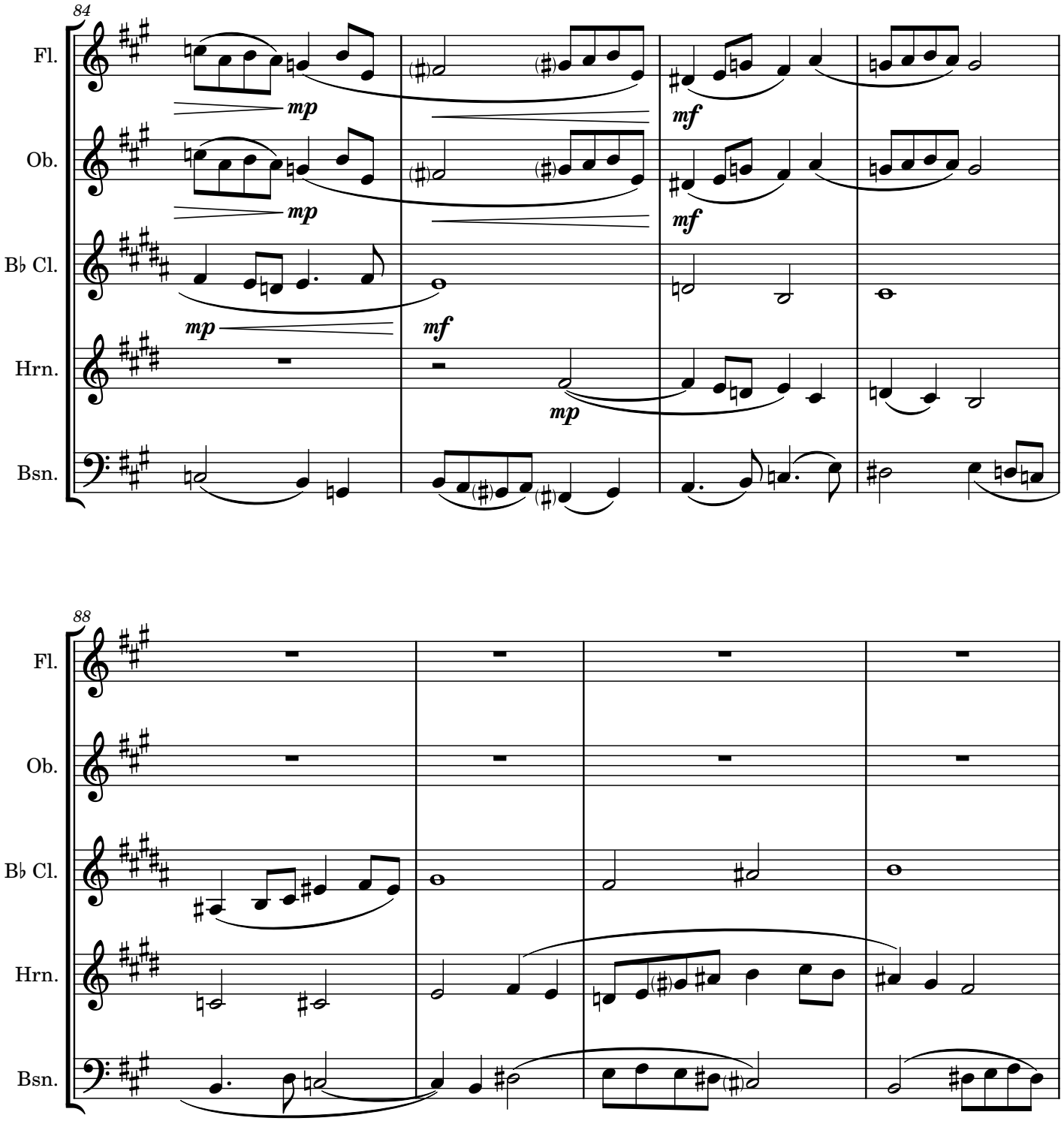

39
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mf
mf
43
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mp cresc.
mp cresc.
mp
f cresc.
cresc.

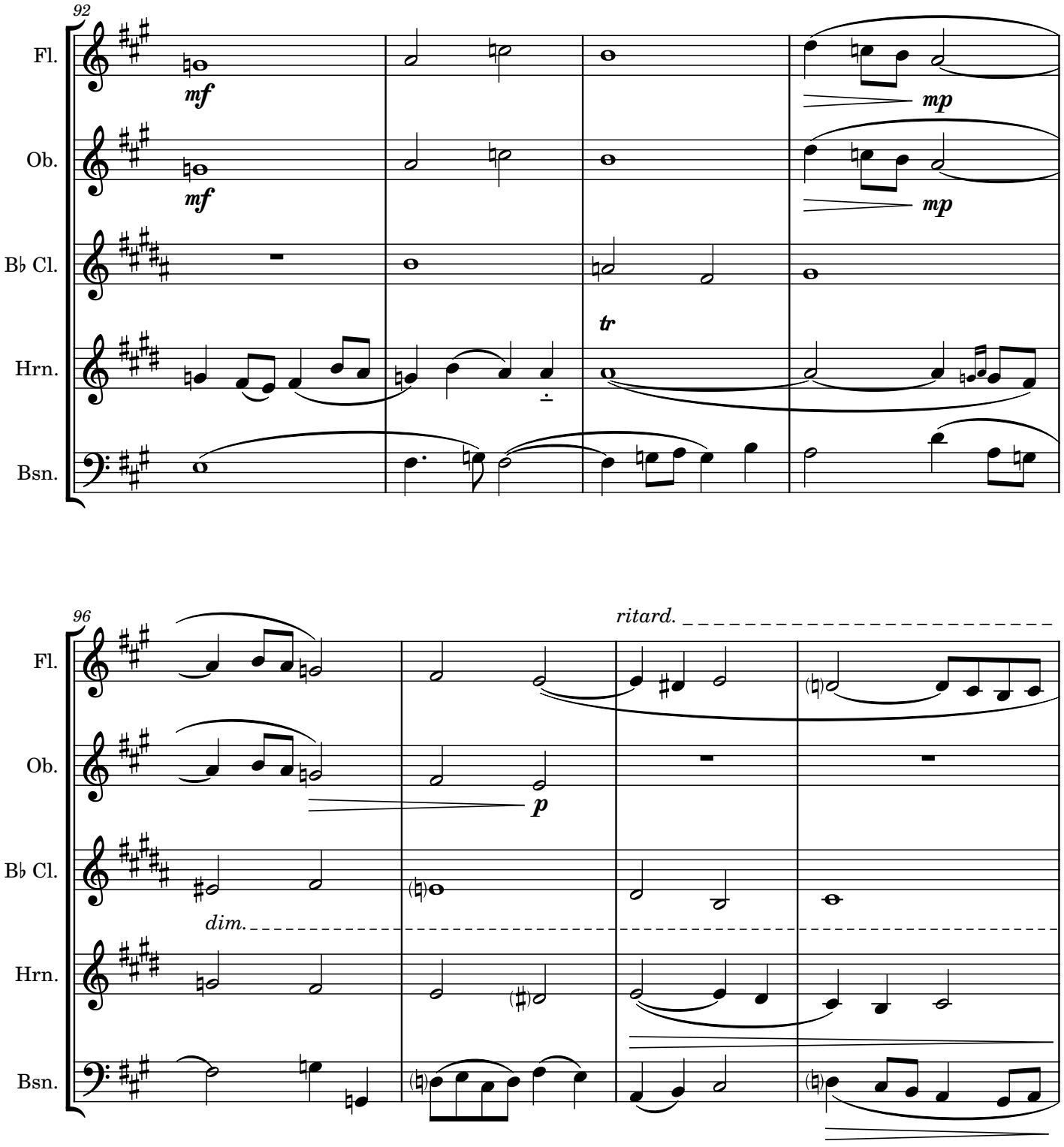


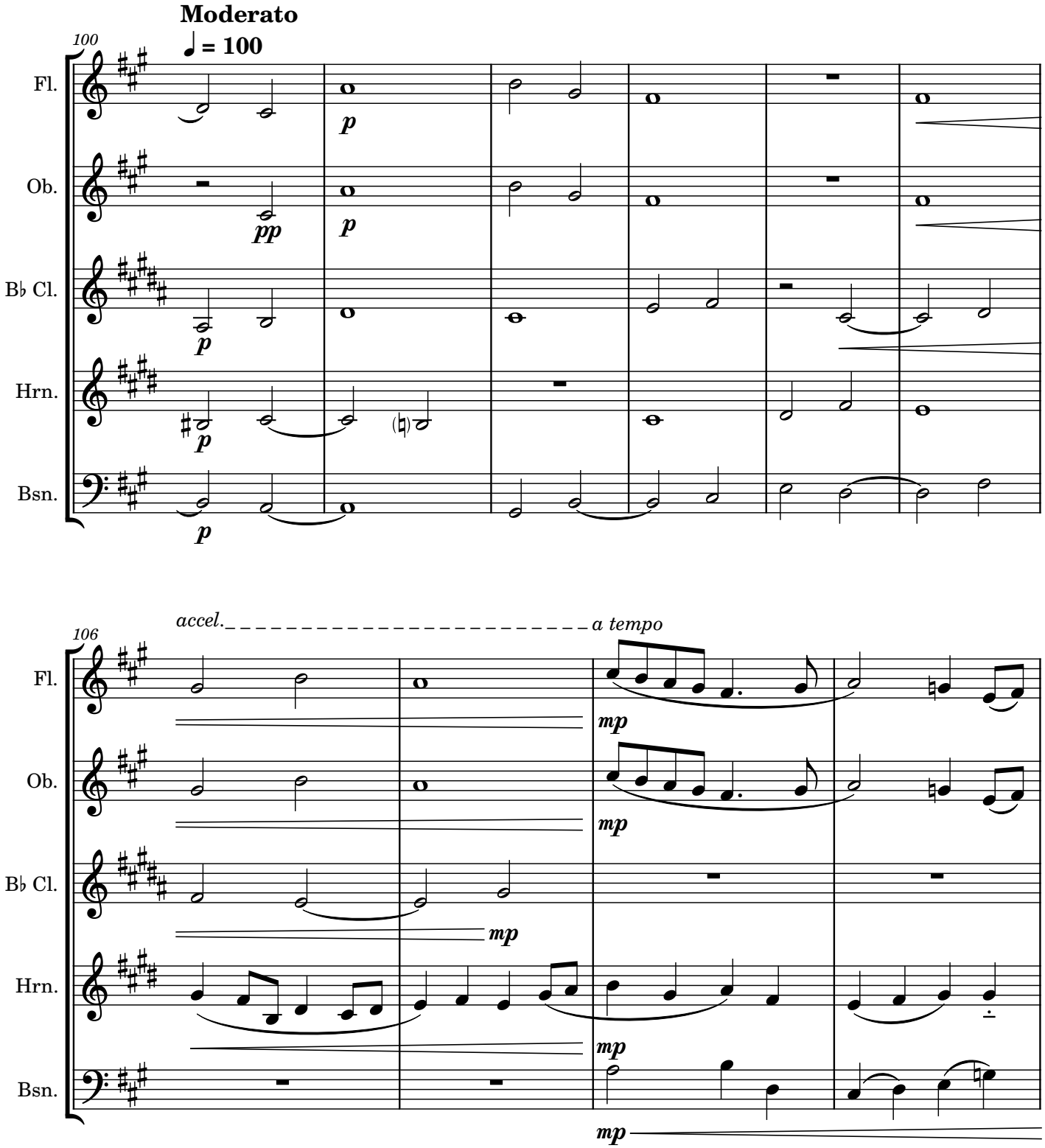


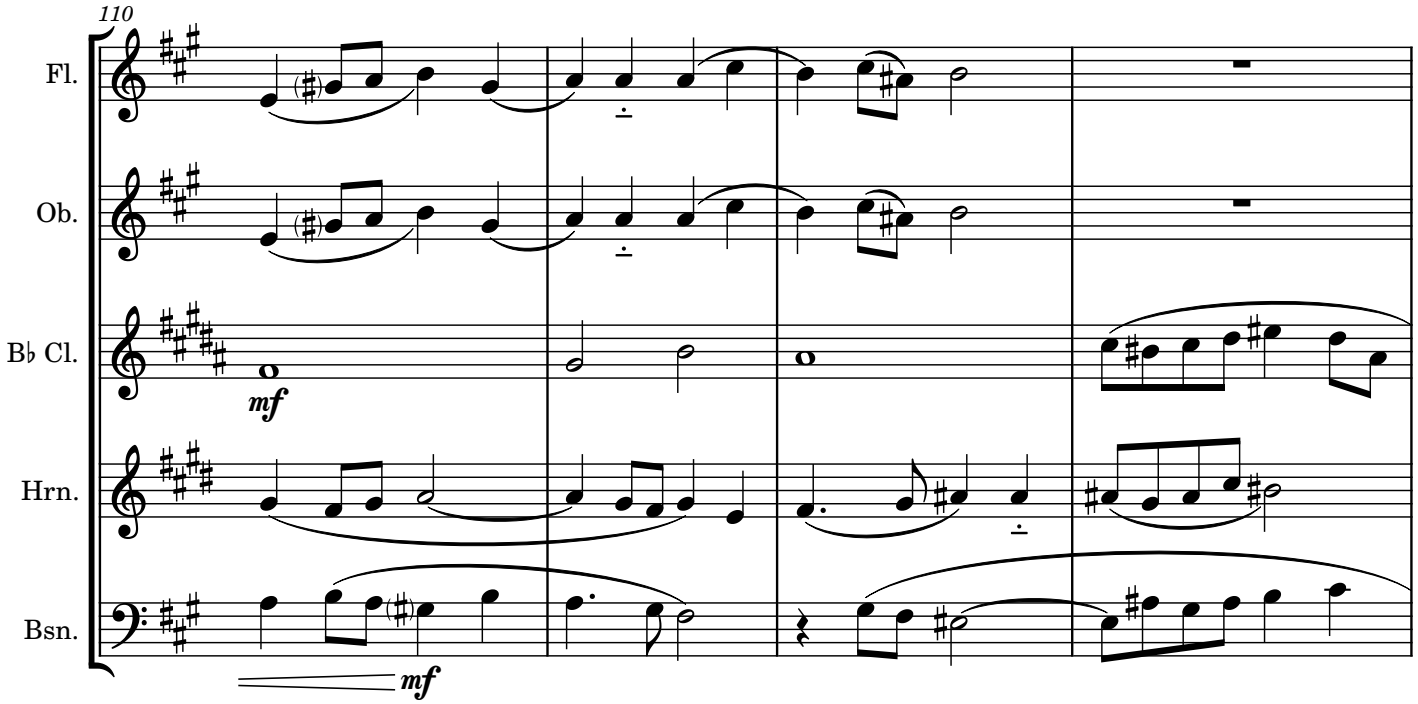


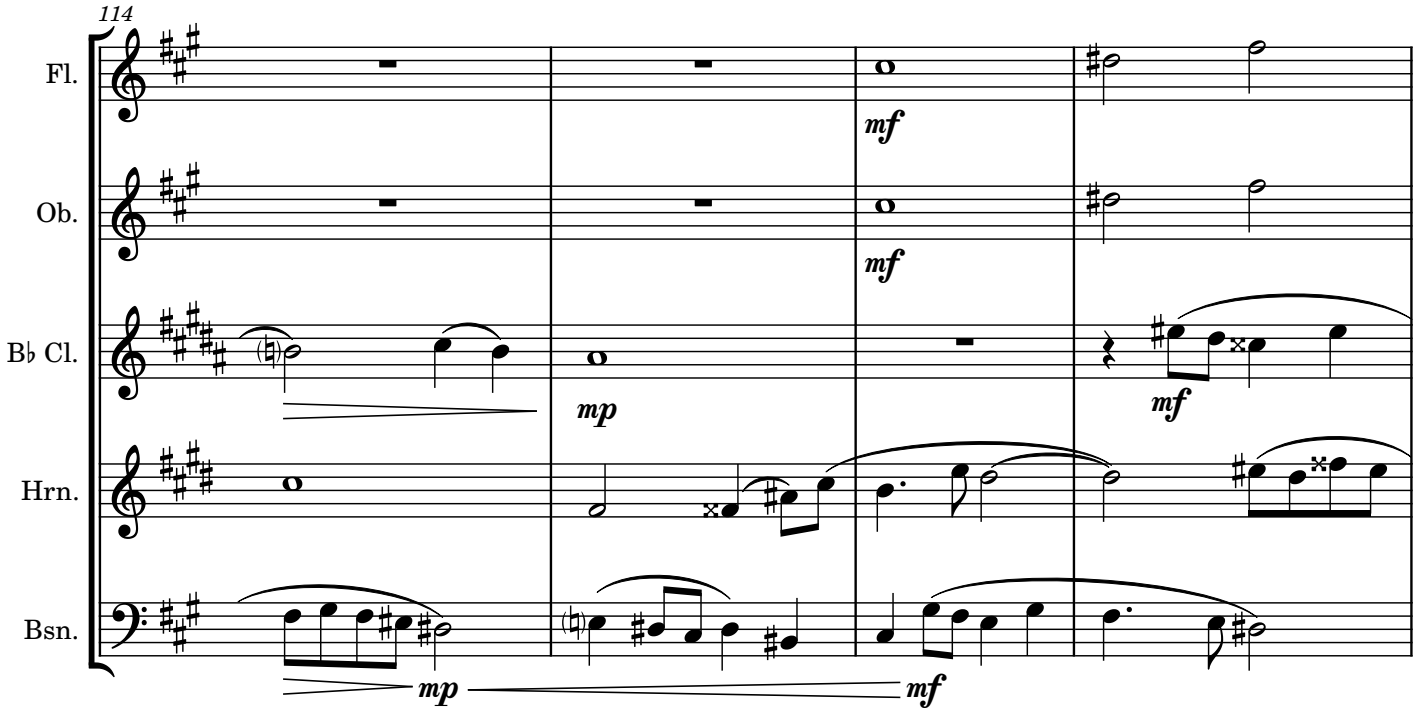


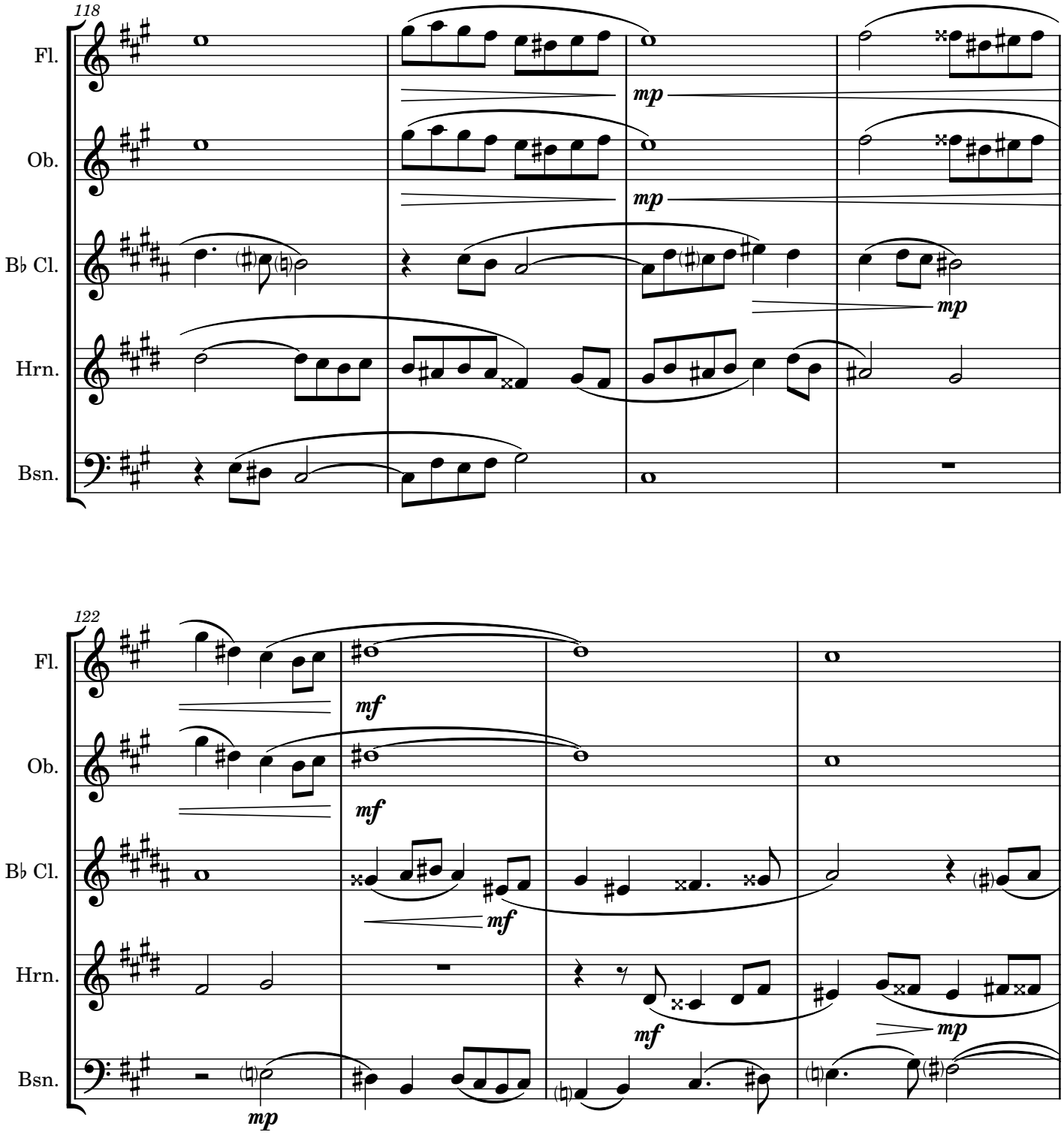


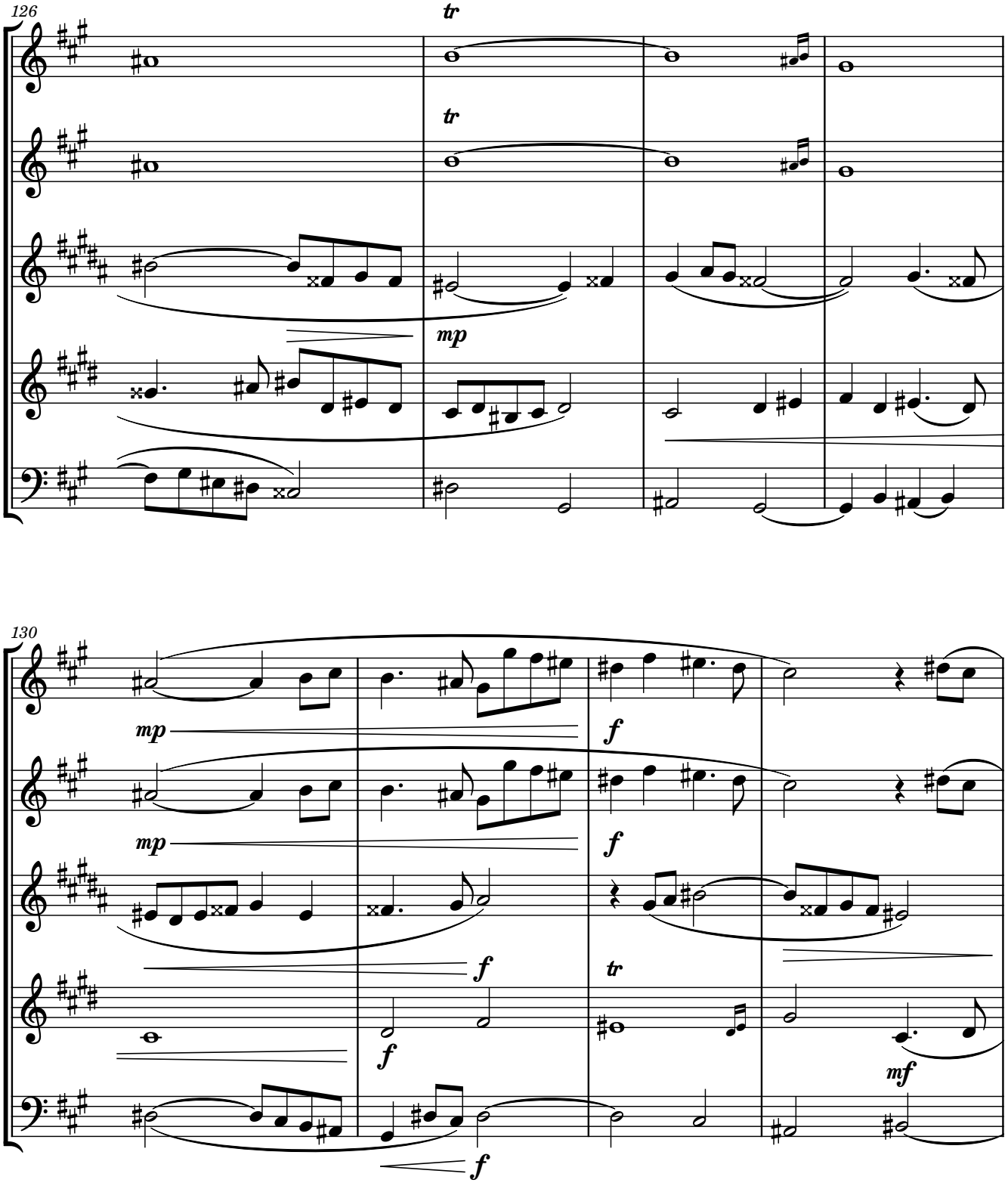

92
Fl.
mf
mp
Ob.
mf
mp
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
tr
Bsn.
96
ritard.
Fl.
Ob.
p
B♭ Cl.
dim.
Hrn.
Bsn.

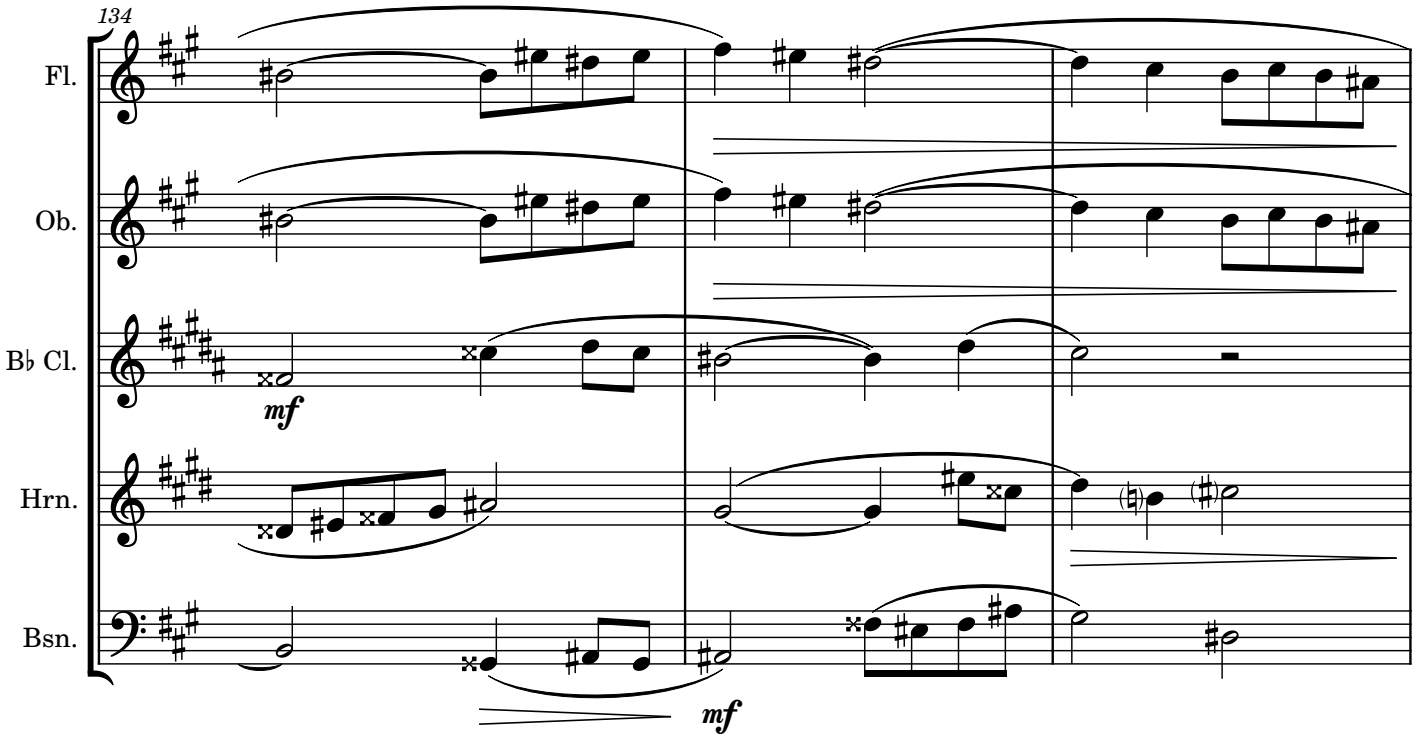


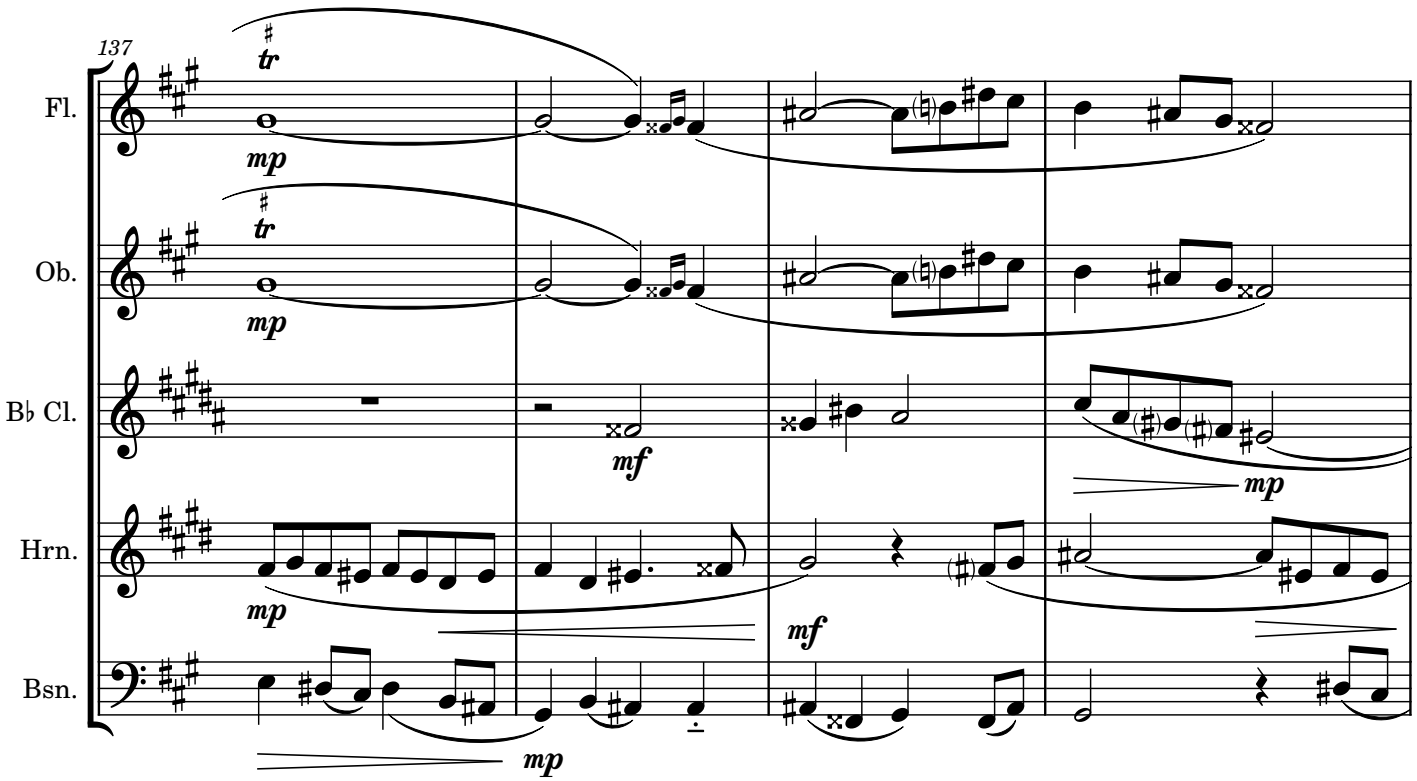


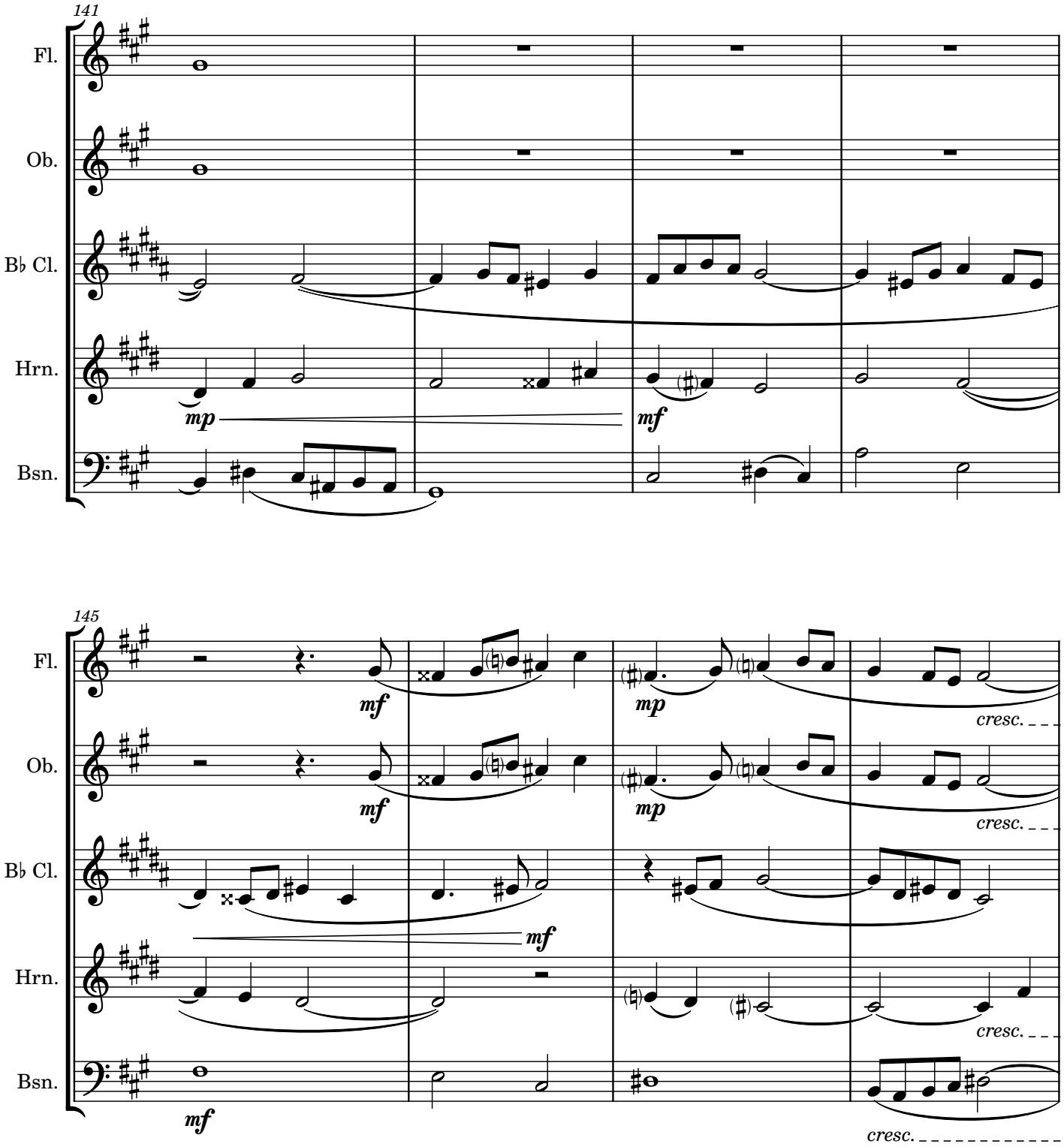


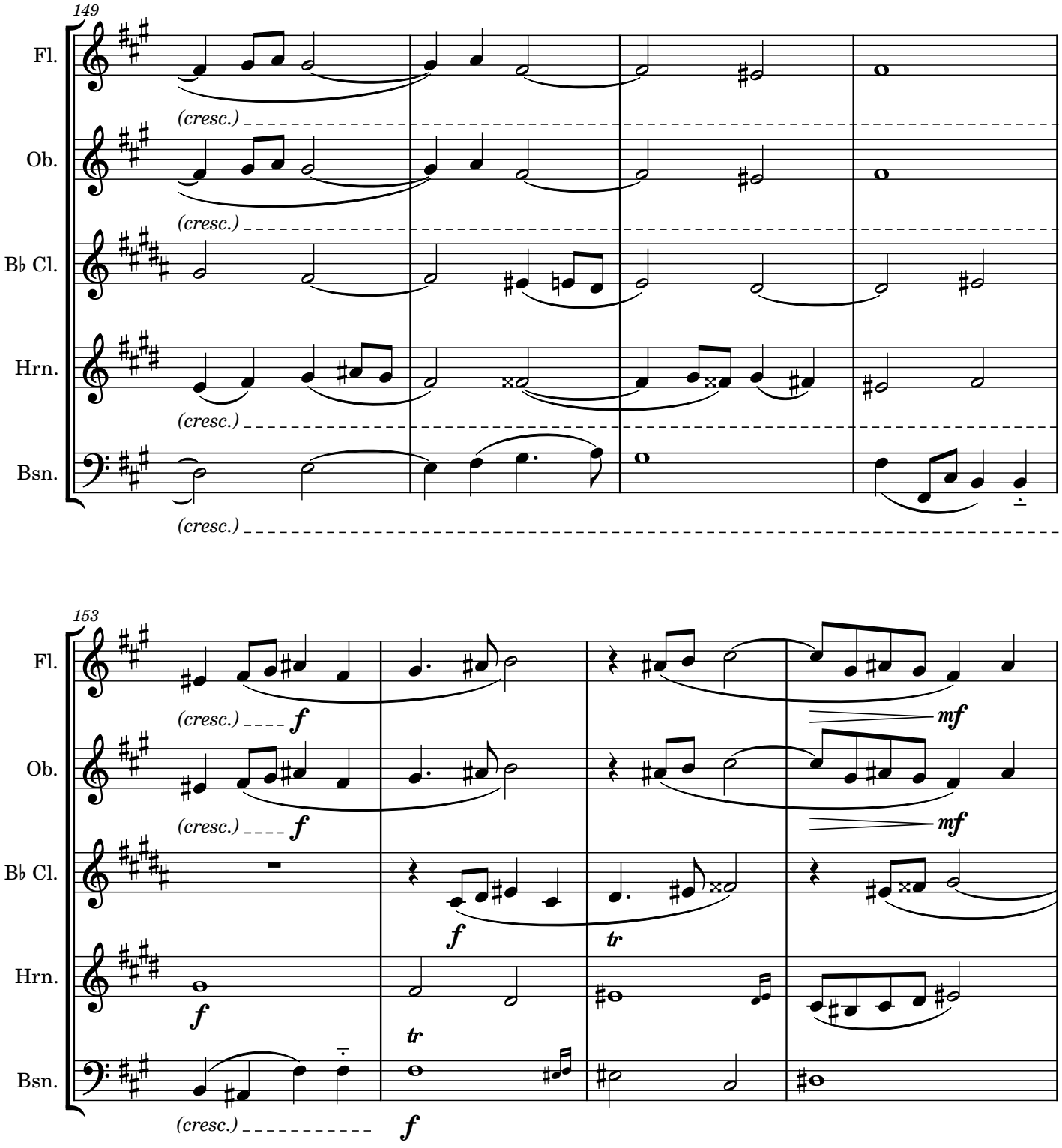

118
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mp
mp
mp
122
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mf
mf
mf
mf
mp
mp

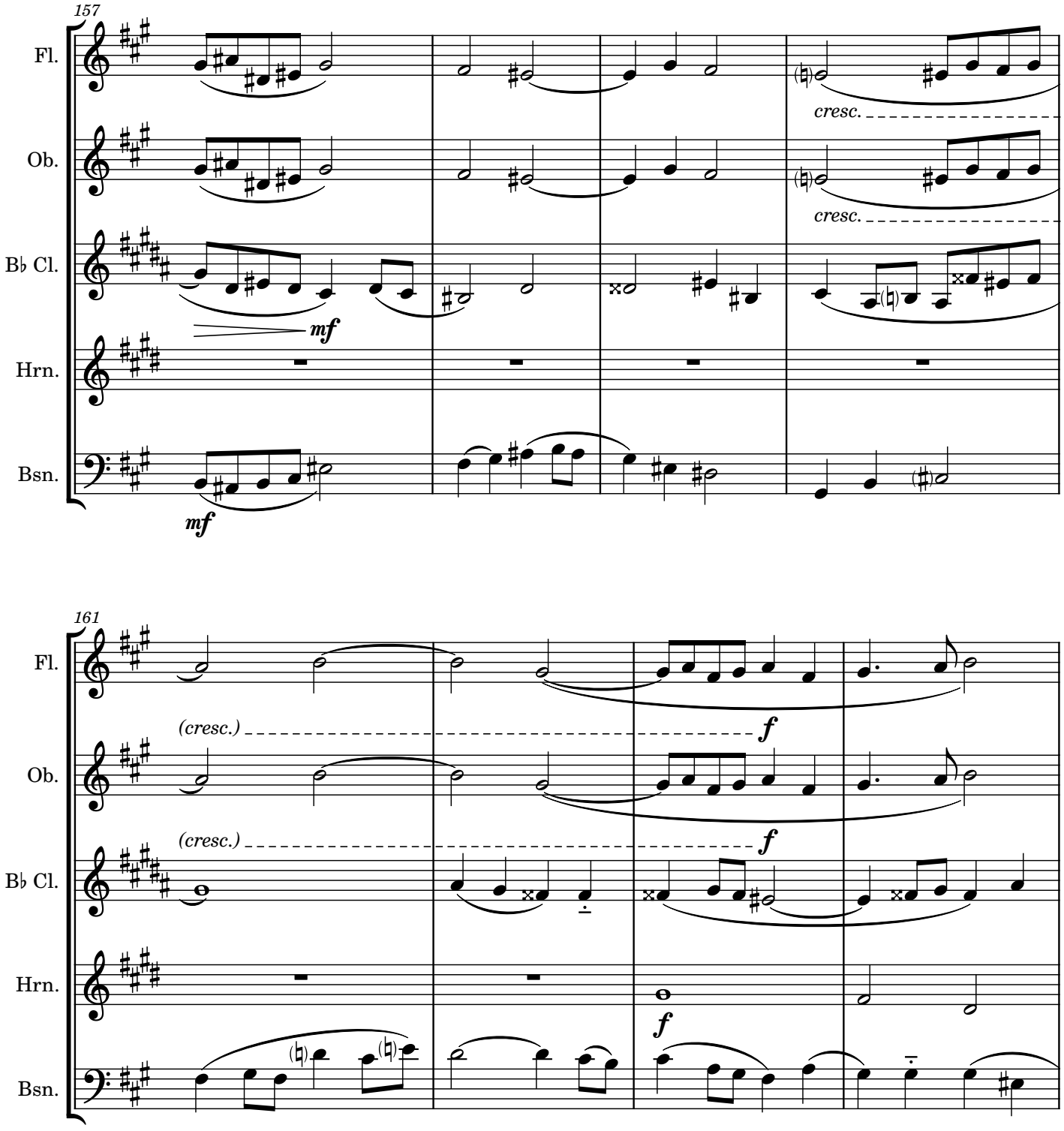

126
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
tr
tr
mp
130
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mp
mp
f
f
f
f
tr
mf
f

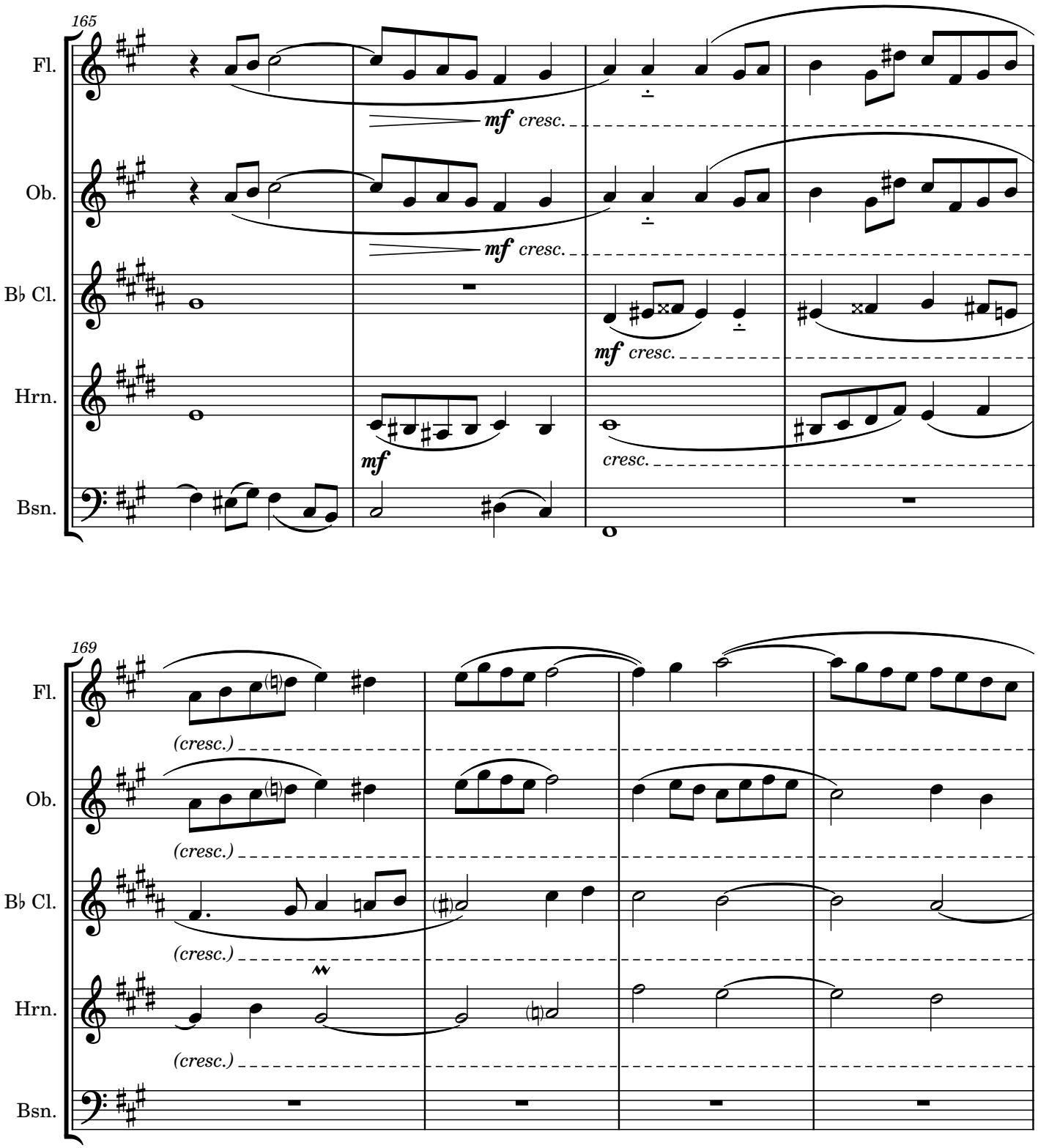

134
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mf
mf

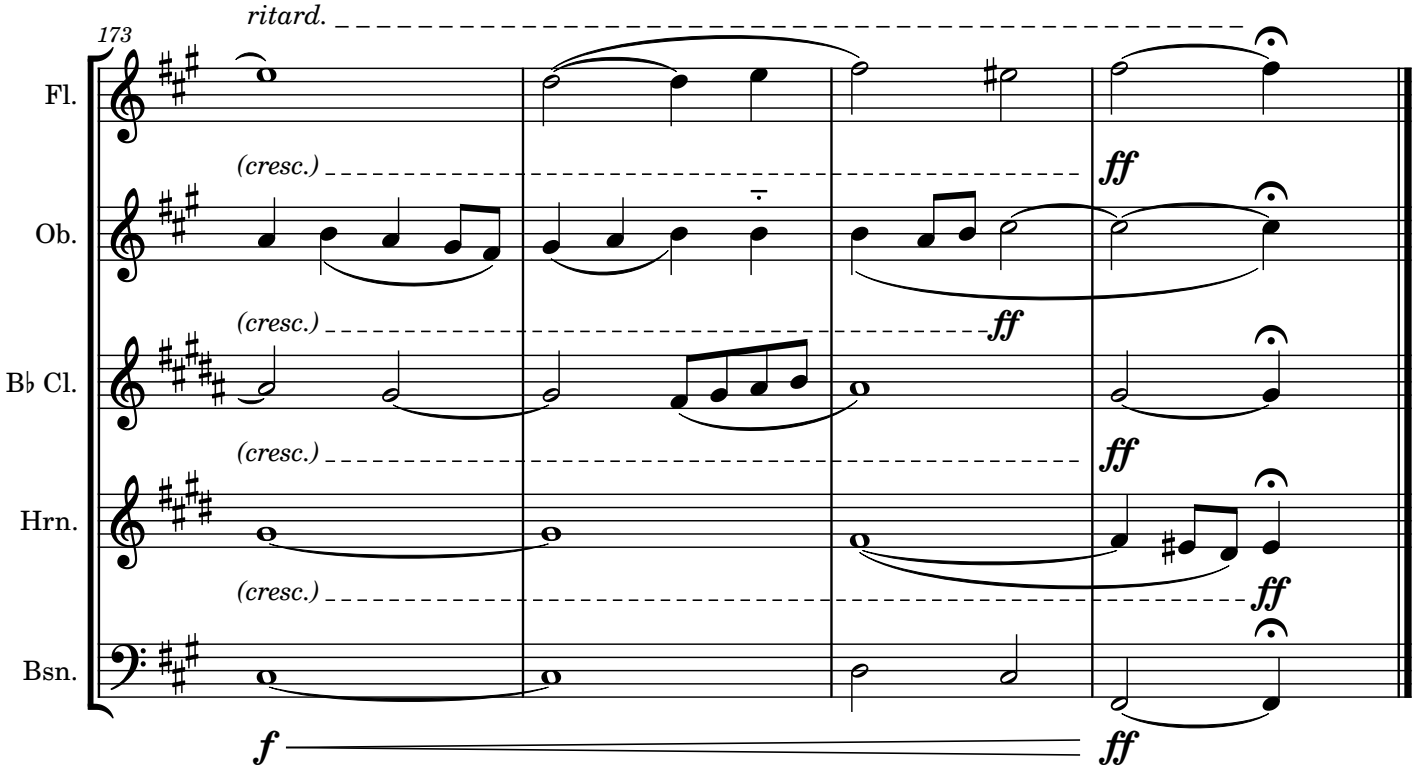

137
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
tr
tr
mp
mp
mf
mp
mp
mf
mp



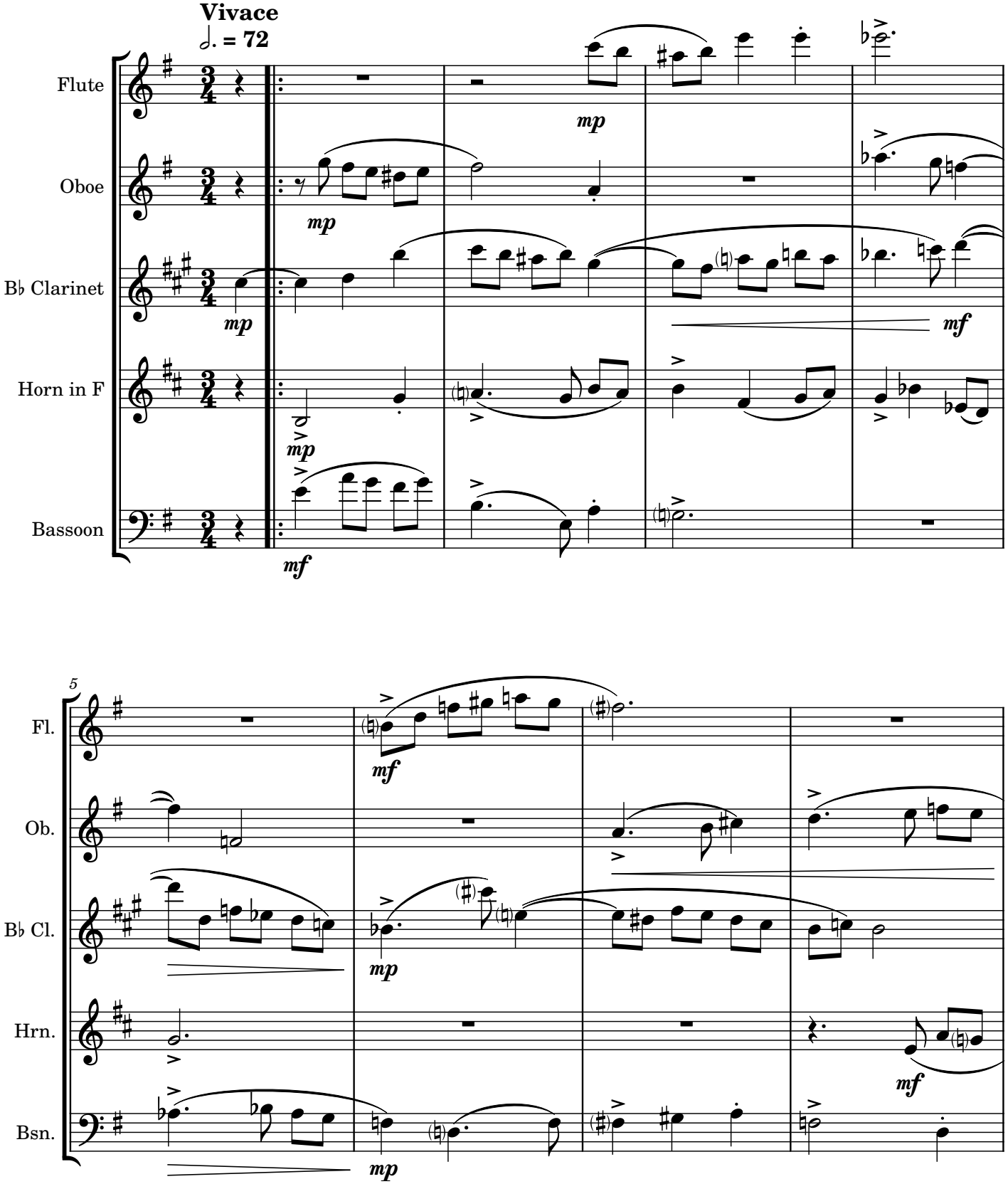


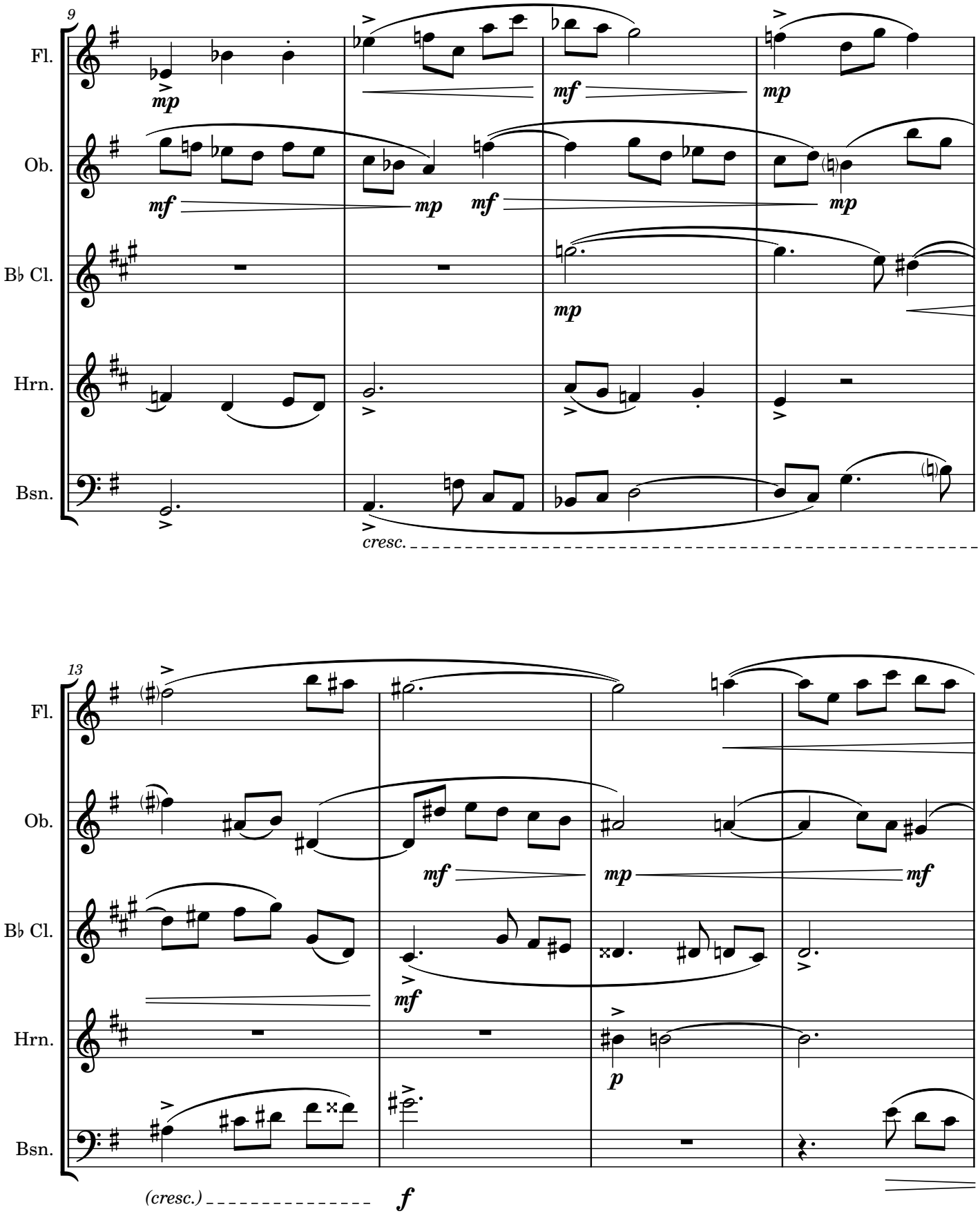


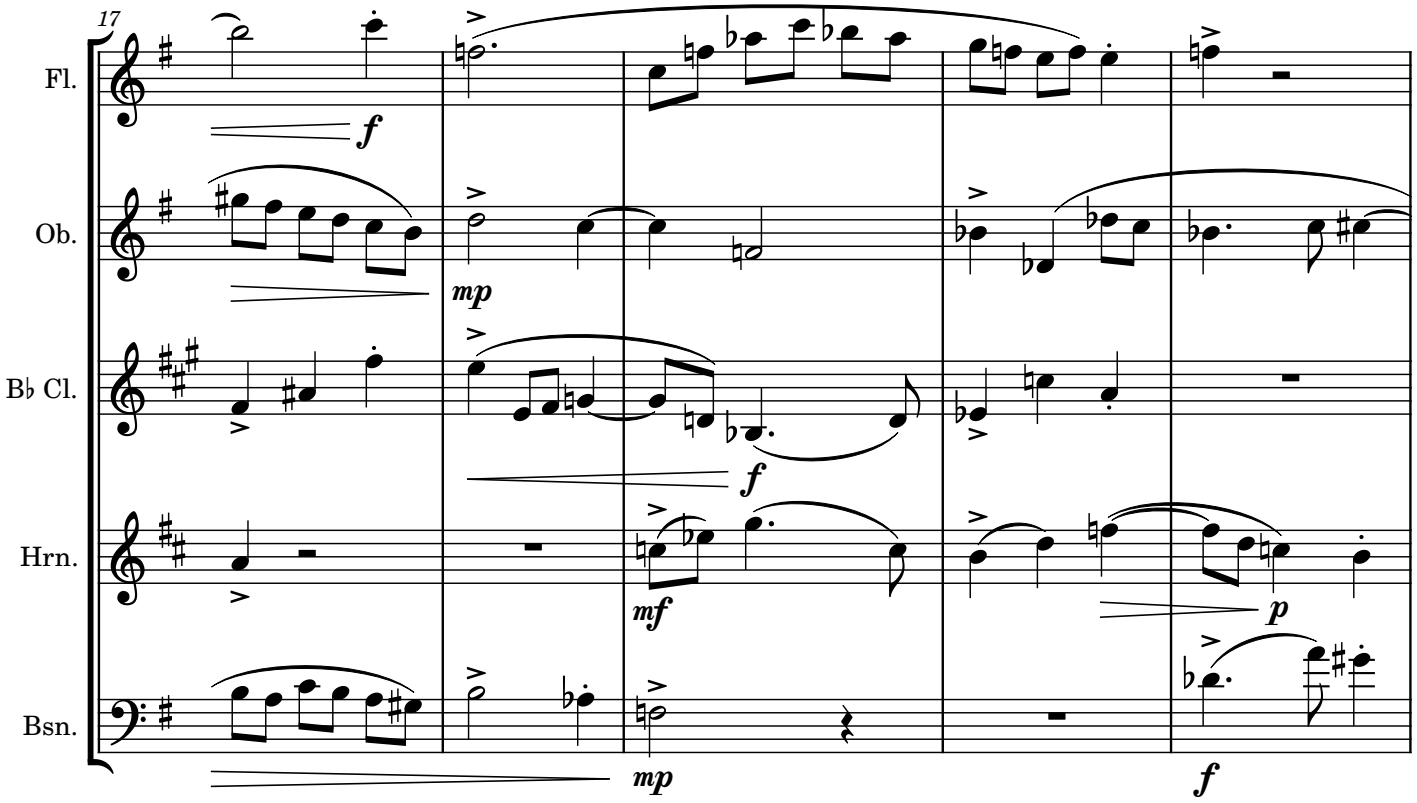

165
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mf cresc.
mf cresc.
mf cresc.
mf
cresc.
169
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
(cresc.)
(cresc.)
(cresc.)
(cresc.)

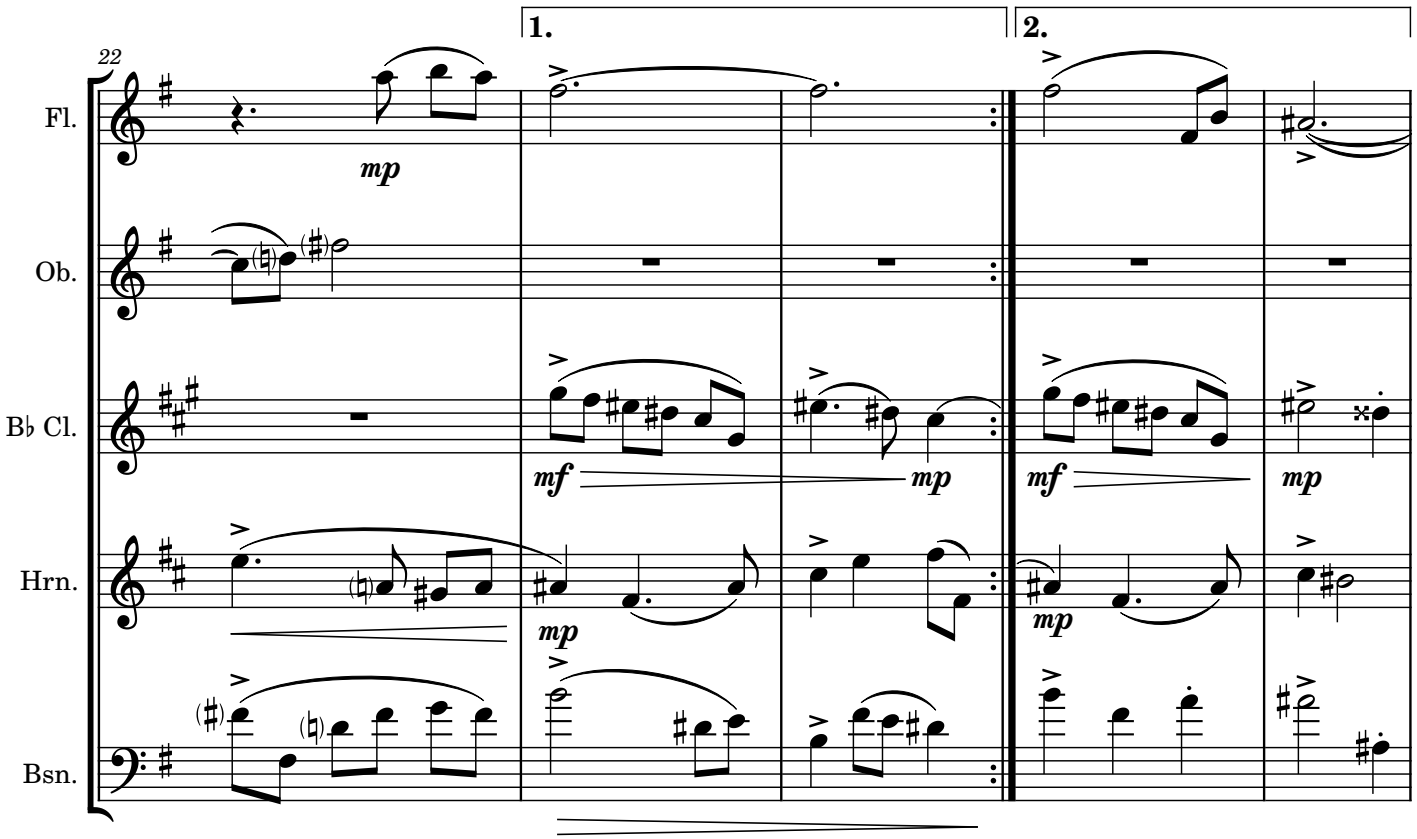

173
ritard.
Fl.
(cresc.)
ff
Ob.
(cresc.)
ff
B♭ Cl.
(cresc.)
ff
Hrn.
(cresc.)
ff
Bsn.
f
ff

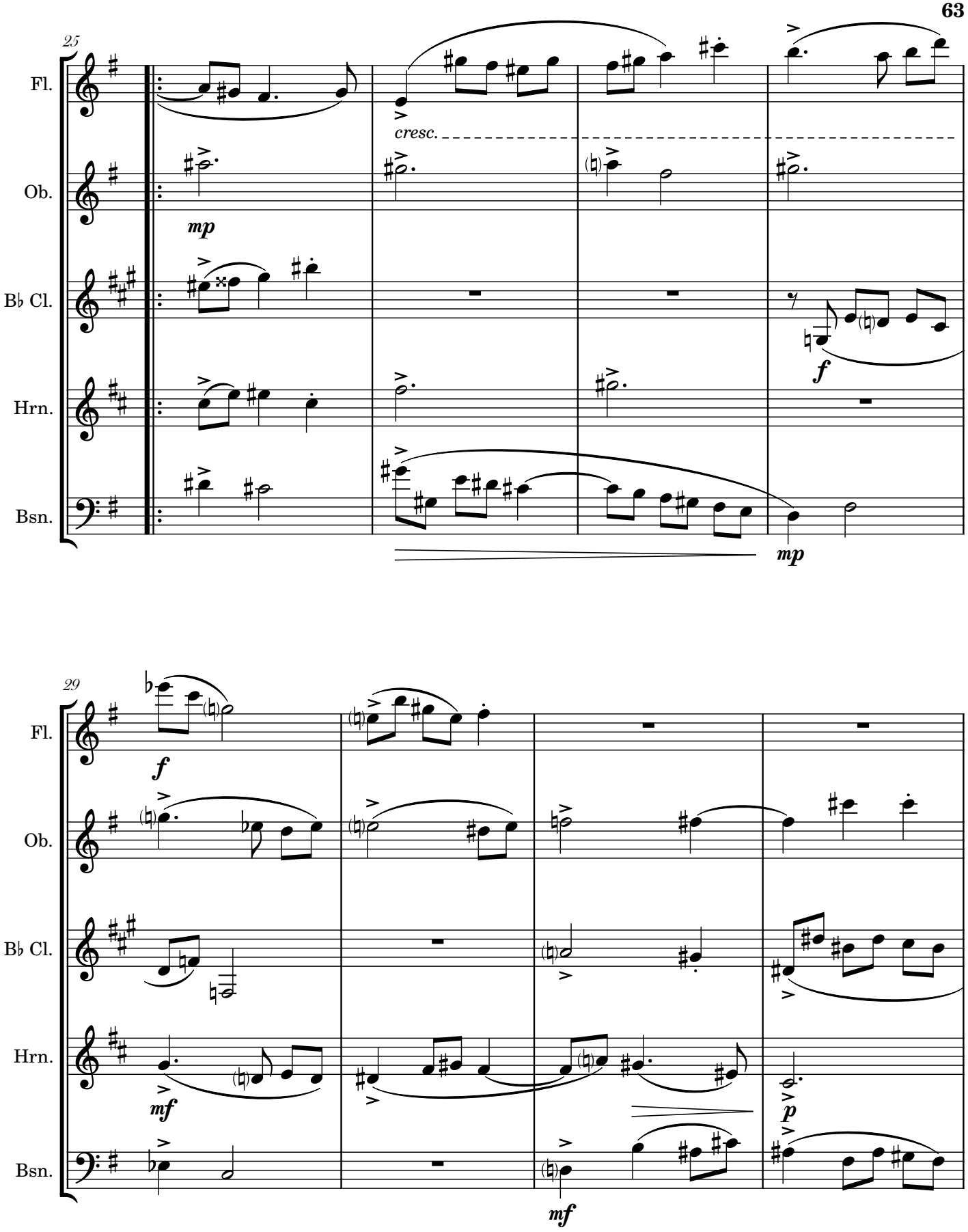
V. Walzer

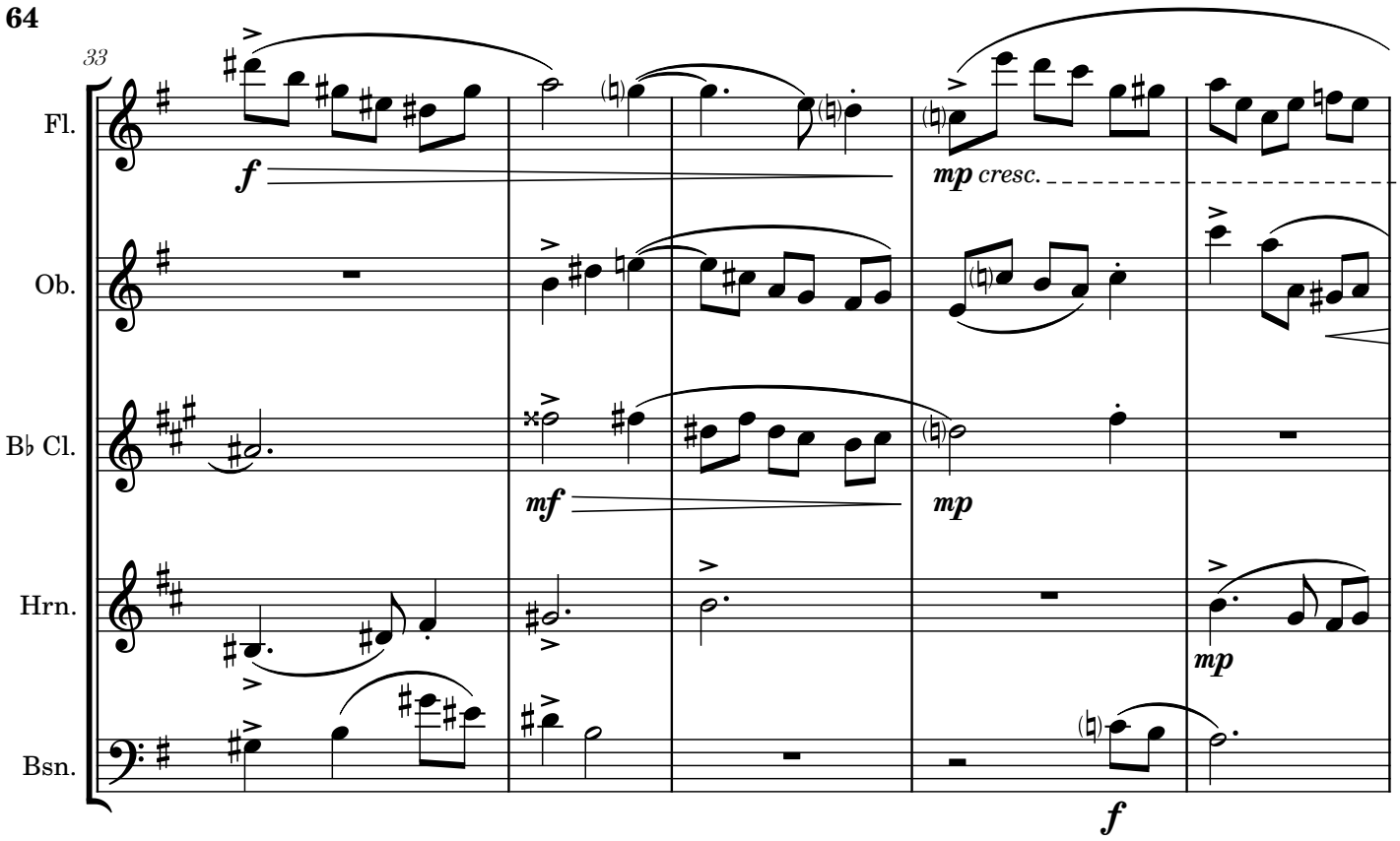


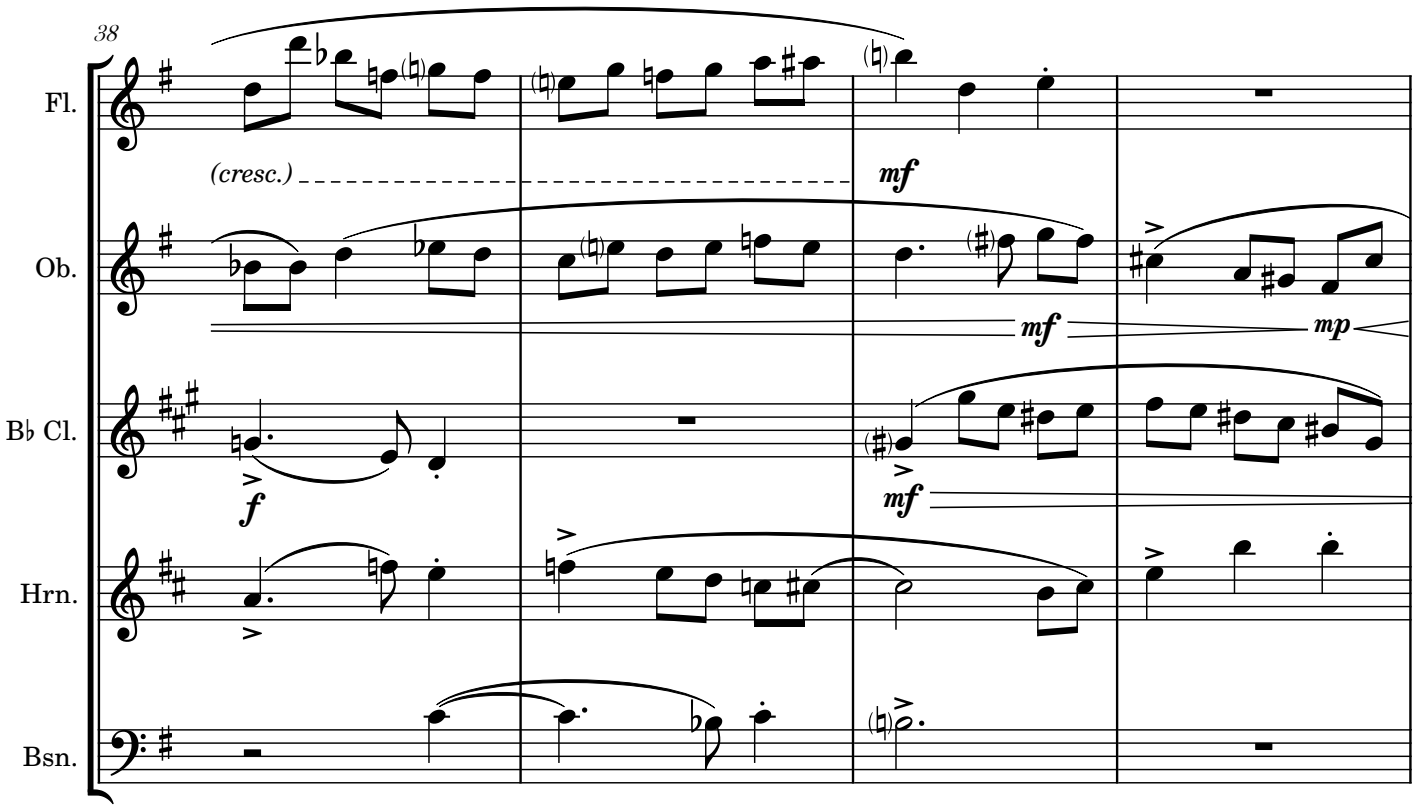

9
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mp
mp
cresc.
13
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mf
mp
mf
mf
p
(cresc.)
f

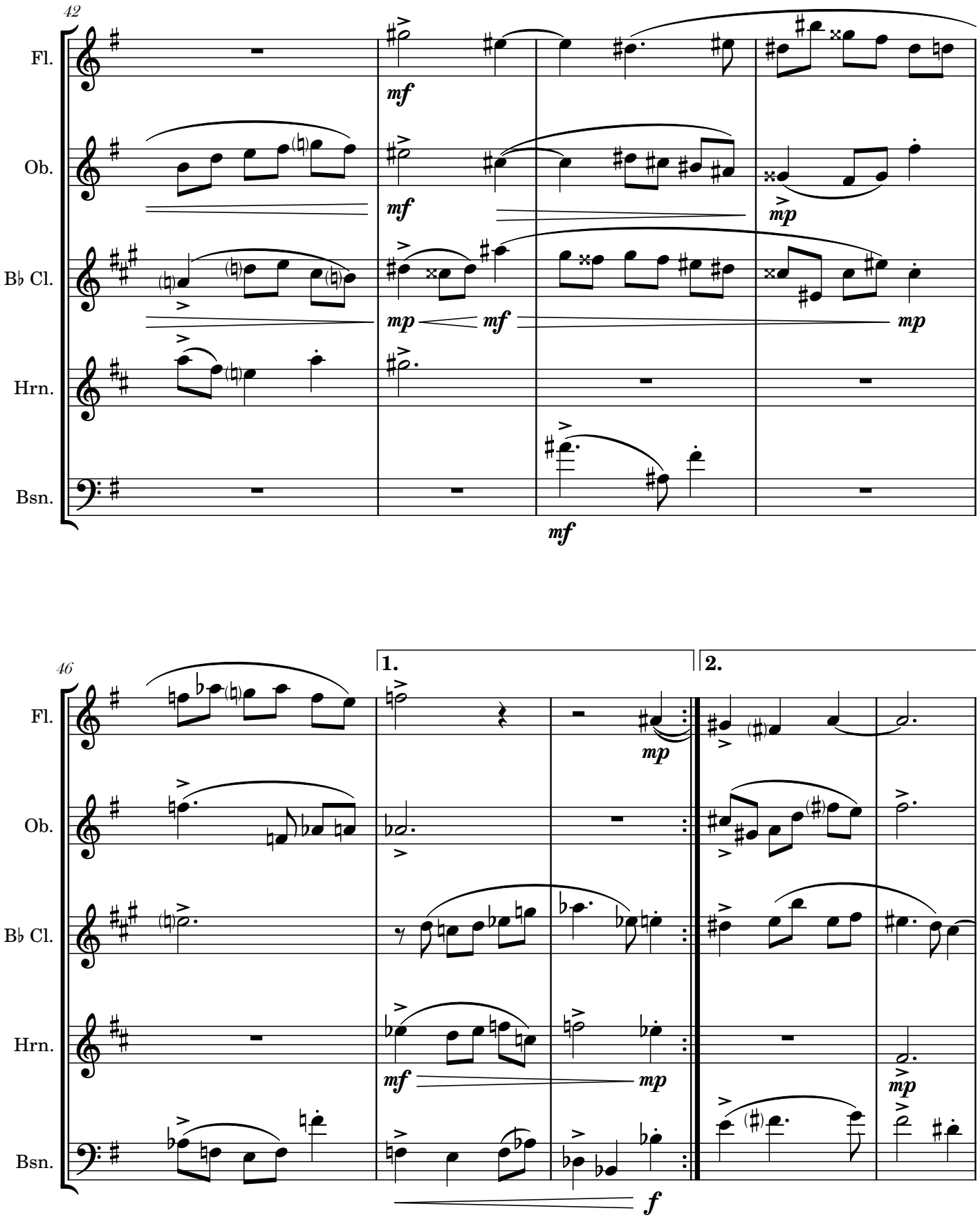

17
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
f
mp
f
mf
p
mp
f

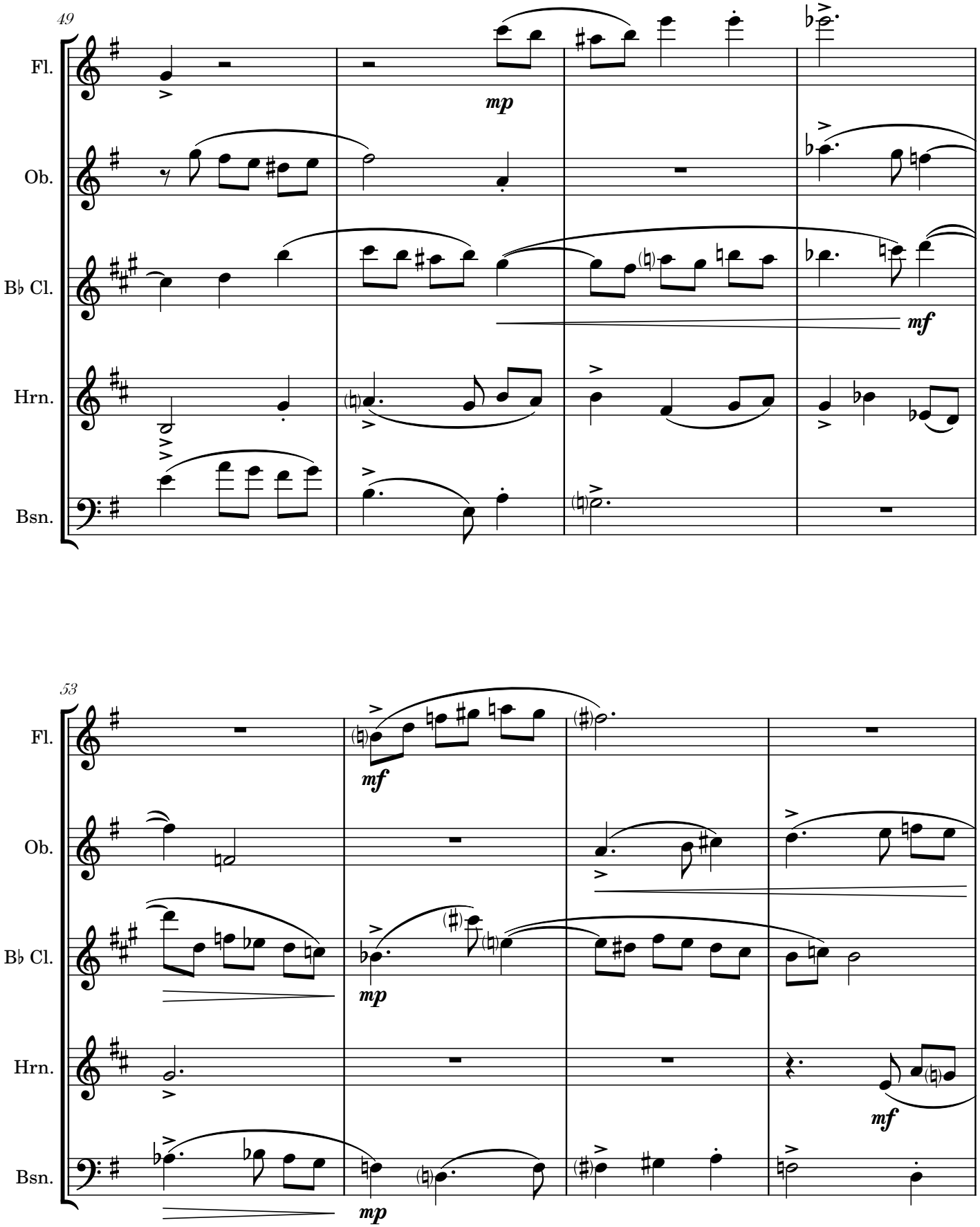

22
1.
2.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mp
mp

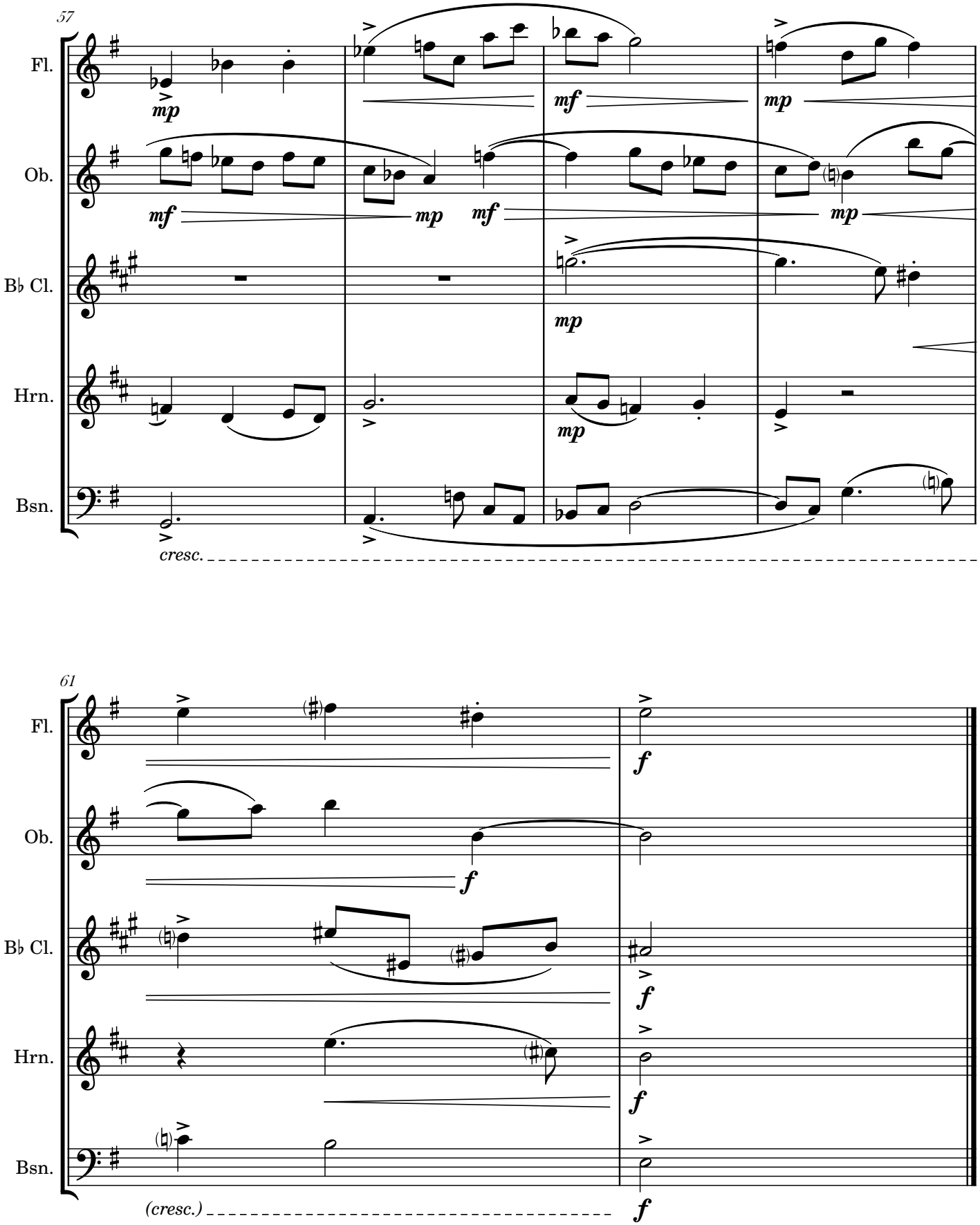



33
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
f
mp cresc.
mf
mp
mp
f


38
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
(cresc.)
mf
mf
mp
f
mf


42
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mf
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
46
1.
2.
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mp
mf
mp
mp
f




57
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mp
mp
cresc.
61
Fl.
Ob.
B♭ Cl.
Hrn.
Bsn.
f
f
f
f
f
(cresc.)

Closing Remarks

The suite demonstrates that counterpoint in contexts of a fast harmonic rhythm (with the harmonies ranging from baroque to more contemporary styles) can be used in a variety of musical forms that use orchestration approaches that range from what would be expected from strict chorale-type composition to fast and disjunct melodic lines played by alternating instruments.

To compose this suite, I studied multiple examples of each of the chosen forms. As someone who has played piano for quite some time, I have experience playing Bach, who's music excellently demonstrates a wide variety of baroque forms (such as fugal composition, the sarabande, etc.). With my pianistic inclinations, I also looked back at Chopin's waltzes and mazurkas for more insight in approaching the way those dances are structured.

For some inspiration for the nineteenth century harmonic approach used in this suite, I studied the scores of lots of romantic composers (Bruckner, Strauss, Wagner, etc.). I also studied Webern scores because I find that his approach to orchestration includes having different instruments alternate in playing different melodic lines, which was something that I wanted to explore. This approach, in combination with my interpretation of the romantic composers' method for atmospheric woodwind instrumentation, helped me develop the style of orchestration for the mazurka and the waltz. I also studied the way the five instruments function, how they sound in their different ranges, what their limitations are, etc. and I related these concepts to the use of these instruments by the great romantic composers to help me develop the technique for orchestrating a woodwind quintet.

Not only did composing this suite help me develop certain compositional approaches to writing chromatic harmony and orchestrating, but my contrapuntal writing technique also improved, especially in composing the two fugal movements. Designing melodies that would be able to fulfill a contrapuntal function against other melodies in contexts of inversions, retrogrades, etc. in addition to working out stretti, expositions, etc. made me faster and better at seeing in what ways different themes can be developed at the same time.

The combination of my compositional foundations for harmony, orchestration, and counterpoint appears to be a step toward me finding my own fully developed compositional style. Before composing this suite, I had experimented with composing works that ranged from compositions with more modal counterpoint to contrapuntal 12-tone music. Although I always had a sense that counterpoint and a fast harmonic rhythm that always tries to explore new harmonies would probably always be central in my composing style, I did not understand in what context I should use it.

I do believe that the process of composing this suite demonstrated to me that a chromatic harmonic foundation is the direction that I should take in future compositions, although I do not know if I should keep a baroque approach to chromatic harmony, a more nineteenth century-

styled basis, or something more contemporary. I also believe that I may later move to orchestrating with different instruments alternating between every few notes of melodies in combination with glittery and atmospheric passages (I think this type of orchestration worked quite well in both the waltz and the mazurka). In any case, I will need to experiment more with the stated techniques to refine and solidify my own style.