Chicago Spiral

for flute, clarinet, soprano saxophone (or three flutes),
drums, violin, viola, cello, and synthesizer

by Kyle Gann
(1990-91)

Chicago Spiral (1990-1)

Living and lecturing in Chicago in the 1980s, I became something of an authority on the history of the compositional scene there. Some of the earliest attention given to Chicago music was an article written by the great Italian composer Ferruccio Busoni, who visited Chicago and met two German émigré musicians who impressed him: Bernhard Ziehn (1845-1912) and Wilhelm Middelschulte (1863-1943). Ziehn, a rather fanatical contrapuntalist, solved for Busoni the mystery of how to combine the four themes in the great unfinished fugue of Bach's The Art of Fugue, enabling Busoni to complete his own Fantasia Contrappuntistica, based on Bach's fugue. And Busoni memorialized his two new friends in an article titled "Die Gothiker von Chicago" - the Gothics of Chicago, meaning that they were pursuing counterpoint with the intensity of Renaissance composers. Daringly progressive, Ziehn proposed that any combination of tones could make a usable chord, at a time when most theorists followed Helmholtz in deriving harmony from the overtone series. He taught John Alden Carpenter, and, via people like Ruth Crawford and John Becker, had a considerable influence on the early Chicago scene.

In a Chicago used bookstore I ran across Ziehn's last book, Canonic Studies, published just after his death. The book gives instructions for writing canons at every possible interval, each example going through a kind of harmonic spiral. I became fascinated with the problem, and decided to write a grand canon in honor of Ziehn, using his methods. Chicago Spiral is a nine-part triple canon in 14/8 meter and at the interval of the major second. The flute's line is echoed a step lower by the clarinet, and another step lower by the saxophone; the cello's line returns a minor seventh higher in the viola, and another seventh higher in the violin; and three lines similarly coexist in the keyboard part. In addition to the basic contrapuntal idea, the meter becomes progressively filled with different kinds of polyrhythms, which create an illusion of continual tempo change, though in reality the underlying pulse never varies. I remember in particular one three-measure passage that was such a tough nut to crack that I worked on it for three full days, Dec. 24-26, 1991.

I dedicated the piece to my good composer friend Scott Wheeler, who conducted the first performance with Dinosaur Annex in Boston.

- Kyle Gann

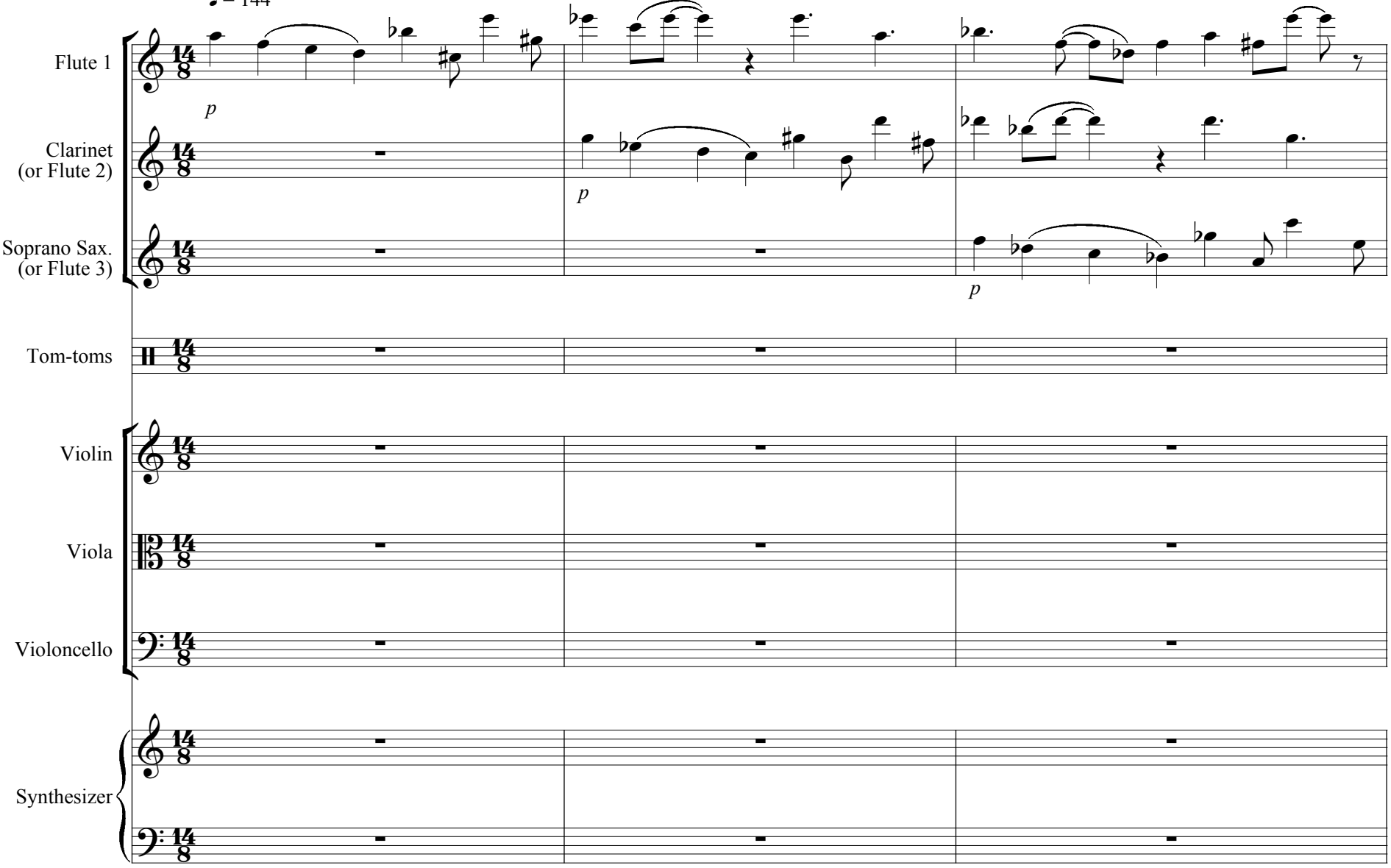
To Scott Wheeler

Chicago Spiral

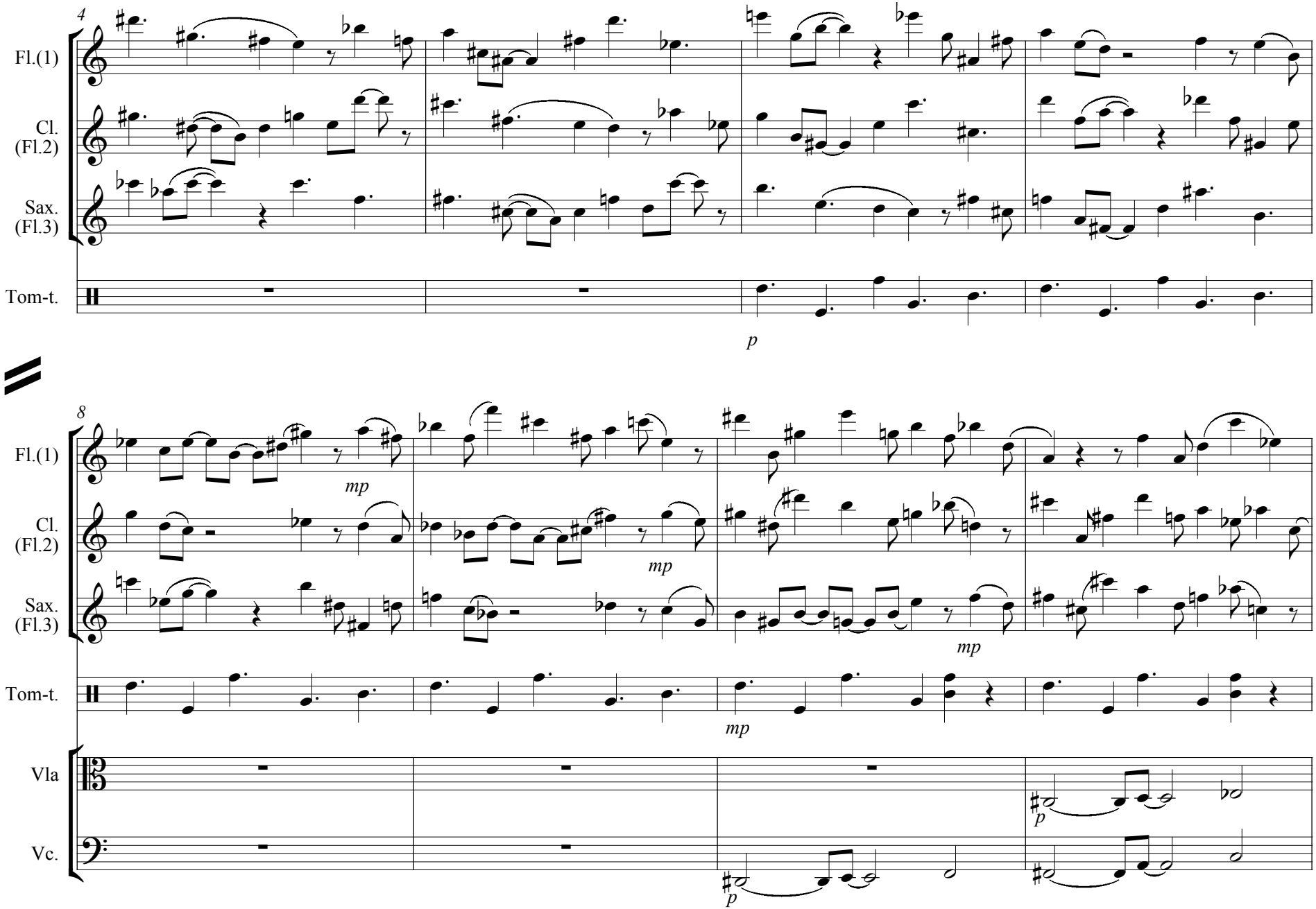
Kyle Gann
1990-91

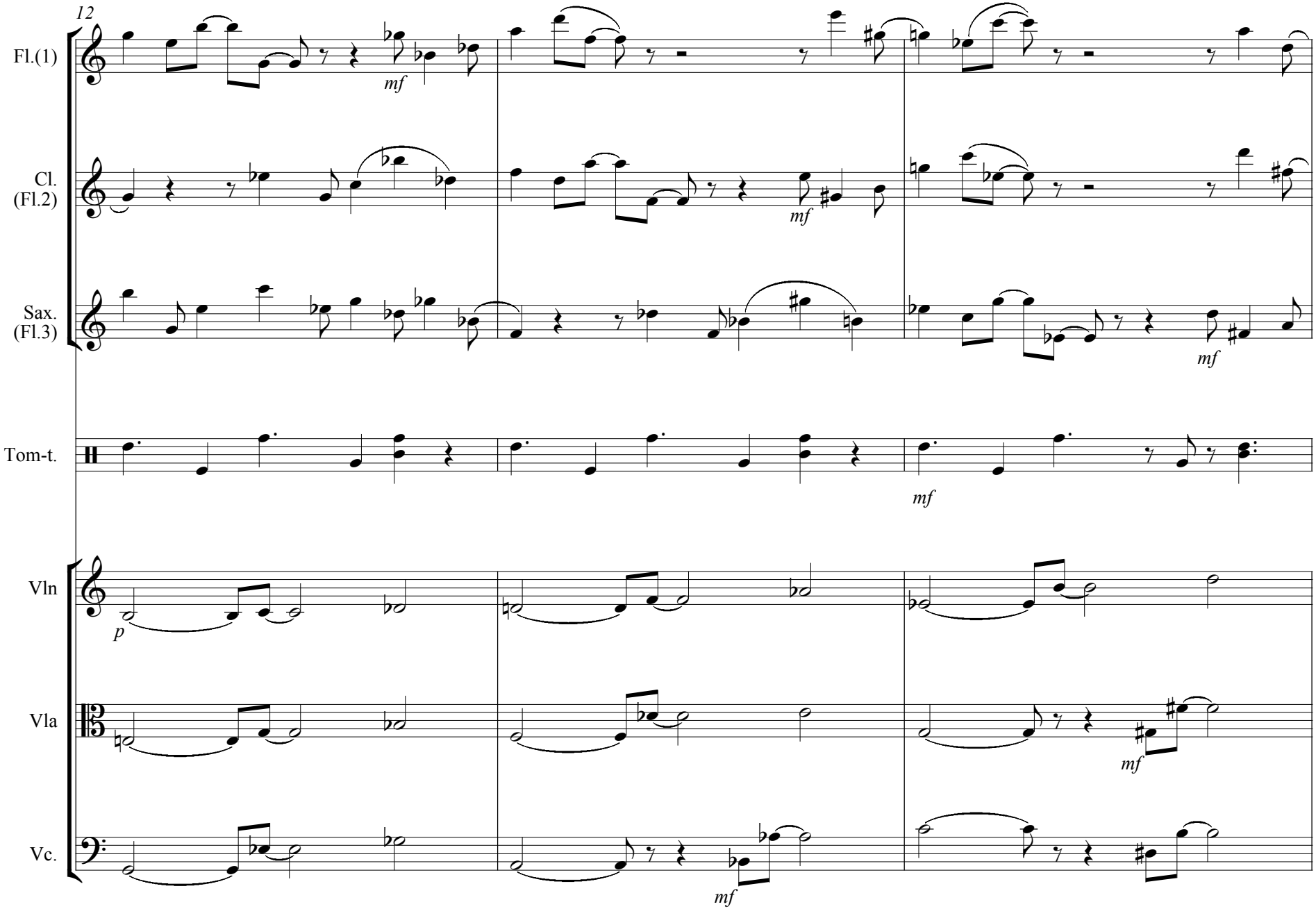
Energetically

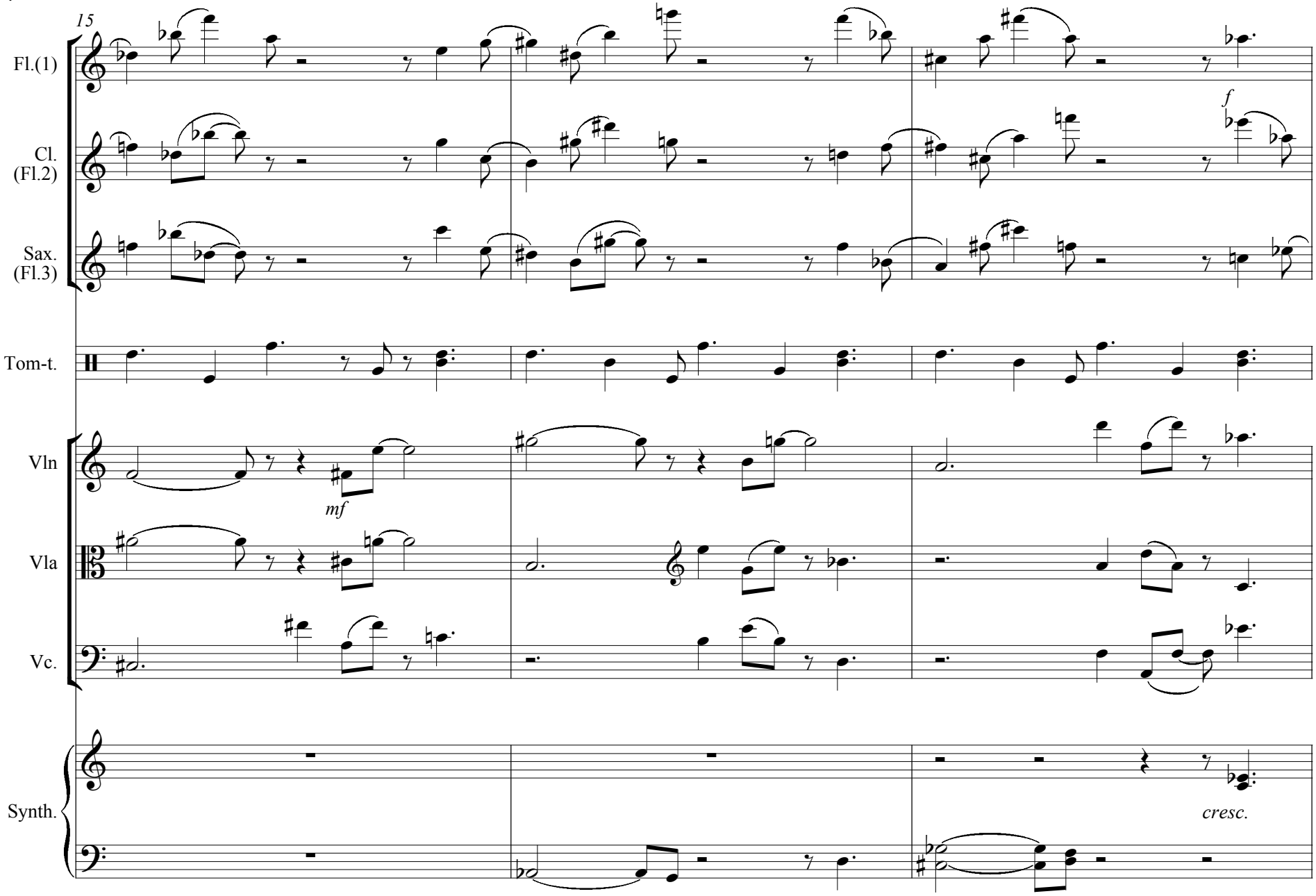
♩ = 144

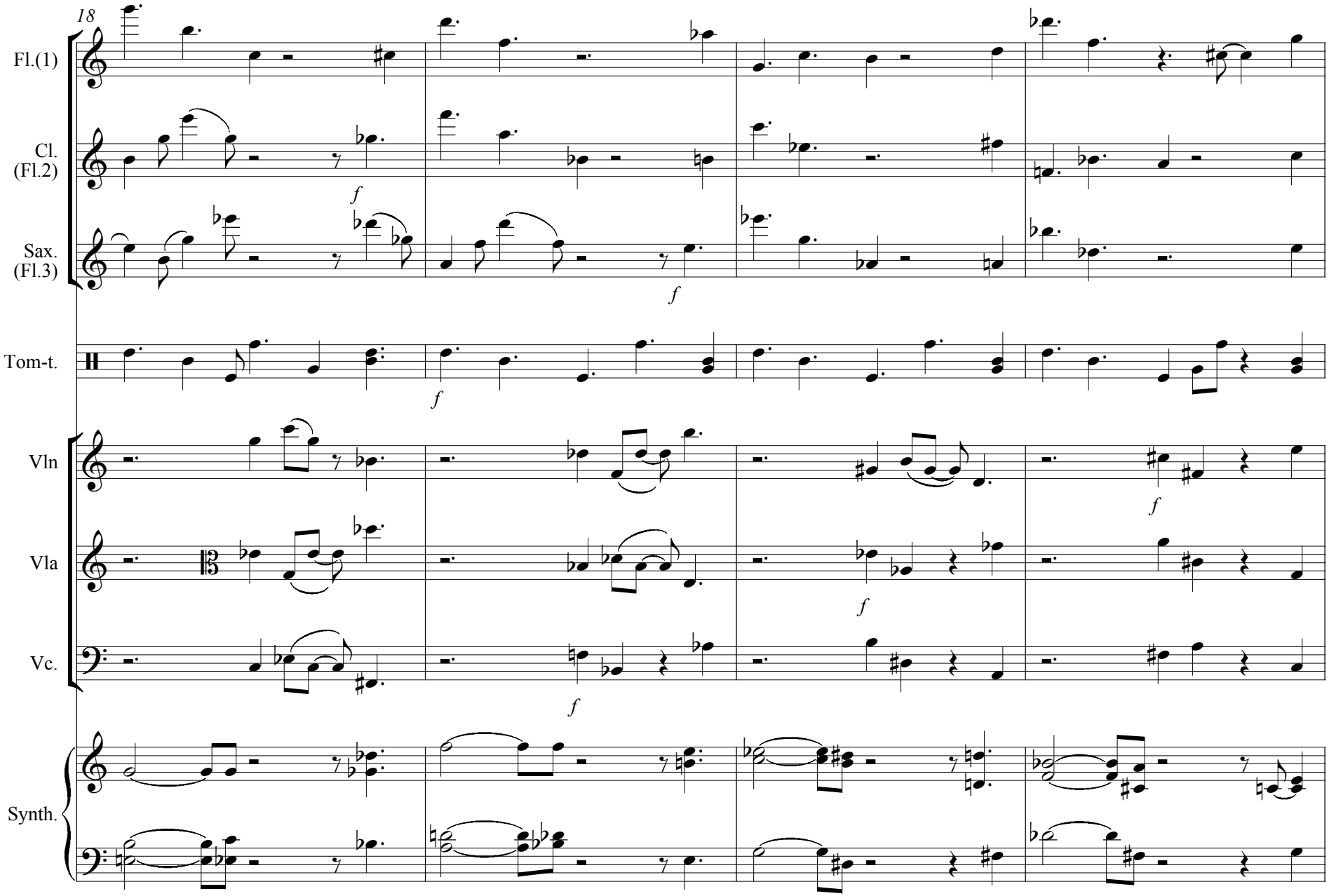


Score is in C.


4
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
p
8
Fl.(1)
mp
Cl.
(Fl.2)
mp
Sax.
(Fl.3)
mp
Tom-t.
mp
Vla
p
Vc.
p


12
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
mf
mf
mf
mf
p
mf
mf


15
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
f
mf
cresc.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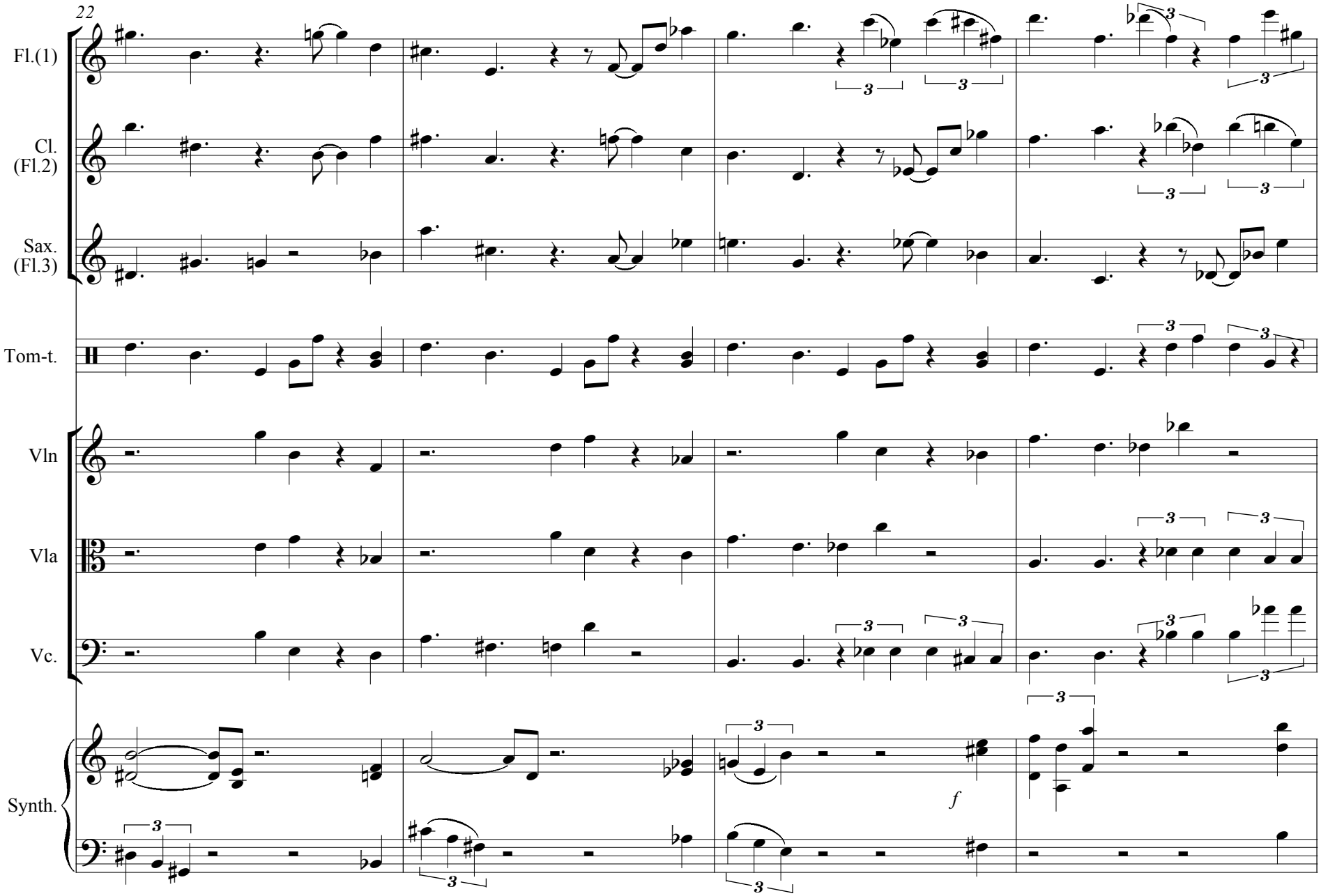
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
f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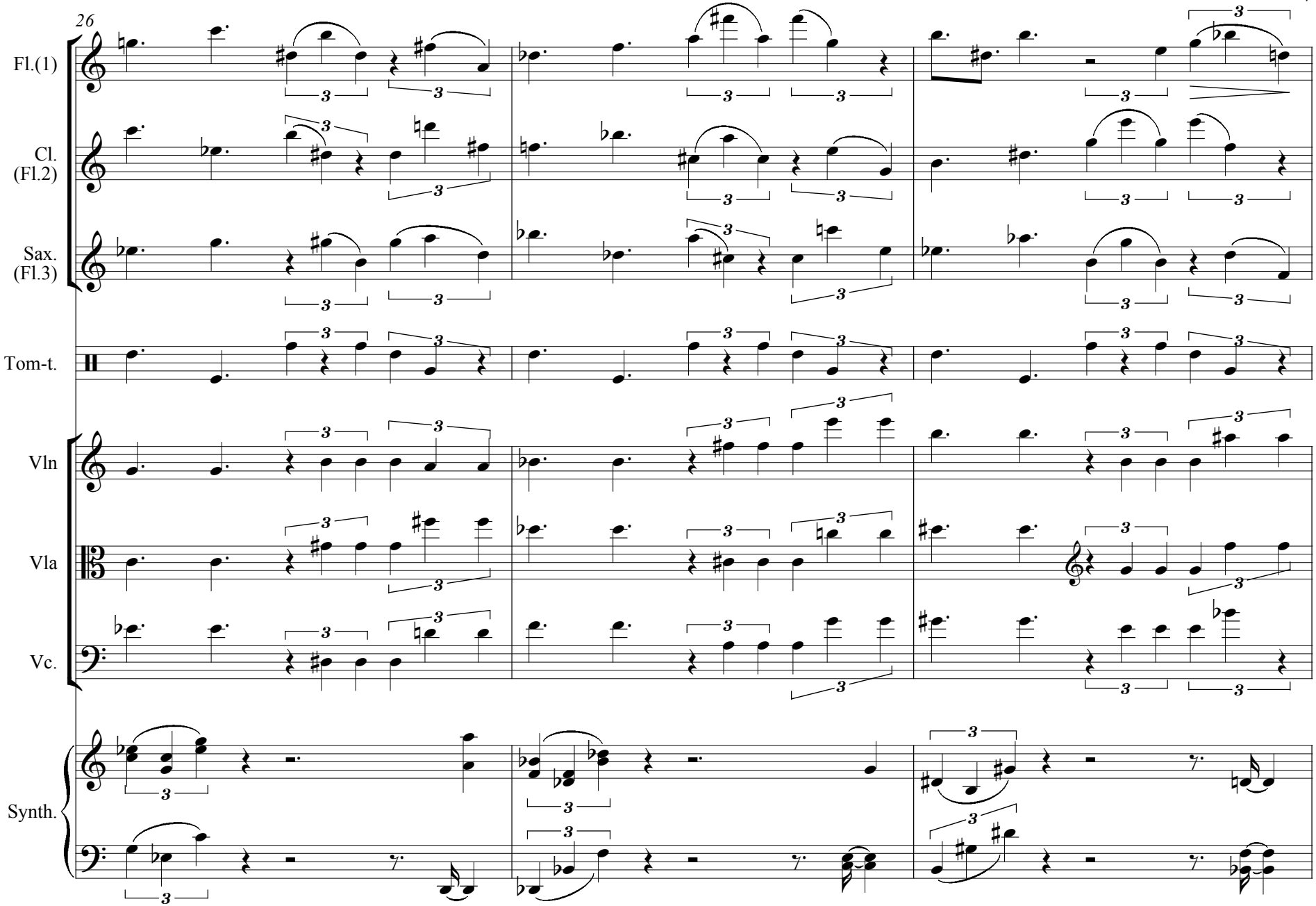
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
f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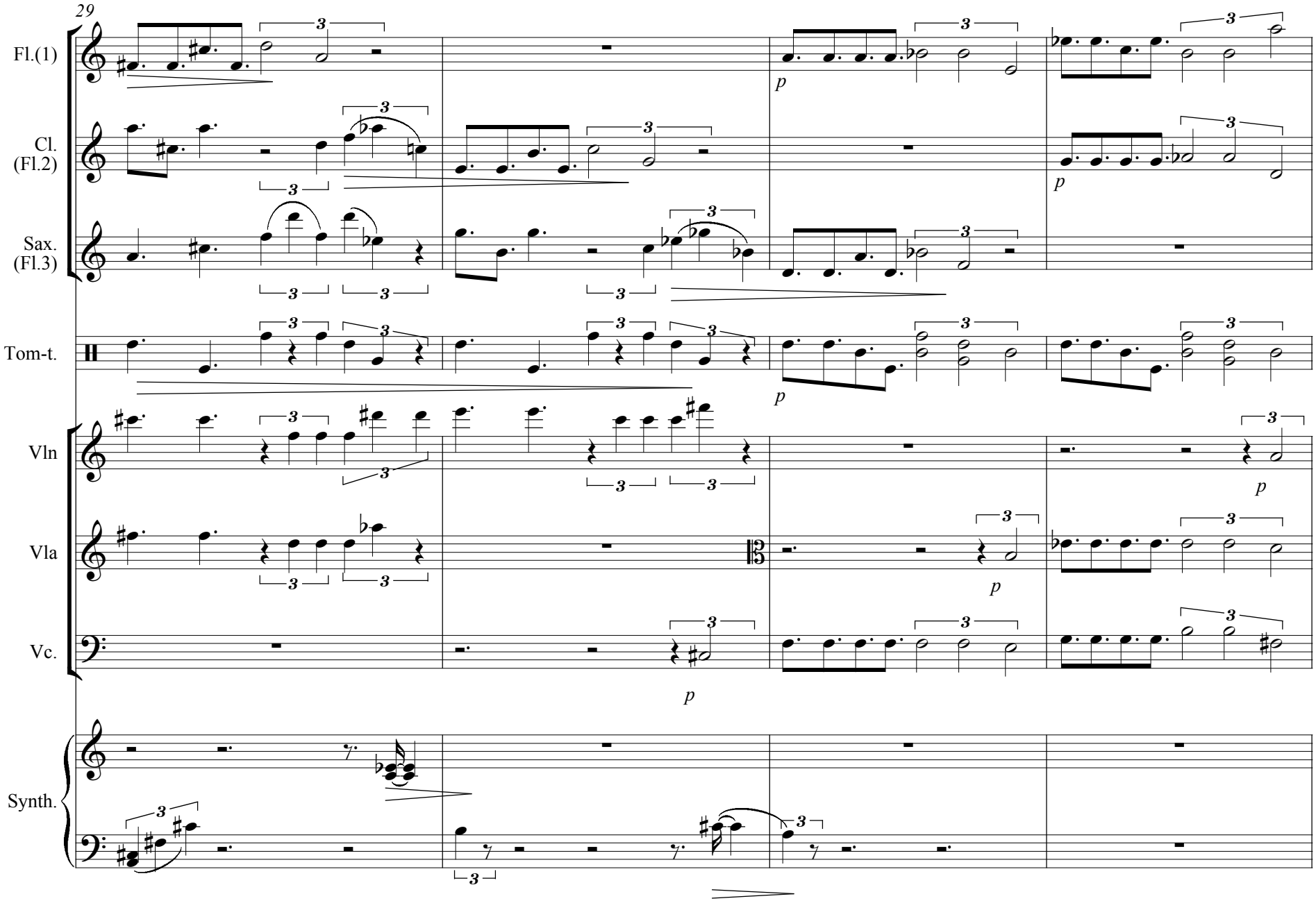
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.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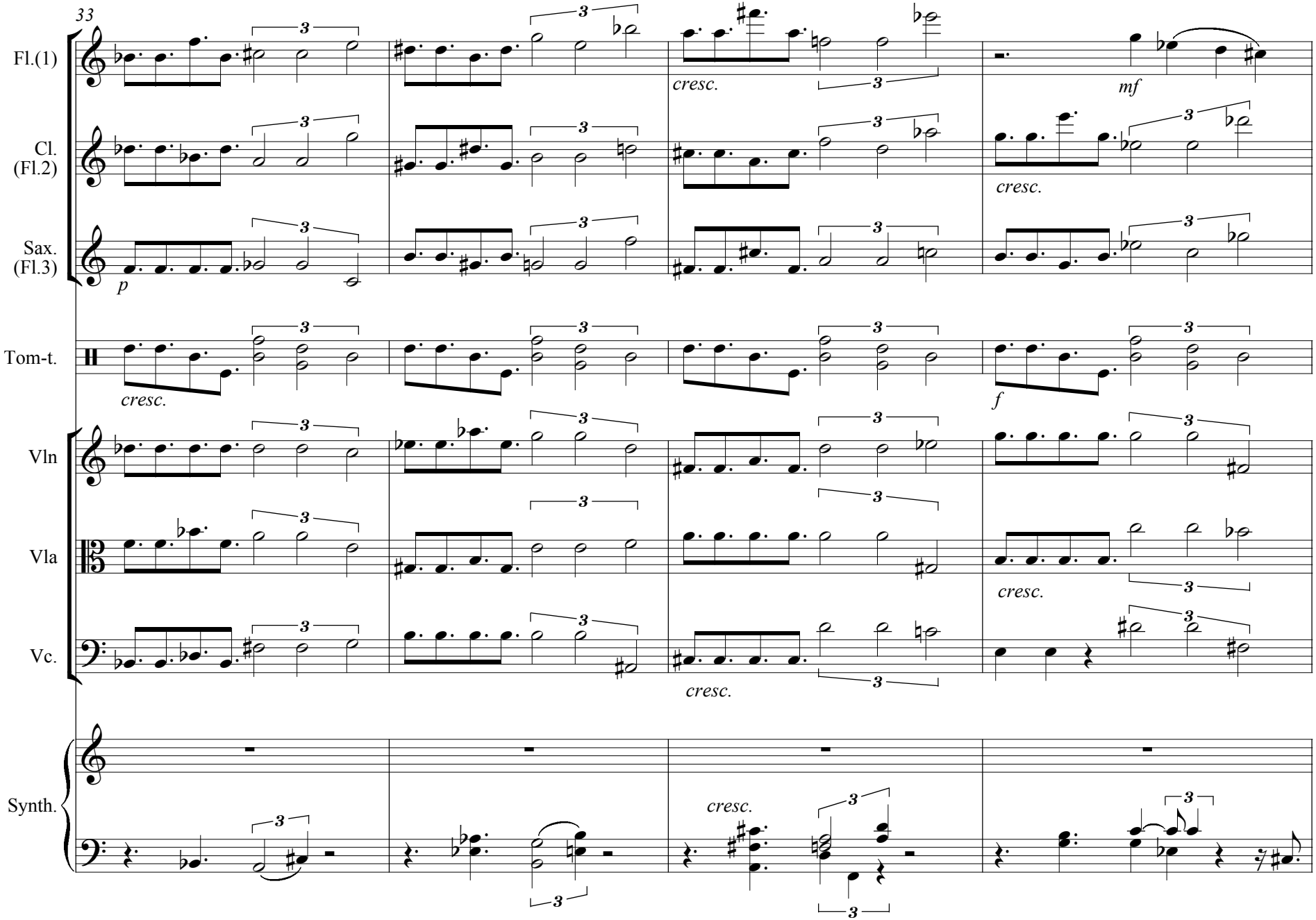
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
p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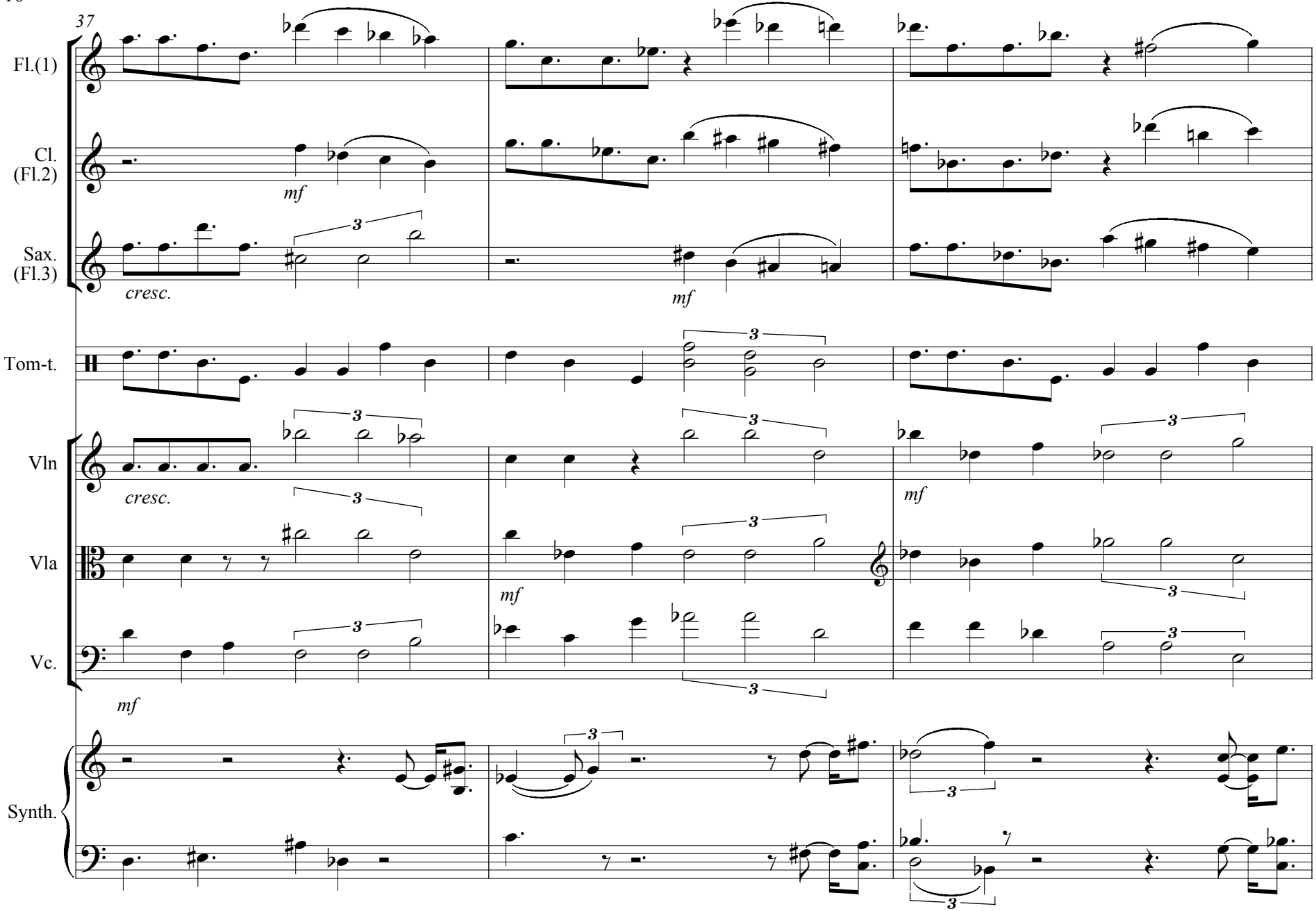
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
p
cresc.
mf
f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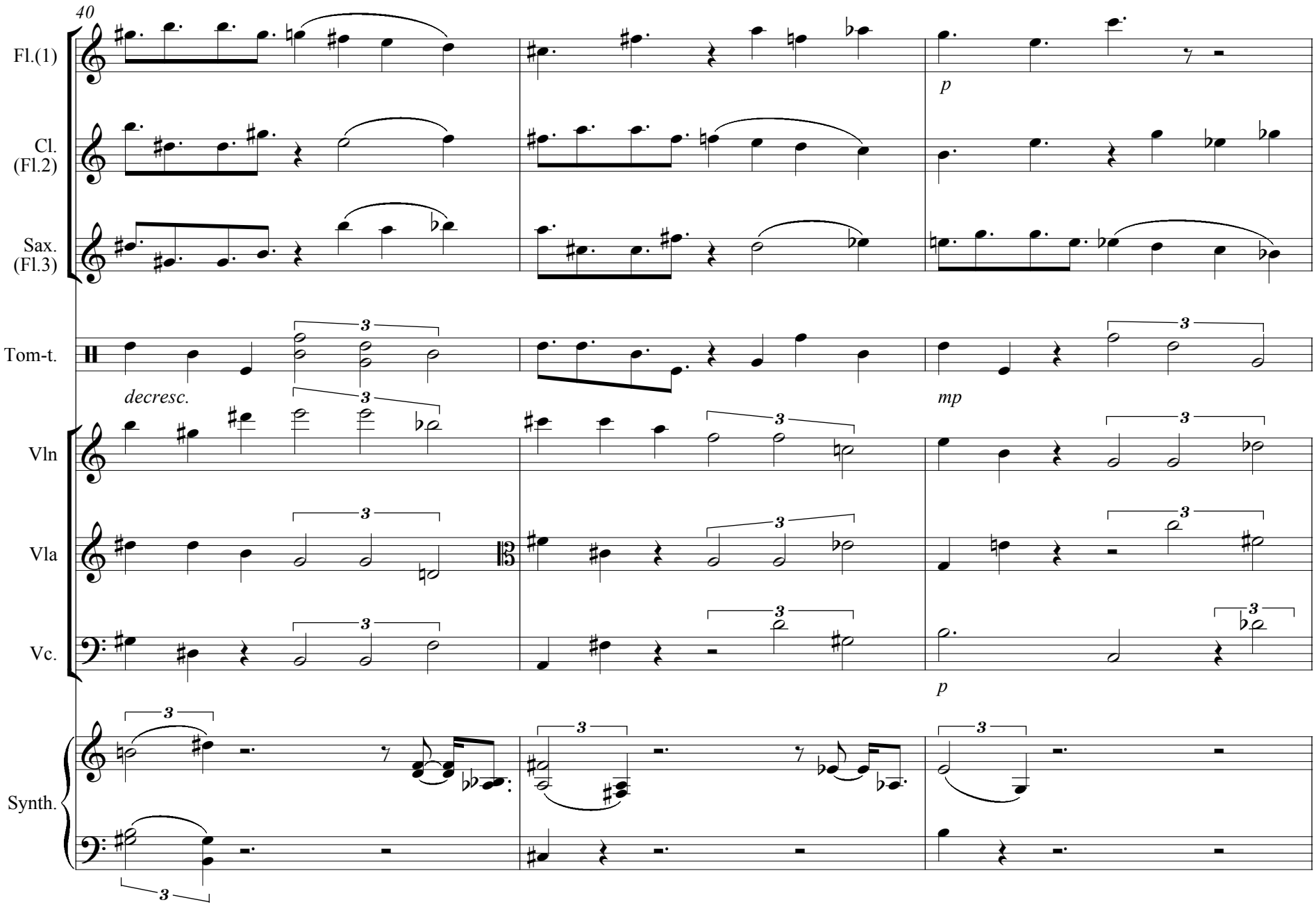
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
mf
cresc.
3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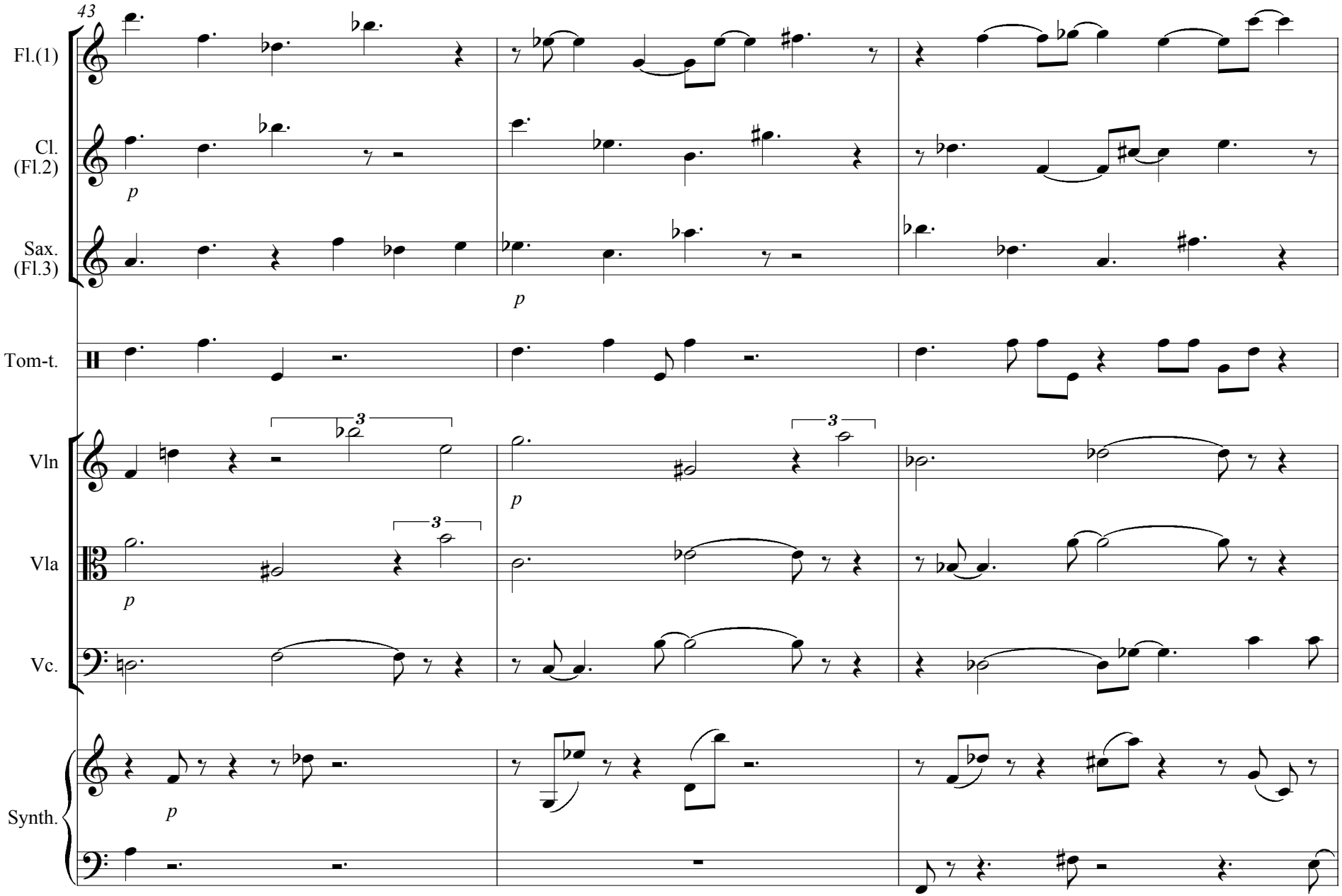
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
p
decresc.
mp
p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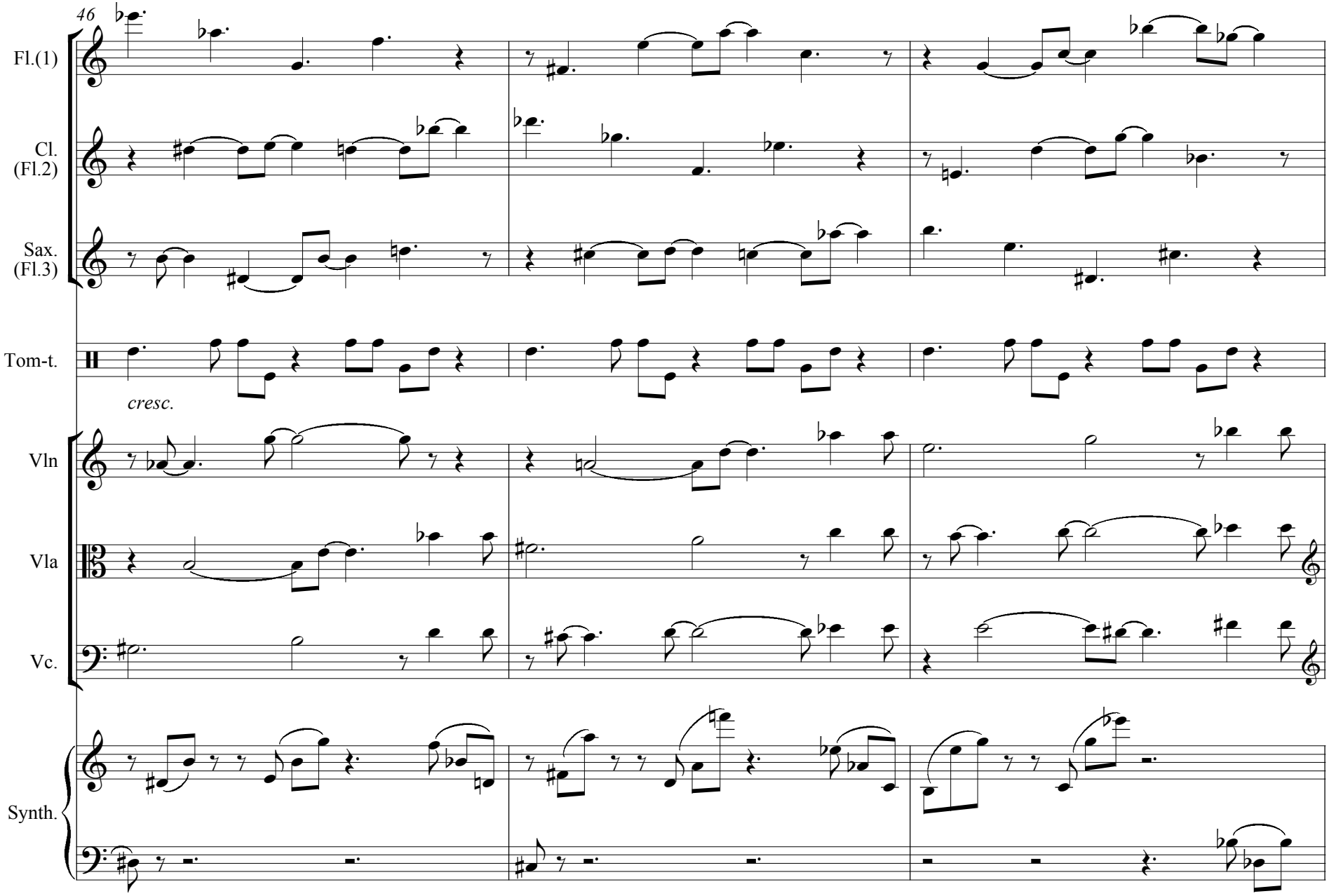
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
p
3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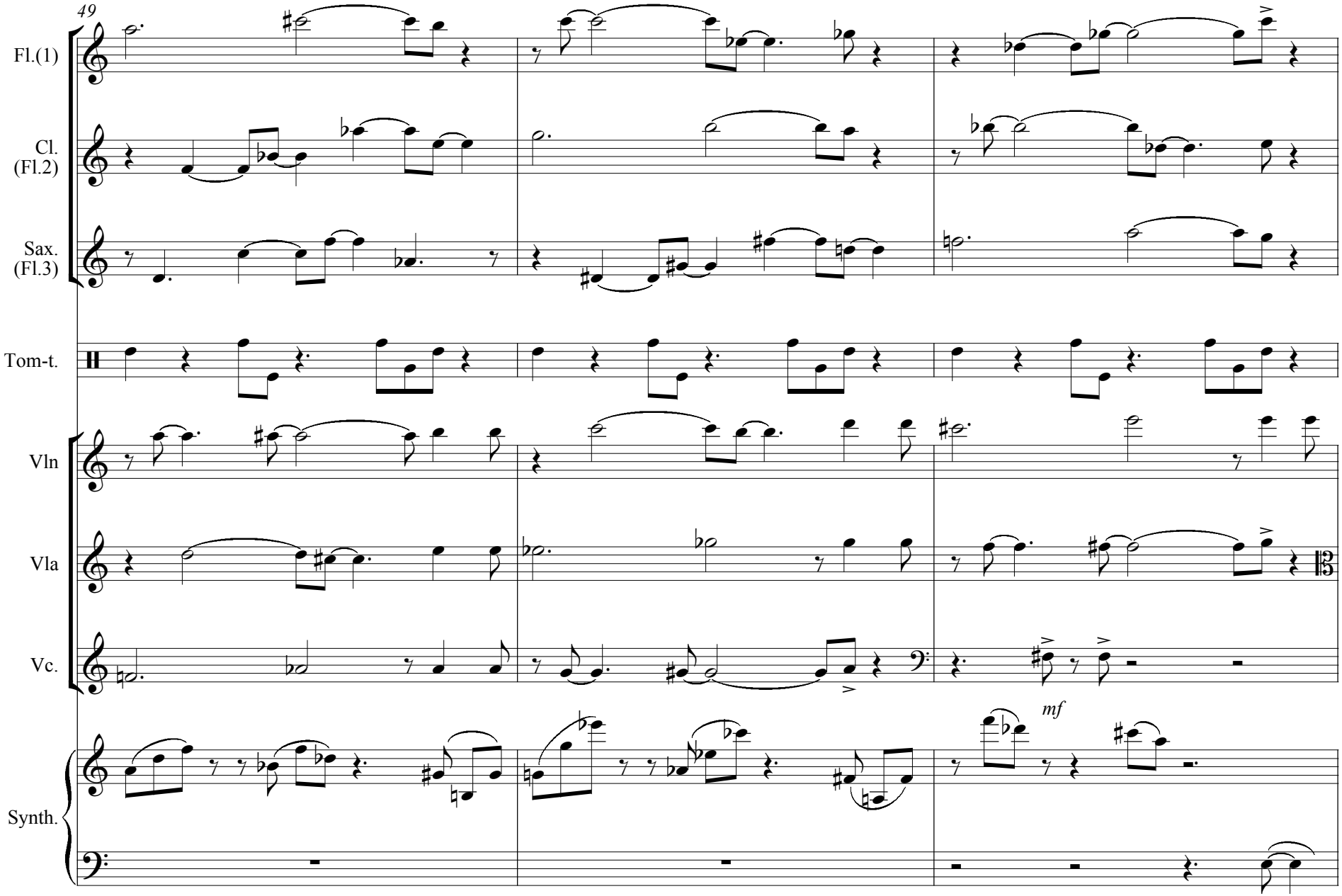
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
cresc.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.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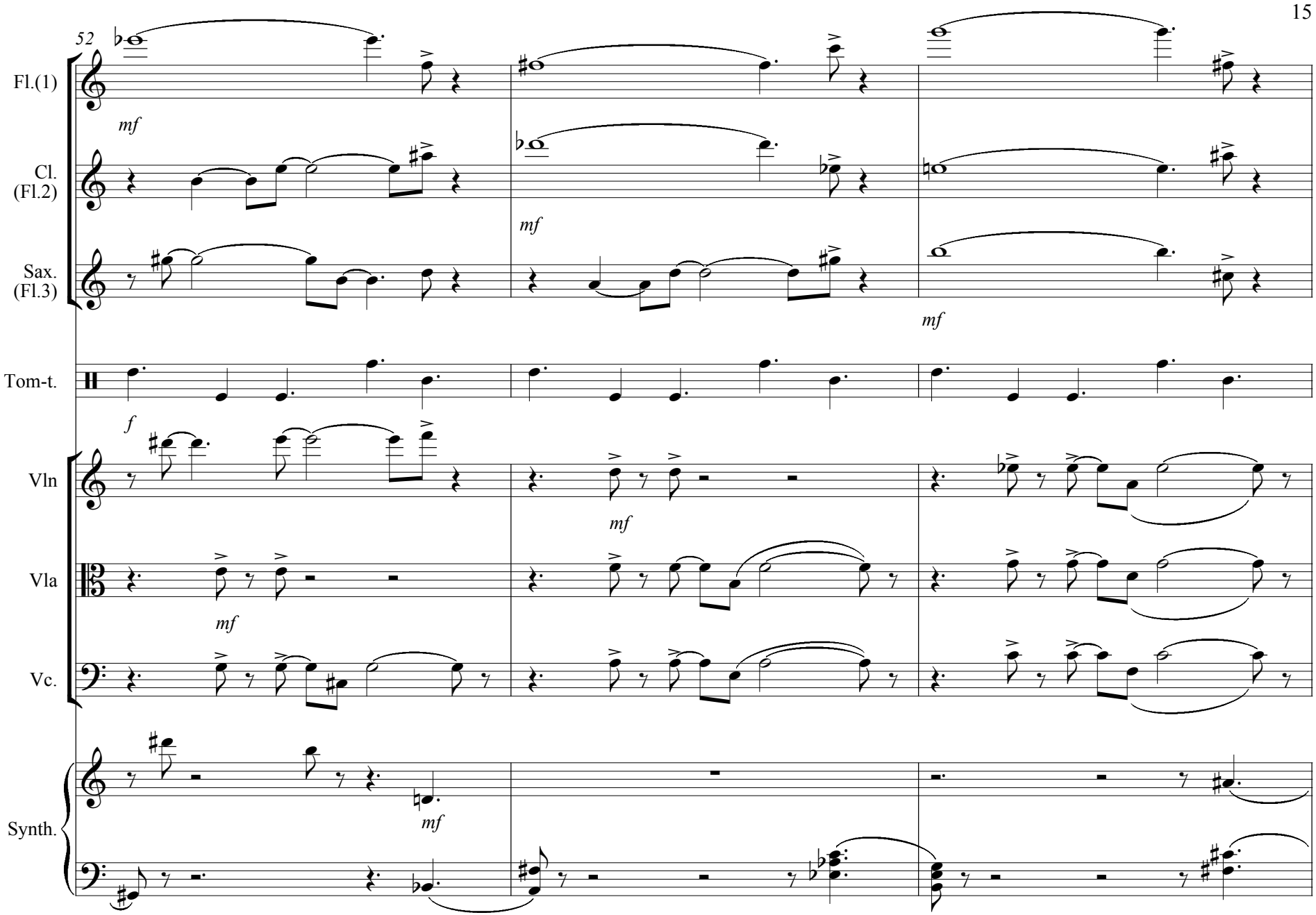
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
mf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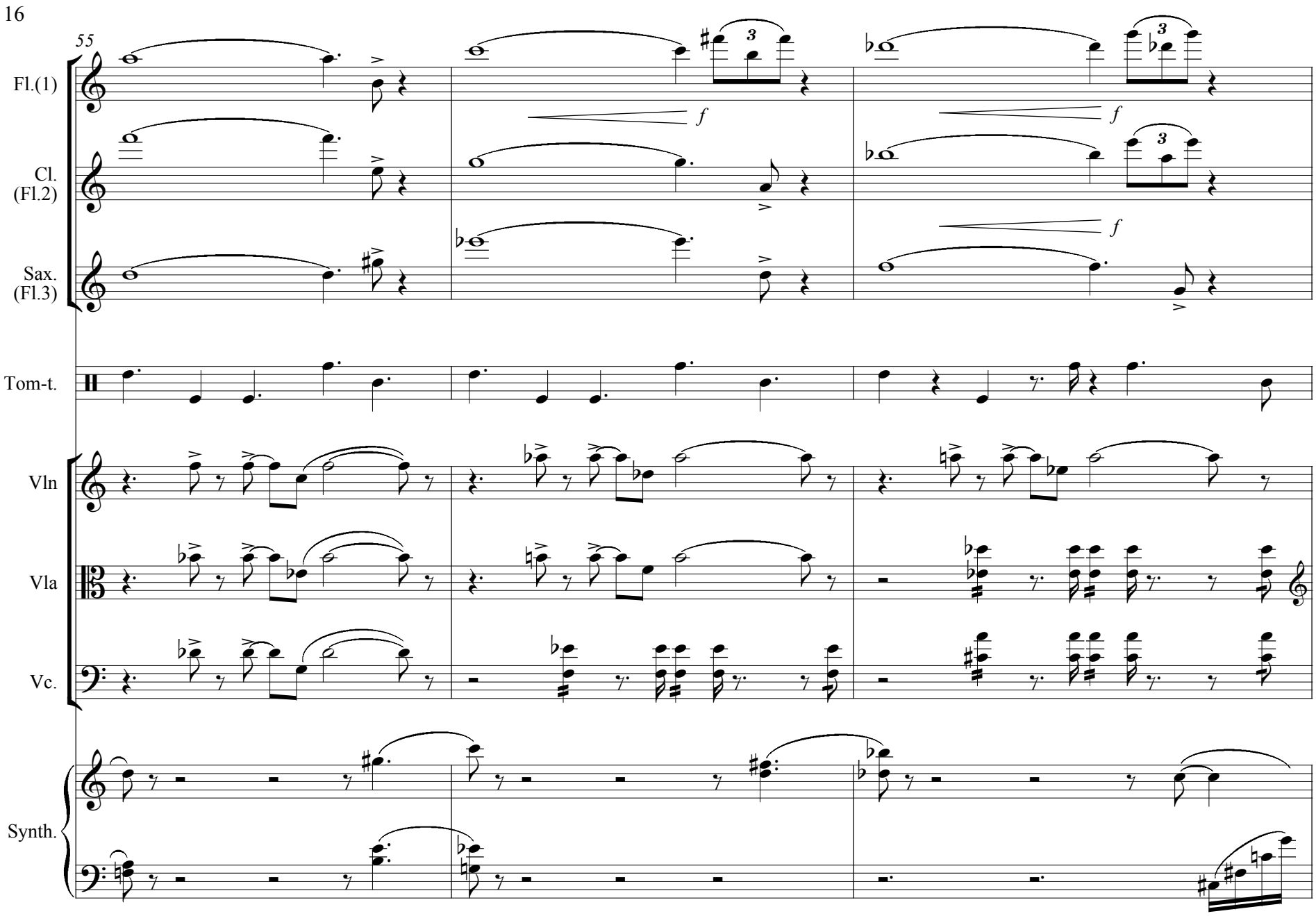
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
mf
f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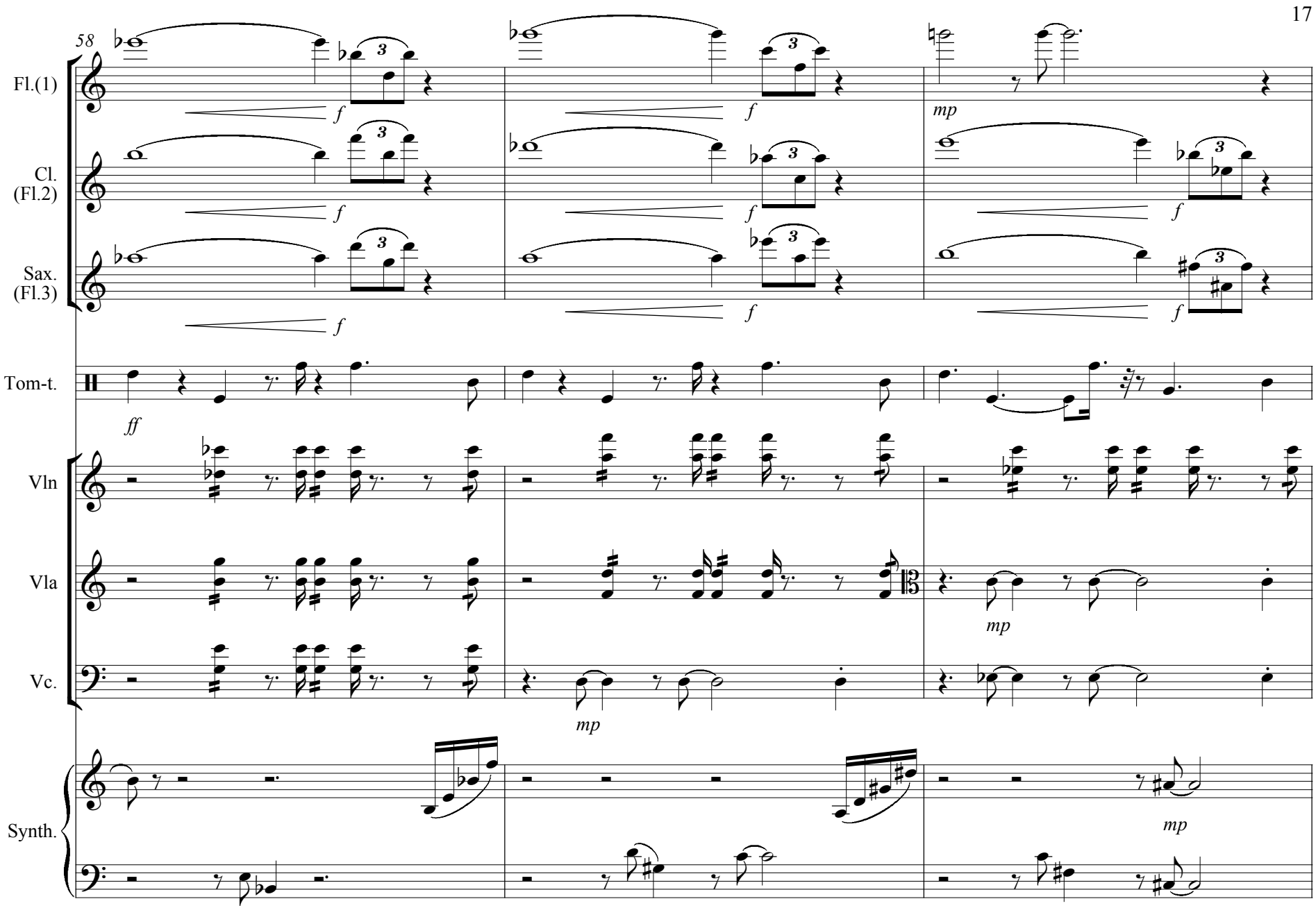
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
f
f
f
3
3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Cl.
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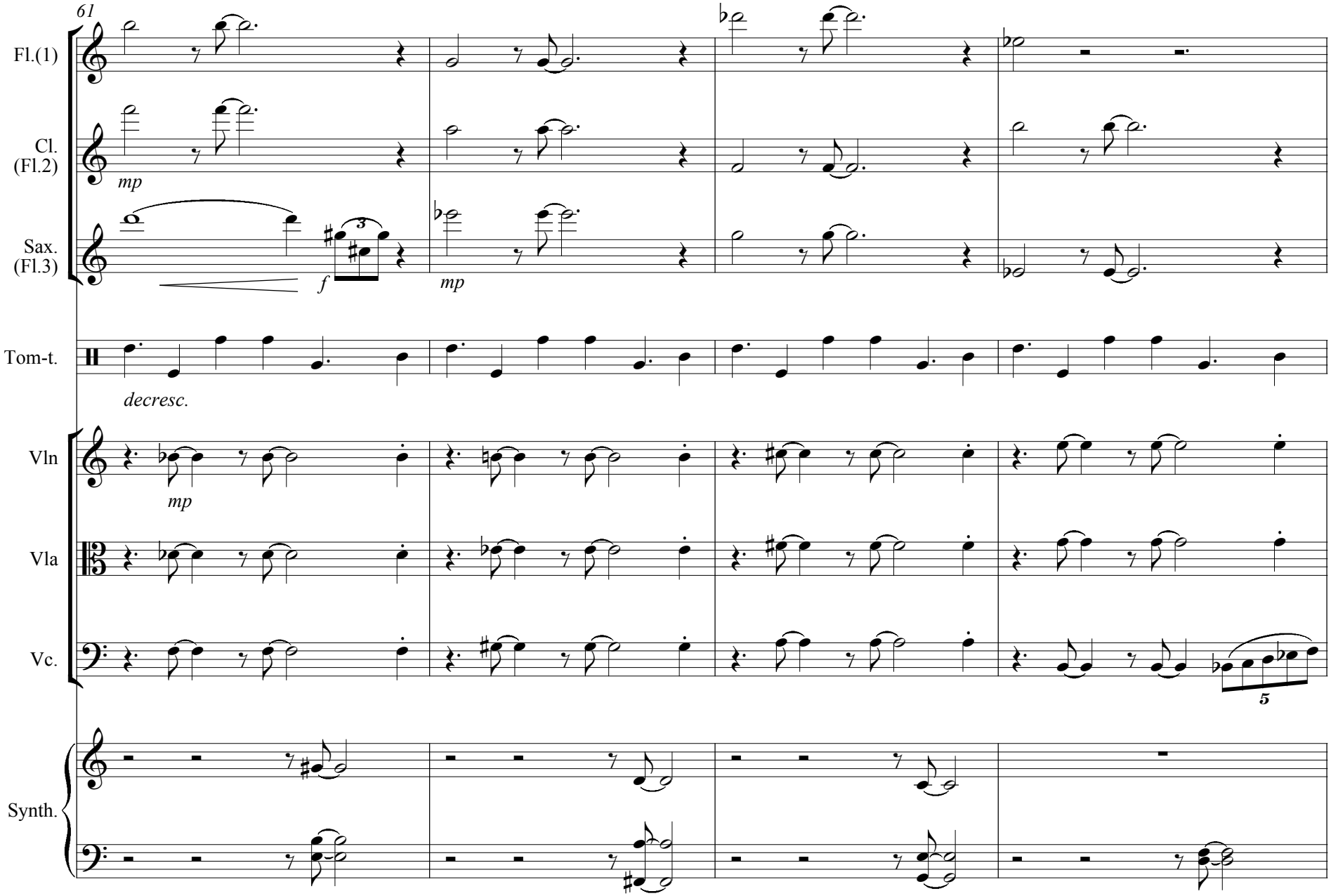
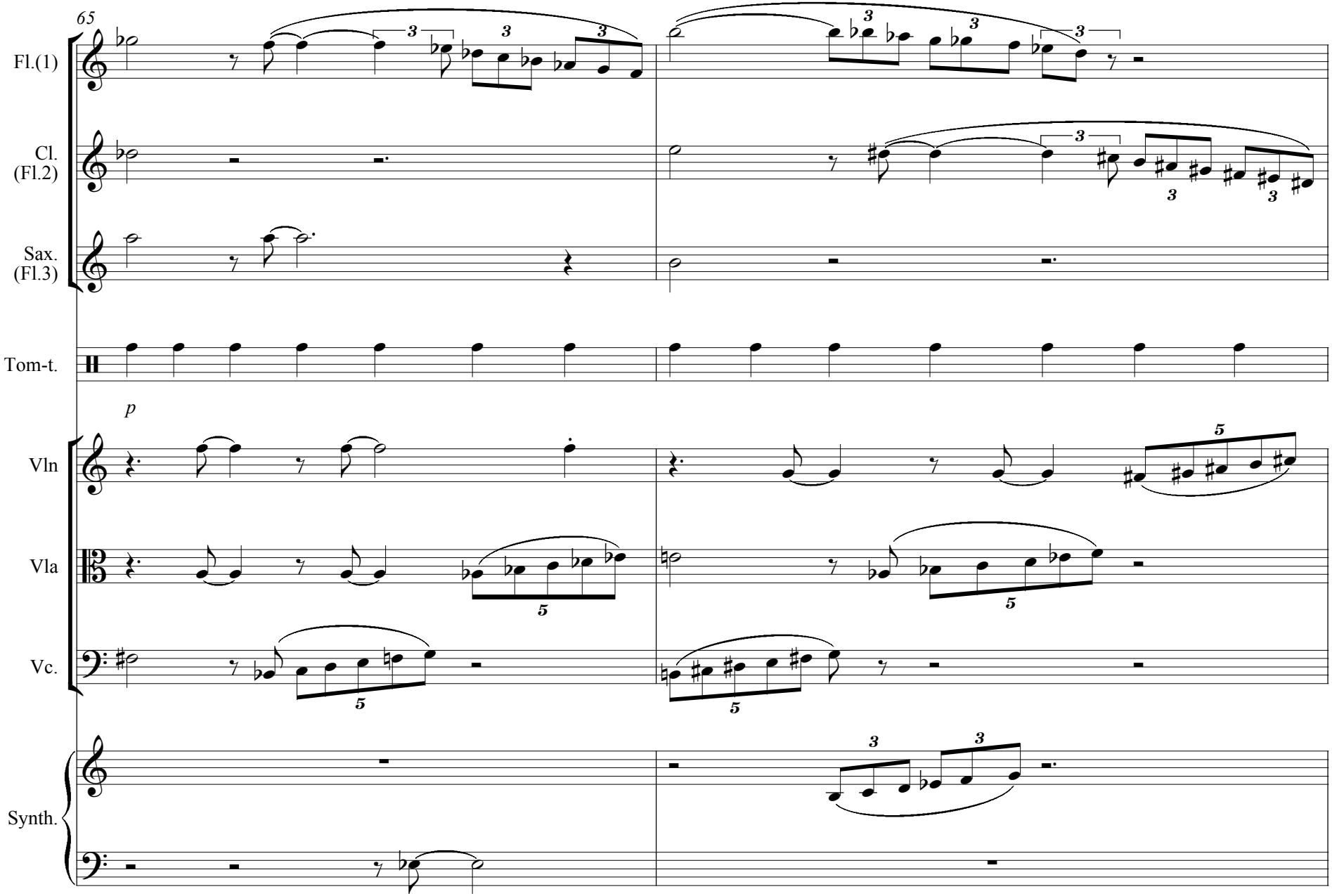
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
f
mp
ff


61
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
mp
Sax.
(Fl.3)
f
mp
Tom-t.
decresc.
Vln
mp
Vla
Vc.
Synth.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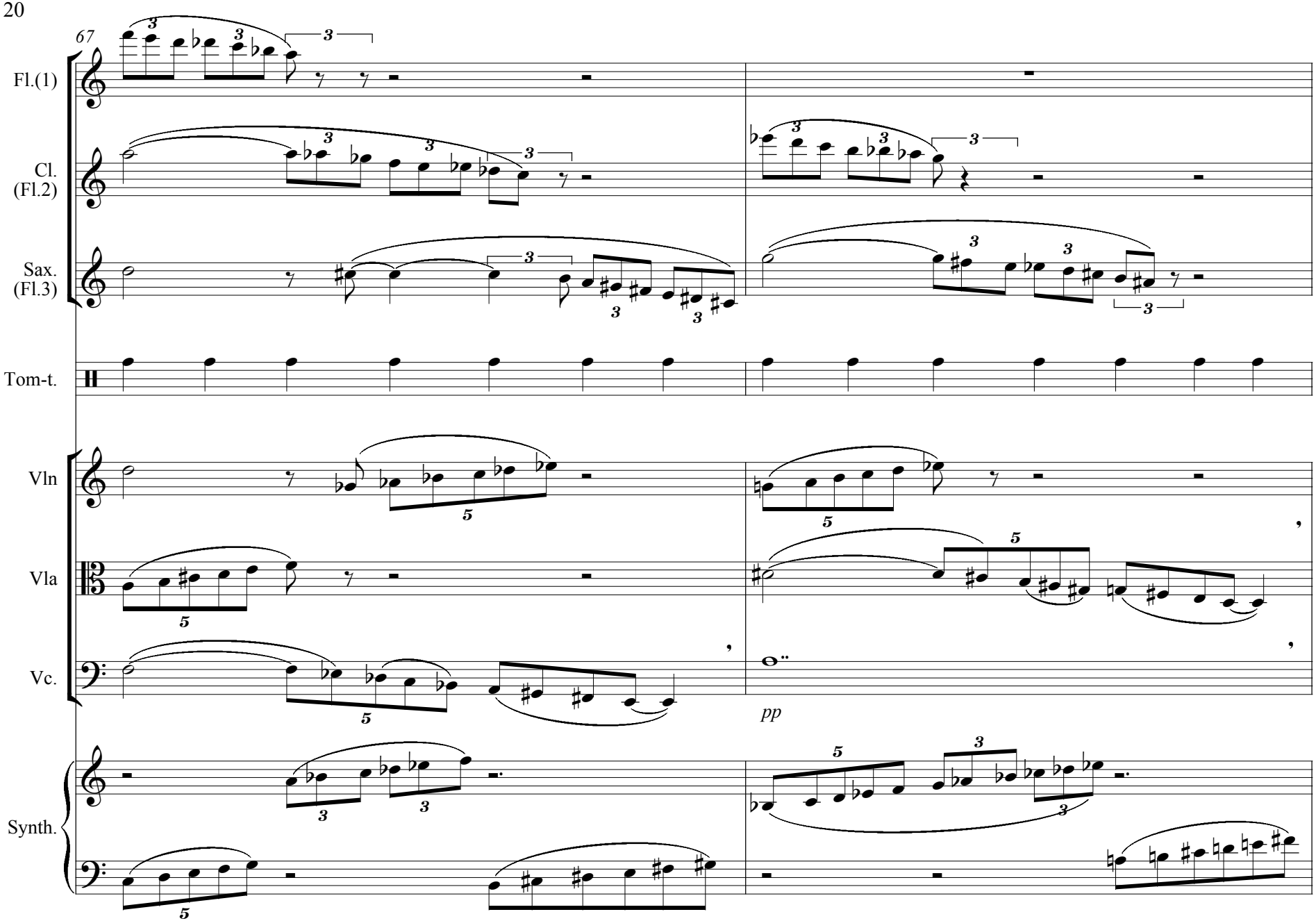
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
p
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.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Cl.
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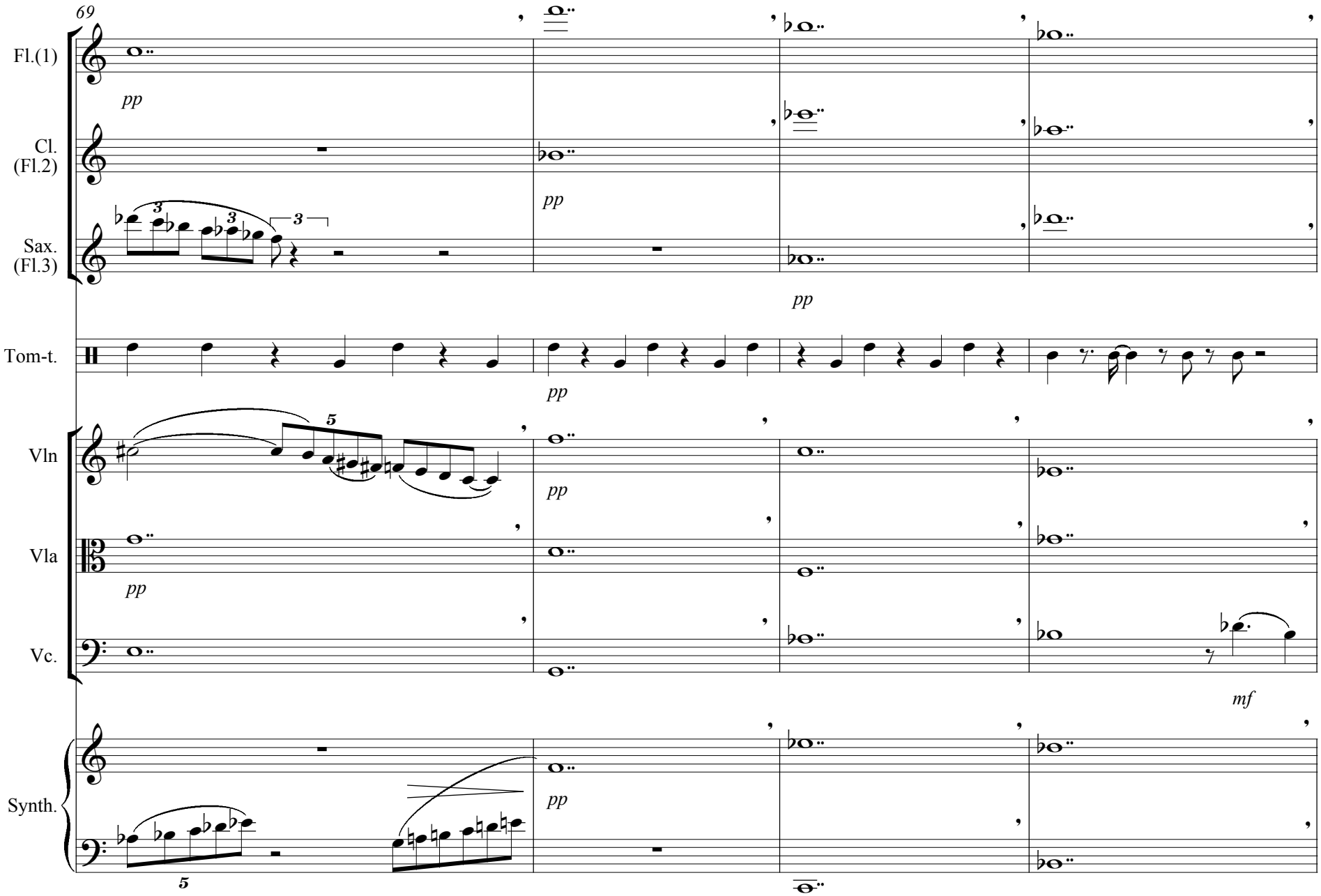
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
pp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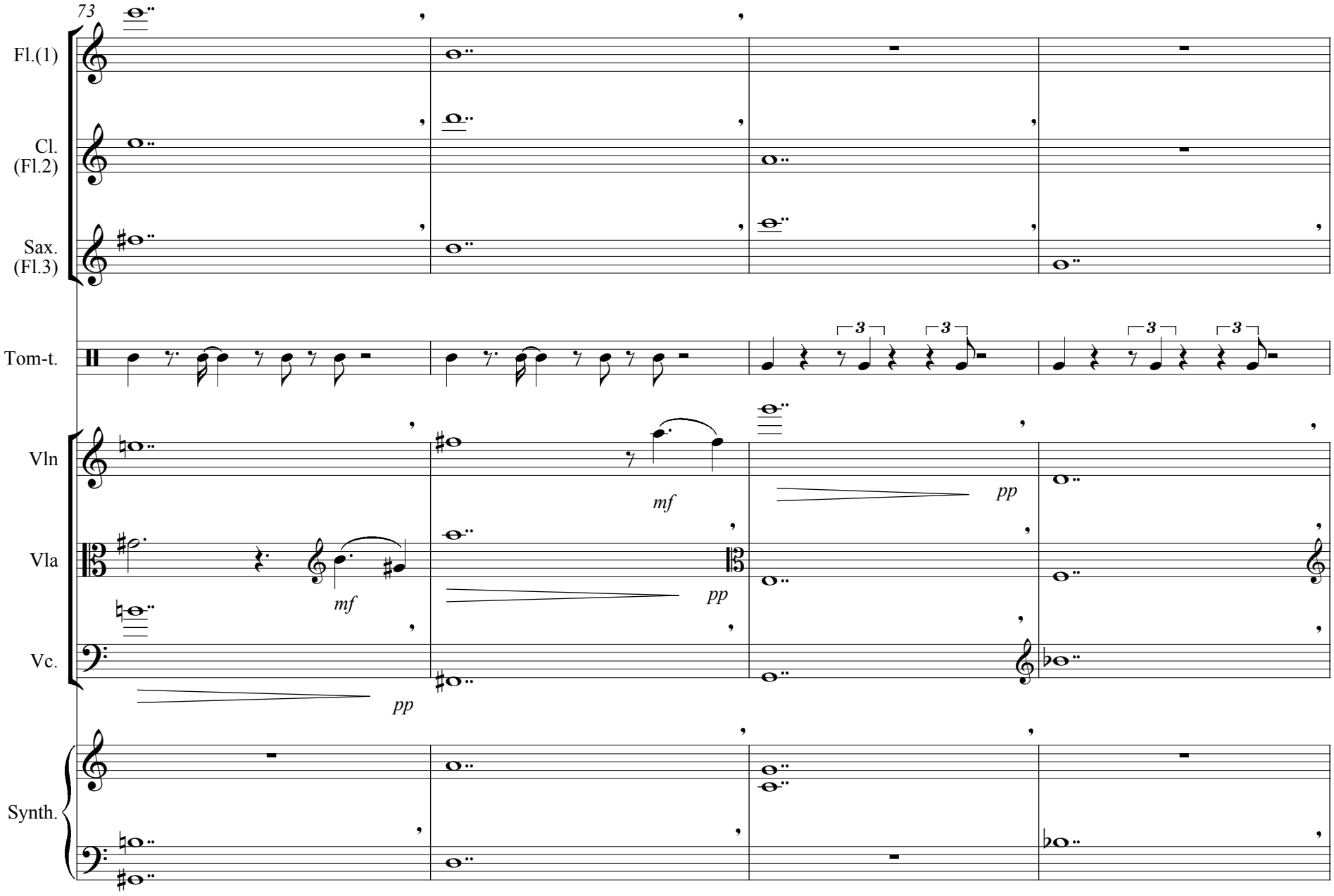
Fl.(1)
pp
Cl.
(Fl.2)
pp
Sax.
(Fl.3)
pp
Tom-t.
pp
Vln
pp
Vla
pp
Vc.
mf
Synth.
pp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Cl.
(Fl.2)
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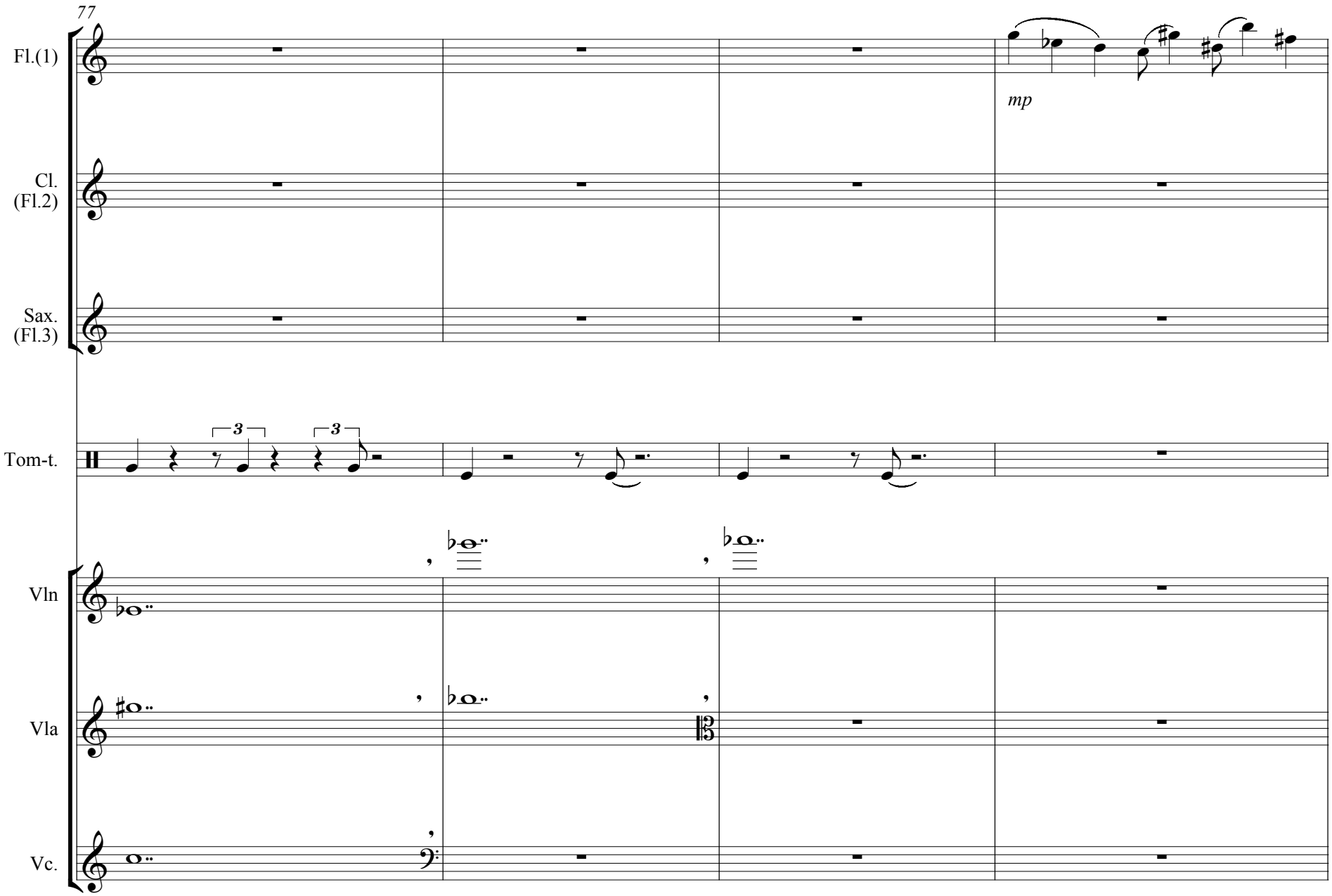
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
mf
pp
mf
pp
pp
3
3
3
3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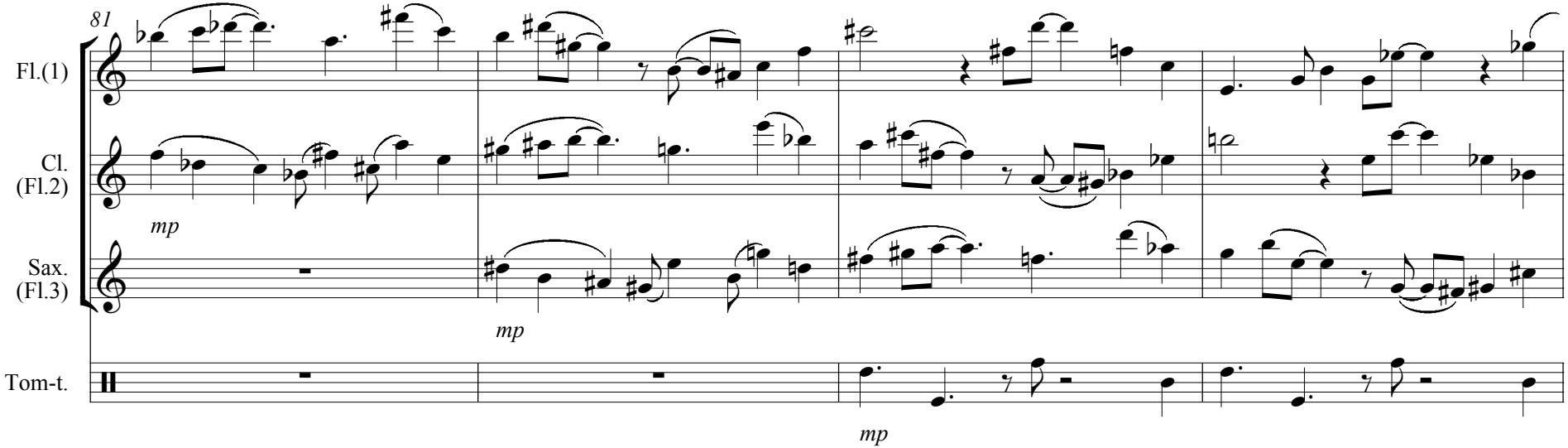
Fl.(1)
mp
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
3
3
Vln
Vla
Vc.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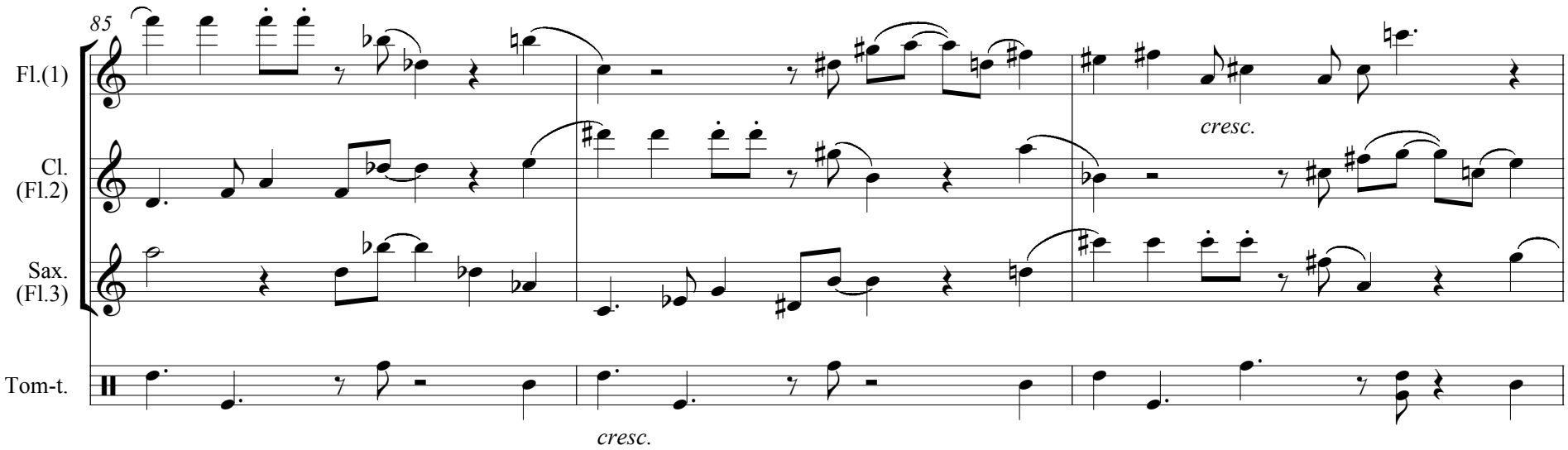
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
mp
mp
mp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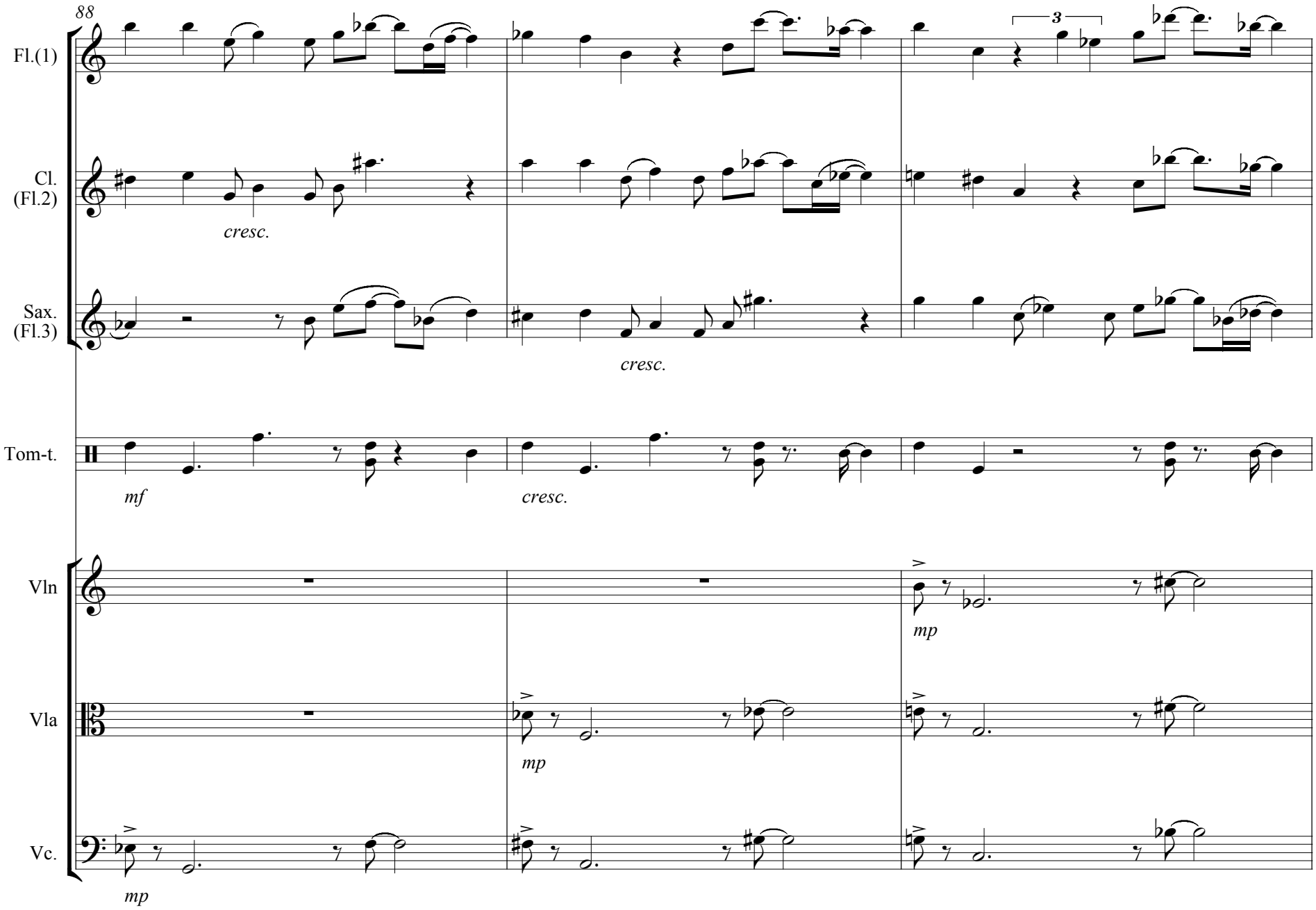
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
cresc.
cresc.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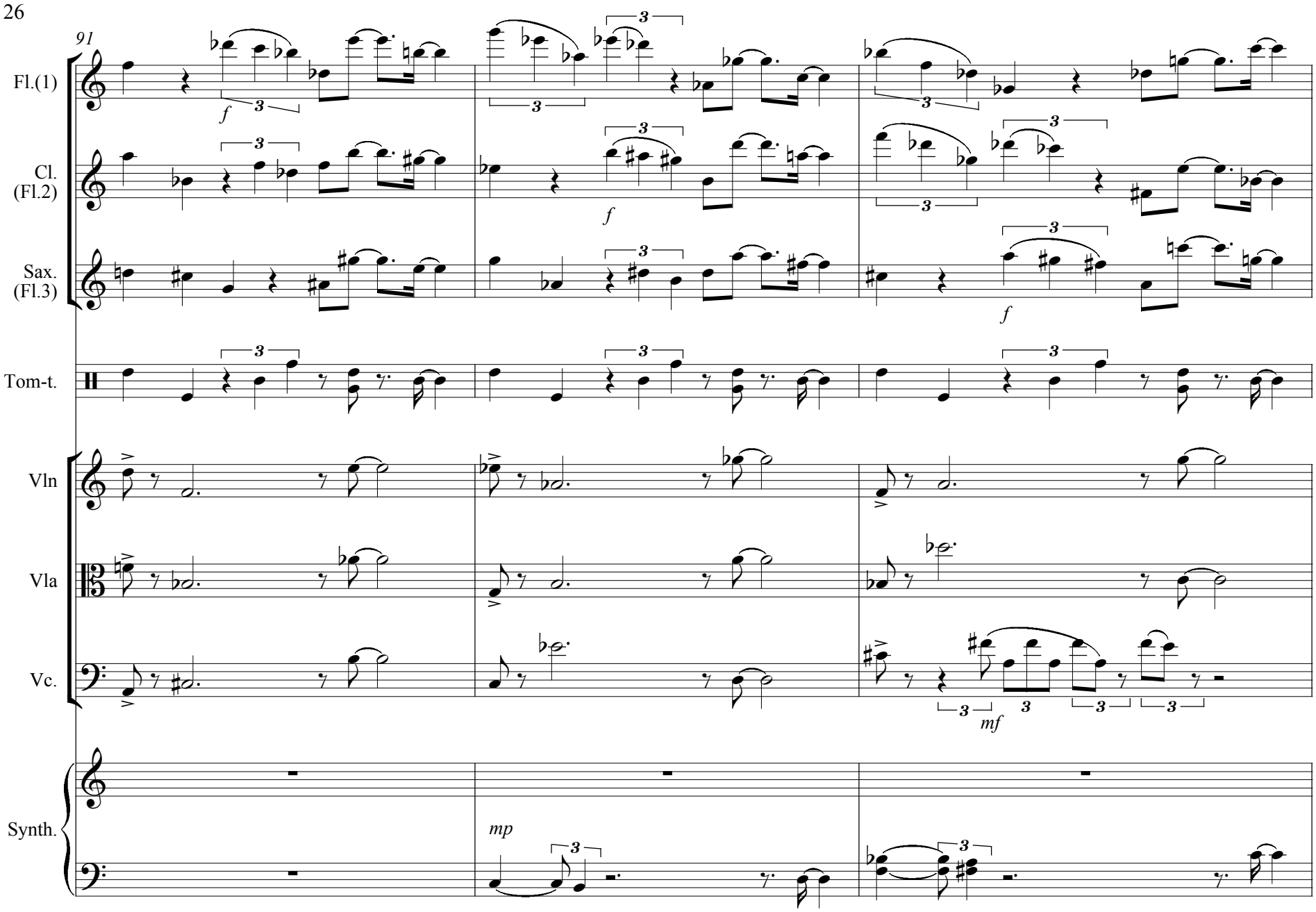
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
cresc.
Sax.
(Fl.3)
cresc.
Tom-t.
mf
cresc.
Vln
mp
Vla
mp
Vc.
mp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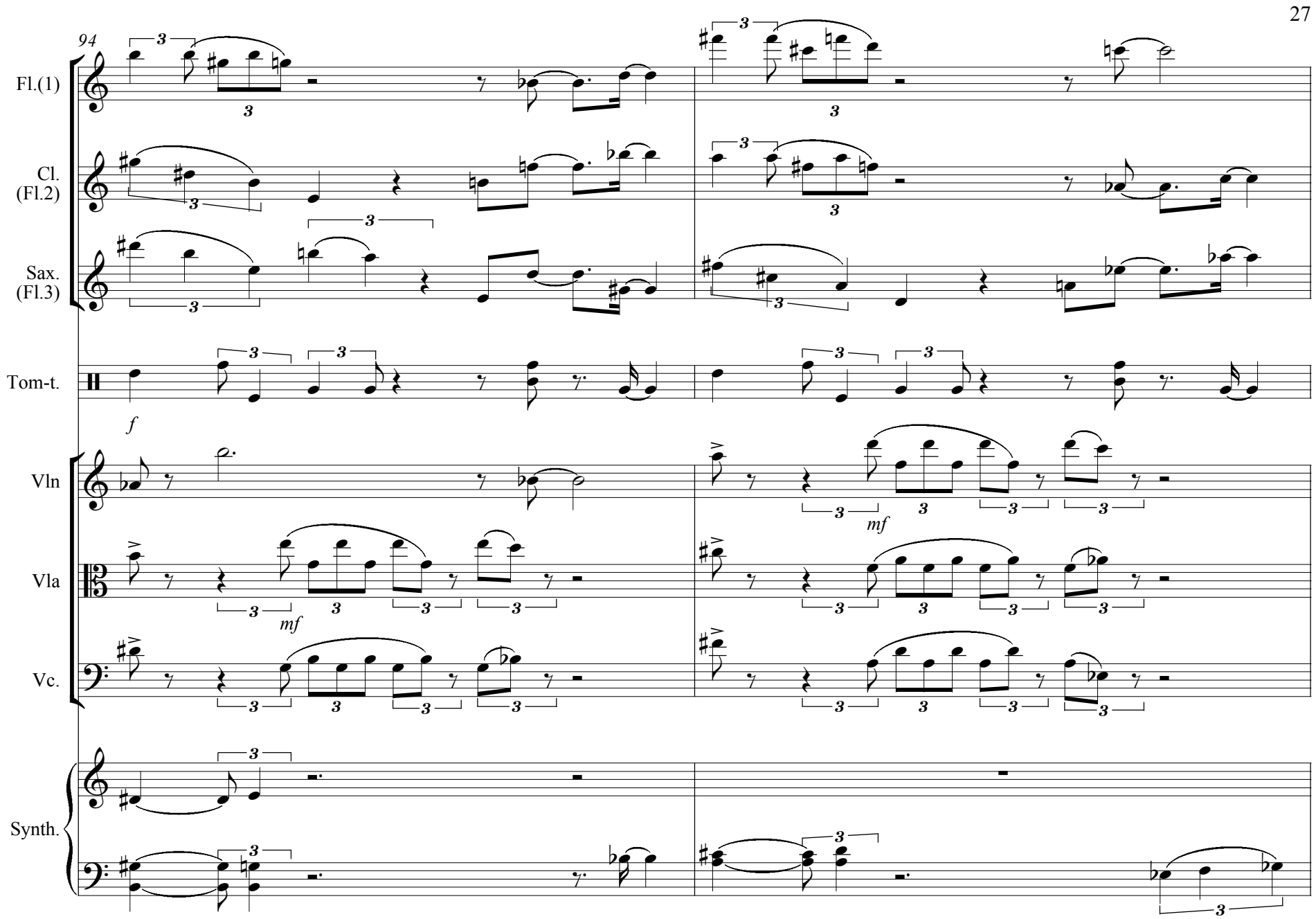
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
f
f
f
mf
mp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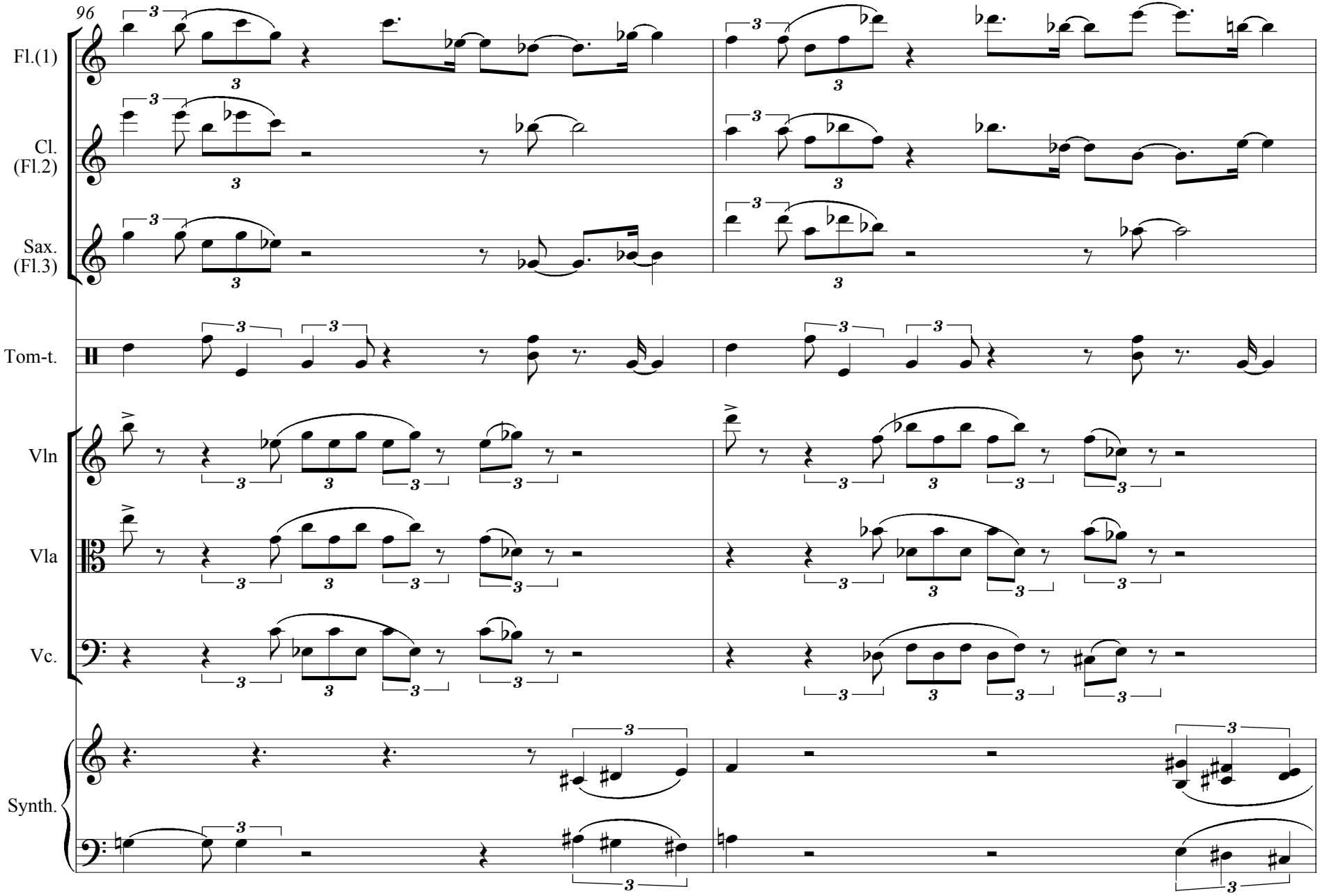
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
f
mf
mf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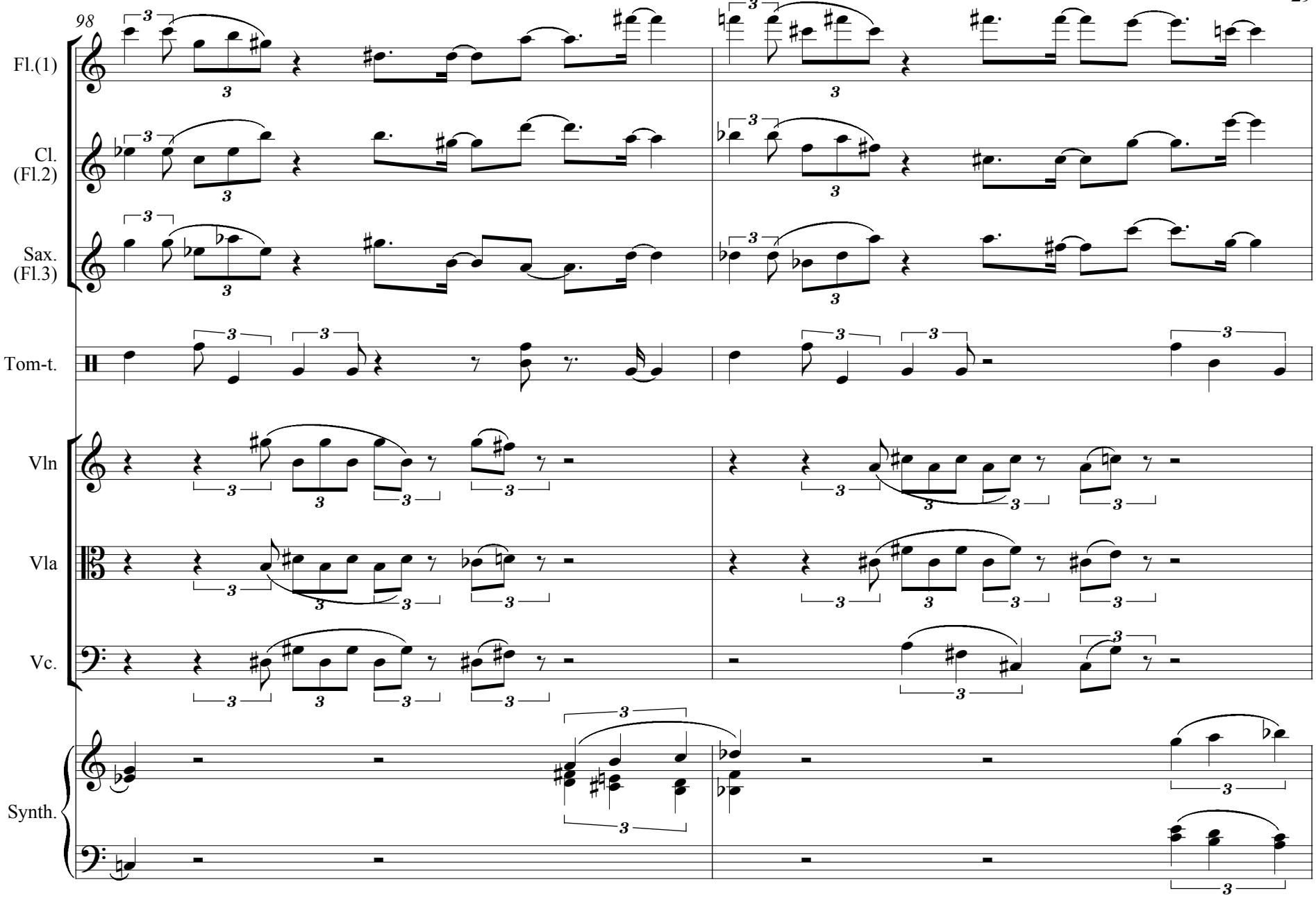
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.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Cl.
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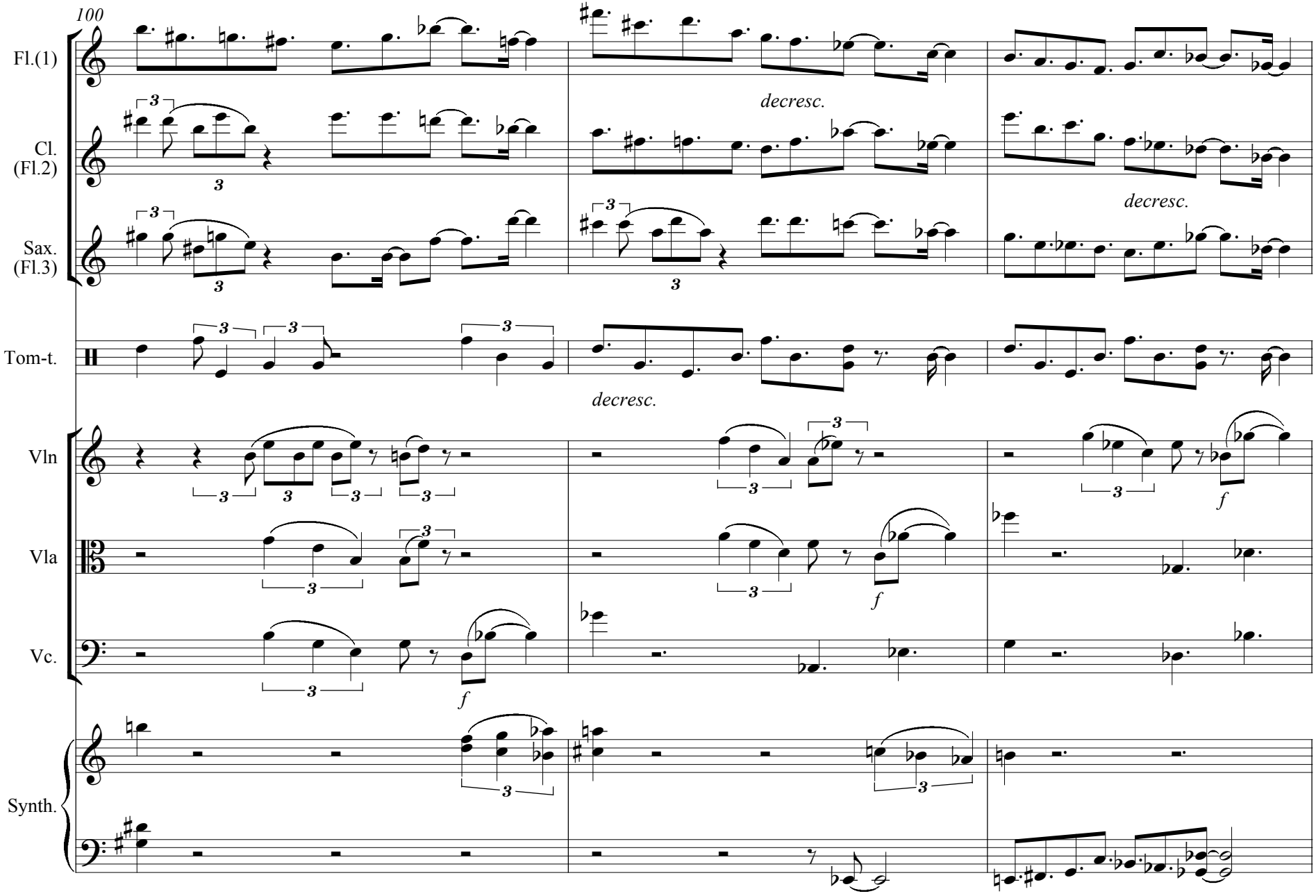
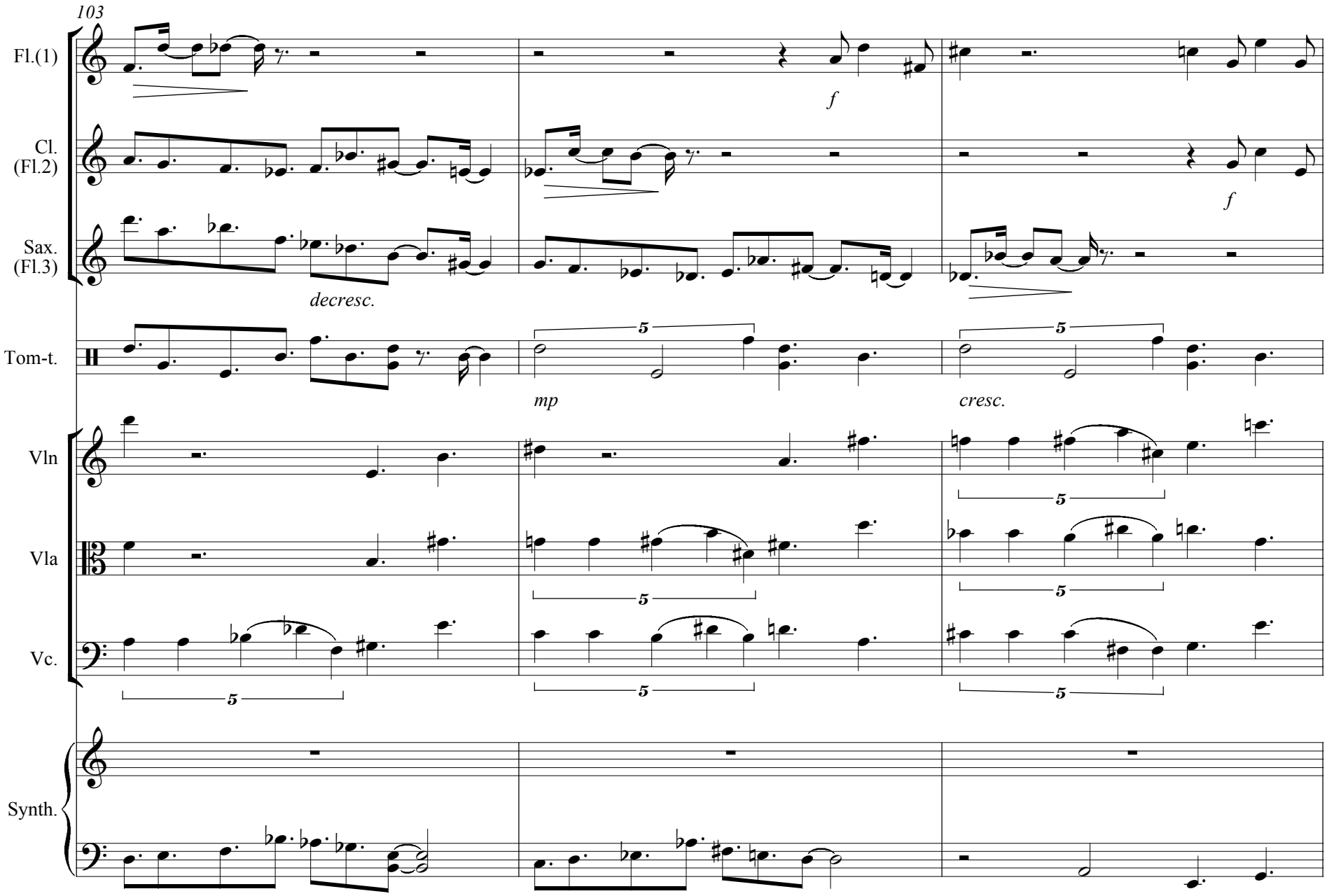
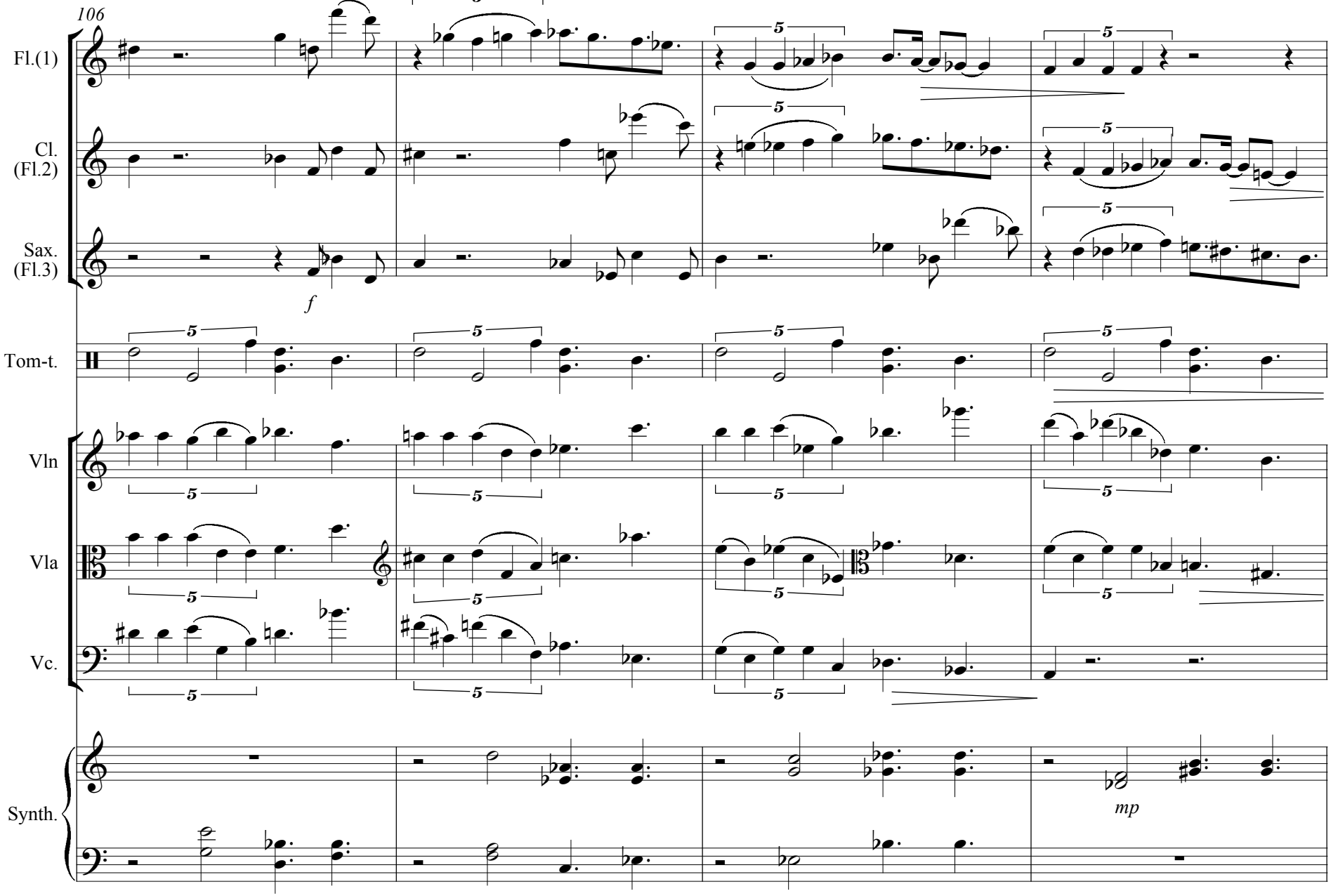
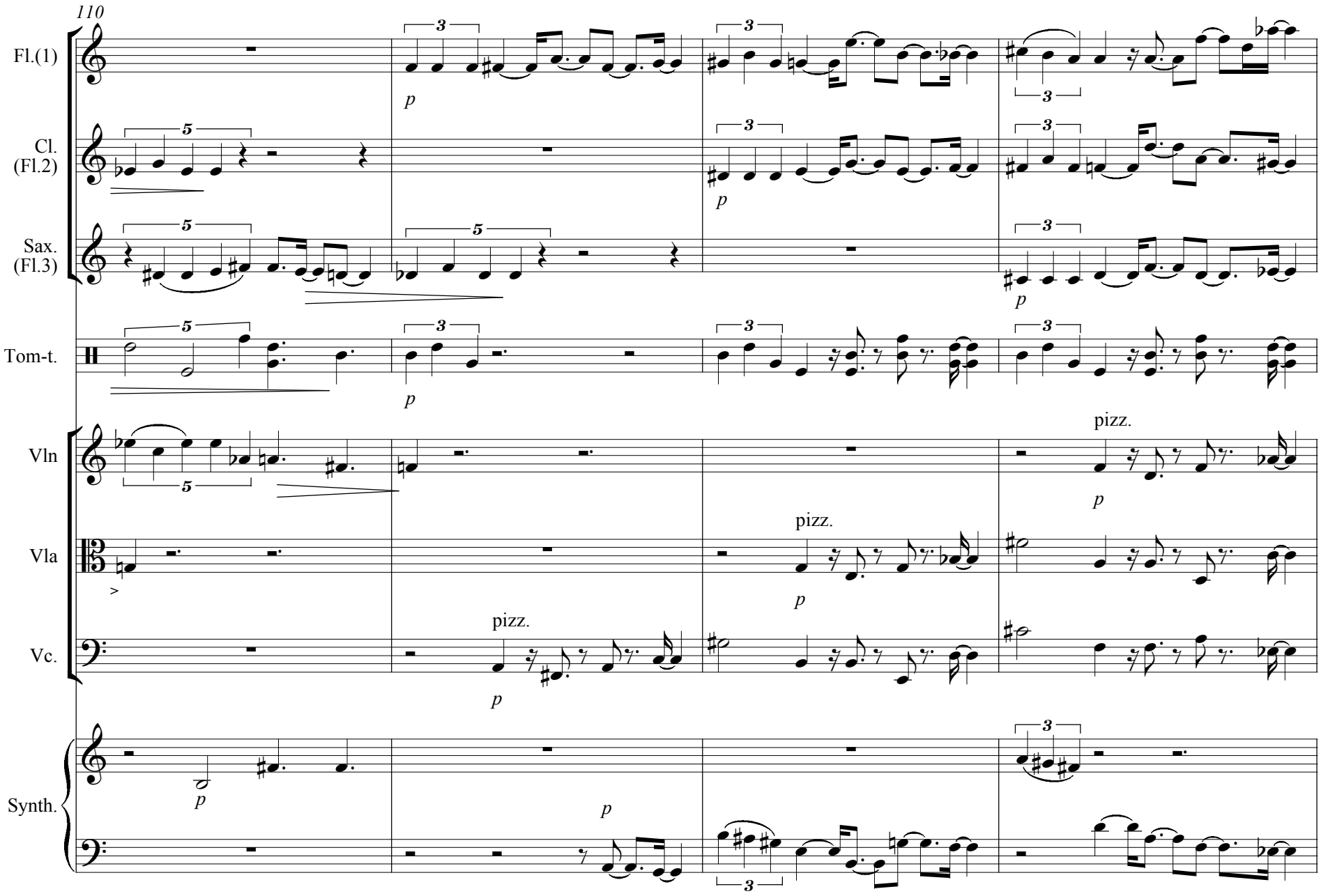
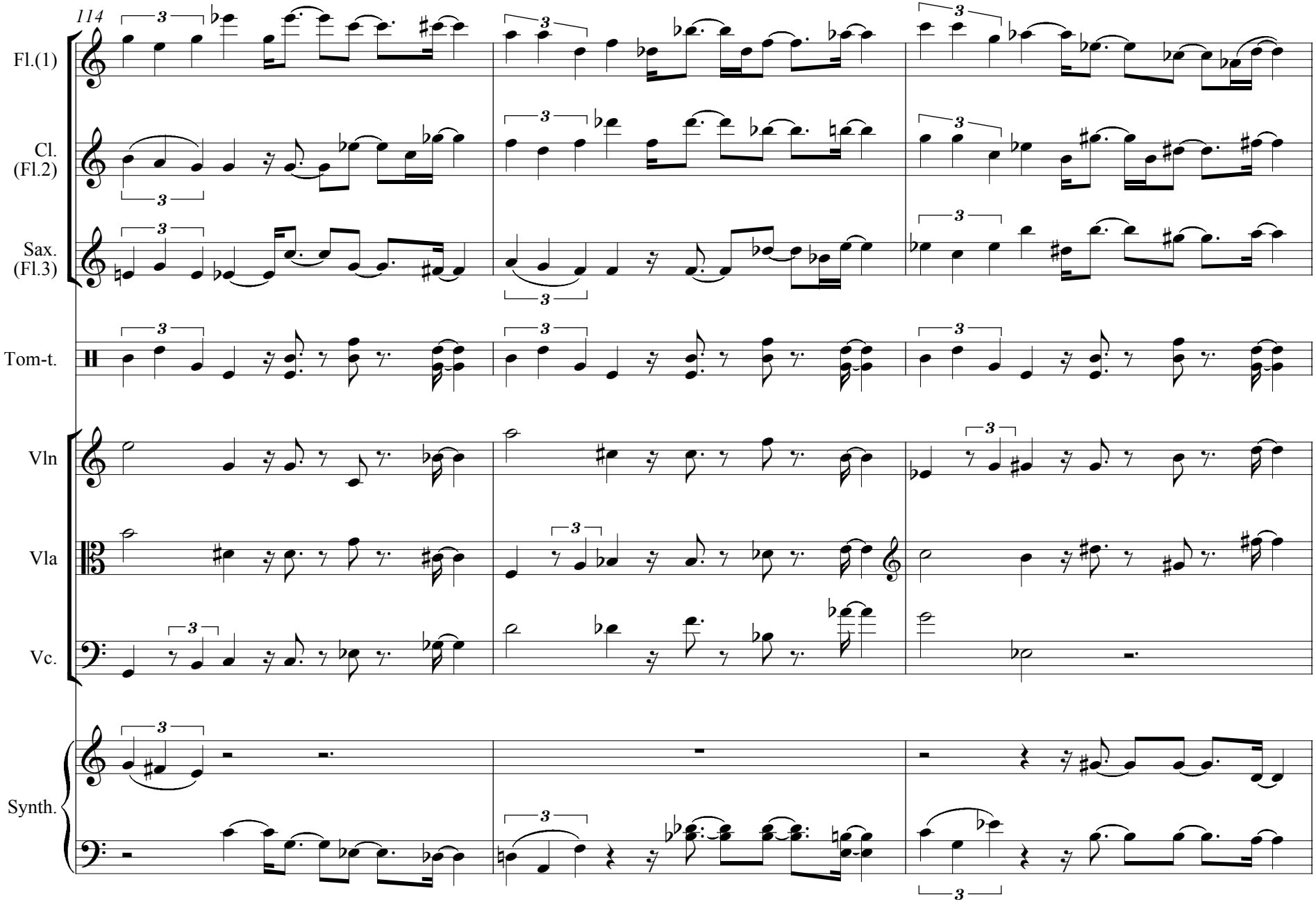
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.

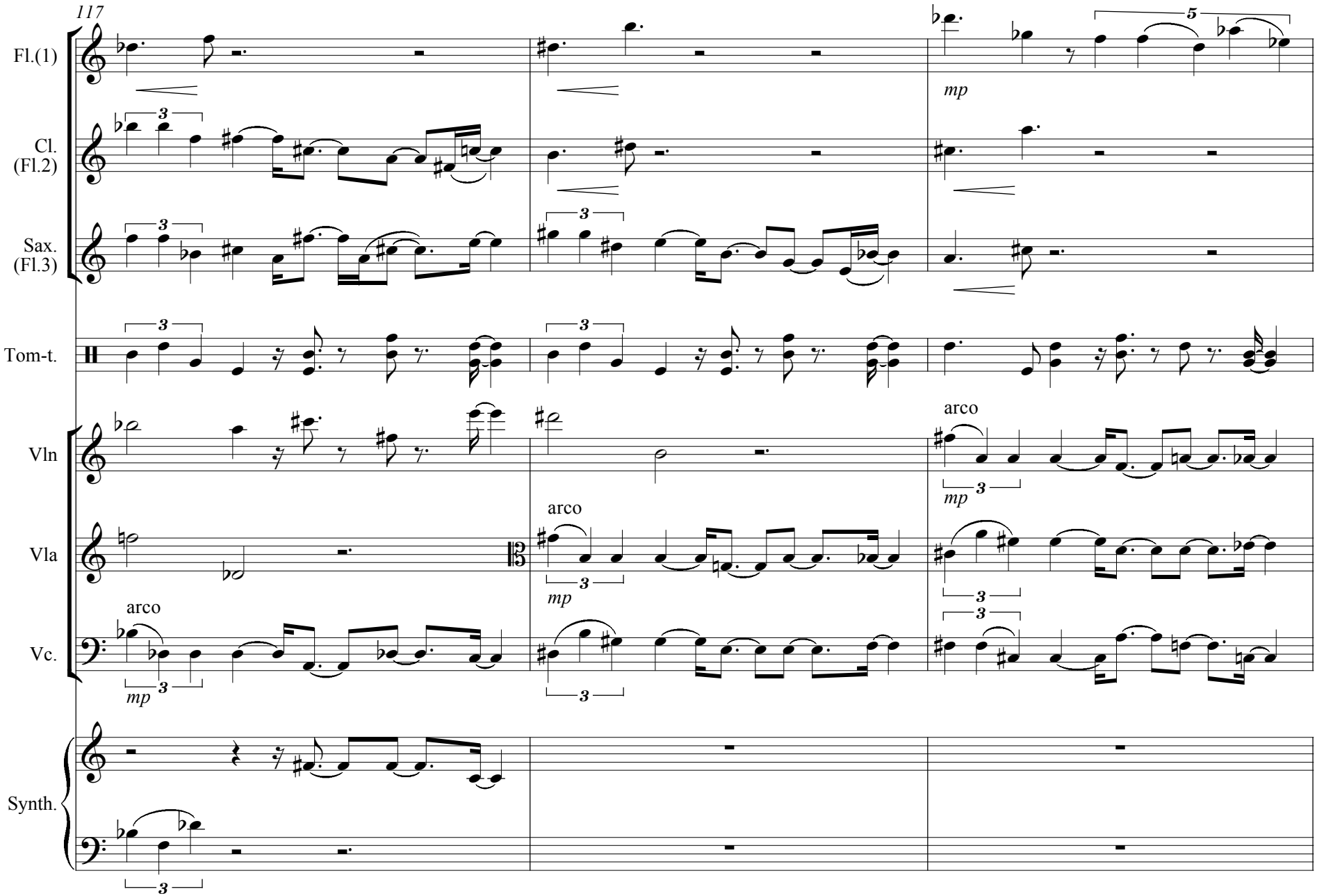

100
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
decresc.
decresc.
decresc.
f
f
f


103
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
f
f
decresc.
mp
cresc.
5


106
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
f
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
mp


110
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
pizz.
p


114
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.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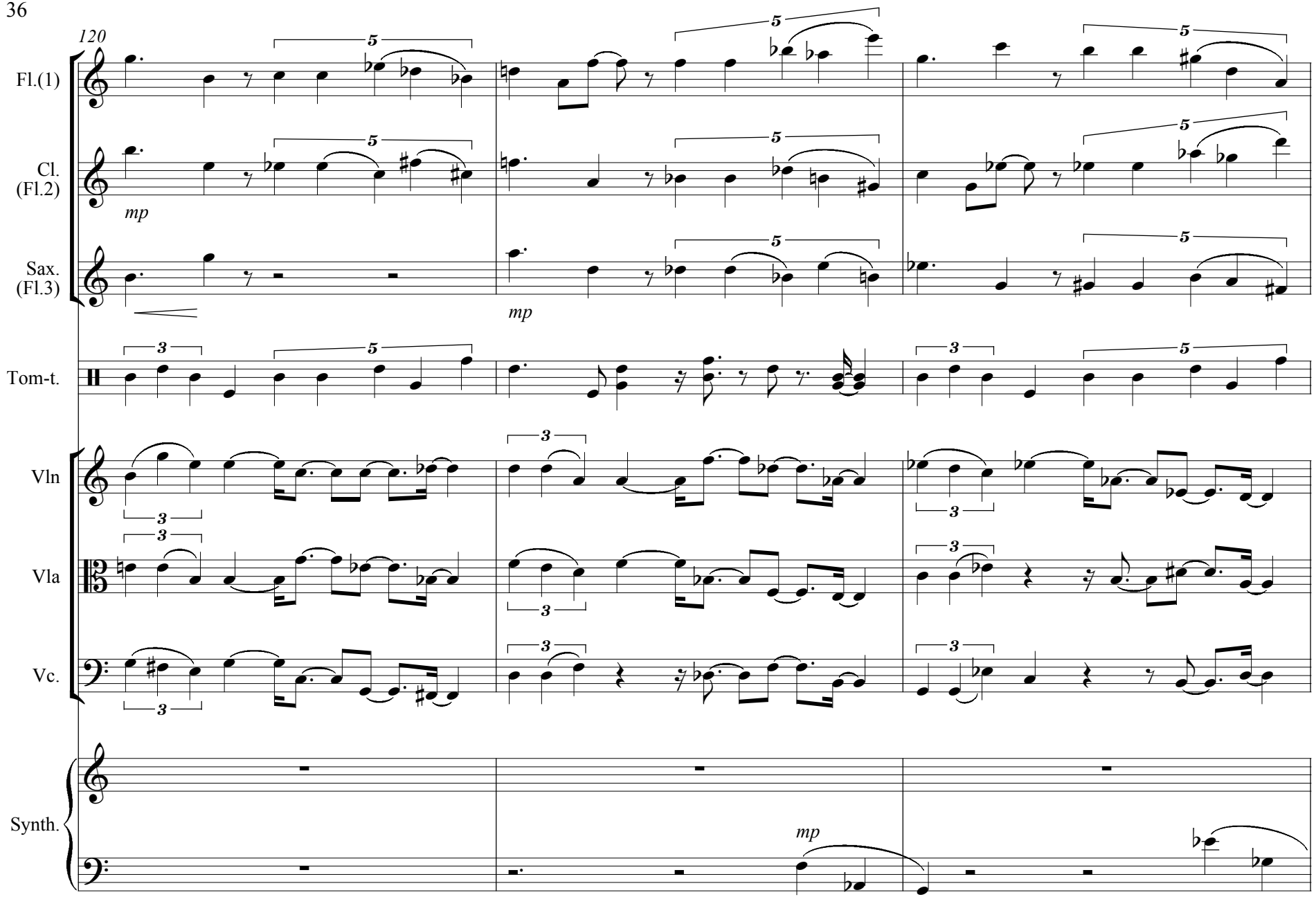
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
Sax.
(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
Vln
Vla
Vc.
Synth.
mp
arco


120
Fl.(1)
Cl.
(Fl.2)
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Vla
Vc.
Synth.
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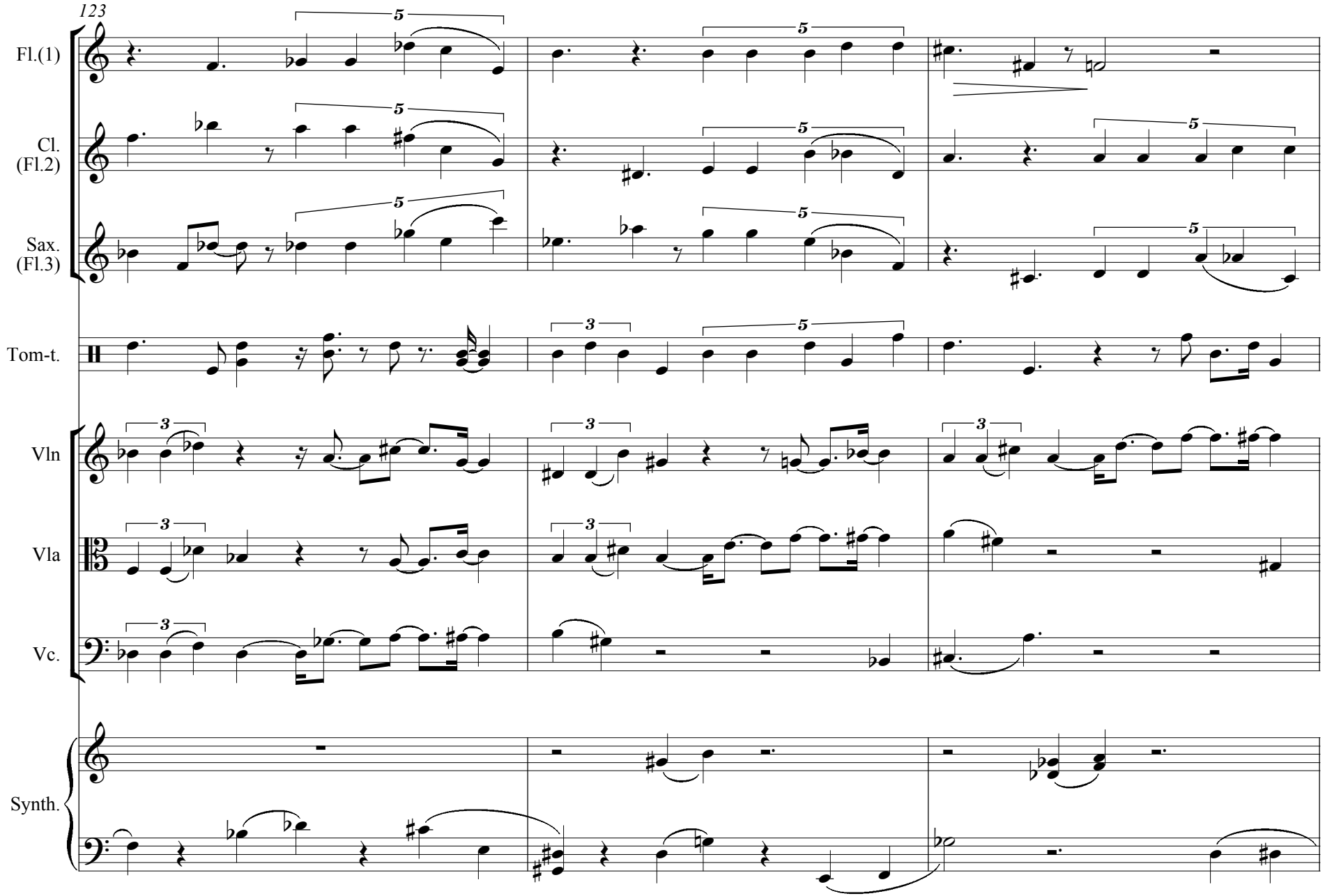
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(Fl.3)
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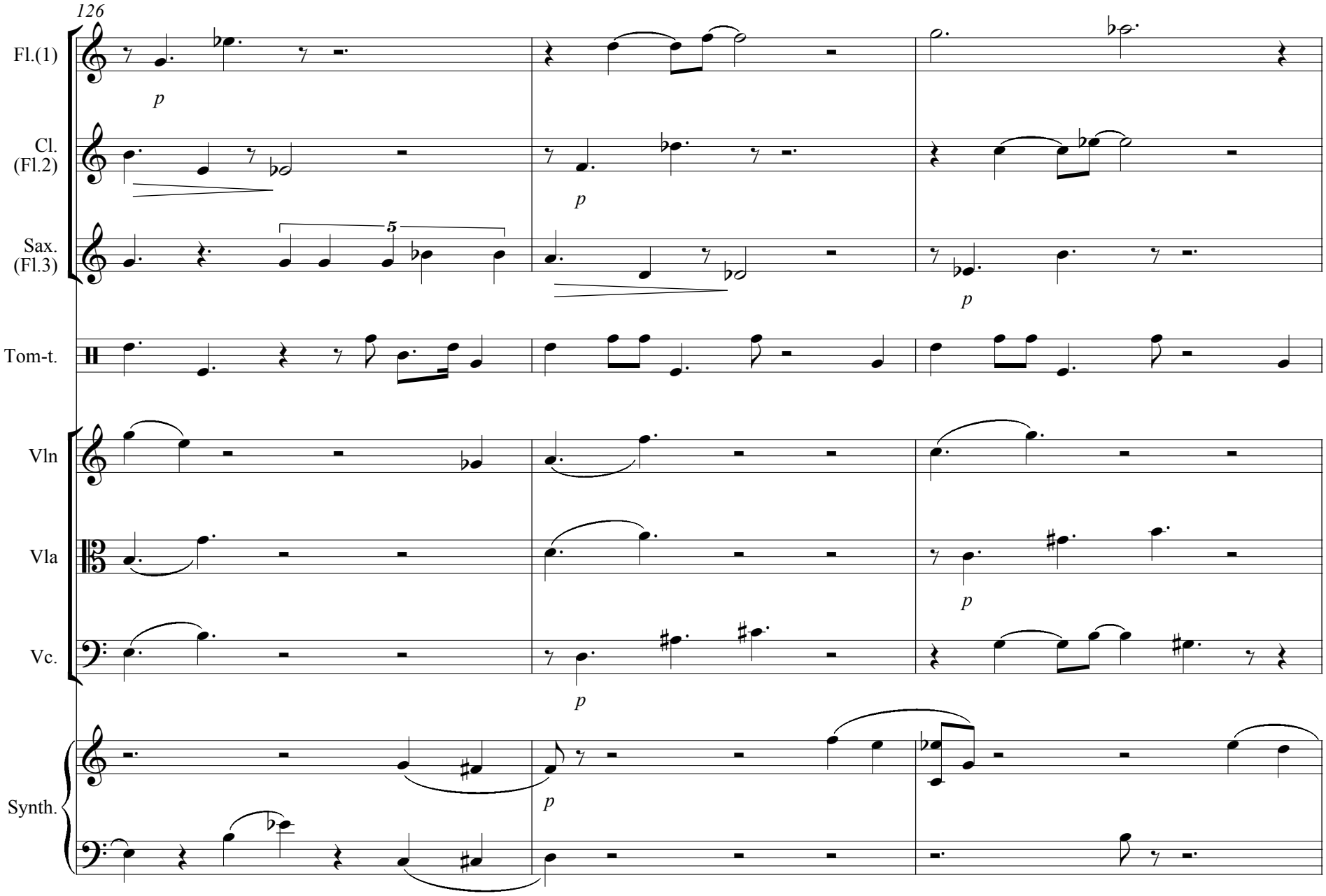
Vla
Vc.
Synth.


126
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(Fl.3)
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Vla
Vc.
Synth.
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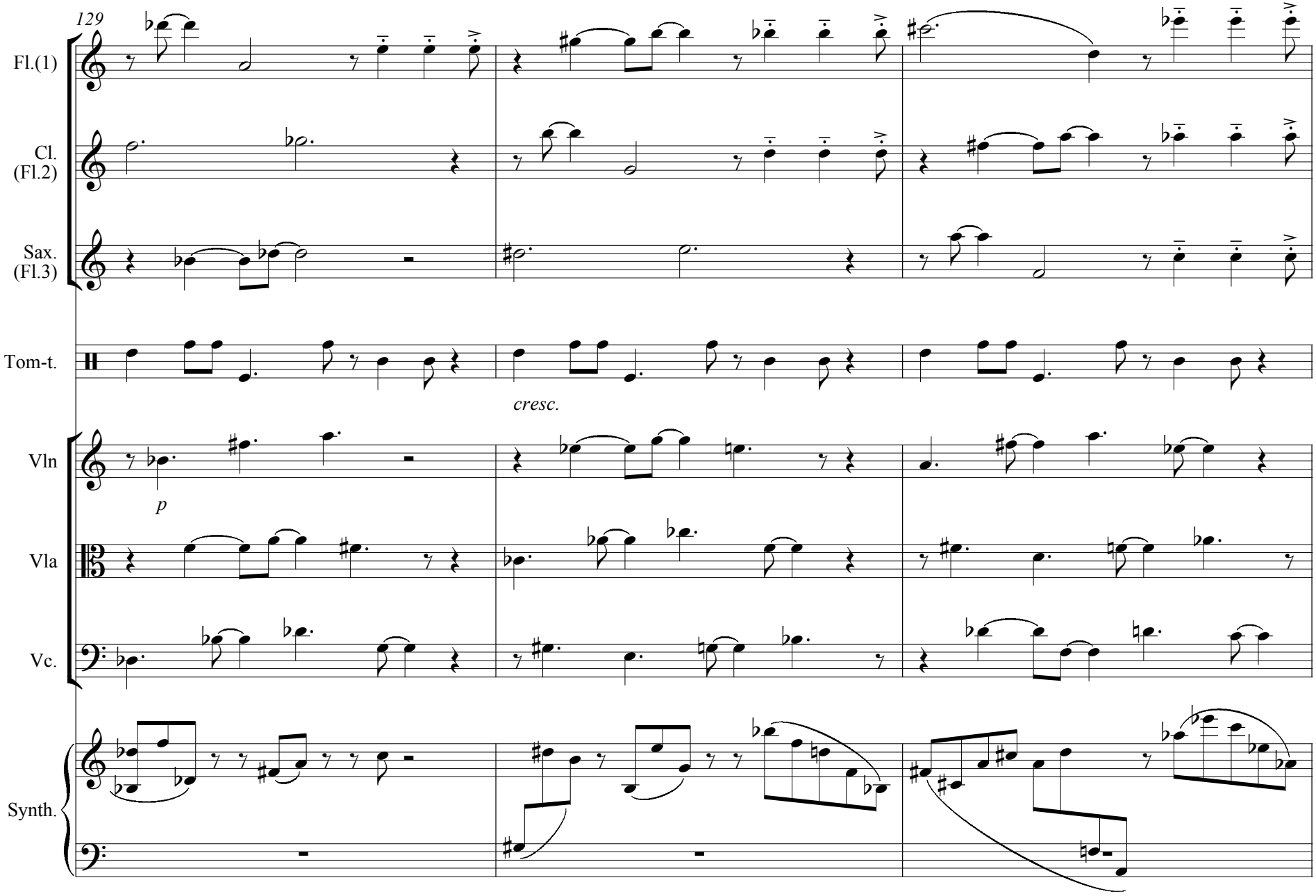
129
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Vln
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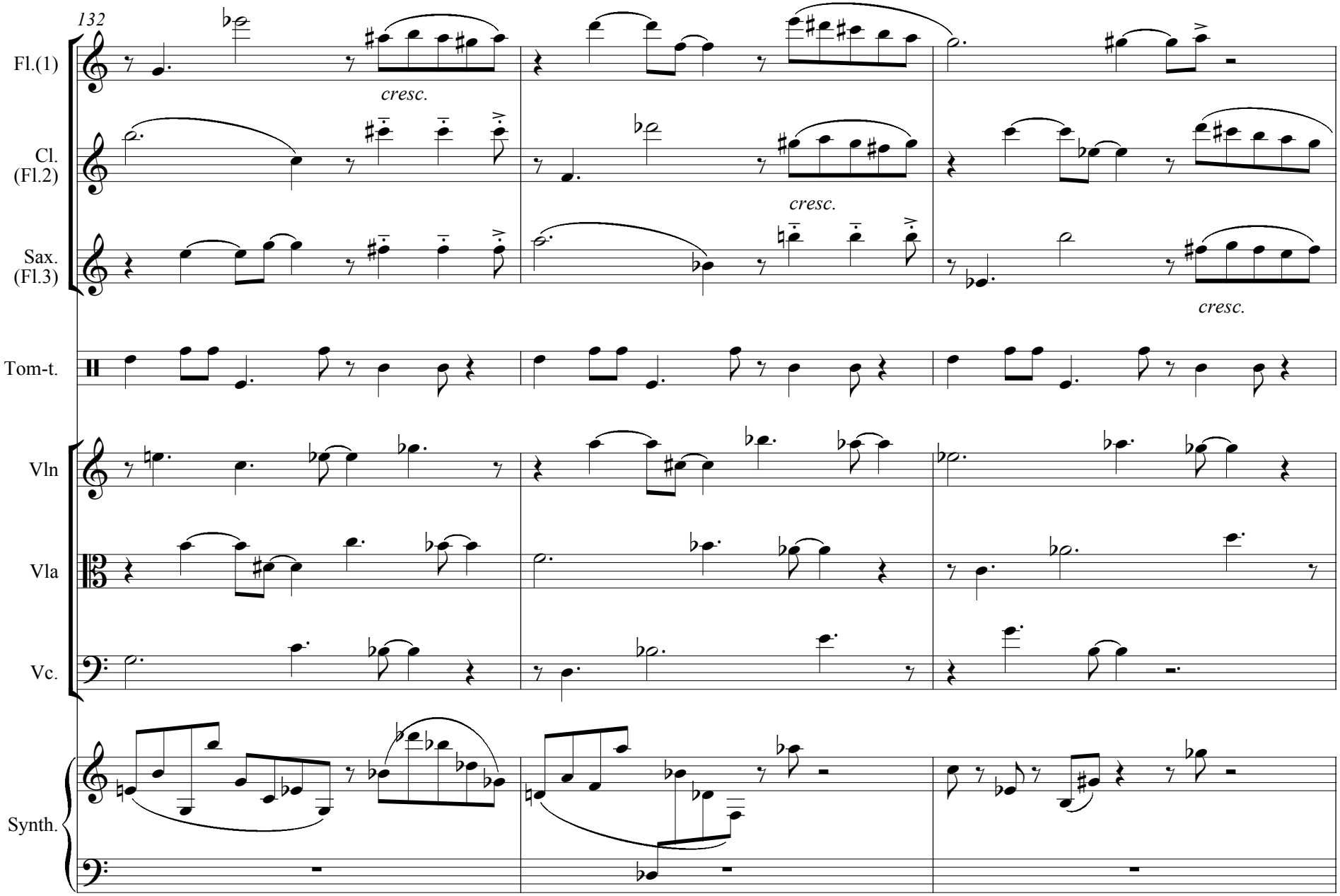
Vla
Vc.
Synth.


132
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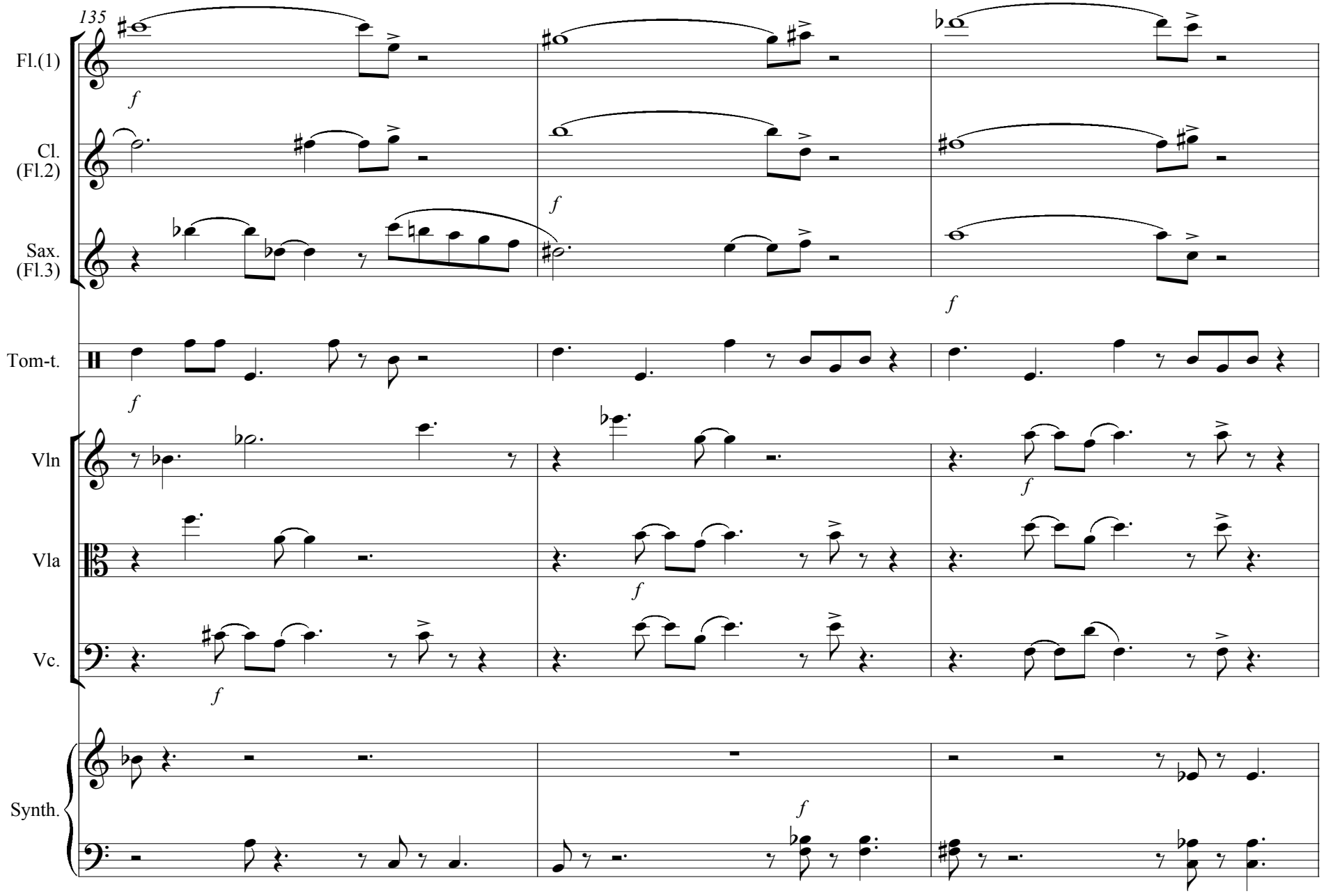
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Synth.
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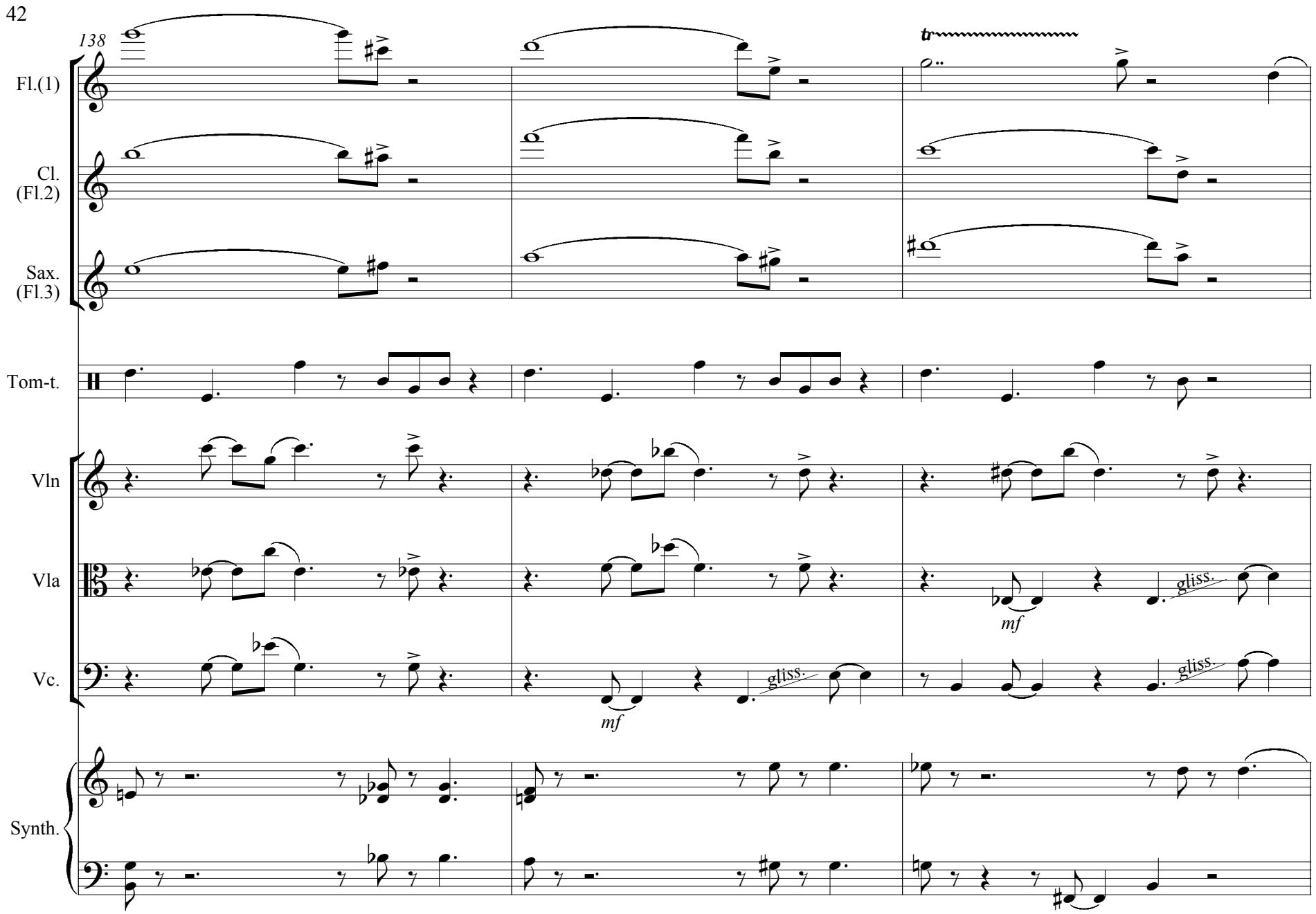
138
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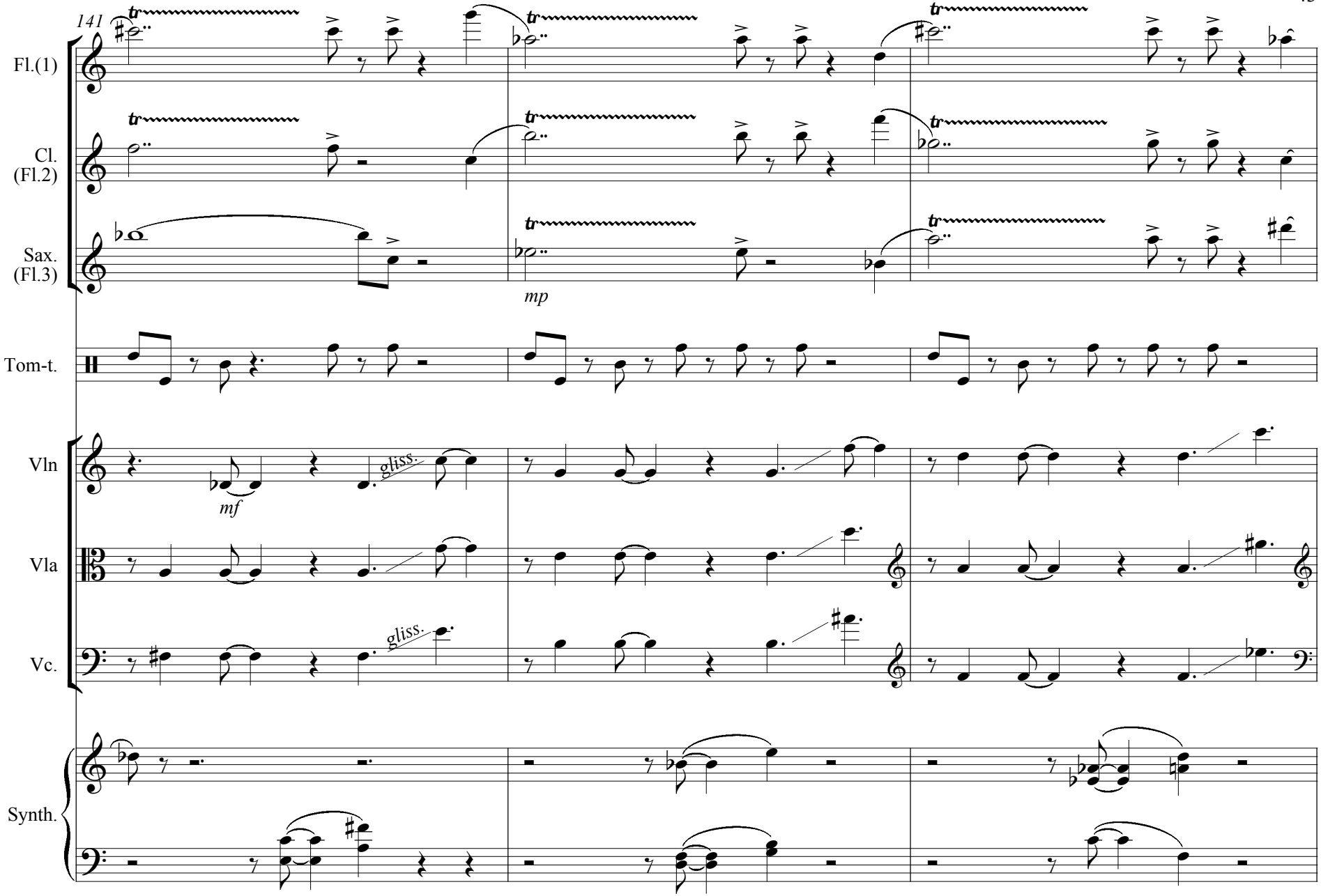
141
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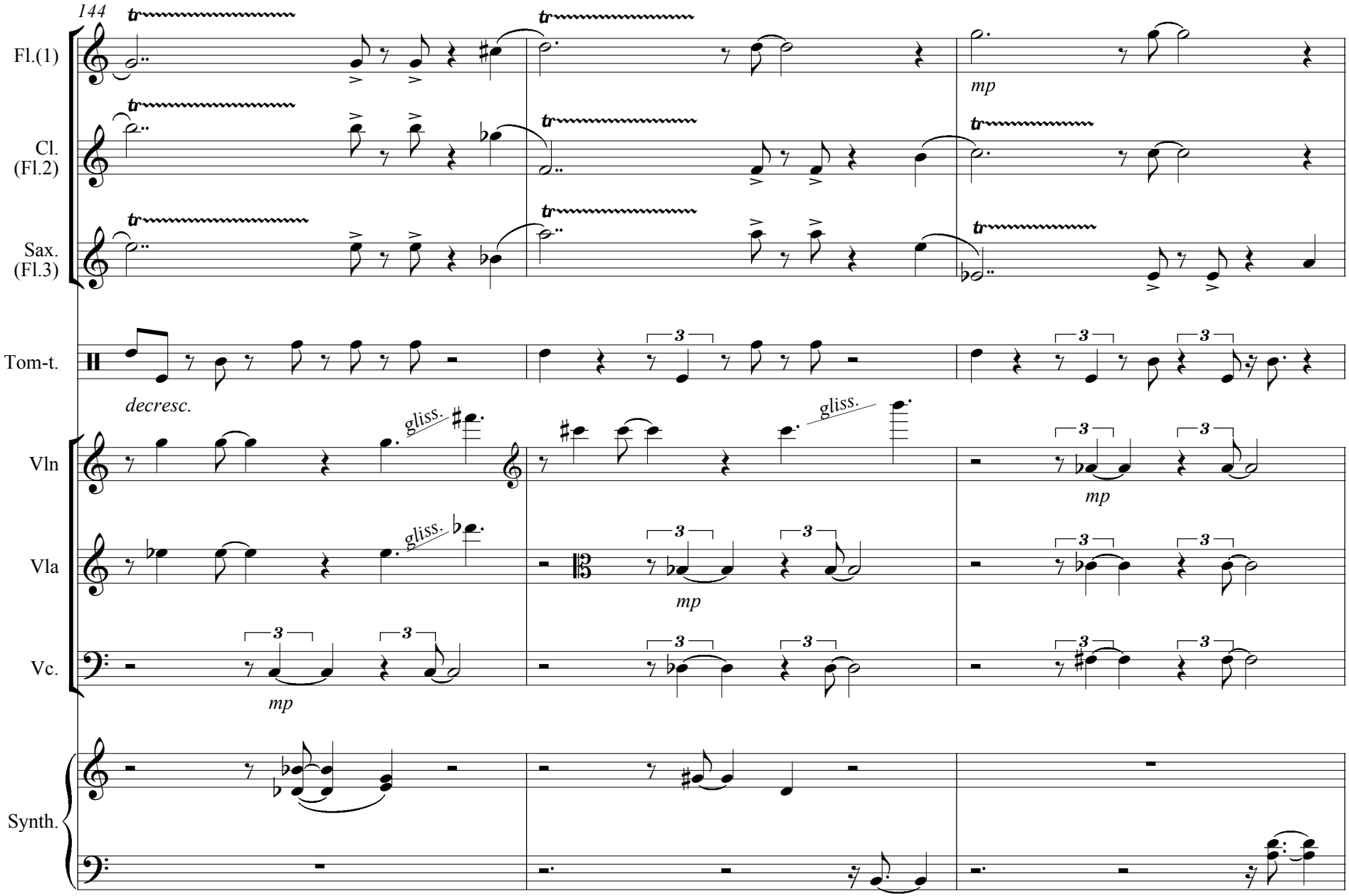
Synth.


144
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(Fl.3)
Tom-t.
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Vla
Vc.
Synth.
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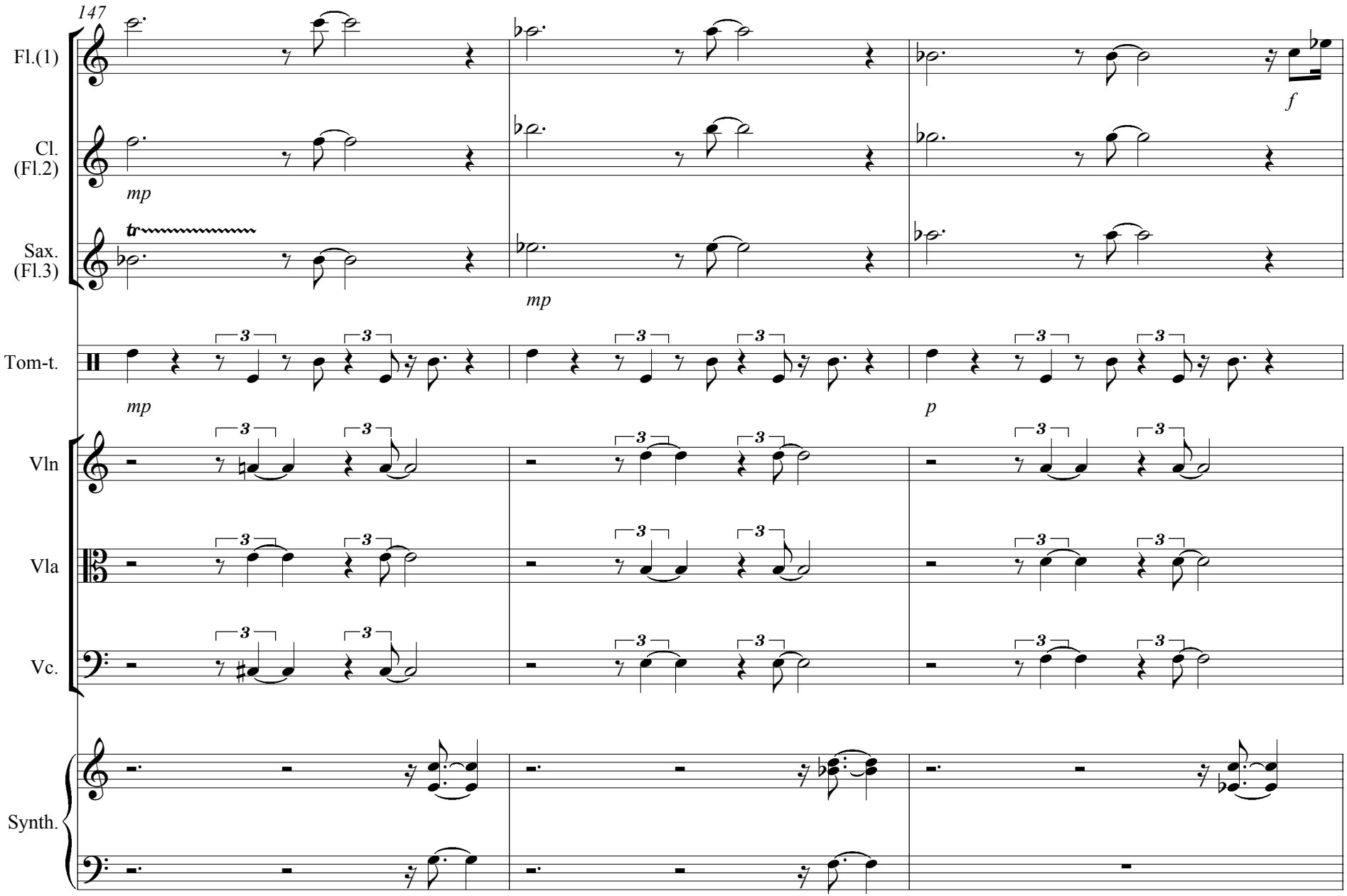
147
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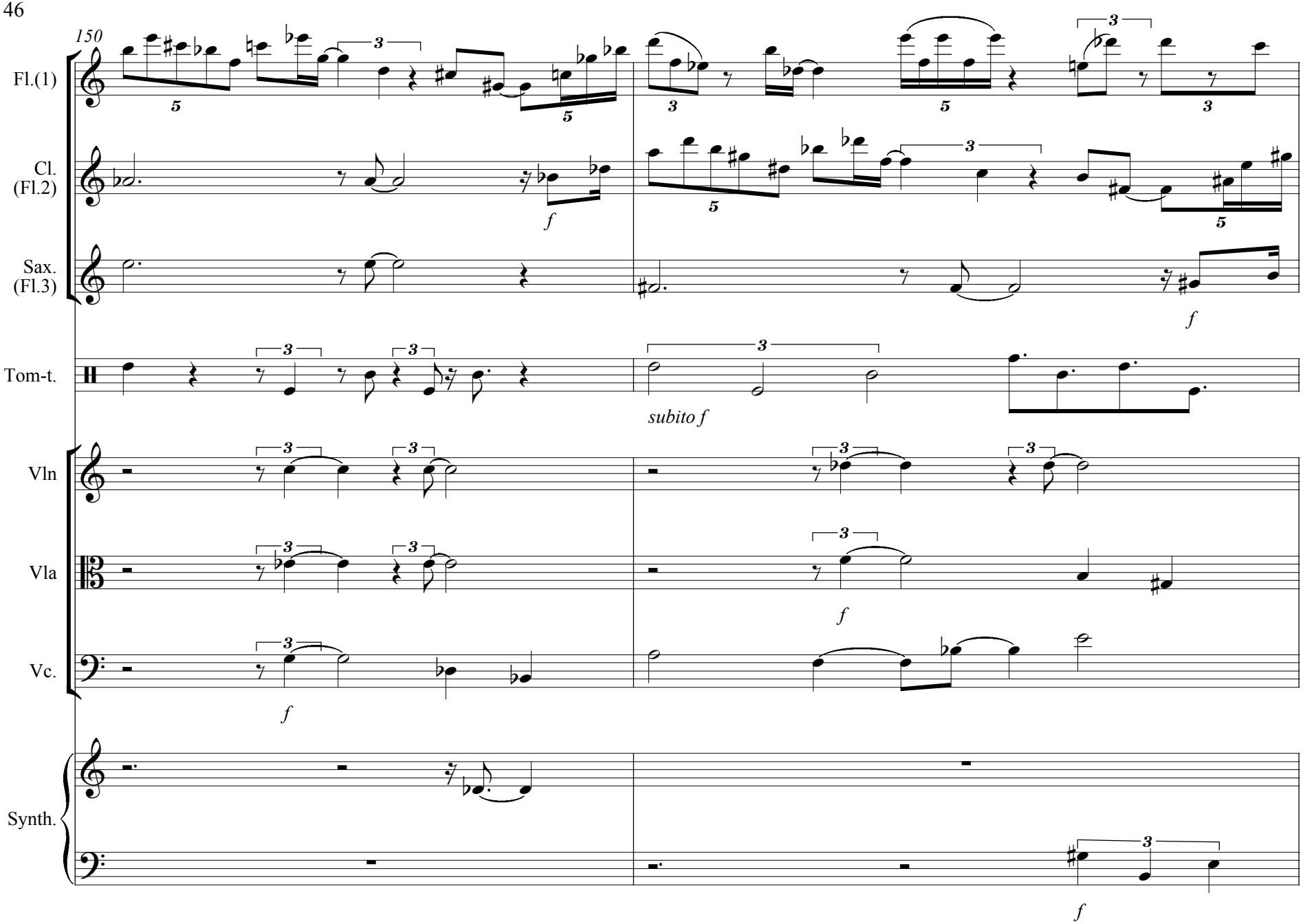
150
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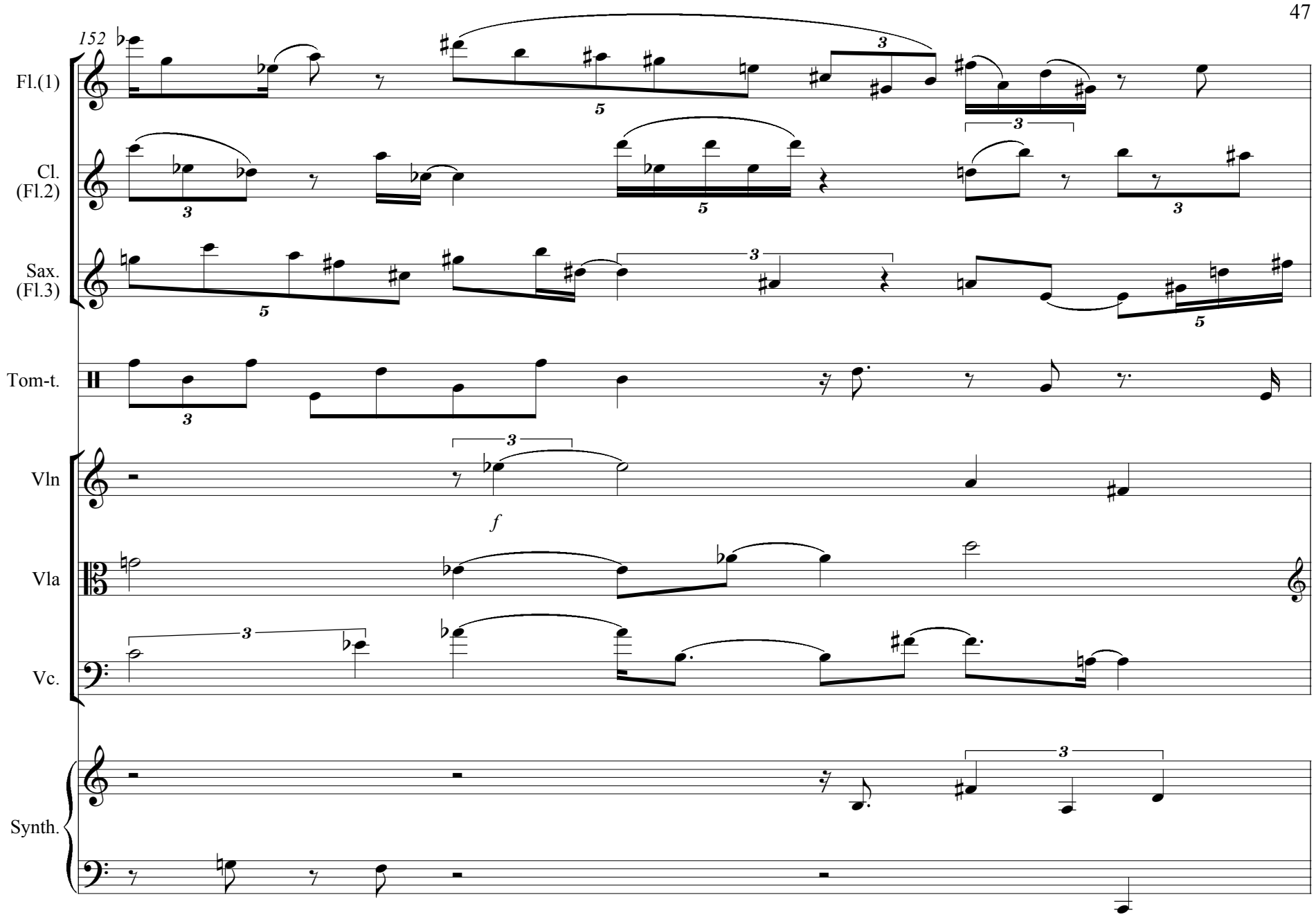
152
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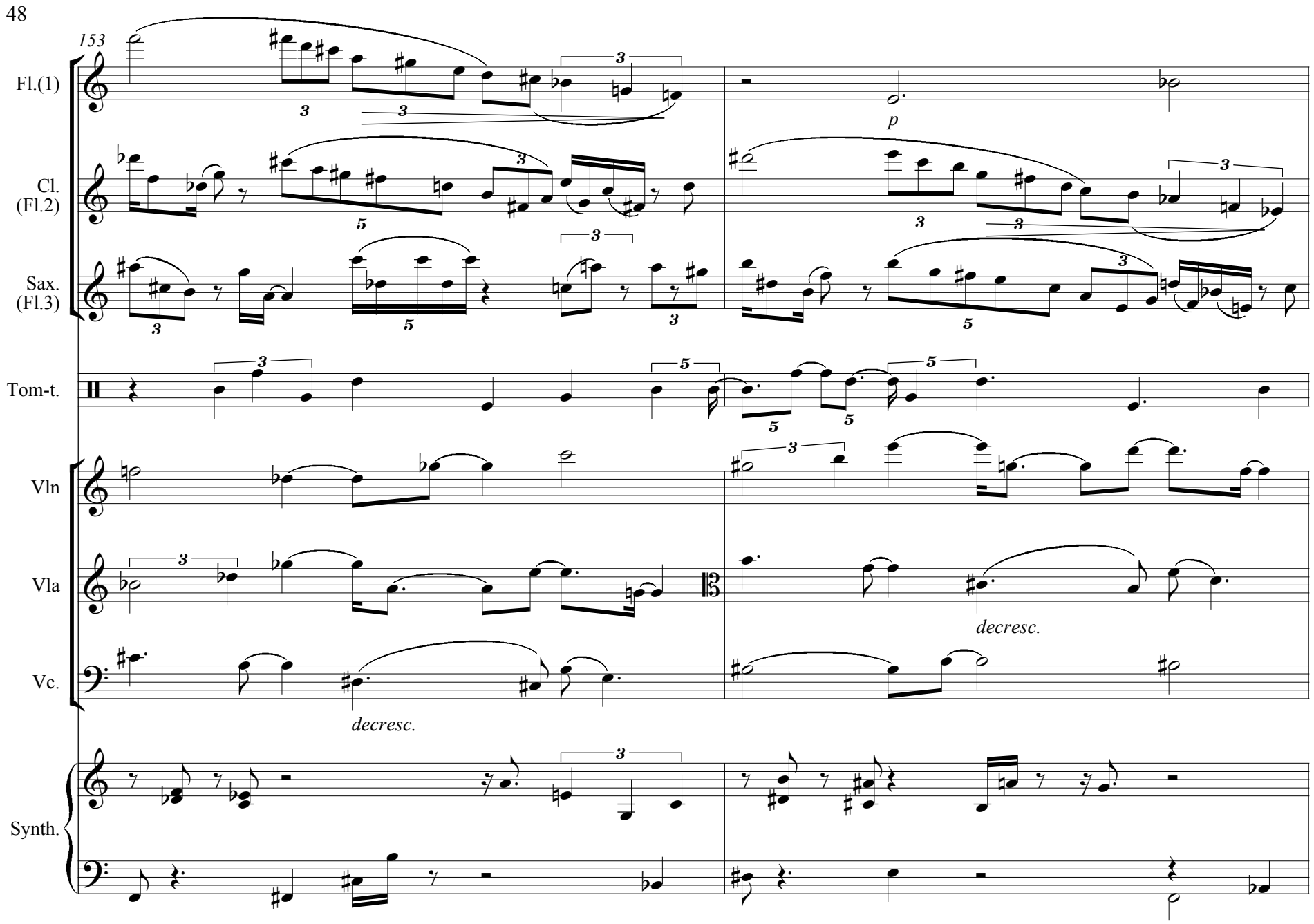
153
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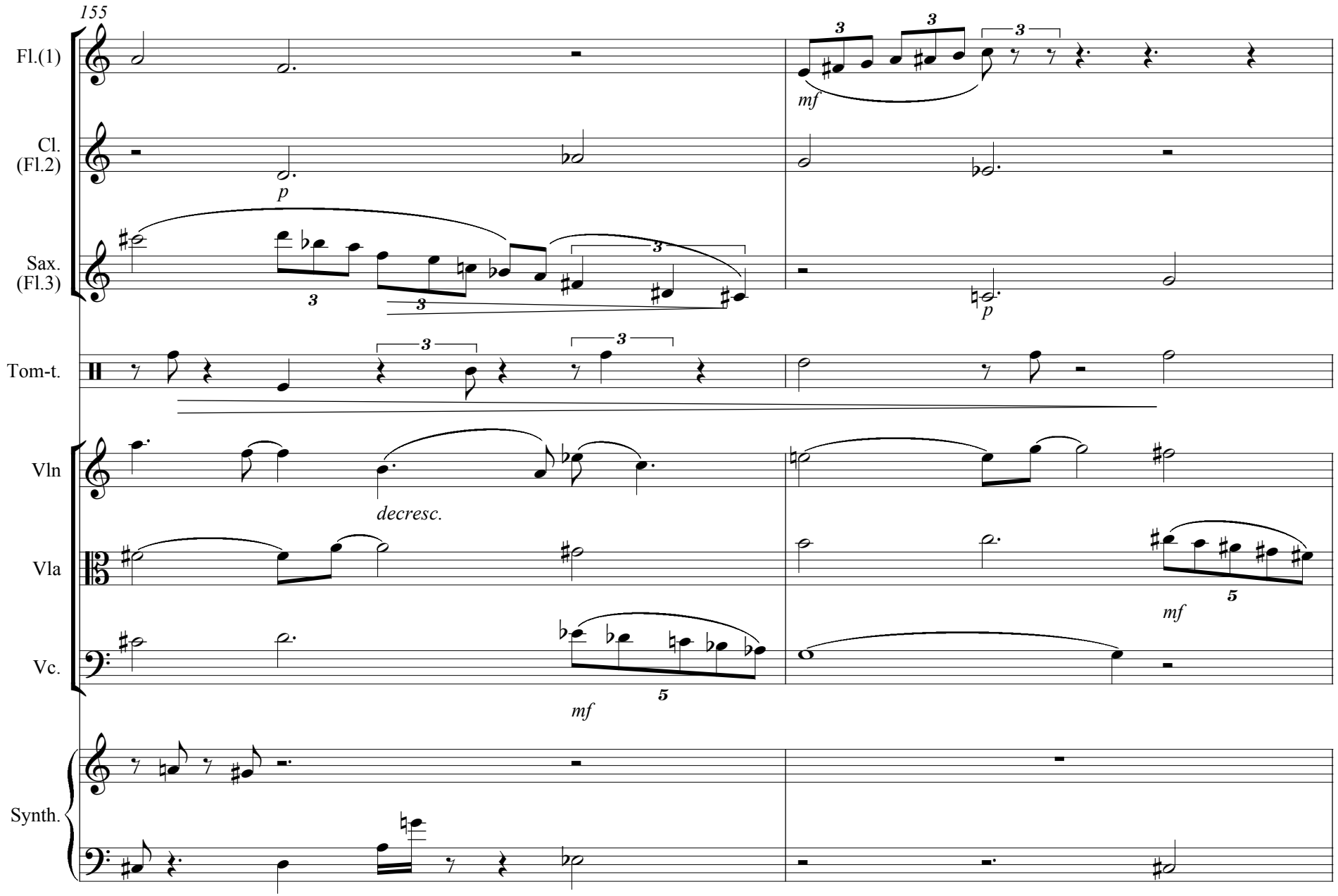
155
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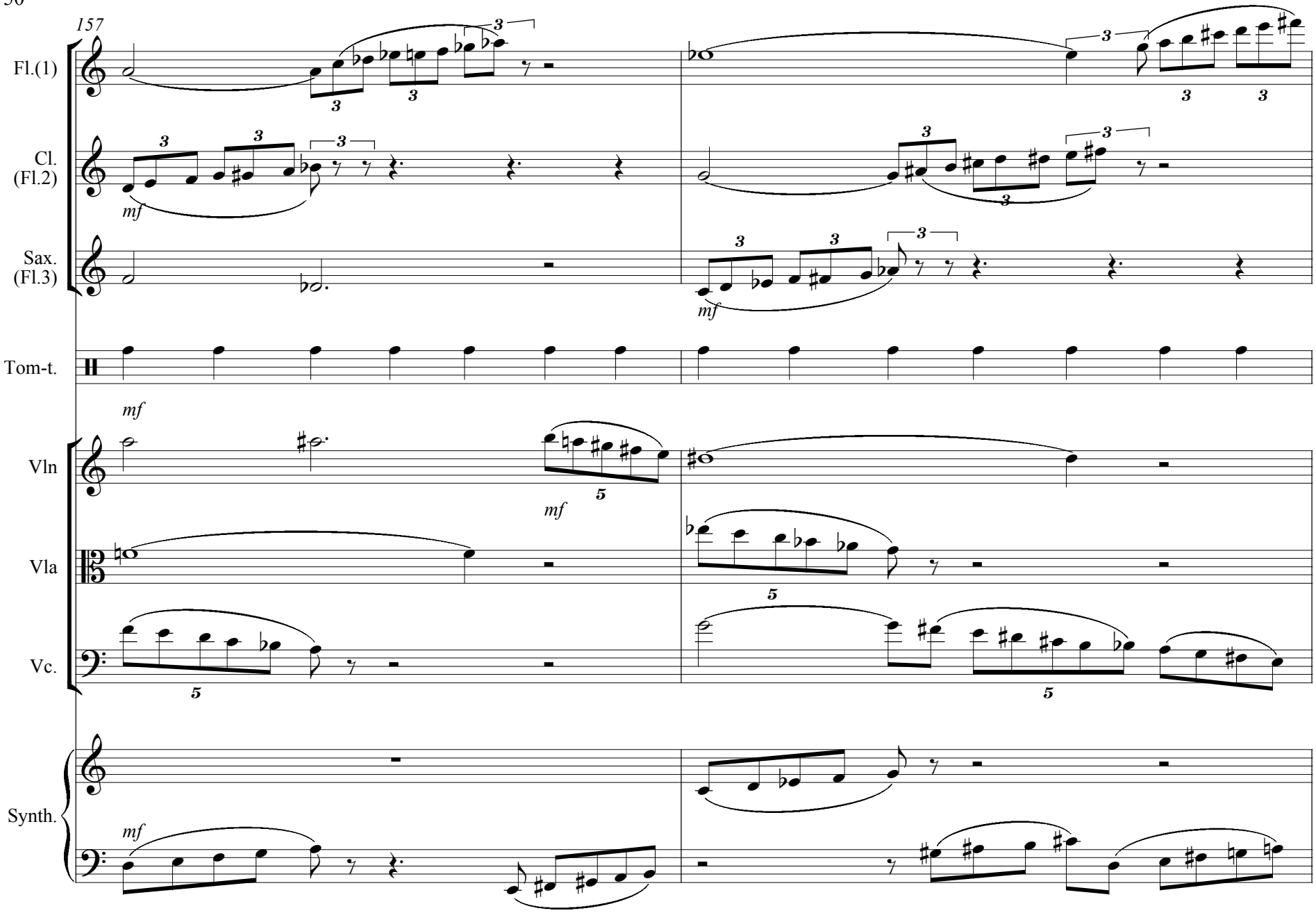
157
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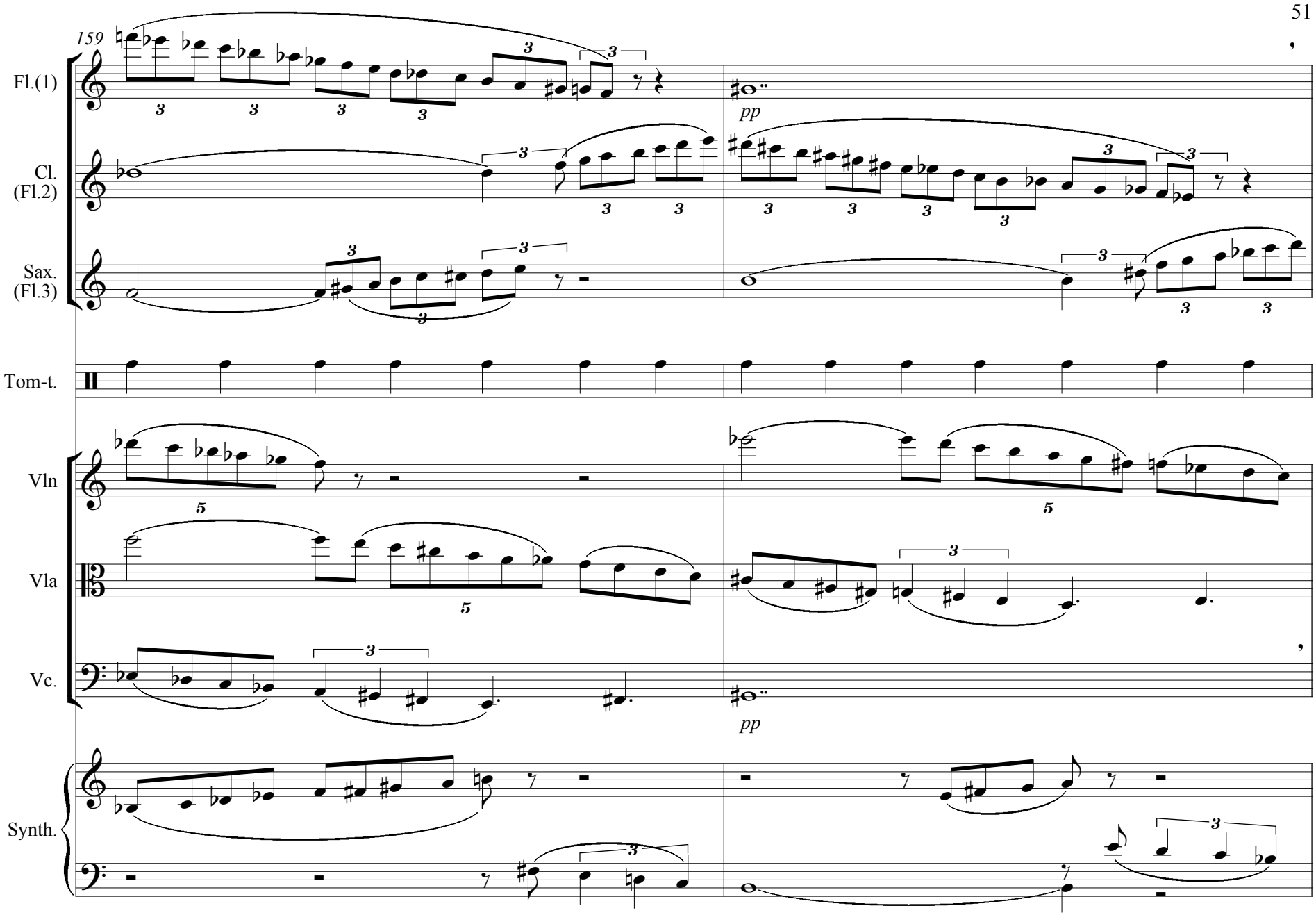
159
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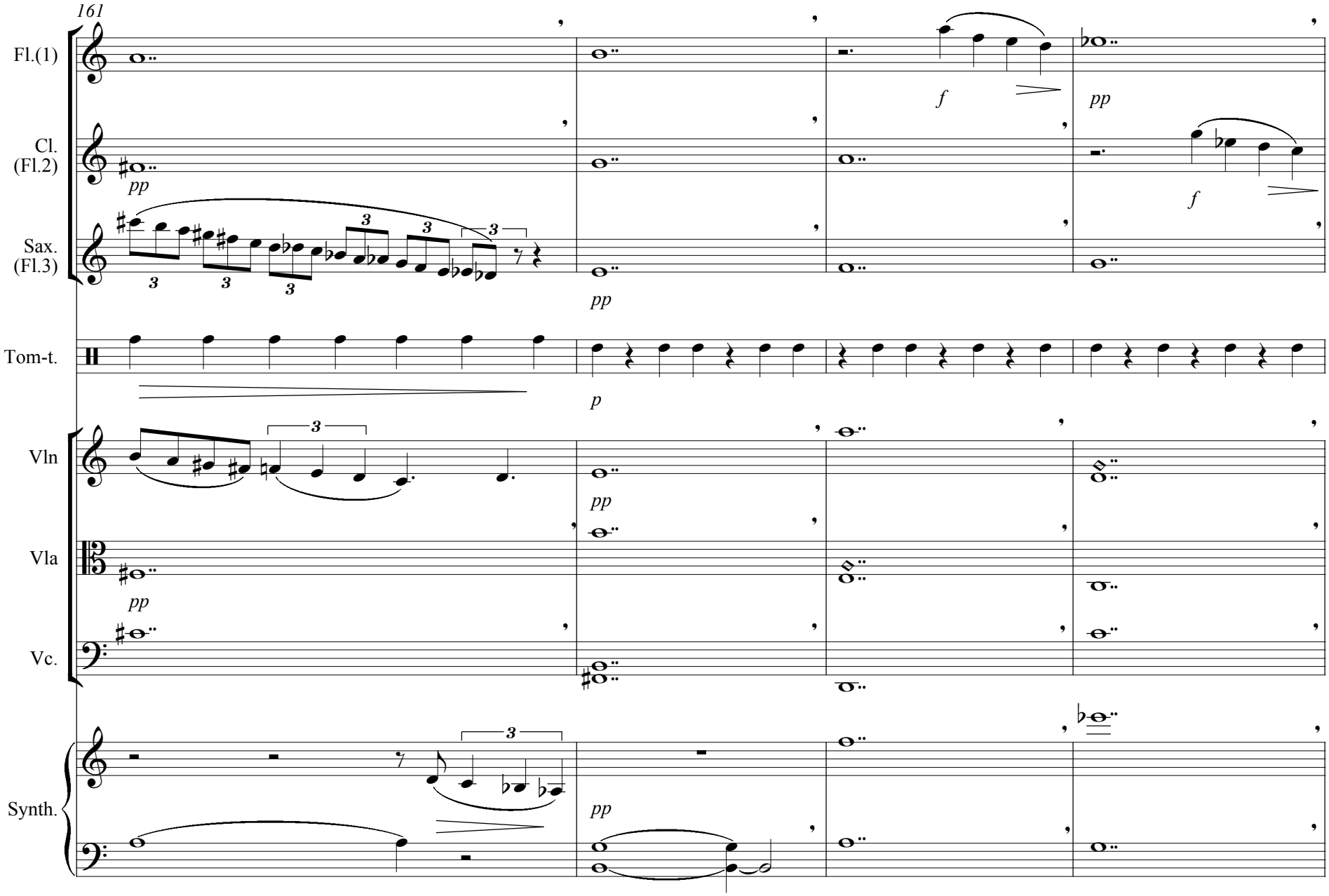
161
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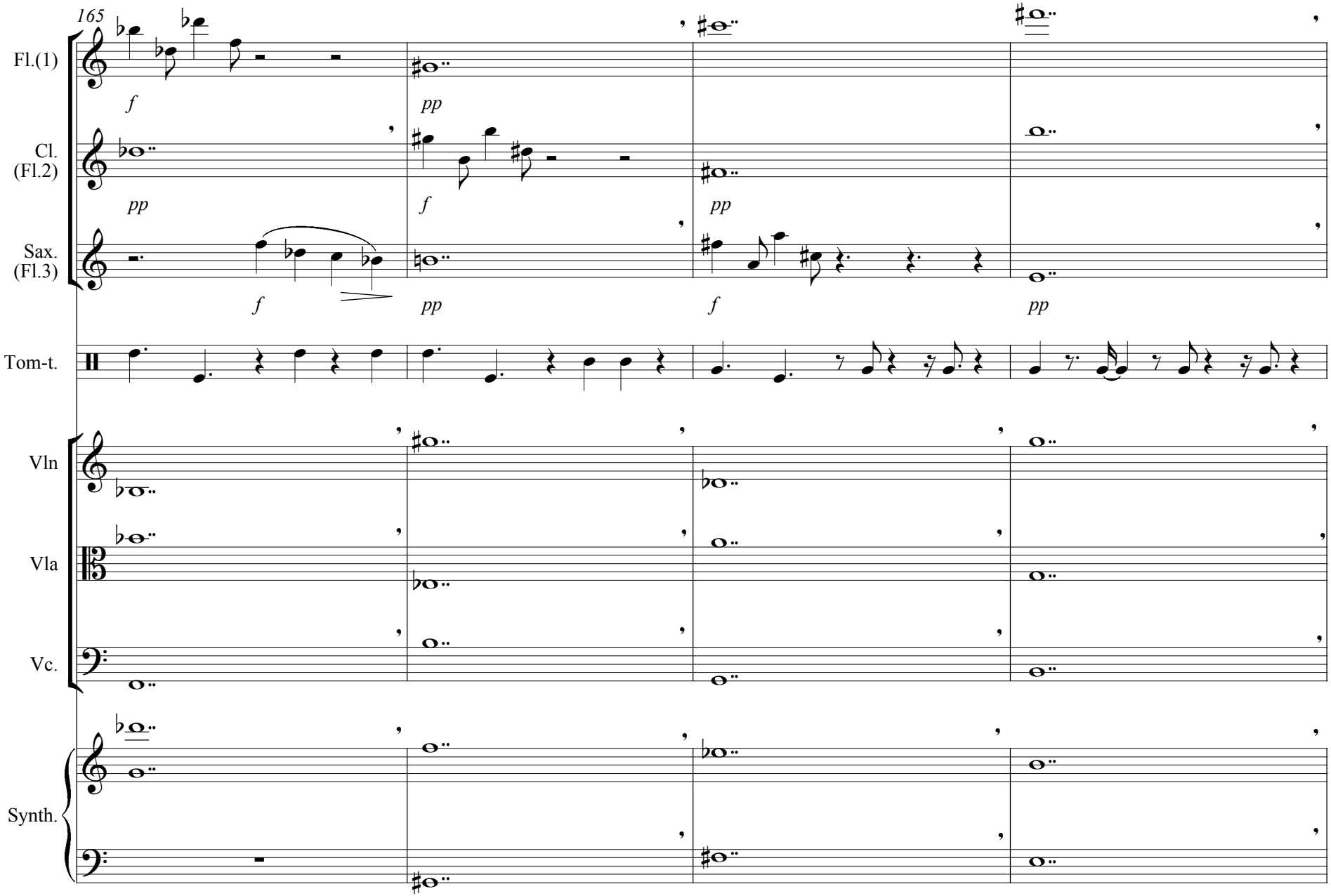
165
Fl.(1)
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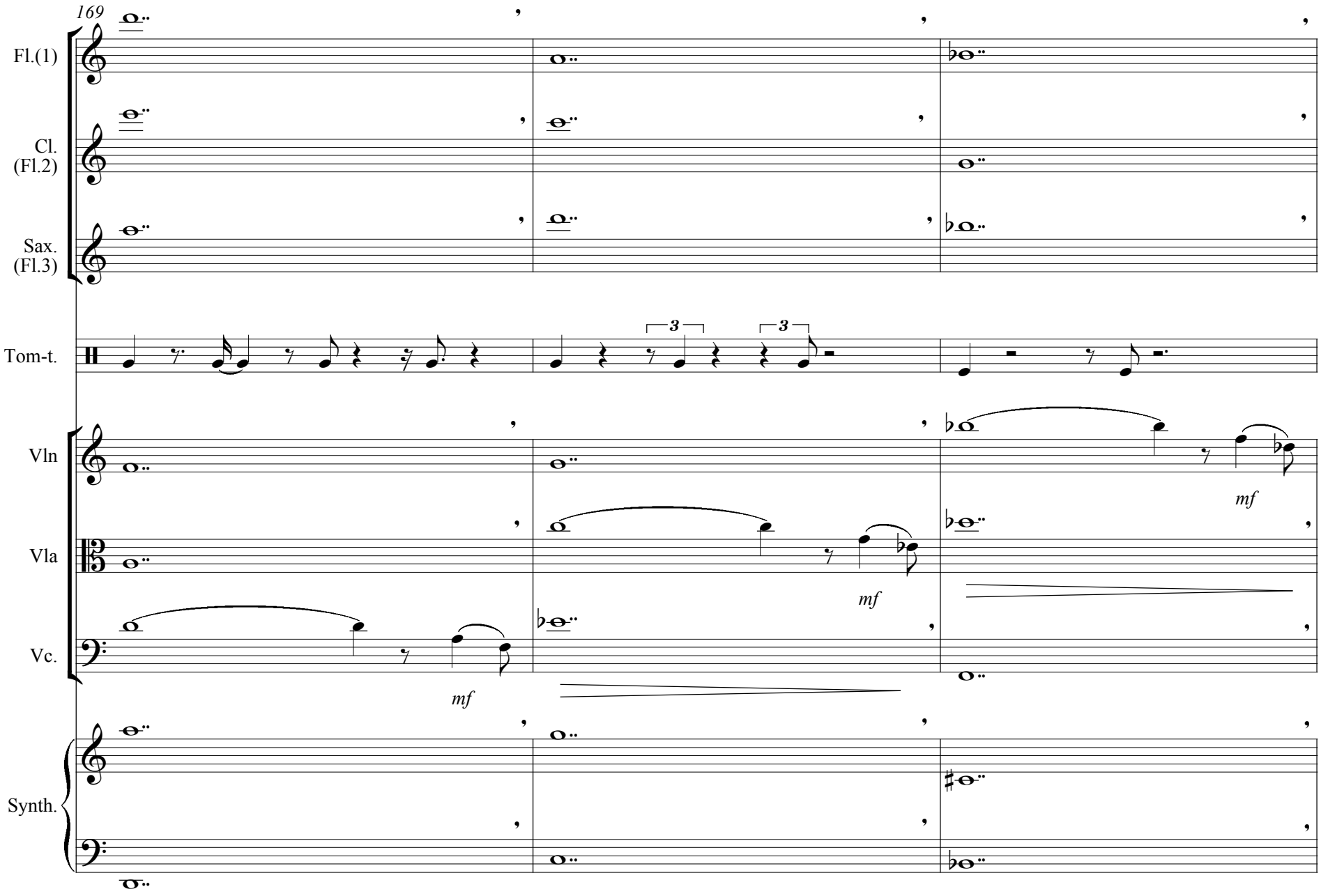
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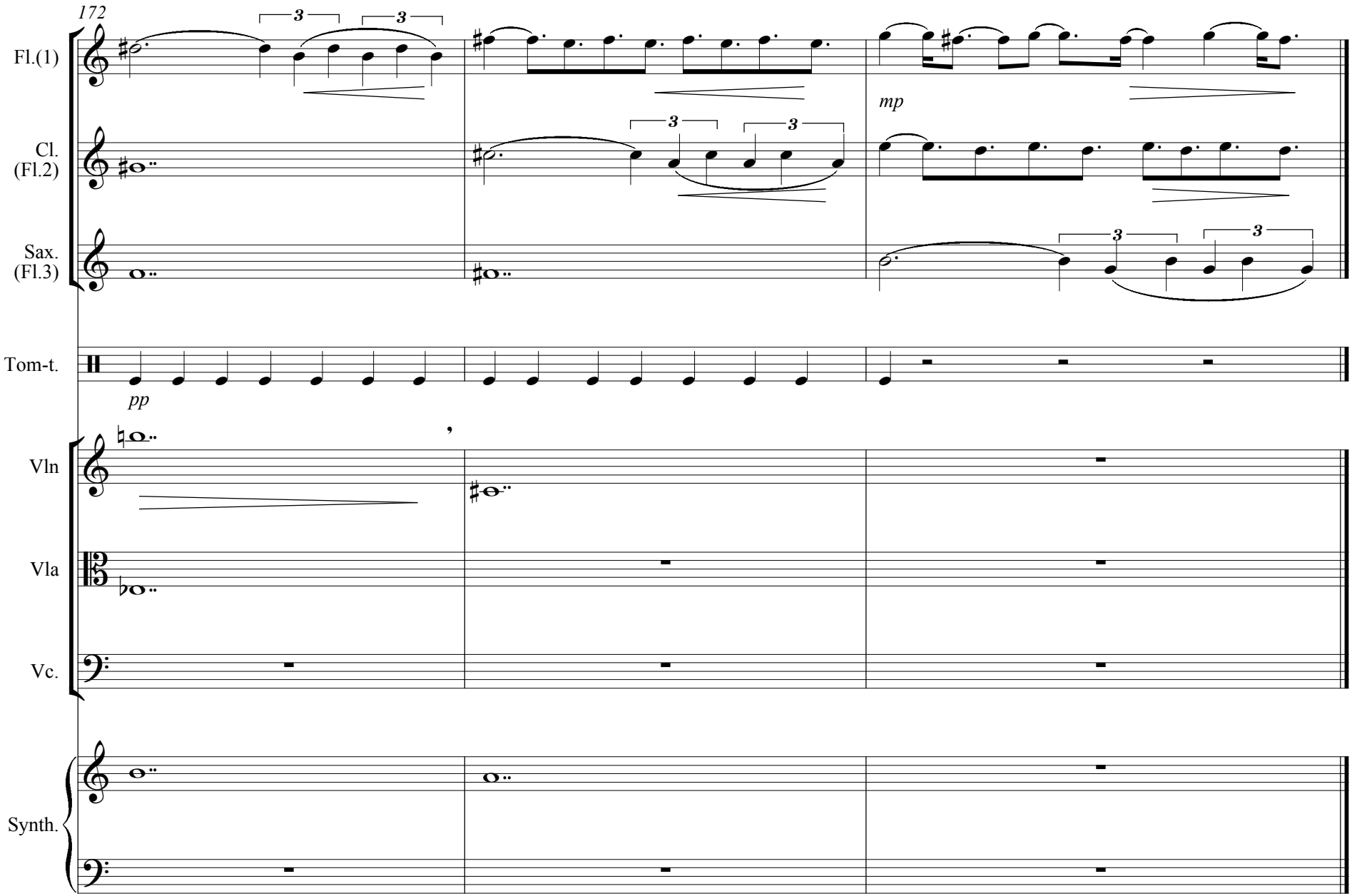
172
Fl.(1)
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