I'ITOI VARIATIONS

FOR TWO PIANOS

BY
KYLE GANN
1985

I’itoi Variations (1985)

I'itoi is the mythic Elder Brother of the Papago Indians of southern Arizona, the famous "man in the maze" of Papago art. He figures in the creation myth as a shadow figure to Earth Doctor, and bears certain resemblances to the Aztec Quetzalcoatl; he led the Papago to their present land, created the calendar, taught them to smoke tobacco, bothered the young women, was killed by his own people, and came back to life before disappearing back into the earth.

The Papago keep I'itoi's myth alive through a long cycle of songs, of which *I'itoi Variations* is based on the "Song of the Black Mountain" (originally recorded on Everest, later available on Legacy international CD 388). I was intrigued not only by the song's unusual rhythm, with its shift between dotted and undotted beats, but by the women's moving drone above the men's melody. The translated text of the song is as follows:

> *There was a black mountain in the ocean. There was an unseen cloud coming toward that mountain. It went into the black mountain and made it wet.*

Across I'itoi's death-and-rebirth story I superimposed a worldy/spiritual contrast modeled after Beethoven's Op. 111 Sonata. Variation VI is the crisis point, the Scorpionic death/transformation; Variation VII is the alchemical rebirth as spirit. Variation II is an homage to Busoni's two-piano masterpiece *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*. Variation IX is subtitled "Hoodoo" after the lumpy, vertical rock formation characteristic of so many Utah canyons. The Finale carves metaphorical petroglyphs (rock drawings) on the slowed-down, rocklike theme, then turns back for a quick trip through all eleven variations in reverse order.

I'itoi Variations was a calculatedly ambitious work, a summing up of my education. I was about to turn 30, had quit my job to stay home with my newborn son, and was propelled by a need to achieve something big and difficult. I admired the "intellectual" monumentality of the two-piano repertoire, including Busoni's Fantasia, Wallingford Riegger's Op. 54 Variations, Bartok's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, Stockhausen's *Mantra*, Ligeti's *Monument / Selbst-Portrait / Bewegung*, Zimmermann's *Monologe*, Reich's *Piano Phase* - each of which left its mark on the piece some way or another. *I'itoi Variations* was written with the help of a grant from the American Ritual Theater Company, and was initially published by Editions V in Essen, Germany (run by Gerhard Stäbler). It seemed commodious enough to merit two dedicatees: my wife Nancy and my fellow political composer Frank Abbinanti.

World premiere: May 4, 1990, at Cooper Union's Great Hall by Double Edge (Nurit Tilles and Edmund Niemann)

to Frank Abbinanti and Nancy Cook

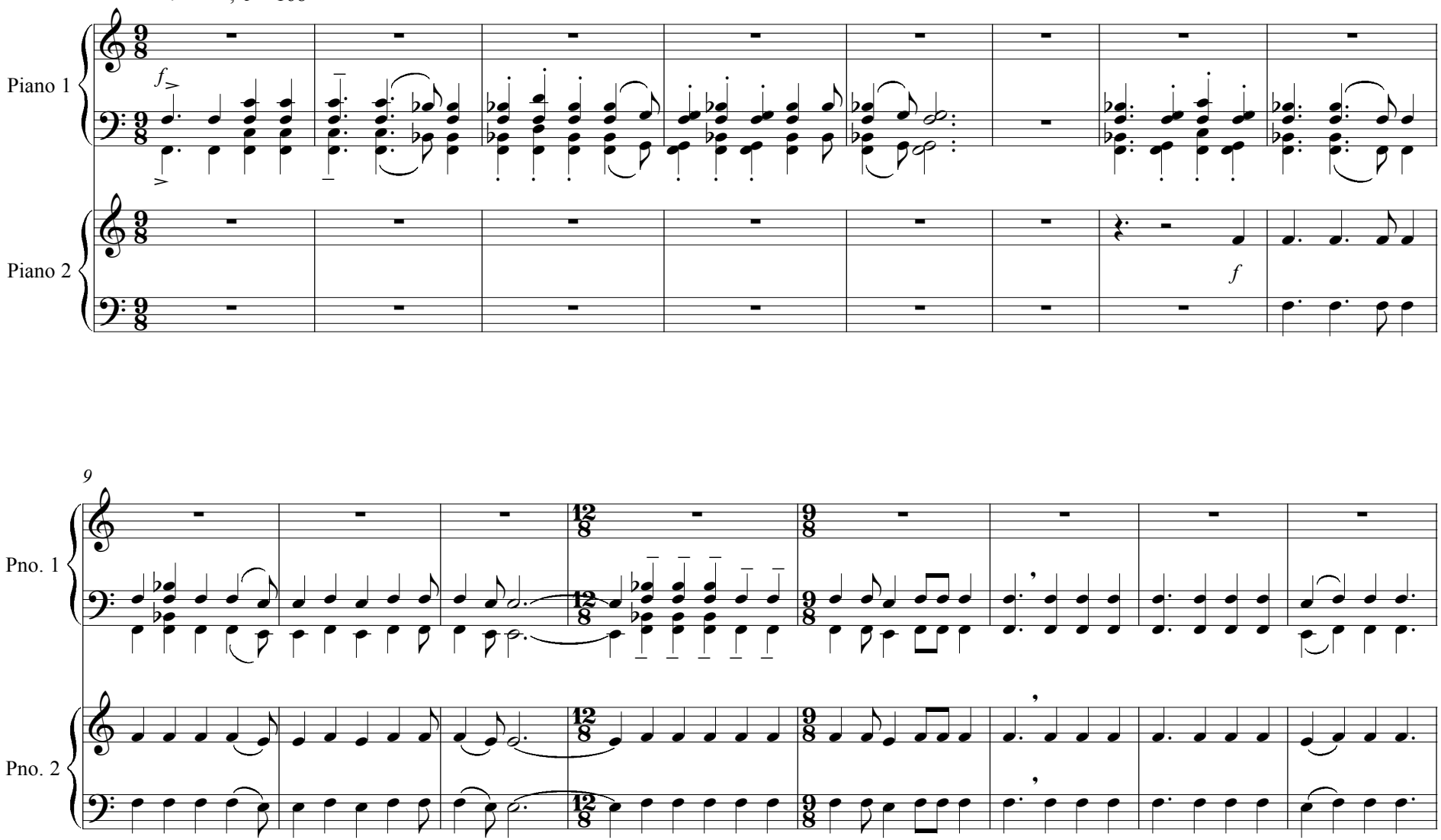
I'itoi Variations

for two pianos

Kyle Gann
1985

Theme

♩. = 112, ♩ = 168



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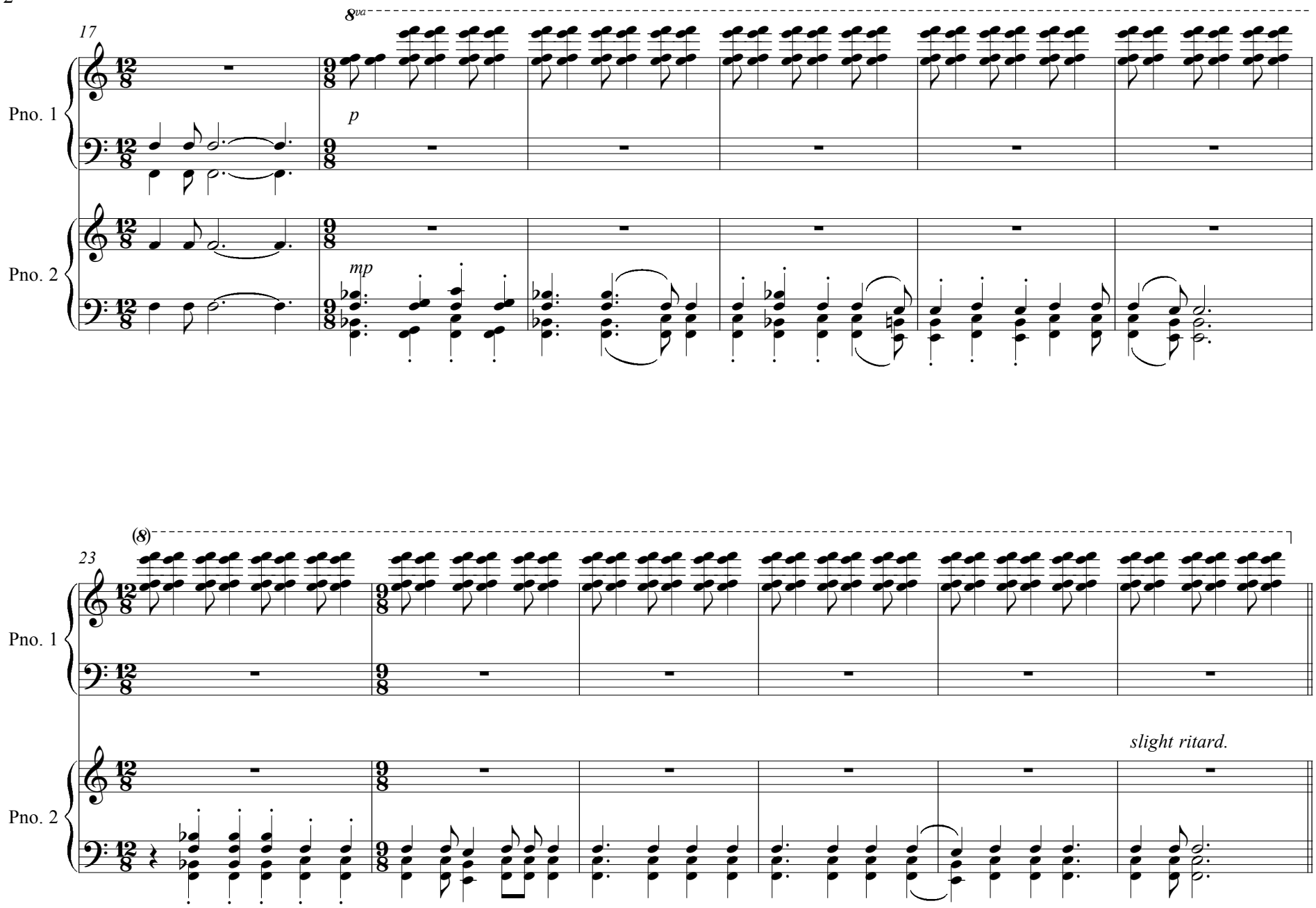
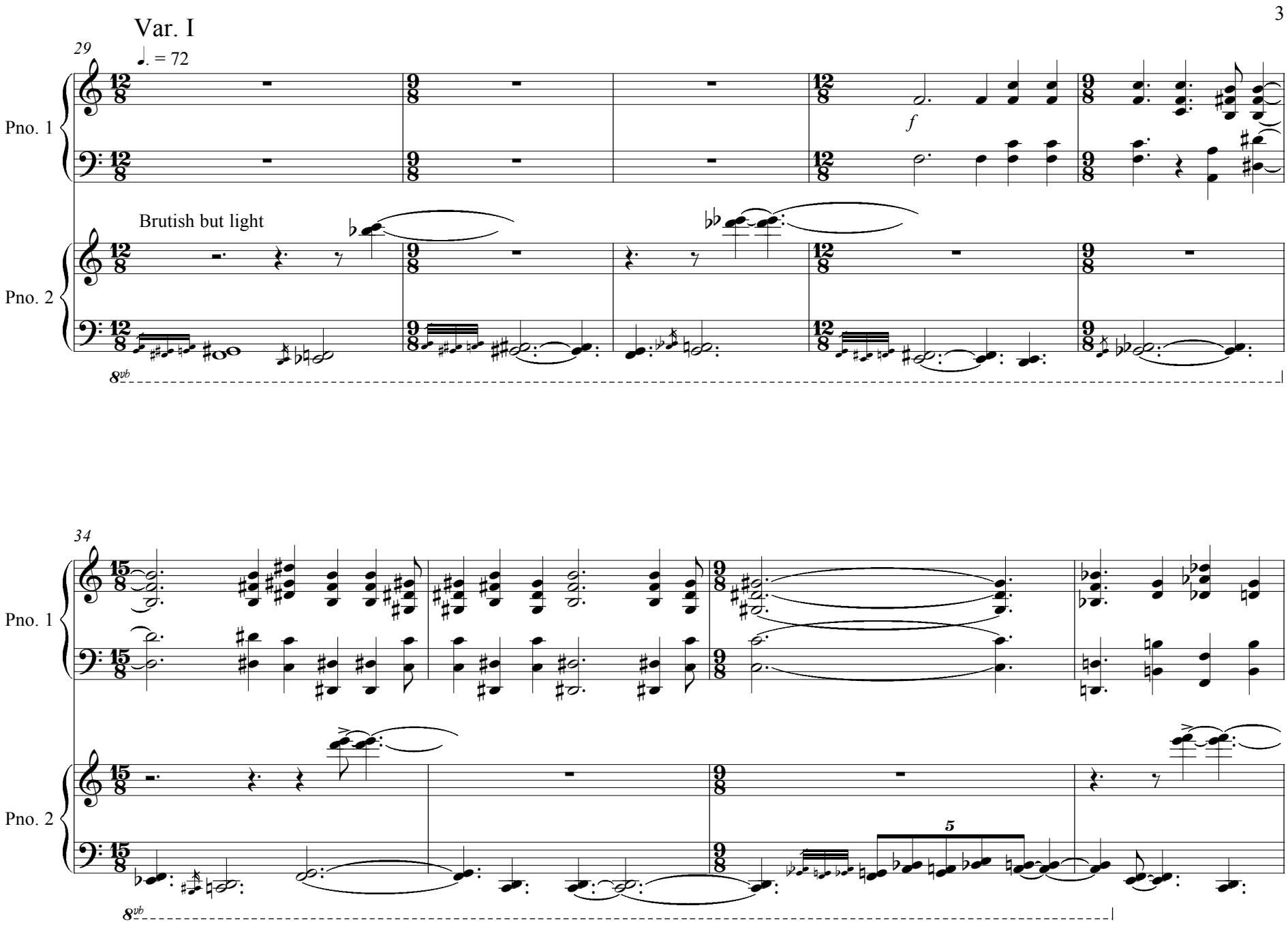
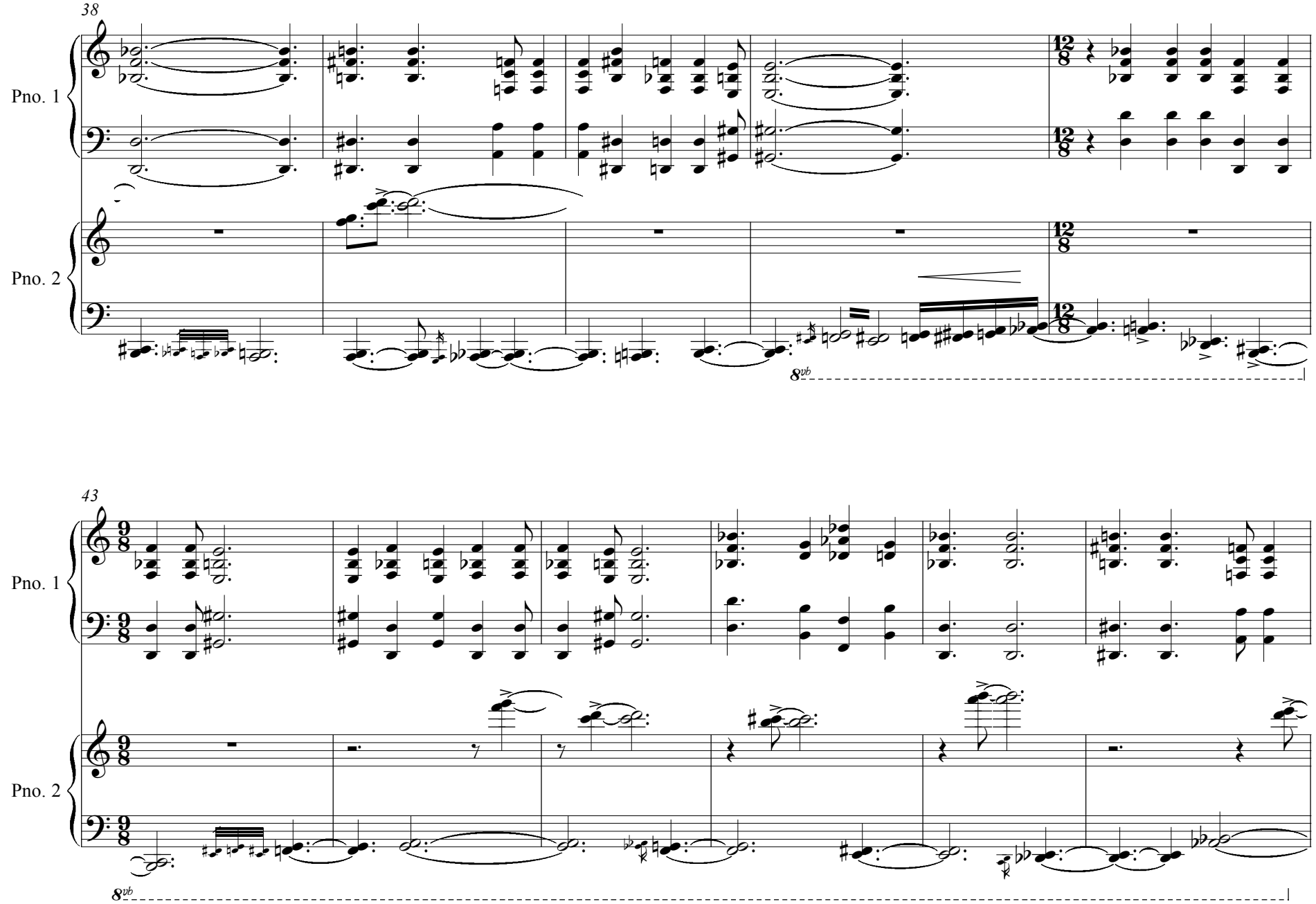
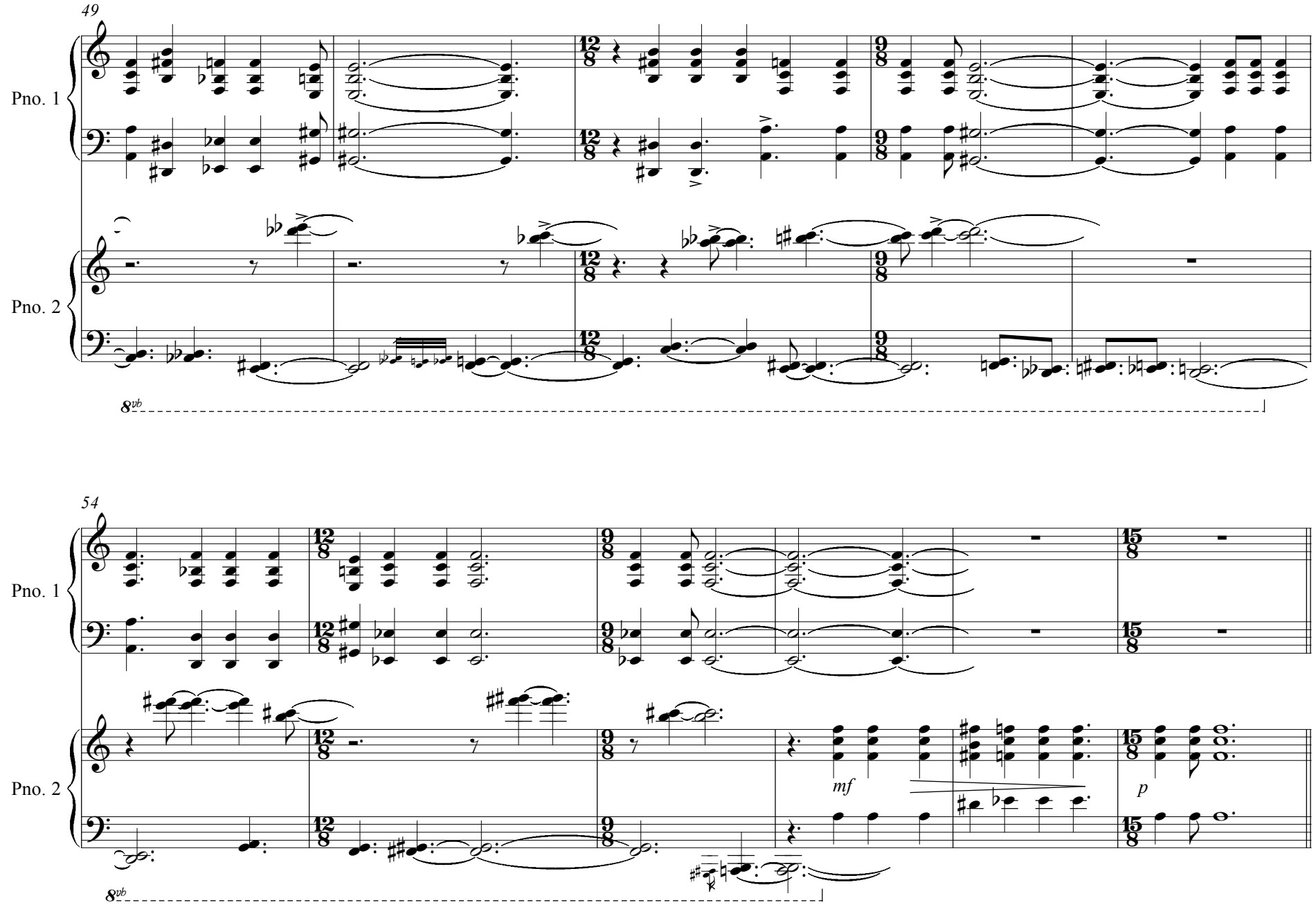
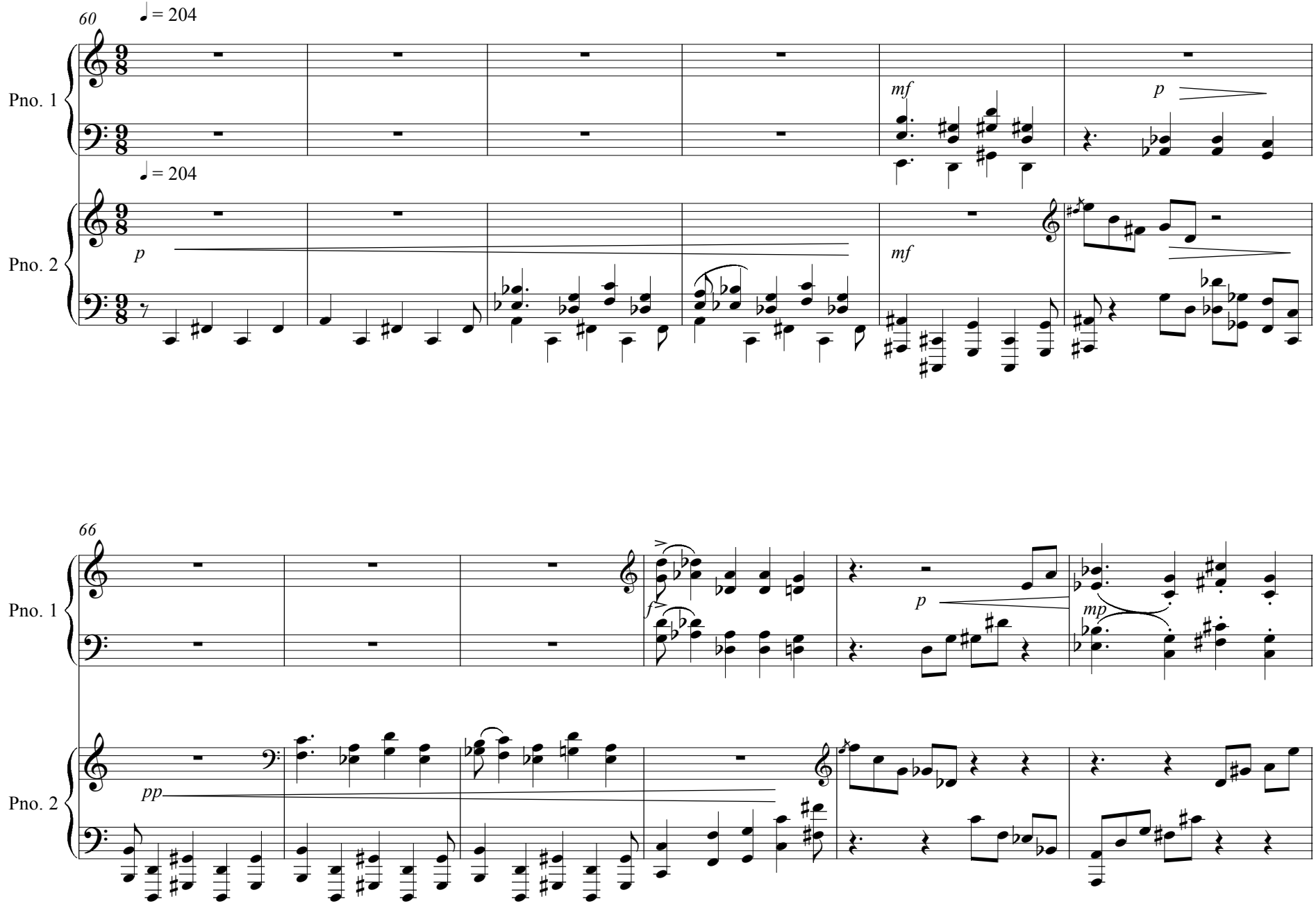

17
8va
Pno. 1
p
Pno. 2
mp
23
(8)
Pno. 1
slight ritard.
Pno. 2

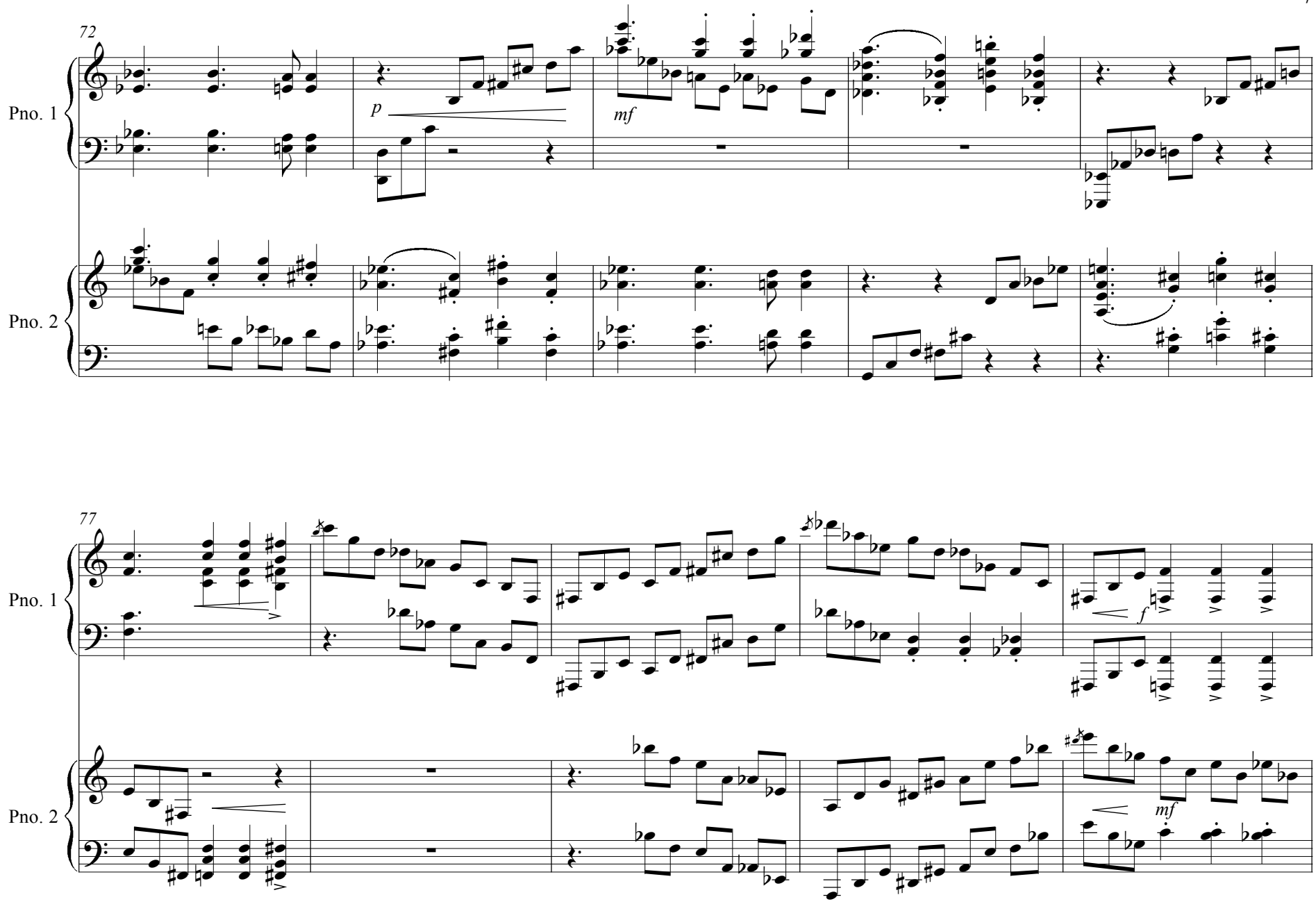

Var. I
29
♩. = 72
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
f
Brutish but light
8vb
34
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
5
8vb

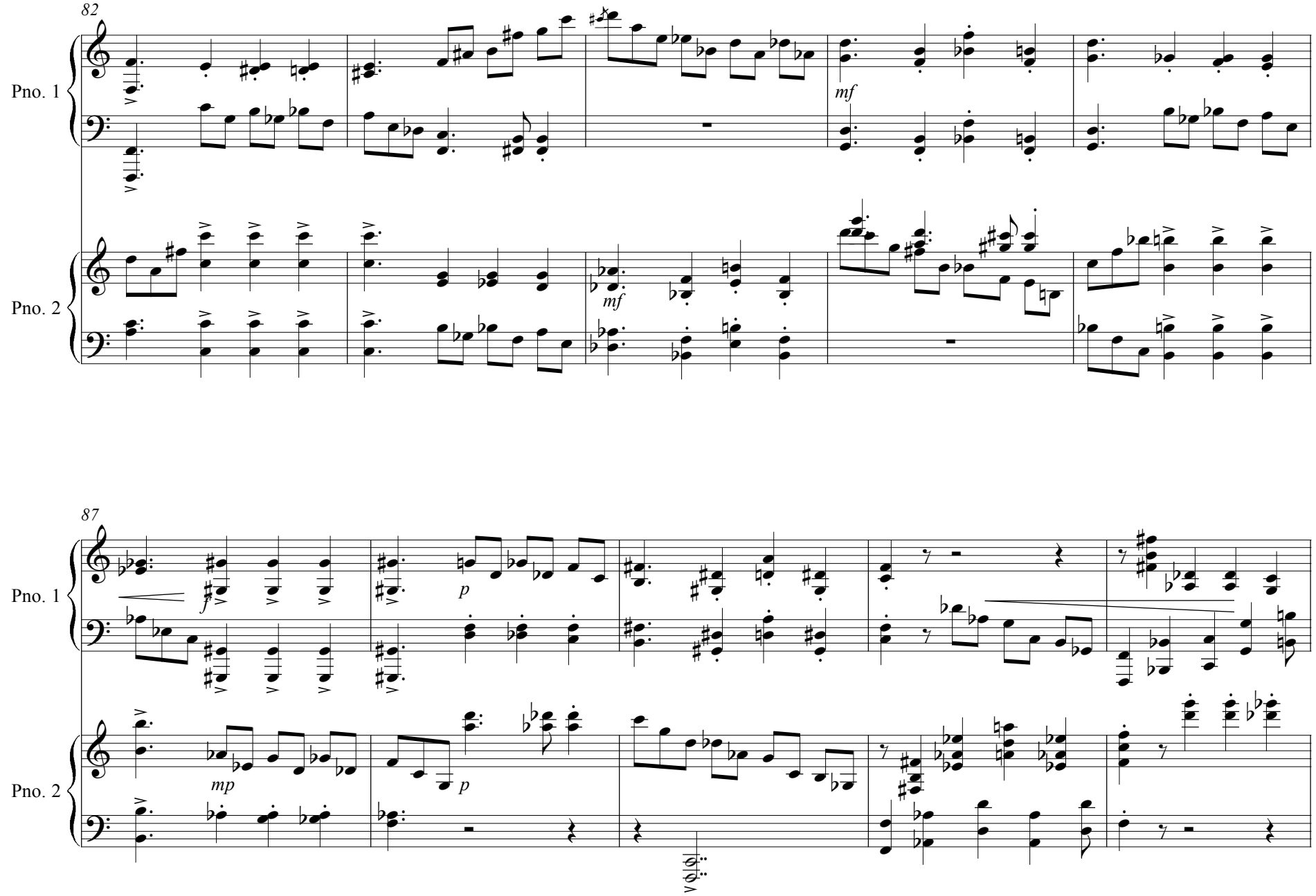

38
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
12/8
8vb
43
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
9/8
8vb

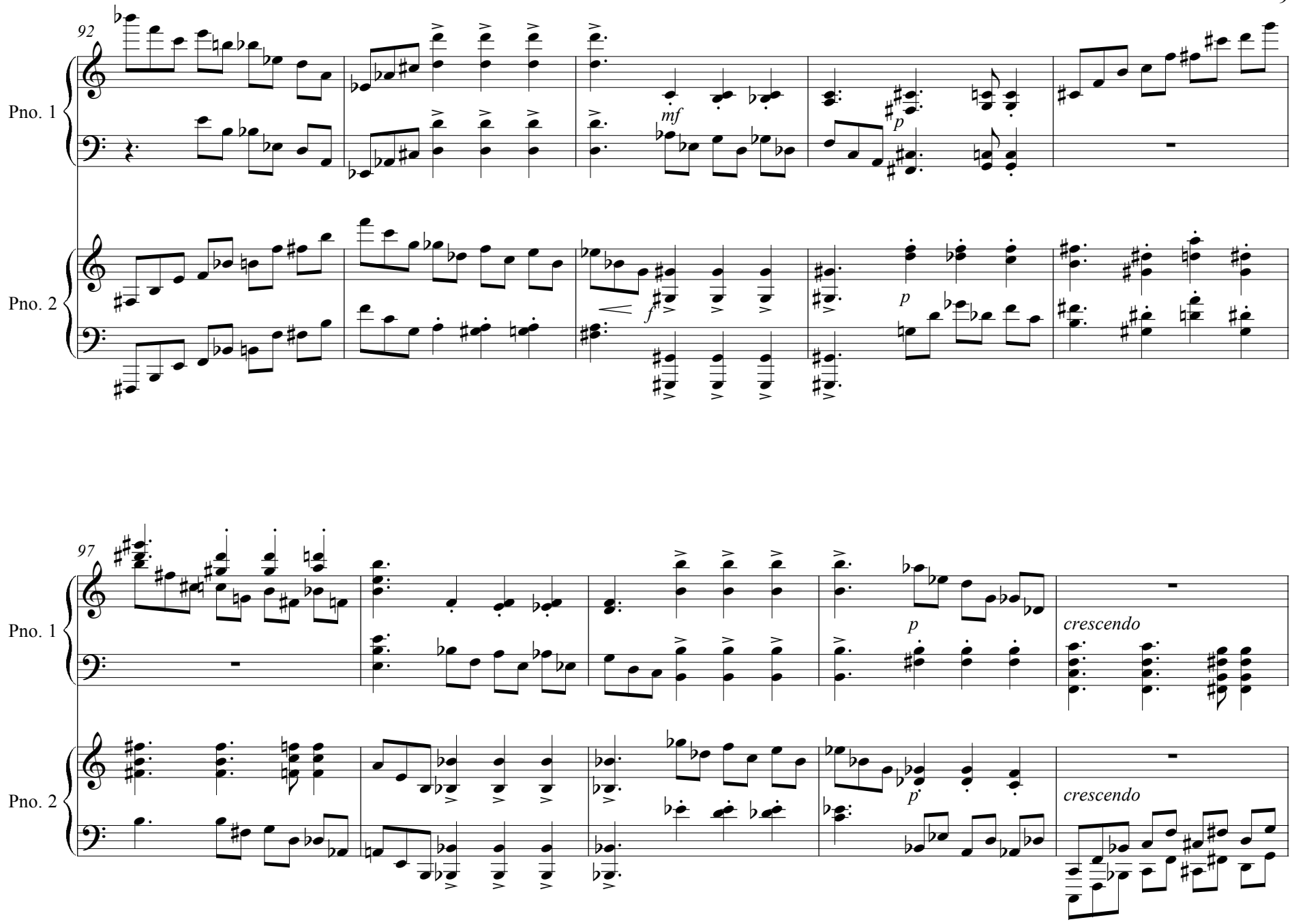

49
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
8vb
54
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mf
p
8vb

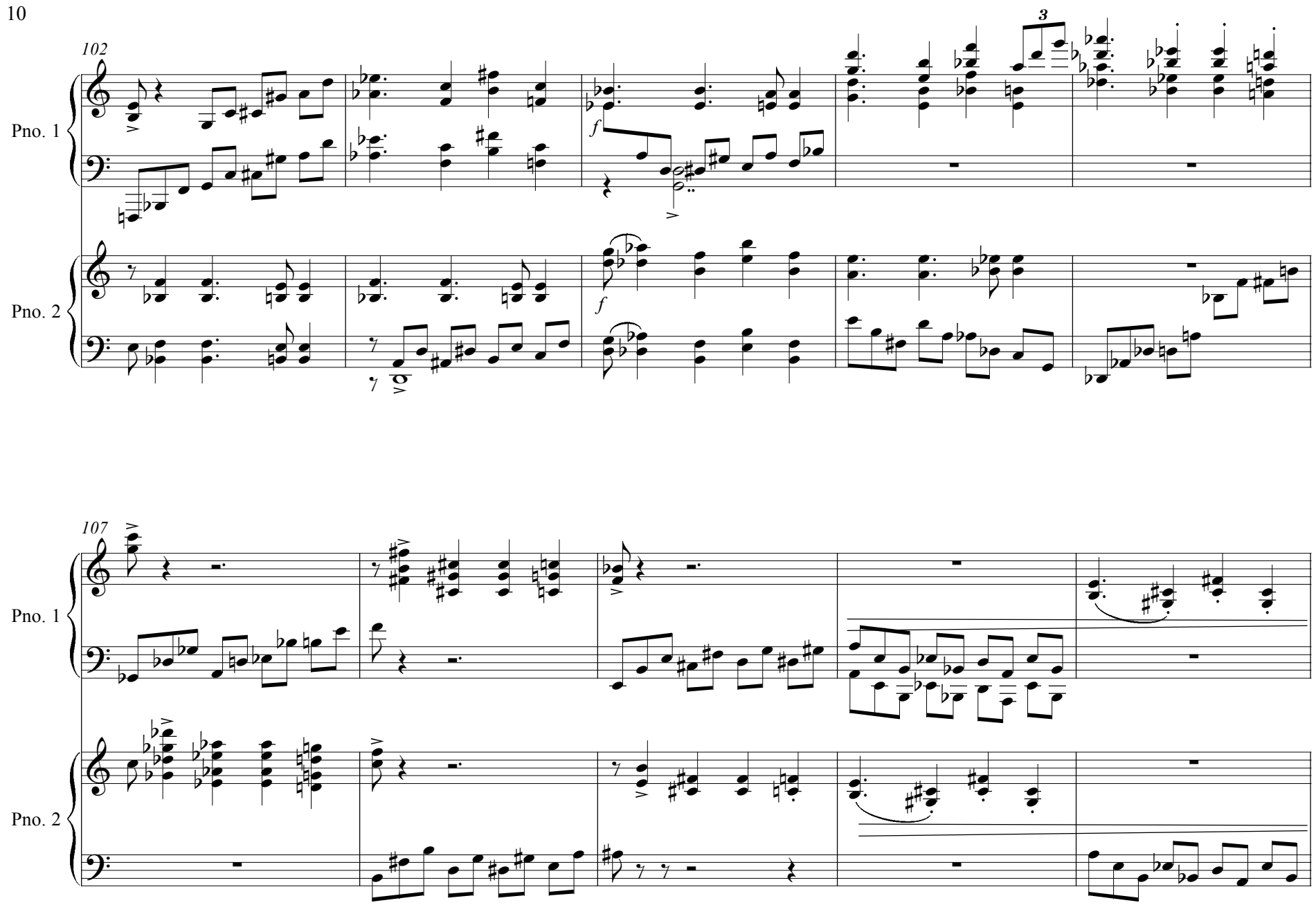
Var. II: Homage to Busoni

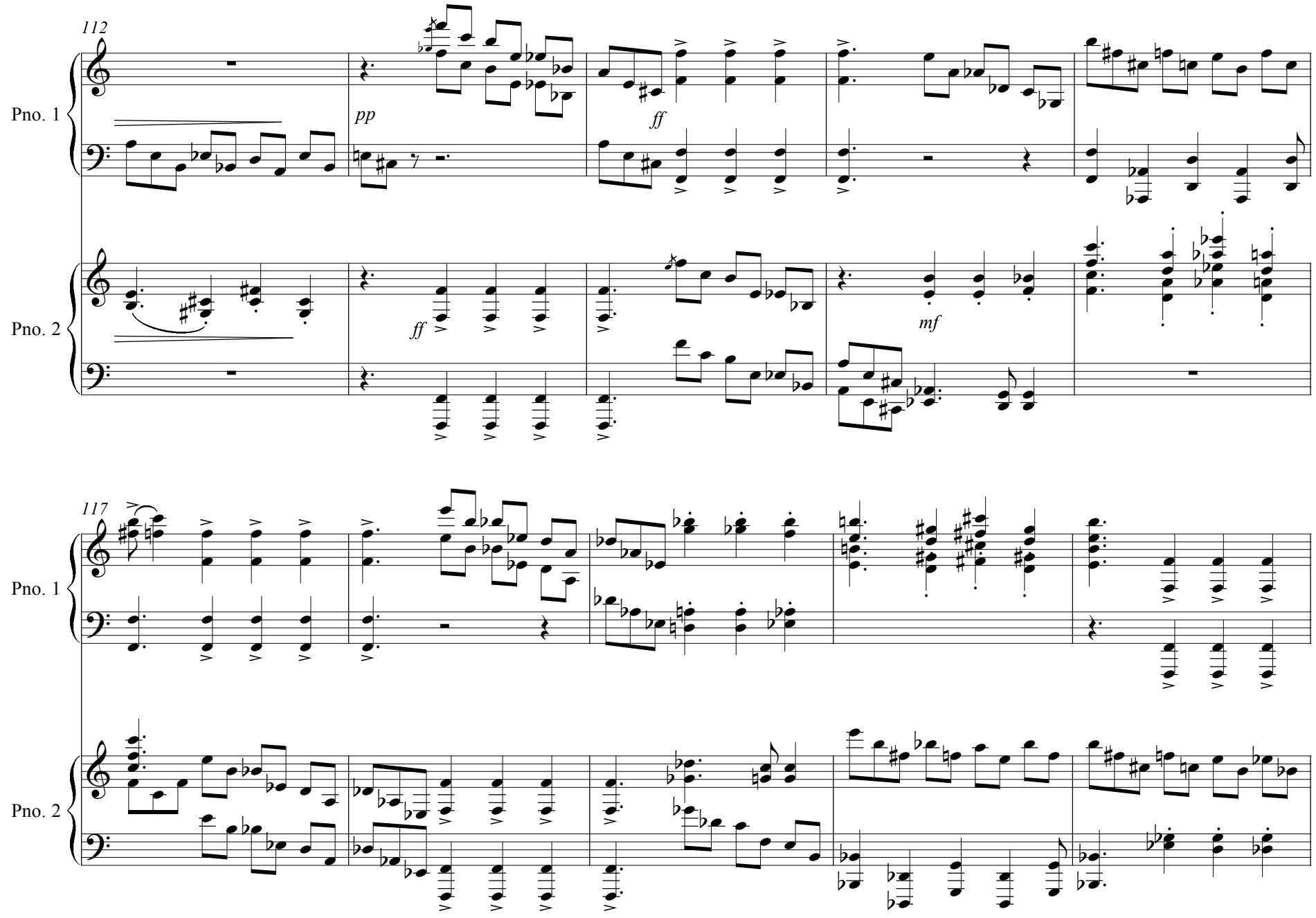


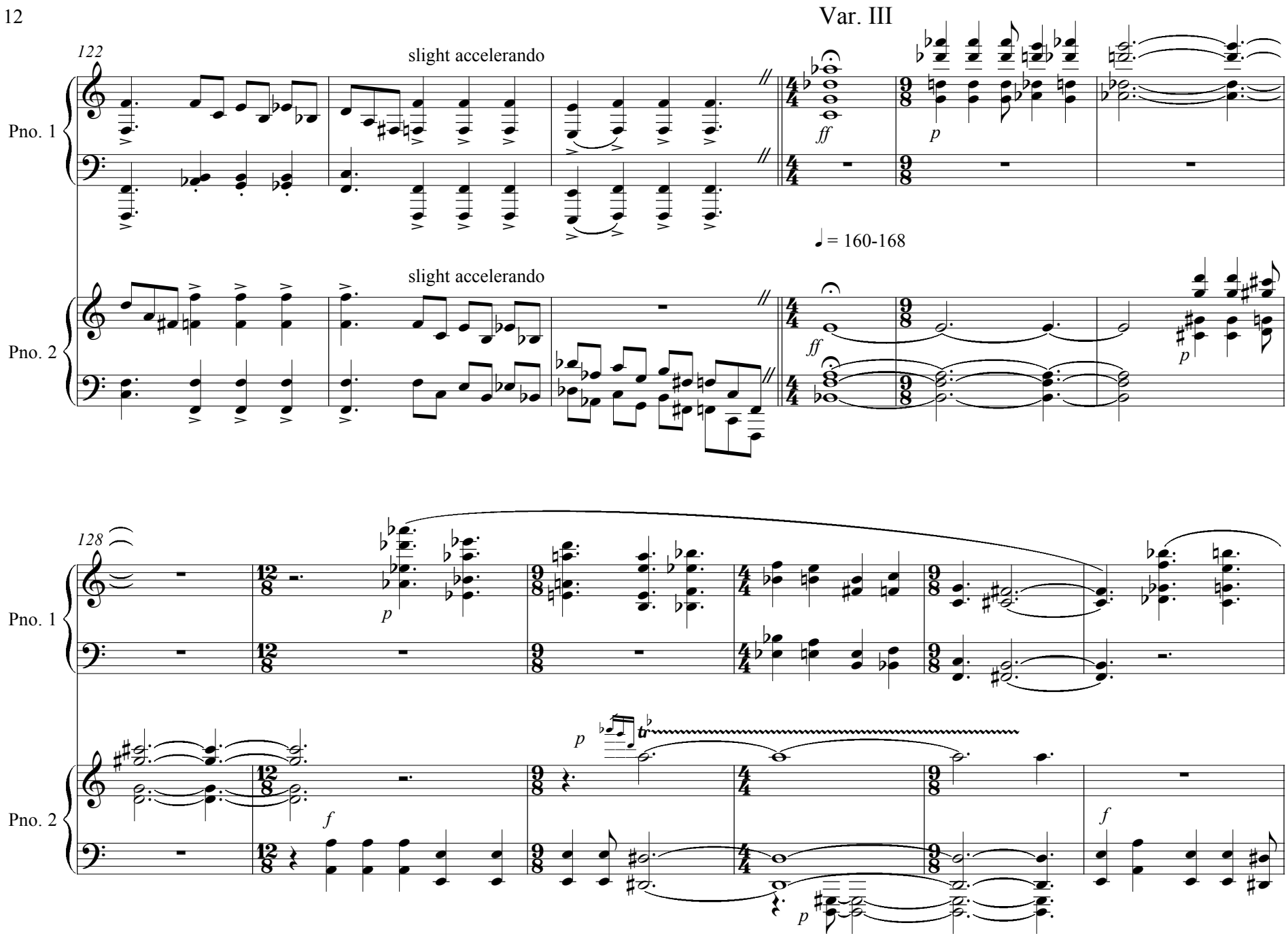

72
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
p
mf
77
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
f
mf

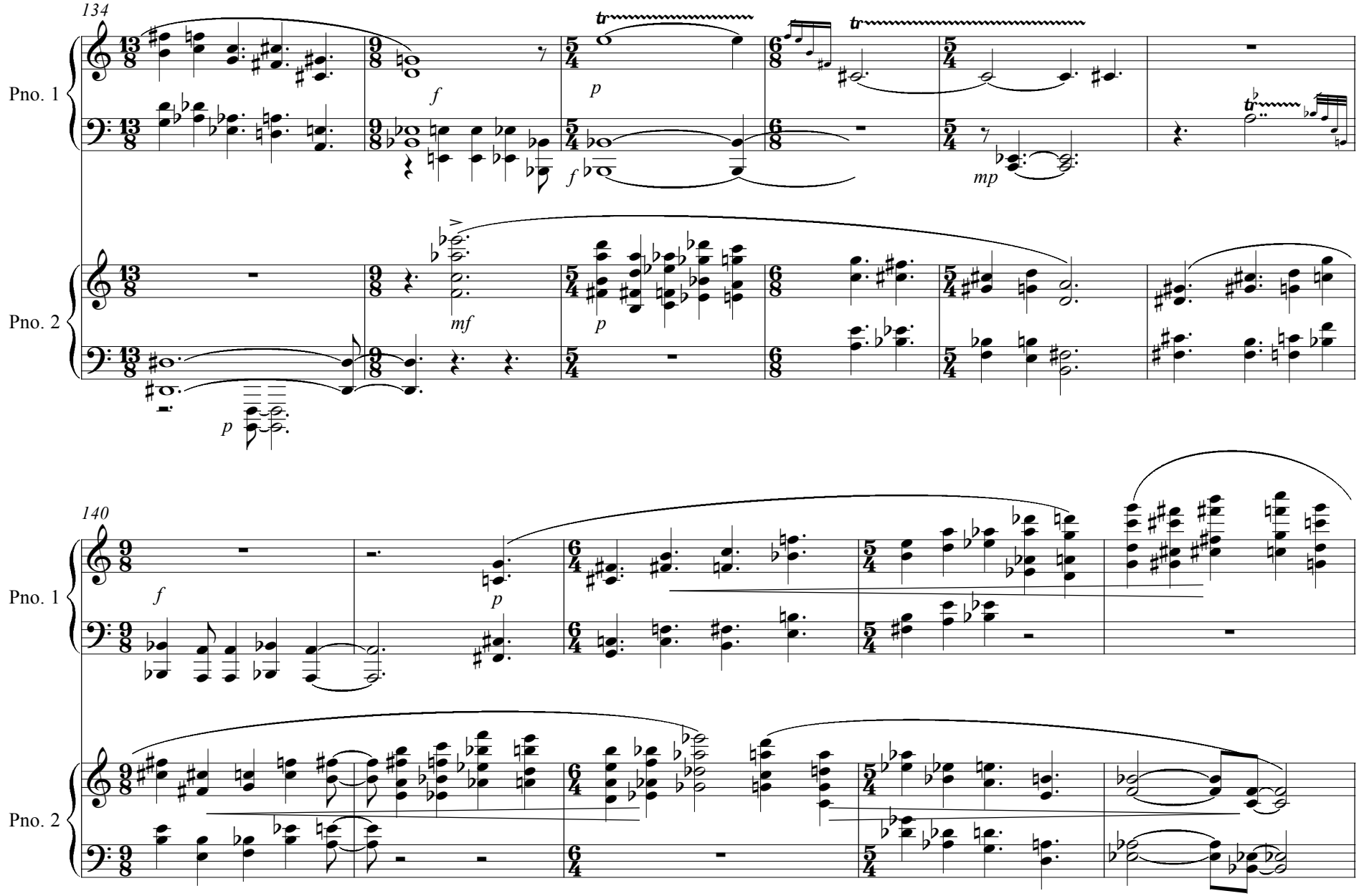

82
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mf
mf
87
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mp
p
p

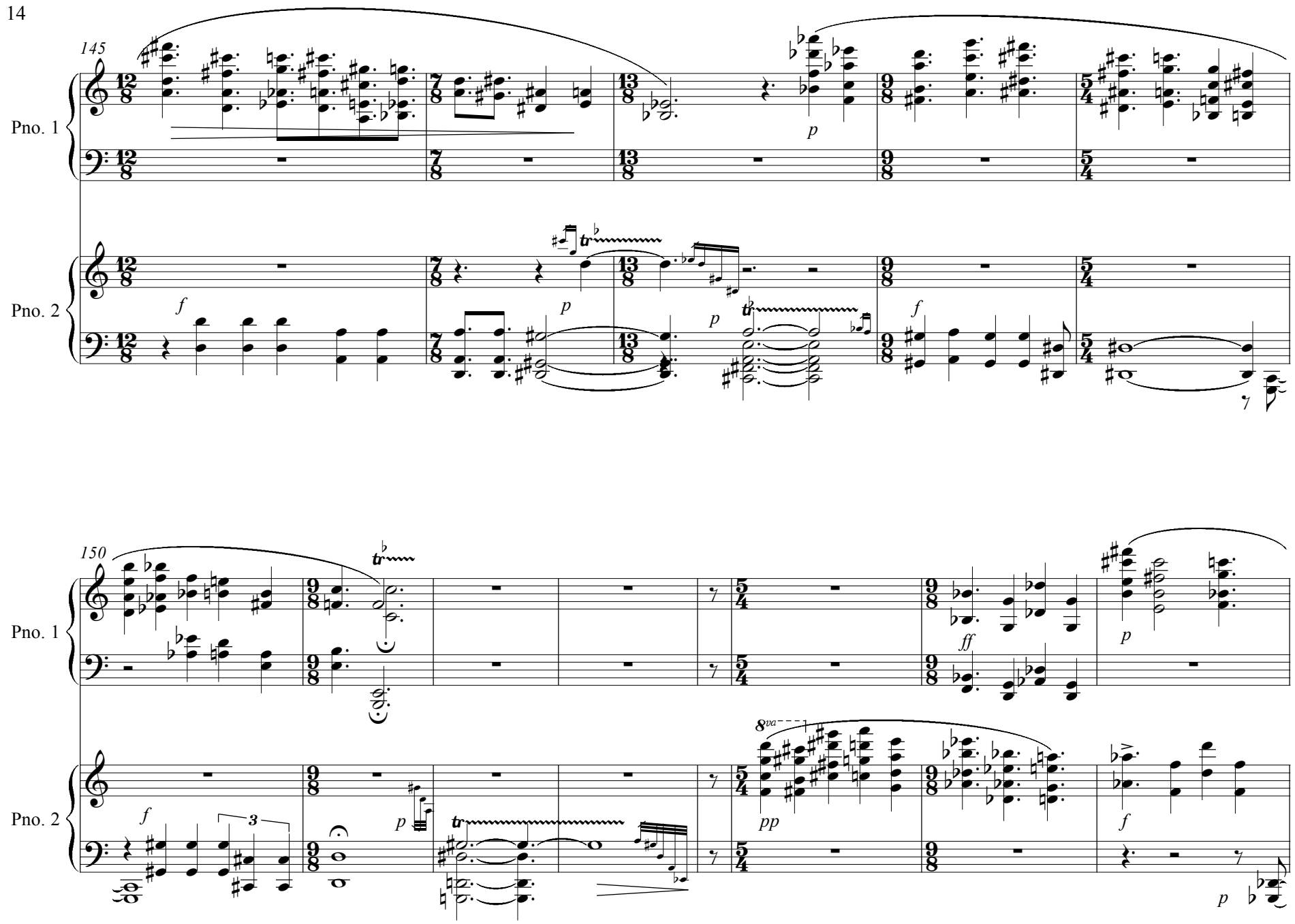

92
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mf
p
f
p
97
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
p
crescendo
p
crescendo

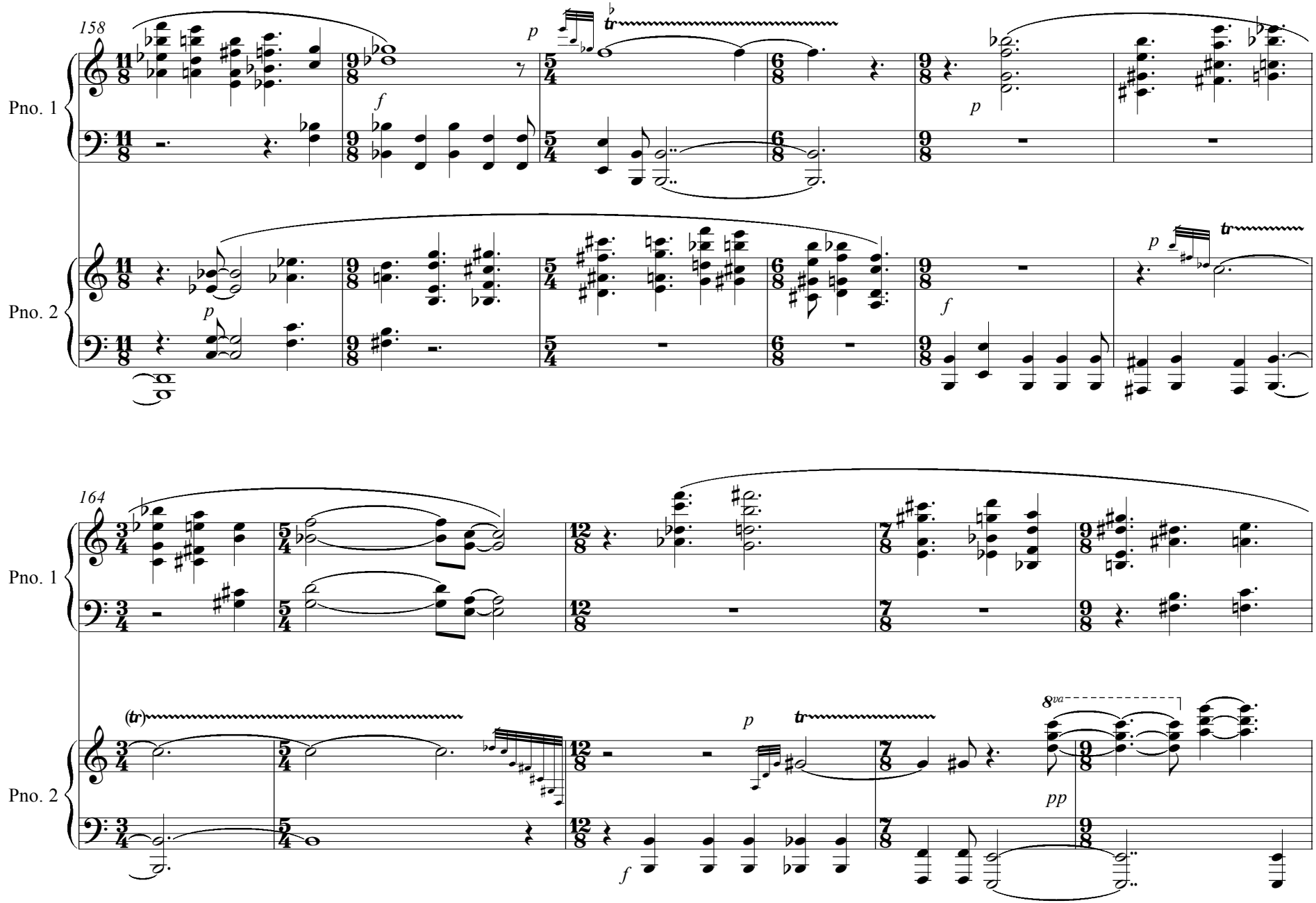

102
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
3
f
f
107
Pno. 1
Pno. 2

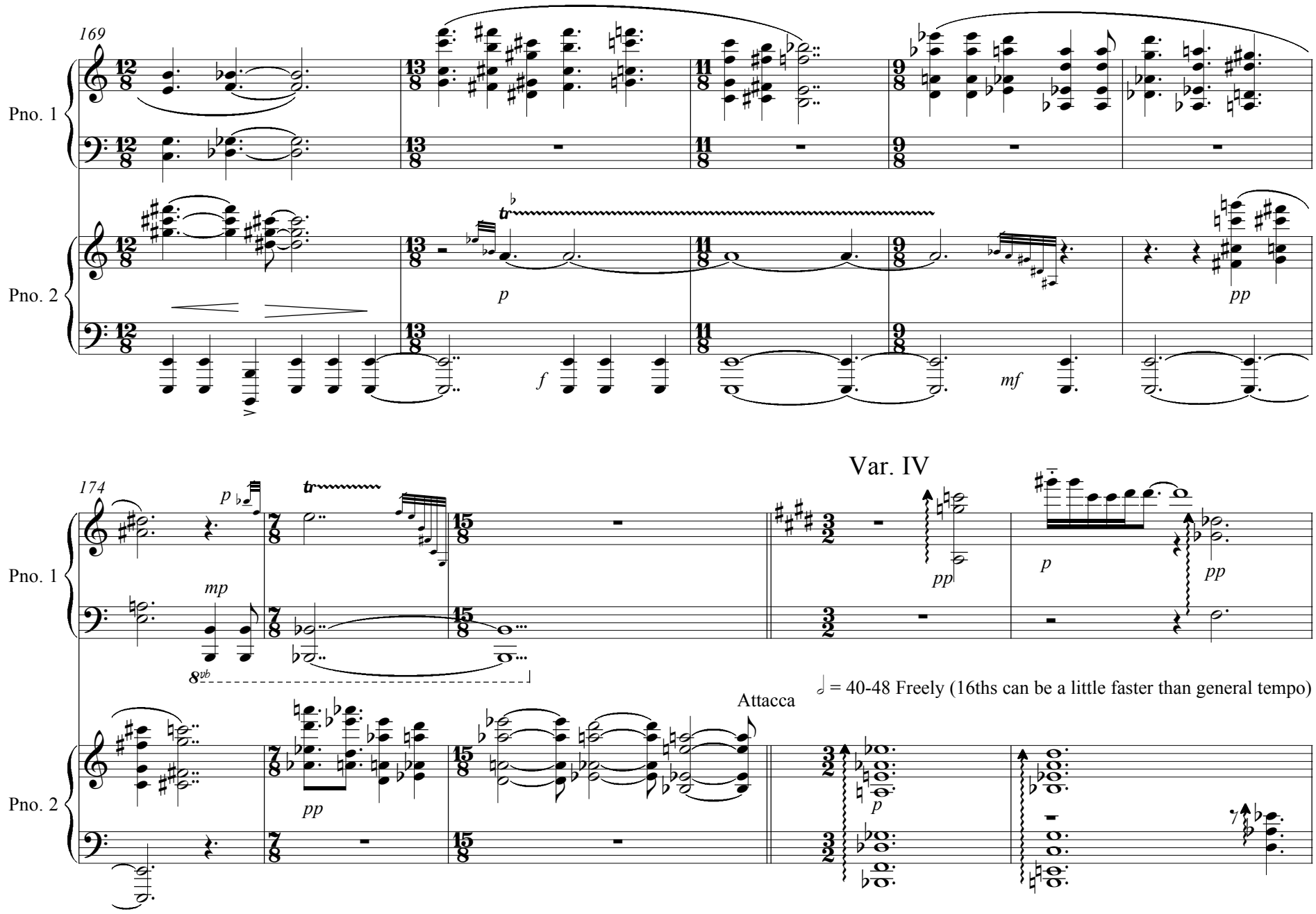

112
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
pp
ff
ff
mf
117
Pno. 1
Pno. 2

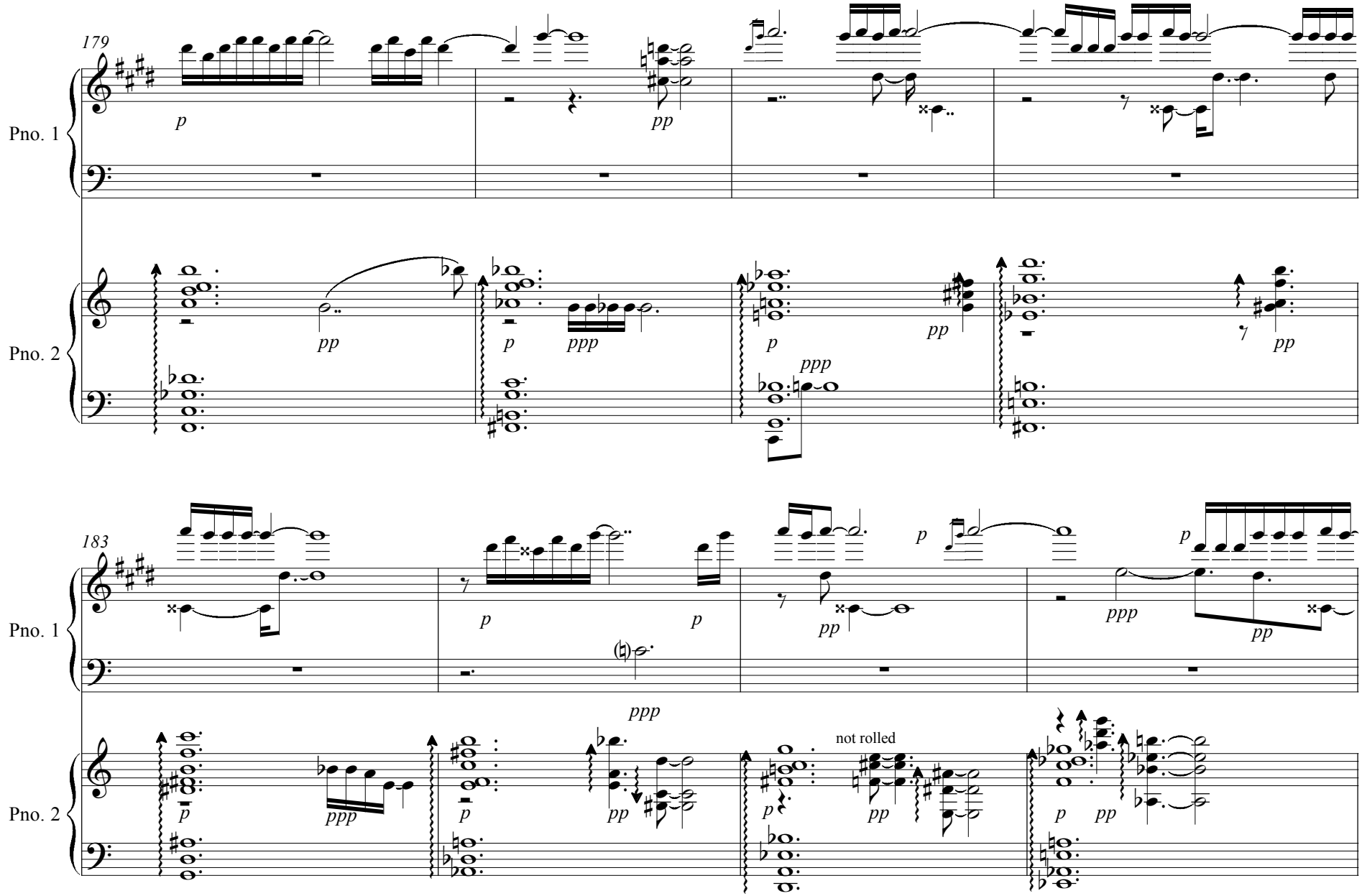

Var. III
122
slight accelerando
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
slight accelerando
♩ = 160-168
128
Pno. 1
Pno. 2

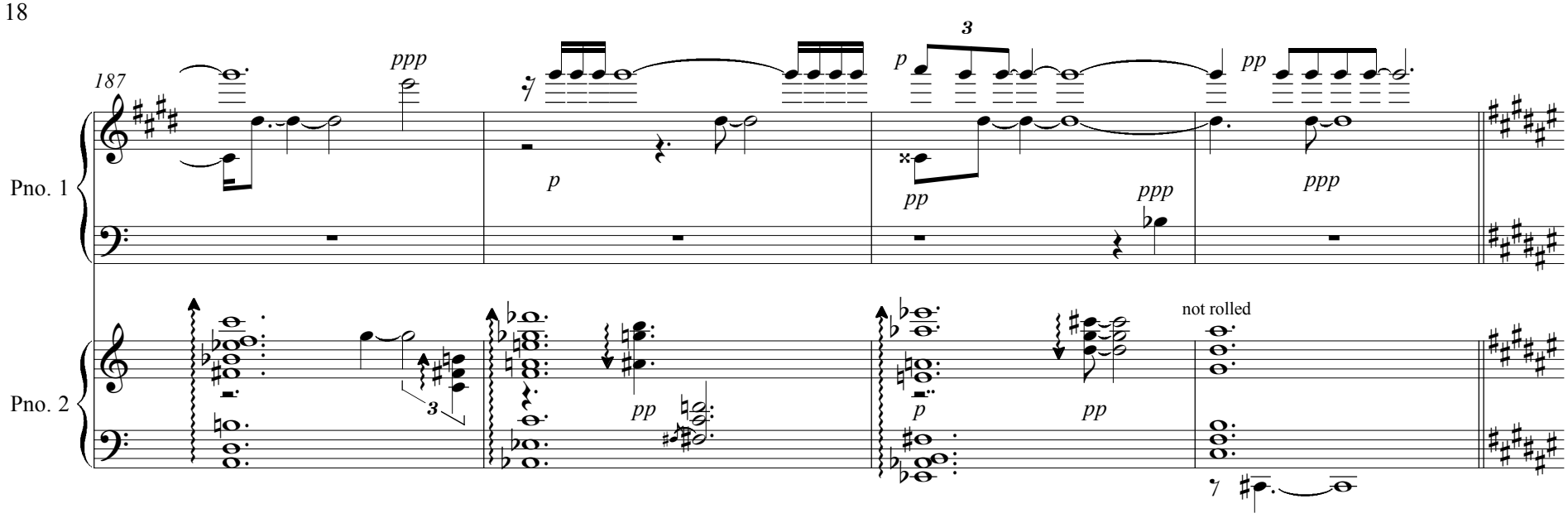

134
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
140
Pno. 1
Pno. 2


145
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
150
Pno. 1
Pno. 2

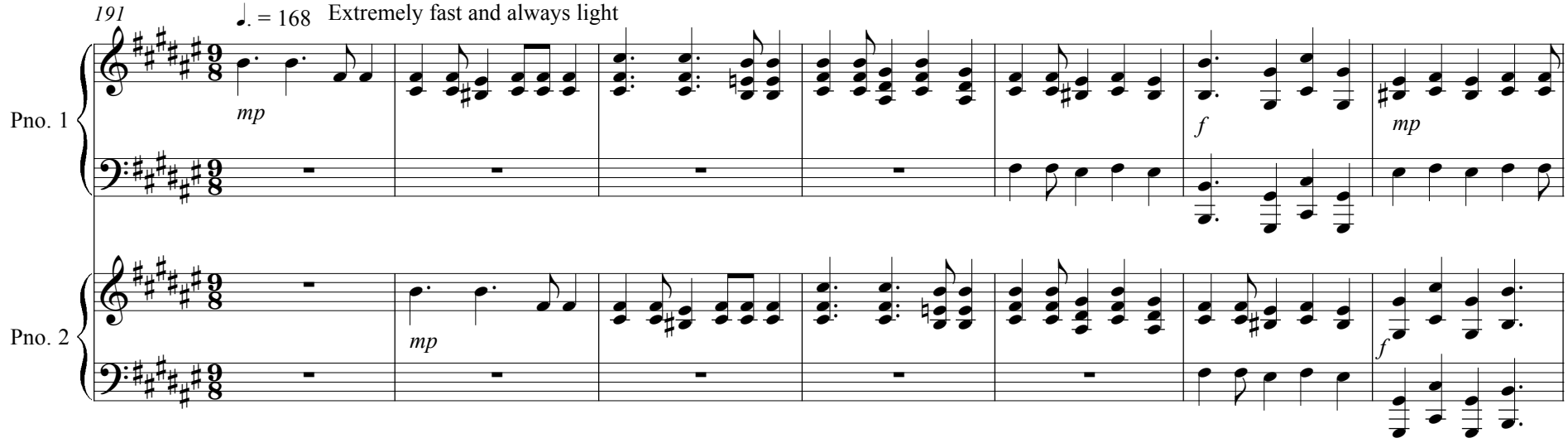

158
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
164
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
8va

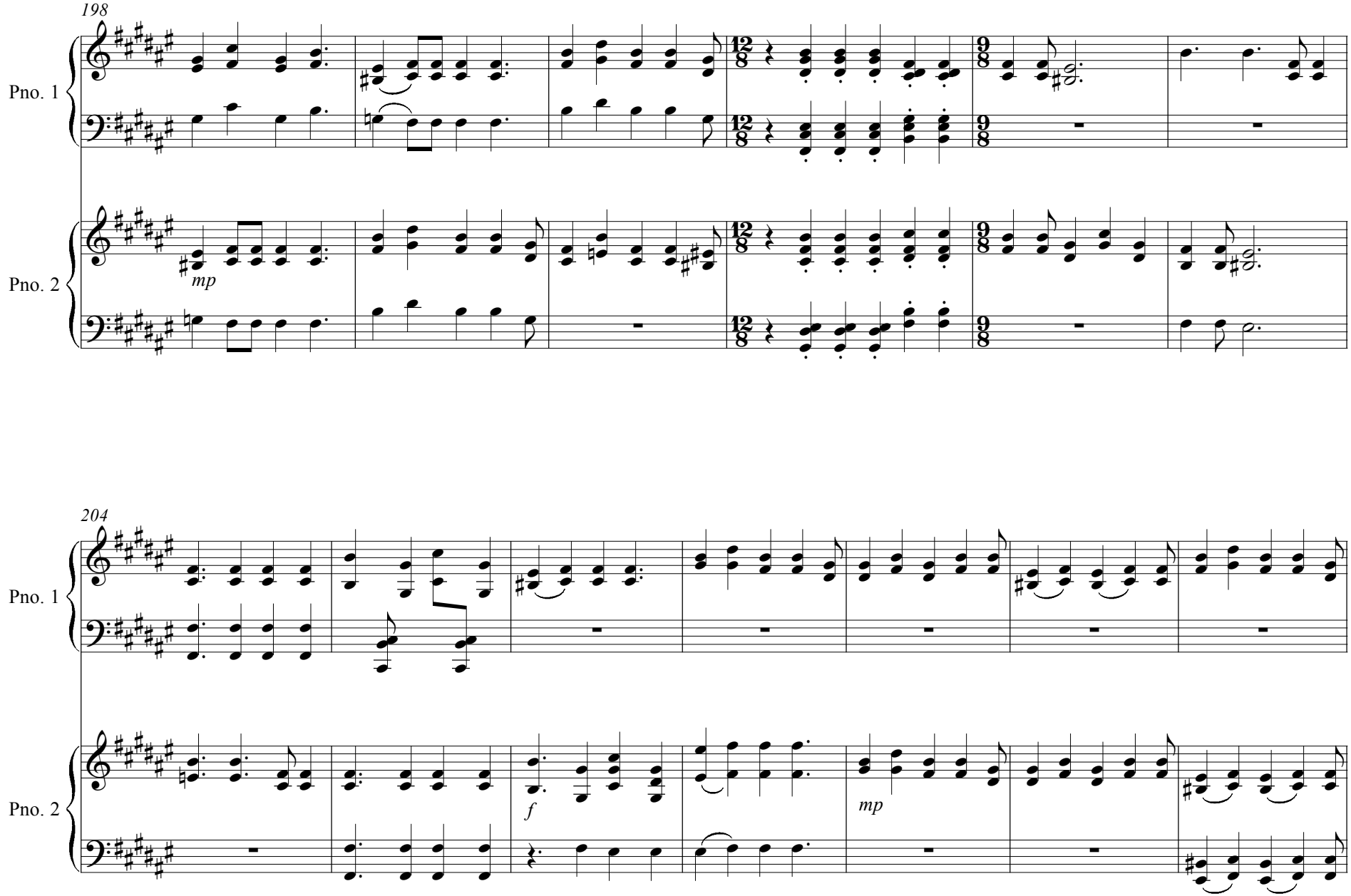

169
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
p
f
mf
pp
174
mp
Var. IV
pp
p
8vb
Attacca
♩ = 40-48 Freely (16ths can be a little faster than general tempo)

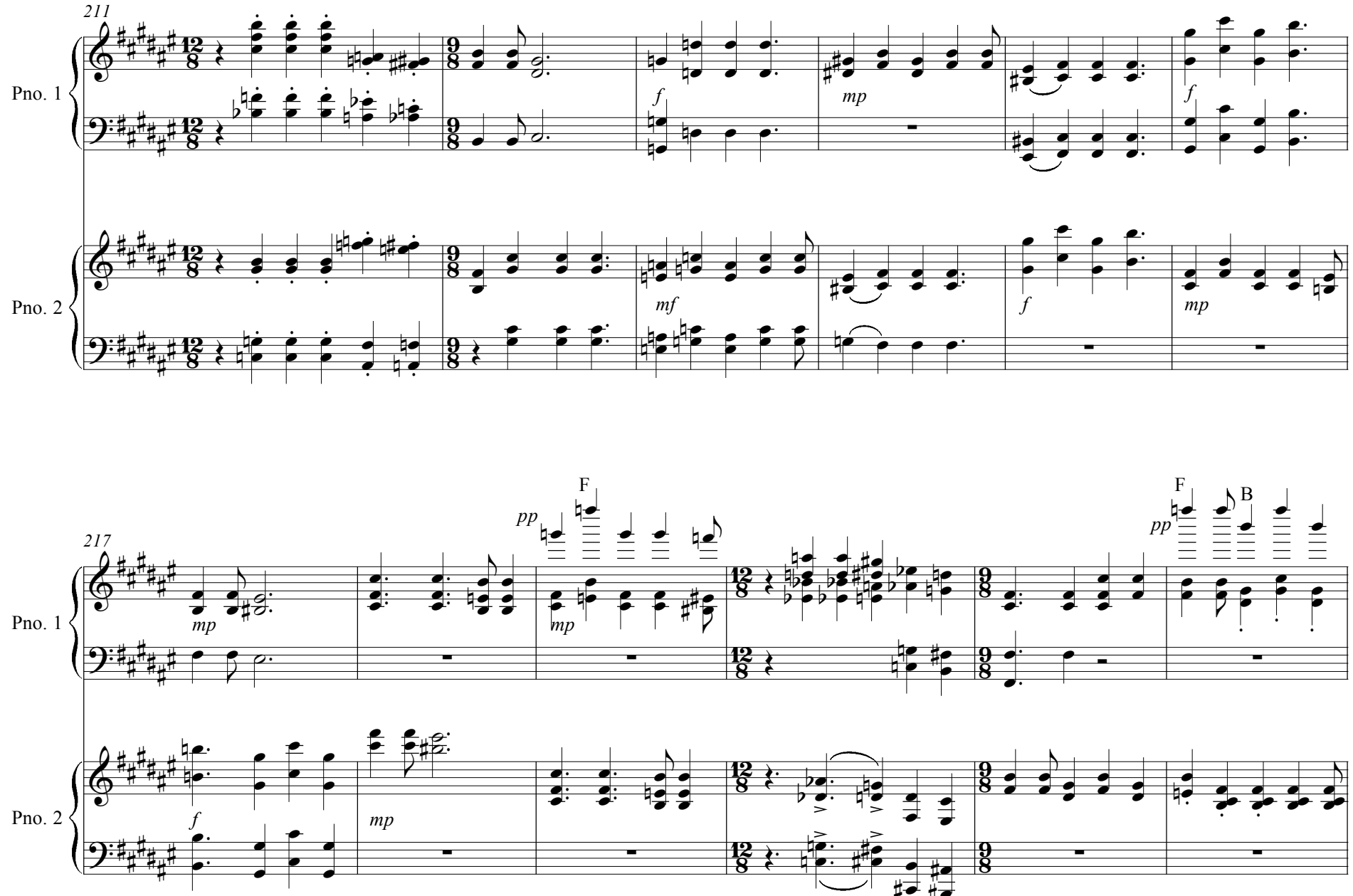

179
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
183
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
not rolled

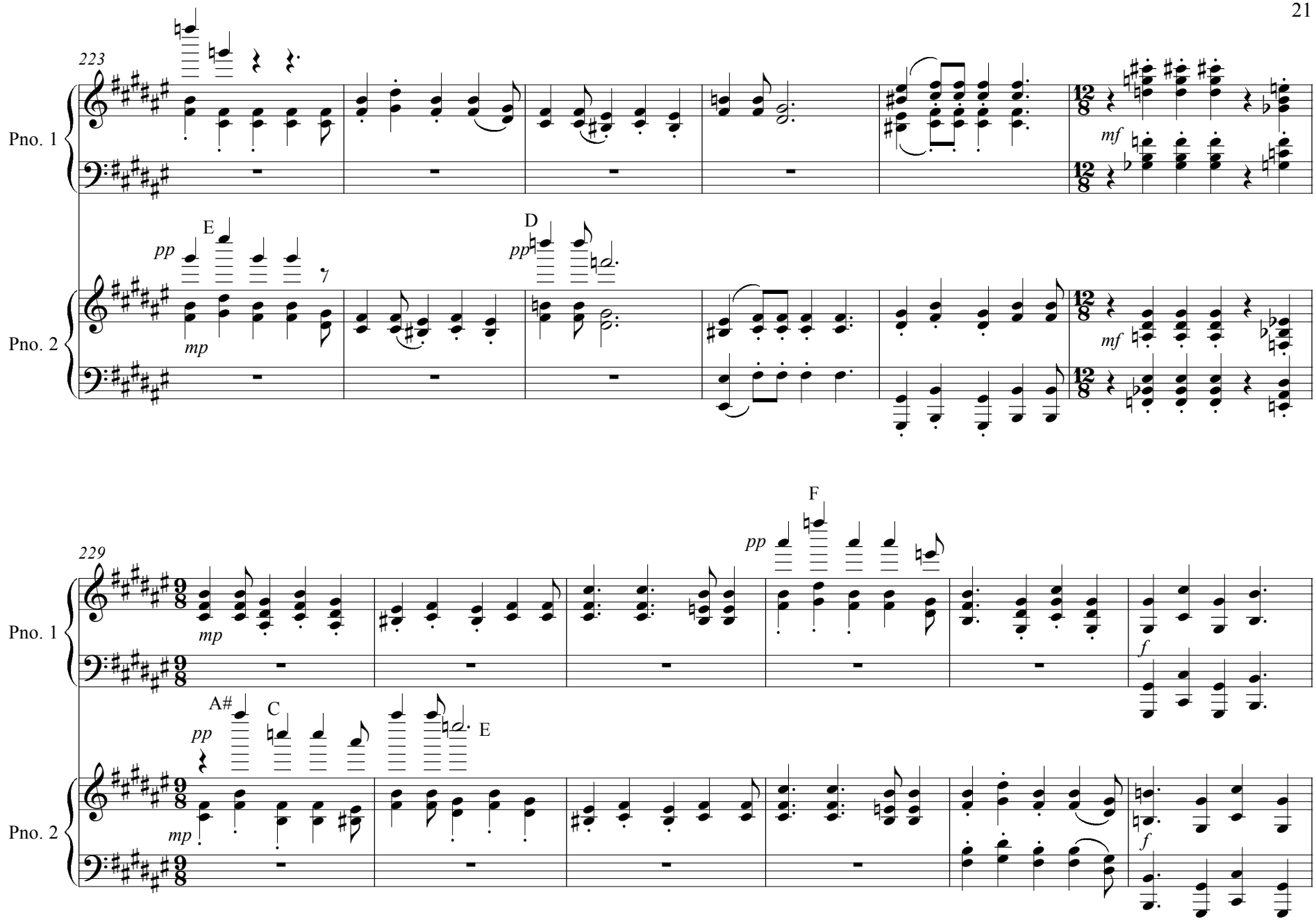


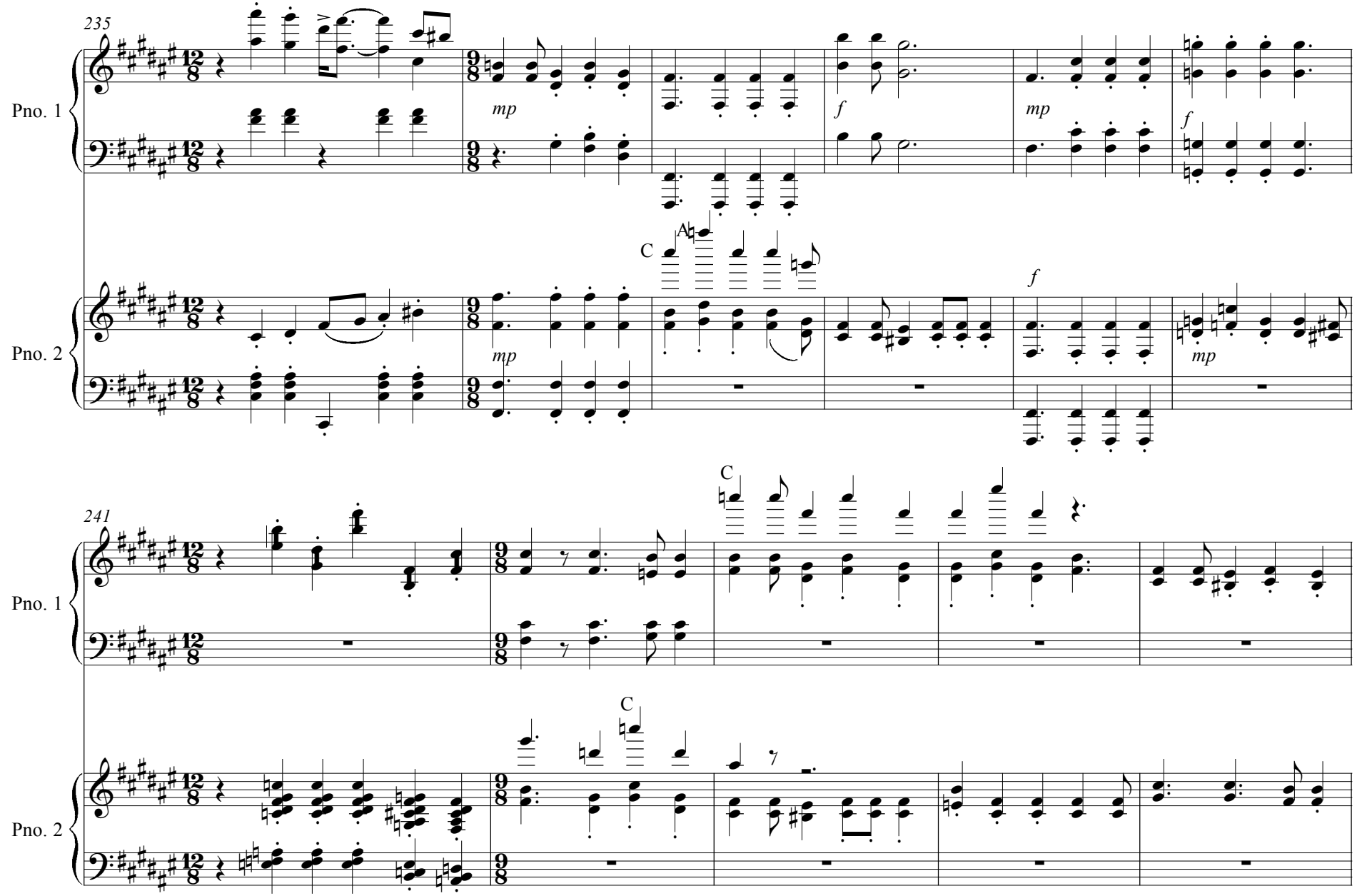
Var. V: Canon Interruptus

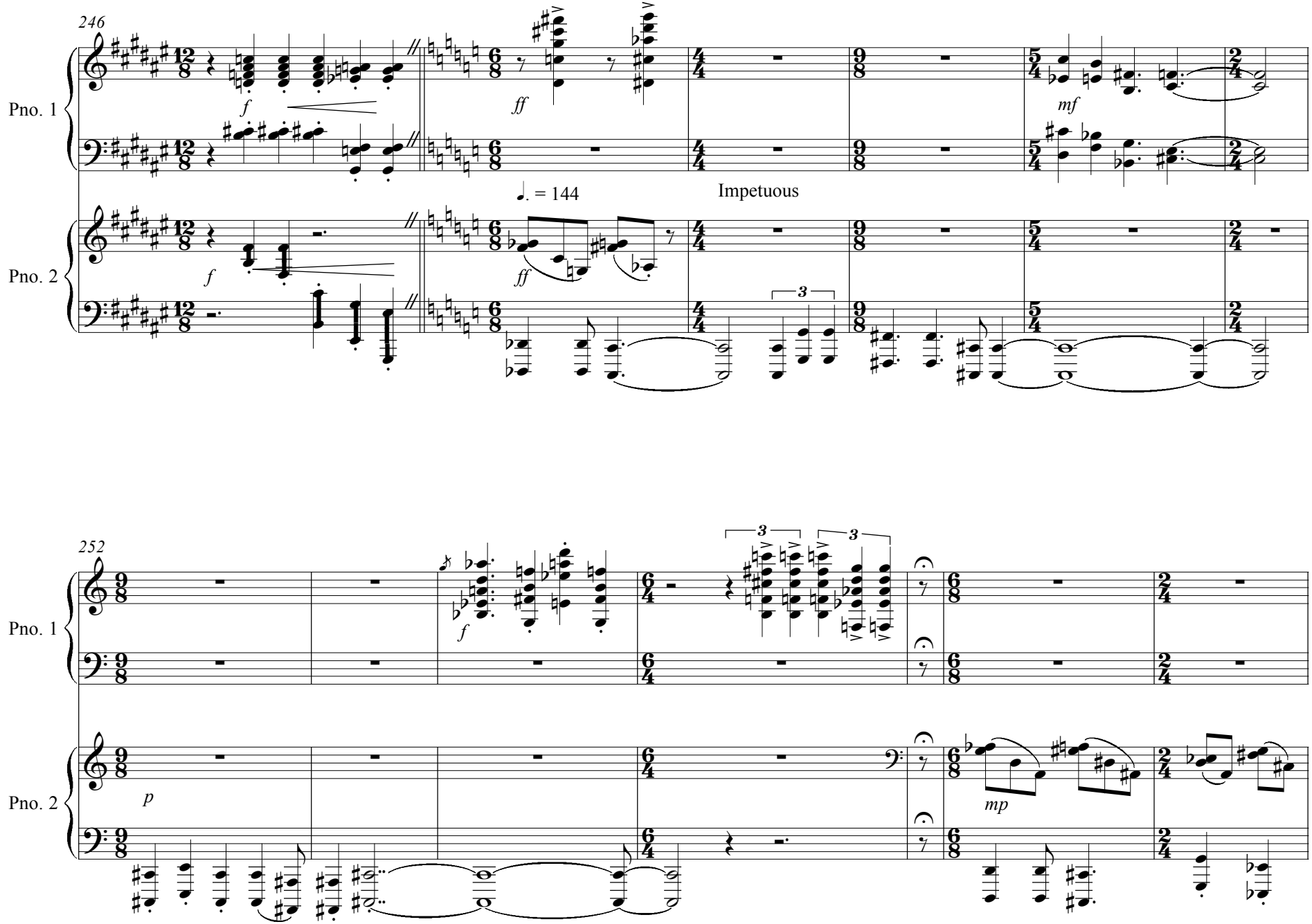


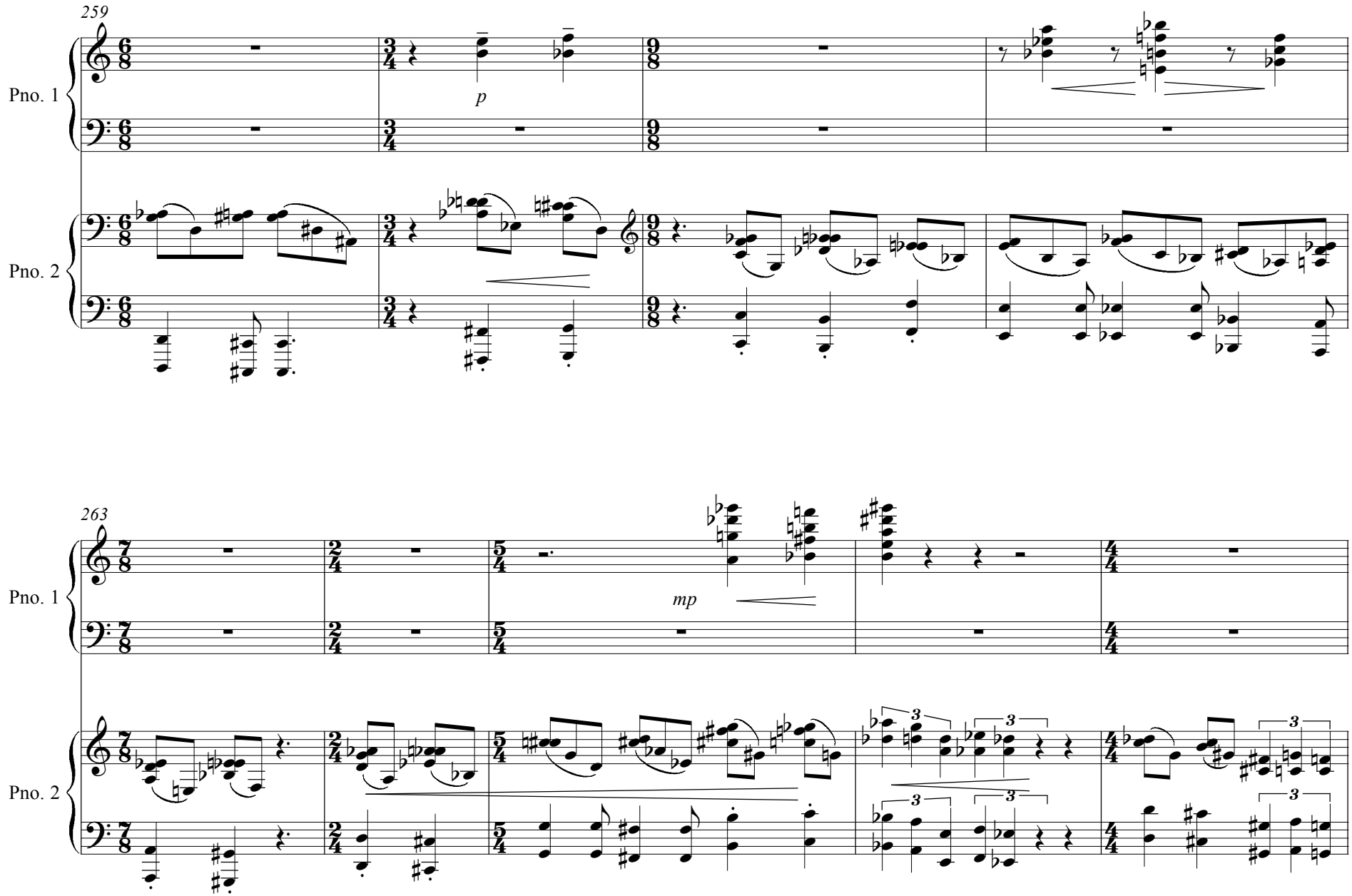

198
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mp
204
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
f
mp

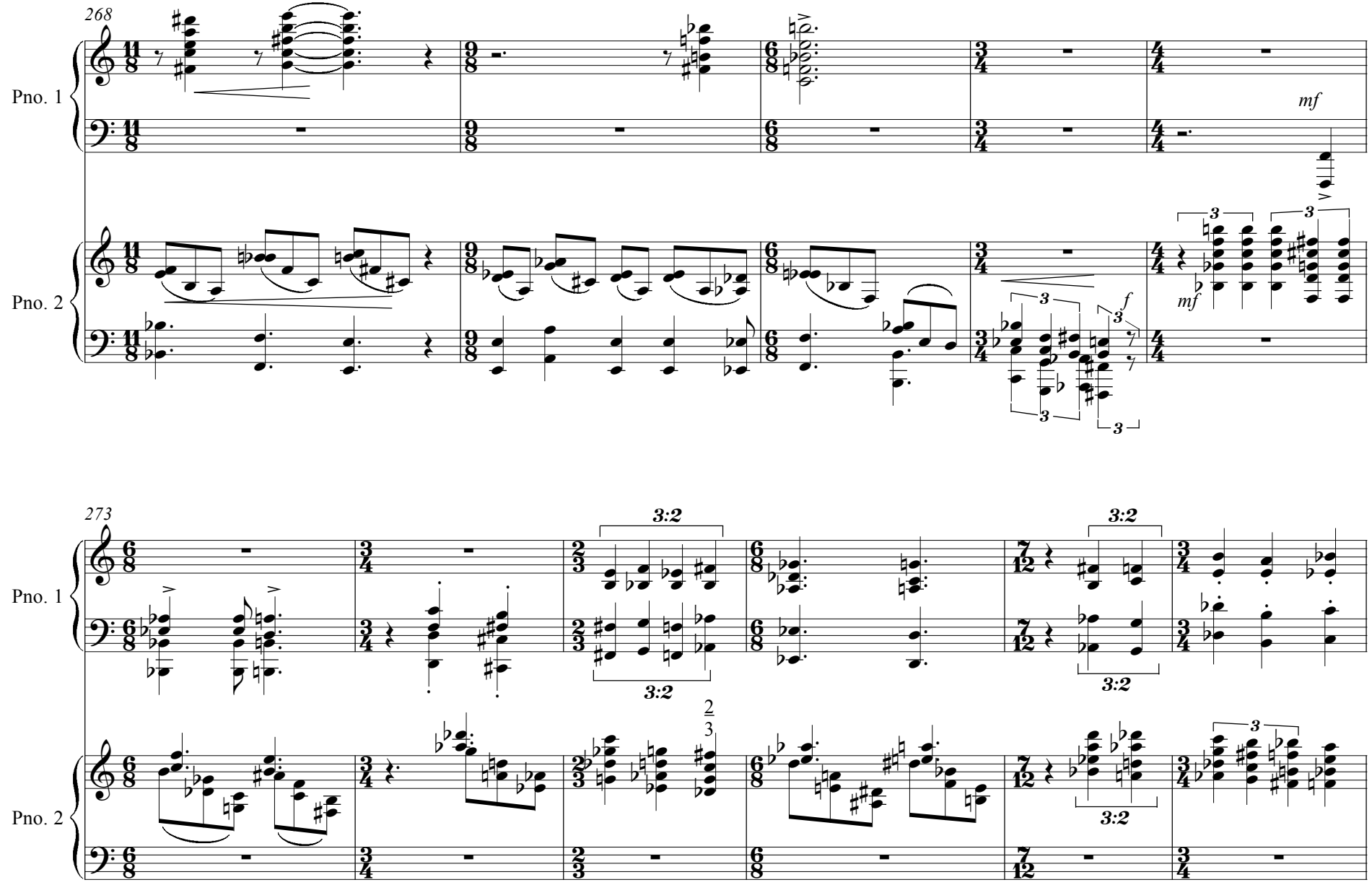

211
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
f
mp
mf
f
mp
217
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mp
pp
F
mp
f
mp
pp
F
B

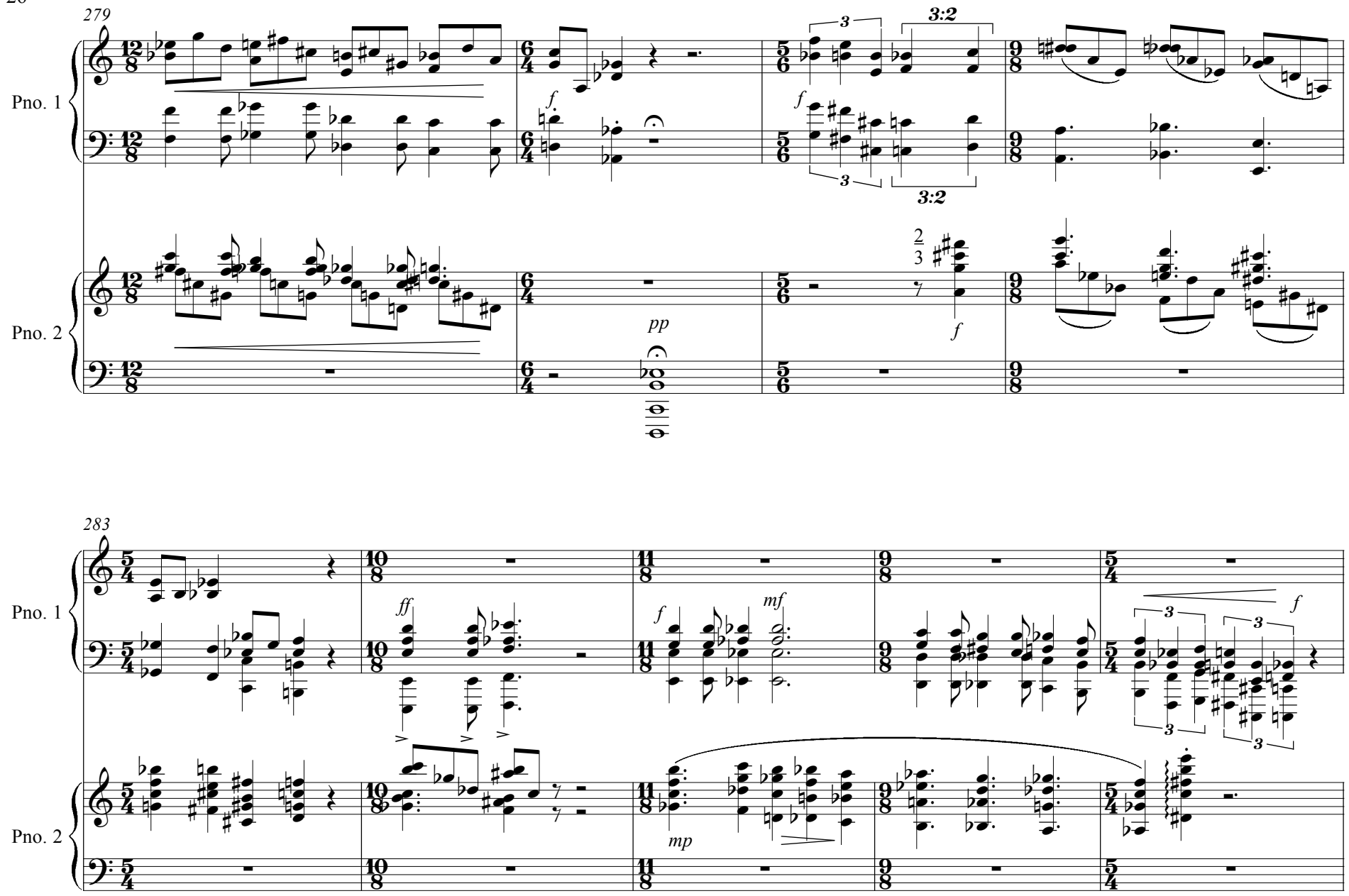

223
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
E
D
pp
mp
mf
229
F
A#
C
E
f

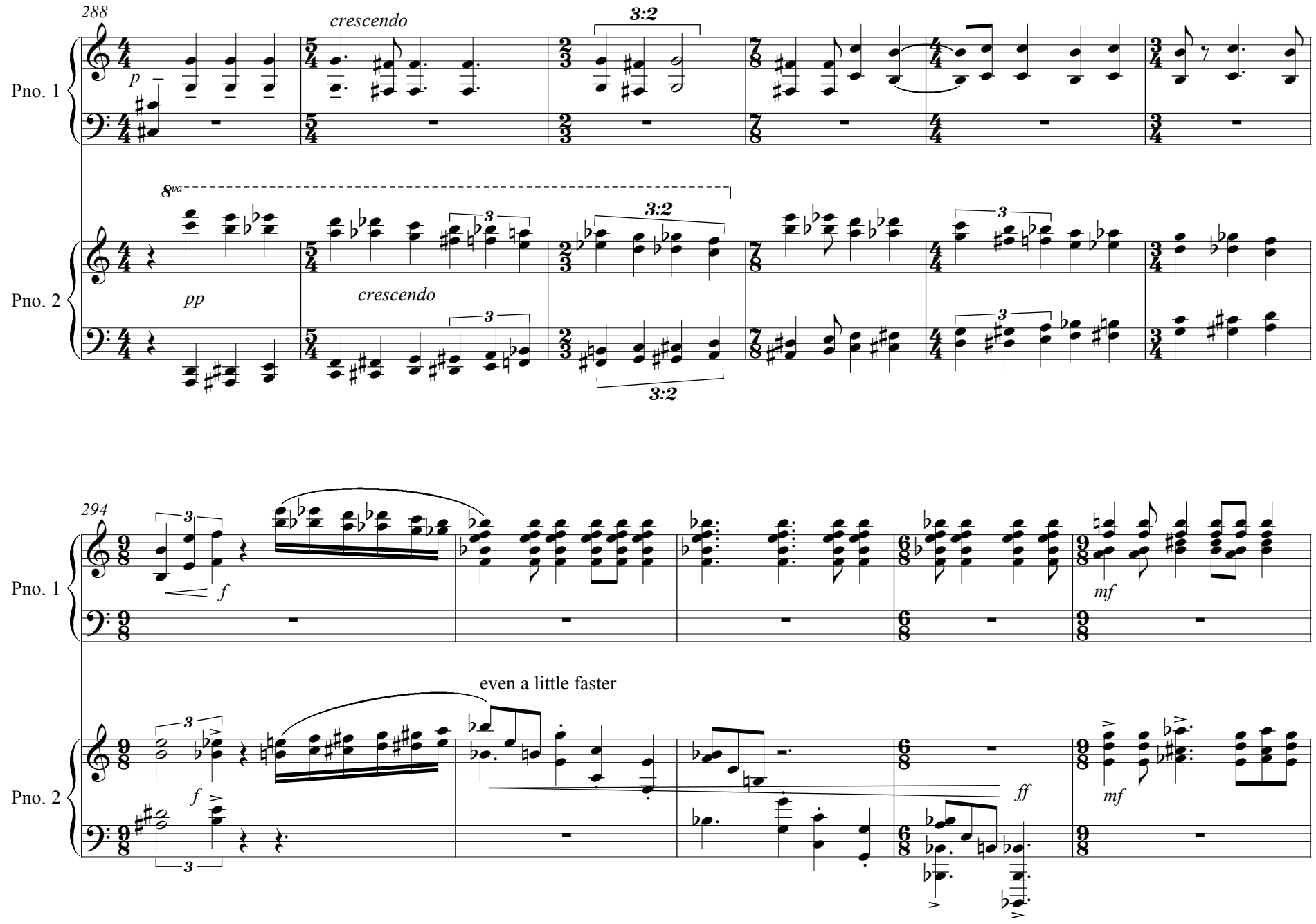

235
Pno. 1
mp
f
mp
f
Pno. 2
C
mp
f
mp
241
Pno. 1
C
Pno. 2
C

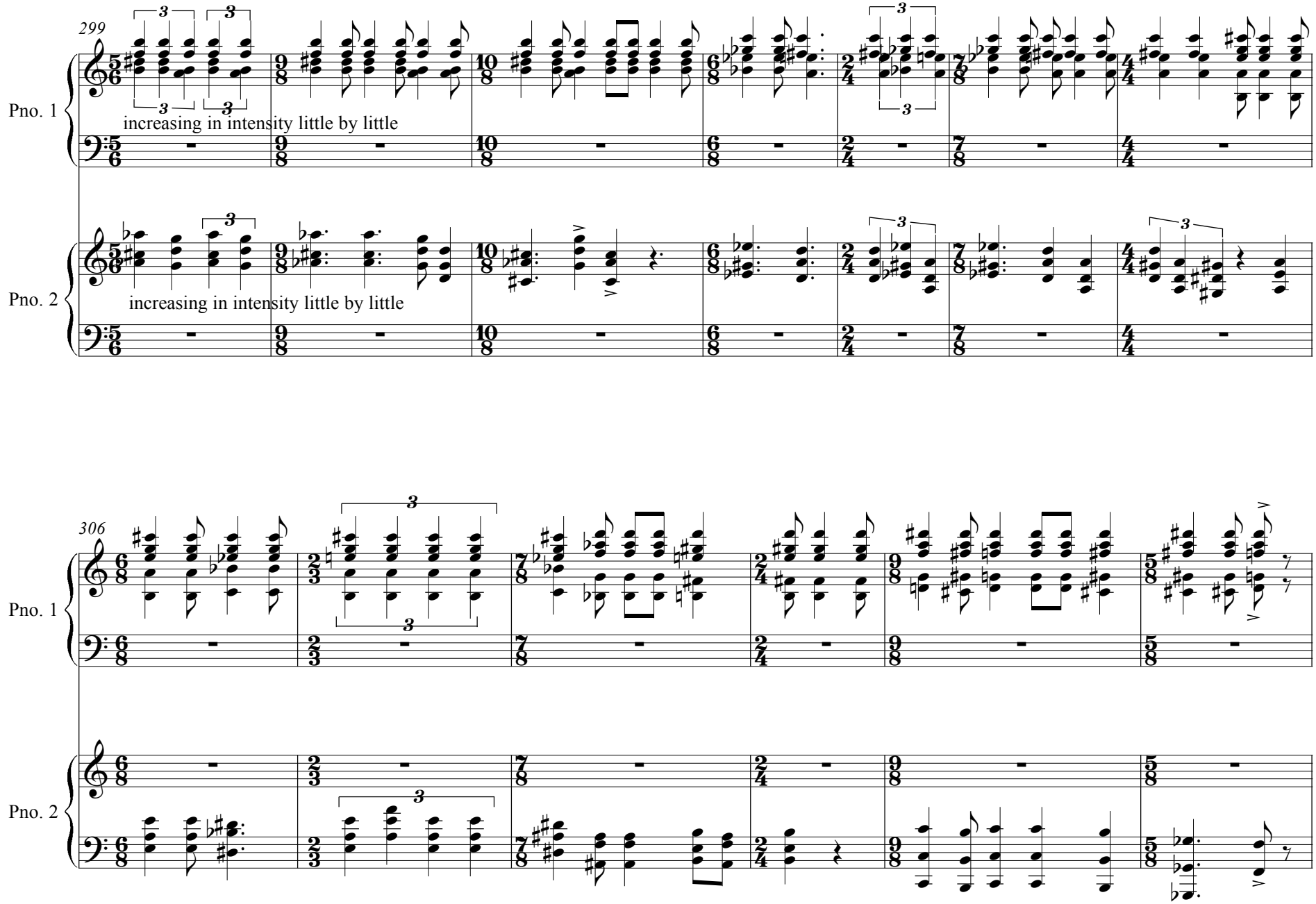

246
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
f
ff
mf
♩. = 144
Impetuous
3
252
p
mp

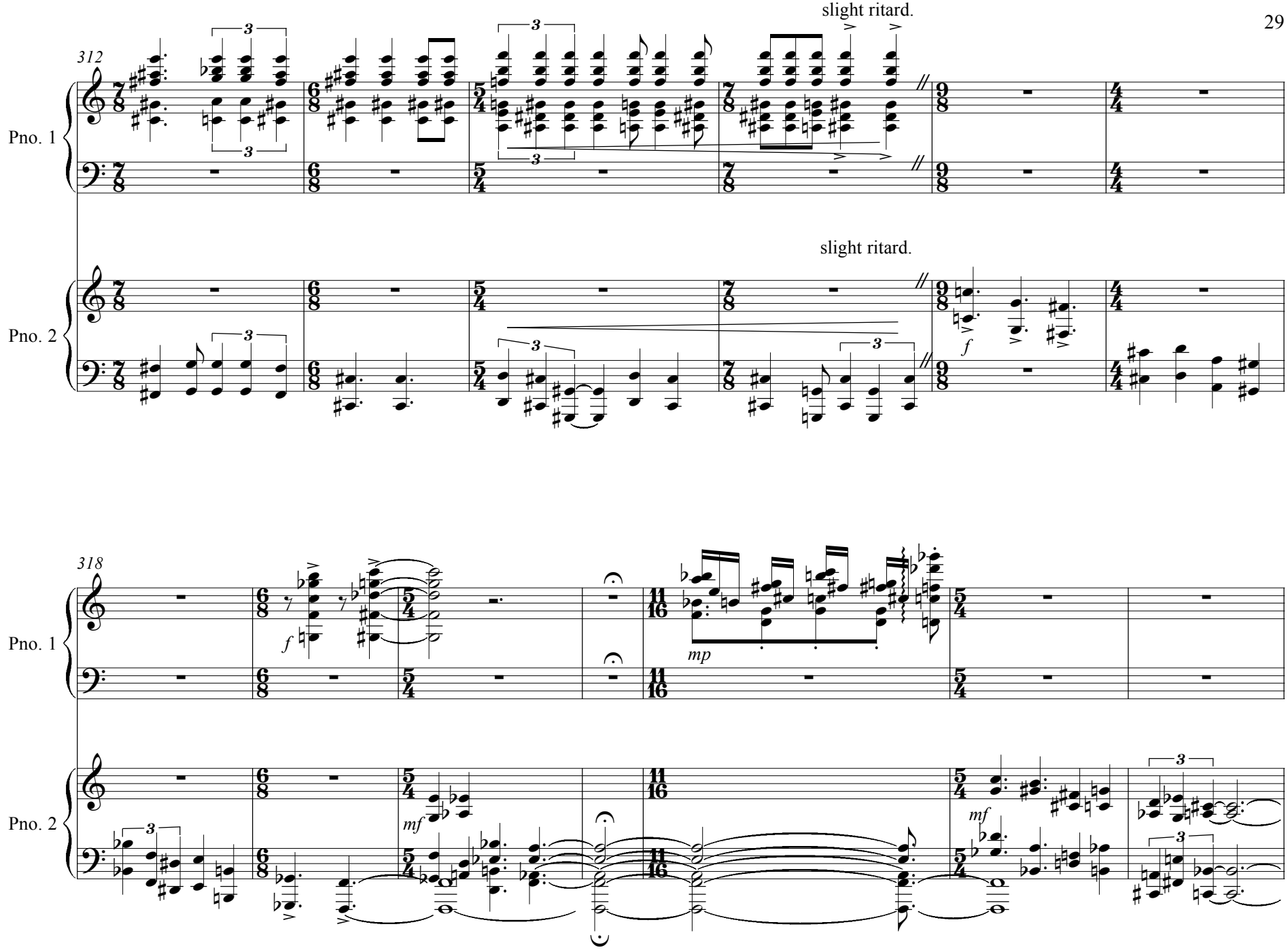

259
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
p
263
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mp

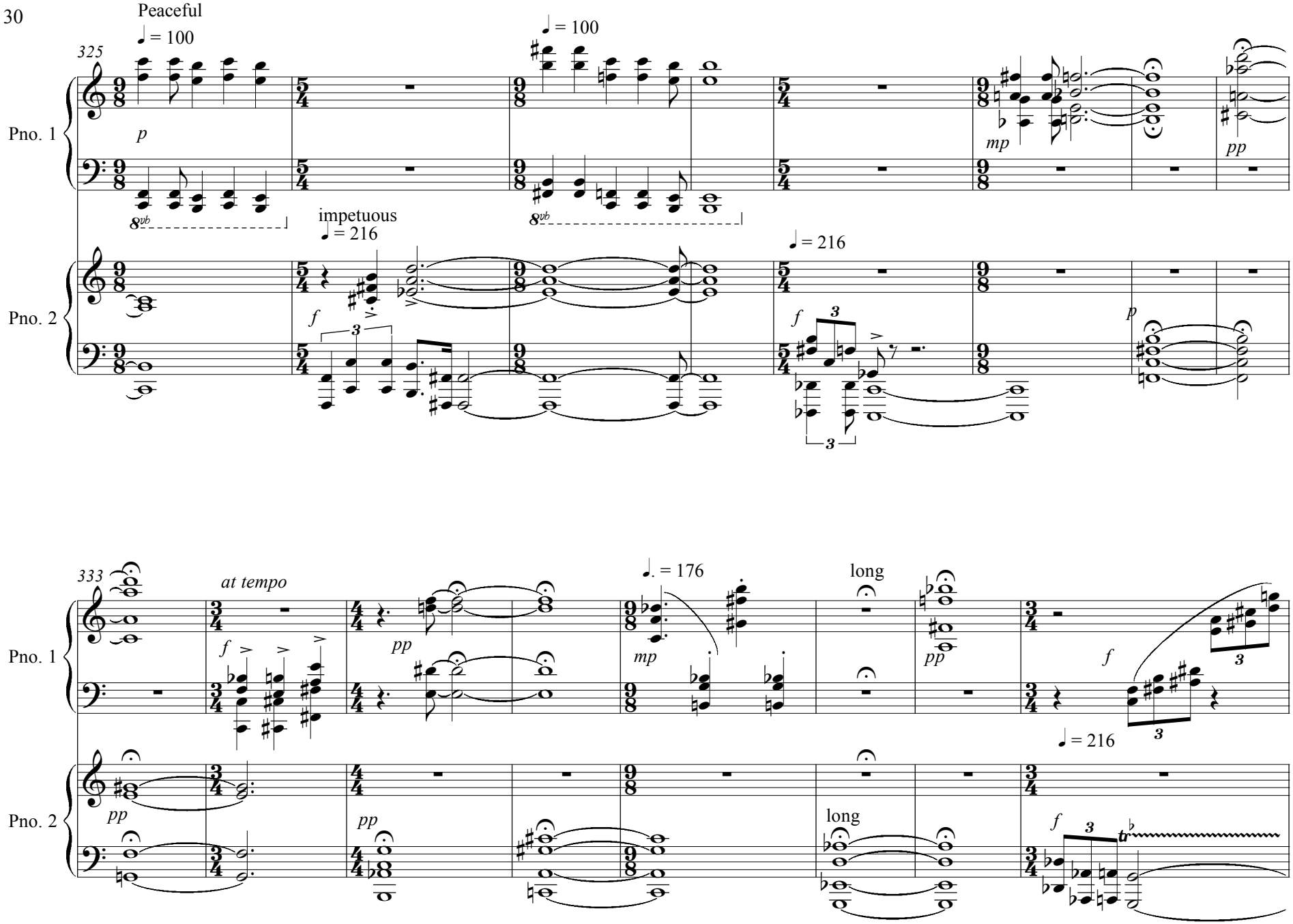

268
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mf
mf
f
273
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
3:2
3:2
3:2
3:2
2
3

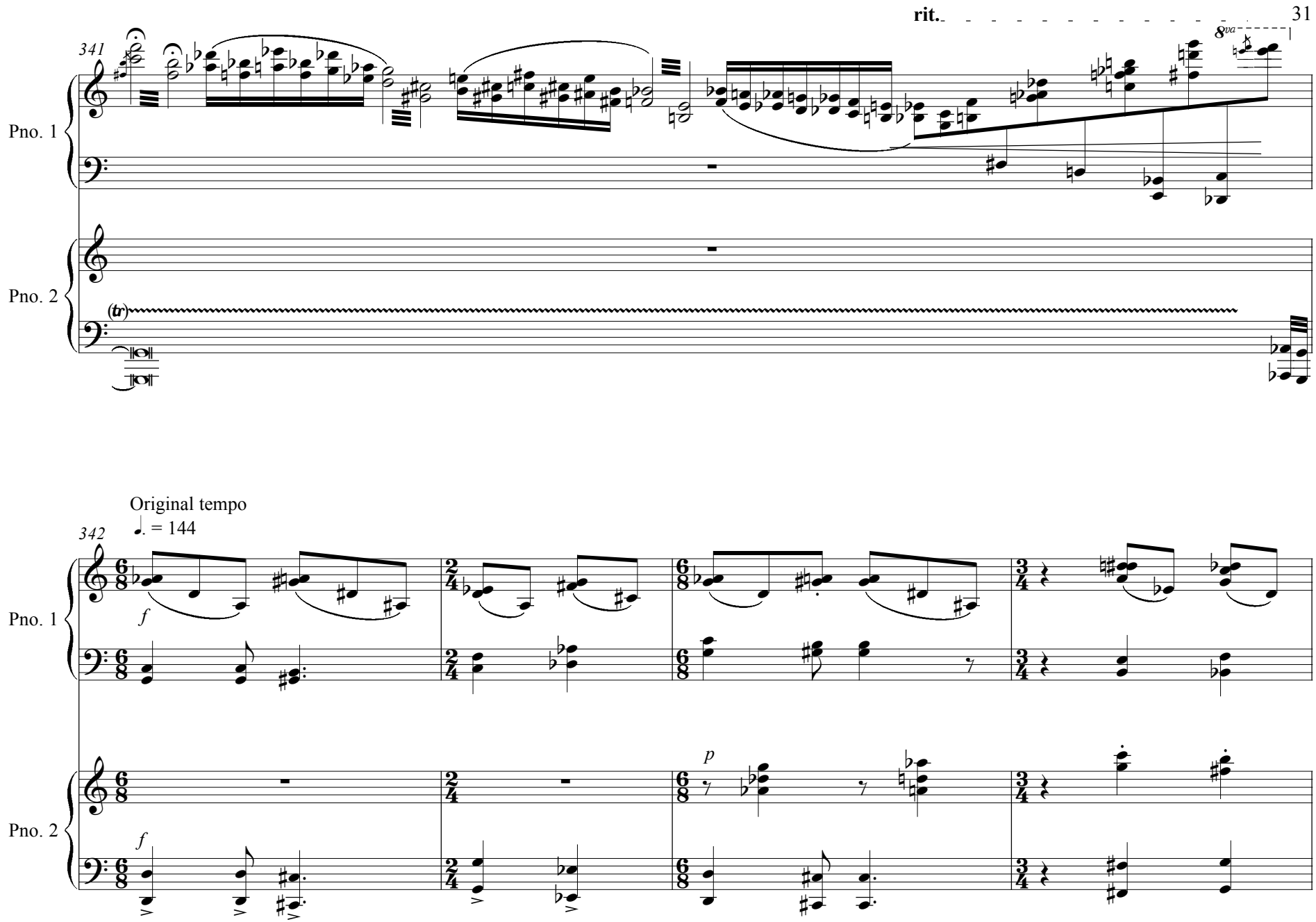

279
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
3:2
3:2
f
pp
283
ff
mf
mp

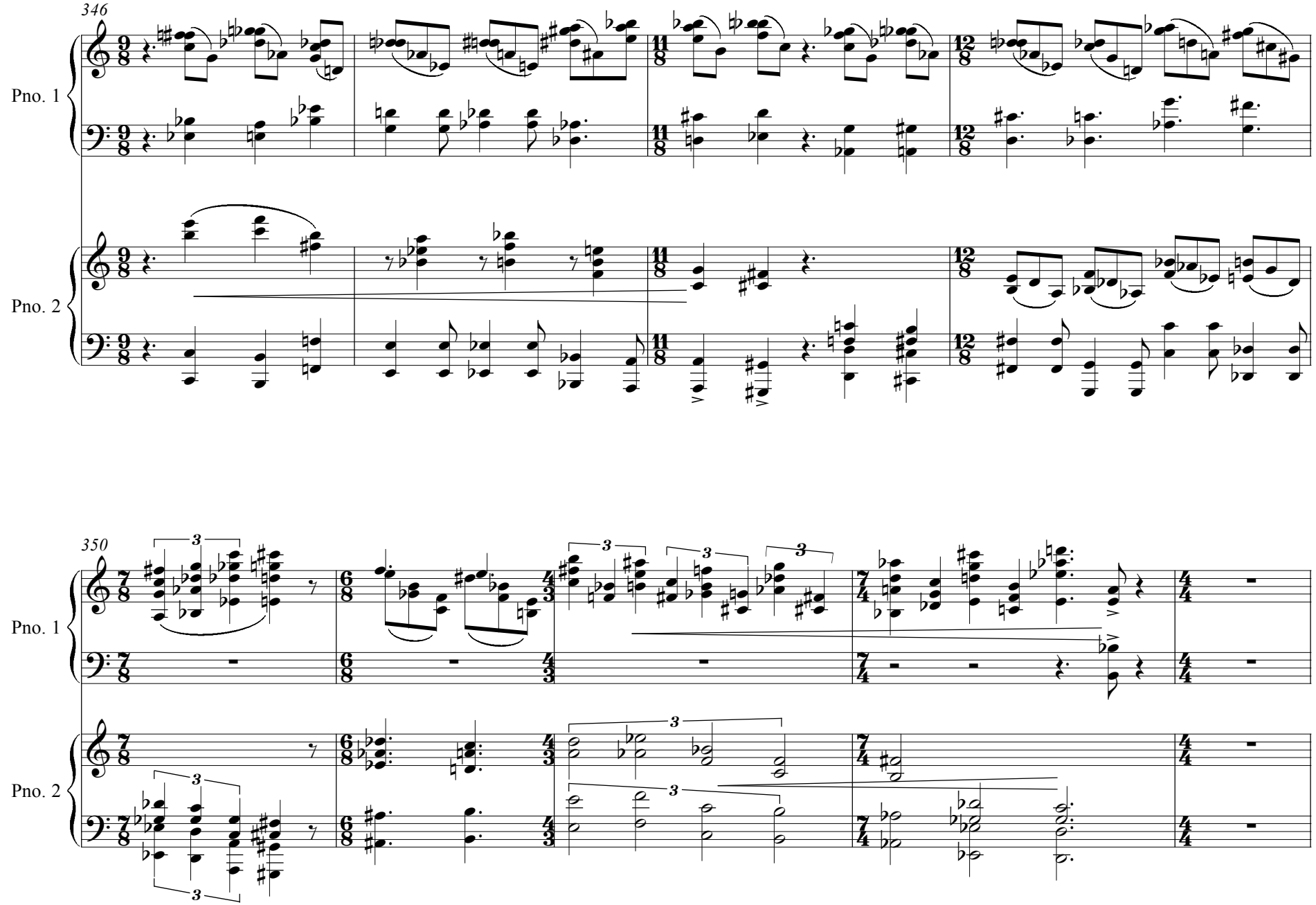

288
crescendo
3:2
Pno. 1
8va
pp
crescendo
3:2
3:2
Pno. 2
294
f
mf
Pno. 1
even a little faster
f
ff
mf
Pno. 2

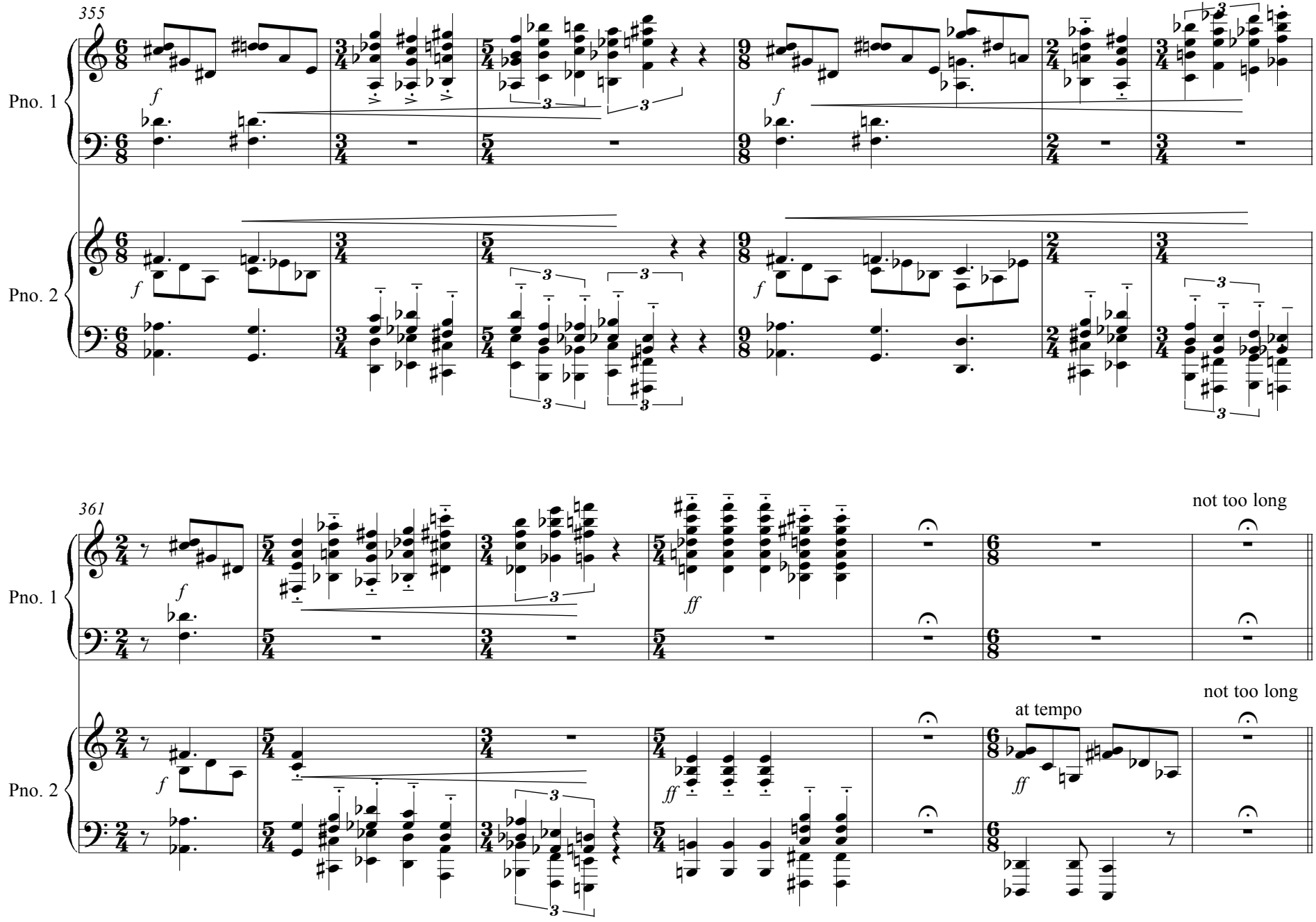

299
Pno. 1
increasing in intensity little by little
Pno. 2
increasing in intensity little by little
306
Pno. 1
Pno. 2


312
slight ritard.
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
slight ritard.
318
Pno. 1
Pno. 2

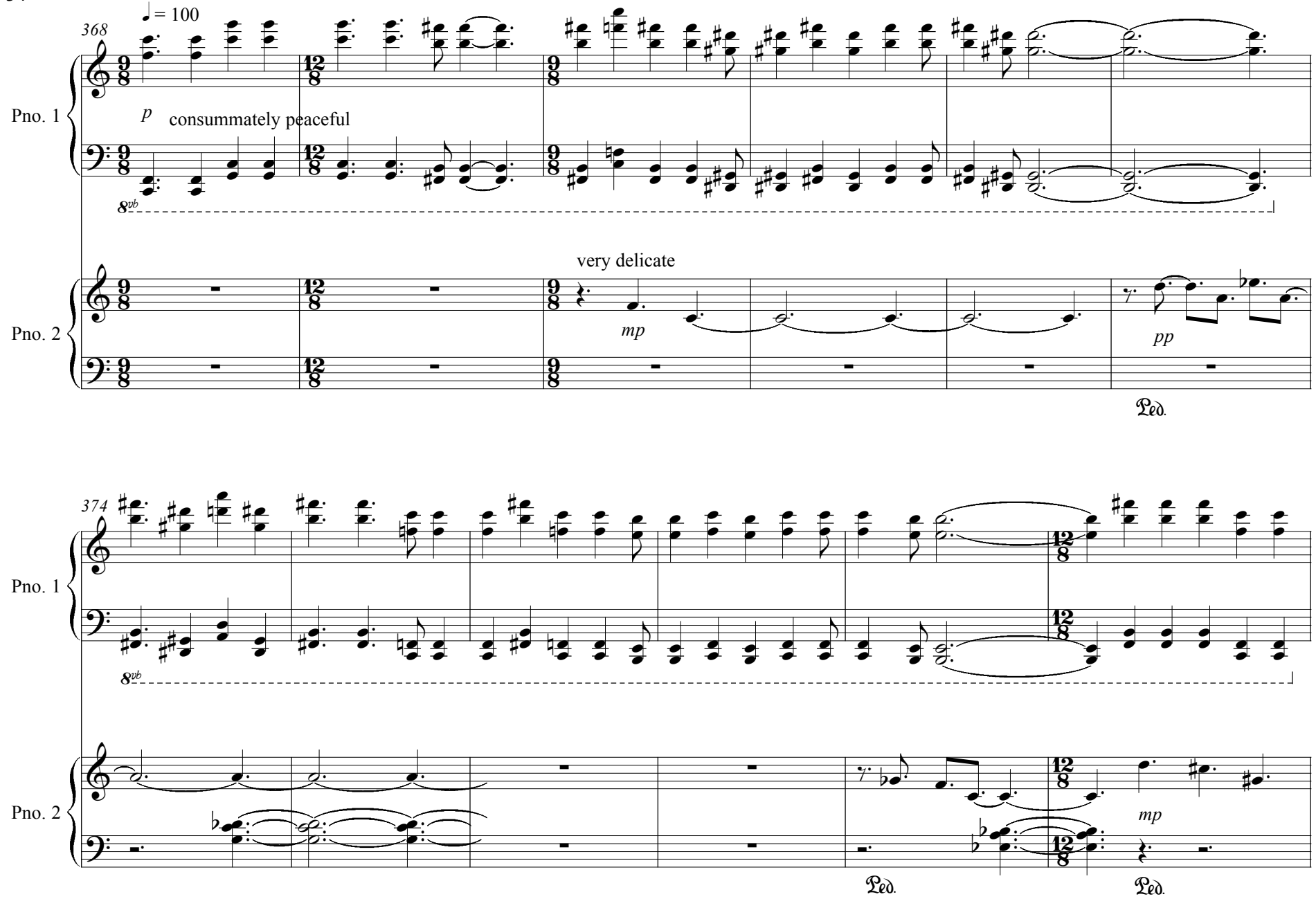

Peaceful
♩ = 100
325
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
p
8vb
♩ = 100
mp
pp
impetuous
♩ = 216
f
3
♩ = 216
f
3
p
333
at tempo
f
pp
♩. = 176
mp
long
pp
f
3
♩ = 216
pp
pp
long
f
3

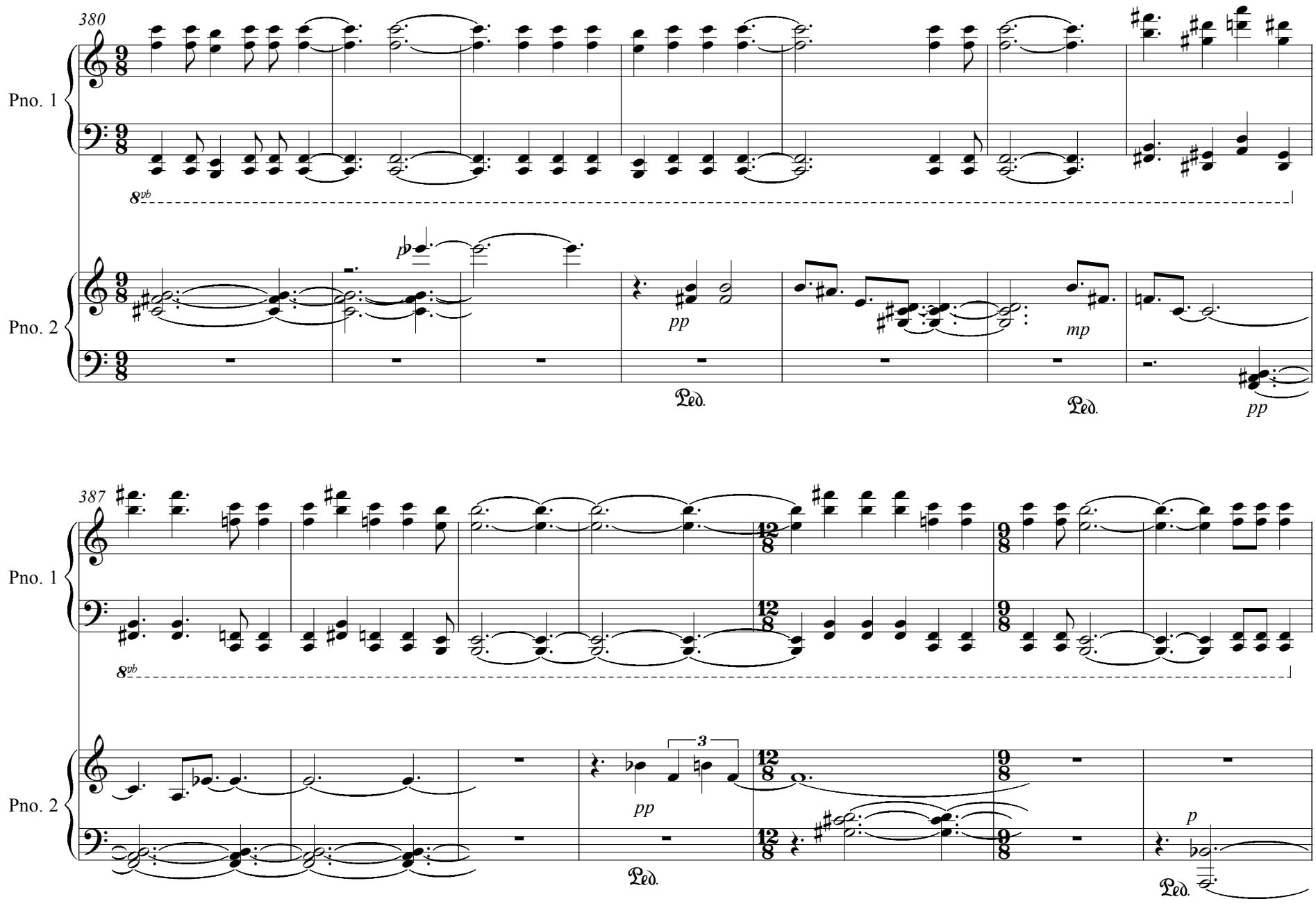

rit.
341
8va
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
(tr)
Original tempo
♩. = 144
342
Pno. 1
f
Pno. 2
p
f

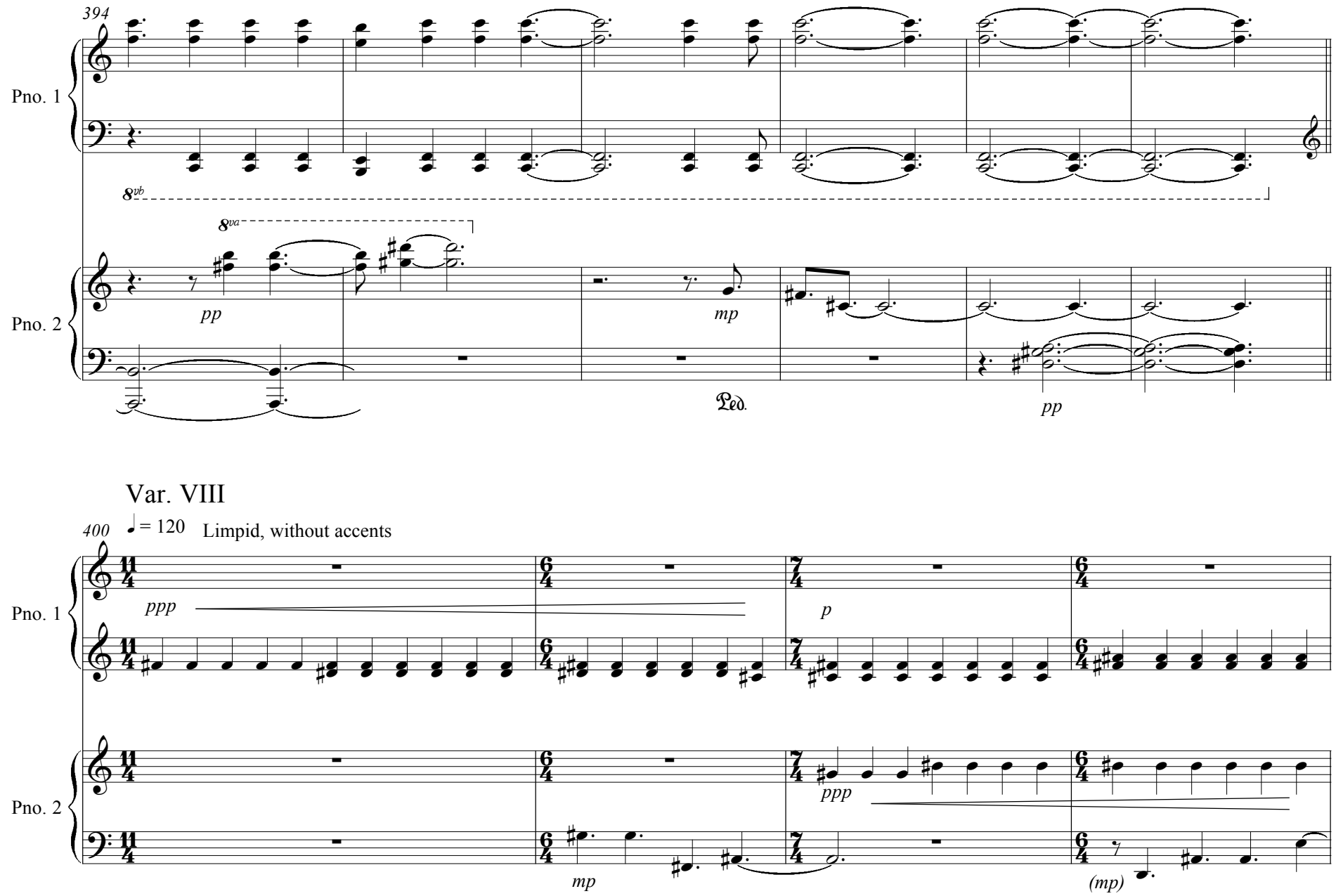

346
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
350
Pno. 1
Pno. 2

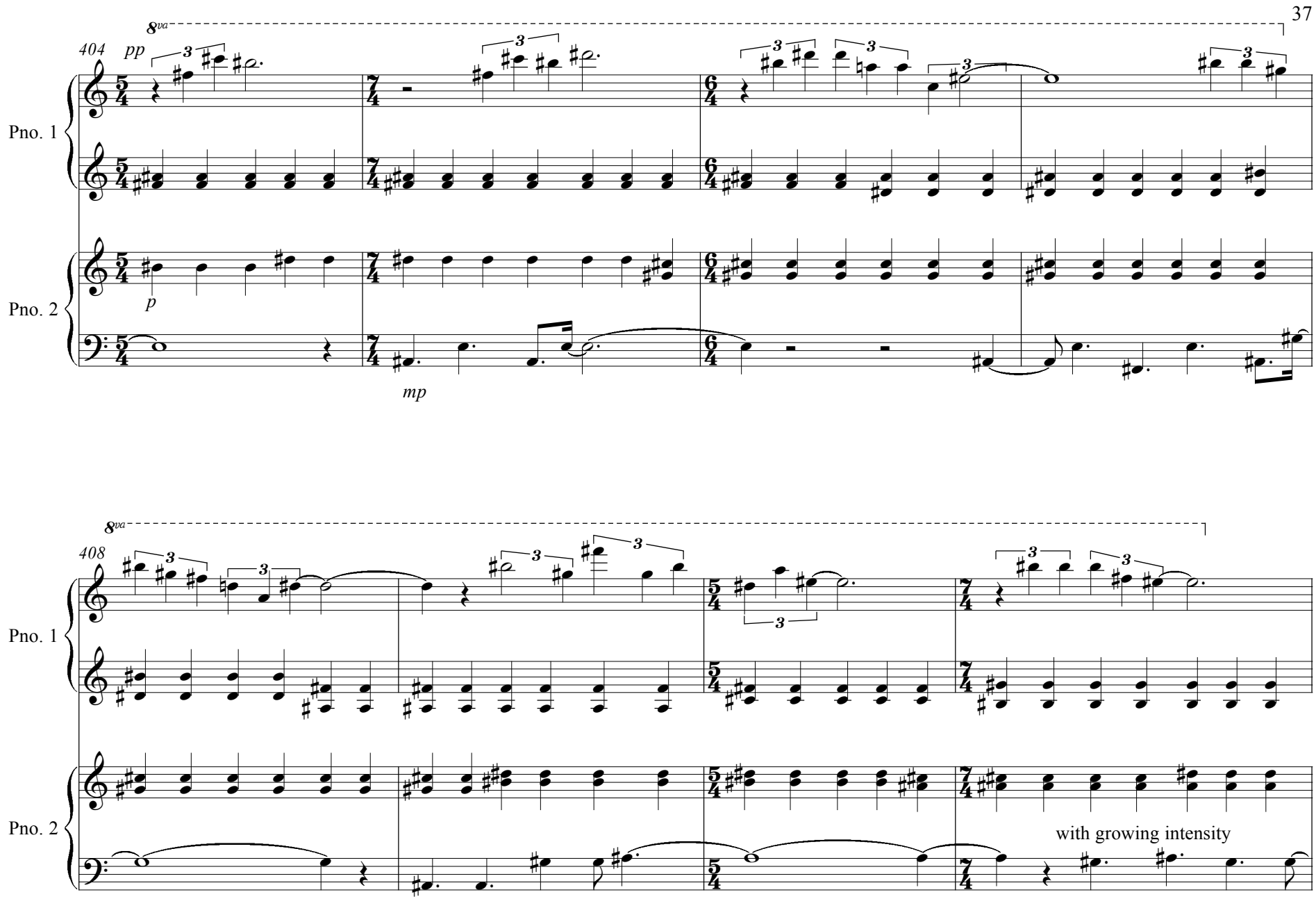

355
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
361
not too long
not too long
at tempo

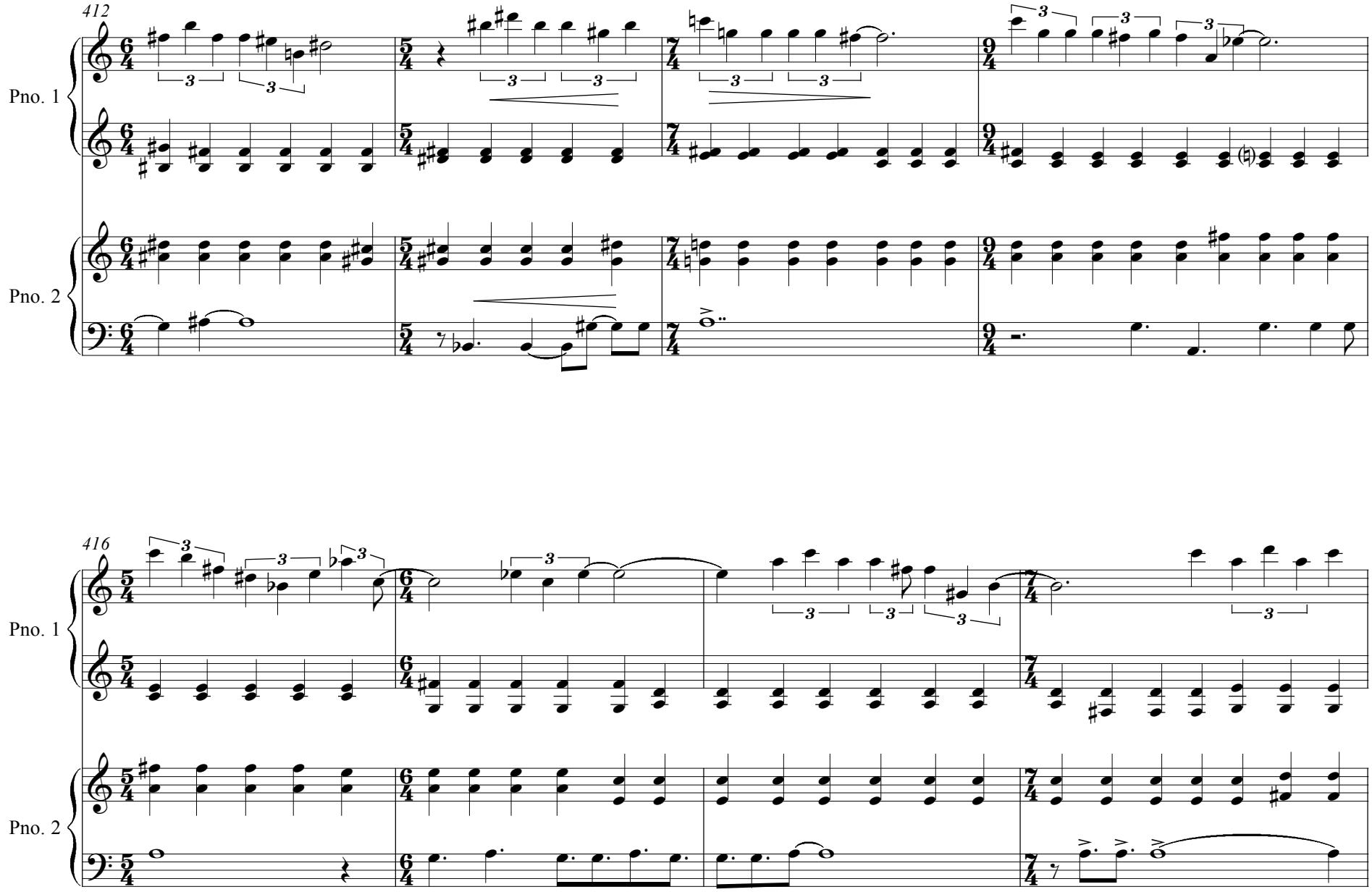
Var. VII

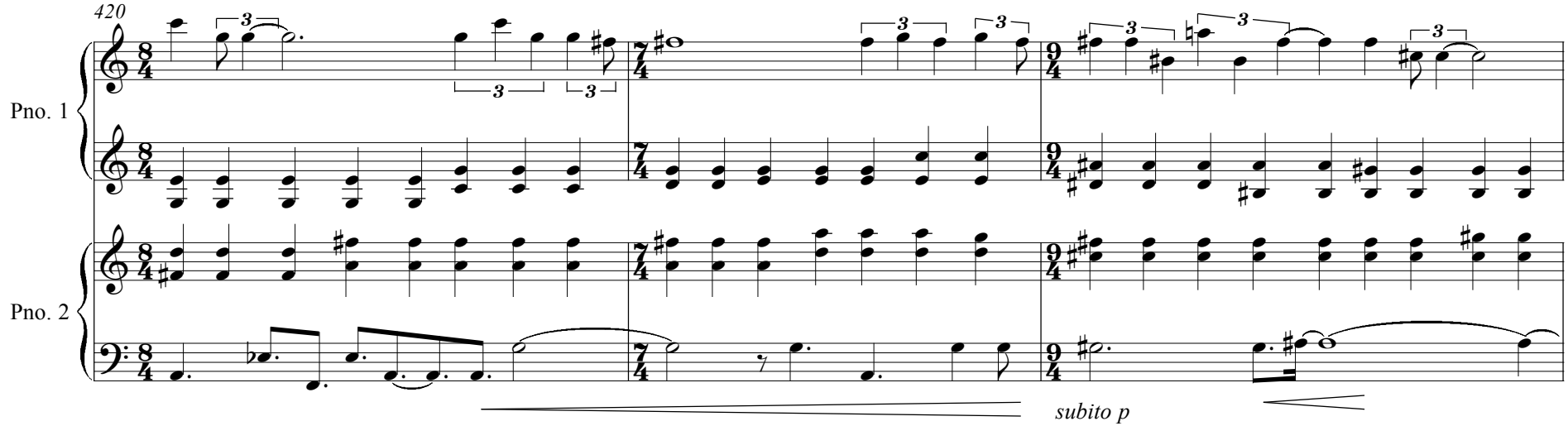

♩ = 100
368
Pno. 1
p
consummately peaceful
8vb
very delicate
Pno. 2
mp
pp
Ped.
374
Pno. 1
8vb
Pno. 2
Ped.
mp
Ped.

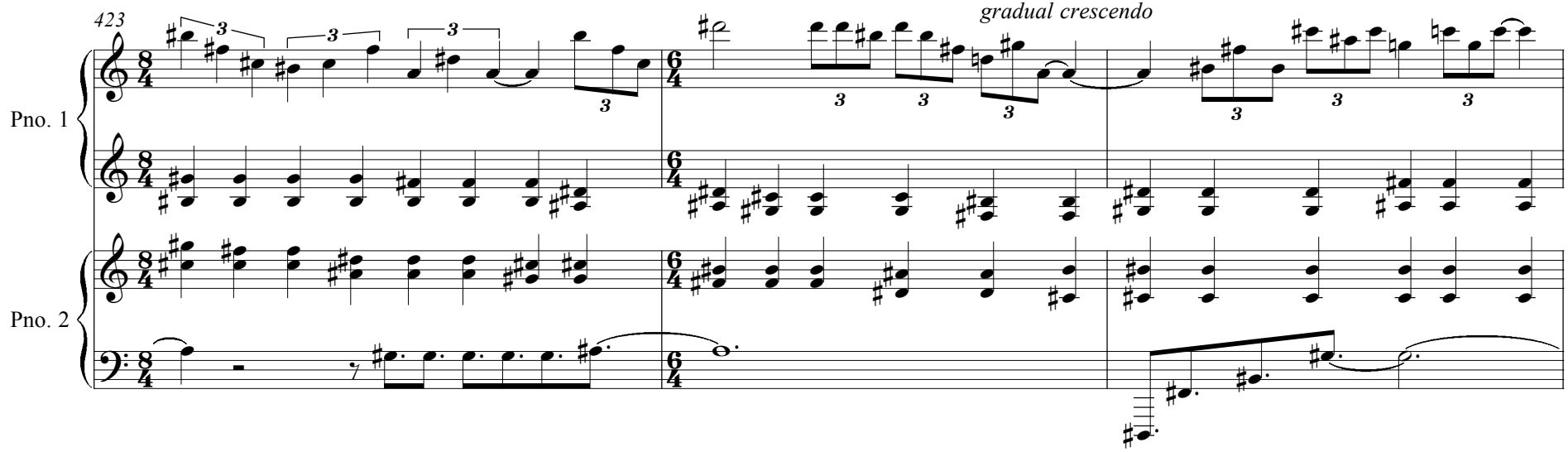

380
Pno. 1
8vb
Pno. 2
pp
mp
Ped.
Ped.
pp
387
Pno. 1
8vb
Pno. 2
3
pp
Ped.
p
Ped.

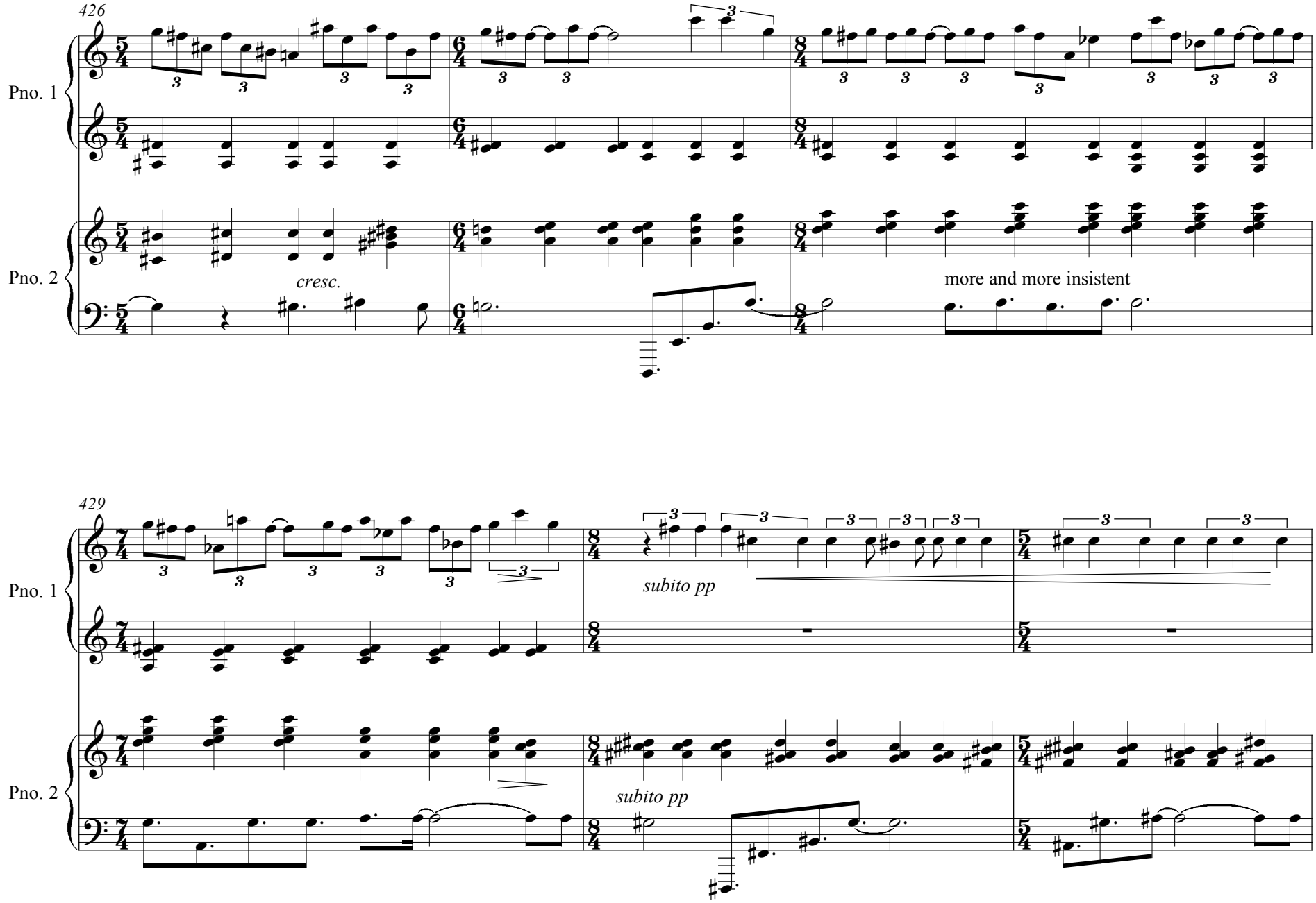

394
Pno. 1
8vb
8va
Pno. 2
pp
mp
Ped.
pp
Var. VIII
400
♩ = 120
Limpid, without accents
Pno. 1
ppp
p
Pno. 2
ppp
mp
(mp)

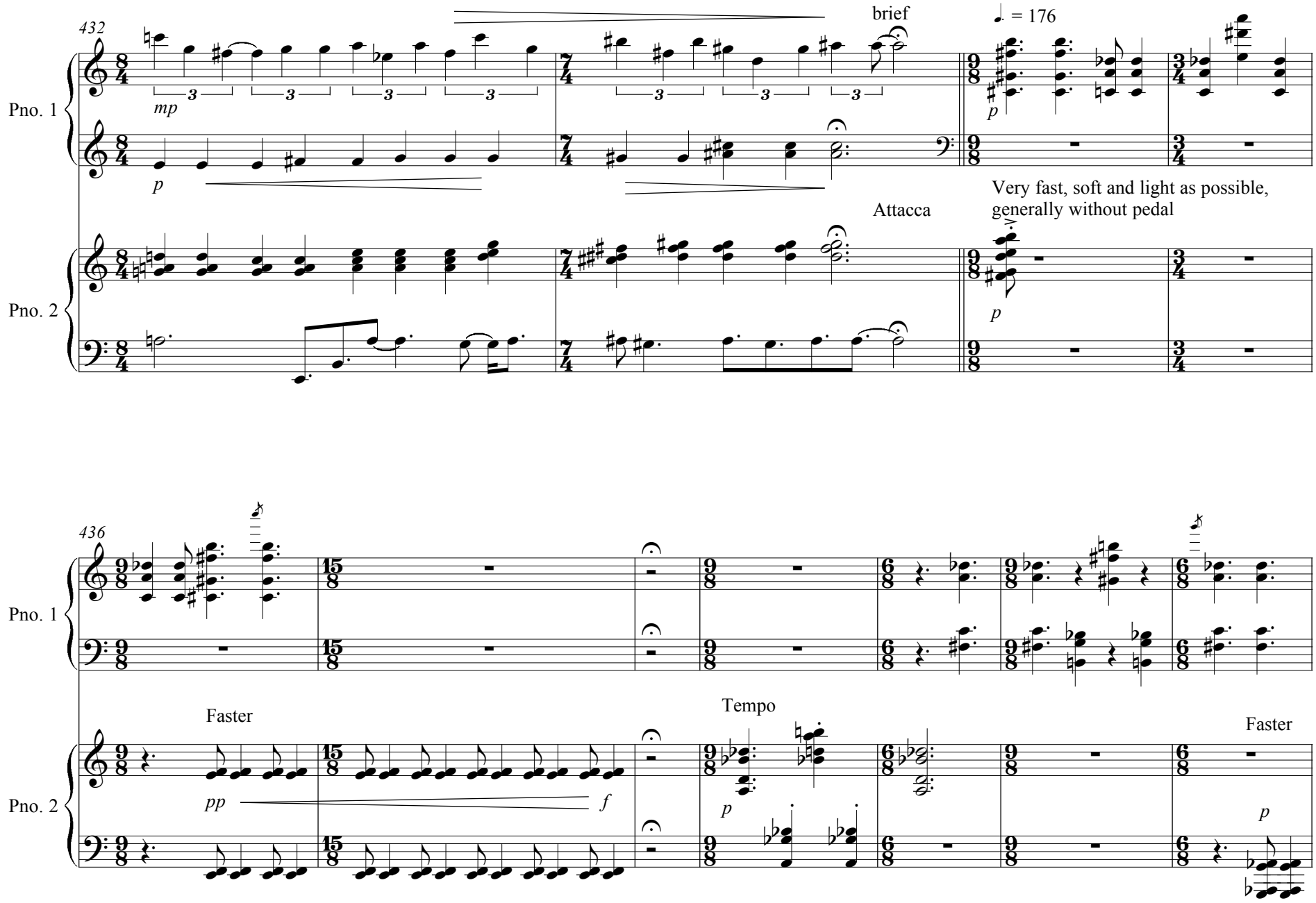

8va
404
pp
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
p
mp
8va
408
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
with growing intensity

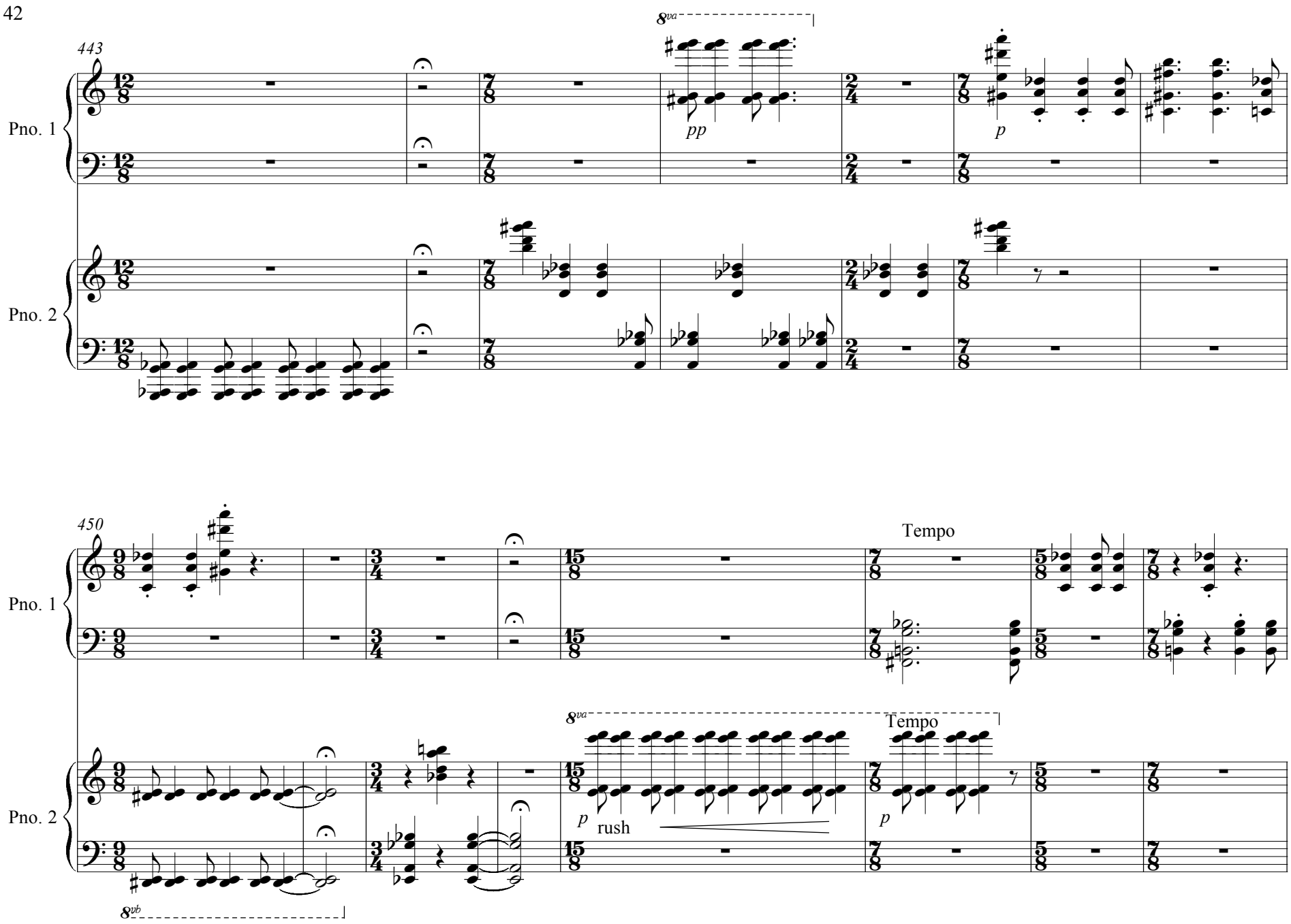

412
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
416
Pno. 1
Pno. 2


420
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
subito p


423
gradual crescendo
Pno. 1
Pno. 2


426
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
cresc.
more and more insistent
429
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
subito pp
subito pp


432
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mp
p
brief
♩. = 176
p
Attacca
Very fast, soft and light as possible,
generally without pedal
p
436
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
Faster
pp
f
Tempo
p
Faster
p


443
8va
pp
p
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
450
Tempo
8va
Tempo
p
rush
p
8vb

458

Pno. 1

Pno. 2

466

Rush

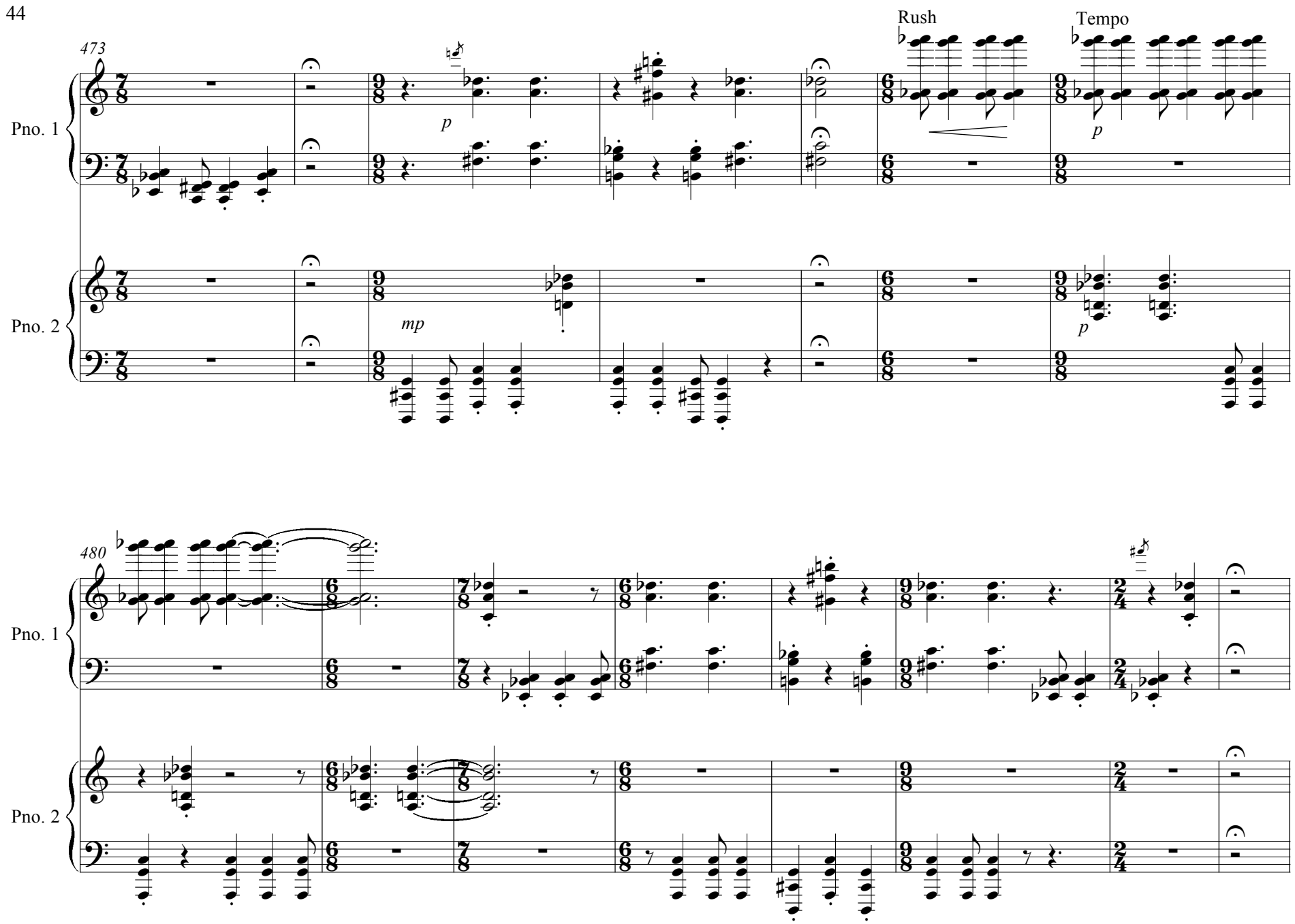
Tempo

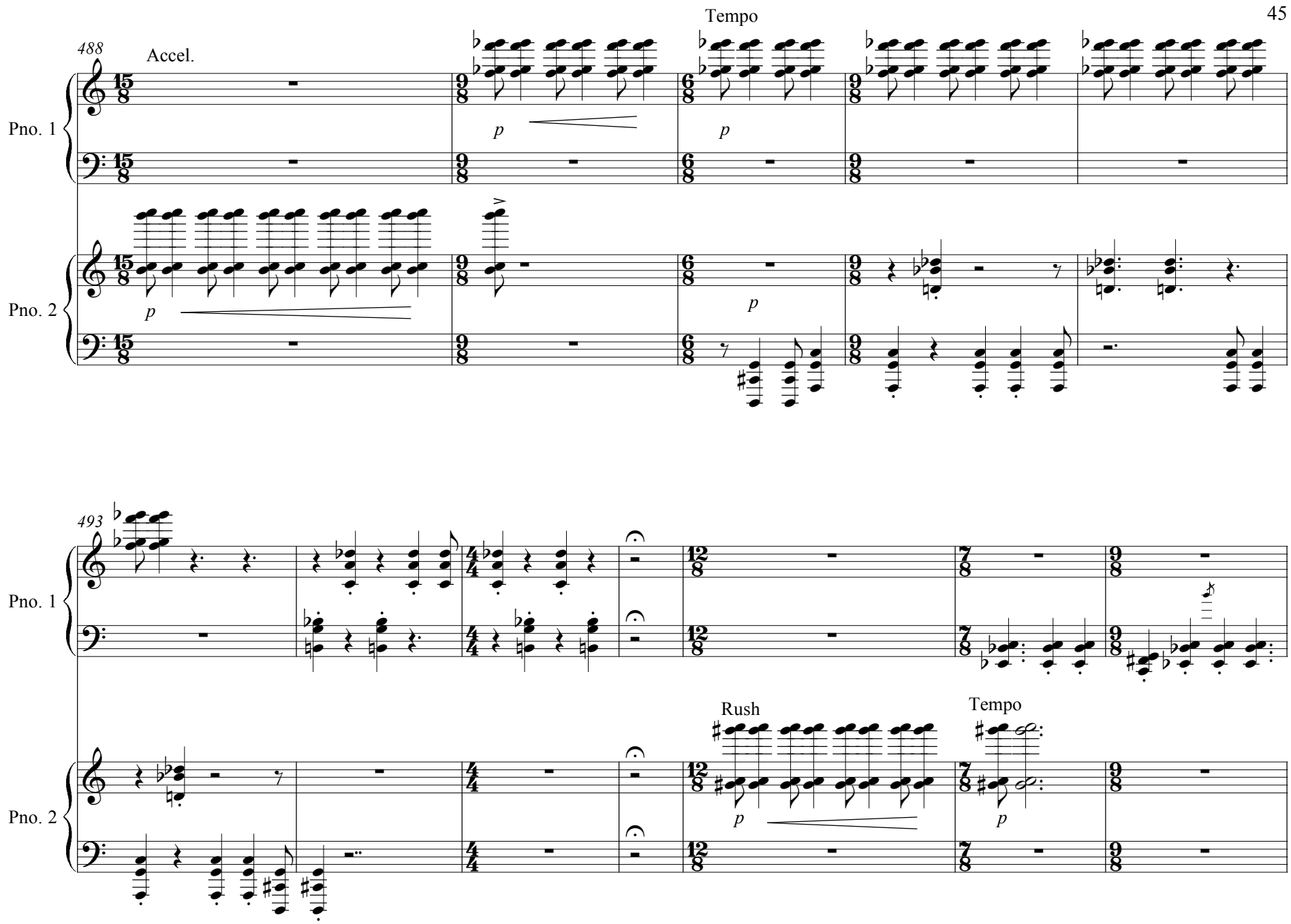
p

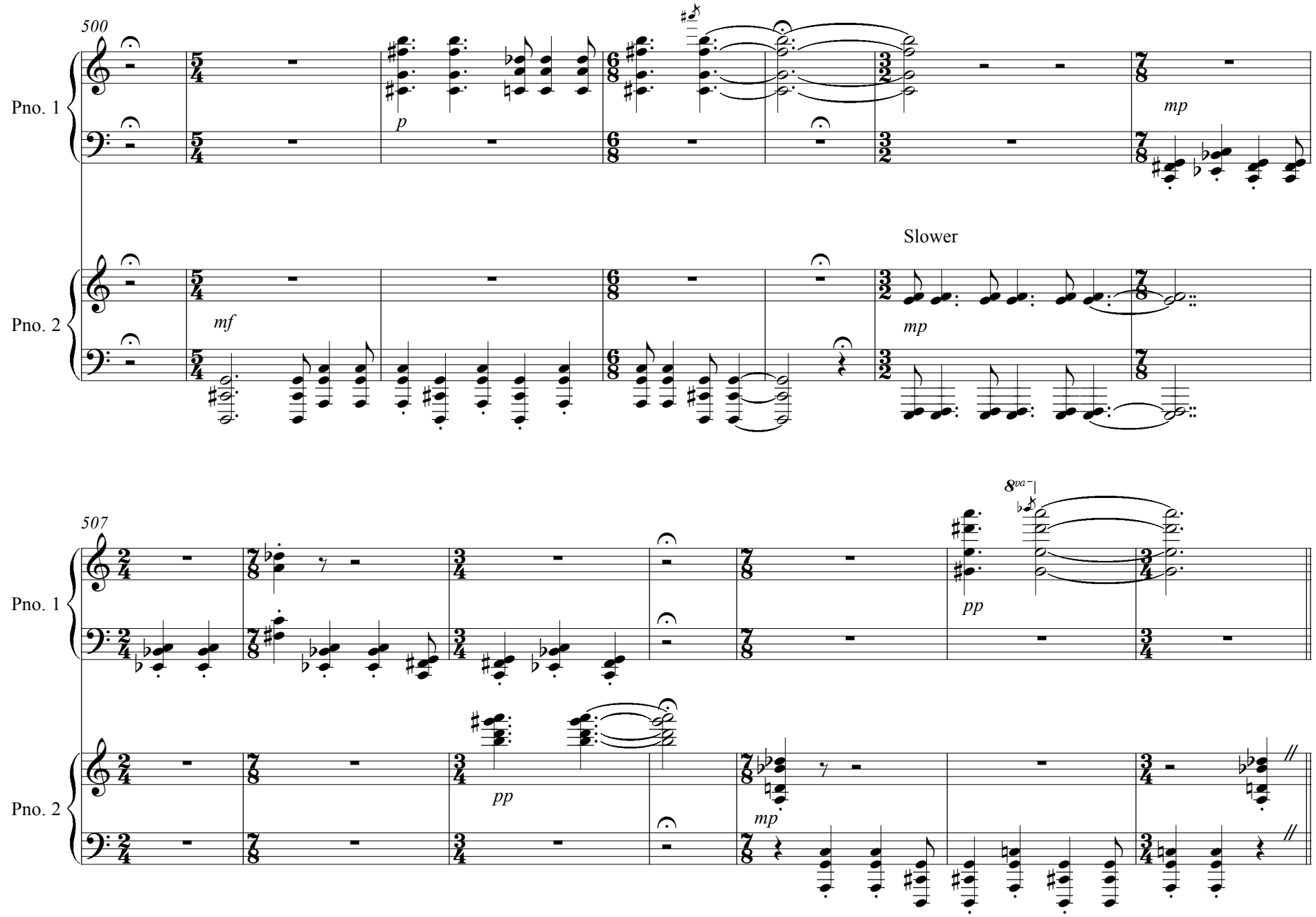
p

Pno. 1

Pno. 2


473
Rush
Tempo
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
p
mp
p
480
Pno. 1
Pno. 2


488
Accel.
Tempo
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
493
Rush
Tempo


500
Pno. 1
p
mp
Pno. 2
mf
Slower
mp
507
Pno. 1
8va
pp
Pno. 2
pp
mp

Var. X

Stark, almost violent, but decrescendoing to the end

♩ = c. 104

514

Pno. 1

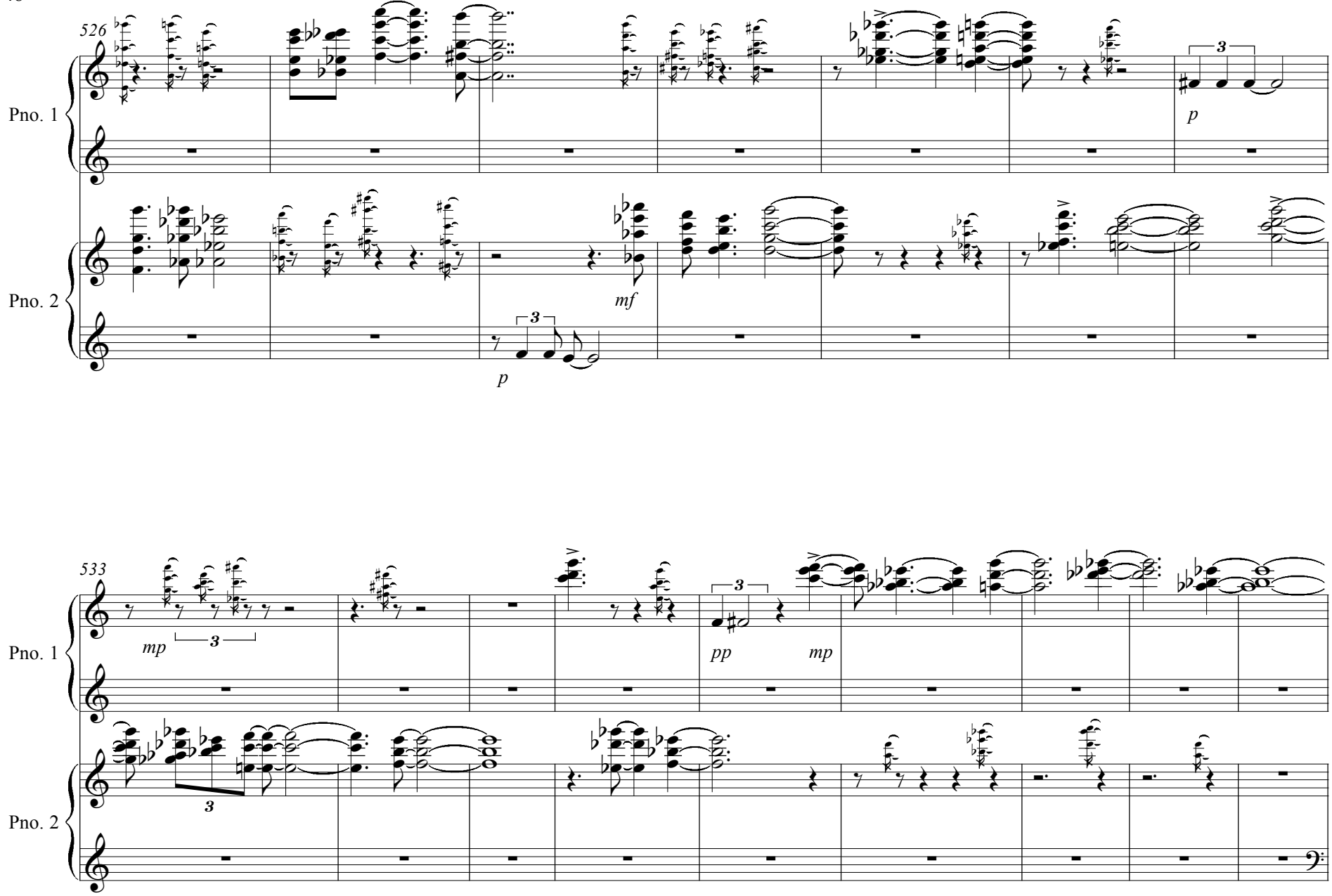
Pno. 2

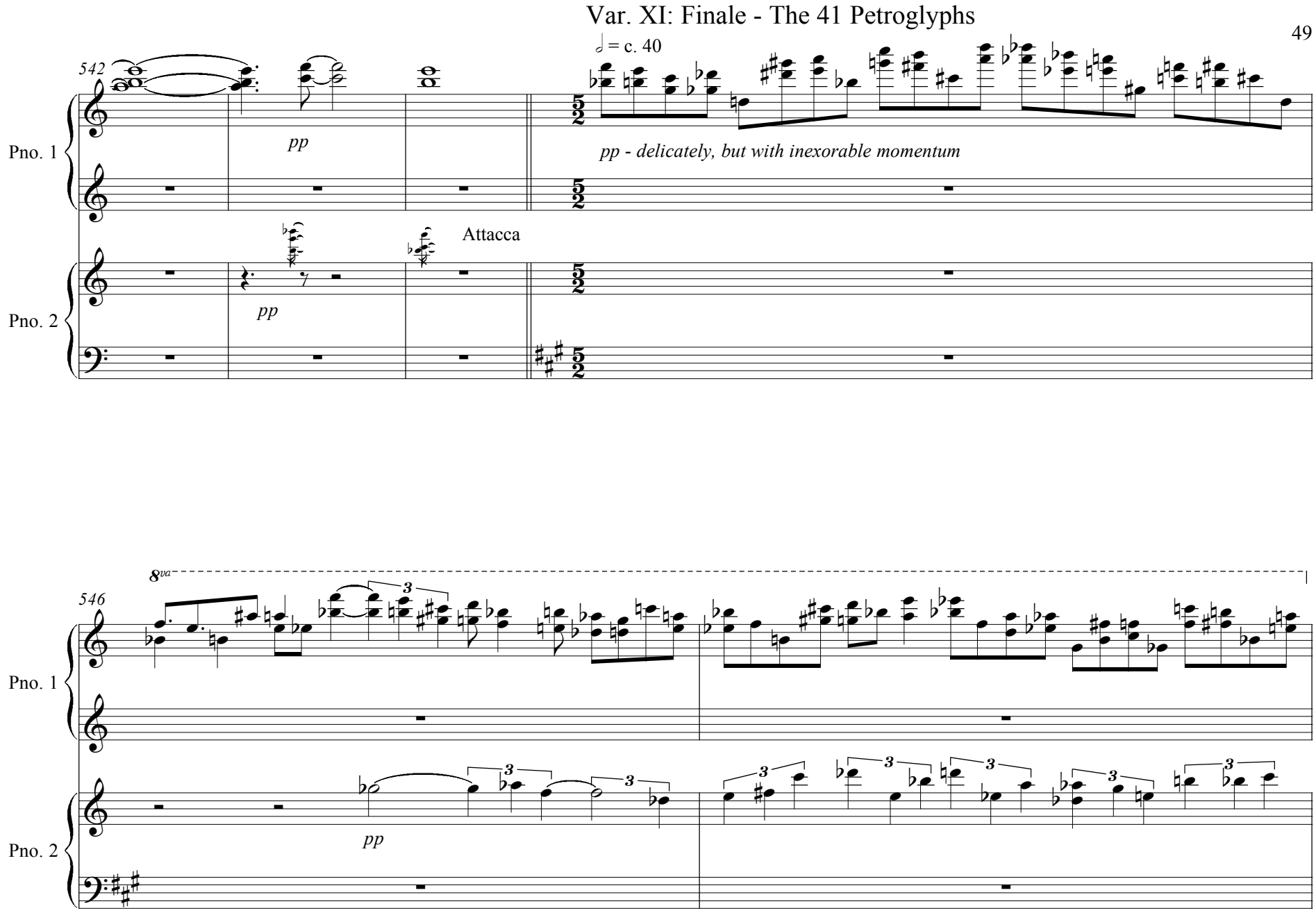
with pedal on each chord

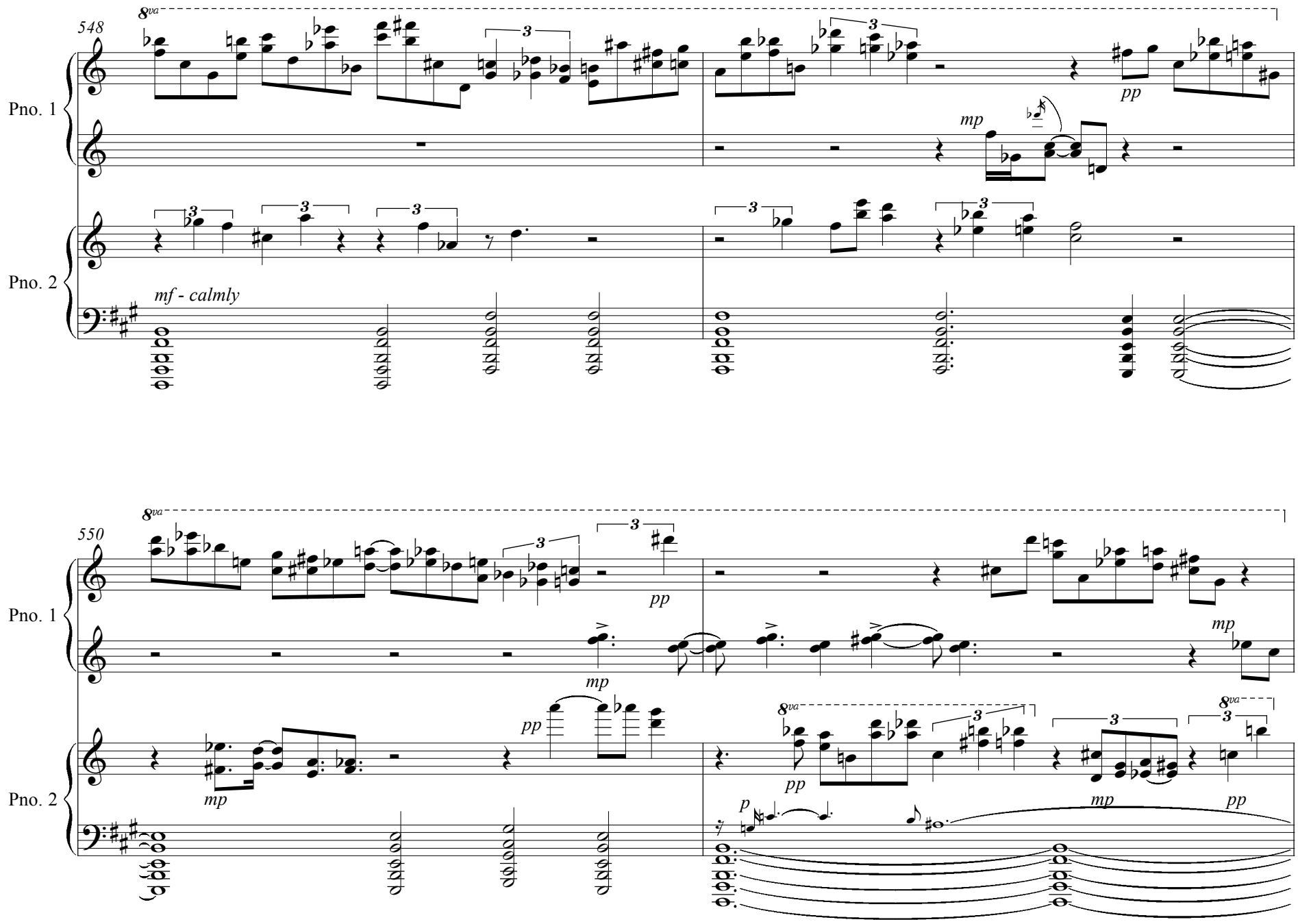
520

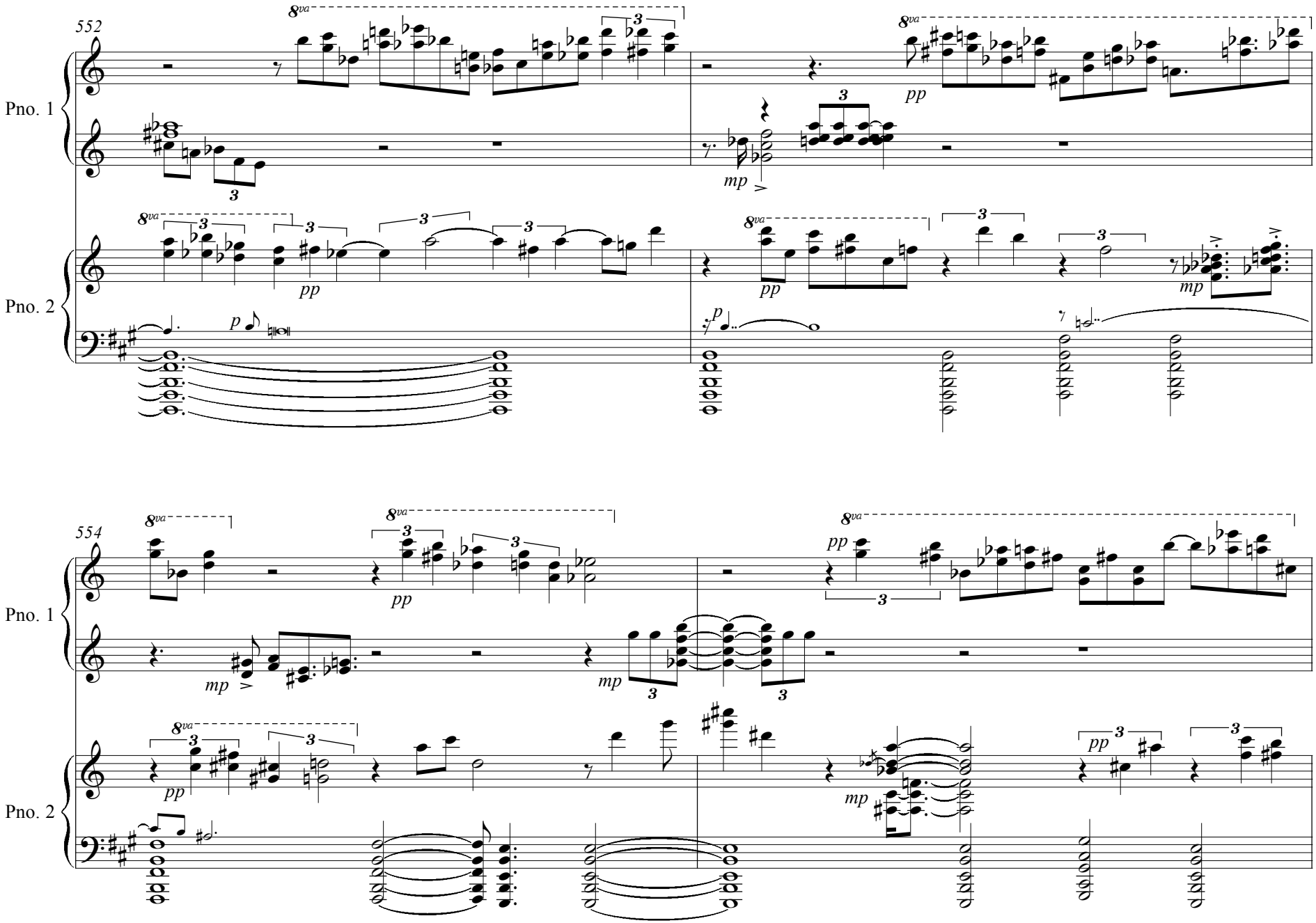
Pno. 1

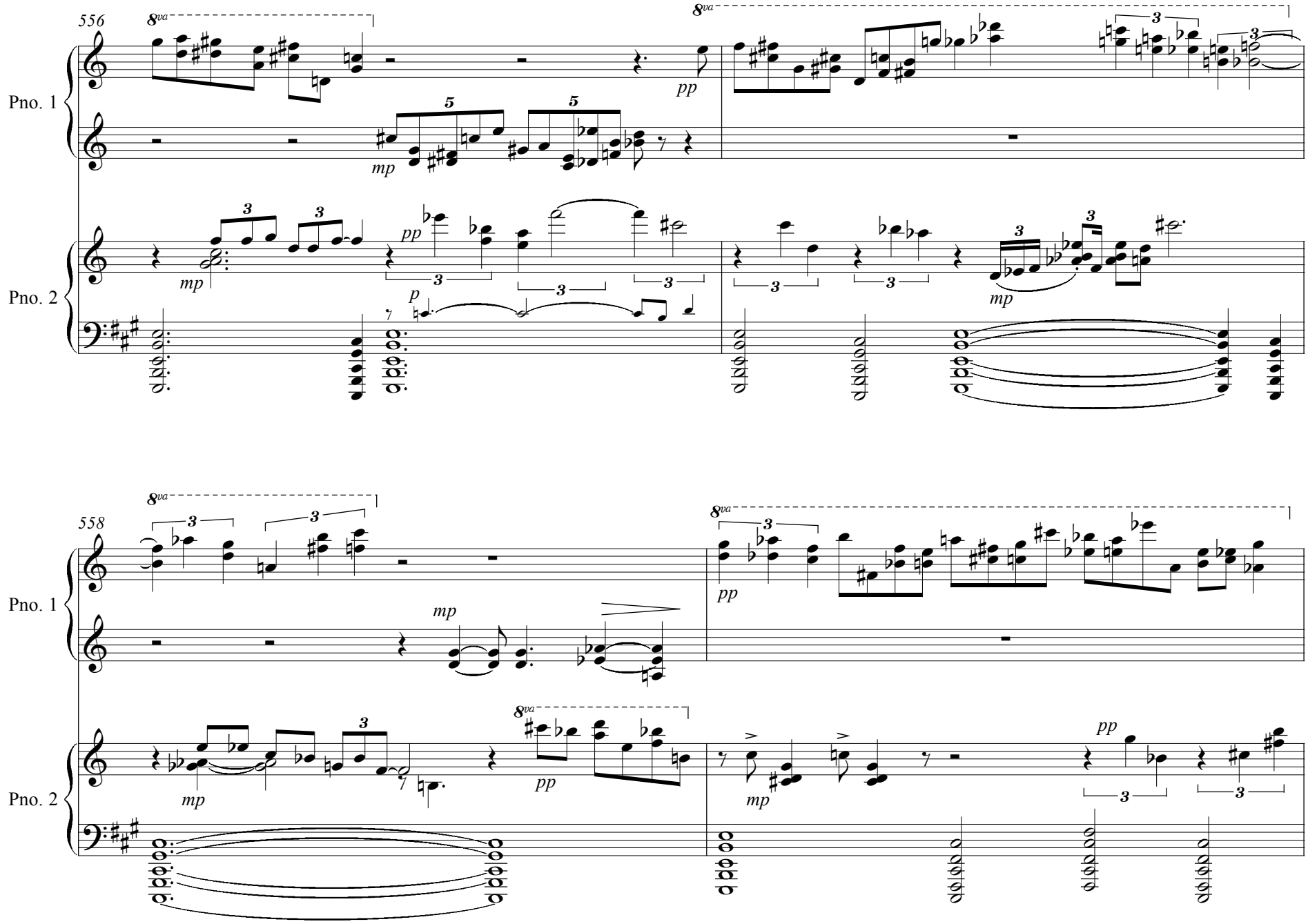
Pno. 2

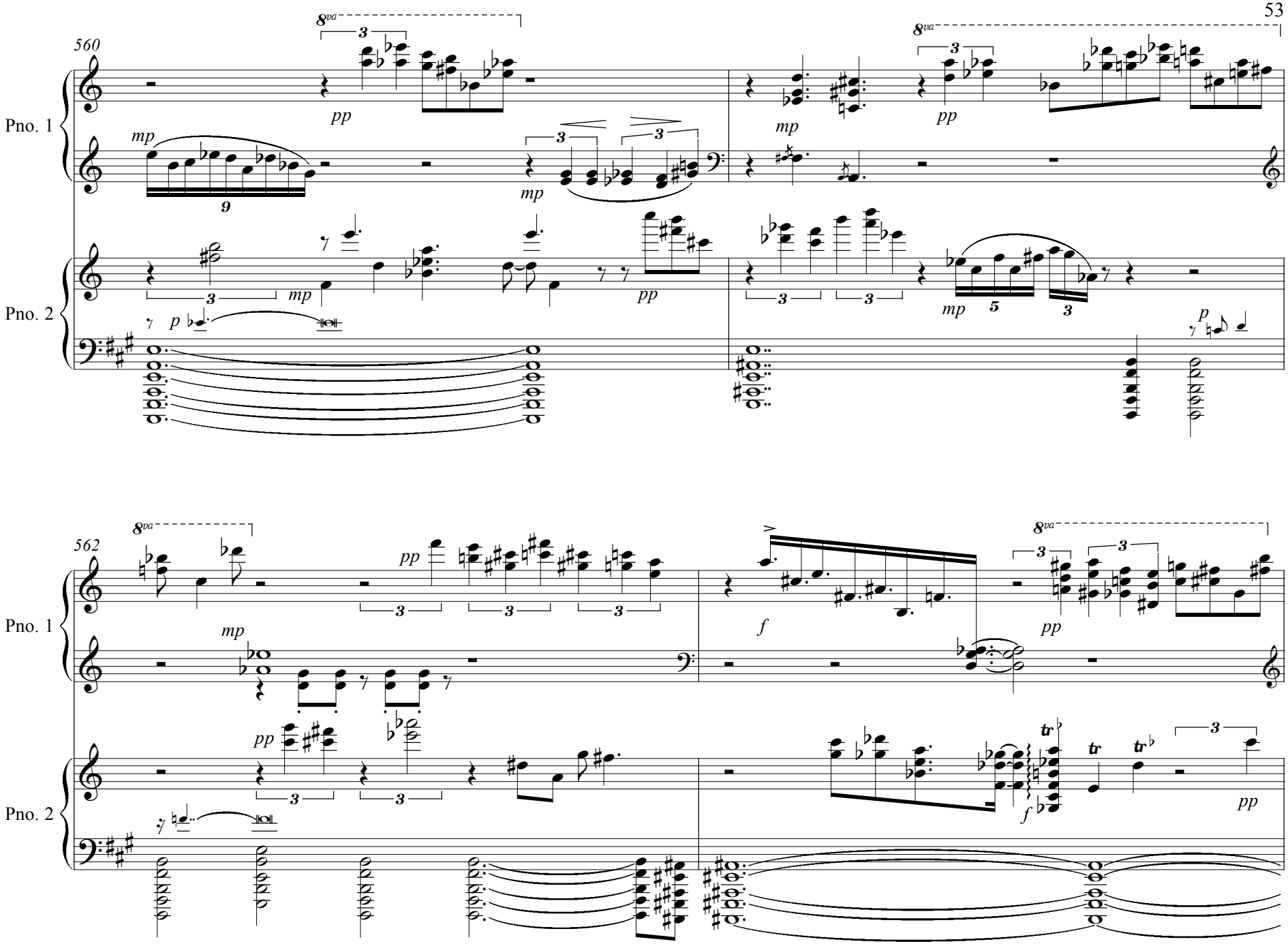

526
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
p
mf
p
533
mp
pp
mp

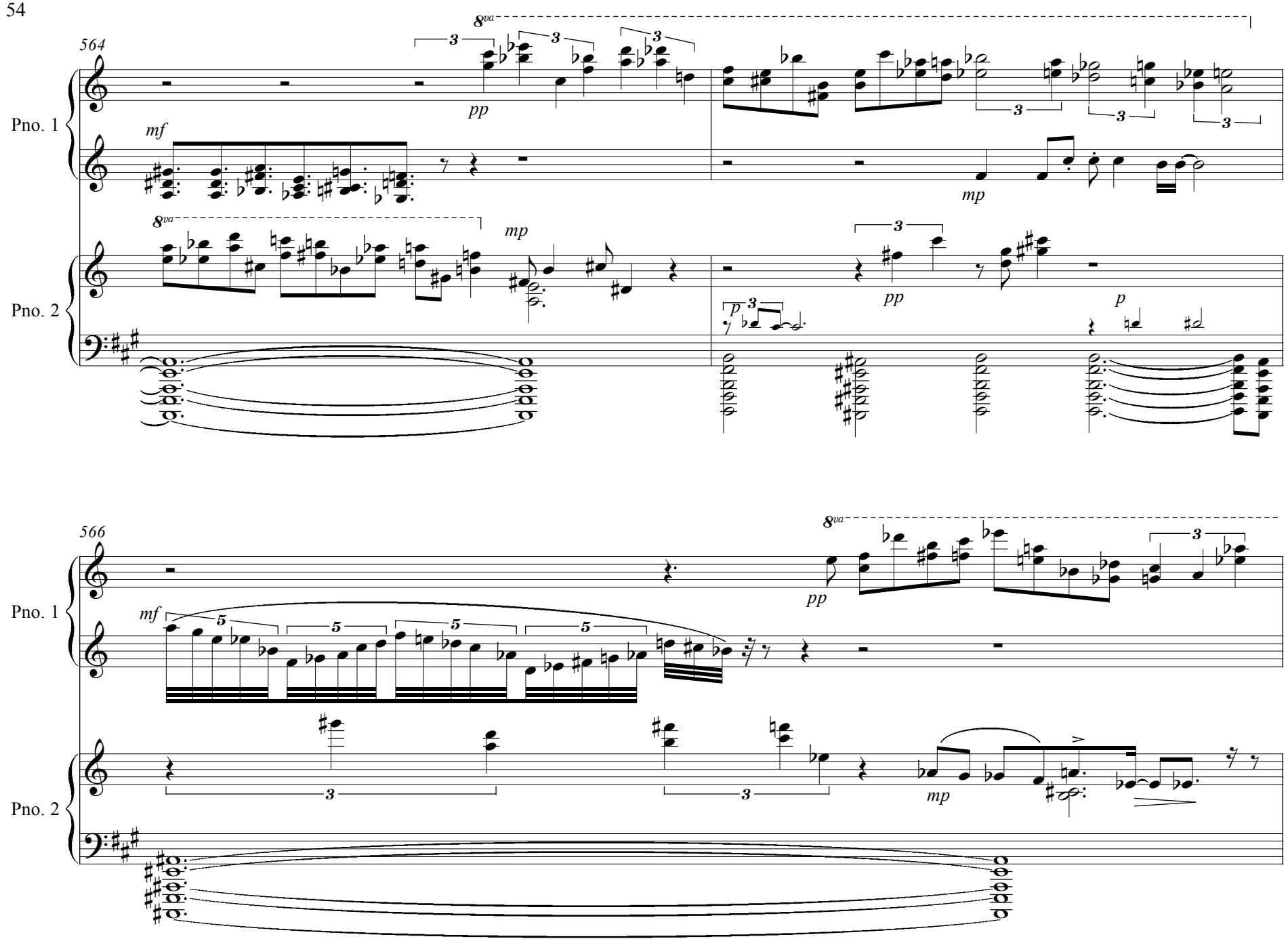

542
♩ = c. 40
Pno. 1
pp
pp - delicately, but with inexorable momentum
Attacca
Pno. 2
pp
8va
546
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
pp

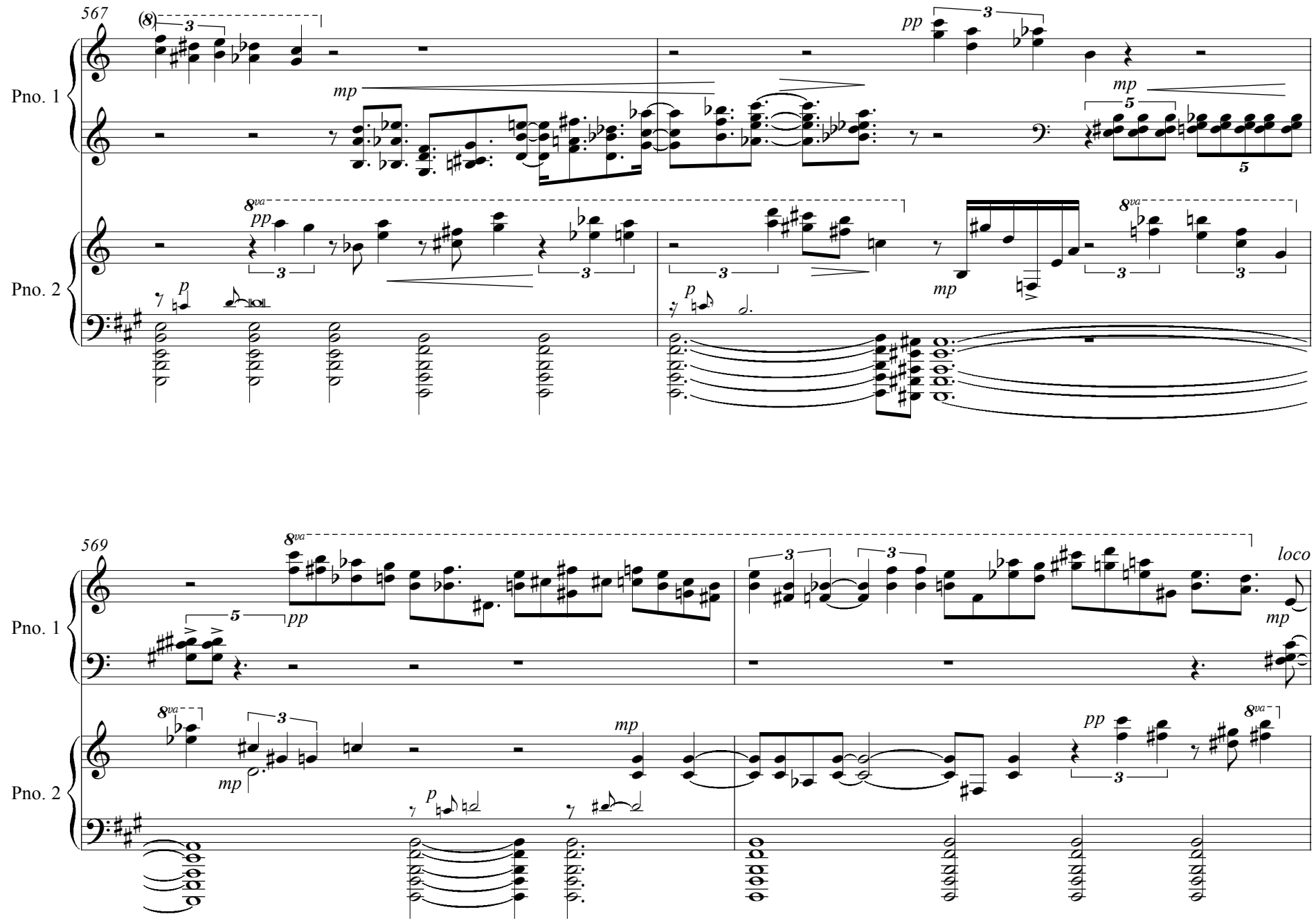

548
8va
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mf - calmly
mp
pp
3
550
8va
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
mp
pp
p
3

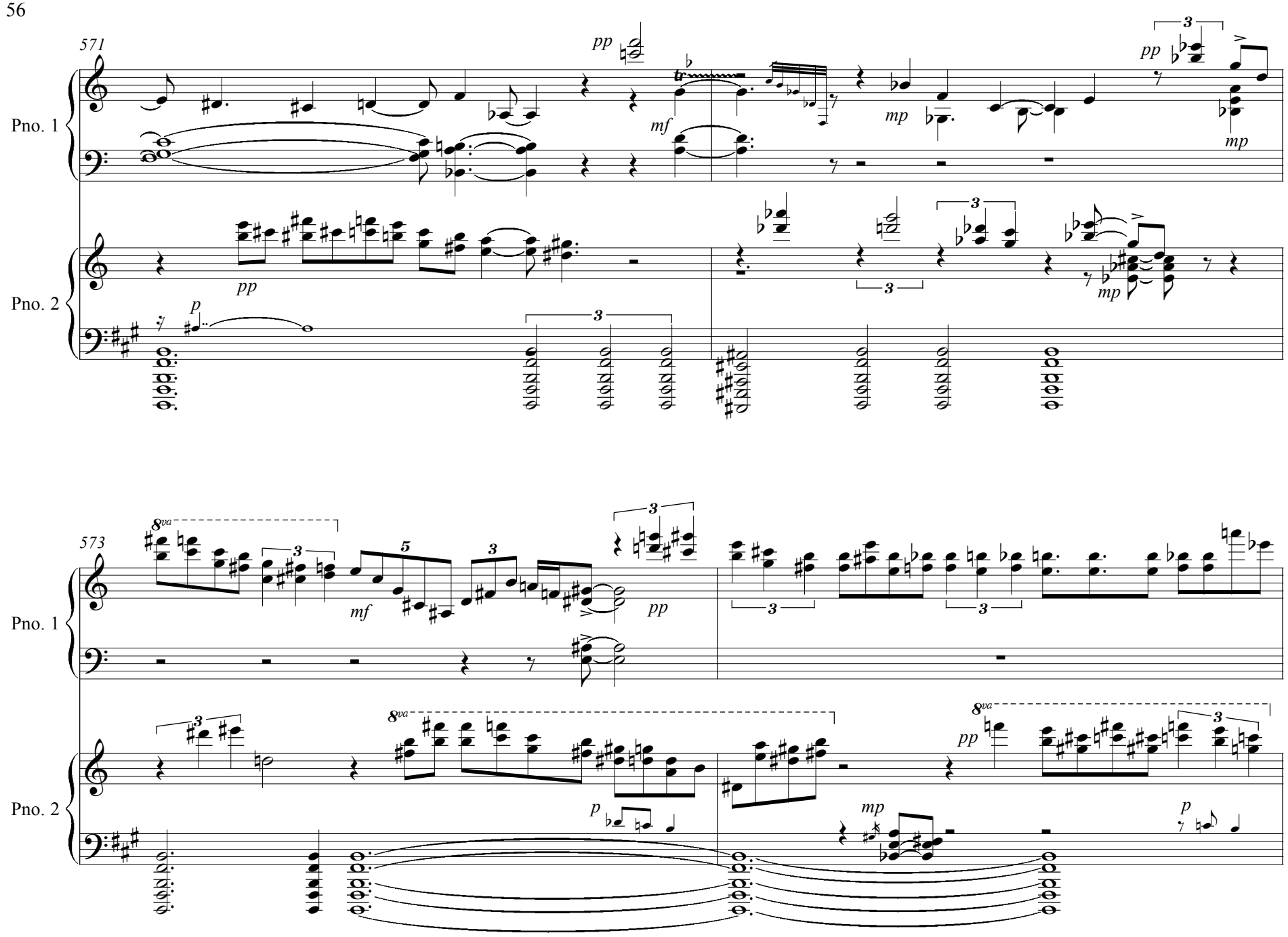

552
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
554
Pno. 1
Pno. 2


556
558
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
8va
mp
pp
p

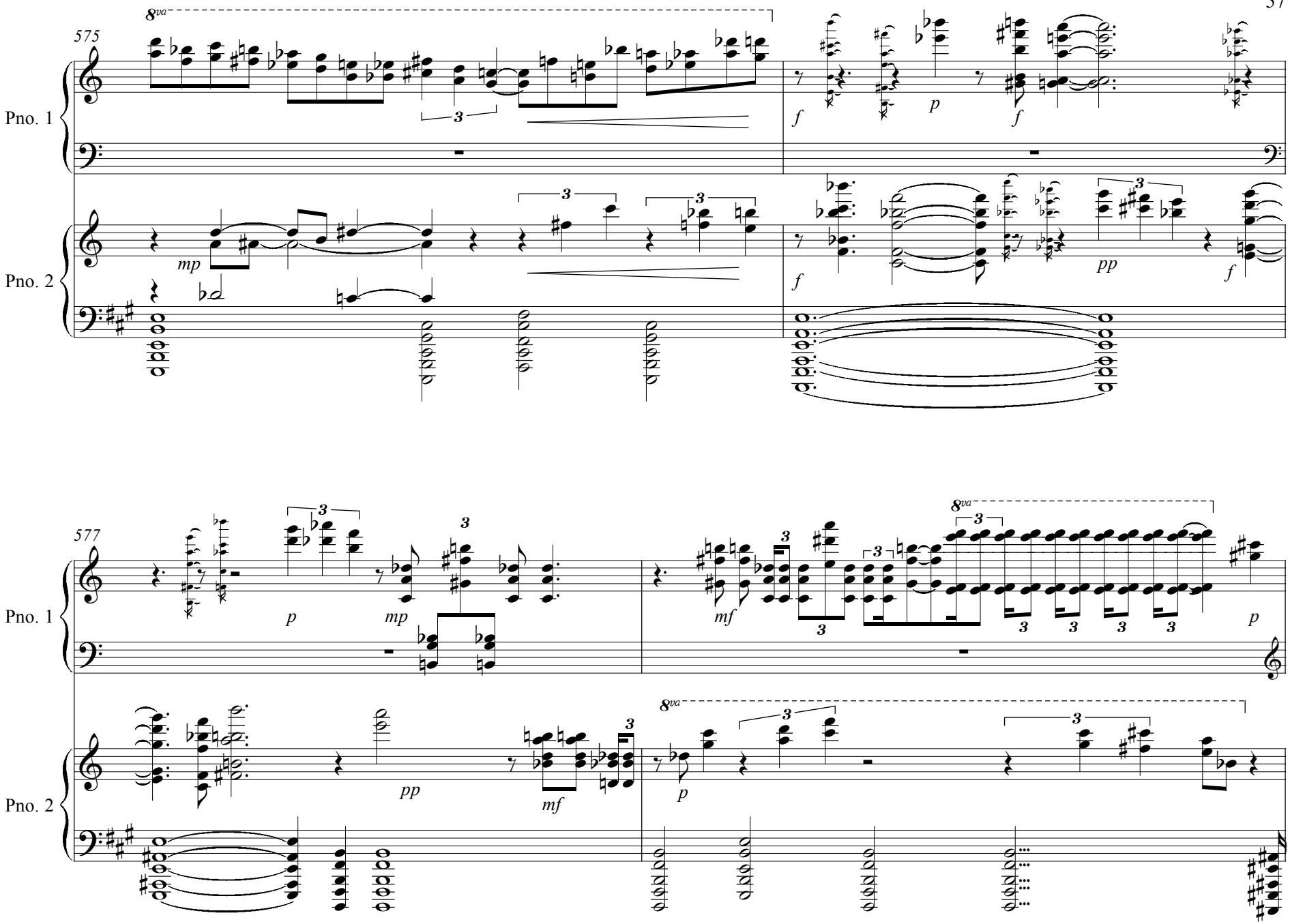

560
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
562
Pno. 1
Pno. 2

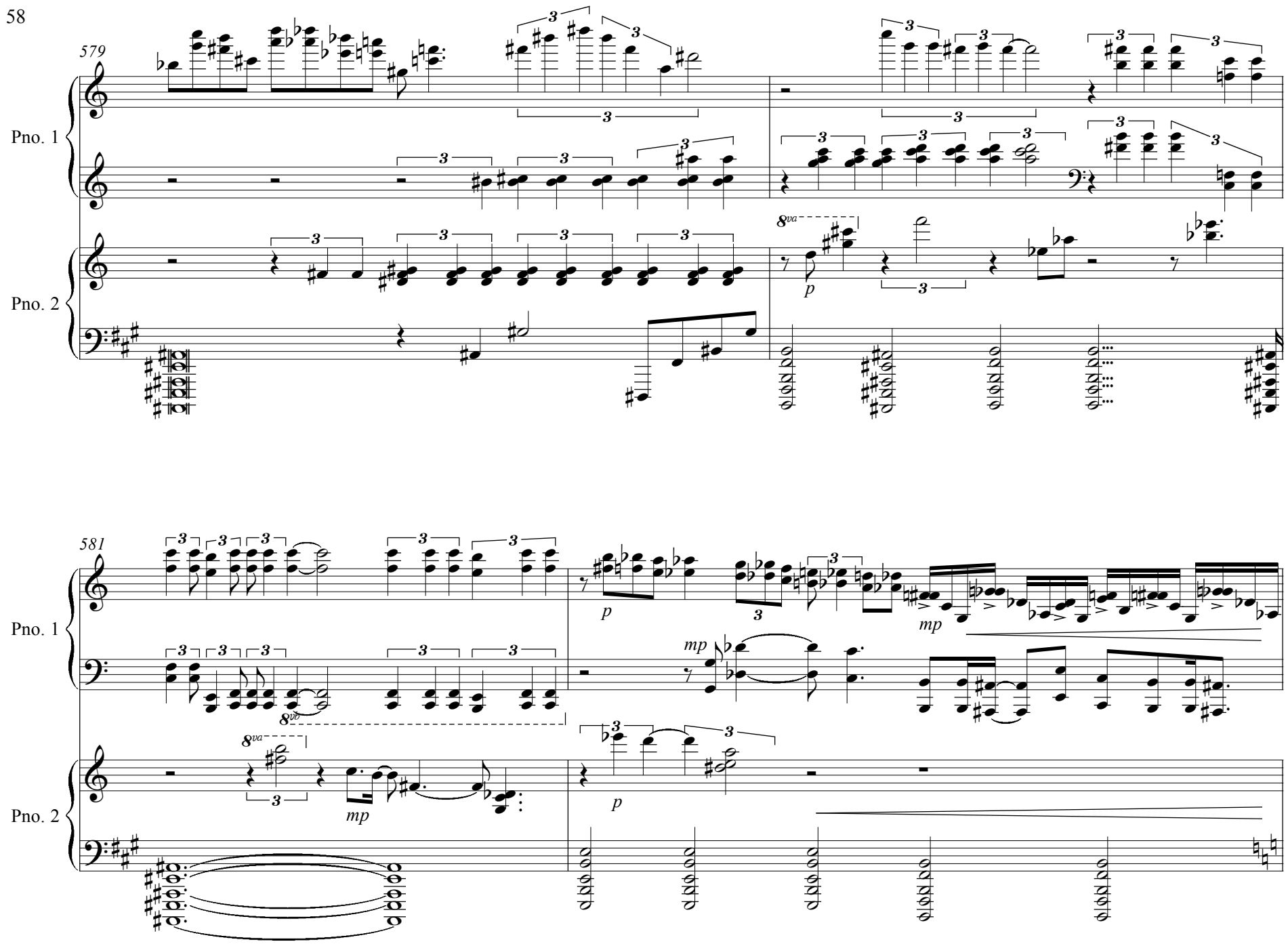

564
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
8va
mf
pp
mp
p
566

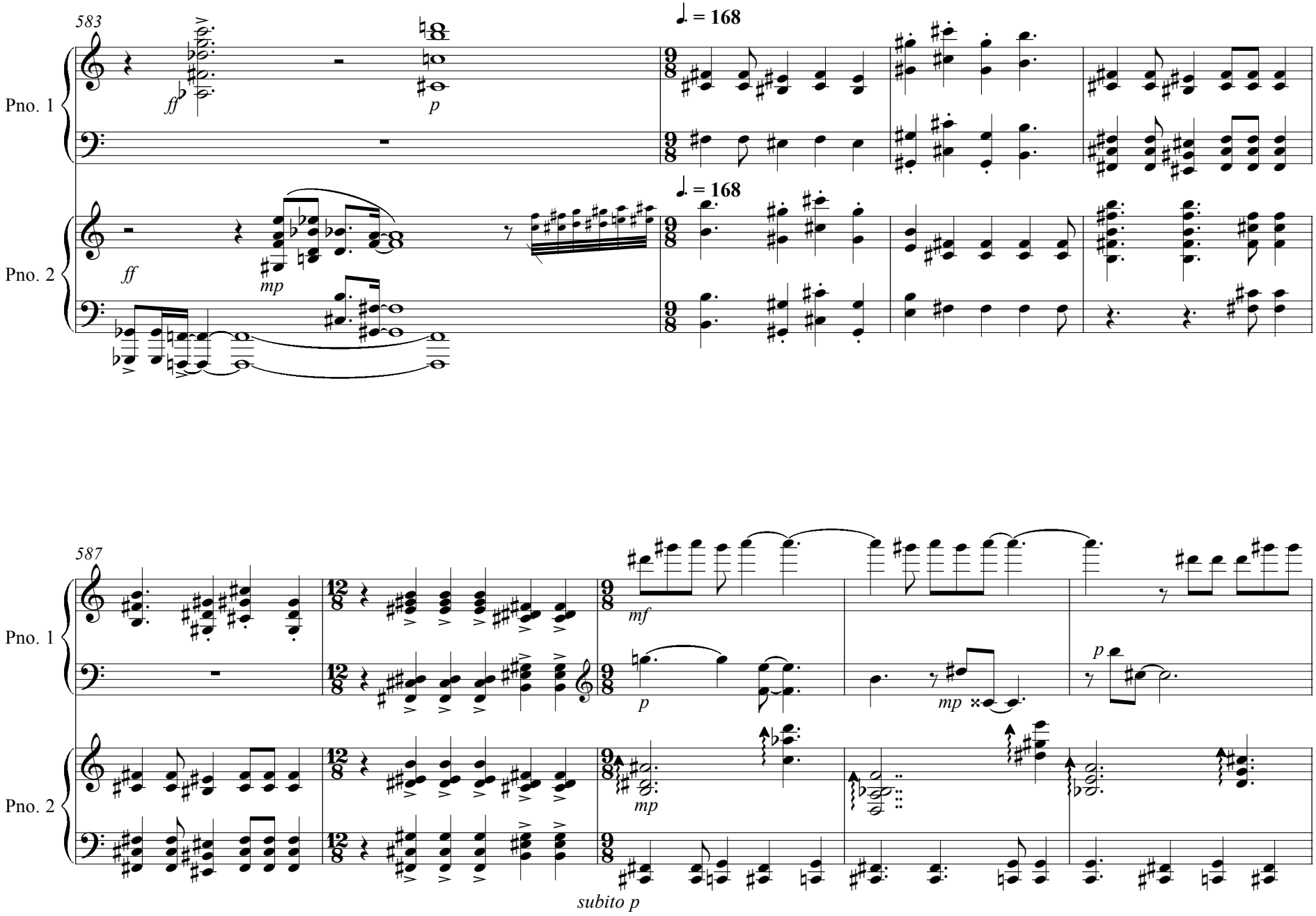

567
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
569
loco

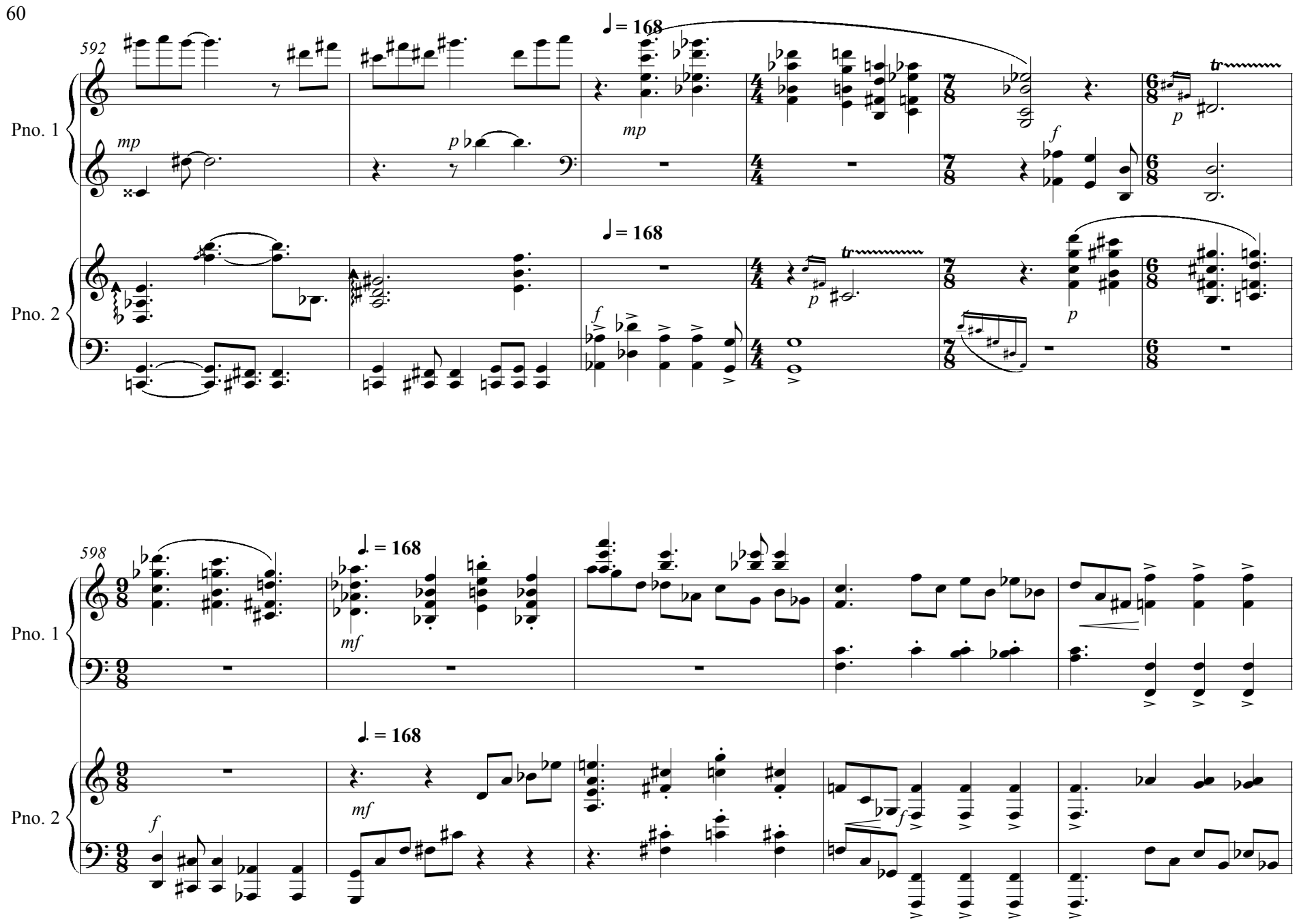

571
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
573
Pno. 1
Pno. 2

Coda




579
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
8va
p
581
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
8vb
8va
mp
mp
mp
p
p


583
♩. = 168
Pno. 1
Pno. 2
ff
p
mp
587
mf
subito p


592
♩ = 168
Pno. 1
mp
p
mp
f
p
tr
Pno. 2
♩ = 168
f
p
tr
p
598
♩. = 168
Pno. 1
mf
♩. = 168
Pno. 2
f
mf
f

603

Molto ritard.....

Pno. 1

Pno. 2

Molto ritard.....

609

Accelerando - as much as possible

Pno. 1

mp

fff

Accelerando - as much as possible

April - December, 1985
Glenview, Illinois

Pno. 2

mp

fff